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**Metric Conversion**

The monetary values given represent  
theoretical conversion rates.

Allowing for inflationary factors, pres-  
ent values (1994) are in excess of 15  
times the 19th century values.

One Halfpenny (1/2d) = 1/2 cent approx

One penny (1d) = 1 cent approx

One Shilling (1s) = 10 cents

One pound (£) = \$2

One inch (1") = 2.54 cm.

One foot (1ft.) = 30.48 cm.

One yard (1yd.) = 0.914 metres

One acre = 0.405 hectares

One square mile = 2.59 square km.

One gallon = 8 pints = 4.55 litres

One ounce ( 1 oz.) = 28.35 grams

One pound (1lb.) = 0.454 kg.

One ton = 1.02 tonnes

One bushell = 0.0364 cubic metres.

Front cover & Title page artwork: Jeff Stewart

Front cover: Nancy Haydon (see story page 19)

Alan,

*Congratulations on  
your fine article!*

*Teddy*

7 Oct 95

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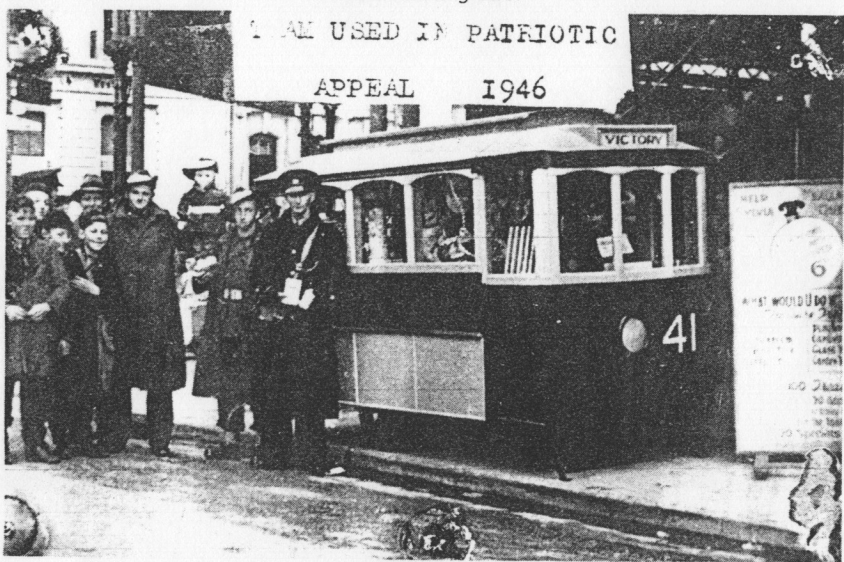
**CENTRAL HIGHLANDS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION INC.**



*Ballarat Tram Conductresses.*

*L. to R. Back row: Mrs. P.E. Tonkin, Mrs. E.A. Jakobi, Mrs. C.G. Etty, (Mrs. E.G. Cameron, Mrs. F. Whykes, Mrs. E. Allen; Traffic Clerks), Mrs. M.E. Ritchie, Mrs. J.M. Cheney (later Mrs. Maxwell). Front Row: Mrs. V.M. Egan, Mrs. M.C. Browne, Mrs. K.I. Denmead, Mrs. A.F. Lawrence, Mrs. J.L. Wightwick, Mrs. J. Spielvogel.*

*Photo courtesy SEC.*



*The Treasure Tram- used in 1944 fund raising (not 1946 as in the caption). Photo courtesy Ballarat Gold Museum.*

## THE BALLARAT TRAMWAYS' WAR

by  
Alan Bradley

The tramway system in Ballarat was opened as a horse system in 1887, and was electrified in 1905. The State Electricity Commission took over the operation from the Electric Supply Company of Victoria in 1934, along with the tramway systems in Bendigo and Ballarat. The Ballarat and Bendigo systems were both in poor condition, but the Commission rebuilt the tram track [using unemployed relief labour] and renewed the overhead wire. Robust second-hand trams from Melbourne and Adelaide were purchased to replace the original flimsy and lightweight trams used by the Company. After an extension from Gregory Street to the New Cemetery in 1937, there were 16 miles [25 km] of track.

The rebuilding of the system co-incident with momentous events in Europe. It commenced in 1934, one year after Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. It was completed in 1938, the year that German troops marched into Czechoslovakia. World War II was declared on 3rd September, 1939, and Ballarat boys went to fight in Europe twenty years after their fathers returned from "the war to end all wars".

After the initial activity in Poland, came the six months 'phony war', where not much happened and life in Australia went on virtually unaffected. Tramways were reserved occupations. Arthur Maxwell, then a motorman and later an inspector, recalled, "I wanted to join up, but was told to go back to work." During mid-1940 came the invasion of the Low Countries, the fall of France and the Battle for Britain. Tramwaymen were allowed to enlist, and so Arthur Maxwell and others like him joined up. Some, like Herb Knight, were rejected on medical grounds and had to remain on the trams.

In October 1940 petrol rationing was introduced, and private motorists were restricted to driving 3000 miles per year. In June 1941 this was cut to 2000 miles per year, and in August, 1941, cut again to 1000 miles per year. Some cars were converted to run on town gas, requiring the fitting of a monstrous gas bag to the car roof. Others had a gas producer fitted on the back of the car. This burnt charcoal and the resulting gas would drive the car several kilometres. However, the process was dirty and dangerous. Many motorists and taxi drivers gave up and left their cars at home. Bus services were restricted. In late 1940 the Ballarat City Council was given the responsibility of determining which local bus services would be reduced or closed.

During 1941 a gun-cotton factory was built in Ballarat South, near the cattleyards. The projected output from this factory, along with increased production from other factories, meant that Ballarat would have to be connected to the State power supply. This work had been scheduled to be completed by 1931, but had been delayed by the Depression.

In December 1941 came the attack on Pearl Harbour, and the beginning of the Pacific War. Australia was now under direct threat of attack, and the Federal Government took drastic steps to conserve energy and guard against air raids. Blackouts were enforced within 10 miles of the coast, and less stringent brownouts within 100 miles of the coast. This latter included Ballarat. Street lights were reduced to a minimum, shop lights and neon signs were banned, and the Town Hall lights turned off after 9 p.m. The use of petrol for recreation was banned. Motor vehicles still on the road had to travel with masked headlights at night, and were restricted to 20 miles per hour [32 kmph] after sunset. Sunday excursion trains were cancelled to conserve coal.

Trams had shades placed on headlights to direct the light downward. Funnels were placed over interior globes to prevent the spread of light. Visibility was greatly restricted, and the resulting reduced speeds made it impossible to maintain the pre-war timetable. Stops were placed further apart to reduce delays. Passengers found it difficult to distinguish one stop from another in the darkened streets, so motormen and conductors were instructed to call out the street names whenever a stop was made. If there was no conductor it was virtually impossible to hear the motorman in his closed compartment, especially if the compressor was running.

In May, 1942, brownout restrictions were eased for public transport, but maintained for private transport. As the tide of war turned in the Pacific the threat of attack eased. The brownout restrictions were removed altogether in July, 1943.

Petrol rationing continued for the duration of the war, and for some years afterwards. More people were now dependent on trams than ever before. Trams were packed, even on Sundays. People, denied the pleasure of a drive in the country took tram trips around Ballarat using one shilling all-day tourist tickets. The camp, which had been set up for the American troops in Victoria Park, catered for 5,000 soldiers. They were totally dependent on trams for transport. Under these conditions tramway patronage soared from 2.7 million passengers in 1939, to 6.4 million in 1943. The Ballarat Tramways even made a profit in 1943, for the first time under SEC ownership.

With the severe manpower shortage caused by the war there was no option but to encourage women to enter the workforce. The SEC employed women as liftdrivers, chauffeurs, meter readers, cashiers, clerks and conductresses in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. In Ballarat the first three conductresses commenced work in June 1942, and by June 1943, there were 23 conductresses employed. All were wives of servicemen.

The attitude towards women workers varied. Women had been working on Melbourne trams since 1941, so by 1942 there was no resistance by the Tramways Union in Victoria. In the same year the Sydney union resisted their employment. The conductresses were paid the same wages as male conductors. This was quite unusual for the times, as many women in other industries were only paid 60% of the male wage. The union's insistence on equality was based upon a fear that female employment at lower rates would depress male wages.

One of the first twelve conductresses appointed was Mrs. Jean Maxwell. Her first husband, George Cheney, died in a POW camp in Rabaul. She recalled the reaction of some men towards conductresses:

*We got abused sometimes because we were doing men's work. They'd say, "Why don't you go home and look after your husband?" They used the wrong argument, because we all had husbands who were away... I think that we all had a couple of occasions like that. On the whole the men accepted us very well. When they realised that we girls were going to be on throughout the war they soon accepted us...*

One conductress, interviewed in 1943, said that men were always courteous and helpful to them on trams, but women were sometimes obstructive. Female passengers frequently kept them waiting while searching for coins in bags and purses; tried to board crowded peak hour trams with prams and luggage or left luggage on the floor for others to trip over. Some women also attempted to emulate men in hopping on and off moving trams, but being less expert at the technique, risked injury.

Wartime was a period like no other in the history of Ballarat tramways. Trams were crowded at most times during the day, and even wealthy businessmen who owned cars travelled by trams. Children would travel to and from Victoria Park, taking and returning marines' laundry for their mothers to wash. Servicemen recovering from malaria would sometimes fall off their seat, bringing unkind comments from fellow passengers about drunks. The conductresses would take them to the main gate at Victoria Park. Convalescent patients, from either the Military Hospital at Lakeside Mental Hospital or Convalescent Depot at Victoria Park, travelled on trams with their crutches and walking sticks, some of them missing legs and arms.

With few taxis available, marines from the American camp at Victoria Park were frequent tram travellers. They paid penny fares, compared to threepence for civilians. Conductresses found their cashbags weighed down with pennies, which as coins were considerably heavier than threepences. Jean Maxwell recalled helping marines sneak back into camp to avoid the Military Police. One marine hid under a seat when the MPs got close to the tram.

During the war there was a debate about the morality of strike action during a period of national emergency. The Ballarat tramways were mostly free of the industrial strife that plagued the coal mining and waterfront industries at the time.

However, early in 1943, there was unrest among Ballarat tramway employees about their working conditions. Motormen complained about eyestrain caused by driving under brownout conditions made worse by the lack of windscreen wipers. Loading on the trams was so heavy that crews found it impossible to maintain timetables, especially in one-man operations. Further, employees received three shillings a week "war loading", which was only half that received by Melbourne tramway personnel.

The union demanded the fitting of windscreen wipers, employment of extra staff (including a conductor at all times), and six days extra leave in lieu of a 'brownout loading'. When the SEC refused the union threatened a 'work to regulations' strike. This would have meant a strict adherence to regulations, such as not allowing trams to move unless people moved off running boards, or unless all passengers were seated. Under wartime conditions this would have led to chaos.

Two months of negotiations followed, and in June 1943, the SEC agreed to install windscreen wipers on all trams, revise timetables, and provide extra staff. A claim for three shillings per week 'brownout loading' was to be heard by the Arbitration Court, but brownouts ceased altogether the next month.

An important part of the war effort was the raising of patriotic funds. During 1944 a fund-raising competition was held amongst conductresses, from tram depots throughout Victoria, to support the Red Cross POW fund. The winner was Ballarat conductress Mrs. Sylvia Mitchell, who raised £3580 out of a total of £15,076. The fund-raising events included concerts, dances, boxing, wrestling, and dog racing. Gaining most prominence was the 'Treasure Tram', filled with toys, clothing, toiletries and other items, which was used as the prize in a raffle that raised £998. The 'Treasure Tram' was exhibited in Ballarat, Clunes and Maryborough. This last angered the Mayor of Maryborough, who thought it detracted from the efforts of local fund raisers.

During the war, the Ballarat Tramways, like many other systems world wide, suffered from a shortage of paint and other material for the maintenance of trams. The shortage of bitumen meant that tar was used instead for patching jobs. Despite the shortages, in 1943 the SEC shifted the Haddon Street loop in Wendouree Parade further west to Martin Avenue to reduce delays. The Ballarat and Bendigo systems were better able than most Australian tramways to withstand deferred maintenance because of their more recent rehabilitation programs.

Ballarat entered the war with 22 'single truck' passenger trams. These were short four-wheel types. There was also a 'scrubber' used for track cleaning. This number was reduced by one when tram No. 22 collided with an Army truck in Drummond Street South on 28th July, 1944. After impact the tram derailed, rolled across the road, and hit a tree. The tram was severely damaged, and twelve passengers injured. Being one car short was a serious handicap due to the heavy loading with its maintenance difficulties. However, many tramway systems in Britain and Europe had suffered far worse losses.

Parts were obtained for the rebuilding of No.22, but it was scrapped when surplus 'bogie' trams were purchased from Melbourne. The first two were delivered in October 1945, two months after the war finished. More bogie trams were purchased in 1947 and 1951.

After the war many Australian tramway systems were badly in need of major renewal, but Governments decided that it was easier and cheaper to replace

them with buses. Between 1949 and 1962 eleven electric tramway systems were replaced in nine Australian cities, including the largest system, Sydney. The SEC closed the Geelong system in 1956, and additional trams and other materials went to Ballarat and Bendigo. This allowed trams in poor condition to be scrapped, and kept both systems going for several more years.

During the late 1940s continued petrol rationing kept tramway patronage close to wartime levels. In 1949 the Ballarat system carried 5.7 million passengers, not far below the 1943 record of 6.3 million. In 1950 petrol rationing was abolished, and motorists took to the roads in Holdens or cheap British imports. By 1952 patronage had dropped to 4.2 million, and one-man operation was brought back. The introduction of television in 1956 meant that more people stayed at home, thus the heavy evening loading to and from cinemas dwindled. Patronage dropped to 3.5 million in 1963, and to 1.8 million in 1969-70. At the same time operating costs increased.

Until the mid-1960s the Bolte Government was not prepared to risk the public backlash and close the Ballarat and Bendigo tramways. Increasing deficits led to an attempt to close both systems in 1968. This was originally defeated in the Upper House of the State Parliament, but was approved in September, 1970. The Ballarat system closed during August and September 1971, and the Bendigo system in early 1972.

Shortly before the Ballarat system closed a voluntary society was set up in an attempt to preserve part of the system for posterity and a 1.2 km section of track was retained in the Botanical Gardens reserve. The Ballarat Tramway Museum now operates trams regularly on weekends, public and school holidays. Of the 23 trams that ran in Ballarat during World War II six were scrapped, and nine preserved as part of the museum fleet. A further seven have been preserved in other Australian tramway museums, and one was sold to a US museum.

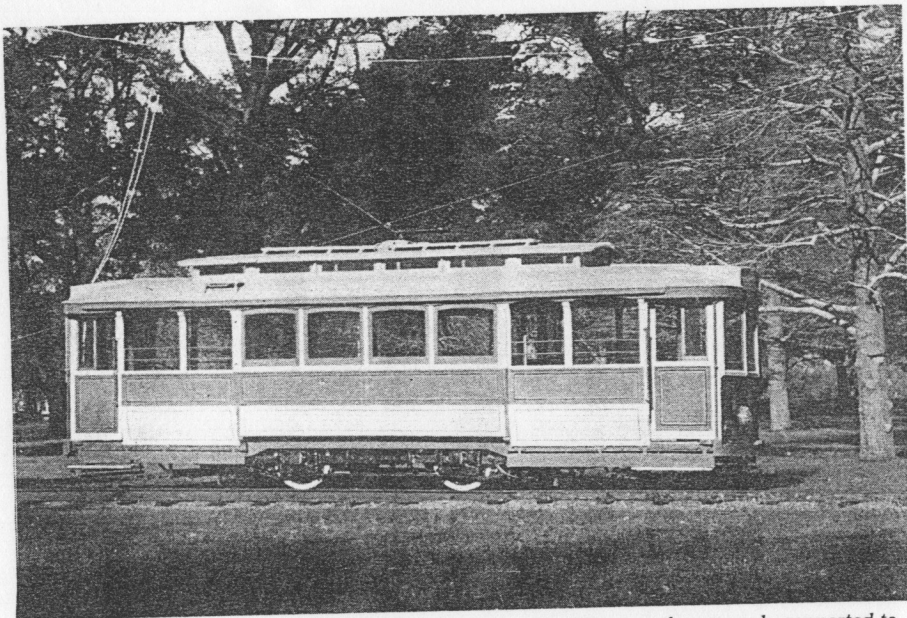
To mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, the Ballarat Tramway Museum has created an interesting exhibit by placing a headlight fitted with wartime brownout screening on a spare tram front. Tram No.27 has been repainted in the early SEC color scheme, that was used during the war. The streetscape in the Gardens reserve, with the tram track and the overhead wires, has not changed much since 1945. The rest of the former tramway streetscape has seen vast changes in recent years: tram track removed, roads widened, buildings demolished, and verandas removed. When former American servicemen return to Ballarat, a ride on a tram is one of the few aspects of the wartime city that remains familiar.

#### References:

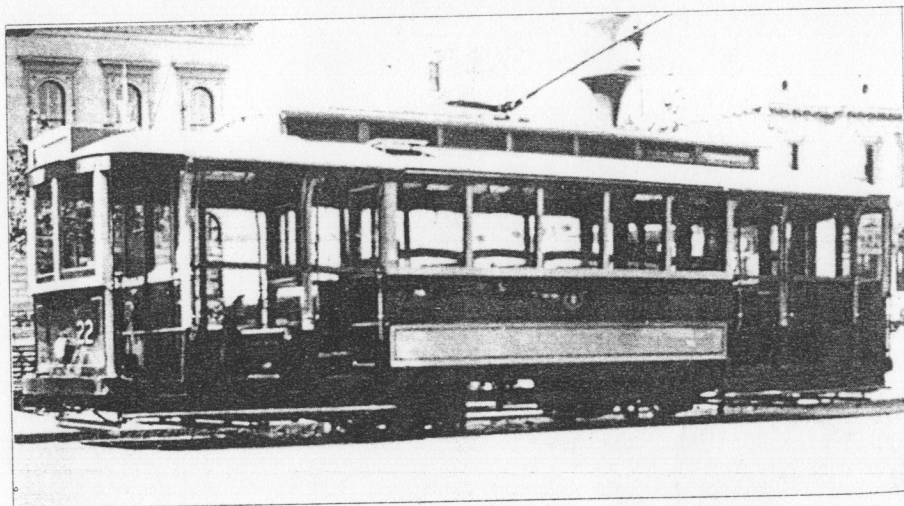
Arthur Maxwell: commenced as a Blacksmith's Striker in 1927, and later became a Motorman (i.e. an electric tram driver). He eventually rose to become Senior Traffic Inspector, a position he held when the tramway system closed in 1971.

Jean Maxwell: [wife of Arthur] worked as a conductress between 1942 and 1946.

Herb Knight: worked as a conductor and motorman from 1937 to 1971, and was elected officebearer in the local tramways union. He drove the official last tram in Ballarat on 19th September, 1971.



Of the 23 trams used during the war 19 were cars with saloons and open ends converted to this one-man design. Tram No 27 is shown here as repainted by the Ballarat Tramway Museum to the early SEC colour scheme used during the war.  
Photo courtesy BTPS archives.



Three cars were purchased from Adelaide in the late 1930s. One was converted to one-man, the other two remained in original condition. Tram No 22, shown here in Sturt Street, was later scrapped after a collision with an army truck in 1944.  
Photo courtesy SEC.

## JACK MORRISS

*Jack Morriss was thirty three years old, and running his own business when he decided "to do his bit". He leased the shop and enlisted in the merchant navy. This interview was held on the 21st of July, 1995.*

I went to Queen Street State School for a while. Then we moved to Frankston, and later we came back to Ballarat, I went to the Christian Brothers at St. Alipius, and then I went to the School of Mines. I left in 1923 and went to work with an uncle of mine called Arnold Franks. He had a butcher shop in Victoria Street in Ballarat East. I got a touch of sinus trouble, and so my father sent me to Tunbridges furniture factory, down in Drummond Street. I served my time there as an apprentice furniture maker. The furniture factory closed down during the Depression, and things were tough.

My father had a piggery in Charlesworth Street, so I went home to help him, and I also did a bit of butchering with Uncle Arnold Franks, as well.

He opened a shop in Melbourne, and I went with him, and after about six months I bought a little butcher shop in Swan Street Richmond, near Dimmey's. I was there for a couple of years, until the war started.

When I was growing up I'd always played drums in dance bands, and I played in several during that time. I even played in a big orchestra that was employed for some big function at Radio Station 3 AR.

I learnt drums when I was a young fellow, in the Regent Theatre, before the talkies came. A chap called Tom MacManamy was my teacher. I played drums with my Auntie, Jessie Hogan, at a function in Creswick when Sir Alexander Peacock, the State Premier, returned to the town. That must have been about the end of the first War. I learnt double bass too, and played with the Junior Lyric Orchestra in Ballarat for a while.

I stayed on in the butcher shop after the war started, but everyone seemed to be doing their bit and I decided that I would too. I didn't want to be in uniform, so I decided that I would serve on the *Queen Elizabeth*. I went along to the shipping office, and applied. I had to join the Seaman's Union, but they couldn't get me on the *Queen Elizabeth* straight away, so they got me little jobs.

The first was when I became an assistant cook on the *Nairana*, an old boat that went between Melbourne and Tasmania. My first job was for seven days from 12th May, 1941, to 19th May, 1941. We carted troops across Bass Strait.

They gave me several jobs like that while I waited for a job on the *Lizzie* Once they sent me on an old tub called the *Yarra* to cart ammunition up to Sydney. We worked that old thing four hours on and four hours off. I didn't know what the cargo was until we sailed into Sydney Harbour and the boat ran several