

FARES PLEASE!

October 2008

News from the Ballarat Tramway Museum

Vale Frank Puls



Frank Puls photographed by Austin Brehaut wearing a black tie on the day of the funeral of Elizabeth the Queen Mother 2 April 2002.

BTM Collection

Ballarat Trams are Ballarat History

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LAUNCESTON CONFERENCE

Left:

Launceston Bogie tram No. 29 in running for the Conference participants.

Photo: Richard Gilbert

Right:

John Binns, one of the Conference Organisers, as proud as can be to be conducting on an operating Launceston tram. John, along with others, has completed many hours of work on reconstructing this tram, not to mention the time spent on all the other tasks required to develop an operating museum.

Photo: Richard Gilbert



POST CONFERENCE TOUR

On board the West Coast Wilderness Railway. L - R; John Shaw, Lindsay Richardson, Richard Gilbert, Greg Dixon, Simon Green.

Photo taken by the train conductor, Gary Preston

The 2008 COTMA Conference

The Conference of the Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia was held in Launceston from Friday 22nd August to Tuesday 26th August, 2008. In all, 80 people attended representing the tramway museums of Australia and New Zealand. The Ballarat Tramway Museum was represented by Carolyn Cleak, Graeme Cleak, Warren Doubleday, Richard Gilbert, Simon Green and John Shaw. Warren is also the Chairman of COTMA. A friend of the Museum, Greg Dixon, also attended.

The programme opened with a social cocktail night at the Launceston Tramway Museum premises. The highlight was the announcement, around 9pm, that Launceston tram No. 29 was outside and ready for boarding. Yes, after 56 years, it was possible to ride a Launceston tram. Congratulations are offered to the Launceston Tramway Museum for their zealous efforts that saw them gain their Rail Safety Accreditation to operate trams, only five days before we arrived. The tram performed beautifully. The restoration of the vehicle is outstanding and something the museum members can be justifiably proud of.

From the Saturday, the business of workshop presentations and field outings took place. Those who attended the informal BRAGG Sessions, where each museum has the time to show a presentation bragging about their efforts over the past two years since the last Conference, were enthralled to see the Ballarat presentation. This depicted the activities of our museum over this period as recorded by Richard Gilbert and were

edited by our production house support person Andre Switzer.

The workshop sessions covered a variety of subjects, from the construction of the tramway extensions in Christchurch, to organising a youth section in a tramway museum. Field outings saw visits to operating preserved railways and agricultural machinery displays and one other outing visited wineries.

After the Conference conclusion, a Post Conference Tour took in a visit to the Tasmanian west coast, and a ride on the West Coast Wilderness Railway. A landslide saw the schedule altered as the full journey could not be completed. In fact, this turned out to be a bonus, as the group enjoyed a return journey over the rack section of the line. After our wonderful outing on this incredibly restored railway, the group adjourned to an impromptu social gathering at the Empire Hotel, opposite the railway station. As Richard, John, Simon and Greg were staying at the hotel, they were able to arrange this event immediately with the owners. The graciously decorated Dining Room, where Prime Minister Alfred Deakin had enjoyed a meal in 1905, was a fitting venue for this social get together.

Of course, our friends at the Tasmanian Transport Museum in Hobart were visited and they made us most welcome. It was pleasurable to see the Hobart trams, as much as it was to see the Launceston trams, during the Conference activities. A visit to Tasmania is a must to see both these tramway museums and the tourist railways of this most scenic part of Australia.

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A Tribute to Frank Puls

The Ballarat Tramway Museum rightly claims to be “the most authentic tramway museum in Australia”! The Museum has a portable promotional banner, which features a photo of a uniformed Frank Puls and the words *Fares Please! Enjoy a ride on Australia's most authentic Tramway Museum!*

On Monday evening October 13, 2008 we lost from our ranks the man on the banner - a "most authentic Tramway man"! Stalwart member, driver, punster and general good bloke, Francis Maurice Puls had lost a short but deadly battle with Birkitt's Lymphoma. Frank died with his beloved wife of thirty five years, Jenny, together with daughter Sharon and son David by his side. He was seventy six.

A dozen or more BTM members attended a farewell and celebration of his life four days later, along with well over one hundred relatives and friends. At the North Ballarat funeral parlour gathering, attendees were given a tribute to Frank along with the “order of service”. On the front was a wonderful photo of Frank puffing on his faithful pipe, and on the back a memorable photo of a smiling Frank at the controls of one of our single truckers! Those present heard some wonderful snippets of his life, work and interests.

Frank was born at Broughton in the northern Wimmera, and was the eldest of four. He was educated at various small schools in the district, finishing his education in Dimboola at the age of eleven. Life on the farm was not easy, and he had to help alongside his father.

Frank and farming did not mix, and he

would often be found with his head in a book, instead of bringing in the cows. His parents had to sell the farm in 1944 - at the end of a drought. It rained on the day of the sale - an act of nature that I am sure helped to form his whimsical take on life.

Frank's father became the Post Master at a little town called Tarranginnie on the Melbourne-Adelaide railway line. As Frank grew up, interest in mathematics, radio, stamps and phonograph records flourished. He accumulated literature of interest to him, to the point where any house he lived in was a monument to “the collector” in him! All his adult life, he was an accomplished button accordion player. He played this instrument at parties, union gatherings and even on the tram!

Frank did all sorts of work. He carried a sandwich board advertising an early Danny Kaye film, he was with the M&MTB four times, and had a long association with the Post-Master General's department (subsequently Australia Post). Frank retired from his mail-sorting job at the Ballarat East Mail centre in 1994. But he continued his strong association with the union movement, and really came in to his own driving trams for the Museum, – especially on week-days.

During the memorial several songs that were important to (and summed up) Frank were interspersed with remembrances and laughter. Frank's sense of humour kept surfacing. Many of us will remember his love of weak jokes and puns.

Frank would tell passengers (with his usual impish smile) at St. Aidan's Drive “Folks, over there is Mount Warrenheip. If you

can see it, it's about to rain". Pause. "If you can't see it, it's raining!" As the tram headed towards Carlton Street, he would advise passengers that it would be getting a little cooler as the tram approached our southern terminus. "It's because we are getting closer to the South Pole!" Of course, north-bound, we would be feeling a little warmer – simply "We're getting closer to the Equator!"

Frank drove our trams up and down Wendouree Parade in the service of our organisation many thousands of times. In the four and a half years before he retired from driving he did almost two thousand trips! He joined us in January 1988, conducted from August 1990 and became qualified as a Driver on 16 May, 1992. Frank could be called upon at any time to do a short-notice Charter. He loved carrying school children, and had this avuncular smile on his face as each small horde of screaming, running kids would invade the Depot for a guided tour afterwards.

Our redoubtable Conductor Austin Brehaut tells us that he conducted for Frank 129 times just since the year 2000! Frank drove on Christmas Day several times – in a red and white Santa get-up, of course! Handing out little gifts (sweets) to the younger passengers was a feature of his commitment.

At the farewell and celebration of his life were two men with navy blue shirts with the 888 symbol. As I made my way over to speak to one of them, I was remembering that 888 was Frank's favourite Melbourne tram. The two fellows of course were wearing shirts that celebrated the 888 icon of the Australian union movement.

At the beginning of the last century, workers successfully won a long campaign for 8 hours work, 8 of rest and 8 of sleep per day. Frank was a proud member of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (and its predecessor, the AT&MOEA), and the local branch President, Tony Russell (based at Ballarat Station) described how grateful local union members were of Frank Puls. Frank loyally attended local Trades Hall meetings, marched with workers in the Ballarat streets for various causes – and played his beloved button accordion at social gatherings.

Frank loved writing, and I have kept several whimsical commentaries on life and politics and people that accompanied his Christmas cards. He contributed to the former AT&MOEA's "Tramway Record" magazine several times. He was proud of his new tram driving life here in Ballarat, and he had a host of funny yarns to recount of life on the trams in M&MTB days.

Frank recounted that in 1965 he "was driving tram 672 through the (old) St. Kilda Junction and turning right into Fitzroy Street, when the back bogie jumped off the outside of the curve. An Inspector finally arrived on the scene and asked me "Why didn't you stop the tram when it first jumped off, instead of clearing the intersection like you have?" I said "The track on this curve is so rough that I couldn't tell if the bogie was on or off." He advised "Don't be funny! When did you notice something wrong?" I said "When the tram slewed right towards Junction Oval instead of St. Kilda Beach, and the destination sign wasn't showing FOOTBALL!"

I remember one day out on Wendouree

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Parade he was saying that old friends of his, Trams 661 and 671, had “followed him into happy retirement in Ballarat”. He said that the “W4” class had a reputation for brake failure – without any warning! He said that that was a tad disconcerting, especially if you were belting down St. George’s Road on a wet night heading back to Hanna Street Depot after the evening peak. “Funny isn’t it? 671 now behaves most reliably here in happy retirement!”

Frank’s sixty eight year love of trams

started in Bourke Street on a dark night in February 1940. Fresh off the train from Nhill, he saw his first cable tram, and was amused at the “quaint” sight. His uncle commented “Look carefully at them, mate, because they’ll soon be gone.” To quote Frank “Sure enough, before the year was out, the cable trams were gone!”

And so too our “most authentic Tramway man” is gone! Well done, Frank! Rest in peace! We will sorely miss you!

Len Millar



Frank Puls (1606) standing next to ‘Dick Kerr’ Car No. 543, Thornbury, Thursday 3rd January 1963.

From the former AT&MOEA’s
“Tramway Record”

Google Earth Streetview

Google Earth - Streetview now has many Australian streets imaged from the street itself. These views are done by driving a vehicle down the street with a camera taking 360 degree views every so often.

Wendouree Parade was “imaged” during the Summer of 2008, with No. 13 at the St Aidans Drive terminus. It shows the very dry lake in the background.



In the Workshop

Most activities in the workshop have been centred around No. 38. During July and August the motors were removed and dismantling commenced. The 22E trucks were stripped of brake gear and thoroughly cleaned. The underside of the body is also receiving attention, with decades of dust and road grime being removed to assess the condition of the timbers. The roof was painted at the beginning of September, and a new set of motor suspension and armature bearings delivered from a local brass foundry. In early October the wheel sets were transported to Bendigo to accompany a delivery from there to Adelaide. The wheels are to be re-profiled on the wheel lathe at the AETM. Our thanks go to Darren Hutchesson at Bendigo for allowing us to share the truck.

Work on No. 38 has since taken a back seat with the arrival of No. 14's motors back from a prolonged stay in Melbourne, having received remedial work. The lifting crane was moved to the second set of mounting brackets at the rear of No. 5 road and a separate workshop area created here to enable No. 14 to return to service as soon as possible. The field coils are being rewrapped, but this is being done locally, and is not expected to take long. Meanwhile, No. 14's controllers were given a good overhaul and the cream paintwork touched up.

No. 26 had a long standing problem with one corner of the saloon.. This had loosened up after having been seen to some twenty years ago. With everything tightened up again the saloon body has

much less movement. The tram has since been used for a children's party and to deliver a wedding party to "Pipers by the Lake" for their wedding breakfast while it waits for the warmer weather to arrive so that it can run in regular service.

Two second hand long trolley poles have recently been received via COTMA. Accordingly, Nos. 13 and 18 have both received new poles to replace the rather tired ones previously fitted. ESCo tram No. 12 has had the holes in the end saloon roofs filled and the ceilings are in the process of being painted to their final colours. Work continues on this car as time permits.

The change room, damaged by the motor car incident some months back, was rebuilt during July and August by a local building contractor and is now better than ever and now back in use.

With the temporary change room in display car No. 39 vacated, the display has now been concentrated in the centre and front saloons of No. 39 only, while the rest of the area has been stripped out for rebuilding. The section between the tram body and the depot wall has been completely removed for the rebuild.

In removing sections of the display, an avenue was opened up for the resident depot possums to enter our Office area after hours with consequent invasion remains left behind by the morning. After some investigation the entry point was found and blocked off.

Recent Charters

We hosted a visit from a group of volunteers on 23 September where we provided a full demonstration of the scope of our museum. These volunteers work at the Eureka Centre, which is the focal point of visitor arrival at Ballarat. We gave them a tram ride along our line and a full tour of our facility to acquaint them with our operation. Many had not known the scope of our activities and appreciated their visit to us and left more informed about our operation.

A charter on Tuesday, 19 August for Carranballac College saw us operate two separate trips for the school group. The students appreciated the look around the Depot, this view is gauged on the 'gonging' that went on whilst they looked through the trams. They did enjoy the ride and asked some quite intelligent questions.

A wedding charter was held on Saturday 13 September where tram 26 took the Bride and Groom and some guests from the Depot Junction to *Pipers on the Lake*, the gardens restaurant pavilion, for their wedding reception.

One lady was heard to tell her friends "We rode on these to Black Rock". Even though the detail was not correct the comment was fascinating to us tramway enthusiasts. Richard Gilbert, the driver, had a chat to the lady who also told her friends that she could remember a tram depot on the corner of St. Kilda Street and Head Street, Elwood. Richard agreed with her and told her a lot of detail about the railway trams. She said "I am so glad to meet you, so that you can tell my friends I was right".

A charter was held for LGB Tours on Monday 13th October for a group visiting Australia from Germany. This tramway/railway interest group really appreciated our efforts to make their visit more enjoyable. They took up a collection of \$54 in Conductor Neill Lardner's 'hat' to show their appreciation.

New Members

The Museum welcomes the following new members. We look forward to seeing them around the Depot and hope their time with us is long and rewarding.

- 785 Mr Adam Jones of Hamlyn Heights
- 786 Mr Marcus Wong of Belmont
- 787 Mr Keith Emery of Ballarat
- 788 Mr Matthew Massarotti of Brown Hill.

Trackwork

A program of track maintenance work is set to commence from Thursday 23rd October. The work will take place over a number of days which will see some sections of rail replaced, where track joints have dropped, and others will be welded where the head of the rail, at joints, is needing a fill of weld to make it smooth again.

Engagement

The museum congratulates Paul Mong on his engagement to Belinda. Alastair Reither, Richard Gilbert and Gary Wood were invited to a celebratory party which was held at the Ballarat East Bowling Club. It was great night and we all wish the happy couple good tidings.

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Photographs from the Jack Richardson Collection

Most members will be familiar with the Destination Series of tramcar handbooks around Australia, published by Jack Richardson. The three SEC tramways (Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo) were covered in a booklet titled "Destination Eaglehawk".

Jack held photographs for future publications. Following his death, his wife asked Robert Thompson of the Brisbane Tramway Museum Society to sort through them and pass them on to the respective Museums. This was carried out by the BTMS President, Peter Hyde, at the recent COTMA Conference. The BTM received the photographs taken in Ballarat and

Geelong. Our thanks to Robert and Peter for enabling the transfer.

The photographs are all black and white prints, often small in size, but dating back to the early 1940's with a number taken during the early 1950's. The photographers are various with many, unfortunately, having passed on.

The four selected show the transition of Ballarat in the post war era from a single truck only tramway to one operating maximum traction bogie trams. A future issue will feature some of the Geelong photos, a city where the tramway system closed in 1956.



Left:

No. 14 heads for Haddon St via Drummond St Nth during the 1957 Begonia Festival. The colourful flower beds of the centre median strip in Ballarat are unfortunately now a memory.

Photo Jim Seletto

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Left:

Music for the People Day, 19/2/1950 saw a busy scene at the intersection of Sturt and Drummond Streets, with trams 13, 12, 34 and 35 busy at work.

Photo Wal Jack.



Right:

No.25 in Wendouree Parade, near Gardens Loop. The tram was transferred to Bendigo in October 1960 to become Bendigo No. 6. Photographer unknown.



Left:

Ballarat Bogie tram No. 15, later No. 36 was photographed by Wal Jack at the City terminus, from the south side on 23/12/1945, soon after its arrival in Ballarat.

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Frank Puls stands alongside the display banner based on the Museum's current brochure. Frank is the "pin up boy" on the top right hand side of the brochure.

The banner has been very successful in attracting attention to the Museum when it has been used at exhibitions and other functions.



No matter what the weather, Frank loved to be at the controls. This photo appeared in *The Courier* on 19.9.06, thirty-five years after the SEC closure. It had rained!



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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