

WESTERN NATIONAL BOOK LAUNCHES DORCHESTER BUS RALLY

Sunday 12th August 2018 – 10am-4pm – Dorchester, Top o' Town car park – 4th annual running day – West Country Historic Omnibus and Transport Trust (WHOTT).

A new book on the history of Western National vehicles is to be launched in Dorchester on Sunday 12th August. It is compiled by Geoff Hobbs of the West Country Historic Omnibus & Transport Trust (WHOTT) which is organising its annual bus rally at Top O' Town car park from 10.00 to 16.00. Vehicles from the former Southern & Western National companies will be present, together with vehicles from other local and national companies and their successors, plus some historic local commercial vehicles. Thirty buses will operate 75 departures on 15 routes from Top O' Town between 09.20 and 17.30. In addition, early morning feeder buses will bring enthusiasts and the public in from adjacent towns.

For the second year running there will be a link with the Hardy Society. Last year two vehicles made a special trip to Melbury House, an area featured in Hardy's novel, *The Woodlanders*. This year we are heading out to Egdon Heath, where in the delightful countryside around Culpepper Dish you will discover areas featured in *The Return of the Native* and associations with *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The route will also take in Hardy's home at Max Gate and further on Clouds Hill, the home of Lawrence of Arabia. A tour guide from the Hardy Society will give a commentary on two coach trips at 11.45 and 14.00. Seats are limited so free tickets will be issued on a first come first served basis. The same applies to the Mystery Tour which departs at 13.30.

Chairman of WHOTT, Robert Crawley, said "This is WHOTT's fourth Dorchester running day and we aim to make it bigger and better than before. I am pleased to say that we have had a lot of support and enthusiasm from the Hardy Society which recognises the unique connection many of our services have with places featured in Hardy's novels, and from local bus operator Go-Ahead which will be displaying some of its vehicles. We shall be running classic buses and coaches on some historic local bus routes to delightful double-barrelled Dorset destinations. All services will be completely free, so we expect heavy demand – please come early!"

WHOTT will also have its mobile museum bus on site showing an exhibition of local memorabilia, and a stand selling books, photographs and transport ephemera. A souvenir programme describing the routes operated and a summary of local transport history will be on sale on the day.

NOTES TO EDITORS

WHOTT was formed in 1998 to establish a museum devoted to the history and development of public and commercial road transport in the West Country. It became a charitable trust in 2000 and now has sixteen vehicles in its care, covering the period from 1929 to 1998, including traditional half-cab single and double-deck buses, luxury coaches, minibuses and commercial vehicles. It also has a growing archive facility that can be visited by appointment.

From 2003 to 2014 the Trust organised an annual transport rally in Exeter but moved to Dorchester in 2015 and has grown every year since.

Free parking in Dorchester on Sundays. The rally site has a café and toilets and is a ten minute walk from the two railway stations. Direct trains from London and Bristol.

Top o' Town car park is the site of the former Bere Regis & District headquarters, bus garage and main works.

Morning free bus services from the main centres to Dorchester depart as follows: from Bere Regis at 09.00, from Blandford at 08.45, from Bridport at 09.00, from Sherborne at 09.00 and from Weymouth at 09.00. For routes and pickup times at intermediate points please see our website or call Robert Crawley as below.

Anyone who shares the aims of WHOTT is invited to become a member. Further details can be found on our website www.busmuseum.org.uk, facebook @WHOTTbusmuseum or from our chairman Robert Crawley, telephone 01395-567795, mobile 07974-567756, or from the sales stand on the day.