Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 716 December 2023

Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk

fb.me/essexbus

From the Colour Archives

Richard Delahoy

Campbell's of Pitsea - never before seen in colour?

The latest issue of the brilliant *Classic Bus* magazine (December 2023 / January 2024) includes a six-page spread about the small Pitsea based operator Campbell's Motor Services, bought out by Eastern National in February 1956, just as Basildon New Town started to be developed. The article features half a dozen shots from The Bus Archive collection, taken by Derek Giles at the Campbell's depot, along with a brief history and copies of some timetables and tickets, plus a route map. Our existing Fact File booklet, written by Alan Osborne and published in 2002, tells more of the story and is available to download from the Archive Articles page at our website www.essexbus.org.uk. The copy there contains fresh scans of the pictures and a selection of tickets, shown in colour now.

But what none of these do is to show the Campbell's livery in colour and it was generally thought that no such pictures existed. However, our late member **Frank Church**, whose 1950s colour shots have featured in EBM before, did take two colour slides at the Campbell's depot. With slides that are now 70 years old, we can't be sure of the correct colour rendition, but what a find!

Campbell's were prolific Albion users, buying no less than 12 brand new. All three vehicles below are Albions:

Below: a pair of service buses new in the early post-war years, LTW 479 (CX13 model, Strachan B32F of 1947) and KNO 53 (also CX13, Pickering B34F, 1946). Both passed to Eastern National, LTW numbered 005 but not used and KNO as 001, used briefly from EN's Vange depot, but moved to store at Maldon by June 1956.

Bottom: an older vehicle was EVX 346, a PV141 new in 1937. The Metcalfe body was originally C32F but was later downgraded to bus work as seen here. It passed to EN but was already out of service and went for scrap.

Essex Bus Magazine the journal of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group
Issue 716 December 2023

Above & Right: First Essex Enviro 400 33825 (SN63 MYH) is a second vehicle at Colchester, after Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 32673, to receive a Remembrance Day livery. The design is similar, however, the light green with yellow stripes on 32673 have been replaced by blue. At Mardens on 9 November 2023. In the interior photo vinyls are being affixed. Both **John G Lidstone**. More details on page 9 and more photos on page 11.

Front Cover: This month we mark the 30th anniversary of the end of Routemaster operation by Southend Transport in a feature length article starting on page 24. Typifying the competitive situation that led Southend to reintroduce crew operation, 123 (CUV 162C) is flanked by Thamesway buses - Leyland National 1836 (VAR 896S) on the 3A to Canvey on the left, whilst pulling in behind 123 is a Ford Transit, 707 (C490 BFB) on the 29B to Newington Avenue. Both routes were contested by Southend's Routemasters. Meanwhile a Southend Inspector watches on; Monday 8 June 1992. Looking very smart without exterior adverts, 123, the highest numbered of Southend's RMs, is on a scheduled isolated weekday working on the 4B to Wakering via Barling, a route today covered by Stephensons 14. **Richard Delahoy**

Group Information

Chair & Meetings	Ian Ransom
Secretary	Alan Osborne
Treasurer & Membership	Richard Delahoy
Distribution, Publication & Sales	Owen Woodliffe
Publications Co-ordinator	Paul Harvey
Tours Organiser	Wayne Bell

Editorial Team

Editor & First Essex, Ensignbus, Central Connect
Adam Kelleher
74 Park Road
Brentwood, Essex
CM14 4TU
adamxxxx4@yahoo.co.uk

Arriva Southend & Colchester
Richard Delahoy, address opposite
(Arriva Harlow notes to Adam Kelleher, address above)

Hedingham & Chambers
Mark Lloyd
133 Hazelton Road
Colchester, Essex CO4 3DY
lloydhousehold448@gmail.com

Service Revisions, Panther Travel, Lodge Coaches and Publicity
Ian Ransom, ianransom2008@googlemail.com

Stephensons & NIBS
Richard Delahoy, address opposite

Smaller Operators
Roger A Smith, 3 Station Mews
Station Road, Witham, Essex
CM8 2FP

Ipswich Buses in Essex
Robert Appleton, rcappleton29@gmail.com

Vectare
Chris Stewart, shenfield252@gmail.com

Printed by
Directcds Ltd, Unit 2, Gentlemans Field, Westmill Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0EF
01920 465023 www.directcds.co.uk

Missing or Defective EBMs
Please contact Owen Woodliffe, 196 Sinclair Road, Chingford, E4 8PT
pat_woodliffe@hotmail.com
Owen stocks a wide range of colour photos, please send an SAE for details.

Subscriptions
The calendar year subscription for 2024 is £27 for printed copies sent by post, or £19 for electronic pdf copies sent by e-mail. New members may join from any month, but subscriptions will always run to December from whichever month the member chooses, please ask for the relevant price.
Please contact Richard Delahoy, 272 Shoebury Road, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3TT
richard.delahoy@blueyonder.co.uk

EBM Extra
EBM is published monthly. In addition, we aim to publish two Extras each year full of historical features. These are supplied to members free of charge, subject to funding.

Membership Records & Data Protection
A statement of our compliance with the GDPR is available on our website or by post. For any membership or Data Protection issues please contact Richard Delahoy, address above.

Reports, Articles & Photographs
Members' reports, articles and photos (prints, slides or preferably jpgs) are always welcome. Please send to the Editor or relevant Sub-Editor. The editors exercise discretion to publish contributions in full, in part or not at all and cannot guarantee publication in any particular month.

Target Dates for EBM 717

Reports to Sub-Editors		**30 December**
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor		**5 January**
Dispatch by Printers	on or before	**13 January**

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent up to 6th and will be included if possible, if not it will be held over to the next month.

Views expressed in EBM do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group or officers. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy, but the Group cannot accept responsibility for any errors published.

© Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group 2023

www.essexbus.org.uk fb.me/essexbus

Group Notices

Welcome to New Member

Wayne Collings, Chesterfield – 1219

Membership Renewals & Electronic Distribution

Following the editorial notices in the last two issues and the renewal form enclosed with the October magazine, we are delighted that over 200 members have now renewed for 2024. However if you have not yet done so, could you please pay now, otherwise this will be your last copy of EBM. The easiest way to renew is simply to pay the appropriate subscription (£27 for paper copies sent by post, £19 for pdf copies sent by e-mail) by bank transfer to Santander 09-06-66, 42118196, a/c 'Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group (EBEG)', or post a cheque payable to 'EBEG' to me - address on page 2.

We are now also offering the option to receive EBM by e-mail every month as a pdf file, as an alternative to printed copies. A number of members have already opted for this method and will be receiving this issue in electronic form, with more converting from next January. There is no obligation to move to electronic circulation, we are very happy to continue to print and post copies, it is up to you. But if space is at a premium or your postal deliveries are unreliable, e-mail distribution may be the better choice – and it's cheaper too, at just £19 for the year!

Richard Delahoy
Membership Secretary

Group Meetings

Wednesday 13 December Richard Delahoy - Buses 20 years ago.

This is being held at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL. This is the same venue where meetings were held before being halted by the pandemic and is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. Doors open for a social chat at 1900, with the presentation starting at 1945. There is very limited on-site parking, accessed via Cedar Avenue West, we would ask that you leave these for those less able to walk. On street parking in the evenings is available on Rainsford Road, Broomfield Road and Coval Lane. Meetings are being held jointly with our good friends at The Omnibus Society, Eastern & Southern Branch, who are very generously paying for the room hire so entrance is FREE.

For 2024, meetings will continue at The Quaker Meeting House but are moving to **Saturday afternoons**.
Doors open at 1400 for a 1430 start, ending at 1630. Dates for the first three months are **13 January** (Bring your own slides - of any age, but preferably pre-2010), **10 February** (Alan Osborne - 'Essex Buses before the Millennium, with Snippets' - 160 views of Essex and 40 from elsewhere), **16 March** (Owen Woodliffe - '2023 Bus Rallies').
Note, Owen's presentation has moved from February (as advertised in EBM 715) to March.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Weekends 9/10, 16/17 December: Ride the Lights, East Anglian Transport Museum, Carlton Colville NR33 8BL 1400 to 1800.
Sunday 17 December: Five RFs on 227 (Bromley-Penge / Crystal Palace and RTs / Routemasters on 94 (Bromley-Petts Wood).
Monday 1 January: King Alfred Mini Running Day. Winchester Broadway.
Sunday 25 February: Winter Bus Event Epping Ongar Railway, North Weald.
Saturday 23 March: Barking Garage Centenary event.
Saturday 6 April: South East Bus Festival, Kent Showground, Detling, Maidstone.

Events are published in good faith. However, the Group cannot be responsible for any changes due to future circumstances. Please check before travelling.

Follow Ups to EBM 715: WNO 481 - Wings Bus

Wings liveried WNO 481 did not sell at auction in November, with the highest bid reportedly being $70k, a long way short of the $200k reserve. It was then advertised on eBay for £175,000.

The Eastern Counties KSWs

WNO 481 (2385, a Central Works conversion) had been one of two Eastern National KSW / ECWs which, after two summer seasons together at Clacton after being converted to open top, were sold to Eastern Counties in January 1968. The other was WNO 482 (2381, a Prittlewell Works open top conversion). At ECOC, WNO 481 was numbered 238 and WNO 482 became 239.

They replaced ex-Brighton Hove & District open top Bristol / ECW Ks (LKO 396/7, CAP 221/9, the latter later preserved in Brighton Hove & District Transport livery) which had been purchased by ECOC in 1962. The existing seafront service at Felixstowe no longer warranted two vehicles and so the two WNOs were separated with 481 going to Felixstowe (the 1969 timetable is shown **below**) and 482 going to Cromer to operate a new service between that town and Sheringham. It later went to Great Yarmouth where it was little used. Both vehicles saw only three summer seasons with Eastern Counties before being sold in 1971.

FELIXSTOWE SEA FRONT SERVICE — Brook Lane - Dock — Service 248

Undercliffe Road, Cobbold Road, Cambridge Road, Hamilton Gardens, Wolsey Gardens, Convalescent Hill, Undercliffe Road West, Sea Road.

OPERATES **SUNDAYS ONLY** from 2nd JUNE until 21st JULY, 1968

BROOK LANE	1140	1240	1440	1540	1640	1740	1840	1940	FELIXSTOWE DOCK	1120	1220	1420	1520	1620	1720	1820	1920
Pier Pavilion	1148	1248	1448	1548	1648	1748	1848	1948	Pier Pavilion	1130	1230	1430	1530	1630	1730	1830	1930
FELIXSTOWE DOCK	1158	1258	1458	1558	1658	1758	1858	.....	BROOK LANE	1138	1238	1438	1538	1638	1738	1838	1938

OPEN TOP DOUBLE DECK SERVICE

OPERATES **DAILY** from 28th JULY until 7th SEPTEMBER, 1968

BROOK LANE	1045	1125	1205	1245	.....	1445	1525	1605	1645	1725	1805	1905	1945	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Pier Pavilion	1053	1133	1213	1253	1413	1453	1533	1613	1653	1733	1813	1913	1953	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
FELIXSTOWE DOCK	1103	1143	1223	.....	1423	1503	1543	1623	1703	1743	1823	1923	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
FELIXSTOWE DOCK	1005	1105	1145	1225	1425	1505	1545	1625	1705	1745	1825	1925	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Pier Pavilion	1035	1115	1155	1235	1435	1515	1555	1635	1715	1755	1835	1935	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
BROOK LANE	1043	1123	1203	1243	1443	1523	1603	1643	1723	1803	1843	1943	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

The two buses may have been reunited during winter storage at Great Yarmouth and they also are likely to have worked together on Epsom Derby services. They were also together at Ben Jordan (dealer, Coltishall) during 1971 after disposal by ECOC after the 1970 summer season, 481 going there in April 1971 and 482 in July. They then went their separate ways. There is an outside possibility they have met again at rallies, but there is no evidence that they did.

The history of WNO 481 has been included in EBN/M before, specifically in EBN 681 with various updates since, including a photo feature in EBM 688 (which included photos of both KSWs when with Eastern Counties, 481 at Felixstowe and 482 on the Epsom Derby service). However, some more specific dates can be added, plus one additional owner. It was sold to Hall's Coaches Ltd, Hounslow in December 1971 (where it became the 'Wings' bus), returning from tour in autumn 1972, stored at Hall's over the winter and re-emerged back to its original open top seating capacity of O33/28R in April 1973 (although possibly with different lower deck seats). It went to Silverline, Hounslow in July that year (an additional owner to those listed in EBN/Ms 681/8) and then to Tricentrol Coaches, Dunstable in April 1975. Subsequent history as in those previous issues.

Less has been written about WNO 482, which has had a less adventurous life. For some reason its middle bands were "curved off" with additional beading at the rear each side but other beading at the rear removed. It was like this when with ECOC, so most likely was done when converted to open top, although why this got different treatment from its sisters is not known. It didn't matter much when the centre band was cream, but is noticeable in the way it has been painted in preservation (see below).

It went from Ben Jordan to Culling's of Norwich in February 1973, repainted into their livery of blue, yellow and white, later receiving Red Car livery of white with red and grey trim (Red Car was the branding name for Culling's services). It may not have operated in Felixstowe when owned by Eastern Counties, but is seen there, **opposite page top,** on the occasion of the 1973 Ipswich-Felixstowe Historic Vehicle rally. **Robert Appleton**

In April 1982 it moved to Abel International, Watton (N-PSV, 'Worldwide Removals - light blue livery with dark blue trim). It then moved to the Castle Point Transport Museum, Canvey Island by May 1993. It was repainted into Tilling cream and green Eastern National open top livery, although with the addition of a centre green band, but because of the "curving off" mentioned above this does not continue around the rear of the vehicle. This feature is

evident in the photo, **bottom**, taken opposite the pier at the Southend open top running weekend on 16 August 2009. Previously being a Clacton bus, this was the first time WNO 482 had run in Southend. **Adam Kelleher**

The 'Impossible' Photographs

When WNO 481 was rotting away in a ravine in Tenerife it seemed impossible that the two ex-Eastern Counties open toppers would ever meet up again, and with its potential impending sale to the USA it seemed the opportunity might have been missed forever, but thanks to the efforts of Gareth & Sacha Norris, Viv Carter, David Edwards, John Stewart, Gordon & Denny Claydon and John Lidstone (with apologies to anyone missing from this list) the 'impossible' meet up of 481 with 482, quite likely for the first time in over half a century (and the first time in Essex since January 1968) became reality on 19 November 2023. Thanks also to Robert Appleton, Pat Burnside, Viv Carter and David Edwards, 'ECOC Fleet History' (PSV Circle, Omnibus Society and Eastern Counties Omnibus Society 1981) and 'Eastern Counties the First Fifty Years' (Maurice Doggett, ECOC, 1981). **Above** photo **John G Lidstone**

Below: 2383 (WNO 479) came down from Norfolk to join in the fun (a history of this bus was in EBM 713), so WNO 479, 481 and 482 all together (although lined up l-r 482, 479 and 481). **David Bateman**

Service Revisions

Ian Ransom

30 October 2023
HTD1 (Sch only) Epping Church - Sawbridgeworth, Leventhorpe School **Hedge The Distance**. Revised timetable on this closed schools contract.

25 November
Z1 (Daily) Aveley Usk Road - Tilbury Amazon **Ensignbus**.
Z2 (Daily) Canning Town Bus Station - Tilbury Amazon **Ensignbus**.
Z3 (Daily) Southchurch Arlington Road - Tilbury Amazon **First Essex**.
Z4 (Daily) Pitsea Broadway - Tilbury Amazon **First Essex**.
All - Additional journeys added to allow for longer Amazon shifts in the run up to Christmas.

2 December
X55 (Running Day Only) Upminster Station - Gravesend West Street **Ensignbus**. Revised route and timetable. Revised to operate via Thames Way, rather than London Road in Northfleet.

26 December
X10 (Boxing Day Only) Lakeside Bus Station - Southend Travel Centre **Ensignbus**. Renumbered X1. Generally every 30 minutes during daytime. First journey from Lakeside 0600, from Southend 0720. Last journey 2120 from Lakeside, 2150 from Southend.

29 December
7 (M-F) Clacton Pier Avenue - St Osyth Seafront **Hedingham**. Service withdrawn after operation on this day.
89X (M-F) Braintree Bus Interchange - Sudbury, Chilton Industrial Estate **Hedingham**. Service withdrawn after operation on this day.

30 December
8/A (M-S) Clacton Pier Avenue - Bockings Elm (circular) **Hedingham**. Service withdrawn after operation on this day.

31 December
3 (M-S) Chelmsford Bus Station - Southend Travel Centre **First Essex**. Revised route (does not serve Hyde Hall during winter) and timetable.
25 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Southend Travel Centre **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S.
31 (M-S) Basildon Bus Station - Basildon Endeavour Way **NIBS**. Service withdrawn after operation on this day (route now covered by First Essex X10).
70/170 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Braintree Tesco East Store **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S.
75 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Maldon Leisure Centre **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S.
86 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - West Mersea High Street **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S.
132 (Su Only) Saffron Walden High Street - Cambridge Drummer Street Bus Station **Myalls** . Revised route and timetable, with Trumpington P&R and Addenbrookes Hospital only served on request.
C10 (Daily) Chelmsford City Centre - Channels, Brassie Wood **First Essex**. Revised route and timetable. Some peak journeys routed via Chelmer Valley Way.
S1 (Daily) Colchester Highwoods - Wivenhoe Railway Station **First Essex**. Revised daily timetable.
S2 (Daily) Colchester Highwoods - Stanway Sainsburys **First Essex**. Revised daily timetable.
S3 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - West Bergholt, Queens Head **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S.
S9 (Daily) Colchester Railway Station - Rowhedge Heath Road **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S.

2 January 2024
410 (M-S) Harlow Bus Station - Cheshunt, Brookfield Centre **Central Connect**. Revised timetable and renumbered 25 or 25B (late afternoon short journeys from Harlow Bus Station to Hoddesdon Clock Tower / Broxbourne Station Road).
X10 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Stansted Airport Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F.

3 January
C392 (M-F) Harlow Bus Station - Hoddesdon Clock Tower **Epping Forest Community Transport**. Revised timetable, with one journey each way to Hyde Mead House, Nazeing on W, F only.

4 January
49 (Sch Only) Basildon Watermill - Shenfield School **NIBS**. Revised timetable.

7 January
66 (M-S) Waltham Cross Bus Station circular via Loughton and Debden **Arriva Herts and Essex**. Revised timetable.
724 (Daily) Harlow Bus Station - Heathrow Airport Bus Station **Arriva Herts and Essex**. Revised timetable, with additional night journeys

Publicity
Hedingham - Timetable leaflet for Halstead & Braintree (16, 21, 88, 89, 89X) dated 4 September 2023.
First Essex have issued two timetable booklets, for X20 and Colchester Shuttles, both dated 29 October 2023.

First Essex Bus shuttles Essex airlink

Adam Kelleher

Vehicles on Loan
Further to last month, driver trainer 66846 has returned from Norwich to Chelmsford.

StreetLites 47679 (SL15 RVW), 47680 (SL15 RVX) and 47682 (SL15 RWX) were collected from Port Talbot depot, First Cymru, on 26 November, the first two for Hadleigh (to free up other vehicles for additional Amazon work over Christmas), the last one for Colchester. However, these are only temporary loans until they move to Ipswich in the new year. They are in red and maroon Urban 2 livery, very similar to Southampton City Red and Ipswich Reds. The two Hadleigh examples entered service on the afternoon of the next day, 47679 on route 27 and 47680 on route 21, the latter seen **below** in Thames Drive, Leigh-on-Sea. **John G Lidstone**. The nearside fleet names (on side and above doors) read 'Castell-nedd & Port Talbot'.

Allocation Changes
BN-Basildon; CF-Chelmsford; CR-Colchester; HH-Hadleigh; PT-Purfleet (Ensignbus); DS-Driving School; FG-First Group cascade (to / from another First company); oos-out of service.

Period 8 2023/24 (22 October - 18 November)
32547 CR (oos)-CR, 33416 BN (oos)-BN, 33425 BN (oos)-BN, 33555 BN-BN (oos), 44910 BN (oos)-Disposal, 47655 CR-BN, 47667 FG-CR, 63336 CR-CR (oos), 63342 BN-BN (oos), 66806 CR-CR (oos), 66846 FG(loan)-CF(DS), 67167 BN-CF (oos), 67191 CR-BN, 67195 BN (oos)-BN, 67756 CF-CF (oos), 67901 CR (oos)-PT (oos)

66806 was the last of the first generation Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urbans still in service (last day 13 Nov). As reported last month, 67901 was towed from Quayside, Colchester to Ensignbus, Purfleet on 4 November.

Disposal
November 2023: 44910.

Repaints
Enviro 400 33825 from First West of England 'excel' orange to a dark blue and dark green based Remembrance livery, as illustrated on pages 1 & 11. Photos of this bus in orange were in EBMs 703, 704 & 714.
Enviro 200 MMC 67171 from Urban livery to red shuttles (Chelmsford stickers). Returned to service on 30 November. It is likely to also have had luggage racks removed but it hasn't yet been seen to confirm.
Further to last month, similar 67167 also returned to service on 30 November, now at Chelmsford, ex-Basildon.

Around the Depots
(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot. All dates November 2023 except where stated.)

Colchester
After attendance at the Remembrance Day event in Colchester on the morning of Sunday 12 November, the two poppy buses, 32673 and 33825, were used in service on routes S2 and S1 respectively, with all ticket revenue that day on these two buses being donated to the Royal British Legion.

News of the Harwich routes (1-30 November).
On Monday - Friday the normal double-deck working on 104 is 0830 Colchester - Harwich & 1008 Harwich - Colchester. 37621 made a rare appearance on these journeys on 24th, but returned to its more usual route X20 in the afternoon. Colchester's second poppy bus, 33825, reached Harwich on 22nd, when it worked 1552 Colchester Norman Way Schools - Harwich 104, 1740 Harwich - Colchester 104, 1910 Colchester - Mistley 104, instead of a single-decker. Whilst seven buses can operate the Monday- Friday school day timetable on 104/102, there can be changeovers during the day, plus a second double-decker has worked all or part of a single deck duty on some days, giving eight or nine buses, for example:
8 November: 32673, 32676, 44003, 47421, 47666, 47669, 47696, 69516, 69520.
28 November: 32669, 37017, 47668, 63329, 63330, 63335, 63341, 69517.
The solitary ADL Enviro 200 at Colchester, 44003, worked on 104 on 1st, 3rd, 8th, 10th & 21st. Two ADL Enviro 200 MMCs in Airlink livery reached Harwich. On 6th, 67189 worked 0830 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1008 return, instead of the normal double-decker. 67189 reached Harwich again on 17th, followed by sister 67190 on 24th. Both worked a full day on 104, started on 0710 Colchester - Harwich 104 and finishing on 1645 Colchester - Harwich 104. 66806 worked on 104 on 3rd & 7th prior to its withdrawal from service; the newer Volvo B7RLEs 69515-69520 still work on 102/104. On Sunday 19th four of them, 69515/17/19/20, covered all the 102 journeys.

Clacton routes. Route 74B has continued to be almost 100% double-deck operated (with Volvo / Geminis), with only three exceptions, StreetLites 47669 on 8th & 63330 on 24th and Volvo B7RLE 69520 on 1 December.
Route 76: 63330, 69519 (12th), 63331, 63335 (19th), 47666, 69517 (26th), 32676, 63331 (3 December).

Double-deckers on route X20: 32526 (14th); 32669 (29th); 32673 (1 December); 33713 (7th, 9th-10th, 13th, 17th, 20th-22nd, 24th-25th, 27th-1, 3 December); 33825 (20th-21st, 23rd-24th); 37004 (29th); 37139 (17th); 37613 (8th, 10th, 12th, 14th-16th, 20th, 22nd, 30th); 37621 (6th-9th, 11th, 13th, 15th-16th, 23rd-24th, 27th, 1 December).

After writing last month that Volvo B7RLE 69519 hadn't appeared on the route for a while, it promptly operated on 6th, the day after EBM went to print! But it hasn't appeared since. Thamesway liveried 69520 did on 1 December. Single-deckers on route 320: 47656 (30th), 47696 (29th) plus Airlink liveried 67190 (21st), 67193 (7th, 1 December), 67194 (6th). Airlink liveried vehicles continue to appear on other routes (examples on 104 given above).

The former small depot in Haven Road, Colchester looks to have changed occupant again. In mid-November, interior building work appeared to be going on. The most recent occupant was a kitchen installer.

Chelmsford

Enviro 200 44549 (YX12 AKO) was fitted with a super rear advert for 'my Orthodontist' on 26 November. It is seen **right** in Westway Depot, Chelmsford, after completion. **Jack Benee**

During part of November, Chelmsford were covering one bus and driver on Basildon route X10. Some examples: 67162 on 13th & 14th, 67164 on 16th, 67737 on 15th.

Accident damaged Scania 36843 returned to service after repairs, on route X30 on 27 November, after five months off road. Its temporary replacement, on loan from Ensignbus 34432, remains in use.

Enviro 400 MMCs on X30: 33994 (6th, 10th, 14th, 17th, 18th, 22nd), 33995 (17th-18th, 20th, 22nd, 30th), 33996 (8th-15th, 20th-23rd), 33997 (17th, 19th, 28th), 33998 (6th, 9th, 16th).
67163 on X30 (late 12th / early 13th).
Double-deckers 37034 (8th) and 37047 (16th, 29th) unusual on X30 shorts.
DS66863 seen on driver training on A120 at Coggeshall (21st).
DS69151 seen on driver training in Lexden Road, Colchester (16th).

Basildon

Further to the photo in last month's issue, former Basildon Volvo 7900Hs 69907 and 69916 had gone from Ensignbus by 16 November.
33981 has had Christmas decorations added to its windows and rear, including Santa and his reindeers.
33983 was on loan to Ensignbus and operated on route Z2 on 7th. This was the route that this bus, and others of the same batch, were originally transferred to Essex for, but the route stayed with Ensignbus due to a driver shortage at Basildon.

33418 an unusual double-decker on 552 (30th). Mid-length Enviro 200s 44001 (7th-9th, 11th, 16th-17th, 22nd, 27th, 29th) and 44004 (23rd, 27th) continue to see use on interconnected routes 9 & 200. 44908 (10th), 44909 (1 December) and 44598 (11th) also on these routes. 44001 on 251 (12th).

Hadleigh

34454 an unusual double-decker on 14 (6th).

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, Jack Benee, Ian Dann, David Edwards, John Lidstone, William Morrison, Gareth Norris, John Podgorski, John Salmon, Derek Stebbing, Andrew Toms, Robert West, Bustimes, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.

First Essex News in Pictures

As reported last month, StreetLite 47667 (SN15 ACO) has been acquired from First Beeline but remains in Southampton City Red livery. Like some others at Colchester still in this livery, it has gained a Colchester shuttles sticker below the windscreen. It is seen in Head Street, Colchester, on route S4 on 30 November 2023.
Robert Appleton

New Poppy Bus

33825 (SN63 MYH), details on page 9.

On route 75 in Colchester Road, Heybridge on 16 November 2023.
Dave Arnold

Together with the existing, green liveried, Remembrance bus, 32673 (SN55 HFA), after delivery to Quayside Depot, Colchester on 9 November.
Ryan Hannah

The Saga of the X10

Richard Delahoy

Last month we reported on the diversion of route X10 (Basildon to Stansted Airport) to serve various points in Basildon and also its confusing timetable. The precise route was not very clear but a recent ride (on 17 November) and examination of tracking data enables us to explain the somewhat complicated arrangements. Instead of heading directly out of Basildon on Broadmayne and East Mayne (now only served by the 0320 & 0535 ex Basildon and the 0445 ex Stansted), buses now leave the town centre via Ghyllgrove and the bus-only link road that leads directly to Cranes Farm Road (A1235). This was built quite a few years ago now (having been proposed in 2005, and opened around 2009) but has rarely seen any buses and we think that X10 is the first route to use it all day long. From Cranes Farm Road, buses perform a double run along Festival Way and Endeavour Way to a dead end at Janus House where the bus reverses into a car park entrance and retraces its steps back to Cranes Farm Road. This serves two purposes - to provide a bus for the large Festival Leisure Park (sometimes dubbed 'Bas Vegas') and to serve the office block Janus House. Confusingly, there are only bus stops on one side of the road on this section, so that buses leaving Basildon towards Wickford and those going into Basildon all use the same stops.

The departure list there is so confusing that it took even our seasoned traveller and timetable compiler half an hour to understand! The route number X10 is shown in different colours according to the direction of travel and there are six lettered footnotes (A, B, C, D, E and, bizarrely, Q8!). Some journeys need two codes and one has three, although that is one of least two mistakes on the display. The routing and stops here mean that whilst you can travel from Festival Leisure Park to Janus House, it's not possible to return as there are no stops, although a kindly driver did drop our confused correspondent off at the fixed stop opposite.

Having regained Cranes Farm Road, through buses then turn off via Gardiners Lane South to access Paycocke Road, but terminating short workings do an anti-clockwise loop via Honywood Road instead, to reach Paycoke Road and then terminate in Gardiners Lane South (we hope you are paying attention, there will be a test later!). This takes all day buses back into the heart of what was known in the heyday of Basildon's development as Industrial Site No.1, served in years gone by various Eastern National peak hour services but today only by Hedingham operated ECC 94.

X10 then takes its previous route into Wickford but north of there continues to divert to serve the relatively recent housing development called St Lukes, on the site of the old Runwell Hospital (this deviation was introduced on 19 February 2023 to replace the previous route 16). The net result of all these additions to the route, plus the diversion via Broomfield Hospital and Great Waltham instituted on 31 October 2022, is to increase the Basildon-Stansted running time from the original 79 mins when the X10 first started in November 2016, to 110 minutes today.

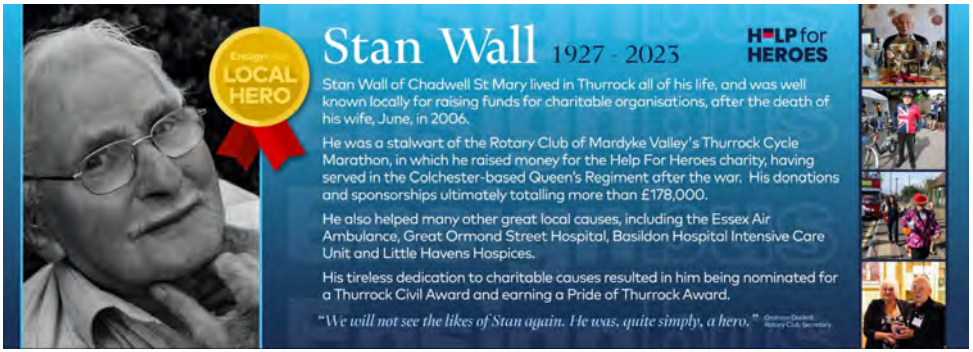
As noted last month, the timetable on Mondays to Fridays now comprises:
Hourly Basildon to Stansted;
Morning & evening peak Wickford station to St Lukes shorts, every 30 mins in the morning but only limited trips in the afternoon;
Limited trips Basildon to St Lukes (one way only) at 1805 & 1935;
Hourly Basildon to Gardiners Lane south approx. 0700-1700;
Peak only Janus House to Gardiners Lane South (unidirectional - to Janus House am, to Gardiners Lane South pm);
One am peak trip from St Lukes to Janus House.

Bottom of previous page: Mini Enviro 200 44909 (YX09 AFY) at Janus House on a short working X10, with a reversed destination display, although the bus is actually on a Gardiners Lane south working.
Above: Enviro 200 MMC 67166 (YY66 PBU) at Festival Leisure Park. Both 17 November 2023, **Richard Delahoy**. Currently four liveries can be seen on the X10, the two illustrated, plus the correct (for through journeys) blue Essex Airlink livery on 67191 and 67195 (although the former, a recent transfer from Colchester, has X20 branding and shows 'Colchester-Braintree-Stansted' rather than 'Basildon-Chelmsford-Stansted') and all black ex Park & Ride livery on 67196 and 67197. The blinds used to show 'Stansted Airport' but now have the airplane graphic.

Ensignbus part of First Group — Adam Kelleher

Vehicles on Loan
Further to last month, StreetDecks 168 (35693) and 177 (35702) have returned to Purfleet from loan to First Eastern Counties at Norwich.

Repaints
Volvo B5LH / Wrightbus Gemini 2 506 (EU62 BVD) is another repaint into new livery with grey instead of silver. On this repaint and 505 illustrated last month, the grey is continued below the windscreen. On 506, but not on 505, the 'Twitter' symbol has been replaced by the new 'X'.
Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Gemini 2 130 (LX15 GPY) from gold Ensignbus 50 years livery to green and cream (to the same layout as 505/6). This is to celebrate 20 years of Ensignbus running the X80 service between Essex and Kent, the original vehicles on this route were in these colours. See photo on next page. Photos of 130 in its gold livery were on the front and rear covers of EBM 696 (April 2022). Both these repaints done at Mardens.



Named Bus
StreetDeck 180 (LX71 AOP) has been named 'Stan Wall', details above.

Ensignbus Heritage Running Day 2 December 2023
Four routes again ran this year (the same as recent years): X21 Upminster-Brentwood, X54 Lakeside-Purfleet Heritage & Military Centre-RAF Hornchurch Heritage Centre, X55 Upminster-Lakeside-Bluewater-Gravesend (with a slightly revised route, see page 7), X81 Shenfield-Brentwood-Lakeside-Grays-Tilbury Ferry.

Photos from the running day are on pages 22 & 23.

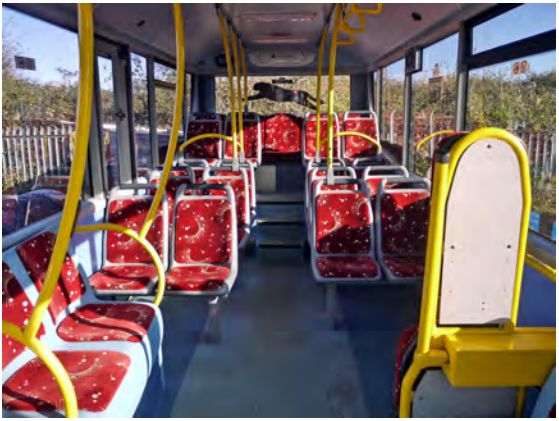
With thanks to John Lidstone and Ensignbus.

Below: 130 looking resplendent at Mardens on 1 December 2023. It re-entered service on route X80 the next day.
John G Lidstone

Disposal
Alexander Dennis Dart AB10 PAN (ex YX10 BGO) has been sold to Turners of Great Barton (with its number plate) to join similar previously sold YX10 BFL.

Reinstated Vehicle
At Harwich International Port (Parkeston Quay), the gangway used by foot passengers to walk between the Passenger Terminal and the Stena Line ferries to & from the Hook of Holland is currently out of service. Therefore, Panther Travel have been contracted to run a shuttle service from the Passenger Terminal at the port onto the ferry and vice-versa to transport foot passengers on and off the ferry. This occurs twice a day, seven days a week. More information about this service was in EBM 707, page 9.

28-seat Enterprise Bus Plaxton Primo SB07 PAN has been reinstated after three and a half years for use on this service. This was a Plaxton demonstrator when new in April 2007 and was originally registered YX07 GVD. It is seen **right and below** at the Panther Travel depot at Parkeston on 17 November 2023.
Robert Appleton



It may well be the last Primo in service in East Anglia, does anyone know of any others?

Behind the driver's cab on the offside, there are four inward facing seats over the front offside wheel arch, and the fuel tank. On the nearside behind the entrance door, there are two inward facing seats, then one tip up rear facing seat in the nearside wheelchair bay.

Dennis Dart SLF BIG 9856 (ex X346 YGU) is also used on this service.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Adam Barham and Stephen Barham.

Significant Allocations

256	EU55 BWC	CN - KN	(14 to 16 November)
533	LX59 DCU	KN - CN	(6 October to 11 November) then back to KN
815	YN55 PZW	CN - SY	(10 October to 15 November)
816	YN55 PZX	CN - SY	(3 November onwards - current at time of report)
875	PN09 ENE	SY - KN	(3 November to 22 November)

Fleet News

Optare Solos 910 and 911 (SF04 SKD/E) have been withdrawn and are reported to be for donation to Ukraine. 875 (PN09 ENE) worked out of Kelvedon for a significant time in November which is unusual for the Olympus fleet members and was immediately placed into service on the 94 South Woodham Ferrers to Basildon service.

Long term off road in November were 230, 257, 260, 262, 276, 470, 517, 532 and 813. During November, 573 and 602 returned to service from a period of non-use.

Correction to last month, open top Volvo B7TL / Gemini 502 (LF52 ZNE) has not yet been placed in winter store (see photo opposite).

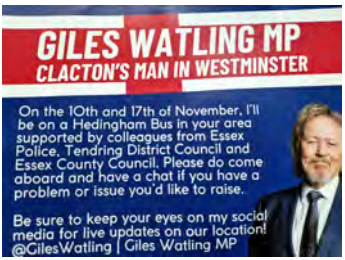
Service News

Colchester High Street was closed (pm) during 15 November for the Christmas lights switch on parade. Services were diverted.

With thanks to John Podgorski & the Hedingham website.

Below: Chambers Scania N230UD / Optare Olympus 873 (PN09 EMV), new to Metrobus, an unusual 'Boomerang' branded vehicle on route 89 in Braintree Bus Interchange on 6 November 2023. **John Podgorski**

Above & Right: Open top Volvo B7TL / Gemini 502 (LF52 ZNE) has been used by Clacton MP Giles Watling MP for some constituency surgeries. It is shown here parked at 'The Black Boy' Public House at Weeley on 10 November during one such surgery. **Derek Stebbing**. Incidentally, some people take issue with the pub's name, but it is actually named after the nickname of King Charles II, given to him by his mother owing to his dark complexion and black hair.



Below: Enviro 200 293 (EU59 AFJ) still in old livery but with white LED blinds fitted, outside 'The White Swan' in Wickford on ECC route 94 to South Woodham Ferrers on 20 November 2023. **Richard Lewis**

arriva — Richard Delahoy

Colchester
4468 (MX61 AXJ), one of only two double-deckers at Colchester, which had been off the road since 1 August, has now had a new gearbox fitted and it returned to service on 22 November.

Southend
VDL SB200 3777 (KX09 KDN) was withdrawn in mid-November and transferred to Hemel Hempstead.

Harlow
Optare Versa 4238 is out of service following an accident between Bishop's Stortford and Stansted in early October.

With thanks to John Card, Adam Kelleher, Keith Sadler and Steve Thompson.

STEPHENSONS NiBSbuses — Richard Delahoy

Former London United Scania N230UD OmniCity 535 (YT59 SFY), reported last month as still in London red, has now been repainted into Stephensons fleet colours; the full batch 531-5 are now in Stephensons livery.

Galloway liveried Volvo East Lancs Millennium Vyking bodied Volvo B7TLs 702 (EX04 VKD) and 704 (PO54 ACY), both withdrawn in the summer, have been noted back into use as crew ferries and 702 has also been noted in service from Boreham depot, as seen **below** on Stephenson's Witham Town Service 39 on 14 November 2023. New to London United as PG04 WHU (VLE15), it gained this local Essex registration in 2022 after sale of its original plate to a West Ham United fan (as reported in EBM 704). **Dave Arnold**

With thanks to the companies, John Podgorski and Rachel Stevens.

Above: Stephensons Optare Solo 324 (EU07 FVO) on route 32 outside Chelmsford Railway Station on 6 November 2023. **David Moth**. Solos were once a common sight in Chelmsford but are rare now.
Below: Stephensons 501 (EU58 BRX), a Scania N230UD / Optare Olympus named 'Lyn Watson', turning from Long Road into Colchester Road, Lawford on 10 November 2023, running light from Frating depot to Manningtree High School to work school service 721 to Thorrington. Destination display set to read "Lest We Forget" plus a poppy, the day before Armistice Day. **Robert Appleton**. Lyn was a chartered accountant by profession but also a director and part owner of Stephensons from 1995 until his untimely death in May 2017. He was an enthusiastic ENEG / EBEG member and was our photographic officer for a number of years.

APT Coaches, Rayleigh
B4 APT (ex BX12 CVS), a Volvo B9R with C55F body by Sunsundegui, has gone to Marlock Minibuses, Ash, Somerset.

Lodge Coaches, High Easter
… have acquired a Bedford VAL for their heritage collection. It is TFV 475J, a VAL70 with Duple Viceroy 37 C53F bodywork, which was new to Murray of Blackpool in May 1971, later passing to Tom Jackson of Blackpool. It then passed for preservation to Maldwyn Evans of Pentrefoelas in March 2002 and remained in his ownership until it was sold to Lodge Coaches in November 2023. The VAL will represent a similar VAL, KNK 362G, that Lodge had from 1971 to 1975.

Photos at the handover on 11 November, credit **Maldwyn Evans** with thanks to John Wakefield. Top photo: Andrew Lodge on the left and Maldwyn Evans on the right, showing the trade plate used for the drive to Essex.

Ford, Althorne
Brand new here in September was VN23 HOL, a Van Hool EX16.

Foster Hartley, Bolton, Lancashire
This operator has a licence for six vehicles. It has the contract to provide bus services for the immigrants currently residing at Wethersfield Air Base, Essex. In late November it was granted an O Licence in the Eastern Traffic Area, prior to this it was using buses with discs issued in the North West Traffic Area. Vehicles seen so far are two Ford Transits, XIG 2408 'Bus 4' and VGZ 5391 'Bus 5'. The fleet numbers are on sheets of A4 paper in the side windows. VGZ 5391 is seen **right** at Braintree Bus Interchange on 4 November 2023, behind Stephensons Enviro 200 479 (EU66 AVD). **Nigel Turner**

St. Margaret's Coaches, Harlow
BG18 ZXY, an Iveco with Ferqui C29F body, and HX68 ZDF, an Iveco with Iles C30F body, are both here from St. Edmunds College, Ware, Hertfordshire.

With thanks to Richard Delahoy, Nigel Turner, John Wakefield and the PSV Circle.

Below: Southern Star Coaches, Harlow SS58 PAT, a Setra S416GT/ Kassbohrer C49Ft, at Lodmoor Country Park, Weymouth, Dorset on 27 September 2023. New to Globus Coaches, London, originally BN58 AJU, purchased by Southern Star from Lodge Coaches, High Easter. **Robert Downton**

Ensignbus Heritage Running Day 2 December 23

Opposite: Two views of RTL453 (KLB 648) on route X81, in the morning fog in Brentwood High Street and later in the day in South Ockendon.
Above: Newly acquired by the Newman family is OKO 816G, a Leyland Leopard PSU3A/4R with Willowbrook DP47F body, new to Maidstone & District in 1968 as CO2816. Also in the fog in Brentwood High Street, on route X21.
Below: RMC1477 (477 CLT), an AEC Routemaster coach, at Lakeside on route X54. It participated in the 2019 running day in former owner Timebus's red and grey, but was repainted in December 2021 and was making its third successive running day appearance in Green Line livery. All photos **Richard Delahoy**

Southend's Routemasters

Richard Delahoy

Thirty years ago this month, on 31 December 1993, Southend Transport withdrew the last of its Routemasters. We take a look back to their five-year reign in the town.

Southend got its first taste of Routemaster operation early in 1987, eight years after its last half-cabs (Leyland PD3s) had been withdrawn, when RM1571 in 'as withdrawn' condition was hired from its preservationist owner for a couple of spells due to a serious vehicle shortage. Lest passengers might be confused, it carried a notice under the canopy proclaiming "This is a blue bus"! A further vehicle shortage just before Christmas the same year saw Southend Transport borrow five immaculate Routemasters from the London Buses sightseeing fleet.

Above & left: RM1571 at Leigh Station on 15 April 1987 on short peak-hour route to Highlands, Woodlands Park, an Essex CC contracted service. You may think the bus is red, but no, it's a blue bus!

Right: RM450 was one of five hired from London Buses' sightseeing fleet in November / December 1987, due to a vehicle shortage. Here it is about to drop down into the Deeping underpass at Victoria Circus on 28 November on route 1 from Rayleigh, with ST via and destination blinds fitted. Some others used the yellow so-called 'strike' boards instead of proper blinds.

Below: **Andy Meadows** took this line up at the Southend Transport depot; the slide is undated but it is possible that this was after the hire ended and the buses were waiting to be returned to London. L-R, RMs 450, 237, 377, 545, the missing one being RM307.

Mark's masterstroke

But it was the escalating bus war with Eastern National (later Thamesway), plus a pressing need to replace Southend's ex-London DMS Fleetlines, that led Traffic & Commercial Director Mark Howarth to hatch a plan to bring crew operation back to the town on a long-term basis. He bought a dozen RMs direct from London Buses and smartly outshopped them in a new livery of French blue and white with a red relief band, numbered in a new series as 101-12. They were also fitted with Transmatic fluorescent lighting, brightening up the interiors, and *Welcome Aboard* notices. The first entered service on route 29 on 2 September 1988, directly replacing DMSs. RM operation extended to the 1 and 3A from early in the following month.

The initial 12 buses, except one, were named "Pride of …" to recognise places served by ST buses, as listed in the table on p31. The names were carried on the bonnet side and the cab offside. Inevitably, some were amended by staff or others, the best remembered being 111 which morphed from "Pride of Thundersley" to "Ride of Thunder"! As an aside, similar names were adopted for the 2013 batch of long Optare Versas, at the suggestion of the author and others, and similarly today, 4255 offers a "Ride of Thunder".

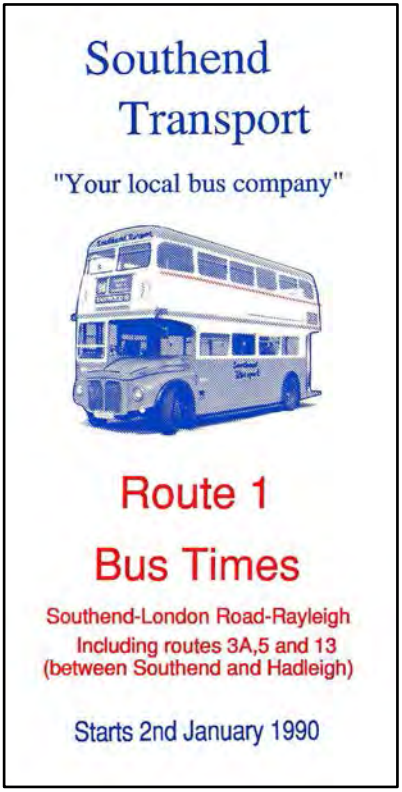
Left: the first batch of RMs had their triangular LT radiator badges replaced by the Southend crest.
Below: on their first day in service, 2 September 1988, the conductor of 111, Matthew Evans, confers with his driver at the Belgrave Road terminus of the 29. (Steve Grimwade wrote about this terminus in EBM 705, January 2023).

Above: a few minutes after the picture on the previous page, 111 approaches the Albany Corner stop in Cavendish Gardens as a passenger descends the stairs ready to hop off. The fresh paintwork gleams and the illuminated offside advert panel carries an advert for the Prudential, in colours sympathetic to the new ST livery. This livery was to be adopted for the whole bus fleet in due course.

- - - - -

The exception to the naming was 102, which was adopted as a company 'showbus' and had various original features reinstated, such as the offside route number box under the staircase, the deeper heater grille below the front destination box and front brake cooling grilles. It was chosen as it had a very early body (B20) with non-opening upper deck front windows. Whilst 101 was nominally older, being the former RM12, it had a much later body (B510) and had lost its original registration, so 102 (ex RM172) was deemed the better bus to embellish. It was rallied by enthusiastic staff, including at events such as the annual North Weald Rally where it performed on the rally service 339.

Left: Red Routemasters were seen on the streets of Southend, on type training for drivers, prior to their introduction into service. I was the driver here and paused in Sutton Road to capture what was to become 112 (Pride of Westcliff) on 30 August 1988. It would shortly go into the paintshop to receive Southend's bright new livery.



We don't have space here to recount the full history of RM operation in Southend, but the initial dozen were joined by more purchases from a variety of sources until the fleet totalled 23, as listed on page 31. 113/4 bought in 1989 were also named but none of the subsequent acquisitions were so treated. The five acquired from Southampton Citybus (113/4/6-8) were all Leyland engined but all but 116 were converted to AEC power units, two possibly using the engines from RM205 & 830, acquired by Southend for spares. 122, one of the last acquisitions, was also Leyland engined. Not all vehicles entered service on acquisition, for example 119/20 came in late summer / autumn 1990 but didn't enter service until the following February. In all, three RMs were bought for spares (and later scrapped) and latterly, six were bought in a dealer capacity and sold on for further use elsewhere.

Above: publicity made the most of the Routemasters. Other individual service leaflets featured a Leyland National or an Olympian.

Right: whilst the destination blind can be changed from the cab, the route and passing point blinds need to be set by the conductor opening the box upstairs, as demonstrated here.

Frank Spence (RD collection)

One unusual purchase was 121, the erstwhile London Buses RCL2256. It had been built as a 'coach' version of the Routemaster, with platform doors and two-part rather than three-part front destination display. As such it passed to London Country Bus Services (LCBS) in 1970 but was bought back by LT at the end of 1978. Initially used as a trainer, it was modified for bus service work, with the rear doors removed and entered service in 1980 on route 149, where it suffered a rear end accident and was rebuilt with a standard RM / RML style platform, making it unique amongst the RCLs. Sold to dealer Ted Brakell, who converted the front blind boxes to the standard three-part display, Southend bought it in August 1990 but it didn't enter service until the end of that year. Numbered 121, at the time there were no buses numbered 115-20, so perhaps it was intended to start a new sequence to reflect its greater length and higher seating capacity? Subsequent purchases filled in the missing numbers and extended the range to 123. One of those last vehicles, 122, ran for a brief period in LT red but carrying "Burnham & District" fleetnames from its previous owner.

Above: 121, with its extra half-bay as compared to standard RMs, in the snow in Chichester Road on 9 February 1991, heading for Rayleigh on route 1.

Left: the rear of 121 looks almost like any other standard RM/RML but there is a clue to its former doored coach status, as the side blind box is mounted higher, above where the door gear once was. Shoebury East Beach, 30 November 1991.

RM operation spread to routes 63 (early in 1989), 4 (February 1991) and 5 (in place of 4, December 1991), with occasional scheduled workings on a whole host of other routes at various times – indeed, I logged or photographed RM operations on the following routes at various times during their five-year reign: 1, 3, 3A, 4, 4A, 4B, 5, 5A, 7, 7A, 8, 9, 9A, 12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 23A, 23B, 29, 50, 61, 62, B62, 63, 69, 404, X1 and X11. It might be easier to list the routes they *didn't* ever operate on! Generally crew operation with the RMs ran until early evening, at which point OPO buses took over; there were no scheduled Sunday operations, other than for special events, such as the Southend bus rally.

We gave a snapshot of the operations in various issues of *Essex Bus News*. For example, scheduled RM operation comprised:

- from April 30, 1989: all of services 3A & 29, half of service 1, plus odd workings on 4A, 7, 7A, 13 & 16, with 14 buses available. Interestingly, service 1 saw alternate crew / OPO buses on successive departures, with the OPO buses allowed five minutes more running time than the RMs;
- Autumn 1991 there were 16 car lines Monday to Friday (14 on Saturdays). The core operation at this point was on routes 1, 3A, 4, 29 & 63, with limited trips on 3, 5, 7, 9A, 13 & 22;
- Summer 1992: regular operation on the 1, 3A, 5, 16 & 29 plus limited trips on 3, 3B, 3C, 4B, 5A, 7, 7A, 9, 14, 20, 21, 22, 23 & 61, plus on the 6 on Saturdays. The fleet was now at its peak strength of 23 buses.

A revised livery appeared in August 1991 on 104, with the blue extended down around the upper deck windows and the application of a massive fleetname covering most of the lower panels within the wheelbase, but this revised livery never extended to the whole RM fleet. On repaint, the "Pride of . . ." names were removed. A small number lost their original registrations either towards the end of their service lives with Southend or after withdrawal; three others had already lost their original marks before purchase by Southend.

Above: showing the revised 'large logo' livery to good effect, a now un-named 103 rounds the roundabout outside Southend Victoria Station on 29 June 1992. Service 20 was introduced in April 1992 as one of Southend Transport's competitive attacks on Thamesway services. Unusually, the conductor has not been able to find a suitable set of passing points (although one did exist) for this afternoon peak short working, an isolated RM operation on this route. There were at least two versions of the blind sets and not all route numbers were catered for on the side and rear blinds, although 20 does now appear here on the canopy number blind (which initially could only show 1, 1A, 3, 3A, 5, 7B, 29, 29A & X1 - some of which never operated).

The growth in RM operations had been part of the escalating competition with Eastern National and then with Thamesway, after EN was split into two in July 1990. Southend were also buying loads of Leyland Nationals at the same time - 33 operated in total - and the fleet grew in size exponentially, as the company broke out of its traditional area, expanding routes to Basildon as well as challenging established Thamesway routes. After the final RM acquisitions at the end of 1991, Southend switched to Bristol VRs, operating 20 in total. By the summer of 1992, Southend had a fleet of 115 buses and 17 coaches (compared to just 58 buses and 36 coaches in summer 1988). Whilst this was a fascinating time for enthusiasts, the level of service and low fares charged by both operators were unsustainable in the longer term. Southend suffered a financial crisis (its second in short succession, 1987/8 had seen the first crisis and a change in management) and the Council, who owned 100% of the share capital, put the company up for sale. The successful bidder was British Bus, an emerging force in the bus industry that was later to be acquired by Cowie and the whole business subsequently renamed Arriva.

Under a new MD, Graeme Torrance, selective service cuts were made from January 1993 when, despite extending service 50 to Billericay in a further competitive thrust, overall mileage was cut by 7%. The first RM withdrawal was of 119 in February 1993 and two more followed before the sale of the company in June 1993. Peace then broke out, with both Southend and Thamesway curtailing some of the competitive excesses, Southend cutting a further 18% of their mileage at the end of August. The writing was clearly on the wall for the Routemasters.

Above: as mentioned, some of the RMs lost their original registrations whilst with ST. I must confess to being the guilty party in the case of WLT 797 (Southend 104). It had been the first one I drove here in service and so I had a special affinity to it. About four months before the end of RM operation, I agreed terms with ST to buy the registration, and the transfer took place at the end of September 1993 and I duly put new plates on my Volvo estate.

A few days later, the following Saturday, 2 October, I decided to see what new mark had been allocated to 104 and found it in service on the 3A - still displaying WLT 797! I tailed it all the way to the Newlands terminus of the 3A on Canvey and pulled into the bus turning circle there. The driver - not someone that I knew - had just got out and said I couldn't park there. I suggested he look at the fronts of the vehicles, at which point he scratched his head and said "something funny's going on here!". I explained the story and he left happy. A few days later 104 was to be seen carrying VYJ 542, and there was once again just one WLT 797 on the road. The bus was subsequently exported to the US and then on to Double Deck Tours at Niagara Falls, as we'll show in a future issue in "Afterlife".

Another EBEG member subsequently bought 102's mark, VLT 172, that bus becoming WYJ 857.

ST #	Registration	LT no.	Acq	Wdrn	Previous operator	Name/Notes
Initial short term loans:						
	571 CLT	RM1571	2/87	5/87	LT	On loan from preservationist
	VLT 237	RM237	12/87	12/87	London Buses	On loan from London Buses
	WLT 307	RM307	11/87	12/87	London Buses	On loan from London Buses
	WLT 377	RM377	12/87	12/87	London Buses	On loan from London Buses
	WLT 450	RM450	11/87	12/87	London Buses	On loan from London Buses
	WLT 545	RM545	12/87	12/87	London Buses	On loan from London Buses
Acquired and used in service:						
101	OYM 413A	RM12	9/88	2/93	London Buses	Pride of Benfleet
102*	VLT 172	RM172	9/88	12/93	London Buses	Company Showbus; re-reg to WYJ 857 early 1994
103*	WLT 577	RM577	9/88	12/93	London Buses	Pride of Canvey; preserved
104	WLT 797	RM797	9/88	12/93	London Buses	Pride of Chalkwell; re-reg VYJ 542, 9/93
105*	WLT 937	RM937	9/88	12/93	London Buses	Pride of Eastwood
106	WLT 949	RM949	8/88	12/93	London Buses	Pride of Hadleigh; re-reg XVS 319, 4/93
107	WLT 993	RM993	8/88	12/93	London Buses	Pride of Leigh
108	61 CLT	RM1061	8/88	12/93	London Buses	Pride of Prittlewell
109	183 CLT	RM1183	8/88	8/93	London Buses	Pride of Rayleigh
110*	ALM 34B	RM2034	8/88	12/93	London Buses	Pride of Southend
111	ALM 101B	RM2101	8/88	8/93	London Buses	Pride of Thundersley
112	CUV 124C	RM2124	8/88	11/93	London Buses	Pride of Westcliff
113	ALD 871B	RM1871	1/89	8/93	Southampton City T.	Pride of Belfairs; Leyland engine (AEC from 5/93)
114	ALM 5B	RM2005	1/89	6/93	Southampton City T.	Pride of Southchurch; Leyland engine (AEC from 6/89)
115	WLT 378	RM378	1/91	9/93	Rotherham & Dist.	Preserved
116*	543 CLT	RM1543	1/91	12/93	Southampton City T.	Leyland engine; preserved
117	682 DYE	RM1682	1/91	9/93	Southampton City T.	Leyland engine (AEC from ?/91)
118	ALM 11B	RM2011	2/91	8/93	Southampton City T.	Leyland engine (AEC from c.11/91)
119	LDS 280A	RM104	9/90	2/93	Western Scottish	
120*	LDS 284A	RM546	10/90	12/93	Western Scottish	
121	CUV 256C	RCL2256	8/90	12/93	London Buses	RCL type
122*	VLT 44	RM44	11/91	12/93	F Spence PSV Sales	Leyland engine; (AEC from ?/92). Preserved
123*	CUV 162C	RM2162	11/91	12/93	GM Buses	
Acquired for spares or resale only:						
	VLT 205	RM205	11/88	Not op.	London Buses	Scrapped
	LDS 248A	RM830	8/90	Not op.	Western Scottish	Scrapped
	BMJ 919A	RM908	11/91	Not op.	United Counties	Scrapped
	YSL 76B	RM1911	6/92	Not op.	Strathtay Scottish	Exported to Budapest
	ALM 87B	RM2087	5/92	Not op.	Burnley & Pendle	Exported to Budapest
	CUV 114C	RM2114	5/92	Not op.	Burnley & Pendle	Exported to Budapest
	CUV 133C	RM2133	7/92	Not op.	Burnley & Pendle	Exported to Canada
	CUV 156C	RM2156	7/92	Not op.	Burnley & Pendle	Sold on, various owners
	CUV 180C	RM2180	7/92	Not op.	Burnley & Pendle	Sold on, various owners
Subsequent short term hire:						
	453 CLT	RMC1453	11/97	12/97	Leaside Travel	Short term loan

* Denotes those in service on the final day, 31 December 1993.
"Date acq" refers to when the buses were purchased, not their entry to service.

All good things must come to an end

It became known that the last day of RM operation would be Friday 31 December 1993. On that final day, only eight RMs remained in public service, 102/3/5/10/6/20/2/3, plus 121 on training duties. Now there was a tradition that I made up commemorative notices for such occasions, having done so for the last Southend PD3 and the last EN FLF in south Essex, so I set to, to create something suitable. In those pre-computer days, it was a case of tracing letters / numbers with a stencil on white paper, cutting them out and sticking them to black card - very time consuming - in the best Blue Peter style! I also made a couple of smaller notices for side windows - these were a real last-minute job; I had to go in to work in London that morning and when I caught an afternoon train back from Fenchurch Street, I was still making these up with black marker pens on white card, to the bemusement of other commuters.

Anyway, I got to the London Road garage in time to decorate 102 ready for the 1715 service 3A to Canvey and back. 102 and 116 had earlier worked some trips on routes not by then normally RM operated, with a 1 to Rayleigh, 4 to Landwick, a 7A to Shoebury and a 12 to Canewdon; sadly I missed seeing most of those. There had been some discussion about which would be the very last bus in service. 102 was due back into the bus station from Canvey at 1911, a crucial one minute before 103 on service 9, due in at 1912. In practice, 102 ran late and was the last bus in service. For its last run it was shadowed by preserved RM1571, recalling the initial hire back in early 1987.

Afterlife

We don't have space to list the disposals of Southend's Routemasters (refer to PSV Circle history PF13 for details) but a notable subsequent user was Reading Mainline, with 102/3/5-7/10/8/9/22 acquired directly or indirectly after life in Southend. 109 also moved within the British Bus Group, running for London & Country, initially in ST blue with L&C names but later smartly repainted in their livery, numbered 4109. Double Deck Tours, Niagara Falls also operated 104/23, those buses having first gone to the Beach Bus Company of Kittyhawk, South Carolina, USA.

Some pictures of the afterlife will appear in a subsequent Essex Bus Magazine. And if you want to read more about ST's RMs, John Lidstone wrote about them in *Buses*, March 1994 edition.

Postcript

December 1993 wasn't quite the end for RM operation in Southend. Much to everyone's surprise, RMC1453 was borrowed from fellow Cowie company Leaside Travel for a few weeks in the run up to Christmas 1997. It was a type not previously operated by Southend - a short, 'coach' version with platform doors, in full London red livery. It was promoted by large posters in bus shelters proclaiming "Christmas is coming . . . and so is our festive bus", with a photo of the bus. It was used on various routes, seen here **right** at Shoebury, The Renown on 6 December 1997 on service 5.

Much later, Routemasters made some one-day appearances in Southend on local services on the special New Year's Day heritage services that Stephensons operated. Buses participating were:

Year	Fleet no	Operator	Year	Fleet no	Operator
2008	RM85	London Bus Company	2010	SRM7	Timebus
	RML2535	Talisman		RM1123	Autocar/Wealden PSV
2009	SRM7	Timebus		RML2466	Hardy Miles
	RML2466	Hardy Miles	2011	SRM7	Timebus
	RML2535	Talisman		RMC1485	Ensign

So 1 January 2011 really was the last day that a Routemaster ran in public service in Southend.

Right upper:
One of two bought for spares, RM205 sits forlornly at the Tickfield Avenue works, having already given up its engine, on 5 February 1989. It was later scrapped.

Right lower:
Not many pictures exist of the five RMs bought from Burnley & Pendle in 1992 in Southend, but here we see *Dot Cotton* (RM2087) ahead of *Wicksy* (RM2114) at the London Road garage on 23 May that year. Burnley had branded their operation as EastEnders, naming the buses after characters in that TV soap. The branding was chosen by the then managing director, Keith Ludeman, who hailed from Bromley and later returned to the Capital to run London General, reflecting their London heritage. All five were sold on.

Rear Cover: the final run! 102, suitably decorated for the final trip, the passing point blind box including a representation of the AEC triangle badge. The radiator sign has survived and will be affixed to the front of one of Ensignbus's preserved examples for a special tour over some of the old routes by former Southend Transport staff on the exact 30th anniversary of that evening in 1993.

All pictures by **the author** except where noted.

ESSEX BUS MAGAZINE Issue 716 December 2023

Reporting the Essex bus scene since 1964