

Newmans Coachlines

With its origins dating back to 1879, Newmans was, in its later years, believed to have been the world's oldest road transport company still owned by its founding family. Unfortunately, an ill-fated 1980s venture into aviation brought about the company's demise, albeit the name itself was sold, and continued in use for some time afterwards.

During its lengthy life, as might be imagined, Newmans went through many chassis preferences, and between 1969 and 1974 its preferred supplier was AEC. Having never purchased any AEC's previously, during this period it purchased 21 Reliances and six Rangers, all of which were bodied as coaches by NZMB.

The Ranger was a front-engined chassis primarily intended for third world markets. Newmans was its only New Zealand buyer. To improve its suitability for New Zealand conditions, the front axle was moved rearwards to allow the door to be positioned opposite the driver. The first two were in a notably more rounded style than the final four.

Of the 21 Reliances, the first six in a more rounded style, and the final 15 in a squarer

style, similar to that seen on the final four Rangers.

Initially, Newmans' North and South Island fleets had separate numbering systems. Duplications, and other issues, resulted in various renumberings over the years. The company's South Island-based AEC's were named after vessels in Lord Nelson's Battle of Trafalgar fleet (Newmans was headquartered in Nelson). Coaches lost their names if re-allocated to the North Island. The eleven Reliances initially allocated to the South Island were fitted with AH505 engines, while their ten North Island contemporaries had the more powerful AH691.

Around 1980, Newmans became involved in contract work, most notably the Marsden Point oil refinery upgrade near Whangarei. Second-hand vehicles purchased at this time included six Reliances – two ex New Plymouth and four ex Christchurch.



Above. Newmans No. 043, 'Agamemnon', a 1969 NZMB-bodied AEC Ranger pictured in Christchurch. Newmans was headquartered in Nelson, and made use of this connection in naming vehicles – its new-built South Island-based AEC coaches being named after vessels in Lord Nelson's Battle of Trafalgar fleet. Dudley Kirker photo, Michael Jarka collection.

Below. Newmans No. 242, a 1971 NZMB-bodied AEC Reliance. Both this vehicle, and the one above, have the earlier, more rounded, body styles. Originally named 'Polyphemus', in line with company policy, No. 242 was de-named on transfer to the North Island. Garth Stewart.

