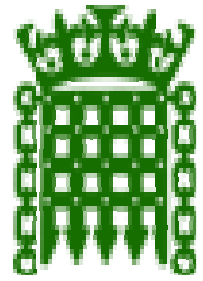


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House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

"The past we inherit, the future we build"
Trams – Catalysts for Jobs, Renewal & Regeneration



Hiroshima tram resumes service in original colors to convey horrors of A-bomb



June 14, 2015

The No. 653 streetcar of Hiroshima Electric Railway Co., which has been repainted into the original gray and blue colours, passes in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome in central Hiroshima on June 13. (Yoshihisa Aoyama)

HIROSHIMA--An inspirational symbol, one of the few remaining streetcars that survived the August 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima has been repainted its original gray and blue colours to mark the 70th anniversary of the world's first use of a nuclear weapon.

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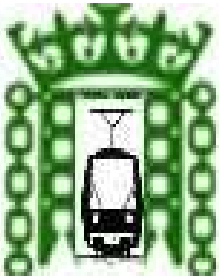
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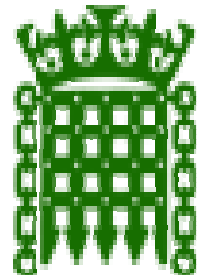


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As it departed JR Hiroshima Station for its maiden trip after restoration on time at 10:30 a.m. on June 13, local residents and train buffs trained their cameras on the train.

One of the passengers, Shoichi Kato, a 22-year-old student of Hiroshima University, said that the "A-bomb trams" are precious assets of the city.

"They must be preserved for future generations," he said.

The Hiroshima Electric Railway Co.'s Model 650 tramcars, which were introduced in 1942, are regarded as one of the symbols of the city's recovery from the A-bombing on Aug. 6, 1945, as the lines resumed operation only three days later.

Of the Model 650 trams that survived the A-bomb, which completely flattened the city and killed an estimated 140,000 people, three A-bomb Trams are still in operation, conveying memories of the atrocity to daily commuters and tourists today.

To commemorate the 70th anniversary, the railway company, affectionately called "Hiroden" by local citizens, restored and repainted one of the three tramcars, which was temporarily retired in 2006. Now the No. 653 car is back with the original grey colour on the upper half of its body and blue on the bottom.

Among the crowd who observed the streetcar's departure on June 13 was Sachiko Masuno, a 85-year-old "hibakusha" A-bomb survivor who worked as a driver and conductor for Hiroden tramcars during the closing months of World War II after enrolling in a women's vocational school operated by the railway company in 1942. Masuno, who continued working as a conductor for two years after the atomic bombing, said that the Hiroden trams still remind her of many former colleagues who lost their lives that day. Of the 1,241 Hiroden employees at the time, at least 185 were killed in the A-bombing, while 108 streetcars, or nearly 90 percent of the company's trams, were destroyed or damaged. Of her 300 classmates, about 30 also died in the tragedy.

"It is very moving to see the same streetcar that endured the city's heinous experience still running in its original colour," Masuno said. "It is a very precious peacetime treasure."

Two other Model 650 tramcars, No. 651 and 652, which were repainted in green and cream colours after the end of the war, still operate on the light rail network that stretches across the southern Japanese city.

The repainted No. 653 car will operate through Aug. 30 on weekends and national holidays on a roundtrip route between JR Hiroshima Station and Hiroden Nishi-hiroshima Station, which passes in front of the iconic Atomic Bomb Dome.

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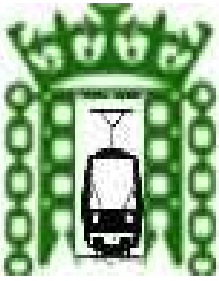
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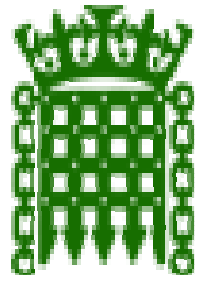


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Documentary footage on the testimony of A-bomb survivors and the city's post-war recovery is shown by monitors inside the tramcar.

Passengers wanting to ride the train need to make a reservation by calling 082-222-1155 (weekdays only).

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