

Colne Corporation Light Railways

(Colne & Trawden Light Railways 1903-1914)



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Cover Illustration: No. 3 (and No. 2 behind) were 1921 English Electric-built balcony cars on English Electric bogies and seating 73. (LTHL collection).

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Colne & Trawden Light Railway Co. Ltd. 1903-1914

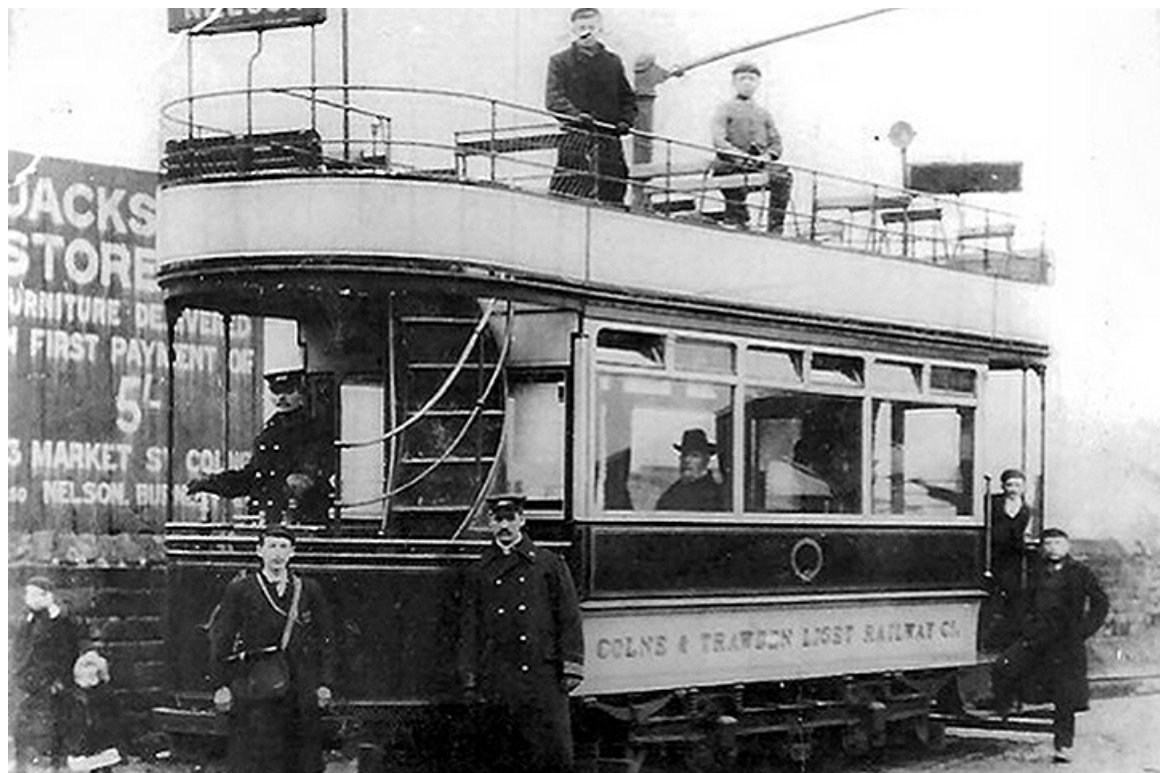
The Colne and Trawden Light Railways Order of 1901 authorised the construction of a tramway between the two Lancashire towns of Colne and Trawden, to be built and operated by the Leeds firm of Batley and Greenwood.

The first section to open was that between Heifer Lane (where the depot was situated) and the Albert Road/Queen Street junction, via Keighley Road, Market Street and through the town centre, on 28 November 1903, with other sections opening in stages; to the boundary with Nelson at Bott House Lane on 30 November 1903; to the Rock Hotel, Trawden on 22 January 1904, and to the Zion Chapel on Lane House Lane, Trawden by December 1905. A branch line from Heifer Lane to Laneshawbridge was operating by the end of December 1904.

The gauge chosen was 4ft, which coincided with that of neighbouring systems. The company traded under the name of the Colne & Trawden Light Railway Co Ltd, although, despite the title, it was a conventional street tramway, apart from a short stretch of reserved track towards Trawden, which removed the need to climb steep sections of roadway on Cotton Tree Lane and Church Street. The cars were liveried in light green and cream.

Although the tracks connected with those of neighbouring Nelson at the borough boundary, passengers could not travel through and had to change cars to continue their journey. Arrangements were made for through running in 1911, but passengers were still required to re-book at the boundary (a practice which continued for several years). In the same year half of the fleet was canopied to make travelling in the inclement weather more comfortable and attractive.

On the 24 March 1914, Colne Corporation purchased the entire system (even though part was within the boundary of Trawden UDC), changing the tramways title to Colne Corporation Light Railways.



Colne & Trawden No. 4 was a 1903 open top bogie car built by Milnes on Milnes bogies and seating 50. (LTHL collection).

Colne Corporation Light Railways 1914-1933

In 1817, horse-drawn coaches were recorded as providing a service from Manchester to Burnley and Colne on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and, in 1824, the 'John Bull' was recorded running to Skipton, Burnley and Colne every Saturday and Sunday afternoon and every Tuesday evening through Rawtenstall. 'The Union' ran to Colne every Sunday, Thursday and Friday afternoon, every Monday evening, every Tuesday evening and every Wednesday and Saturday evening, passing through Rawtenstall and Burnley. By this time Colne was well served by stage coaches.

Horse omnibuses appeared in Colne as early as 1850, when an infrequent service to nearby Burnley, travelling via the main roads, commenced. The service was apparently not a commercial success and part of it (between Nelson and Burnley) was later replaced by the steam trams of the Burnley & District Tramways Company, although the horse drawn omnibus presumably continued to ply between Colne and Nelson.

In March 1906 the Colne and Earby Motor Omnibus Company introduced a bus service between the Swan Hotel, Market Sreet, Colne and Earby using a 30 h.p. Crossley-Leyland double-decker named 'The Pioneer'. Unfortunately the vehicle proved unreliable and the service was withdrawn.

The Colne and Trawden Light Railway Order of 1901 authorised the construction of a tramway between Colne and Trawden, which was constructed to a 4ft gauge, which coincided with that of neighbouring systems and opened on the 28 November 1903.

On the 24 March 1914, Colne Corporation purchased the entire system (even though part was within the boundary of Trawden UDC), changing the tramway's title to Colne Corporation Light Railways. The company had already fitted top-covers to half of the fleet and Colne fitted top-covers to the remainder.

Unfortunately, the advent of World War I shortly afterwards, left the fleet and track in a rundown state and a programme of renovation had to be commenced in 1919.

In 1921 three second-hand Tilling-Stevens chassis were purchased and fitted with new bus bodies, but, because the Corporation lacked running powers, except in the case of tramway breakdowns, they were little used and were soon withdrawn. New tramcars were delivered in 1921 and 1926, liveried in royal blue and white until 1923, then maroon and white thereafter, and a new larger depot opened in Standroyd Road, adjacent to the original one in Heifer Lane.

In January 1923, the first bus route running from Skipton Road to Earby, via Foulridge commenced, and the old tram depot began to be used for the Corporation's growing bus fleet.

Colne was heavily involved in the textile industry and in the 1920's suffered from a slump in trade. The tramway saw its small profits used by the Council to support other areas. Competition from private bus operators increased, and, with the state of the track declining, economy measures were sought. This resulted in the conversion (in 1924-1925) of two of the tramcars to single-deck by the removal of their upper decks and staircases, for one-man operation.

On 19 October 1926 the Laneshawbridge tram route was closed, to be replaced by a bus service. This was followed on 3 June 1928 by the Heifer Lane to Trawden section, Trawden being served by motorbuses from Colne town centre. Now only the section of tramway track from the tram shed to Nelson remained in use.

In April 1927, a fourth bus service was inaugurated. The route ran from Cumberland Street in Colne to Keighley, via Cowling and Crosshills, and was an extension of the Laneshawbridge route. It was operated jointly with Keighley Corporation and Ezra Laycock of Cowling, who had been running between Laneshawbridge and Keighley.

On the 1 April 1933 (under the Colne Corporation Act of 1933), Colne, along with the neighbouring towns of Burnley and Nelson, amalgamated their transport departments to form the Burnley, Colne and Nelson Joint Transport Committee. The remaining section of tramway passed to the new authority, along with Colne's motorbuses and services, bringing to an end the short 19 year history of Colne Corporation Light Railways.

Tram Fleet List 1914-1933

This listing is in the format - Fleet No; Type; Trucks; Builder; Seating.

1914

1-6	Double-deck top covered	Milnes	Milnes	28/22
7-10	Double-deck open-top	Brush Conaty	Brush	26/22
11-12	Double-deck open-top	M & G 21EM	Milnes	28/22
13	Double-deck top-covered	Peckham P22	UEC	30/22

Nos. 1-12 ex-Colne & Trawden Light Railways Co (Nos. 1-12, new 1903 (1-6), 1905 (7-9), 1906 (10-12)); Nos. 7-12 fitted with UEC top-covers 1914-1917.

No. 6 converted to single-deck c. 1925.

No. 11 converted to single-deck c. 1925.

Nos. 4, 8-9, 11, 13 to Burnley, Colne and Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet numbers but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.

Withdrawn **unknown** (5, 7, 10, 12), **1921** (2-3), **1926** (1, 6).



No. 8 was a 1905 Brush-built car on Brush bogies and seating 48 ex-Colne & Trawden in 1914. Car No. 13 was new to Colne Corporation in 1914 and was a United Electric Car-built balcony top covered double-decker car seating 52 on Preston bogies. (LTHL collection).

1921

2-3 Double-deck top-covered EEC Burnley EEC 41/32

Nos. 2-3 to Burnley, Colne and Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet numbers but with the addition of a 'C' suffix .

1926

14-16 Double-deck fully enclosed Peckham P22 Brush 28/24

Nos. 14-16 to Burnley, Colne and Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet numbers but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.

Bus Fleet List 1921-1933

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

1921

- TB2524-26 Tilling-Stevens TTA2 ??-?? ?? B25F

TB2524-26 ex-BMMO (chassis only, new 1913); fitted with new bodies from unknown builder.

Withdrawn 1922 (TB2524, TB2526), 1923 (TB2525).

1923

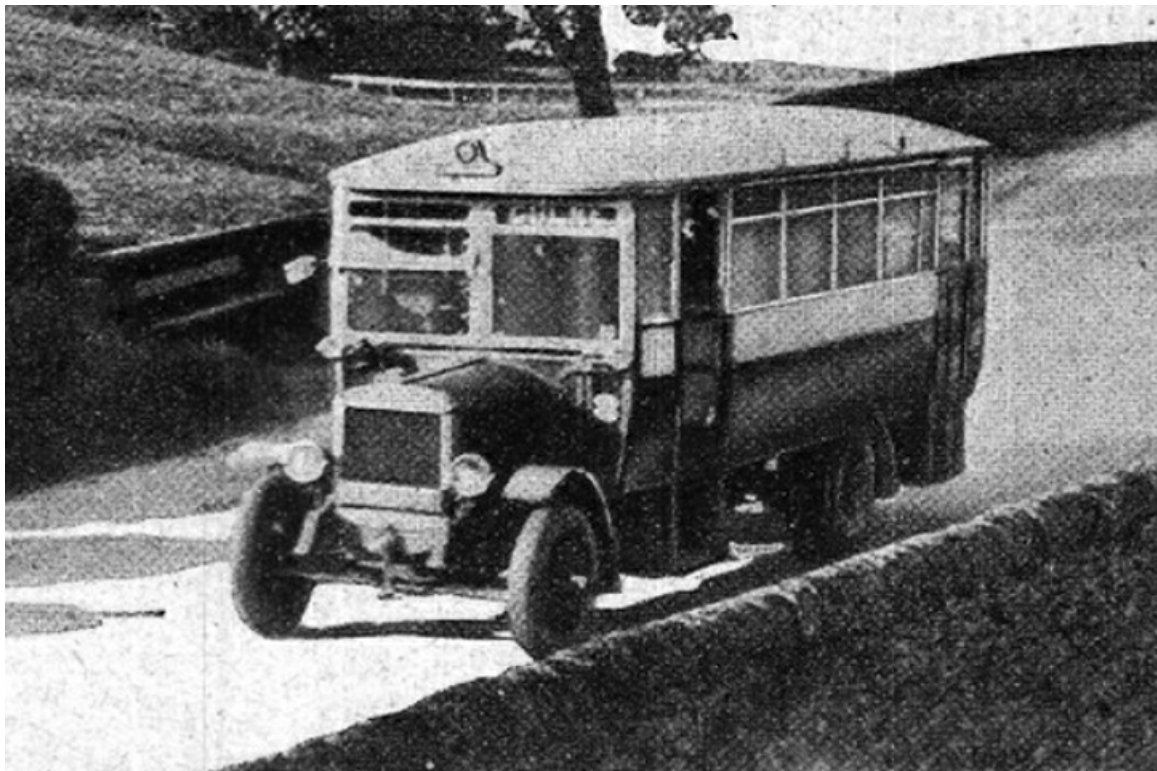
1	CW4529	Vulcan VSD	188	Knape	B19F
2	TC3730	Guy BA	2119	Guy	B20F
3	TC4193	Guy BA	??	Guy	B26D
4	TC5547	Guy B	1424	Strachan & Brown	B26D
5	TC5850	Guy B	1282	Strachan & Brown	B26D

No. 4 fitted from new with body from TB2524; re-bodied as shown in 1928.
 No. 5 fitted from new with body from TB2526; re-bodied as shown in 1925.
 Nos. 2-5 to Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet numbers but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.
 Withdrawn 1928 (1).

1924

6	TC7461	Guy B	1490	Strachan & Brown	B20F
7	TC9404	Guy B	1578	Strachan & Brown	B26D

No. 7 fitted from new with body from TB2525; re-bodied as shown in 1930.
 Nos. 6-7 to Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet numbers but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.



No. 3 (TC4193) is pictured here on the rural route from Earby. It was a 1923 Guy BA with Guy B26D bodywork. (Commercial Motor Archive).



No. 6 (TC7461) was a 1924 Guy B with Strachan & Brown 20-seat bodywork, seen here when new. It passed to the newly formed Burnley, Colne & Nelson JTC in 1933. (Bus Archive).

1925

8	TD2046	Guy BB	1703	Guy	B32D
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No. 8 re-seated to B26D by 1933; to Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet number but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.

1926

9-10	TD7822-23	Leyland PLC1	45283-84	Strachan & Brown	B30D
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No. 9 also quoted with chassis number 45227.
 Nos. 9-10 to Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet numbers but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.

1927

11-12	TD9146-47	Guy B	22302/05	Guy	B26D
14	TE537	Leyland PLC1	45541	Leyland	B26F
15	TE1639	Leyland PLC1	45992	Leyland	B26F

Nos. 11-12, 14-15 to Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet numbers but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.

1928

16	TE4041	Leyland PLC1	46983	Strachan & Brown	B26F
17	TE4128	Leyland PLC1	46984	Strachan & Brown	B26F
18-19	TE4411-12	Leyland PLC1	46979/81	Strachan & Brown	B26F
20-21	TE4413-14	Leyland PLC1	46980/82	Strachan & Brown	B26F
22	TE5110	Leyland PLSC3	47446	Leyland	B35F
23	TE5151	Leyland PLSC3	47447	Leyland	B35F

Nos. 16-23 to Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet numbers but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.

1929

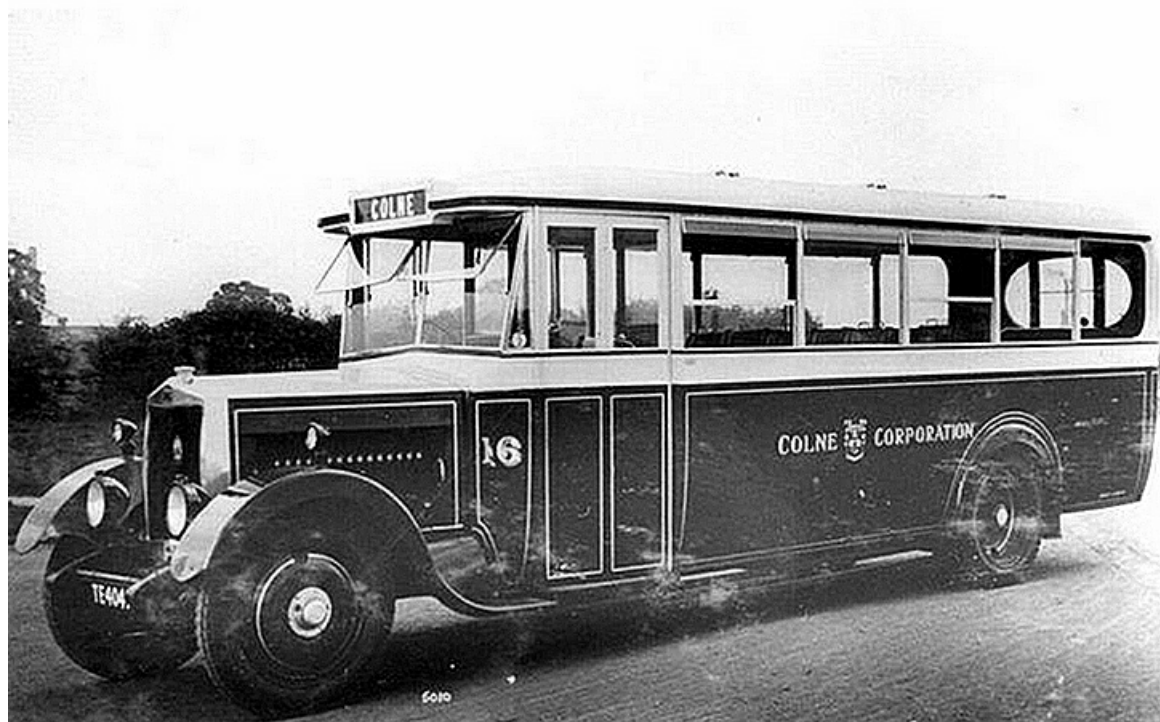
24	TE7662	Leyland PLSC3	47821	Strachans	B35F
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No. 24 to Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet number but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.

1932

25-26	TF8891-92	AEC Regal	6621244-45	Strachans	B32F
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Nos. 25-26 to Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport Committee 4/33 retaining fleet number but with the addition of a 'C' suffix.



Colne purchased 6 of these Leyland PLC1 chassis with Strachan and Brown 28-seat forward-entrance bodywork in 1928. This is No. 16 (TE4041). (LTHL collection).

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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 Histories, RC5, 1958; PC4 1976; PC4A, 1987; Burnley, Colne & Nelson Joint Transport, Catlow, Wyvern, 1985.

Illustrations courtesy: The Bus Archive, Commercial Motor Archive.

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