

London & South Western Railway

The Buses



1904 - 1923

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Cover Illustration: Clarkson steam bus LC691 with Munnion Brothers 20-seat bodywork at Chagford c.1906. (LTHL collection).

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In March 1904 the Locomotive Superintendent of the London & South Western Railway (LSWR) inspected two 16hp Milnes-Daimler 14-seat buses previously operated on a failed service between Sutton and Croydon and purchased them both for the sum of £850. They were thoroughly overhauled and liveried in the LSWR standard railway coaching stock colour of dark oak and entered service on 1 June 1904 between Exeter's Queen Street Station and Chagford, via Tedburn St. Mary, Crockernwell, Whiddon Down and Sandy Park. The service provided a single return journey daily but with a later return on Friday to cater for those attending Exeter Market. Although the service was withdrawn on 30 September for the winter months (and replaced by a horse-drawn service!) the buses continued to work on a service between the Crown Hotel at Lyndhurst (where a garage was built) and Lyndhurst Road Station, which commenced on 24th October 1904. However due to continual breakdowns the service was withdrawn on 11th February 1905 and by November 1905 the buses had been sold.

In the meantime the LSWR had explored the possibility of opening other routes and in August 1904, with the assistance of Thornycroft of Basingstoke, opened an experimental route between Lymington and New Milton using a 16hp Thornycroft bus. The service was withdrawn in October. The same bus ran another experimental service between Farnham and Haslemere for a few days in November. In January 1905 a more powerful Thornycroft 20hp bus operated the service for around 4 weeks but it was felt that an even more powerful vehicle would prove beneficial. These experiments helped the LSWR open two more services and re-establish the Exeter to Chagford route.

In October 1904 the Traffic Committee had decided to purchase 4 Milnes-Daimler buses at least two of which would be not less than 30hp for the Chagford route, but in November the decision was rescinded in favour of purchasing 4 Clarkson steam buses. Two of these re-opened the Exeter to Chagford route on the 3 June 1905 with the remaining two commencing a service between Lymington, Pennington, Milford and New Milton on 19 July 1905.

On the 6 September 1905 a service between Farnham and Haslemere commenced using a Thornycroft 18-seat bus liveried in dark green. This time an arrangement was made with the manufacturers whereby the LSWR retained the receipts from the service but agreed to pay Thornycroft 10d per mile in return for servicing the vehicle. It was agreed that if the service showed a profit after 12 months the LSWR would purchase the vehicle and this proved to be the case. It was repainted in standard LSWR dark oak when it was purchased and later fitted with a second-hand charabanc body purchased from Thornycroft. Two more Thornycroft's entered service in June 1907 on the Farnham to Haslemere route, displacing the charabanc which was subsequently used on the Totton, Hythe and Fawley route along with another Thornycroft delivered in August 1906 that had opened the service on 13 August.

In January 1908 the Clarkson steam buses were withdrawn and replaced by two more Thornycroft's on the Exeter to Chagford route. On the 14 November the service at Totton ceased due to poor receipts and the Thornycroft bus was transferred to the Farnham service whilst the charabanc went to Exeter.

On 12 June 1913 the Farnham to Haslemere service was taken over, along with three vehicles, by the Aldershot & District Traction Company, leaving just the Exeter to Chagford service in LSWR hands.

In 1914 two Karrier 45hp chassis were ordered and after a couple of attempts at delivering them (the War Office commandeering four vehicles on their way to the LSWR!) they finally arrived. However with the onset of World War I and petrol restrictions the service had to be reduced to three days a week and to just one vehicle. One was converted to a lorry and the other soldiered on alone but when major repairs were necessary the service had to cease and did not run for six months between November 1919 and May 1920. The service subsequently declined in popularity and with competition appearing after the War it was soon running at a loss. It passed to the Southern Railway (SR) in 1923 when the LSWR became part of the SR in the 1923 groupings, but ceased on 20 September 1924 and was the only service directly operated by the SR.

Bibliography: Railway Motor Buses and Bus Services in the British Isles 1902-1933 Vol. 1, John Cummings; Oxford Publishing Co, 1978.

Bus Fleet List 1904-1923

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

1904

- ; **A4283-4284; Milnes-Daimler 16hp; ?/? ; ? ; B14R**

Withdrawn 1905 (A4283-4284).

1905

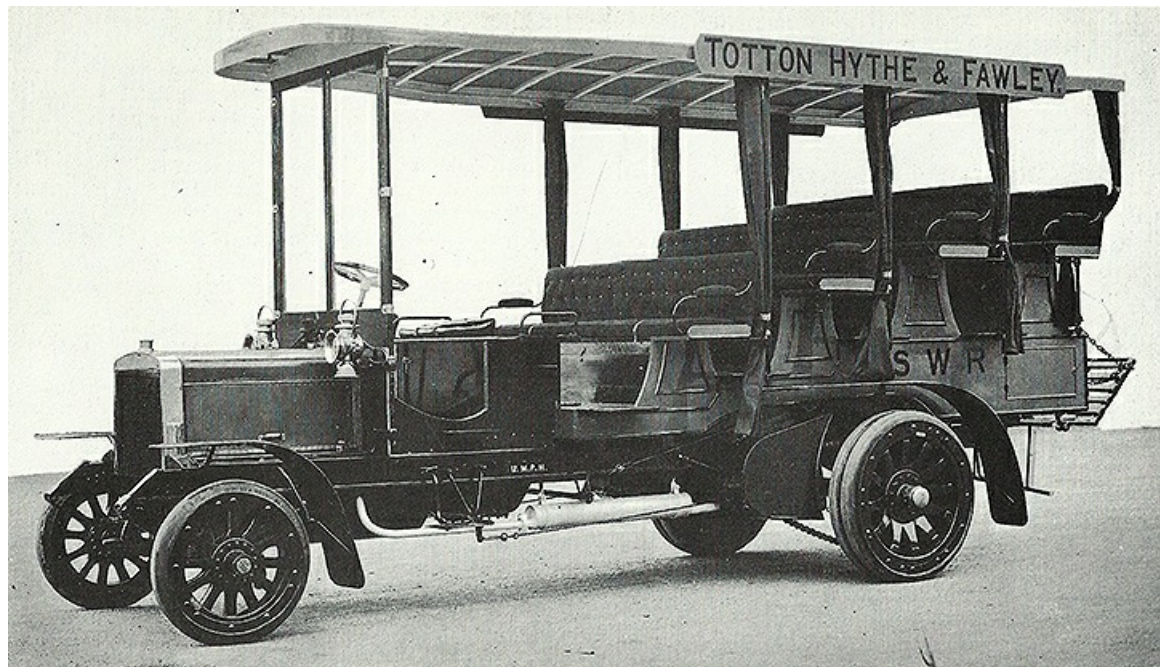
- ; **AA2044; Thornycroft 24hp; 480; ? ; B16R**
- ; **LC690-691; Clarkson 32hp; ?/? ; Munnion; B20R**
- ; **LC1434-1435; Clarkson 32hp; ?/? ; Munnion; B18R**

AA2044 fitted with a Ch18 body at a later date (by 1907 at least).

Withdrawn 1908 (LC690-691, LC1434-1435), 1911 (AA2044).

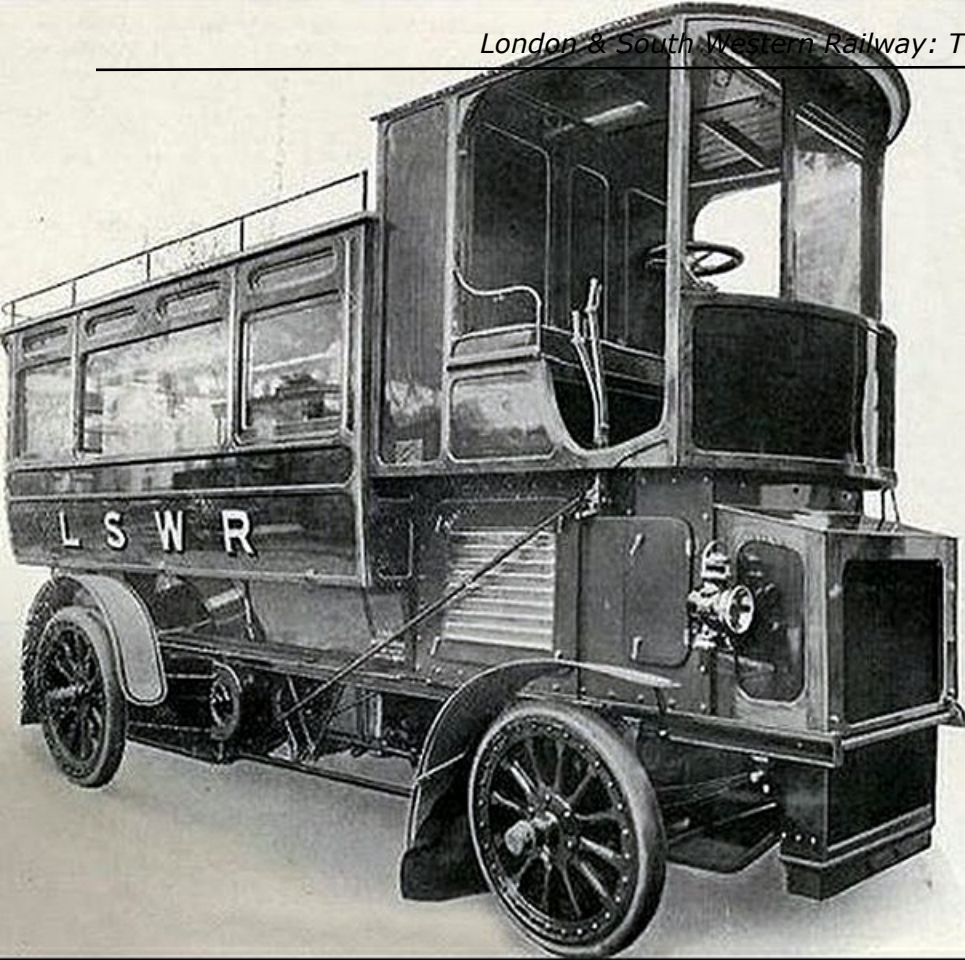


1905 Thornycroft AA2044 with original 16-seat bodywork on the Farnham and Haslemere service. (LTHL collection).



Thornycroft AA2044 was later fitted with this second-hand tiered charabanc body and transferred to the Totton, Hythe and Fawley service. The rear seats were reached by means of a step ladder, which had to be brought out when passengers wished to board or alight. (LTHL collection).

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In 1905 the LSWR purchased 4 Clarkson steam buses in preference to Milnes-Daimler petrol buses. This is one of them before registration. They were bodied by the Munnion Brothers of Chelmsford. (LTHL collection).

1906

1M; AA2139; Thornycroft 24hp; 585; ? ; B16R

Withdrawn 1913 (1M).

1907

2M-3M; AA2186-2187; Thornycroft 24hp; 622/09; ? ; B16R

Withdrawn 1913 (2M-3M).

1908

4M-5M; AA2235-2236; Thornycroft 24hp; 774/70; Hora; B16R

Withdrawn 1914 (4M-5M).

1914

M1-M2; CX1682-1683; Karrier 45hp; ?/? ; ? ; B24R

M1 converted to lorry in 1916; to Southern Railway 1923.

M2 to Southern Railway 1923.

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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