

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-PR3
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PROGRESSIVE MOTOR OMNIBUS SERVICES (WELLINGBOROUGH) Ltd. (171512) Church Street, WELLINGBOROUGH

Wellingborough businessmen who had invested money in Shares of the Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Co Ltd had good cause to be delighted with their investments as that Company paid a 12.5% dividend in its first year of operation, followed by three years paying 20%, two years paying 30% and by 1920 paid a massive 50% dividend. Such profitable operation was undoubtedly a significant factor which led to another group of local businessmen setting up bus operations in the Wellingborough area at the end of the first World War.

Progressive Motor Omnibus Services (Wellingborough) Ltd was incorporated on 19th November 1920 but it is believed that prior to this date operations commenced under the title of either "Progressive Motor Omnibus Company" or "Progressive Motor Omnibus Services". The first application received by the Wellingborough Urban District Council's General Purposes Committee was considered on 14th July 1920 when permission for the operation of one bus was given. By 22nd December 1920 permission to operate a 14-seater vehicle had been granted and on 23rd February 1921 grants for one charabanc and five buses were approved.

The Limited Company, when formed, had a nominal capital of £10,000 divided into 10,000 Shares of £1 each and the Subscribers were as follows:

Leslie H Hawkins, 39 Westfield Road, Wellingborough - Boot Manufacturer.
Thomas Henry Higgins, Rockcliffe, Midland Road, Wellingborough -
Builders' Merchant.
David Nicholson, Higham Road, Rushden - Motor Engineer. ***
Walter Edward Smeathers, Globe Inn, Market Street, Wellingborough -
Manager (later Confectioner).
Alfred Thomas Watts, Northhill, North Street, Wellingborough - Photographer.
Arthur Wright Curtis, Archfield, Oxford Street, Wellingborough - Courier.

*** This gentleman was previously involved with the Rushden & Wellingborough Motor Car & Charabanc Company Limited - See paper NN-RU1.

The Company Secretary was H C Horton of Messrs Morgan & George, Solicitors, Church Street, Wellingborough, whose premises were also the Company's registered office.

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.

PROGRESSIVE M O S Ltd., W'borough

The Progressive operations were conducted from the site of the former Dulley's Brewery in Sheep Street, Wellingborough and it is believed that the early routes mirrored the Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Company's circular Wellingborough – Rushden – Higham Ferrers – Irthlingborough – Finedon – Wellingborough route. Progressive made application to Northampton Borough Council Watch Committee in November 1920 for both motor-omnibus and driver and conductor licences but the matter was deferred pending receipt of further particulars of the numbers of buses to be used. The required licences were not granted until 14th February 1921 when two motor omnibuses were sanctioned. Progressive started operating to Northampton in April 1921 but via Doddington and Earls Barton as opposed to Wilby and Earls Barton. Within a month another six motor buses and a charabanc had been authorised by the Watch Committee.

PROGRESSIVE
Motor Omnibus Services,
WELLINGBOROUGH, LTD.

'BUS LEAVES SHEEP STREET GARAGE,
WELLINGBOROUGH, at 7.50 a.m. for

NORTHAMPTON,

Via DODDINGTON and EARLS BARTON.

'BUS LEAVES NORTHAMPTON 9 a.m.
for WELLINGBOROUGH.

'BUS LEAVES NORTHAMPTON 4.45 p.m.
for WELLINGBOROUGH via EARLS
BARTON, Sundays excepted. W27

The Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Company operated its buses between Wellingborough and Northampton via Wilby and Earls Barton and it is interesting to note that Progressive decided to route theirs via Great Doddington instead, as shown in this advertisement that was placed in the Evening Telegraph for 22nd April 1921.

At an unknown date, possibly late in 1920 but more likely early in 1921, the Progressive Company turned its attention to Lincolnshire and established a route between Boston and Spalding.

By 18th February 1921, 3300 Shares had been taken up, with 300 being held by each Shareholder. The Shareholders at this time were the six subscribers listed on the previous page with the addition of:

John Williams, Ranelagh Road, Wellingborough - Butcher.

Arthur Hale Higgins, 30 Finedon Road, Wellingborough - Builders' Merchant.

John Henry York, St. Barnabas Street, Wellingborough - Coach Builder
(of York, Ward & Rowlatt fame).

Albert Edward Ayres, Wellingborough Road, Finedon - Farmer.

Alexander Smith, 54 Midland Road, Wellingborough - Retired Draper.

The Directors at this same date were Messrs A W Curtis, T H Higgins, D Nicholson, A T Watts, J H York and J Williams.

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: PROGRESSIVE M O S Ltd., W'borough :
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On 6th April 1921 the Registered Office of the Company was changed to the Company's Sheep Street premises and on 7th April, at an Extraordinary General Meeting, the Capital of the Company was increased from £10,000 to £30,000 by the creation of 20,000 Ordinary Shares of £1 each ranking *pari passu* with the existing Ordinary Shares. This Resolution was confirmed at another Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company held at the Hind Hotel, Wellingborough on 29th April 1921. It is presumed that additional Capital was required to finance the purchase of rolling stock, in particular for use in Lincolnshire.

Meanwhile, it can only be assumed that the profitability of the Progressive operation in the Wellingborough area was not living up to expectations. It is unlikely that the founders had taken fully into consideration the professionalism of the incumbent operator - the Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Co Ltd. Exactly what happened will probably never be known but it seems likely that the Wellingborough Motor Omnibus Company let it be known that it was proposing to extend its routes to Spalding. This in turn may have led the Progressive Company to propose a working agreement with W.M.O.C. for the purpose of avoiding duplication of services and, more importantly, the profitable working of the routes of the two respective companies.

The outcome of negotiations was the signing of an Agreement dated 28th April 1921 between the two firms whereby the Progressive Company withdrew all its vehicles from the Wellingborough area, which was defined as being within a radius of 40 miles of the Market Square, Wellingborough, which included the town of Spalding. The W.M.O.C., for its part, agreed not to compete on Progressive routes established outside the 40-mile radius. Whilst Progressive could not use Dulleys' Yard for garaging purposes for public passenger vehicles, it retained the option to use the premises for private cars or lorries used for the conveyance of goods.

The Agreement suggests that the Progressive Company was not negotiating from a position of strength as the W.M.O.C. rid itself of a significant competitor whilst giving little ground other than a possible future development in the Lincolnshire area. It can only be assumed that Progressive's financial standing dictated that a concentration of its resources in Lincolnshire, on routes on which it was probably the dominant operator, would be most likely to be in its long term interests, and so it proved.

A Bell Punch 1/11d ticket of Progressive Motor Omnibus Services (Wellingborough) Ltd printed black on green.



PROGRESSIVE M O S Ltd., W'borough

So far nothing has been said about the rolling stock used by the Progressive Company and not a great deal is known. Certainly sixteen former London General Omnibus Company A.E.C. B-type buses were acquired during 1920/1 but most of these would have been purchased after the Wellingborough operations ceased. The Wellingborough fleet probably comprised no more than seven or eight of these B-types, three of which were LN 4821, LE 9236 and LE 9116. In addition a Daimler single-decker was bought in January 1921, registered DU 1170, and the body, if not the chassis, would have been new at this time. In the succeeding two months a 14-seater Ford T and a Daimler Y were purchased and registered BD 5155 and BD 5853 respectively. No further details of the Wellingborough Progressive fleet are known but the livery was blue and white.

The sixteen ex-London General Omnibus Company L.G.O.C./A.E.C. B-types mentioned above were acquired by the Progressive Company but many of them were bought after operations in the Wellingborough area ceased in April 1921.

					New	Acq
B121	LN 4821	LGOC "B"	L.G.O.C.	O18/16RO	c1910	-/20
B483	LC 5013	LGOC "B"				-/21
B527	LE 9082	LGOC "B"	"	O18/16RO	c1911	-/21
B597	LE 9116	LGOC "B"			c1911	-/21
B660	LE 9236	LGOC "B"			c1911	-/20
B709	LE 9240	LGOC. "B"			c1911	-/21
B747	LE 9257	LGOC "B"			c1911	-/21
B1145	LE 9900	LGOC "B"			c1911	-/21
B1166	LE 9935	LGOC "B"	"	O18/16RO	c1911	-/21
B1287	LF 8067	A.E.C. "B"			c1912	-/21
B2135	LF 9375	A.E.C. "B"			c1913	-/21
B2708	LH 8157	A.E.C. "B"			c1914	-/21
B2738	LH 8167	A.E.C. "B"			c1914	-/21
B4871	LH 8360	A.E.C. "B"	"	O16/16RO	5/17	-/21
B4872	LH 8362	A.E.C. "B"	"	O34RO	5/17	-/21
B4873	LH 8363	A.E.C. "B"	"	O34RO	5/17	-/21
	?	?		14	?	by 12/20
	DU 1170	Daimler		B--F	1/21	1/21
	BD 5155	Ford T		B14	11/20	2/21
	BD 5853	Daimler Y		?	3/21	3/21

This really should conclude the story of Progressive Motor Omnibus Services (Wellingborough) Ltd but in reality the cessation of operations in the Company's home town was just the beginning. What happened in the Lincolnshire area is beyond the scope of this paper but a brief account of the structure of the Company would perhaps be useful as it is unlikely to have been recorded elsewhere.

In July 1921 the Progressive Company concluded its deal, started earlier in the year, to purchase the freehold of its operating base at Dulley's Brewery, at a cost of £4,000 from William Dulley & Sons Ltd of Wellingborough. An adjoining premises known as "The Brewery House" was included in the transaction.

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A.E.C. B-type LE 9116 photographed early in 1921 with "Wellingborough" on its destination board.



Daimler – DU 1170 – was photographed at Wellingborough Market Square when new in January 1921.

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During the period 1st April to 20th September 1921 the issued Capital of the Company increased from £3,300 to £13,300 with a corresponding increase in Shareholders from 11 to 40. With the exception of two people, all the subscribers were Northamptonshire residents. The two "outsiders" were John Griffen (farmer) of Empingham and Charles Bertram Harris (traveller) of Spalding and both gentlemen bought 500 Shares.

An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company was held at the Hind Hotel, Wellingborough on 12th January 1922 where a special resolution was passed and in turn confirmed at a later E.G.M. held on 27th January 1921. The Resolution was "That the name of the Company be changed from Progressive Motor Omnibus Services (Wellingborough) Ltd to Progressive Motor Omnibus Services (Boston) Ltd." The Company's Certificate of Name Change was dated 3rd April 1922.

On 4th March 1922 mortgages were taken out to secure a plot of land at Holbeach with cottage, out-offices, stable and factory building at rear and a plot of land on the south side of London Road, Boston containing 3,350 square yards. At both locations Progressive established garages.

Certainly by April 1923 and probably well before this date, Arthur Curtis and John Williams were joint Managing Directors of the Company. The Registered Office was transferred to Crosby, Scunthorpe on 3rd October 1924. By 12th October 1925 some 28,600 of the authorised Shares had been issued to 47 subscribers, 37 of whom were Northants residents, 3 were based in Lincolnshire, 1 in Rutland and 6 in other areas of the Country. The highest number of Shares issued to an individual was 2150, held by John Williams of Wellingborough (Butcher). The Directors of the Company at this time were Messrs A W Curtis, H W Caswell, J Griffin, A H Higgins, T H Higgins, J Lea, D Nicholson, J Williams and J H York. H C Horton was still Secretary.

Not long afterwards W T Underwood Ltd took steps to acquire the Company and in December 1925 Messrs W T Underwood, E B Hutchinson and A A Speak each purchased 200 Shares, which came from Progressive Directors A H Higgins, J H York and A W Curtis respectively. Evidently an offer for the entire Shareholding was made and acceptance recommended to the Shareholders as, on 26th January 1926, W T Underwood Ltd of Central Avenue, Worksop acquired the remaining 28,000 Shares. Naturally, at the same time the previous Directors were replaced by Underwood nominees.

Once under the control of W T Underwood Ltd, a company that was closely associated with United Automobile Services Ltd, the structure of the organisation's businesses in the Lincolnshire area was rationalised. The operations of the Progressive Company, with others, eventually led to the formation of the Lincolnshire Road Car Co Ltd in 1931. Meanwhile, on 3rd November 1927, the Progressive Company, by reason of its liabilities, could not continue in business and the Company was wound up, being dissolved on 21st January 1928.