

Update 53

10 July 2020

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Chair

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Restarting the Show.....

After 3 months of catching up and Zooming!



I hope "Connecting Services" is managing to hold things together. The response to our invitation to tell the story of an interest in our project and in buses generally has been brilliant! Some fascinating accounts with more still coming in. We'll keep it going so long as there's material. I've not had to chase likely contributors yet, although there may come a point....! CS doesn't take long to produce as the text is already there and it goes in without editing. What you read is the true story told in the contributors' own words!

Over the three months since Update 52 things have moved on. The virus still governs everything but associated restrictions change. SEC furloughed their staff for the month of April, but having reviewed their practices and precautions things were happening again on GKE 68 by mid-May. Further easings and reviews now allow workshop visits by customer representatives, at lunch times, with prior notice and use of face masks. Thanks are due to Paul Chapman and all the guys for staying with it.

As ever, Money Matters

- The remaining big expenditure items are becoming more clearly defined. In Update 52 we suggested we were still looking for around £40k. The big items are seat upholstery and new drop window components. The restrictions imposed for the virus have delayed firming things up, but the further relaxation announced for August should help. Recent indications are that these costs will be within the figures used to arrive at the £40k estimate. We still have to raise that, however, so....
- Wendy has applied on our behalf to the Swire Foundation, one of a number of Funds who will consider funding projects that just need a final financial push to achieve the goal. This would provide a contribution to the necessary balance of funding.
- In addition we've decided to resurrect our "**Sponsor a Seat**" appeal. The response to the earlier launch in 2014 was sufficient to give confidence to buy the moquette. We now need to generate a matching contribution for Fund applications. There's a separate leaflet with this Update which explains all.

GKE : Looking the Business

When things got going again in May, the saloon handrails were extracted from the store of parts, examined and checked for fit. The brackets were cleaned and burnished, and the rails powder-coated in brown. Two handrails are missing and replacements need to be made. The newly-prepared ones have been installed, and look rather fine!

Another piece of work with a big visual impact was the application of vinyde covering for the interior panelling. Finding a supply of suitable colour, surface texture and thickness was a challenge second only to establishing the livery colours but we got there eventually. (The vinyde replaces what would originally have been "Rexine" leathercloth, now deemed to be rather too flammable for such purposes!) Pictures overleaf.

These two pieces of work have almost completed the "whole bus" areas of work. The exception is windows, in particular the restoration of the 14 sets of drop-window mechanisms, many of which were corroded beyond recovery.



The Friends of Chatham Traction was formed in March 2007 to restore the sole surviving Chatham Traction bus, GKE 68, as an educational resource – the Medway Heritage Bus.



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The Out-of-Sight Important Bits

Notwithstanding the emergence of past glories inside the bus, we do rather want it to both move and stop. Paul, Ian and Chris have been liaising and making progress with procuring parts, such as vacuum hoses, spring shackle pins and dynamo drive hose. Most recently the gearbox has been cleaned and the innards inspected. All appears satisfactory, except that the clutch brake shoe has no lining(!), and the associated drum has to be replaced (this item is to hand). An interesting possibility has emerged, namely that the gearbox may have been replaced after disposal of the bus by M&D. Investigations continue....

With pipework still to refit, the exhaust to be repaired, cab equipment to install and all the electrics and lighting to address there's still some way to go.



What a find!

During the work to refurbish the handrails the SEC guys came across a direct link to GKE's past. Rolled up inside one of the horizontal ceiling handrails over a side seat was found the form shown here. The form was used when it was necessary to transfer passengers to another bus, its purpose being to tell the accepting conductor the serial numbers of tickets the transferring passengers should hold. The writing is rather faint, but we can discern that the form was issued by Conductor Fairbrass working service 3 from Gillingham Green on car 874 (i.e. GKE 68). It had been inside the handrail for some time. Its dated 9th June 1941.

Anyone have a Fairbrass relative or friend of that time?

THE CHATHAM & DISTRICT TRACTION COMPANY			
Opening Numbers of Tickets held by Passengers to be Transferred to other Car, or on Conductor being relieved.			
Route	3	Time of Journey	10-14
From	Gillingham Green	Car No.	874
Conductor	Fairbrass	Date	9-6-41
Value of Ticket (Ordinary).	Opening Numbers.	Destination of Passengers to be written below.	
1d.	8191	7.11.41 Gillingham	
1d.			
2d.			
2d.			
3d.			
3d.			
4d.			
4d.			

Just to Clarify....

Other than for the Seat sponsorship appeal our arrangements for making regular donations and receiving new applications have now settled down. The contact is Mike Hodges: 01227 772311; 8 Pier Avenue, Whitstable, CT5 2HQ; michaelrhodges01@gmail.com.