

MIDLAND RED WEST - A BRIEF HISTORY

- 6 September 1981** Midland Red West Limited commenced operations with a 183 strong fleet comprising of 121 Leyland Nationals, 60 Leyland Leopards and 2 Ford Midibuses, operating from depots at Worcester, Redditch, Kidderminster, Hereford, Evesham and Bromsgrove.
The company was formed to take over the South Western area operations of the old Midland Red Omnibus Co Ltd when it ceased to operate bus and coach services.
- 28 March 1983** Midland Red West joined its then sister companies, Midland Red North, Midland Red South and Midland Red East in marketing the Limited Stop "X" services under the Midland Express brand name. In addition to joint publicity, vehicles used on Midland Express services were re-liveried into white, with yellow and red stripes featuring a large red Midland Express fleetname.
In later years the other companies dropped out leaving Midland Red West as the sole Midland Express operator, albeit in the revised ME livery of yellow, red and black.
- July 1983** The company's first new vehicle was purchased, this being number 1001 a Plaxton bodied Leyland Tiger luxury coach. 1001 immediately became the flagship of the company's coaching activities, an area of business which was actively being developed and gaining lost ground after being severely run down by the old Midland Red Omnibus Co Ltd.
- 16 September 1983** Bromsgrove depot was closed and its operations transferred to Kidderminster, Redditch and Worcester depots.
- April 1984** Six new Leyland Suburban National 2s were purchased for the Midland Express operations and featured high back seats with above seat luggage racks. These vehicles were sold to Badgerline Limited in 1989.
- July 1984** Coaching activities were re-structured under the "Midwest" brand name. A new livery for coaches of white with maroon and gold stripes was introduced.
- 23 November 1985** Worcester City services were subject to a major re-organisation with the introduction of sixty-one Mercedes 608D twenty seater midibuses, giving a high frequency of service and serving estate roads which had previously been considered unsuitable for large size buses. The new network was branded under the "Citibus" name and a new livery of yellow, blue and orange was introduced for these vehicles. At the time it was the largest urban network of midibuses in Britain.

8 March 1986 Following on from the success of Citibus, the network of local services in Kidderminster, Stourport on Severn and Bewdley were revised with the introduction of further Mercedes 608D midibuses. Marketed under the "Wyre Forest Shuttle" name the vehicles carried a livery of yellow, green and orange.

In 1990 the brand name was shortened to "Shuttle", by then considered to be more appropriate as many of the Kidderminster allocated vehicles were now operating on services well outside the Wyre Forest District boundary.

19 April 1986 Redditch Town services received the upgrade treatment when a further batch of Mercedes 608D midibuses were purchased. This time the vehicles carried the "Reddilink" name and were liveried in yellow, red and orange.

During 1990 the Reddilink name was changed to Reddibus, thus reviving a title which had first been introduced by the old Midland Red Omnibus Company and one which had caught on with the people of Redditch.

30 August 1986 Service expansion in Shropshire resulted in a number of new Outstations being opened within that county.

26 October 1986 De-regulation of the bus industry brought with it many changes, but Midland Red West was well versed in operating within a deregulated environment as the Hereford region had been designated a "Trial Area" for deregulation from 1981.

A new network of services in Birmingham and The Black Country were started and a new base at Birmingham Digbeth Coach Station was opened with an allocation of 50 Leyland Nationals to cover this operation.

With the onset of privatisation and in order to promote a fresh image, a new "house style" featuring the Wyvern logo and livery of red, cream and black was introduced. The Midland Express livery was also revised at this time with vehicles being repainted in a similar style to the new layout but carrying yellow top halves.

22 December 1986 Midland Red West Ltd and Midland Red Coaches Ltd were purchased from the National Bus Company by a management/employee team led by Mr Ken Mills, Midland Red West's Managing Director since its formation in 1981.

A separate non-operating company Midland Red West Holdings Ltd was registered to perform the buyout, which was the 10th National Bus Company subsidiary to be sold.

For operational reasons all Midland Red Coaches Ltd staff and vehicles were transferred to Midland Red West Ltd. This enabled the two company's coaching activities to be amalgamated and subsequently the Midwest brand name was phased out in favour of that of Midland Red Coaches.

- 18 September 1987** Midland Red West Holdings Ltd purchased the Bristol Omnibus Company Ltd from the National Bus Company.
- 31 October 1987** Droitwich Spa local services were re-structured and converted to midibus operation, using Citibus vehicles. A number of the services involved had previously been taken over from Hardings Coaches.
- 1 November 1987** Midland Red West took over the control of Birmingham Bull Ring Bus Station from National Express.
- 22 April 1988** A merger was agreed between Midland Red West Holdings Ltd and Badgerline Holdings Ltd. This brought Midland Red West, Midland Red Coaches and Bristol Omnibus into the Badgerline Group.
- 23 April 1988** Hereford City services were converted to midibus operation with the purchase of twenty eight Mercedes 609D's, carrying the yellow, green and orange livery and "Hereford Hopper" brand names. To compliment the launch most of the new Hoppers were given individual names relating to the Hereford area, following a competition in a local newspaper.
- 1 April 1989** Malvern local services were converted to midibus operation, utilising "Citibus" vehicles.
- 1 April 1990** Fifty new Leyland Lynx forty-nine seat buses were purchased for services in Birmingham, The Black Country and Redditch areas. This order represented a £3.75 million investment by the company.
- July 1990** Midibuses were re-liveried upon repaint into red, cream, and black to reflect their by now almost universal use on country services. Their separate brand names were retained although these now appeared above the windows, as opposed to the former below window position.
- 12 November 1990** Following the award of a group of service contracts by Centro, the West Midlands County tendering authority, seven Peugeot-Talbot tri-axle midibuses were acquired for operation on these new 'Quickstep' branded routes.

- 6 September 1992** The Company assumed control of the new Worcester Crowngate Bus Station and for the first time all Midland Red West services in Worcester now started from the same location. Worcester Newport Street Country Bus Station closed.
- September 1993** The fleet livery was modified, with the application of 'Badger' logos to lower rear side panels.
- 9 November 1993** Badgerline Holdings Ltd was re-registered as a public company limited by shares and renamed Badgerline Group plc.
- 26 November 1993** The whole of the Badgerline Group's share capital was admitted to the official list of the London Stock Exchange.
- April 1994** Thirty-Seven new Dennis Lance buses were purchased for services in Birmingham and The Black Country. These vehicles were the first of Dennis manufacture to enter the fleet.
- 29 May 1994** New on-bus ticket technology was introduced when 'Wayfarer 2' electronic ticket machines replaced the old 'Setright' system.