

Epsom Coaches in the Community

Right from the start in 1920, despite the difficulties of a fledgling business, not that long after the first world war, Epsom Coaches, were at the heart of the community. Little did Roddy Richmond know, that many years later, the company would also be the “arteries” of the community, in supplying most of its bus services, complementing, its longer distance coach services which had become well established.

In those early days, there was not only rivalry amongst business, but also great camaraderie. The individual shops around the company’s first garage in Epsom High Street, were also suppliers to the firm. This use of local suppliers was commonplace then, but much less so now. However, a common theme at Epsom Coaches, was always the use of local suppliers, as the company wisely surmised that a thriving business community, was beneficial to its business and accordingly, Epsom Coaches were always the preferred supplier for transport needs. Being proactive, rather than reactive, was the way forward.

Not Just Employees

The most important community, that of our staff and their families. With almost 400 staff at the end, Epsom Coaches, also counted their families as part of the “family” business. In all a community of over 1,200 people. It didn’t end there, as those who had returned or moved on, were kept in touch with all the events at Epsom Coaches, including an annual Christmas party, to which all were welcome.



The company had a Staff Social Club, right from the early days. Known originally as the Red and Cream club, organising sports and social events, when transport was never a problem! The company heavily subsidised these events, which included children’s outings and a very special visit from Father Christmas on his bus! Later, the club was renamed the “Inns and Outs” club, for obvious reasons. Epsom folk always knew how to enjoy themselves!

Christmas not only included the children, but the adults gathered for many years at the Burford Bridge hotel, for a dinner dance, complete with a band and a great night was had by all. Prior to that, events were held at The Toby Jug, in Tolworth. Later, the event moved to the Burnt Stub at Chessington Zoo (now World of Adventures) Bourne Hall, Kingstonians football ground and various other venues locally over the years. The event became more informal, as did society but were always well supported.

Tributes to long serving staff at 25 years, were always celebrated, with a lunch hosted by the directors for friends and family and a reception to which all were welcome afterwards, in the company’s Departure Lounge.

Those with 10 years or more services, were annually invited to a Sunday lunch event, along with their partners, which included a boat cruise down the Thames in London. Several other boat cruises were enjoyed over the years.



Many of these events included our suppliers, most of whom enjoyed a long relationship with the company and were regarded as part of the family. Our suppliers would always go the extra mile for Epsom Coaches, as we were a client that was patient and understanding but at the same time, required absolute commitment. We also paid our bills on time!

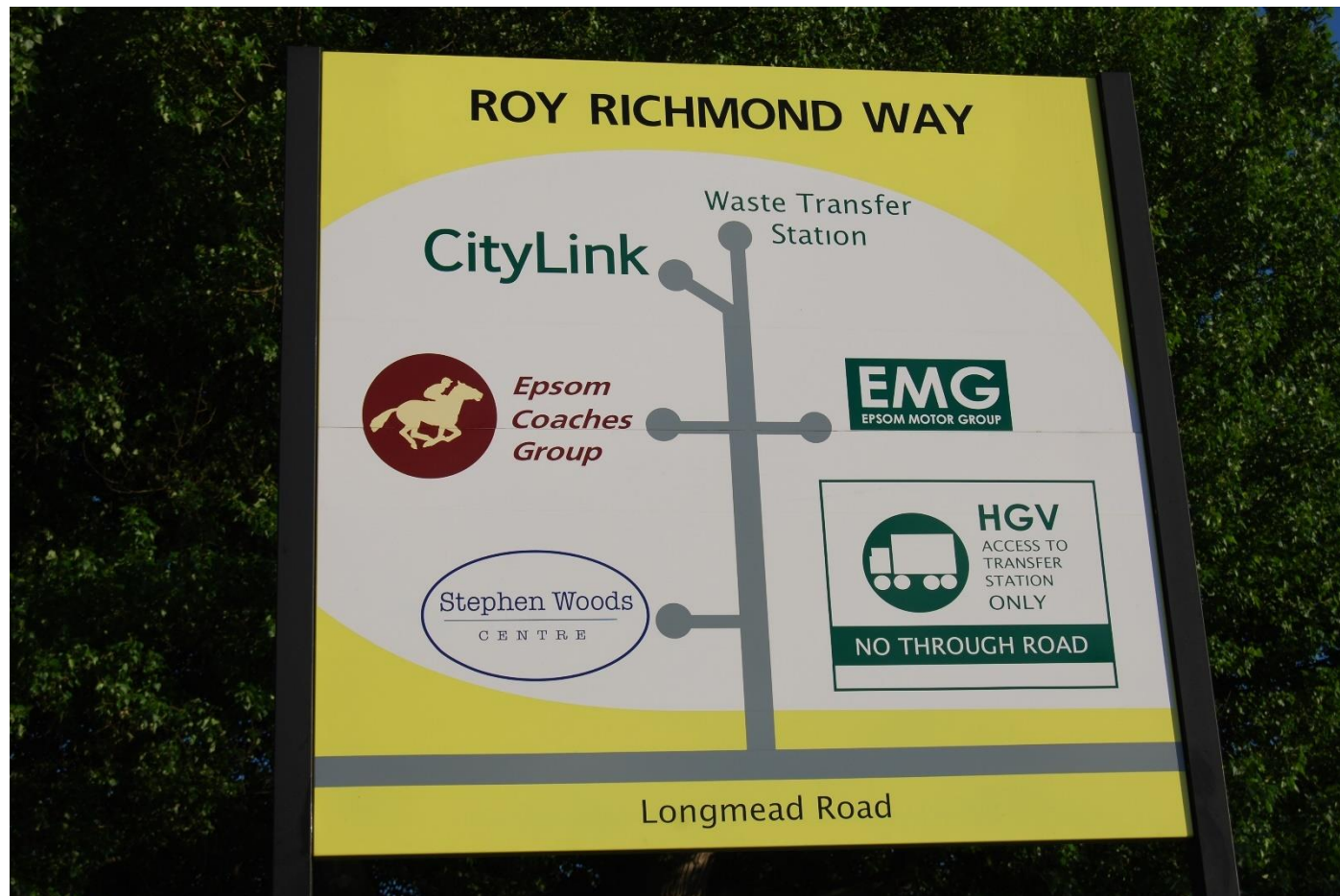


Sporting events, were regular and frequent, playing against other companies and in house. This included a football team, darts and cribbage! Golf was also part of the mix, with an annual tournament named after Peter Aartsen, a long serving member of staff who sadly died shortly after his retirement. Keeping fit was always an aim of the firm, given driving, is a sedentary occupation. Regular health checks including eyesight and blood pressure, and complimentary free membership of the Rainbow Centre in Epsom helped to ensure the Epsom team, kept fit.

Joining Forces

No company should work in isolation, so Epsom Coaches forged valuable relationships, in its own industry and with other local businesses and often hosted promotional events for local business initiatives.

Epsom Coaches were leading members of the Chamber of Commerce. Indeed, Roy Richmond was on two occasions its President. Roy understood that being a major and active player in the business community, was good both for the company and the community. So, win, win. Later, the Company worked closely with Epsom, & Ewell Council to set up the Epsom & Ewell Business partnership. Steve Whiteway was its first Chairman. Roy Richmond was also a member of Epsom Probus club, President of the Epsom & Ewell Silver Band and twice President of Epsom Rotary Club, of which he was a member for over 50 years. The Longmead Business initiative was a concept grown from Epsom Coaches. Steve Whiteway, formed a group of businesses from the Longmead Industrial Estate, to push for improvements. This included renaming the estate as the Longmead Business Park, new signage at the entrances and across the area, to direct heavy traffic directly to the park. The evidence of that work is still there to be seen today. At one time, the company provided a free bus service from the park, serving Epsom town centre, designed for the employees of the companies' resident on the park. Another major plus, for everyone concerned, was the initiative, to redirect residential traffic to the Waste Transfer Station and separating the heavy traffic. This followed years of chaotic scenes, in Blenheim Road, culminating in the death of a motorist, following an assault. Steve Whiteway brought together all the interested parties, local councillors, Surrey County Council and the borough council, to agree a scheme that worked very well and is still in place today.



The Longmead Estate was first opened in the early seventies and Epsom Coaches, were one of the first residents in Blenheim Road. In June 2011, the section of Blenheim Road outside Epsom Coaches garage, was renamed “Roy Richmond Way” in honour of Roy Richmond who did so much, not only for Epsom Coaches, but also the local community. He was also a pioneer within the UK bus and coach industry. Roy Richmond had for many years suffered with Parkinson’s Disease and died in January 2011, aged 85. In his honour, the company and its staff raised over £11,000 for Parkinsons UK, a charity dedicated to helping those with this crippling disease.



Opening of Roy Richmond Way

2011

Charity

Roy Richmond and his wife Nancy, supported by Epsom Coaches, raised over £1 million for the McMillan Butterfly appeal, building a dedicated extension at the new Cottage Hospital in West Park and established the Macmillan Cancer centre in Epsom Hospital. Fund raising was continuous, with coffee mornings, coach trips, special events, including stars such as Ken Dodd and Max Bygraves, helping to raise funds. Local resident Norman Wisdom was also a keen supporter.

Every year, Epsom Coaches nominated a charity it would support. This included several of the Epsom mayoral charities and Brain Tumour research, following the premature death of good friend and client, John Fulcher of Spectra Travel. Staff would be actively involved in raising funds throughout each 12-month period. Not only raising funds, but contributions in kind, to a whole range of charities, with free travel, raffle prizes and voluntary work. The company would also support individual staff events, with sponsorship and assistance.

An annual event, in support of Epsom mayors, provided a coach and driver, for a charity day trip. This included visits to Belgium and France, with all proceeds going to the Mayors charity fund. Drivers would often offer their services free of charge for these trips, with wages paid into the charity fund. The company also provided a coach each year to take the mayors of Surrey around the borough, for the Epsom Civic Day. This included visits to Epsom landmarks, Epsom Racecourse, Nonsuch Park and lunch at the RAC Club. In the afternoon a tour of Epsom Coaches, followed by coffee and cake, in the company’s Heritage Centre, was always a highlight.



Education Business/Partnership

The promotion of public transport with local schools and colleges, was always a priority for Epsom Coaches. The company for many years, provided training for school minibus drivers. It was very much involved with the fledgling Blenheim School, just across the road in Longmead, when it first opened. A prize was sponsored and is still awarded every year. The company also arranged for students to experience its fleet, with visits emphasising the behaviour code required and giving youngsters a chance to sit behind the wheel of a bus or coach.

The company also hosted numerous visits to its headquarters, giving young people an insight behind the scenes. Work experience was also freely offered, with a wide range of departments to choose from, there was excellent diversity of choice.

Steve Whiteway was one of the founders of the Epsom Education/Business partnership designed to integrate local business with local schools. This included Steve and Epsom Coaches staff, participating in business games and offering mock interviews to Six formers. For many years, Steve Whiteway, was involved with Kingston College, lecturing Travel and Tourism students. In 1999, Steve was recognised for his contribution to Education/Business partnership with a presentation from the partnership board.

The Stephen Woods Centre

Based on Roy Richmond Way, the Stephen Woods Centre has for many years, provided youth club facilities and is the home of Epsom Boxing Club. As its immediate neighbor, Epsom Coaches were major sponsors of the club and Steve Whiteway was instrumental in gaining lottery funding to rebuild the centre in the 1990's. For many years, Steve chaired its trustee board and Epsom Coaches facilities were often used for meetings. Administration was provided by the company and it funded the refurbishment of the club's car park, also paying for the renewal of its boundary fencing. It also rented car parking space from the club, ensuring a regular income for the clubs youth work.



Judging and Being the Best

As a multi award winning company, Epsom Coaches were well used to accolades awarded for years of quality service and innovation. They also provided judges for national industry awards events, for local awards and competitions.



**The Epsom team,
with comedian
Tom O'Connor
after sweeping
the board at the
UK Coach Awards**

1997

Anniversary Open Days

A tradition that started back in the 1980's Epsom Coaches Open Days, were legendary, for their ability to draw huge crowds but also to raise money for charity. Held every 5 years, the last open day was held in 2015, celebrating 95 years. Over 4000 people attended an event which included displays from its suppliers along with the modern Epsom fleet and vehicles from its past. It featured classic cars and motorcycles too. Popular tourist attractions were there to promote their locations, along with entertainment for the younger visitors, in the form of face painting and a bouncy castle. The fun bus was also very popular! The event raised over £12,000.



**Open Day
Workshop
Exhibits**

2015

The 2010 Open Day saw a special corporate event on the Friday before, with over 200 specially invited guests attending the formal opening of the company's newly redeveloped garage site. The opening ceremony and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque by Epsom Coaches Chairman Roy Richmond, was a moving ceremony, preceded with an anniversary film, celebrating the company's long history. The following day, once again, a record number of people, came to see for themselves the new state of the art garage, home to a fleet that grew to 150 vehicles.

**Roy
Richmond
opens the
new garage**

June 2010



**Opening
Ceremony
June 2010**



Summing it Up

Always more than the sum of its parts, Epsom Coaches, were pioneers in community involvement, providing as one of the longest established business's in the borough of Epsom & Ewell and one of its largest employers, stability and assistance to many organisations and individuals, both within the company and outside. This was not a passing phase, but a mantra that that was at the core of the company, that was so much more than a business, but an enterprise that was at the heart of its staff's lives and that of the community it served.



**Corporate
Event**

2010

**Senior Citizens
Tea Party
2015**



**Supporting the
Epsom & Ewell
Fun Day
2014**

More photographs of these and other special events, can be viewed in the Special Events section