

THE CLASSIC LONDON BUS SOCIETY

Memorable days out by bus for enthusiasts

Sittingbourne and Kemsley Railway - 12 April 2008

A low bridge on the approach to the railway was the perfect excuse to hire Ensign's 1963 Tiger Cub coach, for the Society's visit to the Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Steam Railway. Many members had commented on the coach during our visit to Ensign back in February, and it certainly did not disappoint. A smooth and quiet ride, once again with Bob at the wheel, comfortable seats and large windows, made for a relaxing journey enjoyed by all.

On arrival at the railway, which was hired exclusively for members, around 50 of us boarded the waiting 'Triumph' engine at Sittingbourne Station. In bright sunshine, many opted for the open wagon, and with soot in their eyes, and smoke in their hair, they arrived a happy bunch at Kemsley Down 15 minutes later!

As we disembarked, Tony, the railway controller, gave a highly polished welcome over the tannoy, and told us what there was to see, and where to find it.

Many though were keen to get straight into the cab of a steam train for a ride, and so the second engine, 'Melior', was soon busy carrying people up and down the track, whilst some hardy souls braved the darkening skies for yet another ride in the open wagon back to Sittingbourne. They were not so gallant on the return journey, and were to be found covering from the impending rain in the closed carriages. Indeed it turned out to be a day of sunshine, and very heavy showers, but that did not detract from the day.



Bob at the wheel of the Tiger Cub
- he had his eyes open when driving . . . I think !

© Trevor



Members milling on the platform

© Bob Stanger



Some things you just can't plan, the weather
- Melior and Triumph in steam

© Trevor

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The station cafe proved to be a popular haunt, and the staff had to work extremely hard to keep up with the demand for bacon rolls and toasted sandwiches, for which we were all grateful.

There was plenty of time for another return journey to Sittingbourne, this time hauled by 'Melior' as 'Triumph' did the honours with the footplate rides, as well as opportunities to look at the museum, shop and model railway.

So another highly enjoyable day out, and a real big thank you to all at the railway, for truly laying out the red carpet for us, in particular Tony and John. It did not go unnoticed that there were quite a few younger enthusiasts working on the railway, a credit to their policy of encouraging younger members to participate. We thank them all for providing us with such a splendid day.

Trevor



Racing the train

© Bob Stanger



Cameras at the ready

© Bob Stanger



Triumph held at signals

© Bob Stanger



Changing ends
- Triumph runs around

© Bob Stanger

Cab View

with 'Bob the Bus Driver'



Bob Stanger tells it as he sees it from up front

The vehicle for the day was Ensign's 1963 Leyland Tiger Cub, with a Harrington Body ex Jones of Wales. With Trevor and his family on board we arrived at what is now the familiar pick up point of TCLBS, outside the embankment tube station.

The Tiger Cub has an original 'Tiger' engine, not to be confused with the Leyland Tiger, replacement for the Leyland Leopard prior to the company being taken over by Volvo.



'The vehicle for the day was Ensign's 1963 Leyland Tiger Cub, with a Harrington Body ex Jones of Wales'

© Trevor Hawes

Seating 45 it has a gearbox with sycromesh only on 3rd and 4th gears so the odd crunch from the box was politely ignored by society members. Thank you.



'experiencing the smell of a steam engine again'

© Bob Stanger

Cab View

Routing out through East London, we journeyed south through the Blackwall tunnel, along towards Kent where we picked up the M2 and headed towards Sittingbourne.

Uneventful, even if the 'Tiger' did find the undulating hills of the motorway a challenge at times. Despite directions and the lack of sufficient brown tourist attraction signs we pulled up close to the former Bowaters paper mill railway.

With exclusive visiting rights for the day I was able to park the coach within the railway site. Ever tried to get a quart into a pint pot? I eventually made it, however, with a number of video cameras capturing the very moments, I was in and out of the coach to ensure the finest of tolerances either side were not breached. Thanks to Trevor keeping an eye on rear!!!



'Ever tried to get a quart into a pint pot?'

© Bob Stanger

The return journey was uneventful, albeit with the 'mature' Leyland engine thankful of the downhill stretches to 'gather breath'

A lot of good memories, experiencing the smell of a steam engine again, the slightly oily smell of the Tiger cub and the grateful smiles of the members and the waves goodbye as we left Embankment to return the coach to Ensigns.
