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East Anglian Express Services 32 YEARS Ago

by Owen Woodliffe.

Silver End is somewhat of a quiet backwater but, on 20 May 1984, it was briefly connected to the National Express network. This came about when, with the introduction of summer timetables, there were major changes to East Anglian Express services. This pool of London - East Anglian services, initially between Grey-Green, Eastern National and Suttons to Clacton in 1967, had expanded the following year to include Eastern Counties services to Yarmouth plus seasonal express provided by Eastern National (X12) and the holiday camp services of Norfolk Motor Services and Belle of Lowestoft.

Firstly, there was a renumbering of all EAX services into the 080 to 089 series. Thus, the 095 London (Victoria Coach Stn) to Thetford was renumbered 083 (the former Yarmouth service, which became 081). The new 083 was curtailed at Bury St Edmunds and re-routed at Witham via Rivenhall and Silver End to Braintree, which also gained additional short workings provided by Grey-Green's Essex commuter service coaches that would be laying over in London. The result was an hourly service between Victoria and Witham via the 'slow' route calling at Charing Cross, Aldgate, Stratford, Ilford, Gants Hill, Romford, Brentwood, Shenfield, Ingatestone and Chelmsford.

The idea for these changes was to build on the successful commuter services that had commenced in September 1983 and were jointly operated by Grey-Green and Eastern National to replicate Maidstone & District's Invictaway network in Essex. For at that time, commuter services 195 (from Sudbury), 196 (from Silver End), 197 (from Fordham Heath) and 198 (from Great Cornard) were providing a 10 minute service in the morning peak through Braintree to London.

I was involved with the 083 service during Summer 1984. Grey-Green had regulators at their major pickup points to assist passengers board their correct coaches on Summer Saturdays and I performed this task between 0730 and 1000 at Stratford where routes converged from Victoria to East Anglia, north and east London to South Coast, Kent and West Country. Essex commuter drivers were utilised for Grey-Green coastal services at weekends so were not available to cover 083 shorts on Saturdays. As I had time to get from Stratford to Stamford Hill, I became a regular driver for the midday ex Victoria and afternoon return.

By the time I arrived at Stamford Hill the only available coaches were usually those that had returned from overnight European services so the Leopard/Dominant 11's FYX 8xxW, Dominant 111 ex Leyland demonstrator DFR 979W, Tiger/Duple Goldliners OHM 831/2Y and Volvo B58/Dominant 11 EYH 802/3V were mainly allocated as these could be utilised and be ready again for Amsterdam or Paris overnights.



The Saturday service to Braintree mostly carried fresh air, with just a handful of passengers except when another EAX coach was overloaded on one occasion and I took the remainder to Chelmsford for the EN staff to sort out. It was a very pleasant summer driving through the back roads of Essex through Silver End in total contrast to the hustle and bustle of the main EAX services. But 1984 was to be the last full year of Grey-Green involvement in EAX. The parent Cowie Group had become dissatisfied with the financial return of the all-year round express services and ordered Grey-Green (as they had done with British Coachways) to swiftly withdraw. Silver End

therefore returned to being a quiet backwater served only by local services and, for a few more years, by a London commuter service.

Top picture: The first Volvo's were delivered to George Ewer in 1980 and EYH 803V was one of a pair with Duple Dominant Express bodies. At Braintree in June 1984, with Owen's family on board, together with his daughter's teddy bear, four passengers equalled a typical load for this complete journey! **Owen Woodliffe.**



lower picture: Actually in Silver End in June 1984, XYK 745T, a similar Bedford YMT with Duple Dominant bodywork.

Owen Woodliffe.

