

Mersey Railway

IN CONNECTION WITH
The Buses
MERCER RAILWAY
TRAINS EVERY 6 MINUTES

012 M3
ROCK-FERRY STATION AND PORT SUNLIGHT. 1^p

CH-50

1905-1907



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Cover Illustration: CM510, one of the 10 Swiss-made Saurer buses purchased in 1905. (Pamlin Print M2443).

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In common with other train operators in the early part of the 20th Century, the Mersey Railway commenced bus operations in connection with its railway services as early as 1905, but, unlike other operators, it was subject to a number of legal challenges from Birkenhead Corporation who sought to protect the revenue on its tram routes and saw the railway company's buses as a threat.

The Mersey Railway's first route opened on the 11th December 1905 between Birkenhead Central Station and Slatey Road, via Grange Road, Grange Road West and Westbourne Road.

10 Swiss-made Saurer buses with Bayleys of London open-top double-deck bodies were purchased for the new venture and garaged in Argyle Street South.

On 26th December 1905 a weekly service between the Cleggs Arms at Gayton and the Central Station commenced. It was successful enough for the company to agree to a request to extend the service to Heswall, which it did in January 1906. Later in the month the Slatey Road route was extended to serve Oxton, terminating at the junction of Bidston Road and Kingsmead Road South, and in February 1906 it became a circular service commencing at the Central Station and travelling via Grange Road, Grange Road West, Westbourne Road, Cearns Road, Chetwynd Road, Wellington Road, Village Road, Christchurch Road, Balls Road, Oxton Road, Grange Road and returning to the Station. The frequency was every 12 minutes, making a bus available in one or other direction every 6 minutes.

However, Birkenhead Corporation viewed the Mersey Railway's expansion with alarm, fearing a loss of revenue on their tram routes and applied to the court for an injunction which took effect on 8th March 1906. The Mersey Railway obligingly ceased operations but lodged an appeal. On the 14th December 1906 the Court of Appeal decided in their favour, provided that the Company carried passengers only to and from their railway stations.

The two initial routes never re-commenced, but, on 16th May 1907, the Company commenced a new service between Rock Ferry Station and the Lever Brothers works at Port Sunlight, again providing a 12 minute service.

In the meantime Birkenhead Corporation had continued with their legal challenge and had taken their case to the House of Lords, who, on the 8th July 1907, ruled against the Mersey Railway and the service ceased, bringing to an end the Mersey Railway's involvement in bus operations.

Most of the buses were sold - six to Hull Corporation and three to Belfast with one being retained for use locally.

Bus Fleet List 1905-1907

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

1905

- ; **CM501-504; Saurer 24/28hp; ? ; Bayleys; O18/16RO**

- ; **CM505-510; Saurer 28/32hp; ? ; Bayleys; O18/16RO**

All withdrawn 1907.



An unidentified Saurer of the Mersey Railway when new. It is seen ferrying spectators to the All Blacks rugby match against Cheshire during their 1905 tour of England on the Saturday prior to entering service. (LTHL collection).

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