

Dewsbury, Ossett & Soothill Nether Tramways



1908 - 1933

Contents

Dewsbury, Ossett & Soothill Nether Tramways

- Fleet History 1908-1933 Page 3
 - Tram Fleet List 1908-1933 Page 6
-

Cover Illustration: Car No. 3 on the opening day of services in November 1908. It was a Brush-built double-deck open-top car and seated 54. (LTHL collection).

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The Dewsbury, Ossett & Soothill Nether Tramways was constructed to the standard 4ft 8½ins gauge under three separate orders – the Dewsbury Corporation Tramway Order, the Ossett Corporation Tramway Order and the Soothill Nether Urban District Tramways Order – all of 1904.

Running from Dewsbury Market Place past the depot on Church Street and on to Ossett Market Place, it ran for just over 3 miles and was single-track throughout with passing loops. A short branch line which left the main line about ½-mile from Dewsbury Market Place ran to Earlesheaton a further ½-mile away.

The tramway was built by the National Electric Construction Company (NECC) but paid for by the three authorities and then leased back to the NECC who operated the tramway on their behalf.

The tramway opened to the public on 11 November 1908 with an initial fleet of eight (Nos. 1-8) 54-seat double-deck open-top cars from Brush liveried in dark red and off white.

Two separate services were worked – the main service was from Dewsbury Market Place to Ossett Market Place and the second from Dewsbury Market Place to Earlsheaton, where it was intended to provide a loop through the village to rejoin the main Wakefield Road at Earlsheaton Cemetery but

this was the only part of the proposed system that was never constructed. No further extensions to the small system were ever constructed and it remained as built for its entire life, apart from the doubling of the line at certain points.

In 1912 Soothill Nether Urban District Council became part of the borough of Dewsbury and the tramways assumed the title Dewsbury & Ossett Tramways, although there was no subsidiary tramway company and the tramway was always worked directly by the NECC.

In Ossett Market Place the tracks of the Dewsbury & Ossett Tramways met those of the Wakefield & District Light Railway end on and through running was envisaged but in the event never occurred, except on special occasions (e.g. Wakefield cars ran through to Dewsbury for matches featuring the local rugby team - Wakefield Trinity, although it seems Dewsbury & Ossett cars never ventured to Wakefield when Dewsbury played there, possibly because they were already overstretched on Saturdays and there would be no spare cars to run the service unless they were borrowed from neighbouring West Riding Tramways).

The tramway was always profitable and the number of passengers increased steadily to a peak of over 3 million in 1929, in part due to the virtual absence of competing motorbuses. In 1928 it was proposed to operate a

motorbus service in conjunction with the trams and although discussions with the local authorities continued for some time a motorbus service was never instituted.

The NECC also proposed replacing the trams with trolleybuses and representatives from both Dewsbury and Ossett visited Mexborough, Doncaster and Rotherham to see the trolleybuses in action and were, it seems, greatly impressed. However, future events overtook the proposals as the NECC and all its subsidiaries were purchased by the British Electric Traction Company (BET) in 1931.

Following the sale the former NECC subsidiaries were left to carry on operating as usual but the Dewsbury & Ossett tramways, which was not operated by a subsidiary company, was placed under the control of the BET's Yorkshire Woollen District Electric Tramways Company (YWD).

The Dewsbury & Ossett Passenger Transport Act of 1933 authorised the YWD to take over the Dewsbury & Ossett Tramways and substitute motorbuses for the trams, which they did later that year on 19 October 1933, bringing this small tramway system to an end.

Tram Fleet List 1908-1933

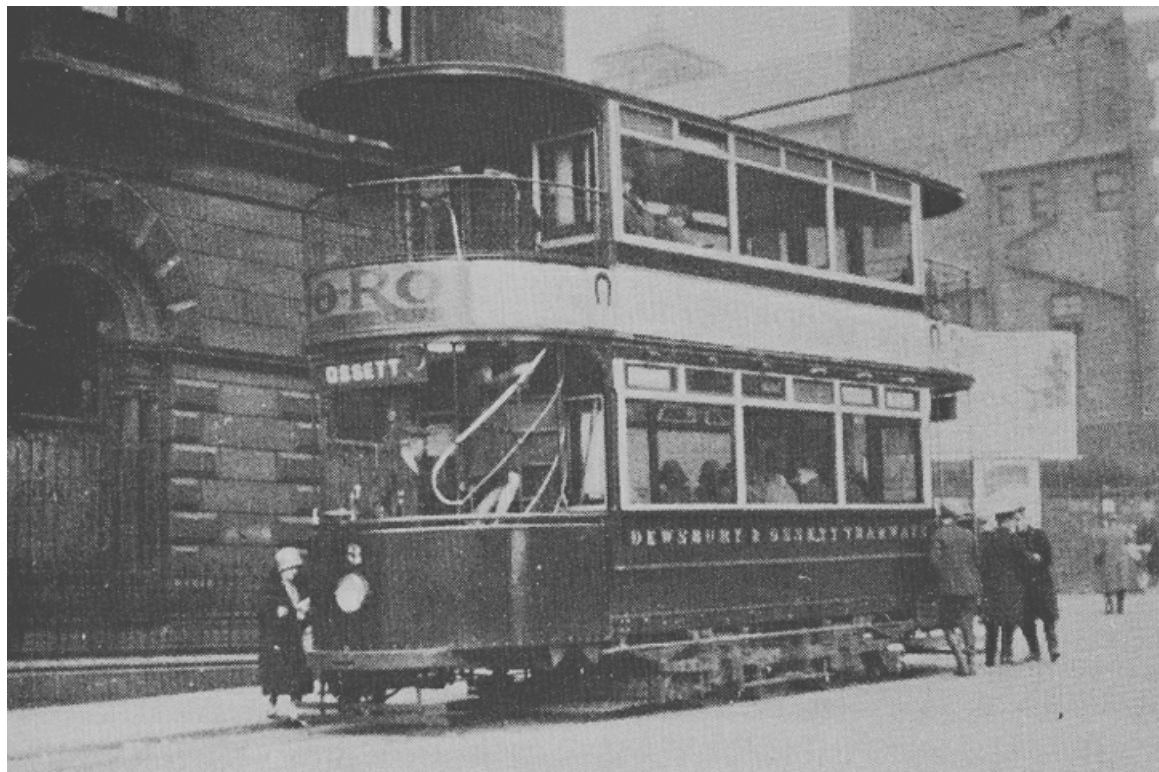
This listing is in the format - Year into service; Fleet No; Type; Trucks; Body; Seating.

1908

1-8	Double-deck open-top 4-wheel	Brush 21E	Brush	32/22
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Top covers were fitted to all these cars; two received UEC open-balcony top covers in 1915; two received English Electric open-balcony top covers in 1921; two received English Electric open-balcony top-covers in 1925 and two received identical open-balcony top-covers built by Mexborough & Swinton at Rawmarsh in 1925.

Withdrawn **1933** (1-8).



No. 3 was originally a 1908 Brush-built open-top double-deck car (as shown on the cover illustration) and is seen here in its final form with balcony top-cover. (LTHL collection).

1911

9-10 Double-deck open-top 4-wheel M&G Radial Brush 32/22

Nos. 9-10 ex-Mexborough & Swinton (Nos. 14, 10 respectively; new 1906); fitted with Brush 21E trucks at later date; received open-balcony top-covers built by Mexborough & Swinton in 1925.
Withdrawn **1933** (9-10).

1928

11-12 Double-deck top-covered 4-wheel Brush 21E Brush 32/22

Nos. 11-12 ex-Mexborough & Swinton (Nos. 7, 15 respectively; new 1906).
Withdrawn **1933** (11-12).



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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; Yorkshire Woollen District - A Short History, R. Bailey, YWD, 1978; The Tramways of Dewsbury & Wakefield, Pickles, LRTL, 1980.

Photographs from the LTHL collection.

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