Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 733 May 2025



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk

fb.me/essexbus



Above: First Essex's former Colchester shuttles StreetLite 47696 (LV22 HVY), now at Hadleigh, on route 21A outside Southend University Hospital on 11 April 2025, note the crooked destination screen! Route 21A normally uses Carlton Avenue on the other side of the hospital and it is a bit of a mystery why this bus was on diversion as there was no planned closure of Carlton Avenue that day and, according to tracking, every other 21A went the correct way. The 21A display was alternating with "Service on Diversion" but that was for a closure elsewhere along the route, in Southchurch Road. **Andrew Colebourne**

Below: Last month we reported on the acquisition of Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse 69278 (YJ57 YSP) by First Essex and commented on its unique for Essex cove panel mounted advert frames. Here is it while in York, turning from St Leonard's Place into Museum Street, in York City Centre, 12 May 2014. **Robert Appleton**



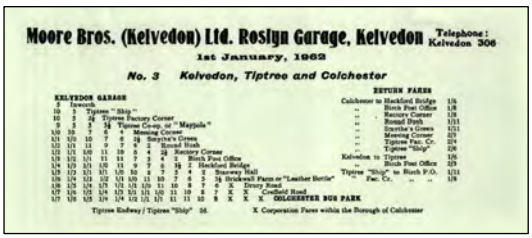
Essex Bus Magazine the journal of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group
Issue 733 May 2025



Above: The running day at Wood Green on 23 March 2025 included a few journeys on former Eastern National route 251 as far as Tottenham Hale. Two preserved ex-ENOC buses were in use, Bristol K / ECW AJN 825 (in Westcliff Motor Services livery) and Bristol VR / ECW 3116 (XHK 221X) in Abus of Bristol livery (they owned it between 2002 and 2019). The latter is seen passing Wood Green Underground Station. It also did a feeder run over the 251 from and to Essex. **Nick Street**

Front Cover: Another former Eastern National Bristol / ECW, this time RELL 1516 (FWC 439H), owned by David Edwards. It has just passed under the iconic Chappel viaduct on special route 88X on 12 April 2025 being driven by David Bateman. Full details on page 29. **Chris Stewart**

Right and Below: Part of the leaflet for the 50th Anniversary event at the Feering & Kelvedon Local History Museum 50th Anniversary event on 6 April 2025. See page 30 for a photo from the event.



Moore Bros. (Kelvedon) Ltd. Rosign Garage, Kelvedon Telephone: Kelvedon 306

1st January, 1962

No. 3 Kelvedon, Tiptree and Colchester

RETURN FARES

KELVEDON GARAGE																		
2	Inworth																	
10	5	Tiptree "Ship"																
10	5	2d	Tiptree Factory Corner															
9	5	2	3d	Tiptree Co-op. or "Maypole"														
10	10	7	6	4	Mersea Corner													
1/1	1/0	10	7	6	2d	Smythe's Green												
1/2	1/1	11	9	7	4	2	Round Bush											
1/2	1/1	1/0	11	10	6	4	2d	Rectory Corner										
1/3	1/2	1/1	1/1	11	7	5	4	2	Birch Post Office									
1/4	1/3	1/1	1/0	11	9	7	6	2d	2	Heckford Bridge								
1/5	1/3	1/1	1/1	1/0	10	8	7	5	4	2	Stanway Hall							
1/6	1/4	1/3	1/2	1/1	1/0	11	10	7	6	5	3d	Brickwall Farm or "Leather Bottle"						
1/6	1/5	1/4	1/3	1/1	1/1	1/0	11	10	8	7	6	X	Drury Road					
1/7	1/6	1/5	1/4	1/3	1/1	1/1	1/0	11	10	8	7	X	X	Creffield Road				
1/7	1/6	1/5	1/4	1/4	1/2	1/1	1/1	11	11	10	8	X	X	X	COLCHESTER BUS PARK			

Colchester to Heckford Bridge	1/6
" Birch Post Office	1/8
" Rectory Corner	1/8
" Round Bush	1/11
" Smythe's Green	1/11
" Mersea Corner	2/1
Tiptree Pac. Cr.	2/4
Tiptree "Ship"	2/6
Kelvedon to Tiptree	1/6
" Birch Post Office	2/3
Tiptree "Ship" to Birch P.O.	1/11
" Pac. Cr.	1/8

Tiptree Railway / Tiptree "Ship" 5d.

X Corporation Fares within the Borough of Colchester



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

Subscriptions
The calendar year subscription for 2025 is £29 for printed copies sent by post, or £20 for electronic pdf copies sent by e-mail. New members may join from any month, but subscriptions will always run to December from whichever month the member chooses, please ask for the relevant price.
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EBM Extra
EBM is published monthly. In addition, we aim to publish two Extras each year full of historical features. These are supplied to members free of charge, subject to funding.

Membership Records & Data Protection
A statement of our compliance with the GDPR is available on our website or by post. For any membership or Data Protection issues please contact Richard Delahoy, address above.

Reports, Articles & Photographs
Members' reports, articles and photos (prints, slides or preferably jpgs) are always welcome. Please send to the Editor or relevant Sub-Editor. The editors exercise discretion to publish contributions in full, in part or not at all and cannot guarantee publication in any particular month.

Target Dates for EBM 734

Reports to Sub-Editors	**17 May**
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	**23 May**
Dispatch by Printers on or before	**31 May**

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent up to 24th and will be included if possible, if not it will be held over to the next month.

Views expressed in EBM do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group or officers. Every effort is made to ensure accuracy,

Group Notices

Membership News

We are sorry to record the death of Geoff Toon of Colchester, member 452, and offer our condolences to his family and friends.

Group Meetings

The next meetings in **2025** are:
Thursday 15 May and
Thursday 19 June: Afternoon **Social Meetings** at **'The Globe' Public House**, **1300** for **1400**.

After experimenting with alternate evening and afternoon social meetings, a vote at the recent AGM resulted in a preference for afternoon meetings so this will be the time going forward. The meetings are very informal with Alan Osborne as host. There is no set programme, instead there is an opportunity for networking and a series of short shows of about 20 minutes duration to members. If you would like to give a digital show you will need to bring a fully charged laptop (there are no mains electrical connections available) which will be used as a screen. About 30-35 images would be best. For colour slides, a slide viewer is available to pass around, about 20 slides should suffice. If you would like to share views of colour prints or B&W photos then these (20 or so, or photo albums) can also be passed around. However, there is no obligation for attendees to give a show and members are very welcome just to view and join in discussions.

Alan will arrive at about 1300 and take lunch; members are welcome to join him. The main shows are from 1400-1700. Please note that when Alan is unable to attend there will be a guest host.
Future dates up to autumn are **24 July**, **21 August** and **18 September**.

'The Globe' Public House is in Rainsford Road, CM1 2QL and is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. There is a car park but you must register your car at the terminal on the bar on arrival, otherwise a penalty charge will apply.

A Message from the Chair
On behalf of the Committee, can I thank all those members who came along to the recent AGM in Chelmsford. I am delighted to announce that, as a result of the large attendance, we will be restarting the main Chelmsford meetings (usually featuring a slide show). These will be held on a bi-monthly basis from October 2025 (dates and location to be confirmed). Alan Osborne will continue to host Chelmsford Social meetings on a monthly basis.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Saturday 3 May: Theydon Bois Transport Bazaar. Village Hall CM16 7ER. ** Group stall at this event. **
Sunday 4 May: Ipswich, Christchurch Park to Felixstowe Promenade Run.
Sunday 4 May: Canvey Island Transport Museum VE Day Celebration Open Day. Point Road SS8 7TD.
Monday 5 May: King Alfred Buses Running Day. Broadway, Winchester.
Sunday 11 May: Vintage Bus Day Mid Norfolk Railway, Dereham NR19 1DF.
Sunday 18 May: Bus & Coach Show (sponsored by Stephensons). Maldon Museum of Power. Hatfield Road, Langford, Maldon CM9 6QA. ** Group stall at this event. **
Saturday / Sunday 17/18 May: Isle of Wight Running Weekend. Ryde Bus Museum PO33 2BE.
Saturday / Sunday 24/25 May: AEC Society Road Run & Rally. Newark Show Ground NG24 2NY.
Sunday 1 June: Classic Buses from Dorking Railway Station.
Sunday 1 June: Canvey Island Transport Museum Open Day. Point Road SS8 7TD.
Sunday 8 June: Route 418 Heritage Running Day between Epsom and Kingston.
Sunday 22 June: London Bus Museum Summer Festival. Brooklands KT18 0QS.
Sunday 13 July: Showbus. Buckingham Railway Centre Quainton HP22 4BY.
Sunday 20 July: Alton Bus Rally. HSDC Alton College GU34 2LX.
Sunday 20 July: Classic Buses in Hertford.

Saturday 9 August: Across Essex on two Bristol REs. Heritage tour retracing Eastern National services 19 and 53 on ex-Eastern National Bristol RELLs 1516 and 1546, the latter the last bus to operate on the 19 between Southend and Maldon. Pick-ups from Chelmsford Station at 1000 and Colchester Station at 1110. There is no need to book. A detailed itinerary will be available from Andy Gipson (andrewgipson@btinternet.com) and from the Omnibus Society website and the OS E&S Bulletin after 1 June. All EBEG Members and guests welcome.
Sunday 10 August: Big Bus Show. Stonham Barns Park, Stowmarket IP14 6AT.
Sunday 17 August: Lodge Bus and Car Show. High Easter CM1 4QR.
Sunday 31 August: Sudbury Bus Rally. Sudbury Bus Station.

For a comprehensive list of forthcoming events, with links to relevant websites for more information, see https://www.classicbuses.co.uk/++Events-diary.html.

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

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arriva — Richard Delahoy

Colchester

With forthcoming service changes on 2 June 2025, there will no longer be any Sunday operations by Arriva Colchester and the depot will be closed on Sundays. From that date, the PVR (peak vehicle requirement) reduces to 23 Monday - Friday and 18 on Saturday.

Southend

Optare Versa 4227 (KX62 JRZ), reported last month as under preparation, entered service here on 10 April.
The remains of fire damaged Versa 4204 were removed for scrap on 11 April.

Harlow

Arriva Kent & Surrey's (Gillingham) Enviro 200 4058 (GN09 AXM) was in use at Harlow from 8 to 10 April. It then went on to Ware until 17th and was back in service from Gillingham on 21st. Harlow's Enviro 200 MMC 4085 (YX17 NHC) was on loan to Ware for a few trips on the morning of 11 April.

With thanks to John Card, Adam Kelleher, Keith Sadler and Steve Thompson.



Right: Between November 2024 and January 2025, eight former Fastrack Enviro 200 MMCs, 4103-5/7/9-12, were transferred from Northfleet to Harlow and repainted into fleet livery. 4109 (SN17 MXH) is leaving the temporary Harlow Bus Station on 3 March 2025 on route 724 to Heathrow Airport. **David Bell**

Follow Ups

EBM 731 - Tickets Please!
Richard Delahoy writes:
I greatly enjoyed reading Alan Tebbit's story about the techniques used by Inspectors to avoid drivers anticipating their presence. It took me back to two very brief spells driving buses for Grahams of Paisley during holidays in Scotland in 1979 & 1980 with my friend John Cooper who worked for Southend Transport. The Scottish connection was through Grahams' General Manager, Ken Cameron, who'd previously worked at Southend under Traffic Superintendent Derek Giles. Whilst not in Essex, I thought I'd share the memory.

Drivers at Grahams had an elaborate series of hand signals to give to colleagues passing in the opposite direction about the location of Inspectors. Sometimes they would hold up a number of fingers, indicating how many stops down the road they'd just dropped off an Inspector or had spotted one at the roadside. Another sign was to very visibly cross themselves - not for religious reasons, but an indication to beware at Paisley Cross or Govan Cross for a "jumper". There were various hand signals but I wasn't there long enough to discover their meaning (perhaps not a warning of an Inspector but passing comment on Sassenach drivers?!). Having an elaborate warning system did make me wonder what they had to hide. Grahams' services were incredibly busy in those days (for example one afternoon duty I covered had three successive standing loads in one hour, on a 70+ seat Fleetline or Atlantean - first from the car factory at Linwood, then from Paisley heading for Glasgow and finally from Govan Cross back to Paisley and onwards). With the high revenues being taken, I suspect some 'skimming off' was not easily spotted. All services were OMO by then, clippies having been phased out not long before my first stint there. Happy days!

Below: Grahams' Daimler Fleetline / Alexander D16 (PGE 347P), new to them in 1976, heading for yet another Cross! It is parked on the Hawkhead Road turning circle, about the only part of the local area that I could still recognise on a visit to Paisley a couple of years ago. It's no longer used as a turning circle but was then the terminus of a local cross-Paisley route. Hawkhead Road had then just featured on Ester Rantzen's 'That's Life' TV programme in a contest to find the British road with the greatest number of potholes; I think it was the winner! West End Cross was a short turn point only used by a few evening journeys. I'd not experienced it (or other parts of their network) on my route learning day but the turning movement there was explained to me. I managed to turn right against a red traffic light there, but we'd better gloss over that. My Southend Transport winter uniform jacket is hanging up in the cab and the orange board in the windscreen, reading 301, is the duty or running board. 28 April 1980. **Richard Delahoy**



EBM Extra 8 - Southend body swaps

Richard Delahoy continues:

In this article about Southend Corporation's rebodying exploits, we mentioned how the 13 ex-London Transport Daimlers were bought from the well-known dealer Norths of Leeds. We then considered whether they were received in Southend complete or with part / most of their bodies removed, coming to the conclusion that they arrived intact. **Bob Williamson** has since helpfully pointed out that Norths had a special office at LT's Chiswick Works to deal with sales with many, for example, being sent from LT premises direct to Dover Docks for export. Therefore, it is quite possible that the buses went direct to Southend from wherever LT had them in storage and never went anywhere near Norths' premises in Yorkshire - in which case, they would have been received complete. Norths may have sold them to Southend at a 'chassis only' price, on the basis that it was too expensive (and rather pointless, given the condition of the utility bodies) to take them to Yorkshire to remove the bodies first.

Ian Ransom has also pointed out that the correct spelling for the church referred to in the caption to the photo on page 15 should be St Laurence Church.

27 April 1975 Group Tour

Unfortunately, the planned photo feature on this tour has had to be postponed due to lack of space. However, one photo from the tour is included on page 27.

EBM 732 - Brentwood Coaches

Roger Tuke writes:

Thank you for yet another excellent edition of EBM, issue 732, recently received.
Wonderful pictures of CCT No. 10 inside the front cover. Although I didn't go on this PSV Circle tour, as I was then too young, it reminded me of several later ones I enjoyed.

I also thoroughly enjoyed reading Chris Stewart's piece on John Brenson and Brentwood Coaches, the family back story of which I wasn't familiar with. The photo of John's interesting Guy coach NUR 659 brought back memories too. Firstly, encountering it one afternoon by chance whilst out on a photography trip with my friend the late Geoff Mills. He confirmed its history to me as having the body from AEC Regal MTO 16 fitted to its Guy chassis by John.

But secondly, several years later by encountering it again by total surprise. Having exhibited or visited the Eurospoor model railway exhibition in Utrecht in 2016 and 2018 and on both occasions spent the returning Sunday night in Rotterdam, a couple of friends and I suggested a more leisurely visit to a city none of us knew. This we did in September 2019, primarily to ride the tram network, visit the excellent tram museum and other places of architectural or museum interest, and over the weekend of World Harbour Day too! As I'd very recently retired I arranged a surprise Friday evening trip on the dining tram Rottertram, (an experience I can thoroughly recommend). So we made our way to the starting stop in Willemskade by the river and it was me who had the first surprise, as sitting outside an adjacent hotel waiting for a private tour party was none other than NUR 659 still in its Brentwood Coaches livery. It was then owned by Hans Classic Cars of Nijerk and registered BE-66-55. A couple of my pictures of it appeared in 'British Buses Abroad' magazine issue 44, March 2020, one of which is reproduced **right**.



Also in the Brentwood Coaches article was a photo of Leyland Olympian Coach / ECW 16 which was built as a Leyland demonstrator, the only Olympian coach constructed with a rear staircase, servery and toilet. As stated, it was exhibited at the 1984 Commercial Motor Show in the livery of Ebdon's of Sidcup.



In last month's photo, 16 carried the registration 823 NMC. It later received the registration C101 OTW. It was implied that this was after it had left Brentwood Coaches, but as can be seen in this photo it did also carry this registration whilst with them. The photo, taken at Beach Coach Station, Great Yarmouth, on a summer Saturday in either 1996 or 1997, also shows the layout of the doors on the nearside.



The coach later went on to join Stephensons of Essex and is seen at Showbus, Duxford on 24 September 2000.



All **Chris Dugdell**

Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit adds:
The article included photos of two of the coaches allocated to me during my time with Brentwood Coaches. The ex-Eastern National Olympian coach was sold to Motts of Aylesbury shortly after my first departure, as no one else wanted to drive it. My final vehicle was Volvo B10 number 15 (LUI 7645) which is still owned by Jonnie Brenson.
The photo **below** is of ex Brentwood Coaches LUI 7640/1/50 with Wheal Briton Travel at their Blackwater, Cornwall yard. Posed in front is me, an ex-Brentwood Coaches driver. WBT had seven coaches from the Essex company (and one driver!).



Below: **Service Revisions** commence on the opposite page. One of the main changes from 20 April, reported in last month's EBM, was the withdrawal of First Essex Colchester shuttle routes S1-S10, mainly replaced by new routes 51/52/53/53A/54/55/55A/56/57. Enviro 400 33668 (SN12 AEL) is at Southway, Colchester (near to the old Essex County Hospital) on the first day of the new routes, on service 52, the direct replacement for the S2.
John Podgorski



Service Revisions

Ian Ransom

15 March 2025

677 (Sch Only) Ilford High Road - Debden, Torrington Drive. TfL contract retained by **Go Ahead London** (operated by **London General**) for three years, one journey each way. Timetable revised to improve punctuality, with the afternoon journey revised to depart five minutes earlier.

5 April

99 (Daily) Leigh-on-Sea Railway Station - Shoeburyness East Beach **Ensignbus**. To correct EBM 732, the service runs hourly every day 5 April - 21 April, 24 May - 1 June, 4 - 7 September and Saturday, Sunday, Bank Holiday 26 April - 13 July, 13/14 September. The half hourly service operates daily 19 July - 3 September and at times of high demand.

20 April - additional to those in EBM 732

1A (Daily) Greenstead, Elm Cresent - Colchester, Ambrose Avenue **First Essex**. Revised timetable on all journeys (operates M-S evening and Su only).

3 (M-S) Chelmsford Bus Station - Southend Travel Centre **First Essex**. Revised timetable.

3A (M-S) Leigh Church - Southend Travel Centre **First Essex**. NEW SERVICE, funding from the UK Government Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) via Southend-on-Sea City Council, seven journeys each way, via Blenheim Chase (to improve the service on that road) and Carlton Avenue (replacing that section of **21A**; existing service **3** operates via Prittlewell Chase).

9 (M-S) Basildon Bus Station - Brentwood Railway Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F, with later journeys in both directions.

16A (Sch Only) Colchester, Napier Road - Colchester, St Helena School **First Essex**. Morning journey revised to start at Colchester Bus Station to avoid having to stand on Mersea Road.

20 (Daily) Southend Travel Centre - Hullbridge, The Anchor **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality.

21/A/S (Daily) Great Wakering, Landwick Cottages - Canvey, Creek Road **First Essex**. Revised M-S timetable introduced on service 21. Service 21A withdrawn and replaced by services **3A** & **26**.

25/825 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Southend Travel Centre. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality.

26 (M-S) Shoeburyness East Beach - Hadleigh Memorial / Canvey, Creek Road **First Essex**. NEW SERVICE. Hourly daytime only, with additional short journeys from East Beach - Shoeburyness Asda. All journeys east of Bournes Green Roundabout (to and from Shoeburyness) are funded from the UK Government BSIP via Southend-on-Sea City Council. Unlike the **21A** it replaced, it will operate direct via London Road between Southend and Chalkwell Schools (Carlton Avenue is now served by **3A**) and in Shoebury runs via Ness Road and Campfield Road, with Asda now only being served by the short workings to & from East Beach.

27 (Daily) Southend Travel Centre - Canvey Leigh Beck **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality and to improve co-ordination with service 28. M-F late evening service from Southend now 20/40 mins instead of 30 - 2110, 2150, 2210, 2250, 2310.

28 (Daily) Southend Travel Centre - Basildon Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality and to improve co-ordination with service 27. Last buses from Southend - previously 2225 to Basildon plus 2255, 2325 shorts to Hadleigh, now 2225 and 2325, both through to Basildon, so later through bus. Last buses from Basildon also changed.

31/331/332 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Maldon, Milton Road / Burnham-on-Crouch Clock Tower **First Essex**. Revised timetable, incorporating NEW SERVICE **333** between Chelmsford Bus Station and Heybridge, Lilac Grove (see EBM 732).

63 (W, F only) Rayleigh The Weir / High Street - Great Wakering, Landwick Cottages **First Essex**. Two journeys each way. Revised timetable to improve punctuality.

68 (M-S evening) Highwoods Square - West Mersea High Street **First Essex**. Revised timetable on all journeys.

71/71X/371/372 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Colchester Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable to improve reliability. Additional **372** at 1615 from Chelmsford to Colchester on Sch only.

87 (Daily) Great Horkesley, Malvern Way - Brightlingsea, Victoria Place **First Essex**. Revised timetable, with additional peak hour journeys (M-F) towards Brightlingsea.

88/A/B (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Halstead, Conies Road **First Essex**. Revised timetable, reduced from hourly to two hourly on M-F off peak and all day Saturday.
88 (M-S) Colchester Bus Station - Halstead, Conies Road **Hedingham**. Revised timetable, with additional journeys introduced (M-F only) to replace those withdrawn by **First Essex**.
100 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Lakeside Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality. Sunday timetable also revised.
102/104 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Harwich Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable to improve punctuality. Also, the two short workings starting & finishing at Mistley (Rigby Avenue) have been extended to start & finish at Wix (Oakley Road) thus giving an improved service for Wix, Bradfield, and Mistley Heath: 0910 Mistley (Rigby Avenue) - Colchester 104 now starts at Wix (Oakley Road) at 0900 (M-F), 1910 Colchester - Mistley (Rigby Avenue) extended to Wix (Oakley Road).
200 (M-S) Basildon Bus Station - Grays Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised route and timetable. Revised to no longer serve Orsett Hospital (see **Ensignbus 88** (22 April) and **First Essex 201**), but is diverted after Orsett Cock to serve Chadwell St Mary, Tilbury and Little Thurrock (replacing **Ensignbus 66** which is withdrawn after 21 April).
201 (M, W, F only) Basildon Bus Station - Stanford-le-Hope, The Green **First Essex**. Revised to operate M-F, and extended from Stanford-le-Hope to Orsett Hospital (as part replacement for **200**). Four journeys each way, daytime only. Funded from the UK Government BSIP via Thurrock Council.
300 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Chelmsford Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised M-S timetable to improve punctuality.
320 (M-F) Colchester Bus Station - Great Notley Bakers Lane **First Essex**. Revised timetable to improve punctuality.
C1 (Daily) Galleywood, Barnard Road - Broomfield Hospital **First Essex**. Minor timetable changes.
C2 (Daily) Chelmsford City Centre - Broomfield Hospital **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality.
C3 (Daily) Chelmsford City Centre - North Melbourne, Wickfield Ash **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality.
C7 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Galleywood, Keene Hall **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality.
C8 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Beaulieu Park, Shardelow Avenue **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality.
C11 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Beaulieu Park, Beaulieu Gardens **First Essex**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality.
X20 (Daily) Colchester Railway Station - Stansted Airport Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable to improve punctuality.
X70 (Sch only) Chelmsford Bus Station - Colchester Bus Station **First Essex**. Additional journey at 1420 from Colchester to Chelmsford.
X80 (M-S) Bluewater Bus Station - Lakeside Bus Station / Chafford Hundred Railway Station **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable, the 0630 from Bluewater revised to terminate at Lakeside Bus Station (currently extended to Chafford Hundred on schooldays).
Z3 (Daily) Southend, Arlington Road - Tilbury Amazon **First Essex**. Will now operate as a closed staff only contract.
Z4 (Daily) Pitsea Broadway - Tilbury Amazon **First Essex**. Will now operate as a closed staff only contract.

22 April
22 (Daily) Purfleet Railway Station / Aveley, Usk Road - Grays Bus Station **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable to improve punctuality.
44 (M-S) Lakeside Bus Station - Grays Bus Station **Ensignbus**. Revised M-F timetable to improve punctuality.
66 (M-S) Grays Bus Station - Tilbury Civic Square / Chadwell St Mary, Aluric Close **Ensignbus**. Service withdrawn after operation on 21 April, replaced by revised **First Essex 200** (but to a lower frequency over this section, the **66** was half-hourly M-F, the **200** is hourly).
73 (Daily) Lakeside Bus Station - Tilbury Asda / Amazon **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable to improve punctuality.
83 (M-S) Lakeside Bus Station - Chadwell St Mary, Sleepers Road **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable to improve punctuality.
88 (M-S) Grays Bus Station - Stifford Clays, Harty Road **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable and extended from Stifford Clays, Harty Road to Orsett Hospital to replace withdrawn section of **First Essex 200** (see above). It is rerouted in Stifford Clays and operates via Stifford Clays Road and Cramavill Street in both directions, it no longer serves Kingsman Drive, Prince Phillip Avenue or Fairway.

1 June

1 (Daily) Greenstead Library - Shrub End, Ambrose Avenue **Arriva**. Revised timetable, reduced to operate every 15 minutes on non-schooldays and Saturday. Sunday service withdrawn.
2 (M-S) Horkesley Heath, Malvern Way - Highwoods Square **Arriva**. Revised timetable to improve punctuality.
2A (Daily) Horkesley Heath, Malvern Way - Highwoods Square **First Essex**. Revised Sunday timetable to improve punctuality (operates M-S evening and Sunday only).
8 (Daily) Monkwick, Gosfield Road - Highwoods Square **Arriva**. Sunday service withdrawn.

The above changes mean that Arriva Colchester depot will no longer operate any services on a Sunday. The Arriva website states that service 1 will be extended to Paxman Avenue, but it is currently not clear how this will happen.

3 March - 31 October

As mentioned under the Ensignbus column last month, **Ensignbus** services **66** (since withdrawn), **73** and **99** (Tilbury version) are revised, due to long term roadworks around Tilbury Civic Square. In response to a query, we do not normally cover shorter term road closures / diversions, due to the sheer number and also not knowing for certain when diversions are in place (and because in a few cases, the actual diversions differ from what has been advertised, e.g. recent cases for Arriva Southend in Shoebury).

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Richard Delahoy, Paul Harvey, Adam Kelleher and the Omnibus Society.

Below: New **First Essex** route **333**, Chelmsford Bus Station - Heybridge, Lilac Grove (Daily) was introduced on 20 April. Enviro 200 MMC 67167 (YY66 PBV) is seen waiting to depart on the first trip from the Heybridge terminus.
Dave Arnold

Enviro 200 44467 operated the first journey from Chelmsford (both leaving at the same time, 0935).



ZEBRA 2 Funding

In EBM 720 (April 2024), we reported that Essex County Council and First Bus had been 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 which are due later this year. On 8 April 2025, it was announced that a further £37.8m funding for 319 new electric buses had been made available to some of the recipients of ZEBRA 2 funding. However, none of this was for Essex this time. The biggest winner was the West of England Combined Authority with nearly £20m for 160 buses.

Acquired Vehicles

37126	YK57 CJJ	YV3S4J8228A123900	AB438	H45/29F	01/08	First West Yorkshire

Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini. Acquired from First West Yorkshire, 6 April 2025. Collected from Leeds (Hunslet depot) by Group Member Jack Benee. Urban 2 livery with blue front, HD Connect (for Huddersfield) branding, but has more recently been operating from Leeds. It entered service on route 170 on 11 April.

67763	SN62 AUK	SFD1C8AR2DGG30737	C312/13	B41F	02/13	First Glasgow
67775	SN62 AXO	SFD1C8AR2CGG30700	C314/3	B41F	01/13	First Midland Bluebird

E30D / Enviro 300. Acquired from First Eastern Counties, Ipswich on Good Friday, 18 April 2025. StreetLites 63328 and 63330 went to Ipswich in exchange (see 'Disposals' below). 67763 is in Ipswich Reds livery. 67775 is in corporate livery, including vinyls and new style fleet names / logos. They moved to FEC from Scotland in April 2017 when the First Borders operation closed down and were prepared at Great Yarmouth for the new Ipswich Park & Ride contract, repainted blue (67763 operated for a short time at Yarmouth in Urban livery).
Both entered service with First Essex on route C1 on 22 April, 67763 with most of its Ipswich Reds branding removed but not all. Unusually, they both have the route number on the nearside on the front blind and, for example, when on C1 (their normal route so far) they show large destinations 'Broomfield Hosp.' or 'Galleywood' with no via points.

Vehicle off Loan

Enviro 400 34432 returned to Ensignbus on 5 April 2025.

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 1 2025/26 (30 March - 26 April)

33415 BN-BN (oos), 33419 BN-BN (oos), 33567 BN (oos)-BN, 33998 CF (oos)-CF, 34432 CF (loan)-FG, 34462 HH-HH (oos), 36839 CF (oos)-CF, 37126 FG-CF, 47665 CR-CR (oos), 63328 CR-FG, 63330 CR-FG, 63335 CR (oos)-CR, 63458 HH (oos)-HH, 67763 FG-CF, 67775 FG-CF

33415 and 33419 are withdrawn for disposal.

Disposals

18 April 2025: 63328 and 63330 to First Eastern Counties at Ipswich. 63328 had been the only long StreetLite to receive red shuttles livery.

Repaints

33688 from Urban livery to new corporate livery late March 2025. With vinyls.
33689 was seen at Mardens on 27 March for repainting from Urban livery to new corporate livery. It was back in service 23 April. With vinyls.
33693 from First Leicester Frequent Fourteens orange and red livery (as illustrated last month) to new corporate livery with vinyls. Its last day in service before repaint was 4 April and it returned to service on 16th.
63463 from Essex Bus green to new corporate livery, but without vinyls and (for now) retaining 'Essex Bus' branding. It also has large, old style, white fleet numbers on front and nearside. Back in service on 24 April.
This repaint of a smart looking two year old vehicle seems quite bizarre when there are similar up to 11 year old vehicles running around in scruffy Urban livery which have never been repainted.

Further to last month: Other previously repainted vehicles to have old style fleet names and logos replaced with new style ones are 34425 and 34426 (by early April); 63454 and 63455, which have two fleet names on the nearside, only have one on the offside, a large one on the lower panels; 67755 entered service in its Essex County Cricket Club wrap appropriately on 4 April, the first day of the new cricket season (with a match at the County Ground in Chelmsford).

Around the Depots
(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot. All dates April 2025.)

Colchester
Super rear adverts, some clarifications / corrections to last month. 47669, 'Freedom Cremations', lost its rear window in an act of vandalism so therefore had a replacement window fitted which obviously didn't include the advert. This has since been readded, see photo on next page. 47656 and 63336: 'Sketchers' is actually spelt 'Skechers', i.e. no 't', the full description is 'Skechers in Culver Square (Colchester)'. In addition to these two, 63333 has also received the same super rear advert. 33668 lost its 'County Broadband' super rear advert in preparation for repaint.

Further to last month, 32672, 37007 and 37054 were still on the scrap line on 4 April. They had been joined by 47665 which looked to be engineless (it had last been in service on 21 March).

Colchester - West Mersea workings. Prior to the service revisions of 20 April, there was a lot of interworking, mainly with double-deckers, on services Colchester - Maldon 75 and Colchester - West Mersea 86. Now buses on the revised Colchester - West Mersea service 55A interwork with services 55/56/57 on Mondays to Saturdays in the off peak. The operating pattern is: xx25 Osborne Street - Shrub End - High Street 56, xx02 High Street - West Mersea 55A, xx57 West Mersea - Bus Station 55A, xx40 Bus Station - St Michaels - High Street 57, xx17 High Street - Monkwick - Bus Station 55, then continues on 56/55/57.
On 23 April, the buses on this cycle departing from High Street to West Mersea on 55A were:
0905 33671 (from Bus Station at 0900), 1002 67189, 1102 47461, 1202 63334, 1302 69519, 1402 63331, 1502 33671 again, after working on the 57/55/56 cycle.

Colchester - Harwich workings. On Mondays to Fridays schooldays the double deck workings on 104 now bring five double-deckers to Harwich: 0640 Harwich - Colchester, Norman Way Schools 104, dead to Wix, 0900 Wix - Colchester 104, 0835 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1010 return, 0935 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1110 return, later 1550 Colchester, Norman Way Schools - Harwich 104, 1745 Harwich - Colchester 104, 1135 Colchester -Harwich 104 & 1310 return, 1235 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1420 return.
These double deck duties mainly interwork with Colchester - Maldon 75, but also include journeys on services 15, 320, X70/372, peak hour 55A, and school contract 694.

The previous double-deck workings on 104 were listed in EBM 730 p15/16.

0720 Harwich - Colchester 104, plus 1335 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1515 return are normally worked by Volvo B7RLE saloons due to interworking with services 71/371. In contrast, there is one single deck duty solely on 104: 0712, 1035, 1440 ex Colchester, returning from Harwich at 0900, 1210, 1625, so far this has been a Wrightbus StreetLite working.

Chelmsford
On the scrap line on 5 April were accident damaged 36841, 44006 & 44915 (both cannibalised) and 69421 & 69433.

37126 on X30 (22nd, 25th & 26th). Its blue front is appropriate for this route!
44914 on 37 / 351 (23rd), on 31 / 71 / 371 (24th).
66886 on driver training on Hatfield Road, Witham (8th).

Basildon
33545 and 33559 have both been out of service since January this year. They both require wiring looms.

44001 on 100 (5th, 25th), on 251 (18th, Good Friday).

Hadleigh
Since the service changes of 20 April, as well as running new route 3A, Hadleigh have taken over operations of some route 3 journeys to Chelmsford from Westway (Chelmsford) Depot. It is now one bus from each depot.

With thanks to James Abrahart, Robert Appleton, Stepen Barham, Jack Benee, Dale Bell, David Edwards, Gareth Norris, John Podgorski, Ian Ransom, David Runeckles, Derek Stebbing, Rob Webb, Robert West, Bus Lists on the Web, Bustimes, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.

Wrightbus StreetLite 47669 (SN15 ACV), still in acquired Southampton City Red livery, with a super rear advert for 'Freedom Direct Cremations' (more details on previous page) on route S3 at Colchester Bus Station on 7 April 2025. The route is now history, part of new route 53.
Adam Kelleher



Former First Kernow 'Atlantic Coaster' part open top Enviro 400 33427 (LK58 KHL) made a surprise appearance at Westway depot, Chelmsford on 8 April 2025. It stayed for at least a couple of days. It was on its way to First Eastern Counties at Norwich.
Jack Benee



Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 37613 (WX58 JXY) on route X20 at Market Hill Coggeshall on 8 April 2025. **Jon Collins**



New Vehicles

224 (TCK), 225 (TGE), 226 (TFZ), 227 (TFY), 228 (TCJ), 229 (TFV), 230 (TFU), 231 (TFO), 232 (TFN), 233 (TFF), 234 (TFJ). All registrations have first four digits RX25.

Mercedes-Benz 517CDi Sprinter B16F. New April 2025 (224 and 228) and March 2025 (the rest).
Note that generally, but not exclusively, the registration numbers are in the opposite order to the fleet numbers.

225, 226, 227, 231, 234 are at Central Connect and are white with dark blur rear, no light blue dividing stripe, no fleet names or 'Transport Made Simple' branding.

224 and 228 are also white with dark blur rear, but do have light blue dividing stripe and Central Connect fleet names but not 'Transport Made Simple' branding.

229, 230, 232, 233 are at Simonds, mainly for newly won contracts on Norwich Park & Ride services PR2 (Harford - City Centre) and PR3 (Postwick - City Centre). Full size buses also appear on these routes. (Note, PR1, Airport - City Centre - Thickthorn, is operated by First Eastern Counties.) They are in white with dark blue rear and with light blue dividing stripe. They also have a large symbol of orange, pink, green, purple and light blue interconnected 'circles with points' on the offside at the rear which carries on over the windows (this is the Norwich Park & Ride logo), plus 'Simonds / Transport Made Simple' names, and 'Norwich Park & Ride' and 'Travel Norfolk' logos.

232 was on display at the Norwich Forum on 22 March alongside Enviro 400 MMC 510 prior to the introduction of the new P&R contracts. 229 is seen **below** at Castle Meadow, Norwich on 5 April. **John Podgorski**

On 24 March, Central Connect regained ECC tendered routes 322/323/324 which they had lost last July to Arrow Taxis (who ceased trading before taking up the contracts) following operation of a temporary contract by First Essex.
225 and 227 were used on the first day.

Out of interest, RX25 TFK and RX25 TGF are similar types of vehicle within these registration sequences but are with Centrebus, Leicester



Further to EBM 731, new ADL E40D / Enviro 400 MMCs 510-12 at Simonds all received Central Connect fleet names but 510 has since been updated to Simonds fleet names.

Other Vehicle News

Enviro 200 926 (ex 1420, MX12 DZE) has been repainted from CT Plus all white into two-tone blue Central Connect livery at Flagfinders Kelvedon Depot and is now working for Flagfinders. It is seen **below** at Braintree Bus Interchange on 7 April 2025 on route 60. **John Podgorski**. It was illustrated in CT Plus livery in EBM 702.



Midi Enviro 200 327 (ex 1601, CC21 GAL) has been repainted from previous Central Connect red and blue (with green leaf pattern at the rear sides) to current Central Connect livery of two tone blue at Simonds.

Simonds Enviro 400s, new to First London, SN11 BSZ / BTE / BTU / EHC have been repainted out of acquired London Borough of Redbridge livery (see EBM 726) into Central Connect livery, with 'Simonds' fleet names and 'Travel Made Simple' branding between decks (the latter similar to the new Enviro 400 MMCs). BTE originally received 'Central Connect' fleet names, but these were quickly changed. They retain dual doors. They have been given fleet numbers 589-592 respectively, which follow on from the ex-Arriva London Enviro 400s 585-588.

Talking of 585-588, these last worked with Central Connect in February this year and have now moved to Flagfinders.

Mercedes-Benz Sprinters 213 (RF68 FMA) and 216 (RX23 TUU) transferred from the East Midlands to Harlow at the end of March (quite possibly Sunday 30th). Both have often been used on new route HL1. 213 is in Novus silver and green livery, see photos on the next page. It has one row of seats reversed with tables. 216 had previously been in all silver livery with 'Ting' branding but it received standard dark blue at the rear with a light blue dividing line and Central Connect fleet names whilst it was still in the East Midlands.

A third Mercedes-Benz Sprinter to transfer into our area is 206 (RX71 TGK). This is in Flexibus blue and silver livery and up until 10 April had been working on Flexibus / DRT services in the Swaffham, Norfolk area. It was on Bishop's Stortford circular service 315 on 17th.

Enviro 400 MMC 508 was extremely rare on 701 (Sandon Park & Ride) on 9 April. This is the first, and so far only, report of a double-decker on Chelmsford P&R since Central Connect (then Vectare) took over the contracts, although double-deckers were sometimes used back in First Essex days.

Flagfinders YS18 GZO, a high roofed body Ford Transit in silver livery, was on Witham - Braintree Rail Replacement on 20 April. This vehicle has not previously been mentioned in EBN/M. It is numbered 190 in the Central Connect series and has 'Central Connect DaRT fleet names.

Services

Although services 20 and 25 are mainly double deck operated, there are insufficient vehicles for complete operation. 501 remains off road, whilst 502 and 503 have been working school routes 812 and 813 in the Royston area (although they did return briefly to Harlow stage services during the Easter holidays). Consequently there is normally at least one single-decker in use on route 20. This, and the single-deckers on route 21, is normally a 40 seater, the 30 seaters having transferred to other routes.



High Leigh is a vast new housing development on the outskirts of Hoddesdon. Hertfordshire County Council supported route HL1 commenced on 4 April 2025 to connect it with the town centre and Broxbourne Station daily, with a generous half-hourly timetable. **Below**: Central Connect Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVM 213 (RF68 FMA), in Novus livery that was previously undertaking a similar type of service in Leicestershire (see photo of sister 211 in EBM 723) is paused with the show house / apartments in the background on 6 April. **Owen Woodliffe**

Since this photo was taken the Novus branding has been removed as seen in **Allan White**'s photo **above right** taken on the same route on 18 April in Hoddesdon Town Centre (Clock Tower).

With thanks to John Card, John Lidstone, Robert MacGregor, John Podgorski, Allan White, Owen Woodliffe and LOTS.



STEPHENSONS NiBSbuses Richard Delahoy

The two NHS vaccination buses, Scania N270 OmniCity 7056 (YN56 FEO) and Solo 330 (MX59 AWF), are now back with Stephensons as the NHS have no further use for them, but are due to depart to Ukraine soon, loaded with additional medical and other aid. Details and photos of these vehicles were in EBMs 687, 689, 694 and 696. They are seen **right**, de-branded, parked at the NIBS depot in Wickford on 19 April 2025. **Matthew Evans**



In Cambridgeshire, a new base at Soham opened in early March 2025, replacing Ely (Greys Coaches depot).

With thanks to the companies, John Podgorski, Matthew Evans.

Ensignbus part of First Bus Adam Kelleher

Acquired Vehicles
RML2615 (NML 615E) from Mr D Rankin September 2024. It is understood that after preparation it will eventually join the Heritage fleet.

Further to EBM 720 and various subsequent issues, the final one of the four Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Geminis acquired from First Eastern Counties in February 2024, 367 (37410, MX58 DXZ), has now entered service, on 17 April 2025. It is in 'Butterscotch Breezer' livery, see photo on rear cover. For now, it has retained its orange LED blinds (which rather go with the livery), 364-6 had these converted to white before entering service last year. It has also retained a number only rear blind, the other three had full width blinds, incorporating the destination, fitted.

All three of 364-6 have had their "Cruising Straight to Rossi Ice Cream" above the rear window which they carried last year replaced with "open-top seafront cruises" and similar branding on the offside staircase panel "Straight to Rossi Ice Cream" removed without replacement (in both cases "Rossi" was in their stylised font), now that Rossi support for the service has ended.

Vehicle off Loan
Enviro 400 132 (34432) returned from First Essex on 5 April 2025. It attended the London Bus Museum's Spring Event at Brooklands on 13th.

Services
On the first day of the through 99 open top service from Leigh-on-Sea to Shoeburyness, 5 April 2025, Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Geminis 'Strawberry Streamliner' 364 and 'Mint Chocolate Cabriolet' 365 plus the sole remaining Volvo B7L / Ayats, 369, were used. As noted above, 367 has also been used since as has 'Bubblegum Beachcomber' 366.

With thanks to Richard Delahoy, John Lidstone and LOTS.

Ensignbus News in Pictures

Recent Acquisitions

Former Sullivans dual door Enviro 200 MMC 701 (44831, SB66 SUL) in Lakeside Bus Station on 28 March 2025. Full details were in EBMs 731 & 732.



Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 125 (37849, BV10 WWG) on route 73 at Grays Bus Station on 21 March 2025. This was new to First London but acquired from Stagecoach London in November 2024. Full details were in EBM 728.



Similar 126 (37863, BV10 WVY) at Lakeside Bus Station on 28 March 2025. Also new to First London and acquired from Stagecoach London in November 2024, with full details also in EBM 728.



All **Richard Lewis**

Acquired Vehicle
541 LX59 CZZ Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 - ex Bee Network Manchester, acquired March 2025

Withdrawn Vehicle
259 EU56 FLP ADL Dart Pointer SLF - withdrawn from fleet list after use 14 March

Significant Allocation
541 Acq - CN In operation 2 April 2025

Fleet News
It can be confirmed that 541 (LX59 CZZ), an acquired Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 from Bee Network, was the vehicle being prepared as mentioned in last month's EBM and is the first vehicle to operate in the new two tone blue Konectbuses livery. It entered service on Wednesday 2 April. A photo of this bus is on the opposite page. This bus was new to Go Ahead London as WVL313 in December 2009. It follows on in number sequence from similar new to Go Ahead London WVLs in the LX59 registration series, 530-539. The "missing" number 540 was used for the non-standard VDL DB300 / Gemini 2 LX58 CWG, which has now been withdrawn as reported last month.

Further to the debate in last month's magazine, one of the three remaining vehicles in original cream and red livery has now been withdrawn. ADL Dart Pointer SLF 259 (EU56 FLP) was withdrawn at Sible Hedingham after use on 14 March, 259 being the last Pointer SLF in service within Go Ahead East Anglia. This leaves 292/293 (EU59 AFF/J) as candidates for potential repaint and refurbishment direct from the cream & red.

EU56 FLP, ex L349, was the Tollesbury allocated SLF out of the four bought new in late 2007 for ECC contracts won at the time. L348 (EU56 FLR) was a Clacton bus nearly all of its life, L350 (EU56 FLN) was a Sible Hedingham allocation and L351 (EU56 FLM) was a Kelvedon bus originally, but in Go Ahead years FLM/N/R all ran out of Clacton with FLP remaining at Sible Hedingham. Out of the four, only FLN was repainted into the new (red and maroon) fleet livery. Over the years, Hedingham operated 27 mark 1 and mark 2 variants, MPD and SLF types, on Dennis, Transbus and ADL badged chassis, including the Brighton & Hove, Regent Coaches and Blue Triangle examples inherited from Go Ahead on takeover and the quartet from Konectbus originating with Go South Coast. 287 (HW54 BUE) became legendary for its coat of many colours and seeming refusal to be withdrawn.

Further to EBM 730 and the introduction of 652 (Y7 THG) into service in January 2025, this vehicle will probably be the last vehicle into Hedingham & Chambers red and maroon livery as acquired. Y7 THG was originally registered SN59 AVY and was new to Travel London, but by entry into service in November 2009, Travel London had been sold to Abellio - for which the Enviro 400 ran as fleet number 9511 in dual door form until August 2021. Then still as SN59 AVY and dual door, it ran for Go Coach operating the then new Fastrack AZ, a 24-hour route connecting Dartford & Gravesend to the new Amazon Distribution Centre built on the old Littlebrook Power Station site. Eight Enviro 400s were refurbished and repainted in dedicated livery for this service. By 2022, SN59 AVY moved to British Blue Tours and worked on staff contracts in the Amazon livery without fleet names. At some point, SN59 AVY became Y7 THG and it was reportedly April 2023 when Y7 THG moved to Go North West. Y7 THG acquired the Bee Network yellow corporate livery and was converted to single door configuration. Numbered 3119 in the Bee Network fleet it ran until 31 October 2024 and was then withdrawn and transferred to Hedingham, receiving the red and maroon livery. Being ex LT specification dual door with a straight staircase, it retains the two seats under the staircase behind the driver. The moquette used is a pleasing grey with orange, white and black relief. The interior is very bright with light grey walls and ceilings. Photo **Mark Lloyd**



Vehicles off road or limited availability in April 2025 were 465, 822 and 851.

Service News

Route 14, Hythe Tesco's to Tollgate Sainsbury's, has suffered major disruption due to road closures in Bromley Road and has suffered diversions around the Greenstead estate initially and recently diversions direct to & from Hythe Tesco's via St Andrew's Avenue due to the closures. Buses have been witnessed late, diverting past the Hazelton Road loop to save time and even passing the loop the wrong way round for the service. Mass confusion all around for drivers and passengers.

Certain M-F daytime services previously provided by First Essex on route 88, Colchester - Halstead, have been replaced by Hedingham services to maintain the timetable after cutbacks by First. The changeover took place from 22 April with slight timing revisions to aid reliability implemented as well.

Easter services basically ran a Sunday service for Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday with a normal Saturday service.

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

Right: Hadleigh Bus Station in the springtime blossom. However, this isn't the Hadleigh where the First Essex bus depot is, but an ancient market town in Suffolk which shares the same name.
Chambers Scania N230UD / Optare Olympus 873 (PN09 EMV), with 'Boomerang' branding including service to Colchester, has just arrived on service 90 from Sudbury on 7 April 2025.
Adam Kelleher



Right: Newly acquired Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 541 (LX59 CZZ) in Pier Avenue on 7 April 2025, the first bus in the new Konect Buses livery which replaces the livery in the above photo. In this picture, the new livery is spoilt by a spill of Adblue down the offside.
Mark Lloyd



Note the tiny offside fleet name, due to the advert frame, the nearside fleet name is much larger.



On 25 February 2025, Scania OmniCity 29 (YR59 FYT) spent a full day working on service 93 Ipswich - Colchester. 29 carries the 120th anniversary livery. Photos and a full description of this livery were in EBM719, p32/33.

Further to EBM728 p19, Volvo B7R / Jonckheere Modulo 1 (SGZ 1001, ex FL02 ZXK) has been withdrawn from Ipswich School contract use, but is held in reserve at Constantine Road depot.

Another type no longer in service is the DAF DB250LF / East Lancs Lowlander H43/29F. Full details of these were in EBM 701, p27, but to recap, Ipswich Buses had seven: 54 (PF04 WML) new in 2004, 55/56/57 (PN52 XBO/K/J), 100 (PN52 XBM) new in 2002, and 58/59 (PJ53 OLA/B) new in 2003. PN52 XBM was originally allocated fleet number 54, but was renumbered 100 because it carried gold / green livery to celebrate 100 years of municipal public transport in Ipswich 1903 - 2003 (as illustrated in EBM 701, p27). Ipswich Corporation replaced the privately owned horse trams with new electric trams in 1903. When delivered, PF04 WML (recorded as a VDL DB250 by some sources) took the now vacant 54 number.



After the takeover of Carters Coach Services on 27 May 2016, 57 started to work on the Ipswich - Manningtree 92 and Ipswich - Colchester 93 / 94 services. As time progressed, the others also worked into Essex. 56 (PN52 XBK) is seen **right** at Bendalls Court, Colchester Road, Manningtree on route 92 on 12 May 2017.
Robert Appleton
(A photo of 56 in a later livery was in EBM 690, p19). After the three Scania N94UD / East Lancs Omnidekkas 60/61/62 (PJ54 YZT/U/V) were refurbished by Hants & Dorset Trim in 2021 for services 92/93, the Lowlanders spent more time on school services.

In EBM 701 it seemed that they were all to be withdrawn, but in EBM 702 it was reported that five of them (55-59) had been reinstated for school services from September 2022, including one route into Essex, 693, Ardleigh - East Bergholt High School. In EBM 709, it was noted that 59 had been withdrawn and that 56 was dedicated to school contract route 604 to Holbrook Academy, leaving 55/7-8 to work into Essex. One still worked school service 693, and another normally worked the last journeys on service 92, 1740 Ipswich - Manningtree and 1830 return on Mondays to Fridays. In EBM 714, it was reported that in summer 2023 the Lowlanders were taken out of service for the school holidays. Three returned to use in September, 55/57-8, however, two of these now worked school contracts to Holbrook Academy, and the third school contracts to Claydon and East Bergholt High Schools. Route 693 was now worked by a Scania OmniCity, so their time working into Essex had ended. Since then, 57 & 58 have been withdrawn, leaving 55 as the last one in service. 55 was finally withdrawn on 30 January 2025. Its last regular duties had been on school contracts to Claydon and East Bergholt High Schools. A photo of 55 at Ardleigh in Essex was in EBM 703, p29.

With thanks to Ipswich Transport Society Journals and Bustimes.

Arriva London

After withdrawal of route 347 (see EBM 730), assuming it continued tracking consistently, ENL111 only appeared in Essex on route 375 three times before being taken out of service at Grays (GY) after use on 3 February 2025. It was then transferred to Dartford (DT) where it has become a regular on route B15 since 15 March. Consequently, ENL112 is the only one of the type remaining at GY and that inevitably means route 375 has continued to see double deck operation when it is not available.

The GY allocation of DW type double-deckers continues to reduce with the transfer of slightly newer T type Enviro 400s from elsewhere. These have started to make appearances on the 375 when it is allocated a double decker.

Some of the DW buses from GY have been operating in Croydon on a temporary Tram replacement route T3 running between 5 and 18 April. They include the first two of the type, DW201/2.

All of the T type buses used at GY have been those numbered in the T2xx series with one exception, T300. That bus came to GY from Enfield (E) and was recorded in use from 13 January until 3 March, after which it was transferred to Thornton Heath (TH). The only route running beyond Greater London that it was used on was the 370. This bus is notable for being one of those ordered by Arriva Kent Thameside for use at DT on TfL work and hence has a Kent registration KX61 LDV. It was originally numbered 6470, being renumbered when the DT TfL operations transferred to Arriva London in 2016.

Given the increasing numbers of Enviro 400s working GY routes it is surprising to note that route 150 at Barking (DX) seems to be seeing a greater number of DW workings alongside its Enviro 400s, with all of DW247-258, 324/5/32/3 having been recorded in March and April.

Go Ahead London

School route 608 continued to be mostly, but not exclusively, worked by BYD EBD type buses until the Easter school holiday (which was from Saturday 5 to Monday 21 April 2025 inclusive). Some EBD type buses have transferred from RR to Henley Road (DS) garage for use on route 129, which was extended through the new Silvertown Tunnel from opening day, Monday 7 April 2025. Others have transferred to New Cross (NX) garage, but nevertheless, in the new term to date, the 608 continues to be mainly, still not exclusively, EBD worked.

One bus route 677 was exclusively worked by the EBD type until the start of its new contract on 15 March 2025. The route was retained by Go Ahead but has been reallocated to Northumberland Park (NP) garage, probably because that garage had lost the (non-Essex) one bus 657 to Stagecoach London from 8 March. The bus used on the 677 was not tracking during the first week, but as at 24 April, ADL Enviro 400 diesel E214 had worked both journeys every school day from 24 March, the contract requirement for a hybrid bus notwithstanding.

Stagecoach London

It appears that the Switch Metrocity buses allocated to Walthamstow Avenue (AW) continue to give problems, to the extent that the Yardley Lane 379 has on numerous occasions been worked exclusively by a pair of the single door Enviro 200s allocated (36325/6 and 37720). However, Metrocities have made some appearances on Debden route 397; short 45006/11 and longer 67016/8/22 all being recorded once each in March and April except 45011 which was recorded twice. Switch demonstrator 89999 was also recorded on 25 March but only for 22 minutes, so confirmation of that would be appreciated. None of the appearances were all day.

Also notable on route 397 was the first appearance of Enviro 200 36284 on 10 April. It has worked from AW since August 2024 but exclusively on route W19. The front route number blind refused to display anything else so that number was carried with nothing in the windscreen to say otherwise. The front destination blind did show the correct information but the side blind was blank. As an historical aside, the W19 began in May 2000 to maintain a link between Ilford and Walthamstow following the withdrawal of Essex Buses (Thamesway) route 551 (Basildon - Walthamstow) and initially, for a few months, First Capital arranged for Essex Buses to work it from Basildon garage.

AW has started to receive their Alexander Dennis Enviro 100 EV buses for non-Essex route W12 but they have not yet entered service. 46033 (YX25 NZA) was at the London Bus Museum open day at Brooklands on 13 April.

Basildon Developments

In September 2022, c2C announced that, supported by its structural engineers and Network Rail, it had made the decision to close a section of Platform 2 (the down platform, towards Shoeburyness) at Basildon Railway Staton due to a worsening of platform movement. This closure was at the part of the platform where the front of 12-carriage trains stopped. 12-carriage trains were unable stop at Basildon in the Shoeburyness direction for the foreseeable future. Some services which remained 12-carriage for capacity reasons skipped Basildon, others were reduced to 8-carriage trains which did not serve the closed part of the platform.

Network Rail had been planning major works to rectify the underlying issue at Basildon. However the level of movement was accelerated by the prolonged period of hot dry weather during the summer of 2022, which caused shrinkage of the clay that underlies much of the c2c route. This resulted in this section of platform having to be taken out of use sooner than planned.



Sometime between then and December 2023, this section of platform was demolished. In **Robert Appleton**'s photo of First Essex Enviro 400 MMC 33989 (SN65 OGE), taken on 22 December 2023 (**right**), a platform support can be seen on the right with no platform above it.

Then in January 2025, the trees and shrubs on the railway embankment, which had been there for decades, were cut down. This made the shortened platform very visible from the street, as seen in **Adam Kelleher**'s photo of First Essex StreetLite 47652 (SN15 AEP) taken on 17 March 2025 (**below**).





Before & after. **Above**: The trees on the railway embankment as they had looked, in full summer bloom in the hot summer of 2022, on 25 July. First Essex 33415 (WA56 FTN) on route 9 to Brentwood, using the stops outside the railway station whilst the bus station was being refurbished. **Richard Delahoy**
Below: Hadleigh's StreetLite 63461 (MC72 UXZ) lays over in the same spot on 17 March 2025. The bus stop flags are still there but no longer in use. **Adam Kelleher**





Meanwhile, on the other side of the railway station, work continues apace at First Essex Basildon depot in preparation for electric buses later in the year. **Above**: This impressive looking gantry has now been built, from which electric cables will descend to plug into the new buses. The three nearest buses facing the camera in this 1 March 2025 shot are Enviro 400 MMC 33986 (SN65 OGB), Enviro 400 33546 (SN58 CFM) and Enviro 400 MMC 33989 (SN65 OGE). With its back to the camera is 70201 (OIG 1790), a former diesel Wrightbus StreetDeck converted to electric power by Equipmake which was originally 35201 (SK16 GWA), new to First Eastern Counties. This bus was stored at Basildon for a couple of months but has now moved on although it is yet to re-enter service. **Nick Street**



Below: A side view of the gantry, looking from one of the two entrances / exits to the depot. The two vehicles on the left, using the existing diesel refuelling point, are Enviro 400 MMC 33988 (SN65 OGD) and StreetLite 47649 (SN15 AEL) with a super rear advert for Efteling, "Holland's Largest Theme Park". 16 February 2025. **William Morrison**



Right: As reported in EBM 729, withdrawn Enviro 200 44598 (KX57 BWF) is parked at the back of the depot being used as a bike shelter whilst works continue. 17 March 2025. **Adam Kelleher**



Below: Flashback to 50 years ago when Basildon depot had just undergone a previous rebuild. Eastern National 1613 (BNO 104B), a Bristol RELH6G / ECW saloon, DP45F, new as 594 (DP47F) in February 1964 and renumbered to 1603 that August. It moved to Tillings Transport, as T1601, in May 1965, renumbered to T1641 in January 1966. It returned to Eastern National and was converted to OMO, losing two seats in the process, in September 1967, regaining fleet number 1603. Photo taken on the Group's South Essex tour on 27 April 1975. **Alan Osborne**

A black and white photo of sister 1602 (BNO 103B), in the previous Eastern National Tilling green and cream dual purpose livery, was in EBM 697 (May 2022).

This photo leads us nicely into the next feature….



Eastern National (and Other) Miscellany

Right: Preserved former Eastern National and Thamesway Bristol VR / ECW 3129 (XHK 234X) at the South East Bus Festival at the Kent Showground, Detling on 5 April 2025. After two years of very wet conditions, resulting in cancellation of the 2023 event and the implementation of a wet weather plan in 2024, this year the showground basked in glorious sunshine for the duration of the event. **Chris Stewart**



Below: Preserved former Eastern National Bristol K / ECW 1327 / 2255 (ONO 59) on Newark Road, Lincoln giving rides as part of an open day at the LVVS Lincolnshire Road Transport Museum, 6 April 2025. **Richard Delahoy**
Co-incidentally, in April 2025 successor company First Essex returned to Tilbury for the first time in many years, although not to the ferry, see 'Service Revisions' above.



40th Anniversary



On 12 April 2025, the East Anglian Railway Museum, Chappel & Wakes Colne, held an 'Essex Electrics' event to celebrate the 40th anniversary of electrification of the line from Colchester to Ipswich which commenced on 13 May 1985. Driving coach 75965 from 'Clacton' electric unit 309624 is seen **right**. The Clacton electrics were the mainstay of the Liverpool Street to Clacton / Walton services from 1963 to 1994, the first 100mph electric units and originally intended for London-York before the electrification of the East Coast was postponed for two decades. After a slightly perilous time, two remaining coaches from what was once a four car set are now safely at Chappel, this one restored cosmetically in recent weeks to later Network SouthEast livery (they were maroon when new, but too many alterations have taken place since then for that to be appropriate).

With a journey time to London of a little over an hour and a half, these trains brought a new level of comfort and service to the Essex 'Sunshine Coast' services for commuters and holidaymakers alike. The latter had other choices of course. During the summer, Eastern National's X12 ran right through from Victoria, Bethnal Green and Stratford to Clacton (Butlins) or Jaywick (taking around three and a half hours). The peak Saturday period return fare was 24/6 (£1.22½) in 1964 when, if you were lucky, the first of EN's Bristol / ECW RELHs would appear (as illustrated on page 27, although in Tillings cream and green DP livery). You might have the delights of a Grey-Green Harrington bodied Leopard (to Clacton, Frinton or Walton), a Sutton's of Clacton AEC Reliance or Empire's Best Bedford VAL from North London - or, of course, a more mundane vehicle such as a Bedford SB or Thames Trader.

Rail replacement covering the Great Eastern main line between Colchester and Shenfield and also on the Marks Tey to Sudbury branch line on 12 April 2025 prompted the museum to arrange a connecting classic bus service, route 88X, to & from Colchester (North) Railway Station, with David Bateman's late model Red & White Bristol MW6G / ECW U.1766 (JAX 117E) also linking direct to & from Shenfield. This and David Edwards owned Bristol RELL / ECW 1516 provided the service during the day.



Right: U.1766 outside Chappel & Wakes Colne Station next to an Eastern National dolly stop.
Text and both photos **Chris Stewart**

A photo of 1516 on route 88X is on the front cover. Whereas David Bateman was driving David Edwards's bus in that photo, here it's the other way round!

50th Anniversary



Six days earlier, on 6 April, 1516 was also helping celebrate another anniversary, 50 years of the Feering & Kelvedon Local History Museum, which was also the 210th anniversary of Moores Bros. Although it had originally been thought that the remaining part of the former Moores / Eastern National / National Travel South East depot at Kelvedon (which is deemed unsafe, with no building maintenance having taken place since EN moved out in 1974) would have been demolished by then, Braintree District Council had yet to determine the planning application to do so, so it was possible to get the **above** line up of former Eastern National vehicles. Left to right: Bristol RELL / ECW 1546 (SVW 274K), similar but earlier style 1516 (FWC 439H) and Bristol KSW / ECW 1407, later 2364 (VNO 859). **David Edwards**

A similar line up at the same spot appeared on the rear cover of EBN 615, **right lower**, photo taken by **John G Lidstone**. That was taken at an event to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Moores, on 28 June 2015, and from left to right was 1516, Guy Arab IV / Massey 1048, later 2017, (373 WPU), 1407 and 1546. Unfortunately, the Guy Arab was missing from the above photo, as, although it had been in service earlier on the day, it later failed. 2025 probably really is the final time that a line-up of preserved vehicles can be taken at this spot, although we were saying the same thing in EBN 615 10 years ago!



The two Routemasters in the top photo on the rear cover of EBN 615 were privately owned RCL 2233 (CUV 233C) on the left and RCL 2229 (CUV 229C), owned by the London Transport Museum. They had made a commemorative trip from Aldgate to Brentwood on 6 June 2015 and are seen parked on arrival in Brentwood at St George's Church, the closest practical point to the original London Hospital Annex bus stand. The trip was to mark yet another anniversary, 50 years since the introduction of RCL double deck coaches on to Green Line route 721. This photo was taken by **Ian Barlex**.

As reported last month, Southend-on-Sea City Council are planning to let a tender later this year for new routes 23A/B, linking Leigh-on-Sea Station with Elmsleigh Drive, Belfairs Woodcutters, The Fairway, Progress Road, Whitehouse Road and then continuing to the Airport Business Park or (certain journeys) Southend Airport terminal building, and to publicise the plans, two Leigh councillors arranged for Canvey Island Transport Museum's former Eastern National, new to Moores Bros, Guy Arab IV 5LW / Massey 1048 / 2017 (373 WPU), to run over the proposed route for invited guests on Wednesday 26 February 2025.

Here is a photo of a previous 23A, at Leigh Station in August 1967. The photographer, **John G Lidstone** explains: "This shot of Eastern National Bristol LD6B / ECW 2413 (205 BPU), allocated to Hadleigh (HH), was one of the first 12 colour pictures I ever took when a young schoolboy, with my plastic Cosmic35 camera on the stand. It was also the first photo I ever took on the forecourt of Leigh Station. Unusually for an early LD, 2413 had had its front indicator display rebuilt to 'T-type' from the as new three panel display, with passing point display next to the numeral display, whilst it also retained its original long front grille."



373 WPU may have been missing from the line up on the previous page, but, further to EBM 732, here is another photo of it taken on 26 February this year, also by **John**, who arranged for it to leave from the exact same place as 2413 some 58 years earlier.



Letter

from Alan Skinner



Back in the 1960s, I lived in the south of the county. I first visited Colchester after being told that the bus station was like a living transport museum, with PSVs of all shapes, sizes, colours and pedigrees, courtesy of the many independent 'family' firms connecting the villages with the town. It didn't disappoint and I was a frequent visitor. My favourite places to take photos were outside Grey Friars to get vehicles entering the bus station, and on Queen Street for them exiting. I was also impressed by the Corporation fleet, their Tuscan red and cream always neat and shiny. My photo (poor quality as it's one of the few negatives saved from a disastrous house fire) shows CCT Leyland PD2A/30 / Massey 41 (OVX 141D) heading out onto Queen Street. This bus was later rebuilt with platform doors.

But my favourites were the ex-LTE vehicles in the fleet of Osborne's of Tollesbury - me not realising that eventually I would be a regular customer on one of their routes.

It's just that a couple of rare occurrences recently jogged my memory, reminding me of the difference between now and when we moved to the area 40 years ago! We were first based very conveniently in town, but when we moved to Great Wigborough all was still ok as there was a regular Osborne's bus each way, well-spaced for either school, work or leisure use, especially when the family car was elsewhere. The drivers got to know us and many was the time when coming back from town they'd say "Do you really want the crossroads with the others or would you rather get off outside your cottage?"

Now the only buses are at either end of the day - so by the time our children were adults we had four cars and a horse lorry parked in our yard!

What prompted this memory was hearing an idling engine outside and spotting a First Essex Wrightbus StreetLite on route 50 clearly waiting briefly for time.

First, it was 47668 (SN15 ACU), still in as acquired Southampton City Red livery, on the weekday 0705 Colchester - Tollesbury run in readiness for the 0750 service into town (see photo opposite). Then later in the week it was 47630 (SN15 ADU) in new corporate livery on the Saturday 1615 Colchester - Tollesbury service.

How times change!



Above: StreetLite 47668 (SN15 ACU), still in acquired Southampton City Red livery, on route 50 in Great Wigborough on 8 April 2025. **Alan Skinner**

Rear Photo Captions - Ensignbus

Top: As reported on page 18, open top 367 'Butterscotch Breezer' has finally entered service. It is seen in Shoeburyness, turning from Campfield Road into Ness Road, on 17 April 2025. **Richard Delahoy**

Bottom: As reported in EBM 731, former Warrington Buses Optare Versas YJ13 HKA/B/C/E are in sales stock but in the meantime are being utilised on Rail Replacement work and have been allocated temporary fleet numbers 602-605. Here is 605 (YJ13 HKE) in Lakeside Bus Station on 28 March 2025 on driver shuttles. Behind is Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 130 (36319, LX15 GPY), in '20 years of route X80 livery'. **Richard Lewis**

Below: Preserved former Southend Transport Leyland PD3 / Massey 336 (CJN 436C) in the early morning sunshine at Hullbridge Road, South Woodham Ferrers on 5 April 2025 on its way to the South East Bus Festival at the Kent Showground, Detling. **Jon Collins**







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