



1957 Garage Fire and its Aftermath



Provincial Bus Community



The small hours of the morning of 18th June 1957 saw disaster strike Provincial. The first signs of the fire to come were spotted by some night cleaners in the former tram depot and they raised the alarm at about 1:45. Seven fire appliances arrived to deal with the blaze, and were able to stop the fire from spreading to the new garage, which was just as well as it held about 60 vehicles. As a precaution these were driven out and lined up in Fareham Road. Once the fire was brought under control it was discovered that all the vehicles inside had been destroyed or badly damaged along with garage equipment. In total six buses were completely destroyed, There were also some lorries being repaired by Harold Radford (Coachbuilders) which were also complete write offs. The list of Provincial losses were as follows:-

Fleet No.	Reg. No.	Chassis Type	Bodied by
16	BUS 138	AEC Regent	Weymann
16*	TM 5909	Dennis EV	Strachans
33	FW 4054	AEC Regal	Harrington (coach)
36	BOR 768	AEC Regent	Park Royal
37	BOR 769	AEC Regent	Park Royal
39	CAA 701	AEC Regent	Park Royal

Two AEC Regal's also had their bodies destroyed in the fire they were:- 24 (CG 9607), and 27 (CG 9612). These were later rebodied by Reading.

* 16 (TM 5909) was a museum piece which was known as Old Bill's bride.



There was an obvious need, if services were to be kept running, to acquire some replacements quickly. The Southdown Company helped out by loaning two pre-war Leyland Titan's 149 (CCD 949) and 157 (EUF 157). They had 1950 East Lancs bodies and were of the Leyland TD4 and TD5 types. Over the next few months these were rotated

with other similar Titan's, 125 (BUF 225), 178 (EUF 178) and 208 (FCD 508) and these vehicles performed this role until 18th December when the last ones were returned.

By this time Provincial had acquired its own second hand replacements which comprised a motley selection of six double deckers :-

Fleet No.	Reg. No.	Chassis Type	Bodied by	Withdrawn
16	ACN 167	AEC Regent II	NCB	1960
33	ACN 172	AEC Regent II	NCB	1958
36	FT 4220	AEC Regent	Pickering	1962
37/39	FT 4222	AEC Regent	Pickering	1962
39/37	FT 4221	AEC Regent	Pickering	1963
72	HHA 84	Guy Arab II	NCME	1971

16 (ACN 167) and 33 (ACN 172) were new to Northern General no's 1167/1172 in 1946.

36-39 (FT 4220-2) were new to Tynemouth and District no's 93-95 in 1937, but their bodies were built in 1949. 37 and 39 exchanged fleet numbers after five days at Provincial.

72 (HHA 84) was new to BMMO (Midland Red) no 2589 in 1945. It was rebuilt by Hooten in 1951, with a characteristic built up nearside front wing. Provincial soon replaced this with a standard wing. In 1963 it became one of the Deutz engined rebuilds being finally withdrawn in 1971.



FCD 508, One of the Southdown Leylands which were on loan to Provincial after the fire, seen here at Gosport Ferry.

Photo: Stephen Didymus Collection



16 (ACN 167) seen here at Hoeford with a temporary route number. 16 was new to Northern General as No.1167 in 1946. It is an AEC Regent II with NCB body.

Photo: Stephen Didymus Collection



Regent 33 (ACN 172) at the Ferry in January 1958 still in undercoat and without a fleetname. This bus was found to be suffering from rot, so did not last in service very long. The chassis, however, was used as the basis for the AEC-Ruston rebuild 14 (270 MHO).

Photo: Alan Lambert



No 36 (FT 4220) which came from Tynemouth and District after the fire. It is seen in West Street Fareham with the Provincial name below the upper deck front window, this was short lived. **Photo: J Cowdery**



No 37 (FT 4221) one of the other ex Tynemouth and District Regent's acquired after the fire. It has a Pickering Body and is seen at Gosport Ferry. **Photo: Ray Soper**



37(FT 4222) at Hoeford with another unidentified Regent in the background.

Photo: Fred York



No 72 (HHA 84) is seen at Gosport Ferry. The built up front nearside wing fitted by BMMO by Hooten has been replaced, detracting from the balanced lines of the body.

Photo: David Gillard



Apparently, Guy 9 (GHO 596) was in the workshops undergoing a minor rebuild and repaint at the time of the fire. With so many vehicles lost or damaged, it had to be hurriedly pressed into service still in undercoat and minus its fleetname and number.

Photo: D.Clark

