

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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NUTT. William Charles
t/a Bluebell Motor Services

Harpole Iron Works

HARPOLE

The village of Harpole was blessed with two bus operators both of whom commenced business in the 1920/1 period, operated similar services and, it appears, competed fiercely with each other. The two bus proprietors in question were W C Nutt who features in this paper and A R Surridge who is the subject of paper NN-SU2.

William Charles Nutt was a blacksmith and although his address is shown as Harpole Iron Works, it was known locally as "The Blacksmith's". His smithy was situated in the High Street near its junction with School Lane and, to the south of it, in the early 1900s Bill Nutt built his home from the stone reclaimed from former cottages which stood on the site. This residence is now known as Shenstone House but it was not named whilst in Nutt's ownership.

As is so often the case when trying to piece together the early history of bus operators some sixty to seventy years after their demise, conflicting evidence and incomplete information are commonly faced by the researcher. This is certainly the case with Nutt's business, mainly because lorries or vans were operated as well as passenger vehicles and there is virtually no photographic evidence to help clarify points of uncertainty.

However, what is certain is that after the Great War Bill Nutt found that his trade in shoeing horses declined dramatically and this situation led him to diversifying into road transport. The Motor Transport Year Books indicate that Nutt started business in August 1920 but such volumes that the Author has seen were written some years after the event and are certainly not always accurate. If Bill Nutt did start at this time it was with a lorry rather than a bus and BD 1080, a model T Ford likely to have been registered in 1919 with a re-issued registration mark, fits the bill, although there is no evidence available to show the date on which Nutt acquired it.

William Charles Nutt was joined in his transport business, at the outset, by his two sons Stanley William and Cyril and the trading name "Bluebell Motor Services" was adopted, the livery being predominantly blue. Stanley was a driver and Cyril was the mechanic.

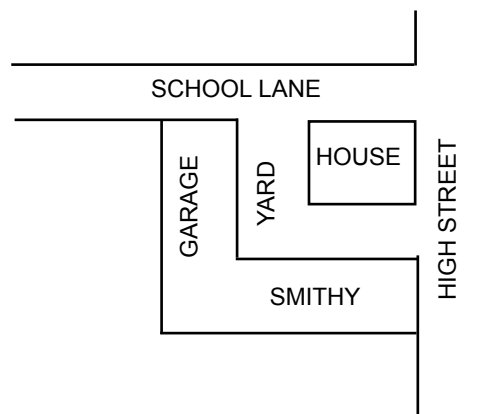
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On 15th July 1921 Bill Nutt ordered a Ford T charabanc from Northampton dealer Henry Oliver Ltd and this was delivered on 20th October 1921. The vehicle was fitted with a fourteen seat body built by Messrs Goodwin of Oxford Street, Daventry and undoubtedly Henry Oliver Ltd arranged for this to be done as they were supplying a complete vehicle. The time lapse between July 1921 when the bus was ordered and October 1921 when it was delivered seems to confirm this view. The vehicle in question was almost certainly registered to Nutt as BD 6139 in October 1921.

Meanwhile, application was made to Northampton Borough Council for a Hackney Carriage Licence to allow the bus to take up and set down passengers at the St. Andrew's Road bus stand, this being granted with effect from 18th November 1921. Bill Nutt was at this stage equipped to commence his bus service from Harpole Village to Northampton operating via the main A45 road and Upton.

Immediately following the commencement of this service, on 21st November 1921 Bill Nutt ordered another Ford T from Henry Oliver Ltd but this time only the chassis was specified, being delivered on 17th December 1921 at a cost of £175. No doubt Bill Nutt talked to Messrs Goodwin of Daventry and found that he could get a bus body direct from them more cheaply than placing the order via Henry Oliver Ltd, as this second Ford T was also fitted with Goodwin's coachwork. The registration mark for this machine had not been discovered. Concurrently an additional Hackney Carriage Licence was granted by the Watch Committee of Northampton Borough Council on 12th December 1921 to permit Nutt's second Ford T to stand at St. Andrew's Road, Northampton.

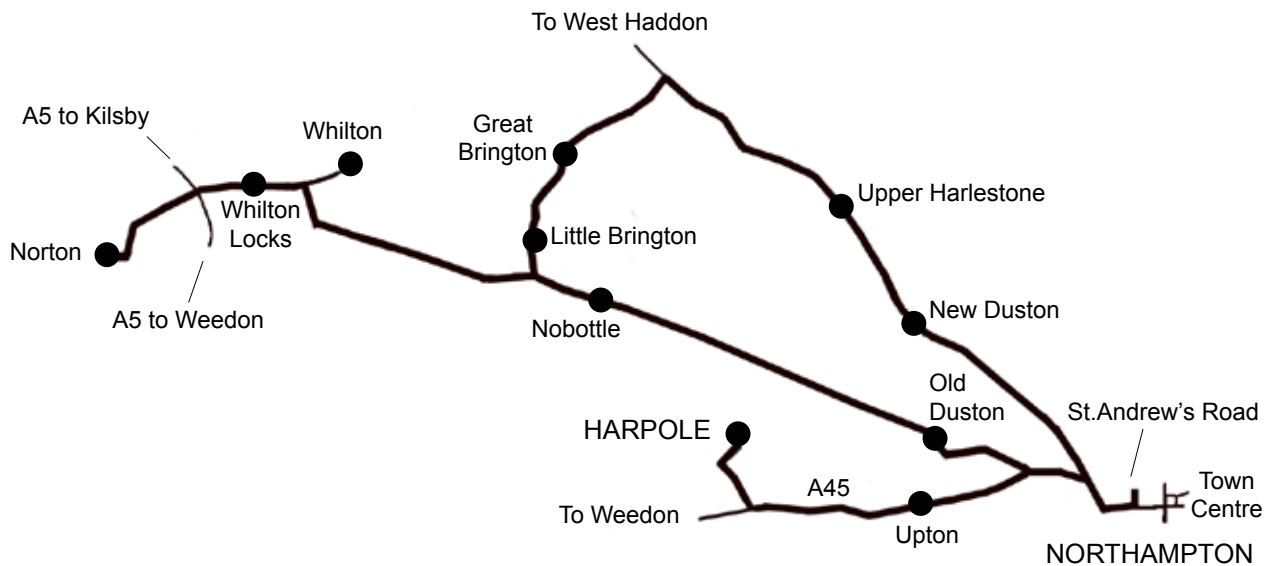
To provide garage accommodation for his motor vehicles, Bill Nutt added a building at the rear of his house which, with the smithy, formed an "L-shaped" structure between the High Street and School Lane.



As the 1920s progressed, Bill Nutt expanded his services and acquired additional rolling stock. Apart from the daily Harpole - Northampton direct service, a Saturday only route from Great Brington via Little Brington, Nobottle and Old Duston to Northampton was started in 1922. Another route from Little Brington via Great Brington, Upper Harlestone

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and New Duston to Northampton, St. Andrew's Road was inaugurated at an unknown date. Private hire and a limited excursion programme were also undertaken. On the haulage side it is understood that the main thrust of the business was the conveyance of footwear from the various Northampton factories to London where, in time, a daily service was operated.



With regard to rolling stock, on the passengers side Bill Nutt added two Star vehicles in 1922/3 registered BD 6423 and BD 7510, the first of which was fitted with a locally built Hasker body allegedly seating thirty-two passengers. The second of the two was apparently a charabanc and this was operated for two seasons only. The year 1924 saw the arrival of another two Ford Ts registered BD 8660/1, one of which may have been a van and the other a 14-seat saloon bus, and a Thornycroft registered BD 8801 supplied and bodied by Messrs York, Ward & Rowlatt of Wellingborough. It, too, is likely to have been a "Luton" type box van rather than a passenger vehicle.

Clearly Bill Nutt found Thornycroft vehicles to be highly satisfactory as subsequent purchases during the 1920s comprised vehicles built by this manufacturer. In April 1925 RP 529 entered the fleet and this was a twenty seater Hasker bodied machine. In the following year a second-hand twenty-six seat Thornycroft X bus registered BD 1671 was acquired, almost certainly through Messrs York, Ward & Rowlatt, having previously been operated by F W Clark of Rushden. Fred Clark was principally a haulier but he ran the odd bus or two in the early 1920s.

For 1927 Bill Nutt bought another two York, Ward & Rowlatt bodied Thornycrofts, registered RP 4437 and RP 4459, the first for the haulage fleet, it is believed, and the second a twenty-four seater bus. In the following year RP 5830 put in an appearance and again was a YW&R bodied Thornycroft but this time seating twenty-six passengers. The Northampton Borough Council Watch Committee Minutes of the time recorded a licence being granted to Nutt for a twenty-six seat vehicle to replace two fourteen seaters, so it

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is assumed that the original Goodwin bodied Ford Ts were retired at this juncture. Bill Nutt is said to have had a second twenty-seat Hasker bodied Thornycroft A6 but details have not come to light, although it probably replaced RP 4459 in 1929.



This photograph depicts Thornycroft A2 registered RP 4459 when subsequently owned by the Gosport & Fareham Omnibus Company. (Photo courtesy A.LaCroix/Surfleet)

Being aware of the impending Road Traffic Act of 1930 and its proposals to regulate the road passenger transport industry, Bill Nutt wrote to United Counties early in 1930 offering to sell his routes to the Company for the sum of £600 and his Thornycroft A2 and A6 buses at valuation. Nutt's receipts from his local services for 1929 were £3,478-2s-11d (£3,478.15). By the middle of February 1930 the asking price had reduced to £450 plus the two vehicles at valuation. A month later and the figure had dropped to £350 provided Nutt be permitted to operate two vehicles for private hires during the forthcoming summer, after which time he would take them out of service. Evidently United Counties was not particularly keen to acquire the routes and the matter was left to stand over for a few months.

Following the enactment of the 1930 Road Traffic Act, all bus operators were required to submit applications to the Traffic Commissioners for Road service Licences for the routes they had operated within the past year and wished to continue. This part of the Act became effective from 1st April 1931 and, accordingly, William Nutt applied for the following five licences which were all granted:-

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BLUEBELL MOTOR SERVICE (Prop. W. C. NUTT.) NORTHAMPTON AND HARPOLE.

SATURDAYS.		WEDNESDAYS.	
Leave Harpole.	Leave Northampton	Leave Harpole.	Leave Northampton
6 45 A.M.	7 0 A.M.	6 45 A.M.	7 0 A.M.
7 0	7 15	7 0	7 15
7 45	8 15	7 45	8 15
9 0	10 10	9 0	10 10
9 45	11 0	9 45	12 0 NOON
10 45	12 0 NOON	10 45	2 10 P.M.
11 15	12 20 P.M.	1 0 P.M.	3 0
12 20 P.M.	1 0	2 30	4 0
1 20	2 0	3 15	5 0
2 20	3 0	4 30	5 30
3 20	4 0	5 0	6 0
4 20	5 0	5 20	7 0
5 20	6 0	6 10	
6 20	7 0		
7 20	8 0		
8 20	9 0		
9 20	10 0		
10 20	11 0		

MONDAYS.	TUESDAYS.	FRIDAYS.	THURSDAYS.		
Leave Harpole.	Leave Northampton	Leave Harpole.	Leave Northampton	Leave Harpole.	Leave Northampton
6 45 A.M.	7 0 A.M.	6 45 A.M.	7 0 A.M.	6 45 A.M.	7 0 A.M.
7 0	7 15	7 0	7 15	7 0	7 15
7 45	8 15	7 45	8 15	7 45	8 15
12 0 NOON	2 0 P.M.	12 0 NOON	2 0	12 0 NOON	2 0
4 30	3 0	4 30	3 0	4 30	3 0
5 0	5 0	5 0	5 0	5 0	5 0
5 20	5 30	5 20	5 30	5 20	5 30
	6 0	8 15	6 0		9 0

SUNDAYS	
Leave Harpole.	Leave Northampton
11 0 A.M.	11 30 A.M.
1 30	2 10 P.M.
1 45 P.M.	3 0
2 30	6 15
5 45	8 0
8 30	10 0
9 20	

Buses leave St. Andrew's Road, Northampton.

BLUEBELL MOTOR SERVICE—Service No. 1.—GREAT AND (Prop. W. C. NUTT)

LITTLE BRINGTON AND NOBOTTLE.
SATURDAYS ONLY.

DEPART	A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
Great Brington	9 20	9 20	11 0	11 0	1 30	4 0	5 30
Little Brington	9 25	9 25	11 5	11 5	1 35	4 5	5 35
Nobottle	9 35	9 30	11 15	11 10	1 40	4 10	5 40
Northampton	9 40	10 30	11 20	1 0	3 0	5 0	7 0
							9 0
							11 0

Service No. 2—GREAT AND LITTLE BRINGTON AND HARLESTONE.

WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS.

DEPART	A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
Little Brington	9 30	11 30	2 0	4 0	6 0	8 0	10 0
Great Brington	9 35	11 35	2 5	4 5	6 5	8 5	10 5
Upper Harlestone	9 45	11 45	2 15	4 15	6 15	8 15	10 15
New Duston	9 50	11 50	2 20	4 20	6 20	8 20	10 20
Northampton	10 30	1 0	3 0	5 0	7 0	9 0	11 0

SUNDAYS.

DEPART	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
Little Brington	10 30	1 30	5 0	8 15	
Great Brington	10 35	1 35	5 5	8 20	
Upper Harlestone	10 50	1 50	5 20	8 35	
Northampton	11 30	2 30	3 0	6 15	9 15

*Saturdays only. Buses leave St. Andrew's Road, Northampton.

Bluebell Motor Service timetables current at December 1930.

- TER 319/1 Stage Great Brington - Little Brington - Nobottle - Old Duston - Northampton Weds & Sats
- TER 319/2 Stage Little Brington - Great Brington - Upper Harlestone - New Duston - Northampton Weds, Sats & Suns
- TER 319/3 Stage Harpole - Northampton (Direct) Daily
- TER 319/4 Stage Norton - Whilton Locks - Little Brington - Nobottle - Old Duston - Northampton Weds & Sats
- TER 319/5 E&T Harpole (Yarmouth/Skegness/London/Special Events)

At this point Bill Nutt replaced one of his Thornycroft buses with a new Maudslay ML3E model carrying a thirty-two seat Willowbrook body. This vehicle was registered NV 512 in July 1931 and was the last bus purchased new. However, in about April 1932, a similar machine in the fleet of G E Richardson of Hartwell was put up for sale when this latter firm was acquired by United Counties and Bill Nutt added Maudslay ML3E registered NV 331 to his fleet. Again this bus carried a thirty-two seat Willowbrook body.

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This illustration depicts the front of Willowbrook bodied Maudslay ML3E registered NV 512, with Stanley Nutt standing in front, at St. Andrew's Road, Northampton.



A rather poor illustration of Willowbrook bodied Maudslay ML3E registered NV331 whilst in the ownership of G E Richardson of Hartwell.

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In May 1932 Bill Nutt was awarded contracts to run mid-day workers' journeys within Northampton for the shoe factories of Messrs C & E Lewis and Messrs Padmore & Barnes. The former ran from St.James' to Campbell Square and return whilst the latter operated from Countess Road to Weston Favell. Initially Short Period Licences were granted by the Traffic Commissioners for these operations but following objections from Northampton Corporation Tramways Department, a substantive licence for the Padmore & Barnes operation was refused in August 1932. Over a year later, in September 1933, a new application was submitted by Bill Nutt to run mid-day workers' journeys from Hutton's Shoe Co Ltd in Countess Road to Kingsley Park and this time the licence was granted. The only other significant change to Nutt's operations was a successful application to widen the very limited scope of his Excursions & Tours Licence to include various race meetings and agricultural shows.

It appears that Bill Nutt got greater satisfaction from, or was more successful at, operating his vans rather than his buses in the now regulated world of the 1930s. It was not surprising, therefore, that on 30th December 1933 William Charles Nutt and United Counties Omnibus Co Ltd reached agreement for the former to sell and the latter to purchase the goodwill of Nutt's services between Harpole - Northampton; Great Brington - Northampton; Little Brington - Northampton; Norton - Northampton; Lewis's Factory - Campbell Square; Hutton's Factory - Kingsley Park and Excursions & Tours from Harpole. The agreed sale price was £1,800 and no vehicles were included. The usual clause preventing the vendor from operating buses in competition with United Counties for a period of ten years was included in the agreement.

United Counties duly applied to the East Midlands Traffic Commissioners in February 1934 to take over Nutt's former services and the applications were granted on 16th March 1934. The Assignment of the business was not completed legally until 7th April 1934 but, in fact, United Counties started operating Nutt's former services from Monday 29th January 1934. Whether or not the Traffic Commissioners granted dispensation for this or the operation was, in effect, on hire to Nutt until mid-March, is not clear.

So, after a little more than twelve years, Bill Nutt ceased running buses and concentrated his efforts on his goods fleet. In fact, during 1934, he bought four brand new Dennis chassis fitted with Willowbrook Luton van bodies from dealers W S Yeates of Loughborough and these were registered NV 3494, NV 3773, NV 4045 and NV 4156 respectively. The business continued in this form until December 1938 when the operation of the daily Northampton to London service was taken over by the well-known carrier PX Ltd of Rushden. It is not clear whether PX Ltd acquired Nutt's vehicles. At this point Bill Nutt retired, Stanley drove for PX Ltd and Cyril went as a mechanic to the Wellingborough motor engineers, Messrs York, Ward & Rowlatt.

The Author gratefully acknowledges information supplied by the late Stanley Nutt and the Harpole Heritage Group.

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NV 3494 was one of Bill Nutt's four Dennis Luton vans.

Express goods & parcel service. Northampton & London daily

W. C. NUTT,
Express General Carrier,
HARPOLE,
Northampton.

Phone : Kisingbury 23. :: ::

A facsimile of W C Nutt's business card.

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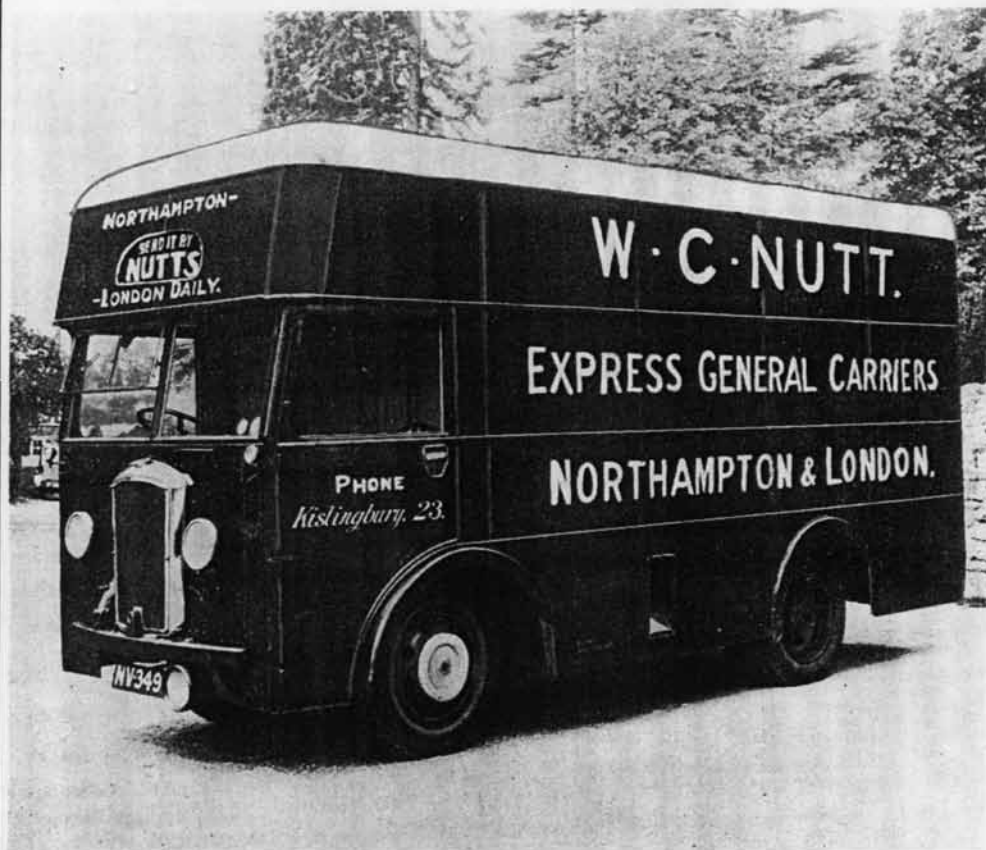
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SEND IT BY NUTTS!

Phone: _____
Kislingbury 23

THUS ENSURING SATISFACTION
by having your Goods Delivered
SPEEDILY and EFFICIENTLY. . .



One of Our Fleet of Modern Vehicles always at your service.

Photo: H. Cooper & Son.

DAILY EXPRESS SERVICES
Between LONDON AND NORTHAMPTON.

LONG DISTANCE TRANSPORT & REMOVALS A SPECIALITY. LOADS, PARCELS, TO 20 TONS

ALL GOODS FULLY INSURED.

W. C. NUTT, Harpole, Northampton.

A facsimile of one of Nutt's advertisements that appeared in the Northampton County Borough Directory of 1936. This also depicts Dennis NV 3494 with certain photographic "touching-up" to the lettering.

STOCK NO.	REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			PREVIOUS OWNER	INITIAL DISPOSAL	NOTES
		MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE & SEATS	NUMBER	NEW	S/H	W/D			
	BD 1080	Ford	T	4693949		Lorry?		c-/19	8/20?	?			1
	BD 6139	Ford	T	4615621	Goodwin	B14F		10/21	-	5/28?			2
	?	Ford	T		Goodwin	B14F		12/21	-	5/28?			
	BD 6423	Star		F1224	Hasker	B32		4/22	-	?			
	BD 7510	Star		TF1773		Ch		3/23	-	9/24			
	BD 8660	Ford	T	7949217		Van?		1/24	-	?			3
	BD 8661	Ford	T	7949049		B14F		1/24	-	?			4
	BD 8801	Thornycroft			Y.W.& R.	Luton Van?		2/24	-	12/29			5
	RP 529	Thornycroft	A1	11293	Hasker	B20		4/25	-	9/31			6
	BD 1671	Thornycroft	X	5667		B26		7/19	c4/26	12/29	F W Clark, Rushden		
	RP 4437	Thornycroft	A1	14366	Y.W.& R.	Luton Van?		5/27	-	by6/35			7
	RP 4459	Thornycroft	A2	14648	Y.W.& R.	B24F		6/27	-	-/29?			8
	RP 5830	Thornycroft	A6	16212	Y.W.& R.	B26		5/28	-	1/34			9
	?	Thornycroft	A1	?	Hasker	20		?	?	1/34			
	?	Thornycroft	A6	?	Hasker	26		-/29?		1/34			
	NV 512	Maudslay	ML3E	4976	Willowbrook	B32F	2487	7/31	-	1/34		Monty Moreton, Nuneaton	
	NV 331	Maudslay	ML3E	4997	Willowbrook	B32F	2493	6/31	c4/32	1/34	G E Richardson, Hartwell	Monty Moreton, Nuneaton	
Goods Vans subsequently operated by W C Nutt													
	NV3494	Dennis	40/45cwt	180077	Willowbrook	Luton Van	2681	3/34	-	12/38	Supp. W S Yeates, L'boro	PX Ltd, Rushden?	
	NV3773	Dennis	40/45cwt	180125	Willowbrook	Luton Van	2683	5/34	-	12/38	Supp. W S Yeates, L'boro	PX Ltd, Rushden?	
	NV4045	Dennis	40/45cwt	180243	Willowbrook	Luton Van	2682	6/34	-	12/38	Supp. W S Yeates, L'boro	PX Ltd, Rushden?	
	NV4156	Dennis	40/45cwt	180344	Willowbrook	Luton Van	2684	7/34	-	12/38	Supp. W S Yeates, L'boro	PX Ltd, Rushden?	

- NOTES:** 1 - BD 1080 last owner Jones, Swansea - 1/31. 2 - BD 6139 converted to a lorry - Last owner J Sharp, Northampton 10/30.
 3 - BD 8660 last owner G C Hupwell, Rugby as a mobile fish and chip shop. Last licensed 12/34.
 4 - BD 8661 last owner T Norman, Rugby - 5/28 5 - BD 8801 could have been a Luton van rather than a bus.
 6 - RP 529 reported to have been a "subsidy" chassis. 7 - RP 4437 could have been a Luton Van rather than a bus. Last Licensed 6/35.
 8 - RP 4459 last owner Gosport & Fareham Omnibus Co. - 9/39. 9 - RP 5830 last owner P Thomas Engineering Ltd, London SE1 - 12/37.