Essex Bus Magazine Extra

Historical features special issue

Issue 4 Autumn 2023

Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

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From the Colour Archives

A classic Southend half-cab - with a tale to tell.

Southend Corporation Transport standardised on lowbridge half-cab deckers from 1937 to 1958 (although there were a few highbridge second-hand acquisitions), due initially to the low bridge across the High Street at Southend Central Station, then later also due to the low bridges at Rochford, Hawkwell and Hockley on routes operated as a result of the 1955 Co-ordination Agreement. The offside sunken gangway of the lowbridge design was inconvenient for passengers and conductors, and so the advent of low-height buses with a conventional centre gangway saw half a dozen AEC Bridgemasters join the fleet in 1959/60, followed by ten Leyland/Albion Lowlanders in 1963.

Then the unexpected happened: in 1965 Southend bought a dozen Leyland PD3s with standard Massey highbridge bodies, 333-44 (with almost matching registrations, CJN 434-44C). It was reasoned that only the 7/8 group of services needed lowbridge buses, provided the new acquisitions could fit under Central Station bridge. Tests followed - see a picture on the wonderful sct.61.org.uk website, where Paul Bateson explains: "Clearance tests had to take place prior to entry into service. 334, CJN 434C, which was the first to be delivered, undertook clearance tests under the High Street bridge on January 27th 1965. Derek Giles, Traffic Superintendent, drove the bus, watching the hand signals of a person walking in front who, in turn, had his eye on another person on the tower wagon behind who was watching very carefully to see just how much clearance had been achieved".

Meanwhile, the buses could be used on the cross-town service 3, Shoebury to Canvey, since that didn't traverse Southend High Street at all. It was another eight months after the test before 337 was the first highbridge bus to operate in revenue service under the High Street bridge, on route 29 on Sunday September 26th, 1965. The roadway under the bridge was lowered so that the PD3s would fit and it was reputed that they had modified springs as well. Three more highbridge PD3s entered service in 1968, with East Lancs bodies (345-7, MHJ 345-7F).

The photo - **copyright Travel Lens Photographic** - shows 344 on route 3, Shoebury to Canvey, on a short working terminating at South Benfleet, Station. The blind shows "South Benfleet Memorial", indicating that the bus was fitted was an older blind - the description of this terminus was changed to "South Benfleet Station" from blind set T6 of January 1965. Perhaps the bus is brand new and has been fitted with an old blind, pending delivery of the new version. Note the classic (painted on) "Drinka Pinta Milka Day" advert, and the unusual gold fleetnumber transfer behind the cab, thought to have been unique to this batch of buses.

Essex Bus Magazine Extra from the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

Issue 4 Autumn 2023

Introduction

Welcome to this fourth edition of **Essex Bus Magazine Extra**, an occasional series brought free to members to offer some in-depth historical articles that we don't have room for in our monthly magazine. This issue has very generously been funded by Owen Woodliffe, whom you can read more about on pages 2 & 3.

We plan to publish two Extras each year, we already have sponsors for 2024. We hope you will enjoy this Extra and will find the range of articles interesting and stimulating, covering a range of eras, operators and parts of Essex.

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The cover pictures for this Extra feature Essex buses working a long way from home. On the **front cover**, we have former Eastern National 2882, UEV 220E, with Alexander Midland, entering the massive Buchanan Street bus station in Glasgow. The story of the swap of 15 FLFs for a like number of Bristol VRs starts on page 6.

Left, Ian Pritchard reflects on Premier Travel's operations on the Essex borders at the end of the 1960s on pages 14-19, when the fleet included the now preserved DCK 219, the ex-Ribble "White Lady" Leyland PD2/East Lancs mentioned and illustrated in our April issue (EBM 708). Here it's at Chrishall depot, PT's only one located in Essex. **Terry Coughlin**

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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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This Issue's Sponsor

Owen Woodliffe

Following an opportunity at the turn of the Millenium to take early retirement, I became a casual driver at Arriva's Edmonton (EC) Garage on the Stonehill Business Estate, just a mile or so on the opposite side of the River Lea from my home. At the time I joined, the flexible policies of County Bus still existed before Arriva brought these to an end and I then was a permanent but part time driver for eight years. I therefore drove people to Walthamstow Central Station that I previously travelled with on their way to the City, although tender wins during my time there expanded the routes operated from three to fifteen and, as I filled in for absences on any route so had no fixed rota, my appearances on route 34 diminished. Being close to the Garage I did get calls from Dee in the Traffic Office beginning with 'International Rescue here - can you….'!

My interest in buses had started some fifty years before, only a couple of miles away as I grew up in a turning off Wadham Road, which at that time was part of the North Circular Road (A406) just north of the Crooked Billet Roundabout. From my bedroom window I could see the London Transport Sports Ground that had regular visits of red buses. The annual sports day attracted buses from all Central Area garages and up to 80 or so overspilled to park up the whole length of adjacent Kitchener Road. The Country Area also held their event separately, although this was a smaller affair. My view was directly across to the London Hospital Sports Ground and I recall ancient buses of Lansdowne of Stratford that brought students from the Medical School to play there. Beyond that was the Waterlow's ground (now Arsenal Youth Training Centre) and I could just see the roofs of Black & White Coaches (Walthamstow), later acquired by Ewer Group, that started from the forecourt of the Crooked Billet pub.

However, I was more fascinated by the enormous variety of coaches in so many different liveries of operators which have long disappeared, that every weekend passed by on their way to the East Coast. How I wish I had recorded these – it may have been different had I met the late Gordon Watts of the PSV Circle and Fleet News editor of *Buses Illustrated*, who I later discovered lived for a time at the end of my road and vaguely remember passing by our house before his move to Colchester.

Family holidays were taken using the services of Grey-Green and so started my lifelong interest in their fortunes - I dimly recall the first one to Folkestone was by a Moore's half cab on hire. We ventured further afield to the West Country by the Harrington Royal Tigers and then by the Tiger Cubs with elegant Wayfarer bodies (SJJ 301 to 319 - nicknamed the 'Spaceships'). Later I travelled on many day tours countrywide, usually on the Leyland engined Bedfords, but sadly did not take any photos of these and it was not until I saw an advert in Buses magazine for the Ewer Group Enthusiasts Club that I began to do so. Ken Bateman was the editor of the bi-monthly news-sheet and when 53 Stamford Hill was cleared prior to its demolition he rescued material from a skip and I assisted him in the publication of *The Grey-Green Story* in 1986. We then started to update this when the Arriva corporate image was due to sweep away former company identities, but sadly Ken died during its preparation and I continued to complete it as *Grey-Green from Ewer to Arriva* that was published in 2001.

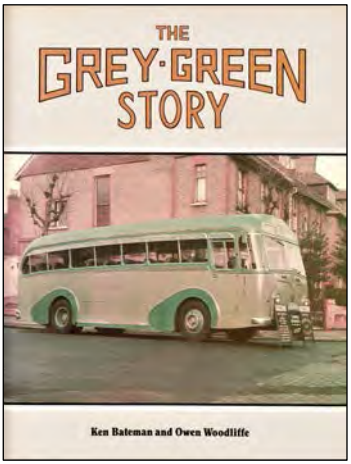
I had previously become more involved with Grey-Green in 1980 when I was asked to be the Grey-Green regulator on summer Saturday mornings at the Stratford pick up point relocated from Manby Park Road, Maryland to The Broadway. As well as the daily services of East Anglian Express from Victoria there were many seasonal Grey-Green services from east and north London that called there, so it was a busy point. When the new Broadway relief road was opened just a year later the services were relocated again to an exposed stop there and the cover of the canopy of the Co-op store in inclement weather was sorely missed.

I had the opportunity in 1982 to learn to drive a PSV with Alpine Coaches of Chadwell Heath and took my test on Leyland Leopard / Duple Commander SWO 68G, seen **right** in this shot by **Christopher West.**

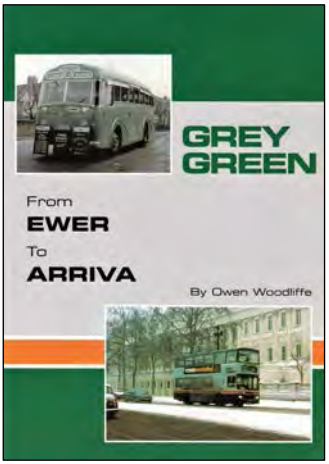
Having obtained my licence, and following the formation of the joint commuter services between Grey-Green and Eastern National, there was also a Saturday service to Braintree at midday from Victoria/early afternoon return that I was able to work using a coach that was spare during the day from one of the Paris or Amsterdam overnight services. This attempt to replicate M&D's Invictaway network only lasted a year due to poor loadings, so next summer I was a regular driver on the North London - Hayling Island service.

As coach work declined, two ex Grey-Green staff set up Enfieldian Tours and I was asked to help out when required, often bringing catering staff of Ring & Brymer back to London (previously done by G-G) after corporate functions, from Blenheim Palace in particular. On returning to park up the coach in the early hours of the morning at the Sampson family owned Broxbourne Zoo (now a vastly developed Paradise Park) it was somewhat un-nerving on opening the gates in the pitch black to hear the roar of the lions in close proximity and I just hoped that they were all still in their cages!

So, whilst I have not ever been full-time in the industry I have had both coach and bus experience and although I have to confess I am more of a coach than a bus man, I am pleased to be able to make some contribution to this Group now to keep alive interest in the Essex bus scene.



Owen's two books about Grey-Green are now long out of print but copies can be found on sales stands at rallies or on eBay.
He also co-authored with Ken Bateman the story of *British Coachways, Ride the Flag*.



Follow Ups

Tyler's Avenue garage, Southend (EBM Extra Issue 3, Spring 2023)

Research at The Bus Archive has confirmed that the garage site was compulsorily acquired by Southend Borough Council, who provided the replacement site in the Seaway car park, giving Eastern National freehold ownership of the site plus a payment of £12,000. Not quite as good as it sounds, as EN then signed a contract with local builders C S Wiggins & Sons of Thundersley to build the new terminal building and associated work for £12,741.

Doug Brown, then a driver at Brentwood depot ("DB from BD") recalls the last days of Tyler's Avenue, which closed in 1964 in favour of a new terminal at the Seaway car park in Southend. He writes:

"I went to Seaway a few times. I recall the 151 going to Southend, I remember the climb up Bread and Cheese Hill (Thundersley) and passing Hadleigh garage. Seaway was awful - from the sausage, egg and chips at the Cottage Café at Tylers Avenue, we were reduced to a machine where you put a coin in for a sandwich and tea, just a tea bag and boiling water - I still make tea in a tea pot! My conductor was Brian Barrett, one of the founders of ENEG. As well as a Setright and cash bag round his neck he also had a camera. I thought he wanted to take photos of stroppy passengers but no, it was buses he wanted. **Here** is a picture he took of me at Tylers Avenue with the last bus to leave there for Wood Green on the day the depot closed, 30 July. The Cottage Café is behind the bus. Brian made sure this was the last bus to leave by asking the shunter at Brentwood to allocate an LS saloon instead of an FLF".

Later the 151 went to Canvey instead of Southend, but Doug was not happy. He explains:
"I did not like Canvey. It would seem every third house had a bus stop outside. In fact I often never got into fourth gear, they were so close together. I went back on Brentwood locals soon after this, which I found a lot easier".

Here also is a picture of a 30-year old Doug taken in 1965. He worked at BD from 1962 to 1968. Note his "N" badge number - Brentwood was in the Metropolitan Traffic Area then, whereas most of Essex was in the Eastern Traffic Area, whose driver and conductor badges started "FF". From the 1930s the Metropolitan Traffic Area had extended as far east into Essex as Wickford and Pitsea, but in June 1991 it was merged with the South Eastern Area and reduced in scope to only cover Greater London, the whole of the administrative area of Essex becoming part of the Eastern Traffic Area.

Belgrave Road terminus, Southend (EBM 705, January 2023)

In the January magazine, Steve Grimwade shared his memories of the terminus at Belgrave Road in Southend / Leigh / Eastwood / Belfairs (as you prefer - the bus operators couldn't make their minds up what to call it!) and how buses need to reverse at the terminus. He recalled the 29 from Southend but we also mentioned the 23 from Leigh Station.

What we didn't explain at the time was what happened when both a 23 and a 29 got there together. The departure stop in Eastwood Old Road was only long enough to hold one bus without blocking household driveways and so special instructions existed to manage this. I knew I had a photo to show this but, frustratingly, couldn't find it when editing the original article. But recently the slide (photographer unknown) has come to light whilst cataloguing some previously unsorted slides. It shows the alighting stop on the south side of Eastwood Old Road, facing west. Normally buses pulled forward to the opposite side of the road before reversing back into Belgrave Road, as Steve described and illustrated. The plate above the stop flag reminded drivers that if the departure stand was already occupied, they should instead reverse into the side road on their left that was immediately behind the stop, Mountain Ash Avenue.

Today Arriva Southend 29 still reverses here but the days of two buses at a time are long gone, except on the rare occasions when a failed bus has been abandoned on the stop, awaiting the external recovery company's wrecker!

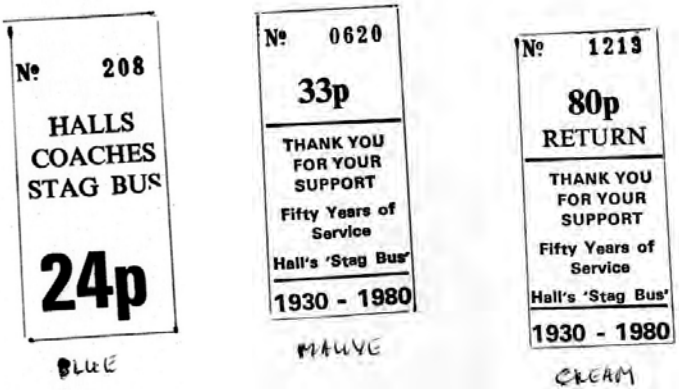
Incidentally, this style of bus stop flag was in widespread use across the Eastern National area. Compulsory stops had red lettering and request ones were black. But there was a subtle difference - within the Southend Co-ordination Area, the rest of the flag was cream in either case, but elsewhere in EN land, the raised edges were painted red or black as appropriate.

And a final observation. Whilst this was generally an alighting only stop, there were occasional peak hour 23s that continued on to Rayleigh, to which this sign didn't apply.

Can anyone think of any other termini in Essex (LT stops excluded) where instructions to drivers were displayed like this?

Hall's Coaches - The Stag Bus (EBM Extra Issue 1, Spring 2022)

On a ticketing theme, member Bob Williamson - our destination blind expert - has followed up our article on Halls Coaches of Hatfield Heath in Extra issue 1 with copies of these tickets, as reproduced here. The undated one is from the 1970s, the other two are special 1980 commemorative issues.



Scottish Exchange - part 1

Richard Delahoy

Do you remember the days before the internet, social media, texting, WhatsApp and e-mail, when news wasn't disseminated instantly and it was possible to be surprised by an unexpected sighting, such as an unusual bus? As enthusiasts we had to wait eagerly for the monthly *Buses Illustrated* to read of the latest developments (in practice, "latest" often meant up to two months or more ago) and for the ENEG duplicated news-sheet (often much more up to date but still only monthly, as is the successor EBM today) - plus the grapevine if we bumped into a fellow enthusiast.

So let me take you back to Saturday 4 September, 1971. I'd been up to London on Eastern National's 400 service from Southend to Kings Cross, by then a limited stop downgrade from the coach style X10. On the way back we diverted into Basildon garage for a reason that I don't now recall and to my complete amazement, inside was a blue liveried ECW double decker with EN fleetnames. No-one had said to expect that! Alighting in Southend I saw another there and asked the driver if he knew anything about it, and was told they were from Scotland and would be entering service the next day on the 400. So Sunday morning saw me cycling into Southend, where I was lucky to catch 3017 leaving the depot on its first journey in service in Essex. (**below, Richard Delahoy**).

I had to wait for the arrival of news-sheet 91 to find out more. There it was explained that 15 just over one-year old Bristol VRTs from the Alexander Midland fleet in Scotland were being swapped for EN's newest 15 Bristol FLF6G Lodekkas. Of course, the full details of the vehicles involved in this exchange, and the much more extensive, three-way swaps between NBC and SBG companies a year and a half later, are well known - although we will include details of the initial swap here - but what has long interested me was how the exchanges came about. The "why" is pretty clear - SBG (Scottish Bus Group) was very unhappy with the complexity and unreliability of the VRs with semi-automatic gearboxes, rear engines and fluid flywheels, and at the time didn't have a pressing need for one-man double deckers. Instead they hankered after the rugged reliability and simplicity of the Gardner engined Bristol FLF. Meanwhile, EN wanted to accelerate one-man operation, to reduce costs and cope with the perennial staff shortages. In Scotland, it was the VR that Alexander Midland objected to, not the concept of rear engined deckers, after all, they had been buying Fleetlines since 1967 and already had 70, with lots more to come.

So far, so clear. The vehicle identities are well recorded by the PSV Circle (publication M6, 1975) and in our records/books, but what I hoped to be able to explain here was who made the first move and why it was that EN were the chosen participant. Sadly, despite searching through EN and NBC official records at The Bus Archive, I'm still none the wiser. How did EN know that Alexander wanted to dispose of the VRs? How did Alexander know that EN wanted OMO deckers to convert the 400? Presumably the respective headquarters of the NBC and SBG were involved, but it's not clear who initiated the transaction. The only reference I could find in EN Board minutes was of the meeting of 21 September 1971, recording the approval of the "exchange" as reproduced here:

2686

Capital Expenditure - Rolling Stock

Approval was granted for the purchase of 15 Bristol VRT Vehicles fitted with Eastern Coachwork bodies from W. Alexander & Sons (Midland) Limited, at a total price of £87,157. This purchase is connected with the disposal under Minute No. 2690 of 15 Bristol FLF vehicles fitted with Eastern Coachworks bodies at a total price of £60,122. The nett cost of the exchange of vehicles, is therefore, £27,035.

It will be seen that EN had to pay £27,035 (an average of £1,802 per bus) to make up the difference in net book values, as the FLFs were three to four years older than the VRs, which had in any event cost more when new, due both to inflation and the more advanced specification of the VRs. I've not seen the actual amounts involved being reported previously.

I couldn't find any reference to the deal in NBC papers, but that doesn't mean that they weren't involved.

Alan Tebbit recalls the actual exchanges: "We travelled up in pairs, as far as the United Auto depot in Darlington, and returned the following day. The Alexander drivers came down and back on the same day, so, unfortunately, we didn't have time to socialise with them. I'm sure we would have heard some tales of woe regarding those buses. They were not in the finest of condition, I think that their fitters had given up on them. Once they had visited ENOC Central Works, or Prittlewell, they became quite reliable workhorses, and I quite enjoyed driving them".
The detailed list that EN supplied to us at the time shows that the exchanges were spread over 7 weeks, the last swap being 2883 for 3011. The complete list comprised:

FLFs				VRs				
EN no.	Reg	Delivered	Alex Midland	Alex Midland	Reg	Delivered	EN no.	Initial alloc.
2865	RVW 391D	Aug 24	MRD195	MRT1	SMS 31H	Sep 29	3005	WG
2866	RVW 392D	Sep 28	MRD196	MRT2	SMS 32H	Sep 8	3006	SD
2867	RVW 393D	Sep 7	MRD197	MRT3	SMS 33H	Sep 15	3007	CY
2868	RVW 394D	Sep 7	MRD198	MRT4	SMS 34H	Sep 22	3008	WG
2869	RWC 941D	Sep 14	MRD199	MRT5	SMS 35H	Oct 6	3009	WG*
2870	RWC 942D	Sep 14	MRD200	MRT6	SMS 36H	Sep 8	3010	BN
2871	RWC 943D	Sep 21	MRD201	MRT7	SMS 37H	Oct 13	3011	SD
2872	RWC 944D	Sep 28	MRD202	MRT8	SMS 38H	Oct 6	3012	BN*
2873	RWC 945D	Aug 31	MRD203	MRT9	SMS 39H	Sep 15	3013	WG*
2878	SVX 277D	Sep 21	MRD204	MRT10	SMS 40H	Sep 22	3014	SD
2879	SVX 278D	Oct 5	MRD205	MRT11	SMS 41H	Sep 1	3015	BN
2880	SVX 279D	Aug 31	MRD206	MRT12	SMS 42H	Sep 29	3016	BN
2881	UEV 219E	Aug 24	MRD207	MRT13	SMS 43H	Aug 25	3017	SD
2882	UEV 220E	Oct 5	MRD208	MRT14	SMS 44H	Sep 1	3018	BN
2883	UEV 221E	Oct 12	MRD209	MRT15	SMS 45H	Aug 25	3019	SD

The initial allocation of the VRs was: Basildon 5, Southend 5, Wood Green 4* and Canvey 1. (* Two of WG's and 1 of BN's were soon sent to SD). They were for use on the 400 (Southend to Kings Cross & Victoria) and 403 (Canvey to Kings Cross, summer Saturdays only), with any surplus at Southend intended for the 11 to Chelmsford. The winter pvr for the 400 at that time was 8, rising to 11 (we think) in summer including the 403. SD were responsible for the maintenance on the WG allocated ones.

FLFs 2874-7 remained with EN as they were fitted with Bristol engines rather than Gardner and as such, were unacceptable to the SBG engineers. The question of Bristol engined buses was to cause further complications in the subsequent much bigger exchange, as we'll explain in part 2, EBM Extra issue 6, Spring 2024. 2884 and newer were of course fitted with semi-automatic gearboxes and hence also unacceptable to the SBG engineers.

Eastern National's only experience of the Bristol VR to date had been the five new in 1968/9, 3000-4 (CPU 979-83G). All bar 3003 had been repainted in dual purpose livery (half green, half cream) soon after delivery despite being bus seated, and had been used briefly on the X10 (which became the 400), but were soon removed from that work after only a few months' experience, deemed unsuitable for it - the bus seats and pitching front end at speed were a major come down from the coach seated 26xx series FLFs - so it is curious that those objections were forgotten in the haste to convert the 400 to one-man operation.

The original VRs were instead banished to Braintree (3001/2/4) and Maldon (3000); the fifth one, 3003, had been allocated to Clacton from new. Meanwhile, the 400 was operated mainly by the 16xx series Bristol RELH semi-coaches, plus the odd MW, until the Scottish VRs arrived.

Above, few pictures exist of the VRs in their year and a half with Alexanders. Here SMS 41H, Alexander MRT11, is in Sterling on local route 55 to Cornton, Johnstone Avenue, crew operated from Balfron depot. Thanks to Ian Barlex and Murdoch Currie with help identifying the location and route. **Copyright busphoto.co.uk**

Apart from having 77 seats (as opposed to EN's 70), the Scottish VRs were basically identical to EN's 3000-4; they were down seated by removing 4 seats upstairs (one pair from each side, respacing the rest) and 3 downstairs (the inward facing bench over the front wheelarch). EN's agreement with the TGWU at the time mandated a maximum of 70 seats and was to be a factor again in the later exchange that we will explain in part 2 of this article.

Having said the Scottish buses were basically identical, points of difference included the seat moquette and the destination blinds, which were to the standard SBG hexagonal style rather than the Tilling standard T shape display, as seen above. EN converted one, 3007, to an inverted T style with standard width and depth blinds, but that was a one-off. Presumably it was deemed cheaper to print special blinds for the rest rather than undertake the rather drastic alterations to the winding gear.

Right, here is 3007 with its modified blinds, in Southend Central Bus Station on 25 June 1980, with a wrap round advert for the new SavaCentre in Basildon.
On route 2 to Grays, it is crew operated, substituting for the usual FLF. **Richard Delahoy**

The blue livery didn't last long, despite some thoughts of it becoming a standard for limited stop services, and as early as May 1972, 3010 gained Tilling green. The others soon followed suit, the last being repainted into green in September that year, just a year after their acquisition. Soon after entry to service they also gained clip-on "Limited Stop" boards with black lettering on yellow and these continued into the green livery era, placed just above the front grille and under the first nearside window.

Below, less than a year after entering service, 3010 has shed its blue livery for standard Tilling style green and cream, sporting the yellow limited stop board on the front - there should be one under the first side window as well.

The location is Southend Seaway coach station, which the 400 served from summer 1972 until Central Bus Station opened in May 1974. Behind is one of the FLF coaches previously used on the X10, plus a United Counties MW. 26 August 1972. **Richard Delahoy**

Their dominance on the 400 waned as newer VRs were delivered, the first being the pair then at Wood Green (3005/18), replaced by new 3020/1 early in 1973. 3017/9 left Southend for Chelmsford in mid-1974. Further reallocations took place, too numerous to list here but, for example, including 3005 to Bishop's Stortford in May 1978. Those still at BN and SD were by now downgraded to less prestigious routes. The 400 was to gain specially liveried buses again in 1979/80 with the delivery of mark 3 VRs 3067-76 (KOO 785-94V), initially in green/white with route branding, later in two shades of green, but that's beyond the scope of this article.

Many of the Scottish VRs were delicenced for disposal towards the end of 1981 and withdrawal of eleven (3005-13/5/7) came in April 1982 with their sale to Crosville for use in North Wales, along with 3044/6 from the second exchange. Not all were used, some being for spares only, but those numbered by Crosville were 3005-12/15/7 as DVG552-62 (and 3046 became DVG563). Crosville had a pressing need for double deckers, also taking VRs and Fleetlines from Southdown and, later, other second-hand VRs from various sources.

In Crosville service:

Left, SMS 43H, now Crosville DVG562, pulls away from the main stop in Porthmadog High Street, confusingly named Australia, after the pub on the left. It's on the trunk service R1 to Caernarfon. **Richard Delahoy collection**.

Below, SMS 33H with its distinctive inverted T shape destination gear, now Crosville DVG554, leaves Bangor and heads for Amlwch on Anglesey on 19 May 1984, pursued by a Ford Fiesta. **Pete Thorley.**

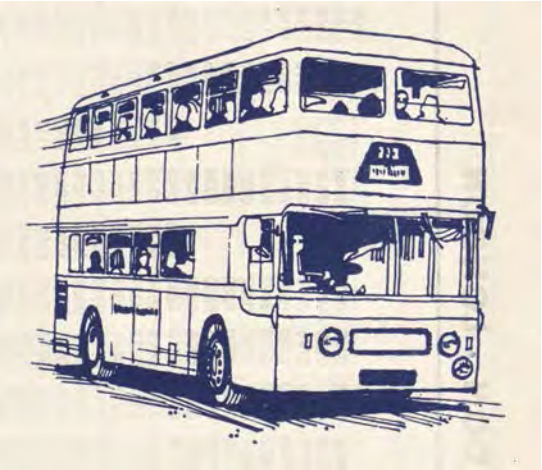
Three more Alexander VRs were withdrawn soon after, 3019 in 7/82, 3016 in 1/83 and 3014 in 9/85 but the final one, 3018, soldiered on, latterly at Maldon then as a "pool" (spare) bus. It was finally withdrawn in September 1987, 16 years after it had transferred from Scotland to Essex. So it is probably fair to say that EN got their money's worth out of the deal, although the FLFs would probably have lasted until about 1982 had they not been sent north - but EN of course benefitted from having OMO buses for the life of the VRs.

Above, seen later into its life with EN, 3018 (SMS 44H) was in Maldon Bus Station on 18 April 1979; allocated to Chelmsford, it was on loan to Maldon hence the use of "Service" for its next trip on the 90, then just a short town circular. Today it is the number for Stephensons's Maldon to Witham service. **Richard Delahoy**

There is just one survivor of these VRs, so far as we know - SMS 42H (3016), now preserved by Mark Telfer. After service with EN it had a couple of non-pcv roles, including with Robson Road Haulage, Deptford, London, SE16 where I stumbled upon it on 31 August 1987 (**below**). Rob Sly's excellent website www.bcv.robsly.com records that it then went to Martin Duggan (The Birds Nest), London SE8 as a mobile bar and off license. It was taken on a trip to Europe as "The Festival Bus" but soon broke down at Soest in Germany with a blown engine in June 1998, passing to Herr Volker Kleiner - he was the farmer on whose field the bus had broken down!

Passing through other hands in Germany, it was bought in November 2012 by Mark Telfer of Southport and subsequently returned to the UK via the Netherlands. The last known photo from December 2021 shows restoration well under way and a partial repaint into Alexander Midland blue - but whose fleetname will it carry? It would be nice to see it with Eastern National on the side once more! **Richard Delahoy**

Two leaflets for the 400 series of routes featured these buses - well, one did faithfully, with a photo of 3016 leaving Southend on the cover of the winter 1972/3 timetable (**below right**), similar to my initial photo, but the other, earlier edition for summer 1972 (**below left**) had a stylised sketch that owes much more to Halifax's low-height Northern Counties Daimler Fleetlines than an ECW bodied VR! At least the blue heading reflected the buses' livery.



ECW bodied VR? I don't think so, but full marks for the artistic rendition.

Back to Scotland

So what of "our" FLFs in Scotland? They were repainted into Alexander Midland blue (and looked magnificent in those colours when freshly painted and clean) as seen on the front cover, and gained SBG style destination blinds, although they ran initially with the EN/Tilling style display until various dates in 1973. The rear destination/number displays were panelled over.

Initial allocations were to Bannockbum (4), Kirkintilloch (3), Larbert (2) and Stirling (6) depots. That remained virtually unchanged until 1979, when they could be found at Alloa, Bannockburn, Kilsyth, Kirkintilloch, Perth and Stirling.

Later that year, five were transferred to Alexander Northern, the first ever FLFs for that fleet. Repainted into the Northern yellow scheme, they looked stunning! They were followed by a further one, but this time for conversion to a mobile office for the ScotMAP project, rather than service use.

EN no.	Registration	Midland	Northern	Notes/Subsequent fate
2865	RVW 391D	MRD195	NRD1	Withdrawn 9/80
2867	RVW 393D	MRD197	NRD2	Withdrawn 11/83, converted to driver trainer, numbered N5, withdrawn by 5/86
2868	RVW 394D	MRD198	NRD3	Withdrawn 1983
2871	RWC 943D	MRD201	NRD4	Converted to driver trainer 6/80, numbered N235DT, withdrawn by 5/86
2883	UEV 221E	MRD209	NRD5	Withdrawn 11/83
2869	RWC 941D	MRD199	--	Office for ScotMAP, in blue. Later transferred to Highland Omnibuses at Inverness as an information vehicle. Withdrawn by 1983

Initially they ran from Aberdeen, Dundee, Elgin and Montrose. Of the remaining nine with Midland, one (MRD196, 2866) was also converted to an office for the ScotMAP project at the end of 1979. The remaining eight were all withdrawn during 1980, the last being MRD206 (2880) in August that year; it was Alexander Midland's last FLF, whilst in November 1983 Northern NRD2/5 (2867/83) became the last FLFs in service anywhere with the Scottish Bus Group. The very end in Scotland came with the sale of the 2 driver trainers N5/N235DT (2867/71) in May 1986.

Top, now Alexander Northern NRD2, RVW 393D passes through Elgin bus station on 24 April 1980. **Below**, the following day, NRD5 (UEV 221E, the last manual gearbox FLF for Eastern National) has just backed off the stance in Dundee bus station after the driver received the all-clear whistle from his clippie. Both **Richard Delahoy**.

In the "Extra" due out in Spring 2024, part two of this article will look at the 1973 exchanges that brought another six Scottish VRs to Essex and some of the complexities of the more extensive transactions that included swapping buses within the NBC, the complete elimination of VRs in Scotland and the three VRs that didn't come to NBC, including one that did however make a new home in Essex.

From the North Western Fringes - Premier Travel in Essex

Ian Pritchard

From 1968 to 1970 when I took these photos, Premier Travel (Cambridge) Ltd was still providing stage carriage services to the north and western edge of the county from its depots in Haverhill and Chrishall.

Premier Travel is probably better remembered for its long-distance express coach services to Clacton. In 1937 it bought the licence to run a service from Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester to Colchester and Clacton from Webber Brothers (Empire's Best) of Wood Green that formed one of its main express routes. This was developed after the War with further Midlands towns added with joint services with Midland Red. In the mid-1960s its co-operation with Yelloway Coaches of Rochdale led to the setting up of pooled services from Lancashire towns to Cambridge and Clacton via Leicester and Northampton. About the same time another set of important pooled services from Clacton and Felixstowe to Cheltenham via Essex towns was set up with Associated Motorways (Black & White) of Cheltenham, Premier Travel's 'Eastlander' service.

My first memories were of seeing their ex-London Transport AEC Regal Metro-Cammell single-deckers in Braintree Bus Park on its market day service 58 from Haverhill via Finchingfield and at Halstead old railway station on the 53 from Haverhill via Yeldham and Hedingham. Both these services would be withdrawn in the early 1970s when economics dictated the closure of many of Premier Travel's rural bus services.

Below: Premier Travel 173 (LUC 225) AEC Regal IV Metro-Cammell B35F with roof lights (one now panelled over), new 1951 for London Transport sightseeing fleet as RF25. Here at Halstead Old Railway Station on service 53 from Haverhill in 1968. Service 53 was cut back to operate Haverhill – Ridgewell circa 1969/1970 and was withdrawn with effect from 4 September 4 1972.

Right: the 1963 timetable for the PT service 53 to Halstead. From Haverhill they provided more services into Essex, notably service 38 which ran as a stage carriage service to Saffron Walden via Radwinter and then as an express to London King's Cross calling at Stansted, Bishop's Stortford, Old Harlow and Epping.

LIGHT FIGURES DENOTE A.M. TIMES — DARK FIGURES DENOTE P.M. TIMES

SERVICE 53. HAVERHILL–RIDGEWELL–GREAT YELDHAM–SIBLE HEDINGHAM–HALSTEAD

(SHOWING CAMBRIDGE AND COLCHESTER CONNECTIONS)

		MONS.–FRIS.			SUNDAYS			
			FO	FX				
Connections: ECOC113/136	**Cambridge** (Drummer Street)		4 05	4 05	12 35			7 40
	Haverhill (Market Hill)		5 05*	5 05	1 53			8 40
			FO	FX				
	Haverhill (Station)	6 55	5 10	5 40				
	Haverhill (Market Hill)	6 56	5 11*	5 41	2 16	5 16		9 16
	Sturmer (Station Turn)	7 00	5 15	5 45	2 20	5 20		9 20
	Baythorne End (Swan)	7 05	5 20	5 50	2 25	5 25		9 25
	Ridgewell (Memorial)	7 10	5 25	5 55	2 30	5 30	6 30	9 30
	Great Yeldham (Wagon & Horses)	7 16	5 31	6 01	2 40	5 40	6 40	9 40
	Sible Hedingham (Sugar Loaves)	7 23	5 38	6 08	2 45	5 45	6 45	9 45
	Halstead (Hospital)	7 32	5 47	6 17	2 57	5 57	6 57	9 57
	Halstead (Bull)	7 35	5 50	6 20	3 00	6 00	7 00	10 00
Connections: ENOC 88/Blackwells	**Halstead** (Station)	8 00	6 10	7 10	4 00	6 00	8 00	
	Earls Colne (Lion)	8 12	6 23	7 22	4 12	6 12	8 12	
	Colchester (Bus Station)	8 50	7 05	8 00	4 50	6 50	8 50	

		MONS.–FRIS.			SUNDAYS			
			FO	FX				
Connections: ENOC 88/Blackwells	**Colchester** (Bus Station)	9 00	3 00	4 00	2 00	5 00	6 00	9 00
	Earls Colne (Lion)	9 38	3 38	4 38	2 38	5 38	6 38	9 38
	Halstead (Bull)	9 50	3 50	4 50	2 50	5 50	6 50	9 50
			FO	FX				
	Halstead (Bull)	10 05	4 20	4 50	3 15	6 00	7 30	10 05
	Halstead (Hospital)	10 08	4 23	4 53	3 18	6 03	7 33	10 08
	Sible Hed'g'm (Sugar Loaves)	10 17	4 32	5 02	3 30	6 15	7 45	10 20
	Great Yeldham (Wagon & Horses)	10 24	4 39	5 09	3 35	6 20	7 50	10 25
	Ridgewell (Memorial) 7 30	10 30	4 45	5 15	3 45	6 30	8 00	10 35
	Baythorne End (Swan) 7 35	10 35	4 50	5 20	3 50		8 05	10 40
	Sturmer (Station Turn) 7 40	10 40	4 55	5 25	3 55		8 10	10 45
	Haverhill (Market Hill) 7 44	10 44*	4 59*	5 29	3 59		8 14	10 49
	Haverhill (Station) 7 45	10 45	5 00	5 30				
Connections: Rail	**Haverhill** (Station)		5 36	5 36				
	Cambridge (Station)		6 16	6 16				
Connections: ECOC113/136	**Haverhill** (Market Hill) 7 45		5 15		4 00		8 45	
	Cambridge (Drummer St.) 8 45		6 15		5 00		10 03	

FO Fridays only FX Fridays excepted.

* Operates via The Pightle on Fridays.

In 1966 when the Audley End, Saffron Walden to Bartlow and Sudbury to Cambridge via Haverhill railway lines were closed they obtained a licence for a bus replacement service. Sensibly this was the more commercially viable route from Haverhill to Audley End station via Saffron Walden and Ashdon and not a direct replacement from the hamlet of Bartlow.

F.C. Moore (Viceroy Coaches) provided additional services from Saffron Walden to Audley End Station with the timetable showing connecting train times to London and Cambridge. From their travel agency in Haverhill, they sold train tickets to complement this service.

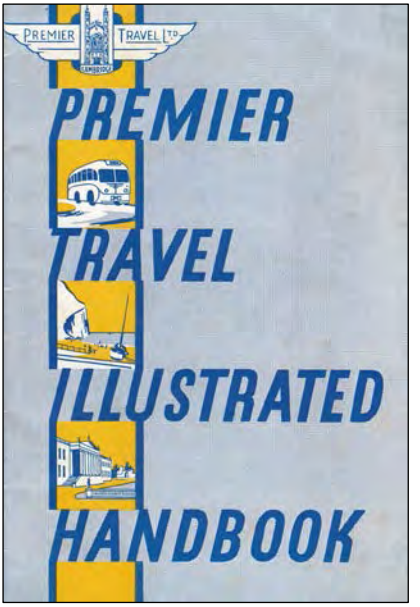
Chrishall depot just in Essex on the border with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire provided local services including service 12 from Royston and Great Chishill to Saffron Walden via Littlebury, service 10 to Bishop's Stortford via Clavering as well as express services, town services in Saffron Walden and market day services from villages in this sparsely populated area.

Vehicles

Their fleet at that time was fairly standardised. The double-deck fleet was 11 ex-Ribble Leyland PD2/3 / East Lancs (White Lady) FL27/26RD coaches, new 1950 bought mainly in 1962. Most of these would last until 1972 when they were replaced by a batch of ex City of Oxford AEC Bridgemasters. The single deck bus fleet was ex London Transport RFs, nine of the private hire fleet AEC Regal IV Metro-Cammell B35F with roof windows and four ex-Green Line with B39F bodies. These would be replaced by a batch of ex-Devon General AEC Reliances with Metro-Cammell B41F bodywork in the second half of 1969.

Left: timetable cover colours changed over the years. This is the 1962 edition, running to 44-pages. Separate leaflets covered express services, with examples on the next page. Their coaches then were AEC Regals and Reliances, the bulk being second hand Burlingham Seagull bodied coaches. The first of these was purchased new in 1959, 114 (UVE 333 - withdrawn in 1970) which set the standard with more than twenty being purchased second hand until 1965. From 1964 to 1967 two new coaches were purchased a year, longer chassis AEC Reliance 2U3RA with Alexander Y 49 seat coachwork followed by two AEC Reliance 6U3ZR with Alexander 53 seat bodies in 1969. From 1968 more second -hand AEC Reliances were purchased, but now with equally stylish Harrington Cavalier bodywork as replacements for the ageing Burlingham Cavaliers.

The booklet **below** was published around 1960 to drum up trade for Premier Travel's excursions, tours and private hire business. It included a potted history, with these comments (**below right**) about Its operations at Saffron Walden. Mind you, we're not sure the claim to have started the first town service is correct, Raynham & Co did that in the 1930s. They tend to be a forgotten operator even though they ran from 1921 to 2021.



Saffron Walden. The Company's connection with Saffron Walden dates back to 1945, when we acquired the services of Messrs. Weeden of Chrishall. In 1949 we purchased Grey Pullman Coaches and carried on their coach service to and from London. We have greatly extended the scope of our local services and have also built up a network of seasonal Express Services to Clacton on Sea, Felixstowe, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Gorleston, and we are now proposing an extension to Scratby and Hemsby. From Saffron Walden, our Day and Half-Day Excursions operate on an extensive scale and we have recently been able to offer the varied and interesting "See-England" Tours outlined in this booklet. In 1959, by popular request, we inaugurated the first Town Service in Saffron Walden and it has already attracted a large number of people. In order to deal with all this Premier traffic, we opened an office at 14 Hill Street and have now extended its scope to cover all types of travel by air, coach, continental rail, etc. We hold a number of agencies for Inclusive Holidays, including Swan's Tours, Blue Cars, Hotel Plan, Butlin's, Wallace Arnold, Southdown and our own Air Plan Holidays from Cambridge. We are local representatives of Cecil Roy Theatre Agency.

We hope that we may continue to guage the transport needs of the Saffron Walden district.

Right: Premier Travel 142 (DCK 218) Leyland PD2/3 East Lancs FL27/26RD new 1950 to Ribble, a 'White Lady'. Purchased in 1962 and withdrawn 1970. Seen in 1969, parked by The Green in Saffron Walden on layover on service 12 from Great Chishill to Saffron Walden, it would also be used on the Town Service.

Left: Premier Travel 190 (KCN 913) an AEC Reliance 2HMU3RA / Harrington Cavalier, C37F, new 1960 to Northern General. Here at Haverhill yard and office on duty for service 38 to London King's Cross via Saffron Walden when new in service early in 1969.

Right: 114 (UVE 333) new to Premier Travel in 1959, an AEC Reliance 2MU3RV / Burlingham Seagull, C41F, outside Chrishall depot in 1968. The first new coach in several years and was then to start the replacement of the existing fleet of Bedford OB and Dennis Lancet coaches.

Left: Premier Travel 177, one of the ex-London Transport Green Line RFs, RF282 (MLL 819), by The Common in Saffron Walden on the Town Service. Photo taken c1969, the bus was withdrawn in May 1971.

Right: Premier Travel 197 (VDV 797) the first of the AEC Reliance Metro-Cammell B41F new 1957 to Devon General purchased in 1969 to replace the ex-London Transport RFs. Photo taken in Haverhill shortly after it entered service in July 1969.

Left: Premier Travel 185 (FCE 132D) an AEC Reliance 2U3RA / Alexander, C49F, one of the first eight of this style of coach bought between 1964 and 1967. Photo taken 1969, also in Haverhill.

All photos by Ian Pritchard.
Leaflet extracts from Richard Delahoy's collection; thanks also to Nigel Turner for his help.

Tailpiece

We couldn't resist using these two contrasting images. **Above**, **Keith Woods** has wonderfully captured one of the ex-Devon General Reliances, VDV 800, in the last year of service 58, in Bocking hurtling round the corner from Church Lane to ascend Deanery Hill. The 58 ceased with effect from 1 November 1970.

Below: The Group visited Premier Travel's Chrishall and Haverhill depots on a coach tour on 7 October 1973. We weren't going to let the small matter of a flat battery frustrate our desire to photograph the fleet! Longer standing ENEG members might recognise their backs in this shot. **Richard Delahoy** gallantly offered to photograph their exertions on the grounds that there was no room for him to join the throng moving AEC Reliance 83 BNV, a Duple bodied example new to York Bros of Northampton, one of five acquired in 1970.

Dryhurst on Colchester Corporation

Here's a small selection of photos taken by Michael Dryhurst on visits to Colchester, focusing in this selection on the Corporation's very varied fleet.

Above, after the war-time influx of Bristol Ks and Guy Arabs (see cover of Extra 2), CCT took four AEC Regents (51-4) in 1947, then a solitary Crossley DD42/Massey (55), followed by five Daimler CVD6/Roberts (1-5), of which 2 (OHK 430) is seen in the High Street in July 1963. Withdrawn in 1966/8, one (4) is preserved. Further Crossleys followed in 1951 (6/7) and 1952 (8/9), with Crossley bodies. Below, 9 (TVX 497) in Queen Street, just beyond the bus station exit.

That multi-sourcing must have created problems in such a small fleet - by 1952 the 35 strong fleet contained five different chassis types and eight different body manufacturers! So a welcome period of standardisation started in 1953 with the delivery of 10-12, AEC Regents with Massey bodies. **Above**, 12 (WPU 374) is passing through the Lewis Gardens bus station in July 1963. These were Regent IIIs and were followed by the later Regent V model in the form of 13-23 between 1956 & 1959, before changing allegiance to Leyland Titans for 24-44 from 1960 to 1966. Massey bodies were a constant over the whole of this period and indeed into the rear-engined era with the first ten Atlanteans for Colchester, 45-54 of 1967/8.

Below, from the first batch of Regent Vs and in rather dismal weather, we find 15 (681 HEV) outside the Railway Tavern, at the bus stops for North Station. In the 1950s the 6 ran from Old Heath (in the south-east of the town), through the town centre and on to North Station to terminate. From September 1959 the North Station section was withdrawn and instead the 6 was sent down Maldon Road to Shrub End/Prettygate (south-west of the centre) to give a sort of inverted V shaped route. All four buses seen here are in the classic Tuscan red and cream livery.

Single-Deck Southend

Text and photos Richard Delahoy

Traditionally, urban operators' fleets were dominated by double deckers, although in the later 1950s and into the 60s, single deckers became more significant as operating costs rose, passenger numbers declined and staff shortages became more prevalent. Southend Corporation Transport was no different, relying heavily on double deckers right from the start of tram operations in 1901 (the initial fleet of 14 cars included just two single deckers, soon rebuilt with a top deck), although there were single deck interludes such as the seven early buses of 1914-16, then from 1925-28 the only trolleybuses were single deckers, likewise with motor buses from 1931-7.

By the early 1970s the fleet comprised 66 double deckers and just 13 saloons (using September 1971 figures), rising to 75 deckers and but just 10 saloons in early 1980. Even into the deregulated era deckers dominated, although in the heady days of the early 1990s "bus war" with Thamesway, a mass influx of Leyland Nationals tipped the scales a bit - at the peak of the bus fleet, there were 96 DDs and 31 SDs (plus the coach fleet of 17, which isn't really part of this story and was very largely used on the London services). In British Bus ownership, deckers still dominated, including five new Volvo Olympians (regarded by many drivers as Southend's finest ever buses).

Into the Cowie and Arriva era, saloons were still only about a quarter of the bus fleet initially, but the move to more single deckers arguably started with a dozen low-floor Darts in 1997. Come the year 2000, there was an influx of 15 new Dennis Tridents in 2000 to see off the last of the Fleetlines; second-hand Dennis Dominators and Leyland Olympians also bolstered the DD fleet, so by mid-2000, deckers still dominated but the balance was beginning to tip, with 46 compared to 33 saloons (including minibuses but excluding the Dengie fleet of 6 small Renault Traffics).

Fast forward to the end of 2005 and, as explained in EBN issue 683 (March 2021), the Tridents didn't last long in the town and were transferred away. The fleet now comprised 34 deckers and 29 saloons (plus the 6 buses for the Dengie contract, now 16 seater Mercedes). A year later and as 2006 ended, saloons now outnumbered deckers (37 vs 27). The decker fleet slipped further to 21, then in October 2008 ten Olympians moved out, taking the DD fleet to just 11, against 58 saloons. Further reductions followed until the unthinkable happened - in late May 2012, the last decker went and the fleet became entirely single deck, for the first time in the history of the undertaking. The fleet of 60 at that time comprised 37 SLF Darts, 12 Versas, 9 DAF SB220s and a pair of MPD Darts.

It seemed as if the world had ended (well, perhaps that is a tad over dramatic) but all was not lost when just over four years later, the double decker was back, in the shape of 18 ADL E400s. There have since been some moves in and out, but as of summer 2023, the fleet - now reduced to 55 in total - comprises 16 deckers and 39 saloons.

So here we present a few photos looking at some of the varied types that ran in Southend as the saloons took over.

Below: Southend's first Dennis Darts were low floor examples, starting in 1997 (and followed the pioneering four Lance SLFs of 1995 that were featured in EBM Extra 3, Spring 2023). Older, step entrance examples came later, from June 2000 onwards, second-hand with a variety of bodies - East Lancs, Wrights, Carlyle, Northern Counties and, as seen here, Plaxton. 3410 (P330 HVX) was actually one of the last to come to Southend, in 2009, and was caught on camera at Bournes Green on 21 March 2009. The saloon fleet became all low floor from Spring 2011.

Above: Northern Counties produced a rather attractive body with a deep windscreen for the step entrance Dart, as exemplified by 3150 (L150 YVK) seen at Mummeries Nurseries, Stonebridge on service 14 which ran via Barling, on 27 May 2005. They had been new to Kentish Bus in 1994 and migrated to Southend in 2004/6. Ultimately seven of these buses ran for Southend (3132/3/8/45/50/3/4, with matching L/YVK registrations), the last being withdrawn in summer 2009.

Below: East Lancs bodies often had quite a quirky appearance, as this rear view of 3009 (L511 CPJ) taken on 31 March 2007 shows. The bus is in Chichester Road, having just left the travel centre on route 29 to Belfairs, for which it carries the rather understated route branding that Arriva practiced at the time. Southend had ten of these in total but never more than seven at any one time, the first arriving in March 2002 and the last departing at the end of 2009. The full list of those that ran here comprised, 3004-9, 3122-4, DS014 (L506-11 CPJ, N542-4 TPK, M525 MPM).

Above: Upsetting the standardisation on Dennis chassis, in 2004 three Volvo B6-50 joined the fleet, transferred from Arriva Southern Counties. With Plaxton bodies, they could easily be mistaken for Darts. 3602/1 (L602/1 EKM), in Southend Central Bus Station on 18 September 2004. The third one was 3608 (unsurprisingly, L608 EKM). They left the fleet in 2005 but then late in 2006, two more came from the same batch, 3606/9, lasting until early in 2008.

Below: Also introducing a new type were the nine DAF SB220s with Plaxton Prestige bodies, 3911-6/8/9/21 (with matching T/KKM registrations), new in 1999 to Arriva Kent & Sussex. They came north to Southend in 2008. Initially some still retained roller blinds but all were converted to electronic displays by 2011. 3918 was seen at Victoria Circus on 27 February 2010. All were withdrawn by the end of 2015, not being PSVAR compliant.
Note the similarity with the Northern Counties body on 3150 on page 23, the Prestige was a low floor development of that design after Plaxton bought Northern Counties and was provisionally named the Paladin LF.

Above: For three years from October 2008, Southend played host to a fleet of ten Scania L113s with Wright Axcess-Ultralow bodies, new to Kentish Bus. They came from Arriva Southern Counties, numbered 3250-9 (N250-9 BKK) and were amongst the first in the fleet with electronic destination blind displays. On 29 November 2008, 3256 was on a short working trip on service 1, waiting in the new Southend Travel Centre. They were replaced in November 2011 by the first batch of Optare Versas. The only other Scanias in the Southend fleet were four K113 coach variants with Van Hool bodies (4351-4, M51-4 AWW), used on the London Green Line service from the end of 1999 until that service ceased in February 2002.

Below: More DAFs joined the fleet from summer 2012 on, this time the SB120 version with Wright Cadet bodies. There were fourteen ex-London examples, rebuilt to single door, 3500-9/14/30-2 of which 3504 (KE51 PUH) was seen at the White Horse, Southchurch on a damp 14 July 2012. Subsequently, longer single door examples came from Guildford & West Surrey in the shape of 3935/7/8/60. The ex-London ones were withdrawn by February 2020 but some of the longer ones lasted until early in 2022.

Colchester's Second-hand Saloons

To start one-man operated services, Colchester took a dozen second-hand single deckers in 1970/1, before buying new Bristol RELLs.

First in was arguably the most unusual - a 36' AEC Reliance with a Plaxton bus body, 652 GVA, from Hedingham & District but new to Irvine of Salsburg in Scotland in 1963, becoming Colchester 55 (later renumbered 12). Then followed six shorter Reliances from SELNEC, new to Salford City Transport in 1962. Numbered 1-6 (TRJ 109, 102-6), they had Weymann bodies as we illustrated in EBM issue 703 (November 2022), showing the one that's now preserved in Salford colours. Prior to their entry into service, Great Yarmouth loaned four of their own Reliances, 81/3/4/6 (AEX 81/3/4/6B). Colchester also looked at a couple of demonstrators, Metro-Scania VWD 451H in December 1970 and Seddon Pennine RU ABU 451J in February 1971. They also inspected a Bristol RELL on delivery to Bristol Omnibus, AHH 731J, leading to the order for what ended up as 15 with ECW bodies (14-28).

Last in were five Marshall bodied Reliances from Leicester, 7-11 (197/8 GJF, ABC 195/6B, GBC 199D) from 1963-6. The second-hand buses lasted a few years, the final ones being withdrawn in 1976 (9-11).
Below, 10 in the bus station on 24 October 1972. **Bottom**, a bit battered and about to be withdrawn the following month, 12 (ex 55) at Magdalen Street depot on 8 February 1975. Both **Richard Delahoy**

A Ticketing Oddity

Richard Delahoy

Southend Corporation Transport followed a fairly normal path for the development of its ticketing systems, starting with the trusty Bell Punch system for trams, early buses and trolleybuses. They did however have a multiplicity of ticket types in the era when stage names, rather than just numbers, were printed on tickets, meaning a large number of different issues were needed when you throw in the added complexity of child, workmens' and exchange tickets and differing fare values. They further complicated things (at least initially) by having separate tickets for each route, eg "Beach Section", "Prittlewell Section", etc. Then add in the renaming of the amusement park from Luna Park to the Kursaal and you have even more different tickets. Indeed, I know of at least 46 different examples, which might be some sort of a record for what was actually a short and simple route network.

Recently I also acquired one **(left)** for the early - 1914 to 1916 - motor bus operations, a type I'd not seen before. With the serial number A0001 and unpunched, it may have been a sample or perhaps one kept back for training purposes?

To simplify matters and speed up ticket issue, in 1933 Southend adopted TIM mechanical machines, the type with a telephone style dial on the top, printing tickets to any available value/class onto a roll of plain paper. However, what happens if the machine malfunctions whilst out on the road? To cover this eventuality, conductors carried emergency ticket packs of punch style tickets. These were for specific values but only had stage numbers, not names, making them available for all routes. Southend still managed to generate a number of different types, initially lettered for stages 1 to 12, then 1-16, then 1-30. But amongst these I have two oddities **(below)** - a 1d issue and a 2d issue, both just with stage numbers 1, 2 and 3. I'd wondered what they were for, and a chance find at The Bus Archive revealed the - somewhat improbable - answer. Derek Giles, later to become Southend's Traffic Superintendent, had written a paper in April 1956 that was circulated to enthusiasts along with some specimen tickets. In it he chronicles the various different issues of emergency punch type tickets. For this odd pair of tickets I can do no better than to quote verbatim:

"It is widely stated that these tickets were bought over 20 years ago [ie around 1933-35] for use by a conductor who was physically incapable of operating a T.I.M. He was put on one route with only 3 stages and a maximum fare of 2d. He left soon afterwards and the stocks were then used as emergencies until 1954!"

So there we have it - a personal set of tickets for just one conductor. Amazing!

To end, I will just mention that there were two issues of punch tickets that were not for emergency use. One type were 1/- values, with or without a "K" overprint, used on dance specials for the Kursaal ballroom. The version with the "K" overprint entitled the passenger to claim a 6d discount off the price of their next dance ticket. The other type was a 1/- return with numbers 1-15 on the left and 16-31 on the right. These were not stage numbers but intended to mark the date and were for the football special "express" service from Leigh to Southend Stadium, although it appears the numbers were not actually punched (does anyone have an example of one of these?).

A Troubled End

Richard Delahoy

Twenty Eastern National Bristol RELL buses made a sad one-way trip to Northern Ireland in 1985/6. This is their story.

The Troubles was the name given to the appallingly brutal sectarian violence that afflicted Northern Ireland, from 1969 until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (not that that has completely eliminated the problems or the violence). On the mainland we were not immune either, with the IRA's bombing campaign, indeed in my banking days I saw the aftermath of a number of such attacks in London, culminating in my London Training Centre building being destroyed in the so-called Canary Wharf bomb attack in 1996 (it was actually at South Quay rather than Canary Wharf itself), detonated less than two hours after we'd all left for the weekend.

They were certainly troublesome times for the bus operators, Citybus (successor to Belfast Corporation Transport) and Ulsterbus, who had over 1,400 buses destroyed in violent disorder in this period. Finding suitable replacements led to them scouring Great Britain from 1977 on for second-hand buses that fitted their fleet profile. For Citybus, initially this meant AEC Swifts & Merlins from London Transport and later LCBS, and Daimler Fleetline single deckers from Potteries and Northern General. Ulsterbus meanwhile had taken Leopards from Ribble and Southdown as well as London Swifts/Merlins. Both Citybus and Ulsterbus were (and still are) state owned and had a common management structure, as part of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company.

After supplies of Swifts/Merlins ran out, from 1980 they started sourcing second-hand Bristol RELL buses (and subsequently a small number of the shorter RESLs and even a solitary RELH), initially from Crosville but subsequently from various other NBC companies, including United Auto, West Yorkshire, West Riding, East Midland, Wilts & Dorset, United Counties, Cumberland, Ribble and Cambus, plus a few from independents. Ulsterbus had taken its first 20 new RELLs in 1969, not taking any more until 1975 when both Citybus and Ulsterbus starting buying them in large numbers, eventually taking 620 new, hence the attraction of adding second-hand examples of a type they knew well.

Eastern National operated a fleet of 55 Bristol RELL6G buses, all 53-seaters with ECW bus bodies, but these were being replaced during the 1980s. The very last to run for EN was 1554, withdrawn from Clacton during March 1986. They were attractive and popular buses and two are regulars on the rally circuit, flat-fronted 1516 owned by David Edwards and curved screen 1546 with Luke Deal; both owners are EBEG members. 1548, which was used as a mobile survey office towards the end of its life with EN, also still exists, unrestored, with the Blackwater Preservation Group.

Citybus and Ulsterbus took an initial batch of nine from Eastern National in February 1985. All were intended for Citybus but four instead went into service with Ulsterbus on Londonderry city services, two in June and the other two in September 1985. Citybus kept the other five, placing them in store initially. They were then prepared for service in 1986/7 and entered service in 1987. Meanwhile, Citybus took a further eleven REs - EN's last ones - in April 1986, again they did not enter service until 1987.

Left: the former 1551, now Ulsterbus 796 and ready for service. **Paul Savage**

Sadly, they were to have very short service lives and indeed, one never made it into traffic. Buses were routinely hijacked whilst in service and burnt as street barricades, bombs were placed in buses, whilst car bombs and firebomb attacks on depots saw large numbers of buses being destroyed in one go. The worst such cases were in February 1980 when firebomb attacks on the Falls Park and Ardoyne depots destroyed 40 buses. So far as the ex-EN buses were concerned, the first four to enter service with Citybus were 790/1/3/4 on 1 April 1987 and of these, one was destroyed just 35 days later (794). The most unfortunate EN example was WNO 538L (714). It had been prepared for service and repainted into Citybus livery and was being moved empty from Falls Park works to Ardoyne depot to replace a vehicle previously destroyed there, but was hijacked en-route and burnt out without ever entering service!

Above: no longer heading for Colchester (or indeed anywhere else in service), 1549 is still in NBC livery and was photographed outside Short Strand depot on its delivery run to Belfast. **Will Hughes**
As recounted above, it was repainted into Citybus livery but was burnt out before it could even enter service, as seen in the picture **below** at Ardoyne depot. **Mark O'Neill**

It is difficult to conceive, let alone understand, what it must have been like to live and work in the Province through the thirty years years of The Troubles. It was a hugely traumatic time for bus crews, although generally, the paramilitary groups (of both persuasions) were more interested in disruption and economic harm and when buses were hijacked, often allowed the drivers to take their cash and gear with them, although the less disciplined hooligan element did attack and rob drivers, as well as stoning buses. Sadly, 12 bus staff were killed in the course of their duties, some targeted because of their affiliations outside of work. Michael Collins' moving book, *Buses Under Fire* (see sources at the end of this article) uses interviews with staff at various levels to paint a picture. Here is the story of just one bus hijacking, as recounted by Ulsterbus driver Raymond Bell. The bus was not one of the ex-EN ones, but the story is typical of the times:

"I was coming back from Lisburn, via the Falls. On the Stewartstown Road I saw a young fellow, about ten-years-old, at a bus stop. I stopped, but as I did the wee fellow ran away. Four masked men with baseball bats jumped out of hiding and onto the bus. I was told to put it across the road and then take my stuff and go. As I was walking away, they came running after me. They had changed their minds as to where they wanted the bus and had tried to drive it away. However, they had stalled it and couldn't get it going again. I went back and started it up for them. As they drove it away, they were smashing the windows. A local couple took me in and gave me tea. I was able to phone Citybus control and they sent a Citybus taxi out for me. The bus was a write off".

Also reflecting the times, John Deegan, writing in *Buses Yearbook 2023* recalled the fate of one of the Ulsterbus ex EN examples: "I was a passenger on no. 795 when it was seized by four youths at Central Drive, Creggan, and while helping a rather feisty old lady off the bus with her shopping trolley she gave the four hijackers a right good verbal and nearly clattered one of them with her brolly, even though the rear of No 795 was already on fire!".

Below, here is the aforementioned Ulsterbus 795, the former EN 1550, in service in Londonderry before it was maliciously destroyed on 9 March 1988. **Paul Savage**

Here's the complete list of former EN buses in Northern Ireland:

Registration	EN number	Fleet	NI number	Acquired	To service	Withdrawn/fate
LVX 116J	1528	Ulsterbus	788	2/85	6/85	Maliciously destroyed, 22/2/86
MHK 914J	1532	Ulsterbus	789	2/85	6/85	Transferred to Citybus 11/88, withdrawn by Citybus 1989
KVX 570J	1524	Citybus	790	2/85	4/87	Maliciously destroyed, 24/2/88
MHK 912J	1530	Citybus	791	2/85	4/87	Maliciously destroyed, 25/2/88
MHK 915J	1533	Citybus	792	2/85	6/87	Maliciously destroyed, 27/8/88
MHK 916J	1534	Citybus	793	2/85	4/87	Maliciously destroyed, 12/8/89
RPU 884K	1544	Citybus	794	2/85	4/87	Maliciously destroyed, 5/5/87
WNO 539L	1550	Ulsterbus	795	2/85	9/85	Maliciously destroyed, 9/3/88
WNO 540L	1551	Ulsterbus	796	2/85	9/85	Maliciously destroyed, 14/8/86
OHK 226K	1536	Citybus	704	4/86	5/87	Maliciously destroyed, 2/7/89
PEV 501K	1539	Citybus	707	4/86	5/87	Maliciously destroyed, 30/8/88
PEV 502K	1540	Citybus	709	4/86	5/87	Maliciously destroyed, 17/2/90
PEV 503K	1541	Citybus	710	4/86	5/87	Maliciously destroyed, 27/8/88
RPU 882K	1542	Citybus	711	4/86	5/87	Maliciously destroyed, 7/10/89
SVW 273K	1545	Citybus	712	4/86	5/87	Maliciously destroyed, 19/1/88
SVW 275K	1547	Citybus	713	4/86	7/87	Maliciously destroyed, 2/7/89
WNO 538L	1549	Citybus	714	4/86	(5/87)	Maliciously destroyed, 13/5/87
WNO 541L	1552	Citybus	715	4/86	6/87	Maliciously destroyed, 11/3/88
WNO 542L	1553	Citybus	717	4/86	6/87	Withdrawn, 9/89, scrapped 11/90
WNO 543L	1554	Citybus	718	4/86	6/87	Maliciously destroyed, 7/10/89

The 1986 acquisitions received fleetnumbers that had previously been used for earlier second-hand buses that had been destroyed; one of the numbers was then used for a third time after the ex-EN bus had similarly been destroyed. So, Citybus 714 was originally SFM 20F (ex Crosville), then EN's WNO 538L and after that, TRU 948J (ex Wilts & Dorset).

Below: resplendent in Citybus red and ivory, but without fleetnames, former EN 1554 is now Citybus 718 and plying its trade in Belfast. As the table above shows, it lasted a creditable two years and four months before it met the almost inevitable end, being destroyed on 7 October 1989 on the Falls Road. Note the Bristol LH front panel and almost complete absence of opening windows, the originals having been replaced with plain glass after malicious damage such as stoning buses. **Paul Savage**

More in service shots in Belfast:

Above, 790 (ex 1524) was one of the first batch to be acquired from Essex and was in store from February 1985 to April 1987. It only managed ten months in use before becoming one of five buses to be destroyed at the Springfield Road/Whiterock Road junction on February 24/5, 1988.

Below, 710 (ex 1541) came across in the second batch in April 1986 and entered service in May 1987, lasting fifteen months before coming to a fiery end on Glen Road. Both **Paul Savage**

Above: this was one fire that was not down to malicious action but took place in the engine bay of 793 (1534), seen here in the workshops at Falls Park in August 1987. It was repaired but was lost two years later, on 12 August 1989 on Glen Road. **Paul Savage**

The first EN buses to be destroyed were two of the Ulsterbus examples (788/96) in 1986. Citybus lost its first EN buses in May 1987 (714/94); the worst year was 1988 with eight buses destroyed, followed by five more in 1989. After the loss of a pair on 7 October 1989 (711/8), just one was left, 709 (1540) and that lasted into February 1990 before it too was torched, alongside native Citybus RE 2044, on the 17th on the Falls Road. And so ended the use of the twenty EN buses that crossed the Irish Sea to meet their fate in the Troubles.

In summary, of the EN buses that went to Citybus, only one survived to be withdrawn in the normal course of events, 717, with the other 15 all destroyed. Of the four that went to Ulsterbus, three were destroyed but the fourth, 789, survived to be transferred to Citybus in Belfast in 1988 and was withdrawn the following year. So just two of the twenty ex Eastern National buses avoided being maliciously destroyed. A sad end indeed for these popular buses.

I'm very grateful to Paul Savage, Will Hughes, Mark O'Neill, John Deegan and Chris Stewart for their help in sourcing photos and details. All opinions expressed are those of the author alone.

Sources and further reading:

Citybus, Belfast's buses 1973-88 (Buses in Ulster series, volume 5) - Will Hughes, Colourpoint Books, 2005;
Buses Under Fire - Michael Collins, Colourpoint Books, 2006;
Busmen in the firing line, Eugene O'Callaghan, Ulster Historical Foundation, 2019; ENEG news-sheets;
Web pages https://www.classicbuses.co.uk/+Ubus-83-88.html
and https://www.classicbuses.co.uk/+Citybus.html

Rear cover photos:

Top, the first loss was of former EN 1528 (WNO 541L), as Ulsterbus 788, destroyed on 22 February 1986 in Londonderry. **Paul Savage** took the photo of it at Pennyburn depot alongside former West Yorkshire OWY 749K (765), a Bristol RESL.

Bottom, this is the sad remains of 715 (1552) on Springfield Avenue in the immediate aftermath of it being seized and burnt out, along with former United Auto NHN 768K (781), on 11 March 1988. **Mark O'Neill.**

ESSEX BUS MAGAZINE EXTRA Issue 4 Autumn 2023

Reporting the Essex bus scene since 1964