

Issue 5

May 2007



Epsom Coaches Group News

The world around us

So much has been going on around the premises since the last newsletter, I thought I would devote my piece to this following many questions.

The most obvious changes are to the building, with the wash bay and the garage entrances now able to accommodate double deckers with the body shop shortly to receive attention to ensure they will fit in. However, I am hopeful the new buses won't need the attention of the body team too soon! A new rapid shutter door will shortly be fitted to the front entrance, which should help rid us of pigeons and improve safety and security. As a result the new pedestrian door will be in use shortly.

On the premises front, we are making progress with the extension to the site. I have now applied for planning permission, which is expected to be heard on 17th July. Subject to our agreeing terms with the council and the planning being granted, we may be able to start work in August, but both the former are significant hurdles. If granted, the extension will provide for 35 - 24 hour car park spaces and sufficient area for the whole coach fleet to be parked. This will free up

the garage for buses and reduce the potential for vehicle damage. This is going to be a costly exercise as ground work is not cheap; we expect a bill for around £250,000!

We are currently evaluating a chassis wash, which will remove the need to take vehicles over to Jumbo's at Heathrow. This has the added benefit of ensuring our fleet will be cleaner year round, which should help in diagnosing faults as well as being more pleasant for the engineers. The chassis wash will be situated adjacent to the main workshop under the covered way.

As you will have noticed, the main car (bus) park has been re-surfaced and marked out for buses, to give more room for walk round checks. The area is still available for car parking between the prescribed hours.

There is no question we have the finest facilities in the business and our ongoing investment will ensure it stays that way for the benefit of us all.

Steve Whiteway



Smoke Free England

On 1st July 2007, England will fall in line with Scotland and Wales with severe restrictions on smoking in public places and at work, including vehicles. We are ahead as usual, with restrictions in place and in compliance with the law, no smoking on the premises, in vehicles or on the pavements immediately outside the premises from 1st July 2007.

The aim is simple, the government (and most of the smokers) want you to give up and this is a golden opportunity to do so. The staff handbook has full details, but remember you can have paid time off to attend for treatment to give up smoking, so take advantage of the offer and perhaps save yourself, not only huge expense, but also years of chronic ill health and ultimately an early death.

Please remember, smoking where not permitted is in contravention of the law and regarded as gross misconduct. Do yourself a favour and avoid becoming one of the 20 or so staff members over the last few years who have succumbed to an early and painful death. It is never too late to give up.



Quality Line News

As you are all aware, we are recruiting heavily for the start of the new routes in June. We are currently around eight drivers short of compliment to start the route on the 30th of June. This has caused us to be over staffed and reduced the work rest days. This will only be until the end of June so please bear with us until then. I hope that you will wish all of the new drivers well and support them through their training. There are too many to name at present, but I am sure they will be welcomed by you all.

We are holding a recruitment day on the 1st of June at the Job Centre in Epsom, and on the 7th of June we will be outside the Weatherspoons Pub with one of the new Double Deck vehicles.

All staff involved with the buses will need to have type training on the double decks, and this will be taking place through the month of June. Please see Terry Torch and book yourself in. We are still looking for drivers to transfer to the 406/418, so have a look at the rota and see Jon Ball if you are interested.

The 470 has had a timetable change, this was done to try and improve the poor QIC results. The S1 will also be changing in June for the same reason as we must improve our results. I am still concerned that certain drivers are still not leaving the terminus points on time. Leaving late will cause us to be penalised and this must cease. I have appointed new Inspectors for the purpose of supervising our on road operations and they will be reporting those of you who do not leave on time.

The S4 and 470 routes start their new contracts in November, so we will be looking at the S4 in more detail to see if any changes are needed. If you are on the S4 and have any ideas, then please let me know as soon as possible.

We are very near to acquiring the extra space needed at the rear of the Garage and this will then stop our parking problems. I would like to thank you all for your patience during this time.

I am currently putting together a tender for the route K2, currently operated by Transdev, this is a ten single deck route between Hook Library and Kingston Hospital. I will keep you up to date with our progress.

Don't forget to see your route rep if you have any problems, and we will be balloting again in October for next years reps. Please make sure that this time

all of the routes are represented it is in your interests.



Grahame Wernham

Epsom Coaches News

Firstly I would like to welcome back Mick Waters, Mick has a wealth of experience and is an asset to the team.

The season is really starting to get busy now; June is very heavily booked up with July catching up quickly.

Anglia Battlefield Tours have told me how pleased they are with our working relationship, thank you to all of you that have worked for this client. They are now placing orders for the winter and early 2008.

The Scout Jamboree will soon be upon us. Just to remind you all that the dates are 24 July for 3 nights and 08 August for 3 nights. We will be working closely with Richmonds, Lucketts and Galloways on this venture. Other operators are helping us on transfer days. All drivers involved will be staying in Hatfield for the duration of the two groups. Maritz have also asked us to provide a proposal for a large movement at the end of May next year to provide transportation for a well known car manufacturer, more news on this as soon as we receive it!

Please all remember to keep your vehicles clean and tidy in between jobs. There is often ample rest time between drop off and pick up for you to polish and generally clean the coaches. This is very important to maintain the high standards that we are renowned for. It doesn't take long for the vehicles to look drab; a bit of TLC from you can make all the difference!

Another quick reminder to you all to check the sensitive edges and tyres on your vehicles, please report any problems to Fleetcare.

Thank you for all your hard work so far this season, please keep up the high standards!

Melanie Mackie

Gaye's 60th birthday

On Friday 11 May we celebrated Gaye Wilson's 60th birthday. Gaye is the longest serving member of the office staff, having started with Epsom in 1986. Gaye was delighted (and surprised) that the company had laid on a drinks reception. Her colleagues in Holidays and the Company bought her a giraffe (not a real one!) of course, to celebrate this special occasion, Caroline also wrote a rather risqué poem!



Some thoughts about our industry

All forms of public transport are under fire from politicians and the media who say with monotonous regularity that we charge too much, the service is inferior and that we should be more regulated. It is very easy for them to criticise and ignore the significant advances that have been made despite their interference.



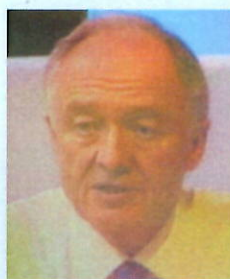
I actually believe that the travelling public have had a far better service from the privatised system than they were used to in the past. After years of lack of investment, the privatised railways have

introduced new rolling stock that is clean and reliable. The bus industry has also heavily invested in new vehicles and should be proud of its achievements. Timekeeping on the trains and buses has also improved and by and large the public receives a very good service. I appreciate the situation is different in other parts of the country but London is certainly an example of best practice.

Despite the fact that improvements are continuing to be made, the politicians are being advised by the academics (people with no practical knowledge of the industry) that the system for reimbursing bus operators should be changed. For example, they want to stop refunding the tax we pay on our fuel and replace it with an amount paid per passenger carried. Apart from making it harder to administer (more red tape) it would create an imbalance that would mean operators having to withdraw services in marginal areas.

It is true that some of the larger PLC bus operators are making profits in excess of 10% on their operations, however as a capital intensive industry, it is clear to see that much of these profits are being re-invested in new buses.

I have not mentioned the coach industry which I feel could play a far greater role than it does. The politicians have largely ignored this form of transport which, given the same conditions that buses and trains enjoy, could provide greater choice of greener alternatives to the car. In particular, coaches do not receive any refund of the tax they pay on fuel, whereas trains and buses are refunded most, if not all, of what they pay. This seems an obvious anomaly which could be addressed by politicians but isn't. This measure alone could give the industry a boost at a time when it really needs it.



Despite the promises of the current administration, very little has been done at government level to address transport issues. One exception has been Ken Livingstone (left) who has at least had the courage to take action in London regardless of whether it is popular or not.

We need others with that courage.

Andrew Richmond



New website unveiled

We have just unveiled our new company website (www.epsomcoaches.com).

The group website emphasises the different sides of our business—coach hire, buses, holidays and day excursions and limo hire. The home page has eye-catching 'flash' images and a customer-friendly navigation. The holidays 'button' takes you straight through to our new online booking site. The limo 'button' takes you through to the Epsom Limos site. We have created new pages for coaches, detailing our services and vehicles. Soon we will have an online quotation capability.

The Quality Line site shows our services, routes and vehicles, including the new double deckers and even our Yarises! There is also a section about our history and some of our support services, including Fleetcare and Training. On the recruitment page we have a copy of the 'drive a bus with us' leaflet in pdf form and we will soon have an online application form.

We think this is the best site in the industry and hope you get a chance to take a look at it.



Fleetcare

Lots of changes within Fleetcare over the past month or so. After much deliberation we decided to concentrate our staff resources across the weekday operation, to enable us to have the right people when needed. Weekends are still covered and so far it seems to be working well. A night shift is one of the benefits, with Fraser Bishop undertaking this role and eliminating as any defects overnight as possible.

Our programme of driver familiarisation has also been a success with the aim to ensure every member of the driving team visits us at some point. The point being that we are able to explain what we do to record and act on all defects and to demonstrate the considerable financial and manpower resources dedicated to maintaining the fleet. The costs are certainly a surprise to many of our visitors with current spend on parts and contractor repairs without our labour, running at around £2,000 a day, every day.

It's all change on the parts front as we say goodbye to Lex and hello to LC Davis Ltd who will be taking over the contract from Saturday 2nd June 2007. We are expecting great things from this new arrangement including better parts availability and reduced costs.

Holidays News

Bookings have been busy for summer day trips and the new ideas are selling particularly well.

We have been pleased with the launch of internet booking. Despite a few teething problems, in the first month of booking online, 13.6% of passengers have booked via the internet. We must have a high proportion of silver surfers, as a Midlands coach company has only achieved 5%! Eventually we hope to launch new products, such as theatre trips via the web; then customers will have to pay a booking fee for the privilege of talking to us!

We will shortly be producing our winter and spring brochure. This will run from November until the end of April and includes our popular Christmas breaks. Also, for the first time Easter and the spring bulbs will appear in this brochure.

Alistair Scott

Epsom Limos

On the 10th May we took a stag party to Chester, Danny and Peter Speaight drove and were amazed by what the lads were watching on the way up!!! The limo really made its money this day because we managed to take on another job that night taking a 21st birthday party to TGI Fridays in Croydon.

The limo has mainly been out on birthday parties but when I was covering a 18th birthday party going to Tattenham Corner pub for dinner, I parked the limo on the grass opposite the racecourse, had loads of enquires and even one lady who would not let me leave without taking her details to book.

Peter Mabbott has been taking the limo to a few shows around Croydon and given away loads of leaflets. If any staff know of anywhere that will stock our leaflets in shops or restaurants etc please let me know.

Limo drivers take note!! We have now purchased an Ice machine, as we have been spending out around £20 - £30 a week in ice!!

All in all the limo is doing very well, not going out much in the week but mainly at weekends.

However, we are a bit disappointed that no one has booked the limo for Ladies or Derby day, but still time yet.

Peter Minnette

Social Club News

As you may be aware, the Social Club Newsletter was issued last week offering some exciting trips:

Drusilla's Park Zoo

Daytrip to Brighton

Thorpe Park

Wimbledon Dogs

Diggerland

Since the newsletter arrived through your letterboxes, we have received a good response so far. These trips are selling out fast, so please see Viv in accounts if you are interesting in taking part. Also, drivers have arranged a daytrip amongst themselves to Belgium on 10th June. Please see the notice board in the rest room for further details.

One coach has already been filled to go to West Wittering, but another one could be available if demand is high. Please speak to someone on Control if you are interested.

We are still waiting for details of when the Wembley Stadium Tours will be commencing. Once we find out, we will organise a daytrip later in the year, along with the "booze cruise" to France in November.

Clare Dann