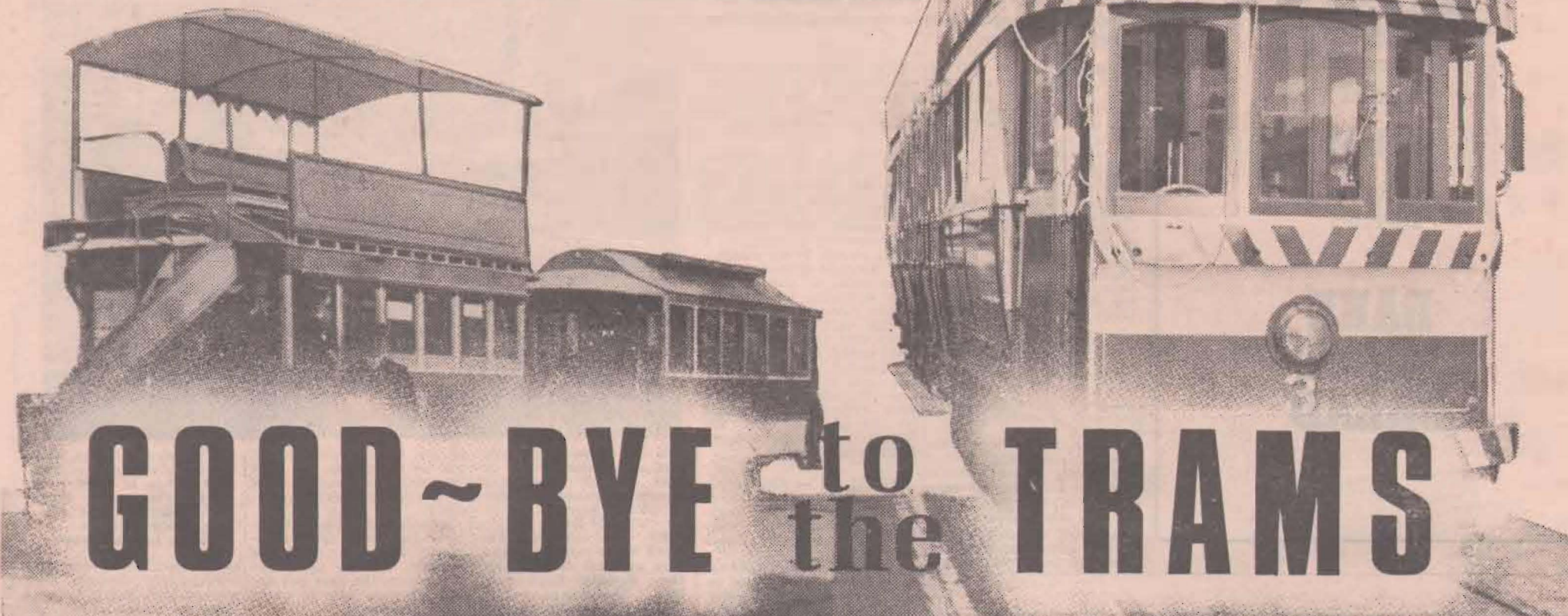


BENDIGO SAYS..



GOOD~BYE to the TRAMS

**BENDIGO
ADVERTISER
FEATURE
Thursday,
April 13, 1972**

FOUR ERAS

There were four eras in the history of Bendigo trams.

The first trial run of battery-operated trams in Bendigo took place on April 10, 1890.

It was at 10 o'clock at night and the car was derailed on the curve leading from the depot to Mollison Street. It was re-railed and then ran quite well along the track towards Mitchell Street.

The service was officially commenced on Saturday, June 14, 1890, between the railway station and the corner of Barnard Street and Mt. Korong Road.

Due to many factors the company withdrew the service on September 23, 1890, after some 13 weeks of running.

STEAM

The steam trams were next on the scene after having been rebuilt from the battery-operated cars.

The steam trams commenced public service on February 1, 1892, with five motors and five trailers available for use. They proved very popular which encouraged the company to order more units.

After a great deal of negotiation and trouble with tracks and trams the overhead electrical system had its first trial on Wednesday, April 8, 1903, when a tramcar left the depot and ran to Charing Cross.

It was not until Wednesday, April 15, 1903, that the service was finally commenced to Eaglehawk with two trams in use.

The Electric Supply Company of Victoria continued to run the tram service in Bendigo until the 1930s when the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, which had been created by the State Government, took over on June 30, 1934.

Since the inception of trams in Bendigo in 1890, the city has seen a number of changes in the motive power of its trams.

During that time the trams have served the public well, but with the advent of the motor car the need for a tram service has gradually diminished until the State Electricity Commission decided it was not longer economical to continue it.

Next Sunday will see the end of an era in Bendigo as the City says a sad farewell to its trams.

And thousands of citizens, along with an expected flood of visitors, will gather to say goodbye as the Bendigo tramway service makes its final bow.

At the stroke of 5 p.m. from the Eaglehawk Town Hall clock 82 years of history will end as the last tram makes its sentimental journey to the city, while at the Bendigo Cemetery — the Quarry Hill line terminus—another tram will be leaving for its last resting place.

It will be sad but gay as the Mayor of Eaglehawk and the Citizens' Band say "Goodbye" on behalf of the Borough.

And when the strains of martial music die away near the Borough boundary you can bet that the last tram will have an escort of thousands as it enters Bendigo.

Bendigo's Alexandra Fountain has seen some stirring sights but when the cavalcade escorts the tram to join one of its companions of the tracks for a sentimental side by side journey down the Mall it will be a sight for all to remember.

With pomp and dignity, sadness and gaiety, the Mayor of Bendigo, Cr. D. E. Elliott, and its citizens will be saying farewell to a system which faithfully served the City through more than half of its history.

BENDIGO

1890



1972

TRAMWAYS

At first by battery, then steam, and finally by overhead electricity, the trams carried generation after generation of Bendigonians.

And so, soon after 5.30 p.m., the last tram service will run along Pall Mall.

And waiting in the wings ready to take the stage will be the big passenger buses — final victors in a "war" in which the first "shots" were fired back in the twenties when the bus first appeared as a passenger carrier.

They were the days when the "trammies" complained of buses starting off from Eaglehawk minutes before each tram and "stealing" the cream of the traffic.

And who knows... the victors themselves may have a limited life in the limelight as modern man searches for new and more economic means of transport.

However, it may not be the last the City sees of its trams.

The City Council, backed by the Bendigo Trust, has sought the retention of a tram service for tourists.

This followed the presentation to Council of a superbly documented submission by the Trust.

"Bendigo has the opportunity to become as renowned for its trams as it is for its gold," the

Trust said, and now a Government decision is awaited.

But already two of Bendigo's tram services have been superseded.

An April 5 services to Golden Square and North Bendigo were replaced by buses and what a journey that was.

The citizens of the City said a fond farewell and the last trams were followed by hundreds of cars in the biggest "procession" seen for many years. And with the last day looming many people have been taking their last trip on a tram.

For oldtimers it has been a look back into yesteryear as they have remembered the golden era of the trams when their ultimate enemy, the motor car, was in its infancy.

For the young, it will be something to remember — a part of the past which progress has pushed aside in its march into the future.

The departure of the trams signals the end of a long struggle.

More than 10 years ago the State Electricity Commission — the operating authority since 1934 — sought to end the service.

As far back as 1903 a massive public meeting formed a Retention of Trams committee to lead the fight and pressure inside Parliament and out, succeeding in staving the execution.

But it was a temporary reprieve and, as the losses sustained on the service grew, so too did the desire of the S.E.C. to dispose of it.

Perhaps the day was inevitable as the trams faced an unequal struggle against more modern means of transport.

And now the long years of tram history will retreat further into the past.

History, which has seen the streets of Bendigo and its suburbs transformed.

Gone now are the horses, the Hansom cabs and the carriages which wended their slow moving way along the city streets.

And history is repeating itself because the Hansom cab had its supporters who decried the introduction of the tram.

And in its heyday the tram was the only means of transport for thousands of people of the City.

From early morning until late at night they rolled along the rails carrying citizens to work and play.

Early morning saw the miners changing shifts, the factory workers ready for the starting whistle and a little later the shop assistants in their hundreds heading for the city centre.

Then it was home again in the late afternoon with the peak traffic crowding the trams.

And at night the city centre was jammed with theatre goers, most of whom travelled by tram.

And so the street scene has changed.

The beginning of the end of the horse era started when trams, run from storage batteries, took to the tracks in June, 1890.

They were operated by the Sandhurst and Eaglehawk Tramway Company.

Later, as the battery trams failed, came the steamers with their shrill whistles and gleaming dark red and gold lines.

The steam service started in February, 1892, and it was operated by the Bendigo Tramway Company.

In 1903 the Electric Supply Company of Victoria took over the Bendigo Tramway Company and started its electric service operated from overhead wires.

The Company generated its own electric supply and the City had every reason to be proud of its progress and initiative.

Melbourne, Victoria's capital, was still using the cable tram and Bendigo's electric service was the first in the State.

THE TRAMMIES

*The trams have gone from Ballarat
And Geelong city too,
In Bendigo we're moving fast
Their lives will soon be through;
But, as the final trip comes round
Let's give the praise that's due,
To those who ran the service —
And faith in them renew.*

*And now your days are numbered
We feel a sense of loss,
For our city's lost some of its charm
Since the motor car is boss;
But the boys who swung the bag and
punch
Gave value for our dough,
For where would you find a better bunch
Than the trammies of Bendigo?*

*Important as the vehicle is
I'm sure you will agree,
That the bloke behind the wheel
Means the world to you and me;
So a "Coo-ee" for our tramway crews
Who took us safely there,
To Eaglehawk or Quarry Hill
Or out to Golden Square.*

*No matter who the passenger
King Dick or just a kid,
Courteous attention was the rule
Drivers did as they were bid;
Conductors never failed to help
Our visitors from afar,
And when a pensioner missed the step
They helped him in the car.*

*Wars didn't stop the service
Our "Doreens" lent a hand,
Until the awful strife was o'er
They proved a loyal band;
And when our Queen to our city came
Or a school display was on,
We safely reached the rendezvous —
The trips were just "Tres Bon."*

*Oft-times when a frantic passenger
Rushed headlong down the straight
The thoughtful driver saw her plight
And held his tram to wait;
So to the tourist traveller
And Bendigonians coming back,
From Deborah Mine to our Joss House
We hope you can still travel the track.*

*Some dinkum Aussies have lost their jobs
Through the turn of misfortune's
wheel,
It's only right that you and I
Demand for them — "Fair Deal",
To members of the Tramway Team
As you stow your cars in store,
A thousand thanks for kind things done
For us—and millions more.*

—R. L. HARROWFIELD.