

GAS COMPANY LORRY.

This original photo was found in family papers belonging to the Cock family, some of whom lived and worked in Birchington and Westgate in the first half of the 1900's.

Mr. William James Cock, with two of his sons, Denys James Hatson Cock and Donald Edmund Hatson Cock, worked for the Westgate and Birchington Gas and Water Company, (later the South Eastern Gas Board) from the early 1920's up until their retirement. As no details of the date or details of the vehicle were known, contact was made with John Meakins, (ex curator, Kent Fire and Rescue Service who has a great interest in vehicles) in June 2012. and he provided the following information.

The lorry is (or should that be was?) a Bedford. It has double rear wheels so I'm sure it's their 2 ton capacity model, in which case it would be a WLG. The model was first introduced in 1931 and the BKL registration letters, as allocated to "your" lorry, were issued by KCC during August and September 1934.

The 1934 registration date would fit in with the fact that the front mudguards of the model were redesigned in 1935, to come much further forward of the front wheels and join with the front bumper. "Your" Bedford clearly has the the early style mudguards.

Bedfords were first produced in 1931 and were a very advanced lightweight lorry at that time, being powered by a six-cylinder overhead valve petrol engine which was very smooth, almost as good as a prestige car of the day. A 4-speed gearbox was also fitted. These early Bedford's were virtually direct copies of the American Chevrolet "trucks" which had been assembled by General Motors Corporation at Hendon, and later Luton, in the late 1920s. The Luton factory then began producing British built Bedford's from scratch with, not surprisingly, a heavy American influence. They were extremely successful, especially in view of the fact that a great many established "British" lorries were still relying on four-cylinder side valve petrol engines.

There's no doubt that it belonged to the a company, in view of the water heaters displayed on the back, also "Mr Therm" is on the cab roof and a different version of him is also sitting atop the radiator surround! The vehicle is all done up as a float for the local carnival, no doubt!

