

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, RF401 MXX289



The present RF401 stands, looking rather battered, at Palmers Green garage on North Circular route 212.

Photo JH Reed

The original RF401 was delivered to Sutton garage in January 1953 for route 213.

The current RF401 is unusual, in that it is one of relatively few RFs whose bodies and chassis were swapped at overhaul, in this case in November 1971, when the body of RF401 was mounted on the chassis from RF415. The LT system of identity-swapping complicates the process of tracing bus histories! Suffice to say that the present

body was new on RF357 and the chassis to RF351, both in November 1952.

After withdrawal from Kingston in 1976, the bus was operated by a local garage social club and another owner in Essex before being purchased for further service by Blue Triangle in 1990. As part of the heritage fleet, it passed to London Bus Company on the sale of Blue Triangle to Go Ahead in 2007 and was repainted into London Transport livery. It is available for private hire.



On Blue Triangle route 612 at Chappel Viaduct in the Colne Valley, Essex, in 1990. Photo John Parkin