

## HOW IT ALL STARTED: PART 2

by Alan Bradley

*25 years ago the Ballarat tramway system was about to close, and a group of enthusiasts tried to save a portion of the track. Part 1 of this article traced the growing interest in preserving the tramway around Lake Wendouree. In Part 2 Neville Gower and Richard Gilbert, in separate interviews, recalled the first year of the BTPS (now BTM). Their comments have been edited, along with excerpts from the "Ballarat Courier".*

**Question:** How did you become interested in preserving trams?

**Neville:** I was a member in Adelaide of the AETM at St Kilda. I saw at St Kilda because they had a lack of funds they had the trams stuck in the swamp, as it was in those days. Then I went down to Tasmania and spent two years as a member of the TTMS. I went from a city of 3/4 of a million to a city of 100,000. There they had an organisation that looked after trains, tugboats, you name it. It seemed a great idea for a small city to incorporate all of its transport. So when I arrived after 12 months in England at the beginning of '71 into Ballarat to take up a job as lecturer in brewing I was confronted with the trams closing. I knew about the trams because I had seen them many times before.

**Richard:** I have always been interested in the SEC tramways. Probably the first real interest came when I was living in Kerang in the early 1960s, and we used to go to Bendigo on Sundays as part of family outings. Those type of trams interested me, they looked antique with their curved sides, the bogie trams particularly. I do remember very vaguely going to a Begonia Festival procession in Sturt St in about 1958. But interest was really developed by going to the tramways in Bendigo. From the point of view of being a railway enthusiast and going on fan trips and things, from about 1965. I first visited Ballarat about then and really developed an interest in the SEC trams.

*Courier 8 April 1971: Retention of trams in Wendouree Parade is to be discussed at a meeting in Ballarat on Sunday April 18. The meeting has been organised by the Brown Hill Progress Association, which has invited all interested to attend. Several Melbourne tram enthusiasts are expected to attend, and they will organise a meeting in Melbourne later this month. An organisation similar to "Puffing Billy" may be formed. A circular stated that trams could run on weekends and holidays, employment could be provided for some former SEC employees, and the tram sheds could be retained as a transport museum.*

*Courier 19 April 1971: Yesterday a steering committee was formed, initially known as the Lake Wendouree Tramways Museum Committee, at a public meeting attended by about 50 people. The intention is to establish a working tramway museum in Wendouree Parade. Encouragement will be given to any move to re-establish a ferry service on the lake, to provide a round-ticket attraction in conjunction with the trams. The meeting was convened by the Brown Hill Progress Association. A sub-committee of 9 was formed, including Mr M. Calnin, Mr C.W. Jessup, Mr G. Netherway, and Mr N. Gower. The meeting occupied the full afternoon, and followed a ride on a chartered tram.*

**Neville:** I dropped a note that ended with the Greater Ballarat Association, that I thought it would be a great idea that they should keep some of the trams, keep some of the track, and maybe put in a transport museum over in the sheds. The idea was that if you had a shed at least you could preserve things, I didn't like the way the "Y" stood behind the Civic Hall. So the next thing I know, Melton Foo contacts me and tells me there's a meeting to try and save some of the trams at Brown Hill, and I think it was on 18 April in the afternoon at Brown Hill. Naturally I went. There weren't a lot of people there, there was a group of what I thought were very enthusiastic young boys who had come from Melbourne on the train. A group of historical people. And the

Brown Hill Progress Association. They were an unusual organisation, in that Brown Hill was never to be apart of Ballarat, and still isn't in that sense. They were very keen people, and they put up the hall, and the oval, and the swimming pool, and they thought it was time they did something else for the city. They called the meeting in this back room to the hall, which if you go there today is no longer a back room, because another room has been added on since then. The room immediately behind the main dance hall. This was where we met, and it was decided that perhaps we could preserve some of the trams in Wendouree Parade, knowing it was going to be difficult because we had virtually a hostile council, or at least they had their ideas about what should go on. They thought that the trams had been long enough in the town and they ought to go. Remember in '71 Sovereign Hill had been going only a few weeks or a few months, so this was something rather novel. We got together and formed some sort of committee. Melton Foo was one, three or four from Brown Hill were others. We called it I think the Lake Wendouree Preservation Society. Lake Wendouree was the most important emphasis, rather than Ballarat, because otherwise we could never get anything. It was pretty well conceded the trams had to go, and the council already had the licences for the buses.

**Question:** Was there any thought in those days to preserving the track along Main Road to Sovereign Hill?

**Neville:** No. As a matter of fact there was one letter, someone wrote from Sydney suggesting that we should keep the track right around the lake, up Ripon St and back along Sturt St to Hamilton Avenue, in a continuous loop. But there problems with that, because unless you go one-way, which was westwards, there was always going to be ongoing traffic. And it was a highway, and Vicroads, or CRB as they were in those days, weren't keen on the idea. But it was never suggested going out to Sovereign Hill, because it then had only part of the main street and the bluestone entrance hall, there wasn't much else in those days. There was the Ballarat Times, the blacksmith, the bank, and the josshouse. They were just in their infant state too. So no, there was no thought of going to Sovereign Hill.

**Question:** Was the original intention to keep the depot and powerhouse?

**Neville:** No, there was none of that. We were just too small to do anything. Remember if you see the article "Ballarat shows its apathy to trams" there was an editorial saying how pathetic it all was. So all we could try and do was keep some trams in the town. We also tried to make it a historical group, but also an educational facility, which I don't think we've done as much as what was originally intended. We also thought it would be great to do something with steam boats. Unfortunately there were no steamers here, so we couldn't keep half the track. The original intention was for a transport museum, we didn't have all those facilities back then. Today of course we have two ferries, one being an original, and now we have the "Y" working again.

*Courier 30 April 1971: A meeting in Melbourne last night decided to preserve part of Ballarat's tramway system. About 60 people attended the meeting, called by members of an interim steering group set up in Ballarat on 18 April. It was decided that the track in Ripon St and Hamilton Avenue should also be retained.*

**Richard:** I was very active when I worked with a group of friends at Railway Head Office in Spencer St. Graham Evans at the time was President of the ARE, and we all used to take an interest in the trams in Ballarat. We went to work one morning, and we all used to meet at the door. I remember Graham Evans saying there's a meeting on at the Railway Institute in Flinders St tonight organised by Bill Jessup to save the trams in Ballarat, could we all go, and we all said yes, it could be interesting. We went to the VRI that night to Room 11 on the 3rd floor. I recently went to Room 11 a couple of months ago, the painters had their paint stored there for painting up the station. It brought back a lot of memories. There were some people there promoting the cause,

and there were some people there knocking the cause, that might have been from another tramway museum that was setting its roots in the ground at that stage! But we were very vocal for it, and we were whipped into enthusiasm by Bill Jessup, Campbell Duncan and Paul Nicholson. From there we decided to form a society, but there was also a parallel move in Ballarat by the Brown Hill group. I got elected onto the committee that night at Room 11, and I remember there was all this yelling and shouting. There were going to be 11 positions and there were 13 nominations, and the only way to resolve this impasse was to create 13 positions!

*Courier 3 May 1971: The City Council's Tourism Committee is investigating the retention of trams for tourists, but costs could force the committee to recommend a horse tram, rather than electric trams. The committee chairman, Cr Chisholm, said that two horse trams were in back yards but neither was in good condition. One could be built from scratch for \$10,000-\$12,000.*

**Neville:** I became secretary, we used to have to write letters. There was one in early May that said horse drawn trams may be revived for the tourists. The Tourism Committee of the council suggested they might go for horse trams, so they said we could get the plans from Adelaide. I was still a member of the AETM in Adelaide at this stage. So I wrote to them and said that we are trying to put together an electric tram system, the council want horse trams, don't provide them with the plans. Now I was a member of the Historical Society, and I got challenged by a certain councillor who said "We couldn't get the plans, someone in Ballarat wouldn't let us. You wouldn't know who it is, would you?" Of course I had to say yes, otherwise the guy would have had me. From that point of view we had a good relationship after that. But you can see what we were up against. We've got the horse tram now, and thanks to Melton Foo we found the horse tram.

*Courier 31 May 1971: The Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society was formed yesterday at a meeting of the Lake Wendouree Tramway Preservation Committee with a membership of 55 local, Sydney and Melbourne supporters of a proposal to retain a tourist tram system for Ballarat. More than 80 people attended the meeting in the Lower Civic Hall, including two from Sydney and 60 from Melbourne. The meeting decided to adopt the name Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society and elected a council of 11 members. It was specified that at least four members were to be resident within 30 miles of the Ballarat GPO and four within 30 miles of the Melbourne GPO. The Melbourne visitors chartered a tram and made a circuit of the lake before the meeting.*

**Neville:** Lake Wendouree was the real initiator, and from there it kept going. The others came to be part of it. I thought Ballarat had to do it on our terms if we were to get anywhere. Hal Cain and I were both at the School of Mines, he was in the library and I was in the Brewing Department. We must have spent a fortune in telephone calls, they were called trunk calls in those days, chasing people like Richard and Billy Jessup, trying to whip up people and getting in contact with the City Council. A lot of meetings were at Hal Cain's place in Yendon, Richard used to be there. I used to get home at midnight myself, Richard had to stay overnight or drive home. We worked out plans of what to do, how to keep this thing going. There wasn't time in April to save trams without a concerted effort when there was nobody, save a few historical people interested. There was no Rotary group offering to help, it was the older people in the Society that got it going, the Maurie Calnins and Bill Jessups.

**Richard:** We all went to the Greater Ballarat Association rooms one Sunday and met Melton Foo, George Netherway and Barry Ward who were involved in the proposal at Ballarat. From there we decided to have a public meeting in Ballarat and form a society dedicated to saving the trams. So we did have a meeting in the Memorial Hall, and that's another story! Being out-of-towners we were told the meeting was at the Town Hall, we all turned up at the Town Hall and there was nothing there, it was all as dead as a dodo. Someone advised us it was the Memorial Hall in that cream brick place up

the road. Prior to the meeting we had a tram tour around Ballarat in a bogie tram, which is on the front of the 10 year book, whatever the number of the tram is. We just encouraged people to come along and learn about the section of line in our minds. So we had the meeting there, and I remember one political bone of contention, we had this committee meeting prior and decided that the membership fee would be one dollar. When we got to the meeting it was announced that the membership fee would be two dollars, and there was a bit of an uproar then because people felt they hadn't been consulted. In realistic terms two dollars was ideal to cover the running costs of the Society. From there we elected Maurie Calnin as the President, we started as a Society meeting in the Memorial Hall one Sunday afternoon.

**Question:** Do you remember the alternative off-street proposals?

**Neville:** We had to spend a bit of time on this. Some people may think we acted incorrectly. When you live in a city that's anti-tram, you have to act quickly and agree to look at things without necessarily agreeing with it. I think it was Councillor Webb, who suggested that if we were interested we could have anywhere we liked in Victoria Park. It was suggested we could put our depot where the old lodge building used to be, I think it was a caretaker's building. It was about a quarter of a way up the main driveway after you come off Sturt St, on the right-hand side. So naturally we agreed to look at it. So Richard and myself plotted as best we could a very poor track, along the western side of the roadway, and we could see that it could run as far as the Cattleyards. In those days VicRail ran to the Cattleyards, so you could have had a gunzel express to there and come back. But we also realised that when we came to Sturt St we had to have a very sharp turn to run to the toilet block, and then another sharp turn to cross Sturt St to Hamilton Avenue, so that on special occasions we could run there. That was what we had to do. We were playing politics.

**Richard:** I recall the council pushing for two things, they were interested in the prospect of having a diesel-powered tram. That idea never went far, it was certainly a suggestion. They were certainly more interested in having the tramway located in Victoria Park. Actually me and Neville Gower, there was only two of us, went to Victoria Park and walked along what could be called a proposed tram route, to have fairness in debate if we were going to talk about it, so that we could possibly know what could be done at Victoria Park. When we had a BTPS Board meeting the Board was very adamant in the majority that the tramway was going to be in the Gardens or nowhere else at all. Neville and I had a view that it could be established in Victoria Park if the proposal at the Gardens, for what ever reason at all, didn't come about. In the end we decided it should be Wendouree Parade or nothing.

**Question:** Why was it decided to choose the depot site next to the Fish Hatcheries?

**Neville:** I think we had to find somewhere in a hurry, because we had to get out of the other place. We looked for sites, by this time the City Council was with us. The nearest site we could get was the South Gardens, which has always been more decrepit than the North Gardens. Also it was not the area for Begonia Festivals to operate in. However we then faced the problem that we were going to face objections from next door, the Fish Hatcheries, because we were going to block their air flow and goodness knows what else. The other thing was that it wasn't too far to drag the trams. I no longer stayed as Secretary, but I became Secretary of the co-op and helped build the section we're in today.

**Richard:** We decided that the section of track in the Gardens would be the ideal section to preserve. We always intended to see the tram run around to Durham Point, and even beyond, to View Point down by the Powerhouse. There was the original fanciful idea of having the SEC tram depot, that was scotched pretty early in the piece. So we in our minds looked at a site around the old zoo. It was only that we were riding around on an SEC-operated tram with Eldon Hogan, it must have been a railway fan

trip, I don't think it was an ordinary service, we were all there as a group. Eldon pointed out this site where our tram depot now is and said that would be an ideal site, it's a long way back from the road and plenty of open land there to build on. I forget whether we went to council with both sites, or we said we'd have that site. But I remember coming back later that day and walking around that site and having a tram bobbing away in what was the setting darkness. We thought maybe it would be a good site for a depot. We certainly decided before the SEC trams closed that it was a viable site for a depot.

*Courier 1 September 1971: The BTPS is working to commence operation of its tourist tramway as soon as possible after the closure of the system on September 19. The Ballarat City Council on Monday approved the Society's submission to operate the service on a trial basis in the three months to next December.*

*Courier 14 September 1971: The BTPS's proposal to operate a tram service on the lake route for a trial period of three months was the subject of comment in a letter from the SEC to the meeting of the City Council last night. The Commission referred to council's decision to raise no objection to the proposal subject to SEC approval. It had been noted, the Commission stated, that the museum committee apparently believed that the tram depot and its equipment would be available for use during the trial period. Council was advised that apart from temporary housing of trams until a building was erected, it would be quite impractical for the Commission to permit the use of the tram sheds as an operating depot. It was quite clear that until the committee arranged for the trams to be removed from the depot it would not be in a position to operate a service in the way it proposed, the Commission pointed out.*

**Richard:** I was at home, and Paul Nicholson had gone to Ballarat to a council meeting that was to decide whether we could have a trial or not. Others may have gone, like Bill Jessup or Campbell Duncan, but certainly Paul was there. He rang me with this hot news that the council had approved this three month trial and we were going to start running soon. I was the secretary of the tramway about then. From there on we must have got correspondence from the council subsequently saying no you're not going to have permission now because the SEC had refused permission to use the Powerhouse, as well as not letting us use the depot for an operating purpose. There was a problem with the power supply, because the SEC said the equipment was worn out, it was too old, and it would have to be operated by them, there would have to be staff on. The Powerhouse which they had planned to decommission would have had to be kept going. As much as the legalities of keeping the trams running out of the SEC depot was a problem, so was the Powerhouse.

**Question:** Was any thought given at the time to preserving any of the old rotary converters or generating equipment?

**Richard:** In retrospect I find that amazing to say no. We just didn't have time to get organised in that area, and I really wish we did. It never came about in any serious discussion that people made a move to ask the Commission "Could we have a rotary converter". I do regret that over the years, especially having gone to Bendigo depot and seen theirs. I'm quite a fan of electrical energy and production and I can't understand myself why we never got motivated and thought of it. We weren't ever knocked back, we just never thought of it.

*Courier 12 October 1971: The City Council will consider approval of a depot and tramway service in the Botanical Gardens area at its next meeting on 25 October, if the BTPS can meet a number of conditions. The proposed route from Carlton St to View Point was impossible due to council's plans for road alignment in two places. For this reason the Council's Tourism Committee recommended a service be permitted in the Gardens area between the North and South Gates. Council agreed to donate \$750, an*

*equivalent amount to providing a shelter for its tram No. 14. Cr Sir Arthur Nicholson described the Society as "super optimists".*

*Courier 23 November 1971: The City Council last night gave permission for the BTPS to go ahead with the building of a depot to house its six trams. The site tentatively approved is in the Botanical Gardens Reserve, south of the fish hatcheries.*

**Question:** How did the council eventually decide to give us the length of track in the Gardens?

**Richard:** I don't recall any meeting in which they said "Yes you can". Probably some time after the meeting where they decided we couldn't have the three month trial they must have decided we could retain the tram track and overhead in the Gardens.

**Neville:** It was Maurie Calnin who came up with the fact that the City Council was responsible for Wendouree Parade between the pillars in the north and the pillars in the south, and therefore there should be no objection from the council to us running there. The City Council then had to make a statement whether they were for us or against us.

**Richard:** I can't ever recall that ever being used as a lever in the argument. I think in later years we've said that, and I wonder if it's something of our own creation. Maybe at some stage it was used by council, but I don't ever recall it being made a point.

**Question:** Why was it decided to get the six trams that we did (Nos. 14, 26, 27, 28, 38 and 40)?

**Neville:** The reason we took those trams was that it was said to me by Mr Denmead, the Superintendent, that before he allocated the trams out he would give us the trams that were most identical to each other for operational purposes, rather than panic about whether we got this one or that one. Remember we weren't looking at it as a gunzel organisation, we had to have a set of trams to operate a tourist educational historical thing. As we had no money and no-where to put them, we had to accept what was offered and the advise Denmead gave us. Not only did Mr Denmead organise the trams for us, he gave us a lot of stuff which is to this day available for the museum. He was a very generous person.

**Richard:** From memory the SEC chose them for us. The SEC decided we could have five trams, the sixth being No. 14 owned by the City Council. The SEC gave us the single truck trams because they were the same class and could be maintained easily by sharing components. They didn't want to give us the "30" trams, 31, 32, 33, because the brake rigging on them was more finicky to deal with, they felt. It wasn't as efficient in braking, they weren't as good a design of tram as those 20s, 26, 27, 28. Therefore they gave us the three single truck trams of the same class. The bogie trams were of the same class, we got given No. 40, we were given a bogie and that was a convenient tram. I think we got No. 38 because it was down the back of the shed for painting and no-one else was in line for it and we got it because it was surplus. No. 28 was given to us because it was a damaged tram and they said it was to be used for spare parts to keep the other trams running. We were appreciative of what we got, and we weren't going to start fighting for other trams. The Commission had drawn up a list in their offices of where the other trams were going anyway.

**Question:** The trams were supposed to be out of the SEC depot by the end of December 1971. The didn't happen for another six months, did it?

**Neville:** I would say it was the logistics of putting up the shed, it was some time in April '72 we did that I think. It was not easy raising a co-operative. That took many hours of my work, which nobody knew about, raising funds from people all over Australia. Then getting Government approval, that takes time. Then designing the

shed, it's a pretty crude building when you look at it today, but we knew that Ballarat had to have the trams in somewhere secure. Even if we couldn't operate for some time, we had to put the trams away, and not as I saw them in Adelaide and some other places, deteriorate. Then it costs you more to do the restoration. At least we had them in mint condition, if you could call it that, because that was their working condition.

**Richard:** We were there virtually until auction day. We just kept getting extensions from the SEC because they hadn't got around to selling the property anyway. So I think the local branch of the SEC could monitor our progress. But obviously at some stage Monash House in Melbourne would have overruled them and said we'd better get this house on the market. It was on until the end of the year but with the New Year the SEC didn't want to sell either, because there's not much real estate market, and they hadn't really got themselves into gear. Locally I just think it suited everyone to continue until June '72.

**Question:** What do you remember about the process of setting up a co-op and trying to find funds?

**Neville:** We were given a Government guarantee of \$4000 if we found \$400. That was a hell of a lot of money in those days, and we didn't have any money.

**Richard:** Probably the first time I heard about raising impossible amounts of money was when I was involved with the Walhalla railway, way back around 1967 or 1968. I went to a meeting at the Fire Brigade Hall in Walhalla where there was talk about putting on the SEC power in the town, and there were all these impossible costs quoted. People talked about co-operative societies, and you could actually get this money given to you on a loan arrangement. When we got the Ballarat tramway museum going Bill Jessup floated this idea that you could have this co-operative set-up and raise \$3000-\$4000 for the tram depot, and I knew from my experience at Walhalla that this was how they were going to raise the money to put the SEC power on - which in 1996 still hasn't happened, they don't want it now because the SEC won't put it underground! The co-operative society was formed, and Alan Harnwell was the Treasurer. We initially got the loan through the State Savings Bank. Traditionally co-operatives were government-sponsored, and this was through their bank, the State Savings Bank. When we extended the depot it was interesting that we were in this grey area, we actually got the second loan to finance the depot extensions through the ANZ Bank, which was stepping way from this government-owned bank. I think Melton Foo was instrumental in going to the State Bank in Bridge Mall, which eventually became the Ballarat East branch when it was the State Savings Bank. Our account is still there, and that's how we got the loan.

**Question:** Do you remember the building of the first shed?

**Neville:** We were able to get the shed up relatively quickly, despite the fact that there were big rocks all around here. I remember we had dreadful trouble laying footings because of rock bed.

**Richard:** The contractor came onto the site to clear it. I remember going up there, there were two big mounds of earth right beside our depot and trees all around. I remember we bulldozed about 3 or 4 trees, and we hung a big lamp off another one that was right beside the corner of the old depot to light up the area at night. Then I didn't got up for awhile, the framework was put up quickly because the next time I went the framework was up. I remember going up not long after that, the cladding was on and the battery sand was delivered. This was a cross between the fine sand we use in our sandboxes and more coarse gravel, it was a very damp-looking sand. That was tipped into a shed as the very base, Hal Cain was driving this bulldozer tractor around spreading it out. From there I remember us laying the rails in the depot, No. 2 road was the first tram line laid. From there we laid a length of track out the front of the

depot, permanent track. We then built temporary track down to Wendouree Parade to receive the trams. The tram track in the depot was permanent, we said once we lay this we'll never pull it up again. We laid it as best we could for permanency, except No. 2 road which has that hump so the trams could roll out of the shed, and in later times we put welds on it to prevent them rolling out. One of the tasks we did in that first winter, 1972, was hiring a cement mixer each weekend. Initially we used to do it by hand, we used to mix cement on a sheet of galvanised iron with shovels. We'd go down in Sebastopol to some place that was open on weekends and get bags of cement, for \$3 a bag from memory. We built cement cut-off walls that ran about two feet deep below the base of the galvanised iron that forms the perimeter wall of the shed. That was to reduce the water table, because that whole area is quite damp in winter. We found the depot was still damp inside. Someone in engineering told us that if you build these cut-off walls you'd lower the water table, which it seems to have successfully done this last quarter of a century.

*Courier 17 June 1972: Yesterday the BTPS moved its first tram, No. 26, from the old depot in Wendouree Parade to the new depot in the South Gardens Reserve.*

*Courier 19 June 1972: The Wendouree Parade tram depot site was sold at auction on Saturday.*

*Courier 17 July 1972: Yesterday the BTPS moved the last of its trams, the large double bogeys, to its depot near the Botanic Gardens.*

**Question:** What do you remember about the process of moving the trams in?

**Neville:** We dragged them out, we used Davies a lot, I think he gave a lot through the Brown Hill people for virtually nothing. We were able to get the trams in the shed and shut it up.

**Richard:** The first time we ever moved a tram was when we were at the old SEC depot and John Withers had his Landrover there and we had the place open on Sundays for people to have a look at. For some reason we decided we were going to move a tram from one track to another, which meant towing it out on Wendouree Parade onto the main line and pushing it back into the depot on the other line road - it might have been No. 28 trying to get it out of the way because of its crushed end. When you think about all the legal situations that could have happened it was an amazing event to do! Obviously in retrospect we shouldn't have done it. When we decided it was time to occupy the new depot it was always in our minds we'd tow them around using John Withers' Landrover, we never considered using trucks and cranes. Old Bob Davies the contractor, who worked out at Ballarat East, he had an old Blitz truck. He used to work at the Powelltown sawmills, he was a rough old diamond, typical sawmilling character, he used to swear and yell. He had this thin Englishman who used to work for him, who was terrified of him. Bob Davies used to do these impossible rip, tug, tear tasks. He must have been terrible to work for, we all feared the man. We had a Board meeting one night and decided we were the employer, why did we fear him, we'd just sack him - we did eventually. We towed the trams around, and when they got opposite the site where our access line now is we had this heavy gauge steel channel. Then we got Bob with his rip, tug, tear methods to get his Blitz truck and put a steel hawser on the back end of a tram and effectively tow it around at 90 degrees and grinding across the bitumen to get it across the width of Wendouree Parade. I remember at one stage on No. 40 we broke the chains on the bogie, we didn't disconnect the hooks and as the tram turned around there was this great crack as the chains broke off. We turned them at right angles to the tram line, and we got a tree winch which was very slow and tedious while we got the handle ratcheting away pulling the tram across the road three inches at a time. But it was good that it was so slow, because we never had a derailment. As we winched the tram along we laid more channelling to lift it onto the guttering. We broke holes in the guttering with pick axes

to guide the wheels through, then onto our temporary tram line. The two bogie trams came in that way. Old Bob got over-excited that this was too slow and decided that he was going to haul No. 26 around and then just derail it and drag it along the dirt road to our depot. When Bob Davies got No. 26 along the dirt road to a point opposite the tram depot then it had to be turned at right angles and it was really hard to do. In fact I think he wrecked the lifeguard at one end by picking it up at one end with his Blitz truck and dropping it. The marks are still in the road today because old Bob did that and nearly wrecked the tram, and that's when we sacked Bob Davies and did it ourselves after that. The others were brought in on that channel iron method on the temporary track, which we laid across the park on the site of our present track. We pulled it up after all the trams had been winched inside the shed, and then we laid permanent track out from the depot. Initially the temporary track faced 2 road and the trams were winched in there, then it faced 1 road, and then 3 road. Then the front of the depot had no track, it was all pulled up. The permanent track was then laid from No. 2 road, and from there we started to construct the depot fan and the permanent track down to Wendouree Parade.

*Courier 6 December 1972: Ballarat City Council has refused to leave part of the tram line in Wendouree Parade for the use of the BTPS. The Society wants to extend its tourist tramline from the North Gates to Durham Point, claiming tourists would be able to come by train to the Wendouree Railway Station and walk to the start of the tourist tramway. The Society asked council's meeting on Monday night to postpone removal of the section of tramline between the North Gates and Durham Point. Permission was refused, on a motion moved by Cr Sir Arthur Nicholson.*

**Richard:** I remember Durham Point was a picnic area, it had boat sheds, it had a nice wide strip of land, the rest of the area the lake margin's quite close to Wendouree Parade. Probably the Wendouree Railway Station had a bit to do with it. But I remember Neville Gower going around with me and saying Durham Point was a great site, cars could come here and park, and a lot of people went to the area. One of the reasons we went for this option was that the road from the Gardens Gates to Durham Point is quite wide and virtually straight. Once you get beyond Durham Point it starts doing sharp left-hand blind curve turns. I think the reason we wanted to cut the tram line back to Durham Point and not run right round to View Point was that there would be less hassle with the Roads Board, or the council, or whoever administered the traffic in that area.

**Question:** Looking back, what sort of Ballarat people got involved in the early days?

**Neville:** In the very early days you had people who were interested in trams. You had people who were interested in them from a historical point of view, like George Netherway and his sister and wife. A few little people joined up. Some of the old tram people joined up. Gradually they dwindled away, remember it was 25 years ago. Most people don't know what a tram looks like travelling down the street. I think it's wonderful we have three teenagers in the Society flat out working, because what have they got to see like you or I? We had a memory of the trams. I first saw the trams in 1967 for a bellringing conference. In 1971 I used to catch them from Lydiard St to Errard St, and go back after lunch on the tram. To a lot of people there's no memory. I looked at someone's wedding the other day, as the bride comes up the tram stopped outside St Andrew's Kirk and continues on, but there's no tram outside the kirk anymore is there?

**Question:** Looking back 25 years later how do you see the museum now, compared to what was envisaged in 1971?

**Neville:** Because of my background with AETM I was always a stickler for seeing that things were done properly. I could see that there were a certain amount of "gunzels" who wanted to play trams rather than run trams. As an operation that initial

excitement has now disappeared. I believe it is a very fine operation in Ballarat. When you see it being done properly with the correct uniforms you know you're running a good operation. The room we're in now, where we're doing the records, which I'm heavily involved in, shows that we really care about the future of this group. It is a strong society in that sense. We may not have the 600 members that we originally had in its heyday, when everyone joins up. What there is is, is being done properly, maintenance is being done correctly. I'm proud to still be a member.

**Richard:** It's far beyond what we ever anticipated. When we wanted to save the trams we knew the SEC trams as they were. I was quite ignorant of the original history of the trams, I didn't know about the horse trams or the Electric Supply Company, I only knew that the SEC ran the trams and had done so for a long time. In fact it was very hard to find the history of the trams, I suppose if you knew people like Bob Prentice and Keith Kings you could go and ask. But people who didn't know, who'd just come into the hobby in the '60s, the only publication that told you anything about the SEC trams was "Destination Eaglehawk". So when the Society was formed I really think everyone - Campbell Duncan, Bill Jessup, Clyde Croft, all those people - formed the Society to preserve the SEC trams as we knew them. As the Society has gone on, developed, matured, we've realised the history of the tramways. At the same time we've had people offer trams to us, such as the horse tram. Someone told us about the horse tram in Ballarat East, I think it was someone local like Melton Foo or Neville. Someone also told us about the horse tram in Dana St, and I went around and looked at it. I can always remember the end platform on it with a handbrake, which the body in Ballarat East didn't have, the one in Dana St had a lot more going for it. There was a move to get a horse tram, which we did. Then we got told about the Electric Supply Company tram. So the whole thing has developed into this more formal museum, and even when we were collecting these trams we didn't intend to make it as formal as it is now. Now we've advanced our thinking to the point where we've got official archiving and cataloguing, and in our minds we're just developing a more professional museum approach rather than a tram fan's approach. So it's far beyond what we ever expected, but I'm really pleased that it has and we aren't running it with a narrow vision of just running the SEC trams as we knew them. I'm very proud that it has and I'm very pleased with the Society.

**Question:** Any concluding remarks?

**Neville:** I think that a plaque should be put somewhere at Brown Hill after 25 years to recall where we started. Too often historical societies put things up 100 years later. We should be recording where our roots are, because it's 25 years of a damn good organisation.

*If any readers wondered why we operate where we do in the Gardens, rather than in a park like many other tram way museums, or in the main street as the Bendigo Trust does, now they know! The author thanks both Neville and Richard for giving their time and agreeing to these interviews to mark our 25th year.*