

# COBHAM BUS MUSEUM

## MAGAZINE



**LEYLAND NATIONAL 25TH ANNIVERSARY**

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FRONT COVER The closure of Addlestone Garage has decimated the Leyland National presence, for more than two decades the most numerous type to be seen in the Cobham area. Darts now reign supreme. However, a handful of London & Country LeyNats still linger on to serve the nearby Brooklands complex, of which former Alder Valley NPJ 479R (258) is best known thanks to its dedicated livery. It looks set to last well into 1998. (Photo: Mike Nash).

## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to another bumper issue of our Magazine, which once again is to the maximum size permissible given the budget allocated. In fact, recent issues have been running at around 15,000 words but this one initially ran to an incredible 32,000 so you could say I've been busy! As such, some features have had to be carried over for future use but please don't stop sending more in. They will all make it into print eventually, provided I can decipher them. Where possible, it always helps to receive them on disc, or if printed, in a bold and dark format suitable for scanning. But for those who rely on the good old BIC, neat handwriting will do just fine. At this point I must just take the time to thank John Bedford for his assistance with a number of past issues, also Henry Law who spends much time on layout and typesetting duties, and without whom I would simply not be able to complete the product. At the same time, may I remind those who compile the regular features to note that I provide a deadline date in each issue for a reason – i.e. so I don't have to chase you up. I won't be chasing you in the future!

The Magazine continues to receive much acclaim and as it evolves, so each issue seems to have its own identity. This one is no exception, being of a rather more contemporary nature than usual due to its concentration on one model. You see, on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1972, the then local urban district council granted planning consent for our premises to be used as a bus museum, thus it can truly be recognised as Cobham's date of birth. Incredibly, the previous day had witnessed another significant happening in the bus world when Cumberland Motor Services became the first operator to take delivery of a Leyland National. ERM 35K was actually the fifth of ten "pre-production" vehicles, but it began a long career by earning its first days keep on, yes, you've guessed it, March 14<sup>th</sup> 1972. An indelible link with the Trust perhaps?

Of course, the LeyNat has attracted more than its fair share of critics over the years, perhaps not least because of the older types it swept



away in its path. But 25 years down the line, and having existed during a period of (at best) indifferent (and at worst) almost non-existent maintenance, coupled with much other upheaval within the industry, the good old LeyNat soldiers on with many vintage examples continuing to provide sterling front line service. Now the tide is finally turning and interest in what is still a remarkably crisp looking, functional, and above all, immensely strong vehicle, is on the up. And as your Editor has found with his 23 year old SNC, a good one can be a pleasure to drive. So don't be too surprised if the breed goes on to eclipse even the Bristol RE in terms of numbers preserved. And remember, you read it here first!

1997 continues to be a very lively rally season and since the last issue there has been a strong Cobham presence at several more excellent events including a searingly hot 'Bus of Yesteryear' at Staines and a super event organised by the NKVPG at Chatham Dockyard. We enjoyed our most successful August Display Day yet thanks to the efforts of Roger Stagg in combining with it the RT Operating Day. And RP90 has covered substantial ground whilst flying Cobham's flag, both by attending the Trans-Pennine Run (at which it picked up two awards) and more recently by completing a 1,200 mile trip to Scotland and Lathalmond, the HQ of the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum. And I'm writing this feature the morning after a truly huge Showbus '97, and guess what, there wasn't a shower to be seen! The weekend of October 11/12<sup>th</sup> sees RP90 clocking up more mileage at Kidderminster and then it's Octobers' Display Day when the RF boys will rule the roost. Don't miss it!

With so much to do and so little time I'm currently contemplating my own position within the Trust. Having completed 18 issues of the Magazine I'm wondering if to call it a day at number 20 and let someone else take the strain. I reckon I spend some £200 a year alone on Trust related phone calls from home, not to mention the many hours in which my Cobham duties eat into business time when they shouldn't. So for me at least, membership to the Trust doesn't come cheap! Of course, this has been offset by the satisfaction in seeing the

Trust flourish these past five years, but it would be nice to see more non-bus owning members getting involved at Cobham so those of us with our own vehicles can spend more time on them. Also, 1998 is already looking to be a busy year for me as, in addition to running my own business I will be working with the BBPG's Nick Larkin on a new car magazine and also hope to be writing an RF book for Ian Allan Publishing. More details to follow.

For now, enjoy the rest of the season, and if you see yourself as a budding editor do please let me know!

Mike Nash

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The re-unification of the assets of the Trust with its membership has been actioned in the form of a comprehensive document sent to our solicitor, David Morgan in accordance with the wishes of the members present at the Annual General Meeting.

This sets out the history of our case and the proposed method of bringing together both sides, ourselves representing this Trust, and the directors of the former London Bus Preservation Group Ltd who have held our assets in trust since 1986 with a view to reaching a "once and for all" settlement. It should be noted that the issue of untrue allegations of which the directors claimed were of paramount importance to resolve the dispute has still as yet to be clarified or substantiated. This delay serves only to increase costs of legal fees to this Trust. However, August is a holiday month for the legal profession and matters should be expedited soon.

I received a written complaint regarding the last paragraph of the Chairman's Report on page 5 of our Spring 1997 magazine. The complaint states that I should thank ALL members for their contributions or none at all. I sought clarification of this statement via the Open Day Sub Committee but no response was received. It has always been a



major problem for me as a volunteer to establish who does what at the museum in my absence and even more difficult, what is undertaken by individuals away from the site in various members' homes. It is absolutely impossible for me to know what exactly hundreds of members may be contributing unless there are reports of some kind, which is more often not the case. Therefore, I sincerely regret I have decided to discontinue the practice of crediting of work achieved by individuals by name which avoids offending members who make unreported contributions. In its place, and to appease our insurers, members must now record their own contributions in a daily museum log which all volunteers must sign on arrival at the museum and record work performed on departure. It is disappointing the member concerned did not appreciate my effort.

In response to our appeal for a site manager at Cobham, the committee considered the applicants and member John Broadhurst has been awarded the position. He has much to keep him occupied!

Our building maintenance weekend achieved good progress despite torrential rain on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July. Only some upper girder-work on the west side has yet to be painted to complete this side of the building. The October weekend, 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>, will concentrate on the east side. Please try to attend.

The north bomb shelter continues to be fitted out for use as a store which will enable our "front of house" and shop area programme to commence. The Aldenham Works signs which the Trust has on loan have now been erected inside the building.

The car park has been re-surfaced with high quality road chippings of uniform size which are easier on the pedestrian. The closure of Addlestone Garage resulted in the donation of various artefacts including the LONDON COUNTRY sign which existed on the outside of the building.

Work on Trust vehicles has been low due to the concentration on the building environment programme. I have commenced work on RT2775 during August and anticipate to work alternate months on this and T448.

Finally, I recall the infrequent and inadequate newsletters prior to my chairmanship in 1993. It is time for me to record my appreciation to the various contributors since then, the feature on my "all time favourite" vehicle T 504 and the recollections like those of Ken Duke have made interesting reading and has made my struggle to improve communication for mutual benefit worth while and I thank you all.

Peter Plummer

## DIARY DATES

Weekend 4/5 October

### MUSEUM CLEAR-UP WEEKEND

Non-regulars especially requested to come down and help the team leaders with improving the look of our museum.

Weekend 11/12 October

### KIDDERMINSTER BUS RALLY/ SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY EVENT

RP90 will be attending and this is now an overnight event. There may still be a few seats left so contact Paul Morris on 0181 8394 for more details. Always a cracking event.

Sunday 26 October

### COBHAM BUS MUSEUM DISPLAY DAY AND RF EVENT

All the usual museum attractions plus the chance to travel on the free 462 service provided by the RF Owners Club and linking the museum with a display at Stoke D'Abernon Station and Leatherhead town centre. See rear cover for full details.

Saturday 20 December

### CHRISTMAS LIGHTS TOUR

St. Pancras, London. 5.30pm. All vehicles welcomed, especially RTs and RFs. More details from Graham Road, Wealdstone, Middx. HA3 5RE or just turn up!



## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Mike Nash

Despite the shorter period since the previous magazine, a steady influx of new members have been joining and Gordon Eldridge performed recruitment duties with much aplomb at August's Display Day with the result that paid-up membership has now crept up to 480.

At the time of writing though, I am about to send out some fifteen reminders to members, most of whom I hope will remain with the Trust. However, the majority of these are members who seem to require a reminder every year and who additionally, seem incapable of completing their "member's details" form to assist our database. I feel that at £12.50, annual membership to the Trust represents extremely good value given the size of our magazine, and indeed, when compared to what many similar organisations charge. And although the income from membership fees is entirely used up in the production and distribution costs of this magazine, I am determined to avoid increasing the membership fee.

However, is it really fair that we seem to "carry" some members continually? To that end I am considering increasing the renewal fee to £15 for those members to whom I have to send out a second reminder. I would welcome your comments and suggestions on the subject. A warm welcome is extended to the following...

598 Ian Whittaker	Burnley		AL
599 G Wilkinson	Nelson	Tiger Cub	AL
600 Stuart Boxall	West Wickham	SMD97, SMS753, DMS2456, LS300, BS4, BL49, MD60 and Metropolitan OCU 772R	MN
601 Ricky Simpson	Castle Donington		
602 Steve Lane	Woking	4 x Bristol RE	MN
603 Michael Cadman	Studland		
604 Brian Rands	Weston-Super-Mare		JR
605 Peter Dace	Cuffley		LB
606 Derrick Dyson	Balham		RK
607 M Cheney	London W1		GE
608 R Davison	Buntingford		GE
609 A Fludgate	Enfield Lock		GE
610 Peter Doyle	Ashford Mddx		WA
611 David Ladd	Iver	RTL, RM, RF, AN and more	WA



Expanding Fleet... RT 1784 makes a fine sight whilst resting at the exit of Bermondsey Tunnel at the midway stage of the Summer Christmas Lights Tour organised by its owners John and Gill Hinson, who also own another RT, three RF buses and various other eclectic machinery. Dare one ask what's next on the list? (Photograph: Phill Cruise).





More Members' Vehicles...RF486 has been out and about again this season, now in the ownership of Paul Brophy from London SE2, and looking smarter than ever (the bus, not Paul!). It is seen on the Summer Christmas Lights Tour. Meanwhile, Ward Jones has been covering much mileage in his newly restored 1948 Leyland Tiger PS1/1 which looks magnificent in its East Kent livery. CFN 104 is of course a close relative to TD95. (Photographs: Phill Cruise and Mike Nash).

612 Stephen Ladd  
613 Michael Berg

Iver  
New Haw

WA  
GE

Recruited by AL (Alan Low), GE (Gordon Eldridge), JR (John Rawlins), LB (Leah Burrows), MN (Mike Nash), RK (Raja Kalsy), WA (Bill Ackroyd)

## SHORT TURNS – I

Compiled by Mike Nash

### Many Thanks...

To Malcolm O'Neill of Carshalton who visited us on Display Day and donated a large assortment of timetables and route information leaflets from the early days of de-regulation in London. These will no doubt be put to good use when our archive displays are assembled next season.

### Any Surplus Rexine?...

Tony Beard of the 2RT2 Bus Preservation Group has written in hoping that a member may be able to spare a small amount of brown Rexine which is desperately required to cover the stairs side of the modesty screen on the top deck on RT113. If you can help Tony would be delighted to hear from you and can be contacted at 58 Perry Street, Billericay, Essex CM12 0NA.

### Classic or Tow Motion...

Whilst most of us were hurtling around the track or demolishing yet another burger at Crowthorne back in June, one member who wasn't having such a good time of it was Alan Low, whose ex-Burnley, Colne and Nelson Tiger Cub (FHG573E) went all mechanical during the day. Luckily, come the evening, 332W, Cobham's Towbus, and some willing members were on hand to see Alan and his Leyland safely back to Dorking where FHG was soon returned to health. Alan wishes to extend his thanks to those involved and in turn we thank Alan for his kind donation to Trust funds. Meanwhile, 332W is enjoying its busiest season for many years, having since performed several more such duties.



## BOOK REVIEWS

### LONDON TROLLEYBUS CHRONOLOGY 1931-1962

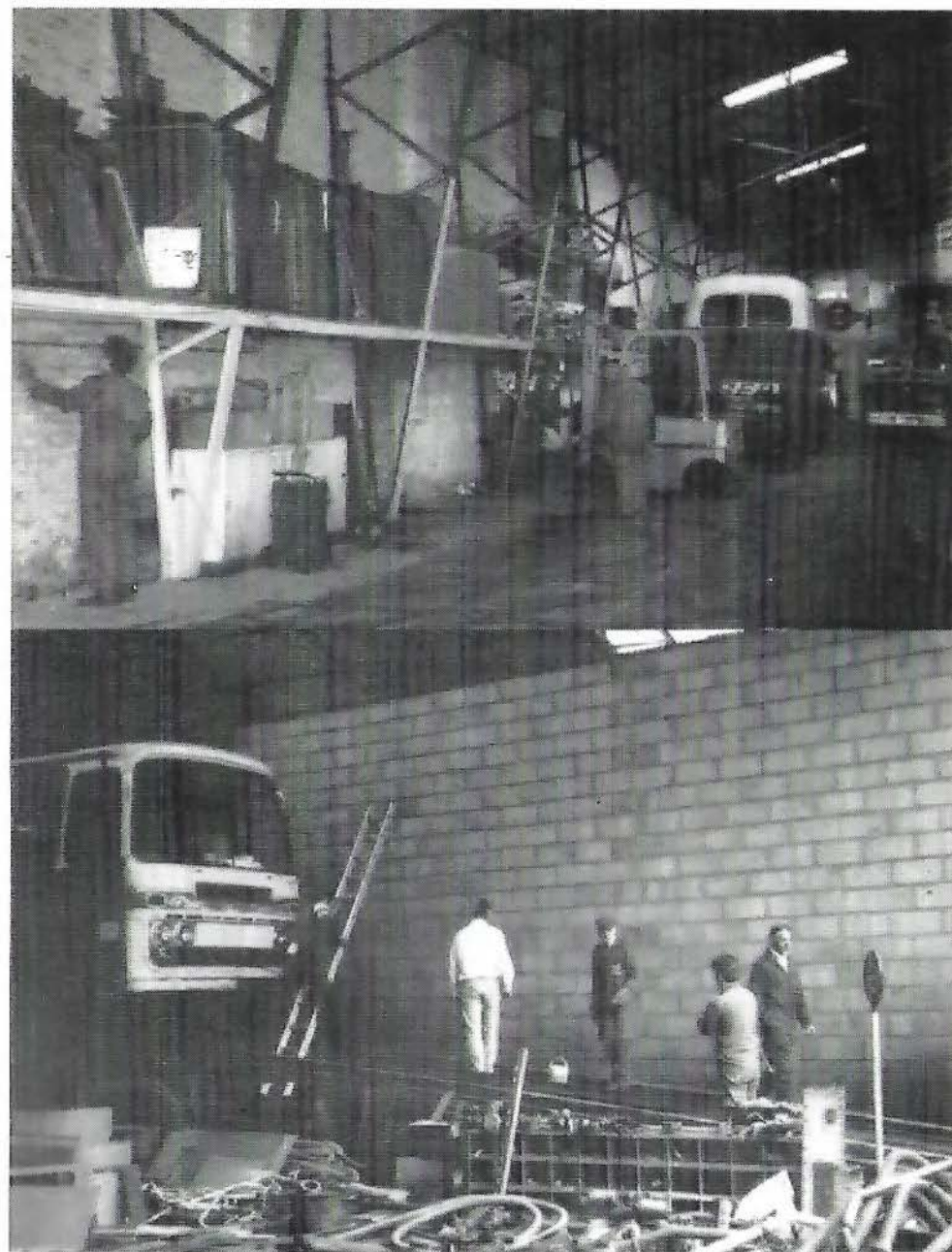
Mick Webber, published by Ian Allan, £15.99

I am always pleased to see a new trolleybus book and the pleasure is doubled if it appears to be well researched and has a fresh selection of illustrations as with this new publication from Ian Allan.

The title is rather like that paint, advertised on TV, it says just what's inside the book. Here is an illustrated diary of all the main events in the history of the London Trolleybus system, produced by someone who obviously has a love of his subject and whose first contact was with the Bexleyheath system, as was mine. The author brings in a number of personal memories. There are many of us who as schoolboys visited and were chased out of the scrapyard at Colindale for example! The book is arranged chronologically in a number of chapters that feature contemporary illustrations, only a very few being familiar. There is a chapter of "odds and ends", one about the depots and others on the service and maintenance and scrapping of the fleet. The destruction and re-bodying as a result of the war is well covered, both in the relevant chapters and in two appendices at the back of the book.

The information seems to be very accurate, which makes a pleasant change from on or two recent volumes on LT that have appeared on the shelves. One small error concerns the provision of opening windscreens. All pre-war standard trolleys were built with two opening windscreens, but many when re-built with full width front bulkheads around 1938 lost the nearside one. All post war bodies had only driver's side opening screens. This is a minor point, and in the context of a complete book that contains so much information is insignificant. The book is worth purchasing for its illustrations alone and will bring back many happy memories.

The production quality is good, being on glossy paper throughout, hard bound with very sharp, well defined photographs. I can thor-



**More Clearing Up...**As always, clear-up weekends are busy events, as can be witnessed from the above scenes. The top picture shows the west wall which has now been painted in entirety making for a much brighter atmosphere in the building. (Photographs: Diane Morris).





**Letter Games...** Andy Baxter, Peter Burrows and Brian Dabbs are pictured putting up the last of the "LONDON TRANSPORT ALDENHAM WORKS" letters obtained by Christopher Sullivan to the west wall of the museum. As well as the message to members contained in the picture, it has also been suggested that a competition be held for members to suggest the most ridiculous anagram from the said letters. Send your entry to the Editor. The winner receives a prize from the Cobham Shop. Needless to say some obscene suggestions have already emerged! (Photograph: Mike Nash).

oughly recommend it to all "students" of the London Transport of the past. Trolleybus enthusiasts won't need any encouragement!

Phill Cruise

#### AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF LONDON BUSES

Kevin Lane, published by Ian Allan £19.99

This excellent book covers all the vehicles purchased by London Transport in its various guises from 1933 to the sale of the last section of the bus operating department in 1995.

The first chapter effectively sets the scene as it was with the inception of the LPTB and gives an overview of operations until the 1990s. Then, starting with the T class, every class of bus and coach is covered, up to and including the Dennis Darts. Operations for BEA are included and there is a chapter about private coaching operations. The final chapters include LRT tendering, hired vehicles and demonstrators and conclude with privatisation and after.

Each chapter is well illustrated with views of vehicles at various stages in their lives including some after sale by LT. These photographs have been well chosen and are generally sharply reproduced on the glossy quality paper. The inclusion of many of the vehicle types stabled at Cobham over the years gives added interest. This book, although not cheap, is one that is a must for the student of London buses as the information is in strictly chronological order and covers the whole spectrum of vehicles that could be seen over a period of over sixty years. Reading through, there are only a few errors such as the caption on a Saunders RT being that it is an RT3 but minor glitches such as this can not detract from the great value of this volume.

Phill Cruise



## DRIVING SCHOOL PROGRESS

Well, the driving school is now up and running with an ex Blue Saloon Bristol LH kindly provided by Mike Nash Enterprises. A few teething problems were encountered with the vehicle at first but most of these have been eradicated as time and experience dictate. We notched up our first success when Mike Nash passed his PCV test at Guildford at the first attempt. Well done Mike! Though the result of a test can never be taken for granted, those who have sampled Mike's driving will know that he is one of those small band of people who have a natural ability when it comes to roadcraft. As for the rest of us; well, we rub along as best we can. More recently Simon Kaye and myself have been out and about with Andy Baxter, one of our stalwart volunteers. Andy has HGV/LGV experience and this will stand him in good stead when it comes to the crunch. Others who are taking up the chance of driver training are David Mulvey, Robin Sharp and Alan Fairbrother with John and Paul Herting not too far behind.

Those who have driven the vehicle, and that includes all four instructors, will know that it has a few idiosyncrasies which are either inherent in the design or a result of wear and tear over the years. The vehicle is quite old and has not had the benefit of a thorough overhaul at any time in its life and with the best will in the world this means that it takes that little bit of extra skill to overcome the obstacles that present themselves from time to time. Our chief area of concern is the fact that reverse gear is next to, and to the left of, second, and this makes it all too easy for the unwary to engage reverse in error when attempting to move off. There is, unfortunately, nothing whatsoever that we can do to eradicate this fault and the only way to overcome the problem is to take just that little bit of extra care. Speaking from personal experience, I can say that all the LH buses that I have driven have exhibited this tendency and everyone, regardless of their experience, has been caught out at some time or another. In normal driving it can be quite disconcerting to find yourself going backwards when

you should be going forwards, but on a test, of course, it means instant failure. I have yet to ascertain whether the fault is that of Bristol Commercial Vehicles, who initiated the design, or whether the gearbox is a bog standard Turner product which was fitted "off the peg" so to speak. Other manufacturers take care to put reverse gear where it cannot be engaged by mistake and, let it be said, until the advent of the LH, Bristol. Commercial Vehicles did the same, so why this aberration should have crept in is quite beyond my comprehension. The problem gets worse with age (no not mine) and selection is more haphazard as the selector springs in the gearbox get weaker.

However, thus far our trainees have coped manfully with the problems they are faced with and even the heavy steering does not draw more than a passing comment, though many grunts issue forth from the drivers on dot turns. Errors, when recognised by trainees themselves, which is, after all the object of the exercise, are normally marked by the murmuring of dark imprecations such as "oh dear" or "goodness gracious". Personally I expect trainees to work hard and to this end I do not stay too close to home in order to provide a surprise around every corner. This makes people think about what they are doing and forces them to read the road ahead more thoroughly. It also has the added advantage of banishing the risk of boredom creeping in if too many familiar roads are covered.

So there you have it. The driving school is working up to capacity at the moment but if anyone wishes to take advantage of the service offered contact can be made through any committee member or direct to me on 01753 642497. With the restricted amount of time that our instructors have available it will inevitably take longer to attain the required standard but the advantage is that it is cheap. We currently charge about 50% of most companies offering vocational driving courses and we are even cheaper than some car driving schools. So, if you are keen, remember, don't delay – apply today.

Alan Bond (Driver Training Co-ordinator)



## RT1 APPEAL

Steve Hemmings

I am sure that the majority of Trust members are well aware of RT1's history and the importance and need to retain this vehicle in preservation. She has been close to the scrapyards on two occasions, the first when London Transport decided not to preserve it themselves because RT1's body sits on the chassis of RT1420 and not the original RT1 chassis which was broken up for spares in 1945. Fortunately the late Prince Marshall purchased and beautifully restored it in time to head the cavalcade on the last day of RTs at Barking garage in April 1979. Following the sad death of Prince in 1981 and the disposal of his vehicles RT1 found herself in the USA and again came close to the scrapyards. Fortune again shone on RT1 in the shape of Michael Dryhurst who was working in the USA and is well known in the preservation field. Michael managed to negotiate and purchase RT1 and she was shipped back to her rightful home in England in 1986 and safely stored. In 1988 the "RT1 Group" was formed and RT1 came under their care and was again restored in time to act as "the star" at the memorable RT50 held in 1989 as a joint RT/RF Register /London Transport Museum event. Since then RT1 has attended many rallies and other events and was the star of the W.H. Smith "own brand" RT Video in which the Trust played a major role in the production, the filming of a great proportion taking place in and around the Museum complex.

Unfortunately, and once again, RT1 is in trouble and has been stored undercover and unwell for the past two years, and the decision has been reached that all attempts must be made for RT1 to attend her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party in 1999 at the RT60 event, the planning of which is well under way.

THE PROBLEMS – At some time in her history RT1 has suffered a knock on the nearside which has seriously weakened this area. Further investigation has revealed major corrosion culminating in

several of the all metal body support stanchions, unique to RT1, snapping, creating serious body sag to the nearside lower deck area. The vehicle has been inspected by a professional historic bus restorer who has informed the Group that considerable repair/restoration work is required to rectify, but on the plus side he has assured them that the body damage can be successfully and authentically repaired. Several other parts of RT1 need major attention, the project to be completed with a re-paint to authentic 1939 colour scheme and contemporary external adverts.

The RT1 Group has held several meetings and reached the conclusion that to meet the estimated total cost of £20,000 from their own private means is totally out of the question. I am sure the same would apply to most of us, and so the only way that RT1 can be repaired and restored to attend her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1999, and events and rallies for many years to come, is to appeal for help by way of "The RT1 Appeal" assist in raising the necessary funds. I have volunteered to act as the Appeal Organiser and am grateful to the Editor for allowing me to appeal to the LBPT Membership through the Magazine. The LBPT appreciates the importance of RT1 and the need to ensure her continued preservation, and I appeal to you to please assist with this important project by sending a donation. There is only one RT1 body, it is unique, and I hope that you agree with me that it must be repaired, restored and preserved for the future.

Please send your cheque made payable to "The RT1 Appeal" c/o Steve Hemmings, 44 Stocks Lane, Gamlingay, Sandy, Beds SG19 3JR. All donations will be acknowledged and used only for the repair and restoration of RT1. I am grateful to the Editor who has also promised space in future LBPT Magazines thus allowing me to send regular RT1 progression updates to keep you informed.

If RT1 is to be completed in time to attend her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1999 we need your help NOW please, as it has been estimated that to undertake the work properly will take about 18 months. Thank you for your help and support which is greatly appreciated. Let's make it happen please. □



## A LOOK AT THE NATIONAL – PART ONE

Mike Lloyd

Having been described by no less an authority as our Editor, chief publicist and recruitment officer Mike Nash, as a champion of the National, I thought it would be a good idea to put some of my thoughts on this bus onto paper for the edification of Cobham members.

Of course, there will be members who claim that the National isn't a London Bus at all, and others who doubt its relevance to Cobham Museum. Let's dispel both these myths. London Country Bus Services Ltd had the largest fleet of Nationals in the world, and if you accept as you surely must that London Country Buses are indeed London Buses then that alone is sufficient reason to regard the National as a London bus. If that doesn't convince you, and you prefer to overlook the substantial numbers of Nationals also operated by London Transport, consider that the National was built up from standardised parts made on jigs to exact specifications enabling mass production to precise dimensions, just like the RT and the Routemaster, and London Transport pioneered this method of bus manufacture.

Not relevant to Cobham Museum? Well, 1997 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first production Nationals, Classic Bus features one on its Calendar for February, the first ones are now eligible for the HCVS Brighton Run, and, of course, they are about to become exempt from tax (if preserved) because of their age.

Those of you who know me probably associate me with the RT and RF Register and my interest in these older types may make you wonder why I also take an interest in a modern tin box, and what qualifications I have for writing about such a box anyway. Hemel Hempstead garage had the largest allocation of Nationals in the fleet, and I worked there, initially as a general hand, but for many years as a bus mechanic, so I feel an intimate acquaintanceship with the type gives me if nothing else a point of view from the sharp end, of trying to operate the things.

The official story of the National was widely publicised and is well known; briefly, it was given out that it was a joint venture between the National Bus Company and British Leyland, both at the time in Government ownership, to produce a standardised, mass-produced city bus suitable for use anywhere. The transport minister at the time, Barbara Castle, was a great believer in large being beautiful and she had a favourite phrase about the "economies of scale," so the National was not only to be the future of the bus industry, it was to be cheap to buy, run and maintain

However, this may not be quite the true picture. We had at HH a Green Line driver named Ray Newman who had once worked for Leyland and had been there when the National was first conceived. He had also been involved in the test programme of the prototypes. Knowing my interest in buses, he used to tell me stories of his days with what was Britain's premier bus builder and his version of the genesis of the National was far different from the official one, and went as follows...

In those days when Leyland was still at the forefront of developments, the company used to train vehicle designers and as part of their training, the trainees were assigned a project. Given a set of parameters and the current Construction and Use Regulations, they had to come up with a viable design. This might be for anything, perhaps a lorry of a certain maximum weight with specified performance characteristics, anything at all, the idea was to prove that they could produce a design to meet certain specified objectives, and which would comply with legal requirements, as of course "real" designs would have to do in the outside world. According to Ray Newman, one such exercise was to design a single deck city bus which could be mass-produced from standardised parts in the way that passenger cars already are, and which met current regulations. There was, he claimed, no intention whatever at that time of ever actually building such a bus, not least because as we all know, every operator had his own ideas of what he wanted and such a bus would never be saleable on the open market. In due course the students came up with what we



might call the father of the National, and then went on to other things. In the normal course of events, the design would simply have been filed away and probably forgotten, but it happened that a delegation of top National Bus Company managers was visiting Leyland at the time and one of them found the design, enquired about it and was told more or less what I have just written above, in particular, that there was no intention of building such a bus because of the marketing problem. However, official NBC thinking was that, as there was now just one major bus company, there would be a lot to be said for producing just such a bus, which they would happily buy in large quantities, so the design exercise was started off on the path to reality and we all know what happened as a result.

The National was not exactly the enthusiasts' favourite and many operators didn't love it either. It was the wrong bus in the wrong place at the wrong time, yet it was built in larger numbers than any other and it has stayed the course in a way we probably didn't think would ever prove to be the case. Why was it so disliked?

From the point of view of the enthusiast, it was a loser from the start because in so many fleets, it replaced well loved, reliable old friends, the RT in LCBS service, and the Regents, PDs, Daimlers and Guy Arabs of the provincial fleets as well as their single deck counterparts. The variety and detail differences so beloved of the enthusiasts were nowhere to be found. No longer did a bus for one part of the country have a distinctive look found nowhere else, instead, all the buses everywhere were alike. It even killed off well loved liveries as you could, Henry Ford style, have it any colour you liked as long as you liked an insipid light green or a strange orangey colour called poppy red. It didn't help that you could also have any kind of seating you liked as long as you wanted bus seats trimmed in cold, unwelcoming vinyl. It is true that there were people who admired its fresh, modern appearance, but overall its brash modernity was a poor substitute for what people began to see as the tasteful and restrained designs of its predecessors, while its odd appearance, with swaged panels and prominent, ugly rivet heads, was decidedly un-British. I

thought of it as being inspired by those American school buses which Dinky once modelled. Enthusiasts tend to be a bit conservative, and the National was a shock to many systems.

From the standpoint of the operator, the big failings of the bus were unreliability (an unforgivable sin) and very erratic handling – it wasn't exactly cheap either, as had been promised, and both to buy and to run was more expensive than almost anything that had gone before with the possible exception of the Metro-Scania. Unreliability was a feature of many early rear-engined single deck designs, only the Bristol RE seeming to get it right, but the National was its own worst enemy in that it was loaded with gadgets apparently fitted for the sake of it (or perhaps to help Leyland win awards for innovation), any one of which could fail and result in a bus that wouldn't go. Compared with this, there was also cheeseparing in important places so that many essential components were under engineered and suffered regular premature failure. More development and some common sense input from operators could have made the bus a world beater from the start, but that wasn't Leyland's way, they knew best and if you didn't like it, too bad. We can see the result today in the large numbers of, shall we say, non-indigenous vehicles on our streets.

The vehicle's erratic handling arose from the dreadful weight distribution, the engine, transmission and batteries all being behind the rear axle, resulting in the front end trying to lift itself up in the air. This was coupled with power steering so effective that it was almost impossible to get any "feel" for the wheel, together with braking that was seriously out of balance on early examples of the type. One mechanic at HH steadfastly refused ever to drive a National on a wet road because of a terrifying experience he had with an early model. He was a daredevil of the first order, and in retirement in his eighties was known to roar about the lanes on a souped-up Thruxton Velocette motorbike while failing to wear a crash helmet, so whatever it was that frightened him about the National must have been pretty serious.

So far I have painted rather a black picture of the National and in retrospect I feel if anything rather sorry for the bus. It need not have



been such a disaster and in fact over the long years its operators have found ways round most of its problems. Nowadays it can be found in the fleets of the sort of small operators who once would have shied away from its technology, and it seems to have settled down into a respectable old age. It has in fact quite a few plus points and I think perhaps we tend to overlook these.

For a start, the idea of a standard bus in use throughout the country is not at all a bad one and works well overseas. France has its Renault PR100, Germany the Mercedes Benz O.405, and so on. The idea that a bus in Town "A" needs its windows 3 inches longer and 2 inches deeper than a bus in Town "B", or needs to be 4 inches shorter than one in Town "C", or has to have its pillars spaced differently from buses in Town "D" is very hard to justify and it must have increased the cost of new buses tremendously when virtually every batch was different. A standard type should have simplified maintenance as staff became familiar with it and spare parts holding should have been greatly simplified as well. Accept that it would have been boring for the enthusiast, but buses are there to do a job and not to provide fun for us, and a standardised bus could have made a big difference to the industry.

In practice, no operator was in a position to replace entire fleets of buses with one standard type, so the addition of the National to fleets was merely another complication. Staff had to learn about another strange type and a whole new range of parts had to be added to existing stocks. In time, this would have solved itself as the older types went, but as buses have a long life, in most cases by the time the last pre-National buses were sold, the National itself was obsolescent and its successors were on the market. If investment had allowed operators to replace their whole fleets with the National, things might have been different and the benefits of Mrs Castle's economies of scale might have become apparent.

The National's best feature was its strength. The basic body structure is extremely strong and frankly, if you're going to be in a crash, make sure you're in a National. It is also remarkably free from corro-

sion. I believe that, given the ability to provide power trains and ancillary parts, Nationals could in fact go on more or less forever. Pity the rest of the bus wasn't up to the same standard!

Most importantly, from the driver's point of view, a good A or B series National, maintained properly, was an absolute joy to drive. The cab layout was very clever, the right hand being used exclusively to control the bus and the left to deal with passengers. Once one had got used to this it was a pleasure to handle, in fact the short version, always the tauter of the two to my mind, was really like nothing so much as a 33 foot long sports car. I was once badly carved up by a cretin in a car near Two Waters garage, and I chased him all the way to the big roundabout at Langleybury just outside Watford and returned the complement – not many buses would do that!

But sadly, on balance, the National had a lot against it. I learned one problem soon after starting as a general hand when, with a colleague, I had to clean the interior on SNB 77 for its annual PSV test. The all-plastics interior of the National was promoted as being easy to keep clean, but the advertising failed to mention that many plastics attract and retain dust and dirt, and such plastics seemed to have been specially selected for use in the National. Cleaning the anodised aluminium handrails was almost impossible and we never really found a suitable solvent which was safe to use but nevertheless removed the grease and nicotine stains effectively. Worst of all was the ceiling. As we often remarked at HH, every schoolboy knows that hot air rises, so given this basic piece of elementary science, the designers of the National fitted the heating system into the roof.

The theory was fine, the roof-pod mounted heater unit would blow filtered, warmed air through ducts in the insulated roof space, and, to circulate through vents above the coving panels, de-misting the windows as it did so. In summer, sensors would calculate that the exterior temperature was high, the heat would switch off, and clean, filtered, cool air would circulate. In theory...

In practice, the clever sensing system never worked, the heater in the pod readily blocked up with scale and gunge, the driver's cab



rarely received enough warmth because of its distance from the heat source and, worst of all, every kind of dust, dirt, oil, grease and filth was drawn in to the pod and blown through the ducts to leave permanently dirty marks all down the coving panels. Far from having easy clean surfaces, these were a rather rough, matt finish which held the dirt superbly. Repeated cleaning with soapy water failed to remove the marks, but the water did find its way nicely into the vents, and for hours afterwards filthy water would drip slowly out onto the nice (fairly) clean panels. How wonderful to have an easy clean interior instead of the dreadful old painted ceilings of the RT, RF, RM, MB family, etc. Eventually, in desperation, our painter actually painted some covings in bright white gloss which improved matters quite a lot, but there was no real solution to the sucking in of dirt and its depositing all around the bus.

The cold, green vinyl seats were a bonus however. These were very simple to clean, merely needing a wipe over, rather than the endless beatings and Hooverings as we struggled to try to clean moquette seats on older types. In those distant days, any kind of dirt inside the bus would cause it to fail its PSV inspection. Things have changed now.

Mention of the interior reminds me of two other problems, namely the used ticket boxes and the luggage rack. The former were so flimsy that they inevitably lost the little flap at the bottom, so all the tidy-minded passengers who used the box merely created a heap of litter by the front, where it could readily be blown about the bus. The luggage rack was so tinny that, equally inevitably, pop rivets broke away and the aluminium sides bent easily from the pressure of standing passengers or indeed from luggage moving about inside. This resulted in virtually incurable rattles for the life of the bus. Cab door catches were pretty inadequate too, in fact the driver was spared a lot of engine noise, but the clatter inside the bus was if anything worse and certain drivers complained regularly about all the row. Others found ways of folding up log sheets and cash bags and wedging the offending parts to produce a bit of peace. Of course, when we came to

do an interior clean, we had to remove all these paper wedges – back to square one. In fairness to Leyland, they did attempt to address some of these defects and later Nationals had much more substantial luggage racks and repositioned ticket boxes which seemed to have a longer life. The cab doors always rattled, however, and as built they had a six-inch gap at the bottom which didn't help to keep the drivers warm. London Country supplied shaped metal plates which we riveted to the door framing to alleviate the draughts, but Leyland never seemed to get round to this.

I mentioned that the first bus I had to clean was SNB 77. This was a classic case of a Friday bus, it was never any good from the day it was built and I noticed that when London Country began selling off Nationals some years ago, 77 was one of the first to make the final one-way journey to the breakers, so presumably it never “came good.”

It did, however, at one time provide a bit of a laugh. Nationals were fitted with a timer relay on the starting circuit such that, if the engine failed to fire and the ignition key was released, a 10-second delay occurred before you could try again. This was a wise precaution to prevent someone trying to re-engage the starter motor with a still-turning engine which would have resulted in damage to the teeth on both motor and flywheel rack. However, and it had to be on 77, for some reason in hot weather especially the 10-second period seemed to extend a little, or rather, quite a lot. This would result, in summer months, in frantic calls from drivers changing over and finding that 77 had been switched off by the first driver and wouldn't restart for the newcomer, unless he was about fifteen minutes late, of course. When this happened, and knowing the problem, I would set out in another bus, equipped with jump leads just in case, and then on arrival, get into the cab of 77 with her load of passengers. By this time inevitably the time lapse was sufficient as I well knew, so I would say, loudly, “Come along old girl, be good and start for Uncle Michael” before turning the key. As the engine fired I would remark, casually, “There you are driver, all done by kindness”, and, turning to face the passen-



gers, add "For my next trick..." which usually brought a laugh, no bad thing when they had been stuck in an immobile bus. A few drivers didn't appreciate this and felt they had been made to look silly, so I usually explained matters. Eventually the electricians changed the offending relay and spoiled my fun.

Another useful electrical interlock was intended to prevent operation of the starter while the engine was actually running. This circuit detected that the alternator was charging and then immobilised the starter circuit, another sound idea to prevent accidental or deliberate damage. We had at one time a bus, can't remember which after all this time, on which this detector circuit was abnormally sensitive. This meant that, just as the revs were building up to the point where the engine would have fired up, the detector detected a faint trace of charge and cut out the starter! Now if you were very quick to release the key and step on the gas, you just might get the thing to go, but mostly you had no chance. This was an odd intermittent fault of the type electricians hate most as it was so difficult to isolate the defective part, but they did manage to cure that as well, a great source of relief to us all as the bus was almost impossible to start normally and we had to resort to trickery of various kinds to get it to go.

Electrics were one of the real problems on the Nationals, and another headache in the summer concerned the gear selectors. For some reason Leyland eschewed the normal CAV semi-automatic gear selector familiar on, inter alia, MB family and RP coaches, and developed their own device, the G2 gear control system. This incorporated a block of solid state electronics under the actual banks of micro-switches. This clever device, called the chocolate block by the electricians, was designed to prevent faults such as engaging two gears at once and to detect various other possible defects in the circuitry. However, like all clever devices, it was also very stupid. If you parked a National out in the hot summer sun for a few hours, the sun beating through the cab windows onto the matt black interior caused, surprise, a rise in ambient temperature of the gear selector. It therefore had a little think and decided that there must be a technical

defect responsible for the generation of all this heat, so just to be on the safe side, refused to engage any gears at all! A regular sight in summer afternoons was bus mechanics armed with soaking wet cleaning cloths going round parked Nationals and cooling down the gear selectors so that the buses could be used on the evening peak services! And this, we had been told by the makers, was the bus of the future! Again, Leyland must have addressed this problem because as selectors were gradually replaced, it ceased to manifest itself.

A last little tale about gear selection concerns a modification London Country attempted on the fleet of Nationals. Any semi-automatic bus is at risk of driver abuse by changing to a lower gear at too high a road speed. This can result in overspeeding the engine and stressing the transmission. On Atlanteans at neighbouring GR it also resulted regularly in sheared fan drive shafts which could do a lot of damage as they flailed around in the engine bustle, but that's another story. To stop this on the National, some enterprising firm developed another black box full of electronic trickery. This was simply plugged in between the gear selector and the rest of the gear circuit, and a speed detector was mounted on the rear axle, detecting road speed by a sensor which worked on the heads of the propshaft bolts. The theory was that, if the driver tried to change down at unsuitably high road speeds, the higher gear would be "held" until speed dropped sufficiently to permit safe engagement of the lower gear.

Nothing wrong with the theory but again the practice wasn't quite as intended. One afternoon, as a late-shift mechanic, I found SNB247 being fitted up with one of these devices and the electricians invited me to take it out for a road test while they travelled as observers in case of any problems. In normal driving along flat roads it appeared to be working as intended, but then we tried the bus up one of the many hills with which HH is surrounded. As I accelerated hard in fourth uphill, I was suddenly aware of a tremendous increase in engine noise coupled with an equally sudden loss of forward motion. No gears! We tried various combinations of gears and revs that afternoon but were completely unable to get the bus to go uphill until we uncou-



pled the magic box and restored the original circuitry. It seemed that no-one had thought about hills, and the gadget decided that we were revving too fast for the gear we were in (we weren't, in fact) so to be on the safe side, it threw the gearbox into neutral!

Several buses had been fitted up with these things and very soon various problems became apparent, usually different problems with each installation. Eventually, after a lot of experimenting and various modifications, London Country scrapped the whole idea. However, piles of conversion kits remained in the back of the stores for years and the wasted money must have been a concern. I suppose whoever bought them off the shelf without a suitable initial trial was promoted out of harm's way as so often happened, but he should have been sacked for the waste of time, money and effort involved in getting us nowhere, quite literally. □

*This feature concludes in the next issue when Mike recalls some of the individual LeyNats he worked with and even hints at a desire to preserve one particular example. Time will tell!*

## THE EARLY NATIONALS

Mike Nash

With so much interest now being shown in early Leyland Nationals it seemed a good time to try to establish exactly what happened to the earliest London Country and London Transport examples. The results of my enquiries proved most interesting and have also led to the rescue for preservation of one of the latter, just weeks prior to its being cut up. But more of that later.

Due to its very concept, the Leyland National has never been considered as having close associations with London, and yet London Country Bus Services went on to acquire the worlds biggest fleet with 543 (not to mention all the 'imported' examples acquired since). And London Transport weren't far behind in taking some 507. So you

could say that with 1050 examples to be seen in and around London (some 15% of the entire build) they were just as much a part of the London scene as many of their more illustrious predecessors.

In fact, the first two delivered to LCBS were of particular significance, being two of the ten 'Pre-Production Prototypes'. LN1 (KPA101K – Ch. 00003) was delivered in April 1972 whilst LN2 (KPA102K – 00004) followed in June. Both were delivered in plain yellow and had blue relief and Superbus markings applied subsequently for use on the so-branded Stevenage services. It was to be some time before more arrived, indeed LN3 was 'L' registered and chassis number 00198 (the main production batch started at 00101). Sadly, neither of the first two survive, LN1 passed to Midland Red North and was cannibalised at their Cannock depot in the early Nineties whilst LN2 is believed to have ended life being chopped up somewhere in Barnsley around the same time. Given their significance these two would have been prime preservation candidates just five years later.

The earliest LCBS example now believed to exist is LN8 (NPD108L – Ch. 00216) which is believed to be with an outfit called Cantibrica of St. Albans. That said, it was one of four examples (8–11) to be delivered directly to Nottingham City Transport for evaluation services and when it did move south together with 10 and 11 it passed to Hants and Dorset in exchange for former King Alfred Metro-Scania vehicles MS5–7, thus never actually turning a wheel for LCBS!

The story for LTE's earliest examples is rather different. The first six, also referred to as prototypes, were delivered for evaluation purposes in 1973, to be directly compared to six Metro-Scania single deckers. LS1–6 and MS1–6 worked out of Dalston Garage on route S2. Neither model excelled itself but the Nationals proved more successful and went almost twice as far on a gallon of fuel! These first six were remembered as much as anything for their unique livery which looked very smart indeed in featuring a white roof, grey pod and yellow front doors. But they also had a number of special features and were to a new 'quiet' specification and fitted with a close ratio 5-speed



fully automatic gearbox. Registered TGY101-106M (Chs. 00703/775/6/817-9) they subsequently moved to Hounslow to join 51 further examples and all six gained a standard livery at the first repaint as well as other modifications to bring them more into line with the second batch. These first six were sold in 1985 with only LS1 continuing as a PSV, for Red Rover of Aylesbury and later Ensigns, even making occasional appearances at rallies. Then, during 1990 Ensigns withdrew it and almost unbelievably broke it up for spares, the remains ending up with PVS at Debden. The other five all passed to British Airways for airside use, initially at Gatwick. None had been seen for quite sometime so I feared that all had passed to the great bus garage in the sky. The PSV Circle confirmed that LS3 had indeed been scrapped by Ripley, Carlton in 1991, but the other four were all believed to have crossed the Irish Sea. Time for some detective work!

A series of phone calls firstly tracked down LS6, now registered 73C22, and in everyday use by Cork County Council as a mobile library, now in its 24<sup>th</sup> season and expected to be used for many more years according to the CCC Transport Manager who forwarded me the photograph you see in this issue. The other three proved more elusive, having apparently passed to a dealer named Bogue of Castlecaulfield. Directory enquiries listed a private number of the same name and town but this turned out to be a fax number. So I faxed a message across, not expecting to hear any more on the subject. Then, barely half an hour later I've got this man on the line who not only tells me that all three survive but also that he's got one derelict in his yard, together with a couple of very early LCBS examples, LN14 being one. Incredibly, it seems that LS2 is still in service at Belfast Harbour Airport whilst LS4 still operates at Dublin Airport. They are used intensively and are apparently considered much prized possessions!

Meanwhile, LS5 had not been so lucky, yet! Bogue's had purchased a batch of Nationals from British Airways for continued airside use. LS5 was the first to arrive and therefore went to the back of the yard. And it never came back out again. But luckily it somehow esc-

aped the full attention of vandals (unlike the other Nationals and ex-BCal Merlins in the same yard) and has remained reasonably intact. Photographs were sent to me which revealed that LS5 was in fact remarkably original outside although most of the glass was smashed so water ingress was likely to be a problem. And of course, the forward section of the saloon is to 'standee' configuration, a legacy of its airside days. However, given that it was complete mechanically, a deal was struck, to include a selection of spares (some of which were needed for SNC117 and 'Sainsbury') and the chance to strip the other two Nationals. So even if LS5 turned out to be a turkey I reckoned I was getting my money's worth! This all happened just in the nick of time as all the buses in the yard were about to be cut up.

I will bring the story up to date in the next issue and plan to have LS5 brought back to the mainland early in October. However, it has already been dragged out of the yard and taken to a friendly preservationists' workshop where the engine has since been fired up and proclaimed as healthy, indeed the vehicle has even been road tested. It has also gained a windscreen but there is too much to do to consider its being driven back to Surrey. However, a donor vehicle in the form of LS229 has been acquired with a view to returning LS5 to the road sometime next year, hopefully to meet up once again with its old sparing partner MS4, which is now back in its original livery.

I'm amazed that four of the six still survive, and given that three will be celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday in continued active service it can't be a bad record. I aim to keep tabs on them with a view to also finding them homes in preservation when they are finally retired. Meanwhile LS5 is destined to become something of a celebrity machine amongst the fast growing ranks of preserved Nationals. □



## A TALE OF TWELVE NATIONALS

Andy Barnes

As a small child, I was always fascinated by anything with wheels, and buses proved to be no exception! My first recollections of buses were on occasions when I was staying with my grandmother, at Canterbury. After persuading my mother or father to take me to the excellent bus station, I used to spend hours, fascinated by the constant stream of buses coming and going. The type which held great appeal to me were the Leyland Nationals, in particular, I recall being fascinated by the grille on the rear panel, with its rotating fan. The engines also made a very distinctive noise, especially when “thrashed” from cold, although I have since learned that this is somewhat unwise mechanically!

I moved on to secondary school in 1982, and a few days before the end of term, my father took me on a “dummy run” to my future school, in the Ramsden district of Orpington. This involved a journey on London Country route 493, and to my delight, a Leyland National appeared. Maybe the prospect of a new school wasn't so bad after all!

After the start of term, I quickly realised that the 493 was worked by Dunton Green garage, which, from my calculations seemed to have fourteen Nationals on fleet strength. I soon started to notice small detail differences, some had green seats, some tan, while some even had blue/green coach type seating. Other differences were in the style of the pods, overhead luggage racks, window layout and handrails. In fact, I taught myself almost everything there was to know about Nationals (at least I was learning something).

Another event in 1982 was my mother moving from Canterbury to Sevenoaks, which also had a bus station. (Better than shopping with mum!) In addition, Dunton Green was conveniently situated between Sevenoaks and Orpington, so we were able to stop at the depot for “five minutes” on the way home!

After the 1983 summer holiday, the SNB allocation at Dunton Green had settled on twelve examples. These were a good variety,



Early Nationals... (Top) LS5 is pictured derelict and as recently rescued from the scrapyard in Dungannon, NI, whilst below is seen LS6 (now 73C22), flanked by LS129 and LS118, all three of which perform as mobile libraries for Cork County Council. (Photographs: Mike Nash)





**Notable Nationals...** PUK 641R (3641), originally a Midland Red vehicle, was the last full length example allocated to Addlestone Garage. It was subsequently rescued and is now in the safe hands of David Crowther and his 'Classic Coaches' fleet at High Wycombe. Meanwhile, the last Mk.1 National to perform on route 218 was the wonderful 'contravision' KPA 364P (213), once part of the Alder Valley fleet and a familiar sight in the Cobham area thanks to its purple and orange livery. It too has passed into preservation rather than making a final journey up to Barnsley. (Photographs: Mike Nash).





**Route 218 Farewell...** The final London & Country working of route 218 was performed by Greenway 360 (JIL 2190), seen at Walton-on-Thames, whilst later that evening the penultimate 218 working is pictured at Kingston. The last run of all all was operated by London Buslines Dennis Dart 632 (P632 CGM), and both trips were shadowed by RF534. (Photographs: Colin Shepperd and Mike Nash).

SNB 84, 85, 106 (early green plastic-seated examples), 117, 123, 156 (former SNC dual-purpose type), 254, 257, 258, 259, 263 (five from the NPK/R batch, new to Dunton Green), and a later bus, 359. For some reason, Dunton Green did not operate any series-B Nationals at that time, a fact that I was grateful for, as I do not rate them as highly.

Obviously, I got to know the twelve buses very well and it was not long before I had started a league table in my school contact book, to see which would make the most appearances in each term. This led to many confused looks from my teachers, they just didn't understand! My actual favourite was SNB254 (the first DG National which I rode on), but I was also very keen on the three former SNC buses, which are undoubtedly the most comfortable vehicles that I have ever had the pleasure to travel on. The grandstand view from the front seats on the upper level was quite superb.

The next three years were uneventful, with the same dozen Nationals giving sterling service. They provided me with a good diversion from a fairly unhappy time at school, and I became far too attached to them. A typical schoolday would see me hurry home, get changed and go back to the bus stop for another dose! As an alternative, I sometimes went to Bromley and back, using LT routes 61 or 261, which were a good bet for a Bromley LS! During 1984, I persuaded my dad to pay for me to join LOTS, so I could keep tabs on overhaul dates, allocations, etc.

The next major development was in 1986, when the bus network of Orpington underwent radical change. After an initial scare, when the 493 was proposed for "breadvan" operation, common sense prevailed and the route stayed at Dunton Green, with SNB operation. The buses concerned had to be fitted with "Weyfarer" ticket machines and LRT notices, so it was decided to equip only five, this being deemed sufficient for the three 493 turns. The buses chosen were the five newest SNB vehicles, which were 257, 258, 259, 263 and 359.

The following year, London Country (South East) became Kentish Bus and a new livery was introduced. A Dunton Green vehicle, SNB359, was the chosen to be the first to receive the new maroon and



cream livery, and so appeared in several publicity photographs.

I left school in 1987, so my regular bus journeys ceased. However, my interest never declined, although things never seemed quite the same from then on. The 493 stayed at Dunton Green until late 1989, when it became the responsibility of Dartford Garage, with several Nationals arriving from early 1988 onwards, of both series-A and series-B type, although the former enjoyed only a relatively brief stay.

By late 1989, most of the Nationals had left Dunton Green, the only examples being SNB257 and a couple of recently acquired (and short lived) former Midland Red 11.3 metre examples, which were intended for use on schools contracts. These were transferred from "parent" company Northumbria, which was also owned by the Proudmutual group, which led to much swapping between the two fleets. Of the other eleven, 359 was also still in Kentish Bus service (at Dartford), 84 and 123 had been sold for scrap, while no less than seven had passed to Northumbria, these being ex-SNB vehicles 106, 117, 156, 254, 258, 259 and 263. The other bus, SNB105, also ended up in the north-east, with another Proudmutual subsidiary, Moordale of Cramlington.

I was now becoming more involved with railways, where I was also employed, and in particular, class 47 diesels. However, I always kept a keen eye on the "DG" National situation and always checked the "Northumbria" section of any magazines or fleetbooks which I came across.

During the spring of 1991, Kentish Bus withdrew their last series-A Nationals, this including 257 and 359. They joined another five, which according to LOTS were "for disposal". I feared the worst, as many earlier surplus Nationals had been sold to W Norths, where they were scrapped, having failed to find buyers. A couple of months passed, with no news of the seven redundant buses. However, fate was about to deal a stroke of luck, when Go-Ahead Northern suffered an industrial dispute, which led to Northumbria undertaking extra work. As a result, the seven Nationals were sent north and immediately pressed into service in Newcastle!

With the new additions of SNB 257 and 359 (amongst others), Northumbria now operated no less than nine of what I considered Dunton Green's "dozen". They were given light refurbishment, some to a greater extent than others. Thankfully, and perhaps surprisingly, the dual-purpose examples retained their coach seats and were even re-trimmed. Even more importantly, all retained Leyland engines – no DAF or Volvo horrors!

I first visited Northumbria in August 1991 and was rewarded by a ride on one of my old favourites. The routes were quite interesting, many of them being good runs, on A-roads. The hour-long journey between Newcastle and Blyth was one such route, good old 117 was even dedicated to express route X1 between these points, for which it carried a special white livery. The former Kentish Bus Nationals were spread around several Northumbria depots, including Ashington, Jesmond, Blyth and Whitley Bay.

I managed to find a nice B&B in Whitley Bay (the home of 254!) and tried to visit the area at least once a year from then on. Using the excellent "North East Explorer" ticket, a good time could be had.

The first significant withdrawals occurred in 1993, when 106, 156 and 254 were all retired. The decline then started to set in, as 258, 259, 263 and 359 fell by the wayside in the following months. Amazingly, the first three were all sent to fellow British Bus company North Western, where they lived a third life! Poor old 359 was not so lucky, passing to North East Bus Breakers.

By Autumn 1996, Northumbria was setting about disposing of its last Mk 1 Nationals. Those which made it to the end were 117 (now an incredible 22 years old, and old faithful 257. Some time prior to this, a few mates and myself had considered saving one of these buses for preservation. The obvious choice was 117, as there were very few of the SNC type left, especially with coach seating. Although we drafted a letter to Northumbria, the project was slowly dropped, as other commitments took precedence. (And we lost our bottle!)

By Christmas 1996, I had learned of the withdrawal of the Northumbria buses. Through routing through several magazines, I



had traced 257 to W North's, while 117 seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth. I assumed Northumbria had scrapped it on site.

Early in the new year, my mate Simon casually mentioned that he and his brother (who does a bit of bus dealing), were visiting the Yorkshire scrapyards. I asked him to keep an eye out for NPK257R at North's, just out of interest, not really expecting a reply.

The phone rang a few days later – Simon had found a quantity of “demic” Northumbria Nationals at North's. He asked me if I wanted the good or bad news first. I said bad, and he told me that only two of the dozen or so had any chance of running again. The good news was that 257 was one of them and that it was mine for two grand! Unfortunately, Simon was unable to photograph 257, as it was apparently stuck behind a skip.

It was at this stage that I realised that it was now or never – fate had decreed that I acted. I knew that I would always regret it if I let 257 die now. I quickly set about finding a home, driver and some guts! W North's were contacted and a date was arranged for a trip to North Yorkshire to give 257 the once-over.

At around this time, news was starting to filter through about 117, that it had apparently been preserved by “a bloke from LOTS”. The name “Mike Nash” was mentioned several times, although enquiries about him seemed to reach a dead end. Still, 117 seemed safe, and the small details didn't really matter.

257 was duly inspected and seemed to be in reasonable condition. The bodywork was superior to the engine, which was certainly on the smoky side (even for a National!). However, I was assured that it drove down from Whitley Bay without incident, and that it would make Kent without a problem, in the (unbiased) opinion of North's. However, I insisted on the bus being MoT'd before we collected it, a fact that almost stalled the deal. SNB315, the other runner, was pointed out as an alternative, having a stronger engine, although I was obviously not interested in this former Northfleet bus (nothing personal).

I eventually received confirmation that 257 had passed its MoT

test and a date was arranged for collection, the story of which will be told in a future issue.

So what is the situation now? I met Mike Nash and 117 at the Cobham Open Day, so that tale has been a happy ending. As for the others, 259 and 263 are still in service with North Western, when they were working out of Bootle depot on routes in central Liverpool. They have recently received light refurbishment, so may last a while yet. 258 was withdrawn by North Western and sold to the dealer Martin's. Incredibly, it survived, passing to a small company in East Devon, of all places. Apparently, it is a bit rough and may not last much longer. 156 was sold (I assume by North's) to a TV production company in Greater Manchester, although I don't know what it is used for or indeed what sort of state it is in now, as that was four years ago.

Therefore, in August 1997, six of the original dozen “DG” Nationals are still in existence. Three are still PCV licensed, two are preserved and one is non-PCV. For a bus which critics said was very poor, I don't think that's a bad record, as even the NPK batch are now well over twenty years old. I am still trying to come to terms with the fact that two Dunton Green Nationals have been saved – quite incredible. Any takers for the other four? □

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**SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER**

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## SHORT TURNS – 2

Compiled by Mike Nash

### One For Next Year...

Having been collecting a car from Oxford on August 17<sup>th</sup>, I decided then to pop down to Swindon and the Science Museum at nearby Wroughton where what was formerly the Bristol Rally but which is now called the Swindon and Bristol Bus Festival was being staged. And it was well worth the effort. The site is ideal for a bus rally and as well as the many and varied static exhibits the rally was very well attended though there was a distinct lack of London vehicles. I'm not particularly keen on judged events but such was the variety and sheer number of awards on offer that many vehicles picked up awards, even Gareth 'Tea Urn' Crowther with his freshly painted Devon General Bristol LH. However, I was concerned to see a very well known vehicle take two awards for best PCV when it only has a Class 5 MOT. With the site situated close to the M4 this is definitely one for Cobham to attend next season en-masse, and I have a suspicion that we could well bring back some silverware with us!

### Binding Time...

Gordon Edridge, our man in the Cobham Shop, has organised some special cordex binders which will hold 12 issues of this very magazine in pristine condition. They will be priced at £4 each and are to be appropriately finished in red leatherette. Full details next issue.

### Regal Rescued...

The appeal in the last magazine for a member to rescue RF512 was taken up by regular Cobham hand Jeff Warr of Gravesend, who just beat a second party (which included Brian Dabbs) in securing this well known Regal. RF512 should be making its way to Ongar fairly soon where it will join RT3175 which Jeff also owns. This itself replaced RT4628 which Jeff had originally planned to buy, only to be let down at the last minute.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Malcolm Lewis

The recent letter from David Porter has prompted me to write firstly to update my whereabouts and secondly to add further recollections to his about the LT contracted routes 116 and 117.

I've moved on from the 436 and London & Country to Wilts & Dorset. The sea air and the Bournemouth Orchestra's attracted me to Poole rather than the desire to drive Metroriders! However, W&D do have a couple of 'stick' Bristol LH buses still in regular use but my type training did not include these. During August the minibus drivers get a chance to drive 'deckers' on Sundays and evenings. This maybe a VR, Olympian or Optare Spectra. The latter is a good modern vehicle but whatever happened to LT's research into windscreens? The reflection from the interior lights and lower saloon is terrible.

David Porters dual-door National, TYJ 45R, reminded me of my times driving it. Being the only dual-door example I would frequently pull up at a stop, open the front doors and wonder why nobody was getting off. Thinking of making the remark "Is no one getting off then?" I'd look in the rear view mirror and see a group standing by the centre exit! Another problem was knowing when the last person had got off. There was a point where if the person was standing on the lower step about to get off he/she could not be seen by the driver. I once had the alarm of virtually pushing out an elderly gentleman by closing the doors too soon. Fortunately, he did not fall over, nor suffer injury. I learned to look for a leg emerging from the nearside by looking in the nearside mirror. Pulling away needed care too because with the centre doors open the accelerator pedal was locked as a safety precaution. You had to learn to close the doors first, then pull away.

Prototype Greenway JCK 852W was the first bus I drove solo, on Christmas Eve 1991. It was very low geared such that on the level, 3<sup>rd</sup> gear pull away was best. Most of the TGM Nationals were I believe



sent away for conversion to Greenways. I was at Addlestone long enough to see the entire allocation change to such. Certainly a more modern bus was created but in reality the cost of conversion was only marginally less than buying a new bus.

Addlestone Garage had been due to close for some years which was why I transferred to Woking depot for my last year with L&C. I remember in the canteen there was a beautiful station-type clock with clockwork mechanism and a small pendulum which I guessed to be about the same age as the garage. Inside the main garage was another relic still in use, the fuel pump, with its original (I was told American) machinery. It had been modernised by the addition of a litre dial gauge in the hose pipe to the nozzle. Otherwise it was original. Perhaps Cobham could rescue it?

*Commercial Road, Poole, Dorset BH14 0JD*

*Editor's note* The clock was rescued by fellow enthusiast and senior L&C man Bill Tutty whilst the fuel pump had to be removed by specialist contractors. However, thanks to the efforts of member David Boshier, we were given the opportunity to have a sift through the remains at WY and as a result, several useful items were obtained for Cobham, and also the large London Country lettering from the side of the building. There was a very friendly and efficient team at the garage and it was sad to see them go their separate ways. My particular thanks are extended to Neil 'Nellie' Smith, John Read and Reg Lambert for their help in the weeks leading up to WY's closure.

From Graham Baker

Firstly I would like to congratulate the Trust on its most splendid array of buses and coaches that appeared at Crowthorne and the South Coast Run. I attended both functions, Crowthorne for a different reason, but I will come to that later, and the South Coast Run hoping for better weather.

I am particularly fond of the London RTL and in particular, RTL1163, which normally attends the Seaton Rally. This year, armed with a video camera I set off for Seaton and arrived at the car park when only a few buses had arrived. I then positioned myself on the approach road to Seaton with a view to videoing the RTL if it turned up.

By 11am there was no sign of the RTL so I thought I would video the road run. Many of the buses I had already filmed went past plus a few which I hadn't got. Almost at the end of the run RTL1163 came along sporting route 93 blinds. I packed up almost immediately to go back to the car park where I met Russell and the owner. We started chatting and I explained that it was 31 years since I had ridden on an RTL. Russell then said that had I been at the car park I could have had a ride. I asked them if they were attending Crowthorne and they said barring breakdowns, yes. I then asked if there was a chance of a ride and they readily agreed.

As you know, the weather was to say the least inclement but that was not going to put me off. Once on site and in the main arena I saw another of the class, RTL988, with its roof off and acting as a marshals' vehicle. And sure enough RTL1163 was there looking like it was fresh from Aldenham. I saw Russell and the owner who said they would give me the nod should the RTL be allowed out on the circuit. Without going into too much detail, the RTL did go on the circuit together with a run on the test track. Russell, who drove, did so brilliantly and I sincerely hope he won. Those two splendid men made a dream come true after 31 years for which I cannot thank them enough. I know RTL1163 is on the Cobham fleetlist so I'm sure they will read this.

One had to dodge the rain at Crowthorne and as the heavens opened up what should turn up but TD95. The last time I rode on a TD I was in short trousers! I was relieved to get out of the rain and exited to travel on a TD after so many years. It was a shame that the weather was unkind, as Crowthorne is a must for all enthusiasts.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> July I duly left home very early and arrived at a suitable



spot on the A24 fairly early. Two hours went by and no buses. Panic ensued. Had the route been changed? Was it even the right day? Five minutes later my prayers were answered. The first RM came past with its special South Coast Run blinds and doing a fair rate of knots. For the next hour and a half many buses came past but the contingent from Cobham was most impressive. The adorable TD95, T31, T504, ST922, STL441, the breakdown RF, the Dennis knifeboard bus, many RTs and RFs. And my day was made when two RTLs came past in tandem! I ended up finally finding the site and the display was excellent. More videoing was done as more and more buses turned up, and the weather this time was sunny all day.

Lastly, a point to ponder over. Next year, 1998 sees the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last RTL buses to run in London. Wouldn't it be nice to see a collection of them including RTL1323 in green together again. Perhaps Stagecoach has an old RTL garage still open. Or how about RTL owners converging on Crowthorne if it takes place again. I'll keep my fingers crossed.

*Critchill Road, Frome, Somerset BA11 4HW*

From Brian Rands

A few weeks ago I made my yearly visit to Cobham and spent some time talking to John Rawlins, who very kindly showed me around many of the vehicles on site, and some of the problems that lay under the steel sheeting, ie. rotten wood frames etc. This I can relate to as my full time work is the repair and restoration of ex-BR railway carriages for main line and private railway use. The vehicles may be different but I can assure you the problems are very similar.

Whilst talking to John Rawlins I mentioned that we use Festo sanding equipment for all body shells etc. A 63ft ex-BR Mk.1 carriage can be totally sanded down in two days, and with repairs to body panels completed, a carriage can be ready for undercoating in five days. I have obtained a Festo catalogue from the new UK dealers and this has

been forwarded to John.

I hope it's not too long before I manage to get back up to home – Walton-on-Thames – so that I can make a further visit to Cobham. In the meantime, I am pleased to apply for membership to the Trust and enclose an additional donation to the LBPT funds.

*Ebdon Road, Worle, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset BS22 9NN*

From John A.Gray

Many thanks to the many generous Cobham souls who turned out for the RT/RF Register's Chertsey '97 event on 13<sup>th</sup> July.

Three of the 21 volunteered vehicles couldn't come for one reason or another and RP90 (which was booked in) gallantly filled in on extra journeys to cover, and ex-Lancaster blue/white AEC Regent appeared as if from nowhere to lend a crucial hand on our otherwise depleted Chertsey local route.

We had planned 200 journeys on the nine routes (two red bus, two country bus, one Green Line and two Aldershot and District) and more than 180 were actually done. Chertsey's main thoroughfare, Guildford Street, was theoretically closed to all traffic save for buses for the day, and frequently it buzzed with action at the five especial bus stops.

Well done to all those concerned and others who I wasn't able to meet – thanks so much for helping with the free services, hoping you enjoyed your day!

*Chesterfield Road, Cambridge CB4 1LN*



From Peter Bowen

The arrival of a new Cobham Magazine is always welcome, it really is a fascinating read. Since I live in the North West (some might say in exile) I am unable to participate directly in Cobham events, although it is always a pleasure to see the Trust's vehicles. In addition, RP90 looked splendid on Mr Hinson's Sightseeing Tour in July.

I was interested to see the pleas for the continuing preservation of RF512 and the availability of several other vehicles. Like Mr Jelly whose letter appeared in the last Magazine, I would also be interested in joining a locally based ownership group of an existing ex-LT vehicle or participating in the joint purchase of such a vehicle, and do have finance available. I would welcome any response regarding the RF or other opportunities.

*21 Chapel Croft, Chelford, Cheshire SK11 9SU (telephone 01625 861987)*

From Roger Stagg

A while back a member reported that he had found a source of Rexine from a supplier in Essex but that it was not quite right in that it was too thick to turn round mouldings and cappings, too shiny, the wrong colour and too heavily grained. Nevertheless, I obtained some samples and agreed wholeheartedly with the comments. It was also horrendously expensive.

Rexine is however still available and although it is not available in normal RT/RF colours of green and cream there is a brown that is almost spot on. It is also available in two thicknesses, the thinner of which is the same as that used on side panels and staircases. The material is thin enough to be relatively easily formed around the various internal fittings and it is available in five different surface patterns including one with virtually no grain which is identical to the LT material. The correct colour is only available for an order of 500LM! Rexine being nitro cellulose takes cellulose acrylic and oil based

paints without problem and the completed articles can be sprayed to the exact colour. At the time of writing (August 1997) the material is available from William M. Collingburn traditional coach trimmers, Kimber House etc. at £12.50 per LM 54 inches wide plus VAT.

*Teston Road, Offham, West Malling, Kent ME19 5NE*

From Roy Adams

#### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BUS TICKET

Unfortunately I was unable to attend this year's AGM, the first one I have missed since rejoining the Trust, otherwise some of the following may well have been put in person.

The Summer magazine was a super publication, as usual, spoilt by only one thing, also as usual. The continual sniping at members who do not (often for a variety of very good reasons) put much time and effort into working at the museum, and in particular don't volunteer to work at our annual Open Day. There have been snipes in previous issues, but Simon Douglas Lane has surpassed them all this time.

To say that members MUST help, that they have NO EXCUSE for not responding, that those who do are supporting those who CAN'T BE BOTHERED, that the museum does not want passengers in its membership, and worst of all, that this STUPEFYING APATHY HAS GOT TO STOP, is arrogant to say the least and is, as far as I can see, likely to encourage the membership to rocket downwards nearly as fast as it has taken off over the past few years. I personally find his remarks extremely offensive. When I was on the museum stall at the 1995 Open Day, persuading visitors to become members, I was not asked to inform them that a condition of their membership was that they had to do some work. If members who are so called 'passengers' are not required, this should be made clear to them before we take their money. As for 'Can't be bothered' and having 'No excuse', well read on.

I will set out the reasons for my stupefying apathy, and trust that



the Editor will print my letter in its entirety (in his otherwise excellent quarterly journal), and invite other members to do the same. I live just over 100 miles from Cobham, therefore any visit by car takes four hours return travelling time, and costs nearly £20 in petrol. In my RT this becomes seven hours and more than £50 in diesel. My wife and I run a small business, which since the recession of the early Nineties has been very difficult. We have no staff any more, so besides manufacturing and selling the product, there is the paperwork to do, and the machinery, premises and yard to clean and maintain. Obviously we have a house, garden, and an everyday car each to look after, as do most people. Then there are the rest of my hobbies, outside of Cobham, preserved vehicles – two 1960s Rover cars, a 1970s Transit van, to say nothing of the RT, RTW and TD to try to look after as best as I can. The storing, maintaining and running of the last three items alone is a near impossible and extremely expensive job, as many members will know, so I consider that I am more than doing my bit towards London Bus Preservation with these alone.

Those who know me well, know that London Buses are not just a hobby with me, they are an obsession, so I think we can discount 'Stupefying Apathy'. Even taking my obsession into account, my wife Joan and I enjoy spending some of our time socialising with each other and with friends, and going to the theatre etc. if only to see Summer Holiday, which I spent many happy hours with Katie, (RT1599 to you), assisting the Bristol Hippodrome to advertise (for just the cost of the diesel, for those who were thinking he must have made a bob or two).

There must be many members with a similar story to mine, so please Simon Douglas Lane, drop the insults and just ask for volunteers a little more politely. Not everyone is in the happy position of having the amount of time to spare that you seem to have.

With regard to the Open Day, before complaining too much about volunteers, organisers should set the example. This year, three of us apathetic members travelled up from Bristol, arriving at Cobham around 9 to 9.30am on the Saturday. We were sent to Brooklands,

and along with two or three other volunteers and the contractor's lorry containing all the barriers and equipment, waited nearly two hours for the team leader/organiser to arrive to tell us what to do.

I am the first to admire and praise the Trust's present management team led by Peter Plummer, who have achieved fantastic progress and who personally do an unbelievable amount of work, and without whom the Trust would once again become stagnant. However, I think the Cobham hierarchy should think carefully about the growing obsession with how much profit is being made. After all, it is not too far removed from one of the reasons that led them to displace the last hierarchy. I personally consider the fees charged on Open Day, to stallholders, to the public, and especially to members, to be exorbitant. It will be argued that it does not keep the public away, but it has certainly made it prohibitive for a number of stallholders who had supported Cobham for years during the lesser times. As a member, I do not expect to be charged to visit the museum on any occasion, the day that I am will be the day that I cease to be a member. My comments are my own personal opinions, and are meant to be constructive, not offensive. I for one can fully understand why London Bus enthusiasts from all over the country wish to be members, and feel that they are part of the greatest collection of ex-LT buses outside of the London Transport Museum. I can also understand that many of them can afford neither the time, nor the money to visit the museum as much as they would wish.

Finally, if and when I retire from the regular five plus days a week rat-race, there is nothing I would rather do than spend some of my time at Cobham, working to ensure that the building and its wonderful collection of London Buses goes on being preserved in the manner to which they have now become accustomed.

*London Road, Wick, Bristol BS15 5SJ*

*Editor's Comment* – Given the nature of Roy's letter I thought it only fair that SDL's reply should be included in this same issue and indeed, it follows below. However, I feel I really must take Roy to task on



some of his comments. Firstly, there is no growing obsession with making profit but it must be understood that a successful Open Day is vital as it largely funds the rest of the year's activities, and permits the Trust's fleet to be more active than it has ever been. But please don't think for a minute that the Trust is rolling in money – our new Treasurer is doing a juggling act worthy of Paul Daniels at present just to keep us afloat. The basic costs alone of running a museum such as Cobham are quite frightening and in this day and age have to be approached in a responsible and businesslike manner.

I have served as Membership Secretary now for four seasons during which membership has increased by 400% (as has our expenditure!) but I calculate that active membership has increased by less than 100%. The membership fee remains very low in comparison to many, dare I say, inferior bodies. So is it really too much to ask for a couple of hours' help in return for free admission? No wonder SDL was pulling his hair out (who said what hair?) in trying to organise a successful event, especially when some members who had previously offered help, although sighted on the day, managed to make themselves strangely scarce. To the eternal credit of Simon and his team, our huge 1997 Open Day probably ran the smoothest ever, but it certainly wasn't cheap to run.

Lastly Roy, you can't be serious when you describe the Open Day entrance fees as exorbitant. A day's unlimited travel on vintage buses, a glossy programme and entrance to two sites, all for a fiver. I wish everything in life came so cheap! I've been to plenty of events this season where £2 or more has been charged for a programme not worth the paper it was printed on. As for the stallholders, this year saw a record number, and those I spoke to were well pleased with their takings. Access to 5000 customers for less than fifty quid – and the money's going to a charity. Don't worry, it's a big pay day for most and you can be sure of one thing – come next year they'll all be doing it again!

*Reply from Simon Douglas Lane* – Can I thank Mike for giving me the opportunity to reply to Roy's letter in the same issue. I am sorry if anybody has been offended by my Open Day report but the same message can be read in the Editor's article, the Chairman's article, John Rawlins appeal and my article too. It is not something that I have imagined and it is mentioned four times to bring the message home. I may have been more direct than the others but then I am charged with the responsibility of making the Open Day a success, both in terms of fun and finance.

It's not arrogance Roy – it's plain hard facts and desperation – the Open Day in its current format is under threat if more people do not help. It's as simple as that. We incurred over £600 in extra expenditure because we had to buy in help, yet we have a membership not far off 500. A condition of responsible and accountable membership should be to help the organisation you have joined if you possibly can. I know Roy lives a long way away and my round trip to the museum is 30 miles – I know too that he is doing his bit for preservation down in dear old Bristol, and thank you for that – all your efforts are appreciated, but at the end of the day we need hands at Cobham from those who live nearer than Bristol. In being direct and plain speaking I was not in any sense being insulting except to those who read it as such.

Now to the question of costs. The 1998 cost of entrance will be the same – we have decided to charge a different rate for stallholders that are registered charities and those that are not. Some commercial stallholders make a great deal of money (and good luck to them!) for a £40 stall fee. In excess of 4500 people can view the stalls and the goods they have to offer. For the entrance money you receive an excellent programme and access to a range of modern and vintage vehicles on the bus service plus two sites exhibiting transport displays. Excellent catering and some say too luxurious loos are also available – I don't think £5 is too much, yet our own costs go up because volunteers are in short supply. We have asked for volunteers politely and it's been no good – I'm sorry to have to resort to plain print.

Volunteers on the Open Day have free entry but they must be reg-



istered with John Rawlins and allocated to a particular team. Access to the museum is free for members throughout the year and the general public are generous in their donations when they leave. However, the Open Day and Display Days are the source of income from which we can continue to preserve our wonderful collection of vehicles – we can at least agree on that Roy – but without the volunteers, that income is at risk.

My best wishes to all those who read my article. I hope that you understand that my affection for Cobham and what it does underpins all my work for the Trust.

## COBHAM GOES ONLINE!

Kevin McGowan

In common with a number of other bus related groups the Trust now has a presence on the Internet. Most members will by now at least be aware of the existence of the Internet or World Wide Web as it is often known but for those who aren't it is, briefly, an international network of computers on which organisations, individuals and companies can all publish information on any subject whatsoever. This information is instantly accessible to anyone having the right equipment (basically a home computer and a telephone line). The information comes in the form of text, pictures and sounds.

The net has been expanding at an exponential rate since its inception and has become a vital tool to many businesses and organisations, but there is a drawback in that so far, the user must have access to a suitable computer. However, this is set to change with the introduction of a new system which relies on the fact that these days most people have a television set and a telephone. All that is needed is a 'black box' to connect the two together and your TV becomes an Internet terminal!

There is a surprisingly large amount of bus-related information available on the Internet. There are sites set up by manufacturers and

operators, and many enthusiasts also have their own 'website' or homepage (a small website). These generally focus on their own special interests, such as the local bus scene past and present. Many other bus museums already have their own site, BaMMoT, Portsmouth Bus Museum and the Nottingham Heritage Centre being good examples. Even RM8 has its own page!

Anyone accessing our own page can find out all about the activities of the Trust, histories and pictures of the resident vehicles, coming events etc. all regularly updated. There are also links to other bus related sites, some of which link back to Cobham. A link is simply a piece of text or a picture which, when selected, takes the user to a different site which in turn might be linked to many other sites. This ability to quickly move from site to site has given rise to the term 'surfing the net'.

Even Cobham village has a website, it's called 'Cobham Online' and features local businesses and organisations. There is a short history of the area with a walk linking places of interest, and also a notice board for coming events. I used it to advertise our August Display Day although I can't say if it had an effect on the number of visitors that day. The organisers of this site told me that Cobham library are often asked for information about our bus museum so perhaps we should give them some of our publicity material.

Our site is a way of advertising the Trust's existence and tells the whole world what we are doing. As the system becomes more widespread it will help to attract more visitors. The page (I'm new to this game but the terms website and homepage appear to be interchangeable) is actually situated somewhere in the USA but such is the nature of the system that its geographical location has no effect on the speed of downloading information. For all you surfers out there, our URL (Unique Resource Locator) is given below.

<http://www.geocities.com/MotorCity/Downs/9026>



## FAREWELL ADDLESTONE, SO LONG 218

Mike Nash

As briefly mentioned in the previous issue, Addlestone Garage (WY) did indeed close at the end of play on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July and Cobham was able to play its part in what was the final day of the museum's most local LT-related bus garage. For your Editor, who lives even closer, it was the end of an era. No longer would WY's distinctly vocal fleet of Leyland Nationals ply my neighbourhood and I have to say that in a way the day felt vaguely reminiscent of the last day of RF operation some 18 years earlier, for Nationals have been just as much a part of my local scene for as long as the RFs were a generation earlier. Truth be told, I miss them both, though for the time being I do still get the occasional fix of the LeyNat death rattle in the locality, but more of that later.

Back to the day in question which saw RP90 (Simon Kaye), RF672 (Paul Morris) and RF534 (myself) departing from the museum early that morning to be joined at Addlestone by RM2116 (Graham Lunn) and RMC1476 (Eddie Knorn) for a photographic session and farewell ceremony attended by the Mayors of two local boroughs. Your Editor also enjoyed the last-ever cooked breakfast from Addlestone's canteen, and very fine it was too. Then we all went out for a spin in one of London and Country's latest generation Darts which now hold the monopoly in the area. DSL72 certainly proved to be a lively performer but we noted how the interior trim was already unscrewing itself and came to the conclusion that these will never last the course as the Nationals have done. They may ride well now but five years of abuse will surely tell a different tale. Subsequently RF534 performed a similar task, much to the approval of the Mayor of Elmbridge who is very much a supporter of our museum.

The following day was to see the introduction of large scale revision of routes in the area with Leatherhead and Woking assuming control of most of WY's routes. These changes, coupled with the arrival of many new Darts would render the Leyland National almost



**Addlestone Farewell...**RP90, RF672 and RF534 were amongst those in attendance on the final day at Addlestone Garage. Meanwhile, the shape of things to come was in the form of DSL77, now by far the most numerous class in the area. Quick and quiet maybe, but it's doubtful that these Darts will outlast their predecessors, of which SNB366 can be seen in the background awaiting collection by the scrapman. (Photographs: Mike Nash).





Further scenes from Addlestone on the last day. The London Country lettering seen on the side of the building was rescued by Cobham members and will no doubt re-emerge on the museum walls in due course. (Photographs: Colin Shepperd).

extinct within London and Country, who were originally the country's largest operator of the type. Other than a quartet at Leatherhead for special contracts, a couple each at Guildford and Warnham for similar duties and a handful retained on the reserve fleet for Christmas duties, Crawley has become the last stronghold of the type and this is likely to be short lived. Meanwhile, Addlestone was to become a temporary storage ground for the many vehicles delicensed as a result of the changes and we watched these vehicles arriving in twos and threes during the day. These joined the Nationals and Atlanteans from WY's own allocation, of which some of the former had been allocated there from new and were therefore very well known to your Editor. They were gradually parked up and deprived of their blinds.

Come the afternoon RF672 and RP90 made their way back to the museum but RF534 was to remain for some very special duties, for the famous route 218 was one of those affected by the changes, being replaced the following day by Dart operated routes 481 and 491. Prior to this it had been operated by all manner of motive power from both Woking and Addlestone. On the 25<sup>th</sup> it was appropriately to be Addlestone who had the last London and Country 218 duties. A request had been put in for this turn to be operated by Addlestone's last full length National, 3641 (PUK641R), but for some reason this didn't happen and 3641 languished inside the garage throughout the day, only coming out to be placed in the disposal line up (it has since been rescued for preservation). And so it was that RF534 set off (late!) with around a dozen on board to pick up the last L&C worked 218 at Walton-on-Thames Station at 16.30hrs. This had already departed but at least there were some photographers to greet us. We made brisk progress through Hersham, Esher and Thames Ditton fully expecting to catch up the service bus but saw not a sign of it until we reached the new bus station in Cromwell Road, Kingston where Greenway 360 (JIL 2190) was sitting in the 218 bay. A brisk photo session was enjoyed on the site which was once the coalyard where rows of RFs had for many years been stabled. Westlink's LS112 pulled in on the 216, another former RF route, and we remarked on the vehi-



cles remarkable originality, another candidate for preservation?

Greenway 360 set off for Staines with RF534 shadowing closely, although the driver had a heavy right foot and the Gardner engined bus (which had started life in 1976 as Midland Red's 499 (JOX499P), the 10<sup>th</sup> from last Mk1), made rapid progress and much deep rumbling and smoke in the process and it proved hard to keep up with at times. Nevertheless, we were still with it upon arrival at Staines after which we headed back to WY for more photographs and to do a second run for those arriving late. By now, more Nationals had been parked up and these included the Thorpe Park twins, blue painted SNBs 518 and 529 and the distinctive Peacock Centre bus from Woking, 213 (KPA364P) with its purple and orange 'contravision' advert. In fact this had turned out to be the last unmodified LeyNat to operate on the 218 and was in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year.

RF534 departed Addlestone punctually (back seat drivers and all!), arriving at Walton Station in good time to join the penultimate ever 218, run this time by London Buslines Dart 632 (P632CGM). My RF is a noted good performer but this Dart was flying and by Hershams he was history and we weren't to see him again until Kingston. Some 44 years separated the two machines, and whilst top speeds maybe similar it was the way the Dart rocketed away from a standstill and up to its maximum that showed up the RF's vintage. Another photo session ensued during which the two vehicles were lined up together. Then the Dart was gone and RF534 headed across the road and into its old garage and famous Clarence Street Bus Station for one last time (or was it?). It seems a long time since we last filled the place with RFs, fully expecting it to be long gone by now, but a further stay of execution makes me think that this most famous of red RF haunts may yet echo to the musical beat of a Regal IV one last time.

And so back to Addlestone once more to bid our last farewells and then onto Cobham in darkness and a well deserved rest for 534, and indeed its driver. In the event, it was not to be the last RF to visit WY, as the following Saturday, and thanks to the string pulling of David Boshier, a small party of us were able to visit the garage with a lorry



**Sheltered Existence...**The 1950's tubular steel bus shelter acquired by Dave Jones has been duly installed and makes a fine sight for visitors as they drive through the entrance gates. There are plans to add more street furniture to the site in due course. (Photo: Tony Lewis).





Reporting for Duty... Towbus 332W has been more active this season than for many years. D142 suffered a failed clutch component on its return from the South Coast Run resulting in this busy scene (top) at Dorking, whilst a seized engine on CDL899, one of the Southern Vectis open-toppers, whilst heading to Cobham for August's Display Day saw our tow-bus rescue it from Hindhead. (Photographs: Andy Barnes and Mike Nash).

and 332W, our RF based towbus, to collect a selection of useful items for the Trust, including the London Country lettering from the side of the building.

So, another LT-style garage bites the dust, and Addlestone no longer feels special. It was also sad to see a friendly and capable team going their separate ways and a selection of vehicles which were so familiar to me, although I gather that most have survived and gone onto further service in other parts of the country whilst others have been secured for preservation. I was pleased to have been able to play my part in the farewells and for now can at least make do with the occasional glimpse of a Westlink LS in Walton and of the two Nationals still employed on the Brooklands free service, these being SNB511 and Marks and Sparks liveried 258 (NPJ479R), the latter of which has long been part of the local scene and looks likely to pass my way when the contract expires. These aside, the bus scene around Cobham Bus Museum really has reached an all time low and I for one am missing the previously ever present sound of Leyland 510s being driven in anger. □

## SOUTH COAST RUN

Graham Lunn

May we all at the Routemaster Association say a big thank you to all at Cobham Bus Museum for the support given to making the above event so special on July 7<sup>th</sup>. You helped to generate a great deal of publicity whereby many Cobham members supported us. We hope that you all enjoyed the run from Millbank down to Shoreham and indeed the gathering that ensued. You supplied us with some of the best preserved buses in the south and it was a treat to see RP90, and special thanks to the lads concerned for taking down D142. What a surprise! I gather that this was its longest journey for some few years.

In total, 60 buses left London for the run and many more joined us at Shoreham. I would like to thank you all for departing from Mill-



bank so quickly after booking in (I hope the armed police had nothing to do with this!).

This was the Association's 2<sup>nd</sup> Road-Run to the Sussex Coast and by far the best so far. Our aim was to make it a day for the owners to enjoy and participate in, so we would be interested in hearing your comments and general thoughts as to future such runs and indeed whether there is scope to run it on an annual basis. Thanks again for your support. We hope to see you all in 1998.

RMOOA – Pooley Avenue, Egham, Surrey TW20 8AB

## RT OWNERS PUT RF OWNERS IN THE SHADE

Ian Barrett and Roger Stagg

The gauntlet thrown down by Mike Nash 12 months past accusing RT owners of not warranting a running day (*I don't recall saying that – Innocent Ed*) was taken up by Ian Barrett and Roger Stagg, resulting in the August 25 RT running day, which it is hoped will become an annual event.

Since first seriously considered at the end of 1996 the potential route changed from Leatherhead, Epsom, Hampton Court, Kingston, Walton on Thames and was finally decided as Woking Town Centre. Woking had a number of advantages, it was only 25 minutes running time, had no difficult hills, bends or obstructions, had no low trees, had suitable stops and layover positions and importantly, hosted a free entry Classic Vehicle Show in the pedestrianised town centre on the same day. (*My suggestion – Clever Ed*)

After a slow start of availability of vehicles with appropriate insurance and duly licensed drivers, the numbers gradually grew for the service and the proposed displays in both Woking and Cobham.

Following week upon week of interminable sunshine and the absence of any form of a cloud, 7am on 25<sup>th</sup> August featured rainfall of the stair rod variety and a forecast that offered little respite at least

until the afternoon. Understandably team B&S was not filled with confidence as to either the number of vehicles likely to attend or the number of members of the public at either event. Nevertheless by 10.15am, RTs 227, 1702, 1790, 2043, 2291, 3491, 3775 and 4217 were filling Redhill Road. 3491 was operating its normal Sunday service 300 but was on standby to join the service in the unlikely event that the number of passengers exceeded vehicle capacity. Also joining us were pseudo RTs, John Bedford's Ipswich No.16 and Ken Wade's Lancaster City Council no 73.

Despite the appalling weather conditions, every vehicle plus one attended for the service, requiring Messrs B&S to radically alter the proposed timetable. Not surprisingly with the traditional August Bank Holiday weather multiplied threefold there were no passengers on the first departures at 10.30am from Woking or Cobham, the absence of public at Cobham at that time being somewhat noticeable and the absence not only of the public but of the Classic Vehicles at Woking. Fortunately the rain abated somewhat and a half-hourly service in each direction was soon increased to 20 minute and then 15 minute intervals which continued throughout the day with good loadings. Despite the last scheduled departure from Cobham being at 4.41, Ken Wade and John Bedford provided two additional services, ensuring that no-one was left where they did not want to be.

Team B&S learnt a lot from the event and it was particularly noted that the promised publicity from Woking Chamber of Commerce had either not taken place or the public had not noticed it. The area set aside for display buses at Woking had been partially taken up by cars and was difficult to access although once in place it was an ideal stand and could easily have accommodated 4 or 5 vehicles. Our only disappointment was that the 3 vehicles promised for display only at Cobham and Woking failed to materialise, no doubt because of the awful weather conditions.

Although bright in the afternoon, the weather was generally appalling and memories of this year's Crowthorne event literally flooded back! A good number of people were carried from Woking and



although the event was not directly connected with the Museum, people did get off outside and a large proportion did decide to enter rather than return to Woking immediately on the service from the other side of Redhill Road that left a few minutes later.

Our thanks go out to those who provided vehicles for the service, RT1702 Preservation Group, Mike Dawes and colleagues, Alan Charman and London Country, The London Transport Museum who provided 4217 free of charge, John Bedford and Ken Wade, John Green and Simon Douglas Lane and to members who provided invaluable help; Duncan Smith as conductor, Mike Woodley and Alan Fairbrother who took on the thankless task of controlling the buses at the Woking end, committee member Richard Hussey who took over driving 2043 whilst B&S reconfigured the timetable, and for the encouragement from many quarters of the Trust which all helped to make the day a success. Watch out for next year's event; more buses, longer runs, extra routes and more passengers. Eat your hearts out RFs! □

*Expect the tables to be turned come Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October (Big 'Ed')!*

## NEWS FROM VIC

Vic Chivers

I am pleased to be able to update members on all the hard work which is going on at our own mini version of Reigate, namely Ongar, where RF41 is being restored. The cab area has now been painted and the transfers applied. The driver's seat has been repainted and greased and is back in the cab. The wiper arms have been repainted and are back in position and the glass and mirrors polished.

I have started to remove the offside seats ready for rubbing down and repainting which must be the first time they've been removed since 41's last overhaul in 1966 after which she went back into service at RE on the 724 express. The ceiling has now had three coats of cream paint and looks very smart indeed.

Elsewhere, we have also been working on RF271, another un-

modified Green Line coach. She has new brake linings and the messy diff gland which had failed some time ago has been repaired by John and myself, though the hard way as somebody (an RF owner who should have known better!) lent me the wrong spanner which slowed things down and resulted in two trips to Cobham. The nearside brake adjustment rod had been wrongly re-assembled. Meanwhile, Richard has been working on the interior on trim and paint and a few minor repairs and he asked John and myself to adjust the brakes as 271 was due to go for her Class 5 MOT. Then I was asked to take her for a brake testing run. John sat at the back to check if anyone was following and we agreed that two rings of the bell would signal that all was clear. I told John to hang on tight as my size 11 boot hit the brake pedal. Richard was sitting up front so I warned him too to hang on tight or he would beat us back to the garage! He got the message after the first test was done on the nice straight bit of road approaching North Weald Airfield.

RF271 is a good vehicle and I should know, I've driven enough of these when on LT and LCBS. We drove back to Ongar via Potter Street, Harlow which must have been a memory for her as she was on the 718 and 720 from EP which used that road when going to Harlow New Town terminus in the good old days. We got lots of looks that day from people who could not believe their eyes. Back to Ongar for a cup of rosy lea (a TGWU requirement!) and then we got on with the faulty front offside brake on RF41. We got the fault sorted out and a new pin was put in the RP adjuster whereby John turned it three times. Bang! It broke, so we said b\*\*\*\*\* and called it a day with the time approaching 7pm.

A few days later RF271 did go for its MOT and passed which pleased us all. It should not be too long before she is out and about together with RF41, the latter having been off the road for some 11 years. I am still looking for photographs of RF41 when in service and with any of the schools later in its life, also for a Green Line fare chart for route 711 circa 1960. Can you help? If so, please drop me a line at

Abbotts Weld, Harlow, Essex CM18 6TS. □



## NEWS FROM THE COBHAM SHOP

Those of you who have visited Cobham this last Autumn will have noticed that a small band of volunteers has been manning the Shop on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. These volunteers also welcome guests to the Museum and act as guides whenever possible. This enables those working on the buses to continue working on their projects. If sufficient volunteers come forward it is hoped to continue this scheme next year. This is an ideal way for new members to get to know Cobham, and for those who do not know one end of a screwdriver from the other, this is a way of making a practical contribution.

Ideas from members as to what will sell well are always welcome but we do try to make sure that any line stocked produces a reasonable profit for the Museum as sales through the shop make a valuable contribution to the funds available for restoration work. And now, for those of you who do not come down to Cobham or cannot get near the Shop on display days, our "Shop-by-Mail" service is being offered for the following items.

Baseball Cap – Red	£4.50	Bertie Bus Book	£1.00
Bookmark	60p	Car Sticker	50p
Comb in case	50p	Guide Book	£2.95
Key Fob (leather)	40p	Key Fob (STL view)	70p
Key Fob & Bottle Opener	£1.10	Pencil with rubber	35p
Pencil Sharpener	£1.95	Postcards (8 card set)	£3.50
Pen (Ball point)	50p	Poster (Cobham Buses)	£1.00
Routemaster N gauge red or green	£2.95	Ruler (12 Inch)	50p
Scrap pad	50p	Tax Disc Holder	50p
Tea Towel	£3.50	Teddy bear (5in)	£1.50
Teddy bear (10in)	£5.00	Video RF Running Day	£8.00

Please send orders, ideas for new lines and offers of help on a Saturday or a Sunday next year to Gordon Edridge, Fairholm Crescent, Ashted, Surrey KT21 2HN. Please make cheques payable to The London Bus Preservation Trust and add 50p towards postage and packing.

## LONDON BUS PRESERVATION TRUST

COBHAM BUS MUSEUM · REDHILL ROAD · COBHAM KT11 1EF · 01932 868665

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**TELEPHONE CALLS** To avoid causing excessive disruption at home, especially during the late evening, telephone messages for committee members should be channelled through Bill Cottrell or Paul Morris (see above), who will pass them to the appropriate person.

Your co-operation will be appreciated.

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