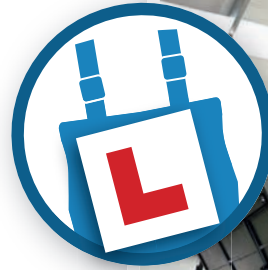


***"I am running 13 double-deckers, and it is a challenge to get them tested and have a clean sheet. I have never hit 100%, but I'm trying for it this year"***

# HIGH ACHIEVER



**Ian Scott, director of Stanley Travel, apprenticed the old-fashioned way, at the side of his father. The time-served engineer was honoured at last year's RouteOne awards**

The story of the founding of Stanley Travel is tied up with the construction of a television transmission mast on Pontop Pike in the high ground near Stanley, County Durham for the queen's coronation in 1953. It needed to be staffed 24 hours a day, but the BBC had no way to transport these engineers. To carry them, Ian Scott's father, a diesel engineer for the coal board with a keen interest in cars, started Stanley Taxis.

And Ian Scott was born into the business. Of his early life, Scott recalls: "We lived on a coal board farm, and the outbuildings were converted to a garage, so even when I was school age I was in the garage helping my dad. I stayed on into sixth form, but I always knew I wanted to work in the business, so after I finished that's what I did. It was like serving an apprenticeship. Dad was always a very good engineer; he was always about quality; it was instilled in him to do the job properly. He carried that spirit into the lads that I have in the workshop here."

Scott now employs six technicians, five of whom are longstanding employees. One, who is now 50, started work at 16, when, Scott recalls, he was not strong enough to be able to click off the torque wrench. Since then, he has developed into an excellent engineer, Scott reports proudly.

Until 2007, Stanley Taxis focused mainly on taxis and minibuses, up to

16-seaters, as well as local buses once public transport was deregulated. But 16 years ago, it sold the bus operation to Go-Ahead. With the proceeds,

the newly named Stanley Travel bought its first new vehicle, a Volvo Plaxton Panther. The bus fleet now numbers 51, alongside 75 taxis.

"I am running 13 double-deckers, and it is a challenge to get them tested and have a clean sheet," says Scott, who explains that his latest technician hire, from Go-Ahead, is in charge of compliance. "He's here to make sure we hit over 95%. I have never hit 100%, but I'm trying for it this year."

Scott argues that coaches are among the most complex commercial vehicles operating. "With trucks, the cab tilts and the engine is just there. Coaches take an engine and build a body around it; everything has access issues."

A major change to the business came in 2016, with the purchase of a nearby coach yard formerly owned by Classic Coaches, a site which was being let go after the firm was taken over by Arriva. "It was one of the best things that I've ever done." At nearly three acres, paved, fenced, it holds and provides for service of all of the coaches and



double-deckers, and features a new

vehicle wash bay and two workshops, one built only last year (pictured).

Stanley Travel, with Lucketts, was a founder member of DVSA's Earned Recognition scheme among coaches. Of that, Scott says: "ER is like having your own compliance manager. You have to make sure that you are fully complying with KPIs, tacho and maintenance; every month you have to be on the ball to be compliant. It keeps you alert."

Winning the 2022 RouteOne award for engineer of the year (small fleet) was a high point. It may be a high-water mark for the passionate engineer. "I'm 60 this year; my health is not the best, so it's time to start slowing down a bit. But I've always got to be there, because with your eyes you always pick up on things that employees don't; it's attention to detail that makes the difference."

When asked to elaborate, he replies: "It's the small things. A mark on a coach, or a dirty wheel; I hate dirty wheels, dirty windows, or drivers without a tie. The appearance of the vehicle on the road is your shop window. It's very important." 