

WIRELESS REPORT

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When it was decided that I should speak to you on the early street transportation of our City, I set out with a light heart, and the belief that I would perhaps have to go back fifty years. In fact, I had it firmly fixed in my mind that all I had to do was to start off by looking into the records of a few years before the cable trams started, to find out when the first serious attempt was made to provide organised transport for the citizens of Melbourne and suburbs. Never was man more surprised as I delved into old files and official papers. Back and back I went until in the end, I began to wonder if at the finish I would not find that Batman drove a bus, and had as his conductor Fawkner, or some other notable early pioneer. It seemed to me, as I searched back, I would find that the transportation of passengers was one of the first business enterprises to be established in Melbourne. I might mention, however, that it was only by diligent search amongst the records that I was able to find any reference to ~~organised~~ street transportation, which seems to have been carried on at the outset in a very free and easy manner. There were no by-laws or traffic regulations to be observed. The driver then could do a left hand turn at five o'clock at Flinders Street without fear of being hailed before the Court and fined. In fact, his only trouble was to see that he did not fall foul of the bullock teams setting out for the Goldfields.

After the Town Council took serious notice of street transportation in 1850, and framed its first by-laws to deal with the subject, it was fairly easy to follow the progress made by the predecessors or Mr. Cameron.

Before taking up the subject of my talk, I think a few words on the early history of Melbourne would not be amiss. Originally known as the district of Port Phillip, and a part of New South Wales, Melbourne was given its present name - that borne by the British Prime Minister of the day, Lord Melbourne, - in March 1837. In that year, Messrs. Hoddle & Russell, under the direction of the New South Wales Government, surveyed and laid out our town site and main suburbs. It was due to the foresight of these two gentlemen that we have now a city that ranks as one of the best laid out in the world. It seems a pity that the surveyors do not have better streets to bear their names than those selected. Five years after the town was laid out, the Melbourne Municipal Corporation Act (the first step in our Local Government) was passed by the New South Wales Parliament. Prior to the Corporation of the Town of Melbourne (as it first was) being formed and undertaking the maintenance of the streets, Elizabeth Street seems to have been the bugbear of the early residents and business men. According to the newspaper reports, it was no uncommon thing for communication between the east side

and the west side of Elizabeth Street to be cut off for days at a time. I came across a newspaper report of an entertainment in those far off days, which was held in Bourke Street East. Dealing with the attendance, the reporter said it was satisfactory considering the fact that the show had to depend on those living East of Elizabeth Street, on account of the recent rains making it impossible to cross that street. In another paper, I found an advertisement inserted by a wag, calling for tenders from those who would be willing to run a ferry across Elizabeth Street at Collins Street. One of the first works sanctioned by the Melbourne Town Council was the erection of a wooden bridge across Elizabeth Street at Little Flinders Street. Evidently bridges were a burning subject

even as far back as that time. *little to the East of the present*

The crossing of the Yarra at this time was done by means of punts, and I found that it then cost a shilling for a vehicle, 6d. for a horse, and 2d. for a man to be taken from one side of the river to the other. *all users of the bridge had to pay toll.* In 1840 the Company that ran the punts changed its name to The Melbourne Bridge Company, and called for tenders for the erection of an iron suspension bridge over the Yarra at Elizabeth Street. The lowest tender was £4,500, but the job was not gone on with, because the New South Wales Government refused to grant the Company the right to collect tolls for 20 years.

The New South Wales Authorities decided to build a bridge themselves

and then a wrangle took place as to whether it should be at Swanston Street or Elizabeth Street. Eventually, Swanston Street was selected and plans were prepared for the new bridge. The foundation stone was laid with great ceremony in 1846. The newspapers of the day gave a lot of space to describing the events of the day.

It is interesting to note that after the foundation stone of the bridge was laid, the official party with the band and guests, marched up Swanston Street to Lonsdale Street, and laid the foundation stone of the Melbourne Hospital. When the erection of this bridge was decided upon by the N.S.W. Government, the Bridge Company before mentioned, realising that it would be some years before the stone bridge was available, decided to immediately put up a wooden bridge

~~I came across an amusing story of one of these pioneers whilst~~
in line with Swanston Street, a little to the East of the present site. This provided a carriage-way 17 feet wide with a footpath 4 feet wide on one side. The contract price was £400, but the

contractor lost £170 on the job. *all users of the bridge*
~~In 1841, the Melbourne Bridge~~
had to pay toll =
~~Company had erected a wooden bridge over the river next to the big bridge, which was built later, and established a toll gate on it.~~

When the Government Bridge was opened, ~~however~~, the toll-keeper of the ~~Government Bridge~~ was out of work, so the local residents presented him with £25 as a mark of appreciation.

~~the story any further.~~

The majority of the inhabitants in 1850 were centred nearby the river. A few of the more daring had ventured into the bush, - now our populous suburbs - and small settlements had sprung up at St. Kilda and Brighton on the Bay front.

With the discovery of gold inland, thousands soon arrived in quest of the precious metal. Whilst the great majority set off for the goldfields, many settled in and around the metropolis, and the area occupied soon grew.

The only available means of transport to the newcomers who wished to get inland, was the bullock dray, and fabulous prices were paid for the carriage of outfits by these vehicles. Some of the newcomers brought their own horses and drays with them from the old country.

I came across an amusing story of one of these pioneers whilst delving into the records. This adventurer was on his way to the goldfields with a two-horse team that he had brought from England with him, and when he came to a creek just outside Melbourne, he enquired from a farm-hand working near-by, if the creek had a good bottom. On being informed that it had, he started to ford it.

In the middle, the dray went down to its axle. Full of wrath, the driver turned to the local man and said - "I thought you said the creek had a good bottom?" "Well, so it has", was the unexpected reply, "but you're only half-way down to it." History does not take the story any further.

It was not long before stage coaches took up the running to the goldfields, and in my search for transportation information, I came across some interesting advertisements regarding the running of these old-timers. But this is not the subject of the talk to-night. I wish to deal more with the street transport of the capital.

The type of conveyance provided for street transportation in these early days was of a very crude, and I should say, uncomfortable type. The first reference I can find of a passenger vehicle in the streets was that run by Peter Jackson, a coach-builder. This was available for hire. It was built on the lines of the old Irish

Jingle, having two wheels and cross-seats on which the passengers sat back to back. The passengers were prevented from being thrown

off by having a broad strap fastened round their waists. So you

see, even our great grandparents were strap-hangers! Evidently,

the roads were too bad for Peter Jackson's turnout, for it was soon

withdrawn from service. This type of vehicle was, however, very

well known in Melbourne thirty years later.

As the population grew and settlement extended, means of communication became necessary between the various suburbs and the town.

The earliest Melbourne omnibus service that I can find any trace

of was one to Sandridge, which is now Port Melbourne. It was run

by Fred Liardet, and his principal source of income was from pass-

engers who wanted to go to and from the oversea ships that then

berthed at Port Melbourne. His advertisements first appeared in 1844. Later, he branched out, and ran a special bathing service. For 2/6d. you could be taken to Sandridge, allowed to bathe in Liardet's baths, and then brought back to Melbourne. Evidently, these trips were very popular for we find that the poor attendance at the Municipal Baths in the Yarra, opposite where the Customs House now stands, was put down to the preference given to Liardet's.

About the same time as the Sandridge service was inaugurated, Liardet started to run a bus to St. Kilda. There is no mention of the fare, but in 1849, an advertisement appeared in the Melbourne Press announcing that Mr. Liardet had a new omnibus built "after the latest London fashion", and that it would do two trips a day to St. Kilda -

fare 1/- each way.

It's wonderful to look back and see how things have changed.

Can you imagine a run to Richmond being described as a country jaunt!

Yet this is how it was described by an enterprising hotel keeper in

January 1846, when the proprietor of the Richmond Hotel, Richmond, advertised that he was providing free transportation from Melbourne to Richmond to anyone who wanted a "rural trip". The only proviso he put in was that the traveller should partake of refreshments at his hotel during the trip.

At a later date, Mooney took over the Royal Hotel, St. Kilda, and

later still, the Princess Bridge Hotel (now Young & Jacksons).

There was an omnibus service between Brighton and Melbourne in partnership with his brother Joshua, he retained his interest in the year 1846. An advertisement stated that a bus would leave the Brighton Hotel on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 8.30 a.m., and depart from the Prince of Wales Hotel on the return journey at 4.30 p.m. Four years later (1850) Mr. James Mooney, who was then proprietor of the Brighton Hotel, advertised the bus to leave on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. By January, 1852, the business had evidently

grown, for we find an advertisement setting out the comforts and conveniences of his hostelry, together with the beauties of the fashionable watering place, and announcing that his new and up-to-date omnibus "Eclipse" built to order, would in future, make daily trips between Brighton and Melbourne. The bus would leave Brighton Hotel daily at 8.30 a.m. and depart from from Chitty's Horse Bazaar, Lonsdale Street at 4.30 p.m. calling at the Bull and Mouth Bourke St., and Prince Albert Hotels en route. The fares quoted were:-

Between Brighton and Melbourne	2/-	each way.
" St. Kilda and Melbourne	1/-	" "
Children under 7	..	Half fare

Fancy boosting a once-a-day service to Brighton! Just for the sake of comparison, I turned up the time-table, and found that to-day there are no less than ~~200~~ 107 trains a day to Brighton, to say nothing of 100 trams which connect with the St. Kilda train. fare for each passenger to be 3d. per mile, etc.

At a later date, Mooney took over the Royal Hotel, St. Kilda, and later still, the Princes Bridge Hotel (now Young & Jacksons).

particularly to the developments of the service.

In the late fifties, there arrived a gentleman who can be justly regarded as the father of Melbourne's organised transportation. In partnership with his brother Joshua, he retained his interest in the omnibus and maintained services to the Southern suburbs for many years.

I refer to the late Mr. F. S. Clapp, whose son is our present Chairman of Commissioners for Railways. In 1855 there is record of a bus which ran between Swanston Street, Melbourne, and the Builders' Arms Hotel, Gertrude St. Fitzroy.

He was for some years engaged as proprietor and manager of coach Fare 1/- each way. By 1857 the fare had been reduced to 3d. and the lines to all parts of Western and Northern Victoria, at the same time, route was later extended to Smith Street for the same fare.

taking a very keen interest in the metropolitan services...

An advertisement in a Richmond newspaper reads:-

In 1859, the Melbourne Omnibus Company was formed, with Mr. Clapp From 6th January, 1859, a line of omnibuses will run

four times daily from the Royal Hotel, Punt Road, is colleagues:-

Richmond, via Swan Street and over Church Street

Mr. William (afterwards Sir William) McCulloch, the founder Bridge to Prahran and St. Kilda. Fares 6d. and 1/- which still survives.

each way respectively.

Mr. A. W. Robertson, of Robertson & Wagner, Coach Proprietors.

In the same year, it is announced that omnibuses would meet all trains

coming from or departing for Williamstown at the Batman Hill terminus, and ply to the Globe Hotel, Swanston Street. Fares 4d. each way.

The Secretary to the Company was Mr. F. G. Spring, who is The first By-law passed by the City Council dealing with the

licensing and regulation of Hackney Carriages, etc., ~~xxx~~ plying

The Company started on a very sound basis, placing orders with the for hire within the City of Melbourne and within the distance of

8 miles from the corporate limits of the City, was No. 26, and was

Say York, for the supply and delivery of the first buses. This is dated 3rd October, 1850. By-Law No. 44 of 22nd July 1861, fixed the

scale of charges by omnibuses as follows:-

Mr. Hick	Between the hours of 6 a.m. & 7 p.m.	the fare for each passenger to be 3d. per mile, etc.
"	" " " 7 p.m. & 10 p.m.	4d. per mile.
"	" " " 10 p.m. & 6 a.m.	6d. per mile.

With Stephenson's buses as a pattern, the Company at its work-I now want to leave the days of individual effort to refer more

particularly to the developments of the sixties.

In the late fifties, there arrived a gentleman who can be justly regarded as the father of Melbourne's organised transportation. I refer to the late Mr. F. B. Clapp, whose son is our present Chairman of Commissioners for Railways.

He was for some years engaged as proprietor and Manager of coach lines to all parts of Western and Northern Victoria, at the same time, taking a very keen interest in the metropolitan services..

In 1869, the Melbourne Omnibus Company was formed, with Mr. Clapp as Managing Director, and the following gentlemen as his colleagues:-

Mr. William (afterwards Sir William) McCulloch, the founder of the McCulloch Carrying Co., which still survives.

Mr. A. W. Robertson, of Robertson & Wagner, Coach Proprietors.

Mr. M. M. (Afterwards Hon. J. M.) Pratt, of Campbell Pratt & Co. of Kirk's Horse Bazaar, whose original building in Bourke Street has only recently been demolished.

The Secretary to the Company was Mr. W. G. Sprigg, who is still living, and whose name ranks next to Mr. Clapp's in Melbourne's Street transportation.

The Company started on a very sound basis, placing orders with the leading bus manufacturers of the day - John Stephenson & Son of New York, for the supply and delivery of the first buses. This is the Company that built the first tramcar sent to Australia, which Mr. Wickham told you a fortnight ago, had run well over a million miles and would see the cable system out.

With Stephenson's buses as a pattern, the Company at its work-shops situated at the corner of Brunswick and Johnston Streets,

Fitzroy, rapidly augmented the number of vehicles in service. With the continued rapid growth of the City and suburbs, the Directors soon realised that a better means of transport would have to be provided. In America and England, street railways or tramways were being laid in all the larger cities, and it was found that these provided a more rapid and cheaper mode of transport. Thus we find that in 1872, the old Omnibus Company was wound up and re-formed into the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Co. Ltd., with a nominal capital of £2,000,000, in 2,000,000 shares of £1 each. Although the Company assumed this title in 1872, it was not till 13 years later that trams were run on Melbourne streets; but I will deal with this phase later.

It may be of interest to quote a few comparative figures to show the growth of the omnibus side of the venture. A copy of the third half-yearly Balance Sheet of the Omnibus Company, which I have before me, shows that the revenue from the fares for the half-year ending September 1870, totalled £11,233. The Balance Sheet of the M. T. & O. Company for year ended 30th September, 1885 (the 12 months immediately preceding the running of trams) gave the revenue as just on £150,000. The total revenue from fares by the present Board for the year just closed was over £2,000,000. The buses, in 1885, covered $3\frac{3}{4}$ million miles, while the tram miles for last year, total over 23 millions. The passengers carried by the buses are given as $11\frac{3}{4}$ millions, whereas our trams carried over 226 millions for the past 12 months, and our motor omnibuses carried

over 7 million passengers.

Just before the Company started running trams, it had 96 buses, and 1200 horses in service. The quantity of horse feed consumed totalled over 5,400 tons. There are still men employed by the Tramway Board who worked for the Company before it ran trams. They can tell some interesting stories of the good old days. There's one tale that will never be forgotten. It concerns an old horse (who was evidently the shed delegate of the tramway horses' union) and the Assistant Manager of the Company. The old horse was famous for his observance of the regulation which provided that a day's work for a horse was four trips. On the completion of this task our sagacious friend would refuse to do another yard in harness. The groom often tried to break the rule, but without result; he refused to budge. One day, when they were pushed for horses, the Assistant Manager - who was at the stables - told the men to put the horse in for a fifth trip. They told him that the horse would not stand for it. "Nonsense", put him in at once." They did, but no sooner did the driver attempt to drive off than Dobbin struck, and he struck to some effect - with his hind legs! Then the boss gave in, and ordered the horse back to his stall for his dinner.,

In 1874, the Company was maintaining a regular omnibus service on the following routes:-

Between Melbourne & Hobson's Bay Railway Station and

Brunswick Street, Fitzroy
Hoddle Street, Abbotsford.
Smith Street, Collingwood
Flemington Road, Hotham.
Simpsons Road, Collingwood

and between Royal Arcade Bourke Street and Richmond.

In 1885 - the year of opening Richmond cable tramway, the following additional services were being provided:-

Flinders St. Melbourne	to	Brunswick
" " "	"	Fuckle Street Moonee Ponds.
G.P.O. Bourke Street	"	Carlisle St. St. Kilda
Royal Arcade, Melbne	"	Dandenong Road Windsor.
" " "	"	Bleak House, Emerald Hill (S.M.)
" " "	"	Sandridge (Port Melb)
and from Queens Parade C.Hill		to Northcote.

~~xxxx~~

A short paragraph from the report to the shareholders of the

M. T. & O. Company for the year 1886 states:-

"With the successful opening of the Richmond line and the practical completion of work on the Fitzroy and Simpsons Road lines, buses will now be released to open up bus lines to St. Kilda and North Carlton. We will also be able to put a larger and better type of bus on the Moonee Ponds route, and your Directors are considering the operation of new lines to the Malvern district."

In accordance with this statement, buses were put on the following routes in addition to those quoted:

Church Street between Swan St. Richmond and Chapel St. Prahran. East Brunswick, from terminus of North Carlton tram, while services were provided between Chapel St. Prahran and Glenferrie Road Malvern on High St. Malvern Road and Dandenong Road.

The last of these bus lines was closed down on 3/5/16, 8 weeks prior to the cable tramway system being taken over by the Tramways Board.

Having dealt with this phase of Melbourne Street transportation, I hope at some future day, to follow up with the Tramway phase of the subject.

GOOD EVENING