

## DIX. Frederick Walter Beech Hill, Grove Street RAUNDS

One of Walter Dix's claims to fame was that he was a champion ice skater whilst another was that he ran buses in the Raunds area from 1919 until 1926. Walter Dix's father - Reuben Dix - was a jobbing builder and carpenter and he must have taught his son the trade as Walter was later to build his own double-deck bus body and possibly one for a single-deck vehicle. Walter was also the Manager of the family owned laundry.

Whether or not Walter Dix had served in the Army during the first World War is not known to the author but it would be no surprise if he had and on demobilisation used his gratuity to purchase his first motor vehicle. In any case this latter event occurred on 29th April 1919 when a machine registered BD 816 was bought by Dix. The manufacturer of the vehicle is unknown but it was painted green with white linings and was primarily a passenger vehicle which could be converted into a lorry. This description in the vehicle licensing records is probably significant as it was contrary to the more usual definition of a vehicle being a lorry, in the first instance, capable of conversion to a passenger carrying conveyance. Immediately after the first World War it was more usual for a lorry to be acquired for the carriage of goods and for its owner to move gradually into the passenger carrying business, first on market days and later on a more regular basis as trade increased and public knowledge of the facilities provided became more widespread. As far as can be ascertained it was always Walter Dix's intention to carry passengers rather than goods.

During the 1919 summer season Walt Dix seems to have been content running BD 816 on excursions and private hires but on 12th December 1919 replaced his bus with a Thornycroft X-type registered BD 3936. Motor Tax records note this vehicle as being painted blue and grey with red linings and red wheels. The licence for BD 816 was cancelled on 20th December and presumably laid up for the winter period at least. The photograph on the next page shows what is thought to have been BD 3936 but in the absence of an original print the registration plate is difficult to read. Whether or not this saloon bus looked as it does in the photograph when first delivered to Dix is uncertain. It is possible that in the early 1920s Walt Dix built the body illustrated himself.

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*What it thought to be Thornycroft BD 3936 stands at Raunds Square in the early 1920s. Note the name of the side reads "F. W. DIX RAUNDS" with a shield or crest in the centre, a device clearly copied from United Counties which company similarly displayed its name with United and Counties separated by the Wellingborough Town Crest.*

The Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Co. Ltd. had, in 1919, got the Raunds - Stanwick - Higham Ferrers - Rushden route well and truly covered as well as points beyond to Wellingborough and Northampton. However, the route from Raunds via Ringstead and Denford to Thrapston and onwards via Cranford to Kettering was not served by the Wellingborough Company and Walter Dix selected this route for his venture into bus operation. It was in September 1920 that Walter Dix first advertised his intention of running a service from Raunds at 10.00am to Kettering via Ringstead, Denford, Thrapston, Islip and Cranford on Friday 10th September. The bus returned from Kettering at 4.00pm

### **F. W. DIX, Raunds,**

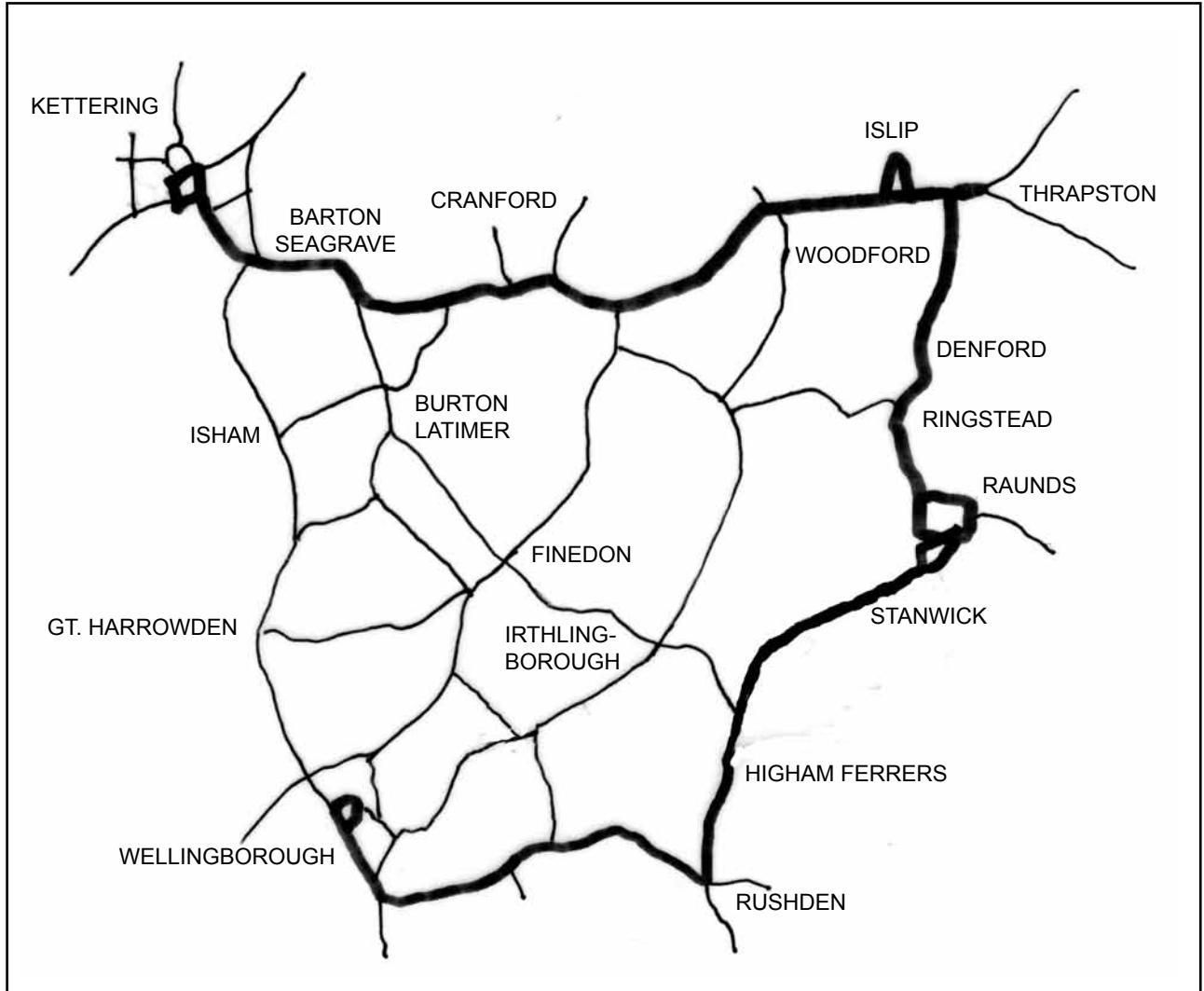
'BUS, CHAR-A-BANC, and REMOVAL  
CONTRACTOR,

Will be running a service from RAUNDS (10 a.m.) to KETTERING, via Ringstead, Denford, Thrapston (10.25), Islip, Woodford Turn (10.45), and Cranford, commencing FRIDAY, SEPT. 10th. Returning from Kettering 4 p.m. See handbills.

PLEASURE PARTIES SPECIALLY  
CATERED FOR.

*A facsimile of Dix's advertisement placed in the Evening Telegraph on 9th September 1920.*

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*Route diagram of Walter Dix's services.*

*Principal route:- Raunds - Ringstead - Denford - Thrapston - Islip -  
Woodford Turn - Cranford - Barton Seagrave - Kettering.*

A couple of months later Dix's advertisement stated his bus would run at the usual times daily between Raunds and Wellingborough via Rushden. This is the only reference seen for such a service and no indication of times are given. In March 1920 Walter Dix had applied to the Wellingborough Urban District Council for a Hackney carriage licence to ply for hire within the town. When considered by the General Purposes Committee on 24th March 1920 the application for one bus to seat 30 inside and 2 outside was granted. It is presumed that as the Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Company was running regularly between Raunds, Rushden and Wellingborough that Dix did not offer his facility for long.

The Thrapston and Kettering route, on which there was no competition, developed well from the single return journey offered in September 1920. By May 1921 the following timetable was in operation.

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### DIX'S 'BUS TIMES

FOR THE  
**Raunds, Thrapston & Kettering Route**  
COMMENCING MAY 14th.  
BANK HOLIDAYS SAME AS SATURDAYS.  
TIME AS USUAL ON FRIDAYS.

Leaves	Saturdays.			Sundays.	
	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Raunds .....	12. 0				4.30
Ringstead ...	12.10				4.40
Denford .....	12.20				4.50
Thrapston ...	12.25	2.30	5. 0	8.30	5. 0
Islip .....	12.30	2.35	5. 5	8.35	5. 5
Woodford ...	12.45	2.45	5.15	8.45	5.20
Cranford .....	12.50	2.55	5.25	8.55	5.30
Ket'ring (arr.)	1.15	3.15	5.45	9.15	5.45
Leaves					
Kettering .....	1.30	3.30	7. 0	9.15	9.15
Cranford .....	1.45	3.45	7.15	9.30	9.30
Woodford .....	1.55	3.55	7.25	9.40	9.40
Islip .....	2. 5	4. 5	7.35	9.50	9.50
Thrapston .....	2.10	4.15	7.40	9.55	9.55
Denford.....				10. 5	10. 5
Ringstead.....				10.10	10.10
Raunds (arr.)				10.25	10.25

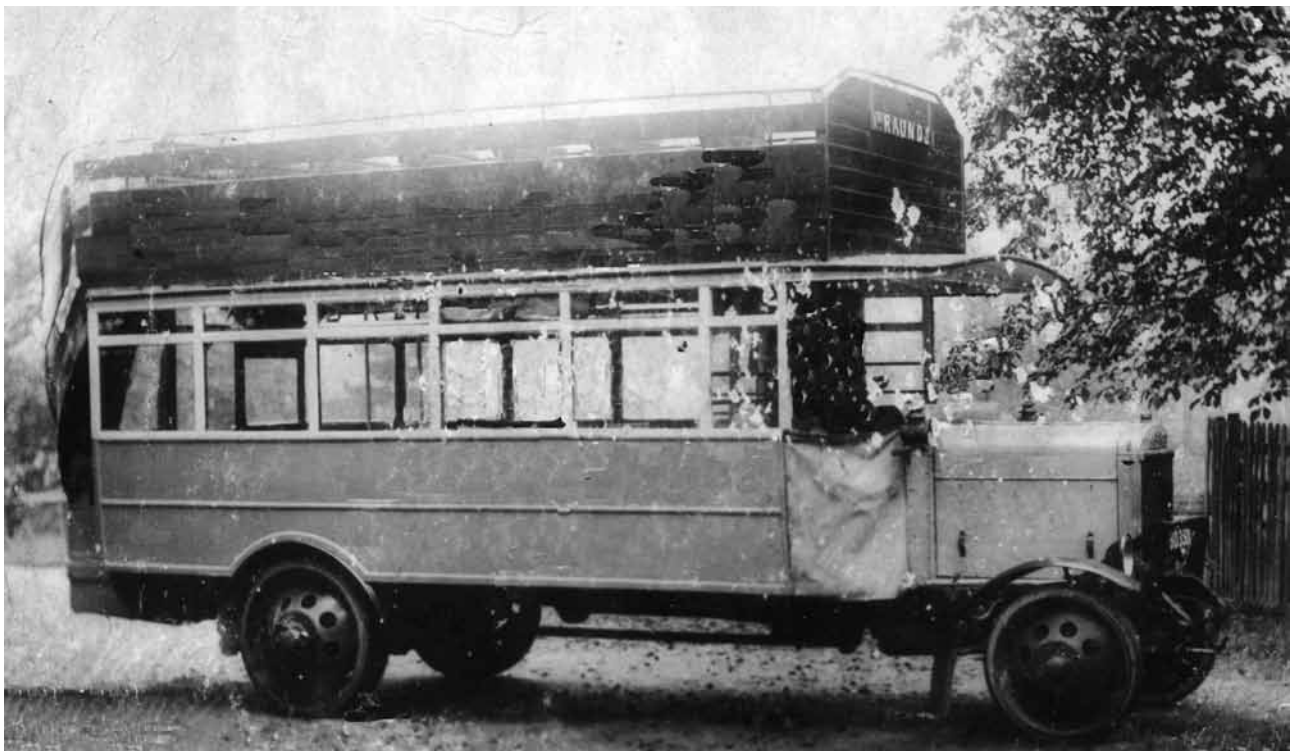
*Dix's timetable dated 14th May 1921.*

Evidently the business prospered as a third vehicle was taken into stock on 19th March 1920. This was essentially a Daimler Y-type four-ton lorry chassis equipped with a 35hp engine and mounted with a 32-seat saloon bus body. At the time of purchase it was described as being grey with red windows but was later repainted blue with red linings. The registration number of this Daimler was BD 4250 and no doubt this was the vehicle authorised by Wellingborough U.D.C. as mentioned on the previous page.

In April 1920 Dix was not so successful when he applied to Northampton Borough Council to ply for hire with a motor omnibus between Wellingborough, Northampton and Kettering, as this request was not acceded to when the Watch Committee considered the matter on 16th April 1920. Reasons for the decision are not known but no doubt consideration of the Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Company's frequent services from Northampton to both Wellingborough and Kettering, together with Northampton Corporation's own tram routes within the Borough of Northampton played their part in the decision making.

### DIX. Frederick Walter, RAUNDS

In 1921 Walter Dix bought a Thornycroft chassis and personally set about the task of building a double-deck bus body with the help of Frederick William Steward, who was one of Dix's drivers, and others. Photographs show that Dix and his helpers made a fine job of their body-building and the resulting bus accommodated forty-eight seated passengers which was quite a high capacity for the time. The completed bus was registered BD 3501 on 28th July 1921 and replaced BD 816 with which Dix had started his business two years earlier. The success of this venture may have led Walter Dix to build a replacement body for BD 3936 but this is by no means certain.



*Thornycroft BD 3501 showing the neat lines of the double-deck bus body built by Walter Dix with the assistance of others. The construction of such a bus body must have been quite a feat for a small independent operator.*

Walter Dix garaged his buses at his home address in Grove Road, Raunds where access to old stable buildings was through an archway at the front of the site. It seems that a miscalculation occurred when BD 3501 was built as its new body would not go under the archway and instead, a perimeter hedge had to be grubbed up to get the bus onto the road! Walter also converted a couple of cottages in adjoining Brook Street to act as a garage but the two sites described above may have been one of the same.

By the autumn of 1921 Walter Dix was operating three buses and this fleet size remained constant until 30th May 1924 when a fourth vehicle was acquired. Yet another Thornycroft chassis was selected which became registered BD 9519. This vehicle seems to have been painted in red rather than the blue of Dix's normal livery, at least at the time of acquisition if not for the full period for which it was operated.

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*Another view of Dix's Thornycroft BD 3501 which regularly operated between Raunds and Kettering between 1921 and 1926.*

### DIX. Frederick Walter, RAUNDS

Incidentally, Walter Dix's wife acted as one of the firm's conductresses throughout the period the services were operated.

By 1926 the fleet was getting weary and competition on the Thrapston to Kettering route with Bagshaw of Kettering, in particular, and other local operators such as Gates of Islip and Mayton Motorways of Thrapston meant that life on the buses was less comfortable. Clearly Walter Dix had to decide whether to spend money on updating his fleet or disposing of his business to Bagshaw of Kettering in about July 1926. At the time Walter held British and World records for speed skating and represented his Country in the 1924 and 1928 Olympic Games. His busy sporting activities must have played a part in his decision to sell the bus business. Walter Dix later left the area and went to run the Richmond Ice Rink in London and thus one less individualistic independent bus operator ran on the roads of Northamptonshire.

## F. W. DIX'S 'BUS TIME TABLE,

KETTERING, THRAPSTON, AND RAUNDS ROUTE.

Alterations Commencing April 1st, 1922.

TUESDAYS.				Fridays		SATURDAYS.				SUNDAYS.	
Leave	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	
Raunds .....	10. 0	1. 0	3.30	10. 0	10. 0	1.30	4.30	8. 0	1.30	4.30	
Ringstead .....	10.10	1.10	3.40	10.10	10.10	1.40	4.40	8.10	1.40	4.40	
Denford .....	10.20	1.20	3.50	10.20	10.20	1.50	4.50	8.20	1.50	4.50	
Thrapston .....	10.25	To	4. 0	10.25	10.25	1.55	5. 0	8.25	1.55	5. 0	
Islip .....	10.30	Thrap'n	4. 5	10.30	10.30	2. 0	5. 5	8.30	2. 0	5. 5	
Twywell .....	10.40	only.	4.15	10.40	10.40	2.10	5.15	8.40	2.10	5.15	
Woodford Turn .....	10.45		4.20	10.45	10.45	2.15	5.20	8.45	2.15	5.20	
Cranford .....	10.50		4.35	10.50	10.50	2.25	5.30	9. 5	2.25	5.30	
Kettering (arr.) .....	11.15		4.45	11.15	11.15	2.40	5.45	9.15	2.40	5.45	

TUESDAYS.				Fridays		SATURDAYS.				SUNDAYS.	
Leave	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	
Kettering .....	11.30		6.30	4. 0	11.30	2.45	6.30	9.15	2.45	9.15	
Cranford .....	11.45		6.45	4.15	11.45	3. 0	6.45	9.30	3. 0	9.30	
Woodford Turn .....	11.50		6.50	4.20	11.50	3. 5	6.50	9.40	3. 5	9.40	
Twywell .....	11.55		7. 0	4.30	12. 0	3.10	7. 0	9.45	3.10	9.45	
Islip .....	12. 5		7. 5	4.35	12. 5	3.20	7. 5	9.50	3.20	9.55	
Thrapston .....	12.10	3. 0	7.10	4.40	12.10	3.25	7.10	9.55	3.25	10. 0	
Denford .....	12.20	3.10	7.20	4.50	12.20	3.35	7.20	10. 5	3.35	10.10	
Ringstead .....	12.30	3.20	7.30	5. 0	12.30	3.45	7.30	10.10	3.45	10.20	
Raunds (arr.) ...	12.45	3.30	7.45	5.15	12.45	4. 0	7.45	10.25	4. 0	10.30	

On Easter Monday and Tuesday and each day during Whit-Week and August Bank Holiday Week, times will be as on Saturdays.

## F. W. DIX,

MOTOR HAULAGE CONTRACTOR AND CHARABANC PROPRIETOR,

**GROVE STREET, RAUNDS.**

FURNITURE REMOVED AND PLEASURE PARTIES CATERED FOR.

F. W. DIX'S 'BUSES ARE GREY.

*A facsimile of F W Dix's timetable commencing 1st April 1922  
by which time Twywell had been added to the route.*

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### Schedule of Rolling Stock

Registr'n Number	Chassis			Body		Dates		Notes
	Make	Type	Number	Make	Type & Seats	New	W/D	
BD816	?	?	?	?	B---	29-4-19	7/21?	
BD3936	Thornycroft	X (40hp)	7979	?	B---	12-12-19	7/26	1
BD4250	Daimler	Y (35hp)	5447	?	B32-	19-3-20	7/26	2
BD3501	Thornycroft	?	6322	Dix	O48R	28-7-21	7/26	3
BD9519	Thornycroft	?	5444	?	?	30-5-24	7/26	4

#### Notes

- 1 - Believed to have passed to Bagshaw, Kettering. Last licensed 7/33.
- 2 - Believed to have passed to Bagshaw, Kettering. Last licensed 7/29.
- 3 - Passed to Bagshaw, Kettering. Last licensed 7/29.
- 4 - Passed to Bagshaw, Kettering. Last licensed 6/31.

General - Although all the above vehicles were registered "new" to Walter Dix, the chassis would almost certainly have generally been ex-War Department stock.