

THE CLASSIC LONDON BUS SOCIETY

Memorable days out by bus for enthusiasts

Annual Open Day and Bus & Coach Gathering, Cobham - 6 April 2008

We Brits have a reputation for being obsessed with talking about the weather. Is it any wonder though, for anyone who ventured to Cobham this year and last, is probably scratching their head wondering what on earth the weather can throw at us in 2009. Last year one could be forgiven for thinking the event had moved to the Cote d'Azur, this year it was a 'Cote' of the thick and wintry variety that was required !

Overnight some of the heaviest snow seen for many a year, had been dumped over large areas of the south east - and it was jolly cold too. I had arranged to meet Bob Stanger our driver in Temple Place, and I was proudly clutching new TCLBS route blinds to put on RM54, our bus for Cobham. When it arrived, though, it was well and truly iced up, and having put the blinds in, you couldn't tell they were there, as a thick layer of snow covered the destination boxes !

No matter, we set out to pick up our ultra loyal (possibly foolhardy) members, and although snowing hard, undeterred, we ventured off, unsure of what conditions enroute would be like. Blizzards all the way was the answer, although thankfully the roads were well gritted.

At Tolworth we pulled into the station to see if we could give a ride to anyone caught up in the rail replacement running that day, and found a Dutch enthusiast, who had come over from Amsterdam that morning, especially to go to Cobham. That's real dedication.

As we got nearer, the snow had relented slightly, and taking a wrong turn down a narrow lane gave us an opportunity for a very picturesque photograph of RM54 in the snow. Jimmy Sheng became a hero, by venturing into the woods and finding a nice big stick with which to rub snow off the destination boxes - well that's what he told us he went into the woods for ! So we arrived at the Wisley site about 09:45, with full 'On hire to The Classic London Bus Society' proudly displayed.



A wrong turn down a country lane but a great picture © Tony Ford



Uncle Bob to the rescue © Tony Ford

It transpired that the event had been in danger of being cancelled due to the weather, and unfortunately attendance was well down on the previous year, and many vehicles didn't make it. So well done to all the volunteers around Cobham Museum and Wisley Airfield for working in such cold conditions, and making the day so enjoyable for those of us that venture out.

Trevor

Cab View

with 'Bob the Bus Driver'



Bob Stanger tells it as he sees it from up front

Just seven days after the society's trip to Reading Transport, members again gathered opposite Victoria Coach station for a trip along the A3 to attend the annual Cobham Bus Rally this year being held once more at the Former Wisley airfield.

What a difference a week makes! From the brilliant sunshine of the previous Sunday,

RM 54 Cobham's choice of Ensigns vehicle to attend was covered in snow as it pulled up to carry its precious cargo.

For those members who attended, none will forget an extremely cold day that naturally reduced the number of vehicles attending the event and not surprisingly reduced the number of enthusiasts visiting.

Setting off towards Cobham, Bob once more driving for the Society travelled steered us across Battersea bridge, through Wandsworth and along to our first stop outside of Tolworth railway station. Major rail engineering work was taking place that day so our stop was warmly (literally!) welcomed by one joining the group – having come all of the way from Amsterdam for the Cobham Bus Rally. Now that is what I call an enthusiast.

Negotiating broken down vehicles and accident victims on the A3, our driver turned left into what he thought was the entrance to Wisley airfield to be confronted with a very narrow lane lined with snow covered trees either side. Out of every cloud comes a silver lining so with an improvised snow clearing broom/stick, RM54 with its bright red paintwork made an impressive sight against the backdrop of the brilliant white of the trees.

After reversing and correcting the enforced unscheduled stop, we set off for the next turning only to find Ensign's newly acquired Spectra (from Reading Transport) turning into the very same lane by mistake. (Should we be worried members?)



'After reversing and correcting the enforced unscheduled stop'

© Tony Ford

Cab View

Entering the rally site we were greeted by many former London vehicles with not surprisingly a preponderance of Routemasters in varying liveries and varying states of preservation.

A welcome sight of Roger Wrights RTW 75 and for some the unique Alexander bodied Volvo V3 with a good selection of RTs along with Cobham Bus Museum's RTL 139 added to the anticipation of travelling on ex LT vehicles throughout the day.

One excellent addition to the organisation by our host Trevor, was the preparation and display of specially made blinds for the trip.

While members toured the site and made their way to the Museum at Redhill Road by the courtesy bus shuttles, RM 54 took its own place in the line up of vehicles carrying out this welcome duty at the request of the organising committee.

As well as the Ensign Spectra, also used on the courtesy shuttles, one of Ensign's two GT400 Metroliner coaches was displayed carrying as it arrived none other than the trio of Peter, Ross and Steve Newman, well known to our members following the first memorable trip of TCLBS

By the time the event was wrapping up and time for us to return to London, all the snow had melted so again the journey home was no where near as eventful as the outward leg.



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© Tony Ford

Always a good rally to attend recognised as the first of the season for LT and ex LT buses, all enjoyed the day albeit with chilled feet, and chilled fingers having been exposed as those shutters clicked away seeking those extra dramatic shots due to weather conditions
