

THAMES VALLEY & GREAT WESTERN Omnibus Trust

	Great Western Railway Road Motors
	National Omnibus & Transport Company
	Western and Southern National
	Royal Blue Express Services
	Reading Corporation
	Thames Valley Traction Company

GREAT WESTERN ROAD MOTORS 1927 GUY FBB BUS YF714

YF 714 is a Guy FBB 32 seat bus built in 1927 for the Great Western Railway and allocated fleet number 1268. The Guy FBB was introduced in 1926 as a forward control version of the 16' 5" wheelbase BB chassis which had been introduced in 1924 and was one of the first bus designs with a dropped frame chassis to give lower floor height for easier passenger access and lower overall centre of gravity. The FBB was powered by a Guy 4.5 litre inclined side valve engine with 4in bore and 5½in stroke driving, through a 4-speed gearbox, an under-slung worm rear axle. YF 714 had Guy chassis number 22251.

The 32 seat body was built by Vickers of Crayford to a GWR design. The entrance was behind the rear nearside wheels and incorporated hinged double doors opening outwards within the step well. Internally the body was separated into two compartments, a 26 seat front compartment and a six seat rear smoking compartment with tip-up seats which could also be used for carrying luggage. A sliding door in the front bulkhead gave access to the driver's cab for emergency exit. The body incorporated several details and features typical of railway carriages of the period including handles, vents and light fittings. The livery was GWR chocolate and cream lined-out in gold with a white roof.

YF 714 entered service on 21 March 1927 at GWR's Penzance Depot on services linked to the rail terminus. It is probable that, at some time, it would have worked on GWR's first service which had been inaugurated on 17 August 1903 from Helston – The Lizard.

The 1928 Road and Rail Transport Act resulted in the big four railway companies investing in the road transport industry and, where appropriate, amalgamating road passenger transport services with those of local bus operators. For those parts of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Wiltshire where the GWR had been competing with the National Omnibus & Transport Company, the GWR took 50% of the shareholding in the Western National Omnibus Company Ltd which combined the assets and services of the 'National' and the GWR Road Motors under agreements dated 21 December 1928 and 17 April 1929. 'National' was the successor to the National Steam Car Company which had been incorporated in 1909 to run steam buses in London and Essex. YF 714 retained its fleet number 1268 with Western National and was painted into the company's livery of green with a cream waist band. It remained in operation at Penzance where the GWR and National Services were integrated from January 1930.

Due to the rapid advances in vehicle design in the 1930s and the non-standard nature of the Guys and most other GWR vehicles, their operational life with Western National was short-lived. The exact withdrawal date is not known but new information has recently come to light which suggests that 1268 was withdrawn and sold in 1931. It was not taxed for road use after



Sister vehicle when new at Slough Station in 1927 near the central works of GWR Road Motors



1268 as a caravan at Liskey Hill, Perranporth overlooking the Atlantic

it was sold and subsequently was converted to a caravan. In late 2011 there was contact via this website from Simon Martin whose grandfather, Richard Martin, had purchased 1268 from a dealer, Penhaligon, of Truro. Mr Penhaligon's son was the Liberal MP, David Penhaligon who represented the Truro constituency but was tragically killed in an accident in 1986. The bus was moved to Perranporth, initially by the beach, where it was used as weekend holiday accommodation. After a short time Richard Martin acquired some land from a farmer at Liskey Hill above Perranporth which has marvellous views over the Atlantic. The bus was moved up there and raised on blocks with wheels removed, for the next six years being used as the Martin family holiday home. Simon's father Eric, who came to see the Guy with Simon in January 2012, recalled his childhood sitting in the cab pretending to drive the bus. The Guy was converted with two beds and a small kitchen. The door was moved to the centre nearside, a lean-to was added in front of this on the nearside and together with tents all the family and friends were accommodated. In 1952 the site along with 1268 was bought by a Mrs E C Olliff who established Seabreeze Caravans, Liskey Hill Caravan Site, Perranporth. 1268 was, of course, already converted with two beds and a small kitchen. The bus later became used as a workshop and the offside was heavily rebuilt. The condition of the body gradually deteriorated although the roof and the protected front nearside part of the body remained quite sound. Miraculously the major mechanical components remained with the vehicle.



25 March 1972. After separating the lean-to 1268 was craned onto a lorry for the journey up-country. The lady watching on the left was the previous owner Mrs Olliff



26 March 1972 at Winkleigh

In 1972 two enthusiasts approached the caravan site owners regarding possible preservation and agreement was reached to buy 1268 for £60. Purchase by Robin Jenkinson and Chris Newman was completed on 25 March 1972 and the bus was moved first to the West of England Transport Collection at Winkleigh, Devon and then to Mr Jenkinson's home at Colchester. The vehicle was later moved to a new home near Consett where it remained until, following advertisement in the Historic Commercial Vehicle Society magazine, it was purchased by its present owners, Colin and Helen Billington in 1997. 1268 was moved on a transporter to its present home near Maidenhead on 27 October 1997 where it joined a collection of other buses and coaches of West Country origin.



25 August 1972 arriving at Colchester. An elf called Robin takes a ride without care for his elfin safety



1268 as seen in Consett awaiting collection



Back at Maidenhead. The cream area is that protected by the lean-to.

RESTORATION OF YF714

Restoration began in 2000 and was essentially complete in early 2011. The accompanying photographs show the restoration at various stages over this period. This involved separating the body from the chassis to give better access to the chassis and to enable work on both to proceed in parallel. By 2003 the body frame had been re-married to the chassis so that it was possible to transport 1268 to The Lizard for display there as part of the Centenary of the service from Helston on 17 August. This was the first time for 80 years that all gears had been selected when 1268 was on the move under its own power.



Body raised and supported on axle stands and chassis being pulled out



Chassis almost out. The original chassis plate can be seen on the bulkhead in the engine compartment



Rear axle being installed on new road springs with new shackle pins and bushes. The original brake shoes have been relined and new brake cams and pull-off springs fitted.



Chassis frame at Ward Jones awaiting running units



The body frame taking shape. The original roof can be seen suspended above. Two original pillars were built in on the nearside with other original parts including floor noggins, traps, boarding, front and cab-side bulkheads and many fittings.



The body frame including the completed roof now united with the chassis ready for The Lizard.



17 August 2003 at The Lizard, England's most Southerly point.



May 2007. The body with panelling and moulding over the joints complete, windows installed and the large roof rack in place. This demonstrates the use of different materials in the form of construction typical of the late 1920s.



May 2007. Internal panelling being fitted up before finishing. The internal finishing was an 'ivory' painted roof with structure and panelling below the cant rail stained and varnished and floor under the seats covered in brown lino and aisle and luggage compartment floor painted brown.



June 2007 with the exterior now etch primed and undercoated. This was followed by two coats of coach enamel and two coats of coach enamel and varnish, each being flatted-off by hand.



September 2009. Repairs to the exhaust manifold underway so the focus is now on the engine compartment and cab, electrical system, fuel system and permanent exhaust system.



July 2010. Seats being fitted to complete the interior.

1268's DEBUT

1268 is now on long term loan to the Thames Valley & Great Western Omnibus Trust, protecting its long term security and ensuring it is available for the education and enjoyment of current and future generations. 1268 was revealed to the public at the 2011 Penzance Running Day held on 17 April at the bus station. Shortly before this, on 6 April to be exact, 1268 was started, pulled out of the shed at Fifield where the restoration had been completed and driven by Colin around to the back of the farm buildings. It was a beautiful day (see photos) and after leaving the engine ticking over for some time, the ignition was switched off. Examination of the paintwork for the first time in full daylight revealed a couple of minor runs on the nearside panels. Attempting to start the engine again to get 1268 back inside resulted in disaster! The engine kicked back, having not been retarded sufficiently, and badly fractured Colin's right wrist. Nevertheless, after a visit to A&E for a temporary repair, the offending panels were rubbed down and repainted with his left hand – quite a good finish as well. So 1268 did make it to Penzance and was parked in a bay next to the bus station on display for the day although again disgraced itself at the end of the day by refusing to start and having to be pushed round to the low-loader and hauled up by winch. An electric starter has since been fitted.



December 2010 with completion in sight. Lining out and sign-writing complete, electrical installation almost complete, advance and retard and hand throttle linkages in final stages to enable completion of the cab floor and installation of drivers seat. Outstanding items: bell and chord, passenger door latch and bolting system, spare wheel carrier, mirrors, traffic notice board, destination board.



It was a beautiful day when the Guy first emerged from the workshop. Five minutes after this photograph was taken disaster struck.



1268 made it to Penzance for the Running Day on 17 April 2011, seen here next to the Cornwall Bus Preservation Group's GWR Road Motors anniversary liveried VR, 1003, and being overtaken by WHOTT's LWL, 1613.



A rear view showing the wide ladder which unfolds to enable the bottom end to land on the ground and provide a firm footing for the crew to load luggage and goods on the roof mounted rack. Also seen is the 'Hackney Carriage' seating capacity plate, a mandatory requirement before new Licensing and Construction & Use Regulations introduced under the 1930 Road Traffic Act, the single rear lamp and warning triangle reflector. No brake lights were fitted.

ACTIVITIES IN 2013

In late 2012 work on preparing the Guy for the road recommenced. The water pump had a bad leak due to the deterioration of the original seal which separated the water chamber from the drive shaft housing. This was repaired with a modified seal by Holman Engineering at Addlestone – very good. After a few short trips out test driving the vehicle to build confidence in its operation and reliability, the first Sunday in May, the date for the annual London-Brighton vintage commercial vehicle run was upon us. We low-loaded the Guy to the start at Crystal Palace and, with some trepidation, our start time arrived and off we went. Just before reaching the A23 at Streatham Common a fairly elderly man at a bus stop, apparently in all seriousness, put his hand out to take the bus! We had a brief stop in Coulsdon to check everything and change drivers and then carried on the A23 through Redhill, passing Gatwick and the halfway halt near Crawley. We did stop at Burgess Hill to adjust the brakes which were beginning to fade, to have a cuppa and change drivers again before facing the long climb up Clayton Hill and descent to the A23 and into Brighton. A successful run was completed by 1268 receiving the awards for best in class (pre-1950 buses) and the overall best single deck passenger vehicle. However, several issues had come to light. The engine power seemed lacking and it was discovered that one of the original head gaskets was blowing as well as one of the spark plug washers, the engine was not running smoothly due to the original timing chain having stretched over the years and the rear axle brakes were difficult to adjust without dismantling. Very fortunately and remarkably, we had obtained new head gaskets at an auto-jumble and were able to purchase a new timing chain to the original specification from RM Fowler of Knutsford who imports them to order from the USA.

The Brighton Run built confidence in the Guy's performance and so, two weeks later, having fitted new head gaskets and spark plug washers, a more local outing was done to Sir William McAlpine's estate at Fawley near Henley for a vintage weekend celebrating the centenary of his Hudswell Clarke saddle tank engine No. 31. Performance on the 33 mile round trip was much improved and the fuel consumption measured at 3.1mpg on the Brighton run was now over 4mpg.

Following this, the new timing chain arrived and was fitted, resulting in much smoother running and so another outing was undertaken – a tour of some of the GWR Road Motors routes around Maidenhead, Slough and Windsor on 30 June which turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far. With a complement of 25 crew and passengers first stop was Maidenhead station, then Taplow, Burnham and through Slough Trading Estate to the Farnham Road. After Burnham, mis-firing due to fuel vaporisation impeded progress so an enforced stop outside a pub at Farnham Royal enabled everything (and everyone) to cool down. The mostly downhill run to Slough station went without incident so we then headed south to Windsor, not along the original route via Eton as the bridge over the Thames is pedestrianised, but via the dual carriageway Royal Windsor Road. Turning into Windsor town the traffic was grid-locked and fuel vaporisation again forced a halt by an ice-cream stall. Once consumed and cooled we drove through the town centre past the castle and then back home. The cause of the over-

heating is that the exhaust pipe from the exhaust manifold comes off the front of the engine and then runs directly below the carburettor. Subsequently the exhaust in the engine bay has been lagged but such hot weather has yet been encountered to test its effectiveness.

An important anniversary for the Guy was 17 August 2013, the 110th anniversary of the inauguration of the first GWR Road Motors service from Helston to The Lizard in 1903. 1268 was transported to Helston for this event being joined by the Cornwall Bus Preservation Society's GWR liveried Bristol VR 1003 which has worn GWR chocolate and cream livery since the centenary in 2003 when it was still in service with First Western National, former Truronian Dennis Dart TT03TRU, now First Kernow 42860 also wearing GWR choc and cream, WHOTT's convertible VR 937 and the CBPS's first Western National Dart 401. On this occasion it poured all day so no vaporisation problems. Fifteen passengers enjoyed the event which was reported in Bus & Coach Preservation. One of the shop keepers at The Lizard produced a picture of the former GWR Parcels Receiving Office, now gone, which had adjoined her boutique.

The Guy was transported back to Loddiswell in preparation for display at the Kingsbridge Running Day organised by TV&GWOT on 21st September. This involved the drive from Loddiswell to Kingsbridge and back with several long steep hills. 1268 performed without fault so we look forward to more outings in 2014 which will include, in the Centenary year of the formation of Guy Motors Ltd, the London to Brighton Run on 4th May and the Fawley Hill Steam & Vintage Transport Rally on 16th-18th May



On the London to Brighton Run on 5 May 2013, 1268 pauses for a check and change of drivers outside Coulsdon library on the old A23 and is accompanied by Bristol LL6B 1218, formerly a Royal Blue coach rebodied in the late 1950s for rail replacement work as branch lines were closed.



Madeira Drive on the sea-front at Brighton and 1268 and 1218 bask in the sun both having completed their first significant journeys following restoration. 1218 provided the transport home while 1268 took the low-loader which does almost three times the mpg!



1268's second outing two weeks after Brighton was to Fawley, near Henley-on-Thames, where it featured on the Transport Trust's display along with buses from the Thames Valley Traction Co and Reading Corporation as well as several cars and an AEC Mammoth Major lorry.



Apart from the modern signage and cycle rack, the entrance to Maidenhead station is little changed since the 1920s when GWR road motors operated from there. Paddy Baker of the Great Western Society brought a GWR sign on the tour which originally hung from the awning above the entrance outside "TO THE GWR BUS" and we were able to identify its original fixing points.



Slough was the headquarters and main workshops of the Great Western Road Motor Department and many photographs of new GWR vehicles were taken outside Slough Station. 1268 poses outside the now Grade II listed station building which, unfortunately, is partly obscured by the trees planted in 2012 before the Olympic Games and overshadowed by the new construction behind.



The GWR Parcels Receiving Office at The Lizard stands on the left of this original picture next to what is now Velvyn's boutique. Velvyn produced this when we arrived on the 110th anniversary of the first service. The corner of Hill's Hotel, now renamed The Top House is on the extreme right.



Three buses in GWR road motors livery stand together at The Lizard for the first time since 1929 when the GWR amalgamated its services with the National Omnibus & Transport Co to form Western National, a company fondly remembered in these parts.



The buses returned to Station Road, Helston and it finally, almost, stopped raining. The crews and some of the passengers posed for the obligatory 'team shot' and a happy team they look.



1268 joins 1218 in the former Thames Valley Princes Risborough dormy shed, which was saved by TV&GWOT when it was demolished in 1999.



The final outing for 2013 was to the Kingsbridge Running Day on 21st September which also started rather damply. Here 1268 can be seen at 7.40am before the running day got going framed by event sponsors' Tally Ho Coaches and First Devon & Cornwall early morning service buses.