



Update 5

Friday 12th December 2008

2 Years On....



Since the decision in December 2006 to take the project forward developments now see us with the vehicle in our care, a Lottery grant towards start-up costs to hand and the benefit of some excellent local publicity culminating in the 21st November item on BBC SE Today. (More about spending the grant in the New Year!)

These positive steps have given the project a momentum of its own, and generated yet more interest. We must work to maintain this and try to keep everyone informed and involved. A significant number of people with appropriate skills and experience are now offering their services and this has influenced our thinking about how to go forward. The big issues are:

1 - Facilities

A suitable location in the Medway area still proves elusive. We have been monitoring developments to balance likely availability of funds, premises and local effort with an eye on speed of restoration. Quickest but most expensive would be a full professional restoration on commercial terms in a restorer's workshop, but this would need a reliable funding stream. On the other hand we had always hoped to involve local people in the project and we now have some volunteers. A local restoration would be more tolerant of intermittent funding, but needs premises and more control (see 2 below).

The separate initiative to set up a dedicated bus restoration, storage and display facility has made progress towards securing land. The project remains confidential but the promoters still intend to move forward, the current financial climate notwithstanding.

We'll continue to weigh up these alternatives, and work to understand them more.

2 - Co-ordination

The restoration will need to be carried out to a high standard, taking account of engineering requirements for technical standards and quality of work. Careful co-ordination will be needed to control the removal, identification, storage and refurbishment of all components. These areas need experienced people to manage them and we shall try to find such individuals from amongst our number.

Other Things

Website

We are now close to having an internet site for FoCT. Early content will concentrate on FoCT itself – its aims and membership, and on the story and status of the GKE 68 project.

Memories

Given that a wider aim of FoCT is to uncover the social history around Chatham Traction a feature of the website could be extracts from collected memories. One or two people have already given us some wonderful insights into how it used to be (see below)

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and we'd ask everyone to see if they could provide recollections of their own. This could be in any form and from any viewpoint – passenger, employee or enthusiast. Just write it down and post it or drop us an e-mail. If anyone would like to talk to someone directly let me know and we'll arrange something. Photos or film especially welcome!

From John Watts:

"Fred Hepper of Luton Road was also a driver. Suffering from back trouble Fred was often hoisted into his cab by Traction colleagues, then out again at the end of his shift. (Applying "The Traction" to bad backs often works...)"

"Along the Capstone Road on the east side after Capstone Water Works there was a smallholder who kept chickens. The tops of the chicken coops were made up of three or more ex-Traction bus roofs still sporting cream coloured front and back domes with flaking silver in between....."

From Alan Price (on Luton Depot in the 1950s):

"The shed itself had gained a concrete floor but the access to the workshop pits at the back of the shed past "Mr William's Office" remained rounded arches in the back wall of the depot proper, fine for an open top tram on tracks but distinctly dodgy for an 8-foot-wide Orion bodied Guy."

And Finally...

As its nearly Christmas how about this cartoon by "Tumble" from the Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham News for 16th December 1955:



"Wot - wrong bus lady? Stay where you are - it'll be easier for us to go your way!"

With very best wishes for the season, and sincere thanks for your continuing interest and support.

Richard B.

Richard Bourne
Chairman

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