

FARES PLEASE!

An Oral History Project of London Bus Workers



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Fares Please! is an oral history project focusing on London bus workers. Working with arts and education charity digital:works, children from Gateway Academy and Westminster Cathedral RC primary schools have explored this history, writing about it and also filming interviews with older bus workers for a unique oral history documentary film.

The writing and film the children have been making are included in this booklet but you can read more and listen to all of the full, unedited interviews on the project website...

[www.faresplease.org.uk](http://www.faresplease.org.uk)





# THE HISTORY OF THE BUS

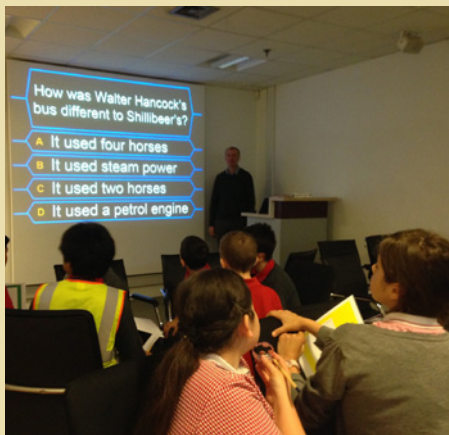
Clippedy, Clop go the horses dancing down the streets,  
As the people inside jump around in their seats,  
Because of the mountain-like cobbles on the ground,  
People sometimes end up falling face down.

Suddenly the roar of the engine comes around,  
As man-made machines come to town,  
With adverts around the spiral stairs,  
While the 'Clippies' ask for the fares.

Next comes the bus with the driver and stairs inside,  
Connected to the rails the bus easily slides,  
With the people on the knifeboard seats, sitting side by side,  
The people of London enjoy the ride.



As part of the project the young people visited the London Transport Museum and went on a bus trip to Acton Depot; they acted out role plays to help understand the history; learnt oral history techniques and how to film interviews, and created the writing for this booklet and their online blog. The writing on the following pages is a mixture of creative pieces, imagined diaries, poems and accounts all inspired by the children's research and meetings with the bus workers.



# EVOLUTION OF THE LONDON BUS

In 1829, London was chaotic. Everywhere was busy with carriages and people on foot. This all changed when George Shillibeer launched the Omnibus in London. It was London's first form of public transport. It could comfortably carry 22 people inside and was pulled by three horses. Shillibeer also made a private Omnibus for Newington Academy for Girls making it the first school bus. Although his business failed, many other bus companies took its place.

In 1910, the B-Type Bus was introduced, the first reliable motorised bus, and the first red bus. This time it was run by the London General Omnibus Company (L.G.O.C.). Shortly after its introduction, the First World War broke out. This led to the B-Type buses going to war, transporting troops. More recently they have been given the nickname 'Battle Bus'.

In 1931, the Trolleybus, like a bus but powered by electricity, came to London. It lasted thirty years.

Eight years later, the RT was introduced. Many bus drivers hold the RT dear to their heart. It evolved from the B-type, with the open 'Hop on, Hop off' end now inside the body.



In 1956 London said “hello” to a new type of bus. Some consider this bus an old legend. Others think the men who designed it were living gods. The RM-Type bus. The Routemaster.

The Routemaster was a double-decker bus, 27 ft long and 14 ft tall; designed by London Transport and built by the AEC Company and Park Royal Vehicles it ran on diesel fuel and was painted bright red with an open entrance at the back and 64 seats. It launched on routes in London in 1956 and from then gave phenomenal service to its passengers.

A total of 2,876 Routemasters were built, most for London Transport, although some buses were built for British European Airways and the Northern General Transport Company.

This bus became a symbol of London, its heritage passed on to buses of today. The Brits immediately fell in love with this bus. It has remarkable recognition throughout the world. No bus has been more celebrated than the Routemaster. The last Routemasters drove up to December 2005, although 1,280 are still around.

The latest version is the 2012 New Routemaster, with the rounded shape, the back entrance, the red paint it is instantly recognised as a London bus.

# A POSTCARD FROM GEORGE SHILLIBEER

Dear Mum,

I am now in Paris. France and I am lost for words. I have just witnessed one of the most spectacular things I have ever seen. It was a huge cart being pulled along by 2 horses and it was transporting a crowd. This was no ordinary kind of cart - the French people call it an "omnibus". It goes on the same consistent route back and forth all day and people pay to get on and travel where they need to go. I was mesmerised by this creation and I really think that this idea could spread across the world.

I am thinking about bringing this idea to life in London. This could change people's lives forever and might make me some money too!

I am thinking about taking this idea to the next level by making it bigger, to carry more people and adding an extra horse to make it easier to go to further destinations.

See you soon,

George





# WORLD WAR I BATTLE BUSES

The newest bus in 1910 was the B-Type, which took 34 passengers and moved at 12mph. When the First World War started, the army didn't have a way to move soldiers around so they took nearly 1,200 of these B-Type London buses to Europe along with their drivers. The buses were repainted for camouflage and each bus window was boarded up for protection. Buses were put to different uses by the army. Some had pigeon coops attached to the roof to carry the homing pigeons used for sending messages, others carried wounded men or ammunition. The buses sometimes broke down and some bus drivers were killed. Only a quarter of the buses came back after the war.

## I'M JUST A BUS DRIVER...

Dear Diary,

It's been three weeks. Three whole weeks in this hell; just a few weeks ago I was driving from Paddington to Bank and now I'm in the middle of a war. I'm just a bus driver I don't know anything about guns or ammunition; I'm just a young chap from London.



*B-type bus being used for the transport of troops at the Western Front during the First World War*

It was only three weeks ago that I was driving my B-type bus in London and now I just want to go back home. I NEVER imagined myself on the Western Front. God knows I just want to go back to the days where I'd wake up and get dressed in my uniform and drive all around London in my bus and pick up people and take them from place to place; instead I am woken up by yelling and screaming and having to put on filthy boots and step out into these hell holes that they call trenches. What have I done to get myself into this position. Not ever have I wanted to be a soldier, I mean sure all boys say that when they were younger but that has never been my dream; no matter how boring or silly it sounds all I've ever wanted to be is a bus driver.

I know I can't turn back time but if I could, I would do something, anything to stop this war. I can never un-see the things I've seen, I can never un-hear the dreadful yells, screams, cries I've heard; all I can do is fight. But I don't want to fight! Never in my life had I imagined that I'd go from driving around London to dodging bullets.

All the people I've talked to down here say this fighting, screaming, pain gives them adrenaline and they tell me to cry them a river and get over it but I can't!

I'm just a boy from London.... I'm just a bus driver...



# THE DIARY OF MARY MORGAN

Dear Diary,

Hello, my name is Mary Morgan and I am a clippie. I come from Poplar just down the road. In November 1940, a bomb dropped NEXT TO MY BUS! I didn't know what to do. I saw these two darling children, so I saved them with my coat. When I got off my bus, everybody said I was a hero, but the only thing that matters is that we were all okay.

The next day I was surprised to be contacted by the artist Eric Kennington to come to his studio so he could paint my picture. I was nervous and shaking with fear and when I put make up on, I looked in the mirror and gulped. He told me that I needed to wash it off before he could make a start! I'd put too much on! I am nervous to see how it turns out!

Mary

SEEING IT THROUGH



How proud upon your apartment you stand,  
Conductor—Captain—of the mighty boat!  
Like some Columbus you survey the strand,  
A calm newswoman in a sea of fuss.

You may be tired—how cheerfully you slip,  
Climb in the dark, with one eye on the street—  
Two decks—one pair of legs—a rolling ship—  
Much on your mind—and fix men on your feet!

The storm blows, and death is in the air;  
Still at her post the brave Captain stands,  
And counts her changes, and scampers up the stair,  
As brave a sailor as the King commands.

A. P. Hebert

Wartime poster by Eric Kennington with portrait of Mary Morgan, 1944



# MARY MORGAN SAVED MY LIFE

Oh my, I can't believe what just happened, I am so shaken up but feeling so grateful to be alive. I was walking down the street minding my own business when I hear a yell "Get Down, Get Down!" At first I pass it off as a mother telling her child to get down off a wall or something but no, just a few seconds later I hear an explosion and I curl up into a ball thinking 'this is it?' But I don't feel anything, and I look up to see a middle-aged woman shielding me and another child with her jacket; she appeared to work on a bus, maybe a 'clippie'. I look up at her tears and she gave me a warm smile that calmed me down somehow; I smiled gratefully up at her giving her a hug, she hugged me back and the other child. "Thank you" I said, happiness finding my voice "You saved my life". When I finished she smiled lightly and put a hand on my shoulder. "I'm Mary Morgan and anyone would've helped". With that she left, as did the other child. I raced home to tell my parents how a woman called Mary Morgan just saved my life and I couldn't be more grateful that she was there, otherwise I wouldn't be here.



## CECIL: HOW I BECAME A BUS DRIVER

A young man came up to me in the street at home in Barbados and asked if I would like a job in England as there were difficulties at this time hiring enough workers for London Transport. I already had a job in Barbados but this opportunity interested me as I could make money and see another part of the world.

Three weeks later, after saying goodbye to all my family and friends, I made my way to England. It was really hard at first, as I needed to get used to a new culture and deal with the fear of people being racist towards me. But I really looked forward to my new job as conductor on a RM (although I honestly didn't know what RM stood for). After a while I found my place in the London Transport community and I found out that RM stands for Route Master!



*LT Recruitment Officer seen interviewing the first batch of Caribbean applicants for work with London Transport. Barbados 1956.*

The first Omnibus went click, clack and clot;  
It was driven by 3 horses on a very nice trot!  
But on the bus everywhere was a jiggle,  
It looked as if everyone was doing a wiggle!

The second Omnibus had stairs at the back,  
For the sake of elderlies there was also a rack!  
The bus was born in 1910,  
When men looked at women's privacy - bad men!

The third Omnibus as usual was red,  
There was also a roof for the driver's head!  
At the top of the bus was a yellow roof,  
And at the bottom an engine instead of horse's hooves!

The Routemaster was the best of all;  
It was so good that nobody would fall!  
While everyone enjoyed the ride,  
Adverts surrounded them inside!

No conductors on a modern bus,  
You swipe your oyster card, which isn't a fuss!  
Modern buses are very busy,  
Even though they do not have a 'Clippie'





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**This booklet** was researched and written by Year 6 Children from Gateway Academy and Westminster Cathedral Primary Schools.

**The film** consists of interviews developed, conducted and shot by Year 6 Children from **Gateway Academy Primary School**: Aya Haidour, Tabassum Raoufi, Walid Sahraoui, Samira Rofique, Wasif Rahman, Fajer Khan, Abbie Haynes, Ali Mikal, Aman Teki, Ahmed Al-Mukhtar, Abdulrahim Salim, Renee Pambu, Siyaad Osman, Anis Dervisi, Rahaf Kalam, Fatima Rostum, Turhan-Ur Rahman, Umayrah Hayath-Shikdar, Drion Veselaj, Awab Ibrahim, Hamza Adan, Emad Taroute, Sirah Miah, Tanbir Mohammed Rafi, Dilshad Al-Siri, Raney Da Silva and Adam Qadir and **Westminster Cathedral RC Primary School**: Kelly Abreu, Tegan Ackaah, Dontae Ashbourne, Morgan Brown, Roisin Bunting, Riccardo Calvelli, Kiara Camacho Moreno, Ryan Chavez Hope, William Costales, Eliza Dicks Murphy, Joshua Fay, Samuel Franco-Halili, Ruben Gallardo Hewer, Louie Gilbert, Ashley Heathfield, Erik Kunz, Ines Lopes, Daniel Mazzanti, Sofia Miseria, Stefanos Mulugeta, Glenda Oloke, Daisy O'Shea, Louis Penne-Stuart, Diana Pereira, Carter Pike, Oscar Tohux, Daniel Tuyindi, Wisley Vergara and Mason Williams-Mitchell.

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