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Clipper

THE LONDON CENTRAL STAFF NEWSPAPER

Benefits begin to show through from fuel use courses

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 the amount of fuel we are using and 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."

Welcomed

The news comes hard on the heels of a successful visit to New Cross garage by Lewisham Deptford MP Joan Ruddock in which she welcomed improved driving standards and the use of new technology to monitor fuel consumption.

New Cross driver Sheldon Pinnock, a former telecommunications engineer, 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 the sounds of the road when I'm driving," said Sheldon.

Hard braking

"Accidents can happen on the bus, for example somebody falling because of hard braking – if you can avoid that sort of thing you have to be 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.

'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.



Selma aims to shed the pounds with her healthy diet.

All aboard for rail relief work

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.

Major ongoing work for Go-Ahead drivers is centred on the O₂ with contracts to take late concert-goers back to three mainline stations and to carry people attending events at the venue from Charlton station and back. 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.

■ See related story on page two.

Salad days for Selma

SELMA SIRET hopes her colleagues will be seeing a lot less of her over the next few months, but it's not because she'll be reducing her hours at work...

In fact it's her waistline that will be disappearing as she's determined to shift a stone or two to feel fitter and healthier. "My ultimate goal would be to lose about four stone, but at the moment I would be happy to lose a couple of stone," said Selma, said the Peckham driver.

Her diet has now completely changed – she's replaced the high fat, fried foods with plenty of fruit and lots of water – and she's taken up walking in an effort to get in shape. "When I first started as a driver I was a size 14, but over the years the weight has crept up. My friends and family say they love me the way I am, but I want to feel better," said Selma.

Having started the diet at the end of 2008, Selma hopes to have lost several pounds by the time she celebrates her birthday on March 17. "I'm sure I'll have more energy if I'm a bit lighter," said Selma. "Everyone has been encouraging me and I've also got the support of my doctor."

No doubt, the company's recent campaign to encourage healthy eating and exercise is continuing to spur Selma on. The campaign is highlighting the health risks of being overweight, especially if you are a woman and your waist measures more than 35" (men 40"). As Selma is finding, the best way to lose weight is through a combination of exercise and a healthy diet. If you are concerned about your weight or health, contact your doctor or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk.



George sparkles in welding contest

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

LEFT: George Wilkins proudly displays his certificate for welding.

took part in competitions over 15 subject disciplines.

Gerry said: "This is quite an achievement and we were told that George failed to win outright only by a very small number of points."

"Our apprenticeship is designed to give youngsters experience in all aspects of engineering whether they hope to pursue careers as technicians or coach makers. All apprentices go through the welding course."

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.

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.

Experience

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.

New line of work for Gillian

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. I saw this job advertised and was lucky enough to be accepted. I see this as another string to my bow and a possible career opportunity."



Charity cyclists back in saddle

THEY put their heart into raising money for charity last year ... and now they're about to do it all over again.

New Cross engineer Derek Parker wants to raise more than last year's £2,000 for the British Heart Foundation and he believes he's on the way to doing so.

The annual London to Brighton Bike Ride is on Sunday, June 21, and Derek reckons all the colleagues who accompanied him on last year's run have promised to ride again ... plus a number of others.

Derek said: "I think 20 cyclists is a possibility this year, which means we could raise more than £2,000, although I'm well aware everyone's feeling the pinch."

The ride is about 54 miles from Clapham Common to the seaside resort and last year all the New Cross riders finished within six hours, which is no mean feat considering they shared road space with 27,000 other riders.

Derek is hoping cyclists from other garages might like to join. Those interested should contact him on 020 7315 2142 or on his mobile 07980 559 509.

● By the way, it's not a return trip on bicycles because Derek hopes to arrange a bus back to London.



All set for the seaside – London to Brighton cyclists, front row, from left: Paul Walker and Clive Gaywood. Back row, from left: Derek Parker, Jason Mahoney, Dave Chapman and Darren Connolly.

Well done, Hannah

CONGRATULATIONS to Hannah Taylor who has been appointed to the position of garage administrator at Camberwell.

Hannah was a driver at the garage and helped out behind the counter before her appointment became official.

"I'm really happy," said Hannah, "this is an excellent garage and there's lots of variety in the job."

Scratch card success

Well done to Joseph Mutama from New Cross Garage, who won the scratch card competition in association with the 'Big Red Book'. Joseph won £1,000 worth of home entertainment equipment.

A big thank-you for a great response

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."

Spotlight on... Group Purchasing

- 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



Flexible team: Jenny Turner, seated centre, with members of the Group Purchasing department.

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. We have a very good relationship with the garages and we've always had a policy of saying that whatever the requirement, make

purchasing your first point of call and get in touch."

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.

Disability scheme a first for London

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."

Understanding the challenges



Steve McGinley: "People with learning difficulties have a whole range of challenges quite different from ours."

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 ours. 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 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."

Scooter is a lost property surprise...

ALL sorts of things get left on buses and perhaps the most unlikely so far this year is a motorised scooter handed to counter staff at Camberwell.

"One of our drivers brought it in on a Monday morning in January," said garage administrator Ana Oliveira. "It's big item, I can't see how anybody would forget about it and leave it on the bus."

It is not known how much it is worth, but similar scooters can cost anything from £50 to more than £200.

As unusual as this lost property is, counter staff said the most memorable incident was last year when a distressed professional dog walker rang in to say she'd accidentally left a dog on the bus.

Unfortunately, there was no record of the animal being handed in and it is believed that as the bus's doors opened later in the journey the dog escaped.

Routes retained

GO-AHEAD London has retained four routes, among them Waterloo garage's two artc services.

The new contract for Routes 507 and 521 begin in June and it marks the beginning of the end for most, if not all, of London's artc buses.

The contract stipulates that conventional 12-metre single decker buses must replace the bendies.

London General also retained Routes 85 and 213, which operate from Putney and Sutton respectively.

NEWS AND SPORT

Del's delight at netting angling trophy for sixth time

THE master returns ...

Bexleyheath angling champ Del Comrie raised the top trophy once again after losing it last year to rival Paul Sharkey.

Del has now won the garage's league table championship six times and said: "It's great to be back on form."

"I'd like to say that Paul has been a worthy holder of the title for the past year and is always very competitive."

Roger Wickett came in second place over the year and Paul made it to third despite taking part in eight matches as against nine played by the top two.

Final points were: Del on 655, Roger on 590 and Paul on 570. Paul won the season's best



Winners: Dave Barber and Tony Cox, with Peggy Barber who supported the team on the day.

fish prize at 13 lb 4 oz; Barrie Taylor took the 'most improved title' and 'best newcomer' was awarded to Gordon McCullum. Special honours were given to Dave Barber, Tony Cox and

Marco Quickenden.

This year's London Busmen's Challenge, sponsored by the Transport Friendly Society, is scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, at Monk Lakes, Staplehurst,



Holding their trophies are, from left, Paul Sharkey, Del Comrie and Roger Wickett.

Kent. Last year 17 five-man teams took part, including seven from London Central and London General. Contact Tony Cox at Bexleyheath garage for more information.

Spotlight on HELPFUL STAFF

BEXLEYHEATH

● ROUTE 89 driver Christine Powell is commended for her "very smooth driving" and for being "very pleasant" by a Mr Knight.

CAMBERWELL

● A DOG and its handler were not allowed to board a Route 468 bus driven by Luke Olojede because the animal was "out of control". Luke stood his ground even though the man with the dog and a male passenger started shouting at him. His action is commended by passenger Miss S. Prosper.

● TRADITIONAL consideration is alive and well as Route 468 driver Michelle Reynolds proved when she got out of her cab to help a disabled passenger board her bus. Passenger Ms A. Wright says this was a "very nice gesture".

NEW CROSS

● BENDY bus driver Richard Gosden is thanked by a passenger called Cherie whose handbag he returned.

● POLITE and pleasant is how Barbara Ren describes Route 171 driver Peter Parnell. She says he greeted passengers boarding his bus with "good morning".

● WIOLETTA Lewandowska-Ukagba thanks ROUTE 321 driver Ayo Williams for returning her daughter's mobile phone, which was left on his bus.

● MR A. WILSON commends Route 171 driver John O'Shea on his friendliness.

● IAN MAITES is described as "excellent" by passenger Mrs S. Douglas. Apart from being a good driver, he was also "helpful". Mrs Douglas was a passenger on the C10 when a "fragile, elderly man" asked her to help him cross the road after he'd stepped off the bus. "Your driver waited patiently to allow me to return to the bus."

PECKHAM

● FORMER busman and now TfL roadshow co-ordinator Francis Debieux describes Patrick Udogaranya's driving as "brilliant". "The bus moved and stopped so smoothly that passengers were put at no risk even when standing. His lane position and command of the road was without fault and the drive was just perfect." Patrick is also described as "very polite".

Drivers to help stop underage drinking

DRIVERS at Bexleyheath are being asked to do their bit in a campaign to combat sales of alcohol to underage youngsters.

The Bexley Safer Transport Team is working in partnership with the local authority to reduce alcohol-related disorder on buses and in public places.

The main thrust of the campaign is to identify shops that are not obeying the law and selling alcohol to young people under the age of 18.

Shopkeepers risk prosecution if they continue the practice after being warned.

General manager Karl Blair said: "The STT wants to build up a picture of local alcohol hotspots so that they can identify outlets selling alcoholic drink to people who are underage. Information will then be passed on to the Licensing Enforcement Officer."

Notices are going up in the garage asking drivers to report occurrences to a supervisor and arrangements are also being made for them to contact controllers direct via iBus.

Karl added: "I'm not sure that the problem is worse here than anywhere else, but any action taken by the borough and the STT to reduce the possibility of incidents on our buses is welcome and I am asking drivers to assist where they can."

Jermaine pots top trophy in pool contest



A THRILLING battle of wills on the Camberwell pool table resulted in a stunning 5 - 4 victory for Jermaine Thorne.

At one point Jermaine was 4 - 1 down in the nine-frame final against fellow driver Scott McDonald, but then steely determination and consistently good cueing took over and the eventual winner took four frames in a row.

"I'm the champ," proclaimed a delighted Jermaine, who has worked at the garage for more than three years. "Scott just couldn't get over the line. I was really surprised to win, but my confidence grew as I won more frames."

Jermaine added that he would be defending the championship next year and said: "There were some really good players in the competition and I'll have to keep on playing well to stand a chance of retaining the trophy."

Organised by driver Gary Tapper, the pool tournament began in October 2008 with more than 50 players taking part. Further competitions are planned every year now with the championship trophy at stake.

Gary said: "I'd like to thank all the players for taking part and the garage management for supporting the event and funding the trophies."

LEFT: Pool champ Jermaine Thorne.

Now Jeff will be making more time for himself

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. Based at Brixton he drove RTs, RTWs, RMs and was one of the first to drive OPO buses.

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's great passion is golf and he will continue as secretary of the Go-Ahead London

Golf Society following his retirement.

Jeff is also 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."

"I think this is an exciting industry. It's always on the move and there's plenty going on. This was only meant to be a temporary job when I joined!"



Jeff is looking forward to his retirement.

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.