

THE

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WINTER 1983/84



THE METROPOLITAN STORY
THAMES WEALD
BUSCO

REVs, LBMs, SUPs, TLBs? LOTS!



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THE

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Cover: Six Leyland Nationals are painted in a special red and white livery for the Docklands Clipper. Buses carry blue number and destination blinds and here at Limehouse LS171 heads for its southern terminus via the 'Enterprise Zone' on 7th January.
Ramon Hefford

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Around and About



The 177 Commuter Express started on 31st October 1983 using two Titans painted in a special red and white livery. The vehicles are reclassified TE112 and 113 and the service is evidently a success as a third journey was added in January. TE112 approaches the end of its first journey to County Hall, the Lion's face appearing to sum up the future of public transport under the new Transport Bill. *Ramon Hefford*

The free services to the ASDA stores are sponsored by ASDA. T509 from Bow garage arrives at the Isle of Dogs ASDA on the Whitechapel service while an older T231 from Barking garage is seen in East Ham on the Beckton run. *Colin Stannard*



Kingston shoppers' bus revised

The K1, which was planned to run to Hook *Hunters Road* from 12th November, had to be curtailed at Chessington Industrial Estate due to residents' objections. Fortunately, a revised routeing was found acceptable from 10th December taking buses from Kingston to Tolworth, then back via Ewell Road, Red Lion Road, Thornhill Road and Hook Road to Hunters Road and normal route back to Kingston.



Left & Below The K1 terminus at Hook was hastily changed to Chessington Industrial Estate following local residents' objections. A dolly stop explained the revised arrangements at Hook while RM19 shows the modification to the blinds. Note the 'Shoppers Express' poster under the canopy. **Below Left** Regular crew operation returned to Berrylands for the first time since the omo conversion of the 418 fourteen years ago. RM1818 is seen in Raeburn Avenue, Berrylands on 22nd November. *Ramon Hefford*



Shoppers' services expand

A number of new excursions have been started by LT in recent weeks showing the increase in demand for these services. Further to the Wood Green to Romford and Peckham to Romford shoppers' buses, a third service from St. Mary Cray to Brent Cross ran on Wednesdays and Saturdays picking up at Sidcup, Eltham, Lewisham and Peckham. Market buses to Petticoat Lane on Sundays before Christmas collected passengers from such places as Holland Park, Bayswater, Streatham Hill, Tulse Hill, Brixton and Kennington. An excursion from Harold Hill, Collier Row and Romford to the Regent Street lights ran before Christmas, while a similar excursion on Sundays served Petticoat Lane Market. For bargain hunters, the same service ran on 2nd January to Oxford Street.

It is clear that this type of service is a successful operation which is to be welcomed. The only concern is that these 'guaranteed' services which run mid-week, and require the use of a number of vehicles, will strain local resources resulting in reductions in peak hour services on other routes.



The Shoppers' buses to Romford and Brent Cross ceased after 14th January with the promise of similar services in the autumn. Here we see Wood Green's M643 at Romford on 3rd December while the two south London services used yellow blinds as shown on Catford's T835 at Romford and Sidcup's T616 on Sidcup Hill. *Colin Stannard (M643 & T835) / Ramon Hefford*



Vehicle Trials switch to Stockwell

The vehicles on order for evaluation purposes to determine the future double-deck replacement programme are now to be tested at Wandle District's Stockwell Garage on routes 44 and 170. The reason for the switch is to ensure that the vehicles are given an unbiased trial, Stockwell having had no experience of modern vehicle types since the B20 Fleetlines. It was felt that Stamford Brook, with its extensive knowledge of the Metrobus, might have favoured the Metrobus Mk2s and found their teething troubles easier to overcome.

Aldenham and Chiswick latest

LT and the Unions are working closely together to rethink the viability of Aldenham and Chiswick Works. Teams have been set up to discuss the various aspects of the work and will submit reports on the future of Aldenham by the end of January. The deadline for Chiswick is the end of March.

National and Municipal join forces

A new daily coach service numbered 795 is to be provided from 1st April between Southend and Brighton. It will be jointly operated by three NBC subsidiaries—Green Line, Eastern National and Southdown—together with Southend Transport. Five return trips per day will run by way of Hadleigh, Basildon, Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope, Grays, Dartford Tunnel, Swanley, St. Mary Cray, Orpington, M25, Gatwick Airport and Crawley.



Improvements to Green Line services on 29th October saw extensive alteration to the 740 and 741. An increased frequency was coupled with the diversion of certain off-peak journeys via Tolworth and Putney Bridge, where RS109 displays the new Guildford Cathedral blind. A new Saturday shoppers' coach from Cranleigh to London is worked here by Alder Valley's 1061 at Tolworth. *Ramon Hefford*

New Coaches for London Country . . .

Since the last issue of London Bus Magazine, a change of plan has occurred regarding the new coach deliveries. TP26-30 are now to be 53-seaters with only TP31-35 being 49 seaters. TP41-60, the 12-metre versions, are now to be classified TPL. Amersham, Hemel Hempstead and Guildford will take the majority of the stage vehicles (27) while the remaining 18 will be shared between Hatfield, Hertford, Northfleet, Reigate and St. Albans. They will principally replace older RSs and RBs which will return to Kirkby (dealers). The fifteen Private Hire coaches (TP36-50) will be spread around the fleet and will replace P1-5 and D13-17 which will be withdrawn.

. . . and a new garage too

Not previously reported is the new garage at Slough in Railway Terrace, the structure being virtually complete by early December. It will be fitted out during the spring, with an expected opening date in June. The sale of Windsor garage, which will be closed, is helping to pay for the new garage.



The new TP coaches entered service during December. At Amersham they coincided with revisions to the Oxford services which saw an hourly Monday to Saturday 291 introduced as shown by TP13 at Eccleston Bridge. *Colin Fradd*

A new experimental coach from Hatfield to Oxford Circus, introduced in October, provides one return trip on Mondays to Fridays for shoppers. The 764 spends some of its time laying over at Victoria where TD7 is seen just after Christmas. *Colin Fradd*



Lower Fares in Welwyn and Hatfield

From 15th October a new zonal fare system was introduced in Welwyn Garden City and in Hatfield resulting in cheaper fares for many bus and coach users. Fares in the inner zone are 15p single (25p 'Outback' return) while outer zone fares are 30p single (50p 'Outback' return). Fares between the towns are 60p single and £1 return. There are reductions for children and pensioners. Weekly, monthly and quarterly seasons are available, as are 'add-on' tickets for Green Line or British Rail season ticket holders. The experiment will run for a trial period of six months while London Country and the district and county councils evaluate the scheme.

Speedline 750

The new daily cross-country Green Line 750, marketed as 'Speedline', commenced on 22nd October 1983 linking Hemel Hempstead, Luton, Stevenage, Hertford and Waltham Cross. Worked jointly by Green Line and United Counties, it opens up many new fast journeys and is particularly useful for shoppers, students, hospital staff and visitors, and airline passengers.



New Titans are gradually taking over from the DMSs at New Cross garage as shown by T887 here at Waterloo on the 70. Ramon Hefford



At Wandsworth, the conversion is to Metrobus, the first examples of which were fitted with makeshift DMS blinds producing an offside route number. M937 is seen here on the 44 in Southwark Bridge Road. Ramon Hefford



The idea of 'all-over' advert buses was resurrected by LT after a long absence. The first two were sponsored by ASDA and work on the 101 and 106 which both serve the stores. Upton Park's T283 shows the offside and rear treatment here at North Woolwich on the 101, *Colin Fradd* while T399, the offside of which was illustrated in the last issue of LBM, shows its nearside here on the cobbles at Finsbury Park. *Paul Carpenter*

Bus Station for Mile End

A new £120,000 bus terminus is to be constructed at Mile End. Situated in Grove Road, the terminal will provide turning facilities for buses on routes 10, 25, 106 and 277. Its primary purpose, however, will be to act as a northern terminus for the Docklands Clipper. The new terminal will require planning permission before the go-ahead is given by the Greater London Council. If permission is granted, it should come into service later this year.



The next 'all-over' advertisement was to announce the new shopping centre at Bexleyheath Broadway. Working from Bexleyheath garage, T799 is basically white above the waistband with the lower deck design consisting of hundreds of shades of brown. It is seen here on the 89 at Crook Log while the rear view at Eltham was taken on the 132. *Colin Fradd/Paul Carpenter*

An unusual advertising campaign was applied to two ex-London Country RMLs shortly before Christmas. RML2412 from Putney garage, seen her at Oxford Road, carries a grey background on which black jockey tops are pictured, with a white band between the decks. Not apparent from the outside is the product – Jockey Shorts. The other vehicle, RML2444 from Upton Park, is all white with hundreds of letter Ys giving a lozenge effect. The product, Y-fronts is a little easier to establish in this case. Both vehicles have now acquired a white roundel on the rear lower deck window on each side. *Paul Carpenter/Ramon Hefford*



An all-over advert Leyland National has appeared for London Country advertising BMWs from Birds Garages. Here at Amersham SNB344 works to Rickmansworth on the 337. *Colin Fradd*

Nighters face setback

Plans to extend the night bus network from 4th February have run into trouble. The GLC transport committee welcomed the changes but the Unions were unhappy about the conversions to one-man operation. They fear increased assaults on drivers although an LT report has shown that the assault rate on night buses is significantly less than on day services. The improvements, which will provide clockface services on thirty routes, all serving Trafalgar Square, are expected to be introduced as soon as the difficulties are resolved.



Left A rare working occurred when D2629 appeared on the 130 to New Addington on 31st December. Such special vehicles are not normally sent to the estate for fear of the damage that could befall them, but D2629 is seen here amid Christmas decorations at Alders. *Colin Fradd* **Right** Not previously illustrated is LS438 which has been repainted in a special livery and christened 'City Belle'. It is seen here at Cornwall Road, Waterloo on 16th November. *Colin Fradd*

Left The gold Titan carried on into 1984, moving to Catford garage after its stint at Victoria. It was caught here in Welling on 31st December on the 160, just one of the many routes it can now work. *Colin Fradd* **Right** Docklands Clipper LS181 is seen here turning into the new link road through Docklands. *Ramon Hefford*



Free Travel for OAPs to go?

It seems unlikely that the London Boroughs will be able to agree on a free travel system for OAPs when control of London Transport is switched from the GLC to central government later this year. The Government have declined to give assurances that free travel will be retained, preferring to speak instead of a concessionary scheme to be agreed and paid for by the boroughs.

Docklands Clipper launched

A new express service for the Isle of Dogs commenced on 3rd January with the support of the London Docklands Development Corporation. Named the 'Docklands Clipper', the D1 runs from Mile End Station through the heart of the Enterprise Zone to the southern end of the Isle of Dogs at Seysell Street. Six LSs have received a special livery for the service which links work places, the shopping centre and the residential areas along its route with the underground station at Mile End in advance of the proposed light railway. Normal one-zone, 'short-hop' and child fares apply, and Travelcards, Bus Passes and free passes are accepted. Buses run every 15 minutes from 7am to 7pm on Mondays to Saturdays and the schedule allows a generous recovery margin at each terminal to assist timekeeping. The service has its own manager with personal responsibility for monitoring performance.

New Travel Office for London Country

The first of London Country's new Travel Offices opened to the public on Wednesday 16th November at Addlestone. The new travel shop is the first of twelve which are planned over the next few years, the next to open being Watford and Gravesend in January. They will deal with all the leading tour operators such as Cosmos, Thomson's, Horizon and Intasun, and can offer all the services normally expected of a good travel agent.



Boxing Day at Uxbridge garage required the use of only two vehicles—one for the 128 and one for the 223. A most unusual result was the appearance of a BL on the latter service which ran only between Uxbridge and West Drayton. Seen here in Falling Lane, Yiewsley BL4 catches the Boxing Day sunshine. *Paul Carpenter*

Kingston Garage closes . . .

Work on the enlargement of Norbiton garage has been completed on target. Consequently, Kingston garage closed after Friday 13th January with staff, vehicles and routes transferring to Norbiton. An interesting result was the rerouting of the 71 via Norbiton garage *on Sundays only* in order to facilitate driver changeovers.

. . . while Uxbridge opens

Dr. David Quarmbly, Managing Director of London Buses, drove through a ceremonial tape on Wednesday 30th November to mark the opening of the new Uxbridge garage. Buses started using the new garage from 3rd December when the old garage at Denham was closed.

Putney Garage facelift

A £4 million plan to modernise Putney Garage has been approved by LT. The garage, known for many years as Chelverton Road, was originally constructed in 1912. It was rebuilt in 1935. The existing garage suffers a number of problems including a single narrow entrance, cramped staff accommodation and outdated engineering facilities. The updating proposals require the demolition of the existing premises and operating block alongside the garage enabling the provision of a separate entrance and exit, and a new two-storey operating block. The building itself will be enlarged, the maintenance pits improved and the roof and glazing renewed. Work is expected to begin this summer and completion is planned for mid-1987.

London Bus Magazine

From this issue, increased costs have forced up to raise the cover price from £1·25 to £1·40. This is the first increase since LBM41 in Summer 1982. Subscription rates are increased accordingly to £5·50 for LOTS members and £7·00 for non-members.

Corrections to LBM46: *Page 9*—The photograph of RM1983 on route N81 was taken by John Parkin, not as stated.

Page 41—The bottom centre photograph was of RT161, not RT1161.

We apologise to contributors for these errors.

The cover price of LBM46 should have been £1·25, and not as shown.

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The Transport Bill. The London Regional Transport Bill, at present in its Commons' Committee Stage, looks as though it will be the biggest thing to hit public transport in London since George Shillibeer put his first omnibus on the road one hundred and fifty-five years ago. This comparison is more apposite than it might seem, because the Bill provides for the replacement of the present London Transport Executive by a body called London Regional Transport (LRT). Separate LRT subsidiaries would be formed to run the buses and the Underground, subsidiaries which could be disposed of, wholly or in part, into private hands either by decision of LRT or by Government direction.

A few interesting points arise from a close examination of the Bill's provisions. LRT's duty as stated in the Bill is to provide or secure the provision of public passenger transport services for Greater London, and to carry out that duty having due regard to the transport needs for the time being of Greater London and to efficiency, economy and safety of operation. An 'exemption' clause is however included, and this would appear to make it impossible for anyone to challenge in a court of law the way in which LRT chooses to carry out its duty. In addition, the Government would be empowered to make grants to LRT but would seem not to be under any obligation to do so, and although Greater London ratepayers would make a substantial contribution towards LRT's operating costs each year, it looks as though any revenue account surpluses would not be returned to the ratepayers but would pass to the Treasury.

When LRT produce 'statements of policy' concerning public transport provision, although they would be required to consult with BR, the local authorities concerned, and the to-be-formed London Regional Passengers' Committee (a replacement for the present LTTC and the TUCC for Greater London), there seems to be no requirement for any other consultation to take place. The provision of OAP concessionary travel facilities would appear to be left to the discretion of the various local authorities, leading to confusion and with no guarantee that the concessions at present enjoyed by pensioners would be continued.

What effects the Bill will have on bus fares and service levels can only be left to speculation, but there is a strong body of opinion that services will be reduced (particularly at off-peak times and in the suburbs) and fares increased. The Government's intentions are believed to be that the Bill will be with the House of Lords by Easter (using a 'guillotine' on discussions in the Commons if necessary) and that it should become law by about July, if at all possible before the GLC has had the chance to extend the travelcard scheme to include BR services in the London area. As soon as it becomes law the Government would take over control of London Transport from the GLC, with LRT being set up as soon as possible thereafter.

Griffith House to close. By the early summer of 1984, it is intended that the London Transport offices at Griffith House will have been vacated by all but certain Lift and Escalator staff. Subject to GLC approval, the building is to be completely refurbished for re-occupation within about two years.

Griffith House was one of the products of the LPTB 'Boom Years' between 1933 and the start of the Second World War. While sharing the austere undisguised brickwork common in LPTB buildings of that period, it lacked any of the architectural refinements that made other buildings (such as Sudbury Town station) catch the public imagination. Nikolaus Pevsner in his series 'The Buildings of England' pays due respect to the building's design by ignoring it completely!

The offices were originally known as Lisson House—the area concerned around Marylebone Road being known as Lisson Grove. It has not been possible to determine the precise date on which the offices opened, but it can be stated that the lifts were commissioned in June 1939, and the building was certainly occupied by the time war was declared in September of that year. Unfortunately, Lisson House proved to be an unfortunate name for the building, as the name was shared with another building in the area—the other one being of dubious repute. The name of the building was changed to Griffith House in 1940—presumably in honour of stockbroker Murray Griffith, who had the distinction of having been the longest-serving director of any of the major constituents of the LPTB when it was formed. Also a director of the East London Railway for eleven years, Murray Griffith had been a director of the Metropolitan District Railway for 32 years by 1933, and had been Chairman of the company for a period.

Departments based at Griffith House during 1940 included Lifts & Escalators, Staff Superintendent (Railways), Medical, Civil Engineering and Architecture. By early 1984, only Lifts & Escalators and Medical were left of those original occupiers—having been joined meanwhile by the Revenue Office, Recruitment and Advertising & Publicity.

The Recruitment Office moved to a new Recruitment Centre at Baker Street on 6th January 1984. By the early summer, the Lift & Escalator Division will have gone to Lindsay House, the Medical Centre to Baker Street and Revenue and Advertising & Publicity to 55 Broadway. The only departments which appear certain to move back after refurbishment are Lifts & Escalators and Medical: the future of the other floors is under consideration.

Griffith House was originally intended to consist of only two floors (to be used by Lifts & Escalators), but another two floors were added, and it was intended to use part of the building for the Railway Training School. In the event, the School remained at Lambeth North (where it had been since 1920) until the new Railway Training Centre was opened at White City in October 1963.

The Metropolitan Story

by Andrew Boag



The Metropolitan demonstrator NVP533M carried a cream and brown livery while on loan to LT, here posing for the camera at Chiswick Works.
London Transport

The origins of the MD class go back to late 1969 when London Transport received on loan a prototype Scania single-decker. This was to be the forerunner of a new type of single-decker bus, type CR111MH developed by the Swedish company Scania-Vabis and fitted with an MCW body incorporating a distinctive asymmetrical windscreen. The 36ft long bus had two doors and seats for 40 plus 21 standees although only three standing passengers were permitted whilst with LT. Registered VWD 451H it was allocated to Plumstead garage for operation on route 99 from 24th January 1970 alongside MBs. The trials lasted for three months and in May the vehicle was returned to its manufacturer. Two years later an order for six 33ft long Metro-Scania CR111MHs was placed, similar to the earlier demonstrator but to B37D+29 layout and incorporating a restyled rear window adding to its distinctive appearance. Known as the MS class, they were fitted with Scania D11 11-litre engines developing 170 bhp at 2,200 rpm. These arrived between May and July 1973 sporting a new single-deck livery of red with a white roof and plain white roundels as fitted to DMSs. Registered PGC201-206L they entered service on 15th August on route S2 from Dalston (D) garage where they were later compared with a similar number of Leyland Nationals. MS4 disgraced itself on its first day by ending up in Clapton Pond. This accident made the front page of the *London Evening Standard* but damage was not serious and the bus was only off the road for a couple of weeks.

By 1973 LT was standardising on Daimler Fleetline double-deckers and there was clearly little prospect of a further order for Metro-Scania. However, MCW was now working on a 31ft (9.7m) double-deck version which first appeared at the Scottish Commercial Motor Show in November 1973. The double-decker was to be marketed under the name 'Metropolitan'. Mechanically similar to the single-decker, it had Scania BR111DH type running units with a Scania B11002 11-litre engine developing 190 bhp at 2,200 rpm, to 'quiet bus' specification. The bodywork was based more on the standard MCW/Park Royal design similar to the DMS style but with a number of distinctive features. The asymmetrical front windscreen was retained from the single deck version and the horizontally mounted rear engine enabled the same large rear window to be used on the lower deck. Hitherto all



These shots of the Metro-Scania demonstrator clearly show its unusual design. It worked supplementary journeys superimposed on the normal route 99 schedule, and although blinds were fitted for the 122A, it was never worked on that route. Tom Maddocks/J. G. S. Smith/G. F. Walker



The MSs which were eventually purchased for route S2 were different from the demonstrator in a number of ways. This photo of MS6 taken at Clapton shows the revised position of the centre exit doors. *Phil Picken*

rear engined double-deck buses had been fitted with smaller rear windows to accommodate the engine compartment. Amongst the other features were radiators on each side immediately forward of the rear axle. The engine compartment air intake was located at the rear of the upper deck, looking rather similar to the roof pod fitted to early Leyland Nationals, although the roof line was in fact level throughout. The overall effect was to produce one of the most attractive bus designs of the 1970s. The first examples of the Metropolitan double-decker entered service with Leicester City Transport in April 1974.

Meanwhile London Transport inspected the original demonstrator, NVP 533M, in December 1973 and again in February 1974. By this time it had been announced that LT intended to order 843 double-deckers for 1975/76 and it was suggested that 164 of these would be Metropolitans rather than DMSs. The DMS was not operating as well in 'London conditions' as had been hoped and its performance was giving rise to concern. Furthermore British Leyland's near monopoly of the UK bus building market, and large Fleetline orders from PTEs were resulting in lengthy delays in the delivery of new vehicles. In March 1974 LT confirmed its intention to purchase 164 Metropolitans although the order was not actually placed until August of that year. This was due to a reluctance by the GLC to approve an order for vehicles with foreign parts. Classified MD, the Metropolitans were to be crew-operated dual door vehicles concentrated in just two garages to assist maintenance. Originally those were to have been New Cross (NX), for routes 53 and 171, and Tottenham (AR), for routes 73 and 171. However capacity problems at Tottenham led to Peckham (PM) being substituted and routes 36/36A/36B and 63 were selected for their operation instead of the 73 and 171.

MDs 1 and 3 (KJD 201/3P) arrived in December 1975. Externally and mechanically they were to standard Metropolitan specification with three-piece front destination blinds. They were the first new double-deckers in the fleet to receive the white relief band around the upper deck windows as applied to DMS46. It had been suggested that DMS type windscreens would be fitted but this proved not to be the case. Internally they were similar to DMSs with no AFC equipment.

A rather awkward third step was necessary on the lower deck, just forward of the rear axle to accommodate the radiators. This presumably resulted in some accidents as notices later appeared on seat backs warning passengers of the step (and strongly reminiscent of 'mind your head' signs attached to the lower deck offside seats in RLHs!). Somewhat surprisingly bell cords were provided on the lower deck with push buttons on the handrails by the centre doors and on the upper deck at the top of the stairs. This bell was considerably easier to use than when placed on the ceiling as on DMSs. The upper deck had 43 seats, one fewer than Fleetlines, as the single inward facing seat behind the staircase was omitted. With 29 seats downstairs this gave a total seating capacity of 72. Two-piece glider doors, as experimentally fitted to DMSs 463-467, were also featured together with the use of fluorescent lighting behind destination blinds to improve identification at night.

It was decided that Peckham would be the first garage to operate the type on the 36 group of routes followed by the 63. The 36, which at that time ran between Hither Green Station and Victoria on Mondays to Saturdays with a Sunday extension to West Kilburn, was chosen to be the first route to operate the class and on Monday 22nd March 1976 the first 12 examples were placed in service. Insufficient drivers had been trained to enable full weekend operation so at first the class was used only on Mondays to Fridays. One week later, Monday to Friday peak hour only route 36A (Brockley Rise to West Kilburn) was converted using a further eleven MDs. The busiest



The first route to receive Metropolitans was the 36, initially only on Mondays to Fridays. MD1, one of the first to be delivered, is seen here in Vauxhall Bridge Road. *Colin Stannard*



One week later MDs started to appear on the peak-hour only route 36A and MD49, here negotiating Hyde Park Corner, heads for Brockley Rise. *Colin Stannard*



MDs worked on the 36B over a period of six years, albeit as strange visitors for half that time. Here at Marble Arch MD75 makes such an appearance in July 1982. *Colin Stannard*

of the three variants, the 36B (Grove Park to West Kilburn), was converted progressively from Tuesday 13th April requiring 44 buses. Weekend operation of the 36 commenced the following Saturday. The progressive changeover of the 36B which continued until September enabled a number of running time tests to be carried out on RMs and MDs for comparison. The performance of Metropolitans was more lively than DMSs. Door operation seemed quicker, possibly helped by the fact that the interlocking mechanism which prevented the bus from engaging gear with its doors open was activated by the brakes rather than the transmission. Consequently there was less 'dead' time between the doors opening or closing and the bus being able to move. The Metropolitan had fully automatic transmission with only two forward gears and it was not possible for drivers to select semi-automatic transmission. From the passenger's point of view the air suspension produced a quality of ride which was appreciably smoother than on most other double-deckers, especially on the upper-deck. The gear change could be a jerky affair though especially when negotiating, say, Hyde Park Corner at about 25 mph, when the vehicle would sometimes appear unable to decide which gear it should be in! Nevertheless it was clear that the Metropolitans (along with other doored vehicles) could not match the Routemasters' boarding times despite having two doors. However it must be said that many crews were reluctant to allow passengers to board at busy stops, for example Victoria or Lewisham Odeon, until all passengers had alighted first because of the risk of overloading.

On 13th June the six single-deck MSs were replaced on route S2 by SMSs and placed in store. Plans to use them on flat-fare routes from Peckham were never implemented, and after many months in store at Clapham (CA) garage MS1 and 3-6 were sold to Newport Borough Transport in November 1978 joining 44 similar buses. MS2 was eventually sold for preservation after having been allocated to Chiswick for experimental purposes.

By the end of September 1976 102 Metropolitans had been delivered and on 27th of that month the progressive conversion of route 63 began. From MD84 registrations changed to OUC84R, etc—this series continuing until MD164. Also in September MD110 (OUC 110R) was exhibited at the last Commercial Motor Show at Earls Court. The following month saw the first examples allocated to New Cross beginning with MD114. This was in preparation for the conversion of route 53 the following January. October also saw the introduction of 'Primary and Supplementary' schedules on the 36 group. Although the total numbers of vehicles allocated to each route remained unchanged the basic levels of service were reduced slightly on the primary schedule, additional buses being allocated to the supplementary schedule which would be covered as resources permitted. By November Peckham had received its entire allocation for the 63 although this was a little later than planned due to slight delivery delays.

The first MDs on route 53 appeared on 9th January 1977, the New Cross allocation comprising MD114-164. Last to arrive was MD162 which was delivered to Aldenham Works on 1st February 1977 and entered service on the 8th. Out of 164 vehicles in stock 151 were scheduled for service on Mondays to Fridays as can be seen from the following table:

		Mondays to Fridays	Saturdays	Sundays
36	(PM)	12	19	13
36A	(PM)	11	—	—
36B	(PM)	44	32	14
53	(NX)	48	23	16
63	(PM)	36	19	8
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		151	93	51

In addition, a cross-working from route 53 meant that an MD was scheduled on route 141 during the evening peak on Mondays to Fridays. Unscheduled appearances on the 141, especially during evenings and on Saturdays, soon became commonplace whilst the 53 was frequently visited by DMs from the 141 allocation. The rest of 1977 was fairly uneventful except for the conversion of the Sunday allocation on route 12 from Peckham garage using seven MDs starting 15th October.

Metro-Cammell Weymann who built all the MDs on Scania running units, had by this time begun producing a new all-British development of the Metropolitan—known as the Metrobus. It became clear that future LT orders were likely to be for this model, and for the Leyland Titan, rather than the Scania version. Three of the initial order for five pre-production Metrobuses were delivered to London Transport in early 1978 and these eventually entered service from Cricklewood garage on route 16 in October of that year.

The main feature of London's bus services in 1978 was the implementation of 'Bus Plan '78'. This was designed to make schedules match staff and vehicle resources more accurately and therefore reduce lost mileage. As far as the MDs were concerned this meant reduced schedules from 28th October 1978 on routes 36, 36A, 36B and 63, but the 53 was untouched. As part of this package route 36A was withdrawn between West Kilburn and Victoria and replaced by a peak hour extension on the 36 whilst the Sunday service on the latter was cut back to operate between Hither Green and Victoria only. This left the West Kilburn section with just a 12-minute Sunday service on the



The largest MD allocation fell to route 53 from New Cross garage. But the shortest life for an MD was that of MD163 which worked for just over two years before being withdrawn in July 1979. It is seen here passing the National Gallery.
Colin Fradd



The 141 was scheduled to receive one MD from the 53 allocation on Mondays to Fridays. In practice, however, they appeared more frequently, often after the evening peak and on Saturdays. Here at St. Paul's Station MD113 makes its long haul through from Grove Park to Wood Green one Saturday afternoon.
Mike Harris



The use of MDs on Sundays eventually came to route 12 but their appearance was irregular for some time. MD93 pauses here in Whitehall during October 1977.
Colin Stannard

36B. Following these changes, which also saw the end of the short lived primary and supplementary schedules, daily allocations of MDs were as follows:

		Mondays to Fridays	Saturdays	Sundays
12	(PM)	—	—	5
36	(PM)	15	18	9
36A	(PM)	10	—	—
36B	(PM)	36	31	15
53	(NX)	48	23	16
63	(PM)	32	16	8
		141	88	53

The spare vehicles were not reallocated as minor corrosion problems had arisen with the class. In November MDs 1 and 2 were sent to Aldenham for treatment and this gave rise to speculation that as non-standard vehicles they would be withdrawn when their initial Certificates of Fitness expired (after seven years). LT had already announced its intention to replace the DM family but the Metropolitans were said to be more reliable. Were they now to suffer a similar fate to all other LT buses purchased in the 1970s? The winter of 1978/79 was particularly severe and regular one-day strikes by BR Southern Region train crews created extremely difficult conditions in south-east London. The corrosion problems coupled with spare part shortages led to services on MD operated routes being seriously depleted in January and February 1979. Three buses which had been off the road for some time were sent to Kingston for store in June 1979—MDs 23, 119 and 163, followed by 81, 104, 122, 128, 139 and 150. LT confirmed that these and any other MDs which received heavy accident damage or had to be cannibalised would be withdrawn. Meanwhile the wisdom of operating doored buses on busy routes serving central London was being questioned.

It was decided that the remaining MDs would be transferred to more suburban duties and the progressive conversion of the 36 group back to RM operation began on 12th January 1980, a process which was completed by 18th February. However, the odd MD was to continue to appear on these routes right up until September 1982. MD4 was repainted in all-red livery in November 1979 and was quickly followed by other early examples. Of the Peckham MDs, 5, 6, 8, 13, 21, 24, 27, 28, 32, 35, 45, 54, 68, 88, 90 and 105 were fitted for OMO replacing DMSs on routes 78, N85 and N86 rather than being transferred elsewhere. Peckham's other MD route, the 63, was unaffected by this reshuffle. The majority of those displaced from the 36 group were sent to Plumstead (AM) garage where they were eventually to replace all RMs and DMSs to provide a single type allocation. Plumstead's route 122 was officially converted to crew MD operation from 17th February although the first sightings were some two weeks earlier on the 3rd.



When MDs were put to one-man operation on the 78, a 'Pay Driver' flap was fitted below the windscreen. Seen here crossing Tower Bridge, MD105 heads for its southern terminus.
Colin Fradd



When MDs took over from DMSs on the 78, it was of course necessary to use them at night on the N85 and N86. This dawn setting outside Charing Cross Station represents their night operation at Peckham. *Colin Fradd*



At New Cross garage, MDs also worked on their two night routes – the N82 and the Inter-Station service. Here we see MD115 at Woolwich Arsenal Station on the former, while early morning sunshine catches MD125 outside Kings Cross Station before making its final return trip to Victoria. *Paul Carpenter/Mike Harris*



Back at Peckham the first omo Metropolitans began work on route 78 on 24th February. Peckham's night routes, the N85 and N86, were also converted at this time. The official conversion date was 28th October 1979 but whilst the odd MD may have crept out before it is not thought the actual conversion took place until February 1980. Conversely the N82 from New Cross was scheduled to be MD worked from February 1980 but had actually been operated as such since the previous November. Only one MD was needed for this lightly used service. The Inter-station night service was also converted to crew MD operation at the same time. Omo routes 99 and 122A were converted from DMS to MD operation from 27th April, when Plumstead (AM) became the first all MD garage. The allocation of MDs was now as follows:



When the MDs were sent to Plumstead garage, their appearance improved considerably. They were first used as crew vehicles replacing RMs on the 122. MD9 is seen here at Lee Green while an uncommon rear shot of MD87 turns at Plumstead Station. *Colin Fradd/Colin Stannard*

As soon as more MDs arrived, they took over from DMSs on the 99 and 122A making Plumstead the first all-MD garage. MD51 threads its way past Woolwich Market bound for Slade Green, while MD48 heads westbound for its hospital terminus at Woolwich Common. *Colin Fradd*

		Mondays to Fridays	Saturdays	Sundays
12	(PM)	—	—	5
53	(NX)	48	23	16
63	(PM)	32	16	8
78	(PM)	15	14	10
99	(AM)	10	8	3
122	(AM)	24	20	11
122A	(AM)	6	6	3
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		135	87	56

Plus Night routes N82(1), N85(4), N86(3/4) and Inter-station (1). Vehicles for these routes are taken from day route allocations.

The condition of the MDs at Plumstead showed a marked improvement over their days at Peckham and it was evident that a great deal of attention was being given to them by garage staff. The 17-mile 122 route in particular is a busier than average suburban service, and with an end to end running time of around 1½ hours at peak times, it is one of the longest routes in London. Nevertheless the MDs seemed to provide as reliable a service as the Routemasters had done previously.

Omo MDs were in theory interchangeable with crew operated ones although in practice the two were not frequently mixed. AFC equipment was no longer used on omo buses by this time so the only modifications necessary were the fitting of a driver-operated Almex ticket machine and base plate, cash tray and a metal barrier to prevent passengers boarding without passing the driver. PAY DRIVER or PAY CONDUCTOR flaps as fitted to D class Fleetlines were attached to the outside below the front windscreen. Fitting out for one-man operation was carried out locally at the garages concerned with Bexleyheath also helping out.

In August 1980 the nine MDs stored at Kingston were disposed of to Wombwell Diesels, Yorkshire. A tenth vehicle, MD15 was re-considered and not sold at this stage.

The operation of DMS route 192 (Lewisham to Plumstead) had been unsatisfactory for some time due to staff and vehicle shortages at New Cross garage. Accordingly it was re-allocated to Plumstead garage from 27th September 1980 and converted to MD operation at the same time. For this purpose MDs 46, 112, 135, 137, 140, 144 and 159 were transferred from New Cross to Plumstead. Their places on route 53 were taken by a mixture of RMs and DMs (including D class vehicles formerly on the 192!) so three types (plus the occasional RML) were regularly in use on that service. The re-appearance of RMs on the 53 marked the start of the conversion of this route back to the type completely, the remaining MDs being replaced progressively between 23rd January and 26th February 1981. Displaced MDs were sent to Abbey Wood garage where they were to take over the operation of crew route 180 and omo routes 177, 178, 198 and 272. The omo routes were converted first starting on 31st January followed by the 180 between 5th and 17th February. The Catford allocation on the 180 remained RM daily. Abbey Wood's other crew-operated route, the 161, kept RMs as insufficient MDs were available to convert the route at this stage, and in any case the Chislehurst War Memorial stand was unsuitable for such buses. As a result of these changes the N82 and Inter-station services were converted to Fleetline operation.

When the 192 was reallocated from New Cross to Plumstead garage to improve reliability, it was also converted to MD operation. MD144, displaying an unusual destination, picks up passengers in Lewisham Bus Station. *Colin Fradd*





The next garage to receive MDs was Abbey Wood who also worked them as both one- and two-man vehicles. The longer distance routes are represented here by MD92 on the 177 at Woolwich, and MD131 working as a crew bus on the 180 at Plumstead Station. *Colin Stannard/Colin Fradd*

Following this reshuffle a total of 121 MDs were scheduled for service on twelve routes plus two night services:

		Mondays to Fridays	Saturdays	Sundays
12	(PM)	—	—	5
63	(PM)	32	16	8
78	(PM)	15	14	10
99	(AM)	10	8	3
122	(AM)	24	20	11
122A	(AM)	6	6	3
177	(AW)	3	3	2
178	(AW)	3	3	3
180	(AW)	12	10	4
192	(AM)	9	8	5
198	(AW)	2	—	—
272	(AW)	5	4	2
		121	92	56

Plus N85(4) and N86(3/4).

Between November 1979 and November 1980 MDs 1-3, 5-7, 11-14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 27, 32 and 141 were repainted all red. Two further vehicles, 46 and 136 were repainted in October 1981 in preparation for the opening of the new Plumstead (PD) garage on 31st October 1981 (followed by 9 and 28 in January 1982). MD136 was given the name 'Selkent Ambassador' for the opening ceremony. The new garage by Plumstead station replaced both the former Plumstead (AM) and Abbey Wood (AW) garages and it was decided that the vehicle allocation should be entirely MD. This necessitated 13 additional MDs for the 161 (problems at Chislehurst having been overcome) and seven for the 180 which lost its Catford RM allocation to the new garage at the same time. In order to provide sufficient vehicles it was necessary to convert route 78 to LS operation. Although a straight swap of RMs and MDs for the 63 might have seemed more logical there was a shortage of RMs at this time caused by the abandonment of a number of service revisions planned for Autumn 1981, but not implemented because of the introduction of the GLC's Fares Fair scheme on 4th October. Nevertheless Peckham's MDs continued to make appearances on the 78 and the N85/86 which also went LS.



The Thamesmead local routes also took their share of MDs, and here we see MD144 with its yellow destination blind for route 178 in Woolwich, MD151 on the Industrial Area service 198 at Plumstead, and MD111 on the 272 at Woolwich, also with a yellow blind, used to denote Thamesmead-bound buses.
Colin Fradd



One of the MDs repaired in all-red livery during 1980 was MD18, seen here in Farrington Road working the 63 to Crystal Palace.
Colin Stannard

Two MD routes made their debut with the opening of the new garage. Route 198A was a Saturday-only variant of the 198 between Woolwich and Thamesmead via Spine Road rather than Nathan Way with an allocation of three MDs to provide a half-hourly service. Route 291 replaced former MD route 192 and New Cross DMS route 151, operating between Lewisham and Plumstead by way of Lee Green and Kidbrooke Park Road, rejoining the former 192 route at Shooters Hill Road. The main reason for the introduction of this route was to enable Greenwich Council to impose a width restriction in Weigall Road, Kidbrooke which formed part of the former loop working on route 151, but two years later this had still not been implemented! The section of route 192 via Blackheath was covered by additional journeys on DMS route 89, whilst the short-lived Plumstead (AM) garage journeys serving Kings Highway were withdrawn without replacement. Including those at Peckham an increased total of 128 MDs were now scheduled on Mondays to Fridays.

The effects of the House of Lords' ruling and the end of the Fares Fair scheme led to a programme of service reductions, planned for July 1982 but deferred until 4th September. Some 600 vehicles were made surplus throughout the fleet and it was announced that the remaining Metropolitans would be withdrawn. From 4th September route 63 and the Sunday allocation on route 12 were converted to RM marking the end of MD operation at Peckham, although one or two remained in use for a few days afterwards. Plumstead remained all MD—but only just. Catford regained an RM allocation on the 180, and route 122A was converted to DMS operation from Bexleyheath. Route 99 also lost its Sunday MD allocation in favour of DMSs from Bexleyheath. Following these changes the total number of MDs scheduled for service was:

		Mondays to Fridays	Saturdays	Sundays
99	(PD)	8	6	—
122*	(PD)	21	19	10
161*	(PD)	10	9	3
177*	(PD)	8	8	8
178	(PD)	3	3	2
180*	(PD)	14	13	6
198/A	(PD)	3	3	—
272	(PD)	5	4	2
291	(PD)	9	7	4
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		81	72	35

*The figures for these routes include a number of additional buses allocated to garages following negotiations with trade unions and these were initially operated as supplementary schedules.



Difficulties at the Chislehurst (War Memorial) stand delayed the conversion of the 161 to MD by about nine months. The slip road, where MD101 is seen, was widened slightly to enable buses to pass one another. Note particularly the non-standard 'push-out' upper deck windows. *Colin Fradd*



Upon the opening of the new Plumstead garage, two new routes appeared. MD99 is seen on the 198A – a Saturday variant of the 198, while MD72 works the new 291 – a replacement for the former 192. *Colin Fradd*



During September 1982 new Leyland Titans 557, 568-581 were allocated to Plumstead but none entered passenger service until 22nd November when they began replacing MDs on routes 177/178. Unlike most garages, such as Sidcup, where new Titans infiltrated onto all former DMS routes, Plumstead's conversions tended to be on a route by route basis. By the end of the year most omo duties were covered by Titans but crew routes 122, 161 and 180 remained all MD. The decision to replace Sidcup's DMSs with Titans simultaneously no doubt slowed down the conversion process at Plumstead, giving the MDs a slight reprieve.

January 1983 saw the first workings of Titans on the 161 and 180 but they rarely strayed on to the 122. On 29th January the 122 timetable was revised so that the service operated in overlapping sections on Mondays to Saturdays in order to improve reliability, and Titans began to appear regularly at this stage. The special supplementary service on this route was then incorporated into the main schedule, with no change in the overall vehicle requirement.

Meanwhile a number of MD sales had taken place, mostly to independent operators, e.g. Whippet Coaches of Fenstanton, Cambridgeshire, whilst Reading Transport with 33 of its own Metropolitans already in stock, announced its intention to purchase 21 to replace some of their Bristol VRTs. It is interesting to reflect upon the varying attitudes of provincial operators who also bought Metropolitans. Tyne & Wear PTE, now the largest single operator with 140 in stock, has been disposing of more recent Leyland Atlanteans and rebuilding its dual doored Metropolitans to single door configuration for further service; it has also two new Scania BR112DH double-deckers with Alexander bodywork. Newport Borough Transport after buying five ex-LT MSs and several first hand examples is now buying new generation Scania products, both double and single-deck. By contrast Merseyside PTE has sold some of its earlier examples to Hull, and Strathclyde PTE has disposed of its entire fleet of forty. Ironically the National Bus Company's experimental batch of five in the Maidstone & District fleet have been replaced by ex-LT DMSs! It seems you either love 'em or hate 'em!

MD82, now working as a courtesy coach for Trafalgar Tours, is frequently seen around central London. It carries a mainly white livery with a broad blue stripe, edged in orange, and was caught here at the Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch. *Colin Fradd*





Whippet Coaches of Fenstanton, Cambridgeshire, now have fourteen MDs. At the time this photo was taken in January 1983 only a few had received their dark blue and cream livery, the others running in LT red complete with 'PM' codes! MD97 heads the line-up here at Ramsey Schools.
Ramon Hefford

By early April 1983 the situation on the 122 was quite the reverse of the position in January. Sufficient Titans had been delivered by the 7th to enable the delicensing of the last three Metropolitans, MDs 10, 12 and 71. It seemed the end of the road had arrived for the class and they would simply disappear from the fleet without ceremony. That was not to be so. On 23rd April route 122 was converted to omo. Because of the increased running time allowances due to omo it was necessary to increase the vehicle requirement by five to maintain the same frequencies. Although in theory Plumstead had sufficient Titans to cover the additional workings, a number were temporarily defective and it was found necessary to re-instate MDs 77 and 127 from 25th April. These appeared on crew operated services 161 and 180 for the next two months. It eventually became known that the passenger journey by an MD would be on route 122 during the evening of Friday 24th June, operating a supplementary return journey between Plumstead garage and Crystal Palace. Arranged as part of LT's 50th anniversary celebrations, one day before the open day at Plumstead garage, MD127 was driven by Dr. David Quarmbly, Managing Director London Buses. A special intermediate destination blind was fitted and there were regular photographic stops for enthusiasts, which Dr. Quarmbly explained to regular passengers over the rarely used public address system. At 22.15 hours MD127 arrived back at Plumstead garage for the last time in service, save for a special enthusiasts tour the following day. MD77, the other late survivor, suffered a mechanical failure earlier in the 'last' week and had to stay in the garage during the open day.

So the end finally came. No more would the characteristic surge of the MD's beefy Scania engine race other buses away from traffic lights, glide almost silently across Blackheath, or squeak to a halt negotiating the narrow back-streets of Plumstead. Having once lived in a road served by DMSs (including the supposedly quieter B20 type) and Metropolitans, I can certainly vouch for their 'quiet bus' status although it was a pity they couldn't always brake so unobtrusively. Nevertheless they will probably be remembered with slightly more affection than most other post-Routemaster types. It is debatable whether they would have been purchased at all if DMS performance had been better, but the Metropolitans were certainly not trouble free. However the remarkable improvement in their condition and apparent reliability when transferred out of Peckham and New Cross must have been more than a coincidence. At the moment the possibility of further Scania vehicles entering the LT fleet looks remote. Orders have recently been announced for trials with Leyland Olympians, Dennis Dominators, Volvo Ailsas and Metrobus Mk 2s, but not Scania BR112DHs. Only a few years ago the Volvo Ailsa was dismissed as being unsuitable for LT and it could be that if recent deliveries of Scania's to other operators are successful London may reconsider. Only time will tell.

In conclusion I would like to thank all those who helped me in the preparation of this article, especially Colin Fradd whose assistance was invaluable.



Left Enterprise & Silver Dawn of Waddington, Lincs have purchased MD113 for use on stage work. It is seen at their depot in their chocolate and cream livery. *Ramon Hefford*



Below Another Lincolnshire firm, R. Kime & Co. of Folkingham, have acquired MD102 and repainted it in a green and cream livery. Used on school work it is seen here at Sleaford one morning in July 1983. *Ramon Hefford*



Nearer to home, Reading Transport now have 21 ex-LT MDs to complement their own fleet of Metropolitans and replace their early Bristol VRs. MD69 in its smart maroon and white livery is seen leaving Reading Station in October 1983. Will they ever see Trafalgar Square again on the X1?
Ramon Hefford

Appendix—The MD Class (continued)

No.	Delivered	Main allocations	Final delicensing	Initial disposal	No.	Delivered	Main allocations	Final delicensing	Initial disposal
1*	12/75	1/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	a	26	4/76	5/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w
2*	1/76	1/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 5/80 (PM) 10/81 (PD)			27*	3/76	3/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	b
3*	12/75	3/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	1/83	b	28*	3/76	3/76 (PM)	12/82	c
4*	1/76	2/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	wv	29	3/76	4/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	i
5*	2/76	2/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	b	30	3/76	4/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c
6*	2/76	2/76 (PM)	12/82	w	31	3/76	4/76 (PM) 1/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	7/82	f
7*	1/76	2/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	32*	4/76	4/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c
8	2/76	2/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 5/80 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	3/83	b	33	3/76	4/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	c
9*	1/76	1/76 (PM) 2/80 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	b	34	4/76	5/76 (PM)	12/82	c
10	2/76	2/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	wv	35	4/76	4/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c
11*	2/76	3/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	4/83	w	36	4/76	5/76 (PM)	12/82	c
12*	2/76	3/76 (PM) 3/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	4/83	b	37	4/76	4/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w
13*	2/76	3/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	1/83	w	38	4/76	4/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	1/83	h
14*	2/76	3/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	4/83	w	39	4/76	4/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	we
15	2/76	3/76 (PM)	9/82	w	40	4/76	6/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	c
16*	2/76	3/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	41	4/76	4/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	1/83	w
17	2/76	3/76 (PM)	1/80	we	42	4/76	5/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c
18*	2/76	3/76 (PM) 11/82 (PD)	9/82	w	43	4/76	5/76 (PM)	12/82	w
19*	3/76	3/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	7/82	e	44	4/76	5/76 (PM)	12/82	c
20	3/76	3/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	wv	45	4/76	5/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	12/82	b
21*	3/76	3/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	b	46*	4/76	5/76 (PM) 9/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	11/82	b
22*	3/76	3/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	w	47	5/76	5/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	w
23	3/76	3/76 (PM)	3/83	g	48	5/76	5/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	wv
24*	3/76	3/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c	49	5/76	5/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	2/83	c
25	3/76	4/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	6/79	e	50	5/76	6/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	1/83	b
			9/82	d	51	5/76	6/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	11/82	w
			12/82	c	52	6/76	8/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	c

Appendix—The MD Class

No.	Delivered	Main allocations	Final delicensing	Initial disposal	No.	Delivered	Main allocations	Final delicensing	Initial disposal
53	5/76	6/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c	110	9/76	10/76 (PM)	1/83	d
54	5/76	5/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	111	10/76	11/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w
55	5/76	5/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c	112	10/76	11/76 (PM) 9/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c
56	5/76	6/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	w	113	10/76	11/76 (PM) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	k
57	5/76	6/76 (PM) 11/81 (PD)	12/82	b	114	10/76	10/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	11/82	c
58	6/76	8/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	c	115	10/76	11/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	b
59	6/76	8/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	3/83	w	116	10/76	11/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	11/82	w
60	6/76	8/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	117	10/76	1/77 (NX)	7/82	e
61	7/76	9/76 (PM)	12/82	w	118	10/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	w
62	6/76	8/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c	119	10/76	11/76 (NX)	6/79	e
63	6/76	8/76 (PM) 10/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	120	10/76	11/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	w
64	7/76	8/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	121	10/76	11/76 (NX)	7/82	e
65	7/76	8/76 (PM)	11/81	f	122	10/76	11/76 (NX)	7/80	e
66	6/76	8/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	9/82	w	123	10/76	1/77 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	1/83	w
67	6/76	8/76 (PM) 2/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	w	124	10/76	11/76 (NX) 8/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	d
68	7/76	8/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	d	125	10/76	11/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	e
69	6/76	8/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	12/82	b	126	10/76	11/76 (NX)	1/83	we
70	7/76	9/76 (PM)	12/82	c	127	11/76	11/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	6/83	w
71	7/76	8/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	4/83	d	128	11/76	11/76 (NX)	3/80	e
72	6/76	8/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	b	129	11/76	11/76 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c
73	8/76	9/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	2/83	w	130	11/76	1/77 (NX)	5/80	w
74	7/76	9/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c	131	11/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	c
75	8/76	9/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	1/83	c	132	11/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c
76	8/76	9/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	c	133	11/76	1/77 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c
77	8/76	9/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	6/83	w	134	11/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c
78	8/76	9/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	wv	135	11/76	1/77 (NX) 9/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	d
79	8/76	9/76 (PM)	12/82	c	136*	11/76	1/77 (NX) 9/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	10/82	we
80	8/76	9/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	wv	137	11/76	1/77 (NX) 9/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	e
81	8/76	9/76 (PM)	1/80	e	138	11/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	w
82	8/76	9/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	12/82	m	139	11/76	1/77 (NX)	7/79	e
83	8/76	8/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	140	11/76	1/77 (NX) 9/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w
84	8/76	9/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	12/82	w	141*	11/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	we
85	8/76	9/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	d	142	11/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	1/83	we
86	8/76	10/76 (PM)	7/82	f	143	11/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	1/82	f
87	9/76	10/76 (PM) 1/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c	144	12/76	12/76 (NX) 9/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	w
88	8/76	10/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c	145	11/76	12/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	w
89	9/76	10/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	2/83	w	146	11/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c
90	8/76	10/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	w	147	11/76	12/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	c
91	9/76	10/76 (PM)	12/82	d	148	11/76	12/76 (NX)	3/80	e
92	9/76	10/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	c	149	12/76	12/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	c
93	9/76	10/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	3/83	b	150	12/76	12/76 (NX)	7/79	e
94	9/76	10/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	151	12/76	12/76 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	d
95	9/76	10/76 (PM)	12/82	d	152	12/76	1/77 (NX) 1/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	b
96	9/76	10/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	1/83	w	153	12/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c
97	9/76	10/76 (PM)	12/82	d	154	12/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 5/81 (AM)		
98	9/76	11/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	1/83	w			10/81 (PD)	3/83	b
99	9/76	10/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	b	155	12/76	1/77 (NX) 8/81 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	b
100	9/76	11/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	b	156	1/77	1/77 (NX)	3/81	we
101	9/76	11/76 (PM) 11/81 (PD)	1/83	c	157	12/76	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	c
102	9/76	12/76 (PM)	11/82	j	158	1/77	1/77 (NX) 12/81 (PD)	1/83	e
103	10/76	11/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w	159	12/76	1/77 (NX) 9/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	9/82	c
104	10/76	11/76 (PM)	1/80	e	160	1/77	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	1/83	d
105	9/76	10/76 (PM) 10/81 (PD)	2/83	b	161	1/77	1/77 (NX) 3/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w
106	10/76	10/76 (PM)	10/82	d	162	2/77	2/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w
107	10/76	11/76 (PM) 9/82 (PD)	3/83	c	163	1/77	1/77 (NX)	6/79	e
108	10/76	11/76 (PM) 4/80 (AM) 10/81 (PD)	3/83	c	164	1/77	1/77 (NX) 2/81 (AW) 10/81 (PD)	12/82	w
109	10/76	11/76 (PM)	10/82	d					

*Repainted into all-red livery.

Initial Disposals

- a —E. Brakell, Cheam, Surrey.
- b —Reading Transport, Reading, Berks.
- c —C.F. Booth & Sons, Rotherham, South Yorks.
- d —Whippet Coaches, Fenstanton, Cambs.
- e —Wombwell Diesels, South Yorkshire.
- f —Ensignbus, Purfleet, Essex.
- g —Burton Coaches, Brixham, Devon.
- h —B. Burns Plant Hire, Osterley, Middlesex.

- i —De Dubbeldekkers, VZW, Antwerp, Belgium.
- j —R. Kime & Co., Fellingham, Lincs.
- k —Enterprise & Silver Dawn, Waddington, Lincs.
- l —First Unit Caterers, Chertsey, Surrey.
- m —Kirby Group, High Wycombe, Bucks.
- w —Withdrawn awaiting disposal at AEC, Southall, Middlesex.
- we —Withdrawn awaiting disposal at Ensignbus, Purfleet, Essex.
- wv —Withdrawn awaiting disposal at Turnham Green garage.

The Doctor's Little Blue Bus

22 years of Thames Weald bus services

by Chris Johnson



This Austin 12-seater, 44PKP, was the first proper bus used by Thames Weald. It was hired from Trailways Travel Services of Longfield (long since defunct). This photograph appeared in the local newspaper with the headline "A new back lanes bus service".
Dartford Chronicle

Thames Weald is a name coined to designate the high woodland of the North Downs beyond the Valley of the River Darenth. You will not find it on any map, but it has a population of some thousands spread over a score of hamlets. Its settlements go back to Roman times and its churches are tenth century.

Thames Weald Ltd., bus company, is the successor to the Thames Weald travel society founded in 1961. Mr Cranley Onslow, a Kent councillor, who later became MP for Woking and Minister for War in the Falklands Islands, wanted to fill a gap left by the withdrawal of the London Transport 492 between West Kingsdown and Gravesend. A meeting was called to decide a plan of action. Dr. Herbert Heffernan, a psychiatrist at Darenth Park Hospital, Dartford, produced a plan for a co-operative society to run the bus service along with Cranley Onslow and the Rev. Graham Thomas, vicar of Darenth. The membership grew to 60 with the regular Thursday journeys picking up 12 members through Fawkham to Gravesend and 15 through Knatts Valley to Sevenoaks. Members paid a monthly subscription of six shillings which was handed to area representatives who were situated every 1½ miles. The members were then eligible for unlimited free travel on any of the Society's services. It was hoped that this system would not have needed a licence, but after only three months the law caught up with them and a temporary licence was granted for an eight week trial period beginning 5th October 1961. The first timetable was for a non-PSV car on Thursdays and Fridays, a coach on the first and third Thursdays of each month between Fawkham and Gravesend and a minibus on the second, fourth and fifth Thursdays between Sevenoaks and Gravesend. Commencing 2nd November the coach was withdrawn and the minibus provided throughout every Thursday. When the full licence was granted from 7th December 1961 the service was increased to every Tuesday and Thursday, with Mondays, Tuesday, Thursdays and Fridays added from 4th January 1962. Wednesdays were not included until late 1962. Saturday services were not run due to London Transport running its 452 from West Kingsdown through Fawkham to Dartford, but West Kingsdown to Sevenoaks was added from 4th January 1964 along with Romney Street and Hever Road, West Kingsdown.



The first bus owned by Thames Weald was a Commer, 509TKO, seen here in Gravesend on 10th May 1963. Although Dr Hefferman thought this vehicle was unsuitable, it still lasted seven years.
L.W. Rowe

The first vehicle to be used was the Darenth Park Hospital bench-seat Thames but a larger PSV vehicle was soon needed. A 12-seat Austin J2VA, 44 PKP, was hired from Trailways Travel Services of Longfield (long since defunct) which had a route indicator board stuck into the front ventilating grille. The first vehicle owned by Thames Weald was 509 TKO, a Commer minibus bought in 1962, which had an indicator blind fitted bearing many names that were never served, such as Maidstone, Ferryfield Airport and Cuckmere Avenue. The second vehicle was a rare Trojan Minicoach, TPN 644, with thirteen-seat Trojan bodywork, but this only lasted just over a year. It was replaced by EMH 822B, a Bedford J2 with Plaxton bodywork that featured a large route indicator. The Bedford VAS that followed, HMK 140B, also had a 29-seat Plaxton body and large route indicator. It lasted a full sixteen years and was the 'Flagship' of the fleet. A few weeks after HMK 140B was delivered there was a strike by Southend busmen and it was sent to help out on a route along the seafront. Since the service was run by the social services department it had no licence and no fares could be charged. Passengers still left money for their journeys making handsome tips for the drivers.

A lateral expansion took place from 31st May 1964 with a route from Southfleet to Meopham on Sundays via New Barn, Longfield, Hartley Court, and Longfield Hill. The purpose of this service was to restore the Sunday travel facilities lost when London Transport withdrew their workings on the 489A and 490. Neither route justified continuance on a Sunday but Thames Weald hoped that by combining the two routes so that one minibus could cover it, operation would be reasonably economical. The route connected with LT's 489 at Southfleet and M&D's 122 at Meopham and lasted until Autumn 1966.



The Bedford J2, EMH822B, is seen in Market Street, Dartford. It was sold after four years for further service with Williams of Varteg.
J. G. S. Smith

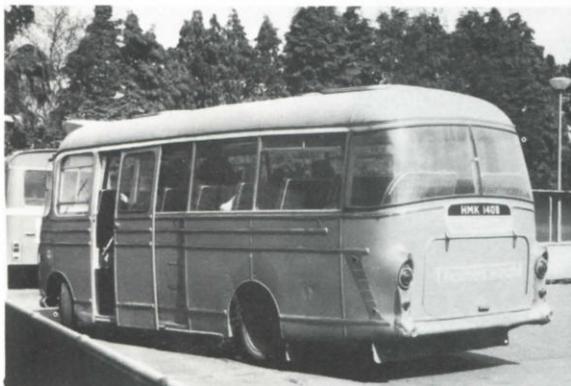


Ex-London Transport GS23, an ECW-bodied Guy Special, is caught here on stand at Gravesend. It originally had a route indicator which showed 'Gravesend & Sevenoaks' on one side of a piece of cardboard, and the bus strike routes on the other side. The glass was soon painted over.
L. W. Rowe



Another Bedford, HMK140B, is seen here at Blackheath Station on part of LT's route 89 which was operated during the 1966 overtime ban. Note the stickers on the bus stop proclaiming 'Service Suspended'.
J. G. S. Smith

Below left In this shot taken at Sevenoaks Bus Station, the rear view of the Embassy style body is shown along with the lack of handrails on the seat backs. *G. Sanders* **Below right** Another view taken in Sevenoaks, this time of Ford Transit TKL201H. After ten years service it was sold to CC Taxis of St Leonards who used parts of it to convert an ambulance into a PSV. *G. Sanders*



Early in 1966 staff shortages with London Transport caused considerable reductions in services and protests at these cuts (made with new schedules) resulted in crews refusing to do overtime. Since overtime was relied upon to keep up the schedules, the difficulty resulted in London Transport withdrawing 28 routes from 30th January. Private operators attempted to cover sections not otherwise served, and Thames Weald took over two sections of the 89. They started 19th February with Blackfen to Bexley and Welling to Blackheath, using two buses with a dead section between Blackfen and Welling. The two Bedford coaches opened the service but the Traffic Commissioner refused to allow EMH 822B to be used since passengers had to open the door for themselves. A recently acquired ex-London Transport GS, MXX 323, was used with HMK 140B instead. Both services were subject to boarding restrictions and two information leaflets were produced, of which over 1,000 were sold at 6d each. The familiar red buses returned to the 89 from Sunday 27th February 1966.

When the Dartford Tunnel was opened under the Thames between Dartford and Purfleet in 1963 London Transport provided two double-deck services, the 300 from Dartford to Grays and Green Line 722, which was extended from London-Romford-Upminster on to Dartford. Passengers were not forthcoming and after only one year the Green Line was cut back to Upminster and the 300 was re-numbered 399 and allocated small one-man GS buses. The 399 was withdrawn from 12th May 1967 leaving the Tunnel unserved by public transport.

Dartford Council sought a replacement and Eastern National took on a Grays to Dartford extension of its 402 from Southend three times a day. Thames Weald took over the Romford service, beating Super Coaches of Upminster (long since defunct). With the impressive name of Tunnel Express, Thames Weald began a Green Line type service on 19th August 1967 between Sevenoaks, Otford, Knatts Valley, Farningham, Horton Kirby, South Darenth, Dartford, Dartford Tunnel, Aveley, Hornchurch and Romford. This 31 mile route with a journey time of 1¾ hours ran once every two hours throughout. It kept away from London Transport routes as much as possible so as not to incur boarding restrictions, but some were applied—to the Romford to Hacton and Row Down Hill (Otford) to Sevenoaks sections. The original Gravesend route became a feeder service connecting at Knatts Valley.

The route out of Dartford altered in June 1969 due to the re-building of the A2 main road to almost motorway standards. The closure of Darenth Road to through traffic diverted the Tunnel Express service via Watling Street, Gore Road, Green Street, Green Road and Lanes End to South Darenth. This had the advantage that the service now passed two of the Dartford Hospitals, at one of which Dr. Heffernan worked.

The original terminus in Romford was in Church Lane but due to the building of a shopping precinct a new terminus in Mercury Gardens had to be used from 31st May 1970.

When London Transport withdrew the 452 between West Kingsdown and Dartford on 25th May 1971, Thames Weald diverted the Tunnel Express via West Kingsdown from 10th July. In addition it was extended from Sevenoaks to Riverhead, Ide Hill, Four Elms, Edenbridge, Puttenden Manor, Lingfield, Smallfields, Horley, Gatwick Airport and Crawley to make 'The Four Counties Route'. It was one of the longest stage carriage routes in south east England with a length of 65½ miles, a journey time of 2 hours 55 minutes, a through fare of 80p and an average speed of 27 miles per hour.

During 1971 the fleet was at its largest—six: HMK 140B the 29-seat Bedford VAS, OVR 798H a 22-seat Mercedes, TKL 201H a 16-seat Ford Transit, and three 12-seat Ford Transits, MNC 913G, LNF 767G, BJH 102F. The Bedford HMK 140B was usually used on the Romford to Dartford section, which has always been the busiest section, and its indicator blind never carried any information for the Crawley extension. A change of buses was required in Dartford, and the 12-seater Transits were usually found on the Crawley route; four vehicles were required for the service.

A new edition of the Thames Weald Traveller, an irregular newsletter of a regular service, was produced for the start of the Four Counties Route with timetables, a map, farechart, and news comments. One was about the livery, described as Cornflower Blue and Corn Gold "trying to strike a pleasantly rural note amid the cement dust" at Northfleet. Another comment about the Fawkham Valley route was that it was long overdue to be pensioned off as it was under used, but survived on a regular 2-hourly basis as a branch to feed the Four Counties route. This is strange as it still ran until 1982—although only twice a week. An Edenbridge local newspaper reporter commented on the pink paper used for the Thames Weald Traveller, and the headline of the "Edenbridge Courier" stated 'The Pink Minibuses Roll In'.

During 1971 the postal workers went on strike for many weeks. Some entrepreneurs tried to provide a replacement service and this included Thames Weald with its important cross-river route. A newsletter dated 11th February 1971 detailed the costs, agents and even European mail services. Thames Weald provided its own stamps in denominations 5p, 10p, 15p, 20p, 25p and 30p. To post a letter, it said, just stop the bus . . .

The Thames Weald Traveller No.12A dated 28th February 1974 referred to the three great 'M' shortages—men, money and machines, also passengers! "Given more drivers like the ones you have come to appreciate and trust, we might even take you to Maplin Sands one day!" As things were in the real world they had to suspend the services to Gatwick Airport and Crawley "for the present". It was due to their inability to control the movements



The Mercedes, OVR798H, is seen at West Kingsdown on 30th June 1978. The seats on the offside faced inwards to accommodate more passengers. Dr Hefferman said that this was the worst of all the buses owned. *G. Sanders*



The Bedford SB, 777UMP, was hired from Mildmay Motors of Shoreham. It is seen in Aveley High Street on 6th October 1979 and is believed to be the last petrol-engined large PSV in the south-east traffic area. *Derek Perssons*

of the drivers who were based at the remote end of the route.

From a journey made during 1972 from Gravesend to Gatwick Airport a typical view of the service can be gained. A change of bus was made at Knatts Valley from one minibus to another, and nearby the bus stopped, blocking the narrow lane. The driver helped an elderly passenger over a stile and into a field and carried her shopping bag out of sight over the hill. In Sevenoaks an American boarded, and he could not understand the price on the ticket, as it was not in decimal currency—nearly a year after decimalisation day! The driver, who was an ex-Maidstone & District man, stopped outside his house for tea, and later took on petrol during the journey—unusual for British buses.

The new timetable dated 8th January 1974 showed a basic two-hourly service from Romford to Sevenoaks with the Fawkham Valley service connecting at West Kingsdown. The Sunday journeys, which had been run since the Tunnel Express started, were withdrawn. Three buses were then needed for the service.

This was a period when I travelled on the bus frequently from Dartford to Romford. There were many amusing situations like when the clutch broke on HMK 140B and the bus was stuck in fourth gear. After much protest from the clutch and the driver we finally reached Dartford, where the bus was withdrawn from service. The driver blamed the Guv'ner for riding the clutch.

ENR539C, a Plaxton bodied Bedford VAS, is seen at Thames Weald House, West Kingsdown. This was the third second-hand vehicle owned and caused much trouble with the vehicle examiner. *G. Sanders*

One of the current vehicles, JKR238V, is seen in a picturesque setting at Otford. There are boarding restrictions between Row Down, Otford and Sevenoaks as well as between Hacton Lane, Hornchurch and Romford. *G. Sanders*



Another time it was very foggy and it thickened as we got out into the countryside. At the Dartford Tunnel roundabout I got out to guide the bus out, armed with a bicycle lamp! Saturday journeys often had—and still do have—good loadings, especially just before Christmas. At times there were over forty intending passengers for one trip—I will not divulge how many were left behind!

In 1976 one of the many hand written notices on the buses asked for lodgings to be found for one of the regular drivers. Otherwise the service would be severely restricted. Lodgings were not found, and the driver had to leave. From 10th July 1976 the services were reduced to:

Romford to Dartford (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday)
 West Kingsdown to Sevenoaks (Weekday rush hours)
 Sevenoaks to Gravesend (Tuesday and Saturday)
 Sevenoaks to Dartford (Thursday)

At this time there were three buses left: HMK 140B, OVR 798H and TKL 201H. HMK 140B had many periods out of service, but was repaired again and again. During the many train strikes of this period Thames Weald ran on hire to Coutts Bank, using . . . HMK 140B.

The licence for the route to Crawley was finally surrendered in March 1978 after being temporarily withdrawn in January 1974. From August 1977 the Dartford route was diverted away from Horton Kirby to run via Longfield and fast to Dartford. During early 1978 Fage (Viking Coaches) ran a service between West Kingsdown and Swanley via Knatts Valley and Farningham along roads previously covered by Thames Weald. They commenced on 1st April 1978 but there were no trace left by mid-May. Following the withdrawal of the London Country 401 between Eynsford and Sevenoaks, Thames Weald applied for a replacement service and this was granted by June 1978 but it was never operated.

Early in 1979 Thames Weald were short of vehicles and hired one of two old Bedford coaches from Digby (Mildmay Motors). These were WNU 243F, a 52-seat VAL, and 777 UMP, a 41-seat SB; both much larger than any of Thames Weald's own vehicles. Digby operated mostly on the Saturday Dartford to Romford service with Thames Weald's TKL 201H on the other days. The hiring was terminated in July due to financial disagreements and so the Saturday Gravesend service had to cease.

Later in 1979, Dr. Heffernan asked Kent County Council if it would subsidise his services. The result was astonishing in that Kent County Council asked another operator to take over Thames Weald's services. Therefore London Country applied for the Dartford to Romford service which it would have numbered 482 from Dartford garage running every weekday. Digby also applied for this service but after a Traffic Commissioner's court hearing Thames Weald kept all its services, but without the subsidy.

In mid-1980 another Bedford VAS was bought from Thamesmead Coaches of Plumstead. Although this coach had a valid Certificate of Fitness when bought, the local vehicle examiner refused to allow it to run when he saw it only three months later due to its many faults. This brought Thames Weald into the Traffic Court once more. The vehicle examiner accused Dr. Heffernan of bad maintenance—which he contracted out to a local garage who claimed to specialise in HGVs. The Commissioners refused to allow the old Bedford, but did allow the newly acquired Dodge to run the service. The chairman also commented on the number of passengers who went along to support and also give evidence, which was unusual. During the lunch break Dr. Heffernan and his supporters got stuck in the court building lift. Due to bad maintenance?

The Dodge JKR 238V was bought from Rootes of Maidstone who used it as a demonstrator and they offered a maintenance contract which won the favour of the vehicle examiner, who wished it to be looked at once a month for preventive maintenance, and this Dr. Heffernan has done. The Bedford ENR 539C was given in part exchange for Rootes' other demonstrator, PKR 399W, a Dodge S50 with 27 coach seats, which has been very popular. These two Dodges are the present fleet strength.

From 3rd June 1982 there was a complete recast of services. Owing to the absence of any transport provision by the Kent County Council for pupils of private schools, of which there are nine in the Sevenoaks area, the mostly commuter journeys were retimed and rerouted via five schools in a loop around Knowle Park to Godden Green. In the afternoon an extra journey was needed. The bus then continued to Romford every day with the terminal changed to a loop from Hornchurch via Romford and Gidea Park back to Hornchurch. This gave the advantage that passengers could board directly from the shopping centre instead of lugging their shopping through the subways. Another advantage was that the heavy traffic was passed only in one direction. The routing out of Dartford was also changed. Northbound from Longfield was by Trolling Down Hill, next to Downs School, to Market Street. Southbound changed to Lowfield Street, Hawley Road and Darenth Hill. This saved 1½ miles and five minutes in the southbound direction.

For the start of the revised services another edition of the 'Thames Weald Traveller' was produced, the first for many years. Besides the timetable, map and farechart there was a description of the changes and many comments. Dr. Heffernan tries to add a little humour to his production such as one comment about 'your motoring friends'.



The offside view of JKR 238V at Sevenoaks shows the route description above the windows. The livery is mainly white with the blue band.
Ramon Hefford



The other current vehicle, also a Dodge, PKR399W, is seen at Bat & Ball, Sevenoaks on 30th June 1982. This is Dr Hefferman's favourite bus and here he is seen driving.
G. Sanders

Please ask them not to flash their headlights at the driver. He has no way of telling whether they are saying 'Your radiator is leaking'. 'The cops are round the corner' or 'Wotcher, old cock, top of the morning to you'. Also there was advertised an Inaugural Excursion to mark the opening of the Godden Green service. The mid-day journey to Sevenoaks was to be extended around Knowle Park to Godden Green at a special rate of £1.00 from anywhere on the route, but nobody took the opportunity. Special rates for more than one traveller together were also introduced for Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, the new Romford days.

Also from 3rd June 1982 the Gravesend route was discontinued. This original route was down to two journeys a week and could not rely on more than three passengers unless the weather was favourable. Dr. Heffernan offered to provide an excursion there on request from any group of 8 or more and this offer was taken up in the pre-Christmas rush, with a full 27-passenger load, three times.

One interesting comment in that 'Thames Weald Traveller' was on the general suitability of the vehicles that had been put into service over the previous two decades, thus, in order of merit:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Dodge S50 27-seater | 5. Guy Special 26-seater | 8. Trojan 13-seater |
| 2. Bedford VAS 29-seater | 6. Transit 12-seater | 9. Commer 12-seater |
| 3. Dodge RB56 23-seater | 7. Bedford J2 20-seater | 10. Mercedes 22-seater |
| 4. Transit 16-seater | | |

Some comments on the reason for this order are that the Top Favourite Dodge has a five-speed gearbox, electric door and coach seats. Although it is not a proper coach it is a speedy bus and popular with the passengers. The Bedford VAS, which was a proper coach, lasted so long. It had a driver-operated door using a lever. The 16-seater Transit is more favoured due to being a high body, rather than the 12-seater's low body which makes people have to bend down to get in. The Guy Special was a proper bus with all that was needed but was rather noisy and old. The Bedford J2 had a similar body to the much liked VAS but its 4-cylinder engine was rather noisy and, as Dr. Heffernan said, 'It shook the bus to pieces'. The same was said about the Trojan. The Commer had a rear entrance that was most unsuitable. The most disliked vehicle was the Mercedes which had a body more like an ambulance with cheap uncomfortable seats, some facing sideways, and a door that fell off! The stairwell gave way and was a dangerous half step.

The new Monday service did not last long, being withdrawn, except for school and commuter journeys, from Monday 12th July. This date was chosen so that Dr. Heffernan could go on holiday. Tuesday afternoon journeys have also been withdrawn from Tuesday 14th December 1982.

New excursions started in early 1983 on Tuesdays serving Gravesend, Bromley, Maidstone and Oxford Circus. They each run about monthly but some Tuesday excursions have been missed due to holidays, mostly on the Oxford Circus run.

The services just about pay their way with the Romford to Aveley market day service loading to about 80 passengers a day. Romford to Dartford passengers number about 15 a day. Dartford to West Kingsdown is loaded to about 12 with East Hill to Sevenoaks shopping journeys also about 12. The morning school and commuter journey loads to a full 27 but the afternoon school journey is difficult to time since different schools finish at different times on different days! These numbers may not seem very much but are about normal for country bus services which only survive with school contracts.

When the Thames Weald Travel Society started Dr. Heffernan made some tickets by cutting squares of card and writing the fare on them in pen! Later company tickets were type-written with company's seal stamp. Proper Bell Punch tickets were soon provided and their successor Control System now provide the tickets. The first style were geographical tickets with the names of the stages along the edge, punched by a Bell Punch machine. Style number two had letters for the stages with the company name on the reverse, still punched. Style number three had the company name on the front and on the reverse 'Tunnel Express'—From the Weald of Kent to the Weald of Essex'. Style number four were standard stock Bell Punch tickets with the 'Tunnel Express' etc. on the reverse. Style number five is similar to style number three with the company name on the front and 'Tunnel Express', etc on the reverse. The use of Bell punch machines was discontinued many years ago and the machines sold to the writer and his friends.

To celebrate 21 years of operation on 2nd October 1982 Thames Weald had its first conductor service provided by ticket enthusiast Robert Wingrove. On the first day he used Willebrew style tickets with the proper cutter. On other occasions on Saturdays he and myself have used Setright Speed, Insert Setright, TIM, Almex, Bellgraphic as well as the normal Punch tickets. The Saturday service can be very busy and the conductor service is liked by the passengers. One lady commented "We're posh now—we have a conductor!"

Thames Weald is the typical idea of a village operator with friendly drivers knowing all the regular passengers and helping them with their journeys from their remote homes to school, work or shopping. Dr. Heffernan says that he helps the elderly who feel they could use a bus whose driver understands their needs—he is past retiring age himself! Dr. Heffernan thinks of Thames Weald as a social service and his passengers are always grateful—long may he continue.

Thames weald

L I M I T E D

Director: H. N. Heffernan, M.A.

West Kingsdown 2 2 4 4
(047 485)



West Kingsdown,

Sevenoaks,

Kent TN15 6AX

Autumn 1983

TUNNEL EXPRESS

Sevenoaks-Romford

via Otford, West Kingsdown, Longfield, Dartford, Aveley and Hornchurch

	Mondays		Tuesdays		Thursdays		Weds & Fris		Saturdays	
	SD	0840s	SD	0840s	SD	0840s	SD	0840	SD	0840
Godden Green Sevenoaks Prep School	1600	1600	1600	1600	1600	1600	1600	1600	1600	1600
Walthamstow Hall	1607	1607	1607	1607	1607	1607	1607	1607	1607	1607
Sevenoaks Bus Station	1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740	0910 1410 1610 1740
St Johns Hill Co-Op Stores	1744	0914 1414	0914 1414	0914 1414	0914 1414	0914 1414	0914 1414	0914 1414	0914 1414	0914 1414
Bradbourne Park St. Helens	1614	1614	1614	1614	1614	1614	1614	1614	1614	1614
Otford opp Station	1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750	0920 1420 1620 1750
East Hill Ashen Grove	R 1800	0930 1430 R 1800								
Five Ways	R 1804	0934 1434 R 1804								
Woodlands Golf Club	1837 1807	0937 1437 1807	0937 1437 1807	0937 1437 1807	0937 1437 1807	0937 1437 1807	0937 1437 1807	0937 1437 1807	0937 1437 1807	0937 1437 1807
Knatts Valley Knatt Lane	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
West Kingsdown Hever Road	R	0945	0945	0945	0945	0945	0945	0945	0945	0945
West Kingsdown Village Hall	SD 1643 1813	SD 0948 1443 1643 1813								
Thames Weald	0730 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815	0730 0950 1445 1645 1815
Fawkham Green	0732 1647	0732 0952 1647	0732 0952 1647	0732 0952 1647	0732 0952 1647	0732 0952 1647	0732 0952 1647	0732 0952 1647	0732 0952 1647	0732 0952 1647
Longfield Station Crouch Oid	0740 1655	0740 1000 1655	0740 1000 1655	0740 1000 1655	0740 1000 1655	0740 1000 1655	0740 1000 1655	0740 1000 1655	0740 1000 1655	0740 1000 1655
Darenth Watchgate Shelter	1006	1006	1006	1006	1006	1006	1006	1006	1006	1006
Hablon Hospital Visitors	1008	1008	1008	1008	1008	1008	1008	1008	1008	1008
Dartford Market Street/Mandarin Restaurant	1015	1015	1015	1015	1015	1015	1015	1015	1015	1015
Dartford Station Shelter F	1018	1018	1018	1018	1018	1018	1018	1018	1018	1018
The Brent Tunnel Approach	1023	1023	1023	1023	1023	1023	1023	1023	1023	1023
West Thurrock Tunnel Approach	1028	1028	1028	1028	1028	1028	1028	1028	1028	1028
Aveley Hill Road Parade	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100
Aveley High Street/Medion Bank	1033	1033	1033	1033	1033	1033	1033	1033	1033	1033
Kenningtons opp Post Office	1037	1037	1037	1037	1037	1037	1037	1037	1037	1037
Uppminster Road Bus Bay	1046	1046	1046	1046	1046	1046	1046	1046	1046	1046
Hornchurch White Hart	1047	1047	1047	1047	1047	1047	1047	1047	1047	1047
Hornchurch Bus Garage	1050	1050	1050	1050	1050	1050	1050	1050	1050	1050
Romford Corner South Street	1052	1052	1052	1052	1052	1052	1052	1052	1052	1052
Romford Station Shelter F	1055	1055	1055	1055	1055	1055	1055	1055	1055	1055
Romford Shopping Centre/Stop N	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100
Godia Park Belgians Crescent	1103	1103	1103	1103	1103	1103	1103	1103	1103	1103
Emerson Park Thorpe Lodge	1107	1107	1107	1107	1107	1107	1107	1107	1107	1107

	Mondays	Tuesdays	Thursdays	Weds & Fris	Saturdays
Hornchurch Bus Garage		1050	1050	1050	0850
Romford Corner South Street		1052	1052	1052	0852
Romford Station Shelter X		1055	1055	1055	0855
Romford Shopping Centre/Stop N		1100	1100	1100	0900
Godia Park Belgians Crescent		1103	1103	1103	0903
Emerson Park Thorpe Lodge		1107	1107	1107	0907
Hornchurch White Hart/Carbap		1110	1110	1110	0910
Uppminster Road/Heaven Lane		1113	1113	1113	0913
Kenningtons Romford Road Parade		1120	1120	1120	0920
Aveley Hill Road Parade		1123	1123	1123	0923
Aveley High Street Shelter		1128	1128	1128	0928
West Thurrock Tunnel Approach		1133	1133	1133	0933
The Brent Tunnel Approach		1140	1140	1140	0940
Dartford Market Street/Mandarin		1145	1145	1145	0945
Hawley Graham Ford		1149	1149	1149	0949
Darenth & Watchgate	0740s	0740s 1155 1655	0740s 1155 1655	0740s	
Longfield Station	0748s	0748s 1201 1703	0748s 1201 1703	0748s	
Fawkham Green	0750	0750 1205 1705	0750 1205 1705	0750	
Thames Weald		1210	1210	1210	
West Kingsdown Hever Road		1210	1210	1210	
West Kingsdown School Lane	0753	0753 1213 1713	0753 1213 1713	0753	
Knatts Valley Knatt Lane		R	R	R	
Woodlands Golf Club	0805	0758 1218 1718	0758 1218 1718	0758	
East Hill Ashen Grove	0808	0805 1225 R	0805 1225 R	0805	
Five Ways	0808	0808 1228 R	0808 1228 R	0808	
Otford Station Bridge	0815	0815 1235 1730	0815 1235 1730	0815	
Bradbourne Park St. Helens	0823	0823	0823	0823	
Sevenoaks S. Sen./Tubs Hill	0825	0825	0825	0825	
Sevenoaks Bus Station	0828	0828 1245 1740	0828 1245 1740	0828	
Sevenoaks School	0830	0830	0830	0830	
Solefields Salefield School	0831	0831	0831	0831	
Godden Green Sevenoaks Prep School	0840s	0840s	0840s	0840s	

No Service Sundays or Public Holidays

CODES: R - Calls by arrangement intending passengers should telephone West Kingsdown (047485) 2244 the previous evening
 N - Not Fridays
 S or SD - Schooldays only
 Z - Time in London Road, near Bus Station, on Schooldays
 * - Near Rad Station
 e - Near Uppminster Bridge LT Station

NOTE: Passenger are not carried locally between Romford and Hornchurch or between Dartford and Longfield

Romford

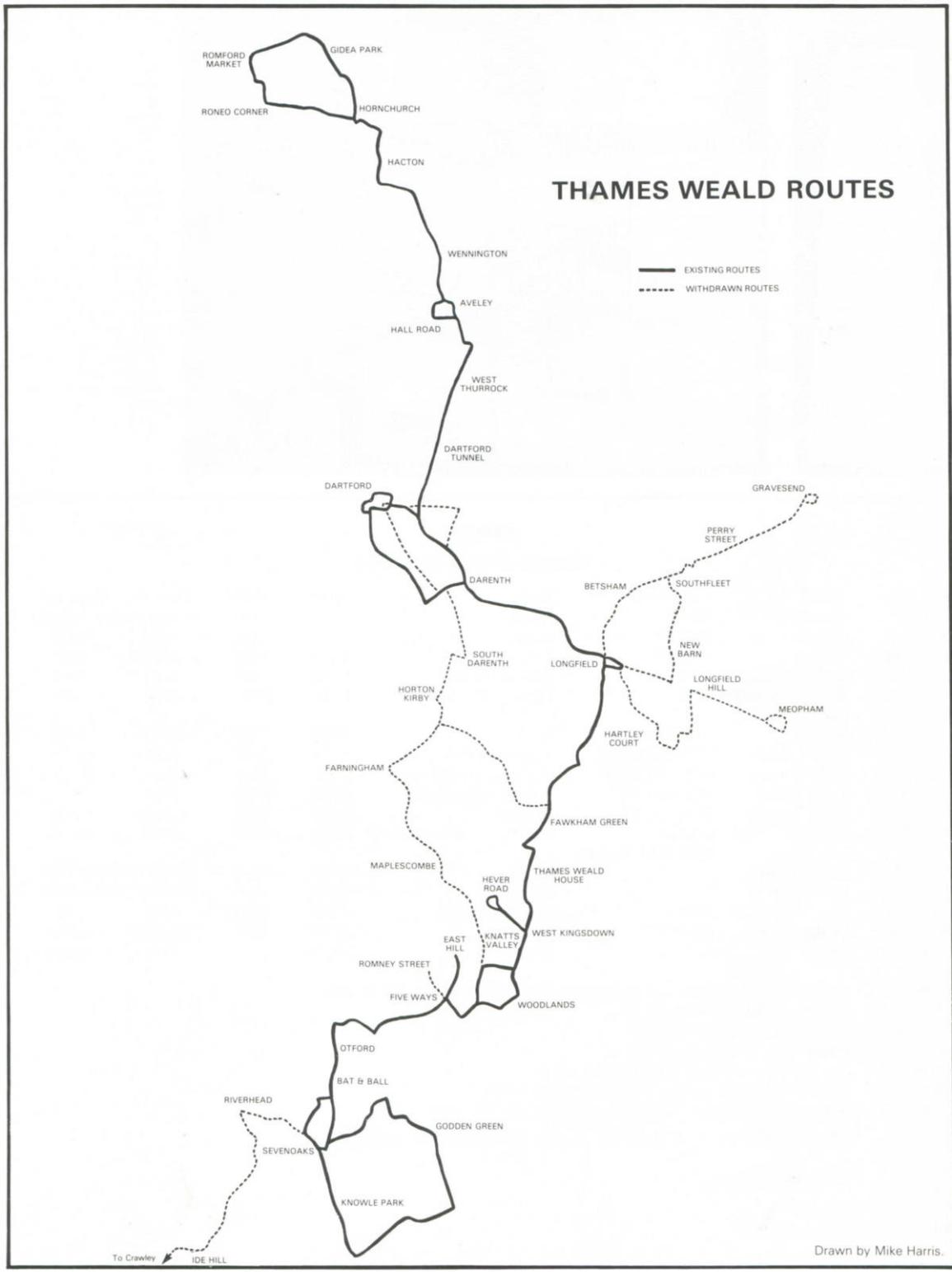
..	Hornchurch				
£1	80	Aveley			
160	140	£1	Dartford		
180	160	120	..	Longfield	
£2	£2	160	£1	80	West Kingsdown
220	£2	180	120	£1	80
220	220	180	140	120	80
220	220	£2	160	140	£1

Principal fares

For day return add 40p to any fare over 50p.
 Family day return from Romford to Sevenoaks on Thursdays: 2nd, 3rd or 4th member of party pays only £1.
 No child fares, but 1 child under 5 years goes free with a paying passenger.
 Dogs 1/2 fare rounded up.

THAMES WEALD ROUTES

— EXISTING ROUTES
- - - WITHDRAWN ROUTES



Drawn by Mike Harris.



Far left The destination blind from HMK 140B. The Tunnel Express display was at the top but it is so faded that it cannot be read. The blind from EMH822B was similar except for an additional panel reading 'On hire to Orpington Rural Transport'. Left A set of tickets used by Thames Weald. The first tickets such as the 5/6d Return contained the company seal. The right-hand set is geographical, all printed by Bell Punch, Control Systems munch types are still used.

Appendix

Thames Weald Fleet List

Reg. No.	Make	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	Built	Date in	Date out
44 PKP	Austin J2VA	80385	Kenex	12	1961	On hire during 1961/62	
509 TKO	Commer LB	220333	Kenex	12	1962	/62	4/69
TPN 644	Trojan	1509807	Trojan	C13F	1961	1/63	9/64
EMH 822B	Bedford J2SZ10	188695	Plaxton 632887	C20F	1964	1/64	8/68
HMK 140B	Bedford VAS1	1790	Plaxton 636732	C29F	1964	6/64	/80
MXX 323	Guy Vixen Special	NLLVP44776	ECW	B26F	1953	2/65	4/69
BJH 102F	Ford Transit	BCO5HG43022	Williams Deansgate	B12F	1968	5/68	12/75
LNF 767G	Ford Transit	BCO5HL58197	Williams Deansgate	B12F	1968	1/69	11/75
MNC 913G	Ford Transit	BCO5HT56731	Williams Deansgate	B12F	1969	5/69	?
TKL 201H	Ford Transit	BCO5JG57688	Strachan	B16F	1969	12/69	/79
OVR 798H	Mercedes-Benz	L406DG/35 309124-23-033637	Williams Deansgate	B22F	1970	9/70	10/78
777 UMP	Bedford SB	?	Duple	C41F	?	On hire during 1979	
WNU 234F	Bedford VAL	?	Duple	C53F	?	On hire during 1979	
ENR 539C	Bedford VAS1	2140	Plaxton 653198	C29F	1965	5/80	1/81
JKR 238V	Dodge RB56	190710	Rootes	B23F	1979	12/80	Current
PKR 399W	Dodge S50	?	Rootes	DP27F	1980	1/81	Current

44 PKP Hired from Trailways Travel Services, Longfield during 1961 & 1962
 EMH 822B Sold to Williams, Varteg
 TPN 644 Ex-Brayfield, London SE22
 MXX 323 Ex-London Transport GS23
 ENR 539C Ex-Thamesmead Coaches, London SE18
 ENR 539C Sold to Rootes in part-exchange for PKR 399W
 TKR 210H Sold to CC Taxis, St. Leonards, Sussex. Used for spare parts
 777 UMP Hired from Digby T/A Mildmay Motors, Shoreham during 1979
 WNU 234F
 JKR 238V } Ex-Rootes demonstrators
 PKR 399W }
 All others bought new
 All other disposals unknown

Odd Men Out on the 28



The appearance of Metrobuses on the 28 is not now uncommon, and here in Kensington Church Street M938 leads a pair of RMs towards Wandsworth. However, the first reported sighting of a Titan on the route occurred on Boxing Day 1983 when T766, seen here at Wandsworth, worked alongside the Metrobuses.

Colin Fradd/Alan Walton



BUSCO—2

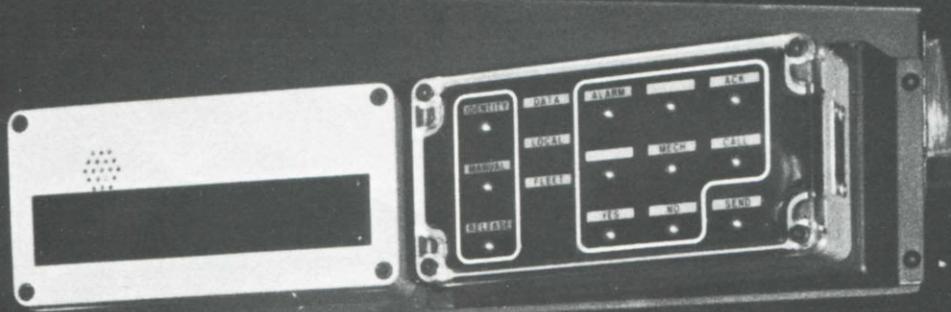
Further Developments
by S.J. Clark



On 3rd October 1983 BUSCO trials with service buses on routes 36, 36A and 36B commenced. Called the 'Seven Bus Trial' this stage of the Implementation of BUSCO has been designed to test the complete system using buses running along the routes sending back data in response to interrogation by the BUSCO computer.

For the pilot scheme 71 RMs are being commissioned with BUSCO equipment—RMs 9, 31, 77, 240/75/84, 400/4/49/61/74/8/91, 522/7/41/75, 687/8, 696 (prototype), 701/8/35/6/58/64/82/7, 801/15/43/68/9/72, 916/28/44/67/73, 1002/49/62/82/97, 1104/19/68/72/4, 1260, 1305, 1609, 1832, 1910/51/5/77/80/92, 2000/22, 2051 (prototype), 2052 (damaged by fire 31/10/83 and replaced by 1019), 2082/99/142/51/9/89/99. This photo shows prototype RM696 in service at Vauxhall Bridge Road shortly after the introduction of the trial.

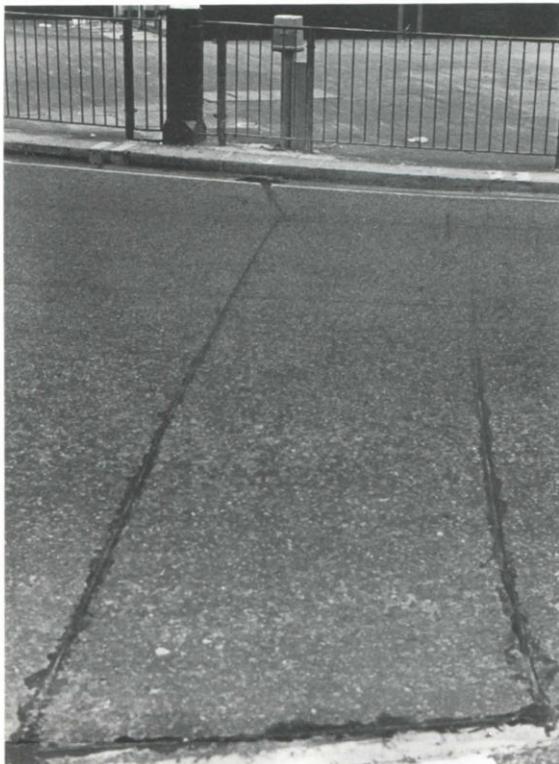
DOUBLE DECK
MAX. HEIGHT
14'-6"
8'-0" WIDE



Drivers' Cab equipment. On the left is the display unit on which can appear coded messages from the local regulator. The right hand unit is the keyboard with its various function keys enabling the driver to acknowledge (ACK) messages from the regulator. The alarm key is situated top centre. Until the final handover of the system for the pilot scheme which, it is hoped, will begin in January 1984, the drivers use of the keyboard will be limited to acknowledging test messages. The Alarm channel will remain fully operational throughout.



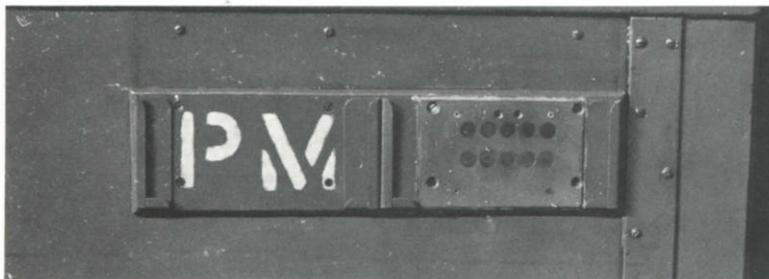
Prior to and during the time the buses were being equipped at Camberwell garage, and during road loop installation, reference bus RM45 was initially used, running along the 36 group of routes, to test radio signal strengths to and from the two radio base stations. The vehicle sent back replies to interrogations or "polls" from the computer. These replies would include its location, picked up on passing over a road loop "beacon". While the loops were being laid, these identities were input manually. With more and more loops operational it was done authentically. This "System Testing" was eventually carried out using two further buses; prototypes RM696 and 2051, running as 'mock' service buses.



Prior to the introduction of the Seven Bus Trial, work in preparation went on relentlessly, e.g. Training Documentation, driver and regulator training, computer software testing, the equipping of the 71 buses, the installing of road loops (beacons) and their testing using reference bus (RM45), the testing of bus borne equipment (logic units and running number plate readers) etc. This picture is of one of the roadside loops at Victoria in Vauxhall Bridge Road, with the electrical equipment housed in the pillar on the pavement.



Equipping of the buses for the pilot scheme has been carried out at Camberwell garage. Seven spare vehicles were transferred into Peckham garage displacing buses to Q for this work. A considerable amount of panel removal was involved. To incorporate the running number plate reader unit into the space between the inner and outer panels of the offside bulkhead, it was necessary to lower the running plate brackets.



The running number plate reader unit's external appearance as seen on RM45.

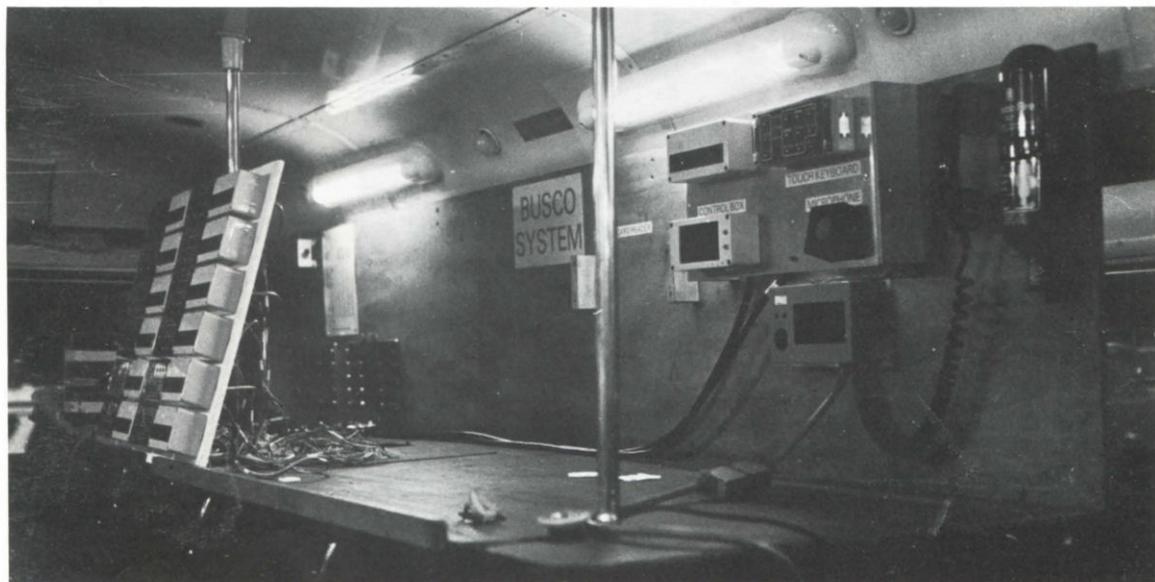


The unit reads the magnetic code from the special BUSCO running number plate as seen here, also on RM45.



Work underneath the bus during equipping involves the installing of the BEACON RECEIVER—the unit which picks up the signal from the loop buried under the road surface.

The top deck of RM45 showing the various items of test equipment. Of particular interest is the board of twelve sets of cab equipment (left) set up for vibration tests.



Location Facilities Ltd



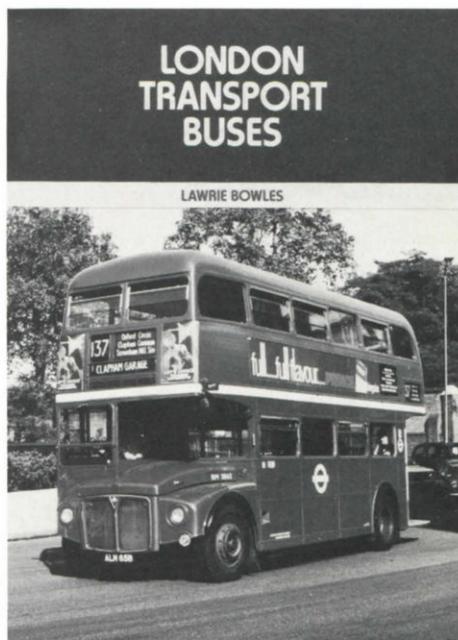
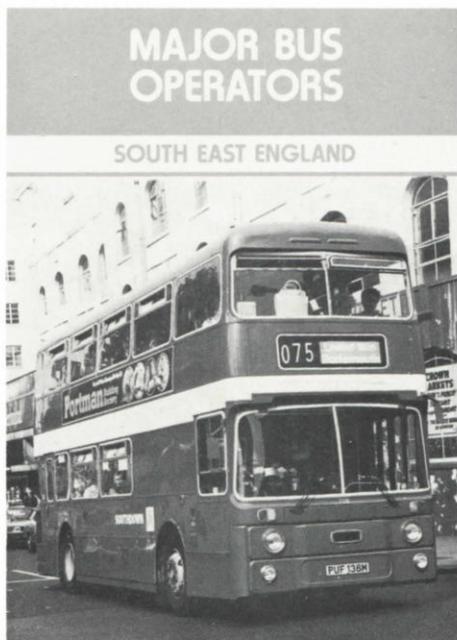
Location Facilities Ltd own a number of ex-London Transport vehicles for use by film crews as changing rooms, rest rooms, canteens etc when working 'on location'. Seen here at their Feltham yard are RTs 4588 and 1969, together with an ex-BEA 4RF4, while below in Horse Guards Avenue is MB638 and one other. All vehicles carry a pale blue livery with white relief bands. *David Stewart/Mike Harris*



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