

Bygone Buses

of
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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FRANKLIN. William J 23/24 New Street, DAVENTRY

William Franklin was born in 1892 and shortly before the outbreak of the First World War he took over the carriers business that his father had established in Daventry at about the turn of the century. As events turned out, William Franklin's venture with horse-drawn vehicles was to be short lived as he was soon destined to enlist with the armed forces and be absent from the Daventry area for the duration of the conflict.

Upon demobilisation in 1919 William Franklin found he had been bitten by the "transport bug" and using his army gratuity and by calling upon his experiences gained with mechanical vehicles during the War, he joined forces with a Horace Wakeford in reforming his carriers and removals business. Horace Wakeford was a well known Daventry business man who had financial interests in a number of local enterprises, but

W. FRANKLIN,
23 & 24, NEW ST., DAVENTRY

CARRIER to ———
NORTHAMPTON.

When ordering your Goods
order by :
Franklin, "Cross Keys."

**Cheap and Prompt
Delivery.**

Facsimile of William Franklin's advertisement for his carriers service appearing in the Daventry Express of 3rd December 1921.

for the purposes of Franklin's transport undertaking, Horace Wakeford was to all intents and purposes a sleeping partner. Because of the Franklin's long association with the transport of goods in the Daventry area and the considerable amount of goodwill engendered by the Franklin family name, the revitalised 1919 enterprise was operated solely under the Franklin title.

Initially William Franklin concentrated on the carriage of goods to and from local villages in the Daventry area and to the nearby larger towns of Northampton and Rugby. Details of Franklin's first vehicles are not well documented but he is known to have owned a Thornycroft lorry registered HO 2423 purchased secondhand in December 1920. William Franklin's brother -

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Albert Franklin - immediately joined the firm as a driver and as the years passed he assumed greater responsibility for the day to day running of the business, although he never had a financial interest in it.

The concern prospered and in 1921 William Franklin decided to diversify into the passenger carrying side of road transport. For this purpose he bought a model T Ford chassis to which a fourteen seat body was fitted, having been made by the Daventry coachbuilder Thomas Goodwin. The completed vehicle was registered BD 5819 on 18th March 1921 and was named "The Dane", having this legend painted on its rear passenger entrance door. This vehicle was used primarily for private hires and local tours, with trips from Daventry to Badby Woods being particularly popular in the spring and summer months. In fact, on Sundays and Bank Holidays, a shuttle service was developed over the years operating from Daventry Square to Badby Woods from 10 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock in the evening at a single fare of 6d (2.5p)



William Franklin's first bus was this Goodwin bodied model T Ford registered BD 5819. The photograph was taken at the rear of 23 New Street, Daventry and Alfred Franklin, son of William Franklin, stands on the step of the bus. The lettering on the rear door included the vehicle's name "The Dane" surrounded by the words "W. Franklin, Daventry".

BD 5819 was a right-hand drive machine as opposed to the left-hand arrangement more commonly associated with the model T Ford imported from America. Many model T Fords of this era were not entirely satisfactory due to the gearing system then in use. Apparently

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they were fitted with three pedals, one of which was a normal foot brake. The other two pedals had to be used in conjunction with the handbrake lever. The left one, when depressed fully, put the vehicle into a very low forward gear and when partially depressed, put the vehicle into a very high forward gear. The third pedal was used to engage a reverse gear. There were also two levers on the steering column, one of which acted as the throttle. Naturally, clutch linings were short lived and when fully laden BD 5819 had a performance on hills that left a lot to be desired. Indeed, it frequently failed to negotiate steep rises without the aid of its passengers dismounting and pushing.

William Franklin also owned a Selden lorry registered BD 3531 which he acquired in February 1921. It was an open flat lorry with sides about two feet high and was almost certainly of ex-War Department origin, dating from circa 1916. A demountable body which included bench seats to accommodate seven passengers each side was built to fit onto this lorry, access to which was via a ladder at the rear of the vehicle. The Selden was used only occasionally for passenger work and acted as a spare vehicle should the Ford T be indisposed. However, it lasted for four years but ended its life rather ignominiously when it caught fire and burned out between Weedon and Daventry whilst being driven by William Franklin.

Franklin's buses were operated from, and garaged at, 23/4 New Street, Daventry throughout the period passenger services were provided. These premises were owned by Horace Wakeford and buildings at the rear of the property served as garages for both buses and lorries.

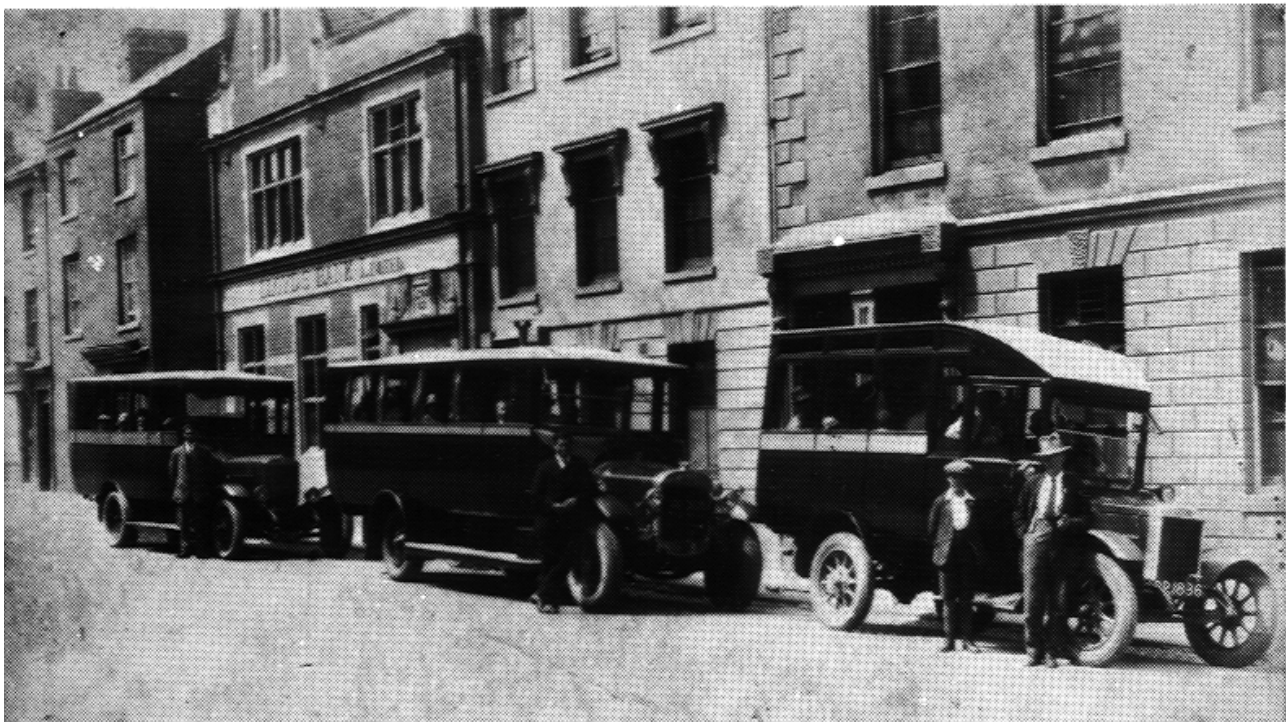
By 1923 William Franklin decided he needed a further passenger vehicle and duly purchased a second-hand Berliet which seated twenty passengers. Unfortunately the registration number of this machine has not been traced but upon acquisition Franklin used it fairly intensively for trips from Daventry to the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley in 1924 and 1925.

It will be recalled that towards the end of 1925 the stand-by Selden vehicle BD 3531 was burnt out and by the same time the original Ford T – BD 5819 – had come to the end of its life. To replace the two buses William Franklin bought a Morris chassis and transferred the Goodwin body from the Ford T to the new chassis with the resulting bus being registered RP 1886 on 6th November 1925. It seems likely that another Morris Commercial was acquired second-hand at about the same time but no details are available although the vehicle in question appears in the photograph on the next page.

Evidently Franklin's business did quite well as a brand new Thornycroft A1 chassis was added to the fleet in the Spring of 1926 and again the services of Thomas Goodwin were sought to build a saloon body for fitment onto this chassis. The end product was registered RP 2357 on 24th March 1926 and at this time the fleet comprised four vehicles, the Morris RP 1886, the Thornycroft RP 2357, the Berliet and the second Morris. It is understood that at about this period a worker's service was started, operating from Staverton via Daventry, Braunston and Dunchurch to the British Thomson-Houston factory in Rugby.

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Initially the vehicle operating the service returned empty to Daventry to undertake other work during the day before returning to Rugby in the afternoon for the workers' homeward journey. In due time two buses were needed for this service and at this stage one of them was parked all day at Rugby with both drivers returning to Daventry on the one bus. At a later stage, one of the two buses was diverted to operate from Daventry via Welton Turn, Kilsby and Hillmorton to Rugby B.T.H. and it was this route that survived into the post 1930 Road Traffic Act days.



This line up of three of Franklin's buses operating a private hire to Wicksteed Park Kettering in 1926 shows the Morris RP 1886 with the Goodwin body transferred from Ford T – BD 5819 – heading the convoy. The clarity of the picture does not permit positive identification of the other two buses. The middle one is certainly a Thornycroft and is likely to be RP 2357. The third vehicle is presumably the second Morris that was purchased. Beside the leading Morris stands Frank Gibbins, beside the centre vehicle stands William Franklin whilst his brother Albert stands with the rear machine.

It seems that a further bus was added to the fleet round about Autumn 1926 and once more a Morris Commercial was chosen. The registration number has not been discovered but the numerals were either 5900, 5903 or 5908 and it probably seated around 18 passengers. The vehicle in question does however appear in the final photograph accompanying these notes.

It has been mentioned earlier that Horace Wakeford did not take an active role in the partnership with William Franklin and in the mid-1920s he sold his share of the business to Mr Frank Gibbins of 16 Badby Road, Daventry, after which time, Mr Gibbins took a personal interest in the operations.

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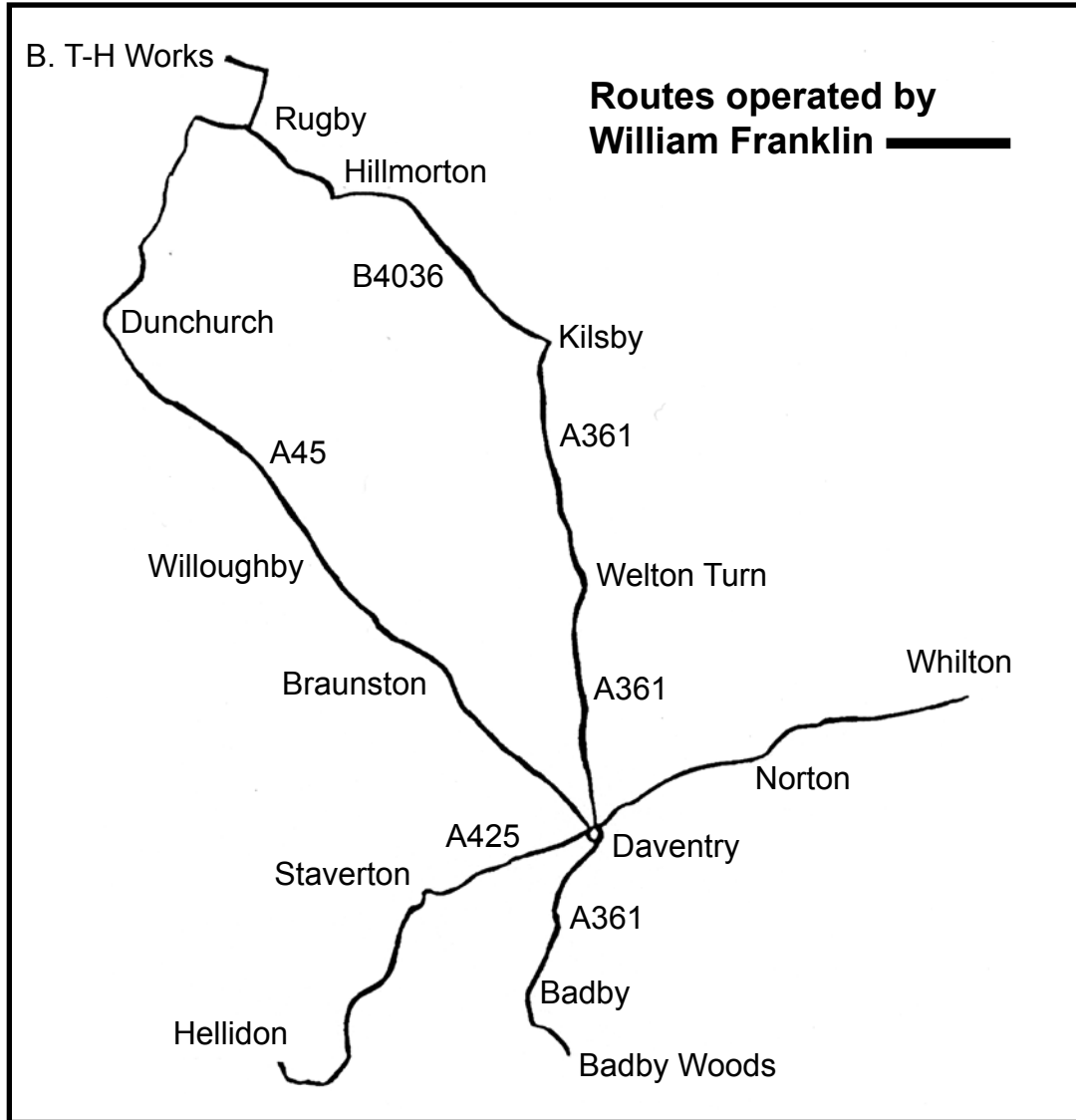


Diagram of the routes operated by William Franklin.

The next development came in March 1927 when the Berliet was decommissioned as a passenger vehicle and was relegated to freight duties. To replace it William Franklin bought a Thornycroft A2 chassis which this time received a body constructed by Messrs Hall-Lewis. The completed bus seated twenty passengers and was registered RP 3963 on 24th March 1927.

The popularity of Franklin's buses continued to grow and a year later the fleet was updated by the purchase of RP 6326 registered on 30th July 1928. RP 6326 provided a further example of a Thornycroft A2 chassis to which a twenty seat body was attached, possibly again by Hall-Lewis but this is not known for certain. In all probability Morris RP 1886 was taken out of the fleet at this time and converted for use as a goods vehicle.

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This picture clearly shows Thornycroft RP 3963 with its Hall-Lewis twenty-seater body. The driver, on the right, is Albert Franklin whilst the gentleman on the left was a Mr Wilson, the organiser of the party being conveyed when the photograph was taken. At the rear is a Morris Commercial, the registration number of which is only partially visible.



Another illustration of the Hall Lewis bodied Thornycroft A2 registered RP 3963.

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By 1929 the second Morris to be purchased was in need of replacement and a fourteen-seat Chevrolet LO was selected for the job. Again the builder of the body is not known but the bus was registered RP 7167 and licensed on 26th March 1929.

William Franklin's partner, Frank Gibbins, wished to pioneer two local services which he thought would be profitable. One of these ran between Daventry and Hellidon whilst the other plied between Daventry and Whilton. Both routes were sparsely populated and the little use made of the services proved to be a drain on the firm's resources. The Whilton route was withdrawn completely whilst the Hellidon service was curtailed at Staverton. This latter route also survived the 1930 Road Traffic Act licensing and Franklin was successful in obtaining an Excursions and Tours licence entitling him to pick up at Daventry and surrounding villages. William Franklin also made application for a licence to continue his operation from Daventry to Badby Woods but this was withdrawn prior to the Traffic Commissioners granting a licence.

Finally, in January 1932, William Franklin applied for a licence for a service previously operated by C W Page of Drayton (See NN-PA3). This route ran on Saturdays and Sundays from Daventry Market Square via Badby, Charwelton and Byfield to the White Horse at Woodford Halse. The Traffic Commissioners did not grant the application until March 1932, by which time the grant appeared in Frank Gibbins name.

At this point the business appears to have stagnated and by March 1932 William Franklin decided he had had enough of running buses. He and his partner - Frank Gibbins - determined they would split the business in proportion to their individual financial holdings. William Franklin continued with most of the lorries and pantechincons and remained in business until road haulage was nationalised after the War and his business was absorbed into British Road Services.

Frank Gibbins took over the three buses then operating, RP 6326 having apparently either been disposed of prior to the business separation or converted to a goods vehicle, and continued the passenger side of the former Franklin business. Gibbins also took two tipper lorries and, like Franklin, continued in the freight side of road transport.

Thanks are due to the late Mr Albert Franklin of Daventry for his recollections of William Franklin's transport business.

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ROLLING STOCK

Registration Number	Chassis Make	Chassis Number	Body Make	Body Type & Seats	New	Dates		Acquired From	Disposal	Notes
						S/H	W/D			
HO 2423	Thornycroft 40hp	?	—	Lorry	8.19	12/20	1?	?	?	1
BD 5819	Ford T	4369684	Goodwin	B14R	3/21	—	2/25		?	2
BD 3531	Selden	26121	?	B14R	-/16?	2/21	12/25		Scrapped	
?	Berliet	?	?	20	?	-/23	3/27		To Lorry	3
RP 1886	Morris	6912T	Goodwin	B14F	11/25	—	7/28		?	2,4
?	Morris	?	?	B--F	?	?	3/29?		To Lorry	
RP 2357	Thornycroft A1	12405	Goodwin	B20	3/26	—	3/32		F C Gibbins	5
-- 5903?	Morris	TX?	?	B18?F	?	-/26	?		?	6
RP 3963	Thornycroft A2	14098	Hall Lewis	B20F	3/27	—	3/32		F C Gibbins	7
RP 6326	Thornycroft A2	13963	?	20	7/28	—	by 3/32	Thornycroft	?	8
RP 7167	Chevrolet LO	50422	?	C14F	3/29	—	3/32		F C Gibbins	9

Notes

- 1 - HO 2423 not recorded as a public conveyance - probably a lorry.
- 2 - Body from BD5819 fitted to RP1886.
- 3 - Last licensed 12/39.
- 4 - Last licensed as a goods vehicle 12/39.
- 5 - RP 2357 last licensed 12/33.
- 6 - Registration uncertain. Photograph shows numbers as 5900, 5903 or 5908.
Second of its two letters was either "K" or "X", the latter being most likely.
- 7 - RP 3963 last licensed 9/36.
- 8 - RP 6326 last licensed to W Clarke, Wellingborough as goods vehicle 12/34
- 9 - RP 7167 last licensed 9/35.