

Newsletter 26A

Autumn 2015

Ten Years On, And Still Going Strong!



*The new Bus Hub at Bedford Bus Station is now in use. There are some other colour photos in this issue from the Bus Station on Pages 8 – 12. © **Suzy Scott***



The Newsletter of the Bedford Area Bus Users Society (BABUS) is produced by [here to there](#)

Welcome to the BABUS Newsletter 26A (but actually the 26th)

If you have any further questions, you want to send a contribution for the newsletter, or you spot something you think is wrong, please feel free to drop us a line!

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Next Newsletter (27) Deadline Date for News and Contributions is Monday 7th December 2015.

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A Slightly Different Newsletter – but why Edition 26A? ***By Suzy Scott***

In case you wonder.... This is our 26th Newsletter, but we missed a number in error. Therefore, this Newsletter is 26A (actually our 26th). The next one shall be 27, and thereafter that brings us back to speed.

Also, as of this edition, paper copies are being sent out with colour covers now. These are also being printed in-house by Here To There Publishing Ltd, our KonicaMinolta BizHub C353. (Maintained and supplied by a company in Leighton Buzzard, Central Beds!) Because we are paying much less per copy than the average commercial rate, we can afford a colour cover, at very little cost.

As a one-off, and especially for those no longer local to the area, I have added some a few extra photos from the new Bedford Bus Station, and 2015 AGM. It's a special occasion from both sides! Call it a souvenir, bonus, special edition, whatever you like!

In addition to the copier, we have a new Franking Machine, which is Mailmark compatible, thus allowing us to do the paper mail-outs a bit more cheaply.

End of Diamond Service 246 ***By Suzy Scott***

Before I forget, Diamond Coaches Service 246 (Milton Ernest – Bedford – Peterborough) is no longer running, following very poor passenger usage.

BABUS 10th Anniversary AGM

By Suzy Scott

Thank you to everyone who attended our Annual General Meeting last month. You can find full minutes on Pages 15 to 18, and some photos over Pages 18 and 20. A full list of the new committee can be found on the right-hand side.

New look BABUS Website

By Suzy Scott

Earlier this year, Here To There took the leap into the future, with updating our website. While the way we did things was cutting edge at the end of the 1990's, things have changed. The way people view websites have changed, and content management systems make things easier to maintain.

After a few more (same theme and layout, just a different colour for each site), the BABUS site was next for the makeover treatment. Our new WordPress site is more easy to look on mobiles, tablets, and modern web browsers alike – and it is also very easy to maintain! The change was made at no additional cost to the Society, too, as our current webhost provides the capability to have it too, and still have plenty of space left over.

While initially very similar in content etc. to that of our last one, watch this space for further developments in the coming months and year ahead.

The new look BABUS Committee

team, from July 2015

By Suzy Scott

As with last year, below you will find a full list of all our committee members. Please note our new Publicity officer does not have email access, but we shall be setting up a mailbox for future publicity refill requests. Additionally, he is not formally a committee member. The below list is updated with details to 31st July.

Mr Ray Smith Chairman

E-mail (BABUS version to follow)

raymondsmith393@btinternet.com

Mr Colin Franklin Vice Chairman

E-mail colin.franklin@babus.org.uk

Miss Frances Horwood Secretary

E-mail frances.horwood@babus.org.uk

Mr Simon Norton Membership Secretary & Treasurer

E-mail simon.norton@babus.org.uk

Mrs Suzy Scott Communications Officer

E-mail suzy.scott@babus.org.uk

Mr Andrew Spearman Committee Member

E-mail

andrew.spearman@babus.org.uk

Mr Ian Wigley Committee Member

E-mail ian.wigley@babus.org.uk

Mr Ian Raby Publicity Officer but NOT a Committee Member

No e-mail access

**Summary of the Bedford Borough
Council Liaison Meeting on 30th
June 2015**
By Frances Horwood

Since our last meeting, the Departure Hub at the Bus Station had opened. The next phase of the work would be concerned with health and safety, signage and barriers. There is work to be done at Bay L, now it is being used by Service 81.

The temporary, red and white barriers preventing pedestrians crossing the forecourt other than at pedestrian crossings, would be replaced by permanent barriers during the summer.

A new member of staff was to be employed in the Travel and Tourism Centre, to deal with bus-related queries. There might also be additional staff training.

The current administration in Bedford is pro bus - hence the investment in our new bus station. The Borough Council supports evening and Sunday bus services and also some rural routes.

Great Denham Residents' Association had asked for Sunday bus services on Route 8 to start later and finish later but this would have an impact on another area of the town as another route would have to start and finish earlier.

The next Bedford Borough Council Liaison Meeting will take place in September. Do get in touch if you have any matters or queries you would like us to raise.

**Summary of the Central
Bedfordshire Council Liaison
Meeting on 28th May 2015**
By Frances Horwood

This meeting took place just after the change to the route of Service 73 in Sandy and the introduction of Service 83. The change was necessary because it was dangerous for buses, with passengers on, to reverse near a school and elderly people's dwellings. Smaller vehicles are used for Service 83 and these reverse in a side road. At the time of the meeting, it was not clear how well used Service 83 would be; some people preferred to walk to the nearest No. 73 stop.

Service 73 now serves Sandy Railway Station but the bus stop has been moved further from the station, where it is easier and safer for vehicles to manoeuvre. A public consultation took place before the changes were implemented and the results of this are available on the Central Bedfordshire website.

There are other public consultations to come and BABUS will have the opportunity to be involved in these. The Council seeks to ensure that bus services meet the needs of those, particularly village residents, who rely on them for shopping and for other essential journeys.

Many bus passengers are concessionary pass holders, with 47% of journeys being made using a bus pass. For such bus users, the news that the government is committed to retaining

bus passes is very welcome. However, for local councils the cost of providing them is high.

The next liaison meeting with Central Bedfordshire Council will take place in late August. Do get in touch if you have any matters or queries you would like us to raise.

**Summary of the Stagecoach
Bedford Liaison Meeting on 15th
June 2015**
By Frances Horwood

This was the first liaison meeting since Jonathan Woodhouse became Operations Director in Bedford, so the BABUS representatives were glad to have a meeting with him. Our meeting had been postponed as Stagecoach were busy with the move to the new bus station and Jonathan was newly appointed. This was, therefore, our first opportunity to discuss the new bus station with Stagecoach.

A few "teething problems" had arisen, some of which were the responsibility of the Borough Council and others the responsibility of the developers, Britannia. The use of Bay L for Route 81 (necessitated by the use of coaches at certain times of day) was confusing, owing to the lack of signage. We had already raised this matter with Bedford Borough Council. Some elderly people find it difficult to get on and off the coaches but it is necessary to use coaches at certain times, in order to get them to Luton to form the 99. The

shelters at the X5 stops had been found not to be long enough for the number of people waiting in wet or cold weather; they may be repositioned.

The new route for Service 73 in Sandy was on the agenda. BABUS knew the background to this from our meetings with Central Bedfordshire Council but queried why the route was different in each direction, meaning that residents from the north of the town could catch a bus to the Tesco supermarket but not back. This was necessary to avoid a left turn on to the A1, where there was a hill and a tendency for some other road users to ignore the 50 mph speed limit. A new timetable for the route (issue 3) had been introduced. There was to be a joint meeting between Sandy Town Council, Central Bedfordshire and Stagecoach.

BABUS raised problems which had arisen during three weekend road closures for the NW Bypass roundabout work, which affected services 40, 41 and X5. Intending passengers were given to understand that services 40 and 41 would still serve the railway station, when in fact they did not and there was no information on this at the Railway station bus stop. When diversions are required, BABUS is ready to assist in the planning for these but in this instance we were unable to meet with Stagecoach during the relevant period.

We also made some comments on the current X5 vehicles. Short people, including myself, missed having a footrest and some taller people didn't

have enough legroom. Despite these drawbacks, the seats themselves were very comfortable and the air conditioning was appreciated. BABUS wondered if the route might get a display and announcement of the next stop but Stagecoach said the technology for this was not sufficiently accurate at present. ***(ED: Seems to work well enough on the Stagecoach Bluebird coach services, where this seems to help not only the visually impaired, but for the new extra-dark glazing in place! However, part of the project had been council funded. More closer to home, and indeed in Beds, it works well – and commercially - on Arriva Sapphire Service 321 (Luton – Watford)...***

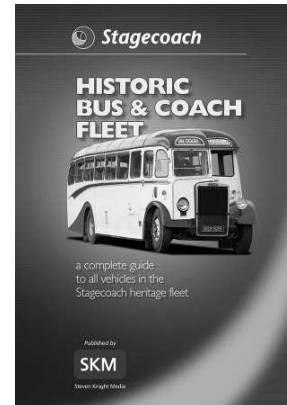
BABUS had been notified of breakdowns which had occurred on Routes 71 and 72 and there had been postings on our Bulletin Board concerning these. Stagecoach told us that a lot of work had been done on the vehicles on that route and that they should be more reliable in future.

The next Stagecoach Liaison Meeting will be held in September. Do get in touch if you have any matters or queries you would like us to raise.

Grant Palmer Liaison Meeting 2015
By Suzy Scott

The one scheduled for July 2015 has been rescheduled for August, and minutes were therefore not available. Please still get in touch if you have any matters or queries, that you would like us to investigate.

ADVERTISEMENT



Stagecoach retains over 50 buses and coaches (and a recovery vehicle) in its 'heritage' fleet with many of the vehicles maintained in a serviceable status and made available for hire as well as being used for local community and PR events. In our largest publication project we have pulled together details of every one of these vehicles and also obtained photographs of every vehicle. Stagecoach is proud of its heritage and many of the vehicles it has retained have a major significance in the history of the company. The book contains a Foreword by Stagecoach Founder and Chairman Sir Brian Souter and full details are given of who to contact to hire many of the historic buses and coaches.

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Bedford New Bus Station 2015 – A Story In Pictures

By Suzy Scott

As a special bonus, we have added four pages of photos from Bedford's new Bus Station.

Page 9, Top The entrance area at Thurlow Street, and the Travel & Tourism Centre. Some additional trees have been planted adjacent to the benches. Compare this with the back cover (top) photograph on the back cover of Newsletter 25.

Page 9, Bottom Under the canopy of the bus station, showing the departure bays for local buses.

Page 10, Top The X5 service needs the space formerly occupied by three local bus stops, for two bus stops for X5 towards Oxford or Cambridge.

Page 10, Bottom The Grant Palmer bus shelters area are fairly recent, so weren't needed to be redeveloped. Here you can see their island platform, next to their layover area. You can also see the plastic barriers, which will eventually be replaced by metal ones.

Page 11, Top A Stagecoach bus in front of the new look Bus Station. The background view shows the full width of the redeveloped site.

Page 11, Bottom Car Parks don't often get mention in BABUS Newsletter, but the one in All Hallows upgrade was part of the Bus Station works. It can be seen behind the buses on layover.

Page 12, Top The interior concourse, showing the seats and timetable panel boards. The metal seats drew criticism on colder days, but those might well be subject to rework between now and the next winter.

Page 12, Bottom The opposite end of the concourse, showing the extended fences, which are intended to keep buses and passengers separate.









What's In A Name?

By Suzy Scott

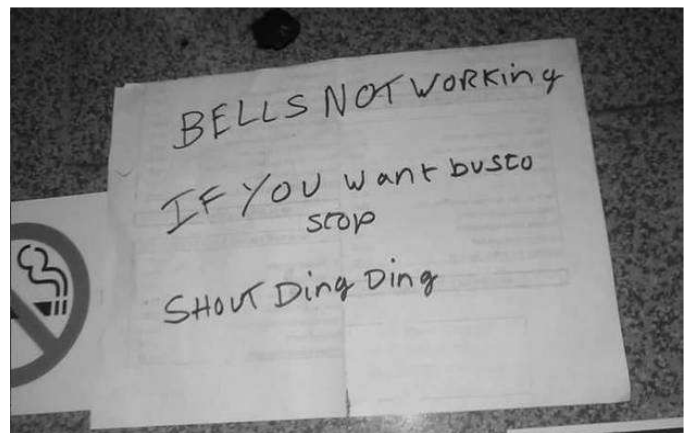
Following the arrival of some used MAN saloons from Cambridge to Stagecoach Bedford (I remember these from travelling to Milton and Royston!), we heard reports over on the Anglia & Thames Valley Bus Forum of the buses displaying Shortstown 9 as two words i.e. Shorts Town 9. Is this the first time this has happened with this particular destination? Spot this difference in these two photos, taken in the same hour at Bedford Bus Station...



No Bell, No Problem...

By Suzy Scott

Thank you to our member Alan Hunter, who sent me this one – after it appeared in *The Independent* and *Dalesman*. Basically, a bus (we think Bates Travel) in Barnsley had a defective bell. Rather than taking this defect to his managers, the poor driver took to his duty card with a marker pen, and affixed this behind the cab...



The Oldest Bus Timetable in Beds – unless you know better?

By Suzy Scott

Thanks to our new Publicity Officer Ian Raby who has sent a letter of various notes. While there are various Bedford bus stop flags from August 2011 in Carlton, Pavenham etc. showing the withdrawn 125/126, it's not the oldest out there. We are told of a timetable case at Wrestlingworth, Chapel Road, for the 173/174 service, showing connections at Stevenage for the 191 at Biggleswade! No date is shown, but it appears to be from 8th September, 1998. That is therefore the oldest bus timetable panel still on display – unless you know different?

Arrival of 3 Whippet Puppies
From the operator – the 75 comes into our area at Wrestlingworth, as does their shopper 406 in Bedford.



In the group photo at the front are (left to right): Charles Hart (Animal Rehomer) with Blousie the dog, Paul Young (General Manager for Whippet Coaches), Richard Parris (Corporate Fundraiser for Wood Green, The Animals Charity), Paul Nelson (Public Transport Manager at Cambridgeshire County Council) and Paula McBride (Animal Rehomer) with Bailey the dog.

Three Whippet Puppy buses are now settling in at their new home in Swavesey, Cambridgeshire. The buses have been acquired by Whippet Coaches from another part of Tower Transit Group, its parent company.

"Whippet Puppy buses seat 29 compared with our full-size single-deckers with up to 46 seats, "explains Matthew Wooll, Commercial Manager. "They are therefore ideal for a number of rural services we operate on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council,

including the 31 and 75 which have new timetables commencing on 27th July."

The puppies were officially launched at Wood Green, The Animals Charity in Godmanchester on Thursday 16th July, thanks to the kind assistance of Richard Parris, Corporate Fundraiser.

"When we heard about Whippet's new litter of puppies we couldn't resist being involved in their unleashing," said Richard. "We often take in pregnant mums and litters of puppies or kittens, giving them the care and support they need before finding them adoring new homes so we love the idea of vehicles being given a second chance by 'rehoming' them, especially ones so young. "

The animal rehoming centre at King's Bush Farm in Godmanchester is the head office of Wood Green, The Animals Charity. From humble beginnings in 1924 it has grown to become one of the leading animal welfare organisations in the UK with centres throughout Herts, Beds, Cambs and London. Thousands of animals of all shapes and sizes are taken in and rehomed each year, including chickens, rabbits, mice, guinea pigs, rats, ferrets, cats, dogs and of course whippets!

Whippet Coaches was formed five years earlier in 1919. The business made a donation of £300 to help the charity continue their good work.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Bedford Area Bus Users' Society, held at Bedford Central Library on Saturday, 4th July 2015
Taken by Frances Horwood

Present:

John Smith - Chairman
Colin Franklin - Vice Chairman
Martin Brookes - Publicity Officer
Frances Horwood - Secretary
Simon Norton - Treasurer and Membership Secretary
Suzy Scott - Communications Officer
Stephen Sleight - Bedfordshire Rural Transport Partnership
Andrew Spearman - Co-opted Committee Member
Ian Wigley - Co-opted Committee Member

Eighteen others were present, including BABUS members, guests from other bus user groups and others with an interest in bus travel.

1. Welcome and confirmation of appointment of Executive Committee members co-opted since the last AGM

The Chairman, John Smith, welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Andrew Spearman and Ian Wigley, inviting members to confirm their appointment to the Executive Committee. The appointment of Andrew Spearman was proposed by Leonard Lean and seconded by Suzy Scott, with all members present voting in favour. The appointment of Ian Wigley was proposed by Suzy Scott and seconded by Ian Raby, with all members voting in favour.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Peter Blakeman, Michael Dewsbery, Paul Owen, Ralph Sewell and Godfrey Willis and also from Hugh Jaeger (Bus Users Oxford) and Paul Spelzini, on behalf of Potters Bar and St. Albans Transport User Group.

3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 5th July 2014

These had already been circulated and were accepted as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's Annual Report for year ended 31st March 2015

This had been included in the current newsletter and so was not read out. John commented that new committee members would still be welcome.

6.1 Treasurer's Report for year ended 31st March 2015

This had been included in the current newsletter. The Treasurer, Simon Norton, said that funds had been very low, earlier in the year. When new leaflets were required in time for the bus station opening, there were insufficient funds to pay for them, so the Chairman loaned the money, which had now been repaid. At present, the net assets amounted to £511.55. This included support from the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity and some cheques which had not yet been paid into the bank account. The cost of hiring the meeting room at the Library was being met by Bedford Borough Council, for which BABUS was very grateful.

BABUS had 32 paid-up individual members and there were 8 who had not yet renewed and a further 5 whose membership had lapsed since they had not renewed it for 2 years. There had been 2 resignations.

There were 15 group members, of whom 3 had paid this year's subscription and 12 had not.

John Smith expressed thanks to Simon for his work as Treasurer and for insisting that cheaper meeting rooms were hired in order for BABUS to be solvent.

6.2 Resolution to be proposed by the Treasurer:

"The Executive Committee be authorised to raise subscriptions for individual members for the year 2016/17, by a sum not exceeding £2 if, in the judgement of the Committee, such an increase is necessary for the proper running of the Society."

Simon Norton proposed this resolution and Peter Williams seconded it. All were in favour. It is not currently intended to raise the subscription but an increase may become necessary, for example if postage costs rise. Suzy Scott said that her company, Here to There, is now able to print the newsletters in-house, enabling them to be produced more cheaply.

7. Election of Officers

The following were willing to continue in office:-

Colin Franklin (Vice Chairman), Frances Horwood (Secretary), Simon Norton (Treasurer and Membership Secretary), Suzy Scott (Communications Officer), Andrew Spearman (Committee Member) and Ian Wigley (Committee Member).

Martin Brookes (Publicity Officer) and John Smith (Chairman) did not wish to continue. It was suggested that those willing to continue be re-elected en bloc. This was proposed by Leonard Lean and seconded by Ian Raby. All were in favour.

Martin Brookes had been a stalwart member of the Committee for a long time, with responsibility for publicity. When the old bus station closed, Martin volunteered to assist with directing people to the temporary stops and he performed this task for a month, during winter weather. He was standing down owing to ill health. Hence a new Publicity Officer was being sought. Ian Raby was willing to carry out this responsibility

but he did not envisage joining the Executive Committee. Ian's appointment as Publicity Officer was proposed by Suzy Scott and seconded by Colin Franklin. All were in favour. John Smith was not standing for re-election as Chairman since he would shortly be moving to Bath in order to be nearer his children and grandchildren, living in Bristol and Wiltshire. He has already joined a bus user group there and his new home benefits from frequent bus services. BABUS was now seeking a new Chairman. The role would depend on whether the Chairman was free during the day on weekdays: if not, the duties would consist of chairing six committee meetings per year, held on a Saturday morning, and the Annual General Meeting but someone available during the day on weekdays could take an active part in attending liaison meetings. Each of these (Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Stagecoach and Grant Palmer) takes place quarterly. There are just sufficient committee members to attend these meetings but more help in this respect would be very welcome.

The meeting was asked if anyone wished to stand as Chairman and Ray Smith expressed his willingness to do so. He told us that he had been interested in buses and other public transport for a long time and was familiar with contacting operators, including Stagecoach Midland. His appointment as Chairman was proposed by Suzy Scott and seconded by Colin Franklin. All were in favour.

8. Election of Executive Committee

Committee Member Marilyn Basketter wished to stand down as she had become Chairman of Sharnbrook Parish Council and this role, together with her family responsibilities, took up a great deal of time. BABUS was grateful to her for her membership of the Committee. Those willing to serve on the Executive Committee were Colin Franklin, Frances Horwood, Simon Norton, Suzy Scott, Andrew Spearman, Ian Wigley and Ray Smith. Their appointment was proposed by Ian Raby and seconded by Alan Sprod. They were voted in en bloc, with all in favour.

9. Any other business

Simon Norton would receive subscriptions at the end of the meeting, if anyone present had not renewed and wished to do so.

David Gower, from Luton, said how grateful he was to have been invited and expressed his gratitude for the help he had received from John Smith. He wished John well for his move to Bath. We learned that hospital staff were very appreciative of the work of bus user groups and wished them well and that they were highly thought of by the BMA .

Dr. Rasamuthiah, who had accompanied Mr. Gower, spoke about the benefits of bus travel. He was a lifelong bus user and, originally from Sri Lanka, had lived in England since 1976. His field was psychiatry and he had worked in Luton since 1982. He was officially retired but was still involved in the hospital in an advisory capacity and was also involved in transport matters, as part of the Senior People's Forum. He said that

the restriction preventing free travel for bus pass holders before 09.30, was a problem for people attending hospital, particularly for blood tests. Bus pass holders in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire, unlike those in Luton, do not have this restriction. Some councils have a reduced fare for bus pass holders travelling before 09.30. This is the case in Milton Keynes; the cost used to be 50p but it has recently risen to half the adult single fare. Other local authorities might consider introducing something similar. Chris Pettifer (Head of Transport Operations, Bedford Borough Council) thanked John Smith and Martin Brookes for their work with BABUS, speaking on behalf of the Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Stagecoach and Grant Palmer.

Peter Ballantyne, Chairman of Milton Keynes Bus User Group, advised us of major changes at Arriva. Arriva the Shires will no longer exist and Milton Keynes will come under Arriva Midland. This will lead to difficulties in communication between the new managers and MKBUG. There has been a change of attitude in Milton Keynes regarding subsidies, which shows a lack of understanding of the practical needs of bus passengers. MKBUG was fighting on behalf of bus users; the group has 150 members and Peter is constantly being contacted by members. The knowledge which the committee of MKBUG has is surprising to the council and bus operators.

John Smith said how pleased we were to see Alan Hopkinson, our former Newsletter Editor, at the meeting. The formal business having been completed, our guest speaker, Claire Walters, the Chief Executive of Bus Users UK, spoke. Her talk, concerning the role of this organisation, was very interesting and informative. She then took questions from members of the audience. The meeting ended with a lively and wide-ranging discussion, prompted by points raised by various people present.

Our 2015 Annual General Meeting – Photo Captions

Our Annual General Meeting attracted a very good crowd! The venue was at Bedford Central Library, with a standing load towards the end! The meeting was lively, and lots of BABUS publicity was picked up – please keep passing 'em on!

Opposite, Top, Page 19 Our Poster also made for a useful door sign!

Opposite, Bottom, Page 19 Refreshments kindly provided by our outgoing Chair's wife, Ellen Smith. Here she is assisting outgoing Publicity Officer Martin to a cuppa! Colin Frankin is in the background.

Back Cover, Top, Page 20 As we set up the meeting room.

Back Cover, Top, Page 20 *All done for another year! The crowd shows the mixture of local and further afield, users and professionals alike. Our former Newsletter Editor, Alan Hopkinson, is the gentleman in the powered chair. **All by Suzy Scott***

Our 2015 Annual General Meeting (Captions on Page 18)



Our 2015 Annual General Meeting (Captions on Page 18)

