

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 693 January 2022



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



fb.me/essexbus





Above: Nine Enviro 200s and 12 Optare Versas moved from the closed Arriva Guildford depot to Essex depots in December 2021, full details on pages 20-22. Eight of the Enviro's (although these are destined for Colchester) and 11 of the Versas were driven to Southend on the misty morning of Sunday 19 December and a convoy, led by 4206 (also illustrated on page 22), is seen approaching Southend on the A127 at Kent Elms Corner. **John G Lidstone**

Below: A Southend & District Travelcard poster, also see page 13.

Front Cover

Brand new Central Connect Enviro 200 MMC CE71 GAL at Brookfield Centre, Cheshunt on Christmas Eve 2021. **Owen Woodliffe.** More information on page 32.

Inside Front Cover: Basildon Allocated First Essex Enviro 400s

Top: Pride liveried 33425 was on loan to Colchester for a few days at the start of the New Year, more information on page 24. It is seen at Tollgate Retail Park on route 70 on 6 January 2022. **Dave Arnold**

Bottom: 33546 waits to take up service on school route 825 at Southend Travel Centre on 16 November 2021. **Robert Appleton**

SOUTHEND & DISTRICT **Revised Charges**
TRAVELCARD **from Sunday**
15th June 1980
£4.50 FOR 7 DAYS · £18.00 A CALENDAR MONTH
TRAVELCARD gives you unlimited travel by bus and rail in the Southend & District Area.
Pick up a leaflet at any bus or rail office in the area.

Group Information

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

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

Missing or Defective EBMs

Please contact Owen Woodliffe, 196 Sinclair Road, Chingford
E4 8PT

pat_woodliffe@hotmail.com

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

Editorial Team

Editor & First Essex and Central Connect

Adam Kelleher
74 Park Road
Brentwood, Essex
CM14 4TU
adamxxx4@yahoo.co.uk

Arriva Southend & Colchester

Richard Delahoy, address opposite
(Arriva Harlow notes now to Adam Kelleher,
address above)

Ensignbus and Hedingham & Chambers

Mark Lloyd
448 Ipswich Road
Colchester, Essex CO4 0EY
lloydhousehold448@gmail.com

Panther Travel, Lodges and Publicity

Ian Ransom, ianransom2008@googlemail.com

Stephensons & NIBS

Richard Delahoy, address opposite

Smaller Operators

Roger A Smith, 3 Station Mews
Station Road, Witham, Essex
CM8 2FP

Service Changes

Paul Harvey
3 Orangewood Close
Gonerby Hill Foot
Grantham NG31 8QW
pw.harvey@ntlworld.com

Ipswich Buses in Essex

Robert Appleton, rcappleton29@gmail.com

Vectare

Chris Stewart, shenfield252@gmail.com

Subscriptions

A calendar year subscription is £25. New members may join from any month, but subscriptions will always run to December from whichever month the member chooses. Those joining from February to December inclusive will pay a pro-rata subscription calculated at £2.20 per month. For example, a member joining in March would pay 10 x £2.20, i.e., £22. Please contact Richard Delahoy, 272 Shoebury Road, Southend-on-Sea SS1 3TT
richard.delahoy@blueyonder.co.uk

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.

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Target Dates for EBM 694

Reports to Sub-Editors	29 January
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	5 February
Dispatch by Printers	on or before 14 February

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 members of its Committee. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy, but the Group cannot accept responsibility for any errors published.

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Group Notices

Welcome to New Member

Peter Clark, Leigh on Sea - 1191

Service Revisions Sub-Editor

After more years than he would care to remember, Paul Harvey has decided to step down from his role as Service Revisions sub-editor. Paul lives outside the area and obviously the vast number of timetable changes during Covid have been time consuming to keep on top of and with conflicting information at times, have also been confusing,

On behalf of the Group, I'd like to thank Paul for all the time and effort he has put into producing an excellent monthly column, that has allowed the membership to see 'at a glance' a consolidated view, the changes to services of all operators, around the county.

We are therefore looking for someone to take on the role, Paul is prepared to offer support, so it won't be a big bang from day one.

The main driver is using bus company websites and social media platforms on a daily basis, plus Essex, Hertfordshire & Suffolk CC Public Transport websites.

This is all supported by LOTS TLB & Omnibus Society (Eastern) News Magazines plus of course Notices & Proceedings (N&P) published weekly by the Traffic Commissioners Office. The Group can help with Panther Travel, Stephensons & Arriva Southend & Colchester information through contacts at operators

If you can help, please contact myself or Adam Kelleher (details on Page 2)

Ian Ransom, Chair

The Running Card by Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Saturday 5 February: Elstree & Borehamwood Transport Collectors Fair. Allum Hall, Allum Lane WD6 3PS.

Saturday 12 February: Enfield Transport Bazaar. St Stephens Church Hall, Village Road EN11 2EY

Sunday 20 February: From LT to LRT display, running day and dusk photo run at Epping-Ongar Railway, North Weald.
www.eorailway.co.uk

Saturday / Sunday 25/26 March: Discovery Tours, Acton LT Depot.

Saturday 26 March: Heritage Operation on Route 101 (Wanstead-North Woolwich)

Saturday 2 April: South East Bus Festival, Kent Showground, Detling, Kent

Sunday 10 April: Spring Gathering, London Bus Museum Brooklands, KT13 0QU

Sunday 17 April: Easter Transport Festival, Museum of Power, Maldon CM9 6QA.

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

Please check before travelling.

693 for EBM 693

A photo of a Carter's coach on route 123 is included as part of this feature on page 11.

To accompany it, this is the October 1988 timetable leaflet cover for services 123 & 124.

SERVICES 123 AND 124

Your shopping buses to CLACTON



Operated by Carter's Coach Services

 **Essex County Council**

CD Covers

Last month the CD cover and vinyl picture disc of 'All In', the second studio album by 'Apollo Junction', were illustrated. These featured ex Eastern National MW6G / ECW coach 573 UVX, but this is not the first time an Essex vehicle has featured on a CD cover.

Richard Delahoy takes up the story:

"I was e-mailed out of the blue in 2004 by a French group called Cobalt saying that they'd seen my bus picture on the sct61 website and could they use it for their CD sleeve. Of course I said yes, in exchange for a copy. I assume they chose it for the colour, not that Southend Transport blue was usually described as cobalt blue. My photo of 205 was taken outside St Christopher School in Mountdale Gardens in Eastwood on 18 February 1976, with 207 behind, but has been photoshopped to a very different location, although leaving the Southend fleet name on the side. 205 (VDB 915) was an ex-North Western Road Car Leopard / Alexander loaned to ST by Ensignbus for 13 months in 1976/7. It was used mainly on contracts, as seen here, but did also appear on bus work, crew operated. I got a credit on the CD sleeve! I have no idea what became of Cobalt, their website is no longer active and it was quite a long time ago now."



Returning to 573 UVX, Richard and Chris Stewart have sent in photos of it from their collections. In the first photo, it still has its original fleet number 536, so the photo was taken between June 1961 and August 1964, and Westcliff-on-Sea fleet names with 'W' on the anti-macassars, and is at Derby. **Richard Delahoy Collection.**

The second photo was taken on a Group tour and is at Basildon Garage, now renumbered 350. The blind for local route 255 may well have been set up just for the photo! The RELL that can be seen through the windscreen and the Tilling livery date this to 1969-early 1970s. **Chris Stewart Collection**



An Idea Ahead of its Time?

by Richard Delahoy

The Guy Wulfrunian was described as revolutionary at the time of its introduction in 1959 - indeed, perhaps the most advanced bus design in the world then - and is a type that has long intrigued Richard. Having first seen one in 1977, he was pleased to catch up with the same bus again in 2021.

Sometimes a bus design incorporates just too many innovations and new ideas to succeed, especially when some have yet to be fully developed. The Guy Wulfrunian was one such blunderbus, although arguably not contributing to the downfall of its manufacturer (which went bust in 1961 for other reasons and was bought by Jaguar Cars, who went on to suffer the warranty costs associated with the Wulfrunian) but creating massive problems for its principal user, the independent West Riding Automobile Co of Wakefield, a factor in their decision to sell out to the State at the end of 1967.

West Riding had been instrumental in the design of the bus, wanting a high capacity, low-height double decker. The most obvious innovation was the set-back front axle (in Atlantean and Fleetline style) but with the engine still at the very front, ahead of the axle. This was the weighty Gardner 6LX, a large lump to hang on the front. But it was other innovations, including air suspension, independent at the front, hydraulic disc brakes and CBC heating in place of the conventional radiator, that created the perfect storm of technical challenges. I don't have room here to go into the full story* but the buses quickly became very unreliable and difficult to keep in service. Nevertheless, West Riding ended up running 130 of the 137 built. They tried various modifications, such as removing eight front seats upstairs to reduce the weight on the front wheels, but some buses were withdrawn when only five years old, although a few continued after the expiry of their first Certificates of Fitness at seven years old and ran for up to 10 years. The last ran in 1972.



As part of the state owned Transport Holding Company from 1968 (to become the National Bus Company), replacements came in the form of second-hand Bristol LDs and FLFs, whilst some new Daimler Fleetlines received engines from prematurely withdrawn Wulfrunians. Much to my regret, I never rode on one (and still have yet to, but have fingers crossed for 2022) but I did come across one purely by chance. I'd visited Eastern National's London outpost at Wood Green on 24 March 1977 and in the side road alongside the depot, Redvers Road, was the yard of Crouch End Coaches, complete with WHL 970 parked up. I guess it was used mainly on school contracts but I have a vague recollection of reading that it had visited Southend on a private hire - can anyone confirm? It had been withdrawn by West Riding when six years old in 1969, passing through various owners including Moffat of Fife, McLennan of Spitalfield, Rennie of Dunfermline and eventually via Paul Sykes of Barnsley to her final operator, Crouch End Luxury Coaches, in May 1974. She can claim to be the last Wulfrunian in revenue earning service prior to being withdrawn and stored in 1978. Indeed, she was one of only seven to be sold on by West Riding for further use and the only one to last more than a year after sale.

She was then saved for preservation by Basil Hancock and subsequently passed to the West Riding Omnibus Museum Trust who run the Dewsbury Bus Museum in Ravensthorpe (and hence the tenuous link to last month's photo of 'Supernatural' JMY 120N at the Museum's 14 November 2021 open day). A lengthy restoration is almost complete but the hopes that she - and sister (green) UCX 275 - would be in service at the open day were sadly dashed. My photos opposite, taken on the day, show WHL 970 in the red livery used on West Riding buses operating on their former tramway routes, the fleet livery being green & cream for all other buses.

For the last word, this is what Robin Hannay wrote in 2016: "The Wulfrunian failed because of the poor financial state of the Guy company when it was designed. The directors believed that with its world-beating specification, it would attract a lot of orders and rushed it into production without adequate testing". Of course, the Volvo Ailsa later succeeded where the Wulf failed, but that's another story.

* To read more, see Robin's excellent 1978 book *Guy Motors & The Wulfrunian*, the article in *Buses Annual* 1987 or his articles in *Vintage Roadscene* September & October 2016. Sadly Robin died as this article was being prepared. And thanks to Owen Woodliffe, Bob Palmer and Martin Weyell for confirming the location of the Crouch End yard, which I'd simply recorded as 'Wood Green' at the time.



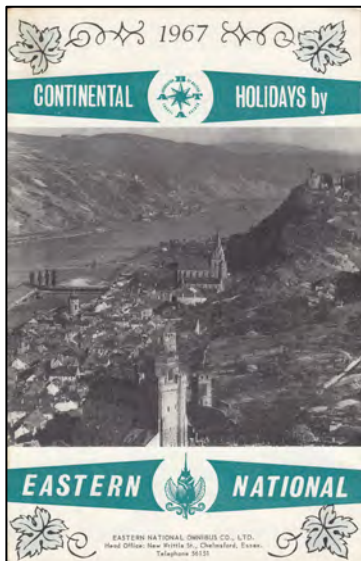
Inward camber on the front wheels led to very short tyre life.

Engine cover removed to reveal the weighty Gardner 6LX, and the narrow throat between the front wheels, with a nearside staircase.



EN Continental Coach Holidays

by Richard Delahoy



In last month's issue, Alan Osborne recalled day and weekend trips to France by Eastern National coaches. EN also operated a holiday programme for many years, building on the tours operated by Westcliff Motor Services (and using the Westcliff name into the early 1960s, long after Westcliff was merged into EN, see photo page 5). Most tours were based in Great Britain but destinations on the near continent and in Ireland featured in the programme. Prompted by the list of places you could visit from Chelmsford, as reproduced from a 1967 EN timetable book on page 3 last month, I was intrigued by some of the place names quoted there. I'm familiar with Llanfair P.G. but not such names as Perros Guirec, so I hunted out some tour brochures of the period, reproduced here. The latter French town featured in Tour C - 6 days in Beautiful Brittany for £32 (about £600 in today's values). The brochure explained that operation was with an Eastern National coach throughout.

Not all tours used an EN coach however, the Irish ones utilising vehicles from Ulsterbus or CIE once across the water. This leaflet features a CIE Leyland Leopard or Worldmaster with stylish bodywork designed by David Ogle Associates and built by CIE. Some tours even featured air travel rather than sea crossings.

TOUR C
6 DAYS **BEAUTIFUL BRITANNY £32**
1st Fare Amount £17

Mont St Michel

LEAVING ON SUNDAYS JUNE 4, JULY 2, SEPTEMBER 3

FIRST DAY Through Sussex to Newhaven for the Car Ferry to Dieppe. On through Normandy to ROUEN, the city of Joan of Arc. Overnight at the Grand Hotel de la Poste.

SECOND DAY Continue southwards through Alencon to LE MANS for lunch (well known for the 24 hour road race). In the afternoon we follow the Loire from Angers with its immense fortifications through Nantes to LA BAULLE, a most fashionable and elegant resort facing due south on the Bay of Biscay. Dinner, Bed and Breakfast at the Hotel Royal.

THIRD DAY Morning at leisure in La Baule. Depart after lunch for the medieval walled town of Guernsey, the flood-like estuary of the Vilaine at La Roche Bernard, the charming countryside of central Brittany through Vannes and Pontivy to the splendid town of ST BRIEUC. Two nights at Hotel de la Croix Rouge.

FOURTH DAY A whole day tour from St Brieuc through Lannion (centre of French telecommunications and satellite tracking station) and the coast road to Perros-Guirec. Lunch and time for exploring at PERROS-GUIREC with its lovely bays and headlands, and a vast expanse of golden sands. Return to St Brieuc via the coast road through Trequeur and Paimpol, and a host of small resorts of great charm.

FIFTH DAY Eastwards to Dinan, a popular town on the Rance. Time to explore the narrow streets and the medieval ramparts. Lunch and time for sightseeing at historic MONT ST MICHEL, showplace of the country. Northwards later along the Cotentin Peninsula to CARTHERET a quiet relaxing resort. Overnight at the Hotel d'Angleterre.



Letters

Michael Allen from Colchester

Ipswich Buses Route 93

Thank you for such an interesting and varied selection of items in EBM 692. I found it a most enjoyable read.

Just a small point for complete accuracy, the photo of Ipswich Buses 60 on page 24 is actually passing the Primary Care Centre in Turner Road and not the General Hospital as stated which is one bus stop further on.

With regard to the re-routing of service 93, I have been unable to establish from Ipswich Buses as to why they chose to take this new route rather than just extending it up to the Hospital from the Town Centre. The running time would be very similar and folk who have been boarding and alighting between The Rovers Tye and the Town Centre would not have been affected. Whilst numbers are not huge, quite a few travel from these stops to and from Ipswich and some folk from the villages use it to shop at Waitrose, which they can no longer do on a direct service. Additionally if the route terminated at the hospital, it would use the stops at the hospital itself rather than a walk away in Turner Road, also beneficial to the passenger.

For clarification purposes route 93 uses Highclere Road between Highwoods Approach and Brinkley Grove Road and not Derwent Road and does not go into the nearby Highwoods Square where some Arriva and First services terminate.

On a different issue, I have noticed that First Essex route 68, Highwoods to West Mersea, on the last journey at 2250 from Highwoods Square on Wednesday - Friday, 29 to 31 December 2021, is terminating at Abberton and goes via Haye Lane, presumably to turn at Abberton and run back out of service. Can any member (perhaps First Essex drivers at Colchester) advise whether Haye Lane has been used by a timetabled service before and if so what? I have got at the back of my mind that many years ago I might have been on a bus that used it. Quite possibly a service from Fingringhoe that came that way. It may be that Haye Lane is used when route 67 terminates and starts at Abberton when there is a high tide at The Strood and unable to go to West Mersea. Does anyone know? Thank you.

Keith Woods from Bures, Suffolk

C&R Coaches Bedford OB JFJ 939

I was most interested to see in EBM 692, page 4, Robert Appleton's splendid picture of C&R Coaches Bedford OB JFJ 939 delivering the Christmas post in December 1967.

What was not mentioned is that this vehicle still exists. In 2020, after some 40 years as a caravan, it joined the three other OBs in preservation in the fleet of Felix of Long Melford, Suffolk, when over 70 years old. A truly remarkable survivor!

Doug Brown from Brentwood (DB from BD)

Who Shot DB?

One of my lasting memories of 251 work was at Tylers Avenue, Southend Garage, as I turned left to go to the High Street. Suddenly there was a bang and a ping. I stopped to see what it was and found the window in the cab door frosted with a hole in the middle and the glass on the other side of the cab chipped. I then found an air gun pellet on the floor. I opened the cab door to look round and saw someone in the flat above the Post Office sorting office take cover from an open window. I drove into the High Street and stopped alongside a policeman. I pulled the window back and shouted "Someone tried to kill me!" and showed him my broken window. He got on his walkie-talkie and called for assistance. A police car turned up and then four more and Southend High Street was shut as this was now a major incident. I told the police about the person in the flat above the sorting office and the open window. Two policemen walked down Tylers but only one came back saying "We have got him". The police then told me I may be asked to attend court as a witness. About a month later I got a letter to go to Southend Court. My gunman was a 14 year old who told the judge he had aimed at my head. He also admitted to going out early morning when milk had been delivered to shops and left outside, he took a pint glass bottle and threw it through a plate glass window. He was sent to Borstal for a very long time. Had I been 5' 6" tall instead of 6' 4" I may not be writing this story now. In the photo below, of First Essex 33376 at Southend Travel Centre on 25 February 2014 ([Adam Kelleher](#)), the illuminated offices in the left background are on the site of the sorting office in Tylers Avenue that I was shot at from.





Routes 392/393

On page 26 of EBM 692, Owen Woodliffe mentioned how the C392 runs dead to the roundabout on the ring road (locally known as 'The Sun' roundabout) to turn round to pick up at the Clock Tower in Hoddesdon for its return journey to Harlow. This reminded me that in the years when Golden Boy were operating routes 392/393 (1985 to at least 1990) they also terminated at the Clock Tower. However they did not return straight away; at the same roundabout they took a right turn to join the ring road for a short distance to lay over in a nearby convenient lay-by. As this is a dual carriageway, when the bus was due to return to the Clock Tower it had to continue along the ring road to circumnavigate the next roundabout to get back to Hoddesdon Town Centre. The above photo of Bristol LH / ECW JHW 124P (new to Bristol in October 1975) was taken in the lay-by on 7 July 1986, with 'The Sun' pub in the background. At that time Golden Boy, although having an office in Hoddesdon, still kept their vehicles in the yard near Nazeing, the entrance of which was passed by buses on the 393 route.

The yellow Ford Escort in the photo was mine. We bought the car new in August 1983 (an early A prefix) and at the time yellow was quite an unusual colour to choose as we discovered when we went to pick it up from the dealer as it stood out as the only yellow one surrounded in a sea of other new Fords in various 'dull' colours! Incidentally my photo on page 21 of EBN 682 of on-loan to M&M Staffing StreetLite SN68 AGF, taken on 15 January last year, was taken at the same lay-by.

More on Buses used in Football Victory Parades

Back in the days when Tottenham Hotspur won trophies they used a selection of open top buses for various victory parades. In 1961 they were the first team in the 20th Century to complete the Football League and FA Cup double. I was still at school at the time and I had not yet been to a match but did follow the Spurs. My Dad had been a Spurs supporter all his life, having been born just across the road from their ground, but he didn't feel he wanted to take me and my brother to see the parade due to the expected crowds. I did keep a scrapbook of the team's achievements and one newspaper cutting shows the team atop a bus but with just the very top of the bus showing. I thought that it could have been an Eastern National bus so I decided to have a look on the Internet and found a couple of decent photos. Incredibly, the bus used turned out to be Eastern National open-top Leyland PD1 1112, LEV 917, which is preserved as 2102, and was the very bus which re-entered service on Ensignbus Southend seafront route 68 last summer (as featured prominently in EBM 689), sixty years after the victory parade. Perhaps when Spurs next win a trophy they could hire the same bus for the parade!

Editor's Note: For copyright reasons we can't publish the photos of LEV 917, although if anyone reading has a copy we could use, we would be very grateful. But the photos are easily obtainable by searching the Internet.

We plan to return to the subject of buses and football with an interesting selection of photos in May's issue.

693 for EBM 693

Right: M & E Coaches, Rochford, Essex B693 BPU at High Beech, Loughton, Essex on 27 June 2012. This was previously Eastern National and Thamesway 4505. It is now preserved in Northumbria livery, as illustrated on page 28 of EBM 690.

Robert Downton



Below: Carters Coach Services AFJ 693T in Station Road, Clacton on 18 November 1988, working Fridays only service 123, Manningtree Station - Clacton. At this time Carters also operated Tuesdays only service 124, Mistley - Clacton. Both services were under contract to Essex County Council (see timetable cover on page 3). They were introduced as partial replacements for the joint Eastern National / Eastern Counties service 123, Ipswich - Clacton, which did not survive Bus Deregulation on 26 October 1986. AFJ 693T was a Bristol LH6L with Plaxton Supreme C41F body (to bus grant specification), new to Western National in January 1979. According to Rob Sly's website bcv.robbsly.com, AFJ 693T was last reported in the Republic of Ireland in 2000. **Robert Appleton**



Colchester Bus Station 20 Years Ago

Photos taken on 2 January 2002 by **David Moth**.

Anglia livery of chrome yellow with a different colour skirt for each company, e.g., green for Eastern National, pink for Thamesway and red for Eastern Counties, etc., was introduced in April 1999. Dennis Dart / Plaxton Pointer 2829, seen on route 67 to West Mersea, was an early recipient, being repainted thus in June 1999. The livery was only for step entrance vehicles, low floor buses were painted in First Group corporate 'Barbie' livery which had been introduced the previous year.



The thinking behind Anglia livery was that when buses moved between Anglia companies, they would only need their skirts repainted. However, this idea did not last long, as, in December 2000, a 'secondary' corporate livery was introduced for step entrance vehicles, known colloquially as 'Barbie 2'. Dennis Lance / Northern Counties Paladin 1509 was the first bus in the Essex Buses fleet to receive this. Sister 1510, seen on route 76, was painted in this livery in July 2001.



Hedingham L208 on route 50 to Layer. A Volvo B6 / Alexander, new to the company in June 1994, with matching registration number (L208 RNO). See page 29 for a modern day photo of a Hedingham bus on a variation of the same route, also taken at (a different) Colchester Bus Station.



Volvo Olympian / Northern Counties Palatine 4303 on route 78A and Bristol VR / ECW 3079 on route 66, both in 1993 Badgerline style Eastern National livery.

And Hadleigh Depot from 40 Years Ago

Below: Bristol VR / ECW 3107, 3060 and 3024 at a snowy Hadleigh Depot, in NBC livery in early January 1982. Spot the differences... one Series 2, two Series 3s; one with cream window rubber, two with black; one with Bristol VR badge, two without; one with single-piece blind box, two with two-piece; one with heated windscreen, two without; one with windscreen wipers at top of windscreen, two with them at bottom; one without illuminated 'Pay As You Enter' sign, two with; one with black registration plate, two with reflective; one with different indicator / side light layouts than the other two; two with stickers in the windscreen for the Southend Travelcard*, one without; one with different style font on number blinds. Not visible: one (on left) with larger hopper vents, two with small; one (on left) with moquette seats, two with plastic (although different colours, 3060 orange, 3024 green). Happily, 3107 is preserved. **Paul Harvey**

* A poster for the Southend Travelcard is on page 1.



29 September 2021

31 Brentwood to Bishop Hall Estate (M-S) **NIBS** it is understood that this service has been suspended from this date due to driver shortages.

20 November

Ensignbus introduced further minor timetable adjustments to service 77/A (Aveley to Tilbury).

2 December

3 Clacton to Harwich (M-S) **Go Ahead Hedingham** reduced Saturday timetable introduced due to driver shortage.

8 December

First Essex introduced further journey cancellations, updating the list from 15 November. Details of daily cancellations are listed on the company's website.

20 December

Go Ahead Hedingham reinstated certain suspended journeys on services 6, 63, X76, 88, 89 & 97 until 31 December whilst schools were closed for Christmas holidays.

27 December

London Bus Company operated special heritage service 339 between Epping Station & North Weald until 29 December.

31 December

621 Great Totham to Chelmsford Schools (Sch) **Stephensons** revision to route & timetable.

637 South Woodham to Chelmsford St John Payne School (Sch) **Stephensons** revision to timetable

673 Wickham Bishop to Chelmsford St John Payne School (Sch) **Stephensons** revision to timetable.

1 January 2022

Stephensons took over the closed school services C1, C2, C4, C7 to C9, L1 & M1 from New Horizon Travel, more information on page 28.

2 January

Stephensons services 21 (Bocking to Black Notley), 30 (Beckers Green to Marks Farm) & 38/A (Witham to Halstead) revised route in Braintree to serve the new Bus Interchange. Other operators are also serving the new interchange. A report on the opening of interchange is on pages 16-19, including a map of routes serving it.

4 January

13/A/S13 Waltham Cross to Epping St Mary Hospital (M-S) **Vectare** revision to timetable with the S13 operating on all days with St John's School only served on Schooldays. Other Vectare changes on this date were reported last month.

608 Gidea Park Gallows Corner to Shenfield High School (Sch) **Go Ahead London** revision to stopping points.

817 Southchurch to Westcliff Schools (Sch) **Stephensons** revision to route and timetable.

10 January

20 Bishop Stortford to Great Hormead / The Pelhams (M-F) **Richmond Coaches** revised timetable with minor route variation and additional journey introduced.

17 January

First Essex are introducing the following service changes to reflect changes in traffic levels and congestion.

9 Brentwood to Basildon (M-S) revised Mon to Fri timetable to improve reliability with additional running time.

20 Southend to Hullbridge (D) revised Mon to Fri timetable with additional running time added in the am and pm school peaks.

25 Basildon to Southend (D) additional running time added on Mon to Fri am and pm school peaks especially from Southend to Basildon.

37 Warley to Bishop Hall Estate (D) revised timetable with more running time added in the morning peaks for journeys from Bishop Hall Estate. Service will operate every 15 mins Mon to Fri off peak between Bishop Hall Estate & Brentwood Station extended to Warley every 30 mins. Saturday service operates every 20 mins with one journey per hour extended to Warley.

42 Galleywood to Broomfield Hospital (D) revised timetable to allow extra running time between Broomfield Parade & Chelmsford City Centre due to congestion.

45 Moulsham Lodge to Writtle (D) revised timetable on Mon to Fri to improve reliability.

61 Highwoods to Wivenhoe (D) & 65 Highwoods to Stanway (D) revised timetable on Mon to Fri, particularly at school times, to improve reliability.

70 Chelmsford to Colchester (D) minor change to the Saturday morning timetable.

100 Basildon to Lakeside (D) revised timetable on the Mon to Fri afternoon timetable especially from Lakeside to Basildon.

X30 Southend to Stansted Airport (D) revised timetable introduced due to congestion on Broomfield Road. Some journeys will not serve Broomfield Hospital at the busiest times on Broomfield Road and operate via Essex Regiment Way on Mon to Fri. Service withdrawn from the grounds of Southend Airport but instead serve new stop on Eastwoodbury Crescent near the Holiday Inn on most journeys. A number of journeys from Stansted Airport will not serve outside Southend Airport but instead operate via A127 to Southend to improve reliability. Service will stop additionally at North End Onslow Green.

Bus operators are continuing to suffer from driver shortages including additional sickness due to the Omicron variant of Coronavirus.



by Robert Appleton

After working on Colchester routes 4 & 11 at the end of November as reported last month, Optare Solo M950 245 (YJ05 XNY) switched to Clacton - Mistley 2/A in December, noted on 2/A on 1/2/4/10 December. 245 was back on routes 4 & 11 on 6/24/30/31 December.

The other Optare Solo, M920 241 (YN04 LWK), worked 2/A on 6 December and 4 & 11 on 7/8/9 December. It continued working in Essex, it returned to 2/A on 13/14/15 December, 4 & 11 on 16 December, 2/A again on 17/18 December, then back to 4 & 11 on 20/21/22/23 December. It is seen below at Manningtree Station on 14 December working 1055 Clacton - Mistley 2. Part of Greater Anglia 321306 is in the background. **Robert Appleton**



Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse 2 (SN57 DDF) was illustrated in EBN 686 page 30 on contract RC1 when still in Lothian Buses livery. On 9 December, SN57 DDF, now renumbered 160, and repainted in green / purple livery, worked on RC1 again, spotted on 0720 Thorrington Crossroads - Suffolk Rural College Otley journey. Sister 162 (SK07 CGO) spent a day in Essex on 17 December, when it worked Colchester routes 4 & 11.

The Christmas school holidays saw Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekkas 60/61/62 (PJ54 YZT/Y/V) continue working on services 92, Ipswich - Manningtree, and 93/A, Ipswich - Colchester, on 20/21 December. Then on 22nd these routes changed to single-deck operation with 92 worked by ADL Enviro 200 74 (DU60 LOJ) on 22nd & 31st and 84 (MX09 HHS) on 23rd, and Mercedes Citaros 155 (BF65 HW) on 24th and 153 (BF65 HVT) on 30th. 93/A were worked by Mercedes Citaros 153 and 155 on 22nd & 23rd, 153 and 154 (BF65 HVU) on 24th, Enviro 200 73 (YX59 BZN) and 101 (SN16 OGG) on 30th, 70 (YX59 BZL) and Mercedes Citaro 155 on 31st.

With thanks to Stephen Barham, Ipswich Transport Society Journal, Ipswich Buses Enthusiast Facebook Group, Bustimes.

Braintree Bus Interchange

by Nigel Turner & Richard Delahoy

As reported in Nigel Turner's series of articles on the history of Braintree Bus Park, which have so far been in EBNs 676, 678 & 684, the bus park opened on 5 September 1932. Nearly 90 years later, the replacement Braintree Bus Interchange opened on part of the same site on Sunday 2 January 2022, commendably only 21 months after the old bus park had been closed for redevelopment. It had closed after service on Sunday 22 March 2020, as covered in EBNs 670 & 673.

Nigel writes:

Since March 2020 Kier Construction have been busy demolishing all the old buildings and then erecting new ones, the largest part being a 70-room Travelodge. As most of the work was obscured by hoardings, it has been difficult to track the progress of the project. However in mid-December 2021 it became possible to see that the Travelodge was mostly complete. Posters then appeared by the temporary bus stands in Manor Street and Fairfield Road that have been used since March 2020, indicating that the new 'Interchange' would open on 2 January 2022.

On the morning of 1 January the security barriers were still up but these had been removed by the evening and the information screens at the temporary stops had been covered with black bags, not that they had actually worked anyway since before Christmas.

Braintree Council had not stated at what time the interchange would open so I had to make a guess which luckily turned out to be correct. Arriving around 0645 I found two 'genuine' passengers waiting for the 0700 service 133 to Stansted Airport, one waiting at the temporary stop and the other hedging his bets by standing at the entrance. Arriva 4323, SK68 TWU, duly arrived and went straight in to the interchange, albeit not to the correct stand. At precisely 0700 we departed and made bus history.

After a brisk walk back to Braintree I was back in time to catch the first First Essex bus to use the interchange. This turned out to be 69433, AU58 FFW, in the new green livery, working the 0756 service 70 to Chelmsford. Again with other two passengers, we left promptly and I travelled as far as the site of my birthplace in London Road.

After a quick trip home for refreshments I was back in time to catch the first 42B towards Halstead which was FE 66806, MX05 CCV.

The first Hedingham vehicle to use the Interchange was 259, EU56 FLP, which spent the day on the number 21 town service. As Stephensons don't have any Sunday services they didn't appear until Tuesday 4th (the 3rd being a Bank Holiday with Sunday services).

The stands have been allocated logically in that 1 is for services due east (towards Colchester) and they work round the compass until 8 is reached which is for services heading north east towards Halstead. However, the trouble with this method is that it sometimes ends up with two vehicles needing to be on the same stand at the same time. It will be interesting to see how this is resolved. There is also a stand 9 (for infrequent services), although the stands are in reverse numerical order from the Manor Street entrance.

The new layout and stopping arrangements are shown opposite. With thanks to **Essex County Council** and **Braintree District Council**.

Note that although route 900, the free service to Braintree Village (Freeport), is shown as leaving from Stand 2, it had ceased at the start of the Covid crisis and has not been reinstated. As a free service it is not registered so there is no public record to confirm if it has ceased permanently.

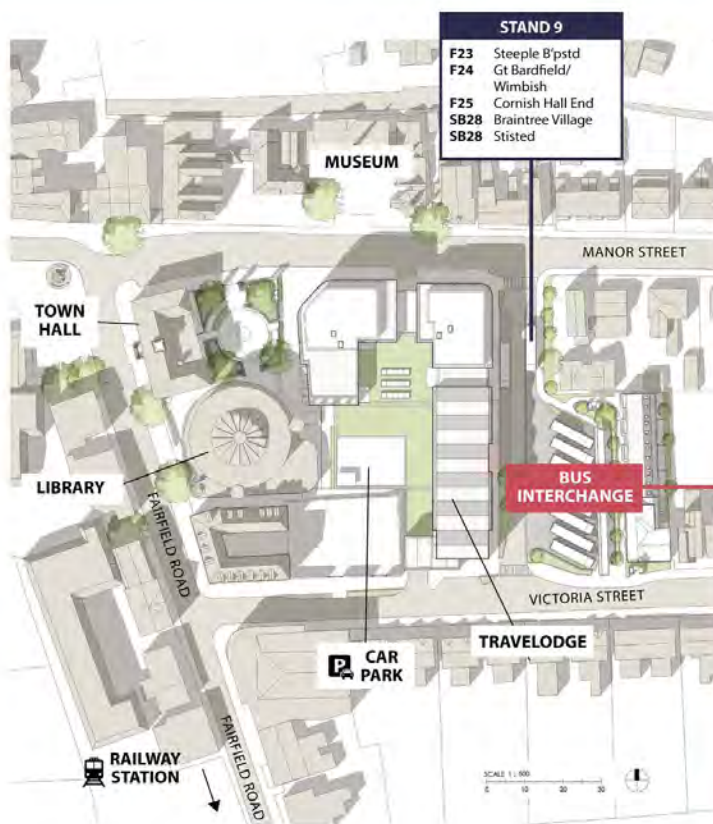
The lack of stand numbers on the roadway clearly confused the driver of First Essex 32631 on 5 January and he ended up broadside across a number of stands. In the background two Stephensons buses lay over on stand 9.

Richard Delahoy



WHERE TO CATCH YOUR BUS IN BRAINTREE

FROM SUNDAY 2 JANUARY



Richard writes:

I visited three days after Nigel, on Wednesday 5 January.

Buses still enter from Manor Street and exit into Victoria Street. There is still a bus stop on the left as buses enter (the new stand 9), but instead of the main stops being on the left, right and centre with buses driving straight through (as illustrated lower left), there are now eight drive on / reverse off saw-tooth stands on the left (as buses enter) on the site of the old bus layover area and stands 7-12 that had ceased to be used some years ago (see Nigel's plan in EBM 684, page 29) and which in more recent years had been a car park. Where the waiting room & toilets, the layover area and most of the bus stops had been up to closure in March 2020 is now the Travelodge hotel, with a multi-storey car park behind.

At the opening all was not quite finished - whilst the shelters are in place, they lack proper identification and didn't have timetable displays or real-time information screens, just small A4 posters showing the list of stops and a small stop number (as shown left, also see previous page). Drivers were experiencing some difficulty as the bays are not numbered on the roadway, making it problematical to identify the correct stand. There have not (yet) been any changes to the surrounding road layout but whilst the short section of Victoria Street from the exit towards Fairfield Road appears to be a two-way road, on my observations, only one driver used that section of road to exit directly to the southbound contra-flow bus lane in Fairfield Road, all others instead turning left out of the new facility and doing a loop via Victoria Street, Railway Street and South Street, adding extra time to their journeys.

The Bus Interchange lacks any passenger facilities beyond the shelters which are open on two sides, but the most serious issue in my opinion is that there is no segregation of pedestrians and buses. This breaks the cardinal rule of any drive on / reverse off bus station, in that buses reversing and people walking must be kept apart! Indeed, the layout positively encourages pedestrians to walk diagonally across the bus apron as I saw only too vividly in the two hours I spent there. It is to be hoped that no accidents result.



Above left: Braintree Bus Park on the last day before closure for redevelopment, 22 March 2020. All the area to the left of the middle bus shelter, including the 1932 waiting room and toilets, has been replaced by the rather domineering Travelodge as seen in the above right photo. Conversely, the area to the right, where the skip is, has been reclaimed for usage by buses, as seen in the photo right, having been a car park for many years. This photo also shows the road into the Bus Interchange (on the left) which is unchanged.



All taken from Victoria Street by
Richard Delahoy.

Both photos on right taken on 5 January 2022, three days after the re-opening.



As noted, the lack of segregation of pedestrians and buses is a potential problem, as illustrated here. Stephenson's 441 (SN16 ORU) was reversing off bay 1 en-route to Marks Farm as the elderly lady ambled across the apron, taking the direct route from Victoria Street straight towards the other stands. There are no railings or signs to direct pedestrians away from danger.



Another view of the eight new drive on / reverse off saw-tooth stands and the basic shelters provided, with more new building taking place behind on the left-hand side. This part of the town centre has been designated Victoria Square, described by the Council as "a catalyst that will rejuvenate Braintree town centre. It will deliver health, homes, journeys and jobs in line with our key priorities. This major investment will benefit residents and businesses by bringing jobs and visitors to the town centre". The current timing of services means that there are alternating periods of inactivity and then four or five buses descend almost at once.

Both **Richard Delahoy**, 5 January 2022.

The old order:

A close up of the 1932 waiting room and toilets and the commemorative opening stone which was due to be moved to the adjacent Braintree Museum in Manor Street.

Both **Richard Delahoy**, 22 March 2020.



Right: a photo taken on 26 July 2013 showing the car park on the right where the saw tooth bus stops now are. Also, this shows the road into the Bus Park, in comparison to the photo at the bottom right of the previous page. Despite other changes, 'Balti Night' is still opposite the entrance over eight years after this photo was taken, when First Essex still had a depot at Braintree and ran most of the local services. The bus is Dennis Dart / Plaxton Pointer 42429 (P429 ORL) new to Western National. **Adam Kelleher**



Harlow

Acquired Vehicles

2990, YJ09 MKD, Optare Versa V1100, B38F, from High Wycombe

4183, YJ10 EYD, Optare Versa V1100, B38F, from Guildford

Acquired December 2021. Both these acquisitions are related to the closure of Guildford depot (details below), 2990 indirectly and 4183 directly. 2990 was seen on route 10 on 23 December and 4183 on route 3 the same day.

Colchester

Acquired Vehicles

1014, BF67 WGM, Mercedes-Benz Sprinter minibus, transferred from Southend to Colchester on 4 December 2021. It had been used for crew shuttles at Southend (along with 1000 which remains there) and is used for the same at Colchester.

3989-3, 4044/7/52/3, GN07 DLX/Y/Z, DME/F, GN09 AWV/Y, AXD/F, ADL Enviro 200 B38F.

These nine Enviro 200s were collected from Guildford on Sunday 19 December 2021 after that depot closed. All except 3989 were initially taken to Southend for inspection and then moved progressively to Colchester. 4052 is seen below arriving in Short Street, Southend approaching the Arriva depot. **Richard Delahoy**



Dates of entry into service: 3989 - 21 December, 4052 - 4 January. 4044 seen in Basildon Bus Station on driver training on 7 January.

Park & Ride new fleet: 4124/5 were both noted at Southend in black on 15 December with air-conditioning plant now fitted. 4125 was then moved to Colchester for storage on 19 December.

Vehicles Withdrawn

All the remaining Darts were progressively due to be withdrawn from mid-December 2021 onwards, viz: 1562 (RX07 KPG), 3413/5-21 (SN54 HWY, HXB/C/D/E/F, AY54 FRC/FPZ). At the time of writing, some remained in service pending the commissioning of the replacement Enviro 200s but all are likely to have been withdrawn by the time that this issue is published.

Dates withdrawn so far: 3413 - 28 December; 3416 - 30 December; 3419 - 21 December.

This improves the fleet average age to 11.3 years from 12.2 years previously (and will reduce further to 11.0 years once the Park & Ride fleet is replaced shortly). The fleet now comprises 32 buses: ADL Enviro 200 x 26, Wright StreetLite DF x 5, Wrightbus DB300 x 1.

Below: The Dart SLFs that are being withdrawn include those new in 2004 after TGM Group had acquired Arriva Colchester and updated the fleet and rebranded the operations as Network Colchester. They were not only seen on town services, here 529 (later Arriva Colchester 3420), AY54 FRC, was in Braintree Bus Park on ECC Sunday contract route 352 from Chelmsford to Halstead on 3 April 2005. There will be a feature on Network Colchester in a forthcoming issue.



Southend

Acquired Vehicles

1009, BF67 WGD, Mercedes Sprinter minibus for staff shuttle duties (in the new light blue livery), from Northfleet in November 2021, replacing 1014.

4201/2/4-12, YJ61 CHV, CHX, CHZ, CJE, CJE, CJO, CIU, CIV, CIX, CIY, CIJ, Optare Versa V1110 B37F.

These 11 Versas were collected from Guildford on 19 December 2021 after that depot closed. They had been new to Southend in 2011 for route 9 (then branded as "the Wave" - see EBNs 571/2) but moved to Guildford in 2016 when the Enviro 400s were delivered for route 1 and displaced the Versas on that service to the 9. They re-join 4203 which had returned to Southend previously, in July 2020. All are still in the older, dark blue livery and three retain the names applied when in Southend first time round, viz: 4201 Kursaal Flyer, 4202 Procol Harum and 4207 William [Bradley being missing now].

They entered service as follows: 4205/8 - 23 December, 4209 6 January.

Vehicles Withdrawn

1014, staff shuttle, transferred to Colchester as reported above.

Volvo B7RLE 3825 (GN07 AVG) was withdrawn at the end of November 2021.

Then from mid-December all of the following were due to be withdrawn, replaced by the returning Versas:

Dart: 1564 (HX04 HUH) (only recently transferred from Colchester to Southend as reported and illustrated last month)

DAF SB120: 3935/60 (GK52 YUY, GN04 UFX)

VDL SB200: 3963-5 (GN04 UGA/B/C)

Volvo B7RLE: 3817-9/22 (GN07 AVD/E/F/K).

At the time of writing, some remained in service pending the commissioning of the replacement Versas but all are likely to have been withdrawn by the time that this issue is published. Of the withdrawn vehicles in store at Southend, the following have been removed by their new buyers: on 24 December - 1564/5, 3819/25.

This improves the fleet average age to 8.5 years from 9.5 years previously. The fleet now comprises 60 buses: VDL SB200 x 6, Volvo B7RLE x 1, Optare Versa x 34, Wrightbus DB300 x 1, Dennis Trident x 1, ADL Enviro 400 x 17.



Above: 4206 showed an appropriate display on its blinds as it left the Arriva Guildford depot for the last time, as seen here on its return to Southend. **Matthew Evans**. See also page 1.

Other News

The repaint programme continues, with 6515 being the second E400 now in the lighter blue, and 6505 the third, although the treatment differs slightly from 6503 (that has a narrow blue band between the destination box and the top of the windscreen, these don't). One additional transfer from Guildford to Southend, arriving on 20 December, was rather less expected and came on the back of a lorry - a fuel storage tank! Items of furniture were also brought to Essex in some of the buses moved on the Sunday.

With thanks to Matthew Evans, Keith Sadler, John Lidstone, John Card, Adam Kelleher and the M&D & East Kent Bus Club.

Below: The oldest bus in the Arriva Southend fleet before these cascades had been 3935, GK52 YUY, a DAF SB120 / Wrightbus dating from November 2002. Seen in its last few weeks in service, **Richard Delahoy** photographed it in Chichester Road on 6 December 2021, appropriately on service 6.



Acquired Vehicles

33411	WA56 FUB	SFD45MBRA6GX34074	6410/1	H39/32F	01/07	First Devon & Cornwall
33413	WA56 FUE	SFD45MBRA6GX34109	6411/2	H39/32F	01/07	First Devon & Cornwall
33416	WA56 FTO	SFD45MBRA6GX34112	6411/5	H39/32F	01/07	First Devon & Cornwall
33418	WA56 FTT	SFD45MBRA6GX34114	6411/7	H39/32F	01/07	First Devon & Cornwall
33419	WA56 FTU	SFD45MBRA6GX34115	6411/8	H39/32F	01/07	First Devon & Cornwall

Alexander Dennis Trident / Enviro 400. Acquired from First West of England in orange 'Excel' livery. 33413 & 33419 arrived at Basildon circa 6 December 2021, the others later in the month. These join 33412/4/5 reported last month. 33417 will not be joining First Essex as it was withdrawn by First West of England circa July 2021 following a fire.

Right: 33419 at Basildon Depot on 9 December 2021.

William Morrison



Allocation Changes

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

Period 9 2021/22 (21 November - 25 December)

32087 CR-CR (oos), 32478 CR-CR (oos), 32531 BN-CR, 32532 BN-CR, 32547 CR-CR (oos), 32673 CR-CR (oos), 33411 FG-BN (oos), 33413 FG-BN (oos), 33414 FG-BN (oos), 33416 FG-BN (oos), 33418 FG-BN (oos), 33419 FG-BN (oos), 37135 CR-CR (oos), 42927 CF-CF (oos), 63341 CR-CR (oos), 66730 CF (oos)-Disposal, 66813 CF-CR, 67194 HH-BN, 67736 CR (oos)-CR, 67904 BN-BN (oos), 69433 CF (oos)-CF

The annual fleet list, allocation list and changes during the year is on pages 26-27. A reminder that a free monthly fleet list is published on our website at <https://www.signal-training.com/ebeg/Fleets.htm>. Back copies are available there from February 2020 onwards.

Disposal

66730 December 2021.

Christmas & New Year Services 2021/22

No services ran on Christmas Day. On Boxing Day and New Year's Day, only the 42 and X30 ran, the former between Chelmsford and Broomfield Hospital only. Eight journeys each way ran on the 42, starting at 0950 and ending at 1655. The X30 was basically a two-hour service. Sunday services operated on Bank Holidays Monday 27 December, Tuesday 28 December and Monday 3 January, except on 27th & 28th a special service on X10 & X30, basically every two hours each, to give a combined hourly service between Chelmsford and Stansted Airport. On Wednesday 29 - Friday 31 December, normal services ran on routes 10, 32, 46, 47, 73/A, 94/A/B, 174/175 and 565 with other routes having special (reduced) timetables.

Reports on Boxing Day and New Year's Day: 26th - 36840, 67160 on 42, 36842, 36843 on X30, 36837, 36839 on both; 1 January - 36843, 67164 on 42, 36837, 36842 on X30, 36839, 36840 on both.

Area News & Workings

Colchester

(All vehicles listed below allocated to CR except where stated. All dates December 2021 except where stated.)

Further to EBM 692, 66797 returned from Colchester to Chelmsford off loan after service on 20 December (it had been on loan since 2nd). Other Chelmsford Volvo B7RLEs have also been on loan to Colchester: 66796, 13-27 December; 66817, 8 December-3 January; 66872, 23 November-16 December, and 69434, 13-17 December. Similar 66813 has transferred from Chelmsford to Colchester.

An update on out of service vehicles at the turn of the year. 30564, 30567, 31785, 32477, 32478, 32485 and 63332 are all for disposal and are unlikely to see further service. Also on the scrap line were 32547, repaired and awaiting deep clean and inspection before going back into service (it did so on 5 January), 37133, long term VOR (vehicle off road) with engine / fuel pump defects and sold 41521 awaiting collection by its new owner. Inside the workshops along with vehicles for routine service and inspection were longer term VORs 32673 compressor and 37135 gearbox, plus 63337 camshaft but this vehicle also returned to service on 5 January. 63341 was outside the workshops, this has been out of use since its MOT expired at the end of November and some parts have been removed. On the positive side, 32531/2 transferred to Colchester from Basildon on 9 December, joining 32530 which had been transferred in November, and 32087, which had been out of MOT since the end of November, and which was thought to have been withdrawn, was returned to service on 2 January. Also, Pride liveried 33425 went to Colchester from Basildon on loan on 3 January (see photo on inside front cover). However, on 8th it returned to Basildon, replaced by NBC liveried 33424 from the same source. News of the Harwich routes (1 December 2021 - 3 January 2022).

Once again routes 102/103/104 were dominated by single-deckers, with 11 of the 12 ADL Enviro 300s (67742 not spotted) and 10 of the 11 Volvo B7RLEs (66810 not spotted), plus four StreetLites. Also four additional B7RLEs from Chelmsford, 66813 transferred, the others on loan: 66796 on 13th, 19th, 27th; 66797 on 17th; 66813 on 22nd, 24th; 66817 on 3 January. 18 double-deckers, 14 B7TL and four B9TL, mainly on the 0920 Mistley - Colchester 103. The only B7TLs to work through to Harwich on the 104 were 37036 on 6th, 37053 on 8th, 32631 on 11th (unusual for a Saturday), 37016 on 20th, 32629 on 23rd. All B7TLs were Wrightbus bodied, none with ALX400 bodies spotted (although not surprising given the recent decline of this type).

The amended (reduced) timetables for 29-31 December, requiring three buses, similar to the Saturday timetable, was also in use on Christmas Eve for routes 102/103/104. On that day the three buses were 66801, 66803 and 66813. On 29 December 66800, 67755, 67756, on 30th 66803, 66970, 67738 and on 31st 67739, 67755, 67805. Sunday services ran on route 102 on 27-28 December and 2-3 January as follows: 27th 66796, 66800, 66804; 28th 66970, 67755, 67805; 2 January 67737, 67738, 67755; 3 January 66800, 66817, 66970.

Clacton routes: 74B: 32531 (6 January), 32628 (9th), 32629 (13th part), 32669 (18th), Pride liveried 33425 on loan from Basildon (4 January, its first day working at Colchester), 37005 (11th), 37006 (6th, 30th), 37007 (10th), 37017 (8th), 37020 (7 January), 37027 (17th, 5 January), 37034 (15th), 37035 (20th, 31st), 37042 (16th, 22nd), 37053 (14th, 29th), 37054 (7th, 21st), 37062 (23rd), 63338 (13th part), 66798 (24th), 66828 (8 January). 76 (in date order): 37020 (12th), 66817 (19th), 67742 (27th, Bank Holiday), 66828 (28th, Bank Holiday), 66810 (2 January), 66971 (3 January, Bank Holiday), 37005 (9 January).

Chelmsford

(All vehicles listed below allocated to CF except where stated. All dates December 2021 except where stated.)

The transfer of operation of route X10 from Basildon to Chelmsford has led to some unusual workings with a Dart and Volvo B7RLEs noted on the route for the first time. Dart 42935 on 4 January, Volvo B7RLEs 66799 and 66837 both on 14th, 66811 on 6 January. Double-deck Scania 36838 unusual on 10th. Double-deckers have been used before when Scania's were loaned to Basildon during the first lockdown two years ago. Unusual Enviro 200 44550 was replaced by even more unusual shorter Enviro 200 44004 on 4 January.

67163 on X30 on 6th, the first report of an Essex Airlink liveried single-decker on this route, and the first report of a former Basildon based X10 'Here to There' liveried bus on the route. Normally the two single-deckers in this livery, this and 67161, stick to the X10, although there have been occasional reports of them on 'normal' routes, e.g., 67161 on 36 on 17th, when 44538 was on X10. Other unusual workings on X30: 44662 (15th), 66813 (10th), 66830 (8th) and 67171 (12th).

Black Park & Ride Enviro 200 MMCs continued on school route S33 until the end of term and again from the start of the new term in January. 67190 was on S33 plus Tuesdays only 35 on 7th & 14th. The 35 does not run when schools are shut, route S33 did not return after the Christmas Holidays until 6 January, so no 35 on 4 January.

The P&R MMCs continue to be used on other routes. Former Chelmsford 67194 has moved from Hadleigh to Basildon. DS66848 seen on driver training in Brentwood High Street on 22nd, DS66863 seen likewise in Rettendon Village on 16th.

Basildon & Hadleigh

(All vehicles listed below allocated to BN except where stated. All dates December 2021 except where stated.)

Route 9 continues to be mainly Enviro 400 operated but normally now with at least two StreetLites each day. However, on 6th, 21st and 24th there were three StreetLites and on News Year's Eve three StreetLites and no double-deckers. Other types of double-decker noted have been 32249 (7th, 15th, 20th), 32526 (17th), 32539 (10th, 11th, 30th, 7 January), 32540 (18th), 33086 (23rd), 33186 (11th). Two mini-Enviro 200s on the same day was unusual on 8 January, 44908 and 44910 (no StreetLites that day).

Routes 94/A continued to be mainly operated by either two StreetLites or one plus a mini-Enviro 200. On 7th, 33561 was on the even hour journeys from Basildon. The only other double-decker noted was 33553 on Saturday 18th. Black P&R liveried 67194 was unusual on Christmas Eve. Double-deckers on route 100: 32526 (unusual Volvo / Gemini, 8th), 32531 (also unusual Volvo / Gemini, 6th), 33424 (6th), 33504 (10th), 33544 (9th, 5 January), 33552 (16th), 33555 (3 January), 33557 (7th), 33561 (10th), 33562 (7 January), 33567 (24th), 33570 (16th), 33574 (10th). Black P&R liveried 67194 also on 100 on 10th.

Double-deckers on route 16: 32249 (11th), 32526 (20th), 33552 (6th).

Two mini-Enviro 200s on 251 on 12th, 44908 and 44910. 44910 again on 19th and 2 January. 44909 on 3 January. HH69518 on 27 (15th).

69903 on school route 825 (17th, last day of term). 69906 on school route 625 (7 January).

NBC liveried 33424 failed at Wood Street, Chelmsford on route 625 on the morning of Monday 13th and was replaced for the rest of its journey by Chelmsford's 32551 (if a bus is going to break down, it is best to do so near a depot!). The afternoon journey was worked by 33546. 33424 was back in service the next day, on routes 5A/B.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, Dale Bell, Jack Bence, Jon Collins, David Edwards, Gareth Norris, John Podgorski, Ian Ransom, First Essex, Bus Lists on the Web, Bustimes, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.

Right: Front views of First Essex StreetLite 47655 in its Christmas wrap were included last month, but here is a rear view taken in Brentwood High Street at 1519 on 22 December 2021. The trouble was this was the 1454 departure. The major cause of the delay can be seen on the right. The promises made when lockdown was first implemented nearly two years ago, to take the opportunity to improve travel by public transport, seem a distant memory. Because of the delays to the 9 and some other routes that have been caused by traffic congestion, timetable amendments with some extended running times are being introduced, see 'Service Revisions' on pages 14-15. **Adam Kelleher**

Below: Route X30 has been serving Dunmow since changes were introduced at the start of the pandemic, and now calls there as part of the replacement for withdrawn (apart from on Sundays and Bank Holidays) route 42A. 36838 is seen in the High Street outside the appropriately named 'The Fritchouse' on 5 January 2022. **Richard Delahay**



First Essex Fleet & Allocation Summary January 2022

This information is up to date to the end of Period 9 2020/21 (25 December 2021).

Fleet List

The fleet list is summarised under main types. Figures / letters in brackets are registration periods.

Volvo B7TL / Transbus ALX400: 30564/7(02), 31785 (53), 32068/87(51), 32249/60 (52), 32477-8/82-85(53)

The 53 regs except 31785 are low height, the rest full height.

Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini: 32526/30-1(54), 32532/9-40(05), 32547/51/628-9/31/40-2(54), 32669/72-3/6(55), 37004-7/10/5-7/20(55), 37027/34-7/42/53-4/62(06)

Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini: 37133-6/8-40(57), 36216-20(12), 37985/6 (11)

The 57 regs have Eclipse Gemini bodywork, the 11 & 12 regs have Eclipse Gemini 2 bodywork.

Transbus Trident / Transbus President: 33086/95/8(51), 33133-4/6(02), 33186/91/232(52)

The 52 reg are 9.9m, the rest are 10.5m. 33232 has gasket glazing, the rest bonded.

Trident / ALX 400: 33373/6/83-5(53), 33401-5(54)

The 53 reg are Transbus, the 54 reg are Alexander Dennis.

Alexander Dennis Trident 2 / Enviro 400: 33411-6/8-9 (56), 33424/5(59), 33504/7(08), 33544-6/8-9/51-3/5/7-9/61-3/7-8/70/2-4(58)

33424 is 10.8m long and low height, the rest are 10.1m and full height. 33425 has bonded glazing, the rest have gasket.

Scania N250UD / Alexander Dennis Enviro 400 MMC: 36837-43(69)

Dart / Pointer 10.7m: 42487(03), 42895/923/7/30/3-7/9(05), 42940-1/4-5(56), 42956(06)

All Alexander Dennis built, except 42487 is Transbus.

Alexander Dennis Enviro 200: 44001-6(57), 44080-1(58), 44537-51(13), 44596(60), 44597(58), 44598(57), 44599(08), 44900(08), 44908-10/3-5(09)

The 13 reg are E20D chassis, the rest are Enviro 200 Darts. 440xxx are 10.2m, 44537-51 are 10.9m, 44596-9 are 10.8m and 449xx are 8.9m.

Alexander Dennis E20D / Enviro 200 MMC: 44659-62(66), 67160-69/71(66), 67189-97(66)

44659-62 are 10.5m, 67160-69/71 are 11.6m and 67189-97 are 11.8m. 67160-69/71 have luggage racks for original use on routes X10 & X30 (all have been repainted out of original X10 & X30 livery and only 67161/3 are still allocated to an airport route (X10) in 'Essex Airlink' livery, but all retain their luggage racks), 67189-97 are dedicated Park & Ride vehicles in Essex County Council all black livery, although due to Covid 19 service reductions were also used on normal services during 2021.

Wrightbus StreetLite DF: 47521-30(64), 47643-58(15), 63161-70(64), 63328-44(65)

The 63 series are StreetLite DF Max and are 11.5/6m in length, the 47 series are 10.9m.

Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban: 66759/60/94-801/3-4/6/8/10-9/21/3/5/8/30/7/46/8/60/3/72/970/1(05), 69024 (55), 69421/9-34(58), 69515-20(11), 69532-3(05)

69515-20 are Eclipse Urban 2. 66846/8/60/3 are permanent driver trainers in red driver training livery.

Alexander Dennis E30D / Enviro 300: 67735-9/41-42/50/5-6/79(62), 67805(13)

Alexander Dennis E35H (Hybrid) / Enviro 350: 67901-4(13)

Volvo 7900 Hybrid / Volvo: 69901-19(13)

Allocations

Basildon: 32249/60, 32526/39-40, 33086/186, 33424-5/504/7/44-6/8-9/51-3/5/7-8/61-3/7-8/70/2-4, 44908-10, 47651-2/4-8, 66759/821, 67165-8/94, 67901-3, 69901-19

Chelmsford: 32482-4, 32551/631/41-2/72/6, 36837-43, 42923/30/3-7/9-41/4-5, 44001-6/80-1/537-51/96-99, 44659-62, 44900/13-15, 66760/94-7/9/806/8/11-2/4-5/7-8/23/30/7/72, 67160-4/9/71/89-93/5-7, 69024/421/9-34/532-3

Colchester: 32068, 32530-2/628-9/69, 37004-7/10/5-7/20/7/34-7/42/53-4/62, 37134/6/8-40, 63333-40/2-4,

66798/800-1/3-4/10/3/6/28/970/1, 67735-9/41-2/50/55-6/79/805

Hadleigh: 33098/133-4/6/91/232, 33373/83-5, 33401-5, 36216-20, 37985-6, 42487/895/956, 47521-30/643-50, 63161-70/328-31, 69515-20

Driver Trainers (at Chelmsford): 66846/8/60/3

Out of Service / Stored: 33411-6/8-9, 33559, 47653, 66819/25, 67904 (at Basildon), 32640, 42927 (at Chelmsford) 30564/7, 31785, 32087/477-8/85, 32547/673, 37133/5, 63332/41 (at Colchester), 33095, 33376 (at Hadleigh).

Total 337 vehicles (excluding one on loan).

Vehicles on Loan

66759/60/872/970/1 have all been on loan since September / October 2020, details in EBN 678. As they have been on loan for so long they are now treated as part of the fleet. 66873 was also on loan from First Greater Manchester from October 2020, but did not return, it went for scrap in March 2021 (EBN 684). In addition Mercedes-Benz Citaro 64017 (52 reg), details in EBN 691, is on loan for driver training but is not included in the above lists.

Changes During 2021

Type	Total	+	-	Into Fleet	Out of Fleet
B7TL / ALX400	13	1	1	31785	32476
B7TL / Eclipse Gemini	36				
B9TL / Eclipse Gemini	7				
B9TL / Eclipse Gemini 2	7				
Trident / President 9.9m	3		2		33178/90
Trident / President 10.5m	6		3		33073/77/88
Trident / ALX 400	10	3		33402/4-5	
Enviro 400 10.1m	32	8		33411-6/8-9	
Enviro 400 10.8m	1				
N250UD / Enviro 400 MMC	7				
Dart / Caetano Nimbus	0		1		41521
Dart / Pointer 10.7m	16		5		42898/922/31-2/68
Enviro 200 8.9m	7				
Enviro 200 10.2m	8				
Enviro 200 10.8/9m	19				
Enviro 200 MMC 10.5m	4				
Enviro 200 MMC 11.6/8m	20		1		67170
Enviro 300	12				
Enviro 350H	4				
StreetLite 10.9m	26				
StreetLite Max 11.5/6m	27				
B7RLE / Eclipse Urban	47*		4		66730/826/61/73
B7RLE / Eclipse Urban 2	6				
7900 Hybrid	19				
Total (336** last year)	337	12	17		

* Last year's total of 45 did not include the on-loan vehicles referred to above which are now included. Including them would have made last year's total 51 which is now reduced to 47 with the four disposals this year.

** Last year's total of 336 did not include the on-loan vehicles referred to above which are now included. Including them would have made last year's total 342 which is now reduced to 337 with the net five disposals this year.

Type that left the fleet during the year was Dart / Caetano (41521, publicity / driver shuttle). 66860 was converted to a permanent driver trainer during the year.

The number of Darts in the fleet decreased by six during the year. One of those to go was 42931, seen right in Brentwood High Street on route 351, in Barbie livery, nine years ago, on 18 January 2013. To the left is an unidentified Caetano bodied Dart, the last of these, 41521, was sold in 2021.

Adam Kelleher



Outstanding news of the month is that Stephenson's have acquired the school bus operations of New Horizon Travel of Frating as of 1 January 2022. The deal involves eight commercial school services (C1/2/4/7/8/9 to Colne Community School / College in Brightlingsea, M1 to Manningtree High and L1 to Lexden Road / Norman Way schools in Colchester) and nine buses, as follows:

Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus H76F: SFZ 525 (LF52 TGO), SFZ 818 (LF52 TJO), BX04 AZU, BX04 AZW, BX04 BBJ, BX54 DJZ, BX55 XLW - possibly to be numbered 708-14. BX55 XLW was illustrated in EBN 678.

Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus B40F: HF54 HGD, HF54 HGY.

The two single-deckers are unlikely to be operated. NIBS Volvo double-decker 706 is also being transferred in to Frating.

Stephenson's will operate from part of the existing Horizon depot at Frating; pending authorisation of that as an operating centre for Stephenson's, New Horizon continued to operate the services. They had already ceased coaching operations and it is understood that the owners will now retire and surrender their O Licence.

Other news is that Dart SLF / Caetano Nimbus trainer A16 SOE has regained its original registration of LK03 NLG and Enviro 200 MMCs 401/2 (YX16 OBP/R), see EBM 689, entered service at the beginning of January, both in NIBS livery, as illustrated in EBM 691.

With thanks to the companies, Wayne Bell and John Podgorski.

Below: Two for the price of one! NIBS 419 (CN11 FBE) leads sister 418 (MX59 AVN), both mini Enviro 200s, under Basildon Railway Station bridge as they approach the bus station at the end of their respective journeys from Grays and Purfleet. Both are on Thurrock Council contract routes, 374 and 11, which rather bizarrely are timed to run together (one minute apart) from Stanford-le-Hope via Fobbing to Basildon on these trips just before 1300, as seen here on Monday 13 December 2021. The front bus is on the 374, which is an historic London Transport County Area number but with an interesting history, latterly used to denote buses running between Grays, East Tilbury and Linford. That route had originated with Eastern National in November 1930 as the 45 but was transferred to LT as part of the major 1952 reorganisation of services in the Grays area. Initially numbered 380 by LT from January 1952, it was replaced by the extension of the existing 374 from June 1958. In the 1970s it reverted to running just between Grays and Linford. It then went through many changes from the late 1980s as a tendered service, operated variously by S&M Coaches, Harris Bus, Thamesway, Arriva, JWS Travel, Town & Country, Go Ride, Ensignbus and First Essex at least, with many route and terminal point changes. Latterly it was extended on to the much more logical eastern terminus of Basildon, running via Fobbing but still with the retention of the 'traditional' number 374. On the other hand, Route 11 is a more recent creation by Thurrock Council, providing new east-west links that avoid Grays Town Centre on the lengthy journey from Purfleet to Basildon, although parts of it can be traced back to experimental route 389 introduced by London Country in September 1979 (Aveley to Orsett Hospital via Ockendon). NIBS have run both routes since April 2019, when they won the contracts from First Essex. **Richard Delahoy**



Vehicles Acquired

At least the following Volvo B9TLs have been delivered to Clacton depot:

LX59 DCE Volvo B9TL Wright Eclipse Gemini 2 ex Go Ahead London WVL322

LX59 DCY Volvo B9TL Wright Eclipse Gemini 2 ex Go Ahead London WVL327

LX59 DDF Volvo B9TL Wright Eclipse Gemini 2 ex Go Ahead London WVL331

All stored at CN awaiting single door conversion and repaint before entering service later in 2022. Originally supplied to London Central December 2009 in H39/23D layout. At CN by 7 December.

Significant Allocations

Note - EBM 692 correction.

261 KN - HD by 17 December

266 CN - KN by 18 November (not 298 as reported)

283 KN - CN by 24 November

911 HD - KN by 1 December (see note below) then to CN by 20 December

Fleet News

In EBM 692 it was reported that 294, OU57 FGZ, had been repainted and the rejuvenated vehicle is seen in Colchester Bus Station waiting to depart on the 0848 service 50 to Layer-de-la-Haye having arrived from Tollesbury on service 50A, on a wet and dull morning 18 December 2021 (right). **Mark Lloyd**. This contrasts with the photo of L208 on page 12.

In early December, 292, EU59 AFF, short Enviro 200 appeared on service with two replacement front dash corners, in red colour added to the traditional cream. The odd-looking vehicle was pressed into service on service 40 but will no doubt be repainted once time allows. Solo 911, SF04 SKE, returned to service transferring from HD to KN, spotted in Colchester on 17 December and back at Clacton by 20 December. 910, SF04 SKD, remained VOR at the same point in time. Enviro 400 640, LX56 EUC, has been converted to single door and repainted at Hants & Dorset Trim by 14 December. 641, LK08 FLL, was apparent in the CN workshops fully repainted, being prepared on 29 December. 642, LK08 FLN, which had been reported as converted and returned to fleet strength last month has made appearances on Clacton school services during mid-December. To update EBM 692, 284, OU57 FGX, short Enviro 200 was resting in the corner of Clacton workshop yard awaiting attention, still wearing the Carousel version of livery on 29 December.



Service News

Saturday 18 December saw the last day of operation by Panther Travel during 2021 on service 3 Clacton - Harwich. The break-up of schools allowed sufficient Hedingham drivers and vehicles to be available from 20 December to provide both duties, with 253 and 265 reported on the service that day. It will be reported whether Hedingham continue to run the services or if Panther Travel restart in the New Year. Routes 6, 63, X76 and 97 had some reinstatements of a small number of services due to the school holidays improving driver availability, and the 88 and 89 routes planned to operate full timetables, all during the period 20 to 24 December and 27-31 December. Boxing Day and New Year's Day service 137 operated and Bank Holiday Monday & Tuesday, Sunday services operated. Generally after 2130 services finished on Christmas Eve.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, John Podgorski & the Hedingham website.



Ensignbus

omnibus suppliers to the world

by Mark Lloyd

Dealer Stock Movements December 2021

Vehicles In

From **Al's Coaches**: Scania YN56 FBY

From **Axe Valley**: Volvo B7TL LF52 ZPP

From **Metroline**: Volvo B9TLs LK59 CWR/T/Z/CXB/L/P/FCV

From **Stagecoach Midlands** : Solos KX57 KFZ/KGF, KX58 AYF - see below & page 32

Vehicles Out

Al's Coaches, Liverpool: Volvo B9TLs SN59 BFO/X/BGE

Axe Valley, Seaton, Devon: Volvo B9TL LK59 CWW

Bromley Bus Preservation group: Volvo B7TL SN56 AWX

Chiltern Automotive, High Wycombe: Volvo B7TL LX06 DZW

Coastliner Buses, Blackpool : Enviro 400 LJ09 CAA

Connexions Buses, Harrogate: Scania YN56FCD/F, YN08 DHD

Cwtch up Independent Voluntary Foodbank, Cardiff: Volvo B7TL Y818 TGH

Finch's Coaches, Wigan: Enviro 400s LJ09 CCA/CB0/Y

Galleon Travel, Roydon, Essex: Solos KX57 KFZ/KGF, KX58 AYF, Scania YN56 FBX - see page 32

GDS Travel, Peterborough: Volvo B7TL LX54 GZR

Gwynfor Coaches, Llangefni: Enviro 400 LK08 DXU

Hawkes Coaches, Derby : Volvo B7TL YJ51 RCU

Lewis Coaches, Greenwich: Scania JFZ 7001

Sanders Coaches, Holt: Volvo B7RLE SK07 CFX/CGG

Seven Sisters Bus & Coach, Lewes : Volvo B7L EU05 VBT

Stantons of Stoke: Volvo B9TLs SN09 CUC/G

York Pullman: Volvo B9TLs SN59 BFU/V

To Shelton Motors for scrap

Trident SN51 SYY, Volvo B7TL LX54 GZK

Ensignbus Fleet

Disposals

791	LJ56 ONP	Enviro 200 to Kleanbus, Maldon, Essex
792	LJ56 ONS	Enviro 200 to Aintree Coachlines
113/4/6	P058 NPK/N/U	Volvo B9TL / Olympus to Moving People, Accrington

791/2 are two of the four purchased in 2017 ex Abellio.

Ross Newman has explained that Kleanbus are a company "working on converting diesel buses to electric". There is information about them at <https://kleanbus.com>, although that only lists them as being based in Scarborough, there isn't a mention of the Maldon connection (perhaps a factory there?). The founder of the company, Ian Goodman, is listed on LinkedIn as "Essex".

113/4/6 complete the sale of the Optare Olympus bodied Volvo B9TLs purchased new by the company, except 120, as previously reported, will eventually become a member of the heritage fleet.

Other News

Further to EBM 687, Enviro 400 MMC 132 remains on loan to First Eastern Counties.

Heritage RMC1477 has been repainted from red with grey relief to traditional 1960s Green Line livery and was seen thus at the Vintage Running Day on 4 December 2021. In the box under the main fleet names on the sides it has "Ensign Bus" (in capitals) rather than "London Transport".

As reported in 'Service Revisions' last month, route X10, Southend to Lakeside via Basildon, again ran on Boxing Day 2021.

With thanks to Ross Newman.

Ensignbus now have a substantial fleet of 21 Wrightbus StreetDecks, seven (161-7) being 21-plate low-height examples originally ordered by Arriva, and fourteen (168-81) 71-plate full-height versions specified directly by Ensignbus. The differences between the two heights is apparent from these photos taken in Grays Bus Station on 13 December 2021, the front view showing 168 (LX71 AOB) on route 22 passing 162 (LX21 CHJ) on route 88 and the rear 167 (LX21 CHV) being passed by 173 (LX71 AOH).

The roof profile is the obvious clue to the different batches.

Both **Richard Delahoy**



RM371 was illustrated with its Christmas lights on the rear cover of EBN 681. It was again out last year, with more and better lights, which followed and complimented the lines of the bus, snowflakes added all round (and a snow-blower on top) and there were interior lights added as well as multi-coloured lights underneath. On 20 December 2021 it covered parts of Leigh, Westcliff, Southend and Shoebury. Then on the following day it ran over route 68 between Leigh Station and Southend Pier and on the 23rd it ran in Thurrock (covering Aveley, Belhus, Lakeside, Purfleet, Grays Bus Station, Socketts Heath, Chadwell St Mary and Tilbury), in each case delivering presents and stopping so that people could have their photos taken with Santa, but not carrying passengers. **John G Lidstone**

See also rear cover.



New Vehicles

CC71 GAL and CE71 GAL, Alexander Dennis Enviro 200 MMC 9.75m, B34F, 12/21

These are the third and fourth new vehicles for Central Connect / Trustybus and have USB charging points and wood effect flooring. They follow the first two, similar CC21 GAL and CE21 GAL, delivered earlier in 2021, as reported in EBM's 685/7.

CC71 GAL entered service on routes 420/A on 13 December. CE71 GAL entered service on 16 December on the same routes. On Christmas Eve it appeared on route 410, as illustrated on the front cover.

Acquired Vehicles

KX57 KFZ Optare Solo M880 B27F, new to Stagecoach Midland Red South 47518 11/07

KX57 KGF Optare Solo M880 B27F, new to Stagecoach Midland Red South 47510 11/07

KX58 AYF Optare Solo M950 B29F, new to Stagecoach Midland Red South 47652 09/08

From Stagecoach Midlands, via Ensignbus. These follow KX57 KGA reported in EBM 688 and illustrated in EBM 689, these were also new in Goldline livery and specification, with high backed leather seats, for the Stagecoach Midlands Warwickshire operation, although they later received standard Stagecoach livery.

YN56 FBX Scania N94UD / Scania OmniCity H41/23D, new to London United SP13 09/06

From Happy Al's, Birkenhead, via Ensignbus. All red, LED blinds fitted.

Other News

Scania SGZ 1089 has continued to be a regular on route 410 although on Christmas Eve it was on route 386.

With thanks to Owen Woodliffe, LOTS and Bus Lists on the Web.

Below: **Lewis of Greenwich** JFZ 7001, an ex Ulsterbus Irizar Goldline, part of a batch bought (and the only one listed as re-sold so far) by Ensignbus. In Crossways, Shenfield on Greater Anglia Rail Replacement on 27 December 2021. Some of these coaches worked on Olympic shuttles at Lea Valley in summer 2012. **Chris Stewart**



Other Operators

by Roger A Smith

Milestone Coaches, Canvey Island

W714 RHT (ex HXZ 252), Dennis Trident / East Lancs H49/30F, ex Roselyn Coaches of Par (and still in their pale green livery), previously First Cornwall but new to First Bristol, was acquired last summer.

New Horizon Travel, Frating

Major news about this company is reported under 'Stephensons NIBS' on page 29.

With thanks to Richard Delahoy

Below: New Horizon Travel Dennis Trident / Alexander ALX400 V124 MEV, new as a dual-door vehicle to Stagecoach London in November 1999, at Witham Station on rail replacement on 27 October 2012. **Dave Arnold**. This vehicle left the fleet some time ago and was not part of the Stephensons acquisition. It became a static double-deck diner near St Osyth; we hope to feature a photo of it thus in a future issue.



Rear Cover

Leigh-on-Sea looking magnificent at dawn and night.

Top: The first light of the day on 22 December 2021 at Belton Way with First Essex Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Gemini 2 37986 (BJ11 ECV) in heritage Eastern National 1968 FLF coach livery against a stunning Estuary backdrop.

Bottom: Ensignbus Christmas bus RM371 (WLT 371) was mobbed by enthusiastic people at every stop on its intended three runs over service 68 with 'Father Christmas' on 21 December 2021 so, as a result, was actually running two hours late here on its only westbound trip. Over 100 people at the Pier each way, over 200 at the Kursaal on the first trip from Leigh meant the second round trip couldn't happen, so the initial return became the only westbound run, making an extremely unusual sight on Belton Way with the lights of the Kent coast behind.

Both **John G Lidstone**

