

# Kilmarnock Corporation Transport



1904 - 1931



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Cover Illustration: One of Kilmarnock's first buses was this Albion PH24 with Stewart 19-seat dual entrance bodywork purchased in 1924. (LTHL collection).

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Authorised by the Kilmarnock Corporation Act of 1904 and built to the standard gauge of 4ft 8½ins the council owned tramway was Kilmarnock's first tramway, there being no previous horse tramway operating within the town.

As built, the tramway was single-track throughout except for a short double-track section from the railway station through the town centre to the King Street Church near Fowlds Street, a distance of around ½ mile. The main line ran in a north-south direction from the northern burgh boundary at Beansburn through the town centre to its southern boundary at Riccarton. A single-track branch ran eastwards from the Cross in the town centre along London Road through Crookedholm to Hurlford Cross, around 1¾ miles. The depot was located in Greenholm Street and the double-track was extended a further ¼ mile to here in 1905. The first service commenced on the 10 December 1904.

The initial fleet consisted of 11 open-top double-deck cars by Hurst Nelson (Nos. 1-11), in an olive green and cream livery. A single additional open-top car (No. 12) was added in 1905 along with two top-covered cars (Nos. 13-14), all by Hurst Nelson that completed the fleet.

Although, initially, the tramway fared well, it soon became apparent that it was not going to be financially sound. Constant problems with the

permanent way led to a deterioration in the system and fluctuating revenues caused by fluctuating employment, Council policies and generally poor management added to the tramway's woes.

With the onset of World War I in 1914 the tramway began to suffer from further neglect and when the War ended private motorbus operators began to erode the tramway's revenue. The costs of reconstructing the tramway system would be prohibitive and other options would be cheaper. Finally, the Council decided to replace the Hurlford section, which had suffered the worst, with the motor bus.

Powers to operate motorbuses were granted under the Kilmarnock Order Confirmation Act of 1924, passed in July of that year and on the 15 December 1924 the last cars ran on the Hurlford route. Replacement buses commenced service that afternoon, making Kilmarnock the first Scottish authority to replace its own trams with buses.

The livery applied to the buses was similar to that of the trams but with a deep yellow panel bearing the legend 'Kilmarnock Corporation' below the windows. Fleet numbers were applied to the rear of the vehicles only. The buses were garaged in Green Street Butter Market (previously used by the Scottish General Transport Company) as the depot in Greenholm Street was still occupied by the trams. The buses were relocated to Greenholm Street at the end of 1927 and the Green Street depot given up.

In January 1926 the Tramways Committee recommended the replacement of all tram services by motorbuses and at a meeting of the full Council on 10 March the decision was made to abandon the trams completely. However, on 3 May, the tramway workers joined the General Strike called by the TUC bringing tramway services to a halt. The Council subsequently decided not to resume operations after the strike ended on the 12 May and the tramway thus ceased to operate on the 3 May 1926 without ceremony. The buses resumed operations and covered the former tram routes.

By 1930 the buses were operating the following routes;

Route 1; Riccarton - Beansburn;
Route 2; Railway Station - Hurlford;
Route 3; Bonnyton - Victoria Bridge and Bellfield (via the Cross and Fowlds Street);
Route 4; Culzean Crescent - Fairyhill Road (via St Marnock Street);
Route 5; Irvine Road - St Marnock Street - Cross - Station - Gibson Street (circular).

In late 1931 a tentative approach from the Scottish Motor Traction Company was made offering to purchase the Corporation's motorbus services. A motion to sell the undertaking was proposed and accepted by the Council, the official date of the take-over being 2 January 1932, however Kilmarnock Corporation's motor buses operated services until February

1932 when the buses and routes were handed over to the Scottish Motor Traction Company, bringing Kilmarnock Corporation's involvement in public transport to an end.

## **Tram Fleet List 1904-1926**

This listing is in the format - Year into stock; Fleet No; Type; Trucks; Body; Seating.

### **1904**

**1-11 Double-deck open-top 4-wheel      Hurst Nelson      Hurst Nelson 30/22**

Withdrawn **1926** (1-11).

### **1905**

**12 Double-deck open-top 4-wheel      Hurst Nelson 21E Hurst Nelson 30/22**

**13-14 Double-deck top-covered 4-wheel Hurst Nelson 21E Hurst Nelson 32/24**

No. 14 was vestibuled in 3/14 - the only Kilmarnock car to be so treated.  
Withdrawn **1926** (12-14).



No. 6 was one of the first batch of Hurst Nelson-built cars in 1904. (LTHL collection).





No. 13 was a 1905 balcony top-covered double-deck car built by Hurst Nelson and seating 56. It is seen here at Beansburn, with an interested bystander, awaiting departure to Riccarton. (LTHL collection).

## **Bus Fleet List 1924-1931**

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

### **1924**

1-2	SD8799-8800	Albion PH24	4055D?/4057D?	Stewart	B21D
3-4	SD8801-8802	Albion PH24	4057B?/4057C?	Stewart	B21D
5-7	SD8811-8813	Thornycroft Boadicea	10974/80/78	Cowieson	B30D

Nos. 1-2, 5-7 to Scottish Motor Traction Co 1/32 (to Western SMT 7/32; may not have been operated; they were not re-numbered).

Nos. 1-4 chassis numbers uncertain; five PH24 chassis are recorded as being built for Kilmarnock - the four above and 4058A. Only four of these vehicles went into service thus the chassis numbers above cannot be confirmed; Nos. 3-4 part-exchanged for the 3 Thornycrofts in 1928.

Withdrawn **1928** (3-4).

## 1925

8	SD8838	Thornycroft	Boadicea	10977	Cowieson	B30D
9?	SD8835	Thornycroft	Boadicea	10975	Cowieson	B30D
10?	SD8837	Thornycroft	Boadicea	10979	Cowieson	B30D
11?	SD8839	Thornycroft	Boadicea	10981	Cowieson	B30D
12	SD8836	Thornycroft	Boadicea	10976	Cowieson	B30D

SD8835, SD8837, SD8839 were numbered 9, 10, 11 but the order is unknown; to Scottish Motor Traction Co 1/32 (to Western SMT 7/32; may not have been operated; they were not re-numbered).

## 1927

14?	AG1949	Albion	PM28	7007L	NCME	B28D
15?	AG2278	Thornycroft	UB Forward	14467	NCME	B28D
13	AG2279	Thornycroft	UB Forward	14466	NCME	B28D

AG1949, AG2278 were Nos. 14, 15 but the order is unknown; to Scottish Motor Traction Co 1/32 (to Western SMT 7/32; re-numbered 3, 354, 355 respectively).

## Kilmarnock Corporation Transport 1904-1931

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No. 8 (SD8838) was one of five Thornycroft chassis delivered in 1925. All had Cowieson 29-seat dual entrance/exit bodywork and all passed to SMT in 1932. (LTHL collection).

## 1928

16	AG3194	Thornycroft	UB Forward	17116	NCME	B28D
3-4	AG3195	Thornycroft	UB Forward	14486	NCME	B28D
4	AG3196	Thornycroft	UB Forward	14487	NCME	B28D

Nos. 3, 4, 16 to Scottish Motor Traction Co 1/32 (to Western SMT 7/32; re-numbered 357, 358, 356 respectively).

## 1930

17	AG6040	Thornycroft	LC Forward	20626	Cowieson	B28D
18	AG6041	Thornycroft	LC Forward	20627	Cowieson	B28D
19	AG6042	Thornycroft	LC Forward	20625	Cowieson	B28D
20	AG6043	Thornycroft	LC Forward	20624	Cowieson	B28D

Nos. 17-20 to Scottish Motor Traction Co 1/32 (to Western SMT 7/32; re-numbered 359, 360, 361, 362 respectively).



No. 16 (AG3194) was a 1928 Thornycroft UB Forward chassis with Northern Counties 28-seat dual entrance/exit bodywork. (LTHL collection).

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Additional information, corrections and photographs are always welcome.  
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*In producing this booklet reference has been made to the following publications; Kilmarnock's Trams And Buses; Brotchie & Grieves; NB Traction; 1984. The Directory of British Tramways; Turner; Patrick Stephens Ltd; 1996. PSV Circle Fleet History PM20; 2003.*

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