

Farnworth U.D.C.



1902-1906

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Cover Illustration: One of the Farnworth UDC cars soon after delivery. (Bolton Library and Museum Services).

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In 1878, Farnworth UDC (jointly with neighbouring Bolton, Astley Bridge and Kearsley Councils) obtained powers to construct a horse tramway through the town. Promoted by Bolton Corporation, construction began in 1880, and one of the first routes to commence, on 1st September 1880, ran from Bolton town centre to Moses Gate at the Farnworth boundary. The tramway was leased to Messrs. E. Holden and Company, who operated the tramway using three-horse double-deck and two-horse single-deck cars. By 1898 further additions to the tramway system had been made and the total track length had increased to over 31 miles. The Farnworth section consisted of a double-track line from Moses Gate through Farnworth to the Black Horse at Kearsley. Although in 1888, Bolton, along with Astley Bridge and Farnworth Corporations, obtained powers to operate the tramways mechanically, they were never taken up.

The Bolton Tramways and Improvements Act of 1897 authorised the conversion of the horse tramway to electric traction and Bolton Corporation acquired the remaining portion of Holden's lease in order to carry out the necessary work.

On 2nd January 1900, electric trams commenced running to the boundary at Moses Gate and on 13th April 1900 the service was extended through Farnworth to the Black Horse. In the interim period, Holden's operated a horse bus service in place of the withdrawn horse trams.

The Farnworth Urban District Council Act of 1900 authorised the construction of Farnworth's own electric tramway and work duly commenced in May 1901. On the 9th January 1902, the first section of standard (4ft 8½in) track, between Moses Gate (which was not connected to the Bolton line), along Egerton Street, Albert Road, and

Worsley Road to Brookhouse, opened. A branch line from the junction of Albert Road and Worsley Road ran along Longcauseway and terminated just short of Bolton Road near the Black Horse.

The initial fleet consisted of thirteen (Nos. 1-13), Milnes, double-deck, open-top bogie cars wearing a chocolate and yellow livery, and housed in the newly built depot on Albert Road, where the generating station was also situated. The cars carried Farnworth Council Tramways as a fleetname.

On 20th February 1902 a single-track extension of the Bolton line from the Black Horse through Kearsley to Spindle Point, Kearsley opened (and at the same time a connection was made to the Farnworth line at the Black Horse). This section of track was owned by Kearsley UDC and leased to Farnworth. On 13th March 1902 the final ¼-mile section of track to Unity Brook opened.

On 1st June 1902, Bolton Corporation's powers to operate the former horse tramway line through Farnworth expired and they were unwilling to agree to joint operation of through services with the small UDC. As a result the electric connection at Moses Gate was severed and Farnworth took control of the section of track within its boundary, linking it to its own Moses Gate line shortly afterwards.

The tramway, however, proved to be a financial disaster and on 1st April 1906 was leased to the South Lancashire Tramways Company for a period of 21 years. The Farnworth cars were taken into the SLT fleet and Farnworth's brief encounter with public transport operations was over.

Tram Fleet List 1902-1906

This listing is in the format - Fleet No; Type; Trucks; Body; Seating.

1901-02

1-13; Double-deck open-top bogie; Brill 22E; Milnes; 38/30

Nos. 1-13 to South Lancashire Tramways Co. Ltd., 4/06 (re-numbered 46-58).



Farnworth Council Tramway's car No. 8, one of thirteen 68-seat open top cars built by Milnes and delivered in 1902, ostensibly the first car to arrive at Walkden on June the 22nd! (Bolton Library and Museum Services).

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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