

60 YEARS OF RED RFs

The red RF bus

Designed for London Transport in 1951, the AEC Regal IV became London's standard single-deck bus in the 1950s and 1960s, serving as Green Line coaches and Country buses as well as on single-deck routes in Greater London. The bus has a 9.6 litre engine laid on its side under the floor, hence 'RF', Regal Flat. The first red RF entered service on route 210 across Hampstead Heath on 11 September 1952 and 225 were built between then and March 1953. They were used initially on routes where double-deck buses could not operate, initially with a driver and conductor. Later on, many were converted for driver-only operation before driver-only double-deckers were available. The last one in London Transport service ran at Kingston on 30 March 1979.

This bus, RF354 MLL991



RF354 arrives in Kingston on route 215, July 1970.
Photo Colin Grafham collection

The original RF354 was delivered to Merton garage in December 1952 for route 200.

However, as usual, the present bus has changed identities over the years, starting life as RF509, new in March 1953 at Sidcup for routes 228 and 241. It then moved on to Dalston (routes 208 and 208^A) and West Green (route 233), before becoming RF517 in December 1957.

In 1959, the bus was converted for one-man operation and doors were fitted, but it re-entered service at Norbiton on the 213 still carrying a conductor.

Its next overhauls saw it emerge as RF533 and finally RF354 in 1973. Its last service was on routes 218/219 at Kingston.

After withdrawal in 1977, the bus was converted by Gosport & Fareham Round Table to provide wheelchair access.



Restoration included removal of the wheelchair access door cut into the side; here the interior begins to recover its original form. Photo Colin Grafham collection