

WILFORD. Charles
t/a "SILVER STAR"
102 Wellingborough Road,
NORTHAMPTON

To consider the bus and charabanc operations of Charles Wilford it is first necessary to go back a generation to Leslie Wilford who established a furniture shop and removals business operating from 102 Wellingborough Road, Northampton, which comprised a shop and living quarters at the corner of Wilberforce Street. Leslie Wilford had a son named Charles who in due course was taken into the business, which then onwards operated as "L Wilford & Son". The removals side of the firm was carried out using horses and carts until 1921 when a Ford T convertible lorry/bus was purchased and registered NH 3616. It is probable that this vehicle was at first used for furniture removals only, but by 11th June 1923 Charles Wilford had been granted a Hackney Carriage Licence by Northampton Borough Council Watch Committee to operate a fourteen seater motor bus.

By the summer of 1924 Charles Wilford's Hackney Carriage Licence entitled him to operate a coach from Northampton Market Square and the provision of excursions became an increasingly important aspect of the Wilford's business. A second Ford T was acquired, either new or second-hand and this carried an eighteen seater saloon body. At around this time in the mid-1920s Charles Wilford adopted the trading name "SILVER STAR" for his vehicles which were painted pale blue and carried a silver star insignia on each side.

As the 1920s progressed, the Wilford family put more and more effort into running their transport business which gradually assumed greater importance than the original furniture and removals activities. The Spring of 1924 saw the arrival of a 27-8hp Reo coach which was registered NH 5607 and at some stage a Morris charabanc was also operated. In March or April 1927 Charles Wilford bought another Reo coach which took the registration NH 7611. There were undoubtedly other vehicles operated but no further information has been forthcoming.

In the late 1920s or early 1930s Charles Wilford operated a couple of local services to convey the employees of various Northampton shoe factories from their work places, home

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

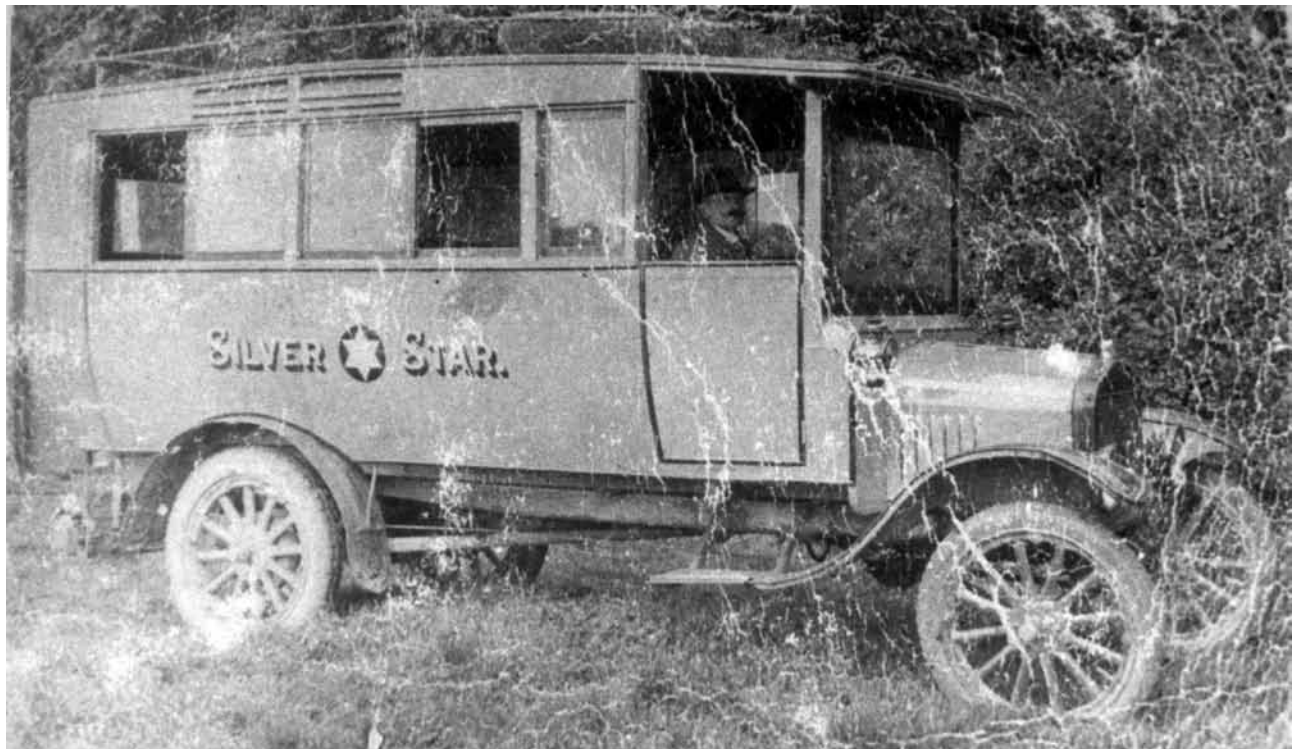
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Charles Wilford's original Ford T - NH 3616 - can be seen advertising "Private Parties & Removals - Any Time & Any Distance".



Fortunately a photograph of Charles Wilford's second Ford T has survived but the registration number of this machine remains a mystery."

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Reo NH7611 may be seen in this photograph taken outside 102 Wellingborough Road, Northampton. Behind it can just be seen a charabanc which it is presumed belonged to Charles Wilford but has not been identified.

to dinner and return again. It was a peculiarity of the Northampton footwear industry that operatives insisted on going home for lunch and what were generally known as "Mid-day Worker's" journeys were operated from many of the major employing factories to various districts of town. The journeys provided by Charles Wilford were from Manfield Road to Campbell Square and from Stimpson Avenue to Far Cotton. Road Service Licences for these services were obtained in 1932 and a three vehicle Excursions and Tours licence was also held by Wilford which permitted operation from Northampton Market Square. In 1933 Charles Wilford applied for, and was granted, an express service licence to operate between Northampton Market Square and Towcester Race Course on Easter Mondays. Many years earlier the Wilfords had operated a horse drawn carriage service from Northampton to Towcester Races.

In 1932 Charles Wilford leased the former coach garage of W E Coombs & Sons of 77 Colwyn Road, Northampton, which firm had itself been taken over by W A Nightingale's "Midland Motorways" concern. The new Colwyn Road premises gave Charles Wilford an excellent operating base from which to develop his business. Unfortunately, no details whatsoever of the vehicles operated by Charles Wilford during the 1930s have come to light. Soon after moving to Colwyn Road, Charles Wilford's sister - Louise - retired and the furniture business was sold by auction and Charles carried on with his coaching activities.

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Charles Wilford married Florence Clarke and the couple later had three daughters and two sons, the sons being named Harold and Sydney Charles, both of whom worked for their father. When it came time for Charles Wilford to retire and hand over the business to Harrold and Sydney, the two brothers decided they would be unable to work harmoniously with each other and, accordingly, Charles Wilford had little option but to sell the business as a going concern to a third party. Early in 1935 the coaching operations were sold to Charles Knight, the Denton coach operator, who later passed the business to his brother Sidney Knight. Sidney continued to develop the business from Colwyn Road, trading as "Knight's Coaches".

Rolling Stock:

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	No.	Dates			Former Owner	Disposal	Notes
							New	S/H	W/D			
NH 3616	Ford	T	?	?	Lorry/ B14	—	c6/21	—	by 3/28	?	?	1
?	Ford	T	?	?	B18F	—	?	by -/24	?	?	?	
NH 5607	REO	?	?	?	C	—	c6/24	—	?	—	No further owner	
?	Morris	?	?	?	Ch	—	?	?	?	?	?	
NH 7611	REO	Speed Wagon F	143401	?	C20F	—	4/27	—	-/35	—	?	2

- Notes:** 1 - NH 3616 last owned by F E Capell, Braunston and last licensed 3/28.
 2 - NH 7611 last owned by J Fisher, Denton and last licensed 12/41.
 3 - There must have been several other vehicles in the fleet but no further details are known.