

In 1951, operation of the route moved back to Bromley garage, its home ever since except for a five year contract 1992-97 with Kentish Bus. The route was extended from Penge to Crystal Palace, although many buses continued to turn in Penge. The 'Scooters' were replaced by new RF-types in November 1952.

In the hands of the ultra-reliable RF, the route remained unchanged for approaching 20 years. The next big change was the loss of conductors on the route, with new 'one-man' buses (there were no women bus drivers in 1972).



The first type of driver-only bus on the 227.

Photo © London Bus Scene

The Swifts were replaced by Leyland Nationals after only 6½ years, these lasting until privatisation of London bus operation. The route was won by Kentish Bus in 1992 and the route was cut back from Chislehurst to Bromley North (the Chislehurst section being taken over by the 161), leaving the route as operated today. However, operation returned to Bromley garage, by now Stagecoach, in 1997. New low-floor buses were introduced in 2000, with the present Mercedes buses taking over in 2012.

Further reading:

www.Red-RF.com

www.LondonBusMuseum.com

BUS ROUTE 227 CENTENARY

Welcome to this free bus service, celebrating 100 years of your local bus.

Read more at www.Red-RF.com



Over sixty years ago, an 'RF' type passes The Crooked Billet in Penge. These buses worked the route, with conductors, for 19 years until 1971. Photo © Geoff Morant

Bus route 227, now operating between Crystal Palace and Bromley North Station, marks 100 years of operation in August 2016. Today, Saturday 13 August 2016, a group of vintage bus owners is operating a free service along the route, from Crystal Palace and Penge to Bromley North, and onwards to Bromley Bus Garage, where operator Stagecoach are holding a garage open day from 1030 to 1630.

Old buses operate about every half-hour between Penge and Bromley, less frequently from Crystal Palace, between about 1100 and 1700. The free bus service is operated in addition to the normal TfL service, and TfL have no responsibility for it.

History of route 227

In 1916, munitions production from Woolwich Arsenal was increased substantially to meet the requirements of war. This in turn required a large increase in staff, who had to be drawn from a much wider area than before. The Ministry of Munitions accordingly agreed with London General Omnibus Co (LGOC) the provision of a number of extra buses, including two new routes. One of these, then numbered 109, ran from Penge (Crystal Palace Entrance) via Bromley, Chislehurst and Eltham to Woolwich, using single-deck B-type buses due to low railway bridges along the route.

The route ceased operation when funding stopped after the first world war ended, in February 1919, but was reintroduced later that year to work between Penge and Bromley North, extended further to Chislehurst six months later. An indication of the conditions faced by drivers is given by an official circular from 1920, which states: 'Drivers are instructed to vary the part of the roadway used in each journey ... and not to keep in the same rut each time'.



A B-type at Beckenham Church, c1925. Photo © www.beckenhamhistory.co.uk

Thomas Tilling were a long-established bus operator in south-east London, having started as jobmasters, moved into horse buses and then motor buses. They co-operated with LGOC, and from 1924 route 109 was transferred to Tilling's Bromley garage – now Stagecoach's garage, still providing the buses for the 227. In 1925, an early type of 'hybrid' bus was introduced on the route, the TS7 petrol-electrics developed and built by Tillings. In 1930, these buses were converted to run on pneumatic tyres. A batch of AEC Regals replaced the TS7s in 1932. From 1938, operation moved from Bromley Garage to Elmers End garage.

In 1934, after the formation of London Transport and the acquisition of the independent operators, most of the bus routes in London were re-numbered, and the 109 became the 227. Now running every 7½ minutes over most of the route, larger buses were required and LT 'Scooters' replaced the Regals in 1936.



A 'Scooter' in Penge High Street in 1952. A Scooter is on display today at Bromley Garage Open Day. Photo © Alan Cross

Many of the buses used on the route were destroyed on 18 July 1944 when Elmers End garage received a direct hit from a V1 flying bomb, killing 16 staff and destroying more than 40 buses. Despite the devastation, services continued the following day with borrowed buses.