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24/2/97

Dear mr Williams

Please find below details as required for Austin fire engine GLE973
(John O Gaunt 11).

The history as I know it is as follows. It was built in June 1942 by the Austin motor Co of Longbridge Birmingham and surplied to a body builder in chassis scuttle form where it was fitted with a fire engine body built to a home office design, the design being a heavy pump unit it was fitted with a Tangy 700 G.P.M. pump fitted with a Ford V8 petrol engine on completion it was issued to No 15 fire force of the N.F.S. its station is unknown after the war it passed to the newley formed Berkshire & Reading fire brigade who rebuilt it for peace time use in their workshops the large Tangy pump was removed and a pump from a Dennis trailer pump was fitted and driven via a Martin Harper transfer box, from the road engine a hose reel and 120 gal water tank were fitted in what was the crew cab a panel containing a tank filler five way valve and throttle control was fitted to the front near side were the lockers used to be and was feed by a small gear type pump fitted to the gear box (incidentally this kit of parts were marketed by various manufactures as a means of coverting war time auxiliary towing vehicles into hose reel tenders) as the applince was now minis its crew cab the sides were built up to offer some protection on the lines of the prewar new world design the hand operated bell was moved from the roof of the crew cab and fitted to the near side by the officer in charge this was operated through the cab side window this also had the effect of reducing the height of the applince by about six inches, two orange flashers and a small electric bell completed its rebuild the only other modifications was red paint to replace the war time grey crome plate on the brass work and a ajax ladder to replace the home office pattern carried before it was issued to Hungerford and I guess that is why the bell was moved as the old Chernum st station was very low it acquired its name of John O Gaunt 11 the name plate had come from its predecessor the 1924 leyland as far as I know it served Hungerford well untill it was replaced by a Kerrer game cock water tender in the late fiftys on retirement from Hungerford its name plate was removed and as far as I know it is still hanging in the new fire station at Hungerford its retirement from berkshire and Reading fire brigade was by no means its end to its working life as it was sold to Adwest engineering at Woodley near Reading where it served them untill 1978 as a works fire engine this must have made it one of the longest serving war time applinces in daily use it not only served the work site but was used all over the Woodly trading estate it was used when the Waitrose warehouse caught fire and in 1976 during the hot summer it caught fire its self when the wind changed when it was in attendence at a heath fire causing damage to the near side, it was replaced by Adwest in 1979 and was left to deteriorate

in a shed on site I purchased it in september 1980 for restoration and preservation in a very poor state and I spent over 900 man hours restoring it and took it to its first show in may 1981 since then we have been to many shows around this country and we have all so taken it to Germaney twice for fire service festivals it has been used for quite a few fire service weddings including that of Hungerfords officer in charge Norman Barr for his daughters wedding it has also been used for fire service funerals and has appeared in the Royel Tournament at Earls Court it is fully equipped with period equipment and is fully operational and has been used several times on fires on the road when we have been going to or from a show it is my intention to use it on the road as long as government in brussels will allow us to but I have to say that may not be for many more years.

years sincerly

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'M. Barr', written in a cursive style.