

Early Days on the X10

by Ted Miles

In 1962, the old system of numbering express services by letters changed to using an X prefix. This meant service D (Southend - London) became the X10. This used the first three coach type FLF's, 1608-10 (184-6 XNO), which later became 2600, 2602 and 2601. Service D required pre-booking, but when it became the X10, it was opened up to allow passengers to turn up and ride. This made the X10 an immediate success, especially from the Essex end into London.

Basildon initially had three crews working the X10 with Southend having five crews, all on a special rota separate from the main rota. I was a conductor on the X10's, Southend - London service and worked from BN (Basildon) depot. All crews were hand-picked, my driver being Bill Gale, we got on very well as a crew. In charge of express services at Basildon was George Digby, formerly with Digby's of West Bergholt – a very easy-going man and a real busman.

In 1963, Londoners really got to hear of the X10 service and in the summer crews hit many problems on hot sunny days with all the day trippers to Southend. George Digby with Inspector Stan Holder (ex-Walton Depot) listened to drivers' comments and laid on a number of duplicate workings in the Southend direction. The 09:00 Kings Cross to Southend was duplicated from Dalston to Southend and with another duplicate from Leyton to Southend. However this was still not sufficient. There were many duplicates on other departures. Charlie Gunn at Pier Hill also had the problem at night of getting everyone home, using Southend crews.

After a year, the loadings became so heavy in both directions that three further coach FLF's arrived. 2603-5 (RWC 606-8). Little did I know that I would later go on to purchased 2604 (RWC 607), restoring her to coach condition and rallying her for several years. Out of the three new FLF's, only one came to

Basildon, this being 2603, whilst 2604 and 2605 went to SD (Southend) – horror of horrors! However, this meant that 2600 and 2601 transferred from SD to BN at the same time. 2601 was particularly unpopular due to its heavy steering and it being very sluggish. It was the only vehicle which had to use first gear up Bread & Cheese Hill whereas 2603 would go up in third. 2600 was the only one to have chrome wheel embellishments; 2601 and 2602 never did. All later coach FLFs had them. Look at the photos! 2603 (RWC 604) was the fastest and quietest, and a crew favourite.

1964 was a tremendous year for the X10's with much duplication. The 09:00 ex Kings Cross at weekends had a relief (dupe) from Dalston Junction, FLF 70-seater and a second relief from the Bakers Arms at Leyton. It was the same for the 10:00 hrs from Kings Cross. BN also operated the 09:00 ex Southend with two reliefs. The secret of success? A boss that would listen to the men on the road!! And provide the duplicate vehicles, a.m. and p.m. as required. We were on the front line!

This also gave the crews overtime (and the company, huge receipts).

The first X10 rota duties at Basildon were as follows:

Duty 1

07:36 Sign on
07:36 dead: Garage to Basildon Town Centre
07:46 service 151: Town Centre to Southend Victoria Circus
08:46 dead: Victoria Circus to Pier Hill
09:00 X10 Pier Hill to London, Victoria (arr. 11:15)*
11:35 X10 Victoria to Basildon, show Southend (arr. 13:12)
Hand over car
Walk to garage
13:17 Spare duty. Work as required
13:56 Sign off
14:06 Finish

* 2 duplicates on this journey at weekends

This was a 6hrs, 40mins duty. When a meal

break was taken at the depot, a duty was 7hrs 20mins and not paid, whereas on the duty above, we were away from the depot and paid right through. In other cases, if we worked service 53 for instance and had a meal break at Chelmsford, this would be paid also. This duty was a 'chase', The 151 to Southend would average 150 tickets issued as it was particularly busy from Tarpots.

The 09:00 X10 was full, summer and winter and always a problem with luggage especially at weekends for Victoria. Lots of elderly passengers used the service because conductors were there to help and assist, and because it was a comfortable vehicle.

Other X10 rota duties were:

Duty 2 ~ Monday - Thursday only

13:50 Sign on

14:00 Garage to Basildon Town Centre
 14:08 X10 Basildon to Kings Cross
 16:00 X10 Kings Cross to Southend (arr. 17:50)*
 18:30 X10 Southend to Basildon (show Kings Cross)
 19:08 Hand over to Duty 3
 Walk to garage
 19:13 Spare Duty
 20:00 Sign off
 20:10 Finish
 * 1 duplicate: Kings Cross to Basildon

Duty 3 ~ Monday to Thursday only

16:20 Sign on
 16:30 dead: Garage to Coryton, Shell
 17:05 service 242: Coryton to Basildon Town Centre
 18:05 service 244: duplicate: Basildon Town Centre to Whitmore Way, Grimston Road
 18:15 dead: Grimston Road to Garage
 18:25 Meal relief
 18:55 Walk to Town Centre
 19:08 X10 Town Centre to Kings Cross (arr. 20:20)

A shot that captures the spirit of the famous X10 as described by Ted Miles. SD car 1641 (RWC 605), resplendent in Tilling green and cream, chrome 'dustbin lids' gleaming, distinctive white on green blinds, and smart conductor in shirt and tie plus white 'ice-cream' dust-jacket. What looks like a summer Saturday and one heck of a jam in Buckingham Palace Road, outside Victoria Coach Station. Normally X10's entered VCS from Semley Place and left via Ebury Street, so it is not clear why all the coaches are where they are. *Chris Stewart Collection, photographer unknown*





Inside VCS: another SD car, 1637 (RWC 604) on the usual stand for EN express departures – centre of the front or second from front row at the ‘top end’, ready to exit into Ebury Street. A Southdown Tiger Cub/Weymann Fanfare tourer and an East Kent 36-foot Reliance/Park Royal on the L1 (Canterbury, Ramsgate & Margate) are also in evidence. A lady and daughter with weekend case model 1960s fashions, and someone has parked a Ford Anglia 100E over on the right. A colourful scene that lost much of its colour when it was decreed that the ghastly/ghostly NBC white livery should be universally applied.

Richard Delahoy Collection

20:30 Kings Cross to Southend, Pier Hill (arr. 22:20)
 22:20 dead: Pier Hill to Victoria Circus
 22:50 service 151: Victoria Circus to Basildon
 23:50 dead: Basildon Town Centre to Garage
 23:52 Sign off
 00:02 Finish

Duty 4 ~ Friday, Saturday and Sunday

(to cover Friday rest day and to give weekend off)

13:50 Sign on
 14:00 dead: Garage to Town Centre
 14:08 X10 Basildon to Kings Cross
 16:00 X10 Kings Cross to Southend (arr. 17:50)
 18:30 X10 Southend to Kings Cross (arr. 20:20)
 20:30 X10 Kings Cross to Southend Pier Hill (arr. 22:20)
 22:20 dead: Pier Hill to Victoria Circus
 22:50 service 151: Victoria Circus to Basildon
 23:50 dead: Basildon Town Centre to Garage
 23:52 Sign off
 00:02 Finish

Basildon conductors had to have two ticket machines. The reason? To take up or finish a duty between Basildon and Southend, we operated a service 151 to save dead mileage. So, a normal Setright Speed machine and waybill was used for this. For normal stage carriage work I had been allocated machine number E1503 from new, which I kept spotless. I was choked later when I had to give it over and get machine number E1010 in exchange! For the X10, Setright insert machines were required. My machine was no. Z27. The other two crews had MB13 and MB14, ex-Moores of Kelvedon machines. Z28 was the spare machine.

These memories give you just an idea as to how the X10 grew from humble beginnings and localised management. Alas, staff shortages came later, and centralised management from Chelmsford took over.



Two Basildon shots: **1640** (RWC 607) stands at the Southernhay stop, bound for Southend, probably when fairly new. The full coach-standard seats can be seen; on all but the 'semis', these were upholstered in a red moquette for some reason. The luggage compartment racks can be seen too.

2608 (KNO 949C) from the fourth batch, in the Bus Station, displaying the neat and distinctive rear treatment of the EN FLF coach. *Both: WT Cansick / EBEG Collection*



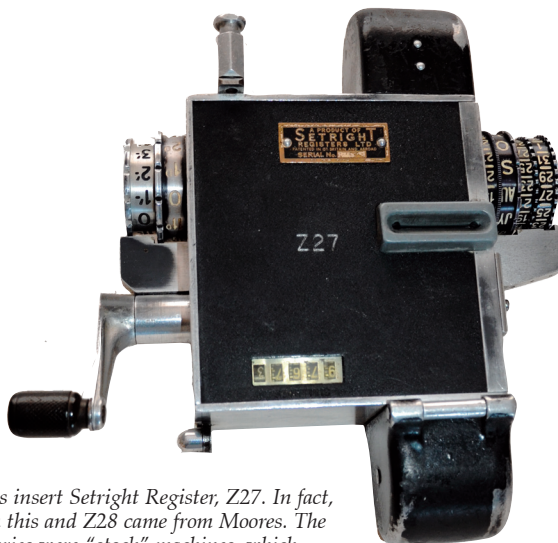
In the next article, I will relate how passengers left the service almost overnight when VRs with bus seats and no conductors replaced the FLFs, particularly the commuters we had on early departures to London. A tragedy! But the bosses and accountants knew best and a very profitable service fell by the wayside!

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Adapted from reminiscences by Ted Miles, first published on Richard Delahoy's "Working on the Buses" ([www.wotb.wp.blueyonder.co.uk/](http://www.wotb.wp.blueyonder.co.uk/)) and updated with additional material.

David Harman

|                                          |         |
|------------------------------------------|---------|
| 17 JUNE 1917                             |         |
| DAY                                      | MONTH   |
| STAGE                                    | BOARDED |
| M/C No.                                  |         |
| SHILLINGS                                | PENCE   |
| FROM LONDON                              |         |
| The Eastern National Omnibus Company Ltd |         |
| SERVICE X10                              |         |
| DAY RETURN                               |         |
| CHILD                                    | Na2142  |
| TO LONDON                                |         |
| DAY                                      | MONTH   |
| STAGE                                    | BOARDED |
| M/C No.                                  |         |
| SHILLINGS                                | PENCE   |
| 17 JUNE 1917                             |         |



Ted's insert Setright Register, Z27. In fact, both this and Z28 came from Moores. The Z-series were "stock" machines, which Setright Registers Ltd sold "off the shelf" to smaller firms. Corona Coaches was another customer for these, and their Z-series machines later passed to Theobalds, Mulleys and Aubrey Letch.

The following pages offer more insights into service X10 and Ted's involvement with it.

## ***Transports of Delight ~ Memoirs of a Bus Anorak***

*from Ted Miles*

I enjoyed reading Terry Challis's "Memoirs of a Bus Anorak" relating to his time with EN schedules in the 1950s (EBN540 - April). I was the schedules representative at Basildon depot from 1965 to 1967. Charlie English, the head of the Schedules Department would make a point of coming to the depot to show details of changed timetables, which was normally twice a year.

The X10 rota was my baby. It was always Charlie's intention to share the X10 work evenly between Southend (SD) and Basildon (BN). However, at Basildon, we normally managed 55% as I had agreed we would operate the 151s between Basildon and Southend. This was important to him as it included the 10.50pm 151 from Southend to Basildon. This was a very busy journey, especially on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and saved dead mileage for SD. It was also agreed that Hadleigh depot (HH) would operate the X7s to Canvey as neither SD or BN wanted this variation to the main X10. The X10 earned high revenue and enabled us to work a fair amount of overtime on duplicates.

Ken Branch was to my knowledge, always the number two at Basildon. Ken Cox was in charge, having arrived from Brentwood depot. George Digby, (ex-Digby's of West Bergholt) was the man we reported to regarding any problems. A very good man and if we said a 'dupe' was needed on certain journeys, he listened and made it happen. Due to many problems with late running, it was Charlie English and myself that persuaded top management to concede and give ten minutes extra running time between Southend and Kings Cross; 15 minutes more if running to Victoria.

However, I left the company in 1968 as I made it very clear that I would never agree to one-man-operation on the X10 (later 400). The X10 was a unique double-decker coach service with a tremendous amount of luggage on certain journeys and many

elderly passengers that needed help. To have the head man of schedules agreeing with me that OMO was undesirable was indeed a sorry state of affairs. Passengers left in droves, firstly when the VRs arrived - and then left! And when finally, OMO (or OPO) came - the predictable happened and what was a profitable route became a loser!!

I used to have many conversations with Charlie English who knew every route inside out. He always reckoned that route 107 (Clacton - Walton) was one of the best paying routes, even ahead of the 251, when calculating receipts of pence per car mile.

Having messed up the X10, the powers-that-be later came up with the "City Saver". This was built up brilliantly, but alas, like the X10, is now gone. Another story: management always knows best!!! There's some good busmen out there - alas not listened to!!

## Ted Miles from the Emerald Isle

## Memories of Route X10 (1960s version)

I was a conductor on the X10 right from the off at Basildon depot. Here is what it was like on a Saturday duty in 1964. Operate service 151 from Basildon to Southend 7.46am, arrive Southend 8.46am. 9am Southend to London Victoria with vehicle 2602 (185 XN0). Arrived at Basildon full, a duplicate vehicle was standing by which operated to King's Cross, where any Victoria passengers he had were transferred to our coach now that we had room. Arrival due at 11.15am, but due to late running was 11.30am. Quick turnround and operated the 11.35am to Southend. More late running left the Bakers Arms 20 minutes down and passengers left behind due to it being a hot sunny day. At Basildon change over crew. This duty was always busy. My driver at this time was Bill Gale.

At this time two ticket machines were used, with two conductor boxes. Setright Speed machine number E1010 was my machine for the 151 and Setright machine number Z27 for the X10. George Digby was the man we reported to, he was the ex-West Bergholt operator who was very easy to get on with. We had regular meetings re the overloading problems trying to work out the duplication needed for the days ahead, a problem due to staff shortage. Another problem could be luggage and you had to aware where the luggage was for, always asking the passengers their destination, as this made life easier and kept things moving as best we could.

We had five crews for the X10 at Basildon, and we were handpicked, and care of the passenger was very important. Where has it all gone so badly wrong? Monday to Friday early morning departures had a lot of regular commuters and were mainly on the service as far as the Bakers Arms. Hope this gives readers an idea what it was like in the Sixties.

### Additional Info

The first two FLF coaches (184/5 XN0) were delivered in February 1962 with the third (186 XN0) following the next month. They had chassis numbers 118.118, 118.120 and 118.119 and body numbers 12521, 12522, 12523 respectively. They were numbered in body number (and delivery date and registration number) order 1608, 1609 and 1610. However, when the fleet was renumbered on 9

August 1964, they were numbered in chassis number order and so became 2600, 2602 and 2601 respectively. They originally had LD style radiator grilles and normal underlined fleet names, but they were modernised by April 1963 with the new moulded grille and moulded fleet name under the first window on the front nearside and under the staircase panel on the offside. They later lost their newer grilles for the original type, but we have no record of why this happened. Does anyone know? The differing styles are illustrated on the following two pages. In the early 1970s all were transferred to Tillings (NBC) Ltd as 9600, 9601 and 9602, before returning to EN, 2600/2 were also loaned to United Counties. All three were later downgraded to buses as 2932, 2933 and 2934 (in chassis no. order).

On the left is a leaflet for the X10 from the very summer Ted mentions. It features 186 XN0, which is included as a colour photo on the inside rear cover of this issue.

On the next page is a photo of 2602 leaving Basildon Bus Station, but a few years after the events recalled in Ted's letter. It is on service X8, which was a variant of the X10 route, introduced from 1968 for trips that ran via Rayleigh Weir and Southend Airport rather than Pitsea and the A13 and which had previously been numbered X1. The photo was taken between 1968 and before October 1970, as by the latter date the X10 group of routes were single-decker worked (although not between June 1968 & April 1969 as 2602 was allocated to Hadleigh between those dates).

In November 1970, 2602 had the two rear single seats downstairs removed to provide extra luggage space for operation on coach-air express service. The X8 ceased when the X10 group was converted to limited-stop operation as the 400 group in April 1971.

**EASTERN NATIONAL**  
**Express Coach Service** **X10**

**SOUTHEND**

- Westcliff
- Leigh
- Hadleigh
- South Benfleet
- Pitsea
- Vange

**BASILDON**

- Gidea Park
- Romford
- Newbury Park
- Snaresbrook
- Leyton
- Dalston
- Islington

**LONDON**

**TIMES & FARES**

**1964** from 26th MARCH until further notice

Also giving details of X1 operating from 15th May to 4th October

**ALL TICKETS ISSUED ON THE COACHES**

**NOTE:** Whilst all tickets are available on the coaches for service X10, SEATS MUST BE BOOKED IN ADVANCE FOR X1

