

# GRANT. Alfred & Sons

## 7 North End,

# HIGHAM FERRERS

Alfred Grant, who was born in Scotland in 1870, came to Northamptonshire in 1886 when he joined his uncle in walking south with the intention of living with his aunt in Broughton. The walking trip was also a working journey as Alfred assisted his uncle in making and selling boots as they accomplished each stage of the long trek south. It seems that Alfred didn't settle well with his guardians and before long he walked back to Loughborough where he enlisted in the Manchester Regiment where he served for twelve years, including six in India.

On his return to this country, Alfred Grant became the coachman to Thomas Patenall, Mayor of Higham Ferrers. In 1900 he married Mary Ellen Miller and the couple subsequently had five sons. The eldest was James Albert who was born in 1904 and, two years later, Walter George was born. The third son was William Alfred who entered the world in 1910 to be followed in 1915 by Donald Lennox and in 1919 by the Grant's youngest son, Stanley.

Returning to Alfred Grant's career, soon after his marriage he was recalled by the Military Authorities and shipped out to South Africa to serve in the Boer War for over a year. However, he returned to Higham Ferrers again in 1902 and at this time he was living in Corporation Row. With his experiences with horses, gained both in the Forces and whilst he was working as a coachman for the Mayor of Higham Ferrers, Alfred bought three horses and carts, employing two men, and started conveying coal from Higham Ferrers Station to some of the various boot and shoe factories within the area. As time progressed he added to his stock of horses and wagons and at one time was contracted to operate the dust carts for the local authority. During this period in the early part of the twentieth century Alfred Grant kept his animals and carts at the rear of the Chequers public house.

In 1914 the Grant family moved to an area known locally as "The Walnut Tree", the official address later becoming 7 North End, Higham Ferrers. Alfred rented fields off Stanwick Road and kept his horses there. In the following years the business developed slowly but surely and upon leaving school at the age of 13 years, Alfred's two eldest sons - Albert and

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Walter - joined their father's business in 1917 and 1919 respectively. In 1919 Alfred Grant ventured into mechanical transport by purchasing an ex-War Department F.W.D. lorry which he used for both coal and general haulage deliveries.

The F.W.D. displaced some of the horse drawn transport but it remained the only motor vehicle in the fleet until 1923, when it was joined by a Vulcan lorry which was to cause the demise of the remaining horse transport. In the same year Bill Grant left school but he did not join the family business initially, instead working at the Victoria Leather Works in Higham Ferrers until 1931. Bill then took over the clerical functions his father's business needed at that stage in it's history. Between leaving school and 1931, Bill was not totally divorced from the transport scene as he learned to drive the Vulcan at the age of thirteen!

In the early 1920s the Grant's observed the success of United Counties' bus routes in the area and, along with a couple of other local firms, decided to give bus work a try themselves. For this venture a brand new Bean was purchased through Messrs Willowbrook of Loughborough, who also built the twenty-seat body that adorned the chassis. The bus, which was painted green and cream, was registered RP 5529 on 4th May 1928. The work to which the Grant's put the vehicle comprised workers' journeys from Raunds via Stanwick and Higham Ferrers to Rushden to carry some of the many operatives who worked in the locality's boot and shoe factories. In the evenings, during the week, the bus was used to ply backwards and forwards between Rushden (Wheatsheaf), Higham Ferrers



*The Willowbrook bodied Bean registered RP 5529 photographed in October 1930. Mrs Mary Grant sits on the step whilst Stan Grant stands to the left.*

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and Irthlingborough (Cross), with the last journey leaving Irthlingborough at 10.30pm. The clientele carried were principally the younger generation travelling to and fro to meet their sweethearts. The fares charged were 6d return from Rushden to Irthlingborough and 5d return from Higham Ferrers to Irthlingborough and the service became known locally as the "Courtiers' Express". In the main the route was operated by the driver only but when a conductress was carried, Bill Grant's future wife - Florence - often undertook these duties. Pre-printed punch-type tickets were used, but never actually punched, as a ticket machine was not owned by the Grant's. Usually, return tickets only were issued and these were collected from passengers on their return trips. During the day time the bus usually stood idle whilst the Grant brothers drove their lorries. On Sundays, mystery and other trips were often operated.

Following the passing of the 1930 Road Traffic Act the Grant's felt there was too much red tape and too many restrictions for it to be in their interests to apply for licences to run their existing services. In any case the competition was fierce and the family was more interested in the haulage side of their business. The bus operation therefore finished in 1931 and the Bean was traded in part exchange for a lorry with Messrs. Grose Ltd of Northampton, who subsequently sold RP 5529 to A R Surridge of Harpole.

At this period A Grant & Sons were running about three lorries on general haulage and parcels work, particularly for the shoe trade, and the firm developed daily operations to Portsmouth, Southampton and Bournemouth. A purpose built garage was erected at North End, Higham Ferrers in the 1920s and by 1942 about six lorries were in the fleet. In this latter year a limited company entitled "Grant's Transport Services Ltd" was formed. Sadly, Alfred Grant's fourth son - Donald - was killed at the age of sixteen, in an accident involving one of the firm's lorries, but after the War, Alfred's youngest son - Stanley - joined the firm after gaining experience in the engineering field with other employers.

Soon after Stan Grant joined the Company in an engineering capacity, Alfred Grant retired and in 1950 British Road Services acquired the assets of the firm but not the Company. Following the 1953 Transport Act, Walter and Stanley reformed Grant's Transport Services Ltd at Irthlingborough, in 1954, and a year later Bill Grant joined them. Ten years later the firm amalgamated with United Carriers Ltd, an outfit which was destined to become one of the largest road freight transport concerns in the country.

Finally, Alfred Grant died in 1951 and his sons Albert and Walter died in 1974 and 1989 respectively. Bill and Stan Grant continue to enjoy good health at the time of writing this paper and I am indebted to both gentlemen for their co-operation.

### **Rolling Stock:**

RP5529 - Bean - Chassis No. 1234/11 - Willowbrook - B20F - Body No. 2163

Supplied new by Willowbrook and licensed 4th May 1928.

Passed to Grose Ltd., Northampton (Dealer) c3/31 and to A R Surridge, Harpole. Last licensed June 1935.