

Lesser Known Coachbuilders 2



**Applewhite & Sons | Barnards Ltd. | Grose Ltd.
Gurney Nutting Ltd. | Picktree Coach & Engineering Co. Ltd.
Wilks & Meade Ltd.**

CONTENTS

Fred Applewhite & Sons.....	Page 3
Barnards Ltd.....	Page 7
Grose Ltd.....	Page 10
Gurney Nutting Ltd.....	Page 14
Picktree Coach & Engineering Co Ltd.....	Page 17
Wilks & Meade Ltd.....	Page 21

CU4746 was a 1947 Leyland PS1 with Burlingham 33-seat coachwork. It was rebuilt in 1955 by Picktree and is seen here in June 1958 operating for Hall Brothers of South Shields. (John Kaye).

First Published 2018 by the Local Transport History Library.

With thanks to John Boylett (courtesy John Kaye), John Kaye, Martin Arrand and Stuart Little for illustrations.

© The Local Transport History Library 2018. (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-147-1

Fred Applewhite & Sons

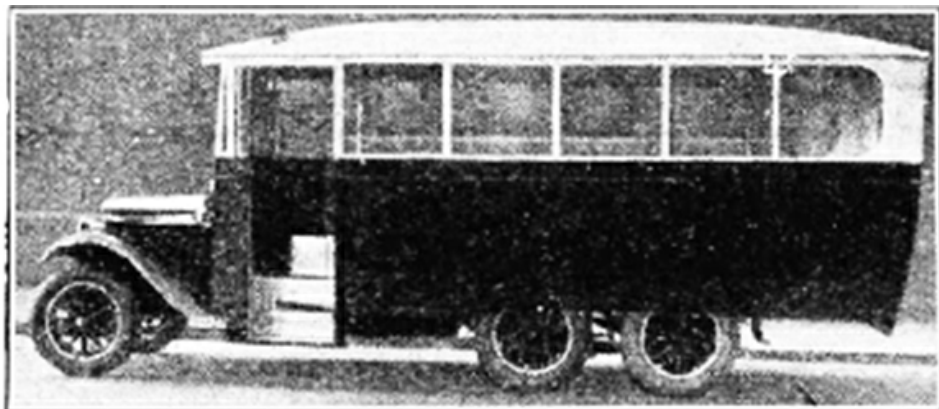
Fred Applewhite was born into a large family in 1868, the son of a farmer and market gardener in Washingborough. By 1891 he was employed as a coachbuilder by Wingad & Bates, who had premises in Canwick Road, Lincoln.

By 1905 the partnership had been dissolved and Algernon Bates had set up a new engineering and coachbuilding business in St. Rumbold Street, which had most probably been the former premises of Rainforth's (another Lincoln coachbuilder), who had recently moved to larger premises. Fred Applewhite was appointed foreman for the new venture and subsequently became Works Manager.

In 1919 Fred took over the business and began trading as Fred Applewhite & Sons, the premises being known as the Central Coach and Motor Body Works.

During the 1920's and early 1930's the Company built a small number of single-deck bus and coach bodies, which were mainly delivered to local customers but some found employment further afield. Bodywork was also manufactured on lorry and car chassis.

In 1926 Applewhites' constructed a six-wheel coach body on a Chevrolet chassis for local hotelier Mr. Wolfe of the Lion Hotel, Lincoln.



**YOU MUST HAVE
RELIABLE COACHWORK**

for COMFORT and STABILITY.

Our picture illustrates 20-seater body fitted on a Chevrolet Ten Chassis with Long Frame Extension. The First Six-Wheeler built for Lincoln, supplied to Mr. V. Wolfe, Lion Hotel, Lincoln.

FRED APPLEWHITE & SONS

All Types of Bodies Built of Best Material. Bus Bodies, Chars-a-Banc and Private Cars. Re-painting and Re-upholstering. Estimates Free. Phone 315.

Central Coach & Motor Body Works, St. Rumbold St., Lincoln.

The largest single batch of PSV bodies was constructed for Lincoln Corporation in 1929. Consisting of four vehicles (numbered 4, 5, 7 and 8) on Leyland 'Lion' chassis they had 32-seat rear entrance bodywork with re-inforced red concrete floors, which became known as the Leyland 'Fireproofs'. They were not a great success and the floors were later replaced by conventional wooden flooring. They were withdrawn in 1938 but due to the onset of World War II, re-instated in 1939 because of vehicle shortages. One of these vehicles survives in preservation - the only known example of Applewhite bodywork to survive.

The business ceased trading in 1932, probably a casualty of the recession which hit British businesses hard during the late 1920's and into the 1930's.



Lincoln Corporation No. 5 was reconstructed from derelict by Lincoln Corporation's Building Department using the remaining bodywork as a pattern and gives an example of what the original Applewhite bodywork must have looked like when in service in the 1930's. (Martin Arrand).

Barnards Ltd

Charles Barnard was born in Bracon Ash, Norfolk in 1804. In 1826 he had established himself as an ironmonger, oil and colourman in Market Place, Norwich. By 1840, he had retail workshops in Pottergate, making ironwork for domestic and agricultural implements.

In 1846 he teamed up with ironmaker John Bishop of St Ives in Huntingdonshire, trading as Barnard and Bishop. His eldest sons (Charles Junior and Godfrey) joined the partnership in 1859, the firm becoming known as Barnard, Bishop and Barnards. He established the Norfolk Iron Works in Coslany Street, comprising iron foundry, steam-powered netting mill and production tramway.

The business diversified in the 1860s and 1870s into ornamental ironwork and in 1864, Barnard, Bishop and Barnards made the "Norwich Gates", which were exhibited in London at the Great Exhibition and given by the county of Norfolk to the Prince of Wales as a wedding present. They stand to this day at the entrance to the Royal Park at Sandringham.

In 1887 the firm was incorporated as a limited liability company under the title Barnard, Bishop and Barnards Ltd. In 1907 the Company became simply Barnards Ltd.

During World War One, Barnards was a large contributor to the war effort, supplying castings, cooking stoves and seven thousand miles of wire netting for road-making in Egypt. In 1921 part of Mousehold Aerodrome was purchased for warehousing, later to become Barnards main premises. During World War Two, Barnards employed 1,200 workers making munitions, aircraft parts and 750,000 telegraph poles for the North African Campaign. Later in the war they made propellers and steam gear assemblies for motor torpedo boats used in the Japanese theatre. The factory at Mousehold was bombed on two occasions, but production was not seriously impeded.

After World War Two the order books were alarmingly empty and the Company was forced to diversify, which included a short 3-year foray into coach and bus body building. Barnards had no previous experience of coachwork, and the circumstances surrounding this venture remain somewhat mysterious, but two managers from Northern Coachbuilders of Newcastle (Horace Hatton and Jack Herdman) had joined Barnards by 1948 to head up the new Barnards coachworks. In the three years 1948-1950, Barnards made a total of 115 bus and coach bodies, amongst them 37 double-deckers.

For reasons unknown, Barnards ceased making bus and coach bodies in 1950. By 1955, flagging fortunes led to a takeover by Tinsley Wire Industries Ltd of Sheffield. The firm continued to operate in Norwich under the Barnards name, concentrating on its core business of fencing products until 1991, when Barnards ceased operations and closed the Mousehold Works.



Llandudno UDC purchased this Guy Wolf with Barnard's 20-seat bus body in 1949. It is seen here in August 1974 on North Parade, Llandudno. (Stuart Little).

Grose Ltd

Joseph Grose initially became interested in bicycle racing, breaking national records on his "penny farthing" bicycle. As his interest in bicycling grew, he decided to start his own business to build and repair cycles in a small lock-up shop in St James End, Northampton. During the 1880s, he became friendly with J. K. Starley, a noted cycle racer and the designer of Rover cycles, for which Joseph Grose became the Northampton agent. With the national craze for bicycling, Joseph Grose moved his business to 63, Gold Street, selling several well known makes of bicycle and his own models from the West Bridge Cycle Depot.

In 1897 Grose invented the Grose patent gear case. This case, made of patent leather, covered the cycle's driving mechanism to protect ladies' skirts from catching in the chain. The case was shown at the Stanley Cycle Show at Crystal Palace, London and sold in large numbers to the Coventry cycle manufacturers. It was so successful that the Grose Gear Case Company Ltd was formed in July 1897 to manufacture the case. The case was later used to cover the greasy chain drives of early motor cars, so enabling long-term production of the gear case.

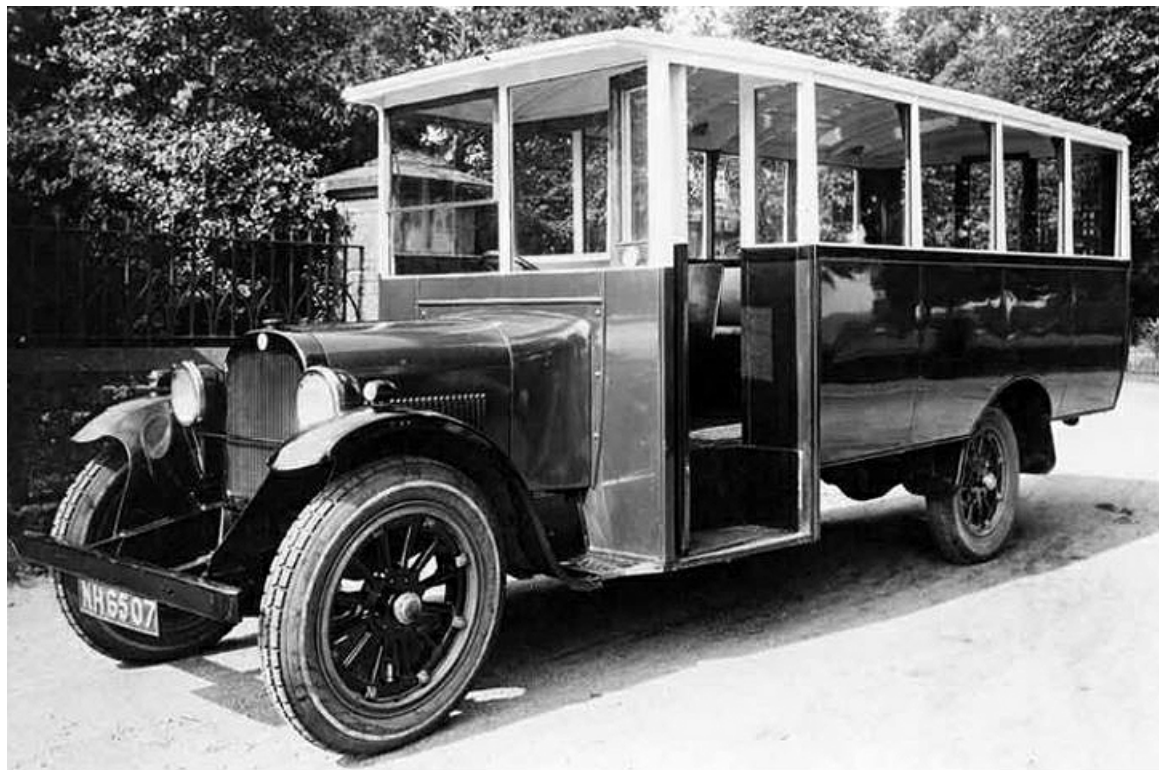
Through business connections with the French motor and cycle industry, Grose built one of the first motor cars in England in the period 1897-1899, using an imported Benz

engine. In February 1900 the company's name was changed to Grose Ltd. The gear case business was sold and the factory in Pike Lane, Northampton was adapted to manufacture Grose steel-studded non-skid tyres, which Joseph Grose had invented for his newly-built motor cars. These cars were built using ready-made chassis, one particular speciality being to build detachable bodies enabling tradesmen to use a vehicle as a delivery box-van during the week, changing it for a four-seater tonneau body for Sundays.

The business continued to expand into the areas of motorcycle sales and repairs, coachbuilding, commercial vehicles, omnibus building and operating. In 1912, Grose Ltd registered its subsidiary company, Northampton Motor Omnibus Co Ltd, whose buses operated on local routes until 1928, when it was purchased by the United Counties Omnibus Co Ltd. Probably the first Grose-built body was for their own Company in June 1925 - a 32-seat bus body on a Daimler chassis. Several more bodies were produced for the Company but the biggest customer was Northampton Corporation, who placed several orders between 1927 and 1932.

In 1924 Grose Ltd purchased the Crofts Carriage Works in Kingsthorpe Hollow, producing customers' special orders for high-class bodies on Rolls Royce, Daimler and other well known chassis as well as double- and single-deck bus and coach bodies.

Between 1927 and 1937 Grose exhibited at the Commercial Motor Show, but following the end of World War II no more PSV bodies were produced.



NH 6507 was a 20-seat Grose-bodied bus on a Graham Brothers LB chassis. Numbered 37 it was placed in service by the Northampton Motor Omnibus Co. Ltd in 1925. (LTHL collection).

In total more than 200 Grose bodies were produced although no records of production seem to have survived - a list of known Grose bodies is contained in the PSV Circle publication 947-HJ, the Historic Journal for December 2018.

Thereafter the main business focus became car dealerships and Grose still survives today as a major car dealer in the Northampton area.

Gurney Nutting Ltd

J. Gurney Nutting & Co Limited was an English firm of bespoke coachbuilders, founded in 1918 as a new enterprise by a Croydon firm of builders and joiners of the same name. The senior partner was John Gurney Nutting (1871?-1946). Nutting had done well from wartime government building contracts and with his partner from that business set up operations in the old Marlborough Carriage Works in Oval Road, Croydon. Between 1919 and 1945 Gurney Nutting made luxury and bespoke car bodies, the first Gurney Nutting designs making their appearance at the London Motor Show in October 1920.

The Croydon premises were destroyed by fire during Easter 1923 and the business was moved nearer to their customers to the upmarket address of Elystan Street, off King's Road, Chelsea, London. Two years later the first Rolls-Royce body was built, and it was not long before the company was supplying coachwork to the Duke of York, Prince George, and other members of the Royal Family. A Weymann fabric saloon on a new Phantom Rolls-Royce for Edward, Prince of Wales (later to become King Edward VIII) followed, and by the early thirties the company held the Royal Warrant.

On September 4, 1930, Gurney Nutting moved, less than a mile, to badly needed, more spacious, premises in Lacland Place SW10. A few weeks later they showed at Olympia a metal panelled Weymann Bentley Sportsman's coupe beside another Bentley of traditional construction for the first time exhibiting Nutting's trademark, a

deep chrome-plated beading strip running from the grille to above the rear mudguards and emphasising the sweeping new lines of the car.

The 1930s were the firm's greatest years. Bodies were built to order on other chassis but mostly these were the years of the Rolls-Royce and Bentley saloons, Coupes de Ville and Sedancas de Ville. McNeil's proportions and always elegant, sweeping curves continued to seem instinctively right.

In 1931 the company secured the contract for the streamlined all-enveloping body of Sir Malcolm Campbell's Land Speed Record car, 'Bluebird'.

With the outbreak of World War II all coachbuilding work was suspended. During the war Gurney Nutting built boats, from lifeboats to patrol boats.

In 1945, the business became part of the Jack Barclay group. Following Joseph Nutting's death on 10th February 1946, at the age of 75, the company was renamed Gurney Nutting Ltd and the premises were mainly employed in the refurbishment of Barclay-owned Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars which had been laid up for the duration of the war.

By 1947 the Company was based at the Ranelagh Works, Lombard Road, Merton, London, SW19 and had begun to construct PSV bodies - the works being turned over exclusively to the production of PSV bodies from 1948, many with full front bodywork. Gurney Nutting produced some very distinctive bodywork in the period to 1952, before PSV coachbuilding finally ceased in 1953 with around 125 bodies being produced.



FDY246 was an AEC Regal IV with Gurney Nutting 37-seat centre-entrance bodywork, seen here in May 1961 at London's Victoria Coach Station. (John Kaye).

Picktree Coach & Engineering Co. Ltd. Picktree Coachworks Ltd.

Incorporated on the 6th September 1947, the Picktree Coach & Engineering Co Ltd was formed and owned by two ex-Northern General employees and traded from premises in Picktree Lane, Chester-le-Street, County Durham, which was just a stones throw from the Northern General depot also in Picktree Lane. As a result, during the Company's 7-year foray into PSV coachbuilding, there was always a close association between the two companies and a good proportion of Picktree's output went to Northern General. A smaller proportion went to local independents and other companies.

The company secured the services of Doug Pargeter from Northern Coachbuilders who designed some of the company's coachwork. They produced half cab bodies on AEC Regal rebuilds (designed by Northern General themselves), referred to as 'Kipper Boxes' because of their shallow roofs and high skirt panels, and many rebodys and refurbishments of prewar vehicles, although Picktree's own designs were generally characterised by fully-fronted coachwork.



DCN68 was one of the AEC Regal rebuild's bodied by Picktree in 1953 to Northern General's design and nicknamed 'Kipper Boxes'. (LTHL collection).

In 1954 the Company produced its final PSV bodies on a batch of 12 Guy Arab underfloor engined chassis, again for Northern General, although the Company continued to trade building caravan and other commercial vehicle bodywork.

On the 2nd December 1986 the Company's name was changed to Picktree Coachworks Ltd, by which time Picktree had also become a motor dealer. The business finally ceased to trade in 1996.



The last Picktree bodies were built for Northern General in 1954 on Guy Arab LUF chassis. This is No. 1533 (DCN833) with Picktree 35-seat coachwork, seen here in Leeds in August 1962. (John Kaye).

Wilks & Meade Ltd

Wilks and Meade Ltd (often wrongly spelt as Wilkes and Meade) was incorporated on 22nd June 1942. It was founded by David Wilks and Harry Meade as a Coach and Wagon builder trading from premises at Hilltop Works, Buslingthorpe Lane, Leeds.

Wilks and Meade's coachbuilding activities at first do not appear to have included new PSV bodies and the Company seems to have concentrated entirely on repairing and rebuilding other coachbuilders bodywork, although little is known of their activities. This was obviously a lucrative market during the Second World War and just after as bus operators struggled to maintain their fleets under wartime conditions.

In 1946 Wilks and Meade was purchased by the Leeds based coach operator Wallace Arnold.

This was an astute move by Wallace Arnold, since in the postwar period demand for buses to replace worn out vehicles escalated as many operators placed large orders. Demand for coaches also increased as people sought to get away to holiday destinations across the UK. The purchase of Wilks and Meade allowed Wallace Arnold to carry out refurbishments and build their own coach bodies, avoiding the long waiting times other operators were experiencing.

WILKS & MEADE L^{TD}

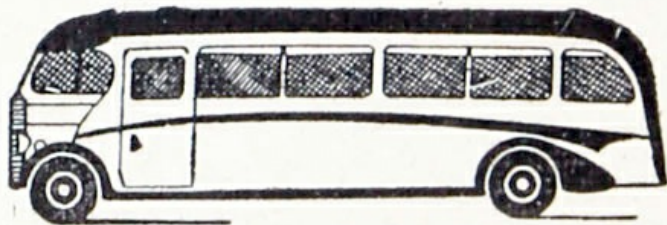
COACH & WAGON BUILDERS

BUSLINGTHORPE LANE, LEEDS.

Our premises have been completely rebuilt and modernized. Repairs and complete rebuilding of single and double-deck buses or heavy goods vehicles. First class workmanship guaranteed.

*All enquiries will
receive our prompt
and careful attention*

PHONE - 42543



In 1947 Wallace Arnold moved the Wilks and Meade operation to Chadwick Street, off Hunslet Road, Leeds close to Wallace Arnold's main depot and the original premises at Buslingthorpe Lane was sold.

Most of Wilks and Meade's production was for Wallace Arnold itself, although a few vehicles were produced for other operators, notably Burrows of Wombwell, Premier Travel and Sheffield Corporation and were almost exclusively single-deck coaches. The only service bus bodies constructed were a batch of ten for Sheffield Corporation and the only double-deck vehicles built were three high specification double-deck coaches for Premier Travel.

However the Wilks and Meade bodywork used unseasoned 'green' timber for the framework due to postwar shortages, which soon rotted and needed expensive repair work or even re-bodying to remedy the faults. Wallace Arnold were in the habit of rebuilding or rebodying their coaches every three years or so, so it did not present a problem, but other operators were faced with heavy repair or rebuilding bills and Wilks and Meade bodywork fell out of favour. Even Wallace Arnold despatched some of their coaches to another Leeds coachbuilder, Charles Roe, in 1949-50 when they re-bodied some of their coaches as double-deck service buses for use by their subsidiaries.



This 1949 Leyland PS1/1 with Wilks & Meade 33-seat coachwork was No. 35 (GER835) in the fleet of Premier Travel and was photographed in July 1959 in Drummer Street Bus Station, Cambridge. (John Boylett courtesy John Kaye).



Premier Travel No. 72 (HVE401) was one of only three double-deck bodies built by Wilks & Meade. Bodied in 1950 using unseasoned timber they did not last long, being extensively rebuilt later. (John Boylett courtesy John Kaye).

No new coachwork was produced by Wilks and Meade after 1951 and thereafter they concentrated on repairing and rebuilding Wallace Arnolds' coach fleet, producing a quantity of full fronted conversions on various makes of bodywork, copying a design of Yeates of Loughborough, to whom many of these are wrongly credited.

Subsequently Wilks and Meade seem to have been absorbed into the Wallace Arnold company, becoming simply known as the 'workshops' and the name fell into disuse, although the Company was not officially dissolved until 28th November 2000.

© Local Transport History Library 2018

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