



Fund Chairman, Richard Holland with daughters Charlotte & Beth. Photo by Toni Morgan

The Barbara Bus

By Toni Morgan

When a member of THE ARCHER team mentioned that she was going to the Barbara Bus Open Day at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore, it brought back a memory of the time some 20 years ago when I drove one of their vehicles.

I was working for the Leonard Cheshire Foundation and was asked to drive a 'Barbara Bus' to Heathrow airport to meet a quadriplegic man and his carer who were travelling from Canada. After taking them on a quick tour round London, the vehicle was then theirs to use for the week before I returned it to Stanmore.

So what is a Barbara Bus? In 1968, Barbara Werndly, a patient at the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, set up a registered charity, The Barbara Bus Fund. The aim was to provide a means of transport for people unable to use conventional forms of transport. Barbara, the founder, died in September

1995, but the fund has continued and now employs a part-time coordinator to carry out the administrative work. Barbara's nephew, Richard Holland, is Chairman of the Fund and on Sunday he introduced their two new vehicles, named after his daughters, Beth and Charlotte. The Fund has a selection of specially converted vehicles that can accommodate from one to three wheelchairs, plus a varying number of able-bodied passengers.

Care to drive?

Friends, relatives or carers may drive the vehicles; they would need to be registered with the Fund and should be between 25 and 75 years of age with a clean driving licence. The Fund

does not make a set charge, but they do ask that the vehicles are returned clean, tidy and with a full tank of fuel. If users can make a donation to the Fund it is much appreciated.

Volunteer drivers are always welcome, so if you have some time to spare and meet the above requirements, why not contact the Fund's Co-ordinator, Julia Pryor, on 020 8416 0733 and find out more about their work?

"The toddletastic way to beat meningitis"

The Meningitis Trust is staging its annual sponsored walk for under-fives between 3 and 16 October. Playgroups, nurseries and families can join the Trust's mascot, Monty the Duck, in waddling to raise funds for the fight against meningitis. Last year, waddlers in the UK and Ireland raised £370,000.

Register online at www.toddlewaddle.org or call 0845 120 45 30.

On the buses

Wheelchair ramps

Since 24 July it has been a breach of contract for any bus to be operated with a faulty wheelchair ramp.

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The 603 bus, which runs between Muswell Hill and Swiss Cottage via East Finchley, has survived its six-month trial period - but only as a school time bus. Even though traffic analysis on the route has shown a move away from cars to buses since its introduction, Transport for London has announced that it will not extend the timetable beyond the present two buses in each direction, morning and afternoon, on school days only. However, the campaign to develop the service continues, with protestors insisting that there has been no proper feasibility study.

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It's official: - Despite rumours to the contrary, the

134 will not become a bendy bus.

Easy bus

Easy Jet announced recently that they were planning to start a commuter bus service between Hendon Central and Milton Keynes. Future plans include further link-ups within the northern Home Counties, and a service between Hendon Central and Luton airport.

Details available at easyjet.com.

Car disappears, but was it the orange stickers?

Local resident and businessman William Stone told THE ARCHER that his car and various personal effects were taken, possibly stolen on 15 July. The car was a 1991 white Mercedes 190, in very good condition and of some value.

It had been parked on East End Road, opposite his shop, since late June. The Road Tax had run out at the end of June. Mr. Stone had been out of the country and returned on 8 July, when he immediately paid the Road Tax, but being unwell for a period he had omitted to display it on the car. At about 4pm on 15 July, he went out to place the new tax disc on the car and found that it was missing. Subsequently his neighbours told him that an orange sticker had been placed on the car, apparently on behalf of Barnet Council because of the lack of tax disc. The vehicle was last seen at around 2.20pm that day.

He contacted Barnet Council and was told that they had no record of this car at all. He contacted the police, the DVLC, the London Central Vehicle Tracing Department, Camden Council, and many, if not all of the car breakers and towing companies in the area, to no avail. Officially, the car is recorded by the police as stolen.

Mr. Stone has expressed little confidence that the council properly controls the identification and disposal of cars not displaying a current tax disc. He has also speculated that the car may have had an orange sticker placed on it illegally, as a prelude to being stolen. He is concerned that the process of placing an orange sticker on a car means that it becomes vulnerable to illicit towing, and blames the law that enables this.

THE ARCHER has contacted Barnet Council, who have reiterated that they have no record of ever identifying the car for removal. They have supplied information about their Abandoned Vehicle Process, and it is clear that there are numerous checks built in to prevent problems such as this.

Unless the car is found, it seems likely that the actual facts will never fully emerge, but if there is a moral, it is not just to pay your road tax, but also to display it.

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