

London & North Western Railway

The Buses



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Cover Illustration: Preserved 1914 Leyland 'torpedo' charabanc No. 59 (CC1087), beautifully restored and now in the LT Museum collection. (LTHL collection).

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The London & North Western Railway (L&NWR) had been a substantial operator of horsebus services in the latter part of the 19th century before turning its attention to the motorbus.

The first L&NWR motorbus service started in North Wales on 10th July 1905 between Connahs Quay and Mold via Oakenholt Mill, Flint and Northop, using two Milnes-Daimlers double-deck buses. Single-deck vehicles were used to open the next route on 11th October 1905 between Holywell Town and Holywell Station, which required the vehicles to negotiate a gradient of 1 in 9; and a daily service between Mold, Halkyn and Holywell Town was introduced on 2nd April 1906. The vehicles operated from a garage under the arches at Holywell Station and buses on the Connahs Quay to Mold route were required to run the 4 miles to Flint each morning for the commencement of services, returning in the evening.

Conductors were provided with a uniform of blue serge with caps to match but, initially at least, drivers wore ordinary clothing and it was not until later that they too were issued with a uniform. The vehicles were liveried in the L&NWR's standard coaching colours of chocolate and milk and carried the company's name or initials and displayed the company's coat of arms.

In England, the first motorised service started on 23rd April 1906 between Watford Station and Croxley Green via Queens Road, Market Place and Harwoods Road, replacing a horsebus service that had operated between the station and the Town Hall. The service ran hourly from Croxley Green to connect with trains at the station. Three months later, on 30th July 1906, an additional service via Bushey Arches, Bushey

Heath and Harrow and Weald to Harrow and Wealdstone Station commenced. This provided a frequent service for commuter traffic to London with connections at Watford and Harrow stations.

The L&NWR, in common with most other railway companies, had no powers to operate motorbuses, but the L&NWR Act of 1909 gave them the powers to do so and also to carry mail. On 9th August 1909 motorbuses commenced operating on the service between Boxmoor (later Hemel Hempstead) Station and Hemel Hempstead which had previously been operated by the company's horsebuses. The Croxley Green service was extended on 6th December 1909 from Watford Station to Callowland (later North Watford), where new housing was being built.

In Wales, a new route between Colwyn Bay and Old Colwyn was opened on 1st March 1910 using a 32-seat double-deck vehicle garaged at the Llandudno Junction Locomotive Shed some distance away. A second vehicle, a Commer 'toastrack' was used for the summer season before being transferred to the Holywell route.

Small 'private' buses were also introduced at Euston Station in 1910. These were intended for private parties, either to meet trains and convey them onward or to pick them up from their residence, hotel or other station for travel to Euston. Based on a Commer chassis, they seated up to 10 passengers and up to 15cwt of luggage. So successful were they that further such vehicles were put into service the following year.

Route developments in Wales continued with a service between Conway and Llanwrst opening on the 1st August 1911 and on 22nd July 1912 a service from Llanwrst to

Penmachno, via Bettws-y-Coed and Conway Falls commenced, with morning and evening journeys extended to Cwm for the benefit of local miners. On 29th June 1912 the service between Holywell Station and Holywell Town was withdrawn after the branch line between these two points opened. The bus garage was transferred to Mold thus avoiding the dead mileage to Flint.

In Staffordshire, the L&NWR opened a route between Brownhills and Hednesford, via Norton Canes on 1st October 1912. This proved to be the last area in which the L&NWR started operations. From 16th June 1913 Chase Town and Chase Terrace were also served, necessitating the use of two more double-deck buses.

Back in Wales, a further service linking Llanwrst and Abergele was introduced on 25th June 1913, operating from a garage at Llangerniew, about halfway between these points. Buses were scheduled to work through from Conway or Abergele to Penmachno or Llanberis and also between Conway and Abergele via Llanwrst in an intensive operation. At the same time a circular tour by road and rail was inaugurated from Llandudno or Colwyn Bay by rail to Bettws-y-Coed or Llanberis and then by motor coach between these two points, proving extremely popular with summer visitors. Two months later, on 25th August 1913, what proved to be the final Welsh depot was opened. Situated on the Isle of Anglesey at Holyhead, somewhat distant from the other L&NWR Welsh routes it served Rhoscolyn and was operated by a single vehicle. Another service was introduced between Mold and Buckley on 1st October 1913, also operated by a single vehicle.

At the end of September 1912, in Watford, which, by now, had become the home of the Road Motor Engineer's Department, a further service had been introduced running from Harrow and Wealdstone Station via Greenhill, St. Ann's Road, and Kymberley Road to Roxborough Bridge. On 3rd March 1913 an extension via Bessborough Road onto the 'Half Moon' at Roxeth commenced. The route now bypassed St. Ann's Road and Kymberley Road and travelled via College Road past the Metropolitan and Great Central Station instead.

On the 12th May 1913 an extension of the Croxley Green service from Callowland to the 'Three Horseshoes' at Garston commenced and on 1st September a route between Watford Junction and Hemel Hempstead serving Huntonbridge, Kings Langley and Apsley opened.

From 1st March 1914 the horsebus service between Tring Town and Tring Station was replaced by a motorbus, the vehicle being garaged at the station.

In the same year eight Leyland chassis were ordered for the North Wales services to be fitted with single-deck or 'torpedo' charabanc bodies, but in the event only six chassis were delivered and they spent but a short time in service as they were swiftly commandeered by the War Department in 1915 when only 8 months old!

With the continuation of World War I, the call up of staff and the possibility of even more vehicles being impressed, the L&NWR decided that the majority of services should be withdrawn from the 17th April 1915. The surviving routes - those from Boxmoor to Hemel Hempstead; from Tring Station to Tring Town and the workmen's

service from Watford to Boxmoor continued to operate, as did the only surviving provincial service - that between Betts-y-Coed, Penmachno and Cwm (operated by a single vehicle garaged at Penmachno). The Welsh service was withdrawn on the 14th April 1917 and the workmen's service shortly afterward on the 30th June 1917; the remaining routes operating throughout World War I.

The L&NWR's buses were thus mainly redundant. Many had their bodies removed and the chassis fitted with lorry or parcel van bodies. The services were never re-instated later and the stored bus bodies were sold, many being fitted to chassis elsewhere.

However in September 1921, the L&NWR purchased a Thornycroft J-type chassis and bodied it in their own works at Wolverton. It was put to work on the Boxmoor route and the L&NWR were so pleased with its performance that they ordered a further two chassis, which were delivered in 1922. These were the final buses to be put into service by the L&NWR. On 1st January 1923 the company became a constituent of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway, thus ending the separate existence of the L&NWR as an operator of bus services.



What would appear to be an official postcard (an L&NWR logo appears top left) of a 'private' horsebus of the L&NWR taking passengers (and their bicycles!) presumably to or from Euston station. (LTHL collection).



The L&NWR was a prolific operator of horsebuses in connection with its railway. This horsebus is operating the Euston to Charing Cross service. (© National Railway Museum courtesy Science and Society Picture Library).

Bus Fleet List 1905-1923

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

1905

1; LC1306; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; O18/16RO

2; LC1305; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; O18/16RO

3; LC2277; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; B18R

4; LC2819; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; B18R

Withdrawn by 1913 (1-4).

1906

5; LC3311; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; O18/16RO

6; LC5123; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; B18R

7; LC5405; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; B18R

8; LC8051; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; O18/10RO

9; LC8052; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; Dodson; O18/10RO

Nos. 8/9 (LC8051/2) were fitted with a luggage compartment behind the driver.
The Dodson body from LC3311 (5) was fitted to No. 18 (CA987) in 1913.
Withdrawn by 1913 (5-9).

1907

10; LN3850; Milnes-Daimler 28hp; ? ; Dodson; O18/16RO

The Dodson body and registration was transferred to No. 19 in 1913.
Withdrawn 1913 (10).



No. 5 (LC3311), a 1906 Milnes-Daimler with Dodson 34-seat bodywork, outside Hednesford Station. (LTHL collection).



No. 8 (LC8051) was also a 1906 Milnes-Daimler with Dodson body, but with a luggage compartment behind the driver, which reduced the seating capacity. (© National Railway Museum courtesy Science and Society Picture Library).

1909

11; LC9930; Milnes-Daimler 28hp; 3653; ? ; O18/16RO

12; LC6707; Milnes-Daimler 24hp; ? ; ? ; O18/16RO

Nos. 11-12 ex-Associated Omnibus Co. Ltd., London.

Withdrawn by 1913 (11-12).

1910

13; M1379; BACS 25hp; ? ; ? ; O32RO

14; LN9913; Commer 16/20hp; MC139; Dodson; B10R

15; LN9940; Commer 16/20hp; ? ; Dodson; B10R

16; BM1358; Commer WP1 32hp; 222; ? ; Ch22

17; LN475; Leyland 30hp; S34477; Dodson; O18/16RO

18-19; ? ; ? ; ? ; ? ; ?

No. 13 built by the British Automobile Construction Syndicate (BACS). It had an Aster 25hp engine.

No. 14 became parcel van of L&NWR c.1917.

No. 15 impressed by War Department January 1915.

No. 16 (and probably No. 17) became a lorry of L&NWR c.1917.

Withdrawn 1912 (13), 1913 (18-19), 1915 (15), 1917 (14, 16, 17).

1911

**20; LN9969; Commer WP1 32hp; 247; LNWR; B22F
21; BM1688; Commer WP1 32hp; 263; LNWR; B22F
22; LE9567; Leyland 30hp; S72609; LNWR; O18/16RO
23; BM1655; Commer WP1 32hp; 246; LNWR; B22F
24; LE9568; Leyland 30hp; S77621; LNWR; O18/16RO
25; LE9569; Leyland 30hp; S82632; LNWR; O18/16RO
26; LE9570; Leyland 30hp; S86638; LNWR; O18/16RO
27; LE9571; Leyland 30hp; ? ; LNWR; O18/16RO
28; LE9622; Commer WP1 25hp; 341; ? ; B10R
29; LE9623; Commer WP1 25hp; 342; ? ; B10R
30; LE9636; Commer WP1 25hp; 343; ? ; B10R
31; LE9637; Commer WP1 25hp; 344; ? ; B10R**

Nos. 20, 21, 23 became parcel vans of L&NWR c.1917

Nos. 22, 24-27 became lorries of L&NWR c.1917.

Nos. 28-31 became parcel vans of L&NWR c.1917.

Withdrawn by 1917 (20-31).



One of the L&NWR's 'private' buses based on a Commer WP1 chassis and seating 10 passengers with luggage carried on the roof. (© National Railway Museum courtesy Science and Society Picture Library).

1912

32; LE9572; Leyland 30hp; S117717; LNWR; O18/16RO
33; LE9573; Leyland 30hp; S120733; LNWR; O18/16RO
34; LF9061; Commer WP1 32hp; 308; LNWR; B25F
35; LF9060; Commer WP1 32hp; 309; LNWR; B25F
36; LF9074; Commer WP1 32hp; 311; LNWR; B25F
37; LF9075; Commer WP1 32hp; 312; LNWR; B25F
38; LF9076; Commer WP1 32hp; ? ; LNWR; B25F
39; BM2282; Leyland 30hp; S168855; LNWR; B25R
40; BM2281; Leyland 30hp; S169859; LNWR; B25R
41; LF9198; Leyland 30hp; S193930; LNWR; O18/16RO
42; LF9199; Leyland 30hp; ? ; LNWR; O18/16RO
43; M4524; Commer WP1 32hp; 347; ? ; O32RO

No. 43 was fitted with the body from No. 13 (M1379).

Nos. 32-43 became parcel vans or lorries of L&NWR c.1917.

Withdrawn by 1917 (32-43).



No. 34 (LF9061) a 1912 Commer WP1 with the L&NWR's own 25-seat body. Withdrawn in 1917 it ended its days as a parcel van. (LTHL collection).

1913

18; CA987; Commer WP1 32hp; ? ; Dodson; O18/16RO
19; LN3850; Commer WP1 32hp; 1039; Dodson; O18/16RO
44-46; BM2596-98; Commer WP1; 1018/17/19; LNWR; O18/16RO
47-49; BM2621-23; Commer WP1; 1020-22; LNWR; B25F
50; BM2775; Commer WP1; 1054; LNWR; B25F
51; BM2776; Leyland 30hp; S1241; LNWR; B25F
52; DU1976; Daimler CD; 583; LNWR; B25F

No. 18 received the Dodson body from No. 5 (LC3311) of 1906.

No. 19 received the Dodson body and registration from No.10 (LN3850) of 1907.

Nos. 18-19 were apparently the second vehicles to carry these fleet numbers, details of the original Nos. 18-19 are unknown.

Nos. 18-19, 44-51 converted to parcel vans or lorries c.1917.

No. 52 continued to operate in service until 1923 when it (probably) passed to the London, Midland & Scottish Railway (LMSR).

Withdrawn by 1917 (18, 19, 44-51), 1923 (52).

1914

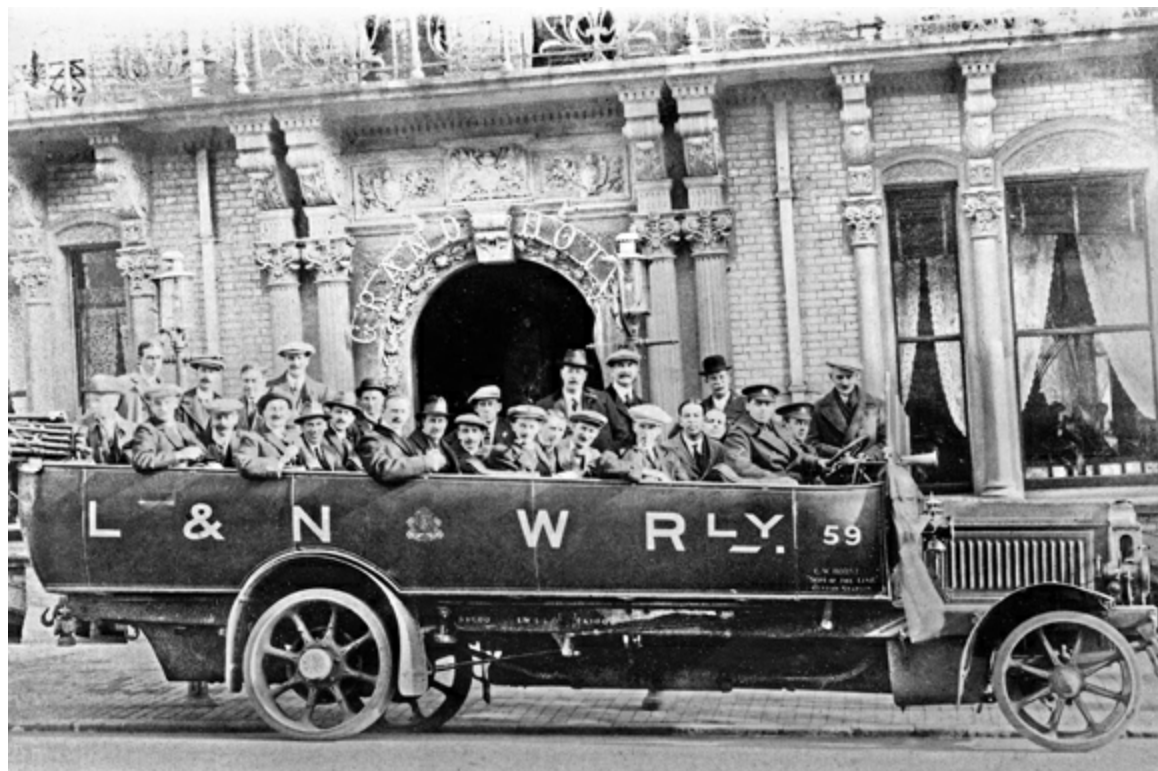
53; LH8782; Daimler CC; 554; LNWR; O18/16RO
54; LH8783; Daimler CC; 303; LNWR; O18/16RO
55; LH8784; Daimler CC; 301; LNWR; O18/16RO
56; LH8785; Daimler CC; ? ; LNWR; O18/16RO
57; LH8786; Daimler CC; 317; LNWR; O18/16RO
58; CC1086; Leyland 30/40hp; ? ; Leyland ; Ch32
59; CC1087; Leyland 30/40hp; ? ; Leyland ; Ch32
60; CA1257; Leyland 30/40hp; ? ; Leyland ; ?
61; CC1088; Leyland 30/40hp; ? ; Leyland ; Ch32
62; CA1255; Leyland 30/40hp; ? ; Leyland ; ?
63; CA1256; Leyland 30/40hp; ? ; Leyland ; B??R

Nos. 55, 57 fitted with single-deck bodies (B25F?), adapted by Birch Brothers to fit the chassis, in 1921; to LMSR 1.1.23.

Two of Nos. 53, 54, 56 were converted to lorries and one remained a bus being withdrawn c.1921.

58-63 impressed by War Department March 1915.

Withdrawn 1915 (58-63), by 1921 (53, 54, 56), 1923 (55, 57).



Leyland 'torpedo' charabanc No. 59 (CC1087) with Leyland 32-seat bodywork in original condition c.1914. It did not stay long with the L&NWR, being impressed for war service in 1915. (LTHL collection).

1921

64; NK2832; Thornycroft J; 9656; LNWR; B32R

No. 64 to LMSR 1.1.23.

1922

65; NK4558; Thornycroft J; 9699; LNWR; B27R

66; NK4835; Thornycroft J; 9700; LNWR; B30R

No. 66 did not enter service until after 1.1.23 and did not operate for the L&NWR.

Nos. 65-66 to LMSR 1.1.23.

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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