

Author	Richard Delahoy
Operator(s)	Southend Transport
Title	A day in the life . . .

Richard Delahoy passed his PSV test at the end of 1978 on a former Colchester Leyland PD2A, having taken lessons privately with a training company based at Kelvedon. A chance encounter with Peter Newman of Ensign Bus the following year led to a lot of weekend and occasional evening casual driving. As a result, Richard came to drive many Southend Transport buses, particularly Fleetlines, on rail replacement and private hires – at the time, ST staff were busily employed covering for mileage cut by their Co-ordination Area partner, Eastern National, and could not cover all the other work on offer, so Ensign helped out.

Richard thus became well known at the ST garage but due to the union agreements of the time, ST could not use part-time or casual staff. The only exception was for the special Boxing Day services, which were not rostered but covered by volunteers. In the event that insufficient drivers wanted to work, casual staff could be used and hence in December 1979 Richard was kitted out with an ST winter uniform and duly worked officially for them on December 26 that year for the first time. Subsequently he worked on Boxing Days for a number of years.

With the onset of deregulation in October 1986, conditions changed and Richard was able to undertake regular part-time driving directly for Southend Transport, which he did until the end of 1989. Here he takes us through a typical day's work in the late 1980s.

A summer's day, 1988:

It's Thursday afternoon and I'm at work in my day job as a Corporate Banking Manager, arranging aircraft finance for one of the major UK banks. The phone rings and it's one of the traffic clerks at Southend Transport: "Are you available on Saturday?" "Yes, what's on offer?" I want to go in to drive, not sit in the canteen, so had quickly learnt to ask for proper shifts, not spare duties or "work as required". I was happy to accept any shift offered, having very good route knowledge of both the local services and the London X1 - the only routes I don't know are the X2 to Maidstone and 795 to Brighton.

As usual, the better shifts had already been taken by full timers looking for overtime, so it was inevitable that I would be offered a late. "We've got D710A uncovered, 1548 to 0018, a mix of Rayleigh 1s and 7s, and a couple of 63s. Can you do it?" I readily accept and put my mind back to the job in hand.

Saturday lunchtime sees me preparing a packed lunch for later in the day. By now I'd acquired a summer uniform jacket but could get away with plain black trousers rather than the regulation ones with blue piping, which I found very uncomfortable, especially in hot weather. I'd not been issued with a uniform tie but a friend had had some dark blue ones made up with the ST name and Borough crest and frankly, they look better than the standard issue!

Parking at the garage for an afternoon start is always difficult, as few of the early shifts have yet finished, and parking places are always at a premium. Today I'm lucky and spot someone leaving, so dive into a space opposite the garage building. These spaces are useful as they are permanently allocated for car parking – if however you end up in the annex, it is necessary to get back to the garage later in your shift to move your car out of the way before it is blocked in by buses for the night (and on a Saturday night, till Monday morning!).

Signing on

I walk into the Traffic Office (technically the "Muster Room"), a pretty cramped area full of drivers starting, finishing or just gossiping. The first task is to go up to the office counter – known to all and sundry as the "log" - to report in to one of the two traffic clerks working there and collect my duty board. These are quarto sized, detailing the shift you'd been allocated. Kept in plastic fronted wallets for protection, folded once they fit into your dust jacket pocket. Here's an example of a typical one, from a few years earlier:

SOUTHEND CORPORATION TRANSPORT						SATURDAYS	CREW DUTY
SIGN ON	SIGN OFF	PAY	HOURS	OFF DUTY	COMMENCING	No.	
16.04	0.38	DVR 7.43	CDR -	46	25.5.74	D522	
CAR SCH. No.	STARTING TIME	SERVICE No.	DUTY DETAILS				
113	16.04		S/ON : GO TO CBS				
	16.24		T/O AT CBS				
	16.35	7B	CBS - ASHINGDON SCHOOLS				
	17.26	7B	ASS - CBS				
	18.05	12	CBS - LOFTMANS CNR				
	19.06	12	LCR - CBS				
	19.55	1	CBS - GRG (SHOW RAYLEIGH STN)				
	20.01		H/O AT GRG : OFF DUTY				
104	20.47		GO TO CBS				
	20.57		T/O AT CBS				
	20.57	7	CBS - RAYLEIGH STN				
	21.48	7	RLS - CONSTABLE WAY				
	23.04	7	CWY - ASS				
	23.56	7	ASS - CBS (SRT)				
	0.18		CAR TO GRG : PARK CAR				
	0.38		FINISH				

The duty board shows the running number of the bus allocated to each part of the duty – we call them car numbers. The running numbers are not displayed on the buses, but are shown on the master allocation board. This is on one wall behind the counter and is a large black painted board with numbered pegs corresponding to each car line. Each bus has its own metal tag and these are hooked over the appropriate peg. As others have described elsewhere in articles, the clever part is that the pegs for car lines that can only be worked by lowheight buses are thicker than the standard ones, and the tags for highbridge buses have small holes that will not fit over the wrong peg. Tags

are also a variety of colours and shapes, to denote different types of bus or coach – not that many traffic clerks need this help as most are enthusiasts and know the fleetlist by heart (as I do)!

If you are taking a bus from garage, it is essential to know which one to take, but at this time of day most duties take over on the road so, to an extent, the bus number is irrelevant, but I always make a habit of seeing what buses are allocated for each part of my duty. Of course, allocations could be changed over the course of the day so I don't always end up with what I might expect! Today I can see that Fleetlines are allocated to each of the 3 different car lines on my duty, starting with a V reg, 222 – this is good, as it's on my hit list of ST buses I've not yet driven. Not that in practice it will feel much different to any of the 70-odd other Fleetlines in the fleet.

I've arrived early, partly because of parking problems, but also because I need some extra time to collect a ticket machine and to read the recent notices. There are two sets of notices – a blackboard behind the counter is used for short term messages, such as temporary road closures, buses with defective radios, requests for driver X to call at the counter, etc. Luckily, there's nothing on there today that affects me.

The other notice board covers a whole wall and consists of lots of printed notices behind glass. These cover all manner of operational issues, from fares and service changes, reminders on rules, road safety notices and even the occasional letter of praise. It can take me a while to digest these and today there's a new one about the procedure for day return fares, which are being introduced in a fortnight's time.

Time to collect a ticket machine. Full time staff have a specific machine allocated to them and these are all stored in a bank of floor to ceiling lockers that form a wall between the Traffic Office and the Cash Office. Each driver has a padlock to secure his machine in his locker, but the lockers are open at the back – on the cash office side – so that the cashiers can get at the machines. As a part timer, I have to go to the cashiers' counter to ask for a machine. I also ask for my pay slip from my previous Saturday's work (a rounder on 3A, then an X1 to London and finally a late 29 to Belgrave Road). That duty should have paid 9 hours 41 minutes but the pay slip only shows 8 hours 54, so I query it and write out a slip to be passed on to the wages office.

I'm passed across a metal ticket machine box and the first step is to go over to the table that runs down the middle of the room to check that the counters on the Almex 'A' machine tally with the opening entries the cashiers have made on waybill in the box and that today's date (July 9th, 1988) has been set on the machine. I will be responsible for the value of all tickets issued till the machine is returned, so it's important to check that the numbers tally. They do, and thankfully the machine has a fairly new ticket roll in, so all I need to do is to pick up a couple of spare rolls and start to complete my waybill with my driver name/number and journey details. Experience has taught me not to try to fill in all the planned trips at the outset, as it's not unknown for me to be swapped to another duty mid-way through the shift. The machine box also contains an emergency ticket book (I check that this is sealed, as again I will be responsible for any that are used), a cloth paying-in bag (of which more later) and a spare waybill.

So what work have I been allocated? I can't keep the duty board when I finish so I write out the details in my note book. Here's the full list:

Duty D710A		Saturdays	Pay hours:	7 hrs 44
1548		SIGN ON		
1555	Pass	Go to CBS		
1610	63	CBS-Temple Sutton, Rusty Bucket		
1625	63	GGT-CBS		
1640	63	CBS-GGT		
1655	63	GGT-CBS		
1708	Pass	Park bus on A stand; travel to GRG		
1720	Spare	Spare at GRG		
1740		Take over at GRG from duty Dxxx		
1740	3A	GRG-CBS		
1755	1	CBS-RLS		
1845	1	RLS-CBS		
1930	Dead	Dead to GRG		
1935		Fuel and park bus		
1940	Break	Off duty		
2023	Pass	On duty; travel to CBS		
2036		Take over at CBS from duty Dxxx		
2036	7	CBS-SEB		
2104	7	SEB-RLS		
2218	8	RLS-SEB		
2334	7	SEB-QWY		
2358	Dead	QWY-GRG		
0003		Fuel and park bus, pay-in		
0018		SIGN OFF		

The first part involves going passenger ("Pass") to Central Bus Station for the 1610 service 63 to Temple Sutton. During the day there's plenty of service buses passing the garage en route to CBS (as the Bus Station is universally known – I'll introduce you to some of the other three letter terminal codes later, but it's always worth checking first at the Traffic Office counter in case someone is taking an empty bus or the staff minibus out of the garage to CBS. I'm out of luck today so hurry out to the London Road stop where, fortunately, an Eastern National Leyland National is already in sight on the 2. I jump on, hoping the driver won't ask to see my staff pass - luckily they never do if you are in uniform and obviously at work (the big metal ticket machine box is a bit of a give-away here!) – since, as a part-timer, I don't qualify for a pass.

We exchange a few words about our respective duties (his is almost over, mine just starting) and we are soon in CBS and he's parked alongside the railings, directly opposite 222 sitting on A stand where the previous driver has just left it.



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Here's a shot of a similar Fleetline on A stand taken on a different day.

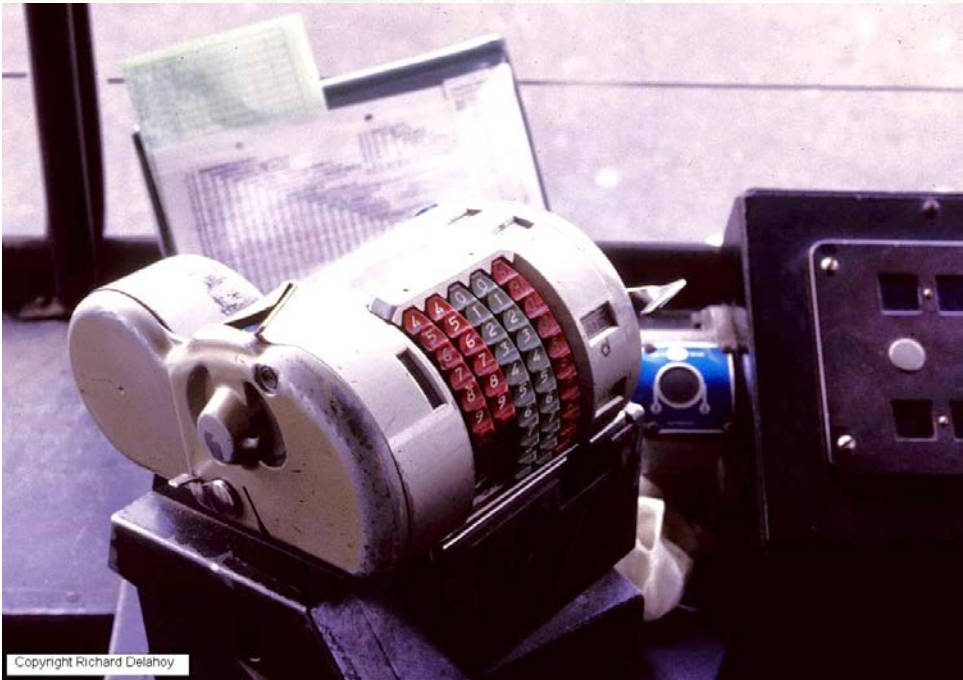
This is rather unusual as by this time on a Saturday afternoon, 63s are often running late due to traffic congestion and the lack of recovery time in the schedule. Luckily I only have 2 round trips to do (an hour's work) – some shifts have up to 7 rounders on 63 in a half shift, which gets pretty tedious.

First trip - 2 rounders on 63s

There are a few people waiting in the shelter already as I let myself in by using the emergency door tap at the front doors, having checked that the blinds have been left correctly set. With the doors closed behind me, I get organised – put the Almex machine on its stand, open the end door on the machine and release the safety catch, close the door and push the lever down firmly to set all fare and ticket class bands to zero. Faretable book open at the 63 page, in the holder near the ticket machine; set the fare stage on my Almex to 21.

16	TEMPLE SUTTON Rusty Bucket 16			
17	20	PANTILE AVENUE Cluny Square 17		
18	35	20	TENNYSON AVENUE 18 (1)	
19	45	35	20	SUTTON ROAD North Avenue or Central Avenue 19
20	55	45	35	20 SOUTHEND Victoria Circus 20
21	65	55	45	35 20 SOUTHEND Central Bus Station 21

7/2/88



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Jacket on the coat hook on the cab rear wall, ticket machine box stood up on the floor at the back of the cab (there's a metal hoop to hold it in place) and my gadget bag on the floor as well. I need this to carry my all important camera and some refreshments plus a conductor's bag. I need the latter because, as a part timer, I've not been issued with a change giver (coin holder). This is a real pain, as the key to fast boarding on a busy bus is not having to fumble with change, but all I can do is to put the strap of the cash bag over the cab door so that it hangs down inside. Adjust the driver's seat – being tall, I need it high and far back – check the handbrake is on and the bus is out of gear, then switch on the master switch out of sight on the panel behind me and press the starter. It's always a good idea to get the engine running before boarding passengers – much better than taking all the fares then discovering the bus is a non-starter! No problems with 222, so my right hand drops automatically to the door selector and I move the lever back 45° to open the front doors only (222 is a dual door bus and the lever can be used to open front or rear doors first, then the second set as required by moving it through a further 45°; to open the rear doors first, you would move the lever forward 45° from the closed position).

Most passengers are shoppers going home and thankfully most have the right money – we are not given a change float, but I always put in a float of my own. Five-pound notes for a 55p single are a real pain! The controversial “no change” policy, enforced by the use of fareboxes, was abandoned 18 months ago. In fact, today could be the last time I use an Almex machine, as ST is converting to electronic Wayfarer 2 machines in a phased programme starting next Monday. The Almex is pretty quick and easy to use, simply pushing up the two middle bands to select the fare - maximum 99p on these short-range machines; the boarding stage is selected with the left-hand two bands and the one on the far right is for the fare class – adult single being the default.

In less time than it's taken to write all of this, all the passengers have boarded and it's already 1611 so I'd better be off. 63 is very tightly timed with no room for recovery. So, doors shut, foot on the brake pedal to counteract any surge when I engage the gears, drop the gear selector into auto, indicator on, make a careful check for buses entering the bus station, release the handbrake (an old fashioned long, ratchet affair – why can't we have spring-loaded parking brakes like on EN's Bristol VRs and Leyland Nationals?) and we're off. It takes hard right lock to pass the bus immediately in front of me on stand B but equally I need to avoid hitting the buses parked alongside the railings to my right. Getting out of the bus station involves a right turn into Heygate Avenue, quickly followed by 2 sets of lights just to get back to being opposite stand A (where we started from) but facing in the opposite direction and it's easy to lose time but today I'm lucky and, after picking up in Chichester Road, opposite Warrior Square, I soon turn right into Southchurch Road. The Sutton Arms stop here, for Victoria Circus, is usually the last pick-up point on 63s. We use the first of the pair of stops here, the further one being for buses going all the way down Southchurch Road. Being a short route, people are reluctant to go upstairs and I have a couple standing as I pull away. The 63 goes via Sutton Road for a short distance before a right into Central Avenue and then left into Bournemouth Park Road. That's 4 stops already from Victoria Circus and I've had to drop off at 3 of them. The left turn at Bournemouth Park lights is pretty tight for a 33' long bus but is OK so long as cars stop at the white line, which is set back further than usual, giving us room to take the corner wide.

More drop offs up Bournemouth Park before the right turn into Royston Avenue, then right again and a left brings us to Cluny Square. By now most passengers have alighted, leaving just a few for the final stops round to the terminus, now known as “Temple Sutton, Rusty Bucket”. This is actually a

lay-by on Eastern Avenue by the top of Hamstel Road; stand time is only 2 minutes, just enough to complete the waybill with the closing numbers for that trip and change the destination blind. ST's destination blinds are laid out pretty cleverly to minimise winding, but not being in alphabetical order, you need to remember which way to wind. CBS in fact features 6 times on the current blind set (T16, to quote the code printed at the end of the blind) and one of those entries is next to Temple Sutton, thankfully. I should just comment here that on my duty board and on the blinds, the code for the Rusty Bucket is "GGT" – not immediately obvious until you realise that, until recently, the pub was called the Golden Goblet and indeed, that's what the blind actually displays, although the timetable book gives the new name.

Not many people board at the terminus and today's no exception. In fact, the whole run back is very quiet as it's too late for shoppers going into town but too early for an evening out, so I get back to CBS a minute ahead at 1637. The layover here is also only 2 minutes so the extra minute is useful if I'm to get away on time at 1640. The trick inbound is to get all the "housekeeping" done before you get to CBS. So, whilst passengers are getting off in Southchurch Road, there's time to complete the waybill, and if the lights are red at the Deeping junction, it's easy to set the destination blind – I can do this almost without leaving my seat and it helps to have a car in front of you so that you can see the reflection of the blinds in its rear window – much easier than peering through the small viewing window at the mirror that lets you read the 3 letter terminal codes printed on the back of the blind.

So, into the bus station ready to go, but I usually let any passengers off first (via the rear doors) then close them before opening the front doors – otherwise, it's easy for someone to slip in unnoticed via the back doors whilst you're busy taking fares. Alighting passengers can also conflict with boarding ones with two door buses, as the shelters here are only laid out for single door buses and there's not much room between the bus and the shelter.

Anyway, another load on and at 1625 we're away again. 13 minutes and 13 stops will see me back at the Rusty Bucket, do the blinds/waybill in the 2 minutes stand (if I'm lucky), then 13 minutes back to Southend! You can see why a complete half shift on 63s can be hard going. Luckily this shift only does 2 rounders, so 1708 sees me back in CBS, ticket machine already off the stand and in its box, on the dash ready for a quick getaway. The relieving driver is already waiting so I leave the rear doors open while he boards and I'm away, nipping over to E stand to catch the 1710 service 3A back to the garage. He picks up a heavy load and is a couple of minutes down as I and a couple of other drivers get off at the Park Tavern stop and cross the road to the garage. This is not my official meal break, as I'm due to take over a 3A outside the garage going in towards CBS in 20 minutes. So, just time for a quick gossip in the Traffic Office.

To Rayleigh and back

Checking my watch, it's already 1733 so I wander out to the London Road stop and, as expected, the 3A I'm to take over comes in a couple of minutes early at 1738 – the driver's finished now and keen to get home. We swap over but I don't bother getting my Almex out yet as no-one usually boards here (other than staff) and there's plenty of time whilst I unload in the Deeping underpass to sort out my machine. The bus is 309, one of the Q registered rebodies based on chassis from the L reg batch, with new NCME bodies fitted with tinted windows. They certainly make the poorly lit Deeping underpass seem even more gloomy, if that's possible (and yes, I did remember to put the interior lights on just as we dropped down into the underpass – side lights too, as the contrast between the

sunny day outside and the darkness of Deeping makes even a double decker bus difficult for other motorists to see).

Pulling away from the unloading stop can be tricky as traffic comes through the one-way underpass pretty quickly and the stop is on a left-hand bend, meaning your offside mirror is useless at first, as it only shows other traffic when it's already alongside you. I don't recall any serious accidents here involving buses, but some car drivers get a fright when a bus pulls out almost directly in front of them, to cross both lanes to turn right at the top of the ramp. Add to that the drag up steep gradient out of Deeping and you have to wonder which idiot designed it that way!

My next working is the 1755 Rayleigh 1 and as this involves leaving the cab to change the rear number blind, as well as setting the passing point blind, destination and 3 track numbers at the front, I leave all of this till I get to CBS. In customary manner I park on the offside against the railings (so that alighting passengers get dropped in the middle of the road!) – I won't pull down onto stand E until I'm fully ready. In theory I have 10 minutes between arrival on the 3A and departure as the 1755 1, but the aim is usually to be on the stand at least 5 minutes ahead of time, to Hoover up as many passengers as possible and keep them off the competing Eastern National buses. (I should add that not all drivers see it this way and some will wait till another bus pulls onto E stand and will then drop in behind the first bus, parking so closely behind it that their destination blind's difficult to see, in the hope of a quiet life. Indeed, they will probably hope that a third bus pulls up behind, thus trapping them in until the first one goes and ensuring they can "scratch" the first bus all the way up the London Road.)

E stand is a double length one and handles all the London Road services so gets pretty busy. EN's 1745 service 2 to Basildon's a couple of minutes late leaving so I quickly pull down to get to the front of the stop and take pole position. This time I see more Day Rovers and Travelcards than on the 63 but still quite a lot of cash fares; journeys at this time of day will probably take a lot less cash once the day return tickets come in (I hope – as I'm always on lates!). A minor difference on the Q reg batch of Fleetlines, so far as drivers are concerned, are door controls, which are push buttons rather than the large lever of all the other batches of Fleetlines new to ST.

There's a fairly steady stream of passengers and the odd enquiry – the Travel Shop's closed for the night but sitting in the middle of the Bus Station, I'm an obvious target for anyone wanting information. I always carry the current Essex CC timetable book, a mine of useful information, as well as ST's own A6 sized one that fits easily into my jacket pocket. Using both though I need to be careful not to get confused, as the ST book still uses the 12-hour clock whereas the County Council book is in the 24-hour clock.

I can't see the Bus Station clock from where I'm parked (it's on a lamp post high above the stand I'm at) but my watch says 1755, so doors closed and off we go. All the town centre stops are busy and as each is split into 3 separate stops, I must remember which ones to pull into. For example, at the first one (at back of the old Sainsburys, near Warrior Square), London Road services use the first of the 3 stops but at the next one (Argos), it's the last of the 3 there. Until a year ago, the final town centre stop was inside the Eastern National garage (known as Victoria Bus Station) but now we stop in a lay-by off the Queensway roundabout, near to the back of the new Sainsburys being built on the old EN depot site.

There's little danger of overloading tonight as the bus seats 80 and is licenced for a further 18 standing, but I check my periscope every so often, to see how the top deck is loading – not that you can get a very clear view!

The 1 is a completely different experience to the 63 as, once on the London Road, it's a virtually straight road up through Westcliff, Chalkwell, Leigh (Elms and Thames Drive), Hadleigh Church and Victoria House Corner (past the EN garage) then onto the 40mph section of the A13 (our Fleetlines' maximum speed) up to the top of Bread and Cheese Hill, where we turn right into Kenneth Road. That's nearly 30 minutes of driving almost in a straight line, in complete contrast to the 63 where there's a turn every 75 seconds on average!

There's some intermediate traffic, picking up at Hamlet Court Road and the Plough for example, but mostly I'm taking Southend shoppers and shop workers home. From Hadleigh onwards there are a few people getting on to go to Rayleigh, more so as we go through Thundersley along Kenneth Road and Hart Road, before reaching the Woodmans Arms pub where we rejoin the direct road from Hadleigh. It's now only a short way down to Rayleigh Weir where we cross the A127 Southend Arterial Road and carry on up into Rayleigh. At the start of the High Street I take the sharp left into Crown Hill, then it's a case of controlling my descent and turning onto the station forecourt to terminate. I have 5 minutes here, enough to do my waybill, set the destination blind and do a quick lost property check before leaving again at 1845 for the three-quarters of an hour run back to CBS.

Back to Southend and a break

The departure time is 1 minute later than the arrival of the fast train from Liverpool Street and few passengers can get off the train, over the narrow footbridge and out of the station in that 1 minute, but once a couple make it, ticket issuing usually gives time for the slower ones to catch up and it's easy to end up 3 or 4 minutes late away. Today there's no sign of the train so I'm off on time – after all, it's my meal break coming up so I don't want to be late!

As we plod steadily up Crown Hill, it's probably a good time to explain the gearbox on Southend's Fleetlines. Most Fleetlines are fitted with the direct selection, electric change, semi-automatic gearbox. This gives two-pedal control (nothing for the driver's left foot to do!), with gears selected via the miniature lever to the left of the steering column. The control has the forward gears laid out in the conventional 'H' layout, with reverse as a fifth position to the left, protected by a sprung-loaded knob that has to be pulled out (it can be done one-handed but many drivers use both hands for this). Some operators have a 6th position, used for door opening. Southend Transport is slightly different in that it has specified fully automatic control since the first Fleetlines came in 1971. The gearbox is the same as on the semi-auto versions, but gear changes are controlled by an electronic sensor rather than by the driver. In heavy traffic this can be useful, and the automatic control avoids the possibility of driver abuse, which I believe was the main reason for ST specifying this feature. I must admit I far prefer a semi-auto box where I have control. On ST, all we can do is to select neutral, reverse, auto and a 3rd gear hold - indeed, the later buses don't even have the 3rd gear hold. It's on hills like this that the auto control really falls down, as apart from 3rd, it's not possible to hold on in a gear as you try to accelerate away – instead, the bus changes up too soon on the rising gradient, then starts to labour as it's in too high a gear for the gradient, so changes down again, then you speed up a bit so it changes up again, and so on!

Sometimes the gearbox also sticks in gear, and on the earlier ST Fleetlines, a reset button was provided - on the J registered batch this was on the instrument binnacle by the speedo, but on the L and P regs, it is fitted to the ceiling panel above the nearside windscreen, just beyond sensible reach from the driver's seat, although that didn't stop some drivers using it on the move!

At the top of Crown Hill we turn left to pick up in the High Street and follow the one-way system round Websters Way for which we're allowed 2 more minutes than the more direct outward journey. Back across the A127 and soon I start to pick up, first at the Woodmans then at virtually every stop through Thundersley. This section is "freehold" today, in other words, it's not shared with any other route (on Mondays to Fridays EN run an hourly 26, Canvey to Rayleigh, but that's no good for people going to Southend) and with only a half-hourly frequency, my half seven arrival time in Southend is an obvious choice for people going out to the pictures or a meal in Southend.

Traffic is steady all the way into Southend and I'm pleased that I still get into Deeping on time at 1927. I certainly don't need the 3 minutes allowed to CBS, where I stop on the through road and quickly wind the destination blind to Private. Then it's away past Seaway (where the EN terminus was for the 251 after the City garage in Tylers Avenue was closed), blast up the ring road and straight back to the garage. Like all drivers in this situation, I'm hurrying back so that I can hopefully beat anyone else to the fuel pumps - it's bad enough to be at the back of a queue of 5 or 6 buses when it's the end of your shift, but I could lose a lot of my meal break. My luck's not doing well as there are 2 buses in front of me but at least it's not a washing night, so we should be through fairly soon. (Exterior washing usually takes place every other day, using the mechanical washer located just beyond and in line with the pump road). Buses queue for the pumps on the extreme eastern side of the garage site, on the wrong side of the road where buses usually exit, as it's a very sharp left turn round the end of the garage building, where the pumps and wash are on the north side of the site, adjacent to where the old tram and trolleybus depot used to be. Time now to write up my waybill and pack my machine and gear away - no point doing it sooner, as even if you are straight into the pumps, there's time for the housekeeping whilst the bus is being fuelled.

A quick lost property check and close all the windows and I'm soon round the corner and at the pumps. The filler point is midway along the offside of the bus, by the central stairs, and the shunter puts the pump in and the latch on so that he can top up the water and oil as well if needed, whilst the diesel tank's being replenished. Fuelling finished, he chalks up the quantity on the board and I check with him where he wants the bus parking for the night. Not all the fleet fits inside the garage building and a lot of buses are parked in the "annex", a piece of land that ST bought from the adjacent Nazareth House children's home to extend the north-west corner of the site. That's where I'm told to park so I pull forward and around the wash (we don't normally drive through when it's not in use), across into the Annex and execute a 360° turn to reverse into the next available space. Clearly 309 won't be going anywhere now till Monday morning.

Meal break - and to Rayleigh again

All this concluded, I'm free till my second half, which starts with a 2036 take-over in CBS. Services are thinning out now but the number 1 due past the garage at 2025 is timed just right, so I won't have to walk. The fog in the Traffic Office and the canteen from cigarette smoke's pretty pungent so I decide to sit in the car to eat my sandwiches and listen to the radio. A quick trip to the loo and all too soon I'm stood at the London Road stop waiting for the familiar sight of an approaching blue bus. Back in

CBS by 2028, there's no sign yet of the 7 I'm due to take over, but after a couple of minutes it comes into sight and I see it's another V reg, 230, identical to 222 that I started the day with. I quickly swap over with the other driver, who takes a spare bus left in the Bus Station to get back to the garage to sign off. These are the fares:

7

2	SHOEBURNESS East Beach 2															34	HOCKLEY Spa 34 (9)																													
11	20	SHOEBURNESS Osprey or Picasso Way 11															35	HOCKLEY Bull 35																												
12	35	20	NORTH SHOEBURY ASDA Store 12 (2)															36	35	20	FOUNTAIN LANE 36																									
13	45	35	20	SHOEBURNESS HIGH SCHOOL 13															37	45	35	20	NELSON ROAD 37																							
14	55	45	35	20	THORPEDENE LIBRARY 14															38	55	45	35	20	RAYLEIGH CEMETERY 38																					
15	65	55	45	35	20	THORPE BAY Rail Station 15 (3)															43	65	55	45	35	20	RAYLEIGH High Street, Council Offices or Websters Way 43																			
16	75	65	55	45	35	20	THURLOW DRIVE 16															44	75	65	55	45	35	20	RAYLEIGH Rail Station 44																	
17	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	LIFSTAN WAY 17 (4)																																						
18	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	ARNOLD AVENUE 18																																					
19	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	SOUTHEND Central Bus Station 19																																				
20	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	SOUTHEND Victoria Circus (Chichester Road, Deeping, Queensway or Victoria Avenue) 20 (5)																																			
21	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	PRITTEWELL St. Mary's Church 21																																		
22	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	EARLS HALL AVENUE 22																																	
23	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	PRITTEWELL Bell 23 (6)																																
24	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	WARNERS BRIDGE 24																															
25	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	ANNE BOLEYN 25																														
26	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	ROCHFORD Square or East Street 26 (7)																													
27	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	ROCHE AVENUE 27																												
28	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	GOLDEN CROSS Post Office 28																											
29	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	LASCELLES GARDENS 29																										
30	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	ASHINGDON Hill Top 30																									
31	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	ASHINGDON SCHOOLS 31 (8)																								
32	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	BLACKSMITHS SHOP 32																							
33	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	GRAHAM CLOSE 33																						
34	160	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	20	HOCKLEY Spa 34 (9)																					
35	160	160	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	35	HOCKLEY Bull 35																					
36	160	160	160	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	45	FOUNTAIN LANE 36																					
37	160	160	160	160	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	55	NELSON ROAD 37																					
38	160	160	160	160	160	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	65	RAYLEIGH CEMETERY 38																					
43	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	75	RAYLEIGH High Street, or Websters Way 43																					
44	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	160	155	150	145	140	135	130	125	120	115	110	105	100	95	90	85	80	RAYLEIGH Rail Stn. 44																					

Essex Sunday Saver Tickets
may be used (but not issued) on this service
on Sundays and Public Holidays

18/4/88

The ensuing trip through Southchurch and Thorpe Bay is unremarkable and soon I'm in Shoebury. The daytime 7/8 service terminates at the Osprey in Constable Way (code "SSN" – courtesy of another renamed pub) but evening trips continue to East Beach (SEB) so I avoid the turning circle at the pub and continue to the end of Constable Way. As I do the water (overheating) bell starts to ring but almost as quickly, stops again. I go past the MoD site and down Shoebury High Street and the bell sounds intermittently. I continue over the level crossing by Shoebury Station (only used for very occasional movements into the MoD's extensive rail network), then left into George Street and right at the end to the terminus, with the bell still ringing at times. Here we are under strict orders to switch engines off, due to regular complaints from the residents of the flats overlooking the bus terminus (although I think they'd describe the flats as overlooking the sea rather than the bus terminus!). I do and open the doors on the emergency tap, close them behind me and walk round to the back of the bus. Being mid-summer there's still plenty of daylight as I peer under the engine and can see water dripping onto the ground. I open the engine cover – this is a single piece fibreglass cover and is pretty heavy, with a gas filled strut to hold it open. I can't see where the leak is but the drip is steady although not too heavy.

I need to contact Control for guidance. Most ST vehicles are fitted with two-way radios, in the Fleetlines these are mounted above the cab side window and have a telephone-like handset with a call button in the centre. I've never actually had any radio training but have picked up enough from watching others, so I pull the handset out of its mounting, press and hold down the orange button, say "230 to Control" and wait for the call to be answered. Peter on the log replies immediately "Control to 230" and I explain the problem. He asks if I think I can get back to Central (CBS) for a changeover and I agree, on the basis that if the bell becomes continuous, I'll report in again. The run back to Southend is on the level and the running time's pretty generous at this time of the evening,

so I can take it easy. A changeover at CBS will keep the service pretty much on time, whereas if Control have to send the duty crew out to me to repair the bus, I will end up at least 20 minutes late – or more, depending on the nature of the leak.

Here's 230 at East Beach:



All this has taken up more than my 5-minute layover so I quickly write up my waybill and set off. It's not until I get to the fourth stop that someone points out that I'm still showing East Beach on the destination blind; whoops, lucky there's no inspectors about. I quickly change it to Rayleigh Station (RLS) and carry on.

The water bell's getting more frequent and I hope we will make it to CBS without further incident. Luckily we do, and the late spare driver is waiting with my replacement bus, 233 (one of the recently delivered W batch) and has helpfully scrolled it up correctly for a 7 to Rayleigh. My bus is not very busy and most passengers are getting off here anyway, but I ask the few going further on to transfer to the bus in front, while I take my machine, box, cash bag and so on.

The changeover takes a couple of minutes and as I glance at my watch, it's already 2131 so I'm 4 minutes late. Not bad in the circumstances and easy to make up at this time of day – indeed, I'd rather be late and able to drive at normal speed rather than crawling along or standing in Rochford or Hockley.

My route from Southend takes me down Victoria Avenue, round Cuckoo Corner onto the A127 and right at the Bell lights into Rochford Road. Soon I get to Warners Bridge and cross the Great Eastern line on the railway bridge by the airport. A few minutes later and I'm in Rochford. The left turn from South Street into West Street and the Market Square is very tight and you need to be well onto the wrong side of the road with a 33' long bus before starting to turn. It's difficult now to think that until

the 1960s, West Street was two-way; it wasn't wide enough even for two 7'6" wide buses to pass. Now there's a one-way circuit so on the way back, I'll go via the rear of the Hospital and come into the town centre from the Canewdon direction.

Traffic's pretty light as I continue past Golden Cross and up through Ashingdon before dropping down the hill to Ashingdon Schools, terminus in past years for short working buses on the 7. Now I'm in open countryside for a short way but soon pick up the ribbon development into Hockley. I cross the GE line again, this time going under the line right by Hockley Station. The road here had to be widened and lowered in 1970 before the Fleetlines were delivered. No-one wants the station stop so I continue to the Spa, a timing point. The 7 going the other way is already here on the other side of the road, waiting time and like him, I'm early so we exchange a wave and I pull up to wait time – 2201. I leave on time, while he's got another minute to wait.

It's dark now as I continue on to Rayleigh, entering the town centre via the Websters Way loop before drifting down Crown Hill to the station – been here before, of course, three and a half hours ago but via a completely different route. Stand time is the usual 5 minutes and this time I do remember to change the blinds – not just the destination, but also the route number (front and rear) and wind the intermediate display down one entry, as I return on the 8 route via Hawkwell rather than Ashingdon.

A late trip to Shoebury

My 2218 departure is the last through trip on the 8 (not that anyone travels end to end!) and I'll be followed by the 2250 7 (also to SEB) and then there's a 2318 8 to CBS only. Running time to East Beach is 71 minutes, the same as during the day (although the daytime 8 terminates at the White Horse at Southchurch, just off the main route – only the evening 8s go to Shoebury, when the overall headway on 7/8 combined drops from 4 an hour to 2 an hour).

As I head back towards Southend pub throwing out time is approaching so I need to be a bit more wary, especially as it's a Saturday night but the few people I pick up are merry rather than abusive. A further reminder that it's Saturday comes from the skimpy outfits of the young girls off for a night out in Southend's night spots!

I'm soon back at the Spa and get a slightly apprehensive feeling as I think about the next stage of the journey. A year ago the 8 was re-routed in two very contentious ways which have seen residents' protests, roads blocked, police intervention and so on, and you're never certain of a clear run through the affected areas, especially in the evening when there are more parked cars, although things seem to have settled down at present. The first and less problematic diversion takes the 8 down towards Hockley Station, where we take a sharp right immediately before the bridge into Station Road and right again into Great Eastern Road before rejoining the normal route. The aim here is to get the 8 to the station which does actually help passengers who previously had to walk to the Spa, but still there are "Buses Out!" posters in some windows of the bungalows in Great Eastern Road.

I follow the road round, up the hill to the White Hart then down the other side and continue on to Nursery Corner where the 8 turns left and soon reaches the railway bridge in Rectory Road. This is not only very low but narrow and is approached by a right-angle bend. Consequently it is traffic light controlled. After passing under the bridge the 8 used to go straight on to Golden Cross but the more

contentious diversion sees us turn left into Harewood Avenue and then right into Lascelles Gardens before coming out on the Ashingdon Road about a quarter of a mile north of Golden Cross. The idea of this diversion is to serve the new housing estate which has grown up here. From the further points within the estate it's a pretty long walk to either Rectory Road for the 8 or Ashingdon Road for the 7, but most residents are car owners and deeply resent the intrusion of the bus service. The roads are not particularly wide but are no more unsuitable than lots of other roads used by bus services, provided cars don't double park. Since deregulation, of course, operators can simply register what they want to operate and then go ahead (after the 42-days' notice period). Residents, councillors, MPs and the like have no right of objection. But that didn't stop the objections on the ground and I well recall how on the first day of the new routing in June last year, the first 8 from Rayleigh took two and three-quarters of an hour to get to Southend after residents blocked the road!

Tonight I'm able to squeeze through a couple of narrow gaps and there's no sign of stone throwing so I get through OK. Had there been problems earlier, the traffic office might have decided to revert to the old routing for the rest of the day – hence the importance of checking the messages on the notice board on the wall behind the log.

I'm soon back in Southend and on my way to Shoebury, due off CBS at 2306. I've picked up quite a lot of people in Deeping and here as the pictures have mostly finished and there's only 1 more bus to Shoebury tonight (EN's last through 20 was 90 minutes ago and the last 3 via Southchurch Road is also ahead of me). As I pick up on CBS stand M, the last 4A is just across the way on B. The 4A would normally also be going to East Beach, but the final trip now turns short at Wakering Church so that the duty ends earlier. A recent change has seen this last 4A divert at the White Horse to do a double run round the Newington Avenue estate to give a late bus back there at minimal cost. I'd worked that duty a couple of weeks earlier and inevitably got a chorus of bells and shouts as I turned left at the White Horse into Hamstel Road. Explaining that I'd not gone wrong and that we'd be back here again 5 minutes later and would continue on to Wakering did little to pacify the irate passengers, so I don't envy my colleague on this duty tonight.

My journey to Shoebury passes without any trouble. I'm due into East Beach at 2329 and out again at 2334 but I deliberately hold back a little and get in a couple of minutes down. Engine off, waybill updated, blinds to set. The destination is Southend Victoria Circus and in theory I should alter the passing points to show a short working rather than showing places I won't be going through on this trip, but I'm tired and can't really be bothered. The chances of meeting an inspector now are very low indeed. I do though go round to do a lost property check and to close all the windows, since this will save time when I get back to the garage.

In my meal break I'd bagged up as much loose coin as I could and I'm tempted to hang on here to do the rest, but the East Beach terminus is a bit remote and there's always the nagging fear of being robbed, so I keep my cash hidden. The buses do have driver attack alarms and you can also radio for help, but neither can produce an instant police response.

I don't see a single passenger on the run back into Southend; I wait time in Woodgrange Drive at the Lifstan Way stop but inevitably still get to Victoria Circus a couple of minutes early. In theory the bus sets down all the way as far as the Queensway lay-by (just off the normal line of route) but I don't have anyone to set down tonight.

From Queensway it's less than a minute to the roundabout by the garage and joining the queue for the pumps, although the official allowance, bizarrely, is 5 minutes. In the hour from 2330 onwards there are 14 buses running in to garage, four of them in the 10 minutes before I'm due in so it's inevitable there will be a queue for the pumps. With windows shut and the bus already checked for lost property, I can complete my waybill. After each trip we only enter the last 4 digits from the counters (1p, 10p and total tickets) but at the end of the shift, you complete the final numbers in full, deduct the closing entries from the starting ones, carry the totals forward to the relevant columns and tot up the value of tickets sold. Today I've issued 152 tickets, total £76.43. I can't say how many passengers I've carried, since we have no way of recording Travelcards and Day Rovers - that's one reason why the company is switching to electronic Wayfarer II machines. These will give far better management information to help identify which services and journeys are not making money. Given the massive losses we incurred in the early stages of deregulation, that's somewhat overdue!

[illegible]

Having completed the waybill, I now bag up the cash and enter the totals on a paying-in slip, remembering to take out my personal float first. I'm 5p short so put that in from my pocket to balance. Short pay-ins are deducted from your wages otherwise. I put the paying-in slip and the bagged-up notes and coin into the green cloth bag that's in my machine box and which has the machine number printed on the bag. I put the waybill in the bag as well and twist the top together then pass it through a ring on the side of the bag to keep it closed when I drop it into the night safe chute under the cash office counter. During the day, drivers can pay in directly to the cashiers, but they finish by mid-evening. My Almex machine goes into the machine box – first remembering to open the end cover, hold down the ticket issuing handle and move the locking catch into place. As I'm not a regular driver I don't have a machine locker but there are some spaces allocated for spare machines. The routine is to put the box in handle first, so that the handle is accessible from the cash office side - this tells the cashiers to take it for checking the next morning. Regular drivers simply put the box into their locker and padlock it shut – the cashiers can then remove the box from the other side of the locker to check the waybill against the ticket machine.

As I do all of this, I creep forward a bus length at a time as the shunter finishes fuelling each one. I don't have too long to wait till my turn comes and 233 is prepared for its next turn of duty. I'm told to park it inside the garage in L road – each row inside the building is allocated a letter, shown by large metal signs hanging from the roof. By now the garage is pretty full and I manoeuvre carefully in between two lines of buses, taking care not to knock any mirrors off in the process, and remembering not to park too close to the back of the bus in front – there needs to be room to open the engine cover if necessary, say if the bus is a non-starter the next morning.

So, all lights off, engine off and master switch off and I shuffle between the parked buses and go into the traffic office. I drop my duty board on the counter and tell the late duty inspector the bus number, so that he can take the tag off the allocation board, or rather, move it from the car line peg to the spare section. Cash bag into the night safe, after checking first that the top is securely in the ring (I don't want the bag coming open before the cashiers check it), ticket machine box into the locker rack next to the cash office.

So that's it. The duty board shows that today's work pays 7 hours 44 minutes – if you want to know how much I'll get paid, this is my pay slip (which should include the arrears from last week).

Home to bed!

COMPANY: SOUTHEND TRANSPORT				PAY ADVISE				DEPOT	PLAT
								PAY POINT	PLAT
								NAME	DELA
								EMP NO	0565
								PAY DATE	14/0
								W/E DATE	09/0
								TAX PERIOD	15
								N.I. NO	
								N.I. CODE	A
								TAX CODE	BR
								TAX BASIS	
								PAY METHOD	CHEQUI
								GRADE	PX00
								COST CODE	001
								87 LONDON ROAD	
								SOUTHEND-ON-SEA	
								SS1 1PP	

PAYMENTS				DEDUCTIONS			
ITEM	UNITS	RATE	VALUE	ITEM	VALUE	BALANCE	
SPECIAL	8.44	400.000	34.93	TAX	9.75		GROSS PAY
PREMIUM PAY	8.44	050.000	4.37	NAT INS	0.00		39.30
							TAXABLE PAY
							39.30
							DEDUCTIONS
							9.75
							NET PAY
							29.55
				RND B/FWD	0.00		
				RND C/FWD	0.00		

DAILY HOURS SUMMARY								TOTAL HOURS WORKED	TOTAL HOURS PAID
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT			
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.44			8.44

TO DATE SUMMARY							
PAY PREV. EMPLOYMENT	PAY THIS EMPLOYMENT	TAX PREV. EMPLOYMENT	TAX THIS EMPLOYMENT	NAT. INS. EMPLOYEE	NAT. INS. CONTRACTED OUT	NAT. INS. EMPLOYER	PENSION
0.00	148.75	0.00	37.00	2.05	0.00	2.05	