

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 720 April 2024



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



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Front Cover: Former London Transport RT113 (FXT 288) of 1940 and former Westcliff Motor Services AJN 825 (1939) together at the Museum of Power's Transport Festival on Easter Sunday, 31 March 2024, at Langford, near Maldon. It was actually the exact 85th anniversary of AJN's delivery, see also pages 4-5. **Alan Moore**

Inside Front Cover: Further to last month's inside front cover, two more First Essex recently acquired Enviro 400s. Full details of these are on pages 14-15.

Top: 33690 (SN12 AGO) when with First Manchester and allocated to Oldham depot. In Oldham Street, Manchester on 5 March 2013 on a Manchester - Oldham - Diggle short working of route 184. **Robert Appleton**

Bottom: 33670 (SN12 AEO) newly arrived at Quayside depot, Colchester on 16 March 2024, with First Greater Manchester fleet names and First Sheffield on the blinds (the reason for the latter is explained on page 14). **Ryan Hannah**

Above: Also acquired was 33656 (SN12 ADU). This has worked briefly in Essex before, when new, on the shuttle services from Leigh Station to Hadleigh for the Olympic Mountain Biking event on the weekend of 11 & 12 August 2012. It is seen climbing Belton Way West, Leigh on Saturday 11th. **Kevin Smith**

Right: Coming Soon... see pages 9 and 20.



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any month, but subscriptions will always run to
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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
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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 721

Reports to Sub-Editors	27 April
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	3 May
Dispatch by Printers on or before	11 May

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 4th 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
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Group Notices

Welcome to New Members

Peter Bates, Leicester - 1224

Paul Sparks, Great Clacton - 1225

Deaths

We were deeply saddened to learn of the death of two prominent enthusiasts during March. John Shearman was a key member of the group that was set up to preserve the former City Coach Company and latterly Eastern National Leyland PD1 LEV 917, preserved in its open top form and more recently used briefly by Ensignbus on the Southend seafront service 68. G. R. (Geoff) Mills was a very well-known Colchester based author and photographer, who has contributed many titles on the history of local operators, including multiple books on Hedingham Omnibuses, Osbornes, Norfolks, Colchester Corporation, Stephensons and, most recently, Lodge Coaches. Our condolences go to their families and friends.

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. 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.

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.

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 Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

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. **CANCELLED.**

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 12 May: Vintage Bus Day. Mid Norfolk Railway, Dereham. **NOTE CHANGE OF DATE** (previously recorded as 19th).

Sunday 19 May: Fenland Busfest. Whittlesey.

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.

Saturday 6-Sunday 7 July: Vintage Transport Weekend, North Norfolk Railway, Holt

Saturday 13-Sunday 14 July: Big Bus Bash East Anglian Transport Museum, Carlton Colville.

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

Items For Sale

The following are available, please e-mail Owen Woodliffe, the Sales Officer at pat_woodliffe@hotmail.com. To save on postage items can be collected at Chelmsford meetings by prior arrangement with Owen.

City Factlyle by Alan Osborne £2 plus £1 p&p

Essex Bus fleet book 1989 £1 plus £1 p&p

75 Years of service in Essex 1930-2005 First Essex £3 plus £2.50 p&p

Eastern National 1930-45 Fleet History PSV Circle £5 plus £3.50 p&p

Westcliff on Sea in Focus by P. Snell / A. Osborne £2 plus £1 p&p

Eastern National in Focus by Derek Stebbing £2 plus £1 p&p

Eastern National Silver Jubilee 1955 Donald MacGregor £2 plus £1 p&p

Buses in Basildon 1970 OS £1 plus £1 p&p

Eastern National Past and Present D.G Bell £5 plus £3.50 p&p

Transfer of ENOC Grays Area Services to LT Alan Osborne £2 plus £1 p&p

The Years Between; Eastern National Story Crawley et al £5 plus £3.50 p&p

Right: Further to the photo on the front cover, here is a rear view of AJN 825 and RT113 (FXT 288) at the Museum of Power's Transport Festival on Easter Sunday, 31 March 2024, at Langford.
Alan Moore



Happy 85th Birthday!



85 years ago, on 31 March 1939, preserved Bristol K / ECW A.J.N 825, together with A.J.N 823 and A.J.N 824, were delivered to Westcliff Motor Services and they entered service a day later on 1 April. The **above** photo was taken at Great Woking Church on 13 August 2011, during a day of recreating routes A.J.N 825 would have worked on in her time with Westcliff, in this case the 4, Southend to Landwick via Great Woking. **Richard Delahoy**
Today Woking is served by Arriva 7 & 8 via Shoebury (and by 4A on Sundays only).

Below: Timetable from 24 May 1939.



Service 4. —SOUTHEND, WAKRING & LANDWICK.		Service 4a. —SOUTHEND, WAKRING & SHOEBURY.		Service 4b. —SOUTHEND & LITTLE WAKRING.		Service 5. —SOUTHEND & SHOEBURYNESS, via Bournes Green.	
DAILY.		DAILY.		DAILY.		DAILY.	
Service No.	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Leave	4a	5	4b	5	4a	5	4b
SOUTHEND, Via, Gr.	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10
White Horse	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5
Bournes Green	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6	8.6
Rose Inn	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7
L. WAKRING CEN.	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8	8.8
Gt. Waking Ch'ch	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9	8.9
LAND WICK	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10	8.10
North Shoebury Cr.	8.11	8.11	8.11	8.11	8.11	8.11	8.11
Cambridge Hotel	8.12	8.12	8.12	8.12	8.12	8.12	8.12
Glass Houses	8.13	8.13	8.13	8.13	8.13	8.13	8.13
SHOEBURYNESS STN.	8.14	8.14	8.14	8.14	8.14	8.14	8.14
High House Farm.	8.15	8.15	8.15	8.15	8.15	8.15	8.15
Barling/Cursons St's	8.16	8.16	8.16	8.16	8.16	8.16	8.16
Castle Hotel	8.17	8.17	8.17	8.17	8.17	8.17	8.17
COUNCIL HOUSES	8.18	8.18	8.18	8.18	8.18	8.18	8.18
Service No.	4b	5	4a	5	4b	5	4a
Leave	8.19	8.19	8.19	8.19	8.19	8.19	8.19
SOUTHEND, Via, Gr.	8.20	8.20	8.20	8.20	8.20	8.20	8.20
White Horse	8.21	8.21	8.21	8.21	8.21	8.21	8.21
Bournes Green	8.22	8.22	8.22	8.22	8.22	8.22	8.22
Rose Inn	8.23	8.23	8.23	8.23	8.23	8.23	8.23
L. WAKRING CEN.	8.24	8.24	8.24	8.24	8.24	8.24	8.24
Gt. Waking Ch'ch	8.25	8.25	8.25	8.25	8.25	8.25	8.25
LAND WICK	8.26	8.26	8.26	8.26	8.26	8.26	8.26
North Shoebury Cr.	8.27	8.27	8.27	8.27	8.27	8.27	8.27
Cambridge Hotel	8.28	8.28	8.28	8.28	8.28	8.28	8.28
Glass Houses	8.29	8.29	8.29	8.29	8.29	8.29	8.29
SHOEBURYNESS STN.	8.30	8.30	8.30	8.30	8.30	8.30	8.30
High House Farm.	8.31	8.31	8.31	8.31	8.31	8.31	8.31
Barling/Cursons St's	8.32	8.32	8.32	8.32	8.32	8.32	8.32
Castle Hotel	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33	8.33
COUNCIL HOUSES	8.34	8.34	8.34	8.34	8.34	8.34	8.34

Follow Ups

More Troubles in Rayleigh

Following on from the comments under the Arriva report last month about incidents in Rayleigh affecting bus services, a further serious incident caused more havoc to First Essex and Arriva services when a burst water main closed Crown Hill (the road linking the town centre to Rayleigh Station). This started sometime mid / late morning on Thursday 29 February and wasn't cleared until midday Saturday 2 March. First 25s had a lengthy diversion in both directions - from Basildon, they ran as normal as far as Rayleigh Station, then back tracked all the way to Rawreth Carpenters Arms, the A1245 to the A127, on to Rayleigh Weir and then back into Rayleigh - almost five miles instead of 500 yards; the same in reverse from Southend. Service 20 buses had no option but to terminate at Rayleigh High Street, with a single-decker providing a Rayleigh Station to Hullbridge shuttle, about hourly we think. The X30 had to divert via the A127 / A1245 and seemed to be missing out Rayleigh altogether, picking up the normal route at Wolsey Park, probably the only way to maintain a reasonably punctual timetable in the circumstances, although some buses did double run to Rayleigh Station. The Wolsey Park to Rayleigh X30 short workings could still run, turning at Rayleigh Station instead of the High Street. Arriva buses terminated at Rayleigh High Street or were turned short.

Thankfully this closure was cleared after two days, despite warnings that it might have extended through to the following Tuesday (right was from First Essex's X feed on the morning of the 2nd, so it was a surprise when they posted a couple of hours later to say that Crown Hill had re-opened)



Text by **Richard Delahoy** with thanks to Nigel Clark and Ian Dann.

Below: First Essex Enviro 400 33544 (SN58 CFK) on route 25 on diversion at Rayleigh Weir roundabout on 1 March 2024. **Nigel Clark**





Above: A crowded Rayleigh High Street. **Top:** First Essex Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 36220 (BJ12 VXD, another bus new for the 2012 Olympics) and an unidentified StreetLite both displaying 'Not in Service' with two Arriva Optare Versas (in old and new liveries) on 29 February. **Ian Dann**

Bottom: The next day, Arriva VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2 3779 (KX09 KDU) has turned round in the High Street, as there was no access to Crown Hill for the station, and is set to head back to Southend. Next to it is 'Sorry Not in Service' Optare Versa 4210 (YJ61 CJX) which had been on route 8, in the bus layby. In front is First Essex Enviro 400 34452 (LJ59 LXR) on route 20 and just visible behind is mini Enviro 200 44927 (YX11 HNZ, on its first day in use since 8 January) which had come up from the stop at the Weir and had just re-entered service on route 63 but couldn't pull out while blocked by the 1. **Nigel Clark**



Eastern National Bristol RELH / ECWs

Peter Oughton writes:

"Further to the mention by Richard Delahoy in EBM 718 concerning the first Eastern National RELH coach, 578 (AVX 961B), appearing in a photo of 'Passenger Transport' magazine in May 1964 with its original, planned registration of 939 LWC, it is not the only time this vehicle has featured in a publication.

"In the December 1973 edition of 'Model Railway Constructor' it was shown in the 'Model Road Vehicles' supplement, which had a page devoted to the Bristol RELH / ECW coach. The article was supplied by L. H. Markham, showing his 4mm to 1 foot scale drawing of such a vehicle plus some technical notes on the type. Two photos completed the feature, a larger photo of a Crosville example and a smaller one of 939 LWC before it was re-registered. Both photos were credited to 'Modern Transport Collection'. Modern Transport Publishing Company was the publisher of 'Passenger Transport' which was later incorporated into 'Buses Illustrated' to become 'Buses' magazine. Both of these titles were owned by the Ian Allan Group that also published 'Model Railway Constructor'.

"To add to the note in EBM 718 that stated that a coach seen in the photo on page 1 of EBM 717 could not have been an Eastern National RELH as it had windows in the cove panels and EN had no RELHs with this feature, in fact no ECW bodied REs at all had these windows.

"The articles in EBM and EBM Extra related to historical features can be very interesting as they can remind us of things that we may have partly forgotten or inform us of something we may not have known before. It helps to keep the past alive and makes for an enjoyable read."

EBM Extra 5 (January 2024) included a photo of AOO 18B, the first Bristol RELH for the Tilling fleet, with maroon relief, believed to have been the last coach delivered as such before the livery changed to Eastern National's cream and green. As explained in the caption, it was acquired by EN on 1 February 1970 as 422. In November 1970 it was sent to ECW for bodywork conversion for OMO - a bus style destination box, 'Pay As You Enter' sign and electrically operated doors were fitted. Coach type seats were retained but reduced from 47 to 45 to provide a luggage pen. It was repainted into Dual Purpose livery and renumbered 1613. Work was completed in the middle of January 1971. It later received NBC bus livery. In February 1975 it was fitted with bus seats but was withdrawn from service for disposal in December 1976. It is seen **below** in London Road outside Southend Depot in April 1975. It leads an ex Bristol MW / ECW coach converted to a bus, another RELH, another ex-coach MW and a Bristol LD / ECW. The LD is still in Tilling green but with the addition of white band and fleet names, the others are in NBC livery. **Eric Thompson**



WNO 484 - the Welsh Exile from Essex

This article, by Chris Stewart, was in EBN 679 (November 2020) with follow up photos in EBN 681.

WNO 484, an open top Bristol KSW / ECW, former Eastern National 2386, is now owned by New and Classic Travel Ltd of Swansea, and is used for private hires such as weddings. It remains in its (non-authentic) cream with red band United Welsh livery. This change of ownership appears to have happened fairly recently as WNO 484 was still being rallied last June.

Southend Transport in the Snow

A follow up article to this starts on page 32.

Service Revisions

Ian Ransom

14 March 2024

570 (Sch only) Great Dunmow Queen Victoria - Colchester Schools **First Essex**. Revised timetable, with morning journey advanced by 10 minutes.

17 March

21 (Daily) Black Notley Bulford Lane - Bocking Deanery Gardens **Hedingham**. Sunday service withdrawn and replaced by DigiGo demand responsive service operated by **Essex County Council**. No change to the M-S service operated by **Stephensons**.

X10 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Stansted Airport **First Essex**. Further to last month, the only change was the introduction of an additional stop at Audley Way, Basildon.

29 March

68 (Daily) Southend Pier - Leigh Station **Ensignbus**. Open top service reintroduced for 2024, hourly, every 30 minutes during school summer holidays and other busy / good weather days. Daily 29 March-14 April, 25 May-2 June, 20 July-1 September and weekends only 20 April-14 July, 7-15 September.

339 Epping Station - Shenfield Station **London Vintage Bus Company**. Reintroduction of summer extension from North Weald to & from Ongar and Shenfield Station, Saturdays & Sundays and certain other days in conjunction with operation at the Epping Ongar Railway.

15 April

7 (M-S) Saffron Walden, Station Street - Cambridge, Emmanuel Street **Stagecoach East**. Revised late afternoon and evening timetable on M-F.

21/A/S (Daily) Southend Travel Centre - Canvey Creek Road **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S, with a NEW SERVICE 21A variant, generally daytimes hourly and reintroducing a service via Carlton Avenue, with Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding awarded by the Government to Southend-on-Sea City Council. Most journeys will operate to & from Leigh-on-Sea Sutherland Boulevard, replacing short 21 journeys to & from Hadleigh Morrisons, but with some extensions to & from either Hadleigh Depot or Canvey Creek Road.

22/A (M-S) Waltham Cross Bus Station - Waltham Abbey, Shernbrooke Road **Vectare**. Service renumbered 16/A with a revised timetable.

66A (Su only) Waltham Cross Bus Station - Loughton Station **Central Connect**. Revised timetable, with a commercial NEW SERVICE 16C variant introduced. This operates anti-clockwise round the Upshire loop.

70 (M-F) Colchester Bus Station - Marks Tey, Domsey Bank **Hedingham**. NEW SERVICE every 30 minutes between school hours. Reintroduces a more frequent daytime service to Marks Tey Estate and introduces a service to Stanway Stane Retail Park.

693 (Sch Only) Ardleigh Church - East Bergholt School **Ipswich Buses**. Revised route and timetable, extended from Ardleigh to start and terminate at Dedham Lamb Corner.

4 May

99 (S, Su only then Daily) Southend Pier - Shoeburyness East Beach **Ensignbus**. NEW SERVICE (Open Top) hourly, first bus 0945 from Southend, last bus 1720 from Shoeburyness. Operates weekends and Bank Holidays only from 4 May, plus Tuesday 28-Friday 31 May (schools half term) then daily 20 July-1 September. If there is demand will operate every 30 minutes. Please note : Concessionary passes are NOT valid on the 68 or 99.

The End of the Tilbury-Gravesend Ferry? Richard Delahoy



Above: The MV Jacob Marley, crossing from Gravesend to Tilbury on 27 January 2024. **Richard Delahoy**

In February's EBM we mentioned Ensignbus's cross river (Thames) bus X80, but of course there is - or rather was - another way of crossing from Essex to Kent. Sadly, the current operator of the Tilbury-Gravesend ferry made this announcement on 1 March 2024:

"Jetstream Tours has operated the Tilbury-Gravesend ferry on behalf of Kent County Council since 2017 and are proud to have been able to provide these services to Kent and Thurrock for the past seven years.

"Following a second extension to our existing contract, in November 2023, we became aware of funding issues which started through the withdrawal of funding from Thurrock Council. We have maintained positive talks solely with Kent County Council throughout this period whilst a consultation period was entered.

"Regrettably due to ongoing concerns and uncertainties presented around future funding and an abandoned procurement process by Kent County Council for longer-term prospects, Jetstream Tours has been unable to enter into negotiations with the council. Further short-term extensions to our existing contract sadly are not tenable for our business and staff. We feel it ultimately would lead to further protracted job insecurities and have an adverse effect on our ability to adequately employ and ensure continuity of a regular and reliable ferry service.

"We regret that Jetstream Tours will not be continuing our services beyond our contracted period of 31 March 2024. We understand that the council have been seeking an alternative operator to continue the service."

Kent County Council had undertaken a public consultation on the future of the ferry and issued an update on 11 March:

"The findings have been captured in a consultation report which is available in the document section of our website. This report was shared at the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 7 March 2024.

"The consultation was required as, at the time, Thurrock Council had advised us that they were unable to continue to provide funding towards the service. KCC would not likely be able to afford the full subsidy on its own but we needed to ensure that we understood how the service is used and all of the possible impacts of it ceasing to inform our final decisions.

"More recently Thurrock Council has indicated that it does have funding which, together with KCC's contribution, could support the ferry for the next year. KCC has therefore been working to secure a new contract that would cover the operation of the service until March 2025, while also looking into longer-term solutions.

"However, despite our efforts to get a new contract in place, a ferry operator cannot be found to deliver this contract from April 2024. KCC continues to work with prospective operators and possible funding partners towards a longer-term solution for the service but the current position is the Gravesend to Tilbury Ferry will stop after the existing contract expires on 31 March 2024. [The actual last day of operation was Saturday 30th.]

"We remain committed to ensuring we explore options for a longer-term operator of the ferry but it is not possible to achieve this to coincide with the end of the current contract.

"Over 100,000 passenger journeys per year are made in total by users of the ferry service, i.e., a service user travelling from Kent to Thurrock and back again counts as two journeys (five service users would be ten journeys etc). Passengers travel from Kent, Thurrock and further afield and the service enables a convenient way to travel to work, school or to access Gravesend and Tilbury towns and onward destinations.

"Since 2000, the service has operated with financial support from Kent County Council and Thurrock Council who became involved when the operator at the time cancelled the service."

Use of the ferry has declined over the years but has featured in some bus enthusiasts' itineraries, not least on the annual December Ensignbus running days in recent years. To the surprise of many, ENCTS passes are accepted on the ferry. My most recent trip was at the end of January to travel to & from the Erith Model Railway Club's excellent exhibition at Longfield and I was most surprised to find live music on board coming back! Not a regular feature, the music was in connection with a 'Carnival of Light' in Gravesend. The current boat, MV Jacob Marley, carries up to 98 passengers (plus bicycles) and has suffered from some reliability issues, for example being suspended in February for almost seven days without warning after developing engine problems, and on 11 March for an annual safety inspection of the boat. Also the service was suspended for two days when cruise ships berthed at Tilbury prevented access to the ferry pier. Anyone relying on the ferry to get to work thus faced major problems.

The history of the ferry is a complicated story and indeed occupies one entire volume of Peter Kay's nine part history of the London, Tilbury & Southend Railway (LTSR). There have been ferries across the river here since at least the 1600s. On the coming of the LTSR to Tilbury in 1854, the railway company provided its own ferry but was initially restricted to carrying railway passengers only. It then took on the leases of the other two ferries and from 1856 provided the whole service. Gravesend and the nearby Rosherville Gardens were at the time a major tourist attraction for Londoners and the LTSR hoped to attract much of that traffic, via Tilbury Riverside station and the ferry. Competition came from steamers coming down the river from London and the emerging Kent rail network. However the tourist market declined soon afterwards, as the railways offered access to attractions further away, such as Southend, and Gravesend's appeal diminished.

The ferries carried horse drawn carts and carriages and then motor cars as well as pedestrians, but the first dedicated car (and coach and lorry) carrying boat was introduced in 1924 alongside the existing foot passenger ferries. Being railway owned, operation of the ferries passed successively from the LTSR to the Midland Railway (1912), London, Midland & Scottish Railway (1923) and then British Railways (upon nationalisation in 1948). Meanwhile plans for an under-river tunnel at Dartford were being progressed and work had actually started in 1939 but was quickly stopped by the war. Uncertainty about the resumption of work on the tunnel and then its likely completion date created confusion over the future of the ferry, which at its height in the mid 1950s was carrying over three million passengers a year (including car passengers), a quarter of a million vehicles and around 2,500 coaches. The opening of the Dartford Tunnel in 1963 took away the vehicle traffic and the vehicle carrying service ceased at the end of 1964.

Coaches of Eastern National (and Westcliff before them) were regular users of the ferry on various summer express services from South Essex to places including Margate, Canterbury, Folkestone, Hastings, Eastbourne, Brighton and

Worthing. That was all to cease with the establishment of the Dartford Tunnel Coachways network from 1964, as described in EBM Extra 5 published in January this year.

Add to this the decline in employment at the docks and changing travel habits, and passenger numbers plummeted. The ferry became loss-making and from 1974 both Essex and Kent County Councils paid British Rail a subsidy to keep it going, although that subsidy only lasted a couple of years. BR then attempted to obtain Parliamentary power to abandon the service but failed. It was hived off into the Sealink company in 1979, still part of BR then, but privatised in 1984. Passing to new owners Stena Sealink in 1990, the following year the ferry was sold on to a new company, White Horse Ferries. Tilbury Riverside Railway Station then closed in 1992 and a rail replacement bus was started from Tilbury Town - today's Ensignbus service 99. Incidentally, you can still buy rail tickets to 'Tilbury Riverside' and they are valid on the bus link. After White Horse Ferries went bust in 2002, operation passed to Jetstream Tours. More recently it became funded by both Kent and Thurrock Councils, until the latter withdrew their funding in 2017 due to their financial crisis.

So what are the public transport alternatives? Not easy, is the simple answer! Most passengers from the Essex side either live in Tilbury itself, not at the ferry terminal, or arrive by train at Tilbury Town. So the starting point is to use the half-hourly Ensignbus 73 (77 at times) to Lakeside, changing there to the hourly X80 towards Bluewater (a service subject to the vagaries of congestion on the Dartford Crossing, as described in the February article) and alighting at Greenhithe Station. From there, Arriva run a frequent service on Fastrack B to Gravesend. How long might this take? Looking at a typical weekday, around one hour 50 minutes, compared to a short bus ride on the 99 to the ferry and a five-minute river crossing. Alternatives are train Tilbury Town to Chafford Hundred to catch the X80 there, and train from Greenhithe to Gravesend to finish, getting the journey down to about 75 minutes (or less, depending on where in Tilbury your journey starts).

Below: Arriva Kent & Surrey Enviro 200 MMC 4119 (SN67 WUH) in Gravesend on Fastrack B on 27 January 2024.
Richard Delahoy

Opposite Top: How it used to be done (1). An unidentified Eastern National Bristol LS / ECW coach drives onto the TSS Tessa (the first purpose-built vehicle ferry on the route) at the Tilbury pontoon on 1 September 1962. Another coach, probably an Eastern National Bristol L 'Queen Mary', can be seen on board in the background. **David Christie**





Below: How it used to be done (2). In BR days, if the ferry wasn't running, a bus replacement service operated via the Dartford Tunnel. Here is Southend Transport Daimler Fleetline 379 (GHJ 379L) at Tilbury Ferry on 6 June 1981. It was on hire to Ensignbus, driven by the photographer, **Richard Delahoy**.



Basildon Electrics

Major news this month is that it was announced on 22 March that Essex County Council and First Bus were successful in securing £4.8 million from the Government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) 2 scheme to fund 55 electric buses in Basildon. These are reported to be 31 single-deckers and 24 double-deckers, but types are not yet known.

First Bus is additionally investing £25.8 million into the scheme which will also include upgrading Basildon depot. The buses are expected to start arriving in the later stages of 2025 and enter service in early 2026.

Acquired Vehicles

33656	SN12 ADU	SFD4DSBRFCGX36562	B450/1	H45/30F	03/12	First Games Transport
33657	SN12 ADV	SFD4DSBRFCGX36569	B450/2	H45/30F	03/12	First Games Transport
33663	SN12 AEE	SFD4DSBRFCGX36613	B450/8	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33668	SN12 AEL	SFD4DSBRFCGX36623	B450/13	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33669	SN12 AEM	SFD4DSBRFCGX36639	B450/14	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33670	SN12 AEO	SFD4DSBRFCGX36620	B450/15	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33671	SN12 AEP	SFD4DSBRFCGX36640	B450/16	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33672	SN12 AET	SFD4DSBRFCGX36645	B450/17	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33674	SN12 AEV	SFD4DSBRFCGX36669	B450/19	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33676	SN12 AEX	SFD4DSBRFCGX36666	B450/21	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33678	SN12 AEZ	SFD4DSBRFCGX36673	B450/23	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33680	SN12 AFE	SFD4DSBRFCGX36674	B450/25	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33681	SN12 AFF	SFD4DSBRFCGX36675	B450/26	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33682	SN12 AFJ	SFD4DSBRFCGX36690	B450/27	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33686	SN12 AFV	SFD4DSBRFCGX36694	B450/31	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33687	SN12 AFX	SFD4DSBRFCGX36723	B450/32	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33688	SN12 AFY	SFD4DSBRFCGX36737	B450/33	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33690	SN12 AGO	SFD4DSBRFCGX36739	B450/35	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33692	SN12 AGV	SFD4DSBRFCGX36741	B450/37	H45/30F	07/12	First Games Transport

ADL E40D / Enviro 400. Acquired from First Manchester. All in Urban livery.

These are further vehicles which were part of the batch of 100 Enviro 400s purchased by First Bus as shuttles for the 2012 Olympic Games. (33656, 33668, 33680 and 33692 at least and perhaps others from the above were used on the shuttle service from Leigh Station to Hadleigh for the Olympic Mountain Biking on 11 & 12 August, as illustrated on page 1). After the Games they moved to First Manchester. 33657 was temporarily loaned to Diamond Bus North West in 2019-2020 after their purchase of First's Bolton depot.

Previously acquired 33684, 33685, 33689, 33705, 33713, 33714 and 33750 were also part of the batch of 100.

33692 was collected from Sheffield (where it had been on loan for Tram Replacement and other services) to Colchester on 7 March 2024. 33670 was also due to be driven from Sheffield (where it had also been on loan) to Colchester that day but developed a defect. It eventually arrived at Colchester on 16th.

33668, 33671, 33672, 33681, 33687 and 33688 were collected from Oldham and driven to Colchester on 17 March.

33656, 33657, 33663, 33669, 33674, 33676, 33678, 33680, 33682, 33686 and 33690 were collected from Oldham on 23 March to be driven to Chelmsford (first two) and Colchester (the rest), although 33656 and 33678 failed on the way back. 33656 was later towed to Chelmsford from Birchanger Services (Stansted) and 33678 towed to Colchester from Hilton Park Services in the Wolverhampton area.

Note, in previous EBM's we have referred to 'First Greater Manchester' and this is the fleet name carried, but according to Companies House, the name is still First Manchester Ltd, and the PSV Operator Licence is still in the name of First Manchester Ltd.

Incidentally, on Sunday 24 March, Oldham depot transferred to Stagecoach and First gained Rochdale depot from Transdev as part of Phase 2 of the Greater Manchester Bee Link franchising scheme. Many other Oldham buses went to other First Bus subsidiaries, but some went to Rochdale.

Entry into service (March):

33657 25th, 33663 25th,
33668 18th, 33669 25th,
33670 19th, 33671 21st,
33672 18th, 33674 25th,
33676 25th, 33678 26th,
33680 27th, 33681 18th,
33682 27th, 33686 25th,
33687 18th, 33688 19th,
33690 25th, 33692 8th.

Right: 33671 (SN12 AEP) at Oldham depot on 17 March



ready for the drive to Colchester. **Ryan Hannah.** More photos on inside front cover, page 1 and page 18.

Vehicles on Loan

Further to last month, First Eastern Counties StreetDeck 35921 was last used in Colchester on 7 March and 35922 on 6th before returning to Ipswich.

Driver Trainers 66846, 66863 and 69148 were all at Norwich during February and 66860 was there in March. For now, it is assumed that they were on loan rather than permanent transfers, and indeed 69148 had returned to Chelmsford by 11 March.

Allocation Changes

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

Period 11 2023/24 (21 January - 24 February)

Correction: 47525 did not transfer from HH to BN, it was only on loan at BN from 5-12 February inclusive.

Period 12 2023/24 (25 February - 30 March)

32530 CR-CR (oos), 32540 CR (oos)-Disposal, 32551 CF-CF (oos), 32641 CF-CF (oos), 32642 CR-CR (oos), 32676 CR-CR (oos), 33561 BN (oos)-BN, 33656 FG-CF (oos), 33657 FG-CF, 33663 FG-CR, 33668 FG-CR, 33669 FG-CR, 33670 FG-CR, 33671 FG-CR, 33672 FG-CR, 33674 FG-CR, 33676 FG-CR, 33678 FG-CR, 33680 FG-CR, 33681 FG-CR, 33682 FG-CR, 33686 FG-CR, 33687 FG-CR, 33688 FG-CR, 33690 FG-CR, 33692 FG-CR, 34456 HH (oos)-HH, 35911 CR (loan)-FG, 35921 CR (loan)-FG, 35922 CR (loan)-FG, 36216 HH-HH (oos), 37005 CR (oos)-CR-CR (oos), 37007 CR (oos)-CR, 37010 CR-CR (oos), 37017 CR (oos)-Disposal, 37020 CR-CR (oos), 37034 CF (oos)-Disposal, 37047 CF (oos)-Disposal, 44003 CR (oos)-Disposal, 44080 BN-BN (oos), 44598 BN-BN (oos), 44908 BN-BN (oos), 44927 HH (oos)-HH, 47654 BN (oos)-BN, 47655 BN (oos)-BN, 63336 CR (oos)-CR, 67805 CF-CF (oos)

According to Bustimes, 37005 returned to service on 6 March but only lasted for three days before being taken out of use again, this time permanently.

Disposals

44003 (13 March 2024), 32540 (14th) and 37017 (21st) from Quayside, Colchester to Trevor Wigley, Carlton, Barnsley.

37034 and 37047 from Westway, Chelmsford to PVS (March).

Note, Shelton Motors is no longer used for scrap vehicles.

Re-seated Vehicle

Not previously reported is that 67166 had its luggage racks removed and extra seats added, so from B36F to B39F. This work was carried out at Ensignbus between 10 September and 7 October 2023.

Around the Depots

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

Colchester

Further to last month, on the scrap line on 13 March, following the disposal of 44003 (see above), were 32540, 37005, 37010, 37017, 37053, 47665, 63341 and 66817. 37007 and 63336 were back in service, the former after receiving the back axle from 37017, the latter with a new engine fitted. Then the next day, 32540 was removed (also see above) and 32530 took its place. On 22nd, 37017 had gone (also see above, this bus had been heavily cannibalised) but 37020 had joined the line. The two StreetLites had gone, 63341 has also had a new engine fitted and 47665 returned to service on 4 April. On 25th, 32642 had joined (with Ticketer removed). 37005, 37010 and 37053 may have gone by this date, but no confirmation yet of their disposal.

Driver Trainer 69148, which had been on the scrap line on 27 January but had gone by 16 February, then turned up at Norwich before returning to Essex (see 'Vehicles on Loan' above).

News of the Harwich routes (1 March - 4 April).

The ADL Enviro 400s acquired from First Manchester have started to reach Harwich. On 11th, 33684 worked the normal double deck duty including 0830 Colchester - Harwich 104 and 1008 return. 33668 did likewise on 20th. On 19th, 33688 worked 1552 Colchester Norman Way Schools - Harwich 104, 1740 Harwich - Colchester 104 and 1910 Colchester - Mistley 104. On 26th, 33686 worked 0610 Harwich - Colchester 104. Other double-deckers working single deck duties included 37062 spending a full day on 104/102 on Saturday 16th and 37139 worked 0610 Harwich - Colchester 104 on 3 April.

More variety from the usual mix of Wright StreetLite and Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urbans has been provided by the 1725 Colchester - Harwich 104 and 1900 Harwich - Colchester 102, normally worked by the bus off 1425 Colchester Station - Braintree 320 and 1550 Braintree - Colchester 320. The bus has often been an Enviro 400, Volvo B7TL, or Enviro 200 MMC in Airlink livery: 33713 (21st), 33825 (1st), 37006 (3 April), 37037 (11th), 37042 (26th), 37613 (20th), 67192 (4th, 19th), 67193 (5th, 25th, 27th), 67194 (15th).

Another Enviro 200 MMC on 104 was 67190 which worked 0710 Colchester - Harwich and 0900 return on 7 March. Then on 2 April, 67192 replaced 47421 at Wix on 0710 Colchester - Harwich 104. 67192 also worked 0900 Harwich - Colchester 104, then replaced by 67190 on 1035 Colchester - Harwich 104. 67190 stayed on 104, and finished on 1645 Colchester - Harwich 104.

Clacton routes. Route 74B has again been mainly Volvo / Gemini operated. Exceptions have been 33669 (6 April), 33671 (5 April), 47427 (12th), 63328 (25th), 63335 (22nd), Airlink liveried 67189 (20th), 67190 (27th) & 67193 (8th), 69518 (21st).

Route 76: 32628 (10th), 47669 (17th), no report (24th), 37054 (29th, Good Friday), 37134 (31st), 33825 (1 April, Easter Monday), 37006, 44006 & 63333 (7 April).

There continue to be daily appearances of double-deckers on route X20. The same five of the newer double-deckers allocated to Colchester as in the last couple of months have been used, although two only reported on one day each: 33713 (4th, 6th, 10th, 13th, 18th-20th, 22nd, 28th-29th, 1, 3 April); 33825 (4th); 37140 (5th-7th, 9th-14th, 28th-29th, 3-5, 7 April); 37613 (5th-13th, 15th-17th, 19th, 21st-23rd, 27th, 29th-4 April, 6-7 April); 37621 (8th). They have started to be joined by newly acquired Enviro 400s: 33663 (4-5, 7 April), 33686 (31st), 33687 (31st), 33688 (24th-27th); 33690 (31st, 2, 5 April), 33692 (14th, 15th, 18th, 21st, 24th-27th, 30th, 1-2, 6-7 April) Also, 32669 (12th) and 37062 (7 April) were unusual Volvo B7TLs on the route.

Non Airlink single-deckers on X20: 47650 (29th), 47679 (4 April).

Single-deckers on route 320: 63335 (7th), 63336 (11th) Airlink liveried 67189 (13th), 67190 (14th) & 67193 (13th).

Chelmsford

Enviro 300 67805 crashed into a wooden pylon and knocked over a brick wall at the junction of Broomfield Road and Roselawn Fields in the Broomfield area of Chelmsford in the early morning of 13 March. It was returning out of service to Westway depot after working the last 370 of the previous day to Halstead. Luckily, the driver was unhurt and no pedestrians were in the vicinity at the time. 67805 was still out of service when this EBM went to print on 7 April.

Further to last month, on the scrap line on 26 March were 32551, 32641 and accident-damaged 67805 (as above). The first two did not last long in service after their return from First Eastern Counties. Since 26 February, 37034 & 37047 (see 'Disposals' above) and, finally after being sold some time ago, the last Pointer Dart, 42935, have all gone.

Enviro 400 MMCs on X30: 33994 (7th, 10th), 33995 (3 April), 33996 (6th, 10th, 13th, 25th, 27th), 33997 (14th, 18th-20th), 33998 (19th, 28th, 2 April). 44900 on 37 / 351 (7th, 11th, 13th). 44915 on 332 (4 April). 67779 on 37 / 351 (4 April), a long vehicle for the 37. DS69151 on driver training in Head Street, Colchester (28th).

Basildon

Enviro 400 33570 has received a super rear advert for NHS Mid and South Essex (not known when, first noted on 20 February 2024).

Out of service 33572 is awaiting a replacement gearbox. 63343 is at ADL for RTC repairs.

47654 is back at Basildon after two months off road, it was collected from Langley on 16 March and drove back with no issues with its new engine. It returned to service on 22nd.

Double-deckers on X10 shorts: 33507 (5th), 33548 (7th), 33552 (20th), 33555 (6th), 33559 (22nd).

33424, 33563 and 44001 all on 251 (24th). Usually short StreetLites on this route.

StreetLites 47651 (5, 7 April), 63167 (31st), 63168 (5 April), 63186 (30th) on X10 (whole route).

44909 on 100 (7th). Airlink liveried 67195 on B4 (8th).

Hadleigh

CF67160 and BN67166 are due to move to First West of England where they are required for a new contract. However, in the meantime, they have both been on loan to Hadleigh from 2 April. 67166 had its fleet names and cove panel writing removed before it left Basildon. It is seen **right** in London Road, Leigh on route 28 on 3 April.

John G Lidstone



47648 (a former Hadleigh vehicle) is also on loan from Basildon to cover for vehicles off road.

34458 (7th), 34460 (2 April), 34461 (28th) and 37985 (27th) unusual double-deckers on 14 shorts.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, David Edwards, Ryan Hannah, John Lidstone, William Morrison, Gareth Norris, John Podgorski, Derek Stebbing, Robert West, Bustimes, Bus Lists on the Web, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.

First Essex News in Pictures

Acquired Enviro 400s

Driven to Colchester from Oldham the previous day, l-r 33682 (SN12 AFJ), 33676 (SN12 AEX), 33690 (SN12 AGO), 33663 (SN12 AEE), 33674 (SN12 AEV) and 33669 (SN12 AEM) at Quayside depot, Colchester on Sunday 24 March 2024.

Ryan Hannah



33669 (SN12 AEM), with added bees, on layover at Colchester Bus Station on 25 March 2024.

Dan Pretty

The Manchester worker bee is one of the best known symbols of Manchester and has been an emblem for the city for over 150 years, hence the name and livery of the new franchised bus network.



33680 (SN12 AFE) being collected from Oldham depot on Saturday 23 March. In the background are brand new replacement Stagecoach electric BYD / ADL 400 EV City vehicles, in Bee Network livery, for use from the next day, including, on the left, 84227 (LF24 ZBD).

Ryan Hannah



Enviro 200 MMC 67191 (SN66 WKM) was new in black livery for Chelmsford Park & Ride. It was reallocated to Basildon in April 2022 then in June 2022 it was repainted to Essex Bus green but 13 months later was repainted again, to Airlink blue, and luggage racks were fitted. It was reallocated to Colchester and branded for route X20 with 'Stansted Braintree Colchester' on the cove panels (although the route number is not part of the branding). But in November 2023 it surprisingly returned to Basildon for operation of route X10, but keeping its X20 branding. This was removed in late February / early March 2024, as seen here at Wickford Station on 6 March. Also, the inside cove panels have lost their X20 branding, replaced by a map with all three airport services shown.

William Morrison

On 14 March Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, was partially closed for emergency gas works. Buses on diversion were alternating between normal destination displays and this one seen on Enviro 400 33996 (SN65 OGM) on route 170 at the end of its journey at Chelmsford Bus Station. **Adam Kelleher**

Wrightbus StreetLite 63370 (SL16 RAX) on route 25 in Webster's Way, Rayleigh on 8 March 2024, still with a 'Solent' fleet name on its cove panel.

Nigel Clark



Acquired Vehicles

For Southend Open Top Services

37405	MX58 DXS	YV3S4L8289A129567	AC283	H45/29F	10/08	First Manchester
37406	MX58 DXT	YV3S4L8229A129614	AC284	H45/29F	10/08	First Manchester
37408	MX58 DXV	YV3S4L82X9A129571	AC286	H45/29F	10/08	First Manchester
37410	MX58 DXZ	YV3S4L8229A129810	AC288	H45/29F	10/08	First Manchester

Volvo B9TL / Wright Eclipse Gemini, acquired from First Eastern Counties February 2024. Prior to being with FEC they had also operated for First West of England after being new to First Manchester. They have received Ensignbus fleet numbers 364-367 (which immediately precede the previous / existing open top fleet numbers 368-371). They are being converted to open top for use at Southend.

For the Heritage Fleet

RML2658 SMK 658F R2RH/1/270 L5936 H40/32R 09/67 London Transport AEC Routemaster / Park Royal, acquired from a private owner in August 2023. It was originally thought to be dealer stock, but it is undergoing a major refurbishment and is intended for use in the heritage fleet.

The following three acquired from Seven Sisters Bus & Coach in March 2024.

HCD 347E L63881 6467 FH39/30F 03/67 Southdown 347 Leyland PD3/4 / Northern Counties, 'Queen Mary' full front body with panoramic windows. In Southdown traditional livery of apple green and cream.

HKE 690L VRT/SL6G VRT/SL2/425 20116 H43/34F 03/73 Maidstone & District 690 Bristol VR / ECW. Rebuilt to open top March 1985, same seating layout. In Maidstone & District livery with 'Seven Sisters Bus & Coach' fleet names.

KMW 175P CRG6LX 68733 20850 H43/31F 02/76 Thamesdown 275 Daimler Fleetline / ECW. Rebuilt to open top May 1985, same seating layout. In fictitious Southdown style traditional livery of apple green and cream with 'Seven Sisters Bus & Coach' fleet names.

David Mulpeter, the owner of Seven Sisters Bus & Coach (and previously Seaford & District) has retired, hence the dispersal of the fleet. One other notable disposal is of well-known highbridge Brighton & Hove Bristol KSW / ECW HAP 985 to Yesteryear Coaches of Haworth, West Yorkshire, who own former Eastern National open top KSW / ECW WNO 480.

Other Vehicle News

Further to last month, red / gold RCL2226 was back on Londoner Buses commercial route T15 on 9 & 10 March. Then on 24th RT624 and RT3232 were used.

From LOTS (with grateful thanks) an update on vehicles on loan to Ensignbus from the Newman Family to fulfil ongoing Private Hire work: ER882 (WLT 882), RF319 (MLL 956), RM54 (LDS 279A), RM371 (WLT 371), RM1361 (VYJ 808), RMC1485 (485 CLT), RML2405 (JJD 405D), RML2588 (JJD 588D), RML2734 (SMK 734F), RT1499 (KGK 758) and RTL453 (KLB 648).

Services

Further to last month, the Epping-Loughton-Chingford service to supplement the Central line finished after operation on Maundy Thursday, 28 March. It is thought the extras on routes 20 and 150 have also ceased. TfL issued a statement: "We are no longer running temporary shuttle buses between Chingford, Loughton and Epping. We reviewed these services after we introduced the new Central line timetable. Very few people used the buses. We are confident that there are enough local buses to meet people's needs - there is an extensive local bus network in this area. We will continue to review this in the coming weeks".

Right is the timetable from Bustimes. The running time was mostly excessive but drivers had to stick to the timetable. Buses waited for time at Loughton. Initially there were lots of complaints about buses taking up parking spaces in Chingford so controllers then tried to ensure that any buses that had to wait did so away from Station Road (with some buses parking in the bus station before proceeding to the pick-up stop). The 50 minute running time from Epping to Chingford seemed to deter most passengers who seemed to prefer to take their chances that a Central line train would turn up. Ironically the service was used the most when the wires came down on the Chingford line one day and people were using it to go to Loughton for the Central line, the opposite of what it was there for!

Observations on two afternoons in mid-March:
Thursday 14th: 181, 135, 146, 406, 708
Friday 15th: 132, 133, 134, 149, 402, 406, 407 plus Stagecoach East London 36579 with Romford (NS) garage codes.
On both days the same two Transport UK buses were running as extras on route 20 between Debden and Walthamstow, Wrightbus GB Kite Electroliner 1701 and ADL Enviro 200 MMC 8223.
With thanks to Andrew Colebourne, Owen Woodliffe and LOTS.

Below: Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 134 (36165, BJ11 EBN) on the service to Chingford at Buckhurst Hill on 15 March 2024. **Andrew Colebourne**





Southend's open top service 68 recommenced for this year on 29 March, Good Friday. **Below:** Ayats Bravo 371 (EU05 VBO) on the very first journey of the 2024 season, on Western Esplanade below the Cliffs Pavilion. **Richard Delahoy**

As noted above, there is an additional Southend open top service this year, route 99 from the pier to Shoeburyness East Beach, which will commence on 4 May.

Fun for all the family on Seaside Service 68

Open top bus rides for

The Kursaal • Southend Pier • Westcliff • Chalkwell • Leigh

Southend Pier Adventure Island	1000	1030	00	30	1700	1730	1800	1830
Westcliff Palmers Arches for cafes	1004	1034	04	34	1704	1734	1804	1834
Chalkwell Shelter	1008	1038	08	38	1708	1738	1808	1838
Chalkwell rail station	1011	1041	11	41	1711	1741	1811	1841
Leigh-on-Sea The Ship for Old Leigh	1015	1045	15	45	1715	1745	1815	1845
Leigh-on-Sea rail station	1021	1051	21	51	1721	1751	1821	1851
Leigh-on-Sea Marine Parade	1025	1055	25	55	1725	1755	1825	1855
Leigh-on-Sea Post Office	1030	1100	30	00	1730	1800		
Leigh-on-Sea Broadway	1033	1103	33	03	1733	1803		
Chalkwell rail station	1036	1106	36	06	1736	1806		
Chalkwell Shelter	1039	1109	39	09	1739	1809		
Westcliff Palmers Arches for cafes	1042	1112	42	12	1742	1812		
Southend Pier Pier Hill LRT	1046	1116	46	16	1746	1816		
The Kursaal Southchurch Avenue	1051	1121	51	21	1751	1821		
Southend Pier Adventure Island	1056	1126	56	26	1756	1826		

58 starts/ends at Leigh-on-Sea Sutherland Boulevard 3 mins earlier/later

buses run on Saturdays, Sundays & Bank Holidays
• Sat 20th April - Sun 14th July • Sat 7th - Sun 15th September

buses run every day
• Fri 20th March - Sun 14th April • Sat 25th May - Sun 2nd June
• school summer holidays Sat 20th July - Sun 1st September

best value, ride all day

6.50 adult
4 5-15
18 group
NEW 18 group
Age 14+ price 2 adult

Concession pass holders pay 5-15 fare

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return 5 3

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Acquired Vehicles

4006	LX13 CZA	ADL E20D / Enviro 200	Ex Go North West
4007	LX13 CZC	ADL E20D / Enviro 200	Ex Go North West
4008	LX13 CZF	ADL E20D / Enviro 200	Ex Go North West
4009	YX13 EFY	ADL E20D / Enviro 200	Ex Go North West
4010	YX13 EFZ	ADL E20D / Enviro 200	Ex Go North West

Similar 4001 to 4005 have been acquired by Konectbus in Dereham.

4006-4008 were new to Stagecoach East London Buses in August 2013 as B31D and have worked previously before in 'historical' Essex on route 165 in the Romford area. 4009-4010 were new to Abellio with the same seating arrangement. All five were acquired by Go North West in 2019 and converted to single door, the Stagecoach ones to B40F and the Abellio ones to B39F. All are in Go North West MCR livery (see photos on next page). LX13 CZC entered service on 26 March and was using fleet number 249 and LX13 CZF entered service the following day using fleet number 250. Fleet number 250 was previously utilised by W312 CJN after takeover by Go Ahead - this was Hedingham's first Dart SLF bought new.

Significant Allocations

256	EU55 BWC	KN - CN by 12 February (correction to EBM 719)
259	EU56 FLP	HD - CN by 15 March
287	HW54 BUE	HDu - KN, back in service 21 March
292	EU59 AFF	KN - HD by 26 February (engineering only - back at KN 1 March)
510	LB02 YWX	KN - HDu by 1 March

Fleet News

It is reported that 510 (LB02 YWX) has been reinstated, but there is no confirmation that it is again running in service. Ian Ransom reported Chambers 809 (YN55 PZM) being used on the 84B service from Colchester to Great Horkesley on 29 February and he decided to hop on as this was unusual but the bus changed over to 292 (EU59 AFF) at North Station (but this was tracking as 283). 809 was working from KN at that time. On 10 March, 537/850-2 worked on Greater Anglia Rail Replacement between Colchester and Clacton. On 15 March, 524 (LX05 EZG), an ex-GAL B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini made an appearance on GA RRP between Colchester and Clacton. As can be seen above, blue Mini Pointer Dart 287 (HW54 BUE) returned to service on 21 March, having been off road since December 2023. On that day it was operating in the Brentwood area on routes 71/72. Other fleet members non active during most or all of March were 260/276/510/511/517/523/528/539/573/587/642 and 823. Despite a reprieve in February, 260 (EU56 FLR) found itself off-road again for all of March.

Other News

Hedingham will be introducing a new service from 15 April, City 70 from Marks Tey via Stane Retail Park to Colchester Bus Station. Starting at Goodman's Lane, the service fills in for some previous cut backs to First Essex services in Marks Tey and will provide a half hourly link to the Retail Park. Working in-between schools services, it will run Monday-Fridays only.

Service 21, Braintree - Bocking. The Sunday service supported by ECC has been replaced by DigiGo, commencing 24 March. After 28 July, the Saturday service and the pre 0800 and post 1800 services M-F will also be replaced by DigiGo services.

With thanks to David Arnold, John Podgorski, Derek Stebbing and the Hedingham website.

Next Page: Two of the recently acquired ex Go North West Enviro 200s.

Top: Further to the photo of First Enviro 400 33690 in Manchester on the inside front cover, here is another photo taken in Manchester of a bus which has now come to Essex. LX13 CZA operating for Go North West in Todd Street on 10 March 2022. **Dave Arnold**

Bottom: Sister LX13 CZF, now Hedingham 250, on route 3 in Pier Avenue, Clacton on 27 March 2024, with 'Go North West' fleet names removed but still displaying 'Manchester our city's buses'. **Derek Stebbing**



Hedingham Preservation by Carl Lemon

Early last year I decided to look for a bus to preserve (or continue preserving). After some thought I decided to try to buy an ex Eastern National bus that I had made enquiries about some fifteen years previously. While nothing came of this, it did lead me to ex Hedingham L148 (WPH 135Y), an ECW B51 bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R. New to London Country for Green Line services, later with Kentish Bus, she was acquired by Hedingham in June 1988. In early 1994 she was given a new lease of life after being re-bodied as a service bus with an East Lancs EL2000 body. She was acquired by Venturer Coachways, Suffolk in 2015 and attended the Clacton Bus Rally in May that year.

In March 2023 I brought her up to Lincolnshire. Sadly a failed spring brake meant that my entry to Fenland Busfest didn't take place, but I did attend in person and had the chance to ride on Leyland Leopard / Plaxton bus L103 (BAR 102X) which Mark Judd has superbly restored. [A photo of L103 was in EBM 698.] Chatting with him on our return to Whittlesey, it transpired that he also owns L105 (BEV 105X), a Plaxton Supreme IV Express bodied Leyland Leopard, which is awaiting restoration.

Some months later, a purchase on Facebook led me to the yard of Black Cat Travel, which is based on the outskirts of Lincoln. A conversation with the owner led to a short tour of the yard and a chance to see Leyland Leopard / Willowbrook L84 (RGV 284N). Whilst not in the immaculate condition that Hedingham always kept this bus in, it does still have a class VI MOT and is used for weddings and other special private hire work, as well as featuring on their website. (This and L148 had both been sold to Mike Nash as soon as Go Ahead bought Hedingham).

Living 80 miles from Hedingham it seems a bit of a strange coincidence that four of their vehicles are within 35 miles of my home!

Below: L148 in Venturer livery at Fordham on the journey back to Lincolnshire on 11 March 2023. **Carl Lemon**





VECTARE

Including Central Connect

Adam Kelleher & Chris Stewart



Above: As reported last month, new Enviro 200 MMC 347 (SK73 CNO) remains in all white but has gained new style Central Connect fleet names, but was seen passing through Bingham on Vectare service 90 from Nottingham on 16 March 2024. **Owen Woodliffe**

Acquired Vehicles

WH66 BUS, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B41F, new to Whitelaws, Stonehouse, Lanarkshire, September 2016. Later to Redline Buses. In Whitelaws silver and black livery but with fleet name and red / blue / white relief removed. Acquired March 2024.

Similar SW16 BUS, acquired via the same route (see EBM 718), has now entered service, it is the first vehicle repainted into Central Connect's new livery based on Vectare colours. It has now received a fleet number, 346, but it isn't carried on the vehicle. It is seen **below** at Stansted Airport on 27 March 2024 on route 316 to Saffron Walden. **Owen Woodliffe**





Above: Further to last month, photographic evidence that fleet number 351 is registered YY73 TGV rather than TGN. It is seen in Saffron Walden High Street on route 319 on 6 March 2024. **William Morrison**

With thanks to John Card, and Owen Woodliffe.

Below: Now in (mainly) common ownership under Vectare, FlagFinders (75% owned) and Central Connect (100% owned), at Witham Station on Rail Replacement on 31 March 2024. The former's Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini LB02 YXG and the latter's Enviro 200 MMCs 346 (SW16 BUS, as also illustrated on the previous page) and 351 (YY73 TGV, as also illustrated above). **Dave Arnold**



Acquired Vehicles

There is nothing further to report at this stage on the ex NCT Enviro 200s, they are still in use in Nottingham due to the electrification infrastructure delays continuing to prevent the replacement Yutongs from entering service.

From Lloyds Coaches, Machynlleth (but new to GHA Coaches, Ruabon) have come three Scania N230 / ADL Enviro 400s SN15 ETD, ETE, ETF. They are to be numbered 611, 612, 613 and will be refurbished and repainted before entering service.

SN15 ETD is seen **opposite top** in Porthmadog on 30 September 2021, in Traws Cymru livery, which certainly has similarities to Stephensons'! **Dave Arnold**

Other Vehicle News

To clarify last month's report about the five new ADL E40D / Enviro 400 MMCs on order, this order was placed last October, well before the demonstration loan of YY73 TGZ.

In connection with the Museum of Power's Transport Festival on Easter Sunday at Langford, near Maldon (as illustrated on the Front Cover and page 4) Stephensons provided a Park & Ride shuttle from Ernest Doe's premises at Ulting, as part of the Museum car park was not available, using Scania N230UD / ADL Enviro 400 601, as seen **opposite bottom**. **Richard Delahoy**

Withdrawn

Further to last month, 407 (EU07 FRN), the last Dart, has been sold to De-Luxe Coach Services, Burton on Trent.

Volvo B7TL 702 (EX04 VKD), last reported in use as a crew shuttle, is now withdrawn and for sale.

Similar 704 (PO54 ACY) which had been on loan to Border Bus, Beccles returned off hire but has now been sold to them.

Below: A photo for leap year, Enviro 200 465 (EU62 FBO) on route D2 outside All Saints Church, Maldon on 29 February 2024. **Dave Arnold**. This bus was illustrated in Drummer Street, Cambridge in EBM 703.





Acquired Vehicles

Further to last month, Enviro 200 LK08 DWE has been prepped for use but will operate in Central Connect red and blue livery. It is seen **below** at Sheephall Road, Colchester on 28 March 2024. **Daniel Pretty**

Similar KX08 HMF, which has had the red of its CC livery repainted to white, has had Panther logos applied to its front.



Disposal

Enviro 200 KX11 EEH has been sold to Turners, Great Barton to join AB10 PAN and YX10 BFL.

With thanks to Adam Barham.

Other Operators

Roger A Smith

Hailstone, Wickford

UNVI C26F bodied Iveco 70C21, registration HT73 BUS, was brand new here in January and is named 'Thunder'.

North Essex Travel, Clacton-on-Sea

This operator has a new operating centre at Iconfield Park, Parkeston, Harwich, where Panther Travel also has an operating centre. The number of vehicle authorised for North Essex Travel has increased from one to two. Recently acquired is a Scania N94UB with an East Lancs Esteem body (B41F) from Yorkshire Buses. This vehicle was new in August 2006 to Preston Bus with the registration PL06 RYO. It was re-registered as YB06 BUS by Yorkshire Bus and is now re-registered again as YF06 NSU as YB06 BUS has been retained by Yorkshire Bus.



National Express, Stansted

On 7 March 2024, National Express unveiled a new electric coach at Stansted Airport, YD24 EUB, to operate on high-frequency airport services between Stansted and London from the following week for four weeks. NEX is the first coach operator in the country to trial Yutong's brand new state of the art GTe14 model. It follows a trial in 2020 where they tested Yutong's previous TCe12 model on the A9 service between Stansted and Stratford. The coach will run up to 21 hours a day with top-up charging in the lay-over area at the airport during scheduled stop times in between departures at Stansted Airport, and a longer charging period at the end of each day.

Above: YD24 EUB on its first day of service, 13 March. **William Morrison**

South East Coaches, Wickford

SF67 OTD, a VDL FHD2 integral, C57FT, was acquired ex McLean, Chapelhall, North Lanarkshire, Scotland in October 2023 and has been re-registered as G9 VDL.

Tendring Travel, Thorpe-le-Soken

Plaxton C29F bodied Mercedes-Benz O816D, registration YN08 NYB, has gone to Drew Wilson (dealer), Carluke, South Lanarkshire, Scotland.

Below: Airport Bus Express Mercedes-Benz Tourismo BV72 XZC outside Stratford City Bus Station on their competitive service A21 to Stansted Airport on 23 March 2024. **Owen Woodliffe**





Above:: Of the London coach operators who do school runs into Colchester, Z Coaches London, Barking now has this ex Rambler of Hastings Yutong TC9 CR65 RAM. Pictured at Southway, Colchester on 27 February 2024, still in Rambler livery. **John Podgorski**

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, John Podgorski and the PSV Circle.

All in a Day's Work

Richard Delahoy

When the editor selected a couple of my old photos to fill a gap in last month's magazine ('Southend Transport in the Snow'), it brought back memories of two rare occasions when I went to work driving buses in my wellies, back in 1987. As I recall (aided by my rather sparse diary entries), the weather was fine on the previous Friday night (9 January) when I covered an evening half shift for Southend Transport, shuttling back and forth between Southend and Daws Heath on service 24. This was normally an Eastern National service, but ST provided an evening and Sunday service commercially (after the initial ECC contract with UMBH Coaches was revoked due to poor performance), not that there were many passengers. I had Tiger coach 209 (BHK 209X).

I think the snow didn't start till overnight on the Saturday. [As an aside, I *had* seen snow earlier that week - but in Switzerland, not Southend, on a flying visit to Geneva for the day on business - at the time my day job was arranging finance for airlines and aerospace companies]. I was booked to help out my friends Lyn Watson and Frank Spence, co-owners of a small operator Venturer Travel, who held the Essex CC contract for the Sunday service on the 6, Southend to Eastwood Kent Elms Corner. I woke on Sunday morning to lots of snow! I should have used Venturer's ex West Midlands Fleetline ROK 453M but that was a non-starter at the Rochford depot they shared with Stephenson's Coaches. They had good relations with Southend Transport (who sometimes borrowed ROK from them) and I was able to go to the ST garage and borrow Leopard coach 203 (UTD 203T) for the day, as illustrated in the article last month.

Road conditions were very treacherous and I plodded on steadily and carefully, especially on the slope from the Cliffs Pavilion down towards Westcliff Station and then up over the bridge there with its right-angle turn at the top, and the dip down to the bottom of Hamlet Court Road. I paused to take the photo **on the rear cover, top** at the top of the cliffs close to the Cliffs Pavilion, on roads that hadn't been gritted at that stage, despite being a bus route. A small 'Venturer' board is visible in the nearside windscreen of the coach.

There were few people about and little traffic, and I hardly carried any passengers (I forgot to note in my log just how few). As well as my wellies, I was carrying a shovel and stiff broom, just in case. The broom was called for when the two-piece glider doors of the bus grant specification coach became frozen to the step! The result of people getting on and off with wet feet and the moisture then freezing. A kick to release them and the broom to sweep the step clear fixed that problem and the day passed without further drama until I was relieved by the late turn driver.

As we recorded in Essex Bus News at the time, the heavy snow falls of the 11th and subsequently led to very serious disruption to bus services, with ST not resuming a normal service until the evening of the 21st. At the worst point, there was only a skeleton hourly service on 1, 4A, 7, 8, 29 & X1. Some vehicles were stranded at the roadside and a number suffered accident damage and mechanical problems (resulting in ST having to hire in buses and coaches to maintain services once the weather improved). With hindsight, ST should have not tried at all - Eastern National didn't run as much and avoided damage to their vehicles. My diary records that I didn't go to London on either the Monday or Tuesday as the trains were also paralysed.

The snow continued to lay in places and the freezing weather continued. Then on Wednesday 21st I was to be found out driving again. [Correcting last month's caption, which said the two jobs were six days apart - they were actually 10 days apart, the snow lasted a long time]. This time was on rail replacement as no trains were due to run on the Fenchurch Street line because of an NUR guards' dispute. Since I couldn't (easily) get to work in London that day, ST asked me to cover rail replacement work. They must have set this up the day before, as I was up very early to sign on at 0530, collecting Fleetline 242 (MRJ 242W) - a decent bus - again as illustrated in last month's issue. Once again I was equipped with wellies and shovel! I was sent empty to Chalkwell Station to run shuttles from there to Rayleigh Station on the Liverpool Street line, which was still running. It seemed an odd idea, it would have been much quicker to take commuters to Southend Victoria and put them on trains there, but I think that because the Chalkwell fare was less than from Southend, BR didn't want to offer the beleaguered LTS passengers a "free" ride from Southend to Rayleigh.

I did two trips to Rayleigh, then on arrival back at Chalkwell at 1045 the staff there sent me to Southend Central to operate an all-stations service through to Upminster to connect with the Underground there. As I said, road conditions were still bad, it was also foggy, and the rail stations are not on the direct line of the road network, so it took just over two hours to reach Upminster (nine stations from Southend). The shovel wasn't needed but easily could have been. Leaving West Horndon, the road climbs over the railway bridge, turns right and runs parallel to the railway, along the unclassified St Mary's Lane. This had only been cleared for a single lane, with snow piled high either side. I was very lucky not to meet any other traffic along here!

I was sent back from Upminster to Southend, all-stations again, but this time only taking 90 minutes, and back to the ST garage empty at last for a short break at 1500. Then it was dead to Rayleigh to pick up homeward bound commuters and take them back to Chalkwell, where at 1725 I was finally relieved - by Group member Ian Dann (does he remember that I wonder?) - and returned to the garage with the crew minibus, finally signing off at 1800. I see that my 12hr 30min duty paid £29.08, at the double deck rate of £2.3264 an hour (single deck rate was slightly lower at £2.2354).

The following day saw me back at my day job in London, ready to sign a loan agreement with a major (but now defunct) US airline that afternoon. My next bus driving stint was not until the 30th, a typical Friday night half-shift for Southend Transport. Such was my schizophrenic working existence at the time!

Rear Cover, bottom: This was Central Bus Station on Saturday 17 January, six days after the first snowfall, showing another Southend Transport Fleetline, but the main subject of the photo is Eastern National Olympian 4001 (XHK 236X) which has just arrived from Hullbridge. The pavements are largely impassable where snow has been shovelled up to clear the roadway. The bus is in NBC livery, but with privatisation style fleet names, the management buyout had been completed the previous month. **Richard Delahoy**



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