

54 Bus Route

In days of yore, the 54 bus passed through Beckenham from Croydon to Woolwich Arsenal. It had been the main bus route linking Woolwich, Lewisham, Beckenham and Croydon since the 1920s. Since the introduction of the trams in May, 2000, the 54 bus has terminated at Elmers end Station.

On 3 May 2014, Stagecoach took over the route from Metrobus and is now operating the route with brand new *Alexander Dennis Enviro400H* double deckers. Metrobus have increased the frequency from 5 to 6 buses per hour.

These are wonderful, quiet buses with a splendid passenger layout and plenty of rails and columns for foot passengers to hold onto especially before getting off the bus. Sadly the buses cannot come to a halt without a final jerk which means elderly passengers stay in their seats until the bus stops.



One of a fleet of vintage routemasters passing through Beckenham High Street on Saturday, May 10th, 2014 to celebrate the centenary of Catford Bus Garage which opened as a Thomas Tilling Service in 1914.



Two brand new Alexander Dennis buses arrive at the same time at the Elmers End Station terminus c. 6 pm on May 13th, 2014

Also we now have almost a return to the situation which was common in the 1950s when the old adage that “you might say you can wait an age for a bus before two turn up at once” was the reality for users of the 54. Fortunately with the 20% increase in numbers on the route employed by Stagecoach, this is nothing like the same problem.

To a large extent today’s delays to keeping to the timetable are due the traffic congestion on the route through Lewisham and Beckenham. According to the AA, the journey from Stumps Hill (at the top of Southend Road) to Elmers End Station is 2.5 miles and should take 10 minutes. But it seems that the 25 minutes that Stagecoach allow for drivers to cope with the 20 places with pedestrian and traffic lights, roundabouts, road junctions and bottlenecks (see map below) is not enough.

However, these problems are known to Transport for London and Bromley Council funds of £4 million have been approved for schemes for Central Beckenham which, when they are begun in 2016, will alleviate the situation while not damaging Beckenham’s Heritage.

