

Central London Buses 1967 - 1987: The RT and RM Families



Central London Buses 1967-1987: The RT and RM Families by Petra Tornack-Zimmermann

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The Central London bus network has a long and fascinating history, with the iconic red double-decker buses becoming synonymous with the city. During the period from 1967 to 1987, two significant bus families, the RT and RM, roamed the streets of Central London, leaving an enduring legacy on the capital's transport system.

This article delves into the history, design, and impact of the RT and RM bus families, providing a comprehensive guide to these beloved vehicles that played a vital role in the everyday lives of Londoners.

The RT Family

The RT family of buses was introduced in 1967, replacing the aging AEC Routemaster buses that had served London since the 1950s. The RTs

were built by Leyland and featured a distinctive modern design with a curved roof and large windows.

The RTs were initially powered by diesel engines, but in 1978, a number of them were converted to use hydrogen fuel cells as part of an experimental program. This made the RTs the first hydrogen-powered double-decker buses in the world, demonstrating London Transport's commitment to innovation and sustainability.

The RT family consisted of several variants, including the RTW (wide version) and the RTR (rear-entrance version). The RTRs were primarily used on services where rear-door boarding was required, such as those serving hospitals and schools.

The RM Family

The RM family of buses was introduced in 1979 as a replacement for the RT family. The RMs were also built by Leyland and shared many design elements with the RTs, but they featured a number of improvements, including a more spacious interior, better ventilation, and a more refined ride.

The RMs were initially powered by diesel engines, but in 1984, a number of them were converted to use dual-mode powertrain systems. These so-called "RM Hybrids" could switch between diesel and electric power, providing improved fuel economy and reduced emissions.

The RM family consisted of several variants, including the RMU (unrestricted version) and the RMA (articulated version). The RMAs were the first articulated double-decker buses to operate in Central London, offering increased capacity on high-demand routes.

Legacy and Impact

The RT and RM bus families served Central London faithfully for over two decades, becoming an integral part of the city's transport network. They were known for their reliability, durability, and comfort, and they were widely loved by Londoners and bus enthusiasts alike.

The RT and RM buses also played a significant role in promoting London's tourism industry. Their iconic red livery and open-top configurations made them a popular choice for sightseeing tours, and they became a symbol of the city's vibrant and cosmopolitan atmosphere.

In 2005, the last of the RT and RM buses were withdrawn from regular service. However, a number of these historic vehicles have been preserved and can still be seen on heritage routes and special events, serving as a reminder of the golden age of Central London buses.

The Central London buses of the RT and RM families left an indelible mark on the city's transport history. Their innovative designs, practical features, and enduring popularity made them beloved by both locals and visitors alike.

Today, these iconic buses continue to inspire and fascinate, serving as a testament to the importance of public transportation and the enduring spirit of London's bus network.

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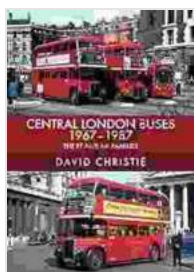
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Image Gallery





An RM bus in service in Central London.



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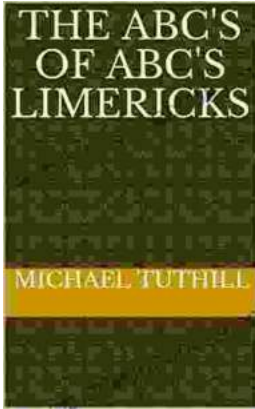
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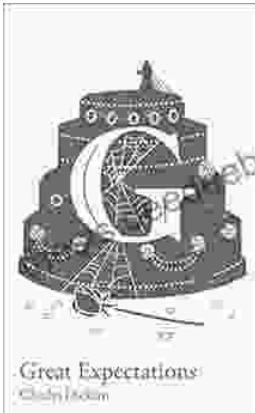
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