

South Midland Motor Services Ltd



1921-1970

614 JPU

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Cover Illustration: No. C433 (614JPU) was a Bristol LS6G with ECW 34-seat coachwork, dating from 1957 that was acquired second-hand from Eastern National in 1968. It is seen parked at Victoria Coach Station in March 1969. (Alan Snatt).

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South Midland Motor Services' history can be traced back to April 1921 when William Beesley, a former Army mechanic, commenced a service in Oxford using a Dennis charabanc. Another charabanc was soon acquired and for a while the operation traded as 'Grey Torpedo Coaches', with the charabancs being liveried in grey. As well as tours and excursions, Beesley commenced an express service between Oxford and London, which resulted in fierce competition with the City of Oxford Motor Services.

In April 1922 the company was incorporated as the South Midland Transport & Touring Company Ltd.

The demand for coaches when the British Empire Exhibition opened in 1924 was so great that South Midland dropped their London express service and ran a service to Wembley that lasted until 1925 and which generated significant profits for the company and stabilised their financial position.

With the onset of the General Strike in 1926 the London express service was curtailed but resumed again in 1928 with the purchase of three Lancia coaches specifically for the route. Fleet numbers were introduced in this year starting at No. 14 to give the impression the fleet was larger than it actually was.

Four more vehicles were purchased in 1929 to increase the frequency of

the London service and in 1930 nine Gilford 1680T chassis were purchased which enabled the frequency to be further increased and a new service to Worcester to be inaugurated. Also in 1930 the company name was changed to South Midland Motor Services Ltd.

Following the introduction of the Road Traffic Act in 1930 South Midland registered four express services; Worcester to London, Oxford to Southsea, Oxford to London and Worcester to Southsea, which remained the mainstay of their business until the company's demise in 1970, although additional express routes from Oxford to Margate (jointly with East Kent) and Worcester to Brighton and Oxford to Brighton (both jointly with Southdown) were added later.

With the onset of World War II in 1939 South Midland were called upon to provide transport for military personnel and prisoners of war in and around Oxfordshire and this proved to be extremely lucrative for the company who profited immensely during the conflict. Towards the end of the War it was apparent that major investment in new vehicles would be required with the cessation of hostilities and the Company was offer for sale. In October 1945 the business was sold to Red & White United Transport of Chepstow, although South Midland continued to operate under its own name as a subsidiary.

Following the end of the War express services began to return to pre-war

levels and the South Midland fleet was updated with 30 AEC Regal coaches arriving between 1947 and 1950. The Company continued to offer excursions, tours and contract work as well as the core business of express services.

From 1 January 1950 the bus interests of the Red & White Group were acquired by the British Transport Commission and South Midland was subsequently placed under the control of Thames Valley who continued to operate it as a subsidiary.

On 1 May 1952 the Oxford-High Wycombe-London service of United Counties was transferred to South Midland along with 8 vehicles and a garage at Botley Road, Oxford.

During 1954 the road service licences of South Midland Motor Services were transferred to Thames Valley, although the company continued to operate as a subsidiary. In 1957 South Midland received an open-top double-deck Bristol K5G from Thames Valley for use on tours of the Oxford Colleges and Blenheim Palace which became the only double-deck vehicle the company ever operated.

In February 1965 the ownership of all of South Midland's assets, including vehicles, passed to Thames Valley, although South Midland continued to operate in its own name and in 1966 an agreement with the Bristol Omnibus

Company led to South Midland taking a share of that company's Greyhound express route network.

By 1968 the British Transport Commission had been succeeded by the Transport Holding Company who had acquired the BET Group including the City of Oxford Motor Services and the two former rivals were now in common ownership. On 1 January 1969 the Transport Holding Company was re-named the National Bus Company (NBC) and under the NBC's rationalisation plans the City of Oxford Motor Services and South Midland were merged with effect from 1 January 1971 under the fleetname Oxford-South Midland, bringing the separate operating existence of South Midland Motor Services to an end.

Coach Fleet List 1921-1970

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

1921

- FC3902	Dennis 2½-ton	20049	Dennis	Ch30
- FC4010	Dennis 2½-ton	20047	Dennis	Ch30

Withdrawn c.1931 (FC3902, FC4010).

1922

- FC4501	Dennis 2½-ton	20086	Dennis	Ch30
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Withdrawn c.1931 (FC4501).

1923

- **LK8069** **Crossley** **??** **??** **C16?**

LK8069 acquired from an unknown source. It was an 'all-weather' coach fitted with pneumatic tyres.

Withdrawn **c.1931** (LK8069).

1925

- **FC8130** **Dennis 2½-ton** **45030** **Dennis** **C29D**

FC8130 was an 'all-weather' coach fitted with pneumatic tyres.

Withdrawn **c.1932** (FC8130).

1927

- **WL2696** **Lancia Pentaiota** **??** **??** **C24D**

Withdrawn **c.1934** (WL2696).

1928

-	BL1351	Hotchkiss 30/40hp	979	??	Ch14
-	WL4131	Lancia Pentaiota	2074	Weymann	C26D
14	WL5055	Lancia Pentaiota	??	??	C26D

BL1351 ex-House Brothers, Watlington (new 5/14 as a private car; re-bodied as Ch14 at unknown date).

Withdrawn 1928 (BL1351), 1935 (WL4131, 14).

1929

15	WL7221	Dennis GL	70504	Arnold & Comben	C20D
16	WL7240	Dennis F	80102	Arnold & Comben	C28D
17	WL7456	Dennis F	80104	Arnold & Comben	C28D
18	WL7233	Gilford 166SD	10737	Arnold & Comben	C26D

Withdrawn 1932 (15), 1937 (16-17), 1939 (18).

1930

19 WL9058	Gilford 1680T	11197	Arnold & Comben C30F
20 WL9076	Gilford 1680T	11239	Arnold & Comben C30F
21 WL9079	Gilford 1680T	11284	Arnold & Comben C28F
22 WL9081	Gilford 1680T	11331	Arnold & Comben C30F
23 WL9415	Gilford 1680T	11344	Arnold & Comben C30F
24 WL9810	Gilford 1680T	11355	Arnold & Comben C30F
25 WL9862	Gilford 1680T	11406	Arnold & Comben C30F
26 WL9942	Gilford 1680T	11407	Arnold & Comben C28F
27 J0200	Gilford 1680T	11460	Arnold & Comben C32F

No. 19 converted to ambulance from 1940-1945.

Withdrawn **1935** (23-24, 27), **1936** (21), **1939** (22, 26), **1940** (20), **1945** (19).



No. 19 (WL9058) was a 1930 Gilford 1680T with 30-seat coachwork by Arnold & Comben. (Bus Archive).

1931

28	J01597	Leyland TS3	61703	Scammell & Nephew	C28C
29	J01599	Leyland TS3	61704	Scammell & Nephew	C28C
30	J01593	Leyland TS3	61519	Scammell & Nephew	C28C
31	J01595	Leyland TS3	61520	Scammell & Nephew	C28C

Nos. 29-31 re-bodied by Harrington to C31F in 1936.
 Withdrawn **1949** (31), **1950** (28-30).

1932

32	J04789	Leyland TS4	1551	Harrington	C32R
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Withdrawn **1946** (32).

1934

33	AFC531	Leyland TS6	4670	Harrington	C32F
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Withdrawn **1940** (AFC531).



No. 33 (AFC531) was a Leyland TS6 with Harrington 32-seat coachwork dating from 1934. (Bus Archive).

1935

34 BFC675	Leyland TS7	6060	Harrington	C32F
35 BWL649	Leyland TS7	6061	Harrington	C32R
?? HA7493	Morris Viceroy	163Y	??	C20F

HA7493 ex-Morris Commercial Cars (new as demonstrator 1931); may have been numbered 23 but this is uncertain.
 Withdrawn c.1940 (HA7493), 1950 (34-35).

1936

36 CWL951	Leyland TS7	9137	Harrington	C32F
37 CWL953	Leyland TS7	9138	Harrington	C32F

Withdrawn 1950 (36-37).

1938

24 FWL795	Leyland SKPZ2	8434	Harrington	C26F
25 FWL797	Leyland SKPZ2	8435	Harrington	C26F

Withdrawn 1947 (24-25).

1939

22 JFC42	Austin K3/CL	1893	Harrington	C26F
23 JFC12	Austin K3/CL	1552	Burlingham	C26F
26 HFC548	Leyland LZ2A	??	Burlingham	C32F
27 HFC550	Leyland LZ2A	201314	Burlingham	C32F

Withdrawn 1947 (26-27), 1948 (22-23).

1940

21 JFC707	Austin K3/CL	2149	Harrington	C26F
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Withdrawn 1948 (21).



No. 27 (HFC550) was a 1939 Leyland LZ2A 'Cheetah' with Burlingham 32-seat coachwork. (Bus Archive).

1947

38	LWL995	Leyland PS1/1	462028	ECOC	DP31R
39-40	LWL996-97	AEC Regal	06624593/91	Duple	C33F
41-42	LWL998-99	AEC Regal	06624594/670	Duple	C33F
43	LJ0756	Bedford OB	54661	Duple	C29F
45-46	LJ0758-59	AEC Regal	06624671/949	Duple	C33F
47	LJ0760	AEC Regal	06624961	Duple	C33F

No. 38 fitted with rebuilt 1936 ECOC B35R body (ex-North Western Road Car Co).

Nos. 40-42, 45-47 refurbished in 1955 by ECW and re-seated to C35F.

Withdrawn **1950** (38, 43), **1957** (45), **1958** (39-42, 46-47).

1948

44	LJ0757	Bedford OB	61338	Duple	C29F
48	LJ0761	AEC Regal	06625639	Duple	C33F
49-52	MWL741-44	AEC Regal	06625643/41/42/44	Duple	C33F
53	MJ0278	AEC Regal	06625645	Duple	C33F
54-55	MJ0664-65	AEC Regal III	0682385/89	Duple	C33F
56	MJ0667	AEC Regal III	0682390	Duple	C33F
57	NFC128	AEC Regal III	6821A415	Duple	C33F

Nos. 48-53 refurbished in 1955 by ECW and re-seated to C35F.
 Withdrawn 1950 (44), 1957 (48, 52), 1958 (49-51, 53-55), 1959 (56-57).

1949

58-59	NFC129-30	AEC Regal III	6821A416/18	Duple	C33F
60-62	NWL877-79	AEC Regal III	6821A163-65	Duple	C30F
63-64	NJ0217-18	AEC Regal III	6821A169-70	Duple	C30F

Withdrawn 1957 (62), 1958 (60), 1959 (58-59, 61, 63-64).



No. 48 (LJ0761) was a 1948 AEC Regal with Duple 33-seat coachwork. (Bus Archive).

1950

65-67	OFC204-06	AEC Regal III	6821A422-24	Duple	C30F
68-69	EJB649-50	AEC Regal III	6821A419-20	Duple	C33F
70	ERX937	AEC Regal III	6821A168	Duple	C33F

Nos. 68-70 ex-Newbury & District MS (Nos. 149-150, 158 respectively; new 1948 or 1949 [158]).

Withdrawn **1958** (69), **1959** (65-68), 1960 (70).

1952

71-72	EBD234-35	Bristol L6B	71.023-24	ECW	DP31R
73-74	EBD236-37	Bristol L6B	73.039/42	ECW	FC31F
75-77	FRP832-34	Bristol LL6B	83.012-13/68	ECW	FC37F
78	FRP836	Bristol LL6B	83.070	ECW	FC37F
79-84	SFC565-70	Bristol LS6G	89.010-12/116-17	ECW	C37F
85	SFC571	AEC Regal IV	9821E182	ECW	C37F

Nos. 71-78 ex-United Counties Omnibus Co (Nos. 71-78 respectively; new 1948[71-72], 1950[73-74], 1951[75-78]).

Withdrawn **1953** (71-72), **1960** (74), 1961 (73, 84), **1962** (75), **1963** (76-78), **1965** (79-83), **1967** (85).



No. 75 (FRP832) was one of a number of Bristol LL6B's with ECW full-front 37-seat coachwork inherited from United Counties when their Oxford depot and Oxford-London service passed to South Midland in 1952. (Bus Archive)

1953

86-89	SFC501-04 Guy Arab UF	UF71338-41	Lydney	C41C
90-95	TWL55-60 Bristol LS6B	97.017-20/41-42	ECW	C37F

Nos. 90-93 resealed to C39F in 1962; Nos. 94-95 re-seated to C39F in 1964.
 Withdrawn **1960** (86-89), **1966** (90-95).

1955

548	FM023	Bristol L6B	79.116	Windover	C33F
553	FM0935	Bristol L6B	81.071	Windover	C33F

Nos. 548, 553 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining their fleet numbers (new 1950).
 Withdrawn **1958** (548), **1960** (553).

1957

770	CAP206	Bristol K5G	55.070	ECW	030/26R
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No. 770 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet number (new 1940 to Brighton, Hove & District as H30/26R).
 Withdrawn **1960** (770).



1953 saw the arrival of four Guy Arab UF chassis with Lydney C41C coachwork. No. 88 (SFC503) was one of them. (Bus Archive).

1958

169	LWL995	Leyland	PS1/1	462028	ECW	FC34F
689-690	HM0835-36	Bristol	LS6B	97.068-69	ECW	C39F
692-693	HM0838-39	Bristol	LS6B	101.062-63	ECW	C39F
800-803	ORX631-34	Bristol	MW6G	135.069/74-75/89	ECW	C34F

No. 169 transferred from Newbury & District retaining fleet number (new 1947 to South Midland [No. 38]; re-bodied as shown 2/51).

Nos. 689-690, 692-693 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet numbers (new 1953[689-690] or 1954[692-693])

No. 803 exhibited at the British Coach Rally as C32F; re-seated as shown 10/58.

Nos. 800-803 re-seated to C38F 1962 (803) or 1963 (800-802).

Withdrawn **1960** (169), **1963** (689-690), **1964** (692-693), **1968** (800, 803), **1969** (801-802).

1959

804-807	PRX930-33	Bristol	MW6G	139.256-59	ECW	C34F
821	FRP835	Bristol	LL6B	83.069	ECW	FC37F
822-823	FRP837-38	Bristol	LL6B	83.071-72	ECW	FC37F
824-827	FRP839-42	Bristol	LL6B	83.084-85/87/113	ECW	FC37F

Nos. 821-827 ex-United Counties Omnibus Co (Nos. 371-377 respectively; new 1951).

Nos. 804-807 all later re-seated to C38F.

Withdrawn **1961** (821, 826), **1962** (822, 824-825, 827), **1963** (823), **1969** (804-807).



From 1954 vehicles had been numbered in the main Thames Valley fleet. No. 806 (PRX932) was a 1959 Bristol MW6G with ECW 34-seat coachwork, later re-seated to 38-seat. (Bus Archive).

1960

545	FM020	Bristol	L6B	79.058	Windover	C33F
550-551	FM025-26	Bristol	L6B	81.068-69	Windover	C33F
552	FM0934	Bristol	L6B	81.070	Windover	C33F
554-555	FM0936-37	Bristol	L6B	81.072/120	Windover	C33F
608-609	GBL872-73	Bristol	LWL6B	85.109-10	ECW	FC37F
830-833	UJB196-99	Bristol	MW6G	164.001-04	ECW	C34F

Nos.545, 550-552, 554-555. 608-609 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet numbers (new 1950[545, 550-552, 545-555] or 1951[608-609]).

Nos. 830-833 re-seated to C38F in 1966; Nos. 831-833 to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.

Withdrawn **1960** (545, 550-552, 554), **1961** (555), **1964** (608-609), **1970** (830).



No. 832 (UJB198) was a 1960 Bristol MW6G with ECW 34-seat coachwork that passed to City of Oxford Motor Services in 1/71 retaining its number, although re-numbered 44 in February 1971. (Bus Archive).

1961

673	HBL75	Bristol	LS6G	89.087	ECW	C39F
688	HM0834	Bristol	LS6B	97.067	ECW	C39F
858-860	WRX773-75	Bristol	MW6G	184.022-23/49	ECW	C34F
861	WRX776	Bedford	SB8	88067	Duple	C37F

Nos. 673, 688 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet numbers (new 1952[673] or 1953[688]).

Nos. 858-860 re-seated to C38F in 1966; to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.

Withdrawn **1964** (688), **1965** (673).



No. 859 (WRX774) was a 1961 Bristol MW6G with ECW 34-seat coachwork. (Bus Archive).

1962

610	GBL874	Bristol	LWL6B	85.111	ECW	FC37F
671	HBL73	Bristol	LS6G	89.036	ECW	C39F
691	HMO837	Bristol	LS6B	101.061	ECW	C39F
862-865	516-19ABL	Bedford	SB8	88965/057-60	Duple	C37F

Nos. 610, 671, 691 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet numbers (new 1951[610], 1952[671] or 1954[691]).

No. 864 carried Ulster Transport Authority fleet number 3158 during 1962-1963 seasons.

Withdrawn **1964** (610), **1963** (691), **1965** (862-863), **1967** (671), **1968** (864-865).

1963

C401-C403	831-33CRX	Bedford SB8	92010/1997/2032	Duple	C37F
674	HBL76	Bristol LS6G	89.109	ECW	C39F
867	521ABL	Bristol RELH6G	REX.002	ECW	C47F

No. C401 carried Ulster Transport Authority fleet number 3158 for 1965 season.

No. 674 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet number (new 1952).

No. 867 re-numbered 403 in 4/69; to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet number.

Withdrawn **1966** (674), **1968** (C401-C403).

1964

C404-C405	834-35CRX	Bristol RELH6G	212.021-22	ECW	C47F
C407-C408	837-38CRX	Bedford SB13	93540/607	Duple	C37F
C409	842CRX	Bedford SB13	93526	Duple	C37F
C410-C412	EM0551-53C	Bedford SB13	95349/54/59	Harrington	C37F

Nos. C404-C405, C407-C412 re-numbered 404-405, 407-412 in 1969; 404-405, 410-412 to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.

Withdrawn **1970** (C407-C409[407-409]).



No. C408 (838CRX) was a Bedford SB13 with Duple 37-seat coachwork, one of three similar vehicles that joined the fleet in 1964. (Bus Archive).

1965

672	HBL74	Bristol LS6G	89.037	ECW	C39F
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No. 672 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet number (new 1952).

Withdrawn **1966** (672).

1966

C413-C414	GRX413-14D	Bedford VAM14	6807175/4745	Duple	C41F
C415-C416	GRX415-16D	Bedford VAM14	6823686/908	Duple	C41F
675	HBL77	Bristol LS6G	89.110	ECW	C39F
866	520ABL	Bristol MW6G	195.008	ECW	C39F

Nos. C413-C416 re-numbered 413-416 in 2/69; to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.

Nos. 675, 866 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet numbers (new 1952[675], 1962[866]).

Withdrawn **1966** (866), **1967** (675).

1967

C421-C423 LJB421-23E Bristol RELH6G 238.081-83 ECW C47F

Nos. C421-C423 re-numbered 421-423 in 2/69; to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.

1968

C417-C418 LJB417-18E Bedford VAM14 6875393/051 Duple C41F

C428-C431 RJB428-31F Bristol LH6L [LH-]115-18 Duple C41F

432-433 613-14JPU Bristol LS6G 119.037-38 ECW C34F

434 618JPU Bristol MW6G 135.001 ECW C34F

Nos. C417-C418 transferred from Thames Valley Traction Co retaining fleet numbers (new 1968); re-numbered 417-418 in 2/69.

Nos. C428-C431 re-numbered 428-431 in 2/69; to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.

Nos. 432-434 ex-Eastern National Omnibus Co (Nos. 320-321, 328 respectively; new 1957[320-321] or 1958[328]); re-numbered 440-442 respectively in 1969; to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.

Withdrawn **1969** (C418[418]), **1970** (C417[417]).



No. C422 (LJB422E), a Bristol RELH6G with ECW 47-seat coachwork new in 1967. (Bus Archive).

1969

432-435 UM0688-91G Bristol LH6L [LH-]186-89 Duple C41F

Nos. 432-435 to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.

1970

436-437 YBL925-26H Bristol LH6L [LH-]410/24 Duple C41F

438-439 YBL927-28H Bristol LH6L [LH-]452/63 Duple C41F

Nos. 436-439 to City of Oxford Motor Services 1/71 retaining fleet numbers.



Seen here displaying its Oxford-South Midland fleetname is No. 32 (UM0688G), a 1969 Bristol LH6L with Duple 41-seat coachwork that had been new to South Midland as their No. 432. (Bus Archive).

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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