

A SURVEY OF EASTERN NATIONAL Garages 1964 to 1980

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By Derek Stebbing

The sixteen years since the publication of the Group's first news sheet in January 1964 have seen a number of changes to the Company's garages and outstations, with many premises modernised to incorporate new maintenance facilities, some garages closed, and the reduction of the number of outstations to two (Great Dunmow and Walton-on-the-Naze). This article describes the main changes which have occurred during this period and provides a background to Group publication E.P.10 (Eastern National Garage and Outstation Directory) which is available from the Administrative Officer.

In January 1964, Eastern National vehicles operated from the following premises :

Brentwood - North Road (BD)

Braintree - Fairfield Road (BE)

Outstation: Silver End - Boars Tye Road (SE, code not carried)

Basildon - Cherrydown (BN)

Bishop's Stortford - South Street (BS)

Outstation: Harlow - High Street (HW, code not carried)

Chelmsford - Duke Street (CF)

Outstation: Great Dunmow - North Street (premises of Don's Coaches)
(DW, code not carried)

Clacton-on-Sea - Castle Road (CN)

- Wash Lane (CN - coaches only)

Outstations: Dovercourt - Kingsway (DT)

Walton-on-the-Naze - Kino Road (WN, code not carried)

Colchester - Queen Street (CR)

Outstations: Brightlingsea - Victoria Place

West Mersea - High Street (WM, code not carried)

Stoke-by-Nayland - rear of Angel P.H. (no garage premises)

Canvey - Leigh Beck (CY)

Halstead - High Street (HD)

Hadleigh - London Road (HH)

Kelvedon - High Street (KN)

Kings Cross - Pentonville Road, London, N.1 (premises owned by Tillings Transport
(B.T.C.) Ltd.) (KX, code not carried)

Maldon - High Street (MN)

Prittlewell - Fairfax Drive (PL - coach and contract allocation of SD)

Southend-on-Sea - London Road (SD)

- Pier Hill Coach Station (PH, code not carried)

- Tylers Avenue (TA, code not carried)

Wood Green - Lordship Lane, London, N.22 (WG)

The codes shown in parentheses were carried on the vehicles on a plate above the short-number plate. The un-carried outstation codes listed were used either as abbreviations at the main garages and/or in Company allocation lists.

The first major change came with the closure of the former City Coach Company garage at Tylers Avenue, Southend at the end of July 1964, and its subsequent demolition later that year. Following extensive service revisions on 11 April 1965 Stoke-by-Nayland outstation was closed, and on 12 December 1965 Silver End outstation closed operationally, and was subsequently used for the storage of delicensed vehicles. During the summer of 1965 a number of coaches was allocated to Central Works, Chelmsford for operation on extended holiday tours, and from May 1966 coaches operating from this base carried CP (Coach Pool) garage plates. In the autumn of 1966 Pier Hill Coach Station at Southend was closed and advertised for sale, being finally sold in 1974. The building is now in use as a carpet warehouse, largely unaltered. On 16 April 1967 a new garage and adjacent Bus Station was opened at Harwich, on the forecourt area of the Rail Station to replace the premises at Dovercourt which were later purchased by Essex County Council and converted into a very attractive public library. The garage code DT was retained for the new premises. On 1 July 1967 the outstation at Brightlingsea closed, with its operation on service 78 being transferred to Colchester.

In 1968 construction began on a new covered Bus Station within the main Southend garage at London Road, additional vehicle parking space was opened at the rear. The Bus Station opened late in 1968 and incorporated a new entrance from the Ring Road. Also in 1968 the former 'National' garage at Wash Lane, Clacton was closed and sold but the adjacent coach park remained.

In the summer of 1969 Tillings Transport was re-designated as Tillings Travel and on 1 February 1970 the Company became solely a travel agent within the N.B.C. based at Kings Cross. Consequently all driving and maintenance staff were transferred to Wood Green and the overhaul facilities at Kings Cross closed. Kings Cross then became an outstation of Wood Green, with two or three vehicles, until April 1971 when this use ceased. The Coach Station subsequently passed to National Travel (South East) and later to Britannia Airways in October 1976. On 1 January 1971 Tillings Travel (N.B.C.) Ltd. became an operational concern once again with 43 vehicles being acquired from Eastern National. The main base was established at Prittlewell garage (although the works area was retained by Eastern National), and vehicles also worked from certain E.N. premises, such as Halstead, Harlow and Wood Green. Coach services as well as Coach/Air facilities to Southend and Stansted Airports were Tillings' main areas of operation.

West Mersea outstation closed on 31 March 1973, with revised timetables being introduced on the 75/76 group of services the following day. Also on 1 April 1973 Tillings Travel (N.B.C.) became a separate administrative entity from Eastern National and was subsequently absorbed into National Travel (South East) Ltd., although vehicles continued to be allocated to Eastern National garages. Operations from Harlow outstation (acquired from Wright Bros., Harlow) ceased in February 1973 and the premises were later sold. Also in 1973 work began on the modernisation of Chelmsford garage, to incorporate new maintenance facilities and a covered Bus Station, the new facilities opened in April 1974. In October 1973 Tillings Travel moved their operating base to the Eastern National garage at Kelvedon and also used the premises at Silver End for vehicle storage. Prittlewell garage reverted to Eastern National ownership at the same time. Eastern National vehicles continued to operate from Kelvedon until October 1974. In March 1974 Harwich (DT) was officially designated as a garage, separate from Clacton (CN) for vehicle allocation purposes, although interworking of vehicles between the two garages remains a feature of operations today. Also in 1974, the London Road Bus Station in Southend was re-named Victoria Bus Station following the opening of the new Southend Central Bus Station. During the summer of 1974, the garage premises at Prittlewell were let to National Travel (South East) to enable an allocation of coaches to be stabled there. On 14 October 1974 Silver End (SE) garage re-opened for operational purposes, having been returned by National Travel. The garage building had been modernised, and the premises, situated close to the expanding town of Witham, were used to house the remaining Eastern National allocation at Kelvedon, which was closed for Eastern National operations after 12 October. Kelvedon continued to be used by National Travel (South East) until its final closure on 7 October 1978. The premises have recently been sold.

At Basildon a temporary storage compound in part of the car park at Southernhay was used from 1973 until mid-1975 whilst a section of the garage yard was taken over by contractors engaged in the construction of Basildon Rail Station. In May 1975 the coach park at Wash Lane, Clacton was transferred to National Travel (South East). The following year saw a new maintenance facility at Maldon completed, and in early 1977 a similar project was completed at Hadleigh. In mid-1977 the staff accommodation and maintenance area at Basildon was re-built to provide more modern facilities. On 29 April 1978 Canvey (CY) was closed with operations and vehicles being transferred to Hadleigh. The premises at Leigh Beck are still owned by Eastern National and are presently being used to house the vehicles owned by the Eastern National Preservation Group, the Castle Point Transport Museum Society has been established to secure the premises for conversion into a permanent bus museum.

During 1978, the location of the outstation at Great Dunmow was moved to the new premises opened by Dons Coaches at Parsonage Downs, the former site at North Street having been cleared and re-developed for housing. In mid-1978 a new maintenance area was commissioned at Braintree.

On 8 October 1978 the coach operations in Essex of National Travel (South East) were transferred back to Eastern National, and the main operating base for coaches established at Prittlewell with garage code PL re-introduced. The coach park at Wash Lane, Clacton reverted back to Eastern National.

The period under review has seen Eastern National consolidate operations with a smaller number of premises, and although the future remains uncertain, the Company should reap the benefits during the 1980's of its investments in improved

maintenance facilities at several garages.

Comparison of Vehicle Allocation Totals in
January 1964 and September 1980

Figures for 9/80 are given first with 1/64 in parentheses

<u>Garage</u>	<u>D/D</u>	<u>S/D and DP</u>	<u>Coach</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Basildon	5 (43)	66 (32)	0 (2)	71 (77)
Bishop's Stortford	4 (5)	9 (10)	0 (0)	13 (15)
Braintree	6 (26)	14 (11)	0 (0)	20 (37)
Brentwood	3 (34)	32 (17)	0 (4)	35 (55)
Canvey	- (8)	- (0)	- (0)	- (8)
Chelmsford	20 (65)	39 (22)	0 (5)	59 (92)
Clacton	5 (18)	29 (19)	3 (0)	37 (37)
Colchester	7 (24)	25 (18)	1 (1)	33 (43)
Dovercourt	- (2)	- (5)	- (0)	- (7)
Hadleigh	16 (42)	24 (1)	0 (0)	40 (43)
Halstead	3 (8)	6 (10)	1 (2)	10 (20)
Harlow	- (0)	- (2)	- (0)	- (2)
Harwich	2 (-)	11 (-)	0 (-)	13 (-)
Kelvedon	- (25)	- (10)	- (2)	- (37)
Maldon	6 (16)	14 (13)	3 (1)	23 (30)
Prittlewell	0 (a)	0 (a)	11 (a)	11 (a)
Silver End	3 (b)	9 (b)	1 (b)	13 (b)
Southend	43 (96)	22 (25)	0 (6)	65 (127)
Wood Green	9 (10)	0 (4)	0 (1)	9 (15)
D/L, D/L (D) and LWA	37 (16)	8 (12)	0 (43)(c)	45 (71)
Docking Spares and Accident Pool	4 (d)	16 (d)	0 (d)	20 (d)

173 (438)

324 (211)

20 (67)

517 (716)

Notes

a - 1964 allocation included in total for SD.

b - 1964 allocation included in total for BE.

c - Large total of coaches D/L for winter period.

d - 1964 allocation included in totals for CF and SD.