

# Bygone Buses

of  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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## **JOHNSON. William Harold & WELSFORD. Reginald John William t/a JOHNSON'S MOTORS Quorn Road, later Washbrook Road RUSHDEN**

Johnson's Motors was formed by William Johnson and Reginald Welsford as a commercial garage business repairing and servicing cars, retailing petrol and later selling cars from premises in Quorn Road, just off Washbrook Road, Rushden. Billy Johnson had led a colourful life and worked for Robert Marriott, the well known Rushden builders, as a mechanic servicing that firms vehicles. Reg Welsford also worked for Marriott's but as a carpenter and joiner.

It was no doubt as a result of their acquaintance at Marriott's that Johnson and Welsford got together to set up a business trading as Johnson's Motors. Billy Johnson was also commonly known as "Stiffy" Johnson but as he was a competent boxer it may be that people did not refer to him by his nickname to his face! Billy Johnson tended to look after the mechanical side of the partnership's business whilst Reg Welsford, who was more of a businessman, tended to look after the administrative and sales side of the outfit.

Soon after the War, either late in 1945 or early in 1946 Johnson's began coach operating acquiring a number of second-hand Bedford WTB models with a variety of bodies. The first three were registered DYF 751 with Duple Hendonian bodywork, FW 9190 probably with a body by Clark of Scunthorpe and DOF 195 with coachwork by Burlingham. During 1947 two more Bedford WTBs were taken into stock with ANV 360 being purchased from fellow operator Fred Abbott of Doddington and ETG 295 which came from a Welsh operator.

*The photograph at the top of the following page shows Johnson's Motors, Quorn Road, Rushden garage and staff and was probably taken in 1949. Coincidentally it includes the rear ends of DOF 195 and DYF 751, the latter complete with roof-rack and steps to reach it. The garage is believed to have been built circa 1947, comprising a large Nissen-type hut at the rear with a brick facing. Reg Welsford is the gentleman 6th from the left, Billy Johnson is 4th from the left and his son Keith is 3rd from the left.*

*(Photo courtesy A J George)*

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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*Fortunately a picture of the Burlingham bodied Bedford WTB registered DOF 195 is available albeit photographed after it had passed to Denis Judd of Byfield in 1949.*

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*In this view taken at Higham Ferrers Square can be seen Johnson's Bedford WTBs ANV 360 with Duple Hendonian body and ETG 295 with Willmotts body.*

*(Photo courtesy A J George)*



*Included for good measure is another shot of Johnson's Bedford WTBs showing from left to right what is thought to be FW 9190, DOF 195 and ANV 360.*



### JOHNSON'S MOTORS - RUSHDEN

During 1948 and 1949 two more coaches were purchased, the first of which was a somewhat larger Dennis Lancet II carrying a thirty-five seat Dennis body. It was ten years old when Johnson's bought it and it carried the registration CAC 380. The second acquisition followed in March 1949 when Fred Abbott was disposing of his Leyland Tiger TS7 bearing the registration CAL 829, for which Johnson's found a home. This vehicle replaced Bedford DOF 195 which moved to the west of the County for further use by Denis Judd of Byfield. Just a glimpse of CAL 829 can be seen in paper NN-AB2 covering the story of Fred Abbott's coaching activities.



*CAC 380 was an all-Dennis Lancet of 1938 vintage and was photographed not whilst with Johnson's but with its next operator, Ford's of Althorne in Essex.*

In the early 1950s Johnson's Motors bought another three second-hand machines - all Leyland Tigers of varying ages. The newer PS1 models were registered ACP 817 and GAW 677, seating either 33 passengers in a Bellhouse Hartwell body or 35 in Burlingham coachwork. These increased seating capacities gave the private hire department more flexibility. The third Tiger, registered KR 1170 was a TS1 model already some twenty-three years of age when Johnson's acquired it and it was bought especially for the use of builders M M Drabble to transport their workers to building sites. Drabble provided the driver and Johnson's maintained the vehicle. The year 1954 saw the intake of Johnson's first brand new coach and the model chosen was a Bedford

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SBG with Duple Vega coachwork seating thirty-six passengers. It is regretted that a photograph of this coach registered KBD 516 has eluded the Author.

For the rest of the 1950s second-hand vehicle acquisitions came thick and fast, replacing older vehicles including, rather strangely, the new 1954 Bedford SBG which was retained by Johnson's for only a little in excess of a year. Generally speaking the fleet total of five was maintained but sometimes increased for fairly short periods. The intake during this period included chassis built by A.E.C., Bedford, Commer, Crossley, Dennis, Leyland, Maudslay and Vulcan whilst the coachbuilders products of Burlingham, Duple, Mann Egerton, Metalcraft, Pearson, Thurgood, Whitson, Woodhall Nicholson and Yeates were all represented. Here follows a few illustrations of JBE 1, GUX 494, 970 FNU and FTL 754. A picture of FNV 256 purchased from Fred Abbott can be seen in paper NN-AB2. Generally Johnson's coaches were painted in a light grey livery with light green reliefs although there were variations in the second colour with both blue and orange being quoted by those recalling the fleet.



*Johnson's bought JBE 1, a 1952 A.E.C. Regal IV with Burlingham Seagull body in October 1956 and it gave fours years service to its new owners.*

*(Photo courtesy D M Bailey)*

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*This classic Metalcraft bodied Maudslay Marathon III joined the Johnson fleet as late as 1957 by which time half-cab coaches were looking a little old fashioned. To modernise it a little, GUX 494 was soon converted to full front specification.*



*Messrs. York, Ward & Rowlatt of Wellingborough converted GUX 494 from half-cab to fully-fronted specification as can be seen in this picture of the Maudslay Marathon when parked in the Rushden garage of Johnson's Motors.*



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*When Johnson's had finished with Duple Vega Commer Avenger II registered 970 FNU it passed to T G Dilks of Desborough in whose ownership it is seen in this photograph.*



*Leyland Royal Tiger FTL 754 with Duple Ambassador coachwork came to Johnson's from the Delaine of Bourne stable but by the time this photograph was taken in the early 1960s its front grille had been replaced by one of a different design.*

## JOHNSON'S MOTORS - RUSHDEN

Johnson's built a new car showroom and offices on a site at the corner of Washbrook Road and Quorn Road, Rushden which was opened by November 1953 adjacent to the existing Quorn Road garage structure. The firm's registered office was transferred from Quorn Road to the new address of Washbrook Road at this time although the move was but a matter of a few yards.

Johnson's Motors decided that for the 1954 summer season they would like to run a programme of excursions and tours starting from their Quorn Road garage at Rushden. Having not previously held Road Service Licences, Johnson's submitted their application to the Traffic Commissioners in April 1954 requesting authorisation to operate thirteen tours as follows:- Matlock & Matlock Bath; Cotswold Country; Farnborough; Brighton; Southend; Wembley; Olympia & Earls Court; Haringay Arena; London Casino Theatre; Northampton New Theatre; Bournemouth; Bath, Cheddar Caves & Gorge and Peterborough for Theatre/Football/Shopping. Both United Counties and Seamarks (Motors) Ltd who already held excursion licences from Rushden, not surprisingly, objected as did Birch Bros. and British Rail. Following negotiations the applications for Matlock & Matlock Bath; Southend and Bath, Cheddar Caves & Gorge were withdrawn by Johnson's. The rest were all refused by the Traffic Commissioners with the exception of the excursion to Northampton New Theatre, which was granted for pre-booked parties only.

Johnson's next encounter with the Traffic Commissioners was more productive as Unilever Ltd decided to provide dedicated transport for their staff working at the somewhat remote Colworth House at Sharnbrook. Johnson's Motors provided the coaches for this operation for which an Express Road Service Licence was required, starting from Johnson's garage at Rushden. The necessary application was lodged with the Commissioners, was granted and the service commenced on 21st January 1957. Incidentally, Johnson's excursion licence was given the Traffic Commissioners reference TER 3578/1 and the Rushden - Colworth House express service TER 3578/2. No further licences were held by Johnson's prior to the formation of a limited company, to be described later.

As recorded in paper NN-AB2 concerning the history of Abbott's Coaches of Great Doddington, Fred Abbott had for a considerable number of years worked closely with Johnson's Motors, offering mutual assistance as and when operating circumstances required such co-operation. Following a period of ill-health being experienced by Fred Abbott in the 1953/4 period Johnson's were particularly co-operative, providing drivers for Fred Abbott. As a result, some years later, the two firms decided to amalgamate, with the coach operations trading as Abbott's Coaches Ltd from Johnson's Rushden premises. On 14th May 1959 both Abbott's Coaches Ltd and Johnson's Motors (Rushden) Ltd were incorporated and the stories of these limited companies are continued in papers NN-AB2A for Abbott's Coaches Ltd and in paper NN-J01A for Johnson's Motors (Rushden) Ltd.



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*The safety curtain at the Windmill Club at Rushden at one time featured an advertisement for Johnson's Motors and also depicted a line drawing of a Bedford OB.*

*The Author is grateful to the late Reg Welsford, his daughter Jose, Bernard Coker and many others who have added snippets of information for this paper.*

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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			
	DYF 751	Bedford	WTB	111444	Duple Hendonian	C26R	8845	-/37	c11/45	c2/52	Garner, London W5	Arlington and exported to Egypt	
	FW 9190	Bedford	WTB	111086	Clark?	C25F	—	5/37	c-/46	by 12/54	Enterprise, Boston	Pond, Bishopsteignton	
	DOF 195	Bedford	WTB	111435	Burlingham	C26F	—	6/37	by 12/46	-/49	Crumpton, Stourbridge	Judd, Byfield	
	ANV 360	Bedford	WTB	112369	Duple Hendonian	C26F	3811	-/38	c1/47	c-/55	Abbott, Gt.Doddington	Drabble Construction, Wellingborough	
	ETG 295	Bedford	WTB	20016	Willmotts	C24F	—	-/39	by 8/47	-/55	Thomas, Nelson	Gourd, Bishopsteignton	
	CAC 380	Dennis	Lancet II	175443	Dennis	C35F	—	4/38	10/48	by 6/53	Harrison, Nuneaton	Ford, Althorne	
	CAL 829	Leyland	Tiger TS7	9578	Duple	C33F	—	5/36	3/49	-/52	Abbott, Gt.Doddington	Marriott, Rushden/Redden, Wellingboro'	
	ACP 817	Leyland	Tiger PS1/1	470667	Bellhouse Hartwell	C33F	—	5/48	12/51	5/55	Holdsworth, Halifax	Cannon, Tipton	
	GAW 677	Leyland	Tiger PS1/1	496417	Burlingham	FC35F	4415	5/50	2/53	by 10/56	Whittle, Highley	Mowbray, Lanchester	
	KR 1170	Leyland	Tiger TS1	60971	Plaxton	C32F	—	2/30	by 11/53	c-/55	A.T.O., Pinxton	Drabble Construction, Wellingborough?	1
	KBD 516	Bedford	SBG	26691	Duple Vega	C36F	—	3/54	—	5/55	—	Dilks, Desborough	
	FBH 66	Bedford	WTB	2108	?	C25F	—	8/38	4/55	?	Errington, Evington/Grummitt, Whittlesey	?	
	JV 9949	Dennis	Lancet III	120J3	Yeates	C35F	—	5/47	7/55	7/56	Bingley, Hemsworth	Hutchinson, Middleton	
	FNV 256	Leyland	Tiger PS1/1	495743	Whitson	C33F	—	12/49	6/56	5/59	Abbott, Gt.Doddington	Abbott's Coaches Ltd, Rushden	
	JAX 295	Vulcan	6PF	4810	Mann Egerton	FC31F	—	3/50	?	7/57	Smith, Murton	Mill Engineering, Caldecott	
	JBE 1	A.E.C.	Regal IV	9821E520	Burlingham	C37C	5146	4/52	10/56	5/59	Meller, Goxhill	Abbott's Coaches Ltd, Rushden	
	EX 6465	Crossley	SD42/7	98062	Seagull Yeates	C35F	121	-/49	12/56	-/58	Felix, Gt.Yarmouth	Kershaw, Batford	
	ERA 96	Leyland	Tiger TS8	16922	Woodhall Nicholson	C32F	—	12/37	4/57	6/57	Mill Engineering, Caldecott	Say, Gloucester	

NOTES: 1 - KR 1170 - the Plaxton body probably dated from 1938.

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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			
	HPP 773	Bedford	OB	23285	Thurgood	C29F	151	7/46	By 6/57	7/57	Pilot, High Wycombe	Lord, Rushden	
	KBH 384	Bedford	OB	48907	Thurgood	C29F	331	5/47	by 6/57	by 4/58	Pilot, High Wycombe	Marriott, Rushden	
	PRE 498	Bedford	OB	78375	Duple Vista	C29F	51183	-/48	by 7/57	-/58	Greatrex, Stafford	Chandler, Seaham	
	GUX 494	Maudslay	Marathon III	79515	Metalcraft	C37F	—	6/51	8/57	5/59	Jones, Mkt.Drayton	Abbott's Coaches Ltd, Rushden	1
	KGU 717	Commer	Q4	15B8574S	Pearson	C30F	—	6/49	10/58	by 5/59	Cunningham, Hempnall	?	
	970 FNU	Commer	Avenger IV	94A0115	Duple Vega	C41F	1090/1	2/58	by 1/59	5/59	Reeder, Chilwell	Abbott's Coaches Ltd, Rushden	
	FTL 754	Leyland	Royal Tiger PSU1/15	511098	Duple Ambassador	C41C	84/6	3/52	3/59	5/59	Delaine, Bourne	Abbott's Coaches Ltd, Rushden	

NOTES: 1 - GUX 494 converted to FC37F by -/59.