

FARES PLEASE!

January 1992

Ballarat Farewells 1991

The last day of 1991 started out normally enough after a night of noisy but harmless thunderstorms. Peter Hill was running the service with No. 18, while Dave Macartney was absent from the shed, having some tramway matters to attend to downtown. By 3.30 p.m. thick black clouds had filled the sky, and thunder and lightning were about. As the rain started to pelt down, Peter decided to run in. He collected his signs, but on arrival at Depot Junction discovered that the track had disappeared under a sea of swiftly flowing brown water. A lighting strike knocked the substation out, so there was a wet trudge up to the shed to reset this. By now the track was under water in four different places, and the rain was getting heavier. Depot Junction points are difficult at the best of times, in ankle deep water they are near impossible. Peter abandoned 18 to the elements, waded to his car, and went for help.

Meanwhile, Dave had returned home, but could not depart for the Depot because of the weather. Someone had discarded a Christmas tree in the drain that runs down the side of Dave's place, and this had become

wedged in the tunnel under the footpath, and diverted the contents of the drain across Dave's lawn and out through the front fence. Needless to say, the power had also failed. Peter arrived out the front, after fording a few more instant rivers on the way, to be confronted by a sea of swirling water between the crown of the road and Dave's veranda. He went striding quickly through this but miscalculated the location of the bridge over the deep bluestone channel, and disappeared up to his chest in the torrent. Fishing himself out of this, he presented such a pathetic sight that Dave agreed to abandon his house and contents to the mercy of the elements and proceed to the Depot to attempt to get the tram in. Getting back to the car was the first problem. Dave rolled the trousers up, removed his shoes and revealed his feet to the public gaze for the first time in several decades. Peter was so wet by now that he didn't bother.

The numerous instant rivers were negotiated once more, and soon the Gardens came into view. There was a solid sheet of water over the road from near St. Aidan's Drive right up around the curve, a river running across at the north end of the loop,

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Preservation Society Limited.

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another at the Floral Clock, and a huge quantity of water at Depot Junction. 18 Stood forlornly in the midst of all this, but after the points had been located they came over easily from the point box and the spring forced over. On arrival at the depot it was realised that Dave's shoes were still in Peter's car, and now Peter couldn't find his door key, so Dave had to walk bare-foot across 5 road, a very painful experience. 18 ran in at 5.40p.m., having arriving at Depot Junction at 4.15p.m. As one local enthusiast says on days like this, 'Its great to see people enjoying their hobby'.

The following day was clean up day, not only at the tramway, but all over town. A number of businesses around the railway station area were all but wiped out by the torrent that swept through there. At the tramway, Dave cleaned the track as best he could when the rain stopped on the 31st, while Frank Puls and Len Millar went out the following day and finished the job. No. 18 needed a major clean out, having had mud tramped into it from one end to the other. It had the final word on the 2nd January, when it blew out an old battery tail lighting circuit in spectacular fashion, in a fit if pique for being left out in 76mm of rain. Now all we have to do is pump the water out of the pits. DMcC

{Ballarat's previous massive hail storm some two years ago did major damage, see March 1990 *Fares Please!*. Peter and Dave should be awarded a Valour medal. ed}

The 15th Scout Jamboree

You will perhaps be aware that Ballarat was 'invaded' by some 15,000 scouts between January the 4th and the 11th. The Jamboree was held in Victoria Park (on the south side of Sturt St. West, not far from the gardens) and a whole host of activities was organised for the scouts. One activity was a coach tour of Ballarat including Sovereign Hill *and* our tramway!

By 10a.m. on the seven days involved (Sunday we rested) bogie cars 40 and 661 and a single trucker were lined up ready for an invasion of scouts borne by six buses. We provided at least two full round trips from near the depot junction, issued a souvenir ticket and were very, very busy for 45 minutes.

The scouts that couldn't cram onto the cars on the first trip were accommodated on the next trip. By 10.45 or so the scouts swarmed back on to their buses - leaving the rostered crews to run back into the depot for a breather. Sales during the trips were brisk (\$1,159 for the seven days)and the new cloth badge was a real hit with the scouts.

New conductor John Treloar 'top scored' with \$92 sales on one of the days. Total scout numbers totalled 2,490 and it all happened thanks to 16 rostered members, and the cars were ready for traffic each morning thanks to Dave Macartney.

In alphabetical order the crews were drawn from Phillip Bertram, Carolyn Dean, Richard Gilbert, Clayton Giles,

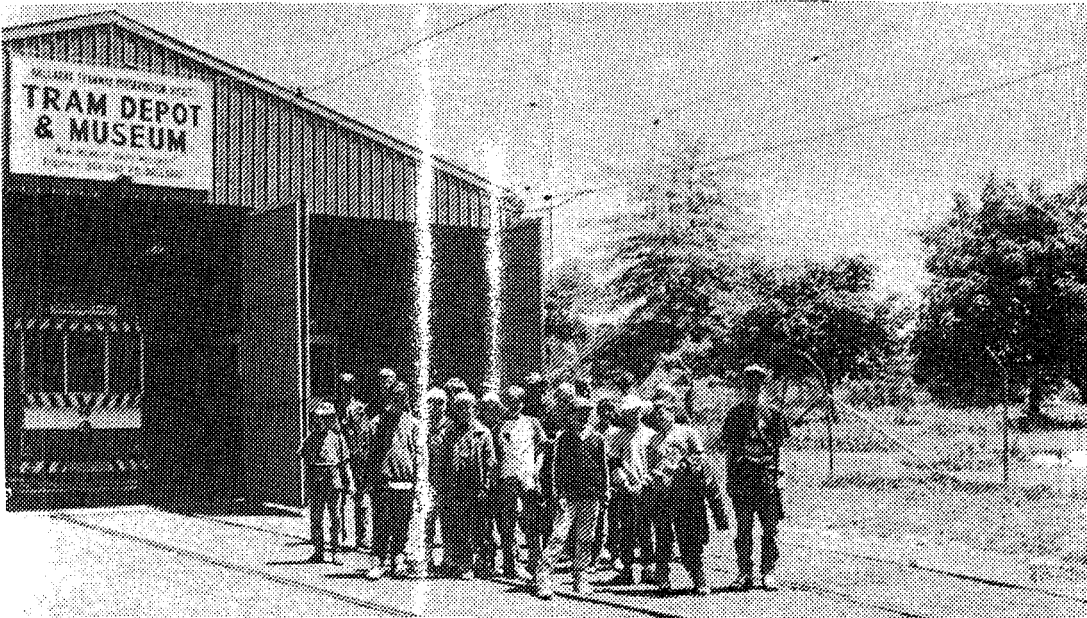
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Peter Hill, Barry McCandlish, Len Millar, Andrew Mitchell, John Phillips, Treloar, Peter Walker and Gavin Young.

The cost? - Carolyn Dean tore some ankle ligaments on a protruding tree root in the gardens, all the drivers got 'bell deafness' {'If you ring that bell one more time, I'll . . .'}, three broken hanging straps, and one broken bell cord. Oh!, and the drivers were tickled to be asked respectfully if it would be all right to put 10 and 20 cent coins on the rails for the trams to squash. It almost amounted to the national debt. The trams themselves once again stood up to being real 'hands on' exhibits, just as they did in the old days, when they transported school kids in Ballarat.

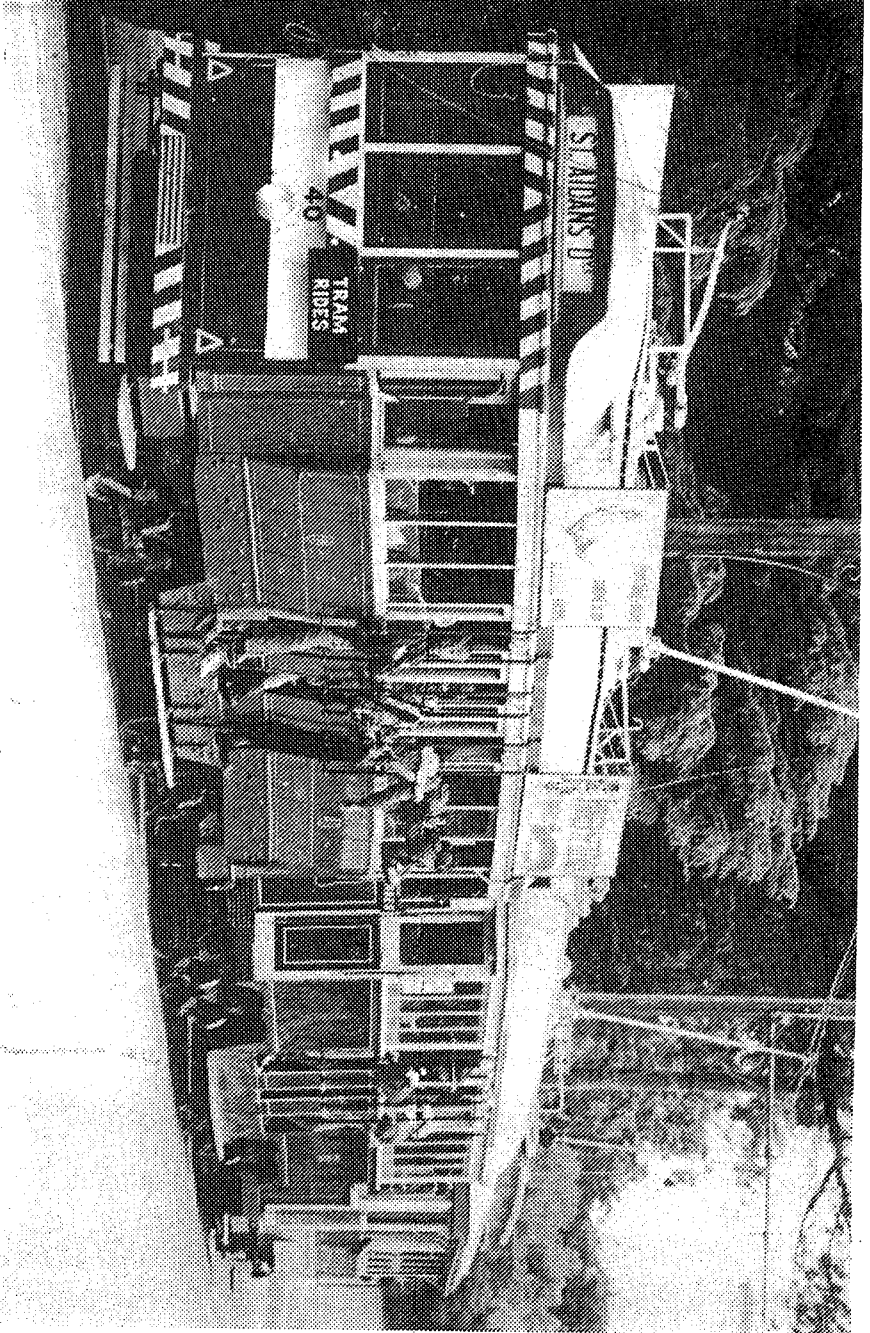
The one disappointing thing about the period was the '\$^^^# weather!!!!' As most Victorians will know, excluding those who were out of the state, the weather for the first 13 days in January were the most miserable on record - rain, cold, more rain and more cold. Ballarat's un-deserved name of being the most miserable place in Australia, according to some who obviously have not travelled to even worse places in Australia, was not helped during the period of a massive influx of visitors.

Quip of the week - courtesy of Frank Puls; *'If a group of scouts were to be photographed out the front of the Depot next to the Trout Farm fence, it would be, of course, (groan); A troop of scouts and a scoop of trouts'*.



Illustrating Frank Puls quip is Len Millar's photograph on 10.1.92

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Trams 40, 661 and 27 line up for the next trip with the Jamboree Scouts on Jan. 8, 1992. Photo: Ballarat Courier

Our Annual Conductor

Member Austin Brehaut, of Hobart, made his annual trip home to Ballarat in January to visit members of his family and to spend a couple of days conducting. Unfortunately for geographical and occupational reasons Austin, a foundation member of BTPS, has generally been only able to spend a day or two each year 'on the platform', but he is always grateful for the opportunity to renew his acquaintance with some very old friends of nearly sixty years standing. Here's to many more years of his association with the Society.

No. 40

On 26 December 1991 the BTPS had owned No. 40 for the same length of time as the SEC - 20 years and 98 days. In about another 10 years, we will overtake the MMTB's ownership. {Get out the wheel chairs! ed.} The distances run in that time make an interesting comparison; SEC - 602,000km, BTPS 8,500km. That's a ratio of 71 to 1 in the SEC's favour. No wonder 40 is so tired.

Just Like a Big Tramway

Being a street operation, events often happen in Wendouree Parade as they do in any other street tramway operation. Fortunately we are seldom held up by a fire, but such an event did occur on Saturday Jan. 18, 1992. The 4.15 p.m. trip from St. Aidans Drive was held up at the loop for nine minutes due to a fire in the engine

compartment of a HG Holden sedan. Fire appliances from Ballarat City and Wendouree Brigades attended. They soon had the fire stopped, but had the appliances parked across our tracks while they worked on the car. Motorman A.Mitchell and Conductor L.Doull reported the delay to the OIC, just after the depot staff saw the Ballarat City truck travelling along Wendouree Parade, and wondering what was going on. Fortunately alternative arrangements to transport our passengers were not necessary.

New Members

The Society welcomes the following new member.

No. 664 Mr. C.Stretton Bendigo

Australia Day Parade

Some members may be wondering why Ballarat Tramways were not represented in the Melbourne Australia Day cavalcade down Swanston St. on Sunday Jan. 26. The Society was invited to participate, but decided against it on the basis of the amount of work required to prepare a tram to go to Melbourne, the risks involved in transportation, insurance matters, and the limited amount of publicity involved when it considered that Melbourne now has a very large fleet of historic trams. Australia Day in Ballarat is becoming a busy day, with a large family festival event being held in the North Gardens Reserve and the Board felt that it would be better serving this event with our full effort.

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New Sales Items

Two new items have recently been introduced to our range of souvenirs. These are a cloth badge featuring tram 26, for \$3.00 (shown actual size below) and a large button badge featuring tram 14 for \$2.00.



We have also ordered a new lapel badge featuring Melbourne's new double decker trains, and these should be available within a month or so.

Remaining in stock is a couple of the video 'Living Ballarat'. Highly recommended for purchase for those who enjoy Ballarat and its past. Price is \$29.95, plus \$3.00 postage.

Traffic

Phillip Bertram has passed his driving examination. Ballarat member John Treloar has joined our traffic staff and has been a welcome addition over the busy Christmas - New Year season.

Traffic for the first six months of the year has been down on the same period for the last year, though last year, we had a bumper first six months. December traffic was poor, particularly on Boxing Day, when only 100 passengers travelled. The poor traffic is we believe due to a number of factors; weather, the recession and the higher fares. On some early December days, the gardens were full, apparently with only Ballarat residents, of whom only a few travel. We operated once again on Christmas day, thanks to Len Millar and Frank Puls, who was dressed in a Santa Claus outfit for part of the day. About 100 passengers were carried. So far this January, traffic has been reasonable, after taking off the Scout Jamboree figures.

Visit by RTA

On Sunday 5 January 1992, the Society hosted the Rail Tourist Association while they visited Ballarat primarily to ride the Redan line. As part of the Scout Jamboree, trains were running on the Redan line, which sees little traffic these days, and the RTA took the opportunity to ride the Steamrail Ballarat rolling stock hauled by T413. The trips ran from Redan to Creswick, reversing at Ballarat Railway Station. {The old double line block instruments would have been busy between the Junctions and the station. ed.} The Society provided a BBQ lunch and of course, tram rides. After these, they travelled out to Haddon to visit the Melbourne Tramcar Preservation Association's Museum before riding the Redan line.

COTMA Conference - Perth

Brochures for the forthcoming COTMA conference in Perth are now available. The Perth Electric Tramway Soc. will host the conference from May 29 to June 3. A very full programme of events have been organised including tours of the new electric train facilities, trips at Whiteman Park, the home of PETS, a visit to the ARHS Rail Museum and a rail car trip around Perth.

Enquiries about the conference and copies of the brochure can be obtained by contacting the Secretary c/- of the Society's address.

21st Celebrations

Planning has commenced to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the Society and the closure of the SEC tramway system in Ballarat in 1971. Yes it is that long ago! An evening function has been booked at the Gardens Kiosk for the evening of actual last tram day, the Saturday September 19. Please put the date in your planning diaries.

At the Depot

The new bituminous concrete (hot mix) floor has been laid in part of the depot. The walking paths between 1 and 2 roads and 2 and 3 roads have been done, and also a portion at either end of the original sheds. It certainly has made a difference to the dust levels, and appearances in the shed. Should have done it years ago!, yes, but it costs money! Hopefully we

can afford to do more in the most trafficked areas in a couple of years time, and a portion outside the depot as well.

The patterns to enable the new motor suspension bearings to be cast for tram 33 have been delivered. The castings are now on order. Measurements have been taken to enable these to be machined. Hopefully the tram will be back in service around Easter time.

The second set of stairs for the horse tram has been completed. It certainly was a lot easier to build the second set than the first set. Anyone needing a set of spiral staircases for a horse tram, please see our Engineering Manager. The first of the end canopies has been completed and fitted into position. The second is being slatted up. It certainly looks like a tram now, and is by far the most popular exhibit in the shed. The next major job is the handrails and the last construction job will be making up and fitting the walkways over the end canopies. The interior louvre windows have been cleaned of their many layers of old varnish and are being finish sanded. When complete they will be installed back into the car. People are amazed what has been done, when they look at the starting photographs. They often ask about the horses, and we reply, 'we are having trouble finding the bones to enable the horses to be reconstructed!'

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Work on the Museum display car continues, but has taken a back seat recently with the Scout Jamboree, floods, track cleaning and the Christmas New Year busy season. Preparation of the floor surface has been completed, and the carpet should be soon laid. Quite a few other finishing off jobs have been done as well. Materials for the display boards will soon be ordered.

The annual floor painting took place during December. The floors on 11, 13, 14, 18, 27, 28, 33 and 40 all received attention in anticipation of

the influx of summer visitors. The interior of 28 has also been varnished.

Work on W4 671 continues. The exterior of the car looks like it has had a case of the measles, with spots of body filler all over the place, where it has had various dents over the years and the many layers of paint has been damaged. The 40 small holes to hold the former advertising board that were drilled into both end aprons of the car have been welded up and filled with body filler and are in the process of being smoothed back.



Warren Doubleday welds up the old advertising holes on No. 2 end of 671; 5.1.92.
Photo Len Millar

Fares Please! is published six times a year in alternate months commencing in January and is distributed to members and friends of the Ballarat Tramways. For further information regarding the Society's activities and publications please contact:- The Secretary,

Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society Ltd.
P.O.Box 632 ACN 005 021 312
Ballarat Vic 3353 Phone (053) 34 1580
