

FRIENDS OF CHATHAM TRACTION

Registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1174323

www.chathamtraction.org.uk

Update 66

14 December 2024

Richard Bourne

Chair

On the Move

richard@thebournes.me.uk 07771 831653

A Big Thank You!

On 25th October around 50 members and others attended an event at Chatham Historic Dockyard to celebrate the part played by many people from far and wide who have contributed to the restoration of GKE 68. The Dockyard granted use of the Royal Dockyard church for a brief welcome from our President David Swan and me. A short presentation of the bus's history followed, beginning from a new vehicle entering public service, through Contractors' transport, the Brian Smith phase, followed by lengthy dormancy (mostly outdoors), leading at last to restoration. There followed a trip to Aylesford by Nu-Venture's Chatham & District Tribute Bus to view the (almost...!) restored bus itself, moved outside for the occasion. Some seats had been installed with some volunteer input - thanks are due to Wendy and Malcolm for co-ordinating the exercise and the supply of parts.

The highlight of the event was to see GKE move under its own power (within the confines of N-V's premises) ably driven by NV's Chris Jenkinson. Recorded via these downloadable videos:

<http://files.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/GKE68-2.mp4>

<http://files.chathamtraction.org.uk/updates/GKE68-1.mp4>



"Heritage Place" progress

Medway has been named by The National Lottery Heritage Fund as one of their 9 places of focus, together benefitting from £200M over 10 years as part of the Heritage Places Initiative. This has enabled the council to start work on developing a heritage strategy for Medway. They are currently researching and mapping local assets, identifying groups and providing support in developing funding bids. Discussions to date are supportive of Friends of Chatham Traction but as yet not promoting an acknowledgement of transport and industrial heritage as a critical part of Medway's heritage. We will continue to develop partnerships with other groups and press to include a transport heritage feature as part of any long term ambitions. Our contact at the Council is Imogen Robertson, Strategic Programmes manager.

At the same time NLHF are supporting us in developing a bid for funding for development and delivery of initial activity to establish the Medway Heritage Bus, to include personnel and resources to boost our capacity, driver training, new website, archiving knowledge, storage facilities, educational resources, interpretation material, pilot projects for community use etc.

And the Bus...?

SE Coachworks have completed the work on the cab sliding windows (thanks Bradley!). It involved fitting some seals to the emergency window on the left side of the cab. (This is so named as it provides a means of escape for the driver in the event that the cab door cannot be opened.) Also, making and fitting the small sliding window in the lower part of the cab door.

This seemed to have long vanished from GKE, but Chris Gibbons pointed out that FKO 223, with its Weymann body contemporary with GKE, still had one. So photos were taken and passed on to SEC.



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There are still things to sort out. Ian has prepared for re-installation the fuse and switch panel that lives in the cab above the emergency window, and has now turned his attention to the interior lights. There are 25 of these, plus the odd one over the platform. Once these are sorted and installed the wiring can be connected.

We are still short of the full complement of saloon light glass shades and bell push-buttons. BAE Systems, who have included us in their funding of local community organisations, offered technical assistance in recreating these items. However this has withered somewhat following an enthusiastic start in mid-2022, almost certainly because of BAE's services being required for other purposes just now. So we may have to go searching once more.

One last thing worthy of mention is N-V's donation of some destination blind rollers which the bus has long been without.

The Bus Inspectors Project

Episode 3 of the Bus Inspectors podcast is available. The topic this time is old company names and the value of their retention.

Here's the link again - thebusinspectors.com/podcast



Dockyard 40s.

We were there over Saturday /Sunday 14th & 15th September. A slightly less boisterous and busy event this year, we felt. Nevertheless we once again met lots of people who had varying degrees of interest in what we were doing. In past years there's always been someone new who drops by to report that they once had a relative on the Traction. This year, within the first hour of the event, it was someone whose father had been a Luton fitter.

Difficulties this year over the transport of our display material to and from the Dockyard were overcome by relying on display panels only instead of our display case on its supports made for us by Medway Men in Sheds. However we managed to maintain an ability to attract attention.

On the Sunday we were pleased to welcome Phil Guyan and Bernard Harris who had brought along the Bus Club's Bristol K6A HKE 867.



One last Christmas...

.....before we have a complete and usable bus. Difficult to pin down when the project actually began, but we'll go for The Stile Bridge meeting in November 2004, where Roger Davies, Norman Kemp, Mike Hodges, Roland Graves and me managed to convince each other that a "Medway Heritage Bus" (as it later became) would be worth pursuing. The notion still has lots of promise, enhanced now by the Heritage Places initiative. 20 years! A nice round figure.

So, our thanks once again for all the support we've been afforded, both passive and active. It's very much appreciated. A very happy Christmas to all from the Trustees.

Finally, a reminder...

Our 2025 Annual General Meeting is planned for Saturday 1st March, to be held at the Huguenot Museum in Rochester once again. Details nearer the time.

FoCT Secretary: Mike Hodges
8 Pier Avenue,
Whitstable, Kent
CT5 2HQ
michaelrhodges011@gmail.com

Richard B.

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