

**Birmingham City Transport Guy Arab IV No 2548
Activities Report 2011
By Rob Handford**



In the car park at Witton, 11th September 2011.

For 2548, the most significant day of 2011, amongst many highlights, was Bank Holiday Monday 30th May, when the Deputy Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Len Gregory re-launched the bus following completion of restoration at Aston Manor Transport Museum.

The stage was set the previous day with cleaning and tidying of the paintshop and surrounding area and a gold ribbon was strung across the door, behind which 2548 stood ready for unveiling. A large turnout of 2548 Group shareholders and volunteers was present on the 30th to participate in the day's activities, when the Deputy Lord Mayor duly arrived at 1130. He was escorted to the paintshop by Geoff Lusher where he was introduced to key figures in the project. I had the pleasure of showing the Deputy Lord Mayor over the vehicle with Geoff and showing him the display board with pictures of the restoration and some of the life-expired components that had to be replaced.

All too soon, the time arrived for the official unveiling. A few minutes before mid-day, the paintshop doors were slid open and, to the surprise of those looking out from the inside, we were faced with a substantial wall of people with cameras at the ready! After being introduced by Geoff to the assembled enthusiasts and well-wishers, the Deputy Lord Mayor gave his speech, talking of his pride and appreciation of this Birmingham bus and its restoration in the city. With the ribbon cut, I climbed into the cab, started the engine and slowly edged out into the museum as the crowd was gently ushered aside by 2548 Group marshals. Emerging into the open air we were greeted by a less than perfect day with leaden skies and persistent rain, but this failed to dampen the delight and enthusiasm of the participants as we set out on an inaugural private run to Aston Cross and back with the Deputy Lord Mayor.



**Chatting with the Deputy Lord Mayor prior to the unveiling, 30th May 2011.
Photo J Everill.**

On returning to Witton, photos were posed for and refreshments provided before the Deputy Lord Mayor eventually departed about twenty minutes behind schedule. It seems he could not tear himself away!

2548's return to public service came at 4 pm that day as a full complement of passengers holding pre-issued tickets boarded at the BCT bus stop in the museum car park. For me, it was a proud moment indeed as I steered the bus out onto the road for the trip to Erdington via the Outer Circle route. The authentic feel of this return to service was re-enforced when my brother Michael, travelling on the 1940 Trent SON which had preceded us out of the museum, alighted at the first bus stop in Brookvale Road. He was dressed in full inspector's uniform and brandishing an inspector's 'slate' as he signalled me to stop. He looked so 'real', I can tell you that as an ex-Outer Circle bus driver, it sent a shiver down my spine! The experience was probably similar for the passengers as Michael boarded and requested them to show their tickets!

Having made our way to Erdington, we continued via Lichfield Road into the City Centre and Hill Street where Bob Day, in BCT conductor's uniform, and me, in driver's uniform, posed with Michael in front of the bus for photos. Having worked our way back to the museum and disgorged our load of happy passengers, the 'crew' took a refreshment break, after which it was decided to do an impromptu run to Walsall. Group members and keen admirers of the bus who had hung on as the day's official events came to an end enjoyed a spirited run to the town which had once been home to thirty of 2548's sister vehicles during the early 1970's. The dismal weather of earlier finally cleared and the sun broke through for our return to Witton at the end of memorable and triumphant day.

As well as all the supporters that helped to make the day such a success, special thanks are due for the part played by John Everill who kindly took a series of excellent photos of the unveiling ceremony. Some of John's photos subsequently appeared in the August edition of Buses magazine alongside others taken by Dave Sanders in a full page feature. I am also grateful to Justin Price for helping me produce the display of restoration photos and artefacts and for going to Derby the previous day to collect the display board, which he purchased through Ebay!

2548's first longer-distance outing was to the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway Classic Vehicle Day at Toddington on June 19th. A warm and pleasant day was enjoyed amongst a wide selection of vintage and classic cars and vans. Our's was the only bus on display, although Routemaster RML2478 was in use on the shuttle service to Winchcombe, bridging the gap in the railway left by a landslip.

That evening, on our return journey to Birmingham, an intermittent vibration became particularly noticeable. We suspected this was being caused by harmonic resonance between the front and rear prop shafts. If you have read reports on the restoration process of 2548, you will know that various faults with the transmission have resulted in the need to carry out significant repairs. However, it was now obvious there were further problems to iron out, so it was decided that both prop shafts should be removed for re-balancing or replacement. The front one had previously been balanced, but this time, requests to Shelley Transmissions in Wolverhampton to overhaul or re-manufacture the shaft resulted in them fitting a new spline and universal joint on the leading end. The rear prop was in good condition, but required balancing.



Open Day at Witton, 10th July 2011.

The prop shafts were refitted in time for the next running day at Witton on July 10th when another full load of passengers enjoyed a trip from the museum to Hill Street and back, this time in warm dry conditions! A short excursion during the afternoon to Aston Parish Church with Philip Lamb of Bus and Coach Preservation Magazine resulted in a fine selection of photos being taken for an article produced in the September edition.

July 16th was a red letter day for 2548 when she provided transport for guests at the wedding of Geoff Lusher and Barbara Powell. A return trip from the Clarendon Suites on Hagley Road to the ceremony at Birmingham Botanical Gardens, with the return extended via Harborne and Quinton, added to a memorable day for those on board and provided an attractive backcloth to some of Geoff and Barbara's wedding photos.



Geoff and Barbara, 16th July 2010.

The last weekend in July was the most ambitious outing for the bus since restoration, with a journey of over a hundred miles to Leyland, Lancashire. The outward journey was a leisurely affair spread over much of Saturday 30th and avoiding the M6 motorway, other than for the last few miles to Leyland to get around a low bridge on the A49. With each of the four drivers, John Green, Matthew Parker, Mick Evans and me doing roughly one hour stints and with two refreshment stops, we checked in at our hotel at about 4 pm before taking the bus for overnight parking at the British Commercial Vehicle Museum ready for their Bus and Coach Show next day.

Our reception at the BCVM was particularly friendly and we were all impressed by the wonderful collection of exhibits housed there and the way in which they are displayed. On top of that, there is an extensive archive including much from Guy Motors so we were delighted when archivist Derek showed us the original build sheet for 2548 which he had retrieved prior to our arrival. The sheet details all the components put together to make the chassis and also includes repairs carried out under warranty. We were given a copy of this fascinating document, which in effect is 2548's birth certificate!

With all this excitement and talking to the constant flow of people interested in the bus, by the time we got round to visiting the museum café on the Sunday afternoon, the choice of food on offer was rather limited, so museum Trustee, Stephen Bullock, asked one of the volunteers to take four of us round to the local supermarket to buy sandwiches in their Green Goddess fire engine, known as Gladys! This is the most unusual vehicle I have ever been shopping in and we were very grateful to driver Norman for the Leyland tour included on our way back to the museum!

After we had given the museum volunteers a ride around Leyland on 2548, the trip back to Birmingham was another pleasant experience, with a stop for a pub meal near Knutsford and a coffee and cake break at Stafford. Thanks to June Corney for making the cakes and organising the hot drinks, something she has done for us on a regular basis. Excellent!

The long journeys involved with this visit proved that the prop shaft work had significantly reduced resonance from the transmission. However, we know that the front bearing in the gearbox is worn and will eventually need replacement, hopefully the last significant repair required to give us the smoothness we want for trips involving a lot of flat-out running. Obviously buses like this were never intended for non-stop work, so many imperfections that would never have been an issue in service days have combined to cause more noticeable problems for us to resolve.

The second week in August was a particular low point in English history when rioting, looting and arson spread through many towns and cities. With Birmingham in the grip of nightly mayhem, and having personally been at the sharp end of this thuggery whilst working a night shift at Network Rail Control in the Mailbox, I took the decision to move 2548 out of Witton on 9th August to the safety of Tower Farm, Essington.

Once the authorities had re-established control, I returned the bus to Witton on 23rd August in readiness for the Bank Holiday weekend event at Wythall. This was most enjoyable, with 2548 running a trip on their bus service to The Maypole on both Sunday and Monday and staying at the museum overnight on the Sunday. Once again, Michael took on his inspector's role, with me driving and Bob Day as conductor. A particularly amusing incident took place on the Monday trip, when an old lady complete with shopping trolley at the Maypole 'terminus' asked the crew what was happening as she had not seen such a bus for many years. As she was expecting to have to walk home and, not wishing to disappoint her, her trolley was loaded inside and we departed with the lady happily aboard before stopping to drop her off, a few stops down Alcester Road at Hollywood Lane!



2548 (right) following an overnight stay at Wythall with old friends Leyland PS2 2245, Daimler Fleetlines 3796 and 3472, Daimler CVG6 3225. 29th August 2011.

Following a couple of evening trips to Kidderminster at the start of September, on the 3rd for the benefit of Diesel Traction Group members and the 9th for Mick Evans' BT colleagues, Barry Whitelaw travelled on the bus when it was being moved empty from Tower Farm to Witton and advised us that the engine seemed underpowered. Being a man of many years experience with Gardners, he knew the solution to the problem and on Sunday 11th September he assisted Mick to make the necessary adjustments. The difference was dramatic! Hills that previously had been breasted at only 20mph, we were now storming over at 30mph. On top of that, top speed was increased from 38mph to 42mph.



Tina Davis, 'conductress' for an evening trip from Witton to Kidderminster, 30th September 2011.

17th September saw the bus embark on another long-distance adventure, to Duxford, Cambridgeshire, for the Showbus event. With my brother Michael and me sharing time at the wheel and June Corney and Justin Price as 'support crew' we travelled via Daventry, Northampton and Bedford, arriving at the Imperial War Museum on the Saturday afternoon. There, we gave the bus a wash and brush up in glorious sunshine, having passed through rain en route. The bus was then parked up in front of the American Air Museum, where it looked like a Dinky Toy against the huge glass frontage. Left secure with the platform enclosed by the newly completed canvas door cover, we retired to our hotel for an evening meal followed by a trip into Cambridge by rail-replacement bus, for a pint or two of ale!



Wash and brush up time after arrival at Duxford. Justin seems to have had enough whilst June has laid on tea! 17th September 2011.

An interesting fact of note in relation to that day's journey with 2548 was that we had filled the fuel tank before leaving Birmingham and refilled it on arrival at Duxford. The fuel consumption for the journey turned out to be 12.3 MPG whereas before the pump adjustment we had only been achieving 9.55 MPG. What you call a win-win situation!

Next morning we were joined at Duxford by others that had travelled on Andy MacIntosh's Metrorider from Witton, at somewhat higher speeds than even 2548 can now attain! A non-stop stream of appreciative visitors were shown around 2548 during the day, many saying that, in their view, it was the best bus in the show. For us, this was just reward for the 20,000 or more man-hours invested in her restoration.



The Dinky Toy! American Air Force Museum, Duxford, 17th September 2011.

As the last vehicles were dispersing we said goodbye to our well-wishers, including my sister Catherine, her husband Rupert and son Steven who had travelled up from Hampshire, and set off for the long journey back home. After a stop near Bedford for tea, we were proceeding along the A428 towards Northampton when the engine started to lose power. We stopped a couple of times and bled air from the fuel pump, which cleared the problem in the short-term. However, after passing the village of Yardley Hastings, a steep hill proved too much and we spluttered to a complete halt. Luckily, I managed to steer the bus off the road into the entrance to a Forestry Commission access as the engine gave its last gasp. We quickly diagnosed the likely cause as being the lift pump. Fortunately, I had included one amongst the spares and equipment carried on the bus, so, with the inspection lamp plugged into the socket above the engine bay (as it was now pitch dark) Michael donned overalls and started to remove the suspect unit. We found that the spare unit was assembled for use on a 6LX engine, so Justin and I dismantled it and re-assembled it with inlet and outlet correctly positioned and we then had to remove the operating lever from the old pump and fit that. After fitting the new pump and priming the system, the engine fired up and we were on our way again after an hour at the roadside. We had been protected throughout the work by the flashing beacon unit made by Mick Evans, Keith Ball and me which fits in the upper rear window. Robert Day had made up the very useful inspection lamp and acted as go-between from the engine bay to the platform where we prepared the replacement pump, so all in all it was a fantastic team effort of which we can all be proud.



At Birmingham Council House during the Handford family tour, 8th October 2011.

Saturday 1st October saw the bus pass its second MOT since return to the road, with no problems noted by the examiner. The following weekend was a particularly special and enjoyable event for me when my parents, brothers, sister and nephews, along with spouses or girlfriends boarded the bus at Witton for a tour of old family haunts in Birmingham. These included schools, colleges, workplaces and our former home in Ridgacre Road, Quinton, now a medical centre. Our meanderings beyond the city boundary took us to Bewdley station where the activities of the Diesel Gala were enjoyed for an hour or so. We then adjourned for a splendid meal at the Bellman's Cross Inn at Shatterford, north of Kidderminster before Mick Evans drove us back to Witton, in frequently torrential rain!

Next day saw a visit to the former Boulton & Paul aircraft factory at Pendeford near Wolverhampton in support of an event being held to highlight the threatened closure of the

museum based there. Although only a small gathering, most of the visitors seemed to want to see inside 2548, including one man who reminisced about his father regularly falling asleep on Birmingham Standards and finishing up in Perry Barr garage! He was so keen to help with the upkeep of our example that he took my name and address and promised to send a donation. To my surprise and delight, three days later a cheque for £100 arrived in the post. A very kind and generous gesture!

16th October saw the very last running day at Aston Manor Road Transport Museum and 2548 played her part, carrying a 'three-bell' load round the Outer Circle to Yardley and back, with the body tilting to angles that can only normally be achieved by a cornering BCT Guy!



Outside her home of 23 years, at the end of the Outer Circle run during the final running day at Witton, 16th October 2011.

With the announcement of closure of the museum at Witton, the search for a new home for 2548 had resulted in an offer from the British Commercial Vehicle Museum at Leyland to house the bus. This was gratefully accepted for an initial period until April 2012, after which it is hoped to bring her back nearer to home territory.

Accordingly, on the day following Aston Manor's final event, a crew of John Green, Mick Evans and me set out on 2548 with my brother Michael following in his car for the second trip of the year to Leyland, this time one way only, for 2548 at least! This marked the departure from Witton of its longest standing resident, 2548 having being only the second bus to arrive in the newly repaired building in August 1988, the first being Ex-Derby Sunbeam trolleybus 215 (ARC 515), long-since removed to Tower Farm.

Everything was going fine on the journey north until we were approaching Wigan on the M6, having joined the motorway south of Warrington. Power started to ebb away and the same symptoms experienced the previous month when returning from Duxford became apparent. After several nerve-wracking stops on the hard-shoulder to bleed air from the injection pump, Mick managed to nurse the bus off the motorway and into a service road leading to an industrial estate. Fortunately for us, Jim Sheldon had very kindly overhauled the previously failed lift pump and this was on board. Michael donned his overalls and set about the now practised procedure of replacing the pump, although this time it was ready to fit with no

alterations. Fifteen minutes later, we were back on the road, firing on all cylinders! Subsequent inspection of the pump by Jim revealed a split in the diaphragm, most likely due to age, despite being described as 'reconditioned' when we bought it. The problem is that the reconditioning could have taken place in the 1980's or before! Once again, Jim has kindly overhauled the failed pump, which will go back into the stock of spares carried on the bus.

On reaching Leyland at about 4 pm, we were greeted by a willing group of volunteers who helped us get 2548 spotlessly clean before she was moved into position within the museum. Standing proud amongst their varied and well-presented exhibits, the bus made a very fine sight as we retired to the museum's cafe for tea and biscuits and a good chat with our hosts.

Following a decent meal and a pint at the Leyland Gates pub, we set off home, driven swiftly down the M6 by Michael, safe in the knowledge that 2548 would be in good hands during her winter hibernation.

In the year since 2548 returned to active use, a total of 1,575 miles have been covered and, although we have suffered two lift pump failures and had to deal with the transmission vibration problems, the bus has otherwise performed very well, considering it had barely moved for the previous 22 years and had not been in regular use since 1982. It has provoked many a smile amongst people of all ages and the most commonly heard comment from those that have inspected or ridden on it has been 'you've made my day!' The bus has been seen by people involved in maintaining it during its working life, people that worked at Guy Motors and Metro-Cammell, those that made components or supplied material for its restoration and people that have supported the project from the start. In each case, it has been a pleasure to show them something they have a connection with and share with them the pleasure of looking after and cherishing one of BCT's finest buses.



'You've got to be joking!' Luckily she was! A friendly WPC 'booking' the driver outside Lench's Trust, Ridgacre Road, Quinton. 15th September 2011.

Each outing has been characterised by people stopping in their tracks when they have seen the bus. On several occasions, motorists seeing the bus at the roadside have parked up and got out of their cars to come and have a closer look. One day in July when the bus was in Ridgacre Road, visiting its former home on my parents front drive(!), a lady motorist from Hull, turned her car round and came back to take photos of what she termed 'the most beautiful bus I've ever seen!'. On the same occasion, a group of residents from the Lench's Trust retirement complex gathered on the other side of the road, gazing nostalgically at 2548. Following a request from one of the care assistants, the bus was driven round onto the frontage of their property where the number of admirers was swelled by two WPC's passing

on patrol. A short trip around Quinton for the local residents caused great excitement and brought one of many requests received in 2011 to come back and visit again in 2012!

It has been quite a year for our 61 year-old design classic and one that I hope will be followed by many more of equal note!



The final departure from Witton. 17th October 2011



In her winter home. The day of arrival at the British Commercial Vehicle Museum, Leyland. 17th October 2011