

Cumbria Classic Coaches NEWSLETTER

FLEET NEWS

This year has been a year of consolidation for Cumbria Classic Coaches. We started the year with seven and a half buses, however we had always planned to sell the Guy Warrior and in the spring after successfully using it in the rally at Kirkby Stephen we had a blitz on advertising it. Eventually an enthusiast at Ingleton decided it was the vehicle for him and so we had another space at Bowber Head. We had also been considering selling Heather, the Commer Avenger as she just didn't get the bookings the half cabs do. One of the bookings we did get for her this year was a wedding in Hawick, Scotland. The gentleman who hired us is a classic enthusiast and fell in love with Heather, he made us an offer we couldn't refuse and Heather is due to depart for Scotland soon. She is destined for interesting times as he plans to use her as a racing support vehicle at Classic car races including Le Mans (you cannot take a modern vehicle into the pits). So if you see her trundling up and down the motorways you can have a guess at where she's off to!

We still have the two tigers, the AEC, the Arab and the double decker and we have no intention of selling any more. To bring you up to date on the rest, Florence has just had a new engine, she had popped a couple of piston rings on the old one so after a tip off from David Bowman we purchased an 11.5 litre AEC engine which George shoehorned in, so the roaring noise you'll hear coming up the street isn't the Tigers! The old Commer has made it into the shed now, work is slowly resuming on stripping the paint. And speaking of paint jobs fingers crossed the Guy is booked in for the spring!

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FROM THE FAMILY

Well I'm sure you want to know what we've all been up to this year. Starting from the top: Nana has settled in well directing operations on the home front at Bowber Head, she knows all the aisles in the CO-OP and all our timetables on our outings. Will continues to enjoy himself pottering around on the buses and is often found wandering around the bus shed ostensibly fixing the lights on the Arab... Claire has hosted visitors from around the globe, we have had students from France and Spain learning English, an artist from China, and guests from Switzerland, New Zealand, Dubai, Holland, Germany and Estonia, it has been a very international year. Alison and Steve's signwriting business continues to grow, it has outgrown the back room and conversion of one of the barns is underway. Finn and Sam cannot yet drive buses but Finn starts big school in September and Sam can dismantle an engine in 6 seconds! Anthony is driving lorries this winter for WH Malcolms.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
& HAPPY NEW YEAR**
**From All at Bowber Head
& Cumbria Classic Coaches**



I DON'T THINK we ever contemplated that CCC would carry out so many weddings on the private hire side but in 2005 we have carried out 67.

All were pretty special and successful – one stands out as exceptional. This was for a Dutch couple who we shall call Harry and Marjolyn for the sake of anonymity.

Harry and Marjolyn approached us in 2004 saying they were a young Dutch couple, Anglofiles, who wanted to marry at an English Registry Office and could we make all the arrangements including accommodation, transport, a tour of the Lakes, a picnic and a reception at a local restaurant. All the couple would provide would be the booze.

I was suspicious because they didn't appear to be exactly a 'young' couple and they had been cohabiting for years. The paperwork was all Double Dutch to me – including the guests' names! If they hadn't invited all our family along including children, Gran and our neighbour, we would have refused the job!

As it turned out all went well including the trip in the LUT Guy Arab to Kendal Registry Office with all these Dutch people who mainly denied knowing the couple but came along for the ride. The weather was perfect until we reached Keswick when it threw it down which substantiates Keswick's claim to be the wettest place in the U.K.

In the evening the party repaired to the Cross Keys at Cautley where we had a terrific reception, good food and more drink. The Dutch guests seemed to get to know each other better and some even found out that they were related!

The Dutch authorities were not initially prepared to recognise Harry and Marjolyn's UK marriage certificate and I was hopeful that we may have to re-enact the whole process again in Holland.

We are led to believe the couple are still together, bolstered by a whole bus load of new friends and we have suspicions that they occasionally occupy a caravan here at BBH.

Excerpts from an article in Classic Bus written by Tony Wilson

WHEN IS A RALLY NOT A RALLY?

Answer when it's Kirkby Stephen Classic Commercial Vehicle Rally. Whilst it may well be publicised as a rally it is much more than that, indeed it is more like an historical living event.

Held over the weekend for the past seven Easters, what was a modest gathering of vehicles in the early years has rapidly grown to well over 200-plus of all shapes and sizes. As the title suggests this has a slant towards the commercial rather than the public service type and a vast array of such vehicles were displayed over several sites in Brough and Kirkby Stephen and ranged in age from 1897 to 1980.

Included were such delights as a 1921 Laffley Road Sweeper from Aberdeen Council, along with larger commercial models from Albion, Atkinson, Austin, Bedford, Commer, ERF, Foden, Guy, Scammell, Scania and Volvo. AEC's included a Mercury, a Mandator and a whole herd of Mammoths. But it was Leyland who came up with Comets, a couple of Octopus [or is it Octopi?], a Badger, a Buffalo and a fine-looking Beaver. There were also many smaller commercials, motorcycles, vans, cars and tractors, along with several steamers large and small. A veritable delight and something for everyone.

This event is held in locations several miles apart and in order to provide a link between them, a bus service is provided. And it is the Hamer family, operators of Cumbria Classic Coaches, who do this with its small fleet of interesting vehicles. So the few days before was spent preparing the steeds, buffing-up a Bristol, polishing off a couple of the Guys and hosing down a Tiger or two.

But six buses are not enough, resulting in many of the visiting vehicles being pressed willingly into service on the route from Brough. Passing through Brough, Sowerby and Kirkby Stephen town centre the route continued on past the long-closed East railway station up the steep and twisting incline to link in with trains on the Settle-Carlisle line at the West station on both days, which included a double-headed steam train. From 10.00a.m. to 5.30p.m. most of the vehicles ran fully laden to a 10 minute headway or thereabouts, the author of this diatribe having been promoted from 'clippie' to 'controller' in Ribble-liveried regalia. This was one of those rare occasions that I was able to tell Mrs W what to do and when, she being one of the many cheerful volunteer clippies!

And what a fine selection of vintage vehicles was provided for this free, yes free, service. Who says there is no such thing as a free ride? Probably the two most interesting vehicles used on the service were, first, a 1943 Guy Arab II, a wartime delivery to Plymouth now with a Duple utility body, CDR 679, brought down from the Lathalmond collection. The other, and probably the star of the show [for my mind

and many others], a circa 1951 Ribble'White Lady' Leyland Titan, DCK 219. Recently restored by Steve Morris of Quantock Motor Services, Taunton, the vehicle had travelled all the way up from the West Country. It appeared in remarkable condition and with a full-fronted East Lancs body worked alongside an Atlantean White Lady.

On the Saturday evening there was an optional Road Run covering around 20 miles in a sort of figure-of-eight route. Departing from Brough along the main road to Kirkby Stephen, the vehicles were soon off the main highway and into the narrow, twisting lanes south of the A66 through the hamlets of Augill and Kaber. Some quite difficult terrain was encountered including hairpin bends, steep inclines and descents. But all were dealt with admirably by the mixture of vehicles that took part. On then and through the centre of Kirkby Stephen, the by now well-traversed A685 up to and past the East station, over the high Ash Fell and down the other side. Then it was the tranquil surroundings of Ravenstonedale that witnessed this cavalcade of extraordinary vehicles as they trundled through the narrow streets and byways. Many locals came out to watch this spectacle. And as the evening light faded and the saloon bulbs were lit, the vehicles made the more direct return to Brough and a good night's rest before the exertions of the next day.

On the Sunday at one time over 20 buses were in service all filled to capacity moving the crowds between both towns and the static sites. Indeed both towns encompassed the event, with many shops and eateries open fully through the weekend putting stalls outside and selling their wares. I for one certainly appreciated the Hog Roast on the Sunday at Brough. As well as the buses trundling up and down the seven-mile route, many of the lorries, vans and cars just went out for a run to add to the atmosphere, and many tackled the steep, curling run up to the West station.

Yes, maybe the weather could have been a little kinder, especially on the Sunday, but nevertheless it did not appear to put a dampener on anyone's spirits. Indeed it added to the atmosphere of our typical climatic weather conditions. Four seasons in one day. I did actually get an opportunity to do a bit of conducting over both days on the basic but 'interesting' Guy Warrior LUF bus, 647 BKL, a Lancashire United Transport liveried Guy Arab coach, MTJ 84 and the Ribble White Lady.

On the Sunday evening when all was over, many of us went down to the local hostelry, for a well-earned Pea & Pie supper. And our steed, of course, what else but the White Lady.

Note from Alison: I must explain Alvarro was a Spanish student who stayed with us over the summer to learn English, on his spare days we decided it would be 'an experience' for him to conduct on The Klipper and a way for him to earn a bit as well. This was one of his essays in the 'Manuel' style!

KLIPPER STORIES BY ALVARRO

My first job on the Klipper was interesting. I understood at once that I was going to drive the coach, later I noticed that the conductor was not the driver, so I started to ask about what was a conductor. The conductor is in charge of keeping an eye in all the passengers, especially young people, who can be noisy and annoying. Besides that, the conductor should help all the old people that comes and leaves the bus, also is good to indicate all the stops from the Klipper and help the driver in whatever they need.

For my can be more difficult because of the language. Sometimes nobody understands you, like young people that have a different vocabulary than the one you study. Anyway you always can repeat everything lots of times, and then they will understand you. In general people are polite, but sometimes you have to be serious with some teenagers, because they can burn the back row, swear to other people, etc.

The bus, which is 50 years old, not look so old, and is more comfortable than you can expect, a reason could be that the speed do not go above 30 miles per hour. The only big difference comes with the gear stick and the clutch. This bus has not synchronization for the gears, so is not easy changing from a gear to another gear. Often you hear a strange noise when the gear is not well changed.

The route consists on giving rounds to the centre of Kendal; you stop in the town hall, three different commercial centres, Kendal museum, etc. The question more common is if the service is free, which I use to respond saying that we do not look after if you pay or not, but people usually make donations of more than 25 pence.

Usually during the day you can have around 200 people in the Klipper, some of them go in the bus 3 or 4 times in the same day, and are the most important people of the service, because they enjoy it, and find it cheaper than an ordinary bus.

Pictured: The White Lady at BBH bus depot.

