

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-AB2

Page 1

ABBOTT. Frederick Stag's Head P.H. & from 1935 "Harroldene", 93 The Ridge GREAT DODDINGTON

The landlord of the Stag's Head at Gt.Doddington for many years in the twentieth century was Herbert Abbott who had five children - four sons and a daughter. The eldest child was Frederick Abbott, the subject of this story, and he was born on 21st December 1903.

As already revealed in paper NN-HA15 the local bus operator in Gt.Doddington was Thomas Hawkins who ran a Ford T on workers' and shoppers' services between his home village and nearby Wellingborough. In January 1928 Herbert Abbott provided the capital to take over Hawkins' bus interests and establish his eldest son Fred as a passenger transport operator. Hawkins' Ford T bus was acquired although its identity has not been established but Fred operated it from the Stag's Head, the yard of which contained several outbuildings suitable for housing either horse or motor vehicles. The Ford T was painted dark blue and a little later in 1928 Fred Abbott traded-in this vehicle to Messrs. Grose Ltd of Northampton in part-exchange for a Chevrolet carrying a fourteen-seat Grose body. Whether or not this was a new or used machine has not been established and nor has its registration number, but it was painted red.

(Please see next page
for caption).



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.

ABBOTT. Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON

Whilst the registration number of Fred Abbott's Chevrolet pictured on the previous page remains a mystery, at least a photograph of it has survived. On the one hand its paintwork, a shield containing the initials "F.A." and the Grose bodybuilder's transfer all look pristine suggesting the vehicle might be new. On the other hand the steps into the saloon give the impression that the bus had been well used and may have been acquired second-hand. The picture was taken at the Stag's Head and in the background can be seen some of the outbuildings used for garaging purposes.

Clearly Fred Abbott was quite successful in running his business as by November 1929 he was in a position to exchange his Chevrolet for a new and larger G.M.C. bus which seated twenty passengers. Again Messrs. Grose Ltd was the supplier and body builder and the vehicle, registered RP 8163, gave eight years of good service. The livery of this and subsequent coaches up until the War was dark and light green.



Fred Abbott stands proudly at the entrance to his Grose bodied G.M.C. registered RP 8163 in November 1929. Again this photograph was taken alongside the Stag's Head at Great Doddington.

The local Wellingborough service together with private hires occupied Fred Abbott for the next few years whilst he assessed the implications of the 1930 Road Traffic Act. Initially Fred applied to the Traffic Commissioners for a Road Service Licence to continue only his Great Doddington to Wellingborough route, without modification.

ABBOTT. Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON

However, in 1932 he applied for an Excursions & Tours licence to enable him to run trips from Gt.Doddington to Skegness and race meetings at Towcester and Brampton. Having only one bus he also had to apply to discontinue his local service on Bank Holiday Mondays and Tuesdays, days on which his excursions would be viable. A year later he applied for permission to pick up excursion passengers at Wellingborough Cannon Street but due to objections from United Counties, Keeber & Oakley and L.M.S. Railway this was not granted. Whilst considering Fred Abbott's licensing applications it can also be noted that in January 1934 he requested the Traffic Commissioners' authority to run additional excursions to Bedford, Huntingdon, Old Warden, Rockingham, St.Neots and Woburn - these all being subsequently granted. Also, in January 1934, Fred Abbott was in a financial position to increase his fleet by the purchase of a new Bedford WLB fitted with a Willmotts (of Shepherd's Bush) coach body. This machine took the registration NV 3408 and its seating was doubtlessly more acceptable for the operation of longer distance journeys.

The year 1935 was an eventful one for Fred Abbott as he married Allison Millicent Chambers from the village of Harrold in Bedfordshire. Upon their marriage Fred and Allison moved to 93 The Ridge, Great Doddington and named their bungalow "Harroldene". Also in 1935 a second-hand Gilford CP6 coach with a twenty-seat Duple body and registered UW 9813 was purchased, bringing the fleet total to three.

United Counties experienced a bitter strike by employees in January 1936 which saw Fred Abbott temporarily expanding the operation of his stage-carriage services by running between Wellingborough, Gt.Doddington and Earls Barton from 8th to 17th January - an operation that was to be repeated between 3rd and 9th May 1937 on the occasion of further labour troubles being experienced by United Counties.

With regard to rolling stock, Fred Abbott was evidently pleased with his Willmotts bodied Bedford NV 3408 as in April 1936 he took delivery of a larger Bedford WTB chassis onto which was mounted a twenty-six seat Willmotts body. This coach was registered NV 6984 on 9th April 1936 and its livery was again dark green with lighter green reliefs. The Bedford NV 6984 was an addition to the fleet bringing the total to four. At the beginning of this paper mention was made that Herbert Abbott had four sons of whom Frederick was the eldest. The other three were Ted, Bernard and Albert and both Ted and Albert worked part-time for their elder brother. Ted for many years also worked for both Birch Bros. and United Counties, both driving and in clerical capacities. Albert Abbott worked for Swanspool Garage in Wellingborough as a mechanic until the War when he joined the R.A.F. In 1943 he left and went to work for Daimler at Coventry and whilst there he drove a United Counties bus from Northampton to Coventry each day conveying workers. It seems that Daimler hired only the bus from United Counties and supplied their own driver. Later Albert Abbott operated his own garage and repair works in Northampton.

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-AB2

Page 4

ABBOTT, Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON



Willmotts Motors Ltd produced a really attractive coach body for fitment to this 1936 Bedford WTB. No doubt NV 6984 was photographed at Doddington when new.

It will be recalled that Fred Abbott ran a stage-carriage service between Gt.Doddington and Wellingborough, a road on which United Counties was also running its 2A service. On 1st June 1938 United Counties reached agreement with Fred Abbott to purchase Fred's service for the sum of £2,000. United Counties duly amended its 2A service with effect from 26th June 1938 and Fred Abbott relinquished his licence thereafter, continuing with just his Excursion & Tours licence. Incidentally, a number of Fred Abbott's journeys between Gt.Doddington and Wellingborough at factory times continued to or started from the Ideal Clothiers' factory in Victoria Road.

Returning to the subject of rolling stock, Fred Abbott decided to replace his G.M.C. registered RP 8163 in December 1937 with another Bedford WTB but this time carrying a twenty-six seat Duple coach body. Sadly a photograph of this vehicle registered ABD 225 has not been located. It is also said that the twenty-seat Bedford NV 3408 was replaced by a twenty-six seat Duple bodied Bedford WTB which seems quite likely but, if it was, no trace of its registration has been found, it probably having been a second-hand purchase. The Gilford UW 9813 was disposed of in March 1938 and the subsequent sale of the stage-carriage service no doubt meant a replacement was not required.

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-AB2

Page 5

ABBOTT, Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON

Shortly before the War Fred Abbott exchanged two of his 26-seater Bedford coaches for a thirty-two seat Leyland Cheetah with Plaxton coachwork. This exchange was effected through Major Allday of Horton Motor Works near Northampton who acted as a dealer and, during and after the War, he reconditioned and refurbished bus chassis and bodies, often rejoining them in different combinations to that in which they were purchased. The Leyland Cheetah in question was registered EN 7548 having been new to Spencer's Tours Ltd of Bury. It was only about a year old when Major Allday acquired it and resold it to Fred Abbott who was delighted with it. It is believed that the two Bedfords traded-in were ABD 235 and the unidentified 26-seat WTB model mentioned previously.



It is understood this is more or less what the Plaxton bodied Leyland Cheetah EN 7548 would have looked like in Fred Abbott's ownership. In fact the original photograph had the dark area coloured green by hand and the registration plate obliterated. The picture was doubtlessly supplied by Major Allday to Fred Abbott but in reality it depicts a Leyland Tiger TS8 registered END 225 for Messrs. Hargreaves of Bolton, being an official Plaxton photograph.

Sadly with the outbreak of War in September 1939 Fred Abbott got comparatively little use from his Leyland Cheetah and in 1940 it was commandeered by the Military Authorities and not offered to Fred for repurchase when released by the War Department. For the duration of the War Fred Abbott's normal operations came to a halt and for some of the time he was engaged in driving a Ford tipper lorry used in the construction of both Podington and Chelveston Aerodromes. In the latter years of the War he was fortunate in being given the job of conveying Land Army girls from Wilbye

ABBOTT. Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON

Grange to Moulton in a bus supplied for the purpose. He was also engaged in driving a lorry for a Wellingborough Fruiterer and collected fruit and garden produce from surrounding orchards and farms.

After the War, as the Military had not returned Fred Abbott's Leyland Cheetah EN 7548, Fred was offered a Leyland Tiger TS7 of 1936 vintage and registered CAL 829. It had a Duple thirty-two seat body and when purchased in March 1946 it was painted all-over in khaki . Whilst rubbing down the bodywork for repainting, at the premises of Messrs. York, Ward & Rowlatt of Wellingborough, the red and cream livery of Robin Hood Coaches was revealed and these colours were then adopted by Fred Abbott for his post-War fleet.



Just a glimpse of Leyland Tiger TS7/Duple CAL 829 can be seen in this photograph taken prior to setting off for the coast in 1947 with families from the Kingsway Estate in Wellingborough. (Photo courtesy Evening Telegraph)

Also in about March 1946 Fred Abbott bought a used Bedford WTB from York Bros. of Northampton. This was ANV 360 which dated from July 1938 when it was new to Walter Keach of Kettering and acquired by York's in 1942. ANV 360 was equipped with a Duple twenty-six seat body and was presumably much the same as the two WTBs sold to Horton Motor Works some years earlier. In fact ANV 360 was a stopgap purchase as Fred Abbott had ordered a new Bedford during the War but this could not be delivered

ABBOTT. Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON

until January 1947 when DBD 907 entered service, comprising a Bedford OB chassis and a Duple Vista 29-seat body. At this point ANV 360 became surplus and was sold to good friend Billy Johnson from Rushden whose story can be found in paper NN-JO1.



This photograph taken at Higham Ferrers Square shows ANV 360, the Bedford WTB with Duple Hendonian coachwork, after sale to Billy Johnson of Rushden.

(Photo courtesy A J George).

Moving on to 1948, Fred Abbott took the opportunity of purchasing a five month old Maudslay Marathon III which had been ordered by Messrs. Wright Bros. (London) Ltd but not operated by this firm. The body of this vehicle had been built by Blackmore of Bideford, Devon, a firm that specialised in shipbuilding and which manufactured few bus bodies. Registered TMG 199, Fred Abbott retained this coach for four years.

An operator with whom Fred Abbott worked closely in the 1930s was William Rice of Wollaston and his story can be found in paper NN-RI2. Rice held an Excursions & Tours licence which permitted him to run trips from Wollaston Nag's Head and also to pick up at Wellingborough Cannon Street. Because of the War William Rice had to cease operating in 1940 and he did not resume after the War. Accordingly Fred Abbott arranged to purchase the Goodwill of William Rice's excursions licence, which he did in the Autumn of 1948 in readiness for the following summer season. Fred had long wanted to be able to pick up passengers in Wellingborough and his new licence enabled him to

ABBOTT. Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON



The unusual bodywork fitted to Maudslay Marathon TMG 199 can be seen in this illustration taken in London in the late 1940s/early 1950s.

(Photo courtesy J F Higham / Alan Cross).

do so and run period excursions to Yarmouth; day trips to Brampton Races, Clacton, Hunstanton and Skegness; half-day tours to Bedford, Huntingdon, Leicester, Northampton County Ground, Whipsnade Zoo and Wicksteed Park; and evening excursions to Bedford, Corby, Fenny Stratford and Old Warden. During the 1950s a handful of additional destinations was added to the Wollaston and Doddington tours licences.

In the 1949/50 period Fred Abbott built a garage in High Street, Great Doddington on the site of an orchard situated between the Forester's Arms public house and Doctor's Lane. The building was set back from the road, could house three coaches and had a forecourt on which vehicles could be parked.

The year 1949 saw the delivery of two new motors to Fred Abbott's fleet, the first of which was a Maudslay Marathon III similar to TMG 199 but this time with a Whitson thirty-three seat body. It was supplied by Messrs. F E Jones & Son Ltd of Bedford and was registered ERP 393 on 1st March 1949. The second new coach was a Leyland Tiger PS1/1 which was also fitted with a thirty-three seat Whitson body. These two machines replaced Tiger CAL 829 which passed to Billy Johnson of Rushden and DBD 907, the Bedford OB.

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-AB2

Page 9

ABBOTT, Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON



For a complete picture of ERP 393 we have to go to R D Walker's "Alma Coaches" of Wellingborough who operated this Whitson bodied Maudslay Marathon III in later life.



This illustration gives a nearside view of Fred Abbott's 1949 Leyland Tiger equipped with thirty-three seat Whitson body and registered FNV 256.

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-AB2

Page 10

ABBOTT. Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON



In this shot Fred Abbott's entire 1950 fleet can be seen, depicting from left to right: TMG 199 - Maudslay Marathon/Blackmore; ERP 393 - Maudslay Marathon/Whitson and FNV 256 - Leyland Tiger/Whitson.

Fred Abbott bought no more coaches until January 1952 when a former Skill's A.E.C. Regal III machine registered LTO 51 was acquired with a thirty-five seat Duple half-cab body. This was followed a year later in January 1953 by a new fully-fronted Whitson bodied A.E.C. Regal III which took the registration HRP 100.



In this picture is shown the A.E.C. Regal registered LTO 51 and carrying a Duple body. It had been new to Skill's of Nottingham in March 1950 and Fred Abbott ran it from January 1952 until March 1956 when it passed to Leslie Adams of Rothwell trading as "Buckby's Coaches" and in whose ownership it is here seen.

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-AB2

Page 11

ABBOTT. Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON



The nearside of the fully-fronted Whitson bodied A.E.C. Regal III registered HRP 100 can be observed in this illustration.



*An offside view of HRP 100 is also available and was photographed in Guildhall Road, Northampton having presumably brought a party to the Repertory Theatre in this thoroughfare.
(Photo courtesy Terry Richardson).*

ABBOTT. Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON

The acquisition of LTO 51 and HRP 100 was balanced by the withdrawal of the two Maudslays TMG 199 and ERP 393. During 1956 the services of Leyland Tiger FNV 256 and A.E.C. Regal LTO 51 were dispensed with and replaced firstly by a handsome A.E.C. Reliance registered NBD 959, carrying a forty-one seat Duple Britannia body and secondly by a second-hand Leyland Tiger - PHA 295 - in February 1957. This latter vehicle was only two years younger than FNV 256 but it carried a thirty-seven seat Harrington body and it had started life with the Gliderway fleet.



A nearside view of the elegant A.E.C. Reliance registered NBD 959 looking immaculate in its livery of grey and maroon with a yellow flash.



The offside of the Duple Britannia bodied NBD 959 photographed at the Doddington depot of Fred Abbott.

ABBOTT.Frederick - Gt.DODDINGTON



The former Gliderway's PHA 295 is evident in this photograph. It is nice to see a Harrington coach body on a Leyland Tiger PS2/3 chassis.

Fred Abbott did not enjoy the best of health and in 1953 he was laid up for a year suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. During this period Johnson's assisted Fred in coping with the running of the business and provided drivers and other help as and when required. In view of the excellent business relationships that had been built up over many years with Johnson's Motors of Rushden, Fred, together with Billy Johnson and his partner Reg Welsford, decided to amalgamate their operations. Thus on 14th May 1959 two limited companies were incorporated to effect the above arrangements and the subsequent history of these two companies will be revealed in papers NN-AB2A and NN-JO1A.

I am indebted to Fred, Ted, Albert and David Abbott for their help in the preparation of this paper.

STOCK NO.	REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			PREVIOUS OWNER	INITIAL DISPOSAL	NOTES
		MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE & SEATS	NUMBER	NEW	S/H	W/D			
	?	Ford	T	?	?	B14F	—	?	1/28	1/28	T Hawkins, Gt.Doddington	Grose Ltd, Northampton	
	?	Chevrolet	?	?	Grose	B14F	—	?	-/28	11/29	?	Grose Ltd, Northampton	
	RP 8163	G.M.C.	T30	3743	Grose	B20F	—	11/29	—	12/37	Supp Grose Ltd., Northampton	?	1
	NV 3408	Bedford	WLB	109340	Willmotts	C20F		1/34	—	c-/38	—		2
	UW 9813	Gilford	CP6	10975	Duple	C20F	1719	11/29	c-/35	3/38	G Castle, Stotfold	J Bailey, Fangfoss	
	NV 6984	Bedford	WTB	110304	Willmotts	C26F		4/36	—	by 2/39	—	A W Chapman, Holm-bury St.Mary	
	ABD 225	Bedford	WTB	111819	Duple	C26F	37161	12/37	—	-/39	Supp W S Yeates, Loughborough	Allday, Horton	3
	?	Bedford	WTB	?	Duple	C26F		?	c-/38	-/39	?	Allday, Horton	
	EN 7548	Leyland	Cheetah LZ2A	16690	Plaxton D	C32F		3/38	-/39	-/40	Allday, Horton/ Spencer's Tours, Bury	War Department/ Spencer's Tours Ltd	4
	CAL 829	Leyland	Tiger TS7	9578	Duple	C32F	6445	5/36	by 3/46	3/49	War Department/ Robin Hood, Nottm.	Johnson's Motors, Rushden	
	ANV 360	Bedford	WTB	112369	Duple	C26F	3811	7/38	by 3/46	c1/47	York Bros., Northampton	Johnson's Motors, Rushden	
	DBD 907	Bedford	OB	43060	Duple Vista	C29F	43283	1/47	—	6/49	Supp W S Yeates, Loughborough	W Tetley, Leeds	
	TMG 199	Maudslay	Marathon III	70214	Blackmore	C33F		6/48	11/48	c1/52		G A Court, Chapel End	5
	ERP 393	Maudslay	Marathon III	70371	Whitson	C33F		3/49	—	4/54	Supp Jones & Son, Bedford	Seamarks (Motors) Ltd, Rushden	
	FNV 256	Leyland	Tiger PS1/1	495743	Whitson	C33F		12/49	—	6/56	—	Johnson's Motors Rushden	
	LTO 51	A.E.C.	Regal III	9621E702	Duple	C35F	45461	3/50	1/52	3/56	Skill, Nottingham	L J Adams, Rothwell	
	HRP 100	A.E.C.	Regal III	9621E1479	Whitson	FC35F		1/53	—	5/59	—	Abbott's Coaches Ltd, Rushden	
	NBD 959	A.E.C.	Reliance	MU3RV878	Duple Britannia	C41F	1068/3	6/56	—	5/59	—	Abbott's Coaches Ltd, Rushden	
	PHA 295	Leyland	Tiger PS2/3	500387	Harrington	C37F	851	2/51	2/57	5/59	Gliderways, Smethwick.	Abbott's Coaches Ltd, Rushden	

- NOTES:**
- 1 - RP 8163 last owned by H Hall, Derby and last licensed 9/39.
 - 2 - NV 3408 last owned by H Dodsworth, Sowerby, Thirsk and last licensed 4/39.
 - 3 - ABD 225 last owned by E C Trott, Crosby, Liverpool 23 as a mobile shop and last licensed 5/63.
 - 4 - EN 7548 commandeered by War Dept. 1940 and not returned to Abbott.
 - 5 - TMG 199 ordered by Wright Bros (London) Ltd, London W7 but not operated. Passed to Abbott 11/48.