

WHAT HAVE WE AT OUR MUSEUMS TO BRING IN THE PEOPLE?

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Much of what I have to present to you today concerns the successful running of charter visits, but alot of it can be applied to the visitors who come to your site during regular operations.

Access

Visitors to any Museum must find that the entrance to the site is accessible for their vehicle - be it private car or tourist coach. This is one aspect for which the AETM is to be commended. The car park is laid out very well. One small tree was removed when I suggested that it proving a problem to large coaches, and a very good turning circle was the result. Several Coach Captains have since praised the Museum, and expressed the comment "I wish some other places respected our vehicles paintwork like you do."

Pedestrian access from car/coach parking areas must be free of obstructions. Again the AETM is quite good - pathways are as clear as possible without being paved. When Senior Citizens first arrive I always (during my greeting to them) remind them of the need to take care on the Depot fan area when crossing tracks to reach the trams they are to ride. As far as I know we have not had any incidents of people tripping and falling when making their way to and from the carpark.

Facilities

The grounds need to be attractive. Trees on the site improve the appearance and provide shade ofcourse, but some

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commonsense must be used in regard to fire safety. Grass kept mown can be as good as planted lawns and probably more in keeping with our site.

Seats are a necessity - older folk like to sit and watch the movement of the trams and let the memories come flooding back. Young mums are also grateful for a chance to rest when spending an afternoon at the museum with their family. Toilets are an obvious necessity - the new block at St.Kilda is very practical, and the planting of trees and bushes around the green coloured building is to be commended. (It doesn't stand out like a "country.....")

Refreshments - at present rather a debated point at St.Kilda. Our site is quite a distance away from any other refreshment facility, and of late we have been able to raise money by selling tea/coffee/cakes/biscuits/etc. on operating days, and also by supplying morning teas or lunches when pre-booked for charters. Everyone enjoys a tea break - even some of the crews disappear when the kettle is boiled! So the potential for fundraising through catering needs to be explored and indeed exploited if possible.

Storage areas for rail, sleepers and other items must be right away from the public area, not only for appearance but for safety too.

Visitors

Visitors must be greeted and made to feel that you are pleased that they are visiting your site. It's not easy greeting strangers - but it's much easier than making a speech at a Conference! Many a time as a coach arrived for a charter I would much rather have let them wander in, but that's not the first impression they need of us. We want them to enjoy their so much that they will comeback and bring other people with them. So, it's take a deep breath,

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breath, board the coach as soon as the door is opened and bid a cheery greeting to the Coach Captain and passengers. If the visit is a first for the Coach Captain he/she will need to know just as much as the passengers about what is going to happen during the visit. If he (there are not many "she" Captains) has been to the Museum before, he may have told the passengers the form the visit will take, so you need to be alert and not repeat a lot of information.

Guides can make or break the visit of a group. Commentaries need to be varied according to the group. Children need to be educated in an enjoyable and interesting way. Little ones really can't absorb facts and figures, but they do like little stories about trams and buses, and they like something to take home - a simple Project Sheet is invaluable.

Older students sometimes come to the Museum with special projects organised by their teachers, and it is then up to the guides to assist them find the answers they need.

Senior Citizens also do not need to be weighed down with facts and figures. They remember using electric trams and can be a gold mine of anecdotes and memories. They relive days gone and can often be heard to comment that they must return and bring their children and grandchildren. Return business - that's what we need!

It's important that some member always remains in attendance during any visit or operating day. I recently visited one museum (which shall remain nameless) and could have walked away with numerous items of historical value, not to mention many dollars worth of tools and equipment. The three members on site were having a coffee break, and the building was wide open for anyone to wander in and take something. Conversely, a prospective "large" donor (monetary or historic relic)

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seeing no one in attendance may have given up and walked away.

Publicity

Paid publicity is becoming more and more expensive, so as many avenues as possible must be found to promote the Museum with little expense. Television magazine type shows can bring enormous publicity. Our members will remember the "State Affair" telecast one Friday evening about two years ago, and the resulting crowds on the Sunday and Monday of that particular holiday weekend and for quite a while after.

Radio talkback has also been used many times and created interest and publicity for normal operations as well as special occasions.

Always inform the media of any special movements of vehicles (or arrival of new ones). They may wish to film or photograph and we hope they do. Unveiling of restored exhibits or special "gala" type days can also gain free publicity. Restoration Days, Santa Tram operations and Charity Days can all cause reporters to see and tell, and when they tell we reap the rewards.

Conclusion

I hope you have gained something from my comments today. I feel that St.Kilda has so much to offer, and I have tried, and will continue to try, to promote our establishment. The potential is enormous - it is up to us to capitalise on it.

Finally a personal word. Thankyou for sharing in our Conference, and I hope you are enjoying the new format of living in at the session site. It is a thrill for me to finally meet the faces behind the names which appear in "Trolley Wire" and "Tramway Topics". Best wishes to all Museums.