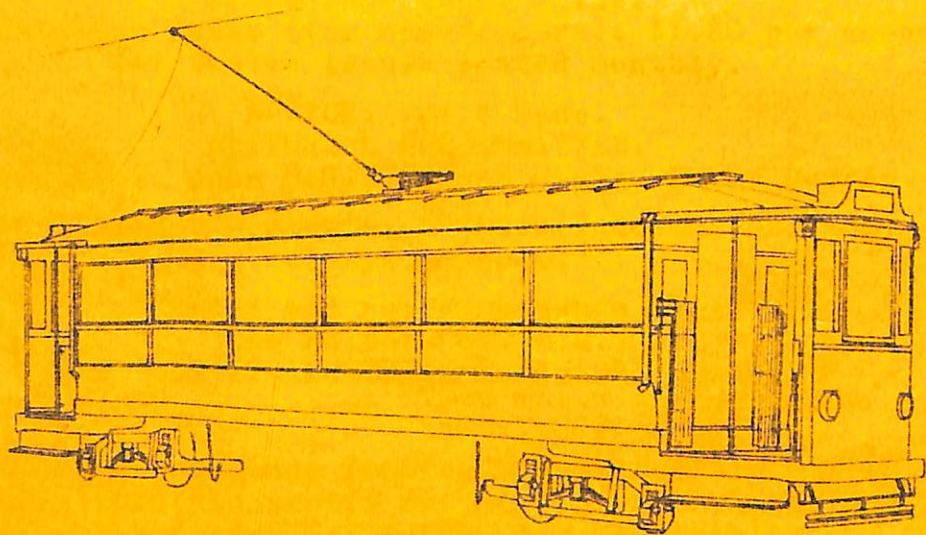


# DREADNOUGHT



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BENDIGO TRAMWAY CLOSURE

The long anticipated closure of the Bendigo tramways commenced on Sunday, 5th March, 1972 when the Golden Square and North Bendigo routes ran for the last time. The last car from North Bendigo was No. 24 which carried only a small number of passengers. Much more interest was shown in the last run from Golden Square however, the final services being provided by a convoy consisting of bogie car 26 and Birney car 29, both of which were packed to capacity. A large number of motor vehicles followed the last cars to the depot. Following this closure the overhead was removed between Golden Square terminus and the Central Deborah mine. The remainder of the route to North Bendigo will be left intact until the Government examines the proposals of the Bendigo Trust to operate a tourist service over this section of line.

Bogie cars were used on the last day of North Bendigo - Golden Square services, but Birney car 29 was used for the benefit of photographers. Single truck cars were last used in normal service on Saturday, 4th March, Car 7 worked the last service to North Bendigo and 19 the last to Golden Square that evening.

Sunday, 16th April saw the sun rising on Bendigo's tramway system for the last time. Huge crowds built up during the day along the city sections of the Quarry Hill and Eaglehawk routes. In the afternoon a crowd estimated at 20,000 stretched from the Alexandra fountain to the Depot. At 5.20 p.m. the last cars from Quarry Hill, 25 and 5 came down Mitchell St. and about 20 minutes later car 2 followed by decorated car 26 came down View St, these 4 cars plus Birney cars 28 and 29 made a historic and memorable procession to the depot accompanied by bands and a huge crowd. The Bendigo tramway system was now but a memory.

The following is a reprint of an editorial in the Melbourne Age on 31 January, 1972.

TRAMS CAN BE TRENDY.

With a little luck and a lot of cash, Melbourne may soon be able to prove that trams are the trendy thing in metropolitan public transport. More and more European cities - Vienna, Brussels, Stockholm, Frankfurt and Munich to mention a few - are revitalizing their tramway systems to provide fast, efficient and pollution-free transport for their citizens. And they are redesigning their tramways to meet the needs of the 21st Century. In the congested city centres, the trams are going underground linked by escalators to street level. Further out, they are being given, so far as possible, their own tracks separated from motor traffic.

This is the pattern that the Tramways Board hopes to emulate in Melbourne. But, first, it is seeking the approval of the government and an allocation of loan funds to buy 300 new trams. Is such a heavy investment and continuing commitment to our tramway system warranted? Critics will point to important differences between Melbourne and the tramway-oriented cities in Europe. What these cities have in common is a relatively compact area and high density housing. They also have a lower rate of car ownership. There are really two questions for us to ask. Does it still make sense for a sprawling, low-density, car-crazy city like Melbourne to spend millions of dollars on public transport? And, if so, should we stick to trams?

The government has already answered the first question in principle, if not with hard cash. It has decided, as a matter of policy, to give priority to improving public transport over extending the inadequate road system. Although it seemingly flies in the face of popular preference, this is the right decision. To provide enough new freeways and ring roads, to meet even the present demands on our congested streets and highways would be both prohibitively expensive and intolerably destructive of the city's housing, parks and character. Public transport can move large numbers of people more efficiently, and it can be improved more economically than a system relying basically on private cars.

In reply to the second question, it has to be admitted that trams are not the solution to the transport needs of Melbourne's relentless outward sprawl. For these, we have to expand and improve the suburban rail network, and express and feeder bus services. But within an eight-mile radius of the city centre, the tramway system will continue to make sense. One powerful reason is that it would be financial folly to scrap it. Most of the tram tracks have been renewed to last for years, and the electrical system is sound. Only the tramcars, some 50 years old and none newer than 15 years, are becoming obsolete and expensive to maintain. Once replaced, they would be much more economical to run than buses.

The Tramways Board has set its heart on modern, European-style trams which will be much quieter and more comfortable than our present vehicles. Another important, though unpublicised, advantage is that they can be adapted to one-man operation. That may not be the board's present intention but, without a reduction in manpower costs, the expense of maintaining adequate services at night and weekends will become too heavy a burden on the taxpayer. There are two other good reasons for investing in trams: the trend towards higher-density housing in inner suburbs, and the growing pressure on motorists to leave their cars outside the central city area. A far-sighted Government will recognise these realities and give the Tramways Board the authority and funds it requires.

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A Trip To St. Helena: Map Pg 11 April issue:

Mr G. R. Ford has asked us to publish a note to the effect that the lines representing tramways in fact included some the existence of which has not been conclusively established.

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LATE NEWS:

Trolleybus No 1 and all remaining trucks, compressors and things mobile were removed to the new site on Sunday 30th April.

Impressions of New Zealand Tramway Museums

(continued from last month)

by P. Hyde

The second Museum to receive our attentions, was the Wellington Tramway Museum Inc. which has its centre of operations at Queen Elizabeth Park, McKay's Crossing, Paekakariki. The address is better known simply as Paekakariki, but this is misleading, as it is a few miles north of the station. The total distance from the centre of Wellington is about 28 miles; however this presents no problems to prospective patrons as there is an excellent suburban electric rail service to Paekakariki, with taxis the rest of the way.

The approach to the main terminus for the visitor is unassuming. "Park" is not quite what the area is; the Australian equivalent would most probably be "Reserve". Overall administration of the Park is in the hands of a trust, with the Museum merely a tenant. Some difficulties have been experienced from time to time in satisfying the demands of the Trust with regard to general appearance of the museum area and applications for track extensions. The situation bears a striking resemblance to that which exists between the S.P.E.R. and the administrators of the Royal National Park in Sydney.

Despite this, the museum has made good progress. It has the longest operating trackage in Australasia, the length available being in the vicinity of 0.8 mile. There is one passing loop about halfway along, but this is not protected by colour lights. On occasions, a telephone is used to supervise safe-working, but this is not often as one car at a time is all that is usually operated.

Patronage is good. While we were there, a second car was run out for our benefit and passengers had to be turned away. A common practice is for one member of a family group to drive along the road beside the tram to pick up 'mum and the kids' at the end of the ride and then to continue to wherever they were going. The whole length of the track is in a side of the road reservation with bracket arm suspension of overhead.