

Day in the life of a Western Greyhound driver, near to the end of that company's operations:

Here is an awesome insight into "a day with a bus driver".

Thanks to **Graham Johnson** for this post! Graham has obviously spent a great deal of time writing his experience below. It is much appreciated!

Can I give you an example of my last 2 days as a driver please. And before I start I am sympathetic to all of your experiences so please don't think this is a "my day was worse than your day" message because it isn't. It's an example of what a bus driver does during the day. Here goes.

Firstly: Tuesday 4th November. My shift was changed to accommodate the fact that Western Greyhound (WG) have lost drivers due to circumstances beyond the control of drivers. So I did a 597/587 which was handed to me 12 minutes late. I had made that time up by the time I got to Victoria Square. Then the Concession cards come out and of the 9 people I collected from there 6 didn't know where they actually wanted to go, 1 dropped her trolley and the other 2 were the only ones with their cards ready. So I left Victoria Square 4 minutes late. College traffic and a tractor along Penstraze meant I was 8 minutes down by the time I got to St Agnes. As a professional driver who knows the roads and the routes I was actually back on time by Goonhavern.

In Cubert there was a royal mail van parked on the bus stop so I had to illegally park and assist an elderly passenger with her trolley. Being 3 minutes late by the time I'd gone to Holywell Bay I met the other bus in the narrows and she reversed back. I got to Newquay on time. Of the 26 passengers I collected and dropped off I said "hi" or generally "ok", "please and thanks" to all of them. Eight said please and thanks. 10 said nothing polite, 6 said thanks/cheers and 2 actually started by saying "last week this bus never turned up. Where were you?" I replied "on annual leave with my family last week. I apologise on the company's behalf". The reply from them was "bollocks"!

When I got to Newquay for my 1 hour paid break I was bombarded with questions about First, WG being bloody useless and where do I catch so and so bus. I answered each one.

Walked into town. Got told by a member of staff in Argos that I'll be out of a job next week. Went back to the drivers' room and ate my lunch.

Was informed that my next run to Padstow was running but the bus before didn't. So as I'm collecting passengers all the way to Padstow (36 on and off) the paying passengers seemed to understand. The 25 concession holders were the rudest. Ranging from "your late.... again" (I wasn't. I was on time but they had waited for the previous bus) to "no wonder your company is going under". Again I apologised on the company's behalf but was met by stoney silence, verbal abuse and a general rudeness. Again I was professional.

When arriving at Padstow the bus going the other way informed me that he had broken down in Wadebridge and couldn't get to Bodmin on time so didn't do the Wadebridge to Bodmin. This means the people in Wadebridge hadn't had a connection to Bodmin for 2 hours. Guess what met me in Wadebridge. 15 very angry people. Again not my fault. I apologised. Informed them I'd endeavour to get them to Bodmin on time. Only one of those people thanked me or said please. I said please and thanks to all. As I left Bodmin to return I was met with sarcastic cheers and abuse as again it was inevitable that those people from Bodmin had waited 2 hours for a bus. I apologised on the company's behalf and of the 17 people there, 4 said please and thanks (I had been polite to them). Those four had had come from Wadebridge 30 minutes earlier and had seen me struggle to make time, remain professional against abuse and apologies for things beyond my control. As I got to Wadebridge those 4 were great tbh. "Well done drive, good driving, spotted that taxi well bud". Small thanks makes a difference. Picked up from Wadebridge. Two had lost tickets, 1 had an out-of-date concession card and the rest were thoroughly pissed off. I apologised

again, had to charge the ticket misplacers and the concession card holder. Was met with abuse from passengers who said "let them travel free". I replied politely that a few weeks back a driver was suspended for allowing a passenger to travel one stop whilst he negotiated parked vehicles at Bodmin Mount Folly bus stop and he was 'jumped' at the next stop, suspended and investigated. I was sworn at and remained professional.

Got to Padstow on time. Again very few said 'thanks' but 2 holiday makers remarked how well I'd done to remain calm as passengers decided to ignore the bells and expect me to remember exactly where they intended to alight. It's bad enough remembering a route, fare stages, legal speed limits, diversion routes etc on a 5-hour run! At Padstow 6 people got on. Two wanted a "car park near a corner shop just beyond a bridge", 2 wanted a specific hotel in Newquay (I know the bus stops, routes etc but no idea of the hotels). One had a wet dog who when I asked her to please keep the dog on the lead and off the seat was met with a torrent of abuse (I ask that dogs be kept on a lead and off the seats. Off the seats because when a child sits on the seat they use their hands as leverage and then whatever the dogs have on their fur gets transferred to the child via hand to mouth) and 1 passenger who was pissed off because of the non-running early buses (understandably so). Again I apologised and said I'd endeavour to get them there on time. I did. There was a few large vehicles in awkward places but we got back on time. Everyone seemed happy and between us we found the hotel the passengers were looking for (no "thank you driver") although to every passenger I said "please" "thanks" "goodbye" too.

This was in a bus where there was no destination blind, several minor defects (gearing problem/ bulb out on dash etc), not the correct running card so I had to check the bus stops for running times and no radio to base to check timings so had to use my own phone (which we don't get reimbursed btw). Like I said not a comparison. Just an insight to a driver's day. Nothing that I had done contributed to the failings of the previous buses. Not my fault but I tried my best and for many that wasn't enough. I'm sorry the previous buses didn't run. For your sake and mine.

Us drivers don't know if we have a job to go to most mornings. We are all worried. Some of you are on a bus for 10 minutes. On certain runs we're on them for 5 hours with no break. No toilet facilities. No pay rise for 4 years. Even thinking we'll get called back to base and told "that's it peeps". We drop some of you to work in the mornings, drop the same people home then out for the evening.

This is not a "poor bus driver post" or anything like that. It's one shift of 6 I do Monday to Saturday. With people wishing our company would fold. We drivers just drive. The bunch of people there right now are fighting for their jobs. Still turning up against a feeling of bad will. Getting spat at, sworn at, physically assaulted and threatened daily (this does happen to us).

I genuinely apologise to those affected by what's happening. We as drivers are trying our best. What affects you affects us and the next bus and driver.

Thanks for reading.

Graham

7/11/14

Extracted from: <https://www.facebook.com/wgwheresmybus>