

Leith Corporation Tramways



1904 - 1920

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Cover Illustration: An unidentified car of Leith Corporation Tramways built in 1905 by the United Electric Car Company of Preston. (LTHL collection).

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Leith Corporation Tramways 1904-1920

Trams in Leith were originally provided by a private company - the Edinburgh Street Tramways Company - under the Edinburgh Tramways Act of 1871. It was Scotland's first street tramway and initially opened on 6 November 1871 with the short section from the Haymarket to Bernard Street in Leith via West Maitland Street, West End and Princes Street to the Post Office then along Leith Walk (where the Company had its depot) and Leith Street to the terminus. In 1872 a second line south from the Post Office to Newington was opened.

Constructed to a gauge of 4ft 8½ins, the system was a mixture of single- and double-track and was initially worked by 12 double-deck horse cars liveried in a red/brown and cream livery. In 1893 that part of the system within the Edinburgh boundary was purchased by Edinburgh Corporation with additional lines purchased later, leaving just the Leith tracks to be worked by the Company. This it did until 23 October 1904 when Leith Corporation purchased the remaining portion of the system and set about reconstructing it for electric traction, continuing to work the horse car system in the meantime.

A new line from Bonnington to the burgh boundary at Pilrig was constructed in 1905 and commenced operations on 18 August 1905 with most of the system following on 16 September 1905. On 21 November the section to Seafield Place opened completing the first part of the system, which was double-tracked throughout.

The initial fleet consisted of 36 double-deck cars (Nos. 1-36) built by United Electric Car Company of Preston and Brush of Loughborough, liveried in Munich lake and white and operating out of the depot in Leith Walk on the site of the former horse car shed.

In 1909, under the Leith Burgh Act of 1908, another 1.9 miles of track was constructed. Opening on 11 May 1909 was the first section from Newhaven along St Arbank Road and Lower Granton Road to Granton, whilst the second section from here along Granton Road to Goldenacre opened on 2 July 1909. The final section to Bonnington Terrace opened on 3 August to complete the system which, as a result, formed a large circular route.

A major hurdle to passengers wishing to travel into Edinburgh came at the Pilrig boundary where Leith's electric trams met the cable trams of Edinburgh. Known locally as the 'Pilrig Muddle' it meant that passengers had to transfer trams to continue their journey, a situation that continued until 1922 when Edinburgh finally electrified their section of line to the Leith boundary and through running could commence.

The hugely unpopular merger between the burghs of Leith and Edinburgh in 1920 (the result of a referendum in which Leith residents voted five to one in opposition) created an enlarged Burgh of Edinburgh under the Edinburgh Boundaries Extension and Tramways Act 1920 becoming law on 5 November 1920 and as a result Leith was absorbed into Edinburgh.

Two weeks later, on the 20 November 1920, Leith Corporation Tramways was merged into its larger neighbour, Edinburgh Corporation Tramways, bringing its short 16 year existence to an end.

Tram Fleet List 1905-1920

Horse cars were operated by the Corporation from October 1904 to November 1905; details are unknown.

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

1905

1-15	Double-deck open-top 4-wheel	Brill 21E	UEC	36/22
16-19	Double-deck open-top 4-wheel	Brush AA	Brush	34/22
20-30	Double-deck open-top 4-wheel	Brush AA	Brush	34/22
31-33	Double-deck top-covered 4-wheel	Brill 21E	UEC	34/22
34-36	Double-deck top-covered 4-wheel	Brush AA	Brush	32/22
37	Double-deck open-top 4-wheel	Brush AA	Brush	32/22

Nos. 1-15 fitted with Brush top-covers in 12/12 (12 cars) or 12/14 (3 remaining cars) and were re-seated to 34/22 at the same time; Nos. 8, 10-11 fitted with platform screens in 1915. Nos. 2, 15 received new 7ft 6ins trucks in 1919.

1905 (continued)

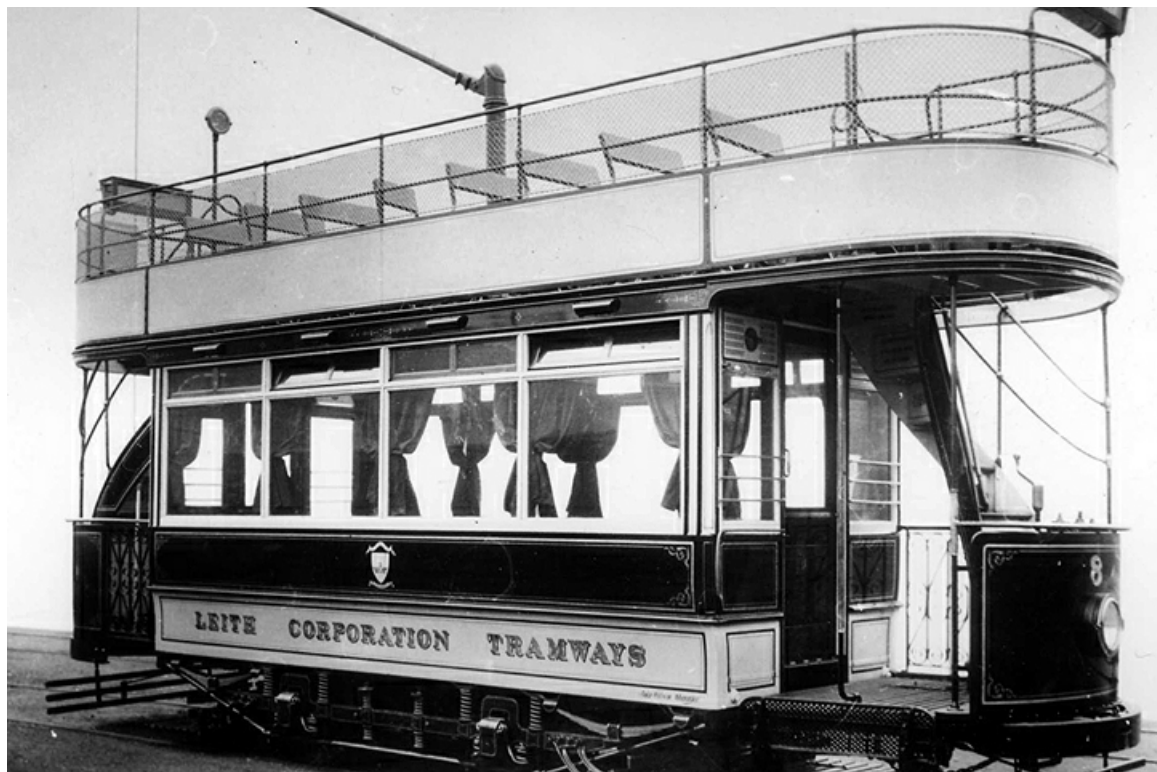
Nos. 16-19 fitted with Brush top-covers in 12/14 and were re-seated to 32/22 at the same time.

Nos. 20, 29 fitted with platform screens in 5/14[20], 3/15[29]; No. 20 had its platform screens removed later.

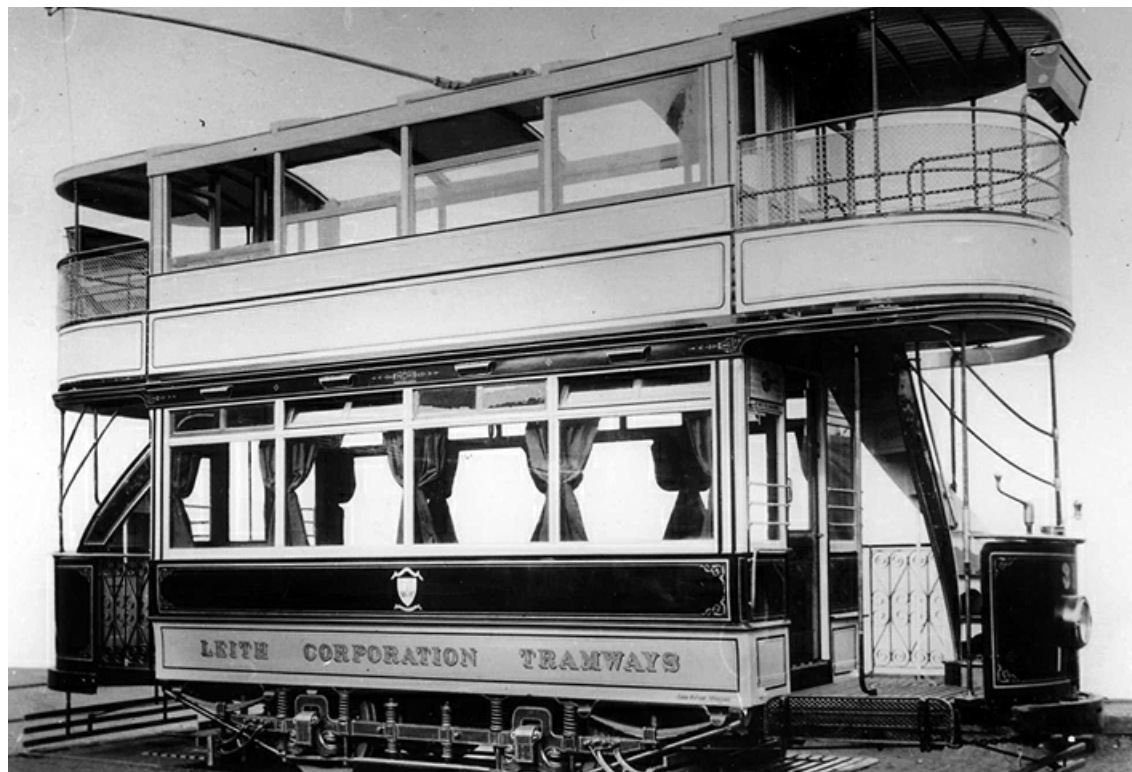
No. 35 fitted with platform screens in 1913.

No. 37 was originally a single-deck instruction car numbered 61; fitted with double-deck Brush body in 1906 and re-numbered 37; fitted with Brush top-cover in 12/14.

Nos. 1-37 to Edinburgh Corporation 11/20 (re-numbered 231-267).



Leith tram No. 8 was a 1905 open-top double-deck car seating 58 built by the United Electric Car Company, seen here when new. (Bus Archive).



Leith Corporation Tramways No. 3 was a 1905 UEC-built double-deck car, originally open-top but fitted with this Brush top-cover probably in December 1912. (Bus Archive).

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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: Directory of British Tramways; Turner, PSL, 1996; The Scotsman, April 2013; PSV Circle Fleet History, PM1, PM1C 1988.

Illustrations courtesy The Bus Archive.

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