

ELECTRIC TRAINS

A POCKET HISTORY

Robin Jones

Everyone knows that Britain invented the steam locomotive. Yet while Britain was gripped by the great period of railway building of the 1830s and '40s in which many of our inter-city routes began to take shape, there were those who believed that the future lay beyond steam haulage. In 1837 Scotsman Robert Davidson built a model electric locomotive, and followed it up with a four-wheeled machine, *Galvani*, that was powered by zinc-acid batteries. It was the world's first electric locomotive. The first English patent for the use of rails as conductors of electric current was granted in 1840. But it took until 1882 until Britain's first public electric railway was opened, in Brighton – the Volks Electric Railway.

Expert Robin Jones traces the history of electric traction in Britain, from these pioneering early days, through nostalgic underground trains and the "Brighton Belle", right up to Eurostar and the Pendolino in the twenty-first century, when a large proportion of the national rail network is electrified.

In more than 60 images and with a sharp and incisive text, *Electric Trains* is the ideal brief guide, in Halsgrove's new collectible, pocket-size format.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A graduate of the University of Central England, Robin Jones, founding editor of *Heritage Railway* magazine, was a news editor and chief investigative reporter at the *Birmingham Evening Mail*, and over the years has produced several books and special publications, along with historical features for numerous other newspapers and periodicals.

He has been interested in railways from a very early age, when his elder brother Stewart took him trainspotting at Widney Manor station in Solihull at the age of four; at the end of the British Railways steam age.

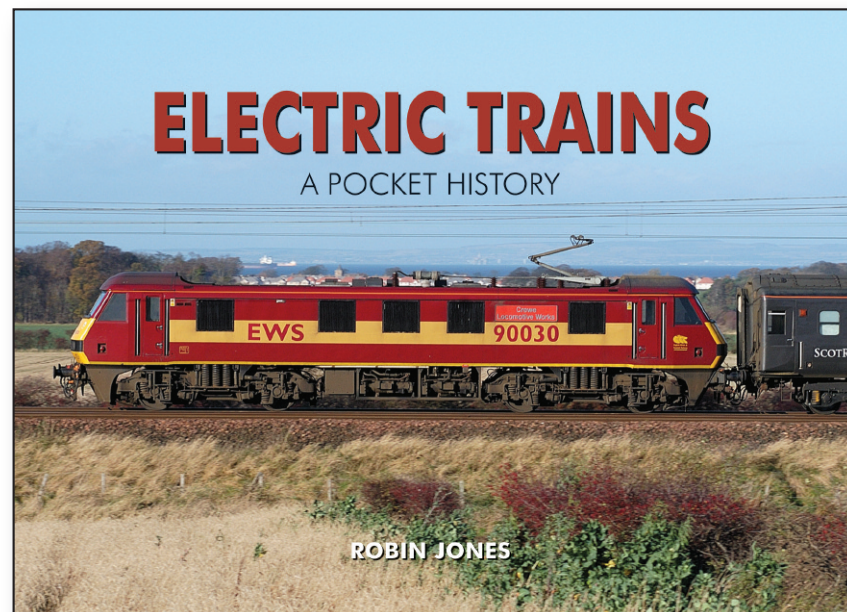
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The 48-mile Tyne and Wear Metro, which uses a 1500VAC overhead supply and opened in 1980, has been hailed as Britain's first modern light rail system.



Outside London, the North Eastern Railway began electrifying suburban lines in Tyneside in 1902, along with a three-quarters-of-a-mile mile, horseshoe-shaped Newcastle Quay freight branch line with gradients as steep as 1-in-27 and sharp curves.



The 19-mile Docklands Light Railway is a light rail system opened on 31 August 1987 to serve the redeveloped Docklands area of East London.



Newcastle's Harton Coal Company pioneered the use of electric traction on its extensive industrial system taking coal and colliery waste to shipping staithes on the River Tyne.



After slam-door stock was withdrawn from the national network in 2005, South West Trains obtained special dispensation to reduce two 4-CIG (Class 421) EMUs to 3-CIGS (removing one car) for use on the 6½-mile Lymington branch.



The 'Brighton Belle' was the world's first electric all-Pullman service. Introduced by the Southern Railway on 29 June 1934, comprising three five-car EMU sets designated S-BEL, it ran from London Victoria to Brighton until its controversial withdrawal on 30 April 1972. The 'Brighton Belle' is seen at London Victoria in 1961.

Below right: A 'Brighton Belle' set running through Marsham, as painted by G. Brwenant Jones. In 2009, a group under the banner of the S-BEL Trust launched an ambitious £600,000 project to recreate a five-car 'Brighton Belle' set from five surviving vehicles for future main line use, filling a major gap in railway preservation.

Below left: Boarding the 'Brighton Belle' in its heyday.



Example of a double-page spread.