

IN MEMORY OF KEITH SYDNEY KINGS.

Thank-you for the opportunity to speak to the life of Keith.

I was introduced to Keith Kings back in 1948. I was a seven year-old attendee at the Camberwell Methodist Sunday School. One day the Secretary discovered that I liked trams. He said "I have a neighbor who's interested in trams, too!" Introductions were made, but as far as I can recall, I did not start going on tram tours with Keith until I was about 14 - in 1955.

At that time, Keith was actively involved in the **Australian Electric Traction Association** (the AETA). The AETA was primarily an organization dedicated to furthering the use of electric trams and trains. They had branches in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne. I have recently received a photo of Keith helping to hold a ribbon in front of Adelaide tram 111 outside Adelaide's old Hackney Depot. There is a small metal board on the tram's bumper bar pointing out that this was a special "tour" of the AETA. It was significant that tram 111 and several other trams were taken down and parked on a siding opposite the Morphettville Racecourse, when most of Adelaide's electric trams ceased running in 1958. These four cars stayed out in the open for a while and then were transferred to the new **Australian Electric Transport Museum** at St. Kilda in the northern suburbs by 1958.

In the mid to late 1950s, Keith was active in the AETA's affairs – in administration, organizing tram tours - and even doing research for what was to become his first book! In 1954, Traction Publications published an illustrated 18 page book that was edited by a Jack Richardson, and the Associate Editor was Keith Kings. The booklet was called "**Destination CITY**".

This landmark publication described and illustrated all the various types of trams that have run in Melbourne's streets since 1910. It covered the various Municipal Tramways Trust, the North Melbourne Electric Tramway Company – which all got taken over by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board in July 1919. The two Victorian Railways tram systems (St. Kilda to Brighton Beach and Sandringham to Black Rock) were also covered.

Keith must have spent many hours doing the necessary research, and the small booklet was such a land-mark publication that it enjoyed five subsequent up-dated editions. In 1960, Jack Richardson (assisted by Keith) published the second edition. Then, in 1971, Keith and Jack reversed roles, with Keith editing "Destination CITY"s" third edition.

But let me step back from 1971 to 1963, when, by mutual agreement, the newly-formed Tramway Museum Society of Victoria was granted ownership of several surplus trams that had been given to the AETA. The new Society's first Secretary was, I believe, one Keith Sydney Kings – and he was pivotal in setting up the management arrangements that were to serve the Society well ever since. The four trams the TMSV owned were housed down the back of the Tramway Board's Malvern Depot, and work parties commenced on steadily restoring these trams. Many tram tours - around Melbourne, as well as Ballarat and Bendigo – and Keith helped organize these, AND had time to take many, many photos – in black and white AND colour!

The TMSV set about trying to find a suitable site to set up an operating tramway museum, culminating in being granted a lease of a mile of broad-gauge track and the station house and grounds at Bylands on the recently-closed Heathcote railway line.

Again, with Keith's guidance, timber power poles and roof trusses were sourced and the first two-track enclosed shed was built. Keith had surprising talents. He was a quiet, reserved man, but he knew which end of a hammer and chisel you used. His father had been a builder, I THINK, and Keith obviously learned "stuff" from his Dad! His Holden station wagon was always neatly filled with tools and material needed for the day's work. One of his station wagons had the number plate KSK-290. His initials, of course, AND the number of the first tram preserved in Victoria. That was cable tram grip car No. 290 – which sat in a big garden shed beside the Northcote house of the late Alf Twentyman! That was Keith for you!

Forgive me for back-tracking, but let's wind the calendar back to 1965. In that year, Keith edited a new booklet – "**Destination EAGLEHAWK**", a wonderful illustrated history of the tramcars of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. It was published by Traction Publications of Canberra and ran to 48 pages. Another "bible" for tram enthusiasts!

When the State Electricity Commission was finally permitted by Parliament to close its last provincial city' tramways. Some dedicated Bendigonians sought Keith's help to convince the SEC and the State government to all part of the closed tram lines to be used for a tourist tramway. **The Bendigo Trust** benefitted from Keith's knowledge, as displayed in his "Destination EAGLEHAWK", in making a successful case to preserve most of the North Bendigo to Golden Square line. Nine months after closure of the Bendigo tram system, the new Talking Tram Tours commenced, and have been running ever since.

In 1972, Keith wrote an illustrated history of "**The Bendigo Tramways**" in time for the inauguration of the Talking Tram Tours. Published by

the Australian Railway Historical Society's Victorian Division, this little tome was 80 pages of fascinating history!

Keith was a tram driver in Bendigo in the late 1980s/early 1990s – and the Bendigo Trust made him an honorary Life Member. But the book writer in Keith was not done yet! In 1996 “**Bendigo's Vintage Talking Trams**” was published by the Trust. 100 pages of fascinating history of the battery, steam and finally electric trams that served the greater city of Bendigo since 1890.

Keith was a long-term Board member of the TMSV, and was made an honorary Life Member in the 1980s, in recognition of his on-going and stalwart help to the organization.

Over many years, Keith contributed many, many articles for Australian transport magazines like “Trolley Wire” and “Electric Traction”.

Back at the TMSV's Bylands development, Keith qualified as a driver when the electric trams commenced running in 1978 – and the smile on his face when he was on duty was a sight to see!

Ever busy, Keith purchased a few old buses over the years and almost single-handedly restored a former M&MTB war-time “Austerity” Studebaker bus. AND he was executive officer of the **Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia (COTMA)** from 1977 to 1986.

And between 1973 and 1978, Keith (with the capable assistance of Robert Green) provided very helpful advice to the painter of the huge **Transport Cavalcade mural** that adorned the old Spencer Street station. The State Artist at the time was Harold Freedman, and he took on this huge project and prepared all the many individual panels in a dis-used train sub-station at East Camberwell. The mural has been re-

located twice, and can now be found, in part, somewhat hidden in the Direct Factory Outlet just north of what is now Southern Cross Station!

I really appreciated Keith's quiet reserved nature, and I was conscious of his steadying hand on the administration of the TMSV. I was Secretary for some years from 1969 and I clearly remember Keith participating calmly and objectively in Board discussions and decision-making.

Keith was renowned for capturing Victoria's (and Australia's) trams on film. His absolutely vast collection of slides, prints and films were passed to the **State Library of Victoria** in 2018. They have a good permanent home, but it will take a long time to catalogue everything! Although - Keith will have greatly assisted the process, because he meticulously recorded a description of each shot – and even wrote down details of the time exposure and lens aperture! An archivist's delight!

Keith's rich legacy of tram preservation and photographic recording of yesteryear's trams around Australia makes him a truly unique character. I respectfully salute him, and I will greatly miss him!