



STEAM SCENE

Newsletter of the Steam Tram and Railway Preservation (Co-Op) Society Ltd.
t/a Valley Heights Steam Tramway.
Proudly associated with the NSW Rail Transport Museum (Blue Mountains Division).
Affiliated with the Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia and Rail Heritage Australia (NSW).

“Preserving the past,
enriching the future”

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Making Tracks to the New Shed

With the coming of the new shed and the necessity to store some rolling stock down on the Ash Roads, it was apparent that the Ash Road tracks were in need of renovation. The necessary lifting work and ballast removal was to have been part of the Job Quest Programme that commenced in March 2006. The renovation of the Coal Road and associated works took more time than anticipated. With time running out, Job Quest supervisor, Ted Dickson, approached the local per way team leader, Bruce Clark, to see if some mechanical aid could be enlisted to speed the process up. Ted was referred to the Regional Manager for Rail Corp infrastructure, Peter Melbourne. Cutting a long story short, Peter very kindly made available a Plasser hydraulic track jack for the task of lifting the track to enable re-sleepering etc. Not only that, the local per way workers volunteered their time under the supervision of Bruce Clark, to carry out the work!

The job was undertaken on Wednesday afternoon September 25. A solid group of VHLDHM members and a lesser number of STARPS members helped dislodge old ballast etc. from the rails and sleepers.

The exercise was to have been a publicized example of community interface by Rail Corp however, the official photographers and other officials did not turn up! Despite this, the afternoon's work was well recorded by amateur photographers.

The track nearest the retaining wall was found to be in poor condition with only the odd sleeper left intact and the rail foot badly corroded. The outer track was in much better condition it having evidently been renovated in the mid 1980's.

We understand that Rail Corp are most impressed with the work that has been done on the depot since RTM took it over and its subsequent development into a public museum.

It is planned to replace the existing 80 and 90lb rail with 107lb rail and to replace the existing timber sleepers with concrete sleepers. These are being acquired at very favourable rates to the museum.

Ted Dickson is to be congratulated on the success of the Job Quest and Ash Road exercises. His work in management, supervision and negotiation is admirable and we of the Society, thank him most sincerely.



The rail jack makes light work of lifting the aged track. Fortunately a hydraulic leak that materialized with the jack, came about at the end of the project. Volunteers from the museum and Rail Corp prise away old ballast.

Oh for a bit of Perspective and Rationality...

I know I've complained about it before and I am sure this won't be the last time either but things just aren't as simple in rail heritage as they used to be. Take firemen and drivers' ticketing for instance. Years ago a fireman did a course at a local tech college, did so many hours practical experience, was examined and duly obtained his ticket. A driver, with a log of experience, references etc. was examined on the job by a DLI examiner and if found satisfactory, was given a ticket. Government support agencies did a fine job and everybody knew how to go about getting a fireman's or driver's ticket. Nowadays, the technical colleges have bowed out of steam courses as has the DLI's successor with examining. Accordingly, we are left with a hotchpotch of trying to locate private tutors and sometimes reluctant examiners to certify firemen and drivers. Apart from this, add the mass of paperwork associated with continuing accreditation matters, medical assessments for RSW's, records for

every tap of work done and on it goes, department by department. Sometimes we wonder if it is all worth it. We are still only a vestigial steam show operating a 1km round trip, the same as years ago yet we are bogged-down in regulation and paper work akin to a main line operator. Useful government support agencies seem to have disappeared whilst regulatory agencies have become positively cancerous, eating into the tissue of volunteerism. The sad result is, paper work is swallowing up enormous amounts of time but our real work, rail heritage conservation, is having less time spent on it. There is a crying need for a proper balance between support, perspective and rationality in heritage railway management issues.

With the benefit of hindsight, so far as rail safety in the rail heritage industry is concerned, it's a pity it was not dealt with in legislative isolation to begin with.

The Editor. (See special note end page 6)



From the
Editor

STOP PRESS!

Just when we have completed all the paperwork, teed up a medico (at very concessional rates) and ready set to go with our category 3 RSW medical assessments, along comes the Regulator, moves the goal posts and gives us some new rules to learn. It now appears that our RSW's will now have to be a category 2 level. This has apparently come about after an internal assessment/comparison of the legislation viz-a-viz the terms of some previous category 3 approvals. We believe six groups, including ours, are included in the revision. The upshot of this determination means a far more stringent medical assessment for RSW's with some workers having to undergo these every 12 months. Of course, there is more paper work to be done and we have to obtain a suitable medico who hopefully will conduct the medical checks at a reasonable cost. In any case, it will incur substantial costs that the RSW's will have to shoulder in some degree. We have until the end of January 2007 to implement the change. Without in anyway jeopardizing safety, our concern (apart from the cost) is just how many of our RSW's will pass the test?

The isolated rail heritage operators are already having a battle to survive without further restrictions and costs. Here we are, operating a 1km, 9 minute trip, with the same health assessment requirements as many critical workers on the commercial network. No one wants to compromise safety but really, does the scope and detail of ours and many other operations warrant such imposition? Perhaps there should be an additional category that whilst recognizing the need for the protection of the public, also recognizes the lack of impact on the network and the limited scope of most isolated operators.

Go kindly, Bruce Irwin

Why Run Heritage Trains (or Trams)?

This article is derived from that invaluable source of information and learned comment, "Locomotive & Railway Preservation". The author was John P. Hankey and commences with his experience as a volunteer carriage attendant on an excursion train. On reading it, I immediately related to his experience having myself been on "both sides of the counter". A study of the various types of heritage rail operation and what people seek and perhaps find when riding such operations follows. The article has been adapted by the editor to local conditions and scenarios where appropriate (see italics).



Puffing Billy. A prime example of a "demonstration or preservation" railway. It is perhaps the premier example in Australia.

While working as a car attendant aboard an excursion train, I had the first glimmer of insight. I wondered "Why am I doing this?" I questioned my motives and indeed, my sanity, because the train was many hours late. It was cold and gloomy and we had a full load of passengers. Some of the cars had heating but some were stone cold. The trip home turned into a nightmare as we shuffled passengers from those cars next to freezing, to empty seats in the barely heated cars. In the meantime we apologized to hundreds of passengers for what we were putting them through.

At the heart of my question was a sense of absurdity. The passengers had purchased tickets to ride this excursion train in reality, to nowhere and back. I and others like me, had volunteered many hours to help make it happen. We were all suffering some degree of misery and yet some of us were still enjoying it!

Many contemporary recreational activities share that essential quality of absurdity. Fishing, running, sewing and sailing were all activities upon which people once depended for survival but have now become for many people, recreational pursuits. Likewise until recently, a train trip was something to be endured. Travel by train involved varying degrees of discomfort and inconvenience. Even a good trip in good weather could become monotonous. Certainly there were enjoyable aspects and a few people did ride for pleasure. Most trips were however, for necessity, not for fun.

An Enjoyable Pastime

Today, thousands of people each year enjoy train travel solely for recreation and amusement. They journey forth on tourist railroads, historic steam passenger trains, dinner trains and mainline excursion trains. The trips range from transcontinental commercial operations with sleeping, dining and lounge cars to a lowly round trip in third-hand carriages behind an ageing diesel. The very act of traveling by train has come to be regarded as an enjoyable pastime rather than as a utilitarian mode of transport.

The number of people who travel by tourist trains is self evident that people want to ride trains. Why they want to is more elusive but the reasons seem to be a complex mix of nostalgia, curiosity and not least, that inherent human urge to travel, observe and experience. In many cases, people ride trains for the same reasons railway preservationists dedicate so much time and effort into operating them. Riding a train is inherently enjoyable to people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of interest. Passengers may not have enough com-

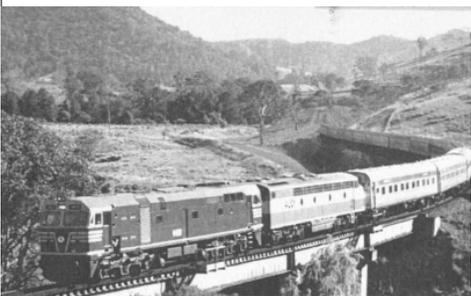
mitment to wield a wrench or join a museum but they will take a train trip that appeals to them.

If why they ride is difficult to pin down, perhaps it is worthwhile to consider what kinds of experiences people are willing to pay for. Working backwards, it should be possible to divine why passengers might have selected a certain kind of trip. Each type of railway travel appeals to a specific audience and reveals particular attributes of recreational railroading. Excluding commuter and journey specific rail travel, as a start I suggest there are four general types of railway experience. There are others and some overlap but the majority of operations fall into one of these categories.

1. The Railfan Trip: Over the past 50 years, the railfan trip has evolved into a fairly standard, rather specialized experience. The target audience is well-known—the committed railway enthusiast. That makes it relatively simple to structure the experience. The typical railfan trip occupies a day and in some cases, more than a day. Ideally, it is steam powered or with some other exotic form of motive power. It usually operates over track with special scenic or operational characteristics.

Railfan trips usually are wholly synthetic and ephemeral. That is to say, they are made up of different elements for the event and they are unique experiences created for the moment. The experience is structured to some extent (photo set-backs, unusual stop-overs etc.) and generally can't be replicated. Trips of this type will be well documented, with as much as possible squeezed into the day. Once completed, it stands alone as a unique event and becomes historic in its own right. *Unfortunately in this country (Australia) the expensiveness of setting up versus generally low budget railfans militates against this type of traffic.*

2. The Tourist or Family Trip: The modern short-line tourist railway experience emerged in America after World War 2. *In Australia it developed tentatively in the late 1950's early 60's.* This type of train ride is characterized by relatively short duration, low cost, frequent service to a regular schedule and large numbers of riders. *Typical examples in Australia are Puffing Billy (Vic), The Mary Valley Line (Qld) and the Zig Zag (NSW).* Defining attributes of tourist railroads are the low levels of commitment required by the traveler and some implied guarantee of availability and reliability. A family can predict with some certainty that they will only spend so many dollars and so much time on the train and that it will be running when they are holidaying in the vicinity in six months time. Tourist railroads often reconstitute a variety of vintage railway elements into a new synthetic operation. *Puffing Billy for example caters to the broader tourist market with interlocking but associated features such as a rail museum, picnic ground facilities, lunch and dinner trips.*



Although not a regular commercial train, the RTM's Heritage Express is a good example of a "Holiday Trip" train.

Few of these functions or the present extent of them, were prime functions of the line in its original task.

The tourist train is oriented to ordinary people seeking a pleasant experience. Raifans certainly ride tourist trains but they make up only a tiny fraction of the total manifest. Most importantly, these rides tend to be stable through time. They provide an experience that can be replicated—a commodity if you like that has the potential to form the basis of the “railway experience” for thousands of people.

3. The Holiday Trip: Whilst this phenomena is descended from the “Grand Tours” of 19th century Europe and America it is a comparative late-comer to Australia for a variety of reasons. Travel by rail to get to a holiday destination was for most people, the only way to go in Australia until the availability of the motor car for the budget of the common man during the 1950’s. From that time on, an accelerating drift from the railway to the car as a medium of transport to a holiday destination became the norm. Concurrently, the advent of the “land cruise” type train took more of a hold. The arrival of the “Indian Pacific” grabbed the retirees’ imagination of the 1970’s whereby it became “de rigueur” for one’s retirement. In effect, train travel became part of the holiday not just the means of getting to the holiday. It still has a certain allure however the overseas trip is now more the “done thing”.

The long distance train trip requires a major commitment of money, time and involvement but not necessarily, an interest in railways. The train is merely a platform from which to explore the culture and scenery at hand. It is a haven a comfort and sociability but not of itself, the main adventure. Many people who ride these trains have an affection for railways or nostalgic memories but I hesitate to call them raifans. They also tend not to take along children. There is a big cost difference from a jaunt on a tourist line and a trip on the *Indian Pacific*. As an introduction to rail heritage however, the tourist ride could well have a greater educational and “real” experience potential.

4. The Demonstration or Preservation Railways: The newest and perhaps the least defined type of train ride is the demonstration railway. Its primary function—the one that drives the majority of other decisions—is to provide visitors with an authentic rail heritage experience. Usually the experience is in connection with a museum, formal preservation activity or historic site. This type of train ride relies on the conservation of a larger set of historic attributes and has education as its implicit or explicit goal.

The defining characteristics of demonstration rail/tramways are historical integrity and some sense of the importance of the route, facilities or history. Many of these lines do not make money or make only enough to ensure their own preservation. The prime motivation for their operation is to preserve some aspect of railway heritage in its original form or to provide some sort of meaningful, educational experience. The rides themselves may resemble other types of rail trip experience and there are exceptions to this broad classification. As mentioned previously, some types of operation overlap in classification. In general, authenticity along with the usual passenger amenities, is the product being sold. Many of the short-haul tramway operations in Australia, would fall into the classifica-

tion of “demonstration line” although they do cross over into the “tourist” type of operation. e.g. Ballarat and our own at Valley Heights.

Directing the Journey

These operations help shape the more basic question of why people ride trains. What are some of the reasons who otherwise responsible, early 21st century citizens are willing to spend time and money patronizing an obsolete form of industrial transportation? Is it possible to predict what will appeal to potential riders based on which railway operations are now successful? Are there universal or at least common attributes of recreational rail travel that can be identified and manipulated? People ride for their own reasons but many of those reasons are discrete and widely shared.

A train is a vehicle capable of taking very different people to very different places. Some find solitude or introspection on a railway journey, especially a longer one. The combination of enclosure in a safe, comfortable environment (the carriage), its passage through the landscape (be it boring or otherwise is immaterial) and the sensation that progress is being made (without the attentions of the passenger) can provide a pleasant and soothing experience.

For others, a railway excursion is a more vivid experience. The trip may be very much associated with the present and represent an abiding interest in experiences for their own sake. Dinner trains, scenic excursions and land cruises may have no explicit link to “the past”. They may even strive to be modern. The train is a vehicle for entertainment, the ride is attractive because it is so different from people’s ordinary means of transportation.

Trains also offer historical experiences. *The Western Endeavour* is one major event that comes to mind. *Recreated Mail Train* trips are also attempts at capturing events of the past. The past exerts a powerful influence on the imagination. Historic train trips are one of the most evocative, accessible and effective means for individuals and families to satisfy their curiosity about “the past”. Many people regard a vintage train or motor trip as a means to engage or sample their own history. I think that is the motivation for many families to include a tourist train in their holiday itinerary. The train becomes an experience shared across generations, one that both exposes young people to a popular aspect of our history and offers a tangible link with the experiences of our ancestors.

The Journey’s Reward

Perhaps most importantly, we as a culture have decided that riding trains is fun. On good days (when everything operates as it should) an excursion by train satisfies a passenger’s curiosity and provides pleasant experiences. The anticipation of the journey is rewarded with sights, sounds and sensations available in no other medium. A child’s first train ride is now treated like a “rite of passage” much like a first haircut or first day at school. Men and women use the train as a means to recall memories or to again experience travel as it once was.

Train/tram rides are one way for those of us with an



Our operation at Valley Heights could be classified as a “demonstration” line, exhibiting a particular niche in rail heritage.

“The train becomes an experience shared across generations, one that both exposes young people to a popular aspect of our history and offers a tangible link with the experiences of our ancestors.”

abiding interest in rail heritage, to share our commitment and have fun doing it.

Excursions also are a traditional way for people to enjoy scenery, pass the time in a pleasant way and make connections with their own past. Most passengers believe that rail travel is fun, a worthy recreational activity and at some level, educational— even if the journey itself is essentially pointless.

There may be no absolute answer as to why people ride trains. Asking the question however, can help us consider why we run trains in the first place and provide insights into what we need to offer to keep those wheels rolling well into the future.

(Basic article written by John P. Hankey. *Locomotive & Railway Preservation*, Jan/Feb 1996.)

Another Vignette from the Vault

More tales of travel with the late Len Manny

Len was keeper of the society's treasury for many, many years. Among his other traits, he had a devilish way of manipulating any person in authority who had the temerity to trifle with him. Len loved the English language and never ceased to amaze those of us fortunate enough to have been witness to his verbal and written manipulations of those in authority. When the goal was to win an argument, secure a favour or to take the "mickey" out of some lowly railway staffer, Len was in his element. Mostly he succeeded in baffling his most formable opponent, no matter how large. Only on rare occasions was he ever defeated (see S.S. April 2006.)

The first tale concerns Len's intense interest collecting Edmondson railway tickets. Len had discovered that the small ticket office at the Bathurst Street entrance to Museum station, still held stocks of old, dark green cardboard tickets with "reverse-block" serial numbers. Len desired at least one of the second class Museum to Wollongong return tickets from that rack to expand his extensive collection. One Saturday morning Len led several Parramatta Park colleagues to Museum and had each one purchase a return ticket to the 'gong. Additionally each purchased a return weekend excursion ticket to Otford (the extent of the metropolitan area). Using this excursion ticket the happy band took the underground to Central where we transferred to and occupied a dogbox on the next all stations steam train to the south coast. Occupation of these celebrated dogbox compartments usually ensured that a ticket examiner would be denied an easy access to check and deface, with his clipper, our prized tickets. The ruse was successful, no ticket examiner attempted to enter our hallowed portals.

On arrival at Wollongong Len presented his plan to snare as many of these tickets as possible. He decreed that I, being an innocent pimply-faced lad of 18 or so years, would bolt ahead of the party, mingle with the outgoing passengers and push through the barriers onto the roadway outside without surrendering my prize ticket. This action was heroically executed. As expected two barrier ticket collectors chased me onto the road where I quietly surrendered my forward half of the ticket and apologised for forgetting to hand it in. Meanwhile my partners in this audacious conspiracy were able to spill through the unguarded barriers, spiriting out their prizes intact. Once all the outgoing passengers had departed Len quietly went about the task of picking up tickets discarded by these exiting passengers onto the footpath leading away from the barriers. Len explained, justifying his course of action, was to deny the enemy the opportunity to sweep-up the discarded tickets which, presumably, were to be returned for "audit".

Recollections of the return trip are not all that clear, other than Len, sitting on the lift-up seat outside the WC, sorting the "gems from the footpath" and distributing the not-wanted to his travelling companions. Just like picking the petals off a daisy "she loves me, she loves me not". Once again a dogbox compartment was utilised with the return half of the excursion ticket became valid once again when we stopped at Otford. Should an examiner demand the tickets before reaching Otford it would have been a revelation to see how Len would have

bluffed his way through that just to keep the ticket. Thank goodness we were not travelling on Central platform tickets!

In retrospect I wondered why Len just did not buy a ticket and put it in his collection. Perhaps he relished the thrill of the chase! And just where is my return half of this prized ticket? *Lost.*

Another hilarious incident occurred in the early 1960's when Len and his tramway cohorts were at Central Station to join the "last steam train to Oberon". It was an accepted rule that the barrier staff did not clip any souvenir tickets, only visually checking their validity. The ticket collectors were checking tickets for two trains docked at the platform. One, I recall, went to Newcastle, the other being the special. Somehow one ticket collector, with limited English, did not understand this tradition nor Len's banter. He grabbed the souvenir ticket to punch, or as Len colourfully observed, "to poke holes in a perfectly good ticket".

Then verbal fireworks erupted. Without flinching Len advised his adversary, amongst other things, that "this ticket is only for the suburban area". Our excitable railway servant demanded to know "where you go?" Quick as a wink Len advised that "I go to La Parouse, just past Daceyville, on the Eastern Suburbs line". Amid much laughter from the intending passengers, Len snatched the special ticket from the railway servant's hand, marched up the platform and took his rightful place in his assigned seat. His adversary, not wanting to appear to have lost the bout, brought a higher official into the ticket caper.

Then came the *grand finale*. The aggrieved ticket examiner located Len in the carriage and pointed him out to his mentor. In they went, boots and all, to ensure the offending ticket was punched as per the regulations. As quick as you can say "Jack Robertson" Len, surprising the little audience that had now gathered to witness the *fait accompli*, willingly surrendered a ticket for punching . . . a platform ticket applicable for that day. You see, Len always purchased a platform ticket, only from a booking office and not a vending machine, for just such occasions when officialdom needed a lesson in ticket etiquette, Len's etiquette.

During January, 1963, Len and I embarked on a rail odyssey to Tasmania. The first day, my 21st birthday, saw us travelling to Junee on the steam "Riv". Nothing would daunt Len. He arranged at lunch time for the buffet car ladies to produce an ad hoc birthday cake. As an encore they sang "Happy Birthday" then encouraged all to come out and cause embarrassment by giving me a kiss in front of the incredulous patrons! Len had arranged a night of rest in the Junee Station



With cap at a jaunty angle, this was a typical Len Manny pose at Parramatta Park.

Our excitable railway servant demanded... "where you go?" Quick as a wink Len replied, "I go to La Parouse... on the Eastern suburbs line!"

Hotel, which at that time still catered for travellers. The buffet car ladies stayed the night at Junee causing more embarrassments calling out and whistling me.

The next day was a short hop in the South West Mail to Narrandera, with a change into tin hares for Tocumwal. Then it was over the platform into a VR train to Melbourne. When the SW mail arrived at Junee the next day the second class accommodation was awash with the flotsam and jetsam of the occupants, a football club returning from an outing to the big smoke. Not wanting to travel with such hung-over travelling companions, Len went to the ticket window to pay for excess fares to upgrade the second class tickets.

Len usually wore a white shirt and maroon tie and this day was no exception. The ticket clerk, seeing only Len's face and the collar and tie, assumed he was a conductor off the train. He queried him as to "why would those silly coots want to pay a 1st class excess to Narrandera". Like greased lightning Len seized the moment and replied "because they are silly coots". With that, the booking clerk invited Len into his inner sanctum. Len boldly went in and to his astonishment was invited to execute the paper-work himself. So there he was, filling out the excess fare book for two upgrades, paying in the money and taking the change! What a coup, excess fare tickets to accompany the Sydney-Tocumwal ticket, signed by himself. Wonder if that illegal clerical function was detected at an audit?

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Later that month saw Len and myself enjoying travel over Tasmanian government and private railways for nearly a fortnight. The fiasco of loosing out on the hamper deposit in Hobart made Len more determined than ever to succeed in his ticket pursuits. One section of the grand tour included a journey in on an Emu Bay Railway Company goods train from Zeehan to Rosebery. Here we changed to the celebrated steam-hauled Emu Bay Railway Company's Westcoaster onto Guildford, where another change was made to the following ASG-hauled ore train to Burnie.

When the trams carried your letters.

Most members will be aware that we now have a representation of a letter box on the back of the tram. This was made up from a photograph with the result that some features such as its connection to the apron of the tram may not be quite authentic. Never-the-less it gives some idea of the post box arrangement. Secretary, Peter Stock, has written the following article on that very practical institution from times past, the tramway letter box.

A feature of Sydney steam trams was a little red postal-box on the apron of the rear car. In those bygone days of the ten colony, inter-communication between Sydney and the developing suburbs was not as speedy or frequent as the present day.

The Railways Commissioners made the suggestion of attaching postal boxes to their trams to the colonial post authorities. These new postal boxes would extend to the residents alongside the ever-expanding tramways, a facility to post their letters at the various "tram" suburbs and also when the trams were en route. It should be remembered that with

But the friendly station master at Zeehan was taken by surprise when someone actually wanted to ride the goods train. He tried in vain to convince us to take the bus! Len would not have a bar of this, the train was in the timetable, Len's version of the timetable. Finally they agreed to issue "flimsy" single tickets to Burnie. Again the English language was used to convince the staff an Edmonson ticket was most necessary for the journey. It is with fond memories that I recall the ancient ticket rack being unlocked (only after a search located the key), the door being swung open and the seller blowing accumulated dust from off the tickets within. With our booking concluded the rack was again locked, the key returned to its proper place, probably for evermore. As the train lurched from Zeehan yard Len confided that the station master would have to enter all the details of every ticket in the ticket register instead of the easy task of pulling a bus voucher!

The journey was undertaken, with emphasis on travelling in dog-box style compartments in guards or passenger vehicles. Upon arrival at Guildford we awaited the following ore train where we were invited to ride with the guard. To my disappointment Len declined the kind offer. Once inside the passenger compartment Len puzzled me and proceeded to lock the left-hand door with a key he apparently brought with him.

On arrival in Burnie, ore trains usually stopped in a loop adjacent to but never at the station. Our train followed the accepted procedure. Here the guard helped us to alight onto the main running lines and found "geeze the left-'and door 'az been locked by a person or persons unknown up the line so me'll 'elp yooze out the uva door". So in the confusion of alighting onto the main line the surrendering of the prized Zeehan-Burnie second class single tickets was forgotten. Sadly, the rail passenger service from Zeehan ceased soon after, buses being the order of the day. And so it transpired Len had hatched his plot as a means to an end to ensure possession of a ticket that may well have been the last Edmonson tickets sold at Zeehan. I hope the ticket cabinet key was found so the final audit could be made.



Len Manny collecting fares on the tram in Parramatta Park. The kids pictured L to R top, Belinda Irwin and Phillip Irwin. L to R bottom, Douglas Manny and Ann-Maree Irwin

The ticket clerk..... assumed (Len) was a conductor....and.... invited him to execute the paperwork himself.



The letter box on the end of the trailer car. Signwriting has yet to be done.

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"Preserving the past, enriching the future"

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The museum is located in Tusculum Road, Valley Heights. Ample parking is available. A train service is available to Springwood. Valley Heights station is accessible for museum visitors but you must walk around to the Tusculum Road entrance and not attempt to short-cut across the tracks.

The museum is open between 10 and 4 on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. Trike rides on the 1st Sunday, steam tram rides on the 3rd Sunday only.

Last but not least....

Mail Bag

Received a welcome letter from long-time society supporter, Bill Kingsley of Victoria. Bill writes regarding last issue's article on replicas and his reminiscences of a ride on a cable tram in Melbourne when he was a child.

Bill reminds me of the replica cable grip-car and trailer presently in use in Portland VIC.



Whilst the vehicles are diesel-hydraulic powered, the bodies were built to exact specifications. I too, have ridden on this tram and found the 7.4 km

round-trip thoroughly delightful. The route links several of Portland's attractions. It is well worth a visit. Bill concludes with the wish that someone would build a VR "S" class and make his fantasies come true. (www.portlandcabletrams.com.au)

The Editor.

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You Can't Beat an Old Professional

103A has had an intermittent "knock" coming out of somewhere in the motion, when in steam. Despite the best ears, it has been hard to locate. Steve Tolhurst came very close to locating it when he put steam into the cylinders when the brakes were still on. It appeared very likely to be in a cylinder but what was it? Craig and Steve set to work recently to seriously locate the "knock" and in the

process, rang member Ron Mills (Ex- DLE, Railways) It was just like relaying symptoms to a doctor. Quick as a flash, Ron suggested the problem- a slightly loose nut holding the LHS cylinder head. On taking the cover off and sizing up the situation, the "old doctor's" diagnosis was correct. Only a gap of a few "thou" but enough to cause the noise. It appears the nut was held in place with a tack weld; not the best of practices according to Ron. It needs a proper "Scotch key". Temporary repairs were made pending full repair to be made after the October steaming days.

Good on you Ron! You haven't lost your touch!



Sorry love, not tonight. I've had a massive derailment this afternoon and my departures are all behind.

Quotable Quotes for Museums

Bureaucrats excel at putting sprags in wheels but not grease on axles.

Special note : The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Board of Directors either individually or collectively.

The Editor



Work Report: 1022: Brake shoe castings received. Sand-dome flow-control flippers received. **93B:** Brake assembly return springs received. No.2 vacuum brake coupling fitted **99DD:** Top deck removed. Ceiling timbers removed. Knee brackets manufactured. Shaping of ceiling support timbers commenced. **103A:** LHS cylinder cover removed, Cylinder head nut assembly tightened pending long-term repair.

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them in a pillar box especially erected for that purpose. This postal pillar box was cleared eight times a day between the hours of 12.15 a.m. and 8.10.p.m. Letters had to have the correct postage stamp affixed to them.

Once the tram post box had been cleared and employee had the special duty to remove the box to the other end of the tram for the next outward journey. At the outer terminus, the postal box was again transferred to the trailing end car. This was done by the conductor (during the early steam tram days known affectionately as "troubadours").

The *Budget* report went on to record that this new convenience was greatly appreciated by the public. It further recorded that although the postal boxes has only been set up for a few days, the average number of letters posted by this method had reached 500 per day! The service was introduced on some of the isolated suburban lines as well.

With the conversion of the steam tram system to electric traction from 1899, the postal convenience was extended to the new electric cars. It was later reported however, that children were at a great risk of being struck by this new form of traction. Apparently, the new electric trams were quieter than their predecessors and it was thought that the risk to children posting letters would become greater. This also applied to the adults. Indeed accidents, some fatal, did occur. This concern, together with the greater number of trams and routes being operated, did not warrant the increased expenditure for the new post boxes.

Other proposals were contemplated which included forwarding mail-bags to Sydney station to coincide with the departure of the country mail trains. Necessary agreement could not be reached however, between all the authorities concerned. Mail bags were carried on steam tram services on some of the outer isolated lines. This was in addition to the post box service. Eventually the carriage of mails by tram ceased.

It is interesting to note that the last carriage of letters by a tram post box occurred on . The postal boxes by this time had developed into timber boxes as opposed to the earlier metal boxes. Letter boxes continued to be attached to some railway branch line services. It is not unusually to see an occasional photo of a rail motor with letter box attached.

An example of a timber letter box is on display at the museum and an earlier metal-type box is attached to the trailing end of trailer 93B. On inspection, it is interesting to muse posting a letter by such means in days gone-by. You can't post a letter with a passing bus nowadays!