

Leyland Motors Ltd

A Brief History



1896 - 1988

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Cover Illustration: Bolton Corporation No. 54 (WH1553) is a preserved 1929 Leyland TD1 with Leyland open staircase 51-seat bodywork. (LTHL collection).

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In 1892, on the death of his father, James Sumner inherited the small, family blacksmith and engineering business based in Leyland, Lancashire. James, however, who had previously experimented with forms of horse-less vehicles, including a steam-powered tricycle, decided that powered transport was the way forward and promptly disposed of the smithy equipment, which was more appropriate to horse-drawn transport. When a local gardener gave him an old lawn mower to experiment with, he fitted the engine from the steam tricycle and the machine became an instant success, securing a first prize and silver medal at the Royal Lancashire Agricultural Show.

In 1895, Sumner fitted a lawnmower engine to a three-wheeled car; the owner being so impressed that he ordered an improved model the following year. However the main business was still the production of steam lawnmowers, which sold at £85 each (a considerable sum at the time) and, as sales grew, further capital was needed.

Coulthard & Co., an engineering firm based in Preston purchased a half share in the business and a new company, J. Sumner Ltd., was formed. Coulthard's share later passed to George Spurrier, whose brother, Henry, took an immediate interest in the company. Henry Spurrier had returned to Britain in 1896 after spending some eight years with an American railway company and had gained valuable experience in the use of steam power. Within days he had joined James Sumner and a new partnership, the Lancashire Steam Motor Company was formed (in 1903 it was incorporated as a limited company). Premises were rented in Herbert Street, sufficient to accommodate

the workforce of around twenty. By the end of 1896 the first steam vehicle was produced, and by 1899 the first passenger carrying vehicles were offered for sale.

In May 1899 the first Leyland bus was built. With seats for 18 and top speed of 8 mph, it was delivered to the Dundee & District Tramways Company. By 1903, with sales of steam wagons rising and the workforce numbering in excess of 150, the Company moved to larger premises in Hough Lane.

With the increasing interest in the petrol engine, Leyland produced an experimental vehicle in 1904. Nicknamed 'the Pig', only one was built, but it served to pave the way for further developments.

The Company exhibited a petrol-engined double-decker in the 1905 Show at the Agricultural Hall (although design problems with their own engine meant that the vehicle had to be powered by a 24hp Crossley engine). This probably influenced the London and Suburban Omnibus Company to order the first petrol-engined double-deck Leyland bus for the capital. Although the Company still traded under the title Lancashire Steam Motor Co., this chassis bore the name 'Leyland', and by the end of the year ten such vehicles were in service. These proved to be so reliable compared to other makes that over 100 Leyland vehicles were purchased before the London General Omnibus Co. acquired the Company (which by then had become the London Central Motor Omnibus Co., and later the New Central Omnibus Company) in 1914.



Manchester Corporation ordered this bus in 1906 from the local firm of Crossley Brothers, although the chassis were obtained from the Lancashire Steam Motor Company (the predecessor of Leyland Motors) and bodied by Dick Kerr of Preston. (LTHL collection).

By 1906 the Company had smoothed out the problems with its own engine and began to market it. It has been suggested that the work was not entirely that of the Leyland workforce and that close collaboration with Crossley Motors, who had supplied the engines for the first vehicles, resulted in the improvements necessary. At this time Crossley was not engaged in the manufacture of commercial vehicles and any assistance in designing the engine was unlikely to conflict with their current interests, so this is a distinct possibility. The first recorded Leyland demonstration bus was also built in this year. Bodied by Milnes-Voss (who were better known for their tramcar bodies) it seated 40 and sported a curious forward spiralling staircase that extended over the engine, which must have seriously restricted the driver's vision to the left. Passengers boarded at the front of the vehicle via a platform by the side of the driver, which made it suitable for one-man operation!

In the spring of 1906, the Leyland 'X' type made its initial appearance at Olympia and became the first really successful petrol-engined Leyland model, although the Leyland 'U' type had also been introduced in the first few months of 1907, Todmorden Corporation buying the first two examples. The Company acquired the business of Coulthard's of Preston in 1907, who had provided the capital for expansion in the early years, and the Company's name was officially changed to Leyland Motors Limited.

Leyland Motors offered a range of its own factory built bodies to complement the various chassis types, an option not normally offered by chassis manufacturers at the time, though most of the bus and charabanc bodies were built for them by the United Electric Car Company of Preston, up until about 1911. Although many of the charabanc

designs were rather spartan and included bench seats on a basic flat platform, service buses were normally panelled up to fitted side windows.

By 1912 concern was growing about a possible conflict in Europe and the War Office was authorised by the Government to hold trials to determine which vehicles would qualify for a war subsidy. It was intended that owners of vehicles that qualified would be eligible to receive a premium of £50 on the purchase price of each vehicle and an annual subsidy for three years of £20. The vehicle was expected to be maintained in good order and would be available for purchase at 72 hours notice in the event of war at current market value plus 25%. Vehicles were arranged in two classes, 30cwt and 3 tons, and it transpired that Leyland vehicles were the only ones capable of gaining certificates in both classes, which resulted in an order from the War Office for 88 chassis. This proved a great boost for sales and increased the Leyland reputation, not least among some of the larger organisations.

The dramatic rise of the petrol-engined vehicle meant that demand for steam vehicles was now slowly falling and manufacture of these types of vehicle was transferred to a small factory at nearby Chorley. In 1913 a new site was acquired at Farington, just north of Leyland, for the increasing volume of work. The workforce now numbered over 1500, and over 2000 vehicles had been produced up to the outbreak of war. With the declaration of war in 1914, all the subsidy vehicles were pressed into military service, along with many other Leyland vehicles. During the first two years of the War all civilian production ceased and output was reorganised for the speedy production of vehicles for the armed forces.



B5628 was No. 8 in the Todmorden fleet. New in 1913 it was a Leyland X with (probably) Leyland bodywork, although it did not last long being withdrawn in 1914. (courtesy Pennine Heritage/Todmorden Antiquarian Society).

In 1915 the entire production of Leyland lorries was allocated to the RAF (which, in the event, turned out to be almost 6000 chassis). With the cessation of hostilities in 1919, however, large numbers of the ex-RAF chassis appeared on the market. In order to protect their reputation Leyland Motors set about purchasing as many of the redundant chassis as they could, refurbished them and sold them on. More than half of the chassis supplied to the RAF was treated in this way.

During the years up to 1925, Leyland Motors introduced around 40 different models, some of which were in production for a relatively short time and differed only by minor changes. Examples were the 'M1' and 'O1', which appeared in 1919, both using the Leyland 36-40hp engine. The 'M1' could accommodate up to 28 passengers with an overall chassis length of 24ft. 0½in, whilst the 'O1', with a slightly longer 25ft. 4in chassis length could accommodate up to 33 passengers.

Towards the end of 1919 the 'G' range was introduced, based on the wartime RAF chassis, using the same 36-40hp engine. There were eight variants, from the G1 to G8, the G7 (the longest wheelbase version at 15ft 10in) was the best seller. By this time the Government thought it necessary to enact legislation to govern the design and safety of the increasing numbers of motor vehicles and the overall length of buses became strictly limited by law. In order to maximise the space offered within these limits, Leyland introduced the 'side-type' variant in 1922. This meant moving the driving position alongside the engine and over the forward axle, which offered a more practical solution than the previously tried 'over-type', which had the driver perched more or less above the bonnet. 'Side-type' variants of several of the 'G' range appeared in small numbers, the first variant being the SG7.



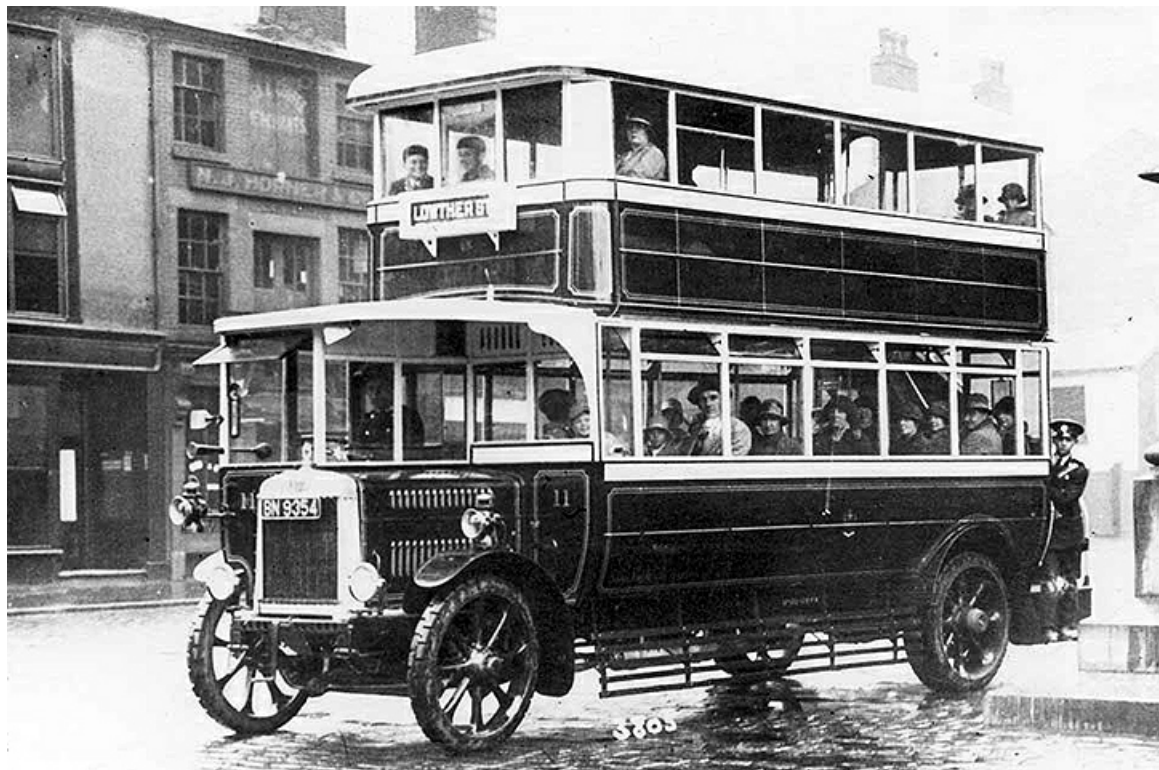
Rawtenstall Corporation No. 34 was a 1924 Leyland SG9 with Leyland 40-seat dual-entrance bodywork. (LTHL collection).

Since their early success with the London Central Company, Leyland had found the London market difficult to expand. The all-consuming London General undertaking had historic ties with the Associated Equipment Company and purchased almost all its required vehicles from this source. In an effort to break this virtual monopoly held by AEC, Leyland introduced the 'LB' range (standing for London Bus). Similar to the popular G7, the first model was the LB2, which sold well to independent operators in London.

In 1923 the 'GH' range, with its high radiator and which comprised of six models; GH2, GH4 to GH8 replaced the 'G' range, although some 'G' models were still produced until 1925, the year in which Leyland Motors made a significant change in the way chassis were designed. The 'L' range was the first chassis specifically designed for bus only use and for the first time Leyland gave the model a name - the 'Leviathan'. Up until this time chassis were commonly designed for both lorry and bus bodywork.

The first model of the Leviathan range (designated 'LG1') was a forward control double-decker with 4-cylinder side-valve engine. The LG1 still sported solid tyres since the development of pneumatic tyres had not yet reached the stage where they could support the weight of a fully laden double-deck bus. A few months later the 'LSP1' variant with 40 hp engine came onto the market.

The single-deck variants in the 'L' range were the 'Leveret' ('LA2'; 20-seat), 'Lion' ('LSC1'; 32-seat), the 'Lioness' ('LC1'; 36-seat) and the 'Leopard' ('LSG2'; 38-seat), which, when they appeared in 1926, were supplied with pneumatic tyres. Later the chassis designation included a prefix 'P' for 'Passenger' (e.g. PLC1).



Bolton Corporation No. 11 (BN9354) was a 1926 Leyland LG1 'Leviathan' with Leyland 51-seat bodywork. It was withdrawn after just five years, the introduction of the Leyland 'Titan' making these types of vehicle dated overnight. (Bolton Library and Museum Services).

In late 1926, probably the best known of the range, the 'PLSC3 Lion', was introduced. 16 LSC1 Lion chassis were supplied to English Electric in 1928, without engines or gearboxes, to be converted to trolleybuses for Bradford Corporation. In time Leyland came to offer its own purpose built trolleybuses.

By the time of the 1927 Commercial Motor Show, Leyland Motors was already established at the forefront of passenger vehicle manufacture and cemented its lead with the introduction of the 'Titan' double-deck and 'Tiger' single-deck chassis. Technological advancements in the design of pneumatic tyres had meant that it was possible to fit them to all single-deck vehicles, but they remained inadequate for fully laden double-deck vehicles. Leyland overcame this problem by designing a lightweight body specifically for the Titan chassis. The chassis was constructed with a low overall height on a lower built two-axle frame, making the overall height of the finished vehicle approximately 13ft. Along with other improvements and adjustments, including aluminium panelling, the total weight was reduced to around 5.5 tons, which meant that for the first time pneumatic tyres could be fitted as standard. The new model was designated TD1. The 'Tiger' single-deck had much in common with the 'Titan' and was designated TS1 and proved extremely popular.

With the overall length of a two-axle double-decker limited to 25ft, Leyland also produced a version for bodywork up to 30ft in length. Named the 'Titanic' it had two driven rear axles with single tyres and could seat around 72 passengers. The initial design was designated 'TT1' and did not prove as popular as the Titan, only 6 were built and although there were later models (TT2-TT5) the Titanic was never a great success.



Bury Corporation ordered 5 Leyland Titanic TT3 6-wheel double-deckers in 1935 with English Electric 60-seat centre-entrance bodywork. This is No. 52 (EN6051) that remained in the fleet until 1946. (GEC Collection courtesy David Beilby).

Even with the introduction of the new models, some of the older ranges were still being produced in large numbers, including the LT1 'Lion', which was improved and redesigned as the LT2 in 1930. The Leyland body shop introduced a new modern style of single-deck bodywork designated 'Comfort' for the 32-seat version and 'Popular' for the 36-seat version.

The TD2 Titan was introduced at the end of 1931, replacing the TD1, which had set the pace for nearly five years. It had larger tyres, better brakes and was generally of more robust construction. The Cub was also introduced in the same year. It was intended for goods and passenger chassis and was normal control, although in 1932 two forward control models (prefixed with 'S' for side-type), the SKP and SKG were introduced. The TB range of trolleybuses was introduced in 1932, with two- and three-axle versions (TB and TTB respectively) and was one of the first range of custom trolleybuses offered, as opposed to the more common conversions from standard petrol/diesel engined buses.

In 1933 the first Leyland oil (diesel) engine for passenger vehicles was exhibited at the Commercial Motor Show and by the end of the year the diesel engine was available for all models in the Leyland range. The TD2 was replaced by the TD3 in May 1933, the Tiger range having progressed to the TS6. In 1934 a six-wheeled version of the Tiger was offered for sale alongside the TS6, mainly to satisfy demand from some of the more important customers whom Leyland were reluctant to lose. The vehicle, designated TS6T, was 30ft in length with the capacity for 43-seat bodywork. The rearmost axle was a trailing axle (i.e. undriven - hence the 'T' suffix). On versions with double-driven axles the designation had a 'D' suffix (e.g. TS7D)



K50 (CYU406) was a 1936 Leyland TS7T (the 'T' suffix meaning trailing axle) with Birch Brothers 43-seat full front coachwork. It was re-bodied by Birch in 1943 as a 64-seat double-decker and re-numbered K150 and withdrawn in this form in 1951. (LTHL collection).

By the end of 1934 all-metal bodywork was offered as standard to customers, and proved to be more robust and longer lasting than traditional timber-framed bodywork. By the end of the decade operators were looking for bodywork that could be used for stage carriage work during the week and for excursion or express duties at the weekend and this led to the development of the 'dual-purpose' body, intermediate between standard saloon and luxury coach.

A new lightweight chassis, the 'Cheetah' (with two variants the LZ1, with 16ft 9in wheelbase and the LZ2 with 17ft 7in wheelbase), was introduced in 1935 along with the Titan TD4 and an improved version of the Tiger, TS7. In 1937, 100 TD4s were delivered to the London Passenger Transport Board where they formed the STD class, Leyland's first large-scale London order since the early part of the century. Their reputation for silence and operating smoothness undoubtedly led to the co-operation of both parties in a prototype, underfloor-engined 'Tiger', designated the 'FEC'. After undergoing proving trials a fleet of 87 (classed TF by LPTB) entered service in 1939. Sadly, however, the onset of the Second World War brought an end to the experiment. The infamous 'Gnu' also made its appearance at the 1937 Commercial Motor Show, but its twin steering did not find favour with operators and only 8 in total were built.

Another joint development with London Transport was the rear-engined Cub, the prototype of which was built in 1938. With B20F bodywork built by London Transport themselves it was designated the CR class and 59 production models were ordered. Sadly, because of the impending War, only 48 were delivered and the subsequent hostilities also brought this experiment to an end. It was to be over 20 years later before Leyland introduced another rear-engined single-decker.

In 1941 plans were announced for the Titan TD8, but had to be shelved when the Government ordered Leyland Motors to stop production of all passenger chassis and concentrate on military vehicles. The Ministry of Supply, however, allowed Leyland to build as many buses as possible from components which had already been assembled, resulting in the construction of 196 TD7s and 22 TS11s, such vehicles being known as 'unfrozen'.

Between 1942 and 1945, Leyland Motors' production was given over entirely to the manufacture of vehicles for the war effort and it was not until December 1945 that buses were once again built, and it was some six months later in 1946 before full production was again attained.

Manufacture of buses after the Second World War did not recommence until late in 1945 and it was some six months later before full production was resumed, priority being given to double-deck chassis due to the pressing demand from operators for maximum capacity vehicles. Two completely new designs were introduced, the Titan PD1 and the Tiger PS1, which shared the same major components. The first completed PD1 entering service with Bury Corporation in March 1946 and the first PS1 entering service with near neighbour Ramsbottom UDC around the same time.

The shortage of buses in the immediate postwar period meant that many older vehicles were refurbished, in most cases prewar petrol engines were replaced with the Leyland 7.4-litre oil engine, which was offered as a conversion unit for prewar chassis. When re-bodied they were hardly distinguishable from new vehicles.



No. 16 (GTC975) was the first Leyland PS1 to enter service in 1946. It had Roe 36-seat bodywork and is seen here outside Bury Art Gallery ready to depart on the Bury to Ramsbottom service. (John Kaye).

In 1947 the Titan was offered with the 0.600 engine, which had been used in goods chassis since 1946. It had the advantage of a livelier performance and, because the engine was under-stressed, greater intervals between overhauls. The first model to feature the engine was the PD2/1, with vacuum brakes, 16ft 3in wheelbase and width of 7ft 6in. Birmingham was the largest customer with 200 ordered between 1948 and 1949. Later in 1947 the PD2/3 was offered as the 8ft wide version of the PD2/1.

In 1948 London Transport, aware that AEC alone would not be able to cope with the postwar demand for buses from the capital, placed an order for 2,135 Titans, of which 500 would be the 8ft wide version. The 7ft 6in versions were prefixed by the letters RTL, whilst the 8ft version became the RTW.

The 0.600 engine was also used on the postwar Tiger, the designation being PS2, for vehicles so fitted. The vast majority of Tigers, however, were built with the narrower 7ft 6in bodywork, not unsurprising when it is realised that route approval from the Traffic Commissioners was required for 8ft wide models. This put a great restraint on the flexibility of 8ft wide vehicles; especially coaches and thus many operators preferred the narrower version.

The Leyland Comet became available early in 1948 and provided a medium weight alternative to the heavier Tigers. It had a gross weight of 8.75 tons, a 17ft 6in wheelbase and was of a semi-forward control design. Most of the Comets for the domestic market were purchased by independent operators.



HOT851 was a 1950 Leyland Comet CPO1 in the fleet of King Alfred Motor Services of Winchester. It had Reading 33-seat coachwork and is seen here on a day trip to Whipsnade Zoo in 1959. (John Boylett courtesy John Kaye).

Changes to the British Construction and Use of Vehicles Regulations in 1950 permitted all Public Service Vehicles to be 8ft wide, irrespective of the route and at the same time the maximum length of double-deck vehicles was increased to 27ft. As a result Leyland made slight modifications to the Titan, including an increase in the wheelbase to 16ft 5in. At the same time the standard Leyland bodywork was improved with the introduction of the 'Farington' style. Shortly afterwards the Construction and Use Regulations were amended to allow 30ft single-deck vehicles on two-axle construction.

In 1949 Leyland turned their attentions back to the development of the underfloor engine, which had been interrupted by the War. The advantages of the underfloor engine were increased seating capacity in a given chassis length, much improved entry and exit, better weight distribution and easier accessibility to mechanical parts, with the consequent saving in maintenance costs. Surprisingly Leyland chose to combine with Metro-Cammell-Weymann to construct the new vehicle, which they named the 'Olympic', even though they were more than capable of constructing the bodywork themselves. The principle of integral (or chassisless) construction, which substitutes the traditional chassis and bodywork with a strengthened body incorporating the running units in their appropriate places, was not popular among British operators. Nevertheless, the HR40 Olympic (which was the 27ft 6in version, replaced by the HR44 at 30ft in 1950) with 15ft 7in wheelbase and width of 7ft 6in was offered to the home market, although the 8ft wide option and wheelbase of up to 20ft 4in was offered on export models. Red & White of Chepstow took delivery of the first domestic Olympics in 1950.



KOC242 was the third of the Leyland HR40 Olympic prototypes. It is seen here in September 1969 whilst in the service of Llynfi Motors of Maesteg. (John Kaye).

In addition to the Olympic, Leyland introduced a separate underfloor-engined chassis, suitable for the range of bodywork preferred by many of their customers. It was named the 'Royal Tiger' and designated PSU1, with the 'U' signifying underfloor engine. There were eight models offered for the domestic market, designated PSU1/9 to PSU1/16, all with 15ft 7in wheelbase and either 7ft 6in (PSU1/9-12) or 8ft (PSU1/13-16) overall width. The designations PSU1/1 to PSU1/8 were never built, since they were intended to be 27ft 6in long, but the amendments to the Construction and Use Regulations made them obsolete before they could be built. The first production Royal Tiger buses were three for Ramsbottom UDC in 1950, who had also taken delivery of the first PS1 Tigers after the War and had also been one of the first to receive the Titan PD2/1 in 1948. The Royal Tiger became an instant success, especially abroad, where they were ordered in great numbers.

In 1951 Leyland Motors acquired the Glasgow-based bus manufacturer Albion Motors Ltd. There followed some heavy pruning of the Albion bus range after the purchase and by 1953 only the Albion Victor was still being sold. Gradually, however, as the design teams of the two companies' co-operated, components from each company began to appear in the vehicles of the other.

A new chassis, the Tiger Cub, designated 'PSUC' - the 'C' standing for 'Cub', was exhibited at the 1952 Commercial Motor Show. Lighter by some two tons than the Royal Tiger, the Cub had a full 30ft long chassis with 16ft 2in wheelbase and was initially only offered with 8ft overall width. It proved to be highly popular among coach operators.



Ramsbottom No. 27 (MTC256) was a 1950 Leyland Royal Tiger, the fourth chassis built and is seen here in Moss Street, Bury in June 1958. It had a Roe 44-seat body. (John Kaye).

By the end of 1954, the Royal Tiger had been developed into a new range, primarily for export, called the Royal Tiger Worldmaster, although some models went to the home market. Halifax and Glasgow were the only domestic customers for the RT3/1, whilst the RT3/2 sold in very small numbers to a few of the leading independents. Production of the Royal Tiger ceased in 1955.

Another concept pioneered by Leyland in the 1950's was the rear-engined double-decker. With bus operators' facing a downturn in the numbers of passengers carried, ways of economising were sought. Although the first experimental rear-engined bus was of conventional rear entrance design, later developments made it possible to move the entrance to the front of the vehicle, initially so that the driver could supervise loading whilst the conductor collected the fares, but later it was to prove conducive to one-man-operation.

The first prototype was No. 530001 and made its appearance in 1952, with a second (No. 542209) in 1954. Designated PDR1 ('R' for rear-engined), it was named the Lowloader.

In 1954 Leyland Motors ceased production of its own passenger vehicle bodywork, although it still continued to build commercial vehicle bodywork. The last Leyland coach body being built for Wilkinsons of Sedgefield, whilst Trent Motor Services took delivery of the last bus body on a PD2/12 Titan chassis.



STF90 was a Leyland Lowloader, the second prototype of the Leyland Atlantean, new in June 1954. Although it had a rear engine it was constructed with a rear entrance Saunders-Roe body. It is seen here in service with Lowland Motorways of Glasgow. (John Boylett collection courtesy John Kaye).

An amendment to the Construction and Use Regulations on 1st July 1956 saw the maximum length for double-deckers increased to 30ft and accordingly Leyland introduced a range of Titans to the new length. The six models were designated PD3/1-6 and were all 8ft wide with wheelbase of 18ft 6ins. At the same time the maximum unladen weight was increased by 2 tons to 14 tons. This gave bodybuilders the scope to increase the seating capacity of double-deckers up to 75-seats depending on the layout chosen. The new permitted dimensions also enabled Leyland Motors to review the design of the rear-engined double-decker.

The first prototype 'Atlantean' was exhibited at the 1956 Commercial Motor Show, although several drawbacks prevented the bus being placed on the market. Among the chief problems was the amount of noise in the lower saloon, largely accounted for by the fact that the engine was inside the body, with the compartment being used for bench seating for up to 5 passengers.

By 1958, Leyland had overcome the initial difficulties and announced the first production 'Atlantean' the PDR1/1 with 16ft 3in wheelbase, with Wallasey Corporation taking the honour of putting the first production Atlantean into service.

Another new model was introduced at the 1959 Scottish Show. Designated the 'Leopard', it was a medium-weight chassis and was intended to fill the gap left by the Royal Tiger, although it was basically a Tiger Cub chassis with a larger engine. Two models were offered, the L1, which was the bus version and the L2, which was the coach version. Both were 8ft wide and 30ft long with a wheelbase of 16ft 2in.



The first production PDR1/1 'Atlantean' with 16ft 3in wheelbase was produced in 1958, with Wallasey Corporation taking the honour of putting the first one into service. (Paul Haywood).

By 1961 another amendment to the Construction and Use Regulations now permitted the maximum length of single- and double-deck buses and coaches to be 36ft and the maximum width to be 8ft 2½ ins. In the summer of 1961 Leyland Motors announced a new range of Leopard models with 36ft long chassis for the home market, which they designated PSU3/1R to PSU3/4R. All four models had a wheelbase of 18ft 6in with overall width of 8ft.

During the 1960's there were some significant changes in the British market, especially that for double-deckers. At the start of the decade the majority of operators preferred the traditional front-engined double-decker operated by a two-man crew. With the advent of 36ft long vehicles, several moved towards high-capacity single-deckers which could be operated by one person, although the public did not favour the standee type vehicles, but preferred instead to go upstairs for a seat. When one-man operation of double-deck vehicles was allowed many of the major operators moved over to the front-entrance rear-engined vehicle, effectively sounding the death knell for the traditional bus. Another nail in the coffin of the front-engined vehicle was the 1967 Ministry of Transport plan to give operators financial grants towards the cost of new stage vehicles, provided they conformed with certain requirements, one of which was that they must have an extreme front entrance under the supervision of the driver. The very last Titan chassis of all, No. 902844 left the Leyland works in 1969 with much ceremony. Registered TTD386H it was delivered to SELNEC PTE in November 1969. Ordered by Ramsbottom UDC before the take over, it was delivered and subsequently operated in full Ramsbottom UDC livery until its first repaint.



The very last Titan chassis of all was TTD386H. Ordered by Ramsbottom UDC, it was delivered in November 1969 and subsequently operated in full Ramsbottom UDC livery until its first repaint. (LTHL collection).

A new rear-engined single-deck chassis was introduced in 1964. Called the 'Panther', there were two models available, the PSUR1.1 bus and the PSUR1.2 coach, both with 18ft 6in wheelbase for 36ft long bodywork. Although the bus variant sold reasonably well with sales of 623 on the home market before production ceased in 1972, the coach variant did less well, many operators preferring the 'Leopard'.

An unexpected amendment to the Construction and Use Regulations in 1967, permitted single-deck buses up to a maximum length of 39ft 4in (12 metres), although this was primarily of benefit only to coach operators, since this proved a little too long for stage carriage services.

The following year Leyland Motor Corporation and British Motor Holdings merged to form the British Leyland Motor Corporation and in July 1969 announced a joint venture with the newly formed National Bus Company. It was to be called the Leyland National Company and was to build a new single-deck bus at Workington in Cumbria. The new bus was unveiled at the 1970 Commercial Motor Show, appropriately named the 'Leyland National'. An extensive proving programme was undertaken before the first production vehicles were made available, the first regular production National going to SELNEC PTE in 1972, although Cumberland Motor Services had placed a pre-production model in service earlier in the year. The phase II model, incorporating a number of developments was announced in April 1976, by which time some 3500 Nationals had been sold, and in 1978 Leyland introduced the B-series, aimed at the lighter end of the market.

Meanwhile, in 1972, Leyland had announced the Atlantean AN68 series. It was available in two models, the AN68.1R, with 16ft 3in wheelbase, suitable for bodywork up to 30ft 10in long, and the AN68.2R, with 18ft 6in wheelbase, suitable for 33ft 3in long bodywork. Wigan Corporation No.1 (NEK1K) was the first AN68 Atlantean delivered.

The British Leyland Motor Corporation however was not only manufacturing buses and coaches. The production of motor cars formed an important part of the business although there was insufficient profit from this side of the business to support investment in new models and the bus and truck side was called upon to maximise profits to support the car factories. This resulted in a lack of investment in new buses for a period of nearly ten years after the formation of British Leyland. Finally, a team headed by Lord Ryder recommended that the bus and truck division should receive a greater degree of autonomy and in addition a greater share of the new investment programme. Consequently detailed studies were made of likely future vehicle requirements both at home and overseas and it soon became apparent that the previous proliferation of models and types would have to be rationalised. At this point in time a new project was already under way, codenamed 'B15' it was revealed to the technical press in November 1975. As a consequence of the rationalisation policy, Leyland decided to offer the B15 in just a single version. The overall length was 31ft 4 $\frac{5}{8}$ ins. with a width of 8ft 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. The wheelbase was 16ft 6ins and the overall height was 14ft 5ins. The famous old name of 'Titan' was eventually given to the B15 and it was finally launched in 1977.



FHG592S was a Leyland B15 'Titan' demonstrator that was on loan to John Fishwick & Sons, Leyland from February 1980 in this grey, yellow and black livery before being purchased in 1982 and repainted into Fishwick livery and numbered 20. (Joe Gornall courtesy Malcolm Jones).

Leyland had recognised that, for a variety of reasons, the fully integral Titan would not suit every one of their customers, so a new double-deck chassis was developed. Codenamed the B45 it was unveiled at the 1980 Commercial Motor Show as the 'Olympian'. This was offered in two versions with wheelbases of 16ft 3ins and 18ft 6ins for bodywork up to 31ft 4½ ins and 33ft 7½ ins respectively. Intended to take over from the Fleetline and Bristol VRT initial orders were encouraging, although the Atlantean continued to be available in the AN68B series.

In March 1981 the Passenger Vehicle Division was re-named 'Leyland Bus' and was given a greater degree of autonomy, although still under the auspices of Leyland Vehicles Ltd. At the same time it launched the 'B43' and re-used another famous old name 'Tiger'. By the end of 1981 over 100 Tigers were in service, with more on order for 1982 as traditional 'Leopard' users switched over. During 1984 the Olympian continued to strengthen its grip on the dwindling British double-deck bus market and by the end of the year was Leyland's only double-deck chassis.

The Conservative Government was re-elected in 1983 and part of their manifesto was committed to selling off nationalised companies in the belief that they would fare better in the privatised sector. The Transport Act of 1985 deregulated all the bus services outside London and caused widespread alarm in the bus industry. The bill also proposed that the National Bus Company would be 'privatised', however, preference would be given to management teams who wanted to buy out their company. Management were quick to realise that large quantities of new buses would add value to their company and decrease the chances of being able to raise the capital needed

for a buy-out. Thus orders for new buses were delayed until the opportunity to 'buy-out' the company became available. As a result the registrations of new Leyland Nationals in 1984 was just 44, with 57 in 1985.

With the depression of the home market Leyland's losses were around £80 million in the three years between 1982 and 1984. By the end of 1985 jobs were being shed in an effort to reduce the losses. The Olympian was largely responsible for keeping Leyland going with over 500 units produced in each of 1984 and 1985. The collapse of the domestic bus market after the 1985 Transport Act had forced Leyland Bus to diversify. Two large orders from British Rail for 'Sprinter' units kept the Workington factory in full employment until 1988. Registrations of double-deck buses in Britain fell to only 177 in 1987. On the 13th January 1987, Leyland Bus was sold to a consortium of management and banks. Some customers almost immediately supported the arrangement, with Ulsterbus placing an order for 195 Tigers just one month later. Other customers, notably ex-NBC Badgerline ordered 36 buses from rivals Volvo. By the end of 1987, however, the directors were having doubts about the future of Leyland Bus and it came as no surprise when it was announced, in March 1988, that it had been sold to Volvo of Sweden. Although, initially, Leyland Bus was operated as a separate division of Volvo Bus, in September 1988 the company was re-named VL Bus and Coach (UK) Ltd., effectively ending over 80 years of the Leyland name. In 1991 the factory at Leyland ceased production of chassis and the 'Leyland' bus passed into history.

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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