

Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Co Ltd

Wakefield & District Light Railway Co Ltd

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WEST RIDDING

1904 - 1935



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Cover Illustration: Car No. 39 ex-Wakefield & District Light Railway now sporting Yorkshire (West Riding) livery. (LTHL collection).

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**Wakefield & District
Light Railway Co. Ltd.
1904-1905**

Although a number of tramway schemes had been proposed for Wakefield from the 1870's onward, the first to be constructed was promoted by a group of local businessmen and authorised by the Wakefield & District Light Railway Order of 1901. On 25 April 1903 the Yorkshire Electric Tramways Construction Syndicate Ltd was formed to build the tramway.

Over 16 miles of tramway was constructed to a gauge of 4ft 8½ins and consisted of three routes; from the Castle Inn, Sandal, via Wakefield to Thwaite Gate, Hunslet, on the Leeds boundary, where it connected with the Leeds system - through running commenced on 1 June 1905; from Agbrigg to Ossett Market Place, where a connection with the tracks of the Dewsbury, Ossett and Soothill Nether Tramway was made in 1908, but through running never took place; and a short 1½ mile branch line from Rothwell Haigh to Rothwell village, which was worked as a service from Thwaite Gate. The first two routes opened together on 15 August 1904, with the Rothwell service commencing early in December 1904 (although the exact date is unknown).

The initial fleet consisted of 55 double-deck trams, built by the Electric Railway and Tramway Carriage Works at Preston and liveried in crimson lake and cream. Nos. 1-30, delivered in 1904, were open-top, whilst Nos. 31-55 were delivered in 1905 with top covers.

On 4 April 1905, the Wakefield & District Light Railway Co. Ltd was taken over by the Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Co Ltd (a subsidiary of the Yorkshire Electric Tramways Construction Syndicate Ltd), which had been registered on the same day, although the Wakefield & District company was not officially wound up until 1911.

Tram Fleet List 1904-1905

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

1904

1-30 Double-deck open-top 4-wheel Brill 21E ERTCW 34/22

Nos. 1-30 to Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Ltd. 4/05.

1905

31-55 Double-deck top-covered 4-wheel Brill 21E ERTCW 34/22

Nos. 31-55 to Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Ltd. 4/05



No. 12 was an Electric Railway and Tramway Carriage Works 4-wheel open top double deck car built in 1904 on Brill 21E trucks and seating 56. (LTHL collection).



No. 35 was a 1905 top covered car built by the Electric Railway and Tramway Carriage Works of Preston on Brill trucks. It is seen on its way to Pontefract. (LTHL collection).

Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Co. Ltd. 1905-1935

Registered on 4 April 1905 and authorised under the West Riding Tramways Act of 1904, the Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Co Ltd was a subsidiary of the Yorkshire Electric Tramways Construction Syndicate Ltd - who had been empowered by the West Riding Tramways Act of 1904 to acquire, construct and operate a network of tramway services in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Although some 50 miles of tramway was proposed, most was never constructed, and the mainstay of the system was the Wakefield and District Light Railway Co Ltd, who had already commenced operations on 15 August 1904 and was taken over on 4 April 1905.

The tramcar fleet as acquired consisted of 55 double-deck trams, built by the Electric Railway and Tramway Carriage Works of Preston. Nos. 1-30, delivered in 1904, were open-top, whilst Nos. 31-55 were delivered in 1905 with top covers. The livery was initially crimson lake and cream, but during the First World War cars were painted brown and grey before a livery of two shades of green was finally adopted in the early 1920's.

On 29 October 1906 a line linking Normanton, Castleford and Pontefract was opened and although powers were granted for lines from Wakefield to Normanton, and from Castleford to Rothwell, which would have connected the two sections, they were never built and the Castleford tramway remained isolated from the Wakefield and District system. The initial rolling stock consisted of sixteen former Wakefield and District cars (Nos. 23-38), which had to be hauled by steam traction engines to the new depot in Wheldon Road, Castleford for the commencement of services. This depot was destroyed by fire on 5 March 1917, along with eight tramcars. Replacement cars were loaned by Leeds Corporation and subsequently purchased.

By the early 1920's it had become apparent that an extension of the tramway system would not be feasible and it was agreed that a fleet of motorbuses would be acquired. Consequently £30,000 was set aside for the purchase of 22 Bristol 4-ton vehicles, which were delivered in time for services to commence on Easter Monday 1922. 13 similar vehicles were ordered for delivery the following year.

On 16 November 1923, the Company registered a wholly owned subsidiary - the West Riding Automobile Company Ltd, which would be solely responsible for the operation of the new fleet of motorbuses. The buses acquired by the parent company were accordingly transferred to the new subsidiary (backdated to 1 January 1923) and the fleetname 'West Riding' was adopted for both buses and trams.

Later that year, powers to abandon the unconstructed sections of the tramway were obtained, although the remaining tramways continued to be operated as normal.

By 1925, however, it had become obvious that the isolated Castleford tramway was facing a serious threat from the motorbus and becoming unremunerative. On 1 November 1925, it was closed down (the last car being No. 13) and the following day services were taken over by West Riding's motorbuses.

The Tramway Company continued to build up its subsidiary motorbus fleet and plans to replace the remaining trams were mooted. On 1 June 1932 the final tramcar operated on the Sandal to Leeds route, being replaced by motorbuses the following day, and on 25 July 1932 the trams on the Ossett to Agbrigg route ceased to run.

Now that the trams were no longer running, there was no need for two separate companies. The subsidiary motorbus company was put into voluntary liquidation on 20 March 1935 and officially wound up on 30 June 1935 and on the following day, 1 July 1935, the Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Company Limited changed its name to the West Riding Automobile Company Limited - bringing the tramway era to a final close.

Tram Fleet List 1905-1935

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

1905

1-30	Double-deck open-top 4-wheel	Brill 21E	ERTCW	34/22
31-55	Double-deck top-covered 4-wheel	Brill 21E	ERTCW	34/22

Nos. 1-55 ex-Wakefield & District Light Railway (new 1904 (1-30) or 1905).

Nos. 1-30 received top-covers in 1911-13; No. 28 destroyed by fire at Castleford 3/17 (and possibly one or more of 23-25/29).

Nos. 31, 34, 35, 37 destroyed by fire at Castleford 3/17 (and possibly one or more of 33/36/38).

Withdrawn **1917** (28, 31, 34, 35, 37 and three of 23-25/29/33/36/38), **1932** (13, 17, 26, 27, 30), **between 1927 and 1932** (remainder).



No. 9 was a 1904 ERTCW car inherited from the Wakefield company and is shown here wearing its new livery and 'bow-tie' style fleetname. (LTHL collection).

Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Co. Ltd. 1904-1935



No. 39 was a 1905 ERTCW-built top-covered car on its way to Agbrigg on a wet Yorkshire day. (LTHL collection).

1906

56-61 Double-deck top-covered 4-wheel Brill 21E	UEC	34/22
62-67 Double-deck open-top 4-wheel Brill 21E	UEC	34/22

Nos. 62-67 received top-covers in 1912-1913.
 Withdrawn **between 1927 and 1932** (56-67).

1919

68-75 Double-deck top-covered 4-wheel Peckham Cantilever Brush	32/24
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Nos. 68-75 ex-Leeds Corporation (Nos. 133, 138, 147, 148, 163, 170, 177, 180 (order unknown), new 1899); on hire from 1917 until purchased; Nos. 68-74 re-trucked with Brill 21E trucks at a later date.
 Withdrawn **between 1927 and 1932** (68-69, 71-73, 75), **1932** (70, 74).

Yorkshire (West Riding) Electric Tramways Co. Ltd. 1904-1935



In 1919 the company purchased eight ex-Leeds Corporation cars dating from 1899. This is No. 74 a Brush-built top covered double-deck car that lasted until 1932. (LTHL collection).

1920

28	Double-deck top-covered	4-wheel	EEC	English Electric	34/22
31	Double-deck top-covered	4-wheel	EEC	English Electric	34/22
34	Double-deck top-covered	4-wheel	EEC	English Electric	34/22
35	Double-deck top-covered	4-wheel	EEC	English Electric	34/22
37	Double-deck top-covered	4-wheel	EEC	English Electric	34/22
?/?/?	Double-deck top-covered	4-wheel	EEC	English Electric	34/22

This batch of eight cars took the numbers of the eight cars destroyed by fire at Castleford in 1917. Three of these cars have not been identified but by elimination must be three of 23-25, 29, 33, 36 or 38.

Withdrawn **1932** (28, 31, 34-35, 37 and unknown cars).

Bus Fleet List 1922

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

1922

101-105	HL1320-24	Bristol	4-ton	1526/29/25/30/32	BBW	B30D
106	HL1325	Bristol	4-ton	1533	BBW	B30D
107-113	HL1373-79	Bristol	4-ton	1521/23/1452-56	BBW	B30D
114-116	HL1380-82	Bristol	4-ton	1459/1520/1451	BBW	B30D
117-119	HL1430-32	Bristol	4-ton	1466/64/70	BBW	B30D
120-122	HL1433-35	Bristol	4-ton	1475-76/74	Strachan & Brown	B31F

Nos. 101-122 to West Riding Automobile Company Limited 1/23.



No. 110 (HL1376) a 1922 Bristol 4-ton with Bristol B30D bodywork on its way to Wakefield.
(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; The Directory of British Tramways, Turner, PSL, 1996; The Tramways of Dewsbury and Wakefield, W Pickles, Light Rail Transit Association, 1980.

Illustration courtesy The Bus Archive.

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