

Expressing it on a Poster

By Peter Delaney

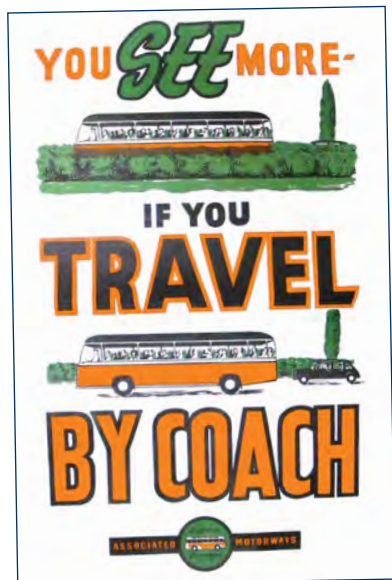
"To inform, educate, and entertain" – these were the core values set out by John Reith for the BBC in 1922. They might also be used to describe the different types of artwork produced by bus and coach operators. The 'educate' part of this would include designs such as the round notice put on the rear offside corner of buses asking motorists to "Let the Bus Pull Out", or a variety of 'safety first' announcements. Poster artwork however, might 'inform' and 'entertain' as a way to attract attention to the facilities available.

The designs often reflected the fashion of the time so, even without a printer's reference date, the era in which they were produced can be deduced. To keep up to date with the current trends, of course, and keep a fresh look, individual designs did not stay in use for a long period. Being something used by company offices and booking agencies, and not

issued to the travelling public, they were produced in more modest quantities.

They might be held in a dedicated frame for display, but could also be found pasted onto a suitable surface. (A number were discovered like this in an unused passageway at Notting Hill underground station in 2010.) Unlike timetables, handbills and tickets, therefore, paper posters feature rather less in archives or private collections.

Some of these posters carried fairly basic slogans to encourage coach travel. As the coach would travel through town and country, these would often emphasise that the view from a coach window would be an attraction to travellers, as in the small Associated Motorways example.



Posters intended mainly to 'inform' included some that featured a timetable. This might be for a specific route, such as the one for the joint Royal Blue and Bristol Greyhound route from London to Bristol and Weston-super-Mare, dating from the summer of 1951. Alternatively, Southern and Western National produced large sheets (a "double crown" size poster, which measures 30" x 20") that contained the timetables for many of the Royal Blue express coach routes. These would usually be pasted onto a board with a triangular shaped top, of the style also used by these companies to display timetables for their stage carriage services. This example also contains the routes that ran in the summer of 1951. Later timetable posters, like that for the Associated Motorways Northampton to Bournemouth service from 1967, tended to have a somewhat clearer typography.



EXPRESS COACH SERVICE

LONDON-BRISTOL-BATH - WESTON-SMARE

VIA HIGH WYCOMBE, OXFORD, FAREINGDON, SWINDON, CHIPPENHAM

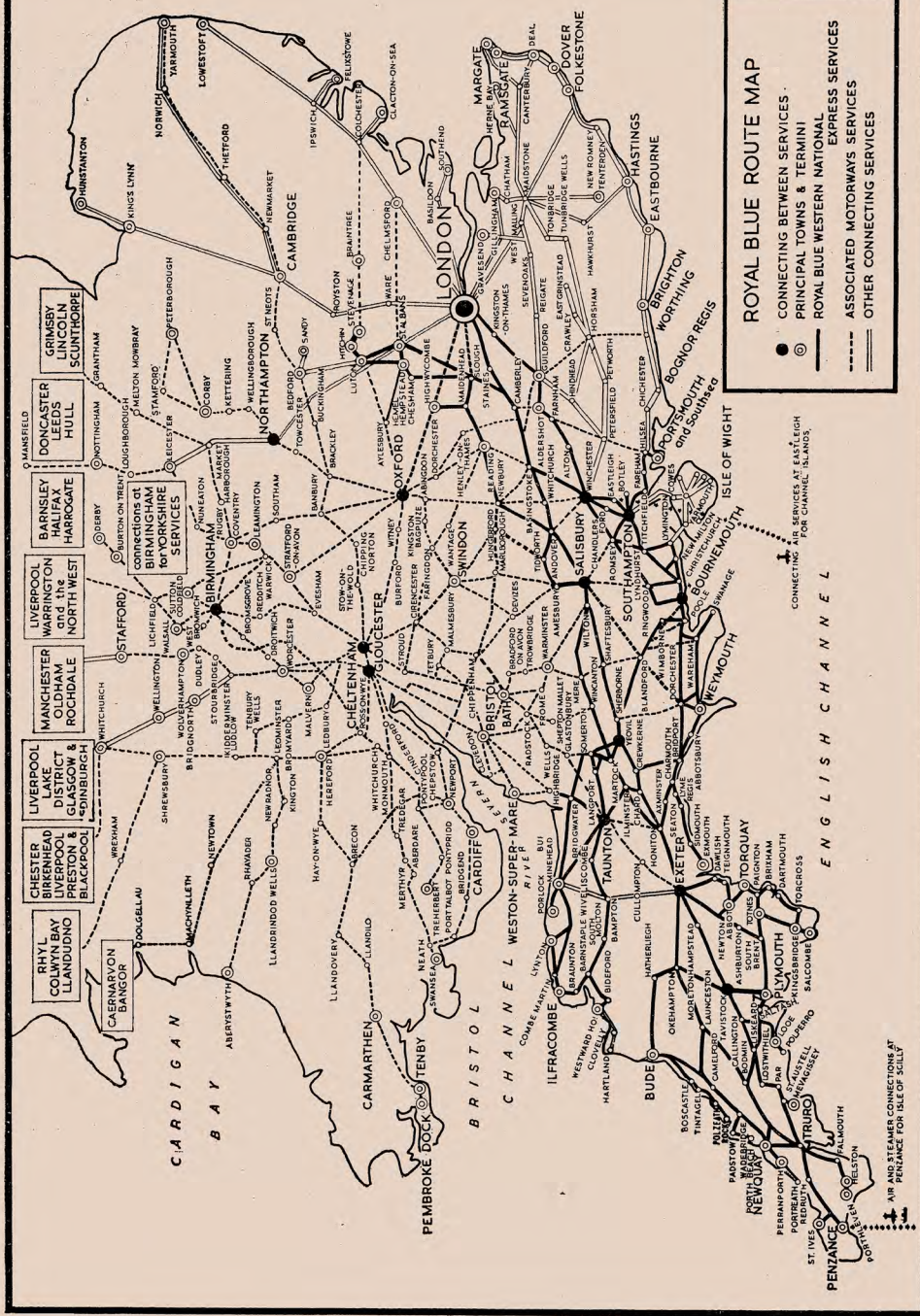
VIA READING, NEWBURY, MARLBOROUGH, CALNE, CHIPPENHAM

also serving DEVIZES, PRILHAM, TROWBRIDGE, FROYE, SHEPTON PALLEY, WELLS, CHORDEA

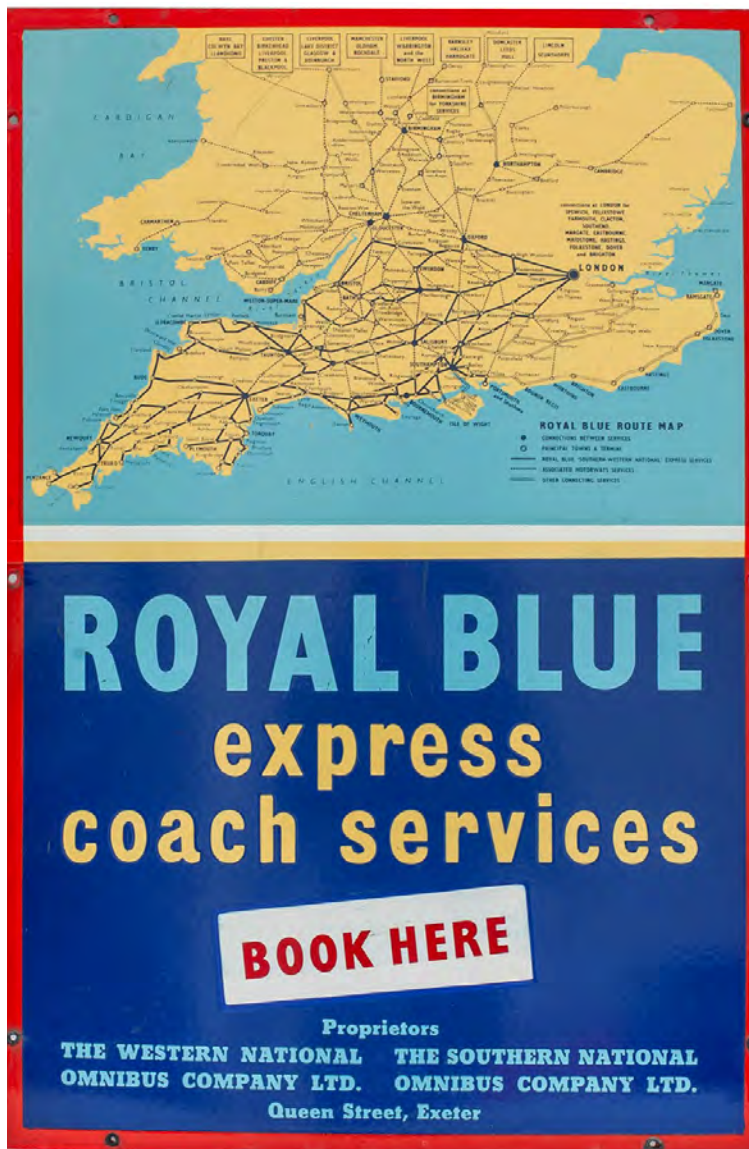
SUMMER SERVICE 1951—from 1st MAY to 21st OCTOBER inclusive

DAILY SERVICE (including Sundays)

London (from) 9 00 01 03 30 41 5	Weston-Smear 10 10 11 12 13 14 15
Uxbridge 9 42	Bath 10 50 11 00 11 10 11 20 11 30
H. Wycombe 9 50	Bath 10 58 11 08 11 18 11 28 11 38
Oxford 10 00	Bath 11 06 11 16 11 26 11 36 11 46
Swindon 10 10	Calne 11 14 11 24 11 34 11 44 11 54
Slough 10 20 10 30 10 40 10 50	Calne 11 22 11 32 11 42 11 52 12 02
Marblehead 10 30 10 40 10 50 11 00	Calne 11 30 11 40 11 50 12 00 12 10
Reading 10 40 10 50 11 00 11 10	Calne 11 38 11 48 11 58 12 08 12 18
Newbury 10 50 11 00 11 10 11 20	Calne 11 46 11 56 12 06 12 16 12 26
Marlborough 11 00 11 10 11 20 11 30	Calne 11 54 12 04 12 14 12 24 12 34
Devizes 11 10 11 20 11 30 11 40	Calne 12 02 12 12 12 22 12 32 12 42
Trowbridge 11 20 11 30 11 40 11 50	Calne 12 10 12 20 12 30 12 40 12 50
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Through the 1950s and 60s, there were also posters for use by agents that included a route map, again as a way to 'inform' passengers. One version of this was a 43" x 30" poster-sized variant of the map that appeared on the timetable booklet, whilst two more colourful items contained the map along with an exhortation to "Book Here" – these two were more commonly found as enamelled metal signs outside the booking agency office (see below). Although the design in the timetable booklet was changed to the standard Transport Holding Company bus route pattern in the late 1960s, the poster continued to use the 1950s and 1960s format mapping, as seen on the April 1970 edition (opposite page). Note that the Southern National had been merged into Western National the previous year, as shown in the title box in the lower right hand corner.





These map posters went some way towards attracting the attention of potential passengers, but much more effective were the colourful artist-drawn illustrations. Some of these related to a specific route, such as the early 1950s Royal Blue and Greyhound poster for the London to Bristol route, with a route map below images of John Cabot at Bristol and Christopher Wren at St Pauls Cathedral in London.

By the early 1960s, however, the poster for this route was in a more jovial cartoon style, produced by the artist Daphne Padden – the route map including the variant via Oxford and Stroud which was introduced in May 1957 and lasted until the summer of 1965.

Daphne was born in 1927, and died in 2009, her father also having been a poster designer including for transport companies. Her style is quite distinctive, and she did work for many of the Tilling Group companies during the 1950s and early 1960s. They lack the ‘fussy detail’ of earlier posters, and often using bold cartoon characters that are more eye-catching - exactly what a poster needs to do. Another example of her work has two jolly sailors advertising Royal Blue’s routes to the holiday areas of the west and south west of England in an entertaining way.

EXPRESS SERVICES
to the West and South West



travel

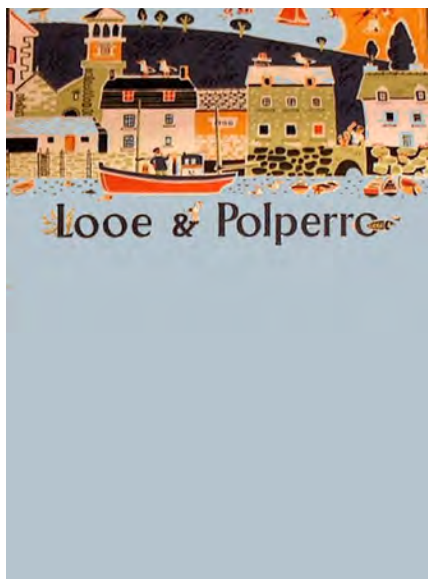
ROYAL-BLUE

Focusing particularly on Royal Blue designs, the next items gives a first glimpse of a coach – surprisingly uncommon in an era when destinations became more significant than the wonders of travel by coach!

Some posters were designed to contain some basic information, but with a large area left clear to be over-printed to suit a specific need. An early example of that includes a drawing of a 1952 Royal Blue LS coach (with a fictitious number plate), alongside the company name – establishing a brand identity, even if used for a ‘one-off’ hand written notice. An earlier version showed an L type coach.

A later example of a poster with a pre-printed header is that for Looe and Polperro, to which could be added some basic text information, as in details of the service and fares. Note that it says the return fare between London and Looe is “from” 82/- . That was the mid-week fare in 1967, while the summer weekend fare used by many holidaymakers was 105/- !

A similar generic Tilling group poster that could be overprinted with specific service information was the bright orange one detailing the Newquay service from London by Royal Blue, also dating from 1966-7.



Holidaymakers were the target audience for other posters, as Royal Blue also offered inclusive holidays in the 1950s and 60s (i.e. a 'package' which included the travel to and from the resort and holiday accommodation there). This is another cheerful cartoon style artwork, this time the artist's signature being 'Kate', although a similar style to the Daphne Padden range..



As noted previously, it will be seen that the posters rarely show an actual Royal Blue coach, but emphasize the places that could be visited, and the network by which they could be reached. An exception, therefore, is the bold colourful one that suggests passengers can travel by Royal Blue for business, holiday, or 'just a day out'. The artist was Derek Duff and although undated, the lower left quarter shows Royal Blue RELH car 2364, ATA106B, which joined the fleet in 1964.





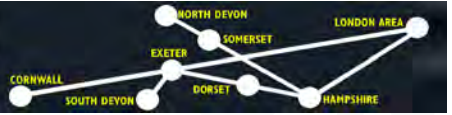
By the early 1970s the posters for specific services had reverted to a simple route map. The design of the network map was also in a greatly simplified diagrammatic form, rather than geographical representation.

It was produced as a poster in two forms – one with the route diagram as white on a blue background, and another with the colours reversed to show a blue diagram on a white background.

The same concept was also used (but not quite the same artwork) for the timetable booklets of that era, with the blue background version for summer issues, and white backgrounds for the winter editions. A further variant of the same idea was used on the sides of double decker buses, such as the FLF shown. This was of such a length that it was printed in sections, to be pasted onto the bodyside end to end.

ROYAL BLUE

Express Coach Services



Other posters that were intended to attract the attention of people had moved away from artist designed to be photographic – with young ladies in swimwear that may not now be considered ‘politically correct’.

Posters were not only fixed to the outside of the buses, but also inside along the cove panels above the windows on each side. An example of one of those might be considered to be of the ‘entertain’ form – although the verse to encourage passengers to “travel by Royal Blue” might not win any prizes in a poetry competition!!

**If you're a politician, a poet or a 'pug',
A turf commission agent or just a simple 'mug';
If your Uncle Aloysius manages a Bank,
Or your sister Angela is married to a Yank;
If you just want to travel or have got to get around,
To see the sights and scenery or cover extra ground;
You'll find it more convenient and comfortable too
To go by Express Services run by Royal Blue.**

ASK FOR DETAILS OF BUS AND COACH SERVICES AT ANY WESTERN NATIONAL OR SOUTHERN NATIONAL OFFICE, OR ROYAL BLUE AGENT