

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features
Issue 713 September 2023



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



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Another open top special this issue.

Above: Ensignbus Dennis Trident / Alexander ALX 400 on route 68 climbing Belton Way West, Leigh with the sea and pier in the background on an unusually sunny day this summer, 9 August 2023. **John G Lidstone**

Front Cover and Inside Front Cover:

Former Eastern National Bristol KSW / ECW open top 2383 (WNO 479) has recently received NBC white & green livery. It attended the Stonham Barns Big Bus Show on 13 August 2023, its first rally after the repaint and other work carried out by London Bus Works in Northfleet. The bus was runner-up in the best double-decker category.

Front Cover & Inside Front Cover lower - at Stowmarket Railway Station, working on the 210 service to Stonham Barns as part of the event. Front cover **James Cole**, Inside Front cover lower **Richard Dixon**. 2383 is owned by the 2383 Group based in Norwich, and Richard is one of the four co-owners. Inside Front Cover upper - pausing in a lay by on the A140 near Brockford Green, being passed by former Eastern Counties Bristol VR / ECW VR190 (VPW 85S).

James Cole

Right: 2383 at Chappel in July 1998. **Chris Stewart**
The Story of 2383 is on pages 26-29.



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chooses. Those joining from February to December
inclusive pay a pro-rata subscription calculated at
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EBM Extra

EBM is published monthly. In addition, we aim to
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These are supplied to members free of charge, subject
to funding.

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A statement of our compliance with the GDPR is
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Reports, Articles & Photographs

Members' reports, articles and photos (prints, slides or
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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 714

Reports to Sub-Editors
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The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 7th and will be included if possible, if not it will
be held over to the next month.

30 September

6 October

14 October

Views expressed in EBM do not necessarily reflect the
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Group Notices

Membership News

We are sorry to report the death of member Barry Hall of Ashingdon (member 939) and offer our condolences to his friends and family.

Group Meetings

Our regular Chelmsford meetings return in the autumn and will be held at The Quaker Meeting House, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL. This is the same venue where meetings were held before being halted by the pandemic and is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. These will be on **Wednesday** evenings, doors open for a social chat at 1900, with the presentation starting at 1945. 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. On street parking in the evenings is available on Rainsford Road, Broomfield Road and Coval Lane. The meetings are being held jointly with our good friends at The Omnibus Society, Eastern & Southern Branch, who are very generously paying for the room hire so entrance is FREE. Dates organised for 2023 are:

20 September	Alan Osborne - Buses of Essex
15 November	Robert Appleton - Eastern Counties Omnibus Company from 1970 onwards
13 December	Richard Delahoy - Buses 20 years ago.

The 2024 programme will be announced in due course.

An additional meeting, which is being held in the afternoon, on **Saturday 28 October**, 1400 for 1430 start, is a presentation by Anthony Delaine Smith, the 2023 President of the OS, and Managing Director of Delaine Buses. This is at the Central Baptist Church, Victoria Road South, Chelmsford, which is located between the Railway Station and Retail Market. All members of EBEG are invited to attend.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Saturday 9 September: Delaine Bus Museum Open Day & Heritage Bus Rides Bourne PE10 9LE.

Sunday 10 September: Free heritage bus service around King's Lynn serving heritage properties.

Saturday 16 September: Enfield Transport Bazaar. St Stephens Hall, Village Road, Bush Hill Park, Enfield EN1 2EY.

Group Stall at this Event

Sunday 17 September: Canvey Transport Museum Open Day.

Friday/Saturday/Sunday 22/23/24 September: LT Acton Depot Museum Open Days.

Saturday/Sunday 23/24 September: Trolleybus Weekend East Anglian Transport Museum, Carlton Colville NR33 8BL. 1200-2100 Saturday, 1100-1700 Sunday. Includes late evening running after dark on Saturday.

Sunday 1 October: Chesham Running Day

Saturday 17 October: NLTS Transport Bazaar. Theydon Bois Village Hall CM16 7ER.

Sunday 22 October: TransportFest. London Bus Museum, Brooklands.

Sunday 22 October: Lincolnshire Road Transport Museum Open Day, North Hykeham, Lincolnshire.

Saturday 28 October: Halloween Event. East Anglian Transport Museum, Carlton Colville, Lowestoft NR33 8BL. 1500 to 2000.

Saturday 4 November: Aldenham Transport Spectacular. Allum Hall, Allum Lane, Elstree & Borehamwood WD6 3AJ.

Sunday 5 November: Chalk Farm Garage Running Day.

Saturday 18 November: Enfield Transport Bazaar. St Stephens Hall, Village Road, Bush Hill Park EN1 2EY.

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

Publicity

First Essex - Timetable leaflet for Airlink Service X20 (Colchester – Stansted Airport) dated 23 July 2023.

Heddingham - Leaflet for Clacton Airshow Park & Ride on 24/25 August 2023.

Follow Ups to EBM 712

Route 35

Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit has responded to an article in last month's issue.

I was intrigued by Richard Delahoy's article 'Go West Young Man' in EBM 712, regarding the withdrawal of service 35. To me the 35 was always the Tuesday, Friday and Saturday only service from Chelmsford to South Hanningfield. This operated via Great Baddow, West Hanningfield and Rettendon, to terminate at 'The Windmill'.

I first encountered it in the early 1950s, at my father's knee (or actually from the seat behind his cab) on wonderful Bristol Ls, or later on SCs when he was on the OMO rota. I can recall close encounters with tipper lorries during the construction of the Hanningfield reservoir, when part of West Hanningfield was submerged, including I believe, the parish church. For a short while about 1965, it was extended to Basildon via Wickford, and operation passed from CF to BN.

Right: Basildon's Bristol MW5G / ECW 1349 (209 YVX) is seen in Duke Street, Chelmsford on service 35 to Basildon, crew operated. Exact date not known but between August 1964 and Autumn 1965. **Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit**



Richard's tale brought back a memory from my own involvement with the 35 some years later. It was a lovely sunny morning, the start of my shift being on town routes, I can't recall which now. After a short break, just time for a cuppa, I was to go 'dead' (i.e., out of service) to South Hanningfield to bring the shoppers into town. On such a nice morning the canteen didn't appeal to me, the smell of breakfast frying in that smoke filled environment was best avoided. So I set off early, to find somewhere to sit in the sunshine. I had already decided on a straight stretch of road, beside the southern edge of the reservoir, safe to park my Leyland National, and a nicely cropped verge to sit on. Just a ten minute sit in the sun, and fresh air, so relaxing. By the time I woke up, I should have been having lunch, the bus should have been on its next trip, and the village ladies should have been picking up bargains in Chelmsford Market! Being over an hour late, I was surprised to see that my intended passengers were still waiting. Several had phoned in, and been assured that the bus was definitely running. Some asked if I had overslept, they didn't appreciate the irony of that question! A Mobile Inspector met me along the route to ensure that all was well, as I had apparently disappeared! He radioed to CF of my misdemeanour, and Inspector Fred King was waiting at the multi storey bus stop, next to the market, where most of my shoppers would alight. After apologising for the delay, he told them that although the service bus would run at its scheduled time, an extra bus would run an hour and a half later, to give them their full shopping time, and added, with a sadistic smile, "this young man will drive it, WITHOUT PAY!"

Jesada Technik Museum Essex Open Toppers

As reported last month, former Southend Transport Leyland PD3/6 / Massey 312 (PHJ 951), open top, has been at Jesada Technik Museum, Nakon Chaisri, Nakhon Pathom province, Thailand since at least 2008 and it was later joined by former Colchester Borough Transport 48 (YWC 648F), a Leyland Atlantean / Massey, also open top.

Roger Tuke has supplied more information on the latter's journey from Colchester to Thailand.

It was sold from CBT for preservation to a D. Morris of Colchester in December 1988 but moved swiftly on to D. Boughton (Rallybeam) of Ipswich in 1989. It was kept at Debach during winters but was used in summer 1990 on

seafront service in Felixstowe, as Blue Bus Services, (blue/cream livery) then in the summers of 1994-97 on a Paignton to Torquay service as Bulleys Bus Services (same livery), it was kept at Torre railway yard during these summers. It then was sold to B.K. Reilly (Maghull Coaches) Bootle in January 2001 and was used on Liverpool sightseeing tours through to 2011, in a white livery. It was advertised for sale by Used Coach Sales (dealer) in 2012 who wanted £8,000 for it. It was seen at Southampton docks in October 2012 awaiting export. It was then reported as being at the Jesada Technik Museum in Thailand later that year. There are numerous photos of it online in a green vinyl wrap livery for 'Champions of Asean / Suzuki AFF Cup 2014' on the streets of Bangkok in December 2014 for the football club's victory parade. There's a subsequent photo online back in the museum with wrap removed revealing a now very tatty white Maghull Liverpool sightseeing livery. I believe it is still in the museum's collection.

Company Acquisitions

Not one, but two company acquisitions to report this month.

Firstly, Rayleigh based **APT Coaches** has been purchased by investment firm **REL Capital**. APT Coaches has been established for over 50 years and operates a number of school contracts alongside its private hire and tour work, running a modern fleet of Volvos. APT will be operated by REL Davian, which last year purchased John James Luxury Travel in nearby Billericay and Romford. It marks the seventh acquisition in the coach sector over the last two years by investor REL Capital, who bought South Mimms Travel and Reg's Coaches in May of this year.

Secondly, **Galleon Travel 2009 Limited**, including the **Central Connect** bus services, was acquired by **Vectare** on 24 August 2023. Initially at least, Galleon will be run as a stand-alone business, separate from Vectare Essex. Over 40 vehicles come with the Galleon business. This acquisition marks a substantial growth of the overall Vectare Group business, taking them to a size of approximately 100 vehicles and 200 staff nationwide.

Below: Two Enviro 200 MMCs now in common ownership, at Witham Railway Station on rail replacement service on 26 August, two days after Vectare completed the purchase of Central Connect. The former's 318 (SN16 OVM) in front of the latter's 1606 (YX22 OKB). **Dave Arnold**



713 for EBM 713

Firstly, a correction to the last two issues. The bodies on both SYU 711/2S were Plaxton Supremes not Duple Dominants. Not sure how that got past the editor and proof readers twice! Apologies. But ironically, the next in sequence, Grey-Green SYU 713S, was a Duple Dominant! With thanks to Anthony Randall.

SYU **713S** is seen at Parliament Square on a very warm 12 September 1985, although not on an East Anglia Express service. It was not often used on those routes. When new it was the regular vehicle on the Ipswich - Glasgow & Edinburgh service.

Fred Lawrance

Essex Buses (Eastern National) **713** (R713DJN), a 1998 Dennis Dart SLF / Plaxton Pointer new in the recently introduced First Bus corporate livery (Barbie), at High Street, Great Dunmow on 20 July 1999 on Diamond route Bishops Stortford - Stansted Airport - Chelmsford - Southend.

Robert Downton

Eastern National Bristol FLF6G / ECW 2753 (JWC **713**) new in 1962, H38/32F, at Clacton Bus Station, Jackson Road in September 1978. This photo gives a good comparison of the original white NBC symbol still on the Leyland National with the revised version on the FLF. 2753 was sold in September 1980.

Robert Appleton



31 August 2023

1 (Tu, Th only) Basildon Bus Station - Pitsea Tesco **NIBS**. Service withdrawn after operation on this day.

1 September

265 (M, W, F only) Grays Bus Station - West Horndon Railway Station (circular) **NIBS**. Service withdrawn after operation on this day.

374 (M-F) Basildon Bus Station - Grays Bus Station **NIBS**. Service withdrawn after operation on this day.

Below: NIBS 443 (YX10 FEU) at King Street, Stanford-le-Hope on 25 August 2023 during the penultimate week of operation of route 374. **Richard Lewis**



2 September

11 Basildon Bus Station - Purfleet Railway Station **NIBS**. Service withdrawn after operation on this day.

375 Romford Railway Station - Passingford Bridge **Arriva London**. Minor timetable revision.

NIBS services 11, 265 and 374 have been withdrawn following the ending of funding by Thurrock Council.

3 September

1 (Daily) Harlow Bus Station - Sumners (circular) **Arriva**. Revised timetable.

8 (Daily) Harlow Bus Station - Old Harlow Post Office **Arriva**. Commercial journeys rerouted via Howard Way, instead of Minchin Road, due to ongoing problems with badly parked cars.

10 (Daily) Harlow Town Railway Station - Church Langley (circular) **Arriva**. Revised timetable.

31/331/332 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Burnham Clock Tower **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S to improve punctuality.

37 (Daily) Warley Eagle Way - Pilgrims Hatch (circular) **First Essex**. Revised M-S timetable with buses running up to every 20 minutes during peak times but reduced from 20 minutes to half-hourly at most other times. However, most journeys now cover the full route to Warley Eagle Way, so the off peak service between Brentwood Railway

Station and Warley is actually increased from one bus an hour to two. An additional journey will run on Mondays to Fridays from Gloucester Road at 0620. There are no changes to the Sunday timetable.

300 (Daily) Basildon Bus Station - Chelmsford Bus Station **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S.

309 (Daily) Stansted Airport Bus Station - Bishops Stortford, Thorley Park **Arriva**. Revised timetable.

508/509/510 (Daily) Harlow Bus Station - Stansted Airport Bus Station **Arriva**. Revised timetable.

C2 (Daily) Chelmsford City Centre - Broomfield Hospital **First Essex**. Revised service. The late morning / early afternoon M-S service reduced from every 15 minutes to every 20 minutes, but now all these journeys (plus some earlier morning ones) run through to Broomfield Hospital instead of every other journey during this period terminating short at North Melbourne, Morrisons, as they have done since 17 April this year (see EBM 708).

Revision to the Sunday timetable.

C3 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - North Melbourne, Wickfield Ash **First Essex**. 2233 ex Chelmsford Bus Station withdrawn on M-F.

C7 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Galleywood, Watchhouse Road **First Essex**. Revised timetable and revised to operate every 20 minutes, rather than every 30 minutes, off peak and Saturday.

C8 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Beaulieu Park, Beaulieu Gardens **First Essex**. Revised timetable, 2225 from Beaulieu Park and 2250 from Chelmsford Bus Station withdrawn on M-F.

C11 (Daily) Chelmsford Bus Station - Beaulieu Park, Beaulieu Gardens **First Essex**. Revised timetable, 2211 from Beaulieu Park withdrawn on M-F.

4 September

21 (M-S) Brentwood Railway Station - Ongar Four Wantz **NIBS**. Revised timetable on M-F. 1430 from Brentwood Station and 1458 return from Ongar withdrawn, leaving a two hour gap in service. Final bus of day at 1840 from Brentwood Station still runs, but 1908 return from Ongar withdrawn. No change to Saturday service.

81 (M-S) Brentwood Railway Station - Hutton (circular) **NIBS**. 0534, 0634, 0734, 0834, 1434, 1534, 1634, 1734 and 1834 from Brentwood Station withdrawn on M-F. So at these times, service reduced from half-hourly to hourly. Remains half-hourly between 0904 and 1404. No change to hourly Saturday service.

93/A/X93 (M-S) Ipswich Cattle Market Bus Station - Colchester Bus Station **Ipswich Buses**. Revised timetable, X93 will now operate via Ipswich Road, rather than Highwoods, in Colchester.

95/A (M-S) Tollesbury Square - Maldon Plume School **Hedingham**. Revised timetable, with amended route for service 95A (Sch only) in Maldon.

100 (Sch only) Stow Maries, Prince of Wales - Burnham Ormiston Rivers Academy **Fords**. Revised timetable.

102 (Sch only) Steeple, Canney Road - Burnham Ormiston Rivers Academy **Fords**. Revised to operate as a closed school service.

103/104 (M-S) Colchester Bus Station - Harwich Railway Station **First Essex**. Service 103 withdrawn. Service 104 operates to a revised timetable with one journey each way extended to Norman Way schools (Sch only).

103 (Sch only) Asheldham, Brook Lane - Burnham Ormiston Rivers Academy **Fords**. Revised to operate as a closed school service.

104 (Sch only) Tillingham, Wick Cottages - Burnham Ormiston Rivers Academy **Fords**. Revised to operate as a closed school service.

105 (Sch only) Southminster, Steeple Road Corner - Burnham Ormiston Rivers Academy **Fords**. Revised to operate as a closed school service.

106 (Sch only) Southminster Railway Station - Burnham Ormiston Rivers Academy **Fords**. Revised to operate as a closed school service.

434 (Sch only) High Ongar Church - Shenfield School **NIBS**. Minor timetable change.

481 (Sch only) West Horndon Railway Station - Hutton, St Martins School **NIBS**. Minor timetable change.

561 (Sch only) Basildon Bus Station - Chelmsford **First Essex**. Revised route and timetable.

756 (Sch only) Sudbury Bus Station - Colchester Norman Way Schools **Chambers**. Revised timetable for reliability.

809 (Sch only) Wakering area to Rochford King Edmund School **Stephensons**. Further to last month's notes about revised timetables for the 807/8/10/11/12/13 variants, the 809 trip is withdrawn.

816 (Sch only) Ashingdon, Lascelles Gardens - Westcliff High School **Stephensons**. Revised timetable.

902 (Sch only) Little Horkesley, The Beehive - Stanway Secondary School **Hedingham**. Revised timetable and no longer operates via Wakes Colne.

C392 (M-F) Harlow Bus Station - Hoddesdon Merck Sharpe & Dohme **Epping Forest Community Transport**. 1530 ex Harlow and 1559 ex Hoddesdon withdrawn.

D1 (M-S) Bradwell Bate, Dudley Drive - Maldon Tesco **Stephensons**. 0724 from St Lawrence revised to start from Bradwell Bate, Dudley Drive at 0713 (Sch only) or St Lawrence 0724 (Non Sch).

- FC01** (Sch only) Mayland Green - South Woodham Ferrers School **Fords**. Revised timetable.
- FC03** (Sch only) Southminster, Steeple Road Corner - South Woodham Ferrers School **Fords**. Revised timetable.
- FC05** (Sch only) Tillingham Square - South Woodham Ferrers School **Fords**. Revised timetable and extended to start & finish in Asheldham.
- FC07** (Sch only) Mundon Victory Hall - South Woodham Ferrers School **Fords**. Revised timetable.
- SB07** (M only) Sewardstone, The Elms - Loughton, Traps Hill **Epping Forest Community Transport**. Renumbered DaRT 10 and revised from fixed to an on-demand service.
- SB09** (M, W only) Abridge Field Close - Epping St Margret's Hospital / Loughton, Traps Hill **Epping Forest Community Transport**. Revised route and timetable.

Below: StreetLite 63328 (SK65 PXJ), in red shuttles livery, on the 1535 Colchester - Harwich 103, 21 August 2023, on the B1352 entering Ramsey before the Ramsey (Castle) turning, a section of route no longer covered by the Colchester to Harwich service after 1 September. Note the side fleet numbers on this vehicle are unusually over the front wheel arch and not towards the rear. **Robert Appleton**. More on route 103 on pages 24-25.



Below: Some Service Revisions from 69 years ago this month.

WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA
MOTOR SERVICES LIMITED

WINTER SERVICES commencing SUNDAY, 26th SEPT., 1954

Revised Services will come into operation on the following ex "CITY" Routes

251	LONDON (Wood Green) — BRENTWOOD — BILLERICAY — SOUTHBEND-ON-SEA	(Winter Time Table)
252	BRENTWOOD — HUTTON (Bracken Bank) — Journeys via Priest's Lane re-routed	via Shenfield "Green Dragon"
253	BRENTWOOD — BILLERICAY — WICKFORD — RAWRETH (via Shotgate) —	Winter Time Table
255	BRENTWOOD — BILLERICAY — LT. BURSTEAD — LAINDON —	Winter Time Table
260	ONGAR — BLACKMORE — BRENTWOOD — BULPHAN — LAINDON	
	7.53 a.m. (Sundays) Blackmore — Brentwood Rly. Stn. —	Withdrawn for Winter Months
262	BRENTWOOD (Bishop's Hall Estate) — Three Arch Estate —	Additional Early Journeys on Saturdays

For full particulars of these and all other Revised Services see Time Table Supplements (price 3d.) from Local Offices

W.M.S. 13/1/54

Head Offices: New Writtle Street, Chelmsford. Phone: 3431 (4 lines)

Excludes until 9/10/54

Harlow

Further to last month, Optare Solo M810 Slimline 2482 (YJ07 VRF) is still at Ware and larger Solo M950 2484 (YK07 BEO) is still at Harlow, so these can be regarded as transfers out of and into the Harlow fleet. Correction to last month, 3813, the VDL SB200 / Plaxton Centro seen in Harlow depot on 21 July 2023 is registered YJ58 FFC not YJ58 CCF. Coincidentally, the latter registration is carried by a vehicle allocated to Harlow, Optare Solo SR 1519.

Colchester

Enviro 200 3988 (GN07 DLV) was withdrawn in mid-August upon MOT expiry. Southend's VDL SB200 / Wrightbus 3761 (YJ08 DZM) was received on loan from Southend on 8 August.

Southend

Two further Enviro 400 repaints into light blue are 6506 (SN66 WJA) and 6507 (SN66 WJC). The latter carries Pride colours in place of the usual white and light blue diagonal lines; old liveried 6509 also still carries Pride colours but presumably will lose those on repaint (6509 was illustrated on the rear cover of EBM 696). 6507 is seen **below** in Southchurch Road, Southend on 31 August 2023 outside the Cow & Telescope (formerly the Sutton Arms); the driver had forgotten to change the destination display. **Richard Delahoy** 6507 and 6509 both carry the same six colours of the rainbow, applied in the same order, but reversed. 6509's only extended down as far as above the doors / driver's cab.

Another trainer noted at Southend is T27 (LJ58 AVD), a dual-door Enviro 200, first seen on 8 August, in the current Arriva training livery with a purple front. Trainers used at Southend vary from time to time and we don't get full reports of all such movements; generally there is only one allocated at any given time. As noted above, 3761 was loaned to Colchester from 8 August.

With thanks to Neil Bays, John Card, Matthew Evans, Adam Kelleher, John Lidstone, Keith Sadler and Owen Woodliffe.



Acquired Vehicles

33705	SN12 AHO	SFD4DSBRFCGX36660	B450/50	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33714	SN12 AJV	SFD4DSBRFCGX36691	B450/59	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport

ADL E40D / Enviro 400. Acquired from First South Yorkshire & Midlands, collected from Doncaster depot and driven to Chelmsford on 30 August 2023. In Urban livery.

These were part of the batch of 100 Enviro 400s purchased by First Bus as shuttles for the 2012 Olympic Games. After the Games 33705 and 33714 moved to First Manchester, then went on loan to Diamond Bus North West when they took over some of First's Manchester operations before returning to First at South Yorkshire (Sheffield). Previously acquired 33685, 33713 and 33750 were also part of the batch of 100.

Vehicles on Loan

Further to the report last month of 35917 (BN72 TVL) and 35921 (BN72 TVT) being on loan to Colchester from Ipswich between 24 July and 3 August, from Tuesday 15 August two further First Eastern Counties StreetDecks, also in Ipswich Reds livery, 35918 (BN72 TVM) and 35925 (BN72 TVX), were on loan to Colchester from Ipswich.

Allocation Changes

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

Period 5 2023/24 (23 July - 19 August)

32530 CR (oos)-CR, 32532 CR (oos)-CR, 32629 CR-CR (oos), 32676 CR (oos)-CR, 33997 CF (oos)-CF, 33998 CF (oos)-CF, 36839 CF-CF (oos), 44002 CF (oos)-Disposal, 44005 CF (oos)-Disposal, 44598 CF-BN, 44599 CF-BN, 44913 CF (oos)-Disposal, 63064 HH-HH (oos), 63338 CF-BN, 63339 CR (oos)-CR-BN, 63341 CR-CR (oos), 63343 CR-BN, 63344 CR-BN, 63375 BN (oos)-BN, 63383 BN (oos)-BN, 66796 CF (oos)-Disposal, 67161 BN (oos)-CF, 67163 BN-BN (oos), 67190 BN-CR, 67194 BN (oos)-CR, 67195 BN-BN (oos), 67196 CF-BN, 67901 BN-CR (oos), 67903 BN-PT (oos), 69024 CF (oos)-BN, 69516 CR-CR (oos), 69905 BN-BN (oos), 69907 BN-CF (oos), 69909 BN-PT (oos), 69915 BN-BN (oos), 69916 BN-CF (oos), 69917 BN-BN (oos)

The many transfers into Basildon are partly to replace the hybrids, see below.

The End of the Hybrids

Enviro 350H 67903 last ran on 9 August and Volvo 7900H 69909 on 4th. Then, suddenly, on Friday 18th, all the remaining hybrids were taken out of service. This is believed to have been an edict from First Bus as a business case had been made for their withdrawal, this also included the withdrawal of the First Berkshire Volvo 7900Hs.

The final Enviro 350H, 67901, actually last ran on 17th, on route 22, then on 18th the rest of the Volvo 7900Hs came off service. 69907 ran in at midday, part way through its day on route B3. 69916 ran in similarly early, part way through its day on B1. 69915 ran off next, from Canvey, Leigh Beck at 1850 off route 22 and then returning out of service to Basildon Depot. 69917 was the penultimate, running off route X10 at 2024 from Chelmsford. Appropriately, refurbished 69905 became the last hybrid in First Essex service, its last departure from Southend Travel Centre was on route 25 at 1915, then its final journey was the 2030 short 25 to Shotgate, then back out of service to Basildon. So for 69905 just six months of use after its very long and very expensive refurbishment. Photos on pages 16-17.

Therefore only just under 10 and a half years' service for the First Essex hybrids. But they were experimental technology, which has since been superseded by fully electric vehicles, replacement parts were getting difficult to obtain and they were expensive to run.

[The last remaining Volvo 7900H with First Berkshire, 69928 (and the only other one still in service with First Bus), was also due to finish on 18th, but it ran a few journeys the next morning.]

Disposals

44002, 44005, 44913 and 66796 to PVS, Barnsley, week ending 19 August 2023.

Re-seated Vehicles

67189 is the second ex Park & Ride Enviro 200 MMC to have had luggage racks fitted, this one at Ensignbus. After being out of use since 5 June to have the work undertaken, it returned to service, on route X10, on 22 August. However, it has not yet been repainted and remains in P&R all black (possibly because it was needed back at BN as part replacement for the withdrawn hybrids). Both it and 67194 (reported last month) are now B36F, ex B41F. 67192, which has already been repainted into Airlink blue, was seen at Ensignbus on 30 August, possibly to also have racking added (it had been out of service since 16 August).

Repaints

Further to last month, 67194 has route X20 branding.

Tap & Cap

This was introduced in the Chelmsford area on 29 January 2022 (see EBM 694), in Colchester on 26 February 2022 (EBM 695) and in Basildon on 17 April 2022 (EBM 696). It was finally introduced in the Southend Metro Zone on 14 August 2023. This extends from Southend to Hadleigh, Rayleigh, Canvey Island, Battlesbridge, Hullbridge and Tarpots. It also applies to routes 22 and 28 beyond Tarpots to Basildon. Fares under the current £2 maximum for some short distance journeys are still available to buy from the driver. Return tickets are no longer available entirely within the Southend Metro Zone. Apart from on routes 22 and 28, Tap & Cap does not apply to interurban routes (apart from on local journeys within the respective zones).

Tap On Tap Off

As reported in EBM 701, Tap Off readers were fitted to buses over the August Bank Holiday weekend 2022. However, this has still not been introduced, the current £2 maximum fare largely makes this superfluous, although on interurban routes it would speed up boardings with passengers not having to buy a ticket from and state their destination to the driver.

Around the Depots

(All vehicles listed below allocated to relevant depot except where stated. All dates August 2023 except where stated.)

Colchester

Further to last month, by 6 August 32530, 32531, 32547, 63331 and 63337 had been joined in the scrap line by 69516 (which has been out of use since 9 July) and all have had Tickers removed and some were being cannibalised for spares. Accident victim 63331 was towed away (destination unknown) on 8 August for assessment. On 18th, 32629, 37016, 37017, 63341 and 67901 had joined the line. 32629 is the last vehicle in Barbie livery and has an unserviceable engine plus is out of MOT. 63341 had a gearbox failure and hybrid 67901 had transferred from Basildon for storage. 32530 and 32532 had both returned to service. There was no sign of 32531 or 32547. 37016 and 37017 both returned to service later in the month.

Colchester has had a number of vehicles on loan during August. Two more StreetDecks, 35918 and 35925, have been on loan from Ipswich, details on previous page. 32551 & 32641 from Chelmsford and 36220 from Hadleigh arrived on 6 August. 32551 was only used for two days, 7th & 8th, before returning, 32641 was used from 7th-17th inclusive and 36220 went back after five days work (7th-11th). Basildon's suitably liveried 33425 was used in the Colchester Pride procession on 12th and the next day attended the Big Bus Show at Stonham Barns. It then stayed in Colchester, used in service from 14th to 18th, when Enviro 350H 67901 was moved to CR for storage and 33425 was collected for return to BN.

On the last day of August, the final two Enviro 300s at Colchester, 67741 & 67750, moved to Chelmsford (so the whole batch is now at CF) and in exchange the final two original style Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urbans at Chelmsford, 66806 & 66817, moved to Colchester.

News of the Harwich routes (4 August - 1 September). Compared to last month's report, only three double-deckers have been noted:

21 August: 37062 on 1735 Colchester - Harwich 104 and evening 102 journeys

23 August: 37613 on 0915 Mistley - Colchester 104

23 August: 37020 started on 1005 Colchester - Harwich 104, stayed on 104, finished on 1805 Harwich - Colchester 104.

After 63338/39/43/44 transferred to Basildon, reducing the number of StreetLites at Colchester, there were more appearances of Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 2s, for example on 30 August 69519 had a break from route X20 (see below) working on 103/104 from 1235 Colchester - Harwich 104 to 1705 Harwich - Colchester 104. The two ADL Enviro 300s, 67741 and 67750, continued to make regular appearances as well before their transfer to Chelmsford at the end of the month.

A new weekday timetable on 104 was due to start on 4 September, including the withdrawal of the last two Monday - Friday 103 journeys via Ramsey, Harwich Road Wrabness and Bradfield (Church). The last day of service 103 was therefore 1 September, with 47665 on 0720 Harwich - Colchester and 69517 on 1535 Colchester - Harwich. See pages 24-25.

Clacton routes. Route 74B has again mostly been worked by long StreetLites during the last month. Exceptions have been double deck Volvo / Geminis on all Saturdays: 37007 (2 September), 37135 (19th, 26th), 37140 (12th), plus also 37133 on Friday 25th; short StreetLites 47430 (23rd), 47655 (31st), 47668 (17th, 24th); Enviro 300 67741 (22nd); Volvo B7RLEs 69515 (18th), 69517 (1 September), 69519 (30th), 69520 (7th). Route 76: 47421 & 63328 (13th), 47665 & 63328 (20th), 63329, 63334 & 69520 (27th), 47658, 63335 & 67741 (Bank Holiday Monday, 28th), 63330 & 69517 (3 September).

37613 and 37621, double-deckers in green Essex Bus livery, have been on route X20 frequently during August, sometimes both on the same day. Less usual was 37137 (13th). Similarly, green Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 2 69519 has been a regular on the route. Less usual were 69517 (19th) and Thamesway liveried 69520 (26th). A couple of StreetLites have also been reported, 63330 (17th) and 63336 (26th).

67193 (9th) & 69520 (15th) single-deckers on route 320.

A very unusual working (in the rain, following an RTC) on Saturday 5th, 37027 on 81/A (normally StreetLite operated).

Chelmsford

On the scrap line on 20 August were 42935 (intact), 66814 (heavily cannibalised), driver trainer 69151 (minus its engine) and hybrids 69907 & 69916 transferred from Basildon for storage. 32540 and 66759 had both gone, as had 42941, 42956, 44002, 44913 and 66796, which are reported above and previously as being disposed of.

69421 returned to service on 22 August after accident damage repairs.

Now that Chelmsford has some more modern double-deckers with the recently acquired Enviro 400 MMCs, there has been regular use of these on route X30 (full route) in August whilst up to three Scania's at a time have been off road. Noted have been: 33994 (15th, 16th, 24th-26th, 31st), 33995 (7th, 24th, 29th, 30th), 33996 (18th), 33997 (9th, 31st), 33998 (12th, 14th, 17th, 25th, 1 September). Similar on loan Ensignbus 34432 continues to also be used. Less usual have been older Volvo / Geminis 32629 (29th) and 37034 (21st) plus Enviro 200 MMC 67169 an unusual single-decker on the full route on Bank Holiday Monday, 28th.

44006 on 170 (9th). 44900 on 31 (11th).

Basildon

StreetLite 63375, which was acquired from First Hampshire & Dorset on 6 May 2023, finally entered service on 17 August.

In August, 33981 and 33991 received 'Essex Bus' fleet names on side and front in magenta and light purple on their Urban 2 with white front liveries. Those on the front replaced 'First f' names.

69907 (16th), 69917 (9th, 10th, 13th, 17th, 18th, its last day of service) on X10.

44908 on 25 (9th, 10th). Recently transferred from Chelmsford, 44599 an unusual Enviro 200 on 9 (22nd) and 25 (25th). StreetLites noted on the full X10 route: 47595 (18th, whilst sister 47596 was on Wickford to Rettendon shorts), 47652 and 47653 (19th), 47652 again (20th), 63169 (21st) and 63312 (7th). 63170 & 63375 (Bank Holiday Monday, 28th) the first report of long StreetLites on 251.

Hadleigh

63064 was towed away from Hadleigh depot by LJ Transportation's DAF LJ69 TOW on 23 August, to Cummins at Langley to receive a replacement Euro 5 Cummins engine.

33685 an unusual double-decker on 14 shorts (10th).

Service Vehicles

To summarise the electric vehicles that are known. All are plain white.

Vauxhall Movano engineering vans KR23 VWX at Basildon, KW23 NLN at Colchester.

The former has Sema number 93015.

Vauxhall Vivaro minibuses for staff shuttles (eight seats plus driver), FP23 MWU at Chelmsford, FG23 XYY at Colchester.

Any further information, including the missing Sema numbers, would be welcome.

Right: KW23 NLN being charged at Quayside on 28 July 2023. **David Edwards**



Stonham Barns Big Bus Rally

This event, near Stowmarket, Suffolk, was held on Sunday 13 August 2023. There was a good attendance by First Essex and First

Eastern Counties buses, plus preserved Eastern National and Eastern Counties vehicles. First Essex vehicles noted were 33425 (Pride livery), 37133 (Colchester Zoo), 47696 (red), 63457 (green), 67161 (red) and 67194 (blue) - the last two the first conversions to having luggage racks removed / fitted. Former Eastern National and / or First Essex vehicles noted were 1516, 1546, 1833, 2383, 3107, 65574 and 65679. Also there was former Heddingham L103. See photos on front cover, inside front cover and pages 15 & 21.

On 2 September, 33981, 36837 and 47596 were on display at the Orsett Show.

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

Below: Former Eastern National Leyland Tiger / Plaxton Paramount 3200 1131 (C131 HJN) at the Peak Rail Bus Rally on 18 June 2023. **John Weeks**

1131 was new to EN in March 1986 and sold to United Automobile, Newcastle in May 1989. It was allocated to Middlesborough by United and was awarded the trophy as the best modern vehicle in the 1989 Tyne Tees rally. It was restored to this livery between 2018 and 2019.



First Essex News in Pictures

Twilight time. The nights are drawing in as we head to autumn, although this photo was taken at the height of summer, at 2058 on 7 August 2023. 47697 (LV22 HVZ) on route S2 at Highwoods, Colchester.

Dan Pretty



Two First Essex StreetLites at Stonham Barns on 13 August 2023, 63457 (MC72 UXV) in Essex Bus green and 47696 (LV22 HVY) in shuttles red. Both were new to FE, but the latter was from dealer stock, and although shorter than 63457, has the same seating capacity.

Nigel Clark



As mentioned last month, the 1605 M-F 86 from Colchester to West Mersea, which returns dead, is worked by a vehicle off route X20. Enviro 200 MMC 67193 (SN66 WKP) on the first such working, in Queen Street, Colchester on Monday 24 July 2023.

John G Lidstone



The End of the Hybrids

67901 (SN13 CHO), the last remaining Enviro 350H, on its last trip, 1750 Basildon - Canvey at High Street, Benfleet at 1750 August 2023. It ran dead back to Basildon.



69915 (BV13 ZBX) on its final run, at High Street, Benfleet at 1815 on 18 August. After reaching Canvey, Leigh Beck, it then ran dead back to Basildon.



The last hybrid in service, refurbished 69905 (BV13 ZBG) heading for Basildon at Rayleigh Road, Eastwood with dusk falling at 1939 on 18 August. A shame that it didn't receive yellow stripes or shuttles branding.



All this page
John G Lidstone

Rear view of 69917 (BV13 ZBZ) in Duke Street, Chelmsford on 18 August 2023.

Jake Gill

As these photos show, 69915 and 69917 kept their original livery until the end.



The other end of the spectrum. Newly delivered 69902 (BV13 ZBD) at Basildon Depot on a bitterly cold 24 March 2013, before the 'A Greener Essex' decals were added.

Adam Kelleher



One of the replacements for the hybrids at Basildon was a surprise in the form of Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 69024 (SF55 UAS), rescued from withdrawal at Chelmsford. However, it didn't last long at BN, it only operated (on shuttle routes) on 19, 21 and 22 August before being withdrawn again. This photo, in Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, was taken on 22 May 2023 when it was still in service from CF. Scania / Enviro 400 MMC 36838 (YN69 XXV) on route X30 is immediately behind.

David Moth



Acquired Vehicle

First of a few, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 YY64 TXK, ex Transport for Cornwall (2205). New to Go Ahead London (SE225) originally B25D converted to B30F. It is not currently known where in Go East Anglia these will operate.

Significant Allocations

470 HD to CN (back to HD by 24 August)

Fleet News

Long term out of use 255 (EU05 AUT) has been officially withdrawn from the fleet. 257 (EU56 FLM) is off road but has not been officially withdrawn.

267 (AJ58 PZS), 296 (SN10 CCY), 524 (LX05 EZG), 532 (LX59 DCO), 536 (LX59 DCZ), 602 (SN10 CFF) and 852 (AO57 HCD) were all long-term off road during late July and early August, with 267, 536 and 852 making it back into service by the end of August. With regards to 823 (YN56 FFC) and the extended working diagrams, it is now believed that other vehicles (283 and 292) in early August were carrying 823's ticket machine but in a coincidence 821 (YN56 FFA) was seen working the 1512 service 753 from Bury St Edmunds to Sudbury. See also photo **below**. 822 (YN56 FFB) has had all body panels replaced or renewed as required and has also been retrimmed and MOT'd and awaits repaint. Enviro 200 275 (YX57 BXC) was in the process of being repainted into fleet livery, ex EYMS, in early August. 534 (LX59 DCV) has been readied for service and has been initially allocated to Kelvedon joining 533 and 535 there although did transfer to Clacton for the Airshow. It is believed that 279 (YX57 BXH) has also been repainted, but is now running with 462's ticket machine details, mainly on the 77 service. To correct previous reports - EBM 707 reported 588 (PJ02 RBY) going for scrap, but 588 has been long term stored since coming off road in February 2023 but is still currently not operational.

Below: Long wheelbase Scania OmniDekka 821 (YN56 FFA), still in Brighton & Hove livery, on route 134 on Marine Parade West, Clacton-on-Sea on 24 August 2023. In recent years, route 134 has been worked by open toppers in the summer, but this year the open top bus is used on new specific open top route 1 (see rear cover) albeit on this particular day it was in use on the Airshow service. **Alan Moore**



Service News

Heddingham provided the Clacton Airshow Park & Ride service on 24 & 25 August 2023 running direct with no intermediate stops between Clacton Shopping Village Car Park and the Seafront. Open top 502 was used on the service meaning that closed top vehicles were used on route 1, 851 on 24th and 641 on 25th.

From Sunday 3 September there are planned timetable amendments to Chambers services 373, 374, 707 and 756.

Additional News

Ex L103 (BAR 103X) Leyland Leopard / Plaxton Bustler attended Stonham Barns Big Bus Show on 13 August along with fleet member 9273 (LX09 AZP), the driver trainer Esteem bodied E200 Dart. This vehicle is seen **below** in Pier Avenue, Clacton, on 8 August.

Robert Appleton

With thanks to Adam Kelleher, John Podgorski & the Heddingham website.



Acquired Vehicle

Stephensons Enviro 200 428 (YX17 NYW), reported last month as acquired from Mistal Group where it had been in their rental fleet, is currently operating in plain white without fleet names, from Rochford depot.

Services

A few NIBS liveried vehicles have been helping out on the newly won ECC tendered routes 5 & 14 in Harlow. In the first week of August, 438 operated on Stephensons routes 30, 38/A and 39 in the Witham, Braintree, Halstead area, then from 9th, it was used on the Harlow routes. 401, 439 and 450 were also used on these routes during August.

438 (YY15 FZC) is seen **right** on route 5 on the approach road to Harlow Bus Station on 14 August.

Jamie Gracie Mckay Wilson via Facebook

With thanks to John Podgorski and the companies.



Below: Route 14 is peak hour journeys between the bus station and the Pinnacles Business Area. Stephensons own Enviro 200 435 (YY67 USC) is departing from Pinnacles turning from Elizabeth Way into Fourth Avenue on the second evening working back to central Harlow, on 1 August, at 1628. **Owen Woodliffe**



Other Operators

Roger A Smith

Acme, Takeley

... has moved its vehicles from the site near Stansted Airport to a site on the Shire Hill Industrial Estate, Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden. The new site has an authorisation for 25 vehicles.

Brentwood Community Transport

... has a new Volkswagen minibus EA23 UCL (named 'Beryl').

North Essex Travel, Clacton

Paul Harper formed this company in 2022 and has been operating Dennis Dart SLF / Caetano KX03 HZP since March 2023. The Dart was new to Ealing Community, Acton in April 2003. Since it has been with a number of operators including Cardinal Buses as fleet number DC102 and Burrows Coaches where it carried the registration T666 BFX. Paul previously worked for Arriva and Hedingham before becoming a freelance driver and setting up the company. This year he has advertised a number of day trips from the Walton, Frinton and Clacton area. He also undertakes rail replacement and private hire work.

Below: KX03 HZP at the Stonham Barns Big Bus event on 13 August 2023. **Alan Moore**



Below: Close up of the pictorial fleet name. **John G Lidstone**



Lodge Coaches, High Easter

A recent acquisition is PN09 EKW, a Scania N230UD / Optare Olympus new to Metrobus. It was converted to single door by Ensignbus in early 2019 and had been operating in an all-white livery with Selwyns Travel. It is in fleet livery and is seen **below** at the Lodge open day on 20 August 2023 alongside Optare Solo YJ07 VTA.

Richard Delahoy

Bottom: Also on display at the open day was Lodge's oldest vehicle, Ford T SV 6936. **John Salmon**

A photo of this was in EBN 678 (October 2020) but in black & white.



Tendring Travel, Thorpe-le-Soken

On 12 July 2023 **Robert Appleton** photographed Volvo B7TL / Alexander ALX400 LW05 VKV at Bath House Meadow Car Park, Walton-on-the-Naze (**below**) but he was unable to trace its history on the Internet. He suspected it may have been new to Dublin Bus. His instincts were correct, and the information he wanted was coincidentally included as an acquisition by Tendring Travel in last month's EBM - formerly with Keane Travel, Orsett, this vehicle was originally registered as 05-D-10431 in the Republic of Ireland. The Beestons Enviro 400 MMC next to it, YX23 OSM, was illustrated in EBM 710.



The old bus bays on Dane Street at the Bishop's Stortford Interchange are now closed to passengers. They have been replaced by new stops on an extension of the station approach closer to the railway station.

With thanks to Richard Delahoy, Alan Moore, John Podgorski, Ian Sharpe, Rob Webb and the PSV Circle.

Osborne's of Tollesbury timetable

Thanks to the generosity of the Transport Museum Wythall and our member Bob Williamson, we have a spare copy of this Osborne's timetable to give away. The timetable is undated but from an illustration inside is likely to be mid to late 1950s. If you are interested, please contact Richard Delahoy (details on page 2). First come, first served!



The Demise of the 103 (and triumph of the 104)

Robert Appleton

This article is a follow up to 'The Decline of the 103 (and rise of the 104)' in EBM 690 (October 2021).

The service revisions of 17 April 2022 involved minor changes on Mondays to Fridays only:

0920 Mistley - Colchester 103 advanced to 0915 and renumbered 104, although the route between Mistley and Colchester was the same on 103 and 104.

1530 Colchester - Harwich 103 retarded by five minutes to 1535.

1825 Colchester - Harwich 103 replaced by 1835 Colchester - Harwich 104.

Further service revisions on 30 October 2022 saw the Saturday 103 journeys replaced by 104 journeys, so the few remaining 103 journeys operating via Ramsey, B1352 Harwich Road Wrabness, and Bradfield (Church), re-joining service 104 at Bradfield (Village Maid), were now Mondays to Fridays only:

0715 (Schooldays) Harwich - Colchester Head Street.

0720 (School Holidays) Harwich - Colchester Bus Station.

1535 Colchester Bus Station - Harwich.

The last Saturday 103 journey, 1700 Harwich - Colchester, was worked by Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 66801 (MX05 CCI), as illustrated in EBM704, page 16.

Service revisions on 3 September 2023 included the withdrawal of the remaining 103 journeys, so 103 operated for the last time on Friday 1 September. As noted on page 13, Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus 69517 worked the last journey. From 3 September, the Harwich - Colchester service is a revised 104 on Monday to Saturday daytimes, plus 102, also serving Parkeston and Dedham, on Monday to Saturday evenings and Sunday daytimes.

Below: Bristol FLF6G / ECW 2772 (VVC 52), allocated to Harwich (DT), leaving Harwich Town Station on the 103 to Colchester in March 1978. Just visible in the background is a Harwich & Dovercourt Leyland Leopard / Harrington that has transported Prins Ferries passengers from Navyard Wharf to the station to join the boat train to London Liverpool Street. Part of the train is visible in the station.



On Monday to Friday schooldays, Ramsey is still served twice a day by Panther Travel 18 / 118 linking Ramsey with Dovercourt, Harwich, and Parkeston. At other times, anyone living in Ramsey needs to walk up Church Hill to catch First Essex 102/104 at Ramsey Church.

Right: Flip dot display on Volvo Olympian / Alexander 34284 (P184 TGD), 3 March 2006.



An Eastern National Omnibus Co. Ltd map dated 1930 shows a Colchester to Harwich route operating via Bradfield (Church), B1352 Harwich Road Wrabness and Ramsey. In September 1930 the first straight line across Essex, services 51/53 started: Tilbury Ferry - Grays - Chelmsford - Colchester, then 51 to Harwich using this route, and 53 to Clacton. In April 1965 the second straight line across Essex was started when the Bishop's Stortford - Braintree - Colchester route was joined to the Colchester - Harwich route, and the whole service was numbered 70. Later this Colchester - Harwich section was renumbered 103 from 30 April 1972. So after 93 years, there is no longer a stage carriage / local bus service via Bradfield (Church), B1352 Harwich Road, Wrabness and Ramsey.

Acknowledgements

The National Way - Silver Jubilee of the Eastern National Omnibus Co. Ltd. 1955, by Donald MacGregor (Cotterell & Co.).

60 Years of Service to Essex 1930 to 1990, edited by G.W.H. Dodson (Eastern National Limited).

Essex Buses Fleet Record Volume 3 1996 - 2004 by Adam Kelleher (Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group).

EBM 690, EBM 697 Supplement, EBM 703, EBM 704.

First Essex Buses timetables.

Below: Bristol VR / ECW 3078 (STW 22W) also allocated to DT, at Colchester Bus Station on 7 May 1997, collecting passengers for service 103 to Harwich. 3078 had been refurbished by Marshalls of Cambridge between October 1996 and January 1997, including up seating from H39/31F to H43/31F. It has the short lived main 'Eastern National' with f symbol fleet names introduced after First Bus was created in 1995.

All photos **Robert Appleton**



The Story of Cover Star 2383

Chris Stewart

The vehicle with the longest ever career - approximately 57 years - with Eastern National and its predecessor and successor companies, Bristol KSW / ECW WNO 479, has recently received a new (old) identity, as illustrated on the front and inside front covers.

WNO 479 was new to Westcliff-on-Sea Motor Services, entering service in October 1953. Part of the last batch of lowbridge ECW L27/28R bodied KSW5Gs delivered (in green) to WMS and Eastern National, it passed into the main EN fleet in January 1955 upon the absorption of Westcliff, becoming fleet number 1426. Random allocation lists for the 1950s and early 1960s (plus complete ones from January 1964 onwards) suggest that it spent its whole working life as a closed-top bus at Southend (SD), before being one of 10 WNOs selected for conversion to open top during the 1965/66 off season. Rebuilt at Central Works to O33/28R layout (there were two versions, those done at Prittlewell having some noticeable differences in appearance [1]), 2383 - as it had become in the August 1964 renumbering scheme - re-entered service at SD in May 1966 with others of the batch, replacing ex City and Hicks Leyland Titans. It then worked virtually every summer on the seafront at SD until the end of September 1978 (although for most of summer 1971 and all of summer 1973 on loan to Southend Corporation Transport), the exception during this period being 1974 when Clacton beckoned for one summer for route 121 [2]. There were odd out of season spells as a driver trainer or private hire vehicle at SD, Basildon, Chelmsford and Brentwood (including being used in May 1972 for an open top victory tour by Chelmsford City FC after they won the Southern League). Before the 1974 season, the four remaining open toppers, 2383 plus 2379, 2382 and 2384, were repainted into NBC white and green livery, having been cream with green relief since their conversion [3]. A fifth was in stock at the time, 2386, but this had been damaged in an accident the previous July and was delicensed for disposal [4].

One FLF converted to open top, 2300, replaced 2379 in service at Southend in mid-June 1978, with three more (2301-3) replacing the remaining KSWs for summer 1979. 2379 was kept in store before being sold to the Eastern National Preservation Group in September 1980, but the other three surprisingly reintroduced open top operation to Clacton, on route 121, in 1979 for the first time since the one bus service (2383) in 1974. This was repeated in 1980, although 2382, by then a show bus, wasn't used. However, summer 1980 ended up being the last year of EN operation of Southend open top services and in 1981 the FLFs replaced the KSWs on Clacton services (which were revised to 117/8) [5]. And so 1980, for now, also proved to be the last use of the open top KSWs in service. 2383 and 2384 were delicensed for disposal in August 1981 and had their fleet names removed. 2382 was sadly destroyed in an arson attack at Prittlewell later the same month. 2383 and 2384 luckily survived the fire, but were put through the bus wash at Southend multiple times to try to remove the smoke staining. Work was then undertaken to convert 2383 to a show bus to replace 2382. The chassis was painted in blue Hammerite (as per 2382 and the former FLF show bus 2849), the radiator blind slides were painted black as per 2382, the radiator was polished and small red fleet names with a blue & red on white NBC symbol were added to replicate how 2382 had been. However, this work was halted by management and it is not thought that 2383 saw the light of day in this condition. We are very grateful to **John G Lidstone** for providing his very rare photo **opposite**, taken inside Prittlewell Works.

However, for whatever reason, neither bus was sold. The next reference to them in the Group's News Sheet was a year later when both were decorated for use in carnivals on the same day - 14 August 1982 - 2383 at Southend and 2384 at Walton. 2383 was also used in another Southend carnival procession a week later, where it advertised 'Explorer' tickets. It was relicensed as a Class V and allocated as a Pool vehicle. In 1983, 2383 was decorated as a space rocket in the Southend Pier Festival on 3/4 September whilst 2384 attended the Showbus and British Bus Weekend rallies, plus it won third prize amongst the decorated floats when dressed as a Town Hall at the Harwich carnival on 4/5 November! In October it was reported that "2383/4 are currently at Central Works, and these vehicles are to be refurbished for further use next year; one vehicle, probably 2384, will be prepared to a condition suitable for rallies, and the other vehicle will be available for carnivals and other special events". 2383 was used at Braintree on special Christmas promotional duties in December.

Then, in the week ending 14 April 1984, both 2383 and 2384 were repainted into traditional cream and green open top livery (albeit with green bands above the windows, which they didn't previously have when cream), the former at Central Works, the latter at Clacton depot. For the summer, they again attended rallies and carnivals.



Over the years, 2383 was repainted a few times, always in the same cream and green combination. Dates known are May 1986, March 1993, February 1998 and December 2004.

Towards the end of 1985, 2383 was fitted with a new engine supplied by Tom Burrells (1905) Ltd. A tachograph had been fitted to it by June 1987, although this may have been done earlier.

In 1986, open top services at Clacton recommenced, with newly converted Bristol VRs 3500 (WNO 546L) and 3501 (NPU 974M) on routes 100 and 200. Then the following year, route 300 (Highfield Holiday Park - Jaywick Sands) was added, which saw the surprise return to PSV service of 2383. In 1988, both 2383 and 2384 were certified for PSV operation of route 300, the same route as 1987, although between 26 June and 10 September running from Holland-on-Sea (The Haven) to Jaywick Sands.

These routes did not operate in 1989, instead the open top VRs transferred to Hadleigh, for the reintroduction of route 67 (Southend depot having closed by then). 2383 also went to Hadleigh as a spare vehicle for the service, and did operate, for the first time in Southend for 11 years.

2383 and 2384 seem to have spent most of 1990 in store at Colchester, although 2383 attended the Thorley fete in July and 2384 was used by a group of schoolchildren on a tour around Essex for November's BBC Children in Need appeal. By October they were both in store for the winter at Walton depot, as illustrated in EBM Extra 2.

In May 1991 it was noted that 2384 had been seen on driver training duties in the Chelmsford area. That summer 2383 worked a Wednesdays-only circular heritage tour from Highfields and Clacton to St Osyth, Great Bentley, Dedham, Manningtree, Mistley and Walton (£4.50 for three and a half hours), for which microphones and speakers were fitted. This was repeated in 1992. In between, 2383 spent most of the 1991/92 winter in use as a driver training vehicle from the New Writtle Street, Chelmsford yard.

Both KSWs, together with VR 3500, attended the Derby at Epsom in 1993. In summer 1993, open top operation resumed at Clacton with the VRs on route 100. New route 99, Martello Coach Park to Holland Haven, along the seafront, was scheduled to be worked by "vintage open top buses". This service was repeated the following year (Holland to Jaywick) and both KSWs are known to have operated. On the Sunday of 1994's August Bank Holiday weekend, as part of their Historic and Interesting Vehicle Day, Suffolk County Council used 2383 on service 631

between Colchester and Lowestoft, via Ipswich, Leiston (Long Shop Museum), and Carlton Colville Transport Museum, a journey of more than 60 miles in length.

However, the next year disaster struck 2384; it was working on a Suffolk County Council contract, route 651 to Walberswick, on 23 July, when it suffered a blown engine. Various attempts to source a replacement engine proved fruitless, and it languished outside at the back of Clacton depot. By September 1998, parts were literally dropping off. Thankfully, it was sold for preservation the following month and is still with us today.

Meanwhile, 2383 took part in the open top bus rally at Southend in September 1995 and gave rides along the seafront. In 1996, although still owned by Eastern National, it was being cared for by the 'Eastern National KSW Preservation Group' (which included a group of interested staff) and was based at Harwich depot. It continued to attend events and was available for private hire.

2383 operated a Sunday rail replacement service between Colchester and Sudbury during Summer 1998, connecting with the East Anglian Railway Museum at Chappel & Wakes Colne (see photo on page 1). It then undertook a round Britain tour during late summer 1998, visiting First Bus premises at Bristol, Swansea, Stoke-on-Trent, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, York, Leeds, Sheffield, Leicester and Norwich, with an eventual return to Chelmsford Bus Station on Friday 4 September. This was in aid of the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, and the journey started with a visit to Kensington Palace to lay a tribute to the Princess. It was reported that the bus completed 1,639 miles and used 115 gallons of diesel and six pints of oil.

It continued to be used on special services - for example, during summer 2000 these included the joint Great Eastern Ale Trail on the Harwich to Manningtree line, the Chappel Beer Festival and the Harlow Show.

2383 set off on another tour in May 2003, from Harwich to the Czech Republic, for the Bohemia International Bus Show. The trip, for which EBEG was a co-sponsor, celebrated the bus's 50th anniversary and raised money for cancer research and the Czech Republic flood relief fund (following flood damage the previous year).

In March 2004 2383 was officially renumbered 90230 as part of the First Group nationwide Sema numbering system. It kept its 2383 fleet number plates, but the Sema number was added above the fuel cap. In October that year 2383 was on display at the official opening of the new Westway, Chelmsford, depot.

By 2006, 2383 was back at Clacton. Then in 2010 First Bus decided to disband its heritage fleet and 2383 was sold for preservation to John Day, the bus residing for some time at Yeldham Transport Museum before that had to be vacated. The bus changed hands in January 2022 and left Essex, being acquired by a consortium of Norfolk-based drivers / enthusiasts with Essex connections [6]. So although no longer Essex based, 2383 remains relatively local. It could have been a lot worse - before First Bus disbanded its heritage fleet, there had been talk that 2383 would go to Aberdeen to be part of a First Bus Museum.



2383 ended up (just) being the last ever Bristol chassis vehicle in the Eastern National / First Essex fleet. It left the fleet (from storage at the new Braintree depot) 11 days after heritage Bristol VR / ECW 38790 (3072, KOO 790V), which is happily also preserved. It was also very nearly the last ECW bodied vehicle in the fleet; there had been farewell trips for 34818 (4018, C418 HJN) in June 2010, but the bus soldiered on in service beyond October. There had been buses bodied by ECW and its predecessor, the Eastern Counties coach factory, in the fleet since 1933.

Having had the prestigious job of leading the buses in HM Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee Parade in June 2022, attired in a wrap representing the 1950s [7], London Bus Works carried out extensive body work and repainted 2383 in NBC white and green during 2023 and the bus took to the rally scene again in August, as shown on this issue's front and inside front covers.

NBC Livery on KSWs

As noted above, 2379, 2382, 2383 and 2384 received NBC white and green livery prior to the 1974 summer season. 2382 was destroyed in the Prittlewell fire. 2379 and 2384 are now commercially operated. After being acquired by the Eastern National Preservation Group in 1980, 2379 was later exported to the Netherlands, but returned to the UK after being acquired by Stephen Leckie, CEO of Crieff Hydro Ltd, Perthshire, in April 2015 [8].

After sale for preservation in 1998, 2384 operated for Town & Country and later Talisman. With the latter it regained its NBC livery (albeit with a historically incorrect red & white on blue NBC logo) but with the collapse of the company it was acquired by Riviera, Torquay before moving to its current owner Aire Valley Transport Group, t/a Yesteryear Coaches. It has been repainted into traditional cream livery (and regained 'winged' fleet names) but with black instead of green (and including a black band) [9]. So this left 2383 as the only one of the original NBC quartet available to regain NBC livery, and at 70 years old, and 49 years since it first received this livery and 39 years since it lost it, it is very pleasing to see it restored to it.

References

- [1] These detail differences were outlined on page 32 of EBM 688.
- [2] Your editor did not previously know that 2383 had operated in Clacton in the summer of 1974. Therefore, there are a couple of errors in his article 'A Brief History of 2300' in EBM 702 which stated that before 1979 open toppers hadn't been used in Clacton since 1973.
- [3] A photo of 2379 newly painted into NBC white and green taken at Prittlewell Works on 18 March 1974 was on the inside front cover of EBN 681.
- [4] 2386 was subsequently sold to South Wales Transport in September 1974. Its story was told in EBN 679 with follow up photos in EBN 681.
- [5] More detail relating to this paragraph is in the aforementioned article 'A Brief History of 2300' in EBM 702.
- [6] A photo of 2383 at the village of Worham, Suffolk, en route to its new home, was on page 4 of EBM 694.
- [7] Three photos of 2383 in its 1950s wrap were on the inside rear cover of EBM 698.
- [8] More details of this vehicle were in EBNs 639 and 640 with the most recent photo, taken in May last year, of it in EBM being in issue 704.
- [9] As illustrated on the rear of EBM 700.

Additional information by Adam Kelleher and John Lidstone. If anyone else has anything to add, or can fill in some gaps, we will include in a future issue.

Below: After 57 years, the end of 2383 with Westcliff / Eastern National / First Essex. Wrapped up for the winter inside the new Braintree depot on 23 October 2010, after sale but before collection by the new owner. The depot itself was to open on 19 February 2011. The tarpaulin covering the roof was affixed using hooks added to 2383 at some stage (as can be seen in the photo on page 1), but these were removed during its recent restoration.

Chris Stewart



Eastern National FLF Open Top Conversions

In EBM 688 (August 2021) we included two rare photos of Eastern National KSW 2382 (WNO 483) being converted to open top inside Prittlewell Works.

In EBM 702 we included a brief history of the FLF open toppers.

Here we combine the two topics, with three rare photos of two of the FLFs being converted inside Prittlewell Works, kindly supplied by the photographer **John G Lidstone**.

John does not have exact dates for the photos but conversion of the FLFs to open top was carried out utilising spare works capacity only during 1978 and 1979, with 2300 completed by June 1978 and 2301-3 completed by April 1979.



Above: an FLF after the roof had been removed but before it had been repainted, so an open top FLF in NBC green. RHK 348D still has its fleet number plate of 2863, as an open topper it was renumbered to 2301 in 1979.

Top, opposite: And not just one but a second rare photo of an FLF converted to open top but still in NBC green. RWC 608 was a former coach, new as 1641 and renumbered 2605 in August 1964. It had only been converted to bus configuration in 1976, renumbered 2937, before being chosen as the first open top FLF in 1978. In this photo it still has its 2937 fleet number plate.

Bottom: A later photo of RWC 608, now repainted white, with old fleet number removed, new one, 2300, not yet fitted. As described and illustrated in EBM 702, 2300 is preserved and worked on Southend route 68 on 25 September 2022, on loan to Ensignbus from its owner Julian Patterson.



Thamesway to Harwich

Colchester allocated 69520 (BJ11 ECW), in Thamesway heritage livery, reaches Harwich occasionally. Here it is on route 104 on the way there, in Manningtree on 11 July 2023, working the 0835 from Colchester.

However, this is not the first time that a Thamesway liveried bus has reached Harwich. 3109 (UAR 599W) was one of three Bristol VR / ECWs to receive this version of Thamesway livery, and one of the last two buses to do so, in April 1999 just before Anglia livery was introduced. It had transferred from the Eastern National division of Essex Buses to Thamesway in October 1998 for contract work at Basildon. In June 2002 it transferred from Basildon to float, then arrived at Harwich depot on 26 September 2002. At Harwich it was one of the two buses used on school contracts 30A/B Harwich - Manningtree School. 3109 is seen on Station Approach, Harwich on 16 November 2002. The legal lettering had been amended to Essex Buses Ltd t/a First Eastern National, although by this time local fleet names had been removed by First.

And a photo of 3109 when in Eastern National 1986 privatisation livery, with the later addition of a black grille, also on Station Approach, Harwich, on route 103 on 10 February 1995.

All Robert Appleton



Rear Cover

Hedingham's convertible open top Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 502 (LF52 ZNE).

Top: Predecessor open toppers 500 (PL51 LDJ) in EBM's 688, 689 & 699, and 501 in EBM 701 have featured in photos taken at Pier Avenue, Clacton, so here is a photo of 502 taken there on 23 August 2023. However, there is a twist. Unlike service 134, which the open toppers used to operate on, service 1, new this year, does not normally serve this stop. The bus was on diversion, due road closures in readiness for the Clacton Airshow over the following two days. Similar, but closed top, 528 (LX06 EAM), still in London red, is behind. **Richard Lewis**

Bottom: On normal line of route, 502 on layover on Marine Parade East on 8 August 2023, before working its next journey on service 1 to St Osyth and Point Clear. **Robert Appleton**

EBM Extra 4

The next issue of EBM Extra, our magazine devoted entirely to historical articles, is due to be published around three weeks after this copy of EBM and will be sent to members free of charge, thanks to the generous sponsorship of our sales & distribution officer, Owen Woodliffe. There's a wide range of articles, featuring not only buses in Essex but local buses that ended their lives in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We also take a look at single deckers from contrasting eras in Colchester and Southend, Premier Travel's Essex operations in the 1960s and showcase some more of Michael Dryhurst's fabulous 1950s and 1960s pictures with four atmospheric shots of Colchester Corporation.

As a teaser, **below** is a photo of former Eastern National 1533 (MHK 915J), resplendent in Belfast Citybus colours in Belfast City Centre. It was one of 20 EN Bristol RELLS that crossed the water to Northern Ireland in 1985/6. **Paul Savage**

You'll have to wait for EBMX4 to arrive to find out what happened to it and its 19 sisters!



