

CHAPMAN. Peter t/a Heeps Garages Ltd and/or Premier Coaches GUILSBOROUGH

It is suggested that readers first acquaint themselves with paper NN-HE2 which is concerned with the earlier history of Albert Norman Heeps and his son who formed Heeps Garages. From this paper it becomes clear that Peter Chapman took over Heeps Garages in 1952 following the illness of the proprietor.

Peter Chapman, who was born on 28th October 1922 at Leeds, moved to Moulton and later Spratton in the late 1930s with a view to pursuing a career in motor-cycle racing. At this point he took up employment at Norman Heeps' Garage at Guilsborough as a salesman for agricultural machinery, cars and motor-cycles. The War intervened in his career and Peter served in the Army from September 1939 to December 1946. Peter's absence from motor-cycle racing for seven years put paid to any personal ambitions he may have had in this field although it is understood that he enjoyed considerable success in the immediate pre-War period. Demobilisation saw Peter return to his salesman's job with Norman Heeps and over the course of the next few years he took on more and more responsibility for the running of the firm and, indeed, became a partner in the business. In 1950 Norman Heeps was taken ill and Peter Chapman ran the outfit until it was apparent that Norman would not regain his health and sold the business to Peter Chapman in 1952.

Peter continued to trade as Heeps Garages at Guilsborough and West Haddon but in 1954 joined with Edward and William Lucas (Moulton Builders) and Kenneth Baskcomb (Haselbech Farmer) to form Heeps Garages Ltd (539992). This company was incorporated on 1st November 1954 with a nominal capital of £10,000 divided into 10,000 Shares of £1 each and the four gentlemen mentioned above became Directors and held equal Shareholdings. The company was formed "to acquire and take over as a going concern and carry on the business of a Garage Proprietor now carried on by Peter Chapman at Guilsborough and West Haddon in the style of Heeps Garages."

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OFFICIAL AGENTS FOR FISON'S PEST CONTROL CHEMICALS

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THE BRITISH MOTORISTS ASSOCIATION

DIRECTORS
P. CHAPMAN, A.M.I.N.S.T.B.E.
E. N. LUCAS
W. K. LUCAS
K. N. BASKCOMB

Heeps Garages Ltd.

AGRICULTURAL
AND MOTOR ENGINEERS

CARS FOR HIRE
CYCLE & MOTOR-CYCLE
AGENTS

GUILSBOROUGH, NORTHAMPTON. TELEPHONES: GUILSBOROUGH 207 AND 270
ALSO AT WEST HADDON. TELEPHONE: WEST HADDON 216

A facsimile of a Heeps Garages Ltd letterhead of the 1960s showing the Directors and some of the activities with which the company was associated. Directors E N and W K Lucas were from the Moulton Builders' firm of that name, in which Peter Chapman also had a financial interest. Reference to paper NN-HA6 concerning F R Harris Ltd of Northampton will also reveal another of Peter Chapman's interests when this firm was acquired in 1955.

With the acquisition of Heeps Garages Peter Chapman inherited two Bedford coaches which operated a school contract from Cottesbrooke, Creaton, Teeton and Hollowell to Guilsborough School. Unfortunately the identify of these two vehicles has not been discovered.

During the 1950s Peter Chapman bought three secondhand coaches, two of which probably replaced the Bedfords he has taken over with the business. The first purchase was BVV 379 which was a Commer Avenger with thirty-two seat Harrington bodywork. This machine had been new in July 1950 to British Timken Ltd of Northampton who in June 1954 traded it into Duston Garage who in turn passed it on to Peter Chapman, probably some two years later. By coincidence the Bedford OB already in the Heeps Garages' fleet also came from British Timken, as likely as not via Duston Garage.



Commer Avenger BVV 379 is shown in this illustration with its Harrington coach body. (Photo courtesy DM Bailey).

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Soon afterwards Bedford OB registered FFH 293 with its Duple Vista coachwork joined the Heeps' fleet having previously been operated by Corvedale of Ludlow. By 1959 a Bedford SBG coach had been added to Heeps' rolling stock and this machine was registered BJM 546 and carried a thirty-six seater Plaxton Venturer body. Photographs of both these Bedfords are available.



FFH 293 was a standard Duple Vista bodied Bedford OB which provided several years of good service to Peter Chapman prior to being sold for non-P.S.V. use to the associated building firm of Lucas of Moulton. (Photo courtesy D M Bailey).



The Bedford SBG registered BJM 546 with Plaxton Venturer bodywork had taken a party of school children to Wembley when this photograph was taken. (Photo courtesy R H G Simpson).

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Two further coaches were taken into stock during 1960 with a Bedford SB3 Plaxton Consort II bodied machine registered AFT 753 arriving in March followed by a further example of the Bedford OB/Duple Vista marque arriving in November. This latter coach was registered EBD 900 having originated with York Bros of Northampton and latterly operated by Alma Coaches of Wellingborough.



In their day the Plaxton Consort II bodied Bedford SB3 coaches were quite handsome vehicles as demonstrated in this view of Heeps Garages' AFT 753.

(Photo courtesy R H G Simpson).

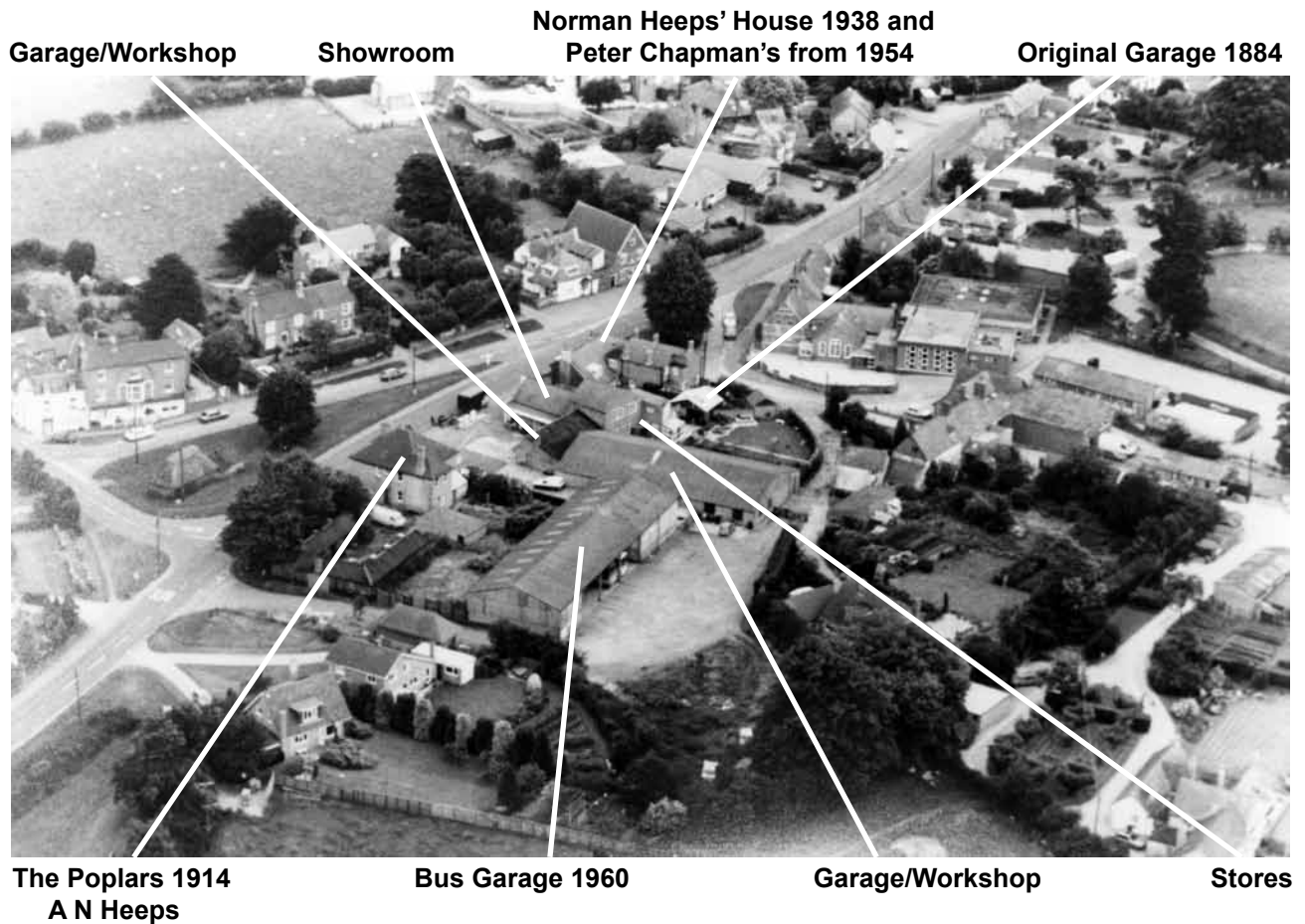


When this photograph of Bedford OB/Duple Vista bodied EBD 900 was taken in May 1957 it was in the ownership of Alma Coaches of Wellingborough, passing to Heeps Garages in November 1960.

(Photo courtesy D M Bailey).

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The Heeps' garage site at Guilsborough was quite extensive as can be seen from this aerial photograph. The buildings on the site had been erected at various dates from 1884 and in 1960 Peter Chapman erected a bus garage to house his growing coach fleet. Another photograph of this building can be seen at the end of this paper.



Working for United Counties the Author knew Peter Chapman from 1960 onwards by virtue of hiring Heeps' coaches for duplication on the Company's Motorway Express Services. Peter is remembered as a very modest and private man who would never relate what he had done or achieved in the past, even when pressed to do so. When questioned he would always respond that it wasn't important what he had done. However, the Author recalls reports of Peter driving coaches on test tracks and having the tyres detonated at speed. It was no "ordinary" man that would undertake such activities. Peter was also very much involved in the promotion of motor-cycle racing and often German and Japanese riders would stay in the Guilsborough area during the racing season.

With the opening of the M1 Motorway in 1959 the requirement for fast motorway coaches was foreseen and Peter Chapman was involved in a joint venture with Vauxhall Motors and W S Yeates coachbuilders to produce such a vehicle. It is understood that Bedford provided an experimental SB1 chassis which Yeates equipped with a Fiesta Continental body and Peter Chapman was involved in modifying the vehicle

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such that it was capable of speeds reaching 112mph. In this form it was tested for 10,000 miles at M.I.R.A. and for a similar distance on the M1 Motorway. After that Peter Chapman purchased the vehicle in May 1961 when it became registered as YBD 1. Not a man to be satisfied with an easy life, Peter Chapman, along with seven other men, took YBD 1 on a record-breaking trip from London to Moscow and back.

The coach left The Guildhall, London at 2115 hrs on Tuesday 30th May 1961 and proceeded via Dover to Ostend and then through Brussels to Helmstedt on the East German border and, skirting Berlin, on to Warsaw, Minsk and Smolensk to Moscow arriving at Red Square at 2107 hrs on Thursday 1st June 1961. The return trip left Moscow at 12.00 noon on the following day and arrived at The Guildhall, London at 13.08 hrs on Sunday 4th June 1961. Accordingly, in the space of less than five days YBD 1 had travelled 3,741 road miles at a running time average of 51.6 mph.



YBD 1, the record-breaking Bedford SB1/Yeates Fiesta coach standing in Red Square, Moscow on Friday 2nd June 1961. The coach was powered by a Bedford 300 cu. in diesel engine connected to a five-speed overdrive-top gearbox and a Bedford two-speed axle. (Some reports say it had a six-speed gear box).

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A somewhat clearer photograph of YBD 1 taken a little later in life whilst operating on hire to United Counties. (Photo courtesy P M Photography).

During 1961/2 a couple of older vehicles in Heeps Garages' fleet were replaced by newer stock when 903 CPT arrived in June 1961 and WWU 866 in the following year. 903 CPT was another Bedford, a make very much favoured by Peter Chapman, being an SB3 model carrying a Yeates Europa body seating forty-one passengers. The 1962 purchased WWU 866 also carried a Yeates Europa body but this time on an SB1 variant. The numbers following the SB chassis letters denoted the engine types fitted which in the case of the SB1s were Bedford diesels whilst the SB3s were petrol engined. WWU 866 was often to be seen duplicating United Counties' express services.

For the rest of the 1960s Peter Chapman tended to buy mostly one but occasionally two new Bedford coaches each year. Thus in 1963, 2 DBD, which was a Duple Northern Firefly bodied Bedford SB5, was taken into stock followed in 1964 by a pair of Duple Bella Vega Bedford SB5s registered ANV 3B and BRP 4B.

The plan was to operate five front line coaches at a time and to replace them on a rolling basis every five years. For the next thirteen years a new Bedford coach was purchased each year and bodied by either Duple or Plaxton. For 1965 delivery another SB5 with Bella Vega coachwork joined the fleet as DNV 5C replacing WWU 866. In 1966 it was a Bedford VAM5 with Duple Venturer forty-five seat bodywork registered HNV 1D that saw the demise of 2 DBD. The years 1967 to 1969 witnesses the arrival of three VAM14,



The Duple Bella Vega bodied Bedford SB5 coaches always looked very modern in the 1960s and were light and airy inside. In this instance Premier Coaches' ANV 3B is the subject of the photograph. (Photo courtesy R H G Simpson).

VAM5 and VAM70 Bedford chassis carrying Duple Viceroy bodies and respectively registered KRP 2E, ONV 3F and SBD 4G. The VAM 14 was Leyland engined whilst the VAM 5 and VAM 70 were powered by Bedford engines of different capacities.

The requirement for a minibus arose in 1969 and a used Morris eleven-seater registered CNH 452C was acquired from Duston Garage in November of that year and was itself replaced by a new twelve-seater three years later when FNV 6L came on the scene.

Few coach fleets could have been replaced so methodically as that of Premier Coaches and the same pattern of a new coach each year replacing an older one was followed between 1970 and 1978. During this period nine Bedfords of various models were bought comprising one SB5, four YRQs, two YRTs and two YMTs. The SB5 carried a Plaxton Panorama body for a change whilst all the rest were bodied by Duple with either Viceroy or Dominant coachwork. The registration numbers between 1 and 5 were all consistent except for the 1975 delivery when the D.V.L.A. ignored operators' wishes to reserve specific numbers. Thus from 1970 to 1978 the registrations of VNV 5H, YRP 1J, CRP 2K, JRP 3L, RBD 4M, JNH 838N, MVV 1P, VVV 2S and DNV 3T were allocated to Premier's new rolling stock.

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DNV 3T was a Duple Dominant II bodied Bedford YMT purchased new by Premier Coaches in 1978 and is seen here in Victoria Street, Northampton. Premier Coaches adopted a refined livery of light and mid blue.

After 1978 the fleet was not replaced at such regular intervals and in fact Peter Chapman bought only three further new coaches, the first of which materialised in October 1980 as UBD 7W, being another Bedford YMT with Duple Dominant II fifty-three seat bodywork. For his next coach Peter turned to Volvo to supply a B10M-61 chassis which was mounted with a Duple Dominant IV body and in October 1983 was registered A44 UVV. For his final coach Peter Chapman returned to Bedford for the supply of a YNV chassis to which was fitted a Caetano Algarve body which was a complete change from the usual Duple coachwork normally favoured. The registration D26 BNH was allocated to this machine. Peter Chapman was very friendly with the Yeates family, the well-known Loughborough coachbuilders and dealers, as a result of which most of his rolling stock was acquired from and returned to Yeates, no doubt on favourable terms.

As far as operations were concerned Peter Chapman estimated that about half the turnover of Premier Coaches came from express service duplication undertaken for United Counties in the first instance and for National Express from October 1973 onwards. School contracts accounted for roughly another 20% of the turnover with the main school served being the local Guilsborough Secondary School. Premier Coaches operated its own Continental Tours

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In this 1986 Northampton view Premier Coaches' Bedford YMT registered UBD 7W can be seen with its Duple Dominant fifty-three seat bodywork.



Premier Coaches owned only one Volvo B10M coach with Duple Dominant IV coachwork and on the occasion when this photograph was taken A44 UVV had ventured to Skegness.

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programme and also ran excursions from Guilsborough and Northampton to the Dutch TT and Belgian Grand Prix between 1964 and 1969, obtaining short period licences from the Traffic Commissioners as required. Other Grand Prix tours even operated as far as to Japan.

SEA

PREMIER COACHES
GUILSBOROUGH
NORTHAMPTON
Telephone GUILSBOROUGH 207

SUN

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HOLIDAYS 1965

Afacsimile of Premier Coaches 1965 Continental Holiday Brochure offering travel to the Venetian Riviera, Switzerland, Austrian Tyrol, Paris, Holland, Costa Brava, Italian Riviera and Ostend.

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On the local service front a one return journey on Mondays to Fridays was operated from Guilsborough and West Haddon to the A.E.I. Factory at Rugby and on to Bitteswell Aerodrome from 1972 onwards. Only employees of G.E.C. and Hawker-Siddeley Aviation were generally carried on this service but the general public could travel on the Guilsborough to Crick M1 Junction section under Road Service Licence TER 5172/2. This operation continued until the early 1980s. Following service reductions in Northamptonshire introduced by United Counties in 1978 Peter Chapman arranged, in conjunction with the Company, to provide replacement facilities on two stage-carriage services running between Guilsborough School and either Market Harborough Bus Station or Kettering, Dalkeith Place under references TER 5172/3 and 5172/4. These replacement services ran on Tuesdays and Fridays on different weeks of the month linking villages north and east of Guilsborough to the market towns of either Kettering or Harborough. Again these services continued into the 1980s with the Kettering route being taken over by R L Bates of Rothwell in 1982.

In 1988 Midland Fox Ltd of Leicester, recently privatised, was aggressively acquiring the businesses of smaller bus and coach firms in an area somewhat extended from its traditional operating area. As a result of this policy Midland Fox acquired the coaching side of Heeps Garages' business in February 1988, taking over the seven coaches being operated together with the work and contracts then part of the business. Midland Fox continued to make use of the Guilsborough garage until July 1989 when its operations were transferred to Market Harborough. In the month after the sale of the coaches Peter Chapman retired and the four Directors sold their Shares in Heeps Garages Ltd to four new Directors. By the end of October 1988 the Motor Engineering business ceased and all trading assets were sold. The Guilsborough and West Haddon properties were also disposed of and much of the Guilsborough site has since been redeveloped. Heeps Garages Ltd was dissolved on 11th September 1990.

Sadly Peter Chapman died on 7th October 2008 at the age of 85 shortly before his eighty-sixth birthday.



A view of coaches parked in the Guilsborough Bus Garage shortly after acquisition of Premier Coaches by Midland Fox.

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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			
	?	Bedford	OWB?	?	Duple	C29F	?	c-/44	-/52	6/54?	Heeps Garages, Guilsborough	?	
	?	Bedford	OB	?	Duple	C29F	?	c-/48	-/52	?	Heeps Garages, Guilsborough	?	
	BVV 379	Commer	Avenger I	23A0556	Harrington	C32F	819	7/50	6/56	12/62	Duston Garage, Duston	Yeates, Loughboro'	1
	FFH 293	Bedford	OB	57564	Duple Vista	C29F	48255	-/47	by 9/56	by 3/62	Corvedale, Ludlow	Lucas, Moulton (Non PSV)	
	BJM 546	Bedford	SBG	28445	Plaxton Venturer	C36F	2313	-/54	by 10/59	3/64	Mason, Bolton	Byrne, St.Helier (J 8370)	
	AFT 753	Bedford	SB3	62623	Plaxton Consort II	C41F		6/58	3/60	1/66	Taylor, North Shields	Carter, Litcham	
	EBD 900	Bedford	OB	74909	Duple Vista	C29F	46572	5/48	11/60	6/62	Walker, Wellingborough		
	YBD 1	Bedford	SB1	86608	Yeates Fiesta	C41F	884	5/61	—	8/64	—	Scrapped after accident	2
	903 CPT	Bedford	SB3	68353	Yeates Europa	C41F	748	3/59	6/61	12/61	Favourite, Coundon	Dyson, Stockport	
	WWU 866	Bedford	SB1	63614	Yeates Europa	C41F	705	10/58	by 8/62	3/65	Walker, Tadcaster	Lancaster, Wootton	
	2 DBD	Bedford	SB5	92045	Duple N. Firefly	C41F	130/11	4/63	—	12/66	—	Sinclair, S Hetton	
	ANV 3B	Bedford	SB5	94459	Duple Bella Vega	C41F	1170/344	5/64	—	4/68	—	Cathedral, Gloucester	
	BRP 4B	Bedford	SB5	95391	Duple Bella Vega	C41F	1170/418	7/64	—	1/69	—	Sproat, Bedford	
	DNV 5C	Bedford	SB5	96904	Duple Bella Vega	C41F	1183/82	4/65	—	7/70	—	Scrivener & Watts, Huntingdon	
	HNV 1D	Bedford	VAM5	1027	Duple Bella Vn	C45F	1205/56	4/66	—	5/71	—	Halls, Hatfield Heath	
	KRP 2E	Bedford	VAM14	6861022	Duple Viceroy	C45F	1208/27	3/67	—	2/72	—	Falconer & Watts, Cardiff	
	ONV 3F	Bedford	VAM5	7837627	Duple Viceroy	C45F	1208/318	5/68	—	4/73	—	Bridges, Saham Toney	

Notes: 1 - BVV 379 last owned by B S Russell, Sutton Coldfield and last licensed 9/64.

2 - YBD 1 - New in 1959 as an experimental chassis. Much modified and with a top speed of 112mph by time of registration.

STOCK NO.	REGN. NO.	CHASSIS			BODY			DATES			PREVIOUS OWNER	INITIAL DISPOSAL	NOTES
		MAKE	TYPE	NUMBER	MAKE	TYPE & SEATS	NUMBER	NEW	S/H	W/D			
	SBD 4G	Bedford	VAM 70	9T462240	Duple Viceroy	C45F	1221/36	2/69	—	5/74	—	Lloyd, Shouldham	
	CNH 452C	Morris	J2M16	139270	Morris	11	—	8/65	11/69	6/72	Duston Garage, Duston		
	VNV 5H	Bedford	SB5	OT477637	Plaxton Panorama	C41F	708142	7/70	—	5/75	—	Kinch, Mountsorrel	
	YRP 1J	Bedford	YRQ	IT485479	Duple Viceroy	C45F	227/149	5/71	—	4/76	—	Woodley, Felsted	
	CRP 2K	Bedford	YRQ	IT490739	Duple Viceroy	C45F	244/41	5/72	—	10/77	—	Doughty, K Lynn	
	FNV 6L	Austin-Morris	250JU	41425	BLMC	12	—	8/72	—	by 3/84	—	Wilkinson, Desborough	1
	JRP 3L	Bedford	YRQ	CW451070	Duple Dominant	C45F	266/86	4/73	—	11/78	—	Skinner, Saltby	
	RBD 4M	Bedford	YRQ	CW453725	Duple Dominant	C45F	416/2606	5/74	—	10/83	—	St.Ivo School, St.Ives	
	JNH 838N	Bedford	YRT	EW450883	Duple Dominant	C53F	517/2327	5/75	—	2/88	—	Midland Fox, Leicester - 9500	
	MVV 1P	Bedford	YRT	EW456472	Duple Dominant	C53F	617/2324	4/76	—	2/88	—	Midland Fox, Leicester - 9501	
	VVV 2S	Bedford	YMT	GW453484	Duple Dominant II	C53F	717/2352	11/77	—	2/88	—	Midland Fox, Leicester - 9502	
	DNV 3T	Bedford	YMT	HW453550	Duple Dominant II	C53F	817/2515	10/78	—	2/88	—	Midland Fox, Leicester - 9503	
	UBD 7W	Bedford	YMT	KW451302	Duple Dominant II	C53F	018/2785	10/80	—	2/88	—	Midland Fox, Leicester - 9504	
	A44 UVV	Volvo	B10M-61	3801	Duple Dominant IV	C53F	349/8126	10/83	—	2/88	—	Midland Fox, Leicester - 9328	
	D26 BNH	Bedford	YNV	FT700455	Caetano Algarve	C53FT	185077	2/87	—	2/88	—	Midland Fox, Leicester - 9323	

Notes: 1 - FNV 6L withdrawn 8/79 but reinstated 8/80.