

# Trams centenary celebrated in style



*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 Hunnisett*

**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.

## 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

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

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.