

Cinderella gets to go!

We were disappointed last April that GKE 68 wasn't in a state to be able to take the bus to the South East Bus Festival at Detling. This year, of course, things have moved on, so we've arranged some towing and organised our appearance at this year's event. We'll be in two locations this time – our marquee, with new promotional material, in the Clive Emson Centre, and the bus in its skeletal splendour standing in the Maidstone Hall.



Kent Showground, near Maidstone, Kent ■ Saturday 2nd April 2016

AGM 2016

What was probably our best AGM yet on Saturday 5th March put the difficulties of last year behind us with a great double bill comprising guest speaker Alan Price, and the visit of Paul Baker and his nearly-finished M&D AEC Regent VKR 39. Alan's talk included some wonderful anecdotes arising from the constant struggle of running a bus service in Medway around 1960, and some detail of the people and practices at Luton depot, both largely the same as in Chatham Traction days. Len Randall filmed the whole thing, so we have a record to draw on for future use. Our thanks to Alan for an entertaining and informative contribution to our cause. Paul's AEC is a fine restoration job to the sort of standards we aspire to for GKE 68. It was on its way to receive graphics and upholstery when we saw it, and the finished article is also down to be at Detling on 2nd April.

There is usually a flurry of subscription renewals around the AGM. If you need to renew, or wish to begin, a regular subscription please contact Paul – details at the foot of this Update.

NARTM Spring Meeting

For a few years now we've been a member of the National Association of Road Transport Museums. The membership includes organisations with collections ranging from a couple of vehicles to the mighty Manchester Museum of Transport and the equally awesome Ribble and Wythall (Birmingham) set-ups. NARTM works to develop guidelines and provide advice on such things as vehicle legislation, free bus services and legacy planning. It monitors relevant legislation and disseminates advice to members through a quarterly magazine and specific codes of practice. There is much fellowship and sharing of advice to be had, as amply demonstrated at the recent Spring meeting in Manchester. This event included a visit to the Museum of Transport where we attendees were conveyed by the lovely Rochdale AEC Regent shown here....



FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

South East Museums

Our aspirations to become an accredited museum moved on a step with a recent attendance at an introduction to SE Museums 2016-17 Development Programme. There were reports on specific achievements from a number of existing museums before Sarah Corn, who we met last year, outlined the plans for this year. Included are a collections mapping exercise (who holds what and where), and a study of Trustee diversity (or range of skills and experience), which may have some relevance should we be successful in obtaining transition funding. A theme which emerged in both presentations and discussions was how local museums, notably those around Swale and Ashford, had formed groupings to share such functions as promotion and administration. These groupings are largely of small museums of local significance. Medway has three centres of national significance (the Historic Dockyard, and the Royal Engineers and Huguenot museums) but perhaps there is scope for some of the more locally-focussed Medway bodies to come together?

The Brook Canteen remembered

Update 34 invited anyone who recalled this establishment to tell us what they knew. Some folk did so, and a story unfolds.....

Ted Delahay said "the Brook canteen was two doors along from the Army & Navy pub. There was a doorway in the advertising hoarding. John Lambourne the Inspector used to be in there; Dinger Bell was another...". Marjorie Farrow remembered the canteen was "...inside a high wooden fence, somewhat like a building site might look.....", which ties in with Ted's memory. However, Dave Wright worked for A J Brenchley in Military Road - "our yard and workshop were to the rear of the building; entrance was down an alley off George Street next to the tattoo shop. The canteen was further down the alley, behind the Chatham Constitutional Club. My brother was a conductor and driver from Luton depot I often went into the canteen for a cuppa with him. I have a 1965 Kelly's directory and it is mentioned in there under George Street." So the first change maybe? Later, pre-Pentagon, Mike Hodges recalled a facility above the Twin Dragons restaurant on the corner of Medway Street.

Great stuff – several enterprises and streets now long gone. At some point I think there may have been an arrangement for bus staff to use the Paddock Restaurant, part of which building is now, incidentally, one of the workshops used by the Medway Aircraft Preservation Society at Rochester Airport!

Next for GKE

I mentioned on my Chairman's Report to the AGM that just before Christmas we had re-established contact with MidKent College. We learnt that there had been a significant change of personnel in the Construction and Engineering department, and in February I received a phone call from Andrew Livesey, the new (interim) Faculty Director. The outcome was that the college would not be able to offer us student input until the start of the next academic year in September. That being so, Ian Marsh is applying his mind to the order in which meanwhile we might progress work on chassis components item-by-item, with funding sought on a similarly incremental basis, perhaps by a bit of metaphorical tin-rattling and with some volunteer help!

What's next?

- SE Bus Festival 2nd April 2016
- Meet Heritage Lottery Fund to review funding options



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