

FARES PLEASE!

December 2025

\$2.50 inc. GST

News from the Ballarat Tramway Museum



GATHERING FOR A FAMILY TICKET TO RIDE TO THE MUSEUM

PHOTO: REGINALD DE LEON



SPRINGTIME IN THE GARDENS



Warm weather and a conductor brings out No. 26 after a long winter of sitting in the depot. A family enjoys a ride through the Gardens [Top]. Two classic vehicles in Wendouree Parade and a wave from Len on a warm spring afternoon. [Bottom] Photos: Glenda Phillips





NEW MEMBERS

- 1163 Ross McGregor of Reservoir
- 1164 Michael Leist of Scoresby
- 1165 Mathew Gorman of Ballan
- 1166 Margaret Evans of Ballarat North
- 1167 Heidi Taylor of Ballarat

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The new Board will be:

President: Paul Mong,

Vice President: Greg Rodgers,

Treasurer: Carolyn Cleak,

Secretary: Peter Winspur,

Ordinary Board Members: Arthur Adams, Neville Britton, C K Tang, Peter Fitzgerald, Ryan van der Zweep, Peter Waugh.

Pressure of work saw Sam Boon step down from the Board after five years. We thank him for his contribution. Sam intends to remain as active as work permits.

At the AGM members agreed to increase the number of Life Members to fifteen.

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

Hi,

I just wanted to send a note to say thank you to your volunteers! We visited today with my autistic daughter and she had the best time riding the trams back and forth for hours. Your drivers were super friendly and knowledgeable. She enjoyed exploring the museum because it was a nice quiet space that wasn't overwhelming for her.

You are all doing a great job!

Cassee Brown



Photo: Cassee Brown

AROUND THE MUSEUM WORKS REPORT

No. 18 - The body has been partially dismantled to allow for the replacement of the saloon floor, and new timbers have been fabricated for the ends of the tram. Work has continued on the truck.

No. 34 - Over the past few weeks a lot of work on the body of No. 34 has been completed. The roof has been waterproofed with cloth and membrane, and painted in its final colour. All damaged timber under the body has been renewed and waterproofed. New steel cab front skirts have been manufactured and new cable troughing has been prepared and installed. New driver seats have been made, and the timber of the life guard trays have been prepared and painted. All parts have been stripped of lead paint; the body has been sanded and will be prepared for painting in the next few weeks.

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No 40 – Repairs to the No 2 end trolley bridge now complete. This involved the manufacture and fitting of two new trolley base bearer blocks to replace the originals that had been damaged by an overhead dewirement. Dave MacKinnon made the replacement blocks that were fitted by Karl.

No 407 – In the cab, the controller covers, pipework, windshield aprons and floor have also been repainted. New polished brass controller handles that have new knobs were also fitted to smarten up the internal look of the tram. Works undertaken by Tony.

No 1029 – During traffic operations, one of the half drop saloon windows became jammed in the open position. It was jammed so badly that the whole window assembly required dismantling to free it up. As all the pillar screws were rusted, they required drilling out and in the process, the bottom fixed glass panel cracked. Tony obtained new replacement glass, and the work was undertaken by Dave and Karl with assistance from Geoff.

In the workshops the following works have occurred:

The safety barrier posts and chains have been fitted to the No 5 road pit and work is currently being underway on fitting these to the No 4 road pit. Dave MacKinnon is undertaking this project himself, which involves the drilling of the floor for the post sockets and the fabrication of the sockets and posts.

Spare DH 10 Compressor – Karl has overhauled a spare DH 10 compressor, which is currently undergoing bench testing. This compressor can then be fitted to any tram that requires replacement in the future.

The two single spring MV No 6 trolley bases ex No 13 and No 33 that had been replaced with overhauled units were dismantled and their worn components sent away to our contact engineering works for repairs. They have now been returned and are currently being reassembled. One unit will be used on No 18 and the other held as spare.



Karl overhauling the spare DH compressor [Left] whilst Geoff practices his acrobatics servicing the motors on Cuthberts 939 [Right] Photos: Tony Smith.



HIGH TEA

Vanguard Visionaries have started to offer High Teas on Cuthberts 939 at Sunday lunchtimes fortnightly. The new service has been well patronised, and it is wonderful to see the tram back in regular use. The first High Tea charter operated by Eoghan Clwyde was the trial run on Sunday 17 August this year. The first 'full service' High Tea took place on Sunday 21 September.

Including the trial, there have been a total of six "Cuthbert's High Tea" charters this year. There are already six charters confirmed for the first three months of next year, with more dates planned for the rest of 2026. Eoghan intends to continue operating the service every fortnight, releasing dates in blocks of three months depending on demand and the success of the venture.



Guests on Cuthberts 939 enjoying their high tea in the cosy interior of the tram whilst the weather outside was anything but cosy. Photos: Ben Boehle-Mithchell



Another role for Cuthberts 939; staff crew room for horse tram days and providing motive power for No. 1. Photo: Marcus Wong



MELBOURNE'S RESTAURANT CARS

By Mal Rowe

PREDECESSORS

Dining cars were common on mainline railways from the 19th century, but it took a bit longer for commuter electric passenger services to try the idea.

Perhaps the first was an interurban service between Dusseldorf and Krefeld which commenced in 1924 and ceased in 2014. It was basically an on-board bar for commuters.



Photo: Thomas Busskamp

The famous North Shore line Electroliners ran five services a day each way between Chicago and Milwaukee in the US from 1941. They offered various drinks and meals including the aptly named 'Electroburger'. The Electroliners managed to achieve 90mph (over 140Kph) using trolley poles and without spilling the patrons beer! The route was closed in 1963 but the trams went on to provide "Tavern Lounge" services in Philadelphia until 1978. Both sets are now preserved.



An Electroliner in downtown Milwaukee in 1961. Photo: Marty Berhard

MELBOURNE

Melbourne's restaurant tram service began in November 1982 after Paul Stephen-Daly arranged to have W2 442 converted to a restaurant tram with sumptuous decoration. The drop centre was levelled to salon floor height. A single entry door was provided and the tram was divided into two saloons (12 seat and 24 seat) separated by a small galley where pre-prepared meals were cooked and a small cellar provide unlimited drinks. The décor was sometimes described as "French Boudoir".

The service was very successful and capacity was increased. In 1992 SW6 937 was converted to restaurant service, followed by 939 in 1995.

The starting point was usually on the reserved track connecting the light rail lines west of Clarendon St. Prompt loading was important to avoid delaying regular services, A circuitous route through the city and inner suburbs kept guests guessing where they were. Halfway through the journey the trams stopped at the loop in Albert Rd South Melbourne to allow the later courses to be loaded and for guests to get out,



442 passing V214 on Good Friday 25 March 2005. Photo: Mal Rowe

stretch their legs and perhaps have a smoke. During the Grand Prix period the starting point was moved to the Peel St siding in William St and the route varied to avoid the Albert Park area.

In 2006, the original W2 was retired and replaced with a third SW6 (938).

By accident or design, the service was now run by three sequentially numbered SW6 trams. However, 937 and 939 were taken out of service in 2011 to be replaced with 964 and 935. All the restaurant trams now had modified trucks with magnetic track brakes.



939 at the corner of Flinders Lane and William Streets March 2008, Photo: Mal Rowe



The three final cars in Clarendon St on 8 November 2013. Photo: Mal Rowe

The trams carried 'restaurant fleet numbers' in the route number boxes.

442	01
937	02
939	03
938	04
964	05
935	06

After withdrawal, Restaurant tram 939 went to the Ballarat Tram Museum where a grant enabled the galley kitchen to be upgraded. The restaurant in 939 was named "Cuthberts" in recognition of the first Chairman of the Ballarat Tramway Co.

The Colonial Tramcar Restaurant was a four-time winner of the coveted National Tourism Award (1984, 1988, 1992, and 1993). It was also a nine-time winner of the Victorian Tourism Award (1984,

1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993, 2002) and was welcomed into the Hall of Fame in 1993. Hall of Fame is awarded to an entrant that has won the same category over three consecutive years. (Wikipedia).

As noted earlier, loading trams quickly on the main line for the light rail was always a challenge. In 2016 a dedicated Restaurant Tram siding was built near the Clarendon St starting point to enable service cars to pass the trams while they loaded.

Bookings were rapidly filled when a Melbourne Cup Day breakfast was advertised in 2018. However, in October 2018, Yarra Trams announced that the restaurant trams had been withdrawn from service and were no longer allowed



to operate on the network due to safety considerations.

The Colonial Tramcar Restaurant Company appealed against the decision but was not successful in that appeal. The Victorian Government set aside one of the W8 conversions – which were compliant with safety standards, for conversion to a restaurant but a single tram and the large cost of conversion meant that this was not taken up.

OPERATING NOW:

Cuthberts has a new life in hospitality at Ballarat with a very successful High Tea offering being booked solid well in advance.

Melbourne W2 411 operates a similarly successful program with full meal service on the Christchurch City Tramway.

... AND NEXT?

The operator behind the Colonial Tramcar Restaurant Company has not given up and is exploring options with Bendigo Tramways to re-start a restaurant tram service in Melbourne.

The author hopes that negotiations are successful so that he can enjoy the “restaurant with a view that keeps changing” again.



Loading at the new dedicated siding in January 2016. Photo: Mal Rowe



ARCHIVES NEWS

PHOTOS FROM GEORGE STEVENS

The Museum recently received a USB memory drive from George Stevens of Leeton NSW. George made several trips to Ballarat and Bendigo from Sydney with fellow rail enthusiasts from 1967 to 1971 getting the “coverage” of the two tram systems. On the drive were some 450 colour photographs and almost 200 Black and White ones, along with some taken in Melbourne including our track scrubber tram No. 8.

George scanned and dated the photographs along with some notes.

This has made the cataloguing task a lot easier. They can be viewed on Victorian Collections searching for his name.

One thing that was new to our Collection Manager (or he forgot about it) was the operation of school specials on track that had been closed to passenger services. This was confirmed by Keith Kings in an item that appeared in the Oct. 1971 issue of Running Journal that chartered trams ran on weekdays over “closed” sections of track for local school children to be given a “last tram ride”.

Warren Doubleday.



Trams 41 and 34 in Drummond St Nth running a school special. This section of track had been closed to regular passenger services on 22/8/1971. Photo taken on 17/9/1971. Photo: George Stevens Btm10392i10.



Trams 35, 42 and another cross at the Bell St loop in Skipton St – demonstrating a few photographers on the last day would be prepared to hold up traffic while they got the “shot” - 19-9-1971. Photo: George Stevens



Tram 12 at the Sebastopol terminus – probably just before it gives a ding ding and moves off as you were turning the corner – 25/1/1970. Photo: George Stevens



W4 671 at St Aidan's Drive terminus on 3 January 1981 whilst working a special charter for visiting British enthusiasts, Mike Russell and Peter Haseldine.
Photo :Paul Nicholson (who was motorman on this auspicious occasion) photo.

RECENT VISITORS

Our museum has a well-deserved reputation as being one of the best in the world. From time to time, we are visited by globe-trotting tram enthusiasts – either with us as their focus or part of a bigger tramway oriented overseas adventure.

Recently, we've been privileged to receive several distinguished overseas visitors. First was Rushton Luoma from Calgary in Canada. Rushton works in the bus division of Calgary Transit, but her passion is light rail and trams. Calgary was one of the early examples of a modern light rail system introduced many years after the traditional tram network closed. On the day of her visit, Rushton was welcomed by three of the BTM's most travelled volunteers; Robyn Kamer in the kiosk, Paul Nicholson who was guide for the

day and motorman, Greg King. Rushton told us of social connections in the Geelong area, so she was keen to see our “Butterbox” number 2. To say she was impressed is an understatement.

More recently, Mike Russell from Reading in the UK and Ian Longworth from the Isle of Manx were our distinguished visitors. Mike is well known as one of the world's most travelled tram enthusiasts (with more than 450 systems under his belt) and Ian, before retirement, was manager of transport on the Isle of Manx – with the horse trams and Manx Electric Railway under his charge. These days, Ian organises international group tours for tram enthusiasts. He caters especially for older folk who may find independent travel a bit of a challenge but are still keen to get the tram coverage at the systems and museums visited.



On the same day, as Mike and Ian were at the museum, we entertained Robert Lee, one of the joint editors of Trolley Wire magazine. Robert and his colleague, John Cowper, have given some new life to the magazine after the early retirement of long-term editor, Bob Merchant, who's now in aged care in suburban Sydney. Robert was accompanied by well-known former New South Wales enthusiast, Tony McIlwain, who lives in retirement in the Cairns area. Each of our enthusiast visitors was most impressed with our wonderful museum.

Mike Russell is well known throughout the tram enthusiast fraternity for his photography and learned articles, particularly in the heritage section of

Tramways and Urban Transit magazine. One could anticipate a future illustrated item on the BTM?

Whilst nowhere near Mike's figures, we have some well-travelled volunteers. Greg King is widely acknowledged as our most travelled, but Gary Davey and Jeff Gill are not doing too bad – each with more than 180 systems under the belt. I can't compete with that with around 140 but I reckon my partner, Robyn, would have to be our most travelled female member having visited more than 80 systems.

Paul Nicholson

TRAM SHELTER REBUILT



Canadian visitor, Rushton Luoma who works for Calgary Transit.
Photo: Paul Nicholson.



On 20 August the old shelter at Dowling Street was demolished, with many moaning its loss. Two days later the Council started to build a replacement. It is good to see that some tramway street furniture is still considered valuable.

Photo: Glenda Phillips



COTMA CONFERENCE

Arthur Adams

The 2025 COTMA Conference was held in Brisbane and hosted by the Brisbane Tramway Museum on behalf of COTMA. Five delegates attended from the Ballarat Tramway Museum: Ryan, Carolyn, C.K., Taylah, and Arthur. The four-day program covered heritage tram operations, restoration updates, safety matters such as sleep apnoea, and strengthening relationships between museums.

Friday 10 October began with a trip to the Queensland Museum Rail Workshops in Ipswich. Delegates were welcomed by staff and attended the opening presentation, which focused on staying relevant, community engagement and event-based visitor growth. After lunch, delegates took part in guided tours of the museum and archives, followed by a rare behind the scenes tour of the Queensland Rail Workshops, where rolling stock is maintained, restored and retired.

Saturday 11 October was held at the Queensland Museum South Bank and featured a full day of presentations from museums across Australia and New Zealand. These sessions highlighted restoration projects, operational improvements and future museum planning.

Sunday 12 October included a half-day of presentations, including updates from Ballarat and MTPA. Delegates then returned to their accommodation to prepare for the conference dinner at the Easts Leagues Club - Atkin Centre, Coorparoo. During the evening, several awards were announced. Ballarat received an Achievement Award for the restoration and accessibility upgrade of

W7 1029. Tony Smith received a Volunteer Award for his ongoing contributions, and Richard Gilbert was presented with the COTMA President's Award for his lifetime service to both COTMA and BTM. Tramway Historical Society, Ferrymead received the Bill Kingsley Award for the restoration of Christchurch tram 24.

Monday 13 October was hosted at the Brisbane Tramway Museum and included guided tours and supervised operation of selected Brisbane trams, which was a highlight for many delegates. The Conference General Meeting was also held, where new board members and office bearers were confirmed. Nominations were then taken for the 2027 conference. Ballarat submitted a nomination, and we are pleased to confirm that Ballarat has been selected to host the 2027 COTMA Conference.

Key themes across the conference included volunteer shortages, particularly among younger people, increased use of technology within museums, and growing concerns around sleep apnoea testing for workers in the tramway and railway industries, especially in the heritage sector. Conference also provided excellent networking opportunities throughout all four days.

Our delegation. Photo: C K Tang





Carolyn at the controls of No. 400, the Brisbane prototype four motored tram, in the background is Phoenix car No. 554 the last tram built for Brisbane.[Top] C K brings 400 out of the running shed [Bottom]. Both photos: C K Tang



THE OLD AND NOT SO OLD



Tram drivers wanting to be chauffeurs? CK, Matthew and Andrew pose beside some recent visitors to the museum. No. 33 looks quite modern in contrast. Photo: C K Tang



*W7 1029 approaching Windmill Drive on a balmy spring afternoon.
Photo: Glenda Phillips*



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