

## **RESTORED VETERANS LAUNCH DORCHESTER BUS RALLY**

Sunday 14th August 2022 – 10am-4pm – Dorchester, Top o' Town car park – 7th annual running day – West Country Historic Omnibus and Transport Trust (WHOTT).

Two remarkable veteran survivors which have not seen light of day for many years will be unveiled by the Mayor of Dorchester Cllr Janet Hewitt in the morning of 14th August. The historic coach was delivered new to an Exeter company in 1938 and operated on the Isles of Scilly from 1952. It entered preservation in 1971 and passed to the West Country Historic Omnibus & Transport Trust (WHOTT) in 2009 with whom it has been subject to a 13-year long restoration project. The restoration team will be on hand to guide visitors through its work. Its sister 1939 bus was new to Bournemouth Corporation, passed to the Civil Defence Authority and to Poole & District Model Railway Society, and has just been restored to original condition. Another first this year will be a model steam engine.

The vehicles will be static exhibits at Dorchester's annual vintage bus rally which will return on Sunday 14th August. It is again being organised by WHOTT, based at the Top O' Town car park from 10am to 4pm. Vehicles from former National and Borough bus companies will be present, together with representatives from local bus companies and their successors, plus some historic local commercial vehicles. However, the timetable will be less formal this year, with free buses operating on routes around Dorchester, Poundbury and local areas. In addition, early morning feeder buses will bring enthusiasts and the public in from some adjacent towns.

For the fifth year running there will be a link with the Hardy Society. A free coach tour of sites commemorating the 150th anniversary of the novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* and the centenary of the collection of poems *Late Lyrics* and *Earlier* will depart at 12pm with an on-board running commentary given by a local Hardy expert. In previous years vehicles made special trips to Melbury House, an area featured in Hardy's novel *The Woodlanders*, and to Egdon Heath, features recalled in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, as well as Hardy's home at Max Gate, and Clouds Hill the home of Lawrence of Arabia. In 2019 the Hardy trip followed the old route from Dorchester to Weymouth, looking at places connected with *The Trumpet Major* and other Hardy short stories. The idea was repeated in 2021 focusing on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Seats are limited so free tickets will be issued on a first come first served basis.

Chairman of WHOTT, Robert Crawley, said "This is WHOTT's seventh Dorchester running day but we continue to be cautious. Covid remains prevalent and we recommend that face masks be worn inside vehicles and the marquee or in close proximity to other people. Nevertheless I am pleased to say that we have had a lot of support and enthusiasm from Dorchester Town Council, and the Hardy Society which recognises the unique connection our services have with places featured in Hardy's novels. The event is kindly sponsored by local operator Damory, part of Go Southcoast".

A marquee will provide a covered area showing an exhibition of local memorabilia, and a stand selling books, photographs and transport ephemera. A souvenir programme describing 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 fifteen vehicles in its care, covering the period from 1929 to 1994, 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.

The Dorchester 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 will run to Dorchester from some main centres. For routes and pickup times please see our facebook page or 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](http://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."