



## Mysterious Hong Kong Tramcar Identities

Joseph Tse does some detective work on trams 12, 29, 30 and 88

Car 29 entered service on 20 January 1988 and is seen with an all-over advertising livery for 'Amazing Thailand' in December 2000.

*Photographer unknown*

Over the years there have been a few changes to the tram numbers in the Hong Kong fleet. Individual parts are freely exchanged between trams while undergoing overhaul but, apart from new trams 171, 173, 174 and 175 which have replaced the trams from gaps in the previous series (the former 63, 71, 85 and 134), the story of tram numbers 12, 29, 30 and 88 is an extraordinary one.

In June 1987, tram 12 was the first car of the



The body of original 29 might have been discarded afterwards at Whitty Street Depot (see top of next page) whilst a 'new' 29 in green paint without adverts but plus coloured destination blinds was seen in February 2002.

*Photographer unknown*

new series to receive a completely new body and underframe from local industry (instead of a rebuilt body), which replaced the 'post-war' body built in 1952 that had gone to Vancouver, Canada, in 1985 for the Expo there. During the programme of lifeguard removal from new and old trams (including heritage car 120 but excluding tour cars 28 and 128), lifeguards were replaced by deep fenders which now carry the car number. In 2002, it was noticed that the body of 29 was discarded at Whitty Street Depot whilst a 'new' 29 had replaced it in public service, although its original identity was unknown.

Meanwhile, tram 30 of 1988 had been used experimentally with full-height platform doors instead of the traditional gates. Car 88, one of the 1986 rebuilds, had experimental traffic indicators on both ends, which modifications were afterwards seen on present cars. For some reason, tram 30 was reported as 'scrapped' in 2002 and the vacancy has lasted for quite a few years. From other sources, we have seen a few unidentified bodies being scrapped in early 2002, and one of those was possibly tram 12.

In the mid-1990s, HKT faced another challenge with numerous accidents,



Left: Seen in October 2006, the body of 29 stripped down and entering the workshop. Note that the fleet number on the roof box (at top left) has been erased, probably to avoid confusion with the 'new' 29 then in service.

*Joseph Tse Yiu-hon*

Below: New 30 is nearly complete and painted in green, seen here at Whitty Street Depot in November 2006. It carries a trolley pole with two tension springs on a higher mounting than normal.

*Joseph Tse Yiu-hon*

hence a dummy car 888 was built in 1996 for fire evacuation exercises. The body is of the 1987 style, painted in green but without resistors or truck. In Chinese traditions, the number '8' means 'getting rich' and is regarded as a 'lucky' number; it seems the company intended to lessen the adverse impact by using such numbers.

In October 2006 the discarded body of 29 was stripped down and rebuilt as the 'new' 30.



A 'hidden' number 30 painted under a bench seat of current tram 12, indicating this should be the previous 30 used in full-height door test experiments in 1988.

*Joseph Tse Yiu-hon*



In the meantime, when tracing the identity of current tram 12, a hidden '30' was found written under a bench, indicating this should be the previous 30 of 1988. This overturned the point, as stated elsewhere in a publication, that 888 was rebuilt to 12.

In March 2014, 30 suffered a serious crash with its lower front panels torn off. It was soon repaired and returned to service but was then withdrawn and stripped down in the depot. A few months later, another 'new' 30 was seen in the street with the roof box number in the same font as the new cars. The only proof that it was renumbered from 88 was the number painted on the flat roof in white which had not been corrected, albeit elsewhere it is shown as '30'.



*Left:* The original 12 of 1987, which replaced the 1950s style 12 shipped to the United States, was scrapped in early 2002. You can just see the number written in black on the lower right-hand corner of the dash.

*T.V. Runnacles*

*Below:* The dummy car 888, used for fire evacuation exercises, is seen in December 2000. It is likely renumbered to be the present 29, not 12 as stated elsewhere.

*Lars F. Richter*

As to HKT, the air-conditioning testing resumed and a new 88 was built, with hopper vents, and was recently involved in road testing. (The former air-con test car 171 of 2002 had fully enclosed windows).

My thanks to John Prentice for assistance.



After a serious crash, 30 was withdrawn and stripped down in the depot. Note the faint '29' chalked on the dark metal bulkhead at the top of the picture indicating its original identity.

*Joseph Tse Yiu-hon*



'New' 30 on 8 July 2014 renumbered from 88 (the white number 88 on the roof can still be seen), in juxtaposition with the new 88 seen on 27 February 2015 equipped for air-con and AC motor testing.

*Joseph Tse Yiu-hon*



**Double take!**  
An amazing view at Whitty Street depot showing two trams numbered 30 at the same time, on 16 March 2015. Ex-88 is on the left and the skeletal framing of ex-29 is on the right.

*Joseph Tse Yiu-hon*

## Coming in the Next Issue\*

**TLRS AGM Illustrated Report**  
**Festival of Model Tramways Report**

**Fylde Coast in 00 scale**

**Another Tram Depot Pub Crawl**

*(Postponed from this issue)*

**The Town That Jim Built**

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**Model Trams, Trolleybuses,  
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## BEC-KITS

47 Woodlands Road, Lancaster, LA1 2EH

## Announcement

BEC-KITS has suspended some activities due to removal and retirement. Tram trucks, white-metal kits and parts will no longer be produced. Tower Trams plastic kits, decals and Sommerfeldt overhead parts will still be available.

If you have a serious interest in buying the business, please contact us.

*Thank you very much for all your support over the past 20 years.*

**www.bec-kits.co.uk**  
**info@bec-kits.co.uk**