

Title: The Lost Moorsbus of Blakey

Author: Bill Breakell

Date: 2014

Most pictures of Moorsbus show a beautiful landscape on a sunny day, usually with a splash of purple heather in the foreground. That's most people's memories of their bus ride too.

But at either end of the season the wind and rain can set in.

And the snow.

One October evening, after I assumed all the buses and their passengers were either at their ultimate destination, or nearly there, I had a phone call.

"A Moorsbus has gone off the road on Blakey Ridge." It was a poor quality telephone line, and it ended somewhat abruptly.

It was warm at home, and I looked through the window to see the snow was blowing in on the sides of the road. I phoned the police with my brief message: they said they would go and investigate, would I go along as well? We came to the conclusion that, hopefully, no ambulance was required at this stage.

I met the police van at Hutton le Hole and we slowly headed north in convoy along the middle of the road – blue lights eerily bouncing off the snow drifts. Visibility deteriorated as the snow turned horizontal reflecting my headlights back at me and making every gorse bush and bank look like a missing Moorsbus.

Four miles on, where the map shows Stone Rigg, our lights picked out the reflectors on the back of a bus. Through the blizzard we could make out the flattened snow-packed heather leading some hundred yards off the road. The bus must have either missed a corner in the white-out, or skidded off the road and then trundled over the snow in a straight line.

With torches in hand we waded through the snow to find the bus cold and deserted. No-one around, not even a sheep.

Thanks to the police radio, messages were relayed back to headquarters and to the Lion Inn where, sure enough, driver and passengers were in good shape. They had managed to get a lift there to await further rescue and the onward journey to Teesside.

The bus remained there on the moor until the weather improved and, ignominiously it was towed back onto the road, and taken back to the depot.

I still travel that road and imagine the lost Moorsbus of Blakey.

Bill Breakell