

# Vehicle Profile: FM0938

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

**THAMES VALLEY &  
GREAT WESTERN**

 Omnibus Trust



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556 was delivered new to The Thames Valley Traction Company in August 1951 and entered service at Reading garage where it remained until January 1958 when it was transferred to Newbury. It remained at Newbury until September 1960 when it was sold for further service with United Welsh retaining its Thames Valley fleet number 556.

After six years' service, 556 was sold to Welsh independent Precelley Motors of Clynderwen in Carmarthenshire in October 1966. They operated 556 for two years before passing it on to nearby Jones Motor Services of Login in September 1968 where it spent a further 10 years (a total service life of almost 28 years). It was withdrawn circa May 1978 and sold to a preservationist.

Sometime prior to 1982, 556 was acquired by a farmer in Sussex who disposed of the seats and kept chickens in it. However, in September 1982, 556 was acquired by Ward Jones of High Wycombe and restoration commenced. A Thames Valley enthusiast acquired 556 from Ward, following which Ward continued to restore 556 on his behalf. The Bristol gearbox as fitted to 556 needs plenty of driving time to become accomplished. And the new owner found this a barrier to full mastery and enjoyment so he reluctantly decided to return 556 to Ward. The restoration work carried out during his ownership enabled 556 to be rallied by several other owners for nearly 20 years before it was laid up in the early 2000s for a period of 14 years. When TV&GWOT obtained agreement to take 556 on loan for the TV100 event in 2015, it was driven back from Worcestershire with only minor fuel issues at the start of the journey.

556 soon became a firm favourite at events and with Supporters, complementing the 1927 Tilling-Stevens No. 152 and 1946 Bristol K6A No. 446 already in the TV&GWOT Collection. 556 is significant being Thames Valley's first 30ft long vehicle, the oldest surviving former TV Bristol single-deck bus, and the oldest preserved Bristol LL with its original body. With age, it was looking shabby and some significant body weakness had developed so in 2020 an [appeal](#) enabled TV&GWOT to acquire the bus and embark on a major re-restoration to safeguard 556's long-term future. A major objective is for 556 to be restored to a standard to take centre-stage at (covid-delayed) events marking the Centenary of the formation of The Thames Valley Traction Company Ltd.

## DATA PANEL

**Registration:** FMO 938

**Type:** Bristol LL6B

**Built:** 1950

**Engine:** Bristol AVW

**Body:** ECW, B39R

**Operator:** Thames Valley Traction Co.