

SANDTOFT

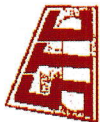
SCENE

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THE TROLLEYBUS MUSEUM
AT SANDTOFT'S MAGAZINE



The Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft

SANDTOFT TRANSPORT CENTRE LIMITED

Registered in England No. 1747475

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We reserve the right to alter or amend text to suit the style of *Sandtoft Scene* or the content of a particular edition. The content of individual items and articles represent the opinions of the individual contributors: they are not necessarily the opinions or policies of Sandtoft Transport Centre Limited, its Directors or its members.

FRONT COVER PICTURE:

It could be Reading in the 1960s with buses at a terminus but no, this was Sandtoft Square during the Spring Bank Holiday weekend 2006 *Photo: David Needham*

Our Vision Statement:

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

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

This edition of *Sandtoft Scene* should be with you in time to remind you that our big open-day, Sandtoft Gathering 2006, is about to take place. We have, over the years, been fortunate to have a hard-working team of people to make sure everything goes smoothly on open days but, the 'Gathering is different and more help is always required. Please help as much as possible: contact Chris Proctor and let him know you can help either before the great day or when you arrive at Sandtoft - I know he will be pleased to see you!

I am sorry but owing to a number of circumstances we have very little information from the Board members. However, for the next edition of *Sandtoft Scene* the Chairman, Steve Harrison, has promised to give us an update of his 5-year plan and details of the directors' principal responsibilities. Also, the Financial Director, Francis Whitehead, will update us on the progress so far with the fund-raising for the new project and his initiatives for future fund-raising - we still have a long way to go.

If you come to 'Gathering, why not look me up and say "Hello" - I would like to meet you.

OBITUARY

RAY HENTON 1943- 2006

It is with regret sadness that I have to report the death of long-standing member Ray Henton, who passed away on Saturday 1 April 2006 after a long illness.

Ray was interested in trolleybuses, buses and steam locomotives and was a member of both Sandtoft and the BTS since the late 1960s. He even formed a northern group of the then Reading Transport Society. He was a man with great vision in bus preservation.

I first met him in 1968 through placing a letter in a local newspaper asking for assistance to purchase a former St. Helens trolleybus from Bradford City Transport to restore back to St. Helens condition. Ray was the first to respond, together with the late Mervyn Ashton. From that moment, Ray was filled with enthusiasm far greater than mine and he formed the St. Helens Trolleybus and Transport Society. Eventually Bradford 799 (BDJ 87) was purchased and it became St Helens 387 once more. Almost immediately after, another vehicle was added, the St. Helens RT, no.67 (BDJ 67), rescued from Hull City Transport. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Ray organised secure covered accommodation for vehicles at the former USAF Burtonwood airfield near Warrington, and slowly, other organisations came together through Ray's efforts. In 1984, Ray, together with Mervyn Ashton negotiated with St. Helens

Council for the use of the old bus/ trolleybus depot in St. Helens, which had been closed by the then Merseybus, for use as a museum. They succeeded after great efforts and the St. Helens Transport Museum was formed - and indeed opened to the public. Serious setbacks culminated in the museum having to close, but Ray continued to fight to get the museum re-opened and to get funding for it from the lottery and Europe. He succeeded and a grant was issued from EU funds.

Ray was Chairman of the St. Helens Transport Museum for over 20 years. Today the museum has almost been completed and is to open later this year as the North West Museum of Road Transport. There will be an official opening next year, but sadly, Ray will not see this. There are several vehicles in the museum, not all from the St. Helens fleet, saved from scrap through Ray and Mervyn's tireless efforts. When the museum does open it will be a fitting tribute to him.

I will miss Ray very much: he was a long-standing friend and, like me, a trolleybus man throughout: trolleybuses passed his first home in Westfield Street, we both shared our interest in the St. Helens Corporation fleet and mourned it's passing. Thank you, Ray, for all you have done you have left us and the town of St. Helens with a great legacy.

Geoff Sandford

AT THE BUS STOP - 1

ST. HELENS 387

With the sad loss of Ray Henton it is, perhaps, appropriate to relate the history of St. Helens 387 (BDJ 87) and how it came into the preservation world.

Built in 1950 by BUT, it was fitted with a 56-seat East Lincs body, built at Blackburn and was delivered to St. Helens with 7 others of the batch. About the same time, eight Sunbeams with similar bodywork were added to the fleet. These 16 trolleybuses were the first and last high-bridge trolleybuses to enter the St. Helens fleet as, by the time of their delivery, the decision to abandon the trolleybus system had already been taken.

After only 7 years service, the 8 BUTs were sold to Bradford, where 387 became no.799 in that fleet after being up-seated to 63 and other refurbishment work. After having thoroughly earned its keep in Bradford, and having been withdrawn for several months and then re-instated, no.799 was finally withdrawn in 1971.

In 1968, as a result of a letter placed in a local newspaper by myself, Ray Henton, the late Mervyn Ashton and others got together to set up a fund to purchase an ex-St. Helens trolleybus from Bradford, to return it as near as possible, to St. Helens condition. Initially the plan was to purchase BDJ 82 (Bradford 794) as the BUT chassis number was 9611T0001, but when withdrawn, 794 was not in good condition especially the platform area, so 799 was eventually chosen. Also 799 had returned to St Helens to take part in the transport centenary in 1969 and was towed around the town by the

Sandtoft Scene

Corporation Matador in a large vintage vehicle rally to Sherdley Park where there was an exhibition. She actually travelled part of her old haunt, the Rainhill route, to get there.

799 was purchased for £120 after covering 770,000 miles in service. There was an official handing over ceremony with the Manager, Mr Edward Deakin, and Stanley King present, after which 799 was to head back home to Lancashire - not to St Helens, but Wigan and covered storage. Ray, Mervyn and others then commenced restoring 799 back to 387. A move to one of the huge hangers at the old USAF base at Burtonwood near Warrington later came about. After 3 years of work, 387 was completed, and in 1974 returned home again to be repainted by St. Helens Corporation in the old red and cream livery. It was the last bus to be repainted by the Corporation before it was taken over by Merseybus. 387 then came to Sandtoft and ran very well for a few years and was a popular vehicle to drive. For some reason she then became neglected and fell into some state languishing in the back of the shed. The rest is history and 387 is now on the way to recovery and as can be read in the *Sandtoft Scene* vehicle reports, things are slowly happening to get her back running again. The sales from the South Lancashire and St. Helens DVD by On Line Video have made a good contribution to funds to ensure that some major work can be carried out.

I can add that with the loss of the late Mervyn Ashton, and now Ray Henton, 387 is no longer privately owned. It was Ray's wish that 387 would be donated to Sandtoft and that wish was carried out: he always did say he never wished it to leave the museum.

AROUND THE BOARD

..... from Brian Maguire, Infrastructure:

In the main, work on the site, has revolved around the Pelham building. The chimney and the roof sheeting have been completed with most of the sheeting also being painted. The outside walls have been painted and only 2 window surrounds are left to deal with. Inside, the electrics have been installed, all the walls and entrance ramps have been finished. A mantelpiece has been fitted to the fire surround in the living room, and the kitchen walls primed. A cupboard has also been fitted in what is to be the Griffiths Archive Room (after Geoff Griffiths).

A new building has been started (pictured left) for the entrance from the new car park at the rear of the site.

The Memorial Garden now has a proper plaque - a move instigated by Mike Dare some time



Photo Graham Bilbé

George's Church House (behind St. George's Church), start around 7.30pm and we have a variety of guest speakers scheduled throughout the year. See the dates and details below:

- Saturday, 1 July Pete Goddard
- Saturday, 5 August Bring Your Own Slides
- Saturday, 2 September John Law
- Saturday, 7 October TBC
- Saturday, 4 November AGM followed by Transport Quiz
- Saturday, 9 December (Note: not Graham Bilbé
Saturday, 2nd Tickets required for Inc. Buffet & Raffle
this meeting.)
- Saturday, 6 January 2007 Bring Your Own Slides



THE ROUTE TO SANDTOFT

PLUMTREE - PART 4

The Great Explosion

Steve Collins

January 1966, and I, fool that I am, was very happy with life. Nottingham 578 had been wrested from the clutches of the vile Bingley-based scrap dealer, Auto Spares, and had been installed at Plumtree next to Rotherham 37. This brought the Nottingham Trolleybus Group's collection up to seven vehicles; to add to the euphoria, an offer had been submitted to Derby Corporation for their no.175, one of the last utility trolleybuses left anywhere in the country, and I had agreed to contribute towards it. I had no doubt that our bid would be successful, as Mike Dare had purchased no.172 from them the previous February (Mike Dare again, you see - I keep telling you that all this is his fault!).

About this time, a chap who was a student at Nottingham University turned up and began wittering on about buying an ex-Huddersfield Daimler utility motorbus which was then in service with West Bridgford Urban District Council, who ran buses into Nottingham. He hailed from Huddersfield, which was why he wanted the thing, and as a stop-gap he wanted to take it to Plumtree. The group's secretary, Black Rod, was somewhat suspicious of him, but then again, Black Rod held suspicions about just about everybody, so nothing new there. I must have been getting more cynical though, because I recall thinking "I will believe it when I see it". This character will feature later in the story, so I will refer to him as "The Student".

Later in January we had a meeting at the Chairman's house, and were given the news that our offer for 175 had indeed been accepted, so everything was proceeding as it should - or so I thought. Even in the best regulated circles, flies can get into the ointment, and this particular fly would take the form of Black Rod.

In the face of several problems - lack of money and the NTA being among them - Black Rod had built up quite a good working relationship with John

ago. The Woodland Walk pathway has been widened and chip-covered. Elsewhere it's been the usual mowing, weeding and odd jobs.

..... from Aiden Proctor, Director / Webmaster:

Many of you may not realise that the 2006 season actually started before Easter, on 1 April (I'm not fooling!). A visit from the Micro Maniacs in their numerous types of bubble car was an enjoyable event. A big Thank You is due to all who made this happen, particularly the café staff. We also hosted a meeting of the Motorcycle Sidecar Club on Easter Saturday as well as the advertised Morris Minor Rally on Easter Sunday. As a result I'm also pleased to report that revenue from events (that's admissions, café and shop) this year is already up substantially on this time last year - and looks on course to set new records.

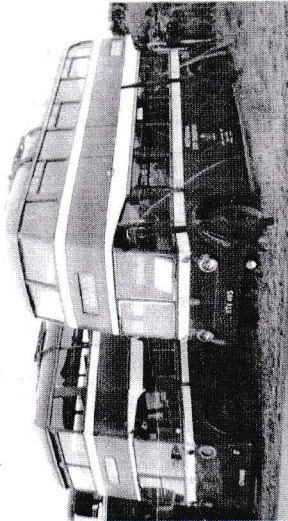
Further to the Operations Report in *Sandtoft Scene* no.60 (January 2006), can I please reiterate that you must present a valid membership card at the gate for your free entry and trolleybus rides on open days. This is important for getting accurate visitor numbers and we thank you all for your co-operation. On the website front, the Museum is now able to accept donations online. Plans are being put in place for further development of this function, so look out for exciting new features coming on stream over the next 12 months. Online visitor numbers have increased every month so far this year and I expect this trend to continue.

Looking ahead to 2007, Trolleyday dates and features have now been set. They are:

- 7 - 9 April 2007 Easter Bank Holiday Trolleydays
- 5 - 7 May 2007 European Weekend Trolleydays
- 26 - 28 May 2007 Southern Weekend Trolleydays
- 10 June 2007 Trolleyday
- 24 June 2007 Trolleyday
- 8 July 2007 Trolleyday featuring Vintage Bicycle Rally
- 28 July 2007 'Gathering Preview
- 29 July 2007 SANDTOFT GATHERING 2007**
- 11 - 12 August 2007 Trolleyday with 1940/50's theme.
- 25 - 27 August 2007 East Midlands Weekend Trolleydays
- 8 - 9 September 2007 Trolleyday - Part of Lincolnshire Heritage Weekend
- 22-23 September 2007 Six Wheeler Weekend Trolleydays
- 14 October 2007 St. Leger Historic Vehicle Rally
- 11 November 2007 Trolleyday featuring Twilight Trolleybus Services
- 8 - 9 December 2007 Santa Weekend - Visit Santa with the kids!

Finally, have you ever had an overnight stay at the Museum over a weekend and wondered if there is anything to do in the evening? Or, do you live in the Doncaster area? Well the Doncaster Omnibus & Light Railway Society (DO&LRS) hold regular "Bus Club" social meetings on the first Saturday of every month and you are welcome to attend. Meetings are held at St.

Wake, the General Manager of Nottingham City Transport. He had managed to prise trolleybus 493 out of him at a price which was much less than its scrap value, and had reached an understanding with him that when the Nottingham system finally closed, one of the last trolleybuses would also be acquired by the Group at much less than the going rate.



Nottingham 493 with 466 (left) at Plumtree during August 1965
Photo: Steve Collins

For various reasons trolleybus 518 had been selected to be the sole survivor of Nottingham's post-war fleet of Brush-bodied BUT six-wheeleders. This was an 8 foot wide example, as opposed to the virtually identical 578 which was only 7'6". All this had been thrashed out by the NTG Committee before I got involved, and Black Rod was basically following what he considered was the right course of action. I have already explained how I had been drawn into Plumtree by the speech given by "The Teacher" as he stood on 578's platform the previous October. What I hadn't realised was that the speech, brilliant though it was, was basically a load of pap, an impromptu outpouring made up as he went along. All the guff about bringing 578, 466 and 493 back to Nottingham to operate on the last day was, basically, tripe.

Another thing I didn't know was that The Teacher had been involved at Plumtree some time before, but had dropped out, only to reappear on the day of the 578 tour. It had been obvious to me for some time that Black Rod held a deep-rooted, simmering dislike of The Teacher, and the appeal to save 578 had only added to it. Whatever The Teacher's actual motives, Black Rod was beginning to take the 578 business personally, he began to look upon it as a deliberate attempt to destroy his credibility with John Wake, and make him look a fool.

All the while The Teacher was negotiating with Auto Spares, Black Rod was annoyed but also mildly amused. He knew that Auto Spares wanted £200 for 578, and did not believe that it would be possible to raise anything like what was then, such a large amount of money. Don't forget that he had had to struggle to scrape up £50 for 493 only a few months earlier, and the NTA had not come up with anything for Nottingham 460, so to try and raise £200 was like trying to jump to the moon. The negotiations with Auto Spares had gone on for nearly three months, and in all that time Black Rod had been unswerving in condemning the whole thing as a pipe dream, and this had led to him becoming marginalised, and dismissed as a misery by the Chairman, and the many new members (myself included) who had joined following the

appeal for 578.

In view of Black Rod's attitude to 578, when the acquisition of Derby 175 had been mooted, the Chairman had neglected to tell him, possibly because he didn't think it was important, possibly because no money was available to pay for it, but most likely because he knew he would be less than pleased. Whatever the reason, not telling him was a bad error of judgement.

So here we have it: Black Rod had put a lot of effort into Plumtree, decisions had been made which he had accepted, then suddenly somebody turns up out of the blue and upsets everything. The best way to describe what was happening is to say that 578 was a barrel of gunpowder, 175 was the fuse, and all that was needed was the match to set it off. The match came in the form of a letter from John Wake to Black Rod informing him that the price required for trolleybus 518 would be £125. The reason for this is simple, Wake had found out that the NTG had paid over the odds to a scrap dealer for 578, so he wanted the full price for 518. The days of concessions were over.

The meeting at the Chairman's house was going well; we were working out the final details of how we were going to pay for 175. The Chairman would take out a loan for the £80 needed to pay Derby Corporation, and various people would pay so much a month until the loan was paid off. I agreed to pay £1 a month, and collect the money from everyone else to make up the figure of £8. My friend Geoff would then take the cash into the finance company, as it happened to be near to where he worked. We were just putting the final touches to all this when the doorbell rang - Black Rod had arrived. There must have been about fifteen of us in that room when Black Rod walked in, and without saying a single word, he was in charge. Nobody else mattered. He looked directly at The Teacher and his eyes said it all, absolute loathing. When the words came, they were like ice, and they flowed, softly at first but getting louder. Nobody else spoke - nobody else dared to. I had never seen anything like this. I had heard the headmaster at school bawling people out, but this was different. This was pure, unadulterated, controlled, hatred.

After all this time I can't remember everything he said, but it was direct and to the point. He accused The Teacher of ruining everything that had been achieved at Plumtree, of undermining his efforts, of making us a laughing stock, of upsetting John Wake, and basically being responsible for every crime committed during the past two hundred years. I remember the terms "going cap in hand to Wake" and "pleading poverty" cropped up, as did "you paying £200 for a heap of scrap". It went on and on, and the worrying thing was, that it all made sense: in no way could it be described as incoherent raving, and when the target shifted from The Teacher to everyone else in the room, we all just sat there and took it. 175 was condemned as extravagant stupidity, and we were told in no uncertain terms that we could forget 518. There would be no eight-footer - we had 578, and that would be it, the only six-wheeler. His last words were that he had finished with Plumtree, and that we could sink or swim by our own efforts. After a few more barbed comments, he turned,

walked out and slammed the door behind him.

The first person to speak was not surprisingly, The Teacher. "Well p*** off then" he said to the closed door. Not a very satisfactory reply, I thought. As I headed for home, I realised that my feelings were somewhat altered, all the dreamy ideas had gone, and had been replaced by just one. I was beginning to wonder exactly what I had let myself in for.

But time and trolleybuses wait for no man, and someone had to organise the collection of 175 from Derby. All this seemed to be happening very quickly, for February saw a group of us en-route for Ascot Drive depot where we were to rendezvous with Barton Transport's towing crew. At Ascot Drive I got my first proper look at 175, and to be honest I was not all that impressed. One of its booms was broken, which was why it had been withdrawn, but someone had put a replacement in the lower deck. Most of the panels were steel and were very rusty, going into holes in places. Just to help, the offside was badly scratched and dented. This had been caused by a row of taps on the depot wall, and was a standard feature on a lot of Derby's buses in the sixties. I recall seeing 181 and 184 in the depot, similar vehicles to 175 and still in service despite being in at least as bad condition, if not worse. Both were withdrawn at the end of the month, thus being the last utility trolleybuses in service anywhere in the country. Bartons turned up as arranged, and with their usual efficiency soon had 175 hooked up to their cut-down Leyland PD1 towing vehicle. With Nottingham Road Cemetery on the blind, 175 left Derby via the already-abandoned Nottingham Road trolleybus route, and apart from one stop on the then new A52 Borrowash by-pass for a quick check round, it soon became the first Derby trolleybus at Plumtree, and number eight in the collection.

Also In February, the Nottingham Trolleybus Group held a tour of the Bradford trolleybus system, using Weymann-bodied BUT no.758. This had been organised before the big bust-up, and I had been invited to share a car with, among others, Black Rod. Upon our arrival at Thornbury Depot I gained the distinct impression that most of the people there were from Sheffield, rather than from Nottingham. With hindsight, I think the reason for this was because Black Rod had organised it, and most people wanted to avoid him. It was a feature of NTG tours that the Sheffield people were always informed, so this was not unusual. 758 was parked ready and waiting next to the famous "Tin Shed" which, I was told, contained all the remaining ex-Notts. & Derbys. trolleybuses, which still carried their original bodies. Black Rod produced the Nottingham Trolleybus Group name board which was fitted into 758's nearside windscreen, and we all stood about waiting for the tour to start. Black Rod was engaged in conversation with somebody when an unusual incident occurred: a young woman suddenly shrieked something incoherent, ran up to him, and booted him hard on the leg.

This was a new one. As far as I could remember, I had never seen this person before, but she knew Black Rod, and I think she held some sort of grudge

against him. My initial reaction was that she must be a woman scorned, who he had used, abused, then cast adrift, but in this I was way off the mark. Following the initial meeting between her foot and his shin, she delivered several blows to his chest, which bellowing a torrent of threats, swear words and meaningless drivel with beggared belief. By this time everybody was gaping at the spectacle, which only ended when two chaps who obviously knew her, rushed forward and dragged her off him. Sobbing, she was led away still uttering threats and accusations. Black Rod nursed his injured leg and injured pride "Friend of yours?" I said. Now you may be wondering why I have mentioned this, as the woman was obviously deranged, but there was one thing that I had picked out of all the invective that got me thinking: the only rational thing I heard her say was that Black Rod had stolen Rotherham 37!

The tour got under way and I must admit I enjoyed it. I don't think Black Rod did though, because it soon became apparent that the mad woman was on board, and she attacked him whenever she got the chance. He spent virtually the entire trip standing at the front of the lower deck with his back to the bulkhead, never knowing when the next assault would begin. I asked him who she was, and he swore he had never seen her before, which I found hard to accept, but there you are. Several years later the subject cropped up again, and he was adamant that he still didn't know who she was. Interesting tours we had in those days.

Having seen how Black Rod had taken control during his one-sided argument with The Teacher, it seems odd that he just stood there and took all this, I must confess that the accusation that he had stolen Rotherham 37 did puzzle me. I mean, what sort of idiot would try and steal a trolleybus? Alright, I know I have been nominated, but the police believed me, and that was the end of it. I did ask Black Rod what she meant, but he just dismissed it as nonsense, and I let the matter drop. As for the woman, I still don't know who she was, but she was a harpy if ever I saw one.

March arrived and with it the need to produce £8 as the first payment due on 175's loan. Notebook in hand I went round all the people who had agreed to pay in, and collected £6 and a couple of excuses. This meant that I needed an additional £2 from somewhere else, so Geoff and I both chipped in an extra quid to make it up. In April I had the same thing again, only this time I only raked in £4, so Geoff and I again had to make up the shortfall. This was becoming a worry, as I was now paying £3 instead of the £1 I had budgeted for. You may think these figures are paltry, but the value of money has changed out of all proportion over the past 40 years. I know you will be thinking "Here it comes, Cloggins is going to tell how he could go out with tuppence, get drunk, buy fish and chips, and still go home with change". Things weren't quite like that, but I can assure you getting an unexpected bill for £3 on a regular basis was a major problem.

One person who had agreed to pay into 175 was Tom Bowden, and he dropped out very quickly. The reason for this was simple, Tom had been

appalled by the idea that a Nottingham eight-footer would not be preserved, and had been agonising over whether he could raise the finance to buy 518. He started tapping people up to see what resources he could call on, and began to get some backing. By mid-April he had reached his target, so he submitted an offer to John Wake.

While he was busy trying to raise the money he needed, Tom had had a change of heart, not in his determination to save an eight-footer, but in the choice of the vehicle he wanted. I remember him saying that if he was going to buy a trolleybus, it might as well be the one that had always been his favourite, and that was 502 ! When Black Rod heard about it, he just shook his head, "Pure madness" he said.

Tom was not the only one who was having difficulty raising money. When I went round in May to collect the loan payment, I had even less success than in previous months, this meant that Geoff and myself would have to pay it all ourselves, and we just could not afford it. I was at my wits end, when help came from a most unexpected source. Black Rod approached me and offered to help us out. When you remember that he had been opposed to 175 from the word go, this seems a peculiar thing for him to do - it just shows what a complex character he was.

So with my enthusiasm rapidly diminishing, I was beginning to wonder what surprises lay in store, I didn't have long to wait.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 9 July Trolleyday & Vintage Cycle Event featuring Vintage cycles of all shapes and sizes
- 29 July Sandtoft Gathering Preview (open 11.00-22.00) - Real Ale Bar
- ◆ 30 July Sandtoft Gathering 2006 (open 10.00 -18.00)
Our biggest event of the year featuring 75-100 visiting historic vehicles and a host of other attractions. Real Ale Bar
- 12 August Trolleyday & Historic Caravan Club Rally
- 13 August Trolleyday & Historic Caravan Club Rally
- 26 August Bank Holiday Weekend - Six Wheel Weekend, featuring three-axled trolleybuses and other six-wheeled vehicles
- 28 August
- 9 September Trolleyday (Part of Lincolnshire Heritage Open Days)
- 10 September Trolleyday
- 16 September Trolleydays & Model Weekend featuring model trolleybuses, trams, trains & layouts
- 17 September Trolleyday & St Leger Rally with parades and many visiting historic vehicles on display
- 15 October
- 12 November Twilight Trolleyday - featuring twilight trolleybus operation
- 9 December Santa Weekend (open 11.00-16.00)
- 10 December with Father Christmas in attendance
- denotes FREE bus service on these days, departing 12.30 from West Street, Doncaster (near Railway Station). Return trip departs Sandtoft at

- ◆ 16.00 (approx. 30 minute journey time)
(30 July only) denotes the free bus service runs half-hourly from 10.00 to 16.30

Admission Charges for 2006:

Trolleydays: Adult £4.50 Concession (Child/ OAP) £2.50 Family: (2Adults + up to 4 Concession) £12.00

Gathering: Adult £6.00 Concession (Child/ OAP) £4.00

TROLLEYBUS ANNIVERSARIES

Compiled by Geoff Welburn

July to September

Systems Opened

75 years since Walsall opened on 22 July 1931

70 years since Reading opened on 18 July 1936

Systems Closed

80 years since Oldham closed on 5 September 1926

75 years since Wigan closed on 30 September 1931

VEHICLES REPORTS

from Brian Maguire & Ian Wilson (unless credited otherwise)

Bournemouth 297: The centre roof section has been removed and repairs are underway. The bulk of the cabling is having to be renewed as it is rubber insulated. The traction motor has been removed, sent away for refurbishment and received back. Whilst the motor is out, the chassis has been shot-blasted and painted.

Bradford 562: An assessment of the roof condition (it is made of timber planking and canvas) is being made to establish what repairs are necessary.

Bradford 845: Paint stripping continues; the Prudential advert has been traced to facilitate its later signwriting.

London 1812: The differentials have now been returned and are ready to be refitted as soon as time and workshop availability permits.

Marseilles 202: arrived at Sandtoft on 8 May (on the back of a lorry). Bruce Lake's account of its epic journey across land & sea appears on page 21

Nottingham 367: Work has started on the nearside with three lower saloon pillars and various other rotten framing removed. New pillars are being made. The chassis side has been cleaned and painted with rust treatment.

Nottingham 466: Re-wiring has been completed. A wiper motor is in place and working and final cab tidying-up is taking place.

Nottingham 493: Andy Thornton reports work on 493 has progressed in the way planned, with more cleaning and painting under the cab during the early May bank holiday. The success of the Spring bank holiday weekend Reading event is reported elsewhere, and needless to say as this scribe spent two days driving and rendering assistance with last-minute works on the vehicles that ran, progress on 493 has suffered.

Reading 144 was transferred to Sandtoft on 26 March 2006, following a delicate and exasperating operation to extract it from the space in Westgate that it has occupied since 1978. Some sticking contactors have had to be freed but with only some minor work (and a jolly good clean) it was tested and passed out for service.

Reading 174 arrived at Sandtoft on 5 March 2006, the first time it has been to Sandtoft. Between then and the Spring bank holiday, it has undergone some intensive restoration which has involved the removal, overhaul and re-fitting of the traction motor, extensive re-wiring, a chassis clean (by shot-blasting) and paint, resistor banks overhauled/ rebuilt, some bodywork framing renewed, some panelling replaced, the roof and other panelling stripped and prepared, a full exterior repaint, and exterior transfers applied. The braking system has been overhauled, including re-lining the front shoes, and a full inspection and test carried out. All in all, a truly amazing achievement and "well done" to all involved.

It is now planned that 174 will stay at Sandtoft. More work is needed to bring the interior up to standard, and this will be attended to in the coming months as funding permits.

Reading 193 returned to Sandtoft on 25 March 2006. Its traction motor, which has been away for overhaul since before 193 left Sandtoft to go south some years ago was returned, completed, and has been refitted (not without its problems!). The lower saloon has been painted and the vehicle tested out: unfortunately, as time had beaten us, it could only be run on demonstration during the Spring bank holiday Reading weekend – and then only after some emergency repairs, led by Ian Metcalfe, on the Sunday to the positive trolleybase. It is intended to get all the outstanding work on 193, including an external repaint, done in time for next season.

South Shields 204: On 1 April, 204 was on display in her old town, courtesy of Stagecoach, to celebrate the Centenary of South Shields' Dean Road depot. 204 was the star of the show and created a lot of interest, particularly with the old staff – many former trolleybus drivers and conductors were there and 204 clearly brought back many memories for them.

204 was actually taken to South Shields on 30 March and returned on 4 April.

Photo: Francis Whitehead

St Helens 387: Geoff Sandford explains that during the Easter weekend, 387 was cleaned inside of the usual winter grime and mould and was towed

outside for a good external wash and clean. With the open weekend she was placed on the workshop road wiring with booms up under a dead section and attracted several photographers and visitors. One or two of the upper deck window frames have been re-fitted after re-varnishing. Over the Reading weekend, 387 was in the workshop for assessment and it has been decided to remove the motor and send the vehicle to have the chassis shot-blasted and sprayed silver. Also it was discovered the rotten section under the cab is not load-bearing but due to it's condition it will be replaced. This will have to be done through the cab which means that will have to be stripped out (rather like Nottingham 493). It has been confirmed that the wiring does appear to be in reasonable condition and may not need replacing (I hope). It should be remembered that 387 has been little used since being at Sandtoft so wear and tear is not a problem. For example the brake shoes and brakes are in good condition. Work on the platform rubber edges has to be done and also the grab rails. New rear tyres also have to be purchased. Whilst over the pit, one of the resistor plates was found to be the wrong way round and this was duly rectified. I hope that the planned work can start in the next few months - I do have some other commitments but I will ensure the work starts as soon as possible. I will add that the object is to get 387 running again as it is not a big restoration job like some other projects. It will be some time before 387 gets a re-paint for example. There is still plenty to do, anyone out there willing to help?

Teesside 5 has come to Sandtoft for a short stay: it was hoped it could run during the North East Weekend, but unfortunately too much work was required to get it operational with not enough time to do it. (Thankfully, the Darlington Daimler was bought down by the Aycliffe Preservation Society and ran on the Isle tours for us that weekend.)

Douglas 52: Graham Rhodes is steadily getting 52 up to operational standard: all the bell pushes have been overhauled, the battery boxes restored and other minor items sorted out. The fluid flywheel slips badly, so this will need some attention before a MoT test is considered.

Felix 41: New transfer box oil seals have been obtained and fitted, and the transfer box overhauled and refitted to the bus.

Nottingham 137: paint striping of the upper saloon continues with all the perished rubber bulkhead covering now also removed.

London Transport RM 529 was taken to Preston for some repair work. An MoT was obtained and the vehicle has been returned to Westgate.

Sheffield 754: Two new shock absorbers have been obtained and will be fitted before the next MoT test.

International Harvester Tractor: An IH 674 Tractor dating from the 1970s has been obtained. Although requiring some work before it "enters service" at Sandtoft, it is intended that this tractor will become our main towing vehicle. The IH is more powerful than the Nuffield and also has power steering, which should (hopefully!) make "shunting" a bit easier.

Nuffield Tractor will go into well earned semi-retirement as soon as our "new" International Harvester tractor is ready.

RUNNING DAYS

EASTER WEEKEND

The 2006 Open Day season got off to a flying start over the Easter weekend (15 - 17 April), when the trolleybus service consisted of Bradford 746, Derby 172, Porto 140 and Maidstone 72. A new system was introduced for visitors riding on the trolleybuses, which involves being issued with an old penny (1d.) coin upon entrance to the Museum. The coin is then handed to the conductor of the first trolleybus the visitor travels on, in exchange for an all-day-ride ticket.

On the Saturday we were visited by the Motorcycle Sidecar Club which made for a busy and interesting day.

On Easter Sunday the Museum again played host to the North Lincolnshire Area Morris Minor Club, who attended with around sixty visiting vehicles. Later in the afternoon a selection of Morris Minors were lined up across Sandtoft Square to allow photographs and a brief talk was given by the group Chairman. The visitors numbers over the course of the day was very impressive, almost like a "mini-Gathering" with the trolleybuses doing a good trade, operating with capacity loads on many trips. The Isle of Axholme tour proved so popular that a second vehicle had to be used to cater for the passenger numbers. The motorbuses used were a visiting Routemaster (Long Version) and Doncaster 22. Both the *Tea Trolley Café* and the *Trolleyshop* were also doing a roaring trade.

Moving on to the Bank Holiday Monday, although the visitor numbers were down on the previous day, a good number did turn out to make for an interesting and enjoyable afternoon. Overall a good start to the season!

Some of the Morris Minor owners very kindly gave us the following comments:

Geoff Clipson from Hull, explains:-

I got my car from a lady in Anlaby, near Hull. It was a typical garage find and I

thought it did not need a lot doing to it. That was until we got it home when we found out that it needed extensive welding repairs. It was really a retirement project - in fact, I carried on after I retired and it took some 6 years before I finally got it completed and through its MoT test. This is a 1950 car and was produced during the early production run of this series at Cowley in Oxfordshire. It is a Grimsby registered car but I



1950 Morris Minor owned by Geoff Clipson

Photo: Dave Shepherd

purchased it in Hull. We use it quite a lot but as it is a convertible it is mainly used in the summer.

Mick Shaw the owner of the AA Van says:

I bought the van in 2002 off another AA patrol man. It was in a bad state of repair and wanted complete restoration. Over a period of 18 months we took off the back and front of the vehicle to just leave us with the chassis. We cleaned up the chassis and fitted a few repair panels, a new inner wing, a couple of outside wings and a couple of sills. We then put it all back together again and brought it up to its present condition.

Over a period of time we have obtained a lot of the original equipment it carried - for instance, a 1970 two-way radio, and thanks to E-bay, we managed to get the original period amber beacon on the roof. Also thanks to a lot of friends in the AA we managed to get some period uniforms; we are still on the look-out for a lot more of the equipment for it, but things keep turning up now and again. The vehicle is an original AA service van and at the moment there are only two remaining ex-AA Morris Minor vans on the road, this one and one owned by the AA itself. There is a third one which we know of - in Devon - and at present it is being restored.

READING WEEKEND

This special event was held over the Spring Bank Holiday Weekend (27 - 29 May) to mark the 70th anniversary of trolleybuses being introduced to Reading and also the 45th year of the British Trolleybus Society.

Planning and preparation for this major event began around two years ago and a huge amount of hard work has been carried out both at the Museum and in Reading to make it possible. This included trolleybuses 174 and 193 being towed to Sandtoft in March 2006.

For the actual event all the mobile BTS-owned trolleybuses were moved from the depot and parked up on display outside the Museum's back gates on the Friday afternoon and at around 5 pm motorbuses from Reading arrived consisting of AEC Regent no.47, Dennis Loline III no.76, AEC Reliance no.52 and



AA van - being of service

Photo: Mick Shaw



Restored BTS trolleybuses on display

Photo: Graham Bilbe



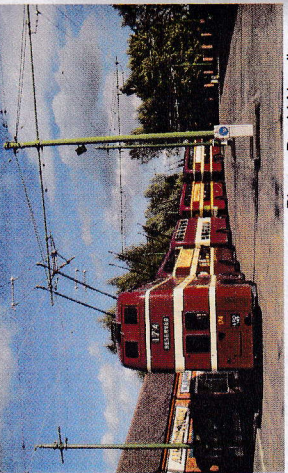
▲ 1 Photo: Francis Whitehead



▲ 2 Photo: Francis Whitehead



▲ 4 Photo: Francis Whitehead



▲ 5 Photo: David Needham



▲ 7 Photo: Graham Bilbé



▲ 8 Photo: David Needham

- 1 Saturday: 113 passes 174 and 193 being prepared
- 2 All the Reading vehicles squished into Sandtoft Square
- 3 The Reading trolleybus contingent photo-call
- 4 The first time ever that 113 & 193 have operated together
- 5 Sunday evening and the crowds have gone
- 6 Getting ready for another line-up
- 7 A study of Park Royal bodies
- 8 Ex- Reading Corporation employees with Graham Bilbé
- 9 76, 3 & 258 at Epworth on a triplicated Isle Tour!
- 10 Monday morning: 144 & RM529 are boarded for a tribute trip for Mike Dare
- 11 The Memorial Garden, and the service for Mike Dare



▲ 10 Photo: Peter Price



▲ 3 Photo: Francis Whitehead



▲ 6 Photo: David Shepherd



▲ 9 Photo: David Shepherd



▲ 11 Photo: Peter Price

Bristol RE no.258; also driven up that day was towing/ tower wagon no.32. AEC Regent III no.98 arrived from Westgate and a similar AEC Regent III, no.3 arrived from Reading the next day.

On Saturday the trolleybus service commenced at 11 o'clock and became busier as the day wore on. Dennis Loline 76 was used to perform the Isle of Axholme tour.

Outstanding work and final testing continued on 174 and 193 to enable them to be serviceable for the following day. Unfortunately 193 did not make it into full passenger service due to a damaged trolleybase, but this, was repaired to enable it to run on demonstration. On Sunday, at 12.00 noon, two Reading Buses "Goldline" coaches arrived with full compliments of passengers and the trolleybus service soon became very busy with two and sometimes three vehicles operating at once.

Various line-ups of vehicles were assembled for photographers and we managed to run all the five trolleybuses simultaneously for a short time which was a very impressive sight indeed! We also re-created the last trip to Tilehurst on the closure date involving 174, 181 and 144.

Later on Sunday evening Regent no.3 carried a party of nearly 50 members and families out to Crowle for an evening meal. Upon their return, some night trolleybus running was undertaken, and then Reading's "11 o'clock whistle" was re-created - a practice from very early days in Reading when all the town's last buses of the day, having arrived in town-centre Broad Street and allowed passengers time to change buses, simultaneously and spectacularly moved off to their various destinations at the sound of the duty inspector's whistle.

At 10 o'clock on Monday morning, before the Museum was opened to visitors, a short Memorial Service was held for Mike Dare, during which his ashes were interred in the special Memorial Garden which has been established at the top end of the museum site. A number of moving tributes were paid to Mike and Reading no.144 and RM529 operated a special run both before and after the Service.

The visitor numbers on Monday were less than Sunday (not helped, quite possibly, by the distinctly cool wind), but a good number did attend and we repeated the format of the previous day finishing with another re-creation of the final run to Tilehurst of 3 November 1968.

In conclusion a most enjoyable three days and well worth the effort put in by so many people to make it possible.

SANDTOFT'S CRASH-BOX FESTIVAL

The 3-day Reading event was a quite wonderful occasion, spectacular in every way, and the writer very nearly missed much of it, being booked to visit two rallies over the weekend. Water-logged rally sites and unsafe ground conditions put paid to that, and the result was three action-packed and very happy days at Sandtoft. While five working Reading trolleybuses were quite properly stars of the occasion, there was a strong supporting cast of Reading motorbuses on hand for the celebrations. These included three AEC Regent double-deckers - 47 (RD 7127) an 0661 with low-bridge Park Royal body, built in 1935, while Park Royal-bodied 98 (LDP 945) and 3 (MRD 146) are 1956 and 1957 6812As, in effect a modernised version of the 0661, with flexibly mounted engine and triple-servo vacuum brakes instead of the vacuum hydraulic system of the pre-war Regent. No.4 (MRD 147), the last Regent III built, also survives, most fortunately, but was not able to be present at Sandtoft. During the course of the weekend, the realisation dawned that there were on site no fewer than 6 crash-gear box AECs, all in working order, and that this in itself was remarkable and possibly unprecedented at any of the country's road transport museums. When this fact was mentioned to the event's organisers "after hours" on Sunday afternoon, the effect was immediate, with the institution of an add-hoc parade and photographic line-up that represented a memorable concert performance, and a spectacular vista of magnificent half-cab buses. Joining the three Reading Regents for the occasion were Doncaster 22 (MDT 222), a 1953 Regal III 9621A bodied by

Roe, Doncaster 122 (KDT 393), a 1951 Regent III 9613A, and York Pullman 64 (JDN 668) a 1954 Regent III 6812A. Both 122 and 64 likewise have elegant Roe bodies. Reading 47, Doncaster 22 and Doncaster 122 all have the venerable D124 gear-box, basically a late 1920s design, while York Pullman 64, Reading 3 and 98 have the early 1950s D162 unit, beefed up to cope with the increased torque of the 9.6 litre engine. Ironically, the 9.6 litre-engined buses both have the earlier gear-box though the original example in D.C.T. 122 lasted only about two and a half years before driver abuse saw it off. From 1954 until 1986 122 had a D162, but aurally there is no way of distinguishing between the D124 and the D162.

Thus all the participants in Sandtoft's crash-box parade sang the same litting and melodious song, much loved by Southall devotees and producing some of the most appealing sounds ever to emanate from any PSV. It was fortunate that there was on hand a squad of drivers well versed in the idiosyncrasies of AECs curious sliding mesh/constant mesh gear-box, which can sometimes catch out the uninitiated, so that 6 AECs were driven round with cheerful aplomb and considerable skill. For the writer at least that did not quite represent the end of Sunday's excitement, for Tim Wale very kindly allowed him to drive Reading 3 back from Thorne Waterside. We had an unscheduled and unanticipated diversion via Goole, but that did give the opportunity for an enjoyable gallop down the motorway and, needless to say, the Regent behaved impeccably. Ten 6812As are thought to survive and your scribe has now driven 7 of them, plus an eighth that sadly is no longer with us. Perhaps that, too, is a record in the annals of Bus Preservation.....

AT THE BUS STOP - 2

MARSEILLE 202

Parlez-vous Marseille?

Or how (not ?) to recover a trolleybus from the depths of France.

It all started last summer. Martin Nimmo (who keeps a close eye on French trolleybus developments) was contacted by an acquaintance from the ARTM (Les Amis du Rail et des Transports de Marseille) who said that, some two years after the system had closed, there was still a Marseille ER100 trolleybus in storage. The ARTM group had themselves taken up offers of both trolleybuses and motorbuses from the operator, RTM (Régie des Transports de Marseille) and had already a fair collection and didn't want another, but were loathe to see it scrapped and would Sandtoft like it ?

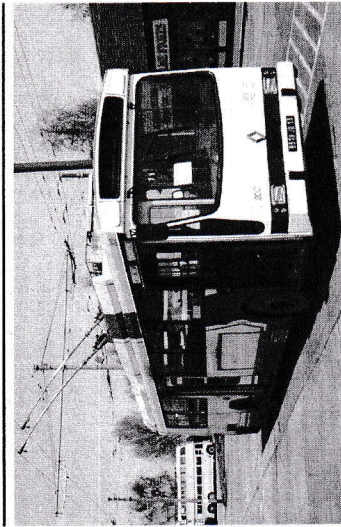
Bruce Lake



The 6 crash-box AECs on parade in Sandtoft Square
Photo: Graham Bilbé



Part of the Reading exhibition in the Axholme Stores
Photo: Graham Bilbé



202 stands in Sandtoft Square shortly after delivery

Photo: Bruce Lake

Now, Sandtoft's Acquisition Policy focuses on the more "standard" overseas trolleybuses, rather than the unique, and a French ER100 therefore figures in that policy. Dating from the late 1970s, the ER100 is quite a significant trolleybus: although confined to French systems (when new, that is, for many have now been sold out of service to Eastern European operators), it signalled a renaissance for the trolleybus obviously in France, but also in Western Europe generally, at a time it was beginning to fall from favour and enabled a large trolleybus presence in France for many more years during the '80's and '90's. Technically, it also marked a development in adopting a considerable amount of electronic technology in its control systems – the last variants built having virtually all- electronic controls. For these reasons, we at Sandtoft considered that one of these vehicles should ideally be in our trolleybus collection.

Hence, I was charged with making contact with the operator in Marseille to see what sort of condition the remaining trolleybus (numbered 202, we later found out) was in and see what arrangements could be made for transport. Martin generously agreed to fund some of its transport costs, and we discovered that 202 would be made available to us gratis, so the scene was set for acquisition. Or so it seemed. Unfortunately, we bargained without the French being involved. Or is it just the Mediterranean population which seems to take forever and make everything so complicated?

First of all, apart from acknowledging my message, the operator told us nothing. They didn't seem at all interested in the trolleybus, except for getting it out of their hair. The next we heard (weeks later) was from people in the enthusiast groups ARTM and TBFP (Trolleybus Autobus France Provence), who promised to act as go-betweens and make all the arrangements for us. So far so good. However, my French is not brilliant to say the least (school, 40 years ago!) and their English wasn't always too good either. Martin had to do some translation, especially of the technical stuff. Questions about 202's condition and whether it still worked went unanswered, but we did finally obtain its dimensions and weight and so on. This enabled Francis Whitehead to put out feelers for transport: very quickly, the options of (a) towing it through France and (b) a sea journey direct from Marseille were found to be impractical, so transporting it on a trailer was the only real choice.

I have to admit that at this point, we were really only going through the motions, as the logistics of bringing a trolleybus of unknown condition some

800 miles were pretty daunting, and we weren't getting answers to many vital questions. We knew from a photograph that we had been sent that 202 was very low to the ground (probably, we thought, having sunk on its air suspension) and had huge overhangs back and front, which, combined, were going to make going up a ramp onto a lorry trailer – even a low one – pretty difficult. It all just reinforced our resolve to take things very steadily!

However, around Christmas, the situation seemed to be getting a little worrying for ARTM / TBFP (our contacts seemed to be members of both, increasing the complexity of precisely who we were supposed to deal with), as the operator was making increasingly loud noises about wanting 202, which had by then been "reserved" for us, out of the way. We had to make a decision. With both height over the trolleybases and the length over the booms still being unknowns (neither of these were shown on maker's drawings we had), Francis had to investigate whether a trailer or low-loader could do the job, bearing in mind height restrictions on French roads and the ferry, and also charges for the ferry crossing – could it be done at a reasonable and affordable cost? He concluded that height-wise, there were millimetres in it, but it ought to be possible. And the cost was established as being something just over £3,000 including VAT.

We asked whether the auxiliary diesel engine worked and whether we could use that to pump up the suspension and drive the trolleybus up onto the trailer. After a considerable delay, the answer came back that the diesel engine ran OK, but nothing worked from it – air or drive! Not much help from that response then. I had also asked what the likelihood of obtaining any spares with the trolleybus was. The reply – when it came – was not very encouraging. Not much would be available (we suspected because the system had closed some time ago). We were getting very little of a positive nature from France.

By now it was February, and we were being pressed for a date we could fetch 202. Given all the lack of information and difficulties we had already encountered, we had decided that if we were going to have the vehicle, someone needed to go to Marseille to supervise things. I was due to go on holiday in March and shortly after it would be Easter, so we suggested late April to ARTM / TBFP. The lack of response led us to believe it wasn't very well received, but it wasn't a "no" either. With Easyjet fortuitously due to launch Liverpool to Marseille flights around Easter which made it more practical for me to make the trip, and with Francis living relatively close to Gatwick, we settled on the three days 25 to 27 April. With different flight times, day 1 would essentially be taken up with travelling and meeting up with each other and our French friends whilst the other two days would allow us time to check the trolleybus, make it ready for its journey and obtain any spare parts that might be available before getting it onto the lorry and catching afternoon/ evening flights home. We advised ARTM / TBFP accordingly.

Francis then learned from the haulage agent that the trailer they had available that was fitted with a winch was not long enough for the job and that the trailer

that was long enough *didn't* have a winch ! Back to the drawing board. We asked our French contacts if they could push 202 on with one of RTM's towing vehicles. Good news ! It turned out that RTM had a Unimog which could be used. Francis therefore provisionally booked the haulier to arrive on the morning of Thursday 27 April: we had decided on Thursday as, apart from neatly fitting in with flights for us back to the UK, it would enable 202 to get through France and to the Channel port before the weekend, when HGVs are prohibited on French roads.

Frustratingly, about a week before we were due to go, and we needed to book the flights before the prices increased any more ("low fare" airlines only have low fares if you book well in advance); we still didn't know if we were going to physically get 202 onto the lorry. Francis had done some calculations involving overhangs, angles of ascent and heights of trailers and had worked out that we needed 202's air suspension pumped up AND we needed very long ramps, otherwise both the front and the back ends (and possibly amidships) would ground as it went onto the lorry. We had not been informed whether the Unimog would actually be available either, OR whether we would be able to get the parking brake off to move 202 at all ! We therefore decided to postpone. There was no point in despatching the lorry from the UK at huge expense, only to find we couldn't do the job when it got there. We were also concerned about how we were going to get 202 off again at Sandtoft ! We reluctantly advised the ARTM people that we would be there a week later (i.e. 2 - 4 May), and asked them to urgently chase up the remaining details for us. Several days later we were a little further on, although not entirely satisfied that we had everything covered, but we now had a few more details and, helpfully, the address of La Rose depot for the haulier. Francis had ordered the longest ramps available, and we decided that we had no alternative but to go for it. We therefore booked the flights and hotel and confirmed the lorry, and informed the French that we were *definitely* on our way....

Or were we ? Due to fly out on 2 May, I was aghast to find an email sent very late on 1 May from the French saying that we *had* to postpone the trip ! The air turned blue to say the least ! This was not on ! Their reason was that RTM and the administrator responsible for Marseille transport wanted to do an official hand-over the following week with TV and the press in attendance. Following some hasty consultations, Martin Nimmo phrased a measured reply (!) to say that our flights were booked, the lorry was actually already on its way (it had left England late on the Monday) , and we had spent thousands of Euros on the project and we weren't going to change the plans at this late stage, and we would see them that week. In the absence of any reply (nothing new there then !) by the time we had to go, we set off to our respective airports, with Martin agreeing to be the focal point for contact from his desk in London.

Arriving in Marseille was relatively uneventful (although Francis did manage to get on the wrong transfer bus at the airport and end up in completely the wrong place). Despite having advised our contacts where we would be

staying, we heard nothing from them that evening. We rose fairly early on the Wednesday to travel to the RTM depot. We still had to find it, but we knew it wasn't far from the end of Metro line 1, and my map-reading skills are renowned; and finding that bus route 41 ended up at "La Rose" was quite handy. We arrived after a half-mile walk uphill in what seemed like a Mediterranean heat-wave. Just had to get in past the gate now. Doesn't anybody speak at least five words of English over there? (the answer is, generally, "non"). We eventually explained in pidgin-French who we were and who we needed to see (ARTM had kindly - and usefully - given us some contact names). The chap we asked for wasn't available, so we had to try someone else. It transpired that at least *he* knew we were coming and he arrived from some distance about 40 minutes later. He was bound to speak more English than the gate man wasn't he ? Wrong ! Anyway, we communicated after a fashion and he then walked with us to where 202 was parked (outside, of course). At last ! Sight of what we'd come for.

It was initially just a little bit of a shock - somewhat scruffy on the outside and deep dust on the inside. Our man left us to look her over, and went to try and make contact with the enthusiast group (who we hoped spoke more English and would be able to get things arranged). Detailed examination of 202 was initially fairly gloomy. It had obviously been cannibalised to a degree, as there were many odd bits missing - sawn off or rivets drilled out. However, as time went on we realised that these were largely cosmetic and could be reinstated fairly easily, and that basically she was complete and pretty sound. We set about making a list and examining the several "dead", scrap motorbuses around the place, from which we might be able to obtain replacement parts, amongst them, nearly 20 wheel-nuts.

There were also three other (similar) trolleybuses there (201, 211 & 213), along with a number of PR100 motorbuses with essentially the same body as our ER100. However, these were all preserved or at least reserved for museum groups, so we couldn't get anything from them. However, they did mean we could compare things and take lots of pictures of how things were supposed to be. Our chap from RTM came back and said that no-one from ARTM / TBFP could come until the following day. This was a blow as the lorry should be arriving at 10am. We sorted out with RTM's man how the paperwork was going to be done, and agreed to sign everything the following morning. We asked about the Unimog. It didn't seem to have been organised, so he arranged that for us, to arrive the following day about the same time as our lorry. It was the RTM recovery vehicle, so could be on stand-by at any depot.

We had now exhausted (literally - it is hard work in overalls in 30+ degrees Celsius !) all the work we could do to prepare 202, and were still short of parts. What didn't help was that La Rose wasn't the original trolleybus depot so of course there were no spares there at all. I suggested to Francis that a visit to the proper trolleybus depot was called for. Fortunately we'd bought day-tickets that covered travel on all RTM services , so nipping over there wasn't going to

be a problem. Except we didn't know how to get there and the La Rose staff didn't seem to know what we were talking about (no change there either!). I knew from previous trips that Castellane was on the old trolleybus route to it, so that would be a start and we should get the Metro and get off there. I was glad we did, because we were greeted with the sight of trolley wires still running round the Monument. This was a bit of a surprise as the road around the spectacular Monument hadn't been wired until the last few years of operation as overhead had been regarded as unsightly. On my first trip to Marseille in the late 1990s the trolleybuses de-poled automatically before reaching it and re-poled into wiring pans on the other side. Anyway, there they were, and very nice to see – and even those wiring pans were still in-situ. As we were looking a 54 motorbus rolled up. This was handy as I knew this route ended up at St. Pierre, the depot we wanted to go to. So we "did" the 54 trolleybus route, under wires for most of the way.

I was disappointed to find when we got there that half of St Pierre depot had been flattened. This was because the old tramway ran through the middle of it and now the tramway is being converted to standard gauge, they need the access, and also room to build a brand-new tramway depot. Of course, by the time we got there that afternoon most of the staff had gone home, but a very helpful chap told us who to ask for any time after 8:30 the following morning. We spent the evening using our day-tickets to trace some of the remains of the last two trolleybus routes – the 54 and the 81. We were astonished to find that most of the wiring still existed (and even some of the previous route 80). Only where the tramway construction impinged (as at St. Pierre and up at the Cabenière) did they appear to have taken down the overhead.

Next morning was an even earlier start, as we needed to get to St. Pierre and then quickly nip back to La Rose by 10.00 ready for the lorry. The person we wanted wasn't there (would *anything* actually work out on this trip?), but the staff were very helpful and found us someone who *could* assist us. He said that they hadn't any spares left as the depot had been demolished and they had cleared everything out, but he knew where there were two retriever drums. Disappointed, we said we'd have those if he didn't mind. On the way back with them he must have decided to check with his storeman to see if he knew of any more bits. Fortunately, he did!

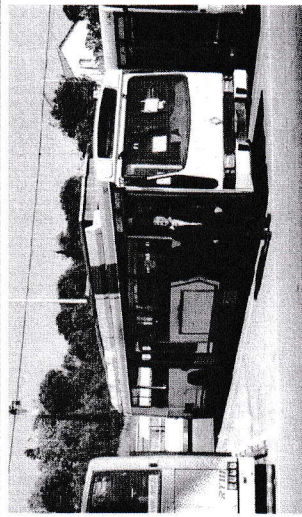
We ended up in some scruffy back-oles (as we say in Yorkshire), but the storeman was brilliant and dug out all sorts of amazing stuff. "This is off a trolleybus," he would say (en Français), "do you want it?". It didn't matter what it was, the answer was always a resounding "Oui!". We ended up with boxes of all sorts, from headlights and blinds, through gaskets, drive belts, air cylinders, control boards and switches, to prop shafts! It wasn't a structured collection of stuff, but we thought it would all be useful! We asked if they had any manuals or diagrams, which could be vital in the future. He looked in a big metal cupboard and found it was half-full of trolleybus manuals, circuit diagrams, the lot! So we now have a big box full of those. They asked if we

had a car to get all this stuff back to La Rose. We had to admit we hadn't. Our very helpful guide laughed at the idea of us dragging it all onto the Metro and said he would arrange to have all the boxes shipped across and put into 202! We left St. Pierre for the Metro, extremely gratified to have gone there and found so much useful stuff. To be honest I think they were glad to be rid of it all. The remarkable thing was that when we arrived back at 202, we found all the boxes already there! They must know a short cut.....

The less remarkable thing was that now, after 10 o'clock, that lorry and trailer wasn't there. Francis rang the agent only to be told that it would be 2 o'clock before he arrived as the truck was unloading a previous load in Toulouse, 4 hours away. Ah well, back to the trolleybus and sort through the stuff they had sent us. We stowed it away at the back of 202. A bit more sorting and the RTM guy turned up again, expecting to see a truck. We told him the bad news (which, clearly, he was not amused at). Anyway, he had brought all the documentation for the hand-over, so we spent the best part of an hour reading through this as best we could with his help. I had to sign in duplicate on several different forms. Eventually the "Carte Grise" (or log book) would be ours. We would need that to get 202 through Customs at Dover.

With RTM's blessing, we spent a further happy (and very hot) hour taking wheel-nuts off various scrap motorbuses to replace those missing off 202, and then unspannered a few other useful bits to replace missing parts. 1 o'clock came and went, and there was still no sign of anyone from ARTM or TBFP. We were now getting itchy feet about the transport, so we rang for an update. The agent

said they were having problems and that the lorry hadn't set off from Toulouse yet. That meant it would be 5 o'clock before he arrived! The French did not take this very well, as they obviously would want to be going home at that sort of time. They eyed us with the suspicion that we couldn't organise anything! Our contact said the Unimog wouldn't be available at this late time. However, we were one step ahead here and had already asked this question of the driver, and he said "of course, buses break down in the evenings too, so it had to be on standby" (or that was the gist of what he said). He also confirmed that it had a compressor on board and he could pump up 202's suspension for us. Perhaps something was going right! He would come at 4:30 and do that for us. It was now touch and go. Francis needed to leave at 2:30pm to catch his 5.00pm flight. Mine wasn't until nearly 9 o'clock, so I could stay until 6:15 at



A hot Bruce with 202: part of 202's "bumper" is off to expose the towing point. 201 is in the background

Photo: Francis Whitehead

the latest. However, if the wagon arrived at 5pm it wouldn't leave much time to get the job done, and there was no evidence that it *would* arrive at 5pm. There was no alternative but to alter at least one of our flights. Now, Easyjet had only just introduced the Marseille – Liverpool service, so there were only two weekday flights, neither of them on a Friday! Francis therefore drew the short straw and had to stay another night. This entailed cadging a lift to our RTM guide's office (at the end of the Metro line) and amending the flight booking on the internet. With one day's notice, the cheap flight of about £45 to get home turned into one of £119! That done, we returned to La Rose and waited for the lorry to arrive.

The Unimog man didn't seem in a hurry to come and see us at his promised 4.30pm and deal with the suspension, so we went to find him as 5pm approached. Of course, the job he had expected to take 5 minutes, didn't. Using the drain ports under the trolleybus to fill the air tanks with air had little effect. Either you can't do it that way, or there were valves sticking somewhere. By now a group of interested maintenance employees on their way home were gathering, most of them wanting to give advice (on a vehicle they probably had no experience on, mark you). Nothing seemed to work. Fortunately, you might say, although it didn't feel that way at the time as the lorry *still* hadn't turned up. The French would have been distinctly unimpressed had it not been for the fact that they were too busy trying to blow the suspension up on 202! They finally elected to break into the door air supply and this time they succeeded in lifting the thing off the ground - at the front only! Just as this was happening, the long-awaited lorry actually arrived. It was five minutes to six! Francis and I heaved a huge sigh of relief!

Mind you, this wasn't the end of it. The truck which arrived had fancy hydraulic ramps on the back – none of your fiddling about with loose ones - which of course means you can't adjust them either. The driver (it wasn't his fault he was late – the previous load had needed to be craned off and the French clients had failed to arrange the crane! ...) assessed the situation and decided 202 had to go on forwards, meaning it would have to reverse off at Sandtoft. At this point I had to leave for my flight, booking Francis in for an

extra night at the hotel on the way (also a problem, wanting to book a room at 7 o'clock for the same night!). I kept in touch with Francis by mobile phone, and he told me they had managed to load 202 with a lot of effort and shouting, and not without some anxious moments when it almost came off the side of the trailer in the confusion: the mass of excited



202 on board the lorry at La Rose depot at long last
Photo: Francis Whitehead

French "helpers", quite keen to go home, were not as careful as we would have been if left alone and as we feared might happen, the back end (still low on its suspension) had grounded and damaged some of the underside fibreglass protective panels; fortunately, it didn't seem too serious. The lorry had set off with 202 securely strapped on for an overnight stop at the nearest motorway service area and was likely to arrive at Sandtoft early the following Monday. Phew!

I decided I'd better be at Sandtoft when it arrived. Staff there only had an idea that it might be difficult to get 202 off, and didn't know the story of getting it on! The initial idea of letting it roll off back down the ramps on its own was now a non-starter. It would have dug up a section of runway with its back end and done itself no good either!

It would have to have the suspension pumped up again - which turned out to be straightforward now, as we could use the same method that the French had used. Fortunately there were a few of the regulars about at Sandtoft, and Harry turned up out of the blue, and he just happened to have a winch with him! This was used to steady 202 down the slope while Ian Metcalfe pulled with the tractor. Several pit-boards and other lumps of wood were used to lessen the slope of the incline and we made it with no more damage.

So now Sandtoft has a Marseille trolleybus – we think the very first Renault ER100, as all earlier ones had been Berliet and 202 was built at the time Renault took over the Berliet interests. I am steadily re-fitting and/or remaking the parts that are missing or damaged and the recent Volunteer's Day provided a team to start cleaning it down. We have been promised some of the still-missing parts by the French enthusiasts (who, incidentally apologised for not being able to help us whilst we were in Marseille), so we are now waiting for those to arrive. They also neglected to tell us at the time, that we would need several keys and some very special fuses to make 202 operational. Most of the essential refitting work is now complete (I think/hope), the keys have arrived, and a nice chap from the UK arm of Carbone Lorraine has promised us some of those specialist fuses, so very shortly we should be able to test it out! Watch this space.....

A FEW DETAILS ABOUT 202:

Date into service: 14 May 1980 **Date withdrawn:** 25 June 2004
Length (excluding booms): 11.5m **Width:** 2.5m



202, ready to be slowly manoeuvred off the lorry at Sandtoft on the morning of Monday, 8 May 2006

Photo: Bruce Lake

Height over trolleybases: 3.4m **Unladen Weight:** 10.8 tonnes
Seating Capacity: 33 **Standing Capacity:** 67 (crush loaded)
Motor: 121 kW **Auxiliary Power:** 42.5 kW diesel engine

DEAR 'SCENE

I have been following Steve Collins' *Route to Sandtoft* with much interest and have found it a fascinating insight and most informative. When he mentioned about who Rotherham 37 was given to, I thought I would trawl through my early correspondence records and see if I could come up with anything. It would seem it was initially given to the Sheffield Omnibus Group and the Manchester Trolleybus Preservation Society, although it seems the latter would eventually claim sole ownership.

Gerry Carroll (Hull)

As Secretary of the Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiast Society when the Rotherham system closed, I still have the copy of the letter from Rotherham Corporation donating this vehicle. I was responsible for its being stored in Sheffield for many years, being assisted by the Sheffield Transport General Manager Mr. C. T. Humpidge, famous for expanding the Bradford system. During this time it attended at least two rallies including the Trans-Pennine at Harrogate (en-route we passed through Bradford and put the poles on the wires for a few minutes). I also arranged for its full exterior repaint at Halifax Corporation, with the help of their General Manager Mr. G. Hilditch, a staunch trolleybus supporter. Thus I have a great interest in this bus, and it will be wonderful to see it running again.

Dennis Vickers (Chesterfield)

BOOK REVIEW

OLD BUSES by David Kaye (published by Shire Publications)

In 1982 Shire Publications produced a little book called *Discovering Old Buses* written by well known Lincolnshire transport author David Kaye. It proved an immediate success and has been reprinted at regular intervals during the 1980s and 1990s. 2006 has seen the introduction of a much enlarged version, now simply entitled *Old Buses*. It begins with a concise and useful history of the bus industry, though from a vehicular rather than an organisational viewpoint, dealing with such "dead-ends" as battery buses and steam buses in passing, as well as such developments as the petrol electric, which died out on the road, but which effectively was the precursor of the familiar diesel railcar. The author rightly notes the significance of the Leyland Lion, Britain's first "modern" motor bus, and tells us why the six-wheeler enjoyed such popularity in the late 1920s. Likewise covered are the introduction of the underfloor engine and the Leysholme Smith torque-converter transmission. Characteristically, the author makes some controversial statements from time to time, but the book's principal weakness lies in inadequate checking and proof-reading, particularly in the captions to



the illustrations, many of which have never been seen in print before. A picture purporting to show London Transport AEC Swift and Merlin single-deckers is of two Leyland Nationals; two City of Oxford AEC Regent IIs prove to be a Regent III and a Regent V; Lancashire United Leyland 114, described as a TS4, is actually a TS8, and there are several other glaring errors. Sandtoft features strongly in *Old Buses*, with no fewer than eleven pictures of vehicles at the museum, but no trolleybuses. Perhaps this is the reason for the very strange omission of the Sandtoft museum from the list of places to visit, as trams and trolleybuses will presumably have books of their own. There are, however, twenty motor buses and converted motor buses at Sandtoft; all of sufficient historical interest to make our museum worth visiting on this score alone.

Tony Peart

NEWS FROM OTHER MUSEUMS

CARLTON COLVILLE

from James Race

The Fleggburgh building is now looking very smart: internal wood doors are now fitted and painting looks complete. The fresh white walls make the interior look very spacious now. The only big job remaining is the entrance area concreting. A successful steam weekend has just been held, including two traction engines and a roller in steam - the roller being Roger Gouldby's 1924 Ruston and Hornsby, bought from the disbanded Bygone Village (at Fleggburgh, where the building also originated) and making its first steaming at the event since arriving at Carlton. On the trolleybus side the work on Portsmouth 313 is advancing noticeably - the interior is almost complete and the bus now has received undercoat to the exterior panels. London 1521 and Belfast 246 have both visited the Black Country Museum and have run in service there. Belfast 246 had a dual reason for attending as its unique braking system needed further attention and this has been undertaken. For arriving visitors the entrance area has been brick-paved and a new Kiosk is now in use (slightly bigger than the original) making a much more attractive first impression.

BLACK COUNTRY MUSEUM

from Keith Hopkinson

The status of the trolleybuses at the Black Country Museum is that Walsall 862 and Wolverhampton 433 are fully serviceable; Derby 237 is also fully serviceable after a thorough spring clean and retouch of paintwork in various areas. Bradford 735 is back on site, after being serviced and is also operational. Wolverhampton 78 sits awaiting a miracle or £2,000,000+, Teesside T291 has received considerable attention: the upper deck was stripped out, floor boarding replaced, ceiling repainted, roof vents re-chromed, new bell push surrounds manufactured and new bell pushes sourced, window surrounds repainted, side panels stripped and primed and a staircase mirror backing plate made and painted. All interior lights are now working with new ballast units fitted, the electrically-operated doors have been repaired and seat frame bases sandblasted and primed. The bottom deck has been cleared of all rubbish and surplus equipment and after cleaning it now looks as it should!

FINNINGLEY AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY **Brian McInnes, Chairman**

Situated almost next door to the Trolleybus Museum is a group of enthusiasts with the hobby of amateur radio. Some of our older readers may think back to the sketch by Tony Hancock but let me assure you that communications by amateurs today is far, far removed from that infamous sketch!

The Finningley group is some 40 members strong and consists of all ages and both sexes. Why Finningley? Well the club originally started its life on the airfield of RAF Finningley, moving to Sandtoft when the airbase shut down in 1995. Having earned a good reputation amongst other amateurs, the club decided to keep the association with its former home in its title.

Radio amateurs, or "radio hams", as they are also known, must pass an exam currently regulated by OfCom before being licensed and entitled to transmit over the airways. Amateurs have their own set of frequencies over which they can communicate with other amateurs around the world.

Throughout history, amateur radio enthusiasts, through their self-experimentation, have made significant contributions to science, engineering, industry and social services. The economic and social benefit derived from research by amateur radio operators has founded new industries, built economies, empowered nations and saved lives.

Bold statements, but consider Heinrich Hertz and his discovery of electromagnetic radiation; Guglielmo Marconi sending messages across the Atlantic and what that has meant since. How about Scottish amateur Les Hamilton (GM3ITN) feeding British Military intelligence on what the Argentinians were up to in the Falkland Islands through his contact with two Falkland Islands operators after all other methods of communications had been cut. Did you know, for example, that over 300 radio amateurs were deployed for weeks after the Lockerbie disaster? Police and other emergency services communications could not cope in the remote regions that needed to be searched. Recently, a group of amateurs were put on stand-by immediately after the London bombings when cell phone technology became overloaded.

The American space shuttle normally carries at least one radio amateur and it is possible for radio amateurs to contact the International Space Station. By clicking onto the Finningley club's website at www.goghk.co.uk and following the links you will be able to hear two of their members doing exactly that when contact was made with ISS Astronaut Bill McArthur (KC5ACR).

Amateurs like to help other organisations advertise their existence by putting on what is termed Special Event Stations and exchanging QSL cards with those whom they make contact with. These QSL cards, in simple terms, are postcards detailing the organisation in question and how, where, when contact was made. The Finningley club is presently planning to put on just such an event from the Museum during the Radio Society of Great Britain's *Museums on the Air* weekend of 18/ 19 June. The guys would love to see you and answer any questions you have. They will also show anyone around their premises whenever they call in to see them.