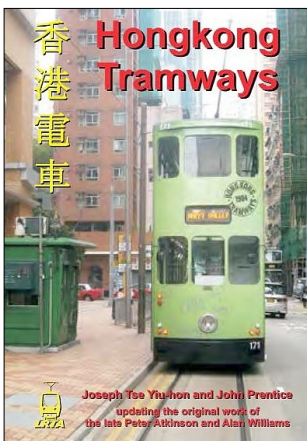


System for a Tramway'. Further appendices cover the short-lived petrol-electric trams, time-tables etc. and concluding with an extensive bibliography.

This is a beautifully produced bound book, both by its content and choice of paper it is print-

ed on, which imparts a tonal quality to the photographs seldom achieved elsewhere. Save up if you have to, but it will be money very well spent and both you and your library shelf will be all the richer for it.

**Bob Appleton**



## **Hongkong Tramways**

By the late Peter Atkinson, Alan Williams, Joseph Tse Yiu-hon and John Prentice  
A4 softback, 216 pages, with over 500 illustrations.  
Published by the LRTA

Available from:  
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Price £27.50 plus £3.50 p&p (UK)  
ISBN 978-0-948106-48-4  
(See also advertisement on p.40)

changed out of all recognition for those that knew Hong Kong in the 1970s or even earlier. This is brought home in many of the new pictures.

Naturally, the real value in this book is the more recent history and development of the tramway since 1970.

Politically of course, the biggest change was the handing back of Hong Kong from Britain to the People's Republic of China in 1997 but this had little

The original 'Hongkong Tramways' book by Peter Atkinson and Alan Williams was published by the LRTL (now the LRTA) in 1970 but has been out of print and even hard to obtain second-hand for decades. Now, 47 years later, an overdue but welcome, larger and updated edition has appeared, thanks to the persistence and determination of new authors John Prentice and Joseph Tse Yiu-hon.

Most of the original text is unchanged and all of the original illustrations have been re-used, although there were relatively few to start with. The bulk of this new edition adds to the story from 1970 to 2016/2017 but, as the new authors say, keeping up-to-date is like trying to hit a moving target.

The main update is the addition of hundreds more photographs, including many older images from the earlier days of the tramway, which add greatly to the historical content.

As far as the trams themselves are concerned, the book describes in considerable detail how the fleet has been rebodied and modernised without losing all of the old character of this unique British-style tramway.

The routes are essentially the same but the areas and streets through which they run have

direct effect on the tramway.

The 1970s and 1980s had been successful but the 1990s were not the best for the Hong Kong tramways with many challenges such as outdated safety systems and competition from bus services. The new Island Line of the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) was seen as the death knell of the tramway by some but patronage did not collapse after the line opened in 1985.

Safety issues, not least of which were controller fires, and fare rises helped to thwart ideas of a new, modern tram fleet and route extensions. Numerous abortive studies were undertaken, including a doomed flirtation with trolley-buses - actually, only one trolleybus.

The new millennium brought a new tram - the 'Millennium' type with an all-metal body and modern bus-like appearance. Four prototypes were built with great hopes for the future but that's where the project stalled and stopped. Instead, the eventual 'new fleet' reverted to new bodies of the traditional design with modern features, but reusing much of the equipment from scrapped trams. This one-for-one replacement programme is still on-going.

Chapter 11 is especially interesting. It starts with a 1960s journey description along the main

route by original author Alan Williams, including observations of the passing scenery. This is followed by the same journey taken in 2012 by new co-author Joseph Tse. The route itself has changed little in over 50 years but everything else around it has. It is an enlightening comparison backed up by many pictures.

Coverage of the all-important rolling stock arrives in Chapter 12 but, for the pre-1970 period, it is essentially from the original edition. For post-1970 stock, the pictures and descriptions are very well detailed. Apart from the liveries, it seems almost all trams in the fleet are unique in one way or another - an enthusiast's dream, or nightmare perhaps.

Construction stages of the new fleet, including works cars, are amply illustrated and captioned over many fascinating pages. Some of the data are tabulated for clarity.

An update to the original chapter on depots follows, about closure of the large Sharp Street depot and opening of new depots at Whitty Street and Sai Wan Ho, all copiously illustrated. There are major additions to the chapters on track, power supplies, fares and tickets. For items that were not designed to be kept, the pages of coloured tram tickets through the ages are impressive. Tickets were abolished in 1977.

Hong Kong trams are renowned for their colourful all-over advertising and it's good to see a new chapter dedicated to the topic. With many of the Chinese adverts being illustrated and translated, this reviewer has finally found out what some of them were all about.

The last of the original chapters, on company background, has been updated to reflect the cur-

rent state of affairs and includes a number of illustrations absent from the original work.

The book ends with several appendices covering the fleet lists and tram descriptions from 1904 onwards in considerable detail. However, such lists for the present-day cars are quickly and already out of date due to the rebodding programme, so no criticism of the authors here.

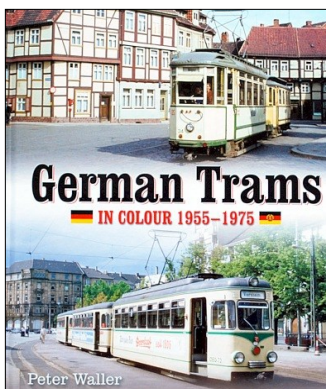
Tram stop signs, route maps, destination blinds and the Hong Kong 'standard truck' (fascinating detail here) almost complete this book. The final parts describe the Hong Kong cars for Birkenhead, model Hong Kong trams (a whole book could be written on these) and close with an addendum to bring us up to date as far as possible prior to printing. This covers the changed tram workings due to disruption caused by pro-democracy demonstrations, new trams 68 and 88 and the new brand image introduced in May 2017.

That's the long review and summary but should you buy this book? Unequivocally, yes! Its 216 colourful pages require less than half an inch of bookshelf space and this is now the standard work for decades to come and against which all or any newcomers will be judged.

If you have ever been to Hong Kong you must have this for the memories it will bring back. If you have never been there, this book will persuade you to go - it really is as colourful a place as the pages depict.

The new authors are to be congratulated on their resolve, in spite of many difficulties, to get this new edition into print. Their efforts have not been in vain and should be applauded.

**Bob Appleton**



## **German Trams in Colour 1955-1975**

By Peter Waller. 265mm x 230mm  
portrait hardcover with 160 pages and  
over 200 illustrations.

Published by Unique Books

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ISBN: 978-0-9957493-1-3

This is literally an A to Z (Aachen to Zwickau) of colourful trams from Germany when it was still split between East and West. This particular time period has been chosen because the author identifies it as depicting the final years of traditional