

# FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1174323

[www.chathamtraction.org.uk](http://www.chathamtraction.org.uk)

## Update 55

15 March 2021

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Chair

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## A Quiet Year, but still progress

*Whilst contributions to our Final Appeal have made the bank balance look healthy (still £12000 to go, folks.....), we have been unloading some of the accumulated monies. SEC's efforts through January were close to a full month's work and brought an invoice to match. Up-front 50% payments for the upholstery work and the leather trim material were for similar amounts. Upholstery will begin in April whilst SEC look to complete the remaining glazing, including drop windows, and other work to complete their scope. A return to Aylesford and Nu-Venture is now planned (thanks Norman). But there is now a vision and, we feel, an obligation.*

***We must present the results of all the work on GKE 68 this year. If, instead of an agonising wait for full completion, this is done in stages we think you'll understand.....***

## Annual General Zoom

Thanks to all those who responded to the request to indicate acceptance or otherwise of the Friends' reports and records for the year ending December 2020. There were more than enough responses to meet the Constitutional requirement for a quorum, and we're happy to report there were no dissenters! We must be doing something right.....

I was the only Trustee due to retire under our 3-year rule, so the burdens lifted for a period which was probably measured in seconds. After some swift work by Vice-Chair Wendy I was Chairman again. A date has been set for next year's AGM – Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

## Staying and Leaving

During the Zoom era of the last year or so the Committee have had regular weekly chats about all sorts of things, mostly FoCT-relevant or sometimes more widely transport-related. Every fourth such Zoom is a formal Committee. One issue we kept coming back to was income.

**Staying** The basic annual donation has long been £20, and we've decided to let this stand for 2021. Given the number of people donating regularly we can more than cover the charity's running costs, the balance being used directly for restoration activity. We'd like to firm this up a little, though, so **please regard 1<sup>st</sup> April as the annual renewal date, payable by 1<sup>st</sup> May.** We would be grateful if Members who pay by standing order at other times during the year could let us know so that we can make sure our records are correct.

Quite a few folk pay monthly, some regularly donating higher amounts. Much discussion has been around how to handle one-off larger donations, in particular whether these should bring the same voting rights as regular donations. The debate continues, with an eye on how others treat this.

**Leaving** The completion of GKE 68's restoration is in sight but the final stages still contain significant items of expenditure. The current Appeal total stands at roundly £28,000, with £12,000 still to find. Wills and legacies can be a delicate subject. Receiving unexpected lump sums can give rise to uncertainty as to the best direction for an investment or expenditure. However if a deceased person was known to be supportive of our bus's re-appearance and of the wider Medway Heritage Bus project then we would welcome any contributions.



Restoration  
Award



*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.*



City of  
Rochester  
Society



The  
Rochester  
Bridge  
Trust

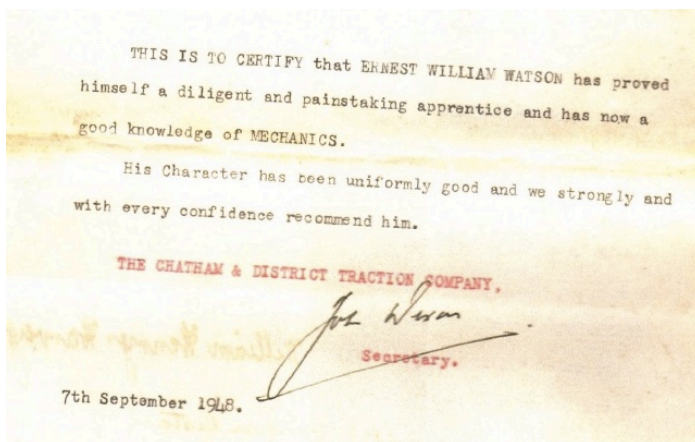


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## What a connection....

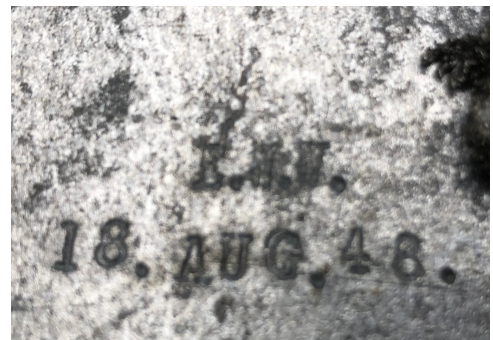
One of our very early members was Ernie Watson. Ernie came along to see GKE at Aylesford in December 2007, soon after its arrival from Barnsley. He told me that day how he'd worked as a fitter at Luton Depot, and pointed out some of the jobs that he used to carry out on all the Bristol buses. He later sent to us his apprenticeship papers. His Indenture was signed on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1945 committing him to a 3-year term as "an Apprentice in the trade of Motor Engineering". On completion of his training Chatham Traction issued Ernie with a certificate, signed by the Company Secretary John Dixon and dated 7<sup>th</sup> September 1948.



It was probably customary for Apprentices nearing completion of their training to complete a "test piece" to demonstrate their ability to complete a job of some complexity without supervision.

Whilst GKE 68's gearbox was being re-installed last year some initials and a date were found stamped on the gearbox casing.....

The initials "EWW" and a date just a couple of weeks in advance of the signing of Ernie's Apprenticeship certificate is surely more than coincidence. We can't prove absolutely at this distance in time, but it looks as though GKE's gearbox was overhauled by Ernie as his final task prior to becoming a fully-fledged mechanic.



It's a matter of great regret that Ernie died in July 2009, long before we began to attend to GKE's mechanical components. Ernie and his wife Margaret lived in Holly Road, Strood.....

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## Another Farewell

We were sorry to learn just before Christmas that FoCT supporter and local transport enthusiast John Grubb had died on 13th December. John attended our first Open Meeting in December 2006, and was a regular supporter thereafter. He was involved with the Medway Valley Line Community Rail Partnership and was a stalwart of Medway Council transport policy meetings for many years. He was also a member of the M&D and East Kent Bus Club, achieving fifty years' membership.

John's appearances at AGMs was legendary. He invariably arrived just after business had begun, carrying his trademark holdall, but then kept us honest by ensuring motions were properly proposed and seconded. His enthusiasm for transport matters never faded, and we've lost yet another "character".

