

CLARKE. George Henry The Wheatsheaf Inn, WEEDON

An account of George Henry Clarke's earlier foray into the world of bus operations can be found under reference NN-CL5 and this paper continues the story.

After dissolving his partnership with George Dillow, George Henry Clarke moved on to take over the Wheatsheaf Inn at Weedon, where he was installed as landlord in late 1913 or early 1914. During George Clarke's previous career he had been well and truly bitten by the transport bug and it was not long before he again dipped his toe into the water by venturing into bus operation.

It is believed that George Clarke's earlier association with Mr Wren of the Wren's Polish Company was to play a vital part in Clarke's next venture inasmuch that almost certainly Wren put up part of the capital that George Clarke required to purchase a Maudslay demonstration double-deck bus. This superb machine was registered BD 2188 on 20th February 1914 and it carried a Brush O18/16R body with the word "MAUDSLAY" in large letters on its lower side panels. Its upper-deck side panels were given over to advertisement space for "Wren's Boot Polishes."

On 16th March 1914 George Clarke applied to Northampton Borough Watch Committee for a Hackney Carriage Licence to use a stand at St. Andrew's Road, Northampton in connection with a service he was running between Northampton and Daventry. The licence was duly granted with the proviso that, to protect the Corporation's Tramways, a 3d minimum fare be charged for travel within the Borough of Northampton.

Mr Wren's initial financial contribution undoubtedly got the venture off to a good start but unfortunately the business did not continue to flourish as it had started. The Northampton Motor Omnibus Co Ltd was formed on 16th July 1914 and immediately commenced operating on the Northampton - Weedon - Daventry route. This competition and the outbreak of the First World War can hardly have been beneficial to George Clarke, but he carried on his business regardless with Maudslay BD 2188.

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Exactly what happened during the course of the following year is uncertain but it seems likely that the owners of Wren's Polish Works, together with other local businessmen having an interest in transport, saw the potential of profitable bus operations on a somewhat larger scale than the single bus currently being operated by George Clarke. George was struggling financially, and would not have been in a position to develop his operations significantly and, in any case, he may have lacked the ambition and business acumen to do so. The outcome was the formation of the Midland Motor Bus Company (later limited) in the Autumn of 1915, to be incorporated on 29th January 1916. George Clarke became a Director of this new firm so he must have been in league with the other founding directors from the start. Unfortunately the Company Records have not survived so it is impossible to know whether the Midland Motor Bus Company was formed to take over George Clarke's business or not. The story of the Midland Motor Bus Company is told in paper NN-MI1.

Whatever the case, George Clarke's Maudslay BD 2188 was sold to the Midland Company on 6th December 1915 and the vehicle continued to operate on the Northampton - Weedon - Daventry route. Meanwhile, in the Autumn of 1915 and presumably on behalf of the Midland Company, George Clarke ordered a second Maudslay and a 30hp Belsize. The Maudslay was duly registered BD 3157 on 9th October 1915 and the Belsize became BD 3138 on 13th December and these passed from Clarke to Midland on 19th November and 13th December respectively, the Belsize at least not being operated by George Clarke.



Ex-Maudslay demonstrator BD 2188 stands outside the Wheatsheaf at Weedon with a full compliment of passengers when the vehicle was new in 1914. This bus was equipped with a folding windscreen and an illuminated destination display, both features which were unusual as early as 1914.

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE


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Another superb view of the magnificent Maudslay BD 2188 posed in Weedon Road, Northampton with a capacity load.

ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB DRIVING CERTIFICATE.	
(PUBLIC SERVICE DRIVER).	
No. <u>1443</u>	
Date of original issue } <u>20th July</u> 19 <u>15</u>	
This is to Certify that	
Mr. <u>G. H. Clarke</u>	
of <u>Wheatstrave Lane</u>	
<u>Weedon</u>	
has been examined by the ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB, and that he is qualified to drive a	
<u>Public Service Vehicle</u>	
Tested on a <u>Maudslay bus</u> at <u>Northampton</u> <u>9.7.15</u>	
	
Signature of Holder.	
Secretary.	
RENEWAL. This Certificate is hereby renewed so as to be in force from <u>191</u> to <u>191</u>	
Secretary.	
This Certificate is only valid for one year from date of issue (unless renewed)	

A facsimile of George Clarke's RAC Driving Certificate confirming his qualification to drive a public service vehicle. It is dated 20th July 1915 and shows he was tested on a Maudslay bus.

CLARKE'S MOTOR BUS
Weedon to Northampton
Return Fare 1/2
 Available on day of issue only

A Clarke's Motor Bus 1/2d day return edmondson ticket valid between Weedon and Northampton. It was unusual for edmondson tickets to be used on bus services and this one was printed black on buff card with the right-hand side coloured bright pink. The ticket has been punched with what appear to be nippers of standard railway design.

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By the end of 1916 George Clarke was in serious financial difficulties and, unable to satisfy his creditors, was declared bankrupt. That was not quite the end of the story, however, and readers are referred to paper NN-CL6A.

Rolling Stock:

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	Dates			Former Owner	Disposal	Nts
						New	S/H	W/D			
BD 2188	Maudslay	28hp	?	Brush	O18/ 16ROS	2/14	—	12/15	Demonstrator	Midland Motor Bus Co., N'hampton	
BD 3157	Maudslay		?	?	?	10/15	—	11/15	—	Midland Motor Bus Co., N'hampton	1
BD 3138	Belsize	30hp	?	?	?	12/15	—	12/15	—	Midland Motor Bus Co., N'hampton	2

Notes: 1 - BD 3157 probably ordered for Midland Motor Bus Co and may not have been operated by George Clarke. Recorded as used as a public conveyance.

2 - BD 3138 probably ordered for Midland Motor Bus Co and not operated by George Clarke.