

Update 63

7 November 2023

Richard Bourne

Chair

All Fired Up

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Down in Aylesford something stirred.....

After much threading of pipes, investigations into apparent oddities, solving of mysteries, rectification of revealed bodes, seeking of parts, and uncovering of still more issues, on 11th August GKE's Gardner engine was ***started for the first time*** after its re-uniting with the bus. This was a long-awaited major milestone, and to hear the idling beat of a 5LW engine sounding exactly as it did in August 2014 when demonstrating the result of its overhaul, was both a thrill and a relief. James Hodgson has compiled another short video which can be seen (and heard!) here: <https://youtu.be/Pln-aUQCWdQ>



So how long.....?

before the bus is driveable, or even complete? The question's been asked for a long time now but its near impossible to answer. I've included a headline list below of what's essential to making the bus driveable. We've a way forward for most of that work. There are still several items and parts to procure, albeit none that are hugely expensive.

Suspension

Fit rear springs and shock absorbers

Fit front shock absorbers

Steering

Strip out track rod ball joints, clean and check.

Make & fit new grease pipe around steering box.

Rear Axle.

Drain and refill oil

Seal drive dogs/flanges to rear hubs

Brakes

Adjust shoes to drums.

Set up brake linkages.

Vacuum pipework to complete.

Engine

Connect cooling system

Connect engine stop

Oil gauge pipes to make

Clutch

Set up and test.

Transmission

Connect rear part of propeller shaft.

Electrical

Switch/fuse panel assemble & install

Instrument lamp(s?) to fit

Rear STOP panel - obtain glass, signwrite and fit.

Battery to source.

Opening (upper)Windscreen

Assemble frame & fit

Wiper motor fit and connect.

Fit wiper arm and blade.

Cab emergency window

Fit front edge frame strip

Driving Mirrors

Obtain & fit

Number plates

Fit front (rear fitted)

Driver's Seat

Upholstery required

Commission

Engine and systems

Independent safety check

Examination by third party

Dedication

The mechanical side of the job has relied almost entirely on Ian Marsh, with assistance from Paul Baker for a time, and more recently from James Hodgson. Ian and James have been attending our compound at Nu-Venture's Aylesford depot on as many Fridays as things permit. Ian travels from Norfolk, James from Faversham. Both have built up a memory bank of detail pertaining to GKE, and both take parts needing attention away with them to fix and

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refurbish in their own workshops between visits. Given that they both have to earn their keep on the other days this is a huge input on their part, but it works well and I wouldn't want to disturb that arrangement.

The list of tasks above, as you'll have noticed, is largely mechanical and "under the floor". Completion to the point of being presentable and useable needs the further input of Chris Gibbons' great detail knowledge, with more things to do inside the vehicle including of course the full installation of the seats.

We Met Again.....

...at the Dockyard's Salute to the 40s Weekend, Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September. We duly occupied the same pitch as last year in No.1 Smithery courtyard. Given the very warm weather this west-facing spot under a high roof was most welcome.

For our display we decided to feature the contribution of women to Chatham Traction's operation, and Richard Lewis prepared a display to that effect. It showed the use of Grange Farm as the first preservation base, thanks to farm owner Miss Stedman and Brian Smith's mum. Also featured were three photos showing female staff grouped in front of vehicles in tram days, around 1940, and in 1953. This caught the attention of many people. One visitor recognised his grandmother amongst the 1953 conductresses.

The intention of our attendance as ever is to attract or maintain interest, and if possible gain more support. Over the two days we felt things were still moving positively.



Going Public

Wendy led a FoCT appearance at the Medway History Showcase event on 21st October at the Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham. A relatively quiet affair, but nevertheless there was some serious interest.

Local Connections

Wendy and I recently had an introductory chat (by Zoom) with Luton councillor Simon Curry. Simon was elected last May and is Medway's portfolio holder for climate change and strategic regeneration. He has a strong transport interest, and there's a ready link to FoCT through the Luton connection. We look forward to working with him to help inject what the Medway Heritage Bus might offer into future developments for Luton and the whole of Medway.

Dave Barlow

News reached us in September that Dave had died on 10th August. He was an early addition to our membership, regularly attending AGMs. Mike Barnard knew him well:

"He was a driver at Luton Depot and their TGWU schedules rep. for many years. At each schedule/duty re-hash he would spend days out at Luton Head Office recasting duties. Those were the days when duties were hand cast, hand written on paper then pasted onto pieces of plywood and varnished. Dave was also heavily involved in the purchase and preservation of M&D coach 2816 which a group of Luton drivers rallied for some years. A very amiable chap, Dave was always up for a laugh and encompassed that Luton ethic of "can do".

Our collective sympathies, I'm sure, to his family and friends.



AGM 2024: Saturday 2nd March, Huguenot Museum, Rochester

(venue subject to confirmation)

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