

Stuart Malcolm Andrews

Stuart was born in war ravaged Woolwich in South East London in 1944, lived in Kent and during his early teens emigrated to Auckland, New Zealand until returning and settling at Plymouth in 1960.

After working in the Routes Department of the Royal Automobile Club, he joined Western National at Plymouth depot in 1965, starting as a conductor with the opportunity to be trained as a PSV driver. Subsequently his training took place at the wheel of a Bristol KS and he managed to pass his test at the first attempt. After twelve months on stage carriage work, he was accepted for coaching and enjoyed touring, and particularly Royal Blue duplication. In 1970 he joined Southdown Motor Services, spending a year at Hilsea depot carrying out stage carriage, touring and naval express work before returning to Plymouth and operating one man buses and Royal Blue express services. In 1974 promotion came in the form of Royal Blue Inspector at Exeter, which later became National Travel SouthWest, and later again National Express. Whilst working for them, his title changed to Allocations Supervisor for Exeter, though nobody really seemed to know what the appointment meant and work carried on as normal until closure of the coach station in Paris Street, followed by redundancy in April 1984. He then operated as a driver for Greenslades, carrying out National Express contracts until taking voluntary redundancy in December 1986.

Driving had been his life, so it was of no surprise to seek qualification as an approved driving instructor. This enabled him to start his own business which ran successfully until December 1999. It was during this period that First Red Bus were looking for a Depot Supervisor for their Exeter Depot. He was accepted but turned the position down due to poor remuneration. Instead he drove for this company for about eighteen months but, due to changing service commitments, was made redundant twice. The thought of driving old buses again drew him to Quantock Motor Services in Taunton, getting behind the wheel of heritage buses, particularly the former Western National Bristol LDL open-tops over Exmoor and down Porlock Hill. For a period he was made their Operations Manager but later on wished to reduce his working time, so moved to a part-time job with Exeter Mini Coaches, operating to Gatwick and Heathrow airports until my retirement in 2009.

His interests have always focussed mainly on transport and travel of all kinds, as well as photography, computing, motor cycling and the operations of Bomber Command during the second world war. In more recent times, with help from others, he managed to arrange three staff reunions, successfully tracing the whereabouts of former coach company employees. The first was a general south west reunion held at Bournemouth in May 2013, followed by an Exeter area one in March 2014 and another Royal Blue reunion held during the same month. Based on the success of these, three more are being planned to take place over the next twelve months.