

# EASTERN COUNTIES OMNIBUS COMPANY LIMITED



*Photo taken in 1967 at the Fountain, March, Cambridgeshire*

**REG NO: 3014 AH FLEET NO: LM 452 BODY NO: 10380 CHASSIS NO: 139227**

1958 built Bristol MW5G 45 seat saloon with ECW bodywork and Gardner 5HLW oil engine.

Vehicle owned and fully restored to original 1950s condition by Patrick Burnside of Norwich, Norfolk.

Rescued for preservation from the Eastern Counties Omnibus Society (now ETCS) in June 1978.

Restoration completed in September 1984.

One man operated Bristol MW5G stage carriage saloons were the mainstay of the Eastern Counties single deck fleet from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s, following the demise of their crew operated half cab 'L' type predecessors. LM 452 started her service life as fleet number LL 452 in March 1959 at Wisbech depot, where she began operating the newly introduced M&GN railway substitute service 336 from King's Lynn to Peterborough, via Wisbech, Guyhirn and Thorney.

Two years later, she was converted for 'one man operation', had her fleet number changed to LM 452 and was transferred to March's Wisbech Road garage, where she remained for the rest of her service life, often noted operating the long distance stage carriage service 104 between March and Cambridge. She quickly became a very

familiar stalwart on the lonely Fenland roads, ferrying passengers from the railway town of March to the cities of Peterborough and Ely and the nearby market towns of Chatteris, Downham Market, Manea, Ramsey and Wisbech. She was also a regular performer operating the local March town services throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

In 1966, LM 452's fleet number was changed yet again to LM 952, to allow for the newly delivered Bristol FLF Lodekkas to receive fleet numbers previously allocated to the 4XX numbered MWs, LM 452's fleet number subsequently passing to the thirteenth member of the new FLF class, FLF 452 (JAH 552D).

In 1973 she was repainted into the corporate NBC poppy red and white livery, complete with white fleetnames and reflected 'N' logo. It was around this time that she lost her front radiator grille, when her front panel was replaced possibly following an accident. This procedure was common-place with MWs in the Eastern Counties fleet, with very few members surviving to the end of their service with their radiator grilles intact!

LM 452 was one of the first Bristol stage carriage MWs to be withdrawn in 1974, following the introduction of the 'Bus Grant', a Government backed scheme which allowed bus companies to replace older fleet with brand new vehicles at a significantly reduced cost. However, despite her somewhat early withdrawal, LM 452 provided the Company with fifteen years of sterling passenger service in and around the Cambridgeshire Fens.



### *Subsequent history . . .*

After leaving Eastern Counties service, she passed to Ben Jordan of Coltishall, who quickly sold her to John Brignall & Co, a Cambridge building contractor. Here she was repainted into all over cream livery with yellow 'go faster' stripes along her sides and was operated as a site workers' bus for the next three and a half years.

Upon withdrawal from John Brignall, she was acquired by the Eastern Counties Omnibus Society (now the Eastern Transport Collection Society) as a possible preservation project. The Society had also acquired LS 789, an MW5G coach of similar age to LM 452 at this time and after much consideration by the Society's committee, decided not to proceed with LM 452's preservation, opting to restore LS 789 instead. LM 452 was destined to become a source of spares for LS 789 and her future looked very bleak. Fortunately, her present owner learnt of her existence 'through the grapevine' and managed to negotiate a suitable deal with the ECOS treasurer at the eleventh hour and LM 452 was successfully rescued from her uncertain fate a couple of weeks later in June 1978.

Full restoration, including reinstatement of the radiator grille and rear destination indicator, was carried out over the next six years by her present owner, culminating in a prize winning debut appearance at the Norwich Bus & Coach Rally, organised by the Eastern Transport Collection Society at the Royal Norfolk Showground in September 1984.

Since this time she has attended many rallies, shows, museum open days and classic bus running days throughout the Eastern Counties area and beyond from Lincoln in the north to Southend and Canvey Island in the south, winning many awards along the way!

LM 452 is the sole surviving member of a once large Eastern Counties stage carriage MW fleet, numbering 105 such vehicles, making her a unique part of the Company's history.