

# Bygone Buses

of  
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

NN-KN3

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## **KNIGHT, Herbert Sidney** **77 Colwyn Road, later at** **194-200 Kingsthorpe Grove,** **NORTHAMPTON**

This paper continues the story of the Knight family's involvement in bus and coach operations from the time in 1939 when Herbert Sidney Knight took over the reins from Sarah Jane Knight and her husband Charles White Knight. The precise date on which Sidney Knight took control has not been established but it seems to have been either coincidentally with, or very shortly after, the acquisition of the former firm's stage carriage service operating between Harrold and Northampton by Eastern National Omnibus Co Ltd on 24th May 1939.

The fleet inherited by Sidney Knight is believed to have comprised five vehicles, three of which were A.E.C.s registered VV 3748, VV 6003 and ABC 558; one Gilford registered RH 3919 and one A.J.S. registered UP 3000. The livery of each vehicle was cream and blue. The premises at 77 Colwyn Road, Northampton had been leased by Sarah Knight from W E Coombs, the Northampton mineral water manufacturer and the lease was subsequently assigned to Sidney Knight. This situation continued until February 1944 when Sidney Knight bought the property from the Executors of the late W E Coombs for the sum of £1500.

Throughout 1939 private hire and excursion operations formed the basis of Sidney Knight's business. The outbreak of War soon put paid to pleasure travel but instead brought many opportunities for expansion, which Sidney Knight willingly seized. It is said that most of Knight's coaches were commandeered by the Military Authorities in 1940 but details of specific vehicles taken are entirely absent. The likelihood is that the three A.E.C.s were commandeered whilst the Gilford and A.J.S. probably were not. During the course of the War at least thirteen vehicles were acquired to supplement the fleet, almost entirely second-hand. A motley collection of A.E.C., Albion, Dodge, Gilford and T.S.M. buses and coaches were obtained. In fact more or less anything roadworthy was purchased by Sidney Knight as he scoured the countryside for suitable vehicles. There may well have been more rolling stock owned than those for which details have been collated in the accompanying vehicle summary and, in fact, the fleet increased to such an extent that the Colwyn Road premises became inadequate to house them all and a

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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site in Stanhope Road, Northampton comprising an area of waste land was rented as a parking lot for fifteen coaches. A pair of Bedford WTB coaches were purchased from A R Surridge of Harpole who, until the War, had operated excursions and tours as well as private hire. Wartime conditions meant Surridge could no longer cater for pleasure traffic and these vehicles were of no immediate use to him, hence the sale to Sidney Knight.



*One of the many interesting vehicles acquired during the War was SR 8164 which had started life in 1932 as a normal controlled A.E.C. Ranger with Harrington bodywork. Before the War it was converted by A.E.C. into a forward control model, in effect a Regal, and a Mulliner body was fitted. This rather indistinct photograph shows SR 8164 in its latter form and as it would have appeared when operated by Knight's.*

*(Photo courtesy P Lefevre collection).*

With regard to operations during the War, Knight's Coaches conveyed evacuees from Northampton Rail Station to a variety of dispersal points around the Northamptonshire countryside and the firm later operated Prisoner of War contracts. Workers were regularly conveyed from the Northampton area to the munition factories at Coventry and this work required a regular allocation of eight coaches. Another five vehicles were supplied daily to the American Airforce base at Harrington from 1944, to convey military personnel as required. The particular vehicles involved with this contract were outstationed at Harrington. Several coaches were used to transport construction workers from the Northampton area to Poddington Aerodrome when that site was being developed.

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*Sidney Knight's Harrington bodied A.E.C. Regal registered GC 4814 is illustrated in this photograph. This coach was acquired during the War for various contract operations. It appears to be in quite good condition but the livery suggests the photograph was taken in the post-War years.*

*(Photo courtesy Alan B Cross/J F Higham)*

An unusual War-time contract operated by Knight's Coaches was to transport the cast of Northampton's New Theatre to Coventry for afternoon performances, as it was considered too dangerous to hold the shows at Coventry in the evenings. One of Knight's former drivers clearly recalls driving a coach carrying munition workers from Northampton to the Daimler No.2 factory at Coventry during the War. On the occasion in question he had a full load of passengers and on nearing the factory his coach was strafed by German aircraft when bullets hit his vehicle, entering the roof above the luggage rack, passing over the passengers' heads and out the other side of the coach. Remarkably, no one was injured but it was an event neither he nor his passengers ever forgot.

Another War-time contract saw two of Knight's coaches plying between Northampton, George Row and Brooklands Aviation factory at Sywell. Additionally security staff were transported from Northampton to Yardley Chase Ammunition Depot on a shift basis and quite a lot of troop movements were undertaken moving personnel to and from Simpson Barracks.

School transport did not feature to any great extent in Knight's schedules but a contract for two vehicles to take pupils to Spratton Hall was undertaken for a number of years.

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Around about 1943, the precise date being uncertain, Sidney Knight took over the stage carriage service previously provided by J H Mills of Brixworth, operating between that village and the Cross Keys public house in Sheep Street, Northampton. A Duple bodied Dodge registered BYL 446 was taken over with the service which had operated as "Maroon Bus Service" whilst under Mills' ownership.

Sidney Knight was allocated just one new vehicle during the War and this was a Bedford OWB which is understood to have been fitted with a Mulliner thirty-two seat utility bus body. It was registered VV 8802 in December 1942 and was used mainly on the stage-carriage service acquired from Mills as its wooden seats were not popular on the longer distance services to Coventry or elsewhere.

Sidney Knight and his first wife, Elizabeth, had a son and a daughter who were twins. Sadly both Elizabeth and the boy died but later Sidney remarried and a son named Norman resulted from his second marriage. Sidney's daughter - Mary Elizabeth Knight - later joined her father in the coaching business and Mary managed the office requirements of the firm. Norman Knight did not become involved with the business.

After the War the number of contracts declined and many of the coaches were withdrawn and sold for further use or for scrap. Private hires and seaside trips began to get moving once again from 1946 onwards and it became necessary to acquire rolling stock more suitable for pleasure traffic. New coaches were not immediately available after the War so Sidney Knight bought three second-hand coaches in reasonable condition. The first vehicle taken into stock was EOB 737, a twenty-six seat Bedford WTB with Plaxton coachwork, that had earlier operated for Surman's Coaches of Chinor. At the same time, because Knight's blue and cream livery resembled the colours of York Bros' coaches, it was decided to paint the Bedford orange and maroon, which thereafter became the firm's standard livery.



*A front view of H S Knight's Plaxton bodied twenty-six seater Bedford WLB registered EOB 737 acquired at the end of the War.*

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The next coach obtained second-hand was a 1930 Maudslay ML3 that had been rebodied by Burlingham in 1936. This coach was registered TF 3759 (shown below) and was purchased from York Bros (Northampton) Ltd. The third coach was an A.E.C. Regal registered DY 7354 which dated from 1933 and had previously been operated by Timpson's of London. This vehicle seated thirty-two passengers in an elegant Harrington body.



*It's a pity the registration number of this A.E.C. Regal coach is not visible to confirm beyond doubt that it is A.E.C. Regal DY 7354. The photograph was taken in 1949 when the coach was about to convey a party from Irthlingborough Church on a day's outing.*

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### KNIGHT H.Sidney - NORTHAMPTON

Sidney Knight was pleased with both A.E.C. Regal chassis and Harrington coachwork and he placed an order for three brand-new coaches with the above chassis and body combination. These fine vehicles duly arrived in the spring of 1947 when they were registered ANH 3, ANH 4 and ANH 5.



*From left to right are ANH 5/4/3 when these Harrington bodied A.E.C. Regals were new in 1947. The photograph was taken on Northampton Market Square.*



*This photograph depicts Knight's A.E.C. Regal registered ANH 4, elegantly bodied by Harrington with thirty-two seat coachwork. The photograph was taken at Epsom in 1952. (Photo courtesy ATPH/Hustwitt)*

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### KNIGHT H.Sidney - NORTHAMPTON

In addition to buying new coaches, Sidney Knight also arranged to have his 1935 A.E.C. Regal registered VV 3748 rebodied by Harrington to the same design as ANH 3, 4 and 5. The chassis was prepared and overhauled at Colwyn Road prior to despatch to Harrington's works at Hove.



*Before... The chassis of A.E.C. Regal VV 3748 is seen here at Colwyn Road, Northampton in 1948 prior to making its way south to the coachbuilders.*



*And after... VV 3748 photographed on Northampton's Market Square carrying its 1948 Harrington body. This picture was taken in the 1950s. (Photo courtesy T Richardson).*

### KNIGHT H.Sidney - NORTHAMPTON

During 1947 Sidney Knight bought a house at 200 Kingsthorpe Grove, Northampton together with a garage occupying the sites of 194 to 198 Kingsthorpe Grove. Earlier in the century this property had been occupied by Messrs Allchins' Luxury Coaches of Northampton but prior to Sidney Knight acquiring the premises the Post Office had occupied them. From this time onwards Knight's operated from both Colwyn Road and Kingsthorpe Grove. It is interesting to note that both Knight's Northampton premises had earlier been used as bus garages by other operators.

In the Spring of 1948 Sidney Knight made arrangements to acquire the Road Service Licence of Harpole operator A R Surrudge. Alfred Surrudge held an Excursions & Tours licence for a group of 28 destinations originating from the Central Stores at Harpole, with a vehicle allowance of three coaches. It will be recalled that Sidney Knight had purchased two of Surrudge's vehicles in 1941 at a time when they could not be used for excursion traffic due to fuel supply and use restrictions. Clearly liaison between Surrudge and Knight continued after the War when arrangements were made for the transfer of Surrudge's former tours licence to Knight. As far as can be ascertained, Surrudge did not recommence operations in the post-War period and Sidney Knight applied to take over the dormant licence in April 1948. The Traffic Commissioners made the necessary grant on 23rd July 1948.



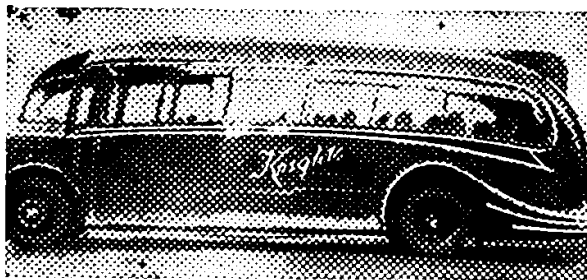
*A view of Knight's Kingsthorpe Grove property from which the garage building is self-apparent and, to the left of the garage, can be seen the house known as 200 Kingsthorpe Grove.*



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In the post-War period Sidney Knight's health began to fail and sadly he died on 4th February 1949 at the age of forty-nine years. At this point the business passed to his daughter - Mary Knight - whose story is continued in paper NN-KN4.

## *Knight's* COACH TOURS



COLWYN ROAD, NORTHAMPTON Phone 808

**NOTTINGHAM RACES**—MONDAY & TUESDAY, JULY 7th & 8th  
Coaches leave Market Square, 10.45 a.m.

**HUNSTANTON**—WEDNESDAY, JULY 9th.

Coaches leave Market Square 7-30 a.m.

**THAMES VALLEY & WINDSOR** SUNDAY and MONDAY,  
JULY 13th and 14th. Coaches leave Market Square 8.0 a.m.

*(Limited number of seats available).*

*Facsimile of an advertisement for Knight's Coach Tours appearing in the Northampton Independent in July 1947.*

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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	1. Harrington	C33C	503	5/35	-/39	-/48	S J Knight, Denton/N'pton	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		
RH3919	Gilford	168OT	11956	2. Harrington	C32F		-/48		2/49	S J Knight, Denton/N'pton	No subsequent operator		
VV6002	A.E.C.	Regal	6622208	Hull City Motor Works	B32R		8/31	-/39	12/42	S J Knight, Denton/N'pton	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		
UP3000	A.J.S.	Pilot	117	Harrington	C32F		5/37	-/39	2/49	S J Knight, Denton/N'pton	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		
ABC558	A.E.C.	Regal	6621857	Burlingham	C32F		6/29	-/39	?	S J Knight, Denton/N'pton			
DG485	Gilford	168SD	11328	London Lorries	C26D		5/30	1/41	9/43	S J Knight, Denton/N'pton	/Showman		
ANX818	A.E.C.	Regal	6621844	Duple	C32F	6842	3/36	c -/40	3/43	/Cream Coaches Ltd. Ldn N1	Don Everall, Wolverhampton		
NV7892	Bedford	WTB	110793	Grose	C25F		10/36	1/41	2/49	/O Heler, Leamington Spa	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		
UD7655	Bedford	WTB	110259	Duple	C26R	6808	5/36	1/41	2/49	A R Surridge, Harpole	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		
GK3410	Gilford	168OT	11655	Wycombe	C31F		11/30	2/41	1/44	Super Chs, Hackney E8	No further owner		
HMX975	Albion	PK115	25019E	Harrington	C26F		3/38	c 5/41	2/49	/G F Bailey, London	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		
RA8613	Gilford	166OT	10741	Reeve & Kenning	B32R		5/29	11/41	2/49	/F E Hughes, Enfield	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		
JU713	Gilford	168OT	11982	Willowbrook	C32F	2532	6/32	7/42	3/47	/R A Turner, Brampton	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		
KO2664	T.S.M.	B9A	5300		C32F		5/27	9/42	2/47	/Coventry operator	Church, Pytchley		
GC4814	A.E.C.	Regal	662175	Harrington	C32F		3/30	12/42	c6/48	/Grundens Chs, London SE6	Showman -last licensed 3/57	1	
GH3811	A.E.C.	Regal	662537	Hall Lewis	C27R		9/30	c -/43	by 2/45	/A Timpson & Sons Ltd. SE6		1	
VV8802	Bedford	OWB	11499	Mulliner?	B32F		12/42	-	2/49	/Black & White, Leyton E10	Miss M E Knight, N'pton	2	
BYL446	Dodge	PLB	1036	Duple	C20F	5507	7/35	c -/43	by 3/46	J H Mills, Brixworth	/E Naylor, Halesworth		
SR8164	A.E.C.	Ranger/Regal	665023	Mulliner	C32F		3/32	c -/44	2/49	War Department/ A Jones, London E14	Miss M E Knight, N'pton	3	
KX6094	A.E.C.	Regal	662599	Petty	B30D		12/30	by 4/45	by 7/46	F H Bellham, Hanslope			
EOB737	Bedford	WTB	112088	Plaxton	C26F		4/38	by 12/45	?	/J R Flatt, Long Sutton			
TF3759	Maudslay	ML3BC	4939	Burlingham	C30F		12/30	c -/46	?	/R C Surman, Chinor York Bros., Northampton	Adams, Rothwell		
DY7354	A.E.C.	Regal	6621474	Harrington	C32R		4/33	by 3/46	2/49	/A Timpson & Sons Ltd., SE6	Miss M E Knight, N'pton		

Notes: 1 - Registration and body of GC4814 may have transferred to chassis of GH3811.

2 - Northants registration records show this vehicle as GH3801, a similar AEC Regal.

3 - 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.



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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			
	ANH3	A.E.C.	Regal	06624910	Harrington	C32F	41	3/47	-	2/49		Miss M E Knight, N'pton	
	ANH4	A.E.C.	Regal	06625439	Harrington	C32F	79	3/47	-	2/49		Miss M E Knight, N'pton	
	ANH5	A.E.C.	Regal	06625440	Harrington	C32F	86	-/47	-	2/49		Miss M E Knight, N'pton	

Notes: