

# News from Transport Museum Wythall

## A COMPREHENSIVE diary for 2026 – SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

- **HIGHLIGHT** 'Outer Circle 100' celebrates the centenary of one of the world's most famous bus routes with a new exhibition and running day
- **HIGHLIGHT** The Harrington Owners Gathering returns with coaches and cars from this famous bodybuilder
- **HIGHLIGHT** Daimler celebrates 130 years of one of the big names in omnibus manufacture
- **Eleven themed event days across the year include:**
  - Bristol Owners Gathering
  - *Outer Circle 100* exhibition and running day
  - Harrington Owners Gathering
  - London Comes to Wythall
  - Blues and Twos – the second emergency vehicle day, by popular demand
  - Daimler 130 celebrates this famous bus manufacturer
  - Seventies Mania for all things seventies
  - 40 years of deregulation and the end of WMPT
- **Launches of the Midland Red D7 following extensive restoration and the WMPT Ford Transit minibus**
- **Wythall BusFest@Gaydon with Daimler 130 focus**
- **18 buses in the running fleet for 2025 including new 'faces'**
- **Museum open from February 14 to April 1 on a winter schedule**

Transport Museum Wythall regularly celebrates the evolution of public transport with era-specific rallies, including events that spotlight the transition from 1930s elegance to the post deregulation 1980s and 1990s. For the 2026 season, which opens on February 14, these themed days will continue to offer a family-friendly atmosphere with miniature steam train rides running alongside the buses and access to three display halls packed with transport memorabilia. Prices from £6 for adults will apply until April 1 when the full schedule commences. Please see the website for full details of prices and opening dates over this period.

2026 will see eleven themed event days including the return of the Harrington Owners Gathering and London Comes to Wythall, a tribute to Daimler in its 130<sup>th</sup> year, a dive into the 1970s and a review of 40 years of Deregulation – and much, much more.

### New Exhibition from April 2025 – 'Outer Circle 100'



The Museum has created a new exhibition for the 2026 season looking at Birmingham's iconic Outer Circle bus route that opened 100 years ago in April. The number 11 is a 27-mile orbital route with 266 bus stops that encircles the city's outer suburbs and is today operated by National Express West Midlands. It's a famous 'Brummie' icon and was once Europe's longest urban bus route. The comprehensive exhibition explores the route and its buses.

## **2025 visitor numbers held up in another fiscally challenging year**

2026 follows another successful year for Transport Museum Wythall, maintaining its visitor numbers at *circa* 18,000 in an ongoing period of cost-of-living challenges. Visitors continue to be vocal on Facebook and Trip Advisor about the value for money that the museum offers, particularly to families when two adults and two children can visit from just £20, with free bus rides included. 30% of the Museum's visitors now have one or more children with them.

## **Never a dull moment in 2026 with plenty to interest in a variety of themed events**

2025 sees a strong mix of themed Event Days alongside normal running days, in both cases free bus rides are included. Main Event days also see a number of visiting vehicles, the majority allied to the event theme itself, and the special museum service from Birmingham city centre.

This year includes the return of the now well-established Bristol Owners Gathering (Sunday/Monday, 5/6 April) when the Museum's Bristol buses will mix with visiting examples, presenting the wide range of buses supplied by this well-known company, many of whose chassis were bodied by Eastern Coachworks. The Harrington Gathering (Saturday/Sunday, 16/17 May) is also back this year, now established as a regular event. With not only its stylish coaches but sports cars from both Sunbeam and Triumph, Harrington's designs never fail to please the eye.

The sounds of fire engines, police cars and ambulances will ring out on Blues and Twos Sunday (9 August), then we celebrate the Coventry built Daimler bus in its 130<sup>th</sup> year with a display of our own fleet alongside early Daimler cars from the British Motor Museum collection (30/31 August).

And of course, the year will end with Twilight Running Day (Sunday 26 October). The traditional end of October rally brings an end to the running day season with a chance to ride on buses into the twilight now that the clocks have gone back. The Museum is open until 6.00pm with last bus rides at 5.30pm.

## **Running events for 2025 in more detail**

### **Main Event. Easter Bank Holiday – Sunday/Monday 5/6 April**

We open our new **Outer Circle 100** exhibition which records some of the interesting local features around this iconic bus route along with the vehicles that ran on it over the decades. Outside, the Bristol Owners Spring gathering will bring its usual eclectic mix of Bristol vehicles alongside examples from the museum collection.

### **May Day Bank Holiday – Sunday and Monday 2/3 May**

Springtime bus rides.

## Harrington Owners Gathering - Sunday 17 May



The museum is proud to host the return of the Harrington Gathering in 2026 when we hope to see the largest ever rally of iconic Harrington coaches and cars plus any other Harrington coachbuilt product that surfaces in the meantime. The 2023 event was much appreciated by all 400 people that visited Wythall on the day with coaches representing eight decades of art deco-inspired design on a number of different chassis. The already significant interest indicates that this year's event will be considerably larger than 2023.



## Main Event. Spring Bank Holiday – Sunday and Monday 24/25 May

The museum's number 11 Outer Circle 100 fleet will lead the running day supported by visiting vehicles.

## **London Comes to Wythall– Sunday 14 June**

The day when London moves north and the Museum's AEC RF joins its visiting friends for a running day.

## **Low Floor Running Days – Saturday/Sunday 27/28 June**

The museum is blessed with several examples of what some may call 'new buses', although step free access was a mid-1990s phenomenon. The fleet will be joined by visiting vehicles for a themed day that appeals to a much younger audience than our regular classic running days.

## **Main Event. Wythall BusFest@Gaydon with Daimler 130 theme - Saturday 5 July**

2026 sees the fifth event at Gaydon as it now gains a firm footing in the annual bus rally calendar. This year we focus on Daimler in its 130<sup>th</sup> year with a display of Museum vehicles alongside visitors. All Daimler PSV types from all eras are welcome and visitors will be able to visit the Daimler Heritage Trust, which is situated on the Gaydon site, to view the magnificent range of Daimler cars that populate their collection.

## **Blues And Twos Vehicle Day – Sunday 9 August**

An opportunity for the blue light vehicle enthusiasts to see a gathering of police, fire and ambulance vehicles and possibly an Air Ambulance. Owners of classic blue light vehicles are welcome to display, free of charge to the driver. Free entry for Blue Light card holders.

## **Main Event. Daimler 130 – Saturday/Sunday 30/31 August**



Daimler 130 celebrates one of the big names in PSV manufacture, based in Coventry. Vehicles in the museum's collection from across several decades will be on display and running on the free bus service where we expect to welcome Daimler visitors. The British Motor Museum will visit with a number of its early Daimler motor cars, also manufactured in Coventry.

## **70s Mania – Saturday and Sunday, 5/6 September**

The 70s was a decade of significant cultural experimentation and change with iconic symbols emerging across music, fashion, television and technology. David Bowie, Slade and T-Rex brought glitter and platform shoes to the mainstream and disco fever swept the nation. Flares and bell bottoms were in, and punk exploded on the scene. Fawlty Towers, Dad's Army and The Good Life were the staple diet on TV. These were the years of the Leyland National, the MCW Metrobus and the Daimler Fleetline. We will also be joined by the Triumph Dolomite Owners Club, classic 1970s cars. So, dress up and join us for a backward glance.

## **MAIN EVENT. A Tribute To 40 years of deregulation – Sunday 4 October**

Bus deregulation in the Midlands followed the national trend of a ‘free market’ approach that led to service consolidation and, ironically, a long-term decline in passenger numbers. The West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive had to separate its operations into a private company, West Midlands Travel. Private operators also came in and set their own fares and routes, which led to bus wars. We’ll sample some of the vehicles that ran in this period.

#### **MAIN EVENT. Twilight Running Day – Sunday 25 October**

The classic end of season event that needs no introduction.

### **Wythall Miniature Railway**

#### **Rail Gala on 27/28 July**

In addition to bus themed events, the Wythall Miniature Railway, a main feature of the museum site for children of all ages, is running a gala weekend with visiting locomotives and an intensive service of both passenger and freight trains. The railway has seen some significant updates for 2025 so don’t miss the ride.

Visit [www.wythallsteamrail.com](http://www.wythallsteamrail.com) for more information.

### **Buses returning to the operational fleet in 2026**

In the past few years, a significant amount of work has been undertaken in the restoration workshop and a selection of the fruits of this working group of volunteers, supported in some cases by outside contractors, will be back on the road in 2026.

Coming to the end of a two-year restoration from dire structural condition is the Midland Red D7 XHA 482. Its launch date is yet to be confirmed but likely to be early summer. Into public use in May will be JRR 404, the Barton Leyland Leyland PD1, it too following a long-term restoration. The third vehicle following restoration is the WMPTE Ford Transit Minibus which will be completed for a return to service in the Autumn after 18 years off the road.

#### **Operational vehicles available for 2025 –**

Please watch the website for running day bus lists as all are dependent on vehicle availability at the time.

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>OV 4486</b>  | Birmingham City Transport AEC Regent                           |
| <b>FFY 402</b>  | Southport Corporation Leyland Titan PD2/3                      |
| <b>XHA 482</b>  | Midland Red D7   |
| <b>JOJ 976</b>  | Birmingham City Transport Guy Arab IV                          |
| <b>PDH 808</b>  | Walsall Corporation Leyland Royal Tiger PSU1                   |
| <b>JUE 349</b>  | Stratford Blue Leyland Tiger PS2/3                             |
| <b>JRR 404</b>  | Barton Transport Leyland Titan PD1                             |
| <b>3016 HA</b>  | Midland Red D9 London Transport                                |
| <b>248 NEA</b>  | West Bromwich Corporation Daimler CVG6/30                      |
| <b>BON 472C</b> | Birmingham City Transport Daimler Fleetline CRG6 single decker |
| <b>KOX 780F</b> | Birmingham City Transport Daimler Fleetline CRG6               |
| <b>BHA 399C</b> | Midland Red D9   |
| <b>KON 311P</b> | West Midlands PTE Leyland Fleetline FE30ALR                    |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>NOE 544R</b> | Midland Red Leyland National Mk 1               |
| <b>WDA 835T</b> | WMPTE Metrobus pre-production vehicle           |
| <b>DOC 26V</b>  | Leyland National 2                              |
| <b>D553 NOE</b> | West Midlands PTE Ford Transit Minibus          |
| <b>BX02 ASV</b> | Travel West Midlands Dennis Trident 2/ALX 400   |
| <b>R1 NEG</b>   | Travel West Midlands DAF DB250LF/Optare Spectra |

**Operational vehicles out stationed at Statfold Barn:**

|                 |                             |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>YN08 HZS</b> | Arriva Scania OmniLink 3505 |
| <b>UHA 956H</b> | Midland Red S23             |
| <b>FRC 956</b>  | Trent Leyland PD2           |

**Classic Car Meetings and Club gatherings**

Transport Museum Wythall has been growing as a classic car and motor club venue, particularly with the introduction of **Cars and Coffee@Wythall** in partnership with Classic Car Weekly – CCW at CCW!

Meetings will be held on Sunday 26 April, which includes Drive-It Day, and then on the third Sunday of each month from 19 June to 18 October inclusive. (please note that there is no CCW in May due to an event clash on site). The event is open from 09.00 to 11.00 for pre-2000 classic cars. Entry for drivers is free with passengers paying £5. Non-classics pay normal admission prices. The Museum is open and hot and cold refreshments are available.

All motor clubs are invited to consider Transport Museum Wythall as a club meet venue – more information at: [www.wythall.org.uk/motorclubs](http://www.wythall.org.uk/motorclubs)