

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features
Issue 728 December 2024



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



fb.me/essexbus

Coming in 2025...

As previously reported, First Essex have 55 electric vehicles on order for late 2025, to be based at Basildon, 31 Yutong E12 single-deckers and 24 Yutong

U11DD double-deckers. At the Euro Bus Expo, NEC, Birmingham on 12-14 November 2024, an example of a shorter E10 single-decker was on display, plus a U11DD. The latter was in full First Bus livery and interior layout with legal lettering for First Hampshire & Dorset. **Richard Delahoy** took these photos of it on 13th. There may be some tweaks to the final product that First Essex receive. See also page 10.

Because of the seats being high up at the rear of the lower deck (**below, bottom**) the lower deck ceiling is raised at this point, resulting in a step at the rear of the upper deck (**right, bottom**).



Essex Bus Magazine the journal of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

Issue 728

December 2024



Front Cover & Above: For the second time in four months, and the third time in 14 months, we are very pleased to feature a restored Eastern National bus on the front cover. EBM 715 (November 2023) featured Bristol SC / ECW 427 (604 JPU) and EBM 725 (September 2024) Bristol VR / ECW 3129 (XHK 234X). This time it is Bristol FLF / ECW 1622 (EOO 590), taken in Llanuwchllyn, one end of the Bala Lake Railway / Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid, on 26 August 2024. The cover photo is passing Yr Eagles Community Pub. Both **Martyn Hearson**. Details and more photos on pages 26-27.

Below: Great news for bus enthusiasts and Greggs fans! There was a small Greggs in Basildon Bus Station, to the left of the Eastgate entrance and behind the bus on the right, but during October, this was replaced by the new, much larger one seen on the right of the entrance. The former one had very limited views of the bus station, but in the new one bus enthusiasts can sit and watch all buses arriving and departing. The two green Enviro 400s in the photo are 33411 (WA56 FUB) on the left and 33419 (WA56 FTU), 30 October 2024. **Adam Kelleher**



Group Information

Chair & Meetings
Secretary
Treasurer & Membership
Distribution, Publication & Sales
Publications Co-ordinator
Tours Organiser

Ian Ransom
Alan Osborne
Richard Delahoy
Owen Woodliffe
Paul Harvey
Wayne Bell

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.

Editorial Team

Editor and First Essex & Ensignbus

Adam Kelleher
74 Park Road
Brentwood, Essex
CM14 4TU
adamxxx4@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
34 Donald Way, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9JE

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

Central Connect

Chris Stewart, shenfield252@gmail.com

Subscriptions

The calendar year subscription for 2025 is £29 for
printed copies sent by post, or £20 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 729

Reports to Sub-Editors	21 December
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	27 December
Dispatch by Printers	on or before 4 January

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 28th 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 2024

www.essexbus.org.uk

fb.me/essexbus

Printed by

Directcds Ltd, Unit 9c Britannia Estates, Leagrave Road,
Luton LU3 1RJ
01582 702703

www.directcds.co.uk

Group Notices

Welcome to New Members

Don Nicholson, Hornchurch - 1233
David Runeckles, Feering - 1234
Barry Smoothy, Leigh on Sea - 1235

Deaths

Martin Weyell 1947 - 2024

It is with deep regret that we have to record the passing of Martin Weyell on 5 October 2024 at the age of 77. I first met Martin as a passenger on an M&D and East Kent Bus Club Ilford Group coach tour that I had organised, Jim Young was also on board. The vehicle used was Eastern National 015 (SEV 814) a Thurgood bodied Leyland Royal Tiger acquired from Rose Bros., Chelmsford in 1958 [which was illustrated in EBN 682, February 2021]. Martin joined the Eastern National Enthusiasts Group shortly after the formation in 1964, membership number 10, and later became a valued committee member and Tours Organiser. Many long term members supported these tours and have sent their condolences including Chris Stewart, Paul Harvey, Richard Delahoy, Ian Ransom and Adam Kelleher. His last group appearance was at my slide show in Chelmsford on Saturday 14 September this year, which sparked several memories. He was always camera shy and shunned any portraits. However, in June 1966 an 'Ilford Group' colour slide was taken by **Laurie Murphy** opposite my house in Seven Kings where we regularly met. The assembled members are (from left to right): Brian Barrett, Jim Young, Martin Weyell and myself. Martin left no family and wished for a private cremation with donations to the National Tramway Museum, Crich. Alan Osborne, Group Founder and friend



We are also very sorry to record the passing of John Brenson, founder of Brentwood Coaches, on 30 October 2024. John was only mentioned in last month's magazine as purchasing preserved Eastern National Bristol VR 3129 from Paul Harrison in 2016 before selling it on to Bill Hiron in 2019. We offer our condolences to John's family and friends. A feature on John and Brentwood Coaches will be included in a future EBM.

Membership Renewals for 2025

Very many thanks to those members who have already renewed for 2025. If you've not done so yet, this will be your LAST copy of Essex Bus Magazine, but it's not too late to continue your membership for 2025. Simply send the appropriate payment (£29 for printed copies, £20 for the pdf version) 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. Please pay before Christmas, to avoid any delays in sending your January magazine. And could the member who paid £29 by bank transfer on 24 November reference "K King, Alans bus mag" please identify themselves to me. Richard Delahoy, Membership Secretary / Treasurer

Group Meetings

These are being held on **Saturday afternoons** at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL, which is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. Doors open at 1400 for a 1430 start, ending at 1630. 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.

14 December Richard Delahoy - 20 years ago.

11 January 2025 Tony Francis - From Camberwell to Westminster via Reigate. A career in transport and lessons learnt. (Postponed from 12 October.)

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.

Group Meetings Organiser

Further to the note in last month's issue, there has been no response to taking on the role of Chelmsford Meetings Organiser. Please note that the current committee simply do not have the time to absorb this position, so please don't expect that to happen. Unless anyone is willing to take over from 31 December 2024, the January meeting will be the last one. If you are able to take on this role please contact Ian Ransom, details on page 2, asap.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Sunday 8 December: Christmas Cracker. Ipswich Transport Museum, Cobham Road IP3 9JD.

Saturday / Sunday 7/8, 14/15, 21/22 December: Ride the Lights. East Anglian Transport Museum, Carlton Colville NR33 8BL. 1500-1900.

Wednesday 1 January 2025: King Alfred Mini Running Day. Broadway, Winchester.

Saturday 1 February: Enfield Transport Bazaar. St Stephens Church Hall, Village Road, Enfield EN1 2EY.

Sunday 30 March: Classic Buses from Rickmansworth to Loudwater.

Saturday 5 April: South East Bus Festival. Kent Showground, Detling.

Saturday / Sunday 12/13 April: Wellingborough Bus Rally. Museum, Castle Way, Wellingborough NN8 1BX.

Sunday 13 April: Spring Gathering. London Bus Museum, Brooklands, Surrey.

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

Route 86 to Romford for 100 years

On 1 December 1924, the London General Omnibus Co. Ltd. introduced new route 86 (Stratford - Ilford - Romford - Brentwood). A century later, most of the route is now covered by Stagecoach East London with new electric double-deckers. A pictorial tribute to this long standing route will appear in next month's EBM.

Bus Funding

Two recent announcements have been made by the Government. Firstly, regarding the £2 single bus fare cap introduced by the last Government. This was due to expire at the end of 2024 but the current Government have announced that it is to continue for a further year, to 31 December 2025, but with a £3 cap. There is also a mechanism to limit the size of fare increases and this makes it difficult to assess the likely impact - not all fares will necessarily jump from £2 to £3 overnight. Some short distance fares on graduated scales may be less than £3 anyway. The increased cap may also make 'tap & cap' tariffs more attractive for regular users with contactless bank cards. We await further details from the bus operators that are participating in the scheme.

Secondly, the Government have now announced the funding allocations for 2025/26 to local authorities under the BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) process. Whereas the initial BSIP scheme was based on authorities submitting plans and competing for an allocation of money (with many being unsuccessful, as the scheme was massively oversubscribed) and then there was a BSIP+ allocation of modest amounts to authorities who lost out first time round, this new funding for 2025/26 is based on a formula applied to all local authorities, taking onto account 'place need, levels of deprivation and population'. Announcing the funding, Transport Secretary Louise Haigh said "We're reforming funding to deliver better buses across the country and end the postcode lottery of bus services. It's why we're providing over £1bn of funding to keep fares down, protect local routes and deliver more reliable services. This is part of our wider plan to put passengers first and give every community the power to take back control of their bus services through franchising or public ownership. By delivering better buses, we'll ensure people have proper access to jobs and opportunities, powering economic growth in every corner of the country".

Billed as "a record level of recent investment for bus improvements for the majority of areas, alongside once-in-a-generation reform to deliver London-style bus services to every corner of the country" many commentators have assumed that the funding will indeed deliver 'London-style' services, but the amounts fall far short of that ambition, which is thought to refer to what authorities *might* achieve *if* they pursue franchising schemes *and* then have the money to dramatically increase services.

The BSIP funding for 2025/26 is split into two categories, capital spending (e.g., on infrastructure such as bus lanes, real time systems, etc.) and revenue spending (e.g., on tendered bus services, fares reductions, enhancements to existing services, etc.), with a small amount to fund staffing in the local authority public transport teams. For our authorities and those in neighbouring counties the amounts are:

Authority	Capital funding	Revenue funding
Essex County Council	£9.2m	£7.3m
Southend Borough	£1.8m	£0.7m
Thurrock Council	£1.2m	£0.6m
Hertfordshire	£5.4m	£5.5m
Suffolk	£5.2m	£2.8m

These all represent increases on the previous BSIP+ funding, but are weighted towards infrastructure and it remains to be seen how quickly the revenue funding can be turned into increased services. It is also possible that some authorities do not actually have worked up plans for infrastructure spending to use these time-limited funds.

Follow Ups

EBM 725

We wrote of our surprise at seeing a Stephensons Optare Solo back in Brentwood in 2024 (September) on NIBS routes 71/72, a while since one of the type last ran on these services. 325 (YJ58 PHO) was the vehicle involved. As reported last month, 325 (and sister 326) have now been withdrawn, so we thought that really was it. However, on 1 & 2 November, 327 (MX06 BPZ) was on the routes.

EBM 727 - Peter Carr writes:

EBM 727 just arrived - nicely put together, as always. I chuckled at the misspelling on the blind of JVW 430 on the back page ('Linsell' for 'Lindsell'). Other misspelt destinations I have seen are 'Great Cornrad' for 'Great Cornard' on a Colchester garage MW in Sudbury on 86, and 'Takley' for 'Takeley' on a Chelmsford garage Bristol LD on loan at Bishop's Stortford on 70. Both were in the mid-1970s. Maybe EBM readers know of other misspelt destinations on blinds in Essex?

EBM 727 - Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit writes:

I was pleasantly surprised when I turned to the back cover of EBM 727 to see a picture of Eastern National's LDL6G, 2510, travelling home from Brighton. Like Chris Stewart, I remember that journey, especially as a 27 year old me was behind the wheel. The bus had been hired by the Chelmsford branch of the ENPG, at social club rates, which meant that the driver was paid 10p per hour, way below the standard rate. It was also me who wound up the

destination, the only appearance of the word "Brighton" on a Colchester blind. On the way to Brighton, it was actually changed during a comfort halt on Purley Way, Croydon, in order that we could enter the seaside town with an appropriate display. Private was reset on the return journey during a pub stop at Orpington.

Two incidents stand out. One of CFs conductors had a cine camera, and filmed our progress through Brighton. He sat in the front nearside seat upstairs. At a set of traffic lights on Lewes Road, the window ledge prevented the camera from seeing all of the lights. Therefore it failed to pick out the green straight ahead filter, only the red stop light. For years after he would warn other conductors not to work with that dangerous idiot, he goes straight through red lights!

2510 spent a lot of her life at Brentwood, where, as 'Big Bertha' she was renowned for being a bit of a flyer. By 1975, she had become quite sluggish, and the journey to Brighton was very sedate. I was surprised therefore to find a more spirited performance on the way home, attacking the Surrey and Kent hills with gusto, and bounding along the open road. On arrival at Brentwood, one passenger, Ernie Heeley, long time Mechanical Superintendent at BD depot, came to bid me farewell. He asked me to stop the engine, and then lifted the bonnet. "I'll have my money back now" he said. Apparently an old mechanics' trick, involving coins of the realm, and Gardner injectors, will improve the engine's performance. He did complain that decimal coins did not compare with the old threepenny bits!

In the picture 2510 appears freshly painted, and I think that we snatched her for the day, whilst she was awaiting return to CR, after her visit to Central Works. CF depot carried a float of vehicles (docking spares) to be loaned out to depots whilst their vehicles were in dock.

EBM Extra 7 - Andrew Colebourne writes:

Owen Woodliffe's article on Walthamstow Depot in EBM Extra 7 was interesting. One point that might be worth mentioning is that the WW allocation plate with pressed surround was non-standard. Most, if not all, other garage plates didn't have the surround, unlike the fleet number plates. Were there any others like that? I can't find any depicted in my collection of Eastern National pictures.

This and the article on Vange Depot in the same issue set me wondering about non-alphabetical methods operators used to indicate allocations. The previous EN method of coloured metal shapes was mentioned. There were a number of operators who used colours, either coloured discs or different colours on the background of fleet number plates. To understand these would require memorising the colours and / or shapes whereas letters, at least if they relate to the garage name, would be relatively easy. Additionally, the shapes that EN rivetted on would have different hole locations for, say, a circle compared with a triangle, so you couldn't use the same holes if you had to change from one shape to another. Perhaps this was the reason they were given up?

The WW article mentioned that the LB Waltham Forest council yard also housed its Ford buses. I was reminded I had photographed a couple of their Ford buses at Colchester Bus Station in 1977.

Below: London Borough of Waltham Forest 3324 (KMU 837P) and 3319 (KMH 589P), Colchester Bus Station, 18 April 1977, with an Eastern National Leyland National behind. The drivers were evidently unsure where to park but ended up parking in the area behind the bus stops next to the EN garage yard wall. The buses had Ford R1014 chassis with Marshall B45C bodies. There were eight of these new in 1975 and 1976. I don't know how long they lasted with the borough but by 1986 KMH 589P had become a travellers' home.



3 September 2024

A (Sch Only) Takeley, Garnetts - Bishop's Stortford, Birchwood High School **Acme**. Extended to start from and terminate at Little Canfield, Warwick Road with a revised timetable. This is a closed school contract.

C (Sch Only) Leaden Roding Village Hall - Bishop's Stortford, Birchwood High School **Acme**. Extended to start from and terminate at High Easter, Gepps Close with a revised timetable. This is a closed school contract.

I (Sch Only) Great Dunmow High Street - Bishop's Stortford, St Mary's Catholic school **Acme**. Extended to start from and terminate at Flitch Green, Tanton Road with a revised timetable. This is a closed school contract.

K (Sch Only) Thaxted Car Park - Bishop's Stortford, Birchwood High School **Acme**. No longer serves Duton Hill. Revised timetable. This is a closed school contract.

4 September

F (Sch Only) Leaden Roding Village Hall - Bishop's Stortford New High School **Acme**. Extended to start from and terminate at High Easter, Gepps Close and diverted to the New High School with a revised timetable. This is a closed school contract.

9 September

61 (M-S) Brentwood High Street - Blackmore Green **NIBS**. First two and last two journeys on M-F extended to operate to & from Brentwood Railway Station. This is in line with the service operated by **Central Connect** prior to **NIBS** gaining the contract on 29 July 2024. **Central Connect** used the number **61C** for these journeys, but the **NIBS** ones remain as **61**.

23 September

311 (M-S) Bishop's Stortford Interchange - Stortford Fields, Newland Avenue West **Arriva**. Some journeys on schooldays extended to and from Avanti Grange School (note this service was replaced by a new 511 service from 3 November 2024, as covered in EBM 727).

With thanks to the Omnibus Society.

Publicity

Arriva Southend area timetable booklet dated 28 July 2024.

Hedingham & Chambers timetable leaflet for Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury, Hadleigh and Colchester, dated 1 September 2024.

NIBS Buses around Basildon timetable leaflet dated 29 July 2024.

Stephensons buses to Bury St Edmunds timetable leaflet dated 29 July 2024.



Richard Delahoy

Colchester

Further ADL Enviro 200s transferred in are 4059 (GN09 AXO) received from Gillingham on 7 November 2024 and 4066 (GN59 FVH) from Maidstone on 15 November.

It appears that the plan to allocate seven of the Mercedes-Benz Citaros made surplus after the closure of Aylesbury and High Wycombe depots to Colchester has been abandoned.

VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 4468 (MX61 AXI) returned to Southend on 23 November. It had moved from Southend to Colchester in April 2022 (see EBM 697). This bus was illustrated in EBMs 692 & 697.

Southend

Ahead of the planned cascade of Enviro 400 MMCs (as reported last month), 6504 was withdrawn at Southend and taken to ADL at Harlow on 7 November for accident repairs; it is then expected to go straight to Maidstone.

As reported last month, 6530 (see photo below) has moved to Ware (direct from loan at Colchester) but no other exits have yet taken place. However, as noted above, 4468 has returned from Colchester.

Enviro 400 driver trainer T199 (SN08 AAE) has transferred to Harlow.

Harlow

Acquired Vehicles

4103, 4104 (SN17 MXB/C) ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B45F.

New to (August 2017) and acquired from (November 2024) Arriva Kent & Surrey.

Repainted from Fastrack livery to corporate blue before entering service. (From 10 November Arriva lost Kent Fastrack routes to Go Ahead London.)

4103 was in Harlow Bus Station on 18 November morning, although it was not in service. It had carried some managerial staff to take part in a filming session. It then entered service on 20th, 4104 did so the next day.

T83 (LJ59 AAE) ADL Trident / Enviro400 10.1m H41/26D from Arriva Kent and Surrey (Gillingham).

In addition, as noted above, similar T199 (SN08 AAE) has transferred from Southend.

Both are in blue and purple training bus livery. T199 was illustrated in EBM 706.

Repaint

VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2 3797 is the last of the quartet to have been repainted from green, white and purple Greenline route 724 livery into standard light blue livery which now eliminates the very short lived 724 livery from the fleet. It returned to service on 23 October.

General

4230 was loaned to Ware from 31 October to 5 November.

The depot PVR has increased by one since 4 November as new route 511, which replaced routes 308 and 311, has a PVR of three.

Harlow Bus Station Redevelopment

Although this also relates to other operators, for convenience we will normally report updates on this in this column.

The temporary bus station in Post Office Road is scheduled to open on Sunday 1 December. On Monday 21 October, operators supplied vehicles to check access to the site. Work has continued on creating the access into the new bus station from Velizy Avenue and South Gate.

With thanks to John Card, Adam Kelleher, Keith Sadler, Steve Thompson, LOTS and Bus Lists on the Web.

Below: Enviro 400 MMC 6530 (YX16 OJA) has transferred to Ware. On 10 November 2024, Remembrance Sunday, **Allan White** caught it on the once an hour Sunday 310 to get to Hoddesdon town centre for the Remembrance Day service at the War Memorial. He writes: "When the bus turned up on time at 1005 I was surprised to see that it was 6530. On getting off at the Clock Tower in Hoddesdon I dashed across the road to get a photo before it drove off. On looking at my photo I noticed that by chance I had captured the appropriate message for the day on the destination display. Some days things just work out right!" Also, note the man on the right of the photo carrying a wreath of poppies.



Ownership

On 28 October 2024, it was announced that Eastern Transport Holdings Ltd, the parent company of Stephenson's and NIBS, had been sold by its sole owner, Bill Hiron, to an Employee Ownership Trust. Introduced in April 2014 as a Government initiative, an Employee Ownership Trust is often referred to as the John Lewis model. Under the scheme, all shares in the company are held in trust on behalf of the employees who are beneficiaries of the EOT rather than being individual shareholders. This ownership gives them a stake in the company without personal risk or expense, and has been shown to have significant benefits to both employee engagement and motivation. It is thought that this is the only example within the bus industry in England. The team heading up the current day-to-day operation of the business will remain unchanged with Managing Director, Dean Robbie, being supported by Finance Director, Gary Raven and Bill Hiron remaining as Chairman, strengthened by the appointment of Fleet Engineer Mark Sayer to the newly created position of Engineering Director.

The sale does not include Galloway, which remains a stand-alone company.

Vehicles

Enviro 200 466 and Scania OmniDekka 635 have been offered for sale but are still in use at present.

With thanks to the companies.

Right: NIBS Ford Transit Connect van EK14 YXZ at The Parade, Brentwood Station on 7 October 2024. Note the writing at the bottom of the offside door.

Adam Kelleher



Below: Enviro 200 436 (YY67 USD) on the evening 14, at the last corner before Landwick terminus, on 27 July 2024.

John G Lidstone



Adam Kelleher

Sema Numbering

When this was introduced over two decades ago now, there were six categories that the first digit of five indicated: 1 Articulated bus, 2 Coach, 3 Double-deckers, 4 Short (mini / midi) single-deckers, 5 Minibuses, 6 Full size single-deckers. A seventh has recently been added, 7 for double-deckers (so far StreetDecks) that have been converted from diesel to electric operation. These also break the rule of one fleet number for life as these StreetDecks have been renumbered from the 3 series to the 7 series. First Essex is not (so far) affected by this new sequence.

Demonstrator

Yutong U11DD double deck demonstrator YD73 FTP, in a red and black livery with 'Pelican Bus + Coach' fleet names (Pelican being the UK importer of Yutong vehicles) arrived at Basildon depot on 29 October 2024. This is ahead of the 24 such vehicles due towards the end of next year. It is seen **below** at the depot on 31 October.

John G Lidstone It was still there on 6 November, but it is not known when it left.



Vehicles on Loan

Further to last month, Enviro 400s 33590 (SN09 CFD) & 33593 (SN09 CFG) (30 October) and Enviro 400 MMC 34432 (YX66 WLH) (3 November) have returned from Quayside Depot, Colchester to Ensignbus, Purfleet. With the service reductions outlined last month, plus the re-MOTing of two Volvo B7TLs and the transfer of 33725 from Basildon, see below, they were no longer required at Colchester (despite 37140 moving to Norwich, also see below).

Repaints

33672 from Urban livery to new corporate livery (with vinyls), back in service at Colchester on 17 November.
33676 from Urban livery to new corporate livery at Mardens (with vinyls), returned to Colchester on 30 October 2024 and back in service on 3 November.

34462 another one from Essex Bus green to new corporate livery, at TVS (without vinyls), back in service from Hadleigh on 8 November. This only received green after it was acquired just over two years ago in August 2022. This, and 33750 noted repainted last month, still has an 'Essex Bus' fleet name on the rear upper deck window. 63342 from Urban livery to new corporate livery at TVS (without vinyls) following accident repairs, returned to Basildon on 31 October. Back in service on 20 November. 67196 from Park & Ride black to new corporate livery at TVS (without vinyls), returned to Basildon on 15 November. (This MMC is the first Enviro 200 to receive the new livery.)

Allocation Changes

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

Period 8 2024/25 (27 October - 23 November)

32672 CR-CR (oos), 32673 CR (oos)-CR, 33549 BN (oos)-BN, 33590 CR (loan)-FG, 33593 CR (loan)-FG, 33725 BN-CR, 34432 CR (loan)-FG, 37037 CR (oos)-CR, 37140 CR-FG, 44597 CF-CF (oos), 44900 CF-CF (oos), 47655 BN-CR, 47668 CR-CR (oos), 47679 CR (loan)-FG, 47696 CR-HH, 63465 HH (oos)-HH

As forecast last month, 37037 did indeed buck the trend of Volvo B7TLs not having their MOTs renewed and returned to service on 30 October after receiving a new MOT. This was then followed by 32673 which returned to service on 1 November, this bus is in Remembrance livery so good timing. But these two are due to be the last B7TLs to be re-MOTed. Ironically, 32672's MOT expired on 31 October, the day before 32673 returned to service.

Disposals

2 November 2024: 37140 to First Eastern Counties (Norwich).
The remains of burnt out 67162 have gone for scrap.

Next Stop Announcements

Further to last month, some more observations. A ride on Airlink Scania 36841 on route X30 on 30 October confirmed that audio announcements had been fitted and were working. However, there were no visual announcements. On this limited stop service, the female voice states "We are approaching..." as opposed to "The next stop is...". Then a check on 36837 on the same route on 18 November had the same result - audio in use but not video. These Scania have a TV style screen downstairs which was blank and one upstairs over the staircase which is used to monitor the lower deck luggage racks, this was working. They also have a narrow screen above the upstairs front windows, this also was blank. Then on a ride on 47697 on route 28 on 6 November the system wasn't in operation at all, despite the fact that this bus is within the age of buses that should be using it since 1 October this year and despite the fact that it was transferred from Colchester to Hadleigh for this reason. Incidentally, sister 47696 finally also transferred from CR to HH on 17 November (for the same reason) but this hasn't yet been checked out.

Around the Depots

(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot except where stated. All dates November 2024 except where stated.)

Colchester

Time expired Volvo B7TLs 32547, 37004, 37006 and 37007 were on the scrap line on 25 October plus Enviro 400 33689 which was acquired in February this year but has been out of service since July. It has recently had some body panels removed.

News of the Harwich routes (26 October-21 November).

From 3 November, there were revised services on some routes, but not 102/104. However, the vehicle duties did change, with ten or eleven buses required to cover the 102/104 journeys on Mon - Fri schooldays, depending on whether there were changeovers during the day. There is now much more interworking with other routes, including 71/371, 86/68, 88, S4, S5, S6, S7 and S8. Several of the duties have just one journey from Colchester to Harwich and return. As November progressed, the duties settled down so that there were normally three double deck workings on 104 arranged to also cover busy peak hour journeys:

- 1) 0720 Harwich - Colchester 104 continued on to service 88, including 1640 Colchester - Halstead 88.
- 2) 0718 Halstead - Colchester 88 continued on 0835 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1010 return, later worked 1552 Colchester, Norman Way Schools - Harwich 104.
- 3) 0722 West Mersea - Colchester, Norman Way Schools 86 later worked 1135 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 13.10 Harwich - Colchester 104, then continued on 1550 Colchester, Norman Way Schools - West Mersea 86.

The single deck duties include interworking on 71/371 Colchester - Chelmsford, for which Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urbans were regularly allocated, therefore it was usual to see three of these working on 102/104.

Examples of the buses working on 102/104 to illustrate the above:

12 November: 33680, 33686, 33697, 33718, 63329, 63330, 63331, 63335, 69515, 69516, 69520.

19 November: 33671, 33681, 33690, 47482, 47483, 63331, 63333, 63341, 69517, 69519, 69520.

20 November: 32673, 33686, 33725, 47658, 47665, 63329, 63330, 63341, 69516, 69517, 69520.

21 November: 33670, 33688, 37139, 47665, 47666, 63334, 63341, 69515, 69516, 69517.

Remembrance liveried buses 32673 and 33825 were together at Colchester War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday, 10 November.

47658 a single-decker on 320 (13th). 69519 was often used on X20 in the past month.

Chelmsford

44473, which hasn't been in service since November last year, is still around, it was seen in the workshops at Westway in October.

44597 was on the scrap line on 12 November, with some front end accident damage that it may have suffered in Harlow on 16 October. Parked next to it was 44900 with various stickers in the windscreen, this bus had been in service the previous day.

33656 (6th) & 33657 (15th) non-MMC Enviro 400s on X30.

44461 (Beaulieu branded on rear) on 70 (29 October). DS69155 on driver training in Braintree (7th).

Basildon

63161 was on loan from Hadleigh between 11 and 18 November inclusively, it worked on at least B2, B3, B4 and 100.

Airlink liveried 67191, 67193 and 67194 have now all had their X20 branding removed.

Long StreetLites on 9: 63167 (5th), 63343 (5th), 63344 (5th), 63383 (6th).

Long StreetLites on 251: 63370 (10th), 63370 (10th), 63375 (27 October). 33415 on X10 shorts (18th).

33988 on B1 (10th). This is the first report of an Enviro 400 MMC on a Basildon shuttle route, Enviro 400s make occasional appearances on these routes.

44001 on 251 (3rd), on 9 (14th). 63370 (13th & 20th) and 63343 (19th) single-deckers on 625.

67165 & 67168 on 9 (4th). Airlink liveried 67191 on 9 (18th).

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

Right: Anti-cyclonic conditions at the end of October and the first two weeks or so of November 2024 led to low cloud and dull days, with early morning and evening mist and fog at the coast. Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 36219 (BJ12 VXC) is seen on the first westbound 21 of the day in Thames Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, on 23 October.

John G Lidstone



First Essex News in Pictures

Midi Enviro 200 44080 (YX58 HVK) at the Tuesdays only 322 Lindsell terminus on 29 October 2024. It's a few hundred yards further along the road from the former Eastern National 315 Lindsell 'Old School' terminus. This route can be added to the lists in previous EBMs that need to do a reverse turning (out of service).

David Edwards



Route 37 branded Enviro 200 44540 (YX13 AHP) on route 3 at the Woodmans Arms public house, Thundersley, on 30 October 2024.

Nigel Clark



StreetLite 63381 (SL16 RCV) on route 25 in Rayleigh High Street, also on 30 October 2024. Note the faded impression of the previous Solent fleet name on the cove panel.

Nigel Clark



The first Enviro 200 to receive the new corporate livery is MMC 67196 (SN66 WKT), repainted out of Park & Ride black. On route X10 at Chelmsford Bus Station on 17 November 2024, two days after returning to service.

William Morrison



On page 1 last month we showed the 'Happy Halloween' displays on some First Essex buses which alternated with route number, vias & destinations. These were joined at the end of October by 'Lest We Forget - We Will Remember Them' blinds. There was a few days crossover of both displays, but not on the same buses. Then after Remembrance Day, Christmas and New Year blinds started to appear. Enviro 200 MMC 67165 (YY66 PBO), its livery contrasting with 67196 above, shows the Remembrance Day display outside Basildon Railway Station, opposite the bus station, on 30 October 2024.

Adam Kelleher

Also last month, we reported that Enviro 400s 34453 and 34456 have received white based super rear adverts for Oatly milk (a dairy alternative). Here is 34453 (UJ59 LXS) at Hadleigh Depot on 15 October 2024.

John G Lidstone



In July & August 2008 First Essex received five Volvo B9R / Plaxton Panther coaches (20801-5) for route X30. Most were sold in December 2016 and all went to First Devon & Cornwall. 20802 (YN08 OWP) made a surprise return to Chelmsford for a few nights during September. Now with First Eastern Counties, it was on its way to & from Mardens for repaint from dark green Truronian livery to new corporate livery. It is seen back at FEC, at Norwich Railway Station on 16 October 2024 on a Bernard Matthews contract. It received its new registration, TFO 319, whilst with FD&C.

John G Lidstone

Recently repainted Enviro 300 67735 (SN62 AHL) on route 31 in Chelmsford Bus Station on 29 October 2024.

Derek Stebbing

The idea of Enviro 400 MMCs 34425 & 34426 being in a 'hybrid' of new corporate livery with X30 adverts, to be used on both standard routes and route X30 (see EBM 725), didn't last long. Here is 34425 (SN17 MTY) on route X30 in Southend Travel Centre on 6 November 2024 with a commercial advert on the offside and no advert on the nearside. (34426 was seen on 12 November with no advert on the nearside but still with its X30 one on the offside). With StreetLite 47633 (SN15 ADZ) behind also in corporate livery, this photo gives a taste of the future.

Adam Kelleher



Acquired Vehicles

123, YUI 5582, Enviro 400, H41/26D, new to Travel London, ED11 (LJ56 VTN), 02/07

Later to Abellio London (9411) and BM Coaches, Hayes. Whilst at BM Coaches, re-registered from its original mark to its current one and repainted from all red to all white (with 'British Airways Staff Shuttle' fleet names). Acquired by Ensignbus from BM Coaches November 2024.

124, BV10 WWE, Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2, H39/23D, new to First London, VN37847, 03/10
125, BV10 WWG, Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2, H39/23D, new to First London, VN37849, 03/10
126, BV10 WVY, Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2, H39/23D, new to First London, VN37863, 03/10
In June 2013, as part of its withdrawal from London operations, First Bus sold Lea Interchange depot and vehicles, including these three, to Tower Transit. The buses retained their First fleet numbers. Then in June 2022, Stagecoach London purchased Tower Transit's Lea Interchange depot and vehicles, including these three, which received fleet numbers 16978, 16979, 16968 respectively.

Acquired by Ensignbus from Stagecoach London November 2024.

124 and 126 remain in London red, but 125 has been converted to single-door and repainted all white with Ensignbus fleet names.

124-126 have been given Ensignbus fleet numbers immediately preceding existing similar types 127-131 (15-reg).

123, 124 & 125 all entered service on 21 November. In the few days afterwards, before this issue went to print on 24th, they were mainly used on Amazon route Z2, but also on c2c rail replacement, plus 125 has also been used on normal services.

The following for the Heritage fleet.

August 2024: RML884 (WLT 884) AEC Routemaster H40/32R from Mr R Duker for continued restoration.

September 2024: RM17 (WLT 675, ex LDS 241A, ex VLT 17) AEC Routemaster H36/28R from Mr R Duker for continued restoration.

RT542 (HLX 359) AEC Regent III / Weymann H30/26R.

Off Loan, returned to the Newman family

RF319 (MLL 956), RT1499 (KGK 758), RM25 (VLT 25), ER882 (WLT 882), RML2588 (JJD 588D).

Vehicles on Loan

Enviro 400 MMC 132 (34432, YX66 WLH) and sales stock Enviro 400s 33590 (SN09 CFD) & 33593 (SN09 CFG) were on loan to First Essex during October (the former also into early November). More details in last month's issue, plus above under First Essex.

Withdrawn / Disposals

'Modern Heritage' Volvo B9TL / East Lancs Olympus 120 (PO58 NRE) has been withdrawn from service. It last ran a few months ago (June or July).

Wrightbus StreetDecks 168, 169 and 170 (LX71 AOB/C/D) were withdrawn November 2024 and have been sold.

With thanks to Richard Delahoy, Paul Dickson, Bus Lists on the Web and LOTS.

Opposite top: BCI Enterprise 402 (39401, LX66 GXD) in Pool Valley, Brighton, Bus Station on 22 September 2024 on what was likely to be the last long distance trip organised by Matthew Evans which were primarily for, but not exclusively, former Southend Transport staff. **John G Lidstone**

402 is blinded for route 795. This route started ambitiously on 1 April 1984, offering five round trips daily and operated jointly by London Country (Crawley depot), Southdown, Eastern National and Southend Transport; each provided one coach daily. Initially running via Basildon, Corringham, Stanford, Grays, Swanley, Orpington, Green Street Green, Pratts Bottom, Gatwick and Crawley, a number of route revisions took place over the years, particularly in Kent, the route variously serving Dartford, Bexleyheath and Sevenoaks at times. Southdown withdrew in January 1985 and London Country in 1986, followed by EN in 1988. Latterly just a seasonal single trip each way, Southend Transport finally gave up in May 1998.



Adam Kelleher & Chris Stewart

Acquired Vehicle

189, FD68 YPT, Ford Transit 320 Custom TDCi 130 / Ford M16

First registered on 11 January 2019, acquired in October 2023.

All white livery with two-tone blue Central Connect fleet names. Registered as a PCV.

It is thought it is normally used on Demand Responsive services; it has no destination equipment or power door.

However, on 31 October 2024, it very unusually worked the 1020 circular service 24 from Harlow Bus Station due to a shortage of vehicles.

Driver Trainer

Enviro 200 924, formerly 1416 (YX12 DHO), has been converted to a driver training vehicle and repainted from Central Connect old red and blue to new two-tone blue. It is the only original style Enviro 200 to receive this livery, although one variation is that it has three light blue stripes at the rear rather than two. It is seen **right** at Harlow Bus Station on 19 November 2024. Note the old Vectare names in the blind box.

Andrew Colebourne



Other Repaint

Enviro 200 MMC 350 has been repainted from all white to two tone blue, but without fleet names or other vinyls.

Disposals

Enviro 200s 927, formerly 1418 (L8 XEL), and 928, formerly 1419 (L9 XEL), which have been out of service since circa May and January this year respectively, had left the fleet by October.

The report in EBM 726 about Enviro 200 MMC 341 (SF66 ARV) being disposed of in June this year was incorrect. Instead it has transferred to Simonds. It has indeed been repainted into new Central Connect livery.

General

Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 204 has been running with a paper number in the front windscreen.

Various buses have been receiving Central Connect fleet names to replace Vectare ones, but of particular interest is Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 217, the first of its type noted thus.

Enviro 200 MMC SK73 COU still does not carry its fleet number (349).

Some of the ex-Arriva London Enviro 400s in red livery (585-8) made a number of appearances on service work during the half term holiday and this has continued since, see photo below for an example.

With thanks to John Card and LOTS.

Below: Former Arriva London Enviro 400 586 (LJ59 LYC) was illustrated in last month's issue at Royston on 24 September 2024. Here it is again, at Brookfield Centre, Cheshunt on 21 November. The main difference between the two photos is that, between the dates they were taken, 586 has been converted from dual to single door. A much more minor difference is that it has also had its front Arriva London fleet number removed. It is on route 25, which replaced the 410 on 2 January this year, but its acquired LED destination has not been updated. The correct route number is in the windscreen. Double-deckers were rare on the 410 and possibly this is the first one used since it has been renumbered 25. **Owen Woodliffe**



After many weeks off the road for mechanical repairs, Volvo B11RT / Caetano Levante number 3 (SGZ 1003, ex BX65 WDD) returned to service in October 2024. On 6 November, 3 was noted on Ipswich School contract 9 from / to Castle Hedingham and Sudbury.

With 3 returned to service, this enabled sister 2 (SGZ 1002, ex BX65 WDA) to move to Ipswich School contract 10 from / to Holland-on-Sea and the Tendring area. 2 was spotted on this contract on 6 and 11 November. Thus 2 has replaced Volvo B7R / Jonckheere Modulo 1 (SGZ 1001 ex FLO2 ZXX) on Ipswich School contract 10. 1 is the oldest vehicle in the Ipswich Buses fleet.

ADL Enviro 200s 102/103 (SN16 OGH/OGK) have lost their Greenwich Greyhound branding for Ipswich town service 1, so both have worked the duty on Shotley - Ipswich 97/98 which continues on 1645 Ipswich - Colchester 93 & 1810 return on Mondays to Fridays: 102 on 28 October, 6 & 8 November, and 103 on five days, 11 to 15 November.

63 (YN06 TFZ), the new to Network Colchester Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka, had a break from its normal duty on school service 615 to / from Holbrook Academy, and worked into Essex on three days: 1 November on 93/A, 0815, 1150, 1500 from Ipswich, returning from Colchester at 0935, 1315, 1635 6 November on 92: 1225, 1425, 1635 from Ipswich, returning from Manningtree at 1320, 1520, 1730 15 November: 0550 Ipswich - Colchester X93, 0630 Colchester - Ipswich 93, then a full day on 92 from 0803 Ipswich - East Bergholt High School - Manningtree 92 to 1730 Manningtree - Ipswich 92.

With thanks to the Ipswich Transport Society Journal and Bustimes.

Below: Volvo B11RT / Caetano Levante number 3 (SGZ 1003), passing Tower Ramparts Bus Station in Ipswich on 24 March 2022, running to Ivry Street to work an Ipswich School contract. **Robert Appleton**



Acme Bus, Saffron Walden

YK06 CZZ, a BMC 220 (B57F) is now with Dolphin Travel, Norwich.

Anita, Stansted Airport

Yutong ZK6938HQ (C37F), registration AC74 ERN, is brand new here. VV16 ERN, a Mercedes-Benz 1021L with UNVI C34F body, has gone to TK Travel, Berinsfield, Oxon.

Milestone, Canvey Island

R17 TSV (originally YN06 CKA), a Scania K124EB with Irizar C53FT body, has gone from here.

South East Coaches, Wickford

Brand new here are a pair of Irizar i6s integrals, registrations YT74 EFW and YT74 EFX, C??FLT.

GRZ 2450 (ex BU04 EZD, a Setra S415HD (C49FT), has gone from here, as has K123 SEC (ex YJ12 CKC), a Van Hool integral TD921 (CH57FT).

With thanks to the PSV Circle.

Below: Sunderland Crossley GR 9007 was superbly restored from a complete wreck by John Jackson and Tony Melia at Wormingford, Essex. After seven years work she was completed in 2007. She is no stranger to EBN/M, being illustrated many times, including on the front cover of EBN 591 (July 2013). Group Members have visited her (and ridden) on visits to Wormingford. Sadly, John died in March 2021; an obituary for him was in EBN 684. Later that year, his sister donated GR 9007 to the North East Bus Preservation Trust. GR 9007 has been a guest vehicle operating the site bus service at the Living Museum of the North at Beamish, although when **Owen Woodliffe** caught up with her on 5 October 2024 she was unfortunately parked up in the rear yard of the replica Northern bus garage with a blown head gasket.





Above: Preserved Royal Blue Bristol RELH / ECW 1457 (LDV 467F) at the Wilson's Corner stops in Brentwood High Street on the way to the Wightbus weekend on the Isle of Wight on 10 October 2024. **Chris Stewart**

Below: Cooks Coaches of Westcliff-on-Sea YN13 BXG, an Irizar i6, at Alexandra Palace, London on 11 October 2024 where it had bought a party to visit the annual 'Knit and Stitch' event being held there. **Allan White**



Southend Routemaster Afterlife

Richard Delahoy

In last December's EBM (716), we took a look back to the Routemasters that Southend Transport operated between 1987 and 1993. Here are photos of some of them after leaving Southend.

By far the biggest subsequent user of these buses was Reading Mainline, the competitive operation set up by the former Traffic Superintendent in Reading, Mike Russell. Operations started in July 1994 and, as we noted in the article, they acquired nine former Southend buses, 102/3/5-7/10/8/9/22, either directly or indirectly, and in total owned 45 RMs, although not all ran in service. At its height, the PVR (peak vehicle requirement) was thought to be 26 buses. Municipally owned Reading Transport mounted a strong defence and ultimately Mainline sold out to Reading Transport in May 1998. Routemaster operation continued there until July 2000.

Right: This was Southend 122 (VLT 44), now Mainline No. 7 and clearly freshly out-shopped, minus fleet names for the present. It's on Friar Street in the town centre. The cinema behind was originally Central Picture Playhouse. Today a Novotel is on the site and the bus is preserved, back in ST livery, at the Canvey Island Transport Museum. **Richard Delahoy collection**



Below: Former Southend 118 (ALM 11B), now Mainline No. 4, turns out of Station Road into Friar Street, just east of the photo above, on 19 June 1996. The Reading Mainline name was of course a play on the RM designation of the buses. **Richard Delahoy**



Two Southend RMs ended up in Canada at Niagara Falls in the fleet of Double Deck Tours. One was Southend 104 (WLT 797, later VYJ 542) whose registration swap onto my car was covered in the article. Fast forward to July 1998 and I was in Toronto on business. Group member Paul Bateson lives relatively nearby at Brampton, Ontario, and kindly offered to take me to Niagara to see 'my' bus, using his contacts at Double Deck Tours. After visiting their depot, we tracked the bus - number 17 in their fleet - down to a tour service from the Falls to Niagara-on-the-Lake. Despite the open rear platform, it was being operated as a one-man bus - at stops, the driver got out of the cab, walked to the back of the bus and attended to the passengers!

I'd taken the Southend registration number plates to Canada (luckily my luggage wasn't searched by security or customs, so I didn't need to explain what they were and why I was carrying them!) and so we talked to the Canadian driver and duly affixed the proper registration to the bus for photos. **Below**, Paul poses with the bus, whilst **bottom** I admire the correct registration. The Canadian mark was BA4-845. 8 July 1998.



Also mentioned was that Southend 109 (183 CLT) moved on within British Bus to London & Country in October 1993. Initially it ran in Southend livery including fleet names but was soon repainted into the attractive L&C colours as seen **below** in **Tony Wilson's** picture taken in Leatherhead in May 1994 (with a 4 prefix added to the fleet number). Subsequently it received traditional LT Lincoln green. It was sold to Nostalgiabus in 1996 but was later destroyed in December 1997 by vandals who set it alight after it had been damaged in an accident.



And finally, one that came home, albeit briefly. Ex Southend 113 (ALD 871B), back in Southend Travel Centre on service 1, on the New Year's Day Running Day 2009, fitted with genuine ST destination and passing point blinds. Then in the fleet of Timebus, its livery recalls its time in London in 1977 as SRM7 for the Queen's Silver Jubilee.

Richard Delahoy



Full details of the disposals of Southend's Routemasters up to 2014 are contained in the PSV Circle Fleet History PF13 and histories are also available on-line at Ian's Bus Stop, <http://www.countrybus.org/RM/RM7.html#top>.



A remarkable return. 53 year old, new to Southend Corporation Transport in 1971, Daimler Fleetline CRL6/33 / Northern Counties 368 (WJN 368J) was seen by former Southend Transport driver Colin Billham on the A127 close to Progress Road, broken down, on 9 October 2024. Apparently something to do with stock car racing (and possibly now based in Southend again). After service with Southend it worked for City of Oxford in NBC red as 368 and returned to its home area with the Linkfast Group (in their pale green / silver grey livery).



368 was in my view one of the best of the J-reg Fleetlines to drive, so appropriate it's the last UK survivor of the 26 (348-73) which contributed to the replacement of the crew-operated SCT fleet from summer 1971. For some years, active 348 in New Zealand was thought the last J-reg to survive anywhere. All photos **Colin Billham**



A batch of thirteen Bristol FLF / ECWs arrived in summer / early autumn 1962, numbered 1611-23 (EOO 579-91). The first five were Gardner powered whilst the remainder had Bristol engines and were the first for EN with the revised front cowl, with new moulded radiator grille and revised single line front registration plate. Several of them are thought to have been allocated to Brentwood (BD) from new (the earliest relevant allocation sheet we have, July 1963, has 1611/2/7-9/21-3 at Brentwood).

1622 was renumbered 2748 in the August 1964 scheme and stayed at Brentwood until October 1975 when it moved to Colchester. Delicensed in July 1976, 2748 was sold in February 1977 to dealer Syd Twell of Ingham, being sold on to Ford's Coaches of Althorne in May. Ford's had earlier operated two ex EN Bristol LDs, firstly LD6B 2472 (819 HNO) and then LD5G 2401 (XVX 26), while FLF6Bs 2746 (EOO 588) and Crosville DFB94 (904 VFM) ran alongside 2748. Repainted cream and red, 2748 stayed with Ford's until October 1982 when it passed to Bob Salmon for preservation and took up residence for a time at Canvey Museum.

Unfortunately, restoration never occurred and 2748 was eventually sold to dealer Carl Ireland in 1997 where the cab was rebuilt. Its next move was to Western Greyhound in Cornwall in 2003 with a view to being put back on the road, but sadly it remained untouched and deteriorated there in the open for 10 years before being rescued by Ian Rudd of Porthmadog. In due course, 2748

moved to Reliance Bus Works at Newcastle-under-Lyme for complete restoration, a major job during which new authentic cream window rubber was installed, while work also involved fitting a Gardner 6LW as the Bristol engine had regrettably seized. During several years at Reliance it incidentally shared the yard with another former Brentwood bus, SC4LK 427 (604 JPU), now happily also restored, as featured in EBM 715. Repainted into Tilling green and cream, 2748 made its debut at the Bala Lake Railway's Gala event over August Bank Holiday 2024 where it behaved impeccably. It has regained its original number, 1622, and BD depot plate, plus has had its rear destination blinds reinstated. It has since moved to Keighley Bus Museum in West Yorkshire.



Opposite: 1622 at the Toll Gate lay-by on the A5, west of Llangollen in the Dee Valley, on 24 August 2024.
Martyn Hearson

Right: EOO 590 as 2748 in NBC livery turning round on route 252 by Shenfield library (near Shenfield Station) taken from another FLF (hence some reflections on the photo) c.1974.
Chris Stewart



Right: EOO 590 when with Ford's, Althorne, at their depot.
Chris Stewart Collection, slide dated October 1980 and possibly taken by **Peter Snell**



Below Right: From Autumn 1970, Eastern National vehicles started to have their rear destination displays panelled over, so over half a century later it is good to see this feature restored on 1622. It is seen yards from the Bala Lake Railway / Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid Bala station on 24 August 2024. A new extension to the railway will eventually run alongside where the bus is parked.
Martyn Hearson



Both the author and the editor remember travelling on the Brentwood EOO batch to school on the 251 (although separately, to different schools) in the 1960s, so this restoration is particularly pleasing for them both.

First Essex & Successors in Clacton

Robert Appleton

Part 2 of 2: Late 1980s - 2024 (Part 1, Predecessors, from 1920, was in EBM 724, August 2024)

Essex Bus News 294 (October 1988) had a Clacton and Walton allocation for September 1988, i.e. after bus deregulation and the end of the bus war with Coastal Red:

Clacton (39 vehicles):

0200/0202 - 0219 Mercedes L608D / Reeve Burgess B20F

1110/17/30/32 Leyland Tiger TRC/TL11/2R / Alexander TE DP53F

1751/54/56 Leyland National 11351/1R B49F

1834/41/72/85/1906/07 Leyland National 11351A/1R B49F

2202 (ex 1710) Leyland National 1151/1R/0401 DP20D + 8 wheelchairs

2383/84 Bristol KSW5G / ECW O33/28R

3033/41 Bristol VRT/SL2/6LX / ECW H39/31F

3201 Bristol VRT/SL2/6LX / ECW H43/31F

3500/01 Bristol VRT/SL3/6LX ECW O39/31F.

Walton (7 vehicles):

0220 - 0224 Mercedes L808D / Reeve Burgess B20F

3039/50 Bristol VRT/SL2/6LX / ECW H39/31F.

The Walton-on-the-Naze depot closed on 25 May 1996.

Eastern National had been privatised on 23 December 1986 when it was sold to its management. Then on 12 April 1990, Eastern National was sold on to the Badgerline Holdings Group of Weston-Super-Mare. On 16 June 1995 Badgerline merged with GRT Bus Group of Aberdeen to form FirstBus Plc.

Below: CN3025 (WNO 545L), a Bristol VRT/SL2/6LX with ECW body, pulls off the bus stands in Station Road, Clacton, on 7 July 1987, during the 'bus war' with Coastal Red. Note the maximum fare 30p notice, and the "Regular and reliable that's us" side advert, which was quite common during this bus war. **Robert Appleton**





The buses allocated to Clacton followed the preferences of these groups. Badgerline favoured Mercedes minibuses and Dennis Darts. An example of the latter, with Plaxton Pointer step entrance bodywork, is seen **above**: CN2828 (N828 APU) in the short lived 'First Anglia' livery with the green skirt for Eastern National buses. At Colchester Bus Station on 4 October 1999, waiting to work home to Clacton on service 76. **Robert Appleton**.

Step entrance Darts evolved into the wheelchair accessible Dennis Dart SLF. First Bus also purchased low floor wheelchair accessible single-deckers with Wrightbus bodies on Scania and Volvo chassis. Single-deckers came to dominate the Clacton allocations. Only a few double-deckers were required. After step entry Leyland Olympian / ECW and Volvo Olympian / Northern Counties, there were a few low floor Dennis Trident / Plaxton Presidents but the last double-deckers allocated to Clacton were low floor Volvo B7TL / Alexander ALX400 H49/27F 32068/087 (KP51 VZS/WBZ). They moved to Colchester in October 2016. After this, the Clacton allocation was all single deck, and remained so until closure. Clacton depot worked all journeys on 74/76, including evening and Sunday variations, and I never spotted a Colchester allocated bus on 74/76 (except on the two-day Clacton Airshow).

Harwich depot closed in December 2013 and Clacton depot gained four Alexander Dennis Enviro 200s 44516-519 from Harwich for services 3 & 4, Harwich - Clacton, and Harwich local services 20/A, 22A/B. Later, the Harwich local services were revised as 2/A (later still these services were taken over by Panther Travel). Apart from this, there was a period of stability in the Clacton area. Thus it was a shock when it was announced that Clacton depot would close on 28 July 2018 with most services being taken up by Go Ahead owned Hedingham.

[The independent Hedingham & District had reached Clacton in January 1991 when they acquired Kemp Coaches of Clacton, who operated coaches, school contracts, but no local bus services. Hedingham established a temporary depot in Tendring for this work, until a larger depot at Stephenson Road on the Gorse Lane Industrial Estate in Clacton was opened in November 1996. Hedingham & District continued to expand in the Clacton area with school contracts and successfully tendering for local bus services under contract to Essex County Council. Hedingham & District became part of the Go Ahead Group on 5 March 2012.]

It seemed that smaller depots were no longer in favour. Over the years, Maldon, Silver End, Halstead and, more recently, Harwich had closed. Instead, operations were concentrated on larger depots such as the new depots at Westway at Chelmsford and Quayside in Colchester. Presumably operations are more economical at these larger

premises. (First Essex were not alone in this. First Eastern Counties closed Cromer, Saxmundham, Felixstowe and Bury St Edmunds, and King's Lynn lost all their services except Excel/X1 Peterborough - Kings Lynn - Norwich. In addition all the outstations have been closed.)

On the final day of operation at Clacton depot on 28 July 2018, the allocation was:
42555/556/557/561 Alexander Dennis Dart SLF / Pointer B31F (9.3m long)
42918/927/928/937 Alexander Dennis Dart SLF / Pointer B37F (10.7m long)
43845/846 Alexander Dennis Dart SLF / Pointer B29F (8.8m long)
65675 Scania L94UB / Wrightbus Solar B43F
62407/408/409/410/688/689/690/691/692 Scania L94UB / Wrightbus Solar B44F
65748 Scania L94UB / Wrightbus Solar B44F (out of use at Clacton depot)
65028/029/030/031/032 Scania OmniCity CN94UB / Scania B41F.
Total 26.

The last bus off service to go into Clacton depot on the evening of 28 July was 42927.
The Darts moved to Chelmsford and the Scania's to Colchester.

The following services were taken up by Hedingham:

3 Clacton - Thorpe-le-Soken - Harwich
4/A Burrsville / Bockings Elm - Clacton - Jaywick
5/A Clacton - Flatford Drive
6/A Clacton - St Osyth - Point Clear
10A Clacton, Telford Road - Jaywick (Mon - Sat evenings)
17/18 Clacton - St Osyth - Point Clear (Mon - Sat evenings).

Remaining First Essex services were operated from Colchester depot. They retained the Colchester - Clacton 74/76/A and Clacton - Walton 7/8 services. These were revised to three Mon - Sat daytime through services between Colchester and Walton from 30 July 2018 (therefore no need to change buses in Clacton):

97 via Elmstead Market, Frating, Weeley, Clacton, Kirby Cross
97A via University of Essex, Elmstead Market, Frating, A133, Clacton, Kirby Cross
98 via University of Essex, Thorrington, St Osyth, Clacton, Kirby-le-Soken.

97/A replaced 76/A between Colchester and Clacton and 7 between Clacton and Walton. .

98 replaced 74 between Colchester and Clacton and 8 between Clacton and Walton.

Each service operated hourly, giving a bus every 20 minutes between Colchester, Clacton and Walton. These were single deck operated, because they all passed under the 13ft 3in high railway bridge at Kirby Cross. On evenings and Sundays, the services were split at Clacton, so in theory Colchester - Clacton journeys could be double deck, but they stayed single deck, because of interworking between Colchester - Clacton and Clacton - Walton services.
[Some examples of this were my observations on Sunday 29 July 2018 printed in EBN 652 (August 2018) p15].

Mon - Sat evening services from 30 July 2018 were:

7/8 Clacton - Walton
74B Clacton - Colchester
100 Clacton - Weeley - Thorpe-le-Soken - Walton.

Sunday services from 29 July 2018 were:

7/8 Clacton - Walton
74A/76 Clacton - Colchester
99 Clacton - Holland-on-Sea.

This left the Clacton - Mistley 2, which First Essex sub-contracted to Panther Travel. Since then, this service has been re-tendered twice by Essex County Council. From 27 July 2020 Ipswich Buses operated this service, then from 31 July 2022 it passed to Hedingham.

[The full service revisions were listed in EBN 651, July 2018. Coverage and photos from the last days of Clacton depot and the new operations were in EBN 652, August 2018.]

First Essex only operated services 97/A/98 for 18 months, until 5 January 2020, when Hedingham took over, but with the services revised and split in Clacton again. The revised Hedingham services were:

74 Clacton - Colchester via St Osyth, Thorrington, University of Essex

76 Clacton - Colchester via Weeley, Frating, Elmstead Market
76X Jaywick - Clacton - Colchester via A133, Frating, Elmstead Market, University of Essex
97/98 Clacton - Walton, 97 via Kirby Cross, 98 via Kirby-le-Soken.

First Essex retained the Mon - Sat evening services and the Sunday services, but further changes on 29 March 2020 resulted in First Essex finally completely withdrawing from Walton and Frinton with ECC evening and Sunday services 7 & 8 and 100 from Clacton to Walton passing to Hedingham, incorporated into their existing 97/98 routes and new 97A/98A/99 variations.

This left First Essex reaching Clacton on only two services:

Mon - Sat evenings: 74B Colchester - Clacton, via University of Essex, Thorrington, St Osyth.

Sundays: 76 Colchester - Clacton, via University of Essex, Elmstead Market, Frating, Weeley.

As Walton & Frinton were no longer served, double-deckers could now be (and were) allocated to these two routes.

However, in another round of retendering of Essex County Council's supported services, 74B and 76 transferred to Hedingham on 28 July 2024 (exactly six years since First Essex closed their Clacton depot) thus ending 104 years of the National Omnibus & Transport Company, Eastern National and First Essex serving Clacton.

Acknowledgements for both parts

The National Way: Silver Jubilee of the Eastern National Omnibus Co. Ltd 1955 by Donald MacGregor (Cotterell & Co).

Eastern National and its Predecessors: 60 Years of Service to Essex 1930 - 1990 edited by Geoffrey Dodson (Eastern National Ltd).

75 Years of Service in Essex 1930 - 2005 with Eastern National & First by Geoffrey Dodson (First Essex Buses Ltd).

Eastern National Fleet Record Volume 1 1964 - 1990 by Bob Palmer (Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group).

Eastern National - Memories of a Bus Company by Andy Gipson (Eastern & Southern Branch of The Omnibus Society).

Coastal Red Fact File 4 by Alan Osborne (Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group).

Hedingham & District Omnibuses - Over 50 Years of Family Ownership by Geoff R Mills (M. W. Transport Productions).

Eastern National Enthusiasts Group News Sheets.

Essex Bus News & Essex Bus Magazines (Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group).

Eastern National, First Essex, Go Ahead Hedingham bus timetables.

With thanks to Richard Delahoy, Chris Stewart & Adam Kelleher for some additional information.

Below: ADL Dart SLF Pointer 42918 (EU05 AUK) at Telford Road, Clacton depot three days before the last day, 25 July 2018. **Robert Appleton**





Opposite Page

Top: The first day of the new First Essex through services from Walton to Colchester, 30 July 2018. Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 66828 (MX05 CFE) on route 97A in Pier Avenue, Clacton, with the route number on a piece of paper in the windscreen. There is no mistaking which depot this bus is from! **Adam Kelleher**

Middle: First Essex Scania L94UB / Wrightbus Solar 65675 (SN51 UYJ) on route 6 at Point Clear on 30 May 2018, a couple of months before this service passed to Hedingham. **Adam Kelleher**

Bottom: Hedingham ADL Dart SLF / Pointer 258 (EU56 FLN) in Pier Avenue, Clacton seven months after they took over route 6, 27 February 2019. **Robert Appleton**

Below: Clacton Bus Station, with two Eastern National Leyland Nationals, in the early to mid 1980s (but not before August 1982, the blue car is a Y-reg). **Geoff Dodson / ENOC** with thanks to Chris Stewart



Right: Bristol VR / ECW 3003 (CPU 952G) at Colchester Bus Station, where the multi-storey car park is being built in the background, on service 19 to Clacton on an early evening in June 1971. A Bristol RELL6G had worked route 19 from Southend to Maldon, where passengers changed to 3003 for the Maldon - Clacton part of the service. As noted in Part 1, 3003 was the first Bristol VRT allocated to Clacton, in May 1969. **Robert Appleton**

Rear Cover Photos - 728 for EBM 728

Continuing with a Clacton theme, buses on Eastern Counties / Eastern National joint service 123 between Clacton and Ipswich.

Top: Eastern Counties Bristol RELL / ECW RL728 (YPW 728J) at Rigby Avenue, Mistley on 21 August 1982, on 1640 Clacton - Ipswich 123. In the background Eastern National Leyland National 1789 (PEV 701R), allocated to Clacton, is on 1635 Ipswich - Clacton 123.

Bottom: Eastern National Leyland National 1826 (VNO 728S), also allocated to Clacton, at Ipswich Old Cattle Market Bus Station on 28 November 1981, prior to departing on 1435 Ipswich - Clacton 123.

Both **Robert Appleton**





ESSEX BUS MAGAZINE Issue 728 December 2024
Reporting the Essex bus scene since 1964