

DRAGE. George Edwin Co-op House, London Road BOZEAT

Remarkably little is known about George Edwin Drage other than that he was usually called "Eddie" and that his buses were red.

When he started in business is unknown but he pioneered routes between Bozeat and Rushden, one via Hinwick, Podington and Wymington and the other via Wollaston and Irchester. It seems that both were designed to convey workers to the Rushden shoe factories and it is said that one of Drage's drivers was in fact employed in a shoe factory and drove the bus to Rushden in the mornings and returned with it in the evenings.

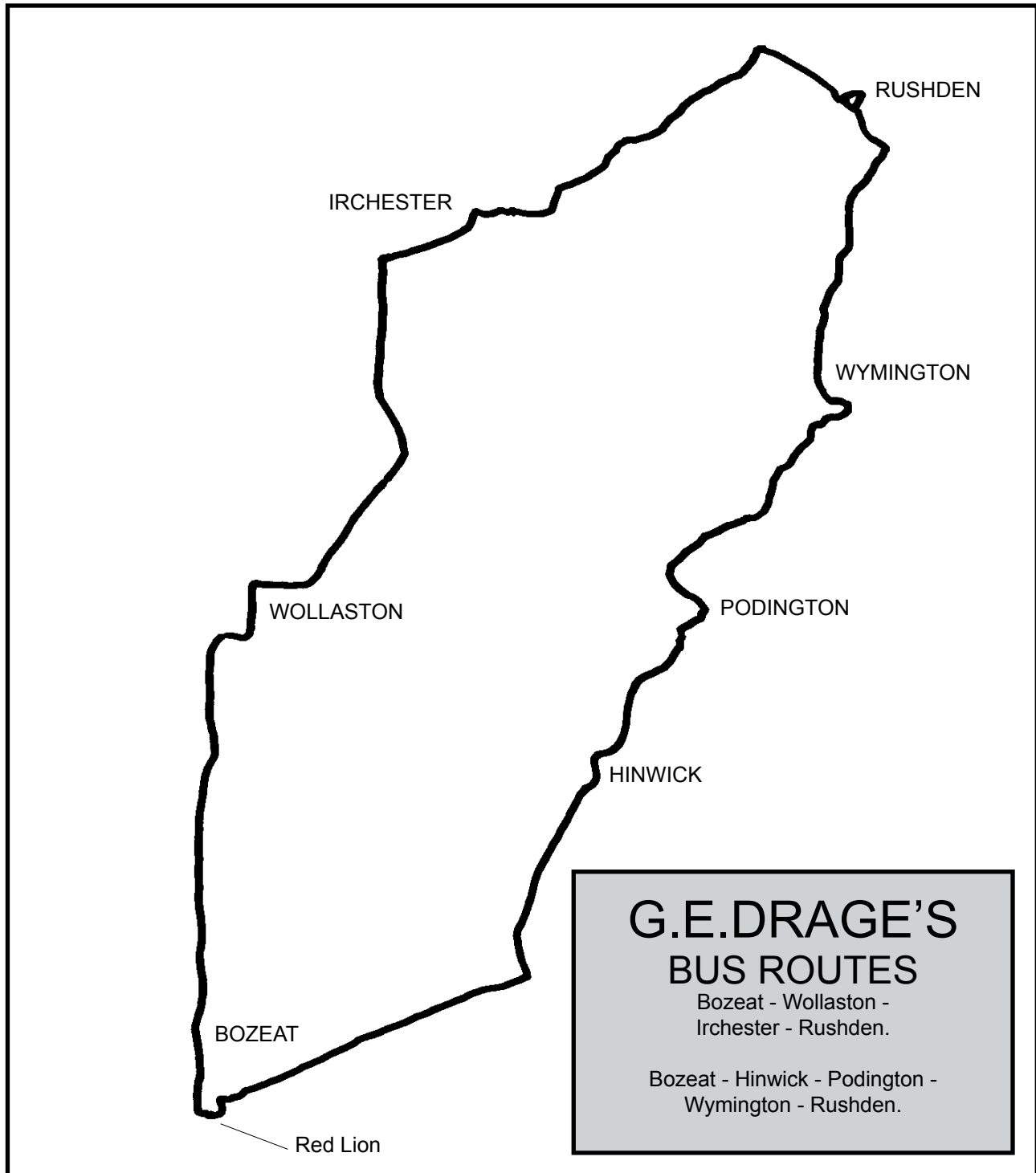
In the wake of the introduction of the 1930 Road Traffic Act George Edwin Drage placed applications before the Traffic Commissioners in November 1931 for licences for his Bozeat - Wollaston - Irchester - Rushden route and for his small group of Excursions & Tours starting from Red Lion Hill, Bozeat. The appropriate licences were granted in December 1931 for the stage-carriage route and in January 1932 for the tours, these two in due course being allocated the Commissioners' references TER417/1 and TER417/2. Drage's Excursion Licence entitled him to run to Yarmouth and Lowestoft for one-week period journeys, to Hunstanton and Skegness on day tours and to Towcester Races and Bedford. He was permitted to operate only one vehicle per day on this group of excursions.

In September 1932 the Bozeat - Rushden service was renewed without modification as indeed it was again a year later. Upon renewal of the Excursions & Tours licence in September 1932 Drage applied to discontinue the Lowestoft and Hunstanton destinations and to add Yarmouth, Northampton County Ground, Wicksteed Park, Rushden (for boxing and whist drives) and Grendon (for dances and whist drives). When the new licence was granted with effect from 1st December 1932 Drage was permitted to pick up at both Bozeat and Wollaston on the Skegness and Yarmouth tours but at Bozeat only when operating to Northampton or Rushden. The Wicksteed Park and Grendon destinations were withdrawn from the application, no doubt as a result of objections from other providers.

Whether or not United Counties approached George Edwin Drage with a view to purchasing his business at the same time that the Company acquired the operations of

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Drage Bros. of Bozeat, Davis of Lavendon and Wright of Irchester in March 1933, is not known. However, agreement between United Counties and Drage was reached on 20th November 1933 for the sale/purchase of the Goodwill of the services for £50. The small value placed on the Bozeat - Rushden route together with the tours licence as opposed to the £1,400 paid earlier in the year to Messrs Drage Bros reflects the relative significance of the two Bozeat "Drage" operations. No vehicles were included in the sale.



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Interestingly the Agreement made between George Edwin Drage and United Counties Omnibus Co Ltd refers to Drage having operated between Bozeat and Rushden both via Wollaston and Irchester and also via Hinwick and Podington, yet the Traffic Commissioners' documentation refers only to the route via Wollaston and Irchester. However, when United Counties came to take over from Drage the Company applied to amend both its Swineshead - Rushden - Bozeat and Rushden - Bozeat - Olney services which were respectively routed via Podington or Irchester on the relevant section of route between Rushden and Bozeat. The likelihood is, therefore, that Drage operated via both routes on weekdays for shoe workers and via Hinwick and Podington on Sundays, as the 1934 United Counties service 32 Sunday timetable between Rushden, Bozeat and Olney was considerably enhanced. Incidentally, United Counties commenced operating George Edwin Drage's former services from Sunday 17th December 1933.

So far nothing has been reported about the vehicles Eddie Drage operated and prior to 1931 nothing is known about any of the vehicle he may have owned. However, on 3rd July 1931 a new Bedford WHG 2-ton goods chassis registered NV 446 was licenced to Drage and, being supplied by Messrs Grose Ltd of Northampton it is fairly certain to have been equipped with one of that firm's bodies and, equally as likely, an older bus would have been traded in to Grose in part exchange.

It seems probable that Eddie Drage ran two buses at a time and on 31st May 1933 Messrs Grose supplied another Bedford, this time a WLB passenger chassis fitted with one of their twenty-seat bodies. Consequently, at the time Drage sold out to United Counties he had a remarkably modern fleet.

Rolling Stock:

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	Body No.	Dates			Former Owner	Disposal	Nts
							New	S/H	W/D			
?	?	?	?	?	?	—	?	?	7/31?		?	
?	?	?	?	?	?	—	?	?	5/33?		?	
NV 446	Bedford	WHG	103814	Grose	B14F?	—	7/31	—	12/33	Supp Grose Ltd., Northampton	?	1
NV 2623	Bedford	WLB	109088	Grose	B20	—	5/33	—	12/33	Supp Grose Ltd., Northampton	?	2

Notes: 1 - NV 446 - Last owned by J Edmunds, Talgarreg? and last licensed 12/50.

2 - NV 2623 - Last owned by F Soul, Olney and last licensed 10/45.