

# Bygone Buses

of  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-SE2

Page 1

## SEAMARKS. Herbert, Horace & Leonard t/a SEAMARKS & SON 52, High Street HIGHAM FERRERS

The story of the Seamarks family's involvement in bus operation started in a fairly conventional way but in later years became quite complex. It all began with Herbert and Sarah Seamarks who had thirteen children - seven sons and six daughters who, in descending order, were as follows: -

<u>Sons</u>	<u>Daughters</u>
Horace	Hilda
Ralph Leonard	Edith
George	Ada
Harry	Annie
Alfred	Mabel
Stanley	Gladys
Reginald	

It seems that Horace Seamarks started a business during the first World War collecting parcels delivered to Higham Ferrers rail station and delivering them with the aid of a horse and cart to the local shoe factories to which the parcels were addressed. Presumably this service was provided on a contractual basis to the Railway Company. Similarly return traffic from the factories to the rail station was carried and in due course general cartage within the Higham Ferrers and Rushden local area was undertaken. Whether or not Horace's father - Herbert - financed the operation from the beginning is not clear but by the end of the War the two of them seem to have been trading as Seamarks & Son. Soon afterwards Horace's younger brother Leonard joined the fray after having been demobilised from the Army in 1919 and spending the next twelve months in Hereford. Extra rolling stock was acquired and the three Seamarks continued as carriers until May 1923 when Horace sadly died whilst still in his twenties.

From this time on Leonard took the reins, assisted by his father and they were joined by Alfred Seamarks who came straight from school in 1924 but he had no financial

Bygone Buses of Northamptonshire is compiled by R M Warwick, "Torestyn" 101 Broadway East, Northampton NN3 2PP, who would be pleased to be advised of any additional information relating to the above operator. The records of the PSV Circle and the Omnibus Society have been consulted extensively for this series and acknowledgement and thanks are due to these organisations.

SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS

holding in the business. Leonard Seamarks has been described by those who knew him as a “wheeler-dealer” and he certainly must have been an enterprising man as he also set himself up as a coal merchant trading from 54 High Street, Higham Ferrers whereas the transport business was based at number 52. Seamarks’ vehicles were not kept at this address but were parked in nearby Nene Road on land adjoining Herbert and Sarah Seamarks’ residence. In later years a garage to accommodate six buses was erected on this site but the date of construction is uncertain although taking place after 1935. Moving on to the rest of the male Seamarks, George did not participate in the business but Harry later joined as a driver having first worked in one of the local shoe factories. In due course Stanley and Reginald also became drivers.

Herbert Seamarks’ wife Sarah is said to have had a little private capital and it is understood she financed the purchase of the Seamarks’ first motor vehicle, which was a Bean which had a demountable bus/lorry body. In its lorry form the vehicle was used to continue the freight side of the business but in its bus form the Bean was used principally on an evening courting service running from Rushden via Higham Ferrers to Irthlingborough, a route introduced at this time. It seems it was a custom in the A6 towns for courting couples to travel up and down this route and for the youth of the area to seek prospective partners by means of local buses - and why not indeed! The Bean was registered RP 1063 on 12th May 1925 and this latest venture with passenger carrying clearly inspired Leonard Seamarks to expand his bus service operations. In fact it was Leonard Seamarks who is claimed to have remarked that lorries had to be loaded manually whereas passengers boarded and alighted their vehicle without assistance. Accordingly and supporting this philosophy, in the second half of the 1920s the freight side of the operation was allowed to dwindle whilst the passenger side was developed.

A couple of regular passenger services were introduced, the main one plying between Rushden, Higham Ferrers and Irthlingborough on a daily basis and the other one ran from Rushden via Higham Ferrers and Stanwick to Raunds on weekdays. Market day services were also provided to St. Neots and a weekend facility run between Rushden and Harrold. Apart from the Bean, the only other buses known to have been purchased by Seamarks were an unidentified Guy, presumably a second-hand purchase, and a French built Laffly which took the registration RP 5337 when bought new on 27th January 1928. Other passenger vehicles were probably acquired to run the above services but were, no doubt, second-hand stock, details of which have not been forthcoming.

As noted earlier in this paper the business for some time traded, quite appropriately, as Seamarks & Son, being owned by Herbert Seamarks (father) and Leonard Seamarks (son), albeit with Leonard the dominant force in the partnership. At an unknown date the above two Seamarks were joined in their partnership by a Trevor Cecil Wyatt but continued to trade as Seamarks & Son. Just who Wyatt was and whether or not he played an active part in the business has not been discovered by the Author. For reasons that appear to defy logic, from time to time the firm also traded as R L Seamarks and Son and, indeed, Road Service Licences were applied for under this title but Leonard Seamarks had no children.

SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS

Mention of the 1930 Road Traffic Act and its various provisions and demands on operators of public service vehicles has been made in many of the papers in this series. In the name of R L Seamarks & Son applications were made in October 1931 to the Traffic Commissioners for four stage-carriage services to continue Seamarks' previous operations together with an excursion and tours licence as follows: -

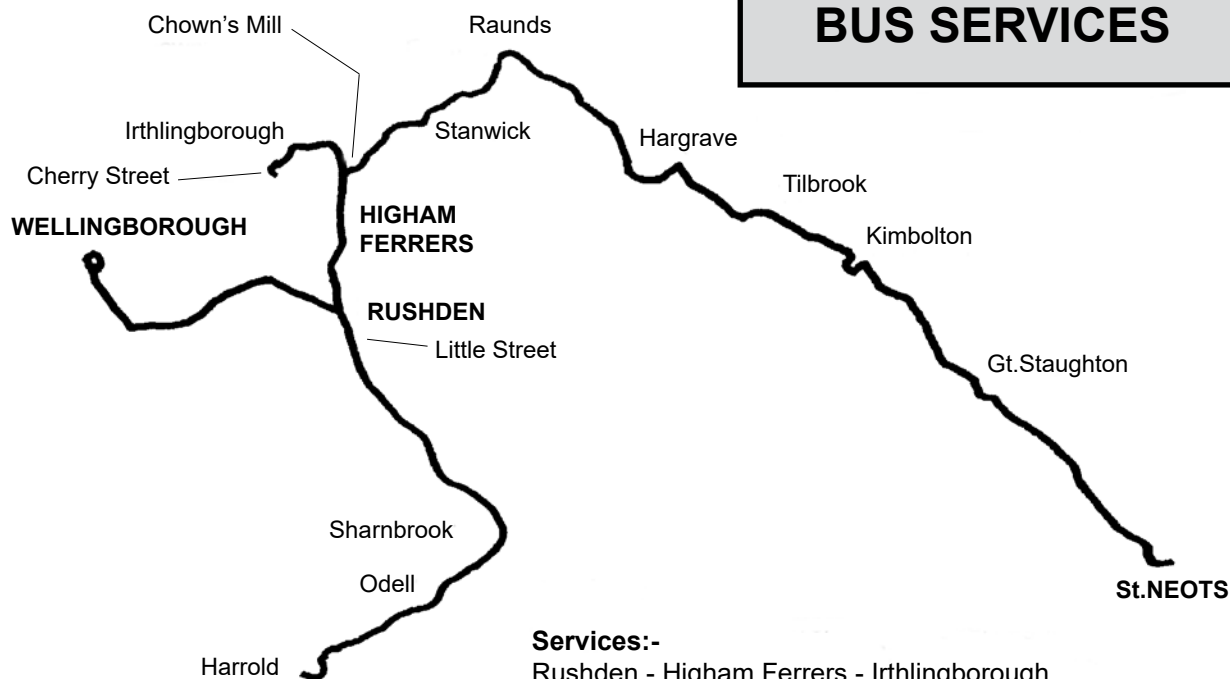
Traffic Commissioners Initial	References -		Route	Days of Operation
	Type	Subsequent		
E13778	TER333/1	Stage	Rushden - Higham Ferrers - Irthlingborough.	Daily
E13779	TER333/2	Stage	Rushden - Sharnbrook - Odell - Harrold.	Sats/Suns
E13780	TER333/3	Stage	Higham Ferrers - Stanwick - Raunds - Hargrave - Tilbrook - Kimbolton - Great Staughton - St.Neots.	Thursdays
E13781	TER333/4	Stage	Rushden - Higham Ferrers - Stanwick - Raunds.	Mons-Sats
E15179-84	TER333/5	E&T	Starting from Rushden, Wheatsheaf.	

Licences for each of the above were granted in November 1931 for the stage services and in January 1932 for the excursions and tours. There is a possibility that the St.Neots service was routed initially from Higham Ferrers via Chelveston to Hargrave rather than via Stanwick and Raunds but was certainly following the latter route by June 1932. In November 1932 Seamarks & Son made application for a new Wednesdays only market day service from Higham Ferrers via Rushden to Wellingborough and despite objection being raised by United Counties a licence was granted under reference TER333/6 on 6th December 1932.

For the next two or three years the Seamarks' services remained fairly constant, with occasional applications for additional workers' or evening services and the odd new excursion from time to time. Unfortunately timetables for Seamarks' services are not generally available but the Rushden to Irthlingborough route was the main service which reputedly ran hourly with additional worker's journeys morning, noon and night. The St.Neots and Wellingborough services were one return journey market day facilities whilst the weekend Harrold service comprised three return trips on each day. The frequency of the weekdays Raunds service is not known.

The Rushden excursion licence was amended in 1932 to permit passengers to be picked up and set down at Higham Ferrers Market Square and generally the operation of two vehicles per day was authorised.

### SEAMARKS & SON BUS SERVICES



#### Services:-

- Rushden - Higham Ferrers - Irthlingborough.
- Rushden - Higham Ferrers - Stanwick - Raunds.
- Rushden - Sharnbrook - Odell - Harrold.
- Rushden - Higham Ferrers - Stanwick - Raunds - Hargrave - Tilbrook - Kimbolton - Gt. Staughton - St. Neots.
- Higham Ferrers - Rushden - Wellingborough.

Rather surprisingly, in February 1935, Seamarks & Son applied to the Commissioners to operate their Rushden to St. Neots service additionally on Saturdays and Sundays, proposing three return trips on Saturdays and two on Sundays. The application for the Saturday service was refused in April 1936 and on Sundays restrictions were imposed on the licence that precluded the carriage of local traffic between Rushden and Raunds and between Kimbolton and St. Neots. Notwithstanding this, a further application for Saturday and Sunday operation was submitted just a month later in May 1935 and this time the Commissioners granted the required licence, again restricting the carriage of local traffic between Rushden and Raunds on Sundays and between Rushden and Hargrave on Saturdays.

The stage-carriage service between Rushden and Irthlingborough commenced from Little Street, Rushden on the south side of the town and terminated in Irthlingborough at the Cross. In June 1935 Seamarks & Son applied to extend the route from Irthlingborough Cross via High Street to Cherry Street and this extension was approved on 17th June.

In January 1936 the offices of Messrs R L Seamarks & Son were moved north along the A6 road from 52 High Street to 34B College Street, Higham Ferrers.

SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS

With regard to Seamarks' rolling stock, the only two vehicles purchased new were the Bean and Laffley reported earlier in this paper together with a second-hand Guy. Additionally there must have been a small number of used buses in the fleet, the identities of which remain a mystery. The next two recorded acquisitions were a pair of Gilford normal-control 166SD types that came from National Coachways of London in October 1931 registered UV 4034 and UP 1934. These were joined within the next year by another similar Gilford registered UU 3258 but the former history of this machine has not been discovered. The above three Gिल्фords were followed in 1933 by yet another Gilford, a twenty-seater with Metcalfes body, registered HJ 7334 and previously owned by Borough Services of Southend.



*This photograph, which dates from about 1933/4, depicts from left to right UP 1934 and UV4034 - both Duple bodied Gilford 166SDs; another similar Gilford - UU 3258 - with unrecorded bodywork and, on the right, the Laffly RP 5337. The vehicles are parked on ground in Nene Road, Higham Ferrers prior to the erection of a six-bus garage on this site.*

The next vehicles recorded are a brace of buses previously used by operator A Lord of Burbage, one being a REO and the other a forward-control Gilford 168OT and both having Bracebridge bodies. These machines arrived in March 1935 whilst in 1936 five vehicles were purchased. Another two Gिल्фords that were being disposed of by Eastern National were selected and, interestingly, Seamarks bought two second-hand double-deckers for their local services. One was a Maudslay Mentor registered EV 3403 and the other an A.E.C. Regent registered RM 7328. The final acquisition for 1936 was again a Gilford but this time a DF6 chassis which had been used as a van by the Danish Bacon Company. To the chassis of this vehicle registered GW 9186 the Seamarks' fitted a twenty-seat bus body, the origin of which is again unrecorded. The usual livery of Seamarks' rolling stock was cream and green.

# Bygone Buses

of  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

## NN-SE2

Page 6

SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS



*Another view of Gilford UU 3258 but this time showing the rear and nearside. It will be seen that this vehicle has a folding passenger door at the front and a hinged door at the rear behind the lady posing for the photograph. The garter on the side contains the letters "LS". The photograph was taken at the Rose & Crown at Girtford, possibly on its way to or from Sandy Show.*



*A.E.C. Regent RM 7328 acquired by Seamarks in 1936 was previously operated by Cumberland Motor Services in whose ownership it was photographed.*

SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS



*Fortunately a photograph of the wonderful Maudslay ML7 with Dodson body and registered EV3403 has survived, albeit in the livery of a former owner.*

*(Photo courtesy A D Packer).*

Clearly, to United Counties, the presence of Seamarks operating over routes the Company had been running for many years must have been galling indeed and the acquisition of this operator would have been an aim of United Counties for the past few years at least. By November 1936 the Directors of United Counties had secured an option, to be exercised before 31st December 1936, to purchase the business of Messrs Seamarks & Son for the sum of £15,000.

This anticipated acquisition must have had something to do with the fact that Herbert and Leonard Seamarks and Trevor Wyatt dissolved their partnership on 23rd December 1936 leaving the two Seamarks to continue. This same incident must also have been connected to United Counties paying Leonard Seamarks a deposit of £4,000 on the purchase whereas it was normal practise to pay 10% of the purchase price as a deposit, which would have been £1,500. Presumably the additional funds were required to remove Trevor Wyatt from the partnership for reasons that are not now apparent. Anyway, the purchase of part of Seamarks business by United Counties went ahead as planned.

The Company applied for two Road Service Licences to cover the Rushden to Harrold and Rushden to St.Neots routes and its existing services were modified to incorporate Seamarks' former operations between Rushden and Irthlingborough, Rushden and Raunds and Rushden and Wellingborough.

# Bygone Buses

of  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

## NN-SE2

Page 8

SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS

## UNITED COUNTIES

OMNIBUS COMPANY, LIMITED,

Have acquired the STAGE CARRIAGE SERVICES of  
**Messrs. R. L. SEAMARKS & SON, of Higham Ferrers**  
and will OPERATE, on and after 24th JANUARY, 1937,

Revised Times on the following Services:

- SERVICE No. 2 & 4 - Raunds, Rushden and Wellingborough.**
- „ **No. 3 - Rushden, Irthlingborough and Kettering.**
- „ **No. 4a - Wellingborough, Chelveston and Raunds.**
- „ **No. 23 - Hargrave and Raunds.**
- „ **No. 25 - Rushden, Chelveston and St. Neots.**

Slightly Revised Timings will be introduced on the two Services:

**RUSHDEN and HARROLD, and  
RUSHDEN and ST. NEOTS, via Raunds.**

For Full Details see Special Leaflets.

**UNITED COUNTIES OMNIBUS COMPANY, LIMITED.**

Head Office: Boughton Road, NORTHAMPTON (Telephone 632).

Local Office: Finedon Road, IRTHLINGBOROUGH (Telephone 62).

*A facsimile of the poster produced by United Counties to advise the public of their acquisition of Seamarks' stage-carriage services.*

Seamarks' excursions and tours licence was not included in the sale but five vehicles were, these comprising a Maudslay and an A.E.C. Regent - both double-deckers - along with three Gilford single-deck machines. The effective date of transfer to United Counties was Sunday 24th January 1937.

As indicated above, Seamarks' retained their Excursions & Tours Road Service Licence and three coaches, which were probably Gilfords UV 4034, UP 1934 and HJ 7334, carrying on trading from 34B College Street, Higham Ferrers and garaging the vehicles at Nene Road. Still owned but no longer required were Gilfords UE 3258 and GW 9186 together with REO UE 4164. The money received from United Counties from the sale of the stage-carriage side of the business provided finance for Seamarks' to purchase a brand new Albion Victor PK115 coach seating thirty-one passengers, being both supplied and bodied by Arthur Mulliner Ltd of Northampton. Fortunately a photograph of this coach has survived and is shown on the following page. The Albion was made available to Seamarks' from 1st May 1937 when it took the registration NV 8987. In addition it appears that Leonard Seamarks purchased land at 54 High Street South, Rushden - directly opposite Crabb Street - and established a motor garage and filling station at this site.



SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS



*The handsome Mulliner bodied Albion Victor registered NV 8987 by Seamarks' in May 1937. It was earlier thought that Messrs Willmotts had bodied this vehicle but this photograph clearly shows that Arthur Mulliner was the true bodybuilder.*

With a much reduced operation there was no longer sufficient work to employ other members of the Seamarks family in the business. This matter was resolved by Leonard Seamarks, along with his two younger brothers Harry and Alfred purchasing, on 10th April 1937, the business of G I Smith of Westoning, Bedfordshire trading as Westoning & District Bus Service. Brother Stanley continued to work at Higham Ferrers but at some stage after the War moved to Bedfordshire to join the Westoning outfit.

At Westoning Leonard, Harry and Alfred traded as Seamarks Bros and the business was run by Harry and Alfred with Leonard remaining at Higham Ferrers looking after his other interests. Although based in Westoning, the office address continued to be 34B College Street, Higham Ferrers. The operations of Seamarks Bros in Bedfordshire are beyond the scope of this series of papers which is restricted to Northamptonshire, but as time progressed the Seamarks' business developed into a significant operation centering on the Luton area, ceasing only as recently as the year 2000. It is understood that in June 1937 two of Seamarks' Higham Ferrers based fleet, namely Gilfords UU 3258 and GW 9186, were transferred to Seamarks Bros of Westoning to replace a pair of Dennis buses sold to K W Services Ltd of Blakesley (NN-KW2).

#### SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS

Until the War Seamarks continued their excursions and private hire work but with the outbreak of War in September 1939 and subsequent restrictions on the use of fuel, the scope for day tours ceased altogether and it is likely that Gilford UV 4034 and REO UE 4164 were taken out of service for good whilst the Albion coach NV 8987 passed to Seamarks Bros at Westoning.

As the War progressed the opportunity arose to operate one or two contract services, no doubt in connection with the building of aerodromes in the area or the movement of Prisoners of War. For these purposes the Ministry of Transport allocated a B.M.M.O. IM6 model registered FT 2849 to Leonard Seamarks in about 1941. Later an unidentified Gilford Hera, a Dennis Lancet registered FMF 940 and two A.E.C. Regals registered TY 9518 and GF 1736 all found their way into Seamarks fleet during the War and these coaches were operated from High Street South, Rushden rather than from Higham Ferrers. After the War a thirty-two seat T.S.M. coach was acquired in September 1945 and the Dennis Lancet FMF 940 passed in the early part of 1946 to T W Blake / Dunstable Coaches Ltd, with which Leonard Seamarks was closely involved.

Towards the end of 1944 Leonard Seamarks, who by this time was the sole proprietor of Seamarks & Son, his father Herbert presumably having retired or died, had discussions with other business men with the intention of expanding the operations and these discussions were to lead to the formation of Rushden Motors Ltd on 31st May 1945, an account to be found in paper NN-RU2.



*This photograph of Brush bodied B.M.M.O. IM6 registered FT 2849 is seen after its days of carrying passengers had ended and in the ownership of a showman named Strudwick.*

#### SEAMARKS & Son - HIGHAM FERRERS

#### Rolling Stock:

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	Body No.	Dates			Former Owner	Disposal	Nts
							New	S/H	W/D			
RP 1063	Bean		2975	?	Lorry/Bus		5/25	—	by 12/33	Supp Parker & Son, Higham Ferrers	A Spriggs, Higham Ferrers	
?	Guy		?	?	B		?	c-/26?	?	?	?	
RP 5337	Laffly		187794	?	B		1/28	—	by 9/34	Supp Laffley Bros., Kilburn		
UV 4034	Gilford	166SD	10832	Duple	C26D	1576	7/29	10/31	by -/40	National Coachways, London WC1	No further owner	
UP 1934	Gilford	166SD	10518	Duple	C24D	1445	10/28	10/31	6/38	National Coachways, London WC1	No further owner	
UU 3258	Gilford	166SD	?	Wycombe?	B26D		5/29	by-/32	6/37	?	Seamarks Bros., Westoning	
HJ 7334	Gilford	LL165	10282	Metcalfes	B26D		12/27	by 4/33	-/38	Borough Services, Southend	No further owner	
UE 4164	REO	Major	G5354	Brace-bridge	B20F		5/26	3/35	by -/40	A Lord, Burbage	Showman	
UE 8526	Gilford	168OT	10727	Brace-bridge	B32		5/29	3/35	1/37	A Lord, Burbage	United Counties (443)	1
VX 5346	Gilford	168OT	11380	?	C32		4/30	c 2/36	1/37	Eastern National (3572)	United Counties (442)	1
JN 256	Gilford	168SD	11227	Duple	C26F	1876	6/30	c 2/36	1/37	Eastern National (3447)	United Counties (444)	
EV 3403	Maudslay	Mentor ML7C2	4929	Dodson	H26/22R		1/31	c 3/36	1/37	C & P Sales, Peckham/ L.P.T.B. (MY1)	United Counties (440)	2
RM 7328	A.E.C.	Regent	661781	Short	H26/26R		8/30	c 4/36	1/37	A.E.C. Southall/ Cumberland M.S. (12)	United Counties (441)	2
GW 9186	Gilford	DF6	12015	?	B20		2/32	5/36	6/37	Danish Bacon Co.	Seamarks Bros., Westoning	3
NV 8987	Albion	Victor PK115	25014E	Mulliner	C31F		5/37	—	4/40	—	Seamarks Bros., Westoning	4
FT 2849	B.M.M.O.	IM6	1723	Short	B34F		4/31	c -/41	10/42	Min of Transport/ Northern General (734)	Belgrove, Cold Higham	
?	Gilford	Hera	?	?	?		?	c /42	-/44?	?	?	
FMF 940	Dennis	Lancet II	175131	Duple	C32F	8456	3/37	c -/42	c 4/46	Kirby, Bushey Heath	T W Blake/ Dunstable Chs	
TY 9518	A.E.C.	Regal	6621347	Robson	32		4/32	c -/44	8/46	Valliant Direct, Ldn W5	Rushden Motors Ltd, Rushden	
GF 1736	A.E.C.	Regal	662098	Harrington	C32D		3/30	c -/44	8/46	Valliant Direct, Ldn W5	Rushden Motors Ltd, Rushden	
UU 3171	T.S.M.	B10A	5380	Wilton	FB32C		5/29	9/45	8/46	Pritchard, London E5	Rushden Motors Ltd, Rushden	5

- Notes:**
- 1 - UE 8526 and VX 5346 recorded as seating 31 when acquired by United Counties.
  - 2 - EV 3403 and RM 7328 recorded as seating 50 when acquired by United Counties.
  - 3 - GW 9186 was originally a van. Bus body fitted by Seamarks.
  - 4 - NV 8987 originally recorded as having a Willmotts body but is now known to have been bodied by Arthur Mulliner.
  - 5 - UU 3171 was originally an all-weather coach and may have been rebodied during the War.