

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 718 February 2024



Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

www.essexbus.org.uk



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Arriva Routes 59 & 509





Above: Stephensons received this demonstrator, YY73 TGZ, a long wheelbase ADL E40D / Enviro 400 MMC, in mid-January 2024. It is seen on route 17 at Chalkwell on 17 January, its first day in service.

John G Lidstone

More details on page 17.

Front Cover: A major report on Vectare and Central Connect is in this month's issue, starting on page 19, and featuring a combined fleet list. Included in the list is 412 (W12 VEC), a Mercedes-Benz Tourismo, seen on Rail Replacement service at Colchester Railway Station on 27 January 2024. The livery is so shiny that a Tourismo of Peter Godward (likely to be either BV66 GXD or GXE, both were seen at Colchester on RRS that day) is clearly reflected in the offside panels. Behind is a Panther Travel Enviro 200 also in use on RRS.

Dave Arnold

Inside Front Cover:

Top: In the remnants of the Arriva Max livery it had (with route branding) for Southend's route 5 from Southend to Basildon, 3820 (GN07 AVG), now at Harlow, has just begun its return journey to its home town on route 59 when captured in New Street, Chelmsford on 1 February 2024.

Bottom: Enviro 200 MMC 4083 (YX17 NHA), with a strange cream replacement panel, on route 509 in Station Road, Harlow on 27 January 2024.

Both **David Moth**

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Subscriptions

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printed copies sent by post, or £19 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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Richard Delahoy, address above.

Reports, Articles & Photographs

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

Target Dates for EBM 719

Reports to Sub-Editors **24 February**
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor **1 March**
Dispatch by Printers on or before **9 March**

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 2nd 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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Group Notices

Welcome to New Members

Simon Trevallion, Southend on Sea - 1221

Daniel Latus, Colchester - 1222

Paul Naylor, London EC1 - 1133 (re-joined)

Group Meetings

For 2024, meetings have moved to **Saturday afternoons**. These are being held at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford, CM1 2QL which is a five-ten minute walk from Chelmsford Bus & Railway Stations. Doors open at 1400 for a 1430 start, ending at 1630. There is very limited on-site parking, accessed via Cedar Avenue West, we would ask that you leave these for those less able to walk.

However, please note that **April's** meeting (only) will be at the **Central Baptist Church**, Victoria Road South, Chelmsford, which is located between the Railway Station and Retail Market.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 10 February | Alan Osborne - 'Essex Buses before the Millennium, with Snippets' - 160 views of Essex and 40 from elsewhere. |
| 16 March | Owen Woodliffe - 2023 Bus Running Days (King Alfred, Rydabus, Portsmouth Depot, Bournemouth, Merseyside, Yorkshire Dales, Sandtoft). |
| 13 April | Julian Elliott, Head of Network, First East of England 'First Essex Buses in 2024', including a brief overview of First Eastern Counties. |
| 11 May | Ian Barlex - Lost independents in England, Wales and Scotland during the past ten years. |

Further dates for 2024 are **8 June, 14 September, 12 October, 9 November and 14 December**. Please note there are not meetings in July or August.

Meetings are being held jointly with our good friends at The Omnibus Society, Eastern & Southern Branch, who are very generously paying for the room hire so entrance is FREE.

Annual General Meeting

The 56th Annual General Meeting of the Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group will be held at **The Quaker Meeting House**, Rainsford Road, Chelmsford (details above) on **Saturday 11 May**, commencing at 1330 (note this is 60 minutes before the normal meeting start time). There will be a brief presentation from the Committee on the current and future plans of the group. 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 12 April. The current roles are Chair, Treasurer & Membership, Secretary, Magazine Editor, Sales Manager and Tours Organiser.

The Running Card

Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Sunday 25 February: Winter Bus Event, Epping Ongar Railway, North Weald.

Sunday 10 March: Golders Green Vintage Bus event. (Please note, this is the correct date, apologies for an incorrect date in last month's EBM.)

Saturday 23 March: Barking Garage Centenary event with a running day on routes 62 and 145.

Saturday 6 April: South East Bus Festival, Kent Showground, Detling, Maidstone.

Sunday 7 April: Classic buses in rural Hertfordshire.

Sunday 14 April: London Bus Museum, Brooklands, Spring Gathering.

Saturday 27 April: Delaine Heritage Running Day, Bourne. Museum also open 0900-1645.

Saturday 4 May: Theydon Bois Transport Bazaar. Village Hall CM16 7ER. 1100-1500.

Sunday 5 May: Essex Bus Day. Museum of Power Maldon (tbc).

Monday 6 May: King Alfred Running Day, The Broadway, Winchester.

Saturday 11 May: Delaine Museum Open Day, Bourne. 1200-1600.

Sunday 19 May: Fenland Busfest. Whittlesey.

Sunday 19 May: Vintage Bus Day. Mid Norfolk Railway, Dereham.

Monday 27 May: Essex Bus Rally. Garons Park, Southend.

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

Osborne's timetable

We have two copies of a small timetable folder for Osbornes of Tollesbury's service from there to Maldon. As with most such publicity of theirs, it is undated but probably pre-1964. They are available free; if you are interested, please contact Richard Delahoy (details on page 2). With thanks to member Bob Williamson for passing these on to us.

718 for EBM 718

Last month we reported on the withdrawal of the last First Essex bus in Barbie livery, 32629. Dennis Dart SLF / Plaxton Pointer 2 718, later 43718 (R718 DJN), was one of the first batch of buses delivered in this livery to Essex Buses in February 1998. It is seen **below** in Southend Central Bus Station on 25 April 2000, with a 'Thamesway' fleet name and branded for the Canvey Clipper service.

Robert Appleton

Price 1d.

G. W. OSBORNE

TOLLESBURY, ESSEX.

Summer Services

JUNE (Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays)
JULY, AUGUST & SEPTEMBER

TOLLESBURY — MALDON — TOLLESBURY

ABBREVIATIONS

WFSO Wed., Fri., Sat. only. MTTO Mon., Tues., Thurs. only. SO Sat. only. NS Not Sat. TSO Thurs. Sat. only. TO Thurs. only. FO Fri. only. WSO Wed., Sat. only. NWFS Not Wed., Fri., Sat. NTS Not Thurs., Sat. ¶ Awaits conclusion of the Cinema. † Operates only on the last Wed. in July and during August month.

PLEASE NOTE. The 9.30 a.m., 1.45, 5.15 and 7 p.m. services from Tollesbury are direct connections at D'Arcy Lion from Colchester at 9.5 a.m., 1.15, 4.30 and 6.30 daily, respectively.



Follow Ups to EBM 717 and EBM Extra 5

Former Eastern National Bedford OB ONO 85

Peter Carr advises that in the history of this vehicle one operator was missing. ONO 85 was acquired by Mulleys of Ixworth in January 1971 and operated by them. The photo **right** shows it with Mulleys in their livery, with the engine temporarily removed, on 31 October 1971. **Peter Carr Collection / G. R. Smith.** It then went to T. O'Neil, as stated, by May 1975.



Below: ONO 85 at Easton's on a Group trip on 23 May 2015. The fact that work was being undertaken on it at the time makes its recent scrapping even more regrettable.

Dave Arnold



More on Eastern National Bristol SCs by Alan 'Tebzy' Tebbit

In last month's issue, Peter Carr posed the question "Did Bishop's Stortford depot have more than one SC?".

Possibly someone with access to allocation lists can give a definitive answer, but from personal memory, I can state that BS did have at least two. In 1957, my father became one of the first OMO drivers at Chelmsford. Being only a four line rota, every fourth Saturday saw him operating the 9.15 am Chelmsford to Harlow New Town service 46, and it was one of my special treats to go with him. At Willingale 'Maltsters Arms' we would meet a Chelmsford bound 46, in the form of a BS based SC. Shortly after, at Fyfield Post Office, we would see another (or THE other) BS SC working the 33A from Dunmow to Ongar.

The 46, along with some 'shorts' to Willingale and Fyfield, ran four times a day, 9.15 am, 12.5 pm, 2.40 pm and 6.5 pm ex Chelmsford to Harlow. On the 2.40pm and 6.5 pm a CF driver would work as far as Matching Green, where they would meet up with a Stortford driver, and both would return to their starting point. The original plan was for the drivers to change cars, and the driver on CF duty 3 (the 2.40 pm) would then change with the duty 4 driver, so that the BS car would work the 6.5 pm, and the second change at Matching would see all buses back at their home depots. Unfortunately the two Stortford duties did not meet up anywhere to effect a changeover, so each depot would receive a foreigner overnight. Dad put in a written suggestion that with the addition of a couple of destinations on the blinds, the buses could be available for service. The powers that be decided that a more practical solution would be for the drivers to stay with their original cars, and the passengers would change. I'm not sure how practical the customers found this arrangement, especially during inclement weather! This arrangement carried on well into the 1970s long after the SCs had gone.

The TGWU at Chelmsford were vehemently opposed to OMO, but the development of Harlow New Town increased the frequency of service 46, meaning an extra two rota lines at CF, and the company would only operate them as OMO. Pushed into a corner, the union made conditions, one of which being that OMO would be a maximum of 35 seats (i.e. SCs) and the Matching Green changeover, as originally envisaged, would only work if Bishop's Stortford could guarantee an SC.

(N.B. Throughout the above, I have used the 12 hour clock, in deference to the fact that Eastern National did not convert to the 24 hour clock until 1964.)

On a related matter, the caption to Bob Beaumont's picture of 451 in Maldon yard states that the front 'Pay As You Enter' sign has been removed. The early OMO buses had a yellow circle painted on to the bodywork, with the words in black lettering, one on the front, and one just rear of the entrance (the latter as can be seen in the photo). Each bus so treated carried two aluminium discs, painted green, which fitted over the sign, when the vehicle was being crew operated. Bob's photo shows the disc just under the nearside windscreen, so the sign is, presumably, still in place underneath.

Brentwood Coaches Fleetlines

Tebzy also points out that the photo at the bottom of page 17 is of LMS 155W, not 151W ("oops, apologies" - Editor).

Tebzy adds: "The caption to Chris Stewart's photo puts it at the 'Tallon Road depot'. As far as I am aware the only depot in Hutton, shared by County and Brentwood Coaches, was in Wash Road. Part of the planning conditions for the depot was that no double-deckers could occupy the yard. If a decker had to spend the night, it would be hidden in the workshop. During daytime layovers, they were taken to Tallon Road to park roadside, as is the case here. The Brentwood Coaches VR parked behind was the only decker allocated to Hutton, but, in my day, it would be out-stationed overnight at The Eagle, Kelvedon Hatch, all the others were allocated to Little Waltham.

EBM 717 Page 1 photo: Well spotted!

David Edwards has advised that the vehicle third from the left in the photo on page 1 of EBM 717 (visible through the windscreen of 582) cannot be an Eastern National DP RELH as it has roof lights in the cove panels, which EN RELHs never had. He suspects that it is a visiting vehicle.

Chris Stewart agrees and adds: "I would say it has to be a Crosville MW (CMG), as I can't think of anyone else (apart from Midland General / Mansfield District) who had bus domes on Mark 2 coach bodies. MGO/MDT number boxes were narrower so it's not one of theirs."

Essex County Show, Dartford Tunnel Bicycle Buses and Registrations

Richard Delahoy has been working his way through a large collection of trade magazines and two items related to recent issues caught his eye. In EBM 717 we included a short article about Eastern National's stand at the 1964 Essex County Show. This was evidently EN's second appearance there, as the August 1963 edition of Passenger Transport included a picture of an EN marquee alongside an MW coach, stating that this was the first time that EN had exhibited there (on 12-13 June 1963).

Then in EBM Extra 5 he mentioned the five Ford Thames Trader buses specially built to carry cyclists and their bikes through the newly opened Dartford Tunnel and operated by London Transport on behalf of the Tunnel Authority. What he didn't say was that the buses only ran from 0600 to 2200 each day. So what happened outside those times? Bizarrely, pedal cyclists were allowed to ride through the Tunnel due to the low volume of traffic at night!! All is made clear in articles in Passenger Transport of July 1963 & January 1964 describing the new tunnel. Initially, buses were scheduled to run nine times an hour in the peaks, reducing to six an hour off-peak. Bus & Coach of September 1966, reporting on the withdrawal of the cycle buses, noted that the average number of cycles carried per day was 34 in summer, dropping to just 16 in winter, so it was not surprising that the fleet of five special buses was barely used. There was no information about how many cycled through at night! Incidentally, the charge for cycles was 6d (2.5p), whether on the special buses or ridden through. Cars cost 2/6d (12.5p) and normal buses and coaches with over 28 seats were charged 6s (30p). And if you look at the picture of the surviving bus in EBMX 5, also illustrated below, it clearly didn't conform to normal bus / coach Construction and Use regulations - they were actually specially authorised to carry fare paying passengers under the Dartford Tunnel (Public Service Vehicles) (Conditions of Fitness) Order, 1962.

Pedestrians have never been allowed in the tunnels (the walkways there are for maintenance workers) but could cross the river on bus services using the tunnel, initially London Transport's 300 and 722, on which there was a 6d surcharge to cover the costs of the tunnel toll. Today, buses on registered local services - in practice just Ensignbus's X80 - are exempt from the toll.

After the dedicated cycle buses were withdrawn, cycles were carried in the Tunnel Authority's Land Rovers; today they apparently are carried on roof racks instead, although special pre-booking arrangements are necessary for tandems. Back in the mid 1960s though, who would have wanted to pedal through the 4,700' long Tunnel? Even with ventilation fans, the air quality would not have been great, plus dust swirling around. It was bad enough when Richard once drove a windscreen-less former London DMS through there in 1980 - on 1 April, so who was the fool?

Also in EBM Extra 5, Richard referred to the change from reversed registrations to B suffix ones. In News Sheet number 2 we had recorded the delivery of numerically the first RELH coach, 578 (to become 400 in August 1964) with its originally planned registration number 939 LWC. Well, in the May 1964 issue of Passenger Transport, there was a picture of it displaying that registration. It looks to be an official manufacturer's posed shot and accompanied a road test of another of that batch. This was unusual, as Bristol and ECW vehicles were not then available on the open market, so there was little point in a road test report, other than perhaps to demonstrate the superiority of the Bristol product, as the first rear-engined single deck chassis in volume production. Magazine editor Alan Townsin was impressed by it (and so he should have been!). The coach illustrated had its registration changed to AVX 961B before entering service at SD (Southend) in March 1964.

Right: EBM Extra 5 included an offside photo of the surviving Ford Thames Trader with Strachans bodywork, TT4 (529 FJJ). Here is a nearside view, also taken at London Busworks, this time on 7 June 2023.
John Bath



25 February 2024

21/S (Daily) Southend Travel Centre - Canvey, Creek Road **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F, no change on Saturday or Sunday.

27/A/827 (Daily) Southend Travel Centre - Canvey, Leigh Beck **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-S, no change on Sunday.

88/A/B (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Halstead, Conies Road **First Essex**. Revised timetable on M-F afternoon, no change at other times.

320 (M-F) Colchester North Station - Great Notley, Bakers Lane **First Essex**. Revised timetable, with additional journeys.

S4 (Daily) Colchester Bus Station - Greenstead Library **First Essex**. Revised daily timetable.

X20 (Daily) Colchester North Station - Stansted Airport **First Essex**. Minor adjustments to M-F peak hours timetable.

Essex County Council Contract Services

Following a period of consultation on supported bus services, Essex County Council are recommending the following from July 2024. The vast majority of services will continue, although there may be a change of operator.

Please note, this is published for information, confirmation of any changes will be published when available.

6 (M-S evening) Harlow Bus Station - Little Parndon **Arriva**. Current service withdrawn, but replaced by a developer funder service.

7 (M-S evenings) Southend - Rayleigh **Stephensons**. Partly withdrawn.

9/A (M-F) Great Notley - Great Sailing / Great Bardfield **Central Connect**. To be withdrawn and replaced by DigiGo demand responsive service.

10 (M-F) Temple Grove - Pleshey **Arrow Taxi**. Fixed timetable retained, but flexible on demand element withdrawn.

15 (M-F) Marks Tey Station circular **Hedingham**. To investigate combining with other services.

21 (Daily) Bocking - Black Notley **Stephensons (M-S)**, **Hedingham (Su)**. To be withdrawn and replaced by DigiGo demand responsive service.

50B (M) Colchester - Great Wigborough **Hedingham**. Will be partly replaced by combining with other services.

69/A (Tu) Colchester - East Mersea **Hedingham**. Will be partly replaced by combining with other services.

84B (Th) Little Horkesley - Colchester Bus Station **Hedingham**. Service withdrawn.

94 (Su) South Woodham Town Service **First Essex**. Service withdrawn.

99 (M-S) Walton-on-the-Naze - Clacton, Pier Avenue **Hedingham**. Service withdrawn.

99A (M-F) Heybridge - Broomfield Hospital **Arrow Taxis**. Fixed timetable retained but flexible on demand element withdrawn.

256 (Tu, Th, S) Ramsden Heath - Basildon Bus Station **First Essex**. Service withdrawn.

345 (W) Fuller Street - Braintree Freeport Railway Station **First Essex**. To be withdrawn and replaced by DigiGo demand responsive service.

552 (M-F) Ramsden Heath - Billericay Rail Station **First Essex**. Service withdrawn.

804 (Sch) Debden - Chigwell **NIBS**. Service withdrawn.

C56 (Su) Chelmsford - Galleywood **First Essex**. Service withdrawn.

DaRT 4 (M-S) Burnham-on-Crouch - Bradwell Waterside **Arrow Taxis**. Withdrawn and replaced by a new fixed timetable service, to be numbered 45.

DaRT 5 (M-S) South Woodham Ferring - Burnham-on-Crouch **Arrow Taxis**. Withdrawn and replaced by a new fixed timetable service, to be numbered 45.

DaRT 7 (M, Th) Moreton - Epping **Epping Community Transport**. Revised service with BSIP funding.

F315 (M-S) Halstead - Sudbury **Arrow Taxis**. Withdrawn and replaced by a revised Dart 3 demand responsive service.

SB21 (M) Fuller Street - Braintree **Arrow Taxis**. To be withdrawn and replaced by DigiGo demand responsive service.

A BBC website report about some of these cuts is available here at <http://tinyurl.com/5cud8jff> (note the photo of the 94 is of the weekday Hedingham service from Basildon that is continuing, it is the Sunday First Essex South Woodham Town service that is being withdrawn).

Adam Kelleher

Acquired Vehicles

33684	SN12 AFO	SFD4DSBRFCGX36722	B450/29	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport
33689	SN12 AFZ	SFD4DSBRFCGX36738	B450/34	H45/30F	06/12	First Games Transport

ADL E40D / Enviro 400. Acquired from First Greater Manchester, Oldham depot. Driven to Ipswich on 3 February 2024. 33684 on to Colchester the next day with 33689 to follow. 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 they moved to First Manchester.

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

Vehicles on Loan

In EBM 714 it was reported that Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Geminis 32551 and 32641 moved from Chelmsford to First Eastern Counties at Great Yarmouth on 3 September 2023. In a surprise move, they returned to Chelmsford over the weekend of 27-28 January 2024. They were both in service at Great Yarmouth on Friday 26th but in use from Chelmsford on Monday 29th. Therefore we will treat these as loans to First Eastern Counties rather than disposals. At Chelmsford they have replaced similar, but newer, 37034 and 37047, both out of service with faults.

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 10 2023/24 (24 December - 20 January)

33553 BN (oos)-Disposal, 36218 HH-HH (oos), 37034 CF-CF (oos), 44003 CR-CR (oos), 44927 HH-HH (oos), 47655 BN-BN (oos), 47666 CR-CR (oos), 47679 HH (loan)-CR (loan), 47680 HH (loan)-CR (loan), 63341 CR-CR (oos), 63375 BN-BN (oos), 63383 BN-BN (oos), 66806 CR (oos)-Disposal

Disposals

17 January 2024: 33553 to PVS, Barnsley.

Before it left, it donated its gearbox to 33555, its engine to 33504 and its axles to 33414.

25 January 2024: 66806 removed from Quayside Depot, Colchester.

Correction to EBM 714: 32551 and 32641 not disposed of, see 'Vehicles on Loan' above.

Repaints

Enviro 400 33555 from Urban livery to Essex Bus green. It was seen leaving Mardens on 21 December 2023. It had been off road since 5 October 2023, and had been in the workshop at Basildon having 33553's old gearbox fitted, but finally returned to service on 24 January 2024.

Right: 33555 (SN58 CGF) on route 300 in Chelmsford Bus Station on 30 January 2024.

Robert Appleton

Further to last month, from looking at photos on Flickr, it does not appear that 36843 has been repainted.



Around the Depots

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

Colchester

Further to last month, 66817 was seen back on the scrap line on 7 January. 66806 and 69148 were still there. On 20th they had been joined by 47666, 63336 and 63341. 63336, 66806, 66817 and 69148 were all being stripped for spares (although 63336 and 69148 could be returned to use) with 47666 & 63341 both VOR with Ticketers removed. By 27th, 44003 and 47430 had joined them, but 66806 had gone (see 'Disposals' above). 47430 also had its Ticker removed.

Compared to the photo in EBM 717 page 16, when seen on 19 January 47680 had lost most of its branding, but it still had Neath & Port Talbot fleet name on its rear window. See page 14 for news on 47679's branding.

News of the Harwich routes (5-31 January).

Sunday 7 January had the rare allocation of three double-deckers on the service 75/102 duties: 32669, 33825 and 37010. 33825 reached Harwich again on 12th when it covered part of a single-deck duty from 1135 Colchester - Harwich 104 to 1615 Harwich - Colchester 104. The other ADL Enviro 400 at Colchester, 33713, also reached Harwich on 23rd on 2035 Colchester - Harwich 102. On 30th, 37621 worked 0830 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 1008 return.

On 5 January, a serious accident closed the A120 near Wix, so all traffic was diverted through Wix village, on roads not suitable for HGVs going to & from Harwich International Port, so delays resulted. 63331 on 0640 Harwich - Colchester Norman Way Schools 104 was seriously delayed, so 44003 was used to cover its next journey, 0915 Mistley - Colchester 104, and 63331 resumed its duty on 1035 Colchester - Harwich 104. The other mid-length Enviro 200 at Colchester, 44006 worked a Saturday duty on 104 on 27th.

Wright StreetLites plus Volvo B7RLEs 69515-20 cover most duties on 104/102, but more variety was provided by four Airlink liveried Enviro 200 MMCs. On 8th, 67189 worked 0710 Colchester - Harwich 104 & 0900 return. On 10th, 67190 worked 1552 Colchester Norman Way - Harwich 104, 1740 return and 1910 Colchester - Mistley 104. On 11th, 67192 worked from 1135 Colchester - Harwich 104 to 1615 Harwich - Colchester 104. On 10th, 67194 worked 0915 Mistley - Colchester 104 and on Sunday 21st 1205 Colchester - Harwich 102 and 1345 return.

Clacton routes. Route 74B has been completely Volvo / Gemini operated except for 33713 (15th), the second Enviro 400 to appear on the route after 33825, StreetLite 63330 (24th) and Airlink liveried Enviro 200 MMCs 67189 (10th, 19th) & 67194 (2 February).

Route 76: 47668 (14th); 63329 (21st); 63335 (28th); 37136 (4 February)

There continue to be daily appearances of double-deckers on route X20. Five of the newer double-deckers allocated to Colchester have been used, 33713 (18th, 24th-25th, 28th-31st, 4 February), 33825 (8th), 37140 (9th-12th, 14th-17th, 19th, 22nd-23rd, 26th-27th, 2 February), 37613 (9th-11th, 16th, 18th-19th, 22nd-26th, 29th-1 February), 37621 (8th, 11th-12th, 15th, 17th, 31st-1 February). Then on 2 & 3 February an older Volvo B7TL was surprisingly used on the route, Midland Bluebird liveried 32669 (so similar colours to the Airlink single-deckers!). Non Airlink liveried single-deckers (Volvo B7RLEs) 69517 and 69519 both on 4 February.

Single-deckers on route 320: 47669 (1 February), 47679 (29th), 63328 (24th), 63331 (15th), 69519 (17th), 69520 (22nd, 26th, 31st) plus Airlink liveried 67189 (16th), 67192 (2 February) and 67194 (12th, 22nd).

Further to EBM 716, although building work was going on at the former small depot in Haven Road, Colchester, it is still occupied by Blackstone Kitchens.

At the beginning of January, signs for Horizon Construction had been erected at the former Queen Street, Colchester depot and there were building materials stowed in the yard at the rear of the site.

Chelmsford

The only vehicle on the CF scrap line on 23 January was 42935. 69151, which had been on the line on 3 December, is back in use.

On Sunday evening and overnight on 21-22 January, single-deckers replaced double-deckers on route X30 due to

Storm Isha. 67162, 67164, 67167 and 67171 were used. Double-deckers returned around 0500 on the Monday.

Enviro 400 MMCs on X30: 33994 (1 February), 33995 (9th-11th, 26th, 28th-30th, 2 February), 33996 (29th, 31st, 4 February), 33997 (15th, 17th-19th, 31st, 4 February), 33998 (1 February).

Airlink Scania 36843 very unusual on anything other than X30 or a school route, on X70 and 170 on 16th. 67739 (24th), 69421 (19th) and 69433 (10th) on 351.

69421 (30th) and 69430 (26th) single-deckers on 372.

DS69151 seen on driver training in Brentwood High Street (10th). This and DS66846 and DS66860 all seen passing Chelmsford Railway Station on 12th.

Basildon

33559 is another to receive magenta "Essex Bus" fleet names, replacing old style "Essex" names on the sides and the f symbol on the front (the first one in original Urban livery).

67160 and 69431 were both on loan from Chelmsford on Friday 12 January, but only operated a few journeys each, the former on X10 and 200, the latter on 100.

Double-deckers 33507 (16th-17th), 33416 (30th), 33548 (18th), 33552 (30th), 33558 (17th), 33563 (10th), 33568 (9th), 33984 (22nd) and 33986 (23rd) on X10 shorts.

Mid-length Enviro 200s 44001, 44004 and 44080 continue to see some use on (partially) interconnected routes 9 & 200: 44001 (8th, 9th, 12th, 18th-20th, 24th, 1 February), 44004 (8th, 11th-12th, 20th, 22nd, 25th, 30th), 44080 (9th, 11th, 29th). As this is now a fairly regular occurrence we will no longer report these workings.

44004 & 44080 on 251 (28th). 44598 on 100 (11th) on 9 (20th). 44908 on 251 (4 February). 44909 on 9 (22nd). Airlink liveried 67191 on 200 (2 February) and 67195 on 22 (25th), B1 (30th).

Hadleigh

33685 (8th) & 34460 (18th) unusual double-deckers on 14.

With thanks to Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, Richard Delahoy, David Edwards, John Podgorski, Peter Sedge, Derek Stebbing, Andrew Toms, Robert West, Bustimes, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group, Bus Lists on the Web and Terminus.

Below: Repainted 36842 (YN69 XYZ) is seen at Chelmsford Bus Station on 30 January 2024. Clues to the fact that it has been repainted are that it no longer has a jet symbol above the white swoosh, it has a smaller side fleet number than previously and the airplane symbols next to the place names are in a lighter font than previously (indeed, almost invisible) - plus, as noted last month, on the offside the symbol is incorrectly placed next to 'Southend' rather than 'Southend Airport'. **Robert Appleton**



First Essex Fleet & Allocation Summary January 2024

This information is up to date to the end of Period 9 2023/24 (23 December 2023).

Fleet List

The fleet list is summarised under main types. Figures / letters in brackets are registration periods.

Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini: 32526/30(54), 32532/40(05), 32547/628/42(54),

32669/72-3/6(55), 37004-7/10/5-7/20(55), 37027/34-7/42/7/53-4/62(06)

Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini: 36216-20(12), 37133-6/8-40(57), 37613/21(58), 37985/6(11)

The 57 & 58 regs have Eclipse Gemini bodywork, the 11 & 12 regs have Eclipse Gemini 2 bodywork.

Alexander Dennis Trident 2 / Enviro 400: 33411-2/4-6/8-9(56), 33424-5(59), 33504/7(08),

33544-6/8-9/51-3/5/7-9/61-3/7-8/70/2-4(58), 34451-65(59)

33424 is 10.8m long and low height, the rest are 10.1m and full height. 33425 has bonded glazing, the rest have gasket.

Alexander Dennis E40D / Enviro 400: 33685/705/13-4/50(12), 33825(63)

Alexander Dennis E40D / Enviro 400 MMC: 33981/3-9/91-2/4-8(65)

Scania N250UD / Alexander Dennis Enviro 400 MMC: 36837-43(69)

Alexander Dennis Enviro 200: 44001/3-4/6(57), 44080-1(58), 44171-8(11), 44467/9(12), 44471/3(62),

44537-51(13), 44596(60), 44597(58), 44598(57), 44900(08), 44908-09/14-5(09), 44927(11)

The 12, 62 & 13 reg are E20D chassis, the rest are Enviro 200 Darts. 440xx & 44171-8 are 10.2m, 444xx &

44537-51 are 10.9m, 44596-8 are 10.8m and 449xx are 8.9m.

Alexander Dennis E20D / Enviro 200 MMC: 44659-62(66), 67160-69/71(66), 67189-97(66)

44659-62 are 10.5m, 67160-69/71 are 11.6m and 67189-97 are 11.8m. 67160/2/4-6 retain luggage racks from their original use on airport routes X10 & X30, 67189-95 have had luggage racks fitted for their current use on airport routes X10 & X20 and are now all in Essex Airlink blue livery.

Wrightbus StreetLite DF: 47421/7/30(63), 47521-30(64), 47595-602/4-8(14), 47643-58/65-69(15),

47696-7(22), 63061/3-5(63), 63161-70(64), 63312/28-31/3-44(65), 63370/2-3/5/81/3(16),

63454-66(72)

The 63 series are StreetLite DF Max and are 11.5/6m in length, the 47 series are 10.9m.

Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban: 66806/17/46/8/60/3(05), 66886(55), 69148/51/5(06),

69421/30-4(58), 69515-20(11)

69515-20 are Eclipse Urban 2. The 58 & 11 reg are 12m, the rest 11.9m. 66846/8/60/3/86, 69148/51/5 are permanent driver trainers, all in red driver training livery, except 66886 and 69155 in acquired yellow and green driver training livery.

Alexander Dennis E30D / Enviro 300: 67735-9/41-42/50/5-6/79(62), 67805(13)

Allocations

Basildon: 33411-2/4-6/8-9/24-5/504/7/44-6/8-9/51-2/7-9/61-3/7-8/70/2-4, 33981/3-9/91-2,

44001/4/80/598/908-09, 47595-6/648-9/51-5, 63167-70/312/38-40/42/4/70/2-3/5/83, 67165-6/8/91/5-7

Chelmsford: 33705/14/994-8, 36837-43, 37034/47, 44081/171-8, 44467/9/71, 44537-51/96-7, 44659-62, 44900/14-15, 47597-602/4-8/57, 67160-4/7/9/71, 67735-9/41-2/50/5-6/79/805, 69421/30-4

Colchester: 32526/30/2/40/7/628/42/69/72-3/6, 33713/825, 37004-7/10/5-7/20/7/35-7/42/53-4/62, 37133-6/8-40/613/21, 44003/6, 47421/7/30/650/6/8/65-9/96/7, 63328-31/3-5/7/41, 67189-90/2-4, 69515-20

Hadleigh: 33685/750, 34451-65, 36216-20, 37985-6, 44927, 47521-30/643-7, 63061/3-5/161-6/454-66

Driver Trainers (at Chelmsford): 66846/8/60/3/86, 69151/5

Out of Service / Stored: 33553/5, 63343/81 (at Basildon), 44473 (at Chelmsford), 63336, 66806/17, 69148 (at Colchester).

Total 320 vehicles.

Changes During 2023

Type	Total	+	-	Into Fleet	Out of Fleet
B7TL / ALX400	0		6		32068/87/260/482-4
B7TL / Eclipse Gemini	30	1	4	37047	32531/51/629/41
B9TL / Eclipse Gemini	9				
B9TL / Eclipse Gemini 2	7				
Trident / Enviro 400 10.1m	46		1		33413
Trident / Enviro 400 10.8m	1				
E40D / Enviro 400	6	2		33705/14	
E40D / Enviro 400 MMC	15	8		33981/91-2/4-8	
N250UD / Enviro 400 MMC	7				
Dart / Pointer 10.7m	0		10		42930/4-7/40-1/4-5/56
Enviro 200 8.9m	6		2		44910/3
Enviro 200 10.2m	14		2		44002/5
Enviro 200 10.8/9m	22		1		44599
Enviro 200 MMC 10.5m	4				
Enviro 200 MMC 11.6/8m	20				
Enviro 300	12				
Enviro 350H	0		4		67901-4
StreetLite 10.9m	49	18		47595-602/4-8/65-9	
StreetLite Max 11.5/6m	50	20		63312/70/2-3/5/81/3/ 454-66	
Citaro	0		1		64017
B7RLE / Eclipse Urban	16	2	17	66886, 69155	66759-60/94/6- 7/801/4/11/3- 4/18/23/5/970, 69024/532/3
B7RLE / Eclipse Urban 2	6				
7900 Hybrid	0		19		69901-19
Total (336 last year)	320	51	67		

Type out of the fleet: All Hybrid vehicles, both Enviro 350H and Volvo 7900H. Volvo B7TLs with ALX 400 bodywork. ADL Dart / Pointers. The solitary Mercedes-Benz Citaro driver trainer.

Types into the fleet: No new types joined the fleet in 2023.

A reminder that we publish a fleet list with allocations and livery details on our website every month.

First Essex News in Pictures

As reported in 'Vehicles on Loan' above, Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 32551 (SF54 OSO) and 32641 (KP54 AZC) have returned to Chelmsford from Great Yarmouth. The latter is seen on route 170 at Chelmsford Bus Station on 31 January 2024. Note the lack of magenta stripe; it has never had one since it was repainted from Barbie to Urban in October 2017.

Dan Pretty



As reported in 'Allocation Changes' above, the two StreetLites on loan from First Cymru (see last two issues) have moved from Hadleigh to Colchester. Not previously illustrated, 47679 (SL15 RVW) is at Harwich on 13 January 2024 on route 104, displaying a 'Metro' name above the front offside window. (When 47679 was seen again on 25 January the fleet names had been removed but 'Metro' remained.)

Work was taking place at Harwich depot, which has been empty for over a decade since it closed, hence the container and skip lorry. The Harwich Brewery Co. building (behind the container) which has been closed since 2016 has had new doors, windows, and shutters fitted. Whybrow and Dobbs at Colchester are still the agents for the sale, with prices of £400,000 for the bus depot, and £525,000 for the brewery building and the bus depot together.

Both **Robert Appleton**



Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 37140 (SN57 HCZ) has often been on route X20 during January. Here it is on the route on the 19th at Tollgate, Colchester, showing its super rear advert for Adult Community Learning Courses, Essex.

Robert Appleton



Pride liveried Enviro 400 33425 (SN59 AWW) on route 300 on 23 January 2024, by the Trinity Methodist Church in Duke Street, Chelmsford.

Derek Stebbing



33705 (SN12 AHO) was new for Olympic Games shuttles in 2012 and was acquired by First Essex last August. As reported on page 9, two more of the Games Enviro 400s have joined the fleet this month. 33705 is seen on route X70 at Chelmsford Bus Station on 30 January 2024. Neither the vehicle nor the route have previously been illustrated in EBM.

Robert Appleton



Acquired Vehicles

429, YX17 NYZ, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 8.9m, B29F, originally in the rental fleet of Mistal (as was 428 reported in EBM 712). Operated by Claribel Coaches, Birmingham, from new for a few years, before moving to Transdev at Heathrow Airport. Acquired October 2023. It is currently in all-over white, as seen below on route 32 at Chelmsford Bus Station on 31 January 2024. **Dan Pretty**

Meanwhile, 428, which was illustrated in EBM 715, has now been repainted from all-white to Stephensons livery.

Six more ADL E20D / Enviro 200s are in the course of acquisition, from Nottingham City Transport: YX63 GXV/W, YX63 KFG/J/K, YX63 LHU. They are B40F examples, new in 2013 as Nottingham 391-5/7. At the time of writing they were in the course of collection, having been withdrawn by NCT on 29 January 2024. Fleet numbers will be provided next month.



Vehicle on Loan

A demonstrator was used on loan in mid-January, YY73 TGZ, an ADL E40D / Enviro 400 MMC, long wheelbase, H48/32F, working from Rochford depot. It has high-backed seats, skylight over the stairs, under seat lights, polished stainless steel wheels and rear-view cameras. It had earlier been on loan at Ipswich Buses, amongst other operators. A photo of it is on page 1.

Other Vehicle News

Further to last month's report of some Enviro 200s having received adverts over the rear windows for driver recruitment, a third strapline seen is "could you be moving upfront?" on 450 (YX10 FFL), captured at Brentwood Station on 30 January 2024.

Adam Kelleher



With thanks to Chris Staley, Adam Kelleher, John Lidstone, John Podgorski, Ian Ransom and the companies.

Vehicles Withdrawn

It is reported that 510 (LB02 YWX), the Volvo B7TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini that was acquired from Konectbus and was never repainted into fleet livery, has been withdrawn at Kelvedon depot. It kept its blue, yellow and grey livery throughout its time with Hedingham whereas sisters 511-514 were all repainted into fleet livery.

Driver Trainer Scania / East Lancs 9016 (YU02 GHA), last reported in EBM in issue 707 (March 2023), left the fleet by April 2023. It may have gone to Beestons for a short period, but by September it was with Border Bus, Beccles and it has been repainted all white, ex TfL red with dark grey skirt.

Sister 9017 (YU02 GHA), also a trainer and also last reported in the same issue, moved to fellow Go Ahead company Metrobus in March 2023 where it has been numbered 7545. It remains in TfL all red, but with Metrobus fleet names replacing the Hedingham ones.

Significant Allocations

256	EU55 BWC	CN - KN by 16 January
261	EY57 FZE	KN - CN by 29 January
292	EU59 AFF	KN - CN by 24 January
816	YN55 PZX	SY - KN by 18 January
870	PN09 ELO	SY - KN by 31 January
874	PN09 ENC	KN still at KN on 31 January

Fleet News

Clarifying information provided in the previous two issues, Optare Solos 910 and 911 look to have been accepted by Swindon Humanitarian Aid Partnership, which converts old buses into useful aid or medical buses, containing such things as old hospital beds, stretchers, wheelchairs, basic treatment areas with water supply and waste water services onboard. Once converted, vehicles from this organisation are then exported to Ukraine.

Boomerang branding is being removed from the Chambers fleet.

The ex- Go Ahead South West Enviro 200s (new to Go Ahead London), which were reported as acquired in EBM 714, are being repainted. 230 (YY64 TXK) was the first so treated to the standard livery, returning to service on 17 January. The second, 234 (YY64 TXO), returned from paint on 18 January and the last, 236 (YY64 TXR), went to Mardens on the same date. A reminder that 231/2/3/5 (YY64 TXL/M/N/P) are with Konectbus. 230 & 234 were illustrated in EBM 714.

Long term off road in January 2024 were 260/276/287/511/517/521/523/525/528/533/642/852, but 258/262 & 821 returned to service during January.

Service News

Planned from 2-15 January was a closure to West Avenue Clacton. Services 74B and 76 diverted towards Clacton via Rosemary Road, Station Road and Pier Avenue. Travelling towards Colchester, the diversion was Pier Avenue, Rosemary Road, Station Road, Carnarvon Road and Wellesley Road. Jackson Road, Morrisons and Anchor Road were not served. It is not known to which extent of dates the diversions operated.

Routes B2 (Soham - Bury St Edmunds West College) and RC5 (Sudbury - Suffolk Rural College, Otley) are being operated by Sible Hedingham and Sudbury depots respectively.

A correction to the caption on page 27 of EBM 717, the Dennis Darts illustrated had fleet numbers L348-351 not L148-151.

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

After the Christmas / New Year holidays, the new term at Ipswich School started on 4 January 2024. On 8th, the following were spotted on the school contracts operating into Essex, departed from Ivory Street outside Ipswich School at 1625:

47 (SGZ 3347, ex YN08 MRX) Scania OmniCity on contract 2A to Colchester Tollgate & Feering.
 51 (SGZ 3351, ex YN08 DHX) Scania OmniCity on contract 2B to Langham & Colchester Braiswick.
 46 (SGZ 3346, ex YN08 MRV) Scania OmniCity on contract 2B to Colchester & Langenhoe.
 76 (LX58 LML, ex 09D3732) ADL Enviro 200 on contract 3 to Dedham & Dedham Heath.
 3 (SGZ 1003, ex BX65 WDD) Volvo B11RT / Caetano Levante on contract 6 to Halstead & Sible Hedingham.
 1 (SGZ 1001, ex FLO2 ZXX) Volvo B7R / Jonckheere Modulo on contract 10 to Tendring & Holland-on-Sea.
 All these vehicles are fitted with seatbelts.

The new school term at East Bergholt High School started on 3 January 2024. The Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekkas had a rest over the Christmas and New Year holidays, but returned to service for the new school term. On 15 January, buses working into Essex were:

Ipswich - Manningtree 92: Scania OmniDekka 60 (PJ54 YZT) on the all-day duty, including 0803 Ipswich - Manningtree and 1520 Manningtree - Ipswich, which served East Bergholt High School. This duty finished on 1635 Ipswich - Manningtree & 1730 return.
 Scania OmniCity 45 (YR61 RVE) came off school services to work 1740 Ipswich - Manningtree & 1830 return.

Ipswich - Colchester 93/A: Scania OmniDekkas 61/62 (PJ54 YZU/V) on the two all-day duties, including 0750 Colchester - Ipswich 93, 0805 Ipswich - Colchester 93A, 1500 Ipswich - Colchester 93, 1505 Colchester - Ipswich 93A, which served East Bergholt High School. 16.5 Ipswich - Colchester 93 & 1810 return remained a saloon working, ADL Enviro 200 101 (SN16 OGG) was used on 15 January.

Ardleigh - Manningtree - East Bergholt High School 693: Scania OmniCity 41 (YR61 RVF) worked both journeys at 0813 from Ardleigh, 1545 from the High School. In between, 41 worked to & from Ipswich on service 94.

The Scania OmniDekka new to Network Colchester, 63 (YN06 TFZ) normally works school services to & from Holbrook Academy, but on 18 January it returned to Colchester, working one of the all-day duties from 0805 Ipswich - Colchester 93A to 1635 Colchester - Ipswich 93. On 19 January, 63 reached Essex again on 1740 Ipswich - Manningtree 92 & 1830 return.

With thanks to Ipswich
 Transport Society Journals, Bus Lists
 on the Web, Bustimes

Right: Normally, if any of the Scania OmniDekkas 60/61/62 are unavailable, then Scania OmniCities are used instead. On 20 July 2023, 30 (YR61 RPY) had turned off the A12 at East Bergholt Four Sisters, working the 1500 Ipswich - Colchester 93. This bus was new to First Centrewest in 2011 with fleet number SN36034. Acquired by Ipswich Buses in 2017 from Metroline via Scania (UK), converted to single door and refurbished by Hants & Dorset Trim.

Robert Appleton



EBM Reporting

Although Central Connect remains a separate company from Vectare (albeit owned by Vectare), because a number of CC vehicles are currently operating on Vectare routes and vice versa, because a new Central Connect livery has been introduced using Vectare colours, and because Central Connect vehicles have been renumbered into the Vectare series, from this issue we will be reporting on both companies under one heading. This is similar to how we treat Stephensons and NIBS. Reports can be sent to either sub editor, details on page 2. A combined fleet list is on pages 22-24. We will occasionally report on specific vehicles moving between companies and areas (for example, 347 under 'New Vehicles' below) but won't routinely do this as it is too difficult and time consuming to keep track.

New Vehicles

347, SK73 CNO, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B40F, December 2023

348, SK73 COJ, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B40F, December 2023

350, YY73 TGU, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B40F, January 2024

351, YY73 TGN, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B40F, January 2024

352, YY73 RGX, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC (mini), B30F, January 2024

355, YY73 RHE, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC (mini), B30F, January 2024

356, YY73 RHF, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC (mini), B30F, January 2024

All are currently all white. 347 entered service on Wednesday 3 January 2024 on Central Connect route 386 (Bishop's Stortford to Stevenage) but after three days use it moved over the weekend to Vectare in the East Midlands where it entered service on route 90 (Newark to Nottingham) on 8th. It has mainly (but not exclusively) been used on this route since.

348 (3rd), 351 (30th), 355 (31st) and 356 (27th) entered service in January, 350 and 352 both on 1 February, all these on Central Connect routes.

Further to last month, Enviro 200 MMCs 353 (YY73 RGZ) and 354 (YY73 RHA) are also mini versions with 30 seats.

Acquired Vehicles

341, SF66 ARV, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B41F, new to Whitelaws, Stonehouse, Lanarkshire, Sept 2016.

342, SF66 ARW, ADL E20D / Enviro 200 MMC, B41F, new to Whitelaws, Stonehouse, Lanarkshire, Sept 2016.

Acquired from Red Rose. 341 was originally registered K66 ONA. 342 was originally registered CA66 RRA. They are being repainted into new two-tone blue Central Connect livery.

Further to last month, acquired Central Connect Enviro 200 MMC GW16 BUS has been numbered 343 in the Vectare numbering system. SW16 BUS will be 344, 345 or 346, which one not yet confirmed.

Disposals

Vectare Mercedes-Benz Tourismo 414 (W14 VEC) is reported as disposed of, but not known when and where (it was still with Vectare in June 2023).

All the below are Central Connect / Galleon Travel vehicles.

In EBM 714, DX65 GAL, a VDL FHD2 / VDL in Shearings livery, was listed as part of the Galleon Travel fleet acquired by Vectare. However, it is now reported as being with GMT Travel, Dunlop, West Scotland. It is not known when it left the Galleon fleet.

August 2023: Partial open top Dennis Trident / Alexander ALX 400 X336 NNO (in black Gangsters Tours livery) to Underworld Tours who are now operating the Gangster Tour. (It has since been replaced at Underworld by similar, but Transbus built, LY02 OBK, ex Go Ahead and previously operated on Oxford sightseeing.)

In EBM 714, it was reported that Volkswagen Transporter T5 / Bluebird Tucana 1102 (YX10 AYF), which was only acquired from CT Plus in September 2022 and received Central Connect livery that month, was withdrawn c June 2023. However, in EBM 715 it was noted that "the report of this being withdrawn in last month's issue was incorrect and it saw limited service in October". But there is now a report that this may itself not have been correct

and a Mercedes-Benz minibus may have been using its ticket machine. But whichever is the case, it hasn't been reported since October, is no longer listed on Bustimes and did not receive a Vectare fleet number in the recent renumbering and is now confirmed as withdrawn.

Also further to EBM 714, Optare Solo M850 Slimline 1001 (SGZ 2221) and ADL Dart / East Lancs Esteem 1302 (PO56 JFE) departed the fleet c September 2023.

January 2024: ADL Enviro 200s 914 (ex 1401, LX07 BYA), 915 (ex 1402, LX07 BXV) & 919 (ex 1410, KX08 HMF) and ADL Enviro 200 / East Lancs Esteem 918 (ex 1409, LX09 AZL) to Panther Travel (see page 26).

The following vehicles have also been withdrawn from service, some have been sold, some are awaiting sale:

Scania 320 / Irizar 1018 (JFZ 7018)

Scania N230UD / OmniCity 595, 597 & 598 (ex 2002/4/9, YP59 OEM/S/T)

Wrightbus StreetLite 910 & 911 (ex 1201/2, CC10/11 BUS)

Enviro 200 912, 916, 917, 920 (ex 1406, 1403, 1404, 1412, LJ58 AVE, SN57 DWV/Z, LK08 DWE).

Repaints / Wraps

Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVMs 207, 208 (see photo on opposite page), 214, 215, 217 and 218 have recently (within the last six months) been repainted from all white to standard minibus livery of silver with dark blue rear and a light blue dividing line.

In January, new Enviro 200 MMC 353, illustrated last month in all white, received a black wrap for Hertford routes H1-H6, with the slogan 'H is for Hertford'. Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVM 223 (CC04 GAL) has also received this (ex-Central Connect red and blue livery), as seen below in Hertford Bus Station on 31 January 2024. **Allan White**



Other Vehicle News

Central Connect Scania K320 / Irizar coach 1018, in Central Connect livery, received a large wheelchair symbol over the middle windows each side with the legend "This Vehicle is Wheelchair Accessible" (in capitals) on the cove panels plus a large "Central Connect" fleet name over the rear window each side, but lost "Free Wi Fi" lettering over the penultimate side windows. These changes were made between May and September 2022. However, as noted above, this vehicle has now been withdrawn.

Vectare Enviro 200 MMC 320 and Mercedes-Benz Tourismo 417 are currently off road with accident damage and are away having substantial repairs.

With thanks to John Card, Richard Delahoy, Paul Harvey, Ian Ransom, Owen Woodliffe, Steve Curl & the PSV Circle, the companies, Bustimes, Bus Lists on the Web and LOTS.

Combined Vectare and Central Connect Fleet List

A fleet list for Central Connect after the sale to Vectare was included in EBM 714 (with one addition in EBM 715). Two further additions are:
Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 1101 (CC04 GAL). In EBM 714 it was reported as last being in service on Bustimes on 14 May 2023 and had since been out of use. However, it had returned to service by December 2023.
ADL Enviro 200 1419 (L9 XEL). In EBM 714 it was reported as last being in service on Bustimes on 15 June 2023 and had also since been out of use. However, it returned to service on 15 January 2024.

One correction to the EBM 714 list, fleet number 1018 had the registration JFZ 1018, it should have been 7018.

Vectare and Central Connect remain separate companies, but the CC fleet has been renumbered into the Vectare sequence. In the below table, any entry in the column 'CC Fleet Number' (showing the previous Central Connect fleet number) refers to a Central Connect vehicle (including those marked 'n/a'). If the cell is empty the vehicle is a Vectare one or a Central Connect one which joined the fleet after the renumbering.

Most of the 9xx series (and also the 59x series) are for vehicles that are due for replacement.

No Central Connect vehicles have yet been seen carrying their new fleet numbers.

As well as their services in Essex and Hertfordshire, Vectare operate in the East Midlands (where the company originated) and East of England. Services in the East Midlands include Leicester, Loughborough, Derby, Bingham, Nottingham, Newark, Grantham and Vale of Belvoir. The East of England services include St Ives, Peterborough, Uppingham and Swaffham. Also operated is the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority DRT Ting service in West Huntingdonshire.

The Head Office is based in Loughborough with depots and outstations based throughout the operating areas, as follows (with number of vehicles based at each location per operating licence):
Rettendon Common 9; Wickford 8; Swaffham 2; Loughborough 15; Long Eaton 10; North Weald 10; Stansted 20; Harlow 25.
In practice, transfers take place between the different areas / licences, in theory any vehicle can work in any area, although the branded vehicles are less likely to do so. As an example, Enviro 200 MMCs 327-330 (CC21/CE21/CC71/CE71 GAL), all in Central Connect livery, have recently been working in the East Midlands (see photo on page 25). On 10 January 2024, route 90, Nottingham to Newark, was operated by 327, 328 and 329, and 330 was operating route 93, Grantham to Bingham, plus Bingham local 97.

It is therefore not possible to separate out the Essex and Herts vehicles from the rest, and so the fleet list includes all Vectare and Central Connect vehicles wherever they are based. In order to show the complete Central Connect fleet renumbered into the Vectare series it also includes some vehicles that have recently been withdrawn and either sold or awaiting sale. These are indicated in the notes.

Right: A route change that deleted one of the double-runs to High Barnet Station last year to correct the appalling late running sadly has not improved passenger loadings on Central Connect service 84B. On Saturday 27 January 2024, Vectare's Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVM Cityline 208 (RX23 TFK), recently repainted from all white to fleet livery, had sufficient capacity when seen in Barnet High Street. **Owen Woodliffe**



Type	Vectare Fleet No.	CC Fleet Number	Registration Number	Livery / Other Notes
Mercedes-Benz Vito	193		KJ19 GGY	Ting branding
	194		KJ19 GFK	Ting branding
Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVM	197		RX71 SYW	Vectare silver / blue
Ford Transit	198		EN16 WKT	White
	199		HY68 AYS	Silver
Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVM	200		WN69 FYL	Vectare silver / blue
	201		RX20 RJV	Vectare silver / blue
	202		WV20 VDG	Vectare silver / blue
	203		RX20 RDV	Vectare silver / blue
	204		RX70 SKZ	Vectare silver / blue
	205		RE70 EZU	Vectare silver / blue
	206		RX71 TGK	Flexibus blue / silver
	207		RX72 TWP	Vectare silver / blue
	208		RX23 TFK	Vectare silver / blue
	209		RX18 LNT	Vectare silver / blue
	210		RF68 FLV	Novus Direct silver / green
	211		RF68 FMC	Novus Direct silver / green
	213		RF68 FMA	Novus Direct silver / green
	214		RX23 TKV	Vectare silver / blue
	215		RX23 TFJ	Vectare silver / blue
	216		RX23 TUU	All silver, Ting branding
	217		RX23 TUV	Vectare silver / blue
	218		RX23 TUW	Vectare silver / blue
	219		RX23 TUY	Vectare silver / blue
	220		RX23 TVD	Vectare silver / blue
	221		RX23 TVE	Vectare silver / blue
	222		RX23 TVF	Vectare silver / blue
	223	1101	CC04 GAL	H is for Hertford
ADL Enviro 200 MMC	305		YX69 NWB	Vectare
	306		YX22 OGR	Vectare
	307		YX22 OGS	Park & Ride black. (A)
	308		YX22 OGT	Park & Ride black. (A)
	309		YX22 OGU	Park & Ride black. (A)
	310		YX22 OGV	Park & Ride black. (A)
	311		YX22 OGW	Park & Ride black. (A)
	312		YX22 OGY	Park & Ride black. (A)
	313		YX22 OGZ	Park & Ride black. (A)
	314		YX22 OHA	Park & Ride black. (A)
	315		YX22 OHB	Vectare
ADL Enviro 200 MMC mini	316		YX16 OBO	Vectare
	317		YX16 OBS	Vectare
	318		SN16 OVM	Vectare
	319		SN16 OVO	Vectare
	320		SN16 OVP	Vectare

	321		SN16 OVR	Vectare
ADL Enviro 200 MMC	322		YX73 OVM	Vectare
	323		YX73 OVN	Vectare
	324		YX73 OVO	Vectare
	325		YX73 OVP	Vectare
	326		YX22 OJJ	Vectare
ADL Enviro 200 MMC midi	327	1601	CC21 GAL	CC red / blue
	328	1602	CE21 GAL	CC red / blue
	329	1603	CC71 GAL	CC red / blue
	330	1604	CE71 GAL	CC red / blue
	331	1605	YX22 OKA	CC red / blue
	332	1606	YX22 OKB	CC red / blue
	333	1607	YX22 OKC	CC red / blue
	334	1608	YX22 OKD	CC red / blue
	335	1609	YX22 OKE	CC red / blue
ADL Enviro 200 MMC mini	336	1610	YX72 ONA	CC red / blue
	337	1611	YX72 ONB	CC red / blue
	338	1612	YX72 ONC	CC red / blue
	339	1613	YX72 OND	CC red / blue
	340	1614	YX72 ONF	CC red / blue
ADL Enviro 200 MMC	341		SF66 ARV	CC new livery
	342		SF66 ARW	CC new livery
	343		GW16 BUS	Silver / red bumpers
	34x		SW16 BUS	CC new livery. (B)
	347		SK73 CNO	All white
	348		SK73 COJ	All white
	349		SK73 COU	All white
	350		YY73 TGU	All white
	351		YY73 TGN	All white
ADL Enviro 200 MMC mini	352		YY73 RGX	All white
	353		YY73 RGZ	H is for Hertford
	354		YY73 RHA	All white
	355		YY73 RHE	All white
	356		YY73 RHF	All white
Scania K360EB6 / Irizar i6	403		YR20 VHT	Vectare silver / blue. (C)
Mercedes-Benz Tourismo	410		W10 VEC	Vectare silver / blue. (C)
	411		W11 VEC	All silver. (C)
	412		W12 VEC	Vectare silver / blue. (C)
	415		W15 VEC	Vectare silver / blue. (C)
	416		W16 VEC	Vectare silver / blue. (C)
	417		W17 VEC	Vectare silver / blue. (C)
Scania K410 / Higer	494	n/a	SS71 GAL	Leger Holidays. (D)
Irizar i6s integral	495	n/a	YS23 XFY	Shearings. (D)
	496	n/a	YS23 XFZ	Shearings. (D)
Scania K410 / Irizar i6	497	n/a	LU22 GAL	Leger Holidays. (D)
	498	n/a	LX22 GAL	Leger Holidays. (D)

Scania K320 / Irizar	-	1018	JFZ 7018	CC red / blue. (E, G)
MetroDecker M1114	501	2101	CT21 GAL	CC red / blue
Scania N230UD / OmniCity	595	2002	YP59 OEM	CC red / blue. (G)
	596	2008	YP59 OEO	CC red / blue
	597	2004	YP59 OES	CC red / blue. (G)
	598	2009	YP59 OET	CC red / blue. (G)
	599	2005	YP59 OEV	CC red / blue
Transbus Dart / Pointer	900	1301	KP02 PVO	All red. Driver Trainer.
Wrightbus StreetLite	910	1201	CC10 BUS	CC red / blue (G)
	911	1202	CC11 BUS	CC red / blue (G)
ADL Enviro 200	912	1406	LJ58 AVE	All red (G)
	913	1405	LJ57 USU	All red
	914	1401	LX07 BYA	CC red / blue. (F)
	915	1402	LX07 BXV	All red. (F)
	916	1403	SN57 DWV	All red. (G)
	917	1404	SN57 DWZ	All red (G)
ADL Enviro 200 / East Lancs Esteem	918	1409	LX09 AZL	All red. (F)
ADL Enviro 200	919	1410	KX08 HMF	CC red / blue. (F)
	920	1412	LK08 DWE	CC red / blue (G)
	921	1413	YX60 DXY	CC red / blue
	922	1414	YX12 FPY	CC red / blue
	923	1415	YX12 DHM	CC red / blue
	924	1416	YX12 DHO	CC red / blue
	925	1417	ML62 OGY	CC red / blue
	926	1420	MX12 DZE	CT Plus all white
	927	1418	L8 XEL	All white
	928	1419	L9 XEL	All white
Mercedes-Benz Trekka	973		KN73 NZC	All white

Notes

The Mercedes-Benz minibuses have EVM Cityline bodywork.

Vectare's bus fleet livery is two tone blue, apart from minibuses and coaches which have a main livery of silver with two tone blue at the rear. Variations are listed in the table and notes.

(A) 307-10 have Sandon branding, 311-4 have Chelmer Valley branding.

(B) Fleet number not yet confirmed, but will be 344, 345 or 346. Two other vehicles are expected to be received to complete this sequence.

(C) These sometimes get used on bus services when there is a shortage of buses but they normally operate East Midlands closed school contracts, rail replacement services (including in Essex) and private shuttle services, for example between Nottingham City Hospital and the Park & Ride Tram site at Cinderhill. Previous registrations: 410 NH17 EFH; 411 NH17 HFH; 412 BP17 URL; 415 BU18 YSB; 416 BU18 YSD; 417 BU18 YSD.

(D) These were part of the Galleon Travel coach fleet before the Vectare takeover and did not previously have fleet numbers.

(E) Not known if this received a Vectare fleet number.

(F) Sold to Panther Travel in January 2024.

(G) Also withdrawn from service and either sold or awaiting sale.

Notes on some missing numbers from the above table.

212 (RF68 FLN) was a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVM Cityline acquired from Arriva and operated in Novus livery. It was sold to Hunter's Executive Coaches, Alloa between June and August 2023.

301-4 were Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 2 BK13 NZM/R/S/U, acquisition details were in EBNs 678 (October 2020) and 681 (January 2021), since sold.

There were other coaches in the 40x series which have since been sold. For example, former Gardner Travel Mercedes-Benz T371 OHL and SF04 ZLV were numbered 409 and 408 respectively.

The 410 series were numbered to match their cherished registrations, presumably there wasn't a W13 VEC (there is nothing on Flickr). As noted above, 414 (W14 VEC, ex NH16 DEH) has been reported as withdrawn.

Below: Two Enviro 200 MMCs in the East Midlands which have previously been illustrated in EBM in Hertfordshire and Essex when brand new.

Both **Paul Harvey**

CE71 GAL was on the front cover of EBM 693 (January 2022) on route 410 at the Brookfield Centre, Cheshunt on Christmas Eve 2021. Here it is at Grantham High Street after arriving from Bingham on service 93 on 30 January 2024. It was numbered 1604 but is now 330 under the Vectare scheme.



315 (YX22 OHB) was in EBM 699 (July 2022) at Sandon Park & Ride on 22 June 2022 as part of the launch of 'Travel Essex'. It is seen at Bingham Market Place on its way to Nottingham, also on 30 January 2024. However, the next day it returned to Essex and was on 13/C/14 (Epping / North Weald / Waltham Abbey / Waltham Cross routes) on 1 February. (This illustrates the difficulty in keeping track of different buses in different areas as referred to above.)



Acquired Vehicles

CU08 ADZ Alexander Dennis Enviro 200 B35F From Ensignbus (dealer)

New to First Cymru (44506), it has been refurbished and now has USB points. It has been reregistered VB08 PAN and repainted into fleet livery.

LX07 BYA Alexander Dennis Enviro 200 B29D

LX07 BXV Alexander Dennis Enviro 200 B29D

KX08 HMF Alexander Dennis Enviro 200 B29F

LX09 AZL Alexander Dennis Enviro 200 B29D

All were previously with Central Connect (now part of Vectare), see page 20. LX09 AZL has East Lancs Esteem bodywork. These are currently awaiting a decision on future use.

Disposals

BIG 7758 Volvo B7TL Alexander H47/29F New as W758 DWX

Sold to Lawsons of Corby, retaining the BIG 7758 plate.

SJ57 AAY Volvo B12B (T) Plaxton C69FL

Sold to MC Tractors, Ely, for scrap after being used for spares.

With thanks to Adam Barham.



Colchester

Enviro 200 4022 (GN58 BUO), withdrawn last September, had remained at the depot in a heavily cannibalised state but during January it was removed for scrap.

Right: EBM 714 included a photo of Colchester's recently acquired Enviro 200 4065 (GN59 FVG) taken prior to acquisition in Maidstone. Here is the same vehicle on route 1 in Queen Street, Colchester on 29 November 2023, taken by the same photographer, **David Moth**.



Harlow

Further to last month, it is confirmed that ADL Enviro 200 MMC 11.5m 4120 (SN67 WUJ), B45F, has been acquired from Arriva Kent & Surrey (at Maidstone). It has been in regular use at Harlow since 11 January 2024. An extra vehicle was needed with the enhancements to route 724 early in January, this route now has a PVR of eight.

Further to the last two months, Optare Versa 4238 has returned to service following its accident between Bishop's Stortford and Stansted in early October.

Mercedes Benz 1012 remains in use on crew shuttles, on 4 January similar 1007 was seen on driver training.

With thanks to John Card, Adam Kelleher, John Podgorski and the M&D & E K Bus Club.

Airport Bus Express, Stansted Airport

Reported as brand new here in November 2023 are a pair of C59FL bodied Mercedes-Benz Tourismo M/2s, registrations BF73 CDY and BF73 CEA.

APT, Rayleigh

Since its acquisition by REL Capital, this operator has been absorbed into REL Davian, Edmonton. The APT O licence ceased in December 2023. However, as reported last month, some recent sightings of REL vehicles show a legal address of Rawreth, which was the base for APT Coaches.

Don, Great Dunmow

Bova Futura FHD14-430, registration DH05 DON, has reverted to its original registration of YJ05 FXH, whilst the DH05 DON registration is now carried by an Enviro 300 (original design), ex MX55 XGM.

Klarners, Clacton-on-Sea

Mercedes-Benz Tourismo BL16 GBZ has been reregistered to D22 KCL.

Lodge Coaches, High Easter

Setra S416GT (C49FT) registration JW10 DGE (ex BV10 ZJX) has gone to R&J Coaches, Smeeth, Kent. When new, this vehicle was in a gold livery to celebrate Lodge's 90th anniversary. It was subsequently repainted into fleet livery and named 'City of Chelmsford'.

North Essex Travel, Clacton-on-Sea

Van Hool C49FT bodied Volvo B10M-62, registration V64 FSX, is here from Salec, Carbrooke, Norfolk.

Quality Asset, Wickford

This operator's licence has been surrendered but operations continue with Bus 62, Wickford. The Quality Asset fleet has been transferred to Bus 62.

With thanks to John Podgorski and the PSV Circle.

Below: Southend Transport converted two of their P registered Daimler Fleetlines to open top in May / June 1990, JTD 390/5P becoming 904/5, later 914/5. They had short lives in this guise with ST and when the company came under the control of British Bus they were withdrawn in July 1993, passing to Crosville Wales (later Arriva Cymru). JTD 395P subsequently ran in Torquay and was acquired for preservation in October 2011. It has since been kept at the Canvey Island Transport Museum and has been slowly restored to working order and Southend livery. Its first outing on the road was on Saturday 27 January 2024, as seen here at the Newlands terminus on Canvey. **Ian Banks**



EN & TW Leyland National Greenways

Alan Osborne

Recently I was sorting through some of my older colour slides and came across some views of former Eastern National vehicles that I had completely forgotten about. Although this was reported in EBN 378 (October 1995) nothing has been contributed since. Eastern National and Thamesway did not operate any Leyland National Greenways themselves, but some of their own Nationals were converted to Greenways.

The National Greenway first appeared in late 1991, conceived by London & Country, then part of the Drawlane Group which owned East Lancashire Coachbuilders. It was a project intended to give almost time expired Leyland Nationals a new lease of life. Stage 1 of the programme, carried out at Reigate, involved a complete chassis strip down and fitment of a reconditioned Gardner 6HLXB engine. The Stage 2 reconstruction was undertaken at the East Lancs works in Blackburn. The project lasted about four years with the last of the 176 examples entering service in 1996. A major customer was London General for their Red Arrow fleet.

Many different types of Leyland National were included in the rebuilding programme, however, apart from the length, the differences between the incoming vehicles made little or no difference to the finished product, since each vehicle was stripped down to the barest rolling shell, which was repanelled and given new windows, front and rear ends, and a completely new interior. Despite the extensive nature of the rebuilding, vehicles were eligible to retain their original identity, and some did so. However, many operators chose to apply 'cherished' registrations (mostly Northern Irish), to hide the age of the finished rebuild.

In June 1994, Eastern National withdrew LN 1806 (TJN 505R), which initially passed to Carlton (breaker) for scrap. Thamesway withdrew 1859 and 1866 (YEV 317/24S) in February 1995. All three were selected for the Greenway programme and duly entered service with Blackburn Borough Council Transport as 428 (in March 1995) and 429/30 (in April 1995), still carrying their Essex registrations. In Blackburn the municipality was most keen to support local enterprise and quite a collection of Greenways was amassed, 423-30 were 49-seat examples, whilst 523-32 were shorter 41-seat machines. The vehicles were last reported in service in 2004.

With thanks to Wikipedia.

Below: Blackburn Transport National Greenway 430 (YEV 324S), formerly Eastern National and later Thamesway 1866, in Darwen Bus Station in April 1996 bound for the Cemetery at the borough boundary. **Alan Osborne**



In this September 2001 view, wearing the later green, black and white livery, is former Eastern National 1806 (TJN 505R), after conversion to a National Greenway as Blackburn Transport 428.

Alan Osborne



Another September 2001 view in Ainsworth Street sees Blackburn Transport 429 (YEV 317S), previously numbered 1859 in its earlier Essex days. It is in advertising livery for Enviro Skips and is bound for Accrington.

Alan Osborne



And here is 1866 (YEV 324S) in original form with Eastern National, at Don's Coaches, Dunmow yard, out stationed from Chelmsford Depot, on 20 April 1980.

Richard Delahoy



Under 'Service Revisions' in EBM 716 it was noted that Hedingham route 89X would be withdrawn after operation on Friday 29 December 2023. Although I suspect that many members would not have been aware of this service, it does have a history stretching back over forty years so I thought it worth recording a few details here.

Around 1939, Arthur Evans founded Evans Electroselenium Limited which produced Flame Photometers, Spectrophotometers and various other scientific instruments. In 1952 the company moved to Halstead and established a factory known as St. Andrews Works. In 1973 the business was acquired by Corning Medical who expanded the business with space being taken at part of the old Courtaulds Factory at Bocking.

Around 1980, the decision was taken to build a new factory at Sudbury on the Chilton Industrial Estate. Employees at Bocking and some of the Halstead ones thus moved to the new factory and it was decided to provide a contract bus service for their needs.

Hedingham & District were the chosen operator and they provided a service which left Braintree at around 0720 and operating via the A131 through Halstead in order to arrive at the Sudbury factory just before 0800. The return journey left at 1650. As a contract, timetables were not publicly available and Hedingham duties of the era tended to be short on detail so exact timings are not known.

The advantage of this contract to Hedingham was that it could be worked around school contracts and thus contribute to profits without much extra cost. It's worth noting that at the time Hedingham also had works services to Rippers (Sible Hedingham), C.A. Vandervell (Sudbury) and Colchester Lathe (Colchester) so they were an important source of revenue.

Typical duties during 1982 are shown below. Note that the 12 hour clock was used despite their public timetables using the 24 hour clock since the mid-1960s.

6.30	Start
6.47	Great Yeldham - Braintree (Service 4)
	Evans - Sudbury
	Colne Engaine - Halstead (Sch)
9.00	Finish
3.00	Start
	Hedingham - Bulmer (Sch)
	Evans - Braintree
5.35	Braintree - Great Yeldham (Service 4)
6.30	Finish

Although Hedingham opened their Sudbury depot in 1993, the service was still mostly operated from Sible Hedingham as it generally fitted better with their other work.

Over the decades the ownership and name of the Sudbury factory changed a number of times, Ciba-Corning (1985), Chiron (1996), Bayer (1999) and finally Siemens (2007). Despite this the service kept on running. At one stage a lunchtime service to and from Sudbury town centre was also provided.

Inevitably those employees who came from the Braintree and Halstead areas retired and they tended to be replaced by ones more local to the Sudbury area. It appears that towards the end of Hedingham as an independent, the service became available to outsiders although this feature doesn't seem to have been advertised.

After Hedingham was acquired by Go-Ahead in 2012 things continued unchanged for a while although the Sudbury depot became the new operating centre for Chambers.

In 2014, Chambers registered the route as a 'Local Bus Service' with effect from 17 February and numbered it 111, a number which seems to have been plucked out of the air. According to N & P, it was to be cancelled from 21 May 2017 but in the event it was renumbered as 89X and continued. Finally it was registered to Konectbus from 19

December 2018 when that business absorbed the Hedingham and Chambers companies. By now the time of the morning operation had changed, leaving Braintree at 0633.

Latterly the operation of the route was somewhat complex. It appears that in school term times it was operated by Kelvedon depot but on other days it was worked by Sudbury in the morning and Sible Hedingham in the afternoon.

When I saw that the service was scheduled to end on 29 December I was rather sceptical as to whether it would run during the week between Christmas and the New Year as many factories including Siemens were closed. However I was proved wrong as arriving at Braintree Bus Interchange on the last day I was greeted by the sight of 800 (YN53 RYP), a Scania OmniDekka. Having paid my £2 I received my ticket which advised me of timetable changes commencing on 30 March 2020!

I had thought I might be the only passenger but in fact there was a gentleman who boarded at Braintree in order to reach Halstead for a 0700 job start. He was not happy to find that it was the last day of operation. There are a couple of Stephensons journeys which reach Halstead before that time but they start en route at High Garrett rather than Braintree itself for what I think are historic reasons.

My journey to Sudbury was uneventful and I had plenty of time to make my onward connection. I didn't see the return journey in person but Bustimes indicates that it was worked by Hedingham depot 259 (EU56 FLP), originally L349. Thus ended another little piece of bus history.

Below: Preceding the Sudbury contract by a few years, but indicative of the contracts that Hedingham ran, Bristol MW5G L73 (YWT 294), which was in the fleet from 1971 to 1974, displaying 'Works Service' on the blind.

Nigel Turner Collection

hedingham & chambers

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The Trials and Tribulations of Running Buses in Thurrock

Richard Delahoy

Running buses reliably in Thurrock is a major challenge, as in most towns and cities, but with one extra added complication in the shape of the M25 and Dartford Crossing. With over 60,000 vehicles using the crossing each way every day, it only takes an accident or incident to cause massive traffic jams which quickly spill over onto the local road network. Ensignbus work very hard to minimise the resultant problems and to keep passengers informed via social media, but they cannot work miracles. Most of their routes converge on the Lakeside Shopping Centre, effectively alongside junctions 30 & 31 of the M25, and hence services right across Thurrock are very vulnerable. But none more so than the X80, linking Lakeside with the Bluewater shopping complex on the other side of the river. Normally the X80 runs hourly and is scheduled for a 20 minute journey time. Using the crossing - bridge southbound, tunnels northbound - there is no alternative way round for the X80. So if the crossing comes to a standstill, the X80 is often suspended until the congestion clears, as there is no point in having buses stuck for long periods with passengers on board. As an aside, the last time I used it, we left Lakeside on time and had just got up the slip road leading onto the bridge when everything stopped. We then sat there for the next 47 minutes before, thankfully, the road was reopened and we were able to carry on. When the X80 is suspended, Ensignbus have reciprocal ticket acceptance agreed with the Tilbury to Gravesend ferry, so passengers have some alternative option, albeit with multiple changes. But come what may, the last bus always runs, to ensure people are not stranded.

And so to the events of the afternoon and evening of Saturday 6 January 2024. An incident developed over the bridge on the Kent side. Initially the road was closed southbound at Junction 1A in Dartford from around 1330, but then by 1600 the authorities closed the whole southbound crossing from junction 31 on the Thurrock side, including the bridge. The problem was not with the bridge itself but with the road beyond the crossing, hence the option of diverting traffic through one of the tunnels was not possible and the road shut completely for southbound traffic. It's worth mentioning here that the crossing itself and its approaches is numbered A282, although most people think of it as part of the M25 - indeed, the transition is seamless. Technically, the M25 ends at junction 30 (for Thurrock Services and the A13) and resumes at junction 2 for the A2 on the Kent side. The reason is partly historic - the A282 predates the M25 by a couple of decades - but also because different traffic regulations apply to A roads as opposed to motorways, meaning certain vehicles banned from motorways can still use the crossing.

As there are no other crossings of the Thames east of here, the only option for traffic approaching on the clockwise M25 is to take the A13 towards London and then use the Blackwall Tunnel (or to turn round completely and go all the way round the anti-clockwise M25, not an option likely to appeal to many). Ensignbus duly suspended the X80 from the 1500 departure onwards, but as the afternoon and evening progressed, there was no sign of the road reopening and yet there were passengers on the Kent side who needed bringing back to Essex. As they explained on social media, "ROUTE X80: Please note that we are only planning to run the last bus on this due to the ongoing A282 closure towards Kent. We are working out a plan for this but note that the bus needs to *get to* Bluewater to come back. At present, we expect *significant delay*".

Hence the decision was taken to run the last bus as usual - but how? The only answer was to send the bus up the A13 to the Blackwall Tunnel and then back down the A2 to Bluewater - an extra 25 miles. As they explained at 2003, "ROUTE X80: The 20:15 will run from Lakeside. This will divert via Blackwall Tunnel and will take a significant amount of time due to the traffic. We do not have an exact time it will get to Bluewater but would not expect it there before 21:30 - we will keep you updated here". The X80 is normally worked by double-deckers and indeed, Wright StreetDeck 163 (LX21 CHK) was the allocated bus. But - the Blackwall Tunnel is height restricted, hence why TfL route 108, Lewisham to Stratford, is only operated by single-deckers. However, the height restriction on the southbound tunnel is 15' 6" and so double-deckers can go that way, but can't come back as the older northbound bore is only 13'. As the Dartford Crossing was still open northbound, the X80 could come back the by usual route with its top deck still intact.

163 duly left Lakeside on time at 2015 and for the first 25 minutes made good progress along the A13 into East London, but then hit massive jams. The 3.5 miles from Ripple Road at Barking to Prince Regent Lane at West Ham then took no less than 89 minutes! That's an average of 2.3 mph. By this time word had come through that the southbound Dartford Crossing had reopened and the driver turned round and headed back eastwards along the A13,

getting back to the M25 / A282 in a fifth of the time it had taken going the other way. A clear run then saw the bus arrive at Bluewater at 2243, by now 128 minutes late. It returned immediately and was back in Thurrock before 2300. Had the bus not turned round, I dread to think how much longer the further two miles to the Blackwall Tunnel might have taken!

We don't think such a diversion has ever been tried before but in the end, the X80 didn't pass through the Blackwall Tunnel and so history wasn't made - but full marks to Ensignbus for trying, and for keeping intending passengers informed, with ten separate messages on social media, including posting tracking maps to show how far the bus had got up the A13. And all of this just a few days after earlier suspensions when the bridge was closed due to the high winds of Storm Henk. Thankfully the A282 closure wasn't a week later, as the southbound bore of the Blackwall Tunnel was closed over the following four weekends, meaning double deck buses couldn't go southbound and congestion would be far worse. We don't envy their controllers the task of trying to keep the services running in exceptionally trying circumstances. Sadly the man involved in the incident that resulted in the road closure died as a result of his injuries.



Amazon Tilbury Bus Station

Richard Delahoy

In various issues of EBM we've mentioned the services run by Ensignbus and First Essex to the massive Amazon fulfilment centre at Tilbury (coded LCY2 by Amazon). There is a substantial bus station at the front of the warehouse building, with around seven or eight bays, replacing some car parking areas. It is mainly only served at shift change times morning and early evening, by the following services: Z1 (Ensignbus - Aveley, Lakeside, Grays, Chadwell St Mary), Z2 (First Travel Solutions, operated by Ensignbus - Canning Town, Barking, Dagenham, Rainham), Z3 (First Essex - Southend, Westcliff, Leigh, Hadleigh, Benfleet) and Z4 (First Essex - Pitsea, Basildon, Stanford le Hope, Corringham). Ensignbus 99, the Tilbury Town / Ferry local service, also calls there at appropriate times. All services are open to the public except for Z2, which is restricted to Amazon staff (as illustrated below on Wrightbus StreetDeck 172). All Z services run daily and there are 24 arrivals daily, plus on the 99, 8/10 trips call Monday to Saturday.

The pictures on the rear cover, taken on Saturday 27 January 2024, show First Essex Volvo B9TL / Wrightbus Eclipse Gemini 2 36217 (BJ12 VXA) on the Z4 to Pitsea and Ensignbus EBS1972 (SK18 TKY), the Wrightbus StreetDeck maintained in London livery for filming assignments, ahead of another StreetDeck, 172 (LX71 AOG), both loading for the Z2. The photographer, **Richard Delahoy**, had arrived via the Tilbury-Gravesend ferry and Ensignbus's 99, continuing his journey home on the Z3 to Southchurch. That trip actually carried more local passengers over the Tarpots to Southend section than had boarded at Amazon.





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