

COBHAM BUS MUSEUM

MAGAZINE



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FRONT COVER: A typical scene from the Christmas Lights Tour sees ST922 easing past RTL1163 and RT2293 towards Bermondsey Tunnel. Tony Lewis is at the wheel, but strangely Richard Hussey has also squeezed into the cab, no doubt to show Tony how better to drive the ST!!!
(Photo: Peter Larkham).

FROM THE EDITOR

The last three months really have rushed by, not least because there have been so many positive things happening for the Trust. 1998 is looking very good indeed for Cobham but we really do need an exceptional Open Day to kick things into gear. That said, weather permitting, I have every confidence that the sub-committee, expertly led by Simon Douglas Lane, have all the angles covered. They really have worked very hard indeed, and having been closely involved with them I applaud their efforts in organising what is a huge logistical event.

This being my twentieth issue and with five years completed as Editor it really is time for me to sign off before I outstay my welcome (some may say I already have!). Apart from anything else, the barrage of Trust related phone calls which disrupt most evenings are no longer considered acceptable by 'er indoors (best to ring the museum number at weekends, or, if you must, the contact numbers provided inside the back cover of this magazine), but I'd like to think that my involvement with the Trust has helped take it to new heights, certainly in terms of the Magazine and its punctuality.

I am, of course, most grateful to all those who have contributed to make the magazine so lively and informative – without your help it could not have happened. The magazine depends on your continuing support – please keep it up. But no matter how hard you try you can't satisfy all of the people all the time and I was reminded of this when a member rang me to say that he/she thought the Magazine was too big! There's gratitude for you.

But don't despair. Our old pal Bill Cottrell will be compiling the next issue, by which time hopefully a new Editor may have come forward. So please assist Bill by submitting your features and photographs well within the deadline (20th May). Of course, I will be on hand if he needs me and I won't exactly be vanishing from the scene as I will be continuing as Membership Secretary. But having, over

several years been guilty of neglecting my business activities in favour of Cobham, it's now time to make up some of the lost ground. In addition I am compiling two books for release next year and indeed the scope of my work is expanding considerably, not least as a result of my much closer ties these days with Classic Coaches of High Wycombe fame. So, an exciting year all round.

Please support Cobham in any way you can during this vital season and be sure to buy some goodies on Open Day from our new shop, so expertly conceived by Robert Vince and capably operated by Gordon Edridge and his team. What with full Museum Registration, the grant to rebody STL2377 and the aforementioned shop we really are moving into a new era at Cobham. The Trust is truly an organisation to be proud of, whatever your involvement.

So, until next time.

Mike Nash

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

With a reasonably mild winter so far, work on the shop and building have proceeded well and for regular volunteers, the pace of change seems meteoric, even to us.

The area designated for the new toilet facility for disabled persons has been cleared and painted. The seemingly endless task of preparing and painting storage crates continues every weekend by my dedicated team of three regular volunteers to whom I extend my gratitude. Their efforts are truly transforming the internal appearance of the building as we prepare for our very first season with full museum registration.

The response to our 'sponsor a bus restoration' appeal has been encouraging and at the Treasurer's request, I have prepared a list of items required to complete RT2775, to which a budget can be assigned from the fund. Parts and materials will be brought in and

stored for the time when my coachmaking team have completed their building improvement work.

Concurrent with this, Roger Stagg who is a structural engineer, has been appointed project manager for the reframing and restoration of STL2377. A separate statement on the project appears elsewhere in this magazine.

This is the most important major reconstruction project ever undertaken on a pre-war London Transport vehicle, the cost of which will be enormous. The Treasurer will be pleased to receive donations specifically in support of this venture. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to Roger Stagg on behalf of the Trust for his enthusiasm, professionalism of presentation to official organisations and dedication to the Trust's primary function of vehicle restoration.

The rumour of an interesting discovery in the antipodes has now been confirmed. T499, a former 10T10 Green Line coach, exists in Western Australia. As my favourite class of vehicle, I shall endeavour to give its owner support in obtaining parts for its restoration. Trust archivist Alan Bond is preparing a vehicle history and a feature including photographs should appear in the next magazine.

Bill Cottrell's team is beginning assembly work on the chassis overhaul of wartime Guy Arab G351 which is being carried out to an extremely high standard.

Grounds manager John Broadhurst has made improvements to the site and prepared a plan of future needs for consideration by the committee.

The Trust is on the springboard to an exciting imminent future of progress – your support will ensure you are part of that.

Peter Plummer

FROM THE SECRETARY

Following the approval of the Trust's application for full museum registration by the Museums and Galleries Commission during the latter part of 1997, we received news of another significant development early in the new year. The Trust's application to the Science Museum Prism Fund for financial assistance towards the cost of rebuilding STL2377 had yielded a positive response. The offer of a substantial "partnership grant" towards the project has been made, subject to the Trust complying with the standard conditions and terms for assistance.

It is excellent news that restoration of this important vehicle in the collection is virtually guaranteed. At its meeting of 21 January, the Committee endorsed the proposal to appoint as project manager Roger Stagg, principal partner of Roger Stagg and Associates, Consulting and Civil Engineers, who masterminded the Trust's technical presentation to the Science Museum. It was agreed that Roger would be delegated responsibility for management from commencement to completion during the contract period, estimated to last about 18 months. Roger has prepared the following summary statement for the Magazine...

"I have been involved with this project for some time now and was part of the team that surveyed the condition of the existing vehicle, which has led to the production of drawings for its reconstruction and the works that have led up to us now being in a position to put into action what at one time seemed little more than a pipe dream.

"Even those who dedicate a lot of their time to the Museum are unlikely to be aware of how much work has gone on behind the scenes to get to this stage, particularly by the Secretary, but after a long and at times frustrating period, we are now in a position to have contractors with orders in their hands to undertake the works which will commence immediately following the 1998 Open Day.

"All of us who have been involved have been only too conscious that all the exemplary work carried out by the mechanical team has been standing gathering dust for two years and many must have thought that no progress was being made; this was in fact far from the case. There will be many of you who wonder why we have not proposed to undertake the works from the volunteer force at Cobham and I would like to take the opportunity to answer that very valid question. The STL bus represents the final stage of Chiswick body development before changes were made to the steel framed construction of the RT. The STL design was based upon principles developed from the horse bus, the engineering properties of which had not kept pace with the mechanical improvements and expansion of size, and thereby passenger capacity. As such the STL body framework flies very close to the point where the last straw will break the camel's back. Rebuilding is a task for specific expertise, not simply expertise in woodwork but one that involves composite wood and metal work construction as fitch beams and fitch columns. Although our volunteer force is enthusiastic and does exhibit considerable carpentry skills, skills necessary in the reconstruction of this vehicle exceed that of even an experienced joiner like Peter Plummer, who few in the trust would try to emulate.

"We did not therefore find ourselves able to call upon the skills of a volunteer work force where the necessity was for experience to an extremely high standard of difficult coach building practice. Moreover the extent of volunteer labour at Cobham is finite and my requests for a work force prepared to carry out even the less skilled tasks over a suitable period have fallen mainly upon stony ground. Taking due regard to other Trust projects which are currently under way, there was little possibility unless a whole new skilled volunteer force appeared from nowhere, of any works to STL2377 being undertaken within the foreseeable future.

"Many members may not appreciate that although we have 2377 apparently standing virtually complete, the restoration work carried out many years ago is, regrettably, defective in many ways. The surveys

showed that not only is much of the essential structure missing but that such things as window openings are significantly incorrect in square and size. The rebuilding work required is very much more than fixing on the cladding that is missing and putting the glass back, which was how one member saw it who expressed his thoughts to me only a few weeks ago. That may well suffice if the idea is simply to finish the vehicle, give it a coat of paint and push it away in a corner for a few people to look at but the purpose of the Trust is to put the vehicles into usable condition and on the road. As such the next few months will see the vehicle reduced to its framework and much of that framework removed and renewed before actual rebuilding will commence.

"Over and above the labour required, whether it be volunteer or paid, there are the costs of the materials for the refurbishment and these in themselves represent a very substantial amount over and above that which could be met from the Trust's current resources.

"For all of the above reasons it was decided to explore the professional rebuilding of the vehicle within a finite period of time. With the project based upon this premise, it is possible to apply for grant assistance. Grants for projects such as this are available from the Science Museum Prism Fund but a proper business plan does need to be submitted, as the Fund no longer provides grants towards purely volunteer based projects as so many of them have floundered. Accordingly a business plan was drawn up following the selection of suitable contractors to undertake the works, of whom there are very few available. The CVs of the contractors proposed had to demonstrate their experience within the field of work and to come under the scrutiny of the Science Museum. The business plan and proposal were submitted on 16 January 1998 following a meeting at the Science Museum. At the meeting we were advised that the Prism Fund gave a grant up to a maximum that was only provided in exceptional circumstances and that a grant could not exceed 50% of the costs involved. We were further told that a period for consideration of a grant was likely to be between 3 to 6 months.

"It is therefore perhaps an indication of the standard of material

presented to the Science Museum, combined with the importance placed upon STL2377, that not only were we offered the maximum grant available but that the offer was made within 14 days of the application.

"I am also pleased to be able to tell you that the Trust is benefiting from loans from anonymous Trust members to provide the necessary total funding, allowing the overall cost of the project to be set over a number of years of income. We are therefore in the enviable position of being able to commence this important piece of work virtually immediately.

"By Open Day, STL2377 will have left the main Museum and will be situate within the paint bay where the necessary dismantling will be undertaken before the vehicle reframing takes place during May. Timber work will be machined and installed by Cox Brothers of Maidstone and all the new steel flitch plates, gussets and bracing will be fabricated and supplied by Premier Structures of Romsey. The re-framing works are expected to be complete before the end of June, at which time the vehicle will be transferred to Dorking where the restoration will be completed by Ian Barrett.

"Once the vehicle moves into the paint shop it will not be accessible to Trust members, as under safety and other regulations, the area will fall under the framing contractor's jurisdiction. On the completion of the framing however, the vehicle will be on display towards the end of June for one weekend before its transfer to Dorking. Once at Dorking the vehicle will be going into a business environment and cannot be made available for members' inspection but I will keep members informed of progress within each Magazine, together with photographs, and photographs will also be displayed in the canteen at Cobham.

"Our goal is that STL2377, looking and sounding very much like it did on the day it emerged from Chiswick, will be present for its re-inauguration before December 1999, in time to celebrate a new millennium."

MUSEUM ENTRANCE HALL AND SHOP

Regular visitors to Cobham will be aware of the building changes currently taking place to create a new visitor reception area and shop. The committee has been aware for some time that the potential for expanding shop sales was being frustrated by inadequate facilities and a poor working environment – and the need to create a more welcoming atmosphere for visitors. The rebuilding works also presented the opportunity to introduce other improvements to the ground floor, principally to reorganise access and seal off the existing entrance to the toilets. Following discussion of the proposals by the committee during 1997, it was agreed to accept the offer made by Trust member Roger Vince (who directs his own design consultancy), to award an external contract which he would manage on behalf of the Trust.

This was considered the only realistic option because we do not have within the organisation sufficient voluntary resources to carry out extensive building works; also, it was crucial to get the shop up and running in time for the Open Day if we were to achieve the maximum return from a full season of business. At the time of writing, the project is running to timetable and by the time this magazine reaches you, the refurbished “front of house” should be operational.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Enclosed with this magazine are notices of the Annual General Meeting which will take place on 13 June. Please make a note of the date in your diary and try to attend. Also enclosed are a copy of the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting, held on 28 June 1997. These will be submitted for approval on 13 June, so please remember to bring your copies with you.

John Bedford

TREASURER'S REPORT

Since writing my last report Christmas has come and gone and the Trust has moved into a new financial year. As I explained last quarter, our major expenditure has been on the new front of house where work will continue during first quarter to enable us to open the new shop on Open Day. Our stock has been increased to include all relevant literature from the major publishers and London related models from the EFE range. We shall hopefully be promoting our own Cobham related model sets during the coming years.

But what of our finances? The front of house will have cost over £10k by the time of completion and this must be viewed as the major project for second half 1997 and first half of 1998. RT2775 is the recipient of the many donations that have been received since my small request in the last issue and I have forecast to our Chairman that the £2000 required to finish this project in time for Open Day 1999 can be made available. A big thank you to those that responded with donations in January and February, please keep it up, our target is getting closer all of the time.

During 1998, a five year expenditure plan will be established to include not only the restoration of our vehicles but also the development of the Museum infrastructure. In the past 12 months the building and infrastructure has taken precedence over the restoration of vehicles but this has now reached a stage where a more balanced approach can be made.

The next report will be made after our Open Day on 5th April. This year, more than ever, we need to generate considerable income from this, our main fund raising event, so please support our new shop, treat yourself to a new book or two, buy a Cobham sweatshirt, and one of our special Open Day models.

Alan Charman

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AT COBHAM

As you will read in 'Diary Dates', in addition to our 25th Open Day on April 5th there are to be three further Display Days at the museum, and for the first time, dedicated days when the public can visit and the shop will be operating, approximately every fortnight. Members will of course still be able to visit every weekend, subject to the external rallying commitments of the Trust's fleet. Thus, with the general public restricted to specific days only, security of the premises will be improved and work within the museum will be more free from interruption.

The first Display Day will be held on Sunday 7th June in conjunction with a 'Not the RT/RF Running Event!' masterminded by our Treasurer. This will feature all manner of machinery including GSs, XF1, MS4, RMs and who knows what else on the day! No RTs or RFs though. As with all Display Days, admission to the museum and travel on route 300 is free to members but £2 for the visiting public; all other bus rides are free of charge. This should be one not to miss.

August Bank Holiday Monday 31st August sees a Display Day with the added benefit of an RT Running Event which links the museum with Woking Classic Vehicle Show. See Roger Stagg's feature elsewhere this issue.

And then to round off the season in style (Christmas Lights Tour excepted), Sunday 25th October sees our Pre-Hibernation Display Day teaming up with the popular RF Running Event. Full details have yet to be finalised but expect Peter Starks and the RF team to come up with another cracker! Please be sure to mark the above dates in your diary and to support Cobham at these busy events.

Your departing Editor is also keen to see Cobham stage a 'Rear-Engined Running Day' at some point in the future and this maybe something to think about next year, or even to squeeze in this year if time permits. What do you, the members think?

Mike Nash

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The membership figure has held steady at 503 during the last quarter which is a good result given that it is very much the quietest period for the Trust in terms of recruitment. This means that we have a sound platform to move forward from during this season and Phill Cruise and his team will be aiming to sign as many new members up as possible to get us off to a good start at Open Day.

You will note that I've managed to recruit more than half of the new members just by selling the benefits of Cobham as I'm out and about. Now I know I'm the Membership Secretary but surely I'm not the only member capable of this. Please, let's see a few more of you following my lead. With the new 1998 leaflet now printed and more good things than ever happening at the museum, do make an effort to encourage others to join. If you need a few leaflets with which to do this, please drop me a line (don't ring) and I will send them out by return of post.

Let's all make an effort to ensure that 1998 is another year of growth for Cobham. According to our Treasurer there is scope to eventually reach a figure of 2,500. Whilst that will be great news for our printer it would definitely create a full-time job for the Membership Secretary. I'll settle for a thousand! A warm welcome to the following whom we hope will enjoy being members of the Trust:

			Mike Nash
633	Clive Goodrick-Meech	Tongham	JW
634	Jeff Lemon	Mountnessing MS4	MN
635	Paul Ferguson	Westcliff-on-Sea RMC1469	MN
636	David Kinnear	Camberley	
637	John Adcock	Horsham	AC
638	Tony Challands	Selston, Notts.	MN
		'RE' NNU 449J	
		'LH' KPB 881P (soon!)	
639	Colin Batten	Portchester	MN
640	Fleetmaster Ltd.	Horsham	MN
642	Guildford College of F & HE	Guildford	MN
643	Terry Hussey	Basingstoke	MN
644	Colin Temple	Swaffham Prior	MN
645	B. Perkins	Camberley	
646	J. Gregory	Greenford	
		Atlantean TBK 196K	
		Leyland 'Bendy' FHE291V	
		Loads of Bristols!	

Recruited by: AC – Alan Charman, JW – Jeff Warr, MN – Mike Nash.

BOOK REVIEWS

BUS SCENE IN COLOUR: PRESERVED BUSES

Gavin Booth and Peter Durham

Published by Ian Allan. £12.99

This fine addition to Ian Allan's excellent series of colour landscape albums has actually been out for some few months now, but it is entirely appropriate to include the review in this issue for two reasons. Following Peter Durham's decision to retire from photographing the transport scene, not only is this book very much his parting shot, but also, by way of a farewell he has chosen our Open Day at which to do a final signing session for those who purchase the book on the day, or indeed who bring along a copy which they have already purchased.

Gavin Booth provides the introduction and captions in capable fashion but it is the sheer quality of the portraits which take centre stage, with some of the subjects seeming almost to want to drive out of the page towards the reader. There are those who claim that the only photographs of any merit are those capturing buses in their service days, but most of the stars of the today's rally circuit have now been in preservation for many more years than they achieved in service. Indeed, it is easy to forget that some 'celebrity' machines had remarkably short service lives in comparison to LT vehicles because they weren't actually that good! So to these eyes at least, Peter Durham's efforts are every bit as relevant and merely capture vehicles to the highest standard in a further phase of their lives.

Assembled in manufacturer order, there really is something to please everyone, from Mike Sutcliffe's 1908 Leyland X2 and the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum's 1927 Titan TD1 (which has the loudest transmission I've ever heard!) through to the mid-Seventies, including a smattering of vehicles owned by Cobham members, and several trolleys, all posed with maximum attention to detail in a stunning variety of backdrops.

It's difficult to nominate stand-out shots but here goes. The Alexander (Northern) 1947 Tiger PS1 looks simply superb in its rich yellow and cream livery and what a treat it would make parked alongside our similar TD95, whilst the shot of a 1957 Burlingham Seagull bodied Tiger Cub within the environs of the Severn Valley Railway is mouth watering. And with my more contemporary tastes, I was pleased to see the inclusion of several Bristol REs including SWC 24K, the ex-Colchester Leyland engined RELL now owned by Classic Coaches which I just so happened to have been driving the night before writing this, on rail replacement work between Wimbledon and Parsons Green. The 'bellow' from the exhaust was quite magnificent, setting more than a few car alarms off in the process and doing nothing to diminish my enthusiasm for these most aural of machines! Also included are a couple of VRs of which the Oxford Bus Museum's 1977 example looks particularly fine in its traditional City of Oxford livery, which just goes to show what a livery can do for a vehicle not usually renowned for its looks.

Every bit as colourful as the man himself, this book is a fitting tribute to his talents and a must for your shelf. We wish Peter well in the future and thank him for all the support he has shown towards Cobham during the most crucial years in our museum's history. I'm sure he knows that the kettle's always on for him and Carol at Redhill Road!

Mike Nash

BUS SCENE IN COLOUR: LONDON'S BUSES

Stephen Morris

Published by Ian Allan. £13.99

Focusing on the London scene since de-regulation, Stephen has knitted together a collection of photographs and useful captions to remind us all just how varied the last decade or so has been in our capital. It's no wonder that the customers are confused, but for enthusiasts I wonder whether there will ever be such changeable times again, especially now that operators are under such pressure to

reduce the age profile of their fleets.

I suspect that this book will mature like a good malt whisky for much of its content presently seems too fresh (and distressing!) in our minds to be of great merit. But ten years down the line, when everything will be sounding like a sewing machine, son of Dart in a whole multitude of varieties will hold the monopoly, and the last Routemasters will surely have departed from front-line service, what's the betting that there will be plenty who will once again yearn for the variety displayed in this book, and to hear again the death-rattle of a 510 National in full cry and the deep rumble of a Gardner engined Metrobus. I will likely be one!

This book then, includes within its pages a whole selection of vehicle types, liveries and short-lived routes which reflected both the optimism and uncertainty of de-regulation. It makes for entertaining reading, not least because it displays how even the most major players were more than capable of getting it wrong, and often on a regular basis. The whole period has been something of a blur because there has simply been too much change to cope with.

Stephen Morris has done well to capture a large slice of what has often come and gone before you've had time to blink and this will prove a fascinating book to anyone interested in the modern London scene.

Mike Nash

LONDON BUS HANDBOOK

Published by Capital Transport £17.50

With the latest version of the London Bus Handbook Capital Transport have completed the transition from the original anoraks' "spotter's handbook" style of publication to a glossy informative volume that gives a well rounded view of the current state of London's PCV scene.

There are 240 pages presented in A5 landscape format, 160 of which contain full colour photographs. There are in fact around 200 of these. The fleet lists included in the book are correct for December

1997 and cover operators of LT services within Greater London and sightseeing operations.

The range of pictures is wide and the quality very good as one would expect from the cover price. For followers of the current scene in London this book will be an invaluable addition to their bookshelves.

Phill Cruise

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT

Graham Ruddock

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Two important projects to develop Cobham as a museum will start soon if volunteers come forward to help with them. They both concern restoration for display at Cobham.

The committee's priorities for restoration are STL2377, and then the Guy, G351. There will not be resources for STL2093 to be restored to working order for some years. The bus needs tender loving care and to be turned from an eyesore to a useful exhibit while it waits its turn for restoration.

The plan is to restore it for static display as an exhibit on pre-war bodywork and the problems and costs involved in remedying them (with collection box of course!). The missing off-side panels will be replaced, and enough panels will be removed from the near side to show the body construction of both decks and the associated problems. Volunteers are needed to rub down the bus, to repaint it and generally tidy it up. This has already started and the inside has now been cleared out. There will be no need to worry about specialist work, such as panelling and replacing some of the missing parts, this will be done for you.

When completed the bus will be displayed facing the canteen with its off side and front easily visible to visitors.

THE RT CHASSIS

Member Dick Garbutt has kindly offered to loan the Trust, on a long term basis, a complete RT chassis which lost its body in a fire. The committee has accepted Dick's generous offer and would like to take this opportunity to thank him publicly.

Ian Barrett has already replaced missing parts and steam cleaned the chassis. Volunteers are needed to rub down the chassis and paint it silver. The various systems, air, lubrication fuel etc will be painted in different colours to allow members and visitors to see how the RT works.

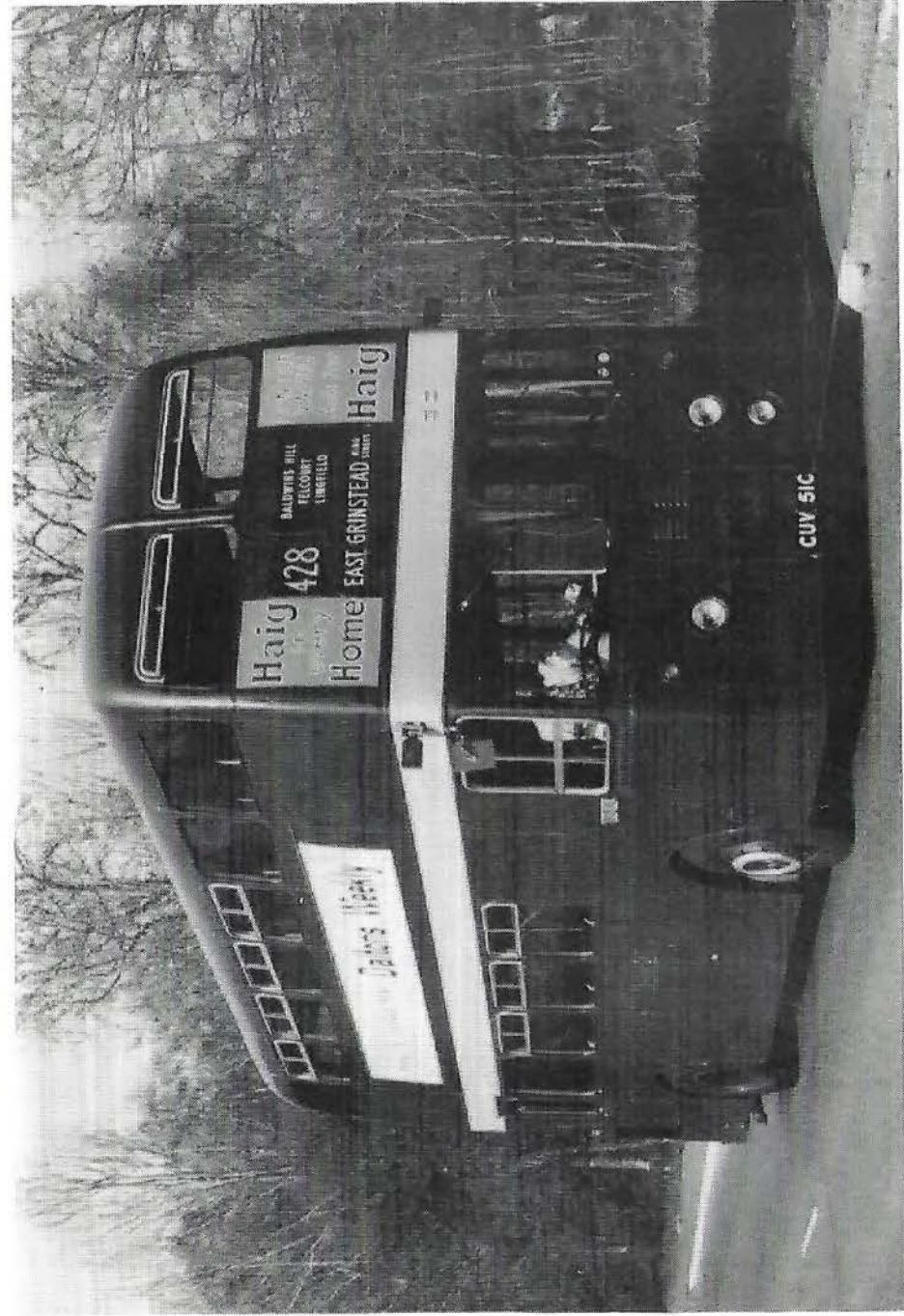
HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Our existing resources are stretched with STL2377, T448, RT2775 and P3 receiving major attention plus all the routine maintenance etc which is needed on other buses. We are looking for non-regulars at Cobham to undertake these two projects, which are suitable for those with no pretensions to be mechanical experts or bodywork specialists!

For each project we are looking for a co-ordinator and volunteers. The co-ordinators would be responsible for planning the work, liaising with Graham Ruddock and Ian Barrett, and for leading volunteer helpers to work on the projects. This might be done by regular working days, by co-ordinated work by individuals or a combination of the two. There are no strict deadlines to adhere to, but regular progress would be wanted.

If you think you would be able to help, please drop a line to Graham Ruddock at the Wimbledon address given in this magazine's committee membership list. Please offer to help, I am sure it will be enjoyable, interesting and worthwhile.

COBHAM, STL2093 AND THE RT CHASSIS NEED YOU



The Durham Gallery... XF1, the immaculate 1965 Daimler Fleetline owned by Dick Garbutt and Alan Charman, will be offering rides to Woking when the 'Not the RT/RF Running Event!' connects with our museum Display Day on Sunday June 7th. The organisers hope to provide quite some variety of machinery including GSs, Routemasters and non London vehicles. Should be good. (Photo: Peter Durham).



Little Guys Farewell... Alan Charman, Mike Dawes and Robin Sharp said their farewells to Dunton Green Garage by taking along GSs 56 and 62 on February 14th. GS56 is pictured inside the garage whilst GS62 is seen leaving for the last time what was a popular country area garage. (Photos: Alan Charman).

DUNTON GREEN

Saturday 14th February 1998

My wife has always maintained that I put my bus and a trip to Dunton Green Garage before her, so perhaps it was appropriate that DG finally closed its doors for the last time on St Valentine's Day.

I have lived close by Dunton Green for most of my life and been a regular visitor there from my youngest days when I would spend the day at the garage or riding on the 413 or 471 with my father, who was a driver at Dunton Green from 1953 until 1967.

Saturday 14th dawned bright and sunny I had arranged to meet Mike, Trevor and Robin with GS56 at Dunton Green at 2.00 pm, I arrived 15 minutes late after a slight miscalculation of the time from Dorking to DG on a Saturday, being mostly used to empty roads early on Sunday mornings. 56 was parked inside the Garage which was already bereft of vehicles as most had been transferred out to Dartford on Friday evening.

The next 2 hours was spent enhancing the profits of Mr Kodak while GS56 and 62 posed in every possible location, GS62 probably being the last former LT vehicle to use the front doors which were especially opened for the occasion.

Finally at 4.00pm with the last 437 to Sevenoaks Weald having departed the garage, the two GS buses headed off towards Knockholt Pound for one last nostalgic trip up Star Hill.

A sad occasion made enjoyable by the excellent weather and friendly atmosphere that existed from the few staff left at the garage, and so another former LT garage is gone, but certainly not forgotten.

Alan Charman

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED

Roland Graves

As more of our members are baring their life histories to us through the columns of the magazine. I thought I would take up the Editors' offer and recount some of my experiences. Having been interested in buses for as long as I can remember I sometimes think my Mother was correct in her account of possibly why.

I was born at Crown Point, Kent, midway between Borough Green and Sevenoaks in the days when travel was almost always by public transport. At the age of 3 months my parents decided that they would have a day out at Brighton. This entailed travelling by bus all the way! In 1948 the 122 service ran from Gravesend to Brighton and was jointly operated by M&D and Southdown. I suspect it was the journey of 4 hours each way, possibly on a Leyland TD or perhaps a Guy Arab, that was enough to alter the balance of my mind.

As a child I attended school in the centre of Sevenoaks which entailed walking from the station area, up London Road, to the Town. At the age of 6 or 7, I was already taking note of the buses that appeared at Sevenoaks Station. Each morning as I reached the parade of shops opposite the station entrance there would be a procession of RTs heading for the bus station. Between 08.32 and 08.44 no less than 6 routes passed towards Sevenoaks and 3 in the other direction.

Each of these would decant numbers of commuters for the trains to London. Town journeys were 402 to Sevenoaks, 403 to Tonbridge Station, 454a to Tonbridge Station via Weald, 431 to Sevenoaks, 431 a to Sevenoaks and lastly the 431d works journey from Fort Halstead.

The 454a journey started from opposite the cattle market having carried out a reverse turn at the Hichen Hatch Lane, Mount Harry Road and Bradbourne Road junction. This was always carefully supervised by the conductor as even then it was a busy junction. If I actually saw the 431d then I was going to be late for school and needed to run up the hill. We kids used to enjoy racing the lorries up

Tubbs Hill, at that time the main A21 route to the South. The heavy lorries always had to change down into bottom gear and we would wait until they were level with us and then run off and wait again further up. The drivers seemed to enjoy the fun that we were having as they sat there with foot flat on the floor, lots of revs, noise and diesel fumes. I recall many AEC mammoth majors, Fodens and Leyland Hippos. If they didn't have at least six wheels then it wasn't worth racing them unless you found a Bedford which was always worth a run. They didn't sound so good but always seemed to struggle.

If it was a wet day then I would part with my penny ha'penny for a half single to the "car park", as Sevenoaks bus station was always known to the locals.

Of course it wasn't just RTs that would be seen at the same time of day; RFs on Green Line 704/705 also appeared. I almost forgot but at 08.38 a strange antiquated looking half-cab single decker in the green & cream livery of M&D departed from the same stand as the 454a on service 105 to Seal. This was the only M&D service that penetrated the west side of Sevenoaks into what to me was always LT territory and then only for a few journeys in the peak hours.

That strange M&D half-cab was often S043, LKT991 the Bristol L6A ECW B35R that is now preserved. Members often comment on vehicles that they would like to own, that M&D Bristol will always be the one that I shall covet most.

At the age of 11, I moved to the secondary school which was situated at Wilderness on the east side of Sevenoaks. Believe it or not, that 105 service passed the gate. I was at last able to travel on the Bristols if I could save enough pocket money for the 3d fare. Only one way though, I had to walk home in the evenings. Unfortunately the Bristols were replaced by new AEC Reliances with Park Royal or Weymann bodies in 1959. For an 11 year old, part of my youth had already gone.

It was at this time that I also realised that the M&D trunk service 9 to Maidstone had strange lowbridge buses with odd offside gangways and long seats upstairs.

These were the long lived Bristol K6As with their handsome curvaceous Weymann bodies. They were still in use when I left the area to go to college in 1967. All the M&D vehicles were based at Borough Green depot and carried the little round BG garage plate on the back.

You can see that certain interests are already showing up even at this early age. You might have noticed that there are differences in terminology in my description e.g. LT always used "route" numbers; M&D used "service" numbers; LT put their buses to bed in "garages"; M&D in "depots". □

VIC'S CHRISTMAS QUIZ – ANSWERS

This was a hotly contested quiz with several members just missing maximum marks. But only one member got the whole lot correct and that was Christopher Sullivan who has kindly donated his prize to the RT2775 restoration fund. The question which really sorted out the men from the boys related to the surviving RPs. They are (unless you know otherwise?) RP21 (recently sold by London & Country to a Barnsley scrapyards), 25 (owned by a preservationist but open stored for more than ten years and semi-derelict in a farm near Dorking), 71 (with Knotty Bus, Staffs.) and of course 90 which I suspect you all know as a Cobham resident. 72 has recently been broken up.

Worthy of special mention is Graham Smith who came a close second and whose extensive answers gain him the 'Golden Anorak' award!

1. General; 2. Diddlers; 3. Chiswick; 4. Yes; 5. Numerically RT4825 but eventually RT4794 ended up with the highest body number; 6. Built new in omo. form; 7. The Lost Property Office; 8. Aldenham Works; 9. Stevenage; 10. Shoplinker (and later Clyde-side!); 11. 43; 12. AEC; 13. Christopher Sullivan (that man gets everywhere!); 14. Tour of USA and Canada, 1952; 15. See above.

RT BUSES IN GUERNSEY

Phill Cruise

During the greater part of the 1980s we regularly spent two weeks holiday in Jersey, travelling for the day courtesy of an Aurigny Airways Trilander plane (which for those of you who are not plane spotters is like a large Ford Transit with wings and three engines – hence the name) over to Guernsey. In those days the mainstay of Guernsey-bus, as it had become, were various Bedfords and some Albions with Reading bodywork. By the mid-eighties the Bristol LH started to take over and at the end of the decade LT ruled, as most of these were ex BLs.

One sunny day in 1987 we were driving along from St. Sampson's to 'Town' (St. Peter Port) when a strange sight hove into view coming towards us. When it got nearer I uttered 'Good heavens that is a jolly old RT' (I didn't but this is a family publication!). What I did say was 'Follow that bus!' We turned round the Metro and back at St. Sampson's we caught up the RT. It had obviously just come out of the works and gleamed in all-over white livery with black wings and wheels. The 'bonnet' number was 14 and chassis number 09613476 and yes, the roof was missing. I had my first ride on a Guernseybus RT. The first of many over the years.

Number 14 alias RT2494 KXW 123 had a Cobham connection, they supplied it complete with RMC/RCL seats in May 1987. Before this it had been a 'Lesney' bus, having completed its LT service at BX in August 1976. The original RT with this number entered service at Forest Gate in January 1950. The Guernsey Evening Post of 6th June 1988 shows 14 in Marlboro (cigarettes) livery on its first day of service on route K which is the 'Town' to Pleinmont route over which the RTs run.

It was about this time that 15, alias RT1377 KXW 476, joined the fleet from the Docklands Road Transport Museum. This vehicle had ended its LT service at SE in January 1973. In its original form it entered service at X in May 1950. This also started out in a similar

white livery which was later signwritten as a travelling advert for Island FM, the local radio station. It often sees service as a mobile grandstand around the island for such events as the Rocquaine Regatta.

The last of the original trio arrived in July 1990 from Darley Dale Bus Co. This was 18, ex RT4037 LUC 196, which had started life as a country area bus at Luton in January 1951. It came over already open topped and was soon painted blue and cream and put into service. I rode on it during its first season and the lower saloon was still in as withdrawn condition when it finished as a trainer at PB in November 1979. It had also been among the last few hundred LT RTs, having been in service at Barking and Plumstead during 1978. This bus subsequently received the rebuilding treatment of its companions as it evidently leaked like a sieve when it rained.

These three vehicles maintain the service on route K which runs during the holiday season from April to the end of September. The first journey leaves Town at 10.15 arriving at Pleinmont at 11.35 and the last 'out' is at 14.45. The last bus leaves Pleinmont at 16.05 arriving back at St Peter Port at 17.15. The route starts at the Bus Station in 'Town' and travels along the edge of Belle Greve Bay to St. Sampson's harbour which is the industrial area of the island where the RTs must feel at home. From the top deck there is a fine view of Herm Island and Sark. St. Sampson's has a fine harbour with many working boats of various kinds and a selection of shops for the other half to spend your money in. Travelling past the fort and oil terminal the bus follows the coast before heading inland through some very narrow roads before heading across L'anresse Common and up to Pembroke Bay which has a superb sandy beach. Running back on itself and then through more very narrow roads the bus regains the coast road at L'islet and from here on you have non-stop breathtaking views of the North West coast until this becomes the West coast and the terminus at Pleinmont is reached. Here the buses reverse with passengers on board. The six feet thick stone wall stops them falling on to the beach fifty feet below! I can heartily recommend the Imperial Hotel outside



Island Regent – Take One... Originally RT1377 and now No. 15 in the Guernseybus fleet, the London veteran is seen at Pleinmont on a dull August day. The driver is Jim Young and this is not his favourite bus! (Photo: Phill Cruise).

which the bus stands for that well earned holiday sustenance and the nearby kiosk does lovely cream teas.

As you may have realised we holiday in Guernsey now and I managed to make contact with the bus garage and the man responsible for rebuilding the RTs and two PS1s, Vernon Priaulx. Unfortunately early this year there was a radical reshuffle in the company and many long serving staff including Vernon have left. He was in the final stages of converting RT1896 LLU 804 into the front entrance number 20. I first met him when he was building a new body on an ex Jersey PS1 and was really impressed with his skills which he told me were at one time in use building caravans. I have since visited him when he was rebuilding RTL1004 KYY 647 as a front entrance mid staircase vehicle, virtually on his own, (Peter you would love to have this man working at Cobham, believe me!) and RT1896. Both these buses were supplied by Dr J Young of Nottingham University who is chairman of Channel Islands Bus Society. During vacations he lives in Guernsey and drives the RTs. I'm very envious as that would be my idea of heaven!

Vernon is a very interesting person to talk to and on my visits to his workshop in the garage, he found time to talk me through the work he was doing, particularly on the RTL. The body on this was a bit rough but nothing compared to RT1896 which was in a similar state to RT2177 rebuilt by Ian Barrett. The work on both of the closed top conversions included new floors, ceilings, back sections to replace the platforms, ex BL platform doors and modified cabside, new panelling and much new framing. Downstairs used the LT seats but upstairs coach seats replaced them. One of the hardest parts was making and fitting new staircases as the main body framing at ceiling/upper floor level had to be modified. When it was completed 19 was a fine bus and I travelled on it during its first few months in service on a wet Easter day on service K. It rides really smoothly as it's probably heavier than standard and the engine didn't have the usual RTL 'hunting' that seemed to be evident in London. A regular duty for the vehicle is the evening tour which lays over outside the 'Imperial'.



Island Regent – Take Two... The former RT2494 (No. 14) is seen at Pembroke Bay bus layby on a bright but chilly June day, hence the lower deck is well patronised. (Photo: Phill Cruise).

I've got a nice shot of it taken from the Hotel garden with Fort Grey lit up in the background.

I don't know if 20 has been completed as I did not go into the bus garage this year, not knowing the new management. It will be a shame if it hasn't as it would be a fine companion for the RTL. Thinking about the Island these cold winter evenings gives me something to look forward to. If you get the chance, travel over, even just for a weekend and travel on the only regular RT operated routes in Europe and enjoy the strange experience of classic London vehicles in their second life. □

DRIVER TRAINING

Mike Nash

Since the last issue Andy Baxter has successfully obtained his PCV license and two more members, Alan Fairbrother and Andrew Hay are expected to have tested by the time you read this. There are five or six other members making steady progress and during February and March the ex-Blue Saloon Bristol LH which I have loaned to Cobham has been clocking up more miles than ever and has proved itself a most reliable little machine. Full marks also to our three instructors, Alan Bond, Bill Ackroyd and John Broadhurst, who have given so much of their free time for the benefit of those members concerned.

However, with P3 expected to be available later in the year, and a buyer having been lined up for the LH in preservation it is likely that KPB 881P will be released soon after the Open Day and that there will be a gap in the driver training programme until P3 is ready. Therefore no additional pupils are being taken on for the time being and Alan Bond will announce in the Magazine when the scheme is to recommence. □

SHORT TURNS

Compiled by Mike Nash

On The Move...

Our friends at Ian Allan Publishing have recently relocated and can now be found at River Dene Estate, Molesey Road, Hersham, Surrey KT12 4RG (telephone 01932 600, fax 01932 601). All correspondence for 'BUSES' magazine and indeed that relating to the many other excellent publications which we enjoy from this most prolific transport publisher should be forwarded to the new address. The move has also permitted IAP to update much of their printing equipment so rest assured that the products which emerge from Hersham will be of an even higher quality.

More To Read...

Talking of Ian Allan Publishing, they have just launched a new magazine entirely devoted to our favourite subject. 'PRESERVED BUS' is a glossy quarterly title edited by Stephen Morris and aimed at supplementing 'BUSES' magazine which he already edits. The first issue was launched on March 26th with a 'southern' launch at our Open Day. We are promised high quality photography and contributions from many well known preservationists. Not to be missed at £2.50.

Low Down Merlin...

Member Christopher Sullivan is most anxious to locate any remaining examples of the MB class which had the low driving position (MBs 16-165) in order to preserve a red example to go with MB90. Condition is totally immaterial and within reason so is price. If you know of one lurking near you please drop Christopher a line at 27, Grantham Green, Borehamwood, Herts. WD6 2JQ. There must be one somewhere!

Routie Moquette...

Roland Graves has sent in details of a contact who has a supply of material for RM seats. The material has been removed from cushions and backs that

have been recovered in vinyl for use in open-top vehicles. Therefore the trimmer has a supply of good part used moquette sections or it might also be possible to swap good seats for bad which he can then recover in vinyl. He is only looking for a nominal sum, say £1 per piece so it could be a cheap opportunity to improve your Routemaster trim. Ring Tim Last on Sittingbourne 01795 915.

M & S Now North...

Those interested in the fate of the Marks & Spencer liveried LeyNat (NPJ 479R) which for so long worked the Cobham patch may like to know that whilst the attempt to secure it for preservation failed, it has indeed survived for the time being having been sold with several of its London & Country sisters to Dart of Paisley, near Glasgow. Some of the batch entered service straight away but NPJ has yet to be sighted.

Don't Scorn Sorn...

Fears that the DVLA's new Statutory Off-Road Notice (SORN) scheme would be bad news for preserved vehicles are unfounded. The DVLA have issued a statement explaining that SORN is aimed at reducing road tax evasion. Off-road vehicles which are restored, partially restored or simply boxes of bits are not affected. SORN declarations will only need to be made when an existing road fund license expires on or after Jan 31st and a new tax disc isn't purchased. The DVLA will send a renewal form to the owner as usual but this form will also include a SORN section to be completed if the vehicle isn't being re-licensed. This process will occur each twelve months until the vehicle is put back on the road, whereby it can be licensed at the post office in the normal way and at the usual cost. So the SORN scheme is merely an improved way of the DVLA monitoring vehicle movements and cracking down on tax dodgers. □

T499 DOWN UNDER – THE STORY SO FAR

Ian Kerr

One of our retired members, who is also a member of a group who travel around the state giving tree seedlings to farmers in an effort to overcome soil degradation, came across this old bus on a farm about 370 kilometres south of Perth. He took a few photographs and reported the find at a Bus Museum meeting (at which I wasn't present). Apparently he talked the farmer into donating the bus to the museum but the committee declined the offer as it doesn't fit the aims of preserving buses of Western Australian heritage.

Sometime later I heard about this find and decided the opportunity was too good to let pass. I went down to the farm with a friend (another pom who has this strange leaning towards buses of Birmingham Corporation origin) to have a look at the condition of the bus and decided to take it on myself. I had always wanted to own my own bus and had already made up my mind to have it before going! My friend offered to go halves and, much as I would have liked to go it alone, with thoughts of the restoration costs involved, I accepted.

The bus appeared to be remarkably intact considering its age but was missing the two front wheels, the battery box panel and all the interior seats. Both destination boxes had also been removed and panelled over. It had been painted in a yellow and green livery at some stage but the Australian sun had taken its toll of this as it could be picked off in large chunks revealing a shiny aluminium beneath. I was able to identify the bus as T499 from the brass plate still attached to the dumb iron.

Home again and I dug out all the information I could find on the 10T10 from my books. I even found a photograph of the actual bus taken during the war when it was converted to an ambulance in 'Green Line 1930 – 1980', a London Country publication. I'm now becoming an expert on all the detail differences of the 10T10! Why did some have that odd offside front mudguard?

A few weeks later, armed with a can of WD40, a tool box and a

couple of spare wheels, the two of us were back at the farm getting T499 ready for transporting back to Perth. One of the wheels was a spare from the Museum's Leyland trolley bus of the same vintage and looks very similar to the 10T10's originals. The other, and only other wheel we had available, was from a later model Leyland. This fouled the steering linkage and couldn't be tightened up, so we used one of the rear duals. Air was pumped into the flat rear tyres and so to the moment of truth – would it move. A quick pull with a chain and tractor proved that someone had the sense to park with the handbrake off all those years ago! The opportunity was taken on the second visit to have a closer look at the condition of the bus. The bodywork was not as sound as first thought as most of the wood in the framework had rotted away, the beading strips being all that was holding the panels on in some places. The interior was full of junk on our first visit but had now been cleaned out and it appears that most of the trims are still fitted – some windows could even be wound up and down.

T499 arrived at the Museum's premises on Monday 24th November on a low loader. A couple of panels had come away from the body on the journey including the two lower rear corners and the one under the emergency exit which came away completely as one unit. The bus is now waiting to be placed in a corner somewhere ready for work to start. But where to start?

The wife of the farmer where T499 was found managed to contact the wife of the original Australian owner and passed her number on to me. Her husband died six years ago. This lady has a son who lives in Perth and we have arranged to meet when she next comes up for a visit. She did tell me that they bought the bus from North's of Leeds in 1954 to replace an old box on wheels they had at that time on their school bus run. They paid £250 Sterling for it and a further 500 Australian Pounds import duty. She and her husband had asked her father in England to send out a 7.7 engine bus and that is what they thought they had until the engine failed. Only when the wrong parts started arriving from England did they realise that T499 had an 8.8. Eventually, and this is the bit I find most disappointing since finding



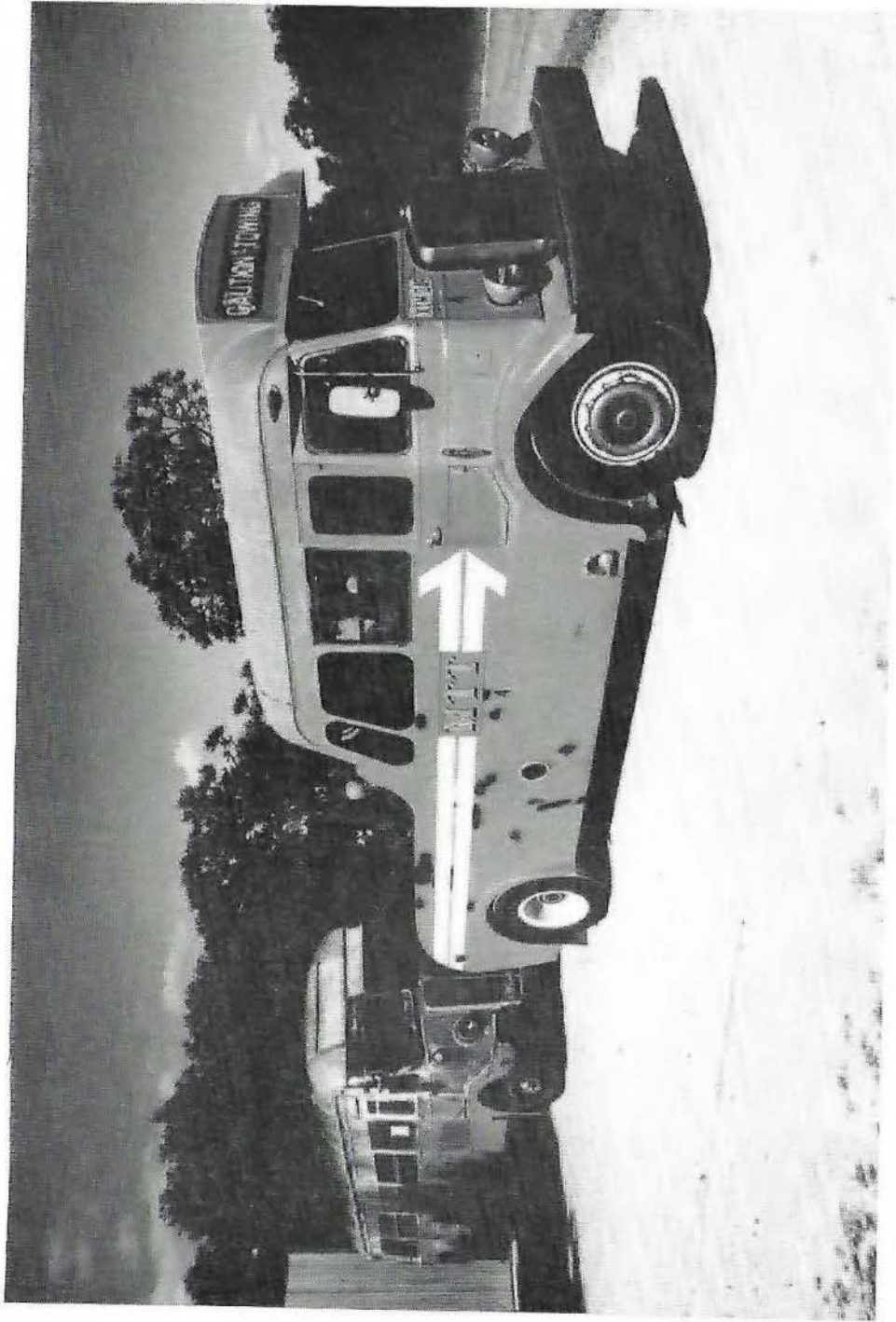
T Down Under... Having safely arrived at its new home, T499 basks in the sunshine, having completed the first stage in what will be a major project. Incredibly, such is the size and shape of the building behind that this view could almost be a scene from Cobham.



This rear view shows the damage which was probably done when T499 was dragged onto the low loader at the farm. The centre and two corner panels came off as one unit!



This offside view shows how remarkably original the vehicle is, with only the missing blind box distinguishing T499 from how our T504 once looked.



The museum's Leyland OPS4 tow wagon eases T499 back into the safety of the fenced compound prior to the 10T10 being lifted onto blocks ready for restoration to commence. (All photos: Ian Kerr)

the bus, they changed the engine for a 7.7. She did say she would phone around to see if she can trace the original engine. More on the history at a later date.

The next step is to draw up a plan of restoration including parts required etc. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who may have a drawing of the body which we could copy or buy, especially of the destination boxes. As for the livery, it's too early days yet to decide which colours to restore it to. It doesn't appear to have been painted red as I can't find any traces of that colour on the body. I quite like the look of the early black and white shots of 10T10s in what looks like three tone green, as in a photo of a lineup of six of these buses when new outside Hemel Hempstead Garage in 1938. □

Offers of help or information should be sent to Ian Kerr, Bermuda Drive, Ballajura, Western Australia, 6066, Australia.
e-mail i.kerr@ com.au

PUBLICITY OFFICER REQUIRED

With the committee having to cover ever more ground it is felt that a dedicated post needs to be created to ensure that progress at Cobham is regularly broadcasted to all the relevant parties.

Such a person (or persons) need to have a good working knowledge of Cobham, both in terms of fleet news, events, members vehicles and other progress, and to be able to send out well written, informative press releases to encourage further support in the form of new recruits and indeed visitors.

Things are happening so fast at Cobham these days, and we need the world to know of our progress. If you can work under your own initiative and communicate effectively, both with the key members and indeed the world at large, then we need to hear from you, so why not drop the Chairman a line about this vitally important role, or have a chat when you next see him □

NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE KNOW THAT...

Michael Lloyd

It was the short reference in Magazine No 19, in fact the "Short Turn" about the death of Bev Sears, that triggered off these reminiscences about RMC1495, or "Gus the Bus."

Back in the Spring of 1977 I was working the so-called "late late" or twilight shift at HH. We started at six in the evening and worked through to half past two the following morning putting the incoming buses to bed. At that time, Hemel had a variety of types including long and short Nationals, long and short Routemasters and members of the MB family, not to mention a solitary RF. Obviously, with the hours I then worked I never saw the normal middle turn men (as the day shift was called), only the late turn running shift, and it wasn't always easy to find out what had been going on. I did however become aware that an awful lot of work was being done on RMC1495, universally accepted as not exactly the garage's best example and enquiries eventually revealed that the bus was being prepared to enter Weymouth Bus Rally. Remember Weymouth? It was a superb event in a splendid setting with a wide variety of vehicles and a great atmosphere. Pity it all had to end, but that's another story.

Anyway, as the days and weeks passed, RMC1495 had a lot of mechanical work done, a complete exterior repaint, a set of retrimmed seats were fitted and the interior was improved considerably. The end result really was a credit to the garage, the more so as it seemed the whole thing was inspired by two or three drivers who had had to struggle to persuade the management and the engineers to go along with their plans – there was little love lost between driving and engineering staff then, believe me! Anyway, came the early morning of Sunday, 3 July 1977 and RMC1495, beautifully turned out but not in fact quite finished, crept out of the garage in the early morning mist to make her long, slow way to sunny Weymouth.

I can't tell you about the journey. I always went to Weymouth, one

of my friends being a main organiser of the event, but my wife and I went early under our own petrol, as it were, to get there before the crowds, photograph the buses as they arrived and look round the sales stands before everything was sold. The day seemed and indeed was well advanced before at long last the Routemaster, resplendent in gleaming National green, finally rolled on to the site. The light green livery combined with the yellow Green Line blinds certainly made the bus stand out and perhaps to everyone's surprise she actually won an award, being judged the "Best AEC" and getting a fine shield to take home.

After that, it was back to more mundane duties, but the intention was always that the bus would be used to attend further rallies in the future, and to that end every couple of weeks we gave her a special soap-wash by hand to clean around the cab, grille and bonnet where the bus wash couldn't reach. As I mentioned in my article about Nationals, Head Office occasionally used to amuse themselves by transferring buses around the fleet and, you've guessed, they decided that 1495 should move to Garston. We tried hard to keep the bus but to no avail and soon Garston's legendary high standards of maintenance had reduced it to a dirty, rather battered travesty of its former proud self. They even managed to blow up the engine, whereupon the vehicle was withdrawn and parked at the back of the garage. In the Spring of 1978 I spent a few weeks at GR and used to eat my lunch on the upper deck of what was once HH's prizewinning Routemaster, a sad state of affairs. Eventually, without ever attending another rally in her life, 1495 passed back to London Transport and suffered the indignity of being painted the same colour as a fire engine or Post Office van. After a period earning her living as a training bus she was sold off and became, as we know, a catering bus. This seemed very sad considering her brief but influential period of fame.

Influential? Well, yes. Not long after the events described, various London Transport garages started to tart-up selected Routemasters with old-style livery and transfers and to use them as "Showbuses" for weekend rallying. Many were lucky to find their way at length

into preservation after their period as celebrities and certainly this practice helped no end to promote the cult of the Routemaster. It was London Country who started it all, however.

Perhaps even more far reaching was what happened next at HH. In April 1978 one of our driving instructors was allocated National-liveried RT1018 as his permanent steed, despite the fact that on paper it was a Stevenage bus. 1018 was an old HH resident of many years standing, in fact as we subsequently discovered, she had been there since 1955 albeit under three different fleet numbers. The return of this very old friend, and the success we had briefly enjoyed with the RMC, led me at length and with the willing co-operation of the garage's Sports and Social Committee, to seek and obtain permission to treat 1018 as the HH Showbus. Once again frantic efforts ensued as the bus was repaired, repainted, re-seated, etc., and a set of blinds obtained from various sources. All this had taken quite a long period and we missed the 1978 rally season, but on 1 July 1979 RT1018 was to be seen making her debut at – Weymouth. Well, where else?

We had a couple of great years rallying the RT until she was withdrawn in the Spring of 1981. At this stage I decided I couldn't bear to be parted from her and I bought her, an event that led directly to the formation of the RT and RF Register in 1982 by Peter Gomm who had accompanied us to rallies whenever he could as a sort of honorary member of the HH staff. So you see "Gus the Bus" (ugh!!) really started something all those years ago. It would be nice if someone with more interest and energy than I have could restore the poor thing to her former glory, however briefly *she* enjoyed that glory.

By the way, if you happen to have a programme for the 1977 Weymouth rally, you'll find the bus described as 455 CLT. This was because RMC1455 was "first choice" for the sprucing-up process, being widely regarded as almost the best HH RMC and the rally entry form quoted its number. Why they substituted 1495 was never clear. My photograph shows RMC 1495 at Weymouth with her "Best AEC" Shield proudly displayed in the cab window.



THINKING OF WRITING FOR THE MAGAZINE?

All contributions are, of course, welcome. You can submit your work in a variety of ways. Handwriting is perfectly acceptable, but if you can type it out, the typesetter can scan it directly, avoiding the need for re-typing. However, handwritten corrections need to be in the margin, also, if possible, please use one of the following styles.

12 point typewriter text (Courier)

12 point Times Roman

The following styles are difficult to scan reliably – please avoid them.

10 point and smaller, *italics*, *script*, **bold**, sanserif styles such as Arial, Gill Sans, Humanist 521, Univers, Helvetica, Swiss, and matrix printers in draft mode.

You can also send work to the editor on disk or by e-mail to the typesetter, who will then print a copy and forward it to your editor; the address is @pavilion.co.uk. Please write your name and address on the disk to ensure it is returned to you.

LNC27 RETURNS TO LONDON'S COUNTRY

Jonathan Wilkins

This story begins on the top deck of an RT (where else?), travelling between Leighton Buzzard and Crowthorne on the day of Classic Automotion 1997. I had been seeking a more active role in the bus preservation scene for a while, and had almost accidentally been introduced to Nigel Adams of the British Bus Preservation Group, through the St.Alban's (LT Garage) Supporters Organisation (see how many plugs you can get into one sentence!). I am grateful to him, and to Dave and Pam Johnson for their kindness that day.

Full of enthusiasm, I looked around the Celtic Fringe to find out what might be happening that related to bus preservation, and the answer seemed to be "not a lot". Then came one of those moments – when reading the '25 years of Leyland Nationals' article in a previous Magazine.

A couple of years ago, my eye had been taken by an obviously London Country vehicle trading as a school bus locally. I subsequently found and photographed it one lunch time, laying over on the council's coach park in Llandudno. I don't know if it is an official arrangement, but sometimes 30% of the fleet of Alpine Travel can be found here – wall to wall Bristol VRs, usually. Finally, I plucked up the courage to phone the company and ask if they still had NPD 127L in their fleet, and I was ready for an ear-full about time-wasters in response. I didn't get one and I was very pleasantly surprised to find that I was talking to one of the directors, and they did still have 'NPD', though now disused. Did I want to go and have a look at the vehicle?

My first visit found a very sad-looking bus, with back turned, air-suspension flat and the front wheels off. It was a typically damp Welsh winter day and there was that unique, all-pervading smell of oily mud that you only get in scrapyards. Heart sinking, I climbed in through the missing emergency exit door. Inside it looked better than expected, Andrew the local mechanic had said on the phone that it had lain there for about a year, and I was half expecting to find a



National Rescue... (Top) LNC27, rescued by Jonathan Wilkins, is seen on January 21st departing from Alpine Travel, near Llandudno, on the back of Geoff Ripley's wrecker heading for Barnsley and then on to Surrey. (Bottom) Sneaking into the picture on the left is LNC27, having safely arrived in the south, and parked next to LS5 which has caused the Editor more than a few headaches during its movement from Dungannon, Northern Ireland. Thanks to Geoff Ripley for his part in the rescue of both these long term projects. (Photos: Jonathan Wilkins and Kevin McGowan).



New to South Yorkshire PTE, this rare Leyland DAB Bendybus is set to become a familiar sight at rallies in the South, having recently been purchased by Guildford College for use as a play bus and promotional vehicle. Having joined the Trust, the College hopes to debut the vehicle at our Open Day, where face painting and other activities will be available for visiting children (and adults too!). The College aims to make a donation to our vehicle restoration fund.

chicken shed. There was a mixture of green and tan PVC seats, and a load of spare seats and windows piled in, but it was complete, and a sweep and wash would make it fit for service. Slowly it began to grow on me, and I had another look round outside. A car that had been garaged in the rain for at least 10 years, and probably nearer 20 years, would be a rust-ridden heap – but this was solid in places I expected to push my finger through. Various bits had been robbed, but not to a frightening extent. Quite by accident, I found the serial number plate – 00321. Early production, and useful to work out whether this really was LNC27. It was.

After a briefing from Nigel, a second visit was made a couple of weeks later. The purpose was to make an inventory of robbed parts – and it looked daunting when finished: alternator, door-gear, emergency exit door, exhaust assembly, fuel pump, gear-shift, mirrors, radiator, starter-motor, track-rod ends, wiper-motor... I was assured that those were the easy bits, and that tricky bits like the differential were hardly worn. She had been driven into position, and was stopped because she was 'passing oil'. To my untrained eye the integral body still looked sound – but then I didn't know where to look for the classic problems. Everybody said "Go for it", so I spoke to the owners again. They were happy to see her go for preservation, and the matter of finance was quickly resolved. A timescale of about a month was imposed – otherwise she would be scrapped.

My long-suffering wife was less than impressed, and as the weeks ticked away the problems failed to go away. Andrew the mechanic was extremely helpful at this stage, because various missing parts were found and applied. Next time I visited, LNC27 was back on her wheels, turned to face the world, and ready for towing on a bar. Accommodation was found – but too expensive to contemplate in the long term – and to make it worse, our narrowboat was in dry-dock having its hull-plating doubled to cover the rusty holes that had developed over a similar lifetime to LNC27. I had to bite the bullet, drop plans to preserve the bus and concentrate on family, house and boat instead. It was a sad day, because it had looked so possible, and I

e-mailed Nigel with the news.

Luckily, the opportunity was too good for him to let slip away, and a new plan began to emerge. The cost of recovering the vehicle to the Home Counties was unknown, but once there she would be among friends. Christmas passed slowly, with no news – then came the Winchester running day of Friends of King Alfred – appropriate as King Alfred had three of London Country's 11.3m Nationals in exchange for Metro-Scania for service in Stevenage New Town. Nigel and Mike Nash talked it over, and finally in mid-January an affordable recovery was arranged. I visited Alpine's garage in Llandudno and picked up the paperwork, and LNC27 left Llanrwst on a suspended tow at 09:45 on 21st January 1998. Incredibly, this is almost exactly the 25th anniversary of her arrival at Bell Street, Reigate. I followed the convoy along the A470 as far as Llandudno Junction, and watched rather sadly as she vanished up the slip-road of the A55 on the way (first) to Barnsley. Photographs of her arrival at her new home near Weybridge (chez Nash) at 06:00 on Friday 23rd January are not available due to seasonal darkness.

I can offer no advance on the history of early London Country Leyland Nationals as given by Mike Nash in previous editions of the Magazine, and I have to say that attempting to unravel their early life has resulted in more questions than answers. However, the mists surrounding the career of LNC27 are beginning to clear, so here's the story so far...

London Country's first four Nationals were put into use alongside Metro-Scania and AEC Swift vehicles on the Stevenage (SV) Super-Bus high-frequency, flat fare routes. The next batches started work from Dunton Green (DG) in January 1973 (LN19–21/3) and Hatfield (HF) in February. LN1–23 were equipped with dual doors. Simultaneously, single-door vehicles designated LNC24 upwards started service as Green Line coaches. The first batch of ten went to work from Romford (RE) garage on the short, intensive 721 route to London's Aldgate from Brentwood on 17th February, followed by five more on 3rd March. Later examples went to Tring, High Wycombe

and Reigate for the 706 and 711 routes. Coaches they were not! They were definitely buses, and introduced cold, slippery PVC seats to Green Line bottoms for the first time. As deliveries of later, coach-seated SNC vehicles proceeded, the LNCs were reclassified LNB and sent to work on bus routes. The first 70 Nationals were 11.3 metres in length (LNxx), but all subsequent vehicles were to the shorter 10.3 metre specification (SNxx).

LNC27 ran from Romford until 10/76, when the reduction in service on 721 made her redundant. The service lasted only until July 1977, when it was abandoned and Romford garage closed. What a change from the 1930s, when an establishment of 90 vehicles was maintained there. The huge garage became a store for redundant vehicles. LNC27 was moved to Tring (TG) and reclassified LNB27. Closure of that garage in 4/77 brought about relocation to Hemel Hempstead (HH). At both garages she was (supposedly) employed upon the 301 trunk route from Aylesbury to Bushey – Mike Lloyd tells me that it was the only route apart from the 387 in Tring that was licensed for the 11.3m length of these vehicles. He also reckons that that she may be one of the two vehicles (the other was LNB29) that were towed in engineless from TG, such was the woeful state of the vehicles in those days. She may have spent some time engineless at HH before being de-licensed to Hatfield (HF) from 10/77 to 3/78 and repainted in all-over Leaf Green in 8/78. De-licensed in 1/80 and moved to Crawley, she was out of service until re-certification in 8/80, when she went back to Hemel Hempstead. Mike Lloyd notes that she was faulty on arrival, with electrical problems, which was not uncommon. In 2/82 he changed the gearbox – which was obviously a mistake as she was promptly reallocated to Hatfield in 4/82. This lasted until 10/83, when she was finally moved to Grays (GY) and stored out of use. Mike also tells of other LNBs at the back of Hatfield garage, slowly sinking up to their axles in the soft ground and proving very difficult to extricate when they were sold.

Unlike previous generations of London Transport vehicles, these were standard 'provincial' buses and were sold into fleets of similar

vehicles. A new career in service with East Kent began in 2/84, the new owners had her painted in all-over Poppy Red livery by the Bristol Omnibus Company before she entered service at the Dover depot in 5/84 – running as number 1127. Deregulation struck in 1986, and a new livery of burgundy/cream was applied in 10/87, but only lasted until the following February when she was sold to a dealer on the Welsh island of Anglesey.

The story of LNC27 continues with the Alpine Travel Company, an established operator of coaches from North Wales. They set about testing the local monopoly of Crosville Cymru, and successful competitive services in the busy corridor between Conwy, Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Rhyl were run for 5 years. Alpine were then bought off these routes by Crosville, although part of the deal was that their name would continue to be used. Other, more recent London Country Nationals came to the Alpine routes – SNB386/7/443 – but a new career as a school bus was given to NPD 127L. I am still digging out the details of her career in North Wales, but schoolchildren travel quite long distances along the A5 corridor to the senior school Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy at Llanrwst.

Since arriving at Mike Nash's place she has been examined more critically, and shows all the wear-and-tear that is to be expected – particularly rusting of the cab floor and lower body structure, but there is still hope. The cab electrics have deteriorated with the wet, and the alternator wiring is missing. As for the interior, new cove panels are already procured for the replacement of the badly-painted examples we have inherited. It will not be quite so easy to deal with the red paint applied to the upper seating area. I still haven't found who was responsible for this. Many of the bolt-on mechanical parts have already been sourced, including a good engine in case the oil-passing symptoms are terminal. Fresh batteries have been applied to the wiring – and produced some encouraging results. At least there was no shower of sparks.

While Nigel jokingly refers to me as the Manager of this project, in reality my distant location prevents active involvement in the

restoration. At present there is a lot to do on historical research, and this is a role which I relish. I have a Web site dedicated to matters London Country, which is host to a special section for this project. Those of you with Internet access can go to...

[Http://www.provider.co.uk/users/.../lcountry.html](http://www.provider.co.uk/users/.../lcountry.html)

Click on 'Vehicles', then 'LNC27' and you will find the full story as it unfolds, with updates as often as I am fed them by Nigel and Mike. There is also a colour shot of her 1995 condition, and more of the recovery operation. We would be extremely grateful to anybody who can help us to unravel the history of this vehicle, either in pictures or by way of anecdote. Perhaps we can look forward to a National Running Day in a couple of years' time? □

The LNC27 Project (NA, MN, JW) wish to express their grateful thanks to the following for their assistance in recovering NPD 127L and helping to unravel her career. *Alpine Travel (Hughes Brothers (Llanrwst and Trefriw) Ltd.)*, *The M&D and East Kent Bus Club*, *Andrew Davis*, *Mike Lloyd* and *Brian Wright*.

WANTED

LT Country area allocation book for 1958 and 1962 (original or photocopy)
Country Area Bus Blinds RT and/or RF for former LT/LCBS garages NF, DG, CM, RG, CY or EG for use with preserved vehicles.

Alan Charman, Hampton Way, East Grinstead, West Sussex. RH19 4SG
Cash is available!! Please write or contact via the Museum.

BEYOND THE GATES

John Hinson

At this time of year there are of course, no rallies to speak of (excepting the Lights Tour for which there is a separate report) and as most of this column is written on personal observation I expected there would be less to report. Not so, it would seem.

I did see an interesting vehicle on the move (although not under its own power) recently in Buckinghamshire. It was a CR (is it 36?) and this was the first signal I received of the “down-sizing” of the brothers Sapte’s collection following the sad and untimely death of James Stirling who was a co-owner. The CR was, I understand, James’ retirement project. I hope it has gone to a good home.

Since then I have heard that RT1 has also been sold, but I understand this is subject to restoration work continuing to ensure the vehicle is able to attend its 60th birthday celebrations in 1999. I am sure everybody agrees that is a good thing.

Another member of that collection on the move (although whether it has just gone for repairs, or sold, I don’t know) is C4 which I understand is now having some work carried out on it in Cambridgeshire.

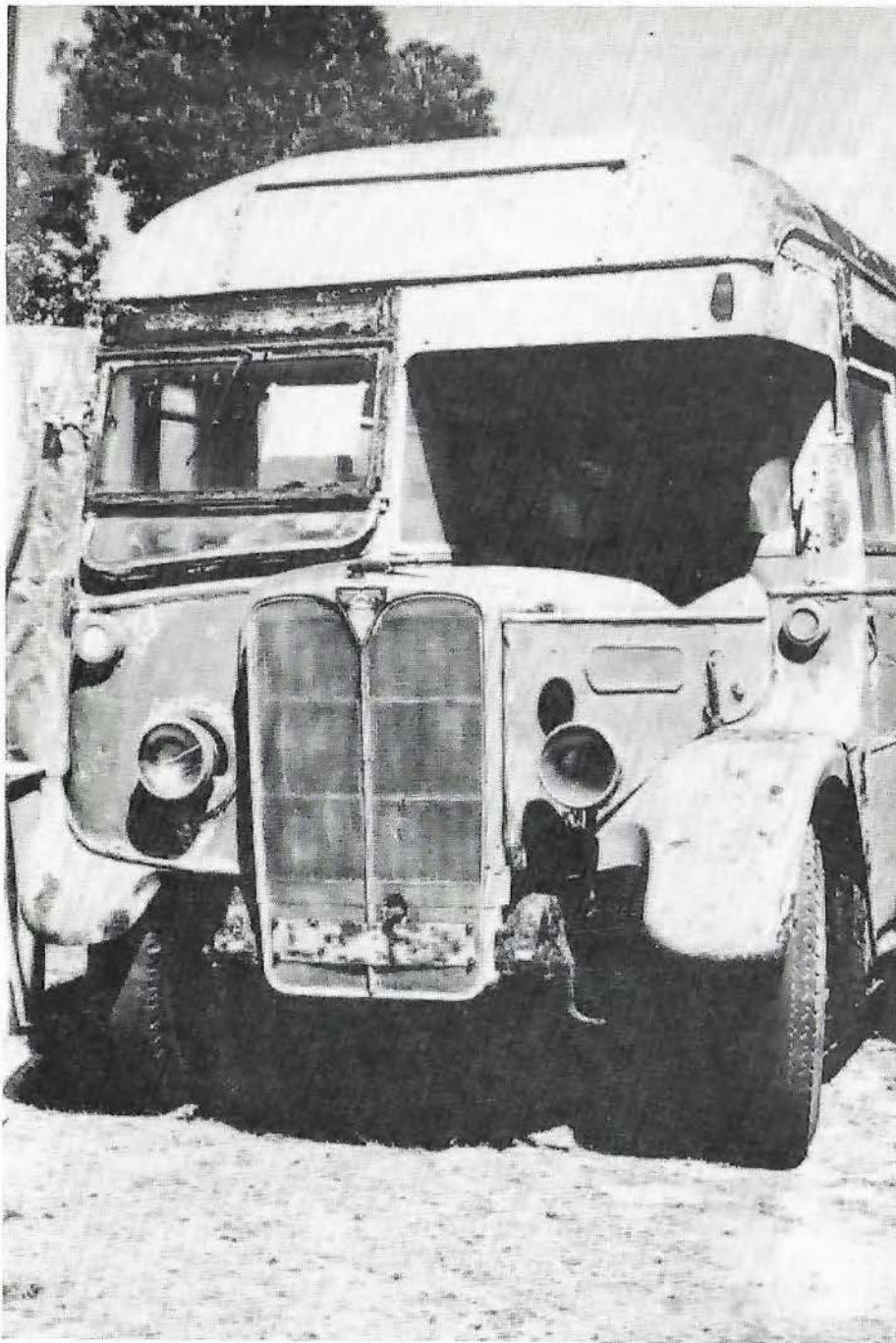
At this point I must say that as this is something of a “gossip column”, I apologise if any details published prove to be incorrect and/or cause offence. Much is based on what I hear, and sometimes even the owners don’t tell you the whole truth! End of official disclaimer.

One example of that is RF315, for which I published details in good faith. I now stand corrected, the vehicle is *jointly* owned by Alan Charman and Memory Lane Travel. This means that Memory Lane are now able to offer both an RT and RF for private hire, which is useful. I understand 315 occasionally works at the Bluebell on special event days, and Memory Lane’s RT1790 was also out recently deputising for the usual L&CRT there.

RF13 hit the road just in time to take part in the Christmas Lights



Back Where it Belongs... A most welcome participant on the Christmas Lights Tour was RF13, still in its Hampson of Oswestry livery which it is to retain when repainted, and on its first London outing for very many years. Owners Mike Dawes and Robin Sharp also have sister vehicle RF12, also ex-Hampson, which is a longer term project. (Photo: Peter Larkham).



Who'd Have Thought... The discovery of another 10T10 in Australia proves that almost anything is possible. It seems incredible that T499 is only five away from the Trusts's own example numerically and that both served as ambulances during the war. We look forward to more news from Ian Kerr on the project in due course.

Tour, and is to be preserved in Hampson's of Oswestry livery to make a change. Read about it in the Lights Tour Report.

RF20 has recently been reported as still surviving, in poor condition, at Carlow, Ireland, whilst RT4118 has been spotted in the Cayman Islands, forming part of a restaurant on Grand Cayman.

But there's another vehicle recently turned up that was exported as long ago as 1954. T499 has been discovered in Australia. No, not a modern red Leyland double-decker, this is the real McCoy – 1938 Green Line style. Ian Kerr discovered it on a farm which had apparently owned it since being exported by W North's all those years ago! He tried to interest a local bus museum in it, but they were not really interested in anything foreign, so he has decided to take it on himself. Good for him, I say, and I am sure we all wish him luck with the project.

The vehicle is basically similar to the Museum's own T504, although 499 was the only one to have ever been converted to 33 seats (c1946) as a 10T10/2. It spent its working life at Grays and Windsor, with a spell as a wartime ambulance in between.

Ian is particularly keen to learn more about the colour schemes – can anyone help? The PSV Circle describe the original livery as “medium green with light green window surrounds”, but Ian points out that the roof and wings look darker in photographs – were they black or deep green? If anybody would like to contact Ian, I can pass messages on by e-mail.

Going more modern, AN35 is currently for sale. It isn't a runner, and if I remember rightly there is a big hole where the engine should be. It could be redeemed but do I not recall seeing that a Cobham member wanted an early AN for spares? Contact Ward Jones on 01494 711510. Please make a point of mentioning my name, I've been promised a pint if I can help sell it.

If you need RF spares, Ward also has RF333 which has been progressively stripped over the years. There are still some bits to be had off it, though. Ward has the chassis of an RT with some mechanical parts still on it, too. I know he is starting to clear the yard, so if you

need some parts, now might be the time to contact him.

As many people know, our vehicles are just around the corner from Ward. I have reluctantly decided that I am not doing justice to our lorry, and therefore am thinking about selling it. If anybody is interested in a open radiator AEC Mammoth Major III breakdown lorry, running order but tatty, please contact me.

RT1379 has been reported as for sale, contact John Clarke 01480 811233 after 7 pm for details. And anybody that could help with the restoration of my old friend TD118 which is now in Dover should contact Dick Bole (01304 206431). Dick is able to offer money, vehicle accommodation and use of his RT for your services.

I was stunned to learn recently that GS50 is on the road. Do you remember stories of a GS rotting away on the Isle of Arran? Well, it has been purchased by a Romanian Children's Charity, Venture Reprieve, who have remounted the body on a Ford Cargo lorry chassis which, I must say, is a very courageous conversion. It had to be done because the original chassis had rotted beyond repair. Many budding preservationists had been to see it on Arran, and shook their heads muttering "beyond it", so I give Venture Reprieve full credit for doing what they have done. It is now capable of doing a good 50 mph, so watch your rear mirror!

I found reference to GS50 on the Internet, and although some of the technical details are wrong it makes interesting reading. For anyone else with Internet access I list below a few useful sites which are worth a look.

GS50 Venture Reprieve

<http://www. .co.uk/local/charity/venture/page4.htm>

Cobham Bus Museum's own site, maintained by Kevin McGowan

<http://www.geocities.com/MotorCity/Downs/8806/index.html>

Kevin's own site, for his SMS369 and RM291

<http://www. .com/silverstone/murray/57/buses-index.html>

Trevor, Mike & Robin's GS56, RF12, RF13, RF16, RF255, RT2291 and EFN584

<http://www. .com/~wealdsman/welcome.htm>

My own site – RF280, RF433, RF453, RT1594, RT1784, RT4275 and associated tat

<http://home. .net/wealdstone/>

Ian's Bus Stop – basically a site about London bus history, but includes an article and pictures of last Autumn's RF Running Day

<http://vzone. /ian.smith/buses/index.htm>

There are lots more, but once you've got going you will find that most sites have "links" (pointers) to other sites of similar interest, so once you are rolling you are away! I am a bit tight for the press deadline this time so you'll have to wait until the next issue for the next member's provincial vehicle to come under the spotlight. □

Please send any reports to John Hinson, "The Shambles", Graham Road, Wealdstone, Middx HA3 5RE

And, if you are "internetted", why not send me your reports by email – my address is easy to remember, its shambles@bigfoot.com

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CHRISTMAS LIGHTS TOUR

John Hinson

Once again, this event broke records on vehicle numbers (a total of twenty-two) and there were some real gems, too. The first arrival was Peter Cousens with RTL1163, who had driven all the way from Devon to join us. Soon afterwards, Roy Adams arrived with RT1599 from Bristol. So if the ones from so great a distance can get there on time, why can't the Cobham contingent? Actually, it's a good thing a few vehicles were late, because if some hadn't already departed before the last had arrived there just wouldn't have been room in Midland Road!

Altogether, there were ten members of the RT family (the others being RT935, 1784, 1790, 2043, 2293, 3143, 3254, 3871 and amongst the drivers were two Father Christmas's – I think one must have been an imposter.

RFs were down in numbers this year (probably because we left ours at home) but those that were present more than made up for that. Green Line RF167 looked very much at home in London, whilst red RF534 demonstrated the driving standards of a typical London bus driver (he means courteous, smooth, impeccable lane discipline etc! – MN). Two gems to arrive were RF4 and RF13, the latter having just gone back on the road the previous week and under restoration to Hampson's of Oswestry livery. What more appropriate vehicle could you have on the tour?

We also had two provincial vehicles, David Lattimore's Wigan Leyland PD which is becoming a regular participant, plus Alan Lowe's Burnley Colne and Nelson Leyland Tiger which was extensively bedecked in Christmas decoration and looked very pretty in the dark. Both seemed just as much at home as the London buses – I always find there's a real atmosphere with preserved buses at night.

It was a nice change to have the Routemaster front well represented by Graham Lunn's well-known RM2116 and Eddie Knorn's RMC1476 (which is now in NBC green) but Eddie himself surprised

us all by appearing at the back of our convoy in the City with Blue Triangle's RT3871.

The more recent era was represented by BL95 and RP90, whilst the Museum did us proud by turning the clocks back with TD95 and ST922 which certainly were something special to have on the tour.

Highlight of the tour for me was seeing ST922 arriving in Midland Road facing the wrong direction. "No problem" the driver said, and promptly did a three-point turn! How versatile vehicles like that are!

The worst point on the tour was when I hopped off RT1784 near the Embankment to see what had happened to the rearmost bus. "Don't let Gill drive off without me" I said to a certain Cobham member who was sharing the back platform with me. The next minute, the bus pulled away, leaving me there (perhaps they had a whip round John?!). Fortunately, having designed the route myself, I was able to take a ten minute walk to where I was expecting the convoy to come next, but I missed the Embankment and Westminster Bridge.

One of the things that always makes me feel it is worth doing is when Gill and I sit down and count the collection that was made for Children in Need. This year, including donations from "absent friends" it totalled £428.58 – which is another record broken. Thanks everyone. With more buses than previously, and more money, can we beat it again in 1998? We can try. □



RT1 APPEAL

Steve Hemmings

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all members who kindly supported the RT1 Appeal by way of cash donations and other offers of help.

However, following the considerable interest and publicity which surrounded the appeal, I was informed by the "RT1 Group" that a prospective purchaser had approached the Group directly with an offer to purchase RT1 outright with a guarantee that the necessary repairs and restoration would be undertaken.

The RT1 Group arranged and attended a meeting with the prospective purchaser where the matter was discussed at length and after considerable thought decided that it was in the best long term interests of RT1 that the offer should be accepted, and therefore RT1 has been sold to a new owner and the Appeal closed.

The sad loss of Jas Stirling, a member of the RT1 Group was a factor in the decision but, and to quote a member of the Group, "the remaining members are not getting any younger", and the long term future of RT1 was paramount, so to sell to a younger person who actively shares our hobby so knows the value of RT1 and her place in history, and who is able to give her the attention that she needs, was a major consideration that we had to address. We therefore agreed that to sell was the right decision for RT1.

May I again thank all who offered help and support to the Appeal and I am sure that we all look forward to seeing RT1 in her former glory for us all to enjoy. □

RT1 DESTINATION BLINDS

Peter Gomm, The RT1 Group

This is an attempt to clear up the mystery of the destination blinds carried by RT1 in press photographs published in July 1939, a question raised by Gordon Edrige in the last issue of the magazine, "Will somebody put me out of my misery?". I say attempt, because I may be adding to Gordon Edridge's misery rather than helping.

Having lived with the bus for over 10 years I have learnt a lot about it. Obviously the blinds used in 1939 have long since disappeared so I cannot directly answer the question. However, we assume the blinds are a complete set in all the photographs, I beg to differ. The Aldgate destination appears in the first livery photographs when the aluminium trim was left unpainted. These appear to have been taken in Chiswick. Later, when it was taken to Clapham Common for official publicity shots it had gained the proper destination of Morden.

Let's move on to July 1939, or rather May or July, and by now it is showing Private or blank except for the route number blind, which now displays 148 front and rear. This is another route the bus was never to see, so why? When it appeared on the press run in July I have a picture of it showing 148 to Sutton Garage. On that same day, another picture was taken showing the platform, this appearing in the August 1939 Pennyfare. Here the "via" has been turned to show the Circular Route in Sutton. I think the ultimate blind used for the first, was *not* a Sutton one. In August 1939 it was allocated to Chelverton Road and therefore got a set for that garage, and it these we copied in 1989. How nice it would be to get into the minds of those responsible all those years ago.

So have I helped? Somehow, I doubt it. If it is any consolation, the research I have done has raised more questions than answers. □

BROOKLANDS '98 – AND BEYOND!

Simon Douglas Lane

The Brooklands saga continues: alert readers will have seen in the last magazine that the Sunday Traders (operating under the far from appropriate name of Wendy Fair!) won their battle with Elmbridge Council and are now allowed to trade on every Sunday of the year with the proviso that the Managing Agents for Brooklands can operate a trading ban three times a year.

On 6th February I met the Managing Agents and the Managing Director of Wendy Fair: as a result, the rep from Wendy Fair was asked to send a plan of how their operation would impinge on ours: it was promised by 13th and was written on the 16th! If it arrives it will be discussed at the next Open Day Sub Committee on 27th February. If it doesn't arrive by the 27th then I think we are perfectly entitled to ask the Managing Agents to serve a prohibition notice.

About 3000 visitors would attend the Sunday Market which would take up 25% of the Park and Ride Car Park. A special pedestrian access would be made available to our event, and the rest of the park and ride car park normally used for the Sunday Market would be ours alone. I did not agree to their marshals controlling our parking! The sub committee will ask for the trading ban to be operated if there is a shadow of doubt that the presence of the Sunday Market will negatively affect our event: we have one Sunday they have 52!

More alarming is what is on the horizon for 1999! Trafalgar House has put in a planning application for a development on the southern runway (park and ride area). It can't be housing and it can't be industrial, so it's leisure: a park, restaurants and a hotel are in the frame but if it's passed it would make it impossible for two events to go ahead on the northern runway!

Other aspects of the Open Day, notably volunteers are covered elsewhere: my thanks as usual to my sub committee for their hard work in putting on the event that starts the annual rally season. □

LETTERS

COBHAM IS THERE TO BE ENJOYED

From Brian Dabbs

In all the letters published recently on the subject of volunteers at Cobham Bus Museum, nobody has mentioned the attraction the museum has. A hot, welcoming cup of tea on a cold Saturday or Sunday morning makes a great start. The banter which circulates in the mess room has to be experienced first hand and is well worth the trip itself. But most of all, you get to play with buses. So come down and enjoy yourself.

Ael y Bryn Road, Fforestfach, Swansea SA5 8JB

TRUST SUBSCRIPTIONS

From Mike Lloyd

I see that suggestions are now being made about increasing the subscription to Cobham. I am a member of a number of organisations (although fewer than previously) and, as you would expect, both levels of subscription and standards of service vary enormously so it is difficult to make comparisons. However, there is no doubt at all that the Cobham magazine is the best produced of the lot, particularly as the Editor resists the temptation to draw lines and boxes everywhere and use two dozen different typefaces, not to mention, I suspect, his judicious corrections to bad grammar, always a failing with "society" publications.

Of course, the fact that the Magazine is quarterly rather than monthly or every six weeks or whatever must assist no end in keeping everything just so. There is obviously far less time to get things right when something has to be produced much more frequently. I would, though, urge caution in going for a large subscription increase.

Despite the claims of the lunatic fringe in Downing Street and Westminster, we are a long way yet from full employment. I was myself unemployed for five years and only work part time now, and a number of other members in this part of the world are also on reduced incomes for one reason or another. People still have to look carefully at where they spend their cash.

For many years I was a member of a larger, national society whose subscription is now £20 per annum. For this of course the member gets more magazines, although much less well written and often full of white space and big type to fill the gaps. I would not like to see Cobham going along the lines of charging ever more in subscriptions and lowering its standards as well. I realise that costs continue to rise and some increase will sooner or later become inevitable, but if it gets too expensive many who, like me, live far away and are unable to derive the full benefits of membership will probably be forced to drop out. At the moment Cobham is good value for money and I hope it will stay that way.

Queen Street, Highfield, Wigan, Lancs WN5 9HY

From Roy Adams

My letter last autumn certainly started a debate, and that can never be bad for the Trust. I would therefore appreciate another space in your excellent magazine for a final response.

Simon Douglas-Lane and I are on the same side, make no mistake about that. We are however in very different situations. Simon lives considerably nearer to Cobham than I do. He has also been clever enough to arrange his involvement with his own vehicle in a way that it earns at least some of its own keep, whilst I still find it financially difficult just to prevent my own vehicles from deteriorating into the scrapyard. This is of course my own fault, or choice, whichever you like, but the law does not allow me to charge even five pence to visit or ride on my collection of London Buses.

My original letter generated, I believe, a record post bag for our editor. I was surprised to receive so many letters from members at home. It also provoked a response from both the Chairman, and the Secretary of the Trust.

To the Chairman I would like to say that I am genuinely sorry that my use of the word "hierarchy" disturbed you, it was just my substitute for "leaders", without whom no organisation would function. I think anyone who knows me, knows of my great admiration for our current leaders, one and all, even if I do not always agree with everything they do.

I would just like to state that I would fully support an increase in the annual membership fee, in fact I hope to propose it at the AGM. Whatever is finally agreed, I will pay willingly, however, I will *never* pay both an annual subscription and then an entrance fee of any amount, to visit the museum. A member of the London Transport Museum, which, although registered as a charity, is very much a commercial operation, has free access to Covent Garden whenever it is open, without lifting a finger to help.

I would therefore earnestly suggest to our leaders, that the charges to members on Open Day be dropped. It is most unlikely that even one member would resign from the Trust over this action being taken, therefore the total loss would be say 300 members entrance day fees. A three pound increase in the membership fee would cover this. I am certain that at least half the members are unhappy about paying both fees, and if only a half of them were lost, the long term effect on the Trust would be catastrophic, especially after all the effort that has been put into increasing the membership.

One of the most interesting letters in the winter magazine, was from Graham Lunn. The cost of privately owning and rallying a large vintage commercial vehicle is prohibitive, and I strongly believe that all rally organisers should allow a small stall to support the preservation of any attending privately owned vehicle, free of any charge. If all owners were to contact rally organisers, ask for this facility, and, if refused did not attend, it would only take a year of empty rally fields

to change their views. After all, if there were no vehicles, there would be no public to help the vast numbers of commercial stallholders that now attend most events, to get rich selling overpriced, purposely under-supplied, EFE RFs to hard up enthusiasts.

London Road, Wick, Bristol, BS3 5SJ

From John A Gray

Let's see if we can get into perspective this business of membership help on the Open Day or show days.

Organisations of all sizes and interests sometimes have a "Friends Of" arrangement. LT Covent Garden Museum springs to mind. If this idea were applied to Cobham, the inner circle of devotees would form the Trust membership; the outer circle, financially supportive but seldom if ever, participatory, the "Friends Of". Whether one group would pay more or less in membership fee, the level of privileges, vehicle owner or not, all would need to be discussed and decided.

I am neither for nor against this proposal. I simply put it forward as a way of identifying what could be hoped for from whom!

Chesterfield Road, Cambridge CB4 1LN

PAYING FOR BUS PRESERVATION

From Graham Baker

I read with interest the 88 page magazine, not absorbing everything but it is clear that Roy's comments have caused quite a stir. I really do feel that owners of preserved buses and coaches get a very raw deal. Buying them is one thing but storing and maintaining them is something quite different. Surely there must be a way of being able to accept donations of one form or another to assist in the running costs of such vehicles. To that end, any perks that can be enjoyed by

members cannot be a bad thing combined with a modest increase in membership fees then those who put in all the hard work get a little more than satisfaction. Just an observation: Where buses can be used to give the public a trip back in nostalgia, surely a hat placed in a strategic position preferably in someone's hand for the sole purpose of preventing undue wear and tear in other peoples trouser pockets or collecting litter in the form of £5 and £10 notes, is not breaking any law and doing everyone a bit of good. Finally, I hope that 1998 will not pass without some form of recognition that 30 years ago the last RTL ran on passenger duties in London.

Critchill Road, Frome, Somerset BA11 4HW

DIARY DATES

SUNDAY 5 APRIL

COBHAM BUS MUSEUM 25TH ANNUAL OPEN DAY

Weather permitting, this should be the best yet. Attendance is compulsory!

SUNDAY 26 APRIL

BLUEBELL RAILWAY VINTAGE BUS DAY

Based at East Grinstead and with a variety of routes and vehicles being operated, this will be an excellent event. Organised by our Treasurer who tells me that attendance is compulsory! More details c/o Hampton Way, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 4SG.

SATURDAY 2 MAY

KING ALFRED EVENT, WINCHESTER

A special rally to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the end of this famous operator. There will be a display of buses in the afternoon and then an intensive selection of free services in the city until 22.30hrs. No doubt this will be up to the group's usual high standard of organisation.

SUNDAY 17 MAY

90 YEARS OF BRISTOL COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

A must for Bristol fans, this should be a cracking event, being based at the Lloyds Amphitheatre, Bristol Docks. Also celebrating 30 years of the VR. Details from Kelvin Amos 01275 755.

WEEKEND 23/24 MAY
AEC SOCIETY RALLY & ROAD RUN.

The 15th such event and one for AEC fans everywhere. Details on 01509 672 (6 – 10pm).

SUNDAY 24 MAY
ALDERSHOT & DISTRICT RUNNING DAY

Based at Guildford Station this year and with the usual excellent selection of routes including one which links with our museum.

SUNDAY 31 MAY
RT/RF REGISTER EVENT

Organised by our own Steve Hemmings at The Queen Adelaide PH, Croydon Village near Royston, Herts. Vintage bus trips to Cambridge plus other attractions and a nice relaxed atmosphere. Pub open all day plus free nosh for bus owners. Admission free but donations requested in aid of Addenbrook's Children's Cancer Research. For more details please send s.a.e. to Stocks Lane, Gamlingay, Sandy, Beds. SG19 3JR.

SUNDAY 7 JUNE
COBHAM BUS MUSEUM DISPLAY DAY

Featuring 'Not the RT/RF Running Event!'. A chance to sample some vehicle types which we don't normally see in service at Cobham. Bound to be a big success so please do support the event.

SATURDAY 13 JUNE
COBHAM BUS MUSEUM AGM

At Weybridge Library. Ring museum for details nearer the time.

SUNDAY 14 JUNE
SOUTHSEA SPECTACULAR

Always well attended by our members, shame it clashes with the BBPG rally.

Also LUTON FESTIVAL OF TRANSPORT

Home to the BBPG's annual event. Huge selection of classics plus a wide range of BBPG members' buses and coaches – good alternative to Southsea.

SUNDAY 21 JUNE
'BUSES' CLASSIC AUTO-MOTION

Without doubt one of the most enjoyable events of the season with non-stop action as a huge variety of buses and assorted classic vehicles trundle around the TRL test track at Crowthorne, Berks.

SUNDAY 28 JUNE
NORTH WEALD

A very large event with a particularly wide selection of sales stands.

SUNDAY 5 JULY
ROUTEMASTER ASSOCIATION 10TH ANNIVERSARY BUS RALLY
Based at Chatham Historic Dockyard, the RMOOA always puts on a good show and the Dockyard will provide the perfect setting for this year's event. Details from Pooley Avenue, Egham, Surrey TW20 8AB.

SUNDAY 12 JULY
SOUTHAMPTON 16TH ROYAL VICTORIA BUS RALLY
Always a popular event on the South Coast and it usually enjoys glorious weather too. Organised by our member Denis Forrest whom you can contact on 01703 213.

SUNDAY 19 JULY
MID-HANTS RAILWAY BUS RALLY AND RUNNING DAY
Based at Anstey Park, Alton this is always a fine, well organised event which is very well attended by the Cobham fraternity. As usual, there will be a large selection of free bus services and the railway will be in full steam. Contact our own Alan Fairbrother on 0181 5649 (evenings/weekends).

Also CHAPPEL BUS RALLY
Held at the East Anglian Railway Museum, near Colchester. Full details on 01206 524.

Further details of events can always be found in 'BUSES', 'CLASSIC BUS' or 'PRESERVED BUS'.

RT RUNNING DAY – MONDAY 31ST AUGUST

Roger Stagg

I am pleased to announce the second RT Running Day between Woking and Redhill Road, Cobham, on August Bank Holiday Monday, the same day as Cobham Museum is holding a display. The proposed running route will be between the Woking Classic Vehicle display where we shall be having a rally display area and a bus stop in Redhill Road close to the Museum. There will of course be no obligation upon any passengers on this free Class 5 service to visit the Museum and they may return on the same or any other bus from a bus stop on the other side of the road. Buses will turn at the end of Redhill Road, where a further display will be arranged if there are sufficient vehicles.

Whilst classed formally as an RT Running Day, the event will be open to all pre-1958 double deck vehicles. Vehicles are being accepted for one of, or any combination of: display, restricted running (members only), restricted running (restricted passenger numbers), running (photographic only), running (unrestricted passenger numbers). With Woking historically having been an interface between London Transport and Aldershot and District, A&D buses are particularly welcome.

Application is open to all suitable vehicles irrespective of origin and is not limited to Cobham members. The majority of vehicles taking part in 1997 were from Cobham members but the event operates wholly outside of Cobham and its Display Day. Persons interested in taking part in any capacity are invited to write as soon as possible for an application form to RTOC, Morphews Farm, Teston Road, West Mailing, Kent, ME19 5NE.

Assistance will also be required and gratefully accepted from enthusiasts prepared to assist in control functions at both Woking and Cobham. Such events cannot realistically take place without these people any more than it could without the owners, operators and crew members of the vehicles. □

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THE NEXT MAGAZINE
STRICTLY 20TH MAY**

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.

Thinking of writing a letter or article for the Trust magazine?

Please send your contributions to

**Bill Cottrell, Shaftesbury Avenue,
South Harrow, Middx. HA2 0AW
0181 8240**

Also please see notes on page 35



Reliance down under... Not quite Australia this time, but March 14th did witness what was almost certainly the first ever RP to go through the Chunnel and into France when RP90, complete with 30 Cobham regulars, enjoyed a day trip. RP90 is pictured about to board the train that morning. The outing was a great success and is likely to be repeated later this year. (Photo: Mike Nash)