

ESSEX BUS NEWS

August 2001

Issue 448

**Your Ticket For All
The Latest Bus News In Essex**



THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ESSEX BUS ENTHUSIASTS GROUP

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Essex Bus News

We welcome your comments, suggestions and contributions. Please enclose an s.a.e. If you would like a reply. Our contact addresses are listed on the front cover.

Membership and Subscription Information

A one-year membership includes 12 consecutive issues of Essex Bus News Magazine and runs from either January or July. Current rates are £13.50 First class £12.50 Second class postage. Membership applications and any enquiries about your membership should be addressed to Derek Stebbing.

Timetable Subscription Service

Members of the scheme receive the Essex county council timetable books and monthly updates plus copies of Thurrock councils timetable book. Please contact Derek Stebbing for information on joining the service.

Photo Sales

A very large selection of photos is available for you to purchase and we have photos of most operators and vehicles in Essex both past and present. Please write to Peter Snell if you have a particular interest.

Members Adverts and Appeals

As a free service we will publish members for sales, wants and appeals for information. Publication is subject to space and restricted to bus and transport related items. Please send your advert to the Managing Editor.

Members responding to adverts should deal direct with the advertiser, as the group is not involved with any of them.

Your Reports and Observations

We aim to provide comprehensive coverage of bus services in Essex and members news reports and observations are welcome. Please send them direct to the relevant Sub-Editor or e-mail them to essexbusnews@hotmail.com

We are also interested in publishing original articles and photos concerning Essex operators, routes and vehicles past and present.

Any views expressed in articles are those of the articles author alone and they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the magazine editor or Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group.

Contributions and Closing Dates

Thank you to the following for their help this issue – Essex Buses, Arriva Shires & Essex, Heddingham Omnibus, Colin Sigston, John Rugg, Martin Farmer, Jon Cush, Dave Arnold, Derek Stebbing, Richard Delahoy, Steven R, Paul Sparks, Nigel Fall, Members of the Essex Bus 'y' Group, Essex County Council, LOTS, PSV Circle, Essex Chronical.

**Contributions for the next issue of Essex Bus News to Sub-editors by 5TH September and to the Managing editor by 8TH September
The September magazine is due for posting on Wednesday 19th Sept.**

Essex Bus News is designed by Sean Menzies & printed by Kithead Ltd, De Salis Drive, Hampton Lovett, Droitwich, Worcs WR9 0QE

Welcome Aboard ! What's Inside This Month

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Autumn Nights Out

We start an exciting Autumn season of meetings at the Freight House in Rochford on Tuesday 11th September with a short illustrated talk with Clive Hutt and the buses of the Southern Hemisphere. This will be followed by an open slide show , so don't forget to bring your bus slides along!

Don't forget the new time for our meetings of 19.30 which will allow time for you to chat with other members before we start the show at 20.00

Other Highlights

Tuesday 9th October The guest speaker will be Robin Staines, owner of Brentwood based Clintonia Minicoaches.

Other Meetings will be held on Tuesday 13th November and Tuesday 11th December.

The freight House in Rochford is easily accessible by Road, Rail or Bus.

This Months Front Cover CITYSIGHTSEEING VRG 416T Dave Arnolds Photo shows open-top MCW Metrobus at it's starting point outside the historic Castle Gates in Colchester.

Buses In the News

Phoenix Spreads it's Wings

Phoenix Student Travel are making some changes to their expanding operations next month and will be buying some more buses.

For the last few years Essex Buses has been operating 11 buses owned by Phoenix, to supplement its own fleet, on a series of schools contracts with buses based at Chelmsford, Braintree, Basildon and Hadleigh Garages.

From the start of the September term, Ensign Bus will also be operating buses for Phoenix, with a fleet of 12 ex Stagecoach Selkent Olympians, currently being converted to single door and repainted into Phoenix livery. These vehicles were part of an order for 260 buses for London Transport in 1986/87 and were the last major order to have ECW bodies.

Performance

Ensign will operate some work previously undertaken by Essex Buses but Essex Buses will remain the bigger contractor and the change does not represent any dis-satisfaction with Essex Buses' performance.

Ensign will operate 3 buses from Purfleet (2 x ON, 1 x Lynx), and 9 ONs from a new base in Maldon (hence the recent adverts for a manager there). The precise allocation of vehicles has not yet been settled and is unlikely to be clear until the new term starts. It is possible that many of Essex Buses' remaining VRs will be withdrawn - however, we do not have any details of their plans. More information of the Olympians being acquired from Ensign will hopefully be published in Essex Bus News next month and it's expected that they'll carry 60xx numbers, to distinguish them from the low height ones in the present 50xx series.

Our regular correspondent Richard Delahoy has written a full account of the Phoenix story to date and the article is due to appear in Buses magazine's October issue (due out mid September).

Stop press

The following services have been registered by Ensign Bus Company

F14625/1961	Althorne to Southend via Burnham, Southminster and South Woodham. Service: 503. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Aschooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14626/1961	Feering to Southend via Kelvedon, Witham, Maldon and Danbury. Service: 504. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14627/1961	Danbury to Colchester via Maldon. Service: 505. A normal stopping service part and hailand ride. Service: 505. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14628/1961	Ostend to Chelmsford via Burnham, Southminster, North Farnbridge and Danbury. Service: 510. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.

F14629/1961	Chelmsford to Westcliff, Kenilworth Gardens and Westcliff High Schools via Danbury and South Woodham. Service: 514. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14630/1961	Purfleet to Southend via Tilbury, Stanford Le Hope and Hadleigh. Service: 559. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14631/1961	Purfleet to Southend via Basildon. Service: 560. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14632/1961	Maldon to Chelmsford via Great Totham. Service: 579. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14633/1961	North Fambridge to Ingatestone via South Woodham. Service: 602. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14634/1961	Ostend to Ingatestone via Burnham, Southminster, Latchingdon and Hanningfield. Service: 607. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14635/1961	Felsted to Ingatestone via Great Dunmow and Chelmsford. Service: 608. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.
F14636/1961	Purfleet to Ingatestone via Brentwood. Service: 610. A normal stopping service part hail and ride. Schooldays only. WEF: 03.09.01.

ESSEX BUS NEWS

First with the latest news

Farewell to Frank Harris

Frank Harris, owner of Harris Coaches and several local businesses died peacefully at home in Little Baddow in July, aged 67.

Under Mr. Harris' direction, the long established family haulage and coach businesses were expanded to include truck sales, repairs and Bus services. He was also chairman of Grays Athletic Football club.

He is survived by his daughter Danielle, Son Frank and six grandchildren, his sister Margaret and 98 year old Mother Norah.

Kingstons Expands in Thurrock

Kingstons of Essex started two new bus services in Thurrock from 4th August with Service 20 from Lakeside to Tilbury now running seven days a week and Service 375 running from Lakeside to Pitsea. No fares were charged for the two weeks to comply with the 42 days notice required by the Traffic commissioner for revised services. Meanwhile, Kingstons original service 511 runs on Saturdays only from 4th August and the route is changed to operate from Epping to Bluewater via Ongar and Brentwood.

First Eastern National

Allocation Changes

Changes reported until 29th July 2001

313 Paint spare – Disposal **346** CN – BE **2608** CN – Disposal
2611 CN – Disposal **2612** CN – Disposal **2629** BE – Disposal
2803 CR – BE **2804** CR – BE **2819** BE- CN **2820** BE – CN
2921 Acquired – CR **2923** Acquired – CR **4028** DT – Disposal

Larger Buses spotted on Clacton Town Routes

It is interesting to see larger buses being used instead of minibuses on the town services in Clacton . Recently observed have been an Olympian on the 5 and Darts on the 11 & 17. In some cases the roads these vehicles have to transverse are extremely narrow and it's quite a sight to see them travelling these routes.

50 for V2001

This year's requirement is for First to supply 50 vehicles - some of which of course may be subcontracted (for example from NIBS). The buses are needed for a free shuttle service between Chelmsford Rail Station and the venue at Hylands Park. More info on the vehicles used in next months Essex Bus News.

Council Bids to Boost Buses

A cash injection worth £2.5 million is being sought to boost council-run bus services in Essex.

It is reported that money for bus services contracted by Essex County Council has been stripped by a quarter over the past ten years and in comparison with similar counties, Essex fares badly. Essex has £2.8m for spending on bus services, compared with £4.1m in Hampshire, £3.5m in Kent and £3.6m in Surrey.

Essex County Council wants more services in the countryside to prevent people feeling isolated and a better school journey service. Also planned is a network of daytime services in smaller towns and a system of Sunday services in larger towns.

To meet these aims, the county council's executive board has decided to call for £2.5 million from the Government. The plan is for the money to be spread over four years, starting with an extra £625,000 next year.

The aim is for a minimum level of service in the rural areas and to encourage people to use public transport, especially those in the many rural areas.

If granted, the money will be used to subsidise private bus companies to extend routes where they would not normally make a profit.

Essex County Council expects to know whether the bid is successful by January or February next year and, if so, the bus routes could be up and running within about two months after that.

First Thamesway

FLEET CHANGES

Vehicles on loan

Lynx 282 (F282AWW) has lost its Yorkshire advertising material (except for the rear contravention) and gained First Thamesway information adverts internally. **Leyland Olympian GFM110X** has been returned to Ensign.

Allocations

Period ending 29 July: **357 BN-D/L(D)**; **9017 DVT-D/L(D)** (leaving only one Bedford trainer, 9411); there has so far been no change to the coach allocation at BN.

Subsequently **3112** has been transferred from FEN at Chelmsford to BN as a mechanical spare, indirectly replacing **364** to D/L(D).

It is planned that **5001** will move from HH to Phoenix in time for the new school term.

VR in Southend

Your sub-Editor took the opportunity of a £6 Day Ranger (or half day in this case) ticket on 24.7.01. Starting with Darts from Wickford to Rayleigh and on to Southend, I arrived there just in time to see VR HH3113 depart for Hullbridge! Another trip to Rayleigh on refurbished HH1419 enabled me to return to Southend on the VR (which was really the point of the exercise); it then worked the 15.00 service 21 to Canvey (past the end of Peter Snell's road) – this duty then apparently works a 22 to Basildon and back to Canvey, then a 21. Unfortunately time precluded the full trip and I changed onto green Lynx 282 at Benfleet (on the next 22 to Basildon). Subsequently HH3069 was noted on the 20 on 27.7.01.

Holiday Oddities

School holidays often produce double-deck and other odd workings, and as well as Hadleigh vehicles (including 4005 on the 20 on 27.7.01), Basildon's 3109 appeared on the 751 on 31.7.01 – only the second time a double-decker has been reported on this route. On the same day Olympian BN4026 was on the 151. BN's evening working on the Hutton local 77 (Olympian or occasionally Lynx) was Super 8-liveried 924 on 26.7.01 while Dart BN920 was in Billericay on the 101 (usually a Mercedes) the following day.

First Thamesway vehicles are expected to see use at Chelmsford over the weekend of 18/19 August for the V2001 Spectacular at Hylands Park.

On Sat 4/8/01 4026 and 4030 were used on rail replacement service Baker street to Wembley Park on hire to first capital and driven by first capital drivers. 4026 was driven by EBEG member Nigel Fall.

Refurbishments

Lynx 1405 to 'Barbie 2' (no vinyls or fleetnames) – seen on service 20 on 27.7.01
1419 has a new floor, re-trimmed seats and repainted roof lining (but sadly still some body rattles).

Routes and Tickets on Line

The First Thamesway website (www.firstthameways.co.uk) now includes a list of routes operated by each depot, although intended as a guide to service frequency – look under 'routes' and click on 'Romford/Basildon/Hadleigh service frequency'.

The site also includes a useful summary of the various tickets generally available:

Single/Day Return

Bus Ranger (one day unlimited travel on First Group services in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk)

Southend Rover/Rover Plus (one day unlimited travel in Southend Unitary, Rochford District and Castle Point Borough areas; Rover Plus valid to/from Basildon Hospital in addition)

Southend Hopper Plus (weekly or monthly ticket)

Rayleigh Bus/Rail (bus travel added to rail season ticket)

Wickford Bus/Rail (through tickets via First GER Wickford station)

Basildon Bus/Rail (through tickets via Basildon c2c station)

Faircard (unlimited travel in Basildon, Wickford and Billericay; two zones - outer zone also includes Grays and Lakeside)

Billericay Fastcard (through bus/rail ticketing within three zones)

Brentwood Day Saver (one day unlimited travel between Billericay, Romford and Margaretting on First Eastern National and First Thamesway services)

Brentwood Savercard (week's unlimited travel within same area)

In common with First Eastern National, a Family Ranger ticket is available throughout August for £12 covering two adults and up to four children.

FLEET ALLOCATION 29.7.01

Basildon (BN)	35, 364/72/4-6/9-81, 602/3/5/7-11, 711-5/34-8, 805/9/11, 852-5, 913-5/8-22/4-34/59-72, 1430/2/3, 2657/60/1, 3109, 4026/30, 5005
Hadleigh (HH)	314-21/3-7, 701-10/8-21, 808, 935-42/6-58, 987, 1400/4-6/9-12, 1417-24/31, 3069, 3113, 4003-5/27, 5001
Romford (RD)	401-10, 806/7/10, 2658/9/62
Reserve	355 (BN), 368 (RD/BN)
D/L (D)	310/57, 804, 3226, 4031, 9016/7
Driver Training	625, 9029-32, 9411 (all usually at BN)

ARRIVA Southend

Into the Fleet

2188 R188 DNM Mercedes Vario 0814D /Plaxton Beaver 2 From HA 7/01
2372 R942 VPU Mercedes Vario 0814D /Plaxton Beaver 2 From WA 6/01

Out of the Fleet

2135 N915 ETM Mercedes 709D/Plaxton to HA 7/01
2137 N917 ETM Mercedes 709D/Plaxton to HA 7/01

Where Are They Now?

105 WLT 937 Now with Absolute Charter Inc, trading as Gray Line Tours, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, locally registered 130 42D. (Previously Reading Mainline no. 5).

224 XTE224V (Fleetline) - now re-registered PJI 1861, with Heritage Coaches, Shoreham by Sea, Sussex. They are reported to have another but identity not known. 224 last reported with Ensign, I think, after sale by ST.

390/904/914 JTD390P (Fleetline open top) Sold by Arriva Cymru to Wigley, dealer, for scrap.

395/905/915 JTD395P (Fleetline open top) Sold by Arriva Cymru, now noted with an unknown operator running as a free bus to the Babbacombe Model Village, Torquay

254 Q554MEV (Fleetline rebody) Now with Stephenson's (dealer stock) eg Pegg, Rotherham (who had loaned it to Liverpool Motor Services).

Greenline and Other Oddities

Three exceptional unusual workings on 721

Sun 22/7: To replace a broken down AS coach, Arriva London 960, P960RUL (Dart/Alexander) worked Barking-London-Barking.

Sun 29/7: To replace failed DAF 4055, Grays garage 3403, R313NGM (Dart/Plaxton, ex Town & Country) worked Lakeside-London-Lakeside

Tue 31/7: Following overloading on the 1800 ex Southend, the scheduled coach was swapped in Basildon for Dominator 5288, off the 2. The Dominator then worked BN-Victoria-Southend and the coach worked the 2 back to Southend.

Wed 1/8 5419 N709TPK on route 17 to Wallasea with no blind at 14:06. P reg dart on route 6 to Landwick also at 14:06 Also an unidentified 7/8 branded Trident on the 1 for most of the day with a minibus on the 1 or 2 most of the afternoon.

Olympians 5416 & 5393 have been on Thurrock service 383 in July 5402 & 5403 are The usual vehicles seen.



DONS A62 OJX Leyland Leopard / Plaxton Paramount 3200 C57F at the depot July 2001 (converted from left hand drive before bodying). (Dave Arnold)



LOGDES K317 ELV MB 814D / Autobus Classique C33F
Acquired from Staines (t/a Clintona), Brentwood. (Dave Arnold)



STANS SIL 6705 (ex 114 RVX, E108 GOO) Van Hool T815 C48Ft
 New to Crusader Holidays, Clacton but acquired from Ellis (t/a Grahams), Kelvedon.



COUNTY 2328 RU (new as N245 NNR) Volvo B10m / Caetano
 Seen on the Quay at Boulogne in December 2000. (Dave Arnold)

Changes to ARRIVA Southend Bus Services

Starting Sunday 2nd September

Service 1 Shoebury-Southend-Hadleigh-Rayleigh

There will be some changes to the timetable on all days of the week. Basic frequencies are unchanged, except on Sunday evenings when the service is reduced to hourly.

Service 4 Landwick-Wakering-Southend-Leigh

The Monday to Saturday daytime service will be increased to every half hour (partly replacing service 5). All buses on Monday to Saturday will be extended to Leigh Station and the evening service will be retimed to provide a more evenly spaced service together with the 17B. Evening buses will run to Leigh station, not Thames Drive. There are no changes to Sunday buses.

Service 5 Shoebury-Wakering-Southend-Leigh

This service will be withdrawn. See Services 4 & 8 for replacements.

Services 7/7A/8/8A/8B/8C Shoebury-Southend-Rochford-Hockley-Rayleigh

There will be major changes to times and some buses will have a new route.

The alterations to routes will be:

7 & 7A: routes unchanged, except that buses terminating at Hockley Spa will run via Great Eastern Road between Hockley station and the Spa.

7B: this number will be used for a limited number of peak journeys that divert in Thorpe Bay and Southchurch to serve Bournes Green and the White Horse (previously numbered 8A or 8B).

8: Between Shoebury and Southend, the 8 will replace route 5, running via Wakering, Bournes Green and Southchurch Road. It will no longer serve Asda or Thorpe Bay. Between Southend and Rochford, the 8 will run via Cuckoo Corner and Manners Way direct to Warners Bridge, no longer serving the Bell or Rochford Road; In Hockley, buses terminating at Hockley Spa will no longer serve Hockley Station.

8A, 8B and 8C: these variations of service 8 will be withdrawn, mainly replaced by an increased frequency on the 8 itself and by new service 7B at school times. Maplin Way North (8B) will no longer be served; Thorpe Hall Avenue will only be served by the 1, not the 8A. All journeys will be operated by low floor, easy access buses (except for a few peak time journeys).

Service 9: Shoebury-Southend-Eastwood-Rayleigh

There are some changes to the timetable on all days of the week. Basic frequencies are unchanged. Low floor buses will operate all journeys. Journeys previously numbered 9A will be renumbered 9 and operated by low floor buses.

First Olympian Referbished

5393 Olympian/Alexander was the first of the batch to be refurbished in June. It has also given an all over blue and silver advert for Southend United Football Club. **5394** is currently away for refurbishment.

Hedingham and District

Into the Fleet

L321 G995 VWV Leyland Lynx LX1280 LX112L10ZR1R

Acquired from Ensign Bus in July in part exchange for the 6 Bedford vehicles listed below, this bus was new to Brighton Transport in August 1988. It was recently on loan to First Thamesway at Hadleigh Garage.

MAN95N Leyland lynx

Acquired from Ensign in July and will probably be re registered.

Out of the Fleet

L88 REV 188R	Bedford YLQ /Duple Dominant
L89 CEV 89T	Bedford YLQ /Duple Dominant
L95 JAR 495W	Bedford YLQ /Duple Dominant
L98 SPU 898W	Bedford YMQ /Duple Dominant
L100 UNO 100W	Bedford YMT/Plaxton Supreme Express
L133 BHK 710X	Bedford YNT/Plaxton Supreme Express
L224 A486 FPU	Bedford YNT /Duple Laser
L225 A487 FPU	Bedford YNT /Duple Laser

All to Ensign Bus in July

L166 MRP 802P Bristol VRT /ECW Sold to the holding company of Clacton Common Guinea Ltd and moved to Scotland in July .

There's also expected to be some other withdrawals including **L165 LRA 801P** Bristol VRT /ECW which will be sold to Trent Preservation Group.

L139/46 FCY 287/85W Bedford YMT /Duple Dominant are due to go to Slackers for Scrap. **L152 D576 VBV** Freight Rover Sherpa /Dormobile is also expected to go soon. **L169 JKV 414V** Bedford YMT /Plaxton Supreme will be scrapped but it's seats will be donated to **L100 UNO 100W** Bedford YMT/ Plaxton Supreme.

Service Changes Starting Saturday 5th August

Service 91 Tollesbury – Witham - Saturday service operated under ECC Contract by Arriva Colchester

Service 95 Tollesbury – Maldon – Saturday service operated under ECC Contract by Arriva Colchester

ESSEX VR WATCH

A Brand new column to keep track of the Ever reducing number of Bristol VR's in passenger service with Essex Operators.

There will be substantial changes to the First Eastern National VR fleet from September, partly as a result of the major alterations to school contracts.

It is planned that Chelmsford's allocation will be withdrawn or transferred to Braintree for schools duties, Harwich's only VR will move to Colchester in exchange for an Olympian (4013) and one of CR's buses will be officially withdrawn. Specific proposals known at the time of writing are: 3076 CR-D/L(D); 3077 CF-D/L(D); 3078 DT-CR; 3083 CF-BE; 3084 CF-D/L(D); 3103 CF-D/L(D); 3112 CF-BN; 3219 CF-BE. The First Thamesway allocation is understood to be unaltered (apart from 3112).

Within First Eastern National, this will leave two buses at Braintree and eight at Colchester (3072/8/9, 3092-4, 3101, 3230) although there have been reports that 3101 and 3230 are out of use. The First Thamesway vehicles are 3069 and 3113 at Hadleigh, with 3109/12 at Basildon.

Have You Seen Them?

Reports of VR workings will be greatly appreciated. It is now 32 years since the first Bristol VR entered service with Eastern National. Email your reports to essexbusnews@hotmail.com With your help we can keep track of the changes and let everyone know what's going on .

VR's on the Move

Members Graham Belfall and Sue Burden report seeing the following former Eastern National/Thamesway Bristol VR's in use with First Western National during a recent visit: 3067 (KOO785V), 3096/9 (UAR586/8W), 3107 (UAR597W), 3115/8/20/3/5 (XHK220/3/5/8/30/1X); whilst Richard Delahoy managed to photograph former 3098 (UAR588W) with First Red Bus in Bideford.

EMAIL REPORT LINE essexbusnews@hotmail.com

Essex Dealer Report

The latest vehicle movements at Purfleet dealer Ensignbus

Vehicles in

From Stagecoach London **T609NUW 609Y** from BK 16/7

T797 OHV 797Y from T 187

From London General **M1206 B206 WUL** from A 18/7

From Hedingham Omnibuses .

Bedfords REV188R,CEV89T,SPU898W,JAR495V,A486SPV,A487SPV.All in July.

From Stagecoach London

(BK and NS all in July)**T6 WYV 6T,T18 WYV 18T,**

T23 WYV 23T,T446 KYV 446X,T461 KYV 461V ,T609 NUW 609Y

T971 A971 SYE.

From Metroline(PB 26 July) **M1119B119 WUL,1146 B146 WUL,1331 C331 BUV**

1333 C333 BUV.

From Isle of Man Transport.Lynx **MAN95N**, Olympians **MAN81H,MAN82H.**

From Kingston's,Benfleet Metrobus MK2 **B149EDP**

Vehicles out

M69 Coastal Liner,Stafford **M741 KYV 741X,M629 KYO 629X** Field Systems Design Ltd. **M461GYE 461W,T262 BYX 262X**and ex London Pride **101B101 UAT** Liverpool and District M.S. Lynx **G995VWV** Hedingham National2 **NAT198V** Red Route,Northfleet. **T262 GYE 262W**Leroy,Cambs.

Metro **SND145X**, Atlantean **EPH218V** and **M739** all to PVS for scrap

M9 WYT 9T S and M ,Benfleet. Olympian **GFM110X** Price coaches,Cambs.

M318EYE 318V,Metro **SND110X** PVS for scrap. Tiger **TDC854X** Red Route,Northfleet.

M272 BYX 272Y Kingston's ,Benfleet. > **M1288 B288 WUL** Bluebird Coaches,Dublin.

Bedford **A486FPV** Star Coaches,Deal. **T1004 A604 THV** TM Travel,Chesterfield. MK2

Metro's **F772EKM,E748SKR** Armchair,Brentford. **T522 KYV 521X** Nut Hall

Farm,Sevenoaks (for store shed) **M1213 B213 WUL**, Trustline,Potters Bar.

Olympian **DBV133Y** Sanders,Holt. **M1298 B298 WUL**,

M1291B291 WUL,M1299 B299 WUL,M1164 B164 WUL McKindless,Wishaw.

MK2 Metro **B149EDP** White Rose,Staines. **M1331 C331 BUV ,M1161 B161 WUL** TM

Travel,Chesterfield > **T953 A953 SYE** Roberts Coaches,Canterbury.

The 3rd Big Bus Tri axle is **F159UJN**,formerly > ML75,HK reg DZ7066,chassis no.MB9711.

4th Big Bus Tri axle is **F164UJN** MB9712 (DZ3015) > Also **ML 66(DY6756,MB9722)**

and **ML78(DZ8263,MB9728)** are now **F165UJN** and **F166UJN** respectively with

Brylaine Coaches,Scotland.

12 ex – Stagecoach Selkent Olympians are being repainted for Phoenix School travel.

Disposals and subsequent history of London based vehicles are covered in more detail by London Omnibus Traction Society (LOTS) See their web page www.lots.org.uk for details on joining the group. For more about Ensign check www.ensignbus.com

INTO LONDON

The History of Eastern National and Thamesway London Bus Contracts

Part 7 - 1997 Staff Shortages and Vehicle Problems

This year witnessed two key changes to Thamesways parent company Firstbus that would have a profound effect on the company in the years to come.

In March Firstbus paid £54 million for Centrewest buses, one of the more enterprising of the former London bus companies with a large portfolio of contracted routes predominantly in North west London but also with some routes in South East London. This and future acquisitions would give the group a significant presence in the capital and Peter Hendy, Centrewest's MD assumed responsibility for the London and South East division of Firstbus.

The other major event at the tail end of the year was the groups renaming from Firstbus to Firstgroup. This more closely reflected its wider transport interests which now embraced rail and airports including holding a 7 year franchise for Great Eastern Railway, a company that mirrored much of Thamesways territory and would offer opportunities for synergies in the future.

As far as the routes were concerned, the new five year contract for the 362 (**King George's Hospital – Barkingside**) and 462 (**Barkingside – Ilford**) commenced in April and became rather a convoluted affair. It was proposed to withdraw the 362 between Grange Hill and Barkingside and to extend the 462 from Barkingside to Grange Hill and Hainault. However, width restrictions in Longwood Gardens in Barkingside meant that the route changes were postponed until the local council was able to carry out work to adjust the bollards along the road. Unfortunately the hand of bureaucracy delayed this work for over a year. Nine new Mercedes Varios with Marshall bodies were ordered for the 362/462 but these were not without their problems as modifications had to be made the suspension to cure the poor ride quality before they could enter service. It would be Spring 1998 before they were all delivered, leaving the life expired Mercedes 608's to continue to ply the troublesome 462 route for another year.

The healthy economy certainly didn't help with staff recruitment and retention and Thamesway was not alone in finding it increasing difficult to operate a reliable service. Lost mileage was particularly acute on **Route 214 (Liverpool St – Parliament Hill Fields)**. Poor performance on this high profile and politically sensitive City service was obviously causing concern and evasive action was taken in the Autumn when agreement was reached with MTL London Northern to take over the route from February 1998.

Despite the current Driver shortage, Thamesway was surprisingly awarded a One bus contract for new route **W17 (Walthamstow – Coppermill Lane)** Sponsored by the London Borough of Waltham Forest, it was due to begin in the new year. More about that and the many developments in 1998, next month.

Essex By Bus

Richard Delahoy's Father's Day - with a difference

This year my father's day treat was to be allowed a day out on my own, roaming by bus and train across Essex - not the most conventional idea for a family day, but one which I was pleased to take advantage of, especially as it gave me the opportunity for some "mystery shopping", wearing my Rail Passengers Committee hat. I thought that readers might be interested in details of my trip - not all of which went to plan!

I'd chosen to use the higher priced Sunday Rover (£6) rather than the usual Essex Sunday Saver, as I wanted to use two of the First Great Eastern train services that are included in the scheme. To start with, I cheated, using my car into Southend. I could have caught Arriva Southend's first 5, but there is no longer an evening service to get me home at the end of the day. So, here's the itinerary, as planned and as happened:

<i>From/to</i>	<i>Ser.</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Punctuality</i>	<i>Operator</i>	<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Southend Victoria- Wickford	Train	0910	R/T	FGE	321 341	Needed to buy a separate ticket - £2.50
Wickford- Southminster	Train	0938	3 late - waiting connection	FGE	321 349	First problem - Great Eastern unable to sell me the Sunday Rover ticket. I travel free - "buy it on the next bus"!
Southminster - Maldon	631	1021	6 late into Maldon	FEN	2826 - Dart/ Plaxton	Shock horror - ECC Inspector boards in the middle of nowhere!
Maldon - Witham	632	1054	R/T	FEN	Same bus	Diverted due to road closure in Witham.
Witham - Marks Tey	71C	1122	5 late	FEN	1504 - Lance/NC	My 2 minute connection works - lucky, as the inspector's going the same way too.
Marks Tey - Chappel	Train	1214	13 late - waiting connection	FGE (Anglia unit)	153 306	Planned to visit the East Anglia Railway Museum but nothing happening.
Chappel - Halstead	88C	1306	11 late (and I have a 10 minute connection!)	FEN	1503 - Lance/NC	Some spirited driving gets us to Halstead at the time the 352 is due - no sign of it, but it arrives shortly.
Halstead - Braintree	352	1332	4 late away, R/T at BE	FEN	730 - Dart SLF/Plaxton	My first Barbie bus of the day.
Braintree - Stansted	133	1406	4 late away, 3 late into STN	Arriva Colch- ester	2382 - Merc Vario minibus	Late away whilst driver looks in vain for correct destination display.

and then the plan was thwarted, as Arriva failed to hold the advertised connection onto the 1445 service 510, leaving me stranded. Had the connection worked, the plan was: 510 to Harlow (Arriva E Herts), 500 to Romford (Imperial), 370 to Upminster (Arriva E Herts), pizza, c2c train to Southend.

So here is "plan B", made up on the spot:

Stansted - Tottenham Hale	Train	1515	R/T	WAGN	317 xxx	Not operated by one of the dedicated, refurbished 317s, so the advertised facilities not provided.
Tottenham Hale - Blackhorse Road	Tube	1550	n/a	LUL	Victoria line stock	
Blackhorse Rd - Barking	Train	1606	23 late into Barking - points failure	Silver-link	150 xxx	"Fun" to sit outside Barking watching my connecting trains go!
Barking - Southend Central	Train	1655	R/T	c2c	357 xxx	Air Conditioned comfort at last - but then today was freezing cold and wet!
finally - car home - via the pizza takeaway, of course!						

Total cost £13.50 (I had an all zones weekly season covering the latter part of the day, so didn't need to pay for all the train fares). Writing this nearly 3 weeks later, I am still waiting for Arriva to offer an explanation and apology for the missed connection (and to refund my train fare)!

Essex Fleet Focus

KINGSTONS OF ESSEX HOCKLEY

ROUTES OPERATED

511 LOUGHTON BRENTWOOD LAKESIDE BLUEWATER SAT'S ONLY
 20 LAKESIDE GRAYS CHADWELL-ST- MARY TILBURY GRAYS LAKESIDE MON-SUN
 375 LAKESIDE - PITSEA MON- SAT

FLEET LIST (CORRECT TO AUGUST)

A68THX	Leyland Titan	Leyland	H44/26D
0JD829Y	Metrobus	MCW	H43/28D
KYV506X	Metrobus	MCW	H43/28D
GYE453W	Metrobus	MCW	H43/28D
KYX791X	Metrobus	MCW	H43/28D
A7FRX (H524DVM)	Scania K93	Plaxton	C53F
A8FRX (H528DVM)	Scania K93	Plaxton	C53F
K442BM0	Scania Ki 1 3CRB	Berkhof	C53F
M683LRU	Scania K113CRB	Berkhof	C51FT
F572EVG	Mercedes 609D	ADV	C24F
G782MAK	Renault Master		M14
0JD191R	Leyland Fleetline DMS		storeshed.

Eastern National Enthusiasts Guild

Chelmsford to Brentwood 80 years of service update

Frank Monck has kindly added some details about the 3A Dunmow extensions of the Tilbury Ferry – Brentwood service 40's.

These were all worked throughout by Bishop's Stortford depot, firstly with **Dennis Lancets 3483 (AVW461) & 3544 (BTW483)** and **AEC Regals 3510/20/62/77 (AEV88, AHK792, EV6296, MV2272)**. The Regals were an interesting secondhand selection, ex Bird, East Bergholt & District, Quest and Underwood respectively (and 3510/20 had been rebodied from coaches).

These vehicles were followed by **Bedford OB's 3925/6 (LPU615/6)** and **Beadle-Bedford 4013 (NVX527)** before a succession of Bristol L's, LL's and LWL's. In fact **4077 (ONO991)** was allocated brand new to BS for this route, and express-bodied **3970 (MPU31)** was the one mentioned in the original article. Several of these buses (**3510/20, 3926 and 4013** at least) were later allocated to Brentwood depot (**3510**, and presumably also **3520**, for Tilbury Power Station construction contracts for which BD kept a number of elderly and secondhand vehicles).

1951 50 years ago

In 1951, Eastern National acquired two small operators. The first operator acquired in June 1951 was Queens Park Coaches of Aylesbury, with a service from Aylesbury to Halton Camp via Weston Turn. A mixed fleet of Leyland, Bedford and Dennis saloons and coaches were transferred to Eastern National and were numbered L121—L129, the service and fleet passed to United Counties in 1952.

In September the services of E&E Benjamin (Our Bus Services) at Grays was taken over. The services involved were Grays War Memorial, Socketts Heath. Nutberry Corner, daily joint with Eastern National 32a. and Grays War Memorial, Turps Corner, Fairway, daily joint with Eastern National 32b. No vehicles were involved in this take over, however Our Bus Guy Vixens KVV878 and KVV879 were hired to Eastern National for a short period.

Bishops Stortford to Saffron Walden

With the recent change of operator on the Bishops Stortford to Saffron Walden route it brings to an end for Eastern National operation of this service which was started by the National Omnibus Company in 1921. Originally numbered 13 it was transferred to Eastern National in 1929 and the service continued with this number until renumbered 301 in 1955. Lately Eastern National under contract to Essex County Council operated the route. So after 80 years, another historical milestone has passed,

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