

Once upon a time

...in a place not very far away, there was a magical kingdom known to all as Longridge.

Within the walls of Longridge lived Mrs Bullen and the tale that is to follow was all Mrs Bullen's fault!

There was once an aging Head of Junior School - Mrs Maddock; she was known to be a great fan of George Clark's Amazing Spaces and had long dreamt of creating an innovative space for the sublime and sweet Longridge Junior Children. But surely, these notions were just pie in the sky? However, she had heard tell that if you dreamt something more than once, your hearts's true desire was sure to come true.

By chance, on the fateful day our story begins, Mrs Bullen happened upon a Facebook photograph of an old bus, unloved, unwanted and on sale in Dunbar - a Scania double-decker bus, originally built in March 1988 with 60 seats, but most recently used as a catering bus on TV and film sets.



It was love at first sight and Mrs Maddock was smitten; but how to make dreams come true? Should she ask Mr Lee? Surely he would laugh at such a preposterous idea? Especially as Mabel was no beauty!



But no, needing no encouragement, the gallant Mr Lee accompanied Mrs Bullen and Mrs Maddock on their perilous journey up north to meet Mabel. It was agreed that this tatty, dusty unwanted heap could rise like a phoenix from the flames and be transformed from beast to beauty!



A phone call was made to the Fairy Godmother, Lucy Armstrong, the then Chair of the LTSDA; she summoned the support of the committee members and they generously agreed to purchase the bus, lovingly **care** for her and fundraise for her transformation.

What a tale this was to be; a tale of **resilience** and **perseverance**, of generosity and skill, of teamwork and tantrums, fantasy and fundraising and in the midst of it all... a pandemic. But the school community rallied together offering their skills generously to drive Mabel to her new home and to store her for a few months in a barn at Murton (which turned into a year) and then on the school site.

Storm Arwen attempted to huff and puff and blow her down, thickets of brambles tried to hide her and yet, steadfastly, those who had faith in her, continued to investigate how to breathe new life into Mabel. They gave generously of their time, advice, skill and craftsmanship; supported school events to raise much needed funds, and tried, tried and tried again when things didn't quite work



out as expected. A special mention must go to then Governor Michael Mole (this story's knight in shining armour) who championed Mabel's cause at every turn ably assisted by many local tradespeople.



After what seemed like 100 years, the ugly duckling began to transfigure casting off her dull grey down and emerging as a beautiful swan. The little children danced with joy as, each day when they skipped past, Mabel metamorphosed into the next stage in her life cycle... new windows here, a paint job there, a new floor, new lights and heating. Oh how happy Mabel felt to be cherished once more. She was cleaned and

buffed, spruced and tidied, decorated and furnished. She swelled with pride in her new-found beauty. Now all she longed for was to welcome the little children into her beautiful interior; to hear them laugh and learn and read and grow for she knew, *'There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island.'* WALT DISNEY

This is indeed a tale with a very happy ending as, it came to pass that **AWARD-WINNING CHILDREN'S AUTHOR, POLE VAULTER, WIZARD AND EXAGGERATOR** James Harris came to Longridge to work alongside the talented Junior children, captivating their young minds and inspiring young authors.



James worked alongside the children combining elements of monster-making, humour and books and breathed life into the world of storytelling before officially opening the bus with cutting of a giant red ribbon and unveiling her mystical depths to the enraptured children.



And so, from this day hence, the fortunate and industrious Junior pupils are to be blessed with a charming and inspirational space in which to read and learn. *'So there you have it, a lifetime of first smelling the books, they all smell wonderful, reading the books, loving the books, and remembering the books.'* RAY BRADBURY

Mabel has been granted her wish, and we are certain that every day, special moments will be created which will become tomorrow's magical memories for many, many children. And they all lived...



Happily Ever After

