

EXPRESS COURIER INDUSTRY

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE
SAME-DAY
COURIER SERVICE

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Edition Two 2020

ABSTRACT

This short history of the Express Courier industry covers the knowledge of the authors who worked through the growth of the industry, recalling events of the '70s, '80s, '90s up to the turn of the millennium.

The history is a snapshot of this new sector that grew out of the economy boom years and was able to adapt and incorporate new technology to increase the sectors capability. In naming courier company mergers and take overs is mostly of the London courier companies as geographically this was the area of highest demand for the sector, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Edinburgh were the other regional hotspots.

Up to 2001 little has been written on this sector and this short history is a record of a sector that will continue to grow, and its history should not be lost.

A Short History of the Same-day Courier Service is written by Carl Lomas and Tracey Worth and is factually correct to their knowledge.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The leading early writer of the road transport industry is Charles Dunbar, whose book covers the history from 1919 to 1939. Whilst a respected source, his work is far from current as this was written in 1987. Dunbar covers the reasons for the start of transporting goods and the development of steam engines and internal combustion. He highlights the Royal Commission on Transport in 1928, 1930 and 1933. The earliest mention of same-day delivery, or even the use of small vehicles, comes in 1934 with the co-ordination of the Hutchinson's transport service, Red Arrow Deliveries. Dunbar also covers the new approach of rapidly extending interworking between parcel carriers. Since then, trade unions, war, the innovation of tyres and new engines have moved the transport industry forward. Dunbar closes his work in 1939.

In 1943, one of the most famous motorcyclists of all time, six-time world champion Geoff Duke, became an army dispatch rider. 63 years later, he was to be the guest of honour at the tenth National Courier Awards in 2005. Some of the very earliest modern companies, GLH, Mercury and West One, would also be present.

There is still a long gap between that period and the modern same-day courier industry. This time has not been formally documented as a history, but is covered in various works, such as 'The History of a Company' by Securicor (1998) and 'The Complete Guide to Dispatch Riding' by Carl Lomas (2001). To that end, a broad history of the courier industry begins.



Express History Timeline

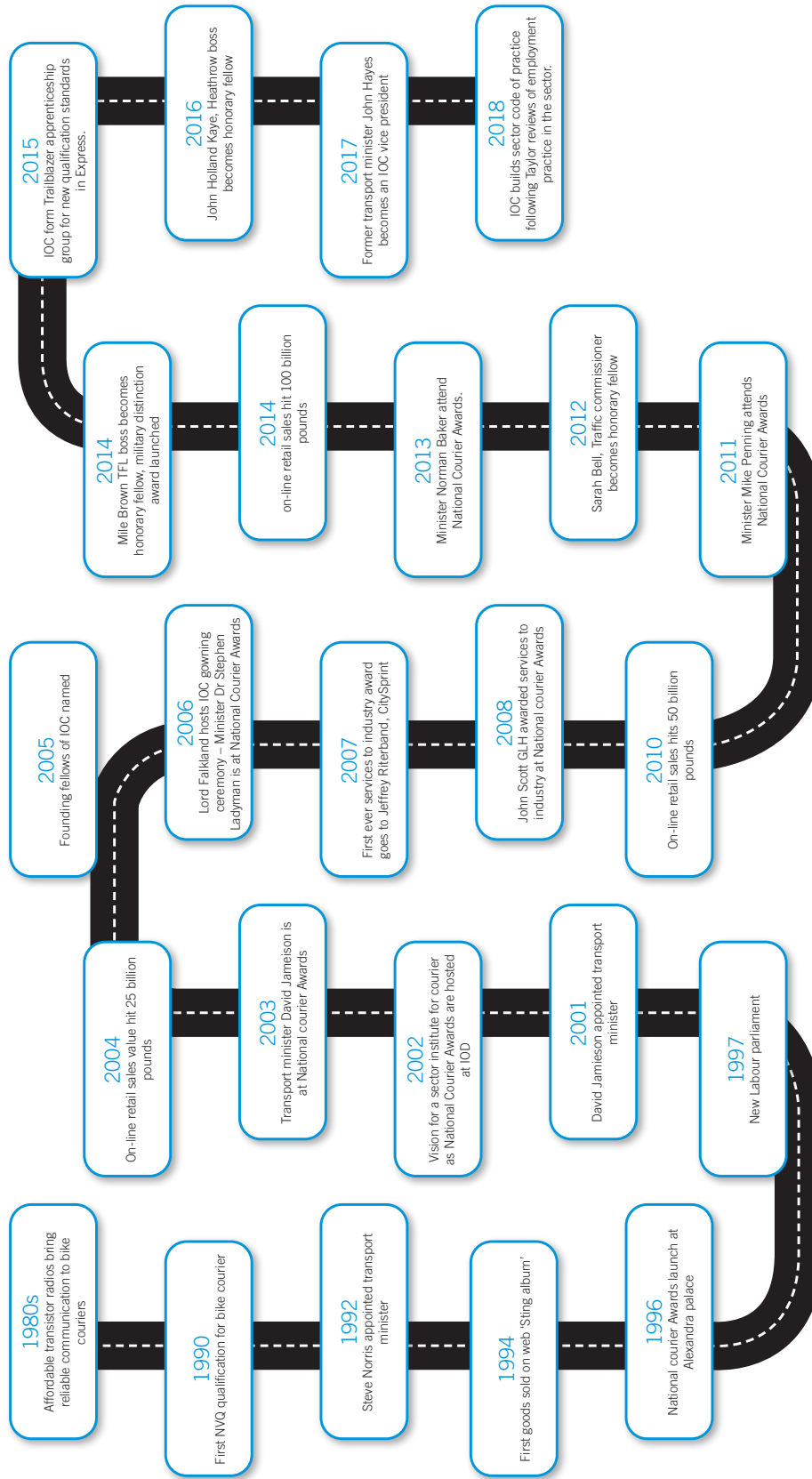


Figure 1: Timeline of Express Delivery (Lomas, 2020)

2. 1960s - THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MODERN COURIER INDUSTRY

The job of a courier in the 1960s was to collect and deliver a client's package before returning to the courier base. In almost every instance, the point of the activity was security; urgency was not an issue. The accountability of collections and deliveries that were signed for was paramount. Typically, early couriers would work for banks, the Ministry of Defence or the government. The delivery of a parcel by courier was uncommon and brought a high level of prestige to its arrival.

The birth of the modern same-day market most likely began in mid-1965, with a fleet of Ford Vans. As the 1960s unfolded, Keith Erskine saw an opportunity to support the growing use of the computer. Punch cards and paper tape machines were producing a great deal of paper for payrolls and banking, so Erskine led Securicor to launch that fleet of Ford vans. Named 'Data Transit', the vans were driven by young women in air hostess-style uniforms. Erskine never guessed the importance his new service would hold, but it would go on to make Securicor a household name in the courier industry.



One of the earliest-known companies to operate on two wheels is Scooter Messengers, run by Doug Sissons out of a small office in Soho Square in 1969. This was the same year that GLH was set up by Cyril Wilds, who had been involved in the minicab world since the 1920s. Owner of GLH, John Scott (2001), remembered the post-war days when a Spitfire was parked on the lawn in front of his office at Highgate, which is now a car park.





3. 1970s – COMMUNICATIONS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE SAME-DAY URGENT COURIER

In the late 1960s, security remained the key purpose to the provision of the service. This was very poor use of a courier's time and it was an expensive business. A courier would contact courier control from a client's phone or a phone box in the street (remember the pips?) and this did not present a very professional image to the client. The weakness in this system was the one-way communication from the rider to the courier control office. Communication was in no way real-time (meaning 'as an event is happening'). If a problem arose, the courier company could not contact the courier halfway through a journey. However, the communication systems that were to come would change the face of the same-day industry.

There was to be a shift of service provision from the delivery of secure items to the delivery of urgent packages. Today, over 90% of clients use a courier for time-sensitive work. Radio communication revolutionised the possibility of couriers in the early 1970s. First, there would be beepers, pagers and message pagers. Early mobile radios were expensive but made urgent delivery possible, as they allowed a courier to be tracked, located and directed towards the next urgent job. Secure work would continue, but a whole new direction for the industry had opened up. Early radio-based couriers were controlled on 'open call' systems, which had been developed by the minicab industry. In the early 1970s, minicabs were well established. Radio systems had come to cars earlier, as it had been possible to fit much larger radios with a great thirst for electrical power and a strong metallic base. Pye Tait and the pale blue box of the Westminster were commonplace.

The method used by an office-based controller to organise a large number of cars was to call jobs by location. Using a radio, job locations would be called out as the telephonists took them from clients. A system of first, second or third call would be used, wherein the first call was to a driver very close to the job, and the second and third were for drivers who were further away. Knowing their own location, the driver would then call back for the job. This was an effective system for getting the closest drivers to urgent jobs. However, a driver may occasionally have cheated and false called their own position.



They would soon lose favour with colleagues and be disciplined. The strength of this system was the promptness of arrival to an urgent job; the downside was human error. For example, the drivers might not have good street knowledge, so they could be close to a client but not know it. The drivers could also cheat and lie about where they were, in order to get the best jobs. Either of these issues would cause service problems for both the client and the courier company. Even so, 'open call' was well respected.

In the seventies, 'open call' was often used for bikes, which could then find themselves sharing a radio channel with cars. Sammy Rose was a minicab driver in the 1970s, operating on just such a circuit. In 1972, he began Mercury Dispatch from an office in Glenthorne Road in London W6, with a small fleet of Suzukis in bright orange livery. The bikes came first but with growth, orange vans arrived and a new office was founded in Maida Vale. It was around this time that Phil Booker launched Vanguard Express, and his son Adam would be around to bag the Red Star contract for same-day British Rail deliveries almost 20 years later, in the mid-1990s.



Today, 'open call' is rarely seen but still has a place in large minicab firms, such as Addison Lee. As technology improved, message pagers replaced beepers for mobile communication. Radios became more reliable but dependable direct two-way conversation was still difficult to support. Limited channel availability was an issue, but more so was the inability to find a good aerial site; typical spots included the top of West End hotels such as the Hilton or Metropole. During this boom of technology, the mid-1970s saw the creation of some of today's largest courier companies. John Weston began West One Couriers in 1974, while Phoenix Express began in 1975. Malcolm Bloomel established Bell Despatch in 1978, the same year that Martin Ruddy and Tim Gilbert joined forces to set up London-based Speed. Sammy Rose had moved on from Mercury to form Express Despatch in Ladbrooke Grove, where the new fleet now had a bright yellow livery.

During the late 1970s, many of the emerging companies adopted the plot system of courier control. This was to become widely used and showed the way forward for the courier industry. Plot control brought all the power back to the controller in the courier office, who would plot the expected position of a rider throughout the day. The controller would give out work according to a courier's location and the number of jobs available. Typically recorded on paper docket, these jobs would adorn the table-tops of busy controllers, and a magnetic map board generally portrayed couriers' positions. The controller had the benefit of seeing all the job docket booked by clients, so jobs that went in the same direction could be doubled up. The controller would hand them out in pre-set routes that could string a number of jobs together. If a client demanded a job at short notice, the controller could redirect the courier accordingly. The quality of pick-up and delivery times came under the supervision of the controller. The courier company could maintain its service levels with important clients by leaving other clients to wait. Plot controlling and increased work levels in the courier industry brought additional needs, and new roles for customer service and control co-ordinators were created. With this new way of working and improved technology, companies increased their customer base.

New technology and systems arrived but the biker culture of the 1960s remained with the industry. Cruising with a motorbike was very much the 'in' thing to do and the door was open for people to make money in a job they loved doing. Motorcycling was their hobby and they could be paid for doing it. With a growing number of customers, it was a natural and successful merger of supply and demand.

However, it was the lifestyle issues of the job that were to bring many failings to the service. For example:

- The culture of individuals - this was a lifestyle job.
- Bikers were not reliable, they wanted to work as and when suited them.
- The public image of these individuals - the world was much more anti-biker than it is today.
- The poor conditions of vehicles that were not built for reliability.
- These newcomers had no experience of courier work.
- There was no training, just on-the-job learning.

With the close of the 1970s came the launch of a courier icon, as Honda released the first versions of the CX500. No superbike, this was to become the workhorse of the two-wheel world with a rugged shaft drive reliability, the likes of which had never been seen before. In a crash, it usually damaged something else rather than itself.





Carl Lomas MBE with the iconic Honda CX500

An Ancient Livery of London, The Worshipful Company of Carmen

An ancient London livery that was created to support the skills required to provide trades for the City of London.

The Carmen did not invent the wheel – they put it to work.

Founded in 1517 the Carmen are the 77th Livery Company of the City of London, holding their first royal charter in 1945.

The carmen livery today is a celebration of fellowship for the transport industry, supporting apprentice's and professionals. The celebrated procession of vehicles through Guildhall yard was restarted in 1986 after having lapsed for a decade. At this event the Lord Mayor of London brands working vehicles annually that delivery within the City of London. The Institute of Couriers enters with the 1980's classic courier motorcycle that shows the logos of the courier company of the time.



Figure 3: Branding of the IOC Courier Motorcycle 1996

The branding iron is especially made alphabetically for each year. This ceremony pre-dates the vehicle license registration (1904) which took the system of dating vehicles alphabetically from the livery cartmarking.



Figure 4: Branding Iron flames 'alphabet' letter of annual registration

4. 1980s THE BOOM YEARS

For the courier industry, the boom years flourished right through the 1980s. Both the economy and the courier industry were in the pink and many new companies started up, as the demand was there, and it was trendy. These included Add Bikes, Area Route and Alternative, just to mention a few 'A's and in 1981 Des Anderson set up Dale Express in Croydon. In the same year, the first major purchase took place when Securicor took over Pony Express. The old green logo, white leather jackets treasured by age-old bike couriers were replaced with Securicor blue, but a national presence of franchise operators was soon to arrive in the new colour scheme.

Alongside business-to-business activities, eighties extravagance arrived. Deliveries of fish and chips, love letters and alcohol purchases were commonplace. A strong housing market brought new clients in the form of estate agents moving keys between offices for ever more viewings. The economy was buoyant and the proof of a company's affluence was in its use of couriers. Bringing glamour to the industry, world-champion car racer Damon Hill found himself as a motorcycle courier for Apollo Despatch in 1982. He rode a Kawasaki Z500. At the weekends, he would race his courier bike and later became champion of Brands Hatch aboard a Yamaha TZ 350.

However, many older riders were not happy with the industry's new direction and affluence. With the demise of 'open call', their choice of jobs had been taken away from them. They were unable to pick their favourite jobs and had lost their day-to-day control. The lifestyle benefits they had joined up for were being suppressed by the courier companies' need to provide better service levels, which were demanded by clients who were becoming dependent on a need they had created.

Services for courier companies were springing up; Headstart started in 1986, a company providing customised bags for packages and radios specifically for the two-wheel courier. The Yellow Pages became full to bursting with same-day delivery adverts. In 1983, Challenger began out of Britannia Cars' offices, Jeremy Thompson started Mach One Couriers in 1984, Shaun Merrick and Quentin Abel formed Speed Northern in Manchester in 1985, and in the same year, Cyclone emerged in London. 1987 saw Kevin Hay launch Citadel Couriers in Scotland, when his experience with Interfax couriers and QED led him to create what would become a key Scottish same-day courier company and latterly find him a place on the board of the Despatch Association.



Couriers who had by then been out on the road for ten years looked for career progression, somewhere new to go. If they were already at the top of their tree, they often found themselves stepping into control positions. Top bike couriers with client knowledge could take the opportunity to set up their own business. Couriers' pay was good at that time; for example, a rider could earn £500 per week. A very special bike would cost £2000, so a courier would only need to work for four weeks to buy the best bike available. For those who had entered the industry on a bike-lifestyle basis, these were great times. Some 30 years later, riders still earn £500 per week, but a special bike such as a racy Ducati will now cost £10,000. This means that a courier will now have to work for 20 weeks to be able to afford one. Even though we would not expect earnings to increase directly in line with the cost of living, i.e. the price of the bike, earnings have not gone up at all. In many cases, earnings have actually come down due to inflation. What was once a very well-paid lifestyle job for the few has become a reasonably-paid job for the many.

With the increased need for many more couriers, new problems would arise, particularly in the supply of couriers themselves, the raw material of a courier company. If an experienced rider was not tempted to start up their own business, the obvious move was into the office of the courier company for which they worked. The natural position was that of junior controller, which could make great use of an individual's street knowledge. This step from frontline delivery work to middle management would later bring a very practical hands-on approach to many of the 1990s' management systems.

At the same time, the opportunity for someone to enter middle management from outside the industry was blocked by the need for that highly detailed street knowledge. As the 1980s' boom time of growth softened, it was their experience and industry knowledge that gave couriers the opportunity to start their own company. Little capital was needed and there was even good government support for start-up companies. Speed Couriers Manchester was one such example, supported by a Prince's Trust grant. The denationalisation of many industries meant a high level of unemployment, but anyone with a licence to drive could turn to mini-cab, courier or truck driving work. Looking back at old business phone directories, there seems to have been a never-ending stream of new companies. Motorcycle News was stuffed with rider adverts, guaranteed minimum incomes and any bonus you could care to think of. With biker couriers dissatisfied with the changing style of the industry, one other new element was to appear: the American Riders Union, started by the motorcycle riders of America to protect their rights. This also transpired in the UK, but it did not take off in the same way. However, it did manage to make some small in-roads in trying to ensure that companies gave fair rates to drivers.

The business originally came from the lifestyle culture of the 1960s and the timing of strong economic growth allowed those who were experienced to benefit and start up in the industry. The very nature of the job and the need for excellent communication, motivational and application skills meant that couriers could climb the ladder quickly from a hands-on, practical starting point. A person could move from driver to assistant, assistant to controller and on to operations manager without any external qualifications. This means that many of today's managers have arrived in their role with only experience as their guide. That is not to say that there is no place for this experience, but in other industries, employees are required to pass exams and are often trained to standards or go on day release. The courier industry offered none of that. However, it should be noted that, during this period of time, there was no great need for it. Bosses won contracts, paid the wages and made a profit using their own abilities.



As the 1980s drew to a close, the timing of technological innovation was perfect for the industry's next steps. Many of the paper systems used by courier companies were at bursting point, but the early IBM PC would help enormously. Many home-grown systems began to appear around compiled basic computer language and the economies of the first Amstrad units sowed the seeds of growth. With more cost-effective PC availability and the first standardised networks, professional courier computer systems such as Fleetway and the Realtime Operational Control System (ROCS) came onto the screen. These systems set the foundations that would be expanded on into the present day. The software supported the plot system and would display jobs by time priority on a computer screen, with the most urgent at the top. Jobs would be highlighted when they were allocated to a courier, waiting to be picked up or in transit. Later screens brought excellent use of colour to represent key data; for example, very urgent jobs waiting could be displayed in red. The age of the paper docket and magnetic map board was coming to an end.

The National Courier Association began in 1988, creating a new opportunity for smaller same-day companies to inter-trade into the next-day market. In the last days of the 1980s, another major player arrived on the same-day market, as Laurence Levan sold Britannia and Concorde to FedEx.

5. 1990S - THE TIGHTENING OF THE BELT

When the 1990s came in, customer demands had long changed from those early days. The economy tightened its belt and understanding how to adapt was more than just 'acting on a gut feeling'. The scene had changed. Customers started to demand more professionalism and wanted better value. Price wars started and the corporate customer stamped its buying power over the industry. As the large national companies started to contract out and concentrate on core competencies, they used their buying power to make the courier industry very competitive on price and quality. This was a wake-up call for the industry. In the life cycle of a product, this was 'maturity' and changes were needed; indeed, only the fittest survived.

A number of large new companies were formed with mergers and acquisitions that had begun in the late 1980s. Laurence Levan had sold Concorde to American giant FedEx in 1988. In 1990 Ken Ewell, Vice President of FedEx, sold the same-day UK Rapid Delivery division back into the private hands of Malcolm Bloomel. The Dally brothers sold their market leading AtoZ Couriers to Securiguard PLC, while their sister Jane Dally held a strong presence in the North of England with Abacus Express in Leeds and Bradford. Mayfair-based On Yer Bike bought Security Despatch with venture capital from Foreign & Colonial. These were the first really big deals in the courier industry.



1992 was rocked by the liquidation of West One. Then the largest of the same-day London courier companies, it was rescued by Hilton Lewis of Bridge Wharf Investments, who acquired it from the receiver on 2 October 1992. A chartered accountant by trade, Hilton Lewis went on to buy Malcolm Bloomel's Rapid Despatch in 1993. This formed the first super-sized same-day company.

With the formation of larger courier companies came even more technology. The mid-1990s saw computer implants installed at the client's premises and Jeremy Thompson of Mach One Couriers won a National Courier Award for one of the first implementations. A client could have a remote terminal and book directly onto a courier company's system. The internet has further supported this and advanced the client's ability not only to book, but also to check how a job is doing. A client can call up the location of a job and find out how long it may take for delivery or who signed for it on arrival.

Technologies were all moving on. The technology that made computers possible in the late 1980s saw a major step forward in chip-based radios by Motorola and Maxon in the 1990s. This brought the true availability of handheld radio. The regular use of radio by security guards and event organisers brought further economies of scale to the new chip-based radios, which were small, light and easily protected from rain with a plastic parking ticket bag. Custom-made bags soon followed, and a small cottage industry began to support ever more specialised courier needs. Clothing, bags and radio pouches would commonly carry the courier company's name. Even third-party adverts came on to the scene, meaning that a corporate body could advertise on billboards, buses, cabs and now on couriers. At the operations end, software packages arrived that could download job details to radio at the press of a button. The next step brought data messaging to handheld radios, allowing the courier to simply action a reply button to verify receipt of a computer-transferred job detail.

Technology continued to progress towards today's microwave-frequency phones. Much of the phone technology has helped the economy to develop, particularly in the areas of miniature nickel-cadmium (NiCad) batteries and message systems. The latest systems upload radio from the courier back to the office, while some signature pads are digital and also send proof of the package delivery back to the office. This is then fed back to the client using internet software. In the early 1990s, the technology was moving at a fast pace but rider shortages were beginning to bite hard. The lifestyle bikers were very thin on the ground, on-the-job learning was not helping with retention and there was nowhere new left to advertise, as almost everything had been tried. A new answer to the rider shortage issues came when Camelot Courier Training launched in 1992, with government support from the Training Enterprise Council. Government funds began to help the unemployed to find jobs through recognised training in the industry. In 1993, an NVQ became available in Transporting Goods by Road. The frontline courier was gaining recognition but more importantly, a safe step into the industry had arrived. Couriers could train first and gain some street knowledge and confidence, before launching into the real job.



New courier companies were still being formed, such as Business Direct Couriers, created in 1993 by Tim Houston. Martin Ruddy, the owner of Streetwise Couriers, took over Business to Business in Hackney and exceeded £2 million of turnover. A year later, he would sell his London operations to Mach One and focus his attention on the South West. Also, in 1993, Michael and Peter Kane floated Business Post at a value of £60 million and Apollo launched its tenth office in Sheffield. As the year drew to a close, Hilton Lewis of West One merged with Malcolm Bloomel's Rapid Despatch to form West One Rapid, with over 4,000 daily same-day dockets. This was the time of the famous Motorola P210 radio. Dockets rolled across computer screens and couriers received them with the reliability of strong bash-proof technology. In addition, a growing number of new couriers had the foundation of proper training and things generally looked good.



In 1994, another US giant, UPS, experimented with its first motorbikes, hiring four CX500s to work out of their Heathrow hub offices. That same year, US-based Domino's Pizza had to pay out \$1 million in compensation after a pedestrian was injured by a speeding delivery driver. At the time, many pizza deliveries had 'money back' offers for late delivery, but in the wake of the Domino's lawsuit, such offers were dropped. In the same year, the Despatch Association launched an industry-wide Conditions of Carriage document.

By the 1990s, the original 1960s biker image of the industry was coming of age and gaining respectability. With this new respectability came a host of courier companies gaining accreditation for BS5750 and ISO 9000. BS is the British Standard and ISO is International Office of Standardisation which confirms that a company has processes and systems that match the standards registered by these two organisations. A well-known Park Royal company, Delta, gained BS5750 under Jack Price. Quicksilver and Phoenix followed and soon after Apollo gained ISO 9002. Securicor gained ISO 9000 for its 102 branches, which encompassed the company originally known as Pony Express.

The Alternative Parcel Company (APC) was formed in 1994 by a confederation of 40 courier companies around the UK. In the early days, there were same-day and next-day companies, but times had changed, the National Courier Association was now strong and in 1995, the National Courier Network got the Marks & Spencer contract to deliver flowers for Valentine's Day. This was a big job with a tiny timeslot, a sort of same-day job for the next-day industry that made them one and the same. Before 1994, there was one special courier crowned a world champion: Damon Hill. An ex-Apollo Despatch courier, he had also spent some time at West One when it was based in Great Portland Street.



1995 saw the Rank Xerox contracts land with Concorde, then under the ownership of Simon Bliss. This was another step forward, finding same-day couriers now holding third-party parts for delivery. As the years passed, the very same couriers would often become engineers for the third-party clients they originally serviced. 1995 also saw Securicor change its Pony Express parcels carrier to a full-service logistics supplier, with a £50 million purchase by Russell Davies. The group was rebranded as Securicor Omega Logistics and targeted the shifting customer need for a complete logistics solution. 1996 saw WC1-based GoBetween Couriers take part in a merger takeover of Globe Trotters. Fondly known as Gobby's, the firm had been set up more than ten years earlier as a co-operative of almost a dozen riders; couriers making their own courier company.

Couriers needed top-level skills to compete in the growing market. By the end of the 1990s, Camelot Training was well established in the delivery of NVQs to motorcycle couriers and was audited by the government's Training Standards Council. It gained rave reviews for safety and quality and scored one of the highest marks of all training programmes in the UK. The comments recognised Camelot and the courier companies' success and included, "Very practical with strong links to industry" (National Training Office 1994). Starting a new trend altogether, Business Post closed in the 1990s by rebranding its home delivery services to HomeServe.net. Peter Kane commented, "We will adapt to meet the e-commerce opportunities that arise" (Business Post Annual Report 2001).





6. 2000s – MILLENNIUM BRINGS RE-SPECTABILITY AND GROWTH

As 2000 arrived, e-commerce and technology were both driving the modern courier companies. At the end of the 1990s, the mergers that had drawn West One together with Rapid, Delta and Security Dispatch under the American DMS structure listed them on the NASDAQ stock market. The National Courier Awards, then in their fifth year, were held during a glamorous ceremony aboard HMS Belfast in central London. Professionalism had arrived and it was being recognised. Ex-Conservative Transport Minister, Steve Norris, took a top motorcycle slot as he headed up the Motorcycle Industry Association (MCIA). Late in 2000, the Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) announced that its government lobbying had been successful, and motorcycles would be exempt from the London congestion charge. Motorcycle couriers would travel free in the busy cities they served.

In April 2001, TNT bagged one of the biggest deliveries yet, with the contract to deliver 37 million census forms. It celebrated 21 years of overnight deliveries in the same year. Hilton Lewis, former MD of West One Rapid Despatch, returned in 2001 to launch Lewis Day and by August, a deal was on the table to take over Challenger. In January 2002, the receivers arrived at DMS. The then owners of West One, Delta and Security Dispatch were rescued by a management buyout headed by Andrew Barnard, who reformed the operation into CitySprint. By February 2003, CitySprint had acquired Hornets and M&L Couriers in East London, pushing turnover up by ten per cent.



In 2003, eCourier arrived. Tom Allason completed a year's research by implementing a cutting-edge GPS-tracking computer booking system that would allow customers to watch their deliveries on a laptop, without the need for many of the control staff. At the end of 2004, the National Courier Network collapsed, with a turnover of nearly £25 million being driven by many small courier companies across the UK. Business Post claimed 50 new clients as the market settled. In 2005, one of the oldest family-run courier companies, Anderson Young, went to Addison Lee and AtoZ Couriers came under the ownership of Mach One, headed by Jeremy Thompson. In the same month, Business Post became the first UK courier company to make it to the FTSE250 Share Index. By the autumn of 2005, big courier companies were all over the news. Lynx was set to be swallowed up by UPS, Amtrak was about to get Nightspeed, and then word came that DHL would bid for Excel to make a £10 billion courier company giant.

The high street was reporting tough times in late 2005, but courier companies remained strong. The London streets were surprisingly quiet for December, but internet shopping was driving a boom of jobs into many courier companies, both same-day and overnight, so couriers found it easy to cash in on the quiet streets. 2005 would also be remembered for the creation of a new way of recognising the individuals of the courier industry. Carl Lomas headed up the launch of the Institute of Couriers (IOC), backed by then Transport Minister David Jamieson. IOC President, the Viscount Falkland, gowned the founding fellows at the House of Lords in early 2006. Professional recognition for the people who made all the deliveries possible had arrived.

Key Issues in the 40 Years 1965-2005

- Human resource issues, such as rider expansion, shortages, retention and lifestyle.
- Expansion of new companies were set up out of the old companies.
- The pressure of national companies exerting buying power and the price war that followed.
- Payment to riders became stationary in the price war.
- Facsimile and ISDN lines were claimed as the beginning of the end for the courier industry.
- Technology caused the loss of some of the client base (those who used the service, such as printers, media and artwork designers).
- Technology (such as IT and radio) improved the quality and the possibilities of service.
- Training schemes helped to introduce new couriers at a ferocious pace in the 1990s.
- By 2000, e-commerce was building home delivery work that would fuel more growth.
- The culture of organisations, a practical background meant limited diversity.
- The IOC launched in 2005 to recognise the professionalism of individuals.



7. SUMMARY

The core nature of the industry has changed. From the early '60s when a delivery was in a van with important pieces of paper delivered between banks and accountants, set routes and always returning to the depot after each delivery. '70s technology gave the sector beepers, pagers and message pagers allowing a courier to stay out on the road and not have to return to the depot between jobs and also giving the courier company the ability to track and communicate with the courier en-route.

The '80s were the boom years for this sector as demand rose and it was trendy to order a courier. Not just for business needs but also for lunch like fish and chips or pizza, a prelude to the food delivery companies that evolve in the millennium years. Technology continued and gave capability to the systems used by the sector, paper dockets continued but controlling systems were now being processed on a PC (Personal Computer). Growth was explosive as small courier companies were created from the experienced courier riders of the '70s.

Moving into the '90s economic downturn created mergers and takeovers of the smaller courier companies to create larger company's which gave way to investment into the people in the industry. Training and professionalism were standardised with the rise of the NVQ Level 2 Transporting Goods by Road. British Standard (BS) and International Office of Standardisation (ISO) was recognised by the sector and the clients it served. Recognition of these standards brought the courier companies accepted as a quality service equal to that of the solicitors or accountancy services. Technology brought the mobile phone allowing controllers to be mobile whilst still be in contact with the office for out of hours control meaning that customers could contact the courier 24 hours a day. Whilst the economy was shrinking the courier company was adapting and creating new opportunities.

By the Millennium, e-commerce had arrived with the innovation of the internet and on-line selling of products. The first sale (11th August 1994) accredited to the sale of 'Stings CD' from one individual who posted the sale of the cd on the internet was the catalyst for the online shopping growth and the express delivery sector adapted to meet this new customer need. The evolution of the technology, customer demand and courier company mergers meant that the millennium was the age of change, adapt and innovation. The express delivery sector has not disappointed and delivered on all three challenges.

The job involves adapting, contingencies and environmental changes on a daily basis. The sector sees the future needing courier companies to be able to adapt to the technology and environmental changes that are expected and demanded by the public.

Every day, every week, even every minute is different, and this is almost certainly the main reason why anyone chooses to join the industry.



