

# Bygone Buses

of  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-WO2

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## WOOLLEY. Henry Thomas & Son 165 Abington Avenue, NORTHAMPTON

Henry Thomas Woolley owned a motor garage at the corner of Abington Avenue and Collingwood Road, Northampton and first operated charabancs in 1920. For the next five or six years, along with a handful of other local firms, he was at the forefront of charabanc hire and excursion operation in the Northampton district but was not one of the providers that survived the advent of the 1930 Road Traffic Act.

Unfortunately specific details of Woolley's fleet are sparse but by May 1920 he was advertising a thirty-seat charabanc being available for race meetings, private parties, touring parties, seaside parties and bowling parties. This vehicle was almost certainly a Dennis and was named "Comfort". The word "Comfort" is likely to have adorned both sides of the charabanc, with the owners name and address signwritten on the rear panel. Concurrently Woolley owned a Daimler wagonette registered BD 807 and seating twelve passengers. Apparently Woolley had owned this machine from July 1914 and no doubt hired it out as a wagonette. It seems that later the seating of this vehicle was arranged in charabanc fashion as it was subsequently referred to as a charabanc rather than a wagonette and was known as "Daimler". From the beginning Woolley garaged his vehicles in Bradshaw Street and excursions initially started from this town centre location in May 1920.

By July 1920 Henry Woolley was running his excursions from the Market Square on days other than Wednesdays and Saturdays and quite probably did so without the permission of the Town Council. At least there are no records of Woolley being granted Hackney Carriage Licences by the Watch Committee during 1920 and his initial application in 1921 was adjourned by the Watch Committee. However, the required authorisation was granted in March 1921 for Woolley to use the Market Square, or Regent or Campbell Squares on market days. Destinations to which H T Woolley is

*A facsimile of one of Henry Woolley's advertisements for a period excursion to Yarmouth from 31st July returning on 7th August using "Comfort". July 1920 was quite an early date to be offering period holiday travel.*

THE  
**MOTOR CHAR-A-BANC**  
(COMFORT)  
**WILL RUN TO YARMOUTH,**  
JULY 31st,  
RETURNING AUGUST 7th.  
For particulars (phone 1000),  
H. T. WOOLLEY,  
165, ABINGTON AVENUE.

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.

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known to have operated during 1920 included Northants Agricultural Show, Epsom Races, Leicester Races, Birmingham Races, Great Yarmouth and various circular tours. For the 1921 season Henry Woolley added another thirty-seat charabanc to his fleet. This one was definitely a Dennis, was registered NH 3086 and was on the road by the end of March 1921. Following Woolley's practise of naming his vehicles, NH 3086 was called "Luxury". Fortunately three photographs of it have been located.

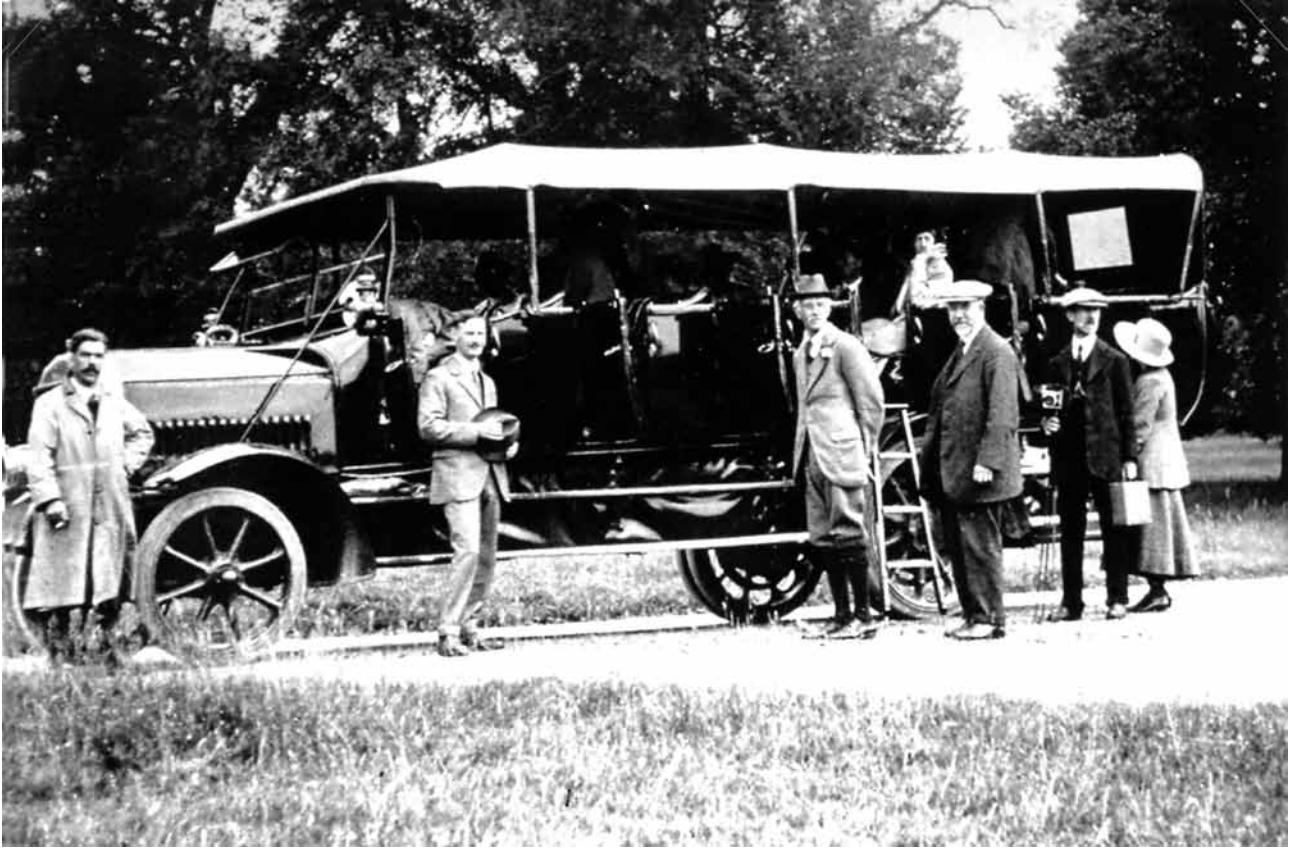


*This view of Dennis NH 3086 shows H T Woolley's charabanc uplifting a party from Newport Pagnell Workmen's Social Club in the early 1920s. The name "Luxury" can be seen on the side of the vehicle whilst on the first door is signwritten "Phone 1000".*



*A rear shot of Dennis charabanc NH 3086 with a party apparently in a rural setting but nonetheless armed with glasses of ale. The rear of the vehicle is signwritten "H.T. Woolley, Charabanc Proprietor, 165 Abington Avenue, Northampton". The plate visible to the left of the registration number reads "Hackney Carriage".*

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*The third photograph of Dennis NH 3086 shows H T Woolley's charabanc participating in a Northampton Natural History Society & Field Club outing.*

Operationally during 1921 Henry Woolley concentrated on excursions to race meetings, local tours and private hires. Northampton always provided a staunch race following and meetings were regularly attended at Birmingham, Leicester and Newmarket. Bedford was a popular destination for afternoon tours due to the attractiveness of its river front. Seaside trips were operated to Skegness and Bournemouth amongst other destinations.

Woolley's base at Abington Avenue was roughly three-quarters of a mile from the town centre, so to facilitate bookings, arrangements were made for the owner of a cake stall on the market to act as a booking agent. In addition, many tours commenced from the yard of the Racehorse Inn at Abington Square before picking up at the Market Square. Bookings could also be effected at the Racehorse.

The year 1922 was an interesting one in the development of Henry Woolley's passenger carrying business, as by January 1922 he had acquired a DeDion C2.3 chassis equipped with a Dodson "Charabus" body seating either twenty-eight normally, or thirty-four by the use of tip-up jubilee gangway seats. Unfortunately the registration number of this vehicle is uncertain, although probably NH 3997, but its acquisition by Woolley was reported in "Motor Transport" and "Commercial Motor" in February 1922. The report from "Commercial Motor" is reproduced on the following pages.



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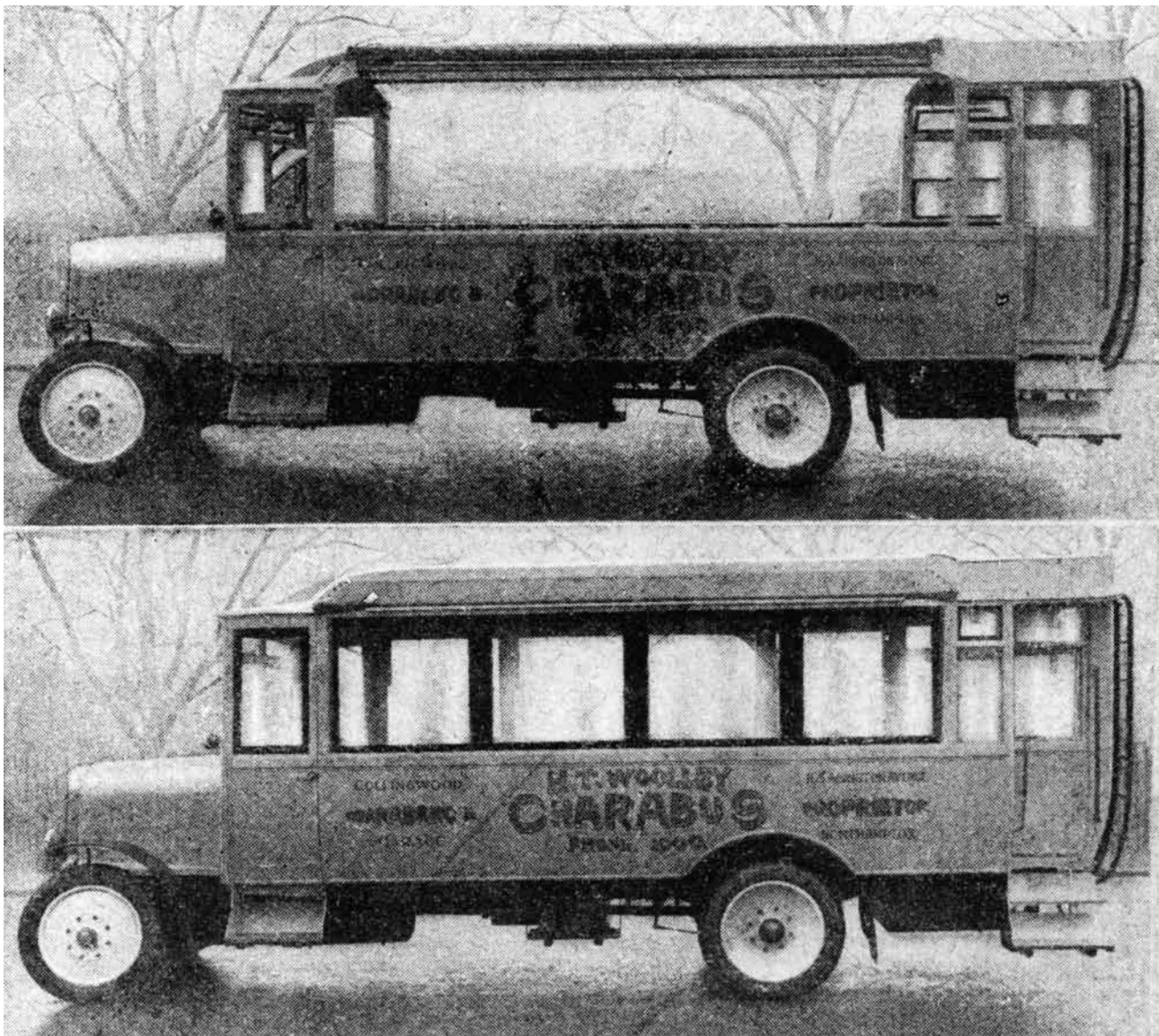
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**“AN ALL-THE-YEAR-ROUND PASSENGER VEHICLE.**

One of the outstanding novelties at last year's Olympia Show, in so far as passenger vehicles are concerned, was the Charabus, which is designed and manufactured by Christopher Dodson Ltd., of Cobbold Road, Willesden, London, N.W. 10.

The main idea in designing this novel body has been to produce an improvement on the ordinary coach, by providing an open type of vehicle that can be readily converted and made comfortable and weatherproof, enabling it to be used all the year round, irrespective of prevailing weather conditions. It is



*A Dodson Charabus body fitted on a Michelin-tyred De DeDion chassis, and recently supplied to a Northampton user. This type of vehicle possesses the merits of both an open and a closed machine.*

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a well-recognized fact that the standard Cape-cart hood is far from satisfactory, and that in actual use passengers often get wet while it is being raised. The difficulty of raising the hood also induces the driver to avoid putting it up until the last moment.

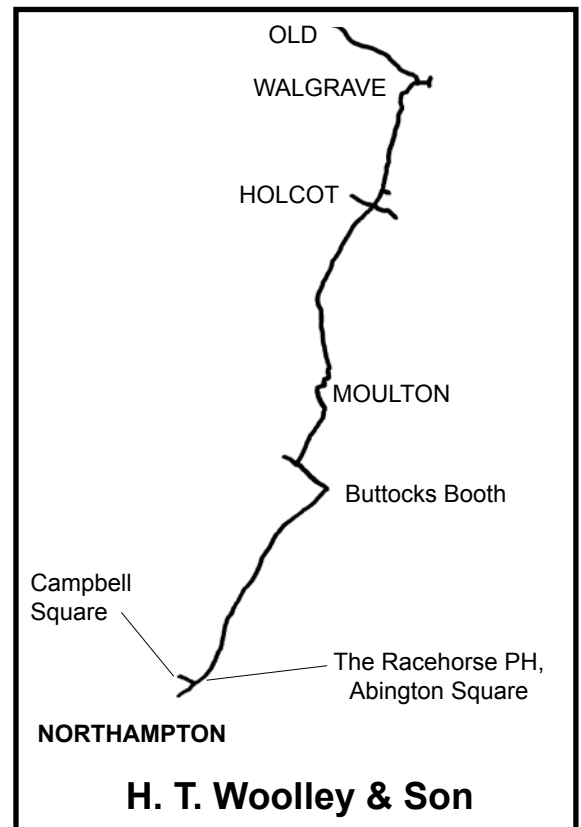
With the Charabus, protection can be given to passengers in less than one minute. Two men can in 10 minutes convert the Charabus from an open vehicle to one completely enclosed. Four detachable mahogany framed windows are used for each side when the vehicle is completely enclosed, although, should the weather be only showery, the stormproof curtains, which can readily be removed when the weather improves, can be used.

In the Charabus the driver's cab and the compartment at the rear are permanent fixtures, and a centre rail connects the two. This centre-piece houses the cant rail, to which is fixed the twill covering. When it is desired completely to enclose the top, this cant rail, which runs on rollers, is drawn over to the side, where it is held in position by three stays, which, when not in use, are also accommodated in the centre-piece. The cant rail is so shaped that, when used with the centre-piece, rattle is prevented.

The normal seating capacity of the Charabus, as illustrated on this page, is 28, but, by the provision of tip-up seats in the gangway, this can be increased to 34.

It is fair to assume that the Charabus will be patronized during uncertain weather conditions when an ordinary char-a-bancs might very well be regarded with disfavour. Upon fairly long trips returning late at night, even in the summer, the nights get chilly and the ride tedious, owing to cold and darkness; with the Charabus closed and the interior lit up, a cheerful and pleasant finish to the day's outing is assured."

One of the reasons for which Henry Woolley bought his DeDion/Dodson Charabus was to commence a local service from Northampton, Campbell Square to Moulton, Holcot and Walgrave, a route on which the Leathersich brothers of Walgrave were already running. This service commenced on Wednesday 8th March 1922 and ran on Wednesdays (three return journeys) and Saturdays only (five return journeys).



**H. T. Woolley & Son**



WOOLLEY. H. T. & Son - NORTHAMPTON

# TIME TABLE.

Commencing on Wednesday, March 8th 1922.

H. T. WOOLLEY'S Motor "Charabus" Service between Northampton and Walgrave, via Moulton and Holcot.

### WEDNESDAY SERVICE.

Leave	NORTHAMPTON	8.45 a.m.	1.0 p.m.	5.0 p.m.
"	MOULTON	9.5 a.m.	1.20 p.m.	6.20 p.m.
"	HOLCOT	9.20 a.m.	1.35 p.m.	6.35 p.m.
Arrive	WALGRAVE	9.30 a.m.	1.45 p.m.	6.45 p.m.
Leave	WALGRAVE	9.45 a.m.	2.0 p.m.	7.0 p.m.
"	HOLCOT	9.55 a.m.	2.10 p.m.	7.10 p.m.
"	MOULTON	10.10 a.m.	2.25 p.m.	7.25 p.m.
Arrive	NORTHAMPTON	10.30 a.m.	2.45 p.m.	7.45 p.m.

### SATURDAY SERVICE.

Leave	NORTHAMPTON	8.45 a.m.	12.30 p.m.	3.0 p.m.	5.30 p.m.	9.0 p.m.
"	MOULTON	9.5 a.m.	12.50 p.m.	3.20 p.m.	5.50 p.m.	9.20 p.m.
"	HOLCOT	9.20 a.m.	1.5 p.m.	3.30 p.m.	6.5 p.m.	9.35 p.m.
Arrive	WALGRAVE	9.30 a.m.	1.15 p.m.	3.45 p.m.	6.15 p.m.	9.45 p.m.
Leave	WALGRAVE	9.45 a.m.	1.30 p.m.	4.0 p.m.	6.30 p.m.	9.45 p.m.
"	HOLCOT	9.55 a.m.	1.40 p.m.	4.10 p.m.	6.40 p.m.	9.55 p.m.
"	MOULTON	10.10 a.m.	1.55 p.m.	4.25 p.m.	6.55 p.m.	10.10 p.m.
Arrive	NORTHAMPTON	10.30 a.m.	2.15 p.m.	4.45 p.m.	7.15 p.m.	10.30 p.m.

H. T. Woolley cannot guarantee the running of any bus, but will endeavour to maintain a standard service. Passengers will be Picked Up and Set Down at CAMPBELL-SQUARE, or en route. FARES: Northampton to Moulton 6d., Northampton to Holcot 10d., Northampton to Walgrave 1s.

H T Woolley's Northampton to Walgrave timetable as advertised in March 1922. Note the fare from Northampton to Moulton was 6d (2½p), 10d (4p) to Holcot and 1s (5p) from Northampton to Walgrave. (Northampton Daily Chronicle)

**HUNTING BY CHAR-A-BANC.**  
PYCHLEY HOUNDS  
Meet at SYWELL WOOD, 11.45 a.m. on MONDAY.  
COMFORT will leave RACEHORSE ABINGTON-SQUARE, 10.45 a.m. 2/6 Return  
H. T. WOOLLEY.  
Coach and Char-a-Banc Proprietor.  
Phone 1000.

**RUGBY RACES.**  
WEDNESDAY, 15th.  
CHAR-A-BUS and COMFORT will leave MARKET SQUARE, 10.30 and 11.15 a.m.  
5s. Return. Phone 1000.  
H. T. WOOLLEY and SON.  
Coach and Char-a-Banc Proprietors.

**MOTOR COACHING.**  
"Comfort" & "Luxury."  
The Easiest Riding Coaches, propelled by the Reliable Dennis, will be on the Market-square EVERY DAY.  
Except Wednesdays and Saturdays.  
Book your Seats at the Racehorse, Abington-Square, and the Kiosk for Bedford EVERY THURSDAY and SUNDAY.  
Fare 5s.  
Leaving Market-square 2 o'clock.  
Special Prices for Large Parties Long Distance.  
**H. T. WOOLLEY & SON.**  
MOTOR COACH PROPRIETORS.  
Phone 1,000. 165, ABINGTON-AVENUE.

**NOTTINGHAM RACES.**  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 23rd.  
DAIMLER will pick up from Market-square 9.30.  
Book at H. T. WOOLLEY & SONS,  
165, Abington-avenue.

On the days Charabus was not committed to the Walgrave service it was available for hire or for excursion use. In press advertising Henry Woolley nearly always specified the actual vehicle he was intending to operate on given excursions, as shown in the above Northampton Daily Chronicle advertisements.

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Returning to Henry Woolley's local Northampton to Walgrave service, the route was extended to Old from Sunday 22nd October 1922 and thereafter ran on a daily basis with an increased level of service.

### TIME TABLE

#### H. T. WOOLLEY & SONS "CHARABUS" SERVICE

BETWEEN

#### Northampton and Old,

Via MOULTON, HOLCOT & WALGRAVE,

COMMENCING

SUNDAY, 'OCT. 22nd, 1922.

MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY & FRIDAY.						
Leave North'ton.	8.45 a.m.	1.0 p.m.	6.0 p.m.			
" Moulton	9.5 ..	1.20 ..	6.20 ..			
" Holcot	9.20 ..	1.35 ..	6.35 ..			
" Walgrave	9.30 ..	1.45 ..	6.45 ..			
Arrive Old	9.35 ..	1.50 ..	6.50 ..			
Leave Old	9.40 ..	1.55 ..	6.55 ..			
" Walgrave	9.45 ..	2.0 ..	7.0 ..			
" Holcot	9.55 ..	2.10 ..	7.10 ..			
" Moulton	10.10 ..	2.25 ..	7.25 ..			
Arrive North'ton	10.30 ..	2.45 ..	7.45 ..			
WEDNESDAY.						
Leave Northampton	8.45	1.0	6.0	9.0		
" Moulton	9.5	1.20	6.20	9.20		
" Holcot	9.20	1.35	6.35	9.35		
" Walgrave	9.30	1.45	6.45	9.45		
Arrive Old	9.35	1.50	6.50	9.50		
Leave Old	9.40	1.55	6.55	9.55		
" Walgrave	9.45	2.0	7.0	10.0		
" Holcot	9.55	2.10	7.10	10.10		
" Moulton	10.10	2.25	7.25	10.25		
Arrive Northampton	10.30	2.45	7.45	10.45		
SATURDAY.						
Leave North'ton	8.45	12.30	3.0	5.30	9.0	11.0
Moulton	9.5	12.50	3.20	5.50	9.20	11.20
Holcot	9.20	1.5	3.35	6.5	9.35	
Walgrave	9.30	1.15	3.45	6.15	9.45	
Arr. Old	9.35	1.20	3.50	6.20	9.50	
Leave Old	9.40	1.25	3.55	6.25	9.55	
Walgrave	9.45	1.30	4.0	6.30	10.0	
Holcot	9.55	1.40	4.10	6.40	10.10	
Moulton	10.10	1.55	4.25	6.55	10.25	11.20
Arr. North'tn	10.30	2.15	4.45	7.15	10.45	11.40
SUNDAY.						
Leave Northampton		2.0	6.30	8.0		
" Moulton		2.20	6.50	8.20		
" Holcot		2.35	6.5	8.35		
" Walgrave		2.45	6.15	8.45		
Arrive Old		3.50	6.20	8.50		
Leave Old		2.55	6.25	8.55		
" Walgrave		3.0	6.30	9.0		
" Holcot		3.10	6.40	9.10		
" Moulton		3.25	6.55	9.25		
Arrive Northampton		3.45	7.15	9.45		

H. T. Woolley cannot guarantee the running of any bus, but will endeavour to maintain a standard service.

Passengers will be picked up and set down at CAMPBELL SQUARE, or en route.

*Evidently Henry Woolley's son had joined his father in the business by March 1922 after which time advertisements showed "H T Woolley & Son". This is a facsimile of the Northampton to Old timetable applicable from Sunday 22nd October 1922.*

*(Northampton Daily Chronicle)*

Henry Woolley continued to operate his excursions, private hire and local bus service during 1923 and 1924 with little change. However, in April 1923 Woolley is believed to have bought a Berliet saloon bus registered NH 4766 which lasted only two years before being destroyed by fire. Happily the chassis was recoverable and was later rebodied for Kingston Bros of Blakesley.

By July 1924 at the latest, Woolley was advertising a vehicle known as "Super DeLuxe". This was a Belsize registered NH 5597, about which no more information is available but the Minutes of Northampton Watch Committee include entries granting Hackney Carriage Licences to Woolley in June 1924 for a "single deck" and in April 1925 for a "20-seater". These licences were probably for the same vehicle so it is assumed that "Super DeLuxe" was a twenty-seater. Period holiday travel to both Yarmouth and Skegness was being offered in August 1924.

Thereafter Henry Woolley's passenger business gave the impression of merely jogging along with little obvious sign of management effort to show new initiative or to update the fleet in line with the firm's competitors. In June 1927 Woolley seems to have made a final effort to reinvigorate his business by acquiring a new Brockway coach which reference to Hackney Carriage Licence records suggest was a twenty-six seater. No other details of this vehicle are known for certain.

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### H. T. WOOLLEY'S TOURS

**T**HE NEW BROCKWAY SUPER-SAFETY  
COACH will run to:

GREAT YARMOUTH. JULY 30th to  
AUG. 6th. Only a few vacant seats.

SUNDAY NEXT: Starting at 2 o'clock a  
2s. Tour. At 5.30 a Trip to BEDFORD.  
two hours' stop: 9s. 6d. return.

JULY 10th: A Trip to MATLOCK. starting  
at 8 a.m.: 10s. return.

Also Special Quotation for Private Parties.  
Enquiries at GARAGE. Abington-avenue.  
or Phone 1,000.

*A facsimile of H T Woolley's advertisement in the Northampton Daily Chronicle of 25th June 1927 which refers to a new Brockway super-safety coach.*

All available evidence shows that Henry Woolley ceased passenger operations at the end of the 1927 season.

Northampton operator W E Coombs & Sons (see paper NN-CO8) ran three Brockway coaches, two of which were new in June 1927 as was the Brockway attributed to H T Woolley. It must therefore be a possibility that Coombs bought only one Brockway at this time and later in the year acquired Woolley's machine and maybe took over the goodwill of Woolley's business at the same time. This theory, however is speculation as nothing has been seen to suggest a link between Coombs and Woolley. Furthermore, it appears that the Northampton to Old local bus service just ceased in the Autumn of 1927 with alternative facilities being provided by Leathersich Bros (paper NN-LE2) and W A R Gibson (paper NN-GI5).



WOOLLEY. H. T. & Son - NORTHAMPTON

**Rolling Stock:**

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	Dates			Coach Names	Notes
						New	S/H	W/D		
BD 807	Daimler	38.1hp	TC.38.105	?	Ch12	1/09	by 7/14	3/27	Names "Daimler"	1
?	Dennis			?	Ch30	by 5/20	—	c 10/27	Named "Comfort"	
NH 3086	Dennis			?	Ch28/30	by 3/21	—	c10/27	Named "Luxury"	2
NH 3997?	DeDion	C2.3		Dodson	B26R (B34R)	by 1/22	—	c10/27	Names "Charabus"	3
NH 4766	Berliet	LB	10551	?	B20?	4/23	—	c2/26		4
NH 5597	Belsize	1t 19¾c		?	B20?	by 6/24	—	c10/27	Named "Super De Luxe"	5
?	Brockway			?	Ch26?	by 6/27	—	c10/27		6

**Notes:** 1 - BD807 originally owned By E C Browning, Rushden as a Landalette. Described as a wagonette when purchased by Woolley 30/7/14.

2 - NH 3086 last owned by Burtonhead Trading Co., St.Helens and last licensed 5/33.

3 - NH 3997 was a DeDion registered on 18/1/1922 with a quoted chassis number G.Q.3-1508. It was last owned by G E Richardson, Hartwell and last licensed in 9/33 as a 32-seater. It is likely that this was the DeDion new to H T Woolley.

4 - NH 4766 - It is believed that this bus was destroyed by fire in 1925 and later rebodied B14F when acquired by Kingston Bros of Blakesley in 2/26 as RP 2180. It did not appear as a "named" charabanc in any of Woolley's advertisements.

5 - NH 5597 had no further owners after H T Woolley.

6 - See final paragraph of text.