

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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NEVILLE, Ross

55 High Street,

RUSHDEN

William James Neville and his son, Ross, ran a tobacconist and stationer's business from premises at 55 High Street, Rushden. During the 1930s the Neville's became agents for Messrs. Birch Bros. of Kentish Town, who pioneered a London – Rushden service. This agency in turn led to a considerable number of passengers arriving in Rushden on the Birch service making enquiries at Neville's for taxis to take them on to their final destinations.

Ross Neville was a young man in the 1930s and whilst his father was not interested in diversifying from his original business, Ross saw the opportunity of running his own taxi business to take advantage of the trade landing on his doorstep by virtue of the Birch coach service. In the mid-1930s Ross bought his first taxi and within a year or two was running several machines. By 1937 Ross was harbouring a desire to run a coach and with this in view he visited the Olympia Motor Show to see what vehicles were on offer. His eye was taken by a Waveney bodied coach exhibited at the Show and on his return to Rushden Ross ordered a Commer PN3 chassis through the Wargate Motor Company of Rushden, to be bodied with a handsome twenty-seater Waveney coach body. The completed vehicle was delivered to Ross Neville in January 1938 when it was registered ABD 398. The vehicle was acquired purely for private hire work and regular services were not a feature of Ross Neville's operations.

All went well with Ross Neville's business venture until the early part of the War when petrol ceased to be available for private hire work and, in any case, Ross was called up to join the Forces and had to abandon his transport operations. At the same time, Messrs. York Bros. of Northampton had a number of their vehicles commandeered by the Military Authorities and were looking for any coaches they could lay their hands on. Whilst Ross Neville was away his father made arrangements to sell ABD 398 to York Bros. and this occurred in the late summer of 1940.

After the War Ross Neville was demobilised and returned to Rushden to assist his father with the family stationer's business. In the post-War years Ross re-commenced running taxis and private hire cars as a side-line to the main shop business. Once again Ross

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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The delightful twenty-seat Waveney bodied Commer PN3 registered ABD 398 bought new by Ross Neville in 1938. The livery of this coach, which advertised "Land Cruises Throughout Gt. Britain" was dark/light blue and cream.



Not that many coachbuilders managed to achieve an elegant rear end design for their products but Waveney of Oulton Broad certainly produced a well balanced design as this view of ABD 398 shows.

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An interior view of Ross Neville's Waveney bodied Commer PN3 registered ABD 398. It was fitted with four rows of comfortable double seats accommodating 16 people with another four passengers on the rear seat.

developed the urge to own a coach and re-enter coaching work and whilst the exact date is not known, it was probably in late 1950 or early 1951 that he finally achieved his aim. Ross travelled to Kibworth in Leicestershire to view a Bedford OB coach with 29 seat Duple Vista body in the ownership of N&S Coaches. The vehicle in question had been new in October 1949 to Auty's Tours Ltd of Bury and was registered EN 9871. It was in such good condition that Ross Neville bought it straight away and then sent it to Messrs. Spite of Thrapston for sign writing and a final spruce up of its cream and brown liveried body, prior to advertising it as being available for hire. Incidentally, Ross Neville's coaches were garaged in Alfred Street, Rushden in a warehouse building at the rear of the High Street shop premises.

Through operating coaches, Ross Neville came to know George Baxter, the well-known coach operator from Moggerhanger, Bedfordshire. During the course of their friendship, Ross often saw Baxter's Commer Avenger coach registered JNM 735 and he was favourably impressed by it. When George Baxter proposed to dispose of the vehicle, in

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Ross Neville's coaches were always immaculate and EN 9871 was no exception when this photograph of the Bedford OB/Duple Vista was taken.

March 1952, he offered it to Ross Neville who immediately bought it. JNM 735 was equipped with a Thurgood thirty-one seat body and whilst it was in excellent condition, being only just over a year old, Ross returned it to Thurgood's works at Ware to be repainted cream and brown. The Bedford OB - EN 9871 - was sold at this time to an unknown operator in Luton who required it for school bus operations.

The Commer Avenger was destined to be Ross Neville's final coach as in 1953 his father - William Neville - suffered a stroke and could no longer run the family's principal business. Accordingly Ross had to decide whether to run the tobacconist's shop full time and give up his taxis and coach, or to abandon the shop and concentrate on the transport side of his interests. He decided on the first course of action and in June 1954 sold the Commer, JNM 735, to Taylor's Coaches of Ilford. In this way, Ross Neville's involvement in running three coaches, spread over a time span of sixteen years, was ended.

The ready assistance of Ross Neville in the supply of information and photographs for this paper is gratefully acknowledged.

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Commer Avenger I - JNM 735 - photographed after it's Thurgood body had been repainted in Ross Neville's cream and brown colours. The entwined "RN" monogram on the side of the coach was cut out of an aluminium sheet by Ross Neville himself.



A rear view of JNM 735, Ross Neville's Thurgood bodied Commer Avenger.

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The sumptuous interior of the Thurgood body of JNM 735 complete with Clayton-Dewandre heater.

Vehicles:

REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			PREVIOUS OWNER	INITIAL DISPOSAL
	MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE/ SEATS	NO.	NEW	S/H	W/D		
ABD 398	Commer	PN3	46D609	Waveney	C20F	-	1/38	-	c8/40	Wargate Motor Co., Rushden	York Bros. Northampton
EN 9871	Bedford	OB	116564	Duple Vista	C29F	54904	10/49	10/50	3/52	N&S Coaches, Kibworth	Unidentified operator, Luton
JNM 735	Commer	Avenger I	23A0621	Thurgood	C31F	673	1/51	3/52	6/54	G A Baxter, Moggerhanger	Taylor's Coaches, Ilford