

## Coopers History of Malvern

### Chapter 17

#### Railways & Tramways

(In part)

### **Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust ( P&MTT )**

The Malvern Council was the first municipal body in Australia to construct municipal electric tramways. The Council was the master in the movement, and it interested neighbouring municipalities in its progressive proposals. Year after year had passed during which antiquated, cumbersome buses, drawn by horses, had run from the Prahran Town Hall along High Street to the Malvern Town Hall, each passenger's fare for the journey being threepence. When Parliament passed "The Tramways Enabling Bill," it was expected by the Malvern Council that the service of buses would be replaced by a tramway, but the Melbourne Omnibus and Tramway Company did not install a tramway service.

From 1891 to 1907 no new tramway were laid down. From the beginning Malvern had been ignored. The company commenced to run a line of buses between Prahran and Malvern. In 1889 the cable tramway was placed in Chapel Street, Prahran, one of the chosen places within the inner circle for tram connections. It seemed at the time to be simple to extend from Chapel Street trunk line a tramway spur line to Malvern, but the company, though asked, did not do so.

In December, 1891, when the Malvern Council succeeded in getting the "Amending Tramway Act" passed in Parliament, the prospect of a municipal tramway at Malvern was so remote that the Act did not create alarm in Government circles nor interest the Victorian Railways Commissioners. The Melbourne Tramways and Omnibus Company had its Malvern line of buses running, but the returns from them were of so little moment that the company contemplated ceasing to run the buses. Certainly the company's receipts were not enough to suggest that a tramway would be a profitable undertaking. In 1895 the Malvern Council asked the Melbourne Omnibus and Tramway Company to commence a service of cars from Chapel Street to the Malvern Town Hall. Electricity was suggested as the motive power. The company declined to do so. The Malvern Council's proposal was said to be altogether too progressive for the times. The constructive tramway proposal were revived by the Malvern Council in 1902, and again in 1903. In 1904 the Council waited on the Premier, Thomas Bent, and suggested to him that the Government should build a tramway line from Prahran to Malvern. People numbering 35,000 had their dwellings within a radius of half a mile from the proposed tramway line along High Street. The Premier referred the question to the Railways Standing Committee. After an exhaustive inquiry, that Committee recommended that the route should be tested by motor buses run by the Railways. The buses were put on the road in December. They were run for six months, but the public, lacking motor car sense in those days, was shy of using them. It was said in Parliament that the buses "shook the teeth out of the

passengers, and they shook the foundations out of the road, and that was all the satisfaction that was ever got from the motor buses." Nevertheless the Malvern Council made an effort to persuade the Railway Commissioners to keep the buses running, but the Commissioners in June 1906, said their decision was irrevocable. The buses, they asserted, owing to the condition of running, did not pay, and the roads were unsuitable.

The agitations for and against the construction of the proposed tramways had the effect of creating contending parties of ratepayers. The Malvern Tramway League came into being to advocate views that ran counter to those held by the Malvern Council. The creation of the League provoked another section of the ratepayers to combine to support the Council. Its members called themselves "The Malvern Ratepayers Association." The members of the Malvern Tramway League proclaimed their intention to make the tramway section the issue to be decided at the annual municipal elections to be held on August 23, 1906.

Two thousand people, it was estimated, gathered in front of the Malvern Town Hall to hear the declaration of the poll. The result of the Prahran municipal elections showed a majority in favour of the Malvern to Prahran Tramway as proposed in the Malvern Council's scheme and agreed to by the Prahran Council.

Councillor Alexander Cameron, a lawyer, who was taking a keen interest in the tramway question and studying the legal aspect of the tramway from all angles, moved in the Malvern Council an important active amendment in substitution of a passive marking time motion. The amendment, which was carried, was :-

"That the City of Prahran be requested to Join the Council in conference to further discuss the question of improving the means of intercourse between the two municipalities, and that the respective mayors and two councillors from each municipalities be appointed to attend such conference."

This amendment foreshadowed that at last the preliminary work of the Malvern Council was beginning to show the promise of some results from the many abortive meetings of the Prahran and Malvern municipal delegates' conferences. Much talk had been indulged in at these conferences, especially by the Prahran Council's representatives. Whenever any attempt was made by the delegates from Malvern to pin the Prahran Council to a decision leading to the construction of the tramways, the Prahran councillors said "This," or "That," as the case might be, "is too important to be decided now. Let us postpone the consideration of the question until our next meeting." The next meeting was as fruitless as the one before it.

The postponements annoyed the Malvern councillors, who decided to finalise the tramways question. Months and months passed, during which the Prahran Council could not be pinned to any decision. At one time the Prahran Council even proposed to desert the Malvern Council, and contemplated having a tramway of its own made along High Street to Boundary Road, which was the boundary line between Malvern and Prahran, and

already received two pounds eight shillings a week, were awarded bonuses in lieu of definite advances.

The lines opened for traffic were seven. 12.8 miles of single track, route mileage 4.507, of which 1.855 was single, and 2.622 miles were double track.

The cost of the electric tramway to Malvern and Prahran municipalities was given as :  
Cost double track to Malvern Council, 23,400 pounds; to Prahran 14,000 pounds.  
Malvern for overhead work, 2,600 pounds, Prahran for like, 2,900 pounds.  
Cables, Power House etc 15,840 pounds, Prahran, and 17,120 pounds Malvern.  
Total cost, 76,000 pounds, exclusive of a further 4,5000 pounds for alterations to gas mains, water mains and sewers. The Councils promised a five minute service in busy hours, and ten minutes in slack hours. The first peg of the tramway line was driven into the ground on November 3, 1909, and the work of construction was finished May 31 1910.

**The opening ceremony took place on May 30, 1910, in the presence of a crowd estimated at 1,500, who saw the first cars come out of the barn at Coldblo Road.**

The extension of the Trust's lines was determined on in September, 1911.

A reconstruction of the Trust took place in November, and the Trust was then composed of the Chairman, A Cameron, and one representative from the Prahran, Malvern, St Kilda and Caulfield Councils, with H.S. Dix in the position of Engineer and Manager. A Bill was passed to extend the Trust's borrowing powers to 500,000 pounds, and debentures to the value of 195,000 pounds were bought from the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Co

The Dandenong Road tramway line was opened for traffic on December 16, 1911.

The extension of the High Street line to St Kilda Road was opened on September 14 1912

The Balaclava Road extension on April 12, 1912.

The extension to Kew, September 30, 1913.

The Caulfield extension, south of Balaclava Road on November 30, 1913.

On September 30, 1914 the High Street line from the Malvern Town Hall to about 1,000 feet east of Tooronga Road, and was extended thence to Lower Malvern Road.

The expansion of the tramway system, St Kilda Road to Gardiner, was accomplished on April 10, 1915.

The councils desired the Government to bring a Municipal Tramways Trust Bill on the lines of the Bill that lay stranded in the Legislative Council since 1913. The Government, instead of granting the request, launched the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Bill, and had it passed into an Act on January 7, 1919. Under this Act there was an end made to the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust, and to every one of the Tramway Trust that owed its birth to the original enterprise of the Malvern Council. The Act brought the cable and municipal electric tramways in the metropolis under the control of a new board, consisting of seven members appointed by the Governor-in-Council. The value of the works, and undertakings, transferred by the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board, in February, 1920, was 851,998 pounds.

### **The Routes.**

- 1.) Commencing at the centre of the intersection of Kooyong or Boundary Roads and High Street; thence easterly along High Street to Tooronga Road.
- 2.) Commencing at the intersection of High Street and Tooronga Road , thence easterly along High Street to Burke Road.
- 3.) Commencing at the intersection of High Street and Glenferrie Road, thence southerly along Glenferrie Road to Wattle Tree Road.
- 4.) Commencing at the intersection of Wattle Tree Road and Glenferrie Road, thence along Wattle Tree Road to Tooronga Road
- 5.) Commencing at the intersection of Wattle Tree Road and Tooronga Road, thence easterly along Wattle Tree Road to Burke Road.
- 6.) Commencing at the intersection of High Street and Glenferrie Road, thence northerly along Glenferrie Road to the south side of the Glen Iris Railway.
- 7.) Commencing at the intersection of Glenferrie Road and Wattle Tree Road, thence westerly along Wattle Tree Road to Kooyong or Boundary Road.
- 8.) Commencing at the intersection of Glenferrie Road and Wattle Tree Road, thence southerly along Glenferrie Road to Dandenong Road.

In September the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust issued its first annual report, covering the period since the lines opened on **May 30, 1910.**

**The report showed that the Trust had made a profit of 1,174 pounds in four months.**

The total revenue was 7,153 pounds, and the expenditure 5,978 pounds. The number of car miles run during the four months was 141,131, and the number of passengers carried 974,352. The number of passengers per car mile was 6,903, the rates of passengers carried on penny tickets was 54 per cent, and on the 2d, 3d, and 4d tickets 28, 14, and 4 per cent respectively.

### **THE TRAMWAY WAS A SUCCESS.**

**The Malvern Council was justified in its faith. Everybody benefited. The ratepayers and the general public were well satisfied.**

The councils looked forward to profits, all to be expended in the interests of the municipalities of Malvern and Prahran. In December the employees of the Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust shared in the success of the lines. The wages of the conductors were increased from two pound five shillings per week to two pound eight shillings for 96 hours a fortnight, or at the rate of one shilling per hour, while the motor men, who

clause also provided that in case of any dispute the dispute was to be settled by the Lands Compensation Act, 1890.

This clause was approved by the Premier, but Mr. Bayles sought to have the clause modified. He said that the position the Malvern Council took up was that if the undertaking lost money for some time the Government perhaps, when things were commencing to improve, might want to take the tramway over. The Council thought that the arbitrator who would settle the value, should take into consideration the amount which had been paid for the undertaking. **Premier Bent would not accept the proposal, insisting upon his pound of flesh.**

On October 7, 1907, the Council passed an appreciative motion of the “great services” **Councillor Alexander Cameron** had given in connection with the Prahran-Malvern tramway scheme. **On December 16, 1907, Councillor Cameron informed the Council that the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust Constitution Bill had passed both Houses of Parliament. He explained to the Councillors how the bill had been loaded with restrictive conditions, and how also the Government has shackled the enterprise of the Council.**

**On February 3, 1908, the Malvern Council elected Councillors Cameron and Knox as members of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust, under the provision of Act No. 2130, at a salary of seventy five pounds per year. In the following month, March 16, the Council passed a motion, “That Mr. Alexander Cameron be elected Chairman of the Prahran-Malvern Tramways Trust, in accordance with the provisions of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust Act 1907, No. 2130.**

Councillor Cameron had resigned his seat as a councillor for the South Ward of the Town of Malvern six days prior to this appointment. On April 6 the Prahran Council informed the Malvern Council that it had also elected Mr. Cameron to the position of the Chairman of the Municipal Tramways Trust. Though there were two other candidates for the position who were members of the Prahran Council, the majority of the Prahran Council thought that as Malvern Council was the real author of the tramways, that with equal representation, the Malvern Council should be paid the compliment of electing from its members the first Chairman of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Board.

Under the order of the Executive Council dated July 6, 1908, The Malvern Council was authorised to construct the following tramways in the municipal district of the Town of Malvern :-

agents for the owning councils may not sell at reduced rates through tickets for train and tram, and it may not enter into any arrangements whatever for transfers to trains or omnibuses of the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company or of any other proprietary." Pull rates had also to be charged, with the result that it would cost sixpence to travel into town from the Glenferrie Road by the new tram connecting with Chapel Street instead of five pence which was paid for bus and tram over the route. The first class return ticket on the railways, Malvern to Melbourne was eight pence. The Tramway Trust had to concede concessions in fares to the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company, yet the Trust could not issue concessional workmen's tickets.

**The working hours of the tramway employees were fixed at the lowest number of any working hours of tramway men in Australia, and the wages were specified, regardless of the Trust's opinions.** In opposition in Parliament to the Hours and Wages clauses, it was argued that it was an extraordinary thing that the rates of wages for the different classes should be fixed by an Act of Parliament, and that it was an entirely new departure.

It was not considered wise by the councils to irritate the Government (Bent) or to let go of the Order-in-Council with the risk of losing it. That loss could easily have happened, since the Council was at the mercy of Premier Bent. A safe procedure was followed when a motion was carried to refer the Order-in-Council to the consideration of the members of the Tramway Trust, with the suggestion that the Trust draw up amendments thereon for submission to the respective councils. These well-considered amendments were to be adopted by the Council if they thought fit to do so, prior to a deputation waiting upon the Government asking for modifications of the Order. If the deputation waited on Bent, it was one among many deputations that did so over the tramway question. His mind was made up, and no deputation to him apparently affected his stubborn decisions.

**The Municipal Tramways' Bill was called the Prahran and Malvern Tramways' Trust Constitution Bill. The object of the Bill was to confirm an agreement between the City of Prahran's Council and the Town of Malvern's Council, and also provide for the constitution of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust.**

The Councils of Malvern and Prahran desired to obtain the power to form a trust for the construction of a tramway with the rights to borrow up to 100,000 pounds.

When the Bill came before the Legislative Assembly Premier Bent said he would not allow the Bill to pass until a clause was inserted giving the Government the power he demanded to purchase the municipal tramways. The sponsor of the Bill, Mr. William Bayles, member for Toorak electorate (which included Malvern) found himself confronted with the alternatives of agreeing to Bent's demand, or losing the Bill. He had to submit to the terms imposed by the Government. A clause was thereupon drafted stating that it was lawful for the board of Land and Works, if they thought fit on behalf of the Government of Victoria, to purchase at any time upon giving twelve months notice in writing of the intension so to do, the undertakings of the Trust and all lands, buildings, works, rolling stock, and plant of and belonging to the trust upon such terms, etc., and the

Malvern Council had overcome the weakness of the Prahran Council, and the two councils for the purpose of promoting a municipal tramway had amalgamated. The Government had failed to clip the financial wings of the two councils by its demand of 13,000 pounds, nor had it deterred the Malvern Council by restrictive clauses in the Order-in-Council.

**The hostility the Bent displayed towards the Malvern Council while the Council was endeavouring to create the first municipal tramways was unprecedented on the part of a State Government.** Bent protested that he did not desire to act as “a dog in the manger,” but he protested overmuch. He affirmed that he had always been against the tramways taking the traffic from the railways. When the Melbourne Tramway Company came into existence, he said, to quote his own words, that he “did not believe in spewing passengers off the railways on to the trams.” So far as the Malvern Tramway was concerned he asserted that he would “take good care” the Government had the power to purchase the line, and that the material used in its construction was of the best quality. If the Government had had 100,000 pounds he would not allow the councils to build the tramway lines.

The Government held supervisory authority over municipal tramway-construction for the purpose of checking any reckless or unprofitable tramways undertakings by councils, and also it was the Government's duty to see that any tramways that were permitted were to be fashioned in such a way that the safety of the travelling public would not be endangered. The authority was intended as a general protection in all ways to the public, but when the draft Order-in-Council was perused it was seen that the Government was using it directly to the disadvantage of the Malvern and Prahran Councils. When the order for construction of the tramway was lodged with Bent, he declared he would not sign it unless the Malvern Council paid the 13,000 pounds for regrading the railway. Three months afterwards the Council informed him that the sum of 13,000 pounds would be paid. Still he declined to sign the order, and continued to do so for another twelve months. His autocratic demands were not contemplated by the Tramway Act, 1890. Such conditions as Bent imposed had not been made by any Government in any order authorising the construction of tramways in Victoria. Bent was told that the power given by the consent of the Governor-in-Council permitted the Malvern Council to construct the tramway. He admitted that was so “in a way”. The Malvern Council had foreseen that if the tramways were to be a success that the Prahran Council would have to join in the undertaking, and a trust be formed. An Act of Parliament was necessary to create the trust. Bent could stop the passage of the proposed Municipal Tramways Bill. That power was the Ministerial lever that he used to enforce conditions unfair to the contracting councils. Bent, as Premier, had so expanded his powers that he was as masterful as a State Caesar. The councils could only appeal from Caesar to Caesar, while Bent held a majority vote in Parliament. The councillors were indignant at the way Bent was interfering with municipal enterprise.

The draft Order-in-Council seemed to have been expressly framed to make the new tramway as unpopular as possible. Such conditions, for instance as these, the “Trust as

Boundary Road was to have been the tramway's terminus. The Malvern Council protested most strongly to Premier Bent, absolutely objecting to the limited use of a main arterial road such as High Street by the Prahran Council for a tramway of such parochial character. If there was to be a municipal tramway in High Street, Malvern Council required that the line should serve the traffic for the whole length of High Street, and the cross sectional streets appurtenant to High Street. Premier Bent declared he would not allow any Bill to pass through Parliament to construct tramways with such limited range, and of such a parochial character. A coolness ensued between the Prahran and Malvern Councils, and the old tune of "Mark time Delay" continued to play on and on. During the hours of delay the Prahran Council delegates were not altogether free from shadow of civic jealousy, arising from the fact that it was Malvern, and not Prahran Council, which was pioneering the way to the construction of the first municipal tramway in Australia. On the other hand, the Joint Malvern and Prahran conferences of municipal delegates assumed powers quite beyond the charter of their delegates.

Then it was **Councillor Alexander Cameron** who led the way to businesslike methods.

To facilitate that business should proceed on proper lines, Councillor Cameron drew up four motions, which on the day of the meeting, he circulated among the councillors of Prahran and Malvern. At the meeting the Prahran Council charged the Malvern Council with having motions "cut and dried," whereupon Councillor Cameron explained that the Malvern Council had not taken any part in drafting them, or in submitting them. The Prahran Council accepted the first two motions that really meant the construction of the tramways, and it objected to the last two motions that were purely machinery motions to enable the first two to be carried out. This had to be explained at length to avoid an adjournment to consider the question. Fortunately the Malvern Council coaxed the Prahran Council over the fences; its members saw the real and imaginary ones, and persuaded the Prahran Council to agree to both councils asking control and management of the proposed tramways when constructed. A deputation, consisting of members of both councils, waited on the Premier, the Hon. Thomas Bent, who was asked in November by the Malvern Council to have the Tramways Bill drawn up by the Parliamentary draftsman. He refused to allow the Council to have the assistance of the Parliamentary draftsman. He told the Council that it had better employ its own solicitor to draft the Bill. When its solicitor did so, Bent said the draft Bill would be submitted for revision to the Parliamentary draftsman. He refused, when requested, to make the proposed Bill a Government measure. Bent was informed that the councils were willing to pay 13,000 pounds he demanded for regrading the railway line between Toorak and Caulfield. When Bent looked at the clauses in the tramway proposals he stated that he noticed that someone was to receive a salary of 5 pounds per week as Chairman of the Trust!

These activities on the part of the councils caused the authorities to realise that the Malvern Council had determined to have a municipal electric tramway regardless of the Melbourne Tramways Trust, the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company, the Victorian Railway Commissioners, and the hostility of the Bent Government, represented by Bent.



## **A Closure - But A New Beginning.**

The Government recognised the ability of the Prahran and Malvern Tramway Trust's chairman, the ex-councillor of Malvern, **Mr Alexander Cameron**, who had become chairman of the amalgamated municipal tramways trust. He resigned that position on October 31, 1919, and he was gazetted the Chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Board.

The action of the Government in depriving Malvern of its municipal tramway was an act that left the Malvern Councillors feeling very sore over what they had every reason to regard as an act of injustice.

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board was incorporated under the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act 1918. The Board was appointed for the administration of the Cable and Electric Tramways. The Board assumed control of the Metropolitan Cable Tramways on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1919, and the municipal Electric Tramways of the Prahran and Malvern, Hawthorn, Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg, Fitzroy, Northcote and Preston and Footscray Tramways Trusts; and Cable Tramway of the Northcote Council taken over by the Board from February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1920..

*As first appointed Chairman of the Prahran and Malvern Tramway Trust, **Mr Alexander Cameron** became the first appointed Chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board, for both cable and electric traction. Under Cameron's guidance the Tramways Board was to bring these under a single control, extend the electric lines, and convert the existing cable system to electric traction.*

*In March 1923 Cameron went abroad to investigate traffic problems; he returned next year confirmed in his long held opinion that electric trams were superior to buses and that overhead wires were preferable to the underground conduit system.*

*Cameron's term of office was originally five years. The structure of the Board was then to be reviewed, but this was continually postponed and Cameron's term extended. Finally on December 18, 1935, reconstruction was announced and at the same time Cameron's retirement. He first read of this decision in the press and the members of the Board protested at the grave discourtesy shown to him; they paid tribute to him when he chaired his last meeting on December 19.*

***Cameron was known for his friendliness, and his enthusiastic dedication to his work. 'He talks and thinks trams', wrote an interviewer in 1928.***

***He died of cancer at his home in South Yarra on February 1940.***