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THE BRADFORD TROLLEYBUS ASSOCIATION REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1116734.

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TRACKLESS No. 251 (October 2023 – December 2023)

Page 1 …… Editorial

Page 2 Where are they now? Part Two of Bradford's Preserved Trolleys

Page 15 …….. 758 – Progress Update

Page 17……... Members Meeting

Page 17……STOP PRESS – Further Update on 758!

Page 18 ……. Membership News, etc.

Front Cover 746 at Frizinghall approaching Emm Lane, probably in the late-1950s Photo: J Copland
Back Cover: Farewell to Derek M Coates, 25th September. 2023.

Editorial

Welcome to the 251st edition of Trackless! As you will see, there's a lot going off – with the second instalment of "Where are they now?", more news on the ongoing restoration 758, news of a BTA Members' Meeting at the Keighley Bus Museum, a proposal to update the BTA's Constitution and a farewell to the late Derek M Coates.

Autumn has been showing us its colours – in some cases we might think winter has come early! For me. I've plenty to keep myself occupied. I have enjoyed putting another edition of Trackless together and would like to thank contributors for their efforts – so I hope you enjoy it too. For those of you who have sent in articles for the mag, they will be included in future issue!
May I wish all a happy festive season! Mick

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

By John Stainforth

PART TWO: Better late than never

In the previous instalment, we recalled the initiatives in 1967 to save Bradford 770 and 774, but these vehicles were essentially Notts & Derby specimens, rather than native Bradford ones. And despite two further preservation projects being embarked on during 1966/67 by local enthusiasts, neither vehicle involved was a Bradford one.



Nottingham 506 and Liège 425 side by side in the yard in Frizinghall

Photo: Stan Ledgard

John Ayrey, who was well known as the proprietor of the Bradford Model Railway Centre in Frizinghall, was a prime mover in both.

He collaborated with Stan Ledgard (still a student in those days) to purchase a 1932 single-decker from Liège. After organising its import from Belgium, they transported no.425 to Bradford, where it was stored in various locations, including most conspicuously in T. Barron's removals yard by the *Black Swan* in Frizinghall Road. During the coming months, Liège 425 attracted a great deal of local interest, and even carried a full load of enthusiasts on a battery-powered run from Chapel Lane to the City Centre. Also visible for many months in the yard at Frizinghall was Nottingham 506, whose purchase in Spring 1967 by the Huddersfield Trolleybus Preservation Society had been made possible thanks to John Ayrey's support.

A prolonged lull in activity followed these initial preservation successes, despite the City being so alive with trolleybus enthusiasts. And in 1970, with only two years' life left in the system, there was still no sign of a Bradford trolleybus being preserved. Very surprisingly, there was little organised interest in preserving a Bradford vehicle and the nearest local group (based in Huddersfield) was reluctant to overstretch its capacity by acquiring one. Nor were there any "national" initiatives coming from the NTA or from the RTS, whose collection by then extended well beyond examples from Reading. Against this background of inactivity, the only tangible prospect at that time was for the City Council to

retain an “official” example: something which became more likely as plans took shape during the early-1970s to create the Bradford Industrial Museum at Moorside Mills. A transport display was proposed, and the selected vehicle was finally identified in June 1972.

On the credit side, the establishment of a trolleybus museum at Sandtoft in 1969 made the idea of preservation a more practical and inviting proposition. First, there was now a permanent place to keep them, and second – even better – this was somewhere with a realistic ambition of running them under two wires with passengers on board. At long last, during 1971, two substantial initiatives were underway in parallel. One was a widely publicised project to preserve 834, whilst the purchase of 746 was a private affair about which little was generally known.

Bradford 746

The first of these schemes to reach fruition was the acquisition of 746 by David Mitchell in August 1971. It was one of twelve BUT 9611T's built for the conversion of the Bradford Moor route from tram to trolleybus operation in 1949. It has a Roe body incorporating the traditional Roe patented safety staircase and is fitted with a 120hp 410-type motor and electrical equipment by English Electric.



746 in Forster Square on 1 January 1950, awaiting departure as the first trolleybus on the cross-city service from Bradford Moor to Crossflatts. *Photo: JS King collection*

Trolleybus operation to Bradford Moor began on 3 December 1949, with the BUTs entering service from Thornbury Depot. Their 120hp motors provided particularly on the 1-in-9.5 climb past Bradford Cathedral.

When the through service from Bradford Moor to Crossflatts started on 1 January 1950, no.746 became a regular runner on the city's longest trolleybus route and following the transfer of all the BUTs to Saltaire depot in 1952 it was rarely seen on any other service for the next eleven years.

Very few alterations were made to 746 during its time in service. Automatic acceleration was fitted during 1953 and the grey roof was repainted blue at around the same time. Number blinds replaced the rear destination and in 1955 the seating capacity was increased from 56 to 58 by providing an additional double seat upstairs and a layout of H33/25R. During its running life 746 was only involved in one serious accident, which happened in November 1954. Sixteen passengers were injured when it collided with a motorbus bound for Sandy Lane at the junction of Barkerend Road and Otley Road.



746 during its last phase of passenger service on 13 July 1963 at the Holme Wood barrier recently relocated in what later became the Central Ring Road. *Photo: JS King*

746 ran in service on the last day of trolleybus operation of the Bradford Moor route on 17 November 1962. For a few months it remained at Saltaire Depot but was transferred back to Thornbury in July 1963, when front entrance trolleybuses took over on the Crossflatts route. 746 then began to appear on other routes in the city, including Clayton, the Bolton Road routes, and the Wakefield Road routes, and it remained available for service until being withdrawn on 29 February 1964. The BCT management was in no hurry to dispose of its surplus trolleybuses, and 746 became one of around 30 withdrawn trolleybuses that found themselves in long term storage, either in the former

Railless Depot (known as the "tin shed") or in the Far West area of Thornbury Depot.
A surprise return took place on 1 December 1966 when 746 was re-licensed for use as a driver training vehicle and renumbered 063. For several months it was “marooned” at the Bowling Hill training circuit, where it remained in use until after the Wakefield Road wiring was removed. After that it joined 743 for driver training on the main system and ran in this role for several years. Finally, on 30 July 1971 it achieved the distinction of being used for the country's last trolley vehicle driving test and was then permanently withdrawn at the end of the day.



746 enjoying a new lease of life as training vehicle 063, passing the new (but now long-demolished) Provincial Society Building. *Photo: R Kitson collection.*

On 15 August 1971 746 passed into preservation when it was acquired by local transport enthusiast David Mitchell, who, as a resident of Bradford Moor, had been particularly attracted to the preservation of one of the Roe bodied BUTs. David had the necessary funding and was in a strong position to care for his exhibit, thanks to his association with Sharp & Griffiths’ haulage firm where his father Leonard was the transport manager. The spacious vehicle yard behind their premises in Hollins Hill at Baildon thus became a temporary home for 746 and later for further trolleybuses.

David took delivery of the vehicle with its original fleet number in place and with its original rear destination box reinstated. The driving instructor’s seat and second handbrake in the cab had been removed, along with the temporary

saloon door, and the raised saloon front seat was returned to its normal position.



After the formal handover of 746 at Thornbury with (left-to-right) Cllr. Stanley King, Edward Deakin (General Manager), Paul Watson, Maureen Leak (with Alex), Leonard Mitchell, David Mitchell, Mick Leak, Celia O'Brian, David O'Brian, and Vic Midgley (General Works Foreman). *Photo: J Copland*

One feature not reinstated was the automatic acceleration, which had been disconnected on conversion to training duties. Perhaps this was for consistency with 746's "as new" condition, and the facility remains disabled today. Mick Leak had repainted two destination blinds with the original 1949-style lettering using tracings supplied by Stanley King. The destination "30 Bradford Moor" looked truly authentic when the vehicle travelled under its own power as it left the Works for the last time, to be officially handed over (together with its logbook) by the General Manager, Mr Edward Deakin.

In its new home at Baildon the renovation began. The interior of the upper deck was stripped, seats renovated, leathercloth renewed and woodwork repolished. The chrome was renewed, the interior completely repainted in its original 1949 colours, and the seating arrangement returned to its original H31/25R layout. Light fittings were stripped and cleaned, ventilators re-chromed and flat aluminium beading reinstated above and below the interior advertisement panels. The replacement sections of beading had been salvaged from derelict Hull trolleybus no.80 at Autospares of Bingley. Overall, an enormous amount of work was put into these tasks by David and his two colleagues, Mick Leak and Paul Watson.



David Mitchell at Baildon in 1973 after becoming the proud owner of 758 in addition to 746. *Photo: John Stainforth*

In order to carry out the jobs that required accommodation under cover, 746 moved in early 1972 into storage at a garage in Colne. Mick Leak writes: “A huge amount of restoration work was done in a "Nissan Hut"-style building owned by garage proprietor John Macadam. I had to build a set of doors to keep things safe. When the vehicle finally returned to Bradford, various pieces of replacement steelwork (including stair risers) were fabricated by Fred Strauss, who was the chief mechanic and recovery driver for Sharp & Griffiths. Other pieces of steelwork, like the mudguards, were farmed out elsewhere. Acquiring the correct style of cab-side semaphore arm trafficators was not easy, but I finally found a company specialising in HGV recovery at Garforth, near Leeds, which had a large truck still sporting the type we wanted!”

Although BCT was approached about the external repainting of 746, they were unable to carry out the job. A positive response was subsequently received from Halifax Corporation Passenger Transport Department, thanks to the support of its General Manager Mr Geoffrey Hilditch. During a meeting to discuss the project he memorably treated David and Mick to a tour round Skircoat Road Depot in his vintage Jowett.

The next phase followed in September 1973 when 746 was towed to the Depot in Halifax, where the craftsmanship of their paintwork proved excellent: it lasted for over 30 years! Many hours were spent in discussing the finer details of the livery: light blue and primrose with a grey roof, wide cream bands beneath the upper and lower deck windows, black beading and black mudguards. BCT and Tyneside PTE kindly contributed the appropriate name and number transfers, and yellow lining was applied to the blue panels. Yellow was chosen because re-creating the original gold leaf lining would have been an unaffordable luxury. To provide authenticity, the Gil Sans fleet numbers and legal lettering were in gold-coloured paint. After a few weeks 746 emerged from the Halifax depot resplendent in all its 1949 finery.



A freshly repainted 746 leaving Halifax en route back to Baildon on 13 October 1973. *Photo: MJ Leak collection*

As an essential part of returning 746 as closely as possible to its 1949 operating condition, David organised the repainting of its original external advertisements. The large side panels promoting Mather's Black Beer and the Hammonds Ales were re-created by Duffs Signs of Bradford. Permissions were obtained from both Bass, who held the rights to Hammonds of Bradford, and from Mathers, who were still trading. Alderman Bertrand Mather of Leeds City Council was always an advocate of electric transport, and he was very welcoming at his

home, recounting anecdotes of the Leeds trams. The results of the signwriting were excellent, although David probably never sampled either of these two alcoholic products as I gathered, he was a teetotaller. Coat of arms transfers of the original style were obtained, along with transfers for the other legal lettering, with Stanley King again advising and obtaining some of the required transfers. Restoration efforts continued with the lower saloon interior and the driver's cab.

With the bodywork restoration finally completed, David was looking at various possibilities for a long-term home where 746 could be displayed to visitors, The new industrial museum at Moorside Mills was not an option for a privately-owned trolleybus, and despite initial optimism, a proposal to display 746 at the Armley Mills Industrial Museum in Leeds did not materialise.

For whatever reasons, David had reservations about his vehicle going to Sandtoft, but eventually he relented and 746 arrived at Sandtoft on 3 August 1974. Pre-service testing revealed an electrical fault that was soon rectified with the help of former Saltaire Depot shedman Harold Brearley, who knew 746 well from its days in service there. Then, on the DO&LRS Open Day on 29 September, 746 made an impressive return to passenger service.



746 at Sandtoft Gathering 1975, on display to good effect with its bright new paintwork. *Photo: R Kitson collection*

However, whilst at Sandtoft a problem arose with the compressor's motor, and it was removed for repair at R.F. Winders of Stanningley. A further electrical problem with a contactor also had to be repaired. Because both the compressor

motor and contactor solenoid had burnt out, David began to worry about the danger of fire destroying the wooden framed Roe body and he decided that the risks of connecting 746 to a 550-volt supply were too high.

746 was towed back to Bradford on 22 March 1975, becoming resident once again in Thornbury Works. David remained the owner under an arrangement with the West Yorkshire PTE, who became responsible for its custody in anticipation of displaying it (along with 844) in a future PTE museum. The date of 746's subsequent relocation to the PTE's Hall Ings garage adjoining the new Transport Interchange is unclear, but it did venture out on 5 November 1978 in an event to mark the formal opening of the Interchange. *[confirmation of the date would be welcome, as the Interchange actually came into use in late-1976]*



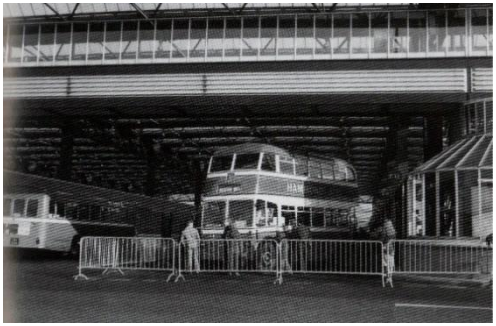
Above: 746 in Bridge Street participating in a rally to mark the formal opening of the Bradford Transport Interchange on 5 November 1978. *Photo: Don Akrigg*



On display in the WYPTE garage at the Interchange, with 844 in the background.

Following the consolidation of most of Bradford's out-of-town depots into the new Hall Ings garage, the former BCT motorbus depot at Ludlam Street had been relegated to a driver training centre. With plenty of storage space available, both 746 and 844 were moved there in mid-1980.

746 returned for brief visits to the Interchange on at least two occasions. The first was for an open day in 1982 and the second for an event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Bradford trolleybus system in 1986.





Left: On display in Bay F of the bus station area of the Interchange on 17 October 1982.
Right: At the 75th Anniversary event in 1986 *Photos: R Kitson collection*

During the 1980s plans were slowly taking shape for a new West Yorkshire Transport Museum and David negotiated a place for 746 on permanent loan. The Museum was initially established at Ludlam Street in early-1984, under the management of a limited company and charitable trust. A large and interesting collection of historic vehicles rapidly accumulated there, with successful open days and productive volunteer working parties. 746 ventured out for a day for a rally of Roe-bodied vehicles in Temple Newsam Park in Leeds to mark the closure of the C.H. Roe factory in September of that year.



Setting off from Ludlam Street behind Graham-Gratrix's towing vehicle to attend the C.H. Roe rally Photo: Donald Sykes



746 attracting the interest of visitors at the C.H. Roe rally in Temple Newsam Park, Leeds. *Photo: Donald Sykes*

The first steps to develop a permanent operational transport museum took place in 1985 following the acquisition of a large site at Low Moor which included a long section of disused railway line. Initially most of the vehicles at Ludlam Street (including 746) were destined for the collection there, but a long series of complications and difficulties blighted the project from the outset, not least the abolition of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council, which had been its main sponsor. By the time the ill-fated *Transperience* finally opened its doors to visitors in 1995, changing circumstances and pressure of space had led to 746 no longer being required there, and many preserved vehicles were at risk of becoming homeless when the need arose to sell the Ludlam Street building to raise cash. These events came as a great disappointment to David, and in May 1995 the ownership of the vehicle passed to Mick Leak.

Mick's acquisition of 746 coincided with the centenary of the Shipley Glen Tramway, the renovation and operation of which had been his long-term "labour of love" for many years. Thus 746 logically became an essential feature of the celebrations, echoing the Tramway's 1982 reopening Gala when 735 was displayed. Then, immediately following the Bank Holiday weekend, Sandtoft finally became 746's "forever home" after making the journey there from Bradford for the second time, on 1 June 1995.

Following its return to Sandtoft, 746 was once again an operational exhibit, but running the vehicle soon highlighted a problem with its traction motor. There had always been an unusual noise from underneath, initially attributed to the differential, for which a replacement had been obtained "just in case" in 1972.



746 makes a final public appearance in the Bradford area for an event to celebrate the centenary of the Shipley Glen Tramway in May 1995. *Photo: MJ Leak collection*

However, a thorough examination by the late Peter Swift (assisted by Jim Sambrooks) led to the verdict that it was due to a collapsing motor bearing. They removed the traction motor, which was taken to British Electrical Rewinds Ltd (BERL) for repairs. The total bill came to around £1,450 – a very large sum in those days! Returned to Sandtoft, the motor was soon re-installed and successfully connected-up. Work was also carried out by them on one of the kingpins, and the automatic chassis lubrication system received some attention. Time was steadily taking its toll on the seat cushions and David Needham did an excellent job in repairing them.

In 2000 746 made its longest ever journey when it travelled to the Black Country Living Museum at Dudley to take part in the *Trolleybus 2000* event. A further change of ownership took place in April 2002 when Mick moved to Ireland and 746 was acquired by Stewart David, who invested heavily in further restoration and a full external professional repaint in Spring 2004. This time the lining was done with gold-coloured paint. Following that, 746 won the best trolleybus award at the Gathering that year. Renovation of the bottom cushions of the leather seats upstairs took place in 2009, with Chas Allen taking them to Doncaster for re-trimming. The upper deck seat backrests still have their original leather trim and remain in reasonable condition. Two years later, after suffering a broken front spring, two replacement front springs were professionally fitted, just in time for the 2011 Bradford Centenary event.



Two Bradfords at the Black Country Living Museum in Spring 2000: 746 alongside the tramcar depot with 792 following behind. *Photo: Philip Lamb*

In 2008 Stewart's responsibilities for accommodation and maintenance became shared with fellow enthusiasts Chas Allen, David Verity and David Croft. In December 2009 David Verity sold his share to the remaining three owners, and. David Croft's death in 2016 left 746 in the hands of Stewart and Chas. Finally, in 2018, Ian Brown took over Stewart's share and in 2021 Ian completed 746's internal restoration with the re-upholstery of the moquette-and-leather seats in the lower saloon.



The refurbished lower deck seats with moquette specially manufactured to match the original fabric, trimmed with brown leather to re-create the classic appearance of the 1950s.

Photo: Ian Brown

746 became the first Bradford trolleybus to make use of the specially woven moquette: part of a large consignment of fabric ordered by former BTA chairman Gary Wilkinson after extensive liaison with the owners of preserved Bradford vehicles. Finally, a new set of tyres fitted just before the 2022 Gathering will keep 746 running for many more years!



Sadly, David Mitchell died in 2019, but his legacy lives on in a very visible way, as a tribute both to him and to the efforts of those who have contributed to keeping 746 in such good shape over many decades. Today 746 remains in excellent overall condition and - remarkably for its age - continues to be one of the Museum's most frequent and reliable runners, as well as being one of most popular vehicles with all the visitors.

Acknowledgements for help with compiling this "pocket history" of 746 are due to Mick Leak, who supplied most of the material covering its preservation from 1971 to 1995. Further information has come from Stewart David, Chas Allen, Ian Brown and the writings of the late David Croft and Stanley King.

758 UPDATE

Work has started again on 758's restoration. On the 26th. September John Francis and I loaded up our cars with the wooden seat backs and bases off 758, to take them for retrimming by Eastgate Coach Trimmers at Pickering. We also took six new hides and four rolls of moquette.

I had put the hides in my car the night before. The smell of new leather was beautiful when I got in the car next morning. John and I met at Keighley Bus Museum. We were unsure if we would be able to get to the museum, as there had been a fire at Dalton Mill, next door to the museum. Fortunately, the road was open as far as Riverside, where the museum is.

We soon had the cars loaded, with the help of some of the volunteers at the museum.

Whilst we were there a Victorian horse drawn Black Maria arrived. It had been at Keighley Police Museum, which has now closed, and has been given to Bradford Police Museum. Photo to follow in Trackless 252.



Above – another **stop press** item! The seat frames were delivered early morning on the 21st of November! Photo courtesy of Norman at the Museum,

We were now ready to go and decided that we would meet up at Pickering! I went via Leeds Ring Road, following my satnav. As I got near Garforth the roads had been altered, and the satnav got very confused. According to the machine I was driving across fields!

The coach trimmers are in an industrial estate on the edge of Pickering. On the same estate is Matthewson's Car Auctions. They sell classic cars. They are on a programme “Bangers & Cash.” The cars were soon unloaded. We discovered one of the seat backs is ½ inch taller than the rest. We will have to measure the seat frames when we get the cushions back. Some of the wood is damaged, so

will have to be replaced. Eastgate are supplying the Rexine for the rear of the seats.

John and I were shown round the workshop. It was most interesting. They do a lot of retrimming for First Bus - and make regular trips with a van to West Yorkshire, dropping off retrimmed seats, then filling up with seats for repair! There are very few coach trimmers left. All the staff at Eastgate are getting to retirement age, and there is no-one willing to learn their skills. Sadly, the company will eventually shut down. I had to bring two rolls of moquette back with me, as they were not needed. Hopefully the seats will be ready later next year. Also, could I please appeal to BTA members to sponsor a seat on 758, to help cover the costs.

Alan Whitrick

BTA MEMBERS MEETING 11-11-2023

Twelve BTA members attended a meeting at Keighley Bus Museum on the above date. As well as local members the BTA chairman Dave Chick came from Purley, and our treasurer Paul Waldron came from Cirencester. John Francis and I gave a brief update on the work that has taken place this year on 758. Seat backs & bases have gone for re-trimming. Window rubber is being sourced. Seat frames and grab handles are going to be taken to be powder coated. After refreshments, members were able to have a good look at 758 and see the other exhibits in the museum. As we say in Yorkshire everyone then had a good "cal", before dispersing! I would like to thank everyone for making time to come and visit 758. Special thanks go to Keighley Bus Museum for hosting the event. Alan Whitrick

STOP PRESS - LATEST UPDATE ON 758

This morning (16th. November) I met the owners of Triple-S powder coaters of Bingley at Keighley Bus Museum. We loaded up the seat frames off 758, and the grab rails, to be taken to be powder coated. I had called at their works yesterday with a seat frame and short rail, to get a quote from them. When they arrived at the museum today, they had already shot blasted the rail! The metal underneath the plastic has come up really well. The handrails will be powder coated black. All the seat frames will be coated dark brown.

I was very impressed with their work. They showed me round their works and they are giving us a good discount, as we are local, and a charity. They are wanting to specialise in doing work on classic vehicles. The seat frames will be done in a few weeks, so we can refit them. The rails will take a little longer, as they will all need shot blasting. Alan Whitrick

Membership News

The BTA's membership year runs from May to April, and as we approached the start of May this year many subscriptions had lapsed and there was quite a lot of catching-up to do. We sent out 46 renewals invitations with Trackless 248, followed by reminders where needed with Trackless 249 and 250. The overall percentage renewing has been most impressive, and we thank you all for your continuing support and confidence this year. In total, 42 out of the 46 members invited to renew have now done so, with many taking out a 3-year subscription, and one member renewing as a life member.

Thanks to the enrolment during 2023 of 9 new members, our membership total now stands at 76 – significantly higher than in the past few years.

We would like to welcome Andy Feather (Penrith, Cumbria) as a new member, and Stuart Emmett (Seascale, Cumbria) re-joining after a long break. Special thanks also go to long-standing member Graham Bilbé, who has recently taken out a life membership.

BTA Constitution

The current BTA Constitution has remained unaltered since the Association became a Registered Charity in 2006. Changing circumstances and recent events have highlighted the need to review it carefully, and a thorough overhaul has now been carried out by the trustees under Paul Waldron's leadership. We are now recommending approval of the draft updated version enclosed with this *Trackless*, and we will be bringing it forward for endorsement by the membership at next April's AGM.

The updated constitution includes several important changes:

- A stronger emphasis on our responsibilities as a Registered Charity
- A committee size more appropriate to the Association's current needs and capacity
- Flexibility to determine management positions in keeping with an evolving environment.
- New provisions for electronic participation in meetings
- Options for postal voting on significant issues at a General Meeting
- Measures to ensure that the BTA maintains an adequate number of trustees.
- More rigorous financial reviews

The explanatory note included with the amended constitution sets out the proposed alterations in detail. Please let Secretary Alan Whitrick know if you have any immediate reactions or suggestions.



DEREK'S Final Journey

There were a lot of people at Derek Coates funeral on the 25th of September including Alan Whitrick and Gerald & Pauline Whiteley from the BTA. Derek's final journey was on a bus from Low Moor to Scholemoor Cemetery. KBM made a special blind for the bus.

