

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BERNARD BEED

This week we mourn the loss of Watford's very own Bernard Beed. You may have known Bernard. A man of distinction. In a rare interview published in the Observer last year, Bernard described how important his life had been.

'I left school aged 16 in 1950 and went straight to work for London Transport on the buses. I started as a bus conductor on Route 142, one of the longest services running from Junction Station to Hendon in those days, no Brent Cross back then. I got to wear a navy-blue peak cap with a shiny silver badge. I realised wearing a peaked cap, people would look up to you. I was important.'

'What happened then?'

'Inspector Cyril decided I would make a good bus driver and within five years, LT trained me accordingly. I remember my driving test at Aldenham which involved handling difficult weather conditions and slippery surfaces. I was awarded another peaked cap, this time with a coloured badge in recognition of my status as a driver.'

'How long did you drive the 142?'

'I was the main driver for twenty years. I loved that route. Regular passengers would wave as my bus approached their stop. I will say, there was always a frustrating part in Bushey when at 08:17 I would encounter the school crossing "lollypop" man, Reg Mill. I got to know Reg when I reported him to Inspector Cyril. Reg thought he could hold up my bus by walking into the road when parents and children were not even close to crossing. Reg thought he was the big man, but his peaked cap was not like mine! His was a Watford Council non-blazoned cap.'

'Did Reg change his ways?'

'No. In fact he increased his dalliances so delaying my bus even longer.'

'I understand you were promoted by LT?'

'When Inspector Cyril announced his retirement a year in advance, I was invited to train for my Depot Inspector's exam. I carried on driving at the same time but would attend the LT training course once a week, diligently writing up my notes at weekends. I passed the exam with top marks and received my new Inspector's peaked hat with its golden badge. My dear mother was so proud. My depot was the cleanest and most efficiently run depot in the whole of LT. I was

often invited to open local fetes. I was a pillar of the community. I always wore my Inspectors peak cap and was addressed as Inspector Beed. I was respected.'

'You were clearly married to your job.'

'Yes. When I retired a few years ago, I was invited by the Council to be their new lollypop man in Bushey. They even gave me a peaked cap and yellow uniform to ensure I was safe. I hated that driver of the 142. He used to get angry with me. All I was doing was ensuring the safe crossing of parents and children. I mean, just who did he think he was?'

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500 words