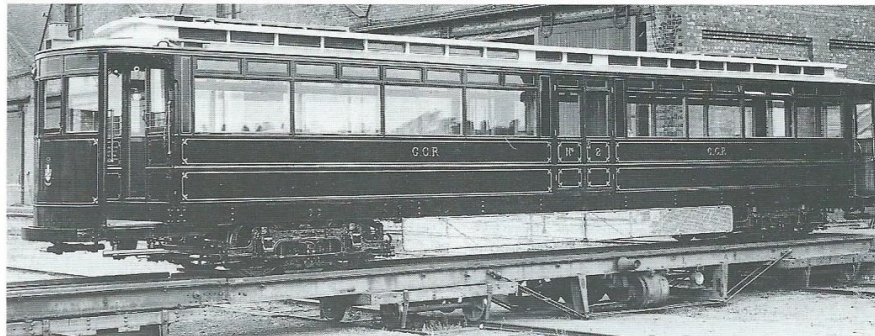


# GLIMPSES OF THE PAST

By George Toms



## 10. BY BRUSH TRAM TO IMMINGHAM

Until the Great Central Railway developed the extensive docks complex on the south bank of the River Humber before the Great War, Immingham was almost unknown.

The railway company owned several lines in the area and these served the docks and Grimsby town also. It was the Great Central Railway's eastern link with Europe. During the construction of the docks the dock contractor laid down a line for his own use and afterwards (1910-12) a steam railcar passenger service was operated on it by the Great Central Railway between Grimsby and Immingham.

Its success led to a standard track gauge (4ft 8½in) electric tramway being built by the Great Central Railway parallel to it entitled the Grimsby and Immingham Electric Railway. The main section of 5¾ miles was opened for traffic on 15th May 1912 from Corporation Bridge, Grimsby, to Immingham Town, being extended to the latter's Eastern Jetty 17th November 1913; total mileage reached 7¾ eventually. It served to transport dock workmen between the docks and Grimsby and Great Central Railway engineman to and from Immingham locomotive depot.

The Great Central Railway ordered its tramcars from Brush and was not a new customer. Sumptuous carriages and dining cars had been supplied several years previously, so Brush products were already well-known first hand on the railway.

For the opening, eight Brush single deck tramcars of two sizes were delivered. Nos. 1 to 4 were 54ft 2in over fenders, then Britain's longest tramcars and weighed 17 tons each. They were mounted on two four wheeled Brush Standard equal-wheel trucks, each with a Dick Kerr DK9 50 hp motor driving the inner axle. Each car seated 32 passengers on reversible wooden seats in each of two saloons with a further capacity of eight tip up seats in the control luggage compartment. Officially, about 30 standing passengers could be carried.

Nos. 5 to 8 were 38ft 10in long, weighed 15 tons and were designed to run beyond the electric railway into the centre of Grimsby on the town tramway system, but lack of early replacement of an existing intervening bridge too weak to support their weight ensured that this never occurred. These cars each seated 48 passengers (20 in each saloon plus 8 in the luggage compartment). They were similarly powered by Dick Kerr DK10B 35 hp motors.

Four more cars similar to Nos. 1 to 4 were built by Brush in 1913 (Nos. 9 to 12) followed by another four in 1915 (Nos. 13 to 16). The last four were said to have been completed by the Great Central Railway at its Dukinfield Works, so perhaps the Falcon Works despatched them incomplete due to more pressing war work?

Power pick up was from an overhead wire supply of 500 volts d.c. with the return circuit through the bonded running rails. The railway was for some parts of its route on reversed track and on

other parts acted as a street tramway.

The tramcars were splendid vehicles when new in Great Central Railway livery complete with the company's coat of arms, ornate lining out and high gloss varnished finish. In 1923 the Great Central Railway became part of the London and North Eastern Railway and the reddish-brown livery gave way to a varnished teak style. The finish needed to be good because when not in use the tramcars normally stood in the open on sidings adjacent to the workshop, which could only hold three vehicles.

The Brush cars served the railway well, maintaining a half-hourly service during the day and approximately hourly intervals at night and on Sundays. During the last war convoys of six cars were common on weekday peak services. The above services increased at peak times to five minute intervals. Journey times averaged 20 minutes with speed limits of 12 mph being imposed on the street sections and 25 mph in open country. The docks extension at the western end added no more to the schedule, the existing times being adjusted accordingly.

The four short cars (5 to 8) were withdrawn from revenue earning service during the early 1930's when one of the services was withdrawn, but No. 5 served on after being converted into a repair and maintenance service vehicle.

The remaining vehicles continued in service for much longer, being most useful on account of their high capacity seating. Two were withdrawn in 1951 (2 and 10), one in 1952 (13) and the remaining eight (1, 3, 4, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16) in July 1961 when the system finally closed. No. 15 was saved for preservation by British Railways, which had inherited the line in 1948. It passed to the Tramway Museum Society who stored it at Clay Cross until 1988, when it was moved to the National Railway Museum at York for restoration.

Although some decline occurred in the early 1930's, this was later offset by wartime traffic. In the late 1940's industrial expansion along the Humber south bank increased traffic further, so much so that more cars were required to meet traffic demands.

Only second-hand tramcars were available due to the decline in street tramways and the lack of tramcar builders. Three were bought in 1948, four in 1951 and a further eighteen 1952-4. Of these acquisitions seven (Nos. 17, 21, 23, 28, 29, 32 and 33) were Brush Tramcars that had seen previous service on Gateshead & District Tramways Co lines and dated from either 1921 or 1923. All survived in service until closure in 1961.

Gradual reductions in services and Grimsby Corporation exercising its right to take over lines within its boundary combined to ensure closure. After this occurred most of the surviving cars met an ignominious end by being burnt, after all valuable fittings had been removed.

Brush car No. 21 was specially prepared for the final day of operation, but on the day before it was accidentally backed into the depot doors and thus missed out on the lap of honour as it were.