

L. Crow Email, 2005 (Edited by S. Crow)

Percy Crow's Career

Percy Crow was first employed as a Tramways Conductor (after a few years as a pony boy in the pit) and then transferred to become a driver when motor driven vehicles were introduced.

At the start these were the only qualified drivers on the roads. Cars were just driven by anyone who had an hour or so to take them out on a road. Chauffeurs and Taxi Drivers were the most experienced because they had use of someone's vehicle and drove regularly. They also became engineers as they had to keep their cars on the road if they wanted to keep their job.

Percy's training route was from the Sheffield Road Garage to Birdwell Police Station then around the triangle of roads which surrounded the station where he had to stop for practice at loading and unloading of passengers. He drove many hours around that triangle. Also there was a lot of stopping and starting on hills on the way. If he stalled the bus he had to get out of the cab and swing the engine with a heavy starting handle making sure that when the engine fired he quickly disengaged the handle. If you didn't do this quickly enough the handle would swing around and may smash your wrist and may result in the loss of your job. The instructor never helped a driver but accidents and constant stalling would lead to your rejection as a driver and failure of the most coveted award of the Public Service Vehicle (PSV) License.

Percy so valued this license disc (which all early drivers had to wear when working) that he renewed it annually so that he always had a job as a driver. Even when during the war he went to work as a centre lathe turner (he qualified in his own time after work at the Technical College) he kept his PSV badge and used it when he did some overtime relief driving on weekends after the war. His badge and driving license are in a box in the garage. This extra work was valuable to provide holiday money which were one of the most important parts of his family life.

Percy only had one year when he was not awarded his Good Safe Driver Award. (The family has a medal he was given for many years of Safe Public Service Driving). The missed year happened soon after Percy and Hilda got married and before Leslie was born. Percy was driving a bus on a main road (Sheffield Road?) when another driver pulled across him from a side road. The bus although travelling at a steady speed couldn't slow down or stop soon enough and they ran into one another.

Percy was cut by glass on his forehead, a scar he carried till his death. Any

driver involved in an accident was immediately suspended and had to go next morning before the boss, Mr. Robinson. In spite of support from passengers on the bus and his explanation of his actions to try and stop an accident which was not his fault he was reprimanded but kept his job, subject to his safe driving in future years.

To say that from that moment on he was an even more careful driver (and taught Leslie to be so too) is an understatement. When driving a car or a bus he had a smoothness which endeared him to his passengers. He caressed the gears, listened to the engine and changed directions with consideration for others and the vehicle. "Think for the other man", he would say. "Make up his mind by giving him space and consideration". How he would have hated driving these days. He was a very special Dad.