

LOOKING BACK IN TIME

The recent publication on Melbourne's Cable Trams, "Mind The Curve", has had the effect of stimulating interest into Melbourne's past transportation history. While the Cable Trams helped to make this city what it is today, I would like to take readers further back to the days of the Horse Buses, and then on to the Cable Trams.

First, a look at the timetables issued in those early days by the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company Ltd., which was formed in 1868. The first service commenced operations on March 23rd, 1869 with a service of 11 horse buses, from Bourke St. to the Birmingham Hotel, at the corner of Smith and Johnson Streets, Fitzroy.

Timetables, dating from 1885, still exist. We will start in Malvern, which was an important place in Australian Transport history as it saw operation of the first municipal electric tramway in Australia.

Most timetables in those days carried advertisements. One for the High Street line was paid for by a Mr. Holdsworth, a dentist, who had a clinic opposite the Town Hall, Prahran. His advert tells us what good dentures he produced! The date of the timetable was January 1887 and the service ran from Prahran Town Hall to Malvern Shire Hall with a connection at the Prahran Town Hall with the Prahran line to Melbourne. This timetable is one of the few horse bus timetables that quotes actual running times. From Prahran it was an 8 minute run to Orrong Road and 13 minutes to Malvern Shire Hall. There were no transfers to other lines. The hours of operation reflect the differing social pattern of life then. The first horse bus from Prahran being at 7.30a.m. on weekdays and Saturdays and at 1.30p.m. on Sundays. In the reverse direction the times were at 7.57a.m. and 1.57p.m. respectively. Last buses were from Prahran at 11p.m. on weekdays, 11.10p.m. Saturdays and 10.40p.m. on Sundays, and from Malvern at 11.27p.m., 11.37p.m. and 11.7p.m. on the respective days. Special services were operated on holidays but these must be recorded elsewhere. The fare charged, for this route, was 3d all the way and the service had an average frequency of 25 minutes.

Another timetable for this line appeared in November, 1888. The service had now been improved with the first bus from Prahran being at 7.15a.m. on weekdays and Saturdays. The Sunday service was unchanged. Last buses were at 11.10p.m. weekdays and Saturdays from Prahran and at 11.37p.m. from Malvern. Sunday service, again, was unchanged. The weekday service had been increased to approximately every 15 minutes.

Also listed in the 1888 timetable was a line which ran from Prahran to Malvern via Commercial Road. It only operated 19 trips each way at infrequent intervals, the first, from Prahran, being at 7.35a.m. on weekdays and

Saturdays and at 1.35p.m. on Sundays. From Malvern starting times were at 8.5a.m. weekdays, 2.5p.m. Sundays. Last buses ran at 10.45p.m. from Prahran and 11.12p.m. from Malvern on weekdays, and at 10p.m. from Prahran and 10.27p.m. from Malvern on the Sunday.

At the corner of Wellington and Chapel Streets, Prahran, another line operated down to St. Kilda, terminating at the corner of Barkly and Acland Streets. Passengers transferred to and from the Prahran Town Hall by the Prahran line. The company only undertook to transfer passengers if there was room on the buses. Transfer tickets had to be obtained from the driver unless the omnibuses connected and the tickets then issued were for immediate use. The service for weekdays, at December 1st, 1887 was roughly every 20 minutes. First buses from St. Kilda were at 8a.m. on at 2.5p.m. on Sundays; last ones ran at 10.45p.m. and 11.5p.m. From Windsor the times were at 8.20a.m. weekdays and Saturdays, 1.45p.m. on Sundays, last buses at 11.5p.m. and 10.45p.m. on Sundays. The flat fare was 3d. Unfortunately, no running times are given or intermediate points listed. Mr. Holdsworth and his dentures feature on this timetable, too, by the way.

Now, from Holdsworth, the dentist, to F. Barnard, the druggist whose premises were opposite the Kew Post Office. In addition to being a chemist, he was also the local registrar for Births and Deaths and dispensed horse and cattle medicines too. The "Kew Line" ran from the corner of Union Street and Bullizen Road to Hawthorn Bridge. This line connected at Hawthorn Bridge with the Richmond cable route to Melbourne. The service operated every 10 minutes. First buses from Kew on weekdays and Saturdays were at 8.5a.m. and on Sundays at 1.50p.m. From Hawthorn Bridge, times were at 7.46a.m. and 1.30p.m. respectively. Last buses were from Kew at 12.21a.m. on weekdays, 10.40p.m. on Saturdays and 9.10p.m. on Sundays. From the Bridge, last buses ran at 12.2a.m., midnight, and 10.30p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays in very fine weather, the services would be operated at shorter intervals and in wet weather at longer intervals than listed. The fare was again 3d and no transfers, at this time, ¹⁸⁸⁶were operated between this line and any other. The fares were paid on each bus. After 7.10a.m. on weekdays and 2.10p.m. on Sundays, the tramcars on the Richmond line left Spencer Street 40 minutes before the time listed on the timetable at Hawthorn Bridge to connect with the horse bus at Hawthorn Bridge for Kew.

Moonee Ponds is our next port of call. This line ran from Moonee Ponds via Flemington, Ascot Vale, to the foot of Elizabeth Street. The timetable for this line is interesting for quite a few reasons. It is the oldest one, so far, dating from 1st April, 1885. The fare structure differs from those already mentioned in that the line had two sections as opposed to the 3d flat fare charged on the other lines. From Moonee Ponds to the Hotham Bus Stand the fare was 3d. and from there to the city, also 3d. For the whole or any other part of the route, the fare was 6d. Passengers could, however, buy three tickets for 1/-, the first example of concession fares quoted. The starting and finishing times of this service were similar to those mentioned earlier; headways varied from 20 to 30 minutes. Passengers were exhorted to support private enterprise in the form of one, Charles Pattison, the Moonee Ponds store keeper, who, like Mr. Barnard, appears to have been a versatile gentleman,

being a wholesale and retail grocer as well as a draperer.

The timetable for Northcote is an uninteresting bit of cardboard. It carried no adverts, the only one, so far, not to do so. This line ran from Northcote to Northcote Bridge with a connection to the Clifton Hill line which ran to Melbourne. The service was increased, or decreased, according to weather conditions. Headways were either 15 or 30 minutes depending on the time of day. The date of this timetable is 1st July 1885 and concessions were carried still further with 12 rides for 2/9d; the normal fare being 3d, with no other line transfers. This concession appears on later timetables for some other routes; e.g. Toorak, in October, 1889, but not on any of the earlier ones.

The first of the Toorak route timetables carries no date apart from a nice ink script on the top reading: "About 25th May, 1889". The line ran from Toorak via South Yarra Station to Princes Bridge with a good service, in those days, of about 10 minutes. The time at the intermediate point of South Yarra Station is given and so it is possible to work out the running times for this line: Princes Bridge - South Yarra Station, 20 minutes, South Yarra - Toorak, 21 minutes. Adverts for Glen Whisky, Ceylon Tea and Cigarettes adorn this timetable.

This, then, shows what the first of the early timetables, prior to 1890, reveal. As time moved on the city transport scene got more interesting. In the future, we will look at excerpts of the "Bradshaw's Guide to Victoria 1890", which shows visitors to the city, at that time, what the city had to offer in the way of public transport. This gives us a more interesting picture since it shows transport in the city as a whole, not just that offered by one company, as we have seen so far.

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