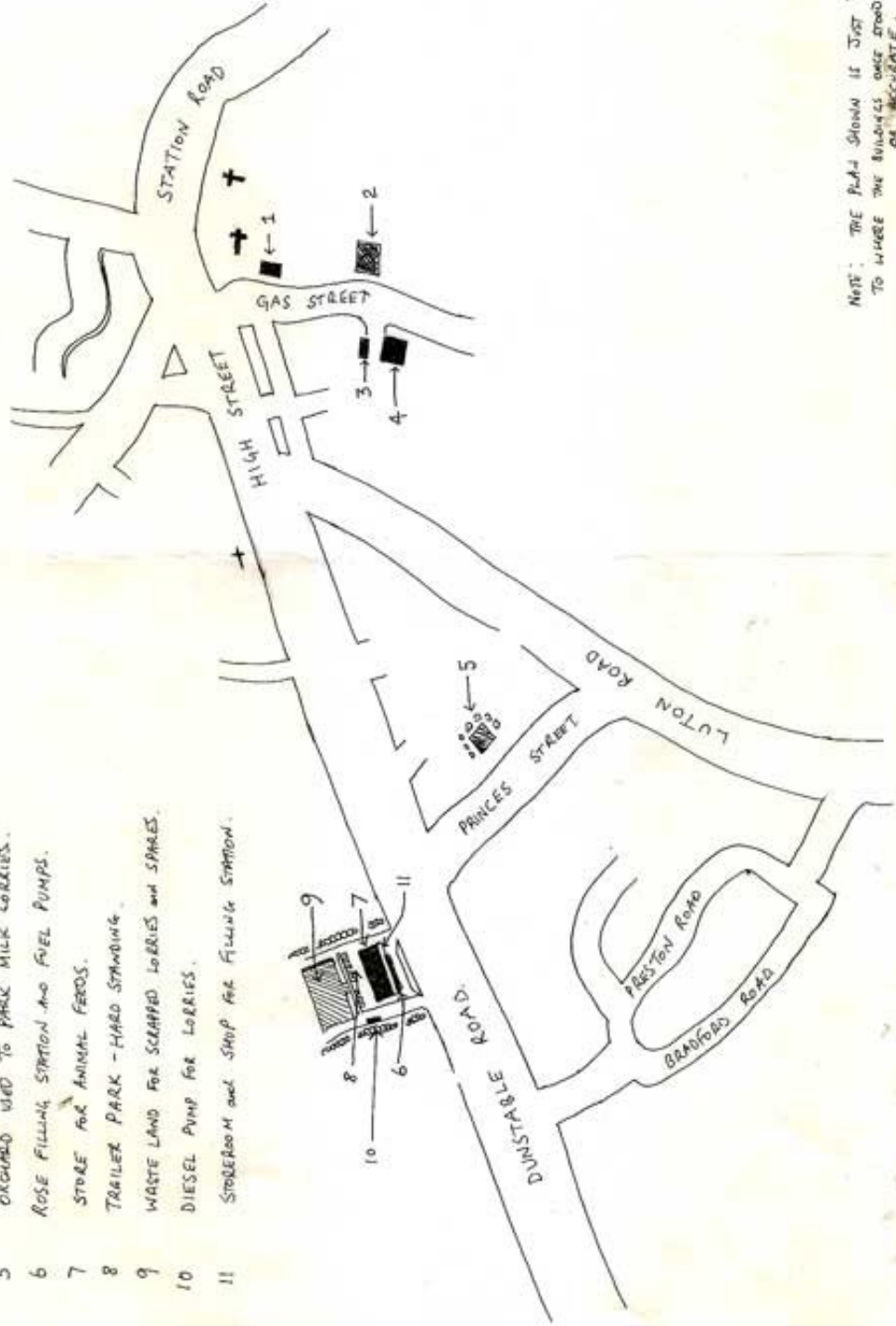


CANDELENT'S
of
TODDINGTON

by
Trevor Stringer

CANDELENT'S TRANSPORT LTD TODDINGTON BEDS

1. NO 1 GAS STREET - REGISTERED OFFICE
2. EASTERN NATIONAL BUS GARAGE.
3. OFFICE
4. WORKSHOP and GARAGE.
5. ORCHARD USED TO PARK MILK LORRIES.
6. ROSE FILLING STATION AND FUEL PUMPS.
7. STORE FOR ANIMAL FEEDS.
8. TRAILER PARK - HARD STANDING.
9. WASTE LAND FOR SCRAPPED LORRIES and SPARES.
10. DIESEL PUMP FOR LORRIES.
11. STOREROOM and SHED FOR FILLING STATION.



NOTE: THE PLAN SHOWN IS JUST TO GIVE A ROUGH GUIDE TO WHERE THE BUILDINGS ARE SITUATED, AND ARE NOT TO SCALE OR ACCURATE.



Mrs L Candelent



1 Gas Street (later Conger Lane) (The garage was used in the early days for servicing the lorries)



Mr Reg Candelent



Hydraulic sack-lifter as fitted to GYR 820



This vehicle was restored by Mr R Woodcock from Amptf'ill
Mr Candelen's Bedford QLs were mostly purchased from the Government Auctions in this condition.

Two Were Hurt In This Crash



Two men were injured slightly when these two six-wheeler lorries were in collision last week in Filmeick High-street.
Photo: T. H. Sheen.

FTM 297 6-wheeler on LHS driven by
Derek Tiller



4-wheeler fitted with Perkins P6 engine and Albion Front axle



Young 'Gilo' at the wheel - son of Arthur 'Gilo' Giles from Greenfield.
Parked up in School Lane, Greenfield - late 1950s.



Bedford 2-tonner 1931 'W' Type
Very similar to MJ 8061 and MJ 8062



Bedford QL Tractor Unit 1952
Newly-painted and signwritten



Bedford K-type 30cwt van with Spurling bodywork.
Introduced in 1946

Vehicles parked in Gas Street 1952
Note: chain on rear of first lorry
for carrying milk churns



Interior of Bedford QL Tractor Unit
CAS lorry parked in Gas Street
early 1950s



CANDELENT'S OF TODDINGTON

by TREVOR STRINGER

From the end of the Second World War Bedfordshire's road haulage industry could, like that of many other counties in Britain, boast a large number of small fleet operators and one or two vehicle owner-drivers. Because of the massive demand for building materials for the reconstruction of wartime Britain, the brickfields of Bedfordshire were the main source of work for many small hauliers. The brickyards of the London Brick Company, Eastwoods, and the Marston Valley Brick Company were all within a stone's throw of many villages in Mid-Bedfordshire but unfortunately over the past twenty years or so, with many brickworks closing down, work has gradually dwindled away. Hanson Brick is now the only brickmaker in the area, employing, on occasions, just a handful of private-account hauliers.

Local hauliers had been working for the brick manufacturers since the 1920s, with market gardeners and farmers supplementing their own work with the occasional load of bricks. Amongst some of the earlier local hauliers were Inskip of Kempston, Woodcock of Amptill, Billington of Flitwick and Meeks of Luton to name but a few, all of whom are still in business today in some way or another. However, many local hauliers well-known for transporting bricks over many years have completely disappeared from the transport scene, such as Lobb of Maulden, Phillips of Flitwick, Mallinson and Wright of Willington, Lumb and Fisher of Toddington, D&J of Harlington and Ray's of Bedford - and of course not forgetting the unusual fleet of CANDELENT'S TRANSPORT of Toddington.

Candelent's were unusual in the fact that during the 1950s and early 60s they operated a fleet of between fifteen and twenty ex-army Bedford QLs, on local and long distance general haulage. A few other hauliers elsewhere in the country had used one or two of them mixed in with their other vehicles but none on the same scale as Candelent's. The Luton-built Bedford QL was probably the most popular of all the four-wheel-drive three-tonners used in military service during the Second World War. The very first one came off the production line in early 1941 and by 1945 over 52,000 had been built.

My interest in Candelent's, apart from having a general interest in road haulage locally, and having had relations who drove for them, goes back to the mid 1980s when Roy Woodcock, owner of Woodcock Transport in Amptill, purchased for restoration an ex-Army Bedford QL, very similar to one he drove during the Second World War in Italy and North Africa. Whilst looking around the remains of the QL just after it arrived in his yard Roy mentioned that Candelent's had run a fleet of them on general haulage back in the 50s and 60s and remembered them quite vividly, I looked inside the cab and was amazed how cramped it was! There was simply no comparison to today's lorries: even lorries that were in production back in the 1960s were getting quite comfortable and roomy compared with what drivers had to endure at the wheel of a QL!

I knew that after the war many of the QLs were auctioned off and most ended up as recovery/breakdown vehicles. Some were used in the timber and logging industry and also some in fair-grounds. However I wasn't aware that many were used on 'general' duties.

Over the years I have heard numerous stories about Candelent's QLs from local men who were involved in transport in the 40s and 50s, mainly from my neighbour John Giles, who as part of a long driving career drove for Candelent's in the 50s and early 60s. John has some fond memories of working for Candelent's and has been a most reliable source of information.

Leonard Alfred Candelent (always known locally as Reg) was born in 1903 in Harringay, North London. His parents were in the jewellery trade and had a business in nearby Amos Grove. In his early days the family went to live in Canada but they returned after a few years. He became interested in motor vehicles and after leaving school did an apprenticeship in motor engineering at the Ford Motor Company in Dunstable Road, Luton. He married Miss Lavinia Bartholomew in February 1930 and purchased a 15th century thatched cottage on Toddington Green at No 1 Gas Street - in later years to be renamed Conger Lane - which after the war when the firm became a Limited Company was to be the registered office.

He started in Transport in the 1920s doing furniture removals, borrowing the money to buy an American-built Reo lorry fitted with a canvas 'tilt' body from a Mr Thomas from Harlington who ran a daily parcel service from Harlington Railway station to Toddington for the London Midland & Scottish Railway. In the late 20s the fleet grew and consisted of a Ford four-wheeler flatbed which he drove himself, and two Ford six-wheeler flatbeds driven by Henry Kingham from Toddington and by Hubert Groom from Dunstable who were both with him for many years. By then he was hauling for local farmers, mainly milk, but also animal feed and grain. The business

was operated from a yard and workshop near his home in Gas Street, opposite the then 'Eastern National' bus depot. In later years he also used as an additional yard an old orchard in Princes Street, to park four milk lorries.

In 1931, shortly after Vauxhall Motors had announced the new 'Bedford' range of goods vehicles, a pair of Bedford WLG two-tonners were purchased brand-new at around £200 each. They were painted 'factory' brown - which was to be the company's livery until the arrival of the QLs. 'MJ 8061' and 'MJ 8062' had petrol engines but were fitted with a 'Claudel Hobson' conversion to the manifold which enabled them to run on paraffin. They were a lot cheaper to run as paraffin was roughly half the price of petrol, but the downside was the dreadful 'rotten egg' smell which came from the exhaust!

These lorries were used on contract to the newly-formed Marston Valley Brick Company, which had only recently started producing bricks at its new works in Lidlington. As orders increased they added another brickworks in nearby Ridgmont which was completed in 1936. One of the Bedfords was driven by Stan Richardson from Westoning who used to do two loads of 2000 3-inch bricks every three days to the Midland Boiler Company's site at Earley Airfield near Reading. Surprisingly, when Marston Valley first started using their own 'three-tonners' in 1935 they would load 2500 2¾-inch bricks, which were the standard imperial size house brick as used in the South of England, as opposed to the 3-inch brick which was used mainly on housing developments in the Midlands and the North of England. This was quite a difference in weight considering that Candeleant's Bedfords were only two-tonners and were carrying heavier bricks.

Stan loaded and delivered one of the very first loads on a private vehicle to come out of the new 'Ridgmont' brickworks. These went to the Kent and Sussex Building Society's new head office in Feltham, Middlesex. Stan joined Candeleant's in 1928 after a spell at Sundon Cement works, where he did his fitter's apprenticeship. Apart from his War duty from 1939 to 1946 he stayed until 1959. The other new Bedford was driven by another local man, Bill Muckleston, who also did two loads every three days but to a development at Runwell in Essex.

Two Bedford WTL three-tonners were bought new from Spurlings of London in October 1939 just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Stan Richardson drove one of them, and remembers going to pick up a load of special white bricks from the Ryarsh Brick Works at West Malling in Kent. On his way home he was stopped by the Military Police at the top of Wrotham Hill on the A20. He was told that the lorry was to be commandeered by the War Office to transport supplies and to report to the Drill Hall in Old Bedford Road in Luton as soon as he had offloaded! Fortunately for Candeleant's it was only for a three-week period, whereas a large amount of private vehicles used to do war service were never seen again.

Before the war Reg Candeleant went into partnership with Arthur Meeks, of Meeks Transport in Luton. Reg had done his apprenticeship at Ford's with Arthur in the 20s. C & M Transport was formed in conjunction with Burrows Transport who were 'clearing agents' based in Lower Thames Street, London. Amongst other work they had a contract with Lever Brothers, to carry animal feed. Arthur was based in the London office and Reg in Toddington. One journey in particular was to load up brown sugar from Tate & Lyle's in Silvertown, deliver to John Smith's brewery in Tadcaster, then reload with drums of acid from I.C.I. at Stairfoot near Barnsley and deliver them to I.C.I. at Rainham in Essex.

During the war Reg was in charge of issuing petrol coupons from the house in Gas Street, and when the war had ended there was an abundance of ex-military vehicles which could be bought reasonably cheaply. Since he had run Bedfords from the early days the QL was to be the obvious choice. They were all purchased from the government auctions at Great Missenden, Cheltenham, Brigg and Ruddington (near Nottingham). He would buy them in lots of four at around £25 to £30 each - sometimes a lot less! The first lot arrived in late 1947 from Great Missenden, shortly followed by another four from Cheltenham.

It is said that many of the lorries had never seen service and some had a hole in the sump where they had been 'sabotaged' with a pick-axe so they couldn't be used! Some would be collected within a few days of the sale depending on whether there were drivers available to pick them up, but sometimes vehicles were left in storage for maybe months on end. When drivers eventually went to collect them the farmer whose land they were parked on wouldn't let them go until the storage was paid, leaving the drivers to 'cough up' out of their own pockets! When they finally arrived back in Toddington the QLs were converted to 'civilian' use which required quite a few changes.

The Bedford driven front axle was removed and replaced with a Thornycroft axle, usually from a 3-ton 'Sturdy' model. Albion axles were also known to have been used. On one occasion he was taken to Luton Magistrates court by the Ministry of Transport for using a vehicle in an un-roadworthy condition. It had been noticed by the Ministry that when loaded the front axle would bend causing the front wheels to spread out, looking quite odd as the vehicle trundled along the road. He overcame this by welding a type of adjustable tie-bar, which would pull in the bottom of the front wheels. He defended himself in court and came away with a ticking-off.

After being used for a while the rather uneconomical 28hp Bedford 6-cylinder petrol engine was changed for a more frugal Perkins P6 diesel. The first P6s were purchased new from Kingston Hill Motors in Wimbledon who were Perkins agents. After delivering a load of bricks to Sutton in Surrey one morning, Stan Richardson had to take 'KBM 222' to Wimbledon during a promotion of the new P6 diesel to let the Perkins engineer look at the vehicle to see if the P6 could be fitted without too much trouble. As the P6 was a bigger engine a few modifications had to be made: a larger clutch was fitted (a 14-inch as opposed to the 12-inch), the air-intake was fitted inside the cab, and the engine surround had to be modified using aluminium panels making the already-cramped interior even more so!

One of the articulated units was believed to have been fitted with a Gardner 4LK engine, but not much is known about this particular conversion. Generally the Bedford four-speed gearbox was used, but two or three were known to have had a Thornycroft four-speed gearbox.

The Bedford rear axle was retained, with the single 'Desert Type' 10.50x20 'Trak-Grip' tyres being replaced with twin 35x 7½ tyres. Michelin tyres were always used in preference to any other make. Nothing was modified on the braking system because at the time the brakes were thought to be 'more than adequate'. Modifications to the cabs were limited to covering the gun-turret hole in the roof with a circular piece of metal, roughly the size of a dustbin lid, and fitting slightly different front mud-wings which had rounded edges on them as opposed to the original straight-edge type wings. The wings were always getting smashed and dented, so there was always a good stock of replacements in the workshop. The tubular front 'crash bar' surrounding the radiator was also removed from all of the QLs; the bodies were usually 14ft 6inch timber platforms.

When the lorries were ready for the road they were taken to Freddie Carter's scrapyards in French's Avenue, Dunstable to be weighed. In order to get them under the magical three-ton unladen weight, which enabled them to travel at 30 mph (over three tons would mean 20 mph), the wagons were literally stripped of any excess baggage: the spare wheel and the entire contents of the cab were taken out, the twin rear wheels were swapped for singles, and heavy batteries were taken off. Then as soon as it had a ticket from the weighbridge everything was put back on, probably adding about half a ton to the unladen weight.

When painted, mainly with 'Leylac' paint, the QLs looked quite presentable. The original matt finish army olive green was covered over with a similar green, but with a shinier finish. The chassis were silver, and Candelent's name was signwritten across the roof and on both doors in yellow.

Painting and signwriting were carried out in the workshop by employee Lionel Tomkins who started for Candelent's in 1946 and after ten years' service went on to start his own signwriting business in Heath Road, Leighton Buzzard, although he continued to paint and signwrite Candelent's lorries after he left the firm. A type of trolley was made up which could be towed behind a car to take a complete cab from Toddington to Lionel's premises in Leighton Buzzard where he would paint it - on the trolley! He is now retired but his business, which is still family-owned, continues to flourish.

Lionel remembers Reg Candelent as being a very kind-hearted man, especially after he found out his interest in motorcycles. One year he took him to the Isle of Man T.T. much to the annoyance of Mrs. Candelent - he always remembers her as being not so kind-hearted! She once sent him to Hitchin to purchase some *super*-expensive fish for her sister's aquarium in Beale Street, Dunstable. As asked, he put them in with the 'residents': by the time he got back to Mrs. C., all the new fish had been eaten!

He was at one time looking to buy a car to replace an old one, and Reg sent him to Cambridge on a dark, wet, and windy night to buy a second hand Jowett Javelin. He bought the car - Reg had said that no one else would make the trip on such a dreadful night, and he was right.

Lionel also recalls at one time a driver breaking-down 40 miles from home on the M1. The message was a mixture of "Diesel injectors won't work" and "The pump's packed up". A fitter went out equipped with a van-load of spares, but could not get it to work. Eventually the cause of the trouble was found - "Run out of Diesel"! Reg was far from happy!

On one occasion a driver fitted a 'Perkins' badge to the grille of one of the lorries. As soon as Reg saw it he said "You can get that ***** thing off there - I don't advertise free for nobody". Even the 'Bedford' badges had the Candelent name on them!

Derek Itzinger - 'Itzy' - from Toddington, drove a QL on contract to 'Lookers' of Stopsley, who were agents for 'Chiltern Mills'. Derek's wagon was fitted with a tailboard and a higher-front headboard, carrying the 'Lookers' name, for carrying pig meal. He would do the occasional load of bricks when 'Lookers' were quiet, but would

always have to cover up the name on the headboard with a sheet. Derek worked for Candelent's from 1955 until 1959. He left to drive direct for Chiltern Mills where he was given a new 'Commer two-stroke'. Derek's elder brother Ronnie, who tragically died of asthma at the early age of 28, and his younger brother Kenny both drove for the firm, Kenny leaving to work for Commer Cars in Dunstable.

Arguably, his most 'famous' conversion was of a four-wheeler QL to an articulated-tractor unit! As and when a rigid QL came to the end of its working life, the body was removed, the chassis shortened, and an ex-military Dayton-Walther fifth-wheel coupling was fitted (new parts were very rarely fitted). Trailers were purchased from the government auctions; these were ex-United States Army Fruehauf single-axle trailers of about 16 feet in length. The wheels on these trailers were of the 'bud' type, in which you would bolt on the inner wheel and then bolt the outer wheel, using two sets of wheel nuts on each side.

This type of wheel was notorious for working loose, and Candelent's trailers were no exception! The trailer fleet was mainly the American trailers, but there was also one B.T.C. 'four-in-line' and one longer trailer about 20 feet long. The long trailer was the one all the drivers wanted because you only needed to load the bricks four high, instead of the seven or eight high on the short trailers.

The brakes were servo/hydraulic on both the tractor units and trailers, and because of the weight they were carrying needed to be kept well adjusted, sometimes during the day. The brakes on the American trailers were always bad although one, which was converted to a Bedford axle, always stopped slightly better than the others.

John Giles started with Candelent's in 1956. One of John's early recollections was when his trailer came adrift! He was on his way to load up at LBC's Coronation works early one morning, and was approaching the 'Quest' Garage on the Amptill to Bedford road, when the trailer parted company and 'overtook' the unit! Luckily, it came to rest on the grass verge. Everything appeared to be in slow motion and when he realized it was 'his' trailer that had passed him he stopped, went back to retrieve the number plate, and quickly made his escape to the brickworks to telephone the 'Guvnor' just in case the 'law' arrived at the scene!

Apparently, trailers became 'unhooked' on more than one occasion, mainly due to the well-worn fifth-wheel couplings which had all seen better days. A 'trestle' was made up to support the trailers when they were uncoupled in the yard, because, although they had landing legs fitted, the legs were set too far back, and when a loaded trailer was dropped, the front end would drop to the ground!

The electrics on most of the QLs were a rather poor set-up especially on the artics. The cable between the tractor unit and trailer was normally such a poor fit on the trailer that the drivers had to wedge matchsticks between the plug and the trailer to make the lights work, John left his home one night for a run up to Liverpool, he'd only done two or three miles when the headlights started to flicker then finally gave up completely, John soon traced the cause of the problem, when he had jumped up into the cab he threw his sandwiches, which were wrapped in tin foil into a small tray which housed which could only be described as a 'shambles of a fusebox' the 'samies' had shorted out the lights! A quick look in the 'spares box' revealed a suitable 'nail' as a temporary fuse and the journey continued! To make night driving slightly better all the lorries were fitted with a 'spotlight' under the nearside front towing eye.

All the conversions were done at the Gas Street garage. Reg himself as 'Chief Designer' was ably assisted by head fitter Jack Tiller and in later years joined by Tony North. Jack's sons Brian and Derek also worked for the firm, Derek starting in the garage from 1958 to 1960 and then going on to driving. The fitters were given set times to carry out major overhauls: 50 minutes to change a complete rear axle, 45 minutes for a gearbox, and 4 hours to change an engine - which involved the complete removal of the cab!

As the fleet began to increase it was obvious that the Gas Street premises were too small, so the lorries were moved to some land on the Dunstable Road going out of Toddington - land which had been purchased well before the war. A store was built on the land after he finished milk haulage in 1955; here he stored cattle cake and other products for BOCM - British Oil & Cake Mills. The products were stored, sometimes for several months, before delivery to the other BOCM stores at Avonmouth near Bristol, and Hull on Humberside.

Candelent's Transport became a Limited Company in the late 1940s. By the mid 1950s there were about twenty vehicles in the fleet consisting of QL four-wheelers, Artics, one six-wheeler, a Bedford 'O' type four-wheeler, a Bedford 'K' type 30 cwt van, and an ex-British Oxygen Company bonneted-type Leyland Lynx breakdown lorry. There was also a Jowett pick-up truck, and at some time three or four ex-military Canadian Fords which were converted to 4 cubic yard Tippers. These vehicles were used for local excavation work including the building of the M1 Motorway and also did a lot of work for Luton builder Aubrey Burnage. He once supplied six ex-War Department Chevrolets fitted with Tipper bodies to Mowlem's Contractors who were constructing a huge

reservoir in the Potters Bar area. Each vehicle was towed to the site using a rigid tow bar manufactured in the workshop; this made for a hectic journey, especially on sharp bends!

During the early 1960s either three or four brand new 'TK' Bedford Artic units were purchased from Arlington Motors in Ponders End, Enfield. They arrived as basic chassis cabs, without fifth-wheel couplings or heaters, which of course were luxury items.

During the 1950s Reg possessed an assortment of motor cars, his most favoured make being Jowett - he owned a Javelin and a Jupiter. He also owned two Ford Populars and all of the cars were painted green, clearly Candelent's preferred colour - Reg always wore a green suit! The Ford 'pop' was the company car normally driven by Jack Pateman who was also the main driver of the Bedford van. He would travel to London every day to collect the delivery tickets and other paperwork. The Ford was also used by any of the drivers if they wanted to take their families on holiday - free of charge! Not many of the drivers owned a motor car in those days.

On one occasion Reg was offered a Rolls-Royce by someone who was desperate for cash. After bidding a rather paltry sum for the car, the man said 'Thanks but no thanks' and went on his way. At the time one of the drivers said 'You should have snapped that up, that was a real bargain'. Reg replied 'He'll be back' and sure enough a few days later the man returned with the Rolls. He was duly paid and the engine was taken out and the rest of the car was scrapped! It had at some stage been fitted with a P6 Diesel engine, a good spare for one of the lorries; but not only that, it wasn't green!

Reg could be a hard man to work for, but was always known as a fair and generous employer. The wages were never good but he would always help out if a driver was having difficulties. If he was seen to be walking from his house to the garage 'snapping his fingers' on one hand then all was well and he was in a good mood - but if he came across snapping both hands he was in a foul mood, someone was in trouble! Every Christmas all the staff would frequent the Oddfellows Arms, opposite the house in Gas Street, for a free Christmas drink - until one year when things got slightly out of hand and one or two of the drivers went a bit 'over the top' much to Reg's annoyance, leaving him no option but to announce that there would be no more 'free Christmases' in the pub.

The Bedford van was used for picking up the smaller collections from the various wharves along the river Thames. When the van was loaded it would meet up with one of the lorries and trans-ship the load. This was done so that the lorries could avoid the long queues at the wharves and docks. A few days before one Christmas, John Giles had gone out with the van along with 'Pimple' Smith the van boy, who was also the tyre fitter. They were on their last collection at Tooley Street cheese store in Bermondsey, when John left Pimple to look after the van while he went in for the collection. When he came back he reached out to open the back door but to his surprise the van had disappeared! His first thoughts were that one of the other drivers who would have been in the area at the time was playing a trick on him, but after a while 'Pimple' appeared after a visit to the toilet. 'Where's the ***** van?' John said. 'It was here a few minutes ago' said Pimple. Sure enough the van had been 'pinched', almost fully loaded with Christmas fare, including cheese, salmon, bacon etc., etc. The police were called which resulted in a three hour interrogation in the local 'nick'. The van was found in Deptford after Christmas minus its load, but with John's coat and wallet still in the cab!

The six-wheeler was another weird and wonderful QL creation. At some time during the 1950s a pair of six-wheel Diamond T lorries were bought, mainly for the 'A' licences, from Smiths of Markyate. They had petrol engines and were extremely thirsty. They were only used for a short time and had the name 'Candelent and Smith' written on the doors. They were eventually broken up for spares, so the entire back end from one of them was 'grafted' on to one of the QLs complete with its 16-foot body. After a short time the drive axle gave up and was replaced with a Leyland axle. The trailing axle was fitted so close to the Leyland axle that the tyres were literally touching each other as the lorry went along. Jack Tiller in the garage found it impossible to get the two sets of rear springs to line up, causing the rear spring hangers to hit the chassis as the vehicle went along. Also there was no movement between the two axles which meant that it was frequently losing its drive, not only on building sites but also on uneven public roads, often when going to LBC's Stewartby works to load. When negotiating Flitwick railway bridge it needed two shunts simply to turn left on to the High Street! All the drivers who ever drove it said it was an absolute 'pig'.

4000 bricks were carried on the six-wheeler, the same as on the artics. Derek Tiller was the driver who suffered the most with the 'beast' and was also at the wheel when it finally came to the end of its life. It had been in the fleet about 12 to 18 months when it was involved in an accident in March 1959 outside Denel End farm gateway in Flitwick High Street. It was about 5.30 on a very misty morning when Derek was on his way to Stewartby brickworks; he could smell something burning which turned out to be the head of the broom which he carried in the cab with him. Due to the ill-fitting engine cowling the broom was touching the hot manifold of the engine and had started to smoulder. It obviously distracted his attention and in an effort to pass a bus which had stopped to pick up workers for the brickyards he skidded, and could not avoid a head-on collision with a fully-loaded AEC

six-wheeler belonging to C.A.E.C. ('Cacky') Howard of Bedford. Derek was thrown from the lorry and ended up in the ditch and for a while could not be found! Most of Candelent's lorries were rebuilt after an accident but because of the fire in the cab, this time the whole thing was scrapped.

During the 1950s the main bulk of the work was for the London Brick Company, hauling out of Stewartby, Coronation (Kempston Hardwick), Millbrook, Elstow, and occasionally Newton Longville (Bletchley). Back-loading was mainly for J.F. Tooley, of John Street mill in Luton, and H.C. Tooley from Leighton Buzzard, who were grain and animal-feed merchants, and various other merchants including, B.O.C.M, Lever Brothers, and Loders & Nucoline from Silvertown, Provimi from Stratford, Mollasine from Greenwich, McDougall's from the Isle of Dogs, Rank's from Deptford Bridge, Paul's from Bermondsey, White & Tomkinson from Rotherhithe, Quaker Oats from Southall, Vitamealo from Hammersmith, Fisons from Barking, Chelsea Flour Mills, Co-op, Spillers, and Albion Sugar in Woolwich, to name but a few.

A normal load on a four-wheel rigid would have been 3500 bricks, and considering that the QL was only designed as a 3-tonner, the gross weight of the vehicle would have been about 8 to 8½ tons. The artics would take 4000 bricks and regularly bring home a 10-ton payload. It was well-known that a Bedford could take a 50% overload! Reg Candelent certainly got his money's-worth out of them. Some other firms that operated QLs on general haulage were Gates Haulage from Stevenage, and E.A.T. -Ex-Army Transport from Nottingham. John Giles also recalls a maroon-coloured QL which came up from the Burgess Hill area in Sussex to load bricks from Stewartby.

John Giles - 'Crackerjack', as he was nicknamed at Candelent's - remembers loading-up bricks at Coronation Works not long after he had started there, in the mid fifties. The bricks were at the bottom of a stockpile which had been there since before the War. After hand-loading the 3½ thousand bricks he went to drive away, but the lorry would not budge! There was so much weight on it that the rear tyres were squashed up against the floor of the body and he had to unload over a third of the bricks before it would move.

Generally, a day's work would be a load of bricks to London, Surrey, Middlesex, etc, then reload out of the London docks or mills for delivery to Luton, Hitchin, or anywhere in the Home Counties. If the drivers knew they were picking up from the docks, they would take a pile of hessian railway sacks with them on top of the bricks. When filled each sack weighed 2¼ hundredweight. On a 4-wheeler they would load around six tons, and the artics would load about eight tons. They might load grain one day, cattle cake the next day, and a load of sugar the next day, using the same sacks every time. Another 'classic' was to roughly sweep away the brickdust, throw a few sacks on the deck and then load whole sides of bacon from the docks, throw an old tarpaulin over the load and off they went. If the Environmental Health people had been around in those days they would have been in their element! Some of the drivers would do a milk-run early in the morning followed by a load of bricks. The milk-run involved collecting the milk from local farms and delivering it in churns to the big dairies - the Coop in Manor Road, Luton, Cartwright's in Dunstable Road, Luton, Randell & Whiting in High Town Luton, and Allen & Hanbury's in Ware, Hertfordshire. Mrs. Candelent, whose parents kept the Rifle Volunteer Pub in Dunstable, used to say that she was married one day and up at 6am the next morning cleaning out the milk churns ready for the next collection!! Candelent's gave up the milk haulage at the end of 1955.

Work was not only to London; there was a fair amount of long distance work. John Giles remembers a trip to Renfrew in Scotland, one of the occasions when he took a spare propshaft, with him - just in case! Surprisingly, it wasn't needed and apart from a couple of injector pipes breaking the trip was problem free.

There was a regular journey to a Lever Brothers factory at Port Sunlight on Merseyside with a reload from somewhere along the East Lancashire road for AC Delco in Dunstable. Another collection from the Midlands was engineering bricks from Jacksdale, Nottingham, for delivery to Sidney Bennett's Builders Merchants in Beale Street, Luton.

Ken Hearn from Flitwick started for Candelent's in 1951 driving amongst others 'GTM 57', a 4-wheeler. Ken would do a milk-round in the morning collecting from farms around Eversholt, Tingrith, Milton Bryan, Hockliffe and Eggington, and delivering to the dairies in Luton; from there go to the brickworks and do a load to somewhere like Harlow; unload, and then drive across to Hedges Brothers at Cottered near Bishops Stortford to load potatoes for delivery in the Maulden area. It would of course be the evening when he finally was empty, on many occasions having to drag the farmworkers out of the pub to help unload. Ken remembers driving home through London one day and not being able to stop behind a fire engine; the ladder on the engine went straight through the radiator - which had only been fitted the previous night!

Another of Ken's recollections was when he and 'Crutch' Stringer were sent to Flitwick railway sidings to empty a railway wagon full of ground-nut meal for Goodman's Mill in Flitwick. They reversed the lorry between the wagons and loaded up. When they went to drive out the gap seemed to have got smaller! While they were loading they hadn't noticed the wagons being shunted in the sidings, resulting in the lorry being well and truly wedged in.

Not being too bothered they attempted to drive out, resulting in all the sacks on both sides of the lorry being ripped open and also wrecking the tailboard! When they returned to the yard after clearing the entire wagon of ground-nuts, Reg's only concern was whether the wagon had been emptied - he wasn't too worried about the damage to the lorry!

Ken worked for Candulent's until February 1956 when he started out on his own buying a four-wheel two-stroke Commer to carry bricks out of Stewartby. During his first few weeks of being an 'owner-driver' the weather was very bad and work in the brickyards was virtually non-existent. Candulent got to hear of his misfortune and offered him work as a sub-contractor. After a couple of days' work Reg noticed that the tyres were on their last legs and said to Ken 'Take that truck down to the workshop and tell Jack to put a new set of tyres on it'. 'I can't afford that sort of expense' said Ken. 'Don't worry about that boy, you pay me back when you can'. Sure enough the tyres were paid for within a couple of months, and for the time he was working for Reg he was always paid daily to help him get on his feet. To this day Ken has fond memories of his time with Candulent's and of Reg's generosity, something which has definitely rubbed off on himself over his forty-four years in road haulage. After thirty-odd years of running between ten and fifteen lorries on brick haulage he now operates just two vehicles from his Flitwick yard.

Norman 'Crutch' Stringer drove one of the milk lorries in the late forties/early fifties and one incident which many local people still remember is when he was collecting empty churns one Christmas day. He'd already been to most of the farms and had called at his last collection at Hill's Dairy in the centre of Amptill. After loading-up he was invited in for a Christmas drink and after a couple of good-size scotches left feeling rather merry. Unfortunately on his way towards Flitwick he didn't notice the left-hand bend at the Running Waters (before the One o One garage was built). The inevitable happened: he lost control and the lorry ended up on its side in the pond, and the milk churns were thrown everywhere. Jack Tiller came out with the breakdown wagon and pulled the lorry out, and amazingly just one piece of timber on the headboard of the body was broken! The churns were loaded back on and the lorry was driven back to Toddington!

One of the 4-wheelers, 'GYR 820', was fitted up with a 'Telehoist' Hydraulic Sack Lifter. This device was mainly used when collecting from farms. It was bolted to the rear of the chassis. Unfortunately it was not a success, and was a painfully slow way of loading. One day in the yard in an effort to 'speed it up a bit' an adjustment was made, which resulted in, a ½-cwt. sack of poultry feed being thrown up against the back of the cab with such force that the sack split, showering all the onlookers with pellets! The drivers all agreed it was quicker to load by hand!

Another of Reg's inventions was his own version of a winch-type spare wheel carrier. These were fitted to his lorries years before they became a common feature on most types of haulage vehicle. This was one of his better and most used innovations. He also came up with a design in the 1950s for demountable bodywork. He took his design to 'Syntilla' Engineering in Dunstable, but unfortunately they were not interested and nothing ever came of his idea. In later years and up to the present day this system of bodywork has become popular with many large furniture and parcel companies - if only!

Punctures and blowouts were a common occurrence, and are always a talking point among not only the ex-Candulent drivers, but also anyone else who remembers their lorries. If a tyre had the slightest amount of tread, and would still hold air, then it was fitted! One night another driver and John had left to do a double delivery to Hull. They only got as far as Shefford when they had a puncture right outside one of Shefford's many public houses. The spare wheel was on top of the load, and the usual way to lower it to the ground was on a piece of rope, but to save time it was just pushed off the top. As it hit the ground it bounced and demolished not only the pub door, but also the framework!

John remembers an incident just after the M1 Motorway had opened. One of the other wagons had suffered a blow out and was on the hard shoulder in the opposite direction. The driver didn't have a spare wheel so John rolled his spare across all six lanes of the Motorway! There were of course no central crash barriers in those days, and nothing like the amount of traffic we have today.

In the workshop in Gas Street, tyres were built up on to the wheels (there was always a good stock of wheels) and on one particular occasion the old and very slow compressor was busy puffing away blowing up a tyre when John, one of the fitters and Reg went across to Bill Childs's Victory Cafe for breakfast. They returned to the garage completely unaware they had left the compressor running, only to find a gaping hole in the corrugated iron roof of the workshop! The rim of the wheel hadn't been fitted correctly and as the tyre slowly inflated, it was forced off straight through the roof: where the rim actually landed was anyone's guess, it was never found!

All of the QLs carried a selection of spares with them - fan belts, injector pipes, universal joints, sometimes a complete propshaft - and not forgetting the spare half-shaft which was stowed just inside the driver's side door in a clip which was originally made for holding a rifle! This was accompanied by a length of steel reinforcing rod of

the same diameter as the shaft, usually mounted across the rear of the cab. This was used for tapping-out the broken piece which was left in the axle casing. The drivers also had to make their own half-shaft gaskets using either a piece of card, or any other material that came to hand.

The shafts used to snap on a regular basis, due to the fact that the Bedford axle was only designed for loads of up to three tons, and not the regular six to eight ton loads! They would mostly break on building sites with the wheels spinning on the soft ground. As they were spinning 'Paddy' on the site would throw half a bag of cement under the wheel and when it 'grabbed' the sudden jerk would break the shaft.

John recalls the time when a half-shaft snapped one evening on his way home through Welwyn. 'I'd stopped on the main road near the town centre, had got both of the shafts out, and was struggling to poke out the broken piece which was still in the axle with the bit of steel bar we took with us. It was cold and I was swearing, cursing and calling Candelent all the names under the sun. I gave the bar one almighty whack and the broken end flew out of the axle tube like a rocket. Just as it came out, there just happened to be a chap riding his pushbike on the path right next to the wheel. The bit shot out and went straight through the spokes of his bike wheel -what a shot!'

At one stage Mr. and Mrs. Candelent owned three limited companies: Candelent's Transport Ltd, C.A.S. Transport Ltd (formed when the company acquired Smith's of Markyate), and C.A.P. Transport Ltd (formed when the company bought out Pope's Transport, a London firm). When the 'Rose Filling Station' was opened in late 1959 the transport companies were gradually sold off one by one. C.A.P. was sold off in 1963 to Summerfield's Haulage in Maulden, Beds and C.A.S. was sold to Frank Hill Transport of Luton.

Candelent's Transport Limited remained in business until March 1965, when the business was sold to Lumb & Fisher Transport Contractors who were situated opposite the Rose Filling Station' in Dunstable Road. In later years L&F were taken over by Heygates Flour Millers from Northampton. After selling the haulage business Mr. and Mrs. Candelent ran the Rose Filling Station, also known as 'Toddington Motor Company'. The garage opened in late 1959 to sell fuel to the public. Petrol and diesel pumps for the garage were bought second-hand from Dickinson and Adams's Garage near Wardown Park in Luton.

Reg suffered a bad stroke in April 1970 which left him blind and affected his speech but he still showed a keen interest in the business until his death in January 1976. Mrs. Candelent, who was a Toddington Parish Councillor from 1960, continued to run the filling station until her death in October 1983. The long-time company accountant Michael Wootton, who joined the firm in 1950 after leaving Toddington School where his father was headmaster, remained to dispose of the assets. The garage was sold to Esso and the business was finally wound up in 1985.

Candelent's Transport was an important part of life in Toddington for over forty years, employing many local men. The drivers had to work long hours, and more often than not it was hard graft, but they all refer to their days at Candelent's as some of the happiest of their lives. There was always a good spirit of comradeship amongst them, unfortunately something which sadly seems to have disappeared from today's busy transport environment.

Vehicles - a few of the known registration numbers:-

FMJ 605	4-wheeler	FTM 298	4-wheeler
KBM 222	4-wheeler	ETM 620	Artic
GYR 820	4-wheeler	HMJ 193	4-wheeler
OMH 694	Artic	FTM 297	6-wheeler
GTM 57	4-wheeler	GNM 33	Artic
GNM 985	4-wheeler milk lorry	GNM 986	4-wheeler milk lorry
HUW 539	30 cwt van		
OXF 60	Ford Popular	DUW 639	Ford Popular
WNK 444	Jowett Javelin		

Drivers:-

John 'Crackerjack' Giles, Ronnie Itzinger, Derek 'Itzy' Itzinger, Kenny Itzinger, Bill Muckleston, Stan 'Gunner' Richardson, Hubert Groom, Ivor Mather, Dick Boutwood, Reg Stapleton, Billy Ayres, Alec Stringer, Norman 'Crutch' Stringer, Ken Hearn, Johnny Edwards, Arthur 'Gilo' Giles, Harry Bowers, Derek 'Shorty' Short, Harry Cook, Henry Biddlecombe, Brian 'Dabber' Kingham, Reggie Smith, George Smith, Jack Pateman, Bill Pateman, Billy Smith, Rex 'Simmo' Simmonds, Henry Kingham, Alan 'Neddy' Buckingham, 'Button' Carr, 'Tucker' Jones, 'Arpy' Daniels, Tommy Brown, Johnny Bowers, Derek Tiller, Brian Tiller, Bob Briggs, Jed Daly, Les Strugnell, Alan Smith, Stewart Buckingham, 'Pip' Buckingham, Terry 'Pimple' Smith, Cyril Kingham, Tom Horne, Hughie Morton, Frankie Goode, Reg Gazeley, David Morgan.

I wish to express my appreciation to the following, who have all willingly provided essential information or/and photographs for use in this article:

John Giles, Derek Itzinger, Ken Hearn, Stan Richardson, Derek Tiller, Michael Wootton, Lionel Tomkins, Mrs. Arthur Giles, Beryl Hyde, Jean Compton, Valerie Webb, The Luton News, and Luton Museum.

I should be most grateful to hear from anyone who has any other information for future reference, particularly photographs, relating to Candelent's Transport or any other local haulage companies.

Trevor Stringer
15 Oak Road
Flitwick Beds
MK45 1LP
01525 752265
December 2000

Local or Long Distance Haulage
DAILY SERVICES
LONDON - BRISTOL - AVONMOUTH
General Goods and Bulk Grain Transporters
Blowing and Tipping Grain Discharge
ALL BY
Lumb & Fisher (Contractors) Ltd.
Inc. Candelents Transport Ltd.
Toddington Haulage Co.
TODDINGTON, Beds.
Toddington 346 & 783 Bovington 3354