

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-MI6
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MINNEY. Agnes **t/a "Comfy" Bus Service** **69 Little Street, YARDLEY HASTINGS**

Jabez Minney was one of the carriers based in Yardley Hastings and his wife, Agnes Minney, kept a sweet shop which she operated from the front room of her home. Jabez employed a four-wheeled wagon, fitted with a wooden covered top, which was drawn by a pair of horses to make his twice weekly trips to Northampton on that town's market days of Wednesday and Saturday. A local account records that the wagon carried "up to eight passengers and a quantity of goods including beer which was carried in 9-gallon barrels and delivered to farms for 4d a barrel. If the wagon became overloaded the passengers were expected to get out and help push the wagon up the hills". In fact the passengers sat four each side of the conveyance and the goods were heaped up between them in the centre of the wagon. The Minneys also owned a couple of carts which Jabez used on the other days of the week for the transport of stone delivered by rail to Castle Ashby and Piddington Stations, to various sites around the district for use in road making and repairing.

It is assumed that Agnes Minney held the purse strings as the Minney family bus business was carried out in her name rather than in that of her husband or even jointly. It seems that Agnes could neither read nor write but she was as sharp as needles with figures and successfully did all her own book-keeping. It is reported that Agnes Minney encouraged her husband to acquire a 14-seater Chevrolet bus, probably second-hand, in 1923 to build on the success of his carriers service from Yardley Hastings via Denton, Brafield, Little & Great Houghton to Northampton. The service ran to the Black Boy Hotel Yard in Dychurch Lane, Northampton and reached this point by proceeding from Houghton Road via Derngate, Hazelwood Road, St.Giles Street and Fish Street.

Jabez and Agnes Minney had a large family which comprised eleven surviving children and three of the sons - Alfred, Frederick and Douglas - became involved with the carrier and bus businesses. As a boy Alfred helped his father, particularly on Saturdays, and left school at the age of twelve towards the end of the first World War to work full time for his father. Both Alfred and his elder brother Frederick later became drivers and the youngest son, Douglas, who worked at Anstey's Black Boy Garage in Dychurch Lane, Northampton, became the mechanic. As the years progressed the sons took over from their father but the business remained in Agnes's name.

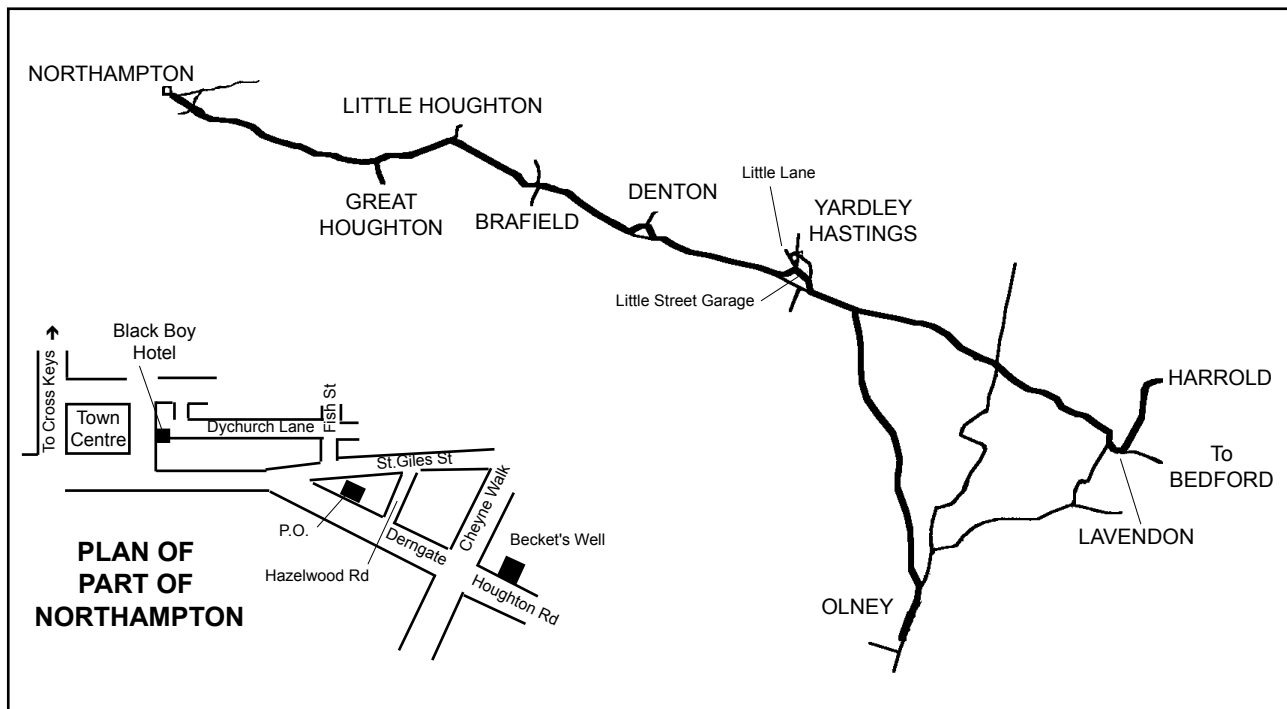
Bygone Buses of Northamptonshire is compiled by R M Warwick, "Forestyn" 101 Broadway East, Northampton NN3 2PP, who would be pleased to be advised of any additional information relating to the above operator. The records of the PSV Circle and the Omnibus Society have been consulted extensively for this series and acknowledgement and thanks are due to these organisations.

MINNEY. Agnes - YARDLEY HASTINGS

Unfortunately no details of Minney's first Chevrolet are known but its operation was successful and a new 14-seater Chevrolet registered RP 2080 was purchased on 5th February 1926 to be followed by yet another on 13th September 1926 when RP 3286 joined the fleet. Undoubtedly this latter vehicle replaced the original Chevrolet.

At an unconfirmed date, but probably in October 1926, the Yardley Hastings to Northampton service was re-routed in Northampton from Derngate via All Saints Church, The Drapery and Sheep Street to the yard of the Cross Keys public house. The service picked up passengers at Derngate at the rear of the Post Office on a stand authorised by the Borough Council. In January 1928 Northampton Borough Council Watch Committee revised its Hackney Carriage stands and directed Minney's service to henceforth terminate at Becket's Well in Houghton Road. Vehicles entering Northampton turned in the roadway at the junction of Houghton Road with Victoria Promenade, Derngate and Cheyne Walk

At about this same time the service was extended in an easterly direction from Yardley Hastings, first to Lavendon and a little later to Harrold. Previously passengers had ridden their cycles to Yardley Hastings to take advantage of Minney's early morning workers' service to Northampton which, incidentally, continued to St. Edmund's Church in Wellingborough Road, Northampton to take passengers nearer to many of the Boot & Shoe factories in town. Those cycling to Yardley Hastings were permitted to park their bikes at Minney's premises in Little Street for 2d per week. It is said that the daily return fare from Yardley to Northampton was 1/-d (5p) whilst weekly tickets cost 3/6d (17½p) from Yardley Hastings and 2/6d (12½p) from Denton.



Agnes Minney's Comfy Bus Service routes

MINNEY, Agnes - YARDLEY HASTINGS

MINNEYS

COMFY BUS SERVICE BETWEEN

Lavendon, Yardley Hastings and Northampton

and Intermediate Villages of

DENTON, BRAFIELD, LITTLE HOUGHTON and GREAT HOUGHTON

Saturday Service.

	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.		
NORTHAMPTON	10:45	11:15	12:15	2:0	2:30	3:15	4:15	4:45	5:30	6:15	7:30	8:30	9:0	10:15	11:0
GREAT HOUGHTON	10:50	11:20	12:20	2:5	2:35	3:50	4:20	4:50	5:5	6:20	7:35	8:35	9:5	10:20	11:5
LITTLE HOUGHTON	10:55	11:25	12:25	2:10	2:40	3:55	4:25	4:55	6:10	6:25	7:40	8:40	9:10	10:25	11:10
BRAFIELD	11:0	11:30	12:30	2:15	2:45	4:0	4:30	5:0	6:15	6:30	7:45	8:45	9:15	10:30	11:15
DENTON	11:5	11:35	12:35	2:20	2:50	4:15	4:35	5:5	6:20	6:50	7:50	8:50	9:20	10:35	11:20
YARDLEY HASTINGS	11:10	11:40	12:40	2:25	2:55	4:10	4:40	5:10	6:25	6:40	7:55	8:55	9:25	10:40	11:25
LAVENDON			12:50	2:40			4:50			6:50					

	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	
LAVENDON	9:40			1:10		3:20		4:50		7:15			10:10	
YARDLEY HASTINGS	9:40	10:0	11:15	12:55	1:25	3:10	3:35	4:15	5:5	5:20	7:20	8:0	9:40	10:20
DENTON	9:45	10:5	11:20	1:0	1:30	3:15	3:40	4:20	5:10	5:25	7:35	8:5	9:45	10:25
BRAFIELD	9:50	10:10	11:25	1:5	1:35	3:20	3:45	4:25	5:15	5:30	7:40	8:10	9:50	10:30
LITTLE HOUGHTON	9:55	10:15	11:30	1:10	1:40	3:25	3:50	4:30	5:20	5:35	7:45	8:15	9:55	10:35
GREAT HOUGHTON	10:0	10:20	11:35	1:15	1:45	3:30	3:55	4:35	5:25	5:40	7:50	8:20	10:0	10:40
NORTHAMPTON	10:5	10:25	11:40	1:20	1:50	3:35	4:0	4:40	5:30	5:45	7:55	8:25	10:5	10:45

Wednesday Service.

	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
NORTHAMPTON	10:45	11:20	1:0	1:50	3:15	3:50	5:15
GREAT HOUGHTON	10:50	11:25	1:5	1:55	3:20	4:0	5:10
LITTLE HOUGHTON	10:55	12:0	1:10	2:0	3:25	4:5	5:15
BRAFIELD	11:0	12:5	1:15	2:5	3:30	4:10	5:20
DENTON	11:5	12:10	1:20	2:10	3:35	4:15	5:25
YARDLEY HASTINGS	11:10	12:15	1:25	2:15	3:40	4:20	5:30
LAVENDON			1:40			4:30	5:40

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday Service.

	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.
NORTHAMPTON	1:35	4:55	6:15
GREAT HOUGHTON	1:40	5:0	6:20
LITTLE HOUGHTON	1:45	5:5	6:25
BRAFIELD	1:50	4:10	6:30
DENTON	1:55	4:15	6:35
YARDLEY HASTINGS	2:0	4:20	6:40
LAVENDON			7:0

	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.
LAVENDON	11:10		
YARDLEY HASTINGS	11:25	2:40	5:45
DENTON	11:30	2:45	5:50
BRAFIELD	11:35	2:50	5:55
LITTLE HOUGHTON	11:40	2:55	6:0
GREAT HOUGHTON	11:45	3:0	6:5
NORTHAMPTON	11:50	3:5	6:10

Sunday Service.

	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
NORTHAMPTON	10:0	2:15	2:45	6:15	6:45	8:0	9:15
GREAT HOUGHTON	10:5	2:20	2:50	6:20	6:50	8:5	9:20
LITTLE HOUGHTON	10:10	2:25	2:55	6:25	6:55	8:10	9:25
BRAFIELD	10:15	2:30	3:0	6:30	7:0	8:15	9:30
DENTON	10:20	2:35	3:5	6:35	7:5	8:20	9:35
YARDLEY HASTINGS	10:25	2:40	3:10	6:40	7:10	8:25	9:40
LAVENDON	10:30	2:55		6:45	7:20	8:40	

	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
LAVENDON	9:15	1:0	1:30	5:0	5:25	7:20	7:55
YARDLEY HASTINGS	9:20	1:15	1:35	5:5	5:30	7:25	8:0
DENTON	9:25	1:20	1:40	5:10	5:35	7:30	8:5
BRAFIELD	9:30	1:25	1:45	5:15	5:40	7:35	8:10
LITTLE HOUGHTON	9:35	1:30	1:50	5:20	5:45	7:40	8:15
GREAT HOUGHTON	9:40	1:35	1:55	5:25	5:50	7:45	8:20

Passengers picked up and set down at Derrogate, Back of Isst Office.

The Proprietors will make every effort to maintain the Services but reserve the right to alter or suspend.

A. MINNEY, Yardley Hastings.

Agnes Minney's Comfy Bus Service timetable circa 1928, taken from a deteriorating, dilapidated and repaired copy.

MINNEY. Agnes - YARDLEY HASTINGS

After Agnes Minney's fleet comprised two vehicles, a separate workers' service was run from Yardley Hastings to Barker's Shoe Factory at Earls Barton and around 1928, when the L.M.S. Railway withdrew its early workers' train from Bedford to Northampton a request was made by Olney residents for an early bus, which Agnes Minney supplied at a weekly fare of 5/-d (25p).

From 25th March 1928 Agnes Minney leased from the Compton Estates Company of Castle Ashby an area of land comprising approximately 760 square feet, in Little Street, Yardley Hastings for the purpose of erecting a garage. The building erected on the land, with the financial assistance of the landlord, could accommodate two buses and a further two could unofficially be parked on the approach to the building. The approach road was a right of way for other land users but no doubt access was rarely required at night time when buses might be parked there. The original lease was for a period of sixty-three years and it was subsequently assigned to Mrs Sarah Knight, Eastern National and United Counties, the latter operator still using what remained of the original building until 24th March 1997. Prior to securing this dedicated garage site in Little Street, Agnes Minney had parked her vehicles behind the house known as "Fernbank" in Little Lane.

One of the busiest days in the calendar for Agnes Minney's buses was Good Friday when a shuttle service was operated from Becket's Well, Northampton to Denton Woods for primrose picking which was a traditional pastime on this particular day. A return fare of 1/-d (5p) was charged for the trip.

Competition with Knight's of Denton in particular and Law's of Brafield and the Northampton Motor Omnibus Company, put a great strain on the Minney fleet and business. Something had to be done and a fine twenty-seater Star Flyer with Willowbrook body was purchased new in December 1927. It was registered RP 5179 on 5th of that month and the Minneys travelled to Loughborough to fetch it. Undoubtedly the Star Flyer improved Agnes Minney's competitive edge but only one new vehicle could be afforded. A second-hand REO was purchased from C E Billington of Duston as a back-up vehicle and this machine was registered NH 5614 and dated from 1924. The Minney family used "Comfy" Bus Service as a trading name and the word "Comfy" appeared on the sides of each vehicle from the time the business started. The final vehicle to be purchased by Agnes Minney was a Chevrolet LO model which seated 14 passengers and was registered RP 6276 on 17th July 1928.

The introduction of new buses did not solve the Minneys' financial problems as competition, particularly with Knight's, proved just too much for the resources of the Yardley Hastings business. The competition from the Northampton Motor Omnibus Company had been replaced by the National Omnibus & Transport Co Ltd (later Eastern National) from 7th April 1928. Additionally it was becoming clear that the impending Road Traffic Act of 1930 was likely to impose much tighter controls on the operation of public service vehicles and accordingly arrangements were made to sell the business along with the Star Flyer and Chevrolet to Sarah Knight of Denton for the sum of £500. Unfortunately the date of sale is not known but it is believed to have taken place in 1930.

MINNEY, Agnes - YARDLEY HASTINGS



Alf Minney, Sid Lack and Doug Minney pose alongside the Willowbrook bodied Star Flyer that was registered RP 5179 in December 1927.

Of the Minney family, all three sons transferred with the business to Knight's as drivers. Alf stayed with this latter firm until the stage carriage services were acquired by Eastern National in 1939 and he transferred to Eastern National's employment at this time and finally to United Counties in 1952 where he worked at the Yardley Hastings outstation until his retirement in 1971. Fred and Doug Minney did not remain with Knight's for long and found alternative employment. Jabez Minney survived until 1944 when he died at the age of 74 whilst Agnes outlived her husband by eleven years, passing away in 1955 aged 84 years. Fred, Alf and Doug have also since died.

Postscript: *The Author interviewed Alfred Minney in the late 1960s and Alf was fairly certain that the first motor bus was acquired in 1923 and he mentioned the firm having only two Chevrolets in the early period of its existence. A fellow researcher later similarly interviewed Doug Minney and obtained almost exactly the same story. If it is correct that bus operations were started in 1923 then the Minneys purchased three Chevrolet buses and this is reflected in the foregoing narrative. If however it is correct that Agnes Minney possessed only two Chevrolets then operations must have started in 1926 when RP2080 was new and not in 1923. For the time being this inconsistency can only be noted pending the discovery of newspaper or other reports of the 1920s to verify operation of Minney's bus service during the 1923-6 period.*

MINNEY, Agnes - YARDLEY HASTINGS

Rolling Stock:

REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			PREVIOUS OWNER	INITIAL DISPOSAL	NOTES
	MAKE	TYPE	NO.	MAKE	TYPE/ SEATS	NO.	NEW	S/H	W/D			
?	Chevrolet				B14		?	-/23	9/26?			
RP 2080	Chevrolet	R	6926T		B14F		2/26	-	12/27?			1
RP 3286	Chevrolet	X	10631		B14F		9/26	-	7/28?			2
RP 5179	Star	Flyer VB4	714	Willow- brook	B20F	2062	12/27	-	-/30		S J Knight, Denton	
NH 5614	REO	27-28hp		Billington?	B		-/24	-/28?	11/30	C E Billington, Duston	No subsequent owner	3
RP 6276	Chevrolet	LO	43132		B14F		7/28	-	-/30		S J Knight, Denton	

- Notes:**
- 1 - RP 2080 last licensed to R Bussey, Holcot 12/31.
 - 2 - RP 3286 last licensed to J T Jeremy, Brynmawr 3/32.
 - 3 - NH 5614 last licensed to Agnes Minney 11/30 - presumably as a goods vehicle.