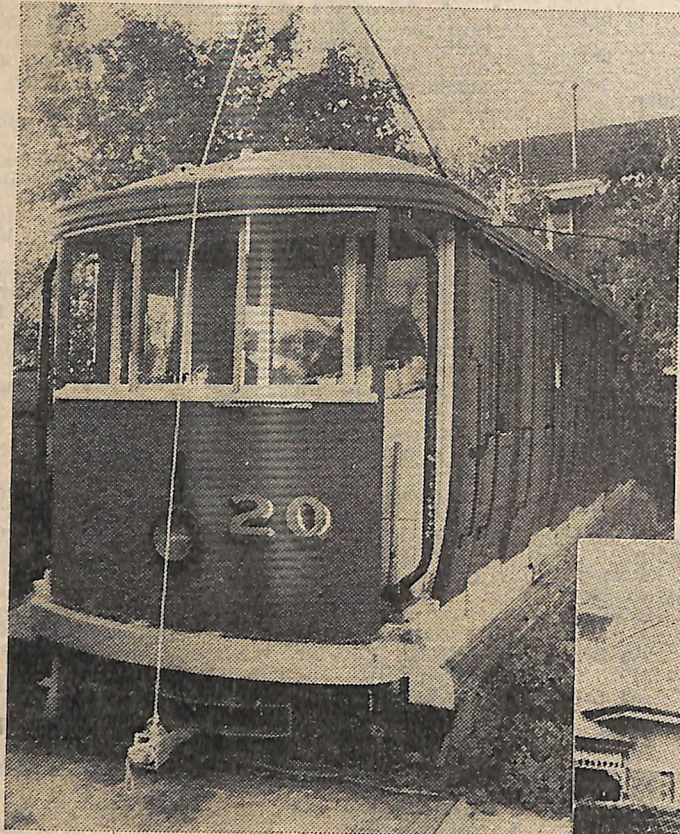


End of the line

Then
and
now



ABOVE: "Toastrack" tram No. 20 has come to rest in the Prahran backyard of Mr Bob Prentice. Right: One of the "toastrack" fleet with its conductor, who had to scramble along the footboard to collect fares.

BRIGHTON - BOUND passengers from Flinders St. are transferring from the gas-lit trains at St. Kilda Station.

A white-collared conductor is calling: "Hurry on, please, for the electric car!"

At the height of the peak-hour rush, several hundred passengers clamber aboard the awaiting trams and the procession moves across Fitzroy St.,

up Grey St. to the Village Belle, and bound for Brighton Beach.

Into Mitford St. and through the reclaimed Elwood township along Ormond Road, the fleet gathers pace down St. Kilda St., passing the depot on the Head St. corner, and reaching the Brighton terminus at Grosvenor St.

The five-mile journey has just taken 29 minutes.

The St. Kilda-to-Brighton electric line is new born and effecting the

first through-route round the far reaches of Port Phillip to bayside Brighton.

Any previous connection between the two, involved a rail loop through Windsor and Elsternwick.

Today, some 66 years on, a veteran of the now-defunct St. Kilda Station-to-Brighton Beach Electric Street Railway, to give it the full title, is sitting in the middle of a Prahran backgarden.

Enthusiast

The owner, Mr Bob Prentice, an optician, describes it as a "toastrack", late of Elwood, and of a 1913 vintage.

In its present suburban setting, old Number 20, still retains the original color scheme of chocolate, cream and red.

Mr Prentice, an avid transport enthusiast, says he bought the tram in 1959, when the line officially closed.

It served its last days (40 years to be exact) as a breakdown car confined to the Elwood depot.

Number 20 was built by Pengeley & Co. of Adelaide in 1913, and

entered service between May and July of the same year.

Mr Prentice said his tram was part of a replacement fleet, built by the Adelaide crowd, after a fire in March, 1906, destroyed the depot and reduced the entire fleet of 17 trams to a heap of frames.

Number 20 served the public for five years till the toastrack design became obsolete and was replaced.

Requested

Mr Prentice said that the toastrack design — closed cross bench seats with no centre aisle — meant the conductor had to move along the narrow, running board to enter the compartments from the outside and collect his fares.

The trams had gas-light fittings made of brass and displayed a notice to the occupants: "Please hand as nearly as possible the exact fare to the conductor. Passengers are requested to give early notice where they desire to be set down."

—STEPHEN FOLEY.

