

ABBOTT. Asher & Sons High Street South, RUSHDEN

It is rather unusual for an Undertaker to have ventured into the world of charabanc operation but this is exactly what happened in the case of Asher Abbott & Sons of Rushden.

Asher, always known as "Ash" Abbott, was born in 1856 and his first employment was managing a smallholding and Livery Stables in Rushden. In 1885 Asher started operating his own horse-drawn transport and was soon running brakes and landaulets from premises in High Street South, Rushden, where he lived and from which the present-day Funeral Director's business is carried out.

Asher Abbott married Rebecca Willis and the marriage produced four children - Frank, Patricia, John William and Cyril Willis. The eldest two children were not involved in the future operation of coaches but the younger two were. John William (Bill) was born on 3rd September 1882, later marrying Lucy Perkins, and Bill and Lucy in March 1927 had a son whom they Christened William Asher Abbott. William is now the present Managing Director of the firm. Cyril Abbott married Violet Chettle and they had a son and a daughter named Reginald and Marian respectively. Tragically, Cyril, Violet and Marian were all killed when bombs were dropped on Rushden in August 1942.

Returning to the gentleman who started the business, Asher Abbott, it is of interest that he diversified into the undertaking profession in the early part of the century. In January 1921 Asher tried his hand at running charabancs and bought a Thornycroft X-type twenty-eight seater from Messrs Allchin & Son of Northampton, which was duly registered BD 5440.

A little later, Asher Abbott bought another Thornycroft machine, but this time it was fitted with a saloon body which was compartmented and must have seated in the region of eighteen to twenty passengers. This Thornycroft was registered BD 1676 and probably dated from 1920 having apparently been new to Briggs Bros. of Wellingborough. There is some confusion over the history of this vehicle, which is covered in more detail is paper NN-BR3 covering the story of Briggs Bros. of Wellingborough.

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

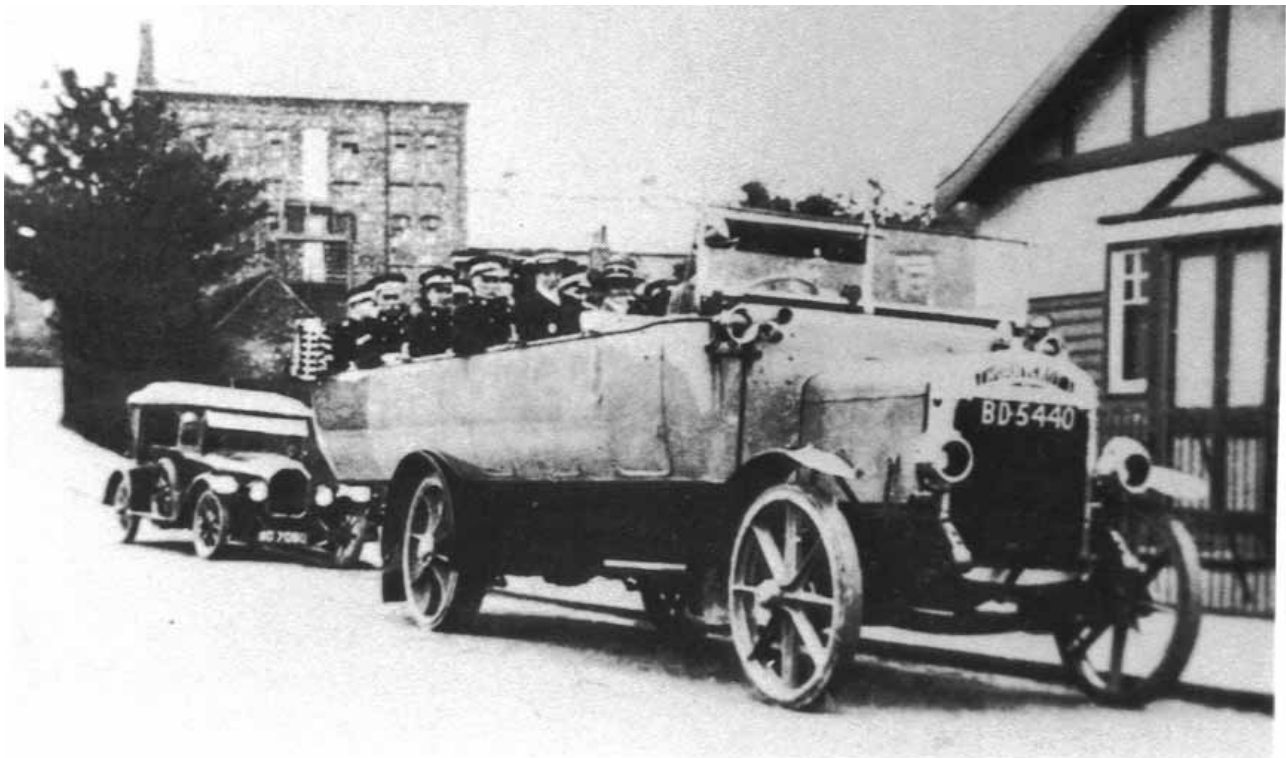
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Asher Abbott's Thornycroft - BD 5440 - with a full compliment of passengers at Portland Road, Rushden.



An offside view of Thornycroft charabanc BD 5440, this time conveying a party of St John's Ambulance people on an outing. The picture was taken in Station Road, Rushden outside the St John's Ambulance Headquarters.

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BD1676, also a Thornycroft, was photographed at South End School, Rushden prior to conveying a party from Arthur Sanders Works on a day tour.

Early advertisements placed in local newspapers by Asher Abbott indicate that by May 1922 he had a bus to seat 14 and charabancs to seat 14 and 28 passengers. Maybe Thornycroft BD 1676 was designed to carry only 14 passengers and this is the bus referred to in the advertisement? However, the picture above shows eighteen passengers alongside and the driver sitting within the machine. It is probable that other vehicles were operated but details of them are unknown, although in latter years the firm operated only one coach at a time.

Asher Abbott died on 10th October 1926, at which point his two sons William and Cyril took over the reins. In April 1927 a brand new Reo Pullman coach was bought from Messrs Allchin and it appears that BD 5440 was traded in, in part exchange. The Reo was registered RP 4175 on 14th April and it provided the Abbotts with their flagship motive power for the next ten years. Whenever more vehicles were required for a hire than were owned, the Abbotts co-operated with several other Rushden operators to provide sufficient rolling stock for the hire.

Excursions and private hires formed the entire trade of the coach operational side of the firm's business and regular trips were run to Great Yarmouth, particularly during the town's boot and shoe industry holiday periods. In fact Asher Abbott & Sons applied to the East Midlands Traffic Commissioners for a Road Service Licence for excursions and tours starting from Rushden Church in November 1931 and this application included a 7-day excursion to Great Yarmouth on August Bank Holiday, day tours to Clacton, Skegness, Hunstanton, London, London Zoo and several half-day and evening excursions. The licence permitted the operation of one vehicle.

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The livery of the Reo - RP 4175 - was pale blue and by the end of 1936 William and Cyril Abbott decided to replace it with a new machine. A Bedford WTB was chosen and supplied by Messrs Grose Ltd of Northampton, fitted with one of that firm's twenty-six seat bodies. RP 4175 was taken in part exchange and the new Bedford was registered NV 8311 on 1st January 1937, being painted maroon with cream reliefs.

Birch Bros. of Kentish Town, in looking to expand their business along the line of their London - Bedford - Rushden - Kettering stage-carriage service, actively pursued the acquisition of excursion and tours operating rights. Approaches were made by Birch Bros. to a number of Rushden excursion licence holders and in April 1938 Asher Abbott & Sons sold the goodwill of their licence together with Bedford WTB - NV 8311 - to Birch Bros..

Asher Abbott & Sons thereafter concentrated on their core business, that of Funeral Direction, and the firm which has been a limited company since 1948, is still providing the good people of Rushden with this facility in 1994.

I am indebted to William Abbott for his assistance with the preparation of this paper.

Rolling Stock:

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	No.	Dates			Former Owner	Disposal	Nts
							New	S/H	W/D			
BD 5440	Thornycroft	X	8532	?	CH28	—	1/21	—	3/27	Supplied Allchin & Son, Northampton	Last Licensed to Allchin 7/33	1
BD 1676	Thornycroft	J	?	?	B18?	—	-/20?	c-/21	?	Briggs Bros., Wellingborough	Disposal not known	
RP 4175	Reo	Pullman	W2876	?	B20	—	4/27	—	1/37	Supplied Allchin & Son, Northampton	Allchin & Son, Northampton	2
NV 8311	Bedford	WTB	110893	Grose	C25F	—	1/37	—	4/38	Supplied Grose Ltd, Northampton	Birch Bros. K59	

Notes: 1 - Mystery surrounds the original owner of this bus. It may have come from Briggs Bros. of Wellingborough or may have been new to Abbott.

2 - Later to S Grainge, Westbury, Northants.

General - It is probable that at least one other 14-seat charabanc was owned.