

SANDTOFT SCENE

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THE JOURNAL OF SANDTOFT
TRANSPORT CENTRE



Sandtoft Transport Centre Limited

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Contributions and comments (for publication or otherwise) are always welcomed by the Editor.

COVER PICTURE:

Photo call with Tommy the Dulux dog on 27 January 1999: back row (from left: Mark Sanders, Ken Hulks and John Stanley, front row (from left): Mark Ashton, Gordon Peach, Tommy, Adrian Wilson and David Stubbings. All except Ken and Tommy are from *New Deal*.
Photo: R.N. Ashton

The Company has a Vision Statement that summarises the Museum's *raison d'être* in one sentence:

To be nationally acknowledged as the Museum of the Trolleybus and to entertain, educate and give excellent value and service to our visitors.

This Vision Statement portrays exactly why Sandtoft exists and how Sandtoft should be run. All considerations, decisions, directives processes and actions of the Directors and the Members must be focused to meet this end.

EDITORIAL:

Over my years at Sandtoft, I have seen several articles written by members - some of them long-standing members - and published in other publications, which do not cast our museum in a particularly favourable light. There is no need to go into detail as we have all read many such articles in the past.

So I feel it is time for some good old fashioned Yorkshire straight talking. Take a look back into trolleybus preservation history. How many vehicles were rescued from the breakers by small groups intending to start their own museum? How many of those groups failed in their objectives and subsequently settled upon Sandtoft as an alternative? This is I believe where much of the problem lies: Sandtoft should have become an amalgamation of what were the best ideals and ideas of those small groups. Sandtoft will, however, always be second best to them unless current board policy happens to be going their way. Unfortunately you cannot please all of the people all of the time.

I have already warned in previous editorials of the dangers of public bitching and don't intend to repeat myself. "Where has all the fun gone?" they ask. "Where is all the comradeship we used to enjoy?" Whist Sandtoft remains a land of second best and broken dreams to someone, there can be no joy for them. To the writers of vitriolic articles I simply have this to say. "Before you next put pen to paper just try looking in before you look out; try mucking in and pulling together instead of creating division; try presenting Sandtoft to the outside world in a positive light instead of negative, and finally, be prepared to put your ideals to one side to the common good. Then just maybe your joy and sense of comradeship will return."

Dave Shepherd

30TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR TROLLEYDAYS

It is with great pleasure that we announce a number of special events and arrangements for certain of this year's Trolleydays, to mark our 30th Anniversary Year.

30/31 May (Sunday and Monday) Spring Bank Holiday Weekend

With a splash of publicity (the press, enthusiast press and TV have all been invited to attend), it is planned to "launch" the British Trolleybus Society's 60 year old Reading no.113, as a service trolleybus on Sunday 30 May, following its extensive restoration. As we went to press, full details were not finalised as no.113 has to be finally passed as fit for service, but it has been arranged that BTS Vice-president and Custodian Trustee, Lord Stoddart of Swindon, a long-time supporter of trolleybuses, will officiate at the "launch" at 3.00 p.m. It is hoped that visiting vehicles of suitable vintage (mid-1930's to early 1960's) will also attend; a barbecue is planned during the Sunday afternoon, with a special slide show also being presented in the *Ritz* on both days. The period theme will continue on Bank Holiday Monday.

27 June (Sunday) Lincolnshire Heritage Day

This forms part of our local council's Heritage Week to promote tourism in the North Lincolnshire area: it is anticipated that a number of craft stalls will be in attendance. An extra event, and as we went to press confirmation was

awaited, but on 27 June it is planned that Sandtoft hosts the Yorkshire Traction Group Driver of the Year Competition. This prestigious event carries with it much trade publicity and will necessitate the use of the adjacent land we use on 'Gathering days.

11 July (Sunday) Trolleyday

All the standard arrangements apply, although no free Doncaster bus service is scheduled.

24 July (Saturday) Sandtoft Gathering '99 Preview

Trolleybuses should run, but there may be limited attractions available during the afternoon (e.g. no *Ritz* or miniature railway) whilst key staff prepare for the following day: there should then be evening running of the trolleybuses and the trains. Fares will be charged for all trolleybus and train rides, and will reflect that there is no admission charge to the Museum on this day.

For those who are planning to camp at the Museum that night, or bring caravans, your co-operation is requested: the only areas available to you on the Museum site will be adjacent to the box van and behind the depot - i.e. the central grass area may not be so used - and with space so restricted, all cars should therefore be parked elsewhere. We are pleased to advise that as an alternative, tents and caravans can be pitched on the campsite directly opposite the Museum, but prior notification is necessary and a small fee will be charged (Contact Mr. Buxton A.S.A.P. on 01724 710513 for details and to book). And, for the benefit of all that night, please, please, please keep noise to a minimum!

25 July (Sunday) Sandtoft Gathering '99

As the central event to our 30th Anniversary celebrations, *Sandtoft Gathering '99* will follow much the same pattern as previous years, with the added spectacle of special photo-calls and cavalcades. The event will again be on just one site, with the usual separate car parking and a free park-and-ride bus service. The Museum should be decked with bunting to create a celebratory atmosphere, whilst it is expected also that a trolleybus will be appropriately decorated. Further arrangements for the day are still being planned. A is normal for 'Gathering days, fares will be charged for all trolleybus and train rides: this year, fares will be 30p.(all classes) on trolleybuses and 50p.(adults), 30p.(concessions) on trains.

As in previous years, cars belonging to staff can be parked just 200 yards down the road from the Museum, at the Finningley Radio Club premises (open from 8.00 a.m.): regulars will know that Sandtoft is a hive of activity from as early as 7.00 a.m. on 'Gathering days and can get quite congested so your co-operation in clearing the Museum of all cars by 8.30 a.m.

30 July - 1 August & 4 August (Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday) 1999 F.I.C.C. International Caravan Rally

The Museum has recently hosted many meetings with the local tourist forum (set up by North Lincolnshire Council to develop tourism in their area), thus forging a strong link with the council and the local community: one result has been an invitation for the Museum to attend the 22-acre Lincolnshire Show Ground where, in July/August, the F.I.C.C.'s international caravan rally will be held (the first time it has been held in the U.K. for 20 years). The organisers have already received over 1,500 caravan entries (representing in excess of

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4,500 visitors) Each day, many tours are being organised to take visitors to attractions in the area and Sandtoft features in three of these tour itineraries. The schedule for the weekend is:

30 July (Friday): Eastbourne no.69 attends the show ground with representatives from the Museum, council and local businesses to publicise the Museum and the local area.

31 July (Saturday): Eastbourne no.69 and Bournemouth (Fleetline) no.159 operate a tour from the show ground to Epworth and Sandtoft and back.

1 August (Sunday): Eastbourne no.69, Bournemouth no.159, and, depending on demand, possibly also Doncaster no 33, operate from the show ground to Sandtoft and back.

4 August (Wednesday): coach tour from the show ground calling at Sandtoft as part of a fuller itinerary.

At the Museum, the usual attractions, including trolleybus and train rides, will be available.

Epworth Park-and-Ride

As part of an Epworth tourism promotion, *Epworth Entertains* - a series of musical concerts which are being held in the town this summer, it was decided that Epworth would benefit if traffic congestion could be minimised. The result is that for six Saturdays - **22 May, 5 June, 19 June, 10 July, 31 July and 5 September** - car parking would be at our Museum (at £2.00 per car) with a park-and-ride bus service to Epworth. It is planned that trolleybuses and the miniature railway operate on these days, and possibly that the normal attractions also be available, with fares charged for trolleybus and train rides.

Dates of Trolleydays later in the year (any extra details will be included in the next *Sandtoft Scene*) are:

1 August (Sunday) Trolleyday

11 August (Wednesday) Special Railway Day

15 August (Sunday) Trolleyday

18 August (Wednesday) Special Railway Day

29/30 August (Sunday and Monday) August Bank Holiday European Weekend

26 September (Sunday) Trolleyday

24 October (Sunday) Yorkshire Day

11 December (Sunday) Santa Special

19 December (Sunday) Santa Special

Please remember, the free Doncaster bus service will only operate on certain of these dates, so check by calling our Telephone Information Line (01724 711391), or look at our Web Site <http://freespace:virgin.net/neil.worthington/sandtoft98.htm>.

As can be seen, the Museum is set for a bumper season this year, and the new approach to the types of open days will hopefully see the Museum flourish into new tourism markets.

It all sounds like hard work, great fun and satisfaction, and cause for celebration in this, our 30th Anniversary year, and certainly a good reason (if you need one) to come and help to make all these days go with a buzz. It is exactly what our Museum is all about!

But, it can only happen with your help. As ever, we need you to operate the

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Museum. All - and we mean all, events need your assistance to make them a success, and help of all sorts really is required before, during and after the Museum opening times. The more of us that turn up to help, the more fun it is for everyone, workers and visitors alike.

So, please, make a special effort, get out your diaries, enter the above dates, consult with your family as necessary and plan when you can come to Sandtoft to help us. If you can, please contact Chris Proctor, our Operations Director, or Ken Hulks, our Managing Director, as far in advance as possible to tell them when you can assist (both Chris and Ken can be contacted by writing to the Museum). Please do not leave it to the few faithfuls to do all the work again.

EASTER AND MAY DAY TROLLEYDAYS

During the week running up to Easter, there was much frantic activity around the Museum, getting things ready. It is good to report an excellent start to the season, with visitor numbers well up on last year. Easter saw full Isle of Axholme tour double deckers each day, whilst the May Day Bank Holiday Monday (we also did open on Sunday with a good turnout) saw three capacity loads on the Isle tour.

SANDTOFT PRESS FEATURES

The Museum has attracted a good amount of publicity recently, with features appearing in a variety of publications. Some (quite a lot) of this is in response to press releases put out by our Mr. Publicity, alias Bob Ashton. Bob doesn't seem to miss an opportunity for Sandtoft to gain publicity, but newspapers, although given accurate information in these press releases, still seem to get details wrong - that is the press for you!

Following on from good local paper coverage in December of the Santa day, amongst the bigger features already this year was the presentation of the Dulux award during February which attracted colour front page coverage in the *Axholme Herald* and inside spreads in the *Epworth Bells*, *Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph*, *Doncaster Evening Post* and at least one of the free Doncaster weekly papers. In March the various "Axholme Stores" shop windows gave rise to stories inside the *Axholme Herald* and *Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph*, whilst the 22 April edition of the *Doncaster Free Press* carried a full page colour feature headlined "Abandoned But Not Forgotten" telling readers about trolleybuses and the Museum, with six photographs, including two of Doncaster no.375 (one of it under wires in Doncaster just before withdrawal in 1960).

In the more specialist press, the Sandtoft Miniature Railway appeared in a recent *Model Engineer*, whilst a particularly attractive two-page colour photo feature in *Preserved Bus*, initiated by Aiden Proctor, reproduced some magnificent photographs by Aiden of the Museum's European Weekend of last August showing each of the five overseas trolleybuses and a small amount of text about the event - well done Aiden!

This is all good stuff - and (our Financial Director should note) it is free publicity. There are many other instances of the Museum being mentioned in newspapers and magazines: Bob likes to maintain a file of these, but cannot know of every mention (please let Bob know of any you see), as they can result from any one of a number of different sources, the Web amongst them.

The board of directors recently agreed on pursuing a policy of publicising as many Museum-related achievements and events as possible, wherever possible: they aim to establish good working relationships with editors and reporters. It would be good to hear from members who believe they could assist (even occasionally) with all this, but obviously it has to be co-ordinated. In the ideal world, we could do with different people writing on the same event etc. with different styles and from different angles, this particularly so for the specialist press and magazines. Bob Ashton, or John Heighway would be pleased to hear from the budding journalists amongst you and from anyone who sees an opportunity for publicity.

VEHICLES

General: At the time of going to press, the following trolleybuses were certified for service: Bradford nos.792 and 834, Derby no.172, Huddersfield no.631, Limoges no.5, Nottingham no.506 and Porto no.140, although nos.5 and 140 do have defects preventing them from running.

Liège no.425: The Company has been discussing the possibility of no.425 returning to Belgium under a lengthy loan agreement where it would be restored and placed on display with a sister vehicle, and others from the fleet. However, at the European Weekend event last August, when no.425 actually operated under power on demonstration, Mike and Beryl Dare very generously offered to make a sizeable donation towards its re-cabing and renovation, on condition it remained at Sandtoft. The board of directors has considered this very carefully and has accepted what is a most magnificent offer by way of Gift Aid from Mike and Beryl. An enormous "THANK YOU" to you both!

The cable has already been purchased; Steve Harrison will be carrying out the electrical work, whilst Brian Maguire will attend to the bodywork and paintwork. Regular progress reports will appear in Sandtoft Scene and we very much look forward to seeing our oldest operable trolleybus (yet) - it dates from 1932, whilst our actual oldest trolleybus, Mexborough and Swinton no.34, just a bare body and chassis hulk, dates from 1927 - in passenger carrying service.

Maidstone no.72: It is hoped that we can get no.72 operating and in service again during 2000, and to then carry out further restoration. To that end, Malcolm Coates has been asked to lead a team to carry out the necessary work. Donations for no.72 are being sought, so please contact Malcolm, or send your cheques (payable to Sandtoft Transport Centre Limited) to our Financial Director, Alan Platt (either can be written to at the Museum).

No.72 is actually owned by Maidstone Borough Council, but is on long-term loan to the Museum. We are liaising with Maidstone with regard to our proposals in order to safeguard the vehicle's future at our Museum: we will be retaining the vehicle under a regularly reviewed updated agreement.

Reading no.113: A huge amount of money has been spent completely refurbishing no.113 over the past couple of years. It has now been tested and will be passed fit for service, ready for the Spring Bank Holiday weekend when it is scheduled to be "launched" into passenger service (see elsewhere in this issue for details).

The bulk of the work on no.113 has been carried out at Mike Dare's Westgate Trolleybus Museum, just down the road from Sandtoft. No.113 returned briefly to Reading during November to be displayed in the town centre to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the closure of the Reading trolleybus system, and has been at Sandtoft since

London no.1812: An appeal has been launched by the BTS for donations towards the restoration of no.1812 to London condition and to get it operating. The target for the appeal is £20,000, which should see it completely refurbished: donations already received include one of a magnificent £1,000, another of £500 and several others of significant size. Donations (cheques payable to British Trolleybus Society) should be sent to David Beach c/o Morris Hill School, Newtown, Newbury, Berkshire, RG20 9DJ.

Work on it has already got under way on no.1812, such that it is beginning to look like a London trolleybus again. External panelling has been fitted, whilst the low voltage wiring has been renewed; the 500/600 volt and traction side has been inspected and tested and appears to be all in good condition. Considerable progress has been made with the lower deck interior and a start made on the upper deck. New brown leathercloth has also been ordered.

The target is for no.1812 to operate in passenger service at Sandtoft next Easter - with appropriate publicity - and for it to go to Carlton Coleville later in the year for a special London trolleybus event, when it is planned to bring all the UK preserved London trolleybuses together. Progress and details will be included in future issues of *Sandtoft Scene* as they happen.

Bradford no.792: It is good to record that no.792, after much hard work by owners John Stainforth and Andy McDougall (and by others) is now passed fit for service - well done!

Doncaster no.94 moved to Westgate Trolleybus Museum at the end of October 1998 for storage.

Glasgow no.1B78 is scheduled to return to Sandtoft shortly from Fifield, near Maidenhead, Berkshire, where body and chassis restoration has been taking place: no.1B78 will be repainted at Sandtoft before taking up service again, hopefully later this year.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT SANDTOFT SCENE

By Dave Shepherd and Francis Whitehead
Dave has been asked how photographs are selected for use in *Sandtoft Scene*, and as the production of the journal is quite involved, this is how it is all done.

Firstly, *Sandtoft Scene* has to be a low cost publication, and a straw poll amongst members some time ago indicated that they wanted a "parish magazine" rather than an expensive glossy, allowing the membership subscription to remain low and enabling the Company to spend its money on its Museum enterprise. Hence there are budgetary constraints and limitations on the processes available to us.

Dave's first task is to collect copy to make up each 'Scene'. This seemingly simple job is not that easy, with promised articles and information not always appearing by his deadline, and sometimes not even materialising at all. The Editor's job is to edit, not write, the journal.

Next, the contributions are sifted through and wife, Sylvia, types them - if they are not already on a computer disk - using a word processing computer package. At the same time, Dave contacts authors as necessary to check detail. He also, generally, writes an editorial that Sylvia types.

At this stage also, photographs are considered. Firstly all photographs which have been made available for publication are viewed by Dave and all those that are topical, or which accompany articles in the current issue are considered and selected for possible use.

Then all the selected pictures are digitised for use on computer by a process known as scanning, the scanner is a bit like a small photocopier sat at the side of Dave's computer, except it stores the image as a file on the computer: this is where we hit the first of the photographic problems as Dave's computer equipment is somewhat old by computer standards, although it is able to read a typewritten or printed document using the scanner and a process known as OCR (Optical Character Recognition) and convert it to a text file to use in a word processor.

The digitised pictures are then converted to black and white and "enhanced" on the computer using a photo manipulation program: it is at this stage that Dave could add things to the photograph (like Pamela Anderson in her Baywatch swimming costume) or remove something undesirable (like a tree growing out of the top of someone's head) should he wish to do so.

Finally (for Dave) all the computer files, both text and picture, are transferred to a floppy disk to send to Francis Whitehead, who does the layouts, printing and distribution of *Sandtoft Scene*.

The first job that Francis has to undertake, having read Dave's notes on the edition in hand, is to find all the text files on the disk and convert them from the word processing package (Word Perfect) that Dave has to the one (Word 97) that Francis has, and find and iron out all the problems that that entails! The text is also all converted into the (now) standardised Arial font, which has been selected because of its compactness and ease to read when reduced in size (as the page layouts of *Sandtoft Scene* are assembled in A4 size and then reduced to A5 during printing).

The different items and articles are then put into some sort of (logical?) sequence, taking into account also how those items "fit" on the pages before the photographs are considered. This is where probably the biggest problem of the entire operation occurs: computer picture files are rather large and complicated - typically around 900kb for an 8" x 5" photo. The capacity of a floppy disk is somewhat small (only 1.44 Mb), and therefore all pictures have to be shrunk by a factor of around 50% in order to avoid having to send Francis a whole box full of disks for each issue. In enlarging the photographs back to size, we have been losing a lot of clarity, whilst the printing (photocopying) process can also lead to a loss of definition. Francis and Dave are continually discussing and experimenting with different methods in order to achieve the best end result with the photographs, and to date, photographs with very light backgrounds and high contrast are proving to survive the processes best.

From what is available, a front cover picture is chosen - normally discussed beforehand with Dave, and a subject that is topical. As far as the inside

photographs are concerned, the space available after all the text has been included, and the A5 format of *Sandtoft Scene* dictates how many views and of what size can appear. Because of the technical problems already described, Dave tries to send enough shots to allow Francis to select ones that will reproduce reasonably well and if necessary he will adjust on his computer the brightness and contrast of photographs to obtain the optimum results.

The next stage of the layout process is to add in any pre-produced advertisements or other items and then see either how much space remains unfilled, or what items can be cut out and held over for the following edition. It is virtually impossible for Dave to supply just enough to precisely fill each edition, so much jiggling can occur: sometimes Francis will be sent extra material by Dave, or others, sometimes he has to omit completely, or trim items down; sometimes he can generate and insert additional material on relevant subjects from board discussions etc. and sometimes, careful adjustments to paragraph spacing will be all that is required. In short, somehow 12, 16 or even 20 pages (including the back and front covers) need to be filled. There can be no doubt that the Editor eagerly looks forward to see what will be in *Sandtoft Scene* each time!

The mundane task of printing, collating, stapling and folding *Sandtoft Scene* follows, care being taken to get the best possible reproduction of the pages containing photographs. Equally mundane are the tasks of putting the finished journal into envelopes and sticking on the printed envelope labels (supplied by Membership Secretary, Rob Shepherdson), whilst the chore of licking over 200 envelope flaps can only be described as quite horrible! It was a great relief to discover that the Post Office now sells self-adhesive stamps, making yet another hitherto tedious job much easier. All this routine is undertaken by Francis, helped on occasions by his wife, Julia.

It is most satisfying to see a new edition of *Sandtoft Scene* finished and ready for dispatch. Much time and hard work goes into writing it and producing it (it can take four weeks or more from assembling the contributions to posting the final product), so it is hoped that everyone appreciates receiving it and reading it. The production side is the best we can achieve at the moment given the low budget mandate (and until we can both afford and get a compatible and readable CD-ROM computer system). The balance of its journal's content can only be improved if more people contribute to it with their news, views and experiences.

The object of *Sandtoft Scene* is for it to be the official source of information for members about the activities of the Museum and the Company and for it to be the voice of the Museum and its members. The spirit is willing, so over to you for your views and input.

LETTERS

From A. S. Feather, Bradford **On the subject of Safety**

The increasing emphasis on health and safety in the *Sandtoft Scene* and around the Museum is welcomed and of major importance. The safety of fellow workers and visitors is vital in our world when we work with obsolete equipment and vehicles. The same can be said of working practices which sometimes are at odds with current legislation.

Those members and visitors who have known me for a long time will know the familiar orange "crash helmet" which I wear at all times whilst working on the overhead line equipment. These were introduced by Bradford City Transport for overhead linesmen several years before anyone thought of a Health and Safety Executive. I learned to accept the wearing of safety items such as protective footwear, overalls and goggles as second nature when I worked for BCT. To the best of my knowledge no other trolleybus operator provided such protection, the helmets actually being supplied by a mining safety company, as supplied for very many years to combat the known hazards in that industry.

My point in mentioning this to you is to bring to your attention the cover photograph on Issue No 42 of *Sandtoft Scene*. This shows a contractor working for the Company (to help clear the arrears of maintenance on the overhead) regrettably without any visible safety equipment being in use. This shows a lack of the Company safety rules being stipulated to outside contractors and their enforcement whilst on site. This is perhaps an oversight, but the selection for publication to the outside world of such a photograph depicting this work is most unfortunate, and some might say, contradictory to Company policy. I wonder what thought goes into deciding what photographs are used to promote the view that we "... be Nationally acknowledged as the Museum of the Trolleybus and to ... educate ... our Visitors".

Due to other commitments I have not been in a position to give time to *Sandtoft* other than cursory visits to visually inspect the overhead line installation. I hope to rectify this situation from the Spring of 1999 onwards which should greatly reduce the need to bring in additional resources from outside the organisation. I also look forward to hearing from anyone - male or female - who would like to learn even the basics about this fascinating aspect of trolleybus operation.

Our Chairman, Francis Whitehead, responds:

Andy makes a number of very valid points that need to be responded to or answered honestly.

The main question, of course, is why is a safety helmet not being worn? Company policy (and common sense) is that helmets should be worn whilst working aloft on the overhead line, and also by personnel within the immediate vicinity beneath such work - the "vicinity" depending on the exact nature of the overhead work taking place (equally, only personnel necessary to the work being undertaken should be in the vicinity, others, including spectators, should be kept at a safe distance). In actual fact, Peter Price, the contractor in question, did wear a safety helmet virtually all the time he was working on the line: a sequence in the "Sandtoft Experience" video, shot at this time, shows Peter making a definite practice of putting his helmet on.

It was only fair for Peter to be asked about this, and his response was that the photograph must have been taken at an unfortunate moment when he had taken the helmet off due to the summer heat (everyone who has worked whilst wearing a safety hat will understand this, as hard hats are not the most comfortable of things in hot weather) whilst checking over some of the work. An obviously embarrassed Peter assures us that the hat was up on the tower with him!

And, why publish a photograph, least of all in such a prominent position as the front cover, depicting such (apparent) disregard for safety rules? Andy generously offers us the use of the excuse of it being an oversight. The shot was chosen for its topicality, to show particularly trolleybus-oriented work going on at Sandtoft, to emphasise the commitment of the Company to the trolleybus cause at the Museum (contrary to opinions that had been voiced in the months previous), in general line with the Vision Statement, and because it was unusual, eye-catching and departed from the standard views that we see so often featuring vehicles. The safety aspect was secondary to the extent that the photograph was submitted for publication, and was then selected by the Editor for possible use without consideration that the wrong message safety-wise might be put across; I, as described elsewhere in this issue, assembles "Sandtoft Scene"s page layouts, did spot the lack of a hard hat, but ultimately, and on balance, chose the shot for the reasons already described. In hindsight perhaps I should have enquired whether a similar, more suitable, photograph was available, but then, would there have been the time to do so during the preparation of that edition?

Turning to the other point made, on those occasions when a contractor is used, Ken Hulks, who is responsible for Health and Safety within the Company, ensures that the contractor is aware of the Company's safety requirements and expectations.

And on the subject of safety helmets, members should be aware that they have a limited life and should be renewed regularly to ensure optimum protection. If in doubt, ask any safety equipment supplier to check it. Hopefully, Andy's "familiar orange crash helmet" is not the original one issued to him over 25 years ago - if it is, we need to make it on of our Museum's exhibits - a genuine example of BCT-issue safety equipment

We look forward to seeing Andy around the Museum again more this year.!

From Doug Barrow, Kent On Maidstone Trolleybuses

In 1997 my sons and I gave two colour slide presentations, in Maidstone Central Library, to mark the 30th anniversary of the closure of the Maidstone trolleybus system. Following the presentations I was invited by Wilf Watters (producer of Online Video, specialists in transport-related videos) to join him in the preparation of a video about the Maidstone trolleybus system.

It is proposed that part of the proceeds from the sale of the video will be donated towards the restoration of Maidstone no.72 (Francis Whitehead informs me that Sandtoft, as the vehicle's custodians, would be willing to accept any such contributions!), and for my part I am not seeking any payment for my work on the video as it is intended to raise funds for a worthy cause.

Wilf and I have already obtained some very interesting material for the proposed video and we are hoping that it will be published this Summer - but we still have some gaps in the system's coverage, and time is getting on: with this in mind, could you please ask, in the Spring issue, Sandtoft Scene, readers who may not have sent Wilf any material, but who have ciné film of the Maidstone system, to lend it to Wilf for possible inclusion in the video, all material will be returned and anything used will be acknowledged, and each contributor whose material is used will be sent a complimentary copy of the

video. Wilf's address is "Little Martins", Ox Lane, St. Michaels, Tenterden, Kent, TN30 6NQ.

Many thanks in anticipation of your help.

From Edgar Jordan, Reading On "Real Life" Trolleybus Operation
In response to your request for contributions, a perfectly true story of when I made a journey on the Reading trolleybus system.

Duke Street junction was the point on the erstwhile Reading trolleybus system where the connection to Mill Lane depot branched southwards from the main east-west trolleybus route. A vehicle from the west side of town made a right turn from King Street into Duke Street, the overhead frog being of the manual pull variety at this traffic light controlled junction. This, of course, involved the conductor alighting from his vehicle to pull and hold the frog until the trolleybus had passed through it. He then had to take his life into his hands, run across the road to rejoin his vehicle - enough to give the Health and Safety boys a fit, had they been around at the time. Reading Corporation Transport also became concerned about the procedure, so they replaced the hand-pull method by a push-button, enabling conductors to operate the frog and immediately rejoin their vehicles before they made the turn. Automatic reset to the straight line was actuated by the trolleyhead passing a skate on the overhead.

It was shortly after the introduction of this new system that I watched a bus approach and saw the conductor carry out the procedure and rejoin his vehicle which then proceeded on its way to depot. What you may ask was so noteworthy about this? Answer - the vehicle was a motorbus on a trolley duty! I saw the funny side of this and was about to pass on my way, when I realised the frog had not been reset to straight through, there having been no passing trolleyhead to accomplish this. The next trolleybus along for the main line would de-wire if the unsuspecting driver failed to notice the frog indicator light was illuminated. I therefore took it upon myself to pull the cord provided for just such a situation.

SANDTOFT MEMORIES

by Brian Maguire

Two events this week made me sit back and think about the last thirty years (or more) in which I have revolved around Sandtoft and trolleybuses.

In 1968 I was a new member of the Reading Transport Society/ British Trolleybus Society and got to meet people like Mike Dare, Francis Whitehead, Graham Bilbé and Malcolm Coates. We used to travel to many places I had previously never heard of on various trips arranged by the Society, to travel on trams and trolleybuses. My first visits to Blackpool, Walsall, Cardiff and the Isle of Man, were made this way.

On the return from Manchester (where a big trolleybus film show had been organised) to Reading on one of these trips, we made "a slight detour" to view Westgate and the site for the new trolleybus museum at Sandtoft. By this time, an eight-vehicle depot building would be ready for the trolleys to go into - or so we were told! However, when we arrived only eight holes for the shed foundations had been excavated, and we all peered down into them, somehow expecting legs to grow out of them to form a shed!

Mike Dare disappeared in our transport - an AEC Regent V (ex South Wales) - and left us with a young Graham Rhodes, who had called in with his ex-Bradford ex LT RT type bus, no.410. We were instant friends, my being from London.

The decision was made that day to move as near to Sandtoft as I could, and to devote my time and effort to establishing the museum with the many friends I was making. I transferred my job with British Rail at Stratford, to BR at Doncaster, found a flat in Belton and bought Graham Rhodes' little mini-van for transport, moving to Belton in early 1970. Moving up here, it seemed like 11 months of winter and 1 month of summer to me - always damp under foot and cold. "I want to go home" I thought, but new friends were still being made. Les Flint and Ray Atkin especially, (Ray putting me up one night when I missed the train to back to London) and Bob Ashton and Pete Goddard plus many more on the early DO+LRS trips.

The BR job went, as £2-17s-6d (£2.875 in modern money) didn't go far and I had to work Sundays, which was when it all happened at Sandtoft. But before I left I made a small purchase: In Marshgate sidings was an old mobile joiner's goods wagon, which used to be shunted into sidings for line repairs - until BR removed all the sidings, making it redundant. After a lot of negotiation, begging, wet hankies etc., I got BR to part with it for £20. As the wheels and axles were not needed, these were burnt off as the steam crane lifted it onto a brand new lorry for delivery to Sandtoft. On arrival we had a problem - how to get it off! Barry Dodd had a bulldozer on site and he just put a chain on it and dragged it off! The new lorry went off to have a new rear light fitted after doing just one job - and we had a building for the princely sum of £8 after the sale of the scrap wheels and axles.

Members set about turning the box van body into a "canteen", and the electricity board fitted a meter and supply to it: they refused at first as they said it was "mobile" - I said "Well you move it then!" A chap from Huddersfield (John Moxon) fixed up the water and we were able to have a cuppa! Along came another fella from Leeds, Dennis Tate, with a brown suitcase full of books (I still have the suitcase in my loft!) and set up his shop at one end of the box van.

In 1971, local people were asking me what was happening in this "field of buses down the road", and I thought we should have an open day. We had no toilets or real facilities and at a committee meeting an argument ensued as to whether it was a good idea or not. In the end, I was told "if you want one - you organise it." So I did, - and the Gathering was born in September 1971. I invited the Lincolnshire Veteran Vehicle Society, all the local bus operators I knew, others with old cars, traction engines etc. By now, a schoolboy offered to get a trolleybus going round on batteries for the event, and this turned out to be Steve Harrison, who got Huddersfield no.619 full of batteries downstairs, and running a service around the site. (He later did the same for Teeside 282 when it was at Emsbay). The box van was cleaned, and both books and teas etc were sold from there, an old wooden latrine having been acquired and fixed to the side of "Fort Knox" (the old brick building left from the airfield days) by this time. A group of lads came over in a hired Guy Wulfrunian, enjoyed it so much that they went back and bought the bus and formed The West Riding Transport Society. No prizes were given, just a big vote of thanks to everyone!

Over £150 profit was made and the next year the familiar Gathering Committee took over.

It was in 1971, also that I met Steve Collins (Cloggins to his friends). He and Tom Bowden (later known as Tom Twentysheds - due to him having a vehicle stored in, at least, twenty places) started to acquire vehicles from Plumtree, near Nottingham and began to tow them to Sandtoft. They were good times. I was on Derby no.172, at the chapel, fitting its wooden seats, when I first met Steve: I offered to assist where I could and got involved in many a trip, carrying wheels for vehicles in my van. It is amazing to think now, but the ex-Nottingham tower wagon, no.802 towed Derby no.224 to Sandtoft using an old chain! Vehicle work and movements were many in those days.

It was a great shock when Les Flint and Dennis Tate both died in the same week. Dennis had asked me to run the shop at Easter as he would not be there - how true, as he died the next week and I ended up running the shop for a good while afterwards.

After all this time, Huddersfield no.619, which had gone away, is back and hopefully will be serviceable by the Gathering this year - nearly 30 years on, bringing back memories of that first Gathering.

BOOK REVIEW

Trolleybus Driving Present, Past and Preservation by Geoff Griffiths

A fascinating and very interesting 52-page (including covers) A5-size booklet written in Geoff Griffiths' inimitable style: Geoff assumes that the reader has a little knowledge of how trolleybuses operate as he relates his personal experiences of preparing, testing, operating and driving trolleybuses at Sandtoft, and at the two other main trolleybus-operating museums - Carlton Coleville and Dudley. Factual comparisons are made of idiosyncrasies of the many preserved trolley vehicles, the driving techniques necessary and the museums' infrastructures and operating practices: Geoff must be unique in having practical experience at all three museums (and having driven at a fourth), allowing him to make these latter comparisons. References to "real life" trolleybus operation, particularly on the author's "home system" of Llanelly adds to the interest of the book.

A surprisingly wide range of topics are covered, over and above those which the title suggests (I originally took it to be a trolleybus driving handbook): although it is difficult to see how to do otherwise, this results in an alarming amount of jumping around from one item of interest to another. Such divers issues as driver licensing, a background to the trolleybus preservation movement, reasons for loss of power on a vehicle, tuition and towing vehicles between museums are discussed - not necessarily in that order, and some in tantalisingly little detail that could benefit from being expanded.

All in all, this is a trolleybus book with a difference, approaching the subject from a hitherto neglected angle: it was inspired of Geoff to write it and, although I may be biased because of where the proceeds are going (see below), I recommend its purchase!

The booklet is published by the author himself, with absolutely all the takings, very generously, being donated to the restoration of ex-London no.1812. With six good quality, well reproduced colour photographs, plus one black and

white view, *Trolleybus Driving Present, Past and Preservation* is good value at £2.50. It is available from the Museum's Trolleyshop (post and packing is extra if ordered by post) and from the British Trolleybus Society stall at selected events.
Francis Whitehead

SANDTOFT SCENE

Once again, we have to apologise for the late appearance of *Sandtoft Scene* (it was originally scheduled for posting by 4 April), this being a "knock-on" effect of the late publication of the previous edition and the late (and even non) arrival of various contributions. "Better late than never", they say, and we trust you have found this edition interesting.

Please, we need your input for *Sandtoft Scene* to do its job properly; in doing this, for all sorts of reasons, we need to achieve the deadlines indicated below for future editions. We would particularly like to hear your views about Sandtoft matters (including this journal), news about our Museum's vehicles and news about happenings around the Museum. So, if you have even a snippet that might be of interest, send it to the Editor (address on page 2).

Contributions to Editor by "Latest posting" date

Summer 1999	<u>5 June 1999</u>	3 July 1999
Autumn 1999	<u>4 September 1999</u>	2 October 1999
Winter 2000	<u>4 December 1999</u>	10 January 2000
Spring 2000	<u>4 March 2000</u>	3 April 2000

Once again, the deadline for the next edition is close, so don't delay, please write something and send it off today!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Company membership subscriptions became renewable on 1 April (for administrative reasons, it was 1 May for those who join through the Bradford Trolleybus Association). You should have received reminders by now, either from your society membership secretary if you join through one of the Contributing Societies (BTA, BTS, DO+LRS or SMR), or from Rob Shepherdson if you join as a direct member.

If you have already renewed your subscription, thank you for doing so - you should be receiving your new membership card shortly. If you have not yet paid up, then please take this as a gentle reminder to do so (we need all the support we can get to make our Museum a continuing success) and note that this will be the last *Sandtoft Scene* for those who do not renew their subscription.

Needless to say, renewals may not apply to those who joined as 2-year members of a society and who are now into the second year!

FOREIGN TRAVELS FOR BOURNEMOUTH TROLLEYBUS NO.297

We learn with interest that the Bournemouth Passenger Transport Association's 1962 Sunbeam MF2B, no.297, is off to Usi nad Laben in the Czech Republic shortly to help them celebrate their Centenary of Electric Traction on 18-20 June (all, on 12 May, still subject to various bits of Czech red tape being sorted out). No.297 is expected to remain in the Czech Republic for a year or so to operate tours before returning to the U.K.