

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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KNIGHT. Miss Mary Elizabeth 77 Colwyn Road, NORTHAMPTON and 194-200 Kingsthorpe Grove, NORTHAMPTON

Mary Elizabeth Knight had performed most of the clerical functions required to keep her father's business on the road so that on the death of Sidney Knight, Mary was in a good position competently to continue the operation of Knight's Luxury Coaches. She was also fortunate in having good Works Managers - Jim Anstey and Frank Merry - to look after the engineering side of the business.

It appears that the fleet comprised a dozen buses and coaches at the time Mary Knight became the owner and these vehicles are listed at the end of this paper. Before he died, Sidney Knight had placed orders for two new vehicles. Originally he was intending to have only one and he also wished to have his 1937 A.E.C. Regal registered VV 6002 rebodied by Harrington in the same way that VV 3748 had been done. However, Harrington's were unable to cope with the work and this caused Sidney Knight to look to Whitson's to body his new A.E.C. Regal III chassis. A most up-to-date split-deck observation coach body was chosen by Sidney Knight and as Whitson's also had a similar Maudslay Marathon coach with observation style bodywork for sale, he bought this vehicle instead of proceeding with the refurbishment of VV 6002. Apparently Whitson's were also commissioned to rebody 1933 A.E.C. Regal DY 7354 at about this time but the body fitted was a conventional 33-seater body.

The two new coaches were delivered to Mary Knight in the late summer of 1949 and, being the only two coaches with observation style bodywork in the Northampton district, they were much sought after and distinctive coaches. The Maudslay Marathon was registered BNH 301 whilst the A.E.C. Regal was registered BNH 302.

Having acquired the business, it was necessary for Mary Knight to apply to the Traffic Commissioners to take over the three Road Service Licences previously held in Sidney Knight's name. This Mary did in April 1949 and was duly granted Excursions & Tours licences starting from Northampton Market Square/Regent Square and Harpole Central Stores as well as a stage carriage licence for the Brixworth - Northampton service.

Bygone Buses of Northamptonshire is compiled by R M Warwick, "Torestyn" 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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KNIGHT Miss Mary E - NORTHAMPTON



*The Maudslay Marathon BNH 301 is depicted here with its distinctive Whitson half-deck coach body.
(Photo courtesy A Hustwitt)*



*The A.E.C. Regal III - BNH 302 - had slightly different front end panelling and additional decorative strips which perhaps improved its appearance.
(Photo R Marshall collection)*

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KNIGHT Miss Mary E - NORTHAMPTON

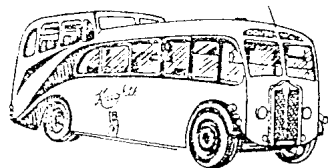


The rear end of the Whitson bodied A.E.C. Regal BNH 302 can be seen in this view taken on Northampton Market Square.

Private Parties!

SEE ENGLAND BY ROAD

Knight's
Luxury Coaches



194-200, KINGSTHORPE GROVE
NORTHAMPTON
TELEPHONE 983

Mary Knight had for some years been the main contact between Knight's Coaches and its tour organisers and thus had little difficulty in coping with the organisational work involved with planning and operating tours. In fact she ventured into Continental trips at an early date when A.E.C. Regal BNH 302 was despatched on a 1700 mile tour of France and Switzerland in June 1950. This was the first of many similar Continental trips in years to come.

Left:
A facsimile of Knight's Luxury Coach Tours Handbook of the 1950s.

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KNIGHT Miss Mary E - NORTHAMPTON

The operation of the stage-carriage route from Brixworth to Northampton did not fit very comfortably into Mary Knight's main business and arrangements were made with United Counties to take over the timings with effect from 1st March 1952. The agreement was reached on 1st February 1952 and provided for the sum of £150 to be paid for the Goodwill of the service to Mary Knight. The Traffic Commissioners duly granted United Counties permission to operate additional timings on the latter Company's service 12 licence.

Mary Knight was destined to purchase just one more new vehicle for the Knight's Luxury Coaches fleet and this event took place in September 1955 when a Yeates Riviera bodied A.E.C. Reliance was taken into stock. It was registered FNH 400 and is believed to have replaced the A.E.C. Ranger/Regal registered SR 8164.



A.E.C. Reliance FNH 400 was brand new when it posed for the camera at Yeates' Loughborough Coach Works in 1955. (Photo courtesy W S Yeates)

By 1955 Mary Knight's fleet numbered no more than ten coaches and there was really no need to keep two operational bases functioning. The business was therefore transferred entirely to the Kingsthorpe Grove property and the Colwyn Road house and garage was sold to Victoria Car Hire for £3,750 on 24th August 1955.

KNIGHT Miss Mary E - NORTHAMPTON

As the 1950s drew to a close, Mary Knight's fleet was becoming distinctly elderly compared to that of her main competitor in the excursion and tours and private hire market, York Bros (Northampton) Ltd. Underfloor engined coaches had largely superseded their exposed radiator predecessors and Mary Knight had only one of the more modern coaches, namely A.E.C. Reliance FNH 400. Mary was therefore faced with the stark choice of investing considerable capital in renewing the fleet and persevering with the operation of a very demanding business or selling the firm as a going concern and taking a well-earned early retirement.

York Bros had earlier approached Knight's with a view to purchase and during the winter of 1959/60 Mary Knight decided to re-open negotiations, as her Excursions and Tours licences were of particular interest to York Bros. Agreement was reached in February 1960 for Mary Knight to sell and York Bros to purchase "Knight's Luxury Coaches". The business was valued at £22,500 of which £8,600 represented the value of the seven coaches then being operated, £8,000 the value of the freehold garage and house at Kingsthorpe Grove, £820 the value of sundry plant and £5,080 the value of the Goodwill and licences.

York Bros applied to the Traffic Commissioners in March 1960 to take over the Harpole and Northampton groups of excursions and these were granted in May and June 1960 respectively. The purchase agreement was concluded on 1st July 1960 although it seems York Bros undertook a number of Knight's hires during the months preceding the agreed date of purchase.

Thus, at the end of June 1960, thirty-five years of bus and coach operation by the Knight family came to an end. Mary Knight and her husband Albert Driver, in due course moved to Norfolk where Mary still resided at the time this paper was written.

The Author is most grateful to the late Mrs Mary Driver and other members of the Knight family for information supplied to enable papers NN-KN1 to NN-KN4 to be prepared.

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE of KNIGHT MISS M.F. - NORTHAMPTON

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STOCK NO.	REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			PREVIOUS OWNER	INITIAL DISPOSAL	NOTES
		MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE & SEATS	NUMBER	NEW	S/H	W/D			
VV3748	A.E.C.	Regal		6621691	Harrington (-/48)	C32F		5/35	2/49	6/60	H S Knight, Northampton	York Bros. Northampton	
VV6002	A.E.C.	Regal		6622208	Harrington	C32F		5/37	2/49	12/49	H S Knight, Northampton		
NV7892	Bedford	WTB		110793	Grose	C25F		10/36	2/49	c-/52	H S Knight, Northampton	/W H Watkins, W Bromwich Hamtune Uphlstry Ltd, N'pton (last licensed 1/53)	
UD7655	Bedford	WTB		110259	Duple	C26R	6808	5/36	2/49	by -/58	H S Knight, Northampton		
HMX975	Albion	PK115		25019E	Harrington	C26F		3/38	2/49	4/50	H S Knight, Northampton	/T W McLean, London SW1	
RA8613	Gilford	166OT		10741	Reeve & Kenning	B32R		5/29	2/49	by11/50	H S Knight, Northampton		
VV8802	Bedford	OWB		11499	Mulliner?	B32F		12/42	2/49	by -/56	H S Knight, Northampton		
SR8164	A.E.C.	Ranger/Regal		665023	Mulliner	C32F		3/32	c2/49	c9/55	H S Knight, Northampton	/W Ivens Ltd., Rugby Welford Garages, Goldington	1
DY7354	A.E.C.	Regal		6621474	Harrington Whitson	C32R		4/33	2/49	-/49	H S Knight, Northampton	York Bros., Northampton	
ANH3	A.E.C.	Regal		06624910	Harrington	C32F	41	3/47	2/49	5/57	H S Knight, Northampton		
ANH4	A.E.C.	Regal		06625439	Harrington	C32F	79	3/47	2/49	6/60	H S Knight, Northampton	/Fuller, Netherfield York Bros., Northampton	
ANH5	A.E.C.	Regal		06625440	Harrington	C32F	86	-/47	2/49	6/60	H S Knight, Northampton	York Bros., Northampton	
BNH301	Maudslay	Marathon		70538	Whitson	RC31F		8/49	-	6/60		York Bros., Northampton	
BNH302	A.E.C.	Regal III		9621E740	Whitson	RC31F		9/49	-	6/60		York Bros., Northampton	
FNH400	A.E.C.	Reliance		MU3RV657	Yeates Riviera	C41C	523	9/55	-	6/60		York Bros., Northampton	

Notes: 1 - SR8164 was new to Hunter & Nelson, Brechin passing to Horne Products Slough in 1937. A.E.C. scrapped the original Harrington C33F body and converted the chassis to forward control and thus, in effect, to a Regal. Fitted with Mulliner C32F body 5/37 and sold by Horne Products to A Jones, Popular Coaches, Poplar E14. Requisitioned in 9/39 and later acquired by Knight's c-/44.