



The Beadle - OKP 980

Owned by Thornes since 1960

This coach is one of the only four survivors from 209 Beadle Integral Rebuilds constructed utilising mechanical components salvaged from pre-war double deckers. It is the only one certified to full passenger carrying MOT standards. The rebuilds were produced to help satisfy the insatiable demand for new buses and coaches at the end of World War 2.

OKP 980 first went on the road in 1952 in its current form, supplied to the order of the Maidstone & District bus company in Kent. It was used initially as an express coach linking the Medway towns with London on a daily basis. Between 1971 and 2000 it lay disused and open to the elements. In 2006 it returned to the road in all its glory in 'as new' condition.

The driver sits in a cab separated from the main passenger saloon with a 7.4 litre Leyland engine to keep him company. Meanwhile the passengers sit in sumptuous luxury in ornate armchair-like seats known as the staggered design. Strangely the most generous leg room is afforded in the seats which are situated over the rear wheel arches - which counters the often heard adage 'I don't want to sit over a wheel'. The coach itself can cruise along at a brisk and quiet 50 mph, although it is usually driven along the open road at around 45 mph which is most commendable for a coach built when the maximum permitted speed for coaches was 30 mph.

As part of the refurbishment the coach has been fitted with a full CD and Public Address sound system. It can also be equipped to operate a hot drinks machine for 'in-coach' refreshments.

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The Seddon - VHO 200
Owned by Thornes since 1961

The Seddon is both unique and famous, It is however these two features which secured its fate and ensured its survival into preservation as a heritage icon.

The chassis was built and exhibited at the 1958 Commercial Motor Show in London. The chassis was purchased at the show by Charles Wilkins proprietor of the Creamline of Bordon Company, who sent it to Harrington Coachbuilders at Hove for fitment of their Wayfarer 4 Coach body. It entered service in March 1959.

The 30 production examples were all built to left hand drive and exported, leaving only the prototype (VHO 200) to represent the type in the British Isles. Creamlines policy was to replace their coaches at 2 years old and so the Seddon was acquired by J.H Thornes in 1961. The coach has remained in the ownership of the Thornes family ever since. However it lay disused in open storage between 1971 and 1989 but in that latter year a 4 year refurbishment began. Since returning to service in 1993, this coach has regularly toured the Benelux Countries, Ireland and throughout the UK.

It can achieve a commendable 58 mph if required, but cruises comfortably and efficiently at 50-55 mph. Not bad for a vehicle built in the year the first motorway opened.



The Dominant - KVY 789N
Owned by Thornes since 2002

The newest member of our heritage fleet, is a comparative youngster, although it is now over 30 years old.

It was supplied new to Gorwoods Coaches of East Cottingwith, near York in 1975. It would remain with them for 27 years until the owners themselves retired. Throughout the 27 years it was treated with nothing less than tender loving care, It never spent a single night 'under the stars'. It is reputed to have never ventured further than 60 miles as the crow flies from its depot and latterly was used only as a spare coach. Consequently its immaculate pristine condition when advertised for sale made it an ideal addition to the nearby Thornes Heritage Fleet.

45 Passengers can be seated in comfort and during 2006 the coach toured in The Netherlands and Germany



The Britannia - SHO 800
Owned by Thornes since 2003

The Britannia is one of the only two Duple Britannia's from this period known to exist. The other one operates tours around the Great Orme in Llandudno.

Our Britannia was built to the order of Creamline of Bordon (Hampshire) a high profile operator run by husband and wife Team Charles and Margaret Wilkins. Creamline purchased all their coaches brand new and sold them on after only 2 years service. Mrs Wilkins was well known for her coach driving skills in the South of England. Remember lady coach drivers were regarded as something of celebrities heroines even in the 1950's. Margaret Wilkins drove this very coach to success in the 1958 British Coach Rally.

SHO 800 is fitted with a semi-automatic gearbox which makes it a joy to drive. Another feature is the fitment of roof 'quarter lights' these being additional windows set into the roofline on each side to give passengers maximum visibility when 'sight seeing'.

Incidentally Charles and Margaret retired in 1967 and Creamline ceased to trade. There are only two known survivors from their fleet still on the road today and not entirely by coincidence they are both owned by Thornes.