

'GREEN' CAMPAIGN MOVES UP A GEAR

DAVID Brown, managing director of surface transport for Transport for London, launched Go-Ahead London's electric-powered support vehicle fleet on March 11 at Stockwell Garage.

The vans, which boast zero emissions while in

use, are powered by the latest technology lithium ion batteries. They are being used for roadside assistance and for distributing stores to Go-Ahead London's garages.

Go-Ahead London is believed to be the first bus company in the

UK to operate electric support vehicles. The picture shows David Brown handing over the keys to stores delivery driver Jeff Watson, watched by Go-Ahead London managing director John Trayner, centre, and project manager Frank Thorpe.



On the fitness trail



WHEN Stephen Briant saw a photograph of himself last summer he was so shocked by what he saw that he embarked on a new fitness regime.

"I'd had my photo taken for the London General Employee Awards and I couldn't believe it was me. I weighed 22 stone, wore a 19 and a half-inch collar and the waist of my work trousers measured 52 inches. That picture was most definitely the kick-start I needed to improve my health," said Stephen, who has been a bus driver for 25 years and is currently based at Waterloo.

Realising that for him exercise was the key, Stephen has built running, power walking and cycling into his daily routine.

"I couldn't run for more than 10 seconds last August, but now I run for up to 20 minutes at a time. I quite often cycle to work

at Waterloo from my home in Mitcham, too."

No doubt, the company's recent campaign to encourage healthy eating and exercise is continuing to spur Stephen on.

"If I need another inspirational push, I just dig out that photo from last summer! Losing weight has helped change my life."

■ In General readers may be interested to know that if you are a woman and your waist measures more than 35" (men 40"), your health may suffer. If you lose as little as five per cent of your weight, you may improve many of the problems associated with obesity. The easiest way to lose weight is through a combination of exercise and a healthy diet. If you are concerned about your weight or health, then contact your doctor or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk.

Bye bye bendies ...

IT'S THE beginning of the end for the bendy bus. London General was the first operator in the capital to use artics and now, seven years later, they are on their way out.

The Waterloo garage has retained its contract to operate Routes 507 and 521, but its 31 bendies are to be replaced with conventional 12-metre single-deck vehicles. It is believed that about 50 new buses will be required and these will be based at Waterloo and Mandela Way.

Both services operate five days a week, but under the new contract the 507 will operate from Waterloo station to Victoria station on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays when the bendies are replaced.

Frequencies will be increased on both routes during the week and the 507 will operate every 12

minutes at weekends. Additional drivers will be required at Waterloo and Mandela Way.

As well as retaining the two Red Arrow services, London General has also held on to Route 213, which operates from Sutton, and Putney's 85. Both contracts begin on July 4. The 213 uses 19 buses and the 85 has 15. Existing buses will be used on both contracts.

David Cutts, operations director, said: "We are delighted to have retained these routes and our thanks go to the teams at all three garages for their strong performances."



It's farewell to the artics, seven years after their introduction.

Efficient driving campaign is helping to produce 'very promising' results

EARLY results from the 'Gasfeed' courses for drivers and the Telematics technology fitted to buses are said to be "very promising".

Gasfeed is designed to show drivers how to improve fuel efficiency by driving smoothly and the Telematics monitors the results. Telematics fitment and gasfeed are dovetailed together to ensure seamless progression at garages throughout Go-Ahead London during the rollout. The first two garages to complete Telematics fitment and driver training were New Cross and Peckham.

New Cross operating manager and energy champion Graham Johnson said: "We are making savings on fuel and our driving standards appear to be improving as well, with fewer incidents and accidents. This means that our drivers are going about their work in a very professional way and driving more smoothly.

"Apart from saving fuel, good driving is also an important QIC2 measure and could help us win more work. I think the results of Gasfeed and what the black boxes tell us are very promising."

The news follows a successful visit to New Cross garage by Lewisham Deptford

MP Joan Ruddock in which she welcomed improved driving standards and the use of technology to monitor fuel consumption.

New Cross driver Sheldon Pinnock said he was "very conscious" of driving smoothly and safely.

"I try to drive my bus in a way that my passengers feel happy with. The black box trips a light on the dashboard and a buzzer if you brake too hard or accelerate too quickly. I don't want to see the black box light up or hear anything other than the sounds of the road," said Sheldon.

"Accidents can happen on the bus, for example, somebody falling because of hard braking – if you can avoid that sort of thing you are driving better and saving fuel at the same time."

Gasfeed training and black box fitment were due to be completed at Bexleyheath, Waterloo and Waterside Way at the end of last month (February). Mandela Way is due for completion this month and Stockwell should finish at the end of June. Training and fitment were due to start at Merton last month and Camberwell is due to start in May. The entire Gasfeed training and Telematics fitment programme is due to finish by the end of July this year.



George was just points away from winning the competition.

George shows his metal in welding competition

ENGINEERING apprentice George Wilkins has been awarded second prize in a competition organised by the College of North West London. George attended an eight-day welding course at the college last year and was so good that his training managers Gerry Fleming and Ian Saich were asked by the college if he could be entered for the WorldSkills UK Competition. He did and after a day of testing claimed the number two spot for oxy-acetylene welding at Level 1. Some 600 students from the college took part in competitions

more than 15 subject disciplines. Gerry said: "This is quite an achievement and we were told that George failed to win outright only by a few points. Our apprenticeship gives youngsters experience in all aspects of engineering, whether they hope to pursue careers as technicians or coach makers." George, now a third-year technician apprentice, took the exam during his second year. WorldSkills is sponsored by City and Guilds and supported by the Department for Innovations, Universities and Skills.

Joseph's scratch card success

Well done to Joseph Mutama from New Cross Garage, who was successful in winning the scratch card competition in

association with the 'Big Red Book'. Joseph won £1,000 worth of home entertainment equipment.

Gillian's the friendly voice



THE friendly new female voice answering the engineering training school's telephone at Stockwell belongs to Gillian Cole. Gillian has been appointed part time engineering clerk and she works in the mornings five days a week. However, the former Peckham driver likes to keep busy and combines her admin work with driving scheduled service buses in the evenings and at weekends. Gillian said: "I really enjoy driving, but I also wanted to get experience doing something new within the company."

On call: Gillian Cole.

DOUBLE ROLE

KARL BLAIR, general manager of Bexleyheath garage, has also assumed responsibility for Putney and Waterside Way. Pat Mahon, previously general manager at Putney, has reverted to the full-time role of general manager (operations) and general manager, Waterloo.

GO-AHEAD PIONEERS GROUND-BREAKING NEW SCHEME IN THE CAPITAL TAKING DISABILITY CONCERNS ON BOARD

PEOPLE with a learning disability are being given the opportunity to live life more independently with the help of Go-Ahead London. The scheme, the first of its kind in the capital, is aimed at helping vulnerable people travel on buses with confidence. The voluntary organisation HAIL is leading the initiative and working in partnership with Go-Ahead London, which is providing a bus and a driver from Putney garage for one day a month. The scheme is funded by Wandsworth Council and is supported by Transport for London and the Met Police. It involves people with learning and, in some cases, physical disability who attend Wandsworth Council's Atheldene day centre. Their ages range from 18 to 85. A typical day involves the bus running on a short 'circular' route to and from Putney Heath. This allows people with learning difficulties, accompanied by HAIL staff, to experience bus travel. For example, they learn how to request a bus to stop, how to board it using their Freedom Pass, how to ask the driver for help

if necessary, get a seat, manoeuvre a wheelchair and how to use the bell. General manager operations Pat Mahon, who is a key figure in the project, said: "We were approached by HAIL to assist their staff in giving people the chance to access buses and give them the confidence to travel. We are the only London bus operator involved in this sort of initiative and are delighted to help give people with learning difficulties a bridge to the wider community." HAIL's travel mate manager Rachel Wills said: "We support people with a learning difficulty to live within the community and we also want to offer them help to become even more independent, and that includes accessing public transport. "They want to go out just like anybody else. It is very moving to see people who have been worried about getting on a bus doing so for the first time. It's a real achievement and they show it." London General's buses on Routes 44 and 270 serve the day centre and Rachel said: "Generally speaking the drivers on these routes are brilliant, very considerate."



Steve McGinley is helping people with learning difficulties overcome their travel fears.

'My advice to drivers is to be patient'

IT IS planned to carry out travel access days for people with learning disabilities at other garages. Here, driver and volunteer schools liaison officer Steve McGinley gives an insight into his day. "You learn immediately that the things we take for granted can be quite challenging for people with learning difficulties," said Steve, who is based at Putney. "I heard that one man hadn't left his home for three years because he was frightened of the outside world. That's almost impossible for most people to

imagine. "People with learning disabilities have a whole range of challenges that are quite different from the ones we face. "My advice to drivers is to be patient with someone who is having difficulty communicating and never assume that they understand what is being said to them. "I really enjoyed the day. I learned a lot and realised just how important it is for people with learning difficulties to use buses because it is an empowering exercise."

We get rail travellers back on track

MORE than 450 drivers were involved in massive rail relief operations throughout London and the south east over the first weekend in March. Involving three rail companies, including London Underground, it was one of the largest operations of its kind ever undertaken by Go-Ahead London's commercial department. Engineering work on the Northern Line required the use of 100 drivers to ferry passengers to and from Stockwell and Morden stations. Many more drivers, largely from New Cross and Bexleyheath, were working from London to the south coast covering for services halted by maintenance on the Southern and Southeastern rail networks.

With the LU work going on for three weekends and more Overground rail replacements coming up, the scene is set for a busy year. The new work follows hot on the heels of an exceptionally busy Christmas for Go-Ahead London drivers and controllers, with the successful completion of a prestigious contract for the Gatwick Express and another involving work at Kempton Park races on Boxing Day. The Gatwick Express job used outside coach operators in addition to vehicles and drivers from Go-Ahead London. Passengers and their luggage were taken to and from Victoria station and the airport. A number of drivers were asked to do manual handling duties at both ends of the

journey and on some trips luggage was stored in the lower saloon of a double-decker bus while passengers rode upstairs. A total of 12 buses and drivers were required for work on Boxing Day at Kempton Park. This work involved a shuttle inside the racecourse premises, buses to and from Richmond station and Kempton Park and a shuttle from a nearby multi-storey car park to the course. Major ongoing work for Go-Ahead drivers is centred on the O₂ with contracts to take late concert-goers back to three mainline stations. The latter involves bendy buses from Waterloo and New Cross plus personnel from Bexleyheath to manage some 2,000 people on to and off buses.

Airport vehicle is brought back to life

IT ARRIVED on a low loader and had seen better days... But now it was about to begin a new lease of life as a restoration and training project for Go-Ahead London's engineering apprentices. The former Birmingham Airport baggage handling vehicle, which belonged to Go-Ahead's aviation business, Aviance, was delivered to the Stockwell-based training school last year. It has since provided the company's young engineers with

hands-on experience over and above that required for the completion of their apprenticeships. Two third-year bodybuilding apprentices, Mark Hart and Tom Martin, are restoring the vehicle in Go-Ahead London livery while their mechanical colleagues will be using it to gain practical experience not achievable on buses, including a manual transmission and clutch. Joint engineering training manager Ian Saich said: "The vehicle is part of

the broader training and education this company offers its apprentices." Ian added that very few engineering apprentices in the London bus industry would have the opportunity to rebuild a vehicle or work on manual transmissions. "We also send our apprentices on work placements to Volvo, Cummins and Voith among other companies so that they get a full practical package to complement their studies at the College of North West London in Willesden," said Ian.

EMPLOYEES APPLAUDED FOR HELPING SECURE NEW WORK

COMMERCIAL manager Colin Farrant expressed his thanks to all those employees involved in private hire and commercial work. "We have had a very busy time since Christmas and we continue to secure more work. My thanks go out to everyone involved. "We have had sufficient vehicles to put out on to the roads, that's down to the engineers, and enough drivers and controllers to ensure we have provided an excellent service. "I would like to thank all those drivers who became baggage handlers for a while on the Gatwick Express contract and those who are involved in crowd management at the O₂. "Commercial work is a very important source of revenue to the company. I am,

however, aware it uses enormous resources and we would not be anywhere near as successful without full co-operation from the garages." Commercial assistant and panel driver David Ewing, who acted as baggage handler over Christmas, said: "It was quite an unusual job. We were running a 30-minute service on Christmas Day and every six minutes on Boxing Day. "All the drivers involved took a course in manual handling and panel drivers do it as a matter of course. We enjoyed the work, it was something different and most of our customers were very appreciative. We all saw it as part of the service."

Trio chosen for training

THREE employees have been chosen to take part in an in-house training scheme to find managers of the future. Darren Barnden is working as a senior garage administrator at Sutton, Lawrie Breschinsky is a garage administrator at Docklands and Rachel Jones is a controller at Camberwell. Their appointments follow a three-stage interview process. A total of 27 employees applied to take part in the programme. All three successful candidates will gain experience in other areas of the business. They take up their new roles on 6 April.

Meet the team who get a purchase on your needs



EVER wondered who orders your new uniform or who ensures there is a constant supply of toilet paper at your garage? The group purchasing department is in charge of all purchasing requirements for various commodities, which can be anything from a brand new fleet of vehicles to a spare light bulb. It's also the team's responsibility to draw up and implement contracts wherever possible, to make significant cost savings, not just for Go-Ahead London, but for all operating companies within the group. In this special feature we put the spotlight on the department and introduce the team, which has recently relocated from Gatwick to Go-Ahead House in Croydon. Jenny Turner is group procurement manager (bus division) and heads up a team of 11. While some of the team members deal with the day-to-day London requirements, other members of the department look after the rest of the group's interests. "What's great is that we have complete flexibility here so that any member of the team can deal with an enquiry and ensure that it is followed through. Our priority, of course, is to keep buses on the road," said Jenny, who has worked for the company for 26 years. Linda Crabtree, who deputises in Jenny's absence, is senior buyer. Heather Knox is the PA, Stephen

Hatt and Alan Hall are buyers and Lynn Whitcombe is purchasing administrator. Buyers Richard Sayers and Russell Dean predominantly look after the requirements of London and are joined by assistant buyer, Nathan Wood, and trainee buyer, Tashan Dalmage. Michael Winch is the stores supervisor and acts as liaison between garage storekeepers and the purchasing department. Mark Adkins is on a temporary assignment with the purchasing department, as a project coordinator. "The relocation from Gatwick to Croydon does have its benefits," said Jenny. "We're much nearer to London Central and London General's head office and closer to the garages, too. This makes it easier to visit the garages, if it is required." There is never a quiet moment in keeping the business running, especially when the department has various cost saving initiatives under way, including Operation Facelift. Jenny said: "We're always keen to encourage cost cutting and promote the importance of buying from contractors." Other projects include getting a new engineering stores system up and running within the next 12 months and introducing a new system called I Procurement, which will deal with non engineering purchasing requirements such as getting a roof repaired or drains unblocked.

It's the busman's Roller!

LIKE driving a Rolls-Royce is how Stockwell type trainer Estelle Bennett described the garage's five new E400H buses. Adorned with London Buses' new green leaf livery, the 10.8-metre, two-door hybrid vehicles are built by Alexander Dennis. They are among the first of their kind in the capital and the first delivered to Go-Ahead London. They were due to go into service on Routes 24 and 196 last month (February) alongside conventional E400s already operating on the routes. Estelle, who has been a type trainer for five years, said: "They are really nice to drive and every single driver, except one, has said how good and how different they are from other buses. In the bus world it's like driving a Rolls. They offer an exceptionally smooth ride because the retarder starts as the driver is decelerating and before they touch the brake." The new buses are said to reduce fuel consumption and emissions by 30 per cent or more. They have a BAE Systems hybrid



Estelle Bennett with Michael Brown, driveline and use lithium ion batteries, which do not need mains recharging during their life cycle. The E400H is one of well over 50 new hybrid models operating in the capital and Transport for London has said it expects all buses joining the fleet by 2012 to be hybrids. Stockwell is also evaluating a diesel electric Wright Gemini hybrid.

STAYING CHIRPY!

Finches' new aviary really fits the bill as a winter retreat

IT WAS so cold in early February that Dave Merrett's 'family' did what they do best – they stuck together like birds of a feather.

There they were ... all 40 or so finches huddled together in their breeding boxes and coconut shells like fluffy balls.

"I didn't have one casualty," said the Merton driver. "The finches just cuddled up and kept warm."

"They are really funny to watch at any time, but seeing them jostling for position to get as close to each other as possible was really comical."

Dave has kept and bred birds for more than 20 years. Apart from the finches, he has six cockatiels and a canary all sharing a large, heavy, timber-frame aviary at his home in Hampshire.

"They all get on very well together," said Dave. "They're much happier here than in Wandsworth where we used to live until about three years ago."

"I used a couple of garden sheds as aviaries, and that wasn't very satisfactory."

The new aviary is full of features to keep the 'family' happy, such as rope swings, bird baths and feeders – they all like millet and



Dave Merrett with his feathered friends.

corn. Apart from that and basic aviary hygiene the birds need very little care.

"When I'm working I just make sure they've plenty to eat and enough water before I

leave the house. At other times I just enjoy watching and looking after them," said Dave.

"The finches are great at aerobatics and really funny the way they react to each other."

Knights of the road

What the travelling public says about the people who work for London General

SUTTON

● ROUTE 80 driver Emma Gravestock is described as "fantastic" and a "credit to your company" by passenger Mike Sams.

He says Emma accelerates and brakes "very smoothly" and cornering is done with "such care it's obvious that the comfort and safety of her passengers is paramount".

● IF THERE is a gold star going spare it should be given to Route 213 driver Ruth Symons, says passenger Denise Olsson-Hildick. Ruth waited while customers ran for the bus.

PUTNEY

● MR J. BEDDALL commends Route 14 driver Jason Bond for the way in which he responded to a tramp who was asking him all sorts of questions from the pavement.

Jason "dealt with him very politely and was equally pleasant and patient with passengers", says Mr Beddall. He adds:

"Drivers on this route are generally very helpful."

● A MRS ANDERSON is a regular Route 74 passenger and commends driver Sue Cowlard for waiting patiently for people to board, being polite and "always smiling".

● FULL marks are awarded to Route 14 driver Malcolm House from passenger Jason Clapperton. The victim of a badly-sprained ankle, Mr Clapperton says Malcolm was patient and friendly as he boarded the bus. Furthermore, Malcolm was equally friendly and eager to "help all his passengers".

MANDELA WAY

● ROUTE 133 driver Tayo Bakare is commended for his patience and good driving by Ms V. Bailey.

● ROUTE 453 driver Wieslaw Sacharczuk is praised by passenger Andrew FitzMaurice for his "excellent" driving.

STOCKWELL

● DRIVER Bruce Maragh is praised by passengers Kevin and Ellie Skelton for the way he dealt with rowdy passengers constantly ringing the stop bell on his N87 bus.

● REGULAR passenger Jillian Meadows would like Route 315 drivers to know how appreciated they are. Known locally as the 'Little Bus', Jillian says the drivers do an "excellent job of navigating the constant and unpredictable obstacles in the way through the back streets of Streatham and Norwood". She also describes their "bravery" driving on untreated roads during the hard winter weather in February.

WATERLOO

● A MR COE called to say that if he owned a coach company he would offer Route 507 driver Austin Laronde a job. He "showed great consideration to his passengers" and drove smoothly. "A great way to start the day," says a happy passenger.

Journeying into retirement

Farewell to six popular Go-Ahead employees



Chris Du Sautoy

THERE must have been something about the bus industry that lured Chris Du Sautoy back after many years.

Among a variety of jobs when he was younger he became a conductor with Midland Red. He left the industry after three years to do other work and then rejoined at the old Peckham garage in 1987. Shortly afterwards he transferred to Walworth to drive the Red Arrows and then went with them to Waterloo in the early 1990s.

"I've always enjoyed driving," said Chris, who retired last month (February), "and I like working with people. You are very much your own boss on the road and I like the responsibility. I've enjoyed my career with Go-Ahead and will miss my colleagues at the garage, but I'm looking forward to pursuing my interests."

Ted Brown

PAINTING is among the pastimes Ted Brown hopes to resurrect as he settles in to retirement. Ted left the industry on January 1, just short of 25 years as a driver at Merton. Ted and his wife Liz are members of the National Trust and he hopes that their travels to historic places will give him the inspiration to resurrect his hobby of painting.

"I've done very little painting over the past six years, but I hope to get started again soon," said Ted, whose brother Ron is an artist. "It's so relaxing and it's like disappearing into another world. I'm also enjoying spending more time with my family, particularly our three grandchildren."

Mohammad Khan and Dave Rollock

STAFF at Stockwell are saying farewell to colleagues as they begin a new chapter of their lives in retirement after a combined 80 years on the buses.

They are Mohammad Khan, 35 years, and Dave Rollock, 45 years.

Mohammad was a conductor for 20 years, starting out at Riverside, Hammersmith. He became an instructor after five years, which was quick in those days. He began driving at Victoria and has since worked at Waterloo and Stockwell. He began driving at Victoria on Route 11 and has since worked at Waterloo and Stockwell on the same route, remaining on Routemasters until their demise at Stockwell in 2003.

Eelson Greenidge

ONE OF London buses' finest ambassadors retired from Sutton garage in December. Described by operations manager Derek Barker as an "absolute gentleman", Eelson Greenidge called it a day, aged 75, and after almost 48 years in the industry.

Eelson had worked part time since 1998. He drove the service known locally as the 'Tesco bus' and KU1, the Kingston University service. The withdrawal of the Tesco bus just before Christmas was reported in the local paper and regular customers said how much they missed the service and their "lovely" driver.

Derek added: "Eelson was a valued member of staff. He was polite, helpful and you could always rely on him to do the job with utmost professionalism."



Jeff Handford

IT'S THE end of an era as the last of London's timing inspectors is set to retire in May.

Jeff Handford began his career on the buses as a driver in 1968. He became an inspector in 1973 and was based primarily at Tooting Broadway until he took on the role of timing inspector in 1985 and moved to London Transport's headquarters at 55 Broadway.

There were just 24 timing inspectors to cover LT's operations and Jeff is not only the last, but also the longest serving member of the team.

Jeff is an enthusiastic traveller and he and his wife Kathleen have planned a fabulous holiday later this year that takes in visits to Rome and Venice and a cruise among the Greek islands.

"I've really enjoyed my career," said Jeff, who has been based at Go-Ahead's Merton HQ for some years. "It's been a pleasure to come to work every day. I've made many friends and will still see some of them at golfing events."