

Fleet Digest

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*Seasons Greetings
from*



S STEVEN KNIGHT **T**
— MEDIA —



On the Cover



Christmas past. Oxford Street in 2018. © Steven Knight Media

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Obituary: Martin Townsend

We are sad to report that Martin Townsend, a regular correspondent to Fleet Ramblings and Fleet Digest has passed away after a period of illness. Martin worked at Banbury depot and upon retirement and kept up to date on happenings at the depot, which is now part of Stagecoach Oxfordshire.

Despite his illness, Martin continued to provide us with updates through until last month being able to view Banbury's buses passing his flat.

Stagecoach Oxfordshire

The company put its first five new Oxford Tube Volvo B11RLE/Plaxton Panorama coaches, 50421-25 into service on Saturday 28th November 2020 and now has 50421-34 delivered. The displaced Van Hool Astromegas will eventually join the Stagecoach West Scotland and Stagecoach East Scotland businesses with 50281-84 already with the West Scotland fleet Scotland fleet. With 50261-63 reported as moved to Kilmarnock for onward transfer to East Scotland.

Our friends at the *Oxford and Chiltern Bus Page* have confirmed that 50261-68 will move to Stagecoach East Scotland at Perth displacing a similar number of Volvo B13Bs to Stagecoach North Scotland with 50269-84 being earmarked for Stagecoach West Scotland, again displacing a number of vehicles to Stagecoach North Scotland. Other displaced vehicles be for cascade elsewhere within Stagecoach UK. It currently looks like 50233/35/37/50 will temporarily remain at Oxford in a Reserve Fleet capacity.



Oxford Tube Van Hool Astromega 50266 (YJ14LFA) is one of eight examples of the type which are destined for Stagecoach East Scotland as they are displaced by new Volvo B11RLE/Plaxton Panorama coaches on the Oxford Tube service. (New Oxford Tube coaches enter service - page 4). © Martyn Sacalof

Stagecoach Megabus

Volvo B11R 54272 has gained a yellow swoop at the rear of the bodysides and has also received the name 'Nimbus 2000'. We understand that the 'yellow swoop' is now part of the Megabus livery and will be applied to other vehicles.

Stagecoach South East

Further repaints into the Stagecoach 'Local' livery here are Scania/Enviro 400MMCs 15278 and 15290.

Go North East electric buses hit the road

Go North East launched the region's first fully-electric bus fleet in the North East on 27th November 2020. The

Yutong ZK6118BEVG/Yutong E10 buses are capable of all-day service with a single overnight charge, supporting the company's commitment to improve air quality.

The switch was flipped on the nine high-tech zero-emission buses as part of a £3.7million joint-funded project from Go North East and the Government's Ultra-Low Emission Bus Fund, following a bid that was also supported by Nexus and Gateshead Council.

Based at the company's depot in Gateshead, these game-changing buses are powered by zero-emission clean sources such as solar, wind and hydro, and are housed in a new electric bus micro depot capable of accommodating 30 electric buses, paving the way for future investment.

These state-of-the-art, super environmentally friendly buses, branded 'Voltra', will run between Gateshead, Saltwell Park and Newcastle on Go North East services 53 and 54.

They have a striking new futuristic look and boast a whole host of onboard features to deliver a bus of the future experience, including high quality interiors with luxury seating using sustainably produced materials.

Features include free Wi-Fi, wireless and USB charging, seat back phone holders that allow you to comfortably watch videos from your seat, next-stop audio-visual announcements, and 'tap-on tap-off' contactless bankcard ticketing, which is a first for the North East.

All you need to do when travelling on Voltra is simply tap your contactless card as you get on, and as you get off, then the system automatically calculates the fare and caps out at the day or weekly ticket prices if travelling multiple times, making sure you pay the best price – no more than £3 a day or £13 a week.

Martijn Gilbert, managing director at Go North East, said: "This is the dawn of a new era for bus travel here in the North East as we launch what we believe are the very best local buses in the UK, and probably beyond, with a game-changing bus of the future experience for customers, not just with zero-emission buses but a range of pioneering technologies and customer features to revolutionise bus travel.

"This represents a major investment of £2million topped up by the Government's Ultra-Low Emission Bus Fund, to help boost the recovery of our region ready for unlocking and demonstrates our commitment to improving air quality for our communities.

"Sustainability is key and our Voltra buses run on electricity sourced with green credentials, but Voltra is far more than an electric bus fleet as we've looked at every detail and maximised the use of technology to provide a new standard in bus travel including customer comfort, information and ticketing.



Image: © Go North East

New Oxford Tube fleet enters service

The first five Oxford Tube Volvo B11RLE/Plaxton Panorama coaches, 50421-25, entered service on 28th November 2020.

Images: © Martyn Sacalof



THE OXFORD & CHILTERN BUS PAGE
Weekly briefing

If your interest is in the Oxford & Chilterns area, then this is the news page for you.

www.oxford-chiltern-bus-page.co.uk

For uninterrupted bus fleet information bookmark

www.fleetreport.co.uk

Fleet Ramblings/Fleet Digest will finish on 31st December 2020. Thank you for your support

The Road to Gold (Part 2)

Stagecoach Midlands X4 Northampton to Peterborough

The Stagecoach Gold brand is being phased out in many parts of the Stagecoach UK operation.

In the second of a two-part feature we look at the evolution of the Stagecoach Midlands Northampton-Peterborough operation

Below: Heading over Town Bridge in Peterborough at the start of its journey through to Northampton in August 1997 is Stagecoach United Counties' Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympian which was new in October 1992. At this time the X65 operated out of Peterborough via Town Bridge and Oundle Road.
© Steven Knight Media.



Above: The X65 between Peterborough-Oundle-Corby-Kettering-Northampton was jointly operated by Viscount Buses and Stagecoach United Counties when Stagecoach took over Viscount (with the purchase of Cambus Holdings) in December 1995. Seven months later and still in Viscount livery was Optare MetroRider 808 (M808WVR) pictured outside Oundle outstation. Viscount used minibuses on Sundays when it ran three return trips on the X65 from Peterborough as far as Corby for connections forward on a Stagecoach United Counties vehicle. The 17:40 weekdays Northampton-Peterborough also utilised a minibus from Oundle to Peterborough returning to Oundle around 20:00.
© Steven Knight Media.





Above: Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere Interurban 178 (R178DNH) carries 'Coachlinks' branding as it departs Peterborough whilst (Below) similar branding is carried by Alexander RL-bodied Leyland Olympian 645 (G645EVV) which at the end of its X65 journey from Northampton to Peterborough. Images: © Steven Knight Media.



Left: June 2001 and Stagecoach Viscount dual purpose-seated Alexander RL-bodied Volvo Olympian 588 (S588BCE) leaves Peterborough with an X4 for Northampton.

Operation of Viscount portions of the X65/X4 was generally from the outstation at Oundle. However, by the end of the year Viscount would lose its share of operation on the X4 route.



Below: In June 2001 and painted in the then new Stagecoach 'beachball' livery, Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympian 658 (K658UNH) is pictured in Upper Benefield between Oundle and Corby with an X4 for Northampton. © Steven Knight Media.

As a result of an industrial dispute which saw Viscount's driver take strike action the decision was taken to move Viscount's share of the X4 to the United Counties operation at Kettering. That change took place from 11th November 2001. © Steven Knight Media.





Above/Right: The first major investment into the X4 route took place in 2004 when a fleet of 11 Tridents were introduced. Based at Kettering they carried 'crossX4county' branding. Pictured in April 2004 before the application of proper fleet numbers and fleet names was 18103 (KX04REU). These were the first new double deck buses for United Counties for almost six years. Both: © Steven Knight Media.



The next upgrade for the X4 saw ten Scania/Enviro 400s cascaded from Stagecoach Manchester and allocated to Kettering depot. The X4 branding was updated and the strapline changed to 'cross county links' Pictured is 15453 (MX08GJE), which arrived at Kettering in December 2008, just nine months after it had been delivered new to the Manchester fleet. © Steven Knight Media.



Above: In November 2011 the X4 was upgraded to 'Stagecoach Gold' standards and 13 Scania/Enviro 400s were bought at a cost of almost £2 million. They featured charging facilities and WiFi as well as leather seating. Pictured leaving Oundle for Peterborough is 15745 (KX61DLK).

© Steven Knight Media.



Left: The most recent upgrade to the X4 took place in October 2018 when the Scania/Enviro 400s were replaced by 13 ADL Enviro 400s, representing an investment value of just over £3 million. Since May 2018 with the withdrawal of the Milton Keynes-Northampton section of the X4 the service has operated between Northampton and Peterborough. Pictured is 11136 (SK68LVH).

© Steven Knight Media.

Snow Leopards



Our seasonal selection of images features a selection of Midland Red Leyland Leopards.

Above: Although building its own vehicles, Midland Red supplemented its vehicle requirements with a number of purchases from outside suppliers. The LS18s Leyland Leopards had either Weymann or Willowbrook bodywork and a number designated LS18A had dual purpose seating. This is an unidentified Weymann-bodied example. © Steven Knight Media.



Centre and Left is S28 325 (PHA325M) which was pictured in two different parts of Nuneaton on consecutive workings. (Centre) it heads along Thorntons Way in Stockingford with a N40 service whilst (Left) it heads along Queen Elizabeth Road in Camp Hill with an N50 working. It would appear that the destination blind has been set to 'Nuneaton' as a 'catch all' for its operation on local routes! Both: © Steven Knight Media.





Now in Stagecoach 'Local' livery with Stagecoach North East is gas-powered Scania/Enviro 300 28003 (YN63BXW). © Ian Hardie

Stagecoach North East

We have been advised that the planned repaint of Enviro 400 19681 into Stagecoach 'Local' livery did not take place due to the vehicle being required to stay in service at Walkergate depot due to Enviro 400H 12078 remaining under repairs.

Hartlepool's Enviro 200 36086, Sunderland's Enviro 300 27740 and Walkergate-allocated Enviro 400H 12061 have also received Stagecoach 'Local' livery. Scania/Enviro 300 (Gas) vehicles 28031/40 remain delicensed and out of service here with 28031 being reported at ADL Anston for repairs.

Stagecoach South Wales

'Stagecoach Gold' Scania/Enviro 400 15754 finally returned to service at Cwmbran on 1st December 2020, whilst now in 'Local' livery is Caerphilly's Optare Solo 47197.

Stagecoach Midlands

Former Kettering-allocated Trident/ALX400 18107 is now with Lincolnshire operator **Brylaine**, where it is receiving their fleet livery.

Stagecoach East Midlands

Enviro 300 27789 from Gainsborough is the has received a repaint into Stagecoach 'Local' livery at Lincoln whilst similar 27760, reported as repainted in *Fleet Digest 12* is allocated to Lincoln and not Mansfield as we reported. By early December it has not re-entered service after its repaint.

ALX400-bodied Trident 17738 at Mansfield has been delicensed as a result of low bridge accident damage and has been replaced at the depot by Dart SLF 34456, which has been transferred from the Reserve Fleet at Lincoln. Withdrawn Volvo B7TL/East Lancs 16911 has now been scrapped.