

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 731 March 2025



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



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Two Buses with Three Axles





Above: Central Connect Mini Enviro 200 MMC 357 (YY24 HBA) on route 18 at the junction of High Road and Forest Road, Loughton. The building with the clock tower is the 1884 Lopping Hall, just to the other side of that was the original 1856-1865 Eastern Counties Railway Station. 31 January 2025.

Andrew Colebourne

Front Cover: Arriva's former Colchester Park & Ride Enviro 200 4075 (SK15 GXV) returned to the city from Maidstone on 26 January 2025. It is seen the next day on its intended route, 133, near Takeley. Note the air conditioning pod on the roof.

Adam Jones

Inside Front Cover

Top: Further to EBM 727, Dons of Dunmow's former Xelabus Volvo B9TL / Olympus G3 XCL (new to Imperial, Southall as PO59 KGG) has been reregistered to BIG 9249. (This registration used to be on a Panther Travel Olympian, originally J114 KCW.) It is seen at the Young Voices concert at the O2 on 20 January 2025.

David Bell

Bottom: ADL Enviro 500s are rare beasts on the roads of Essex. SN09 CDO has arrived after service in far off places. Now with Anita's Coaches of Stansted, as one of a trio of their vehicles that work Birchwood High School, Bishop's Stortford services, it was new to First Glasgow before moving to First Kernow, whose livery it still carries. 13 February 2025.

Owen Woodliffe

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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
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EBM Extra

EBM is published monthly. In addition, we aim to
publish two Extras each year full of historical features.
These are supplied to members free of charge, subject
to funding.

Membership Records & Data Protection

A statement of our compliance with the GDPR is
available on our website or by post. For any
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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 732

Reports to Sub-Editors	22 March
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	28 March
Dispatch by Printers on or before	5 April

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 29th and will be included if possible, if not it will
be held over to the next month.

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

Directcds Ltd, Unit 9c Britannia Estates, Leagrave Road,
Luton LU3 1RJ
01582 702703

www.directcds.co.uk

Group Notices

Deaths

We have only recently learnt of the death of Alan Moore, member 1138 and part owner of the superbly restored RT113. Alan had been a regular contributor of photos for EBN/M and his photo of RT113 alongside preserved Westcliff Bristol K / ECW AIN 825 graced the front cover of last April's EBM.

We also regret to announce the death of Clive Romain, member 1167, in January.

We offer our condolences to their families and friends.

Group Meetings

The next meetings in **2025** are:

Thursday 20 March at 1430 (but see below): **Social Meeting at 'The Globe' Public House**

Saturday 12 April at 1430 (doors open 1400): **Annual General Meeting at The Quaker Meeting House** (more details below).

Thursday 17 April at 1900: Social Meeting at 'The Globe' Public House.

The social meetings will be very informal with Alan Osborne as host. There will be no set programme, instead there will be an opportunity for networking and a series of short shows of about 20 minutes duration to members seated around two tables will take place. 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 will be 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) can also be passed around. At the end, the contributors will then swap tables. There will also be a short break. However, there is no obligation for attendees to give a show and members are very welcome just to view and join in discussions.

For the March meeting, the first afternoon one, the format has been slightly revised. Alan Osborne will arrive at about 1300 and take lunch; members are welcome to join him. The introductions will start at around 1400 with the shows from 1430.

A brief report on the 13 February evening meeting:

Our first social meeting in the new series at The Globe, with most members bringing along albums of colour photos to share, which invoked many memories. There were no digital offerings but Alan Osborne gave two short 20 slide shows on Lodge Coaches and North Essex in 1981 which went down well. Glasses were refreshed at intervals. The meeting closed at 2130 and everyone present agreed that it had been a most enjoyable evening.

The Quaker Meeting House is in Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL and is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. There is very limited on-site parking, accessed via Cedar Avenue West, we would ask that you leave these for those less able to walk.

'The Globe' Public House is also in Rainsford Road, just 100 yards along from the Quaker Meeting House, on the other side of the road. 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.

Group Members are also invited to the following **Omnibus Society** meeting which has a strong Essex connection (with thanks to Andrew Gipson):

Saturday 29 March at 1400: Talk by Robin Orbell, ex Western Greyhound and Eastern National at the **Abbey Community Centre**, 34 Great Smith Street, Westminster, London SW1P 3BU. Ten minute walk from Westminster or St. James's Park Underground Stations.

Annual General Meeting

As noted above, the 57th Annual General Meeting of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group will be held at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford on **Saturday 12 April** commencing at **1430**. There will be a slide show afterwards, where Richard Delahoy and Ian Ransom will present a mixed selection of omnibus interest. There

will be a brief presentation from the Committee on the current and future plans of the group. If any member of the Group is willing to stand for one of the Committee roles, please contact the Chair (Ian Ransom) no later than 31 March, contact details on page 2. The current roles are Chair, Treasurer & Membership, Secretary, Magazine Editor and Sales Manager. We also welcome questions from the membership, again via Ian Ransom.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Saturday 8 March: Delaine Bus Museum Open Day, Bourne. 1200-1600, admission £2.50, includes bus ride.

Sunday 23 March: West Surrey Running Day, Guildford. Southern Bus Preservation Group.

Sunday 23 March: Wood Green Transport Event. Heritage buses on routes 29, 121, 144, 251 and W3.

Saturday 29 March: Route 19 (Finsbury Park-Battersea) Running Day by London Bus Museum.

Sunday 30 March: Classic Buses from Rickmansworth to Loudwater.

Saturday 5 April: South East Bus Festival. Kent Showground, Detling.

Sunday 6 April: Vintage buses running as part of the Kelvedon museum anniversary celebrations, details below.

Sunday 6 April: Canvey Island Transport Museum. Open Day. Point Road. 1030-1600.

Saturday / Sunday 12/13 April: Wellingborough Bus Rally. Museum, Castle Way, Wellingborough NN8 1BX.

Sunday 13 April: Spring Gathering. London Bus Museum, Brooklands, Surrey.

Sunday 27 April: Amberley Spring Bus Show with veteran bus rides around site. BN18 9LT.

Saturday 3 May: Theydon Bois Transport Bazaar. Village Hall CM16 7ER.

Sunday 4 May: Ipswich to Felixstowe Run.

Sunday 4 May: Canvey Island Transport Museum Open Day. Point Road. 1030-1600.

Monday 5 May: King Alfred Buses Running Day. Broadway, Winchester.

Sunday 18 May: Maldon Museum of Power. Essex Bus & Coach Show.

Saturday / Sunday 17/18 May: Isle of Wight Running Weekend. Ryde Bus Museum. (Note corrected dates.)

Sunday 8 June: Fenland Bus Rally.

Sunday 10 August: Big Bus Show. Stonham Barns Park.

An update to EBM 729 regarding the event in Kelvedon on **Sunday 6 April** to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the local museum. Buses are planned to depart from the museum at regular intervals from 1200 onwards to local towns and villages. The museum is in Maldon Road, Kelvedon (the opposite end of the High Street from the Railway Station and the Hedingham depot). Three or four buses are expected to attend; the buses / owners have a connection to Kelvedon. The event is due to finish at 1600. (With thanks to Dave Cope.)

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

Items for Sale

Peter Carr writes: I'm thinning out my Essex and London related bus timetables and route maps, so have quite a few for sale. Earliest is the Westcliff timetable book for 1948 and other Westcliff items from the early 1950s, latest are LT / London Buses route maps from the early 1980s. Includes some ENOC and UCOC timetable books from early 1950s. If interested, please email me at hevcarr@hotmail.com for a list.

EBM Extra 8

The next issue of EBM Extra will be published towards the end of March and sent to all members by the usual distribution methods, thanks to the very generous sponsorship of Robert Appleton. A well-illustrated feature article looks at the early development of the Hedingham & District fleet from 1960 to 1978, by which time it comprised almost 100% Bedford buses and coaches, but with a strong Bristol / ECW content in the journey from 1960. The front cover features Hedingham's Bristol Lodekka THW 746. There's an in depth look at rebodging exercises by Southend Corporation, including the still unresolved mystery of the three ex-London Transport STL buses. An early Colchester Atlantean features in the Colour Archives section, whilst other articles include City Coach Company scheduling, an Eastern National Braintree destination blind, another Scottish / Essex connection, EN's Dunmow outstation, Dial-a-Ride in Harlow and a look back over 30 years of services from Southend to Stansted Airport.



Follow Ups

EBMs 724/5 - Bus Shelters

We reported in EBM 724 that, in collaboration with Clear Channel UK, Essex County Council was launching a scheme to upgrade, maintain, and expand bus shelter infrastructure across Essex and that ECC will invest £3 million in the first year of the contract to upgrade and install a range of new bus shelters across Essex.

The programme for these installations is at <https://www.travel Essex.co.uk/about-timetables-maps/essex-bus-shelters>. Next on the upgrade programme is Colchester with the first new shelters being installed in the city from 24 February.

On page 31 of EBM 725 there was a photo of the bus stop and shelter at The Crown, High Road, Loughton. Although the bus stop flag is a TfL one, the shelter is the responsibility of ECC, and this is one of the shelters that has now been replaced. The new shelter is shown **below**, photo taken on 31 January 2025 by **Andrew Colebourne**. A further photo which includes the old shelter is on page 31. (Note, further to the photo in EBM 725, TfL still haven't updated the E-Tiles on their bus stop flags for the renumbering of the Central Connect services in July 2024.) This shelter has been replaced sooner than programmed (it was due to be done February-March 2025) although others in Loughton were done later than planned.



EBM 730 - Local Government Reorganisation

On 5 February 2025, the government announced that Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock unitary councils have had their requests to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme agreed. (This includes the cancellation of this year's Essex and Thurrock elections.) The government has now issued public consultations for those councils affected by the reorganisation, it is seeking views from interested parties, such as local residents, businesses, and public sector bodies. The aim is for Mayor led strategic authorities to be in place by May next year.

EBM 728 - EOO 590. Chris Stewart writes:

Following on from my article about Eastern National Bristol FLF / ECW 1622 / 2748 (EOO 590) in EBM 728, I was looking through my notebook for 1974/75 when fellow enthusiast Chris Baggs and I were regular school day lunchtime visitors to Brentwood (BD) Depot and recorded the output board each day. When I look at it, this actually represented 105 visits...!

I came across two entries where 2748 had been out on the 'Main Road' (151/251) during that time and I also saw that manual gearbox FLFs were far from rare on these routes despite the predominance of the semi-automatics since 1967. My notes state that 2748 went out on Thursday 10 April 1975 covering for Wood Green's (WG) 2913 because this was suffering battery trouble, being swapped back again some time the following day. On Monday 17 March, 2748 had also been out on a Brentwood Main Road car working.

BD had five such lines out of the total of 25 on the 151/251, although the cyclical nature of the workings meant these could be buses from any of the six depots involved and were often out for more than just a single day. The Brentwood Inspectors' output board only showed the BD lines. The oldest bus I have recorded on one of these during that period was Basildon's (BN) 2722 on Thursday 13 February, with Hadleigh's (HH) 2723 noted on Friday 3 January 1975 and HH2724 on Friday 7 February. These three 1961 buses were no strangers to the Main Road, having been at WG until 1965 (2722/3) or 1967 (2724) - contrary to any idea that the 151/251 always had the newest buses on it. Chelmsford's (CF) 2862 was on one of the BD Main Road lines between Saturday 25 and Friday 31 January (I assume as a Docking Spare at another depot) with Canvey's (CY) 2848 and former coach BN2939 both making more than one appearance (2939 on 7 December 1974 and again on Tuesday 6 May 1975). Home depot 'stick jobs' noted were BD's own 2738 during December 1974 and 2743 in March 1975. In addition HH2735, BN2756, BN2767, BN2780, Southend's (SD) 2797, HH2825, BN2858, CY2863 and former coach BN2936 all made appearances at some point. And that was just on the five Brentwood lines during that period.

Mention of 2722-4 above led me to look at Wood Green's FLF bus allocation from 1967 onwards. The last month before semi-auto FLFs took over completely was November 1967, when WG had 2734/9, 2772/88, 2808/51/75 (covering a span from 1962 to 1966 deliveries) and the first of the semis, 2887/90/1. In December, newly delivered 2907-14 displaced all the manual gearbox buses (and 2887) and were joined by 2915/6 the next month, with 2890/1 moving to BD. In July 1968, 2917 replaced 2916 (its cream cab being favoured for 'On the Buses' filming) and things then stayed the same for a good many years before the FLF allocation started shrinking. Nevertheless, when WG closed in June 1981, 2908/11/2/4/7 were still there after 13 or so years. Along the way, however, in a surprise move, manual gearbox 2787 had been allocated for a month in August 1971 and even more oddly 2801 spent five months there from September 1979 (between coming back off loan to United Counties and being listed for disposal).

There was also, of course, the long running use between March 1973 and June 1974 of Southend depot's manual gearbox 2790 on the 151/251 during its period as an overall advert for Typhoo Tea, the result of a typographical error when semi 2890 should have been the bus selected.

Incidentally I realise that we actually have unofficial allocation lists for 1962, which confirm 1622 (2748) at Brentwood from new along with 1617-9/21/3 (2743-5/7/9).

EBM 730 - Another FLF, 2887

A photo of Eastern National Bristol FLF / ECW 2887 (WNO 975F), allocated to Brentwood, taken in May 1975, was included in last month's EBM. **Chris Stewart** has supplied another photo of the same bus, thought to have been taken around a year later, in Brentwood High Street, **opposite page**. Chris writes:

Problems arose with Cave-Browne-Cave fitted FLFs when the thermostatically controlled 'Varivane' shutters serving the high level radiators malfunctioned, which they were prone to do - if they jammed open, the system failed to heat the bus, while sticking shut meant that the water in the system rapidly boiled away under load. Water spouting from the bonnet like this (or worse!) was a fairly frequent sight in Brentwood after a well-laden 151/251 had come up Brook Street Hill. The nearby EN travel office at 3 High Street always kept a watering can ready so that buses could be topped up.

In last month's photo of 2887 its radiator grille was silver, but in autumn 1975 Eastern National started painting the moulded grilles on FLFs green. The seven LYN-P Leyland Nationals (1751-7), one of which is on the 351 behind, were delivered between October and December that year. Photo taken by **John Fryer**



Above: Details on previous page.

EBM 730 - After the Sale - Benfleet Garages. Gary Sharpe writes:

This article stated that the identity of the Crossley coach bought new is unknown. It was VVX 613, an SD42/9 with Duple Ambassador C24C body, new July 1953, although the chassis may have been slightly older. A photo of it appears on page 234 of the book 'Crossley' by Eyre, Heaps & Townsin, Oxford Publishing Co, 2002. The body style on a front engined chassis is very rare, and only 24 seats seems to suggest a specific use; in the photo the word 'Orchestra' is just discernible on the side window. It was sold in December 1961.

Paul Creighton has provided information on other vehicles owned by this company:

AOG 647	Daimler	COG5	Thurgood	C35F	In 5/53	Out 4/54
CCX 698	Daimler	CWA6	Brush	L27/20R	In 6/52	Out 11/53
CXD 357	AEC	Regal	Harrington	C33F	In by 8/53	Out after 8/53

Of the ex-London STLs mentioned in the article, BXD 471 was only operated from 9/53 to 10/53, and CXX 208 from 5/53 to 10/53.

EBM 730 - TfL Route 347. Andrew Colebourne writes:

My photo on page 1 was actually the penultimate arrival at Ockendon, not the final one. The bus then did one further round trip to Romford and back. On page 32, it would be Thurrock Council not Essex County Council who would be responsible for supplying new bus stop flags.

Regarding the "lot of nothingness" that is North Ockendon referred to by Brian Bell, I had a feeling it had something to do with the possibility of expanding housing in the Ockendon area as London overspill. It seems I was partly right, but it originates in early 1930s objections by the parish in which North Ockendon is located to being transferred to Purfleet. Suburban expansion was then expected but the post-war Green Belt prevented it. What is surprising, as the only settlement in Greater London outside the M25, the boundary has not been altered since. Perhaps the old objections still persist!

731 for EBM 731

Right: Eastern National pool vehicle Leyland National 2 1935 (MHJ 731V) working from Colchester depot on 10 February 1995, outside Manningtree High School in Colchester Road, Lawford, working 1410 Colchester - Dedham - Mistley - Bradfield - Horsley Cross 87. This school journey was extended from Mistley to Bradfield and Horsley Cross.



Below: 1935 was sold to Eastern Counties in January 1996 and received fleet number 630. It is seen working from Lowestoft depot, at Kessingland, on 6 April 1996. It is in Grampian Regional Transport style livery. Both **Robert Appleton**





Above: Grey Green Bedford YMT / Duple Dominant II RYL 731R at Maidstone Bus Station on route 136 from Ipswich to Hastings, Rye Camber and Dymchurch, via Basildon, in summer 1980. For a time, Grey Green had four of these in this white and blue livery, the others being RYL 732R and YYL 779/780T, with side slip boards for Tor Line work, that were there almost permanently. Driver and photographer **Fred Lawrance**

Service Revisions

Ian Ransom

5 January 2025

441 (Sch Only) Takeley, Four Ashes - Saffron Walden High School **Stephensons**. Service withdrawn. Further to EBM 729, the last day of operation was Wednesday 18 December 2024.

1 March

397 (Daily) Debden Broadway - Higham's Park, Sainsbury's **Stagecoach London**. Renewal of LBSL (QC) contract for three years using existing Enviro 200 / MMC diesel single-deckers. See also page 28.

23 March

36/A/836 (M-S) Bishop's Stortford Birchwood School / Interchange - Buntingford, Greenways **Central Connect**. Timetable change and additional journey. Service 36 peak evening journeys from Buntingford to Bishop's Stortford departure times changed to improve reliability. The journey at 1705 from Bishop's Stortford to Buntingford will now depart Bishop's Stortford 30 minutes later. Service 36A will operate an additional journey Mondays to Fridays from Bishop's Stortford at 0745 to Little Hadham. Minor changes to Saturday journeys departure times. Minor timetable change on 836 to improve punctuality.

37 (M-S) Buntingford, Crown - Stevenage Bus Station **Central Connect**. Timetable change. Revised peak evening journeys from Stevenage to depart at 1700 and 1900 (previously 1725 and 1810). The 1607 journey from Buntingford will now depart at 1522. Minor changes to Saturday journeys departure times.

322/323/324 (M-S) Bishop's Stortford Interchange - Lindsell / Great Dunmow / Stebbing **First Essex**. Operation passes to **Central Connect** with minor timetable revisions following the ending of the short-term temporary First Essex contract.

335 (M-S) Bishop's Stortford Interchange - Birchanger **Central Connect**. NEW SERVICE, further details next month.

Colchester

Further to last month, the transfer of ADL Enviro 200s 4059 (GN09 AXO) and 4063 (GN59 FVE) to Maidstone did occur as expected on 26 January 2025, with similar but newer 4075 (SK15 GXV) returning to Colchester in exchange. However, 4074 (SN15 GXU) joined 4075 in moving to Colchester as the expected 4072 (SK15 GXS) was unfit at the time, but that was corrected the following weekend, with 4072 then coming to Colchester and 4074 returning to Maidstone. 4072 and 4075 are in the current Arriva livery and are intended for use on service 133 to Stansted Airport. They were originally at Colchester for the Park & Ride service before the frequency of that service was reduced. 4075 is illustrated on the front cover.

Southend

A further Optare Versa to enter service here, on 5 February 2025, is 4199 (YJ58 PFZ), B38F, previously at Ware depot, last used there on 3 January. It is in the previous turquoise livery.

Southend also used Ware's Versa 2405 (YJ58 PFX) briefly for a couple of days at the beginning of February, before it went back to Ware on 7 February and was in use there later that day.

Further to last month, Enviro 400 MMC 6504 (SN66 WHX) which had been under repair by ADL at Harlow since last November after accident damage, was returned to Southend and re-entered service here, on 4 February. However, in due course, it is still expected to move to Maidstone, in exchange for VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 4452 (MX61 AYL).

The two Mercedes-Benz 45 Sprinter minibuses used for crew shuttles, 1000/14 (BT66 UAL, BF67 WGM), were transferred away on 2 February. They were replaced by a pair of Mercedes-Benz 516CDI / EVMs from Northfleet depot, previously used on the now ceased Arriva Click service at Ebbsfleet, but new to Arriva Merseyside, 1031/3 (RF68 FLL/P). They are in a predominantly silver livery, see photo on opposite page. 1000/14 were removed to Northfleet, possibly for storage rather than use.

Harlow

Acquired Vehicle

Further to the last two issues, another former Fastrack Enviro 200 MMC acquired from Arriva Kent Thameside is 4111 (SN17 MXK). It was also repainted to current light blue fleet livery before entering service. It entered service on 27 January 2025.

Withdrawal / Disposal

Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 3820 is reported as withdrawn from service (it last ran on 21 January 2025). It has been parked in the area of the garage normally reserved for withdrawn vehicles.

Optare Solo 2484 has gone to Arriva Kent & Surrey at Tunbridge Wells (and been repainted). It was last used at Harlow on 16 January 2025.

Further to the last two issues, 3772 (February 2025) and 3773 (January 2025) are further VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2s to transfer within Arriva Herts & Essex, but out of our area, to Stevenage.

Other Vehicle News

The remaining two VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2s 3771 and 3798 continue in use on route 724.

Enviro 200 MMC 4081 has also been out of service since December 2024.

Volvo B7RLE 3889 and Enviro 200 MMC 4076 were on loan to Ware from 31 January to 3 February inclusive.

The poor vehicle availability in January (reported last month) was due to a parts shortage exacerbated by the Christmas / New Year holiday.

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



Above: The acquisition of two Mercedes-Benz 516CDI / EVM minibuses for crew shuttles is reported on the previous page. 1033 (RF68 FLP) is seen in Southend Travel Centre on 6 February 2025. **Richard Delahoy**

Below: All but one of the recently acquired VDL DB300 / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2s are in the current Arriva livery (as per the VDL at the rear in the photo above), the exception being 4459 (MX61 AXW), which came from Colchester, which is in the previous turquoise. Same location as above, 18 February 2025. **Robert Appleton**



Vehicles on Loan

Last month we reported that "Ensignbus Enviro 400 MMC 132 (34432, YX66 WLH) returned for a third time on loan on 17 January 2025. It was at Chelmsford, to cover accident damaged Scania 36843 on route X30. However, it was required back at Ensignbus and was due to return the next weekend without being used." The day after EBM went to print it was decided that it was staying at CF after all! It entered service on school route 525 on 30 January. Since then it has principally appeared on 70, 170, 570 and X70 and has not actually been used on X30.

Ensignbus Enviro 400 33593 probably left Basildon depot (without being used) by early February.

First Eastern Counties Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 36271 (BG12 YKD) was on loan from Norwich to Colchester from 17-21 February (half term week). It is in Urban livery with 'Network Norwich' fleet names. It is from the same batch as Hadleigh's 36216-20 and was new for 2012 Olympic Games shuttles.

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 10 2024/25 (29 December - 25 January) - additional to EBM 730

34432 FG-CF (loan)

Period 11 2024/25 (26 January - 22 February)

33411 BN-BN (oos), 33425 BN-BN (oos), 33545 BN-BN (oos), 33559 BN-BN (oos), 33567 BN (oos)-BN, 33714 CF-CR (loan)-CF, 33725 CR-CR (oos), 36216 HH-HH (oos), 36271 FG-CR (loan)-FG, 36838 CF-CF (oos), 44597 CF (oos)-Disposal, 44900 CF (oos)-Disposal, 47668 CR (oos)-CR, 63329 CR (oos)-CR, 63458 HH-HH (oos), 67171 CF-CF (oos), 67189 CR (oos)-CR, 67738 CF-CF (oos)

33411 has been withdrawn from service for disposal, suffering from metal rot. See photo on page 15. It last ran, on route 25, on 3 February. This was numerically the first Enviro 400 for First Bus (33411 and 33412 were new to First Devon & Cornwall in December 2006, with 33413-19 following in January 2007).

Disposals

11 February 2025: 44900 to PVS, Barnsley

12 February 2025: 44597 to PVS, Barnsley

Further to last month, the disposals reported, 32547, 37004, 37006 (December 2024) and 44909 (January 2025), also went to PVS, Barnsley.

Repaints

63329 from Urban livery to new corporate livery (with vinyls), following accident repairs, seen completed at Mardens on 28 January and back in service at Colchester on 31st. Black masking has been added to the bottom of the windscreen to allow the new f logo to be applied. This bus has an advert frame on the offside, so has a small fleet name and logo above the first window behind the driver's cab, but has a large fleet name and logo on lower panels on the nearside. (So part correcting EBM 729: "Also, on single-deckers, on the offside the logo is in large size below the windows, but on the nearside where an advert frame is fitted, a smaller version is used, above the windows and nearer to the front of the bus" - this should have read "*some* single-deckers", different single-deckers have different combinations of advert frames.)

Further to EBM 728 and last month, the two ex-Arriva Enviro 400s that have been repainted from Essex Green to new corporate livery at TVS, 34453 and 34462, have now received (by late January / early February) vinyls, including the new logos and fleet names, at Mardens.

Ticket Rolls

Further to the photo of a bus ticket pre-printed with the old logo in EBM 729, ticket rolls are now appearing with the new logo pre-printed on them.

Around the Depots

(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot except where stated. All dates February 2025 except where stated.)

Colchester

As well as 36271 being on loan from Norwich (see above), Enviro 400 33714 was on loan from Chelmsford from Monday 17 February (half-term week). It was still in service at Colchester in the morning of Friday 21st, but returned to service from Chelmsford that afternoon.

Airlink liveried 67189 has returned from accident repairs at ADL, Harlow, and re-entered service on 19 February (it had been off road since 9 September 2024).

Further to last month, 32672, 37007 and 37016 were still on the scrap line on 6 February. 37042 had gone by 24 January (probably sometime between 11th and 17th, it had been there on 10th and 37016 had taken its exact place by 19th). 47668, out of use since 24 October last year, returned to service on 5 February.

News of the Harwich routes

This sub-section evolved after Harwich lost full depot status at the end of November 2013, becoming an outstation of Colchester, then closed down completely after service on 28 June 2014, to keep track of workings on the former Harwich routes. However, these days, basically any bus on the Colchester allocation can now work on the two remaining routes, 102 & 104, irrespective of livery or seating capacity. So this sub-section has more or less run its course. We will continue to report on anything significant and changes to vehicle duties. For example, for this issue, on loan from Norwich 36271 was on the 0640 Harwich - Colchester 104 on 18 February and the 0710 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 0900 return on 21st (before going on to the 86 and then returning to Ipswich in time to work in the evening on the Costessey Park & Ride circular). On loan from Chelmsford 33714 worked the 0910 Mistley - Colchester 104 on both 18th & 19th.

Many thanks to Stephen Barham and Robert Appleton for their observations and write ups over the years.

Chelmsford

Heath Drive, where route C5, terminates was closed on the morning of 12 February and so the route terminated at Moulsham shops. Most buses then continued to the mini roundabout at the top of Longstomps Avenue and turned round there. That turn is a bit tight, which may explain why Mini Enviro 200 44914 was unusually used on the route (and linked C4) all day.

33705 (31 January) & 33730 (27 January) non MMC Enviro 400s on X30.

44549 a single-decker on 372 (4th).

Ipswich Reds liveried 67406 on 351 (27 January).

Some sightings of driver training vehicles:

66848 in Witham (12th February); 66860 in Witham (29 January), at A130 Colchester Road, Springfield (6th); 69151 in Baddow Road, Chelmsford (27 January), in Collingwood Road, Witham (29 January); 69155 at Boreham Interchange (27 January).

Basildon

63342 (27 January), 63375 (6th) and 63381 (7th) long StreetLites on 9. Also, Enviro 200 MMC 67196 on the route (21st). 63375 on 300 (31 January).

Hadleigh

36217 reported on Bustimes on two round trips on Basildon's 100 on 22nd. Not confirmed by sightings, but it is possible HH were helping out BN for the day.

63458 (out of service since 22 January) seen at Motus Truck & Van, Witham (12th).

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, Jack Beney, Richard Delahoy, David Edwards, John Lidstone, John Podgorski, Colin Sigston, Derek Stebbing, Andrew Toms, Robert West, Bustimes, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.

First Essex News in Pictures

Enviro 400 33418 (WA56 FTT) on route 300 in Billericay High Street on 27 January 2025 with a Central Connect Enviro 200 MMC on route 12 behind.

Chris Stewart



Enviro 400 33684 (SN12 AFO) was showing alternating displays whilst on route 75 on 8 February 2025, 'Service on Diversion' as shown, along with the normal route display. However, there was nothing showing on the First Essex website stating that the 75 was on diversion. Maldon High Street.

Gareth Jones



From 7 February 2025 for about a week, emergency road works outside Brentwood Station led to route 9 being curtailed at William Hunter Way, missing out two stops in the High Street, one in King's Road and one at the station on its journey to Brentwood, although only the latter two on its return to Basildon. Enviro 400 33544 (SN58 CFK), still showing "Rail Stn" as the destination, about to terminate in William Hunter Way on the 1312 arrival from Basildon on 13 February. This display was also alternating with 'Service on Diversion'.

Chris Stewart



As noted on page 12, Enviro 400 33411 (WA56 FUB) has now been withdrawn from service. It is seen languishing, engineless and heavily stripped, in Basildon Depot on 15 February 2025.

Derek Stebbing



Enviro 400 MMC 33986 (SN65 OGB), without fleet names or vinyl stripes, leaving Basildon Bus Station to park up on layover outside the railway station, contrasts with fully vinyled 33984 (SN65 OFZ) behind on a stand at the bus station on 18 February 2025.

Robert Appleton



A visitor to Quayside depot, Colchester, on 23 January 2025 was this brand new Wrightbus StreetDeck Hydroliner (hydrogen cell powered) 39726 (BG74 DLD) one of three (39726-8) so far delivered for Sizewell C staff transport, to be based at a site in Ipswich but run by Specialist Passenger Solutions, a First Bus subsidiary. Four Colchester drivers have been on loan to help operate the service.

David Edwards





Above & Below: As reported last month, following the change to the maximum fare on most journeys from 1 January 2025, the '£2 to Stansted' adverts on some Airlink double-deckers have had a £3 sticker added over the £2. This is shown on Enviro 400 MMC 34426 (SN17 MTZ) at Southend Travel Centre on 6 February 2025. As also reported last month, they still show the X30 as serving Great Dunmow and the X10 not, even though from the 5 January 2025 service changes the majority of X30 journeys no longer serve Great Dunmow whereas most X10 journeys now do. The bus also has a wrong destination display for this journey as it is still showing 'Gt Dunmow' as a passing point. Both **Richard Delahoy**



Acquired Vehicles

101, YX12 FNG, ADL E40D / Enviro 400, H41/24D, new to London United, ADE1, 06/12
102, YX12 FOP, ADL E40D / Enviro 400, H41/24D, new to London United, ADE27, 07/12
103, YX12 GHJ, ADL E40D / Enviro 400, H41/24D, new to London United, ADE28, 07/12
104, YX12 GHK, ADL E40D / Enviro 400, H41/24D, new to London United, ADE29, 07/12
105, YX12 GHN, ADL E40D / Enviro 400, H41/24D, new to London United, ADE30, 08/12
106, YX62 BYJ, ADL E40D / Enviro 400, H41/24D, new to London United, ADE42, 09/12

Acquired from RATP (ADE40401/27-30/42). They are to be converted from dual door to single door before entering service.

301, SN11 FPA, ADL E40D / Enviro 400, O47/30F, new to First Glasgow, 33908, 08/11
302, SN63 NCA, ADL E40D / Enviro 400, O41/24D, new to Stagecoach London, 10196, 10/13

Acquired from First Glasgow and Stagecoach London respectively. 301 is 10.8m long and 302 10.1m. They both lost their roofs in incidents whilst with their previous operators (301 after it had crashed into the railway bridge on Cook Street, Glasgow on 21 May 2023 and 302 when it collided with a tree on Hedgemans Road, Dagenham, whilst on route 145 on 20 November 2024) and are for use on Southend open top services. They replace sold open top Volvo B7TLs 370/371 (as reported last month).

408, XL66 ACL, BCI FBC6123-BRZ2 triaxle 12.5m, H61/37F, new to Aintree Coachlines, 1001, 09/16
Acquired from Aintree Coachlines, c September 2024. It had been the only BCI tri-axle bus in the UK not owned by Ensignbus. Repainted into blue and grey fleet livery with black wheels at Mardens in January 2025. The fleet number follows on from BCI Enterprises 401-7 (although 401 (LX66 GXC) was involved in a collision with a lorry on the Harwich-bound A120 near Great Bromley on 2 July 2018 and was written off).

701, SB66 SUL ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B25D, new to Sullivan Buses, AE21, 12/16
Acquired from Sullivan Buses.

Exact dates of these acquisitions not known, but all except 408 thought to be c January 2025. (For example, 103 was still in service with RATP on Christmas Eve 2024.)

Further to EBM 728, Enviro 400 123 (YUI 5582) was only used in service for 10 days, up until 3 December 2024. It is no longer in the operational fleet and is now part of sales stock. Incidentally, it was given Sema number 32730.

Further to EBM 729, the temporary TFL shuttle service 546 (Keston Church to Downe High Street) finished as planned on 20 December 2024. The two Mercedes-Benz 516CDi Sprinters 54151 & 54152 (WUI 7786 / 8150) used on the route are no longer required for service and are currently being prepared for sale.

Other Vehicle News

Optare Versas YJ13 HKA/B/C/E (from Warrington Buses) are in sales stock but in the meantime are being utilised on Rail Replacement work and have been allocated temporary fleet numbers 602-605.

As noted above, Enviro 400 MMC 132 (34432, YX66 WLH) is on loan to First Essex at Chelmsford.

Heritage Vehicles on loan from the Newman Family

In EBM 728, RF319 (MLL 956), RT1499 (KGK 758), RM25 (VLT 25), ER882 (WLT 882) and RML2588 (JJD 588D) were noted as having returned to the Newman family. However, of these, it is now reported that ER882 and RML2588 are currently at Ensignbus (it is not known if they did return and come back, or if the report that they returned was erroneous). Previously reported RM54 (LDS 279A), RMC1485 (485 CLT), RML2405 (JJD 405D) and RML2734 (SMK 734F) remain on long term loan. RTL453 (KLB 648) is also still at Ensignbus but is no longer in use. RM1361 (VYJ 808) has returned to the Newman family.

In addition, RMC1510 (510 CLT) remains on loan from a private owner.

With thanks to John Lidstone and LOTS.

Scania N94 UD / East Lancs OmniDekka 634 (YN55 NHF) from the NIBS fleet was sold to Sergeants, Hereford, on 22 January 2025.

With thanks to the companies.

Below: Stephenson's 904 (YN53 CFX), a Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka new to Nottingham City Transport, in a special livery for Great Baddow High School, in Duke Street, Chelmsford, opposite the bus station, on 13 February 2025. **Paul Sparks**



Vehicle Reinstated

587 PL51 LDU Volvo B7TL / Transbus President - had been withdrawn at CN.

Significant Allocations

234	HD - KN	by 5 February 2025
284	HD - KN	by 10 January, back at HD by 13 February
293	KN - HD	by 11 February
587	Withdrawn - KN	by 3 February, then to CN by 11 February

Fleet News

276 (YX57 BXD) is being cannibalised for parts and resides at CN along with de-roofed 640 (LX56 EUC), the Enviro 400 that hit the Kirby Cross Railway bridge, as reported last month.

Reinstated is elderly Volvo B7TL / Transbus President 587 (PL51 LDU), presumably as a replacement for 640. It returned to work from Kelvedon depot week commencing 3 February but then transferred to Clacton by 11 February. On 19 February, 587 was recorded working the 134 town service in Clacton. It remains in East Yorkshire maroon and cream livery (as illustrated in EBN 679 and EBM 702), but its rear has been repainted in a slightly darker shade of maroon.

819 (YN06 JYD) was towed from Kelvedon to Clacton to have accident damage assessed.

Long term off road 470 (EU05 CLJ) returned to service from Sible Hedingham on 4 February after a period of non-use since October 2024.

510 (LB02 YWX) has seen use on schools services only during February up to half-term Friday (14th).

540 (LX58 CWG) despite not tracking was spotted on the OC6 contract on 14 February - and has probably worked January 2025 not tracking, it was listed here as off road last month.

Vehicles off road or limited availability in February 2025 were 463/502/524/640/819/873.

Other News

Further to EBM 729, regarding the planning application re the Kelvedon (former) Moores depot, Braintree District Council are still to determine the application, so no progress as yet.

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

Below: Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka 815 (YN55 PZW) on route 40 at Collingwood Road, Witham on 29 January 2025. New to Metrobus, as a dual door vehicle, in February 2006. Acquired by Hedingham in June 2015, converted to single door and repainted at Hants & Dorset trim, this later received Chambers fleet names before reverting to Hedingham ones. **John Podgorski**



New Vehicles

Further to last month, all nine ADL E40D / Enviro 400 MMCs (11.5m) on order were indeed delivered (to Simonds at Diss) before the end of January. They are 504-12 (YY74 OBM-P/R-V). All are in Central Connect two tone blue livery, but 510-12 have Simonds legal lettering.

510 (1 February) and 511/2 (31 January) entered service with Simonds on the Canswick Food Factory contract from Yaxley to Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Ipswich. They have since also been used on route 82, Roydon - Norwich, with 512 on route 70 Diss - Bury St Edmunds on one day.

504 (13 February) and 505 (14th) entered service on school routes 812/3 in the Royston area. 506 (14th) and 507 (13th) entered service on route 25. 508 entered service on route 24 on 18th and 509 on 20 on 21st.

Below: All of the six buses for Essex, left to right, 505/4/6/9/7/8 (YY74 OBN/M/O/S/P/R) at Simonds, Diss on 29 January 2025. **Omar Atiallah**



Other Vehicle News

Further to last month, the four red ex-Arriva London Enviro 400s 585-8 (LJ59 LYA/C/G/X) which have been converted from dual to single door are now H41/28F, previously H41/24D. They have continued in regular use from Harlow on route 25 and also routes 20 & 21. 588 (LJ59 LYX), still displaying Arriva fleet number T98, is seen **right** on route 25 at the northbound stop at Hoddesdon Clock Tower on 11 February 2025.

Allan White

With thanks to Omar Atiallah, John Card, Robert Downton, John Podgorski, Allan White, Owen Woodliffe and LOTS.





Two photos of new 506 (YY74 OBO). **Above:** on route 25, crossing the River Lea Navigation at Stanstead St Margarets on 14 February 2025. **Owen Woodliffe**

Below: Two days later, approaching the Two Brewers terminus in Ongar on route 20. **Robert Downton**



Other Operators

Roger A Smith

Acme Bus, Widdington

This operator is now based in Saffron Walden rather than Widdington.

Barker, Roydon

FY52 LEJ, a Mercedes-Benz 1223L with Ferqui C39F body, was acquired from Dolphin, Norwich in November 2024 and has been reregistered as N191 MMR.

Tey Tours, Great Tey

Mercedes Benz Turismo D22 KCL (ex BL16 GBZ) arrived here in December 2024 from Overy, Lowestoft, Suffolk and has been reregistered as Y23 TEY (seating capacity C55F). GB15 KCL (ex YT15 AOU), a Scania K410EB6 with Irizar C53FT body, also from Overy, Lowestoft, has been reregistered as Y22 TEY and OW68 AXB, a Neoplan N2216 (C53FT), previously with M&M Staffing, Cooksmill Green, has been reregistered as Y24 TEY.

With thanks to the PSV Circle.

Tickets Please!

Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit

At the end of the main season, Eastern National's coach drivers were found alternative jobs for the winter, tree lopping, bus stop painting, etc. In 1973 I was asked to join the output team of Derek Clements and Ray Shawcross at Chelmsford (CF) depot. This entailed opening up the garage in the morning, shunting buses around to their correct stands, and allocating them for service. It was a three-man rota, consisting of two early shifts, 0430 until 1230, and one late, 1200 to 2000. Saturdays were one early and one late, with Sunday only one duty 0630 until 1430. This was all paid at crew driver rate, and, as third man, I had the chance of service, or private hire work on Saturdays, and overtime on the road on weekdays. Within a fortnight, Derek had been promoted to Inspector, so just the two of us on output, but that was okay. A month later, Ray was also promoted, leaving me on my own. 0430 to 2000 for 6 days of the week, and 0630 to 1430 on Sundays, or 101 hours per week. As OMO was on the rise, no one was prepared to volunteer for output at crew rate. The management suggested that they would make output an extra duty for the Inspectors and promoted me. They then advertised output at OMO rate and got three volunteers. I was left as a reluctant Inspector, a job that I didn't want, or seek.

There was one aspect of inspecting that I did enjoy, and that was road checking, away from the office. The main weapon in an Inspector's armoury is the element of surprise. Once you had checked a bus, and got off, the driver would give the 'thumbs down' to the next bus he met, warning the crew that trouble was ahead. Mobile inspectors had the advantage of a car and driver, they could merely go onto another road, and just pop up. A foot Inspector had no such advantage. My training was carried out under the guidance of an old hand, Frederick King. He taught me to plan my day, always work in a big circle, and never go down a cul-de-sac, where you would have to double back. On my day out with him we went via Danbury, Maldon, Wickham Bishop's, Witham and Braintree and back to Chelmsford, always moving forward around the circle.

On one day out on my own, I followed that advice. Leaving the depot, I made my way up to Melbourne Estate, 44B, short walk, 44A, short walk and a 48 off of Chignall Estate. Alighting on Roxwell Road, I knew that the 48 would be past the bus station, before my next capture departed. The 0900 service 58 to Bishop's Stortford (BS crew) took me to Boyton Cross. I was viewed with some suspicion when I got off there, I had no transport, and the next bus would not appear for ages, about an hour and a half. I could almost hear the conductor's thoughts, "I bet he's got a bit of stuff to visit". A brisk walk took me to the edge of Roxwell village, and a stroll along to Elm Farm, to hide behind a tree, and await the 0915 ex Chelmsford service 46 going to Harlow. I had time to fill in most of my checking sheet before the bus appeared. I knew that it would be MW CF1356, with driver Bob Vinall, with my dad's old Setright E104. I also knew that he would greet me with "How the **** did you get here?" and he didn't disappoint me. He expected me to leave him at Willingale, where he would wait for the Chelmsford bound 46, but I

stayed with him. When I asked him to drop me at Fyfield post office, he realised that I would be catching the service 33A from Leaden Roding to Ongar at 0955., still circling. A quick scoot across the road at Ongar Four Wantz and I was on a 32, heading towards Chelmsford with Dave Mayle. The 32/A provided an hourly service between the two towns in those days. I dropped off at Norton Heath, knowing that Dave would give the thumbs down when he met the 1005 ex Chelmsford at Cooksmill Green. Was I down a cul-de-sac? No chance.

I was now feeling peckish, so an all-day breakfast at the Norton Cafe was in order. I took a window seat, and shortly a Bristol MW DP passed slowly, the driver scanning the hedgerows for an elusive inspector. My appetite satisfied, and a bit of exercise was necessary, so a brisk walk to Nine Ashes saw me waiting for that same MW DP heading back to Chelmsford as a 32A. I can't remember the driver's name, but he let himself, and Dave Mayle, down by stating that he had expected to see me ages ago. A short ride into Blackmore, and then headed to Brentwood on a 260. From Wilson's Corner a 351 took me to Shenfield Crossways, and a short stroll to Shenfield Station, to hide in a shop doorway before a 251 picked me up.

Here occurred the most bizarre happening of the day. Near the back, downstairs, was a most attractive 30 something lady, frantically searching for her ticket. I left her searching as I checked upstairs, and when I returned, she waved her ticket triumphantly. What had happened? Had she actually found her ticket, or had the conductor also found her attractive, and had planned to give her a free ride, ringing her off a ticket while my back was turned? Whatever, she now had a valid ticket, so all was well. She asked me what would have happened if she hadn't found the ticket, and in a flippant mood, I suggested that I would call around to her place to punish her. Imagine my surprise when, as she was alighting, she handed me a slip of paper, with her address and telephone number. I wonder, over 50 years later, if she is still waiting for a call, or a knock at the door.

From Billericay, I jumped a 152 to Galleywood Eagle, and via 41A and 44A to the bus station, a whole circle completed, and the element of surprise maintained. My protests to management finally bore fruit, and I was returned to driving in time for the 1974 coaching season, and every time I received a thumbs down, and then picked up a jumper, I would think, "don't go down cul-de-sacs".

Below: In his article, Tebzy mentions both Bristol MW / ECW 1356 (MOO 177) and Shenfield Station, and here is the former, preserved, at the latter, on the Shenfield School Model Railway Exhibition shuttle service on 21 September 2013, being driven by Group member Chris Stewart. **Adam Kelleher**



Essex Buses in Norfolk

In EBM 729 we listed the Central Connect vehicles that were operating for Simonds, Diss in December 2024.

Owen Woodliffe visited Diss on 13 February 2025 and captured photos of two of them. He also took photos of two other buses operating for Simonds with Essex connections. Incidentally, apologies for the one-off extra 'm' in Simonds name last month. The company also advise that the name should be pronounced 'Si-monds', i.e., similar to the boy's name 'Simon', rather than the sometimes used 'Sim-onds'.

Right: This ADL Mini Enviro 200 was new to Jim Stones of Greater Manchester as BUS 1N and on the cessation of this business was acquired by Tyrers of Adlington, being re-registered to ML62 OGY. It was acquired by Central Connect, via Ensignbus, in June 2022 and was illustrated in EBMs 701 and 725. It is in original Central Connect livery. It received fleet number 1417 when acquired, later becoming 925 when renumbered into the Vectare sequence (as listed in EBM 718). It is seen in Diss Bus Station.



Below: The 'missing' Enviro 200 MMC 341 (SF66 ARV). This bus was new to Whitelaws, Stonehouse, Lanarkshire, in September 2016, originally registered K66 ONA. It was acquired from Red Rose in February 2024 and was one of the first repaints into new Central Connect livery in March 2024. However, it was only used in service for two days, on 20 & 21 March, and was thought to have been disposed of, but in October it reappeared in service with Simonds. Previous reports were in EBM 726 with a correction in EBM 728. Also at Diss Bus Station.





Above: Lodge Coaches, High Easter, only operated VDL DB250 / East Lancs Myllenum YJ56 KCK, which had been new to Courtney, Bracknell, for less than six months before disposal to Simonds. Still in Lodge's livery, it is seen departing Diss, on route 82 to Norwich.

Below: Scania N230UD / East Lancs Olympus YN08 OBZ was new to Network Colchester (104) in June 2008. It and sister 103 (YN08 LBY) later moved on within TGM but ended up with SBC Leisure and continued to be used across Essex on schools and rail replacement work. OBZ was acquired by Simonds from SBC in August 2023. It remains in SBC livery, minus fleet names. At Diss Bus Station, also on route 82 to Norwich. A photo of it when brand new was in EBM Extra 2 and it was illustrated when with SBC on the rear cover of EBM 708.



In recent issues we have covered TfL routes 549, W14, 347 and 608 which all serve(d) Essex or Thurrock. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Transport for London so provides an opportune moment to review the bus services that TfL provides into Essex and Thurrock.

Formerly part of Essex County Council, Thurrock became a unitary authority from Wednesday 1 April 1998. TfL became operational on Monday 3 July 2000.

The bus routes operated as part of the TfL network into Essex and Thurrock as at 1 January 2025 are as follows.

Note, routes 347 and 362 are included for completeness, but the former was withdrawn after service on 17 January 2025 and the latter doesn't carry passengers within Essex or Thurrock.

20	Terminals and operation:	Debden - Walthamstow Central (Daily)
	Essex section	Debden - High Road, Buckhurst Hill (Beech Lane)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Leyton (T)
	PVR and vehicle type	10 double deck ADL Enviro 400H City (see note a)
	Current contract details	23 March 2024, 6 years, 10 existing hybrid double-deckers

150	Terminals and operation	Chigwell Row - Becontree Heath (Daily)
	Essex section	Chigwell Row (All Saints Church) - Romford Road (at the north end of the parallel Latchford Place). The out of service terminal working continues north from the church up Gravel Lane to the Pudding Lane junction to turn there.
	Operator and garage	Arriva London, Barking (DX)
	PVR and vehicle type	15 double deck ADL Enviro 400 (see note b)
	Current contract details	12 October 2024, 3 years, 15 existing hybrid double-deckers

167	Terminals and operation	Loughton Station - Ilford (Daily)
	Essex section	Loughton Station - Chigwell, Fencepiece Road (north of Tudor Crescent)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Barking (BK)
	PVR and vehicle type	7 single deck AD Enviro 200 MMC long (see note c). The route is single deck because of the low railway bridge in Roding Road east of Loughton Station.
	Current contract details	9 March 2024, 6 years, 7 exiting medium diesel single-deckers

215	Terminals and operation	Lee Valley Camp Site - Walthamstow Central (Daily)
	Essex section	Lee Valley Camp Site - Sewardstone Road, Yardley Lane Estate (Boardman Avenue)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Leyton (T)
	PVR and vehicle type	5 double deck Wrightbus LT type double-deckers (see notes a and d)
	Current contract details	2 March 2024, 5 years, 5 existing LT type double-deckers

275	Terminals and operation	Barkingside - Walthamstow St. James Street Station (Daily)
	Essex section	Tomswood Hill, Chigwell (south of Stradbroke Park) - Woodford Bridge, Manor Road (Clarence Gate)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Leyton (T)
	PVR and vehicle type	13 double deck ADL Enviro 400 (see notes a and e).
	Contract details	2 March 2019, 5 years extended by 2 years, 13 existing 2012 diesel double-deckers

347	Terminals and operation	Ockenden Station - Romford (Mondays to Saturdays only)
	Thurrock section	Ockenden Station - North Road (in Thurrock) where it meets Ockendon Road (in London) south of Home Farm Cottage
	Operator and garage	Arriva London, Grays (GY)
	PVR and vehicle type	1 single deck ENL type ADL Enviro 200 long (see note f).
	Current contract details	Originally 17 October 2020, 5 years, but contract revised and route withdrawn. 1 existing diesel single-decker.

362	Terminals and operation	Grange Hill Station - Little Heath (King George Hospital) (Daily)
	Essex section	The terminus at Grange Hill Station is actually some distance east at the junction of Manford Way and Manor Road, where there is a triangle of green with the Essex boundary running along the centre of Manor Road. Buses run clockwise between the set down and stand / pick up points in the Manford Way sides of the triangle, thus traversing the Essex side of Manor Road out of service for a few yards.
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Barking (BK)
	PVR and vehicle type	3 single deck ADL Enviro 200 MMC long (see note c).
	Current contract details	23 March 2024, 6 years, 3 existing long diesel single-deckers

370	Terminals and operation	Lakeside Shopping Centre - Romford (Daily)
	Thurrock section	Lakeside - North Road (in Thurrock) where it meets Ockendon Road (in London) south of Home Farm Cottage
	Operator and garage	Arriva London, Grays (GY)
	PVR and vehicle type	13 double deck DW-type Wright Gemini 2 VDL integral (see note g)
	Current contract details	2nd November 2024, 6 years, 13 existing hybrid double-deckers

372	Terminals and operation	Lakeside Shopping Centre - Hornchurch (Daily)
	Thurrock section	Lakeside - east of Wennington at the junction of Sandy Lane and New Road.
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Rainham (RM)
	PVR and vehicle type	6 +1 off 252 ADL Enviro 400H and 400H MMC (see note h)
	Current contract details	30 March 2019, 5 years extended by 2 years, 7 Euro 6 hybrid 2014 double-deckers

375	Terminals and operation	Passingford Bridge - Romford (Mondays to Saturdays only)
	Essex section	Passingford Bridge - Stapleford Abbots where Oak Hill Road (in Essex) meets North Road (in London).
	Operator and garage	Arriva London, Grays (GY)
	PVR and vehicle type	1 single deck ENL type ADL Enviro 200 long (see note i).
	Current contract details	6 July 2019, 5 years extended by 2 years, 1 existing Euro VI diesel single-decker.

379	Terminals and operation	Chingford Station - Yardley Lane Estate (Daily)
	Essex section	The Yardley Lane end of the route is a clockwise loop working which enters Essex for a matter of yards in Sewardstone Road between Boardman Avenue and the northern entrance to the Yardley Lane Estate bus stand.
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Lea Interchange (LI)
	PVR and vehicle type	3 single deck single door short Switch Metrocity EV (see note j)
	Current contract details	9 March 2024, 7 years, 2 short new battery electric single-deckers

397	Terminals and operation	Debden - Walthamstow, Crooked Billet (Daily)
	Essex section	Debden - High Road, Buckhurst Hill (Beech Lane)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Walthamstow Avenue (AW)
	PVR and vehicle type	5 single deck + 1 single deck off W19 on schooldays. Medium ADL Enviro 200 MMC (see note k)
	Current contract details	26 February 2022, 5 years, 6 existing diesel single-deckers. New contract from 1 March 2025, 3 years, 6 existing diesel single-deckers. (Note: Stagecoach took over the 2022 contract from HCT. Since then, Stagecoach has used break clauses to exit loss making contracts, several of which were acquired with the Kelsian and HCT businesses bought by Stagecoach during 2022. Hence the new contract from March 2025.)

462	Terminals and operation	Limes Farm Estate - Ilford (Daily)
	Essex section	Limes Farm Estate - Grange Hill Station (Manor Road / Manor Way)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Barking (BK)
	PVR and vehicle type	8 single deck AD Enviro 200 MMC short single door (see note c)
	Current contract details	23 March 2024, 6 years, 8 existing short diesel single-deckers.

498	Terminals and operation	Brentwood - Romford, Queen's Hospital (Daily)
	Essex section	Brentwood - Brook Street (Colchester Road M25 junction 28)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Romford (NS)
	PVR and vehicle type	6 double deck ADL Enviro 400 MMC (see note l).
	Current contract details	27 June 2020, 5 years extended by 2 years, 6 Diesel 2015/16 double-deckers

608	Terminals and operation	Shenfield High School - Gallows Corner (Schooldays only)
	Essex section	Shenfield High School - Brook Street (Colchester Road M25 junction 28)
	Operator and garage	Go Ahead London, River Road (RR)
	PVR and vehicle type	3 double-deckers (see note m)
	Current contract details	4 September 2021, 5 years, 3 existing diesel double-deckers

667	Terminals and operation	Chigwell, West Hatch School - Ilford (Schooldays only)
	Essex section	Chigwell, West Hatch School - Chigwell, Fencepiece Road (north of Tudor Crescent)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Barking (BK) and West Ham (WH)
	PVR and vehicle type	1 BK + 2 WH double deck ADL Enviro 400H MMC (see note n)
	Current contract details	12 March 2022, 5 years, 3 existing diesel double-deckers

677	Terminals and operation	Debden - Ilford (Schooldays only)
	Essex section	Debden - Chigwell, Fencepiece Road (north of Tudor Crescent)
	Operator and garage	Go Ahead London, River Road (RR)
	PVR and vehicle type	1 double deck WHV type Volvo B5LH Wright (see note o)
	Current contract details	12 March 2022, 5 years, 1 existing diesel double-decker. New 3 year contract due to commence on 15 March 2025, 1 existing hybrid double-decker (new contract due a break clause being activated).

W14	Terminals and operation	Loughton Station - Whipps Cross (Daily)
	Essex section	Loughton Station - Hillside Avenue (in Essex) / Buckhurst Way (in London), Roding Valley (Central Line bridge)
	Operator and garage	Stagecoach London, Lea Interchange (LI)
	PVR and vehicle type	2 single deck long Volvo BZL (see note p).
	Current contract details	7 September 2024, 7 years, 2 new large battery electric single-deckers.

Notes

(a) At the beginning of 2025, route 20's ADL Enviro 400H City vehicles were supplemented by six conventional ADL Enviro 400H buses, both types being fitted with blinds covering route 20 and other Leyton double deck routes. Consequently, the City buses now also appear on routes 215 and 275 in this list. From early February 2025, more of Leyton's conventional ADL Enviro 400H buses started to appear, such that all 26 (12128-12153, which is the whole fleet of Stagecoach London vehicles numbered in this series) had appeared on route 20 with two exceptions (12144 and 12147).

(b) The existing buses can be expected to be replaced by hybrid vehicles once sufficient battery electric buses have replaced hybrids elsewhere.

(c) In reality, routes 167, 362 and 462 use a common pool of single-deckers comprising long dual door Enviro 200 MMC vehicles, short single door Enviro 200 MMC vehicles plus some older long dual door Enviro 200 vehicles.

(d) Route 215 can see any type of double-decker allocated to Leyton (T) garage but is mostly LT type. It is the only TfL route serving Essex to regularly see operation by New Routemasters, although this type have also worked school route 608 and rail replacement services into Essex.

(e) Route 275 also regularly sees ADL Enviro 400H and Enviro 400H MMC buses.

(f) Route 347 was withdrawn after operation on 17 January 2025, as reported and illustrated in last month's EBM.

(g) During 2024, some T type ADL Enviro 400s were transferred into Grays (GY) garage to support the ageing DW type buses there and these regularly appear on route 370.

(h) In reality most vehicles used are of the 110xx series ADL Enviro 400H micro hybrid type and older Enviro 400s, plus a few Enviro 400 MMC buses.

(i) On 1 November 2024, the route was temporarily converted to double deck operation using a Wrightbus Gemini 2 bodied VDL DB300. On 16 January 2025, the route was converted back to single deck operation with the ADL Enviro 200 type being reintroduced, probably because of the withdrawal of route 347 the next day which used these Enviro 200s. Since then ENL112 has been the regular vehicle on the route, on occasions ENL111 has been used instead, although it is likely double-deckers may also appear sometimes.

(j) The Switch Metrocity EV buses have proved unreliable and consequently from December 2024 the manufacturer loaned a similar vehicle to Stagecoach, which is numbered 89999 (YJ74 DGF). This operated route 379 fairly frequently during December 2024, but only rarely since. Short single door ADL Enviro 200 buses also appear when a Metrocity is not available.

(k) Route 397 also sees older Enviro 200 vehicles and also long vehicles of both types. Two medium length Switch Metrocity EV dual door buses allocated for route W11 have been recorded this year but only once each for a few hours during the afternoons of 22 January (67015) and 29 January (67020). Short single door Enviro 200 buses appear from time to time

(l) Route 498 also occasionally sees older ADL Enviro 400 vehicles.

(m) Go Ahead London's River Road (RR) garage was using a variety of vehicle types on its TfL school routes until mid-January 2025. Any of the E and EH ADL Enviro 400, 400H and 400H MMC, Wrightbus LT type, Volvo B5LH / MCV MHV type, Volvo B5LH / Wrightbus WHV type and Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus WVL type could appear. Additionally, the Blue Triangle River Road (RR) garage has recently been regularly exchanging vehicles with the Docklands Buses Henley Road (DS) garage, further increasing the pool of vehicles that might be used. As reported and illustrated in last month's EBM, from 15 January 2025, RR has been using the new EBD B11 type of BYD battery electric buses on its school routes, including the 608, since the previous vehicles were required on newly won contracts in Bexleyheath. This is thought to be a temporary arrangement; we wait to see the long term allocation.

(n) The ADL Enviro 400H MMC vehicles include the '110xx series micro hybrid' type. Older ADL Enviro 400 buses also appear.

(o) Unlike the 608, the 677 had until recently been exclusively using a small number of WHV type vehicles (see photo on opposite page), although most of the other types have appeared in the past. But like the 608, from 15 January 2025 the route has gone over to the new EBD B11 type. Again, the long term allocation is currently not known.

(p) The W14 is currently mostly operated by ADL Enviro 200 long dual door single-deckers pending delivery of new Volvo BZL buses. The BZL buses currently appearing are allocated to the garage for other Lea Interchange routes. Although the Peak Vehicle Requirement (PVR) is two, more than two vehicles will appear over the course of any given day. The route uses the same pool of single deck vehicles as route W13 and it is thought there are cross-workings between the two.

All double deck vehicles are dual door. Single-deckers are also dual door unless otherwise stated. For single-deckers, the unofficial terms long, medium and short are used instead of the actual dimensions which vary by type and age of vehicle. TfL defines them by total (optimistic) capacities of 45, 50 or 55 and 60 respectively; there is also a 'mini' specification with a capacity of 40, but this does not apply to any Essex or Thurrock routes.

For clarity, the generic Alexander Dennis Ltd (ADL) body type names for the vehicle types from this manufacturer are used above with 'H' suffixes where the vehicles are hybrids.

Routes 150 and 215 only have their terminal stops in Essex, so passengers cannot travel wholly within Essex, they can travel between Essex and Greater London for one stop in each direction. The 150 has a northbound set down stop and continues via the terminal working to the southbound stop where buses stand. The route 215 terminal is a turning circle on private land in the Lee Valley Camp Site. There is only one bus stop but passengers may be set down in the circle before it is reached.

Route 275 is unique as the only TfL route that runs through Essex between its terminals which are both in Greater London. It is theoretically possible to make a journey just within Essex because there are two stops in the county in both directions.

The 379 is similar, but slightly different, as passengers can travel on it through Essex, but cannot board or alight as there are no bus stops in the county.

The other routes are likely to have some patronage wholly within Essex or Thurrock, although perhaps limited in the case of the 375 and 667 in particular. The Thurrock routes are obviously heavily dependent on Lakeside traffic to and from stops in both Thurrock and Greater London.

School route 608 is unique in having the majority of its mileage in Essex.

Route 462 is the only route entering Essex from the east.

There are no TfL routes that serve both the current administrative areas of Essex and Thurrock.

We will update this information in future EBM's with occasional 'TfL in Essex and Thurrock' articles (similar to 'Ipswich Buses in Essex' articles). Thanks to Ian Barlex and Robert Munster for their help in compiling this article.

Below: Go Ahead London Volvo B5LH / Wrightbus Gemini 2 WHV4 (LJ61 GVZ) on school route 677 passing The Crown bus stop in High Road, Loughton on 6 September 2024. WHV4 was showing the wrong destination, it should have been 'Ilford'. Buses on routes 20 and 397 show 'Debden' and not 'Debden Station' for the same terminal in Burton Road. 'Station' is not entirely accurate as it is a short walk away, a blunder in the town planning of the Debden Estate. Currently, new electric BYD EBD B11 types are being used on route 677. Also, as illustrated on page 5, the bus stop shelter has since been replaced. All photos by **the author**.





Above: Stagecoach London Switch Metrocity electric 45001 (YJ23 EHS), on the one-way loop working of route 379, is about to cross the London Borough of Waltham Forest boundary into Essex on 11 November 2024. The boundary crosses Sewardstone Road at the Boardman Avenue junction just behind the photographer. 45001 will re-enter Greater London at the north end of the 'Bus Standing Area' on the east side of Sewardstone Road, also called "Yardley Lane Estate, Boardman Avenue, Hesitation Point" in the TfL route description. Yardley Lane, shown as the destination, is traversed at the end of the loop before the bus rejoins its outward route in Sewardstone Road. There are no stops in the short distance traversed in Essex.

Below Right: Also on 11 November 2024, Stagecoach London New Routemaster LT363 (LTZ 1363) on route 215, unfortunately with a torn number blind, was passing the Essex boundary sign in Sewardstone Road. This is the point the boundary turns east (to the right of the sign). The road is still in Essex until the boundary turns west at the Boardman Avenue junction. From this point southwards, the boundary divides the road from the 'Bus Standing Area', which is in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The bus will leave Essex by turning into the Yardley Lane Bus Stand, leaving via Boardman Avenue and continuing down Sewardstone Road. Northbound buses use the same route in reverse, so do not enter Essex until leaving the bus stand. However, the stand is also a curtailment point for northbound buses on this route. Curtailed workings enter the north end of the stand like route 379, thus still briefly entering Essex.



Right: Arriva London Enviro 400 T170 (LJ60 AUV) has departed the route 150 stand and loading point just north of All Saints Church in Romford Road, Chigwell Row, and is crossing the Essex boundary into the London Borough of Redbridge. The alighting point northbound is in the distance on the left hand side of the picture. The buses allocated to route 150 include some that are still route branded from the experimental TfL April 2017 scheme for routes serving Barking-side. 14 November 2024.



Below: Within Essex, just north of the Yardley Lane stand, Stagecoach London New Routemaster LT358 (LTZ 1358) in Barclays Bank advertising wrap on route 215 passes what was once the Fox and Hounds Public House which closed in 2003. The pub building is now part of the Albion Centre (a residential home) so named as it is adjacent to Albion Terrace houses in the background of the picture. The post mounted sign is relatively recent; a 1986 picture shows the pub sign suspended on a bracket fixed to the building. The Essex County Council bus stop here had been disused since the withdrawal of route 505 between Waltham Abbey and Chingford, due to the TfL LEZ, from 10 April 2021. It is not served by the 215 as it is only a short walk north of the stop at the Yardley Lane bus stand. 11 November 2024.

Rear Cover

Top: Arriva London Enviro 400 T179 (LJ60 AUF) at the most northerly point reached by route 150 buses in Essex, the junction of Pudding Lane and Gravel Lane, Chigwell Row. It is not in service here, this now being the first point north of the terminus where buses can turn. 14 November 2024.

Bottom: Stagecoach London New Routemaster LT365 (LTZ 1365) in 'Just Eat / Waitrose' advertising wrap complementing the autumn colours at the private Lee Valley Campsite turning circle and stand of route 215. LT-type buses in advertising wraps appear regularly on route 215 but one suspects the client's would prefer the greater exposure provided by Leyton Garage's LT-worked route 55 into central London! However, the Campsite would appear to be popular with foreign visitors as there are signs similar to the one in the picture reminding visitors to drive on the left as they exit the site. 11 November 2024.





ESSEX BUS MAGAZINE Issue 731 March 2025
Reporting the Essex bus scene since 1964