

Sandtoft Scene

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News and Views from
The Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft

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FRONT COVER PICTURE: Sandtoft, under a blanket of snow Photo: David Needham

Editor's Note: As you will notice, the front cover of our magazine has a new look. Our thanks go to Mr. C Barker of Hull, who very kindly designed it for us. David Needham

Our Vision Statement is

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

and portrays exactly why The Museum exists and how the Company and The Museum should be run. All considerations, decisions, directives, policies, processes and actions of the Directors and the Members must be focused to meet this end.

EDITOR'S VIEW



It is with great sadness that I have to advise that Trish Harrison passed away on 26 February 2010. Trish was a regular helper in the Museum's café. She was always there to help and encourage not only the staff, but also the visitors, and without doubt she will be sadly missed. My condolences go to her husband, Steve (our Managing Director), and their daughter, Becky.

In this edition – Steve Collins' last article on Plumtree, but that is not the last we will hear of this undertaking, as Black Rod has knocked on the door and we have for future Scenes, a series of articles from him that start at the very beginning of the trolleybus perseveration movement.

At the request of Chris Proctor, there has been a slight re-alignment of Board responsibilities, with Ian Wilson taking over as the Operations Director with the Traffic Department now reporting to Ian rather than Chns. I am sure that Ian will give us further information in future Scenes.

PATRICIA HARRISON 1962 – 2010

From Bruce Lake and Cheryll Crowther

Trish Harrison first arrived at the Trolleybus Museum "towed" behind Steve, which is how many husbands got their spouses there. Fortunately, she took to it very well, and was happy to be in at the outset when the café was set up after experiments with selling sandwiches. Mike Dare had been pushing for a proper café for some time, and he was delighted that several of "the girls", including Trish, got stuck in and made it a success. Indeed, it wasn't long before the folding stools that had been acquired for the staff to sit on in their quieter moments were thrown out as redundant as they never had time to use them! Trish made the perfect customer-facing member of staff, to give it its modern term. She took over the taking of customer orders, preparing the drinks and running the till and was often the first of the café staff that customers came into contact with. This was ideal, as her jolly and unflustered nature went down well with visitors.



From left to right Trish Harrison, Jill Ferris, Cheryll Crowther, Judith Martindale and Bernice Needham Photo: Doug Barrow

When not serving, she and the other ladies would have a good chinwag and her cheerful laugh would echo down the corridors of the Axholme Stores. You could always tell when the ladies were having a good time! Although the café was hard work, Trish was always proud when adding up the takings for the day and found they had exceeded expectations. As the new season starts, all the café ladies will miss Trish terribly and so will the visitors.

and from Brian Maguire

I first met Trish just before her marriage to Steve. I was proud to be the only Sandtoft member to be invited to their wedding, on 31 July 1993. Many visits were made to their new home in Lincoln over the next few years, whilst Steve knocked the place about, fitting a new kitchen and doors etc. The mess that brick saw made!!

Along came the baby, young Becky, and again, I was around to share the joy of two good friends, as I was at Trish's 40th birthday "bash" at the Pyewipe. It was great to see Trish find a slot to help at the Museum in the café, and really enjoy herself - well, she did look terrified at the till sometimes!

I know Trish worked in the insurance offices in Lincoln, and she was a really lovely person. I consider it a privilege to have spent a little of my life knowing her. I know how upset I feel, so cannot even begin to comprehend how her family must be feeling: none of them deserved this. I will miss her smile in that café.

BERYL DARE 1942 – 2009

From Roy Fawcett

It was mentioned in the last edition of *Sandtoft Scene*, just as it was about to go to print, that Beryl had sadly passed away on 30 December 2009 (note not 29th as stated in *Trolleybus*), aged 67, after having been quite poorly since mid-November.

Beryl was born in 1942 and brought up in Wandsworth, London. After leaving school Beryl went to Bromley College to train as a teacher, and having qualified, she took a teaching position at George Palmer Infants School in Reading. Reading was to remain her home, as Beryl moved on to Moorlands Infants School in Tilehurst, Reading where she met Mike (who was an Assistant Head at Moorlands Primary). Beryl later moved to her last teaching post at Ranikhet School, also in Tilehurst.

Beryl and Mike were married in 1970 and enjoyed 35 happy years together. However Mike kept Beryl a secret until the wedding was set and at one memorable committee meeting at my house, when we were sorting out dates for Reading Transport Society (as the BTS was called then) events in 1970, Mike just quietly dropped into the discussion that we could not use a particular date as he would be getting married that day!

When not working, Mike and Beryl spent their leisure time very much together and particularly enjoyed holidays on canal boats, breaks at Westgate where they could relax, and, of course, their foreign holidays. One of the first of those was to Russia, in 1974: this was in the days before Communist Russia was really open to foreign tourists. Mike considered their foreign holidays to be "fact-finding missions" as there was always a tram and/or trolleybus system there, and if possible, passing below the hotel bedroom window!

Beryl gave her wholehearted support to Mike with his fleet of buses at Westgate, the Sandtoft museum which was his "dream come true", and the BTS, where she helped Mike run the sales stall for 30 years, helped with sending out the journal each month and hosted the committee meetings at their



Beryl was in her element talking to visitors about the Museum's exhibitions

Photo: Graham Bilbé

will. My thoughts go out to Beryl's sister, Pauline, and brother-in-law, Steve, who were very close and I know they are missing her deeply too.

DIRECTORS' SPOT

..... from Graham Bilbé, Chairman:

At the time of writing, another operating season is almost upon us, and there remain so many things still to do! Despite the best efforts of our site team, the weather has thwarted several of the projects we had hoped to progress this last winter. Nonetheless, I have personally found my life completely taken over with "Trolleybus Business" in the last two months, either for Sandtoft or BTS! So, it's actually been quite an "eventful" winter behind the scenes, with a new cherry-picker being purchased, work on a new fleet handbook (to be published jointly with Venture Publications), several slide shows for different groups, trying to help sort out the return of London 1348 for Sandtoft (and Manchester 1344 for BTS), visits to farmers regarding vehicle storage, trying to finish tests on Edmonton 189 and Huddersfield 541, re-fitting 203's traction motor (with help from Ian M), chasing up and collecting new wheels for "William", the horse-drawn tower wagon - it feels more like a full-time job than being "semi-retired"! There's certainly never a dull moment, but there are some sad ones. Opening the last issue of *Sandtoft Scene* and seeing no less than three obituaries, all of people who, in their time, had put far more than average into our Museum, was very sad, especially as I had just heard that Trish Harrison had finally lost her fight against cancer. I'm sure there will be others better qualified to write her full obituary, but I would like to say here that few gave of their time and intellect to Sandtoft so willingly and uncomplainingly, and we are all better off by virtue of her superb efforts, especially in the café. Trish will always be loved and remembered by those who knew her, and we shall be considering carefully a suitable memorial to her hard work and admirable character. A conservatory "lean-to" on the end of the café has been suggested, or another round bench similar to that dedicated to Mike Dare, but

at this stage the Board would welcome your suggestions as to how we might best remember dear Trish, and of course any donations to help achieve it.

Which brings me onto a rather sombre topic that I have been meaning to raise for some while - that of our mortality, and what happens to our "stuff" when we are gone. Most of us enthusiasts have a tendency to collect items of interest to our hobby, from tickets and photographs to complete vehicles. We never know what is around the corner, and it would be nice to think that these items that we have rescued from oblivion might serve to educate or at least interest others in future generations - after all, that's what preservation is all about, isn't it?

So, please consider Sandtoft when writing or revising your will - and if you don't already have one, I recommend that you put it in hand sooner, rather than later. Now that we have an archive room, Adrian Dennison and Dave Lovegrove have been working hard to list and organise our smaller exhibits. Whilst we cannot undertake to accommodate absolutely everything in perpetuity, we will do our best to look after specific items of "value" or relevance to the trolleybus story, should you decide to leave them to us. In the case of larger items - vehicles, for example - it would be helpful to make contact with an appropriate Board member to verify the suitability of what you have in mind before formalising it. In most cases it would be helpful to include a "dowry" with your vehicle to assist its longer term maintenance, though of course any financial bequests will help the Museum, with or without a vehicle... Without wishing to dwell on this unhappy subject unduly, do please give it some thought.

By the time you read this we should be well on with the annual overhead inspection, hopefully passing out some more vehicles for operation this year, and maybe even collecting up one or two of the "new" vehicles that keep being offered to us!

The Board has also been applying considerable thought to events beyond the present season, in particular the centenary of British trolleybuses, and the 50th anniversary of trolleybus preservation by enthusiasts (both in 2011): and the Rotherham Centenary, and 50th anniversary of the London system's closure in 2012. We are working on lining up some interesting "visitors" for these events, in liaison with our fellow museums, so there will certainly be some exciting times to come!

Later this year we hope to finally achieve Accredited Museum status - results expected in July - on which Bruce Lake, in particular, along with a few others, have worked incredibly hard in recent months. This work will be largely unseen by the average visitor or even members, but without question, raises our profile in the museums movement, which can only be a good thing. We have also received considerable help from our professional museums advisors, Jaane, Sue and Robin, for which we are very grateful.

Last thing for me to mention this time is the annual dinner, to be held - as last year - at the *Green Tree*, Hatfield, on Sunday 30 May at 7.00pm. Last year's 40th Anniversary "do" was hailed as a great success, so I see no reason why we shouldn't celebrate every year in similar fashion! Price of the dinner has

been pegged at only £10, plus a small donation towards the bus if travelling down from the Museum - all part of the fun, especially the sing-song on the way back! A booking form should be included with this issue - if you don't have one or have lost it, you can pick up another at the Museum reception, or contact me (see page 2). Bookings really should be made a week before the event, (though we may be able to squeeze in a few more later, but please don't rely on that!) The function room can take 120 people, last year we had 70 present - let's see if we can fill it up.

I made a comment at Trish's funeral that her tragic loss highlights the need to value and cherish the great people that we have at Sandtoft. Someone else added that a real "community" has grown up within the Museum - something we all deserve to celebrate and be proud of. Do come if you can!

..... **from Aiden Proctor, Commercial Director:**

Total 2009 visitor numbers (5,666) were down 2.68% on 2008 (5822), but this variation can be explained by some extremely well-attended events right at the end of 2008 (the St. Leger Rally, with a visit from the Cambridge and Oxford Car Owners Club for their AGM, the Reading Twilight Event and the load - if that is the correct collective noun - of Beaver Scouts at the Santa Weekend), so 2009 is in no way disappointing. Well done to all who helped!

The "trial" online shop has sold £194-worth of DVDs since going live in October. The plan is to now expand the range of items offered by the online shop over the course of this season.

The sale of 'Gathering stall' space this year is being done through our website only and is selling well. Additionally, TDE 2011 will be sold online only and I am investigating the possibility of selling advance admission tickets online. TDE is now sold out for 2010 and no more dates will be added as staff are so stretched.

The 2010 leaflet is now available and looks fantastic, and features for the first time a 3-D drawing of the Museum. This illustration is also to be used for a revamped visitor handout, as suggested in the VAQAS (Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme) report we received last year. Thought is being applied to how we improve and widen our publicity activities: to do this we will be looking for a Press Officer and details will appear in due course.

THE ROUTE TO SANDTOFT

Steve Collins

PLUMTREE - PART 12

The Great Sack



Years ago, if an army occupied an enemy town, it would be sacked, which means that everything of value would be carried off by the victors, and that is the only way I can describe what happened at Plumtree in those last weeks of December 1974.

A combined force of men from Sandtoft, which included Len Smith, Jim Sambrooks, Bob Ashton, a very young Phil Howard, Tom Bowden and myself, teamed up with Grimsby John, Roger the Bodger and Steve Blood (the well-known Derby preservationist), to do the job. There were probably other people as well, but after 31 years, that's the best I can do. One person who didn't

show during the proceedings was The Chairman, and considering that the site was his responsibility, I think it shows just how low he was at this point. He, more than anyone, had tried to keep Plumtree going, and obviously, he couldn't face seeing the last of his dream destroyed.

The first vehicle to leave was Notts. & Derbys. 357, a 1949 Weymann-bodied BUT, which Green Tree George towed to Sandtoft one Sunday. Several of us went with it and it arrived on site with a large poster



Notts. & Derbys. 357 is prepared to leave Plumtree

Photo: Steve Collins

The next departure was the "Birmingham Horse Bus", which had been sold to some Birmingham enthusiasts, who came for it with a lorry. The "Birmingham Horse Bus", of which only the lower deck remained, had been discovered on an allotment at Colwick near Nottingham, where it had been owned by a Mrs. Beaton (not the author of the famous Victorian cookery book, I must add, or if it was, she must have been wearing devilish well). The thing about the "Birmingham Horse Bus", which is what it was always called, is that it was not a horse bus at all: it was, in fact, the remains of a 1913 Tilling Stevens TTA2 which had started life with BMMO (Midland Red), passing to Birmingham Corporation as their number 26 the following year. Registered O 9926, it ran in service until 1924, following which the chassis was cut up. The body was found on the allotment 43 years later.

As well as the bus body, the Birmingham group also took the back axle from Derby tower wagon no.2, which was an engineless derelict, abandoned on site some years earlier. They hooked a wire rope to the tower, then pulled the thing over with their lorry, and cut out the axle with oxy. They didn't say a lot, those Birmingham lads, they just loaded their goodies and left all the mess for us to sort out. They did a good job with O 9926 though, so good luck to them.

Not wanting to leave wreckage of that kind on the site, Big Tommy from Newark was summoned, to clear up what was left of the Derby tower wagon, the ex-Trent FEDD, which had also been left on its side, and the lower deck of Nottingham tram number 67, which was immovable.

Green Tree George arrived again, and this time he took Midland General 117, an AEC Regent III non-runner, to a farm at Saxondale for temporary storage;

he returned and took Cleethorpes trolleybus no.54 to the same place, as it was still not accepted at Sandtoft due to its condition. Before 54 left, Tom Bowden used a ladder to climb up what was left of its back end, to tie the booms to the hooks. Tom went with 54, and when he and George returned, he said "You saw me tie the booms to the hooks didn't you?" I said I had, and he continued "What I should have done was tie the hooks to the roof."

At some point between Plumtree and Saxondale, 54's hooks had parted company with the roof, the booms had sprung up, and catapulted the hooks to nobody knows where. The first thing Tom and George knew was when they realised that the booms were flailing about, bringing phone lines down. It can be a hazardous job towing trolleybuses about. The hooks were never found, and there has been endless speculation as to where they ended up. Tom always has visions of an old cove emerging one morning, and finding the said hook assembly lying neatly in the middle of what had been his greenhouse. Not only would he not know how the thing had got there, but he would also have no idea what it was.

While all this was going on, the good men loaded West Bridgford Daimler 25 with a stash of booty looted from the site: Len Smith had taken down most of the chain link fence and the cut-down Derby bracket arms it had been fastened to; Phil Howard and myself had collected up all the wheels that were lying about from vehicles that had been scrapped; there was a very long, heavy ladder with "Station Master Widmerpool" painted on it. Widmerpool was the next station down the line, and this ladder had been appropriated by some nefarious unknowns some years before. Apparently they had crept off down the line under cover of darkness and drunken laughter, and seen the opportunity to swipe the station master's ladder and bear it off as a trophy. Odd the things some people will do for social advancement.

West Bridgford 25 was destined to provide body parts for Nottingham 466, and fortunately, someone had stacked all the lower deck seats into the upper deck, which gave us a lot of room for all this stuff: first in were all the wheels, there were at least 20 of them, everything else being slung on top. Thus loaded, 25 was hooked up by George so he could tow it to Sandtoft, suspended. We didn't go, but told George where to leave it so we could sort it out as and when. I thought later that we should have daubed the word "swag" on the side, but that is a four letter word, and the graffiti artists at Plumtree never progressed to words of more than three.

Grimsby John had arranged for his Grimsby Guy Arab and AEC Regent to go to a place called Bicker Fen in Lincolnshire for storage, and both left when I was not there.

We had a break for Christmas Day, but were back again on Boxing Day to carry on. The Bedford WLB previously operated by Teas, Biscuits, Minerals and Crisps also left when I wasn't there, and I don't know where that went. Somebody from Aldershot, or somewhere in that neck of the woods, came to look at the derelict Dennis Lancelot, but said they didn't think it would get to the bottom of the drive, let alone to where ever they were from.



The trolleybus that started it all for Steve Collins - Nottingham 578, seen in happier days at Plumtree
Photo: Steve Collins

Nottingham 578, the trolleybus that had entangled me in all this in 1965, was still owned by The Chairman, and he needed to sell it to pay off the last of his debts incurred at Plumtree. Out of the blue, Roger the Bodger said he would take it on, and in view of the approaching year-end, The Chairman agreed to let it go, provided the finance was sorted out quickly. Green Tree George towed it to Sandtoft on the last Sunday in 1974.

Grimsby John saw a farmer in Plumtree village, and arranged for the derelict Dennis, the Bedford OWB, and Nottingham 802 to go there. He used 802 to tow the OWB, then the Dennis, which, contrary to the views of the miseries from Aldershot, not only made it to the end of the drive, but also about a mile down the road. Some people have no faith. The Dennis was the last vehicle to leave Plumtree Station. The site was now empty. Everything of value had been taken away. The Great Sack was over - Len Smith said it was the best Christmas he ever had in his life.

There were, of course, still a few loose ends to tie up. The two buses which had gone to the farm at Saxondale both moved to an airfield at Saitby in Leicestershire. Midland General 117 became a mess room for a gliding club: it was painted yellow and given the name Boris. It was broken up on site by itinerants in 1977. Cleethorpes 54, the pariah of the trolleybus world, was used as a windssock anchor until finally being accepted at Sandtoft, also in 1977. The "Birmingham Horse Bus" was fitted to an appropriate chassis, and restored as Birmingham 26. It now lives at Wythall.

Nottingham 578 was taken to Sandtoft by Roger the Bodger, but he neglected to pay for it. The Chairman sent a message to Tom Bowden saying that the money was needed urgently, and Tom relayed this to Roger. Roger then pushed a note through Tom's door telling him he did not want 578. Young Phil

Howard then stepped forward and said he would have it: he still owns it 31 years later, which means he has owned it for longer than all its previous owners put together.

West Bridgford 25 was dismantled at Sandtoft during 1975, the body being used in the re-building of Nottingham 466. The chassis was sold to The Student from Huddersfield, who used it as spares for CCX 777, formerly West Bridgford 24.

Grimsby John disposed of all his vehicles except his Grimsby AEC Regent III: The Guy Arab workhorse which went to Bicker Fen was broken up, I don't know when; the derelict Dennis was also broken up in the farmyard at Plumtree - Grimsby John broke up the body, with the help of two passing cyclists, then got a breaker in to see off the chassis. The people from Aldershot decided to take BUX 608, the ex Whittle Bedford OWB, and as a bonus, Grimsby John threw the remains of the Dennis into it as a New Year gift. Nottingham tower wagon 802 was sold to Sandtoft, where it arrived in March 1975. It was purchased in typical Plumtree fashion by means of a "whip round". It was used as a workhorse until 1986, when it was restored, and is now classified as a preserved tower wagon. The Grimsby AEC Regent III also turned up at Sandtoft, where it still remains.

As a last memorial, part of the boundary fence was re-erected at Sandtoft, and though past its best, it was in use along the "back straight" until recently when it was replaced with a new welded mesh fence. Apart from the vehicles, it was all that remained of eleven years of effort and shattered dreams.

Snaresstone, the son of Plumtree, only outlived its parent by two years, being cleared at Christmas 1976. The last vehicle to leave was Nottingham 702, an AEC Regal owned by Tom Bowden, and this was towed to Boughton near Ollerton by Barton 816, driven by The Engineer. Tom's comment at the time was "Only we would be daft enough to tow a bus in a snowstorm on the shortest day of the year". I got lumbered with steering 702 (which had no engine), and I would modify Tom's statement as follows. "Only I would be daft enough to steer a bus on tow, with no heater, in a snowstorm, with the grand daddy of all draughts surging round the cab, on the shortest day of the year". Born to suffer, that's me.

While incarcerated in 702's cab, as well as being frozen stiff, I also missed what is now one of Phil Howard's favourite recollections: as 816 approached a traffic island, the vehicles preceding it slowed, then stopped. A van that was masquerading as "an incredibly realistic log-effect gas fire" was immediately in front of 816, and when the traffic began to move off, the van didn't. An interesting selection of grinding and clunking noises was heard, prior to the incredibly realistic log-effect gas fire lurching backwards. The Engineer nearly had a fit, but we were soon on our way again.

Following the exodus from Snaresstone, the old bat who had her lair in the station house became suspicious about all the activity, and ventured as far as the goods shed door and peered inside. What she saw was an empty shed, and the conclusion she jumped to was that the wicked people who had blighted her life for the past four years had done a flit (probably owing money)

and had taken the shed door with them. The door was actually just slid back on the inside of the building, and was much bigger and thicker than the ones on the depot at Sandtoft. When 702 had left, nobody had bothered to close the door, so the old bat rang the police and reported it stolen. She was a real old baggage, right enough, and it was probably worth leaving Snarestone just to get away from her.

All the vehicles owned by the Dastardly Door Thieves of Snarestone are still around, though all are now under new management. West Bridgford AEC Regent III number 21 is at Boughton where Phil Howard is restoring it. Barton 816 was sold to somebody in Huddersfield, where it regenerated into Cumberland 291, its original identity. GNU 750 the Blue Bus Daimler coach, passed to a new owner in Coventry, then to the British Leyland Heritage Collection. Derby 27, the Brush-bodied Daimler CVD6, which during its life has been just about everywhere, became both homeless and ownerless following Snarestone's demise. In a remarkable burst of inspiration, Steve Blood, the well-known Derby preservationist, contacted Derbyshire Museums Department, and calling upon his impressive powers of eloquence and cunning, convinced them that what they needed was a former Derby Corporation Daimler omnibus. He overcame obstacles like the fact that they had nowhere to put one, by pointing out that there was a place in Cheshire where this prize exhibit could be stored until such time as it could take its rightful place as the centrepiece in the County's industrial museum. So in 1977, it was agreed that Derby 27 would go to Burtonwood for storage, and all the bills would go to Derbyshire Museums for payment. Weeks, months and years went by until in about 2000, somebody at the Museums Department asked

why were they paying to keep an old bus that they did not own, in a shed in Cheshire. Enquiries were made, and nobody could come up with an answer: presumably, whoever Steve had arranged it with had moved on and neglected to tell their replacement anything about it. Derby 27 was therefore, evicted, but Steve Blood duped somebody else into taking it. All's well that ends well.

So there it is, the story of a failed enterprise. Just how much of a failure will be the topic of debates and discussions for many years to come, and others can make up their own minds as to the final judgement.

Exactly who was responsible at the start of this series, I put forward my view that it was all Mike Dare's fault, because *he* had started the trolleybus preservation movement, and the Nottingham Group had followed his example. Mike saw the first instalment of my saga, and begged to differ. In fact, he gave me a right panning, and said he would get even and set the record straight. Sadly, of course, he was not able to do that, so I don't know what he would have said. He did, however, strike the first blow. The last time I saw Mike, he arrived with a group of visitors just as I emerged from the gloom next to Nottingham 367. He introduced me as being the closest thing Sandtoft had to a village idiot, whose only contribution to the greater good was inflicting 367 on the civilised world. He could be cruel at times.

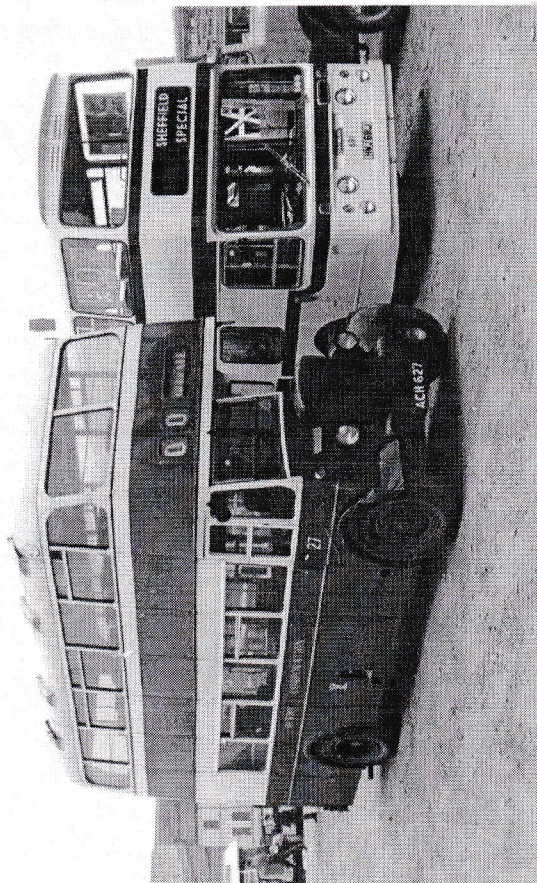
To be fair, a few of the things that went wrong at Plumtree weren't really his fault: he never advocated preserving toastracks fitted with steam engines, or fragments of horse buses stacked in old dolly tubs. I knew Mike for over 35 years, and in all that time I don't recall him ever even mentioning dolly tubs, let alone storing horse buses in them. One thing that I will recount is the arrival at Sandtoft of Mexborough 34. Mike was on site, so was I, and he gave me a real drubbing for that as well - "This sort of thing," he bellowed, "its got to stop - this place is getting just like Plumtree!" 34 was nothing to do with me, but I still got the blame. He was a cruel man, but fair.

Be that as it may, I still say Plumtree was all *his* fault.

But it's an ill wind that blows no good, so what good came out of Plumtree? When the list of fiascos and scrapings is put aside, it must be said that a lot of vehicles still survive that might not if Plumtree had never been there. In all, no less than 14 trolleybuses were kept at Plumtree at various times: these were Nottingham 466, 493, 502, 578, Derby 175, 215, 224, 237, Notts. & Derbys. 357, Huddersfield 541, Rotherham 37, Manchester 1250, Cleethorpes 54 and Ashton 80. As well as these, Nottingham tower wagon 802, and Derby tramcar no.1 were also kept there, as were numerous motorbuses.

So, the truth of the matter must be that fourteen trolleybuses survive today that might not if Plumtree had never been there. That must count for something surely, so who gets the credit?

Black Rod, The Teacher, The Chairman, Ted White, all contributed, so did many others. Tom Bowden did a phenomenal amount, both before, and after he teamed up with me, and I think I deserve some, because if I had not got myself re-involved just when things were starting to go sour, and teamed up with Tom to save what we could, I shudder to think what would have



Derby 27, seen with Sheffield 691

Photo: Steve Collins

happened. It was lucky really that Sandtoft had been set up at just the right time to enable me to take 493 there, and start the ball rolling to save all the others. But hang on a minute, I only got re-involved because Sandtoft was there to accept 493. If it hadn't been, I would have had nowhere to take it to, would have left it stood in the mud at Plumtree, and left Black Rod to sort it out. So the actual reason so many trolleybuses survived is because Sandtoft was founded at just the right time, and who founded Sandtoft? Mike Dare!

But this would mean that the person who actually deserves the most credit for those fourteen trolleybuses must be Mike Dare! After all the arguments, all the costs, all the losses and all the hassle, the person who comes out of the mess with the most credit is the same person who was responsible for it in the first place - that can't be right - can it?

Postscript

That was to have been the final line of my story. I wrote the beginning, then the end, then let the middle take care of itself. The first time I met Mike Dare was in 1970, when I called in to see him at Westgate. He was applying blue paint to Derby 172's windows, as part of its wartime image, and confided to me that it was a horrible job, and that he wished he had never started it. A certain Mr. Maguire was fitting the wooden slatted seats, and two young lads were helping in various ways. That was Mike at his best, in his chapel, with his helpers and his trolleybuses.

As for saying that Plumtree was his fault, that's not really correct. A more accurate description would be that he inspired Plumtree, the same way that he inspired so many people. I think that probably the fairest way to put it is - **If it can be said that one man preserved Britain's trolleybus heritage, that man is Mike Dare. The saddest thing is that he probably never even realised just how many vehicles he saved.**

NEWS BULLETIN

Financial

Our financial stability continues to improve, following the huge outlay for the extra land. However, our Accredited Museum application has revealed a number of gaps in the Museum's arrangements which need to be filled, and these will create expense in most cases. In addition, we need to provide accommodation for any vehicles we borrow for next year's trolleybus centenary celebrations. It is desirable that the proposed new building be ready by then, but this may not be practical and we may have to look at alternatives in that case. Either way, it won't be cheap! One of the necessary tasks for accreditation is to monitor the temperature and humidity that our collection is stored in. The "collection" is not just the trolleybuses and motorbuses, but also anything we deem as a necessary part of the Museum - so that will cover a selection of ticket machines, uniforms, destination blinds, models, photographs, manuals and other records. To automate this, we have purchased five temperature/humidity data-loggers which will record a regular stream of data which we can then analyse - and take action on.

Gift Aid

A further cheque has been received from HM Revenue and Customs to settle (along with associated interest) our latest Gift Aid application. Thanks go to John Zebedee for his sterling work in putting all the relevant data together: he has already prepared the next sequential application, and then we'll have to submit the one for the 2008-9 financial year, so as to reap the benefit of the Government's transitional Gift Aid relief following the reduction in the basic rate of income tax.

Trolleybus Driving Experience

The TDEs last year made an appreciable amount for the Museum. Discussions have taken place as to whether this income should be put towards a specific project: one idea would be to put it, and subsequent years' TDE profit towards restoring Bradford 743 as a driver training trolleybus - the rôle in which it finished its working life: it has long been an idea to have a dedicated driver training trolley vehicle. A further idea could be to restore the platform and lower saloon to allow disabled and wheelchair access, thus substantially reducing the amount of seating re-upholstery work required; initially (at least) there would be no requirement to renovate the upper saloon. The result would be a dual purpose trolleybus and a real asset the Museum. Member's comments on these suggestions are invited.

Subscription and Vehicle Maintenance Contributions

In line with the Board's declared policy to not increase subscription and vehicle maintenance contributions during the recession, there have been no increases for two years. These rates are now being examined with a view to applying a modest increase at the beginning of next year.

Grants

The data-loggers mentioned above have been purchased with the help of a grant from Renaissance Yorkshire's Museum Development Fund. The data-loggers will be set up around the Museum quite soon: you may see them in some of our buildings - they are yellow and look like movement detectors. The data will periodically be downloaded from them onto a laptop for analysis.

Another grant we applied for late last year, to MLA, was for £10,000 towards improving museum access and experience in 2012 - the Olympic Year. During 2012, it is expected that thousands of foreign visitors will visit Britain, and museums were being offered this grant to ensure that the most is made of museum visits by these visitors. Having already recognised the potential of 2012, Francis Whitehead put together a comprehensive package of proposals that were already in our Forward Plan but needing funding, to substantially improve our Museum's facilities and at the same time fit the criteria for the grant. Very disappointingly, our application was not successful and we are now seeking alternative ways of progressing the different improvements.

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety sub-group met in December, when they progressed a number of issues. A gap analysis produced some time ago was reviewed, and it was found that around 70% of the actions required at that time had now been completed. That was considered a good achievement, and efforts are

on-going to progress the remainder, along with further requirements. Our new Training Co-ordinator, Linda Proctor, attended the meeting as naturally, much of the improvements in health and safety rely on training. In addition to maintaining our new staff experience database, she will record any training received. Traffic and the café are areas already well-placed in this respect, the former by virtue of Stewart David's efforts and the latter because of health and hygiene legislation. It will be necessary to bring all other areas up to the same sort of standard.

The staff experience database now has about 30 of our key volunteers on it: if you haven't yet got round to providing your details, then please take a few minutes to advise Linda. In line with recommendations, the Museum's accident book is now being reviewed at Board Meetings. Fortunately, accidents to date have been few and far between, and those reported have been of a very minor nature. However, staff are reminded that every personal accident should be recorded in the book, which is kept in the Traffic Office.

An Emergency Plan has now been written, and staff will be expected to know where it is and how to respond to any emergency we may have. A copy is kept in the Traffic Office, and familiarisation with its contents will be the subject of training in due course. As part of this, an "Incident Officer" will be designated at every open day. The Incident Officer will be responsible for acting on any emergency on open days, should it occur.

We have recently obtained a new cherry picker as the old one had developed problems that were going to be expensive to rectify and was just about life expired. Any staff member who was trained on the old one will need new training in the operation of this acquisition as it is different in a number of ways. Peter Rowell will be writing risk analyses and safe systems of work for it, which staff will have to follow.

Occasionally, trolleybuses need to be test-run after repair work, but before they have been passed for service by the vehicle examiners. This is obviously potentially dangerous and it has been questioned whether anyone but an examiner should do this. However, to make that rule would be very restrictive, and sometimes the restorer or repairer will have a better idea of the repair than the examiner, so it has been decided that the restorer or repairer may test the vehicle (provided he/she is authorised on that type of vehicle) as long as an examiner is present and aware that this is taking place. Any major works should be checked over by an examiner first, even if the vehicle is still "in-test".

Site Works

The dreadful winter has curtailed quite a lot of site work, but some has been done. Five new windows have been fitted to the back of the toilet block to replace rotten ones. The hedge along the workshop road has been trimmed to match what is expected from the newly planted hedge in due course: the latter hawthorns (almost 300 of them !) duly arrived and were planted by a working party along the line of the Museum's old northern boundary. They will take time to become established, but will form an effective barrier when they have.

An area behind the Memorial Garden, and stretching towards the admission

building has been stoned up to form a level area for disabled parking. Please note that this is a designated disabled parking area and no-one should park here unless they qualify to do so - this is relevant to our volunteer staff and to anyone undertaking car park duties on open days.

To provide more staff parking space at the back of the depot, members' caravans should not be parked in this area from this season: instead, they are to be parked on the "new" land behind the workshop road. This is more spacious (and nearer the toilets anyway !). Electrical hook-up facilities will be provided here in due course.

Organisational

Our operations rôle is being reorganised. Due to pressure of work elsewhere, Chris Proctor has relinquished much of his operations rôle, passing it to Ian Wilson, who takes on the title of Operations Director. To assist Ian, Tony Ferris is administering the rostering for open days. Chris will continue to manage reception/ admissions and the *Trolleyshop* and have a watching brief over the café (note also Chris' new email address - see page 2). Operations are a most important aspect of the Museum, and the Board will be closely monitoring the changes to see whether any further improvements can be made.

Museum Accreditation Submission

Adrian Dennison has done sterling work in compiling a schedule of all the objects in our collection (not including things like spare parts and *individual* bits of overhead equipment which we are not classing as part of "the collection"). He has created a database which records all the necessary details of the objects. At the time of writing, he still has to fill in the hand-written copy of the accession register, and suitably label most of the objects. Any help which can be offered on the latter task would be gratefully received.

The Board have approved and adopted a range of up-dated or new documentation that is called for by the Accreditation process (much of it is necessary for the effective running of a business anyway). Included were the acquisition and disposal policy, an up-dated forward plan, complete with associated costs, an up-graded organisation chart and the initial summary of the emergency plan. These, along with the Company's up-to-date Memorandum and Articles of Association, our VAGAS appointment letter and signed copies of the past two years' accounts have been sent to the Accreditation Board. Two meetings with our Curatorial Adviser, Susan Hopkinson, our Museum Development Officer, Jaane Rowehl and our Regional Accreditation Officer, Robin McDermott, have moved things on considerably. Their expertise in knowing what is required for accreditation, coupled with their detailed knowledge of our Museum has been invaluable.

Our application went in on time and we are now awaiting a date for the assessor to visit us, at which time we will have to have other documentation available for inspection. These include our documentation procedural manual, our backlog plan, our full emergency plan and our staff experience chart: these, thankfully, are all completed or well on the way.

TROLLEYBUS ANNIVERSARIES

Compiled by Geoff Welburn

January to June

Systems Opened

85 years since Wigan opened on 7 May 1925

Systems Closed

95 years since Rhondda closed on 1 March 1915

75 years since York closed on 5 January 1935

50 years since the systems at Grimsby and Cleethorpes (by then operated by

the joint Grimsby-Cleethorpes Transport) closed on 4 June 1960

40 years since Cardiff closed on 11 January 1970

DEPARTMENTAL NEWS

TRAFFIC OFFICE

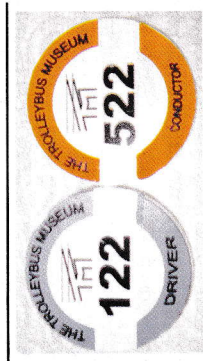
Driving Authorisation and Entitlement Procedures

Please be reminded that it is a fundamental requirement that all persons who drive or operate trolleybuses, motorbuses and ancillary vehicles or equipment under the Museum's fleet insurance policy are at ALL TIMES fully paid-up members of Sandtoft Transport Centre Limited. Also, all such members are required to produce their driving licence for annual audit by the Traffic Manager or his deputy at the start of the new operating season.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in withdrawal of authority to drive or operate such vehicles upon the Company's premises.

Trolleybus Driver and Conductor Badges

Colour-coded badges have been produced for all our current trolleybus drivers and conductors: the badges bear the individual serial number of driver's or conductor's permit and should be displayed at all times when performing traffic duties at the Museum. Thanks to Paul Shepherd for arranging the production and distribution of these.



VEHICLES REPORTS

Cardiff 203 (Report from Brian Maguire) Work has started on the top deck ceiling, with the two domes being stripped back and primed. Work then returned downstairs to the interior, where panels were all warped as they were made of hardboard. Replacing these with plywood was - or is - no easy job. The nearside replacements are in place, but to achieve this, all the seat frames have had to be removed to get the new plywood up under the window pans. New cloth has been sourced to fit on the plywood, and both decks have to be treated the same way.

I am indebted to Peter Smith for his supply of information, and answering my many questions posed to him. When painting the exterior, it was noted that the nearside panels were not in as good condition as was thought. The decision was taken to remove them and replace panels and beads. It has not been possible to get a straight line with the beads due to the window pans being

fitted in place crooked, when previously restored. The top deck is now painted, as is the rear, despite the freezing weather we have had to work in to achieve our May deadline. The lower deck seats have returned from the upholsterer, and the top deck ones have gone away; new bases on seven seats have been made. The seating alone will cost nearly £10,000 and donations are welcome by Roy Fawcett, in memory of Mike Dare and Geoff Griffiths. The traction motor is now in place and at Easter, after much work underneath, the vehicle was test-run. **Bradford 562** (Report from Brian Maguire) With the front of the body removed to access the chassis, we worked out roughly where the front framing should sit. Shortly afterwards Geoff Lumb came over with a set of body drawings and seating layout, plus photographs of the chassis! All of immense help, as I am not at all familiar with these trolleybuses - 562 was withdrawn from service the year I was born!

A sheet of hardboard has been fitted to the front floor to allow us to draw out where things sit, but part way through, someone spilt bitumen paint over it, so we will have to start again.

Stanley King has kindly sent a set of interior light holder covers, and a bell. Gerry Carroll continues his work on the ceiling and the steelwork - it is all coming up like new! The hole where the chimney went through the roof has been trimmed and new boarding is being fitted.

John Crossley has removed the rear wheels and hubs: the brake drums and hubs are all one piece - and very heavy. One side is now greased and re-assembled, the other is on-going. All parts work still and a handbrake lever is being sought. We are in contact with a chap down south who has a steering box and other parts; the problem we have is we do not know what should be there in the first place! Access to a Leyland PLSC manual has been offered by the Lincolnshire Vintage Vehicle Society which should give us more information as English Electric trolleybuses of this period were based on Leyland PLSC Lion chassis.

Edmonton 189 (Report from Bruce Lake) By the time you read this, 189 should have been launched back into service, at least I'm hoping so! The last report said that "further work will take place over the winter". Well, I guess you all know what the winter has been like this year - the hardest I've known for a long time, with sub-zero temperatures and snow for longer periods than I can remember. Typical! Thus little was done after mid-November. I managed to get the suspension levelling valves replaced in December (these had been removed for transit), and after some cleaning out of the chopper box and warming it up in the workshop in early January, the electric brake started working. After that, the snow arrived, so work concentrated on trying to bring up the insulation resistance, which was a bit low. This involved more cleaning - particularly the supporting insulators for the chopper box, the traction motor and the braking resistor box, and dispersing moisture from inside all sorts of equipment boxes. However, it wasn't until the warmer weather arrived in mid-February that the resistance effectively sorted itself out.

February was also the time for getting the underneath greased and passed out for test while Graham Bilbé was around to do it. Unfortunately, we discovered

that the back brakes were frozen on - the actuators were working, but the brake shoes were not ! It took most of a morning for Graham, Ian Metcalf and myself to get them off again - much of this involving big hammers and even bigger socket sets. Unfortunately, there isn't an easy way to leave the brakes off during periods of storage. Once off, 189 wouldn't move under power, and sat there with a "line volt" light arrogantly shining on the dashboard. To move, all the warning lights have to be off, so this was obviously wrong, and indicated that 189 thought that the overhead voltage was lower than it should have been. It wasn't, 'cos I checked it !

Fast forward several weeks, during which I was in touch with a friendly electrical engineer from Edmonton Transit. He was thinking about things that could be wrong and was emailing me his ideas. I was tripping off to Sandtoft and trying them out, finding no difference and reporting back. You can imagine that this process takes a long time ! I wasn't getting anywhere, so the weekend before Easter was set aside for a really thorough search through the manuals to find any indication of what might be wrong. Ian Metcalf and Peter Rowell joined in and we steadily traced the fault back to a resistor which supplies a transducer which supplies a circuit board which decides what the line voltage is which turns on the light if its not happy ! Of course, this resistor was in the most inaccessible place in the chopper box, so Ian had to dismantle half the side bumper to get at it. At the time of writing, I have had to order a replacement resistor from Texas (yes, the one in the United States) - doesn't anyone make anything in the UK anymore ? The plan is to replace it over Easter in order that 189 can have its day of glory on 17 April.

Bradford 558 (Report from Geoff Welburn) All the structural work around the near side wheel arch has now been completed and all the internal stress panels have been fitted. The downstairs floor is back in place, along with the steel box-section over the back axle and rear springs. The offside seat positioned over the wheel arch and the internal panel for the used ticket box are also fitted.

The ceiling panels have been removed from the downstairs saloon. The flat panels will be replaced due to their poor condition, the curved corner panels have been stripped of paint. All the downstairs panels will be refitted shortly. A start has been made in renewing the downstairs lights cable. The offside front wing has been removed to enable a replacement to be made.

Doncaster 22 (Report from Ian Wilson) Work has been continuing all through the winter on removing the old canvas roof and repairing the roof structure so that new canvas can be fitted. This has proved necessary because in wet weather the old canvas leaked like a sieve !

Doncaster 55 (Report from Ian Wilson) 55 has had a new stainless steel exhaust system fitted and after a few other minor jobs being carried out, has successfully passed its MoT test.

Doncaster 94 (Report from Ian Wilson) The fuel pump has been removed, overhauled and re-fitted.

Johannesburg 589 (Report from Francis Whitehead) The in-depth report (running to 12 pages) that was commissioned on 589's condition and how

restoration work could proceed was duly received by the 589 Group in November and presented much food for thought.

We are absolutely delighted to report that in late January, we received a massive, 5-figure donation for 589 ! Buoyed by this magnificent gift, and having considered the merits and abilities of different concerns to undertake the restoration work, the 589 Group invited proposals from three potential restorers: After much deliberation, the Group has recommended to the Board that the first phase of the work (the basic main steel structure) should be awarded to Richard Bilbé, who will undertake the work where 589 is stored, in Reading. Consequently, by the time you read this, work should be about to start in earnest - the lower deck offside between the bulkheads being the first area to be re-built.

NEWS ON POSSIBLE FUTURE ACQUISITIONS

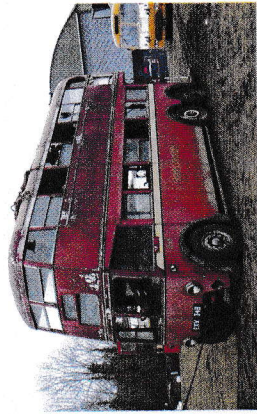
A Briefing from Francis Whitehead

There is nothing further that can be reported about endeavours to repatriate Wellington 82 apart from the fact that we are serious about taking on no.82 but the project has to be funded somehow; roughly one-quarter of the shipping costs have very generously been pledged by one member but we do need more ! Graham Bilbé would be pleased to hear from you (contact details on page 2). We still await news on the fate of the remaining Volvos in Arnhem, and can do nothing until we hear more.

We have learnt that the Crimea Trolleybus Company has agreed in principle that we can have a Skoda 9Tr in the next 12 months ! We are now investigating the logistics of bringing a trolleybus to the UK from there. Again, Graham Bilbé should be contacted if you can donate and support this project.

It seems there is never a dull moment at the Museum ! It is around ten years since Brian Maguire discussed with the Transport Museum Society of Ireland (TMSI) the possibility of us taking London trolleybus no.1348 on a long loan basis. At the time, it was not possible to get 1348 out from its storage and the project lost momentum, although the idea was not forgotten. Now, after all that time, we are in advanced discussions with TMSI and no.1348 could be coming to Sandtoft on a 25-year loan in the very near future, dependant mainly on us being able to put it under cover (which is easier said than done).

1348 is an example of a "standard" London trolleybus (it is one of the 300-strong K-class, delivered between September 1938 and June 1939), and it is a Leyland, which is a type not yet represented in our collection. It is in need of quite a bit of restoration work, but Brian and the team who have almost now completed their work on RT3323 are keen to turn their attention to 1348. As with any project such as this, we can only go ahead if there is money to get it done. Already, we have received some



London 1348 at Castleruddery earlier this year
Photo: courtesy TMSI

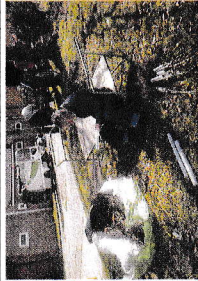
donations, for which we are very grateful. We have sufficient to get 1948 to Sandtoft, but that is only the start, as its accommodation will have to be paid for and there will be a lot of expenses to follow, once work begins. All contributions for 1948 should be sent to me at the Museum address, and, of course, regular donations can be made by standing order straight into our bank account.

DEAR 'SCENE

Dear 'Scene

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you all how hard the volunteers worked during the recent working weekends. Though there was few in numbers, the energy and enthusiasm shown by all who came (see my photos attached) was second to none. It may come as a shock to some, but no, the fairies don't pop in over the winter to do the window displays or the gardens or plant the hedges, they don't even clean the loos or the pre-fab etc., etc. But for those few volunteers that did show up, I would like to say a great big thank you for the laughter and fun you put into two cold, windy weekends. But most of all for the good, honest hard work you put in. Well done!

Judith Martindale (Huddersfield)



Dear 'Scene

Two things to let you know. First, I saw Graham Bilbé on TV, and it was good! Less good, I recently went to the farm where we have stored some of our vehicles awaiting restoration, to view the Grimsby "RT": what I saw depressed me a great deal. Quite apart from the filth all over the buses, the state of them is a disgrace. 846 has at least two smashed windows, the RT has one, plus four panels that were replaced by me some time ago are dented. The front of 44 is all crunched in on the nearside - and that is all that is visible, as they are so close to each other.

Although they are in a dry shed, they are not really safe: arguably better than the very damp chapel in Belton, but not impressive by a long chalk.

Brian Maguire (Scunthorpe)

+++++

Dear 'Scene

For about 15 years I have been friendly with model shop proprietor living in the Yorkshire Pennines village of Haworth, famous for the Bronte sisters and, of course, the Railway Children film made in 1971. When he telephoned me

earlier this year about a routine business matter, he mentioned it was his birthday - he was born in February 1947. Knowing he spent his childhood in Newcastle and was in the army and then became a teacher, I made the comment that 1947 was a bad winter and it must have been bad in the north-east at the time.

He surprised me by saying that his mother and father lived in Crystal Palace in London for 2-3 years. He mentioned that in the early hours of 1 February 1947, his mother suddenly began having labour pains. His father had to get her to hospital quickly. Trolleybuses (on the 654) had finished running for the night but on the main road (I assume Anerley Hill), his father spotted an out-of-service trolleybus which was busy spreading grit for the next day to ensure that they could continue to run from 5.30 in the morning. In desperation, his father flagged the trolleybus down. The driver was far from happy - I wonder if he ran in front of it! Having explained the circumstances, he convinced the driver to take them to the hospital - he does not know which hospital, although his birth certificate shows the general area of issue as being "Beckenham". His father told him that for the last part of the journey they took the overhead collection poles off the wires and ran to the hospital on battery power.

So, my northern friend really is a southerner - Crystal Palace is a far cry from Newcastle or the Pennines. I see him in a slightly different light now. So, 63 years ago - which hospital was he born in?

The 654 trolleybus was replaced by AEC Regent RT buses on the 154 in March 1959. All these years later, he is selling model buses, planes and trains in his model shop in Haworth village, near the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway station, and 15 miles away, I am running an insurance broking business not only specialising (amongst many other things) in model shops and wholesalers, but also preserved buses as well as trolleybuses, www.rigtoninsurance.co.uk.
Roland Wilcox (Guiseley)

Editor's Note: I am not sure what is meant by "busy spreading grit" - I understand that it was more likely that the trolleybus was running a ghost service to keep the overhead ice-free.

REVIEWS

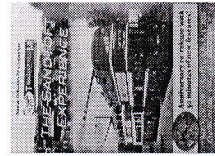
DVD - The Sandtoft Experience

A re-release of a previous VHS tape edition, with added footage to celebrate 40 years of the Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft

Published by Video Production Services Limited

£10.00

(UK Postage £1.00)



I was looking, last year, at my copy of the VHS tape *The Sandtoft Experience* (published in 1998) and thinking of suggesting that an updated version be produced as so much had happened since 1998. Unbeknown to me, others had obviously been thinking likewise, and I was pleased to learn later in the year that an updated version in DVD format had been produced - in connection with the Museum's 40th anniversary.

The new DVD incorporates the material used in the comprehensive 1998 programme (which covered so many aspects of the Museum's development, work, vehicles and events, and interviews with some of the Museum's volunteers) with an extra half hour added to bring the story up to date.

Richard Laurence produced the original VHS and he introduces the extra half-hour feature. Graham Bilbé outlines the Museum's history and Graham's information is followed by Steve Harrison speaking about the various plans for an extension of the operating area before showing viewers the land which was recently purchased. Cheryll Crowther mentions the ongoing success of the busy café, and while Maidstone 72 travels around the route, Bruce Lake gives a commentary on how a trolleybus works and is driven.

The film crew followed Dave Shepherd on one of his informative depot tours and showing visitors various vehicles whilst recounting aspects of their respective histories (the programme includes brief video clips of the particular vehicles in action under the Museum's wiring). Dave is also seen explaining the work undertaken by the tower wagon and its crew, and the various parts which make up the overhead wiring.

Steve Harrison is then seen presenting the prizes in the Museum's logo competition and this sequence is followed by some visitors' comments, on camera, about how they enjoyed their visits; the inclusion of these comments is a useful addition to the feature. Graham Bilbé closes the programme by mentioning *Sandtoft Scene* and the benefits of Museum membership.

An excellent programme and a worthy addition to the range of trolleybus DVD material presently available, this pressed DVD runs for about 90 minutes. Unfortunately, my copy suffered from a small amount of (minor) picture break-up, particularly in the "old" material, but this may have been an exception; the break-up didn't detract from the programme itself, and this well-produced DVD is recommended to enthusiasts and visitors alike.

The DVD is only available for a limited period, so while you can, get your copy from the *Trolleyshop*, or order it online at www.sandtoft.org.

Doug Barrow



DVD – RTW: 50 Years of 8-footers
Published by The RTW Bus Group

£13.99
(UK Postage £1.00)

It is pleasing to review a DVD programme dedicated to 50 years of London's RTW Class as these motorbuses were the first 8 feet wide ones permitted to operate in London and they were in service there during some of the years in which London's trolleybuses were operating.

Following the experience gained from the operation of some 8'-0" buses (including London's famous SA class trolleybuses) and lobbying by various operators, including London Transport, for permission to be given so that 8'-0"

wide vehicles could be used instead of the (then) standard 7'-6" width ones, permission was granted, in 1946. However, the programme's commentary mentions that the Metropolitan Traffic Authorities were strongly opposed to the operation of 8'-0" buses in Central London. A test-rig, which LT made up, representing an 8'-wide bus, to gain some experience is seen operating on various Outer London roads, and in later times, trials of 8'-0" wide buses (RTWs took over for a few days for each trial from their narrower cousins) on Central London's streets: these latter trials were successful and permission was granted for 8'-0" wide buses to operate in Central London - and thus the RTWs paved the way for the introduction of Routemasters in later years.

RTW1 entered service, on route 41 (from Tottenham Garage), in May 1949 and by October 1950 a total of 450 RTW buses - the class' designation "RTW" is an abbreviation of "RT (family) Wide-body" - had been delivered and before long the total number in the fleet was 500. These 500 buses were built to London Transport's specification, including bodywork design and layout, and looked like a slightly-wider version (but with a cast-aluminium Leyland radiator) of the RT-type AEC. Leyland Motors Limited had to make some modifications to its standard Titan PD2 model to meet London Transport's requirements... for example, the incorporation of a fluid flywheel, pre-selective gearbox, air brakes and a body which could be exchanged with others from the RTW class during overhaul. The RTWs weren't the only new post-war Leyland double-deck buses in the London fleet, as LT had also placed an order for 1,615 RTL class 7'-6" wide Leyland PD2-based double decker buses, whose bodywork would be interchangeable with that of the RT type when overhauls were undertaken. That order for 2,135 new vehicles was certainly a massive one!

The DVD contains a wealth of interesting film, in both black-and-white and colour, of London's street scenes as well as RTW buses and their narrower counterparts in service, and the programme's commentary is informative but doesn't intrude. The two RTW buses which were driven to Berlin and back, and exhibited at the 1950 Berlin Trade Fair, are seen - both before they set off from London, and in a posed photograph flanking a local double-decker in Berlin.

Although the last RTW ran in London service in 1972, a number were then used for driver training, and many others were sold to other operators (such as Stevenson's of Spath, and Osborne's of Tollesbury); some went to South Africa, others to Niagara Falls and to Sarajevo, and a large number went by the shipload to Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka). A smart RTW is seen in operation in Cape Town's cream and green livery - this operator also purchased some RTWs - and others are seen hard at work (in various, somewhat neglected, conditions too, but still working well!) in Ceylon. For comparison, the programme includes views of a couple of ex-London Routemasters (again in non-London condition) in service in what was, by then, Sri Lanka, and one RTW is seen ending its days by being used as a cricket scoreboard!

Happily, 5 RTWs have been saved for preservation and they are seen taking

part in an RTW 50th anniversary event at the Cobham Bus Museum, Surrey, in July 1999. One of them, RTW178, was purchased from Stevenson's for preservation several years ago, and in more recent times our Sandtoft colleague, Tim Stubbs, acquired this vehicle for ongoing preservation in Stevenson's distinctive yellow-and-black livery and retaining the Stevenson's no.11 fleet number. RTW178 is seen in operation in the Uttoxeter area, commemorating the vehicle's work on two routes there.

With a running time of 47 minutes, well-selected sequences and informative commentary, plus short interviews with Tim and others who are or were connected with RTWs, this excellent (pressed) DVD programme contains a lot of information. I've watched the programme several times already - I travelled on RTWs in London in the 1950s and 1960s and it brought back many good memories for me.

I happily recommend this DVD, and it is a very welcome addition to the history of bus operation and preservation. The proceeds from sales of this programme will be used for continuing RTW restoration.
Doug Barrow



BOOK – Walsall Trolleybuses 1931-1970

Written by David Harvey

Published by Amberley Publishing

Price £16.99

(UK Postage & Packing £2.00)

Walsall's connection with electric on-street traction began with the Corporation operating tramcars (on 3'-6" gauge track) on 1 January 1904. Powers to operate trolleybuses in Walsall were first obtained in the Walsall Corporation Act 1914, which authorised two trolleybus ("railless") routes as extensions of existing tramway routes, but it was to be some years before the Corporation's first trolleybus service ran. The Corporation's first bus operation commenced in 1915.

Although the Corporation had trolleybus powers, motorbuses were used for the first tram route replacement (on 1 April 1928) and likewise for the second tram route conversion. However, the tram-to-trolleybus route conversions in nearby Wolverhampton - where trolleybuses had been introduced as early as 1923 - could well have had some influence in Walsall, because when the third Walsall tram route conversion took place, on 3 February 1929, motorbuses took over for a while pending some work being carried out prior to the introduction of Walsall's first trolleybus route (between Walsall and Willenhall) on 22 July 1931. Wolverhampton had previously replaced, with trolleybuses, its tram route to Willenhall, and on 16 November 1931, through trolleybus working commenced on a joint route between Walsall and Wolverhampton.

The last tram in Walsall ran on 30 September 1933, on the Bloxwich route, and a public trolleybus service commenced the following day. In the course of time, Walsall's trolleybus operating area expanded, with the opening of new routes, and during Mr. R. Edgley Cox's term as the General Manager (he took

up the post in 1952), more routes and route extensions were opened. Also during Mr. Cox's term of office, a Sunbeam S7 three-axle trolleybus was purchased and in 1954-5, the unusual-looking 30'-0" long, Willowbrook-bodied two-axle Sunbeam F4A trolleybuses - for which special dispensation had to be obtained, as the (then) maximum length for a two-axle double-decker was 27'-6" - entered service. More of the same were delivered in 1956. Full details of the various routes, along with photographs, are included in the book.

Sadly the Walsall trolleybus system - which, along with other operations in the general area, had become part of the large West Midlands Public Transport Executive operation - declined and the trolleybus system closed for normal operation on Friday 2 October 1970. However, a special trolleybus service operated the following morning and later in the day, as darkness fell, the final three trolleybuses (862, 864 and 872) made their last journeys under the Walsall system's overhead wiring.

This well-researched and comprehensively-illustrated book contains 190 pages between its card covers. It recounts the story of the Walsall system and includes a fleet list of every trolleybus (including loaned ones) whether new to Walsall or second-hand; individual chapters - each with an excellent selection of relevant black-and-white photographs - tell the respective stories of the various routes and there are also chapters on new buses and official photographs, Birchills Depot, and a miscellaneous photographs chapter containing views, for example, of trolleybus 864 on demonstration in Portsmouth in September 1955, which do not fit into any of the other chapters. A clear system map, showing the overhead wiring as at 1965, occupies the last two pages and the author's acknowledgements on page 190 close this very interesting and informative book.

An excellent publication that is stocked in the Museum's *Trolleyshop*, this book is recommended not only to enthusiasts but also to people who are interested in an aspect of Walsall's history.
Doug Barrow

RUNNING DAYS IN 2010

Gates open 11.00 am to 5.00pm unless stated otherwise

Saturday 1 May	Extravaganza Weekend
Sunday 2 May	with up to 12 trolleybuses in service each day
Monday 3 May	with up to 12 trolleybuses in service each day
Saturday 15 May	Mid-May Trolleydays
Sunday 16 May	Mid-May Trolleydays
Saturday 29 May	Spring Bank Holiday Weekend Trolleydays
Sunday 30 May	Featuring the launch of Cardiff 203 back into service
Monday 31 May	Featuring the launch of Cardiff 203 back into service
Saturday 12 June	West Yorkshire Weekend
Sunday 13 June	Featuring trolleybuses from Bradford & Huddersfield
Saturday 26 June	Teddy Bears' Picnic
Sunday 27 June	Featuring games and activities plus children bringing a teddy bear get free entry!

Saturday 10 July	Bus	Vintage Bicycle Weekend
Sunday 11 July		Featuring a selection of vintage bicycles
Saturday 24 July	Bus	'Gathering Preview (open 11.00am to 10.00pm) With real ale beer tent and twilight trolleybus services
Sunday 25 July	Bus	'Gathering 2010 (open 10.00am to 6.00pm) Large selection of trolleybuses in service, visiting historic vehicles on display, transport bazaar, real ale beer tent, live music, craft stalls and more.
Saturday 14 August	Bus	Blue's and Two's Weekend
Sunday 15 August	Bus	A variety of visiting emergency vehicles, fire & rescue displays & demonstrations throughout each day
Saturday 28 August	Bus	Six Wheeler Weekend
Sunday 29 August	Bus	Featuring a variety of 6-wheel/ 3-axle trolleybuses
Monday 30 August	Bus	
Saturday 18 September	Bus	Model Weekend
Sunday 19 September	Bus	Featuring model trolleybuses, trams and trains and working layouts
Saturday 2 October	Bus	Worldwide Weekend
Sunday 3 October	Bus	Featuring trolleybuses from around the world
Sunday 17 October	Bus	St. Leger Rally St. Leger Historic Vehicle Rally starting from Doncaster Aircraft Museum, transport-related sales stands and parades of historic vehicles at Museum
Sunday 14 November		Twilight Trolleys (open 11.00am to 6.00pm) Trolleybuses operating after dark
Saturday 11 December		Santa Days (open 11.00am to 4.00pm)
Sunday 12 December		Children can visit Santa

Key to Bus Services and Links

Bus denotes Isle Coaches service 291 11.00am departure from Doncaster Interchange connects with free Museum bus at Epworth. Return at 4.10pm to connect at Epworth with Isle Coaches service 399 to Doncaster (where it arrives 5.35pm)

Bus denotes FREE bus service from Doncaster Interchange direct to The Trolleybus Museum. Departs Interchange, Bay C5, at 12.00noon. Return departs Museum at 4.00pm (journey time approximately 40 minutes)

Admission Charges (for non members - members are admitted free)
Adults £5.00 Seniors (60+) £4.00 Concessions £3.00 Family (2 Adults + up to 4 Concessions) £15.00

On days shown on dark red background:

Adults £7.00 Seniors (60+) £5.00 Concessions £4.00 Family (2 Adults+up to 4 Concessions) £20.00

On Santa Days (shown on blue background):

Adults £4.00 Children visiting Santa £5.00 Seniors & Concessions (& Children not visiting Santa) £3.00

Note: Seniors are defined as Adults over 60 and may be requested to provide proof (e.g. national bus pass). Concessions are defined as Children aged 5-15 inclusive, **Persons who are Registered Disabled** and their Carers and **NUS members** (Categories shown in blue may be requested to provide proof).