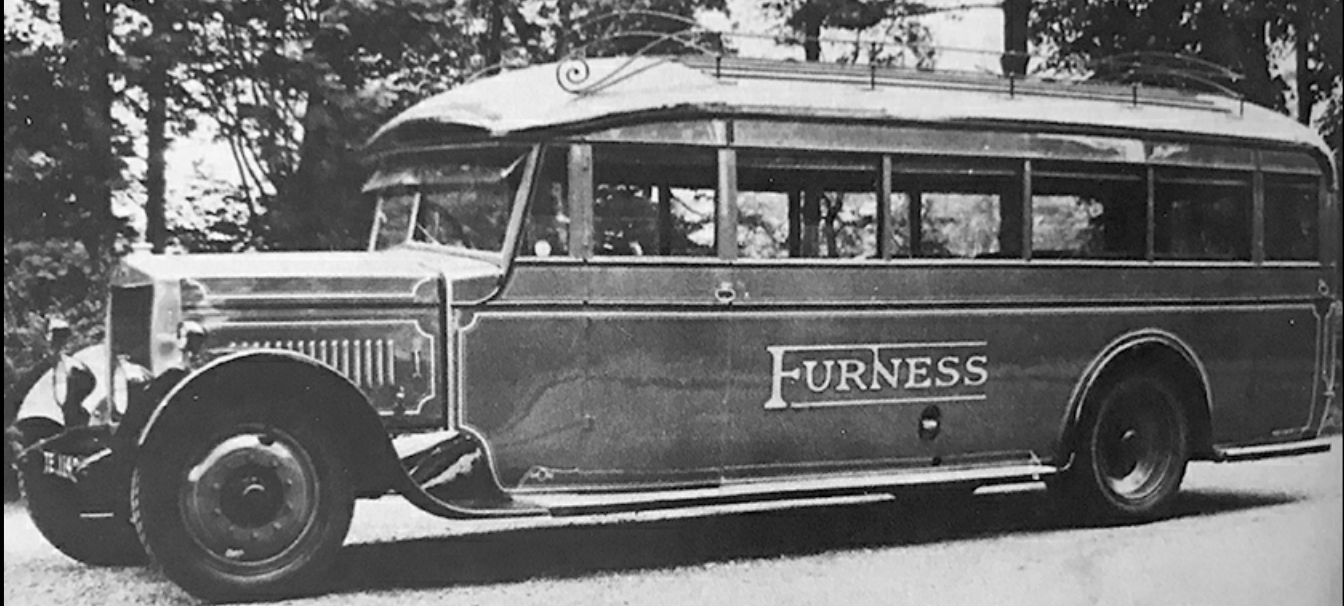


Furness Omnibus Co Ltd



1926 - 1930

Contents

Furness Omnibus Co Ltd - Fleet History 1926-1930	Page 3
Furness Omnibus Co Ltd - Bus Fleet List 1926-1930	Page 11

Cover Illustration: TE1140 was a 1927 Leyland LC1 'Lioness' with Hall Lewis 24-seat coachwork for use on the Manchester express service. (LTHL collection).

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The route between Barrow-in-Furness and Ulverston had been operated by the British Automobile Traction Company (BAT) under the British fleetname, in competition with a number of private operators, since 1918. However the vehicles operated by BAT were solid-tyred Daimler single- and double-deck buses and compared poorly to the new pneumatic-tyred vehicles operated by the independent operators which passengers showed a preference for. As a result due to poor loadings the BAT withdrew from the route in 1921, leaving the private operators to battle it out between themselves, with licences apparently being freely issued.

By 1925 no fewer than 60 one-vehicle proprietors operating 14-seater motorbuses were plying between Barrow-in-Furness and Ulverston. There were no fixed time-tables and motorbuses moved off from the various stands as soon as what was considered to be a 'satisfactory paying load' had been obtained.

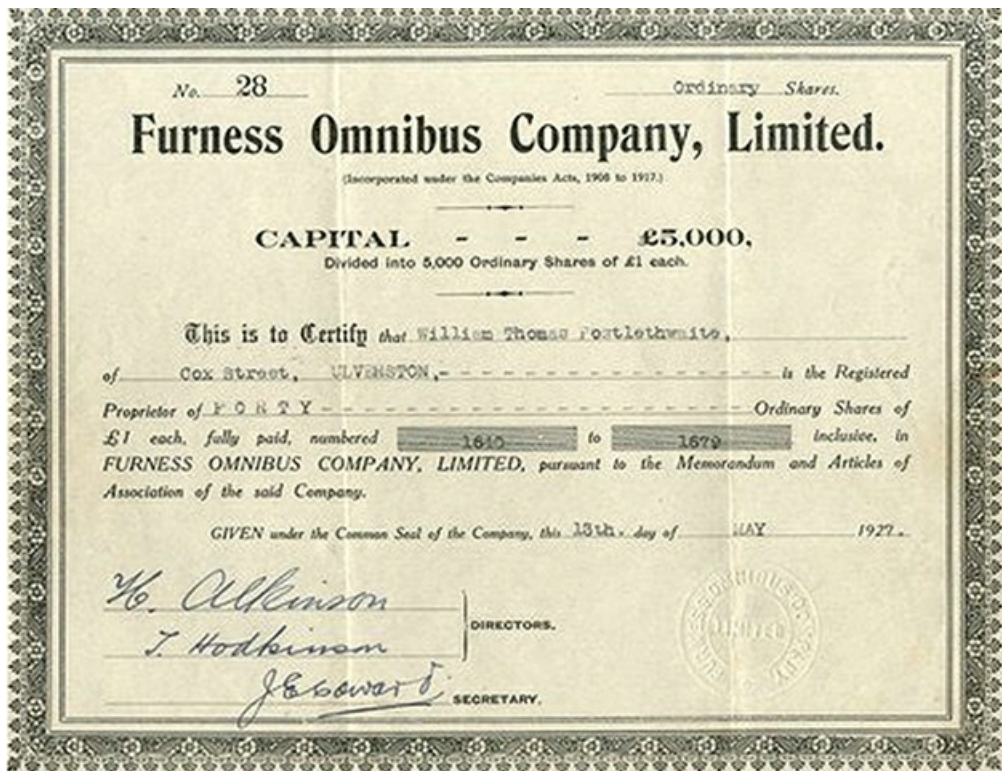
The licensing authorities, which were represented by a joint board formed by Barrow-in-Furness, Dalton-in-Furness and Ulverston councils, then began to take an interest in motorbus operations and to strengthen the regulations. Their first requirement was the enforcement and observance of timetables.

During 1925 an inquiry was held at Barrow by the Ministry of Transport to discuss whether motorbuses from outside districts should, or should not be allowed to pick up and set down passengers along routes served by

Barrow Corporation's tramways when entering Barrow. The decision of the Ministry was in favour of the bus operators, however they were given 12 months in which to place their services on a satisfactory working basis. As a result of that ruling it became necessary for the owner-drivers to get together and try to co-ordinate timetables and suitable vehicles for the route.

A scheme was put forward outlining the possibility of forming a limited liability company, in which all 60 owner drivers were invited to participate. After discussions amongst the owners, 16 of them decided to band together and form a company to establish efficient bus services in and around Barrow. The 18 licences held by these individuals were surrendered in exchange for eight licences for larger motorbuses, eight Leyland 20-seater 'Leverets' having been acquired for the new company.

In 1926 the Furness Omnibus Company Limited was incorporated with a registered capital of £5,000 of which £1,500 was paid up initially, with the 16 participants investing the whole of their capital in the project. From the outset, the directors decided to purchase vehicles of an up-to-date and satisfactory type. It was felt that the patronage of the Barrow to Ulverston route did not warrant the employment of larger buses than 20-seaters, but the company had planned for the time when larger vehicles would be necessary and it was decided that when that occurred the 20-seater vehicles could be transferred to less well patronised country routes.



A certificate of shareholding in the Furness Omnibus Company Limited issued on 13 May 1927 to William Postlethwaite of Ulverston in the sum of £40. (LTHL collection).

The remaining owners who were working the Barrow to Ulverston route, although given the opportunity to merge their interests with the Furness Omnibus Company decided to act otherwise. They continued in competition with the Company but ultimately around 30 of them ceased to run vehicles on the route due to lack of patronage.

Initially the municipal authorities considered that equal responsibility for the maintenance of service times should be borne by the Furness Omnibus Company and the independent owners. The proposal made was that each should despatch a motorbus from Barrow and Ulverston respectively every 40 minutes, thus ensuring a 20-minute service. This satisfied the one-vehicle owners, but not the Furness company who complained that such a restriction would affect its interest. The company, therefore, asked for permission to run a 20-minute service, to which the licensing authorities eventually agreed.

The Company attempted to attract regular traffic, such as school children and workpeople, who travelled twice daily on the route, as well as people who made frequent journeys between Barrow and Ulverston by issuing discount tickets. The fares charged compared favourably with those quoted by the independent motorbus owners. A scale of return fares was introduced, and this enabled passengers to complete the double journey at a charge which was only 50 per cent, more than the single fare.



A staff photo taken at the Dalton-in-Furness depot during 1926 showing 18 members of staff. (LTHL collection).

By September 1927 it was reported that the independent bus owners now only had eight 14-seater buses running on the Barrow to Ulverston route. In contrast the services of the Furness company had grown beyond expectations, so much so that it had reached the point where it was difficult to handle.

A licence for a service between Dalton-in-Furness and Askam, mining district was also obtained. Up until then, services had been maintained by small motorbuses which were owned individually and were not running to any definite timetable. Dalton Urban District Council subsequently advised the independent owners to put vehicles suitable for the route into use and to observe timetables. When the Furness Omnibus Company applied to the council for a licence, the Council stated that it would not grant a licence if the independent owners acted on their advice. However, the proprietors of the single vehicles did not consider that the possibilities of the route were such as to justify their incurring fresh expenditure and licences were therefore granted to the Company, who agreed to maintain an hourly service between 9 am and 10 pm. The Furness company put one of the small Leylands on this route, established a timetable and maintained a service at frequent intervals. As the traffic on this route subsequently increased it necessitated the purchase of a Leyland 31-seater saloon to operate the service (thought to be No. 11 [TD9219]).

The company also operated a short-lived express service to Manchester, along with the Lonsdale Bus Company, travelling via Carnforth, Lancaster and Preston. The Furness Omnibus Company provided one bus in each direction on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays during the summer months and the Lonsdale Omnibus Company a bus each way on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Lonsdale company also operated on this route during part of the winter months. The single journey to Manchester took approximately five hours with buses leaving Barrow at 7am and returning from Manchester at 6pm on the same day.

The company operated a thriving private hire business and it was frequently necessary to turn down business owing to the fact that the number of vehicles was insufficient to deal with the traffic. The policy of the management was to decline offers of bookings if there was any likelihood of it interfering with the operation of the regular services.

The headquarters, main office and central garage were at Beck Side Road, Dalton-in-Furness, with two other garages located at Newlands (Ulverston) and Lindal-in-Furness. All maintenance work was carried out at the company's garage at Ulverston, which could accommodate 16 vehicles.

During 1929 the Furness Omnibus Company acquired three of its rivals, the Lonsdale Pullman Bus Company, the Barrow Bus Company and Creighton & Sons, which brought a motley collection of vehicles into the fleet.

The success of the Company, however, brought it to the attention of Ribble Motor Services who made an offer to purchase the Company for £45,000 that was accepted by the shareholders and on 18 May 1930 the Furness Omnibus Company Ltd along with 36 vehicles was acquired by Ribble bringing its short existence to an end.

Bus Fleet List 1926-1930

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

1926

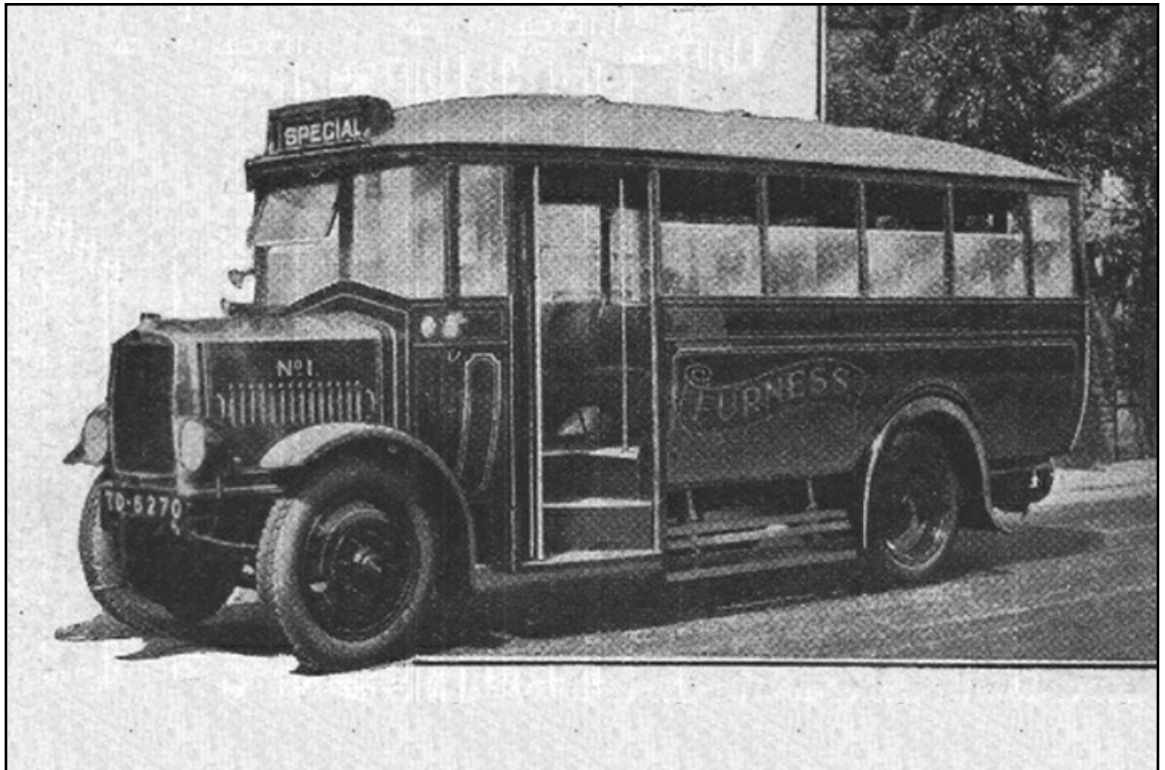
1	TD6270	Leyland LA2	40019	Leyland	B20F
	TD6477	Leyland LA2	40020	Leyland	B20F
	TD6683-84	Leyland LA2	40021-22	Leyland	B20F
	TD6822-23	Leyland LA2	40041-42	Leyland	B20F
	TD7523-24	Leyland LA2	40050-51	Leyland	B20F
	E02724	Ford T	429763	??	B10?
	E03762	Chevrolet X	8195	??	B14?

E02724 ex-Riley, Barrow-in-Furness (new 1921).

E03762 ex-Matthews, Barrow-in-Furness (new 1926).

TD6270, TD6477, TD6683-TD6684, TD6822-23, TD7523-TD7524 to Ribble Motor Services 5/30 (re-numbered 937, 940, 941-942, 943-944, 945-946 respectively).

Withdrawn **1926** (E02724), **1929** (E03762).



No. 1 (TD5270) was one of eight Leyland LA2 'Leveret' 20-seat buses used for commencement of company services on the Barrow to Ulverston route in 1926. (Commercial Motor Archive).

1927

11	TD9219	Leyland LSC1	45484	Leyland	B31F
12	TD9220	Leyland LC1	45482	Leyland	B26F
13?	TD9221	Leyland LC1	45483	Leyland	B26F
14	TE1140	Leyland LC1	45357	Hall Lewis	C24D

Nos. 11, 14 to Ribble Motor Services 5/30 (re-numbered 947, 949 respectively).

Withdrawn 1929 (12-13?).

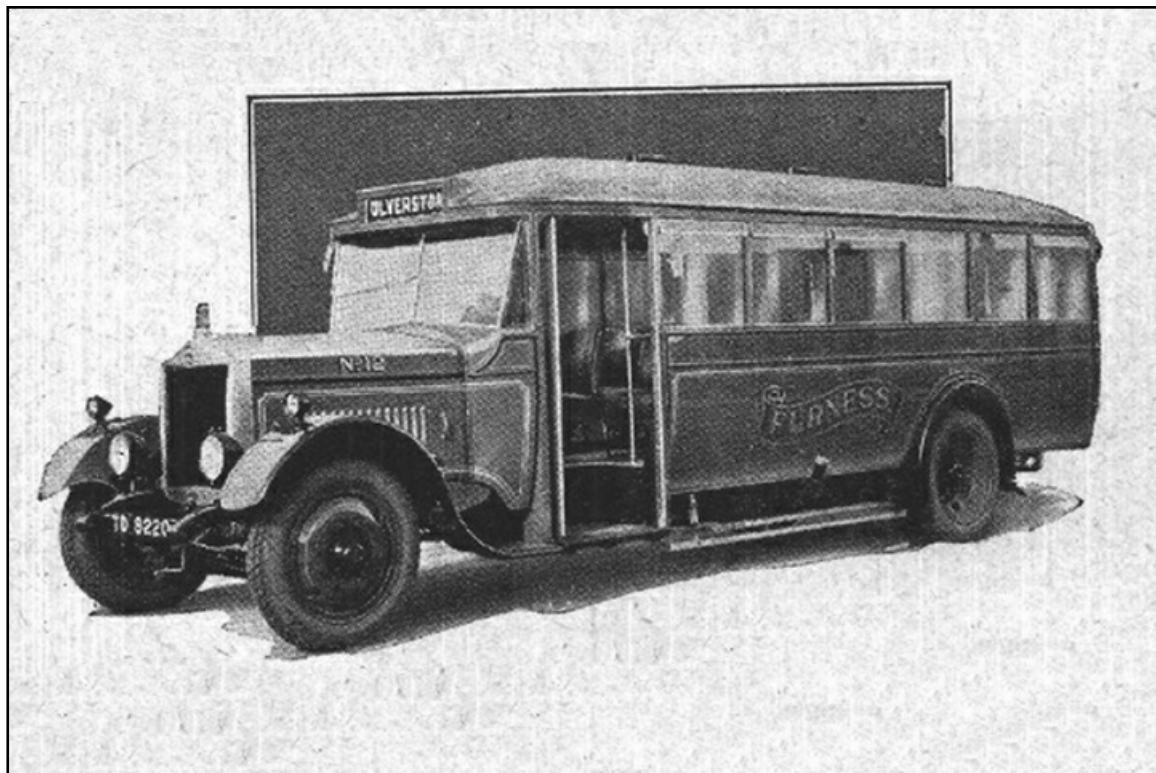
1928

	TE2896-97	Leyland LSC1	46393-94	Leyland	B31F
	TE2898-901	Leyland LSC1	46410-13	Leyland	B31F
	TE4563	Leyland LSC3	47137	Leyland	B36F
15-??	TE5417-18	Leyland LSC1	47565-66	Leyland	B31F

TE2896-TE2897, TE2898-TE2901, TE4563, TE5417-TE5418 to Ribble Motor Services 5/30 (re-numbered 952, 951, 953-956, 960, 962, 961 respectively).



This photo was probably taken in 1928 and shows the depot at Dalton-in-Furness and some of the fleet. The vehicle on the right nearest the camera is No. 11 (TD9219) a 1927 Leyland LSC1 'Lion' with Leyland B31F bodywork. (LTHL collection).



No. 12 (TD9220) was a 1927 Leyland LC1 'Lioness' with Leyland B26F bodywork. (Commercial Motor Archive).

1929

??	BB9998	AEC 202	202078?	??	?26?
??	TD6435	AEC 414	414036	??	B26?
??	TD7996	AEC 414	414062	??	?26?
??	TE153	ADC 417	417020	Short	?32?
??	TE3573	ADC 416	416618	??	B32?
??	TE3574	ADC 416	416561	??	B32?
21	TE8686	Leyland TS2	60630	Leyland	B30F
22	TE8684	Leyland TS2	60629	Leyland	B30F
??	TE8685	Leyland TS2	60628	Leyland	B30F
??-??	TE8687-88	Leyland LT1	50369/68	Leyland	B35F
31	CB6297	Chevrolet X	9117	??	B14?
36	CB8329	GMC T20	208342	??	B20?
??	E04061	Overland	821075	??	B14?
??	FR2090	Daimler CJK22	??	??	?26?
??	MP9318	GMC T20	204565	??	?20?
??	W01362	ADC 416	416853	LGOC	B32?

Nos. 21, 22, TE8685-TE8688 to Ribble Motor Services 5/30 (re-numbered 968, 967, 965, 966, 964 respectively).

Nos. 31, 36 ex-Creighton & Sons, Ulverston (new 1926, 1928); to Ribble Motor Services 5/30 (re-numbered 939, 963 respectively).

1929 (continued)

BB9998 ex-AEC demonstrator (new 1925); to Ribble Motor Services 5/30 (re-numbered 934).

FR2090, MP9318, TD6435, TD7996, TE153, TE3573-TD3574, W01362 acquired from either Creighton & Sons or Lonsdale Pullman Bus Company (ownership uncertain); to Ribble Motor Services 5/30 (re-numbered 933, 950, 938, 935, 948, 959, 958, 957 respectively).



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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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