

Vehicle Profile: RU 8805

An initial look at a vehicle in
the TV&GWOT Collection



RU 8805 was one of 25 6-cylinder petrol-engined Duple-bodied AEC Reliances purchased by Elliott Brothers (Bournemouth) for their 'Royal Blue' fleet in 1929.

With the purchase of Royal Blue by the Tilling Group in 1935, the Reliances were distributed 8 each to Western and Southern National and 9 to Hants & Dorset. RU8805 became part of the Western National Omnibus Company fleet, although still operated in traditional blue and cream under the Royal Blue name. Later that year, RU 8805 (Fleet No. 3615) was re-bodied C28R by Beadle's of Dartford and carried this body for the remainder of its operational life.

During WWII, 3615 transported military personnel and on return to civilian service in 1944 it was over-hauled and put into Western National green and cream livery. Transferred to Taunton it completed its 20 years' service on bus duties.

In 1949, as was the way at that time, 3615 was sold to a farmer in nearby Fiddington who used 3615 as a hen coup, doubling as a playground for the farmer's children. The vehicle was topped with a pitched roof which not only disguised but served to protect 3615 as it languished outside for the next 60 years. Quietly monitored by Colin Billington over many years, a deal was eventually done in 2000 to exchange 3615 for a more useful farm trailer and the fragile coach was dug out and transported to Berkshire for restoration (travelling via the AEC Rally at the Chiltern Open Air Museum).

3615 is the subject of a thorough ongoing restoration and is on long-term loan to TV&GWOT as a unique survivor from the Elliott Brothers coach fleet

DATA PANEL

Registration: RU 8805

Type: AEC Reliance

Built: 1929

Engine: AEC 6 cylinder

Body: Duple C28D

Operator: Elliott Bros (Bournemouth) Ltd

RU 8805 – Rescue and Restoration



Left and below: 3615 found abandoned on a farm in deepest Somerset. The roof gave some protection from the weather but added significant load causing the body to collapse. Undaunted the restoration team investigates.



Above and right: the interior still retained important details like the Royal Blue moquette on the front bulkhead (now re-woven to the original pattern) and the controls in the cab, despite their last use being decades before.



Above and right: From the recovered state (shown on page 1), the body structure was stripped and rebuilt with new ash framing reinforced by steel fitch plates. Much of the original roof, bulkheads and floor was sound and was retained.