



THE

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# Clipper

THE LONDON CENTRAL STAFF NEWSPAPER

## Reminder about 'hi-vis' jackets

DRIVERS are being asked to refrain from wearing 'hi-vis' jackets while they are driving.

Training manager Eric Dale said: "It is one of the ways that London Buses is trying to raise the profile of bus driving as a professional job."

"As a company, Go-Ahead London asks our drivers to be smartly dressed in uniform when driving and to wear their 'hi-vis' jackets only for safety reasons as instructed, that is when they are walking in garages and bus stations."

Eric also pointed out that London Buses' mystery travellers penalise the company for drivers wearing 'hi-vis' jackets in service.

"Penalty points given against a driver count in the tendering process. I'm not saying that such an infringement would make the difference between winning and losing a contract, but it is all part of a cumulative points system. If the penalties mount up for whatever reason, then they could affect the company's prospects."

Eric added that the more drivers follow the instructions about wearing 'hi-vis' jackets, the more likely it is to become second nature.

# COST OF ACCIDENT CLAIMS INCREASES

## Swift action needed to cut payouts

**DRIVERS are being urged to play their part in the fight against the rising costs of accidents and personal injury claims.**

The total cost of third party claims over the past 12 months stands at a staggering £6.4 million, compared with £2.8 million five years ago.

While all costs are going up, senior managers are becoming concerned about the increasing frequency of claimants hiring replacement cars through specialist companies.

Car hire costs last year were £780,000 as against £425,000 five years ago.

In one recent case the company faced a payout of £45,000 for what risk and safety manager Andrew Smith described as "no more than a minor scrape".

The costs arose from a claim involving

allegations of damage to a car and injuries to three of its occupants, including the driver. The claim also included a hire car, legal costs and repair bills.

Andrew appealed to drivers who are involved in an incident, however minor, to get full details of the other driver and vehicle as well as witnesses.

### Higher rates

The information should then be given to a supervisor or manager as soon as possible.

Andrew said accident management companies charge car hire at significantly higher rates than those which our claims handlers can obtain hire cars for.

Accident management companies

might also offer assistance with personal injury claims and repairs to their clients' vehicles, all at costs that could be avoided if the company acted quickly.

Andrew said: "Over the past five years the company has expanded significantly, so we have to expect an increase in the cost of claims, but the magnitude of the increases is quite alarming."

"We are also seeing legal bills from claimants' solicitors out of all proportion to the claims. In one recent case a claim was settled for £1,200 but the claimant's solicitors' costs were £38,000."

"Basically, we are obviously asking for our drivers to drive safely and avoid accidents, but, where an accident does occur, it is essential that full information is obtained and passed to the relevant manager as soon as possible."



Professional: Cesar Cardenas.

# Four major contracts renewed



Good work! Staff at Peckham celebrate the renewal of the 63 service contract.

GOOD work by staff at New Cross and Peckham has been rewarded by London Buses with the renewal of four contracts.

It is excellent news at a time when competition among operators for new work is particularly stiff and when successes for London Central on the tendering front recently have been few and far between.

Both garages have retained two routes apiece and combined they secure work for well over 200 drivers for five more years.

The contract for Routes 21 and 321 at New Cross begin on October 10 and Peckham's 63 and 363 contracts begin on November 14.

The garages' general manager Trevor Johnson said: "Although in the main these routes have performed well and we deserved to retain them, there was no certainty of success."

"Competition is very tough these days and we won it because we got the price right and the teams at New Cross and Peckham did their jobs well too."

"I thank them for their hard work and congratulations on the result. Well done."

Routes 21 and 321 represent almost 22 per cent of the work at New Cross and the 63 and 363 represent almost 44 per cent of Peckham's work.

The number of vehicles required for all four services amount to almost 80 and the figure remains largely unchanged when the new contracts begin, although Route 21 will see its PVR increase by four to 25.

Routes 21 and 63 are to get new buses while the 321 and 363 will use refurbished vehicles.

PRE-SERVICE CHECKS VITAL – P2 ■ TEAMWORK IS THE KEY – P3

## Staff lend their weight to bus pull

BIG-HEARTED Bexleyheath employees have come up with another way of raising money for charity.

Staff at the garage collect thousands of pounds every year through dragon boat racing and other ventures, but now they've decided to add a bus pull to the programme of events.

Organiser and satellite manager Eddie Howard was hoping the bus pull would raise £1,000 for charity. This will be split between the Anthony Nolan Trust (to help towards the sponsorship required for two dragon boat race tournaments) and a charity that supports armed service personnel hurt in action.

The bus pull was due to take place on June 13 along a seven-mile stretch from the garage to the bottom of Shooters Hill.

Eddie said: "We've got a good team of people from the garage, including friends and family, to pull the bus and carry buckets alongside to get people to give their money to the charity."

Driving instructor Nerina Hughes has agreed to use her own bus, RM 1063, for the event and bagged the best job, steering it!

The garage's dragon boat racers are competing at the London Regatta Centre on July 9 and at Bewl Water on September 12.

The Anthony Nolan Trust is a charity dedicated to helping people with leukaemia and who need bone marrow transplants.

## Key routes retained

SISTER company London General has retained four important high frequency services in the latest round of tender results.

All four are operated from Putney and Waterside Way garages. The routes are the 14 / N14, 39, 74 / N74 and 430.

The routes employ about 200 drivers and use 85 buses.

Managing director John Trayner said: "The retention of these routes was critical for both garages. They were won on the quality of work because we were not the cheapest."

# Licence prohibitions can be avoided with driver service checks



Driver Aleksandra Zbrzezna carries out a pre-service check on her bus.

## WHY PRE-SERVICE CHECKS ARE VITAL

**THE Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) carries out random bus inspections, usually at stands.**

**If a bus is found to be faulty, it is possible the inspector could issue a prohibition (PG9) on the spot. This means the bus being withdrawn from service and a penalty on the company's operator's licence file held by the traffic commissioner.**

**If the bus has a safety-related defect, which should have been found by the driver, it could be classed as a serious failure of the maintenance system. This could lead to prosecution for both the driver and the company.**

**In extreme cases it could mean a serious reduction of vehicles authorised for use on the company's operator's licence.**

**"We are asking drivers to carry out their pre-service checks thoroughly and report defects to engineers immediately," said Roy Sayers. "In London Central, drivers are also asked to complete VCR cards.**

**"Among the most important of their pre-service checks is the wheelchair ramp. If there is a fault report it immediately to engineers. Failure to do so could incur a severe penalty from London Buses."**

A **TIMELY** reminder has been issued to the company's drivers to carry out pre-service checks.

It follows a public inquiry that led to the traffic commissioner withdrawing 20 operator's licence discs from London Central with effect from March 31.

It means that out of a fleet of 638 buses the company is authorised to use 618.

The latest inquiry is the second in three years for Central – a record described by quality manager Roy Sayers as "concerning". He added that a third appearance before the commissioner could spell disaster for the company should he "decide to throw the book at us".

Roy said the first inquiry resulted largely from defects found during roadside inspections by VOSA examiners. The second inquiry was called following a wheel loss incident in July last year.

The result is that over the past three years London Central has been issued with 40 prohibitions, four of which were 'S' marked, which means maintenance related.

Roy said: "We have significantly revised and improved our maintenance systems and the commissioner took this into account.

"But we cannot stress too strongly the importance of drivers' pre-service checks. Among the most common defects found by

inspectors are leaks, body damage, loose seats and faulty seat frames, damaged tyres and defective wheelchair ramps.

"Generally speaking, most defects are apparent during the pre-service check and should be reported to engineers immediately."

Roy added that virtually all bus companies have their fair share of prohibitions, but a consistently poor record has the potential of impacting on a company's ability to maintain services and win further work.

He said the results of the most recent VOSA inspection of 48 London Central vehicles was "quite good".

## Watch this space!

**Name our new staff magazine and WIN £200!**



### ENTRY FORM

My suggestion for the name of the new staff magazine is:

Name:

Location:

Telephone number:

AN EXCITING, magazine-style publication is to be launched in August for all Go-Ahead employees in London.

The new magazine, which replaces the Clipper, will be produced more often – every two months instead of quarterly so there will be lots of opportunities for staff to be featured.

You will be able to read news from all four Go-Ahead bus businesses in London in one handy publication.

Before we launch the new publication, however, a name is needed and this is where we are asking for your help.

We know how creative you can be so we want you to think of something short and snappy up to five words long that will make an

appropriate name for the new staff magazine.

The author of the winning entry will win £200 spending money and will be featured in the first issue. How's that just for coming up with a title?

Complete the entry form and send it to: Go-Ahead London Name Competition, Ruxley Communications, 81 High Street, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 1DN.

Alternatively, you can email your suggestion to go-ahead@ruxley.co.uk. Your entry should be with us by July 15. A panel of judges will decide the winning title and the author will be notified shortly afterwards.

Only Go-Ahead London employees are eligible to enter and the judges' decision is final. Correspondence will not be entered into.

## Two special anniversaries for Bexleyheath garage

# A trip down memory lane



The way things used to be...  
Left: The interior of Bexleyheath bus garage in 1961 with a complement of RTs.  
Below: Bexleyheath trolleybus depot in 1936. Note the typical curved 1930s architecture that Mick Buttifant refers to in his reminiscences.  
Pictures courtesy of LT Museum.



BEXLEYHEATH garage will have seen two special anniversaries before the end of next year.

This year is the garage's golden jubilee and 2010 is its 75th anniversary!

Confused? Bexleyheath opened in 1935 as a trolleybus depot and 24 years later it was full of RTs having been one of the first garages to abandon trolleys.

The garage closed in August 1986 and its work moved to Plumstead, Catford and Sidcup. However, it reopened less than two years later as a low-cost tendered operation under the Bexleybus brand.

Its blue and cream buses, which included Olympians, Metroriders and Leyland Nationals, were distinctive, but the company failed to win new tenders and only retained one route, the B16.

London Central took control in 1990 and began winning new work and has since been

the area's premier operator for many years.

Bexleyheath now operates 10 routes – 89, 229, 244, 401, 422, 486, B11, B16, N21 and N89. The garage has 103 buses and 326 drivers. There are 16 engineers and 13 road operating supervisors and regulators.

Driver and union secretary Mick Buttifant has worked at the garage for 41 years and is the holder of 37 safe driving certificates.

He takes up the Bexleyheath story: "It was RTs when I started. They were built like tanks and you had to stand on the brakes to stop them and stand to turn them. They were hard work, but full of character ...

"When the RMs came in we thought it couldn't get any better.

"There was a thriving social side to the job then and I used to take a bus down to the coast almost every weekend during the summer.

"It was full of people from the garage and

we used to have a good day out.

"On the children's runs there used to be seven or eight double deckers and they were all packed.

"When the garage closed briefly in the eighties I went to Sidcup. I returned when it was Bexleybus and was there when London Central took over.

"I must have driven every bus we've ever had at this garage. Of course, I'm fond of the old RTs for nostalgic reasons, but the new Enviro 400s are in a different league. You can't really compare the two.

"From the outside the garage looks much the same, although there used to be a big building on the right, which is a wall now. It used to be the output and there was a canteen and a games room.

"We used to have two full-size snooker tables and other games facilities as well."



The garage today: Mark Colegate and Mick Buttifant outside the garage, which hasn't changed much in more than 70 years.



Road operating supervisor Mark Colegate has owned this magnificent example of an old Bexleybus Leyland Titan since 2004. It was 'liberated' from Bedfordshire where it was on school work and repainted in the 1980s livery. Its London Transport number was T888 and it was Bexleybus 84.

Mark said: "I was a youngster in Abbey Wood when Bexleybus was going and I just wanted to recall old memories and preserve the brand. It cost me £2,000 to buy and I love driving it."

## Teamwork is the key to survival

NO business is completely immune to the economic downturn and that includes the passenger transport industry.

The current financial climate means that there are tough times ahead for all operators, including Go-Ahead London.

The directors are confident, however, that the Go-Ahead London team is in a good position to move forward in 2009 and the

years beyond.

The passenger transport industry is faced with rising costs and fewer journeys, but the Go-Ahead London team is working hard to ensure the business can rise to the challenges now and in the future.

Everyone must do their bit to ensure the company's costs are kept down (fuel efficient driving is just one way of combating rising

costs) and that customers, including London Buses, are impressed with Go-Ahead's service.

Operations director David Cutts said: "These are difficult times particularly as the economic environment is deteriorating, but if we work together as a team this will help us to better tackle the challenges and move ahead in a stronger position."

### Face2Face



IN OUR Face to Face column we chat to Camberwell driver **Neil Palmer** and ask him 10 light-hearted questions...

**Q: Describe your perfect Sunday.**

A: At home with my wife Mary and relaxing with our family – we have five children and three grandchildren.

**Q: What is your favourite TV programme?**

A: I enjoy watching sport on TV.

**Q: Which country would you like to visit if you had the opportunity?**

A: Jamaica.

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

A: Nelson Mandela for what he's been through and his strength to come out the other side.

**Q: What are your favourite hobbies?**

A: Playing pool and dominoes.

**Q: What or who makes you laugh?**

A: Rowan Atkinson and John Cleese.

**Q: What do you most enjoy about your job?**

A: Being out on the road on my own and the job security.

**Q: Who would you most like to meet?**

A: Nelson Mandela or Muhammad Ali.

**Q: What would you do if you won £1 million?**

A: Set up a home back in Jamaica and share the money with my family.

**Q: What is your favourite film?**

A: The Harder They Come with Jimmy Cliff.

### Spotlight on HELPFUL STAFF

#### CAMBERWELL

• A JOB "well done" is how passenger Ms N. Hennis describes Route 468 driver David Evans' response to an abusive "young gentleman".

David told the youth that he could not travel without a pass or a valid fare. The youth swore, punched the safety screen and kicked the bus as it left the stop. Ms Hennis writes: "Your driver dealt with the incident with the minimum of fuss and I send him my thanks and regards on a job well done."

• MS A. SHAN praises Route 484 driver Nicholas Martin for being a "very smooth" driver, "pleasant to everyone and very calm".



Jamie Slingsby: No time for hanging around.

# Jamie takes leap of faith for charity

**JAMIE** Slingsby admits to being 'a bit of an adrenalin junkie' so when he saw an advert asking people if they were 'up for a challenge' he just couldn't say no.

"I saw a notice at a bus stop asking for volunteers to do an abseil and I thought it would be fun. I used to abseil when I was younger so this is a chance to get the adrenalin pumping again!" said Jamie, who is a Camberwell driver.

The event took place on May 24 at Guy's Hospital Tower and was in aid of the Myasthenia Gravis Association, a charity that helps people affected by the auto-immune disease.

Having thoroughly enjoyed the event, Jamie says he wasn't nervous – despite the height of the tower, which measures almost 500 ft.

"I think it's a very worthwhile charity to support and I'm grateful to everyone at Camberwell who has managed to spare a few pounds to sponsor me, especially during the current recession," said Jamie.

He was cheered on by a team of supporters made up of colleagues, friends and members of his family.

"My father recently passed away so it's really put things into perspective. It's made me realise that life is precious and that I should live for the moment," added Jamie, who raised £520.

# Football fun day aims to raise £4,000

**FOOTBALLERS** and their supporters are aiming to raise more than £4,000 for charity from a company-wide, all-day tournament at Tooting and Mitcham's ground, The Hub.

Players from all over Go-Ahead London took part in a similar event last year and organisers are hoping to get sister company Metrobus involved for this year's extravaganza on August 31.

Organiser Scott Horney, a driver at Merton, said money raised would go to the neo-natal unit at St George's Hospital, Tooting, the Peter Pan ward at Great Ormond Street Hospital and Macmillan Cancer Support.

Apart from a feast of six-a-side football there will be lots of activities for children and families at the ground, including inflatables and face painting. As last year, there will be competitions and a buffet disco in the evening.

"The event was big last year," said Scott, "but this year we've got lots more attractions planned and we want to get women playing football as well. For every goal a woman scores we're going to double the points their team gets."

Scott is being assisted in the organisation by Janette Lillington, Steve Powell, Andi Richards and Matt Thompson.

People interested in playing or helping out in any other way should contact Scott on 07989 109 169 or 020 8947 0134.

Both of Scott's children, Sophia and Millie, have been cared for by staff at St George's Hospital and Steve's daughter underwent an operation at Great Ormond Street.

# Model is a miniature marvel

**CALLING** all model bus collectors – here's an opportunity to own a miniature version of the E400 on Route 36.

You'll have to be quick, though, as there is a limited number of models and they are expected to be snapped up quickly. They are available to staff at a cost of £25 each (only one per person).

All you have to do is call in at Go-Ahead London's head office in Merton and see Valerie Clark, who will gladly sell you one of these great models.

Alternatively, you can send a cheque for £25 (made payable to 'London General') to Valerie Clark, Go-Ahead London, 18 Merton High Street, London, SW19 1DN.



# Well-deserved retirement for three long-servers



**WINSTON COX** (above) left Barbados on January 9, 1962. Less than 24 hours later he'd started his training at Chiswick to be a bus conductor.

"It was a journey into the unknown for me and many other young West Indians who decided to start a new life with London Transport," said Winston.

He knew no-one in this country then, but over the past 47 years that's all changed and Winston is now a highly respected figure throughout the bus industry in London.

He retires next month (July).

Winston's career began at Sutton as a conductor. He became a driver shortly afterwards and after a spell at Stockwell he was appointed to inspector.

That job led to a gold badge and the position of chief inspector in 1983. He was later appointed operating manager at Sutton, a job he held successfully for 10 years.

Since then, Winston has been a key member of the recruitment team based at Camberwell. He has a variety of roles and been involved in special projects.

An enthusiastic cricketer, he earned an impressive reputation as opening bat for Stockwell during his younger years. He enjoys watching cricket now.

Winston said: "I've made many good friends in the industry and will miss the excitement and variety of the job. It is a way of life and I suspect I might find it a little difficult to adjust for a while."

He has no firm plans for retirement, but is considering returning to Barbados to live.



**IMPROVING** his internet skills and learning more about astronomy are just a couple of pastimes **ALFRED STEVELY** is getting involved in during retirement.

"I'm enjoying myself," said Alfred,

known to his colleagues at New Cross as 'Ian', as he settles down to a life of leisure after 27 years on the buses.

Alfred began his career as a conductor at New Cross and three years later became a driver.

Alfred, who was an air conditioning fitter before joining London Transport, said: "I've really enjoyed my work as a driver. I get on with most people and never had any trouble with my passengers."



**CONTROLLER BRIAN WAITHE** retires next month (July) and says life on the buses has been great: "I've enjoyed it tremendously."

Brian, who has been in the industry for 31 years, is looking forward to gardening, taking a holiday in Barbados, his country of birth, and then possibly looking for a "small part time job".

He started out at the old Peckham garage and has since been based at New Cross. He worked briefly as a conductor before becoming a driver and was appointed inspector in the late '80s.

Before joining London Transport, Brian served in the British Army for six years and was a fitter-welder with a pipe laying company when he left.

Brian is married to Marva and the couple have three sons and four grandchildren.

"We love looking after the children when their mums let us have them," he laughed.

Brian said: "The great thing about this industry is that it's all about people. In my job I'm dealing with other members of the team and the public. It's always a challenge and there's something new every day. I'm sure I will miss it."



Brian Waithe: 31 years' loyal service.