Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 732 April 2025



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

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732 for EBM 732

Colchester Corporation Transport 10 (WPU **732**), an AEC Regent III 6812A with Massey H30/26R bodywork, new in 1953. At Sheepen Road, Colchester on 18 October 1970, during a PSV Circle tour from Colchester. Its rear route number matches its fleet number, although the front route number has an additional 'A'. Number 10 left the fleet for scrap in 1971.

Both **Robert Appleton**





Essex Bus Magazine the journal of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group
Issue 732 April 2025



Above: Early March 2025 saw sunny skies and above average temperatures. The contra side to this was cold nights with overnight frost. The frost provides a stunning backdrop to Stephensons Enviro 400 MMC 804 (EU74 KTT), known as "Katie" due to its registration, on the morning of 4 March before running the 807 route to King Edmund School. **Chris Staley**

Front Cover: A surprise acquisition for First Essex from First West Yorkshire on 9 March 2025 was this Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 69278 (YJ57 YSP). It is unusual, and unique for First Essex, in having full size advert boards fitted to the cove panels both sides. It is seen on route 31 outside the White Horse in Maldon High Street on 12 March. **Dave Arnold**
More details on page 12.



Right: The story of John Brenson & Brentwood Coaches is told on pages 24-32. Displaying the current silver livery, Volvo B9R / Plaxton Panther FJ58 LUL, which was new to Sable, King's Lynn, on a wedding hire in Warley on 28 May 2016. **Adam Kelleher**

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Owen stocks a wide range of colour photos, please send an SAE for details.

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

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

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

Target Dates for EBM 733

Reports to Sub-Editors	**19 April**
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	**25 April**
Dispatch by Printers on or before	**3 May**

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent up to 26th 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.

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Group Notices

Welcome to New Member

Glen Bubb, Whitchurch - 1240

Group Meetings

The next meetings in **2025** are:
Saturday 12 April at **1430** (doors open 1400): **Annual General Meeting** at **The Quaker Meeting House** (more details below).
Thursday 17 April at **1900**: **Social Meeting** at **'The Globe' Public House**.

The social meetings are very informal with Alan Osborne as host. There will be no set programme, instead there will be an opportunity for networking and a series of short shows of about 20 minutes duration to members seated around two tables will take place. If you would like to give a digital show you will need to bring a fully charged laptop (there are no mains electrical connections available) which will be used as a screen. About 30-35 images would be best. For colour slides a slide viewer will be available to pass around, about 20 slides should suffice. If you would like to share views of colour prints or B&W photos then these (20) can also be passed around. At the end, the contributors will then swap tables. There will also be a short break. However, there is no obligation for attendees to give a show and members are very welcome just to view and join in discussions.

The Quaker Meeting House is in Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL and is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. 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.

'The Globe' Public House is also in Rainsford Road, just 100 yards along from the Quaker Meeting House, on the other side of the road. There is a car park but you must register your car at the terminal on the bar on arrival, otherwise a penalty charge will apply.

Annual General Meeting

As noted above, the 57th Annual General Meeting of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group will be held at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford on **Saturday 12 April** commencing at **1430**. There will be a slide show afterwards, where Richard Delahoy and Ian Ransom will present a mixed selection of omnibus interest. There will be a brief presentation from the Committee on the current and future plans of the group.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Saturday 5 April: South East Bus Festival. Kent Showground, Detling.
Sunday 6 April: Vintage buses running as part of the Kelvedon museum 50th anniversary celebrations. Three or four buses are planned to depart from the museum at regular intervals from 1200 onwards to local towns and villages. The event is due to finish at 1600.
Sunday 6 April: Canvey Island Transport Museum. Open Day. Point Road. 1030-1600.
Saturday / Sunday 12/13 April: Wellingborough Bus Rally. Museum, Castle Way, Wellingborough NN8 1BX.
Sunday 13 April: Spring Gathering. London Bus Museum, Brooklands, Surrey.
Saturday 26 April: Spring Heritage Running Day, Delaine Museum, Bourne. £7 admission, includes bus rides on three routes featuring the Delaine heritage fleet and guest vehicles. 0900-1630.
Sunday 27 April: Amberley Spring Bus Show with veteran bus rides around site. BN18 9LT.
Sunday 27 April: East Grinstead Running Day.
Saturday 3 May: Theydon Bois Transport Bazaar. Village Hall CM16 7ER.
Sunday 4 May: Ipswich to Felixstowe Run.
Sunday 4 May: Canvey Island Transport Museum Open Day. Point Road. 1030-1600.
Monday 5 May: King Alfred Buses Running Day. Broadway, Winchester.
Sunday 18 May: Maldon Museum of Power. Bus & Coach Show (sponsored by Stephensons). 1000-1600. Hatfield Road, Langford, Maldon CM9 6QA. Group stall will be at this event.
Saturday / Sunday 17/18 May: Isle of Wight Running Weekend. Ryde Bus Museum.

Saturday / Sunday 24/25 May: AEC Society Road Run & Rally. Newark Show Ground NG24 2NY.
Sunday 1 June: Classic Buses from Dorking. Amersham & District Omnibus.
Sunday 1 June: Canvey Island Transport Museum Open Day. Point Road.
Sunday 8 June: Route 418 Heritage Running Day between Epsom and Kingston, 1000-1700.
Sunday 22 June: London Bus Museum, Brooklands. Summer Festival 1000-1600.
Sunday 10 August: Big Bus Show. Stonham Barns Park, Stowmarket.

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

Slide Boxes for Disposal

Member Andrew Fieldsend has approximately 130 Fuji slide boxes that are available free to a good home. They are the most recent type, green with 'stepped' lids. They would be available for collection from Chelmsford after Friday 25 April. He can be contacted at fieldsend54@gmail.com.

Follow Ups to EBM Extra 8

DRT 1970s style

An excellent contemporary 20-minute documentary on Harlow's 'Dial-a-Ride' is available to watch for free on the Talking Pictures TV website or app (which is free to download). Just search "dial". (Warning, flashing images at the beginning.)

Hedingham & District - the early years

In this feature we looked at the development of the Hedingham fleet but didn't have room for a full list of vehicles operated over the period covered, referring readers to the various books written by Geoff Mills. We've since spotted that the company website includes both an outline historic listing of every bus/coach up to L417 and also a current fleet list. Both are available at https://www.hedinghamandchambers.co.uk/enthusiasts.

Every picture tells a story

This was a small piece about Wiffen's Coaches' depot in Finchingfield - Sunnyside Garage. Since writing that, we've unearthed a few letters about arranging Group coach tours to visit operators' premises, including a 1981 north Essex trip that included Wiffen's. So here is the rather attractive letterhead from the company, featuring a rather newer coach than the Bedford OB illustrated in the background of the EBM Extra article (and which is illustrated again on page 32 of this issue) - but still a Duple bodied Bedford. The letter, granting permission for the visit, was signed by Mrs E R Wilks-Wiffen, Managing Director.

We plan to include a photo feature on the April 1975 Group tour in next month's issue and more on old Group coach tours in general in an Extra in 2026, both in a tribute to Martin Weyell, our former tours organiser who died last October.



Service Revisions

Ian Ransom

27 November 2024

Z3 (Daily) Southchurch, Arlington Road - Tilbury Amazon **First Essex**. Additional journeys introduced between 27 November and 14 December for pre-Christmas period.

Z4 (Daily) Pitsea Broadway - Tilbury Amazon **First Essex**. Additional journeys introduced between 27 November and 14 December for pre-Christmas period.

Unknown date, but by 3 February 2025

A8 (Daily) Stansted Airport Bus Station - London Kings Cross St Pancras **National Express**. Additional stops introduced at Stamford Hill Broadway and Dalston De Beauvoir Town.

23 February 2025

84/784 (M-S) Colchester Bus Station / Norman Way School - Sudbury Bus Station **Chambers**. Further to EBM 729, service **84** revised so all journeys now operate via Northern Approach Road, Colchester. On M-F, 1035 Colchester - Stoke-by-Nayland and 1110 return journey withdrawn. Additional journey at 1143 Leavenheath - Colchester. 1330 ex Colchester retimed to 1304. Additional **784** on M-F Colchester - Leavenheath at 1110, plus minor timetable changes on M-F. (Both **84** and **784** are partly Suffolk BSIP funded.)

24 March

36/A/836 (M-S) Bishop's Stortford, Birchwood School / Interchange - Buntingford Greenways **Central Connect**. Further information to last month, there are also additional (M-F) **36** journeys at 1445 and 1635 Bishop's Stortford Interchange - Buntingford Greenways and an additional (M-F) **36A** at 1605 Little Hadham, Albury Road - Bishop's Stortford Interchange. The M-F **36** journeys Buntingford Crown - Bishops' Stortford Interchange at 1752, 1837 and 1917 are retimed to 1712, 1812 and 2012.

335 (M-S) Bishop's Stortford Interchange - Birchanger **Central Connect**. NEW SERVICE occasional early morning and late evening journeys. These are essentially positioning journeys from the depot at Start Hill.

5 April

99 (Daily) Leigh-on-Sea Railway Station - Shoeburyness East Beach **Ensignbus**. Southend Seafront open top service recommences, with the former **68** (Leigh Station - Southend Pier) and **99** (Southend Pier - Shoeburyness East Beach) operating as a combined service. Operates half hourly on the following dates: 5-21 April, 24 May-1 June, 19 July-7 September and hourly at weekends 26 April-17 May, 7 June-13 July and 13-14 September, with the first journey commencing from Leigh, Sutherland Boulevard and the final journey, extended there, as in previous years

19 April

Colchester shuttle services, which were introduced almost exactly three years earlier on 17 April 2022, will be amended after operation on this date, with the **Sx** numbers replaced by services in the **5x** series. Unlike B for Basildon and C for Chelmsford, the letter S has no connection to Colchester, it was originally used as C had already been taken and stood for "shuttles". There are no current plans to renumber Basildon and Chelmsford shuttle routes. Basically, the main changes in Colchester are:

S1 becomes **51**. **S2** becomes **52**.
S3 becomes **53**, M-S late evening is **53A** (Su evening still **53**). **53** also incorporates **S9**.
S4 becomes **54**. **S5** withdrawn.
S6 becomes **56**. **S7** becomes **57**.
S8 becomes **55**. **S9** incorporated into **53**.
S10 withdrawn.
Also, **86** becomes **55A** (M-S), **68A** (Su). See the 20 April entries below for full details.

20 April

7/8 (Daily) North Shoebury, The Renown - Rayleigh Railway Station **Arriva**. On Saturdays, reduced from two 7s and one 8 per hour (giving a combined frequency of every 20 minutes over common sections) to one 7 and one 8 per hour (giving a combined frequency of every 30 minutes over common sections). No change to weekday or Sunday service.

51/52/53/53A/54/55/55A/56/57 First Essex. Details under service **86** and **S** services below.
86 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - West Mersea High Street **First Essex**. The M-S service between Colchester City Centre and West Mersea High Street renumbered **55A** with a revised timetable. Some M-F early morning and late afternoon journeys extended from & to Colchester General Hospital. Most journeys will start from Angel Court, rather than the Bus Staton. The Sunday service between Colchester Jump Street and West Mersea High Street via Peldon Village is renumbered **68A**.
333 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Heybridge, Lilac Grove **First Essex**. NEW SERVICE operates via Baddow bypass, Danbury, Maldon Milton Road, Maldon Town Centre and Maldon Tesco. Generally hourly M-S daytime and evening and Su daytime. Combined with the current 31, this restores the link between Chelmsford and Maldon from x60 to x30 minutes on M-S daytime, although has a different route in Maldon.
S1 (Daily) Highwoods Square - Wivenhoe Railway Station **First Essex**. Route renumbered **51**. No change to route. Frequency largely unchanged, every 20 minutes M-S daytime, every 30 minutes M-S evening and Sunday.
S2 (Daily) Highwoods Square - Stanway Sainsburys **First Essex**. Route renumbered **52**. No change to route. Frequency largely unchanged, every 20 minutes M-S daytime, every 30 minutes M-S evening and Sunday.
S3 (Daily) West Bergholt Queens Head - Rowhedge, Heath Road **First Essex**. Route renumbered **53**, and replaces service **S9** between City Centre and Rowhedge (the **S3** and **S9** are currently interworked anyway). No change to route. Frequency largely unchanged, every 45 minutes M-S daytime, every 60 minutes M-S evening and every 90 minutes on Sunday. On M-S, late evening (after 2050) operates as **53A** between Colchester, Stalin Road and West Bergholt Queen's Head, while the **53** operates between Rowhedge Heath Road and Colchester Railway Station. The Sunday evening service will be provided by service **53**.
S4 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Greenstead Library **First Essex**. Route renumbered **54**. No change to route. Frequency increased from every 10 minutes to every 7-8 minutes M-F between peaks, and from every 12 minutes to every 7-8 minutes Saturday daytime. Remains every 10 minutes M-F peaks and Saturday after 1600, remains every 30 minutes M-S evening and remains every 20 minutes Su daytime.
S5 (M-S) Colchester Bus Station - Greenstead Library **First Essex**. Service withdrawn after operation on 19 April. This route was operated in competition with **Arriva**.
S6 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Shrub End, Hazell Avenue **First Essex**. Route renumbered **56**. No change to route. Frequency remains every 30 minutes M-S daytime, every 60 minutes M-S evening and Su. On M-S, the final journey at 2247 continues to be extended to Layer-de-la-Haye, The Fox.
S7 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - St Michaels, Baronswood Way **First Essex**. Route renumbered **57**. No change to route. Frequency remains every 30 minutes M-S daytime, every 60 minutes M-S evening and Sunday.
S8 (Daily) Colchester General Hospital / City Centre - Monkwick, Gosfield Road **First Essex**. Route renumbered **55**. No change to route. Frequency remains every 15 minutes M-S daytime, every 30 minutes Sunday daytime. No evening service. See **86** above re service **55A**.
S9 (Daily) Colchester City Centre - Rowhedge, Heath Road **First Essex**. Service withdrawn after operation on 19 April and incorporated into service **53** (see above).
S10 (M-S) Colchester Bus Station - Colchester General Hospital **First Essex**. Service withdrawn after operation on 19 April.

There are changes to many other First Essex services from 20 April, including some route changes, but full details were not available when we went to press, these will be provided next month. These include services Z3/4 becoming closed services, only available to Amazon staff.

30 May
132 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Braintree Bus Interchange **Arriva**. Service withdrawn after operation on this date.
133 (Daily) Braintree Bus Interchange - Stansted Airport Bus Station **Arriva**. Service withdrawn after operation on this date.

2 June
333 (M-S) Braintree Bus Interchange - Stansted Airport Bus Station **Central Connect**. NEW SERVICE, replacing **Arriva** service **133**. Generally hourly on M-F between 0530 and 2130, with a reduced service until 2330. On Saturdays, it will operate every three hours between 0530 and 2130. There will be no service on Sunday. It remains to be seen if funding will be made available to cover the timings that are not commercially viable.

With thanks to the Omnibus Society and Bustimes.

Southend-on-Sea City Council are planning to let a tender later this year for new routes 23A/B, linking Leigh Station (and therefore the c2c line) with Elmsleigh Drive, Belfairs Woodcutters, The Fairway, Progress Road, Whitehouse Road and then continuing to the Airport Business Park or (certain journeys) Southend Airport terminal building. This follows a long campaign by local residents and councillors and will utilise BSIP funding. To publicise the plans, two Leigh councillors arranged for Canvey Island Transport Museum's former Eastern National, new to Moores Bros, Guy Arab IV 5LW / Massey 1048 / 2017 (373 WPU), to run over the proposed route for invited guests on Wednesday 26 February 2025. It is seen **below** outside the Launchpad building on the business park, off Cherry Orchard Way, the likely terminus for the service (subject to surveys to establish precise bus stop locations). Launchpad is an office building owned by Southend Council and used by new businesses looking to become established in the city (despite the building actually being physically located in neighbouring Rochford District!). **Richard Delahoy**



A sewer collapse in the middle of Brentwood High Street on 3 March 2025 led to the road being completely blocked off at that point, so no through traffic could use the High Street. Buses were therefore diverted along parallel William Hunter Way. Services on route 269 (NIBS) that normally terminate in the High Street and on 498 (Stagecoach) terminated outside the back of Boots. The normal 498 bus stop / terminal point on the other side of the road, outside Sainsbury's, was used by through services. The 1545 'schools' 269 from St Helens School did not use William Hunter Way, but instead Ingrave Road and Queens Road to pick up line of route at Brentwood Station; this makes sense, as Ingrave Road is much nearer than WHW to the schools that the route serves. The High Street reopened on 20th, but as this was during the afternoon, NIBS, at least, continued to use WHW until 21st so as not to miss potential passengers.



Right: First Essex Enviro 200 44469 (YX12 GGO) in William Hunter Way on a diverted 37 to Brentwood Station and Warley on 14 March. **Chris Stewart**



Colchester

Received on Sunday 23 February 2025 were former Southend VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 3756 (YJ08 DZF) from Harlow and VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 4469 (MX61 AXK) from Southend. These may be loans rather than permanent transfers. 4469, which had been transferred from Maidstone to Southend on 29 December 2024 is seen **above** on route 8 at Colchester Bus Station on 25 February 2025. **Robert Appleton**

Then on 13 March, a new type arrived in the form of 3552 (KX09 GYB), an ADL Enviro 300, B45F. It had previously been at Stevenage (last used there 1 March) and is in the current lighter blue livery.

Withdrawn on 4 March was Enviro 200 4052, which was taken to Southend where it donated its engine to similar 4011 to enable the latter to re-enter service at Colchester, which it did so on 19 March.

Southend

Further to EBM 730, Optare Versa 4186, which had been on loan to Ware depot, has returned to Southend, re-entering service here on 26 February. The Versa that it had been exchanged for, 4194, was returned to Ware on 3 March.

Versa 4208 has been withdrawn following engine failure, it was last used on 10 February. Further to EBM 729, Versa B37F, 4227 is under preparation for service.

As noted above, 4469 has been at Colchester since 23 February.

Further to EBM 728, Enviro 400 driver trainer T199 (SN08 AAE), which moved to Harlow in November 2024, returned to Southend in February 2025.



Above: As reported last month, Optare Versa 4199 (YJ58 PFZ) entered service from Southend on 5 February 2025 after transferring from Ware. Unlike all the other V1110 Versas at Southend which have Mercedes 4 cylinder engines, this is Cummins 6 cylinder powered (all Southend's V1170 Versas also have 6 cylinder Cummins engines). It is seen on 18 February in Victoria Avenue, Southend, on route 9A. **John G Lidstone**

Harlow

1661 (GN64 DXY) is a second Wrightbus StreetLite WF, B30F, to be acquired from Arriva Kent & Surrey (at Tunbridge Wells), on 18 March 2025, joining 1660 as reported in EBM 729.

As noted above, VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 3756 moved to Colchester on 23 February 2025. With no vehicles transferred in before 18 March this left the depot short of vehicles with resultant cuts to services on Monday-Fridays.

Also as noted above, Enviro 400 driver trainer T199, which had only been at Harlow since November 2024, returned to Southend in February 2025. Similar T83 (LJ59 AAE), which had also been received in November 2024, from Gillingham, moved to Northfleet in February 2025.

Further to last month, Enviro 200 MMC 4081 returned to service on 28 February.

Due to emergency waterworks near the Black Horse bus stop by Dunmow Road, route 59 was diverted on 18 March down a single lane country road missing Black Horse Lane, White Roding, The Elms and Leading Roding. This necessitated small vehicles to be used on the route; noted between 18th and 21st were WF StreetLites 1660 and 1661, Optare Solo SR 1519 and mini Enviro 200 4008. The route was back to normal on 22nd.

Acquisitions / Transfers / Disposals

Corrections to EBMs 728-730. The ex-Fastrack Enviro 200 MMCs that moved to Harlow (from Northfleet, Kent) were technically transfers within Arriva Kent Thameside rather than acquisitions. The VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2s that went to Stevenage were transfers within Arriva Kent Thameside rather than Arriva Herts & Essex - 'Arriva Herts & Essex' doesn't actually exist. See 'Current Arriva Structure' on page 11 for further explanation.

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

Liveries on Colchester Enviro 200s 4057 (GN07 AXK) and 4059 (GN09 AXO)

The livery on these two vehicles was described in EBMs 729 & 730 as being "a modified version of the old turquoise 'cow horns' livery but with additional cream with a cream swoop covering the windscreen pillars and cove / roof first two bays." This description wasn't quite correct, as **Richard Lewis** explains: "Both were delivered in the original Arriva livery of aquamarine and Cotswold stone and that still forms the basis of what is carried sixteen years later. They never carried the 'interurban' livery with cow horns, but from 2018 the original livery was modified with blue added at the front, dark blue skirts added and the new fleet name applied (not all amendments were done at the same time, for example, in December 2019 4057 had the dark blue on the front bumper but not on the rest of the skirt, that was added later)." The treatment of both was not identical, as can be seen from these two photos, 4057 (**below**) at Bluewater on 15 November 2024, just before it transferred to Colchester (on 28 November) and 4059 in Maidstone (**bottom**) on 25 February 2025 soon after it left Colchester (it was only at Colchester from 7 November 2024 to 26 January 2025). Both **Richard Lewis**

A photo of 4057 operating from Colchester, taken on 9 January 2025, was in EBM 730.







Above: Showing the original livery before it was amended. All 16 of the batch branded for the Medway Mainline network were on display at the launch event at the Universities at Medway campus (it is named in the plural as there are three universities there) on the old Parade Ground in what was originally part of the Royal Naval dockyard at Chatham on 27 August 2009. This is 4057. **Richard Lewis**, who designed the branding.

Current Arriva Structure

Bustimes is potentially confusing on the structure of Arriva, so **Robert Appleton** has kindly provided the following guide. Also, unlike, for example, First Essex or First Eastern Counties, Bustimes does not provide the depot a particular vehicle is allocated to.

'Arriva Kent Thameside' on Bustimes is just for the Arriva Kent Thameside operation at Northfleet depot in Kent.

'Arriva Herts & Essex' on Bustimes is for the Arriva Kent Thameside depots at Southend, Colchester and Harlow in Essex, plus Ware, Stevenage and Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire.

'Arriva Kent & Surrey' on Bustimes does align with Arriva Kent & Surrey depots at Maidstone, Gillingham, and Tunbridge Wells in Kent. There are no depots in Surrey now (Guildford closed on 17 December 2021).

Arriva Kent Thameside and Arriva Kent & Surrey make up the Arriva Southern Counties region.

'Arriva Beds & Bucks' on Bustimes is for the Arriva The Shires depots at Luton in Bedfordshire plus Leighton Buzzard and Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire.

Arriva The Shires is part of the Arriva Midlands region which also includes Derby and Leicester.

Northfleet, Harlow, Stevenage and Hemel Hempstead were London Country garages. Ware (indirectly) replaced the previous London Country garage at Hertford which closed in April 1989. Maidstone, Gillingham, and Tunbridge Wells were all Maidstone & District depots.

Luton and Milton Keynes were United Counties depots. The previous depot at Leighton Buzzard was for many years rented to United Counties on an ad-hoc basis. When United Counties was split up before deregulation, Luton became Luton & District, Milton Keynes became Milton Keynes Citybus. The remaining parts of United Counties were later bought by Stagecoach. Kettering and Northampton depots are now part of Stagecoach Midlands, but Bedford depot went to Stagecoach East, joining Cambus, based at Cambridge, and Viscount, based at Peterborough.

Adam Kelleher

Acquired Vehicles

33693	SN12 AGX	SFD4DSBRFCGX36692	B450/38	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport

E40D / Enviro 400. Acquired from First South Yorkshire & Midlands (First Leicester) 10 March 2025. It had recently been on loan to First Glasgow to cover for ADL Enviro 200 EVs which had suffered structural failures (details in EBM 730). It temporarily moved to Bramley depot in Leeds on 8 March 2025 before being collected for Colchester two days later. It is in Leicester 'Frequent Fourteens' two tone orange and red livery. It is another of the 100 Enviro400s new for shuttles for the 2012 London Olympics, First Essex now has 33 of these. Like the others, it went to First Manchester after the Olympics. It was temporarily loaned to Diamond Bus North West in 2019-2020 after their purchase of First's Bolton depot. Upon return to First, it moved to Leicester in May 2020. It entered service with First Essex on 11 March. See photos on page 16.

69278	YJ57 YSP	YV3R6K6228A123686	AB252	B44F	11/07	First York
69369	YJ08 XYH	YV3R6N2248A127438	AC035	B43F	08/08	First York

Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban. Both for Chelmsford.

69278 acquired from First West Yorkshire, 9 March 2025. Collected from Leeds (Hunslet depot) by Group Member **Jack Benee** who took the photo **right** before departing. In Urban livery with main 'York' fleet name on lower panels and small 'First York' name above doors on nearside, just small 'First' above driver's cab on offside. 'York' names were soon removed. It unusually has (Northern Ireland Citybus style) full size advert boards fitted to the cove panels both sides, these were added c 2009/10. It entered service on 10th. An offside photo is on the front cover.



69369 also collected from Leeds (Hunslet depot) by **Jack** on 22 March. Photo **right** also taken there. This is in Urban 2 livery with white front, with main 'Leeds' fleet name on cove panels at rear on both sides and small 'First Leeds' name above doors on nearside and small 'First' above driver's cab on offside. The Leeds names were also soon removed. It had been new in York Park & Ride silver livery. It has an air conditioning unit on the roof towards the rear. The B7RLEs for York Park & Ride had one fewer seat than was standard at the time.



This pair of buses were acquired to replace similar 69421 and 69433.

Vehicles off Loan
Further to EBM 730, StreetLites 63454 and 63455, which had been on loan to First Glasgow since 4 January 2025, were collected from Glasgow for return to Hadleigh on 29 March. They both last ran in Glasgow on 3 March. However, between then and 24th, they were repainted into corporate livery (see below).

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 12 2024/25 (23 February - 29 March)
33425 BN (oos)-BN, 33567 BN-BN (oos), 33693 FG-CR, 33725 CR (oos)-CR, 33998 CF-CF (oos), 36838 CF (oos)-CF, 36839 CF-CF (oos), 36841 CF-CF (oos), 36843 CF (oos)-CF, 37016 CR (oos)-Disposal, 37042 CR (oos)-Disposal, 37054 CR-CR (oos), 44006 CF-CF (oos), 44537 CF-FG, 44538 CF-FG, 44915 CF-CF (oos), 47625 HH-CF, 47633 HH-CF, 63335 CR-CR (oos), 63454 FG (loan)-HH, 63455 FG (loan)-HH, 67171 CF (oos)-CF, 69278 FG-CF, 69369 FG-CF, 69421 CF-CF (oos), 69433 CF-CF (oos)

After three months out of use following accident damage, 36843 returned to service on 18 March. However, on 28 March, sister 36841 suffered accident damage on the A130 Southbound at the A12 Junction 17, Howe Green, in a collision with a car whilst on route X30. Thankfully there were no serious injuries and no one was taken to hospital.
37054 was withdrawn after service on 7 March when its MOT expired. There are now only two Volvo B7TLs left in service, 32673 and 37037.
69433 was withdrawn after suffering engine failure while on route C1 on the morning of 3 March. Both 69421 and 69433 are in Essex Bus green livery, indeed the former was the first bus to receive this livery, as illustrated on the covers of EBN 684 (April 2021).

Disposals
March 2025: 37016 (24th) and 37042 (25th) removed from Quayside depot for scrap by Trevor Wigley, Barnsley.
29 March: 44537, 44538 to First Eastern Counties at Lowestoft.

Repaints
47521 (SN64 CMV) from Urban livery to new corporate livery, with vinyls. Black masking has been added to the bottom of the windscreen to allow the new f logo to be applied. It was painted at First Potteries Adderley Green depot, there is a new in house paint booth / paint oven there. It is seen **below** on 20 February 2025 after arrival at Adderley Green. Photo taken by **Colin Billham** who drove it there (photo courtesy of John G Lidstone). Note, Adderley Green is in Staffordshire and is east of Stoke-on-Trent, and now is First Potteries (part of First South Yorkshire & Midlands) only depot (although there are outstations). 47521 returned to service on 12 March.



63454 and 63455 from Essex Bus green to new corporate livery with vinyls whilst at Glasgow (between 3rd and 24th March). Both have two fleet names on the nearside, one on cove panels and one on lower panels, the latter within an advert frame. Offside not yet seen. Unlike 47521, no black masking added for the front f symbol, instead it is in the same position on both as the one on 47521 in the photo on the previous page before it was repainted.

Previously repainted 33657, 33984, 33989, 67735 and 67805 have all had their old style fleet names and logos replaced with new style ones (by early March).

Enviro 300 67755 (SN62 ASO) has received a mainly red wrap for Essex County Cricket Club at Mardens. The design is based on the design of the front of the club's Twenty 20 shirts for the 2025 season. 67755 is seen **below** after return to Westway, Chelmsford on 21 March 2025. **Jack Benee**. N.B. To the right of 67755 is Driver Trainer 69148 (MX06 VOA) which, as reported in EBM 726, received a pre-First 'Eastern Counties' style fleet name when on loan to Norwich last year.



67755 is a surprising choice for this wrap, since it was only repainted into corporate livery six months ago and there are still eight Enviro 300s in Urban livery.

Between 1985 and 1995 Eastern National had four vehicles in Essex County Cricket Club advertising livery, firstly Bristol VR / ECW 3111 (XHK 216X), followed by Leyland Olympian / ECW 4005 (C711 GEV) then Leyland National 1924 (JHJ 150V) and finally Mercedes-Benz 709D / Reeve Burgess Beaver 616 (J616 UTW). A photo of 4005 in ECCC livery was in EBM 711.



Around the Depots

(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot. All dates March 2025 except where stated.)

Colchester

Further to EBM 730, the super rear advert for 'Freedom Direct Cremations' on StreetLite 47669 was altered in February so that it no longer covers the rear window.

StreetLites 47656 and 63336 have both received super rear adverts for Sketchers, Culver Square, Colchester. Conversely, Enviro 400 33688 has lost its County Broadband super rear advert.

47668 (27 February), 63334 (7th), 69518 (7th) single-deckers on 320.

Further to last month, 37042 was, after all, still on the scrap line in January, but had been moved out of sight. On 9 March it was still present along with 32672, 37007 and 37016 and had been joined by 37054. However, by the end of the month, 37016 and 37042 had gone for scrap (see 'Disposals' above).

News of the Harwich routes: a correction to last month, First Eastern Counties 36271 returned to Norwich, not Ipswich, on 21 February.

The April service revisions reported above will see the Colchester peak vehicle requirement reduce by three.

Chelmsford

On the scrap line on 11 March were 69433 and 67779. The latter had some minor front end accident damage which was incurred on 24 February. 67779 returned to service on 27 March. On 26 March, 44006 and 69421 had joined 69433.

Enviro 200 44550 very unusually made a couple of journeys on X30 on the evening of the 3rd, probably covering for 33997 which had broken down in Southend.

Hadleigh

Further to last month, 63458 (out of service since 22 January 2025) was still at Motus Truck & Van, Witham on 26 February.

Corporate News

Further to EBM 729, First Bus announced on 28 February 2025 that the purchase of the RATP Dev London bus business (comprising London United, London Sovereign and London Transit) had been completed. The company will be known as 'First Bus London'. A couple of weeks before this, the new First fleet name and logo had started to appear on some RATP London vehicles.

Further to EBM 724, where it was reported that the double deck electric vehicles on order for Basildon towards the end of 2025 will be 24 Yutong U11DDs, the first of this type have now been delivered and have entered service with other First Bus subsidiaries. Since the Sema fleet numbering scheme was introduced over two decades ago, First Bus have generally not re-used numbers, but for these they have gone back to the very start of the double-decker (3xxxx) sequence and used 30001 onwards for these vehicles. This could be considered somewhat appropriate as a number of people have commented that these buses have a look of updated Bristol VR / ECWs and Eastern National's VRs commended in the 30xx series. Also, the original 30000 and 30001 were Bristol VR / ECWs. (There is not a 30000 this time round.) It is reported, though not yet confirmed, that Basildon's U11DDs will be numbered 30103-26 and their Yutong E12 single-deckers will be 65140-70.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Jack Benee, Ian Dann, David Edwards, John Lidstone, Gareth Norris, John Podgorski, Roger A Smith, Derek Stebbing, Andrew Toms, Robert West, Bus Lists on the Web, Bustimes, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.



Right: Chelmsford's midi Enviro 200 44173 (YX11 AFO) on route 3 at Rayleigh Station on 26 February 2025.
Nigel Clark

First Essex News in Pictures



As reported last month, Ensignbus Enviro 400 MMC 132 (34432, YX66 WLH) Is back on loan to First Essex. It is seen at Chelmsford Bus Station ready to take up service on route 170 on 18 February 2025.
Adam Kelleher



As noted above, Enviro 400 33693 (SN12 AGX) was acquired on 10 March 2025. It is seen on route 75 on the morning of 15 March in Heybridge.
Dave Arnold

This is the second Enviro 400 from this batch to enter service in First Leicester 'Frequent Fourteens' livery, although the previous one, which lasted just under three weeks in this livery before being repainted into corporate livery, had its branding removed before entering service with First Essex. Photos were in EBM 724.



A rear view of 33693 on route 87 in Colchester Bus Station the previous day, 14 March.
Robert Appleton

As reported in EBM 729, Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 37986 (BJ11 ECY), in 1968 Eastern National FLF coach livery, has had its front white LED display replaced with an orange one after the former failed. It leads a colourful line up in Chichester Road, Southend, on route 20 on 29 January 2025. Behind is Enviro 400 34455 (LJ59 LYK) in Essex Bus green, Arriva VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 4460 (MX61 AXY) in current light blue and StreetLite 47696 (LV22 HVY) in red shuttles livery. Plus, in the distance is an Optare Versa in old Arriva aquamarine livery.
Nick Street



Midi Enviro 200 44080 (YX58 HVK) exiting the temporary Harlow Bus Station on route 407 on 5 March 2025 heading for Harlow Hospital. First Essex won the 407/17 local routes in the last ECC tender round, from 29 July 2024.
Richard Delahoy



First Essex's temporary contract for Essex County Council routes 322/323/324 following the collapse of Arrow Taxis in July 2024 came to an end on 22 March 2025. On the last day of operation, midi Enviro 200 44174 (YX11 AFU), in shuttles red livery, has arrived in Great Dunmow en route to Stebbing on route 324. From 24th, the routes passed to Central Connect.
Owen Woodliffe





Further to the photo in last month's issue, taken on 23 January 2025, of First Specialist Passenger Solutions Wrightbus StreetDeck Hydroliner 39726 (BG74 DLD) at Quayside depot, Colchester, three more hydrogen cell powered SPS vehicles have visited Hadleigh depot recently. The other two of the first three StreetDecks visited on 14 March (39727) and 18 March (39728). On 17th, Wrightbus GB Kite Hydroliner 68901 (BN25 DFU), the pioneer single-decker of the coming huge fleet of 148 buses to serve the vast Sizewell C development in Suffolk, visited (**above**). These buses were at Hadleigh because the depot has outside Hywema lifts, enabling work to be done (checks and modifications) following their delivery and initial PDI elsewhere. Because there aren't hydrogen sensors in the roof of HH, the buses were banned from entering the depot. **John G Lidstone**

Below: 15 former Arriva London Enviro 400s were delivered to First Essex, at Hadleigh, in August & September 2022 to replace the remaining ALX400 and President bodied Tridents (details in EBMs 700-2). They had been converted to single door layout at Ensignbus and repainted into Essex Bus green at Mardens. Since then, two, 34453 and 34462, have been repainted into corporate livery following accident damage. 34460 (LJ59 LYU) on route 21 in green, but missing its front fleet name, and 34462 (LJ59 LYW) on route 20 in purple & grey, wait time at Southend Hospital on 17 February 2025. **John G Lidstone**



Acquired Vehicles

Further to last month, the Sema numbers of the acquired vehicles are:

ADL E40D / Enviro 400
101 (YX12 FNG) is 32741
102 (YX12 FOP) is 32742
103 (YX12 GHJ) is 32743
104 (YX12 GHK) is 32744
105 (YX12 GHN) is 32745
106 (YX62 BYJ) is 32746
301 (SN11 FPA) open top retains its First Glasgow number 33908
302 (SN63 NCA) open top is 33894.

BCI FBC6123-BRZ2 triaxle
408 (XL66 ACL) is 39044. This follows on from 402-4 which have Sema numbers 39041-3 which is logical as they also have 66 registrations. 405-6 (19 reg) are 39051-2 and 407 (70 reg) is 39061.

ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC
701 (SB66 SUL) is 44831. Existing 705-710 have Sema numbers just before this, 44821-6.

Disposals

Further to the acquisition of BCI Enterprise (triaxle) 408 from Aintree Coachlines, as reported last month, two-axle BCI Excellence 150 (LX17 GKL) has gone the other way. It last operated for Ensignbus in mid-January 2025.

Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 124 (BV10 WWE) was last used in service on 12 February 2025 and is reported as sold that month.

In EBM 724 it was reported that AEC Routemaster RM2151 (CUV 151C) had been acquired from the estate of Mr D McMaster for the heritage fleet in June 2024. However, this was sold to First Eastern Counties by October 2024. It was repainted at Mardens (keeping London Transport livery, albeit with generally non matching white band and gold underlined 'London Transport' fleet names) that month.

Other Vehicle News

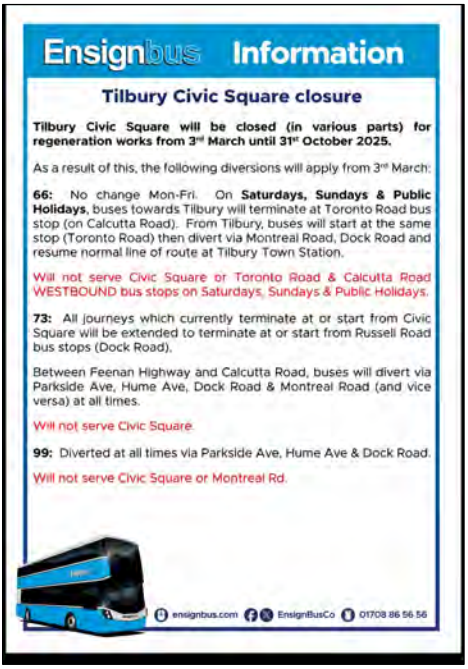
Further to last month, Optare Versas YJ13 HKA/B/C/E (from Warrington Buses) which are in sales stock but in the meantime are being utilised on Rail Replacement work and have been allocated temporary fleet numbers 602-605, have also been allocated Sema numbers, 49011-4 respectively.

Services

This year's Southend open top service commences on 5 April, with the two routes 68 and 99 combined into a through 99 service from Leigh-on-Sea to Shoeburyness. More details in 'Service Revisions' above.

Tilbury Civic Square is closed from 3 March to 31 October 2025, affecting routes 66, 73 and 99 (Tilbury version). Details **right**.

With thanks to John Lidstone and LOTS.


Ensignbus Information

Tilbury Civic Square closure

Tilbury Civic Square will be closed (in various parts) for regeneration works from 3rd March until 31st October 2025.

As a result of this, the following diversions will apply from 3rd March:

66: No change Mon-Fri. On **Saturdays, Sundays & Public Holidays**, buses towards Tilbury will terminate at Toronto Road bus stop (on Calcutta Road). From Tilbury, buses will start at the same stop (Toronto Road) then divert via Montreal Road, Dock Road and resume normal line of route at Tilbury Town Station.

Will not serve Civic Square or Toronto Road & Calcutta Road WESTBOUND bus stops on Saturdays, Sundays & Public Holidays.

73: All journeys which currently terminate at or start from Civic Square will be extended to terminate at or start from Russell Road bus stops (Dock Road).

Between Feenan Highway and Calcutta Road, buses will divert via Parkside Ave, Hume Ave, Dock Road & Montreal Road (and vice versa) at all times.

Will not serve Civic Square.

99: Diverted at all times via Parkside Ave, Hume Ave & Dock Road.

Will not serve Civic Square or Montreal Rd.

ensignbus.com EnsignBusCo 01708 86 56 56

Vehicle Withdrawn
540, LX58 CWG, VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 - withdrawn from fleet list 2 March 2025.

Significant Allocations

819	CN - KN	Returned to KN by 11 March after accident repairs
875	SY - KN	by 28 February, returned to SY by 19 March

Fleet News
540 (LX58 CWG), the non-standard VDL DB300 / Gemini 2, has reportedly been withdrawn from the fleet, with veteran Volvo B7TL / President 587 (PL51 LDU) seen on route OC6 in its place. 540 was last tracked in Hedingham use on 19 December 2024 but had been seen during February running on the OC6 but not tracking. 540 is believed to have been transferred elsewhere within the Go Ahead Group.
Volvo B7TL / Gemini 524 (LX05 EZG) has been spotted working the afternoon Tendring Technology College (TTC) contract leaving the Clacton Gorse Lane depot around 1445 and returning at around 1610. This proves the bus is still active but is another fleet member currently not tracking.
De-roofed ADL Enviro 400 640 (LX56 EUC) was towed to Sible Hedingham depot on Monday 10 March.

Vehicles off road or limited availability in March 2025 were 250/465/502/811.

General News - Company Rebrand Announcement
In late February, the following announcement of the rebranding of Hedingham and Chambers depots and buses to Konectbuses was announced, primarily to affected schools and colleges to aid smooth transition. From June 2025, both the Hedingham and Chambers names will disappear and the red and burgundy livery will be gradually phased out in favour of a new two tone blue livery of Konectbus.

Sad is the fact that Hedingham were about to celebrate a 65th year anniversary of running, and doubly sad that one of, if not the oldest recorded bus company names in England, Chambers, will be lost in everyday use, with an operating name in favour of the relatively new Norfolk business. Ironically, the early years of Hedingham and District were covered in the recently published EBM Extra 8.

The Go Ahead East Anglia rebrand statement is as follows:

“The year 2025 marks a significant period of transformation for our business as we work on embedding our core values into the heart of our operations. Our focus is on caring for our people, our passengers, our community, our assets, and our environment. Starting from March 2025, we will implement substantial changes to our Konectbus network in Norfolk and from June 2025 in Essex and then Suffolk to better support our passengers and colleagues. As part of our transformation, we plan to unify our three local brands under the existing name Konectbus to create consistency across the business. This will mean that our business will operate under one regional identity, fostering a sense of unity and pride among our colleagues as part of a single company.

“The Hedingham and Chambers brand in the south will be phased out and all operations will be simplified under Konectbus. Our local brand names will be updated to Konectbus Norfolk and Konectbuses Essex and Suffolk. This distinction on our name is necessary to avoid confusion which may be caused by overlapping route numbers within our East Anglian network, especially when viewed on our website or app.

“Over the next few months, some of our buses which are used on school contracts in Norfolk will be repainted blue and feature a modernised logo and name. This rebrand will have the greatest impact on our contracted services across Suffolk and Essex where our Hedingham and Chambers brand will transition from being red and burgundy painted buses to become dark blue and the name will be changed to Konectbuses. Our website, app and social media channels will remain as Konectbus in Norfolk but our Hedingham and Chambers sites will become Konectbuses www.konectbuses.co.uk and @konectbuses handles on our social media platforms. The Konectbuses app will be updated to display the newly branded fleet.”



A note from the Sub Editor.
This is incredibly sad for me personally and many other enthusiasts and is the end of an era of the Hedingham and Chambers operating names in North Essex and Suffolk. The whole scenario seems messy and ill thought out, with the Norfolk operation remaining as 'Konectbus' and advertising and ticket app working on the singular business name, whereas the rebrand utilises the plural name 'Konectbuses', plus the necessary strap line 'Essex & Suffolk' with 'Part of the Go Ahead Group.' Surely it would have been easier to rebrand as Go East Anglia - similar to other group companies, but with Norfolk, Suffolk or Essex straplines. Three different font sizes / styles '*Konect*' 'bus' '**es**' and partial underlining on the one fleet name seems quite bizarre. As does having 'Konect' with a 'k' and one n and "Connecting" with a 'C' and two ns on the side of vehicles. With Central Connect and Arriva blues, plus First Essex purple, seen in Essex already the choice is confusing as at least now the current livery stands out against First and Arriva. Just as well Stagecoach don't operate in the area with their new steel blue livery! Additionally, to use such a light blue on skirts and lower dash panels will highlight damage more quickly.

The first group vehicle outshopped in the new two-tone blue livery is Norfolk based ADL Enviro 400 626 (SN65 OAE) with the Konectbus Norfolk branding. Coming to Essex & Suffolk will be 541, a Gemini 2 which is believed to be LX59 CZZ, ex Bee Network 3269, which has been spotted being prepared into the new livery. Existing buses to be used on the 74 and X76 corridors are said to be being repainted first.

Chambers can trace its origins back to 1877 in the village of Bures as a saddlery, progressing to have motor vehicles placed in service by 1919 and laid claim to being the oldest bus company in England. Hedingham, newer in formation, developing after the takeover of the Letch and Blackwell businesses, can be traced back to 1960. Buses have been operated under the legal operator's licence of Konectbus, Dereham since shortly after takeover by Go Ahead in 2012. It will be very interesting to see if any of the three original Hedingham liveried vehicles still in the fleet remain long enough to wear the new Konectbuses livery, as these buses have worn the original red and cream since new and have been subjected to paint patch ups ever since 2012. They are Dart SLF 259 (EU56 FLP) and Enviro 200s 292/3 (EU59 AFF/J) all new to Hedingham under private ownership. The Dart seems unlikely because of its age and the fact that others of this batch have been withdrawn, but the Enviro 200s are a possibility, they are not the eldest of the type in the fleet.

With thanks to Dave Arnold, John Podgorski and the Hedingham website.

STEPHENSONS NiBSbuses — Richard Delahoy

Six 8.9m ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMCs are on order for delivery in July.

Enviro 400 612 (SN15 ETE), which had been operating in the base Traws Cymru colours of its previous owner (not dissimilar to Stephensons' colours and as illustrated in EBM 723), has now been repainted into fleet livery. This leaves 611 to be so treated.

Withdrawn Dart 456 (GU52 HJX) has gone for scrap.

With thanks to the companies.



Above: Stephensons 327 (MX06 BPZ) is one of only two Optare Solos still in passenger service in this fleet. On 5 March 2025 it was to be found in Chelmsford Bus Station on service 99, working the 1710 Broomfield Hospital to Maldon. This is a tendered replacement for the former Arrow Taxis 99A service and is now numbered 99, although the blind display on this bus shows 99A. The route is more usually worked by former Arrow Mercedes Sprinter 202. 327 could be found in the bus station alongside the other active Solo, 328, the latter working the 32 to Ongar.
Richard Delahoy

Other Operators

Roger A Smith

Barker, Roydon
The following vehicles have been re-registered: LFZ 8052, an Irizar bodied Scania K400EB6, is now M300 ROL and Van Hool TD927 is now D22 EKE, previously CN61 FAM.

Felixstowe Travel
We reported in EBM 729 that "REL Capital has taken a majority shareholding in Felixstowe Travel. The existing management team will remain in place." However, in the event this did not occur, and Felixstowe Travel have now ceased trading, as explained in 'Coach & Bus Week':

"Felixstowe Travel ceased trading on Sunday 16 March 2025, posting a notice on its website that its offices were now unmanned and liquidators would be appointed in due course. The acquisition of a majority shareholding in the company was planned by REL Capital in December 2024, at which time REL said the business would "work closely with existing Davian and Tendring Travel businesses to strengthen the company's presence in the East of England" and that the management team would remain in place, however CBW understands that the parties were ultimately unable to agree a deal.

"Clarifying the position, REL's Andy Scott told CBW: "We didn't actually complete the purchase. Felixstowe Travel reached out to REL last year, as they were struggling financially, but were unable to agree terms with their landlord,

and drivers were reluctant to move to a new location, so disappointingly there was very little to save." Andy added that REL hopes to retain some of the private hire business from its depots at Tendring and Rayleigh in Essex."

Ford, Althorne
W833 NNJ, an East Lancs H78F bodied Dennis Trident, is now with Grey Line, Higher Walton, Cheshire.

Lodge Coaches, High Easter
JW25 DGE, a Mercedes-Benz Tourismo M/3, is a brand new addition to this operator's coach fleet. Another similar vehicle is expected soon.

Peter Godward, Basildon
Mercedes-Benz Tourismo BV66 GXE (C53FLT) has gone to S-Line, Blackburn, Lancashire.

St. Margaret's Coaches, Harlow
SN11 FFT, an Alexander Dennis Enviro 200 (B39F) is here from Faresaver, Chippenham, Wiltshire. This vehicle previously operated in Essex with Ensignbus (fleet number 713).

With thanks to the PSV Circle.

Below: Last month it was reported that Tey Tours, Great Tey, Neoplan N2216 Tourliner 2 had been reregistered from OW68 AXB to Y24 TEY. It is seen at Broxbourne Station on Greater Anglia Rail Replacement on a foggy morning on 1 March 2025. Alongside it is a rare Mellor Sigma 7, MX23 LDL owned by LH Coaches. This vehicle has been used in the recent past on cross platform shuttles at Ingatestone Station during Rail Replacement.
Allan White



Below: A Westcliff-On-Sea Coach Services poster from 70 years ago, 1955.



John Brenson & Brentwood Coaches

Chris Stewart

In EBM 728 we recorded the passing of John Brenson, founder of Brentwood Coaches, on 30 October 2024 and stated that there would be a feature on John and Brentwood Coaches in a future EBM. Here it is.



In the 1920s, William Harry Pratt was a farm labourer who decided, with a mate, to buy and run a 14 seater bus between Pitsea and Southend (under the style, it's believed, of *Rayleigh and Pitsea Motor Services*) mostly ferrying workers to and from the EKCO radio works at Prittlewell. They seem to have been forced out of business by the 1930 Transport Act and by Westcliff Motor Services, after which Harry 'flitted about' (his son Jim's words) before moving the family to Brentwood in 1935. Here Harry got a job driving for City Coach Company, which included work on airfield contracts during World War II and being one of the first two City drivers to gain a double deck licence after the War. He wouldn't work for Westcliff after the takeover but did continue driving with successor Eastern National until about 1964. Sons Arthur (known for most of his life as Jim), Ted and Albert (known by his second name John) had been to school in the town and Jim spent time training as a mechanic with City, but wasn't keen to follow his father's footsteps and engine grease caused him skin problems. He had several jobs including Electricity Board linesman and working in a local cinema.

John, however, wanted to get into buses, but only as an owner-operator. He'd driven a coach at a very young age in the early 1950s - details of exactly what are a bit contradictory, the family knowing a number of operators. In a sense of what was to come, however, the Brentwood Coaches name could already be seen on FOU 985, a Maudslay Marathon / Duple which had originated with Coliseum Coaches of Gosport. It had been acquired in 1958 and licensed to A W Scott of Shenfield. This was followed by OWT 463, a Bedford OB (recorded as licensed to a Mr Cain of Mountnessing) and then HUJ 997, a rather exotic Whitson one and a half deck bodied Foden new to Salopia of Whitchurch. Two other vehicles are known to have operated around this time under the Brentwood Coaches name, ONW 998 (a full front Maudslay / Plaxton, ex Superior of London N17) and VMK 723, a Gurney-Nutting bodied Leyland Royal Tiger new to Valliant of Ealing, bought in 1960 but sold by 1961/62. Ownership was recorded as 'Eyres-Scott' (of whom more anon, but presumably the son of A W Scott noted above).

By the late 1950s, Jim and John (who later took his wife's surname of Brenson) had been running a coal lorry, as Pratt's Fuels, from Great Warley. The coal round provided inadequate work in the summer and so Jim (who had a PSV licence) went for an interview with Grey Green. The wage on offer was £7 10s for a 7-day week, with the added expense of travel to and from London. Finding this unattractive, the brothers bought their first coach in November 1959, a cream and orange Bedford OB (JXE 574), for £175 through the Exchange & Mart and so Pratt's

Coaches was formed - becoming County Coaches in about 1961. The coach often ran on hire to good friend Norman Tiffin (t/a Tiffin's Coaches, of Ongar Road) and was garaged initially with the coal lorry in the yard next to Great Warley Post Office. In 1961, they traded the first OB for an SBG / Duple (OXT 975), after some difficulties getting the OB through the PSV test. The next move was to a red and blue OB (KYE 309) and a Yeates bodied SB8 (199 CDH) which was painted the same colours but looked, according to Jim, "like a Circus wagon". Hence the first outing of County's long-lived two-tone green livery on the next coaches, twin, Plaxton bodied Bedford SB1s JEF 325/6. Father Harry drove for them sometimes but John moved back mainly into driving lorries (mostly tippers). Meanwhile Roy Eyres-Scott, referred to earlier, seems to have sold his licence (but not the Brentwood Coaches name) to County Coaches in the early 1960s.

Kenneth Whiskin of Billericay also ran coaches - including HOD 47, a former Western National OB / Duple, and ROE 11, another SB. These were sold in 1964 when DHK 881B (a Bedford SB / Duple) was bought new and the proprietor moved to Hutton. This probably carried the Brentwood Coaches name from then onwards - it was certainly adopted by a new limited company formed in 1965. This was WHM (Brentwood) Ltd which comprised Messrs Whiskin, Heard and Millington of whom the latter was proprietor of 'The Plough' Public House (now 'Mesken') in Rayleigh Road, Hutton. WHM ran a Bedford SB1 (259 CPT), two VAM / Duples and a Ford R192 bought new (LGT 813/4D and VNO 577E). They bought a 1964 Bedford VAL14 / Duple in 1967 (BYU 338B) and a VAL70 / Duple in 1970 to replace it (PJH 454H). Doug Brown, an Eastern National driver from 1962 to 1968 and EBEG member, was impressed by the first VAL when it came into EN Brentwood for testing to be done and was offered the chance there and then to work for them by Roy-Eyres Scott. Roy was still involved in the business but set up Lee-Roy Coaches in 1972, initially acquiring three vehicles from Midas Motor Services (Ted Dover) of Brentwood when they ceased, and operating from Kelvedon Hatch.

WHM was in due course sold to John (it is believed in 1973) with the Brentwood Coaches business and two vehicles, the R192 and the second VAL. By 1982, Brentwood Coaches had a fleet of ten coaches, mostly Fords (John's preferred manufacturer, as they were "faster than Bedfords") and expanded again in 1984 with the formation of Chelmsford Travel, with a house and yard in Little Waltham. Although the family connection between the two businesses remained, County and Brentwood Coaches developed distinct identities with the latter refining their livery to the bold brown, orange and white colours they maintained for a number of years for the coach fleet. Difficulties in painting this style have more recently led to the current silver livery (with one green exception).

Vehicles were kept at various locations around Brentwood before the Wash Road, Hutton site was bought in the early 1970s. Forced out of here for some years by planning constraints, they used 'The Gables' at Wyatt's Green (later Hi-Ho, and *Frontrunner South East*'s base from 1986) before acquiring a one-time bus yard in Great Eastern Road near Brentwood Station. Eventually, County Coaches and Brentwood Coaches settled back together in Wash Road where Brentwood Coaches is still based.

Although they both ran double-deckers on schools contracts, neither operator was ever involved in stage services, apart from the summer of 1994 when some Sunday services ran using 'vintage' vehicles over the former City Coach Company route between Brentwood, Stondon Massey and Ongar. John was a great City fan, collecting numerous photographs. By then, County had an OB (EDR 793) and John had amassed a vintage fleet of at least 10 vehicles, many of them restored by him and his employees with one (Guy Arab NUR 659) even having the body transferred from another coach in their workshop. The Sunday route featured several, namely North Western Leyland TS7 JA 5515, Commer TS3 WKJ 787 (one time demonstrator and later Moss Motor Tours of Sandown, IOW), Albion Aberdonian XUP 692, 'Eastern Belle' AEC Regal / Duple NXL 847 and two OBs - KEL 95 (new to Shamrock and Rambler) and Jim's EDR 793. Others within the fleet were former Tilling AEC Regal / ECW MXB 733, similarly bodied Bristol LWL6B NHY 947, Albion Victor KBJ 831 and Leyland PS1 / Harrington JYC 855. Many of these vehicles - all now with new owners - owe their continued existence to John. They also ran a 663 Maldon - Purleigh - South Woodham Ferrers - Wickford - Crays Hill - Barleylands - Basildon vintage service on seven Saturdays in June-August 1995.

County Coaches ceased trading in 2014 upon the retirement of Jim Pratt's son Bob. Sadly Jim died in March 2024 and John on 30 October 2024. A number of the family remain involved with Brentwood Coaches and son Jonathan acquired some classic vehicles of his own, including buying back MXB and restoring it a second time. It has now been re-sold again (having made it, as did John, to the Museum of Power in Maldon for the May 2023 Eastern National Heritage Bus Event, as featured in EBM 710), but Jonathan has two fine operational Bedfords carrying

Brentwood Coaches 'tribute' livery - former Happy Times of Wednesfield Bedford SB / Duple Super Vega 558 FBF and Bedford OB SEV 777 which had been new to Wiffen's of Finchingfield. He also owns unrestored CDL 551C, an SB3 / Duple Bella Vega new to Paul's Tours of Ryde, IOW. Two Volvo B10Ms complete the collection - LEW 16W, a Plaxton Supreme bodied example new to Kenzie's of Shepreth, and Plaxton Premiere bodied LUI 7645 which was new to Wallace Arnold as P329 VWR but operated for a number of years in the Brentwood Coaches fleet.

The families have contributed much to the bus and coach scene in Essex over nearly seven decades and the Group's condolences go to them. John's funeral was attended by a number of past and present figures from within the local coach and bus fraternity, as well as SEV 777 (see page 32). I was privileged to know both Jim and John, some of the above notes coming from afternoons sitting down with each of them about 25 years ago. Grateful thanks also go to John Kaye who has searched out PSV Circle information for me, Colin Sigston for present day information, Doug Brown for his insight and to Jonathan for photos and helping to piece together the facts. There are gaps, however, and any wrong assumptions are entirely mine. Corrections would be welcomed.

The present Brentwood Coaches fleet comprises:

4	7947 RU	Volvo B12B	Caetano C49FT	Ex BC06 BWC
5	823 NMC	Irisbus 397E	Plaxton C57F	Ex YN55 YSF
7	1023 RU	Scania K360EB4	Higer C51F	Ex YR17 RJJ
9	5189 RU	Scania K360EB4	Higer C49FT	Ex YR16 BNY
10	MRZ 3843	Volvo B9R	Plaxton C49F	Orig FJ58 LUL
	BSV 572	Scania K410EB4	Scania C53FT	Ex GC17 GLC
	LUI 7647	Volvo B8R	Plaxton C59F	Ex AT17 ATN

Page 24: A very happy looking John is seen at Lodge Coaches' Bus and Coach Day at High Easter on 18 August 2024, with Jonathan's preserved Bedford SB 558 FBF providing the backdrop. **Jonathan Brenson**

Below: Around half a century ago, John poses in front of a Plaxton-bodied coach, presumably Ford R192 VNO 577E, which was a Ford R192, new to the former owners of WHM (Brentwood) Ltd and which transferred with the business. Fords continued to form the bulk of the fleet for a number of years - there were seven plus a Bedford YRT in 1982. **Courtesy Jonathan Brenson**





Bristol Lodekkas. **Above**: Three Western SMT Lodekka LD6Gs (JSD 928/9/49 - ex WSMT B1292-3/1313) were part of the Brentwood Coaches fleet between February 1975 and June 1976. Two (JSD 928/9) passed to Motts but no further owners are recorded for JSD 949, seen here in 1975 at Eastern National's Brentwood depot, flanked by two EN former Dual Purpose Bristol MWs, where maintenance and testing were carried out. **Chris Stewart**

Below: Two further Lodekkas were operated, being ex Bristol Omnibus FLF6Gs C7219/52, EHT 108C and FHW 157D. Both were acquired in August 1978 with both surviving - EHT being preserved these days in West Riding 'tribute' livery while FHW was sold to Tricentrol in May 1981, also operated for Motts and passed through a number of hands including a preservation group before being exported to Germany by Carl Ireland of Hull. FHW is just about to pass Brentwood Station in September 1980. **John Fryer**





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Opposite: Also from Western SMT was Northern Counties lowbridge bodied Leyland PD3/3 LCS 954, seen here alongside Brentwood / County Coaches' then depot in Great Eastern Road, Brentwood on 5 September 1976.
Chris Stewart



Right: Perhaps John's most ambitious project was NUR 659, a Guy Arab III which originally had a Thurgood body and was new to Cannons Coaches of Puckeridge. The bodywork had all but collapsed when bought by John and a replacement body was sourced and fitted. It is seen here at Great Waltham. It is now in the Netherlands.
John Brenson



Right: 30ft AEC Regal / Duple NXL 847 from the vintage fleet was photographed at Brentwood Station after working one of the summer 1994 Essex County Council heritage routes to Ongar and back.
Chris Stewart

Right: Carrying the Chelmsford Travel identity, 3 (999 BWC) was a Volvo B10M with Plaxton Paramount 3500 bodywork new to Essex Coachways of Bow as A705 XMH. It joined the WHM fleet in 1990 and served for seven years, during which time it was re-registered again to HIL 8334.
John Brenson





Above: Seen at Brentwood School on 28 February 2002 is Volvo B10M / Plaxton Premiere 15 (LUI 7645), new to Wallace Arnold as P329 VWR, which has been retained by Jonathan Brenson. Numerous B10Ms were owned over the years, albeit with the occasional unusual vehicle including a Seddon Pennine VI and a Neoplan double decker.

Below: Volvo B10M / Caetano 1 (610 KWC) was new to Osborne's of Tollesbury as M577 JBC in 1995, only two years before the company sold out to Hedingham. Here it awaits the daily exodus from Brentwood School, an important customer for Brentwood Coaches over several decades. Both **Chris Stewart**





Leyland Olympian Coaches. **Above**: 12 (LIL 7230) would be better known to many Essex enthusiasts as B688 BPU, being the former Eastern National 4500, a long wheelbase Leyland Olympian / ECW coach. It went through a number of owners, including Metrobus (who rebuilt it with more standard upper deck front windows than it had when new) and Motts of Stoke Mandeville, but is seen here at the June 1997 Southend Bus Rally in the company of Bedford OB KEL 95 (part of the Brentwood Coaches vintage fleet) and East Kent Leyland Tiger JG 9938. **Chris Stewart**. See rear cover for two other vehicles from this batch, with original upstairs front windows. **Below**: 16 (823 NMC) was built as a Leyland demonstrator with an ECW body (to CH47/20DT layout) numbered in the 'experimental' series (EX26), this was the only Olympian coach constructed with a rear staircase, servery and toilet. Exhibited at the 1984 Commercial Motor Show in the livery of Ebdon's of Sidcup, it was bought by South Yorkshire Transport and registered 4475 WE with them. It has had a number of owners and identities, including a period with Stephensons of Essex as C101 OTW after sale by WHM. It had joined the fleet in April 1996 from Day, North Common in South Gloucestershire. It's thought to still exist. **John Brenson**





Above: Representing the current fleet and silver livery, left to right, 5 (823 NMC, the same registration as the Leyland Olympian coach at the bottom of the previous page), 4 (7947 RU) and 10 (MRZ 3843) at the Wash Road depot on 23 November 2024. (Type details on page 26.) **Chris Stewart**

Below: Beford OB / Duple Vista SEV 777, suitably adorned with a black ribbon, at John's funeral at Bentley Crematorium and Cemetery, Brentwood, on 26 November 2024. **Chris Stewart**
This vehicle was new to Wiffens, there is a short feature on it when with Wiffens, plus it appears in the background of a photo taken in August 1964, in the recently published EBM Extra 8.



Route 53 to 71

Thirty years ago this month, on 10 April 1995, long running route 53 between Chelmsford and Colchester was renumbered 71, with a revised route and timetable. Here is a small selection of before and after photos, all taken by **David Moth**. Interestingly, as reported on pages 5 & 6, a new Colchester 53 route is commencing on 20 April.

Right: Bristol VR / ECW 3091 (STW 35W) on route 53 passing Chelmsford Railway Station in April 1994.



Below: From 1 March 1994 to June 1994, dual door Bristol VR / ECW AHW 201V was on loan from Bristol City Line (5150) to temporarily replace 3071 at Colchester, which moved to Chelmsford to replace 3070 which had been withdrawn after suffering accident damage after being stolen from CF depot. It is seen on route 53 at Chelmsford Bus Station during its last month with Eastern National.

Rear Cover: Leyland Olympian coaches. **Top**: 4503 (B691 BPU) in 1986 privatisation livery on route 53 in Springfield Road, Chelmsford, in September 1991. **Bottom**: 4501 (B689 BPU) in 1993 Badgerline style livery on replacement route 71in New London Road, Chelmsford in April 1995.







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