

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 717 January 2024



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



fb.me/essexbus



Above: Exactly 30 years since the photo of the last Southend Transport RM, 102 (VLT 172), on the rear cover of last month's issue, Ensignbus's Routemaster 116 (543 CLT) in ST livery on the same route, displaying the same ultimate destination, on the last journey and at almost exactly the same spot, on 31 December 2023.

John G Lidstone. More details and photos on page 13.

Front Cover: As this is our 60th anniversary issue (see page 1), we include a brief history of Eastern National on pages 5-7. This is a photo from almost half way between our first and current issues, 1964 and 2024, and six days before Badgerline merged with Grampian Regional Transport to form First Bus which eventually led to the First Essex of today. Appropriately also for this issue, **717 for EBM 717**. 3233 (LUA 717V), allocated to Colchester, a Bristol VR / ECW (H43/31F) new to West Yorkshire Road Car Company in 1980. It was one of the vehicles acquired to replace vehicles lost in the Boxing Day 1994 Colchester depot fire. It came from Yorkshire Rider in March 1995. It is in Colchester Bus Station on 10 June 1995. The VR in the background, 3078 (STW 22W), is still in 1986 Eastern National privatisation livery.

Fred Lawrance

Right: The most numerous type of double-deckers in the Eastern National fleet was eventually to be the FLF version of the Lodekka, with 247 owned. In traditional Tilling livery of the time, with twin cream bands edged in black, Basildon's 2792 (AVX 960B, new as 1669 in the same month as our first issue, January 1964) enters Basildon Bus Station en route from Southend to Grays on a variant of the trunk service 2. The number 2A had previously been used for Southend to Romford but from April 1965 referred to journeys to Grays that served Orsett Hospital.

Bill Cansick





Happy Birthday to Us!

Sixty years ago this month, the Group published its first News Sheet and now we have reached issue 717. To mark that achievement and the establishment of the Eastern National Enthusiasts Group as a separate society, we are publishing an additional EBM Extra later this month. Full details on page 4.

Above: A brand new type of vehicle for Eastern National in 1964 was the Bristol RELH / ECW, with seven coaches and eight dual-purpose types delivered between January and March. One of the former, 582 (AVX 965B) new in March, is seen at Prittlewell Depot soon after delivery. It was renumbered 404 in August. Far left is one of the MW coaches 046-8 (10/12/13 DLY) acquired from Tillings Transport the previous November, then two other new RELHs, 581 (AVX 964B) and one of the DP RELHs. Right is MW coach 533 (570 UVX). **EBEG Collection**

Despite this new product from Bristol / ECW, three Bristol MW / ECW coaches were delivered in March and April which received higher fleet numbers, as illustrated on page 6. (Tillings Transport also received three MW coaches, one in March and two in June, which moved to Eastern National in 1970.)

Right: An advert from the Basildon Standard of 31 July 1964.

PARCELS TO LONDON!

EASTERN NATIONAL . . .

have introduced a new parcels' facility between **LONDON** (Kings Cross), **BASILDON** (Cherrydown Depot) and **SOUTHEND** (London Road Offices) by our Express Coach Service X10

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EASTERN NATIONAL OMNIBUS COMPANY LIMITED
New Writtle Street, Chelmsford, Essex
Telephone 56151

ENJAD.P.196 24/7184

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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 718

Reports to Sub-Editors	27 January
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	2 February
Dispatch by Printers on or before	10 February

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 3rd 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

Happy New Year

The Committee and Editorial Team wish all members a Happy New Year. We also hope you all had a good Christmas, and apologise for not wishing Seasons' Greetings last month. We'd like to say it was because of a lack of space but we simply forgot, sorry!

Below: Kelly's of Essex former Pulham's Mercedes-Benz Tourismo GL14 PUL on Greater Anglia Rail Replacement at Witham Railway Station on 30 December 2023. **Dave Arnold.** Two more RRS photos are on page 32.



Welcome to New Member

Tony Gaze, Gloucester - 1220

Group Meetings

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 10 February | Alan Osborne - 'Essex Buses before the Millennium, with Snippets' - 160 views of Essex and 40 from elsewhere. |
| 16 March | Owen Woodliffe - 2023 Bus Running Days (King Alfred, Rydabus, Portsmouth Depot, Bournemouth, Merseyside, Yorkshire Dales, Sandtoft). |
| 13 April | Julian Elliott, Head of Network, First East of England 'First Essex Buses in 2024', including a brief overview of First Eastern Counties |
| 11 May | tba |

For 2024, meetings are moving to **Saturday afternoons**. These are mainly being held at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL which is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. Doors open at 1400 for a 1430 start, ending at 1630. There is very limited on-site parking, accessed via Cedar Avenue West, we would ask that you leave these for those less able to walk.

However, April's meeting (only) is at the **Central Baptist Church**, Victoria Road South, Chelmsford, which is located between the Railway Station and Retail Market.

Meetings are being held jointly with our good friends at The Omnibus Society, Eastern & Southern Branch, who are very generously paying for the room hire so entrance is FREE.

Group Visits

Hedingham

By kind invitation of Robert MacGregor and Daniel Butterfield of Go Ahead, we have been invited to visit Sible Hedingham depot on 16 June 2024, for a tour lasting about 60 minutes. The visit will allow time to photograph vehicles and a visit to the office built by Robert's father in the 1970s. Robert and Daniel will then give a short talk and take questions on Hedingham, both as a family business and since corporate Go Ahead days. The tour is restricted to 20 people (EBEG members only) and will require you to make your own way to and from Sible Hedingham. To be as fair as possible to those wishing to book, please write to, or e-mail Ian Ransom (details on page 2), there will then be a random draw on 20 February. If writing, please enclose an SAE, so you can be notified of the outcome.

Canvey Island Transport Museum

With our sincere thanks to the Committee of Canvey Island Transport Museum, we are pleased to announce a day visit to the museum on 30 June 2024, with a shuttle bus provided to and from Benfleet Station. It will give an opportunity to view the museum's vehicles and talk to members of CITM and then for rides on a number of vehicles. Further details, including how to book, will be announced nearer the time. Please note this visit is restricted to members of EBEG only.

The Running Card

The following events have been advertised.

Owen Woodliffe

Sunday 25 February: Winter Bus Event, Epping Ongar Railway, North Weald.

Sunday 19 March: Golders Green Vintage Bus event.

Saturday 23 March: Barking Garage Centenary event with a running day on routes 62 and 145.

Saturday 6 April: South East Bus Festival, Kent Showground, Detling, Maidstone.

Sunday 7 April: Classic buses in rural Hertfordshire.

Sunday 14 April: London Bus Museum, Brooklands, Spring Gathering.

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

EBM Extra 5

Sixty years ago this month the Group published its first News Sheet and now we have reached issue 717. To mark that achievement and the establishment of the Eastern National Enthusiasts Group as a separate society, we are publishing an extra EBM Extra later this month. The Extra is very kindly sponsored by our current Chairman, Ian Ransom, and focuses on the events of 1964. Features include the Eastern National fleet renumbering and major service revisions, a review of the fleets of the Southend, Colchester and Ipswich municipalities, Tillings Transport, the birth of Dartford Tunnel Coachways and the new vehicle registration system. There are lots of evocative photos, most in colour and almost all not previously published.

Some other photos of vehicles new in 1964 appear elsewhere in this issue. And to provide some context to the story of 1964 and the importance of Eastern National, we have a brief history of the company on the following three pages.

Members should receive EBM Extra 5 by the end of this month.



Essex Bus Magazine Extra

Celebrating 60 years of publishing
Issue 5 January 2024

Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group
www.essexbus.org.uk
fb.me/essexbus

As Eastern National was the inspiration for the formation of the Group, we thought it would be appropriate to offer a condensed history of the company on our 60th anniversary.

The Eastern National Omnibus Company Ltd (EN or ENOC) was registered in February 1929 and commenced trading early in 1930, but its history goes back much further, to the steam buses of Thomas Clarkson and the National Steam Car Company. Clarkson established a factory in Chelmsford in 1902 and in 1909 started running buses in London. In 1913 National set up bus operations in Chelmsford, taking over services previously run by the Great Eastern Railway and in 1914 briefly ran in Colchester as well, before the Great War intervened. After the end of the war, National moved to petrol buses and set about expanding what became the National Omnibus & Transport Company Ltd (NOTC). Rapid development followed with NOTC setting up not just in Essex but also on the London fringes (on behalf of the LGOC) and in Bedfordshire and in the west country. Expansion came through a mix of setting up new bases, starting new services at existing bases and by acquiring many other operators.

There were then two major legislative developments. Firstly, in 1928 the 'Big Four' mainline railway companies gained the legal power to run buses and implemented that by buying into established bus companies. NOTC operated in all four railway company areas and its operations were split up, EN being formed to run the Essex and Midland areas (Bedfordshire and parts of Northamptonshire & Cambridgeshire), owned 50% by NOTC and 25% each by the LMSR and LNER companies. In the west country, Western National and Southern National were similarly formed but are not part of the EN story. EN thus started operations in 1930 with a fleet of 275 vehicles across a wide area. Then the 1930 Road Traffic Act brought order and structure to the chaos that had prevailed in the 1920s and gave protection to existing companies. Once it came into effect, EN continued to buy up rival local operators, safe in the knowledge that the Road Traffic Act would eliminate competition. Indeed, more than forty separate operators were bought up in the 1930s. An important acquisition was of Silver Queen in Clacton, adding 69 buses and 28 routes to EN and filling a big gap in its territory. Countering that was the loss of operations to the west of Grays to the newly formed London Transport in 1933.

EN ran a very mixed fleet although Leyland and AEC models predominated, but that was to change as a result of another seminal moment in the company's history. In 1931 Thomas Tilling Ltd bought a controlling interest in NOTC and hence in EN. Traditionally operating in London and Brighton, the Tilling Group expanded dramatically in the 1930s as they bought into many major operators and began to influence and control vehicle policies, standardising on chassis by Bristol and bodies by ECW (Eastern Coach Works) from the middle of the decade onwards, after a brief period favouring Dennis chassis. Indeed, despite the railway companies owning half the shares in EN, it was the Tilling Group management that set the policy and direction of the bus company.

One area that EN was poorly represented in was south-east Essex, where Westcliff Motor Services had grown into the dominant operator and became part of the Tilling Group in 1935, in this case with no railway ownership. The area was also well served by Southend Corporation (with trams, trolleybuses and motor buses) and independent operators, plus EN's interest in The Borough Services. Elsewhere, EN made substantial investments in the 1930s, with impressive new bus stations and garages and a modern fleet.

The Second World War inevitably proved very challenging and the fleet emerged in a run-down condition with a big arrears of maintenance, into a new era politically and socially. Passenger numbers were rising but vehicles and parts were in short supply. With the election of a Labour government, nationalisation of the railways was a given (achieved in 1948) and the Tilling Group management decided to sell up voluntarily rather than face possible nationalisation, so in 1948 EN came under state control, with both the Tilling shares and the railway shares now held by the Government. Westcliff likewise came under state control, all through the newly created British Transport Commission (BTC). New buses started to be delivered, mostly classic Bristol K types (double-deckers) and L types (saloons and coaches), but with a few Leyland Titans and Bedford OBs for good measure.

The first half of the 1950s saw another series of far reaching changes that were to shape the rest of the company's history. The residual local operations at Grays (to the east of the town) passed to London Transport in 1951, and, much more significantly, the Midland Area operations - which were always effectively separate from the Essex area - were transferred to fellow Tilling Group / BTC company United Counties in 1952, along with 241 vehicles, halving

the size of EN. Meanwhile, Westcliff had consolidated its position by acquiring the City Coach Company and its famous Southend to London Wood Green service (later to become the 251) and the linked Benfleet & District and Canvey & District companies. All those acquisitions were made through the BTC. Indeed, after the acquisitions, Westcliff was a larger business by revenues than EN. BTC also bought the significant Braintree operator, Hicks. The next step was for EN to take control of those businesses and by 1955 Westcliff and Hicks had been fully absorbed into EN, which finally had control of almost all of Essex outside the LT area. 1955 also saw an important Co-ordination Agreement with Southend Corporation, leading to joint operation of all the services in a ninety-six square mile area of south-east Essex.

So by 1955 EN had achieved a recognisable shape and size that many of us remember fondly and nostalgically. Two more acquisitions were to follow, that of Campbell's of Pitsea in 1956, giving EN control of the rapidly expanding Basildon New Town, and the very long-established business of Moore's of Kelvedon in 1963. Standardisation on Bristol / ECW products was almost complete, but Moore's brought with it a large fleet of Guy Arabs to upset things a little, the last of the Guys not being withdrawn until 1975. But the peak years of the bus industry were passing as car ownership exploded and leisure tastes changed, so that the 1960s proved to be a difficult decade, with declining passenger numbers, worsening congestion and staff shortages. From the 1950s the double deck fleet moved on to the revolutionary Bristol Lodekka, initially in rear entrance LD form and then front entrance FLFs, whilst for single deckers the engine moved under the floor in the form of Bristol LS, MW and then RE models, enabling a widespread move to one man operation. Bristol VRs and later Leyland Olympians restocked the double deck fleet from the late 1960s, leading ultimately in the early 1980s to 100% one person operation.

Below: There were just over one hundred coaches in the fleet in summer 1964, including this April 1964 delivery, BNO 117B seen a bit later in its life, in summer 1972, entering London Victoria Coach Station to take up service on express service X4 to Clacton and Walton, part of the Essex Coast Express pool which was set up in 1967, giving EN a share of the coastal express services jointly with Grey-Green and Suttons Coaches of Clacton. This was the last saloon / coach to be delivered under the 1955 numbering scheme, thus gaining the highest number of that sequence, 601. It became 367 just four months later. The ECW body carries the later style as used on Bristol MWs. In the photo it is being followed in by an Eastern Counties Bristol RELH. There was a similar East Anglian Express pool which comprised EN, Eastern Counties, Grey-Green and Norfolk Motor Services. The story of both pools is told in David Grimmett's book *Essex Coast Express / East Anglian Express a personal look at their history 1967-1985*. From the following year, the route would become National Express 084. **Alan Osborne**



By mid-1964 EN was operating a fleet of 730 (588 buses, 40 dual purpose and 102 coaches) from around 20 depots. But another seminal change was about to hit the industry. The privately owned BET Group, which controlled many of the big non-nationalised companies like Ribble, Southdown, Northern General and Midland Red, sold their bus interests to the Government in 1968, who then formed the National Bus Company to run all the Tilling and ex-BET companies. That led to the introduction of a new standard corporate livery (leaf green for EN's buses, white for coaches) and the development of the Leyland National single-decker bus. By 1973, the fleet had declined to 589 vehicles, although EN also had control of the 49 coaches of Tillings Transport. However, EN was soon to lose all its coaches with the formation of National Travel South East, although some coach operations (including some of the vehicles that had gone to NTSE) returned in 1978 following another restructure.

And so the 1970s and early 1980s saw the continued decline of the bus industry, before the 1985 Transport Act swept away the protective licensing system, heralding deregulation of buses in October 1986 (coaching had been deregulated earlier, in 1980) and the sell-off of the NBC companies and most municipal and PTE operators. Hence EN was bought by its senior management at the end of 1986, before they sold it on to the Badgerline Group in April 1990. The fleet at that time stood at around 470 vehicles. An early move under Badgerline control was to split off the south Essex operations as Thamesway. Expansion also occurred during the mid-late 1980s with the winning of contracts to run London Regional Transport bus services, starting in 1985 with the 193 & W9.

Badgerline then merged in 1995 with another emerging industry consolidator, Grampian Regional Transport, the combined entity becoming First Bus (later First Group). An early decision was to undo the earlier split, the Thamesway operations being absorbed back into EN, which was renamed Essex Buses Ltd. Initially the EN and Thamesway names and liveries continued but these were gradually dropped in favour of corporate branding around the turn of the century. In 2003 the company name changed to First Essex Buses Ltd, which it remains today.

With a major influx of minibuses, the fleet stood at around 550 vehicles in the mid-1990s. There had been a significant expansion of the London tendered services (involving EN setting up depots at Walthamstow and Ponders End), but following the loss of some contracts and First's acquisition of Capital Citybus, the London operations were progressively transferred to First Capital, and ultimately First Essex ceased these London services in 2006, the last route operated also being one of the first, the 193 in Hornchurch / Romford.

One area of expansion was at Stansted Airport where First acquired the operations of two companies and in 1999 established Airport Buses & Coaches as a separate company but controlled by Essex Buses, although the business was closed down in 2003. However, today, First Essex run semi-express services from the airport to Chelmsford, Basildon, Southend, Braintree and Colchester.

The 2000s have seen something of a retrenchment, with the closure of depots, concentrating operations now on just four bases - Chelmsford, Colchester, Basildon and Hadleigh (albeit the first two have moved to brand new purpose built sites this century). Whole areas of territory have been given up, particularly following the closure of Clacton depot in 2018. At the end of 2001 the fleet stood at just over 410 vehicles. Today (early 2024) First Essex run a fleet of around 320 buses (no longer any coaches), considerably slimmed down from the peak years of seventy years ago but still recognisably identifiable with the Eastern National Omnibus Company.

An outstanding development in early 2023 was the purchase by First Bus of Ensignbus at Grays, currently operated separately from First Essex but with scope for closer co-operation over time, and bringing areas of Thurrock previously given up back under common ownership.

Below: An Eastern National traffic notice re coaching holidays film shows in 1964. **The Bus Archive**

EASTERN NATIONAL
has pleasure in
announcing
★

**"COACHING HOLIDAYS"
FILM SHOWS**
1964

**BY REQUEST—
SPECIAL "REPEAT"
SHOWS AT**

SOUTHEND ST. PAUL'S HALL, SUMMERCOURT ROAD,
LONDON ROAD, (near "The Cricketers")
Tuesday, 10th March at 7.30 p.m.

CHELMSFORD SHIRE HALL
Thursday, 12th March, at 7.30 p.m.

SHOWING COLOUR FILMS OF THE FAMOUS HOLIDAY AREAS OF BRITAIN

ADMISSION (FREE) BY TICKET OBTAINABLE AT LOCAL OFFICES OF THE COMPANY

EN AD. 85/1/64 Head Office: NEW WHITTLE STREET, CHELMSFORD. Phone MR (7 lines) (Sales and Tel. 84)

Promoting the Company in 1964

Richard Delahoy

Eastern National had an active publicity department to promote its activities, one important event being the company's stand at the Essex County Show. The Essex Agricultural Society had been established in 1858 and that year ran its first agricultural show. Over the ensuing century the Show was held in various places in Essex but in 1958 a permanent base was established with the purchase of 158 acres of land at Great Leighs, between Chelmsford and Braintree. Today this is the site of Chelmsford racecourse. It is thought that the final County Show was held in 2002.



Top right: The 1964 Eastern National exhibit featured the first of the new Bristol RELH coaches, 578 (AVX 961B, renumbered 400 that August).

Right: EN were also proud to show off recovery vehicle 0101, an ex-Forces AEC Matador acquired from the RAF in 1959. The original body was sold for scrap and a new one constructed at Central Works from the front section of Tillings Transport Bristol LL6G / ECW MXB 738. The remainder of that body was also sold for scrap. It was fitted with a crane at the same time. Mind you, we're not sure it was necessarily a good marketing point to highlight the need for a specialist vehicle to tow in broken down buses and coaches!



Bob Beaumont was on hand to photograph the exhibits as seen here and was probably involved in manning the stand. He had also photographed the remains of the Tillings coach at Central Works, as shown **right** in an undated shot. Bob was a founding ENEG member, number 3, and worked for EN in various admin and later managerial roles until leaving in 1986.



30 October 2023 (additional information)

81/A (M-S) Colchester Bus Station - Dedham, Marlborough Head **First Essex**. 1600 from Norman Way Schools (Sch only) & 1613 from Bus Station (Non Sch) renumbered from 81A to 81 and extended from Dedham to Manningtree Railway Station.

83/A/B (M-S) Colchester Bus Station - Bures Church **First Essex**. Revised timetable. 83 operates Colchester - Bures via Lexden, Stanway, Fordham and Wakes Colne. 83B operates Colchester - Aldham. 83A variant withdrawn.

31 December (additional information)

70/170 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Braintree, Tesco East Store **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S. Most daytime journeys will operate as 170. The 70 (via Rayne Road, Braintree) will now operate some M-F journeys only.

S3 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - West Bergholt, Queens Head **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S. Revised from hourly to generally every 45 minutes and most buses continue as S9 from Colchester High Street to Rowhedge, Heath Road.

S9 (Daily) Colchester Railway Station - Rowhedge, Heath Road **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S. Revised from hourly to generally every 45 minutes and most buses continue as S3 from the Bus Station to West Bergholt, Queens Head.

X10 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Stansted Airport Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F to improve reliability. M-F 0800 from Runwell to Basildon revised to start from Broomfield Hospital at 0720. M-F additional journey 0605 Basildon Bus Station - Broomfield Hospital. Note corrected date, shown as 2 January last month.

7 January 2024

351 (M-S) Bishop's Stortford - Hertford **Central Connect**. Revised timetable and renumbered 35 for most journeys, 35B for Stanstead Abbots - Hertford short workings and 35C for Bishop's Stortford schools services.

With thanks to the Omnibus Society.

On 19 November 2023 the Chingford Historical Society put on a display in the former buffet of Chingford Station to mark 150 years since the arrival of the railway in the then village, although in 1883 it terminated about a mile before and the extension to the current site and building was not opened until five years later.

Right: London Bus Company's RTW75 (KGK 575), pictured outside Chingford Station, gave trips around nearby Epping Forest, through which the railway was proposed to be extended until Queen Victoria decreed during her visit there in 1888 that the forest be kept for the people of London to enjoy.



Text & photo
Owen Woodliffe

Follow Ups

EBM Extra 4 Scottish Exchange by Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit

Richard Delahoy's article in the Autumn Extra about the Scottish VRs reminded me that there was another mass transfer of double deckers from Scotland to Essex. In late 1995, John Brenson, the owner of Brentwood Coaches, saw an advert for eight Leyland Fleetlines being sold by Western SMT and he arranged to purchase them. They were Alexander bodied LMS 151/2/5/66W, and ECW bodied ULS 662/71/4/5T. In the event, if my memory serves, one required mechanical attention, so it was not included in the deal.

One Friday evening, after the schools run in, five of us (three drivers, one mechanic, and John's son, Terry) set off in the company Renault Megane for Airdrie, Scotland. The boss, another mechanic, a local enthusiast (with PCV license) and one other, had travelled up earlier in the day, for sightseeing, and the enthusiast probably snapping the local buses. The rest of us arrived about 11pm, locating the guest house by getting directions from two 'ladies of the night' who were disappointed that we were not customers!

After an early breakfast we presented ourselves at the ex-Baxter's Victoria garage to collect our steeds. Surprisingly all of the maintenance staff absented themselves, only emerging as we pulled out, to cheer us on our way, or was there something more sinister behind those salutations? My beast was one of the ECW ones but I don't recall which. We stopped just short of Penrith for a comfort halt. John then made me convoy leader "because he has got the pace just right"! Little did he know that I was virtually standing on the throttle, trying to coax a bit of speed out of the thing! It was decided that we would cross the Pennines on the A66 to Scotch Corner, and head south on the A1. In my mirror I could see all of the other six, and a long line of other vehicles. I could feel the frustration of those motorists who had finally managed to pass the big red bus, only to find another one, and subsequently, another five!

We stopped at a service station at Great Gonerby, near Grantham, and £50s worth of diesel was put into each bus (total £350), a lot of money back then. It was an Esso station, and that company were giving 'Tiger tokens' with each purchase, to be used towards gifts. Terry was delighted with his haul of tokens helping to furnish his home. It was quite a surprise that those old girls made it to the Little Waltham yard without hitch, and none of them caught fire like modern buses might, being taken from local service work to a long non-stop journey. One of our clan had an unusual day, his right foot either hovering over the brake pedal, or resting on the dashboard. Our arrival back home was greeted by the boss handing out cans of John Smith's famous brew, most welcome.

Although all of them were resprayed into fleet colours, I don't think ULS 671T ever saw any revenue earning service, being cannibalised to keep the others running.

Below: Before repainting, an ECW bodied Fleetline on the right with two Alexander examples, amongst some of Brentwood Coaches Bristol VR / ECWs. The forward facing Fleetline is LMS 151W.

Brenson family, courtesy Jonathan Brenson





Above:: LMS 151W again, after repainting, on the right, next to LMS 155W and VR CJH 121V.
Brenson family, courtesy Jonathan Brenson

Below: A third livery for LMS 151W. By the time of this photo it had moved from Brentwood Coaches to County Coaches and received their colours, but the acquired VR behind is still in Brentwood Coaches livery. Seen at the Tallon Road, Hutton, depot on 27 September 1999. The two companies were owned at the time by brothers, one owned Brentwood Coaches and the other County Coaches. **Chris Stewart**



EBM 715 - Bristol SCs

Peter Carr writes: "A really interesting piece in EBM 715 about ENOC's Bristol SCs. The comment accompanying the interior photo was spot-on, according to one of the few OMO drivers at Bishop's Stortford who had been on OMO in the early 1960s. He told me he hated the one (or was it two?) at BS; firstly, with only 4 cylinders it was chronically sluggish, and secondly, there was the twisting round to take fares. He was glad to see the back of it. At least one subsequent owner dealt with the unsatisfactory fare-taking position by using crew operation, as this photo of 9577 F (ex-EN 453) with K.W. Coaches of Daventry clearly shows. **Peter Carr Collection**



"The caption to the photo of 604 JPU asks whether Bishop's Stortford's SC (or SCs) ever sat at the same point. The answer is almost certainly no, as the Thaxted terminal stand was on the opposite side of the road, exactly where the white people-carrier can be seen, facing the picturesque Guildhall. Additionally, when I joined Eastern National in January 1970, the four trips per day to Thaxted were all crew-operated, and I was told that they always had been since the service was introduced in September 1952 to replace the closed Elsenham to Thaxted railway line. The only possibility of any SC working that route to Thaxted would have been as a crew-operated vehicle if no other vehicle was available, highly unlikely during the short life of the SCs with EN. And, as noted, Bishop's Stortford Depot would have had two at most, more likely only one. The Thaxted service was firstly numbered 38, later 338, and finally 302. There were several short workings to Henham, originally as part of the routes to Debden. The Debden routes were combined with the Thaxted service in the late 1960s. Henham had been served by two stations / halts on the railway, surely wildly extravagant for a village which didn't reach a population of four figures until well into the 21st century!"

Below: In EBM 715 we included a photo of Bristol SC 451 (9575 F) at Brentwood Depot. Here is another photo of it, after withdrawal, with depot & fleet number plates, destination blinds and the front 'Pay As You Enter' sign removed, and the fleet names and legal lettering painted over, at the back of Maldon Depot in 1964, with one of its sisters alongside. **Bob Beaumont**



EBM 716 - Southend's Routemasters



As mentioned in last month's article, 31 December 1993 was the last regular day of service for Southend Transport's Routemasters. Exactly 30 years later, a private tour was run over some of the old routes, featuring Ensignbus's ex Southend 116 (543 CLT) and privately preserved 122 (VLT 44).

Top right: 116 leading 122 on route 4A at Poynter's Lane, Shoebury.

Middle: The two Routemasters passing each other at the Belgrave Road terminus of Route 29.

Bottom: 122 at Southend Travel Centre, displaying the original commemorative notice that 102 had carried 30 years ago on the final journey, on the 3A from Southend to Canvey and back, as illustrated on last month's rear cover.

Top Right: **John G Lidstone**
All others: **Richard Delahoy**



EBM 716 - The Saga of the X10

This route actually commenced on 24 July 2016, not November that year.

With thanks to William Morrison

Preservation News

Sadly, ONO 85, the sole surviving Eastern National Bedford OB, has been broken up by its current owner Easton's Coaches of Stratton Strawless, Norfolk who acquired it from Jonnie Brenson in March 2014. Easton's had advertised it for sale in late November but presumably did not find a buyer, it was in poor condition and would have required a full restoration. A summary of its history:

Bedford OB / Duple C29F new 1949 to Eastern National as fleet number 4064.

Withdrawn 1952, to United Counties, number 118, 5/52

Withdrawn 9/53

To Thurgood (dealer), Ware, 10/53

To Robinson, Carlton Huthwaite, date unknown

To Whippet, Hilton 8/55

To O'Neil, Lidsing, date unknown

To Olsen, Strood - refurbished by Duple, late 1970s

To Saville, Mitcham, Surrey - preservation, mid 1980s

To Gould t/a Nostalgibus, Merton Park, by -/94

To Repton, Bookham, 1/03 (photo **below** when with Repton in 2003, **John Wakefield Collection**).

To J Brenson Essex, 6/12

To Easton, Stratton Strawless, 3/14.

With thanks to Chris Stewart and John Wakefield.



Colchester

As is customary, no services ran on 25, 26 December 2023 or 1 January 2024, except for the 133 (Braintree-Stansted) with a limited service of eight journeys each way on those three days.

Southend

As is customary, no services ran on 25, 26 December 2023 or 1 January 2024.

Versa 4257 is a further repaint into the current lighter blue livery, after being of the road for most of December.

When Versas 4201/2/4-12 returned to Southend from Guildford just over a year ago, three (4201/2/7 – Kursaal Flyer, Procul Harum and William [Bradley] respectively) still carried names that had been applied during their original stay in Southend, in the window ahead of the doors. Subsequently these have been removed, possibly up to a year ago. Likewise, long Versa 4259 has also lost its name (Tony Tomassi). With the long Versas (4245-60 batch), those remaining in the older Arriva livery still carry their "Pride of" names but the five that have been repainted into the latest lighter blue livery (4248-51/7) have lost those names on repaint and have also lost the attractive photos of local scenes on their rear panels.

Harlow

Further to last month, Optare Versa 4238 remains out of service following its accident between Bishop's Stortford and Stansted in early October. Also, Versa 4184 was not in use during December.

ADL Enviro 200 MMC 4120 (SN67 WUJ) was used on route 10 on 22 December 2023 (using a spare ticket machine). It had previously been in use in Maidstone. It has not worked in Harlow subsequently so it seems it was only a temporary loan.

Generally the availability of the VDL SB200s has been the best ever since their introduction on to the 724. There have been some cuts due to vehicle shortages in mornings but by later in the day vehicles have been made available to cover. Mercedes-Benz crew shuttle 1012 (BF67 WGJ) remains in use here, it was seen on crew shuttle duty on 18 December.

With thanks to John Card, Adam Kelleher and Jonathon Thompson.

Below: It has been many years since Towerfield Road in Shoebury has seen buses - it was a terminus for the 22 in the 1970s - although a bus stop pole remains, with a fragment of bus stop flag still attached. However, in mid-December it was used for a few days by service 9 buses towards Rayleigh, diverted due to the closure of Ness Road southbound for emergency gas works. With a large poppy prominent, 4208 (YJ61 CJU) has just passed the erstwhile terminus stop on 15 December. **Richard Delahoy**



Adam Kelleher

Vehicles on Loan

Further to last month, 47682 (SL15 RWX) entered service at Colchester on Monday 4 December. However, it was only used for two days before moving to First Eastern Counties at Ipswich where it entered service on Friday 8th. It is seen **below** at Woodbridge (Turban Centre) after its arrival on the 1042 SCC contract 'Village Link' Old Felixstowe - Woodbridge 73 on 16 December 2023, now stripped of its Port Talbot fleet names. **Robert Appleton**



47679 (SL15 RVW) was only in use for one day from Hadleigh, 27 November, before suffering a defect. It returned to service on 2 January 2024 for two days before moving to Colchester. 47680 (SL15 RVX) has been in daily use. One minor correction to last month, it entered service in the morning of 27 November, not afternoon - it was captured in the morning, **below**, by **Andrew Sugden**, outside Southend Hospital. This nearside photo contrasts nicely with the offside one included in last month's issue and shows the different fleet names on nearside compared to offside. Incidentally, the front destination shows the (relatively) new 'Southend City Ctr' but the side blind still shows 'Southend Bus Stn'. This bus also moved to Colchester in the New Year, in service there from 3 January.



Ensignbus Enviro 400 MMC 34432 (EB fleet number 132), which had been on loan since 12 July 2023 covering for accident damaged 36843 which returned to service at the end of November, returned to Ensignbus on 4 January 2024. Its last day in service with First Essex was 3rd. It seems to have spent its entire time with FE on route X30 apart from one day in September on Rail Replacement.

Allocation Changes

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

Period 9 2023/24 (19 November - 23 December)

32629 CR (oos)-Disposal, 36843 CF (oos)-CF, 42935 CF (oos)-Disposal, 44006 CF-CR, 44080 CF-BN, 44473 CF-CF (oos), 47679 FG-HH (loan), 47680 FG-HH (loan), 47682 FG-CR (loan)-FG, 63342 BN (oos)-BN, 63343 BN-BN (oos), 67167 CF (oos)-CF, 67171 CF (oos)-CF, 67756 CF (oos)-CF, 67901 PT (oos)-Disposal, 67903 PT (oos)-Disposal, 69148 CF(DS)-CR (oos)

Disposals

11 December 2023: 32629 towed away from Quayside Depot, Colchester by a Trevor Wigley (Barnsley) wrecker. This had been the last bus in Barbie livery.

To tidy things up, we are going to show the last Dart and the last Enviro 350Hs as disposals. The former, 42935, was noted still at Westway depot, Chelmsford at the start of December, but has not been used in service since 19 June 2023. It is believed it is awaiting collection by its new owner. The latter, 67901 & 67903, haven't been used in service since August 2023 and were last reported in store at Ensignbus's premises at Purfleet. They may have had parts stripped by now. Although they may technically still be owned by First Bus, they are no longer part of the First Essex fleet.

Repaints and Reseating

Airlink liveried 36842 has been repainted in the same livery. On the offside at least, the airplane symbol has been applied next to 'Stansted' correctly but also next to 'Southend' rather than 'Southend Airport'! It also temporarily received Christmas decorations in the same style as those on 33981 mentioned last month. These were removed by 31 December. It is possible that 36843 was also repainted after its accident repairs but this has not been confirmed.

Further to last month, it is confirmed that 67171 has had its luggage racks removed (apart from over the front wheel arch).

Around the Depots

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

Colchester

On the scrap line on 1 December were 32629, 66806 and 66817. By 9th, driver trainer 69148 had joined them, it had been towed from Chelmsford. As noted above, 32629 was removed on 11th. By the end of the month 66817 had also gone, but no further details at present.

News of the Harwich routes (1 December 2023 - 4 January 2024).

22 of the 23 StreetLites allocated to Colchester worked on 102/104 during this period, the exception was 63336 which is out of service. Despite this, all six Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse 69515-520 also worked to Harwich. 69519 has reached Harwich occasionally, but sometimes returns to the X20. For example, on 3 January, 69519 worked 0610 Harwich - Colchester 104, then four trips on 174/175, then 1335 and 1740 ex Colchester North Station X20, returning from Stansted Airport at 1540 and 1945.

In addition mid-length Enviro 200 44003 appeared on 5 December and 3 January, and sister 44006, recently transferred from Chelmsford, on 2 and 14 December. Three Airlink liveried Enviro 200 MMCs also reached Harwich. On 11th 67194 worked a full day's duty from 0710 Colchester - Harwich 104 to 1645 Colchester - Harwich 104. On 13th 67190 worked 0710 Colchester - Harwich 104 to 1208 Harwich - Colchester 104, then on to its branded route, X20. On 19th, 67192 worked 0720 Harwich - Colchester 104 to 1420 Harwich - Colchester 104, then four journeys on service 11, and final journeys on X20.

During the school Christmas / New Year holidays, the regular double deck journey was just 0915 Mistley - Colchester 104, with occasional journeys at other times. For example on 2 January 32547 worked 1725 Colchester - Harwich 104, 1900 Harwich - Colchester 102, 2035 Colchester - Harwich 102. On 3 January, 37027 worked these first two journeys, but 44003 worked 2035 Colchester - Harwich 102. However, the most unusual working occurred on 31st, when 37134 joined 47430 and 63331 working the three Sunday vehicle duties on Colchester - Maldon 75 and Colchester - Harwich 102.

Clacton routes. Route 74B has been 100% double deck operated except for 63331 on 4 January. However, on 21st & 23rd, Remembrance liveried 33825 was the first Enviro 400 to operate on the route, otherwise it has been worked by the normal with Volvo / Geminis.

Route 76: 37037, 63337, 69517 (10th); 37621, 63331 (17th); 37036, 47669, 63337 (24th); 63341 (31st); 32676 (7 January).

Double-deckers on route X20: 32673 (27th); 33713 (6th, 9th-12th, 15th, 21st, 28th-30th, 1, 3-4 January); 33825 (10th-11th); 37027 (15th), 37133 (7th, 19th); 37140 (4th, 19th, 21st, 3, 5 January), 37613 (5th, 6th, 8th, 10th, 13th-15th, 20th-22nd, 26th-27th); 37621 (4th, 6th-8th, 11th-12th, 14th, 20th, 22nd, 28th-31st, 2, 4-5 January).

Non Airlink liveried single-deckers on route X20: red 47696 (6th, 7th) & 47697 (8th & 9th) used on last round trip of the day - warm and comfortable vehicles, ideal for the last journey. 69516 (27th), 69519 (24th, 26th, 1-4 January). Airlink liveried vehicles continue to appear on other routes, including 67189 on 87U on 5 January.

Single-deckers on route 320: on loan 47682 on its first day of service (4th), 63329 (14th), plus Airlink liveried 67189 (14th), 67190 (5th, 21st), 67192 (5th), 67193 (6th).

Chelmsford

On the scrap line on 3 December were 42935 (fully intact) and driver trainer 69151.

Enviro 400 MMCs on X30: 33994 (4th, 8th, 14th, 31st), 33995 (11th), 33997 (4-5 January), 33998 (5th) plus on loan from Ensignbus 34432 continued to be a regular on the route until its return to Ensignbus (see above).

Double-deckers 33705 (20th), 37034 (6th) and 37047 (19th) on X30 shorts.

DS66846 and DS66886 both seen on driver training outside Chelmsford Railway Station (20th).

Basildon

Double-deckers 33416 (14th), 33562 (21st) and 33570 (19th) on X10 shorts.

Mid-length Enviro 200s 44001 and 44004 continue to see some use on (partially) interconnected routes 9 & 200 as has similar 44080 (22nd, 27th) now also transferred from Chelmsford to Basildon.

44909 (9th, 5 January) and Airlink liveried 67196 (14th, 21st) also on 9. 63167 on 300 (28th). 47596 (6 January) & 63383 (4 January) on 100. Airlink liveried 67191 on B1 (30th). 44001 & 44909 on 251 (7 January).

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

Further to 33981 reported in EBM 716, two other vehicles to receive Christmas decorations were 36842 (as noted in Repaints above) and 37135 (SN57 HCP) seen **right** in Colchester Bus Station on its first day after receiving them, 15 December 2023.

Dan Pretty

A photo of 33981 is on page 21.



First Essex News in Pictures

Enviro 200 44469 (YX12 GGO) looking rather different to normal with a replacement front panel, on route 14 in Station Avenue, Wickford on 20 November 2023.

Richard Lewis



In EBM 698 (June 2022) we reported that Enviro 200 MMC 44546 (YX13 AKJ) and StreetLite 47649 (SN15 AEL) had received super rear adverts for Efteling, "Holland's Largest Theme Park". These have not previously been illustrated in EBM, here is 44546 in Maldon High Street on route 73B on 24 November 2023.

Adam Kelleher



Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 37004 (WX55 VHN) entering Maldon Road, Colchester from Southway on route 4 on 31 October 2023. Route 4 is an Essex County Council tendered service, Stanway to Hythe, hence not having an S prefix to its route number; there is also a First Essex commercial S4, town centre to Greenstead, which has a short section of route in common with the 4.

John Podgorski



Colchester, 30 November 2023

Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 2 69517 (BJ11 ECD) on route S6 to 'City Centre', in Colchester High Street, with a reversed destination to indicate that it 'Continues to Monkwick S8'.



Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 32547 (SF54 OSK) on route S1 in Colchester High Street. This bus is now in its 20th year of service.



We recorded the acquisition of two Enviro 400s from First South Yorkshire and Midlands in EBM 703 (November 2022). Both moved from Basildon to Colchester in September 2023, becoming the latter depot's first of the type. 33825 is now in Remembrance livery, as illustrated last month. Here is the other one, 33713 (SN12 AJU), on route X20 in Head Street, Colchester. A photo of this bus when at Basildon was in last January's issue (EBM 705).



All **Robert Appleton**

First Essex in Suffolk.
Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus
Eclipse Gemini 37005
(WX55 VHO) at the Bures
terminus of route 83, with
HC Chambers & Son's
former offices and depot in
the background, on 30
December 2023. Photo
taken by its driver.

David Edwards



Enviro 400 33551 (SN58
CFX) entering Lakeside Bus
Station on route 100 on
2 December 2023.

Richard Delahoy



In EBM 713 we reported
that Enviro 400 MMCs
33981 and 33991 had
received magenta 'Essex
Bus' fleet names on their
Urban 2 liveries, and last
month we reported that
33981 had received
Christmas decorations.
Illustrating both of these,
33981 (SN65 OFW),
opposite Basildon Bus
Station on 22 December
2023, having just arrived on
a 300 from Chelmsford.

Robert Appleton



As noted above, Enviro 400 MMC 132 (34432) returned from long term loan to First Essex on 4 January 2024. It immediately went for repaint.

127 has a new offside advert for heritage bus hire. Ensignbus vehicles do not normally carry external advertising.

As has become tradition over the last few years, RM371 was again dressed up in Christmas lights in 2023 and used to deliver presents in the Southend and Thurrock areas during the pre-Christmas period. See EBN 681 (January 2021) and EBM 693 (January 2022) for more info and photos taken in 2020 and 2021.

Right: example of one of the day's operations. **Ensignbus**

Red StreetDeck EBS 1972 (35322, SK18 TKY), usually used for filming work, appeared in the Christmas Day special of 'Doctor Who', on route 94. This was filmed in Bristol, doubling for London.

RMC1485 made a guest appearance on Londoner Buses commercial route T15 on 30 December. This vehicle was a regular on the main TfL 15 route when owned by Stagecoach London up to summer 2003, when the route was converted to OPO.

Ensignbus again ran their traditional Boxing Day service from Lakeside to Southend via Basildon in 2023. However, now that Ensignbus is part of First Bus, the route was renumbered from X10 to X1 to avoid clashing with First Essex's Basildon to Stansted Airport X10, which also operated on that day, although, as can be seen **right** at London Road, Westcliff at the Hamlet Court Road junction, the bus stop displays were not updated. Almost a week later, on Sunday 31 December, the screens were showing a totally erroneous half-hourly service X10 from Southend to Lakeside!

Richard Delahoy

Top of Opposite Page:

Tri-axle BCI Enterprise 406 (LX19 EAG) on route X1 at Pitsea Broadway on 26 December 2023. **Nick Street**

SANTA BUS

come and meet Santa

Friday 22nd December
4pm start

LIVE Santa Bus tracking check socials for details

Marine Parade Leigh-on-Sea Broadway
START & END Leigh-on-Sea Station The Ship Chalkwell Station Chalkwell Shelter Westcliff-on-Sea Southend Pier The Kursaal

Ensignbus
in association with the former drivers of the company

Bus Departures			11:07
Svc	Destination	Exp.	
X10 Ensignbus	S'nd Travel Ctr	11:31	
X10 Ensignbus	S'nd Travel Ctr	12:01	
X10 Ensignbus	S'nd Travel Ctr	12:31	
X10 Ensignbus	S'nd Travel Ctr	13:01	
X10 Ensignbus	S'nd Travel Ctr	13:31	
X10 Ensignbus	S'nd Travel Ctr	14:01	



Below: Ensignbus's' modern heritage Volvo B9TL / Optare Olympus 120 (PO58 NRE) on route 83 passes the first London Transport Metrobus, M1 (THX 101S), on route X81 at Lakeside Bus Station during the Ensignbus Running Day on 2 December 2023. **Richard Delahoy**



Reserve fleet Transbus Dart 404 (EU03 CFY) was removed for scrap in mid-December 2023. It was one of the first two buses bought new by Stephenson's, now over 20 years ago.

Further to last month's report, the second Galloway liveried Volvo double-decker, 704 (PO54 ACY), has also now been used in public service, noted operating on route 505 on 7 December, although use of both this and 702 in service has been very limited, with some appearances on school routes C7/9.

Some Enviro 200s from both Stephenson's and NIBS have received adverts over the rear windows for driver recruitment, including 421 & 447 which have the strapline "do you want a better view?" and 435, 444 & 451 "would you look good in this?", with earnings of at least £650 a week on offer for full time staff. 435 (YY67 USC) is seen **right** in Southchurch Road, Southend on 11 December 2023. **Richard Delahoy**

With thanks to the companies, Adam Kelleher, John Podgorski and Chris Staley.



Below: Scania N230UD / East Lancs Olympus 505 (YN07 LHX) in Norman Way, Colchester on an icy 1 December 2023. **John Podgorski**





Above: NBS Buses Enviro 200 418 (MX59 AVN) at High Ongar Church, High Ongar operating Stephensons route 32 from Ongar to Chelmsford on 5 December 2023. **Robert Downton**

Below: In EBM 701 (September 2022) we reported that Mercedes Sprinter / Atlas 301 (RE66 VPD) had been sold to Taw & Torridge Coaches, Devon. It is seen with them, now re-registered Y700 TAW, in School Way, Okehampton on 4 December 2023 on the Thursdays only, once a day each way, service from Winkleigh / Iddesleigh Green.

David Harman. Photos of this bus when with Stephensons were in EBMs 688 & 690.



Acquired Vehicles

465 YN58 BCE Scania CK230B / Scania OmniLink ex Go Ahead Commercial London 51
 466 YN58 BCF Scania CK230B / Scania OmniLink ex Go Ahead Commercial London 52
 467 YN58 BCK Scania CK230B / Scania OmniLink ex Go Ahead Commercial London 53

Below: 466 in Jackson Road. Clacton, alongside the site of the former Clacton Bus Station, now a car park, on 28 December 2023. **Derek Stebbing**



Also, the following are currently at Kelvedon, but are thought to be destined for Konectbus.

YX61 BXL ADL Enviro 200 ex Go Ahead London SOE143
 YX61 BXM ADL Enviro 200 ex Go Ahead London SOE144
 YX61 DVP ADL Enviro 200 ex Go Ahead London SOE165
 YX61 DVR ADL Enviro 200 ex Go Ahead London SOE166

Vehicles Withdrawn

1 BX55 FYH Mercedes-Benz Touro (coach, ex Chambers)
 2 BX55 FYJ Mercedes-Benz Touro (coach, ex Chambers)
 255 EU05 AUT ADL Dart / Pointer
 257 EU56 FLM ADL Dart / Pointer
 588 PJ02 RBY Volvo B7TL / Plaxton President (East Yorkshire livery)

All to Shelton Motors week commencing 11 December 2023.

Significant Allocations

874 SY - KN by 28 December

Fleet News

Further to last month, Optare Solo 911 has indeed been donated to assist in Ukraine, but sister 910 has gone to a charity in Swindon.

December saw the final departure to Shelton Motors for coaches 1 & 2 (BX55 FYH/J), the last vehicles of Chambers heritage from the date of the takeover by Go Ahead in 2012. 257 is the first of the four 56 plate Dart / Pointers to be withdrawn.

Three Scania OmniLink single-deckers were transferred from Go Ahead Commercial Buses business London during December. YN58 BCE/F/K were new in September 2008 to Brighton & Hove and still carry the B&H livery worn when they transferred to GAL in 2020. Their acquired numbers 51/52/53 were the original B&H fleet numbers. Numbered 465/66/67 respectively, 465 & 467 entered service from Clacton on 20 December and 466 on 28 December.

Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 532 (LX59 DCO) re-entered service on 22 December after a long period off road since February 2023.

Veteran ex East Yorkshire Volvo B7TL / President 587 (PL51 LDU) undertook three intensive all day service diagrams on 19-21 December.

Also earmarked for future use possibly by Konectbus are ADL Enviro 200s from Go Ahead London, SOE 143/44/65/66 (YX61 BXL/M/DVP/R). These arrived with dual doors and are awaiting conversion to single door. These four vehicles were stored at Kelvedon by the end of November.

Dart / Pointer 258 (EU56 FLN) is parked up at the rear of Clacton depot, as is Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 514 (LB02 YWY), 258 being off road since late November.

Long term off road during December were 236, 258, 260, 262, 276, 510, 533 and 821.

Service News

Hedingham & Chambers did not run any services on Christmas Day or Boxing Day but a normal M-F timetable ran 27-29 December and a Saturday timetable on 30 December. A Sunday timetable ran on New Year's Eve with no buses running on New Year's Day. Normal service resumed on 2 January 2024.

From 2 January there were changes to the timetables including withdrawal of the 7 St Osyth Beach - Clacton and 8/A Clacton - Bockings Elm services. Chambers withdrew service 89X Chiltern Industrial Estate, Sudbury - Braintree and school service 237 Sudbury - Stour Valley School, Sudbury.

Services 236/373/374/375/716/750/751/753/757/758 all had minor timing or route changes. Route 751 was extended to St Benedict's School in Bury St Edmunds to help relieve 375 overcrowding. Service 758 was withdrawn, the 0803 757 service now running a more direct route to ensure more punctual arrival times at Thomas Gainsborough School, Great Cornard.

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

Below: As noted above, 257 (EU56 FLM) is the first of the four 56 reg Dart / Pointers to be withdrawn. It retained the original Hedingham livery from new to withdrawal. All four are seen when brand new at Sible Hedingham depot on 30 August 2006 displaying their original fleet numbers. Left to right L148-L151 (EU56 FLR/P/N/M).

Dave Arnold



New Vehicles

322, YX73 OVM, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B41F, December 2023
 323, YX73 OVN, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B41F, December 2023
 324, YX73 OVO, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B41F, December 2023
 349, SK73 COU, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B40F, December 2023
 353, YY73 RGZ, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B??F, December 2023
 354, YY73 RHA, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B??F, December 2023

322-4 are in fleet livery and all entered service on 19 December, 322 on Chelmsford Park & Ride route 702, the other two on Central Connect routes, 323 on 420/A, 324 on (co-incidentally) 323 and 324 plus 386. The next day, 324 was also on 420/A, as seen **bottom** at The Talbot, North Weald.

353 entered service on Central Connect route 301 on 21st. It is in an all-white livery. It has a paper label attached to nearside 'On Hire to Galleon Travel (2009)', Stansted address with Vectare name beneath, Galleon O disc displayed. **Right:** 353 on route 384 at Hertford Bus Station on 29 December.

349 and 354 are also all white, both entered service on 2 January 2024, both on Central Connect routes, the former on 316, the latter on 319/20/1.

With thanks to Owen Woodliffe.
 Both photos **Owen Woodliffe**



Acquired Vehicles

GW16 BUS, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B41F, new to Whitelaws, Stonehouse, Lanarkshire, August 2016.

SW16 BUS, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B41F, new to Whitelaws, Stonehouse, Lanarkshire, August 2016.

Both later to Redline Buses. GW16 (at least) moved to associated Red Rose, Aylesbury earlier this year. Acquired by Central Connect in October 2023. GW16 entered service still in Whitelaws livery but with the addition of two red front bumpers (as acquired), as per the photo below.

SW16 went to Mardens where it became the first vehicle to be repainted into the new Central Connect livery - the same two shades of blue as parent company Vectare, but in a different design (an illustration of the proposed design was in EBM 715).

Vectare Vehicles noted on Central Connect Services

Mercedes Benz Sprinters 205 (RE70 EZU) on 31 on 2, 9, 15, 16 December, 220 (RX23 TVD) also on 31 on 23, 27-30 December.

Enviro 200 MMCs 319 (SN16 OVO) on 20 on 9 December, 306 (YX22 OGR) on 505 on 15 December.

As noted under Vectare, new Enviro 200 MMCs 323 and 324 have also been used on Central Connect routes. Prior to their arrival, Enviro 200 MMC 317 (YX16 OBS) had also been used.

Other Vehicle News

Only three double-deckers were in use during December, 2005 (YP59 OEV), 2008 (YP59 OEO) and 2101 (CT21 GAL).

With thanks to John Card, Allan White, Owen Woodliffe and Bus Lists on the Web.

Below: GW16 BUS has been used on a variety of routes. It is seen on its third recorded appearance on 410, at Hoddesdon Clock Tower on 11 December 2023. **Owen Woodliffe**



School holiday timetables started on 21 December 2023, requiring one all day duty on Ipswich - Manningtree 92, and two all day duties on Ipswich - Colchester 93/A. These were worked by Scania CN230UD OmniCities, the older Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekkas had a rest over the school holidays. In addition seat belt fitted buses usually found on contracts for Ipswich School also appeared.

On 21 December 34 (YR61RSV) on 92, 36/38 (YR61 RUC/RUU) on 93/A.

On 22 December 40 (YR61 RUW) on 92, 31 (YR61 RPY) and seat belt fitted 49 (SGZ 3349) on 93/A.

In addition there were two single deck journeys in the evening peak worked by ADL Enviro 200s:

1645 Ipswich - Colchester 93 & 1810 return: 85 (KX59 GNY) on 21 December, seat belt fitted 74 (DU60 LOJ) on 22nd.

1740 Ipswich - Manningtree 92 & 1830 return: seat belt fitted 72 (LX58 LMM) on 21 December, 81 (YX63 LGE) with Nacton Nipper branding on 22nd.

The Saturday duties on services 92/93 can produce a variety of buses, including Mercedes Citaros and the solitary Volvo B7RLE in the Ipswich Buses fleet. There are three all day duties, one on 92, two on 93. For example:
9 December: 60 (PJ54 YZT) Scania / East Lancs OmniDekka on 92, sister 61 (PJ54 YZU) and Mercedes Citaro 155 (BF65 HVV) on 93.

23 December: 161 (SN57 DCX) Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse on 92, Mercedes Citaros 154/155 (BF65 HVU/HVV) on 93.

On Saturdays, the all-day duty on 92 finished with 1520 Manningtree - Ipswich 92, the bus then worked 1645 Ipswich - Colchester 93 & 1810 return. This left two return journeys on 92 to be covered:

1635 Ipswich - Manningtree 92 & 1730 return was worked by a 'Whitehouse's Own' branded ADL Enviro 200 off Ipswich town service 8 Asda - Whitehouse - Tower Ramparts, this was 107 (YX66 WCL) on 9 December, and 105 (YX66 WCJ) on 23rd.

1740 Ipswich - Manningtree 92 & 18.30 return was worked by an ADL Enviro 200 off Shotley - Ipswich 97, this was Nacton Nipper branded 81 (YX63 LGE) on 9 December and 85 (KX59 GNY) on 23rd.

With thanks to the Ipswich Buses website, Ipswich Transport Society journals and Bustimes.

Below: Ipswich Buses driver trainer 9001 (SJ56 GBY) in Colchester High Street on 30 November 2023. An Alexander Dennis Enviro 300 acquired from Yellow Buses, Bournemouth in 2022. **Robert Appleton**



Barker, Roydon

MEZ 3827 (ex L957 NWW), a Jonckheere C70F bodied Volvo B10M-62, is here from Down, Mary Tavy, Devon.

Foster Hartley, Bolton, Lancashire

Further to last month, additional Ford Transit minibuses seen on the bus services for immigrants currently residing at Wethersfield Air Base, Essex have been SP10 XMA, WG58 CZS, LT14 MWX, YN65 YUA and W17 ORR.

SP10 XMA has legal lettering for Prestige, Crawley.

Lodge Coaches, High Easter

Acquisitions are former London United Scania N230UD OmniCity SP40042 (YT09 BMO) and SP40048 (YT09 BND) both of which have received fleet livery.

London Bus Company, Northfleet

Right: RML902 (WLT 902) was working a 339 Santa Special service to "Snowgar, Two Baubles" on 20 December 2023 with bus and driver suitably attired. Arriving at the end of the journey at Two Brewers, Ongar. It is passing First Essex Enviro 400 MMC 33998 (SN65 OGP) on school route 620 from Ingatestone on its circuitous route to Abridge, operating three hours earlier than normal due to breaking up for the Christmas holidays. **Owen Woodliffe**



REL Davian, Edmonton

Some recent sightings of vehicles show a legal address of Rawreth, which was the base for APT Coaches, which was purchased last year (as reported in EBM 713). A new white based livery has been introduced, coaches seen repainted into this livery are Scania EB6 / Levantes BV17 GOK / GPY and former APT Volvo B8R / Sideral R27 APT.

Acquired are Transbus Trident / Alexander ALX400s LX04 FYC / FYH (new to Stagecoach London) from 1st Bus Stop, Gravesend. FYH is seen **right** on SEEVIC Campus, Benfleet services on 23 November 2023, with a coach in the new livery in the background. **Owen Woodliffe**



With thanks to John Podgorski, Owen Woodliffe and the PSV Circle.

Greater Anglia Rail Replacement

Below: Two former Metrobus Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekkas meet up at Billericay Station on New Year's Day 2024, Flagfinders YN56 FDD and Chambers 800 (YN53 RYP). **Andrew Sugden**

Bottom: New as Y112 CKC to Eavesway Travel of Wigan (the main UK buyer of the uncommon Van Hool TD921 Altano), K123 SEC had joined the fleet of South East Coaches, Wickford in 2021. It was seen at Ingatestone Station on 28 December 2023. **David Bateman**



Rear Cover Photos: Scania Double-Deckers after use as PSVs

Top: As reported in EBM 708 and 712, former London United Scania N230UD / Scania OmniCity SP111 (later SP40111, YR59 FYS) was acquired by the Salvation Army from Ensignbus in March last year for conversion by South East Coach Works to a mobile 'Social Supermarket' on Canvey Island. Here it is visiting First Essex's Hadleigh depot for some attention on 19 October 2023.

Bottom: Army recruitment Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka YN54 AJY, new to Metrobus as 497 (later 6497) in north Essex on 16 October 2023. Both **John G Lidstone**



Above: Basildon was one port of call for the NHS cancer 'bus-ting' tour, in partnership with Stagecoach who provided an Enviro 400 MMC. It was in Basildon Market Square on Thursday 30 November 2023, having earlier stopped off in Grimsby, Coventry and Nottingham, and then continued on to Portsmouth. The locations were chosen as places where early diagnosis rates for cancer are among the lowest. The vehicle is 11254 (SN69 ZFO) from Manchester but staffed by two drivers from Stagecoach South. **Richard Delahoy** with thanks to Paul Harvey.

Below: Also seen in Basildon the same day was another bus with Stagecoach connections. T31 PST is an ADL Dart / Pointer now with Peter Smythe Training. It had been Stagecoach East Midlands YN56 HBA (35133) and was sold by them in August 2023. It remains in Stagecoach livery. The cherished registration was previously on an Optare Excel. The company is based in Sutton in Ashfield in Nottinghamshire but appears to have a local base, possibly in Thurrock. The trainees were taking a break parked up opposite Basildon Bus Station. **Richard Delahoy**



