

4 Hardinge St.
Beaumaris 3193
24/2/21

Ballarat Tramway Museum
PO Box 632
Ballarat 3353

Attention Warren Doubleday

Dear Warren,

Received your letter the other day. Enclosed is the signed Record of Gift. I have slightly altered and initialed item 9, as it related to SEC Tramway Workers, not SEC workers generally.

On your notes of the meeting with myself on 9-2-21, below are further notes to expand or clarify certain points, which I hope will be useful.

1. You have correctly identified Arthur Reed in the photograph that you supplied.
2. The Painters and Carpenters had little to do, only the occasional minor repair to a damaged tram, and decorate the Christmas Tram each year. When I started in July 1968 they had two painters employed in the depot. One of them left in around 1970, and was never replaced. With nothing to do they just sat in a tram reading. Danny Irvin (foreman) would occasionally join them for a chat.
3. correct. A small tram had to be left outside on four road.

Whenever a small tram was in the paint shop, this pushed another bogie into the main shed area, which resulted in another small tram being left outside, which was usually left on either 2 or 3 road. This is why a bogie was usually in the paint shop when no major work was need to be done on any tram.

4. & 8 Ballarat Tram fleet had 10 bogies and 15 small trams (including number 20)

Two bogies and three small trams were serviced each weekday. There was a permanent list of which trams were to be serviced on which day, so that each tram was serviced each week, on its allotted day.

There was also another list of small trams, which were referred to as brake trams, these were to have their brakes adjusted Monday to Saturday, five trams per day.

Brake adjustments were done six days per week, five trams per day, equals 30 tram brake adjustments each week. With fifteen small trams in the fleet, each small tram has its brakes adjusted twice each week, plus once each week when serviced.

The bogies to be serviced the next day were parked overnight on 0 road. The five small trams for brake adjustment were parked on 1 road, and the three small trams to be serviced the next day were parked on 4 road. After all of the small trams from 1 road had their brakes adjusted, and been taken into service by the motormen, then the three small trams to be serviced were transferred from four road onto 1 road, and then one of the bogies was taken from 0 road and over the pit on 1 road for service, when that was completed it was transferred onto either 2 or 3 road, and the remaining bogie was taken from 0 road and over the pit for service before the small trams could then be serviced.

The only exception to this strict timetable was that trams could be serviced one day ahead of their regular service, and that trams that had not been out of the shed for that week did not require servicing. eg 38 which lived in the paint shop, and 20 which had its body severely modified by a truck, and was now a permanent fixture at the top end of 1 road, and any other trams which had not been in service during that week.

This juggling act was used particularly when there was a public holiday, when most of the depot staff had the day off, and trams were not serviced on that day, or the service pit was required by the tram mechanics for other repairs, eg. (grinding the metal tyres), and also whenever Melbourne trams were on strike, and the union told us that we had to go on strike as well. This particular situation with the union continued until Roy Courtney the Union secretary of the Ballarat Branch, contacted the union head office, and pointed out that if we had an issue with the SEC and went on strike, would they also strike in support of us. We were never called to go on strike to support the Melbourne Branch again.

5. As I mentioned to you at our meeting, my understanding was, Stan Lakey (leading hand), was expected to take over the foreman position on the retirement of the previous foreman, as promotion was generally based on seniority.

However Dan Irvin was appointed to the position, transferring from Geelong, where I believe he was foreman when the Tramways ceased operation there. He continued employment with the SEC still being classified as a foreman, although no such position was in existence, until the Ballarat position became available. He was then told to accept the position in Ballarat or be demoted.

When he transferred to Ballarat I don't know. I found him to be a good boss, easy to talk to, and very fair in any discussion, as was Stan Lakey when he replaced Dan. Bill Trussler (Works Superintendant) was also a nice guy, and very easy to talk to. They were all Tramways employees, not SEC management.

Stan Lakey when Leading Hand his main job was in charge of the lathe, turning and re-facing the metal tyres. He also assisted the mechanics whenever required on repairs to trams.

6. Each week when the paymaster arrived, accompanied by a policeman, they were at the depot for about one hour, paying depot staff, and any motormen present. The depot foreman would then receive the pay envelopes for the depot employees who were not present; the shift workers who started at 4.30pm, midnight, and the one with that day off, and any who may be absent from work that day.
7. Very interesting to read the story of Vin Dalton, and how the museum was able to provide information to his relatives. Well done. I noticed that Vin wasn't wearing earmuffs, wouldn't have helped his hearing loss.
8. The bogies brakes only had their brakes done once a week during their weekly service, as they were more modern mechanical design than the small trams, and had self adjusting brakes
9. Yes, I was given the coat by Leo McMahon in about 1970.
10. Yes, if the motormen and depot staff didn't return their uniforms or overalls the SEC were going to charge them for whatever items were not returned.

In William F. Scott's book Last Tram at Eleven, on page 184, an "Extract from the Commission's Geelong Branch Annual Report 1956." "..... It is to the Commission's credit from the top echelon down that no obduracy has been displayed towards the tramways or the traveling public. The 'grace payment, the farewell Smoke Social to the tramway personnel and the last car celebrations, coupled to the capable liaisons with the Councils, Public and the Union all served a purpose culminating in the gratifying knowledge that the Commission leaves the field of transport in Geelong cradled in a high level of regard from both the Councils, Public and the departing employee point of view."


I have never heard one positive word spoken about the SEC by any Ballarat Tramways employee in all my time working on the trams, just that they were arrogant and difficult to deal with.

When the Tramway Employee photograph was taken, the union received requests from both the SEC and the Ballarat Tramway Museum for a copy of the photograph. I was present at the union meeting that evening, and it was quickly agreed that the Museum should receive a copy free of charge, however the prevailing opinion towards the SEC, and stated as "stuff 'em, they give us nothing, they can pay for it if they want it." They were charged the cost of producing the photograph \$2.00.

Their attitude towards the employees was also highlighted at the Farewell Dinner when the SEC representatives after saying that "it is your night, not ours," walked out, and turned off the lights, ending the evening early.

I guess their attitude changed somewhere between 1956 and 1971.

If you require any further information, or if I can assist any other members of the Tramway Museum in any way please do not hesitate to contact me.


Wayne Kell

P.S. Have included 3 photos taken at the 25th Reunion dinner.

Notes on Meeting with Wayne Kell, former SEC Pitman 9-2-20?1

1 - Group photo of the Ballarat crew and workers - Arthur Reed, head visible between two in 3rd road, not named in photograph. Not all crews and depot workers attended the photo shoot.

Put in part of photo

2 - Painters and Carpenters were not that busy, tended to sit when not doing things in the bogie car on the end of 3 road.

3 - Small car left outside at night on 4 road could not fit everything in.

4 - Two bogies car that were due for servicing the following day were parked on 0 road,

5 cars on 1 road - for brakes the following day or overnight.

5 - Dan Irvin - retired 31/7/1969 - see Reg Item 3957i2.

Stan Lakey - Leading Hand, later Foreman, ran the wheel lathe?

6 - List of crews and addresses - see btm3626

6 - Paymaster used the Pay Office once a week, paying depot staff and any crews who happened to be there, before going to the City office. Was accompanied by a Policeman.

7 - Grinder operator - Harry ? - did not do too much (Vin Dalton)

8 - Generally certain trams were done on each day, brakes 5 cars/day, Monday to Saturday = 6 days x 5 = 30, three cars serviced each day, Monday to Friday = 3 x 5 = 15. 15 cars in service (single truckers).

Bogie cars had their brakes done once a week, service?

9 - Coat ex Leo McMahan.

10 - At the end, all workers had to return their overalls and crews their uniforms.

11 - At the Farewell dinner, one bottle of beer per table only, when empty, renewed but only one. After the SEC Official speeches, Doug McGregor sang and then the workers asked Alf Mercer to speak. Officials left and turned the lights out!