

Essex Bus Magazine

Current news and historical features

Issue 707 March 2023

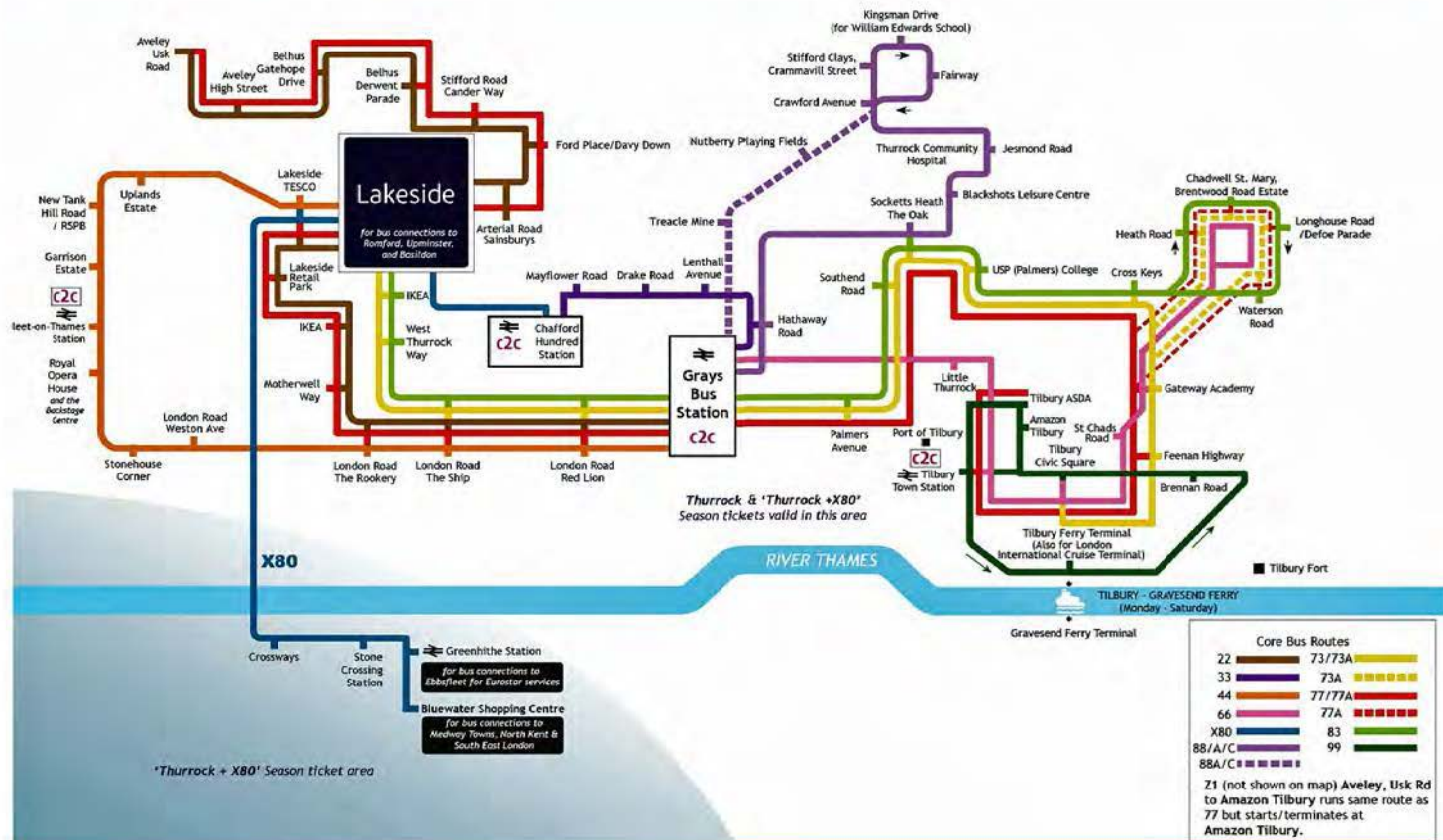


Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

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Ensignbus sale to First Bus

The standout news this month is the sale of Ensignbus to First Bus.

It was announced on 8 February 2023 that FirstGroup plc had signed an agreement to purchase Ensignbus Company Limited. The sale includes the depot at Purfleet, the vehicle fleet (but excluding the vintage vehicles), the routes based around Thurrock, plus Southend open top route 68, rail replacement and private hire contract operations and the vehicle refurbishment and re-sale operation. First stated "the acquisition of the Ensignbus business will both enhance First Group's existing local commercial bus operations in Essex as well as providing a number of growth opportunities in the business to business and bus vehicle dealership markets".

The sale is due to come into effect from Friday 10 March (so just before this issue of EBM reaches subscribers). Further information is on pages 6-8. **Inside Front Cover:** the latest Ensignbus network map.

Front Cover: Characterising the Newman family's initiative and entrepreneurial flair is the fleet of BCI double-deckers, sourced and specified by Ensignbus and built in China. There are a mix of 2-axle (Excellence) and 3-axle (Enterprise) versions; typifying the former type, 143 (LX17 DZD) was passing through Grays Bus Station on 13 December 2021 on one of the core routes of Ensign's comprehensive network of local bus services across Thurrock.

Above: Also typical of their enterprise, in 2021 Ensignbus acquired a previously unregistered 2013 built 8.9m Alexander Dennis Enviro 200 development vehicle and transferred the highly appropriate registration E17 SGN to it - that registration had previously been on their Volvo FH12 heavy recovery truck (since replaced by a newer Volvo, EB20 TOW). Numbered 601, the Enviro 200 has a Euro VI engine in an original style body. It is branded for the short Tilbury Town to Tilbury Ferry service 99, being seen at the Ferry on 3 December 2022, during Ensign's Heritage Running Day. The bus layby there was blocked by a pair of Routemasters, hence the bus stopping on the other side of the road. Both **Richard Delahoy**

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A calendar year subscription is £26. New members
may join from any month, but subscriptions will always
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March would pay 10 x £2.30, i.e., £23. Please
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EBM Extra

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

Membership Records & Data Protection

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

Reports, Articles & Photographs

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

Target Dates for EBM 708

Reports to Sub-Editors	1 April
Sub-Editor drafts to Editor	7 April
Dispatch by Printers on or before	15 April

The last two dates are fixed, but late news can be sent
up to 8th 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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published.

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Group Notices

Membership News

Welcome to new member:

Ryan Gordon, Basildon - 1210

We are very sorry to report the death of W (Bill) White of Grays, member 320, one of our long-standing members.

The Running Card

by Owen Woodliffe

The following events have been advertised.

Saturday 25 March: London heritage buses on routes 174/5 (Dagenham - Harold Hill / N. Romford, Chase Cross).

Tuesday 28 March: Bill Hiron, MD of Stephensons, NIBS & Galloway, is presenting a talk about those businesses to the Omnibus Society, who have extended an invitation to EBEG members to attend. First Floor, Abbey Community Centre, 34 Great Smith Street, Westminster London SW1P 3BU at 1800 for 1830.

Great Smith Street is served by the 88 bus; it is a short walk from routes 3, 11, 12, 87, 159 and 453 and from Westminster or St James's Park Underground stations.

Saturday 1 April: South East Bus Festival, Kent Showground, Detling. Ensignbus are operating a service to the rally, departing Upminster Station (Approach, stop E) at 0845, Lakeside Bus Station (N) 0910, Bluewater Bus Station (12) 0930, fare £10 return. For details see the South East Bus Festival website or Facebook page.

Sunday 9 April: Canvey Island Transport Museum Open Day 1030-1600. Shuttle bus from 'The Monaco'.

Sunday 16 April: Spring Gathering, London Bus Museum, Brooklands KT13 OQN.

Saturday 22 April: NS70. Open Day at Stagecoach North Street, Romford Garage.

Sunday 7 May: Ipswich-Felixstowe Run. Depart Christchurch Park 1100. Display at Felixstowe Promenade from midday.

Monday 8 May: Eastern National Heritage Running Day. Museum of Power, Langford, Maldon CM9 6QA.

Sunday 14 May: Bus Day, Mid Norfolk Railway, Dereham Station. **Note date change from previously reported (had been 7 May).**

Sunday 21 May: Open Day at Canvey Bus Museum

Sunday 21 May: Fenland Bus Festival, Whittlesey. Free 30min bus from Peterborough to the site, and services to the Classic Car Show at Ramsey, also Yaxley, Turvey, Thorley and March.

Saturday 27 May: Theydon Bois Transport Bazaar. Village Hall CM16 7ER.

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

EBM Extra 3

The third edition of EBM Extra, devoted entirely to historical features, will be published about two weeks after this issue and is being sent to members free of charge with very grateful thanks to sponsorship by Keith Shayshutt. You can read more about Keith in the Extra, along with a selection of articles that we hope you'll find of interest. Peter Dimmick recalls his conducting and driving days at Eastern National's Walton and later Clacton depots, whilst another depot features in a look back at Tyler's Avenue in Southend, through City Coach Company, Westcliff and EN days. Staying in Southend, we take a look at the Corporation's three 'bacon slicers' - you'll have to wait for the magazine to find out what they were!

Coming slightly more up to date, we tell the story of the first ten low floor buses in Essex, operated by County Bus, Hedingham and Southend Transport, now almost thirty years ago. Moving to the north west of the county, we have some great photos from Michael Dryhurst of buses in Saffron Walden in the early 1960s. Finally, we remember when Great Yarmouth helped out in Colchester and Southend in the 1970s and recount a couple of tales of confused passengers.



For Sale

Group publications now half price:

Essex Buses Fleet Record (EN and Thamesway Reunited 1996-2004) £7 plus £2 p&p.

Eastern National and Thamesway in London - Tendered Services £6 plus £2 p&p.

14 photos 6x4 colour of Southend New Year Running Day 2009 - £3 plus £1 p&p.

11 photos of 6x4 colour Southend New Year Running Day 2010 - £2.20 plus £1 p&p.

Please send e-mail to Sales Officer, address on page 2.

Reverend Terry Challis RIP

Last November we reported the death of our member the Reverend Terry Challis, whose exploits working for Eastern National and Crosville in the 1950s and 1960s had been serialised in EBN from 2008 onwards. His grave at Singleton Parish Church in St Annes has now been marked by this splendid headstone, featuring a most impressive, highly detailed engraving of preserved Eastern National Bristol K double-decker JYW 430. A fitting tribute to a life-long bus enthusiast! Photo courtesy of his son **Jonathan Challis**.



EBM 707 - The Buildings Issue

Purely by co-incidence, there are a number of photos of former depots, plus one new one, in this issue. We start with a photo of the former Eastern National and First Essex depot at Harwich, which had opened in April 1967 and closed completely at the end of June 2014. It has finally been sold as this photo taken on 2 March 2023 shows.

Stephen Barham with thanks to Robert Appleton

A minor correction to the caption to the photo of 66886 on page 9 of EBM 706, the location is the Head Street junction with St. John's Street (not Osborne Street), Colchester.



Book Review

Richard Delahoy

London Transport Country Buses Part 2 - North

Laurie Akehurst with photos by Peter Mitchell

Published by Adam Gordon. 214 x 304 mm, casebound, 184 pages. £40.

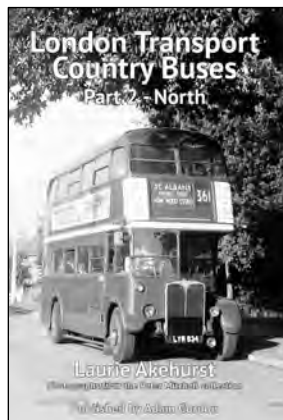
We don't routinely cover London Transport operations in EBM, but as mentioned on the next page, from 1951 onwards, green LT Country Area buses could be seen in south east Essex, well into what would be regarded as Eastern National country. This recently published book provides a timely reminder with some cracking photos. The furthest east that LT buses reached on normal service was at Coryton, just east of the oil refineries at Shell Haven, as the shot **at the foot of the page** of RT4735 (OLD 521) recalls, taken on 29 July 1961. Route 349 terminating here was only eight and a half miles from the centre of Southend as the crow flies and a whopping 28 miles from central London.

This book is a photo album with informative captions so doesn't go into the detail of the territorial changes between EN and LT in 1951, but does offer a great selection of pictures from the 1950s and 1960s. It covers the whole of the northern part of the Country Area, routes in the 300 and 800 series and some Green Line services. Many photos were taken in the countryside or at obscure terminal points and reveal a time now long gone. The Grays area is treated to 35 photos, including two magnificent shots of RTs standing on the forecourt of the hotel at the Bata Factory in East Tilbury, and another RT at Linford. Or how about the short-lived services through the Dartford Tunnel, with an RT on the 300 and a GS on the 399? And earlier, an STL on the forecourt of the former EN depot at Argent Street on a 44 to Bulphan in December 1951. Priceless.

Epping and Harlow get less coverage, 26 shots, and Brentwood none at all (save for two shots of 721s elsewhere along the route), but nevertheless, the Essex interest is strong.

Overall the book has around 320 photos, most presented two to a page but 38 - including the Bata pair - are a whole page, really showcasing Peter Mitchell's excellent photography. £40 may seem a lot for a book (well, it is a lot!) but the quality is first class and the cost averages at just 12p a photo. Inevitably RT and RF types predominate, but other classes featured include C, CR, D, GS, MB/MBS, Q, RLH, RMC, RML, RW, ST, STL, T and TF.

A minor gripe, I wish the photographer's name, Peter Mitchell, had been given greater prominence on the cover, equal to that of the author. Without Peter's pictures, the book wouldn't exist! That aside, this is recommended to anyone interested in the London Country Area.



Ensignbus sale to First Bus

Continuing from page 1, First Essex are expected to acquire around 55 buses from Ensignbus, we will list these next month once they are confirmed after completion of the sale. Around 200 employees will also transfer from Ensignbus to First Essex. Although the vintage fleet is remaining with the Newman family, it will temporarily stay at Purfleet with some vehicles going on loan to First Essex for a period of around 12 months for private hires and television & film work. In the meantime the Newman family will be looking for new premises to house the vintage fleet.

Ironically, the announcement of the purchase by First of this family owned firm came five days after the 60th anniversary of Eastern National taking over another long established family business, Moore Brothers, as commemorated in last month's issue.

The purchase is complementary to the First Essex operation locally, with existing depots in Hadleigh and Basildon. At present the Ensignbus livery and branding will be retained by the new owners, but this may change in the future.

First Essex already operate into Thurrock with routes 100 and 200, but the sale will see the company, as successor to Eastern National, return to being the principal bus operator in Grays, reversing the transfer of those operations to London Transport back in 1951. Prior to the formation of LT in 1933, EN and its predecessor, the National Omnibus & Transport Co, had operated across the town, along with various independents. But the LT boundary was set through the middle of Grays and EN's operations on the west side passed to LT in 1933/4; LT also compulsorily purchased the independents. That left Grays a divided town, EN serving the east and LT the west, a very unsatisfactory position for passengers. So in 1951, with both EN and LT now controlled by the British Transport Commission, LT took over EN's operations (except longer distance routes) and the depot in Argent Street, Grays.

The story of Grays from the 1930s to the 1950s is a complex one. It is covered in our booklet published in 1980 and in articles in EBN issues 459, 592/4/5, pdf copies of all of which are available from Richard Delahoy (contact details on page 2). The LT operations in Grays became London Country Bus Services (LCBS) in 1970, then London Country North East, County Bus and ultimately Arriva, until they progressively withdrew from the area in the 2000s.

Ensignbus had been set up by Peter Newman in 1972, following his previous involvement with vehicle dealing business PVS (London) Ltd. Before that, Peter had worked for Grey-Green and Super Coaches of Upminster. His first bus sale was an ex-London Transport RT to Osborne's of Tollesbury, which led to the setting up of PVS. He later split from PVS and set up Ensignbus, to trade in second-hand buses. The first acquisition was an ex-Portsmouth Titan for a school contract in Southend. Soon Ensignbus were operating contract services for the Port of London Authority and Lesney Toys. Crucially, Ensignbus also acquired the London sightseeing tour licence that Super had previously held. In the early days there was also a joint venture with S&M Coaches of Benfleet, named Mendabus. Later Ensignbus were based at a modern industrial unit in Grays, with buses stored in the derelict Royal Docks, before acquiring a massive site on the then A13 next to the Circus Tavern at Purfleet.

The business really came to prominence in 1979 when it began to take on almost 2,000 of London Transport's unloved Daimler Fleetlines (DM/DMS class), refurbishing and selling them far and wide, not just in the UK. But they also bought and sold second-hand buses from a huge variety of operators and acted as importers / dealers for new vehicles from continental suppliers Famos, Padane and Berkhof.

Operations took them into the London sightseeing market through the acquisition in 1984 of London Pride and its subsequent massive development. They revolutionised the sightseeing market with the introduction of electronic ticket machines, hop on-hop off services, tri-axle double-deckers, two way radios, 24-hour tickets, local fares, interconnected routes and Christmas Day operation. They were early participants in LRT tendered bus services in east London, later adding the operations of Fronrunner South East, before selling the London tendered bus operations in 1990 to Hong Kong interests as Ensign Citybus (later Capital Citybus, subsequently sold to First Group). The sightseeing business was expanded significantly and took over most rival operators in London before being sold to private investors in 1998, only for Ensignbus to buy it back in 2000, before selling it on to Arriva the next year. From 1998 Ensignbus also established and developed the worldwide City Sightseeing brand, with a mix of direct and franchised operations. They bought rival Guide Friday in 2002 and this also led Ensignbus into some relatively short lived local bus operations in Stratford-upon-Avon and Cambridge. The City Sightseeing business itself was sold in 2011.

Through all of this the dealing activities remained, albeit scaled back after the DMS era. After the Purfleet site was compulsorily purchased for road improvements and HS1, they moved to Rainham, then to another site in Purfleet and finally to the current premises there, with dealing operations scaled back up again such that Ensignbus can claim to be Britain's biggest bus dealers.

Ensignbus also ran a number of services around Thurrock before selling these together with a number of Metrobuses to Town & Country in December 1999. The current Thurrock bus operations can be traced back to a 2004 rail replacement contract in Kent which included live positioning journeys from Essex. With the demise of Town & Country in 2006, Ensignbus took over some of their services. With Arriva also facing serious difficulties in Grays, Ensignbus progressively built up a comprehensive network of services across Thurrock, supplanting Arriva, and they now account for around 69% of all bus passenger trips in the borough, all services being commercially operated. Between 2010 and 2019 they also ran services in Brentwood (ironically the first, the 81, taken on when First Essex gave up the route) before transferring these to NIBS.

Rail replacement has always been an important part of the business and as the heritage fleet has been built up over the years, filming and private charters have added another string to the bow. And of course, enthusiasts have enjoyed the fantastic heritage running days and other special operations.

Over the years, Ensignbus has sold over 20,000 buses to nearly 100 countries, undertaken around 25,000 MOT tests, converted over 1,000 buses to open top, completed over 5,000 single door conversions, operated on three continents and carried tens of millions of passengers on local service and sightseeing buses.

A multi-award winning business, including the recognition given to Peter Newman personally with the special Judges' Award at last November's routeone Awards, Ensignbus stands testament to the business acumen, flair, entrepreneurship and unstinting commitment of Peter and his sons Ross and Steve and their families. The Group wishes Peter a happy, well deserved retirement and Ross and Steve well in their future endeavours, and thanks them for all they have done for the bus industry, bus passengers and bus enthusiasts over the last 51 years. Information provided by Ross on dealership ins & outs has been a popular feature in EBN/M for many years. We also send thanks and best wishes to the rest of their families and both former and current Ensignbus employees.

With thanks to Coach & Bus Weekly and routeone for some information.

Below: One of the ex-London Transport Daimler Fleetlines that Ensignbus kept for themselves, DM1720 (THM 720M), now A103 in the London Pride sightseeing fleet, seen in Haymarket on 31 March 1987. **Richard Delahoy**



Right: Two ex-First Essex Tridents at Ensignbus at Purfleet on 25 February 2023, a site soon afterwards to be owned by First. The main subject of the photo is President bodied 33186 (LT52 WVB) with ALX 400 bodied 33384 on the far left (LK53 EZD). In between is another Trident / ALX, ex-Powells 2717 (AB02 POW), new to Connex for Transport for London service as KVO2 URP, in a livery for the free service between Rotherham Interchange and Parkgate Shopping Centre.

Richard Delahoy



707 for EBM 707

Below: Orange Luxury Coaches Bedford YMT / Duple Dominant II TYE **707S**, C49F, new in August 1977, seen in Maidstone Bus Station in 1980. The Union flags on the front depict that at the time Orange was part of the short-lived 'British Coachways' consortium. The summer service route 136 went from Ipswich to Rye, Camber and Dymchurch, via Colchester, Kelvedon, Witham, Chelmsford, Basildon, Maidstone and Hastings. Photo taken by one of the drivers, **Fred Lawrance**.



Follow Ups to Previous Issues

Foot Passenger Shuttle

On last month's inside front cover was a photo of Panther Travel's Enviro 200 KX58 BGY taken on New Year's Day 2023 on board Stena Britannica operating a foot passenger shuttle.

Stephen Barham has kindly supplied more details of this shuttle. At Harwich International there is a high walkway from the ship to the Terminal for foot passengers, of about 600 yards, it is movable at quayside for tide changes etc. It is illustrated **right**. When it is out of use (broken) Panther Travel takes passengers off the ship from the Car / Lorry Deck 3 to the terminal, approximately a five minute trip. Most trips are 50 to 70 foot passengers but Stephen has known up to 240.



Reversing

Additions to last month's list: Central Connect services 7/A both reverse at Henham, Woodend Green after serving Henham, High Street; Central Connect service 301 reverses at Widdington Fleur-de-Lys; Stephensons services 313, 414 & 453 reverse at Wimbish Primary School and First Essex 63, while not reversing at a corner, pulls onto the front of Lower Hockley, Dome and then reverses to the bus stop. These are all mid-route, not at the terminus. At Wethersfield 'The Green', vehicles on Hedingham service 16 continue along the High Street and reverse into Hereward Way. See page 13 for a photo of a Hedingham vehicle on route 16 at Wethersfield. At Great Yeldham 'The Green' vehicles on Hedingham service 89 reverse into Leather Lane. With thanks to Ian Ransom and Nigel Turner.

Service Revisions

David Edwards writes:

In Service Revisions EBM 705 (page 8) the withdrawal of Stephensons school service 701 (Brightlingsea to Norman Way Schools) is of note. Link this to Service Revisions in EBM 706 (also page 8) - "First Essex service 87 revised timetable". These few lines hide the significance of this event. The 701 was the last vestige of the former New Horizon Travel service 78X, which of course was the main service taken over from Cedric of Wivenhoe. That service had been introduced by Cedric to compete with Eastern National on the Brightlingsea route (78) after EN won Brightlingsea Colne School contracts way back circa 1990. First Essex (as successor to EN) gave up running to Brightlingsea entirely for several years during the late "noughties" until reinstating the service (as number 62) when Hedingham had also stepped into the fray running a Brightlingsea - Colchester service (87) against New Horizon who by then had taken over Cedrics.

New Horizon eventually gave up the route leaving First and Hedingham to it (Hedingham eventually withdraw when the Clacton area routes were gained after First's Clacton depot closed), but retained the one return journey schooldays only Brightlingsea-Norman Way service. This passed to Stephensons (becoming 701) when NHT sold out to them in January last year. So with Stephensons withdrawal of the 701 First Essex have taken over the school journeys to Norman Way incorporating it into the 87 (another route variant) - hence the "revised timetable" entry last month. The significance of this is that First Essex (as successors to Eastern National) have once again a 100% monopoly of the Brightlingsea to Colchester route, although of course Hedingham do have the basic hourly Clacton-Colchester route 74 which covers the same section of route as the 87 between Thorrington Cross and Colchester.

More on Moore's

David Edwards continues:

I must say how much I enjoyed reading the article on the takeover of Moore Bros 60 years ago, a subject I had grown up with in my formative years.

Re the front cover photo caption, in the late sixties and into the early seventies (indeed still into 1975 when Kelvedon operations had moved to Silver End), KN covered several peak hour operations on the 50/A/B Chelmsford - Terling / Flacks Green route. This had short journeys between Terling / Flacks Green and Hatfield Peverel, which then picked up further short journeys on the 53 between there and KN, hence the destination display on 2017. Dead mileage was very much frowned upon in those days and if anything could be run in service it was. Along with 2017 as a survivor in the photo, 1340 also survives of course in 'semi-preservation' (it's a shame the other MW showing wasn't CR's 1348!).

Peter Carr's shot of 2019 in Bishop's Stortford (page 30) although rare wasn't completely unusual. KN depot did indeed have an all-day car working on the 70 for its entire length including on a Sunday for a number of years and Peter is correct in that 2821 was generally the regularly allocated vehicle. I can remember travelling with my father on it on many occasions. Crew changeovers from KN took place at Coggeshall and short journeys to and from Kelvedon were worked on services 70A and 71 to facilitate this, as can be seen in timetables of that era (once again no dead mileage involved). KN also had other workings on the 70, the 1550 Colchester - Dunmow Church End being one in particular and this was always a Guy Arab operation.

In Richard Delahoy's photo of 2015 in Kelvedon depot (page 31), the early FLF to the left would have been either 2702 or 2705 as both were KN allocated at that time. This was the short period when National Travel South East had taken control of KN and Eastern National buses were relegated to outstation status and parked in the former Orchard behind the 'decker sheds' shown in Bob Beaumont's photo on page 24. The white National coaches can just be made out behind the buses. Also note the change in the frontal appearance of 2015 compared to the photo above. The registration number plate is now higher mounted and a step hole has been cut in above the (re-instated) fog lamp. These changes were made by EN to facilitate a change in the destination blind winding handles which were shortened, so the poor conductor had further to reach! The same can be seen on the two AOOs in the photo underneath which were new to Tilling standard.

Finally, in Bob's photo of PHK 534 on page 26, Moore's long serving driver Eddie Warner, complete with flat cap, can clearly be seen in the cab. A real gentleman, Eddie lived well into his 90s and used to travel with me on the 53 when I first started driving buses in the early 1980s.

Nigel Turner adds:

Re the article on Moores, I can't pretend to remember the actual takeover, but I do have some memories from that period. The late Jack Gentry was a family friend who had worked for Moore's since pre-war days, firstly as a driver then as a mechanic. I remember how annoyed he was soon after the takeover when there was an occasion where they were a driver short for a peak hour run. Jack was all prepared to get out of his overalls and climb into a Guy Arab but was firmly told that that was now forbidden by the union who wouldn't allow a mechanic to drive in service. Of course, in independent days the most important thing had been to ensure that every service ran. I also remember that occasionally when we visited on a Sunday, Jack would be at work so my dad and I would walk down to see Jack and if we were lucky we would get a ride on a bus while he road tested it.

A very surprise allocation in October 1966 was one of Eastern National's two Bristol FS / ECWs, 2539 (62 PPU) from Chelmsford (where it had been since at least March 1962, our records don't go back any further, quite possibly it had been there since new in April 1960) to Kelvedon. Its allocation to KN was as a result of the withdrawal of four ex-Moore's Guy Arabs that month, 2000, 2001, 2004 and 2006. Two Bristol MW / ECWs, 1319 and 1355, also transferred to KN, both from Clacton, to replace the Guys (although 1355 was swapped with 1359 from Maldon the following month). 2539 stayed at KN for only five months before it joined sister 2538 at Southend, where it spent the rest of its life; it was swapped for Bristol LD / ECW 2488.

Opposite page top is a rare photo of 2539 on route 335 to Maldon whilst working from KN, still with its side advert / branding for route 11/A Southend to Chelmsford. **Dave Savage** with thanks to Fred Lawrance. Does anyone recognise the location?



Bus Funding Developments

The Government announced two significant funding extensions in mid-February 2023. The industry had been facing considerable uncertainty with the ending of support payments at the end of March, creating a cliff-edge that was likely to lead to further substantial service cuts, but some limited extra breathing room has been granted. The Bus Recovery Grant, designed to fill some of the gap created through passenger numbers remaining below pre-pandemic levels, is being extended by three months through to the end of June, with an extra £80m of funding allocated. However, this fails to provide any long term certainty on bus funding, simply pushing the cliff edge out by a further three months.

Then the £2 fare cap, which was only funded from January to March, is being extended to 30 June. Details were awaited at the time of writing and it will be up to operators already in the scheme to decide if they want to continue or not; those who chose not to participate originally will also be able to join now if they want to, although it's doubtful whether their concerns about the scheme will have been allayed.

Below: First Essex Enviro 200 44471 (YY62 BNB) at Two Brewers, Ongar on 21 February 2023 with a £2 maximum fare poster in the front offside window. **Robert Downton**



1 April 2023

22 Grays Bus Station - Aveley, Usk Road **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable.
44 Grays Bus Station - Lakeside Bus Station **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable.
66 Grays Bus Station - Chadwell St Mary, Morant Road **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable.
73/A Lakeside Bus Station - Tilbury Civic Square **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable.
77/A Aveley Usk Road - Tilbury Asda **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable.
83 Lakeside Bus Station - Chadwell St Mary, Morant Road **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable.
88/A/C Grays Bus Station - Stifford Clays, Crawford Avenue **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable on M-F, service withdrawn on Saturdays.
Z1 Aveley Usk Road - Tilbury Amazon **Ensignbus**. Revised timetable.

16 April

6 Harlow Bus Station - Little Parndon **Arriva**. Revised timetable.
8 Harlow Bus Station - Old Harlow Post Office **Arriva**. Revised timetable.
9 Harlow Rail Station - Old Harlow, London Road **Arriva**. Service withdrawn.
C1 Galleywood, Barnard Road - Broomfield Hospital / Great Waltham, Warners Farm **First Essex**. Revised timetable.



Mark Lloyd

Withdrawn Vehicles

565 (W425 WGH) and 588 (PJ02 RBY) Volvo B7TL / Presidents have gone for scrap.
822 (YN56 FFB) Scania N94UD / East Lancs OmniDekka - partially cannibalised at Sudbury depot.

Fleet News

Go East Anglia 202 (YX69 NPG) Enviro 200 MMC was repainted from Norwich Park & Ride green livery to the standard blue and grey Konectbus livery. This explains the storage of 202 at CN in late December as per the report in EBM 705.

Ex-London General Enviro 400 E67, now 645 (LX57 CJJ) Konectbus, has been repainted into a driver recruitment livery and was present at CN week commencing 27 February 2023, it has decals regarding training and L plates applied so may have been converted to a driver trainer, but this is to be confirmed. Also visible in the Clacton yard was the first Enviro 200 Optare Esteem bodied trainer to be repainted, LX09 AZP, ex London General SOE20. It has a blue rear with a red front end. The coving panels have "earn as you learn" and "caution driver under instruction" with the group logos on the sides, as well as "we're training the next generation of bus drivers" and the obligatory L plates. This marks a change, having corporate liveried training vehicles instead of the ex-LT red of the Scania / East Lancs 9016/9017 (YU02 GHA/D) still in the depot. LX09 AZP did not have any fleet number applied when seen.

Reported into new livery is yet to enter into the fleet Enviro 200 270 (YX60 FCE) which has been stored at Clacton awaiting work for many months. Further to EBN 704, ex Go Northern Scania N230UB / East Lancs OmniCity NK56 KJF is confirmed as fleet number 461 rather than 463. It was seen at Mardens on 2 March freshly repainted into fleet livery. 463 is NK56 KJO which fully entered service on 27 February. It has also been repainted into fleet livery. Both 461 and 463, plus Esteem trainer LX09 AZP mentioned above, have a new joint 'hedingham & chambers' fleet name. (The Esteem also has 'goeastanglia' and 'konectbus' fleet names.) The app and website have recently been changed to reflect this; the website address is now www.hedinghamandchambers.co.uk.

A correction to last month, ADL Dart / Pointer 259 (EU56 FLP) at least still had its Covid mask into February as seen **opposite page top** at Wethersfield on route 16 on 10 February 2023. **David Moth**



Service News

From 6 February to 10 March St Osyth Road was closed between Coopers Lane and Rush Green Road, services 3, 6, 74 and 135 were diverted for the duration of the works.

From 16 April Hedingham plan major changes to the Clacton town network, labelled 'Endeavour', to make the network more reliable. Current customers are being asked to have their say via the website. Highlights include a new route 8/A proposed Pier Avenue to St Osyth via Greater Clacton with changes to service 6 and 7 to facilitate. Route X76 will become 76 (with stopping at the University of Essex) and there will be a faster 76X via A133 from Weeley. Route 135 will be withdrawn and there are changes to routes 74, 97, 98 and 136.

With thanks to John Podgorski & the Hedingham website.



Chris Stewart

Acquired Vehicles

Further to previous issues, SN16 OVM was seen on 18 February with its incorrect fleet number 321 removed but its correct one of 318 not yet applied. The final one of the four of these recently acquired Enviro 200 MMCs to enter service, the real 321 (SN16 OVR), did so on 23 February on routes 13C and 418, although since then it has only been used on one other day, 28th.

Other Vehicle News

Mercedes-Benz Sprinter / EVM Cityline 203 (RX20 RDV) was unusual on route 61 on 11 February.

Purchase of Ensignbus

Details of this major development are on pages 1 and 6-8.

Corporate Structure

Further to the news in EBMs 699-701 about First Essex and First Eastern Counties becoming a local business unit, First East of England, from October last year, recent management changes have strengthened the links between the two companies. A Head of Operations for the unit, based in Essex, reports directly to the Operations Director. The Engineering Manager for Ipswich depot has additionally taken on the same role at Colchester and the Operations Manager for Colchester depot has additionally taken on the same role at Ipswich.

New Vehicles

63454	MC72 UXS	SC5DSRD XU23000097	----	B41F	02/23
63455	MC72 UXT	SC5DSRD XU23000098	----	B41F	02/23
63456	MC72 UXU	SC5DSRD XU23000099	----	B41F	02/23
63457	MC72 UXV	SC5DSRD XU23000100	----	B41F	02/23
63458	MC72 UXW	SC5DSRD XU23000101	----	B41F	02/23
63459	MC72 UXX	SC5DSRD XU23000102	----	B41F	02/23
63460	MC72 UXY	SC5DSRD XU23000103	----	B41F	02/23
63461	MC72 UXZ	SC5DSRD XU23000104	----	B41F	02/23
63462	MC72 UYA	SC5DSRD XU23000105	----	B41F	02/23
63463	MC72 UYB	SC5DSRD XU23000106	----	B41F	02/23
63464	MC72 UYD	SC5DSRD XU23000107	----	B41F	02/23

Wrightbus StreetLite Max DF, Euro VI Daimler engines. Body numbers to follow. Note the unusual Manchester registrations. In green Essex Bus livery. Delivery dates to Hadleigh: 13 February 63454/5/60, 14th 63456-9, 21st 63461/2/4, 23rd 63463. Fleet names, yellow stripes and other decals added by Mardens staff (at HH). Received with long arms for the nearside front rear-view mirrors, these were shortened before entering service. Standard First Bus interior, blue with pink handrails and high backed e-leather seats (with USB ports in the back). White LED blinds. Two more are also due, 63465 (MC72 UYE) and 63466 (MC72 UYF). At the end of February these hadn't left Northern Ireland, so it is possible they may receive 23 plates.

A few of these vehicles briefly entered service on 'needs must' / testing short journeys only: 63454 on a one-way pre-dawn Amazon staff contract service Z4, 63455 similarly on a one-way pre-dawn Z3 and 63459 on a part-trip on service 27 just from Canvey as far as Hadleigh, all on 23 February and none of these were used afterwards that day. Similarly, 63460 entered service the next day just on one early morning trip on route 22 and nothing else the rest of the day.

Full entry to service: 63454 on 27/20 (27 February), 63455 on 22/28 (3 March), 63456 on 28/27 (3 March), 63458 on 28/20/Z3 (3 March), 63459 on 22/28 (28 February), 63460 on 22/28 (2 March).

Acquired Vehicles

47595	SN14 FEU	SA9DSRXXX14141617	AK267	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47596	SN14 FEV	SA9DSRXXX14141618	AK268	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47597	SN14 FEX	SA9DSRXXX14141619	AK269	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47598	SN14 FFA	SA9DSRXXX14141620	AK270	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47599	SN14 FFC	SA9DSRXXX14141621	AK271	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47600	SN14 FFD	SA9DSRXXX14141622	AK272	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47601	SN14 FFE	SA9DSRXXX14141623	AK273	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47602	SN14 FFG	SA9DSRXXX14141624	AK274	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47604	SN14 FFJ	SA9DSRXXX14141626	AK276	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47605	SN14 FFK	SA9DSRXXX14141627	AK277	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47606	SN14 FFL	SA9DSRXXX14141628	AK278	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset

47607	SN14 FFM	SA9DSRXXX14141629	AK279	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47608	SN14 FFO	SA9DSRXXX14141630	AK280	B37F	07/14	First Hampshire & Dorset
47665	SN15 ACF	SA9DSRXXX15141967	AL278	B37F	04/15	First Beeline
47666	SN15 ACJ	SA9DSRXXX15141968	AL279	B37F	04/15	First Beeline
47668	SN15 ACU	SA9DSRXXX15141970	AL281	B37F	04/15	First Beeline
47669	SN15 ACV	SA9DSRXXX15141971	AL282	B37F	04/15	First Beeline

Wrightbus StreetLite DF. 47595/6/8/9/600/1/2/5 were collected by First Essex drivers from First Southampton City Bus (which ceased operations after 18 February 2023) on 25 February, the rest were collected the next day.

All are in red / maroon City Bus livery (see photo on page 20). The 14-reg were to a higher than normal spec and have silver-grey handrails, wood effect floors and white LED blinds. They were new in Southampton's City Red livery. **Below:** Interior of 47607 whilst on route 3 at Southend Travel Centre on 2 March. **Jake Gill**



The 15-reg were new in Urban livery and have standard First Bus specifications including pink handrails and orange LED blinds. 47665/6/8 moved to First Hampshire & Dorset in September 2017, initially to Southampton, but then in January 2018 they moved on to the First Portsmouth, Fareham & Gosport division, receiving 'Solent' fleet names. 47669 also moved to FH&D, but went directly to FP,F&G in January 2018, also receiving 'Solent' fleet names. In September 2019 a new route 1 was introduced in Southampton to compete against Blue Star (ironic as since 19 February this year Blue Star have filled gaps left by First's withdrawal from Southampton) and all four moved (back) to Southampton and were repainted into City Red livery with branding for the new route. This branding was later removed (whilst still in service in Southampton).

The 14-reg fit into the gap between First Essex's first batches of new short StreetLites, 47521-30 and 47643-58, but they are actually older than 47521-30 which are 64-reg. 47665/6/8/9 follow on from 47643-58 which are also 15-reg, they were new around the same time as the FE ones but despite having higher fleet numbers they have lower registration letters.

47595/6 are for Basildon, 47665/6/8/9 are for Colchester and the rest are for Chelmsford.

47596 has had temporary small old style 'Essex' fleet names added on front, sides and rear plus an 'Essex' in new style on nearside front window. 47666 has a super rear advert for Fareham College.

Entry into service: 47596 on 25 & 47599 on 3 (both 27 Feb), 47600 on 351 (1 March), 47602 on 3 (1 March), 47607 on 13 (2 March), 47666 on S2 (1 March). Some of these entered service still with Southampton branding. 47595 went for repainting to Essex Bus green at Total Vehicle Solutions (TVS) Laindon on 28 February. On the same day 47601 and 47605 were seen at Mardens for repainting. 47598 arrived at Westway depot, Chelmsford on 3 March after repainting to red shuttles livery at Mardens.

69155 MX06 VNL YV3R6G7256A113095 K940 B43F 06/06 First Manchester

Volvo B7RLE / WrightBus Eclipse Urban. From Olive Grove depot, Sheffield, First South Yorkshire & Midlands, first seen on 4 March 2023 in Chelmsford Bus Station. A driver trainer, in the same Urban 2 style livery of dark green rear, yellow front and red dividing line as 66886 which was illustrated last month, although with different graphics.

Allocation Changes

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

Period 10 2022/23 (25 December - 21 January). Addition to EBM 706.

32087 CR-CR (oos)

Period 11 2022/23 (22 January - 18 February)

32068 CR-CR (oos), 33544 BN (oos)-BN, 33552 BN (oos)-BN, 33568 BN (oos)-BN, 33713 BN (oos)-BN, 34459 HH-HH (oos), 34465 HH (oos)-CF (oos), 37034 CR-CR (oos), 44005 CF-CF (oos), 44913 CF-CF (oos), 44915 HH-CF, 63454 New-HH (oos), 63455 New-HH (oos), 63456 New-HH (oos), 63457 New-HH (oos), 63458 New-HH (oos), 63459 New-HH (oos), 63460 New-HH (oos), 66804 CR (oos)-Disposal, 66886 FG(DS)-CF(DS), 67738 CR-CF, 67755 CR-CF, 69518 HH-CF-CR, 69905 BN (oos)-BN, 69906 BN (oos)-BN, 69913 BN-BN (oos)

32068 was taken out of service after 28 January and soon after was seen in the disposal line with all fare collection equipment removed.

34465 was seen at the back of Westway in mid-January and was still there on 13 February with a "Not to be Moved" sticker in the windscreen.

37034 hit a telegraph pole on 12 February in Wivenhoe, it sustained severe nearside front corner damage and it is possible it may be written off.

44005 has been taken out of service for disposal, early Enviro 200s are next in line to go after the Darts, although at the time it was taken out of use five Darts were still in use. Mini Enviro 200 44913, a bit newer being an 09 registration, has also been taken out of service for disposal. Parts from it were fitted to sister 44915 which has now taken its place at CF. Its last day in use was 7 February. On 25th it was seen on the Chelmsford scrap line.

69518 moved from HH to CF on 24 January but then moved on to CR at the end of the period, when 67738 & 67755 moved in the opposite direction from CR to CF.

69905 finally returned to service after its refurbishment on 7 February, working B shuttle routes in Basildon. It is in two-tone red but had not received any vinyls. See photos on next page and page 21.

69913 has been placed into long term reserve after suffering a gearbox failure, its last day in service was 15 February.

Disposals

66804 to PVS, c 7 February 2023.

32068, 32087, 32260, 42936, 42937, 42940, 42945, 66801, 66811, 66970, 69532, 69533 to Ensignbus February 2023. In practice, 32068, 32087, 32260 & 66970 went direct from Colchester to Shelton Motors for scrap on 1 March, 42937, 42940, 69532 & 69533 went direct from Chelmsford to Shelton Motors for scrap on 2 March and 42936 & 42945 went direct from Chelmsford to Shelton Motors for scrap on 3 March. 66801 also went direct from Colchester to Shelton Motors for scrap.

The disposal of 66801 marks the end of 'A Greener Colchester' version of Urban livery (although two Volvo 7900 hybrids, 69915 & 69917, remain in similar 'A Greener Essex' livery) whilst the disposal of 66970 marks the end of Urban 2 livery with magenta front (although this was only ever on a handful of acquired buses).



Above: 69905 approaching Basildon Bus Station from Pitsea Tesco on route B3 on its second day back in service, 8 February 2003. **Nick Street**

Repaints

As noted above, 47598 from Southampton City Red to red shuttles livery (before entering service), completed and at Westway depot, Chelmsford on 3 March.

67902 from Urban livery to all off-white at TVS, after front accident repairs, back at Basildon on 28 February and back in service on 2 March. It has received this livery pending a decision on its future.

Around the Depots

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

First Essex peak vehicle requirement (PVR) figures from 19 February 2022 service changes:

	Mon-Fri Schooldays	Saturdays	Sundays
BN - Basildon	63	51	31
CF - Chelmsford	79	58	29
CR - Colchester	58	47	26
HH - Hadleigh	50	41	24
Totals	250	197	110
Change from Oct 2022	+2	-2	0

With thanks to Sean Menzies for extracting this data from Bustimes files made available under the BODS (Bus Open Data Service) Regulations. The previous table was in EBM 703 after the end of October 2022 service changes.

Colchester

37136 has received 'Essex Bus' style fleet names on its Urban 2 with green front livery.

37140 has received a super rear advert for Adult Community Learning Essex.

News of the Harwich routes (2 February - 1 March). The 0915 Mistley - Colchester 104 remained a double deck working, but only three Volvo B7TLs reached Harwich. On 3 February 32530 worked 0715 Harwich - Colchester

103. On 21st 37017 replaced 67779 and 37042 replaced 67739, both on 104, so that 67739 and 67779 could transfer to Chelmsford (Period 12 transfers). By the end of February most Colchester - Harwich journeys were in the hands of the remaining five Enviro 300s at Colchester: 67736/41/42/50/805 and the six Volvo B7RLE / Wrightbus Eclipse Urban 2s now at Colchester 69515-20. The 1905 Colchester - Harwich 104 remained a StreetLite working, including the use of four StreetLites in red shuttle livery: 47421 on 17th, 23rd & 27th, 47427 on 3rd & 13th, 47430 on 7th & 20th, 47697 on 14th, 28th & 1st March. In addition, 47696 worked on 104 on 17th starting with 1435 Colchester - Harwich. The Sunday 102 service is normally worked by three saloons, but on 26th five were used 47427, 67741, 67750, 69517 & 69518.

Clacton routes. Route 74B has been mainly worked by long StreetLites in the past month, 63329 (8th, 14th, 21st), 63330 (7th), 63333 (10th), 63334 (20th), 63335 (13th, 24th), 63339 (17th), 63342 (15th), 63343 (1 March), 63344 (9th, 16th, 22nd). Doubly unusual was 47697 on 6th - a short StreetLite plus the first time a red shuttles bus has worked to Clacton. This was followed by similar 47430 on 28th and Urban liveried 47655 on 3 March. Other types of single-decker were Enviro 300 67750 (27th, 2 March) and Volvo B7RLE 69516 (23rd). Only five double-deckers, 32547 (11th), 32669 (25th), 32672 (4 March), 37135 (16th), 37140 (18th). Route 76: 63333 (12th), 67736 (19th), 69519 (26th), 37027 (5 March).

47650 on X71 (8th). Red 47696 on 370 (11th, 25th).

Chelmsford

A new bus wash has been built at the depot.

44462, repainted into red shuttles livery as reported last month, has regained a blue 'Beaulieu to Chelmsford Station Express Service' super rear advert, very similar to its previous one but with amended wording.

36837 has been at the Scania dealers in Witham. It returned to service on 1 March.

32641, noted last month as in the scrap line on 30 January, returned to service on 6 February.

42941 was taken out of service after 2 February and was noted in the scrap line on 11th, but it still had its ticket machine fitted. It then returned to service on 24th.

42934 was taken out of service after use on 20 February and 42956 after use on 28th, leaving just four Darts remaining, 42930, 42935, 42941 and 42944. On Saturday 4 March, just before we went to press, all four were used in service and 42935 was also used on Sunday 5th.

Driver trainer 66825 was reported last month as being in the scrap line on 30 January. It was no longer there on 25 February and is believed to have been used during the month.

32551 on X30 (27th). 42956 (9th), 66823 (14th), 67756 (17th) on X30 shorts. Red 44662 on Brentwood routes 37 & 565, plus 351 (3 March). 66759 a long vehicle on 73 (2 March). 67196 on 32 (15th). Recently acquired driver trainer 66886 in Head Street, Colchester (16th).

Basildon

33413, which was only acquired in December 2021, but which has been out of service since 5 August last year, is now earmarked for disposal. Photos of it were in EBMs 694 & 696.

33412/14/16/24/552/57/61/62/63/68/73, 33713, 33987 all on 300 on first day of double deck operation of the route, 19 February. Most Sunday journeys interwork with route 25, but weekday journeys do not.

As a result of the double decking of 300, a few more single-deckers on 9, 100 and 200, although these remain predominantly double deck operated.

Route X10 diverted at Runwell from 19 February to replace withdrawn route 16, but the first day of X10 shorts between Wickford Station and Runwell was 20th, when mini Enviro 200s 44908 & 44909 operated these journeys.

47651, a P12 transfer from HH, (25th, 27th & 1 March) and 69915 (22nd) on 9. 47652, also a P12 transfer from HH, on X10 shorts (28th and 1 & 2 March). Recently acquired 47596 on X10 shorts (28th) and on 251 (5 March). 69901 (28th), 69907 (21st) and 69909 (20th) on X10. 69908 and 69912 on school route 625 (28th). 69910 on 106 (23rd). 69914 on 16 (15th) during last week of the route.

With thanks to Michael Allen, Robert Appleton, Stephen Barham, Jack Bennee, David Edwards, Matthew Elsey, John Lidstone, William Morrison, Ross Newman, Gareth Norris, John Podgorski, John Salmon, Derek Stebbing, Chris Stewart, Andrew Toms, Rob Webb, Robert West, Bustimes, Bus Lists on the Web, Facebook, Essex Buses Google group and Terminus.

In EBM 705 we included a photo of Volvo B7TL / Transbus ALX 400 32087 with the note that it didn't quite make its 21st birthday. Sister 32068 (KP51 VZS), new at the same time (January 2002) also to Leicester Citybus and also acquired by First Essex from First Leicester in May 2015 was more lucky. Here it is at Highwoods, Colchester on route S1 on 13 January 2023. However it didn't last much longer, its last day in service was 28 January. See also page 16.

Robert Appleton

32068 again, on the right of the photo, withdrawn at Quayside Depot, Colchester on 15 February. On the left is heavily cannibalised 63328 (SK65 PXJ), the accident damage (see EBM 706) is on the other side. Ticketer and base plate removed. In the middle is 37138 (SN57 HCX).

David Edwards

At the time of going to press only three ALX 400 bodied vehicles remained in service, 32482-4 (AU53 HJZ/HKA/HKB). First Eastern Counties have also been withdrawing buses from this batch of Volvo B7TLs which were new to them, including 32475 (AU53 HJJ) which operated for First Essex between July 2011 and January 2020 before returning to FEC. 32491 (AU53 HJZ), on the right of the photo taken at Ipswich depot on 22 February 2023, did not operate for First Essex. See also page 25.

Daniel Pretty



Route 16 (Wickford Station - Runwell, St Luke's) was withdrawn after operation on 18 February 2023 and replaced with a diversion of route X10 (Basildon Bus Station - Stansted Airport) from the next day, with additional short journeys between the 16 termini on Monday to Friday peaks. 44909 (YX09 AFY) is seen at St Luke's on one of these short workings on 22 February. We think that the reversed front blind is to indicate that the bus is not operating the full X10 route.

William Morrison



The end of the Darts? Not quite - as we went to press four were hanging on, but with the massive influx of StreetLites in February they are likely to be gone by the time EBM 708 is published. 42944 (WA56 OAU) on 22 February 2023 at Chelmsford Bus Station on route 47.

Andrew Toms



And here is one of their replacements. Former Southampton 47599 (SN14 FFC) on its first day in service with First Essex, 27 February 2023, on route 3 on London Road, Leigh. Some Southampton branding has been removed, including 'City Red' on black at the bottom of the windscreen.

John G Lidstone



Roadworks by City Fibre across Southend have continued to cause disruption to bus services. From 20 February, London Road (A13) was closed westbound in Westcliff from Hamlet Court Road to The Plough, affecting Arriva service 1 and First Essex 27, 28 & Z3 and leaving three key stops unserved. Here 34458 (LJ59 LYS) emerges from West Road back onto London Road at The Plough on 21 February. West Road has not seen buses for many years now, but was traditionally part of route 62.

Richard Delahoy



Green and red. Another photo of refurbished 69905 (BV12 ZBG) on route B3 taken on 8 February, this time at Pitsea Tesco, being passed by 69913 (BV12 ZBU), still in former 'City Country Connections' livery, on the same route.

Robert Appleton



Hadleigh's 63065 (SK63 KKF) at Canning Town station on 18 February 2023 operating a Jubilee line rail replacement service between there and North Greenwich. 63061 was also in use on this service being operated by Ensignbus, using their own vehicles, dealer stock and some hires (an Ensignbus Enviro 200 MMC is just visible in the background). Loadings were particularly heavy due to a Peter Kay show at the O2 that evening.

Jonathan Cush



Colchester

The last 07 plate Enviro 200, 3991 (GN07 DLZ), was withdrawn on 17 February. It was replaced by a further transfer from Maidstone, similar 4013 (GN58 BTV), B38F, which is in new Arriva livery, collected on 18 February,.

On a historical note, we should record that a small part of the former tram and later bus depot remains, as was briefly mentioned under the First Essex article in EBM 703 (November 2022). Network Colchester had moved out of the historic Magdalen Street premises in 2008; subsequently First Essex used part of the site until summer 2015, but it was all demolished at the end of 2018 and student flats have been built on the site. However there is still one small reminder - or rather, two. A small section of the electricity installation at the rear of the depot, fronting onto Military Road, remains as illustrated here. The stonework includes the Corporation crest.



A footpath leads from here through the student complex and at the suggestion of Colchester High Steward (and former Mayor and MP) Sir Bob Russell, it has been named Tram Folley. He explains: "It is more than 90 years since trams ran in Colchester [December 1929], but there is no permanent reminder of the time when traffic congestion was non-existent and there was cheap public transport run by the Council". The footpath includes a short section of tram track. The use of the word 'Folley' has various precedents in Colchester, there has been an Artillery Barracks Folley since the 1880s, historically, there were Camp Folley North and Camp Folley South and today there are other examples. The use of Folley with an "e" in it is of course different to 'folly', which the dictionary defines as "a costly ornamental building with no practical purpose, especially a tower or mock-Gothic ruin built in a large garden or park". No connection with bus and tram depots, then!

Harlow

Preliminary work on the rebuilding of the bus station (as reported last month) means that certain bays and parking areas are unavailable.

Cuts due to vehicle shortages continued during February.

Green Line liveried 3771 returned to service on route 10 on 4 March. It has had a new engine fitted so it is planned to use it on local routes for a couple of weeks to run the engine in.

VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 3752 (YJ08 DZB) is a transfer in from Hemel Hempstead. It is in Arriva Max livery.



4183 has a new super rear advert for Adult Community Learning.

Above Right: The furthest you can travel from Essex on one bus for the current maximum fare of £2 is to Heathrow Airport where Harlow's VDL SB200 / Wrightbus Pulsar 2 3774 (FL63 DXE), a June 2022 acquisition from Arriva Midlands, lays over prior to working the 1215 back to Harlow on a gloomy 25 February 2023. **Ian Ransom**

With thanks to Nick Agnew, John Card, Adam Kelleher, Keith Sadler, Facebook and the Colchester Civic Society.



Ian Ransom

Below: Panther Travel out base a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter at Don's Coaches, Great Dunmow. Here is MV53 GRZ on 30 December 2022. **John Podgorski**



Updating the list of the ex-London United Scania N230UD OmniCities published in EBM 705, the current position regarding those in use / under preparation is:

57	YT09 ZCE	London red, in service
58	YT09 ZCF	In paint shop, going into Stephenson's green / white
83	YT59 RYJ	Overall white, in service
94	YT59 SFY	London red, in service
104	YT59 SFF	London red, in service
106	YT59 DXZ	In paint shop, going into Stephenson's green / white
109	YR59 FYO	London red, in service (see below)
110	YR59 FYP	Stephenson's green / white, in service
113	YR59 FYU	Stephenson's green / white (entered service 6 February), in service.

All the above have been converted to single door. Those in Stephenson's livery have also been retrimmed. As reported last month, 109 has been on loan to Border Bus but was due to be returned at the beginning of March. Until a final decision is made over how many are to go onto the fleet long term, they continue to carry temporary fleet numbers, the same as their original numbers at London United but excluding the SP prefix; ultimately they will receive 5xx numbers. The others acquired (see EBMs 695-8) are in sales stock or have already been sold, as previously reported.

Below: 57, displaying its later London United five-digit fleet number with SP prefix, SP40057, outside the Travel Lodge, Maldon on 2 March 2023. **Gareth Jones**



Dennis Dart trainer 9033, previously registered A17 SOE, has reverted to its original mark of LK03 NLG (see photo on rear cover). Scania N94 trainer 7054 (A19 SOE, originally YN54 AHC) has now become A17 SOE and the A19 SOE registration mark has transferred to a company car.

With thanks to the companies and Benjamin Driver.

Sale to First Bus

Details of this major development are on pages 1 and 6-8.

Dealer Stock Movements

Vehicles In January 2023

Correction to EBM 706, the Enviro 200s from **Transdev Airport Services** all had GV63 registrations not GN63.

Vehicles In February 2023

From **First Eastern Counties**: Volvo B7TLs AU53 HJJ/K/Y/HKH/J. HJJ, HJK, HIY previously operated for First Essex (fleet numbers 32475, 32476, 32481). A photo of 32475 is on page 19.

From **First Essex**: Darts WA56 OAV, SN05 DZS/T, MX56 HXZ, Volvo B7RLEs PL05 UBR/S, MX05 CCJ/CDK, KX05 MJV, Volvo B7TLs LT52 WWF, KP51 VZS/WBZ. These were fleet numbers 42945, 42936, 42937, 42940; 69532, 69533, 66801, 66811, 66970; 32260, 32068, 32087. See page 16.

From **First Potteries**: Volvo B7TL KP51 VZO

From **Go Ahead London**: Citaro BD09 ZPT, Volvo B9TLs LK59 FEH, LX59 CNZ, Enviro 200 LX09 AYO

From **Lothian Buses**: E400s SN11 EES, HY11 BUS, SN61 BBF/J/K/O/U/V/X/Z/BCE/F/K, HY61 BUS, LB61 BUS

From **Metroline**: Enviro 400s LK59 DZA/H/L/N/O/P

From **RATP London**: Enviro 400s YX62 BFU/BKO/BBO/BFL/BMY/BNQ

From **Stagecoach West**: Van Hool Astromegas YJ14 LFD/E

Vehicles Out February 2023

A2B, Luton: Enviro 200 YX59 BZL

Axe Valley, Devon: Enviro 400 LX08 DXZ

City Direct, Galway, Eire: Enviro 400s SN12 EHJ/H

Empress Coaches, Upminster: Scania CN57 FGA

Finestyle, Wellingborough, Northants: Scania CN57 FGD

Hire Your Transport, Surrey: Volvo B9R YN10 FZW

Howard Saith Coaches, Newcastle: Trident LV52 HFH

London Bus Company, Northfleet: Routemaster RM1971

Moffat & Williamson, Fort William: Volvo B9TL BX12 CVO

Oddball Trucks, Bristol: Enviro 200 GV63 HXP

NBM Hire, Penrith: Enviro 200 YX59 BZN

Peoplesbus, Liverpool: Enviro 400 SN12 EHP

Select Bus, Stafford: Scania YN63 BYO

Sharpes Coaches, Nottingham: Volvo B9TL HF11 HCV

Top View Sightseeing, London: Scania YTO9 ZCO, YT59 RYF, Enviro 400s SN12 EHD/F/J/K/R/T/W/EGY/Z

Trent Barton, Derbyshire: E400s SN11EES, HY11 BUS, HY61 BUS, LB61 BUS, SN61 BBF/J/K/O/U/V/X/Z/BCE/F/K

Youngs Coaches, Cambridge: Van Hool Astromegas YJ14 LFD/E

To Shelton Motors for Scrap

Darts WA56 OAV, SN05 DZS/T, MX56 HXZ

Enviro 200 LX09 AYO

B7RLEs PL05 UBR/S, MX05 CCJ, KX05 MJV

B7TLs LT52 WWF, KP51 VZS/WBZ, YJ54 XUV, AU53 HJK/HY/YN53 EOB

B9TL LK59 FEH

Tridents WA05 MGU/V

Enviro 400s SN06 BNY, LX58 CXF

Citaro BD09 ZPT

Ensignbus

BC141 sold to Aintree Coachlines

RMC1513 sold from Heritage Fleet to London Bus Company, Northfleet.

With especial thanks to Ross Newman for providing all this information over the years.

Disposal

StreetLite 1202 (CC11 BUS, ex SN64 CVR) to Yorkshire Buses.

Other Vehicle News

Further to last month, Solo 1001 (SGZ 2221) remains in service. Acquired Enviro 200 GX07 HUU has not yet entered service.

Other News

Also further to last month, it is confirmed that during February Central Connect moved from Hailes Farm, Roydon to a base in Harlow at River Way. Two views of the new site **below** taken on 22 February; the bus is Scania N230UD / Scania OmniCity 2010 (YP59 OEW), still displaying its London United fleet number SP40161. Both **Owen Woodliffe**

With thanks to John Card, Owen Woodliffe, Harlowride and LOTS.



Hi-Tech Coaches, Basildon

M640 KVU, a Van Hool C46FT bodied Volvo B10M, has gone from here.

Middleton (Marc 1), Billericay

TIL 8148 (ex K807 HUM), a Volvo B10M-60 with Van Hool C48FT bodywork, is here, previously with Thorns of Rayleigh, Benfleet. N548 SJF, a Volvo B10M-62 with Jonckheere C70F body work is here, ex Milestone Coaches, Canvey Island. Van Hool bodied Volvo B10M-62 has been re-registered as E21 SRM from P813 GBA whilst Neoplan N316 SHD has been re-registered from YN04 AUX to F22 SRM.

Middleton (FST Coaches), East Tilbury

R903 JGA, a Volvo B10M-62 with Van Hool C53F bodywork, has been acquired, ex Middleton, Billericay.

Truck & Bus, Rettendon

NB03 GHD, a Beulas bodied Irisbus 391E (C53F), is here, previously with Gretton, Peterborough.

With thanks to the PSV Circle.

Below: SBC Leisure former Go North East Volvo B11R / Caetano Levante BV17 GVD at Luckyn Road off Miles Gray Road, Basildon on 3 December 2022. **Paul Harvey**



Finally under the news items for this month, farewell to Ensignbus as an independent company after 51 years. The sign outside their Purfleet depot, taken on 25 February 2023.

Richard Delahoy



When member Alan Moore was given a bus jigsaw he thought we'd be interested in its nostalgic Southend scene. We certainly were!

The jigsaw is based on a painting I've long admired and have a framed copy of on my office wall. It is a fabulously evocative scene of Southend past and a superbly executed painting by the Halstead-based respected transport artist Malcolm Root, FGRA. But what's the story behind it? I've known the person who commissioned it, Cliff Moore, for many years through our mutual membership of SEERS - the South East Essex Railway Society (incidentally, the only organisation I've belonged to for longer than ENEG / EBEG, by a year). Cliff had asked Malcolm to paint the scene back in 1997 as a reminder of aspects of his childhood. The inspiration was a black & white photo taken by the Council's Borough Engineers Department, one of a number recording Southend in the 1950s.



So first to the original photo, **above**, which is courtesy of **Southend Museums Service**. This shows a busy Southend High Street, looking north from just south of the bridge carrying the LTS line. Prominent is City Coach Company Daimler CVD6 / Roberts D3 (NVX 173), about to turn left into Tylers Avenue at the end of its lengthy run from London Wood Green on the service that became Eastern National's 251. (The story of Tyler's Avenue bus depot is told in the forthcoming EBM Extra Issue 3). We don't know the exact date so can't say if the bus was still being operated by City or whether this was after their 1952 sale to Westcliff. The livery style suggests possibly the early 1950s rather than when D3 was new in 1949. The newer car in the background doesn't help narrow it down, as that has a DHJ registration dating from 1948/9. To the left of the picture is Clifftown Road and the buildings at the start of the approach forecourt of Southend Central Station.

What is curious is the vantage point the photographer has used. The height and position mean it cannot have been taken from any of the buildings further down the High Street, so perhaps Southend Corporation provided the tower wagon used for trolleybus overhead line work? The perspective certainly suggests a location in the roadway close to the kerb.

When it came to painting this scene, Cliff as commissioner wanted some changes / personalisation and Malcolm as artist wated to add his own touches. Indeed, he makes the point that "basing a painting so heavily on a photograph is not the norm. This one was specifically asked for and recalled a lot of memories for me as well. It was just a splendid scene from a time we remember fondly".

The most obvious change was to the bus, substituting a typical Southend Corporation bus, still a Daimler but a 1945 CWA6 version with Brush lowbridge body to utility specification, in the form of 226 (BHJ 775), heading for Shoebury on route 5B. This was a supplementary service over part of the 5A route (Southend Victoria Station to Shoeburyness Cambridge Hotel via the seafront), 5B journeys being Central Station to Ness Road (Shoebury Common), described in winter timetable leaflets as running "as and when required" but codified in the summer versions as running from the Thursday before Whitsun, daily, until the last Wednesday in September, every 15 minutes from lunchtime to mid-evening [e.g., as per the July 1951 TT]. It was heavily used by day trippers heading for the seafront attractions.



Other changes include adding Stanier 3-cylinder 2-6-4T loco 42516 crossing the bridge on its way up from Shoeburyness, placing the distinctive Southend Standard advert on the bridge (in reality that was on the other, north side), adding the railway lorry emerging from Clifftown Road, moving the cyclist exiting from Tylers Avenue back so that he doesn't obscure the front of the bus and adding a couple of personalised family pairs – so a young Cliff is on the pavement on the right with his father, whilst the girl who was much later to become his bride can be found with her mother on the other side of the road. A minor glitch can be seen in the front offside upstairs window of the bus – two children are grasping the handrail as they look out of the window above the cab, but as a lowbridge bus, there would not have been a seat there, although it's possible they are kneeling on the raised floor over the driver's cab. And the front wheels are angled slightly to the left, creating the impression that the bus might be turning into Tylers Avenue – whilst the City bus did, the 5B continued straight ahead down the High Street to Pier Hill. Cliff also asked for the weather to depict sunshine after a heavy rain shower, creating a challenge for the artist – look for example at the cyclist, reflected in the wet road in the foreground and with a shadow from the sunshine behind. A real test of artistic skill and talent!

The buildings on the right are still extant and, shopfronts apart, not noticeably altered, as is the green dome of what was then the Middleton Hotel, although it's more hidden from view these days. But everything on the left foreground has been swept away and replaced.

We are very grateful to Malcolm Root for giving us permission to reproduce the painting here, to Southend Museums for consent to use the original photo and to Cliff Moore for sharing the story of the painting's origins. And to Alan Moore (no relation to Cliff!) for prompting us to tell the story. The painting has also been reproduced as a gift card which can sometimes be found on sale at rallies and at transport museums and on-line from RothburyPublishing.com, where you can find other Essex transport scenes including a Southend open topper at night, two vehicles of Blackwells of Earls Colne, a Colchester tram, four different EN buses & coaches, a Hedingham Olympian and a Lodge Coaches Bedford OB, plus plenty of other road and rail scenes.

Indeed, Cliff Moore has added that "There are at least six different jigsaw puzzles using this painting. It was also featured on Malcolm's 1999 calendar cover and inside. And on the dust cover of (and in) his 2002 book 'Malcolm Root's Transport Paintings' published by Halsgrove. It has been reproduced as a limited-edition print run of 200 of which I have number 3. And as a Christmas card being sold nationally as well as on one of Malcolm's personal Christmas cards. It has appeared in colour in the local press at least three times. So it's quite a celebrity!"

Below: Another of Malcolm's paintings, this one from 2003. The unmistakable location of Chelmsford Railway Station is the backdrop for Eastern National Dennis Ace / Dennis 3614 (CTW 210) new in 1936, as it enters the bus station. Meanwhile LNER 'Sandringham' class B17 loco 1629, *Naworth Castle*, heads north on a boat train to Harwich in this scene set in the later 1940s. Withdrawn by EN in 1949, the bus later worked for Vine's Coaches of Clacton and Joe's Bus Service on Jersey before passing into preservation in 1960. In 2021 it was advertised on eBay in a poor condition, any clarification of its current status would be welcomed.



Dan's Coach Travel Stowmarket Services Robert Appleton

Last year, Dan's Coach Travel of Great Finborough, near Stowmarket, Suffolk started a number of market day services, one journey each way, which are run commercially, no subsidy from Suffolk County Council. They provide extra work in the off-peak for one bus used on school service 387 (Needham Market - Stowupland High School).

A summary of these services is:

Mondays:

388 Stowmarket Circular.

389 Stowupland - Stowmarket.

390 Rattlesden - Stowmarket.

Wednesdays (Bury St Edmunds market day):

386 Combs Ford - Stowmarket - Bury St

Edmunds.

Thursdays (Stowmarket market day):

388 Stowmarket - Combs Ford Circular.

457 Gislingham - Stowmarket.

Fridays (Diss market day):

456 Combs Ford - Stowmarket - Diss.

Full timetables are on the Suffolk on Board website www.suffolkonboard.com.

There are no extra services on Tuesdays.



The relevance of this to Essex Bus Magazine is that Dan's Coach Travel operate two ex-First Essex Scania L94UB / Wrightbus Solars, YR52 VEH, ex FE 65679, new 2002, B43F, and YS03 ZKF, ex FE 62410, new 2003, B44F.

On Thursday 26 January 2023 I photographed YS03 ZKF in Ipswich Street, Stowmarket, collecting passengers before departing on the 1300 Stowmarket - Gislingham 457. Note its rear wheel discs added by Dan's.



Rear Cover Captions

Top: From 19 February 2023 route 300 was converted to double deck operation, therefore, it now has to divert to avoid the Duke Street low bridge. Enviro 400 33414 (WA56 FTK) is seen two days later turning from Victoria Road South into Duke Street, thus having completed the diversion, the low bridge is just visible through the scaffolding.

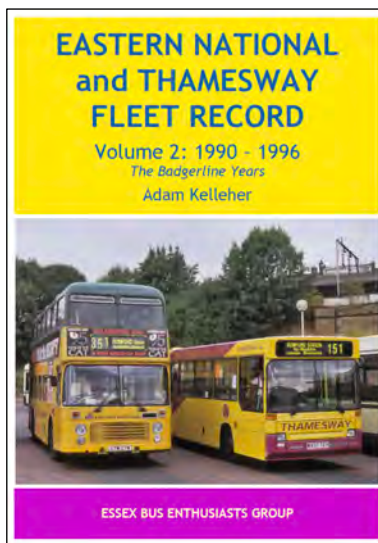
Nick Street

Bottom: Stephensons Driver Trainer Transbus Dart / Caetano 7033 (LK03 NLG) parked in Newmarket Bus Station on 21 February 2023. Previously registered A17 SOE. New 2003 to First Capital as DHL505, B29D, later with Metroline. To Stephensons October 2015 via Ensignbus. It may have been used briefly in service but was soon converted to a trainer, the purpose for which it was purchased. **Dave Arnold**

Fleet Record Volume 2 Front Cover Revisited

Below: Mid-1990s Badgerline style Eastern National and Thamesway liveries meet at Quayside Depot, Colchester on 26 February 2023. 37007 (WX55 VHR) has been at CR since being acquired three years ago, whilst 69520 (BJ11 ECW) is a Period 12 transfer from Hadleigh. The opportunity was taken to recreate the front cover of the Group's 'Fleet Record Volume 2'. The photo of that, by Richard Delahoy, was taken at Romford station on 27 August 1995 and the VR, 3083 (STW 27W), is in the previous, 1986, post-NBC livery. Route 9 is the current (shortened and modified) incarnation of the previous 151 as on Dart 937 (M937 TEV). **Ryan Hannah** with thanks to David Edwards.

A reminder that 'Fleet Record Volume 2' is available as a free pdf to download from <https://www.mdsbooks.co.uk/downloads>.



Last month we reported that the last remaining part of the former Colchester depot, the frontage on Queen Street, was demolished by 4 February 2023. Here are some photos.



Right: The entrance from Queen Street is now blocked off by white hoardings. On the other side of these members of the Colchester Archaeological Trust were excavating the depot floor. Visible in the hoardings are three viewing holes, two for adults, one for children. 16 February 2023.

Robert Appleton



Right: A view through one of the viewing holes in the hoardings on 27 February showing the excavations taking place.

Alan Moore



Below: The rear of the former depot on 16 February.

Robert Appleton





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Reporting the Essex bus scene since 1964