

BASINGSTOKE ROAD TRANSPORT 1700 TO 2013.

A Great Thoroughfare.

In 1700 Basingstoke was dependent on land transport as it was 15 miles from the nearest navigable water, the Thames at Reading. Passenger and long distance goods traffic developed during the 18th and 19th centuries and local carrier services in the 19th and 20th centuries.

For most people at the start of this period walking was the only option. Some would ride their own horses. Farmers' carts brought produce for sale to market towns such as Basingstoke. Long distance wagons took passengers but they moved slowly at not more than 2½ - 3 miles an hour. Paterson gave a contemporary view (1826) of Basingstoke's location:

‘Situated on the line of road from London to Southampton, Winchester and Poole, and also at the point of division on the road to Salisbury, Exeter, Plymouth Basingstoke is consequently a very great thoroughfare, and participates not only in the advantages resulting from the expenditure of travellers but also from large establishments of horses and men in the employ of the several coach proprietors, engaged in working the western mails and other stages and whose several concerns in this town are conducted on an extensive scale’.¹

Passenger transport.

Stage coaches first appeared in the mid 17th century. Basingstoke was on the main through route to Andover, Salisbury and the West Country. The first coach recorded in Basingstoke was following this route to Exeter in 1655.² The first coach specifically to Basingstoke was in 1690 when it was one of 97 places within 40 to 80 miles of London having a coach service.³ In 1738 11 coaches passed through Basingstoke to the West Country each week.⁴ In 1784 17 coaches passed through the town daily (Figure 1) and ten of the arrivals and departures occurred at night.⁵

¹ E.Mogg, *Paterson's Roads, Being an accurate description of all the cross roads in England and Wales*, 18th edition (London 1826), 573.

² D. Gerhold, *Carriers and Coachmasters*, (Chichester, 2005), 197.

³ *Ibid* pp. 200, 152.

⁴ *The Intelligencer or Merchants Assistant*, (London 1738).

⁵ B.Austen, 'The Impact of the mail coach on public coach services in England and Wales 1784-1840', in *The Journal of Transport History*, 3rd series, Vol II. no.1 (1981), 31.

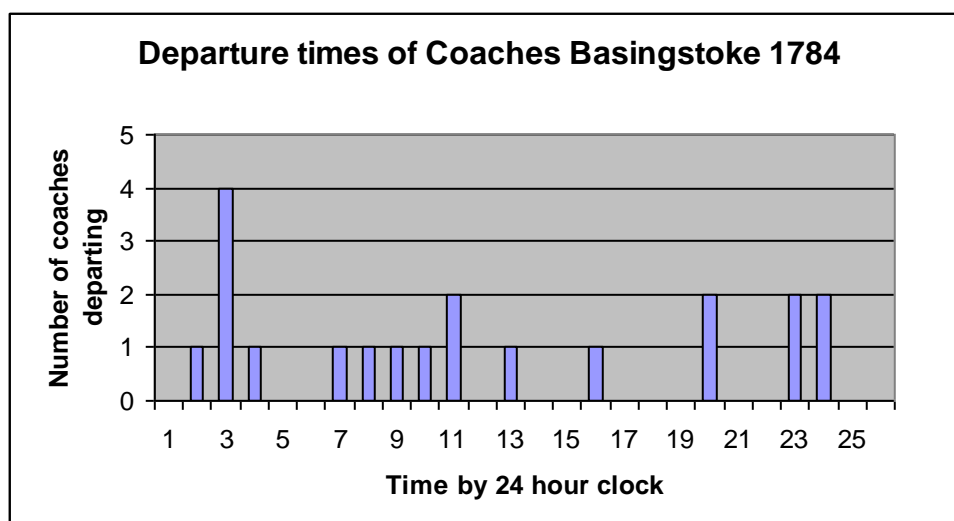


Figure 1 *Departure times of coaches, 1784.*

Table one below shows the growth of the coaching trade from 1784 to 1839.⁶ A feature of the late 18th century was that the frequency of services increased from two or three journeys a week to daily services to a large number of places. Coach provision was a major employer in a town of about 2,500 people. There was a need for at least 108 horses in 1828 to provide replacements at the end of each stage plus

Destination/Year	1784 services per day	1828 services per day	1839 services per day
LONDON	9	10	1
Salisbury	2	2	1
Exeter	4	3	3
Exeter/Plymouth		3	
Taunton	1		
Bath & Bristol	1		
Southampton		6	7

⁶ Sadler's *Hampshire Dir.* 1784; Pigot's, *Dir. of Hampshire* 1828 and 1839.

Weymouth		1	1
Barnstaple		1	
Reading		1	1
Total	17	27	14

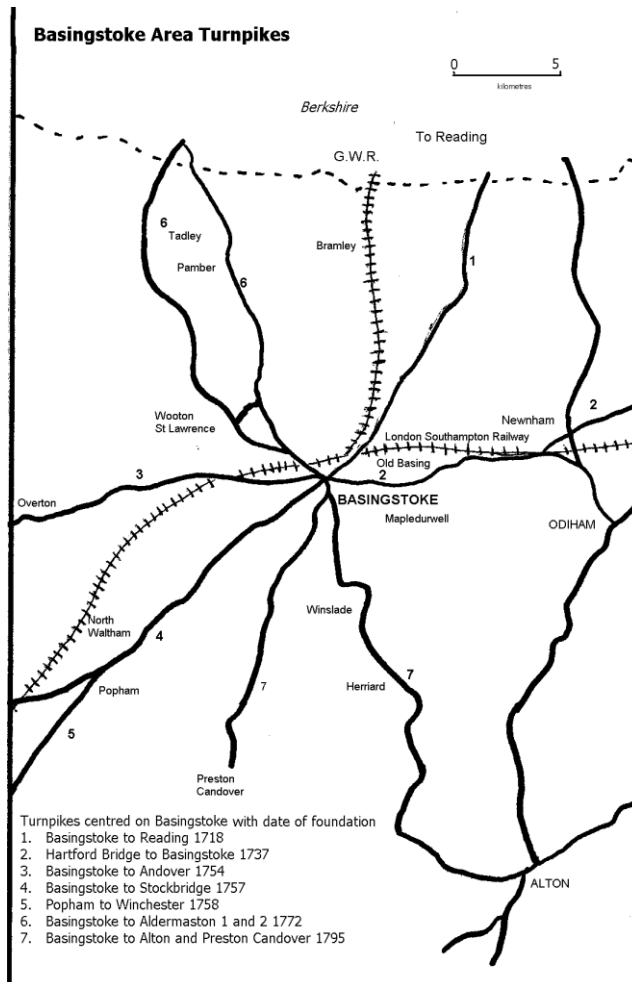
Table 1. *Destinations and size of stage coach traffic for selected years.*

another large number for carriers, traders and professional people. The major inn keepers, who were agents for the stage coach proprietors, managed a complex logistical exercise providing stabling and horses, purchasing provender from local farmers and providing a service for the passengers. They were significant employers of ostlers and other inn staff. The 1839 figures reflect the first impact of the arrival of the railway. The long distance coaching trade effectively ended by 1840 after the London Southampton railway was established.

Between 1784 and 1828 there was an improvement in the time taken by the coaches. In 1784 the time taken for most coaches, including the mail coach, for the 18 miles from Basingstoke to Andover was three hours or six mph with only lighter coaches such as the Exeter Diligence, which only carried three or four passengers, timed for two hours. By 1828 although one or two coaches were still timed for three hours most took between 2¼ and 2¾ hours with some light coaches given a 1½ hour schedule. A major reason for this improvement was the improvement of the roads. Eight turnpike roads met at Basingstoke, see Map 1 below.

The main through roads such as Hartford Bridge to Basingstoke, which was turnpiked in 1737, and the Andover road (1754) enjoyed an increasing income during the high years of the coaching trade allowing them to significantly improve by ‘macadamising’ their roads and paying an adequate return to their investors. Other secondary routes such as Aldermaston and Preston Candover, Alton and Basingstoke showed smaller levels of growth.⁷

⁷ Derek J. Spruce, *Basingstoke 1780 – 1860 Aspects of the Development of a North Hampshire Market Town*. 1997 MSc. Dissertation Univ. London, 77. Copy in Basingstoke Library.



Map 1 *Turnpike roads.*

Bus Services

These emerged to meet a need as carriers declined. In the early 1920s Wood brothers ran a service from Roman Road, initially using a van with seats but soon using a bus⁸. After 1926 the Thornycroft family founded the Venture Bus Company, which provided transport for its workers. It steadily developed a local bus network and grew by absorbing a number of smaller rivals⁹. By 1945, its last year of independence, it used 42 buses, half of them double deckers¹⁰.

⁸ *Basingstoke Gazette*, 4th April 2007

⁹ Omnibus Society Archive and Library, Venture Ltd file

¹⁰ P. Birmingham, & J.Pearce, *Venture Limited* (1995), 123.

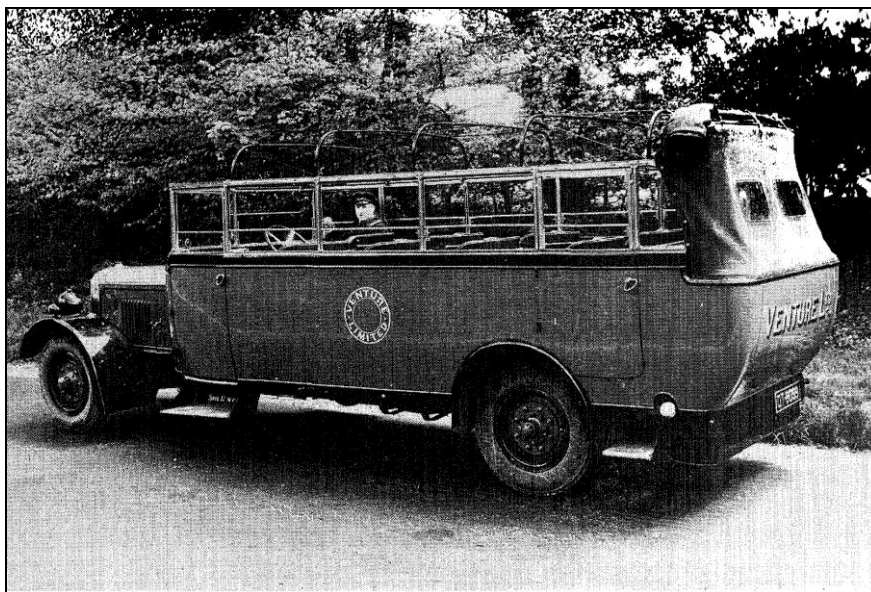
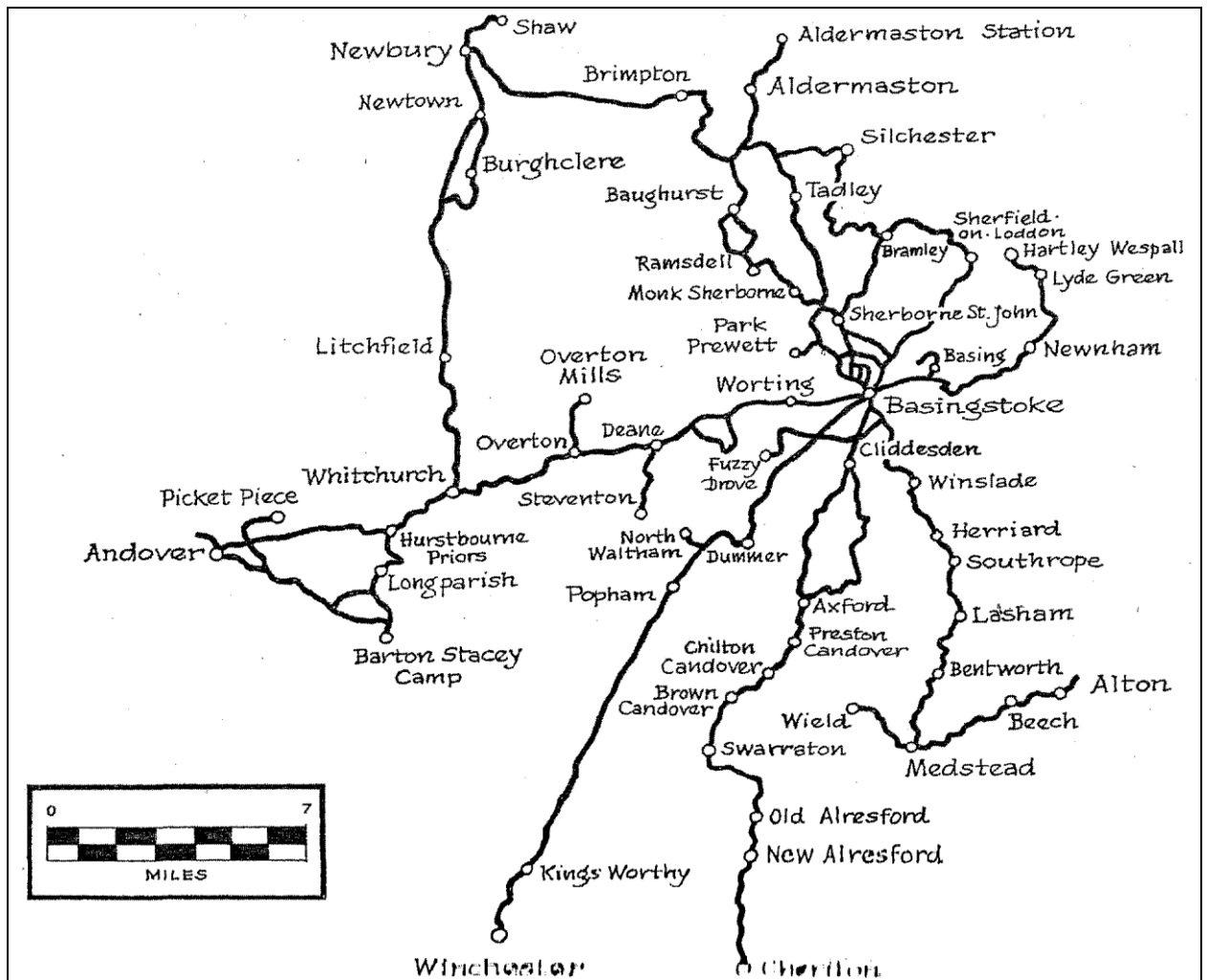


Figure 2. *Venture Bus Company number 11, built by Thornycroft in 1928. Withdrawn 1945. The canvas roof is rolled back (Paul Lacey Collection).*



Figure 3 *Venture Bus Company number 29 built by AEC in 1937, withdrawn in 1950 (Paul Lacey Collection).*



Map 2. *Final route network of Venture limited in 1945 when it was absorbed into the Red and White group. Not shown are the Aldershot and District Traction Co. route east to Odiham and Aldershot (Morris).*

The company was absorbed into the Red and White group and then into the Hampshire and Dorset group which became Hampshire Bus in 1983.¹¹ The rise in car ownership in the 1960s and 70s saw a diminution of bus travel. A Hampshire County Public Transport plan of 1979 – 80 showed that of 17 Hampshire and Dorset and eight Alder Valley services serving Basingstoke only one did not run at a loss¹². In the aftermath it was recommended that the 66 buses at the Basingstoke depot were reduced to 40, the drivers from 129 to 93 and conductors (31) phased out. The state-owned Hampshire Bus group was privatised in 1987 when it became part of the

¹¹ C. Morris, & A. Waller, *Wilts and Dorset Motor Services Ltd* (Salisbury, 2006), 98.

¹² HRO, 119M94/16.

Stagecoach group which in 2010 ran an intensive service within the urban area with much less frequent services to outlying villages and neighbouring towns.¹³

Taxi and Private Car Hire

These services complement the bus service provision. A study in 1981¹⁴ considered the importance of this provision as part of the public transport facilities. By 2012 the number of taxis had doubled to 60 and private hire cars increased by a factor of 10.¹⁵

Goods Traffic by Road

Long Distance Carriers

Pack horses would have been seen passing through Basingstoke to and from Somerset up to c.1750.¹⁶ The earliest record of a regular wagon service to Basingstoke is to be found in 1681¹⁷ when 'Lawrence Wardners wagon comes to Kings Arms Holborne Bridge on Wednesday and goes out on Thursday'. Other long distance wagons to Barnstaple, Salisbury and Exeter would also have come through Basingstoke. These were slow moving (c.2 ½ miles an hour) and by the end of the 18th century they were large four wheeled wagons with a canvas hood and nine inch wide wheels drawn by up to six or eight horses and carrying four tons or more¹⁸.

In 1784¹⁹ there were 12 weekly services to London and 13 to different destinations in the West Country. No local carrier services are listed. In 1828²⁰ a large number of long distance carriers are listed, with seven firms running 31 wagons per week to London and 21 to Taunton, Salisbury and the West Country. The listing includes carriers, who all travelled to towns within 15-17 miles of Basingstoke, such as Reading, Andover, Farnham, Winchester and Alton. Only four places had one service

¹³ Stagecoach timetables from 3rd January 2010.

¹⁴ P.A.K. Greening, & R.L. Jackson, *The Basingstoke Taxi and Private Hire Car Study* (Transport and Road Research Laboratory Monograph LR 1062, 1982), 19.

¹⁵ www.basingstoke.gov.uk › ... › [Licensing](#) › [Hackney Carriage Licensing](#) Accessed 25th March 2013.

¹⁶ D. Gerhold, *Road Transport before the Railways* (Cambridge, 1993), 27.

¹⁷ T. De-Laune, *The Present State of London* (London, 1681), 385.

¹⁸ Gerhold *op cit* 29.

¹⁹ J. Sadler, *The Hampshire Dir.* (Winchester, 1784), 64.

²⁰ J. Pigot, *National and Commercial Dir.* London and Manchester, Hampshire section (1828)p 310.

a week. There is no mention of specific services to surrounding villages, although they would have also served villages that they passed through. There were nine routes with 15 services using them.

Into the Railway era

The London and Southampton railway reached Basingstoke in 1839 and was connected to Winchester in 1840. By 1844 this had caused radical changes: only one stage coach still operated to Reading. Long distance wagons are not listed.²¹ Instead R. Wallis, 'using the railway', acted as a carrier for places to the west of Basingstoke such as Overton, Whitchurch, Andover and Salisbury which were not reached by rail until 1857. He also operated using the canal for places such as Odiham and London to the east.

Although the railway revolutionised long distance transport, short distance distribution of goods into the 20th century still depended on horse drawn vehicles and as trade increased, so their use flourished. The Angel Hotel was the largest inn and offered passenger vehicles and flies for hire (Figure 3).²² Wallis and Co were established as corn and coal merchants near the railway station (Figure 4).²³ The Barge Inn hired out post horses and carriages and offered stabling in 1863 (Figure 5).²⁴

²¹ I Slater, I, *Pigot & Co Royal National & Commercial Directory Part 2*, London and Manchester, 1844, Hampshire section, 12.

²² Hampshire Museum Service (HMS), WOC5226.538.1 DPAAPE.

²³ HMS, WOC5226.538.1 DPAAPE35.

²⁴ HMS, WOC5226.946 DPAARV54.

McCall's type.

WILLIAM LODDER,
 THE
Angel Family Hotel, Tavern,
 AND
COMMERCIAL INN,

POST HORSES
 CLOSE AND OPEN
 CARRIAGES
 FLYS. GIGS.

A WELL
 APPOINTED HEARSE
 AND MOURNING
 COACHES.

MARKET PLACE, BASINGSTOKE.
 CHOICE WINES. HOME BREWED ALES.

*A Dutch Establishment, the Nobility, Gentry, Travellers by Railway,
 Commercial Gentlemen & others, will meet with every accommodation.*

AN OMNIBUS AND FLYS
Attendance for every Train, at the Great Western and South Western Stations.

1863

Aug 20. Ave. House to
 Sherburne £. 0

Paid June 10/64
 W. L. Lodder

Figure 4. The Angel Hotel.

10, The P. H. Inn

Lord Bolton

Basingstoke,
 To Dr. Wallis.

Corn and Coal Merchant.

**SLATES, SEED, OIL CAKE, SALT, AND
 ARTIFICIAL MANURE.**

CORN and HAY sold by Commission.

Sacks let on hire at 1d. per qr. per Week.

Corn stored and Insured at moderate Prices.

24th Office near the Railway Station.

1854

March 1,000 Country Slated Wyth Hill - 2s/ 4 00

July 3 3,000 D. M. Potnam - } 30 00

Sept 25th 700 x Hackwood Ho L 3 10 0

1855 30th 150 x 850 x Basing Park 8 10 0

Feb 7 17th 5 cpr Oak Farm 42 10 0

49 0 0

See List of Goods on Sale on the other side.

Figure 5. Wallis and Co.

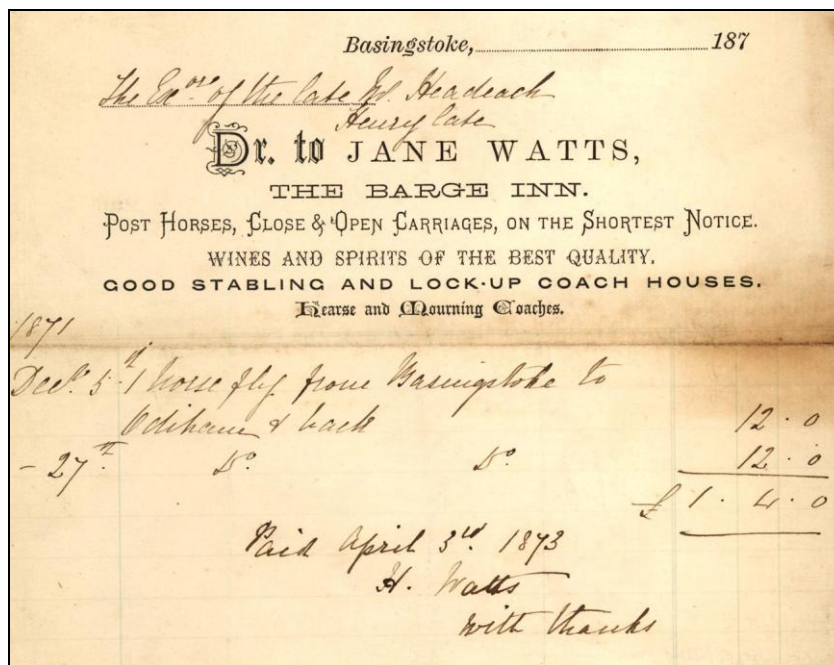


Figure 6 Billhead of The Barge Inn in Lower Wote Street, 1873.

The Carrier Network

The development of a local network of carriers related to the town with its railhead grew slowly but became a marked feature of the 19th century. Initially carriers traded to adjacent market towns such as Newbury, Reading, Farnham, Alton and Winchester but by 1844 there are weekly local carriers to Overton and Deane for the first time.

There was a growth from seven to 11 routes from 1852-53 and 1855 but the number of services almost doubled to 21. These figures however mask significant changes; for example there were no services to Overton in 1852-53, although it may have been served by the three running to Andover, but there were eight a week in 1855. There was a small falling back between 1855 and 1859 but only one service, to Monk Sherborne, ceased, and two others reduced their frequency. The service to Andover had ceased by 1855 after the railway opened in 1854. The upward trend was resumed by 1865, with Overton and Deane continuing to have a daily service and Preston Candover having four per week, where previously there was none. There was steady growth in the decade following to 1875. Between that year and 1898 there was almost a doubling of routes and a 162 per cent rise in the number of services run. Many villages not previously running carrier services, such as Mortimer, Silchester, and

Hartley Wespall, joined the network. Ramsdell, which previously did not have a service, enjoyed no fewer than eight per week, with three of them on Saturday.

Year	No. of Local Routes	Services Per Week	Places with 1 Carrier per week
1828	9{ long distance}	15	4
1844	7	9	7
1852/3	7	11	4
1855	11	21	7
1859	10	18	7
1865	13	29	6
1875	15	32	7
1889	23	59	10
1898	28	84	10
1911	24	93	5
1920	28	102	3
1935	14	51	0
1939	17	68	0
1948	13	44	0
1952	2	4	0

Table 2 Basingstoke. Showing the increase in local carriers' routes and increase in numbers of services in the period 1828 – 1952.²⁵

²⁵ Pigot, 1828, 310.

Slater, 1844, 12.

Slater, I, *Royal National and Commercial Dir. Hants*, Manchester & London, 1852-3 .

Services to the two larger towns that did not have direct rail links, Newbury and Alton, persisted through the 19th century. By 1911 the number of services had reduced by four but the number of journeys had increased by 10% to 9.3 with villages such as Upton Grey now having a service on three days. The number having only one service per week was reduced to five.

The information in the table is shown graphically in Chart 2,²⁶ which shows that the number of routes remained under 30 with peaks of 28 in 1898 and 1920. In 1889 ten places only had one carrier a week but the period up to 1920 showed a marked intensification of services to a peak of 102. After 1920 there was a steady decline but the demise did not come about until 1952. The 1939 directory introduces the successor to carriers, ‘Regular omnibus service to all parts of the surrounding area.’

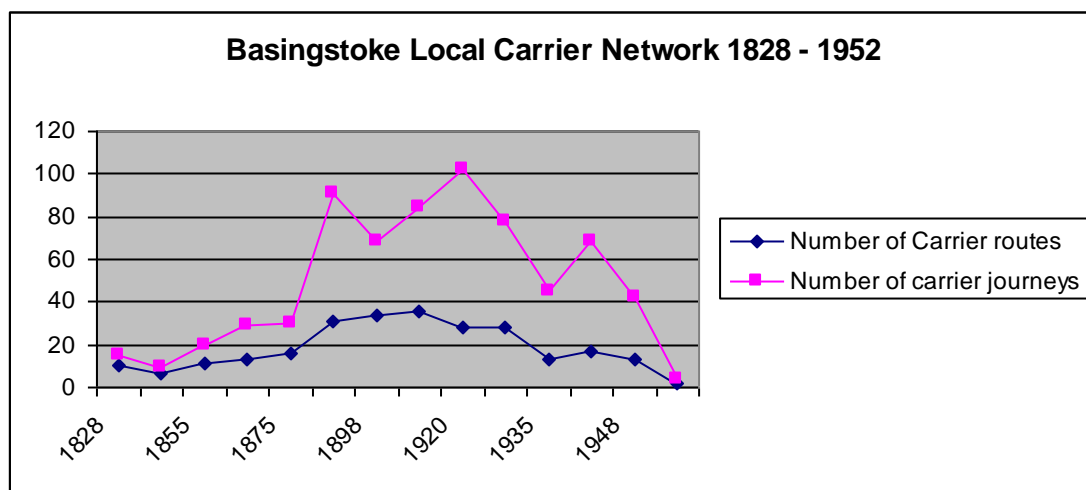


Figure 7 Local Carrier Network 1828-1952.

Kelly & Co, *PO Dir. Hants, Wilts and Dorset*, (London, 1855), 18.
W. White, *Dir. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (Sheffield, 1859), 494.
Harrod & Co, *Dir. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (London, 1865), 604-5.
Kelly & Co, *PO Dir. Hants, Wilts and Dorset* (London, 1875), 30.
Kelly & Co, *PO Dir. Hants, Wilts and Dorset* (London, 1889).
Kelly & Co, *PO Dir. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, (London, 1898), 51-2.
Kelly & Co, *PO Dir. of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, (London, 1911), 59.
Kelly & Co, *PO Dir. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (London, 1920).
Kelly & Co, *Basingstoke Dir.* (London, 1935), p 56
Kelly & Co, *PO Dir. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* (London, 1939), 65.
Kelly & Co, *Basingstoke Dir.* (London, 1948), A26.
Kelly & Co, *Basingstoke Dir.* (London, 1952), A12.
²⁶ HMS, WOC5226.946 DPAARV54.

Most of the villages served by Basingstoke carriers lay within an eight mile radius of the town, with the majority of settlements served being in the Thames basin to the north of the town. At the edges of the area lie other small market towns, Odiham, New Alresford, Whitchurch and Kingsclere (all of them on the chalklands, see figure 1), which had carrier links to other towns further away.

Starting points in Basingstoke

Most carriers started from one of the inns in Basingstoke. Over the whole period no fewer than 15 inns were used in this way but some were consistently favoured. The Feathers in Wote Street was cited in every directory from 1828 and in 1911 16 carriers started from there.²⁷ Others that were well used were the Wheatsheaf, the Rose, the Rose and Crown and the Barge, which became popular in the last two decades. Wednesday, as market day, saw most departures, especially for those places with one service in the week but after 1890 many services also departed on Saturday.

The Carriers' Role

Although this study outlines the structure of the carrier services much information about the detailed operation of the carriers is unchronicled. Carriers brought horticultural produce into town for sale. They acted as an agent for country people, purchasing goods on their behalf and delivering them to their houses. They also carried passengers, as remembered by Eleanor Goddard who worked as a dispenser until 1939:

"On Wednesdays, two carriers came into town and came to the surgery with messages from patients in other villages. One came from Dummer and the other from North Waltham. They arrived about eleven o'clock and called back for answers and medicines during the afternoon. They also shopped for their customers and their vans were fitted as crude buses."²⁸

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ B. Applin, *Taking the Pulse of Basingstoke* (Basingstoke, 2005), 9; HRO, Recording and Transcript BAHS 19, Wessex Sound & Film Archive.

In 1861 the population of Basingstoke town was approximately one quarter of Basingstoke district.²⁹ There were trades people who delivered into the hinterland by their own wagons or carts, an example being a coal merchant delivering from Basingstoke wharf to Herriard House.³⁰

Carriers' Vehicles. For much of the period a cart or wagon with one horse was the standard road vehicle but some carriers experimented with a steam powered van made by Wallis and Steevens in Basingstoke (figure 8).³¹ After 1918 when many army surplus vans became available there was a widespread move to these.³²

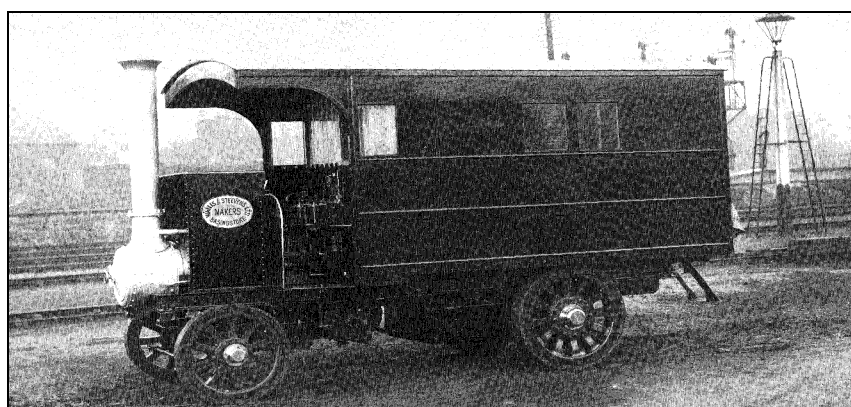


Figure 8. *Wallis & Steevens steam powered van.*

Road Network

From 1871 the struggling Turnpike Trusts were wound up. In 1888 the Local Government Act enabled the new County Councils to take over the maintenance of main roads. After the First World War main roads were slowly tar macadamised and traffic volumes along what is now the A30 through Basingstoke grew so much that the centre of the town was often gridlocked. To alleviate this a southern by-pass was opened in 1932³³. Traffic volumes escalated, especially after 1960 with the town

²⁹ 1861 census.

³⁰ HRO, 44M69 G1187.

³¹ Wallis and Steevens steam van no. 7106. Used by J.C. King, carrier at Weston Patrick, from January 1910. The vertical engine can be seen inside the cab.

³² Robert Applin, personal communication, November 2013.

³³ E. Stokes, *The Making of Basingstoke* (Basingstoke, 2008), 137.

expansion scheme. The M3 Motorway opened in 1971 and a Ringway encircling the centre of the town was completed in 1976 with greatly expanded car parking provision.³⁴

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³⁴ Ibid, 138.