

MEMORIES OF MOORE'S by Alan R. Tebbit, BEM.

The coverage of the Moore's bi-centenary celebrations brought back many memories. Being a Chelmsfordian, I was familiar with the smart Guy buses in town but, because my Dad worked for Eastern National, we never travelled by Moore's. When I was about 13 years old, I went on a school exchange trip to Paris. Our transport for the day included Southern Region electric train from London, Victoria, British Railways steam ship Newhaven to Dieppe, SNCF steam train to Paris and an Autocar Chausson to our digs. But the best part was on one of Moore's Arab II, Strachans L55R 'deckers to Victoria. This was one of the GYL batch. On our return to Victoria on a Sunday evening, we were met by a gleaming new 19 PVX, a Massey L67R Arab IV.

On Saturday 2 February 1963, my school mates Alex Scholier and Roger A. Smith and I travelled on as many Moore's routes as we could (if EBN had been around in 1963, Moore's would have been too big for Roger's column!). In the evening, I cycled through the snow to witness Moore's final departures from Coval Lane at 2245. The following morning I was at the bus station to welcome 032 (KGT 379) Arab III Strachans C35F from Maldon and 1044 (8963 NO) Arab IV Massey L67R from Colchester. They carried ENOC legal lettering, the crews were in Tilling uniform and the conductors were using Setright Speed machines, but they were still essentially Moore's.

By the time I transferred from Head Office to Duke Street as a conductor in August 1966, the ex-Moore's Colchester – Chelmsford service had been incorporated into the 53/153 Clacton/Wivenhoe to Tilbury Ferry route. A union resolution precluded us from using the unpopular Arabs with their 5 cylinder Gardner engines on through journeys. We were allowed to use them on short workings, and we had one duty where we did. We started from CF with an FLF bound for Clacton on service 53 but, at Kelvedon, we would hand over to a KN crew. We would walk into the depot, where our steed, always 2010 or 2011 (2834/5 F) would be ticking over, courtesy of the Clacton bound driver.

These were Arab IVs with Northern Counties L64R bodies. We would work the 0811 trip back to Chelmsford. At CF, we had 100% Bristol/ECW buses, all with standard height seat frames. We conductors were all practised at placing the base of the spine against top rail, with just the correct bending of the knees to balance whilst collecting fares from the opposite side of the gangway. 2010/11 had much lower seat backs and, inevitably, one would slide along the top of the seat when negotiating bends, accompanied by a high pitched, gurgled scream and tears in the eyes!

On one occasion, driver Don Howe and conductress Jeanne Cuniffe were due to take over the 1712 hours service 153 to Tilbury Ferry. Due to some failure down the line, the bus that came in from Wivenhoe was an Arab IV. Don was a bit of a lad and relished the challenge of one of our busiest runs in an old Guy so, in defiance of the union, they set off. As the 5LW Arab was no match to a 6 cylinder FLF in acceleration, or straight-line speed, the only way to keep to time was some "grand prix" cornering. This, combined with low seat backs meant that Jeanne returned battered and bruised. The crew of the 2045 hours to Wivenhoe (a CF crew) were persuaded to take the Guy, on the promise of an FLF being available at KN.

By the time I was driving, an LD operated the 0811 KN to CF, so I thought that I would never drive a Guy. However, one evening, another Arab/Massey had found its way onto the main road. This was 2019 (582 AOO) that had been ordered by Moore's, but delivered to ENOC after the take over. It had Tilling T type destination indicators. On arrival at CF the Basildon driver taking over refused it point blank. A CF FLF was rolled out and all was well. However, next morning, we had a stranger in the camp, which no one wanted to drive. 2019 was offered to the crew of the 0715 to Clacton, in the hope that they would hand it over at KN and we would be rid of it.

The driver pointed out that it was a "through" journey and quoted the union resolution. The only bus left in the depot was an FLF allocated to the 0725 service 32A to Blackmore. This was hurriedly reallocated to the Clacton run. The output driver went into the regulators office to see who was on the 0725 Blackmore and was relieved to read Tebbit A with Mohammed Hanif on the sign on sheet. Would I take 2019? You bet I would! However, I was just driving along Duke Street, when I received a cascade of bells; and they were loud on the Massey/Guys. What could be wrong? I stopped at the cathedral stop and Hanif's very bewildered face appeared over the bonnet top. He had never seen a bus with the lowbridge type bodywork. "This is a very strange bus, Chief", he said. "The top deck is all beds!"

The only other time that I drove a Guy was when I took JVX 555, a utility bodied Arab II, which central works had neatly rebuilt as a mobile uniform store, to Canvey depot for storage pending disposal.

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Eastern National - Dunmow Outstation Alan Tebbit

Dawn breaks over Dunmow yard,
In comes a cyclist, peddling hard,
Ten to six, that is not too bad,
Oh, what an energetic lad,
Jumps on bus with sprightly tread,. . . ,
Finds batteries well and truly dead,
Oh swear, and cuss, and kick the thing,
Not enough juice to make bells ring,
Back on his bike to find a phone,
And to hear the inspector moan,
Hello Derek, I'm very sorry,
But can you dispatch the breakdown lorry,
And now I dread the coming morn,
When I will face the reg'lars scorn,
'Twas not through me they lost a quarter,
But through a lack of distilled water.

This poem of mine first appeared in Eastern Nationals' in-house magazine "Grapevine" in the late 80s and referred to a true episode when I was providing cover at the Dunmow outstation. Probably it was not a lack of distilled water that caused the problem, but it rhymed and scanned nicely! Hicks of Braintree built a depot at 5 North Street, Dunmow. By the time I joined the company, the garage had been sold to Dons' Coaches, but we still housed a double deck bus there. This operated exclusively on the 33 route between Dunmow, Church End, and Chelmsford. Originally an outstation of Braintree, by the time I was involved, it had been transferred to Chelmsford. The vehicle was a Bristol LD5G, 60 seater, 2508 (1853 F), but was soon replaced by FLF6G, 2848 (MVX 885C). The regular crews were George Latter, and Chris Cracknell, the old boys, and the younger pair Keith Pallet and Richard Wright, known to all as Dunmow Dick. I can still see Chris, a giant of a man, standing on the forecourt at Duke Street, whilst changing the front destination blind, without having to climb onto the step. When the elder pair retired, Dick took up driving duties, and Ray Hitchins, and "Tina" Belsham were drafted in.

I started my PSV driving lessons on my 21st birthday 5/9/1968 and was one of the last conductors to train without pay. At that time the company had embarked on an aggressive recruitment campaign in the unemployment black spots of the North, and a hostel had been established for the incomers to be housed in, pending council accommodation being offered once they had been employed. Naturally the company wanted these through their tests as quickly as possible, for they were being paid. Consequently, I was pushed back for my own test to make way for them. By mid-November, I was getting frustrated at the delay, and made quite a nuisance of myself. I watched as one of the Northerners, Rod Mackenzie, and Dick Wright, went out on Bristol LD5G 2480, for their tests, feeling very angry. I was kicking off alarmingly when they returned, Rod had failed, but Dick was successful, and gained PSV badge FF22859. The examiner heard my raised voice, and offered to take me out, there and then. I had a successful test, being allocated badge FF22864.

Dick passed his test two hours before me but broke his leg later that day, and I had to cover his last conducting shift. I well remember that day! A regular customer was a young lady, Linda Turner, from Great Waltham, who had a penchant for men in busmen's uniforms. She caught the 1305 ex Chelmsford, and excitedly asked if I was to become the regular outstation conductor. I assured her that as long as I was conducting, I would be on the 33 road. At 1525 hrs that afternoon, I operated my first journey as a driver,

Sorry Linda! By the time I had to cover a Dunmow shift as a driver, Dons had moved out of North Street to more spacious premises at Parsonage Downs, on the outskirts of town, saving the awkward reverse out of the old depot, under the guidance of the conductor. It was not long until Tina was promoted to Inspector, and Dick went OMO. VR 2027 (NPU 974M) became the regular bus, being suitable for both crew, (Keith and Ray) and OMO.

For a short time, there were two buses allocated to Dons' yard, following Viceroy's sudden departure from their Dunmow and Saffron Walden service. Driver Joe Schact was sent in to operate the old Viceroy timetable, using an MW5G dual purpose saloon. At the end of his shift he would take the decker back to the yard, whilst the crews would use the saloon for their evening shift, in order to refuel it at Chelmsford.

Eventually the Viceroy service was tagged on to the 33, and was operated by Chelmsford, leaving the outstation to run the first and last Dunmow-Chelmsford runs, plus the dinner time changeover, and found themselves on Chelmsford town services.

One of my memorable days at Dunmow, was the day after the Christmas holiday. We were operating a Saturday service for the entire week until New Year, so I didn't have to start until 0738. I had abandoned my usual transport, I would normally cycle the 16 miles from my home, but a heavy overnight fall of snow, forced me into my car. 3027 had stood in Dons' yard for three days, and was up to its' axles in snow, but the Gardner engine burst into life. The duty involved the 0756 Church End to Chelmsford, and then the 0845 to Saffron Walden. Progress was steady due to the weather, but I kept reasonably to time. The Radio station, BBC Essex, had announced that the Thaxted to Walden road was closed. The bus route, of course, used the backroads between these points, and a lady in Debden, hearing that the road was closed, abandoned her planned visit to town. She had just taken off her coat, when the bus passed by her house. She phoned the company to complain that I had run, after BBC Essex had said that it was impossible, probably the only time that I was reported for doing the job properly.

Published in Essex Bus News 667, November 2019

Taking over from Viceroy, Alan Tebbit

I was prompted to recall a story, about F. C. Moores' Viceroy bus service. I recall that during 1969 Viceroy found themselves in a dilemma. The receipts from the service were falling well short of the running costs, and they were forced to surrender the service. As the local nationalised operator, Eastern National were obliged to provide immediate cover. Consequently, Chelmsford based OMO driver Joe Schact was seconded to Dunmow outstation, the Dons' coach depot at Parsonage Downs. One of the dual-purpose MW5Gs, of the 125x EV batch was utilised. The Viceroy timetable was used, and, I believe, their faretables also. The regular Dunmow crews would change buses with Joe at the end of his duty, in order for the saloon to be refuelled at CF. Joe told me that in its last week of operation, Viceroy received about £19 takings over 6 days, whilst he collected £9 on his first day, which would suggest that the drivers were supplementing their wages, or regular passengers were travelling at "mates-rates".

As soon as possible EN applied for an extension to service 33 Chelmsford to Dunmow (Church End), to include the ex-Viceroy service, using CF's newest vehicles RELL6Gs 1515/6 (FWC 438/9H). This meant that the outstation crews, who had worked only services 33 and 52, Chelmsford and Pleshey, now found themselves working a couple of rounders of busy Chelmsford town service 43, Broomfield (Angel), and Oxney Green, on their early shift, although their late shift was unchanged, there being no late evening service between Dunmow and Saffron Walden. With the introduction of tendering services by Essex County Council, Viceroy regained their old route, and service 33 was diverted at Dunmow to Bishops Stortford via Stansted Airport.

As a postscript re "mates-rates" I was returning from Saffron Walden one day, when I picked up an elderly gentleman at Cutlers Green. He was on his way to Thaxted Post Office, to collect his pension, in those days before computerised bank transfers, and asked what the fare was. I advised him that it was 28p, to which he said, "I haven't got 28p but I do have a couple of fresh Bantams' eggs". They were delicious!

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Another in an occasional series of a former busman's recollections.

In the days before motor factors had little vans doing express delivery, most out of the way garages had parts delivered by bus and many a farmer would stand at the end of his lane for a part for his tractor so he could get on with his ploughing.

We had some unusual parcels as well. When we took over the Dunmow to Saffron Walden run from Viceroy coaches, we would often be halted at the Doctor's Pond at Dunmow by a lady carrying a galvanised bucket. She would pay for a parcel ticket, about one shilling and 3 pence (7p) and leave the bucket in our tender care. The bucket had a piece of foil as a lid and string tied over it. The string turned the bucket into a "parcel" as defined in the company rules. The bucket contained a casserole dish, with freshly cooked casserole for her daughter in Walden. She was, by all accounts, a rubbish cook. The said daughter would meet the bus at The Gate pub, and toddle off to reheat her supper. On Monday the bucket, empty dish and essential string would make the return trip.

Even more interesting was a daily parcel. This was a little wooden box, tied with the obligatory string, which went from the doctors' surgery in Dunmow to the Herts & Essex hospital in Bishop's Stortford. It contained blood and other bodily fluids for analysis. A porter would meet us at the hospital, exchanging the full box for yesterday's empty one. One Christmas Eve, he failed to appear, and the full box spent several days in the Inspectors' Office in Chelmsford, where it made its presence felt!

PARCELS SERVICE



SEND YOUR PARCELS BY BUS

THROUGHOUT ESSEX

and adjoining Counties

PARCELS may be handed to the conductor, to local Offices of the Company or authorised Agents for conveyance by Company's Service and delivery to the nearest Local Office or Agent or to be met by the consignee.

Weight not exceeding :

7 lbs.	1/6
14 lbs.	2/6
28 lbs.	3/9
(max.)	

Any Distance.

CONVENIENT AND EXPEDITIOUS TRANSIT

An anecdote from Chris Stewart about parcels –

in the 1970s, his brother worked for a firm of estate agents and surveyors with offices in, amongst other places, London Road, Southend and Queen Street, Colchester. The manager of Southend office was prone to wander into the drawing office mid morning, lose his train of thought completely and ask 'has anybody got anything to eat?' Some time after he moved to run the Colchester office, those at Southend sent a parcel by bus (the 19 at the time, which handily connected the two towns) containing two cheese rolls and phoned him up to say there was a package for collection from the nearby Bus Station.

Pictures:

Pre and post-decimal parcels adverts from Dec 1965 (this page, left) and Dec 1971 (next page, top) timetables, together with the list of parcels agents from the latter (next page, bottom).

Chris Stewart collection.

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PARCELS may be handed to the conductor, to Offices of the Company or authorised Agents for conveyance by Company's Service and delivery to the nearest Office or Agent or to be met by the consignee.

Weight not exceeding :

7 lbs.	10p
14 lbs.	15p
28 lbs.	20p
(max.)	

Any Distance.

Parcels will be generally accepted between 0900 and 1700 hrs. at Company's Offices on Mondays to Saturdays and will not be accepted on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

PARCELS AGENTS

Aldham—Mr. D. E. Reeve, P.O. Stores, Ford Street.
Alresford—Watts, Essex Electrical Services, Colchester Road.

Bradfield—Mr. E. Luxford, Garage, High St.
Brightlingsea—"Maskell's" 18 Victoria Place.
Burns—H. C. Chambers & Son, Ltd.
Burnville Park—Mr. A. Holdaway, The Stores, Burna Road.

Castle Hedingham—Tills V. Smith & Co., The Garage, Nunnery Street.
Cattawade—Mr. F. W. Whitby, Newsagent.
Chappel—Mr. W. Brown, The Stores.
Coggeshall—Mr. Southgate, Market Hill Stores.

Deffham—Mr. F. W. Harvey, The Pharmacy, Royal Square, High Street.
Dingle—Mr. P. F. Bray, The "White Horse".
Dunmow—Mr. Blower, Ironmonger, High Street.

Earis Colne—Mrs. G. A. A. Spurling, Colne Crafts, High Street.
East Mersea—Mr. F. Nicholson, The Stores.

Felsted—Mr. L. H. Woodley, The Garage.
Fitchingfield—Mr. Waller, The Garage.
Fordham—Mr. R. H. G. Baker, The Corner Stores.
Fratton—The Crossways Garage.
Frinton-on-Sea—Mr. Starling, Newsagent, Gateway Stores, Walton Road.

Gosfield—Seymour Bros., Rookery Garage.
Grays—Flints (Greys) Ltd., 30/32 Orsett Road.
Great Bardfield—Mr. H. D. Fudge, General Stores, Brook Street.
Great Bentley—Mr. D. Richer, Randall's Stores, Plough Road.
Great Leighs—Mr. Fleuty, The Stores.
Great Tatham—Mr. Cooper, The "Compass".
Great Yeldham—Mr. J. Harris, The "Wagon & Horses".

Harlow—London Country Bus Services Ltd., Bus Station.
Hatfield Peverel—A. S. Cable Ltd., Station Corner Garage.

Ipswich—Eastern Counties Omnibus Co. Ltd., Dogs Head Street.

Kirby Cross—Mr. Vincent, Coronation Garage.

Leaden Roding—Mr. Simpson, The Stores.
Little Clacton—Mr. A. F. Chappell, Candor Motors.
Little Dunmow—Mr. G. R. McDonald, The Supply Stores.

Manningtree—Mr. D. J. Hiskey, Stores, 33 Station Rd. (Service 70).
Mr. A. E. Hudson, 53 Station Rd. (Services 123 & 215).
Marks Tey—Mrs. Warren, Clark's Stores, London Road.

Ongar—Mrs. I. L. Stones, Ongar Woods, High Street.
Highway Travel Ltd., High Street.

Pleshey—Mr. Polhill, Mount Stores.

Ramsey—Mr. F. Page, Butcher, Harwich Road.
Rayleigh—The Library, High Street.
Rowhedge—Mr. B. Gibson, The Stores.

St. Osyth—Gentry's Restaurant, Clacton Rd.
Sible Hedingham—Mrs. Bretton, The Stores, Swan Street.
Silver End—C. Grant & Son, Boot Shop, Western Road.
Southminster—Mr. T. Hooper, Forster News Agency, High Street.
Stanway—Mr. Cattarmull, Street Bakery, 277 London Road.
Stoke-by-Nayland—Mr. P. M. Cooley, General Stores.
Sudbury—P. H. Jordan, Coal Office, Gt. Eastern Road.

Thorpe-le-Soken—Wright's Stores, The Street.
Thornington Cross—The Stores.
Tiptree—Pyke & Lister, The Cafe.

Wesley—Mr. F. Greenleaf, Newsagent.
West Bergholt—Mr. G. F. Cowling, The Stores, Pitts Corner.
West Mersea—Mrs. J. S. Jeffery, High St.
Wickford—Adcock, Travel Agents.
Witham—"Euynna", Travel Agents, 32 Newland Street.
Mr. R. A. Ashby, The Garage, London Road.
Wivenhoe—Mr. Glosier, Tobacconist, High Street.
Writtle—Mrs. M. Gowing, Panda Cafe & Stores, St. John's Green.