

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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KINGSTON Bros. Ralph, John William
& Philip Bernard
The Pound, WOODEND and later
High Street, BLAKESLEY

The village of Blakesley and the nearby hamlet of Woodend lie in south-west Northants mid-way between Northampton and Banbury and roughly twelve miles as the crow flies from each of these towns.

The Kingston brothers who ventured into the bus operating world came from a family very much steeped in transport, as their parents - Andrew and Mary Kingston - owned a small-holding at Woodend and in the 1890s commenced a carrier's service with a two-horse van on which passengers, as well as goods, were carried from their home village and Blakesley to the markets at Northampton and Banbury. Andrew and Mary Kingston had two daughters and three sons, the latter being - Ralph (1888), John William (1898) and Philip Bernard (1900) - and it was the younger two who actively became involved with motor-bus operation and with whom this story is concerned.

In March 1920 William Kingston started his own haulage and passenger business when he bought a second-hand Daimler car chassis registered BD 4255 and fitted with a truck body that was quickly adapted to carry fourteen passengers inside plus two more beside the driver. William experienced a number of mechanical problems with his Daimler and he repeatedly pressed his brother Philip to join him in the business since Philip had gained experience in motor engineering. Indeed he had worked for the Derngate Motor Company in Northampton which in turn was associated with the Midland Motor Bus Company which, during the first World War, had pioneered a number of rural services based on Northampton. Clearly something better than the Daimler was required for public service but William had insufficient funds to buy a more suitable vehicle. His father came to the rescue but with the proviso that each of his three sons should become partners in the business and each be responsible for a third of the debt. Thus, in 1920, Philip Kingston agreed to join his brother in an active way whilst Ralph became a sleeping partner. At the same time an ex-Canadian Army Lancia 50 cwt truck was purchased from a depot in London and on 9th June 1920 it was registered as BD 4633. This vehicle had a canvas sheet top and a fixed steel ladder at the rear which served the passengers as the means of entry to and exit from the vehicle.

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.

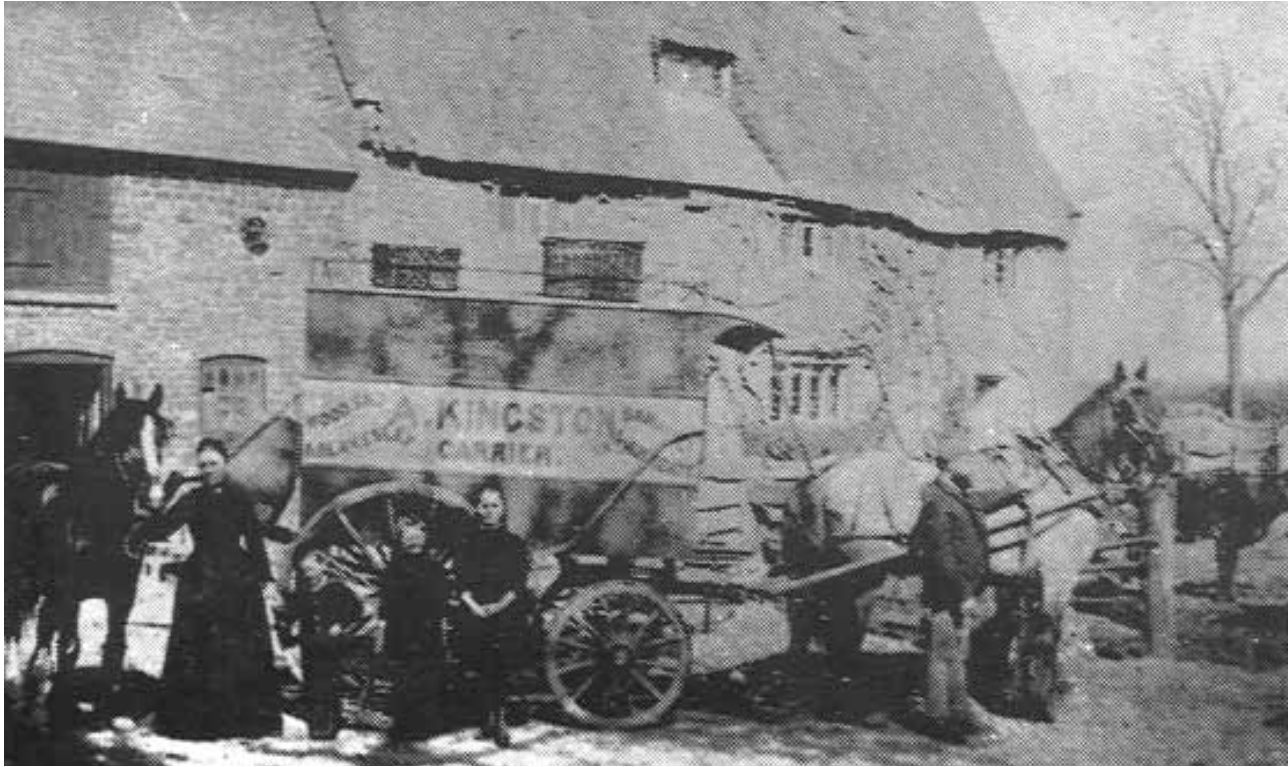
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KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley



Andrew and Mary Kingston appear in this 1893 photograph, along with their carrier's cart and three eldest children.

Later, in 1922 in fact, Messrs Ivens who were the local builders in the nearby village of Litchborough were engaged to enclose the area around the driver's cab of the Lancia and



to make a detachable top with transverse seats. This construction was held in place with the aid of four bolts and wing-nuts and was used as required depending on whether the vehicle needed to be used to transport goods or passengers. The completed vehicles was painted dark green with white window surrounds and as soon as it was ready for the road the original Daimler was sold to Thomas Frederick Reeve of Pattishall who used it to inaugurate his bus service from Grimscote to Northampton.

The Lancia BD 4633 was garaged near The Pound at Woodend in a covered area alongside the Kingston's home and this bus was soon used to provide a regular passenger service from Woodend via Blakesley, Adstone, Maidford, Litchborough,

Left: The ex-Canadian Army Lancia 50 cwt lorry as it was when bought by Kingston Bros in 1920 and registered BD 4633.

Bygone Buses

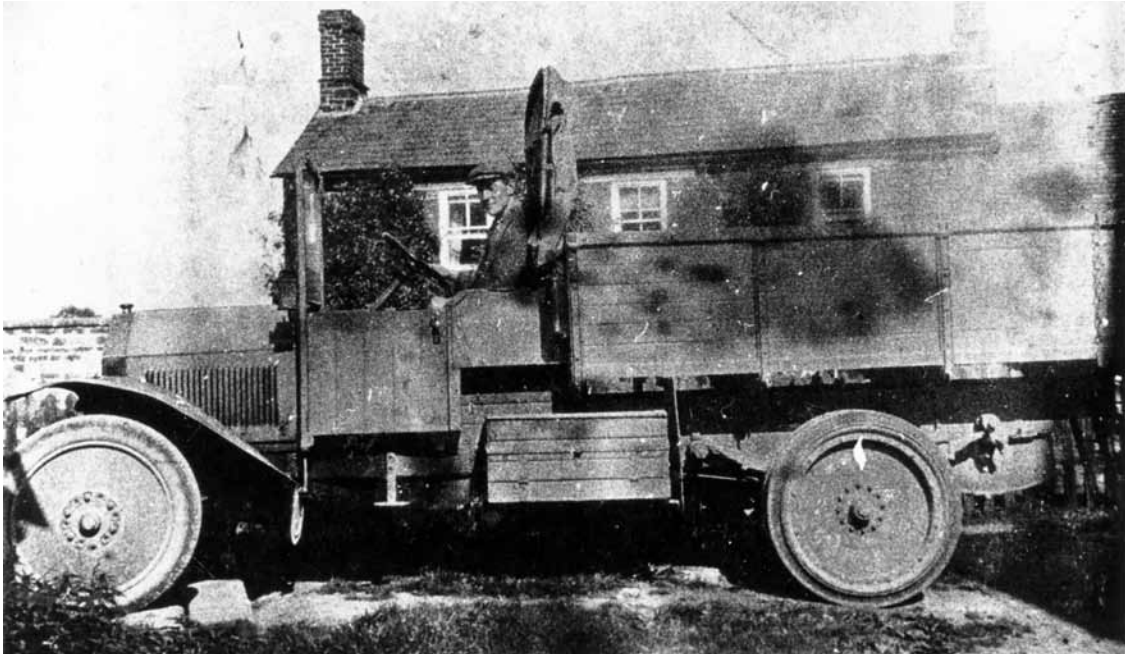
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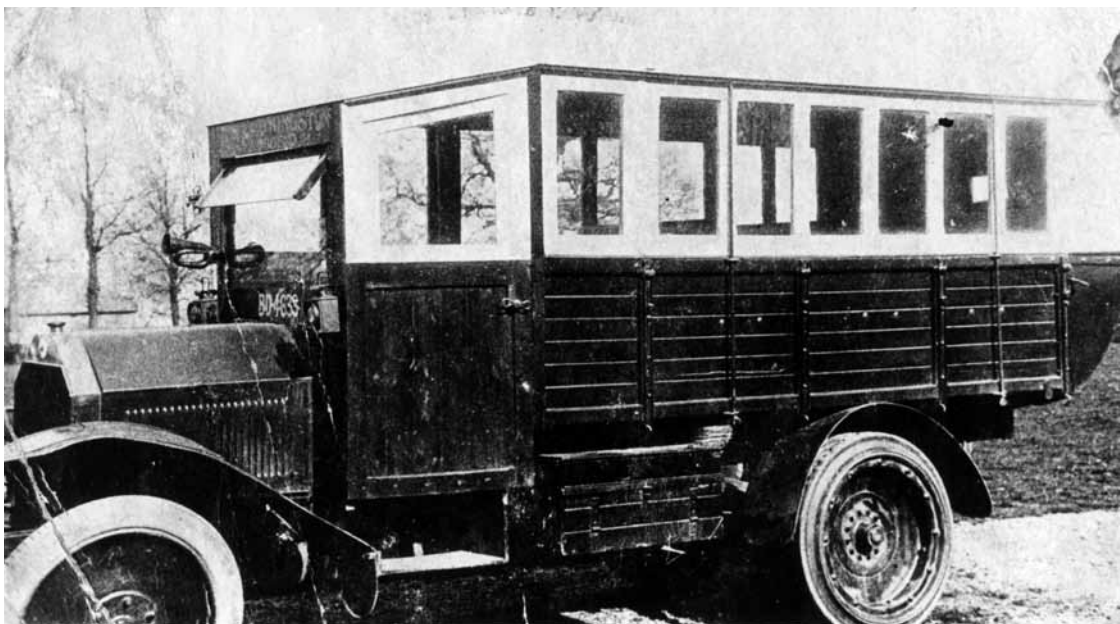
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KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley
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Bugbrooke and Kislingbury to the Plough Hotel yard in Bridge Street, Northampton on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. On Thursdays a route from Blakesley via Woodend, Weston, Moreton Pinkney and Culworth to Banbury Market Place was provided. On other days of the week the vehicle was used for private hires or for any freight work that could be obtained.



This side view of BD 4633 clearly shows the open cab, folding canvas roof and open lorry body of the Lancia.



BD 4633 after conversion to a bus by Ivens of Litchborough in 1922. The rear of the body together with the roof, windows and seats were removable, to enable the vehicle to continue to be used on freight haulage work.

◆ KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley ◆

Early in 1923 the Kingston Brothers expanded their trading activities by opening a general garaging and motor repair business in Blakesley at the rear of what had been the Co-operative Store. At the same time the bus operations were transferred from Woodend to Blakesley and the Lancia and all subsequent buses were garaged at the new premises. The move to Blakesley was accompanied by an addition to the fleet in the form of a second-hand Selden vehicle which had originally been a Shell-Mex petrol-can carrying lorry. This machine was converted into a van by John Franklin & Son, the Blakesley builders and wheelwrights, who also fitted it with detachable seats for emergency passenger use. However, this Selden was acquired principally for haulage work and its appearance on passenger services was kept to a minimum.

Patronage on the local bus services increased and the next advance came in the spring of 1923 when arrangements were put in hand for the Northampton coachbuilders Ben Hasker & Son to construct a twenty-seater bus body for fitment to the chassis of Lancia BD 4633. The resulting machine was at first painted eau-de-nil but was later finished in maroon and cream, the colours which were then adopted as standard by the Kingston Brothers for all subsequent buses.

The re-bodying of BD 4633 led almost immediately to the purchase by Kingstons' of another second-hand vehicle and this was by the little-known manufacturer Nazarro. This chassis was chosen because its dimensions were virtually identical to that of the Lancia's, whose earlier body was then mounted onto the Nazarro chassis. The resulting bus was used to augment operations on the local services and to release the Lancia for excursions to the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley in 1924/5 and for other private hire work.



BD 4633 in its final form whilst with Kingston Bros with its twenty-seat bus body built by Ben Hasker of Northampton in 1923.

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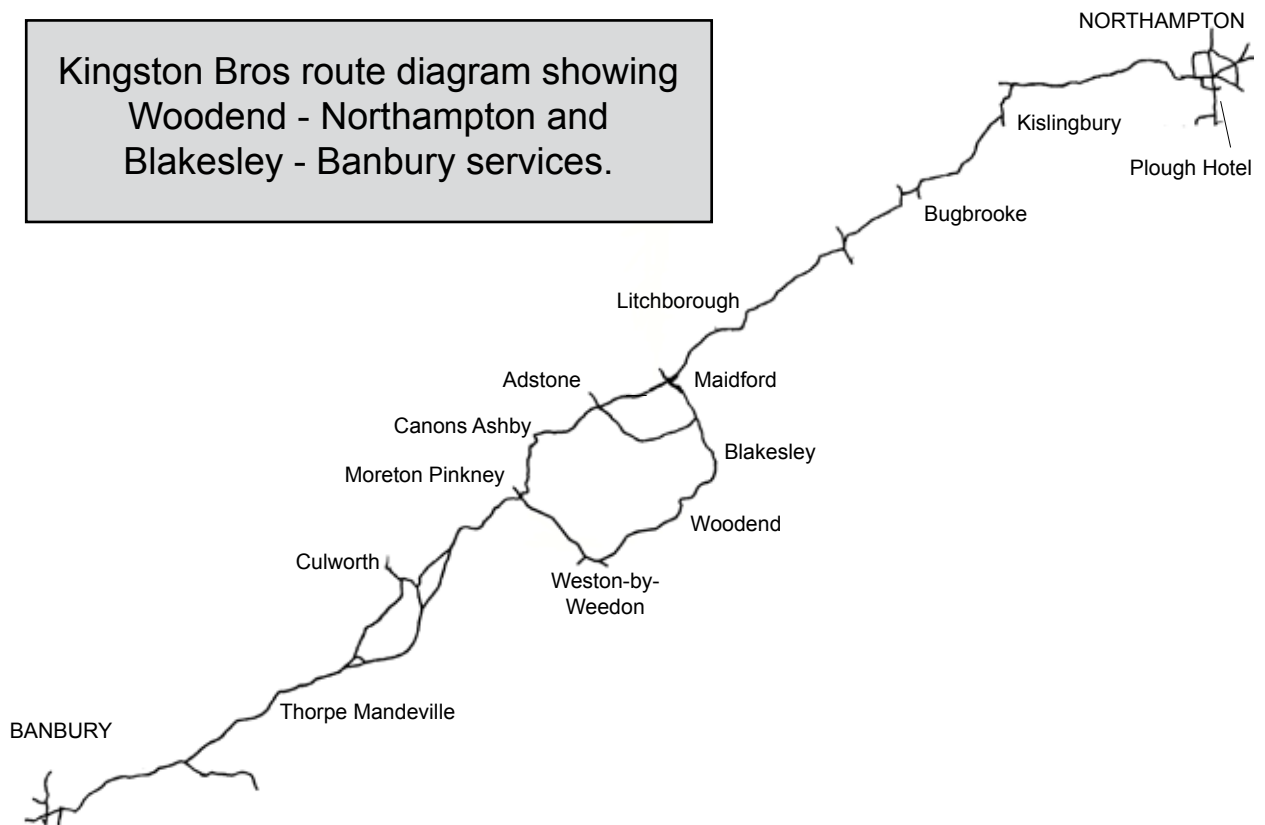
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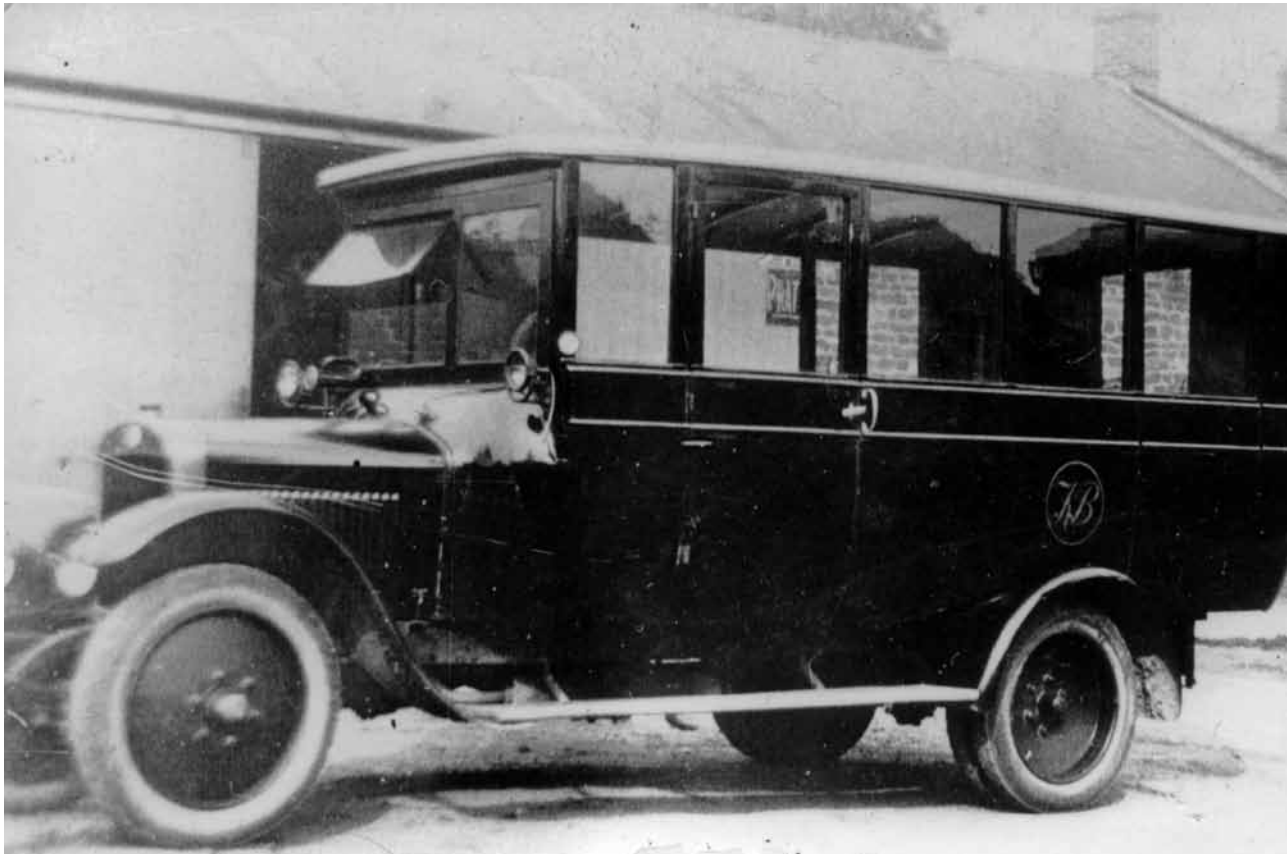
A rear view of Lancia BD 4633 with Hasker bodywork. This view must have been taken earlier than the one on the previous page as the bus is still in its original eau-de-nil livery as opposed to the later maroon and cream colours.

Kingston Bros route diagram showing
Woodend - Northampton and
Blakesley - Banbury services.



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KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley
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By 1926 the Nazarro was past its best and the Kingston Brothers bought a second-hand Berliet chassis to replace it. The original body of this bus had been destroyed by fire and it is believed, but not confirmed, that it had previously been owned by the Northampton bus proprietor H T Woolley. Ben Hasker fitted a new fourteen-seat body to the Berliet chassis and the completed vehicle was re-registered RP 2180 on 27th February 1926.

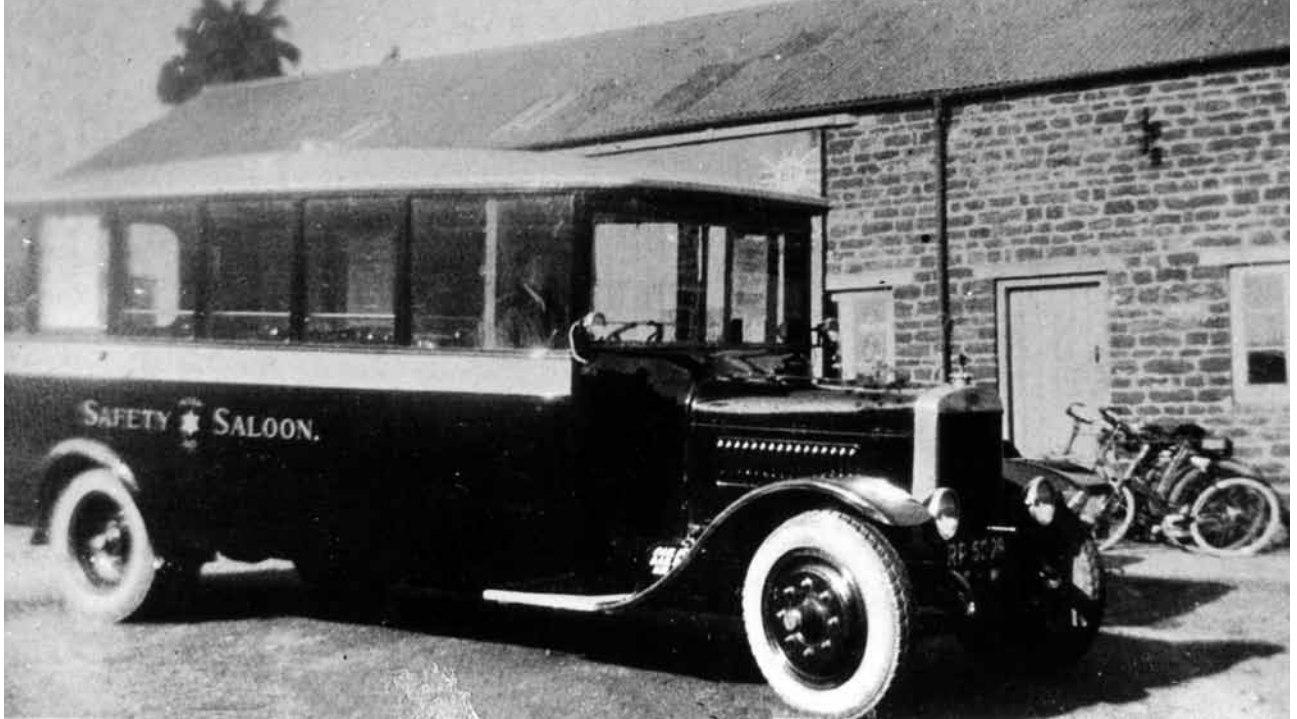


RP 2180 the second-hand Berliet chassis with its 14-seat Hasker body built in 1926.

The next development came a year later when another second-hand Lancia chassis that had been reconditioned and imported from Italy was bought by William and Philip Kingston and again a fourteen-seat bus body by Ben Hasker of Northampton was mounted onto this chassis. The resulting vehicle was registered in this country for the first time on 28th February 1927 as RP 3765 and this bus displaced the Selden reserve vehicle.

To reassess the situation, by the Spring of 1927 the Kingston bus fleet comprised Lancia BD 4633, Berliet RP 2180 and Lancia RP 3765. Although the registration numbers of the latter two vehicles were reasonably current at that time, the chassis of these buses were considerably older and by the end of the 1927 summer season it was clear to the Kingston Brothers that if they were to remain competitive they would have to update their fleet. Consequently they decided to invest in a brand new Star "Flyer" with a twenty-seat body built by Hasker and this was registered on 1st February 1928 as RP 5328 which, in turn, sounded the death knell for the Berliet.

◆ KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley ◆



Kingstons' first brand new bus was this 1928 Star "Flyer" registered RP 5328 with twenty-seat Hasker bodywork.

At an unknown date during the 1920s William and Philip Kingston bought their brother Ralph's share in the business and continued on their own. Meanwhile the garage and motor engineering business being run by the Kingstons was flourishing and much work was undertaken on the repair of buses for other operators. This led to Kingstons' supplying both new and second-hand buses to their competitors and fellow operators and, indeed, an agency was obtained for the sale of Star vehicles.

Returning to the subject of local bus services, from 1927 Jack Welton of Maidford began operating between Maidford and Northampton over a common route with Kingston Bros. Both operators ran to remarkably similar timetables and by December 1930 Kingstons' were running in accordance with the timetable shown on the next page. A little later on the terminus in Northampton was transferred a few yards from the Plough Hotel yard to a piece of waste ground in Cattle Market Road where Mulliner's Garage later stood. Also certain journeys on the route operated from Adstone to Canons Ashby and Moreton Pinkney instead of to Blakesley and Woodend.

With regard to the Kingstons' rolling stock, from 1928 onwards the Star Flyer formed the backbone of the fleet and the second Lancia - RP 3765 - was withdrawn from service in 1930 and sold to Walter Lawrence of nearby Wappenham, who managed to obtain a little further mileage from it. The Lancia's replacement was a second-hand REO Pullman of 1927 vintage, registered CN 3237. This was purchased in June 1930 and seated twenty passengers but the manufacturer of its bodywork is not known.

KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley

KINGSTON'S Bus Service between BLAKESLEY, ADSTONE, MAIDFORD, LITCHBOROUGH and NORTHAMPTON. (Plough Hotel).

Wednesday

Saturday

Sunday

SATURDAYS:

LEAVE	A.M.	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
Woodend	9 0	...	1 0	4 0	...	7 30	...
Blakesley	9 0	10 0	1 0	4 0	5 30	7 30	...
Adstone .....	...	10 10	1 5	...	5 35	...	...
Maidford	9 10	10 15	1 10	4 10	5 40	7 40	...
Litchborough	9 15	10 20	1 15	4 15	5 45	7 45	...
Northampton (arrive)	10 0	11 0	2 0	5 0	6 30	8 30	...
Northampton (depart)	11 0	...	2 30	4 0	6 0	7 0	9 0
Litchborough	11 45	...	3 15	4 40	6 40	7 40	9 40
Maidford	11 50	...	3 20	4 45	6 45	7 45	9 45
Adstone .....	...	...	3 25	4 50	...	7 50	9 50
Blakesley	12 0	...	3 30	5 0	7 0	8 0	10 0
Woodend	12 0	...	3 30	...	7 0	...	10 0

WEDNESDAYS SUNDAYS

LEAVE	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
Woodend	9 0	1 15	5 0	1 30	8 0
Blakesley	9 0	1 20	5 0	1 30	8 0
Adstone	9 10	1 25	5 10	1 40	8 10
Maidford	9 15	1 30	5 15	1 45	8 15
Litchborough	9 20	1 35	5 20	1 50	8 20
Northampton (arrive)	10 0	2 15	6 0	2 30	9 0
Northampton (depart)	12 0	3 0	6 30	3 0	9 15
Litchborough	12 35	3 35	7 10	3 40	9 40
Maidford	12 40	3 40	7 15	3 45	9 45
Adstone	12 45	3 45	7 20	3 50	9 50
Blakesley	12 50	3 50	7 30	4 0	10 0
Woodend	12 55	4 0	7 35	4 0	10 0

Kingston's December 1930 timetable for the Woodend - Northampton service.

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: KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley :
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In November 1930 the Kingston Brothers supplied their main competitor - Jack Welton of Maidford - with a thirty-two seat Duple bodied Gilford coach, the quality of which was so good that the Kingstons' just had to invest in a new vehicle for themselves. They decided to buy an AJS "Pilot" and this machine, which was registered NV 388, entered the fleet on 26th June 1931. It was equipped with a twenty-six seater coach body constructed by Petty Bros of Hitchin and it replaced the veteran Lancia BD 4633 which had performed such yeoman service for the Kingston Brothers since 1920. In fact BD 4633 was sold to E Tarry of Woodend who made further use of it as a cattle lorry until July 1933!

The AJS "Pilot" was the last bus bought by Kingston Bros as such, whose fleet at this time comprised three vehicles - the AJS, the REO and the Star - although the REO was withdrawn in July 1931, just a month after the Lancia.



AJS "Pilot" NV 388 with Petty coachwork was the last new bus purchased by William and Philip Kingston whilst trading as Kingston Bros.

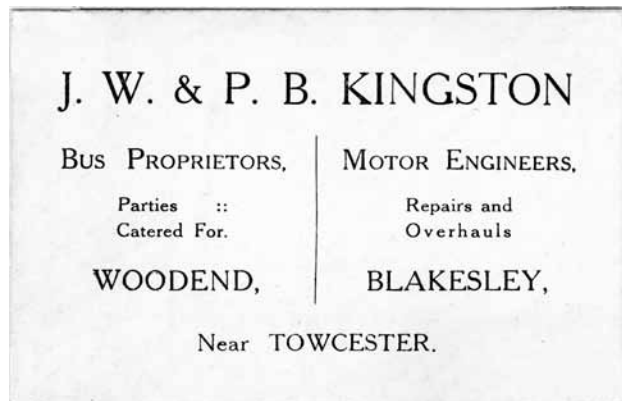
As a consequence of the introduction of the 1930 Road Traffic Act, it became necessary for bus operators to licence their services with the Traffic Commissioners. In April 1931 Kingston Bros submitted details for their Woodend to Northampton and Banbury

KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley

services to the Commissioners. By this time the latter route proceeded from Woodend via Blakesley, Maidford, Adstone, Moreton Pinkney, Culworth and Thorpe Mandeville to Banbury rather than commencing at Blakesley and running via Woodend and Weston to pick up the route at Moreton Pinkney. Licences were granted in June 1931 and in the following September application was made for an Excursions & Tours licence from Blakesley with local picking up and setting down points. Nine excursions were requested, of which four were coastal destinations. In November 1931 four more excursions were added and all destinations other than the Royal Show were subsequently approved.

Over the years a very cordial relationship had developed between the Kingstons and their competitor Jack Welton, so much so that on 1st June 1932 the three men decided to merge their bus businesses by forming a partnership. The new venture traded as KW Services (Kingston and Welton) and this story is continued in paper NN-KW1. The Kingstons' continued their garage and motor engineering business as a separate entity whilst Welton continued to trade as a coal merchant.

The Author is indebted to both the late Philip Kingston and Evelyn Kingston, wife of William Kingston, without whose help this account would have been considerably less informative.



An early Kingston Bros business card.



*The proprietors of
Kingston Bros.
Left John William Kingston
and right,
Philip Bernard Kingston.*



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KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley
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AUTHORISED STANDS :— *Cattle Market Road.*

BOROUGH OF NORTHAMPTON.

HACKNEY CARRIAGES.

No. X 973

Plate No. *583*

LICENCE FOR Motor Omnibus *BD 4633*
~~Motor Char-a-Banc~~

This is to Certify that the Council of the Borough of Northampton

do hereby licence Motor Omnibus *BD 4633* belonging to
~~Motor Char-a-Banc~~

*Wm J. W. W. B. Kingston,
Woodend.*

to ply for hire within the Borough, until the 25th day of March,
19*30*, under and subject to the Orders, Rules, Regulations, and
Bye-Laws from time to time in force, and to the Statutes made
and provided.

Dated this *26th* day of *March* 19*29*

W R New

TOWN CLERK.



N.B.—This Licence and Number Plates must be delivered up at the Office
of the Chief Constable on or before the 25th day of March, 19*30*

Additional Conditions attaching to the Grant of the Licence:—

1. That the 'buses run over routes, to the Borough Boundary and return, specified by the Watch Committee.
2. That a time-table of each service be approved by the Watch Committee.
3. That a seven days' notice be given of the alteration of any time-table.
4. That routes be approved for services running in particular directions.
5. That no 'buses shall pick up passengers in the Borough, except at authorised stands and stopping places
6. That the minimum fare to be charged for a journey in the Borough to be threepence.
7. All emergency exits must be capable of being opened with reasonable promptitude from outside and inside the omnibus.
8. No seats are to be allowed at or in front of the emergency door.
9. The emergency exit must be opened each day.
10. Suitable notices must be placed in all the omnibuses instructing the public how to open the emergency doors.
11. All omnibuses must carry an approved fire extinguisher, and directions as to their use must be prominently displayed.
12. The petrol tank must not be opened or filled while passengers are in or upon the omnibus, nor while the engine is running.
13. No omnibus must carry passengers after dark unless the lighting arrangements are in order.
14. Proprietors should insure against third party and passengers' risks.
15. A ticket stating the fare paid shall be issued to each passenger on payment of fare.

A facsimile of the Hackney Carriage Licence issued by the Borough of Northampton permitting Lancia BD4633 to ply for hire within the Borough between 26th March 1929 and 25th March 1930. The authorised stand was Cattle Market Road.

KINGSTON Bros. - Woodend/Blakesley

Rolling Stock:

REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			INITIAL DIS-POSAL	NOTES
	MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE & SEATS	NUMBER	NEW	S/H	W/D		
BD 4255	Daimler	?	?	?	Lorry/ Bus 16R	-	?	3/20	10/20	T F Reeve, Pattishall	
BD 4633	Lancia	50 cwt	25112	1. ?	Lorry/ Bus		?	6/20	-		
				2. Ivens	B20F		(-/22)	-	(-/23)		1
				3. Hasker	B20D		(-/23)	-	6/31	E Tarry, Woodend	2
?	Selden	?	?	1. ?	Lorry		?	-/23	-		
				2. Franklin	Van/Bus		(-/23)	-	2/27		
?	Nazarro	?	?	Ivens	B20F		?	-/23	-/26		
RP 2180	Berliet	LB	10551	Hasker	B14F		?	2/26	2/28		3
RP 3765	Lancia	Z	3458	Hasker	B14F		?	2/27	-/30	W Lawrence, Wappenham	4
RP 5328	Star	Flyer	?	Hasker	B20F		2/28	-	6/32	KW Services, Blakesley	5
CN 3237	REO	Pullman	W3303	?	B20		7/27	6/30	7/31	J R G Dell, Chesham	6
NV 388	AJS	Pilot	1003	Petty	C26F		6/31	-	6/32	KW Services, Blakesley	

NOTES:- 1 - Ivens body transferred to Nazarro -/23.

2 - Last licensed as a Goods vehicle 7/33.

3 - Believed to have been owned originally by H T Woolley of Northampton. Body destroyed by fire. Re-registered RP 2180 in 2/26 when acquired by Kingston Bros and fitted with a Hasker body.

4 - Imported from Italy and registered RP 3765 on acquisition by Kingston Bros in 2/27. Last licenced to W R Lawrence 9/30.

5 - Registration records show chassis number as 887 but this conflicts with official Star records.

6 - Previously owned by A Howe, Blyth.