

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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KIRTON. Samuel Walter **8, later 2, Gayton Road** **EASTCOTE**

Samuel Walter Kirton was employed as a moulder in a foundry in the initial decade of the twentieth century but on being demobilised from the first World War invested part of his gratuity in a horse and covered cart in 1919. With this he started a carrier's service from Ascote via Eastcote and Rothersthorpe to Northampton on Wednesdays and Saturdays which were the market days in the county town. The service operated to the "Bull and Butcher" public house in Bridge Street, Northampton and before long passengers as well as freight were being conveyed in Walter Kirton's horse drawn transport.

By the early 1920s mechanised vehicles were becoming commonplace and Walter Kirton decided to progress from one horsepower to twenty-two horsepower when on 12th July 1922 he ordered a Ford T truck from Henry Oliver Ltd of George Row, Northampton, the town's main Ford dealer. This machine was a one-ton lorry which cost Walter Kirton £185 and it was delivered on 15th July 1922 and registered BD 6837 two days later. To enable it to carry passengers Messrs. Couch & Son of Commercial Street, Northampton were engaged to build a roof and sides to fit onto the structure of the existing lorry body and also to fit longitudinal bench seating to accommodate six passengers on each side of the vehicle. This conversion added a further £40 to Walter Kirton's bill. Access to the main part of the vehicle was via a ladder at the rear of this lorry-cum-bus and in addition to the twelve seats inside, another two passengers could ride alongside the driver. The livery of BD 6837 was chocolate.

Although when first mechanised Walter Kirton continued his route from Ascote to Northampton via Rothersthorpe, he soon decided to divert instead via Gayton, Milton and the main A43 road into Northampton, thus providing Gayton with its first bus service.

The business clearly prospered as in April 1927 Walter Kirton was able to trade in his Ford T and purchase a new REO from Messrs. Allchin & Son of Kingsthorpe Grove, Northampton who, in addition to operating their own coaches, were the local REO Agent. This bus, registered RP 3771 on 1st April, was fitted with a fourteen seat body manufactured by Economy Motors of Lowestoft. It cost £500 and was painted maroon below the waistrail and green above. At about this time Walter Kirton extended his

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.

Bygone Buses

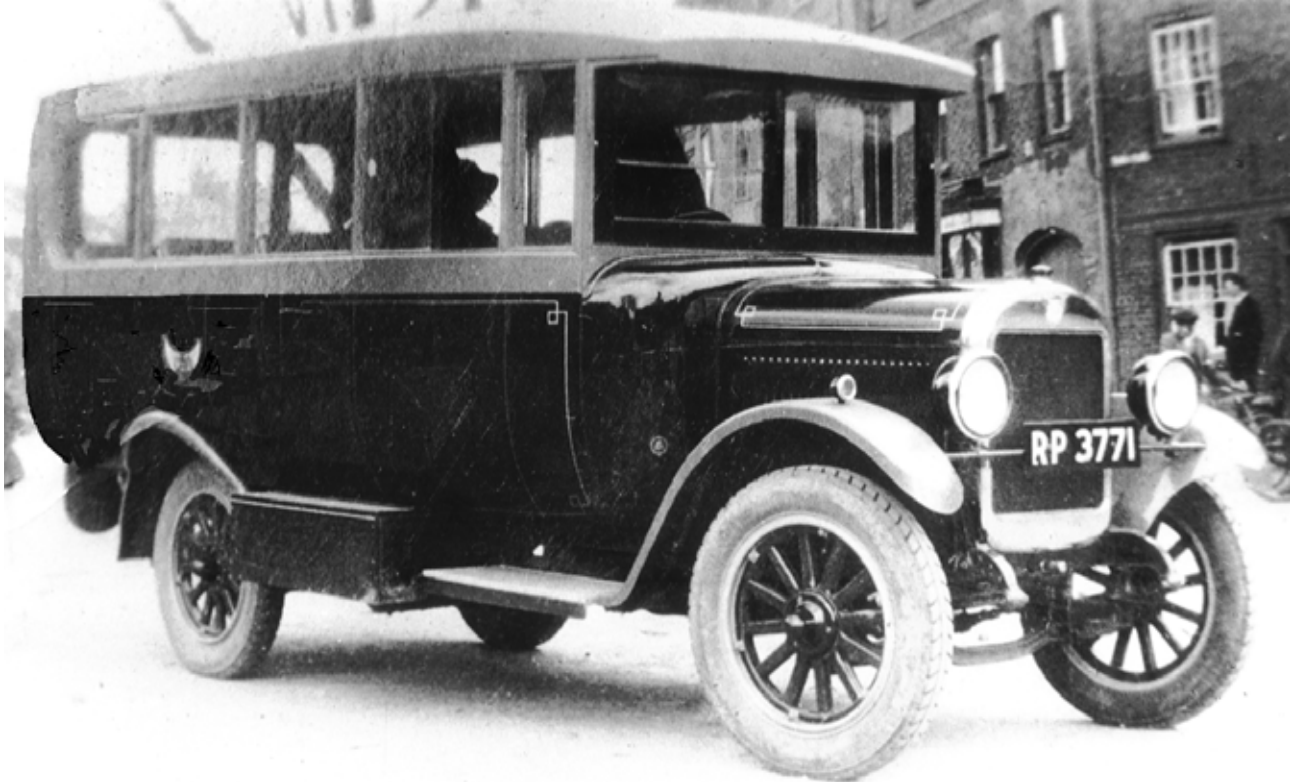
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service in a westerly direction to include the nearby villages of Foster's Booth and Pattishall which thereafter necessitated a "spur" working to cover Astcote.



The sleek REO RP 3771 operated by Walter Kirton between 1927 and 1929.

Evidently trade remained buoyant since by April 1929 Walter Kirton needed to buy a larger bus. Again a REO was chosen and once more it was supplied by Allchin's who took RP 3771 in part exchange. The new REO, like its predecessor, was equipped with a body built by Economy Motors but this time it seated twenty passengers and bore the registration number RP 7313 allocated to it on 30th April. The livery of this bus was maroon up to the waistrail and green above except for the roof which was fawn.



An offside view of Walter Kirton's twenty-seater REO RP 7313 with its Economy Motors body.

KIRTON. Samuel Walter - EASTCOTE

———— Roads served by S W Kirton.

———— Other roads.

Original route:

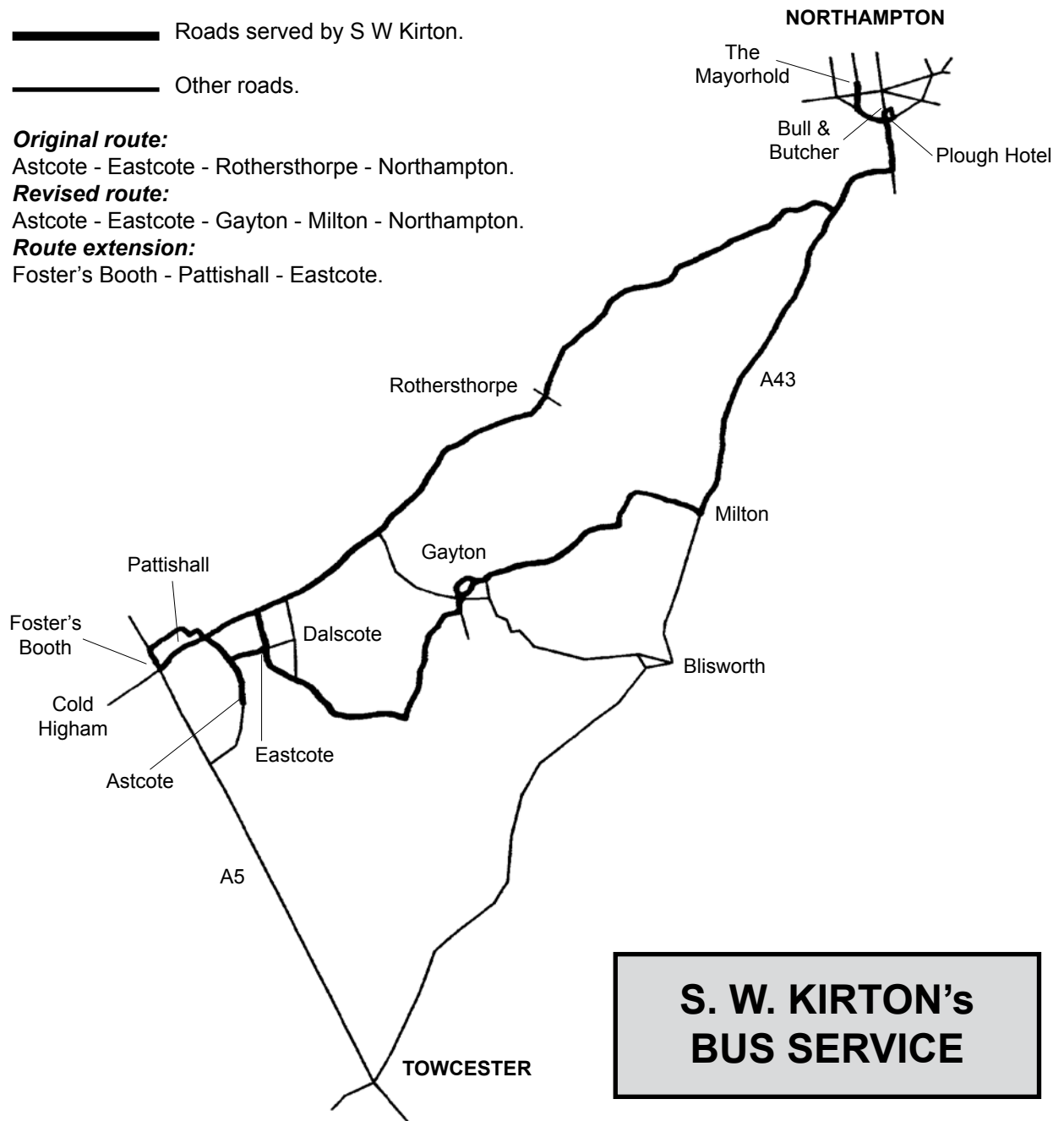
Astcote - Eastcote - Rothersthorpe - Northampton.

Revised route:

Astcote - Eastcote - Gayton - Milton - Northampton.

Route extension:

Foster's Booth - Pattishall - Eastcote.



Walter Kirton originally lived at number 8 Gayton Road, Eastcote and he parked his cart and later the buses at the side of his house. During 1929 he moved to number 2 Gayton Road and built a garage alongside his home.

The 1930 Road Traffic Act necessitated Walter Kirton applying for a Road Service Licence to authorise the continuation of his Foster's Booth to Northampton service and he was one of the earliest operators in the Northants area to submit the required details to the Traffic Commissioners in April 1931. However it was not until the September

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: KIRTON. Samuel Walter - EASTCOTE :
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of that year that the licence was granted and in due course took the Commissioners' reference TER297/1. In February 1932 Walter Kirton made two more submissions, the first to continue a Northampton mid-day workers' service he was already running from the Cowper Factory in Shakespeare Road to Park Road, St.James and the second was for a new service from Eastcote to Towcester Races for the Easter Monday meeting. The factory service became TER297/2 and the Towcester service TER297/3, apparently lasting for just the one day for which the service was required.

Having only one bus, the opportunity for Walter Kirton to operate excursions was extremely limited but in March 1933 he did apply for an Excursions & Tours licence starting from Eastcote and picking up at Foster's Booth, Pattishall, Astcote and Gayton. This application was granted in March 1933 and subsequent amendments over the years entitled Walter Kirton to operate ten tours, the only two of note being London and Skegness, the rest being of a local nature. Quite how the excursions were operated with just one vehicle in the fleet is a bit of a mystery as Kirton's local service ran on a daily basis. Perhaps he hired a vehicle from Harry Webster of Pattishall or Francis Belgrove of Cold Higham?

During 1934 the Northampton terminal of Walter Kirton's stage-carriage service was split so that on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays buses departed from St.John's Street instead of the Bull & Butcher, which public house remained the terminus on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Later in the decade the terminal for all journeys was transferred to The Mayorhold but it seems this was an unpopular move and arrangements were made in June 1938 to transfer to the Plough Hotel in Bridge Street, where the departure point for the service remained for the next twelve years.

Walter Kirton's son - Philip - joined his father in the family business in 1931 and passenger carryings continued to increase until the twenty-seater was insufficient to cater adequately for the intending traffic. As a result of this a second-hand twenty-six seater Maudslay was purchased from Messrs Tailby & George's "Blue Bus Services" of Willington, Derbyshire in March 1933 at a cost of £500. Registered RB 5783 the chassis of this vehicle was a year old but it is believed that the body, or at least part of it, had come from an earlier vehicle and may have been built by Willowbrook of Loughborough. Walter Kirton arranged for Willowbrook to recondition the body and evidently the £140 spent on this work was well worthwhile as RB 5783 provided Kirton's service for the next fifteen years until 1947.

Until the arrival of RB 5783 Kirton's buses had been one-man operated but because this vehicle seated twenty-six passengers the Traffic Commissioners stipulated that a conductor must henceforth be carried. From this time Philip Kirton did most of the driving whilst his father, then in his mid-fifties, acted as conductor, issuing Bell Punch printed tickets until he relinquished this job in 1944 when he reached retirement age. After this time Walter Kirton's daughter - Pearl - acted as conductress and continued until the business was sold. In addition, following Walter Kirton's retirement, his son Philip continued the business trading as S W Kirton & Son.

KIRTON. Samuel Walter - EASTCOTE

SALOON BUS TIME TABLE

~ BETWEEN ~

**Fosters Booth, Pattishall, Astcote,
Eastcote, Gayton and Northampton.**

Leave	WEDNESDAYS				
Fosters Booth	9-22	10-37	1-37	4-37	
Pattishall	9-25	10-40	1-40	4-40	8-15
Astcote	9-30	10-45	1-45	4-45	
Eastcote	9-35	10-50	1-50	4-50	8-20
Gayton	9-45	11-0	2-0	5-0	8-30

	SATURDAYS					
Fosters Booth	9-22	10-37	1-37	4-37	6-37	
Pattishall	9-25	10-40	1-40	4-40	6-40	9-45
Astcote	9-30	10-45	1-45	4-45	6-45	
Eastcote	9-35	10-50	1-50	4-50	6-50	9-50
Gayton	9-45	11-0	2-0	5-0	7-0	10-0

	SUNDAYS	
Fosters Booth	8-22	
Pattishall	8-25	
Astcote	8-30	
Eastcote	1-50	8-35
Gayton	2-0	8-45

RETURN Buses leave Bull & Butcher Hotel, Northampton

WEDNESDAYS				
10-10	12-30	3-30	6-0	9-30

SATURDAYS					
10-10	12-30	3-30	6-0	8-0	10-55

SUNDAYS	
2-30	9-30

**On Mondays and Fridays a Bus will leave Fosters Booth at
9 a.m. Leave Bull & Butcher 3 p.m.**

The above times are subject to alteration, and while they will be kept to as far as possible, the Proprietor will not hold himself responsible for any variation or unpunctuality.

S. W. KIRTON, Proprietor, Eastcote.

A facsimile of S W Kirton's timetable dating from the early 1930s.

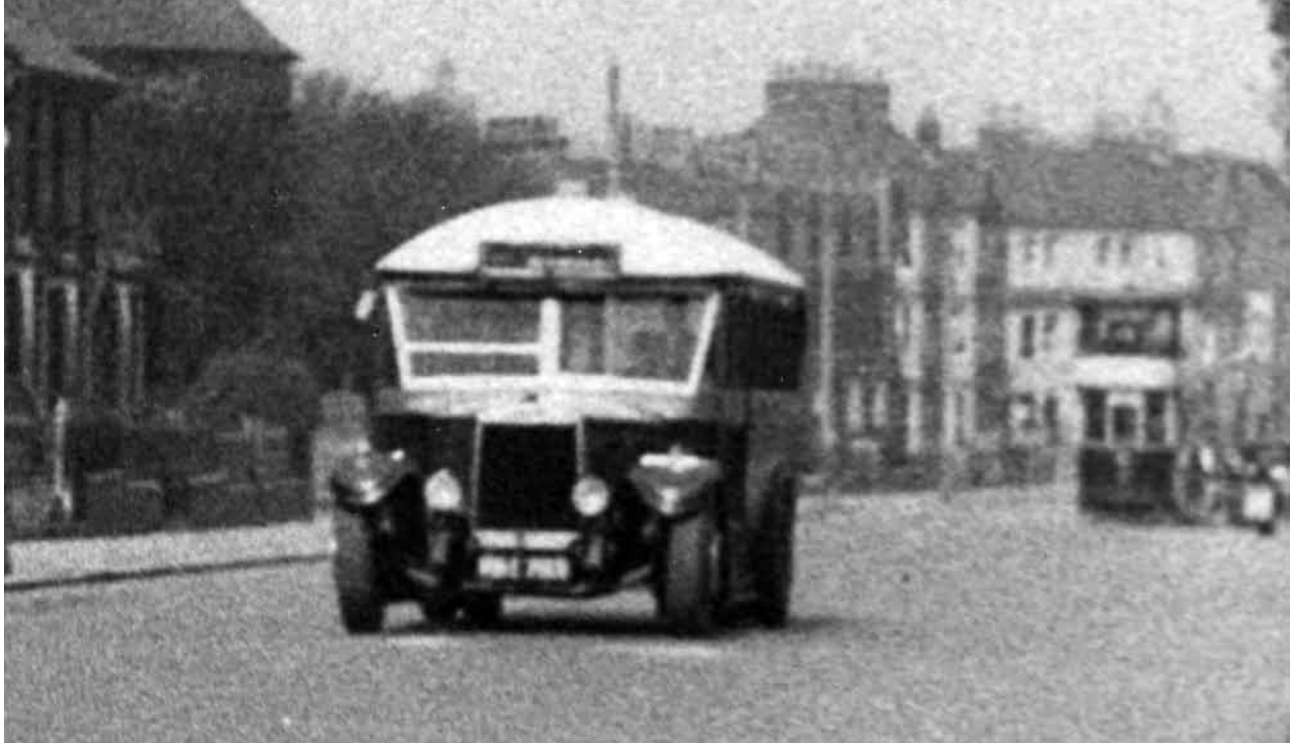
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A somewhat indistinct view of Maudslay ML4B registered RB 5783 motoring up the Towcester Road in Northampton in 1933/34. Note the Northampton Corporation tramcar in the background.



A nearside rear view of RB 5783 still in its original owners' "Blue Bus Services" livery when photographed shortly after acquisition by Walter Kirton.

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For good measure a head-on photograph of Maudslay RB 5783 taken on the same occasion as the lower picture on the previous page and when new to Walter Kirton.



A couple of examples of S W Kirton's Bell Punch tickets. Left is a lilac exchange ticket dating from the late autumn 1934 which has a geographical single-column stage array with the punch spaces divided into single/return and inwards/outwards. Right a 2d orange ticket almost identical to the exchange but dating from 1946.

KIRTON. Samuel Walter - EASTCOTE

S. W. KIRTON.

Saloon Bus Service between Fosters Booth & Northampton (Plough Hotel, Bridge Street)

WEDNESDAY ONLY.

Depart	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Fosters Booth ...	6 40	9 30	11 0	1 45	4 20	
Pattishall ...	6 42	9 32	11 2	1 47	4 22	8 17
Astcote ...	6 45	9 35	11 5	1 50	4 25	8 20
Eastcote ...	6 50	9 40	11 10	1 55	4 30	8 25
Gayton ...	7 0	9 50	11 20	2 5	4 40	8 35
Milton ...	7 10	10 0	11 30	2 15	4 50	8 45
Northampton arr.	7 20	10 10	11 40	2 25	5 0	8 55

SATURDAY ONLY.

a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
6 40	9 30	11 0	1 30	5 0	6 40	
6 42	9 32	11 2	1 32	5 2	6 42	10 2
6 45	9 35	11 5	1 35	5 5	6 45	10 5
6 50	9 40	11 10	1 40	5 10	6 50	10 10
7 0	9 50	11 20	1 50	5 20	7 0	10 20
7 10	10 0	11 30	2 0	5 30	7 10	10 30
7 20	10 10	11 40	2 10	5 40	7 20	10 40

Depart	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Northampton ...	7 45	10 15	12 45	3 15	5 50	9 0
Milton ...	7 55	10 25	12 55	3 25	6 0	9 10
Gayton ...	8 5	10 35	1 5	3 35	6 10	9 20
Eastcote ...	8 15	10 45	1 15	3 45	6 20	9 30
*Astcote ...	...	10 50	1 20	3 50	6 25	9 35
*Pattishall ...	...	10 53	1 23	3 53	6 28	9 38
*Fosters Booth, arr.	...	10 55	1 25	3 55	6 30	9 40

a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
7 45	10 15	12 30	3 15	6 0	8 20	11 0
7 55	10 25	12 40	3 25	6 10	8 30	11 10
8 5	10 35	12 50	3 35	6 20	8 40	11 20
8 15	10 45	1 0	3 45	6 30	8 50	11 30
...	10 50	1 5	3 50	6 35	8 55	11 35
...	10 53	1 8	3 53	6 38	8 58	11 38
...	10 55	1 10	3 55	6 40	9 0	11 40

THURSDAY ONLY.

Depart	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.
Fosters Booth ...	6 40	...	...
Pattishall ...	6 42	...	...
Astcote ...	6 45	...	...
Eastcote ...	6 50	11 30	4 50
Gayton ...	7 0	11 40	5 0
Milton ...	7 10	11 50	5 10
Northampton arr.	7 20	12 0	5 20

Monday only.

a.m.	a.m.	p.m.
6 40	11 0	...
6 42	11 2	...
6 45	11 5	...
6 50	11 10	4 50
7 0	11 20	5 0
7 10	11 30	5 10
7 20	11 40	5 20

Tuesday only.

a.m.	p.m.
6 40	...
6 42	...
6 45	...
6 50	4 50
7 0	5 0
7 10	5 10
7 20	5 20

Friday only.

a.m.	a.m.	p.m.
6 40	11 0	...
6 42	11 2	4 45
6 45	11 5	...
6 50	11 10	4 50
7 0	11 20	5 0
7 10	11 30	5 10
7 20	11 40	5 20

Sunday only.

p.m.	p.m.
...	8 25
1 37	8 27
1 40	8 30
1 45	8 35
1 55	8 45
2 5	8 55
2 15	9 5

Depart	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Northampton ...	7 45	1 30	5 45
Milton ...	7 55	1 40	5 55
Gayton ...	8 5	1 50	6 5
Eastcote ...	8 15	2 0	6 15
*Astcote ...	...	...	6 20
*Pattishall ...	...	...	6 23
*Fosters Booth, arr.	...	...	6 25

a.m.	p.m.	p.m.
7 45	2 30	5 45
7 55	2 40	5 55
8 5	2 50	6 5
8 15	3 0	6 15
...	3 5	6 20
...	3 8	6 23
...	3 10	6 25

a.m.	p.m.
7 45	5 45
7 55	5 55
8 5	6 5
8 15	6 15
...	6 20
...	6 23
...	6 25

a.m.	p.m.	p.m.
7 45	2 30	5 45
7 55	2 40	5 55
8 5	2 50	6 5
8 15	3 0	6 15
...	3 5	6 20
8 20	3 8	6 23
...	3 10	6 25

p.m.	p.m.
2 40	9 30
2 50	9 40
3 0	9 50
3 10	10 0
3 15	10 5
3 18	10 8
3 20	10 10

Passengers delivered to Villages marked * if required.

Special Parcel Service—All Parcels to be sent to "Plough Hotel" Bridge Street, before 2.30 p.m.

Kirton's pre-War operations current at December 1938.

During the War Kirton's operated a slightly reduced emergency timetable terminating in Northampton at the "Plough Hotel" in Bridge Street and this is shown on the next page.

By 1947 the Maudslay RB 5783 had about played its hand and had to be replaced. For this purpose another Maudslay was acquired from the Army Authorities for about £225 and was only two years younger than the bus it was replacing, being new in 1934. This vehicle carried a thirty-one seat Plaxton body and was registered WJ 9412, having earlier served with an independent operator in the Sheffield area. Prior to it entering service with Walter Kirton it was sent to Messrs Grose Ltd of Northampton who rebuilt and reconditioned it at a cost of £800 and painted the lower panels dark blue and the window surrounds and roof fawn.

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: KIRTON. Samuel Walter - EASTCOTE :
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S. W. KIRTON & SON.

E M E R G E N C Y T I M E T A B L E

Bus Service between Fosters Booth and Northampton (Plough Hotel,
Bridge Street,)

Wednesday only

Mon. Tues. Thurs. & Fri.

Depart	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.		a.m.
Fosters Booth	6.40	10.0	2.0		6.40
Pattishall	6.42	10.2	2.2		6.42
Astcote	6.45	10.5	2.5		6.45
Eastcote	6.50	10.10	2.10		6.50
Gayton	7. 0	10.20	2.20		7. 0
Milton	7.10	10.30	2.30		7.10
Northampton arr.	7.20	10.40	2.40		7.20

Depart	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.		p.m.
Northampton	12.45	3.30	5.50		5.45
Milton	12.55	3.40	6. 0		5.55
Gayton	1. 5	3.50	6.10		6. 5
Eastcote	1.15	4. 0	6.20		6.15
* Astcote	1.20	4. 5	6.25		6.20
* Pattishall	1.23	4. 8	6.28		6.23
* Fosters Booth arr.	1.25	4.10	6.30		6.25

Saturday only

Sunday only

Depart	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.		p.m.	p.m.
Fosters Booth,	6.40	9.15	2.0	5.0	7.15		p.m.	8.20
Pattishall	6.42	9.17	2.2	5.2	7.17		1.37	8.22
Astcote	6.45	9.20	2.5	5.5	7.20		1.40	8.25
Eastcote	6.50	9.25	2.10	5.10	7.25		1.45	8.30
Gayton	7. 0	9.35	2.20	5.20	7.35		1.55	8.40
Milton	7.10	9.45	2.30	5.30	7.45		2. 5	8.50
Northampton arr.	7.20	9.55	2.40	5.40	7.55		2.15	9. 0

Depart		p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.		p.m.	p.m.
Northampton		12.30	3.15	6.30	8.45		2.40	9.15
Milton		12.40	3.25	6.40	8.55		2.50	9.25
Gayton		12.50	3.35	6.50	9. 5		3. 0	9.35
Eastcote		1. 0	3.45	7. 0	9.15		3.10	9.45
* Astcote		1. 5	3.50	7. 5	9.20		3.15	9.50
* Pattishall		1. 8	3.53	7. 8	9.23		3.18	9.53
* Fosters Booth arr.		1.10	3.55	7.10	9.30		3.20	9.55

Passengers delivered to villages marked * if required.

A facsimile of S W Kirton & Son's Wartime emergency timetable.

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This was the last bus to be operated by Philip Kirton who continued to run the service until Saturday 29th April 1950, after which date it was sold to Harry Webster of Pattishall who continued the operation from Monday 1st May 1950. Thus ended the thirty-one years of reliable public service provided by the Kirton family!



A fine view of the Plaxton bodied Maudslay WJ 9412 photographed in the yard of the Plough Hotel, Northampton circa 1949. (Photo courtesy of the Omnibus Society).

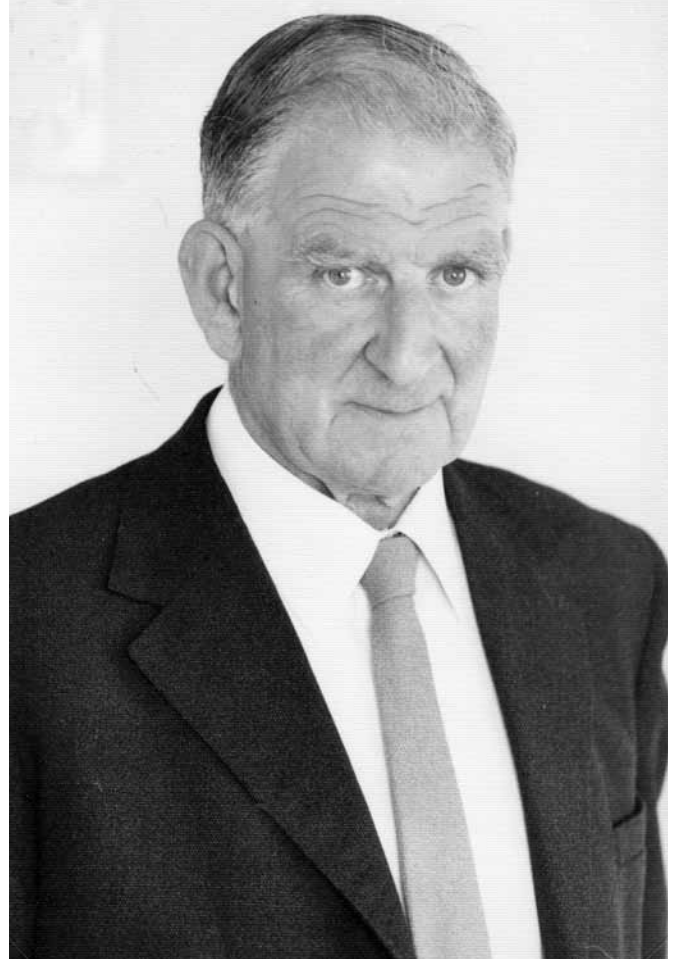


Maudslay WJ 9412 pauses at Gayton on its last day of operation for the Kirton family on Saturday 29th April 1950. Note that the destination aperture has been altered in the final year of this vehicle's life.

KIRTON. Samuel Walter - EASTCOTE



Mr and Mrs S W Kirton, the founders of the Eastcote to Northampton bus service, photographed on the occasion of their golden wedding in 1953.



Philip Kingston who took over the business from his father and continued running the service until 1950.

The Author is indebted to the late Philip Kirton without whose enthusiastic help this paper would have been much less informative.

KIRTON. Samuel Walter - EASTCOTE

Rolling Stock:

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	Body No.	Dates			Former Owner	Disposal	Nts
							New	S/H	W/D			
BD 6837	Ford	T	5825678	?	Lorry/	—	7/22	—	4/27	Supp H Oliver Ltd, Northampton.		1
RP 3771	REO	?	143612	(Couch) Economy Motors	B14R B14F		4/27	—	4/29	Supp Allchin & Son, Northampton.	Allchin & Son/ Op in Kettering area	2
RP 7313	REO	?	10398	Economy Motors	B20F		4/29	—	3/33	Supp Allchin & Son, Northampton.		3
RB 5783	Maudslay	ML4B	5057	W J Smith	B26F		3/32	3/33	-/47	Tailby & George, Willington.		4
WJ 9412	Maudslay	ML3	5127	W Brom Plaxton	C31F		4/34	-/47	4/50	War Department/ Hirst & Sweeting, Sheffield.	H Webster, Pat-tishall	5

- Notes:**
- 1 - BD 6837 last owned by J P Smart, Wollaston and last licensed as a goods vehicle 1/35.
 - 2 - RP 3771 last owned by F C Andrews, Northampton and last licensed as a goods vehicle 9/33.
 - 3 - RP 7313 last owned by Private Coaches Ltd, Swindon and last licensed 9/36.
 - 4 - RB 5783 body believed to have come from an earlier vehicle.
 - 5 - WJ 9412 - refurbished by Grose Ltd, Northampton -/47.