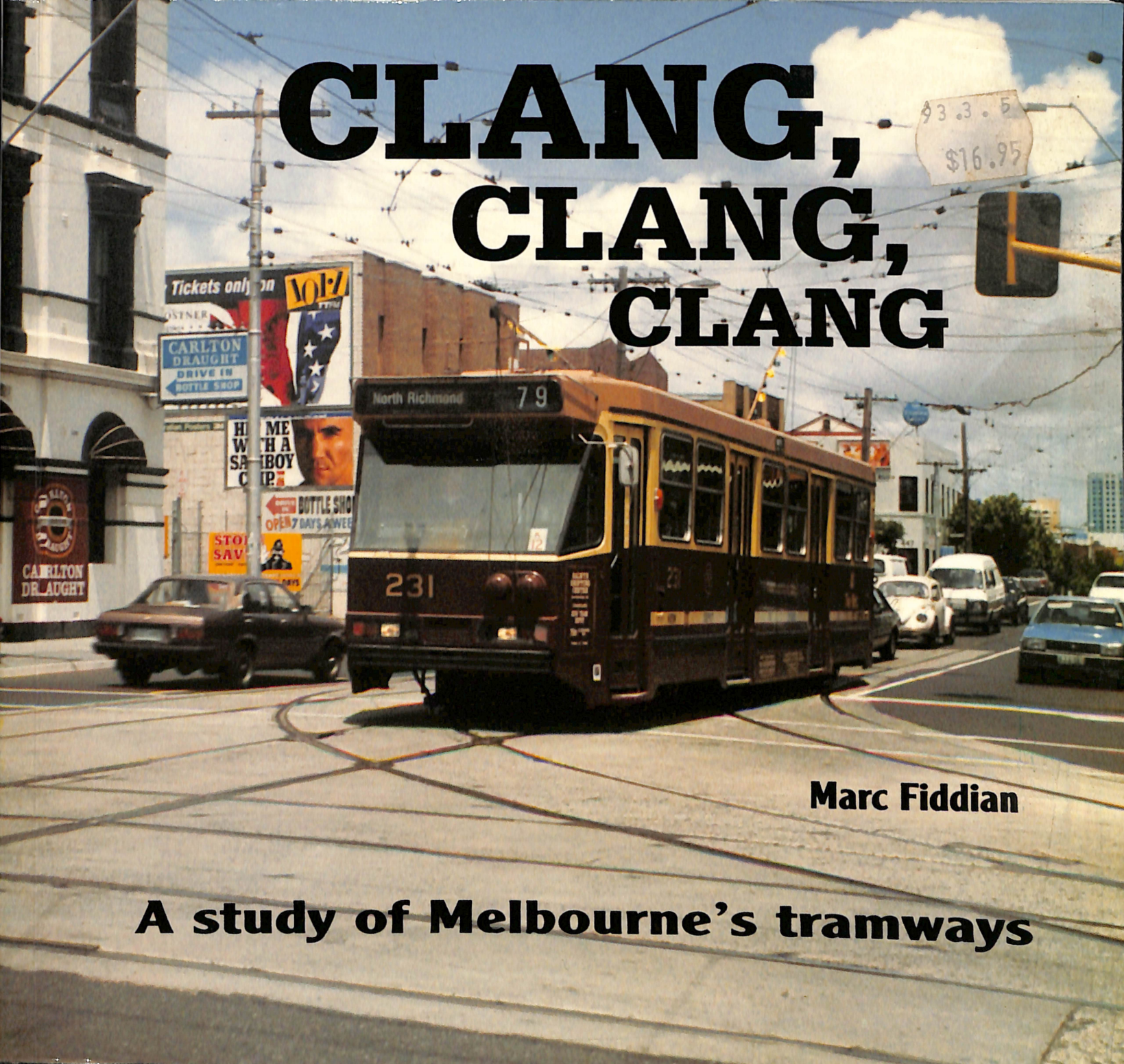


# CLANG, CLANG, CLANG

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**Marc Fiddian**

**A study of Melbourne's tramways**

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# **CLANG, CLANG, CLANG**

**A study of Melbourne's tramways**

**Marc Fiddian**

*FRONT COVER: Repainted chocolate brown and cream—the colors used by the Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust and by the MMTB in its early years—to mark the 75th anniversary of the Mont Albert line in 1991, car No 231 was running on the North Richmond route when sighted at the corner of Church St. and Swan St., Richmond on Sunday, January 5, 1992.*

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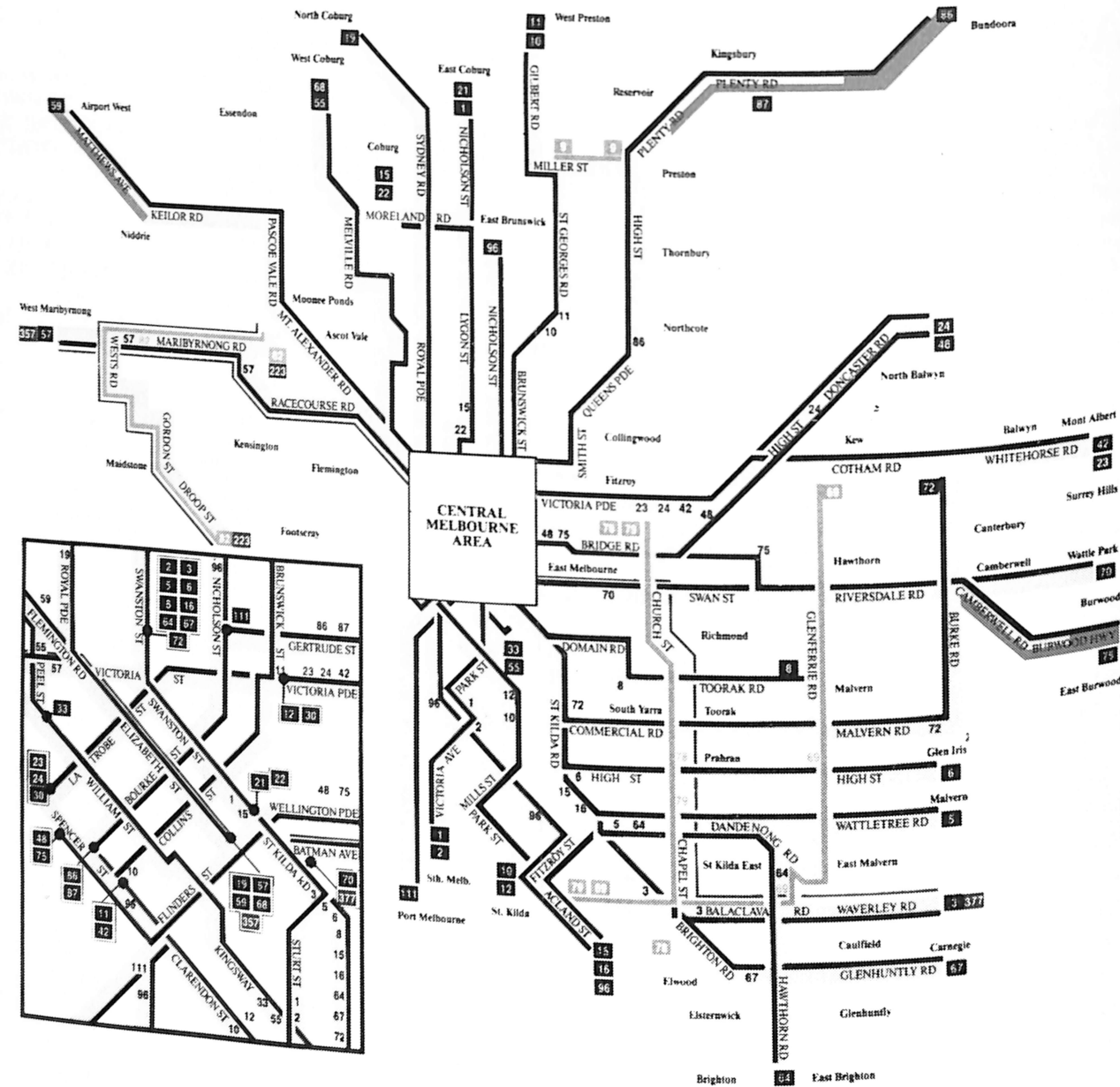
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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**D**IFFERENT people have different memories of trams. The ones that are strongest are generally those involving a degree of embarrassment or disappointment. There are recollections of catching the wrong tram and the difficulties this caused or missing the tram you wanted and its repercussions. Other people recall a personal mishap, such as a fall or tearing a piece of clothing, or being on a crowded vehicle and unable to move away from a drunk or a lunatic. The other 99 tram trips made by these same people have passed without incident or qualm.

This writer's most vivid memory is different again. It involves a somewhat eerie incident but not without its amusing side, dating back to the winter of 1951 when less people used motor cars and more crowded on to trams. At that stage I attended a kindergarten in the morning and had the afternoon free, which meant that if my mother spent an afternoon shopping I accompanied her. On one occasion we had been to busy Camberwell and on catching the tram home in mid-afternoon had to stand because there were no spare seats. We stood in the middle section of the vehicle, which was no great discomfort, but as the tram became crowded I became all but covered in a thicket of overcoats. All I could see were overcoats and, at ground level, women's shoes. My mother grasped my hand to reassure me that she was still there and at one stage a woman said thoughtfully to the other passengers: "Be careful where you stand, there's a little boy somewhere down there." While it seemed an eternity before I again saw daylight and Riversdale Rd., it was probably no more than five or six minutes before the area cleared. Such an experience could only happen to little folk, but from memory there was something wonderfully maternal about being wedged in among all those female overcoats.



Melbourne's tram network.

## INTRODUCTION

MASS movement of people in cities has been a major concern for more than a century. Governments and municipal councils have wrestled with the problems encountered in taking the public to work or play as industries embracing trams, trains and buses have been developed to meet those needs. One form of public transport has tended to supersede another and the huge increase in car ownership in the second half of the 20th century has undermined and, particularly in the United States, wrecked systems that had earlier existed.

Melbourne is one of the few world cities to retain a network of tramways. Not only have the Melbourne tram routes remained basically intact since the 1940s, they may be extended to help ease the transport problems of the metropolis.

The nature of the Melbourne tramway system has changed vastly since it was started in the 1880s. At first the trams were powered by a moving cable, set underground and gripped by the tram for propulsion. The system served the city with general satisfaction until transcended by electric traction. As the cable routes were phased out, more electric trams were pressed into service and the prototype of the 1920s served for many years. More recently the standard electric cars have begun to be replaced by light rail vehicles and the two oldest railways in Melbourne—the Port Melbourne and St Kilda lines—have been replaced by trams.

Trams are as much a part of Melbourne as Collins St. or the Princess Theatre. While they fascinate some tourists they are a necessity to public transport patrons. One major weakness with living in an outer Melbourne suburb is the absence of trams, but possible extensions to Knox and South Morang would change this aspect of life. Melbourne trams have a secure place in history and their future seems equally firm.