

Vale of Clyde Tramways Company



1873-1894

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Cover Illustration: One of the few surviving photographs of the Vale of Clyde Tramway in operation. It shows a Hughes loco pulling trailer car No. 10 in Govan sometime between 1877 and 1881. (LTHL collection).

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The Vale of Clyde Tramways Company operated two separate systems in the area west of Glasgow.

The first tramway was situated in Govan, midway between Glasgow and Paisley and opened on 1 January 1873 under the Vale of Clyde Tramways Act of 1871. The single-track line ran from the Toll House on Paisley Road at the Glasgow/Govan boundary along Govan Road beside the Clyde dockyards to Linthouse Shipyard in Fairfield. The unusual gauge of 4ft 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins was chosen to allow the movement of railway wagons along the tramway track. The initial fleet consisted of 12 open-top double-deckers from Starbuck of Birkenhead and the Glasgow-based Tramway Car & Works Company (Nos. 1-12) thought to be liveried in brown (or dark red) and cream and operating from the depot on Great Wellington Street (later Admiral Street) just south of the Paisley Road Toll. Some of these cars may well have been operated on the second tramway. In 1874 two more horse cars were purchased (Nos. 13-14) to complete the fleet. Operation of the line was leased to the Glasgow Tramways & Omnibus Company until July 1874 who provided through working to the city centre.

A new Vale of Clyde Tramways Act in 1876 authorised the use of mechanical traction to help ease the burden on the horses who were hauling heavy railway wagons along the tram track from Govan sidings to the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company's premises in Fairfield.

For a number of weeks in the middle of 1875 and at the beginning of 1877, William Scott-Moncrieff carried out trials at Fairfield and on the Vale of Clyde line between Govan and Paisley Toll with his compressed air car styled similar to a double deck horse tram of that era and built by Nielson & Co. at their Hyde Park Locomotive Works in Glasgow. It would run for about 7 miles on each charge of air and carried up to 40 passengers. The experiment was not continued and the Vale of Clyde subsequently ran a steam tram service from 1877, the first urban steam powered trams in the United Kingdom.

Between 1877 and 1880 ten steam locos (Nos. 1-10) were purchased, built by Henry Hughes & Co at the Falcon works in Loughborough, along with 12 (Nos. 1-12) open-top double-deck trailer cars. Half the trailer cars were sold in 1881 and eight Metropolitan bogie double-deckers purchased, whilst the loco fleet was renewed with 10 replacements from Kitson of Leeds.

In 1893 (under the Govan Burgh (Tramways) Act 1893), the line was purchased by the local authority, the Govan Commissioners of Police and (from 10 July 1893) leased to the Glasgow Tramways & Omnibus Company, bringing the Vale of Clyde Tramways Company's involvement in steam traction to an end.

The Vale of Clyde Tramways Company's second line was opened on 7 July 1893 under the Greenock Street Tramways Act of 1871 and again was a

single-track line of 4ft 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins gauge, worked by ten (Nos. 1-10) open-top double-deckers built by the Tramway Car & Works Company of Glasgow working from a depot off Chapel Street, Gourock and probably liveried in brown (or dark red) and cream. The line ran from Ashton along Albert Street through Gourock via Shore Street, Chapel Street and Cardwell Street to the Greenock/Gourock boundary and was built and owned by the Vale of Clyde Tramways Company, but the remainder from the boundary onwards through Greenock was owned by the Greenock Police Board and leased to the Company.

Two more open-top double-deckers were purchased in 1875 to complete the fleet. When steam power was introduced on the Company's Govan line eleven of the redundant horse cars were transferred to the Greenock line. Steam power was experimented with on this line during 1878-79 but in the event was not proceeded with.

On 15 May 1893 the Company's lease of the lines in Greenock was taken over by the Greenock & Port Glasgow Tramways Company and in 1894 the Vale of Clyde Tramway Company was purchased by the Gourock Police Commissioners who leased the Gourock section of the line to the Greenock & Port Glasgow Company from 12 February 1894, bringing the short existence of the Vale of Clyde Tramways Company to a close.

Tram Fleet List 1873-1894

Steam Locomotives

This listing is in the format - Year into service, Fleet No; Builder.

1877	1-6	Hughes
1878/79	7-10	Hughes

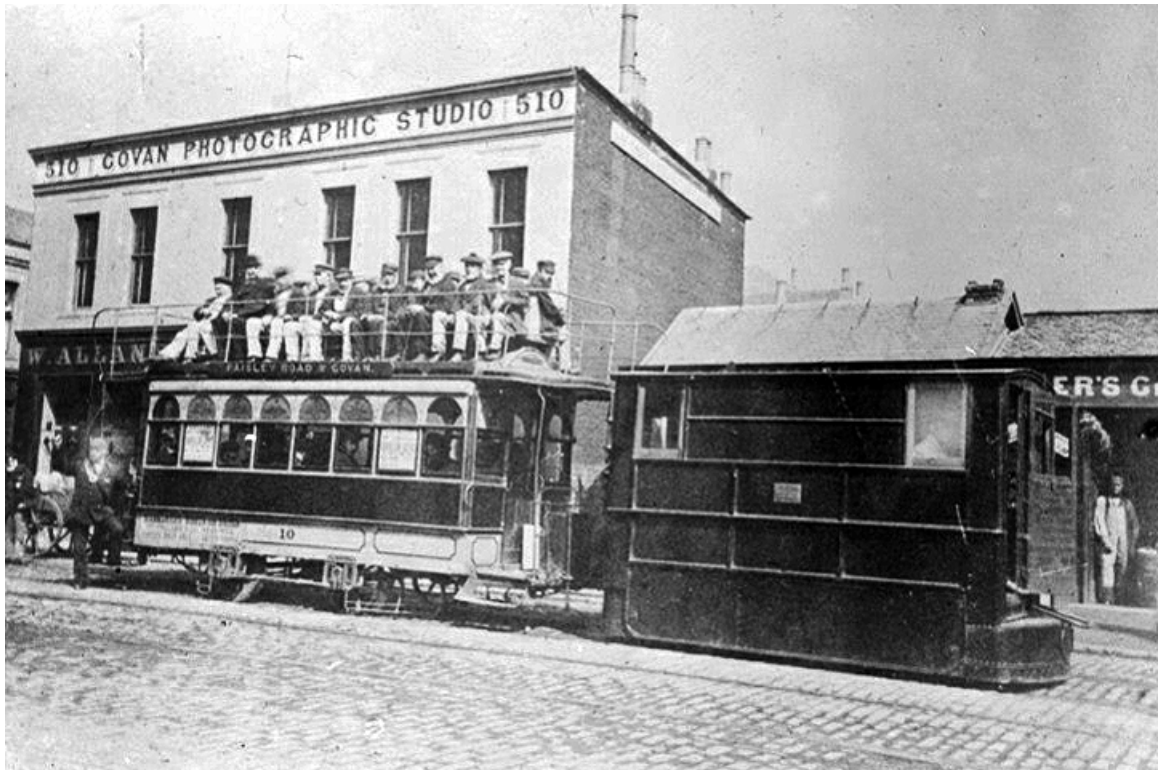
No. 1 built in 1876; to Leicester Tramways 1876, returned to Hughes and then to Vale of Clyde in 1877.

Withdrawn **1881** (1-10).

1881	1-8	Kitson
1883	9	Kitson
1891	10	Kitson

No. 10 ex-Cavehill & Whitewell Tramway, Belfast (No. 1; new 1882); re-gauged from 4ft 8ins before entry into service.

Withdrawn **1893** (1-10).



A Hughes fully enclosed loco of the Vale of Clyde Tramways Company passing the Govan Photographic Studio with trailer car No. 10. The Hughes locos did not perform well and all were withdrawn and replaced in 1881. (LTHL collection).



Maintenance staff at the Fairfield depot of the Vale of Clyde Tramways Co in Govan, showing a Kitson loco and trailer cars, probably dating from the last few years of the tramway. (LTHL collection).

Trailer Cars

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

1877

1-12 Double-deck open-top ?? ??/??

Withdrawn **1881** (6 trailer cars; Nos. unknown); **by 1893** (6 trailer cars; Nos. unknown).

1881

1-8 Double-deck open-top bogie Metropolitan ??/??

Withdrawn **by 1893** (1-8).

1883

9-10 Double-deck open-top bogie Metropolitan ??/??

Withdrawn **by 1893** (9-10).

Horse Cars

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

Govan Tramway

1873

1-12 **Double-deck open-top Starbuck/Tramway Car & Works** ??/??

Built by Starbuck Car & Wagon Company of Birkenhead or Tramway Car & Works Co of Glasgow (numbers unknown).

Withdrawn **c.1877** (1-12).

1874

13-14 **Double-deck open-top** ?? ??/??

Withdrawn **c.1877** (13-14).

With the introduction of steam traction in 1877 three (Nos. unknown) of the fourteen horse cars were sold and the remainder transferred to the Gourock operation.

Gourock Tramway

1873

1-10 **Double-deck open-top** Tramway Car & Works Co ??/??

Withdrawn **by 1894** (1-10).

1875

11-12 **Double-deck open-top** Tramway Car & Works Co ??/??

Withdrawn **by 1894** (11-12).

1877

??-?? **Double-deck open-top** ?? ??/??

In 1877 eleven horse cars were transferred to Gourock after the loss of the Govan lease. It is unknown what numbers they took.

Withdrawn **by 1894** (Nos. unknown).

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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In producing this booklet reference has been made to the following publications: Directory of British Tramways; Turner, PSL, 1996; Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Bulletin 17, 1928; Tramway Information website, John Prentice; British Steam Locomotive Builders, Lowe, Pen & Sword, 2014.

Series Editor: Peter Gould (secretary.lthl@gmail.com)