

THE ROCKHAMPTON CITY TRAMWAYS

(Qld)

(by J. W. Knowles)

(Continued from Bulletin No. 442 – August, 1974)**Other Traffic Matters**

Judging from certain photographs, it would seem that the trams actually joined in certain processions along East Street, held for such events as Anzac Day and Labour Day.

During Carnival week, all available cars operated, with the extras running to and from the Show Grounds and around the city loop. During the day, they ran Post Office to Show Grounds direct, returning via Canning Street; during the evening, this routing was reversed. In 1934, a 6-minute service was provided to the Show Grounds during this busy week.

Extras were run for other special events, in East Street at the Gardens or Show Grounds. One special occasion required running two trailers behind a car to Dawson Road, two conductors aboard collected 324 fares and the rear of the tram was so weighed down that some attachments on the frame made grooves in the bitumen road!

Two trailers were sometimes taken on special runs to the Gardens. Specials to the Football Grounds, sometimes with two trailers, would go to the Show Grounds to turn and would on occasions be overtaken by regular Wandal cars while they waited there or at the Football

Grounds for their return movement.

The last tram to Wandal on Saturdays (10.40 p.m.) hauled two trailers and was preceded by the 10.40 p.m. Show Grounds with one trailer and followed by the 10.40 p.m. for Canning Street also with a trailer, a procession of seven vehicles. The remaining two trailers on the system were running to the Gardens and Dawson Road at the same time.

The 10.40 p.m. Show Grounds would be the extra having just entered traffic, and therefore colder and "shyer" for steam. If it ran low on steam, the following Wandal car would assist by pushing. One night, the driver of the front car was down to a crawl with very low steam pressure, but received no assistance, even though the following car was only about four feet behind. Back at the depot, he tackled the driver of the second car about his failure to help. "Sorry, but I couldn't catch you" was the reply.

Should this give the impression that running was generally poor, at the other extreme was the practice of crews on the last Gardens and Dawson Road trams (both 10.40 p.m.) of seeing who could be first back to the junction of the two lines on the return to the Depot. Efforts were also made to set records for the return from



A tram forms part of a procession along East Street in 1914.

(Photo: J.W. Knowles Collection)



A tram operating along East Street during the 1927 Labour Day Procession.

(Photo: J.W. Knowles Collection)

the Show Grounds during Carnival time.

Trailers were attached to and detached from Gardens and Dawson Road trams en route. The depot was at the top of a slight rise, and trailers could be added to trams without them having to run into the depot. The tram would wait in William Street and the trailer would be given a push at the depot; it then freewheeled out on to and along Canning Street and around the junction line on to William Street under the control of its handbrake, and be then coupled up, sometimes without ever properly coming to rest. Sometimes, two trailers would be run down, to be attached to inbound cars from both termini.

Outbound cars with trailers to be detached would turn out of William Street on to the Dawson Road line (even if bound for the Gardens) and reverse from there along Canning Street up to the Depot, where the trailers would be "flyshunted" into the shed, with the conductor aboard to bring them to a stand.

At flood times, the line in William Street would be submerged. Services to Dawson Road and the Gardens were maintained via Archer Street. After arriving in East Street from Archer Street, cars would run in reverse, on the wrong line where the track was double, to the fork line junction at Murray/Archer Streets and there reverse to continue their runs via Canning Street, the Gardens car shunting at William/Canning Street to make the junction.

Timetabled running time from the Post Office to Canning Street was 10 minutes and to the other termini, 13 to 15 minutes. Usually, only about 3 minutes lay-

over was allowed at the termini, but certain runs involved longer periods, even up to 26 minutes. Cars stopped at the Post Office for periods of up to 7 minutes before continuing their runs, depending on the timetable and how they and other connecting cars in the same direction were running.

Passengers normally did not pull the bell cord; instead they told the conductor their destination and he was expected to remember and pull it for them. Cords to trailers were not connected in any case and the conductor had to make his way to the tram itself to give signals to the driver. A note in the 1926 timetable read: "When desiring to alight from the trams, passengers should either warn the Conductors at least half a street block before their destination, or give the 'stop' bell half a street block beforehand themselves. Ring the bell ONCE for tram to stop at next stopping place. In trailer cars, where no bells are available, passengers should state their destinations to the Conductors when tendering their fares." Another note read: "Persons desiring to board trams are requested to signal the Drivers at least thirty yards before the cars reach the stopping places."

The crews of course knew their regulars and trams often waited for passengers who were not at their stops to go to work. It was said to be desirable to send a message to the tram if you were sick or going on holidays or not going back after lunch, to save it waiting! Similarly, regulars who decided to disembark at other than their usual stop and out of habit forgot to tell the conductor, could cause some consternation.



The line-up of derelicts outside the depot not long after the closure.

(Photo: J.L. Buckland)

During winter, passengers and conductor would make their way to the front of the tram, and during summer would keep as far away from the boiler as possible. One wet night, a passenger insisted on sitting in the roofless

trailer under an umbrella, despite there being room in the tram; apart from incurring comment for his love of fresh air, he incurred the wrath of the conductor, who had to sell him a ticket!



Another view of the redundant fleet outside the depot about the closure time.

(Photo: D. Murray)

Fares and Sections

Before 1920, the adult fare was 1d per section and the children's fare was 1d per route. Children travelling to and from school were allowed to travel any distance not exceeding two routes between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Mondays to Fridays for 1d. Tables of twelve 2d (2 section) tickets were sold for 1/9d. and of twelve 3d (three section) for 2/6d.

After the fare increase of 1920, fares were unchanged until the closure (except for the special Post Office — North Street 2d fare introduced in 1932) at 1½d for one, 2½d for two and 3½d for three sections, with tables of twelve two section tickets at 2/—, and of twelve three section tickets at 3/—. Tables of twelve children's tickets were 1/—. In 1934, 'round trips' were offered every night and on Sunday afternoons for 6d.

The sections were: Gardens and Dawson Road routes; Post Office to West Street (with 8 intermediate stops), West Street to Caroline Street (2 intermediate stops) and then to the termini (with 9 intermediate stops on the Dawson Road line and 7 on the Gardens); Wandal route; Post Office to Murray Street (8 intermediate stops), Murray Street to Show Grounds (4 intermediate stops), and Show Grounds to Terminus (6 intermediate stops); Murray Street to Canning Street Terminus was another section, with 4 intermediate stops.

Nomenclature

The lower of the two side boards carried by the cars in the pre-World War I period carried the words "Rockhampton Council Tramways". A timetable of about 1919 was headed "Rockhampton Tramways", as was one of 1932, but one of 1926 had "Council" included as well. About 1920, the side fascias of the cars were lettered "Rockhampton Council Tramways", but by 1922, when No. 15 was built, this had become "Rockhampton City Tramways", and continued thus until closure, although latterly marked only on the offside wall of the partially enclosed cars.

Staff

Mention has been made of staff numbers and the position at the closure. Many of the tramwaymen who stayed with the Council Transport Department worked on the buses until the 1960's.

The tramwaymen were issued with topcoats and caps. Drivers supplied their own boiler suits and wore dark peaked caps. Conductors bought khaki jackets, mostly from policemen, who had such items on periodic issue and were provided with hard white foreign legion type caps, similar to those formerly issued to Brisbane Tramwaymen, but with neck flaps, which provided protection from the sun and rain as the conductors swung along the footboards.

Acknowledgements

I never saw the Rockhampton Tramways at work, but my researches into them have been assisted by a number of persons, especially former tramwaymen J. Clayson, C.J. Bull, and J. Callaghan; persons who remember them, J.A. Bell, E.M. Loveday, H. Macdonald, K.J.C. Rogers and H.G. Simmons; and others, including the Rockhampton District Scouts Association, the Rockhampton and District Historical Society and its Secretary, Miss C.M. Walker, A.R.H.S. members J. Davey, R. Deskins, D. Campbell, G.H. Verhoeven and G.E. Bond, and others,



The sorry remains of Car No. 3 in September, 1971.
 (Photo: K. McCarthy)

Mr. L. Heaton, and Dr. J. Robert of Paris, and the Rockhampton City Council. Mr. Ken McCarthy, who has studied the system for some years, has been most generous in his help after reading an earlier draft, and especially for details of the rolling stock I owe much to him. I am also grateful to Mr. D.G. Taylor for the diagram.

References

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