

**Impact case study (REF3b)****Institution: University of Bolton****Unit of Assessment: 22****Title of case study: Case Study 2: Excavating Drink Driving in Britain, 1800-2000****1. Summary of the impact**

A long established historian of disease and pollution in the nineteenth century city, Bill Luckin is also an international figure in the history of the 'accidental' and the origins of the risk society. In recent years he has moved closer to academics and practitioners in the fields of planning, transport and mobility studies. The author of several books and numerous articles, Bill Luckin is completing a readily accessible history of drink driving in Britain, aimed at road safety planners and activists and general readers. The overriding concern is with what Luckin calls the 'social relations of mobility'.

**2. Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)

In 2005 Bill Luckin was awarded a three year fellowship, funded by the Wellcome Trust. This was taken up at the Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine at the University of Manchester, where he has been an Associate for over 30 years. The project focused on the massively neglected topic of road traffic accidents in twentieth century Britain. The award was made at a time when the Wellcome Trust was seeking to encourage scholars to engage with twentieth century subjects central to a deeper public understanding of science, technology and medicine.

Luckin's four articles underline a movement from analysis of theoretical frameworks relevant to historically-oriented issues in mobility studies to in-depth engagement with drink driving between 1900 and the early twenty first century. The final paper cited below, published in 2012, in the multidisciplinary journal *Transfers* demonstrates the shift. By this juncture, the author had veered away from the cultural and social historical mainstreams and entered into closer contact with public historians and mobility policy-makers. This involved exploring the political, social and cultural contexts of earlier twentieth century initiatives (and non-initiatives) designed fully to criminalize speeding and dangerous and drink driving, thereby improving – a frequent phrase in Luckin's work – the 'social relations of mobility'.

The first chronologically cited paper, published in *Cultural and Social History* and co-authored by the late David Sheen of the University of Bolton, confronts theoretical and policy-related ambiguities associated with the eclectic and sometimes grossly over-eclectic term, 'automobility'. The article identifies a 'usable past' relevant to historically-rooted debate over radical programmes to reduce the overpowering dominance of the private car in the early twenty first century developed and developing world. The paper also floats the existence of a four-fold sub-periodization of Britain's twentieth century movement towards mass motorization.

The second article, which appeared in *Contemporary British History* in 2010, probes the repercussions of interwar departmental in-fighting on developments in the latter part of the century and on into the 2000s. It describes the curious failure of the Ministry of Transport (MoT) to

secure ownership of a massively destructive road traffic accident crisis, the overriding departmental dogmatism of the Home Office and the unwillingness of senior police officers to confront pro-motorism in the form of the intensely influential AA and RAC.

The penultimate paper, published in *Twentieth Century British History* in 2010, is more traditional. It seeks to correct the road safety record and restore the reputation of the under-documented Conservative Transport Minister, Ernest Marples. Appalled by the scale of the daily death-toll on Britain's roads, the failure of the police and judiciary to prosecute and punish speeding and dangerous driving, and the feebleness of British law in relation to alcoholically impaired motorists, Marples transformed himself into a safety progressive. He re-educated his senior officials who then laid the foundations for Barbara Castle's path-breaking Road Safety Act which passed into law in 1967. Luckin's forthcoming monograph takes the narrative on into the present.

### **3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

Luckin, B. with Sheen, D. (2009) 'Defining Early Modern Auto Mobility: The Road Traffic Accident Crisis in Manchester 1939-45', *Cultural and Social History*, 6, pp. 211-30.

Luckin, B. (2010) 'Anti-Drink Driving Reform in Britain 1920-80', *Addiction*, 105, pp.1538-44.

Luckin, B. (2010) 'A Never-Ending Passing of the Buck: The Failure of Drink Driving Reform in Interwar Britain', *Contemporary British History*, 24, pp. 363-84.

Luckin, B. (2010) 'A Kind of Consensus on the Roads? Drink Driving Policy in Britain 1945-1970', *Twentieth Century British History*, 21, pp. 350-74.

Luckin, B. (2011) 'The Crisis, the Humanities and Medical History', *Medical History*, 55, pp. 283-7.

Luckin, B. (2012) 'Motorists, Non-Drivers and Traffic Accidents between the Wars: A Provisional Survey, Transfers': *Interdisciplinary Journal of Mobility Studies*, 2, pp. 4-21.

### **4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Visits to the United States, including lecture and seminar tours in 2003, 2007, 2009 and 2011 have facilitated rapid dissemination of Luckin's recent and innovative work on road traffic accidents. Audiences have included public historians, urban historians, historians of technology, postgraduate and undergraduate students, city planners, road safety activists and journalists.

In September 2007 in Washington D.C. the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) hosted what may have been the first historically-informed multidisciplinary workshop on death and serious injury on the road. Prof Luckin gave a paper on the historical evolution of the law in relation to alcoholic impairment among motorists and others in mid-twentieth century Britain. The audience included road safety activists as well as professional historians.

In April 2009 Luckin gave a talk at the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Attended by academics, medics and nurses working in or training for a range of roles in emergency medicine and NHS A and E services, the paper deepened the Luckin's contacts with the academic drug dependency community. This resulted in the publication, in 2010, of an article in *Addiction* on anti-drink driving measures in twentieth century Britain.

In the same year, Prof Luckin chaired and commented on papers on technologies of road safety at the Society for the History of Technology annual conference in Pittsburgh. By this juncture,

interest and numbers of researchers involved in the topic had significantly increased. Partly as a consequence, in April 2011 a stock-taking workshop was held at the Hagley Museums, Wilmington, Delaware. Prof Luckin gave a paper that attempted to make a provisional distinction between 'accidents' and 'natural disasters'.

The most important outcome of the Hagley workshop was the creation of an H-Net online bibliography to collate predominantly historical work on risk, accidents and disasters. The tempo had now increased and in summer 2011, Dr Mike Esbester, then of Oxford Brookes University, organized a symposium on the 'History of Road Safety' at his institution. Prof Luckin spoke on the problem of 'Tracking the Silent Dead: Road Traffic Accidents in the Twentieth Century'.

Luckin also contributed to an AHRC-supported workshop at the National Railway Museum, York, organized by Profs Colin Divall and Colin Pooley. The title of the project as a whole – 'Mobility Cultures: Making a Usable Past for Transport Policy' – provided an opportunity to interrogate epistemologically highly complex relationships between the shaping of contemporary transport policies and the 'successes' and 'missed opportunities' of the past. Edited by Profs Divall and Pooley, a selection of the York papers will be published in 2014 by Ashgate. Prof Luckin will contribute an essay on the era of inaction that followed the passing of Barbara Castle's path-breaking act in 1967.

Most recently, in September 2013, at another conference at Oxford Brookes University, links between British, American and continental European mobility scholars, transport planners and safety activists were further strengthened. Papers focused on 'Accidents and Emergencies: Risk, Welfare and Safety in Europe and North America, c.1750-2000'. Emphasizing that the time had come to begin excavating the deeper past, Luckin gave a keynote address on 'Drink Driving Before "Drink Driving" in Britain in the Nineteenth Century'.

Conference Paper at First Biennial Urban History Conference. University of Pittsburgh. September 2002.

Research Fellow. Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine. University of Manchester. September 2005-July 2008.

'The Law and Drink Driving in Twentieth Century Britain'. Social History of Technology. Annual Meeting. Washington D.C. September 2007. [www.historyoftechnology.org/annual\\_meeting.html](http://www.historyoftechnology.org/annual_meeting.html)

Bill Luckin. Review Article. 2008. 'Mangled in the Machinery'. H-Net online. [www.h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/longbrowse](http://www.h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/longbrowse)

Bill Luckin. 'Drink Driving in Twentieth Century Britain'. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. April 2009. [www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/events/2009/04/drink-driving-in-twentieth-century-britain](http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/newsevents/events/2009/04/drink-driving-in-twentieth-century-britain)

Bill Luckin. Chair and Commentator. 'Technologies of Road Safety'. Annual Meeting. Society for the History of Technology. University of Pittsburgh. September 2009  
[www.historyoftechnology.org/pdf./pittsburgh](http://www.historyoftechnology.org/pdf./pittsburgh)

Bill Luckin. International Workshop. 'Accidents and Natural Disasters' 'Histories of Safety, Accidents and Disasters. What Next?' Hagley Museums and Library. Wilmington, Delaware. April 2011. [www.historyoftechnology.org.pdf./safety\\_accidents\\_risk\\_disaster.pdf](http://www.historyoftechnology.org.pdf./safety_accidents_risk_disaster.pdf)

Bill Luckin. 'Tracking the Silent Dead: Road Traffic Victims in the Twentieth Century'. History of Road Safety Symposium. Oxford Brookes University. June-July 2011.

Bill Luckin. Participant and Discussant. AHRC-Supported Workshop. National Railway Museum,

York. 'Mobility Cultures: Making a Usable Past for Transport Policy'. June 2012.

Bill Luckin. 'Drink Driving before "Drink Driving" in Twentieth Century Britain'. International Conference on 'Accidents and Emergencies: Risk, Welfare and Safety in Europe and North America, c. 1750-2000'. Oxford Brookes University. September 2013.

[www.history.brookes.ac.uk/conferences/2013/accident-emergencies/](http://www.history.brookes.ac.uk/conferences/2013/accident-emergencies/)