

EASTERN COUNTIE**S**

OMNIBUS COMPANY LIMITED



Photo taken in June 1966 at the Old Cattle Market Bus Station, Ipswich, Suffolk.

REG NO. 3003 AH FLEET NO. LC 556 BODY NO. 10131 CHASSIS NO. 147004

1958 Bristol SC4LK 35 seater saloon with ECW bodywork and Gardner 4LK oil engine.

Vehicle owned and fully restored to original 1950s condition by Patrick Burnside of Norwich.

Rescued for preservation from Ward Jones Motor Dealer, High Wycombe, Bucks in July 1993.

Restoration completed in May 2005.

LC 556 started life with the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Ltd on 1st January 1959 and was the 56th member of the LC class to enter service with the company. A total fleet strength of 78 was achieved between 1955 and 1961.

Being a light weight vehicle, she was mainly used on country services and was originally crew operated. Sometime during the mid 1960s, she was converted for 'one man operation', the driver's seat being fitted with a swivel mechanism to allow the driver to face the nearside in order to collect the fares. Vehicles of this class were a familiar sight on the lonely fenland roads around Peterborough, March, Wisbech, Ramsey and Chatteris. Others were allocated to Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge, Yarmouth, and Bury St Edmunds main depots and were more often than not outstationed in remote locations all over East Anglia.

The Bristol SC was not designed for a long service life – ten years at the most, but many members of the class lasted well beyond this. LC 556 was eleven years old when she was withdrawn from service in 1970.

Subsequent history

After leaving Eastern Counties service, she passed to Ben Jordan of Coltishall in October 1970, who subsequently sold her to A Monk & Company, a Warrington contractor in March 1971. She was operated as a worker's bus for the next three years. Upon withdrawal, she passed via Martin, a Middlewich motor dealer to the Archbishop McIntyre RC High School, Stoke-on-Trent in June 1974, where she was employed to transport schoolchildren around the locality for the next six years. In August 1980 she was sold to the Margaret Ward RC High School in neighbouring Tunstall for further school duties. Upon withdrawal in 1986, she passed into the hands of an intending restorationist, a Mr Peter Hulin of Oxford, who stored her in his garden, together with 608 JPU, an Eastern National SC, for the next seven years. Sadly, Peter died in early 1993 and his widow sold the two buses to Ward Jones, a motor dealer based near High Wycombe, from where she was finally rescued for preservation by her present owner in July 1993. For the record, 608 JPU was cannibalised to provide vital parts for the badly decayed LC 556.

LC 556 is believed to be one of two survivors of the Eastern Counties stage carriage SC fleet, the other example being LC 543 (VVF 543) which is undergoing restoration by a Mr F Ward of Ipswich, Suffolk.

Before you ask 'why the change of registration mark?' . . .

LC 556's original registration (3003 AH) was transferred as a 'cherished plate' to a Fiat car, believed to have been owned by the erstwhile headmaster of Margaret Ward High School around 1980. The mark FRE 699A is a local Staffordshire plate and was issued as a replacement by DVLA. Interestingly, LC 556's original registration mark was put up for sale around 2003/04 and it was initially hoped that the plate could be repatriated. Sadly, this dream is unlikely to be realised as the owner does not have the necessary collateral to fund the £7000.00 asking price!!

Owner: Patrick Burnside, Norwich, Norfolk.