

Walsall 342 **(NDH 959)**

Chassis:	Sunbeam F4
Chassis No:6	50740
Motor:	British Thomson Houston type 209D, 95 hp
Bodywork:	Brush H30/26R (until 1965), H34/31R (from 1965)
Length:	Originally 26ft, lengthened to 30ft 1965
Width:	7ft 6in
Unladen Weight:	As built: 7t 14cwt 2qrs
Entered Service:	1 November 1951
Withdrawn:	3 October 1970
Owner:	British Trolleybus Society

BRIEF HISTORY

342 was one of a batch of 10 Sunbeam F4s that entered service between October and December 1951 which replaced the 10 Sunbeam MS2's (155 -164) dating from 1933. Between 1951 and 1959 these vehicles predominantly worked Walsall's share of the joint service to Wolverhampton. However, in 1959 they were ousted from this route by eight second hand trolleybuses purchased from Hastings.

342 was originally a conventional rear-entrance double-deck trolleybus. It was taken out of use in 1959; between then and 1965 it was rebuilt in an experiment whereby the chassis was lengthened using motorbus components and the body was suitably adapted to become a 65 seat capacity vehicle. This was the only vehicle in this batch so treated and 342 briefly re-entered service in May 1965. It was off the road again until 1967.

Walsall Corporation Transport were amongst a number of municipal fleets amalgamated into the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority in the early autumn of 1969. The future of 46 trolleybuses amidst a fleet of 2,000 motorbuses looked bleak and it was no surprise when the WMPTE announced plans to abandon the system.

342 survived in service until the last day of trolleybus operation on 3 October 1970 whereupon she was purchased by the Reading Transport Society and taken straight to Sandtoft for storage.

Once trolleybus operations got underway at Sandtoft, 342 was a regular service vehicle in

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the early days. Although in a sound condition she needs some bodywork and mechanical attention before re-entering service. In May 2006 342 was taken to undercover storage at a local farm and remained there until 22 May 2011 when she returned to Sandtoft to take part in the BTSs 50th anniversary celebrations, returning to the off site store afterwards.

The vehicle does require a significant amount of work before it can enter service at Sandtoft, but superficially it is in excellent condition.