



Provincial in the 1920s - 1930s



Provincial Bus Community



In the late 1920's, the then new Gosport and Fareham Omnibus Company adopted a standard vehicle policy, based on the Chevrolet chassis. Chevrolets were becoming popular in Britain and General Motors started a manufacturing facility here at its Vauxhall Motors subsidiary. In 1929, 19 Chevrolet chassis were purchased (8 LQ, 4LO, 4LP, 2LR and 1 U). Also in the original 26 vehicle fleet were 4 Thornycrofts, 2 Guy BB, and a Maxwell. Some of the Chevrolet's were delivered new to Hoeford, and some were transferred from the Provincial Cleethorpes Fleet. Seven more Chevrolet 26 seaters were added in 1930.

In the 1930s, all the Provincial company's assets in Plymouth, Cardiff, Grimsby and Portsmouth were being sold off, and Gosport and Fareham were clearly seen as the future. The Whites, father and son, took over the management and started to build the Provincial Traction Company. This all rather surprising as the populations of Gosport and Fareham were not, at that time, very large. Due to the income from retrenchment what was now a fairly small independent company could afford to buy quite a large number of the most modern buses throughout the 30s.

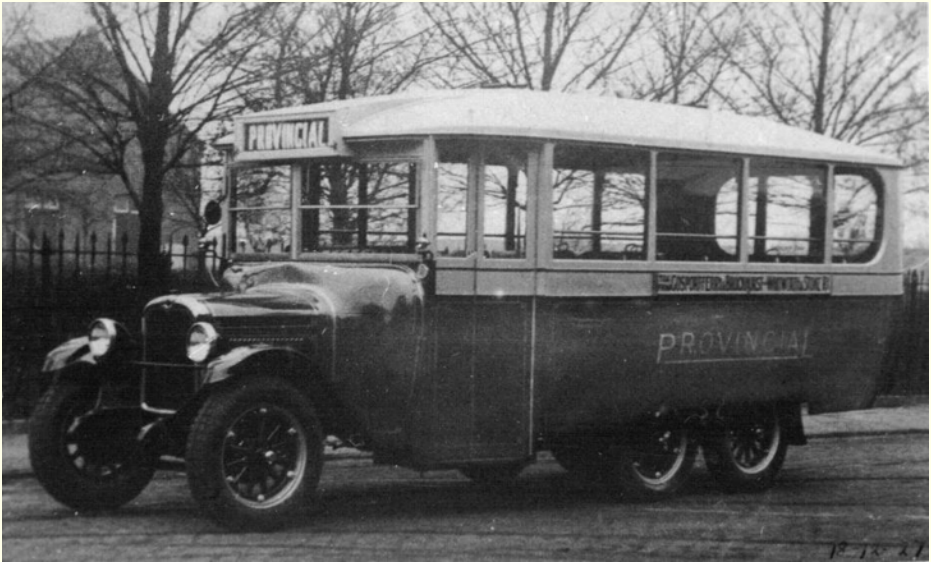
In 1934 the famous long lived AEC Regals 23-30 (CG 9606-13) were purchased 23-30 (CG 9606-13) (for more details see AEC Regals page). There were insufficient funds available to purchase further new vehicles so six six second hand Southdown double deckers were acquired in 1934. These were 1919-22 Leyland N and G7, with open top Tilling and Short Bros bodies, and numbered 17-22. Being already rather old at the time of purchase, they were all replaced by 1940.

As new routes were being developed at this time, more buses were needed to cope with this expansion. In 1935 14 more second hand buses arrived. Eight were from Hants and Dorset Motor Services, and were Leyland Lion PLSC1, with Leyland 31 seat bodies. They were numbered 1-8.

From Luton Corporation came 13-16, two Dennis E Types with 32 seat Davidson bodies, one ES, and a 2 door Strachans bodied EV. West Yorkshire Road Car Co Ltd supplied 2 Leyland bodied Lion PLSC3 (31-32). Some of these Lions were rebuilt to resemble the new AEC Regals, but most were withdrawn by 1946.

In 1936 new AEC Regent double deckers were purchased 34-37 (BOR 766-769). These had 56 seat Park royal bodies. Two of these were destroyed in the 1957 garage fire (36 & 37), 34 lasted until 1970, and 35 was preserved and is still with us. More details of these buses can be found on the AEC Regent pages.

Thanks to David Whitaker for his input to this article. If you require more in depth vehicle details of this period, these are available in Stewart Brett's fleet history available from the Provincial Society.



When the Gosport & Fareham Omnibus Company came into being in 1929, the early fleet was comprised mostly of Chevrolet single deckers. This 'LP' example, thought to be no.1 (OU 224), would normally have only seated 14, but with the provision of an extra axle the capacity was increased to 20. The original mini-bus perhaps?

Photo: Surfleet



Chevrolet 'U' no.12 (OU 4585) with Bracebridge 26-seat bodywork at Hoeford depot. This vehicle was fitted with a sliding 'sun saloon' roof. **Photo: Alan Lambert collection**



This 1930s view in Gosport High Street captures the spirit of the Provincial fleet of the time, with a 6-wheel Chevrolet about to pass a Thornycroft. Although we haven't been able to positively identify either vehicle, the Thornycroft could well be no.10(TP 6102), which was originally owned by Hawkins of Gosport. **Photo: Omnibus Society**



Another Dennis acquired in 1934 was 16(TM 5909), a 1929 'EV' with Strachans bodywork, which remained in service until the early 1950s. After a few years as a stores vehicle at Hoeford, it was damaged beyond repair in the 1957 fire.

Photo: Stephen Didymus collection



A further second-hand acquisition in 1934 was no.9 (RP 4459), a 1927 Thornycroft A2, which arrived from Nutt of Harpole. Bodywork was by York, Ward and Rollatt.

Photo: A.V.P. La Croix



Standing next to Regal 23 is 14(VM 6402) a 1929 Dennis 'E' with Davidson body which had seen service with both Manchester and Luton Corporations before being acquired by Provincial in 1934.

Photo: Roy Marshall



The following month, October 1934, saw the arrival of eight 1926 Leyland Lions from the Hants & Dorset fleet. No 8 (TR 2837), is seen here approaching Gosport Ferry with a H&D Leyland TD1 following behind.

Photo: Stephen Didymus collection



To meet increasing demand, GFOC purchased 6 double deckers from Southdown MS in September 1934, including 18(CD 5115) a 1921 Leyland 'NN' with 1928 Tilling body.

Photo: Surfleet



The famous ex Southdown Leyland G7 CD 7045, which was kept by Provincial for many years and known as 'Old Bill'. It is now preserved in Southdown livery.



Between 1908 and 1936 there were many interchanges of vehicles between the Provincial Grimsby and Gosport fleets, including this handsome 1926 Guy BB with Guy B28F body. Seen here as Grimsby 37, it spent January–November 1930 as fleet no.28 whilst at Gosport.

Photo: Stephen Didymus collection



In 1935, Provincial purchased eight Leyland Lion PLSC1s from Hants & Dorset. Seen here shortly after acquisition, TR 2836 poses for the camera. The absence of any fleet name suggests that this photograph was taken soon after repainting. This would become fleet number 7 in the Provincial fleet.

Photo : Alan Lambert collection



In the same year, Provincial also purchased two Leyland Lion PLSC3s from West Yorkshire. These had a slightly longer wheelbase than the Hants & Dorset examples and their entrance was located at the rear of the vehicle. 32 (VW 6428) is seen at Gosport Bus Station on layover in company with AEC Regal 26 (CG 9611).

Photo : Richard Arthur collection



A classic view of Gosport Bus Station illustrating 32 (VW 6428) and number 1 (RU 3154), a former Hants & Dorset example.

Photo : R. Marshall



In the late 1930s, Provincial rebuilt the bodywork on some of the former Hants & Dorset Lions to look similar to the AEC Regals which the company operated. Fleet number 6 (TR 2835) is seen here after rebuilding. The earliest withdrawals of these vehicles took place in 1942 and the last withdrawals occurred in 1945.

Photo : Richard Arthur collection



*The 8 AEC Regal 4s gave remarkable service to Provincial. No.28(CG 9613), at Hoeford when fairly new, survived until 1968. **Photo: Stephen Didymus collection***



*1936 heralded the first new double deckers for the fleet in the form of Park Royal-bodied AEC Regents 34-37 (BOR 766-769). 37 is seen here at Gosport Ferry in its original livery with the cream stripe below the upper deck windows. At least 3 Leyland Lions are also visible in the background. **Photo: Stephen Didymus collection***