



NEWSLETTER

No. 26

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Chairman's Update ... March 2023.

My return to health has been long and arduous and has not finished yet. The good news is that I returned to regular days at Alford from November. My physical contributions are not yet back to normal, but I hope that I will be able to do more as time goes on.

I am grateful to all the volunteers and Trustees who have kept things running in my absence and kept many of the projects moving forwards. Special thanks to Joe Mackie who has chaired the Trustee meetings in my absence and to George Mair who has kept an eye on the workshop operations.

Getting buses tested for the summer season will be our next priority. In the meantime we have a joint project with Grampian Transport Museum - we shall be hosting a heritage skills project "An introduction to sheet metal work". Designed for those who wish to do some active restoration work.

I hope that we can now put the disruption of Covid behind us and get on with the restoration of our collection of buses.

Gordon Mills, Chairman

Workshop Update ...

Things have moved forward significantly with the restoration of Daimler 11. A new emergency door has been constructed (there was no door when we acquired the bus). The old cab door has been rebuilt and re-pannelled and the entrance doors are ready for glazing and painting. Inside we have received the main saloon seating and have been reworking the seat legs and inner mountings for these. We are expecting the rear five-way seat shortly. All the seats have new frames. They are plywood based, the old ones were de-laminating and had wood worm. We have recently had glass merchants in to quote for reglazing the whole bus and will get rival quotes shortly.



Daimler 160 is also moving forward. The new seats have been fitted but, we are waiting for rubber mouldings which are needed to finish the backrest finger grips. The floor to ceiling stanchions will be fitted, as well as the longitudinal rails on the lower deck. The seating frames have been newly manufactured as old ones of the type had completely disappeared. They were all fitted with new leather fluted upholstery to the original pattern. The driver' seat has been re-upholstered to match. Completion of the paint-work and fitting guardrails are next on the agenda.

***The Bus Collection at Alford are holding an Open Day on
SUNDAY 30TH JULY 2023 — 1100 TO 1600 HOURS***

Events will take place in the grounds of the Grampian Transport Museum, Montgarrie Road, Alford AB33 8AE.

Activities include, Vintage Bus Rides around the track and Alford, Vehicle Displays, Stalls, Guided Tours around the event, Talks and much, much more! Watch our for further information at:

<http://thebuscollectionatalford.co.uk/>

Come and join us for a fun day!

**The Bus Collection at Alford is open again to visitors, please check our website for further visitor information:
<http://thebuscollectionatalford.co.uk/>**

Getting on Top of it All ... The Earlier Days of Double Deckers in the North East

Passengers have been carried on the top of public transport vehicles since the days of stagecoaches. Using the roof for another layer of passengers carried on with the urban horse drawn omnibuses which operated in Aberdeen from at least the 1860s and much later in Peterhead. Aberdeen's horse tramcars from the 1870s were mostly double deck too, and all the electric trams that ever operated in the city were double deck.

The Great North of Scotland Railway introduced Milnes-Daimler motorbuses in 1904 with bodywork by the company's Inverurie workshops. Two such buses, new in 1907, had seats on top and were originally used between Cluny or Newburgh to Aberdeen. Both were sold off in 1926. The next deckers in the area were three petrol-electric Tilling Stevens bought by Aberdeen Suburban Tramways in 1914; all three were rebodied as charabancs in 1921.

Motorbus design advanced greatly in the 1920s, the height of a double decker with a top deck roof being much reduced. The most remarkable was the Leyland Titan TD1 of 1927 which was only 13'1" high thanks to a combination of chassis shape and Leyland's patent "lowbridge" bodywork. "Lowbridge" bodywork had upstairs passengers sitting on long benches with access from a sunken gangway on the offside that intruded through the lower deck ceiling. Credit for introducing Leyland TD1s to the North East belongs to James Sutherland of Peterhead who bought one new in 1930 and ran it until 1949. From 1932 "lowbridge" deckers were extensively used by the Alexander company for their services in the Aberdeen suburbs.

Aberdeen Corporation (ACT) first acquired double deckers in 1930 for evaluation but these had "hybridge" bodywork, i.e., they had a centre gangway upstairs. At c14'6" high they were taller but usually seated slightly more passengers. ACT's main intake of double deckers came the following year when they replaced tramcars to Torry. Thereafter "hybridge" deckers became an increasingly large proportion of ACT's new buses. ACT had no need for "lowbridge" buses.

Away from Aberdeen, Alexander introduced "lowbridge" buses to Morayshire for their Elgin – Lossiemouth route in 1937 against much opposition from the city and county councils, and from Morayshire's Chief Constable. The regional Traffic Commissioner's approval was then required to use double deckers on a given route, a control that remained into the early 1950s. Amongst the objections was the risk of embarrassment for those who did not close the curtains of upstairs rooms.

Back in Peterhead, Sutherland bought two new "lowbridge" Leylands in 1938 of a design for the Northern Ireland Road Transport Board. These buses had a platform door, an unusual feature on a rear entrance double decker in mainland Britain at that time but one which was applied to all new deckers bought thereafter by the Sutherland company. Later that year Simpson of Rosehearty became a double deck operator, acquiring a Guy that was originally new to Blackpool Corporation in 1933. It had "hybridge" bodywork that most unusually had a centre entrance and also platform doors; it remained in the fleet until 1948.

Attitudes to double deckers changed greatly during the Second World War as wartime transport demands increased. To illustrate the point, in 1939 there were four deckers in the Buchan area of Aberdeenshire; in 1949 there were forty-nine!



Three Alexander "lowbridge" bodied Leylands dating from 1938 and 1940 seen after withdrawal from service in 1961. On the right is one of the ex Sutherland models new in 1938. By chance, two of these three have survived.
Photo: John Sinclair.



Yes, we do require volunteers to help us keep our fleet in a good condition, assist with vehicle refurbishment, or a range of other tasks. If you think you could help, either in person or by making a donation, please contact us via: thebuscollectionatalford@outlook.com



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