

FARES PLEASE!

February 2007

News from the Ballarat Tramway Museum

The Museum Receives a Heritage Grant

On 8 February the Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, announced the second round in the State Government's \$2.5 million heritage grants program for 2006-07, under its four-year, \$20.5 million strategy, *Victoria's Heritage: Strengthening our communities*.

The second round of grants focuses on heritage collections, with twenty two collections to be professionally assessed and documented. Training will also be provided to the volunteers and staff who care for community collections and museums.

"These grants will reward our local heritage custodians, be they volunteers, community groups or property owners, and help them continue their work for the benefit of all Victorians." Mr Madden said.

In Ballarat, \$3,000 has been allocated for the repair and display of the original 1857 Botanical Gardens designs, \$5,000 for a significance assessment of the Ballarat Tramway Museum's 3,500 objects and \$4,000 for a management system for artefacts from the Ballarat Town Hall, Her Majesty's Theatre and Buninyong Town Hall.

Yes, the Museum already possesses an archive of 3,500 objects ranging from the trams themselves to the ESCo Employees Register, SEC badges, tickets and photos!

This grant recognises the value of the Museum's collection and the efforts, driven by the Museum Services Manager, Warren Doubleday, of the Museum to properly catalogue and care for an important part of Ballarat's and Victoria's history.

Ballarat Trams are Ballarat History

2. Fares Please!

In the Days When the World was Wide

(Adam Lindsay Gordon 1833 – 1870)

On the 26th of January 2007, we celebrated Australia Day at the Wendouree Botanical Gardens by taking out Tram No 26 – a 1916 toast rack single truck model in ESCo 1930's "Californian" livery of maroon and yellow.

We soon entered Wendouree Parade and were met with a street scene of almost a hundred years ago. Two old-design four wheel carriages each drawn by handsome white street-wise horses, motor cars, some bicycles – and of course, folks – many with children trying to cross the road.

With us joining the throng, the scene was reminiscent of Smith Street Collingwood/Fitzroy on Saturday mornings in the 1950's or probably Bridge Street Ballarat at the same time.

We also had a veteran crew for the tram. Myself, Driver No 16, aged nearly seventy five years and a real live tram conductor – Austin Brehaut, No 29, a few years younger. An ancient tram with an elderly crew. But, to complete the picture, Austin was selling one shilling (1/-) tickets (adult) and six penny (6^d) tickets (children) – replicas of those used about fifty years ago, when a shilling used to buy three meat pies or a week's subscription to the "Sun News Pictorial" newspaper.

During the late afternoon, the car parking spots along the route were quickly filling up. Cars were cruising slowly along the tram tracks, their drivers looking for almost non-existent car parking spaces. Then, they began angle parking at the Gardens Loop tram stop – some fouling the progress of the tram.

We moved them off but on subsequent trips, the process was repeated. Soon, it became a losing battle. Afraid of being stranded at the northern section of the line, we decided to run in at six o'clock – an hour late, although there were still prospective customers waiting for a tram ride.

Then the dream faded – we were back to Australia Day 2007, and we had missed most of the cricket, but it did not seem to matter.

Frank Puls



Austin Brehaut and Frank Puls, our senior crew, photographed at the Depot in front of tram No 26 on their day off.

Photo: Austin Brehaut collection

2007 Begonia Festival

Although the Botanic Gardens are remarkably green at present, the continuing drought has led to Lake Wendouree becoming almost completely empty and Ballarat enduring Stage 3 water restrictions. To conserve water, for the first time in many years the flower beds in the gardens have not been planted.

In this situation, Council was faced with a dilemma in staging the annual Begonia Festival. It was decided to reduce the Festival to the three days of the Victorian Labour Day weekend and to stage most events in the "Fairyland" area near the tramway's passing loop. Most events will be free.

The Museum has been invited to take part and the Festival has again offered to sponsor the provision of tram services within the Gardens so that they can be free.

We are proud to continue our long association with the Festival. A minimum of two bogie trams will operate between 9:30am and 6:00pm for the three days of the Festival which will be held from the 10th to the 12th of March.

Museum DVD

The Museum has just re-released "*The Tramways of Ballarat*" in DVD format. It has been professionally reproduced. Now is the time to get your copy of this wonderful record of the Museum and trams operating in the streets of Ballarat in the 1960's in a modern user-friendly format. It is available at \$28.50 plus packing and postage of \$5.00 from P O Box 632, Ballarat, Victoria 3353 or pick up your copy at the Depot.

Vale

Just after the last "Fares Please" went to print we received the sad news that member Martin Grant had passed away suddenly on Sunday 17 December 2006. Martin was one of our many interstate members and was a regular worker at Whiteman Park in Perth. He had been the rostered driver for the day and when he failed to appear Traffic Manager Garry Barker visited his home and the unfortunate discovery was made after Police were called. As an active member of PETS over the years Martin held several positions including Traffic Manager and was Treasurer for twelve years. The tramway preservation movement and PETS will be the poorer for his passing.

New Members

- 5043 Conah Brown of Ballarat
Conah joins as a Junior Supporter.
- 467 Gary Davey of Blackburn South
Gary has resumed his membership.



The remains of the broken pole following the storm on New Year's evening.

Photo: Austin Brehaut

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The Humanness Of Trams

(For want of a better title, I have called this article "*The Humanness of Trams*")

One cannot be involved with trams for long without giving consideration to some of the essential elements that make a tram more than a purely utilitarian object. And I must say from the outset (if it isn't obvious enough) that I write from a somewhat biased viewpoint.

"In the beginning ..."

I speak particularly of those trams which were built immediately before, during, and shortly after WWI, when the electric tramway systems were being established in the major cities of Australia, both the capitals and provincial cities (though much of this could also apply to those built from 1919 to 1939). Especially I refer to those which eventually became part of the Ballarat fleet.

This was the period before the mass-produced car and motor omnibus became the common and ubiquitous means of public conveyance. In the early days the trams were the means of the growth of many suburban areas, when some tram lines preceded and assisted in the suburban sprawl which we have come to know only too well.

Those first cars (and I speak broadly) were the four-wheel California combination, saloon, drop-centre, and cross-bench type cars which were more or less hand-crafted internally in the fine timbers of the day, from trees grown for constructing elegant creations, and which even today, in their old age, continue to evoke admiration from people more used to the mass-produced, modular vehicles which now ply the streets of Melbourne and Adelaide and many European cities, even if much of the original materials have had to be replaced for various reasons over the years. It would seem (and not having been present at the time, I cannot know the minds of those early car-builders with their coach-building and wood-working skills which were put to such good use) that there was pride in what was being made for the benefit of the

travellers of the early part of the 20th Century. Perhaps we could well appreciate them in the light of the following:

The story is told of three stone-masons in England in the 1800s who were asked what they were doing. The first answered: "I'm laying stones." The second replied: "I'm putting up a wall!" But the third proudly announced: "I'm building a Cathedral!"

Still, in the tramcars which operate in museums throughout the country today, the same care is taken to preserve the inner character of Ballarat 26, Bendigo 21, Adelaide 1, or Fremantle 29 etc. that provide much pleasure to the thousands each year who ride these trams, whether reliving their younger days or riding the trams for the first time. There is almost an awesomeness at thinking of those of past generations for whom these trams were the means of going to work, to school, to entertainments, to the footy, or Sunday School picnics. And today people come from widespread towns and cities whether to visit Ballarat generally or primarily to see the trams. It is fascinating how talking with them can bring out matters that they might not otherwise discuss with a stranger. But as I shall also mention later, there is almost an awe today, as it was then, a reverence shown to drivers and "connies" (note the old affectionate term) -- "gee, it's good to have a conductor - we don't see them anywhere else now!" and drivers in our museum operations who actually have the time to give to the passengers and show them the "works" without having to meet a deadline as one would in a public transport system. "Trammies" had a special place in the community.

The trams were essentially simple vehicles with technology that is relatively (my word) easy to understand and keep in working order. Who would have thought in 1913, for example, that Ballarat 40 (ex-PMTT 35) would still be plying public roads using the same type of controllers, air brakes, and electrical gear over ninety years

later. Can we imagine a 'Citadis' or 'Combino' still running somewhere in 2106? Certainly like all material things, components in our cars wear out, or are damaged, and have had to be replaced regularly, trams given "organ transplants" from other vehicles, life-guards are likely to drop without warning, and temperamental compressors et al cajoled into behaving themselves with a few forcible whacks with a sledge hammer, so to speak, or even by contrast given the skill and care like that of a neurosurgeon. We give them the sort of attention that we might bestow upon other humans who mean much to us - keeping Granny's arthritic joints lubricated, and so on.

And as we are only too aware, age brings with it the inevitable creaks groans and wheezes from which we all suffer from time to time. The bodies wriggle and twist in motion. Gaps appear in the wood-work that let winter breezes in around the ears and other inconvenient places (and aren't the steps much higher than they used to be!) !). But the cars continue faithfully to transport us from A to B (in Ballarat read "Carlton St to St Aidan's Drive", or "to the Begonia Festival", as they did once for example from Mt Pleasant or Sebastopol to the City). We can hopefully imagine that long after we are gone, they will still be performing the tasks for which they were built so long ago.

And those of us who still so lovingly tend and operate them today have an affection for them that transcends the purely material (and as I said before) the utilitarian aspects of their existence; though motorists who find themselves unexpectedly backing out into the path of one of those "green monsters" in Wendouree Parade might not be so taken with them.

I believe trams of the era of which I write this in 2006 are more than mere assemblages of wood, metal and glass. They have taken on themselves "personalities" and idiosyncrasies which in my humble opinion set them apart from most other objects. They are creations of human beings who themselves have been given the skills to design and construct them by a higher Creator.

They were built to serve people, to enable people to take part in essential activities of human life. The passengers interacted with one another; they knew the regulars with whom they shared, for example, the 7.43 am from the Sebastopol terminus each morning, or the 5.10pm service to Gardens via Drummond Nth each afternoon. We knew the crews, most of whom we got on very well with and who knew us, and might even let us off at our front gate sometimes. Each car on a service run was an embodiment of the life of our community, with young and old, workers and school-children, mums with their pushers, families going to the Cemetery on Sunday afternoons, parcels for the shop at Rubicon St, &c. In those days too, remember the courtesies extended to others that have largely gone by the board in 21st century society? No wonder they were looked on with so much affection (well, provided they weren't running late, causing us to miss an appointment! And yes, they did sometimes!). Ballarat trams are not only Ballarat history; they were Ballarat life. They were about people. They were the heart of the city's being for just over 80 years (if we include the horse-trams), or the 66 years of the electrics. I was asked recently whether trams have names, which of course I had to answer in the negative, which may seem to contradict the human aspect. But despite that, look how many had a soft spot for No. 21, or 33, or 40! We remember them by the numbers given to them at random by traffic managers of long ago, and which give them identities. A particular number may evoke many fond (or otherwise) memories.

The bulk of my working life (and still to some degree in retirement) has been spent with people in the many joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, life and death issues, spiritual and material things that concern them. So perhaps it is not unnatural that I look on trams and the people with these things in mind. What would Ballarat and other places have been without these faithful tramcars which have tolerated so many demands upon them and still come out fighting?

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The Humanness Of Trams

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Of course trams, like humans, need guidance in life. So the tracks set the course which they must follow, though again like humans they are inclined to take things into their own hands (as it were) and stray from the "straight and narrow" from time to time, and can be rather reluctant to return to the right direction.

Life is an experience. And I certainly want many others to have an experience as they ride with us each operating day. And when they leave us at the end of their journey, short and all as it may sadly be, it's so wonderful to hear in the words of gratitude and excitement that the passengers have had an experience that they want to remember long into the future.

Our trams (yes, all in our fleet are older than I am!) are one means by which human-to-human life is carried on. They are (in theological terms) mediators between the builders and crews of the "19-teens" and those of us in the "20-noughties". They link two of the stages of the human growth and development that are a part of the ongoing creation of mankind, and, God willing, will continue for many years to come.

Long may they live! And when their time does finally come, may they rest in peace, knowing that it is a case of "well done, good and faithful servants".

APB November 2006

Author's footnote: Other articles and publications may have probably from time to time expressed similar sentiments about trams, but of which I am unaware. The above words are my own personal expressions of and thoughts on the subject at the time of writing.

In the Workshop

With many of our regulars taking a break over the Christmas and new year period to rest and relax, the past couple of months have been a little quieter in the workshop than normal. However work has proceeded on the mechanical overhaul of No 14 with brake gear and other components being repaired ready for the return of the wheels and motors.

In late December and early January attention turned to improving the appearance of the W3 and W4 which play an important role in our operations during major events. Tram 661 has had all of the window shutters removed and these are being stripped and repainted while all of the windows and the cab doors on No 671 have been removed and are being sanded, repaired and repainted. It is expected that all this work will be completed in time for both trams to be available during this year's Begonia Festival in March.

On new years day a spectacular storm passed over Ballarat in the early evening and had the unfortunate side effect of causing a large tree beside Wendouree Parade to collapse. The tree fell across our overhead wiring and snapped off one of our poles, rendering the tramway inoperable between Depot Junction and Carlton St while we waited for the pole to be replaced.

On the 6th of January two teams spent most of the day undertaking the necessary repairs as well as completing a host of other outstanding works on the overhead.

Now that things are back in full swing we expect to make this a big year with some really exciting projects underway. If you find yourself looking for something to do with a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, remember you are always welcome to come and join in.

30 years as Treasurer

At the recent Board meeting it was recognised that Carolyn Cleak had achieved thirty years as Treasurer. At a Board Meeting on the 14th January 1977 Carolyn was appointed to a position from which, now in reflection, has overseen many changes.

In those days she took the job on as a hobby but it has now progressed to being seen as voluntary work. Over the years there have been many changes from writing up huge ledger books to computerisation, expansion and development of the depot premises, purchasing the house and land at Bungaree and being involved in the bureaucracy of name changes. The change of name to Ballarat Tramway Museum required Carolyn to undertake a lot of formal paperwork just as has the recent change of her surname from 'Dean' to 'Cleak'.

Carolyn has said that from its small beginnings to the museum of today it has given her a better knowledge of financial matters and an ability to cope with an increased workload. She is the third longest serving Board member and the longest in the same Board position.

Being the only female Board member she says there have been many challenges from all quarters over the years and she has been able to complete the task efficiently through it all. The Board acknowledged her 30 year effort at its recent meeting and as she stated "It is definitely a long time"

CONGRATULATIONS CAROLYN



Carolyn balancing the cash
(in much earlier times!)

Photo: Richard Gilbert



On 26 December 2004, after the expenditure of over \$30,000, Carolyn had great pleasure in removing a Notice advising the interruption to service due to the lightning strike.

Photo: Warren Doubleday

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Challenges!

Our crew were changing ends at St Aidan's Drive when a group of 42 Chinese school students arrived. They had just arrived from Beijing to stay at Ballarat Grammar School for a month and were being taken for a walk in the park by two Australian staff members. One of the staff asked if they could have a tram ride. Conductor Brehaut decided they there were too many for the tram, so it was decided that half of them would ride southwards while the others walked to Carlton Street where they would change places for the return trip. As the tram approached St Aidan's Drive on the return trip it passed the first group walking back so the opportunity was taken to get a group picture of the entire group. Our crew had to pose for innumerable photos with small groups of the students.



The ageless fascination of trams

It was a fine afternoon in the school holidays. I was driving an empty tram when I became aware of a boy and girl about 8-10 years old running towards the stop. I pulled up and they asked if I could wait for Mum and Nan to walk from their car.

After a minute or so Mum duly arrived, right behind Nan and a very frail little old lady. When they boarded the tram (with a little help) it turned out that I had on board the two children, their mother, mother's mother and her mother ("Little Nan").

It is the first time I have been aware of having four generations from the same family on my tram.

In spite of all conversation having to be shouted into Little Nan's ear ("she's getting a bit deaf you know"), the whole family seemed to thoroughly enjoy the ride. Trams really do interest all age groups.

ATD, your man at the front.

*Photo: Roger Salen
10 February 2007*



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For further information regarding the Museum, its activities and publications please contact: The Secretary, P.O. Box 632, Ballarat, Vic, 3353. Phone / Fax 61 3 5334 1580.

E-mail: info@btm.org.au

Our web page: <http://www.btm.org.au>