



Glimpses of the past

By George Toms

1. The Kearney Railcar

The Kearney High-Speed Railcar was the brainchild of a man who rejoiced in the name Elfric Wells Chalmers Kearney.

The Kearney monorail system was first publicly introduced in 1908 and relied upon a single bearing rail beneath a railcar and a single overhead guide rail to keep the car upright. The guide rail was rigidly braced and supported by standards placed at intervals of sixty feet rendering derailment almost impossible.

Propulsion was electric, the traction motors being suspended on the same centre lines as the driving wheels. The Kearney system was intended for surface, elevated or tube railways.

It is believed that the system had very little practical application, if any at all, but at some stage Brush became involved in the building of an unusual railcar, illustrated here.

About 1910 the railcar took shape and was completed at the Falcon Works, presenting the photographer of the day with an unusual subject. Various views were taken at various stages of construction and on completion the railcar was a very smart-looking vehicle indeed with ends shaped like the prow of a boat. A least one illustration shows the top rail with two guide wheels protruding from the roof of the railcar and a pair of two-wheeled bogies mounted beneath the car.

In the accompanying view the railcar is seen mounted upon accommodation bogies, the whole being perched on the tramcar traverser which was a well-known feature within the works for many years and which succumbed to wartime building needs some fifty years ago.

It was a luxurious car with comfortable fittings and inlaid wood floor set in herringbone fashion, indeed it became one of the best known haunts of the nearby workforce, particularly at night. That Kearney lacked sufficient funds to pay for the railcar soon became apparent to Brush and the company was left 'holding the baby' as it were. Shortly after the Great War it was broken up and several legends have components buried within the works in various places. Perhaps readers can enlighten me?

The location of the car in the illustration is now occupied by part of 23 Coil Shop and the DAX Coil Shop. The right hand side of the traverser pit today is marked by a long row of concrete slabs in the latter shop covering a pipe run under the floor.