

# Ilkeston Corporation Tramways



ILKESTON CORPORATION

1903 - 1931

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Cover Illustration: Ilkeston Corporation No. 8 was a 1903 double-deck open-top 4-wheel car on Brill trucks built by the Electric Railway and Tramway Carriage Works of Preston, seating 48. (LTHL collection).

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The first application to construct an electric tramway in Ilkeston was put before the Borough Council in 1895 and proposed a cable system which would run the length of Bath Street and South Street. Although this was approved by the General Works Committee it was not until 1898 that it was finally decided that the motive power should be by overhead electric cables. In 1899 the Ilkeston Corporation Tramways Act was passed allowing construction to begin.

It was estimated that the cost of constructing the system would amount to a total of £80,345.

Although there were a number of objections to the proposed tramway system they were over-ruled, Alderman Robinson claiming that 75% of the populace were fully in favour of this new mode of transport.

Construction should have begun in August 1900 and was scheduled for completion by August the following year. In the event, work did not begin until November 1901. When work was finally completed the system consisted of 3.85 miles of track and overhead cable — nine tramcars (as opposed to the original eight) with the tram depot and offices being constructed on Park Road.

The short line was just 3.78 miles long and consisted of a main single-line track from Cotmanhay to Hallam Fields Road, travelling along Cotmanhay Road to the town centre, where it served both the Great Northern Railway's station and the Midland

Railway's station, then on via Granby Street, Bath Street, South Street, Nottingham Road to Hallam Fields. A short ½-mile branch line along Station Road served the Midland Railway's Ilkeston Junction station.

Each tramcar could carry a maximum of 48 seated passengers and initially, the ticket price was set at 1d, though this would rise over the years to 3d for the full journey from Cotmanhay to Hallam Fields.

On Saturday 16th May 1903, all nine of the Corporation's tramcars, wearing a maroon and cream livery and decorated with bunting, exited the Park Road depot for the first time and out onto the streets of Ilkeston. Eventually 13 tramcars would be operated on the system.

Thomas Roe, a local printer, secured the advertising rights for £13 per tramcar per annum. Each tramcar bore posters promoting such products as Sunlight Soap and Colman's Mustard, as well as advertising local businesses as Woolliscrofts Drapers and Outfitters and Broughton's the watch and clock maker, both of Bath Street.

The tramway was not a success and losses mounted steadily eventually reaching £32,495 and it was offered for sale to the Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Tramways Company, who took over the line in 1916, along with the Corporation's electricity undertaking.

Re-painted in their new colours of light green (later dark green) and cream and with a reduced fleet of just eight tramcars, the system ran for another 15 years before being closed on 15th January 1931 and replaced by Notts & Derby motorbuses until 7th January 1932 when trolleybuses took over.

## **Tram Fleet List 1903-1931**

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

### **1903**

**1-9; Double-deck open-top 4-wheel; Brill; ERTCW; 26/22**

**10-13; Double-deck open-top 4-wheel; Brill; Milnes; 26/22**

No. 7 was rebuilt as single-deck in 1916.

Nos. 1-13 to Notts & Derby Traction Company 1916. (The N&DT Co was owned by Balfour Beatty & Co. Ltd., who refurbished the tramcars and rebuilt them with direct staircases - retaining 8 for use on the Ilkeston system and distributing the remainder to other tramway companies they owned).



Saturday 16th May 1903, opening day, and all the trams were decked in bunting for the occasion, including Nos. 5 and 6, two of the 9 ERTCW-built cars. (LTHL collection).



One of the four Milnes-built tramcars, No. 13 at the Church Street, Cotmanhay terminus in early 1915, with a sizeable dent on the front panel. (LTHL collection).



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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.  
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