

CANVEY ISLAND TRANSPORT MUSEUM

Newsletter – No.1 2021

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That was the year... that wasn't!

Welcome to 2021.

When the boys of Slade were first heard on the radio singing "So here it is, Merry Christmas, everybody's havin' fun!" last November, I couldn't help wondering where 2020 had gone and what had actually happened.

One thing's for sure, like everyone else I spent considerably more time locked in my house staring at a computer and much less time out enjoying the hobby we are all so passionate about.



"Look to the future now, it's only just begun..." is how the song goes on. I guess that's what we need to focus on now if we're to stay sane, even as another national lockdown prevents us from getting out and about freely.

So wherever and however you have spent your lockdown months, I hope you have managed to keep safe and well. Despite the closure of the Museum for obvious reasons since last March, things have been happening on site thanks to a small group of our dedicated members who live locally. Everything was done in strict compliance with the rules on social distancing at the time, of course. Read on for details.

The Committee has had few changes too, but precious few chances to meet since last March. Regrettably we had to cancel our AGM. That meant we used the power of the post to ask members to vote for the new Committee, and we also issued several updates by letter too. You'll see the results of the postal vote and subsequent changes to the Committee in this issue. We have been keeping in touch by email during lockdowns, but it isn't the same as a long committee meeting with lashings of tea and biscuits.

It's been a while since we last issued a newsletter – and for that we apologise. You'll recall we asked if anyone would want to take on the job of Newsletter Editor some time back, and we're still trying to resolve that. In the meantime, we hope this is of interest and reminds you of what the Museum is and does, even if you haven't been there a while thanks to the pandemic.

Although most of us have been unable to visit the Museum, it has been quite an eventful period with some vehicle movements and some restoration work continuing on vehicles, notably the Museum's own former-Southend Transport Fleetline and Callum Taylor's Bristol MW coach. As you probably know, Callum has been living on-site at the Museum since the first lockdown started, and this has proved to be extremely useful in terms of his ability to work on his vehicle in the safety of the workshop, as well as giving us some building security.

If ever we needed reminding how important such security is, then the bored youths of Canvey obliged last September. They couldn't resist the opportunity to vent their lockdown frustrations on our property by using the upstairs front windows as targets for stone missiles. Luckily only the outer pane of one of the units at the top of the staircase was broken before they fled on realising there was someone on site. Despite having the incident recorded on our CCTV cameras, the local Police were distinctly disinterested, so no action was taken.

A few of us even managed to remove the various vehicle spares we had in long-term storage from a somewhat leaky container on one of the local industrial estates, and repatriate these to the Museum. Now they need sorting and storing safely, though some items may be disposed of to boost group funds.

Continues...

That was the year...that wasn't! *continued*

If you were to head into the Museum today, you would be amazed at the work that's being undertaken on the ground floor and mezzanine – all with a view to making the space more usable and welcoming for our guests as and when we can let them back in. Again, all the work is being done by a very small group led by Keith Patten, with specialist help being called in as required, and social distancing rules observed at all times. Again, read on for details

We have much to look forward to in 2021 and beyond. It's just so frustrating not being able to get together and plan anything with any certainty. Luckily, we were able to avoid significant expenditure that would have been lost in 2020 as we had started early planning for various events. So we're obviously wary now about starting to put plans in place for 2021. When the situation eases and we're able to get busy again, we're going to need some help to accelerate these plans quickly – please!

Finally, I have taken over the role of Membership Secretary, and have contacted everyone whose memberships were due for renewal at the point of taking over. Since then, I'm delighted to say the vast majority of members have renewed, and I want to thank you for that. A few members, however, decided not to renew, but maybe we can welcome them back one day in the future.

You could be forgiven for asking why, under the current restrictions and with the Museum closed, you would pay out for membership renewal? The answer is easy – your membership is to a charitable Society that still exists and desperately needs your support at all times, not just for events in the open season! Think of us as a club – you don't just pay club membership fees for a few months, you pay an annual subscription.

We're in this together, as a group, and we really appreciate everyone sticking with us through the tough times, as well as the good. Take care everyone.

Paul Harrison

Sad News – Phil Robinson:

We trust you will all be aware of the very sad news of the loss of our dear friend and member Phil Robinson, who passed away after a short illness on Saturday, February 29th, 2020.

I'm sure we all have pleasant memories of Phil – he was a real character who lit up the Museum with his humour and presence, and was always ready to roll his sleeves up and help out in any way he could.

He is now at peace and once again with his beloved lady, Sheila. We sent our condolences to his family on behalf of everyone at the Museum.

Dave Tucker

A New Arrival

As vehicle enthusiasts, we all love it when a new one arrives at the Museum. So take a look at this beauty! This Stiga Estate 5092H petrol lawn tractor was offered to us at a great price (it wasn't new!), so we took the plunge on the basis that it's going to be a whole lot easier cutting our grass with this than with the old push mowers which, frankly, were on their last legs.

This eye-catching model is powered by a Briggs & Stratton Power Built 4185 AVS engine, and had a hydrostatic transmission. Features include a 92cm/36-inch Contraflow double bladed cutter deck with 7 heights of cut, from 25 to 80mm, plus a large 290-litre grass collector and mulching kit. Wow!



CLOSURE UPDATE:

In the light of current government advice we made the difficult decision in March 2020 to close the Museum until further notice. This still remains the priority even although some “lockdown” measures were gradually lifted later in the year. Now, of course, we face a full national lockdown once again, and we are barely into 2021.

As well as having the security of a Committee member living on-site, we also managed to have a maintenance staff on duty, and they have been working hard to clear gutters and repair them, fix the side gates, repair the front gates recently damaged by a truck backing into them and, with help from a few local members when we could be together, clear the mezzanine of all the items stored there so that work could begin on lowering the floor to a more suitable level. This means taking out the steps and increasing the headroom – two things that have plagued us for so long.

Downstairs, the display room cases have been emptied and articles carefully stored away. When we inspected the display cases we found severe woodworm in some areas, so these have all been removed. There now exists a clear area downstairs and on the first floor. Although the railway layout is still in one piece, it has been moved by an ingenious method to prepare for the mezzanine floor to be lowered. The chimney structure to the flat above that was inside the railway has also been taken down, and several brick walls have been opened up so that, when finished, the building will be revamped with more space for exhibits and visitors.

We have talked about doing this for several years now, but this closure has given us the best opportunity to carry out this renovation. The Shop will be moved into the new display area, with storage located in the cupboard that is presently full of spares and equipment. The various spares and bits of equipment will all need to be sorted through, and a decision made as to whether we keep items that may be useful, or can dispose of less useful things that would raise money and help to keep our funds in a healthy state.

We have engaged an architect to ensure our plans for lowering the floor and installing the appropriate structure will meet all building regulations and be passed by the council. We hope also to improve our café area and further extend the mezzanine to provide more display space as well as a meeting and presentation room.

Because of Covid, we lost our two big events in 2020 as well as our community outreach events, so it became a priority to get improvements moving as soon as possible. Although we know there is little members can do to help us at the current time, we would ask that when the time is right, you make an effort to come to the Museum and give us a hand to get the building ready as a new and better visitor experience. That way, when we eventually open we can do it with style and repeat visitors will really notice a difference for the better.

On the financial side, although we lost the opportunity to raise money through events and donations, we were lucky to be able to apply for and benefit from a grant from the Council. This has really helped to keep us afloat, and so we are making other applications to various other organisations that have announced funding to help heritage organisations to survive this difficult time.

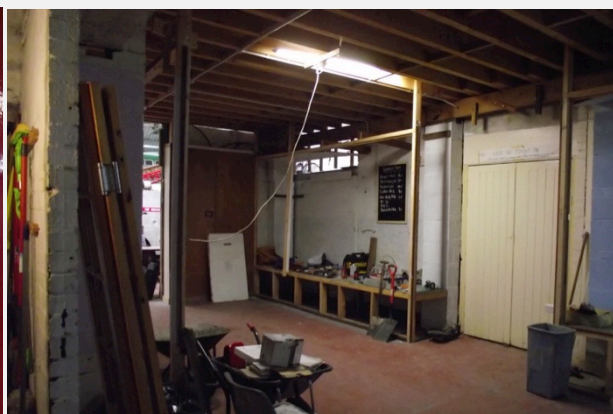
We are faced with the problem of rebuilding our resources – human, structural and financial - to secure the future for our Museum, and to enable us to resume our development and events programme. There are always lots of ideas in the pipeline but we need you – our members - to give us your full support to help carry them through.

In the meantime, until we can meet again, keep safe and well.

We will pull through this and together we will make sure this special Museum of ours has a secure future.

Marian Patten, Hon. Secretary CPTMS





Museum works in progress during 'Lockdown' - Photos by Ian Banks and Callum Taylor

Committee Update

At last we can inform you of what's been happening over the past months. Thanks to those of you who responded to the postal ballot last year for the new Committee, and sorry we couldn't do this at an AGM. As a result, the Committee was voted in as follows in August 2020:

Chairman:	Gordon Claydon	Vice Chairman:	Callum Taylor
Hon Treasurer:	Craig Mara.	Hon Secretary:	Marian Patten.
Committee Members:	Paul Harrison, Janet Walden, Keith Patten, Rory Windass.		

However, at the first meeting of the new Committee, our Chairman tendered his resignation due to other commitments. Therefore, the serving Committee was revised and is now as follows:

Acting Chairman :	Callum Taylor	Acting Vice Chairman:	Janet Walden (also Community Relations Manager)
Hon Treasurer:	Craig Mara	Hon Secretary:	Marian Patten
Committee Members:	Paul Harrison (Membership Secretary); Keith Patten (Buildings/Maintenance and Railway Display Manager); Rory Windass (Advertising & Publicity Manager).		

The new Committee also agreed that other jobs (Events, for example), may be carried out by members who are not serving on the Committee, but who would report to the Committee on matters for which they are given responsibility. It was also agreed that going forwards, vehicles inside the Museum should be exclusively part of the Society's collection, even if owned by a group of members. Vehicles at Canvey should therefore not be included in other Preservation Group or Society collections while they are resident at Canvey to avoid conflict of interest.

In general, we have much to do and very few members to help out. But, we all hope that when the time comes, members will once again join forces and put the Museum back on the road to being the enjoyable experience and friendly place that it should be.



A Message to Members from our Acting Chairman, CPTMS

"May I begin by introducing myself. Being a vehicle owner myself and having been involved with the Museum for many years, I am delighted to hold this position and will endeavour to do my very best for the Society. I would like to thank you for all your support in what has been a very difficult year for everyone.

As Acting Chairman I would also like to thank Gordon Claydon for his significant contribution during his time as CPTMS Chairman and, on behalf of all members of the Society, would like to send him and his family our very best wishes.

As you are aware, the Museum has been unable to open to visitors for the most part of 2020. However, those members who have paid us a visit when restrictions have allowed, will have seen a few changes taking place. Work has been in progress to lower the mezzanine floor to the correct height, to remove steps and trip hazards to create a more useable space, as well as working with an architect to extend the mezzanine floor over the cafe area. This will enable us to re-design the cafe, shop and display room, thus greatly improving the overall experience for our visitors when we are allowed to re-open, which we all hope will be in the not too distant future. I would like to thank those volunteers who have put much time and effort into this project, in particular Keith and Marian Patten, Craig Mara and Kevin Elliott, Janet Walden and Bob Wright.

Unfortunately, the temporary closure of the Museum to visitors has also meant that the Society was unable to hold any events in 2020, including our much-enjoyed Model Railway Show and our hugely anticipated Open Days. Like the whole country, we wait with bated breath to see how and when events like these will be able to go ahead in the future and we will do our best to keep you informed.

I'm sure you'll agree that 2020 was a year that none of us would want repeated in any shape or form, and our thoughts are with all those who have lost loved ones and whose lives have been affected by Covid. Our experiences will probably have greatly varied I'm sure, and I know that I speak for all Committee members in wishing everyone a much healthier and happier 2021. Thank you for your continued support in these difficult times, and we look forward to seeing you again soon."

Callum Taylor

Dave's Last Stop.... All Change – Driver Terminates Here!

On November 30th 2019, 45 years and some after my adventure started, I finished driving my last tour, switched off the bus and signed off as an employed driver for the last time. It was the end of an era, but the start of a new one - retirement!



So, how did it all begin? It all started when I was a novice driver with no licence back in July 1974 and I arrived at the London Transport Recruiting Centre, Griffith House, on the Marylebone Road in London. I was rather nervous, but passed the interviews followed by a medical, before being sent off to Chiswick Works for a cab/driving assessment in the RT simulator. All good! Then followed a week at Harrow-On-The-Hill on a Ford Escort simulator and a 'nursery trial' in an Escort Estate. Then, on to the road, Escort in hand. That was week one!

Second week, and parked on the apron at Chiswick was RT1760 (KYY 598 – became a trainer in 1970 and was eventually scrapped by Wombwell Diesels in 1977). My instructor, Lenny Rand, who was a double for the 50s movie actor John Mills, guided me round it. "Look how big this bus is! Get a feel for the size and how different it is to the Escort!". Four weeks after learning to drive the RT, it was time to drive the 'skid bus'. Six times round, nerves all gone – passed!

Next day came the Test. After doing the reversing manoeuvre in Chiswick, a co-trainee and I set out on the test route. I took over driving at Marble Arch then down Park Lane, around Hyde Park Corner and along to Hammersmith, Chiswick High Road and back into the Works. All good – and passed first time! I picked up my new badge – number N104549 – from Parton Street, and then spent a week learning routes out of the historic Stamford Hill garage (SF – originally opened in 1907 as a London City Council tram depot) before signing on for my first duty on the road on Saturday, August 3rd.

Signing on at 14.49hrs, I drove the 45 and 253 routes, leaving for Aldgate at 15.05hrs with a standing load. The trip seemed to take forever, and I was running late all the time. After a break between 19.35 and 20.27hrs, I eventually finished at 22.33hrs. And that was the achievement of my very first milestone!

Dave Tucker

VEHICLES NEWS

FLEETLINE – One thing we need as a Transport Museum is a Society vehicle we can use for Open Days, private visits, and community outreach. Efforts to progress our former Southend open top Fleetline have been pushing ahead with significant progress being made externally and internally, plus mechanically. It looks very smart in a fresh coat of Southend blue/white/red, and the interior is tidied, painted and fit for use. Its springs have been refurbished, and all that remains is to get her out of the workshop, sort out the sticky throttle, a leak in the fuel tank, and replace the compressor (we have a new one!). We must say a huge 'Thank You' to Keith and Marian Patten, Ian Banks, Kevin Elliott, Colin Phipps, Craig Mara and Callum Taylor for the hours they have put in over the course of last year to get this Museum-owned vehicle back on the road and looking splendid – hopefully later in 2021.



OWC 182D – Callum Taylor's Bristol MW has been undergoing a thorough body and interior overhaul in the workshop, even during the pandemic as Callum has been living on-site. With the interior stripped out and cleaned, it is ready for replacement seat frames and seats – suitable moquette has been acquired! The exterior has been stripped, windows removed, new panels fitted where needed and areas of rot attended to. Repainting is underway, with undercoats finished and top coats being applied when the temperatures permit! Can't wait to see it back on the road in "as new" condition!



AVX 975G – The bonnet area and cab side-window are being overhauled. The plate that sits between the bonnet and the cab window was rotten, so a new plate is being fitted. A new rubber section for the plate has been commissioned. At the same time, the engine bay is being treated to new webbing, new hoses and a general spruce up, and the cab side-window is being cleaned, greased and repainted. It is expected that this work can be completed quickly once the new lockdown ends, as there has been a request to have AVX meet First Essex's Volvo B9TL/Wright Gemini 2 HH 37986, which has been repainted in the same 1968 'heritage' livery worn by the FLF. This superb livery was suggested by, and managed for First Essex by well-known transport journalist and local enthusiast, John Lidstone.

VLT 44 – Stuart Miles discovered that the driver's door on his lovely RM was suffering from a woodworm attack, so this has been attended to.

PHJ 954 – Richard and John Gent have been doing detail work whenever possible, including on the driver's door which needs to be refitted. The fuel tank has also been cleaned, and work is ongoing to get the speedometer working again.

VEHICLES DEPARTED – A number of vehicles have departed the Museum for a new home with The Blackwater Preservation Group. These are: CJN 436C (Leyland PD3 - Southend Corporation); CPU 979G (Bristol VRT1 - ENOC); K909 CVW (Dennis Dart – Thamesway); (Dennis Dart – First Essex); 942 XBJ (Commer Fire Engine).



SPOTLIGHT ON ONO 49: *Sometimes we walk past Society vehicles in the Museum without really stopping to consider their history, how they came to be owned by the Society, and the reasons why they escaped the scrapman's fiery torch! Let's remind ourselves – starting with ONO 49.*

ONO 49 is one of ten Bristol L5G buses that were ordered by Eastern National Omnibus Company for delivery in 1949. The full batch took fleet numbers 4020 to 4029, and were registered ONO 41 to 50 inclusive. The last three, including our bus (4028), arrived early in 1950 and is built on Bristol Commercial Vehicles chassis 028 from Sanction 79. It has a Gardner 5LW engine with 5-speed manual transmission, and Eastern Coach Works B35R body (number 4050 Series 2).

These buses were used on a variety of ENOC services across the company's operating territory, which in those days stretched beyond Essex to include as far west as Aylesbury and north to Bedford and Huntingdon. In 1952, the "Midland Area" services of ENOC in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire were transferred to sister company United Counties of Northampton. The transfer included around half of the ENOC fleet but only one ONO L5G – ONO 45 (4024).

The nine remaining buses from the batch then settled down to enjoy fairly uneventful lives with Eastern National on services all over Essex. ONO 49 was renumbered to 309 in July 1954 (the number it carries today), and to 1107 in August 1964. Service with ENOC after its third number allocation was short, and it was taken out of service at the end of the summer, being sold in October 1964 with a number of other redundant buses to a well-known dealer in Lincolnshire.



Our bus was then sold to Seddon, a civil engineering contractor based in the North West in January 1965. When the contractor finished using ONO 49 in 1972, it was acquired for preservation by the late Terry Coughlin, passing to the Eastern National Preservation Group in 1981. It became a popular visitor to rallies over many years, and was a regular performer at CPTMS open days. It also enjoyed a supporting role in the BBC TV sitcom "Hi-De-Hi!", ferrying holidaymakers to the fictitious Maplin's Holiday Camp. Later, ONO was used by fans of the series in some of their reunion events. With the winding up of ENPG in 2000, ONO 49, along with a number of other vehicles, was donated to CPTMS.

After so many active years in preservation, it's no wonder that ONO 49 is in need of some major renovation. Reluctantly, but in order to protect it from further deterioration, the bus was retired by CPTMS from active 'on the road' work several years ago, and laid up at the Museum. Since then, various engine repairs have been carried out, but there is much still to do before ONO 49 will be ready to hit the rally scene again.

Notes: The Bristol L-Type was a heavyweight chassis for single-deck buses and coaches and was introduced by BCV in 1937. Most were bodied by Eastern Coach Works and only a few hundred examples were built before the war, including 28 for ENOC. Production was suspended until 1946, and in the immediate post-war period the L-Type became a popular choice for municipal operators, independents and the Tilling Group (including ENOC) who took the majority.

With the nationalisation of the Tilling Group and its associated vehicle manufacturers - Bristol and ECW – in 1948, future sales were restricted to operators within the British Transport Commission group. Despite this, hundreds more L-Types including the longer LL and LWL-Types, were delivered to BTC companies until 1954. In total, 2426 L-Type chassis were built, along with 387 LL and 401 LWL-Types. Both the LL and the LWL had been export-only chassis until 1950.

Although most L-Types were fitted with Gardner 5LW engines, in the early post-war period the AEC 7.7-litre diesel was a popular alternative while some operators chose Bristol's AVW engine, particularly for coaches. By 1952, ENOC had built a fleet of over 130 L-Types, including some LL and LWL examples, and including a fleet of 10 luxury coaches. The last of these, 1950 Bristol L5B - PTW 110, was also saved for preservation and is now owned and superbly restored by Society Hon. Treasurer, Craig Mara. ENOC's last Bristol Ls were taken out of service in 1965, though some other Group companies continued to operate them until the early 1970s.

Submissions for the CPTMS newsletter are always welcome!
Please send them to info@castlepointtransportmuseum.co.uk.

*Edited by Paul Harrison;
Photos by Ian Banks, Callum Taylor
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