

# TROLLEY WIRE

Journal of

- SOUTH PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY
- AUSTRALIAN ELECTRIC TRANSPORT MUSEUM
- WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ELECTRIC TRANSPORT MUSEUM
- BALLARAT TRAMWAY PRESERVATION SOCIETY
- ILLAWARRA LIGHT RAILWAY MUSEUM SOCIETY

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## THE ILLAWARRA LIGHT RAILWAY MUSEUM SOCIETY

With this issue of TROLLEY WIRE we welcome yet another preservation group to the ranks of similar societies using TW as their house journal - the Illawarra Light Railway Museum Society. The ultimate aim of this group is to lay and operate in or near Wollongong, NSW, a two foot gauge steam tram line using, wherever possible, material salvaged from some of the numerous colliery lines to be found in the Illawarra area. TROLLEY WIRE, on behalf of the AETM, WAETA, BTPS and SPER offers best wishes to the ILRMS in their venture and we look forward to reading further of their activities in future issues of the magazine.

### R.I.P.

On 20th May 1972, the firm of Gardiner's Body Works was destroyed by fire. This Brisbane firm was responsible for the construction of a number of the Brisbane centre aisle cars and some dropcentres. SPER car Brisbane No.180 is indicated in the records as being one of the Gardiner trams.

### SPER - NOTICE OF MEETINGS

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 23rd June 1972\*. The next General Meeting will be held on Friday 25th August 1972. Both meetings will be held in the Railway Institute Devonshire Street, Sydney to commence at 7.30 pm.

\* Note: date still to be confirmed by letter.

\* \* \* \* \*

COVER PHOTO: Melbourne Y1-class car 610, on tour, traverses treelined Victoria Parade, on one of the many reserved track sections of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board's system.

Photo: Noel Gipp



## ROCKHAMPTON --- REVISITED

compiled by Ken McCarthy

The subject of the Rockhampton Tramways has been largely neglected, the only recent accounts being those appearing in this magazine during February 1967 and October 1967 based largely on observations made by readers during rushed visits to that Queensland city.

Details of the Rockhampton Tramways have always interested the writer since a visit, made on a school boys' excursion during 1947, revealed that a street steam tramway had flourished in that city, but closed just eight years previous to that visit. Mixed reports, over the intervening years, stating that some relics and trackwork still existed kept alive interest in the subject until a visit during September 1971 finally revealed that a treasure trove of items relevant to the tramway can still be seen, even though buses took over the service in 1939.

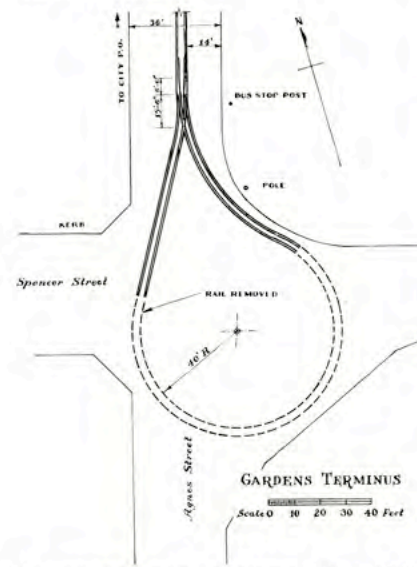
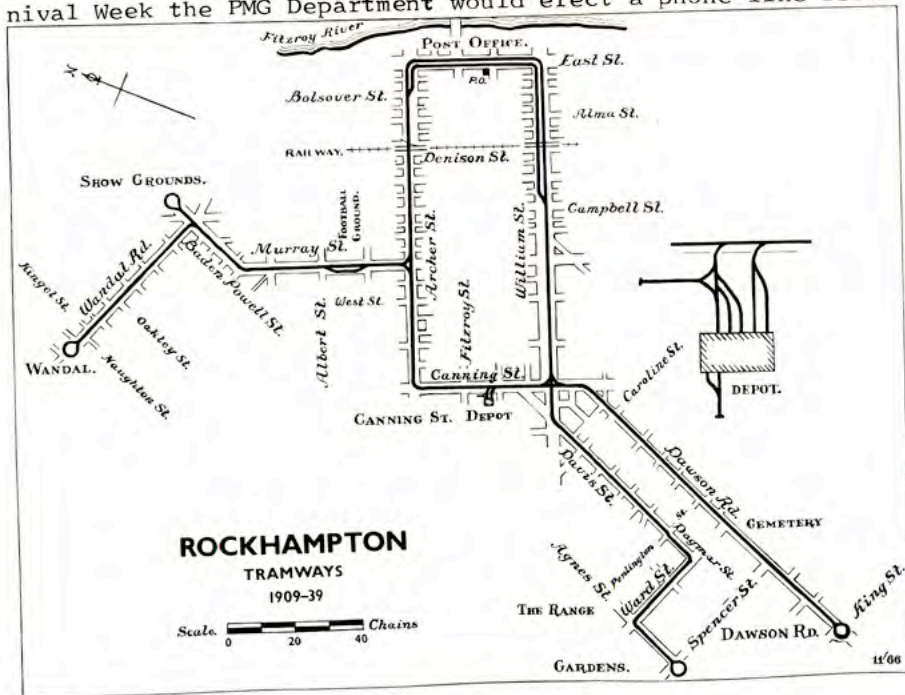
As mentioned in TROLLEY WIRE in February 1967, the 3'6" gauge Rockhampton steam tramways were officially opened on 5th June 1909 and closed on 24th June 1939 and at the time of closure 9 steam powered passenger cars and 6 trailers, all constructed to the open cross bench design, were on the roster. Details of the rolling stock will be presented in a future TW; this section will deal with remaining relics and some unusual features of the operation.

The reason for being opened in June and then being abandoned in the same month, thirty years later, was not a co-incidence. The celebrated "Carnival Week", a mixture of

agricultural show and rodeo extravaganza, attracts thousands of people to Rockhampton and this event caused the system to be prematurely opened for traffic during the show period and a partial service of tramcars to be retained until June 1939 even though sufficient buses were available for conversion three months before this date.

At the opening, the system consisted of a belt line of 2 miles 60 chains, almost half of which was double track, around the closely settled city area and from this, three suburban lines branched out to Dawson Road and the Cemetery (1 mile 40 chains), "The Range" and the Gardens (1 mile 8 chains), and to the football grounds and the Show Grounds along 70 chains of track.

The depot was located on the belt line in Canning Street, at the Denham Street corner. As all powered cars were of single ended construction, balloon loops were located at each suburban terminal, with that at the Show Grounds being larger than the other two to hold several trams at peak loading times, and a triangle stood in the depot yard. Elaborate triangular junctions were constructed at the two major tramway intersections to enable through running to the depot. A long passing loop could be found in Murray Street, outside the football grounds at Albert Street. This was used to pass up and down trams on the single track section during show traffic and to park cars clear of the main line during football matches. During Carnival Week the PMG Department would erect a phone line from



Murray Street to the tram depot to enable additional trams or an emergency team to be called quickly to deal with any load increases or derailments.

Press reports reveal that the opening of the tramway for Carnival Week in 1909 was somewhat premature as construction was incomplete and the staff had not been trained to a degree where a dependable service could be operated. The tramway worked spasmodically for the next year and not until late 1910, after workshop facilities and track adjustments had been made, was a regular service launched.

Several extensions to the basic system were planned but due to shortages caused by World War I, such as lack of manpower and the inability of the Purrey Engineering Works of Bordeaux, France, to provide replacement parts for the boilers, engines and chasses used in the power cars, the only route extension made to the Rockhampton system was a single 52 chain line from the Show Ground to Wandal along Wandal Road. This extension, opened in 1922, brought the total mileage to 6 miles 34 chains, which remained in service until 1939. Photos suggest that a turning triangle could have been provided at Wandal at the opening, but a balloon loop turnback was certainly located there in later years.

On the closure of the system, track was not immediately lifted, but coated with tar as routine road maintenance took place. As a result, much of the trackwork is still in place, except for the Showground and Wandal line beyond the Archer & Murray Streets junction.

The Show Ground line seems to have been located as side of road reservation along Murray Street, while beyond the Show Grounds loop the Wandal track was in centre reservation as far as Oakley Street and on side of road location beyond. It would be fair to say that some of the adjacent paving on roads in Wandal region consisted of loose gravel so it is difficult to consider the track as being isolated from the road surface. Some of the Wandal line was lifted for other use during World War II but a short length of the grooved track is still in position at the Oakley Street intersection.

The length of track most clearly seen today is that along William Street west of Denison Street to the Gardens, while the Canning Street line between Dawson Street and

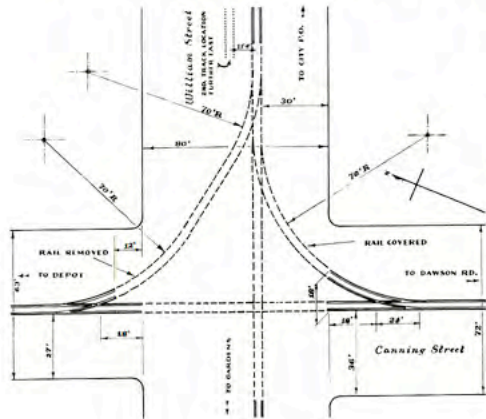
Denham Street is quite obvious. With the exception of the Archer and Canning Streets corner which can be clearly seen, the Archer Street track can only be detected with difficulty while the Dawson Road stretch is in a similar state. The depot yard rails have long been removed and although the double track along East Street is well covered with island gardens, the installation of centre light standards in June 1967 revealed the presence of buried track in that thoroughfare which had to be removed in isolated 1 ft pieces to enable foundations for the lights to be prepared.

The balloon loop at the Dawson Road terminal can no longer be seen but that at the Gardens is partially in position with much of the curved track removed but the 'Y' junction entrance is still in evidence. Detailed measurements taken of this terminal revealed the circle to be of only 40 ft radius yet the track gauge on this curve remained at 3'6". The Sydney loading gauge tables indicated that the sharpest tramway curve, that of 50 ft radius, required a gauge increase of 1 inch. The power needed to work the Rockhampton trams around the tight gauged Gardens terminal loop must have been of a high order.

The Rockhampton tramway crossed the double track Queensland Railways, laid in street formation along Denison Street, at two places. The double track crossing at William Street required four diamonds. The tramway was single track at the crossing in Archer Street, but as the branch line to Archer Park station yard was also crossed, three diamonds were located at that point. No safeworking protection devices were installed at these crossings, but after one collision, which took place in January 1919 at the Archer Street crossing when a northbound train in Denison Street collided with the trailer hauled by tramcar number 7, the Queensland Railways ruled that trains passing in Denison Street could only do so between intersecting streets. The driver of tram 7 had allowed a southbound train to pass and

then crossed the tracks into the path of the northbound train. These crossings were lifted soon after the closing of the tramway.

The original tram depot, consisting of two distinct buildings side by side, still serves as a bus workshop. In tramway days the two southern roads within the "lean-to" structure generally housed the trailer cars while the remaining tracks served the power cars. The workshop, at the northern end of the structure, was reached from



the rear of the depot. All traces of the depot trackwork have vanished.

The large council bus fleet is now parked in the open. Two items from the late tramway days can still be seen in the council area adjacent to the tram depot site; these are two steam rollers. One is still in active service but the other, a Cowley of 1939 bearing number 4 on the council's roster is standing disused. This roller bears a plate labelled 4-12-39 indicating a working boiler pressure of 180 psi.

After recording the remaining track details a visit was paid to Mr. C.J. Bull of Wandal. Mr. Bull migrated to Rockhampton from England in early 1909. He vividly remembers arriving at the mouth of the Fitzroy River one evening and being transhipped to a steam launch for the journey up river to the city. His family disembarked soon after midnight, at the wharf near Stanley Street, and as they struggled up William Street searching for their boarding house, Mr. Bull remembers passing excavations for the tramway, then being constructed.

Mr. Bull joined the tramways in 1922 and after serving as a tramdriver with a 2nd class steam certificate, he transferred to the buses in 1939 as a driver. He continued on the administrative side of the undertaking before retiring in the 1960'S. It seems that drivers with 2nd class steam certificates could operate both the simple and compound expansion steam trams, while those with only a 3rd class certificate were limited to the simples.

Mr. Bull proved to be a mine of information. A point which emerges when discussing the subject with former tram travellers and employees of Rockhampton is that most can quote tram fleet numbers when describing their memories----



Canning Street depot 1938. Trailer 10 is almost hidden in the shed at the left. Power cars 6, 3 and 8 are in the main shed

Photo: Ken Magor collection



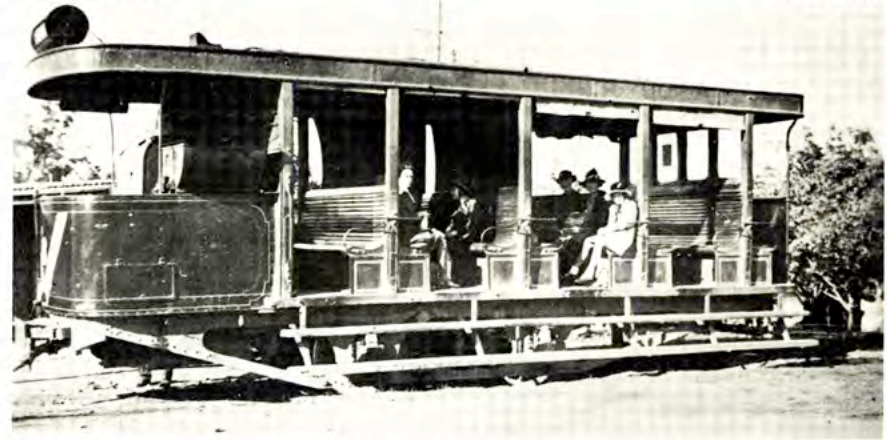
East Street, Rockhampton around 1912. Cars 7 and 8 are closest to the camera, the air hose connections for the trailer's brakes can be seen. The trams are carrying roof destination boards and auxiliary signs on the aprons.

Photo: Ken Magor collection

such is the impression that the system left on those who used it. But as in Sydney, the former patrons either liked or hated the service provided, there were no half measures!

Mr. Bull recalled many items vividly: During the 1930's the service was generally through routed between Gardens and Canning Street, and Dawson Road and Wandal, both services passing the post office in East Street. Prior to this, the timetables reveal that the through routing occurred without a set pattern. Canning Street cars went to either Gardens or Dawson Road etc. with some trips at busy periods around the belt line, from depot to depot. One timetable from around 1920 shows details of an "Extra Late Prowler" service around 10.45 pm. Whether its duty was to round up any drunks and take them home or not remains to be explained! Other runs during busy lunch periods had first stop limitations at West Street for the southern lines and Murray Street for the northern lines.

Stripes were painted on the motor cars about 1931. The front apron carried a large white 'V' while the rear panel displayed an inverted 'V'. The reason for these stripes was to enable the driver on a single track section to readily tell whether the tram in the distance was steaming away from him or towards him. When Mr. Bull was asked about car 8 which carried an inverted 'V' on the front apron (see TW - Feb 1967 and Oct 1967), he laughed before he supplied the simple answer to the query.... the painter made a mistake! A photo since discovered taken about 1938 reveals that the error was later corrected.



Car 8, about 1938. By this time the apron "V" appeared the right way up on the front. Not so clearly seen are the interior advert. racks above the doors. These were unique to this car.

Photo: Ken Magor collection

Between April and 24th June 1939 trams operated only a partial service, mainly during periods of heavy loading, and during this transition time the new buses used the centre of the road tramway safety zones to serve passengers. In fact some residents claim that the buses would not pull into the kerb at suburban stops either, but stood on the tram tracks at the crown of the road to take up passengers. The new bus fleet consisted of ten diesel powered Albions built by Waddingtons-Commonwealth Engineering Company in Sydney. These were delivered under their own power over the 1,000 miles of indifferent quality roads in groups.

To accommodate the new buses, and their maintenance facilities, the dead end track on the depot triangle was extended parallel to Canning Street into the Council's quarry area to enable the tramcars to be stored clear of the depot area. This extension just enabled the fleet of 9 motors and 6 trailers to clear the bus area and Canning Street. A sketch will accompany a later part of this article setting out the position of this rolling stock in this line up and it would seem that car 4 or tram 5 hauling trailer 10 were the last vehicles to traverse the tramway on that closing day.

Several clues were obtained last September as to the possible location of rolling stock remains. Visits to the railway wharf and the cricket grounds revealed nothing, but success awaited at Port Alma and at the local scout's camp, details of these discoveries, as well as detailed rolling stock notes will be published later in TROLLEY WIRE.

ROCKHAMPTON REVISITED..... to be continued.....