

Bedford VAL

2 VEHICLES. NEW TO SBL 1964. ARA SERVICE 1971-1986.

Driveline. Front-mounted vertical six-cylinder Leyland O.400, diesel engine, 125 bhp, 6.54 litres. (No. 845 later re-engined by the ARA – see the text below). 5-speed manual gearbox with synchromesh on 2,3,4,5. Eaton 2-speed crown wheel and pinion rear axle.

Brakes. Air /hydraulic.

Bodywork. NZMB, DP41D (No. 844), DP45D (No. 845), steel frame, 33 feet (No. 844), 36 feet (No. 845).

These buses were new to SBL, but were transferred to its sister company NST before the ARA takeover. In North Shore service they were named respectively “Belmont Cruiser” and “Milford Cruiser”, and continued to carry these names until they were repainted in the new yellow livery.

No. 844 had 3 feet removed from behind the rear axle before being bodied. Designed for service in coaching-style applications, the brake drums on the VALs small wheels were never intended to cope with the frequent stopping required in urban service. To eliminate

problems with overheating brake drums, NST later converted both from the type’s standard small-wheeled, three-axle, twin-steer layout to a convention two-axle layout. New Kirkstall axles were fitted at the front.

In 1985, No. 845 was even more drastically modified by the ARA itself, when it was reconfigured it to a mid-mounted layout, re-powered it with a horizontal Gardner 6HLXB diesel, and fitted a semi-automatic gearbox and power steering. Apart from the chassis rails, little of the original Bedford design remained!



Above. No. 844 was built new with a three foot section cut from its chassis behind the rear axle, giving it a peculiar bob-tailed appearance. The standing passengers on this 1977 peak-hour service departing the central city for the North Shore, would no doubt have preferred the missing length to have been left in place! Sean Millar.

Right. No. 845 at North Shore Depot in its later years wearing the livery introduced with the MAN SL200s. By the time this photo was taken, it had been repowered with a mid-mounted Gardner engine. The remarkable conversion was undertaken at North Shore Depot. Even though the chassis no longer resembled that of a VAL, depot staff customised a VAL badge for the redesigned grille. Prior to disposal, the Gardner engine was removed, and placed in Mercedes O.305 No. 1548. No. 845’s new owners fitted it with another Gardner engine after acquisition. Paul Gourley.



No.	Reg.	SBL No.	NST No.	Chas	New	Disposal
844	EX 647	64	44	1207	12.5.64	30.11.78
845	EX 648	65	45	1206	4.9.64	9.12.86