

# Bygone Buses

of  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-WH5

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## WHITLOCK. Frederick Brackley Rd, & later Watling St TOWCESTER

Frederick Whitlock of Towcester is said to have started business in 1919 operating a Ford T van in which he carried Royal Mail between his home town and Northampton at 2.00am each morning, returning an hour or so later. The identity of his first vehicle has not been traced but is likely to have been a second-hand acquisition. However, it is known that on 21st July 1922 Frederick Whitlock purchased a new Ford T van which was also fitted with forms on which passengers could be seated. This machine was registered BD 6857 and Whitlock was residing in Brackley Road, Towcester at this time. It is believed that BD 6857 replaced the original Ford T van.

Whilst purchasing the above vehicle Frederick Whitlock concurrently made application to the Watch Committee of Northampton Borough Council for permission to ply for hire within the town. A Hackney Carriage licence was issued for the period 20th June 1922 to 25th March 1923 for a motor bus and it is understood that a stand was allocated at St. John's Street. Accordingly Frederick Whitlock commenced a Greens Norton - Towcester - Blisworth - Milton - Northampton service at this time, almost certainly on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays only.

Evidently the business was successful and no doubt the Royal Mail contract underpinned the financial side of Whitlock's business by providing regular income. Two-and-a-half years after buying BD 6857 Frederick Whitlock purchased a Ford T fourteen-seater bus which became registered RP 363 on 14th January 1925 and it is likely that "BD" was traded in part exchange.

At an unknown date in the mid-1920s Frederick Whitlock commenced a Thursday only Towcester to Banbury service and he apparently also operated a bus to serve Towcester Grammar School.

From around 1925 Whitlock is known to have run two buses at a time when an unidentified Maxwell and a Vulcan saloon bus registered NH 2240 were drafted into the fleet. Both would have been second-hand machines and both were painted red and black whilst Whitlock's previous Fords had all worn a blue and cream livery. Frederick Whitlock's

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.

#### WHITLOCK. Frederick - TOWCESTER

next new bus was a REO Sprinter supplied by Messrs Allchin & Son of Northampton on 13th May 1927, registered RP 4375. This vehicle was painted yellow and black but its seating capacity and the manufacturer of its body are not apparent. Whitlock's final addition to his fleet was another REO Sprinter supplied new by Messrs Allchin & Son of Northampton as RP 5757 on 7th April 1928. This bus seated twenty passengers and was again painted yellow and black.

Frederick Whitlock is reputed to have operated a service from Towcester via A5 to Golders Green, the purpose of which is not known. Precisely what happened next is also shrouded in mystery. In April 1928 Whitlock's business had the appearance of stability and success but for reasons unknown to the Author, at some time around June 1928, Frederick Whitlock upped sticks, abandoned his business and disappeared from the area. The two REO Sprinters - RP 4375 and RP 5757 - were taken back by Allchins and sold to other operators. RP 4375 went to Litchfield of Carlton, Bedfordshire whilst RP 5757 ended its life with Kingston & Taylor of Fritwell, Oxfordshire.

The principal driver employed for much of the time by Frederick Whitlock was one Walter Lawrence of Wappenham and the popular version of events is that finding his employer had suddenly vanished, Lawrence acquired the Ford T - RP 363 - and continued operating some of Whitlock's services in his own name. However, various relevant dates fail to support this version of events and it seems more likely that a year prior to Whitlock's disappearance, the Ford T was sold to Lawrence who then commenced his own operations at this earlier date. Walter Lawrence's activities are considered in paper NN-LA9.

An interesting story is told of another of Fred Whitlock's drivers, named Norman Ayres, who whilst using the handle to start one of the buses was injured when the starting handle kicked back, catching his face and literally cutting a hole in his cheek. It seems that Norman Ayres refused to go to hospital and instead got his brother to stitch the hole with needle and thread. They're tough, mighty tough in the west (of Northants)!!

**WHITLOCK. Frederick - TOWCESTER**

**Rolling Stock:**

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	Body No.	Dates			Former Owner	Disposal	Notes
							New	S/H	W/D			
?	Ford	T	?	?	Van	—	?	—	7/22?	—	?	
BD 6857	Ford	T	5825802	?	Van/ Bus	—	7/22	—	1/25?	—		1
RP 363	Ford	T	10630997	?	B14	—	1/25	—	c6/28	—	W R Lawrence, Wappenham	
?	Maxwell	?	?	?	B	—	?	c-/25	c5/27	?	?	
NH 2240	Vulcan	?	?	?	B	—	?	c-/26	2/28	?	No further owner	
RP 4375	REO	Sprinter	145508	?	B	—	5/27	—	c6/28	—	Allchin & Son, Northampton (dlr)	2
RP 5757	REO	Sprinter	FAX 5720	?	B20	—	4/28	—	c6/28	—	Allchin & Son, Northampton (dlr)	3

**NOTES:-** 1 - BD 6857 last owned by A Reynolds, Padbury and last licensed as a goods vehicle 3/31.

2 - RP 4375 last owned by C Litchfield, Carlton and last licensed 9/32.

3 - RP 5757 last owned by W M Kingston & S W Taylor (Fritwell Bus Service), Fritwell and last licenced 12/32.