

A HISTORY OF WRIGHT'S BUS SERVICE

COMPILED FROM SUNDRY NOTES, DOCUMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS
AND ACCOUNTS IN THE POSSESSION OF FRED WRIGHT'S
ELDEST SON IN 1997.



THE PRIDE OF THE FLEET.
DENNIS LANCET II LUXURY COACH 1937

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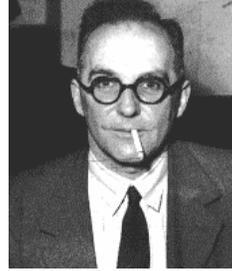
WRIGHT'S BUS SERVICE 1925 TO 1950

In 1924 my father, Fred Goodwin Wright, was a driver for the Silver Queen bus service (later the Lincolnshire Road Car Co) plying between Grimsby and Louth. Before that he had driven a lorry on Grimsby fish docks. He lived in digs in Lee Street, Louth, having married Jessie Maddison from Donington on Bain. In 1925 they moved to 26 Kidgate.

His brother, Alf, had previously been a miner in Australia, and a game keeper in Scotland and Wales but had now married Dolly Cambrai and lived at 7 Nichol Hill. (Dolly was later to take over the nearby corner shop.) He worked as a furniture remov



25 Kidgate, Louth

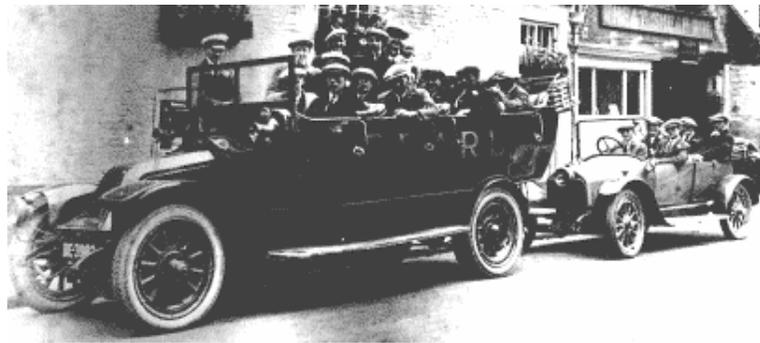


Mr FG Wright

er but agreed to invest £100 to set up Wright Brothers as bus proprietors. Profits were to be shared

equally and Fred was to be paid a weekly wage of £2.50. On the 10th February, 1925, they signed a hire purchase agreement with Grimsby Motors Ltd., for the purchase of a 14 seater Renault Charabanc Reg. No. BE 3982. The total price was £175, being £75 down plus ten monthly instalments of £10.

The registration book states that the vehicle was first registered in 1921, the Renault engine was made in 1911. and the quarterly vehicle tax was £9.90. The photograph below shows the charabanc full of passengers outside the Wheatsheaf Inn in Westgate. Fred is the one wearing the white cap.



The charabanc was garaged at Andersons off Newmarket at a rent of 15p per week. They ran a haulage business and Mr Anderson's name has always stuck in my mind as he called lorries "rullies". Petrol at that time was cheap, 6p a gallon, but tyres were expensive at £6.45 each. It was returned to Grimsby Motors for winter storage at the end of September and a Ford model T bus, reg. no. FU7982 was purchased from East Lincs Motors on the 2nd September 1925.

I haven't got a photograph of the actual vehicle but it was similar to the one shown below. The destination board states "Louth - Saltfleetby - Mablethorpe" and the notice on the window says "Come and visit Maltby's Sale for bargains". This service started on June 4th 1927.

In addition to the regular market day services there are numerous entries in the accounts for private bookings for the Scouts, Guides, Band of Hope, Salvation Army, Wesleyan Chapel, Football teams, The Silver Band, circular tours, Sunday schools, the Adult School, a circus trip, a Skegness Boxing match, Morton Son and Locke - fire grate, bricks and workmen to Holton le Clay, Strawson Brothers - one acetylene generator, Elkington to the Playhouse, a wedding party, Market Rasen and Brocklesby Races. An interesting item occurs on May 8th 1926 - Load of fish, Goodwin's Fish Dock, Grimsby to Liverpool, £10. At first I was puzzled until I realised that this was during the General strike of 1926. A second entry dated 20th May reads - H Wilson and Sons, Fish Merchants, Grimsby, fish to Bristol and Buxton, £17.82. It doesn't state which bus was used but it was presumably the Model T Ford, hopefully with the seats removed. The Lincolnshire Show was held in Louth Park during w/c 22nd June, 1926 and five loads of waiters were daily taken to the show ground at a charge of 25p per load. In between these trips the two buses shuttled backwards and forwards taking the public to the show and takings rocketed from £4.75 on the first day to £12.37 on the Wednesday.

The impression is that the Wright Brothers had launched a thriving business but if you look at the summary accounts shown below you can see why Dolly insisted that Alf withdrew his investment of £100 in August 1926.

After repaying Alf there was a an overdraft of £19.02 and John Wright, their father, was still owed £32. The total income for this period was £766 and it seems sad that a small increase in charges could easily have turned a loss into a profit. On the other hand it must be remembered that there were numerous horse drawn and motor carriers operating in the Louth area and competition for passengers was probably very keen. As today, the most profitable area was private hire, but this did not provide the regular all-year round income that came from timed bus services.

However 'Wright Brothers' were resurrected on the 1st September, 1926, as 'Wright's Bus Service' with the financial backing of Mr E Kemp, owner of the East Linconshire Motor Company. It appears from the accounts that Fred Wright took a weekly wage of £3.50 and the balance of receipts over expenses was paid weekly to Mr Kemp. A partnership agreement was drawn up with Fred Wright taking a 25% share of profits, the balance going to Mr Kemp. (My brother Les thinks the split was 50/50.) Expansion was rapid and the red and cream buses became well known throughout a large part of North Lincolnshire. One of the first drivers was Harry Dixon who, with his wife Ivy, became the celebrated tenants of the Prince of Wales public house after the war. Albert Gibson was also an original driver, eventually becoming office manager. A full list of drivers

can be found in Appendix 1. The table below is an extract from the original accounts book for 1926 and has been converted to decimal currency as computer spreadsheets don't recognise L.S.D.

**COMMENCING 1ST AUGUST 1926
WRIGHTS BUS SERVICE (F G WRIGHT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MR KEMP, LOUTH
MOTORS)**

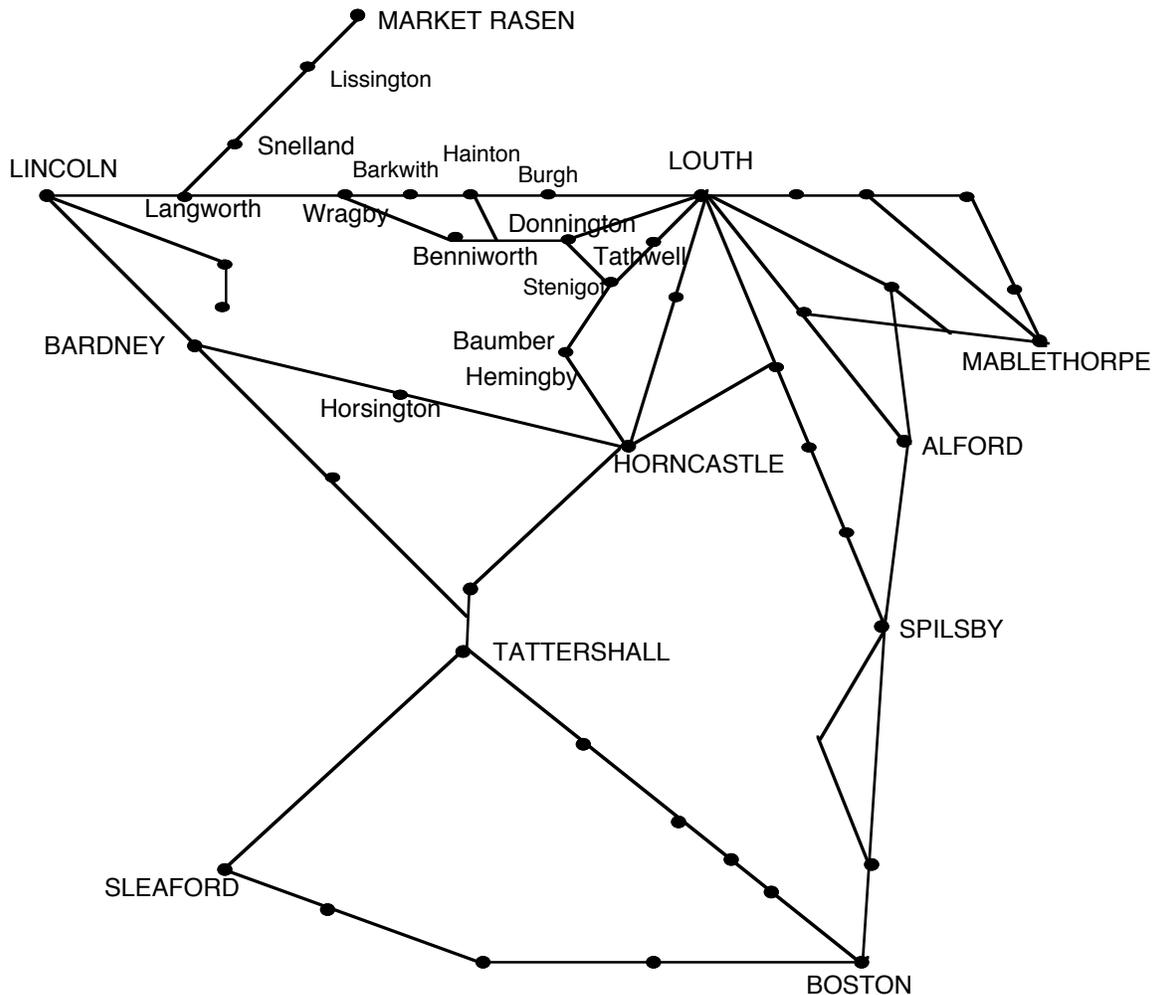
Week Commencing		Receipts	_____	Running	To Louth	To Date to
				Wages/NI	Motors	Louth
				Costs		
			Motors			
AUGUST						
1st	Regular daily service to Mablethorpe started this month	19.93	3.50	2.83	13.60	13.60
7th	Bus Reg No FU 6287	23.98	3.50	8.60	11.88	25.48
13th		23.15	3.50	3.44	16.21	41.69
21st		23.02	3.50	2.61	16.91	58.60
28th	Harry Dixon - Driver Wages £2.50	19.37	5.60	2.90	10.87	69.47
SEPTEMBER						
4th		17.80	5.60	2.65	9.55	79.02
11th	Lincoln/Mablethorpe service started	21.91	6.00	8.80	7.11	86.13
18th	New Bus FU 740	17.15	5.60	4.82	6.73	92.86
25th		17.66	5.60	8.30	3.76	96.62
OCTOBER						
2nd	Trip to Nottingham Goose Fair on 7th Oct	19.09	5.90	9.97	3.22	99.84
				A. Cross 30p		
Week Commencing						
		Receipts	_____	Running	To Louth	To Date to
				Wages/NI	Motors	Louth
				Costs		
			Motors			
9th	Several private jobs this week	16.95	6.80	5.89	4.26	104.10
				A Cross £1.20 H Dixon £2.20		
16th	New Bus FU 6510	13.80	6.27	7.53	0.00	104.10
23rd	Goulceby Service started	18.79	6.40	7.69	4.70	108.80
	H Dixon £2.20 A Cross £0.68					
30th		17.96	5.95	6.89	5.12	113.92
NOVEMBER						
6th	16 journeys Lincoln FU6287 10 journeys Spilsby FU6510 2 journeys Goulceby FU740 2 Private hire jobs	23.02	7.94	9.21	5.87	119.79
						119.79
13th	16 Journeys Lincoln FU6287 10 journeys Spilsby FU6510 2 journeys Goulceby FU740 Wages - FG Wright £3.50 H Dixon £2.25 per week	22.80	7.00	14.19	1.61	121.40
						121.40

THE ABOVE ACCOUNTS ARE AN EXTRACT FROM THE ORIGINAL ACCOUNTS BOOK FOR 1926
The Traffic Commissioners were introduced in 1930 and bus routes and ticket prices became strictly controlled. Prior to that date the only constraints were that a Hackney Carriage License had to be obtained for the vehicle and driver for each Borough the

vehicle would pass through. I still have a number of the original licenses. By the mid 1930's the network was established and the company had expanded to 35 vehicles and over 100 staff. (See map on page 5). A list of all the buses acquired and sold by WBS is given in appendix 2 and most of them appear to have been purchased second-hand. It may be significant that, apart from the Dennis Coach bought in 1937, no additional vehicles were purchased between 1934 and 1941.

I have vivid memories of going to scrap yards with my father and Harry Dixon to buy second-hand engines and parts. (I obtained my pet Yorkshire Terrier on one of these visits as he had just worried the owners pet bantams and was tied to the kitchen table leg in disgrace.) Presumably it was vital to keep costs down because of the intense competition, the restraints put upon fare increases by the Traffic Commissioners and the increased use of private cars and motor cycles.

WRIGHT'S BUS SERVICE ROUTES IN 1938



This network remained substantially the same until 1950 when the company was nationalised and taken over by the Lincolnshire Road Car Company

Unfortunately I have no accounts for the period 1930 to 1946 but I remember we lived very comfortably in rented houses at 'Ashlea', Eastgate, and in St Michael's Road. In 1938 we moved to 38 Legbourne Road and the wonder of electricity. We always had a car and a maid but my father was very reluctant to go away on holiday. He built a six berth caravan and most summer holidays were spent at North Shore, Mablethorpe.

The building of the RAF Station at Manby encouraged labourers, mainly Irish, to travel from Grimsby to Louth station. Wright's Bus Service got the contract for transporting 400 labourers each day to Manby and to cope with the numbers purchased two ancient

Maudsley ML7 double deckers from Coventry Corporation. One of them is shown below. I am sitting on the starting handle.

The first morning these old buses arrived at Louth Station the workmen refused to climb aboard. Harry Dixon was one of the drivers and he used a few expletives which indicated that if they didn't get aboard they would not get to Manby. They climbed on and we never had any more trouble. For me, as a boy of nine, it was a thrill to get up early and travel on the rear platform, returning on the upper deck, before going to school.

Fred Wright was not only interested in buses. On the 20th September 1931 he obtained a private aviator's certificate No 10100 from the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom after a flying training course at an airfield near Nottingham. He subsequently flew from Waltham aerodrome where he met an instructor called Mr Michelmore. On 7th May, 1934 they, formed "W and M Flying Services" and purchased an Avro 504 Lynx biplane of 1919 vintage, from Air Travel Ltd. of Gatwick, registration no. G-ACRE. The price was £340

My father also built a Flying Flea, but his flying activities justify a separate story.

Wright's Bus Service provided a very personal service to the community. Most of the passengers were friends of the drivers and conductors, and often staff would spend their lunch hour shopping for their passengers. The buses also provided a very useful parcels service, particularly for newspapers, to the outlying villages. There was a speed limit of 30 mph on all Public Service Vehicles and bus routes were timed at an average of eighteen miles per hour. Considering the age of some of the vehicles, 30 mph was possibly not attainable. The term 'parcel' was interpreted very freely. Sacks of potatoes, crates of chickens, bicycles, dolly tubs etc were often to be found at the rear of the bus. The phrase 'six standing only' was very approximate. I have counted 71 passengers on a Saturday night dismounting from a Bedford utility bus seating 32. An accident could have been catastrophic, but I cannot recall a single fatal accident, except for the cow killed by a bus at Legbourne. The term 'Bus Stop' meant that the bus stopped anywhere if you put your hand up. On the last service on a Saturday night there would often be more than one bus with only one conductor for all of them, and I remember one occasion between Bardney and Lincoln where the conductor, Walt Richardson, thought there were four buses and in fact there were only three and he was left stranded in the dark. On another occasion on the same route a bus went off the road with a full load and was saved from toppling into a large dyke by coming to rest against a telegraph pole.

The arrival of hostilities in September 1939 put the service right into the front line. RAF airfields were built all over Lincolnshire and thousands of soldiers were stationed in the coastal areas. Petrol rationing for private motorists was soon eliminated and so servicemen and the public had to rely on buses, trains or cycles. Driving at night was very hazardous because of the blackout. Head lamps were hooded so that only a short distance of road was illuminated, and in the coastal areas there were unfenced drainage dykes awaiting the unwary. Air raid warnings were frequent as the German bombers passed over on their way to the Midlands, The call-up of the younger drivers soon meant that the staff were mainly middle-aged and for the first time lady drivers were used. My father had a very small petrol ration as a bus proprietor and drove an ancient Austin 7 with fabric hood and body and celluloid side

windows. In an effort to bypass petrol rationing he had a steam engine built fuelled by coke. It developed 40 HP on bench trials but it was never fitted into a car.

We all got involved in the war effort. My father had regular shifts on duty at the Royal Observer Corps Post up the Grimsby Road and later became an officer in the Air Training Corps. I was an ARP messenger and had to pedal furiously to the headquarters in West Street if the siren sounded

to almost a standstill for six weeks. The roof of the East Lincs Garage collapsed on top of 20

I had married Winn Sanderson in 1946, and when I was demobilised from the RAF in February 1947 I accepted my father's invitation to join the family company. At first I worked in the Louth office at a salary of £5 per week, but then a vacancy for inspector of the Lincoln Depot arose and it was offered to me at £8.50 per week. We bought a wooden bungalow on the Wragby Road (mortgage £6 per month) and I soon found out why it had been difficult to keep a manager at Lincoln - three had left in a short period.

The nine buses were stored in the yard of the Adam and Eve public house at the top of Lindum Hill. The office was an old stable with a coke stove. When it rained the water ran down the back wall, under your feet, and out through the door. There was no telephone. Urgent calls had to be made from a public call box half way down the hill above Unity Square, the bus departure point. In the square the inspector either stood all day or took refuge in Mrs Perkins cafe, which was also the parcels collection point. I had no assistant and was expected to supervise the departure of the first buses at 6.00 am and to ensure that all vehicles were parked safely by 11.30pm. This was intolerable and eventually my father agreed to the erection of a wooden office next to the ironmongers in Unity Square. It was divided into two, the other half being occupied by Mrs Cullen's cafe. I was also given an assistant, Les Lingard, who acted as inspector, clerk and spare driver. I took a PSV driving test so that I could drive in an emergency and take buses to Louth for repair.

The fleet was mainly Bedford utility buses with wooden seats, and passengers complained bitterly about discomfort on the Boston and Mablethorpe routes. However they still queued up on a Saturday morning for the journey to Mablethorpe, and six or seven vehicles would depart at 8.30 am full loaded. Although six new coaches were purchased between 1947 and 1949, these were used wherever possible for private hire as it was more profitable than service routes. Service routes were controlled by the Traffic Commissioners who would not permit fares to be increased or services to be terminated. These restrictions, the increase in car usage and heavy hire purchase repayments on the new buses resulted in a deficit of £1460 on 31st December 1949.

Shortly afterwards I was summonsed to the Louth Office to be told that the company was being nationalised and transferred to the Lincolnshire Road Car Co. I was given the option of an office job at Bracebridge Heath at £5 per week, or I could continue as an inspector in Unity Square for the princely salary of £7.15.

I opted for the inspector's post, and the Hillman Estate car provided by Wright's Bus Service was immediately withdrawn. Working conditions deteriorated, no Saturdays off, one Sunday off in five, no prospects, veiled threats from the union representative as to what would happen if I didn't join. Three months later I got a job with Ruston Hornsby Ltd. as a progress chaser, £6.15 for a five day week. £1 per week less but no hassle. Thus ended my hopes of continuing the family bus service. My father bought a small holding and reared pigs and chickens for several years. But this also became unprofitable and eventually he bought a small bungalow at Manby and spent his final years working very happily in the Manby RAF Officers' Mess.



THE GREAT BLIZZARD OF 1947



Maudsley double decker bought for Manby workmen.
I am sitting on starting handle.



Wright's Bus Service,
Lincoln staff at 25 years celebration party.

