

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features
Issue 715 November 2023



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

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StreetDecks on Loan





Inside Front Cover: First Eastern Counties low height StreetDeck 35912 (BN72 TVD) on loan to First Essex at Colchester Railway Station on route X20 on 23 October 2023. **Kevin King**
More information on page 6 and another photo on page 10.

Above: Conversely, Ensignbus full height StreetDeck 168 (35693, LX71 AOB) has been on loan to First Eastern Counties. It is seen on route 26A in Rampant Horse Street, Norwich on 24 October. **Kevin Smith**
More information on page 12 and another photo on page 14.

Front Cover: Former Eastern National Bristol SC / ECW 427 (604 JPU) is back in Essex after 59 years. Its story is told on pages 24-29. The first event it attended after its return was the Lodge Coaches Car & Bus Day on 20 August 2023. **Chris Stewart**

Right: But this good news is tempered by the fact that Bristol KSW / ECW WNO 481 is in danger of being lost to the country. Details on page 30. It is seen in its storage yard on 16 October 2023.
John G Lidstone



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copies sent by e-mail. New members may join from
any month, but subscriptions will always run to
December from whichever month the member
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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 716

Reports to Sub-Editors	25 November
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The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 2nd 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
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Group Notices

Welcome to New Members

Rob McCaffery, Gloucester - 1125 (re-joined)

Michael Graves, Billericay - 1218

Membership Renewals & Electronic Distribution

A massive thank you to all those members who responded immediately to the renewal notices sent out with last month's magazine, and a particular thanks to those who have included a donation with their subscription. Almost half of the membership had already renewed as this issue went to press. For those that haven't yet responded, there were details in the last issue and the renewal form was enclosed then. 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.

As explained last month, we are now offering EBM sent to you 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!

Richard Delahoy

Membership Secretary.

Group Meetings

15 November

Robert Appleton - Eastern Counties Omnibus Company from 1970 onwards.

13 December

Richard Delahoy - Buses 20 years ago.

These are 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. These are on **Wednesday evenings**, 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. The 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, the 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** (Owen Woodliffe - 2023 bus rallies) and **16 March**.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Saturday 18 November: Enfield Transport Bazaar. St Stephens Hall, Village Road, Bush Hill Park EN1 2EY.

Sunday 19 November: Running Day to commemorate 30 years since the closure of Finchley Garage.

Weekends 2/3, 9/10, 16/17 December: Ride the Lights, East Anglian Transport Museum, Carlton Colville, Lowestoft NR33 8BL. 1400 to 1800.

Saturday 2 December: Ensignbus Vintage Running Day.

Sunday 3 December: The Christmas Cracker. Ipswich Transport Museum, Cobham Road, Ipswich IP3 3JD. 1100 to 1600.

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.

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

Group Sales

We now have a large stock of donated models, this month all London, all boxed and in mint condition £10 each plus postage for Group members. Personal delivery in London / Essex could be possible. If interested please send an e-mail or contact the Sales Officer (details on page 2). Some Essex Models listed last month are still available.

EFE Models

Country Area/Green Line

T type - U.S. Army colours

T581 (715 route)

T596 (359 route)

T651

T695 (705 route)

D149 (721 route)

STL 2637 (406F route)

RLH22 (248 route)

RT (722 route)

RF56 (721 route)

Central Area

G431 (76 route)

STL 553 (47 route)

STD 156 (24 route)

T504 (213 route)

SRT29 (34 route)

RT 3271 roof box (29 route)

RLH74 (230 route)

XA13

RTL (21 route)

Original Omnibus Company Models

D40 (HGC 267) (88 route); D145 (HGC 272) (722 route); Q 1253 (EXV 253) (677 route); Q6 (BXO 527) (218 route); EN L 3898 with London Transport names (32B route, 1951-2)

Service Revisions

Ian Ransom

1 October 2023

260 (Daily) Stansted Airport Bus Station - University of Kent, Canterbury **National Express**. Service withdrawn. Last journey was 0120 ex Stansted on morning of 1 October.

29 October

320 (M-F) Colchester Bus Station - Great Notley, Bakers Lane **First Essex**. To ease overcrowding on route X20.

Schooldays: From Colchester, number of journeys doubled from four to eight, including the introduction of two 'contraflow' journeys in the morning. One of the new afternoon journeys extended back to start from North Railway Station. From Bakers Lane or Braintree, number of journeys doubled from three to six, including the introduction of one 'contraflow' afternoon journey. One existing morning journey extended to North Railway Station in Colchester and another back projected from Braintree to start at Bakers Lane.

Non-Schooldays: From Colchester, increased from one to two journeys, both in afternoon, with the previous schooldays only 1620 now also running on non-schooldays and is extended from Braintree to Bakers Lane (it is similarly extended on schooldays). To Colchester, also increased from one to two journeys, both in morning, the existing one from Bakers Lane and a new one from Braintree. Unlike on schooldays, the existing journey is not extended to North Railway Station in Colchester.

29 October Additional Information to EBM 714

9 (M-S) Basildon Bus Station - Brentwood Railway Station **First Essex**. An additional journey runs at 1830 from Brentwood Station to Basildon Bus Station on Mondays to Fridays. (This is a return journey of the 1700 from Basildon, arriving Brentwood at 1816, which previously returned to Basildon Depot out of service.)

X10 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Stansted Airport Bus Station **First Essex**. This route was revised in Basildon to operate via Festival Leisure Park and Paycocke Road, with the exception of some early morning journeys. On M-F it also serves Janus House, as a double run from Festival Leisure Park. There are also additional short journeys (M-F) between Runwell St Luke's and Basildon Bus Station via Janus House, between Festival Leisure Park and Paycocke Road, via Janus House, between Basildon Bus Station and Paycocke Road, plus the existing Wickford Station and Runwell St Luke's. We are fairly certain that no route in this area has ever had four scheduled variants of short workings on the same day.

With thanks to the Omnibus Society.

Follow Ups

EBM 714

David Edwards has supplied more information about the Eastern National fleet number plates on display in the Station Hotel, Wivenhoe. They were presented to the then landlord by the late Roger Bass, an ex-Eastern National driver at Chelmsford and Maldon depots and latterly with Cedric Coaches of Wivenhoe, when the Station Hotel became his local.

EBM Extra 4

VRT / FLF Exchange

In EBM Extra 4 (Autumn 2023) at the end of the article on the VRT for FLF exchange, where we explained that part two of the article will deal with the wider 1973 SBG / NBC exchanges, the reference to one VR coming to Essex outside of those exchanges should of course have said two, not one. If you're still confused as to which those two were, you'll have to wait for the Spring 2024 Extra to read the full story!

Eastern National Bus Stop Flags

Also in EBM Extra 4 (page 5), we illustrated a Southend Co-ordination Area bus stop flag and commented that in the rest of Eastern National's territory request stop flags were cream with black lettering and border. That should of course have read green, not black. Black was used in the Co-ordination Area, with a cream border, to denote request stops, although Richard Delahoy also has one in his collection with a black border and it's unclear where this was used. Bus stop poles in the Co-ordination Area were painted cream while in the rest of EN territory they were painted green.

It should also be added that in Colchester, roads served by the Corporation buses had Corporation bus stop signs instead, as can be seen in this undated (1960s) photo of Maldon's Bristol FLF / ECW 2829 (KNO 952C) passing one such Corporation stop sign, a fare stage. The location is possibly Shrub End Road. **EBEG Collection**



Acquired Vehicle

47667 SN15 ACO SA9DSRXXX15141969 AL280 B37F 04/15 First Beeline

Wrightbus StreetLite DF. Collected from Slough, First Berkshire and the Thames Valley (First Beeline), on the evening of 31 October 2023. This only moved from Southampton to Slough in January / February this year (Period 11 2022/23) and is still in Southampton City Red livery, although it had been new to First Beeline. It fills a gap in the First Essex sequence 47665-47669, the other four were acquired by First Essex direct from Southampton in February this year and are also still in City Red livery. Full details of these were on page 15 of EBM 707 (March 2023). 47667 entered service the next day at Colchester on route S1.

Vehicles on Loan

Two more First Eastern Counties StreetDecks in Ipswich Reds livery were on loan from Ipswich to Colchester during half term week, 35911 (BN72 TVC) and 35912 (BN72 TVD), from Monday 23 October to Friday 27th. During school holidays, Ipswich has a lower PVR, so buses are spare to be loaned out. Photos of 35912 are on the inside front cover and page 10.

Driver Trainers 66860 and 69148 returned from Norwich in October, so were only on loan to First Eastern Counties, not disposals as reported last month. In October, Driver Trainer 66846 went from Chelmsford to Norwich.

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 6 2023/24 (20 August - 23 September)

Corrections to last month: 66860 CF(DS)-FG and 69148 CF(DS)-FG should have been 66860 CF(DS)-FG (loan) and 69148 CF(DS)-FG (loan).

Additional comments

All the hybrid Volvo 7900Hs have now been disposed of. With their disposal two livery variations come to an end, 'A Greener Essex' and 'City Country Connections'.

All Enviro 300s are now at Chelmsford.

Period 7 2023/24 (24 September - 21 October)

32531 CR (oos)-Disposal, 33413 BN (oos)-Disposal, 33425 BN-BN (oos), 33983 BN (oos)-BN, 63337 CR (oos)-CR, 66846 CF(DS)-FG (loan), 67166 BN (oos)-BN, 67171 CF-CF (oos), 67189 CR (oos)-CR

Disposals

32531 October 2023 (destination not known).

33413 to PVS Barnsley for scrap, 25 October 2023. It had been out of service since 5 August 2022 and many parts had been removed.

Corrections to last month: as noted above, 66860 and 69148 were only loans to First Eastern Counties, not disposals. 69915 and 69917 were listed twice, the first entry "to PVS, Barnsley (via Ensignbus) September 2023" was the correct one.

Re-seated & Repainted

Further to last month, 67190 was back in service on route X20 on 14th after having luggage racks fitted at Mardens, it is now B36F, ex B41F. It was already in Airlink blue.

Also further to last month, 67195 returned from ADL, Harlow in October. It has had luggage racks fitted (now B36F ex B41F) and been repainted by ADL from Park & Ride black into Airlink blue. However, ADL added branding for

route X20, whereas this vehicle is remaining at Basildon. It was seen at Mardens on 27th having this branding removed and X10 branding added and was then back in service on route X10 the next day. See photo on page 11.

67167 and 67169 have had luggage racks removed (now B39F, ex B36F) and been repainted from Urban livery to shuttles red. 67169 (CF allocated) was back in service on 28 October. 67167 (which was BN allocated) arrived at Westway, Chelmsford on 2 November, but at time of going to print had not re-entered service.

Around the Depots

(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot except where stated. All dates October 2023 except where stated.)

First Essex peak vehicle requirement (PVR) figures from 29 October 2023 service changes:

	Mon-Fri Schooldays	Saturdays	Sundays
BN - Basildon	64	52	29
CF - Chelmsford	76	58	30
CR - Colchester	65	51	30
HH - Hadleigh	55	44	24
Totals	260	205	113
Change from Sep 2023	+2	+1	-

Chelmsford is broken down to 36 Main, 31 Town, 3 Schools, 6 Airlink (M-F); 27 Main, 26 Town, 5 Airlink (Sat); 13 Main, 12 Town, 5 Airlink (Sun).

Colchester is broken down to 31 Main, 29 Town, 5 Airlink (M-F); 21 Main, 26 Town, 4 Airlink (Sat), 8 Main, 18 Town, 4 Airlink (Sun).

With thanks to Sean Menzies for extracting this data from Bustimes files made available under the BODS (Bus Open Data Service) Regulations. The previous table was in EBM 714 after the 3 September 2023 service changes.

Below: From the end of October poppies started to be applied to First Essex buses, as seen on 63462 (MC72 UYA) on route 27 in London Road, Leigh on 1 November 2023. **John G Lidstone**



Colchester

Further to last month, 66817 was no longer on the scrap line on 13 October, it was believed to be being prepared for a return to service, but it was back on the scrap line on 1 November. 32672 had joined the line by 13th but was back in service on 1 November. By 24th, 32531 had gone (see 'Disposals' above). 32547 had gone by 27th, being prepared for a return to service which it did so on 1 November. 32629 and 67901 remained on the line on this date, but the latter was towed to Ensignbus, Purfleet on 4 November.

News of the Harwich routes (7-31 October).

Unusual double-deckers on 104 were Enviro 400 33825 on 10th and green Volvo B9TL 37613 on 9th.

Unusual single-deckers on 104 were mid-length Enviro 200 44003 on 11th, 13th & 14th plus Enviro 200 MMCs 67190 on 23rd, 67192 on 16th and 67193 on 20th.

On the evening of Saturday 14th and all day on Sunday 15th, service 102/104 finished & started at Dovercourt High Street. Harwich was not served due to the popular Harwich Sea Shanty Festival, with parked cars causing problems for large vehicles in Harwich.

The Monday - Friday school day timetable continued to require nine buses, for example:

19th: 37053, 47655, 47696, 63330, 63333, 63334, 63337, 69516, 69517.

For the school half term holidays 23rd to 27th, six buses were required, for example:

27th: 37138, 47665, 63329, 63331, 66806, 69515. During these five days, the 0915 Mistley - Colchester 104 was worked by a double-decker, on a duty that also included services 75 and 86. The only double-decker to reach Harwich during these five days was 37138 on 2035 Colchester - Harwich 102 on 25th.

The service revisions of 29 October only had minor changes to the 104 timetable, but there were further changes to the vehicle duties. 0915 Mistley - Colchester 104 reverted to single deck working, using the bus off 0640 Harwich - Colchester, Norman Way 104. Double-deckers off service 320 no longer work on 104. Instead there is one double-deck duty: 0630 Colchester - Halsted 88 & 0718 return, 0830 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1008 return.

These journeys were worked by 37135 on 30th and 32526 on 31st. 37135 later worked on services 75 and 86, 32526 later worked on services S4 and S6.

Clacton routes. Route 74B has continued to be almost 100% double-deck operated (with Volvo / Geminis), with only two exceptions, StreetLites 47421 on 13th and 47668 on 23rd.

Route 76: 63334 & 63336 (15th), 47658 & 63335 (22nd), 37007, 69515 & 69516 (29th), 37134, 47650 & 47696 (5 November).

There continues to be capacity issues between Colchester and Braintree on route X20, with frequently standing loads on single-deckers. Double-deckers have continued to be used on some journeys, with sometimes the Airlink liveried Enviro 200 MMCs used on other routes.

Green Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Geminis 37613 and 37621 continue to be regulars on the route:

37613 (10th-14th, 17th-22nd, 26th-27th, 29th-1 November)

37621 (9th-13th, 16th, 18th-1/3 November)

Other double-deckers noted: 32676 (28th), 32669 (2 November), 33713 (9th, 11th, 2 November), 33825 (9th, 11th, 15th), 37007 (28th), 37017 (2 November), 37140 (2 November), plus loan Ipswich Reds 35912 (23rd evening, see photo on inside front cover). Green Volvo B7RLE 69519, previously a regular on the route, only reported in use once, on 11th. StreetLites 63330 (2 November), 63341 (26th). Volvo B7RLE 66806 very unusual on 1 November, covering for failed 67192.

Examples of the Airlink liveried Enviro MMCs being used on other routes: 67189 11 pm (18th, 19th), 371 (20th), 82 (27th); 67190 371 (19th), 104 (24th), S1 (26th), 82 (27th); 67192 11 pm (11th), 371 (12th, 24th), S2 (18th, 25th), 82 (26th), S6 (27th); 67193 S8 (23rd), 11 pm (25th), S6 (26th), 86 (30th, 1 November), 1A (2 November); 67194 S4 (10th), 11 pm (30th).

Eastern National liveried 37007 on 81/A (21st). 47696 (3 November) and 63337 (16th) single-deckers on 320.

Chelmsford

Further to last month, 42935 and heavily cannibalised 66814 were still on the scrap line on 29 October. Driver Trainer 69155 was also there, but probably just awaiting repair. 66814, reported as a disposal last month, finally left Westway for PVS, Barnsley on 3 November.

Boreham Interchange, Generals Lane Roundabout and connecting roads were closed for roadworks from 2000 on Friday 27 October to 0600 on Monday 30th. Due to the location of the roadworks / road closures, routes 71 / 371

/ X71 were placed on diversion and did not serve Chelmer Village and Springfield. Boreham was only served by buses towards Chelmsford (plus the first bus on diversion towards Colchester, the 2045 371 from Chelmsford on Friday evening).

Free shuttle services operated during the closure period:

Service 1 (71 to Springfield): to and from Chelmsford Bus Station - Chelmer Village - Springfield (Sainsbury's)

Service 2 (Boreham shuttle): Hatfield Peverel, The Swan Inn - Boreham, St Andrew's Church - Boreham, Elm Way - Hatfield Peverel, The Swan Inn circular (the first am journeys started from Boreham, Plantation Road and not Hatfield Peverel). Mini Enviro 200s 44900 and 44915 noted on this route on Saturday, with the latter again on Sunday.

The closure also caused severe traffic delays across Chelmsford and consequent late running on many services.

Enviro 400 MMCs on X30: 33994 (20th, 21st, 2-5 November), 33996 (24th, 30th, 31st, 5 November), 33998 (9th, 10th, 25th, 31st-2 November), plus on loan from Ensignbus 34432 continues in daily use on the route.

Unusual were Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 37034 (3 November) and 37047 (30th) on X30 shorts.

69432 on 351 (21st). DS66886 seen on driver training in Colchester (12th & 13th)

Basildon

Whilst 33413 went for scrap on 25 October (see above), sister 33416 returned from ADL Harlow the next day, and returned to service on 28th. Amongst other work, it has had a new front roof dome fitted.

Mid-length Enviro 200s 44001 (11th, 12th, 16th, 24th, 26th-27th, 3 November) and 44004 (11th, 14th, 16th, 19th, 23rd-27th, 31st, 2-3 November) continue to see regular use on interconnected routes 9 & 200.

33557 (1 November) and 33983 (30th) unusual double-deckers on Wickford-Runwell X10 shorts.

44004 on 251 (15th). 47654 (22nd), 47596 (23rd), 63167 (25th & 26th) on X10 full route.

67195 (Airlink livery) on 200 (3 November).

Hadleigh

Basildon's 63170 borrowed for the afternoon on 15th, used on 27, 22 & 28.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, Nigel Clark, Jon Collins, David Edwards, John Lidstone, William Morrison, Gareth Norris, John Podgorski, Derek Stebbing, Andrew Toms, Rob Webb, Robert West, Bustimes, Bus Lists on the Web, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.

Below: Two consecutively numbered Enviro 200 MMCs in Duke Street, opposite Chelmsford Bus Station, on 31 October 2023. 67164 (YY66 PBF) with 67163 (YY66 PAO) behind, the first in Essex Bus green, the second in shuttles red. This photo highlights that the former has three shades of green but the latter only two shades of red.

Derek Stebbing



First Essex News in Pictures

Last month we included a photo of Volvo 7900Hs 69907 (BV13 ZBL) and 69916 (BV13 ZBY) together, withdrawn at Westway depot, Chelmsford. These have both now moved on to Ensignbus at Purfleet, as seen on 8 October 2023. The Enviro 200 is ex Yellow Buses, Bournemouth HF57 BKN and the Gemini is ex First (at Worcester) 37147 (YN06 URA).

Derek Stebbing

Last month we also included a photo of Enviro 200 44539 (YX13 AHO), one of two in the batch 44537-44551 that have been repainted and have 'Essex' fleet names rather than 'Chelmsford City' ones. Here is the other one, 44540 (YX13 AHP), on route C2 in Corporation Road, Chelmsford on 24 October 2023.

David Moth



Snap! A similar photo to the front cover of EBM 712 (August 2023). An on loan Ipswich Reds StreetDeck on route 75 in front of 'The Salvation Army' shop in Maldon High Street. But that was of 35921 (BN72 TVT), this is 35912 (BN72 TVD), taken on 25 October 2023. This is a good place for photos as buses normally stop here, so provides the opportunity to use a longer exposure than if the bus was moving, to ensure the blinds come out.

Dave Arnold



Enviro 200 MMC 67161 (YY66 OZW) on route C1 in Victoria Road South, Chelmsford, showing an unusual destination display (with 'PART ROUTE' in reversed colours above 'Bus & Rail Stations') on 28 October 2023.

Richard Delahoy



67195 (SN66 WKS), back in service after three months off road, on route X10 and with corrected X10 branding (see above) on 28 October 2023. Repainted to Airlink blue and luggage racks fitted. The map graphic on the rear is new, but is a bit misleading, as it is only the Chelmsford to Stansted Airport combined section of X10 and X30 that operates "up to every 30 minutes". The cove panels 30 minutes claim is worse, implying that the full Stansted to Basildon X10 operates to this frequency. The ghosting of 'Park and Ride' on the rear, from its previous livery, is visible below the route number.

William Morrison



Completing a red, blue, green trilogy of Enviro 200 models, here is 44469 (YX12 GGO) on route 351 at the Green Dragon, Shenfield on 10 August 2023.

David Harman



Livery Changes

The metallic silver on the livery has been replaced by pale grey on recent repaints. This is in order to make panel damage repairs easier to achieve, as the metallic silver is very difficult to blend in, resulting in larger areas requiring to be repainted than would otherwise be needed. The grey shade is a very close match to the look of the previous silver, such that only the non-metallic finish stands out. Also, the wheels are now gloss black, previously they were silver or blue. See photos on opposite page.

The first such double-deck repaint was of BCI Excellence 147 (39027), with Enviro 200 MMC 709 (44825) the first single-decker.

Also on repainted buses, the (now out of date) 'Best Independent Operator' logo is omitted.

Vehicles on Loan

StreetDecks 168 (35693, LX71 AOB) and 177 (35702, LX71 AOM) have been on loan to First Eastern Counties since 17 & 19 October 2023 respectively. Photos on page 1 and page 14.



Ensignbus
proudly presents the original festive heritage

RUNNING DAY

Saturday 2nd December 2023

great family value
ride all day
for just

£10
adult

£2
5-15

Enjoy four special services aboard classic buses

Change of Sub Editor

Now that Ensignbus has been sold to First Bus, and as Mark Lloyd lives a long way from its operating area, it has been mutually agreed that Adam Kelleher will take over the Ensignbus report from Mark. Many thanks to Mark for all his hard work on this column over the years, and we are pleased to confirm that he will still be compiling the Hedingham & Chambers report each month.

With thanks to John Lidstone and LOTS.

Right & Below:

Volvo B5LH /
Wrightbus Gemini 2
505 (EU62 BYR) on
20 September 2023
after repaint by
Marden Commercials
into the new livery.
Previously the fleet
numbers were silver
with black lining and
the side ones were
above the doors /
driver's cab. The
nearside 'PT' garage
/ running number
stencil plate has
been removed. The
LED display is for the
'We are Fstivl' event
held near Upminster.

John G Lidstone



Ensignbus on loan to First Eastern Counties

Below: 177 (LX71 AOM) on route 25 in Red Lion Street, Norwich on 24 October 2023. This is the first Ensignbus vehicle to be seen also displaying its First Bus Sema number, 35702 (also carried on rear). **Kevin Smith**

Bottom: 168 (35693, LX71 AOB) in Thorpe Road on route 26A heading back down towards Norwich Railway Station on the same day. **Mark Pitman**



Significant Allocations

533	LX59 DCU	KN - CN
815	YN55 PZW	CN - SY
816	YN55 PZX	CN - SY

Fleet News

Open top Volvo B7TL / Gemini 502 (LF52 ZNE) has been placed into winter store after ending service for the year.

OmniDekka 810 (YN55 PZO) operated service 94 on 18 October, very unusual to have a double-decker allocated to this route.

Long term off road are 517, 532, 573, 602, 910 and 911.

Service News

From 9 October routes 373 and 751 which were previously ineligible for the Government Fare Cap changed to be included. Thus £2 single caps apply for journeys to and from Bury St Edmunds colleges. Passengers were requested where possible to use routes 373 and 751 to relieve pressure on services 374, 375 and 753.

Other News

Daily, weekly and 30 day tickets increased in price from 30 October.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, John Podgorski & the Hedingham website.

Below: Hedingham Driver Trainer Enviro 400 9645 (LX57 CJJ) in Carnarvon Road, Clacton on 5 October 2023.

Chris Stewart

Photos of Hedingham's Driver Trainer Enviro 200 Dart / Esteem 9273 (LX09 AZP) were in EBM 709 & 713.



Corporate News

On 19 October 2023 it was announced that Arriva's owner, DB (Deutsche Bahn, the German state railway company), had agreed to sell the entire business to a US independent global infrastructure manager, I Squared, for a price reported to be around £1.4bn. The buyer describes themselves as having "extensive experience in providing essential infrastructure, including transport, logistics, energy, utilities, and digital infrastructure around the world. The firm is committed to creating sustainable, long-term growth across its portfolio, supporting management teams in improving operational performance, and investing to support the energy transition with lower-carbon infrastructure". The sale is expected to be completed early in 2024 and as such, it is too early to say what impact it may have on Arriva's bus operations generally and in Essex in particular.

The whole Arriva group had been up for sale since 2019. I Squared had previously attempted to buy First Group in 2022 but their bid was rejected.

Harlow

In early October, roadworks on route 59 meant that it was on a major diversion via the A414, an extra vehicle was sometimes added to try and maintain some sort of schedule.

Southend

Enviro 400 MMC 6506 (SN66 WJA), which has recently been repainted (as reported in EBM 713), had RBL (Royal British Legion) branding with poppies and the name 'Charles Benford' added on 27 October. Charles Benford was a Second World War veteran from Leigh. His name was also carried on the previous Remembrance bus, Enviro 400 6458 (SN58 ENX), which transferred to Ware in April this year (as reported and illustrated in EBM 709). 6506 is seen below on route 1 in London Road, Leigh, on its second day out, 30 October. The "Lest we forget" blind was alternating with normal route 1 details. **John G Lidstone**





Above: Livery contrasts. Old (with added rainbow stripes) and new liveries on Enviro 400 MMCs in Southend Travel Centre on 30 June 2023. The bus in aquamarine on route 2 is 6509 (SN66 WJE), the light blue bus in front on route 1 is 6514 (SN66 WJL). **John G Lidstone.**

6509 is currently still in this livery. A photo of the new Pride liveried Enviro 400 MMC, 6570, was in EBM 713.

Further to last month, Southend Transport livered Volvo B7RLE 3816 (now 3906, GN07 AVC) has now entered service at Milton Keynes.

Former Southend Transport coach 202 (LBN 202P) which has been in preservation now for many years, in the blue / cream livery of the Newcastle Busways' Blue Bus Services subsidiary, has recently been offered for sale. It is reported as being in reasonable condition but suffering from rotten wood around the boot area, causing the rear windows to drop.

With thanks to John Card, Nigel Clark, Adam Kelleher and John Lidstone.



Right: Rear view of 6506 (SN66 WJA) on route 1 in London Road, Leigh, on 30 October.

John G Lidstone

Acquired Vehicle

326, YX22 OJJ, Enviro 200 MMC, B39F, new to and acquired from London Borough of Redbridge, new July 2022, acquired October 2023.

Repainted into fleet livery, but yet to receive fleet names. Since acquisition it has been on loan to Central Connect, mainly used on routes 420/A, as seen below on its first day in service, 12 October, in the dusk at Epping Station.

Owen Woodliffe



£2 Fare Cap

Due to a change in Government Terms & Conditions, Vectare are now eligible to cap single fares at £2. This covers all Vectare services in our area.

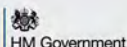
AFFORDABLE ADVENTURES AWAIT



All single journeys on Vectare buses will be capped at £2.00 from Wednesday 1st November 2023.

£2.00

Single Fare



Additions to Fleet List

Additions to the fleet list published last month:

1102 YX10 AYF Volkswagen Transporter T5 / Bluebird Tucana.

The report of this being withdrawn in last month's issue was incorrect and it saw limited service in October.

A further coach for the Galleon fleet is another Irizar i6, YS23 XFY, also in Shearings livery (sister YS23 XFZ was reported last month).

Vehicles on Loan

As reported under Vectare, newly acquired Enviro 200 MMC 326 (YX22 OJJ) is on loan to Central Connect. At the end of October Enviro 200 MMC 317 (YX16 OBS) remained on loan, but the others mentioned last month had returned. Vectare's Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 207 (RX72 TWP) was in use on routes 9/A w/c 9 October but has also returned.

Central Connect Enviro 200 MMC 1606 (YX22 OKB), which had been operating for Vectare at their East Midlands division, returned by mid-October.

Fleet Renumbering

According to the lists on Bustimes, the Central Connect fleet is being renumbered into the Vectare series. However, this is not yet official or complete, so we will wait to publish this.

New Livery

There are plans for a new Central Connect identity, and these will softly start to appear on digital and print publicity, as seen below, before being rolled out across the fleet in due course. The colours are the same as Vectare's but with additional stripes. However, until a vehicle is repainted, we won't know the actual finished scheme.



With thanks to Allan White and Owen Woodliffe.



Ian Ransom

Disposals

Volvo Olympian / Alexander BIG 8796 (ex S246 YOO) and Dennis Trident / Alexander BIG 7596 (ex V130 MEV) have been sold to Gillens Coaches of Greenock (with number plates).

Enviro 200 AB62 PAN (ex YX62 FVV) has been sold to Cludiant Cymru of Caernarfon (also with number plate).

With thanks to Adam Barham.

Right: Interior of NIBS mini Enviro 200 419 (CN11 FBE) on route 21 in Brentwood High Street on 23 October 2023, being passed by Enviro 200 445 (YX10 FFA) on route 81.

Adam Kelleher

Below: As reported in EBM 712/3, Stephenson's have acquired mini Enviro 200 428 (YX17 NYW). It is seen on route D1 outside All Saints Church Maldon on 16 October 2023, still in all white livery.

Dave Arnold



As we've reported in various issues, Stephensons, acting in a dealer capacity, purchased 29 former London United Scania N230UD OmniCities of which five were retained for service (as 531-5, all now in fleet livery except 535 which remains in London red), four went to other operators and the remaining 20 were sold to Go North West for use on the new franchised Bee Network. Full details were in EBM 710 (June 2023).

Below right: One of the five Stephensons retained for use, all of which they converted to single door, is 532 (YR59 FYP). It is seen on a very dull morning on 2 October 2023 in Long Road, Mistley. It was running light back to Frating depot after working Thorington - Manningtree High School service 721. **Robert Appleton**

Below: All the GNW ones are in the Transport for Greater Manchester Bee livery and were also converted to single door by Stephensons. They are numbered 3601-20 and can normally all be found on route 163, Manchester Piccadilly Gardens to Bury Interchange, where 3613 (YT59 SHJ, originally London United SP102) was seen on Saturday 7 October 2023. The Bee Network branding is prominent, with just a small Go North West name under the windscreen. **Richard Delahoy.**



With thanks to the PSV Circle.

Keane Travel, Orsett

Wrightbus Gemini H76F bodied Volvo B7TL KIG 1261 reverted to its original registration of BX55 XLW before going to Ridleys, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. This bus had previously been operated by New Horizon Travel (illustrated in EBN 678) and Lodge Coaches, High Easter.

Transport for London / Former London Transport Vehicles



Above: Abellio New Routemaster LT768 (LTZ 1768) at Shenfield Railway Station on Greater Anglia Rail Replacement on 8 October 2023. Co-incidentally the state of the Shenfield Station bridge had been front page headlines in the Brentwood Recorder just two days previously (**right**). The bus had been red before it parked there (not really!).
Chris Stewart

Chris saw double-deckers from Abellio, Stephensons and SBC, plus one Redwing coach and a very fancy high roof coach with about 100 lights on the outside working the RRS.



Right: Former London Transport Routemaster RML2398 (JJD 398D) doing what it now does best - a wedding at Great Canfield, one of Essex's most beautiful villages, 19 August 2023. **Derek Stebbing**

Derek writes: "I have a part time job as a driver for RML2398, owned by Layer Marney Transport, near Colchester, and used for weddings, funerals, school trips, corporate events, etc., which over this summer has taken up most weekends, as they have enormous difficulty recruiting drivers (with the necessary full licence for an RML). Most bus drivers nowadays are not licenced for it. I did train on a PD2 (Grey-Green - KCH 106) and a FLF (Bender - CHY 418C) though. The RML gets hired out to others, and I did a joint job with Ensignbus recently (RML2734), which was enjoyable. This year has been really busy, still catching up with the backlog of weddings that were postponed because of lockdowns. Passing the (annual) medical to keep my licence is the biggest hassle as DVLA are so slow."



Below: The last open day of the season at the Canvey Transport Museum took place on Sunday 8 October 2023. LYR 997, the former London Transport RT which operated for Osbornes of Tollesbury and has for many years been preserved in their livery, operated a frequent shuttle service between the museum and the Monico Dining Rooms on the Seafront. It is seen here making good speed along the High Street on the return journey to the museum.

Andrew Fieldsend



Eastern National Bristol SC 427 (604 JPU), chassis 113.097 was delivered to ECW from Brislington on 5 January 1957, where it received body no. 8974, and to Eastern National on 1 March 1957 (but didn't enter service until June). It was allocated to Brentwood (BD) from before 1959 - possibly from new - to February 1962. Subsequent spells followed at Southend (possibly for the Rochford Airport link from the railway station) and then rather longer at Clacton, where it ended its days with EN, being delicensed in February 1964. At Brentwood, 427 and the other SCs there only ever seem to have been photographed on the Ongar-Blackmore-Brentwood-Laindon (ex-City) 260 group, but the blinds fitted had multiple destinations and they are certainly reported to have worked the Brentwood-Shenfield Station 252 and the Brentwood-Herongate / West Horndon 265. Brentwood SCs are also known to have done short working Saturday 251s to Billericay and a Sunday School contract to the Hutton & Shenfield Union Church on Hutton Mount (often this was 454, 9578 F). A Chelmsford allocated SC was photographed working into the town on the 30, although how often this occurred is unknown.

Whilst the frugal Gardner 5LW engined Bristol L provided the staple Tilling Group single-decker before and after the Second World War, there had always been a desire to go one stage further in terms of fuel economy. Some say the Tilling Group was obsessed by this, but its relative lack of urban operations (apart from Bristol) meant a much greater reliance on inter-urban work to generate the necessary profit level and fuel costs were a significant consideration, especially for some of the Group's marginal rural services. Beadle and Duple bodied Bedford OBs fulfilled some of the 'country' requirements (a number of Group operators taking these, including a few for Eastern National) but a number of chassis-less designs were also developed in conjunction with Beadle and ECW. Some of these re-used components from a variety of pre-War vehicles whilst others, including a few for ENOC, used Bedford running gear.

The former City Coach Company network based on Brentwood had supported a selection of Bedford OBs, Commer Commandos and Seddon Mark IVs, so the SC was a natural replacement for some of them. A number of these former City vehicles had Perkins P6 engines as for a few years did one of the SC prototypes (Eastern National 396, 725 APU), but despite experience in other chassis the P6 was fairly disastrous in the SC with considerable oil leakage. Production SCs all had the 3.8 litre 4LK fitted, married to a rather quirky David Brown gearbox. They also had a number of bought-in parts, particularly brakes, Austin / BMC rear axles and Kirkstall front axles (the prototypes having used Bedford axles). With a body weighing only about 1ton 1cwt, a whole SC tipped the scales at a little over 4 tons 1 cwt.

A number of the Tilling Group chassis-less vehicles had already been fitted with the 4LK engine, as did a unique batch of coach bodied Bedford SBs for Eastern Counties delivered in 1954. That same year, Bristol and ECW produced the prototypes of the SC ('Small Capacity') of which two went to Eastern National and one to Eastern Counties. Whilst the latter company, along with neighbouring Lincolnshire Road Car, went on to amass large and long-serving fleets of SCs (including the coach seated versions), Eastern National only took another 20. The EN examples were all sold off in 1964, the production versions then being only six or seven years old. 435-437 (605-7 JPU) went in January, to fellow THC operator Cumberland Motor Services, with the rest going in April and May, victims of the major service changes of 19 April which demanded far more double-deckers and led to a surplus of single-deckers. The shortcomings of the SC - both mechanically and practically for one man operation - prompted early disposal. (As can be seen in my photo of 427 (right) OMO operation on the front engined SCs was very awkward for the driver.) The remainder found homes with independents in Wales or the Welsh borders, the Midlands and the North East. Wales was of course already resonating to the sound of Crosville's large SC fleet.

Eastern National's SCs were 395/6 (724/5 APU) of 1954 and 424-7/35-40/5-6 (601-12 JPU), 447-8/50-5 (9572-9 F) of 1957/58 which were spread around the fleet, with at one time six at Clacton / Harwich, five at Brentwood and three at Chelmsford.



Most other depots (except Wood Green) had ones and twos. Somewhat surprisingly, EN acquired two more SC4LKs from Lincolnshire in 1977, these being NFW 649 and OFW 796, which were converted to mobile classrooms and driver training vehicles (although there is little evidence of much use for driver training). Under the August 1964 fleet renumbering scheme, the SCs that hadn't been sold in January and April 1964 were to have become 1000-12 (608-12 JPU, 9572-9 F) but they were disposed of in May / June so never received these numbers.

427 was sold to Vaggs Motors, Knockin Heath, Shropshire in April 1964, along with 395-6 and 424-6. Vaggs also later bought three Eastern Counties SCs and had some ex Aldershot & District Dennis Falcons with 4LK engines. 427 was the last SC still licensed there (1977 according to DVLA), the others from EN having been withdrawn between 1969 and 1972. In about 1984, 427 was bought - and then stored for many years - by Express Motors of Bontnewydd, who also acquired former Lincolnshire OVL 494 for which 427 had been intended to provide a source of spares. Thankfully for 427 that planned restoration never occurred and it survived intact, eventually passing to Chris Brown in Shropshire in August 2004 before being acquired by myself in November 2010 and then undergoing a lengthy and comprehensive restoration at Reliance Bus Works in Newcastle-under-Lyme. It finally returned to Essex in full working order on 17 August 2023 after 59 years away from the county. There are still, however, quite a number of jobs to do, not least the seats, some electrical work and various cosmetic items.

Only a handful of the 323 SCs built have survived. One other Eastern National example, the last numerically, 455 (9579 F), is at the Cavan & Leitrim Railway in Ireland. 436 (606 JPU) still existed in store with Silver Star in North Wales until destroyed by fire in 2001 and another (438, 608 JPU) was used as a donor vehicle for Patrick Burnside's restored Eastern Counties example, LC556 (3003 AH), in the 1990s.

Another survivor with EBEG connections is the aforementioned OVL 494 which is now preserved by well-known former Eastern National man and EBEG member Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit, whose father had been on the original OMO driver rota for the ENOC SCs. A photo of OVL taken in June 2021 was in EBM 704.

Alan Osborne's history of Eastern National's Bristol SCs, complete with fleet list and rare photos, was in EBM Extra 2 (Autumn 2022) with a coda by Richard Delahoy explaining the story of the two driver trainers.

Below: 604 JPU and former Lincolnshire RCC 2485 (OVL 494) at Express Motors (Jones), Bontnewydd in July 1993, following which luckily both survived to be restored. OVL never worked for Vaggs but has started gaining a reversed version of their livery. Happily, both buses are now owned by EBEG members. **David Beardmore**



Below: 427 (604 JPU) back in Essex after 59 years, in Thaxted on 17 August 2023, having come down from Newcastle-under-Lyme the day before and stopped the night in St Neots. Did Bishop's Stortford SCs sit here 'back in the day'?

Sue Stewart



427 (604 JPU) at Brentwood Depot, sometime after repaint in June 1959. Next to it is 1949 Beadle-Bedford 164 (NVX 526), one of ten such lightweight chassis-less buses bought by Eastern National. Fitted with a Gardner 4LK engine in 1951/52, this one was sold in August 1961. Brentwood Depot had at least one allocated but this is one of Chelmsford's, screened up for the 30 to Bow.

Photobus

This isn't 427, but is included to complement the photo above, being representative of the SC fleet allocated to Brentwood in the early 1960s.

451 (9575 F) is next to a Bristol LL or LWL / ECW at Brentwood depot. Both types were victims of the 19 April 1964 service revisions, although after these, a few LLs and all LWLs survived into the first half of 1965. Note 451 has a silver grille. As stated in the main text, we only have photos of Brentwood SCs on the 260 group of routes.

EBEG Collection

427 later moved to Southend for a few months and then saw out its EN days at Clacton where it is seen leaving the bus station, on the British Xylonite plastics (Brantham) works contract. It has also now gained a silver grille. Note the two Leyland Titan open topers in the background.

Roy Marshall, with thanks to Ian Sharpe.



427, with two of its sisters alongside, 601 JPU (far left) and 602 JPU, which were Eastern National 424 and 425 respectively, with Vaggs Motors of Knockin Heath.. At Raven Meadows bus terminus in Shrewsbury, as it was in the 1960s and 1970s.

John Stringer



Front & rear photos of 604 JPU leaving Chris Brown's premises in Shropshire on 19 November 2010, en route to Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Chris Stewart



Also taken on 19 November 2010, interior rearward view of 427.



At North Weald Station for a run out on 3 September 2023, now with fleet names applied. London Bus Company's RTL1076 (LUC 253) behind, being used on route 339.



A close-up view in Thaxted on 17 August 2023.



All this page **Chris Stewart**

Whilst we celebrate the return to Essex of one 1950s Eastern National bus, sadly another is in danger of being lost to the county (and the country).

After its rescue from Tenerife and restoration in 'Wings over Europe' livery over some eighteen months, Tom Jennings, the owner of former Eastern National Bristol KSW / ECW 2385 (WNO 481), dropped what was to many of us the bombshell that the bus was to undertake a final appearance in London on 17 October 2023 and then be auctioned at the Hard Rock Café, Nashville between 16 and 18 November (although it will be staying in Essex until the auction is completed). Understandably that announcement was received with less than universal approval.

On 17 October, the bus was scheduled to be taken by low loader at 0345 that morning from the Essex / Suffolk border, where Viv Carter had been housing it, and then be unloaded at the O2 Arena. Only the previous morning the location was changed to Stonebridge Park. From there it was driven through remarkably light traffic in north west London to reach the Hard Rock Café on Piccadilly Circus. I had the honour of being standby driver for Viv, whilst his business partner Mandy Potter was conductress. I boarded near Baker Street and we arrived at the Hard Rock at 0758, two minutes ahead of schedule.

There the bus attracted a modest degree of attention. Half an hour behind time we set off at 1230 for a tour of locations in North West London with Paul McCartney associations, starting with the other Hard Rock Café near Hyde Park Corner. A group of environmental protesters was by the road, including Greta Thunberg who we later learned had been arrested for obstruction. However the bus received an enthusiastic greeting and mercifully the exhaust was on the opposite side to them!

Other venues were Abbey Road Studios with its famous zebra crossing, Marylebone Station, and the one-time Apple Boutique, outside McCartney's home. This was an area known very well to Viv in his earlier life as a sergeant in the BT Police. Commentary and interviews were given on board by Freda Kelly, The Beatles' former secretary.

I was privileged to drive the home stretch from Marylebone to Haymarket, the traffic congestion being greater in the West End. The bus was a joy to drive although the clutch had clearly reached the extent of its adjustment. After being treated to lunch at the Hard Rock we left around 1600 to begin the reverse of the morning's operation. I jumped ship on Park Lane as Viv and Mandy continued west, not quite into the sunset but an abiding memory as I watched.

(John is a co-owner of sister vehicle WNO 479, whose story was told in EBM 713.)

The Editor adds: The potential export of WNO 481 is obviously very disappointing news for local bus enthusiasts and comes despite earlier claims that "it is clearly an important piece of UK heritage, not only as a historic vehicle but also for her role during the development of 1970s pop culture". Its tenure back in the UK may prove to be short, just six years, after being repatriated from Tenerife in 2017. But at least it is leaving the UK in a far better state than it returned in. We will update as soon as we have news of the result of the auction.

The history of, and various photos of WNO 481 through the years, has been in EBNs 645 (January 2018), 668 (December 2019) & 681 (January 2021) and EBM 688 (August 2021).

Right: A rare photo of 2385 (WNO 481) in closed top form, at Clacton Bus Station.

Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit

Tebzy writes: "If I remember correctly it was taken at Clacton Bus Station during the Easter school holidays in 1964. My friend Alex Scholier and I had cycled from Chelmsford on his tandem."

An earlier photo, when the via blinds were still in use, was in EBM 688.





Previous Page:

Rear view of WNO 481
being prepared for the
Showbus Fly Past.
16 June 2023.

David Edwards

Upstairs and downstairs
views of WNO 481 on the
way to Haymarket, London,
on 17 October 2023.

Both **John Stewart**

This Page:

WNO 481 parked outside
the Hard Rock Café at
Haymarket.



RM1941 (ALD 941B)
passes WNO 481 in
Haymarket, during the last
week of heritage route A.
From 21 October, it was
replaced by new route T15,
between Tower Hill and
Piccadilly, with some
journeys extended to &
from Waterloo. These
routes were / are operated
by Londoner Buses, part of
the Transpora Group, and
are not part of the TfL
network.



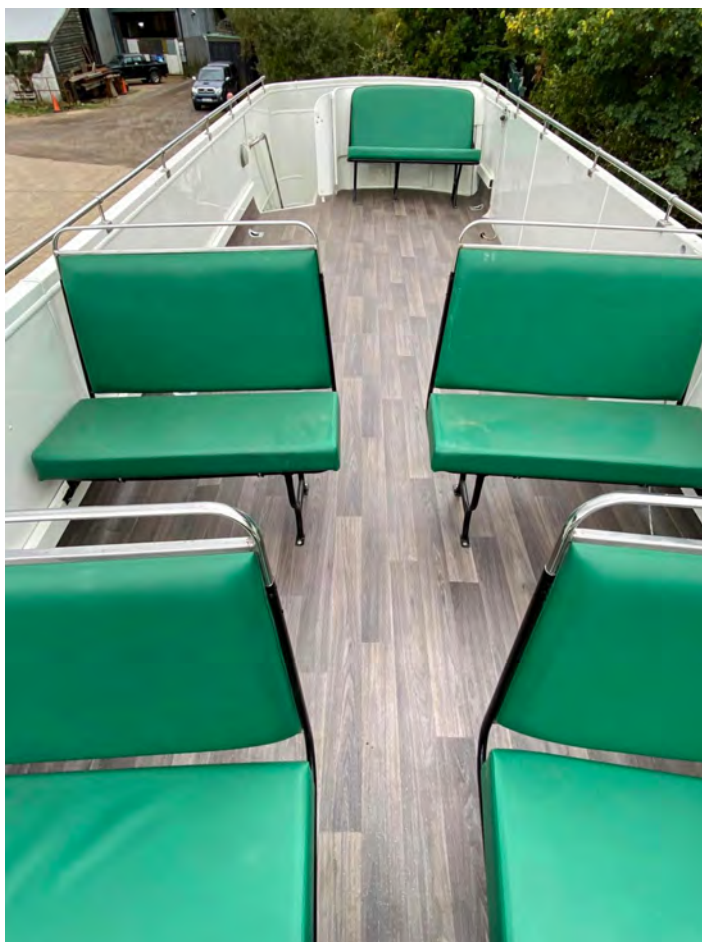
The world famous Abbey
Road zebra crossing, with
WNO 481 parked up in the
background.



All this page **John Stewart**,
17 October 2023.

This Page

Interior and upper deck
photos of WNO 481 taken
by **John G Lidstone** on 16
October 2023.



Rear Cover

WNO 481 in Pall Mall
during its tour on 17
October 2023.
John G Lidstone



ESSEX BUS MAGAZINE Issue 715 November 2023

Reporting the Essex bus scene since 1964