

Update 22

30th April 2013

Running Late...!

My apologies for the rather long gap between this Update and the last (November). We'd been waiting for a couple of key things to happen before we could tell you all, and at last they have!

Both concern money :

- On 7th March we submitted our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. If we are successful funds will be available to accelerate the restoration of the main structure of the bus, and to begin educational and community engagement. Supporting letters were provided by Medway Council, the University of Kent, Chatham World Heritage and Arriva. We should have a decision by late May.
- Then on 27th March we received a cheque for £4500 from the Rochester Bridge Trust. This acknowledges an advanced state of restoration of GKE's Gardner engine, sufficient for these funds to be released. We are very grateful to the Bridge Wardens for this award.

Who's Out There?

Our plan for restoration of the bus, described in the lottery bid, is that we keep opportunities for members and supporters to contribute by dealing with individual components where the work required is within their capabilities. We've sounded people out in the past, and we'll review this and get in touch in due course, so if you've ever said half a word.....!

Body Building.

With the near side near complete apart from the inner wing, attention has turned to the GKE's rear end. Much investigation and debate has taken place about the original shape. The bus had sustained damage in this area at some point during its 20+ years in store, and the two pillars at the rear had corroded away for some length at their lower end, these effects combining to make replacement of the rear pillars extremely difficult. The photo on the right shows what was behind the external panels!



Photo John H Meredith

Continuing the lower body side profile - flare and all - round to the back was shown on photos but didn't appear straightforward in practice. Repairs to the platform support metalwork have been necessary also, and even the shape of the new body pillars may not be entirely accurate. So with very little to get a "fix" on a compromise arrangement has resulted. Provided the end result looks like the picture to the left (the bus, not the vintage car...) I'm sure we'll all be happy.

Events

The Medway Jubilee Bus Day held on 27th December at Rochester Coach Park was a success, despite some very wet, cold and windy weather. Although prompted by a certain round-figure birthday for one of our Trustee benefactors it looks like becoming an annual event. The proceeds from “fares” charged for rides on attending preserved buses were donated to FoCT, and we are very grateful for that. Our thanks to the organisers for whom Chris Jenkinson played no small part.

We attended the Dockyard’s Festival of Steam and Transport on Easter Sunday and Monday. However a combination of a new and relatively quiet location for stands such as ours plus the major new attraction of the Call the Midwife TV location reduced our exposure somewhat. It’s right that the Dockyard seek to continually improve this event – it is for their own benefit, after all – but we may need to look closely at what’s on offer next year if our attendance is to be worthwhile. That said, the FoCT marquee did receive a visit from Queen Victoria....



No, we haven’t changed allegiance! The SE Bus Festival at Detling on 6th April amongst other things gave the opportunity to inspect a new London “Borismaster” at close quarters. More important for us was another opportunity to speak to people interested in our project and to meet friends new and old. We’d been given one of the three guest speaker slots by the organisers and notwithstanding competition from such as Roger Davies we put the message across to a worthwhile audience. This event too is going annual – 5th April 2014 is next.

People

As part of preparing for what we hope will be a successful lottery outcome we have begun to spread what will become an increased workload amongst more people, as follows:

- Wendy Mesher is now formally adopted as a Trustee, leading on education/community;
- Mike Hodges has accepted the post of Hon. Secretary, in addition to being our archivist;
- Alan Watkins, now retired from journalism, is using his connections as our Publicist; and
- Ray Andrews has taken on the task of compiling an Asset Register.

In addition, our lottery submission includes the appointment of a Restoration Controller and an Audience Developer, plus a Lead Restorer for the bus’s body structure. Who called our little exercise “Last of the Summer Wine on Wheels”?! If only... All the best,

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The Friends of Chatham Traction was formed in March 2007 to restore, exhibit and operate as an educational resource the sole surviving Chatham Traction bus, GKE 68.

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