

30

# BALLARAT'S TRAMWAY PRESERVATION PROJECT







## INTRODUCTION

For more than eighty years Victoria's twin cities of Ballarat and Bendigo (joined for a shorter while by Geelong) pulsed with the rumble of their trams. And, until 1972, these cities were the last Australian provincial towns to enjoy such a service. Now these rolling museums - most of them at least fifty years old - have given way to the modern motor bus with its attendant fumes and noise. But the trams were not switched off without due concern for their historic value and tourist appeal. The Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society Ltd. was brought into existence by a popular desire to retain at least a part of the system which had its start in 1887.

This booklet tells the story of Ballarat's veteran green trams; the growth, the operation, and the eventual decline and closure of the famous little tramway system, and the return of some of the colourful veterans to the roadway by the shores of Lake Wendouree.

## THE PROVINCIAL TRAMWAYS

Although transport in Australian cities is now largely dominated by buses and private cars - Melbourne (with an extensive network) and Adelaide (with only a single route) being the only cities with trams still providing public transport - the situation was once very different. Numerous towns in Australia (including all State capitals) once had trams, and in Victoria tramway systems operated in the "provincial" cities of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong as well as in Melbourne.

The Victorian provincial tramways had a total route mileage of almost 35 miles, and had a maximum of over 60 trams in service. Of this, the Ballarat Tourist Tramway has retained six trams and just under a mile of track for its "tourist tram" service.

## Ballarat's Tramways

In December 1887, six horse-drawn trams conveyed some 300 dignitaries from Ballarat City to the Gardens and an awaiting banquet. This procession - which must have presented a strange sight to onlookers - heralded the coming of a mode of transport which was to serve Ballarat for the next eight decades.

The horse trams were double decked, could carry 44 seated passengers, and, like all subsequent trams in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong, travelled on 4'8½" gauge track. The depot constructed to house the horses and their trams was located in Wendouree Parade, just north of the Gardens. This large iron and timber building was to continue to house horse and electric trams until July 1972 - almost one year after closure of the system, and 85 years after the building's erection.

The days of horse tram operation demanded much difficult and time consuming work from tramway staff. There were always at least 50 horses at the Wendouree Parade depot, and they were well cared for. The horses were rubbed down constantly, and open boxes for sick horses were provided. There were four grooms, each having personal supervision of 12 horses, and each brought his own pairs to and from the trams.





STURT STREET, BALLARAT; Electricity Supply Company tram number 4 at the City terminus. A large advertisement on the tram urges citizens to vote "NO" in a local referendum.

Gold mining in Ballarat not only raised the level of prosperity in the region, but also produced some amusing incidents including the following, as reported in the Ballarat Courier. Sovereigns had become abundant, and the miners, particularly the younger men, appeared to gain much pleasure in offering sovereigns for their fares. Of course, a conductor's cash became exhausted, and names had to be obtained. In one instance, the conductor made a last desperate roundup of money, and, getting possession of another gold piece, took the remaining fares from one tenderer. Some excitement and amusement followed. The conductor was threatened with all sorts of reprisals, but there was not much gold offered thereafter.

Ownership of the system was transferred from the Ballarat Tramways Company Ltd to the Electric Supply Company of Victoria Ltd in 1902. Following this transfer, the tramways were extended and electrified in 1905. The new owners continued to operate the system until it was taken over by the State Electricity Commission in 1934.

By this time the trams and track were in bad condition. Because of this the new owners embarked on a rehabilitation program in 1935. By 1936 all worn track and overhead fittings had been repaired, and replacement trams purchased from the Melbourne and Adelaide tram systems. Apart from tram number 14 (which was transferred from Geelong in 1935) all trams in the Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society Ltd fleet were amongst this group. In 1937 the Lydiard Street North route (extending north from the city) was extended by 45 chains, and the system assumed its final form.

In only two of the 37 years of SEC operation was a profit made, and during the later years increasing costs and decreasing patronage led to mounting losses. The SEC announced its intention to seek abandonment of its tramways in 1962, but in face of substantial opposition did not proceed. Five years later, following a Transport Regulations Board enquiry, a notice of abandonment was tabled in State Parliament. This, however, was defeated by the combined opposition in the upper house. Finally, in late 1970, another notice was tabled, and this time permission was granted. Closure now awaited only completion of arrangements for a substitute bus service and delivery of the new buses.



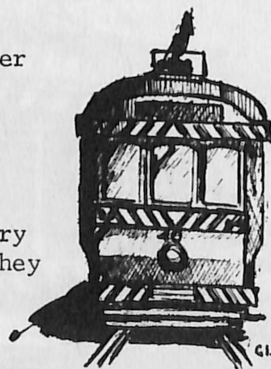
The tramway system was closed in three parts. On Sunday 22nd August 1971 the service to Victoria Street (east of the city, along the Melbourne road) and to the Gardens via Drummond Street North operated for the last time. Two weeks later it was the turn of the Mount Pleasant route (south-east of the city) and the Gardens via Sturt Street West route to cease operation; on this day the last regular SEC tram left the Gardens terminus, over track on which the Ballarat Tourist Tramway now operates. Two lines only now remained, those to Lydiard Street North and to Sebastapol (south of the city). These were to close on Sunday 19th September 1971.

The last day provided a remarkable contrast to the usual quiet Sunday tram operations in Ballarat. Seventy people were at the depot to see seven large "bogie" trams start out for their day's work, and during the day hundreds more - many wearing "Save the Trams" T-shirts - rode and photographed them. Finally the time came for the last tram journey, the late night trip from Sebastapol to the depot. Tram number 40 was rostered for the job.

The event certainly did not go unnoticed by the people of Ballarat, for a crowd of 5,000 people, a brass band, and the local radio station were on hand to say farewell to a mode of transport that had served so well. After a handing-over ceremony at the Sebastapol Borough/Ballaarat City boundary (witnessed by another large crowd) tram number 40, fully loaded with 200 passengers, ground uphill to Sturt Street. Here all passengers disembarked, to allow pass carrying tramwaymen to board for a last nostalgic ride to the depot.

Just after midnight number 40, with driver Lou Walker (who had worked on the trams for forty years) at the controls, moved into the depot. As the doors closed behind it, they revealed a large sign reading "THE END".

This, however, is not the end of the story for number 40 and five of her sisters, for they now run for their new owners, the Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society Ltd.



## Bendigo's Tramways

Bendigo's first trams ran in June 1890 and were battery powered. Numerous operating difficulties, including the short operating range between recharges of the batteries, doomed the enterprise to failure and services ceased less than four months after starting. A new form of power - in the form of steam trams - was substituted, and this met with only a little more success. In 1903 operations were taken over by the Electricity Supply Company of Victoria Ltd, which proceeded to extend and electrify the system. This company continued to operate the system until it was taken over by the SEC in June 1934.

As in Ballarat and Geelong operations were not profitable, and in fact the Bendigo tramways never realised a profit for the SEC. Permission for abandonment was granted in late 1970, and although closure was delayed for longer than in Ballarat, the fateful day arrived with Sunday 16th, April 1972. However, although the days of SEC tramway operation in Bendigo have now passed a tram service is provided by the Bendigo Trust, between the Central Deborah Mine and the Chinese Joss House.





BALLARAT TRAMWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY  
**TRAM DEPOT  
& MUSEUM**  
*New Members Always Welcome!*  
Enquiries BOX 632 PO BALLARAT

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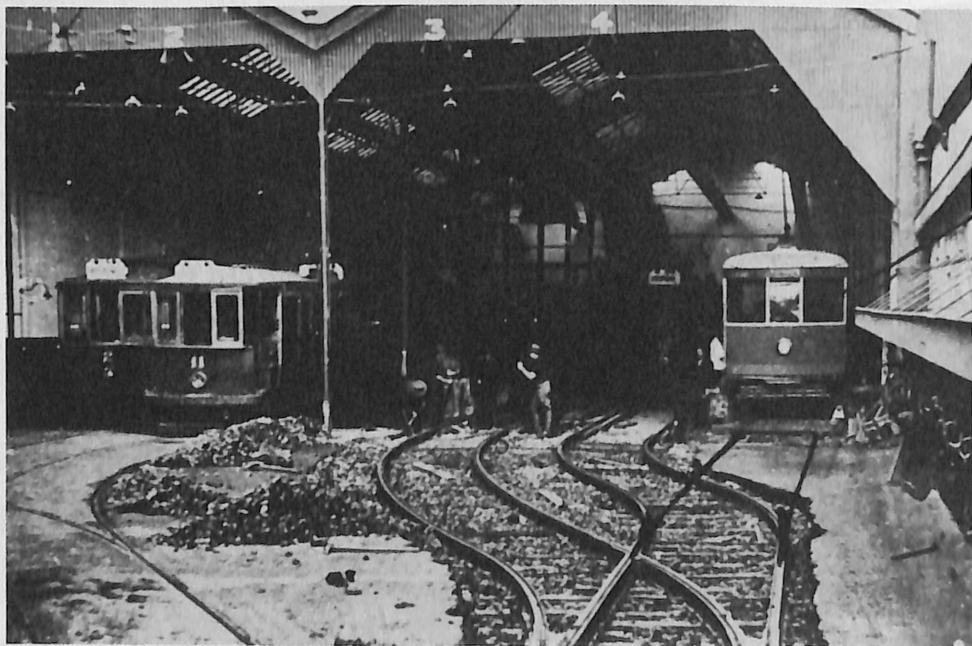


# Geelong's Tramways

Despite earlier proposals, Geelong's first trams (which were electric) did not run until March 1912, and in fact much of the system was not developed until the 1920's. Originally operated by the Melbourne Electric Supply Company Ltd, the enterprise was transferred to the SEC in 1930.

After World War II the condition of the trams and track had deteriorated considerably. Due to this and to the expansion of Geelong's suburbs well beyond the reaches of the tramway network, the decision was made to abandon the system in favour of bus operation. Consequently, in March 1956 - just 44 years after it had inaugurated services in 1912 - tram number 4 returned to the depot for the last time, and tramway operation in Geelong was no more.

Fortunately not all of Geelong's trams were scrapped when the system closed; many were transferred to Ballarat and Bendigo where they were to serve for another fifteen years.



# The Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society Ltd.

The Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society Ltd. was formed shortly before closure of the tramway system, with the aim of keeping about three miles of tramway around the shores of Lake Wendouree operating as a tourist attraction. This idea quickly captured the public imagination, and the Society soon grew to a membership of over 300.

To provide the "tourist tram" fleet, the State Electricity Commission donated six trams, and also gave the Society much valuable equipment. Shortly afterwards the Ballarat City Council agreed to the Society operating over a kilometre of tramway within the Botanical Gardens, and granted a site for construction of the Society's new tram depot.

With this basic equipment for the operation of a street tramway museum available, the Society was now nearing the achievement of its goal. There remained, however, several necessary tasks to be completed before its fleet of trams could start running.

Because the old depot was demolished and the site sold for housing development, a new depot had to be constructed. (A photo of this appears in the centre pages). A program for training tram drivers was put under way - greatly assisted by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board, which has made available facilities of its drivers' school. Also, trackwork had to be laid and DC electricity provided.

The first movement of a BTPS tram under its own power occurred on Saturday, 12 October 1974. From here the major project to be completed was the laying of a connection across Wendouree Parade, linking the depot with the old SEC track. This occurred over one weekend in November 1974.

The Tourist Tramway was officially opened on Saturday, 1 February 1975 by the Chairman of the SEC, Mr. J.C. Trethowan, with the Mayor of Ballarat as an official guest. Following music from a brass band and a pipe band and speeches from official guest, Mr. Trethowan drove tram 40 through a barrier of streamers, and the Society's aim of an operating tramway museum was finally realised.



The Tramway now operates every Saturday, Sunday and public holiday throughout the year. A museum display is also available for public inspection; it is located in the depot, and is open whenever the tramway operates.

The Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society Ltd. is a non-profit company. Most work is carried out by volunteers who enjoy seeing the trams running once again. Our volunteers come from all walks of life.

There is no requirement for members to assist in volunteer work parties (although such assistance is, of course, most welcome) and new members seeking just to keep in touch with the Society's activities are welcome. Members receive regular newsletters ten times a year. If you desire any further information about the Society please write to the Secretary, BTPS, P.O.Box 632, Ballarat 3350.



## details of the B.T.P.S. *Tram Fleet*

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The State Electricity Commission has donated five trams to the Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society Ltd. In addition, a sixth car (number 14), which is owned by the Ballarat City Council, is available for operation on the Gardens tramway.

Of the Society's fleet, four trams are of the "single-truck" type (with four wheels under the middle and with entrances only at each end) and two are larger "bogies" trams (with a four wheel bogie under each end and with doors in the middle section). As with all other SEC trams, these cars are coloured green with cream roofs. Their distinctive striped bumper bars, canopies and marker lights at each end were added in the late 1950's to make the trams more visible to night-time motorists.

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Number 14: Built in 1915 by the Meadowbank Manufacturing Co for the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust. It ran as number 75 and retained this number when classed "J" by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board in 1920. Sold to the Melbourne Electricity Supply Co in 1927, it ran in Geelong as number 29. It was transferred by the SEC to Ballarat in 1935 where it ran as number 14. This car was the last to be overhauled, and was the last to run under its own power under SEC ownership (8/10/1971).

Numbers 26, 27 and 28: Built in 1916 by Duncan & Fraser for the Hawthorn Tramways Trust, where they ran as numbers 5, 10 and 7. Renumbered 111, 116 and 113 and classed "M" by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board in 1920. Sold to the Electric Supply Co Ballarat in 1931, and received present numbers. Passed on to the SEC in 1934, and ran until closure. Number 28 was damaged in an accident in April 1971, but has been repaired by the BTPS. Number 27 had the distinction of running one million miles while in service in Ballarat (achieved on 29/6/68).

Number 38: Built by Duncan & Fraser for the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust and ran as number 41. Retained this number when classed "E" by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board. Sold to the SEC in 1951 and renumbered 38. Altered to its present form in February 1951 to permit one man operation but was



never used as such due to union opposition. Last ran in Ballarat on 27/5/1971.

Number 40: This car is the oldest of the BTPS fleet, having been built in 1912 for the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust. Entered service as their number 35 in April 1913 and retained this number when classified "C" by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board in 1920. Sold to SEC and renumbered 40 in 1951. This car was the last car to carry passengers in Ballarat and was the last car to run from Sebastapol on 19/9/1971.



