

FARES PLEASE!

October 2009

News from the Ballarat Tramway Museum

Trams and Lake Wendouree



An enduring feature of Wendouree Parade is its trams. Tram No. 14 waits to cross with No. 30 at the Depot Loop on the north side of the lake on 22 May 1971. On page seven No 14 is seen this year half a kilometre further along Wendouree Parade. The greatest change is the view of an empty lake. In this issue of *Fares Please* our historian, Alan Bradley, tells us about the history of Lake Wendouree.

Photo: BTM collection (From the collection of N. J. Simons)

Ballarat Trams are Ballarat History

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Left: School visit.

Former school teacher Roger Salen enjoys the company of students from Surrey Hills Primary School during their visit on Wednesday 9 September 2009.

Photo: BTM collection

Right:

No. 32 in “Santa tram” decoration on the north side of the lake near Dowling St. in 1967. Unfortunately, in colour the image has developed a very pink tone.

Photo: BTM collection (From the collection of N. J. Simons)



Left: Visit by Norm Maddock

Currently the curator of the Malvern tramway museum and formerly Assistant Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Tramways Union, Norm Maddock visited on Tuesday 6 October 2009.

Before becoming a full time union official, Norm drove one of the suction trucks which, in conjunction with the scrubber trams, were used to keep the tracks clean in Melbourne.

Norm gave the Museum a folder containing some very interesting information. Some of the documents relate to the attempts by the SEC to close the provincial tramways in the early 1960s.

Photo: BTM collection

The Gardens and Lake Wendouree

Recent good rain with the assistance of recycled water which started flowing in August have seen Lake Wendouree change from a paddock to something resembling a lake in a matter of months.

The Lake is considered a key icon of Ballarat and in the press release at the time the recycled water was turned on, the Mayor of Ballarat, Judy Verlin said “Ballarat can get back to being a garden city again”.

Our surrounding environment is constantly changing. The on-going drought has seen many of the trees around the depot area and along Wendouree Parade removed or severely trimmed.

Many trees in the Gardens and in the Ballarat area are suffering. Ballarat City Council has been planting many new trees including avenues and clusters to the south of the depot. Species more appropriate to dry conditions have been chosen.

Investment in the precinct has been considerable. The City of Ballarat Magazine reports that the Lake Blitz project is nearing completion. \$1.3 million has been spent enhancing the facilities at the lake, particularly at View Point, the Yacht Club, Windmill Drive, Fairyland, Swan Pool and Durham Point.

Funding has been sourced from Council, the State and Federal Governments, the Tattersalls Foundation and the local community.

The Ballarat Tramway Museum has made a small contribution to the project.

Fire Damages Maldon Station

In a serious setback to the Victorian Goldfields Railway, a fire broke out in the historic Maldon Station building in the dying hours of Tuesday 20th October. The fire appears to have started in the room on the west end of the building used as the catering kitchen. Damage to this room was major with a total loss of the ceiling and roof.

The fire progressed to the Booking Office immediately to the east, again with major damage to the roof. Although damage to the room was extensive, a number of important items were recovered, including the railway safeworking equipment and ticket tube cabinet.

The fire travelled through the roof space to the roof timbers above the entrance hall and on to the area above the waiting room and the east most room used as the sales and souvenir room. Although the roof damage is extensive, fire damage is minimal to the interior of these rooms. Damage has been estimated at \$300,000. Fortunately, trains are still operating.

(From: www.vgr.com.au)

This is the third Victorian heritage railway this year to suffer extensive and costly damage due to fire. Operations at the Daylesford Spa Country Railway still remain severely limited until funding can be found to replace almost two kilometres of track.

This latest fire helps to increase the resolve of the Museum to continue to seek funding for the installation of a sprinkler system at the Depot.

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The Lake **By Alan Bradley**

Lake Wendouree can be seen from all sections of the Museum's operating line. However during the last five years or so the lake has been dry more often than it has been full. The beautiful view from the St Aidan's Drive terminus across the lake towards the city and Mt. Warrenheip has too often showed a stretch of dry lake and weed.

My own childhood memories are of a lake that was sometimes low during a drought, but never dry. There was swimming in the lake, leeches, and the rotting piles of lake weed on the shore after the weed cutter had been busy. There was the annual "lap of the lake" at High School. During football playing days the traditional pre-season training always involved laps of the lake. After a bad loss on the weekend the coach often ordered a lap of the lake (sometimes two) on a cold winter night, with the wind howling across the water.

If you think that a dry Lake Wendouree is only a product of recent global warming, read on.

Early history

In ancient times Lake Wendouree was originally a stream which flowed to the west, but a lava flow caused it to be dammed on three sides. The lake now drains to the east via Gnarr Creek, eventually into the Yarrowee River.

Europeans first settled in the Ballarat area during the late 1830s. Thomas Yuille built a homestead next to Lake Wendouree, near the City Oval. For some years afterwards the lake was known as Yuille's Swamp.

The name Wendouree comes from the aboriginal word 'wendaaree' which means 'go away'. A story is told that when William Yuille asked an aboriginal woman the name of the swamp, that was her reply. Bullock teams travelling through to Geelong camped beside the lake. From about 1839 to 1842 there was a drought throughout Victoria and southern NSW. The three large lakes in the Ballarat area (Lakes Wendouree, Burrumbeet and Learmonth) were all dry for much of that time.

The 1851 gold rushes brought large numbers of men from all parts of the world. When Ballarat was first surveyed in 1851 by WS Urquhart the swamp was recorded as "Wendouree" and the misunderstood name became official. The water from the lake was soon in demand as a drinking supply. In 1858 a pipe was laid underground from the Rockery to the Water Works in Sturt Street opposite the Town Hall. From the standpipe carters filled their wagons with lake water and sold it on the goldfields down on the flat. The lake served as Ballarat's water supply until 1864 when the first dam was completed. Water from the Gong Gong reservoir could be used if needed to top up the lake level.

The lake in the early 1860s was still a swamp, as apart from ten metres of clear water around the edge it was completely covered by reeds. In 1864 a course was cleared through the reeds to allow rowing races, yachts and paddle steamers. But the water receded during a drought, and the sailors and rowers were left with a large mud patch. From 1867 onwards prisoners

from the Ballarat Jail worked on various improvements, such as clearing a pathway and planting trees and a hedge on the foreshore.

In the drought year of 1869 the lake bed was completely dry. The convicts burnt off the reeds and built a causeway for pedestrians and horse-drawn vehicles right across the lake from Macarthur Street on the eastern shore to the Gardens. The northern section was a wildlife reserve and the southern section was for water sports. But when the rains came again the embankment disintegrated.

With the lake filling again the rowing, yachts and paddle steamers returned during the 1870s. Fish were hatched and released into the lake. The Botanic Gardens on the western side of the lake were developed and became a tourist attraction, and during the summer holidays paddle steamer trips from View Point to the Gardens became popular.

Local historian W.B. Withers wrote: "Lake Wendouree, the modern name of Yuille's Swamp, very truly indicates by its name the transformation which has come over that scene of one time alternate swamp and mud or dust hollow. By conserving the water and pouring in additions from catch water drains and overflow from the forest reservoirs, a permanent lake has been created, which has for some years now been the great home of aquatic sports and pleasure taking".¹

Following drought the lake was either very low or completely dry during 1898-99, 1902, 1916 and 1945. Among the ideas considered was the pumping of water from

the lower levels of various gold mines in Ballarat.

The lake and trams

Ballarat's horse tram system was opened in December 1887. The depot was built on the north side of the lake, and the line from the city to the Gardens was built first. There were few houses in Sturt Street West and Wendouree Parade then. It must have been considered more important to provide a reliable means of transport to the lake and Botanic Gardens during holiday periods than to provide a service to the suburbs where people lived.

While the trams around the lake were full during the summer, they were mainly empty during winter. Arthur Walker recalled the conditions during the horse tram era: "Wendouree Parade, where I lived, was anything but an inviting residential area. The lake, an eerie place by night, flanked as it was by a high unkempt hedge on one hand, and more paddocks and empty blocks than houses on the other, and the flickering gas lamps at long intervals did nothing to lessen the gloom".²

During holiday periods the horse trams did not cope well with the crowds, as the trams were overloaded and the horses struggled to pull them. Electric trams ran to the lake and Gardens from August 1905. They could run faster and cope with the loads better than the horse trams. As few people had cars, a ride on an open car, sometimes with a horse tram trailer, was a popular pastime in fine weather. A consequence of the higher speeds of the electric trams was that accidents occurred as visibility was

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restricted around curves, and so the hedge was removed.

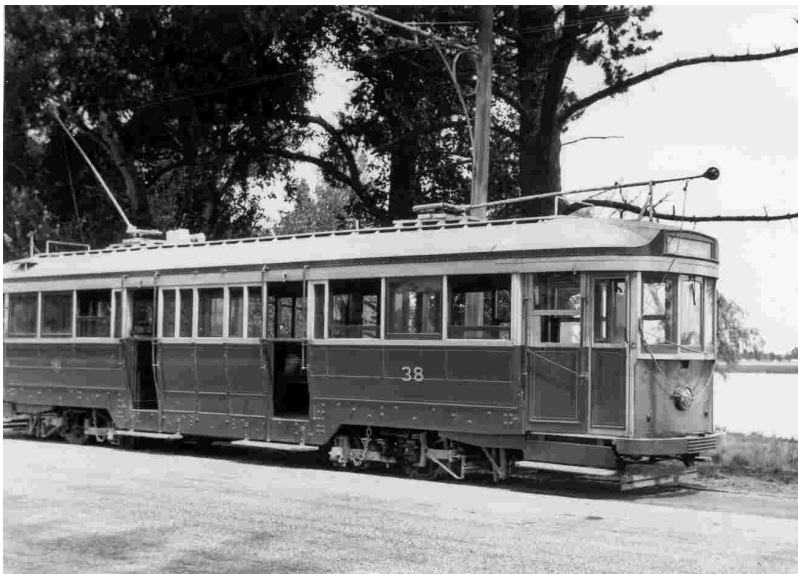
It was the combination of the lake and Gardens environment, and their accessibility by tram that made them so popular during holiday periods. The "Ballarat Courier" commented on New Years Day 1921: "Every tram was full, and a swarm of vehicles brought their contribution. The Gardens, although the hot spell and lack of watering facilities have had a bad effect, present a charming appearance, and they were full of admirers. The swing boats and other amusements were well patronized and hot water was in great demand. As usual comparative solitude was obtainable by the lake away from the western shore, and especially on the northern side there were many fishermen engaged in the thrilling occu-

pation of smoking and watching their line, the rods pegged by the waters edge. A fair number of boats were out, and the white sails dotted here and there over the surface of the lake added considerably to its picturesqueness".³.

The eastern side of the lake around View Point was busy during summer for picnicking, swimming and boating. The start of the annual rowing regattas was held near View Point, and until the late 1940s the normally quiet View Point line tram was kept very busy. During the 1956 Olympic Games the rowing and kayaking events were held on the lake, and the trams were full on race days.

The recent drought

During recent decades there have been occasional periods of drought, such as 1967



For decades the lake was a good background for a posed photo of the latest item of rolling stock. This photo shows No. 38 on 22 January 1955 as converted for 'One man' operation.

Photo: Keith Kings (BTM Collection)



No 14 sits alongside a dry lake on 1st August 2009.

Photo: BTM Collection

and 1983, when the lake level was low. However these were usually followed the next year by good rainfall.

This all changed this century as rainfall declined. Ballarat's long-term average rainfall was 695 mm per annum, but from 2000 to 2008 the average was 550 mm. The 2006 rainfall was the lowest on record. The lake has been dry during each of the last three summers. On 10 June 2008 the "Herald Sun" commented dryly: "Its name is Aboriginal for "go away" and that is what the water in Ballarat's Lake Wendouree has done". Once there was even the unusual spectacle of a fire on the dry lakebed.

A visit to the Gardens during January 2009, a few weeks before the tragic Victorian bushfires, presented the dismal spectacle of an empty lake, dry brown grass on the foreshore, and billowing dust. However good winter rain during September has increased the water level so that it once more looks like a lake.

The Lake Wendouree recycling supply was commissioned during August 2009. This uses storm water and Class A recycled water as alternatives to water from Ballarat's reservoirs to maintain the water levels in Lake Wendouree year round. Estimates for a return to a completely full lake depend on the rainfall. A return to the long-term rainfall average would see the lake completely full by the winter of 2012, but if the recent rainfall average continues it would be completely full by the winter of 2014.

Hopefully the lake will fill again in the next few years and return the unique lake and Gardens environment to its former glory.

1. W. B. Withers, "The history of Ballarat", p. 254
2. Arthur Walker, "Trams did something for Ballarat" in "Ballarat Courier" 12 September 1970
3. "Ballarat Courier" 4 January 1921

At the Depot

The main focus at the workshop has been the commencement of the restoration of ESCo crossbench No. 22. The official start of work on this car was on the 1st of September. The team of four assembled for the job were Dave, Daniel, Deepthi and Dawn. Apparently only people whose name began with a D were eligible to take part. Before work even commenced there was a defection – Dawn was accepted for a three year course in Aeronautical Engineering at the university in Delhi. His sister Deepthi rather gamely offered to take on his component of the job.

The first task was to remove all those extra non tramway additions which had appeared over the previous seven decades. As soon as this destructive phase of the job was over Daniel announced that it was all that he had been interested in, and also resigned. The team was now down to two, just Dave and Deepthi, a formidable combination of brains and beauty. (Deepthi is the brains). Subsequently, Alastair has been recruited to start working on the outside of the car, despite not having a D in his name, while the main priority at the moment is to get the interior into some sort of shape.

Most of the work initially will be on the south side of the body, which is in fairly poor shape. Most of the pillars have been badly affected by wood rot, and will need to be cut short at varying heights and new lower sections grafted on. For this purpose, a sample of the curve required has been laminated out of plywood, and will be reproduced in solid timber by Bill Redfern in the near future. Each of the pillars had two deep triangular cuts where cross pieces

of timber had been installed when the doorways were filled in. These have been filled with pieces of suitable hardwood cut individually to fit. Another job high on the list is the rebuilding of the bulkheads at either end of the passenger compartment. Parts of these had been removed rather roughly and reassembled as a single bulkhead halfway down the body to divide the workshop into two rooms. Most of the parts can be salvaged, and once the bulkheads are reinstalled and the new pillars in place on the south side, the body should start to take on some strength.

There had been complaints in the *Ballarat Courier* in 1930 that the windows in these cars rattled annoyingly, and should be placed in U shaped rubber channel on the edges. This appears to have been carried out on the single pane windows, as some badly perished rubber channel has fallen out when windows have been removed. It also seems that new timber beading was installed at this time, as it is different from the beading adjacent to the double pane glass adjacent to the bulkheads, which is varnished beneath the green paint, while the beading on the single pane windows is not. The interior appears to have been initially varnished, then later painted by ESCo in a particularly bilious shade of green, then, after withdrawal, with an all over pale blue during its days as a workshop.

The car was built at Duncan and Fraser, Adelaide in 1913, as were the P&MTT bogie trams, and the seats from No. 39 should be adaptable to 22 with some modifications.

The area above the museum display car, No. 39, has been adapted for storage, and is being utilized to store any parts from No. 22 that are not required at this time. Three vintage SEC era roof advertising signs were used to enclose the area.

The museum display precinct continues to slowly take shape. On 21st September the video program for visitors was updated to DVD format, giving a much better quality picture for visitors than the video, which was showing its age.

The tool cupboard in the workshop was cleaned out during September and repainted inside. Many tools thought lost over the years turned out to have been there the whole time. Everything has been returned to the cupboard in a logical manner, and it should now be possible to have a reasonable chance of finding what you are looking for. How long this will last is another matter.

Some years ago one of the four metal A frame tram ride signs was stolen from the Parade. On 21st August it turned up again, leaning against the front of the shed when the staff arrived. Since the other three signs of this type have now been withdrawn, it turned out to be a rather hollow victory.

Trams Nos 14 and 671, following their respective overhauls, have been back in revenue service since August. Having only had a repaint, 671 is operating faultlessly, as usual, while 14, having had extensive mechanical and electrical work carried out, is still shaking off various minor problems, which are being rectified as they crop up.

The Museum has recently received a grant from the City of Ballarat of \$1627 for chemical storage unit and an eyewash. The open storage system which has been in place at the depot since time immemorial has been of concern for some time. We thank Council for its assistance.

As mentioned earlier, Dawn Poulouse has returned to India to continue his studies. Dawn's stay with us was all too brief, but he was a very willing worker, and would tackle some of the less popular jobs. Much of the recent work on 671 was by his hand, and he picked up a lot of hints and tips about looking after a fleet of elderly trams, information which will be totally useless in his Aeronautical Engineering studies.

"Big Pete" has been on and off the sick list of late, with a pinched sciatic nerve giving him periods of pain and the necessity of using a walking frame. Through it all he has retained some semblance of a sense of humour despite the inconvenience. Peter is one of the rare breed of people who are willing to spend hours on necessary, but mundane, tasks such as stripping paint or varnish.

Phillip has also been out of action for some time, with damaged tendons in his right shoulder. He finally went into surgery during September, and is now in a prolonged period of rehabilitation, with his right arm in a sling. He has mastered the art of drinking left handed, so his life is not a complete misery. We hope to have him back by the end of the year.

Dave Macartney

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Trackwork

Our track workers have had to undertake a small amount of maintenance on our 80 pound 'railway rail' section of line, to repair some worn rail flange. The curve leading to the long straight towards St. Aidans Drive was showing signs of wear and it was decided to weld in some steel plate to build up the flange on the inside rail of the curve.

This process had been undertaken on a section of the older grooved rail at the southern end of our line some years ago, and was successful.

Alan Snowball and Richard Gilbert undertook the work on Monday, 19th October and the result is most gratifying. We are continually maintaining our ageing track, with the grooved rail section normally needing the most attention. We believe this is the original electric tram track dating from 1905, whereas the 80 pound section, which forms about half our line, generally requires little attention.

The 80 pound description refers to the weight of the rail per yard. It is the base measurement for rail still commonly referred to today, although it is now weight in kilograms per metre.

The SEC relaid much of the Ballarat and Bendigo tramway system with 80 pound railway rail, with a bolted on flange, in the 1930's as part of the rehabilitation of the tramway systems they had inherited. It appears that BHP steel offered this rail arrangement of 80 pound rail and the bolt on flange as a product suitable for a number of tramway systems around Australia that were requiring to relay sections of line. The supply of grooved tramway rail must have been in short supply, or not even available at the time.

In the 1970's the M&MTB undertook a program to prolong the life of some of their rail by lifting and turning it and then re-bolting the check rail on the other side. Unfortunately, the practice of welding the joints rather than using fishplates has not stood the test of time as can be seen in Chapel Street, Prahran.

There is some historical data that indicates BHP did not commence rolling grooved tramway rail until the 1950's and they stopped production of this around the 1980's.

On a visit to Launceston in 2007, Richard Gilbert found a section of line was being pulled up in High Street Launceston, and the rail had been acquired by the Launceston Tramway Museum. On inspection at the storage site it was this same 80 pound rail with the bolted flange.



Photo: Richard Gilbert

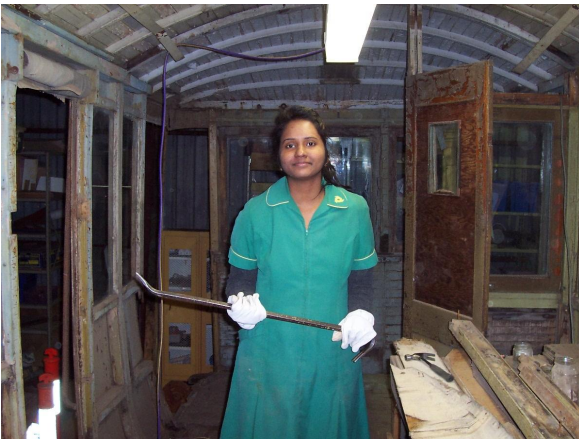


Essential maintenance. Alan Snowball welds a section of check rail which is threatening to come adrift. *Photo: Richard Gilbert 19/10/09.*

Tramcar restoration the easy way!

Deepthi Poulse is not really planning to wreck No 22! The Museum is a great believer in recycling and Deepthi is wearing a 1980s M&MTB conductress' uniform.

Photo: BTM collection 28/9/09



The 365 days a year man. Dave Macartney takes a break. *Photo: BTM collection 10/10/09.*



Museum Service Manager at Work

Warren Doubleday cataloguing our growing collection.

Since this photo was taken by Roger Salen a grant from *RegionalOne Credit Union* has enabled the Museum to upgrade the archives computer to a larger unit and install wide flat screen monitors in the archive room and the office. The two computers have been networked.

It is also now possible to access the collection database from the office.

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COTMA Conference 2010

Preparations for the next COTMA Conference to be held in Wellington in September 2010, commencing on Thursday 16 September are well advanced. The COTMA Web site – www.cotma.org.au and the conference tab will link you to the most recent updates and preliminary programs.

The conference organisation is being led by Bryce Pender of the Wellington Tramway Museum who are the conference hosts.

As a lead up to the Conference, a self organised tour of Christchurch will be suggested and a post conference tour visiting Wanganui, New Plymouth and Auckland provided for.

Put aside two weeks in September for the Conference and the tours. For further information or to register an expression of interest, please e-mail Bryce on cotma2010@paradise.net.nz or write to the Wellington Tramway Museum, PO Box 2612, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.

From COTMA News Update

New Members

The Museum welcomes the following new member and Junior Supporter. We hope their time with us is long and rewarding.

802 Ryan Vanderzweep of Gisborne
5052 Blade McDonald of Wendouree

Membership Cards and Renewals

Members who have yet to renew their subscriptions for the current year will find a reminder with this mail out. We look forward to hearing from you.

If you have renewed your membership your new membership card should be enclosed with this edition.

Web Page

Recently, Warren Doubleday has found some time to expand and update our web page. Information on tram No 22, our latest acquisition, has been added and new photos of many of the trams have been included. A new section on volunteering has also been added. The home page now promotes coming events. It is hoped to completely revamp the site in the coming year.



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.

For further information regarding the Museum, its activities and publications please contact:

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