



# Streets of Belfast

*Mark Kennedy*

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## **Streets of Belfast** Mark Kennedy

As the only municipal operator in the north of Ireland, the City of Belfast has a number of claims to fame in transport history. It was the only Irish tramway to adopt the British standard gauge of nominally 4ft 8.5in (it was actually 4ft 9in), it was also the only operator of trolleybuses in Ireland, and it was the last electric tramway to operate in Northern Ireland. It was in 1904 that Belfast obtained an act of parliament that allowed the take-over, amidst much acrimony, of the company-owned tramways that had existed in the city from the early 1870s. The actual take-over occurred in 1905 and the city's first electric trams operated towards the end of that year. Electric trams were to be a familiar sight on Belfast's streets until 1954, when the last was withdrawn. There was a number of unusual facets to the city's tramway operation, most notable being the fact that services actually entered two of the city's railway stations, thereby providing undercover interchange facilities between two forms of tracked transport. It was in 1938 that Belfast became Ireland's sole operator of trolleybuses, making it one of the last places in the British isles to introduce this form of transport; the trolleybuses were to survive for 30 years, the last of which was withdrawn in 1968. The withdrawal of the last trolleybuses from Belfast made an appropriate cut-off point for the third in Ian Allan Publishing's new 'Streets of' series, which focuses on the urban environment of Belfast from the immediate postwar years through to the end of the trolleybus era. The book shows through the medium of over 80 colour transparencies and detailed captions, the story of public transport in the city for more than 20 years, and provides a colourful reminder of the changing nature of the city over the period. Belfast and environs. Preserved Belfast trolleybuses can be seen in Belfast and at the East Anglia Transport Museum.

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