

Working in a New Town, by Ted Miles

In 1961 I was living and working in Hackney, East London. The housing situation even then was very difficult. With this in mind I went to Hackney Town Hall where I was given sponsorship forms to work in Basildon. The question I was faced with then was where to work in Basildon. Always having been a 'bus nut' I decided to go to the Eastern National office in Bull Road, Vange, and apply to be a conductor.



This is where Ted came to be interviewed - Lodekka 32ENO, en route for Romford on service 2, calls to pick up passengers outside Eastern National's temporary depot in Vange on May 24th, 1959.

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After a few days I was invited to be interviewed and fortunately my application was accepted. Between my interview and starting training with Eastern National they had moved into a new depot facility at Cherrydown in Basildon, very close to the town centre and bus station. [The new depot opened at Easter 1961]. Despite this matter they forgot to tell me they had moved, as such I arrived at Pitsea Station nice and early. It's a good job I did as I walked down Bull Road, mystified, wondering where I was going wrong, where was that depot? Informed of the move, I then carried on the walk, quite a long walk, from Pitsea to Basildon, on what was quickly becoming a very hot day.

So, how well were we trained? Very well actually, by conductor George Byford, who never understood just why I could do up a 'waybill' so easily. I never told him the conductors at Walton had let me do this when I was a teenage boy. During training there were various forms to fill in, and after a short time if you were satisfactory Eastern National sponsored you for a house with 'Basildon Development Corporation' as a necessary local worker. After 7 months I was offered a 2 bedroom house which I quickly accepted.

The training in the school at Basildon was 5 days long, there were 8 of us in the class and I was amazed how high the standard of applicant was. This was no doubt because of the chance of a house. I was at Basildon depot for a total of 6 years and as such with so many of the new recruits, having got their home, leaving the company, there was always a staff shortage. This meant, of course, plenty of overtime if you wanted it.

The second week of training involved being on the road with a senior conductor, in my case Harry Millest, a very good man. His driver though, Harry Risbridger, had very heavy boots which made life very interesting! I will tell you all about being out on the road and my time on the X10, amongst other routes, in a future issue.

The only thing I will say at this point is if you had the 244's, Pitsea – Laindon, via Whitmore Way and Basildon town centre on a Saturday, 4 or 5 hours was more than enough. It was a regular occurrence in the 1960's to do over a thousand tickets a shift on Basildon town services. All short fares meant it was quite a game keeping up with bagging your coinage up, however this was compensated with the country routes which were relatively easy.



A KSW loads in Basildon Bus Station on the 244, much as Ted remembers it. From a commercial postcard.

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