

Extensions won and 322 is under review

CAMBERWELL and Peckham garages have secured Routes 12 and P12 until the end of 2011.

Both were offered two-year extensions by London Buses on their existing five-year contracts because of good performance. The extension on Route 12 begins in November 2009 while the P12's extension begins a month earlier.

The news means guaranteed

work for more than 140 drivers at both garages for the next three years.

● Meanwhile Route 322, which operates from Clapham Common to Crystal Palace, is halfway through its review year (known as the Primary Assessment Period). The low frequency service was won by London General and began operating out of Stockwell in 2005.

DOUBLE TOP?

Two in short list for best London garage

TWO London General garages are in a short list of six for the accolade of London bus garage of the year.

They are 2006 winner Putney and the company's only dedicated artic base, Waterloo.

It is the first time in the competition's seven-year history that the Red Arrow depot has been short listed.

If either garage wins it will be the fifth time that a London General or London Central garage has won – both companies share two outright firsts.

The result of the TfL-sponsored award will be announced in November at the industry's biggest national prize-giving ceremony in London, the UK Bus Awards.

General manager operations Pat Mahon, who is in charge of both garages, said: "The short list means that Go-Ahead has two of the best performing garages in London.

"Putney won in 2006 and was short listed last year. This is a fantastic achievement. Waterloo has consistently been the best performing garage in London since June 2002 and now it's up with the top six in London across all measures. Again another outstanding achievement.

"Every member of both teams has a right to feel proud whether we win or not."

Every year TfL bases its short list on the performance of well over 90 London garages. Their managers are then asked to make a submission outlining the reasons why they should win one of London's most coveted awards.

Continued focus

Already a highly-successful garage, Pat said in his submission that Putney was focusing on the customer, providing a safe and reliable service aimed at reducing accidents and complaints from the travelling public.

In order to do this, he said, there was continued focus on driving standards and "forensic examination" of public complaints, which involved drivers.

"We are showing TfL that we are not resting on our laurels, but trying to do better and reach higher standards year on year," said Pat.

Apart from highlighting the excellence of its performance, Pat emphasised the importance of Waterloo as a training ground for future key players – the depot has produced four operating managers since its conversion to artic.

Waterloo's recognition as one of the top operations in London comes at an interesting time because the contracts for its two high volume services expire next June.

It is believed London's new mayor, Boris Johnson, wants to phase out bendy buses and that he has asked London General as well as other operators showing interest in the routes to submit bids on the basis of single-deck buses and artic.

Pat said: "We have operated artic safely in the heart of London for six years and I think they are the best bus for the job. But whatever the outcome we'll be ready to do what we have to do."



John Trayner, centre, with Wayne and Debbie and the company's £5,000 cheque for Help for Heroes.

Heroes of the Three Peaks challenge

GRIPPED by the spirit of adventure, two London General employees can't wait to rejoin 10 of their colleagues for a new daredevil experience.

Stockwell's Wayne Ashe and Sutton's Debbie Murray had qualified for the 'Bus to Beijing' trip, which was abandoned at the last minute.

To make up for the disappointment the 12-strong team of London bus workers organised a Three Peaks Challenge to raise money for Help for Heroes, a new charity that helps armed service personnel who have been injured in current conflicts.

The self-styled Route Masters team attempted to scale the UK's three highest mountains in Scotland, England and Wales in 24 hours.

Most people do the 450-mile Three Peaks Challenge in fast 4x4s, but the London bus drivers' team did it in a new £160,000 Scania double-decker.

Debbie said: "We did the challenge in 30 hours, which was brilliant. There was no way we could have done it in 24 hours because we had to be so careful not to damage the bus, and you couldn't compare our vehicle with a 4x4 in speed or manoeuvrability.

"But what an experience it was. We're all really keen to meet up soon and do another challenge, but we told the organisers, Max Adventure, definitely no more mountains!"

Debbie said the Route Masters set off at Ben Nevis, the UK's highest mountain at 4,406 feet. They braved deep snow, gales and wind-chill temperatures as low as 11°Celsius.

The weather on Scafell Pike was better, but Snowdon was "deadly". A raging storm with torrential rain and hailstones and winds up to 85 mph greeted the climbers at the summit.

Wayne said: "We were all exhausted

but proud of what we achieved. Everybody played his or her part in the team. We allocated three people to drive the bus so that those climbing could relax between the peaks. The support team was great.

"We'd like to thank the organisers and the company for the support they gave us following the cancellation of the Beijing trip."

People from six London operators took part and Go-Ahead London managing director John Trayner donated £5,000 on behalf of the company to the charity.

Just days after the team completed the challenge, donations stood at more than £20,000 and organisers were hoping to get significantly more.

● The challenge was led by Mac Mackenney, who was with Sir Ranulph Fiennes on his last North Pole expedition.



Driver Aneta Trojniak has worked at Putney for nearly a year. She is presently working in the office on mileage.

Q What is your favourite sport and which team do you support?

A Football and Everton ("That's what the OM told me to say.")

Q Which well-known celebrity would you most like to meet and why?

A Jeremy Clarkson: "I love his sense of humour."

Q Which television show would you most like to appear in?

A Top Gear: "I would love to drive some of their cars."

Q Which character trait do you most like in other people?

A "I like people who are brave enough to admit they are not perfect."

Q Which character trait do you least like in other people?

A "People with short tempers scare me."

Q Which character trait do you least like about yourself?

A "I worry too much and tend to be a control freak."

Q Your favourite film (any era) and why?

A Gladiator: "It is very motivating and it has principles."

Q Which job would you least like to do?

A Chef.

Q If you had your time over again, which career would you like to pursue?

A "I would not change a thing about my life."

Q Your idea of the perfect day is ...?

A "Walking mountains in the rain to see the rainbow afterwards."

Q If you could donate £1,000 to charity, which one would it be?

A Cancer Research.

Q What was the happiest time of your life?

A Childhood.

Q Name one person (dead or alive) you consider to be 'great' and why?

A Pope John Paul II – "perfect human being, and Polish".

Q What is your philosophy in life?

A "When God leads you to the edge of the cliff, trust him fully. Either he will catch you or he will teach you to fly."

Apprentice Tom wins student of the year award

THE College of North West London has named apprentice Tom Martin Student of the Year for its annual Institute of Road Transport Engineers (IRTE) award.

Tom is the second London General / London Central apprentice to achieve the coveted award in three years – the first was Darren Connolly.

Tom, who is specialising in body trades, begins the final year of his three-year apprenticeship this month (September).

The award is sponsored by the IRTE (West London Branch) and is presented to the one student among many from all over London who has shown outstanding ability, aptitude and an excellent attendance record.

Group engineering director Phil Margrave said: "We are very proud of our engineering apprentices, but to be given this award is something very special because the competition is so great. My personal congratulations to Tom."

The company has 26



Tom Martin is seen with his own personal prize and the college's shield bearing the names of other top students.

engineering apprentices at various stages of their training, including 12 who started this summer.

Joint engineering training manager Ian Saich said: "It's probably true to say we have the largest number of engineering apprentices in London and our scheme is certainly streets ahead of anyone else's."

Engineers get chance to take new bus NVQ

EXPERIENCED engineers are being offered the opportunity to train for the new Transport Engineering Maintenance qualification.

Unlike its predecessors the new scheme is an NVQ developed for the bus and coach engineering industry, as opposed to heavy vehicles in general.

It was introduced to London General and London Central last year to new apprentices and is now on offer to mature staff.

Joint engineering training manager Ian Saich explained that Transport for London was looking for an increase in the engineering skills base throughout London's operators with a high percentage

of the workforce having recognised industry qualifications.

"At some stage in the future fully experienced and capable engineers will require a certificate to show that they have reached an acknowledged standard of work," said Ian. "Ability and experience without the paperwork will not count."

He added that in the long term the qualifications held by engineers could be taken into consideration in the tendering process.

The course is offered to all mature engineers at the company's expense and qualification within a year is seen as a "very realistic timescale".

OBITUARY John Butterworth

STAFF at Sutton garage were mourning the death of driver John Butterworth in August.

John, aged 60, had completed almost 37 years in the industry and was known for his jolly sense of humour and enthusiasm for AFC Wimbledon and walking.

John decided to go part time in 2000 and worked three days a week. He became ill earlier this year and passed away peacefully on Friday, August 1, with his long-term partner and family by his side.

Operating manager Derek Barker said: "John had a keen sense of humour and a professional approach to the job. He was a very popular member of staff and sadly missed. Our thoughts are with his partner."

News in brief

THE following changes to engineering responsibilities were announced in June. Russell Latimer has taken over as workshop manager at Stockwell and Terry Absalom has been promoted to workshop manager at Bexleyheath.

STAFF at Mandela Way have elected the following colleagues to union positions. They are driver Robert Brion, representative, driver Janet Sterling, branch chairperson and Pawel Reszka, secretary.

STOCKWELL SGA Steve Chamberlain and GA Don Ditch have transferred to Mandela Way. Wayne Ashe has replaced Steve.

Rob's good deed earns mum's thanks



Rob gave a tenner to a distressed teenager.

A SUTTON driver's good deed enabled a distressed 14-year-old girl to get to her school in time to take an important examination.

Route 213 driver Rob Emburey's action would have gone unacknowledged but for an email from the girl's mother thanking him.

The story began when Rob drew up at the London Road bus stop and was unable to continue to Cheam because of a road traffic accident.

The girl was among those people waiting at the stop and she became "very upset" because she told Rob she would miss her exam if she got to school late.

Rob said: "She was crying and I gave her £10 to pay for a taxi. There's a taxi

see the project through.

Although involved in the planning for months, Gerry's is the most recent part of the project to go live. Before the iBus project began in Go-Ahead, Gerry spent time at Arriva and Transdev looking at their approach.

"Their help was invaluable," said Gerry. "It's fair to say that there were teething troubles and that those two operators helped to iron many of them out with Siemens and London Buses."

Gerry took on the responsibility within Go-Ahead to get 12 buses every night over to Norwood garage so that technicians from iBus manufacturer Siemens could fit the equipment.

High quality

Gerry has had to work closely with managers in operations and engineering in each garage to keep disruption to a minimum.

"The biggest issue by far has been logistics," said Gerry. "London Buses said right at the beginning of the project that it expected operators to continue to provide a high quality service."

"We have had to ensure that there were sufficient buses available to cover for the 12 away at Norwood every night."

Gerry's colleague and New Cross electrician Jamie Magenis has worked – and continues to work – at Norwood to ensure iBus is fully functional before a bus is driven back to its garage.

Gerry said: "We have experienced a high level of co-operation and teamwork both from our own staff and from people working for Siemens and London Buses."

iBUS – TRAINING AND CONVERSION COMPLETES IN OCTOBER

Huge operation in logistics



Gerry May, right, with electrician Jamie Magenis and the in-cab Mobile Data Terminal.

New counter software set to replace ageing CATS

HI-TECH capability at London General and London Central is moving up a gear with the introduction of new behind-the-counter software.

Called Grampian, the new kit covers HR and the allocation of employees to rotas through to the production of timesheets ready for input to payroll.

The software replaces the old CATS allocations program and the Perfect HR System, combining the two functions into one manageable package.

The big benefit for drivers is that when the new system is up and running at their location, they will no longer sign on manually at the beginning of a duty, but instead use a swipe card.

Merton and Sutton general manager Colin Langford, who is managing the project, said: "This process will do all that is required for the driver to get paid."

Grampian is already working well at Waterside Way and Mandela Way and it is scheduled to go live at Blue Triangle this month (September).

Colin added: "We aim to complete one site every six weeks, so by the end of 2009 all 13 Go-Ahead London locations should have switched over to Grampian."

OBAMA MANIA STOPS CLAPHAM OMNIBUS



TIME: 12.44. Date: July 26, 2008. Place: King Charles Street. The driver of this Route 88 bus en route to Clapham Common could be forgiven for wondering what was going on. All he or she could see was a sea of people holding cameras aloft and looking the other way. Is it a rock star? A great sporting star?

Well, no. This bus is believed to have been the first stopped as US presidential candidate Barack Obama left Downing Street in a convoy of limousines on the first leg of his journey back to the States after his European tour.

The route is operated from Stockwell and general manager Colin Opher said: "This part of London came to a standstill briefly on that Saturday morning and our driver was one of a number to get caught up in the excitement. It's certainly a picture for the garage album."

Picture copyright Guardian News and Media Ltd 2008.

Fuel-saving course set for Driver CPC

TRIALS of a one-day fuel efficient driving course have taken place on New Cross garage's Canada Water to Hither Green 225 service.

The trial was in preparation for the introduction of the Driver CPC programme, due to come into force in the UK on September 10. It was also developed in response to a Go-Ahead directive to cut fuel costs.

Resources manager Keith Wood and driver training manager Eric Dale are responsible for successful delivery of the course.

Keith said: "We chose to pilot the course on a single service so that we could see how it worked out and look at the results on a small scale."

"We learned a lot from this trial and have tweaked the course as a result." The course is now being rolled out across London General and London Central as part of the Driver CPC programme.

Around 12 drivers a day will take part in the one-day course on a garage-by-garage basis.

Black box technology, which monitors a drive and produces detailed information on fuel usage during a journey, will be fitted to buses at each location ahead of the training, or in tandem with it. Used in conjunction with training, the results are expected to be significant.

Black box technology not only offers data on the quantity of fuel used, but equally important, how it is being used. Buses will be fitted with the technology to coincide with the completion of training at the end of 2009.

New safety alert after accidents

RISK and safety manager Andrew Smith has renewed his call for drivers to take extra care and anticipate hazards.

It follows two fatal accidents and another incident involving a bus hitting a low bridge.

Both fatal accidents involved pedestrians and Andrew said: "People's behaviour is often unpredictable, particularly where schoolchildren are involved and at crossings. We can only appeal to drivers to anticipate what pedestrians might do and be extra vigilant in areas where the risk is highest."

The low bridge incident occurred when a driver was running light returning to a garage. The driver took a wrong turn and hit a bridge in Hinton Road, near Loughborough Junction. The whole roof came off the bus and landed in the road.

Andrew said drivers must stick to official routes, whether in service or running light. If they take a road that is off the line of route, such as in a diversion or a wrong turn by mistake, they should stop and call CentreComm for further instructions.

He said the area around Loughborough Junction was like a "spider's web" for railways and many roads had low bridges and other overhead obstructions like trees and scaffolding.

"The message is," said Andrew, "for drivers to be aware at all times. Lapses in concentration result in accidents, some of which are very serious."

Diploma for Paul



Paul Coyle.

STOCKWELL'S assistant operating manager Paul Coyle has achieved his BTEC Advanced Professional Diploma in Management Studies.

The qualification is recognised by the Chartered Management Institute.

Managing director John Trayner presented Paul with his diploma at Stockwell garage in August.

Paul joined Go-Ahead as a graduate trainee and completed his Certificate in Management Studies during his first 18 months with the company.

New role for Angie

FORMER senior controller Angeline Verrillo has been appointed road manager for Putney, Waterside Way and Waterloo. Angie has covered for road managers at most locations within the company.

£4,000 raised for children's wards

Stockwell team wins charity football

THE lives of babies and children who need special care have been improved thanks to employees of Go-Ahead London, their families and friends.

More than £3,000 was raised from a great six-a-side football tournament and family fun day at Tooting and Mitcham's ground, The Hub, in June, and then staff at head office weighed in last month (August) with a donation in excess of £700.

Half of the money raised was presented to St George's Hospital's Neo-Natal Unit and the other half to the Peter Pan Ward at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Worthy

Merton driver Scott Horney, one of the main organisers of the football match, thanked colleagues and sponsors for making the six-a-side tournament "such a success in terms of fun for the family and raising money for a couple of worthy causes".

A total of 12 teams took part – Blue Triangle, Camberwell, head office, two from Merton, two from Putney, New Cross, Sutton and three from Stockwell. Stockwell County beat Stockwell Rangers in the final and Merton A and Camberwell took third and fourth place.

Apart from the football, there was plenty to entertain the youngsters including the presence



Steve Powell, left, and Scott Horney with their daughters and staff at St George's Hospital, Tooting.



Going for the ball.

of a vintage Green Goddess fire appliance and a bouncy castle.

Among the raffle prizes were a Virgin Experience Day, an LCD television, a week's break in Kent and a night's stay at a hotel in Wimbledon. A photograph



Stockwell's triumphant County team. Picture by Nigel Wood.

signed by all the Arsenal players attracted the highest bid in the auction at £81.

Among the many people Scott thanked were colleagues Linda Austin, Mark Bolton, Jenny Green, Steve Powell

and Nigel Wood.

Scott said: "We've raised nearly £4,000 for these two hospitals and on behalf of the organisers I'd like to thank all those who have contributed so generously to two really worthwhile causes."

Knights of the road

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

LONDON GENERAL

● **TRANSPORT** for London's driver communications manager Rosamund Snow says a big thank you to London General on behalf of a friend who damaged her foot and wears what she calls a "plastic boot".

Rosamund's friend emailed her to say how helpful drivers have been: "Buses are fab, particularly the marvellous route 14. Without it, I would not have been able to get to work. People have been really nice and helpful – bus drivers and passengers ..."

MERTON

● **PASSENGER** Klara Knaus thanks Route 163 driver Peter Grown for his assistance as she has "some difficulties walking".

● **ROUTE 219** driver Dee Cowan is described as "absolutely wonderful" by passenger Jessica Watson. Dee gave instructions for the passenger's onward journey "and seemed to really enjoy her job, and it was noticed".

● **A "GREAT public service"** is said to have been provided by Route 44 driver Tibor Domeny. Alexandra Day and an assistant were in charge of four adults with disabilities. They were having a "stressful time" with public transport until Tibor turned up.

"Your driver could not have been more helpful," writes Ms Day, "this was a much-needed friendly face to six cold, wet, fed up people trying to get home. He was polite and friendly and did as much as possible to assist us."

PUTNEY

● **SYMPATHETIC** passengers gave Route 14 driver Dave Vassallo a general "Well done, mate" after a difficult journey. Ms Hollingbery says the bus's engine kept cutting out, a passenger was being annoying and another person kept shouting to Dave. He turned into Fulham Road because he couldn't go any further.

Dave "waited with us to ensure we all got other buses, he was so cheerful and communicative that we continued our journeys smiling and sympathetic – an excellent display of passenger and vehicle management".

● **"THIS morning I hopped on to a No 14 and was greeted by a smiling, delightful bus driver who said 'good morning' to me. This made my day ..."** The words of passenger Christine Craig describing Danny Tiwari.

STOCKWELL

● **DRIVER** Howard Kerr is praised by passenger Peter Torre for his "traditional service".

● **A NUMBER** of American tourists fell victim to a malfunctioning ticket machine. They appealed to Route 11 driver Leo Alverado to help and he drove them to the next stop and waited for them to get their tickets for the onward journey.

WATERSIDE WAY

● **MRS A. TABASSUM** congratulates staff responsible for running an "excellent" service on Route 39. She says the drivers are "excellent" as well and reserves special thanks for Shehzad Nasir who "explained the timetable and frequency information in a way that was easy to understand".

Retirements

Former RAF man holidays in the sun

WINSTON REID

WINSTON is probably enjoying a long, well-earned rest in Jamaica as this issue of In General is published.

The Stockwell driver and mentor retired in July after 30 years on the buses and was planning a holiday in his birth place to catch up with friends and family.

Winston came to this country in 1960. He worked initially in

the telecoms industry and then served in the Royal Air Force for nine years as a wireless operator.

He joined London Transport in 1978 as a conductor at Stockwell. A year later he was behind the wheel, a job he was ideally suited to because he has a record of 23 years' safe driving and was a mentor for several years.

A keen sportsman, he played cricket for Stockwell garage for many years and is the proud owner of a number of trophies for outstanding play.

Winston said: "I've enjoyed all aspects of my career, particularly

mentoring new drivers. There is a sense of achievement when you see people improve and develop under your guidance."

General manager Colin Opher said: "We wish Winston all the best in retirement. He was a first class employee and popular with everyone."

YASAR TAHIR

COLLEAGUES at Stockwell also said farewell to Yasar Tahir who took early retirement after 30 years. Colin said Yasar was "a very good employee and we all wish him well for the future".