

PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN COLLEY ILLUSTRATION: ROBIN GRIGGS



Jowett Jaunt



What better for visiting Yorkshire transport museums than three contrasting Bradford-built Jowetts, reckons Nick Larkin. But he returns from the trip an angry young man...



'MONEY-grabbing asset-stripping sodding philistines,' I splutter. *'How the merry hell have they got away with knocking that down?'*

Gulping for breath, I glare at my companions who are mysteriously unruffled at seeing the demolition men at work. 'It's just some scabby old bus depot, Larkin.'

Patently, I explain that we were witnessing the destruction of Huddersfield's magnificent former tram depot which had stood by the canal for more than a century. Britain's biggest omnibus operator, FirstBus recently took over, and flogged the site to developers.

'It's like calling the Mona Lisa a yellowing old doodle and throwing it in the bin!'

No time for further discussion. We've arrived at Grundy Mack Classic Cars, to collect the transport for our two-day tour, and the sight of three joyous Jowetts lifts even my venomous mood. A Javelin, definitely the most innovative and distinctive British saloon of the 1940s, the equally stylish Jupiter two-seater sports car which won its class at Le Mans, and basic but brilliantly fun Bradford lightweight commercial. All the products of a small, Bradford-based company, still legendary despite having died in 1954.

I imagined new Jowetts whooshing past the Tram Depot when it was full of highly polished red and cream Huddersfield Corporation Buses.

Everyone had left me. They were touring Grundy Mack's awesome new premises; a unique two-storey sales area-cum-museum, crammed to the edges with classics, most of which are for sale, along with vast collections of memorabilia and old radios, though music comes courtesy of a Fifties jukebox.

Our team, photographer John Colley and former *Popular Classics* editor Martin Hodder, a man of sufficient vintage to have witnessed many a tram (and probably got kicked by some of the horses!) contemplate spending the entire two days and nights at Grundy Mack. We wouldn't have got bored!

But there's a lot of ground to cover. I lead the convoy in the Javelin, straight to a certain doomed building. Even Hodder admires the stone frontage, apparently the subject of an unsuccessful rescue attempt. In the most bitter twist of irony, next to the legend 'Tramway Depot' on the building we see 'Kingfisher, a subsidiary of FirstBus plc.'

I'm on the boil again. *'FirstBus. Farcebus more likely. 'Kingfisher.' What's that got to do with Huddersfield? Some whizzkid in the Marketing Department's idea, I bet. And to think, they could have brought back 'Huddersfield Corporation.'*

I again fall silent as, looking through the depot doors, there's a scene straight from Dante's Inferno. Funeral pyres blaze, men shuffle around shrouded in smoke pouring from the now roofless building to

ABOVE: Jowett line-up. Jupiter sports car, Javelin saloon and Bradford utility. What a contrast!

RIGHT: demolishing Huddersfield's tram depot has disturbed this mysterious ghost, and it's not even Halloween!

LEFT: Jowett Javelin poses outside Grundy Mack Classic Cars' superb saleroom and motor museum.



Hodder (right) and Larkin ponder how in 1951 you could buy any one of these three vehicles from the same showroom.



Jowett Jaunt

continued

'...a certain curse of the 1990s. Retail parks...'

become one with a grey sky. The ground is rubble and mud, a few piles of useless spares and the remains of a poster advertising a New Years party.

Think of the generations who spent their working life here, polishing the chrome radiators and wood veneer of long-gone vehicles, driving packed buses through grimy streets, repairing tram motors, running the operation.

Discovering this piece of history is being flattened for yet another example of a certain curse of the 1990s put me positively at thermo nuclear explosion point. **'Retail park. RETAIL PARK? Corporate national blandness rules again. Bet there'll be a Homebase, a Curry's and a piggin' Harveys, just like five million others. What's wrong with this country?'**

I attempt to flop down angrily into the **Jupiter's** driver's seat, then remember I'm making the wrong entry procedure. With the roof up especially, the only way to gain access is to put you left foot in first, wiggle it about, place your bottom in rough proximity to the edge of the seat, sort your head out then ease your body leftwards.

Once you're in, all the effort's definitely worthwhile, though the car is wonderful enough from the outside, with its cute yet slightly



aggressive lines, and sweeping rear quarters which resemble a contemporary racing Aston or Ferrari.

Our 'test' example has bucket seats apparently from an Austin Healey rather than Jowett's original bench, a popular modification. A large steering wheel, widely spaced pedals, and, surprisingly enough a wooden dash, on which the assorted instruments are scattered over a small part. The large rev counter and speedo are clearly sited. It's when you press the starter that a Jowett, this Jupiter in particular, shocks. Instead of the normal dull throb of a Fifties engine, set off in this car and you get a noise best described as a cross between a Volkswagen Beetle and a Morris Minor with a bit of V8 thrown in too, amplified by an earth shattering baaarrp! from the exhaust, all thanks to the flat four 1486cc engine,



LEFT: more than a century of history destroyed. ABOVE: Jowetts cut a pace through moorland roads. BELOW: taking on York's traffic, and winning!





developing 60bhp. Aluminium bodywork and a tubular chassis avoid excess weight, and even at low speeds the steering is a positively balanced delight. The brakes are more than up to it too!

Our convoy picks its way through Huddersfield traffic towards the M62, and I only just overcome a deep-rooted urge to give the Jupiter its head, leaving the other two cars as specs in the rear view mirror.

Jowett's gearboxes were renowned for unreliability, but the properly set up unit on this example is an absolute delight to use, at least once I've found reverse.

Urgh, a retail park they made earlier flashes by, and we're on the M82 slip road.

I could have sworn the Jupiter was cackling in excited anticipation of what was to come. Sadly we're

both disappointed as half a mile up the road the traffic slows down to a crawl. We crawl, crawl and crawl, and only the temperature needle is unflustered.

Finally relief! It's our junction which will put us en route to the A64, our pathway to York. Dual carriageway. Gee up, Jupiter! We head forward in jubilation, the engine chattering in frenzied excitement. A couple of twisty bends are tackled as fast as I would sensibly wish to go, the car remaining perfectly poised throughout the manoeuvre. Blame the poor rearward visibility with the hood up, but it appears I've lost the other two cars.

I find a lay-by, write my life story and wait for the others, not that the Javelin is far behind!

The countryside is noticeably flatter now, and before long there's York Minster on the horizon, and soon we're in a paradise of ancient buildings marred by modern traffic roadworks and complex junctions. Thankfully our first port of call is clearly signposted, the National Railway Museum.

NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM, YORK

FROM the moment you enter the main exhibition hall and are dwarfed by two enormous steam locomotives waiting to greet you, this place is mesmerising, so goodness only knows what it does to the average railway buff.

Not just the rolling stock is displayed, but literally everything to do with railways; from the spade which cut the first sod of earth to build one to a footbridge, inspector's cap, guard's watch, timetables, tickets, engine nameplates, photos, foot-warmers and





Jowett Jaunt

continued

'19bhp. Nineteen. One Nine. On a dual carriage-way. In the dark. In the winter'

pieces of railway track.

It's difficult to think of a greater creation made by man than the steam locomotive, and, as you'd imagine, many are to be seen here, along with historic diesels such as the Deltic and even the first electric loco built for a British mainline railway, Bobo No 1, dating from 1904.

A major part of the fascination is that the collection has been built up for more than over a century; the 1829-built goods locomotive Agenoria, used at a Staffordshire colliery for 30-odd years, for instance, was donated to the Science Museum in 1884!

There are carriages from the Bodmin and Wadebridge Railway, unrestored since their withdrawal in the 1890s and still bearing the wear and tear of regular use. What on earth did the people who bounced along the branch line in them talk about?

Many locos are displayed around a turntable which had been there before the museum hall was built, and there's the chance to see others actually being worked on. The collection also includes a sectioned steam engine, so you can see what makes it go, a vast British-built loco, about the size of the average terraced street, which was used in China until 1977, and the beautifully streamlined Mallard, still holding the 126mph steam speed record.

There are 'hands on' virtual reality type display units, films along with special exhibitions, currently on building the Channel Tunnel, and the work of renowned railway artist Terence Cuneo.

Perhaps I'd been distracted by all these delights, but we were



reluctantly about to leave when we discover signs for the South Hall. Ooops! This building has proper railway platforms, and with period lighting and sound effects it all feels incredibly realistic. Only the smells are absent. Included is a display of Victorian Royal carriages, each an extravagant time capsule.

Of equal fascination is a collection of road vehicles used by the railways and, it has to be said, the Brief Encounter cafe! In summer, there's the chance to ride on a steam train outside, which would be the ultimate cherry on a cake it would be difficult to make better!

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

LARKIN'S back in Rotweiler mode again, having seen a photograph of the historic Doric Arch from Euston station, demolished in the early 1960s despite an incredible public outcry. Shades of 1997 Huddersfield, eh?

There's just enough time for a brief tour of York, so we pile into the **Bradford**. Sitting high up on



the stark rear bench seat I remark that this is not unlike one of the Victorian railway carriages we'd admired a few minutes previously. The third class one I would have thought, judging by the wooden bodywork, fabric roof, and, didn't we know it, no heater.

With driver Hodder at the wheel, we bump over cobbles and kerbs. Well, it's the beginning of the rush hour, dusk is gathering and it's my turn to take charge of the Bradford. What a vehicle! From the rear it looks like a top hat on spindly tyres.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Railway road vehicles make fascinating display, the demolition of Euston's Doric Arch in the early 60s sparked a public outcry, superb atmosphere from authentic platforms, heroes Hodder and Larkin talk about trains

GRAND DAY OUT JOWETTS IN YORKSHIRE



Sporting line-up, at North Yorks Motor Museum, note rare beige MGA.

FACTSFACTS

● THE NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM (01904 621261) is at Leeman Road, York, just next to the mainline station. It's open daily from 10am-6pm except from December 24-26. There's a licenced restaurant. Brief Encounter café, shop, car park, excellent facilities for the disabled and reference library. Corporate entertainment and special facilities for school parties are available. Exhibitions featuring the Channel Tunnel and the work of railway artist Terence Cuneo are currently taking place.

Admission: £4.50 adults, family ticket £12, 5-15 year olds £2.50, concessions £3, under 5s free.

Summing Up: brilliant depiction of every aspect of railway travel through the ages.

Value ★★★★★ Range of Exhibits ★★★★★ Innovation ★★★★★

● THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOTOR MUSEUM is at Roxby Garage, Pickering Road, Thornton-Le-Dale, North Yorks YO18 4LH (01751 474455).

Admission: £1.95 adults, 50p children. Open daily 10am-5pm.

Summing Up: interesting museum giving a genuine welcome, variety, many rare exhibits and the chance to see classics being worked on.

Value ★★★ Range of Exhibits ★★★ Innovation ★★★

● THE WARRINGTON GUEST HOUSE is on 01751 475028.

Jowett Jaunt

continued

such as Bill Steel and Neville Wanless? Instead there's transatlantic chatter and a logo you'd expect to see on a deeply tacky satellite station, proclaiming we're watching 'C3NE'.

I remember. It follows Tyne-Tees having been merged with (or into) Leeds-based Yorkshire TV.

We arrive at the museum and, on my word of honour, I did not expect to walk in to the remains of the unique 1950 Bellhouse Hartwell-bodied Thames coach, bought by Yorkshire TV and deliberately crashed in an episode of Heartbeat. The museum rescued it afterwards and hopes to fit a replica vintage body.

Heathen Hodder nearly shed a tear at the sad wreck.

I go into orbit. *'Bloody Yorkshire TV. How could they destroy this for some horrible overrated overdone Sixties police series pastiche which any sane person would only watch for the interesting cars? What have they done to Tyne-Tees? What good programmes have Yorkshire ever made. That thing with Ted Rodgers and Dusty Bin? When's it ITV Franchise Review Time?'*

'Shut up, Larkin.'

NORTH YORKSHIRE MOTOR MUSEUM

JUST about every enthusiast dreams of setting up their own museum, but businessman Derek Mathewson has darned

well gone and done it!

'I'd been collecting for 20-odd years, and it seemed such a shame to have the cars stuck around in barns,' explained Derek, who also runs a modern car garage and a pub locally. 'A lot of friends also had cars they were prepared to put on display.'

The museum opened last year at premises in Thornton-le-Dale, which had been a garage since 1916.

Among the many exhibits are, would you believe, another coach used in Heartbeat (not scheduled for destruction!) There's an excellent selection of sports cars including a 30,000 mile MGA in a colour I'd never seen, Alamo Beige, various Aston Martins, a 1944 Thames 10cwt van, 1929 Renault NN Tourer, a 1938 Rover 12 which has travelled

a mere 13,000 miles. In other words, variety!

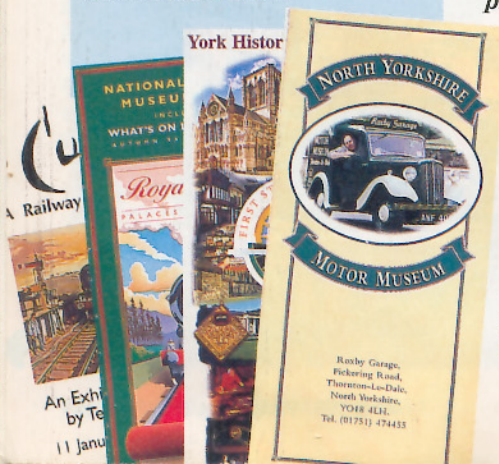
Novel ideas are collections of car magazines through which visitors are invited to browse and a

seating area where old motoring films are shown. The museum also services and restores cars and motorcycles for local enthusiasts, and a few vehicles are for sale to raise funds. When we visited, an immaculate though sadly re-registered A30 was for sale at £1295 next to an Aston Martin DB6 at £27,950.

Derek is one of those people with



ABOVE: Jowetts head to head outside Aidsensfield stores.





ABOVE: Hodder gets his head under the bonnet of bargain Austin A30 for sale alongside Aston.



LEFT: Bradford in York. Note part of the ancient city wall in the background, and the ancient driver.



LEFT: Larkin shakes a fist at television moguls who killed unique bus for Heartbeat.

an infectious enthusiasm for the help but tune into.

Derek's favourite exhibit is an 1970 Aston DB6. 'My family grew up with this,' he recalls. 'I rescued it from a salvage yard in 1982.'

He always asks museum visitors one question. What is your favourite car. And the winner. An Aston? No, a 1960 Humber Hawk!

HEARTBEAT AND HOME

WE FINALLY head off onto the misty moors, one of us threatened with death if he dares mention Yorkshire Television again.

Hills come thick and fast, but now I seem to have learnt how to extract the utmost from the Bradford without straining either of us.

We're off to Goathland which is, of course, Aidensfield in that moving, funny and nostalgic television masterpiece, Heartbeat.

We turn off for the village and take many photos against superb moorland scenery. After it appears we've lost touch with the rest of the world, though with scenery like this, who cares!

Soon we're on the outskirts of Goathland, and a mile on in the centre, straight from the world of PC Rowan, is Aidensfield Stores. If only it had been open for me to fill a sack with souvenirs!

Sadly, we must leave. It's a long way back to Huddersfield but at least it's finally my chance to launch the *Javelin*.

Hodder is bundled back into the Bradford as, much to my amusement, the old warhorse appears unable to lever himself into the Jupiter. What a wonderfully Fifties sci-fi name 'Jupiter' is.

'I want a Javelin and I want it NOW!' I said to myself, settling on deep comforting bench seat. The car's shape seems to get more astonishing the more you see it. The engine is a masterpiece of design, almost an item of beauty in itself.

The car seems as indestructible as the Bradford, yet is only slightly slower than the Jupiter, outperforming just about any other saloon of

its era, and winning hands down on *Standard Vanguard and you wonder* what on earth they were playing at in Coventry.

The Javelin offers an excellent driving position, relatively light and accurate steering, a superb column change, and exemplary ride from the torsion-bar suspension.

There's the spaciousness you'd expect in a Forties family saloon, not forgetting musical notes from the gearbox and a friendly chatter courtesy of the engine.

Instruments, including a clock, are large and symmetrically arranged on a nice wooden dashboard, this being a deluxe model.

We arrive back and dwell on a fascinating trip, seeing the past and traditions both lovingly preserved and thoughtlessly trashed.

I muse how sad it was that Jowett met its demise partly because it didn't have the resources of big business to develop its brilliant products, and relied on other firms to provide most of its body panels.

What would Jowett be making if they were still around today and their Bradford factory hadn't been demolished to build a supermarket?

Probably a British BMW or Porsche. A nice thought. Maybe they could have restored the battered Heartbeat bus!

What a wonderfully comprehensive collection our three test vehicles would make, a sporting joy, the epitome of a tingly Forties saloon and an icon of minimalist motoring, all for the price of a well-restored Mk 2 Jag.

Thank goodness there are enough enthusiasts around to ensure the survival of the precious remaining Jowetts though, like steam locomotives, it's a pity that more were not saved. I was thinking how nice it would have been if the Huddersfield Tram Depot could have been retained as a museum for them, with maybe ex-Tyne-Tees' Bill Steel and Neville Wanless as curators, should they so accept.

Maybe not. Jowetts are far too much fun to gather dust!

MANY THANKS TO...



Grundy Mack Classic Cars, Leeds Road, Huddersfield (01484 450446) for supplying the Jowetts and allowing us free reign in the museum/showroom. Along with the exhibits, Grundy Mack normally have around 100 classics of all kinds for sale. The 1952 Javelin is £3495, the 1951 Bradford Utility is £4495 and the 1951 Jupiter £10,795.