

# Lesser Known Coachbuilders



**Thomas Allsop Ltd., James Bartle & Co. Ltd.,  
Eaton Coachworks (Herbert E. Taylor & Sons Ltd.),  
Longwell Green Coachworks Ltd.  
(W. J. Bence & Son, Bence Motor Bodies Ltd.),  
Mulliners Ltd., James Whitson & Co. Ltd.**

## **CONTENTS**

Thomas Allsop Ltd.....	Page 3
James Bartle & Co Ltd.....	Page 9
Eaton Coachworks (Herbert E Taylor & Sons Ltd).....	Page 15
Longwell Green Coachworks Ltd (WJ Bence & Sons/Bence Motor Bodies Ltd)	Page 21
Mulliners Ltd.....	Page 27
James Whitson & Co Ltd.....	Page 33

---

Cover Illustration: DFR395 was a Maudslay Marathon III with Whitson 'observation coach' body. (LTHL collection).

---

First Published 2018 by the Local Transport History Library.

With thanks to John Kaye, John Boylett (courtesy John Kaye) and Donald Hudson for illustrations.

© The Local Transport History Library 2018. ([www.lthlibrary.org.uk](http://www.lthlibrary.org.uk))

For personal use only. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise for commercial gain without the express written permission of the publisher. In all cases this notice must remain intact. All rights reserved.

PDF-129-1

## **Thomas Allsop Ltd**

Thomas Allsop started in the motor trade in Matthew Street, Shalesmoor, dealing in 1914-18 war surplus vehicles whilst living at Linley Farm, Intake. Soon afterwards, the business moved to larger premises on Worthing Road, Attercliffe, where he bought and sold large numbers of old lorries and vans, inevitably including the products of now long defunct manufacturers. When the lease expired on the Worthing Road premises he moved to the old Sheffield Aerodrome, where he traded from Hangar H1, originally part of No.1 (Northern) Air Repair Depot at Coal Aston. Thomas Allsop was operating from Hangar H1 by April 1934 at the latest.

Allsop rebuilt a large number of RAF Leylands – the modifications included a new nickel steel chassis of his own design, two inches deeper and longer, made for him by Rubury Owen at Darlaston; Tinker Taper roller bearings to front and rear axles in place of plain bearings; Michelin wheels and pneumatic tyres in place of solids and a 20ft platform body increasing the payload to eight tons! A lot were used in the steel trade, carrying steel bars to Birmingham. As well as coach building, Thomas Allsop was also a farmer and stock breeder. He moved to Grove Farm, Holymoorside, Chesterfield in 1938 where he bred and raced trotting ponies.

Whilst still dealing in second-hand lorries, during the thirties, buses became an increasingly important part of Thomas Allsop's business, old vehicles being acquired for the large operators all over the north of England and beyond. Thomas Allsop made

agreements with chassis builders such as Leyland Motors to dispose of old buses that had been accepted by the manufacturers in trade-in agreements against the supply of new vehicles. Thomas Allsop appears to have developed a reciprocal business with the Sanderson Brothers, a Glasgow-based operation, likewise prominent dealers in second-hand buses. Sanderson Brothers brought the buses as far as Penrith to be met by some of Thomas Allsop's employees and a few Sheffield Corporation bus drivers (the latter doubtless enjoying a 'day out' for which they would get a little cash in hand to supplement their drivers' wages). Gathered back at Hangar H1, the best of the buses would be sold to small operators all over the country, others were converted to lorries and those in poor condition were broken up for spares – the sale of which would have provided further valuable income!

Another useful sale for old buses in the thirties and forties was for conversion to caravans and, needless to say, Thomas Allsop likewise exploited this market over the years. Buses were driven to Bridlington or Filey, the bodies removed, a box to sit on was fitted and the chassis driven back to Sheffield (an activity that would quickly attract the unwelcome attention of the law today). Thomas Allsop continued stocking the numerous camp sites along the East Coast with rebuilt 'caravan buses' before the strict days of town and country planning, vigorously applied from the mid-fifties onwards, outlawed the 'eyesore' of such conversions.

Thomas Allsop continued building lorry bodies for the steel and brewery trades, luxury horse boxes and vans, amidst all this frenetic dealing activity.

In the mid-thirties, Allsop formed a partnership with Arthur Kitson. Doubtless well known to Thomas Allsop, Kitson had been operating charabancs since the early twenties and was now in the process of divesting his operating interests to the fledgling Sheffield United Tours. Working together, Allsop and Kitson built a new works on Penistone Road North, close to the junction with Herries Road South, where, before activities were interrupted by the Second World War, in addition to the traditional lorry building, at least three new bus bodies were constructed.

Little is known of Thomas Allsop during the war. An official builder's photograph exists of one small van, displaying the 'Bodywork by Thomas Allsop Ltd Sheffield' transfer in the nearside windscreen and fitted with wartime headlamps, masks, etc, otherwise the output of the new works appears to have gone completely unrecorded.



The van referred to left, with wartime headlamps and masks is the only known record of Allsops' wartime production. (LTHL collection).

After the war, bus and coach operators were all desperate for new vehicles. Thus, for a short time, until the shortage was satisfied by the early fifties, the works was busy building new bus and coach bodies. Nevertheless, known output was only 13 bodies, built on Albion, Austin, Bedford and Daimler chassis and mainly supplied to operators in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.



One of the six Bedford OB chassis bodied by Thomas Allsop in 1948 for Booth & Fisher Motor Services. (LTHL collection).

The biggest single contract undertaken was a batch of six Bedford OB chassis, bodied as 29-seat coaches, for Booth and Fisher Motor Services at Halfway in 1948. As Booth and Fisher eventually got 20 years' service out of four of these six buses, we can perhaps assume that the Allsop product was a reasonably well built body!

In 1951, Sonny Kitson purchased Thomas Allsop's shares in the Company, Allsop subsequently setting up a new business - Thomas Allsop and Sons (Chesterfield) Ltd, Metal and Machinery Merchants at Grassmoor.

After this, presumably, the Allsop family was not involved in the Penistone Road North business. Certainly the extensive dealing in secondhand buses ceased after the war, though the body of a former Rotherham trolleybus, bought in the late thirties and probably the only trolleybus ever purchased, was noted still languishing in use as a shed at Penistone Road North into the fifties.

One interesting contract during the early fifties involved the construction of a small fleet of early Bloodmobiles for the Sheffield Regional Hospital Board of the Blood Transfusion Service, the local depot of which was then at Northfield Road in Crookes. Constructed on Bedford chassis, these strange-looking vehicles had a 'double-deck' cab with accommodation for three staff on a bench immediately behind the driver and co-driver, together with four more on a second bench, mounted substantially higher and with forward visibility through a second set of front windscreens. The van part of the body to the rear accommodated the paraphernalia required for the collection of blood.

Thomas Allsop Ltd (the Sheffield-based business) was acquired by the Kennings organisation in the mid-fifties and the premises at Penistone Road North closed in the late sixties.



One of the unusual 'Bloodmobiles' built in the early fifties for the Sheffield Blood Transfusion service. The stepped seating arrangement for 7 additional staff can be clearly seen. (LTHL collection).



## **James Bartle and Co. Ltd.**

James Bartle was born in 1825 in Camborne, Cornwall, the son of William and Eva Bartle. At the age of 21 he moved to London and in 1846 founded his own Engineering and Iron Foundry Company - James Bartle and Company. The Company's premises were at the Western Iron Works, Lancaster Road, Notting Hill, London. James Bartle died in May 1896.

In 1911 Cecil Stanley Windsor was appointed to the company and subsequently purchased it and became managing director. He was the instigator in the change from foundry work to commercial vehicle work upon his appointment. Windsor had been born in 1879 and educated at the Grocers' Company's School. His apprenticeship was served with the Pick Motor Company Stamford, and from there he went as foreman of the repair shop with Rock, Thorpe and Chatfield. In 1909 he was appointed manager of the automobile branch of the Parsons Motor Company of Southampton, and on leaving that firm in 1911 was appointed to James Bartle and Company. He was also Chairman of the Samuelson Transport Company and was very well known in the industry. He was also responsible for a considerable number of patents in connection with automobile bodies and accessories.

The foundry business had flourished for a number of years and many interesting contracts were carried out successfully. The Company specialised for a number of

years in the complete equipment of gasworks plant, including in a number of cases the gasometers. Another of the foundry's work was cast-iron bridges, up to 12 tons, a number of which were erected over the Metropolitan canals.

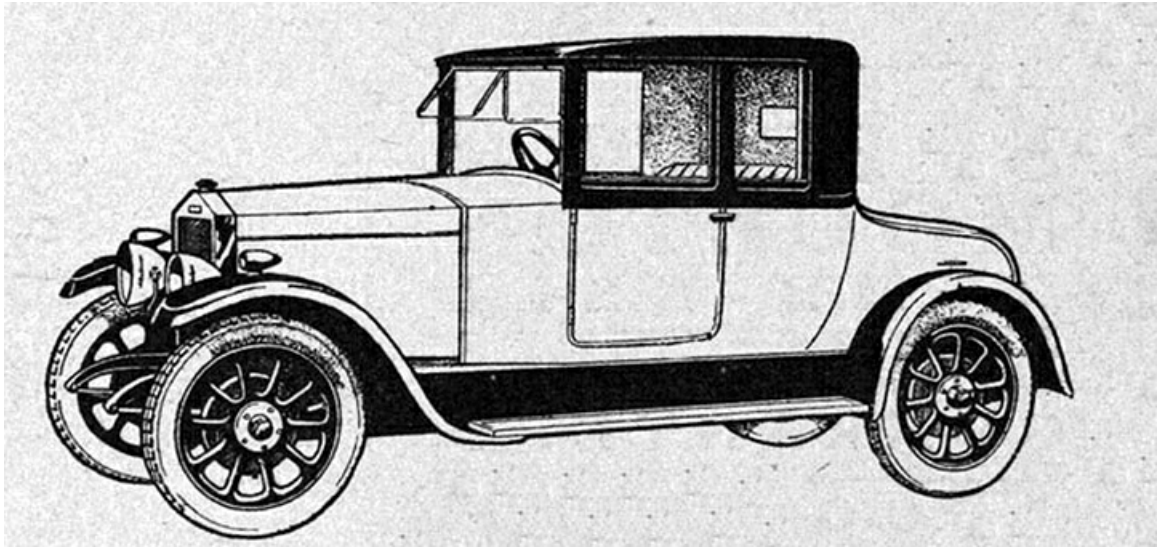
At one time the works kept 12 two-horse vans busy delivering castings and collecting patterns to and from the South Coast, due to freight troubles with the railways. Thousands of lamp-posts and a good many hundreds of miles of iron railings also left the premises. The foundry always had a reputation for high-class reliable work and that proved a valuable asset to the firm.

In 1911, realizing that growing competition and the difficulty of securing the right class of labour and adequate supplies of cheap fuel and pig iron were gradually rendering it extremely difficult, commercially, to carry on in the heart of London, the Company decided to make a bold jump from the old established industry. For a few years previously, casting had been done for the motor trade, such work being principally flywheels, cylinders, brake parts and pistons and it was realized that the commercial vehicle industry held promise of development in London. It was felt that, as the industry grew, the need for specialised depots to sustain it would become more apparent. The works at Notting Hill were converted into an up-to-date commercial vehicle depot, combined with shops equipped with modern machinery and the nature of the whole business was effectively changed. Foundry interests were acquired in the Midlands, and a very considerable proportion of the original business in respect of castings was maintained, especially for motor components.

The Company also established a garaging business for owner drivers. At a charge of 17 shillings per week it covered all running repairs, free lubricating oil and grease, garage, cleaning, tyre changing, etc. The charge did not include the annual overhaul, as Bartle's found that owner drivers preferred to make a separate contract.

In 1915 Bartle exhibited two passenger bodies at the Commercial Motor Show; one was a 30-seater bus body on an X-type Thornycroft chassis ('the body seated 30 persons in five pairs of garden type seats, all of which faced forwards, with accommodation for an additional seven persons being provided in the rear smoking compartment; the other three being situated beside the driver' - *Commercial Motor magazine 1915*); and the other was a 20-seat coach body on a Thornycroft BT chassis ('a handsome production. It has a bulbous scuttle, the side panels being rounded over the elbow at the top, and carried across each row of seats to form a deck. This body is fitted with the company's patent hood' - *Commercial Motor magazine 1915*).

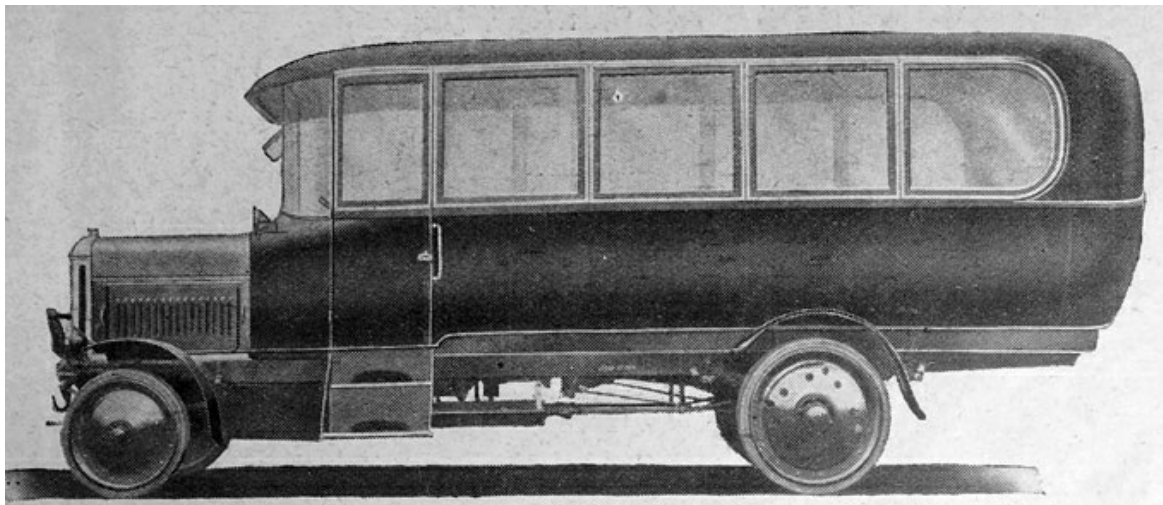
In 1916 the Company produced a motor car named the 'Windsor', after the managing director - Cecil Windsor. A little later the Western Iron Works was re-named the Windsor Car Works.



The 'Windsor' 10-15 hp Coupé manufactured by James Bartle & Co. Ltd. (LTHL collection)

The Windsor 10-15 hp car was available in a number of models including 2-seater, 4-seater and saloon as well as the coupé. Costing between £295 and £395 it sold well - around 300 being produced.

Although car production predominated, Bartle was still building bodies for PSV chassis. In 1921 they were advertising the 'Portsmouth' Saloon bus and later the 'Cheltenham' 30-seat bus body.



Bartle's 'Portsmouth' Saloon Bus - taken from a Company advertisement dated 1921. (LTHL collection).

By 1924 the Company was concentrating solely on the manufacture of the Windsor car and bodies for PSV chassis. The Company advertised 14-28 seater bodies for any charabanc and had built at least one dual entrance 30-seater on a Dennis E chassis for Western in South Wales. Grey Cars of Torquay had a number of 20-seat charabanc bodies built and in 1925 Bartle was advertising its 'All-weather' touring saloon and the 'Standard' service bus, at least one of which was built for Pritchard's Garage of Stoke-on-Trent.

Cecil Windsor died suddenly on 18th December, 1925 and it seems without his driving force the Company went into terminal decline. Although the coachbuilding side of the business looked healthy, the Windsor car business failed in 1927, taking the rest of the Company with it and James Bartle & Company ceased trading.

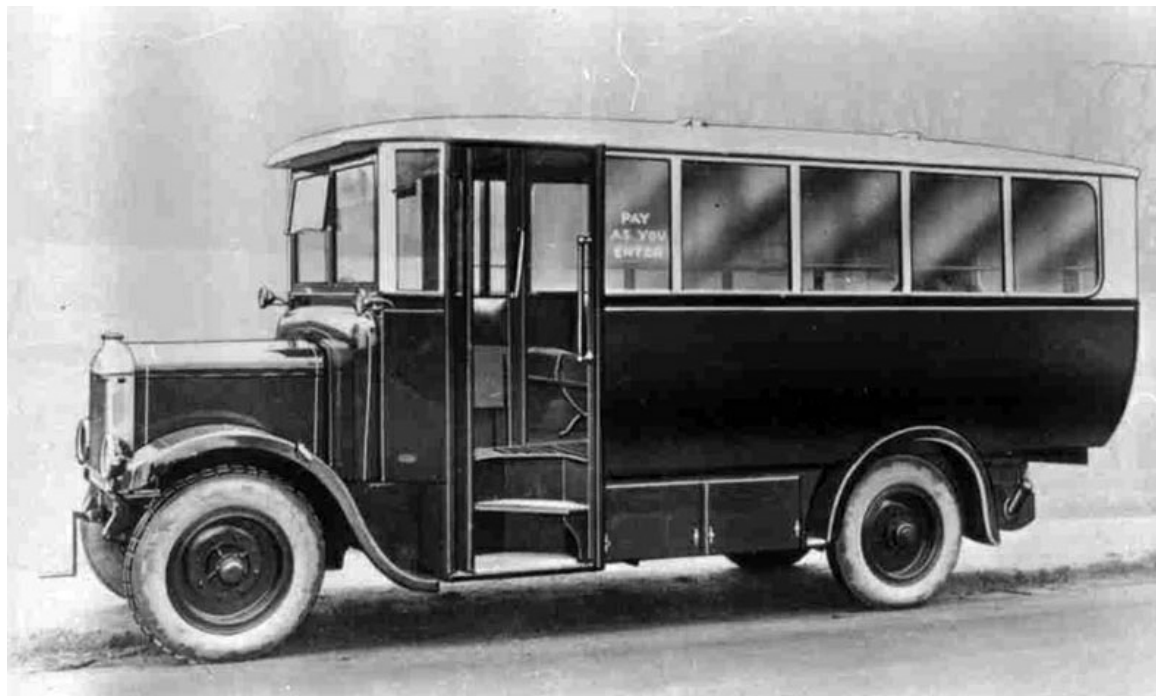
## **Eaton Coachworks**

### **Herbert E. Taylor & Sons Ltd**

Herbert E. Taylor & Sons of Cringleford, Norwich was a coachbuilding company that had been established as early as 1890 by Edward Thrower Taylor, who initially traded as a wheelwright. Later a blacksmith's shop was added and the business gradually expanded until it included a sawmill and joinery works. By the end of the First World War the business (now incorporated as H. E. Taylor & Sons Ltd) had a coach building business and a motor garage.

Eaton Coachworks was the name under which H. E. Taylor & Co Ltd traded.

Between 1914 and 1947, the company's main business was coach building and by the 1920s they had moved into the PSV market. All kinds of bodywork was made to order, the customer choosing the make and model of chassis and the style of coachwork to meet their specific requirements. Body styles included utilitarian buses, luxury coaches, all-weather coaches and sunshine observation coaches. Eaton Coachworks made just about everything for the coaches including cutting the glazing required and making the upholstered seats. They were fitted out in wood, mainly ash and oak frames and covered in sheet aluminium metal. The company turned out on average one coach per week.



A Karrier 2½-ton chassis with Eaton Coachworks 20-seat bodywork. (LTHL collection).



Many of the chassis for coachwork were imported from America such as Reo, Studebaker and Chevrolet. They were better priced than many UK chassis, since they were manufactured in greater volumes. They were driven to Norwich from Bristol or London Docks by a team of men who would subsequently deliver the completed vehicle to anywhere in the country. The American chassis market and many of the smaller UK manufacturers later declined as new Construction & Use Regulations dictated specific requirements for the British market.

During the 1930's business was challenging and at times the company held a stock of coaches and buses for immediate delivery. One advert stated that DeLuxe Coaches on Gilford or Crossley chassis were ready for the road, whilst another offered a Crossley Eagle Bus fitted with an Eaton Service Bus body painted in any chosen colour within 7 days.

Eaton Coachworks also diversified into many other types of bodywork and at the Commercial Motor Show in 1930 they displayed a car (probably Chevrolet) that had a lift up hatchback rear door designed especially for the commercial traveller. Other vehicles produced were various vans, lorries for cattle, removal vehicles and during World War II they produced many Lomax Ambulances.

# Immediate Delivery

DeLuxe Coaches, as illustrated,  
on Gilford or Crossley chassis,  
actually in stock, ready for the  
road.

Consult us regarding your  
body - work requirements  
before deciding elsewhere.

**HERBERT E. TAYLOR  
& CO., LTD.,  
CRINGLEFORD,  
NORWICH.**

'Phone: Eaton 52  
(2 lines).

'Grams: Coachwork,  
Eaton-Norfolk.

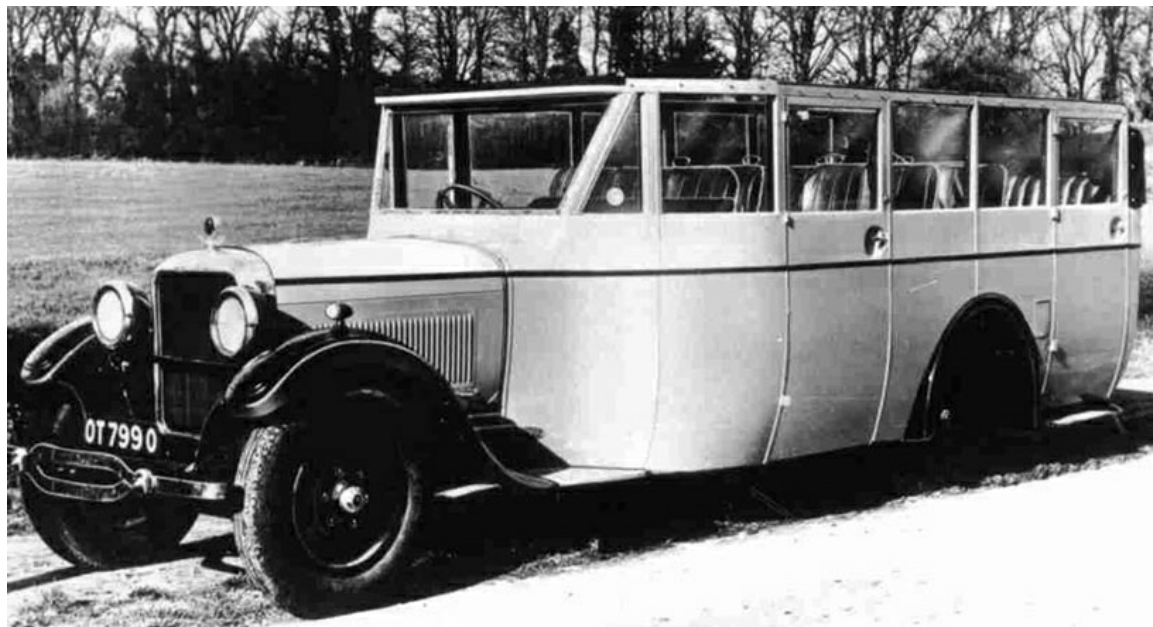
**EATON  
COACHWORK**



Unfortunately for Eaton Coachworks, who were too embedded in the use of timber, Eastern Coach Works Ltd of Lowestoft was one of their main competitors. Originally an offshoot of United Automobile Services, the coachbuilding business was established in Lowestoft in 1920, becoming Eastern Coach Works in July 1936. After the end of World War II new methods of construction had been inherited from the aircraft industry and over the years it increasingly eroded Eaton Coachworks' business eventually producing all-metal buses which were more durable, lighter and cheaper. As a result, demand for Eaton Coachworks' production of traditional timber-framed coachwork dwindled and the last coach body was built in 1947 for Fitt Bros of Norwich.

The company, however, continued in business providing specialised bodies such as cattle trucks and removal lorries and continued to carry out repairs and alterations. The main focus though was transferred into the high class joinery business.

Sadly Herbert Taylor died in 1960 and within a few months of his death the firm was sold to Carters of Drayton and subsequently to Jewsons, bringing the history of Eaton Coachworks to an abrupt end.



OT7990 was a Studebaker chassis with Eaton Coachworks 20-seat 'All-weather' bodywork. (LTHL collection).

## **Longwell Green Coachworks Ltd**

### **W. J. Bence & Sons**

### **Bence Motor Bodies Ltd**

William James Bence established his wheelwright and wagon building business at Longwell Green in the year 1890, having served his apprenticeship to a master wheelwright at Wick. The new venture was set up in an old nail factory and wagons of all types were made for local tradespeople; farm wagons, wagonettes, bakers vans of high quality and such like were produced with a small workforce of local men. William's wife Mary was the bookkeeper and they lived with their three children Bert, Henry and Letitia in a house on the premises in Kingsfield Lane.

As the years went by William Bence purchased land and property on both sides of the main road and extended his premises. After World War I, he developed the motor side of the business and became one of the first Ford agents in the country. In the early days there was no delivery from the factory and chassis had to be collected from Trafford Park, Manchester. Miss Letty Bence and Miss Mable Gough, her friend, fetched the Ford light cars and her brothers Bert and Henry collected the heavier chassis.



DD1222 was a Ford Model T, bodied by Bence themselves with a 14-seat body, seen here operating for Bence Motor Services in 1922. (LTHL collection).

In 1918 he started his own transport business as Bence Motor Services, which operated from Longwell Green around the villages of Bitton, Oldland, Warmley, Wick, Pucklechurch, Kingswood, Staple Hill, and eventually Keynsham. He began to build bus bodies on the Ford T chassis for his own use and for other bus operators on military chassis that had been used during the recent War. A fleet of charabancs, which were for hire, were also operated and made regular journeys to local beauty spots such as Cheddar, Wells and further afield in the West Country. By 1920 he had thirty buses and a number of charabancs which were named 'Queen of the West'. In 1930 the bus business was sold to the Bristol Tramways & Carriage Company but continued to operate as Bence Motor Services from Hanham Depot until the advent of World War II.

PSV bodies continued to be built up until the advent of World War II, when Bence was asked to make vehicle bodies for the military. In 1941 the company was renamed Bence Motor Bodies Ltd.

In 1944 the company was again re-named to Longwell Green Coachworks Ltd and by 1946 the company was offering bus, coach and commercial bodies. Coach bodies were built on chassis from Daimler and Maudslay and 29 and 33-seat buses were built on the Leyland Comet chassis. The company also built double-deck buses. Between 1952 and 1957 Longwell Green was among the companies that built bodies for high-capacity Bedford pumping vehicles known as 'Green Goddesses' for use by the Auxiliary Fire Service.

BUILDERS OF LUXURY COACHES FOR THE  
PAST 25 YEARS. BODIES DESIGNED TO  
PLEASE AND CONSTRUCTED TO LAST



33-seater Luxury Coach Body  
Mounted to a Leyland  
"Comet" Chassis.

**LONGWELL GREEN COACHWORKS LTD**  
**LONGWELL GREEN, BRISTOL**



Longwell Green Coachworks built both buses and coaches until 1966 when PSV coachbuilding ceased. Customers had included Cardiff, Newport, Aberdare, Gelligaer and Merthyr Tydfil Corporations, Rhondda Transport Company and South Wales Transport. Lorries, vans and crew buses were bought by British Road Services, British Rail and the Post Office. Thereafter the company continued in business building car and commercial vehicle bodies until 1983, when Longwell Green Coachworks came to the end of the road and ceased trading.

A list of known Bence & Longwell Green bodies can be found in the PSV Circle's Historic Journal 944-HJ, published in September 2018.



EBX663 was a 1955 Longwell Green lowbridge double-deck body on a 1948 Leyland Tiger PS1 chassis, new to James of Ammanford. (LTHL collection).

## **Mulliners Ltd**

There is often confusion between the three Mulliners, all of whom made bodywork for the better class chassis in the days before integral construction, when car owners could choose the kind of coachwork they required and have it made specially for them. The three Mulliners were H. J. Mulliner & Co Ltd, Arthur Mulliner and Mulliners Ltd.

The best known and most prolific was H. J. Mulliner, although there were links between all the companies. In 1900 H. J. Mulliner purchased the car bodybuilding firm of Mulliner (London) Ltd from his cousins, A.G. Mulliner of Liverpool and Arthur Mulliner of Northampton. Just prior to World War I, H. J. Mulliner retired, having sold his company to the long established coachbuilders of John Croall of Edinburgh - but the Mulliner name was retained and the company managed by H. J. Mulliner's brother-in-law Frank Piesse. The concern continued to prosper after the 1930's even though demand for individual coachwork had diminished drastically. However, there is no evidence that this Company ever manufactured coachwork on PSV chassis.

This company must not be confused with Arthur Mulliner Ltd, a more provincial concern based in Northampton, whose origins dated from very early times. In the 1870s it was a firm of carriers that later built wagons and coaches. By 1900 it was one of the leading bodybuilders in England, but as business became harder in the 1930's the Company did take on some PSV work. In 1939 it was acquired by Henley's Ltd and PSV coachbuilding ceased. Coach bodies built after this date and sometimes attributed to Arthur Mulliner were actually built by Mulliners of Birmingham.

Finally, Mulliners Ltd of Bordesley Green, Birmingham, a much smaller firm than the other two, had its works adjacent to the Calthorpe car factory, of which it became a subsidiary. It made striking polished aluminium bodies on the 10hp Calthorpe chassis in the early 1920's and standard bodies for other specialist car firms.

In 1924 the Calthorpe company failed and the managing director, Louis Antweiler, who was also on the Calthorpe board, arranged to buy the coachbuilding company. He obtained contracts with Clyno and Austin for whom he made many Weymann-style fabric bodies for the Austin 7. When the fashion for fabric bodies declined, the business with Austin went, but was replaced by orders from Hillman, Humber, Standard and Lanchester. In 1929 the company went public. The main business was now with Daimler and Lanchester, making the bodies for the cheaper range of cars and Alvis was subsequently added to its customers.

With the advent of World War II Mulliners were given military contracts working on aircraft and other vehicles. This included the supply of single-deck austerity bus bodies for Bedford OWB chassis. After the War they were sub-contracted by Duple (who were up to capacity building their Duple Vista coach body) to build the bodies for the successor to the OWB, the Bedford OB chassis, which was built until 1950, with many being exported. Mulliners also resumed car bodybuilding but also continued to manufacture coachwork on PSV chassis.



Reading Corporation No.70 (CRD593) was a 1947 Bedford OB with Mulliner 32-seat bodywork, seen here in June 1958. (John Boylett courtesy John Kaye).

A large order for bus bodies for the three armed forces and some Government agencies was obtained in the 1950's. These were built on the OB chassis and later on the SB and SBG chassis. They also supplied bodies to municipal and provincial operators on other chassis (notably Guy).

Mulliners have also been quoted as building an 'observation coach' body for the Morris Works Band, but it would seem that this was actually built by Wadhams of Waterloooville.

One of the final coach bodies produced was a rather 'futuristic' one exhibited at the 1958 Commercial Motor Show on a Guy Warrior chassis. Later that year, however, Standard-Triumph purchased the company and sold the bus and coach body building division to Marshall's of Cambridge bringing to an end Mulliners' separate existence as a coachbuilding company.



NGY823 was a 1954 Bedford SBG with Mulliner bodywork, operating for Johnson Brothers in Shetland in August 1973. (Donald Hudson).



XUK768 was a Guy Warrior, new as a demonstrator in 1958 with Mulliner's rather 'futuristic' style 37-seat centre entrance coachwork. Seen here in London's Victoria Coach Station in August 1961 when in service with Cornwallis of London. (John Kaye).



## **James Whitson & Co Ltd**

Alfred Ernest Whittit had been a foreman at Northern Counties just after World War I before he moved to Riley cars in the 1920's. The following decade he moved to Dennis and from 1938 to 1940 was Works Director at Strachans.

In 1940 he commenced a coachbuilding business on his own, although he traded under the name of James Whitson and Co.

During the war the company was engaged in aircraft manufacture and was incorporated on 30th August 1941, with Alfred Whittit as chairman and managing director.

A new factory was built for the company at Sipson Road, Sipson, West Drayton, Middlesex, especially designed for commercial vehicle bodybuilding and covering a total area of 36,000 sq. ft.

Initially the company manufactured bodies for leading commercial vehicle operators including a specially designed bread delivery van for the Weston Biscuit Company, with some vehicles going for export. From 1946 the Company also manufactured bodies for passenger chassis.



Salopia No. 91 (JAW334) was a Whitson 'observation coach' on Foden PVRF6, new in 1952 and seating 39. (LTHL collection).

Whitson, however, is probably best known for the manufacture of the 'observation coach' body, introduced to the passenger market at the 1948 Commercial Motor Show,

where they exhibited a 29-seat full fronted observation coach built on a Maudslay chassis. It seated 16 on the 'lower' deck with 13 on the short 'upper' rear deck, with an extra large luggage compartment. The Company had a virtual monopoly of this style between 1949 and 1952. Over 30 of these bodies were produced for a variety of operators including the US Air Force which operated 10 built on Crossley SD42/9 chassis.

In 1950 James Whitson & Company was the sole representative of British design at the Paris Show's Vehicle Rally and won a number of awards. The vehicle, a Foden rear-engined coach with Whitson bodywork was a 39-seater and was entered by the bodybuilder. Apart from two diplomas and first prize in its class, the coach was awarded the premier award, the Grand Prix d'Excellence, and the Silver Cup of the Union Europeane de la Carrosserie, as well as the Prix de l'Autocar le plus Elegant (the most elegant coach).

Around 1952, the Company is believed to have assembled some bodies for the Sentinel integral single-deck vehicle, using panels supplied by Sentinel, which resulted in the Company's own 'Grand Prix' style centre-entrance body for underfloor-engined chassis being produced.



Whitson's 'Grand Prix' body seen here on 657CMT, a Sentinel SC6/30 of Best & Sons, London. It was exhibited at the 1954 Commercial Show and had a centre-entrance 40-seat body. (John Boylett courtesy John Kaye).

Later in 1952 a range of bodywork suitable for lightweight coach and bus chassis was introduced. The 'Economist' was a 44-seat bus body, whilst the 'Fairline' was a 41-seat coach body weighing 2 tons 11 cwt. The range also included a 35-seat luxury body especially designed for Bedford chassis.

The same year the Company moved to High Street in nearby Yiewsley, West Drayton and concentrated on fire engine and other commercial bodywork rather than PSV production. The new premises had a covered area of 60,000 sq. ft., with pits in the final assembly shop, which enabled chassis to be prepared for the road while final adjustments were carried out inside the body; it also had separate spray painting and brush painting shops. The factory had been under construction for three years and employed 400 people.

In 1955, even though PSV production was winding down, the Company introduced another standard 41-seater coach body for the Commer Avenger chassis, known as the 'Conqueror' and weighing 5 tons 8cwt. The first two Conquerors were delivered to long time customer Salopia Saloon Coaches Ltd of Green End, Whitchurch.

By the late-fifties, however, production of bus and coach bodies had ceased, although the Company remained active building coachwork in other areas.



Hornchurch Coaches operated this Commer Avenger III with Whitson 'Conqueror' style 41-seat bodywork, new to long time Whitson customer Salopia Coaches in 1955. (John Kaye).

© Local Transport History Library 2018

Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.  
Our general email address is: [lth.library@gmail.com](mailto:lth.library@gmail.com).