

A Presentation by Peter Kahn.

Since my presentation at the first COTMA Conference held in Ballarat in April 1975, naturally a lot has happened in the Australasian tramway preservation scene, although as this is intended as an update about the S.T.M., I will try and limit it. Notwithstanding, this might provide the inspiration for the production of a historical review of tramway preservation in Australia and New Zealand - might be a massive project!

In addition to my own recollection and reference to issues of Trolley Wire, the late Mike Giddey who was also a long-time member of SPER/STM, put together during Covid lockdown in 2020, a detailed history of the life and times of the Museum - a valuable source of information which I have used to add to this review.

SYDNEY TRAMWAY MUSEUM since 1975 - A review of the next 50 years.

Following upon the preservation of Sydney L/P class tramcar No. 154 by our founding members, under the auspices of the Australian Electric Traction Association in 1950, by 1975 the Museum had settled into a regular routine of public operation of preserved tramcars each Sunday and other selected days.

With the limitation imposed on the Museum continuing activities at the R.N.P. site, much time was spent looking at alternate locations for a future operating museum, including in the South-Western area of outer Sydney near Campbelltown. However, later in 1975, we received approval for a development of the new museum at Loftus, on the Eastern side of the railway and Loftus Railway Station, a short distance from the first site. The land, previously a portion of the then National Park, had been hived off when the Princes Highway was constructed through Sutherland and south to Wollongong and beyond.

There was provision for a tramway to be constructed towards Sutherland, but possibly alongside the Illawarra Railway. However, fortuitously, Sutherland Shire Council became involved, with the suggestion that the tramway could parallel the then Princes Highway on land previously reserved for widening of the highway. So, it came to pass, that in 1976, work commenced on clearing the site and associated earthworks. The funds to achieve the construction of the new museum? In the late 70s, there was a change of State Government, with Neville Wran becoming Premier and Minister for Cultural Activities. This heralded a new era for heritage conservation with funding available for heritage related projects. The museum was successful in receiving approval of funding with the result that in January 1980 the contract was signed for the first stage of the main building - Display Hall and Running Shed.

At this stage, it must be acknowledged the tremendous amount of time that was being expended by some of our Board and active working members who at the same time

were gainfully employed in full-time jobs. Sadly, so many have passed away in later years, but the museum today is testament to all the time and effort expended. Around this time also, what became a long-term and continuing association, commenced with Alex Canini and his family with his local earth-moving business for ongoing track and construction works.

Meanwhile, activities continued at the R.N.P. site, with Brisbane Phoenix car 548 entering service in 1978 and the skeleton of Trolleybus No. 19 was acquired, along with a couple of former top-decks to enable restoration (or reconstruction) ultimately to operable condition. Also in 1978, Scrubber car 134s returned to Randwick Tramway Workshops to be prepared for track scrubbing on the newly constructed Eastern Suburbs Railway later that year and early 1979, operated by our members, led by Bob Cowing. During these times and into the 1980s, there were a number of transfers, with privately preserved R1-1971 acquired from Little Hartley on the Western side of the Blue Mountains, Trolleybus 19 to the NSW Railways Apprentice Training College at Chullora for restoration/reconstruction, arrival (at new site) of NSWGR L707 "Gentle Annie" (ex NSWGT 42s) added to the STM collection, O-1111 returned to Manly for display on existing tram-track as part of the Manly Summer Festival in January 1981 and in conjunction with vintage bus operations, including our Leyland Tiger 1275 and Albion 1615. In March 1982, K-1296 was on display at North Sydney for the 50th Anniversary of Sydney Harbour Bridge, then returned to Loftus, but to the new site, where there was now a fully enclosed building (the first half of the Display Hall - Running Shed).

Meanwhile, Scrubber 134s had another job, this time in 1983 on the Cronulla Railway duplication. In 1985, P-1497 went to Waverley Bus Depot (formerly Tram Depot) for the 25th Anniversary as a bus depot, returning to the RNP site. However, during this time, a number of tramcars were transferred from the old to the new site, to the extent that on 22/2/86, in conjunction with the 25th Anniversary of the last tram to run in Sydney, trams operated at both sites. Not forgetting our small collection of buses, Leyland Tiger TS7 No. 275 (also known as 1275) became 50 years old in 1987, in private preservation from 1970, then later transferred to the S.T.M. to illustrate the time when buses started use as feeder services to the tram and railway services in Sydney. Also in 1987, we received the first overseas tramcar - San Francisco PCC Streetcar 1014 as a Bicentennial gift to Sydney. In 1988, Sydney Trolleybus 19, externally restored, was received from the Railway Apprentice Training School at Chullora, when the decision was made to close that facility.

In the 1980s, the Bicentennial of British settlement in Australia was approaching and government funding for commemorative projects was available. The museum was successful in approval of \$150,000 for construction of a Restoration Building (for workshop use) and the installation of a traverser to link the Workshop and Display Hall to the access track. In addition local government Bicentennial funding was also

received from Sutherland Shire Council for concreting of the floor in the Display Hall/Running Shed. The requirement to complete construction by 1988 meant a comfortable lead time, leading to public operations at the Royal National Park site finishing on Sunday 13th March, with R1-1979 closing operations similar to that of the last tram day in Sydney - 25th February 1961. Then the new Loftus site was officially opened on Saturday 19th March as a Bicentennial project in Sutherland Shire by Gerry Gleeson, Chairman of the N.S.W. Bicentennial Council, with local Federal, State and Council representatives in attendance, with F-393 leading the convoy, followed by O-1111, P-1497 and R-1740 carrying a mass of passengers. It was also N.S.W. State Election day, which saw a change of government.

A year later, after obtaining a variety of funding support, construction of the rear half of the main building occurred, which enabled the transfer of the remaining trams from the old site as it had to be vacated. On 19th January 1990 the body of R1-1933, which had served in various guises including as a first-aid room at Randwick Bus Depot, was donated by the Urban Transit Authority, subsequently becoming our temporary bookshop.

In June 1991, the branch railway from Loftus Junction to The Royal National Park (running past our old site) suffered a signalling fault and the service was suspended. In addition, work was required to upgrade the level crossing with the Princes Highway, at an anticipated great cost. The museum proposed linking up with this line and operating the trams along it, fulfilling a dream we had - same gauge and simply disconnect the railway junction. The overhead wire unfortunately had been removed, but new wire and associated fittings were obtained - job done! After much discussion and support from Sutherland Shire Council, politicians and others and a lot of hard work by a few dedicated members and workers, the railway line was officially closed, agreements signed, the crossing reconstructed for traffic safety reasons and on 1st May 1993 the Hon. Bruce Baird, then State Minister for Transport, drove R1-1971 along the line to The Royal National Park.

November 1992 had seen the arrival of Nagasaki tramcar 1054 as our second international acquisition. January 1994 saw a hiccup with operation of the R.N.P. line when a bushfire caused the line to be closed due to fire damage in the Park. Notwithstanding, there was much activity during the 1990s, with tram bodies arriving, for ultimate restoration, a substantial rail heritage grant for construction of a third shed on the western side of the museum site, installation of fire sprinklers (after the disaster for the Steam Tram and Railway Preservation Society at Parramatta) and to restore C-29. W2-244 came to the museum to be prepared for operation in Christchurch N.Z. on the new city tramway, to be followed later by W2-441, removed (dismantled) from Maroubra Junction Hotel, ultimately to be fitted out as a restaurant tram for Christchurch City Tramway, entering service there on 5th January 2000. The

Newcastle Tram Museum had encountered difficulties, resulting in the collection being transferred to our care, but with ex-Newcastle L/P tramcar transferring to the Newcastle Regional Museum. Howard Clark, our erstwhile Treasurer and for much of the time Chairman of the Board, negotiated the purchase, for a nominal sum, 2 Berlin 4-wheel motor cars and a matching trailer, arriving at Loftus in October 1996, adding to our international collection. Then along came J-675, which had been a backyard workshop in South-Western Sydney, followed on 26th June 1997 by C-12 and K-1295 transferred from Norm Boxall's backyard. In 1998, the body of Kalgoorlie No. 23 arrived, followed in March 1999 by two Munich 3-axle tramcars.

1997 saw trams return to Sydney with the opening of the Sydney Light Rail Line from Central Station's Railway Colonnade to Wentworth Park, with our C-29 on display at Central. However, before all that happened, Scrubber 134s returned to the streets of Sydney, after all these years, to prepare the track for operation. Then in July 1999, a Federal Community Grant was received to make C-29 fully operational (launched in June 2001). So, to the next year, the oldest electric tram C-290 (from 1896) carried the Olympic flame from the Museum towards Sutherland on 11th September 2000, to finally arrive at the Olympic Games at Homebush Bay.

In February 2000, R-1808, which had been on display in Bondi Junction, alongside the heritage-listed Boot Factory, after being restored under a Bicentennial Grant by Waverley Municipal Council (assisted by member Chris O'Sullivan), after transfer to S.T.M. arrived at Loftus, but that was only the beginning. In June 2000, it was transported to Bendigo to be made fully operational; December it ran in Bendigo; March 2001 participated in the Moomba Parade; October 2003 - A.E.T.A. 60th Anniversary tour; then December 2009 to MOTAT Auckland for operation; finally in 2017 to Ferrymead Christchurch for operation on the City Tramway where it is today (as 1888).

Meanwhile, back in Sydney, approval was given by Sydney City Council for dismantling the heritage-listed Bathurst Street facade of the Y.M.C.A. building then being redeveloped, to be erected at the museum, thus creating a period backdrop for the passing trams, with the bulk of the facade stonework being completed by mid-2002. In Canberra (September 2001), R1-2001 and W2-249 were on display promoting the proposed Federation Heritage Line, with 2001 operating on a short length of tram-track, both having been made operational at Bendigo.

At this stage to keep this paper to a reasonable length, I'll skim over the next few years, highlighting what I feel are major points of interest.

In 2005, R1-1971 was transferred to the A.E.T.M. for operation at St. Kilda.

In 2006, O-1111 paid a visit by road to Bondi Beach Public School promoting the children's book *The Tram to Bondi Beach*.

In 2011, O-805 was received on loan from the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Castle Hill (Powerhouse Museum) and The Royal National Park Line was upgraded by John Holland Rail.

In 2015, after we had reoccupied the old site by lease to store surplus tram and bus bodies awaiting ultimate restoration, fire destroyed the contents, including the bodies of C-12 and K-129 - definitely arson.

In 2016, Z-111 was now in service in the original orange and cream colours.

In 2017, the railway sub-station in Sutherland was officially opened after restoration through transport heritage, as additional display space and steam motor 1A was transferred from M.A.A.S. Castle Hill on loan to Loftus.

Then came Covid-19 and lockdown in 2020 - a disruption around the nation and the world. Since then life at S.T.M. has more or less returned to normal, albeit with public opening days basically now limited to Sundays and Wednesdays, as volunteer availability has decreased. Fortunately, we have very good ongoing public support, as we carry on demonstrating an important part of our urban transport and social history. Today, we still have much work ahead of us to complete the museum as envisaged, as well as ongoing running maintenance, restoration and conservation.

In concluding, I wish to pay tribute to all the members and supporters who have contributed their time and effort to bring the Museum to where it is today. In particular, we remember all those members who have passed on, many having contributed thousands of hours and/or much funding support. As a wholly volunteer organisation, we have had our personalities since the start of the venture as a living museum - preserving L/P-154 in 1950, setting a precedent in transport preservation. As I tell people, we're a mixed bunch - I'm proud to have known so many past and present over many years.

Thank you.

Peter Kahn, Sydney Tramway Museum - Public Relations