

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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DILKS Thomas Gerald

17 Lower Street, DESBOROUGH

Gerald Dilks was born on 18th December 1907 at Naseby, spending much of his early life in Kelmars, but later moving to the Birmingham area. He was engaged for a number of years buying and selling motor vehicles and driving lorries and coaches. After joining the Forces in September 1939, Gerry Dilks was invalided out in June 1940 and proceeded to supply lorries in connection with the construction of both Harrington and Grafton Underwood aerodromes. At the end of the War Gerry Dilks was living at 17 Lower Street, Desborough and when the requirement for the supply of lorries ran out, he turned his attention to the operation of coaches. Late in 1945 he bought a second-hand A.E.C. Regal registered DY 7416 from Murphy Bros. of Leicester who were, at that time, well established dealers. This coach carried 32-seat Harrington coachwork, which in all probability was not DY 7416's original body, and Gerry Dilks immediately commenced accepting private hire bookings for this coach, his business taking off from this point.



Three of Gerry Dilks' first four coaches from right to left comprised the A.E.C. Regal with Harrington bodywork registered DY 7416, Bedford OB/Hasker DBD 500 and Bedford WTB/Thurgood BJU 734.

Bygone Buses of Northamptonshire is compiled by R M Warwick, "Forestyn" 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.

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DILKS T. G. - DESBOROUGH

In October 1947 Mr Dilks managed to buy a brand new Bedford OB with the first post-war coach body built by Messrs. Hasker of Northampton. This coach was supplied by Messrs. Stockwood Motors of Corby and was registered DBD 500. The livery adopted by Gerry Dilks for his fleet was royal blue with cream reliefs.



Gerry Dilks proudly stands on the step of his new Bedford OB to shake hands with Alwyn Hasker, the owner of the Northampton firm that built the body for DBD 500.



A rear view of the Hasker bodied Bedford OB - DBD 500 - photographed when new in October 1947.

DILKS T. G. - DESBOROUGH

The demand for private hire, particularly to the east coast resorts, increased in leaps and bounds after the war and this led Gerry Dilks to acquire second-hand coaches in 1947 and 1948. These were a Dennis Ace registered JU 4374 with Willowbrook body and BJU 734, a Bedford WTB with Thurgood body. At this point, Gerry Dilks constructed a garage on land he had previously purchased at 4 Harborough Road, Desborough. He also built a bungalow for his family on the same site and occupied the premises from Christmas 1948.

The next new coach came in April 1949 when a Seddon chassis was chosen on which was mounted a body built by Messrs. A E Smith & Son of Kettering. This attractive full-fronted coach, registered ERP 800, can be seen in the photographs below and overleaf. The last coach to be bought new for a number of years was then taken into stock in August 1950. Registered FRP 900 this machine was a Dennis Lancet III with full-fronted Strachan coachwork seating thirty-seven passengers. For some reason this vehicle was consistently difficult to start and, despite much attention from its manufacturers, nothing could ever be done to overcome the reluctance of its engine to spring into life when required to do so. Dennis FRP 900 replaced Bedford WTB – BJU 734 which was taken in part exchange by the dealer supplying the new vehicle.

In addition to private hire work, Gerry Dilks operated a number of contracts. Probably the most important one was a contract gained in about 1951 from Messrs. Rigid Containers Ltd to convey workers from the Corby area to their factory at Desborough. This particular contract was held by Mr Dilks for even longer than he was running coaches! Also in the



Gerry Dilks initially favoured local coachbuilder's products and, when he purchased a Seddon in 1949, he chose A E Smith & Son of Kettering to build the body for ERP 800.

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To effect an attractive design for the rear end of a coach often proved a difficulty for coach-builders. With ERP 800 Smith's perhaps didn't quite get the balance right but nevertheless produced an interesting design.



Strachan built an extremely attractive fully-fronted body design for FRP 900, a 1950 Dennis Lancet III, which sadly did not quite live up to the expectations Gerry Dilks had for it. (Photo Courtesy R H G Simpson)

DILKS T. G. - DESBOROUGH

early 1950s Gerry Dilks regularly supplied a coach on hire to N&S Coaches of Kibworth to work a multi-vehicle contract conveying construction workers from Derby to Ruddington where a Ministry of Defence establishment was being built. The coach in question would leave Desborough at 4am on Monday mornings for Derby and the driver would stay the week and return on Friday evenings. In later years Gerry Dilks held a contract to convey workers from the Kettering, Rothwell and Desborough areas to the Gartree Prison site, near Market Harborough, when this institution was under construction.

Schools contracts operated over the years involved the conveyance of pupils from Welford, Husbands Bosworth and Theddingworth to the school at a Polish Camp that had been established in the Lubenham area, whilst another contract was for the movement of pupils from Kelmarsh, Haselbech and Naseby to Guilsborough School.

Returning to the subject of vehicles, Mr Dilks bought a second-hand Seddon with Whitson thirty-one seat coachwork from Rushden operator Stan Lord, in April 1952, and this was registered FBD 710. In the following year the coaching operations of Stockwood Motors Ltd of Corby were acquired together with this firm's Bedford OB registered EBD 856 and Commer Avenger registered FBD 2. Stockwood Motors were private hire operators who, amongst other things, conveyed Corby Town Football Club to away matches. After acquiring Stockwood Motors' coaches in 1953, Gerry Dilks provided the Football Club with its transport for away matches for a number of years.



FBD 710 was a Whitson bodied Seddon MkIV bought secondhand from Stan Lord of Rushden and used for just a couple of years by Gerry Dilks.

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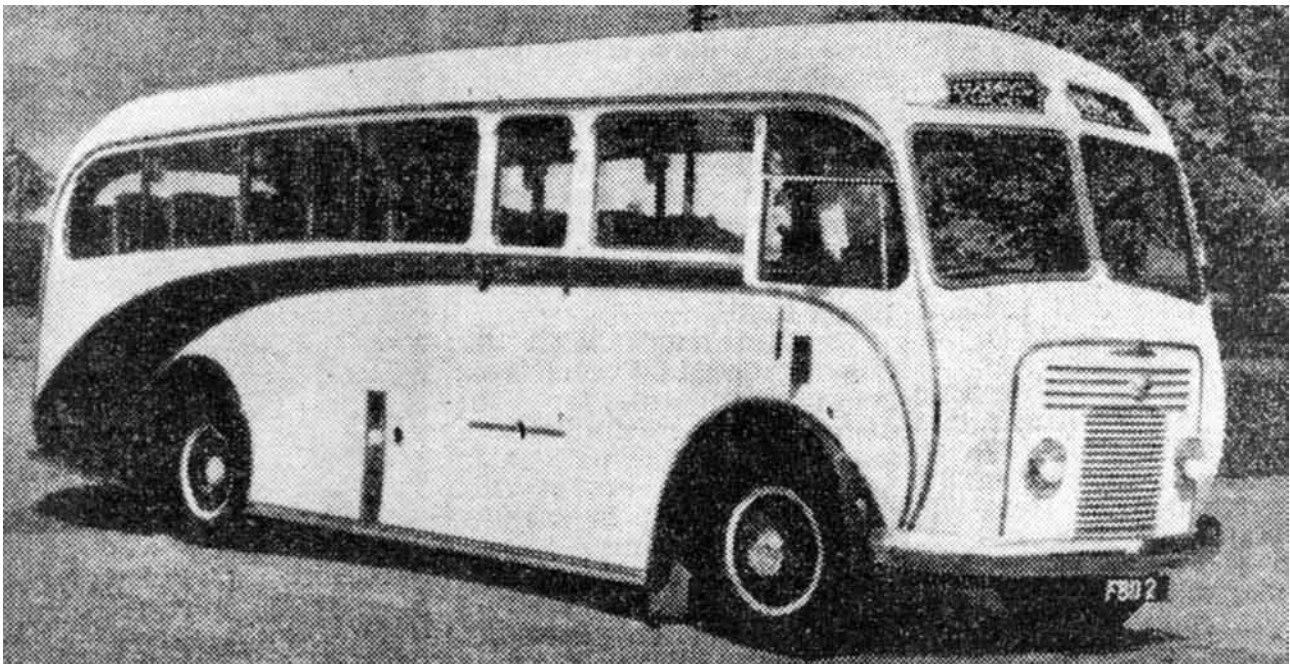
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One of two coaches taken over from Stockwood Motors of Corby was this Hasker bodied Bedford OB registered EBD 856 and photographed at the White Hart, Corby when new. It was virtually identical to DBD 500 which Gerry Dilks bought new 1947.



A rather poor illustration of the second vehicle taken over by Gerry Dilks from Stockwood Motors. It was registered FBD 2 and was a Commer Avenger with Plaxton 32-seat coachwork new in 1949.

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Further second-hand coaches were bought during the 1950s including KBD 516, a Bedford SGB, and 970 FNU which was a Duple bodied Commer Avenger. Both of these vehicles were bought from Johnson's Motors of Rushden. Another vehicle acquired was JWU 229, which was an A.E.C. Regal with Burlingham bodywork.



Commer Avenger IV - 970 FNU - with Duple Vega body was acquired by Gerry Dilks from Johnson's Motors of Rushden, in whose fleet it was painted cream and orange. Mr Dilks retained the cream livery but added red reliefs. (Photo Courtesy R H G Simpson)



JWU 229 comprised an A.E.C. Regal III chassis with a full-fronted Burlingham body seating thirty-three passengers. Gerry Dilks ran it for about two-and-a-half years. (Photo courtesy D M Bailey)

DILKS T. G. - DESBOROUGH

June 1959 saw the delivery of Gerry Dilks first new coach for nine years when TAY 752 entered service in an attractive cream and red livery which was henceforth adopted as the standard. This coach was a Ford 570E with Duple Vega 41-seat coachwork and it was retained for five years. Around about 1961 a Commer Commando 29-seat vehicle with Harrington bodywork was acquired for contract work but as this vehicle dated from 1948 it remained in service for about a year only. It was possibly used for the conveyance of construction workers. A second front-line coach was purchased in 1962 and once again the choice of chassis was Ford. Handsome Duple Yeoman bodywork was mounted on the chassis and the resulting coach was given the registration number 811 ARP.

On Summer Saturdays two of Mr Dilks coaches were invariably hired to United Counties for duplication on that Company's east-coast express services to Skegness, Yarmouth, Lowestoft or Clacton, or for Associated Motorways journeys to Cheltenham. Almost without exception Mr Dilks' son Donald drove 811 ARP and the firm's leading driver Theodore Austin drove TAY 752.

July 1964 saw the delivery of the first heavyweight chassis for the fleet for a number of years, when A.E.C. Reliance CDU 391B was purchased with Duple Northern Commander coachwork seating 41 passengers. This splendid vehicle replaced TAY 752 and by this time the fleet was down to two vehicles. The final vehicle to enter the fleet was 386 FJF, a Bedford SB5 with Duple Bella Vega 41-seat coachwork that had been new in April 1963 and prior to passing to Mr Dilks had been operated by Smith of Long Itchington. This vehicle replaced the Ford, 811 ARP.

It was generally expected that Mr Gerry Dilks' son, Donald, would take over the coach business from his father but this was not to be the case. Donald left the business in 1966 and the Bedford – 386 FJF – was sold to Coopers of Rothwell who used the vehicle to operate the contract which Mr Dilks had formerly run with the coach prior to its sale. The contract itself, which operated from Corby to Desborough, to convey workers of the Rigid Containers factory, remained with Mr Dilks who thereafter operated only one coach – CDU 391B – which was driven by Theo Austin until he too left in 1968. At this point CDU 391B passed to LJ Adams of Rothwell whilst Mr Dilks retained the Rigid Containers contract on which it had worked and Adams operated it on hire. This situation lasted for a year or two until the contracts expired.

Coach operation was only part of Gerry Dilks business as for many years he had traded in second-hand motor car sales and had built a showroom and petrol filling station on the Harborough Road site. After ceasing to run coaches Mr Dilks continued with the remainder of his business until he retired.

Thanks are due to Gerry Dilks who was kindly willing to discuss his experiences in the transport business.

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STOCK NO.	REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			PREVIOUS OWNER	INITIAL DISPOSAL	NOTES
		MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE & SEATS	NUMBER	NEW	S/H	W/D			
DY 7416	A.E.C.	Regal I	6621538	Harrington	C32F		4/33	-/45	By-/50	Murphy Bros. Leicester /Mountain Transpt, Chelsea J Hannington, Kettering	Cooper, Rothwell	1	
JU 4374	Dennis	Ace	200159	Willowbrook	C20F	2655	6/34	-/47	By-/54		S Lord, Rushden		
DBD 500	Bedford	OB	36345	Hasker	C29F	-	10/47	-	?	Stockwood Motors, Corby			
BJU 734	Bedford	WTB	9230	Thurgood	C26F	706	3/39	3/48	8/50		/Ford & Weston, Derby H Partridge, Coventry	2	
ERP 800	Seddon	Mk IV	2944	Smith	FC29F	-	4/49	-	-/53	/Smeeton, M.Harborough D Weir, Leicester	/Evans, Birmingham Pugh, Kettering		
FRP 900	Dennis	Lancet III	884J3A	Strachan	FC37F		8/50	-	By-/54	H Partridge, Coventry			
FBD 710	Seddon	Mk IV	3564	Whitson	C31F		9/49	4/52	By7/54	S Lord, Rushden	/Cash, Urmston		
EBD 856	Bedford	OB	44129	Hasker	C29F	-	6/48	-/53	c-/55	Stockwood Motors, Corby	/Cockroft, Edenthorpe Osborne, Irthlingborough		
FBD 2	Commer	Avenger I	23A0004	Plaxton Q2	C32F	641	5/49	-/53	c-/55	Stockwood Motors, Corby	Dunkirk Motors, Desboro'		
KBD 516	Bedford	SBG	26691	Duple Vega	C36F		3/54	5/55	11/58	Johnson, Rushden	L J Adams, Rothwell		
JWU 229	A.E.C.	Regal III	9621A996	Burlingham	FC33F		-/50	3/57	c10/59				
970 FNU	Commer	Avenger IV	94A0115	Duple Vega	C41F	1091/1	2/58	-/59	c4/62	/Anderton, Keighley Johnson, Rushden	/Young, Hornchurch		
TAY 752	Ford	570E	510E22461	Duple Vega	C41F	1112/22	6/59	-	4/64	H Partridge, Coventry	/Bateman, Shaw L J Adams, Rothwell		
KAU 922	Commer	Commando		Harrington	C29F		2/48	c-/61	c-/62		Stewarts & Lloyds, Corby		
811 ARP	Ford	570E	510E61886	Duple Yeoman	C41F		2/62	-	5/65				
CDU 391B	A.E.C.	Reliance 470	2MU3RA5459	Duple N. Commander	C41F	1107/17	7/64	-	4/68	H Partridge, Coventry	/Park, Greys L J Adams, Rothwell		
386 FJF	Bedford	SB5	91365	Duple Bella Vega	C41F	1159/164	4/63	5/65	10/66	/Smith, Long Itchington	Cooper, Rothwell		

Notes: 1 - The Harrington body carried on this vehicle by -/45 is unlikely to have been its original.

2 - Sold in part exchange for FRP900.