

Journeying Forward on the Long road to success

*The following is an extract from **The Golden Years of LEEDS** (published by True North Books Limited), a periodical dedicated to the history of Leeds people and businesses.*



The Leeds based Company, J Long and Sons (Haulage) Ltd, has been hauling all manner of goods around the country since the days of the horse and cart. In 1918 Joe Long returned home to Holbeck in Leeds after serving in the first world war in which he had been wounded, taken prisoner and spent time in a German Hospital undergoing serious operations to save his life, resulting in him being left with only one lung. On his return he resumed his business as a coal merchant and general carrier with horse and carts and later with the first of the motor wagons. He could not have foreseen the success that lay on the long road ahead.

In the early days of the company's history, Joe carried out all the work on his own with the help of his trusty horses and carts which he kept in stables near to his home in Chetwynd Street. The business continued to grow in this manner until 1933 when it became the second firm to be registered for the sale of coal by Leeds Weights and Measures.

However this initial progress came to an abrupt halt when, with the advent of the second world war, future success was temporarily threatened. Indeed, the advent of the second world war became the catalyst of a period of change to the very nature of J Long and Sons.



By this time Joe and his wife Louisa had parented three sons Arthur, Norman and Reg and removed from Holbeck to Cross Gates with a garage in Marshall Street. The Long's eldest son Arthur had previously joined his father's business and by the declaration of war had developed a full and important role within the business. Therefore, when Arthur was called up to go to war, his absence proved to be a considerable set back. Joe Long's loss was however, the RAF's gain and Arthur's talents in motor transport were put to good use in India. Wartime also brought with it many other restrictions. Fuel was rationed and journeys were restricted. Indeed, any journey longer than 60 miles was under the control of the Ministry of War transport scheme.

Unfortunately, during the second world war, Joe suffered a series of heart attacks and his general health began to worsen. Norman, who was still at Roundhay Secondary School, found himself helping to look after the firm, doing the paperwork, taking bookings and loading vehicles before and after school. Arthur returned home from the war and as Joe's health deteriorated it became evident that he would have to give up the company's reins and retire. On Joe's retirement Louisa and her sons, Arthur, Norman and Reg took over the

running of the business. By this time more and more emphasis was being placed on haulage until nationalisation in 1947.



The decade of the 1950s proved to be an eventful and successful one for J Long and Sons. The beginning of the decade saw many of the wartime restrictions eventually being lifted. This in itself increased the company's business opportunities. However, the most significant restriction for the business had been that of the nationalisation of transport. Therefore, when transport was denationalised during early 1953, the business received an almost immediate boost. The Ministry of Transport set about advertising units of vehicles for sale by tender. J Long and Sons were eager to take advantage of the opportunity to purchase vehicles as a way of expanding the already growing haulage side of the business. So, when a unit of three vehicles based at Selby British Road Service was advertised, Longs put in a tender for it. It was some months later that they found out that their bid was successful. However, they were not home and dry just yet. On collecting the vehicles two of them broke down, only one making it back to the Long premises that day!

As well as acquiring three vehicles Long's successful tender also meant that the business received essential A licences. This meant, amongst other things, that with the haulage side of the firm growing, business could be conducted further afield. Although J Longs and Sons remained a small family concern it was about this time that it won an important contract working for a wholesale fruit and vegetable merchant in Leeds Market.



Sadly in 1953, Joe Long died and did not live to see his first grandson, Chris, who was born ten days later to Arthur and Pat. However, Joe's loyal family carried the business on in his name.

Arthur worked as a driver whilst Norman took care of the paperwork. Reg, who had completed his apprenticeship with Appleyards, also joined the family business as a mechanic although he was to leave in 1956 to run a pub with his wife. As well as thriving in business terms J Long and Sons also helped to produce a personal union for Norman. It was during these years he married his wife Margaret who he had met previously, during the frequent trips she made from her house, which was in sight of the old Marshall Street premises, bringing tea to the premises for the thirsty workers!



Due to the company's development after the lifting of wartime restrictions, the Marshall Street premises were no longer large enough for the operation and so they initiated a move to the Dark Arches, Neville Street, Leeds (now Granary Wharf). At that time the arches were damp and dark and the walls running with water but more importantly they were under cover and spacious. The company's development also led to Pat and Margaret joining their husbands' Arthur and Norman in the business in 1956.

Although not as eventful as the previous decade, the 1960's continued to be just as successful and productive. It was during these years that the changes and developments made in the 1950's began to pay off and prove fruitful. Indeed, the 1960's saw J Long and Sons become a Limited Company and therefore extending its name to J Long and Sons (Haulage) Limited. Despite this newly found grandeur, the company remained a friendly family firm, still known as "Longs of Leeds" to all it had dealings with.

By the 1970's the coal side of the business had almost completely died out. This was in part due to the new smokeless regulations that had recently been introduced but more significantly due to the company's gradual development of the haulage side of the business moving from coal to industry. The increase of the industrial side of the business also had the effect of distracting attention from the removal side of the business. With this change in direction eventually finalised, J Long and Sons (Haulage) Limited transplanted its operations back to Cross Gates to new premises located at Sandreas Way.

The 1970's brought with it another new addition to Long of Leeds in the shape of the third generation of Long's to join the family business. Stephen and Tony Long both completed Business Studies courses at Park Lane College whilst working for the business. Chris Long joined the firm after completing a 5 year apprenticeship as a mechanic with Frank H Dutsons. Anne Long joined the company after leaving school and Andrew Long followed in 1984 after attending Wharfedale College.



For the country as a whole the 1970's brought with it the expansion of industry and the motorway network. Indeed, as these expanded so did J Long and Sons. By then the company had 12 wagons and 15 staff. This growth meant that extra land was needed and an application was made to the local corporation to this end. In 1977 the application for more land was granted and a new building was erected at the Sandreas Way premises for offices and warehousing. From here the contracts with local industry continued to grow and the company could now boast 24 vehicles in its use.

Sadly in 1984 Arthur died. However, the decade as a whole was filled with success as the family business continued to thrive. Indeed, by the advent of the 1990's there were yet more Longs involved in the family business. On Arthur's side was his widow Pat and sons Chris (Fleet Manager) and Tony (Transport Manager) who had been joined by Tony's wife Diane in 1988 and Chris's wife Jacqui who followed in 1994. On Norman's side was his wife Margaret, sons Stephen (Office Manager) and Andrew (Transport Manager), Stephen's wife Brenda who also joined the firm in 1988 and his daughter Anne who has worked for the firm since 1979.



It was the dedication of these family members, aided by the company's loyal staff that J Long & Sons (Haulage) Ltd managed to experience another successful decade in the 1990's. The decade began, however, with a complete change in tradition for the company. Longs had always supported British Industry by buying British made vehicles and this they continued to do until Leyland merged with Daf in 1987.



During the early part of the 1990's the emphasis of the company's work also changed to dealing with paper and finished printed goods for local printers. In order to cope with the increase in demand from this new change of direction the company purchased a warehouse at Rudgate, Wighill Lane, Walton.

As the company grew throughout the 1990's it was soon obvious that the offices were no longer adequate to house the number of administration staff now needed for the future growth of J Long and Sons (Haulage) Ltd.

This problem was resolved when the company bought another unit which came up for sale on Sandreas Way in 1994. This site is now the present day main office block.

1994 was another milestone in the history of J Long and Sons (Haulage) Ltd. This was the year Norman took a well earned retirement from the company after over 50 years service!! Despite this he still remains Chairman to this day and keeps abreast of all the latest developments.

As one generation moved on another generation began in 1995. Chris's son Jonathan joined the company, after completing a 2 year college course, becoming the first of the fourth generation who will help maintain the Long's tradition of a true family business.

The second half of the 1990's continued with progress in other directions. October 1996 saw J. Long and Sons (Haulage) Ltd being awarded the BS EN ISO 9002 Registration and in 1998 the company decided to join an overnight pallet system to offer an extension to the services it already gave to its customers.

Today J Long and Sons (Haulage) Ltd owns a depot based on a 6 acre site in the suburbs of East Leeds from which it provides a quality road haulage, storage and distribution service to all parts of the UK. The site is ideally situated close to the new A1- M1 link road providing easy access to the major motorway networks in the north. The company now owns a 67 strong fleet of vehicles, ranging from a one tonne pick up truck to 41 tonne tractor units, which are maintained in-house at their own workshop where staff are on duty 24 hours a day.

Even more growth is on the horizon for the new millennium starting in April 2000 when the company is opening a 1.5 acre operation in Hull which will be the base for an additional 15 vehicles and 30 trailers servicing a major importer of forest products.

Throughout its history J Long and Sons (Haulage) Ltd has adapted to the needs of its customers by closely tracking the rise and fall of the industries it serves in its home area, initially coal and solid fuels, then carrying the raw materials for Britain's great motor industry and now print and paper stock, although today, this is just one of many industries which forms Long's broad customer base. The Directors constantly reaffirm the company ethic which has seen them through for so long - to satisfy their customers needs with a quality service which is the envy of many and second to none. This and the commitment to remaining a true family business.

