

Carlton Community History Group

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 3

October 2016

Trams in Carlton

In this issue of the Newsletter we highlight the early days of transport in Carlton and in particular trams. There are articles on the horse-drawn tram that used to run through Royal Park to the Zoo, shown in the top picture at right, and the cable trams that serviced Carlton. During the early decades of the 20th century, the cable trams were gradually replaced by electric trams. The lower photo at right shows an early type of electric tram used in Melbourne, the so-called W2 Class, and parked on the right a motor bus of the type used in Melbourne at that time.



A horse drawn tram in Royal Park, sometime around 1910 or 1920
(Photo: Coburg Historical Society)

Also in this issue are details of forthcoming history-related events, including the talks that we have coming up in November and December (see page 3), and details of the historical walks that we run in conjunction with the Princes Hill Community Centre (page 2).

If you would like to receive this Newsletter on a regular basis, become a member of the Carlton Community History Group, for only \$20 a year, and you will be put on the mailing list.

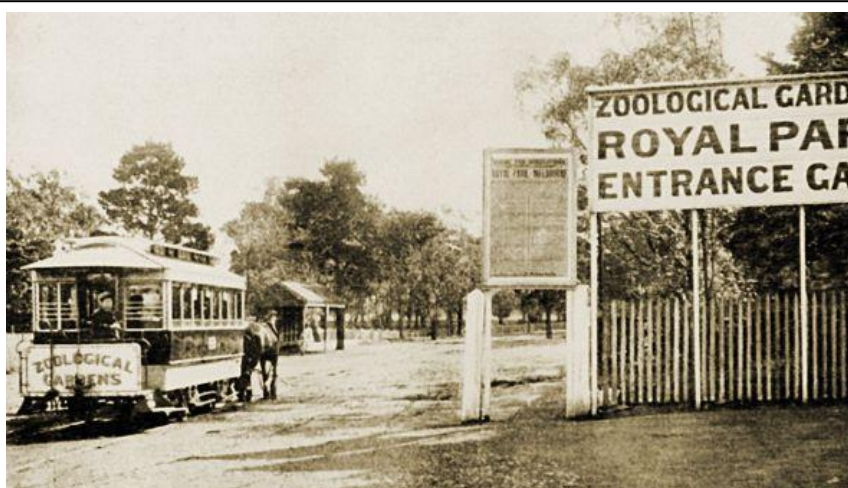


Electric trams in Swanston Street in 1926 (Photo: State Library of Vic)

Horse drawn tram to the Zoo

Melbourne's first trams were not powered by electricity, nor by a cable, but by horses. There were, from about 1870 onwards, a number of horse-drawn carriages (or 'omnibuses' as they were called) operating on Melbourne's roads. But in a few places, the horses drew a carriage with metal wheels that ran on metal rails set in the road. These were horse-drawn trams. The first of these began operating in Fairfield in 1884. The advantage of a horse-drawn tram over a horse-drawn omnibus was that its metal wheels on steel rails gave a much smoother ride than those of the omnibus on rough road surfaces.

Carlton's only horse-drawn tram was introduced in March 1890. It ran over a short one kilometre route from the corner of Royal Parade and Gatehouse Street through Royal Park to the entrance of the Zoological Gardens. The carriage shed and stables were adjacent to the entrance of the Zoo.



(Photo: Tramway Museum Society of Victoria, M G Rowe Collection)

There were no conductors on the tram and instead the driver had to collect the fares as well as driving the two-horse team. At each terminus, he had to unhitch the horses, lead them from one end of the carriage to the other, and hitch them up again.

The route was commercially successful, but during the Victoria Police strike in November 1923 the sheds and stables were burnt to the ground by rioters and the trams destroyed. All the horses managed to escape. But the route was never reopened.

Historical Walks in Carlton

Presented by Carlton Community History Group and Princes Hill Community Centre.

Historic Carlton Walk

Saturday 22 October 2016, 10am to 12 noon.

Walk through the historic and interesting streets of Carlton to find remnants of the 1860s before the era of the cast iron terraces, and learn something of Carlton's most notorious crimes, notable migrants, and more recent public controversies.

Starts at Church of All Nations, corner Palmerston and Drummond Streets, Carlton.

Bookings: phone: 9387 7740, or email: enquiries@princeshill.org.au Cost \$10.

Melbourne General Cemetery Walk

Saturday 12 November 2016, 10am to 12 noon.

Explore and learn about some of the interesting or notorious characters who are buried in the oldest and most historic of Melbourne's existing cemeteries.

Starts at Princes Hill Community Centre, rear 270 Macpherson Street, Princes Hill.

Bookings: phone: 9387 7740, or email: enquiries@princeshill.org.au Cost \$10.

Carlton Community History Group

Talks on Carlton's History

7.30 pm in the Meeting Room, First Floor,
Carlton Library, 667 Rathdowne Street, Carlton North.

Monday 7 November 2016

Mary Sheehan –*Carlton: from slum to sought-after location.*

Mary Sheehan is a professional historian who has lived in Carlton for nearly 20 years. In the early twentieth century Carlton was considered a slum and school children were advised to 'get out as soon as [they] could'. But by the second half of the century these same children, now grown-up, could not afford to buy housing in the area. This transition from slum to desirable location will be examined through the experience of one person born and raised in Carlton, who spent his entire working life in the area.

Monday 5 December 2016

Gemma Di Bari - *Bridging a gap in the Italian community of Carlton, through print, advertising and 'un buon caffè'.*

Gemma Di Bari is a teacher whose family settled in Carlton as part of post war Italian migration. Her talk will focus on 3 men who made a contribution to Carlton and the Italian community: Giancarlo Caprioli of Università Cafe, Rolando Di Bari, advertising manager of Il Globo in the 1980s and Ubaldo Larobina who was the founder of Il Globo.

Cable trams in Carlton

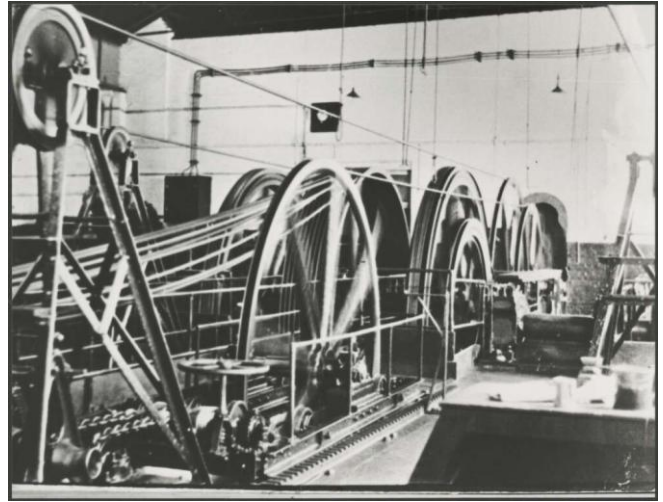
Before electric trams were introduced in Melbourne in the early 20th century, the city had an extensive system of steam-powered cable trams. Operating from 1885 until 1940, Melbourne's cable tram system was the fourth largest in the world, with about 75 kilometres of track, 17 inner-suburban routes, and 600 cable car and trailer sets. By 1916, these trams were carrying more than one hundred million passengers a year to and from the inner and middle suburbs, at speeds averaging 15 kilometres an hour, including stops.

Cable trams depended for their motive power on a cable in a slot between the rails that was kept moving by a steam engine in an engine house along the route. In the first car (the dummy), the driver (the gripman) worked the levers that gripped the cable in the slot to make the tram move. To stop the tram, he simply let go of the cable and applied the brake. Passengers could ride in the dummy, which apart from the roof was quite open. The second car, which was enclosed, was only a trailer pulled along by the dummy.



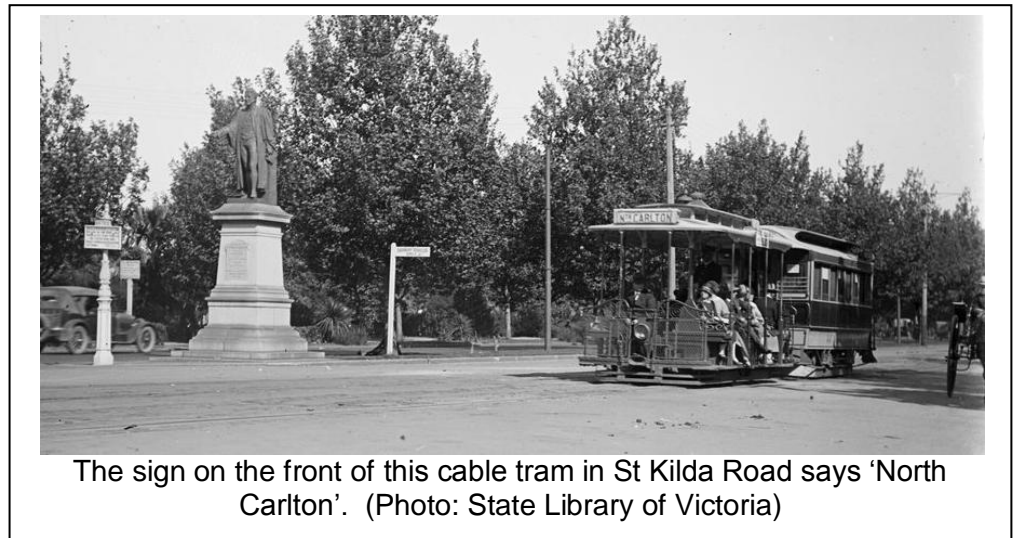
(Photo: N.J. Caire, State Library of Victoria)

At some corners the cable ran around a big pulley, and at others one cable had to be dropped and another picked up. In either case the cable had to be let go. Once the gripman dropped the cable, the tram had to rely on its momentum to keep going until it picked it up again. This was all very well as long as a pedestrian, horse or car did not wander across the tracks causing the gripman to use the brakes. Then there was only one way to get the tram going again – the passengers had to get out and push.



To avoid this, the gripman might get up as much speed and momentum as possible and hurtle around the bend. To avoid people being thrown off, he would call out: 'Mind the curve'. It did not always work. In July 1924 *The Age* reported that Mr Charles Jonah, 76, of Union Place, Carlton, failed to heed the gripman's warning and as the tram turned the corner from Rathdowne Street into Elgin Street, he fell off. He was admitted to hospital but was not seriously hurt and after treatment was discharged.

Carlton was served by cable tram routes that ran north-south along Royal Parade, parts of Lygon Street, Rathdowne Street and Nicholson Street. Rathdowne Street owes its importance as a shopping strip to the North Carlton & St. Kilda line,



The sign on the front of this cable tram in St Kilda Road says 'North Carlton'. (Photo: State Library of Victoria)

which ran down its length, from Park St to Elgin St where it did a 'dog-leg' into Lygon St, then Russell St, Lonsdale St, Swanston St, and St Kilda Road. One of the engine houses for this line was at its northern terminus on the corner of Rathdowne and Park Streets, and the building that housed it is still there, now converted to apartments.

By the 1920s, Melbourne's expanding suburbs meant that the tram network needed to be extended. But building new cable tram routes would be expensive, and electric trams provided a cheaper option. However the cable tram service along Rathdowne Street continued to run until 1936 when it was replaced by a bus. The last cable tram in Melbourne made its final run in October 1940, from Bourke Street via Nicholson Street to Northcote.

For more details and stories of Carlton's cable trams, see our website at www.cchg.asn.au

Did You Know

Paul Gauguin in Carlton

The famous French painter Paul Gauguin once spent a night in Carlton. This was in April 1891 when he was on his way to Tahiti. The ship on which he was travelling, the *Oceanien* was in Port Melbourne for a day or two and Gauguin took the opportunity to spend a day and night ashore. He apparently went to have a look at the Exhibition Building in the Carlton Gardens, and then as evening came on sought out some nearby accommodation. Someone told him about the Rose of Carlton Hotel in Palmerston Street, Carlton, and so it was there that he went - and was offered the best room in the house, the upstairs corner room. The building that was the Rose of Carlton Hotel is still there in Palmerston Street, on the corner of Canning Street. It has for some years been used as student accommodation, but on 20 August this year it was sold (for \$2.85 million) and is now awaiting development. (Source: Nerissa Greenfield).

A road through Princes Park?

In 1928 the Melbourne City Council proposed that, for the convenience of motor traffic and to provide work for the unemployed, a road should be built through Princes Park just south of the Carlton football ground, linking Macpherson Street in Princes Hill with Walker Street in Parkville. These two streets are in line with one another, but on opposite sides of the park and the proposed road would simply join them up so as to provide an alternative route for traffic moving east-west across the city. Fortunately the State Government did not approve of the idea and it never went ahead.

From The Age, Melbourne, 27 July 1925:

TRAM OUT OF CONTROL. Startling Incident at Carlton.

"A sensation was caused in Lygon street, Carlton, shortly after 1 pm on Saturday when the dynamo of an electric tram fused, and the air brake becoming affected, the car gathered speed, and got out of the control of the motorman. With flames spurting from the under carriage, the tram, which was filled with passengers, travelled at a speed of thirty miles an hour along Lygon street. The motorman made frantic attempts to bring the tram to a standstill by applying the emergency brakes, but these did not act immediately. Passengers held their breaths when the car, wreathed in smoke and flames, turned the corner of Elgin and Lygon streets at a breakneck speed. It continued up the Elgin street incline, and finally came to a standstill at Madeline street, when the motorman eventually managed to use the emergency brake. Fortunately nobody was injured".

Man Without Briefcase

by Susan Crowe

Lygon Street tram
Going home
Man gets up
Something wrong
Briefcase gone.

Man tells conductor
Conductor laughs
Conductor tells driver
Driver laughs
Passengers laugh.

Man gets off
Bewildered
Confused
Everyone laughs
Everyone except me.

Electric trams in Carlton

As Melbourne's population and suburbs grew in the early twentieth century, more tram routes were needed. But rather than extend the cable tram system, it was much cheaper and simpler to use electric trams. Instead of being drawn along by a moving underground cable, these had electric motors, which drew the power from an overhead wire.

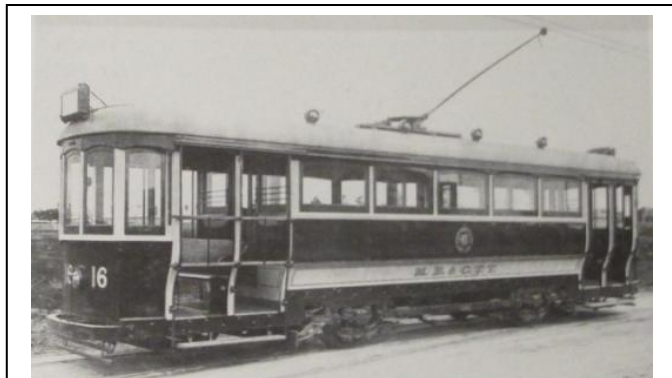
The first electric trams in Carlton were run by a private municipal body known as the Melbourne Brunswick and Coburg

Tramways Trust (MBACTT). In 1916 the MBACTT began operating a line that started at the corner of Queensberry and Swanston Streets, ran north along the top end of Swanston Street to the University, turned right into Elgin Street, then left into Lygon Street and ran north along Lygon Street. At the corner of Elgin and Lygon Streets this electric tram route touched, but did not cross, the Carlton cable tram route. The two types of trams operated together in Carlton for 20 years, the cable tram along Rathdowne Street and the electric tram along Lygon Street.

The MBACTT, along with all the other municipal tramways trusts in Melbourne, was taken over in 1920 and subsumed by the newly formed Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB). The M&MTB continued to operate the route, which eventually became what is now tram route Number 8.



An S-Class tram of the MBACTT (Photo courtesy Coburg Historical Society)



An S-Class tram of the MBACTT

Interested in local history?

Then come and join us, bring your stories and help preserve our past for the future.

Carlton Community History Group

Monday evening meetings starting at 7.30pm.

1st Floor Meeting Room, Carlton Library, 667 Rathdowne St, Carlton North VIC 3054.

Dates, topics of meetings, special events and venues are posted on our website.

Also on the noticeboards in both the Carlton Libraries
(251 Faraday St, Carlton and 667 Rathdowne St, Carlton North).

Carlton Community History Group, P.O. Box 148, Carlton North, 3054.

Email: carlton@cchq.asn.au Website: www.cchq.asn.au