

# FARES PLEASE!

February 2012

*Celebrating 40 Years*

*News from the Ballarat Tramway Museum*

## Tram No 33 Repainted



Tram No 33 returned to service on January 14<sup>th</sup>. Robert Paroissien was enjoying his turn at the controls on the following day.

*Photo: Peter Winspur 15/1/12*

**In this Issue:** Our historian, Alan Bradley marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Begonia Festival. He explains why it was organised and takes a detailed look at the first festival in 1953.

*Ballarat Trams are Ballarat History*

# Around the Museum

This year our trams operated for a continuous thirty-seven days over the summer season and this, as usual, kept our depot staff busy with the usual day to day routine of cleaning and routine maintenance. Patronage was somewhat disappointing considering the generally mild weather and full lake. The usual small band of drivers showed up every week (and sometimes more than once a week) to ensure that we were out there for the enjoyment of the visitors to the gardens.

The major achievement from the maintenance and restoration branch was the return of Tram No 33 in record time after a complete external repaint. It looks superb. Later in the year it is intended to work on the interior. It is the first tram to be spray painted and with excellent preparation work the result is very even. Geoff Gardner, Dave Macartney and Alastair Reither put in many hours to ensure it was back for the summer running. Museum member, Brian Wood, of *Signs on the Move* applied the edge lining, numbers and SEC logos. He is to return to reapply the reflective triangles around the battery tail lights.

The return of No 33 was none too soon as in routine inspections both No 27 and No 40 were found to have wheel bearings in urgent need of re-white metalling. The bearings are to be sent away and both trams are out of service until they are repaired.

Tram No 661 was lifted due to fears that there were further cracks in the motor support beams. This was a common fault in W3 class trams. A thorough cleaning of the bogies by Alan Snowball allowed Warren Doubleday to inspect the beams properly. He found no indication of cracking. The tram has been reunited with its bogies and will be available for its very necessary appearance at the Begonia Festival.

The tramway shelter at the loop was removed by the Council for refurbishment during December. It came back with little of the original materials remaining and now it should probably be said that it was reconstructed rather than restored. The shelter should now see many more years of service. It was donated to the Museum in its early days and was restored and installed in its current location by the Museum. Over the years it has been variously repainted by us and by Council. It was last repainted by the late Phillip Work in 2007.

One final work party was held at Bungaree on Saturday 17 January and the back filling inside the new storage shed was completed. Local neighbour, Ron Trigg, again loaned his front end loader which was most welcome. The shed is now ready to accommodate the trams which have been stored in the open. There are long term plans to also move the two single truck trams out of the original small sheds and use these sheds for smaller items.

Our traffic staff has been augmented by the decision of Greg Robinson, a long time member and driver for the Bendigo Tramways, to join us. He has trained as a conductor and is currently undergoing his driver conversion course. If all goes to plan Aaron McDonald should qualify as a driver when he undertakes his exam on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> February.

Auditors from Transport Safety Victoria visited on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February and conducted a quite exhaustive audit of the Museum's Safety Management System. They identified some minor process issues.

The 60<sup>th</sup> Begonia Festival will be held from Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> to Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March. The Museum will again be sponsored by the Festival to provide free transport.

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The refurbished shelter *Photo: Peter Winspur 27/1/12*



**Above: The late afternoon shunt**  
A daily ritual during January.  
*Photo: Alastair Reither 9/1/12*



**Above: Geoff Gardner assists in the removal of No 661's trucks.**  
*Photo: Dave Macartney 14/12/11*

### Around The Museum



**Above: The new shed awaits tramcars.**  
*Photo: Alastair Reither 17/2/12*



**Above: No 33 glistens in the late afternoon sun.**  
*Photo: Alastair Reither 9/1/12*

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### Rotary – Young Ambition

*Rotary – Young Ambition* is a Ballarat branch of Rotary International. Its members are generally young professionals “who like to have a bit of fun, while doing something for our community at the same time” to quote from their web page.

They assist the community in many ways including raising money for good causes. One of the ways to have fun and raise money is to arrange events like the ‘Tram Pull’. The first event was in 2004 and it was repeated in 2005. The Museum again participated on ‘Springfest’ Sunday on 31 October 2011.

Vice President, Richard Gilbert, attended a luncheon on 9<sup>th</sup> February at which some \$51,000 raised by Rotary during ‘Springfest’ was distributed to various groups in Ballarat. Richard accepted a cheque for \$2,000 on behalf of the Museum.

The Museum is very grateful for *Rotary – Young Ambition’s* support and thanks, in particular, their President Allister Morrison for arranging the event. It was good fun and we look forward to the next competition during ‘Springfest’ in November this year.

### News from Christchurch

Members may recall the appeal for funds last year by the Tramway Historical Society for funds to build a shed at Ferrymead to house their trams displaced from the City Tramway by the February earthquake. In less than a year they have managed to raise the \$100,000 required, obtain permits and build the shed. It was officially opened by Mr Bob Parker, Mayor of Christchurch, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February. Many will remember seeing Mr Parker on television in those dreadful days just after the earthquake.

### 2012 Heritage Weekend

This year the theme of the annual Ballarat Heritage Weekend to be held over the Mother's Day weekend will be 'Your Childhood Memories'. What was Ballarat like in the 1930's, 40's and upward? It would be appreciated that the operation of horse trams through the streets of Ballarat would be in the memories of very few people considering that they last ran in 1913!

We were contacted by Events Ballarat late in January to be advised that this year events would be concentrated in the centre of Ballarat and at Buninyong. Consequently, support for the operation of No 1 Horse tram would not be forthcoming.

As we have advised many people that we intend to operate the tram on Mothers' day and the fact that a picture of the tram appears on the Ballarat page of the National Trust booklet promoting the Victorian heritage festivals we have decided to operate. Unfortunately, special fares will be charged to cover the cost of the horses.

On both days electric trams will also operate and our display of memorabilia at the Museum will be augmented.

### Our Web Site

Warren Doubleday continues to maintain and expand our web site on a very regular basis.

Permanent stories can be found in the Online Exhibitions Page and this month's article by Alan Bradley on the Begonia Festival is already up with extra illustrations. Other stories include *Ballarat Horse Trams – Still at Work* and *Ballarat's Botanic Gardens and its Trams*.

“*Fares Please*” is placed in the public area one issue behind. On request, members will be advised on how they may access each current issue when it is available.

# The Begonia Festival

By Alan Bradley

### Introduction

The Begonia Festival website states: “The Ballarat Begonia Festival will celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this coming Labour Day long weekend, March 10 -12, 2012”. This article explains why the Begonia Festival was organised, and takes a detailed look at the first Festival in 1953. Changes to the Festival over the years are discussed, along with the role of Ballarat’s trams.

### Why a Begonia Festival?

The Botanical Gardens were reserved on the western side of Lake Wendouree in 1858, seven years after the first Ballarat gold rush. The first reference the author has seen to begonias in the Botanical Gardens appeared in the “Ballarat Star” of 3 March 1887. An article “The lake and gardens” noted how thanks to the skill of the staff “a succession of bloom is maintained throughout the year”. A description of the various flowers grown included “Begonias in fine variety with their beautiful leaves”.

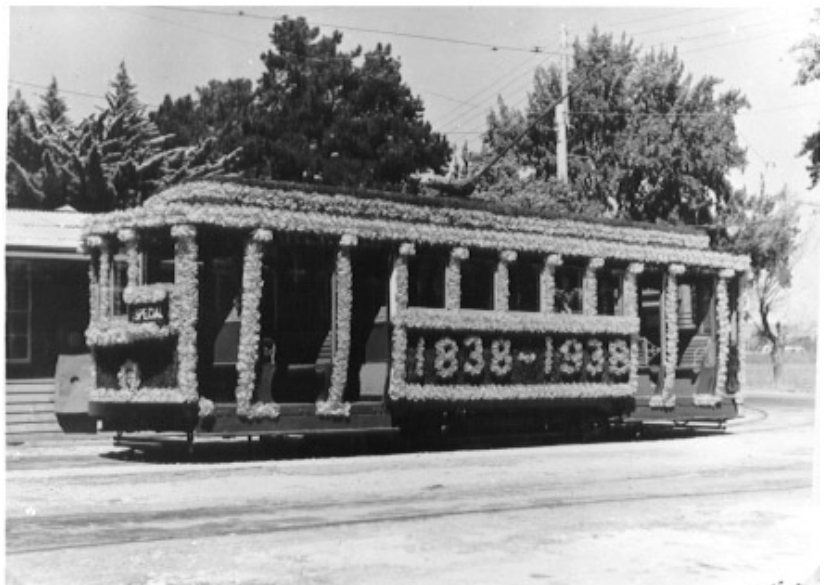
In December 1887 the horse trams commenced running. The Gardens became easily accessible both to Ballarat residents and visitors arriving at the Railway Station. Ballarat became a magnet for tourists at certain times of the year: during the Christmas-New Year period at the Gardens Reserve; in March when the annual Railway Picnics were held; and in October during the South Street Competitions and Band Championships. These influxes of visitors were good for hotels, shops and other local businesses.

By the 1930s the begonia displays at the Gardens were famous, and were the subject of postcards of

Ballarat. In March 1938 a Floral Festival was held in Ballarat to celebrate the centenary of European settlement in the district. Shops in the central business district, a tram and the Grenville Street tram shelter were decorated with waxed paper flowers. The Floral Festival included some of the features seen in future Begonia Festivals: a floral carpet, Festival Queen, floral displays, and a street procession with floats along Sturt Street. On the day of the procession five thousand people came to Ballarat by special train.

So successful had the Festival been in attracting and impressing visitors to Ballarat that it was decided at a public meeting to hold a Floral Festival every year.<sup>1</sup> Another Floral Festival on a smaller scale (again with a decorated tram) was held in March 1939. Any plans for future similar events were interrupted by World War 2.

During the early post-war years a leading Ballarat citizen Edgar Bartrop returned from an overseas tour where he had seen many fairs and festivals. His suggestion that such



Ex-Adelaide tram No. 69, still in Adelaide colours, decorated for the 1938 Floral Festival *BTM collection*

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a festival be held in Ballarat was discussed by the Greater Ballarat Association, and later by the City Council. At a public meeting on 18 September 1952 it was agreed that a "Ballarat Begonia Festival" would be held from 7-15 March the following year, and this would be an annual event. The central theme would be "Ballarat's world-famous Begonias". The aim was to "bring Ballarat's great floral attractions before the people of Australia" and "attract many people to the city, especially in the Autumn when it was looking its best".<sup>2</sup>

### The First Begonia Festival, 1953

The 1953 Festival Program stated proudly: "The Begonia Festival of 1953 is the first of its type in Australia, and gives you the opportunity to see Ballarat in a carnival mood, with its garden setting in the glorious

Autumn time. The City will be at its best with the added magnificent display of Begonias at the Botanical Gardens".

The official opening of the first Begonia Festival on Saturday 8 March 1953 was marked by the symbolic arrival of a Cobb & Co coach, completing a trip from Ballarat to Melbourne and Geelong then return. Large crowds flocked to North Gardens Reserve for "Music for the People", directed by Hector Crawford (later a TV producer). The Lord Mayor of Melbourne congratulated the city on its foresight on organising the Festival. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and the City of Melbourne organised its own Moomba Festival for the first time in 1955 – at the same time of year as the Begonia Festival.

Monday 9 March was Labour Day. The first-ever Begonia Festival Procession was held along Sturt Street, finishing at the City Oval where cycling and athletic events were held. The trams were busy on that weekend. The "Ballarat Courier" noted: "Weekend traffic on trams was said to have been the greatest in this form of Ballarat

transport".<sup>3</sup>

On 12 March a crowd of about 20,000 attended the school children's display at the City Oval to see children from local schools dancing and marching in costumes. The "Ballarat Courier" reported:

*"It was reported yesterday that tram traffic for the children's display at the City Oval on Thursday, combined with the usual daily travel on all routes, constituted a record high for passengers carried by Ballarat tramways on a weekday. The regular basic service was supplied by all cars normally held at the depot for routine inspection and servicing. The smooth flow of road traffic was in direct contrast with that experienced at the week-end when services were most disorganised. Twenty-six trams were in service on Thursday from 11.55 am to 5 pm. This represented the total number of trams in Ballarat, with the exception of one which remained in the depot".*<sup>4</sup>

Ballarat East also had some festival events. The Floral Carpet, which showed the Ballarat coat of arms, and various exhibitions were held at the Alfred Hall in Grenville Street (demolished in 1956). A miniature train and sideshows was held in Little Bridge Street. A "Monster Bonfire" and barbecue were held at Llanberris Reserve, and an evening carnival at the Eureka Stockade Reserve.

On the evening of Friday 13 March a large crowd attended the "Must-See" of the Festival, the Square Dancing Competition in Grenville Street. Saturday 14 March featured a Railway Picnic, which had last been held to Ballarat in 1939. About 3,500 passengers came on three special trains from Melbourne, and one from Dimboola. A Highland Day was held at the City Oval, and the evening saw a street march along Sturt Street, the crowning of the Begonia Queen, and the unmasking of "Begonia Bill".

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### The second Festival, 1954

The second Festival was marked by the unveiling on 5 March of the floral clock, located in Sturt Street between Armstrong and Doveton Street. The 1954 Festival Program stated proudly that “the clock will be the largest of its kind in the world” and “be a constant reminder that Ballarat is indeed the Garden City”. [The floral clock was moved to the Gardens in 1977.]

The second Festival is best remembered for the visit of the Queen and Prince Phillip to Ballarat on Saturday 6 March 1954. The “Royal Progress” took the Royal couple from the Ballarat Railway Station along Sturt and Sturt Street West to the Gardens (watched by a crowd estimated at 120,000 people), and tram and motor vehicle traffic was barricaded. The Queen’s reported comment that “we grow

begonias like saucers, you, like plates” gave plenty of good publicity. A shuttle service was operated on all tram routes during that period. After the departure of the Royal couple the trams were busy carrying passengers to and from the Gardens to the Begonia Festival.

On the Sunday the main attractions were “Music for the People” and the Begonia hothouse. The “Ballarat Courier” reported: “Trams which ran at frequent intervals to deal with the abnormal number of travellers also found progress difficult. They had frequently to stop while cars were moved from the line, but drivers remained good-tempered and considerate throughout”.<sup>5</sup>

### The sixth Festival, 1958

The sixth Festival was marked by the visit of the Queen Mother to Ballarat on Sunday 2 March 1958. To handle the expected crowds eight trams left the Railway Station after the first train arrived at 11.05 am, and normal tram services commenced at 12.30 pm. The Royal train arrived at 4 pm, and tram and motor vehicle traffic was barricaded along the route of the “Royal Progress” (watched by a crowd estimated at 120,000 people). Afterwards people flocked to the Gardens for the Music for the People concert, and special trams ran during the afternoon to handle the crowds to and from the Gardens.<sup>6</sup>

On the following Sunday 9 March 1958 large crowds flocked to see “Youth on Parade”, a musical, choral and folk dancing program provided by youth groups and institutions. From 1 pm a ten minute tram service was operated from the city, and a 20-minute service operated during the evening in place of the usual 30-minute service.<sup>7</sup>



Sturt St. The Town Hall is decorated for the 1957 Festival and the centre median strip is awash with flowers as No. 14 travels westbound. *Photo Jim Seletto (BTM collection)*

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Ballarat No. 21 decorated for the 1969 Ballarat Begonia Festival. Photographed in Wendouree Parade by Brian Weedon 2/3/1969. *BTM collection*

### The 19th Festival, 1971

1971 was the last year in which passengers could travel from the city by SEC-operated trams to the Gardens for the Festival. The trams had only a few months of operation left, and the Festival program stated: "Take a tram ride around beautiful Lake Wendouree, and know that soon it may not be possible to do so".

As an eleven year old the author went by tram to the Gardens one late afternoon. The Floral Carpet and Lakeside Carnival (with merry-go-round and Ferris wheel) were open until 9 pm, and there was also "Illuminated Fairyland Magic".

1971 was also the first Begonia Festival in which visitors to Ballarat could visit a brand new attraction, Sovereign Hill. A group of 180 visitors from Melbourne travelled to Ballarat by train, and from there travelled by coach to the Gardens, then to Sovereign Hill, then back to the Railway Station. In previous years visitors arriving at the Station travelled to the Gardens by tram.<sup>8</sup>

### 1972 - 2010

During the 1972 Festival trams were no longer operating in Ballarat. The newly-established Ballarat Tramway Preservation Society (now the Ballarat Tramway Museum) was still storing its initial fleet of six trams in the old SEC depot. The depot was opened to the passing traffic during the Festival. There were a small number of visitors, one of them being an inspector from the Melbourne tramways. The trams were moved out during June and July 1972, and the depot was demolished soon afterwards.

Trams returned to the Gardens Reserve during the 1975 Begonia Festival. The heavy pedestrian and motor traffic and parked cars slowed progress for trams. Most nights a passenger service was provided until at least 9 pm. On Labour Day the procession was held, finishing in the Gardens Reserve (rather than Sturt Street, as in earlier years). On that day 1,455 people were carried (which was to be a daily record for nearly 30 years). A total of 5,849 people were carried during the 1975 Festival.



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**Some of the 1989 crew:** Bill Kingsley, Andrew Mitchell, Chris Jacobson, Clayton Giles, Richard Gilbert, Ian Hill, Dave O’Neil and Roy Sheedy.

*Photo: BTM collection*

A new Begonia Festival Directress was appointed in 1993, and one of the changes made was an attempt to reduce the heavy motor vehicle traffic in the vicinity of the Botanical Gardens during the Festival. Cars were to be parked in the North and South Gardens Reserves. The Museum became a member of the Begonia Festival Association, and its offer to provide a “park and ride” service from the car parks was accepted.

The new service was made available for the first time on the two Festival weekends in 1993. The procession took place again in Wendouree Parade on Labour Day. During the 1994 Festival 4,860 passengers were carried, and the second Sunday gave the highest daily patronage since 1975.

In 2004 the Begonia Festival was revamped and shortened to five days. Through a sponsorship by Alstom the trams provided free transport to and from the car parks. In the five days 10,548 people were carried, and 3,234 in one day. This arrangement has continued since then, although the sponsorship is now by the Festival itself.

**SAVE YOUR LEGS!**

**Catch a TRAM  
to the  
BEGONIAS**



**Why not catch a tram direct from the car parks to the Begonias during the Festival?**  
Adults only 50 cents, children 30 cents.

And the tram can take you (and those heavy pots of Begonias) back to your car afterwards!

**OR**

**Why not enjoy a longer “grandstand” ride through the Gardens beside the Lake, AND see all the sights of the Festival?**

The return trip takes about 20 minutes. It’s a great experience!  
Adults \$1.50, children 14 and under 80 cents.

*The Vintage Trams are staffed by the friendly volunteers of the Ballarat Tramway Museum.*

45 TRG/MJC

**Above:** In 1998 the Museum was advertising in the Festival Program. *From the BTM collection*

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A five-year drought saw Lake Wendouree completely dry for much of that time. The grass around the lake and in the Gardens was brown and dry, and trees were stressed.

The 2007 Festival almost did not go ahead, but it was decided to reduce it to the three days of the Labour Day weekend. In 2009 primary school children were enlisted to create paper flower displays to make up for the lack of flowers.

### **The 59<sup>th</sup> Festival, 2011**

The 2011 Begonia Festival was again held over three days from 12 - 14 March 2011 (the Labour Day weekend). All the activities were held in the vicinity of the Gardens Reserve. These included a Farmers' Market, the Apex Art Show, a twilight cinema, plaster funhouse and woodworking shed.

High rainfall in late 2010 and early 2011 saw Lake Wendouree fill completely. The Festival program emphasised the opportunity to hire a pedal boat, canoe or row boat on a completely full lake. The Gardens were again at their best, and visitor numbers reflected this. During the festival the trams carried 7,276 people, the best since 2004.

### **Reflection**

In comparing the Begonia Festivals of 1953 and 2011, much has changed in 60 years. Tastes in entertainment have changed greatly since 1953. The Festival now has competition from Melbourne's Moomba Festival, and there are numerous leisure options available today.

In 1953 the Festival was held over nine days and two weekends, and the various Festival attractions were spread throughout the city. Now it is held over three days and one weekend, and all events are held within the Gardens Reserve and Lake foreshore.

The role of the trams has changed from transporting people from the Railway Station and city to the Gardens, to providing

a "park and ride" service. Over the last few years the lake has dried up and filled again, and this has affected the fortunes of both the Gardens and the Festival.

It is difficult to predict the future of the Begonia Festival, but currently it is still important both for Ballarat and the Tramway Museum.

#### References:

- <sup>1.</sup> Ballarat Courier 28 June 1938
- <sup>2.</sup> Ballarat Courier 19 September 1952
- <sup>3.</sup> Ballarat Courier 10 March 1953
- <sup>4.</sup> Ballarat Courier 14 March 1953
- <sup>5.</sup> Ballarat Courier 8 March 1954
- <sup>6.</sup> Ballarat Courier 27 February 1958
- <sup>7.</sup> Ballarat Courier 10 March 1958
- <sup>8.</sup> Ballarat Courier 26 February 1971

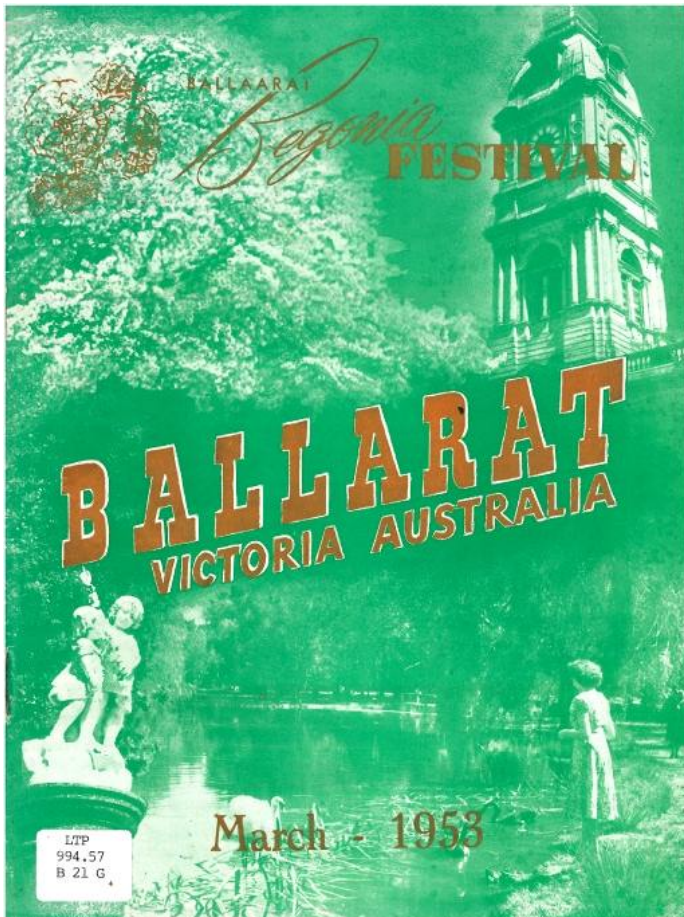
## **Recent Donations**

The Museum has recently received two significant donations of memorabilia from the Electric Supply Company era.

In January, local resident Bill Morrison visited the Museum and donated a medallion which dates from 1906. On the front are the words 'Ballarat Electric Trams 1906'. On the rear 'Councillor W. J. Hoare' has been engraved quite roughly. The medallion was made by Stokes. It was issued for free travel for City Councillors. It is amazing that such a small item has survived in a family collection for well over one hundred years. The Museum also holds one other which was in the Les Denmead collection when it was donated to the Museum in 2001.

Adam Van-Lieshout contacted the Museum recently as he had found a Driver's badge in a trash and treasure market and asked if he could exchange it for any Melbourne tram crew's badges. He had seen the Conductor's badge which is on display at the Museum. The Driver's badge is No 49 and is stamped E.S.Co. of V. Ltd. Warren Doubleday and Peter Winspur were able to oblige and this has enabled the Museum to make another significant acquisition.

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**Top:** Front cover of the first festival program  
*Courtesy of The State Library of Victoria*

**Above:** Nucolorvue postcard from c1955  
*From the BTM collection*



**Left:**  
 The 1906 City Councillors' travel pass



**Above:** Paper flowers in 2009  
 After the rains in 2011. Note that the fully grown tree has succumbed  
*Photos: Peter Winspur 8/3/09 & 12/3/11*

## The Begonia Festival

**Below:** The BTM crew in 2004  
*Photo: From the BTM collection*



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**Above:** The Floral Clock which was unveiled the day before the Queen's visit in 1954. The Town Hall and Myer store are in the background. Tram No. 38 heads west in Sturt St. *Photo: Wal Jack - 23/3/1963.*

**Below:** Until the construction of the new Robert Clark Conservatory in 1995, the Begonias were displayed to the public in this building which once featured in many photographs of Ballarat.

*Photo: Richard Jones - 1970.*



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**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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