



## Fleetcare News

### Fleetcare re-launch.

As part of on-going Fleetcare changes we are planning a re-launch just after the Easter break.

This will include a change to current work attire, the new clothing will be in the company colours and reflect the image we wish to portray. This will include outer and inner wear, not Company underpants though! As well as those on the shop floor, the supervisors will also have a better company image. All this is due to start on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April.

The second part of the re-launch will be a focus on the coach fleet with two engineers dedicated primarily to look after the coaches. This reflects the increasing complexity of these vehicles, which require specialist care from highly trained technicians.

Fleetcare is constantly changing to deal with the changes both in vehicle build and design and the changes in legislation. This has not always been easy and we have at times had to stop and re-evaluate the direction we are taking. This year has been tough with the economy having a direct effect on Fleetcare costing but rest assured we are doing our utmost to get value for money from our suppliers and contractors and to keep Fleetcare focused on our customers both Quality Line and Epsom Coaches. Vivalty, we want to reflect the best possible experience for our driving team and work very hard to achieve that aim.

Best wishes for Easter, from the Fleetcare team.

**Steve Appleby**

## Family News

Congratulations to Lewis Durbridge and his partner Emma on the birth of Mazie, we wish their new family well.

Gary Punter and Laura Beney, tied the knot recently, Laura and her Dad being driven to the Wedding by "Chauffeur" Steve Whiteway, we wondered what he did in his spare time! Our Congratulations to Gary and Laura.

Another new arrival, this time a baby boy, Theo, born to proud mum and dad, Daniel and Vanessa O'Donnell, best wishes to you.

## Projects Report



You will no doubt have seen me doing many things since I have been back with the firm, from driving to road control, driver testing, support and numerous internal projects, including a new group brochure to aid our marketing drive. There is never a dull moment, but this wide variety is all about getting a feel for every aspect of what we do.

Some of the projects underway include:

### Operation Deep Clean

Led by Steve W, the management team turned out to deep clean the fleet, the aim being to ensure our fleet is presented in the best possible way. We have had a lot of problems with the wash recently and will be investing shortly in standby facilities' to ensure the fleet can be washed, even when the main machine goes wrong. The size of the fleet means we can no longer wash it by hand!

### Extension of Site

We are looking to expand the site to improve onsite bus, coach and car parking, it will also enable us to improve the access along the service road at the side of our site. Recent abuse of this access, has meant we have had to consider the move along with Thames Water, as emergency access is required at all times for large vehicles. Planning permission is being sought.

I am also researching the availability of car parking nearby and will publish the results of the survey shortly.

### Mobile Communication

With our mobile phone and IT contract up for renewal, this is a good opportunity to review and hopefully save money in the fast moving world of telecommunications. This project is combined with a review of our IT systems, where again we hope to get more for less.

### More Storage

A mezzanine deck is to be built in the workshop, to expand our stores holding, this will ensure improved availability of parts to get defects repaired quickly and vehicles back on the road.

Other things on the go include, improved tax disc holders, a small point but one that is vital as a lost disc means the vehicle could be off the road. New and larger capacity brochure holders on buses will also help as this is one of our best outlets for publicity.

I will keep you informed, in the meantime have a great Easter.

**Best wishes - Peter Minnette**

Spring 2013

# Epsom Coaches Group News

## MD'S Message



I can't believe that the year is going so fast, with Easter upon us and I hope better weather ahead, following last years disastrous summer. There is no question, we are weather dependent in all aspects of our business, when the sun comes out, the phone doesn't stop ringing with customers keen to book their day trips and holidays. The sun also seems to inspire people to travel on the buses, having perhaps not ventured out during the cold weather and who can blame them! Even private hire benefits, as groups make up their mind where they might go this year. In all, sunshine and warm weather seems to be a winner, I look forward to that prospect, we all deserve it.

With the first two months of our financial year complete, I am pleased to report we are slightly above budget, despite the loss of the Terravision contract and one of our National Express diagrams. This better than expected performance is down to an incredibly buoyant private hire market, especially during our quietest period for coaches and the benefits of the temporary 560 TfL contract, which sadly has now finished. However, despite our best efforts, we expect March to see a deteriorating picture and possibly a penalty on route X26, which has not been budgeted for. The X26 has had additional resources and a new schedule, despite that we are still up against it, but have reduced the potential penalty from almost £125,000 to maybe, £23,000, in itself a considerable achievement. Looking forward, there is no reason why the X26 will not be rewarded with a bonus this time next year, which combined with the excellent performance of most of our other services, augers well. Where there are reliability issues, Huw Barrington is introducing new schedules, always to good effect, but it is not an overnight process.

Of great significance to us all, is the renewal of the TfL Route S1 contract, a service we have been operating now for over 16 years. We have put in a very competitive tender, with various options. We are all on tenterhooks, but won't know the result until after Easter and we can't do any more now than hope we are successful, it certainly won't be through lack of trying by everyone concerned at Quality Line.

Coaches are at the core of the company, with without question, the best brand in the coach industry and the fleet is not as big as it was in the past, as there simply isn't the work available to viably sustain 50 plus vehicles, as others are finding. There is no doubt our strength is in the quality of what we do and we certainly are top of the tree in that respect. However, the coach industry has never enjoyed a quality reputation, so to be top isn't special enough as far as I am concerned and we sometimes let ourselves down with a lack of attention to detail. This applies across the board with operations, drivers and Fleetcare, that has to change.

The change is to be recognised starting with our dedicated team of coach technicians, who will be totally responsible for the coach fleet, paying attention to every detail, including the "hotel" items, that don't affect the running of the vehicle, but certainly do the driver and his or her passengers. They will be going through the vehicles with a fine toothcomb over the next few weeks, while at the same time coaches will be prepared to as new condition, ready for their regular driver to sign them off. We will expect the driving team to do their bit as well, looking after the equipment as if it were their own and better! I will be personally leading some short "back to basics" etiquette courses, to drive home the importance of this.

The re-launch of Epsom Coaches is not all about improving standards, it is also about investment, literally driving our way out of a sticky situation with a confidence boosting investment of over £700,000 in two new Setra tri axle coaches, expected to be in the fleet sometime in August. Be in no doubt, we have the best fleet, the best conditions, the best pay, the best product and most importantly the best people in the coach industry. In fact we have the best people in all of our various departments, let's demonstrate that to the world at large.

On a personal note, I was delighted to act as chauffeur for Gary and Laura Punters wedding, it took me back to my roots as a Coach Driver, albeit with a different mode of transport, but the same "Rolls-Royce" standards apply.

My best wishes to you and your family, for a very happy Easter **Steve Whiteway**





## A Time of Change

The recent changes in the Management Structure now see's my taking on a broader role as General Manager, responsible for covering others in their absence and the numerous systems we have to comply with for our clients and the government. It

doesn't stop there, as we look at changing existing schedules to improve reliability and new business, it all requires a great deal of research. I also look after Health and Safety, which is a job in itself!

Jayne Cracknell now looks after our bus driving team, the counter staff and operations, a formidable task, but Jayne's renowned personnel skills suit her new role very well and will assist in coping with ever increasing staff numbers.

Huw Barrington has now taken on direct responsibility for the Performance Team, looking after on road and I-Bus functions, this makes sense as Huw also deals with the schedules, being one of the industry's most experienced people. His skills have been very evident with the reliability measures put in for X26 and 467 recently, both of which are performing much better. Further fine tuning will be needed as we go further into the year, especially as the full I-Bus system starts in April. This will mean far more timing points across the full operating day, not just in the peaks. Our schedules and indeed our whole way of operating has always been geared to this, so we hope it will be better for all. Four routes that are presently not eligible for bonus (or penalties) and contract extensions will now be included, they are 404 (recently re-awarded for a further 5 years), 467, 465 and 411, so our overall performance really will count in future. Both Jayne and Huw are away this week, so they will be writing for their own sections in our next newsletter.

My very best wishes for a Happy Easter - **Jon Ball**



## Training News

A busy period since Christmas, with CPC training well underway and over 30% of our driving team have now completed. We expect 100% by late summer, ready for the legislation taking affect in early September. Please remember, if you haven't completed 35 hours training by then, you will not be able to drive in service or for test purposes if an engineer. It is the individual licence holders responsibility to ensure they get their CPC training in time. We are paying for the training and you! All you have to do is turn up and enjoy.



BTEC is something else underway, with 19 courses held over the last two weeks or so, bringing us up to date. All those operating TfL services, need to be BTEC qualified within a year of employment, more courses will follow in the summer.

I have inducted a number of drivers along with Jayne this year and we are now fully staffed which is pleasing, but we never stop assessing and re-training, it is the essence of what we do.

We have a legal responsibility to ensure our staff are safe on the road, therefore it is important that we maintain a watching brief, those who cannot drive safely and with the comfort of their passengers in mind, have no place here or within the industry. The law says so, our insurers say so and as a PCV licence is a privilege not a right, the Traffic Commissioner might also have something to say!

We have used the SAFED programme to good effect over the years, with most of our coach drivers having undergone the course. Further SAFED training is underway and is being well received by drivers who have enjoyed their day out with me. Comments such as, "I have really benefitted today, driving this way makes my job easier and less stressful" really does get the point across that training can be fun as well as educational. Talking of fun, have a great Easter.

**Best wishes - Terry Torch**

## Hot Cross Buns...

**When Mr Richmond started the company back in 1920, he brought both his staff a hot cross bun from the local baker, nothing has changed except we now buy over 250 buns, so enjoy with our compliments.**

**Served on Thursday 28th March**

## Inns and Out Social Club News

The Inns and Out Social Club is as busy as ever arranging trips for staff and their families for the forthcoming year: As you read this newsletter, a coach full of staff will be heading to Jersey for an Easter weekend break kindly organised by Mona Cameron, who has taken it under her wing to arrange European short breaks.



### Other forthcoming events include:

- Top Hat
- Colchester Zoo
- Daytrip to Bath
- Shopping in Bicester Village
- Daytrip to Canterbury
- Daytrip to Chichester & Bognor Regis
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
- Coronation Festival and Dinner
- Disneyland Paris

We are looking for ideas for summer daytrips for all the family, so please let Trudie, Mona or myself know if you have any thoughts

**Happy Easter - Clare Dann**

## Coaching News

2013 looks to be a milestone in the modern story of 'coaches'. Steve will give a greater insight elsewhere and there will be a dedicated newsletter devoted to the subject, but recent events have shaped something of a new operation. We have tried to treat the loss of Terravision as an opportunity and the National Express Duplication work has gone some way, but not all the way, to filling the gap.

March has been a bumper month for ad-hoc private hire also which has given enough hope to trigger a long awaited rise in remuneration to our coach drivers. My view is that this renaissance will continue with new marketing plans, competitive pricing and innovative operations.

Additionally we have taken a robust look at the maintenance of the coach fleet; not just from the safety angle, which is taken for granted as being paramount, but resolving appearance issues and hotel items which sometimes are not repaired swiftly enough. Three older coaches will be leaving the fleet shortly for pastures new as two new ones arrive; although there is going to be an interval between the two movements. Such investment with a coach costing as much as a house even in this area, is testament to the confidence we have in the future if we all pull in the same direction.

Of course the continued momentum will rest with all our drivers; new, and some not so new to us, will be treated to a new loyalty regime and higher expectations. A back to basics approach will be taken, with apologies to those who already do what's required, there is a danger you can be let down by those who don't!

I do hope that the re-launched guidance has the desired effect and we will continue to ride the waves of our unstable economy and industry.

Thank you all , a very happy Easter.

**John Fowler**

## Holiday News

We have just returned from another successful Reunion Break. This year we held the event at the Queens Hotel Bournemouth. I was joined by Alistair, Sally, Anna, Gill, Marilyn (Tour Manager) as well as Steve, Lynn and Harry Whiteway. Our drivers were Barrie Wilde and Steve Aston.



During the weekend we launched our new excursions brochure featuring day trips to The Shard and Highgrove as well as other firm favourites. We also managed to raise over £1000 for the Royal Marsden. Stuart Render from Coach Monthly joined us for the weekend and reported in the March edition of the magazine.

We have held a series of coffee mornings with presentations about Collette Worldwide Holidays, Fred Olsen Cruises, Scotland and Ireland. At the moment we are busily preparing our winter/spring holiday brochure which will be released at the end of May.

Don't forget we offer you and your family a discount on our holidays and excursions.

**Wishing you a very Happy Easter  
Melanie Cox**

