



Provincial AECs Part 1



Provincial Bus Community





Provincial AECs - Chapter 1

The First AECs



For 40 years of the 20th century, Provincial had a strong connection with AEC buses. The first Regals arrived in 1934, and the last of the marque left the fleet in 1975. These vehicles gave good service to Provincial with some of the early Regents and Regals lasting in service for 35 years, although some were rebodied during this time. The distinctive sound of the AEC engine and transmission was familiar to generations of folk from Fareham and Gosport and the everyday street scene was enhanced by this. In these articles, I hope to cover in detail how the AEC bus came to Provincial and how it was used during its working life. This is a fascinating story as there were many re-bodies, some complete rebuilds and also many second hand examples acquired over the forty years AEC buses resided at Hoeford. However, their withdrawal from service was not the end of the story as there are a few survivors still in existence, which will be covered later.

Diesel engines (or oil engines as they were better known at the time) had first been used in British buses in 1929-30. They were, however, still uncommon, so it was something of a surprise when Gosport and Fareham bought eight AEC Regal 4s with 6.6 litre diesel engines which entered service in 1935. They were bodied by Harrington of Hove with 32 seat bodies. They could provide a much more efficient service on the companies routes than the petrol engined Chevrolets that they replaced, and also gave a good impression of the company when used for private hire duties. They were allocated fleet numbers 23-30 (CG 9606-13), but not in this order.

Fleet No.	Reg. No	Body	Seating
23	CG 9606	Harrington	DP32R
24	CG 9607	Harrington	DP32R
25	CG 9610	Harrington	DP32R
26	CG 9611	Harrington	DP32R
27	CG 9612	Harrington	DP32R
28	CG 9613	Harrington	DP32R
29	CG 9608	Harrington	DP32R
30	CG 9609	Harrington	DP32R

These Regals had very long lives with Provincial, most remaining in service for 35 years, one 24 (CG 9607) surviving in preservation today. They were, however, extensively rebuilt with new bodies and engines during their long lives. This will be covered in a later instalment.



No.24 (CG 9607) at Gosport Ferry sporting the 'dual-purpose' livery briefly used in the late 1940s.

Photo: Authors Collection



At Gosport Ferry are two of the Regals, 29 (CG 9608) and 30 (CG 9609) in the late 1930s. The other vehicle in the photo is a Thornycroft A1 or A2 acquired by Provincial in 1930. Three of these (two A1s and an A2) were acquired from Gosport independents, and as the registration cannot be seen it could be either model.

Photo: Stephen Didymus Collection



*Two photos of Regals at Gosport Ferry. (Top) No.30 (CG 9609) - Photo: Charles Chidwick.
(Lower) No. 25 (CG 9610) - Photo: Fred York*





Provincial AECs - Chapter 2

AEC Regal No. 33



Following on from the first Regals delivered in 1934, another Regal arrived in 1936. It had been delivered to Provincial Tramways Grimsby branch to the order of H Orme White, Manager and Engineer in 1933. It was an AEC Petrol engined luxury coach with coachwork by Harrington Coachbuilders of Hove (C32R). The coach was described in publicity as the most luxurious road car in Lincolnshire. It was put into service alongside the Provincial Tramways motor coach fleet with fleet number 44.

In 1936, following a total reorganisation of the Provincial company it joined the Provincial Traction fleet at Fareham and the fleet number was changed to 33.

Though it retained its sunshine roof it is believed, in the thirties, to have been fitted with the 6.6 litre 4 cylinder AEC diesel engine as fitted to Provincial's Regal 4s. It continued in this guise throughout the war and, in the forties, was fitted with the 7.7 litre AEC engine which, by now, was standard in the rest of the fleet.

In 1949, following the arrival of coach 66, GOU 449, various modifications were made to the bodywork by Readings of Portsmouth including removal of the sunshine roof

In the early fifties, as some of the Regals were rebuilt as half cab one man operated buses FW 4054 shared private hire duties with coaches 66 and 25.

In 1954, coach 67, JBK 668, a Bedford Duple Super Vega, was delivered. In 1955 and 1956 two ex Oxford Regents were reconstructed as coaches 68, OCG 444 and 69, PCG 436 and we must assume that 33 was stored at Hoeford where it was damaged beyond repair by fire on the 18th June 1957. A very handsome vehicle, shame it met such a sad end.



FW 4054 is seen negotiating a notorious skew bridge near Exeter. A Fareham family hired a Provincial coach for a week every year to take friends and family on a long distance coach tour. This bridge continued to be a challenge for drivers for many years and was one of the reasons why coaches working in the area were limited to 7'6" maximum width.

Photo: David Whitaker



Above: This photo shows FW 4054, by now owned by the Provincial Traction company at Fareham, when it returned to the AEC works in 1937 with Provincial staff for a factory visit. Many of these gentlemen were still working at Hoeford over 20 years later.

Photo: David Whitaker

Below: This photo was one of a number taken at the AEC works before delivery to Provincial Tramways at Grimsby. Note the belt on the offside bearing the name 'Provincial Tramways Company Ltd.' and the large script name Provincial which is underlined with 'Green Line'. The coach would have been described as a 'Sun Saloon' due to its having a roll back roof, not , as some have described it, a luggage rack.

Photo: David Whitaker





This photo, taken at the Provincial depot in Grimsby with tram wires overhead, shows the coachwork at its best. It is said to have had hot water piping inside the saloon for cold conditions.
Photo: David Whitaker



This photo, from an AEC publicity brochure, depicts FW 4054 among other Regals circa 1933.
Photo: David Whitaker



Provincial AECs - Chapter 3a

AEC Regents Nos. 34-35



Following on from the first Regals, Provincial received its first double deck AEC Regent 1s in 1936, they were given Nos 34-37 and registered BOR 766-69. Bodywork was by Park Royal, although Nos. 34 and 36 were later rebodied with a Reading body (No.34 in 1955, No.36 in 1948).

Nos 34 and 35 both had long lives with Provincial, No.34 being withdrawn in Nov 1968, No.35 in May 1966. No.35 was unfortunately damaged by hitting Fareham Station arch and was repaired by giving it the roof and windows from the top deck of No.44 (DAA 846) in 1964.

As we know, No.35 was purchased from the company in 1969 by David Whitaker for preservation and is still in fine fettle today. Nos 36 and 37 were not so lucky, however, and were destroyed in the 1957 Hoeford fire and scrapped on site.

My thanks to David Whitaker for his help with this article

Note: Due to David supplying me with a lot of interesting artefacts about No. 35, I will cover Nos.36 and 37 in the next chapter (3b).



No. 34 (BOR 766) With its Reading body was captured here in November 1965 by Fred York.



No. 34 in company with No.35 at Gosport Ferry. A comparison can be made with the Reading (34) and Park Royal bodies (35). **Photo: V. Blackmore**



From 1937/38 most AECs were built with a 'long' radiator and covered dumb irons to improve appearance. David says :- "I had always wanted 35 to feature the original 'short' radiator'. Two friends, Ian and Jon created the correct radiator in 2023 and Jon also produced the hand painted registration plate" **Photo: David Whitaker**

BEFORE YOU USE ANY MOTOR VEHICLE ON THE ROAD, MAKE CERTAIN THAT YOUR INSURANCE AGAINST THIRD PARTY RISKS IS IN ORDER. IT IS A SERIOUS OFFENCE TO DRIVE WITHOUT PROPER INSURANCE.

Extract from Registration Particulars.

Index Mark and No. **BOR 767**

(a) Taxation Class. *Hackney*

(b) Type of Body. *Double Deck Omnibus*

(c) Colour. *Green & Cream*

(d) Propulsion. *Heavy Oil*

(e) MANUFACTURER'S —
Name. *A.C.B.*

Description of Vehicle

Chassis Type & No. *06614417*

Type of Model

Engine No.

Frame No. (Cycle)

(f) Rating

(g) Seating Capacity. *56*

(h) Unladen Weight
6 tons 9 cwt 28 lbs.

(i) Date of original registration under the Roads Act, 1920 *18.9.36*

Amount Paid and Date of Entry of Licence.	Date Stamp and Initials of Issuing Officer.	Amount Paid and Date of Entry of Licence.	Date Stamp and Initials of Issuing Officer.
£30-4-10	31.12.36	£86-8-0	31.12.40
23-15-3	24-3-37	86-8-0	31.12.40
23-15-3	30-6-37	86-8-0	31.12.40
23-15-3	28-9-37	78-8-0	31.12.40
23-15-3	31-12-37	86-8-0	31.12.40
78-8-0	31-12-38	86-8-0	31.12.40
86-8-0	31-12-39	86-8-0	31.12.40

For use by Registration Authority only.

PNEUMATIC TYRES

Adher and green out

Green cream 10.1.46



When the last space is filled, apply to your Registration Authority for a new book.

Any person finding this Book should hand it over the counter of a Money Order Post Office.

Original logbook showing registration was by Southampton County Council at the time. It also bears evidence of a change of colour in 1941 when cream bands were painted over with deep brunswick green..

Below: This licence badge was attached at the bottom of the rear panel, rather like a taxi cab badge. All of these disappeared during wartime and were replaced by the PSV badge in the cab. Research by Stewart Brett.



Above: The tax disc on 35 shows ownership to be the parent company, Provincial Traction. This enabled buses to operate beyond the confines of Gosport and Fareham on private hire such as the Fawley contract. A number of vehicles were transferred to Provincial Traction in 1947 due to the very real threat of nationalisation in the transport industry. I have assumed that this PSV disc in the cab replaced those worn on the rear of the buses prewar.

All information on this page supplied by David Whitaker



Provincial AECs - Chapter 3b

AEC Regents Nos. 36-37



Provincial received its first double deck AEC Regent 1s in 1936. They were given Nos 34-37 and registered BOR 766-69. Bodywork was by Park Royal, although Nos. 34 and 36 were later rebodied with a Reading body (No.34 in 1955, No.36 in 1948).

We covered Nos 34 and 35 in the previous chapter (3a). Nos 36 and 37 Had relatively short lives compared to the other two as they were destroyed in the 1957 Hoeford fire and scrapped on site. The fire started in the early hours of 18 June 1957. Six buses were totally destroyed, two others had their bodywork destroyed. All were AECs, except Dennis EV No. 16 (TM 5909).



No. 36 at Park Royal Coachbuilders before delivery. Note the managing director on the legal lettering is H L White, Orme White's father. **Photo: David Whitaker**



No. 36 seen here with its Reading body at Gosport Ferry in the company of a new looking Park Royal bodied Guy Arab No. 20 (KOR 462). **Photo: V. Blackmore**



Above: The interior of No. 36 showing the clock and inner panels with a floral pattern. These were in rexine on very thin plywood. They included small metal gauze buttons to allow air to circulate behind the panels. In practice, most of these were severely damaged by small boys who could not resist putting their fingers through them. In later days, Orme White removed all these inner panels. **Photo: David Whitaker**



No. 37 in West Street Fareham, thought to have been taken in 1936, possibly to be used in the AEC Gazette, the house magazine of the Associated Equipment Co.

Photo: David Whitaker



A view of the old East Wing of Hoeford on 18 June 1957 in the aftermath of the Garage fire. No. 37 is nearest the camera with No. 36 behind it.

Photo: Patrick Miller