



Chairman's Update

The Gordon Mills MBE, Bus Collection at Alford Open Day ...

On Sunday, 5th July, we held our annual Open Day at Alford. We enjoyed good weather for most of the day, and even a little rain towards the end couldn't dampen the spirits of those who came to see our wonderful collection of vehicles.

A successful Open Day depends on careful planning and preparation. We could not hold such an event without the support of our Trustees and volunteers. Many hours of hard work went into organising the day, setting up stalls and exhibits, preparing the fleet for display, and ensuring the facility was in excellent condition.

I would like to thank everyone who gave their time and effort to make our open day a success, as well as the many contributors who supported the event. In particular, I am grateful to the many vehicle owners who exhibited their vehicles on the day, and to Grampian Transport Museum for allowing us to use its arena.

A little under one thousand visitors attended throughout the day, including several special guests. Attendance was slightly lower than at previous events, but donations were outstanding: almost £3,000 was raised on the day. This is a fantastic result for the Trust and a testament to everyone's hard work.



Doors Open Day – 19th and 20th September 2026 – Once again, the Trust participated in Aberdeenshire's Doors Open event. The event listed some 54 participating organisations across the county, offering a very wide variety of venues. Over the weekend just short of 200 visitors enjoyed a guided tour of the bus collection, many of whom had not visited before. Although these events offer free entry to visitors, visitors kindly donated well over £200 over the weekend.



David Liston, Trust Chairman

Tribute to Willie George Benzie – 1947 to 2026

If a committee was asked to design the perfect volunteer, they would hopefully consider vast experience, common sense, good humour, strength, and dedication to the cause. That fully describes Willie Benzie.

Willie joined our volunteer group at the Gordon Mills MBE Bus Collection at Alford in 2016. He immediately became a vital member of the team. His lifelong experiences with all kinds of engineering and his problem-solving abilities were invaluable. Willie was a patient man although he did not suffer fools gladly, he took time, many times more than once, with anyone who did not know how to do some tasks. Willie also had a wide range of contacts with various skills, and he was able to call on them for assistance. His lively humour was priceless and his life experiences of working all over the world made for great listening.

His health began to fail in recent years, but true to his nature he carried on regardless and completed reconstruction of engines and other heavy repairs. His health difficulties continued and he often shrugged off heart felt advice to slow down or just be there to give guidance. Although having mobility problems latterly, he was determined to come with the team to Balmoral with the buses and saw the day through with sheer strength.

He passed away not long after the trip, much to the deep sadness of the team, all of whom respected and admired him. To say someone is irreplaceable is an often-misused term. Not in Willie Benzie's case. Our deepest condolences go out to his amazing family who also became friends to our team.



Boys Will be Boys ...

In the later 1960s Aberdeen Corporation Transport was still recruiting school leavers with the expectation that they would become bus crews when they came of age. In the interim some recruits were deployed as office boys, that role occasionally taking them to the bus garage at Advocates Road, King Street. And at the garage there was the temptation to have a sly drive of a bus if no one was looking.

Inevitably they were observed and those caught on this particular occasion were called to account and sanctioned: they had to report to Inspector Findlater, the department's bus driving instructor. For a whole forenoon they were made to shunt buses about the confines of the depot yard, all buses in those days being devoid of power steering. Bathed in sweat and with aching limbs they were returned to their own duties.

And the ultimate consequence of the sanction. Of the three miscreants in this episode, all progressed to enter the driving school officially, and all passed out as qualified bus drivers.

Workshop Update ...

- ♦ ACT 11 - The rear wheel bearings have been fitted to the hubs, and the rear brake shoes have been sent off for relining.
 - Green plastic "lace" to be inserted in bodyside beading has been obtained and installation is now some 75% complete.
 - The previously reported failed weld repair to the engine block is to be addressed using a proprietary sealant applied through the cooling water.
- ♦ ACT 14 (Daimler) at SVBM, Lathalmond - The fuel tank and the vacuum tank have been installed. Work continues with the associated pipe runs and the electric wiring.
- ♦ GRT 74 - A replacement for the failed alternator has been obtained under warranty, and has been fitted.
- ♦ GRT 209 - A failing oil seal on the angle drive between gearbox and axle has been sourced and installed.
- ♦ Tramcar 15 - The lower saloon bodywork has been released from its steel underframe.



The lower saloon lifted to release the underframe.

- Whilst the woodwork is generally in good condition, the underframe has pockets of deep corrosion which will require this item to be replaced. Judging by the significant array of reinforcing steelwork found inside and outside both saloon bulkheads, the car has been in a collision.

- The surviving woodwork of the top deck has been found to have been infested by woodworm and will have to be replaced. Fortunately there is sufficient wood left to serve as patterns.

- When the car became a dwelling house it was stripped of all the ornamental wood that was a feature of tramcar interiors. Some years ago Grampian Transport Museum was presented with examples of such wood from a car from the same batch as 15 and this has kindly been replicated by a local craftsman, Sandy Shirras.



The original steel underframe after cleaning up. Sadly there has been too much corrosion and a replacement underframe will have to be made.

Might You Consider Becoming a Member of the Trust?

The Gordon Mills MBE Bus Collection cares for vehicles that were part of local public transport history in the North East of Scotland. The collection is operated by the Aberdeen & District Transport Preservation Trust, membership of which will provide an opportunity for an individual or family to support our objectives. By joining, you will become part of a community committed to securing for future generations what had been essential parts of everyday living in the area.

Benefits of Membership

- Free unlimited access to the Bus Collection on normal opening days.
- The opportunity to volunteer to help and assist at our events.
- Free delivery of the Trusts Newsletter by Email, minimum of four editions per year.
- Invite to exclusive members events.
- Invitation to an annual update meeting.
- Transport on Trust vehicles to local rallies.

The Trust will be very pleased to welcome you as a member and, if minded, as a volunteer. Your involvement will strengthen the Trust and assist us in continuing our work on our magnificent fleet. Come and join us and play a part in securing a strong and sustainable future for the Trust. Full details of membership are available on our website:

<https://thebuscollectionatalford.co.uk/support-us/membership/>



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