

WHAT BRINGS SENIOR CITIZENS TO VISIT?

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Introduction

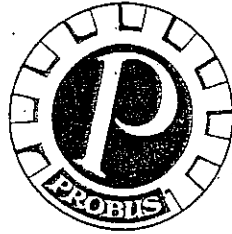
I have been asked to explain what the Senior Citizen expects to see when attending a museum, in particular a tramway museum. So I'm here as a representative of your Senior Citizens - the oldies, sometimes known as the Wobblies, or Grey Power or those for whom the bells toll.

During my term of office as Program Officer for the Brighton Probus Club in 1982, we visited the St. Kilda Tramway Museum. It was a most successful day trip.

In August, 1986 I received a telephone call inviting me to attend the Tramway Conference. After an interval of four years I had almost forgotten the visit and was rather surprised at the invitation - we must have made quite an impression but I accepted it. When I suggested I would have little to say that might be of interest to tramway men, it was indicated that you wanted to know why we had chosen to visit and what our club of retired people thought of the tramway museum.

I will explain to you about:

- Our group of retirees
- The places retirees like to visit
- Impressions of the St. Kilda Tramway Museum



To stimulate thought, interest and participation in activities at a time of life when it is easy to become complacent and self-centred.

PROBUS

CLUBS FOR
RETIRED
PROFESSIONAL AND
BUSINESS MEN,
FORMER EXECUTIVES
AND
OTHERS



THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROBUS IS ONE
OF THE MANY COMMUNITY SERVICE
ACTIVITIES OF ROTARY CLUBS.

WHAT BRINGS SENIOR CITIZENS TO VISIT? (Cont'd)

Our Group of Retirees

Our group of retirees is known as the Probus Club of Brighton. I can assure those of you with a worried look, that PRO-BUS does not stand for Anti Tram. The name Probus is an abbreviation of PROfessional and BUSiness. Probus is an association for retired professional and business men, former executives and others.

The basic purpose of a Probus Club is to provide regular gatherings of men who in retirement, appreciate and value opportunities to meet others in similar circumstances and of a similar level of interest. Incidentally, there are also many womens' Probus Clubs. The Probus motto is:

"To stimulate thought, interest and participation in activities at a time of life when it is easy to become complacent and self-centred".

Activities normally fall into two parts:

- a meeting on a set day each month,
- Visits (between meetings) to places and organisations of particular interest (Members, ladies and friends are invited to participate in most visits)

The Places Retirees Like to Visit

Some of the places we have visited include our old work places, museums, the Stock Exchange, Old Government House, The Advertiser newspaper, Southwark Brewery and Police Headquarters. They love to reminisce about days gone by - the way life used to be before the advent of modern technology. Old people are not interested in modern technological exhibitions. They become confused with too many computers and hi tech gadgets. They'd rather retreat to a world they felt more comfortable in - one they had control of.

WHAT BRINGS SENIOR CITIZENS TO VISIT? (Cont'd)

Impressions of the St. Kilda Tramway Museum

Our visit to the St. Kilda Tramway Museum in 1982 was excellent. It enabled us, not only to remember the past, but actually relive the past by riding on some tramcars. As I recall our group visit included two tram rides and a guided tour of the restored trams, trolleybuses and pictorial displays. An important aspect however, was the way we were made welcome and the infectious spirit of the members. You could tell that they believed in what they were doing. They were volunteer enthusiasts, rather than government workers. An important consideration for old people too, is the provision of suitable toilet facilities.

Other factors which impress about St. Kilda are the other sites to see. Many clubs like to make a day of it and look for other activities to fill the day. At St. Kilda, as well as the trams, there is a hotel, a mangrove boardwalk, an adventure playground (to look at of course, at our age) and picnic facilities. A visit to St. Kilda can even be included as part of a trip to the Barossa Valley.

But most of all, St. Kilda has its beautifully restored trams and tram rides. It offers pure nostalgia - even down to punching the tickets.

ADDING REALITY TO A SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMME

Mostyn Schneider
Principal, Plympton Primary School

Introduction

The upsurge of interest in things historical has been a feature of the Jubilee 150 Year in South Australia (1986).

Government interest and financial support have been apparent - and it is to be hoped that this will carry over into the Bi-Centenary Year of 1988. We hope that South Australians will not have run out of steam (electricity!!) by then.

The national Heritage lobby has become a strong voice in the preservation of our buildings and it is to be hoped, also, that this interest will rub off on all other areas of heritage preservation.

Since about 1980, schools in South Australia have been constantly celebrating their centenaries, as it is over a century since the State began its Education system (following the Education Act of 1875). These centenaries have been a major influence in reminding children of the value of the past, in appreciating the present and in helping to plan for the future.

As a child at school, I was always puzzled by the apparently similar words, TRAM and PRAM.

I knew the Latin origin of PRAM ("perambulare" - to walk about) and could not understand why TRAM did not have a similar origin, since both were forms of Transport.

ADDING REALITY TO A SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMME (Cont'd)

Dictionaries indicate that the Etymology of the word is doubtful in origin although some tie it in with some form of road.

To me, a Tram was, and still is, an electric vehicle; and I found it also difficult to see why the early trams were horse-drawn.

In South Australia, the first tramway to be built was first encouraged by Governor Young in 1850, I discovered. This line was proposed to join Goolwa to Port Elliot.

It was operational by early 1854, when a more favoured line was begun, linking Adelaide to Port Adelaide. This line, however, became a steam line.

Horse trams served Adelaide in its infancy until 1909, when the first electric trams ran to Kensington.

The first attempt to build an electrified tram in South Australia however took place in 1889, when an attempt was made to drive an old horse tram by using electric batteries.

This information is probably "old hat" to you but I found it new and interesting.

This was obviously not successful, since a further 20 years elapsed before electric trams became a workable proposition for Adelaide.

Nevertheless, it was a notable beginning.

ADDING REALITY TO A SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMME (Cont'd)

My mother has told many stories of her travelling from North Adelaide to Adelaide per horse tram prior to 1909:

- a) Of the problems of the hill in front of Adelaide Childrens' Hospital.
- b) How the horses frequently slipped and fell and were not infrequently brutally whipped to get them back onto their feet again.
- c) How drunkenness of the drivers was not uncommon.
- d) And how a third horse was often led behind for use when the slopes were reached.

The rapid expansion of Adelaide's population in the years following World War 1 saw the growth of public transport and especially of the electric trams.

From 1921 - 1927, Adelaide's population grew from 301,742 to 369,630 and new lines were constructed to serve new suburbs.

Electric tramcars, in my memory, were notable for the following reasons:

- Cleanliness (in the sense of being non-polluters)
- Reliability
- Large Capacity
- Multi-exits (good for passengers, but not for conductors)

These reasons made them a good medium of urban transport.

In later years, trolley buses were used to complement the tram services but these didn't run the area I lived in, so I had little experience of them.

ADDING REALITY TO A SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMME (Cont'd)

1958 saw the end of electric trams in Adelaide (excepting the Glenelg line) for reasons which, I believe, were related to politics and to the inflexibility of their routes (i.e. rails).

All this apparent history is relevant to the studies of South Australian development which our children follow at School in the field of Social Studies.

At this stage, I would like to specify a basic principle of learning and teaching which is "from the CONCRETE to the ABSTRACT", or conversely and equally truly, "from the ABSTRACT to the CONCRETE".

Example Warnings and hot stove.

Example Picture of electric tram to concrete experience.

The interest of school children in Transport (including Electric Transport) begins as early as Year 3/Grade 3 (8 - 9 year olds) when their Social Studies course deals with the following topic:

TRAVEL & TRANSPORT

- a) Different kinds of transport.
- b) Uses for goods/people/work/pleasure.
- c) Early types of transport.
- d) People's choices.
- e) Dependence of people on transport.

Following the basic concept of leading children from the CONCRETE to the ABSTRACT etc., it is desirable for children to experience among other things, visits to a tramway (or steam train) museum.

ADDING REALITY TO A SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMME (Cont'd)

Most schools would agree with this notion, but such extra-curricular activities require money and this brings a new perspective into the topic.

Although "Free Education" is one of the many "carrots" dangled in front of new, prospective immigrants over the years, they soon learnt that it is not totally free.

Is anything free?

Excursions have to be paid for by the parents, who, in turn, need to be convinced that the excursions will be of sound educational value to their children. You, no doubt, are or have been such parents!

Communication and publicity are required to convince the schools and parents that visits to such museums as the St. Kilda Electric Tramway Museum are of value to their children.

Money is also essential to the upkeep and development of the Museums, which cannot rely on regular government grants, subsidies or hand-outs.

The "Package Deal" is a fact of life today and is the sort of arrangement which suits both schools and museums and no doubt appeals to the parents and teachers too, as good value.

eg. St. Kilda Tramway Museum/St. Kilda
Playground/Mangrove Board Walk.

This package, or part of it, helps to justify the distance which must be travelled to the Museum.

ADDING REALITY TO A SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAMME (Cont'd)

For the children, there is no comparison between looking at a picture of an old tramcar and actually climbing onto one and riding on it.

- a) to see its immense (to a child) size.
- b) to climb aboard, stepping high and grasping a hand-rail.
- c) to sit on a slippery, wooden seat and be able to slide along it (the Patina of Posteriors!)
- d) to experience the sound and motion of the vehicle.
- e) to be able to hang from a leather strap and ring a bell by pulling a cord.
- f) and to go home and describe the experiences to parents who fully understand what they are talking about.

Admittedly, the children from my school live close to the Glenelg tramline and frequently use the electric tram but they are not aware of its predecessors.

I am impressed by the loving care put into restoration at St. Kilda.

Without these supportive enthusiasts another phase of our heritage would have been lost.

The price is high to preserve the trams, in terms of both labour and materials and the situation resembles to some extent the plight of the stately homes of England, in that money must be raised for further restoration.

But if our children are to be able to see working examples of transport from a former era - and their children too - increased publicity, especially in schools, is important.