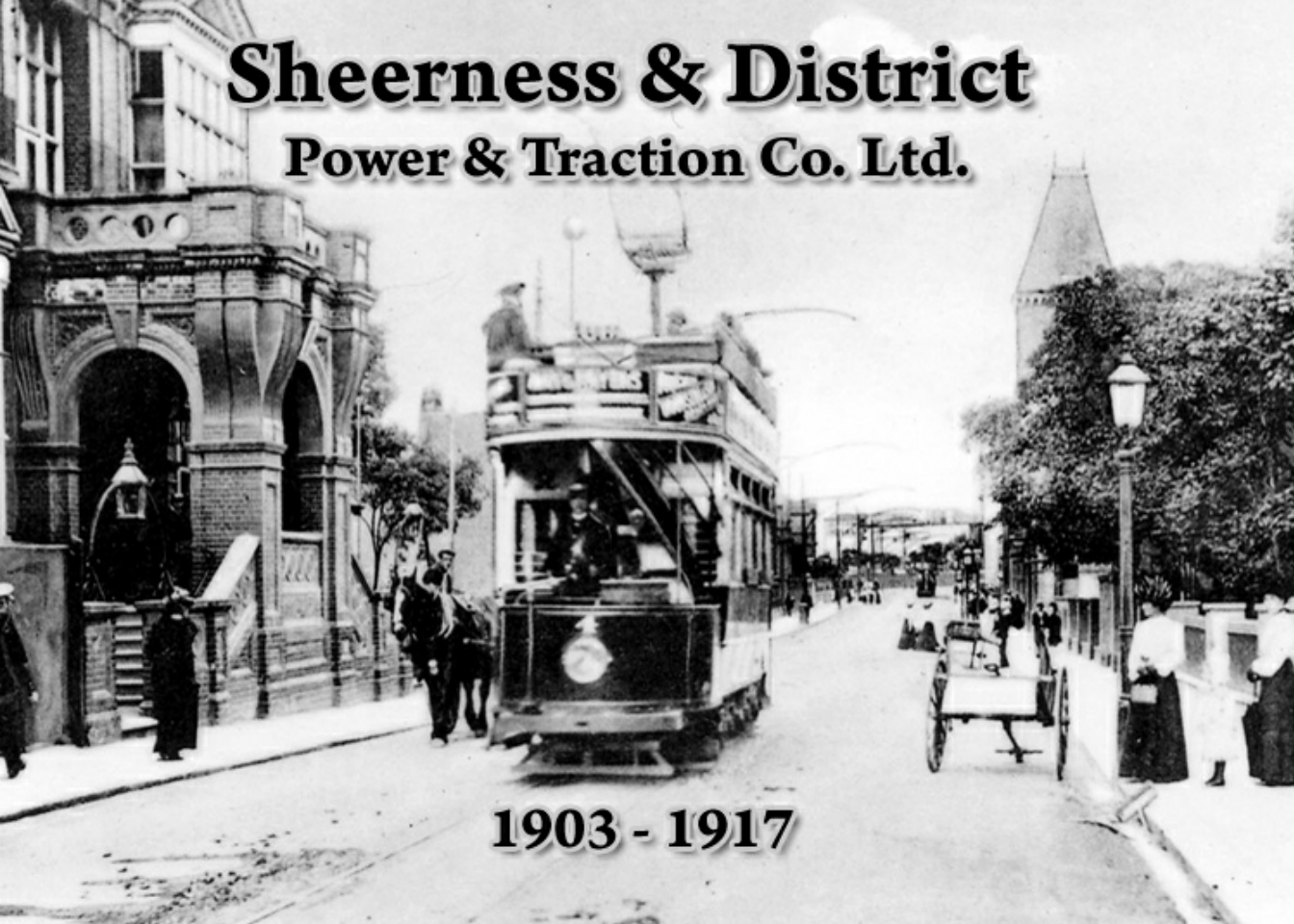


Sheerness & District Power & Traction Co. Ltd.



1903 - 1917

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Cover Illustration: A 1903 postcard showing one of the Sheerness cars (No. 4) soon after the system opened. (LTHL collection).

First Published 2017 by The Local Transport History Library.

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Constructed under the Sheerness & District Light Railway Order of 1903 to the narrow 3ft 6ins gauge, this short 2½-mile tramway situated on the Isle of Sheppey was initially planned to be a much grander system. Objections were raised by the Sheppey Light Railway, whose lines the tramway would have had to cross to reach the proposed termini at Minster and Queensborough, and as a result these were never built.

Owned and operated by the Sheerness & District Power & Traction Co Ltd (a BET subsidiary), the system as constructed consisted of three single-track routes radiating from a central terminus at the Clock Tower; to the South Eastern and Chatham Railway's Dockyard station, along High Street and past the SECR's town station; to Marine Parade; and along High Street to the Sheerness East station of the Sheppey Light Railway (where the power station and tram shed were situated - unusually served by a turntable instead of a track fan).

The system opened on the 9th April 1903 with 12 (Nos. 1-12) double-deck open-top cars from Brush in a chocolate and cream livery. Seating 22 passengers on transverse seating in the lower saloon and 28 on reversible 'garden' seating on the top deck, each had 2x25hp motors. They were equipped with Siemens bow collectors (unique on British tramways), which were only useable in the trailing position. The drivers' controls only operated with the bow to the rear. At the terminus the bow had to be reversed by the guard, making the drivers' controls functional at the opposite end and disconnecting the controls in the vacated section. Trams could only pass using nine loops, each tram having to wait for an oncoming car to enter into the loop before it could continue.

The number of cars was soon found to be too large for the truncated system and four were sold almost immediately to the City of Birmingham Tramways Company.

The shortened 2.47 mile tramway proved unremunerative over its lifetime. As well as the tramcars' equipment, the overhead had been installed by the Berlin firm of Siemens and Halske and this, in part, was responsible for the early demise of the system (the first electric tramway in Britain to close), when German spares became unavailable during Word War I.

Although the system was offered for sale to Sheerness UDC and Sheerness RDC, both declined to purchase it and on the 7th July 1917 the tramway finally closed.

Tram Fleet List 1903-1917

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

1903

1-12; Double-deck open-top 4-wheel; Brush A; Brush; 28/22

All had reversed stairs.

Withdrawn 1904 (9-12), 1917 (1-8).

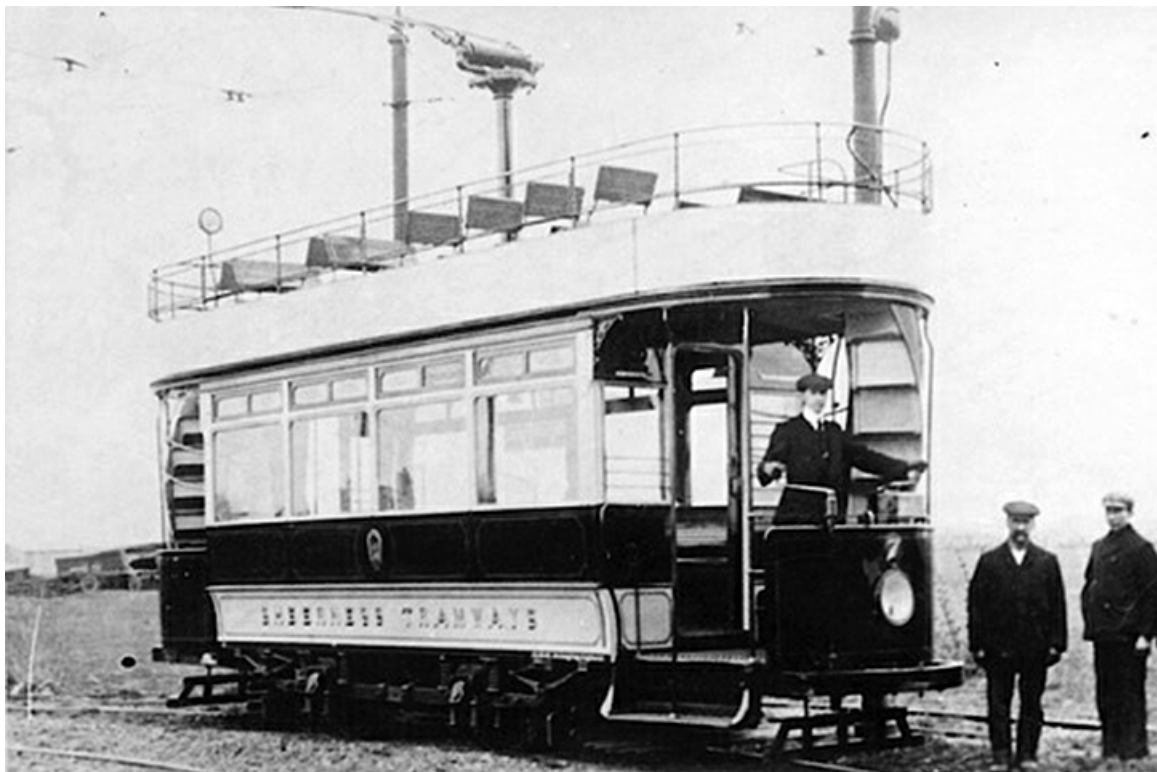
Notes:

Nos. 1-8 sold to Darlington Corporation in 1917 (six were re-numbered 19-24 and two were used for spares).

Nos. 9-12 sold to City of Birmingham Tramways Co. Ltd. in 1904 (re-numbered 189-192).



Car No. 1, dating from 1903, poses for a photograph on Marine Parade, along with an interested young boy. It clearly shows the unique bow collector employed by the tramway. The car was built by Brush on Brush trucks and seated 50. (LTHL collection).



Car No. 7 showing the reversed stairs and 'Sheerness Tramways' fleetname. The non-uniformed staff suggest that this was a test run, indicating that the tram may have just been delivered. (LTHL collection).

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.
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