

# Luton Corporation Transport



1908 - 1970

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Cover Illustration: Luton 173 (173HTM) one of ten Albion LR7 'Lowlanders' with East Lancs 65-seat bodies delivered in 1963. (LTHL collection).

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The Luton Corporation Tramways Order of 1905 authorised the construction of 5¼ miles of tramway, consisting mainly of single-track routes, which had the distinction of being Bedfordshire's only tramway. The lines radiated from the Town Hall, northwards along Manchester Street and New Bedford Road to Wardown Park; north-eastwards along Midland Road and High Town Road to Stockingstone Lane, Round Green; south-eastwards via George Street, Park Street and Bailey Street to the depot; southwards off George Street, Chapel Street, Hibbert Street and Ashton Road to London Road; and north-westwards along Upper George Street and Dunstable Road. The entire system opened on the 21st February 1908, operated on behalf of the Corporation by J. G. White & Company (who had constructed the tramway).

The initial fleet, owned by the Corporation, consisted of 12 (Nos. 1-12) United Electric Car open-top double-deckers and were the only new tramcars purchased for the system. They operated from the outset in a green and white livery with Luton Corporation Tramways displayed on the rocker panels.

In 1909 Balfour Beatty took over operation of the tramway and continued to operate it on behalf of Luton Corporation until 21 February 1923, when the Corporation withdrew the lease because of the general deterioration of the system and took over the running of the tramway. An ex-Glasgow Corporation double-deck tramcar was added to the fleet in 1923, but was

rebuilt to single-deck with single entrance/exit for one-man operation before entering service.

Subsequently, the local Council considered extending the routes and replacing the tramcars, with both trolleybus and motorbus schemes also mooted. Nothing had materialised from these discussions when, towards the end of 1930, the Eastern National Omnibus Company, who was by then the principal motorbus operator in the area, made an offer for the transport department. The Council readily approved the offer of £64000 for the goodwill (Eastern National did not want the tramway system and the Corporation would have had to dispose of it themselves), but local objections resulted in the matter being referred to the Ministry of Transport, who ruled that the deal contravened section 44 of the Tramways Act 1870 and the offer had to be declined.

In consequence of this decision, Luton Corporation decided to order nine motorbuses (Nos. 1-9 on Daimler CH6 chassis) with which to introduce routes to augment the existing tramway. The application for licences to operate on the new routes was made in December 1931 but refused. As a result the Corporation decided to use the motorbuses to replace some of the ageing trams. On 28 February 1932, the trams on the London Road, Dunstable Road and Wardown Park routes were replaced by motorbuses, and two months later on 16 April 1932, the line from Round Green to the depot

saw the last car (No. 7) run and after 28 years the tram disappeared from the streets of Luton.

The livery chosen for the new motorbuses was maroon (although the shade varied over the years) with white relief. The fleetname Luton Corporation was applied with the coat-of-arms centrally underneath. In 1952 the maroon was replaced by pillar-box red with cream relief, although by the time of the United Counties take-over in 1969 the buses were all red.

In 1933, Luton Corporation acquired three companies controlled by Mr. A. F. England, the Union Jack (Luton) Omnibus Company Ltd, of Dunstable, X.L. Motor Services and Bluebird Services. This would have enabled the Corporation to operate to such destinations as Leighton Buzzard, Tring and Pegsdon, with excursions to the newly opened Whipsnade Zoo. However, following objections by Eastern National, a 21-year agreement was signed dividing the services between the two undertakings and laying out the terms for future expansion by both operators. On the Corporation's part they were allowed to operate without objections by Eastern National to Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Streatley, as well as on numerous services within the borough.

A service (No. 23) to Luton Airport was introduced in 1937, after negotiations with London Transport, which commenced with just a solitary Bedford WTB (No. 60).

With the onset of World War II, the Corporation suffered a series of setbacks, including the loss of over 40 vehicles in an enemy air attack in 1940. Although only 1 vehicle was actually destroyed, 46 others were rendered unfit for service and the Corporation had to seek replacement vehicles elsewhere, including some Bristol vehicles from Eastern National. It was to be 1942 before any new vehicles were delivered. A wartime service connecting Luton to the villages of Kensworth and Studham was authorised by the Ministry of Defence, even though the route ran into London Passenger Transport Board territory. It ceased in 1950 when the permit expired.

With the onset of peacetime there was a demand for new and improved services, although new vehicles were still difficult to obtain. The first postwar deliveries were twelve double-deckers; four of Bristol manufacture (Nos. 88-91) with Weymann H30/26R bodywork, and the remainder (Nos. 92-111) were Crossley-bodied Crossley DD42's. Applications for new services had been made (and approved) in 1947 by both Luton Corporation and Eastern National, some of which had gone against the 1932 agreement. As a consequence, both operators signed the Luton & District Transport agreement in 1948, which provided for 50% of the mileage in the agreed area to be worked by each operator, with each receiving 50% of the revenue from the pooled fares. From 1 May 1952, Luton area operations of the Eastern National Omnibus Company were transferred to the United Counties Omnibus Company, who subsequently became party to the agreement.

In 1950 the Corporation abandoned the old Bell Punch ticket system and introduced the more modern Ultimate system.

A number of Leyland double-deckers (Nos. 124-138) were purchased in 1953 and 1954, which enabled the last of the prewar vehicles to be withdrawn. The Leyland bodywork was to the lowbridge layout adopted as standard since the purchase of the first double-deckers in 1932 (the only highbridge layout double-deckers were those delivered during the war and immediately afterwards), a policy continued until the introduction of two Dennis Loline (Nos. 163-164) vehicles in 1960.

Park Street depot, which was the original tramway depot, had become short of space by the early sixties and so a new depot was constructed in Kingsway. It opened officially on the 28 April 1963. The following year, in August 1964, Luton Bus Station was opened, but just five years later it closed down, to be replaced by another on 9 August 1969.

In January 1966 the newly appointed Transport Manager put in an order for high-capacity single-deckers capable of being one-man operated. On 2nd July 1967, using Almx ticket machines, the first of the one-man operated vehicles entered service. Plans were soon announced for the withdrawal of all existing rear-entrance double-deckers to be replaced by one-man operated single-deckers in an effort to reduce the mounting losses

sustained by the Corporation. By the end of the following year 30 single-deckers had been purchased.

In 1968, with the Luton & District Transport agreement, signed in 1948, due to expire in January 1970, negotiations were commenced with the United Counties Omnibus Company over its future. At the same time tentative enquiries were made about the possible disposal of the undertaking to the Company. By now losses were approaching £¼ million a year and labour relations in respect of one-man operation were strained, making the financial situation worse.

United Counties replied in October 1969 with a firm offer for the undertaking, which was rapidly approved and accepted by the Council. The official take-over date was 4 January 1970, on which date Luton Corporation Transport was consigned to the history books, although vehicles remained in Luton Corporation livery with Corporation fleet numbers until February 1970 when the first ex-Luton vehicles began to appear in United Counties livery.



## Tram Fleet List 1908-1932

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

### 1908

**1-12 Double-deck open-top 4-wheel      M & G 21EM      UEC      32/22**

Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 fitted with Brush top-covers in 1929.  
Withdrawn **1932** (1-12).

### 1923

**13      Single-deck clerestory 4-wheel      Brill 21E      Glasgow/Luton CT      ??**

No. 13 ex-Glasgow Corporation (No. 118, new 1901).  
Withdrawn **1932** (13).



Luton Corporation No. 1 was this 1908 double-deck open-top 4-wheel car on Mountain & Gibson 21EM trucks with United Electric Car body seating 54. It was fitted with a Brush top-cover in 1929 just three years before the end of the system in 1932. (LTHL collection).

## Bus Fleet List 1932-1970

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

### 1932

1	TM9877	Daimler CH6	8018	Duple	B32R
2	TM9876	Daimler CH6	8011	Duple	B32R
3	TM9880	Daimler CH6	8022	Duple	B32R
4	TM9879	Daimler CH6	8021	Duple	B32R
5	TM9878	Daimler CH6	8020	Duple	B32R
6	TM9882	Daimler CH6	9086	Duple	L26/26R
7	TM9881	Daimler CH6	9085	Duple	L26/26R
8-9	TM9883-84	Daimler CH6	9087-88	Duple	L26/26R
10-12	MJ183-185	Daimler CH6	9104-06	Duple	L26/26R
13	MJ434	Daimler CH6	9109	Duple	L26/26R
14	MY433	Daimler CH6	9108	Duple	L26/26R
15	MJ1031	Daimler CH6	8070	Willowbrook	B28R

No. 15 probably re-seated to B32R at a later date.

Withdrawn 1940 (2-3), 1944 (1, 4, 6-8, 12), 1945 (9-11), 1946 (15), 1948 (5, 13-14).

**1933**

16-17	MJ1587-88	Daimler CH6	8079-80	Willowbrook	B28R
18-19	MJ1589-90	Daimler CH6	9140/44	Willowbrook	L26/26R
20	VM6401	Dennis E	17477	Davidson	B32R
21	TM5909	Dennis EV	17829	Strachans	B32D
22	MT7868	Dennis ES	17629	?	B32?
23	TM3739	Dennis E	17598	?	B32?
24	R08252	Dennis E	17223	?	B32?
25	TM5910	Dennis EV	17838	Strachans	B32D
26	TM6084	Dennis EV	17856	?	B32?
27	JK210	Dennis E	17611	Hickman	B31?
28	TM9539	Dennis Lance	126031	Strachans	L50R
29	VM6402	Dennis E	17478	Davidson	B32R
30-31	MJ2336-37	Daimler CH6	9145-46	Willowbrook	L26/26R
32-34	MJ2747-49	Daimler CH6	9149-51	Willowbrook	L26/26R
35-36	MJ2879-80	Daimler CH6	9152/30	Willowbrook	L26/26R
40	MJ459	Dennis E	17592	Strachans	B32R

Nos. 16-17 probably re-seated to B32R at a later date.

Nos. 20, 22, 29 ex-Bluebird Services (all new 1929).



The bus on the right of this photo is VM6402, a much-travelled 1929 Dennis E with Davidson 32-seat bodywork. New to Manchester Corporation as their No. 142 it became Luton Corporation No. 29 in 1933. (Roy Marshall).

**1933 (continued)**

Nos. 21, 23, 25, 28 ex-X.L. Motor Services (new 1929, 1928, 1929, 1931 respectively).

Nos. 24, 26-27, 40 ex-Union Jack Omnibus Company (new 1929, 1930, 1928, 1932? respectively).

Withdrawn **1934** (21-22, 29), **1935** (20), **1938** (24-25, 27), **1939** (23, 26, 40), **1940** (17, 19), **1946** (18), **1948** (16, 32-33, 35), **1949** (28, 30-31, 34, 36).

**1934**

21-22	MJ5076-77	Daimler CP6	8103-04	Willowbrook	B32R
29	MJ4151	Daimler CH6	9194	Willowbrook	L26/26R
37	MJ4152	Daimler CH6	9195	Willowbrook	L26/26R
38-39	MJ5454-55	Daimler CP6	9252-53	Willowbrook	L26/26R

Withdrawn **1940** (22, 29), **1946** (37), **1948** (21), **1949** (38-39).

### 1935

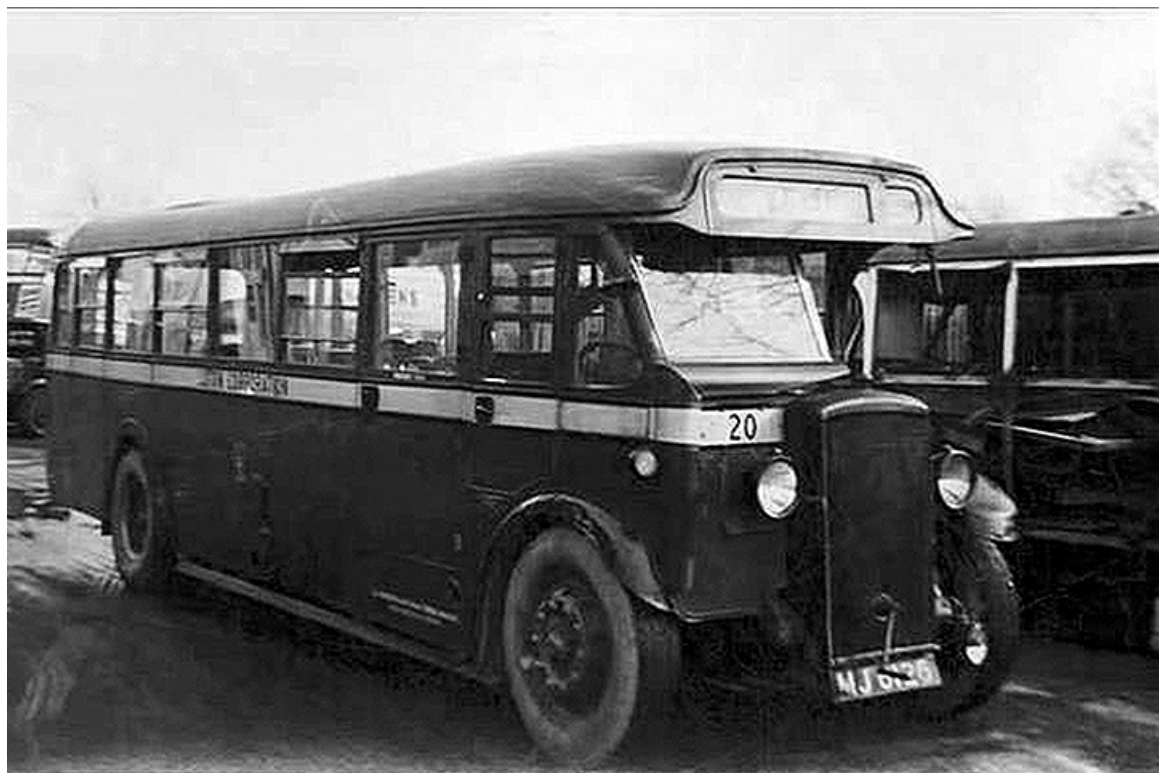
20	MJ6126	Daimler	COG5	8162	Willowbrook	B32R
41-44	MJ6492-95	Daimler	COG5	9265-68	Willowbrook	L26/26R
45	MJ8924	Daimler	COG5	8173	Willowbrook	B39R

Withdrawn 1946 (43-44), 1950 (41-42, 45), 1951 (20).

### 1936

46	MJ9057	Daimler	COG5	8198	Willowbrook	B39R
47	MJ9682	Daimler	COG5	8223	Willowbrook	B39R
48	MJ9681	Daimler	COG5	8224	Willowbrook	B39R
49	ANM257	Daimler	COG5	8225	Willowbrook	B39R
50-51	ANM573-74	Daimler	COG5	9719-20	Willowbrook	L26/26R
52-53	ANM833-34	Daimler	COG5	9717-18	Willowbrook	L26/26R

Withdrawn 1949 (50), 1950 (47-48, 52), 1951 (46, 49), 1954 (51, 53).



Luton No. 20 (MJ6126) was a 1935 Daimler COG5 with Willowbrook 32-seat bodywork. It was withdrawn in 1951. (LTHL collection).



### 1937

54-56	ATM969-71	Daimler	COG5	8299-301	Willowbrook	B39R
57	AMJ802	Daimler	COG5	9958	Willowbrook	L26/26R
58	AMJ801	Daimler	COG5	9956	Willowbrook	L26/26R
59	AMJ816	Daimler	COG5	9957	Willowbrook	L26/26R
60	BBM245	Bedford	WTB	111230	Duple	B26F
61-64	BNM179-82	Daimler	COG5	9954-55/59-60	Willowbrook	L26/26R
65	BTM119	Daimler	COG5	10307	Willowbrook	L26/26R

Withdrawn 1948 (60), 1950 (57, 59, 65), 1951 (54-56), 1952 (63), 1953 (58, 61-62, 64).

### 1938

24-25	BTM898-99	Daimler	COG5	8354-55	Willowbrook	B39R
27	BTM900	Daimler	COG5	8353	Willowbrook	B39R
66	BTM642	Daimler	COG5	10308	Willowbrook	L26/26R
67-70	CNM42-45	Daimler	COG5	10336-39	Willowbrook	L26/26R

Withdrawn 1950 (67, 69), 1951 (24-25), 1952 (27, 68), 1953 (66), 1954 (70).



No. 63 (BNM181) was a 1937 Daimler COG5 with Willowbrook 52-seat lowbridge bodywork. It remained in service until 1952. (LTHL collection).

## 1942

71-74	DNM881-84	Leyland TD7	307890-91/88/92	Brush	L27/28R
75	DTM30	Bristol K5G	57077	Duple	L27/28R

Withdrawn 1954 (71-73), 1957 (74-75).

## 1943

76-79	DTM476-79	Guy Arab I	FD25842/35/51/916	Brush	L27/28R
80-83	DTM480-83	Daimler CWG5	11338/60-61/84	Brush	L27/28R

Withdrawn 1953 (76-79, 82), 1956 (80-81), 1957 (83).

## 1944

84-85	DMJ84-85	Bristol K6A	W1044-45	Park Royal	H30/26R
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Withdrawn 1956 (84-85).



No. 73 (DNM883) was a 1942 Leyland TD7 with Brush lowbridge 55-seat bodywork. It was withdrawn in 1954. (LTHL collection).

## 1945

<b>86-87</b>	<b>DMJ86-87</b>	<b>Bristol K6A</b>	<b>W1046/54</b>	<b>Park Royal</b>	<b>H30/26R</b>
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No. 86 re-seated to H30/28R at a later date.  
 Withdrawn **1956** (86-87).

## 1946

<b>88-91</b>	<b>EBM88-91</b>	<b>Bristol K6</b>	<b>W3158-61</b>	<b>Weymann</b>	<b>H30/26R</b>
<b>92-94</b>	<b>EBM92-94</b>	<b>Crossley DD42/3T</b>	<b>93839/42/50</b>	<b>Crossley</b>	<b>H30/26R</b>

Withdrawn **1960** (88-91), **1963** (92-94).

## 1947

<b>95-99</b>	<b>EBM95-99</b>	<b>Crossley DD42/3T</b>	<b>93852/68/51/87/85</b>	<b>Crossley</b>	<b>H30/26R</b>
<b>109-111</b>	<b>FNM109-11</b>	<b>Crossley DD42/5</b>	<b>94029/23/39</b>	<b>Crossley</b>	<b>L27/26R</b>

Withdrawn **1963** (95-99, 109-111).



No. 88 (EBM88) was one of four Bristol K6A chassis with Weymann 56-seat bodywork purchased in 1946. (LTHL collection).

## 1948

100-104	FNM100-04	Crossley DD42/5T	94138/46/44/73/70	Crossley	L27/26R
105-107	FNM105-07	Crossley DD42/5T	94172/74/71	Crossley	L27/26R
112-115	FNM112-15	Leyland PD2/1	481248/47/037/250	Leyland	L27/26R
116-119	FNM116-19	Leyland PD2/1	481249/46/070/245	Leyland	L27/26R
120-123	FNM120-23	Leyland PD2/1	481069/75/244/068	Leyland	L27/26R

Withdrawn 1965 (100-103, 105), 1966 (104, 106-107, 112-115, 117, 122-123), 1967 (116, 118-121).

## 1949

108	FNM108	Crossley DD42/5T	94175	Crossley	L27/26R
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Withdrawn 1966 (108).



Luton No. 100 (FNM100) was a Crossley DD42/5T with Crossley 53-seat bodywork and was one of eight new in 1948. (LTHL collection).



### 1953

124-127	LBM124-27	Leyland	PD2/10	530202/01/03/323	Leyland	L27/26R
128	LBM128	Leyland	PD2/10	530322	Leyland	L27/26R
129-131	MNM129-31	Leyland	PD2/10	532078-79/81	Leyland	L27/26R
132-133	MNM132-33	Leyland	PD2/10	531795/94	Leyland	L27/26R

Withdrawn **1967** (124-128), **1968** (129, 131), **1969** (130, 132-133).

### 1954

134-136	MNM134-36	Leyland	PD2/10	540308-09/411	Leyland	L27/28R
137-138	MNM137-38	Leyland	PD2/10	540520/489	Leyland	L27/28R

Withdrawn **1968** (136, 138), **1969** (134-135, 137).

### 1956

139-143	RNM139-43	Leyland	PD2/22	560646-50	MCCW	L27/28R
144-147	RMJ144-47	Leyland	PD2/22	561346-49	MCCW	L27/28R

Nos. 140, 143-147 to United Counties OC 1/70 (re-numbered 800/803-807, but retained Luton CT fleet numbers until repainted).

Withdrawn **1969** (139, 141-142).



No. 142 (RNM142), an MCCW 55-seat bodied Leyland PD2/22 new in 1956. It was withdrawn in 1969 just before the fleet passed to United Counties. (LTHL collection).

## 1957

**148-152 UNM148-52 Leyland PD2/31 572372-76 MCCW L27/28R**

Nos. 148-152 to United Counties OC 1/70 (re-numbered 808-812, but retained Luton CT fleet numbers until repainted).

## 1959

**153-157 WTM153-57 Leyland PD2/30 583670-72/91-92 Weymann L27/28R**

Nos. 153-157 to United Counties OC 1/70 (re-numbered 813-817, but retained Luton CT fleet numbers until repainted).

## 1960

**158-162 158-62ANM Leyland PD2/30 600674/99/873-75 East Lancs L27/28R**  
**163-164 163-64ANM Dennis Loline II 101-02YF5 East Lancs H35/28F**

Nos. 158-164 to United Counties OC 1/70 (re-numbered 818-824, but retained Luton CT fleet numbers until repainted).



Luton Corporation Leyland Titan PD2/30 with East Lincs lowbridge body No. 160 (160ANM) dating from 1960, being one of a batch of five, 158-162 (158-162 ANM). (Roland Wilcox).



No. 164 (164ANM) was one of two Dennis Loline's purchased in 1960. It carried an East Lincs H35/28F body and passed to United Counties in 1/70 where it was numbered 824. (Michael Dryhurst).

### 1961

89	JEV419	Bristol K5G	55058	ECW	L27/28R
90	JEV426	Bristol K5G	55081	ECW	L27/28R
91	JEV416	Bristol K5G	55055	ECW	L27/28R

Nos. 89-91 ex-United Counties OC (Nos. 680, 687, 677 respectively, all new 1940).

Withdrawn 1965 (89-91).

### 1963

165-168	165-68EMJ	Albion LR7	62106J/7F/7H/8F	East Lancs	H35/30F
169-170	169-70EMJ	Albion LR7	62108H/8J	East Lancs	H35/30F
171-173	171-73HTM	Albion LR7	62109L/10A/09K	East Lancs	H35/30F
174	174HTM	Albion LR7	62114D	East Lancs	H35/30F
175-177	175-77HTM	Albion LR7	62114E/14F/14H	Neepsend	H35/30F
178-180	178-80HTM	Albion LR7	62114J/14K/14L	Neepsend	H35/30F

Nos. 165-180 to United Counties OC 1/70 (re-numbered 825-840, but retained Luton CT fleet numbers until repainted).



In 1961 Luton purchased a trio of 21 year old Bristol K5G's from United Counties. Built in 1940 they had been re-bodied by ECW in 1953 and provided another 4 years of service for Luton. Numbered 89-91, they are seen here after withdrawal in 1965. (Michael Dryhurst).



No. 172 (172HTM) was one of sixteen Albion LR7 Lowlander chassis new in 1963. Ten had East Lancs 65-seat bodywork as shown here, whilst the remainder had Neepsend bodies on East Lancs frames. (John Kaye).



## 1965

**181-186 FXD181-86C Dennis LoLine III 1164-69L3AF3C1 Neepsend H39/30F**

Nos. 181-186 to United Counties OC 1/70 (re-numbered 841-846, but retained Luton CT fleet numbers until repainted).

## 1967

<b>101-105 MXD101-05E Bristol RELL6L</b>	<b>[RELL-3-]107-111 ECW</b>	<b>B48D</b>
<b>106-107 NXE106-07E Bristol RELL6L</b>	<b>[RELL-3-]224-25 ECW</b>	<b>B48D</b>
<b>108-110 NXE108-10E Bristol RELL6L</b>	<b>[RELL-3-]231-33 ECW</b>	<b>B48D</b>

Nos. 101-110 to United Counties OC 1/70 (re-numbered 361-370, but retained Luton CT fleet numbers until repainted).

## 1968

111-112	PXE111-12F	Bristol	RELL6L	[RELL-3-]	347-48	ECW	B48D
113-117	PXE113-17G	Bristol	RELL6L	[RELL-3-]	351-55	ECW	B48D
118-120	PXE118-20G	Bristol	RELL6L	[RELL-3-]	370-75	ECW	B48D
121-124	UXD121-24G	Bristol	RELL6L	[RELL-3-]	605-08	ECW	B48D
125-130	UXD125-30G	Bristol	RELL6L	[RELL-3-]	616-21	ECW	B48D

Nos. 113-120 delivered with registration numbers PXE113-120F but were re-registered as shown.

Nos. 127-130 never entered service with Luton Corporation because of industrial dispute.

Nos. 111-130 to United Counties OC 1/70 (re-numbered 371-390, but retained Luton CT fleet numbers until repainted).

## 1969

131-135	XXE131-35H	Bristol	LHS6P	LHS115-19	ECW	B37F
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Nos. 131-135 never operated in service by Luton Corporation. To United Counties OC 1/70 (transferred to Eastern Counties OC as Nos. LHS595-99 [re-registered WNG101-105H] in 2/70).



1968 Bristol RELL6L No. 126 (UXD126G) with ECW 48-seat dual door bodywork, numerically the last bus to enter service with Luton because of an industrial dispute. (LTHL collection).

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.  
Our general email address is: [lth.library@gmail.com](mailto:lth.library@gmail.com)

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*In producing this booklet reference has been made to the following publications; Directory of British Tramways, Turner, PSL, 1996; PSV Circle Fleet History PN3/3A, 1980; Municipal Buses in Colour, Wilson, Ian Allan, 1997; Buses/Buses Illustrated, various editions.*

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