

## Maurice Ireland Set up a bus service to Stroud

Maurice Ireland's father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all at times been carriers or hauliers in Painswick, transporting goods to and from the village and no doubt occasionally people as well. So transport was certainly in his blood, but it seems to have been Maurice who saw the opportunity to concentrate on the transport of people. He started his bus service between Stroud and Painswick in about 1893, profiting from the failure to establish a branch line of the railway to Painswick.

It was not the first local bus service and it wasn't a bus as we would know it today, being horse-drawn and looking rather more like a stage coach. But in the jargon of the day it was an 'omnibus', meaning for everyone, and it may have brought bus travel to Painswick within the means of many more people than the stage coaches of previous generations.



Maurice Ireland on an early horse-drawn bus

To run the service Maurice Ireland needed to invest in a bus / coach and in horses, which he kept in Vicarage Street, by the Malt House next to the White Horse, while the bus was garaged in Bisley Street, where the Longfield Shop is now. One horse may have been enough to pull the bus in and out of Stroud, but to mount the hill to Painswick a second horse was required. That led to a terrible accident in 1898 when a visiting boy who had been allowed to ride the extra horse down to meet the bus, then fell off it and was crushed to death.

Buses ran several times a day between Stroud and Painswick and there was a separate but much less frequent service from Painswick to Cheltenham. A service to Gloucester was much more difficult because of the steepness of the hill and when one was eventually launched, it's said that passengers often had to get out and walk on the steeper sections.



Herbert Ireland, left, with a motorised bus in New Street

from Stroud to Painswick, which must have been formidable competition, but somehow Maurice Ireland seems to have maintained his business, still using horses for several more years. His son Herbert worked in the business as a young man and was keen to move on to motor buses, but his father refused, after which Herbert went off to Canada for a period. He was back before long though and of course the business did eventually switch over to motor buses.

That move may have been hastened by another fatal accident in 1908. According to the inquest, it was at the end of the day and the driver had taken the horses down to Vicarage Street and come back to guide the bus into the Coach House. The boy working with him was supposed to let the brake off on the bus, then jump down to steady the rear wheel. But on this occasion he slipped on the wet road, allowing the bus to run down the steep street and pin the driver against the wall.

The business continued throughout the First World War and in 1919 Maurice Ireland even brought in two second-hand double decker buses to work the route, possibly old London buses that had seen war service. But in 1920 the business was sold to the National Omnibus & Transport Company.

In about 1905 the Great Western Railway started a Motor Bus service



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