

Conducting the X1

James Sadd

I worked at Southend Transport in 1986 as a Conductor, one of two who were "X1 trained". My training being to be overseen by a driver on the 0830 Southend-London Heathrow, which was conducted on Saturdays only as far as the [then] Ensign Bus yard at Purfleet. The coach continued on to London one man operated and the conductor waited at Ensign's yard to board the 0957 coach to Southend, which had come through from London and arrived in Southend at 1100. In the days I conducted this service both those journeys were very busy and were utilising the Van Hool Astromegas with an 80% full rate after Basildon! Time keeping would have been impossible without crew operation.

Mostly we used Almex ticket machines (as did the drivers when working OMO) but for a period, long range Setright machines were in use.

When ST operated the 614 Culturebus I had the distinction of being trained for that route. The training being merely given a leaflet map with a Mancunian driver (who still worked at Arriva Southend for many years) and an Astromega! As you can imagine, we did an X1 up to London, then dead (not in service) to Central London - we got lost around Victoria - passing Buckingham Palace twice - not so bad but coaches are banned from there!! On another occasion I conducted morning peak journeys on local services 14 and 29 and then the 0900 X3 to Canvey, 1010 X31 Canvey-London Green Park and 1255 X1 - all with 371, an open-top Daimler Fleetline/Northern Counties.

During my time at ST I conducted Leopards, Tigers, DAFs and on one occasion an Ensign DMS on an X21 to Shoeburyness. My memories of my time at ST will always be treasured ... oh how I wish I could turn the clock back!!

This short story is featured in the book *X1 Southend to London: the rise and fall of a deregulation phenomenon*, by Richard Delahoy