

ON THE BUSES WITH SAGE'S, VINE'S *ET CETERA*

In the 1960s I took the school bus to S. Georges, although I often walked home the mile and a bit to Balls Green as it was quicker than winding through all the lanes. The bus would stop right outside everyone's house and wait if frantic scrabbling was observed within! Mr Walter Seaborne was the able driver, I can still see him, with his old trilby hat, turning the wheel on some of the tighter manoeuvres; I don't remember him always being terribly cheerful when we children made an overexcited din, but he was kind hearted.

I used to idly wonder why there were so many bus companies that serviced our little villages; various people, in telling me tales, would refer to Vine's, Sage's, Best's and so on. On investigation I soon found that there was only the one service that changed ownership and name over the years. (One of my sources suggests that perhaps the route was not very profitable if it kept changing hands?) It was very easy to find out as much information as I needed for an article or two thanks to the generosity of a number of bus enthusiasts, most notably Nigel Turner from Braintree.

Charles James William Sage from Suffolk was originally in business at Frating around 1925. Around 1930 he built a new bus depot and neighbouring bungalow, the garage being extended around 1939. This bus depot was where Frating Road turns into Bromley Road, just round the snake in the road past the old shop where the Crossways Centre is nowadays.

Sage obtained a licence from Colchester Borough Council for a 14-seater bus on 6th March 1929 and started Sage's Bus Service from Gt. Bromley Church to Colchester via Frating and Elmstead. After a few months the route was altered to operate Balls Green via the Church, Bromley Cross, Burnt Heath and Crockleford to Colchester, presumably because he moved into his new garage. Initially being weekdays only, a Sunday service was added in 1932. As well as the Colchester service, over the years there was excursion and private hire work including some post-war forces leave services from Hyderabad Barracks and of course the local school bus run.

The business passed to his widow Eveline Kate Sage and their sons in 1951 and then to James Best trading as J. D. Best & Son in 1952. In 1960 Ronald Lewis George Catt & Robert Cecil Swinn from London acquired the business and traded as Best's Coaches. In 1964 it passed to Frank Walter Vine of Weeley who was already in business and had traded as Vine's Luxury Coaches since about 1951. The current name of the bungalow "Junedene" is apparently derived from the names of F.W.Vine's children.

The route was taken over by Ray James, an ex Eastern National driver & proprietor of a minibus and taxi business at Harwich, but he ceased operations a year later in 1973, following which the route service 79 was taken over by Eastern National and Hedingham & District. At that time the premises were sold to become Crossways and the omnibus fleet disbanded.

The vehicles always had a red and cream livery, Vines taking it to more of a maroon and adding grey.

I would love to hear anyone's memories of taking the school bus or the service operators over the years. I would also like to find out more about Mr Seaborne, who also ran the Black Boy Garage. Please don't be shy to get in contact! Email web@greatbromley.org.uk

There is a picture of the old bus depot taken in the mid 60s, overleaf.

©Hugh Frostick 2013

With sincere thanks to Alistair Douglas for his photo, and to my sources: Nigel Turner, Peter Clark, Richard Delahoy, Dick Gilbert, and some facts from E.G. Axten's "History of Public Transport in the Colchester Area"



Vines Bus Station in March 1965

© Alistair Douglas, reproduced with kind permission

Copyright clearance

From: hugh@greatbromley.org.uk
To: [Richard Delahoy](#)
Subject: RE: On the buses with Sage's, Vine's, et cetera
Date: 27 May 2023 19:26:05

Hi Richard – ten years ago! My memory not *that* good!
However I have dug... and it was in printed village mag and online.
https://www.greatbromley.org.uk/council/greatbromley/parish_magazine/bromley_messenger_2013_05.pdf
You are very welcome to share or reproduce it as you wish.
Many thanks!
Hugh

From: Richard Delahoy <richard@signal-training.com>
Sent: 27 May 2023 18:38
To: hugh@greatbromley.org.uk
Subject: On the buses with Sage's, Vine's, et cetera

Hugh

I have a copy of an article you wrote in 2013 about the bus service in Gt Bromley (in which you acknowledge help from various parties, myself included), but I'm not sure now where I got it from, ie whether it was published in your village magazine or on-line. I'm writing now to ask if you would be agreeable to us publishing it (initially via our Facebook page, later as part of a planned on-line archive website), please? We published a few pictures on FB three years ago (see <https://www.facebook.com/essexbus/posts/pfbid034vkTwCyesKm1TuGhDS1h1Dht99V2PDZWqdGZhnHs6RxW59515xi4ELNbjo7TwuKTI>) and would like to do a follow up.

I'm sure it would be of interest to some of our followers, and might just elicit some new info. Recently we have some examples of Best's tickets posted as a comment to the original post.

Incidentally, I've recently found a couple of timetables for the bus service when it was Sage's, see attached. You are most welcome to reproduce these.

Best regards

Richard Delahoy
Treasurer/Membership Secretary
Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group

272 Shoebury Road
Southend on Sea
SS1 3TT

www.essexbus.org.uk