

FARES PLEASE!

April 2007

News from the Ballarat Tramway Museum

The Museum at Work



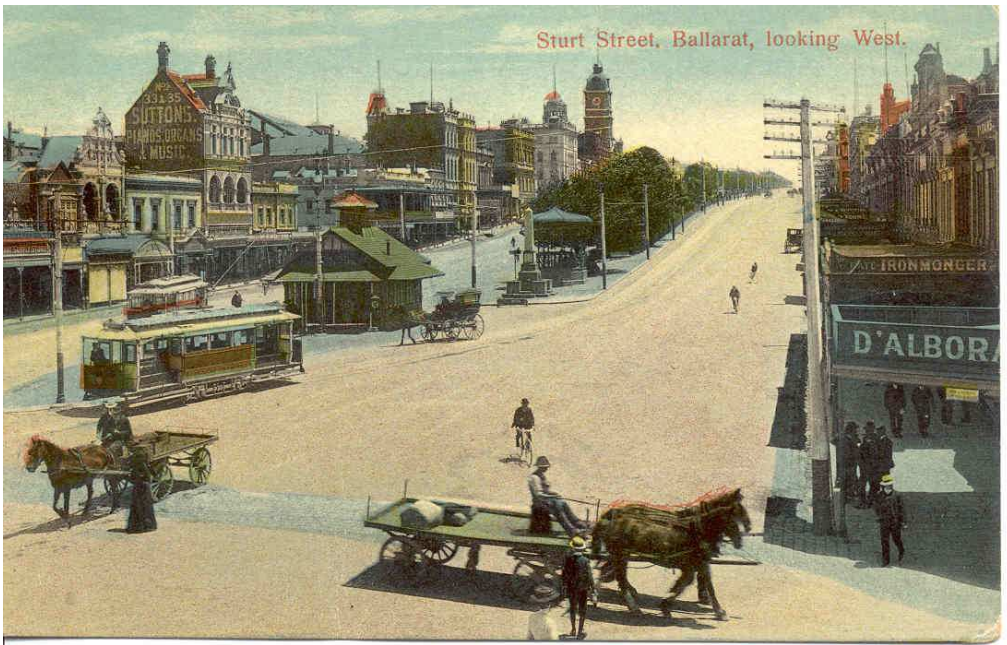
Begonia Festival 2007

Conductor John Shaw and assistant conductor Gye Finlay assist passengers to alight from Tram No 40 whilst Motorman Len Millar waits patiently. Tram No 27 running the shuttle service from the loop to Carlton Street unloads behind. Sunday 11 March 2007. Pram traffic proved so heavy that No 40 was later replaced by No 661 which has more room in the drop centre.

Photo: Peter Winspur

Ballarat Trams are Ballarat History

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One item of interest amongst the recent acquisitions by the Museum is the postcard presented above of a view of Sturt St from the north side of the intersection with Grenville St. The two horse drawn drays, pedestrians and tramcars show a busy scene. The postcard was printed in Germany, c1910, as it postdates the construction of the large waiting shelter (1907), but predates the fitting of windscreens to the tramcars. It also illustrates the bluestone crossings of Sturt St, that enabled pedestrians to cross the road safely (and relatively cleanly) in wet conditions.

A poignant handwritten message is on the rear. There was no postage stamp or cancellation stamp, or name but written probably in 1915/1916.

"Ballarat is a city in Victoria. Mother, my two late Brothers, youngest Brother and I were there in 1914, in Oct, just after the War commenced. My second Brother and the first of the two to lose his life, enlisted when he returned from Ballarat. Sturt is Ballarat's main street."



Sturt Street one hundred years later Photo: Peter Winspur

The 2007 Begonia Festival

The protracted drought continues to take its toll on Ballarat. Not only has Lake Wendouree been reduced to a few puddles but the Begonia Festival almost did not go ahead. With bare flowerbeds and very stressed trees, shrubs and lawns it was finally decided to reduce the Festival to the three days of the Victorian Labour Day weekend.

The Begonia Festival again generously agreed to sponsor the operation of the tramway during the festival and we must thank Barbara Chalkley and Tanje Ruddick for their support and assistance.

The Festival proved to be a resounding success for the Museum. Most activities took place under the trees in the "Fairylnd" area on the "lake" side of the gardens. This is immediately north of Gardens Loop and proved to be a boon to the Museum as people came out of the area almost directly at our tram stop.

Travel patterns were different from previous years and it was soon organised to make sure that there was always a tram waiting at the stop at the loop to take weary visitors to the other end of the gardens.

For much of the time four trams were in operation. Tram No 40 emerged for the first time at a Begonia Festival since 2004.

Nearly 7,000 people rode the trams during the three days and at 2676 passengers on Labour Day and 2567 on the Sunday only two other days (in 2004) have surpassed these since operations began in 1974.

Our dedicated team of volunteers, in addition to providing a professionally run tram service, again answered hundreds of questions concerning the Festival, the Gardens, the Lake and the Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial.

Member John Shaw yet again travelled all the way from Perth and Bruce Worthington came from Sydney to assist. Nearly twenty volunteers were on deck each day, a superb effort considering the small size of our workforce. Although the work is hard they all appeared to enjoy themselves. Over four hundred person hours were put in over the three days. As usual, Gavin Young topped the time worked at thirty three hours and one minute.

A Begonia Festival is never complete without a social evening or two and a record twenty two dined at the Gordon Hotel on the Saturday night and about eighteen enjoyed a superb barbecue at Bungaree on Sunday night which was prepared by Simon Green and Tina. An enjoyable slide show prepared by Richard Gilbert followed.

*Peter, Len and Bill take a breather
Photo: Austin Brehaut 12 March 2007*



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Ballarat's First Motorist

Campbell Laird was born at Mt. Fyans, near Geelong, on 22nd April, 1871, the eighth child of John and Maria Laird. He attended the district school and Geelong Grammar, showing an early aptitude for engineering.

On completing his schooling in 1887, he was indentured for seven years as an engine fitter at the Phoenix Foundry in Armstrong Street, Ballarat, where Central Square is located today. During the period of his apprenticeship his father paid fifty pounds a year for his board and lodging, as well as any expenses involved with his indenture.

Following the completion of his apprenticeship in July, 1894, he was employed as a journeyman for six months, then Foreman for eighteen months, followed by Chief Draftsman and Engineer for nine years. He was then appointed Manager of the Company. Sadly, the Victorian Railways adopted a policy at this time of constructing their own locomotives, which effectively caused the closure of the Phoenix Foundry in 1906. During his period of employment at Phoenix, some 230 locomotives had been constructed, out of a total of 361 during the life of the Company.

During his apprenticeship he had attended evening classes four nights a week at the School of Mines, picking up prizes in several competitions for mechanical design. He was also an instructor in evening classes at the Ballarat School of Arts. He still found time to participate in football, and lead an active social life through his church involvement. It was here that he met

Christina McIntyre, who he married on 7th August 1895. They moved to a home in Trench Street, since largely swallowed up by Bunge's flour mill. He was a member of the Gun Club and Kennel Club, with a great love of dogs and horses. The Lairds were also prominent members of the Horticultural Society of Ballarat, and maintained a noteworthy garden.

During a quiet time at the Foundry, Campbell, with the assistance of one of his promising young tradesmen, undertook to build a steam car. Mechanically, it appears to have had much in common with the locomotives that Phoenix was turning out, with a body that had been made up by a professional coach builder. The photograph shows a vehicle that appears to be completely devoid of brakes, presumably you stopped by reversing the engine - not uncommon in the days of steam. The passengers, Christina and possibly daughter Evelyn or nephew Wally Dawson, perched precariously at the front, while Campbell and an elderly gent, either father or father-in-law, have an actual seat to sit on.

Sunday afternoons the Lairds were to be found chuffing around Lake Wendouree to the amazement of the population, but fairly soon rumblings of discontent were to be heard from various horse operators, no doubt including the tramway company. Eventually the steam car was banished to the dusty back roads away from public view and alarm. It was years ahead of its time. The engine portion actually survived for many years, and was still in existence as late as the 1950s.

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In May 1914 Campbell applied for the position of Assistant Chief Mechanical Engineer with the New South Wales Government Railways, but before the appointment could be confirmed Campbell

had died, a victim of septicaemia, for which there was no cure in those days. He had packed a lot into his 43 years.

Dave Macartney

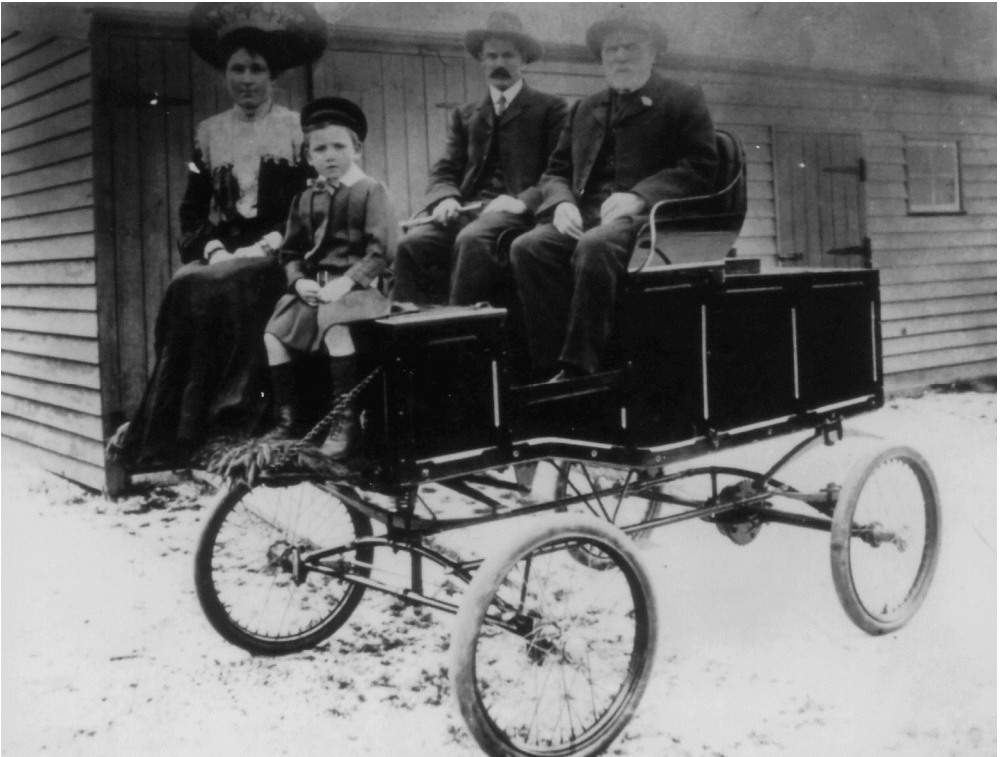


Photo: Dave Macartney collection

New Members

The Museum welcomes the following new members. We hope their stay with us will be long and fulfilling.

772 Mr Leslie Hunt of Ferndale, W A

773 Mr Gavan Dorian of Ballarat

Gavan is about to commence training as a Conductor as a first step to becoming a driver in the near future.

Vale

Jack Richardson on 10 April 2007 in Brisbane. Member Paul Nicholson in remembering Jack writes “Jack’s tramway titles were legendary – the Destination series especially – and his enthusiastic reporting of publication schedules – in preparation/ready soon/ available shortly – became part of enthusiast folklore.”

(From COTMA News Update)

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Happenings at Geelong

Roadworks in Geelong have once again exhumed part of the former SEC operated Geelong Tram System. Part of the former North route have been revealed with the construction of a median strip along the length of Mercer Street, which necessitated some roadway excavation for the work.

Member Clayton Giles noticed the works and found tram track in some parts of the excavation and appropriately recorded the sight on his camera.

The North route, as it was known, saw its last tram on Sunday, 4th March, 1956. A book detailing the history of the Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong tramways, soon to be released, has been written by one of our members, William Scott. He has generously allowed us to print an extract. The last tram to North Geelong is described as follows.

“ The last car to North Geelong left Moorabool Street with a tremendous bang as a detonator exploded on the track. The gong sounded frantically, people yelled loudly, car horns blew or tooted, farewelling the tramcar as it left the main street filled with passengers making the

final round trip. Many who attended the open-air concert at Rippleside Beach were among passengers on the car.”

The book will be stocked by our Sales Department when it is released later this year.

Richard Gilbert

Photo: Clayton Giles 15 April 2007



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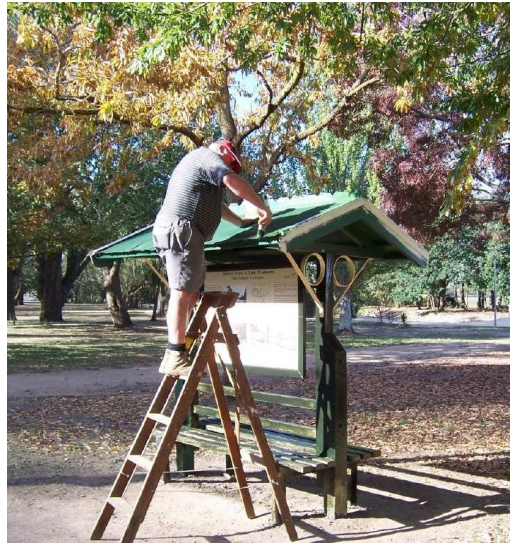


Routine Maintenance

Phillip repaints our tram shelter at Gardens

Loop 18 April 2007

Photo: Richard Gilbert



Emergency Repairs

Alastair & Alan replace a bracket arm

4 April 2007 *Photo: Austin Brehaut*

Infrastructure Upgrade

Garry and Alan replace an insulator

18 April 2007 *Photo: Richard Gilbert*



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Works

A dewirement early in April seriously damaged a bracket arm outside “Pipers on the Parade”. An emergency repair team of Alan Snowball and Alastair Reither were able to replace the bracket arm at very short notice.

The Museum’s workforce is very small and jobs must be prioritised. At times the less urgent jobs can take quite some time to reach the top of the list. Replacing the section insulator outside “Pipers” was one of these jobs.

After thirty years we had run out of spare wooden sections and, due to our double wire overhead, two of these had to be fabricated. We are also dealing with very old infrastructure and one has to be sure that one can actually dismantle the original without everything collapsing in such a heap that it is almost impossible to get everything back together again without major replacement.

During the overhead works day in January it was ascertained that the old insulator could be removed without resorting to drastic methods. Alan Snowball then manufactured brackets to hold the double trolley wires together for the work.

On Tuesday 17 April Garry Wood was able to take a day off work on a non-operating day and he and Alan removed the old fittings, rebuilt them in the workshop using the new parts and rehung them. A full day’s work, yet from the ground one would not notice the difference. Another job has been finalized however.

Tram No 14 remains on the jacks whilst her wheel sets and motors are in Melbourne waiting for attention. Small jobs for large firms will always only be done when time permits and the Museum can only be patient. The motors have been inspected and the news on one of them is not good as a rewind of the armature will be required. Some people may remember that one of No 14’s motors was replaced by a spare in the late 1970’s. We no longer have that luxury as all our spare motors need expensive attention. The next step will be to seek quotes for the work.

Work is proceeding on replacing the supports and the floor in the section of the display area nearest the office. When this is complete a new fit out will begin. Plans developed by Garry will see a new and exciting display area develop over the next few years.



Fares Please! is published by the Ballarat Tramway Museum Inc. (A0031819K) six times a year in alternate months commencing in February. It is distributed to members and friends.

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