

# Bygone Buses

of  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-BE2  
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## BELGROVE. Francis John Woodward COLD HIGHAM

Francis Belgrove entered the bus operating world between the two Wars, when he purchased what was described as a "ton truck and top" from the Northampton Ford Agent - Henry Oliver of George Row. This model T Ford cost Belgrove £160 and it was registered RP 806 on 7th April 1925, being delivered to its owner two days later. Presumably Francis Belgrove used RP 806 as both a lorry and a bus and when in use for passenger carrying purposes it was equipped with a top section which seated six passengers longitudinally each side and two with the driver. As far as can be ascertained the top section, which fitted onto the lorry sides, was supplied with the vehicle by Oliver's.



*Ford T - RP 806 - photographed at Belgrove's Cold Higham premises on 12th August 1926, from which it can be seen that the machine was basically a lorry which could be converted for use as a passenger carrying vehicle.*

Precisely when Francis Belgrove commenced operating a bus service from Cold Higham via Foster's Booth, Astcote, Eastcote and Rothersthorpe to Northampton is not clear. It was probably not until May 1927, when he applied to Northampton Borough Council Watch Committee and was allocated a stand at George Row, Northampton and authorised to operate between 15th May 1927 and 25th March 1928. If he ran before this date he must have terminated at a public house yard.

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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Evidently Belgrove's operations generated sufficient finance to permit him to order a saloon bus from Henry Oliver which, after handing over £301 in payment, was supplied on 31st August 1926. Unfortunately the registration number of this Ford T has not been identified but it may have been RP 3247. In the following year Francis Belgrove bought his first Reo bus which was supplied by Allchin & Son of Northampton, having been registered RP 5102 on 7th November 1927.



*A photograph of Francis Belgrove's Reo registered RP 5102, taken in 1929.*

Francis Belgrove's next recorded acquisition came in December 1934 but he may well have acquired at least one other Reo and a Tilling-Stevens between 1928 and 1934. Be that as it may, Francis bought a Commer with a twenty-four seat Thurgood body and this took the registration NV 4633 on 1st December 1934.

Returning to Francis Belgrove's local bus service, it seems that he was soon operating between Cold Higham and Northampton via several different routes according to the day of the week and the time of the day. He provided a Mondays to Saturdays workers' facility operating via Towcester and the A43 to Northampton whilst on the market days of Wednesdays and Saturdays he ran most journeys via Banbury Lane and Rothersthorpe but routed some runs via Tiffield. Following the introduction of the Road Traffic Act of 1930, Francis Belgrove made application for three Road Service Licences from Cold Higham to Northampton. The first was routed via Foster's Booth, Astcote, Towcester, Blisworth and Milton to the Bridge Street Car Park in Northampton whilst the second

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route proceeded via Foster's Booth, Pattishall, Astcote, Caldecote, Tiffield, Blisworth and Milton to Northampton. The third route took in the villages of Foster's Booth, Pattishall, Astcote, Eastcote and Rothersthorpe. In 1933 the routes were extended in a westerly direction to serve the village of Grimscote and at about the same time Francis Belgrove was granted an Excursions and Tours Licence to operate from Cold Higham with pick-ups at Foster's Booth, Pattishall, Astcote, Caldecote, Tiffield and Rothersthorpe.

### F. BELGROVE'S BUS SERVICE

Between Cold Higham and Northampton (Borough Coach Park Bridge Street.)

#### SATURDAY

Leave	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Grimscote ...	6 25	9 55	11 25	...	3 10	...	6 55	8 30
Cold Higham...	6 28	9 58	11 28	1 43	3 13	5 28	6 58	8 33
Fosters Booth...	6 30	10 0	11 30	1 45	3 15	5 30	7 0	8 35
Pattishall ...	...	10 3	11 33	1 48	3 18	5 33	7 3	8 38
Astcote ...	6 35	10 5	11 35	1 50	3 20	5 35	7 5	8 40
Caldecote ...	...	10 14	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tiffield ...	...	10 20	...	...	...	...	...	...
Eastcote ...	Via Towcester 6-50	...	11 40	1 55	3 25	5 40	7 10	8 45
Banbury Lane...	...	...	11 45	2 0	3 30	5 45	7 15	8 50
Rothersthorpe..	...	...	11 50	2 5	3 35	5 50	7 20	8 55
Northampton ar	7 15	10 40	12 10	2 25	3 55	6 10	7 40	9 15

Leave N'pton	7 30	10 45	12 30	2 30	4 0	6 15	7 45	9 30
			Via Tiffield & Towcester		Via Tiffield			

#### WEDNESDAY

#### SUNDAY

	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Grimscote ...	...	9 55	2 10	...	6 45	...	...
Cold Higham ...	6 28	9 58	2 13	4 58	6 48	1 13	8 58
Fosters Booth ...	6 30	10 0	2 15	5 0	6 50	1 15	9 0
Pattishall ...	...	10 3	2 18	5 2	6 52	1 17	9 3
Astcote ...	6 35	10 5	2 0	5 5	6 55	1 19	9 5
Caldecote ...	...	10 14	2 0	...	...	...	...
Tiffield ...	...	10 20	1 55	...	...	...	...
Eastcote ...	Via Towcester 6-50	...	2 20	5 7	7 0	1 24	9 10
Banbury Lane...	...	...	2 28	5 12	7 8	1 32	9 18
Rothersthorpe...	...	...	2 35	5 15	7 15	1 39	9 25
Northampton ar.	7 15	10 40	2 50	5 30	7 30	2 0	9 45

Leave N'pton	...	1 30	4 0	6 0	7 30	2 30	9 50
		Via Tiffield	Via Tiffield	Via Towcester			

#### Daily via Towcester

Cold Higham	Fosters Booth	Astcote	Towcester	Blisworth	Northampton
6-28 a.m.	6-30	6-35	6-50	7	7-15
Leave Northampton 6 p.m. Saturday 12-30					

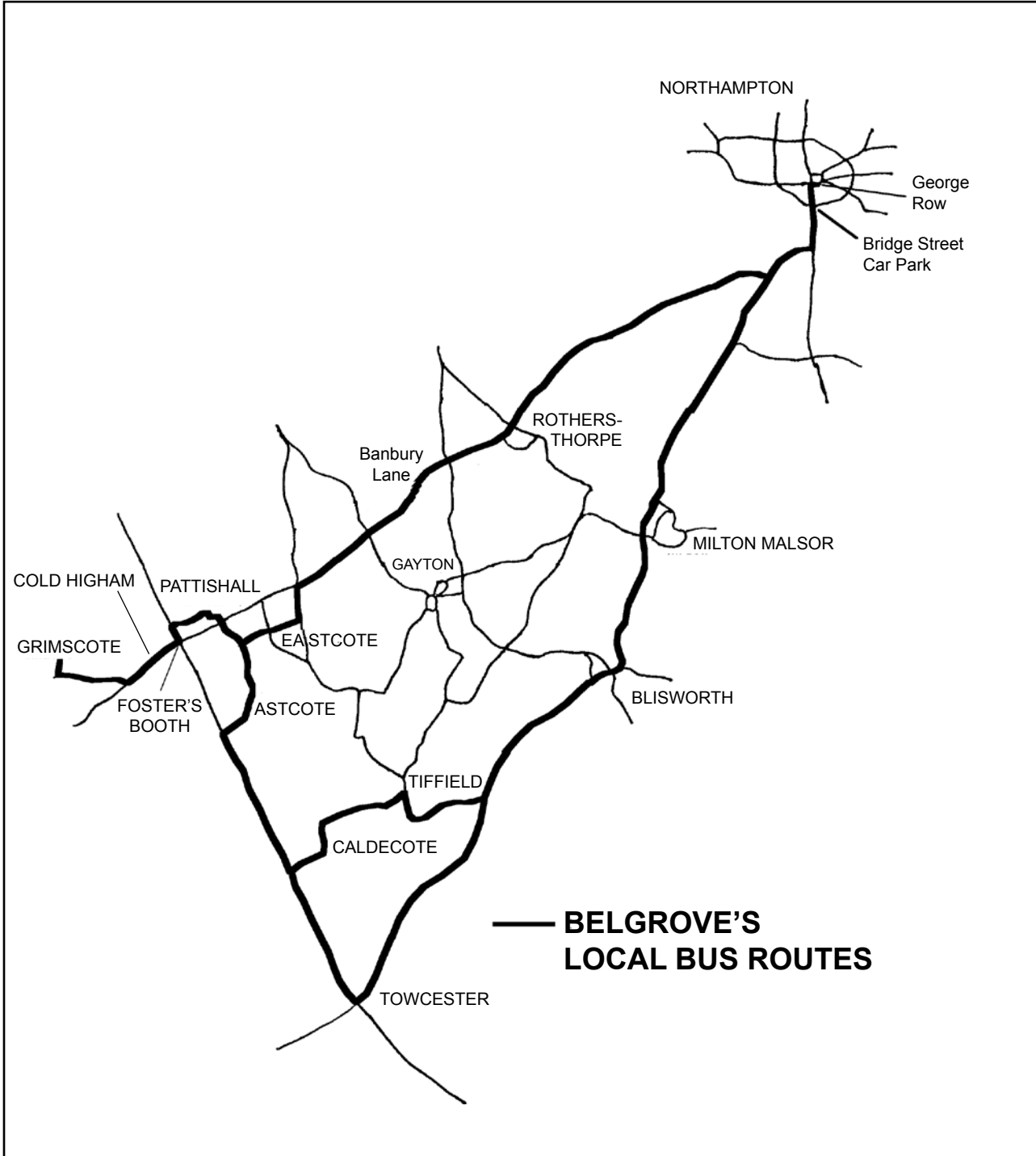
#### Friday for Towcester

Leave Cold Higham 10-30      Leave Towcester 12-30

17/6/36

*A facsimile of Belgrove's Timetable dated 17th June 1936.*

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*A route diagram of Francis Belgrove's local services.*

The livery adopted by Francis Belgrove for his fleet was red, black and cream. Originally he used punch type tickets on his local services and at an unknown date in the 1930s he changed to using the Bell Punch "Automaticket" system, later known as the "Bellgraphic" and continued with this system throughout his career.

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A facsimile of a Bell Punch "Automaticket" ticket printed black and orange on a buff paper for F Belgrove.

It seems that Francis Belgrove was pleased with the Commer saloon he purchased in 1934 as he bought another one two years later. This vehicle comprised a PN3 chassis coupled with a body of unknown manufacture, seating twenty passengers. It was registered NV 8218 on 20th November 1936 and it clearly gave every satisfaction to its owner, for when Belgrove required another vehicle he once more turned to Commer to supply it. Messrs. Grose Ltd of Northampton acted as agent and when delivered on 2nd May 1939 it was registered ARP 727.



*Commer ARP 727 with its attractive fully-fronted bodywork was photographed at Belgrove's property at Cold Higham, in the snow of the winter of 1947.*

Little is known of Francis Belgrove's operations during the War but he did acquire a 1933 S.O.S. with Short bodywork from Messrs. R L Seemarks & Sons of Rushden. This machine was registered FT 2849 and, like all S.O.S. IM6 models, was of unusual appearance due to being designed with a radiator fitted off-centrally.

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*Brush bodied S.O.S. - FT 2849 - can be seen here having ended its passenger carrying duties and being used as living quarters.*

### F. Belgrove's Bus Service between COLD HIGHAM & NORTHAMPTON.

Starting from Mayorhold, Northampton.

**CIRCULAR ROUTE 1/6 Return.**

On Wednesdays - Northampton dep 4-0 pm

	Saturdays					Wednesdays					Sundays	
	AM.	AM.	PM.	PM.	PM.	AM.	PM.	PM.	PM.	PM.	PM.	
Grimscoate ...dep	6 25	1025	265	525	755	6 25	1025	255	455	..	7 0	..
Cold Higham ...	6 28	1028	258	528	8 0	6 28	1028	258	458	1 13	7 3	..
Fosters Booth ...	6 30	1030	3 0	530	8 2	6 34	1030	3 0	5 0	1 15	7 5	..
Pattishall ...	..	1033	3 3	533	8 5	..	1033	3 3	5 2	1 17	7 19	..
Astcote ...	6 35	1035	3 5	535	8 7	6 40	1035	3 5	5 5	1 19	7 15	..
Caldecote ...	..	1044	..	..	..	..	1044	..	..	..	..	..
Tiffeld ...	..	1050	..	..	..	..	1050	..	..	..	..	..
Eastcote ...	..	..	3 10	540	8 10	..	..	..	..	1 24	7 20	..
Banbury Lane ...	..	..	3 15	545	8 15	..	..	..	..	1 32	7 25	..
Rothersthorpe ...	..	..	3 30	550	8 20	..	..	..	..	1 39	7 35	..
Northampton ar	7 15	1110	340	610	9 0	7 15	1110	340	530	2 0	7 50	..

Dep Northampton Sat. 7-30 am. 12-30 via Tiffeld & Towcester, 4-0 via Tiffeld, 7-0 (via Rothersthorpe) & 9-0 pm Wednesdays—7-30, 2-0 & 4-0 via Tiffeld, 6-0 via Towcester Sunday 2-0 & 8-0 p.m.  
Daily via Towcester—Cold Higham 6-28, F. Booth 6-30, Astcote 6-35, Towcester 6-50, Blisworth 7-0, arr Northampton 7-15 am Dep Northampton 6-8 pm (1230 Sats)  
Fridays for Towcester, Cold Higham 1030 Dep Towcester 1230

*Francis Belgrove's post-War timetable taken from the local "Enterprise" timetable.*

#### BELGROVE. Francis - COLD HIGHAM

After the War Francis Belgrove made his final purchase of a new vehicle and he chose a Guy Arab III chassis powered by a Gardner 6LW engine. The vehicle in question was supplied by Westonia Garage of Northampton and it was fitted with a thirty-five seat Thurgood body. It joined Belgrove's fleet on 15th August 1947 registered DRP 256.



*A rear view of Guy Arab III coach DRP 256 showing the attractive lines of the post-War Thurgood body.*

Unfortunately Francis Belgrove died in 1949 and left the business to his daughters who continued to run the outfit for some months whilst trying to sell it. In March 1950 Mabel and Olive Belgrove sold the concern at auction to Harry Dunnnett of Wellingborough, who immediately re-sold it to Harry Webster of Pattishall, and so ended the Belgrove connection with bus services.

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#### Rolling Stock:

REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			ACQUIRED FROM	INITIAL DISPOSAL	NOTES
	MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE/ SEATS	NO.	NEW	S/H	W/D			
RP 806	Ford	T	10636858		Lry/bus B14F B		4/25	-	By-/33	H Oliver, N'pton		1
?	Ford	T					8/26	-		H Oliver, N'pton		2
RP 5102	Reo	Pullman?	147601		B F		11/27	-	By-/32	Allchin, N'pton	W Gibson, Walgrave	3
NV 4633	Commer	B3	59009	Thurgood	B24	533	12/34	-	12/47		Chs. Dunnett, W'boro /Webster, Pattishall	4
NV 8218	Commer	PN3	46544	Grose?	B20F		11/36	-	By8/46	Grose, N'pton		
ARP 727	Commer	PLNF5	87E041		FC26F		5/39	-	3/50	Grose, N'pton	/Surman, Chinnor Dunnett, W'boro/ Webster, Pattishall	
FT 2849	S.O.S.	IM6	1703	Short	B34F		4/33	10/42	3/50	R L Seamarks & Sons, Rushden	Dunnett, W'boro/ Webster Pattishall	
DRP 256	Guy	Arab III (6LW)	FD29487	Thurgood	C35F	368	8/47	-	3/50	Westonia Garage, Northampton	Dunnett, W'boro/ Webster, Pattishall	

Notes: 1 - Last owner H Eldred, Spratton and last licensed 9/33.

2 - Possibly registered RP3247. If so, transferred to a Buckinghamshire operator.

3 - Last licensed 9/32

4 - Last owner S R Gough, Bracknell and last licensed 11/52.

#### Possible vehicles

RP 9907 - Commer - 28193 - Supplied new by Grose, Northampton to Belgrove 3/31 and withdrawn by -/46. This vehicle was probably a van but it may have been a bus. It was last owned by Lee and Arthur, Liphook and last licensed 12/46.

There may have been another Reo, a Tilling-Stevens and another Commer in the fleet.