

# Vehicle Profile: DBL 154

A close look at a vehicle in the TV&GWOT collection

446 was delivered to the Thames Valley Traction Company in September 1946, one of a sizeable batch of immediate post-war double-deckers arriving in 1945/6 that were to pioneer many new features.

The twelve DBL-registered vehicles, in common with the earlier CRX batch, all carried Bristol's new lower-profile 'PV2' radiator and an early variant of the lowbridge Eastern Coachworks body, both of which would soon become ubiquitous. These early bodies featured experimental forced-air ventilation hopper windows on the front and sliding quarter-windows on the sides. Although these concepts were widely adopted when the bodies went into general production, the styling was radically changed, and 446 thus has a look that is quite distinct from its younger K-type cousins.

446 originally operated from Thames Valley's High Wycombe garage, where it remained until 1956. It then performed a further seven years service working from the company's depot at Lower Thorn Street in Reading. Following transfer to the western end of the company's operation at Newbury in 1963, 446 underwent an extensive body overhaul prior to re-entering service there.

In March 1965, the bus was involved in a serious accident with a mobile crane, causing extensive damage to the offside rear

accident with a mobile crane, of the upper deck.



Ironically, this has probably contributed to its survival today, having resulted in withdrawal by Thames Valley at a time when the bus might be deemed by others to have further potential service life after repair.

Fortunately 446 was bought by the Rossmore Bus Company in Bournemouth, who repaired the damage and returned it to service. Known locally as the 'Monkey's Hump and Heavenly Bottom Express', or the 'Rossmore Flyer', Rossmore used 446 for a further 6½ years, mainly on school work.

Following withdrawal, after more than a quarter of a century in service, 446 was purchased for preservation by a young Ward Jones in January 1972. Work on 446's restoration started immediately with overhaul of the engine and extensive rebuilding of the timber frame and platform behind the rear axle. Repainted into its original Tilling red and cream livery, 446 was a regular sight at rallies across the country until 1989, when another major refit was undertaken including rebuilding and repainting of the main body frame, re-upholstering and re-trimming and a full repaint.

After 42 years in Ward's care, 446 was purchased by the Trust in October 2014 following our public appeal to raise funds. Many of you gave generously to secure the bus and much volunteer effort from Supporters has since been invested to ensure a high standard of mechanical and cosmetic turnout is maintained. 446's inaugural run with the Trust took place in March 2015 (see *To and Fro* 001), and it featured as the Trust's flagship vehicle in service at our Thames Valley 100 celebrations in August.

## DATA PANEL

**Registration:** DBL 154  
**Type:** Bristol K6A  
**Built:** 1946  
**Body:** Eastern Coach Works (ECW)  
**Operator:** Thames Valley Traction Company

### Lady in Red (left)

446 (DBL 154) pictured at its new home, following purchase by TV&GWOT in 2014. This was thanks to a fundraising campaign by the Trust and the resulting generosity of many supporters.

