

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-MI4

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MILLER. Thomas James Spencer House West End WELFORD

Thomas Miller senior was, amongst other occupations, the Welford village carrier and it is understood that he was operating in the late nineteenth century, travelling to Market Harborough on Tuesdays and to Northampton on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Thomas senior and his wife Maria had seven children and the fourth eldest, the subject of this paper, was born around 1892 and duly Christened Thomas James Miller.



This illustration shows Thomas Miller's carriers cart well loaded on its return from either Market Harborough or Northampton. The photograph is believed to date from the early 1900s and Thomas Miller senior was the gentleman in the cap, peering over the horse whilst his eldest son Denis is at the reins of the cart.

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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MILLER. Thomas James - WELFORD

After the first World War it seems that Thomas James Miller joined his father in his carrier's business and later took over completely when his father retired in the early 1920s. The younger Thomas Miller, having gained experience with motor vehicles during the War wished to mechanise the business and purchased a Napier 30hp lorry that had been registered in Leicestershire on 12th August 1919 as AY 6616. Whether it was new at this date or acquired from the Military Authorities is not known but it was transferred to Thomas Miller's ownership on 30th October 1919. AY 6616 was licenced as a public conveyance as passengers as well as merchandise were carried on this vehicle.

On 6th July 1920 Thomas Miller added a second motor lorry to his fleet when he purchased BD 4783 which was a chain-driven Alldays and Onions flat-bed lorry painted grey but later described as being slate green. With the acquisition of his Alldays, Miller advertised his business as that of a haulage contractor as well as a carrier. Additionally a bus body to seat twelve people was constructed and bolted onto the lorry to facilitate the carriage of passengers. Access to the passenger compartment was via a ladder placed at the rear of the vehicle.



This photograph illustrates Thomas Miller's chain-driven Alldays & Onions twelve-seater lorry-bus registered BD 4783.

MILLER. Thomas James - WELFORD

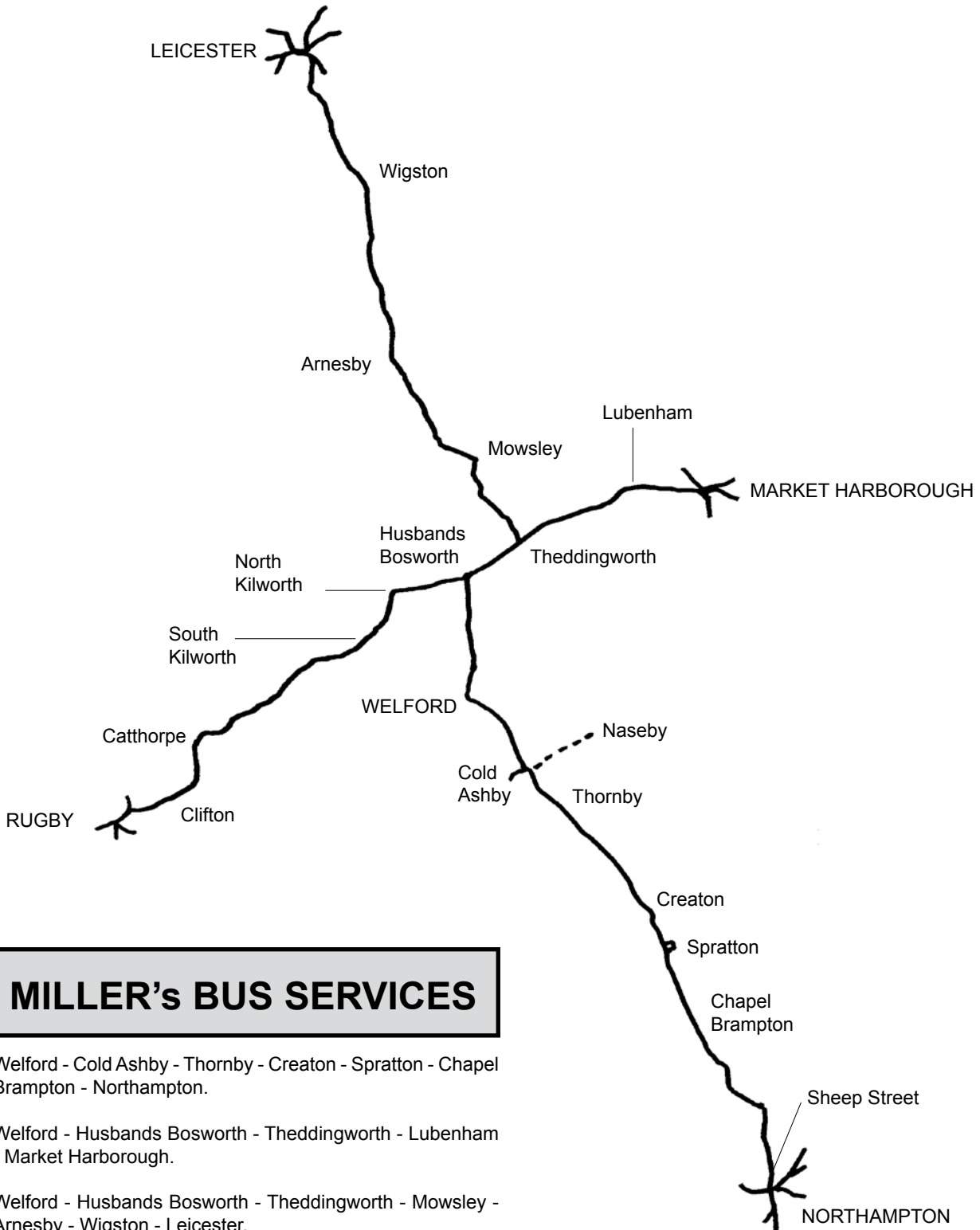
Exactly when Thomas Miller commenced operating dedicated bus services as opposed to carrying passengers on his carrier's vehicles is not known but it is assumed to have been in the early 1920s. In the Northampton direction the route Miller followed was via Cold Ashby, Thornby, Creaton, Spratton and Chapel Brampton. Northampton Borough Council Watch Committee did not issue any Hackney Carriage licences to Miller which indicates he must have terminated his service in one of the many public house yards, almost certainly in Sheep Street. Miller's Welford to Market Harborough route operated via Husbands Bosworth, Theddingworth and Lubenham on Tuesday market days. Later on Miller established a Welford - Husbands Bosworth - Theddingworth - Mowsley - Arnesby - Wigston - Leicester service to run on Wednesdays and Saturdays. He is also reputed to have operated from Welford to Rugby on Mondays, but corroborative evidence has not been found in Rugby Council Minutes or local newspapers. On the other hand evidence confirming the operation of the Northampton service is similarly absent but there is no doubt whatsoever that this service ran. Perhaps an off-highway terminal was used at Rugby as it was at Northampton.

As far as rolling stock is concerned Thomas Miller is known to have owned at least eight vehicles. The Napier and Alldays & Onions machines have already been mentioned. At an unknown date a Ford T charabanc was acquired and this was sold to Henry Oliver Ltd the Northampton Ford Agent, in July 1923. It was soon replaced by a fourteen seat Chevrolet bought new in September 1923 when it was registered BD 8329.



Thomas Miller's 1923 Chevrolet fourteen seater registered BD 8329 and named "Tiny".

MILLER. Thomas James - WELFORD



MILLER'S BUS SERVICES

Welford - Cold Ashby - Thornby - Creaton - Spratton - Chapel Brampton - Northampton.

Welford - Husbands Bosworth - Theddingworth - Lubenham - Market Harborough.

Welford - Husbands Bosworth - Theddingworth - Mowsley - Arnesby - Wigston - Leicester.

Welford - Husbands Bosworth - North Kilworth - South Kilworth - Catthorpe - Clifton - Rugby.

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Just over a year later, in December 1924, Thomas Miller bought a REO saloon which became registered RP 204 and two years after that acquired another REO, a Pullman model, which was bodied by Ben Hasker of Northampton as a twenty-six seater coach, taking the index mark RP 3540. Miller's penultimate bus was another fourteen seater Chevrolet which was registered RP 5287 on 13th January 1928 and it may well have replaced "Tiny". Finally, a REO Sprinter joined the fleet on 26th May 1928 when RP 6047 was registered. This coach was supplied by Messrs Allchin & Son of Northampton and again bodied by Hasker, accommodating twenty-eight passengers.

To garage his vehicles Thomas Miller purchased land in West Street, Welford on 31st October 1928 from an appropriately named Mrs Ellen Buswell and thereafter erected a brick built garage to house up to six small buses.



This picture shows Thomas Miller's bus garage after acquisition by United Counties in 1931. It was an unusually well built structure for a small village bus proprietor.

The prospect of operating bus services under new legislation imposed by the Road Traffic Act of 1930 is believed to have led Thomas Miller to consider disposing of his business to the larger bus companies in the area. Both United Counties and Midland

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: **MILLER. Thomas James - WELFORD** :
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Red had territorial interests in the area covered by Miller's services and, in fact, Midland Red paid £100 to Miller for the Goodwill of his Welford - Husbands Bosworth - Leicester service with effect from 1st March 1931. Midland Red already ran between Leicester and Welford on its route 638 and it made no alteration to this service following the purchase of Miller's operations. Miller's Rugby service, if operated at all, must have ceased prior to 1931.

In order to continue operating his other services in the aftermath of the Road Traffic Act, 1930 Thomas Miller applied to the Traffic Commissioners in July 1931 for three services. These were:-

E4637 - Stage Carriage from Naseby via Cold Ashby, Thornby, Creaton and Chapel Brampton to Northampton on Wednesdays and Saturdays, leaving Naseby at 9.30am; 12.30pm; 4.00pm and, on Saturdays only at 7.00pm. Return times from Northampton were 11.30am; 2.45pm; 5.30pm Sats only; 6.30pm Weds only and 9.00pm Sats only.

E4638 - Stage Carriage from Welford via Cold Ashby, Thornby, Creaton and Chapel Brampton to Northampton on Wednesdays and Saturdays as operated during the previous year.

E4639 - Stage Carriage from Welford via Husbands Bosworth, Theddingworth and Lubenham to Market Harborough on Tuesdays as operated during the previous year.

Before any of the above applications for licences were granted by the Traffic Commissioners an Agreement was made by Thomas Miller with United Counties Omnibus & Road Transport Co Ltd on 31st July 1931 to sell the Goodwill of his business, the West Street garage and REO coaches RP 3540 and RP 6047 for the sum of £600. The Goodwill was valued at £5, the two REOs at £295 and the premises at £300. The Traffic Commissioners consented to United Counties commencing operation on Miller's Welford to Market Harborough service on a daily basis from 1st September 1931 without the necessity of a formal hearing. United Counties was already operating services between Welford and Naseby to Northampton, as indeed it was between Welford, Naseby and Market Harborough, but was previously restricted to Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday operation. It is interesting to note the differing values for Goodwill placed on Miller's services by both Midland Red and United Counties.

United Counties immediately allocated two Leyland Lion saloons to their new Welford outstation and the Directors noted that the premises could additionally accommodate a small bus, but whether or not it did is unknown.

The Author is grateful to Peter Hale and Peter Jaques for their advice on Miller's routes operating within Midland Red territory.

MILLER. Thomas James - WELFORD

Rolling Stock:

Regn. No.	Chassis	Type	Chassis No.	Body	Seats	Body No.	Dates			Former Owner	Disposal	Nts
							New	S/H	W/D			
AY 6616	Napier	30hp			Lorry/ Bus		8/19	10/19	?			
BD 4783	Alldays & Onions	25-30hp	6640		Lorry/ B12R Chara		7/20	—	by 4/30			1
?	Ford	T					?	?	7/23	H Oliver Ltd., Npton/ Ponton, Scaldwell		
BD 8329	Chevrolet				B14F		9/23	—	1/28?			2
RP 206	REO		108552		B20F		12/24	—	by 9/31			3
RP 3540	REO	Pullman	W2647	Hasker	C26F		12/26	—	9/31	United Counties R4/233		
RP 5287	Chevrolet	LM	18105		B14F		1/28	—	by 9/31			4
RP 6047	REO	Sprinter	FAX5866	Hasker	C28F		5/28	—	9/31	Supp Allchin & Son, Northampton	United Counties R3/232	

- Notes:** 1 - BD 4783 - last owned by Hillson, Northampton 4/30.
 2 - BD 8329 - last owned by G Ward, Tamworth 12/32. This bus was named "Tiny" by Miller.
 3 - RP 206 - last owned by T C Robinson, Gt.Houghton 6/34.
 4 - RP 5287 - last owned by S W Wreford, Northampton (as a lorry) 9/34.