



Western National 1747 (RTT 957), a 1955 Bristol LS5G with 45-seat Eastern Coach Works body, operating a Minehead town service. A white steering wheel reminds the driver that this vehicle is 8 ft wide. The chipped Bristol/ECW badge and dented bumper suggest this otherwise immaculate bus is not new. The Austin 10 car has a 1949 Essex registration. Minehead railway station closed in 1971 and the West Somerset Railway reopened it in 1976. Photographer Roy Marshall, copyright The Bus Archive, ref. RM02/14748.

IN THIS ISSUE

Facebook highlights • Derek Potter obituary • Acton changes
Donations • Community outreach • Midland Red hostels
Alder Valley apprentice tests • Trevor Smallwood donation • BusMart

Derek Frederick Potter 1939-2026

Everyone at The Bus Archive was saddened by the death early in January of Derek Potter, one of our stalwart volunteers and someone who was instrumental in setting up and running The Kithead Trust, one of our predecessor organisations.

Derek was born in April 1939 in the Handsworth Wood area of Birmingham, from where he made early trips to Great Barr station on Sundays to see diverted express trains from the Trent Valley line. His family also used the 16 bus to Birmingham city centre and the 70 tram to Rednal. These experiences stimulated his interest in transport.



He became a GEC apprentice in the radio and television department in 1954, then joined the family business of supplying radios and televisions. In the 1950s he joined transport enthusiast groups, including the Light Railway Transport League (LRTL) and Stephenson Locomotive Society (SLS) and at one of these meetings he met Peter Jaques; they became lifelong friends.

In 1963, several enthusiasts met to discuss the assembly and eventual publication of a comprehensive transport history of Birmingham, this group eventually becoming

the Birmingham Transport Historical Group (BTHG). From 1969 to 1986 the BTHG with permission amassed a large collection of archive material from the offices of all municipal undertakings in the West Midlands. There was the problem of storing all this material; some was kept at members' homes and by courtesy of West Midlands PTE, rooms at two bus garages.

In 1984, The PSV Circle was considering how to improve its publications and Peter Jaques, who was Circle chairman, proposed the establishment of its own company to carry out the printing. Kithead Limited was born - a company with shareholders who put up the money to build a property and purchase the necessary printing machinery. A plot of land was found at the Hampton Lovett Industrial Estate near Droitwich, with Peter and Derek employed to run the company, starting in March 1987. Although the main customer was always The PSV Circle, it also carried out printing for other societies.

The new building was able to accommodate the BTHG archive material, and this became something of a magnet as when the National Bus Company was dissolved it became the home of a considerable volume of archival papers – about 20 tonnes of paper. This entailed the first of three extensions to the De Salis Drive building and was funded by The PSV Circle, The Omnibus Society and BTHG members. A charitable trust was formed to run the archive from August 1989 – The Kithead Trust. Both Derek and Peter were trustees and effectively ran the archive on behalf of the trust which continued to expand, with further extensions in 1995 and 1999. The printing operation ceased in 2004, and Peter and Derek continued to run the archive for a further 12 years. Many researchers from that era will remember their sometimes testy relationship.

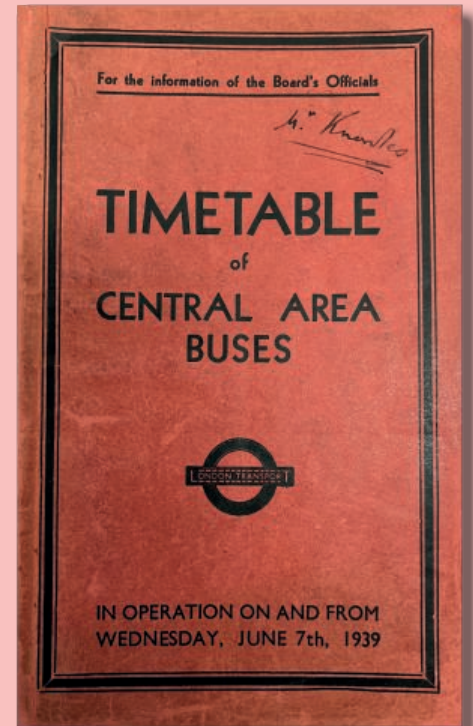
We need to thank Derek for his long service at the archive, and we were grateful for his guidance until his final days.

Changes at Acton centre

As many readers know, we are able to operate a research centre in London thanks to our friends at London Transport Museum, at their Acton Depot.

Late last year, we were asked to move our storage space to another part of the same building and at the same time we re-evaluated our Acton holdings and decided to move the pre-1946 publicity collection which will now be stored at our Walsall centre alongside the provincial publicity collection. This decision was driven by the physical condition of some of the collection and our inability to control the environmental conditions under which they are kept at Acton. The storage rooms at Walsall are constantly monitored for humidity and temperature.

We are aware that this will mean reduced availability to researchers in the London area, but the trustees felt that we need to ensure the long-term preservation of our collections.



West Wales Motors Tycoes near Ammanford purchased Albion Venturer SPM80 in April 1933 fitted with Albion's own 7.8 litre EN85 petrol engine and a English Electric H27/24R body, registered TH 3293. It was rebodied by Duple in 1942 with a lowbridge body seating L30/26R and also acquired a Gardner diesel engine. A young chap seems to be having a whale of a time swinging from the platform pole. Sadly it caught fire and burned out on 30th August 1948 near Cadle Bridge Fforestfach while in service.

(Photographer Charles F Klapper, copyright The Bus Archive)

Facebook highlights

Here are six of the most-liked posts from the last quarter, all showing manufacturers' demonstrator buses. The captions are highly abridged from the original posts; for full stories behind the operators and the vehicles go to <https://www.facebook.com/thebusarchive/>. Copyright of the photos is held by The Bus Archive.



Cornish operator Maurice Rowe came to the Commercial Motor Show in London in September 1954 with the Hillmaster, his own design of coach with an underfloor Meadows 4DC engine which he had converted to horizontal, and a London-built Whitson body. He claimed that its Meadows five-speed gearbox with an extra low first gear allowed a fully-laden start on a 1 in 4 gradient, hence the model name. Displayed alongside it is an 8 ton Rowe Hillmaster lorry. These were in the forecourt of West Brompton station, facing the

Earls Court demonstration park, as Rowe was not a member of the Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders and could not display in the show. Rowe's chassis building business went into receivership in 1960 and completed its last lorry in 1962. (Photographer Derek Giles, ref. DG02_03532)

The second Daimler Fleetline demonstrator, 4559 VC, was new in 1962 and was loaned to Ribble in November that year when it was photographed in Seaforth, Liverpool. This had a lowheight Northern Counties body with shrouds at the rear to hide the bustle effect of the engine compartment. The lowheight body allowed Daimler to show off an advantage that was impossible on early Leyland Atlanteans



without resorting to a side gangway at the rear of the top deck. It was sold in August 1964, but was promised to both Burwell & District and Proctor's of Hanley. Daimler resolved the problem by diverting a demonstrator that was being built with a Willowbrook body to B&D as its 9 DER, while 4559 VC went to Proctor's, which went on to be by two new Alexander-bodied Fleetlines. (Photographer Roy Marshall, ref. RMMXE-11)

Facebook highlights



The second Dennis Javelin chassis formed the basis of the first demonstrator, seen in Blackpool in 1988. E958 EPD had a Duple 320 body, Duple and Dennis then being sister companies in the Hestair Group. The Javelin was a turning point in Dennis's fortunes, the first of many models designed for volume manufacturing rather than operators' bespoke requirements. It combined the advantages of a mid-engined chassis with the luggage capacity of a rear-engined integral. With the then recently introduced Cummins C-Series engine immediately in front of the rear axle,

a large rear boot also was possible. Over 2,500 were built with a variety of body makes before production ended in 2010, but Duple closed in 1989. (Photographer Roy Marshall, ref. RMMXE-19)



Lorry manufacturer Seddon built buses from 1946 and launched the Pennine RU, standing for Rear Underfloor, in March 1969. This service bus was available in 33ft or 36ft lengths with a horizontal Gardner 6HLX engine and Self Changing Gears semi-automatic transmission. A straight chassis frame inclined from front to rear provided a low entrance and step-free interior. The first was a demonstrator, bodied by Seddon's Pennine Coachcraft business and registered in Oldham as TBU 598G. This October 1970 picture shows it on loan to Green Bus of Rugeley, which purchased it in May 1971, numbering it 23. Midland Red acquired Green Bus in November 1973; the RU was numbered 2151 and used briefly at Tamworth before passing to Lancaster City Transport in November 1974, joining RUs new to Morecambe & Heysham. Sold to a dealer in July 1977, it ended its days with Ardglass Gaelic Athletic Association in Co. Down. (Photographer Roy Marshall, ref. RMMXE-60)

Facebook highlights

After the joint venture between Scania and MCW ended, Scania re-entered the UK bus market with the BR112DH, a 9.5m or 10.2m double or single-decker. It addressed issues experienced with the Metro-Scania and Metropolitan, including their heavy fuel consumption and complex cooling pipework, fitting a single offside radiator instead of one either side. The chassis, a semi-integral structure with the bodywork, had a Scania D11 engine, full air suspension and a choice of three-speed Voith D851 or two or four-speed



Scania automatic gearboxes. The first demonstrator, unveiled in September 1980, was a standard wheelbase 78-seater with East Lancs body. It was registered NRR 400W in July 1981, finished in Scania's blue demonstration livery which it retained after Nottingham City Transport acquired it. This picture shows it when new and unregistered, with Leicester City Transport general manager Geoffrey Hilditch in the cab. Leicester tried a second demonstrator but bought no Scania's. (Photographer Roy Marshall, ref. RMMXE-57)



After transferring Titan production from Park Royal to Workington in early 1981, Leyland tried to reignite interest among operators outside London with this demonstrator, VAO 488Y, appearing in August 1982. It was about as different from a London Titan as it was possible to be, with single door, forward staircase and Leyland engine – most of London's were Gardners. This shows it on loan to

Nottingham City Transport, which bought no new ones but took two former London buses in 1993. It had a different lower deck window arrangement from earlier Park Royal-built single-door Titans; those had a narrow offside window behind the staircase. Reading was the only non-London operator to buy new Workington-built Titans, taking ten in March 1983. VAO 488Y passed to Ian Glass of Haddington in October 1984 and became Lowland Omnibuses' 988 after acquiring the Glass business in May 1991; it went for scrap in 1998. (Photographer Roy Marshall, ref. RMMXE-43)

The Trevor Smallwood Collection



We got off to a good start in 2026 with significant additions to our collections including a donation from Trevor Smallwood OBE, a name familiar to many with an interest in the bus industry.

Trevor's bus heritage goes back generations with both his father and grandfather working in buses in South Yorkshire alongside other members of the family. He established his career in both Yorkshire and Bristol over 50 years. This included leading the management buyout of Badgerline in 1986, its subsequent flotation on the stock exchange, the 1995 merger with GRT Bus Group to create FirstBus (later FirstGroup), of which he was chairman until he retired in 1999. He was appointed OBE for services to public transport in 1994.

He has been active in retirement in both business and philanthropy, particularly with local transport charities. Trevor has been generous enough to donate to us materials including photographs, publicity materials and company documentation dating back to the 1920s from Yorkshire and Bristol, seen here passing it over to archivist Elizabeth Shuck.

Below is a sneak preview of photographs from the 1920s to 1940s to show you the range of material ahead of a full cataloguing exercise. These originated with the Rotherham-based Mexborough & Swinton Traction Company. What is particularly nice about these highlights is the social history they show, from women drivers to the scale of an expedition to Skegness to a blurry image taken of staff striking outside of the office gates during the 1926 General Strike. We might imagine the last was taken covertly from a top floor window.



Donations

We have received the following donations in the last quarter. As ever, we are very grateful to everyone on this list:

Gordon Paterson	Photographs
Trevor Smallwood	Yorkshire area ephemera and documents
Tony Walmsley	Timetables
Pat Jones	Photograph albums and other bus memorabilia
Jeanette Cunningham	Books and timetables
Stuart Wise	Timetables
Richard Jefferson	Tickets
Wythall Transport Museum	Engineering drawings and destination blind
Leon Daniels	Magazines
Chris Martin	Midland Red trade union meeting minutes
Philip Rushworth	Books and maps
Estate of David Little	Photograph collection
Robert Pick	Photographs
Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport Library	Books and reports
Paul Shakeshaft	Timetables
Robin Helliar-Symons	Timetables
Barry LeJeune	Books
Wayne Asher	Timetables and accounts
Ian Pinkney	Books
Robert Monroe	Timetables, maps and publicity from Cardiff Bus
Alan Lewington	Mixed collection
Andrew Norman	Mixed collection
Don Akrigg	PSV Circle publications
Derek Stephen	Photographs
Dave Taylor	Timetables
Martyn Gadsby	Photograph albums and other bus memorabilia
Marilyn Preston	Photography collection of the late John Locke.
Chris G. Roberts	Timetables and other items
Catherine Taplin	Mixed collection
Crosville Enthusiasts Club	Archive materials
Estate of the late Colin May	Photograph collection
Bill Hiron	Mixed industry material
Jim Stott	Photograph collection

Remember if you have any surplus material – whether it be official records, your own research, publicity or photographs – we would like to hear from you at hello@busarchive.org.uk. If we don't have a particular item, it will be added to our collections, and if we do already have it then we can sell the surplus one to fund our charity.

Midland Red hostels

Midland Red — the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Company — maintained staff hostels in areas where there were insufficient locally resident drivers, conductors or engineers to maintain all its scheduled services.

Two of them were in Avenue Road, Leamington Spa and Stourbridge Road, Dudley. Correspondence in the archive shows that it was negotiating to acquire the Leamington freehold building, a ten-bedroom detached house within easy distance of the Midland Red garage, which was on the market in September 1946 for £3,500 (£128,000 at 2026 values) including 'old but still suitable' linoleum.

The company's representative, one EH Woodhall, was confident that up to four beds could be accommodated in most rooms. 'I think 30 men could be accommodated without overcrowding to any degree,' he said, adding, 'The conservatory would make a good drying room for wet clothes. In fact, the place lends itself so well to our purpose that I have not the slightest hesitation in recommending its purchase.'

The bedrooms may have had the air of a hospital ward or barracks, but this was in an age of compulsory National Service when, as in wartime, such communal living was an everyday experience for many.

In October 1953 it agreed a new contract with husband and wife Robert and Ellen Davison for their services as, respectively, warden and cook-housekeeper at Leamington, for which he was paid £3 17/6d (£3.87½p — £95 today) per week and she received £3 12/6d. They were permitted to occupy a sitting room, bedroom, bathroom and lavatory free of rent and taxes in an arrangement that specified that this was not a tenancy. They were not permitted to work elsewhere or have other business interests.

They were required to make good any damage to bathroom and lavatory fixtures and fittings (other than wear and tear or fire) and permit company representatives to inspect the premises at any time between 10:00 and 17:00 on Mondays to Saturdays. They were issued with petty cash to cover small items of expenditure of up to £2; they needed the company's authority to spend larger sums.

The contract stipulated that the company could suspend their wages or terminate their employment without notice if either or both of them 'shall at any time wilfully neglect or refuse or from illness or any other cause become or be unable to perform any of the duties'.

The restrictions were the same, but remuneration had improved when Clive and Phyllis Thomas signed a contract two years later, in November 1955, for the same posts at Dudley. He was to be paid £4 10/- (£4.50 — £103 today) per week and she £4.

Exterior of the Dudley staff hostel, an imposing detached house with well-maintained front garden and double gates.



Midland Red hostels



Midland Red hostels



Staff reading newspapers, playing cards and smoking in the lounge of the Leamington hostel.



A five-man bedroom in Leamington.

Community Outreach News

'I Love Droitwich' event

Following an invitation from St Andrew's Square shopping centre in Droitwich, The Bus Archive took part in a volunteer and heritage group pop-up in the town centre on 14 February celebrating a love for Droitwich on Valentine's Day. We had a good day showcasing facsimiles and photographs from our collections with over 100 people welcomed through on the day.



Group visits

New for 2026, The Bus Archive is launching the opportunity for groups of between five and 20 people to visit our Droitwich site. Visits will be held outside our usual opening hours to best accommodate groups and will be free, with a donation always appreciated. Groups will experience a guided tour of The Pod, our new low energy storage environment, and will get the chance to see some highlights from the collection. Full details can be found on our website. If you know of a group that may be interested in visiting, please let them know. We are particularly keen to hear from community groups that may not have engaged with us before. Visits can be booked by emailing hello@busarchive.org.uk.



Alder Valley's apprentice test

When the Thames Valley & Aldershot Omnibus Company — better known as Alder Valley — was recruiting engineering apprentices in 1979, candidates were required to demonstrate acceptable levels of numeracy, spelling and general knowledge before there was any chance of them learning how to deploy a spanner.

In an age long before Google, Wikipedia or ChatGPT existed and the use of pocket calculators would be forbidden, they were given an hour to answer 20 questions, with strict instructions not to guess the answers, write on the question papers or work out the numeracy questions on anything other than a spare piece of plain paper supplied along with the question and answer sheets. A bit like a game of snakes and ladders, there were risks of great jeopardy, as they were awarded one point for each correct answer, but a point and a half was deducted for each wrong one.

Two more test papers followed, with 10 minutes to complete an alphabetical sequence with characters placed above or below in the same order, then 5 minutes to follow 15 written instructions that tested the applicants' literacy and comprehension.

In a year that was dominated by a particularly decisive general election and most people relied on mainstream media to keep up with the news, there was a good chance that most would know the answer to question 15, but how widespread, even 47 years ago, was the knowledge that the island of Taiwan was also known as Formosa and that it's off the coast of China?

If the pass rate for question 12 was high, then literacy standards have plummeted in that same period, given how many emails or internet posts pop up today in which the words 'where' and 'were' are confused.

The pedants among us, or the sticklers for accuracy, will be amused to note that the question setter's own spelling and punctuation are suspect in two places, warning applicants that they will 'loose' points for a wrong answer and confusing 'it's' and 'its' in question 8. Did any budding apprentice dare point that out?

INSTRUCTIONS

Read the questions carefully and record your answer on the answer paper provided.

You must give only one answer to each question. If you give more than one answer, that particular question will be marked wrong.

You will receive 1 mark for each correct answer but you will loose $1\frac{1}{2}$ marks for each one you answer but get it wrong. If you do not know the answer DO NOT GUESS.

If you wish to do any working out, do so on the spare paper provided and NOT on your answer paper.

DO NOT mark this question paper in any way and hand it back in when you have finished.

1. Read all questions and make sure you understand them.
2. Write your name in the top left hand corner of this paper.
3. Underline your name.
4. Put a circle around the fourth and twelfth letters in the title of this paper.
5. Write down overleaf the total number of letters that make up your name.
6. Add the number 7 to the answer you gave for 5 above and write this under the title of this paper.
7. Put a circle around your last answer.
8. If you are the first person in the room to reach this stage of the test, stand up and call out loudly "I am the leader".
9. Write your home address in the bottom right hand corner overleaf.

12. In the following incomplete sentence, which word fits in to complete it?

"I know you are going".

- a) were b) where c) wear

13. Father is to Son as
Mother is to.....

14. A half of threequarters is:-

- a) Six Quarters b) Three Eighths c) Six Eighths

15. The present leader of the Conservative party is:-

- a) Edward Thatcher b) Edward Heath c) Margaret Thatcher

18. Which of the following is the greater?

- a) $\frac{1}{4}$ b) $\frac{1}{8}$ c) $\frac{15}{64}$

19. Which word is spelt correctly?

- a) BEUTIFUL b) BEAUTIFUL c) BEAUTIFULL

20. The Island of Formosa is located off the coast of:-

- a) CANADA b) AUSTRALIA c) CHINA

Surplus stock, photographs and lots more...

There are several ways you can support The Bus Archive. You can make a regular cash donation and become a Friend of the Archive or you can make your own collection more complete by buying surplus books, publicity items (timetables etc) and photographs from us.

Photographs

We have joined with our sister organisation The Omnibus Society to offer copies of our photograph collection with The Transport Library. There are now over **127,000** images available to purchase and on average **1,500** new items are added every month. Omnibus Society members get generous discounts on the purchase price.

New additions from the comprehensive Roy Marshall collection are:

- Newport
- South Midland
- Hebble
- North Western
- Somerset Independents
- Dundee
- Provincial
- Aberdare
- Southdown
- Portsmouth
- Manchester
- Stratford Blue
- Southern National
- Sussex Independents
- Worcestershire Independents
- Eastbourne
- Lincoln
- Grey-Green
- Ipswich
- Hastings Tramways
- Maidstone & District



The comprehensive Roy Marshall collection includes BVO 21C, a Harrington Crusader-bodied Bedford SB5 new to Barton Transport in 1965 with fleet number 1021, one of two sold to the Shropshire operator Vagg's Coaches of Knockin Heath, near Oswestry. Vagg's livery was similar to Barton's with a green rather than maroon roof over largely unaltered cream and bright red. (Photographer Roy Marshall, copyright The Bus Archive, ref. RM02_31785.)

BusMart

We are grateful for all the donated books, magazines and publicity material we receive every year. Anything we don't already have we add to our collection, but for items we already have are offered for sale, through BUSMART which brings in valuable funds for our charity.

There are three branches of BUSMART activity:

- eBay: follow our main account 'busarchive', and also our volunteer seller's account, 'keith2380'
- Online at busmart.org.uk where we have catalogues of all our surplus material for sale
- BUSMART sales catalogue which is published three times a year and sent out to nearly 1,000 people.

If you wish to be added to the mailing list, email hello@busarchive.org.uk



Our feature last time on Christmas Parties brought forth several complimentary remarks – and a correction. From Brian King, our chairman, comes a clarification of our captions to the 1949 Derby children’s party. The company was, of course, Trent and not Trent Barton as we erroneously said – that was several decades down the line.

And Finally...

Here in Liverpool is a very smart – and tiny – Morris-Commercial J-type operated by WRS of Manchester, signwritten for its ‘Carefree Holidays’ programme and first registered in 1950. We aren’t sure what the level of carefree-ness would be taking a holiday in such a small vehicle, but the chaps on the right seem to be interested. (Photo: John F Parke, copyright The Bus Archive).



This newsletter is published by The Bus Archive, 100-102 Sandwell Street, Walsall, WS1 3EB. Registered as a charity in England and Wales (number 1177343), set up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Newsletter editor: Alan Millar
Newsletter design and layout: Mike Greenwood

www.busarchive.org.uk
01922 629358
Phone line open Tuesday and Wednesday, 10.00 to 16.00, answerphone at other times.
hello@busarchive.org.uk