

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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HEAD. Alec Robert Thomas
t/a Reliance Coaches
The Milton Arms, LUTTON and from 1939
Reliance Garage, LUTTON

Today in the Northamptonshire village of Lutton the name 'Head' is synonymous with transport and, in particular, bus and coach operation. As already detailed in paper NN-HE1, Edwin Head started his motorised carrier's business in 1919 and his father before him was, in 1903, one of the village carriers. In fact the name can be traced back even further, to 1847 when a David Head was the Lutton carrier and his business continued until at least 1874.

It should be no surprise therefore that after Edwin Head ceased trading in 1928/9, his nephew Tom Head should succeed him, albeit not immediately. It may be recalled from paper NN-HE1 that Edwin Head's parents were Joseph and Mary Head and this couple had another son named George Thomas Head. Following the early demise of Joseph, by 1906, Mary duly became the licensee of the Milton Arms, as a means of providing an income for the support of her family. She retained this position until the late 1920s when succeeded by her son George Thomas Head, by this time a farmer, who additionally assumed responsibility for the Milton Arms. It was George Head's eldest son - Alec Robert Thomas Head - born in 1904 who resumed the carrier's and bus business in 1931 and with whom this story is principally related.

Alec Robert Thomas Head was invariably known as Tom and he bought his first bus in January 1931, probably from Messrs York, Ward & Rowlatt of Wellingborough. The vehicle concerned was a 1925 Thornycroft A1 with twenty-seat York, Ward & Rowlatt bodywork that had been new to J C Abram, the Earls Barton bus operator. It is understood that Abram traded in this vehicle registered RP 1870, in 1930 when purchasing a new Commer.

At the time of commencing his carrier's and bus business Tom Head operated from the Milton Arms using the same corrugated iron clad garage building that Edwin Head had procured for his vehicles.

Tom Head commenced operating just prior to the time the Road Traffic Act of 1930 was being implemented which, for the purposes of Road Service Licensing was 1st April 1931. It is reasonable to assume that the services he ran were those for which he applied to the Traffic Commissioners for licences towards the close of 1931. There were two

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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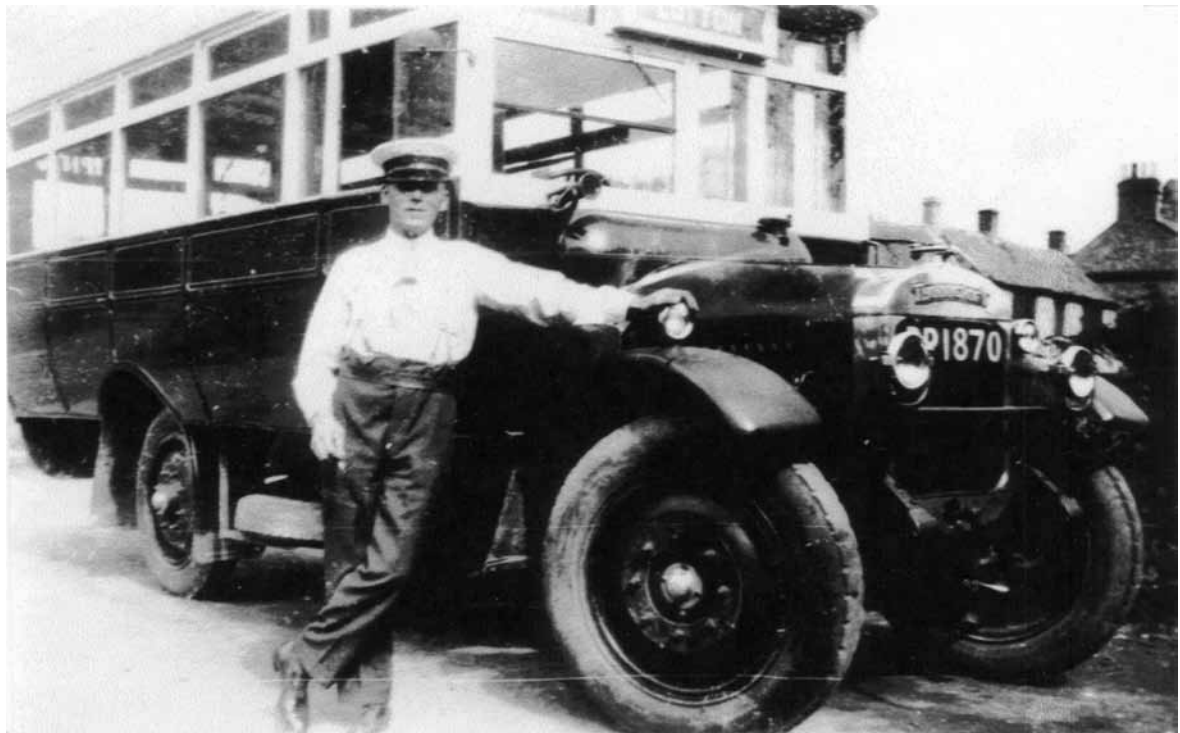
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HEAD.A.R.T. (Reliance Coaches) - LUTTON



A nearside view of York, Ward & Rowlatt bodied Thornycroft RP 1870 with Tom Head standing on the left alongside his father - George Head - with Fred Jackson third from the left. The bus was ready for a trip to Brampton Races at the time this photograph was taken.



This time the offside of Thornycroft RP 1870 in its smart blue and cream livery, again with Tom Head alongside.

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For good measure, the rear of Thornycroft RP 1870 can be shown, with 'A.R.T. Head, Lutton, Northants' on the rear panel and also showing the ladder used to gain access to the roof-mounted luggage carrier. Tom Head is depicted hosing down his bus.

The Milton Arms at Lutton. The only public room in the building was the tap room, the door to which can be seen on the left-hand aspect of the building. The lady on the right was Mary Head. The roadway passing the tap room led to Tom Head's garage.



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Behind Tom Head and his eldest son, Alec, stands the corrugated iron clad shed which served as a garage for the Head's buses. This photograph was taken circa 1937.

stage-carriage services, the first ran on Thursdays from Lutton via Polebrook to Oundle and the second was routed from Hemington via Polebrook, Lutton, Folksworth and Norman Cross to Peterborough on Wednesdays and Saturdays. At the same time Tom Head applied for an Excursions & Tours licence starting from the Milton Arms, Lutton and this was limited to five tours, of which only Skegness and Hunstanton represented significant destinations. Even Hunstanton was dropped from the licence over the winter period 1932/3, so clearly excursions were not a major source of revenue for Tom Head's business.

In November 1932 Tom Head applied to extend his Hemington to Peterborough service to commence from Luddington, a village about one-and-a-quarter miles south of Hemington. This application was duly granted by the Traffic Commissioners when the following timetable operated:-

	Wednesday	Saturday	
Luddington	9.10am	9.20am	-----
Hemington	9.20am	9.30am	4.50pm
Polebrook	9.30am	-----	5.00pm
Lutton	9.45am	9.45am	5.15pm
Peterborough	10.20am	10.20am	6.00pm

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	Wednesday	Saturday	
Peterborough	3.00pm	3.00pm	9.30pm
Lutton	3.35pm	3.35pm	10.05pm
Polebrook	3.50pm	-----	10.25pm
Hemington	4.05pm	4.00pm	10.33pm
Luddington	4.15pm	4.10pm	-----

The fare from Luddington to Peterborough at this time was 1/6d (7½p) single or 2/6d (12½p) return and parcels were always carried on Tom's bus services.

The village of Luddington presumably provided Tom Head with very little revenue as, four months after the extension was introduced, application was made to withdraw it and revert to Hemington as the south-western terminal of the route. However, the Saturday timetable was increased from two to four journeys each way and timing points introduced at Washingley Cross Roads and Folksworth. Henceforth on Saturdays buses left Hemington for Peterborough at 9.30am, 1.45pm, 4.45pm and 7.50pm returning at 12.55pm, 3.15pm, 6.55pm and 10.15pm. However, for the winter period 1933/4 the Saturday service reverted to just two return trips.

Tom Head's original Thornycroft bus registered RP 1870 reached the end of its life in the Autumn of 1933 although it remained licensed until the end of the year. To replace it in September 1933 Tom Head purchased a bus from a London Dealer and this time chose a 1929 Gilford 166SD with Duple twenty-six seat coach body that had been registered MY 386 and previously operated by R Armstrong of Ebchester on Newcastle to London services. This machine, with its increased seating capacity, as well as operating the Wednesday, Thursday and Saturdays stage-carriage services gave Tom Head a suitable coach for excursions and longer private hires. MY 386 was fitted with an oval roof-mounted illuminated fleet name box, having previously carried the "MAJESTIC" label of its original owner. Tom Head at this point soon inserted the name "RELIANCE" and henceforth traded under this name.

Tom Head's Road Service Licences remained unaltered until September 1934 when he applied to the Traffic Commissioners, inter alia, to extend the Saturday Peterborough service to start from Oundle instead of Hemington. Both Eastern Counties and the L.M.S. Railway objected to this move and Tom Head withdrew the application in October 1934. Apart from adding a Kettering excursion and introducing additional picking up points on his Excursions & Tours licence, Tom Head left his operations unchanged until January 1936.

At this point, undoubtedly spurred on by a successful application by A J Gill & Sons of Godmanchester to introduce a Saturday service from Godmanchester to Oundle via Huntingdon, Wood Walton, Hamerton and Polebrook, Tom Head resurrected his plan to extend his Saturday Peterborough route to run to and from Oundle. Again Eastern Counties objected, as also did Gill, but the Traffic Commissioners ruled that Head's application be granted with a condition attached that prevented through passengers travelling from Oundle to Peterborough or *vice versa* being carried on Tom's service.

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An offside view of Duple bodied Gilford coach MY 386. The garter on the side reads 'A.R.T. Head, Lutton' with 'Northants' inside the emblem. The oval roof-mounted fleet name box referred to on the previous page can be seen in this view. In the previous illustration, depicting Tom Head's garage, the nearside of Gilford MY386 can be seen to the right of the photograph.

The Saturday timetable at this stage was as follows:-

Oundle	-----	1.55pm	4.50pm	8.05pm	10.50pm
Hemington	9.30am	-----	-----	-----	-----
Polebrook	9.40am	2.05pm	5.00pm	8.15pm	11.00pm
Lutton	9.50am	2.15pm	5.15pm	8.25pm	11.10pm
Washingley X Rds	10.00am	2.20pm	5.20pm	8.30pm	-----
Folksworth	10.10am	2.30pm	5.30pm	8.40pm	-----
Peterborough	10.40am	2.55pm	5.55pm	9.05pm	-----
Peterborough	12.40pm	3.15pm	6.55pm	9.45pm	
Folksworth	1.00pm	3.35pm	7.15pm	10.00pm	
Washingley X Rds	1.10pm	3.45pm	7.25pm	10.10pm	
Lutton	1.15pm	3.55pm	7.30pm	10.15pm	
Hemington	1.30pm	4.25pm	7.40pm	10.25pm	
Polebrook	1.40pm	4.35pm	7.50pm	10.35pm	
Oundle	1.50pm	4.45pm	8.00pm	10.45pm	

On his Excursions & Tours licence during 1936, Tom Head applied to add Brampton Races, Spalding Tulip Fields, Whipsnade Zoo and an evening trip to Corby. All were subsequently granted by the Traffic Commissioners. In addition from the mid-1930s Tom Head provided school transport each morning and afternoon from Lutton, Hemington, Polebrook and Ashton to Oundle.

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In October 1937 Tom Head purchased a 1930 Chevrolet from Teddy Shaw of Maxey, the two men often meeting at Peterborough and building up a good working relationship over many years. The bus in question was KX 4096 and it was a fourteen-seat model. This second bus in due course permitted Tom Head to operate his stage-carriage services on Sundays and in March 1938 Tom Head applied to introduce a new summer Sunday service running from April to September between Oundle and Peterborough over the same route as the Wednesday and Saturday facilities apart from the omission of Hemington. The timetable, on which end-to-end traffic between Oundle and Peterborough was again excluded, was as follows:-

Sundays						
Oundle	-----	2.40pm	4.40pm	6.25pm	7.40pm	9.40pm
Polebrook	1.00pm	2.50pm	4.50pm	6.35pm	7.50pm	9.50pm
Lutton	1.10pm	3.00pm	5.00pm	6.45pm	8.00pm	10.00pm
Wsh'y XRds	1.15pm	3.05pm	-----	-----	8.05pm	-----
Folksworth	1.25pm	3.15pm	-----	-----	8.15pm	-----
Peterboro'	1.45pm	3.30pm	-----	-----	8.30pm	-----
Peterborough		1.50pm	3.35pm	-----	-----	8.40pm
Folksworth		2.05pm	4.00pm	-----	-----	8.55pm
Washingley X Rds		2.10pm	4.10pm	-----	-----	9.05pm
Lutton		2.15pm	4.15pm	6.00pm	7.15pm	9.10pm
Polebrook		2.25pm	4.25pm	6.10pm	7.25pm	9.20pm
Oundle		2.35pm	4.35pm	6.20pm	7.35pm	9.30pm

The fourteen seat Chevrolet would have been quite adequate for this route, never a great money spinner, leaving the Gilford free for private hires and the occasional excursion.

Around about 1938, the precise date has not been established, Tom Head replaced his Gilford coach MY 386 with an elegant A.E.C. Reliance thirty-one seater coach with a Metcalf body. The registration number of this vehicle was TX 8001 and "RELIANCE" fleetnames were added to the paintwork on each side of the coach which is illustrated overleaf.

As intimated earlier, the Milton Arms was Tom Head's operating base and residence at the time he started his business. He thereafter soon married Winifred May Rawson from Weldon and Tom and Winifred, as well as jointly running the business, acquired land near the Church at Lutton on which they built a house and in 1939 added a garage to accommodate two buses side by side. This building was also equipped with a pit, work benches and compressor. On completion in February 1939 the business transferred from the Milton Arms to the new garage and the terminal or picking up point for bus services and excursions was redesignated "Reliance Garage" at the end of March 1939. It is also important to note that Tom and Winifred Head had two sons, the eldest being Alec who was born on 27th June 1932 and who was later to acquire his father's business. Tom and Winifred's younger son, Ivan, although never wishing to take a financial stake in the business, nevertheless spent a lifetime working for the family concern.

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There is little doubt that the Metcalf bodied A.E.C. Reliance TX 8001 was an impressive machine. It is seen here circa 1941 with 'RELIANCE' fleet names, Hartley headlight masks and white-tipped mudguards.

Incidentally, Winifred Head became a conductress on the family's buses from the early days and was still lending a hand when required in the 1950s. For his stage-carriage services Tom Head adopted the Bell Punch ticket system but from precisely what date is unknown. He was certainly using "stock tickets" - i.e. those without the operator's title - but advertising his private hire capability on the reverse, by the Summer of 1935. By 1939 tickets with A.R.T. Head Reliance Coaches were in use, provided by Bell Punch block number D3516.

With the possibility of conflict with Germany looming on the horizon, in the mid-1930s the Government surveyed a site to the east of Polebrook for possible use as an airfield. As events turned out a significant base was constructed there for the Royal Air Force Bomber Command with work commencing in the Autumn of 1940 and continuing until the summer of 1941. George Wimpey was the main contractor for the project which was to have a considerable impact on Tom Head's bus business.

In fact Tom appears to have been contracted to arrange the supply of transport for the hundreds of labourers, tradesmen and construction workers engaged on the building

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In this picture Winifred Head may be seen in front of Leyland Lion WP6113 at Oundle Square, complete with Bell Punch ticket machine.



On the left ticket 0706 printed black on a buff card with a red 1d overstamp provides an example of one of Tom Head's stock tickets with the advertisement appearing to its right, on the reverse. Ticket P4408 and its reverse shown to the right of the page were printed black on green card with red 1/- (5p) overprint using Bell Punch blocks D3516/9789 respectively.

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of the air base and these men were billeted in the surrounding district, many at Peterborough, but others as far afield as Spalding and Wisbech. The timings and routings of the contract buses were varied by the week or even the day, much depending on the hours of daylight in the changing seasons. Clearly, Tom Head had neither the machinery nor drivers to supply the fourteen buses required for Wimpey's workforce and consequently sub-contracted the work to other operators. Bert Saville, who was employed by Tom Head in the early part of the War, clearly recalls the following operations hired by Tom Head. Billy Camplin of Donington provided the Spalding to Polebrook daily return journey using a driver living in Spalding and thus eliminating dead mileage from that town to Donington. The vehicle used was a Leyland Lion (WP 6113) which Tom Head later purchased from Camplin. Whippet Coaches of Hilton operated three Gilford vehicles whilst Safford's of Gransden supplied a further two Gilford coaches. Messrs Gill of Godmanchester and Veazey of Great Gidding each allocated one coach to the contract and from the Wisbech area Progressive of Cambridge provided a Leyland Tiger. Teddy Shaw of Maxey weighed in with two REOs and a Maudslay from the Peterborough area and one of the REOs - DO 8731 - was retained by Tom Head in February 1942. The final two buses required on the contract were operated by Tom Head who drove A.E.C. Reliance TX 8001 and supplied a driver for his Chevrolet KX 4096.



*REO Pullman DO 8731 was bought by Tom Head from Teddy Shaw of Maxey in February 1942. It was photographed in the same year in the charge of driver Laurence Williamson and again sports war-time Hartley headlight masks and white tipped mudguards
(Photo courtesy H Saville)*

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Unfortunately REO DO 8731 ran for Tom Head for only about eighteen months before it met with a violent end in September 1943 at Norman Cross when a collision with an American Army lorry removed its complete offside.

Polebrook Aerodrome was taken over by the R.A.F., still incomplete, in May 1941 but its tenure was short lived as the airfield was transferred in June 1942 to the U.S. Army Airforce who retained it until June 1945. The Aerodrome was handed back to the R.A.F. in July 1945 and used as a storage and dispersal unit until the end of 1947 after which time it became a satellite station for R.A.F. Upwood until closure in October 1948. Polebrook was reopened from 1959 to 1963 when a R.A.F. Squadron deployed three Douglas Thor missiles at the base. During the early post-War period a contingent of German Prisoners of War awaiting repatriation were encamped on the airfield.

As a result of all the military activity at Polebrook, Tom Head was kept extremely busy for many years as, even after construction of the base had been completed, the airfield personnel and servicemen required transport services, mainly to Peterborough

In a press interview some years after the event Winifred Head spoke of an unnerving experience she encountered during the Winter of 1941. Whilst conducting on the Peterborough to Oundle service, with her younger son lying asleep on one of the seats, a

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German plane came over and dropped a number of bombs nearer the bus than she would have wished. The plane then turned and machine-gunned Polebrook Aerodrome. The bus was hit by bullets but little damage was done and no one was hurt. Needless to say no further passengers were picked up during the whole trip. They had all run into the woods for shelter and the bus had passed by the time they came out again.

During the early years of the War, apart from the REO registered DO 8731 mentioned previously, Tom Head acquired another second-hand REO Pullman registered NH 9375 and Camplin's Leyland Lion WP 6113. In addition, in about May 1942 Tom replaced his trusty A.E.C. Reliance TX 8001 with a Dennis Lancet coach registered BRE 737 which, by coincidence, had been operated by another gentleman named Head who ran from premises in Old Hill between Dudley and Halesowen. Sadly this latter vehicle enjoyed a life of only about a year with Tom Head as it was destroyed by fire at Tom's garage in October 1943 along with another vehicle, though to be REO NH 9375. It seems almost certain that these two buses were replaced by a single Leyland Lion PLSC3 registered KO 5171 and earlier operated by Invicta of Biddenden, Kent.



Leyland Lion WP 6113 with thirty-two seat Burlingham coachwork was acquired from Camplin of Donington circa 1942. This illustration shows it with Tom Head to the left and Frank Wiles to the right, probably in 1946.

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In the Spring of 1947 the Leyland Lion WP 6113 was refurbished by Messrs A F Smith of Granville Street, Peterborough to make it more presentable for excursions and private hires and it is seen in this picture after completion of the work. Externally there seems little difference to the previous picture apart from the revised livery.

At an unknown date during the War, Tom Head was given permission to run two new services. Nothing is known of the first, which took the Traffic Commissioners' reference TER845/5, and it was not continued after the War. The second new route was TER845/6 which ran from Great Gidding to Oundle, presumably via Luddington, Hemington and Barnwell, and on Thursdays only. Incidentally, the Commissioners references TER845/1-4 were allotted to Head's Lutton to Oundle; Oundle to Peterborough (Wednesdays/Saturdays); Excursion & Tours from Lutton and Oundle to Peterborough (Sundays) services respectively.

It may have been in connection with the unknown service TER845/5 which probably involved the movement of US Army Airforce personnel that Tom Head was allocated a Wartime Bedford OWB saloon with wooden seating for thirty-two in its utility body. This addition to the fleet was registered CBD 669 in April 1944 and just five months later was joined by CBD 873 which was originally HD 4607, a Leyland Lion LT5 new to Yorkshire Woollen District in 1932, commandeered by the War Department in 1940 and not returned to its original owner. The bus in question was offered to Tom Head in 1944, accepted and re-registered CBD 873 in September of that year. In February 1945 Tom was able to add a Burlingham bodied A.E.C. Regal to his rolling stock, a thirty-two seater machine registered FV 7132 that came from the Blackpool operator Batty Holt. In the following year another Leyland Lion found its way to Lutton and this dual-purpose bus/coach registered DEH 48 seated thirty-six passengers in its Duple body.

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The first bus Tom Head operated from new was this wartime Duple utility bodied Bedford OWB registered CBD 669 and fitted with slatted wooden seats for thirty-two passengers. In this post-War view it is seen with Alec Head standing alongside.



Fortunately a rear view of the Bedford OWB registered CBD 669 is also available. It was photographed at Tom Head's house and garage in Lutton with the flags and bunting suggesting the picture was taken soon after VE Day in 1945.

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HEAD.A.R.T. (Reliance Coaches) - LUTTON



This delightful Burlingham bodied A.E.C. Regal was registered FV 7132 in 1936 and joined the Reliance fleet in 1945. In front of the coach are Winifred Head and her eldest son Alec.



Reliance's Duple bodied Leyland Lion LT7 registered DEH 48 is seen at Peterborough Bus Station in August 1949 and destined for Polebrook. (Photo courtesy R Marshall)

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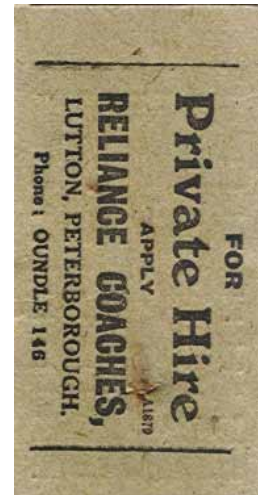
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Returning to the subject of Bell Punch tickets, after the War, in about December 1945, tickets using block number F1727 were ordered from the suppliers, to be followed in April or May 1947 with a further variety using block F4623. Weekly tickets were also in use, certainly in the post-War period.



Ticket B4203 shows a Reliance Coaches version of Tom Head's tickets printed at about the end of 1945 using block F1727. The next variation came with block F4623 in 1947 and illustrated by the 2/- (10p) ticket A7003. Slightly different advertisements for private hire appeared on the reverse of each ticket and both were printed black on buff card with red fare overprints.



Ticket 0391 printed black on pink card in April 1948 is a 7/- (35p) six-day workman's weekly ticket for travel between Polebrook and Peterborough.

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It is not entirely clear when the Lutton to Oundle service, which started as a Thursday only route, was expanded to run on Saturdays too, but by the time the licence was renewed in December 1946 the service was running on both days. At this point the timetable was amended to provide the following facilities:-

	Sat am	Sat pm	Thur pm	Th/Sat pm	Th/Sat pm	Th/Sat pm	Th/Sat pm
Lutton	9.15	1.00	1.30	2.00	3.25	4.30	6.25
Polebrook	9.25	1.15	1.40	2.10	3.35	4.45	6.35
Ashton Tn	9.30	----	1.45	----	3.40	----	----
Oundle	9.35	1.25	1.50	----	3.45	----	----

	Sat am	Th/Sat pm	Sat pm	Th/Sat pm	Th/Sat pm	Th/Sat pm
Oundle	10.15	----	3.35	4.00	----	----
Ashton Tn	10.20	----	----	4.05	----	----
Polebrook	10.25	2.23	3.45	4.10	4.53	6.50
Lutton	10.33	2.33	4.05	4.20	5.03	7.00

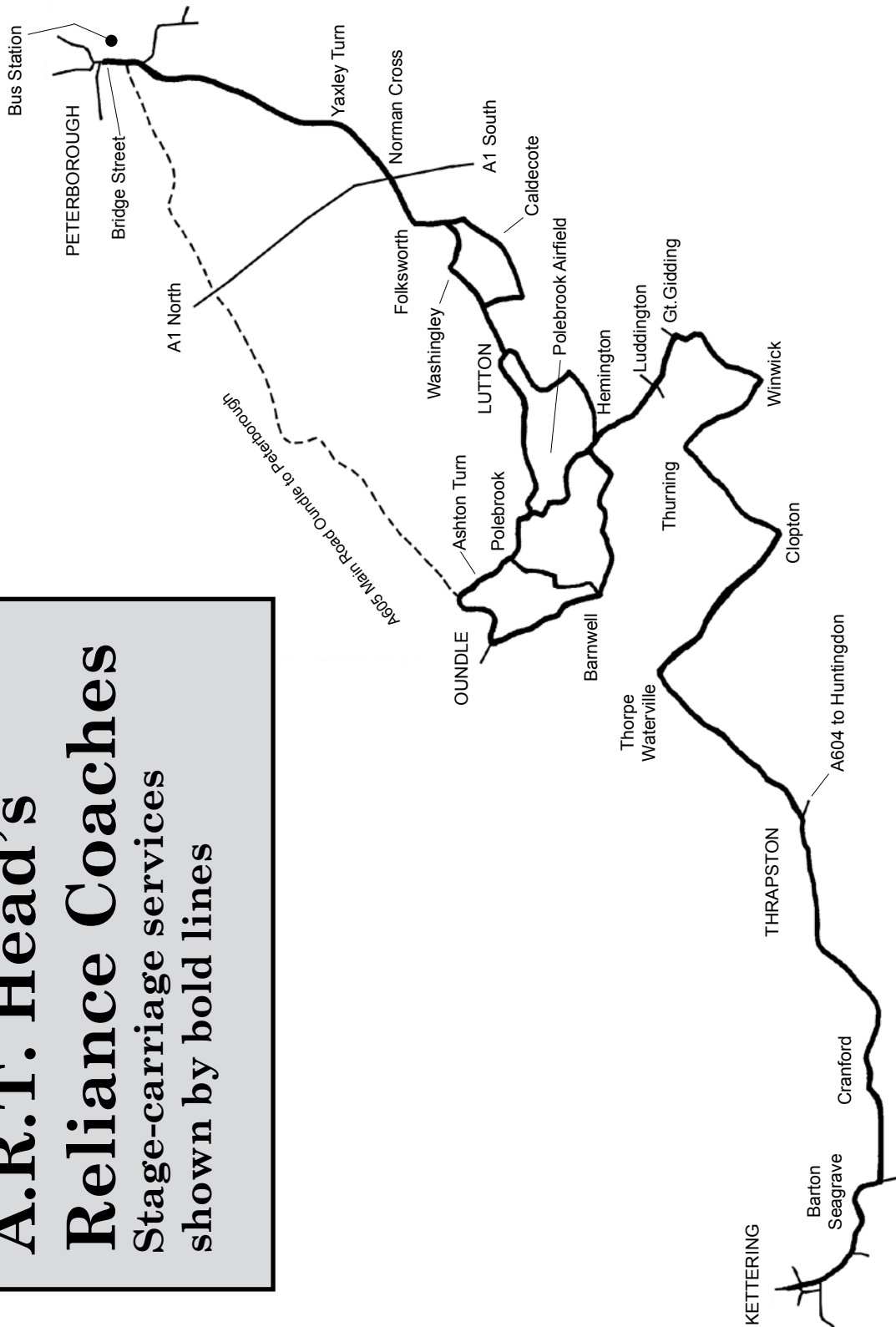
Apart from revising the Lutton to Oundle route, Tom Head applied for a new Friday and Sunday service to run from Lutton via a rural route to Thrapston and Kettering. United Counties objected to part of the proposals and when granted by the Traffic Commissioners in March 1947, a condition was attached to the licence that no passenger should be taken up at or between Kettering and the railway crossing east of the Lilford Cross Road on the A605 for the purpose of being set down within that portion of route. The timetable was as follows:-

	Fridays		Sundays	
	Read Down am	Read Up pm	Read Down pm	Read Up pm
Lutton	9.00	5.10	1.00	8.10
Polebrook	9.10	5.00	1.10	8.00
Hemington	9.15	4.50	1.15	7.50
Luddington	9.20	4.45	1.20	7.45
Gt. Gidding	9.30	4.40	1.30	7.40
Winwick	9.35	4.34	1.35	7.34
Thurning	9.45	4.24	1.45	7.24
Clapton	9.55	4.14	1.55	7.14
Lilford Cross Roads	10.00	4.08	2.00	7.08
Thrapston	10.07	3.59	2.07	6.59
Cranford	10.22	3.47	2.22	6.47
Kettering	10.32	3.30	2.32	6.30

At the time the above two applications were submitted to the Traffic Commissioners, Alan Coales of Aldwinckle was in the process of taking over George Veazey's Great Gidding based stage-carriage services and was no doubt seen by Tom Head as encroaching on "his territory". It would be surprising if the Kettering service was not Tom Head's way of reacting to Allan Coales perceived expansionism.

HEAD.A.R.T. (Reliance Coaches) - LUTTON

**A.R.T. Head's
Reliance Coaches
Stage-carriage services
shown by bold lines**



HEAD.A.R.T. (Reliance Coaches) - LUTTON

Indeed, in May 1947, Tom Head applied to significantly increase his Oundle to Peterborough route to provide a daily service to cater for Polebrook Aerodrome personnel and the general public. In fact Tom Head's aspirations were not met at this stage and Wednesday and Saturday public facilities were granted in September 1947 with a significant daily service restricted to R.A.F. personnel only.

Not to be deterred, Tom Head submitted a further application to the Traffic Commissioners in September 1947 to expand the Oundle - Peterborough route by opening up the Polebrook Camp restricted journeys to the general public on a daily basis. Allan Coales of Aldwinckle lodged objections but an adjusted daily timetable was granted by the Commissioners in February 1948. To summarise, the Oundle Market Place to Peterborough Central Omnibus Station route TER845/2 now comprised the following facilities:- Return journeys Polebrook Camp to Peterborough:- Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays - 5; Wednesdays and Fridays - 6; Saturdays 8, three of which were extended to and from Oundle; and Sundays - 4, with an additional late night Peterborough to Polebrook Camp journey.

Contemporaneously, Tom Head revised his Sunday only Oundle to Peterborough timetable and applied for a new licence for a workmen's service at 6.50am from Polebrook via the R.A.F. Station and the usual route to Peterborough and returning at 7.30am on Mondays to Saturdays. Despite objections from Allan Coales to the new service, both applications were granted in either March or June 1948.

Whilst all the above applications and counter-applications were proceeding, Tom Head was strengthening his fleet for the post-War surge in public transport and private hire opportunities. In the Spring of 1947 he introduced an example of the noted A.E.C. Q-type coaches to his fleet. This thirty-two seat Duple bodied machine was registered LV 8319 and had previously been in the Crosville fleet as their T19. It was in "well used" condition when Tom Head bought it and he ran it for a little over a year only. Another coach acquired during 1947 was a brand new Bedford OB with twenty-nine seat Duple Vista coachwork, registered DRP 289. It was destined to provide nearly eighteen years service for Reliance Coaches.

Service changes at the end of 1948 saw a reduction in the number of Polebrook Camp to Peterborough journeys and application was made to discontinue the Kettering service. This seems to have been met with local public opposition and the application was withdrawn, the service continuing for a few more years. No more changes of any consequence occurred until the summer of 1950.

Mention was made earlier in this paper that Tom Head built a garage in 1939 in which to house and maintain his vehicles, and part of this structure is visible in the lower photograph on page 14, just to the left of the house. In the early post-War years Tom Head arranged for a much larger structure to be erected on the land at the rear of his house and in due course the original garage was converted for use as a "Cash & Carry" Store.

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The A.E.C. Q-type was always an impressive motor and this nearside view of the Duple bodied example registered LV 8319 in the Reliance fleet was certainly no exception.



This picture of the offside of LV 8319 shows the A.E.C. Q in the hands of driver Ernie York. The legend "Liverpool London Express Service" is still visible in the cantrail boxes, showing the use made of the coach by former owners.

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When Tom Head's Bedford OB registered DRP 289 was new in 1947 its Duple Vista coachwork was painted blue with a cream roof and contrasting blue flash. Once repainted this vehicle assumed a predominantly powder blue livery.

A view of the rear of Bedford OB DRP 289 at Lutton Garage after repaint in powder and darker blue livery.



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An aerial view of Tom Head's Lutton property showing the post-War garage in the top left corner with the house and first garage bottom right. What appears to be one of the Duple Vega bodied coaches can be seen parked in the driveway.

In May 1949 the utility bodied Bedford OB registered CBD 669 was disposed of and replaced by a Maudslay Marathon registered MNO 144 equipped with a thirty-five seat Whitson body. Some time after this, at a date that is unknown, another Bedford OB with standard twenty-nine seat Duple Vista bodywork was purchased second-hand. This coach carried the registration number EKW 374 and was possibly a replacement for A.E.C. Regal FV 7132.

In July 1950 Tom Head felt it was time to consolidate his local bus services running between Oundle and Peterborough and severally licenced on TER845/1, 845/2, 845/4 and 845/8. To achieve this, a new route was applied for under reference TER845/9 with terminals at Oundle Market Square and Peterborough Bus Station, being routed via Ashton Turn, Polebrook, Luddington, Hemington, Lutton, Washingley Cross Roads, Folksworth, Norman Cross and Yaxley Cross Roads on a daily basis. When granted in October 1950 the four previous licences were discontinued and thereafter the arrangements were much more simple. In addition to the above local services Tom Head operated a school contract for Huntingdonshire Education Committee to convey schoolchildren to Yaxley and Stanground.

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The Whitson bodied Maudslay Marathon MNO 144 was a visually attractive coach as can be seen in this picture. Unusually, on the occasion when this photograph was taken, the vehicle was being used to convey mourners to Ashton Church following an unsolved murder occurring on nearby Ashton Wold. Note the black crepe adorning the radiator.

In March 1951 application was made to discontinue the Sunday service to Kettering and this was approved in May. A few months later the Friday service was also withdrawn and the licence TER845/7 surrendered in October 1951. Meanwhile, in July 1951, Tom Head made application to delete sixty-four journeys per week from his Oundle to Peterborough service, indicating a much reduced transport requirement from the Polebrook base from this time.

By May 1952 patronage on the Oundle - Peterborough service had again fallen, leading to the withdrawal of further journeys and the elimination of Luddington from the timetable. Just a month later, in June, an application was submitted to the Traffic Commissioners under reference TER845/10 for a new service from Lutton to Oundle, this time routed via Hemington, Polebrook and Barnwell. When granted in September 1952 this service replaced the Gt. Gidding to Oundle service licensed as TER845/6. As before the new route ran on Thursdays only and left Lutton for Oundle at 1.23pm, returning at 4.00pm.

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Between June 1952 and April 1954 Reliance's services remained unchanged but continued to decline. Further weekday journeys were withdrawn and application was made to completely withdraw the Sunday timetable. Again local opposition to this saw the implementation of a revised and reduced Sunday operation for a short period. By August 1954 it was again necessary for Tom Head to apply to withdraw the Sunday timings and to amend Wednesday and Saturday journeys.

Tom Head's stage-carriage services continued their downward spiral during the 1950s and in March 1955 he was obliged to submit a revised timetable for the Oundle to Peterborough route which henceforth ran only on Wednesdays and Saturdays as follows:-

	Sats am	Weds am	Sats pm	Sats pm	Sats pm	Sats pm	Sats pm
Oundle	9.40	----	----	4.55	----	----	----
Ashton Turn	9.45	----	----	5.00	----	----	----
Polebrook	9.50	10.00	2.05	5.05	7.10	9.45	11.10
Hemington	9.55	----	----	----	----	----	----
Polebrook Aerodrome	----	10.05	2.10	5.10	7.15	9.50	11.15
Ashton Wolds Cross Rds	10.00	10.07	2.12	5.12	7.17	9.57	11.17
Lutton	10.05	10.10	2.15	5.15	7.20	10.00	11.20
Washingley Cross Rds	10.10	10.15	2.20	5.20	7.25	10.05	----
Folksworth	10.15	10.20	2.25	5.25	7.30	10.10	----
Norman Cross	10.17	10.22	2.27	5.27	7.32	10.12	----
Yaxley Cross Roads	10.20	10.25	2.30	5.30	7.35	10.15	----
Peterborough	10.30	10.35	2.40	5.40	7.45	10.25	----

	Sats am	Sats pm	Weds pm	Sats pm	Sats pm	Sats pm	Sats pm
Peterborough	----	12.40	3.00	3.15	6.00	8.45	10.30
Yaxley Cross Roads	----	12.50	3.10	3.25	6.10	8.55	10.40
Norman Cross	----	12.53	3.13	3.28	6.13	8.57	10.43
Folksworth	----	12.55	3.15	3.30	6.15	8.59	10.45
Washingley Cross Rds	----	1.00	3.20	3.35	6.20	9.04	10.50
Lutton	8.30	1.05	3.25	3.40	6.25	9.09	10.55
Ashton Wolds Cross Rds	8.33	1.08	3.27	3.43	6.28	9.12	10.58
Polebrook Aerodrome	8.35	1.10	3.30	----	6.30	9.14	11.00
Hemington	----	----	----	3.50	----	----	----
Polebrook	8.40	1.15	3.35	3.55	6.35	9.19	11.05
Ashton Turn	8.45	----	----	4.00	----	----	----
Oundle	8.50	----	----	4.05	----	----	----

Incidentally, as well as not being able to carry end-to-end traffic from Oundle to Peterborough, the Reliance service was also precluded from carrying local traffic on the Peterborough to Norman Cross section of route.

By the end of 1955 Tom Head's business was just ticking over and his fleet was down to two or three serviceable vehicles, with Bedford OB - DRP 289 - operating most of the stage-carriage services. In March 1955 the Bedford OB registered EKW 374 was effectively replaced by NWE 663, a thirty-one seat Albion Victor with fully-fronted Scottish Aviation coachwork. In February 1956 another Bedford OB was purchased second-hand but this time fitted with an attractive Plaxton twenty-nine seat body. This bus registered DCX 627 probably replaced the Maudslay MNO 144.

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The Scottish Aviation bodied Albion Victor was quite a handsome coach as can be seen from this view of NWE 663 taken at Peterborough in March 1958.

(Photo courtesy R Marshall)



The Plaxton bodied Bedford OBs looked very different to the more common Duple bodied versions and DCX 627 appears in excellent condition in this 1957 photograph.

(Photo courtesy R Marshall)

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Following the service amendments detailed for 1955 there were virtually no changes to the Reliance local bus services, other than very minor timing alterations, until the Autumn of 1962 when the 8.45pm Peterborough to Polebrook and return at 9.45pm on Saturday evenings was withdrawn. A little over three years was to elapse before the remaining Saturday evening services between Polebrook and Peterborough were curtailed early in 1966.

During the same period the fleet changed little also. A Duple Vega bodied Commer Avenger registered OOR 735 entered the fleet in June 1957 whilst the Albion Victor NWE 663 was displaced in 1958. The Plaxton bodied Bedford OB was ousted in 1959 in favour of PWJ 98 which was a Yeates Riviera bodied Bedford SB. In October 1960 an additional Duple Vista bodied Bedford OB was obtained and this carried the registration GRY 896. The veteran of the fleet, Bedford OB DRP 289 was taken out of service in February 1965 and in its place came TOX 939, a Bedford SBG with forty-one seat Duple Vega coachwork.



Reliance Coaches' premier vehicle in 1957 was OOR735, a Commer Avenger III with Duple Vega coachwork, replacing the 1951 Albion Victor on longer distance hires.

(Photo courtesy R Marshall)

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Returning to the subject of timetables, in July 1967 the remaining Saturday afternoon and early evening journeys on the Oundle to Peterborough service were discontinued leaving just a morning shopping facility to Peterborough on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Reliance Coaches' final vehicle acquisition whilst the business was nominally owned by Tom Head was WDF 610, a Bedford SB3 with forty-one seat Duple coachwork bought from Dew's of Somersham in January 1969 and replacing the three-year-old TOX 939 which passed to Shaw's of Maxey.



WDF 610 was a 1959 Bedford SB3 fitted with attractive Duple Vega coachwork and parked at Peterborough Bus Station when photographed. (Photo courtesy R Marshall)

This story of Tom Head's operation of bus services cannot be completed without reference to the activities of his eldest son - Alec George Henry Head. As part of the Head family, Alec was naturally steeped in the running of buses and coaches - it was second nature to him. As a young man he enlisted with the R.A.F. and on completion of his term of service returned to Lutton with the intention of participating in his father's business. However, the level of activity of Reliance Coaches was, as indicated earlier, at an all-time low ebb in the mid-1950s, so Alec decided to branch out on his own. In fact he reached agreement with his father in December 1955 to purchase three of the Reliance coaches vehicles, these being Bedford OB DRP 289, Albion Victor NWE 663 and an out

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of service Bedford OB, probably EKW 374. This action, however, did not immediately provide a clear-cut distinction between the activities of father and son, as Tom Head retained the Road Services Licences for the stage-carriage and excursion and tours. Alec, however, increasingly took over responsibility for the bus operations and started to rebuild the Reliance Coaches business. Some of the post-1955 fleet were bought in Tom Head's name and some in Alec's, the latter buying his first brand new coach in 1959.

Tom Head finally retired from Reliance Coaches in June 1971 when his stage-carriage service from Oundle to Peterborough was renewed in Alec Head's name on 18th June under reference TER 5968/1. The Excursion & Tours licence from Lutton also passed to Alec Head as TER 5968/2 in June 1974.

Sadly Winifred Head died on 23rd September 1978 and later, on 12th August 1984, Tom Head passed away at the age of eighty years, thus ending a fascinating chapter in the history of Northamptonshire's bus operators.

The story of the growth and development of Reliance Coaches under Alec Head's auspices will be continued in paper NN-HE1B.

The Author is indebted to the late Alec Head, his wife June, his brother Ivan and to Bert Saville and Pete Skinner for help received in the preparation of this paper and for the supply of photographs.



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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			
RP 1870		Thornycroft	A1	11517	Y.W.& R.	B20F		11/25	1/31	12/33	York, Ward & R, W'boro?/ Abram, Earls Barton	No further owner	
MY 386		Gilford	166SD	10839	Duple	C26D	1614	7/29	9/33	c-/38	G J Dawson, London/ R Armstrong, Ebchester	No further use - broken chassis	
KX 4096		Chevrolet	?	?	?	B14F		1/30	10/37	c-/42	Shaw, Maxey	No further owner	
TX 8001		A.E.C.	Reliance	660258	Metcalf	C31C		7/29	c-/38	c5/42	Gough, Mountain Ash	Store, Stainforth	
DO 8731		REO	Pullman	GE169	?	B20F		3/30	2/42	9/43	Shaw, Maxey	Scrapped following accident damage	
NH 9375		REO	Pullman	GE82	?	C26D		8/29	by -/42	12/43	Originally Allchin, Northampton	No further owner Destroyed by fire?	
WP 6113		Leyland	Lion LT5A	4484	Burlingham	C32R		5/34	by -/42	by-/55	Camplin, Donington		1
BRE 737		Dennis	Lancet 1	170954	Dennis	C32C		5/35	c5/42	10/43	Head, Old Hill	Destroyed by fire	
KO 5171		Leyland	Lion PLSC3	46238	?	B32F		9/27	?	4/44	Invicta, Boddenden		
CBD 669		Bedford	OWB	19585	Duple	UB32F	38765	4/44	-	5/49	Supp Grose Ltd, N'pton	Thomas, Pontardawe	
CBD 873		Leyland	Lion LT5	536	Leyland	B32F		-/32	9/44	?	War Department Supp Heighton, Thrapston	Laytham (Showman), West Hartlepool	2
FV 7132		A.E.C.	Regal	6621819	Burlingham	C32F		4/36	2/45	by6/53	Batty Holt, Blackpool	Mountney, B'ham	
DEH 48		Leyland	Lion LT7	10044	Duple	DP36F	6782	4/36	c -/46	12/50	Milton, Stoke-on-Trent	No further owner	
LV 8319		A.E.C.	Q	762011	Duple	C32F	4233	-/34	by 5/47	by7/48	Crosville T19	Coleman, Tydd St.Giles	
DRP 289		Bedford	OB	56931	Duple Vista	C29F		-/47	-	2/65	Supp Yeates, L'borough	AGH Head, Lutton	3
MNO 144		Maudslay	Marathon III	70045	Whitson	C35F	5044	9/47	5/49	by -/56		Pathfinder, Chadwell Heath	4
EKW 374		Bedford	OB	55461	Duple Vista	C29F		7/47	?	by 4/55	Feather, Bradford	Fuller, Netherfield	
NWE 663		Albion	Victor	73007E	Scottish Aviation	C31F		-/51	3/55	by -/58	Talbot, Sheffield	A G H Head, Lutton	
DCX 627		Bedford	OB	47494	Plaxton	C29F	650	-/47	2/56	by -/59	Broadbent, Penistone	AGH Head, Lutton	3

- NOTES:** 1 - Refurbished after the War by A F Smith of Peterborough, circa 1947.
 2 - Supplied by Ministry of War Transport. Originally HD4607 new to Yorkshire Woollen District (196), commandeered by War Dept 7/40 and not returned to YWD.
 3 - DRP 289 and DCX 627 passed to AGH Head at unknown dat between 1955 and withdrawal dates. DCX 627 not used by AGH Head.
 4 - Seating reduced to C33F - date unknown

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		MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE & SEATS	NUMBER	NEW	S/H	W/D			
	00R 735	Commer	Avenger III	T85A0139	Duple Vega	C41F	1062/4	-/56	6/57	3/63	Creamline, Bordon	Cooper, Rothwell	
	PWJ 98	Bedford	SB	18393	Yeates Riviera	C35F	369	-/53	by 2/59	6/59	Andrew, Sheffield	Tagg, Sutton-in-Ashfield	
	GRY 896	Bedford	OB	141949	Duple Vista	C29F		8/50	10/60	3/62	W H Smith, Leicester	Ruddiford, Thornbury	
	TOX 939	Bedford	SBG	50135	Duple Vega	C41F	1074/39	4/56	2/65	12/68	Westercroft, Bradford	Shaw, Maxey	
	WDF 610	Bedford	SB3	66801	Duple Vega	C41F	1105/41	1/59	1/69	1/72	Dew, Somersham	AGH Head, Lutton	