

## THE OLD AND THE NEW AT EURO BUS EXPO

**Our focus at this year's Euro Bus Expo will be to show that there is much more to the business than most people realise.**

Even long-standing customers are often surprised at how many other software solutions the company has to offer, or even what their existing software is capable of.

Peter Crichton, Omnibus Managing Director, explains: *"We have been in this industry for so long that most people think they have a good idea of what we are about and what our software has to offer. Regularly talking to our clients allows us to make them aware of new features and products that will help them to optimise their working practices and improve the quality of their operation, and we know they really appreciate that."*



There will be new talking points too. Euro Bus Expo will be the first opportunity that many people will have to view the capabilities of the new cloud-based version of OmniTIMES (see the full feature in the next column).

Visitors to the Omnibus Stand, located next to the seminar theatre, will also be able to find out more about our TransACT training services. The specialist scheduling training course recognises that in order to get the most out of any scheduling software (and ensure that the drivers' duties or rosters are viable and efficient) employees need to understand the principles of scheduling, understand the data that they are entering and understand what they expect to see as a result.

Peter concludes: *"Come and see us on stand G20 to find out more. Just look for the heritage bus that has become something of a feature of our stand!"*

## NEW OmniTIMES CLOUD

Omnibus is using this year's Euro Bus Expo to launch a new cloud-based version of its industry-leading timetable creation software OmniTIMES. This new software utilises the latest technology to bring you all the existing functionality of OmniTIMES together with some exciting new developments. Being cloud-based, it can be accessed from anywhere at any time, without the need for local installation.

Designed to be powerful yet intuitive, OmniTIMES is the market leader, in use worldwide to compile timetables, not only for buses but also for light rail and ferry services. The new software maintains all the familiar functions that significantly reduce the time and cost of creating timetables without compromising accuracy or data integrity.

Peter Crichton, Omnibus Managing Director, comments: *"Our developers have worked hard to create this updated version of our well-known and well-respected OmniTIMES software. Being cloud-based, users get the best of all worlds - the same advanced functionality with all the flexibility of access from wherever they are. The new features will add further value to the software, giving users new ways to optimise their passenger transport services."*

OmniTIMES has the ability to generate complex timetables with differential running times, as well as differing daily variations such as in school holiday periods or rural operations, all in a matter of seconds. Trips may be altered and retimed instantly, enabling clients to experiment with service ideas without wasting valuable time. The software is widely used by operators of all sizes to improve service and schedule planning, and by local authorities in order to provide information to passengers via Websites, Apps and Traveline.



## THE PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW – SHARING BEST PRACTICE AMONG POLICY MAKERS AND BUSINESS LEADERS

Omnibus was proud to once again be invited to take part in this comprehensive summary of the past year, providing innovative thinking from industry experts. Pictured are MD Peter Crichton together with three of his senior team and England Rugby Union Head Coach Eddie Jones (second from the right) who spoke at the launch event.

# CHARITY UPDATE...



## Developing our Business

Omnibus is committed to supporting and understanding our customers and their requirements. Naturally, this means that our products and business develop in response to their needs. We embrace the latest technology where this will add value and it is in line with this ethos that we are pleased to announce a further expansion of our team – expanding our industry experience and development capacity.

John Whitfield joins us from First Hampshire and Dorset where he was formerly responsible for scheduling. He will be a key addition to our Business Development Team, bringing experience grounded in many years within the UK bus industry at all levels.

We're also pleased to welcome Emily Rogers to our Development Team. She's currently spending her placement year at Omnibus, as part of her Computer Science degree at Manchester Metropolitan University. Emily is specialising in web development and is currently part of the team responsible for developing our products for new technologies.



▲ Charles travelled with a very sick baby to monitor him and get him to hospital for treatment.

## Director Carol Crichton's charitable trust, The Anam Cara Trust, has already made an impact on vulnerable village communities in Uganda.

The Trust has funded its first nurse, Charles, who spends one day a week in the Whisper Children's Hospital, which treats all children free of charge, and one day at the St Francis Health Centre, which specialises in the care of HIV-positive people.

Charles spends the rest of his time out in the community, assessing patients, taking blood samples, recording vital observations, dressing wounds, testing for malaria and giving some of the most needy people on the planet a very good (by local standards) level of service and care.

The Anam Cara Trust has also been working with the charity Eagle's Wing, helping them to provide school books, without which the children simply could not attend school. Carol explains just how vital this work is: *"School is so important in lifting these children out of poverty. Simply providing them with books means that they can attend school and become a future generation of doctors, engineers or even software developers. Something which seems a world away from where they are now, but that education makes possible."*

## Chris Shaw joined Omnibus recently

Chris was previously involved with planning and scheduling at Blackpool Transport, using the suite of Omnibus applications on a daily basis.

His detailed understanding of the software, together with his operational experience, allows Chris to make a great contribution to our support and commercial teams.

Already Chris has been heavily involved in feature specification and testing in our latest software developments – and his perspective as a user of our software is invaluable.

**Chris, 25, is enthusiastic about his new role and is keen to utilise his skills for the benefit of customers – come and meet him at the NEC!**

# SCHEDULES TRAINING COURSE TAKES OFF

Earlier this year Omnibus acquired TransACT from the well-known industry figure Jim Hulme. Included is the popular public transport training course, designed to teach the principles of vehicle and crew scheduling.

Omnibus Managing Director Peter Crichton explains: *"It's simply not possible to create viable and efficient timetables, drivers' duties or rosters without an understanding of the basic principles of scheduling. Only a proper understanding of these principles allows sound and efficient commercial decisions to be made in areas such as service changes."*

Peter continues: *"We are committed to continuing the excellent courses and services that TransACT offered."*

A number of courses have already been held by the Omnibus team with excellent feedback received from delegates.



▲ Omnibus instructors focused on how timetabling and duty decisions are made on a commercial basis

All agreed that it encouraged 'improved input' to assist any computer software to produce better results, particularly for anyone who is new to scheduling or to the public transport industry in general. The enthusiastic Omnibus instructors focused on how timetabling and duty decisions are made on a commercial basis and the quick identification of the various possibilities within a schedule, such as inter-timing and inter-working. On completion of the course the delegates were keen to put their new-found knowledge and understanding into practice.

Peter concludes: *"You simply wouldn't give someone accounting software and expect them to come up with a set of accounts, and the same*

*applies to scheduling. You need to understand the data that you are inputting and why. The quality of the results depends entirely on the data that is being entered so in untrained hands the results can be meaningless. The aim of the scheduling course is to place these tools in trained hands and at the same time invest in training the schedulers of the future."*

Dates are already available for the next round of courses for those wishing to attend, come and see us on stand G20 to book your place or to find out more...

# MANCHESTER ROOTS

Omnibus is extremely proud of its Greater Manchester roots; Managing Director Peter Crichton started his career in 1978 with Greater Manchester Transport.

It was in this early part of his career that Peter started to develop the idea of computerised scheduling, which would lead to the creation of OmniTIMES.

Over twenty five years later, the company is firmly established in the Oldham community. As well as supporting jobs and economic prosperity in the local area, Omnibus also participates in local community events, such as taking the vintage Manchester Corporation Transport bus to a community event at Heaton Park in Manchester, attended by the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Cllr June Hitchen.

Peter comments: *"What better way to demonstrate our unrivalled knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for the UK public transport industry than through our own traditional Manchester Corporation Transport bus from 1964."*

He continues: *"Omnibus is dedicated to the success of the UK public transport industry, with UK-based developers and support staff. We take pride in the quality of our customer care and support services."*



▲ The Omnibus 1964 Manchester Corporation Transport bus

# THE OMNIBUS DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Most people in the industry are familiar with the range of Omnibus software products, and it might appear as if they have been around for years. While that is partly true, there is a team of developers at Omnibus continuously working on improving the software for everyone. We thought we would share with you some of those developments and the team that makes it all happen.

## PRAISE INDEED

**National Express is a long-standing customer of Omnibus, using a number of our Schedules Office applications.**

So it was particularly rewarding for the team to receive some fantastic feedback from Andrew Moore, Planning Manager for the UK Coach division of National Express. He submitted his comments via the contact form on our website and has kindly given his permission for us to share it:

*"I would like to take a moment to thank you for your team's commitment. Sometimes it's all too easy to say thank you when a problem's solved, and move on. Your team, particularly your support arm are First Class. If we have an issue, the correspondence is prompt and importantly, clear. All of your support staff are a credit to Omnibus. Well Done!"*

Marc Knott, Senior Manager (Support) for Omnibus, comments: *"We pride ourselves on the quality of our customer service and we believe, and are confident, that our Customer Support team are second to none. It was therefore pleasing for us to have this confirmed by one of our long-standing customers."*

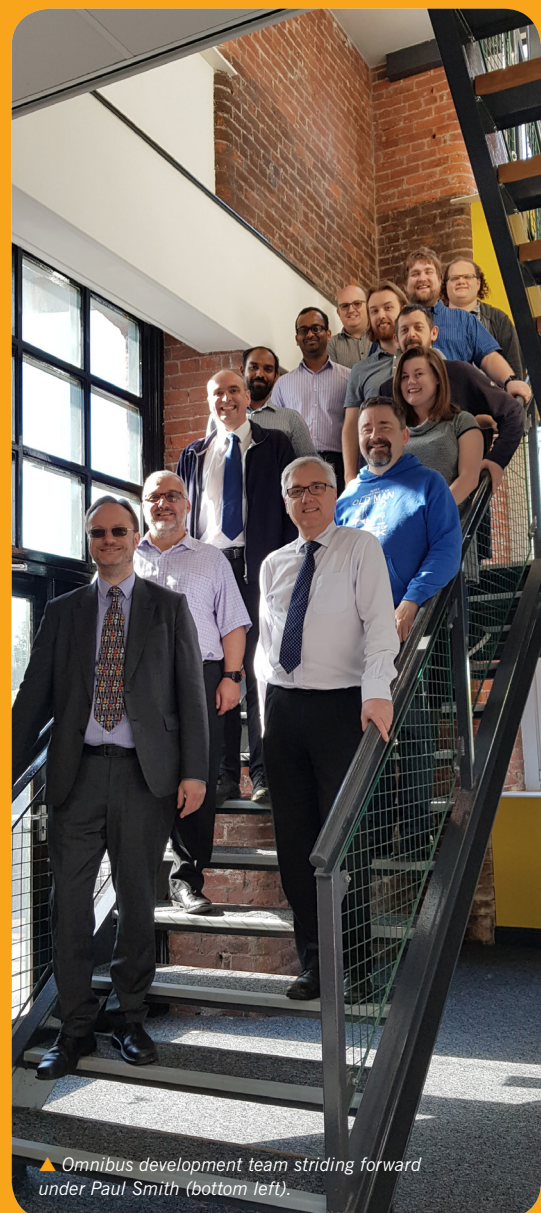
Paul Smith is the man responsible for the Omnibus Development team, and the first thing he told OmniNEWS was that every single product is currently undergoing in-house development. He also spilled the beans on some new developments that will have working prototypes on the stand at Euro Bus Expo, such as Real Time analysis and enhancements to our advanced TransXChange tools.

As well as the work they are doing on the existing Omnibus suite of products, the developers have made significant progress on a major cloud-based development programme. All of the desktop products that are suitable for the cloud environment are being redeveloped and enhanced.

The team is also working on adding 'internal intelligence' to the scheduling products to provide users with the option to automate more of the process if they choose, and also to guide them to better and more robust solutions. These features are designed to benefit advanced users as well as those with less experience of computer aided scheduling.

Open Data is of course another area that the development team is focusing on. They are looking at what users can do with their data, how they can share it and report on it, and how different systems, internal or external, can be integrated with each other.

Paul's team ensures that the Omnibus software products that have been around for years always have something new to offer and continue to deliver for today's challenging data environments.



▲ Omnibus development team striding forward under Paul Smith (bottom left).

Paul joined Omnibus after a career that has spanned academic research, software development, lecturing and consultancy. He has over twenty years of experience managing software development projects, and in addition to public transport he has worked in areas as diverse as utilities planning and investment banking.

Paul specialises in utilising complex mathematical algorithms in software solutions and first started work on bus and crew scheduling algorithms over twenty five years ago. He has a background in theoretical and computational physics.

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