

## DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH OLD BUSES

– John Bishop

Speak to the public over thirty years of age and mention buses in and around East Sussex they will mention either Southdown Motor Services with their apple green and cream livery or Maidstone & District with their dark green and cream livery. Both these companies were part of the British Electric Traction group of companies known as the B. E. T. which at the end of the 1960s formed the National Bus Company.

Brighton was unique as far as East Sussex was concerned in having the Brighton Hove & District company which was state owned and Brighton Corporation sharing the same colour scheme of red and cream. When the National Bus Company was formed as outlined, Brighton Hove & District joined with Southdown albeit they operated as though there were no links until the early seventies when all the routes were rationalised in the whole of Sussex, parts of Hampshire and Kent.

This was basically a 'Beeching' effect from which in the mid seventies caused the severing of many villages of a bus service so other alternative schemes were borne including in East Sussex the Cuckmere Community Bus service. This project was hugely successful and other similar schemes were drafted and today form an essential ingredient for the non car user.

As the eighties marched on so legislation was drawn up for the de-regulation of the National Bus Company and the date of 26<sup>th</sup> October 1986 was the official day of privatisation. The apple green and cream of the erstwhile Southdown Motor Services was reborn adding that familiar feel to our services in east Sussex. Even Brighton had their red buses again albeit Brighton Corporation had already changed their colours to white and light blue

Everything seemed settled again however it was not long before acquisitions were made by the up and coming companies, Stagecoach Holdings, Arriva, First Bus and Go-Ahead. By the beginning of the nineties Stagecoach had marched into Sussex with the acquisition of Southdown Motor Services , Hastings & District and in 2008 Eastbourne Buses completing the scene today where for the last five years services have settled down together with Go-Ahead/Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company.

John Bishop