

COBHAM BUS MUSEUM

MAGAZINE



LONDON BUS PRESERVATION TRUST

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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 numbers above), who will pass them on to the appropriate person. Your co-operation will be appreciated.

FROM THE EDITOR

Can it be that another rally season is almost at an end? Time flies when you're having fun – but also when there's so much to do. Thus far, 1996 has certainly been a year of consolidated progress for Cobham, not least due to the wonderful efforts made by the many members who attended our two recent clear-up weekends. Special thanks are extended to those who travelled considerable distances to join the regulars, and one man in particular deserves mention. For Simon Kaye has been with us almost every weekend in recent months and his varied expertise and sparkling wit (or sarcasm as the case may be) has become an integral part of the team. For me, it is always doubly pleasing when a respected preservationist returns to the fold, the old enthusiasm rekindled by Cobham.

Hopefully we've all had a little playtime too, and there have been some memorable events this year. Without doubt one of the best was "Classic Automotion" at Crowthorne, capably organised by the Classic Bus Heritage Trust. With the Road Research Laboratory test track open to visiting vehicles it ended up as a marvellous free-for-all with a multitude of buses, lorries, fire engines and classic cars steaming around the circuit all day. In addition, there was the "Preserved Bus Driver of the Year Competition" with separate classes for amateurs and professionals. It was with great pleasure that Andy Baxter, myself and John Hinson took the top three places overall. Professionals where were you?! This is certainly an event not to be missed in 1997 but please Mike, can we have the banking open next time?!!!

I took RF534 down to the Royal Victoria Rally at Southampton where we were treated to "Smash a Bus", or at least that was how one

Front cover: Expect to see a multitude of RFs in action at our special "Buses 500" event on 20th October, which promises to be a very busy day.

member of the public interpreted the more usual "Drive a Bus" feature as two of the Corporation's Atlanteans collided. We all took vehicles in glorious sunshine to the Mid Hants Railway bash and RF534 did a stint in service on a very tortuous route, which despite even more spirited running than usual saw me arriving back some 8 minutes behind schedule. The passengers weren't complaining though!

By the time you read this Duxford will have come and gone (hopefully not another "Showerbus"), and probably Kidderminster too which brings me nicely round to our final Display Day of the year. As you may have heard by now this is to be something rather special for we've teamed up again with those nice people at Ian Allan Publishing to celebrate the 500th issue of BUSES magazine. You will find full details elsewhere in this issue and as advertised in BUSES but suffice to say that this will be an event not to be missed. Visiting vehicles will be most welcome and we still need more RFs for service and display so can owners please ring Peter Starks on 01403 902 NOW if they can attend.

Well, that's me just about done for another issue other than to mention that with P3 undergoing a much longer term restoration than had been originally envisaged I may try to secure another vehicle for short term driver training. Meanwhile, the Committee have agreed to prioritise the P3 project over the winter and it should be noted that your Chairman has already put in many late nights repairing the framework of this vehicle and additional helpers are still desperately needed to assist his small team. Meanwhile, rest assured that those members already on the waiting list for driver training will be updated on the situation when necessary whilst additional members who wish to add their name to the list should contact Alan "007" Bond on 01753 497. Hope to see you all on the 20th.

Mike Nash

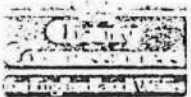
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Legal matters: we have recently obtained a copy of a letter from the Charity Commission, dated 29 February 1996, which confirms that the new organisation, the London Bus Preservation Trust Ltd., has been entered on the Central Registry of Charities. It is reproduced on page 6.

The amalgamation of the existing Trust into the new London Bus Preservation Trust Limited (which holds the assets formerly in the ownership of the London Bus Preservation Group Limited in trust for our own members) has now been proposed by the directors. There remain a few outstanding items to clarify, such as the inventory of assets currently held in trust by the holding company, which the committee, acting in the interests of everyone, wishes to verify. Assuming it is everyone's wish to demonstrate good faith and intention, and agreement is reached on the outstanding matters of detail, there seems no reason why the amalgamation should not take effect at an early date.

Building improvements: the result of our two "clear-up" weekends 3-4 August and 14-15 September have been spectacular. Volunteers in my team have cleared racks, cleaned and painted walls and steel girderwork, and re-stacked sorted spares for half the length of the interior of the building's west wall. This is a major achievement. John Bedford's team stripped and painted the office walls and effected essential repairs.

Meanwhile, Bill Cottrell's volunteers, headed by Andy Baxter and Simon Kaye, sorted spares in the new extension, making space to take in large items brought to them by members of my team cleaning the west wall. Simultaneously, a fourth team led by Ian Barrett cleared the "paint bay" workshop and have painted most of the walls and steel girders. All this constitutes remarkable teamwork to achieve what has been the best-ever improvement in the museum's appearance and environment.



Charity Commission, St Alban's House, 57/60 Haymarket, London SW1Y 4QX

Direct Line 0171 210 } 777
GTN 210 }

Fax 0171 210 }
Our Ref: 210 } MRQ/1053383/ W.M.C.

MR A CROSS
NORTHDOWN ROAD
SOLIHULL
WEST MIDLANDS
B91 3ND

Your Ref:

Date : 29 Feb 1996

Dear *Sam*

CHARITY : THE LONDON BUS PRESERVATION TRUST LIMITED

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1053383

I am writing to confirm that the charity named above has been entered in the Central Register of Charities.

The green wallet accompanying this letter contains a number of leaflets which each of the charity trustees should read carefully so that they are fully aware of and understand their duties and responsibilities.

Also enclosed is a print-out showing this charity's entry in the Central Register including the date of registration. Please let me know if there are any inaccuracies in your entry. Charity trustees have a legal obligation, under section 3(7) of the Charities Act 1993, to keep us informed of any changes to this register entry or to their charity's trusts, and supply us with details of the changes.

All charities having an annual income of over 10,000 will receive an annual mailing from us requesting a copy of their accounts. Although charities with an income of less than 10,000 but more than 1000 will not receive a mailing from us, they will still be required to prepare and submit an annual return and an annual report. Further details of charity accounts can be found in leaflet CCS1, enclosed in the wallet.

Please note that with effect from 1 December 1995 all registered charities with an annual income of over 10,000 must include on any documents appealing for funds and on a range of financial documents including cheques, invoices and receipts, a statement that the charity is a registered charity.

Yours faithfully,

Q Qaiyum

RE 500

Trust vehicles: progress on vehicles has been outstanding this quarter, particularly on the mechanical front, mainly due to regular assistance by long standing member Simon Kaye. I am personally very pleased to have Simon back as a regular volunteer as his skill and knowledge has dovetailed well into Andy Baxter's engineering team. Oh, how my coachmaking "team" envy the pace of their progress.

Top driver Andy Baxter received his award following his splendid effort at the new Crowthorne rally in June which I predict will be a major annual event. Alan Bond, Simon Kaye and Mike Nash also achieved very good marks in their classes. Our thanks to Bill Ackroyd and Mike Clarke in recognition of their superb effort and organisation of the event.

Annual General Meeting: our AGM on 29 June was very well attended, with useful discussion and some constructive suggestions, interspersed with humorous moments. It is clear that our Trust, after years of stagnation, is now a fast moving river putting vast amounts of effort into many different aspects of the museum's development. I therefore welcome Graham Ruddock to the Trust committee, who will boost the available manpower on the administration and educational work of the Trust.

Peter Plummer

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT REPORT

On 7th August John Bedford, Richard Hussey and I visited Brian Dyes at the Ipswich Transport Museum to see their documentation procedures and find out how these related to our own situation. The meeting was quite fruitful and gave us a clearer idea of what is required. JB undertook to obtain some copies of completed documents from Brian on a subsequent visit. A suitable "Accessions Register" and "Museum Object Cards" have since been ordered and when these have arrived we shall be able to make rapid progress with the documentation.

The first task will be to draw up an entry list of the most significant items in the museum – eventually everything will need to be included except spares, furniture and consumables – and decide from this what, in addition to the vehicles, will be accessioned. The list can be produced on a PC database. We will need to decide on the date of entry for each object and establish its source. A record card and entry form will need to be completed for each object listed, those to be accessioned will then be entered in the register and given an identity number which will have to be permanently marked on the object. As to which items are to be accessioned should I believe be a Committee matter, as there are important factors to be taken into account with regard to an object's place and future within the collection.

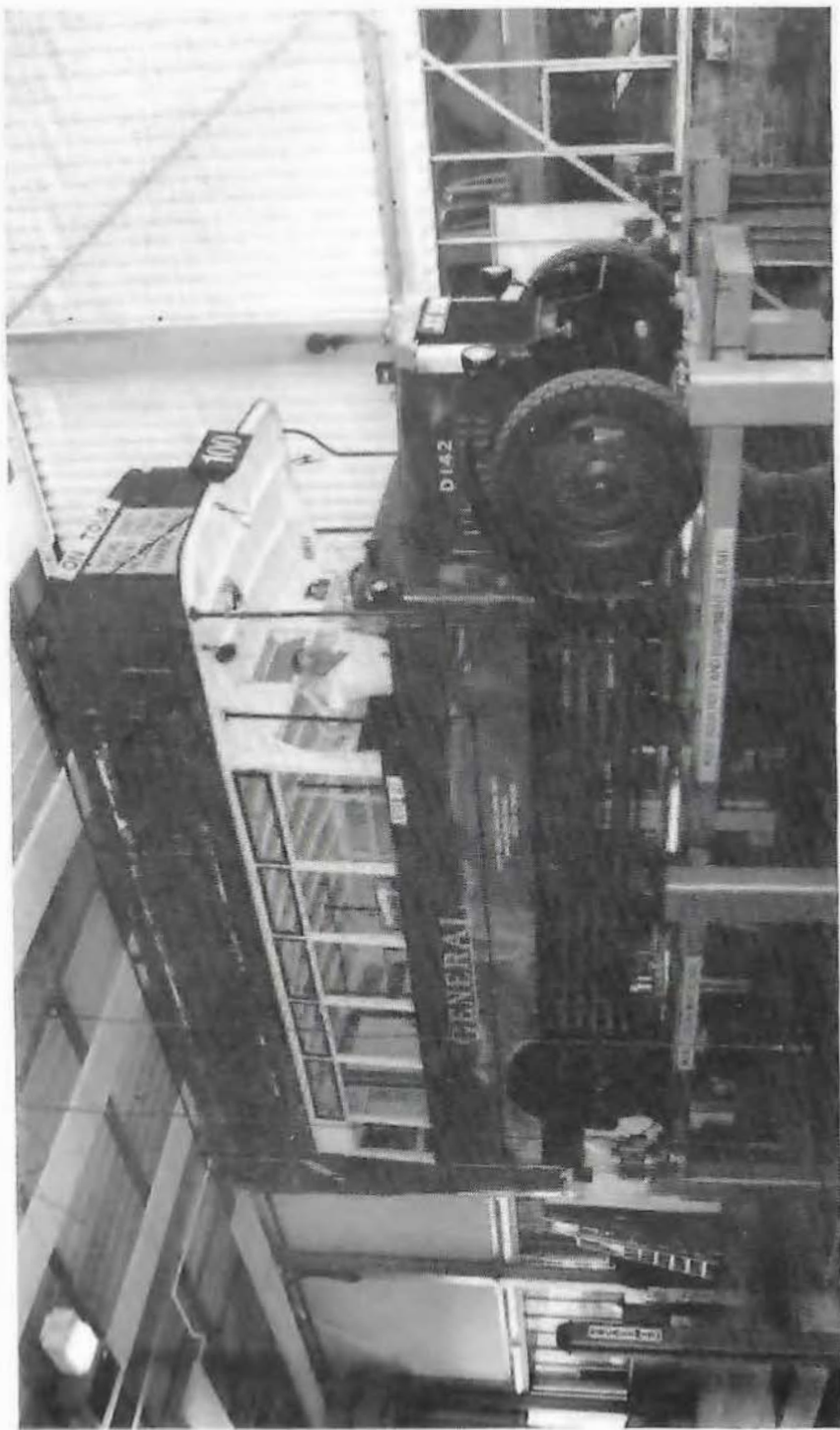
As a first priority, and to show the Museums and Galleries Council of our progress, I feel we should produce an initial entry list comprising the Trust vehicles and the more obvious items of street furniture. Entry records and object cards can then be completed and the initial entries made in the accessions register. Beyond this, the entry list and associated documents will need to be continued with until all the existing items are accounted for. Afterwards it will only be necessary to update the documents as new items arrive.

I hope to have the initial documentation completed by Christmas, after which the MGC should be sufficiently satisfied to award the Trust with full Museum Registration.

David Jones



Top Marks: Andy Baxter (centre) receives his trophy from Bill Ackroyd (right) for winning "Preserved Bus Driver of the Year" at Classic Automotion. Andy was top amateur and overall winner, whilst Alan Bond came top of the professionals. (Photo: Martin Gibbons)



Dennis Doddle: Following much attention, most notably by Sebastian Marshall, D142 sailed through its MOT test at Merrow during August. The Trust's oldest exhibit is pictured during the test, in the safe hands of Alan Bond. (Photo: Mike Nash)

WATCH THIS SPACE

There may be a possibility that one or more vehicle spaces could fall vacant at the museum in due course. With this in mind, the Committee wish to invite members who would be interested in keeping a vehicle at Cobham to notify them as such in writing for future consideration. It goes without saying that there will be a strict set of criteria applied so as to avoid past horrors where we had an excess of non-runners, long term dormancy and resident members who contributed no input to the Trust. Therefore, the following requirements will need to be met:

1. Applicants should already be actively involved with the Trust.
2. The vehicle must be both relevant and compatible with the existing exhibits at Cobham in terms of historic importance, variety and visual appeal.
3. The vehicle should preferably be of smart appearance and in full working order, or if undergoing restoration, actively worked on and seen to be progressing towards completion.

Those members interested are invited to write before 20th November c/o Richard Hussey, Hillcross Avenue, Morden, Surrey SM4 4EX.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE HEYDAY OF THE CLASSIC BUS

Gavin Booth, Published by Ian Allan £10.99

This is the third re-print of this title and from that its popularity becomes obvious. As with the other titles in the series the standard of photographs is excellent though, in a few cases, the actual printing of the colours could have been better and the picture of the three Thames Valley buses on the title page is a case in point. Curiously enough it seems to only affect the photographs taken by P R Wallis for other pictures featuring buses in Tilling Red have printed up true and close to the original. From this evidence one would surmise that Mr Wallis's film emulsion is over sensitive to the red end of the spectrum. This, however, is a small criticism; every picture is clear and sharp and the subject matter has been carefully chosen to make this another recommended buy. 82 excellent colour pictures for £11.99 must be a bargain by anybody's standards. It would be difficult to pick out any of the pictures as being superior to others but that title page picture conjures up much nostalgia for me personally as do the Guernsey Railways Albion Nimbus and the Western National K type at Stoke Gabriel, birthplace of the revered George Jackson Churchward of GWR fame. As with all these colour albums from Ian Allan; if you like the buses of that era you must have this on your book shelf.

Alan Bond

RAILWAY OWNED COMMERCIAL VEHICLES.

By S.W.Stevens-Stratton and W.J.Aldridge.

Published by Ian Allan at £14.99.

This book, first published in 1987 has now been reprinted for another airing and features all manner of types of vehicle on an aspect of the railways which one rarely thinks about. Namely that of the railway owned commercial vehicle, something which once provided an essential door to door service.

I think that most people would remember the once ubiquitous Scammell three-wheeler as being the only railway owned road vehicle which comes to mind. However, this book sheds much more light on this lesser known aspect of railway operations.

With the nationalization of the railways and the subsequent closure of many lines, the decline of the railways road traffic was inevitable and so today, railway owned road transport is virtually non-existent. So this book tells the story from the early days, with particular emphasis on the period from the early Thirties to the late Sixties. All types of goods traffic are covered with detailed analysis of those vehicles designed for specific requirements.

An interesting book then, but one which is probably a bit too specialised for railway enthusiasts with very few if any railway scenes, so perhaps of more interest to road transport fans with the emphasis on older vehicles.

Many of the photographs are of an official nature, and as such are of good quality having been "posed" for the camera. Even so, there is still a good amount of interest and detail contained which make this title well worth a second look.

Colin Shepperd

THE HEYDAY OF THE LONDON BUS - 3

By Kevin McCormack.

Published by Ian Allan at £11.99.

The third in this excellent series of *landscape* style albums comprises another lavish collection of colour shots spanning more than 40 years of London activity, and once again our member Kevin McCormack has assembled a selection to please any Cobham member, especially as TD87 graces the front cover, appropriately captured in Cobham village no less, back in 1961 but in a scene which we could easily recreate with TD95 today!

Other highlights for the reviewer included MBS272 pictured in Reigate in 1969 which reminded me just how very smart these much maligned vehicles looked in their original Lincoln Green and Canary

Yellow livery; central RF445 pausing outside Arnos Grove tube station – two facets which represented the very pinnacle in LTE design; RW3, one of three barely remembered Reliances delivered in 1960 for dual-door evaluation of which RW2 still survives with one of our members – albeit not seen for some time; the 1981 shot of a later Reliance, namely RP31 which, although seen in NBC green, provides a taster of just how handsome RP90 is going to look in its original livery; the Geoff Rixon special where RM1183 is captured in an early deserted East Molesey circa Sixties, right outside the car showroom where some twenty years later I would find myself working; and a selection of shots in the Dorking and Box Hill area which include both RF182 and RT620 seen at the latter, adjacent to the very point where the more suicidal amongst those who made the annual sledging pilgrimage to this famous beauty spot (in the days when we had snow) would descend the unforgiving one in two slope only to collide with a tree at the bottom or worse still cascade onto the road itself and quite possibly the rear platform of a southbound RT. For those interested, your editor recalls that a lavatory seat (preferably in lilac) was a most effective if uncontrolled means of descending at very high velocity! These days I've moved more upmarket and use a washing-up bowl – in red of course.

So, if you've got the first two books in this series then number 3 is a must. If not, perhaps it's time you treated yourself to a truly excellent slice of nostalgia, for Kevin's efforts are amongst the best in what has become a very popular format for colour albums.

Mike Nash

SPECIAL OFFER TO COBHAM MEMBERS!

Ian Allan Publishing have very kindly offered the above title and also the reprinted *Leyland Buses in Camera* by Gavin Booth at very special prices.

The Heyday of the London Bus – 3 is therefore available for just £9.99 including postage and packing (usually £11.99 + £2.50p.p.), whilst *Leyland Buses in Camera* is just £12.99 (usually £14.99 + £2.50p.p.) – a generous saving of £4.50 for each book. Cheques should be made payable to Ian Allan Ltd, and sent to Ian Allan Ltd, Marketing Department, Coombelands House, Coombelands Lane, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 1HY or you can order by credit card by ringing Nicola or Zoe on 01932 909 ext 235/236.

A VOTE OF THANKS

Your chairman wishes to thank volunteers in his team during the two "clean and paint-up" weekends in August and September and to acknowledge their effort, which has significantly enhanced the appearance of the main display hall. They are:

Leo Morey (35)	John Rawlins (272)
Peter Harwood (454)	Peter Harris (172)
Paul Wheeler (408)	Duncan Smith
Allen Trenchard (423)	Gerry Pratchett
Norman Davey (302)	Philip Millard (78)
Simon Lambert (366)	Graham Batten (9)
Brian Dabbs (256)	Colin Prince (26)
John Davies	Peter Burrows (297)
Phil Cruise (238)	George Townsend (46)
Brian Down (63)	Brian Hine (72)
Dave Bray	"Bill" (surname unknown)

Apologies if anyone has been omitted. Your chairman thanks volunteers in the other teams on behalf of their section leaders.

SHORT TURNS

Mike Nash

Cable Ties...

Having recently been in correspondence with Nynex, the cable television providers, I am pleased to announce that Cobham Bus Museum is to be plugged on ScreenScene, the NCTV local news and events station, with additional coverage on weeks preceding our special events such as "Buses 500". What next one wonders. Cobham on the Internet?!

A Testing Time...

Members who keep their vehicles within reach of the Surrey area may like to know that the staff at the Surrey County Council MOT testing station at Merrow Depot, Guildford are very friendly and sympathetic towards old buses. They will be delighted to carry out Class V tests on members vehicles and are likely to have their cameras ready in the process. Call Nick or Keith on 01483 463 for a first rate service, and don't forget to mention Cobham.

Seeing the Light...

The rooflights on RP90 were in poor condition and it proved impossible to track down replacements due to the odd dimensions. Having visited a few so called specialists who quoted ludicrous prices for supplying and cutting perspex to size, I finally stumbled across Aquarius Plastics in Guildford who cut three panels for just £75 + VAT, a third of the price of anyone else. Given that a 3m x 2m, 1" thick sheet of ICI opaque perspex costs an incredible £5,000, Henry Williams at Aquarius is well worth knowing - 01483 044.

Model Example...

Ian Chidlaw recently handed me a copy of the new magazine "MODEL BUSES", a quarterly A4 sized publication priced at £2. The editor, Ian Morton, had a stand at Open Day this year and gave us a nice mention in his Autumn issue. The model market seems to expand with each season and there can't be many Cobham members that

haven't at some time been guilty of pushing their favourite bus around the carpet! Not surprisingly, he reports that the magazine is doing very well and invites Cobham members to subscribe by writing to Model Buses, Talbot Fields, Telford TF6 6LY. A year's subscription is just £8 including postage and the magazine is a very good read if model buses are your thing.

A pair of Bristols...

Mention was made of the two Bristol LHs languishing in Guildford as a result of Blue Saloons' closure. I am pleased to report that both were indeed rescued (along with eight others from the fleet) and BL27 is soon to enter service with David Crowther's "Classic Coaches" whilst BN61 has passed to Cobham member Chris Lewis for preservation into its original London Country livery. Anyone who can help Chris with information, photographs and transfers can contact him during sensible hours on 01483 578.

VEHICLE WORK SPACE FOR MEMBERS AT COBHAM

The committee has decided that a vehicle space will in future be allocated for the use of non-resident members who need to work on their vehicles. Richard Hussey has agreed to maintain a register of members who wish to take advantage of this facility. Please note that the dates you require accommodation must be booked in advance. Do not bring in the vehicle without prior agreement.

The arrangement is meant for short-term work eg. preparation for MoT or the change of small units. The length of stay will normally be restricted to not more than a month. Please do not assume that someone will be available to work on your vehicle - if there is a problem, discuss it with someone first. The scheme commences on an experimental basis on 1 November and members will be asked to make a contribution to cover the cost of the space which would otherwise be paid for by a rent-paying resident. If you wish to use a space, please write to Richard Hussey, Hillcross Avenue, Morden, Surrey SM4 4EX, who will contact you. (No telephone calls please)

WE NEED YOUR FOOTAGE!

Following on from our successful Kingston RF Operating Day video which was released in April, plans are now afoot to compile a second video, hopefully for release later next season, but this time we want members to provide the footage!

1997 sees Cobham Bus Museum celebrate its 25th anniversary. So what better way to mark this milestone than by releasing a video compilation of footage from as many of our Open Days as possible. Which is where you come in.

If you have good quality Cobham footage, be it cine or video, and you are willing to temporarily spare it for consideration, then Rod Lucas wants to hear from you. For it is Rod who has volunteered to co-ordinate this important project in conjunction with several other of our video enthusiasts and of course Ken Tarbox who did such a good job for us with the RF video.

So please. Dig out your old footage and give Rod plenty to sort through. You can write to him at Dorking Road, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 5SA or phone him (sensible times please) on 01737 703. We're counting on you!

Meanwhile, there are still some copies available of the Kingston RF Operating Day video which contains 40 minutes of excellent footage from our successful event last October. These are available from the Cobham shop, which will of course be open for the "Buses 500" event on October 20th, or members can order copies by post via my address, price just £10 inclusive of postage and packing. Cheques payable to the LBPT please.

Mike Nash

ATTENTION RESIDENT MEMBERS

To conform with the guidelines set out regarding Museum Registration and other relevant bodies in making Cobham more informative and educational to visitors, resident members will now be required to provide historical and other details about their vehicles.

Many will of course already have such material which they display when at events but this will now need to be made visible when the vehicle is at the museum. Those who don't have a display board will need to create one to be displayed from January 1st 1997, or earlier if possible.

In order for the museum to fulfil its obligations for full registration, please supply the necessary information about your vehicles...

Donald Allmey	T792,MLL740,RTL1323/RM10
Ian Barrett	UMP227
Graham Batten/Colin Prince	LJ9501/MYA590
John Bedford	CDX516
Michael Blackburn	GS34
Bill Cottrell	Q83
Simon Douglas-Lane/John Greene	RT3491
David Jones/Paul Morris	RF672
David Kriesler	RF10
Mike Nash	RF534
Peter Plummer/George Townsend	RT 593

FOR SALE Two former LT Bedford CA Ambulances, ex-Chiswick and Aldenham Works. Good sound condition with mechanical and body restoration completed. Offers around £2,500 for the pair.

Cliff Blackwell 0181- 0387.

GLX 913

Alias D27 & Southend Corporation 263

Alan Bond

The chassis of this bus was one of 281 Daimlers delivered to the LPTB between May 1944 and November 1946 and is probably the only example of its type left in existence on mainland Britain, though a similar rebodied example is preserved in Northern Ireland and is one of 100 purchased for Belfast Corporation in 1953/54.

The chassis of D27 was delivered to Duple Motor Bodies on 31st July 1944 and the completed bus arrived at Chiswick on 22nd September 1944, entering service from Merton on 1st October 1944. By the end of February 1946 it was one of 144 Daimlers operated from this garage. This total was swelled to no less than 181 when the batch of 37 ex-Green Line vehicles was transferred in from Romford during 1951.

D27 started life carrying a Duple utility fifty six seat highbridge body and was powered by a 7.7 litre AEC oil engine of identical type to that fitted to so many STLs. The pre-selector transmission was also very similar to that of the standard STL. Only two opening windows were fitted on each side of the utility body, one on each deck, and the seats were of the wooden slatted type though these were changed for moquette seats at the first overhaul, between 4th March and 3rd May 1948. D27 then returned to Merton until 8th March 1951 when it went back to Chiswick for overhaul again, emerging on the 16th April for a final stint at Merton. On 14th October 1952 it was withdrawn from service and sent to Ferry Lane Works at Walthamstow for storage while awaiting sale. On 16th December 1952 it was back at Chiswick for its LT identity to be removed and on 11th March 1953 ownership passed to W North of Vicar Lane, Leeds.

At some time during 1953 the body was scrapped and the chassis sold to Southend Corporation who, during 1954, had the chassis fitted with the Massey fifty-five seat lowbridge body which it still



Rare Survivor: As mentioned in Alan Bond's feature, this is the chassis of former wartime utility bodied Daimler D27. Re-bodied by Massey for Southend Corporation in 1954, it is pictured at the Mid Hants Railway event and temporarily carries the Derby livery for a film job. (Photo: Simon Kaye)



A Fresh Coat: Substantial progress was made by a dedicated team during the clear-up weekends in which 25+ years of decay was removed and a fresh coat of paint applied to the interior of the Redhill Road side of the building. It really does look brighter now when you walk in.
(Photo: Colin Shepperd)

carries. It entered service at the famous seaside resort during 1954 and was finally withdrawn from service in June 1962. Fortunately, it managed to escape the breakers again when it was sold to the Southend County Borough Constabulary for use as a mobile road safety exhibition, in which role it continued in use when the Southend force was amalgamated with the Essex Constabulary in 1969. As far as is known it was withdrawn from use by Essex Police in 1973 and was sold for preservation in that year.

For the record the Daimler chassis number is 11845 and the original LT body number was 658 which combination remained unchanged throughout its LT service. The chassis still retains the LT brass plates giving its identity and showing it to be of type 1/1D though what the difference is between this and the 1D classification of D 1 - 6 is not known at present. □

FOR SALE AND WANTED

FOR SALE. 900x20 radial tyres. Don Allmey 01895 760 or 0836 555

WANTED. Models of Cobham '96 STL and Cobham '95 RM (route 73). Good prices paid. Peter Coe 01372 998.

WANTED. Photos of Watford High Street, Leavesden Road and Garston Garages in the 1940s and 1950s for purchase/copy.
Martin McClure 01582 548

MINI BUSES (PART TWO)

Alan Bond

In 1992 I was made redundant by The Bee Line and decided to seek enlightenment in pastures new and, after a desperate summer of seeking, I finished up working for Ralph's Coaches of Langley on their Marriott Hotel contract. With hindsight I have to say this was not the most inspired move I have ever made but I can say that the experience was an education in many ways.

At first we twelve drivers operated a motley collection of two Plaxton bodied Volvo 53 sealers along with a couple of Toyotas and an automatic Mercedes 811D with Optare body. The Toyotas are of that peculiar type which has the engine under a flat floor at the front with a crew seat on the near side opposite the driver. Because the floor is flat and very thick, the noise insulation is good. For a front engined vehicle the sound insulation is, in fact, excellent. When Ford tried the same thing on a special short wheelbase version of the R192, it was, as usual, a dismal failure. Other Toyotas consisted of an earlier four cylinder version and one of the later sixes. The former had a performance which could only be described as pedestrian. In tests, the 0-60 figure came out at about three days.

On the short haul from Langley to Terminal Four, which was its usual haunt, it was necessary to thrash the life out of it to keep time, while, with the six cylinder vehicle it was a breeze, apart of course, from the usual peak hour traffic delays. The less said about the automatic Mercedes the better. It would change up nicely through the gears without a jerk, the problem was that you were in top gear at eighteen miles an hour and the only way to enhance the performance was to change up manually, which rather defeated the object.

However, part of the contract stipulated new vehicles in the livery of the hotel, as dictated by their management and these eventually materialised in the form of five Mercedes 814Ds with Optare 27 seat bodies and five speed manual gearboxes. The livery was, and is, puce with white lettering advertising the presence of the Marriott Hotel.

The batch had the registrations K935 - 939 GWR and with those letters I had visions of Isambard Kingdom Brunel revolving very rapidly in his grave. I do believe he is known by the staff of the Kingdom of St Peter as Whirring Brunel. The first of the new fleet arrived late one Wednesday evening and I lost my rather pleasant six speed Volvo for good and was given the dubious honour of being the first to venture forth with one of the new intake. For a new vehicle the engine noise was appalling and the sound insulation needed to be much better.

The cab heating was the usual Mercedes system and worked fine but the saloon heating was of the modern radiant type with central heating pipes along the sides at floor level. As long as these systems are in constant use they continue to work well but come the summer months the taps are turned off to avoid frying the occupants. With the return of winter, heat is required and the taps are opened and, usually, air locks manifest themselves and a domestic radiator bleed key is needed to eradicate the air from the system. It can take weeks to effect a satisfactory performance from this type of heater and in the meantime the cab heater is attempting to heat the whole vehicle and failing miserably in the attempt.

I think that the final drive ratio of these vehicles must have been the highest that Mercedes had to offer and that was a double edged sword. It meant that starting off could only be done in first gear, if second was used it meant a lot of clutch slipping. Unfortunately the peculiar gearbox ratios left rather a large gap between 3rd and 4th which was a confounded nuisance when you had used up all the available revs going up hill, for invariably a change up into 4th meant a drop in revs to a point where engine torque was very low and rate of climb then became ponderous in the extreme.

The bonus of this high axle ratio was the top speed when we used the airport spur and the M4 motorway. In the distance available I managed to wind one up to 88 mph indicated before I had to slow down to leave the motorway. It was still accelerating up to that point and I am still a bit disappointed that I never did get to find out what

they could really do.

An unusual feature of these luxury bread vans was the compressed air braking system which incorporated a spring operated parking brake. To assist this system an exhaust brake was also fitted and this was interlinked with the foot brake in a most peculiar manner which was prone to electrical faults and caused the exhaust brake to come on when you wanted to accelerate. After a few bouts of this the exhaust brake override switch was left permanently switched on by each and every driver.

As with most of these small firms the drivers were responsible for refuelling and checking of oil and water. Normally refuelling was not a time consuming operation but, for some unknown reason, Optare had decided to change the fuel tank for one of their own design and larger capacity, the filler neck of which was about half the diameter of the standard filler. As anybody knows, oil fuel froths up very quickly when filling and the pressure sensitive switch on the filler nozzle would cut off the flow very early and this resulted in under fuelling which meant that, with the intensive use they were put to, vehicles were running out of fuel. It was not unusual for the automatic filler nozzle to cut off at about 55 litres but if the driver bothered to check he would find that he could still squeeze in a further 30 or so litres before the tank was full.

All this was as nothing compared with the task of oil checking. With the change of front end from the van specification to Optare's own design the oil dipstick became well nigh totally inaccessible. It was situated under the top decking of the dash panel behind a small circular cut-out through which it was necessary to reach to find the dipstick. This was done entirely by feel, as because of the angle of the windscreen, you could not get your head over the hole at the right angle to see anything and even if you could, you could not reach the dipstick anyway. The dipstick itself was about 5 feet long and serpentine in the extreme and, of course, had to be withdrawn and inserted six times each time it was checked and all this entirely by feel. Eventually, and only after some oil levels were found to be so low

as to be courting disaster, a modification was put in hand which involved an oil header tank under the bonnet which could be readily checked and replenished as required.

The rear lights on these Optare bodies will look familiar to many people but unless you stand on your head the answer to the puzzle is not immediately obvious. They are of course pure Ford Granada. This clever piece of chicanery, which was obviously meant to save money, soon backfired on us. The Ford lights are designed to operate on 12 volts and the Mercedes Optare electrical system is 24 volts. Now, no bus or coach body is totally watertight and these were no exception and with the ingress of water into the boot and down the back panels a certain amount of moisture found its way into the light clusters where it caused short circuits and severe arcing which would burn out at least part of the unit and failures of this nature were commonplace.

Personally I will not drive a vehicle knowing that it has defective lights as I both value my licence and am concerned about road safety. Unfortunately, there is a minority of drivers who have a different attitude and just do not seem to care and this led to cancelled trips when those who would, and those who would not, came to the notice of the management who insisted that trips ran regardless. In the end, after the persistent refusal of the majority to operate with defective lights, the supervisors were given a stock of spare lights which could be changed in about five minutes and thus supply caught up with demand while the Ford stockists rubbed their hands with glee as these units are expensive with a capital E.

The spring parking brakes were our next source of trouble. The spring is attached to the chassis frame and from the end of that a lanyard of multi-stranded wire cable attaches it to the parking brake lever on the brake backplate. These lanyards have a tendency to break, but as there are two, a parking brake is or should be always available on at least one rear wheel. This, of course, presupposes that the vehicles are checked frequently enough for the fault to be noticed but after a couple of incidences of no parking brake at all, drivers became very wary and resorted to unorthodox methods of checking

for themselves. Because of the nature of the work that these vehicles are involved in, front brake wear is very heavy and pads have to be replaced at frequent intervals. For new vehicles to an established design they certainly gave plenty of trouble and I despair that things will ever get any better, and they haven't. □

Alan concludes his mini bus saga in the next issue...

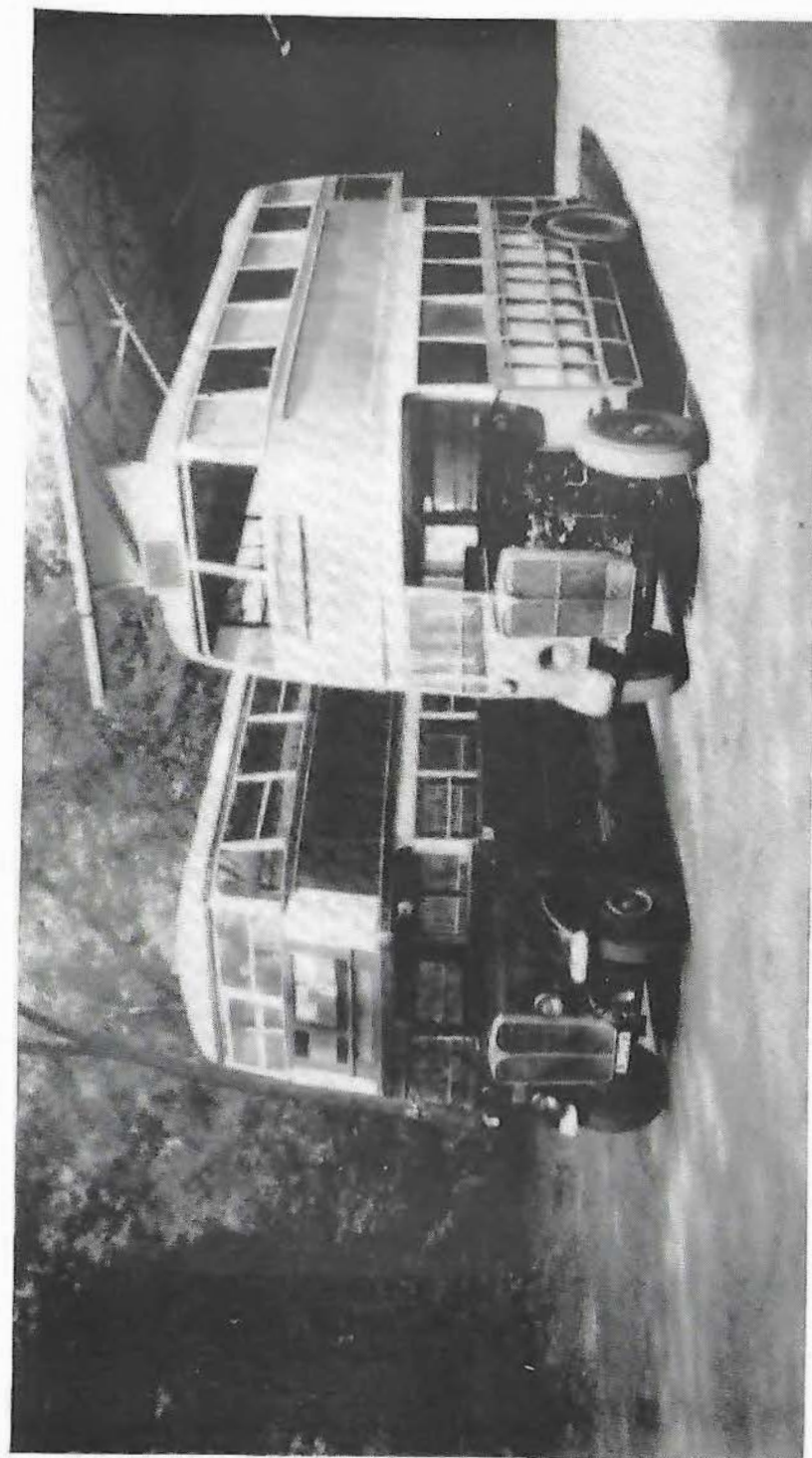
...AND SO TO NOTTINGHAM!

Alan Bond

Those who are aficionados of the AEC marque will know that the AEC Society holds its annual rally in Wollaton Park, Nottingham each May. The event covers two days and the Saturday is occupied by a road run from Nottingham to the National Tramway Museum at Crich.

At the instigation of Ian Barrett plans were laid to get T31 to this year's event and those in the know will have noticed that T31 was almost an also ran for the clutch and gearbox were out on the previous weekend and it was only due to the skill and determination of Andy Baxter that we were able to attend as scheduled. The new clutch paid dividends, for the gear change is now much improved and made the journey that much easier than it would have been while reducing the risk of outright failure.

So, a small party of six, consisting of Ian and Paula, Peter Plummer, Ian Chidlaw and Sandra and your correspondent (no, not co-respondent), set forth on Saturday 25th May with pockets stuffed with wads of money, the better to satisfy the thirst of the magnificent beast. A leisurely start was made and Sandra and myself were picked up en-route at the crack of noon when it fell to my lot to take a stint of driving. Our route took us through the Chilterns and on into North Bucks, where a stop was made at the Little Chef hard by the old



Daylight Again: STL2377 enjoys its first sunshine in many years, having been driven out under its own power thanks to the attentions of our mechanical team, permitting it to be re-united once again with older sister STL441. (Photo: Martin Gibbons)

VEHICLE NEWS -- AUGUST 1996

Peter Plummer

STL2377 A new exhaust system has been fitted and the long awaited seals for the vacuum braking system installed by Simon Kaye, Andy Baxter, Bill Cottrell and 'Ginger' John Messer. The overhauled radiator has been re-assembled and polished by Philip Millard, Dave Bray, Bill Cottrell and 'Ginger' John. On 10th August the engine was started for the first time and after Simon and Andy cured a leaking water pump the bus moved out of the workshop under its own power for the first time in more than a quarter of a century.

Meanwhile, member Roger Stagg, a structural engineer, has produced a set of extremely well detailed drawings following much research which has highlighted the defects in the bodywork. A professional coachmaker has inspected the vehicle and submitted an estimate for reframing the lower deck. Your committee are investigating ways of raising the necessary funds.

T504 This vehicle has now moved into the workshop with a view to investigating the smoky engine and poor performance. Within days Simon Kaye and Andy Baxter had removed the engine and commenced cylinder head overhauls. We had all expected the very worst but the Chiswick engine plate shows that the unit was overhauled on 11/3/53, only a year prior to the vehicles withdrawal. Andy and Simon were quick to show that the cylinder bores show no signs of wear. However, this comparatively rare 8.8 litre engine will be thoroughly checked out by our engineers and the opportunity taken to clean out and paint the engine bay.

RT2775 Martin Gibbons and 'Ginger' John removed the body mountings found to be broken or corroded during

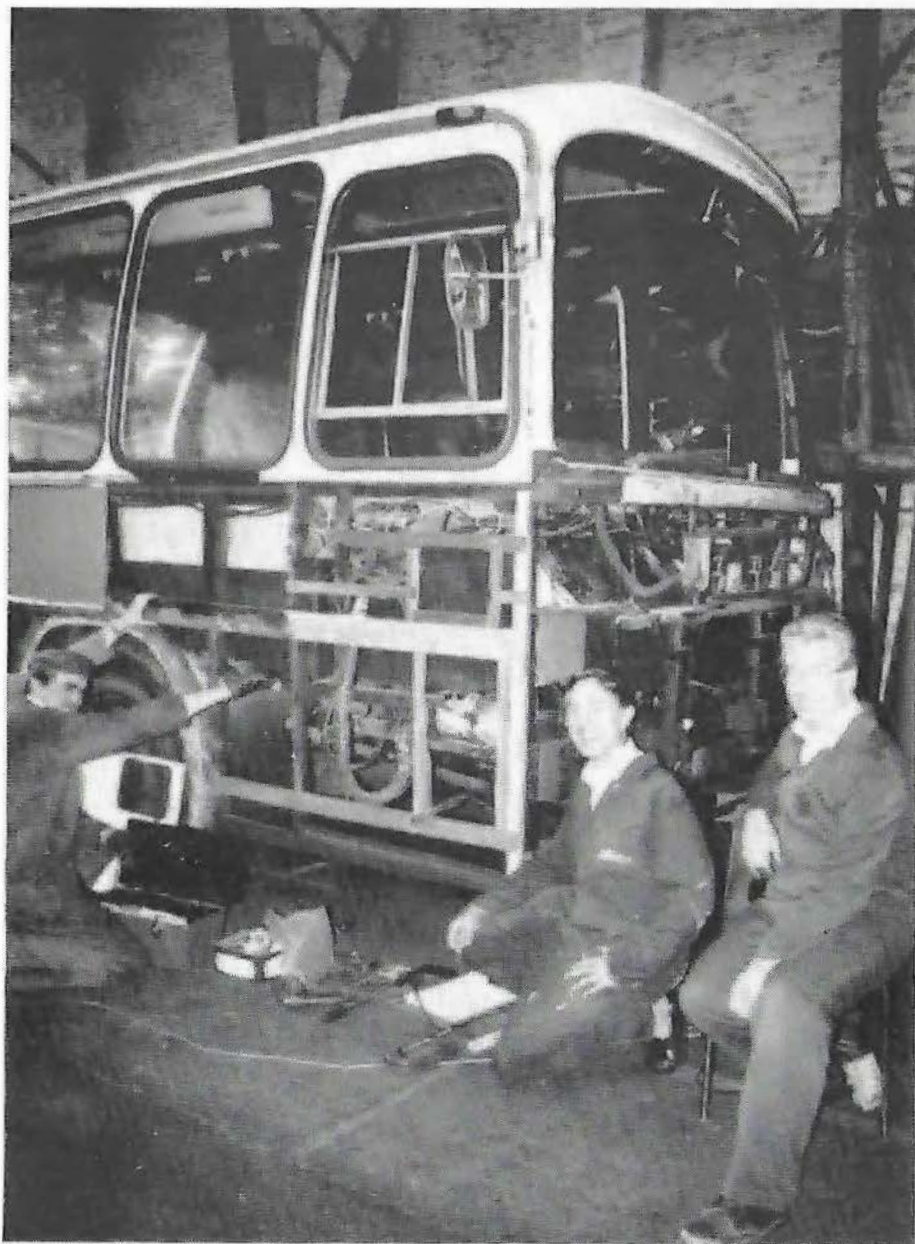
the body lift. Our clear-up weekends have revealed many parts needed to complete the rear of the vehicle, some of which have subsequently been fitted by Brian Down and myself. Paint stripping continued steadily by Brian Dabbs, Dave Bray, Alan Davidson and Raja Kalsy with new panel preparation by Brian and Alan Hine.

P3

This vehicle has received most of our coachmaking effort this quarter. Brian Down and myself have made and fitted timberwork around the drivers cab area. Timberwork to the offside is now 90% complete. Cleaning and preparation work has been performed by Phil Cruise, John Davies, Philip Millard, Roland Graves, John Broadhurst, John Messer, Malcolm Lewis, Richard Hussey, David Mulvey, Paul Morris and Andy Baxter.



Better than new: The coachbuilding team, led by our Chairman, really are doing a magnificent job with T448, as can be seen by the quality fit of these new panels and beading. It is certainly looking healthier than T404! (Photo: Mike Nash)



In P-ieces: The front end of P3 is receiving considerable attention as can be seen in this shot. A surprising amount of wood is used in the construction of this Plaxton body and most of it has had to be replaced. (Photo: Mike Nash)

Pullman Café at Great Brickhill on the A5.

The weather was kind on this day and our journey processed steadily and remarkably rapidly along the A5 as far as Lutterworth whence we diverted on to the A426 to travel via Leicester to Thrussington and our overnight accommodation.

We were met at the motel by Bill Cottrell who had travelled up by car to film the road run and after ablutions we headed for the nearest hostelry which turned out to be the Blue Lion in Thrussington village. Meals were eaten, ale was imbibed, and a jovial evening was had by all. I can heartily recommend this institution to those who are in need of refreshment when in the area. It is also an inn and bed-and-breakfast is available. With hindsight we were of the opinion that we should have stayed here rather than at the motor lodge as we would have got far better value for our twenty quid per person per night.

Sunday morning dawned dull and overcast with a little rain, and an early start was made for Nottingham. We knew it was early as Sandra's eyes did not open until we reached Wollaton Park. Our arrival at the venue was marked by massed photographers and a chorus of oohs and aahs for petrol Regals are few and far between and thinly spread these days, but even so we were parked next to Morley's 1931 example, which, at one time used to be a Cobham resident.

This was my first attendance at the AEC Society event and I was most impressed with the turn out and the organisation. We were looked after well and the event is most definitely a family affair with a flea market, car boot sale and fun fair as well as Wollaton Hall to entertain and edify the wives and children. Harry Pick, the Society chairman stopped by for a chat and regaled us with tales of his days as the manager of the AEC depot in Nottingham in pre-war days, one of whose customers was Enterprise and Silver Dawn of Scunthorpe, a long time AEC user until their take-over by Lincolnshire Road Car in 1950. If nostalgia had been a water hole, on this day we would have been very muddy indeed as we wallowed to our hearts' content.

But what of the other vehicles, I hear you cry! Almost every

conceivable model of AEC lorry and bus was represented, some in greater numbers than others, the Rs of the passenger vehicles vying for attention with the Ms of the goods models. The military AEC was well represented by examples originating from all three services but one that particularly caught my eye was a Matador 6x6 fuel bowser and with a little imagination it was easy to picture this standing beneath the wing of a Lancaster pumping in the 90 octane. A comment on all the Matadors and Mandators alone would cover many pages but one entry in the programme tells of a Mandator with 690 engine that dropped the No. 5 crankshaft bearing cap in the sump and ran for 12 months and 800 miles without trouble before being discovered. The only problem encountered was very low oil pressure and this led to the sump being removed to investigate the cause. L Gardner & Sons, eat your heart out.

The civilian Monarchs, Mercurys, Mammoths, Mammoth Majors and Mustangs were also well represented and the majority of these were so well turned out that it would be difficult to estimate their age from their condition. The later type cabs look so very modern yet they are few and far between on the roads of everyday Britain and their passing has been without comment. Special mention must be made of the magnificently restored AEC Monarch with 4 cylinder petrol engine. New to Bracebridge Mental Hospital, this is one of few survivors of the type which is more familiar in the guise of LT tower wagons. This example, though, has the crash gearbox as opposed to the pre-selector favoured by LT.

Older members will remember British Road Services, which fleet was dominated by AECs for years. One of their vehicles of the Mammoth Major 8 type, built in 1950, has been restored to original condition by Len James of Dagenham and this superb vehicle caught many an eye and was the subject of much favourable comment on account of its, for want of a better phrase, "nostalgia quotient" or otherwise its ability to invoke day dreams. If lorries were still like this I would enjoy being a lorry driver. This vehicle is doubly interesting, in that it has an 11.3 litre engine of, I believe, the A210 type and this

would be one of the earlier installations of an engine of this size. I may well have the designation wrong here so perhaps the real AEC experts could put me right.

The AEC Mustang must have been one of the rarest goods vehicles produced by AEC and I cannot remember ever seeing one until this day. For the uninitiated the Mustang is a six wheel chassis with four wheel steering, effectively a back to front Mammoth. This now probably unique vehicle is one of a trio of AEC lorries entered by Richard Cresswell of Stone in Staffordshire, all immaculately turned out and all truly representative of the AEC goods vehicle in its heyday.

At this point I hear you asking "what about the buses then, Al?" and I heed your exhortation. I have left the juiciest bits until last in order to increase the tension; everything prior to this must be considered foreplay. Buses a plenty there were not, but the delights of high quality were provided by the two Regal coaches of Stephan Tortes. The Burlingham bodied example, ex Florence Coaches of Morecambe is an 0962 with 9.6 and preselector while the Barnaby bodied ex-York Pullman example is a 7.7 with crash gearbox. These two nicely evoke the atmosphere of the fifties coach outing and are a delight to behold. Tony Peart's perennially lovely Doncaster Regent III is always nicely turned out and is all the more remarkable for its narrow escape from death by neglect.

Away from the main display area, Ian and myself were attracted to a Willowbrook bodied Reliance in the livery of the Welsh operator Brewer's of Caeran near Maesteg. The YC registration was clearly of Somerset origin and it started life with Hutchings and Cornelius of South Petherton, later passing to Safeway of the same town. The, current owner maintains it in its present livery in return for sponsorship from Brewers and the arrangement works very well for the two parties involved. Brewers ran AECs for many years and this vehicle, serves as a memorial to a make that is now sadly missing from the many corners it used to inhabit.

The Nottingham Heritage Centre sent along its 9.6 preselector Regent III which was running on the bus service. The standard

Nottingham bus of the 50s and 60s is as distinctive as those of London, Manchester and Liverpool and this example is as typical as you can get. A couple of Barton Regent Vs with the wrap around front could be seen as could a very nice East Kent example of the same model with Park Royal body, the latter being owned by the Nottingham Heritage Centre.

The Sheffield Bus Museum provided its 9.6 litre Regent III, one of a batch delivered with crash gearboxes and later converted. This example has been in preservation since 1972 and I have seen it as far afield as Weymouth. Reliances of various lengths were about in some strength, sporting a variety of Plaxton and Harrington bodies among others and despite the comparatively small number of buses on show the quality of the entrants was high.

Highlight of a very dull, damp and cool afternoon was the parade of vehicles for the benefit of photographers. When it came to the turn of the two petrol Regals, T31 and JF2378, not an inch of space was left spare as everybody jostled for a unique photo opportunity which will probably not be repeated in the foreseeable future. Orgasm now!

The run home was as uneventful as the outward journey but with the deterioration in the weather warmer clothing was the order of the day. Actual journey time each way was between 5½ and 6 hours but our gentle pace paid dividends on the fuel front as we averaged slightly more than 6¾ miles to the gallon. Of course, the return run was probably a little more economical because our wallets were lighter. As for reliability, we couldn't have asked for a better performance, modern manufacturers please note! □

STL441 IN THEATRE APPEARANCE

Ian Chidlaw

We were asked by the Thorndike Theatre Leatherhead if we could provide a 1930s bus to stand outside the theatre on the morning of Saturday 21st September because the theatre were having an Open Day with backstage tours, live music, craft stalls and refreshments and Jason Donovan (I understand he is well known to the ladies) would be making a guest appearance

So there was STL441 outside the theatre at 10.30am in the special coned-off area awaiting the arrival of the star actor of the play at the theatre "Night Must Fall", a classic thriller by Emlyn Williams which takes place in the 30s and our bus with No. 12 destination blinds which passes through West End theatreland.

As with all good mysteries there is always a surprise and that was the actor did not turn up! Nevertheless whilst it wasn't good for the Thorndike it was good publicity for us to have one of the Trust Vehicles parked right in the centre of the town on a beautiful autumn morning and the place buzzing with people. There were a lot of enquiries about the bus, the museum and our next event on the 2nd October so we hope it will be another beautiful day and a lot of our members with their guests and friends as well as the citizens of Leatherhead supporting the Day and the RF Operating Event with its special run to Shepperton. □

EVERYBODY HAS A BAD DAY SOMETIMES OR, HOW NOT TO TAKE YOUR PSV TEST

Simon Kaye

Back in the late 1970s, when the sun shone brightly and those of us employed by LT had a job for life, I decided that the time had come to take my PSV Test, At the time I earned my living as a Running Shift foreman at Leyton Garage and had been through the driving school at Chiswick. I also had a preserved bus and most of the Insurance companies expected a PSV licence to be held as a matter of course, hence my decision.

Working on my twin theories of “if you’re going to do it, do it properly” and “only do it once”, I approached a commercial driving school and arranged a five day course of tuition followed by a test, all to fit in with my two weeks leave from work. In due course I presented myself at their depot where I was acquainted with my instructor, co-trainee and the vehicle that was to be home for the next week, a Leyland PD2 that bore signs of a hard life. The week was enjoyable with one exception – the owner of the school. Apart from believing that he was God, he also believed that the longer his trainees spent in the classroom the more he could save on diesel fuel. As the instructor wanted to spend as much time on the road as possible, conflict was almost a daily occurrence. On one memorable occasion we were all sitting inside the bus when Mr God boarded and openly accused the instructor of failing to adequately brief his trainees on the technical points of the vehicle (which may have taken about ten minutes and saved one pint of DERV). Before anybody could speak he turned to me and demanded to know what make of bus it was, what type of engine it had, how many wheel nuts there were on each wheel. Being a clever sod I replied “Leyland Titan PD2, 0.600 diesel and ten, in that order”. God turned bright red, muttered something and stormed off to his office. The Instructor looked at me and said “I’m glad he asked you!” The other trainee just looked puzzled. I later found out that such incidents were a daily occurrence. However this was not to be the last



Definitely Down Under: This was all that remained of former 9T9 T404 when member Martin McClure visited Auckland, New Zealand in July 1989. Can anyone shed more light on how it ended up here?
(Photo: Martin McClure)



Not Down but still Under: Also seen on the same trip, and just down the road from the T were RLH45 and RM1670, both of which belong to the Auckland Museum of Transport and Technology. (Photo: Martin McClure)

time our paths crossed.

That incident aside, the time soon passed and we were both pronounced sufficiently proficient in the gentle art of the “snatch change”. My test was booked for the following week and I went off to study that little book with the road signs in, and to stand in front of the bathroom mirror reciting “The first responsibility of a PSV Driver is...”

I was informed that my test was to take place at Watford at 11.00 hrs and I duly arrived at the training school at about 09.00 where I met up with Mr God again and received the first surprise of the day. “Oh, hello” he said, smiling. “I’ve cancelled your test because I don’t have an instructor available to go with you.” “Can’t I just take the bus myself?”. I argued, desperately looking for a way around the problem. “No, you’re only insured if you are accompanied by a PSV licence holder” he countered. I remembered something about counting to ten before you hit somebody. It only just worked! “You can’t do that” said I, getting just a little flustered. “I’ve done it” he said, and promptly left the office. Looking around for somebody to vent my spleen on, I was approached by his secretary who had that “Oh, no – here we go again” look on her face. Realising my anger she said that she would see what she could do. First job was to see if he really had cancelled the test. A phone call to the Ministry confirmed that the test was still on and that the examiner was expecting me. The next bit wasn’t quite so easy, but again she came up trumps. She phoned a chap who had passed his test with them the previous week and he agreed to come with me; the only problem was that he had an appointment that afternoon and couldn’t wait around. It was decided that he would drive the bus to the test centre and I would follow in his car. On arrival he would go home in his car and leave me to take the test.

At this point God returned to the office and was appraised of the arrangements. He wasn’t happy, but seemed unable to think of an appropriate objection so reluctantly agreed. As I left the office he called out “What will you do with the bus after you’ve... er... passed your test?” I decided against saying that he would find it on the hard

shoulder of the M1 motorway (mainly because my car was parked in his yard) and settled for "I'll bring the bus back here". After what seemed like an eternity my saviour arrived and we set off for Watford. I was not exactly as cool and calm as I needed to be.

I should point out at this stage of the story that I knew Watford about as well as I know the planet Pluto. The appointment card said that I should report to Station Road, Watford. Now every road has two ends and both I and the bus were left at the wrong one. I left the bus and ran along to the other end of the road where I found about two hundred civil servant types, all with suits and briefcases, standing around. A train departed and then there was only one, whom I approached with some apprehension and introduced myself. He looked at me, looked at his watch, then at me again. "I've got better things to do than wait around for people who can't be bothered to turn up on time" he said sarcastically. "And where is your bus?" "At the other end of the road, Sir, you see..."

"It's no bloody good there, is it. Go and get it!" I ran even faster back to the bus and eventually all three constituent parts of the test were together. I felt as though I had but minutes to live.

As Station Road itself is a quiet road the examiner informed me that we would start with an emergency stop exercise. "When I hit the bulkhead with my board I want you to stop as if a child had run into the road. Start off when you are ready".

I drove off and presently I heard a slight tap from behind my shoulder. The bus stopped quickly. The examiner didn't stop quite so quickly and I heard a sickening thud from behind. Turning round I was just in time to see him picking himself up off the floor. Dusting himself down he glared at me and told me to carry on.

No matter what you are doing there comes a time when you decide to give it up as a bad job and try again tomorrow. I felt that time had just arrived. I was late, I was annoyed, I had annoyed the examiner and now I had almost killed him. This test could only have one outcome and I knew it. From then on I just drove around obeying his commands and not really caring about anything. For the first time

that day I was relaxed. Eventually we arrived back at the starting point and, after I had answered endless questions on the highway code he studied his clipboard.

"That is the end of your test Mr Kaye. I'm pleased to tell you that you have passed. Good-bye." He walked off the bus, I know not where. It was a full twenty minutes before I felt able to stand up.

Having recovered from this shock, I spent the next hour driving about to use up some of the fuel that God had supplied and then headed back to the depot. On arrival I was greeted by a hoard of other trainees and instructors who had by now heard what had taken place earlier.

After congratulations were received Mr God himself approached and asked how I had done. I ignored him and walked to my car.

The day had been a disaster but I had won through. Nothing else could possibly go wrong now. I smiled to myself as I approached my car, feeling in my pocket for my car keys. The car was where I had left it, securely locked. Through the window I could clearly see my keys, still hanging from the ignition switch. □

DIARY DATES

OCTOBER

Sunday 13

Severn Valley Road and Rail Event, Kidderminster

Buses on Parade at Castle Point, Canvey Island

COBHAM DISPLAY DAY/ "BUSES 500". See this issue.

Sunday 20

Reading Buses 4th Open Day, Forbury Works or

Sunday 27

Nocturnal Heart of the Pennines Rally, Halifax

(01422 343557)

NOVEMBER

Sunday 3

BaMMoT pre-hibernation day, Wythall, nr. Birmingham

DECEMBER

Saturday 21

Christmas Lights Tour, St. Pancras, London. 5.30pm

THEY ALSO SERVED

Ken Duke

Much has been written on the subject of London's buses, but very little has appeared in print about those vehicles performing vital but largely unsung work to keep the immense empire of London Transport functioning. I refer of course to the service vehicle fleet, providing a vital support role for LT's buses and trains as well as its infrastructure, personnel and administration.

This article tries in a small way to redress the balance, focusing on the service fleet in the 'forties and 'fifties when there was a varied and fascinating assortment of vehicles. Many readers will I am sure have more detailed knowledge than myself, but I hope they, and others less informed, will find the following of some interest.

When formed in 1933 London Transport inherited a motley assortment of support vehicles, but quickly built up a large service fleet to meet the demands of a rapidly growing organisation, many specialised vehicles being obtained from external sources.

The visits of the Luftwaffe naturally brought a massive increase in the need for ambulances, emergency repair vehicles and lorries for ferrying much needed spares. As well as vehicles hastily drafted in from outside the organisation, large numbers of Ts and STLs were quickly converted. Such conversions continued after the war, but by now the emphasis had switched to commercial lorries and vans to replace ageing and war-worn vehicles, especially use of the classic "O" series Bedford chassis from suppliers such as Spurlings. LT enthusiasts of the time would have been familiar with the registration plate letters which were the same as those reserved for new buses.

In the brief but enjoyable bus-spotting phase of my mis-spent youth between 1958-60, service vehicles were prized cops. Those with trade plates could be a problem with no registration number to cross-check in the Ian Allan ABC. The fleet numbers were often small and difficult to read on a moving vehicle, and as a result, we spotters

developed long-range vision that would have made a peregrine falcon green with envy.

As far as colour schemes were concerned, vehicles involved with trams, trolleybuses or railways were red, or red and cream liveried and the remainder (with a few exceptions) painted green. Most vehicles I remember were kept in a tidy condition with sound paintwork and any damage repaired promptly. Those of pre-war origin had particular appeal with their vintage appearance, especially with many still chugging around even in the mid 'sixties.

Although the network of garages and depots in both central and country areas was home to a large proportion of this fleet, many lorries used for carrying stores, towing etc, were based at Chiswick or Aldenham under the control of the Central Distribution Service, whilst others engaged in civil engineering were operated by the Works and Building Department from a cramped yard by Parsons Green station. Vehicles not directly operating from bus garages were allocated one locally for routine servicing, Hammersmith (Riverside) having a notable share of this work with responsibility for a large number from the surrounding area.

Having given some background information let's now have a look at the many different types of vehicles that helped to keep London Transport functioning.

Tower Wagons were a numerous type within the service fleet, the tram and trolleybus networks needing a considerable number of them to service the overhead. They were distinctive vehicles with their elevated rear platforms, workbenches (complete with a vice) at the back, and large boards on the cab roof reading "Danger Overhead Repairs". In the early 'thirties L or NS bus chassis were used, but with the development of the trolleybus network purpose-built AEC lorries appeared as the mainstay of this group with Mercury, Monarch and Matador variations (suffixed Q, N and P respectively under the 1939 stock re-numbering). They were supplemented by twelve STLs converted in 1948/9 to rather attractive long wheelbase tower wagons

and numbered 722J to 733J.

All tower wagons were allocated to tram or trolleybus depots within the management of the Electrical Equipment Engineer's Department which was split into North and South areas for administrative purposes. Although the demise of the trolleybus system meant a one-way journey to the great "garage in the sky" for the tower wagons, 89Q has fortunately been preserved and superbly restored, and can currently be seen in the LT Museum at Covent Garden.

Pole Carriers had a supporting role to play, nine such vehicles being put into service during 1936/7. They were green-painted open lorries on Mercury or Monarch chassis, fitted with light cranes for loading and transporting the long poles carrying overhead wiring. In 1958 with the trolleybus replacement programme in sight, several new tower wagons and pole carriers were purchased with these extra duties in mind, both types using the latest Mercury chassis.

The other vehicles allied with this group were two strange hybrids known as Wire Lubricators – T-chassis fitted with double-deck open top bodies and sprouting pairs of arms, trolleybus fashion, for greasing the overhead wires. STL12 became a third such vehicle in 1948. They became obsolete when developments in current collection meant lubrication was no longer required.

Vehicles which were particular favourites of mine were Breakdown Tenders. These could be designated Master Breakdown Tender (including some big 4-wheel drive AEC Matadors with 5-ton crane jibs for lift and tow jobs), Railway Breakdown Tender for assisting at Underground emergencies, or Auxiliary Breakdown Tender for general duties. Again, they were mostly STL or T conversions sporting new box-van bodies with half-cabs – such as Ian Barrett's preserved 738J – or full-width fronts. They carried chains, lifting gear and other emergency equipment and were sited at garages, depots and strategic locations on the Underground. I can recall for example 443W (ex-T206), a Railway Breakdown Tender

which for a long time was a well-known sight on standby for emergency duties outside Baker Street Station before eventual replacement by a more up to date vehicle.

Mention must also be made of previous conversions of four old LS type buses to breakdown tenders (219U–222U), resulting in great 6-wheeled monsters that looked as if they ate cars for breakfast; these had all gone by the early fifties.

Light breakdown trucks were sited at trolleybus depots for recovering failed vehicles or dealing with minor problems such as punctures. 189C, allocated first to Fulwell then Stamford Hill was an example, a Leyland Cub of mid-thirties vintage. Another venerable old-timer was 124A, an Albion, with its home at Hammersmith. Both makes of trolleybus tender had slightly out-dated yet pleasing lines and were rugged enough to give nearly thirty years service.

Moving on to other types, a large proportion of the service fleet consisted of general purpose lorries for transporting spares, towing and suchlike. As mentioned earlier, many were ex-Ts or STLs, rebuilt with either high, low or drop-side bodywork and sometimes fitted with a tarpaulin. It has to be said that the Ts used in the conversions were a case of swan turned ugly duckling, the tub-like lorry bodies with underside headlights contrasting sharply with the elegant coachwork which previously graced the AEC Regal chassis. A better looking result came from three ST bus conversions in 1948, the lorries retaining the front part of their bodywork which was then formed into a graceful curve down to the waistline.

From 1948–50 a large number of Bedford and Austin ("Birmingham Bedford") 5 tonners were acquired new to further extend the number of lorries in service. Some had van bodies fitted, necessary for deliveries such as catering stores.

One of the larger lorries was an 8 ton Bedford tractor unit and low-loader trailer, 953B, for moving transformers and other hefty loads. However, for the really heavy stuff a powerful Leyland Beaver 25-ton articulated unit (NLP 628) was purchased in 1953 and numbered 1010L, replacing an older Matador-based one.

At the other end of the scale, smaller vehicles consisted of Bedford box-vans and trucks in various shapes and sizes and half-ton Fordson vans, some with high-top bodies. These in turn were succeeded by swarms of Austin LD series and diminutive Thames 5cwt vans which appeared in the latter part of the fifties.

Cobham visitors in particular will be familiar with two specific classes of vehicle, Mobile Canteen Units and Tree Loppers. The canteen trailers of the Bedford/ Scammell articulated units were situated at busy bus termini and were rather attractive vehicles – did their food match up or was it a “greasy spoon” job? Their predecessors in this role (and butter!) were originally converted NS buses followed by STs, including well-known ST922, on the top decks of which “high” tea could no doubt be enjoyed (Ts would have been more appropriate vehicles if only to prolong the ghastly puns).

Five tree loppers (969J – 973J) were all converted in the early fifties from draughty front entrance STLs, and replaced older versions again based on NS or ST buses. My opinion of the value of their work is high, having had an adjacent window shattered by a branch whilst on a childhood coach journey. Thames Traders with specially built bodies eventually took over this role.

Tankers were other distinctive vehicles. 742J (ex-STL332) based at Rye Lane PW depot was an example, a 1000 gallon tanker used for flushing out tramline conduits, whilst another tanker 963J, rebuilt from STL2649, provided bus garages with distilled water. Bedford 826B also delivered distilled water and carried the tank off an old Albion previously used for this purpose. Two 1200 gallon fuel tankers were purchased from Shell-Mex in 1954, both Maudslay Moguls one of which has since been preserved.

There were further specialised types of vehicles, for instance four gully emptiers working out of Parsons Green. These were built on Matador chassis, two of them having curiously styled upperworks giving them more than a passing resemblance to World War One armoured cars. They were eventually displaced by new Mercurys. Tippers came in various sizes ranging from lightweight Fordsons to

951L, a big Leyland Hippo 6-wheeler.

Road Rollers, Tractors and Mobile Cranes were all included as part of the service fleet, two of the latter (352R/353R) being real old-stagers from 1926. Both were Ransoms and Rapier models and could lift up to 2 tons.

Here’s a poser: what was the only five-wheeled vehicle in the LT fleet? Answer – 989B (NLP629), a Bedford CAV Route Survey Van fitted with a central pivoted wheel which could be raised and lowered from inside for measuring route mileages. Operating out of Turnham Green, this vehicle was unusual in having all-black livery. It was fitted with two-way radio and sometimes attended major events as a control vehicle.

Six-wheeled Shelter Carrier 921 LT (ex-LT951, the only such LT conversion) conveyed bus shelters two at a time like some giant snail, carried on and off by workmen via a rear ramp. Earlier this vehicle had a different role, transporting bus frames. 1035CD was designated a Civil Defence Mobile Gas Unit – it wasn’t an emergency House of Commons on wheels despite the name! This was converted from bus Q75 and lived at Tottenham garage (thus answering the query in my article appearing in issue 11 of this magazine). Does anyone know what it actually did in this guise?

1037J, a Mobile Instruction Unit was a marriage of RT1420’s chassis, whose body had lost an argument with a low bridge, and the body of the prototype RT1; for a long time it was garaged at West Ham. LT even had its own fire engines, police van in navy blue, and staff ambulance (nervous breakdown tender?) – Fordson 652F of 1947, later supplemented by two Bedford CAVs.

Finally, a mention of poor old RT106 (1036TV), purchased some years ago by the Trust for spares. This bus ended its days in undignified fashion, used by breakdown crews to practice lifting overturned buses. Painted grey and designated Turnover Vehicle, it was garaged first at Cricklewood then Stonebridge, and looked a sorry sight towards the end of its life (a photo appears in Kevin McCormack’s “Heyday of London’s Buses”).

There were other types of vehicle that have not been included, but space limitation prevents their being given a mention.

With hindsight, one has to ask whether all were really essential to London Transport and cost-effective in use. However the culture of large public services at that time did not easily lend itself to such questions.

All the vehicles mentioned have long since vanished, except for a few in the capable hands of preservationists. Happily though the numbering system is still to be seen, although the range of vehicles is more limited; it's hard to imagine redundant Metrobuses or Titans being transformed into breakdown tenders and tree loppers.

If any readers have an interest in this subject I shall be glad to hear from them. Any correspondence can be sent to my address at Mapleton Road, Enfield EN1 3PE.

LETTERS

From Alan Bond

As you know I have a bee in my bonnet about raising funds for Cobham, a matter which I raised at the AGM. It is an unpalatable fact that with any voluntary organisation most of the work is undertaken by a very small hard core of volunteers. When an organisation is small these very volunteers make up the largest part of the membership but as that organisation grows the percentage of regular working volunteers grows ever smaller. This is not unique to Cobham or to transport groups generally but to all voluntary-organisations. The National Trust, for example, has over two million members but only a very small proportion of these people actually do any kind of work for the Trust on a regular basis. There are as many reasons for this as there are members, but other commitments such as work and family are often the reason for the lack of time to give to other things. Some peo-



Pulling for Preservation: RF332, our tow-bus has recently been treated to a tidy-up in readiness for use as the control vehicle for our "Buses 500" Shepperton RF Operating Day, which should prove as popular as last years Kingston event. (Photo: Mike Nash)



Bourne again: These former "Green-Line" Leyland Tigers are amongst a batch still in service at Delaine's. The former TDs 8, 4 and 7 were looking immaculate at the company's running day but they are soon to be replaced owing to corrosion problems. (Photo: Mike Nash)

ple live too far away to attend more than two or three times a year while others have their own vehicles to restore and maintain, and yet more will be of the opinion that they have no skills to offer. My own position is such that I cannot give anything like as much time as I would wish to Cobham but I remain fully committed to the aims of the Trust and there will be a large proportion of our membership who have the same problem.

The lack of expertise in the field of coach making is one of the Trusts current problems and the task is falling on the shoulders of a very small number of people who are being asked to do the impossible. The mechanical department, while admittedly better off as regards manpower, cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called over staffed either. There are many other tasks at Cobham which require far more volunteers than we can muster and volunteers cannot be produced from a hat. If we continue to expect this very small band of stalwarts to do all the work our restoration programme is in real danger of losing momentum.

The alternative is to buy the expertise in from outside but it costs money and in order for this to be possible it should not be too much for us to ask that those who wish to make a regular financial contribution to the Trust can do so easily and with the minimum of fuss. It need not be a large amount, even five pounds a month will make a difference. A scheme of this nature would enable those who are committed to our aims, but do not have the time to give to the cause, to feel that they, too, are making a contribution. I know of certain members who are loath to expect too much of their visits to the museum as they feel that they are asking too much for their annual subscription. I don't think I need to tell anyone that the member who feels he or she does not belong does not renew their membership and the Trust will be the poorer for that.

To start the ball rolling I am prepared to make a start by pledging ten pounds a month to the Trust. It does not take a lot of effort, all you have to do is contact Bill Cottrell and ask for bank details and make out a standing order or direct debit mandate. The future of the

Cobham Bus Collection rests in all our hands and we should all be making whatever contribution we can in whatever way we can to ensure its survival in perpetuity. So come on in, the water's lovely

Broad Oak Court, Farnham Royal, Slough SL2 1HY

Editor's comment: Firstly, may I point out that if one quarter of our membership contributed as much to the Trust as does Alan, despite his working shifts, we would make very rapid progress indeed! Alan's generous offer (and hopefully others who take his lead!) is a lesson to the minority who whinged at the AGM about having to pay the admission fee to our annual Open Day.

I feel that in comparison to most clubs and societies, our members get very good value indeed for their £12 subscription. The cost alone of producing and distributing this magazine consumes most of our subscription income, so those who begrudge the Trust £5 clearly do not have their hearts in Cobham's future.

Alan's suggestion to create a fund to permit the "buying in" of labour is an excellent one and to that end I am happy to donate £200 to get it off to a good start. Anyone else feeling generous?

MN

From Roger Stagg

Is there some favouritism towards owners whose upper deck has fallen off, ie RF – Rt upper deck **F**ell off? What about a day for RT owners, you know, proper buses. I seem to recall that despite some of the low bridges in the area, that it was not only half-buses that were around (Kingston RT day!)

Teston Road, Offham, Maidstone, Kent ME19 5NE

Editor's comment: Dare I suggest that RF owners **R**ally **F**requently whilst RT owners **R**arely **T**urn up!! Over to you Roger, to prove otherwise. I'd love to see a Cobham based RT event.

From Peter Starks (38)

At the AGM on 29 June, the question of membership fees and benefits was raised. Both the Severn Valley Railway and Keighley Worth Valley Railway offer a comprehensive list of options. The latter have the same annual subscription as Cobham and offer Life Membership for £240 – 20 times greater, so I am sure a suitable scheme can be produced for us. As to reduced entrance charges for members at Open and Display Days, whilst I have no objection to this, I would suggest to members a cheaper option, volunteer your services for a few hours and get in free! This way everyone gains!

Some figures about the Brooklands display this year which may interest members are:

Display	Planned	Actual
BUSES	100	131 (+31)
ARMY	8	40 (32)
OTHERS	0	10 (+10)
CARS	?	1200 to 2000 (public parking)

These figures do not include the buses in service or displayed at the museum (this figure is around 70).

Staff: Some 17 people handled all of the display parking, many of which worked 9 hour shifts with only a short break, but all enjoyed themselves with much satisfaction in knowing they were contributing to a hugely successful event. Special thanks must go to the North Kent Vehicle Group who provided 15 people and three coaches/buses. I hope that now we have a bigger membership, a number of others will make themselves available to help at next years display site. Please come along and help – it's great fun!

In Magazine 13 (page 13) I see I have been referred to as the "Fat Controller". Many members will know that the "Fat Controller", who lives on the island of Sodor, has objected to the use of this title. He suggests the "Tall Controller" is more appropriate.

Speedwell Way, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 5WA

From David Porter (374)

I had to drop you a line after reading that RP90 has been rescued. I drove it many miles on the 715 Guildford/Hertford "Green-Line" service in 1975/6 when it was only three years old. Allocated to Guildford (GF) were RPs 23,24,25,76,80,88,89 and 90. All were maintained well by the engineers, none being accident victims prior to 1977 when I left LCBS, although RP76 appeared to have a somewhat noisier engine and was often relegated to bus work on the 425 to Dorking and 463 to Walton services enabling the vehicle to sleep the night in its home shed.

The Hertford (HG) allocation consisted of RPs 16,66,78,79,81,82 and 86. Both mechanically and bodily these RPs were dirty and neglected. RP79 was involved in an accident on the A10 near Waltham Cross (I believe) when virtually new, receiving extensive damage to the offside front. RP16 in my view drove the best and was in cleaner condition - almost to GF standard!

HG had for a while in 1976 RF212, still in original condition but somewhat tired. It "expired" on me with air compressor failure at Turnpike Lane bus station late one night. Wood Green garage could not repair it on the spot so I returned as a passenger on RP88 some two hours later!

By co-incidence, the only RP to break down on me was 90! A puncture at Esher station on the nearside front, and then a stalled engine upon selecting gear at the traffic lights by Holland Park underground station - and the battery was flat! These two episodes only a week or two apart.

Nevertheless, I wish you and your fellow owners well with RP90, they were superb vehicles for London work, and reliable. Drivers vision is good all round and I rate the class as one of the best PSVs I have driven.

Send Barns Lane, Send, Woking, Surrey GU23 7BS

ALLOCATION OF CU (CHASSIS UNIT) NUMBERS

Alan Bond

1-50	T719-768
51-80	T769-798
81-100	STL2682-2701
101-260	SRT1-160
261-280	RLH1-20
281-345	STD112-176
346-376	TD1-31
377-476	TD32-131
477-1000	unknown (if allocated)
1001-5673	RT152-4825 (less RT3995)
6001-6500	RTW1-500
7001-8629	RTL1-1631 (less RTL1222/1581)
9001-9015	RFW1-15 (not used)
9016-9040	RF1-25
9041-9715	RF26-700
10001- 10056	RLH21-76
11001-11084	GSI-84

Within the RT series the batch from 1901-2014 was allocated for 114 of the Craven RTs (but not in order) with the exception of the six early overhauls of RT 1402/3/7/29/30/50 which received 1090, 1111, 1025, 1042, 1039 and 1065 respectively. The batch 2401-2560 were allocated from new to the RT chassis purchased as replacements for the SRTs. These were allocated and used in the order 2441 to 2466 for RT4397 to 4422 (8153 to 2154). 2401 to 2440 for RT4423 to 4462 (9153 to 6154), 2467 to 2552 for RT4471 to 4556 (2154 to 9154) and 2553 to 2560 for RT 4463 to 4470 (6/54 to 11/54). These were the only CU numbers allocated to any chassis from new, all others were allotted at first or, sometimes, in the case of the early 3RTs, second overhaul. The reason for this is that the system was not started until after the 3RTs had begun receiving overhauls. Because of this

the vehicles overhauled prior to June 1951 had to wait until their next visit to works before receiving a CU number. The batch allocated to RFW1-15 were not used as the RFW class were never body lifted. The cards show no CU numbers but confirm that body overhauls only were carried out throughout their lives. Obviously, the very low mileages they ran made it unnecessary to do very much mechanical work on them. The SRT number series were only allocated to those vehicles which received an overhaul, a total of 48 in all, from 149-260, the rest remained unused. All other CU numbers in this list were actually attached to the chassis that they were intended for. □

ALDENHAM OVERHAUL RECORDS RESCUED

During the early 1970s a work study into overhaul methods was carried out by LT at Aldenham Works, and following the recent demolition of the buildings the records of this work study have been rescued. They consist of approximately 50 sheets of foolscap paper per body and detail all work carried out at overhaul. The records are mainly RM/RML/RMC plus some RF. If you would like to acquire the record for your vehicle please call me with your body number. If the record for your bus survives the cost will be £6.00 including post and packing.

Christopher Sullivan 0181- 5112 (evenings before 9pm please).

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Featuring free vintage bus service between Shepperton (Station) and Cobham (Redhill Road) operated by former London Transport RF-type buses

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From Cobham	10.25	17.35
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Serving the Display Day at Cobham Bus Museum (open 11.00 - 16.00)



RF type Vehicles on display at Shepperton



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Sunday 20th October 1996

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- A comparison of the bus scene in 1949 and 1996 by Alan Townsin, who was editor of *Buses* from 1959 to 1965
- Fleet News for late-1949
- Eric Hutchinson on 10 years of deregulation from the perspective of one who implemented Tyne & Wear PTE's integrated transport policy before deregulation, managed one of the biggest public sector operators in the early years of deregulation and then led its privatisation

OTHER TOPICS INCLUDE:-

- A profile, by Alan Millar, on **Booline** (formerly the Berks Bucks Bus Co) and **London Buslines**, both of which were recently sold to CentreWest, the main London bus operator in north-west London.
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Catch *Buses* at the newsagents or telephone 01454 620070 to reserve your copy of the 500th issue of Britain's biggest, brightest bus magazine. Alternatively collect your copy at the **BUSES 500 Shepperton RF Operating Day**.

BUSES 500 DAY

Why not pop along to the **BUSES 500 Shepperton RF Operating Day** in association with The London Bus Preservation Trust on **Sunday 20 October 1996?**

At the Cobham Bus Museum, the Trust's base, there will be a variety of trade stands. RF type vehicles will be on display in Ian Allan Ltd's car park at Clock House, Shepperton (adjacent to Shepperton railway station) and the Ian Allan shop, Shepperton will also be open selling books and magazines.

There will be competitions, author signing sessions at both Cobham and Shepperton and a free vintage bus service between Cobham, Weybridge and Shepperton running from 10.25am-18.00pm.

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