

## THE MANY AND VARIED USES OF TRAMS

BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY N. MADDOCK

Since August, 1983, the "CITY OF MELBOURNE" W2 tram No.442 has trundled around the streets of Melbourne carrying diners sitting in the opulence of expensive velvet deep padded intimate booths, burgundy wool carpet, Victorian ash, stained a mahogany hue and brass fittings. The Colonial Tramcar Company leasees of the tram from the M.T.A. - they cannot own and operate it for legal reasons.

In Germany, there are trams running from Dusseldorf to Duisberg and Krefeld, These dining tram cars are as good if not better than many on main-line railways - the kitchens being all electric and very compact and meals are actually cooked on board.

In Stockholm in 1961, an ancient tram was found, also remodelled as a Restaurant car, it could seat only 16. During the first World War, Halifax tramcar No. 96 was in use as a mobile communal kitchen. It was fitted with electric cookers fed from the overhead supply.

Penny bars of chocolate were dispensed from machines in many London trams. Milk was also carried on trams in England - the trams ran between Dudley and Kinver, but it was not for the consumption of passengers. The churns were collected every morning from the farms "en route" for delivery in Dudley. It is remarkable how many other "uses" to which trams have been put whilst still mobile.

As well as providing for man's nourishment, trams helped in the disposal of his refuse. In Boulogne one could be unfortunate enough to be a passenger on a tram which would have coupled to it a truck containing sewerage for distribution to local farms.

Tramway funeral services were not uncommon. Many tramways around the world provided hearse cars and/or mourners cars. In Baltimore, Ohio, for instance, a special hearse car, felicitously named "DOLORES" was booked up many times for its full capacity of two or three funerals per day. Undertakers who were unable to sign up "DOLORES" for an interment had to fall back on "LORD BALTIMORE", a handsome, coal-black parlour car, but one lacking the special features that made "DOLORES" so much in demand. These included a special casket compartment up front with a large glass door that allowed the coffin to be viewed from the street; a nickel-plated rail against which flowers could be placed; eight black leather seats in the casket compartment for the family, and twentyfour seats in the rear compartment for lesser mourners. The charge for all these sombre but choice conveniences was a moderate \$20 to \$26. This fee also included the services of a neatly dressed motorman and conductor.

Just over 1000 km. to the north, two cars, Nos. 27S and 45S, built at Sydney's Randwick Workshops in 1896 and 1909 respectively, were used in Newcastle until the mid to late 1940's, each could hold 3 caskets and were four-wheel trailers. Rates during 1912 (and until 1947) were: Hire of hearse 10/-(\$1) on Newcastle City lines east of Plattsburg, and £1 (\$2) beyond - on the West Wallsend and Speers Point lines. Return fare for mourners on tram and train to Sandgate Cemetary was 2/- 1st class and 1/- 2nd class (20¢ and 10¢) on city lines and

MANY & VARIED USES OF TRAMS(Contd/- from Page ):

2/6 (1st) and 1/6 (2nd) class (25¢ and 15¢) beyond Plattsburg. The hearse cars were trailed behind electric or steam trams and at least 6 trams were fitted with air brake connections for this service. Both hearse trailers were taken off the rails at Hamilton Depot (Newcastle) in February 1949 and used as tool boxes at the depot, still on wheels but air brake plumbing removed. Car No. 27 was transferred to Sydney in 1953 and is now there at the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences. Other cities throughout the world to provide similar services were - MILAN (Italy), PARIS, MEXICO CITY, SALVADOR (Brazil) and DUDLEY in Worcestershire (England). Dudley also had a tram fitted out for wedding receptions.

While many people left the world by tram, only a few entered it this way. One person born on a Spanish tram is not likely to forget how he arrived. He received a free travel pass for life!

If anyone ever deserved a free pass for life, it was ANNA FOX of Chicago, U.S.A., who at the age of 79 revealed that for over 8 years she had slept in Chicago's all-night trams because the fare for 126 miles, backwards and forwards across the city all night, was cheaper than a lodging.

"There is no law against it" she told one journalist, "and besides I always pay my full fare." She paid the conductor for 6 round trips in advance so that her sleep would not be interrupted. With \$8,000 in her bank account, amassed from sales of hair nets on the streets and in Taverns, she could have afforded to buy her own private tram.

The wife of the Mexican dictator, PORFIRIO DIAZ, had one all to herself. It was fitted with silk curtains, arm-chair seats, magazine racks and spittoons!

On the other hand ANNA FOX might have preferred the sleeper horse trams that operated in Argentina many years ago.

Sydney had two Electric trams permanently coupled that also had "beds" of a sort. In 1915 two "C" class trams Nos. 31 and 44 were converted to "Ambulance trams" to carry injured World War I soldiers between Woolloomooloo, Central Railway Station and Randwick Hospital. They were used again in 1919 for an influenza epidemic. Both cars were dismantled in 1925.

Until the 1930's horse trams were used to convey small pox victims from Long Reach on the banks of the Thames to the Joyce Green Isolation Hospital, Dartford, England. The trams were arranged to receive the patients on stretchers and all the fittings were galvanised because they had to be disinfected regularly.

A tram that would have been carefully avoided was Sydney's Prison Car No.948, which had six windowless barred cells with a corridor along one side. Built in 1909 at Randwick Workshops it ran until December 1950. The car can be seen today at the Sydney Tramway Museum, Loftus. The car ran between Darlinghurst Court House and Long Bay Gaol, on the La Perouse line and was shielded from public curiosity as sidings were constructed into special enclosed terminals. Notices on both ends of the tram warned passers-by that it carried "No Passengers". Two prisoners, DUGAN and MEARS made a famous escape from this tram by sawing a hole in the roof during the journey.

Contd/ on Page

MANY & VARIED USES OF TRAMS:

(Contd/- from Page ):

Trams have been used not only to imprison criminals, but also to catch them. In Glasgow two were used by the Police as a road block to halt a lorry stolen by 3 seventeen-year-old youths, deciding on a massive road block at Anniesland Cross, the Glasgow Police stopped two trams and two buses, asked the passengers to leave, and then placed the four vehicles across Great Western Road.

Not all trams have been used for law-abiding purposes. In Mexico City, during the revolutions of 1914-18, some were commandeered by rival generals and used as troop carriers, armoured units and mobile gun platforms. One can well imagine the vehicles, with trolley poles swishing as they swayed down the main streets, firing broadsides into shop windows.

Bradford's (U.K.) tramways once carried heavy artillery guns during the first World War - but without a shot being fired en route. The guns were moved on their way to active service. Another war-time use, this time at Croydon (U.K.) was the equipping of two cars with searchlights, the idea being to vary the location and thus fool the enemy.

On 1st September, 1951, in New Zealand at Invercargill (the most southerly tramway in the world at the time) a tramcar was suitably equipped and parked at a terminus and used as a Polling Booth. A considerable number of voters, who normally would have voted elsewhere, recorded their votes here, just for the novelty of it.

Many tramways throughout the world, including Australia, carried mail. Some carried bulk mail for the Post office and some carried boxes where mail could be posted. In Amsterdam, (until quite recently at least) letters could be posted on trams. At least 10% of the City's outgoing mail is collected in this way, the boxes fitted to the aprons being frequently emptied at a sorting office along the route. How the 10% finds its way into the boxes however, remains a puzzle. A friend in 1960 spent over 30 minutes trying to post a letter before giving up in disgust. Every time he reached the box and stretched out his hand to post the letter, the tram sailed away!!.

Finally, another rare tram runs in Munich. It has been converted (like many buses we see around Melbourne) into a travelling library. It has been fitted with book shelves holding approx. 1,500 volumes and counters and chairs have been installed to suit the librarian's requirements. Different outlying suburbs are visited on a pre-announced schedule, and each day that the library makes its tours, hundreds of books are handled, which is evidence enough that the service is popular.

IT MAY BE A GOOD IDEA IF THE M.T.A. TRIED A SIMILAR  
THING!!!

\* \* \* \* \*