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Hastings Tramways Club

No. 35

Newsletter

Special Bexhill Centenary Edition



A photo of some of the members along with Nigel's amazing mini tram which made its first public appearance on the 30th July.

30th July 2006 Centenary celebrations at Bexhill

On 28th July 1906, the first tram drove along the newly laid tracks of Bexhill and Cooden. To mark the centenary of this event, the club organized a trip through Bexhill with a number of different vehicles. At around 11am the vehicles started to gather at the Sailing Club, Bexhill. At 12noon the vehicles left the Sailing Club heading for Cooden Beach. The lead of the procession was Nigel's amazing mini tram, (this event was its first public showing). It was followed by our club's 1/4 scale tram, and then



by the Hastings Tramways Company Bus, a vintage Maidstone and District double Decker bus, a Stagecoach bus and then about 10 vintage cars from the Bexhill 100 Club. Traveling on board the buses were some of the Members of the BLOD's and children from the Charter's Ancaster who were dressed in Edwardian costume to match the period. At around 1pm the vehicles arrived at the Cooden Beach Hotel where the Mayor of Bexhill Cllr Eric Armstrong unveiled a commemorative painting by Mike Turner to celebrate the centenary of this event. Thank you to the Cooden Beach Hotel who laid on champagne and a jazz band for the occasion. The day ran very smoothly and would not have happened without the help of the Mayor of Bexhill, Mr. Kimber and staff of the Cooden Beach Hotel, The Bexhill Observer, The BLOD's and all the members that helped and joined in.



ABOVE The BLODs and the Mayor with Nigel's mini tram



ABOVE The Mayor of Bexhill, Mr Kimber, Roy and Mike in front of the unveiled commemorative painting

Turn over to see what the Bexhill Observer said about the day

Trams centenary celebrated in style



LADIES and gentlemen were dressed in their Sunday best from a by-gone era to commemorate the centenary of the first trams in Bexhill at the weekend.

A vintage PD2 formerly owned by the old Maidstone and District Bus Company and now more than 50 years old was part of a cavalcade of vehicles which followed the tram route from Bexhill Marina to the Cooden Beach Hotel.

The old double decker, driven by its owner Geoffrey Yarnell, had on board conductor Bob (I always wanted to do this but I worked in an office) Miles.



The BLODS join the Mayor and other councillors at the miniature tram. H31508a. Above, the unveiling of Michael Turner's tram print. H31508e. Pictures: Steve Hunnisset

its first public outing.

Town mayor Cllr Eric Armstrong and some children from Ancaster Charters School rode the route and arriving at Cooden, the cavalcade caused quite a stir among diners outside the hotel enjoying the sunshine.

Hotel owner James Kimber welcomed everyone with complimentary refreshments before the mayor, on behalf of Hastings Tramways Club, unveiled a framed print of a commemorative painting by renowned transport artist Michael Turner.

The print which has been hung on the hotel's reception wall shows a Bexhill tram outside the Devonshire Hotel. It has been signed by the artist and

By Gill Miller

Members of the BLODS (Bexhill Light Opera and Dramatic Society) had dressed for the occasion and enjoyed waving to passers-by and singing a selection of songs from past shows.

They were on board the single bus in its commemorative colours marking 100 years of public transport in Hastings last year and driven by Alfonso Assorgi, formerly from Naples but now living in Ninfield.

Completing the parade was the latest operational bus driven by Michael Wise, classic cars owned by members of the Bexhill 100, a model tram and a miniature replica of an electric tram making

sponsored by the Cooden Beach Hotel. Mr Turner had also signed postcards of the painting for sale which proved popular among those present. Copies of the print on display at the hotel are also available at £11 each by contacting the artist on 421950.

Cllr Paul Lendon said he had gained support for his idea to mark the date of first trams in Bexhill (July 28, 1906) from Roy Austen, the chairman of the Hastings Tramways Club.

Other organisations had been keen to get involved and they were now hoping to get a tram heritage centre in the Bexhill-Hastings area.

Those interested can contact Cllr Lendon via the Observer office.

Bexhill Carnival (29th July 2006)

On 29th July 2006, the tramway club took part in the Bexhill Carnival with the club's mini tram as we did last year in the Hastings Carnival. The club's mini tram, No. 10, was on its especially decorated trailer kindly towed by Alan Humphrey in his car. At around 11am the Judges came around to find winners in each group. We were amazed to find out that our float won 3rd place in the judging of our group which was Charities, Clubs and Organizations! We set off at about 1.00pm for the 4 mile trip. The procession started in Turkey Road and then set off heading into Sidley then into Bexhill, onto the seafront, along the seafront to the finish at the Polegrove where a variety of stalls and entertainment was on offer. The Carnival took about 4 hours to complete, with the club helping to collect money in two nets. It was a really great and fun day! Thanks to Roy, Derek, Alan, Mary and Oliver for taking part.

Hooe Vintage Car Rally (6th August 2006)

On the 6th August 2006, The club held a stall at the Hooe Vintage Car Rally. The day did very well on sales. We made £27.10 on Sales, £36.20 on our "Pick-a-Ticket", £3.61 in donations and £4 for the sale of Badges. That gives us a total of £70.91. Thank you to Roy and Chris for their help on the stall.

Crowhurst Summer Fayre (12th August 2006)

On the 12th August the club held its first stall at the Crowhurst Summer Fayre on the Recreation Ground, Crowhurst. The weather was constantly changing from sunny spells, to

cloudy spells, to pouring rain! Considering the weather changes there was still plenty of people and we had several very busy times. Against the weather we made an amazing amount of money. We made £44.80 on our "Pick-a-ticket" game, £28.51 on sales and £1 in donations, which gave us a total of £74.31! This is amazing in about 2 hours of good weather! Thanks to Derek, Alan, Mary and Oliver for their help on the stall.

Editor's Note: Please note that over the Hooe Vintage Car Rally and the Crowhurst Summer Fayre the club raised £145.22 which is amazing for two afternoons of work!

The Tram Truck (By Roy Austen)

At last we have got the truck from Dover picked up and delivered to the site at Robertsbridge, although it was assumed, by the railway, that we were going to have it sand blasted but we decided that this will be too costly and so we are working on it ourselves. It wasn't long before it was dismembered ready to be worked on. The two motors, having been removed, looked to be in fairly good condition, removing these lessened the weight of the truck considerably. Ian Sharp (R.V.R.) and myself removed the large nuts on the long bolts that go through the spring assembly frame. One of the bolts was broken but I was able to replace it using a discarded railway bolt. The threads on most of the bolts were rusty and rather clogged with years of grime and dirt but Ian carefully rethreaded them. We have learned that the truck is a 3 foot gauge and also slightly longer than a Hastings tram as it was fitted with track bakes. This should not cause us too much of a set back at all as I think we are lucky to get a truck, considering the price we could have paid for one.

FORTHCOMING TRAMWAY EVENTS 2006

23rd & 24th September Oliver will be showing his 00 gauge model tramway at the Staplehurst Society's Model Railway exhibition at Staplehurst Village Centre

8th October We will be holding a stall at the Family History Society's 20th Anniversary Fair

7th & 8th October We will be holding a stall at the Hobbies and Craft Exhibition at William Parker School, Hastings.

Nigel's Tram (By Roy Austen)

After weeks, months, years, Nigel's Tram made its debut for its first public showing on Sunday 30th July to commemorate the centenary of Bexhill's first electric tram service. After weeks of set backs, Nigel's 2 foot gauge tram, partly built from scratch in a workshop in London Road, Bexhill, finally emerged and it was from here that the tram began its first part of its journey. Nigel and members manoeuvred the tram out of the workshop and along to the top of a long narrow alleyway that led to the main road. When all was ready it was hitched up onto Nigel's friend's Land Rover and taken to his new workshop at the Charter's Ancaster school, Bexhill and unloaded. The top deck was brought from Nigel's home and raised into position. With only days to the centenary celebrations, the tram needed to be loaded onto the trailer and on the day, in the morning it was towed to the seafront to take its position in the procession to Cooden Beach. After the event, Nigel had arranged to take his tram to the Festival of Transport near Hellingly over the Bank Holiday. The 3 day event proved to be a success according to Nigel who said he had many enquiries about the tram and many offers to take it to other shows. After

the event the team of members arranged to meet at his workshop to unload the tram.

Immediately after the event, the tram was due to go to Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway near Maidstone, for a test run but this was not to be. The testing was going to be done using batteries but it was found that the batteries had gone unexpectedly flat and an attempt to recharge them failed, much to Nigel's disappointment as to replace them would be most costly. Due to the limited amount of time available for Nigel to test his tram, he now has no option but to rearrange or rethink where he may test it. We wish him better luck for the future.

I would like to say a special thank you to Peter Cavell, one of our members, for using his vehicle to tow Nigel's tram and for all of his help directing traffic at the Cooden Beach Hotel.



Trams

THIS scale model of one the trams which inaugurated the link between Bexhill and St Leonards in 1906 is among the highlights of the continuing museum exhibition devoted to the centenary of the launch of the service.

This cutting was in the Bexhill Observer a few weeks ago about the Bexhill Museum's tram centenary exhibition

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next open meeting will be held on 30th November 2006 at 8pm at the R.A.F.A. Club, Wellington Sq. Hastings.

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