

FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1174323

www.chathamtraction.org.uk

Update 59

27 July 2022

Richard Bourne

Chair

New Openings

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BAE SYSTEMS

We've referred previously to an approach Wendy made some time ago to BAE Systems at Rochester, seeking to draw on their corporate community funding budget which is aimed at worthy causes local to the various BAE operations. Negotiations begun last November resulted in an allocation to FoCT of £2000. This will be used to fund an exploratory exercise with a partner local primary school to explore and begin to define the learning resource the restored bus, together with associated items from our collection, can provide. Wendy's now in touch with Medway Council's Education Officer to arrange connection with a suitable school. BAE's Communications Specialist Gemma Fabian said "*BAE Systems in Rochester are very excited to be partnering with the Friends of Chatham Traction in the Medway Heritage bus project. The bus is a pivotal piece of history for the Medway towns, and we are looking forward to when it will be restored to its former glory and able to provide community and STEM activities to people in the Medway towns*".

Some relevant technical support may be available. We've taken up the latter possibility in our pursuit of the need to replicate parts we are short of. Chris Gibbons has been to meet Sean Holbrook, Senior Process Engineer at BAE and delivered a saloon bell-push and a glass lampshade. Sean advises that the bell-push should be no problem, and that he would seek advice on a suitable modern material for the shade, as this is likely to be reproduced using modern digital techniques. Also, volunteering opportunities can be advertised around BAE staff. Exciting times!

It's a Lottery!

We've been approved as a cause for support through the Medway Lottery! The Friends of Chatham Traction now appears on the listing page of the Medway Lottery website in the browse and search features. Please pass this on to your friends and acquaintances. Supporting info is being prepared. Details are here:

<https://www.medwaylottery.co.uk/support/friends-of-chatham-traction>.



Chatham Dockyard 40s Weekend

Once again, we've asked for a space at this event, which this year takes place on 10th and 11th September. We did discuss the possibility of taking the bus along, whether or not it was driveable. However suitable covered accommodation near the centre of the event wasn't available, and the logistics of moving the bus from and back to Aylesford we felt wasn't worth the associated disruption at both ends, or the cost. So we'll just be there with the stand as usual. Either way we have progress to report so we can update our message.

Assistance on both days would be appreciated, and we'd be pleased to have new faces volunteering for an hour or two on either day to explain to passing folk what we're about. (As well as the regulars, of course!)

Please contact Mike Hodges if you're interested. Details below.

Spreading the word

At the beginning of June Malcolm Spalding and Richard Ratcliffe gave a talk to the Chatham Historical Society, covering the story of Chatham Traction from trams to absorption, the restoration of GKE 68 and the future aims for the Medway Heritage Bus. A re-run for the Strood Fellowship is booked for the 18th November. If anyone knows of other similar outlets for the story do let us know.



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Seats New....

South West Upholstery in Bristol have now begun work on GKE's seats. A pre-production item is expected very soon, which is being provided to seek our approval of the standard of finish which can be expected for the main job.

...and Seats Old

In Update 58 we mentioned that arrangements were being made to dispose of the old seats from GKE 68. If anyone would like to take a cushion-plus-back squab pair, or just some cushions, now's your chance to say so! Two points to remember:

1. The metal seat frames are not part of the offer, having been refurbished and fitted back in the bus, and
2. The cushions were re-trimmed in Chatham Traction days using the later pattern moquette introduced by Maidstone & District in the 1940s. The seat back moquette is the original.

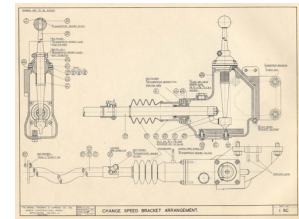
A good scrub and some leather reviver might work wonders. Let Mike Hodges know asap if you'd like to get hold of a pair. Great opportunity for anyone with a shed that needs a seat!



GKE Mechanics

Ian Marsh, assisted by James Hodgson, has stepped up the pace on the chassis fitting-out.

- The change speed box, as Bristol called it, (which transmits the gear lever movement to the gearbox) has been completely rebuilt and re-installed. James completely stripped and cleaned it whilst Ian gave attention to some bushings.
- The engine cooling system pipework elbows need some changes to allow connection to the radiator. (This need probably arose as a result of post-overhaul "endurance testing", the precise nature and location of which we never managed to establish.....!). The fuel pump also needs attention after standing for some years. Gardner Marine at Hersden will undertake.
- The flexible coupling between the gearbox and the intermediate drive shaft has been refitted, completing the drive shaft re-installation.
- All exhaust components are available following repair or purchase. We purchased a new silencer box some time ago, but difficulty in co-ordinating attendance of a local exhaust supplier to obtain a quote for new pipework led to repair of the original front pipe and silencer box*. The work was done by an associate of Ian's in Norfolk, and a fine job has resulted. Together with some new clamps and elbows the full system is ready for re-installation.
- New front suspension bump stops have been purchased. Also a quantity of "Vintage" gear oil from a specialist supplier.



Richard B.

**I suspect Ian's quietly pleased with this, as it's probably the best chance of GKE making the sounds it used to make!*

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A Service of Celebration is being held for John Grubb, at St. Margaret's Church, Rainham, Kent on Monday 15 August at 1.00pm.
John died in December 2020 - See Update 55.