

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 719 March 2024



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



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The major news this month is that Vectare have purchased a 75% stake in FlagFinders, details on pages 23-24.

Above: FlagFinders YN05 ASZ Irisbus Euromidi CC100E with Indicar Maxim 2 body, which was new to FlagFinders in April 2005, at Bath House Meadow Coach Park, Walton-on-the-Naze on 22 June 2022. **Alan Moore**

Front Cover: FlagFinders LB02 YXG, a Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini new to East Thames Buses (VWL9) in 2002, at the same location on 6 July 2022. **Robert Appleton**

Bottom Right: An earlier vehicle for FlagFinders was this Leyland Swift / ELME, C27F, new in February 1989. Here it is at Eastern National Engineering, New Writtle Street, Chelmsford on 7 March 1989. **Dave Arnold**
A nearside view of this vehicles was in EBM 709 (May 2023).

Inside Front Cover: First Essex's two recently acquired Enviro 400s, photos taken exactly 11 years apart.

Top: 33684 (SN12 AFO) when with First Manchester and allocated to Oldham depot, at Manchester Piccadilly Gardens on route 184 to Grotton on 5 February 2013. **Robert Appleton**

Bottom: 33689 (SN12 AFZ) on its first day of service with First Essex, at Colchester Bus Station on route 320 on 5 February 2024. **Dan Pretty**



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Subscriptions

The calendar year subscription for 2024 is £27 for
printed copies sent by post, or £19 for electronic pdf
copies sent by e-mail. New members may join from
any month, but subscriptions will always run to
December from whichever month the member
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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 720

Reports to Sub-Editors	30 March
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	5 April
Dispatch by Printers on or before	13 April

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 6th 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 Members

Carl Lemon, Holbeach - 1223

Terry Holland, Basildon - 1134 (re-joined)

Group Meetings

For 2024, meetings have moved to **Saturday afternoons**. These are 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. Due to recent good attendances, from the next (March) meeting we will be moving from the small hall to the large one. 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, please note that **April's** meeting (only) will be at the **Central Baptist Church**, Victoria Road South, Chelmsford, which is located between the Railway Station and Retail Market.

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 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 | Ian Barlex - Lost independents in England, Wales and Scotland during the past ten years. |

Further dates for 2024 are **8 June, 14 September, 12 October, 9 November and 14 December**. Please note there are not meetings in July or August.

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.

Annual General Meeting

The 56th Annual General Meeting of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group will be held at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford (details above) on **Saturday 11 May**, commencing at 1330 (note this is 60 minutes before the normal meeting start time). There will be a brief presentation from the Committee on the current and future plans of the group. If any member of the Group is willing to stand for one of the Committee roles, please contact the Chair (Ian Ransom) no later than 12 April. The current roles are Chair, Treasurer & Membership, Secretary, Magazine Editor, Sales Manager and Tours Organiser.

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. Spaces are still available, so those that have already booked are assured a place. Please contact Ian Ransom (details on page 2) if you would like to be part of this visit.

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 the progress on the building work taking place, and talk to members of CITM and then for rides on a number of vehicles. Further details of vehicles will be announced in due course, when availability is confirmed, but if you would like to book please contact Ian Ransom. If booking by post, please include an SAE. Please note this visit is restricted to EBEG members only.

The following events have been advertised.

Sunday 10 March: Golders Green Vintage Bus event.

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

Friday 29 March-Monday 1 April: Easter Weekend & Blackpool Tram Weekend 1100 - 1700 each day. Blackpool 634 'Terror Tram' launch on Friday, due to operate all weekend. Kids Easter Egg Hunt, on the Saturday and Sunday. East Anglia Transport Museum, Carlton Colville.

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.

Saturday 27 April: Delaine Heritage Running Day, Bourne. Museum also open 0900-1645.

Saturday 4 May: Theydon Bois Transport Bazaar. Village Hall CM16 7ER. 1100-1500.

Sunday 5 May: Essex Bus Day. Museum of Power Maldon (to be confirmed).

Monday 6 May: King Alfred Running Day. The Broadway, Winchester.

Saturday 11 May: Delaine Museum Open Day, Bourne. 1200-1600.

Saturday 11-Sunday 12 May: 1960s Weekend, 1100 - 1700 both days. A weekend of everything 1960s, the museum is hoping to find people to bring some vehicles from the Sixties to display. East Anglia Transport Museum, Carlton Colville.

Sunday 19 May: Fenland Busfest. Whittlesey.

Sunday 19 May: Vintage Bus Day. Mid Norfolk Railway, Dereham.

Saturday 15 June: Transport & Model Festival. Ipswich Transport Museum, Cobham Road, Ipswich IP3 9JD.

Sunday 23 June: Norfolk Classic Bus & Coach Show. Thursford Steam Museum, Thursford Green NR21 OPS.

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 6

The next issue of EBM Extra, Spring 2024, will be published shortly and is being sent to all members free of charge, courtesy of the generous sponsorship of Ian Barlex. It should arrive about three weeks after this issue of EBM, around the end of March.

In it we pick up on the story of the exchange of NBC Bristol FLFs for Scottish Bus Group Bristol VRs, looking at the much bigger exchange of 1973/4, aiming to tell something of what went on behind the scenes. That story also examines the eight Bristol VRs of various types operated by Osborne's of Tollesbury. Going much further back, our archive photo feature looks at 1920s 'all-weather' coaches, whilst coming up to the end of the 1950s we visit one of the earliest bus rallies - in Basildon, of all places. David Edwards tells the story of his almost 50-year career with Eastern National & First Essex and reveals his favourite type of bus - from a driver's, rather than enthusiast's, perspective. His choice might surprise you! Colchester and Southend enjoy photo features, with the colours of Network Colchester and some more of Michael Dryhurst's pics in Southend. Finally, we look at how some Eastern National Bristol saloons might have ended up over the water, and a pair of unusual additions to the EN fleet. With coverage spanning around 90 years, we hope you'll enjoy it as much as we did putting it together!

Essex Bus Magazine Extra

Historical features special issue

Issue 6 Spring 2024



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Follow Ups

EBMs 717 & 718

Scottish Leyland Fleetlines

Steve Sellars writes:

"I enjoyed the Follow Ups feature in EBM 717 on the Brentwood Coaches former Scottish Leyland Fleetlines and thought I could add some background (with some tenuous Essex connection).

"The buses were from the final two batches of Fleetlines for the Alexander (Midland) fleet, with the LMS-W batch being the last delivery of Fleetlines to the Scottish Bus Group and the last of over 350 Alexander bodied Fleetlines delivered to SBG fleets.

"There were 20 buses in each batch, ULS 656-675T (new in 1978) and LMS 151-170W (new in 1980), with most used on Glasgow area routes. They passed in the Scottish Bus Group reorganisation of 1985 to the new Kelvin Scottish company upon its formation. Kelvin had a troubled existence being engaged in heavy competition with Strathclyde Buses and many independent operators of the period, one consequence of this was a reduction in its fleet with many vehicles sold on to other operators. An Essex link to this is the sold buses included three Alexander bodied MCW Metrobuses which passed to Ensignbus for use in their operational fleet (UMS 751T, BLS 671V and ULS 621X). Kelvin was merged in 1989 with the Central Scottish company forming Kelvin Central Buses (KCB) and the former Kelvin Fleetlines passed to Western Scottish to replace Routemasters in the Clydeside area, leaving KCB without any Fleetlines.

"The vehicles which would go to Brentwood Coaches had remained with the newly formed Midland Scottish fleet in 1985 serving the Falkirk and Stirling areas. Following privatisation, that fleet in September 1990 passed to the GRT Bus Group, before its merger with Badgerline to form First Bus, and who were replacing the Fleetlines with Atlanteans transferred from Aberdeen. The fleet had retained seven ECW (ULS 659/62/64/71/72/74/75T) and six Alexander (LMS 151/52/55/64/65/66W) buses in the 1985 restructure.

"Kelvin Central Buses had also been privatised in February 1991 (for the sum of £1, to give an indication of the financial position the company was in) and, like Western and Southend Transport, was looking to replace its Routemaster fleet. It sourced a number of Leyland Nationals, Bristol VRTs, Dennis Dominators and the surviving ten Midland Fleetlines to achieve that. The Fleetlines arrived in late 1992 / early 1993 and were allocated to the Old Kilpatrick depot in Dunbartonshire.

KCB Fleet No	Registration	To Brentwood Coaches
1689	LMS 164W	N
1691	LMS 166W	Y
1692	LMS 152W	Y
1693	ULS 675T	Y
1694	ULS 662T	Y
1695	ULS 671T	Y
1696	ULS 674T	Y
1697	ULS 672T	N
1698	LMS 151W	Y
1699	LMS 155W	Y

The rather random numbering was on the basis of their acquisition by KCB and to fit into available fleet numbers. The number 1690 wasn't used in light of that date's political links which are still strong, particularly in west Scotland.

"The acquired VRT fleet, mainly from Bristol City Line, was particularly interesting considering the SBG experience of the type as explored in EBM Extra 4. KCB also bought many of the competing operators including the original Stagecoach Glasgow operations, which fleet included Routemasters and new Alexander bodied Dennis Darts. The Darts were moved to other Kelvin Central depots and under First Bus on to Eastern Counties in Norwich and the

Routemasters were retired. A number of the Fleetlines were then moved to the former Stagecoach depot to replace the original fleet and the photo **right** shows ULS 662T in Glasgow as KCB 1694 wearing the then current KCB livery on a former Stagecoach service.

"Kelvin Central Buses would sell out to Strathclyde Buses in October 1994 who sought to rationalise the fleet by standardising on types common to its fleet of Atlanteans and Metrobuses, so the Fleetlines, by that time at Airdrie depot, were sold to Brentwood Coaches in 1995.



"To perhaps give some explanation to the comments regarding the maintenance staff at Airdrie, the history of these buses suggests the many depot moves at a financially struggling company may not have done much for their condition on arrival so staff were unlikely to mourn their departure. Airdrie had been a Scottish Omnibuses (fleet name Eastern Scottish) depot until the 1985 restructure when it passed to Central Scottish management, at that time running a fleet of Seddon Pennines, Leyland Nationals, Fleetlines and Olympians, largely allocated from new there. Central declined to take the double deck vehicles, transferring in Dennis Dominators from other depots to meet that requirement. Soon after that, the National 2 fleet departed to the Kelvin Scottish company, with former Central Leyland Leopards and Tigers arriving at Airdrie as replacements. Following the merger of Kelvin and Central in 1989, the original National buses departed the fleet followed by the Seddon Pennines leaving the depot with a very mixed allocation of vehicles transferred in from other depots and companies, which often seem to have a poorer reputation with staff than vehicles which have been allocated to a depot from new.

"Airdrie depot was in decline, closing in November 1997, having gone from an allocation of 80 buses in 1982, and today the successor company, First Glasgow, has just one route in the area - from East Kilbride, competition from the train resulting in the railway capturing the demand for travel to Glasgow and a number of small independent operators running what remains of the local services. Housing now stands on the depot site."

Eastern National Bristol SC Allocations

In EBM 717 Peter Carr asked the question "Did Bishop's Stortford depot have more than one SC?". Last month Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit answered "Possibly someone with access to allocation lists can give a definitive answer, but from personal memory, I can state that BS did have at least two." Someone with access to allocation lists is **Chris Stewart** who has lists compiled by the late Terry Clark, and this confirms that Tebzy's recollections were correct.

To recap, the Eastern National SCs were 395/6 (724/5 APU), 425-7/35-40/5/6 (601-12 JPU) and 447/8/50-5 (9572-9 F).

From Terry's lists for 1 June, mid-June and 1 July 1959, Bishops Stortford had two SCs, 424 and 447.

Mid 1959 allocations from Terry's lists were:

Brentwood (BD) 396, 427, 437 (ex-SD during June), 438, 454

Basildon (BN) 438, 446

Bishop's Stortford (BS) 424, 447

Chelmsford (CF) 436, 439, 448

Clacton (CN) 445, 450, 451, 452, 453 (452/3 ex-CR during June)

Colchester (CR) 395 (to MN July, not shown mid-June but CR on 1 June list), 455

Dovercourt (DT) 435

Maldon (MN) 425, 426

CNu 440 (to CR July)

By January 1964, when the first SCs were sold, with the rest to be withdrawn from service in the first half of that year, the allocations were:

BN 396, 438

CF 439

CN 427, 450, 451

CR 424, 447, 455

HD 452

MN 425, 426, 445, 453

SD 440, 454

SDu 395

Sold 435, 436, 437.

Hedingham Contract Services

Further to his article in last month's issue about Hedingham route 89X, which started out as a contract service, **Nigel Turner** also has the **below** photo in his collection of a Hedingham bus on contract work. Nigel writes:

"AEC Reliance L56 (DHD 193) was in the fleet from 1967 to 1969 and as can be seen it appears to the uninitiated that it was owned by Holpack Limited. Only the fleet number and the fact it is parked in the Sible Hedingham depot entrance give away its true ownership. I'm not sure of the reason for this, I've seen it described as contract hire or as being non-PSV. Presumably it was cheaper to do it this way but of course it couldn't be used for any other work.

"Holpack of Glemsford made plastic bottles, principally for cosmetics manufacturer E.R. Holloway of Lavenham. In 1950, Thomas Tilling acquired a shareholding in Holpack, presumably with the money they had made from selling their buses to the State. By the 1970s there was a management buyout from Holpack and the business became Gabor Plastics of Sudbury. They made bottles for the Corning factory for many years.

"In the 1980s there was a board in the restroom at Hedingham depot with "CORNING" on it which was clearly intended to be displayed on the service but I'm not sure that happened very often."



National Greenways

In last month's EBM Alan Osborne told the story of three Essex Leyland Nationals that received the East Lancs Greenway treatment to run for Blackburn Borough Transport.

Roger Tuke writes:

"Alan correctly states that the Greenway project was initiated by Drawlane companies London & Country and East Lancs Coachbuilders, but if my memory serves me correct, sometime after it started I believe Blackburn Borough Council Transport was also involved in preparation of the buses for rebuilding, although I can't now recall whether in their own right or as a sub-contractor to East Lancs. I believe this may have had something to do with why the Blackburn fleet acquired its Greenways, rather than just supporting local enterprise.

"This led me to remember the Greenways operated by Colchester Borough Transport (as part of British Bus) which were transferred from sister company London & Country in September 1996 when its Addlestone (WY) garage lost the London contracts for routes 116 & 117 to London United and Armchair. These were numbered 347-352 & 354-5. As I've lived mainly in South London since leaving my home town of Colchester to go University in 1976, I remember a couple of well-known Colchester enthusiasts asking me at the time did I know why 353 didn't make the journey to north east Essex with its sisters? I think I have a plausible explanation. When Bob Franklin, a well-known CBT driver, enthusiast and friend, told me that he had heard a batch of Greenways were coming from L&C, knowing the routes were changing operator imminently I put two and two together and spent the following Saturday afternoon with my camera at Back Lane, Brentford capturing all of the batch while still in service with L&C. From reviewing the photos I took then, 353 was unique in having a super rear advert for a local Surrey business. So I believe this may explain why it didn't move to Magdalen Street."

Richard Delahoy adds:

"I too wondered why 353 didn't go to Colchester, but presumably they only required eight buses at that time, not nine, so one of the L&C ones would have not been transferred. They lasted into the first Arriva era and were withdrawn between 1999 and 2002."

Below: 354 (JIL 2194) near Colchester Railway Station on 17 March 1999. This particular bus had been new to Ribble as CBV 779S, later working for Southdown. It had passed to London Country (South West) in 1992 and was selected for Greenway conversion. Later renumbered 3304 by Arriva, it was withdrawn from Colchester in September 2000 and passed through three dealers' hands before ending up with Ravel Travel of Rudheath in Cheshire. **Richard Delahoy**





In his article Alan also stated that a major customer for National Greenways was London General for their Red Arrow fleet. One of these, GLS490 (GUW 490W), new to London Transport as a Leyland National 2 in May 1991 numbered LS490, is owned by the London Bus Company. It had been converted to a Greenway in 1993. It is seen **above** at North Weald Station on the Epping Ongar Railway 'From LT to LRT' weekend event on 19 February 2023.
Richard Delahoy

The Trials and Tribulations of Running Buses in Thurrock

Following our story of the problems affecting the Dartford Crossing on 6 January 2024 and the impact on Ensignbus's X80 service to Bluewater, **Peter Newman** - Ensignbus's Chairman until last year's sale to First Bus - has written to say that this was not the first time that the Blackwall Tunnel has featured. He writes:
 "I have just read the article relating to the X80 having to operate via the Blackwall Tunnel and it gives the idea that it was something new and someone had a brainwave. It couldn't be further from the truth! We always guaranteed the last bus from either direction would run, and there was a standing instruction that in the event of a major problem then buses would travel via Blackwall Tunnel, and this occurred on several occasions in the past. Just thought I would put the record straight".

We did indeed say in the original article that "come what may, the last bus always runs, to ensure people are not stranded" and are sorry for any confusion.

EBM Extra 5

The Colchester Scene in '64

Roger Tuke writes:

"Not only is it great credit that the society can celebrate 60 years of publishing, but it was especially evocative for me reading Nic Collins' piece on my home town's fleet and reminded me that I still have the commemorative booklet he mentions that was issued to celebrate Colchester Corporation Transport's 60 years of public service in 1964. If my childhood memory serves me correct, a copy was given to each and every child attending my infant / junior school. Despite only being six years old then, given it contained a fleet list it probably played a part in developing my transport enthusiast interest, although saying that, one of my grandfathers had driven trams out of Magdalen Street depot in the 1920s, so perhaps it was in the blood too."

Various

Allan White writes:

"I found EBM Extra 5 of particular interest, probably as most of the items date from an era that I have fond memories of. I found that Ian Ransom's recollections from his early days rang bells with me. During school holidays I would create my own local bus routes and timetables and then use my bike as a makeshift bus to operate them. When I first met my wife Audrey she had to put up with buses and coaches being a large part of my life and still does over 50 years later.

"The front cover picture, plus the one on page 6 of EBM 717, reminded me of the many summer Saturday afternoons spent at Victoria Coach Station where there would be coaches lining up all the way down Buckingham Palace Road waiting to offload their passengers in the station. The spot where BNO 117B is photographed was one I also chose to take photos. The car rental office opposite provided cover in inclement weather. As far as I know the 'Hertz Rent a Car' Office on the corner is still there and can still provide shelter from the rain.

"Below: Norfolk Motor Services 247 (ODH 548K), a Bedford SB5 with Duple C41F bodywork, new August 1971 to Freemans of Bloxwich and acquired by NMS from them in May 1972, on Saturday 26 July 1975. The photo was taken before the days of coaches using the old Samuelson's Garage in Eccleston Place to unload passengers as they do nowadays. Back then, all coaches entered the coach station at the rear, approaching via Semley Place. The coach in the photo is turning into Semley Place from Buckingham Palace Road, having been in a queue way back into the distance. With full coaches together with empty coaches (arriving to pick up passengers) all using the same entrance, there were always long queues and severe delays to enter the coach station at busy times. This was great for us spotters but not so good for passengers wanting to get off their coaches after their long hot journeys. That particular Saturday was very hot and most coaches did not have air conditioning, so you can appreciate why the driver has his passenger door open.

"Back then, late July and August were prime times to see duplicate coaches to supplement the main operators' vehicles, hence the NMS coach going to or from Great Yarmouth probably on hire to Eastern Counties. I was living in Edmonton at the time so Victoria was easy to drive to and I was back there the following Saturday which was just as busy and even hotter.



"Reading page 20 about Essex registrations was also relevant as my first ever car purchased second hand in 1966 was a 1962 Ford Anglia with the Essex registration of OO 5296 (right). [Eastern National had coaches delivered in April & May of the same year with OO registrations, OO 9543-50 (557-64, renumbered 352-5/9-62 in August 1964, the first five of which went on to become buses 1435-9, the other three later moving to Tillings as 9360-2)]. To go full circle, my current car has EX as its prefix, having been registered by the Ford Motor Company when new.



"On page 28, the item on Tillings Transport brought back memories of seeing their coaches around London during my early London Transport bus spotting trips and of recording their numbers in an early edition of Ian Allan's British Bus Fleets Number 11 'London Coach Operators' published in 1962. The back cover of this featured an advert for Tillings Transport featuring Bristol MW / ECW coach 5 (5 BXB) (right). At the time it wasn't known that after "well over a century of service", Tillings would only last for a few more years.

"I remember 1964 very well as it was my first full year of working as a Civil Servant for the MPNI (Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance, how many remember that)? I had started straight from school in August 1963 at Waltham Cross office. My first wage was £5 a week but by 1966 I think it had gone up to about £8 a week and I had saved enough to buy the Ford Anglia mentioned earlier. This gave me the freedom to venture further afield on my own rather than having to rely on being taken by Mum and Dad. My brother and I had never ventured beyond the London Transport area on our own, we were not that adventurous! Now with the car, things changed and on one occasion I even drove to Birmingham using the recently opened M1 Motorway. This was also when trips to Victoria Coach Station on a Saturday afternoon could be undertaken without having to worry about parking as it was free to park after midday on a Saturday. Of course, the complexities of the Congestion Charge and the ULEZ that drivers have to contend with nowadays were also unheard of at that time. Life seemed so simple back then as was the ENEG news sheet. How it has evolved in 60 years to become the marvellous publication produced by the EBEG that it is today. It is a credit to everyone involved over the years. Thanks to you all, past and present."

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Limited, at their Stratford, London, establishment.

Corrections

Page 13: in the tribute to the pioneer members, David Harman's membership number is actually 37, not 34.

Page 25: in 1964, Colchester Corporation were still using Ultimate ticket machines; they didn't switch to TIM until the following year.

Page 27: The proprietor of Thames Weald was Dr Nesbit Heffernan, not Hefferon.

And Finally, a Puzzle

Alan Osborne, the first editor of the News Sheet, has a puzzle:

"EBM Extra 5, charting 60 years of publishing, has inspired some personal memories of an old holiday using an East Anglian Rail Runabout ticket, captured in this old photograph taken on Ilford 120 film. Readers' indulgence is sought to answer the following questions:

Do you recognise the person standing by the doors?

Do you recognise the person walking towards him?

Where is the location?

How might the party have travelled to the location by rail?

What year was the photo taken?

Replies to the (current) editor please, details on page 2."



Service Revisions

Ian Ransom

25 February 2024

X20 (Daily) Colchester Railway Station - Stansted Airport **First Essex**.
Additional daily journeys, from Colchester Bus Station at 2325 and 0125, returning from Stansted Airport at 0045 and 0245. These journeys do not serve Tollgate Retail Park or Coggeshall (additional information to EBM 718).

17 March

X10 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Stansted Airport **First Essex**.
A revised registration for revised stopping places and timetable has been published, further details next month.

With thanks to David Edwards



Epping Ongar Railway 'Winter Country Buses'



This event, based at North Weald Station, took place on Sunday 25 February 2024.

Above: London Bus Company's RF180 (MLL 567) on route 347 at North Weald.

Below: LNC45 (NPD 145L) was new to London Country in March 1973. Later operated by East Kent and the Dover Port Authority, it has also been owned by the Dover Transport Museum. It has latterly been in a white livery with blue skirt but has been repainted to original Green Line livery. It is a rare instance of a single doored vehicle having been converted to dual door (when with East Kent). It is seen at North Weald being used at the station entrance as the ticket office for the event, hence being parked hard up against the station gates. It was on trade plates and was not used in service. It originally entered service from Romford (RE) depot on Green Line route 721 (Brentwood - London, Aldgate) in March 1973 but two months later moved to Reigate (thanks to Keith Nason for info). A photo of similar LNC33 (NPD 133L) on the 721 was in EBM 706 (February 2023). Both photos **Richard Delahoy**. Other photos from the event are on page 17 and the rear cover.



Significant Allocations

256	EU55 BWC	KN - KN by 12 February
261	EY57 FZE	CN - HD by 7 February then to KN by 13 February
292	EU59 AFF	KN - HD by 26 February
870	PN09 ELO	KN - SY by 9 February
874	PN09 ENC	KN - SY by 19 February

Fleet News

Further to previous reports of Optare Solos 910 and 911 being prepared for Ukraine a feature is available on the Hedingham website here: <http://tinyurl.com/pvywezj2>.

On 11 February, 817/820/851 all worked on Greater Anglia Rail Replacement services. By 12 February, 260 (EU56 FLR) had returned to service on the 136/4/76X/76/74 diagram. Scania Olympus 872 (PN09 EMK) is the first of the type to have the Chambers Boomerang branding completely removed. Others will follow as time allows. 467 (YN58 BCK), one of the recently acquired Scania OmniLinks in Brighton & Hove livery, has moved from Clacton to Sudbury but has not been used much since reallocation. 236 (YY64 TXR) has returned to HD after repaint but has not been used in service since.

Long term off road in February were 276/287/511/517/521/523/525/533/642/818/821. 512/520/524/527/528 appear to be the only active Volvo B7TL Geminis.

A recent ride on 274 (YX60 FCE) not only clearly indicated internally where the second door used to reside, aluminium panels used, no matching laminates used on the wall, but the posters inside the vehicle were still relating to the Metropolitan Police from days in the Go Ahead London fleet. 274 was transferred to Hedingham in October 2022. The vehicle when ridden in does not seem ideally geared for hilly terrain, more suited to London streets than East Hill in Colchester which was climbed just above walking pace and all in one gear! The ex-Go Ahead North East Scania's, although older, are much better suited to the routes in and out of Colchester City Centre, albeit suffering from droopy ceiling cove panels.

Other News

Ex L253 (PWY 39W), a Bristol VRT / ECW, was on 7 February dramatically appeared to be dumped in a layby near Eastbourne in a distressed state. It had been resident on a local farm and had been advertised for sale. Police stickers were warning of scrappage if the vehicle owners did not come forward.

More happily, ex L258 (M261 KWK), a Volvo B6 / Plaxton Pointer in preservation, was spotted in Bicester on 3 February still in full Hedingham livery and blinds.

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

Right: As reported last month, former Go Ahead South West Enviro 200s (new to Go Ahead London) Enviro 200 230 (YY64 TXK) has received fleet livery. It is seen on route 9 in Pier Avenue, Clacton on 17 January 2024.

Dave Arnold.

A photo of it before repaint was on the inside front cover of EBM 714.



Acquired Vehicles

Further to last month, 33684 and 33689 both moved from Ipswich to Colchester on Sunday 4 February. 33689 entered service the next day on route 320 and 33684 the day after on routes S6/S7/S8. They have had their 'Greater Manchester' fleet names removed. Photos of both are on the inside front cover.

Vehicles on Loan

As has become common over school holidays in the past year, although not over the Christmas & New Year 2023-24 holidays, Colchester borrowed Wrightbus StreetDecks from Ipswich over half term week (19-23 February). This time, three vehicles were received, 35911, 35921 and 35922 (BN72 TVC/T/U). The first two had been on loan before, but this was the first use in Colchester of 35922. See photos on page 18. 35911 actually arrived before half term, and was in service from CR on 15th, the other two were in use from 19th. All three then continued in service at Colchester the following week, 35911 returning to Ipswich on the evening of 28th, but the other two were still in use at CR on 3 March, the day this issue of EBM went to press.

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 11 2023/24 (21 January - 24 February)

32540 CR-CR (oos), 32551 FG (loan)-CF, 32641 FG (loan)-CF, 33555 BN (oos)-BN, 33561 BN-BN (oos), 33572 BN-BN (oos), 33684 FG-CR, 33689 FG-CR, 34456 HH-HH (oos), 35911 FG-CR (loan), 35921 FG-CR (loan), 35922 FG-CR (loan), 36218 HH (oos)-HH, 37005 CR-CR (oos), 37007 CR-CR (oos), 37017 CR-CR (oos), 37047 CF-CF (oos), 37053 CR-CR (oos), 44004 BN-BN (oos), 47525 HH-BN, 47654 BN-BN (oos), 47666 CR (oos)-CR, 63375 BN (oos)-BN, 63383 BN (oos)-BN

Note, Period 11 is usually a four week period, but because a year is actually 52 weeks and one day (and two days in leap years such as this year) slippage occurs and every now and then a 53 week year is required to realign dates. 2023/24 is one such year and the extra week has been added on to Period 11.

Right: 34456 (LJ59 LYO) out of service at the side of Hadleigh Depot on 13 February 2024. **Nigel Clark**

Around the Depots

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

Colchester

47666 returned to service on 23 February after nearly two months off road. It has had all Southampton City Red branding removed (although ghosting remains) and had Shuttles branding applied, the first such vehicle in City Red livery to receive this branding (although it doesn't have the cove panels strap line of "quick & easy into town...& home again"). It has also had its super rear advert for Fareham College removed.



Further to last month, on the scrap line on 16 February were 32540, 37005, 37007, 37017, 37020, 37053, 44003, 63341 and 66817. 37020 had only joined that day and was soon back in service, on 19th. Driver Trainer 69148, seen on the line on 27 January, had gone. 47430 had returned to service on 1 February. 47666 was presumably in the workshops, see above. 63336 not seen, but it remains out of service (since 23 October 2023). 66817 had its fleet numbers painted over black and half of its registration as well, plus adverts removed.

News of the Harwich routes (1-29 February).

Most journeys continued to be worked by Wrightbus StreetLites or Volvo B7RLEs 69515-20. Exceptions were mid-length Enviro 200 44006 on 5th, 6th, 16th and 23rd. On 13th, Airlink liveried Enviro 200 MMC 67194 worked 0710 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 0900 return. On 20th, sister 67189 worked 1602 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1740 return and 1910 Colchester - Mistley 104. The double deck working remained 0830 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1008 return on Monday - Friday schooldays or 0915 Mistley - Colchester 104 during the schools half term holidays, 19th to 23rd. During this holiday period, 1725 Colchester- Harwich 104, 1900 Harwich - Colchester 102 & 2035 Colchester - Harwich 102 were worked by double-deckers on three days: 37042 on 21st, 37138 on 22nd, 32547 on 23rd.

Service changes to routes 88/A/B, S4 and X20 from 25th caused some changes to the vehicle duties on 102/104. Instead of six buses, seven or eight buses have reached Harwich on Mondays - Fridays. For example, on 28th 37006, 47650, 63329, 63334 and 69520 all started early on 104, joined by 69518 on the late duty starting on 1135 Colchester - Harwich 104. 37006 went onto 75/86, 63329 to 80A/81/A and 63334 to S4. Then 47697 came off S4 and worked 1552 Colchester Norman Way - Harwich 104 & 1740 return and 1910 Colchester - Mistley 104. 37621 came off 320 and worked 1725 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1900 Harwich - Colchester 102.

Clacton routes. Route 74B has again been mainly Volvo / Gemini operated. Exceptions have been on loan 35921 (19th, 24th, 28th), 47427 (8th), 47668 (5th), 63329 (12th) and 69518 (7th). 35921 in Ipswich Reds livery is of particular note, recalling the days when Eastern Counties buses from Ipswich reached Clacton on route 123. Route 76: 63329 (11th), 69520 (18th), 47697 (25th); 63328 (3 March).

There continue to be daily appearances of double-deckers on route X20. The same five of the newer double-deckers allocated to Colchester as last month have been used: 33713 (6th, 9th, 12th, 26th, 2-3 March); 33825 (23rd, 27th, 29th); 37140 (12th-14th, 16th-17th, 19th, 21st-22nd, 24th-26th, 1-3 March); 37613 (5th-9th, 11th-13th, 16th-18th, 20th, 22nd-23rd, 25th, 27th-28th, 1 March); 37621 (5th).

Also, 32628 was unusual on 10th, it replaced 67194 which had broken down at Stansted Airport. And then on 26th, on loan Ipswich StreetDecks 35911 & 35921 were very unusual.

Non Airlink single-decker on X20: 69519 (5th, 12th-13th).

Single-deckers on route 320: Mid-length Enviro 200 44006 unusual on 14th, 47421 (5th), 47666 (22nd), 63333 (13th), Airlink liveried 67192 (26th), 69518 (6th) and 69519 (7th).

69517 on 87U (5th).

Chelmsford

37034, 37047 and 42935 were seen on the CF scrap line on 31 January and again on 26 February. 37034 had some parts missing. 42935 may have been sold as long ago as August 2023 but has not yet been collected by its new owner.

On Sunday evening 18 February, a branch went through the windscreen of 67737 at Chelmer Village on its way from Colchester to Chelmsford on the 371. A tree had probably toppled due to the heavy rain. After a 20 minute delay, 44548 came to the rescue. There were no injuries and the bus was back in service two days later.

Enviro 400 MMCs on X30: 33994 (8th, 15th, 3 March), 33995 (9th, 12th, 14th, 20th), 33996 (5th-6th, 15th-16th, 20th), 33997 (7th, 11th, 18th, 27th), 33998 (7th, 18th). Also Volvo B7TL / Gemini 32551 on X30 shorts on 14th.

44900 on 170 (21st). 44914 on 336 (8th).

Basildon

A partial correction to last month. 33559 has indeed received magenta 'Essex Bus' fleet names, replacing old style 'Essex' names, on the nearside and front, but retains its old 'Essex' name on the offside.

Double-deckers on X10 shorts: 33411 (13th), 33414 (5th), 33424 (23rd), 33549 (14th), 33551 (16th), 33557 (1 March), 33559 (6th), 33570 (23rd) and 33989 (20th).

33544 an unusual double-decker on 251 (25th). 44080 on 251 (3 March). 44598 on 9 (13th). 44909 on 251 (18th). 63344 on 300 (19th). Airlink liveried 67191 on B3 (8th, 15th) & 67195 on B1 (15th).

Right: StreetLite 63339 (SM65 EEX) was out of service for most of February but was back in use on the last day of the month. Here it is parked up at Basildon Depot on 20th. To the left is withdrawn mid-length Enviro 200 44004 (LK57 EJG).

Adam Kelleher

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



Below: Preserved Eastern National Atkinson Black Knight / Defender Mk2 6X2 recovery vehicle 0103 (EHJ 302H) at North Weald Station at the Epping Ongar Railway 'Winter Country Buses' event on 25 February 2024. 6X2 refers to the axle arrangements; in this case the vehicle has a three axle (six wheel) arrangement, with twin steering axles and a single axle at the rear. **Richard Delahoy**

The owner, Ezra Elvin Debond has kindly supplied the following information: "I bought it about two years ago, it was looked after by a man called Robin who owned it for 20 years and worked with it in service. It was a tipper originally and then was converted by S & M Coaches."

Dave Arnold has also provided info: "It came to Eastern National in November 1982 from S & M Coaches for monies owed, I believe it was for fuel. It always ran on trade plates and I believe it was an eight wheeler truck cut down."

Thanks also to Phil Covington, David Edwards, Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit and Nev Walker.



First Essex News in Pictures

As reported on page 15, three Wrightbus Eclipse StreetDecks were on loan from Ipswich to Colchester over half term and beyond. Front and rear views of 35922 (BN72 TVU) at Highwoods on route S2 on 23 February 2024.



63063 (SK63 KKD) has previously been illustrated in EBM in acquired Southampton City Red livery, including on the front cover of EBM 695. It was repainted to Essex Bus green in August 2022. Here it is on route 22 opposite Basildon Bus Station on 20 February 2024.



All this page
Robert Appleton

Enviro 400 34458 (LJ59 LYS) on the forecourt of Hadleigh depot on 23 February 2024, showing its red Arriva London origins with a bit of advert beading missing. Also note the panelling at the bottom of the doors, a relatively unusual feature, normally there is glass all the way to the bottom. Unfortunately, rather than try to pick out this feature as part of the livery, First Essex chose to have this painted black.



Enviro 400 MMC 33985 (SN65 OGA), still with remnants of its First Glasgow branding, on route 25 in Rayleigh High Street on 21 February 2024. A photo of it in service in Glasgow was in EBM Extra 2 (Autumn 2022).



Driver Trainer Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 69155 (MX06 VNL) in London Road, Hadleigh at the junction with Rectory Road on 20 February 2024.



All this page
Nigel Clark

Further to EBM 717's report of RMC1485 making a guest appearance on Londoner Buses commercial route T15 on 30 December 2023, green RMC1477 did so on 20 January 2024 and red / gold RCL2226 on 17 & 24 February.

A severe shortage of serviceable trains for the Central line has caused TfL to provide extra buses on routes 20 and 150 in the peaks, plus a peak-hour bus service from Epping to Chingford, stopping only at Loughton station along the way, for passengers to then use the London Overground from Chingford to Liverpool Street. This service is run by Ensignbus who provide staff to supervise at Chingford and Epping, although from observations passenger loadings have been low.

Below: Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 127 (LX15 GOK) leaving Chingford on 7 February 2024, during the first week of operation.

Owen Woodliffe. Havering Transport Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 0119 (LX60 DXF) has also been seen on the route, on hire to Ensignbus.

Central line

Ongoing service disruption

We are sorry for the continued disruption on the Central line.

We have now introduced a new timetable which enables us to minimise unpredictable long gaps between trains. You may still have to wait longer for a train than before the disruption, but the new timetable should provide more consistency.

Separately, due to issues with track monitoring equipment, there are temporary speed restrictions in some locations. Trains may run slower than you'd expect and we're unable to run as many to Hainault via Newbury Park.

We are working around the clock to address these issues and improve the situation while ensuring the safety of our colleagues and customers.

Enhanced bus services are continuing to run between some affected stations in east London to give you better and more frequent connections to other lines.

[Plan ahead](#), allow more time for your journey and consider alternative routes if travelling into or through central London. For more information, visit our [travel advice page](#).





Two generations of Wrightbus single-deckers. **Above:** Most of the buses provided for the Chingford to Epping via Loughton Central line peak hour bus service have been Ensignbus double-deckers, although First Essex StreetLite 47526 (SN64 CMC), allocated to Hadleigh and seen at Epping Station, was used on Friday evening 9 February. (Out of interest, FE Westcliff liveried 37985 was used on 7 February - thanks to Keith Ward for this information.)

Below: TfL augmented Arriva operated route 150 between Ilford and Hainault. Three extra buses were noted on 14 February provided by Transport UK (formerly Abellio). One was Enviro 400 2579 (YX16 NPV), the other two were new Wrightbus GB Kite Electroliners 1706/7 (LV73 FHC/D) with the latter seen departing from Hainault Station. Kites have also been used on Elizabeth line rail replacement services in February. Both **Owen Woodliffe**



Acquired Vehicles

Further to last month, LJ57 USU, SN57 DWZ and LK08 DWE are more Enviro 200s acquired, during February, from Central Connect (see page 25). These are also currently awaiting a decision on future use.

ADL Mini Enviro 200 / East Lancs Esteem KX08 HMF, reported as acquired from Central Connect last month, has had the red of its CC livery repainted to white and will go into the fleet.

Disposals

Enviro 200 AS09 PAN (ex LJ09 KPT) has been sold, with number plate, to Carolean Coaches of Wolverhampton. Black Volvo B12B / Plaxton Panther DC53 PAN (ex LK53 KWF) has been sold, also with its number plate, to Ambassador Coaches of Great Yarmouth.

With thanks to Adam Barham.



Richard Delahoy

Colchester

Two corrections to last month. The reference to withdrawn Enviro 200 2022 (GN58 BUO) should of course have read 4022. In the photo of similar 4065, it is not in Queen Street as captioned, but in St. Botolph's Street, about to turn right into Osborne Street. Queen Street is the road leading off of the High Street by the castle, past the site of the former Eastern National garage which after passing that then becomes St. Botolph's Street.

Driver changeovers on route 133 (Braintree - Stansted Airport) are now taking place at Braintree Interchange instead of the layby outside the old High School in Coggeshall Road. The latter point had been used since around March 2020 when the Bus Park (now Interchange) was closed for rebuilding.

Southend

Whilst we don't normally report on road closures (planned or unplanned) and diversions, one very unusual occurrence took place on Thursday 8 February, when an accident closed a critical piece of road in Rayleigh town centre, affecting Eastwood Road between Websters Way and the High Street, causing major havoc for many bus routes. Of particular note, Arriva diverted some 7s and 8s between Hockley and Rayleigh to run via Hambro Hill and Downhall Road direct to & from Rayleigh Station. Hambro Hill is never normally used by buses [previous occurrences were noted in EBNs 686/7 (June / July 2021) and EBM 698 (June 2022)]. The road claimed the roof off First Essex Transbus President 33189 in November 2018 at the low railway bridge there when the driver missed a right turn in early morning fog (EBN 656, December 2018). Service 9 was being turned short at Eastwood, Nobles Green.

First Essex were also seriously affected, with at least one bus on route 20 towards Hullbridge that had got as far as Websters Way having to return back along Eastwood Road to Progress Road, then taking the A127 to Rayleigh Weir and into Rayleigh that way. This all followed gridlock in Rayleigh town centre the previous morning due to an accident closing the A127 and dispersing traffic into the few alternative routes.

Harlow

Vehicle availability deteriorated badly in the middle of February. Versa 4184 has been off the road since 30 November 2023 and Volvo B7RLE 3882 since 30 January 2024. The current PVR is 36 and 42 vehicles are allocated. The Saturday PVR is 31, so even though there should have been 11 spare vehicles there were still not enough vehicles to provide a full run out on Saturday 17 February.

The Bus Station Kiosk and waiting room closed on Friday 9 February. Demolition work was scheduled to commence on Monday 12th but has slipped and no work had started as of Saturday 24th.

With thanks to John Card, Adam Kelleher, Nigel Turner, Roger Tuke and the M&D & EK Bus Club.

FlagFinders

On 12 February 2024, Vectare acquired a 75% stake in Braintree based FlagFinders. Formerly College Tours Braintree Ltd, FlagFinders was founded in 1976. Three of the now four owners, including the founder, are retiring and have sold their shares to Vectare, but the fourth is remaining with the business as General Manager and has retained his shares.

As well as the depot in Coggeshall Road, Braintree, FlagFinders have depots at Little Stubleys Farm, Sudbury Road, Halstead and Station Road, Kelvedon (next door to the Hedingham depot). In the medium term, Vectare plans to use the three strategically located depots to expand its portfolio as part of continued planned growth across East Anglia. FlagFinders will remain a stand-alone company.

FlagFinders run school services, private hires and rail replacement services. Most school services are closed contracts but the one journey each way 223 (Braintree-Sible Hedingham) and 716 (Castle Hedingham-Colchester) are open public services, all passengers welcome on board (although the £2 fare cap does not apply on these services).

Fleet List

Mini / midi buses / coaches

N411 WJL Mercedes-Benz 711D / Autobus Classique
SG52 RZJ Mercedes-Benz 413CDI / Onyx
GK03 JUC Mercedes-Benz 413CDI / Stan
VU53 FYR (ex J200 ANN) Mercedes-Benz 413 CDI / Excel
AE54 FMG Mercedes-Benz O814D / Euro coach builders
AE07 NZB Mercedes-Benz O814D / Euro coach builders
PO61 LUW Mercedes-Benz 515CDI / UNVI
YL08 FZS (ex DJ08 BUS) Mercedes-Benz 311CDI / Malton Coachworks
YN05 ASZ Iveco Eurorider / Indcar Maxim 2

Coaches

GB04 FLG (ex RY04 ERN) Bova Futura
GB54 FLG (ex YJ54 EXG) Bova Futura
GB05 FLG (ex DT05 DON, YJ05 XWP) Bova Futura
GB55 FLG (ex KC55 ABC) Bova Futura
Y2 FLG (ex SO15 UBS) Bova Futura 2
Y3 FLG (ex YN15 YTP) Irizar i6
Y4 FLG (ex YT09 FLF) Scania K340 / Lahden Omniexpress

Single-deckers

YN04 PZY Transbus Dart
DC56 PAN (ex RX56 BWE, OOO5 STX) ADL Mini Pointer Dart
YX10 BFO ADL Enviro 200

Double-deckers

Y184 NLK Volvo B7TL / Plaxton President
LK03 NHF Volvo B7TL / Transbus President
LK03 NHG Volvo B7TL / Transbus President
LK03 NHV Volvo B7TL / Transbus President
LB02 YXG Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini
LB02 YXK Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini
LF52 USV Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini
LF52 ZSD Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini
PG04 WHF Volvo B7TL / East Lancs Myllennium Vyking

PO54 OOD Volvo B7TL / East Lancs Myllenum Vyking
YN53 RYD Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka
YN53 RYR Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka
NIL 7251 (ex YN53 RZD) Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka
YN56 FDD Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka
YN56 FDX Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka
YN07 EYP Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka
YN07 EYT Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka
YN08 MLY Scania N270UD / East Lancs OmniDekka

Some observations during February: YN05 ASZ, YL08 FZS, PO61 LUW on Colchester schools; LB02 YXK on 716; GB55 FLG on A120 at Marks Tey; YN08 MLY at Aspen Grange, Braintree.

Central Connect & Vectare

New Vehicles

A correction to last month. 351 was shown as YY73 TGN under both 'New Vehicles' and in the Fleet List. This was as per Vectare's own fleet list and on Bus Lists on the Web. However, both LOTS and Bustimes show 351 as YY73 TGV. TGV is the correct registration as there is a photo of TGN on Flickr taken in February working for Skyport, Linwood on car park shuttles around Glasgow Airport. Apparently there was an error by ADL and the vehicle expected and the vehicle that arrived were not the same (although not a problem as identical).

Vehicle on Loan

922, RX23 TFV, Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVM Cityline, from Dawson's rentals for approximately three months. All white livery. Not to be confused with permanent similar 222, RX23 TVF. There is already another fleet number 922, Enviro 200 YX12 FPY.

Below: New in December 2023, 348 (SK73 COJ), an ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, in North Weald on route 420 on Sunday 25 February 2024. **Richard Delahoy**



Disposals

The following are all Central Connect vehicles:

Scania OmniCity 2001/7 (YP59 OEX/N) both left the fleet in October 2023 with 2003 (YP59 OER) leaving the fleet in February 2024. 2001 was the vehicle that collided with StreetLite 1202 (CC11 BUS) in June 2021 (see EBM 689) and had been being used as a source of spares (the StreetLite returned to service but has now been withdrawn, see EBM 718). The other two Scania's had both been out of service for some time (see EBM 714).

Further to last month, Scania OmniCity 595, 597 & 598 (2002/4/9, YP59 OEM/S/T) were sold in February 2024.

LOTS confirm that Volkswagen Transporter T5 / Bluebird Tucana 1102 (YX10 AYF) left the fleet in October 2023 as did Enviro 200 916 (1403, SN57 DWV).

Also further to last month, Enviro 200s 913 (1405, LJ57 USU), 917 (1404, SN57 DWZ) and 920 (1412, LK08 DWE) were additional sales to Panther Travel during February (see page 22).

Other Vehicle News

New Enviro 200 MMC 347 (SK73 CNO) remains in all white but has gained new style Central Connect fleet names. Although (as noted last month) we have decided to report both Central Connect and Vectare under one heading, of interest is that former Central Connect Enviro 200 MMCs 328 (1602, CE21 GAL) and 329 (1603, CC71 GAL), both in CC livery, were seen in Bingham on service 90 to Nottingham on 16 February with a notice in a nearside window showing the legal owner as Vectare, with the Loughborough address.

Company Name

Finally this month, questions are sometimes asked about the origins of the company name and how it should be pronounced. Most people say it phonetically exactly as it looks, but it is actually derived from the Latin verb vecto, "Vectare" meaning "to carry" or "to transport". The correct pronunciation is best described as "Vect-ar-e" rather than "Vec-tare".

With thanks to the companies, Robert Appleton, Dave Arnold, Wayne Bell, John Card, Ian Dann, Richard Delahoy, David Edwards, Paul Harvey, Owen Woodliffe, the PSV Circle, Bustimes, Bus Lists on the Web and LOTS.

Below: New Enviro 200 MMC 353 (YY73 RGZ) in 'H for Hertford' livery. Route H6 is a recast of the former 333 and the scene is a very wet Hertford Bus Station. **Owen Woodliffe**



ADL Mini Pointer Dart 407 (EU07 FRN) has been withdrawn. It was the last Dart in the fleet (all single deckers now being Enviro 200s or Solos).

The Nottingham Enviro 200s listed last month are still in service in Nottingham due (we understand) to electrification infrastructure delays preventing the replacement Yutongs from entering service.

Also further to last month. ADL E40D / Enviro 400 MMC demonstrator YY73 TGZ, which was used here in January, was with Border Bus, Beccles, in February. The demonstration was obviously successful as five of this type are on order for delivery in June (3) and August (2). These will be to 11.5m length with 86 seats.

With thanks to Adam Kelleher and the companies.

Other Operators

Roger A Smith

FlagFinders, Braintree

As reported on page 23, 75% of this company was acquired by Vectare in February 2024. In future, this company will be reported under the Vectare heading.

Lodge Coaches, High Easter

ADL Trident / East Lancs Myllenum Lolyne PF06 EZL (new to Blackpool Transport) has been sold to Avon and Somerset Police to be used for training purposes for their armed response unit. It was collected from Lodge's on 1 February 2024. **Below:** As noted in EBM 717, Lodge Coaches have acquired two Scania N230UD OmniCities, YT09 BMO and YT09 BND, former London United / RATP SP40042 and SP40048. Both were used on Greater Anglia replacement on 4 February 2024, BMO is seen at Ingatestone Station. **Dave Arnold**



Fourways Coaches, Highwood

AYZ 5039 (ex YN03 DFL), a Scania N94UD with East Lancs OmniDekka H47/33F bodywork, was acquired last November, formerly with Cambridge Bus & Coach, Fen Drayton. Caetano bodied Volvo B9R (C48FLt) FJ61 EWD arrived here during December last year, ex B&J Travel, Barnoldswick, Lancashire. This vehicle has subsequently been reregistered as VKZ 2346. This registration was previously carried by a Plaxton bodied Dennis Javelin which reverted to its original registration of P333 TCC before disposal.

Peter Godward, Basildon

T123 PGC (ex YN07 LKD), a Scania K380EB6 with Irizar Century C56FT bodywork, arrived here last December, previously with A&A Coach Travel Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire.

REL Davian

Further to last month, the Edmonton depot has been relocated to the ex-APT base at Rawreth Industrial Estate, Rayleigh. Ex-APT Volvo B8R / Siderals R27 APT and Y27 APT are both in the new livery as is Scania EB6 / Levante BV17 GPK. Scania EB6 / Levante BV17 GPE is plain white.

With thanks to Richard Delahoy, John Podgorski and the PSV Circle.

719 for EBM 719

Below: Dennis Dart SLF / Plaxton Pointer 2 43719 (R719 DJN) on route 2 at Kingsway, Dovercourt on 6 March 2015. In Barbie livery but without the side swirl. It was new in February 1998 as **719** and spent its entire life at Hadleigh depot before moving to Clacton in December 2014. It only lasted five months in service there and went to Alpha Recovery for scrap in June 2015. **Robert Appleton**



Southend Transport in the Snow

In previous years' winter issues we have been able to present a good selection of photos of buses in the snow. However, this winter, unfortunately (or fortunately, whichever your point of view) there has been little snow in Essex. In Brentwood, where the editor lives, there were snow flurries on 8 January which didn't settle and that was it. So to compensate, here are a couple of photos of Southend Transport vehicles in the heavy snow of January 1987.

Top: Leyland Leopard / Duple Dominant II coach 203 (UTD 203T) at Southend Bus Station on 11th, being used on local service 6 to Eastwood Kent Elms on hire to Venturer Travel, who held the ECC contract for the Sunday service. Richard Delahoy is driving. In the background 'The Royals' shopping centre is under construction. **Matthew Evans**
Bottom: This time **Richard Delahoy** is the photographer as well as the driver of Leyland Fleetline / Northern Counties 242 (MRJ 242W) on LTS rail replacement at Chalkwell Station six days later. More on this next month.



In the first article in this occasional series (EBM 689, September 2021) we looked at a typical crew duty for Eastern National, seeing how it had to conform to the agreements negotiated nationally with the trades unions and then implemented locally. Those agreements covered the major operators, such as those in the Transport Holding Company (later NBC, after the BET Group sold out to the state) and municipalities like Southend and Colchester. Generalising, for those operators, timetables and routes were planned first and then crew duties compiled to cover the work. However, in the independent sector there were and are generally few union agreements and duties tend to be of much more variable length and structure, as they are planned hand in hand with setting up routes or bidding for contracts. The success of an independent operator is often in putting together separate pieces of work in the most efficient way and timetabling services around contracts and the like. So, bringing us a lot more up to date, here's an example from Stephenson's of Essex, showing how inventive planning can cover a variety of work. First, a confession: through my transport consultancy business I was responsible for all the scheduling and route planning for Stephenson's from the early 1990s until retiring from that role just over seven years ago, so I would think it's a good example, of course! Anyway, to our duty for today.

We're based at Rochford depot in the autumn of 2014 and have been allocated duty 37 today. Here, typically drivers work a different duty each day, organised into a rota to roughly even out weekly hours, given that almost no two duties are of the same duration. Many are around 9 to 10½ hours long, but there's a very short one of just 5 hours 10 mins on three days of the week (good for anyone needing an afternoon off), whilst the longest is 12 hours 40 mins end to end, but with time off during the morning.

We sign on at 0630 but will get in a few minutes earlier for a quick brew in the driver restroom first. Our duty today uses the same bus for the entire day and Terry, the depot supervisor, will confirm which one to take - often the same

Monday to Friday		SCANIA DD - low floor	Start	6:30	Driving hours	07:56
Schooldays						
From:	15-Sep-14		Duty	11:20	Pay hours	10:20
6:30	SIGN ON, Prepare bus, complete walk round check					
6:45	Dead	to Stonebridge				
		ETM code	812	out		
		Trip number	8121			
		Destination code	8121			
7:10	812	Stonebridge				
		Weir Pond corner				
		The Castle				
		Barrow Hall Farm				
		Stonebridge/Mummeries				
		King Edmund School				
7:35	Dead	to Eastern Avenue, Sutton Road rbt				
7:57	509					
		Trip number	5091			
		Destination code	5091			
		Eastern Ave, Sutton Rd rbt				
		The Angel				
		Bridge Garage				
		Thorpe Bay Station				
		Kursaal (sea front stop)				
		Thomas More School				
Remind alighting passengers to use 814 in the afternoon						
8:35	Dead	to Leigh Station				
8:50	Break	at Leigh Station				
9:08	17					
	out	Trip number	1701			
		Destination code	171			
		Leigh Station				
		Chalkwell Station				
		Cliffs Pavilion				
		Nelson St				
9:28	17					
	in	Trip number	1702			
		Destination code	172			
		Nelson St				
		Travel Centre stop L				
		Cliffs Pavilion				
		Chalkwell Station				
		Leigh Station				
10:08	17					
	out	Trip number	1703			
		Destination code	171			
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bus is used on the same duty each day. The duty card reminds us that it should be one of the standard capacity Scania double deckers - Rochford has nine allocated, 512, 601-8; today we have brand new 608 (EU64 CVR). Our first task is to conduct a thorough 'walk round check' - this is a legal requirement and we need to check the interior and exterior condition, including operation of lights, emergency doors, wipers and washers, condition of wheels and wheel-nuts, security of the seats, operation of bell pushes, provision of a fire extinguisher and so on. All need to be marked off on a check sheet which we'll hand in at the end of the day. Of course, any defects we spot need to be reported immediately for rectification before we

leave the depot. Today our bus is all OK, so we log in to the Ticketer ticket machine with our individual PIN number and select the first journey.

The depot has 13 duties on schooldays, of which two are lates, both signing on at 1340, but the other 11 start between 0555 and 0645, so the yard is pretty busy at this time of the morning and there's some banter amongst the drivers. At least it is daylight, doing a walk round check is less fun in the dark (so carry a torch) and even less fun in the rain - but it needs to be done!

Air pressure built up, we head out of the depot, taking great care on the narrow access road where the fence is just at the right height to remove one of our mirrors.

An important part of the work here is to take pupils from Wakering to King Edmund School in Rochford and today we are on the 812 which runs dead to Stonebridge, a rather obscure spot on Barling Road, 3½ miles from the depot. Most other King Edmund buses run direct into Wakering to start, but we follow the 14 bus route (another service we operate, under contract to Essex CC) into Barling and Little Wakering before heading up the narrow Barrow Hall Road - hope we don't meet a tractor along here! - and back through Shopland to the only north-south road through Rochford, reputedly the busiest unclassified road in the country. With seven of our buses following this road to the school and all arriving at basically the same time, it gets horribly congested in the narrow roads by the school entrance, with lots of parents dropping off as well. A new dedicated bus park will open soon, easing that problem, once the contractors building a housing estate behind the school complete their work.

Although we've only served half a dozen stops, we have a full bus, most passengers with passes, so it takes a while to unload 70+ passengers. But we can't dawdle, as we need to head straight back onto the main road for the crawl through Rochford back to the Anne Boleyn pub, then round Sutton Road (our third time along here in under an hour) and up to Eastern Avenue, where we start service 509 and pick up our second load of school pupils. King Edmund school starts and finishes much earlier than the other local schools, with an 0800 to 1400 day, hence we are able to get two school runs in on the same bus. Whereas most King Edmund pupils are entitled, so have ECC passes, the 509 caters for the selective school market where parents have to pay. We start off heading east towards Shoebury, then west through Thorpe Bay and down to the seafront, the quickest route across town at this time of day. Turning up Chalkwell Avenue, we cross the London Road and head down Nelson Road to join the scrum of buses unloading at Westcliff High Schools. Then it's a short dead run to Leigh Station where we can park up for a brief break of 15 minutes.

Now the inventive scheduling comes in. First Essex used to run an hourly service from Southend to Leigh that followed the railway line closely through Westcliff and Chalkwell south of the London Road, the 26A (previously 24). They withdrew it in May 2013 and Stephenson's felt there was a limited market to be served commercially, but only if it could be done using existing resources. Hence an example where the timetable was written to fit the duties and not the other way round. I resurrected traditional route number 17 for this, so we'll spend the morning plying between Leigh and Southend, catering almost exclusively for ENCTS pass-holding pensioners glad to still have a limited service.

We do of course need a proper break at some point, so coming into Southend on the second trip the driver on duty 40 will meet us and take over our bus, giving us a ferry van or empty bus for our break. We'll then take our bus back an hour later. Our last run on the 17 leaves Southend at 1332 (there's a final one at 1642 on a different duty, after the afternoon schools) and then comes another bit of clever (some might say odd) scheduling. One of Stephenson's commercial routes for the various selective and faith schools is the 637, South Woodham Ferrers to Chelmsford. In the morning it's worked by Maldon depot with a bus that then spends the rest of its day on the Maldon town service 288. Meanwhile, at Rochford some of the afternoon King Edmund school runs are covered by Maldon and Boreham buses that have worked into the Southend / Westcliff grammar schools that morning and lay over at Rochford during the day. So that frees us up to run empty from Leigh right through to the north side of Chelmsford, to St John Payne Catholic school off Broomfield Road. We're allowed 50 minutes for that run and it's important that we get to the school in good time to find our parking place, as this is another school with more buses than space!

Parking up, we get another break but need to be ready from 1530 to start boarding, ready for a 1545 departure. This inevitably involves joining a queue of traffic to access Broomfield Road. We stop along there to pick up the grammar school pupils from Chelmsford County High and King Edward VI, before heading off north and then east along Chelmer Valley Road and the A130 towards Springfield and into Chelmer Village, where we start to drop off. Then we go down to the Army & Navy roundabout and up the Baddow By-Pass before turning off for Sandon school

(more pupils to pick up) and on the road parallel to and south of the A414 into Danbury, then south through Bicknacre and Woodham Ferrers before a loop round South Woodham to end at the Asda store in what passes for a town centre here. Our last passengers dropped off, all that's left is a long dead run back to Rochford. Our duty card reminds us that we must either use Rawreth Lane and then through Hullbridge & Lower Hockley, or the A1245 to the A127 - any other route would take us into conflict with one or more of three low bridges which we won't fit under!

Hopefully the traffic's not too heavy and we can get back to Rochford at the planned 1735 (we might even be lucky and be early). All that's left is to refuel the bus from our bunker tank and carefully park up by reversing towards the fence. Be careful, space is tight and buses need to park close together! Then it's time to sweep the bus out and put any rubbish in the bins provided. Evening arrivals into the depot are more spaced out than the morning starts, so we may not see any other drivers as we log off the ticket machine and go to the restroom to drop our cash into the night safe, not forgetting to complete the daily walk round check sheet and handing that in. Luckily there were no defects to report during our work today.

If there are still staff on site we can simply drive off home in our car, but if the site's empty and the next bus has not yet arrived, we'll need to close the gates and lock up. All too soon we'll be back here for our next day's work - this time duty 33, commuter route 6A to Leigh, daytime on Pitsea to Basildon local service 1, a contract run for King John School in Thundersley and then Swayne School at Rayleigh to Hullbridge on the late 20X. See you then?

Bringing the story up to date, a few changes have occurred since. The dedicated bus pick up and set down area at King Edmund school is in use and is dramatically easier than the old arrangements. Sadly, the road through Rochford has only got even more congested and new housing developments mean congestion will continue to worsen, to the detriment of all bus services.

The service to Westcliff Schools is now the 817 rather than 509 and has a different route, combining parts of the old 560 and 814 services. The afternoon work is now somewhat different, as the 637 service to & from St John Payne school in Chelmsford no longer runs, numbers having dropped too low to make it viable. And looking at the following day's duty, none of that work now remains, casualties of declining passenger numbers post pandemic and the loss of a short-term contract. But Southend service 17 has now gained some early evening trips, using time that was previously spent on commuter service 6A. And the number and pattern of duties at Rochford has since changed. Oh, and the duty numbering system has also changed, to accommodate the expanded range of Stephenson's operations and depots.

Below: Our bus for today's duty was 608 (EU64 CVR), a Scania N230UD with ADL Enviro 400 body. Here it is seen on Belton Way in Leigh about to operate the last ever journey on service 6A on 29 July 2022. The service was a casualty of the much reduced number of rail commuters to London in these days of working from home.

Richard Delahoy



On 6 February 2024, Scania OmniDekka 60 (PJ54 YZT) failed at East Bergholt whilst working 0805 Ipswich - Colchester 93A. It was replaced by Scania N230UD / OmniCity 29 (YR59 FYT) which completed the journey to Colchester, then worked 0935 Colchester - Ipswich 93. 29 stayed on 93, working 1150 and 1500 Ipswich - Colchester journeys, returning from Colchester at 1315 and 1635. This was 29's first reported venture into Essex, it normally works on Ipswich town routes 2, 5 and 6.

YR59 FYT was new to London United in November 2009 with H41/22D layout. It was purchased by Ipswich Buses in January 2023 via Ensignbus (dealer). It was re-seated and converted to single door, becoming H47/30F, and received fleet number 29. In April 2023 it received a special livery to celebrate 120 years of municipal public transport in Ipswich. In 1903 Ipswich Corporation had purchased the horse trams in the town and converted the routes to electric tram operation.

Ipswich Corporation Transport operated electric trams until 1926, trolleybuses from 1923 to 1963, and motor buses from 1950. With local government reorganisation, it became Ipswich Borough Transport from 1974 until 1986. Then with deregulation and privatisation, the bus operations were transferred to Ipswich Buses Ltd, an arm's length company solely owned by Ipswich Borough Council.

The livery on 29 has several historic features: green and cream goes back to the electric tram era. Silver in the livery goes back to the trolleybus era when many of the trolleybuses had polished aluminium panels. Red wheels were a feature of trolleybuses, and motor buses up to the early years of Ipswich Buses. The shaded front fleet number goes back to the Ipswich Corporation Transport years, and the early years of Ipswich Borough Transport. Plain white fleet numbers on the green livery were introduced during the Ipswich Borough Transport years, replacing the shaded fleet numbers. However in 1975 a brighter livery with more cream was introduced on new Leyland Atlanteans with Roe bodies. On these the fleet numbers were gold on the cream livery. The scroll name 'Elizabeth', in honour of our late Queen, goes back to Ipswich Borough Transport years, when a policy of naming buses began.

60 was quickly repaired on 6 February, and re-entered service in the afternoon on Ipswich town routes 9/10. Then on 7th, 60 was allocated to school service 615 to & from Holbrook Academy, which is normally operated by the new to Network Colchester Scania OmniDekka 63 (YN06 TFZ). In turn 63 replaced a Scania OmniCity, working into Essex on 0813 Ardleigh - East Bergholt High School 693 & 1545 return.

With thanks to Bustimes, Bus Lists on the Web and Ipswich Transport Society Journals.

Opposite top: 29 (YR59 FYT) on route 93 in Colchester High Street on 6 February 2024. **Dan Pretty**

Opposite bottom: 29 on one of its usual routes in Ipswich, route 6, at Ipswich Tower Ramparts Bus Station, soon after receiving this livery, on 24 April 2023. **Robert Appleton**

Rear Cover Photos

In 1945, London Transport were allocated 20 AEC Regent IIs with Weymann bodies to a provincial specification. Coded 18STL20 and numbered STL2682-2701, all 20 were delivered to Watford High Street garage early in 1946 for lengthy route 321, Luton to Uxbridge. However, in July 1951 some were transferred to Grays garage, which ultimately ran eight of the batch; they were soon joined by many older pre-war STLs to operate the services taken over from Eastern National later in 1951. There the post war buses operated on various routes, including ex-EN ones to places deep into Essex such as the Bata shoe factory at East Tilbury, until withdrawn on 1 May 1955, the final Grays allocation comprising seven buses STL2684/6-9/94/9.

One of the post war buses, STL2692, was preserved (although this was not one of those that ran at Grays) which after service in London moved to Grimsby-Cleethorpes Transport where it ran until January 1968. It quickly passed into preservation and was a regular sight on the rally circuit for many years before moving into storage. It was recently acquired by Roger Wright's London Bus Company and has been restored to full PSV standard (class VI tested for fare-paying passengers) and repainted into the later Lincoln green livery, in contrast to the green / off white with brown roof scheme that it had carried in its early days with LT and previously in preservation. It is seen at a misty North Weald Station on its public debut with LBC at the EOR 'Winter Country Buses' event on the morning of 25 February 2024 and later in the day at Betts Lane, Nazeing. Both **Richard Delahoy**





ESSEX BUS MAGAZINE Issue 719 March 2024
Reporting the Essex bus scene since 1964