

Sandtoft Scene

July 2023

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NEWS & VIEWS FROM
The Trolleybus Museum
AT SANDTOFT



Sandtoft Scene

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Front Cover Picture

London 1812 enjoys the Spring sunshine at the early May Bank Holiday.

Photo by Paul Morfitt

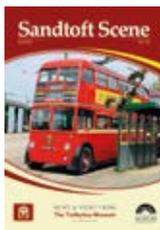
Photography

Photographs in this issue have been kindly provided by: Bob Ashton, Dave Chick, Brian Hall, Paul Morfitt, Bradley O'Connor, Kieran Proctor and Tony Walsh.

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A message from the Editor



Welcome

As the summer season reaches its height, activity at the Museum is also reaching a peak. Once again we are deep in preparation for the Sandtoft Gathering as this issue is prepared, but also looking forward to another full week of opening in August.

And work on the site also continues, with trains now moving on the Sandtoft District Railway and important work to improve our volunteers' safety and install new machinery underway in the workshop.

Talking of new installations, it is fabulous to see Wellington 82 operating regularly at the museum as the UK's first accessible trolleybus, working with the museum's new wheelchair lift to transport passengers.

The first half of the 2023 season has been a busy one, with sniffer dogs, car clubs, Atkinson lorries and a Big Brass Band all visiting the museum. With much more to come before the end of 2023 we hope to see you again at the museum very soon!

News from the Boardroom

With reports from Chas Allen and Dave Chick

Changes to the Board

We're sorry to report that Mark Boulton has resigned as a Director for personal reasons. The Board would like to place on record its appreciation of what Mark has achieved since his election: he led many of the improvements and renovations that visitors can see, as well as others less visible – like the Pre-Fab Stores building, the complete renovation of which he led. Tony Walsh has agreed to be co-opted on to the Board until the next AGM and will be the lead on Site and Facilities matters. Tony's email is sitefacilities@sandtoft.org

Retail Manager

Another resignation in the Spring was that of Val Francis, as Retail Manager. As many of our regular staff will know Val hasn't been in the best of health recently but is hoping to return soon. We're not filling the vacancy for the time being and hope to see Val again soon.

Re-Accreditation

Although we've not had notice of this from Arts Council England yet, because of the pandemic it is overdue and so preparations for are ongoing. Helen Cross, as lead, has been attending various webinars on the subject and the Board has approved an updated Forward Plan.

Telecommunications

As the first step in the upgrade to our phone and internet services, Wifi has been extended to the Shop, Café and Reception buildings; as part of the package we now have the ability to provide free Wifi to visitors although we haven't any plans to introduce that yet. By the time this appears in print we should also have telephone extensions in the Shop and Reception, meaning anyone calling on an open day should be able to speak to a real person rather than having to leave a voicemail on the Office answerphone.

Publicity and Marketing

Dave Chick was interviewed on Radio Leeds in April, as part of a feature on great places to visit in Yorkshire – admittedly, stretching the point a little as we are about half-a-mile over the border! However, this gave us useful publicity at the start of the season.

Our volunteers made a fantastic effort in distributing our leaflets this year. Sian Williams and Barry Fullen attended a leaflet swap near Lincoln, whilst others have been leaving them when they've been on their travels: so much so, that we had to order a reprint! Thank you all!

We've also made an analysis of our visitor profile between 2019 and last year, which was our first full season post-Covid. This highlighted that the age breakdown of visitors hadn't changed, with very few Family tickets being sold (despite reducing their price last year) and Seniors on a par with Adults, both roughly three times the numbers of Concessions (which includes children, amongst others). So we can attract a younger audience we'll be launching a 5-week long digital advertising campaign covering most of Yorkshire in July and August. One advantage of digital is that we will know how many people will have looked at our advert and clicked on it – something that newspapers can't tell you!

The Burntwood Gateway

An important part of the Museum's development plan will see the public car park moved to the land which was purchased in 2018. This will have direct access from Belton Road and so we will no longer be dependent on our neighbour for access to the car park. We have an excellent relationship with White's, who have provided facilities without charge, but we could be vulnerable if there is a change of ownership.

Entry to the new car park will be through the Burntwood gateway, which is too narrow at present to allow two vehicles to pass each other. Widening the entrance is not a simple matter

because it entails extending the bridge across the ditch that runs along the front of the property.

In recent weeks there have been several site meetings between project manager Francis Whitehead and Nolan Elliott, Managing Director of GNE Contracting Ltd, the company which resurfaced the back straight earlier this year. One of the meetings also involved a representative of the North Lincs Council Highways department regarding the interface with the public highway. Sufficient work has been carried out to ensure that planning permission hasn't lapsed and it is hoped that the full project will be completed in the next few weeks. It is being funded by the British Trolleybus Society, which owns Burntwood, largely thanks to a generous donation from member Brian Hadnam.

We are now looking at the work required and funding methods for the new car park and reception building.



Mark Cotton

Mark Cotton, a new volunteer who had only recently joined us, passed away at the Museum in April. He was only 47. Mark had been working in London but, being in between jobs, had returned home to Doncaster and had started volunteering at the Museum. In that short time, he had become a popular and enthusiastic addition to the "Wednesday Gang", mainly working on laying track for the Sandtoft District Railway.

We send our deepest condolences to Mark's family and friends. We would also like to thank East Midlands Ambulance Service who tried for over 20 minutes to save him, and especially our own staff who used our defibrillator and applied CPR until the paramedics arrived.

Gathering Preparations

To say the Sandtoft Gathering is an important event in the Museum's calendar is a bit of an understatement: last year 14.2% of our retail sales (Reception, Shop and Café) were generated on this one day alone. And, to make the day a success, a lot of work goes in behind the scenes with preparation starting months in advance, so by the time this edition of Scene lands on your doormat those plans will be well advanced.

There are a lot of bus rallies and other transport events these days, and those hoping to sell to the enthusiast community in particular tend to plan their calendars well in advance. For this reason, we open bookings for sales stall pitches in March; for the first two weeks those who attended the previous year have priority. By the end of the month we make the bookings page on the website publicly visible and at the same time open up vehicle entry bookings. The Gathering is one of only two events in our calendar when we operate formal booking systems for sales stalls and vehicles: in the case of the latter, the reasons may be less obvious but apart from having some idea of how many to expect on the day it's handy having a record of entrants' contact details should there be any incidents.

Other things that need to be put in place at an early stage are bookings of the beer tent, any entertainment and an ice cream van. Auxiliary catering (in the form of a chip and fish van) is needed because the Café can't cope with the numbers of visitors – or for that matter, offer sufficient choice for those making a day of it.

Another important item that ideally has to be sorted early is visitor car parking. We can't use our normal car park, again because of the size of the event, and for the last few Gatherings have borrowed the parking area on the other side of the bund at the rear of our own car park. This year, we were told that it may not be

News from the Boardroom

Continued...



An exciting new attraction for this year's Gathering is a fly past by Lancaster bomber PA474 of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (Official)! (Photo by Darren Harbar)

available, but although this problem appears to have receded, we still have a Plan B!

The timetables for the bus services, especially the one to Doncaster, have to be prepared well in advance so visitors arriving by train in Doncaster can plan their travel. Also, a Programme has to be designed and printed, as do special Day Rider tickets specifically for this event – we used to print sheets of these on the office printer and cut them up ourselves but it's not much dearer (and a lot less work!) to have them produced professionally. All these tasks should be either done, or nearly done, by the time you read this.

Nearer the day, one important job is getting publicity prepared. This year, in addition to the normal print advertising we've booked a digital campaign starting in mid-July and this will major on the Gathering. It's intended to target the family audience we desperately need to grow. And, having successfully been granted a flypast by the Lancaster bomber in the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight thanks to the efforts of Brad O'Connor, we've at got something that will make our press release really stand out and hopefully make it on to the printed page!

We also have to book portaloos, additional seating for the Café, get the grass mown, and in the last week make sure the septic tank is emptied. The last week is a hive of activity, moving trolleybuses out of the shed on to the back field, and marking out the sales stall pitches in the Depot.

One important job that actually must be done for every open day is to order in stock for the Café, and the Shop's ice cream and soft drinks cabinets. This is never an easy task, and whilst what happened on any particular weekend the year before is used as the basis, it has to take into account any special theme to the day last year and this; the weather then; and the weather forecast this year. Add to that, this year we're hoping the Lancaster flypast and the digital advertising will boost numbers. Whilst we want to avoid over-ordering it would be worse to run out of food in the middle of the day!

Finally, there's a lot to do on the day itself and some of us never manage to get on to the field to see the visiting cars, buses and lorries. If you can help in any way, either on Gathering Day or in the run-up, and even if only for a couple of hours, it will be greatly appreciated. Please drop us a line at trolleybusmuseum@sandtoft.org

Bank Holidays with the Band



The late May Bank Holiday went with a swing at the Trolleybus Museum with a little help from the Motorhome & Caravan Club Concert Band who performed two 45-minute sets on the centre grass! Our BUT Trolleybuses were out on display with Bradford 746, London 1812 and Huddersfield 619 running in service.

We were also pleased to be able to launch the first accessible trolleybus in the UK. The bus is Wellington 82 and as you can see, we've done this without any structural alterations to the bodywork: two double seats have been removed and a wheelchair backrest, kindly donated by Stagecoach East Midlands has been fitted.

Access is through the centre door using the Museum's new wheelchair lift, which our traffic staff have been trained to use. The inaugural passenger was Heather from the Motorhome & Caravan Club Concert Band, we believe this is the first time a wheelchair user has been carried on a trolleybus in the UK. Many thanks to Heather who gave us some important advice on how to support passengers to transfer successfully, increasing accessibility around our Museum. *See more overleaf...*





Six Wheel Three Axle Weekend

***We ask... Why Three Axles?
Why Did They Disappear?***



Some vehicle designs from the past are seen as iconic. For many, the three axle trolleybus is one. During the weekend of 13th and 14th May, the Museum brought out as many of these vehicles as was practical and ran three of them in service, creating some nostalgia for the visitors that remember them, and a feeling of incredulity at the lumbering nature of these large beasts compared to their two axle siblings. The opportunity to photograph these examples from our collection was made even more welcome by the dry weather, and the appearance of the sun for much of the time. Not guaranteed in May in the U.K. and certainly not at Sandtoft!

Why three Axles?

Tea Trolley Café staff are often asked why these three axle vehicles were so built. Why did their manufacture not follow the now familiar two axle six wheel format.

To answer this question we have to take an historical look at vehicle legislation. During most of the history of the British trolleybus, the countries' Road Traffic Act (1930) did not permit a two axle vehicle to exceed 26 feet in length. * It also limited the laden weight of these vehicles to 12 tons. With an extra axle, the absolute maximum length was 30 feet and the weight was 14 tons.

In addition, all road vehicles were limited to a width of 7 feet and 6 inches for many years.

Why the demise of three axles?

After the Second World War, bus undertakings had experienced the temporary use of 8 foot wide vehicles during hostilities as a temporary measure** and were keen to see a change in the law. Both for width and length.

In March 1948 however, London Transport were able to take delivery of their Q1 class trolleybuses at the increased 8 foot width; - as exemplified by no. 1812 which was in service at the Museum's 3 axle weekend.

The length issue was taken up by a somewhat enigmatic General Manager and Chief Engineer employed by Walsall Corporation Transport. Mr. Ronald Edgley Cox. In 1953 he designed a vehicle that would meet all the construction and use requirements with regard to weight, but was an inch or two short of 30 feet in length. The Ministry for Transport gave dispensation in this case from the usual length regulation and the first batch of 15 vehicles were built by Willowbrook in Loughborough in 1954. They were nicknamed



'fish bowls' because of their unusual rounded and rakish design. Mr Cox informed his committee when ordering them that they were to be of a type 'recently approved by the Ministry of Transport'. He also pointed out that 2 axle buses were cheaper to buy than 3 axle ones.

On the 1st July 1956 the law was changed to allow all operators to build 30 foot vehicles with just two axles. Thus the three axle vehicle became unnecessary.

Incidentally the second batch of 'fish bowls' were slightly heavier than the first because of another relaxation of the rules. Because of a local agreement between Wolverhampton and Walsall Corporation Transports, 'fish bowls', -which had a higher seating capacity than Wolverhampton's vehicles- did not operate on the shared route to Wolverhampton. This arrangement did not however stop the odd enthusiast tour going west from Walsall on a private hire!

Huddersfield Corporation Transport ignored the trend towards two axles. Their General Manager considered that standardisation was more important than the benefits of having one axle less. Consequently, they continued to buy trolleybuses with three axles.

What are they like to drive and conduct?

As can be seen from the road surface of Sandtoft Square after a three axle vehicle has turned there, tyre 'scrub' is considerable. The rear axles are fixed - unlike modern vehicles, that axle was not permitted to steer. The amount of rubber left on the road is therefore noticeable. Tyres do not last long.

As a consequence, when comparing one to a two axle vehicle, driving with three requires strength! The steering is generally much heavier and more room is

required to turn. They are also somewhat slower to accelerate unless they have a larger electric motor. However acceleration and breaking is generally smoother as there is more weight to absorb any jerkiness.

At Sandtoft as at the East Anglia Transport Museum, driver training and assessment is conducted on a three axle vehicle. If one can drive one of these, one can certainly drive a smaller stable-mate!

The conductor is kept a lot busier with a fully laden 30 footer!

Back to three axles!

On today's roads, even longer buses and coaches are permitted and although one does see 40 foot two axle examples about, the weight these can carry is severely restricted. Three axle examples are commonplace, but there is a difference. The rear of the three axles is fitted with a steering mechanism to eliminate tyre scrub. The British Government was slow to permit this innovation. Most countries of the world had permitted rear axle steering long before the U.K. did. For example, the three axle Neoplan Skyliner double deck coach, which was common in this country during the 1980s and 90s, was built in Germany with rear wheel steering but examples for United Kingdom delivery had to have their steering mechanisms welded up for years until the legislators caught up!

By David Hanchett (Historical detail provided by Bob Rowe and Dave Hall)

**Increasing in 1950 to 27 feet for double deckers and 30 feet for single deckers.*

*** Some 8 foot wide vehicles had been diverted from delivery to overseas operators to the home market.*



Open All Week

Grandparents and grandchildren alike delight in a visit to the Toy Museum.

The first full week of opening of 2023 spanned the end of May and beginning of June. Visitors were able to ride on Bradford 746 and Wellington 82 and see the Sunbeam Cycle Shop, Toy Museum, Exhibition Centre and the prefab. In the cinema Dave Hall was providing shows about any British trolleybus system on request and because we had a much higher proportion of very young visitors than usual he was also offering film shows that appeal to children. The café and the shop were also open and did good business.

On two of the days the café was staffed by our President, Bob Rowe, and his daughter Cath Townsend, who was volunteering at Sandtoft for the first time and has come up with some great ideas for improving events.

Although the first day was quiet, each of the next three days saw higher visitor numbers than on any of the weekdays in 2022. I spoke to as many people as possible and found that most were first-time visitors. Again, there were many grandparents bringing grandchildren and a few parents bringing their children. Some annual ticket holders came and a small number of members visited.

They had found out that we would be open from a variety of sources including local newspapers,

Facebook and, after a call by Stan Collins, BBC Radio Humberside. Some had been looking for things to do during the school half term and had found our opening times online.

These four days produced additional income and we had a lot of very positive feedback from visitors who said they would be coming again and telling friends and family about the Museum. We also recruited some new members and volunteers. Our strategy to open more frequently is helpful now that we are investigating larger grants to fund our development plan.

All this would not be possible without the magnificent support of our volunteers, who saw to it that all our attractions were open all the time, apart from the Toy Museum closing briefly on one day.

Open Week in August

Our next full week of opening will be Monday 21 to Friday 25 August, with the August bank holiday Trolleydays following immediately afterwards.

We will again need volunteers to work as trolleybus crew and in the car park, café, shop, cinema, Sunbeam Cycle Shop, Toy Museum and Exhibition Centre. When the appeal for volunteers goes out we will appreciate every offer of help. **DGC**



When the Museum opens on weekdays the centre grass is used as the public car park.



Visitors watch the frog being changed outside the Tea Trolley Café.

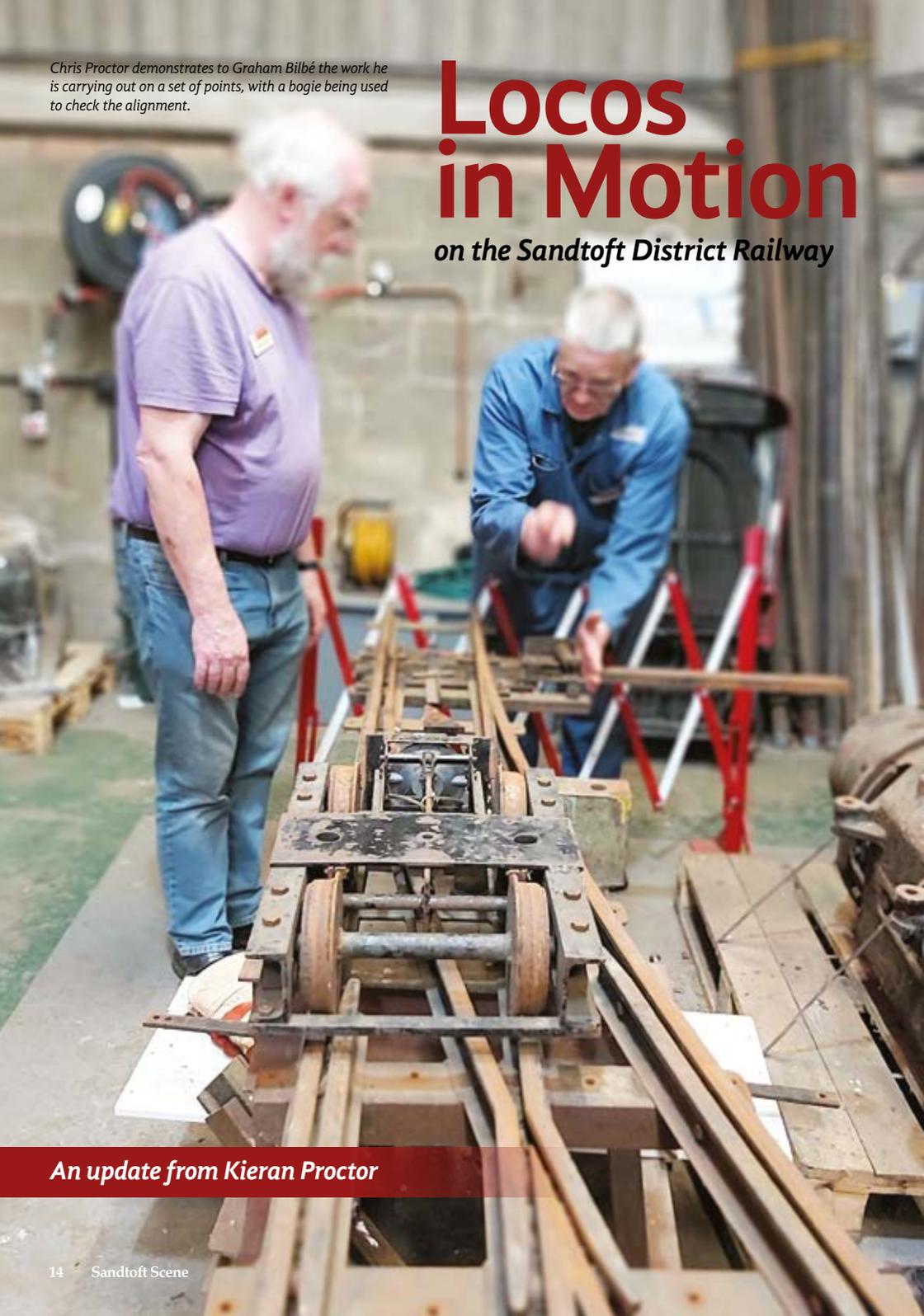


The restoration of Doncaster 94, which carries the body from Doncaster trolleybus 393, has recently been completed. It is seen passing Wellington 82 on the Wednesday of the week of opening, when there were many volunteers present, carrying out site and restoration work.

Chris Proctor demonstrates to Graham Bilbé the work he is carrying out on a set of points, with a bogie being used to check the alignment.

Locos in Motion

on the Sandtoft District Railway



An update from Kieran Proctor

Over the weekend of 17th & 18th June it was a pleasure to finally see the first loco hauled trains operate on the Sandtoft District Railway. This important landmark was made possible thanks to recent works that has seen a temporary branch line being installed from the main running line to the Burntwood Annex, where much of the rolling stock is currently stored.

This work involved clearing the new line of a thick patch of weeds and brambles, and the removal of a small tree. It was also necessary to relocate the old heating fuel storage tank at the back of the bungalow and demolish the base it once sat on. Once the route was clear, rail panels from stock were measured out and put in place to form a temporary line which will allow us to load trains with hardcore straight from the large pile already housed at the rear of the bungalow.

Work on the line was completed on Friday 16th June and saw our largest locomotive, no.5 'Cobber', running under its own power on the SDR for the very first time. 'Cobber' preformed a number of trips as a light engine and some pulling the long well wagon to test the current track and point work. After this successful test it was decided that the operation of trains during the upcoming open weekend was possible, if a bit short notice.

On Saturday 17th June 'Cobber' once again made an appearance out on the rails as space in the annex was rearranged to make day-to-day work on the railway much easier. During the day, people were able to see a good proportion of the existing rolling stock out on display (although from afar), including the GWR railcar taking a spin on the turntable.

Saturday's graft paid dividends, as Sunday saw the first official works train deliver hardcore to the current end of the line, to help build the railway on further. This important task was carried out by our other locomotive, no.4 'Joan', pushing a small open wagon.

Over the course of the weekend, I managed to speak with many visitors and members about the plans for the railway, all of whom were excited to see trains in motion on the tracks. In order to let the public closer to the current works, we opened up the path linking the workshop road to the central station and created a viewing area at the end of this path. This impromptu addition to the weekend's events was well received and we shall continue with works on open days going forwards when possible.

Hopefully, now that we have locos in motion, we will see an uplift in interest in the railway as we move onto the hard slog of using the railway to build the railway. Even though we may not be carrying passengers yet, I feel that allowing people to see us as we work will be valuable and will help regular visitors form a relationship with this new attraction as they see the things around the site change and develop. *More photos overleaf...*



Moving a track panel into position.







An engineering train stands on the new track in Sandtoft Central Station.

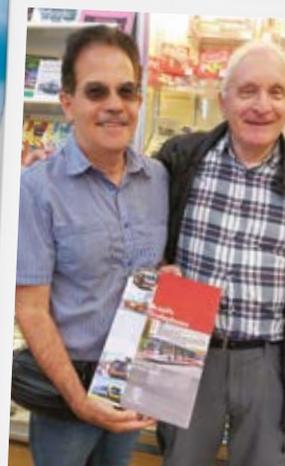


Visitors From Brazil

The Museum receives visitors from all round the world. On 14 May we were delighted to welcome two trolleybus enthusiasts from Brazil, Jorge Moraes and Wagner Pellegrini.

Jorge was a distinguished trolleybus industry professional who designed, installed and upgraded São Paulo's trolleybus infrastructure (overhead wiring and substations). In his youth he built a "trolley-car" and overhead and subsequently refined his designs. In the 1990s Jorge built a small vehicle which ran on the Cedes-Stoll principle and so he was very keen to see the Museum's replica. It had a defect at the time and could not run, but it was posed with its trolley on the length of Stoll overhead on the back straight.

Jorge was accompanied by Robert Howes, his joint author of the most recent Trolleybooks publication, Brazil's Trolleybuses. Also visiting was Ashley Bruce, who designed the book and also researched and produced the designs for the replica of the Cedes' body. The original was built by E H Bayley of Newington Causeway but no drawings have survived. **DGC**



Authors Jorge Moraes and Robert Howes are seen in the Trolleyshop with their encyclopaedic and extensively illustrated book. It is available from the Museum's shop or from the British Trolleybus Society's online shop.



Seen with the Cedes are (left to right) Wagner Pellegrini, Robert Howes, Ashley Bruce and Jorge Moraes.

The Regal Cinema

By Dave Hall

This is the third operating season since taking on the role of Cinema Manager and during that time I have been building up a library of films I can show people.

A digital slide show of any UK trolleybus system and also digital cine of most of the UK systems that operated in the 1960s/70s can be shown on request. I also have digital cine of London, Sheffield and Glasgow trams.

Many people tend to think of trolleybuses as an outdated form of transport. They are pleasantly surprised when I can show a film of modern day trolleybuses in Europe. I am now building up a library of overseas systems to enhance this.

One film show that became available recently was titled 'Welcome To Sandtoft'. Although filmed back in 2006, this is great because not only does it give you a brief history of the museum but also shows the maintenance that goes on behind the scenes. Perhaps the best part of all is that it tells you how a trolleybus actually works and the power supply that goes with it. This has proved extremely popular.

During our week long opening last year, many grandparents brought their grandchildren along and it was obvious that although they wanted to see films of trolleybuses, the children were bored. I now have a few children's shows that can be shown and it did prove popular during our open week in May this year.

When people come into the cinema I usually engage them in chat, in order to understand where they have come from and if they remembered trolleybuses from their youth. If they do, then I establish which system they remembered most and they are usually delighted when I can show them a film of that system.

We get a lot of visitors from the Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Hull areas, and even though they may not remember the trolleybuses, they are fascinated by the cine I can show, especially of the original Sheffield trams.

In the passageway leading to the cinema I have revamped the history of Sandtoft and brought it up to date. It's mainly photos with captions underneath that you follow along the wall. Many people find it an interesting read.



Trolleys and Lorries

Our first open weekend in July saw a collection of classic British Lorries visit the Museum, operating alongside our Trolleybuses and creating an opportunity for our many keen photographers to capture these vintage vehicles operating alongside each other with the Museum providing a worthy backdrop.

The Gathering of Atkinson lorries was the second time this event had been held at Sandtoft, and this year, as well as increasing numbers, a large number of lorries undertook a road run, which was enjoyed and well photographed.

Historically, there used to be an annual Atkinson gathering, with a large following, at Botany Bay in Lancashire, close to where the lorries were originally built. In more recent years, this had moved to the Leyland Transport Museum car park and numbers had dwindled quite substantially and then paused due to Covid.

The lorries have great historic and sentimental value, and there is quite a large following on the Atkinson and Seddon Atkinson Owners Group on Facebook.

Rob Wright, the organiser of the meet, told us: "We doubled the number of lorries on site this year from our inaugural meet and hope to return in even greater numbers next year. We actively support each other and those looking to restore and renovate vehicles, networking between us to get parts and share knowledge. We pride ourselves on being open to enthusiasts and newcomers alike, it's a really inclusive group with a wide ranging age group and we welcome anyone interested in restoring one of these vehicles to get in touch.

We would like to give a MASSIVE thank you to the team at the Museum, we are always welcomed warmly and couldn't ask for better support throughout the weekend. We are keen to build on this relationship for the benefit of ourselves and the Museum."





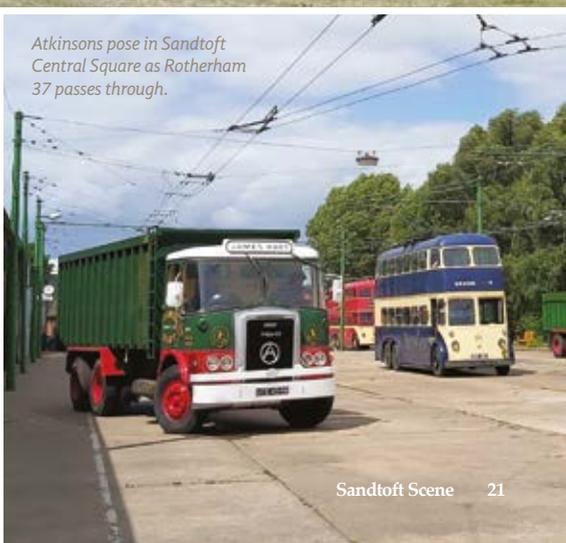
Green Lorry Blue Trolley



Many lorries



Blue Lorry Red Trolley



Atkinsons pose in Sandtoft Central Square as Rotherham 37 passes through.

Curator's Report

By Dave Hall

Since taking on the role of Curator at the beginning of the year, I have put together a comprehensive digital photo archive of the history of Sandtoft. It requires updating frequently by photos of each running day plus works carried out on site such as work on the construction of the Sandtoft District Railway or laying the concrete base for the play tram.

I am now working on trying to find Board meeting minutes from years gone so that a full set will hopefully be available later. This is another way of recording our history.

Last year I was part of a team reviewing the condition of each trolleybus at Sandtoft. I now need to go into more detail about those vehicles currently out of service with minor problems to see what it will take to fix them. Understanding the problems of vehicles in our collection is one I will take a keen interest in. St. Helens trolleybus 387 is on loan to the North-West Museum of Road Transport and I recently visited their premises to carry out an inspection on the condition of 387 and produced a report.

I am currently trying to obtain past issues of Sandtoft Scene. I have one full set but a second set for storage in a different location is required in case one set gets destroyed. I am also on the look-out for Sandtoft Gathering programmes from years gone by. If you have any spare copies of either publication, they would be gratefully received.

Once the summer holidays are over, I will be starting work on writing the history of the Trolleybus Museum at Sandtoft. It will be aimed at the public and not bus enthusiasts and will eventually be sold in the Trolleyshop.

One major task I will be carrying out with the Development Officer, Dave Chick, probably not until next year, is the interpretation of our fleet of vehicles so that the public can see not only the vehicle but details of its history and its place in the fleet in which it originally belonged.

So far it has been an interesting start to my Curator role and hopefully it will continue to be so.



144 MR7703 Norcot Junction 11
June 1968 (Michael Russell)

Reading Trolleybus 144

**...and my
association
with it**

By Dave Hall



As most people at Sandtoft will know, the Reading trolleybus system is very close to my heart, having taken an interest in the vehicles from a very early age. 144 was one of a batch of 20 BUT 9611Ts (138-157) with Park Royal bodywork which were purchased in 1949 for new trolleybus routes to be introduced in the Whitley area of Reading. It entered service on 1 June 1949, four days before the Northumberland Avenue route was converted to trolleybus operation...

I was born in March 1953 and by the end of the summer of 1955 we had moved into a house in Tilehurst, not far from the Tilehurst trolleybus terminus. The BUTs rarely worked on our route, being mainly confined to the Whitley routes. We had mostly Sunbeam S7s (like 174 & 181 at Sandtoft) or AEC 661Ts (like 113). So, to see a BUT was exciting to me!

In 1959, my father arranged for me to be taken on a tour of Mill Lane depot to boost my recovery from a serious illness. Whilst there I was sat in the lap of an Inspector, and we drove BUT 154 at the back of the depot. It was different to the rest of the batch as it had fluorescent lighting and a GEC motor instead of an English Electric one, therefore sounding different to the other BUTs. It became my favourite vehicle from that time onwards.

With the introduction of 12 new Sunbeam F4s (182-193) in 1961, they, and the Sunbeam S7s, began dominating the Whitley routes and the BUTs were largely used as peak hour specials on all routes from then on. They operated a lot more frequently on the Tilehurst route. I used the trolleybuses quite often, travelling to school on them between 1964 and 1966 and would always wait for a BUT if I knew one was around.

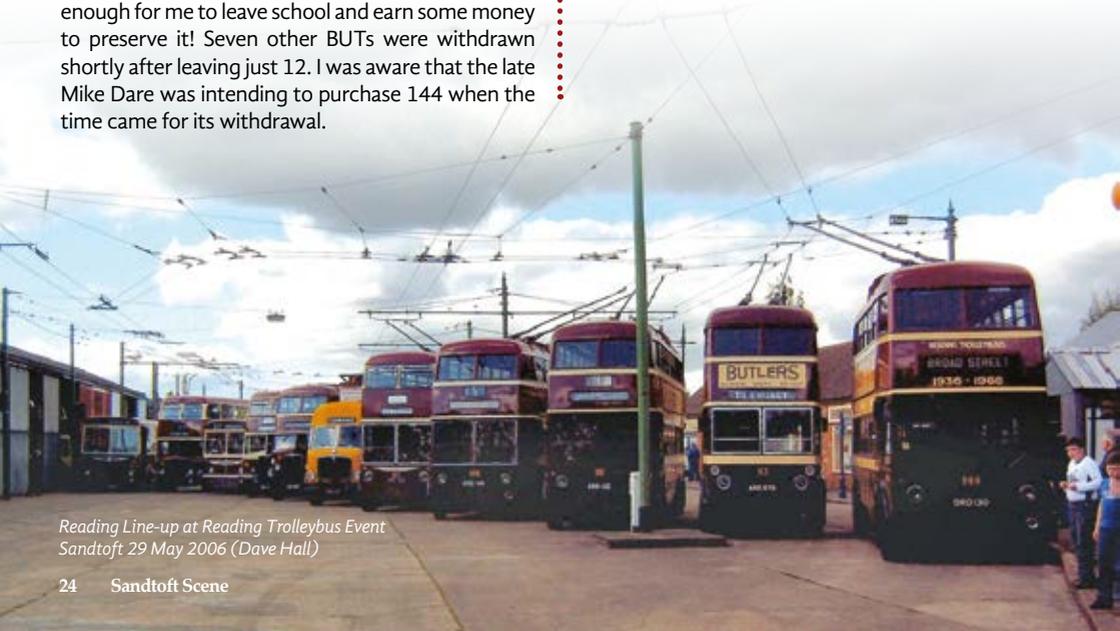
Sadly, in July 1966 it was decided to abandon the trolleybus system in Reading and 154 was the first vehicle to be withdrawn in December that year as the Whitley Wood route was due to be converted to motorbus operation in early January 1967. I was devastated as I had hoped it would survive long enough for me to leave school and earn some money to preserve it! Seven other BUTs were withdrawn shortly after leaving just 12. I was aware that the late Mike Dare was intending to purchase 144 when the time came for its withdrawal.

In December 1967, five more BUTs were withdrawn as the Northumberland Avenue route was to be converted to motorbus operation. Six more followed in March 1968 when the Armour Hill route also succumbed to the motorbus, leaving just 144 as the only BUT in service.

Throughout the summer I would always look out for 144 if I was to make a journey into town or just have a ride to Wokingham Road and back. If I knew it was due in a few vehicles time I would wait. One thing I remember about 144 was that it could certainly shift! I remember one particular journey, after it was running late after the evening peak where we hardly stopped between Tilehurst and the town centre and did the journey in 14 minutes rather than the scheduled 20!

Sadly, the time for 144 to be withdrawn and prepared to become Reading's last trolleybus came on Friday 27 September 1968. It was taken to Bennet Road workshop and repainted. Gold leaf lettering applied to the front to announce it as Reading's last trolleybus. Fleet numbers in the more modern form were applied, the booms were painted white and the upper deck emergency door was modified to its original 1949 arrangement, with no metal platform in the middle of the window. Mike Dare paid for all this work to be carried out.

144 performed the last rites for the end of the trolleybus system on 3 November 1968 and on 23 November was towed to Mike's chapel (Westgate), where it was stored with Derby 172 and Manchester 1344.



Reading Line-up at Reading Trolleybus Event Sandtoft 29 May 2006 (Dave Hall)



144 Pulling Out Of Mill Lane Depot For Final Run 3 November 1968 (The Late Tom Bingham)

For almost 8 years 144 remained in the chapel. However, it returned to Reading in August 1976 to take part in Reading Corporation Transport's 75th anniversary celebrations. Two years later in October 1978, a special Reading event was held at Sandtoft to mark the 10th anniversary of the Reading system closure. It was joined by Reading 113, running for the first time since 1961, 181, 186 (Teesside T291) and 193. Following the event, 144 returned to Westgate until 1993 when it was taken to Armthorpe motors for an external repaint. Mike had already carried out an internal repaint by this time.

I was forever pestering Mike to get 144 over to Sandtoft so I could have rides on it but he wanted it to remain safe where it was. In September 2005, Mike sadly passed away following an illness and ownership of 144 was transferred to Sandtoft. 144 remained in Westgate until April 2006 when after 4 hours of shunting, it was finally out on the road! A special Reading trolleybus event was held at Sandtoft over the Spring bank holiday, which included a ceremonial spreading of Mike's ashes in the Memorial Garden. 144 remained at Sandtoft thereafter.

Turn the clock forward to 2017 and 144's paintwork was becoming tatty and bubbling up. In October it was towed to Penistone for an internal and external repaint. Although Mike had wanted 144 to remain in its last trolleybus livery, I hated it! Without any influence from me the Sandtoft Board fortunately decided it should be painted in normal livery. Its return to Sandtoft was long awaited and it finally arrived in August 2018, the day before the August bank holiday weekend event to mark the 50th anniversary of Reading's trolleybuses demise.

To say I was disappointed when it arrived back was an understatement. Externally it had been beautifully repainted by Darren Sentance, but the cream bands



144 With Lights On Reading Town Hall 3 November 2018 (Dave Hall)

looked more like a light yellow than the cream colour it was supposed to be. Even worse the interior had not been repainted at all. Having arranged for 144 to be displayed in Reading in November that year, for the 50th anniversary events in its home town, I was anxious to put this right.

Nothing could be done between August and its arrival in Reading on 30 October. However, a gang of us managed to clean up the interior and take off some of the tatty internal adverts. Graham Bilbe put the seats back and its internal condition was passable.

Once 144 returned to Sandtoft in May 2019 I began thinking that it would be good if I could look after it on behalf of Sandtoft. My suggestion to become a custodian of the vehicle was accepted and an agreement was signed in July 2021. I was given the go ahead by the Sandtoft Board to arrange for 144 to return to Penistone for an internal repaint and for new lino to be laid on both decks. The upper-deck emergency door will be restored to its 1960s condition with the metal platform restored. I have agreed to pay for external adverts to be sign-written. It will not have the adverts it displayed on withdrawal but instead it will have typical local adverts displayed on the BUTs instead. It was hoped it would have gone to Penistone by now, but problems caused by another vehicle currently on site have delayed its arrival there.

I will oversee the repaint project just as I did with external repaints to Reading 113 and 193, so that it will look authentic. I cannot wait to see it finally completed and back in service! Once completed Reading 181 will follow 144.

Vehicle Updates

All the news from the workshop by Bradley O'Connor and Jim Sambrooks



907 The bus is now halfway through its repaint, after passing its MOT a couple of weeks ago. The engine is much better than before but still requires attention. Mechanical and body work is still ongoing. Thanks to Alex Proctor for the update.

754 Progress has been slow recently waiting for some parts to arrive. These should be delivered very soon and the work will once again speed up. Inner chassis has been removed and outer chassis has been cleaned, repaired and painted. Some body pillars were found to be unsatisfactory and have been replaced by ones that were stored by the group. Thanks to Alex Proctor for the update.

TB78 All internal vents have been removed and new vents have been produced, these are waiting to be fitted to the bus. Unfortunately, it has been found that paint on the internal roof has started to flake away. The aim is to have this serviceable for Gathering. Many thanks to Francis Whitehead & John Petch for the work on this.

144 Still awaiting to depart Sandtoft for works to get underway with Darren Sentence.

Huddersfield 541 has suffered several delays on bringing it back to serviceable condition, this has mainly been down to the brakes. The foot brake has been fine, but the handbrake has been proving temperamental. At the time of writing this, the bus is in the workshop having the final adjustments to it. Once the bus passes the handbrake test, it can run in service.

Huddersfield 619 has now been passed out into public service after its compressor was returned to site after having being refurbished. No major hurdles in bringing this vehicle back to serviceable condition.



Wellington 82 in preparation of the first accessibility event of the season, just had a wash!

82 A fault on the air system has been detected during a running day, this was quickly diagnosed and resolved by Graham Bilbe, this was due to a build-up of dirt in part of the air system.

1348 Due to the amount of work required, it has been decided that 1348 will be sidelined for 2023 and the remedial work will take place over the closed season. This gives us time to concentrate on other priorities.

1812 This vehicle has suffered several issues this season, this has mainly revolved around the contactors in the cab. These have now been inspected and remedial works have been completed.

Cherry Picker This had its six-monthly inspection a couple of weeks ago, it was found to have a leaking ram seal on the steering and it was found the "deadman" foot switch in the cab was not working correctly. Both issues have not been rectified and it has now passed its exam.



The Cherry picker undergoing it's "Thorough Inspection", courtesy of "Altegra".

DO&LRS reports that on Sunday 4th of June over two-score members and friends gathered at Sandtoft to celebrate the anniversaries of three Doncaster buses entering service and one enjoying a long time in preservation. Doncaster 22 was seventy years old, 33 was sixty, 55 was fifty-five and trolleybus 375 marked its sixtieth year in preservation.

There were Isle tours using four motorbuses, 94 had asked to be included following its recent MoT success, and **375** operated several circuits during the day. A splendid cake was provided by Jan Petch, cut by eight-year-old Cody O'Connor and enjoyed by all present.

After all the excitement at the Museum a good number of the party retired to the Glasshouse in Kirk Sandall where an excellent meal rounded off the proceedings nicely. Many thanks to all concerned.

22 Successfully attended the Bus and Tram event at Beamish Museum in May, it operated on their internal bus service for three days without incident, not bad for a seventy-year-old bus.

33 was inspected for MoT which it passed in late June.

94 passed its first MoT test in May.

112 Further interior work has taken place, another visit to our workshop when both rear brakes were stripped out, bearings cleaned, inspected and reassembled, both rear brakes were relined at the same time.

Other Sandtoft vehicle news includes one of our wheelbarrows which developed a slow puncture, Len Smith took it to our tyre providers, Len said it was very difficult wheeling the barrow to Thorne on a flat tyre but much easier on the return journey!



541 moments before it's first movements under power in many years, did fail handbrake test though!

Site Improvements

Chas Allan and Tony Walsh on the latest developments behind the scenes at the Museum



The site team have, as ever, been busy! Amongst the usual bread-and-butter tasks such as repainting woodwork, Hastings 46 has moved indoors. 46 is the single decker that was used as a caravan after World War II and has been left in what can only be described as "unrestored" condition. The move from its previous home alongside the hedge separating the car park from the running track has been made to prevent further deterioration and (just as importantly) improve the first impressions visitors get when they park up!

In another major tidy-up, the old caravan behind the Staff Car Park was finally extricated and sold on just before Easter. This had proved to be a bigger job than we'd expected, involving the removal of two areas of fencing.

Ian Pryor, our regular contractor, has also been busy applying finishing touches to the David Croft Depot and laying the concrete base for the Playtram, incorporating rails kindly donated by our friends at the East Anglia Transport Museum, Carlton Colville.

All this, plus the recent changes to the layout and stocking of the shop, has resulted in positive feedback from some of our members, which is gratifying.



The compressor as donated by Francis Terry

Equipment kindly donated to the Museum by Francis Terry have been refurbished, installed and tested by Tony Walsh and John Petch, including a compressor, lathe and welding set.

Inside the prefab stores which was reroofed last year, new cabling and lights have been fitted so that we can see what we are doing! LED lights and time switches mean that the museum is continuing to improve its green credentials. The team are pondering whether there is room to create a workshop space in the building.



OPEN DAYS FOR 2023

PLEASE NOTE: THESE ARE STILL SUBJECT TO ALTERATION

Saturday 29 July

Sandtoft Gathering '23 Preview

Sunday 30 July
(open 10am – 6pm)

FREE BUS

Sandtoft Gathering '23

displays of vintage buses, cars, jazz band, beer tent - and more!

Saturday 12 August
Sunday 13 August



Weekend Trolleydays

Monday 21 to Friday 25 August **WEEKDAY OPENING**

Saturday 26 August
Sunday 27 August
Monday 28 August

FREE BUS

Bank Holiday Trolleydays

featuring our Roe-bodied trolleybuses

Saturday 16 September
Sunday 17 September

1940s Weekend *featuring (on Saturday) a display of vintage cars*

Saturday 30 September
Sunday 1 October

Blues & Twos Weekend

retired emergency vehicle displays and demonstrations

Sunday 15 October

FREE BUS

Isle of Axholme Running Day & Rally

visiting vehicles and motorbus tours of the local area

Monday 23 to Friday 27 October **WEEKDAY OPENING**

Saturday 28 October
Sunday 29 October



Weekend Trolleydays

commemorating Doncaster's last trolleybus in December 1963

Saturday 18 November
(open 10.30am – 6pm)

Twilight Trolleydays

with atmospheric trolleybus operation after dusk

= Accessible Weekends: At least one trolleybus in service will be wheelchair accessible (subject to availability)

DONCASTER BUS CONNECTIONS

FREE BUS indicates **FREE BUS** operates on these days, departing 11.30 am from Doncaster Interchange (Bay C6) to the Museum, with return at 3.30pm (journey approx. 40 mins). See website for details of extra journeys on Sandtoft Gathering and Isle of Axholme Running Day & Rally days. On Saturdays we run a connecting service to Thorne and justGo North Lincs provides connections from Scunthorpe and Crowle. Trips on justGo North Lincs must be pre-booked.

Doncaster Interchange	1007	First South Yorkshire Service 87	Trolleybus Museum Free Bus
Thorne Park Gates	1054		1100
Trolleybus Museum			1120
Return Service	Trolleybus Museum Free Bus	First South Yorkshire Service 87	
Trolleybus Museum	1530		
Thorne Park Gates	1550		1556
Doncaster Interchange			1644

MUSEUM ADMISSION PRICES

Admission on days with a red background:
Adult £14.50 | Senior (61+) £12 | Concs £8
Family (2 Adults + 2 Concs) £39
Senior+Family (2 Seniors + 2 Concs) £36

Other weekend and bank holiday open days:
Adult £12 | Senior (61+) £10 | Concs £7.50
Family (2 Adults + 2 Concs) £34
Senior+Family (2 Seniors + 2 Concs) £30.50

Prices on Weekday openings – please check our website: www.sandtoft.org