

Llandudno Urban District Council

Great Orme Railway Co. Ltd. 1949-1974



1928 - 1974

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Cover Illustration: Llandudno's last delivery of buses in 1968 were two Dennis PAX V chassis with Dennis 33-seat bodywork. FJC736F is now preserved in Llandudno's maroon and cream livery. (LTHL collection).

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Llandudno UDC did not operate motorbuses until the late 1920's, principally because, as in the case of neighbouring Colwyn Bay, there were already adequate facilities provided by the Llandudno and Colwyn Bay Electric Railway (L&CBER), and Crosville Motor Services, but in March 1928 powers to operate motorbuses were granted. It was intended that the services would not be stage carriage services but would be operated solely to enable visitors to enjoy the scenery of the district. It was agreed with the L&CBER that they would not pick up passengers close to the tramway and that the services would operate only during the summer season. Initially there were two vehicles - a Guy and a Dennis G liveried in maroon and on the 30 July 1928 the first service along the Marine Drive around the Great Orme headland commenced. It was to have been supplemented with additional services from North Coast to West Coast, and a service along the North Bay, but these never materialised. The service was sufficiently popular (it is reported that in excess of 80,000 passengers were carried) that further Dennis vehicles with similar 'toastrack' bodies were purchased for the following seasons.

In 1928, a depot in Builder Street West was opened in order to accommodate the fledgling fleet.

The fleet remained unchanged until 1935, when the original Guy was replaced by a new Guy Wolf with a body carrying detachable side panels and in 1937 the original Dennis was replaced by a coach-bodied Commer with a roll-back canvas roof whilst another similarly bodied vehicle joined the fleet in 1938.

A second tourist service was inaugurated in 1950, from Prince Edward Square travelling via the Little Orme and Gloddaeth Woods to Llanrhos, returning via the West Shore. The following year, a stage carriage service to St. Tudno's Church on the Great Orme commenced.

During this decade the fleet size reached its maximum of seventeen vehicles, and the livery was modified to maroon and cream.

In 1951 two Fodens and three Guy Wolf buses, all with Metalcraft bodies, entered service. The Fodens were used on the St Tudno's service, being fitted with Sprag gear to prevent run-back on the exceptionally steep (1 in 4) climb. It was reckoned that over 50% of the 17 minute journey was spent in first gear! These buses also provided a year-round service to the Great Orme, as the tramway only operated in Summer. In 1953 the service to the Great Orme was supplemented by running extra shuttles to St. Tudno's Church for the open-air service at 11:00 on Sunday, with over 1000 people being transported on occasions.

Although route modifications were made later in 1953 and 1954 the basic route network remained subsequently unchanged.

In 1968 two Dennis Pax vehicles were delivered and replaced the Fodens on the mountain route and heralded a change in livery to blue and cream, which was applied to all the forward-control buses in the fleet. Maroon and cream was retained for the normal-control buses.

On 1 April 1974 Llandudno UDC became part of the new Aberconwy District Council in the county of Gwynedd. All the bus services and vehicles, including the Great Orme Railway, were transferred to the new authority, marking the end of Llandudno UDC as an independent municipal operator. After the take-over a livery of red and grey was adopted.

Bus Fleet List 1928-1974

This listing is in the format - Reg. No; Chassis; Chassis No; Body; Seating.

1928

CC8222; Dennis G; 70326; Roberts; T20

CC8223; Guy OND; OND8398; Roberts; T18

CC8222 re-seated to T19 in 1932.

CC8223 re-seated to T17 in 1932.

Withdrawn 1935 (CC8223), 1937 (CC8222).

1929

CC8670-8671; Dennis G; 70442-43; Roberts; T20

CC8670-8671 re-seated to T19 in 1932.

Withdrawn 1957 (CC8670-8671).



Llandudno's first vehicle was this Dennis G with Roberts 20-seat 'toastrack' body CC8222, seen here operating the 5-mile circular service around the Great Orme. (LTHL collection).

1930

CC9305; Dennis GL; 70608; Roberts; T20

CC9424; Dennis GL; 70621; Roberts; T20

CC9305, CC9424 re-seated to T19 in 1932.

Withdrawn 1957 (CC9305, CC9424).

1935

JC2772; Guy Wolf; CFP11365; Guy; B20F

JC2772 had a removable (or foldable) nearside for use as an open-sided bus.

Withdrawn 1960 (JC2772).

1937

JC4557; Commer PN3; 46579; Waveney; B20F

Withdrawn 1965 (JC4557).

1938

JC5313; Guy Wolf; CFP13451; Waveney; B20F

Withdrawn 1961 (JC5313).



JC5313 a 1938 Guy Wolf with Waveney 20-seat bus bodywork, now in preservation. It is seen here on a visit to the Ffestiniog Railway in 1967. (John Ryan).

1948

JC8344; Guy Wolf; NLW31094; Barnard; B21F

Withdrawn 1962 (JC8344).

1949

JC9735-9736; Guy Wolf; NLW40302/00; Barnard; B21F

JC9735-9736 to Aberconwy Borough Council 4/74.

1951

AJC91-92; Foden PVSC6; 30614/90; Metalcraft; FB35F

AJC550-552; Guy Wolf; NLW42959/43074/79; Metalcraft; FB24F

AJC550-552 to Aberconwy Borough Council 4/74.

Withdrawn 1968 (AJC91-92).

1954

CCC596-597; Guy Otter; LLODP4585/87; Roe; B25F

CCC596-597 to Aberconwy Borough Council 4/74.



AJC91 was a 1951 Foden PVSC6 with Metalcraft full-fronted bodywork, seen here operating on the Great Orme service. (Peter Williamson).



AJC551 - a Guy Wolf dating from 1951 with Metalcraft 24-seat bodywork operating on the circular tour. (Peter Williamson).



Guy Otter CCC596 dating from 1954 with Roe 25-seat body is seen here in 1976 after Aberconwy Borough Council took over operations carrying the red and grey livery. (Paul Haywood).

1968

FJC736-37F; Dennis Pax V; 9395-2328/9390-2328; Dennis; B33F

FJC736-737F to Aberconwy Borough Council 4/74.

Great Orme Railway Ltd. (1949-1974)

The Great Orme Tramways Act of 1898 provided for the construction of a cable tramway rising to the summit of the Great Orme headland at Llandudno. It was promoted and operated by the Great Orme Tramways Company Ltd, and consisted of two separate sections, with the cable-winding house situated at Halfway station between the two sections. The lower section was opened on 31 July 1902, commencing at Victoria station in Church Walks, Llandudno, climbing to the Halfway station at an average gradient of 1 in 6.5. It was designed to operated on the funicular system, with a car attached to each end of a cable running in a conduit down the centre of the track. The upper section was opened on 8 July 1903 and connected the Halfway station to the Summit station at an average gradient of 1 in 15.5. Since that year the service has been operated in the summer season only. In 1935 ownership of the Great Orme Tramway passed to the Great Orme Railway Ltd., by which name it was known until 1977. In 1949, Llandudno Urban District Council, who had powers to compulsorily purchase the operation at seven yearly intervals, exercised their option and acquired the tramway.

The tramway has three main stations, a lower station named "Victoria" after the hotel that formerly occupied the station site, a middle one aptly named 'Halfway', and the Great Orme Summit station. Passengers must change trams at the Halfway station as upper and lower funicular sections are physically separate.

The two sections operate independently, with two cars on each section. The lower section is built on or alongside the public road and has gradients as steep as 1 in 3.8. The cable on this section lies below the road surface in a conduit between the rails. The bottom half of the section is single-track, but above the passing loop it has interlaced double track. In comparison, the upper section is less steep, with a maximum gradient of 1 in 10 and is single-track apart from a short double track passing loop equipped with points actuated by the flanges of the passing cars. The rails are interrupted to accommodate the cable.

The line was initially provided with seven cars, three freight cars numbered 1 to 3 and four passenger cars numbered 4 to 7. The passenger cars were each named after a local Welsh Christian saint and are still in service. The freight cars were for the carriage of goods and parcels, as stipulated in the tramway's original Parliamentary Order, but were withdrawn from service by 1911. The freight vans were also used to carry coffins for burial at St. Tudno's church on the Great Orme. There was no concession for grief; mourners were charged full fare, plus 2s 6d (12.5p) for transporting the coffin!

Tram Fleet List 1902-1974

This listing is in the format - Year built; Fleet No; Type; Builder; Seating.

1902

1; Single-deck 4-wheel; Hurst Nelson; Freight Car

2; Single-deck 4-wheel; Hurst Nelson; Freight car

3; Single-deck 4-wheel; Hurst Nelson; Freight Car

4; Single-deck covered bogie; Hurst Nelson; 48

5; Single-deck covered bogie; Hurst Nelson; 48

6; Single-deck covered bogie; Hurst Nelson; 48

7; Single-deck covered bogie; Hurst Nelson; 48

Nos. 1-3 were 16ft 7inch wheelbase end-canopied and were withdrawn (probably) by 1911.

Nos. 4-7 are 37ft wheelbase and named St. Tudno; St. Silio; St. Seiriol and St. Trillo respectively. To Aberconwy Borough Council 4/74.



Car No. 4 operating on the lower section of the route approaching the summit at Halfway Station. (Paul Haywood).



Car No. 7 operating on the upper section of the railway in 1963. The overhead wire and trolley pole were purely for communication between the cars and the winding houses and is no longer used. (David Mitchell).

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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