

## Fleet classification and numbering memories by Geoff Pullin

Reading the new introduction to the Vehicles section and having been at the chief engineer's offices Cremorne Lane during 1965-1967 (the changing time when the new FLF, RESL, Bedford VAM, RELL were entering the fleet), you may be interested in these comments about the fleet numbering!

As a bus spotter before entering the Tilling Group graduate training scheme (I don't think they had a graduate engineer before!) I could not understand the letters used for vehicle classes at ECOC as they didn't mean anything special to either engineers or traffic but became a simple short hand for a sort of vehicle!

During my time there, fleet numbers were allocated by the engineering clerk (Lennie Leverett). Nobody else in the organisation seemed to show any interest! He was based in the general office, next to the Chief Engineer's Secretary, with Russell ? and desks for the Chief Driving Instructor ( who was usually out around Norwich, Cambridge, Peterborough and Ipswich) and Rolling Stock Inspector (whose major task was storing withdrawn vehicles at Silver Road garages and dealing with disposal, invariably through Ben Jordan). My office was nearby and I spent a lot of time in the general office. So when all these new vehicle types were on the horizon, it was very interesting!

The break with L for Bristol had been made before my time, with the RELH coaches, simply using the generic name RE for the new fangled vehicle - I don't think the E had anything to do with Express (DP). I suspect Lennie wouldn't have known that RESL, RELL were yet to come, so I think I suggested to him that we keep R as common for RE types and then S for short and L for long as this would be useful to traffic in capacity terms and engineering to know what to expect underneath!

When the various Bedford VAMs appeared in the orders, I can't remember how they ended up as CB and SB rather than BC and BS which would make more sense in old and new terms! By the way, the ECW bodied bus version VAMs were not unique to ECOC, others receiving them included Western National & West Yorkshire. That year NBC made a deal with Bedford. In retrospect, I suspect it was to cover a gap in Bristol total output and especially in the light vehicle programme because the Bristol LH was not yet available. ECW clearly had the capacity to produce bus bodies. It was GM Tom Skinner (formerly Chief Engineer of ENOC) who decided to split the four buses between Bedford 330 and Leyland 400 engines so as to compare performance (fuel consumption and maintenance durability). However there was no opportunity to use the information! Bedford buses were not on offer the next year and VAM coaches came with the new Bedford 466 engine (probably without option) .

Earlier, when the FLFs were ordered, I think I checked with Lennie that he didn't intend to code them as LFLF! but all was well and he followed the precedent set by the RE. I am sure I commented that the L in LFS and LFL could be removed, then bus people outside the company would understand what we were talking about!

Keeping the fleet numbered uniquely and below 999 when it had over 700 vehicles and turned over about 30 a year, was tricky. When the proportion of double decks started increasing with the large FLF orders, there was a need to renumber a good few single deck LM to allow all double decks to be numbered below 500. I was surprised how readily this took place without any seeming difficulties!