

COBHAM BUS MUSEUM

MAGAZINE



No. 13

SUMMER 1996

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Front cover: SMS 369 has been restored to as new condition by Kevin McGowan, the Swift making a welcome debut at our Open Day. You can read more about this rare survivor elsewhere in this issue.
(Photo : Mike Nash)

EDITORIAL

So we did it again. For the fourth year running the Open Day was a record breaking occasion with more visitors, more vehicles and more income, the latter of which is so essential to the funding of museum activities for the rest of the season. The new venue worked a treat and gained universal praise and once again we saw sunshine for at least some of the day – and for a change, no bitter winds. The event is covered in more detail elsewhere in this issue by the good Reverend who, with his team of 100, did us truly proud. Suffice to say that, with reports of up to 240 buses in attendance and almost uncontrollable crowds, the preservation world voted with its feet in support of Cobham Bus Museum, and in defiance of those who have done the Trust so much harm. The day of reckoning is very close now as regards those latter individuals.

Setting aside the ongoing legal issues, the other chief concern is that we are still not seeing enough volunteers down at Cobham. Now, for those who don't know, I took over as Editor in the Spring of 1993 – previous to which there had been no newsletter to speak of for several years. At the same time I got to grips with the membership aspect because we only had 96 members (and falling!), subsequently becoming Membership Secretary late in 1994. In the last three years we've grown beyond everyone's wildest dreams yet still it seems to me that it's largely the same handful of people doing most of the work. Take the committee. Each and every one of them is a bus owner. But you seldom see them spending time on their own vehicles. It's the same for me. I spend countless hours behind the scenes for Cobham, yet I can't remember the last time I actually did any improvement work to RF534.

What we would like to see are the non-bus owners coming down and sharing the load – those who for one reason or another aren't in a position to take on their own vehicle. You don't have to be skilled to wash a bus, tidy shelves or wield a broom. But they are essential tasks

just the same and your help will free up the time of an active member who has got specific skills.

With full "Museum Registration" pending, it's vital that we see more of you on a regular basis so please don't leave it all to the handful of us who, for the time being at least, are often guilty of neglecting our jobs, social life and partners in favour of ensuring Cobham's safe future.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I've enjoyed compiling it. It seems to evolve with each issue and the fact that I don't receive any hate mail (nor much praise for that matter!) must mean that I'm doing a reasonable job. So I'll sign off for now and leave you with a request to send me your news, views and photos. Which reminds me. I'd better get started on the next issue!

Mike Nash

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Important events have occurred during the past quarter. Due to large-scale disappearance of museum property, all security locks were changed on 31st March. The Trust's solicitor was notified that this action was being taken – since then, the disappearances have ceased.

We were notified in early March that the trading company, LBPG (Sales) Ltd, had ceased to trade from the premises at the end of February. This commercial activity had always been in contravention of the planning consent and became a serious concern to the longer-standing members as far back as 1983. At this time, a decision was made at an Annual General Meeting to move the operation out, but this decision was never implemented. Unfortunately, and without our agreement, the directors decided to take the museum telephone number, 01932 864078, with them, and this has caused considerable problems for us. We are attempting to regain this number eventually, although an alternative number, 01932 867651, is being used at present.

A letter from the Trust solicitor, David Morgan, in early April, included a footnote, as he had just been notified by the Charity

Commission that the LPBG Ltd had been granted charitable status some two months earlier (February 1996). In consequence, the title of the company had changed to the London Bus Preservation Trust Ltd.

David subsequently wrote to the solicitor representing the four original directors, Mr A B Cross, Mr A Peters, Mr J J Bowden and Mr A D Hurley, asking for an explanation of the delay in notifying us of this, and whether they intended to honour the agreement to invite members of the Trust to join the new charity.

By the middle of May, the ballot result (relating to the proposal to institute proceedings against the former directors), was circulated to members. This showed overwhelming support for initiating legal proceedings in order to bring this protracted dispute to a prompt and satisfactory conclusion.

Following this, in late May, a reply was received by David Morgan, stating that the directors had not been notified that the company had been granted charitable status. However, the letter did contain a proposal to admit three Trust members to the board of the new charity – whereupon the current directors, A B Cross, A Peter and J J Bowden would resign.

Unfortunately, there appeared to be preconditions applied, relating to what the directors referred to as "allegations", and what we referred to as observations and reporting, of missing stock and property. The offer was subject to the withdrawal of the Trust's allegations of improper conduct. Since there have been admissions on their part of the known whereabouts of the missing stock, it would seem to be totally improper for us to be asked to rewrite past events.

Meanwhile, we await a statement from the directors giving details of the assets which will be in the ownership of the new charity, and of any liabilities which may exist.

1996 OPEN DAY – luckily, the weather looked upon us favourably for what was our most successful Open Day ever. My thanks to all volunteer and particularly, John Rawlins, John Bedford and Simon Lane for their leadership of the event. Plans for the 1997 Open Day are currently being put together. You will read a report by Simon elsewhere in the magazine.

Progress on Trust vehicles has been steady, but work on improving the interior of the museum building has been slower than I would have liked, this being mainly due to a shortage of volunteers.

Peter Plummer

OPEN DAY 1996

Simon Douglas-Lane

As Chairman of the Open Day Sub Committee (suddenly in January!), I have been asked to write a few words about how those of us who organised the event feel that it went. Yes, there were good points and yes, there were bad ones too, and although some of the decisions I inherited were perhaps not those I might have wanted, I was more than happy to take any flack and criticism from anybody who had such comments to make!

One decision I did take was to off-load the entire catering requirement to outside agencies. We are not in the business of providing catering for 6000 people let alone the problems with Environmental Health. Secondly, it is debatable whether we are in the craft fair business, and the new Committee will be looking at that area: we seem to think that we should encourage more of a transport flavour to what is a transport event. The Military Vehicles were a success, and we are looking at adding commercial vehicles and vintage cars to that area of interest. Some of the sideshows were popular and some were not; the bus service WILL have enough vehicles next year (we have to allow for those who commit themselves to the service and then don't turn up without a hint of apology), and this area is so important. We will not know until the

autumn whether we have the Brooklands facility again (I have already written to book the site) and our ability to build on the undoubted success of having Brooklands depends on that.

We do have areas of concern, and they are connected with site control, "perks" for members and stall holders, and above all the control of programmes being issued, which we feel must be numbered and controlled by one person alone. At £5 a shot, mismanagement can be expensive! The Membership and Shop Stalls at any sites we have will also need to be properly co-ordinated.

So those are details we are looking at on behalf of the membership and those who come to our major event of the year. My thanks to those who served on the 1996 Committee and are standing down; my thanks to those who have agreed to serve for 1997 (THE DATE IS SUNDAY 7TH APRIL) and at the end of the day we increased our profit by £4,500. It was a splendid effort, and I look forward to a complete year as sub-committee chairman for 1997.

Two final points: the volunteer register comprehensively produced by John Rawlins requires all of us to respond to the call, and to be available at other times in the year especially as we near Museum Registration. Secondly, the superloos at Brooklands (last minute replacements as our contracted supplier forgot the date!) left a lasting impression that you liked them and that we need to increase the loo availability at Cobham. So flushed with success, that's all for now!

FROM JOHN RAWLINS

As Volunteer Coordinator for the event I would like to express my thanks to all those who volunteered and worked on the day.

It was my first year as Volunteer Coordinator and a number of lessons for the future have been learned, these will be applied for the 1997 Open Day.

For 1997 I have been asked to repeat the role and I will be making my initial appeal in the Autumn copy of the CBM. At that time I will explain the 1997 procedure and timetable in detail.

In the meantime thank you again for your response, we had around 100 pre-notified volunteers from a membership of around 375 – a good effort.

Many thanks and see you soon.

John Rawlins (272)

1997 OPEN DAY COMMITTEE

Simon Douglas Lane, Chairman: Site control Cobham, catering, conveniences; Peter Starks: Site Control, Brooklands; Brian Hine: Stallholders, both sites; Andrew Hayward: Bus service and vehicle provision; John Rawlins: Volunteers; Debbie Morris: Revenue Control and Administration; Ian Chidlaw: Military Vehicles, Commercials, Cars, Local Publicity; Mike Nash: External Publicity, Liaison with Ian Allan; John Pimlott: Membership, both sites; Gordon Edridge: Museum Shops, both sites.

MUSEUM REGISTRATION UPDATE

Dave Jones

I must start with an apology. It was not easy stepping into Roger West's still warm shoes – and it has taken some time to get to grips with and understand the mound of paperwork which I inherited concerning Museum Registration. Fortunately, much of the hard work had already been done and, as you may know, the museum has already gained provisional registration. What remains to be done revolves mostly around achieving some real improvements to the building in order to comply with safety requirements. To this end, the vehicles have been spaced out within the building (no more parking the "fag paper" way!) and a new fire exit is due to be installed mid-way along the Redhill Road side. A great deal of tidying up has been done but much more is needed so may I draw your attention to the importance of the two clear-up weekends of August 3rd/4th and September 14th/15th. In addition, behind the scenes, there is a modicum



Appropriate Registration: Andy Baxter and Brian Down send out a message to members with the help of T504. For 'ELP' is what's needed down at Cobham if we are to achieve the vital Museum Registration.
(Photo: Martin Gibbons)



Watch this Space: Visitors now have a much better view of Cobham's exhibits thanks to the spacing out of vehicles. This has also made our museum seem lighter and warmer and as can be seen, shows to good effect the quality of exhibits such as TD95 and RF672. (Photo: Mike Nash)

of documentation to complete and an inspection by the Museums and Galleries Commission to take place.

Once full registration has been gained, the doors are open to much more assistance with the premises and vehicles in the form of grants from various sources. One of the first, and most necessary improvements to the building will be updated toilet facilities for visitors, including toilets for the disabled and baby changing facilities (where people can swap their babies? - None Paternal Editor!). Ian Barrett has put forward a scheme to re-organise the stores within the existing space to allow the current electrical store to be re-used. There are a number of other plans in the pipeline, details of which will appear in future magazines as they are approved. The committee realise that the planned changes will have a far reaching effect on the appearance and atmosphere of Cobham, but in the long run, our status as a charity obliges us to offer educational and leisure facilities and in doing so provide a secure future for the buses – which after all, is why we are all here.

NB Your editor is pleased to report that one of our more active younger members, Richard Hussey has volunteered to assist Dave in his work and I have every confidence that we have the right men for the job in what is a vital aspect in Cobham's development. Please help them to achieve these goals.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

As at 1st June, paid-up membership had passed yet another milestone in the Trust's history and now stands at 404. A further 21 members were still to send in their renewals of which most hopefully will, which should see us comfortably into the 400s.

John Pimlott did an excellent job of co-ordinating the two recruitment stands at Open Day and his team signed up 23 members as a result.

Our new members include Alan Charman who is a director of the

Bluebell Railway and owns GS62. David Churn joins us from Australia and is the proud owner of RT1024 and three Bristol VRs. Gareth Crowther from Lightwater also owns a VR and three REs and is chairman of the VR Enthusiasts' Society. He is delighted to become a member at Cobham and hopes to contribute in due course. And last, but certainly not least is one Sebastian Marshall, son of Prince Marshall, the seminal bus preservationist who did much to start the whole movement rolling when he rescued T31 with Michael Dryhurst and Ken Blacker way back in 1956. Sebastian is already getting his hands dirty down at Cobham as indeed we hope a few more of our new members will.

We are delighted to welcome the following to the Trust

445	Ian Merrell	Goldsborough	CB
446	Bryan Ellis	Walton on Thames	OD
447	John Appleford	Shepperton	ML
448	I Brice	Horsham	OD
449	David Buckingham	Putney	OD
450	Edwin Chappell	Ashted	OD
451	David Cullimore	North Pickenham	OD
452	Mark Dales	Beckenham	OD
453	Roger Davies	Winchester	OD
454	Peter Harwood	Bexley	OD
455	D Hilton	Leighton Buzzard	OD
456	H Hobson	Royston	OD
457	D Jeffrey	Watford	OD
458	Christopher Lewis	Godalming	OD
459	B Mingay	Hinckley	OD
460	Philip Moore	Luton	OD
461	Anthony Osborn	Letchworth	OD
462	Peter Penfold	Royston RF4, Bedford OB	JG
463	Anthony Pollen	Kingsbury	OD
464	Robert Raines	Petts Wood	OD
465	Roger Rettig	Wembley	OD
466	B Seal	Bromley	OD
467	David Bassett	High Wycombe	OD
468	David Bray	St Albans	OD

469	Alan Charman	East Grinstead	GS62	OD
470	Peter Larkham	Wendover		JH
471	David Churn	Australia	RT1024, 3 x Bristol VRs	MC/PS
472	Denis Parish	Buntingford		OD
473	M Barker	Pyrford		OD
475	David Fogwill	Guildford		
476	PSAW	Staines	RM1590	
477	Guy Dawes	Fulham		
478	Gareth Crowther	Lightwater	Bristol VR, 3 X Bristol REs	OD
479	A Milliner	Lewes		OD
480	Tony West-Padgett	Crawley		PP
481	Gerald Pratchett	Pinner		
482	D Martin	Bromley	RT227/1702	
483	Nick Abott	Ipswich		
484	Roy Jackson	Farnham Common		OD
485	Nick Norrington	Perth		
486	R Powell	Newport IoW	GS84	MG
487	Brian Madelin	Slough		
488	Sebastian Marshall	London W9		PP

Recruited by: CB—Classic Bus; JG— John Gray; JH— John Hinson; MC— Mike Clarke; ML— Malcolm Lewis; OD— Open Day; PP— Peter Plummer; PS—Peter Sapte

Mike Nash

GET DOWN AND GET DIRTY

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, much more help is needed down at the museum in terms of improving and tidying the building if we are to achieve the vital Museum Registration status whereby Cobham would be eligible for numerous grants and other assistance with projects.

In view of this, two weekends have been earmarked as "Clear-up" dates when we hope members old and new will come down and get stuck in with the ever constant battle of making Cobham more presentable. We would particularly like to see none-bus owners making the effort because at present the majority of work seems to be

carried out by those who also have their own vehicles to maintain.

So please mark these dates in your diary and come down and help share the load. The first is the weekend of 3rd/4th August – where in addition there will be a free Bar-B-Que on the Saturday night for those who have put in the graft (£2 admission for all other guests). Then in September, the weekend of 14th/15th presents a further chance to get some dirt under the fingernails, by the end of which it is hoped the paint-bay, stores, shelves, shop and balcony areas will all be up to an acceptable standard for the Museums & Galleries Commission. We're counting on you!

Mike Nash

MUSEUM BUILDING

Brian Hine, Alan Davidson and "Little" John have progressed the interior clean and repaint slightly in the last quarter. Kevin McGowan has performed extremely well in clearing out the north bomb shelter and Ian Barrett and John Bedford have started to clear out the paint bay/workshop, vacated by the LBPG (Sales) Ltd trading company.

FOR SALE AND WANTED

WANTED RF Waterpump, handbrake linkage or complete handbrake assembly. Urgently required for next MOT.

FOR SALE RM/RT spares. Send for lists. Original varnish fix transfers for RF/RT/RM in stock and re-manufactured. All proceeds go to RF444 restoration.

Kevin Austin, 82 Harcourt Avenue, Penhill Park, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9LN or phone 0181 2672 or 0956 636.

WANTED Silencer Box for RT3254. Brian Simmons 0161 0318

A RIDE ON THE 76

More reminiscences from Ken Duke

Relax. Let your mind drift back across the years. 1960. North London – Tottenham, to be exact. We are about to take a bus ride. An everyday journey, nothing exotic. A ride along the length of route 76, Tottenham to Victoria.

We have to hurry to the stop in the High Road, as the gleaming red RTW turns out of the garage in Philip Lane. It slows to a halt, its Leyland engine throbbing steadily. Gripping hold of the cream-coloured pole we clamber onto the platform, detecting the distinctive interior smell common to London buses. We decide to go upstairs, making our way to the front seats as the lightly laden RTW pulls away. The driver operates the pre-selector and moves the bus up through the gears, a side-window rattling with the vibration as we begin to accelerate.

The front seats provide a fine view and we settle down to enjoy the sights along the way. We are powering southwards at a steady rate, the High Road busy with home-going shoppers, the late afternoon sun pleasantly warm on this October Saturday. Luckily Spurs are playing away today, or the crowds and traffic would be hugely increased (especially as they are playing well enough to win the double this year!).

One thing we notice is the number of small retail shops. This contrasts with thirty years from now when building societies, estate agents and fast food outlets will dominate much of the scene. The odd bomb-site still remains here and there, screened by large hoardings advertising cigarettes and drinks, or occupied by an "Arfur Daley" car dealer. There is a marked absence of "foreign" restaurants – the British still prefer traditional fare at this time.

The RTW wends its way through Stamford Hill where members of the local orthodox Jewish community can always be seen. On reaching Stoke Newington the bus finds itself caught in the centre of a line of trolleybuses. Oh yes, that's another noticeable feature – the

legions of tall green poles along the roadside supporting the overhead wiring. The High Road is a major trolleybus artery and there are two 649s, a 647 and a 543 surrounding our bus. The procession wends its way south until the 76 manages to overtake the two trolleybuses in front as they pull in to a request stop. An incident soon brings us to a halt though – an elderly lady has been knocked down by a yellow “Evening News” van as it pulls up to deliver to a kerbside paperseller. Bystanders crane their necks to see what has happened; a couple of people are comforting her. Within minutes a Bedford ambulance appears, bell ringing (no flashing lights or sirens in 1960) to collect the badly shaken woman.

The road is cleared and we resume our journey. A few people continue to get on and off but this is not a busy time for our conductor. A red RF on the 236 crosses our path at Dalston, bound for Finsbury Park and we pass a pre-war RT on learner duties, now looking rather down-at-heel towards the end of its life. We travel past Dalston Junction, still served at this time by electric trains on the Broad Street – Richmond line. The 76 then turns away from the main route into the City and travels through an area which in truth has seen better days. Past decaying buildings and over the Grand Union Canal to Old Street, where a sparkling Routemaster is seen on the 5 making for its home garage in Abbott Road, Poplar. Seconds later and perhaps symbolically, an ex-STL seeing out its last days as a bus shelter carrier trundles westwards across the junction – a veteran from an earlier age heading off into the sunset.

Passing the broad spread of Finsbury Square, four trolleybuses are parked alongside, but during the week double that number can be found at this important terminus. Now we are amongst the offices and financial institutions of the City of London. Great buildings soar high above the RTW as it traverses the business heart of the Capital to reach its hub at the Bank. We wait patiently whilst a forest of traffic lights change in turn, sister RTWs passing on routes 8 and 22 bound for East London destinations. At last we accelerate away and head towards the Thames.

The sun is setting rapidly over London as, with only a handful of passengers, we cross the river via Blackfriars Bridge. Traffic is slow giving us ample time to view the famous waterway. A long-funnelled tug passes below hauling a trio of lighters; a dozen or so pleasure craft can be seen at their moorings. Looking further up river, a number of ships are permanently anchored along the curve of the Victoria Embankment – “President”, “Chrysanthemum”, “Wellington” and “Discovery”. Downriver, the unmistakeable shape of Tower Bridge and beyond that, massed ranks of cranes serving London’s dockland.

Now we are heading around the unfashionable south side of the river, past rundown warehouses towards Waterloo and Westminster Bridge where we will again cross the Thames. Neat white pre-fabs occupy an area of waste ground on our left, “temporary” housing erected after the blitz but still in widespread use twenty years on.

At last our 76 turns across Westminster Bridge. Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament dominate the scene, splendidly lit by the dying rays of the sun. What a contrast with the grimy streets of North London! It seems inappropriate that such dignified buildings should play host to the squabbling within as the MacMillan Government wrestles with the latest crisis.

A procession of buses moves around Parliament Square, a mix of RTs, RTLs and RTWs heading to all points of the compass. A smart grey and green London Transport sight-seeing coach crosses at the lights, number RFW4 just distinguishable on the side.

The evening traffic is heavier now as we slowly make our way along Victoria Street. The variety of cars passing the other way is quite marked; a garish pink and cream Cresta, complete with mock leopard-skin seat covers, is tailed by a pre-war Morgan three-wheeler. Then comes a smart black chauffeured Humber Super Snipe, a Morris Minor van and an old Ford 8, herded along by an RT on route 134 bound for distant Potters Bar. There are also FX3 taxis in abundance, adding to the congestion. Our RTW grinds to a halt in the traffic; the conductor goes to the front nearside of the bus where he leans on the wing for a minute sharing a joke with the driver. We

slowly move away once more, past a big grey V8 Pilot which has expired in a cloud of steam; the driver likewise steaming at his misfortune. One of the very latest RTs built, ironically with the registration letters OLD is directly behind our RTW on route 10. The RT is also bound for Victoria having travelled up from the sleepy Essex village of Abridge, a place in complete contrast with all the noise and activity around us.

Victoria Station finally comes into view, a few RF Green Line coaches conspicuous in Buckingham Palace Road on their way to and from Eccleston Bridge. We see one of West Green garage's RTLs on route 29 facing us at the traffic lights in Grosvenor Place, ready to turn into the bus station. The driver winds his destination blind until COCKFOSTERS appears, a name which has featured in the punchline of many a joke.

Arrival. The RTW swings round the far end of the bus station (our driver envying his colleagues on the RTs with their lighter steering) and eases into its designated bay flanked by other buses on a variety of routes. All is hustle and bustle here. Away to the North-East the glamour of the West End draws the crowds like moths towards the glittering neon lights. Cinemas are still well patronised on Saturday evenings, and the queues are forming as people wait to cheer John Wayne, laugh at Norman Wisdom or blink in amazement at Sophia Loren's "supporting cast". For our crew, a welcome break before the return journey. For us, the end of our trip back in time, a time when the familiar shape of the RT type bus was an integral part of daily life in London. □

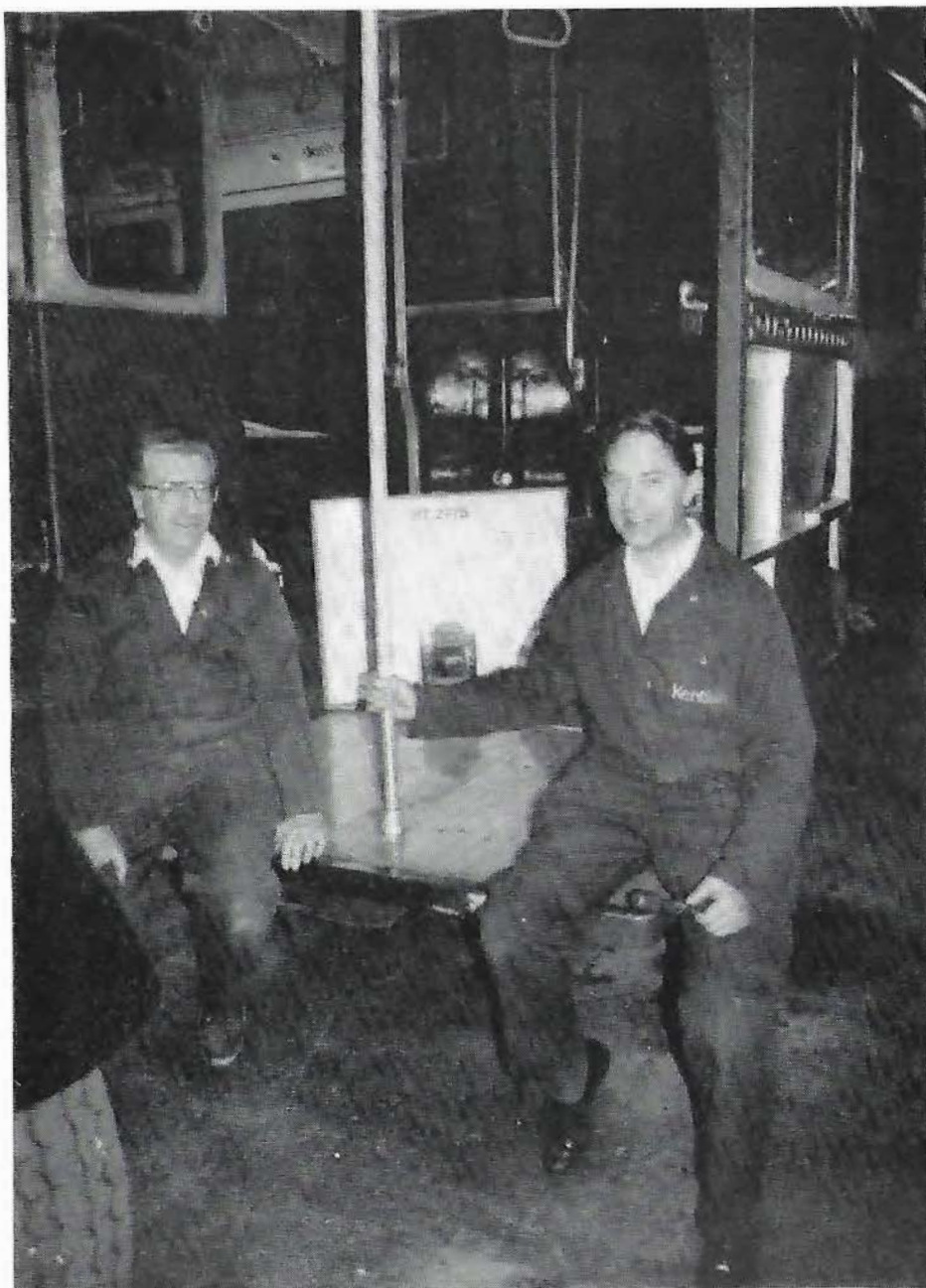
INTERESTED IN WORKING ON STL2377?

If you fancy getting more involved with STL2377 (see article on page 23) why not drop Roger Stagg a line or give him a ring. His address is
Teston Road, Offham, Kent ME19 5NE (01732

627)



Gearing up for T: Our star exhibit, T31 had its previously recalcitrant gearbox replaced during May, which has made the veteran much more pleasant to drive. 'Ginger' John and Graeme Brazier clean up the exchange unit prior to installation. (Photo: Paul Morris)



A Solid Platform: The rear of RT2775 has progressed in leaps and bounds thanks to the many late nights put in by Brian Down and our Chairman. When attention to the bodywork is completed the RT will be handed over to the mechanical team for fitment of a new engine.
(Photo: Mike Nash)

ANOTHER SUMMER HOLIDAY

Those of you who are members of the RT/RF Register may have already seen mention that there is to be a musical stage show version of the film "Summer Holiday" in which (the now Sir) Cliff Richard helped to immortalise the RT London bus.

Member Mike Fuller with RT3028 has been involved with various publicity shoots for the production, which, by the time you read this will already have taken to the stage in Blackpool, complete with an electrically powered replica RT which dismantles into three sections so I'm told! In early May, I too was contacted by the stage manager and as a result we have supplied some suitable items as props for which the Trust receives a plug in the souvenir programme.

If the summer season at Blackpool is a success (which it should be given the level of investment involved and people's fondness for the original movie) there are plans to bring the show to London, at which point it was suggested that a trip for Trust members could be organised (in a red RT of course) to tie in with a further publicity shoot, hopefully with the TV companies and Sir Cliff involved, and complimentary tickets for our members into the bargain! Sounds like something to look forward to.

For those that don't know, it is worth mentioning that Sir Cliff lives just across the Byfleet Road from our museum. Hopefully, the renewed interest in "Summer Holiday" may entice him to pop down to see us one weekend – after all, he admits to being a bit of a transport buff on the quiet and is known to have enquired as to whether any of the actual RTs used in the film still survive. Over to you Alan Bond for more details!

Mike Nash

MINI-BUSES

Alan Bond

In the history of the omnibus there have been many small capacity buses used down the years. The LGOC type B could be considered a small capacity bus by today's standards but with a carrying capacity of 34 for a length slightly shorter than most of the modern generation of minibuses its efficiency as a people carrier shows there's been little progress in 80 years. In pre-war days small buses abounded as operators opened up new routes but invariably these were progressively replaced by larger vehicles as passenger traffic built up. With such gems as the Dennis Dart, Commer Centaur and Guy OND among the larger types, passengers were well served by sturdy vehicles which gave a good ride despite their light weight. Among the even smaller vehicles were the 14 to 20 seat Crossleys, Star Flyers, Chevrolets, Dodges, Lancias and Fords of the small independents. Many of these were at the cheaper end of the range but again, by today's standards, even these were luxury vehicles. A glance at any one of the preserved Bedfords of the WHB variety, among others, is to catch a glimpse of a world where standards meant everything. (Of course the term "minibus" is very much a modern phrase and it would be churlish to apply it to any of the earlier generation in any more than a tongue in cheek fashion). Even more famous small capacity buses were the famous Leyland Cub and the ubiquitous GS and, in common, with their forbears they carried the stamp of good design and high manufacturing standards with attention to detail being obvious. My, how the world has changed!

The origin of the present plague of minibuses goes back to the doomed-to-failure "dial-a-ride" schemes of the Seventies. The Ford Transit was the chosen vehicle and we were into the cheap and nasty with a vengeance. As it happens my first encounter with minibuses in the flesh was when a large batch of Carlyle bodied Ford Transits started to appear at Maidenhead garage where they were stuffed into all manner of nooks and crannies where no proper bus would fit. Two of them were dumped hard up against the wall of the Cedars, the

Georgian house which served as offices, and which had large and very draughty windows. It so happened that these two were against the wall where the cashier's office was situated and they so effectively excluded the draughts that our man begged for them to remain permanently. Thus, for the first and only time in history a minibus served a useful purpose.

The first livery of these bread vans, as they were quickly dubbed, was overall, unrelieved white and after they had stood around for nine months or so while the mismanagement decided what to do with them, they became ever more shabby and dishevelled. I suggested, tactfully, that as Guy Fawkes night was approaching they would make useful fuel for the local bonfires. Unfortunately my suggestion was not taken up and thus they were destined never to serve another useful purpose. After two repaints, first into quite a smart blue and yellow which was quite presentable and has only recently been revived as our new fleet livery, they were soon repainted again into an almost chrome yellow with grey skirt panels, which still looks like a mixture of mud and camel dung.

The powers that be, in their wisdom, decided that they would be used on the Maidenhead local services on increased frequencies to attract more passengers! Snag number one quickly reared its head; most of our drivers had automatic only licences and our bread vans had manual gearboxes. When asked, those drivers with full licences declined to get involved and we had the unenviable situation of requiring seventeen minibus drivers trained in three weeks. This is where yours truly came in; my mission, and I had no choice but to accept it, was to train the required drivers asap. Snag number two, everybody needed drivers yesterday and try as we might we could not get test bookings at Reading or Culham, our two nearest test centres. The nice young lady at Eastbourne said she had plenty of spare capacity at Botley if we were interested and my guv'nor said we were. Snag number three, nobody knew any thing about the test routes from Botley, which for the uninitiated, is near Southampton, so it fell to me to make a recce of the ground and, yes you've guessed it, I had

to take a bread van. An hour on the M3 with a four speed bread van left me limp with exhaustion, not that I actually did any hard work, it was just that the screaming of the engine was absolute torture. I spent the day snooping around until I arrived at the Provincial garage at Hoeford, where the driving instructor offered his condolences over my method of transport and said he would be prepared to put me wise to the general nature of the area and show me the most used test routes.

My factfinding mission lasted a further four days which meant another eight trips on the M3 and never have I longed so much for the peace and quiet of the cab of a Bristol K5G. Isn't it funny how your perception changes in the light of new experience? Anyway, the trainees came and went and came and went and in a year two instructors had trained fifty-four bread van drivers with class 4 licences. This was three times the rota complement at full strength and management were starting to look pensive as they saw the rota continually denuded as drivers departed for pastures new.

The engineering side were none too happy either, the Ford Transit was definitely not a suitable common user vehicle and we were losing engines, clutches and springs with gay abandon and the yard was littered with dead bread vans in no time at all. Wheel tracking would go out of alignment if you ran over a matchbox with a load on and the whole fleet deteriorated rapidly.

Aldershot had the same problems and never has a fleet of vehicles (I hesitate to say buses) deteriorated so rapidly. In the winter the Eberspacher heaters were giving trouble and many a bus was running around trailing a haze of blue smoke as the heaters struggled to ignite. Mind you, once they were working they certainly warmed the bus up (and in the summer too) though this was easily solved by turning off the fuel tap. By next winter, of course, the taps had seized and no heat was available.

The men at the top of the stairs raised their hands in despair and looked for a solution and when it appeared it was in the form of six Mercedes L608Ds with Reeve Burgess 20 seat bodies. These were

leased from Crosville and allocated to Bracknell where another driver training programme was initiated, only this time for class 3 licences. After the Transit the Mercedes could only be a step up and so it was. It steered nicely, the gearchange was very pleasant and positive, with a neat little spherical gear knob that rolled nicely in the hand as you changed gear, the clutch was light and the steering was easy to handle despite, or maybe even because of, the lack of power steering.

By and large it was a vehicle you could manage with up to a point, bearing in mind that all these contraptions have the engine at the front, a position which is most definitely not suited to OMO. With the high floor line this means that passengers deliver their money and tickets into the driver's left ear or thereabouts and the constant twisting plays havoc with your back and neck muscles. No amount of re-design can eliminate this problem and it will be with us until the minibus is well and truly dead and buried.

This batch of Mercs also had Eberspacher heaters of Transit fame and, true to form, they also gave problems. I was driving to Bracknell in the allocated training vehicle one dark morning when I saw a shower of sparks emanating from the side of the vehicle. My first thought was that the exhaust had fallen off and was dragging on the road but the noise level had not increased so this possibility was ruled out immediately. I stopped to investigate and found that I was still getting sparks when I was stationary and further investigation revealed that the fault lay with the heater. If these things fail to work properly, and they frequently do, they rapidly tend to build up carbon deposits in the exhaust tube. Then comes the day that the heater ignites properly and bingo, automatic decarbonisation and a free fireworks display to go with it.

By and large these six Mercs coped pretty well on the work that they had to perform. Their reliability was a great improvement on the Transits and the days of the latter were numbered. One or other of these Mercedes became the regular training bus as required and they were easily mastered by the novices who came and went in great

profusion. Whichever vehicle, was used for training always slept overnight at Maidenhead and it became the regular habit to use that vehicle on the evening local service in preference to a bread van. The experience pointed the way forward for the hierarchy and a new plan was formulated.

The new plan involved a large batch of Mercedes L609Ds with Robin Hood bodies and these were spread around at Maidenhead, Bracknell and Newbury where they replaced all but a handful of bread vans. By this time I had been moved back to proper bus training with my trusty Scottish VR and it fell to others to carry on the minibus training so I did not, at first, get a chance to sample the new beasts. When I did I was somewhat disappointed. The new intake had power steering, which wasn't really necessary, a peculiar pear shaped gear knob, which was, and is, a pain in the backside and, worst of all, nothing had been done to alter the driving position in relation to boarding passengers. I suspect, too, that the engines are lower powered as ours tend to stagger about and need lots of revs while briskly stirring the gears to maintain an acceptable performance. The 608s seemed to have lots of torque while the 609s will not pull the skin off a rice pudding. There must have been other alterations because things started to go wrong that we never had with the earlier batch. Clutch cables broke at low mileages, clutches lasted but a short time and engines dropped like flies in a shower of Flit (yes, I did say "Flit"). In short the changes cost more than they saved and the balance sheet began to look even more suspect.

By this time we were on to the upgrading of class 4 drivers to class 3 but fortunately I was not ever again involved in training minibus drivers. They only reached me when it was their turn to upgrade to the real thing and before they passed out with me some of them had had up to six PSV tests all at enormous expense in terms of training, covering of duty time and lost fees and this has to make the minibus saga the most wasteful exercise in the history of the British bus industry.

The last type of minibus I came into contact with before I left Bee

Line was the Mercedes 811D with Optare body and automatic transmission. A small fleet of these were delivered to increase capacity at Newbury depot. I only twice had the opportunity to drive one of these and I was not overly impressed. The rather jerky gearchanging was not what I would have expected from what is supposed to be a high quality vehicle and after all these years of this type of transmission on buses I would have thought that Mercedes could have got it right by now. So it was that I departed from Bee Line to leave them jerking and bouncing around the Royal county as good money was thrown after bad in order to make a thoroughly bad system work. Well, they failed! □

STL2377 – PROJECT SSS

Stagg's Sag Solutions!

Readers will have gathered, or at least those who did not fall asleep with boredom, that the subject of how to put STL2377 into service with a body that would last, has taxed a number of Trust members for some time. One course was to undo the mistakes in the works already undertaken by others by having a professional historic body builder to essentially start from scratch. Others, myself included, felt that this may be an unnecessary and retrograde step that would eat into funds which could otherwise be put to better use.

The proposal was essentially to put late 20th Century technology into what was a combination of early 20th Century technology developed by nothing more than rule of thumb from 19th Century technology, that had been bastardised by well intended but ill conceived efforts. That technology enables us now to simulate what actually happens to each member of a bus's body over time and over the variety of loading conditions that it encounters. The major benefit is that we can now look at what happens without having to physically take it to pieces and we can put it back together and start all over again with some modifications without it ever having been there in the first place.

By the time you read this, that process will have started. The first operation entails the removal of the interior fittings of the bus and of the lower deck ceiling. The lower deck panelling on the offside will be removed to expose the frame and of course there is no lower deck panelling on the nearside in any event. The jointing band mid decks will be removed and there may also be a need to remove the panelling to the underside of the upper deck windows, exposing the framework, in order to allow us to establish all of the joint position sizes of timber members and how the joints are actually made.

Using the chassis as a datum and ensuring that the chassis does stand properly level, piano wire will be stretched across the ends of the cantilevered flitch beams that support the main load bearing uprights. This will enable the datum line to be established relative to which all other dimensions will need to relate. Using the floor datum, further piano wires will be tensioned exactly parallel to the datum corresponding to seat fixing positions and the underside and top of lower deck windows, and finally at waist level on a junction point of upper and lower decks. These wire lines will be used to determine the deviation from correct dimension, parallel and straightness and will enable the discrepancies in the actual present construction to be related to a drawing. In the next step, verticality of the main pillars will be established relative to the datum, and the relevant horizontal dimensions recorded, together with opposing diagonals to check the degree of racking of the framework.

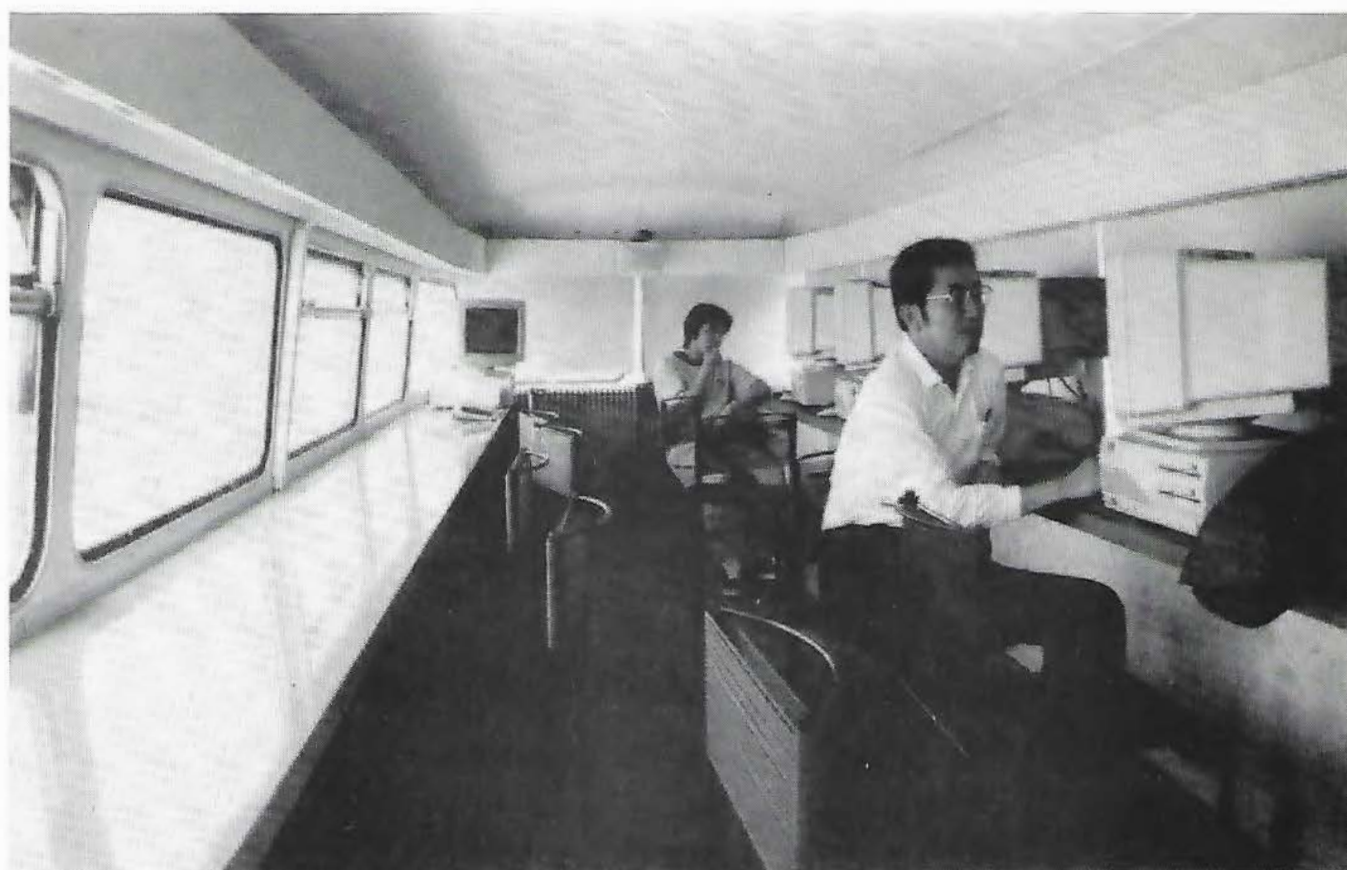
There is no doubt that the interior panels that have already been fixed will need to be removed, along with window frames, and it has already been noted that one of the members which maintains the main stability of the frame, being the under window main beam, should be in a single section but the single piece has been sectionalised. It is also known that the main vertical members which should consist of two pieces of ash interleaved with a steel plate, have been installed as only single ash sections. Whilst this is likely to have little affect on the ability of these members to carry the vertical load of the upper deck and its passengers, it could have a dramatic affect on



Regent Grant: The STL441 project was given a boost at Open Day thanks to a grant from the Transport Trust to assist with body renovation. Member John Butler (left), a senior official of the Transport Trust, hands over the certificate to Bill Cottrell (right) and your editor. (Photo : Rod Lucas)



East from West: Our man in Tokyo, Roger West is settling in well and has encountered four Routemasters so far, including RM1404, one of three in use by a driving school in connection with the Japanese driving test. (Photo: Roger West)



The lower decks are used as waiting rooms whilst upstairs there are computers on which driving theory is practised, as part of the test in Japan is written. Having experienced the traffic jams over there Roger wonders why anyone would want to pass their test anyway! (Photo : Roger West)



Made in Taiwan: Member Colin Shepperd was also in the Far East during April and is seen here with a sorry looking Taiwanese built Hino, discovered in the out-backs of Taipei. (Photo: Wang Yen-Ju)

their ability to carry the forces generated when cornering or when all the passengers are sitting on one side, which tends to collapse the structure sideways.

Once it has been established what parts of the body structure are going to have to be replaced because of dimensional defects or major structural faults, means of strengthening the body to more rigorous standards will be investigated utilising as much as already exists as possible. Due regard will be taken of the fact that some sections of inherent weakness were brought about by producing a bus within which small bodywork sections could be easily replaced at garages following day to day traffic damage. A more realistic approach utilising larger panels could add significant rigidity. Leaving aside the problems of a body partially rebuilt substantially out of tolerance, we have to overcome the problem that plagued the STL in the latter part of its life, ie, sagging bodies. There are six principal reasons for the cause of sagging bodies.

- 1 Elastic deformation (deflection) of the floor beams across the chassis that support the vertical body members.
- 2 Creep (long term irreversible deflection) of the floor beams across the chassis that support the vertical body members.
- 3 Shortening through moisture reduction of the vertical body members.
- 4 Differential movement due to widely varying stiffnesses of the floor support members and the front and rear bulkheads.
- 5 Settlement of the virtually unsupported vertical body member over the rear wheel arch.
- 6 Distortion caused by the half cab design where the upper deck overhangs the lower deck.

The first item can be reduced by increasing the stiffness of the actual member. The actual members installed are flitch beams constructed from two pieces of ash with a steel plate in between. Allowance can be made to reduce the amount of deflection within the final body by fix-

ing it upright at an elevated position, equivalent to the anticipated deflection under the self weight of the body, thus reducing movements to that caused by the passenger load. The second and third items can be discounted providing that properly seasoned timber is used. The use of unseasoned timber not only gives rise to some rather peculiar shapes, but at times some quite remarkable movements. Remember the war time utilities. The matter of the unsupported vertical over the rear wheel arch needs to be covered through adequate bracing to transfer the load by triangulation to the rear bulkhead and the vertical in front of the wheel arch but this leads in turn to increasing the load on the cantilever member at this point by a factor 50% greater than the normal.

In theory any support derived from the cab structure can be ignored as it has to effectively hang off the front bulkhead and therefore if anything this has an additional overturning effect, than that of the half cab section on the nearside. All of the weight at the front of the bus therefore hangs over the front bulkhead and dependent upon the nature of the body construction this part can either hang down in a parallelogram (just look at some photographs of elderly Bluebird LTs and 60 seat STs) or where properly constructed as in the case of the smaller STLs, droop over the front bulkhead converting the movement to what looks like a low "S" laid on its side along the remainder of the body. The effect is to try and pick up the second and third window verticals making the relative position to the vertical in front of the rear wheel arch that much worse. This is where the effect of creep, the long term irreversible movement mentioned earlier, really begins to take effect.

Timber in fact is an extremely good structural material and exhibits relatively constant structural qualities in all directions. It also resists short term deflection, such as passengers getting on and off, very well returning instantly to its pre-loaded shape. The long term loading however, ie, the self weight of the body, takes some time to reach its ultimate distorted position but if maintained at that loading its movement will increase in the long term by a further 15% – 20%

and that deformation will be retained in the members even if the body was dismantled.

Here we have a body developed and built by Chiswick from a design with its origin in the late 1800s. The design principle was based on requirements for single deck frameworks without cab projections and wheel arches. The principles were essentially unchanged throughout the motor bus development and with the short life span expected of bodies, the principle continued to be satisfactory through the advent of double decker and double decker with enclosed roof. Distorted bodies become apparent as soon as lowered floors and thence wheel arches appear but the real obvious distortions became obvious with the STLs and the cantilevered construction over the cab and a continuation of economy to reduce the actual size of timbers used. The exceptions are some of the extended designs where the over cab section was little more than a hang on to the front bulkhead but as mentioned earlier, these just sagged down at the front. No such problem in the steel framed bodies to the Godstone STLs.

The intention now is to investigate the means of stiffening the body to the point where the problems of movement are within acceptable tolerances and although this stiffening will not be prototypical it will be hidden behind the cladding. It is intended that 2377 will operate with a Class 6 MOT and thus its integrity for way beyond the foreseeable future as a passenger carrying vehicle is more important that a wholly authentic hidden structure with only a limited life span before again needing attention. The results of the analysis of the existing body both dimensionally and performance-wise, will be available at Cobham for interested persons, along with the ways by which it is intended to ensure the vehicle's future in virtually as-new condition.

What we need now are volunteers, prepared to commit themselves to doing specific tasks so that this fine vehicle could perhaps be in revenue earning service by the 1997 Open Day. It really is not the pipe dream that it might seem. □

A SWIFT RESTORATION

Kevin McGowan

After my article in magazine no. 6, a little more information on the history of SMS369 has come to light.

The bus entered service on the 30th January 1971 at Merton garage (AL), replacing RTs on route 200 between Mitcham and Raynes Park. From the 18th September it was also used on the 57 from Streatham to Kingston. After a short time in service many of the Park Royal bodied Swifts began to suffer from flaking paintwork (among other problems) and 369 was no exception. Consequently it was repainted at Merton in July 1973 losing the front "coin in the slot" symbols in the process. On the 13th November 1977, DMSs replaced Swifts on both the 200 and 57. 369 was then sent to Aldenham for overhaul in December 1977 where it was one of a few Swifts to be recertified for a further 3 years service despite a general rundown of the type. It emerged from Aldenham in a revised livery with yellow entrance doors and white roundels instead of red fleetnames. It was then allocated to Edgware (EW) where it ran on the 142, 286 and possibly other routes in the area.

It eventually became one of the last five Swifts (excluding the Red Arrow examples) still in normal service with LT. These were kept on for a few weeks longer while their new Metrobus replacements were settling in. It was finally withdrawn in December 1980 after a respectable ten years service and sold for further use as a school bus for the sum of £2100 + VAT. It wore a blue and grey colour scheme during its three years of school service but was repainted into the later style of LT livery by the next owner who kept it for ten years before passing it on to me in May 1994.

There was no question that 369 would be restored to anything other than its original LT livery, the aim being to get it as close as possible to its appearance when it first arrived at Merton garage in 1971. Serious restoration of the bus began immediately after the Routemaster Heritage Trust's 1994 Norbiton Open Day where it took

part in a display of types which once operated from that garage.

The Park Royal body is steel framed with steel inner panels. Aluminium outer panels are riveted to this framework, except for the front and rear ends which have wooden fillers with the outer panels screwed on. It was obvious that all of the panels needed replacing and this would be a good opportunity to inspect the internal structure for corrosion and damage.

The front end was deemed to be the trickiest bit so this was tackled first. All of the front panelling and the windscreen pan was removed to reveal largely rotten woodwork. Much of this was replaced with original LT items but some sections were made from scratch. A couple of ex-British Rail mahogany table legs, suitably modified, also ended up in there! The glassfibre windscreen pan fell into three pieces on removal, this was repaired and strengthened before refitting. At this point the opportunity was taken to conceal the windscreen washer plumbing as this equipment was not part of the original LT specification. The job I was dreading the most was refitting the extremely large two-piece windscreen. It took the best part of a weekend to do. There were one or two heart stopping moments as the glass momentarily slipped from my grasp so I wouldn't advise anyone else to try this on their own.

There was then a slight delay in the proceedings due to the RHT's sudden eviction from Norbiton garage. Luckily a space was available at the Swift's previous home in Dorking. The bus was driven there without incident and with the assistance of Mike Nash. After settling into its new home the rear end of bus was tackled. This had suffered impact damage, probably in LT days. The back end was supposed to be completely flat and vertical below the rear window but it was now pushed inwards with the top of the bonnet being three inches closer to the front of the bus than it should have been. Everything had to come off to expose the framework so that Ian Barrett could straighten and weld it.

Once again, most of the woodwork was replaced and all new panels fitted. The sides of the bus were fairly straightforward in

comparison. Copious Jenolite, primer and bituminous paint were all that was needed before renewing the side panels.

While all this was going on Paul Morris was attending to the mechanical side of things which included a thorough overhaul of the brakes, re-torquing of the cylinder head nuts and fitting a new unloader valve. A reconditioned alternator was fitted and Dave Kriesler managed to get the AFC machine working again. Both Paul and Dave had worked on the type in LT days and they probably thought (or hoped) that they'd seen the last of these vehicles back in 1979!

After a few weekends of surface preparation the bus was ready for its repaint. I had previously brush painted my Routemaster and didn't fancy going through all that again so the job was given to Spraycare of Dorking (owners of RF486) who did a superb spray job at a reasonable price. A task that would have taken me three weeks by hand was done in a couple of days.

Fifteen litres of LT bus red ensured a deep and hopefully, long lasting shine. The flake grey waistband was applied later by myself from a paint tin marked February 1966 which means that the grey band is actually older than the bus!

One of the most satisfying parts of the project for me was the replacement of all the fixtures and fittings that were removed for the restoration – lights, mirrors, indicators etc. Especially the ones that were brand new items straight out of the box. The best bit of all though, is the application of the transfers. Many hours have been spent studying photographs to determine their exact position on the vehicle when it was new. Most of the transfers needed had been acquired over the preceding year from a variety of sources including the Trust of course, but I must also thank Chris Sullivan (MB90) and the RMOOA for much help in this area.

The day after completion, the bus was being moved outside for its official photographs when disaster struck. During a momentary lapse of concentration on my part the bus sideswiped the doorway, the impact shattered a side window and severely dented two panels. As

can be imagined this was a very depressing moment, the bus had only been finished less than twelve hours ago and I had already broken it! Things looked better after I'd replaced the window but I didn't feel like repenelling again so the job was entrusted to Ian Barrett.

By now the 1995 rally season was over so I set myself a nice long deadline for SMS369's first public appearance. Appropriately, this was to be the 1996 Cobham Open Day on April 14th. The major outstanding jobs for MOT purposes were the cleaning and silvering of the chassis and renewing of two corroded air tank straps. The chassis was done on the outdoor ramp using cleaning and spraying equipment kindly supplied by Dave Welton. Cobham stalwart Andy Baxter fixed the air tank.

Attention now turned to the interior of the vehicle, much of which had been painted in an unauthentic light grey by the previous owner. The cab area, AFC cabinet and exit partitions were repainted Chinese green (actually a dark grey). All of the grey rexine in the front half of bus was renewed and the plastic window surrounds cleaned. During its time as a school bus it had been upseated from 33 to 39 by adding extra seats in the standing area. It was returned to original configuration using a couple of DMS type single seats modified to fit on the offside. The ceiling was thoroughly cleaned and treated to a few period posters. At last it was ready for its MOT, almost six years to the day since the expiry of the previous one.

Paul Morris accompanied me with the Swift to the test centre where it was received with curiosity and admiration from the examiners who had never seen a bus quite like this one. We were quietly confident that it would pass with flying colours and luckily this proved to be the case. Holding that special piece of paper in your hand after hundreds of man-hours of hard work gives a feeling of immense satisfaction. Sadly, this feeling instantly evaporated as we lost third gear on leaving the MOT centre. It made driving a bit tedious, especially as first gear had disappeared a few weeks earlier. Luckily there were no steep hills on the way home and we got back without further incident or loss of gears.

Chances were that the gear problem was only caused by an electrical fault but it was still putting the planned Cobham debut, which was only days away, in jeopardy. Later in the week Paul's investigations revealed that the connector block housing on the EP valve was full of water and the electrical connections were badly corroded and either broken or about to break. We were lucky not to have lost all of the gears during the MOT trip. Now I know why first gear failed immediately after the chassis had been steam cleaned! The connector housing was made waterproof to avoid further trouble and the Swift was now ready for the Cobham open day. Parked in the yard at Cobham, it attracted a lot of interest as it has been many years since an SMS (with the exception of Hugh Harland's "Swiftly" of course) has been on the rally circuit. It brought back memories (often bad!) for many of the visitors at the Open Day. Although much work remains to be done on the bus I intend to take it easy over the summer and hopefully SMS369 will be seen at a number of rallies during the 1996 season.

Finally, I would to thank all of the people not mentioned above who helped in the restoration of the bus.

PLAXTON PROGRESS

Mike Nash

Recent visitors to our museum could be forgiven for thinking that P3 is looking more like P2-and-a-half! Indeed, the original intention had been to get our youngest vehicle through its MOT with only a tidy-up and therefore available for PCV training without delay. However, the mechanical overhaul carried out largely by Paul Morris and Andy Baxter is now 95% complete and has revealed P3 to be in quite exceptional condition in terms of its running gear. Thus the decision has been taken to bring the bodywork up to a similar standard before putting the heavyweight in service. Paul and myself recently spent an afternoon stripping a similarly bodied Bedford to yield some useful parts and many other components have since been sourced.



Surplus to Requirements: The well known Blue Saloon fleet based in Guildford was acquired by London & Country on March 31st and much of the fleet has been delicensed pending disposal, probably for scrap.
(Photo: Mike Nash)



Preservation Candidates? These include former central area BL27 (pictured) and London Country 'shorty' BN61 as well as Plaxton bodied Bristol LHs which are similar in appearance to P3. Your editor is at present negotiating to save some or all of these vehicles for preservation/spares. (Photo : Mike Nash)

Meanwhile, work commenced to the offside (the worst side) and removal of damaged panels revealed much more woodwork than expected, most of which was either split or rotten. Repairs have been carried out to a very high standard by a small team led by our Chairman and his right hand man, Brian Down. Things were progressing nicely with Paul Morris having supervised some serious welding to the rear bulkhead and boot sections, but when attention was turned to the front offside corner, panels were removed to reveal a myriad of wood, most of which was crumbling. This prompted the brave decision to completely remove the fibreglass front end and screens, hence P3's somewhat shocking appearance as at mid-June.

We have the relevant experts on the case but need much more help in terms of the basic cleaning up and preparation work – we just don't have members turning up to help in enough numbers. Therefore, as Alan Bond now has a long list of members who wish to be trained on P3, it has been decided to give preference to those who have assisted with the project and they will not only benefit in terms of moving up the list, but also in terms of reduced training fees according to input.

So please, let's see a few more of you prepared to come down with your overalls to get stuck into this project. This in turn will help to release our skilled labour who can spread their efforts to the many other projects also in progress.

There maybe some of you who consider that P3 has perhaps jumped the queue in terms of attention. But remember, this vehicle more than any other represents the "new face" of Cobham, and its future role in training members who are otherwise unable to drive buses due to EEC legislation, or on cost grounds alone, must not be underestimated. And let's face it. With over 400 members now, we are four times as big as in 1993. Therefore we should be seeing four times as much progress at weekends. So where are you all?! □

LETTER

From Bryan Ellis (446)

I was delighted to learn from Graham Smith's article in Magazine 12 that someone still remembers the 221 route which ran from North Harrow to Pinner. I grew up in North Harrow, and the 221 was my school bus. There were two other local routes – the 230 which, when double-decked, was served by the "lowbridge" stock which Ken Duke (Magazine 11) remembers on the 178, and the 183 which was one of the routes on which London Transport ran its STDs.

There were one hundred STDs, but I never discovered which routes they ran on apart from the 13, 113 and 183 out of Hendon. Also, are any of them still working – or preserved in captivity? Perhaps a member has the answers.

The Chestnuts, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 1EE

Editor's note: There were in fact three batches of STDs. 1–100 were TD4s delivered during 1937 and were all-Leyland affairs which externally resembled STLs of that time. 101–111 were "unfrozen" TD7s delivered in 1942 with Park Royal austerity bodies while 112–176 were delivered in 1946 and referred to as PD1s. They were also of all-Leyland construction, but to a far more provincial design. Sadly, no STDs are known to survive, indeed all the final batch, which were arguably the most handsome but were short lived due to LT's quest for standardisation, are believed to have been exported, quite possibly all to Yugoslavia. Does anyone fancy compiling an STD feature for a future issue? Sounds like a job for Alan Bond methinks!

BOOKS

What lucky enthusiasts we are these days. Barely a week goes by without another noteworthy bus book going into print. On top of that, *Buses* magazine goes from strength to strength and is thankfully covering the preservation scene more fully these days, and less so that of the political aspects. And the excellent *Classic Bus* is now being augmented by an annual yearbook, the latest of which is reviewed below. In addition, the occasional *Buses Focus* series is turning out some gems, the latest of which is *Bus Preservation '96*, a truly superb read at just £2.95.

The best part about it is that the various editors of said publications are 100% behind or efforts at Cobham and continue to give us some wonderful exposure. Indeed, the June issue of *Buses* featured a glowing report on our Open Day, *Buses Focus* contained an article on that superb Cobham resident, RT593, which was of course restored and is still owned by our Chairman and George Townsend. The cover of *Classic Bus Yearbook-2* has Geoff Rixon's RM254 splashed across the cover and a feature inside on the same by Geoff, whilst the centre spread of a recent HCVS magazine contained a stunning snap of RF672, which is owned by Paul Morris and Dave Jones. Finally, I was delighted (not to mention surprised) to find my beloved RF534 on the cover of the current issue of *Vintage Roadscene*, white roundels'n all!

Thanks, as ever, are extended to our friends Stephen Morris, Gavin Booth, Peter Durham, Graham Edge, John Whitehead etc. for their continued support.

PS Just as I was putting this issue to bed yet another member had his name in print. That of Tony Blackman (330), who appeared in the Daily Mail no less, pictured with one of his superb Halifax Regents (BCP 671) in the June 3rd issue. Tony has revived the 46A service between Halifax and Hebden Bridge and runs BCP on a daily service!

THE HEYDAY OF THE CLASSIC COACH

Kevin Lane, Published by Ian Allan, £11.99

The popularity of this book can be in no doubt as the copy for review is a reprint of a title originally published no more than two years ago.

So, what makes the classic coach? Well, in the writer's opinion a look at page three will tell you. What more of a classic can you have than this? An AEC Regal III with pre-selector gearbox and 9.6 litre engine carrying a Duple A type body. This particular example started life with Silver Service of Darley Dale and, happily, still survives. LRA 907 has a particular nostalgia for me as I once had the golden opportunity to buy it but my finances were just not strong enough to carry the burden. Nice to know that this beauty is still around though. It would be hard to find a better photograph to start a book about classic coaches and my only complaint is that the vehicle is not properly dressed without guard rings on the front wheels. Still, you can't blame the publishers or the photographer for this omission. From here on this book is a treat, the pictures are full of nostalgia and a wide coverage of the rarer body builders is given. Who now remembers firms like Beccols, Windover and Barnaby who were quite well known at one time. There is also a gem in the shape of an Armoury bodied Bedford OL in the fleet of Isle of Man Road Services. Definitely high on my list of recommended reading, a copy of this on the shelf will give years of pleasure as you wallow in the glory of the classic coach.

Alan Bond

CROYDON'S TROLLEYBUSES

Terry Russell. Published by Middleton Press.

This is the second volume in Middleton Press' Trolleybus Classics series, the first of which was reviewed in the Spring issue of the magazine. It has a soft cover and retails at £10.95.

The territory covered in this book is the 654 route from Sutton, latterly Carshalton Depot and the southern section of Hammersmith's

long trunk route, the 630. The introduction sets the scene and includes a map of the whole of the 654 and the 630 from Mitcham, south to West Croydon. The photographs are arranged in geographical order in Middleton's usual style and cover the whole life of the routes from 1935 to 1959 and on to the last 630, K1 1121 on the night of 19th July 1960. There is a short chapter devoted to the rolling stock and the changes that occurred over the years.

Unlike the places and vehicles shown in volume one, I do not remember the 654 but the photographs give a very full picture of what it must have been like. The 630 however passed by my secondary school and I remember getting into trouble with the science master for looking at passing trolleys instead of attending to my studies. Thirty-five years later I still have a passion for electric vehicles, but I never did take GCE Physics! Many of the places shown in the photographs are still recognizable today and as many are not, but looking through this excellent book gives one the chance to travel back to what were often more pleasant times. If you enjoyed the Woolwich and Dartford book you must get this one too. I hope they will soon bring out number three, hopefully the other end of the 630 and its fellows.

Phill Cruise

THE HEYDAY OF THE BUS: MIDLANDS

J B Bucknall. Published by Ian Allan. Price £11.99.

The rapidly expanding series of Heyday colour landscape colour albums are always an enjoyable read and remind one very much of the "Colour Portfolio" rail albums from a decade or so ago. With Birmingham based grandparents, your Editor has some fond memories of Midland fleets and well remembers catching the always immaculate Birmingham Corporation deckers on route 55 from Shard End Estate into the city in the early Sixties. So I found much to enjoy in this album even though the cover shot of Walsall trolley 310 was slightly out of focus and not perhaps the best choice for the cover.

But there is also much to enjoy for London fans because many LT

vehicles saw subsequent service in the Midlands. Those pictured include down at heel RTLs 26 and 1600 (Harpers, Cannock), a very rare shot of GS41 – one of two such vehicles to end up with West Midlands PTE, MBs 634, 636 and 665 (Mid Warwickshire Motors), DM1974 (Stevensons, Uttoxeter, who also owned DM 1973) and two super shots of RPs, namely the well known RP71 which remains to this day with Knotty and RP79 (Berresfords), the latter looking very smart indeed in that operator's red with white stripe livery. It could almost be a central area RP! There are many other gems including the former St Helen's RT (BDJ 808) converted by Harpers as a recovery vehicle and former BL21, one of three such Bristols still giving good service for Express Motors of Derby.

As many of the photographs cover the Seventies and early Eighties it's arguable whether the album really covers what people would consider to be the heyday of the bus, but nevertheless the book is a most enjoyable read with informative captions and truly something for everyone.

Mike Nash

THE HEYDAY OF THE BUS: YORKSHIRE

Geoff Lumb. Published by Ian Allan. Price £11.99.

From the same series, though largely covering the Sixties this time, Geoff Lumb has in some ways compiled an even better effort in that his captions are rather more informative and the photographs are in general much more nostalgic and with better backgrounds. There isn't too much to interest the London enthusiast although half-cab fans will no doubt appreciate the fact that there's hardly a rear engine in sight!

Favourite shots? Well, several qualify but I particularly liked that of the two Guy Wulfrunians owned by County Motors of Lepton passing each other. Purchased in 1961, these must have been a brave buy for an independent, but by 1963 they had given up trying to keep the things running and passed them on to West Riding. In addition,

the snap of ex-works AEC Regent V (1949 U) bound for Samuel Legards and in that company's superb livery of royal blue with cream relief and the most unusual green roof is mouth watering.

An enjoyable book then, but perhaps one which won't appeal to London die-hards.

Mike Nash

CLASSIC BUS YEAR-BOOK – 2

Edited by Gavin Booth. Published by Ian Allan. Price £11.99.

One of the things that is so enjoyable about *Classic Bus* magazine is that it provides such an accessible read. Anyone with a general interest in transport can pick up a copy and find something of interest contained therein and it also serves to educate spring chickens like me as to the finer points of life before 1960. That said, it is refreshing to see so much space given to post-Sixties machinery. After all, it is now that these vehicles need exposure. Otherwise budding preservationists will miss the boat and a truly innovative generation of vehicles will disappear forever.

It goes without saying that *Classic Bus Yearbook – 2* is really an extension of the magazine and perhaps makes up for the latter not going monthly (yet!). There's a real cross section of features including two by Cobham members, namely Michael H C Baker and Geoff Rixon. In addition, I particularly enjoyed Jasper Pettie's account of Scottish vehicles both rescued and those which sadly slipped the net. To compliment this tale, there are some fine Peter Durham portraits of some of the exhibits now resident at Lathalmond, the wonderful headquarters of the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum. I do hope we can organise a trip there one weekend – a journey custom made for P3 or RP90 wouldn't you agree?

Another enjoyable feature was from the pen of Robert E Jowitt, a man whose fondness for all things female led him to feature numerous partners within the photographs of his road going subjects, in this case the trolleybuses of Bournemouth. The montage

photograph included in the feature is a classic and I can relate to many of his comments as regards the delicate art of juggling hobbies with relationships, having myself been guilty of sacrificing more than a few of the latter in favour of various things with engines!

All in all then, this latest Yearbook represents fine value and Gavin is to be congratulated for both his prodigious output and for introducing a breath of fresh air into what has previously been at times be a notably staid movement.

Mike Nash

RELIABLE BRISTOL 5th Edition just released.

Contains details of all surviving Bristol REs, both in service and preservation. Many colour photo's and new features. Recommended by MN at just £5 including p/p.

Ian Chancellor, Knight Close, Weston-super-Mare, North Somerset BS22 OFG.

VERY RATEABLE TRACTION 2nd edition just released

Bristol VR Enthusiasts' Society

Bristol "Very Rateable Traction", a guide to surviving Series I/II VRs including 23 colour photos. Only £3.50 to Trust members plus 30p postage. Also further details on VR Preservation Society and Enthusiasts Society available on request from Gareth Crowther, Macdonald Road, Lightwater, Surrey GU18 5XZ

NEWS FROM VIC

Vic Chivers is a well known preservationist and one of our most supportive members. As well as continuing with his long term restoration project, RF41, he also manages to get down to Cobham on a regular basis despite living in Harlow, Essex (others please take note!) and does a wonderful job in restoring Green Line route boards for use on T448, T504 etc. You can usually spot him quite easily as he turns strange shades of either green or yellow during his visits according to



Reliance Rescue: RP90 has recently been acquired by Trust members and has been receiving attention at the museum. The last of its class, and one of very few survivors, it is hoped the ex-Green Line coach will be out and about by the end of the year. (Photo: Mike Nash)



Farewell Tree Lopper: Long time Cobham resident 971J, the former STL 1470 which was converted to a tree lopper in 1953, has departed for pastures new, and hopefully an owner who will actually do some work to it! It is pictured being pushed out of the gates by various members. (Photo : Mike Nash)

which board he is sanding down! Anyone who can help with further information or photos of RF41 can contact Vic at 292 Abbotts Weld, Harlow CM18 6TS. Meanwhile, he is appealing for more of our members to get down to Cobham and put some effort in as he feels there are too few doing too much and that we have rather too many "arm-chair preservationists" within our ranks. I couldn't agree more.

Vic was instrumental in the recent rescue of RP90 as he tipped us off as to its availability. Indeed, he actually had first option to buy and is particularly pleased that this RP has been rescued as it used to work along side his own RF41 when both were based at Guildford (GF) in 1973. He is hoping to return RF41 to the road later this season so perhaps it can be re-united with RP90 in due course. Nowadays, Vic is based at Ware Garage and he tells me that some of the drivers there were on the RPs during the Seventies and say that they were not a popular vehicle with staff and there was always a dead row at Hertford. Many RPs went for scrap at an early age and those which have survived generally had a short LCBS service life (only seven years in the case of RP90 as compared to some 23 for RF41). Apparently, the drivers much preferred SNCs which were drafted in to replace the RPs.

Other news from Vic concerns the former Aldenham Works. Sadly, demolition of this famous site commenced on March 18th and the company contracted to carry out the work (Tower Demolition) expect it to take six months. They have been kind enough to donate the London Transport sign to Covent Garden Museum.

Finally, Vic has sent me further information about RF41 which has a fascinating history and probably one of the most complicated of all the Green Line RFs. We're certainly all looking forward to seeing RF41 back on the road in what is its 45th year since it first entered service. Thanks Vic, from all the team for your invaluable support.

RF41 – SOME INTERESTING FACTS

9/53 Entered Aldenham for pilot overhaul, the first RF to so tackled. Outshopped 1/54 with same body (7434).

4/56 The first RF to be fitted with Dog's Ear style indicators.

9/57 One of six examples to be used as float vehicles between garages whilst other RFs were away having saloon heaters fitted. No fewer than 17 garages were worked by RF41 in just 13 months.

10/58 Entered Aldenham for second overhaul. Chassis separated from body. The latter emerged 1/59 as RF38 whilst the chassis entered the works float system, not emerging until 8/60 with body (7677) ex-RF97. Painted in experimental light green livery as were 15 others to work route 711 from Reigate. Subsequently repainted in standard livery.

5/64 Based at Victoria as Green Line spare. Fitted with reduced blind display.

9/65 Went to Aldenham for third and final overhaul. Received body (7630) ex-RF243. Converted for OMO with nearside front seat removed and luggage pen fitted to make seating B37F. Believed to have emerged in bus livery, coded RF5/7, the only RF to ever carry this code.

8/66 Converted back to coach status, resealed to C39F and painted into Green Line livery. It isn't known whether route board hooks were reinstated but RF41 was chosen because an additional vehicle was required for route 724 and RF41 was an easy conversion owing to its OMO status.

7/67 Once again relegated to bus duties due to arrival of modernised Green Line RFs, but retained its C39F status as no luggage pen was fitted. Load-a-meter equipment fitted to monitor route patronage. In this form, its interior remained unique until withdrawal, more than nine years since last overhaul, although it was repainted twice during the period.

11/74 Delicensed at Addlestone Garage (WY). In total, RF41 had seen an incredible 40 garage transfers during its service life! Sold a year later via Booths of Rotherham, one of very few RFs to escape from this famous breakers yard. Subsequently passed through the hands of several dealers including one by the name of Donald Allmey!

1/85 Bought from Southwark Children's Foundation by Vic Chivers for preservation.



FOREVER

ATTENTION RF OWNERS! – I

Following the outstanding success of the Kingston RF Operating Day which combined with our final Display Day of 1995, a similar such event is being lined up for our Display Day on Sunday 20th October, albeit to a different destination. Peter Starks will once again be acting as "Fat Controller" and therefore wishes to hear from RF owners who can take part, either in a static capacity or running in service. All RFs will be welcomed, whether Green Line, Central or Country examples and it is likely that a display of the type will be based at Weybridge Station with those in service connecting the museum with the chosen

destination, of which Shepperton Station or Leatherhead Garage have so far been suggested.

If you would like to take part in this event please contact Peter sooner rather than later on 01 403 902. The more vehicles available for service the more fun the day will be, but owners who volunteer their vehicles must be suitably licensed and insured.

Mike Nash

ATTENTION RF OWNERS! – 2

I am in the process of compiling a feature for *Classic Bus* concerning surviving RFs, of which we know of some 120 at present.

Please drop me a line if you have any interesting facts concerning those still around. For instance, it may be that you know the whereabouts of a dormant example which is ripe for rescue, or if you own or have previously owned an RF with an interesting history, you may have some information which I can make use of in the feature.

Alan Bond has already supplied me with a wealth of statistics but any additional photos and facts from members will be gratefully received. I look forward to hearing from you. Please write to me at the usual address.

Mike Nash

VEHICLE NEWS MARCH – MAY 1996

Peter Plummer

- P3 Repairs to the corroded rear boot bulkhead have commenced under the supervision of Paul Morris. Your chairman has replaced a broken lower pillar on the offside, made and fitted new timber horizontal members and panelled up another section around the emergency exit. Now for the bad news. It was decided to remove the whole of the lower fibre-glass front panel to effect repairs, and the timberwork, in my view, appears worse than the woodwork we found necessary to replace on the 1937 9T9 coach, T448! Meanwhile, Andy Baxter

and Paul Morris are nearing completion of the mechanical overhaul.

- RM3 Ian Barrett has repaired the front roof dome and fitted additional dome bracing between the inner and outer skins. Phill Cruise and Richard Hussey have stripped the front advert panels of chipped paintwork in preparation for repaint.
- RP90 Although not a Trust vehicle, this nice 1972 AEC coach has now been rescued by Mike Nash and Paul Morris and is temporarily at the museum undergoing some mechanical repairs, but the condition of the bodywork is remarkably good. Devoid of most paintwork due to having been largely repainted, the vehicle is destined to be repainted in its original Lincoln Green livery – which sadly only lasted about two years from new on these attractive coaches.
- RT2775 Brian Down and I have almost completed the rebuild of the platform and rear end with the fitting of new panels, new number plate pan and rear tail light box. A new stairwell pan has been made, riveted together and fitted. Brian Hine has varnished the platform boards, in readiness for the rubber platform covering to be fitted. Brian Dabbs regularly makes the journey from South Wales to strip the outside of the vehicle of paint, the condition of which was "as withdrawn" from London Transport, with some touching-in of odd panels, which always let the vehicle down.
- STL2377 Difficulty in obtaining 2" seals has delayed assembly of the braking system and the opportunity has been taken to arrange for welding around the studs in the radiator top tank before assembly, and this should be complete by the time the brake parts arrive. Many thanks to Andy Baxter, Bill Cottrell and John Messer.
- T31 Work was carried out during May to replace a faulty gearbox, and those who have driven the vehicle have reported a marked improvement. A photograph of the work in progress appears elsewhere in this issue.
- T448 With all panelwork now complete on the nearside, Brian Down and I have fitted most of the half-round mouldings and beadings

702B

and at last the coach is beginning to look complete. Alas, the offside of the vehicle has yet to be stripped and rebuilt. No-one responded to our appeal in the Spring magazine for a rubber hornpush. However, Andy Baxter found a brand new assembly complete for £1.00 at an autojumble stall at Brooklands on our Open Day. Well done, "Hawkeye" Baxter.

DIARY DATES

The following are key events most likely to be attended by members and vehicles of the Trust. Please pay particular attention to our "home" events. *Buses* and *Classic Bus* magazines always contain the most up-to-date event information.

JULY

Sunday 14th Royal Victoria Rally, Southampton. (01703 213).
 Sunday 21st Mid Hants Railway Bus Rally, Alton. With special service running from Cobham using RT3491 and further trips from the rally site. (0181 8510)
 Also Routemaster Association Rally, Shuttleworth.

AUGUST

Sat/Sun 3rd/4th Clear-up weekend at Cobham and Bus-B-Que on Saturday night
 Sunday 11th Bus of Yesteryear Rally, Staines (01784 955)
 Saturday 24th Delaine Running Day, Bourne
 Monday 26th Cobham "Display Day" (01932 651).

SEPTEMBER

Sat/Sun 14th/15th Clear-up weekend at Cobham (01932 651)
 Sunday 29th Showbus 96, Duxford (01223 000).

OCTOBER

Sunday 13th Severn Valley Road/Rail Rally, Kidderminster
 Sunday 20th Cobham "Display Day" and RF Operating Event

LONDON BUS PRESERVATION TRUST

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 Paul Morris, Groveside Close, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 2EQ. 0181 8394
 Dave Jones, Epping Close, Romford, Essex RM7 8BH.

Magazine Editor Mike Nash Stroudwater Park, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0DT.

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 numbers above), who will pass them on to the appropriate person.

Your co-operation will be appreciated.

The London Bus Preservation Trust is registered as a charity Registration number 293319

URGENT STOP PRESS : Member Hugh Harland urgently needs to find a new home for 'Swiftly' (SMD 91) before July 1st as Brighton Transport no longer have room. Ring Hugh on 01273 314 if you can help him to find safe, economical storage, preferably in the south, the closer to Brighton the better. 'Swiftly' may have to go for scrap otherwise. Thank you.

Rear cover: This was the scene inside the museum on Open Day before it got busy! Many stall-holders reported record takings and the event was a huge success for everyone involved. (Photo: Mike Nash)

