

Quantock Motor Services Limited

RULE BOOK

for

CONDUCTORS

*General guidance for conducting Stage Carriage
and Private Hire services
on the*
HERITAGE FLEET

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INTRODUCTION

Quantock Motor Services (QMS) has for several years operated a fleet of heritage vehicles alongside its modern fleet of executive coaches and buses. It is believed to be unique in the UK in this respect and the heritage fleet is in demand all through the year for private hire services, stage services, contract hire and rallies.

The fleet is constantly changing but normally includes single deck, double deck and open top vehicles. Some of these are fitted with driver-operated doors and can be used without a conductor if necessary but others have an open, rear platform and these must be crewed by both driver and conductor for safety reasons.

Part of the attraction of taking a journey on a 'vintage' bus whether for a private event such as a wedding, a shuttle service or a regular stage journey, is the recollection of a bygone age. Enough years have passed that the sight of a conductor at work on a heritage bus can be viewed as 'nostalgic'.

QMS prides itself on turning out buses full of character, crewed by smartly dressed and well trained drivers and conductors. The fact that the conductor has the greatest contact with the passengers means that he/she must be fully aware of a conductor's responsibilities and yet have the freedom to engage with the passengers. If they have enjoyed their experience, they will return again or be happy to recommend QMS to others.

This booklet aims to equip trainee conductors with sufficient information to allow them to become competent and valued members of the company's conducting staff.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A CONDUCTOR

Personal Presentation

A QMS conductor will be issued with a company tie, which should be worn with a white shirt and black or grey trousers. If a jacket or fleece is worn, burgundy is the preferred colour. It is not compulsory to wear a traditional bus crew jacket and cap but these can be worn if they are suitably authentic in appearance.

Preparation

The work of a QMS conductor begins at the depot, long before the first passenger steps aboard. The conductor should arrive in time to prepare both the vehicle and him/herself for the day's duties.

This will include checking that the rostered vehicle is clean inside and that equipment, such as a ticket machine (including harness and T-key), is prepared and fully functioning. If fares are being collected, a waybill must also be prepared (see *Chapter 3*). The conductor must also have journey details, timetables and fare charts as appropriate before setting out. Check that the destination blinds are correctly set. Make a note of the Duty Mechanic's phone number. This is usually posted up on the door to the garage.

Manoeuvring

A good bus crew works as a team and this is put into practice when manoeuvring the vehicle, for instance when preparing to leave or upon returning to the depot. In common with many large vehicles, judging distances can be difficult. A conductor should be aware of this when on duty and should be ready to assist the driver by giving directions from behind if reversing or in front if moving forward in confined spaces.

The Journey

Once the passengers begin to board, the conductor is in charge of

The Responsibilities of a Conductor

the bus. He/she must be prepared to assist passengers to board, stow bags and buggies... even fold wheelchairs! The conductor is often regarded as the fount of all wisdom, or at least the source of knowledge for the journey. This means being tour guide, timekeeper and fare collector – all at the same time!

If fares are being collected, this is best done before the journey begins - 15 minutes or so is ample – for passengers who have boarded at the beginning of the journey. For those who join the bus at subsequent bus stops, allow them to find a seat first and then, when safely under way, follow them and take their fares.

Look forward and behind before ringing the bus away in case late passengers are trying to board at the last moment.

It is helpful (and part of the traditional conductor's job) to call out the names of the stops on a journey. This includes the final destination when "...all change please!" can be added.

The conductor should be polite and courteous at all times. Recreating a little of the past includes old fashioned customer service, just like it used to be! There will of course be moments of tension or stress but the conductor should remain customer-focused throughout.

A good conductor will engage in conversation with passengers without being intrusive. Drawing attention to local landmarks is a good way in. Cheery banter, when appropriate, will also help passengers to feel at ease and to enjoy their travelling experience.

At journey's end, assist passengers to alight and thank them for travelling. Check that no belongings (or sleeping passengers) have been left behind before returning to the depot.

The Responsibilities of a Conductor

The Bell

Recognised bell codes are: 1 to stop, 2 to start, 3 bus full (don't stop until 1 bell is given), 4 to stop in an emergency. Passengers must be discouraged from ringing the bell (or buzzer) without good reason. The driver will always respond, perhaps unnecessarily. Passengers may use a nearby bell push to request a stop if they haven't already done so via the conductor. For safety (and in case there is traffic behind the bus) it is advisable for the conductor to step away from the bus to assist in reversing, in which case a whistle may be used in place of the bell.

The Platform

The conductor's 'office' is on the platform, from where he/she can start and stop the bus by use of the bell. Making good use of the handrails while on the move, the conductor can also be aware of late passengers trying to board and also passengers descending the stairs. If a nearby seat is available on a long journey, the conductor may sit down but must always return to the platform when approaching a bus stop. It is good practice to stand on the platform while passing through a town centre, even when travelling empty. An open platform is an attractive place for youngsters to try 'pole hanging' but the presence of a conductor will be a good deterrent.



THE SETRIGHT TICKET MACHINE

QMS has a number of traditional Setright ticket machines. These are mechanical in operation and all are at least 40 years old. It is the conductor's responsibility to ensure that the machine is of a suitable type for the day's journey and is fully functioning. This includes having a spare ticket roll available.

Private Hire Duties

The use of a ticket machine on a Private Hire duty, such as a wedding, is largely optional and entirely for show. No fares need to be collected as the journey will have been paid for in advance.

The type of machine taken is unimportant as long as it can issue zero-fare tickets. If the ticket class selector includes 'special', this is suitable for most private hire journeys.

Stage Journeys

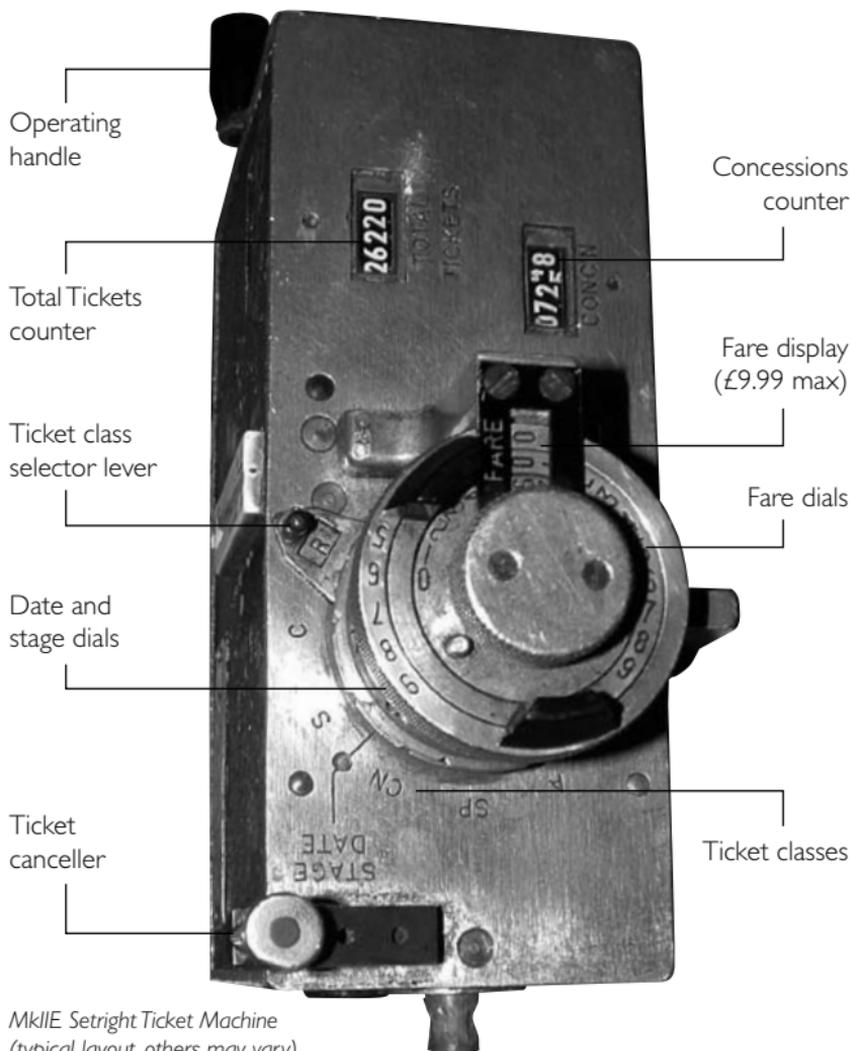
If conducting a timetabled stage journey, fares will be collected. For most of these duties, a Setright MkII E is used. Ticket classes include Concessions and there may be a separate Concessions counter on the top of the machine. This is to record journeys made by passengers carrying the English National Bus Pass (e.g. on the service 400). These journeys are free but a zero-fare ticket must always be issued in order to record the journey.

Ensure that the date dials have been set correctly and that the fare stage dials are set for the first stage of the service. The stage dials must be changed as each fare stage is passed.

A Waybill must be prepared before leaving the depot. In some cases this will already be filled out with opening numbers by the office when the ticket machine is issued. At the end of the journey, usually at the depot, the Waybill must be completed using the ticket machine counters and the required amount of money paid in to the office.

The Setright Ticket Machine

A suitable amount of float, to be used when giving change, must be provided by the conductor. If any discrepancies have been made while giving change, any losses must be made up from the float. The machine total shown on the Waybill cannot be altered.



SERVICE 400 “EXMOOR EXPLORER”



QMS currently operates the Service 400 route, the “Exmoor Explorer” and this raises specific issues which are not covered elsewhere.

The Service 400 is run by QMS on behalf of Somerset County Council and is a timetabled, public service. As such, it must run regardless of the weather or number of passengers, even if none travel. Good timekeeping is essential and it is the conductor’s responsibility to see that the service begins its journey at the advertised time and proceeds along the route as near as possible to the published timetable.

While it may not always be possible to avoid running late, it is not permissible to run early. Although the service is promoted as a tourist route, there are several intermediate stops which are used by the public and if an intending passenger misses the bus due to early running, this could be viewed as a breach of contract by the Council.

All published stops within Minehead are mandatory but the conductor may, if no passengers are waiting, signal two bells to the driver to proceed without stopping. If no signal is given, most drivers will stop even if no passengers are present.

Outlying villages are regarded as request stops.

It is good practice to be aware of where passengers want to leave the bus. Have this in mind while en route so that the driver can be alerted (with one bell) in good time when approaching the stop.

If running ahead of time, it is permitted to lay over at a convenient bus stop in order to depart at the published time.

PRIVATE HIRE JOURNEYS

Most private hire duties are for weddings and the rostered vehicle will usually have been suitably decorated beforehand. The function of the conductor is to ensure that all passengers board and alight safely and to man* the platform while under way. Due to the nature of the event, the conductor must be aware of high spirited members of the party. This is often the case when alcohol has been consumed. The safety of all is paramount and it is the conductor's job to keep good order without being a killjoy. In some cases, if the bell is being misused, it is better to agree with the driver to ignore the bell and use a whistle instead.

If a ticket machine is provided, issue passengers with souvenir, zero-rated tickets once the journey begins. Most of the time they will entertain themselves with little input from the conductor, unless they are seeking information about the journey.

**“Man” in this case means to occupy or monitor.*



IN AN EMERGENCY

Accidents and breakdowns are rare but, should the vehicle be unable to continue its journey, it is the conductor's duty to make sure that the passengers remain on the bus until alternative arrangements have been made. The driver will contact the depot and arrange for a replacement vehicle to be sent out but the conductor, to whom the passengers will most easily relate, should seek to reassure them and to pass on any relevant information.

Place an object (such as a seat cushion) against the back of the bus to indicate to other road users that the bus is disabled.

Common sense should prevail and, while the driver and conductor are expected to use their own initiative, the safety of passengers and crew should be the priority.

USEFUL NUMBERS

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