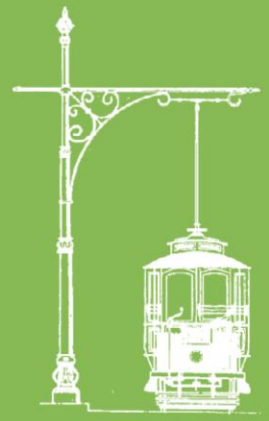
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952



A brief look at the history of *Trolley Wire* and at its uses as a research tool for tramway heritage

The editors, John Cowper and Robert Lee, gratefully acknowledge the indispensable assistance of Corinne Cowper

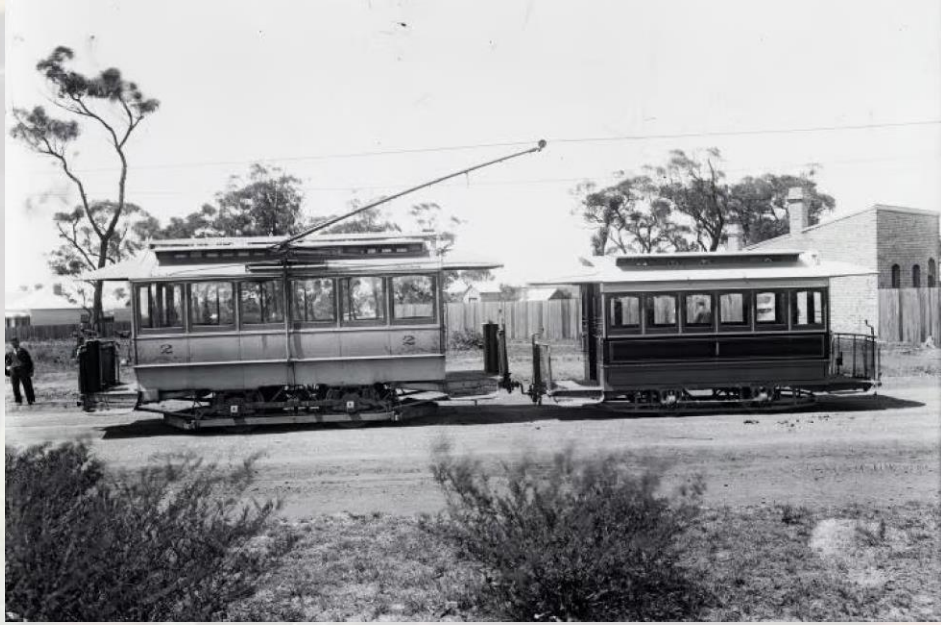
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

A long history

- *Trolley Wire,* like its publisher, has a long history, its first issue having appeared in 1952.
- Published without a break for 71 years, the magazine is now exactly as old as the period of operation of Sydney's first electric tram network from 1890 to 1961.
- This difference in time illustrated in these two images of the trams of 1890 and 1961 (courtesy of the MAAS and Clyde Shoebridge respectively).
- During that time the magazine, and its coverage, have changed considerably.



Above: Experimental electric tram of 1890 and older cable trailer in the wilds of Mosman, c 1893.
Below: Elizabeth Street, Sydney, 25 February 1961.



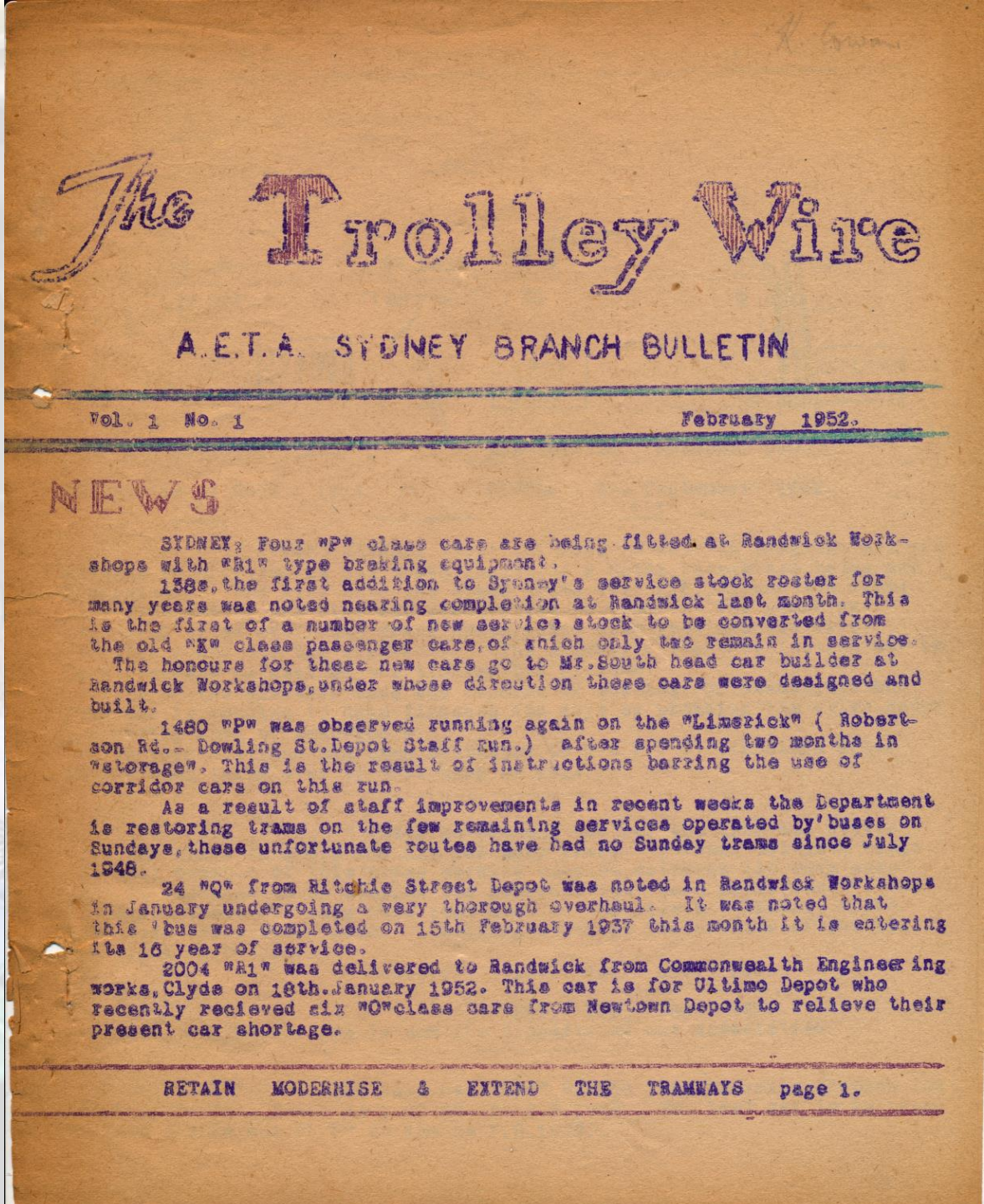
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

Origins

- At first. *The Trolley Wire* was a newsletter for Sydney members of the Australian Electric Traction Association, who later formed the South Pacific Electric Railway Co-operative Society.
- Vol 1, No. 1 was published in February 1952, bearing the slogan: 'Retain, modernise and extend the tramways'.
- News included:
  - Construction of 138s at Randwick (later MMTB 10W)
  - Delivery of R1 2004
  - Prototype P 1480 working the 'Limerick'
- SPER Co-op remains the legal entity operating the Sydney Tramway Museum and the publisher of *Trolley Wire*.



The Trolley Wire

A.E.T.A. SYDNEY BRANCH BULLETIN

Vol. 1 No. 1 February 1952.

NEWS

SYDNEY: Four "P" class cars are being fitted at Randwick Workshops with "R1" type braking equipment.

138s, the first addition to Sydney's service stock roster for many years was noted nearing completion at Randwick last month. This is the first of a number of new service stock to be converted from the old "X" class passenger cars, of which only two remain in service.

The honours for these new cars go to Mr. South head car builder at Randwick Workshops, under whose direction these cars were designed and built.

1480 "P" was observed running again on the "Limerick" (Robertson Rd.- Dowling St. Depot Staff run.) after spending two months in "storage". This is the result of instructions barring the use of corridor cars on this run.

As a result of staff improvements in recent weeks the Department is restoring trams on the few remaining services operated by buses on Sundays, these unfortunate routes have had no Sunday trams since July 1948.

24 "Q" from Ritchie Street Depot was noted in Randwick Workshops in January undergoing a very thorough overhaul. It was noted that this "bus was completed on 15th February 1937 this month it is entering its 16 year of service.

2004 "R1" was delivered to Randwick from Commonwealth Engineering works, Clyde on 18th. January 1952. This car is for Ultimo Depot who recently recieved six "O" class cars from Newtown Depot to relieve their present car shortage.

RETAIN MODERNISE & EXTEND THE TRAMWAYS page 1.

Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

Editors

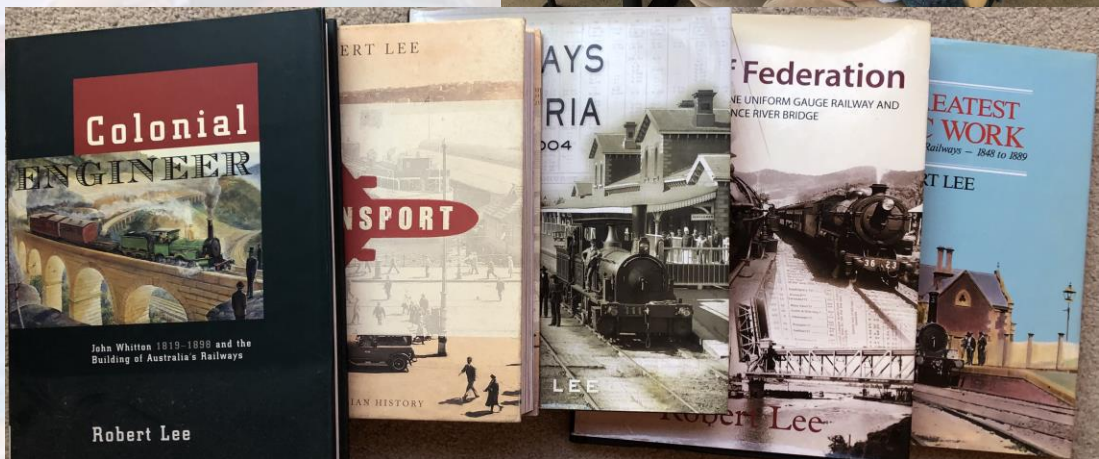
- Astonishing editorial continuity, all volunteers.
- Bob Merchant, a young clerk with the NSWGR, was editor or production manager continually from No. 107, December 1966 to No. 371, November 2022.
- A strange twist: Dale Budd, a frequent contributor, both preceded Bob as editor and succeeded him 52 years later as acting editor.
- The present editors, both retired, are only on their second issue. John ran an advertising agency, while Robert was an academic historian at Western Sydney University, so has experience editing, writing and publishing.



Left: Bob Merchant, 2019

Below: John and Corinne Cowper with Robert Lee, 2022

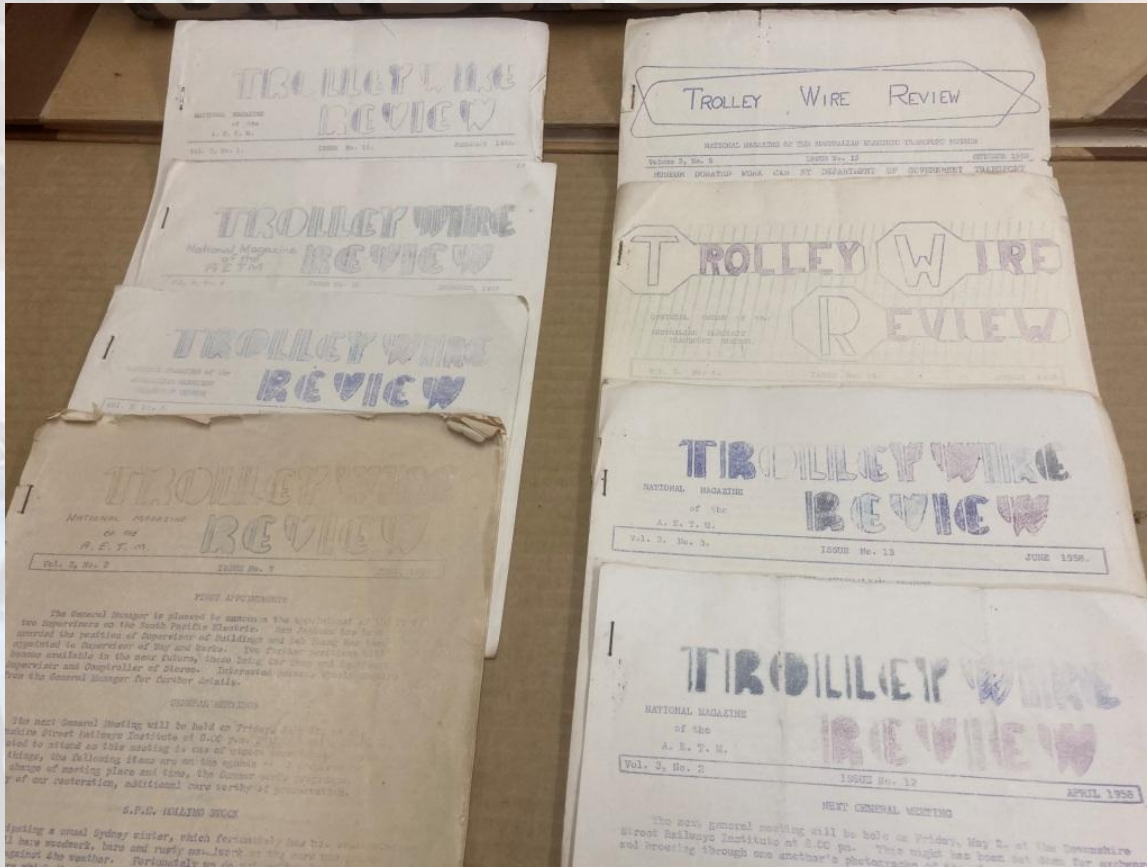




Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023
TROLLEY WIRE
telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

The 1950s: from system news to museum news

- Museum activities began with the donation by Commissioner of Government Transport, A.A. Shoebridge, of L/P car No 154 in July 1950.
- Royal National Park site established by 1957.
- Until 1961, *Trolley Wire Review* reported both system and museum news, after 1961 the latter.
- Also advised members of tram and trolley bus tours until 1961.
- At right, some issues from 1958 courtesy of Colin Seymour of AETM Adelaide.



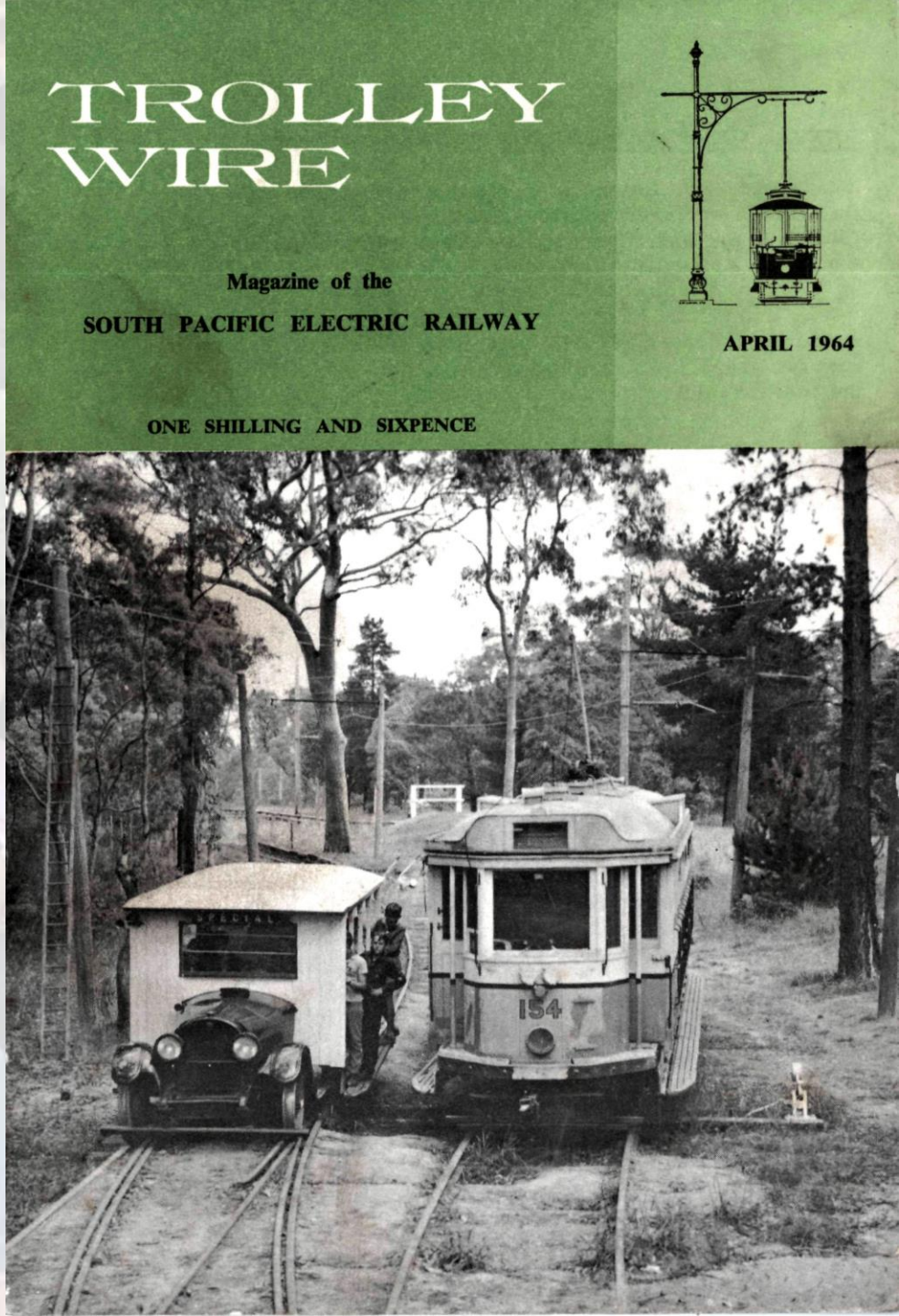
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

The 1960s: a real magazine for a real museum

- Moved from spirit duplicated ‘Review’ to illustrated magazine format from April 1964.
- By 1963 a Cadillac railmotor from Richmond Main Colliery was operating for public rides.
- And in 1965 L/P 154 ran at the Museum under electric power from a substation recovered from the Ritchie Street trolley bus depot in Sans Souci.



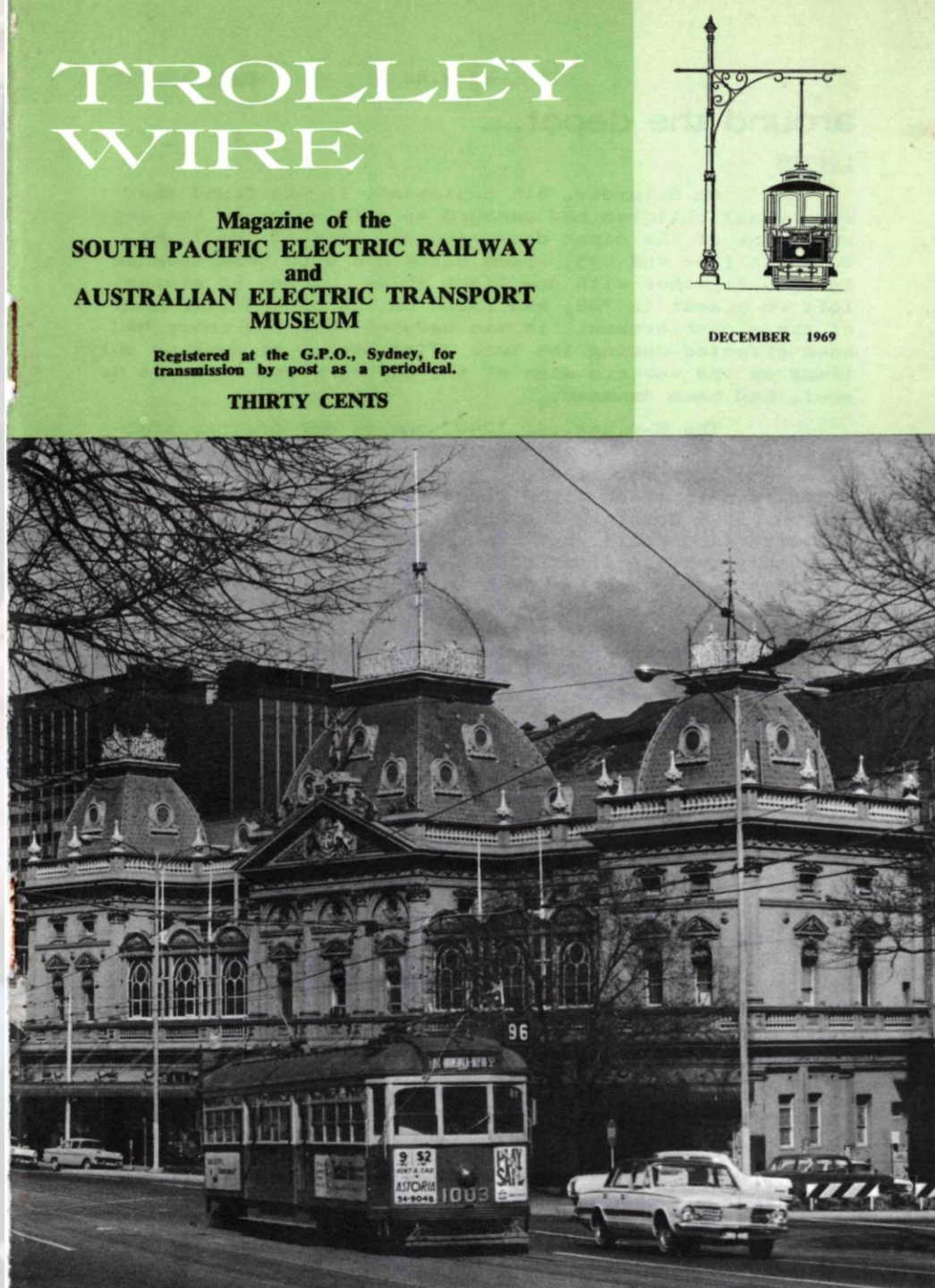
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

Wider horizons

- During the 1960s, the magazine covered various Australian operations, especially in Victoria.
- SPER organised tours interstate, notably visits to Ballarat and Bendigo, all lovingly and visually lavishly documented in *Trolley Wire*.
- Theatres and trams became a bit of a theme.
- SPER even became a rail tour operator, especially the glorious last weekend of FY 1963-64, when on the Saturday ancient tank locomotive 1307 took a happy trainload of passengers to the museum for Cadillac rides, and on Sunday 3801 set a record time of just over two hours to Newcastle, both organised by SPER.



Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

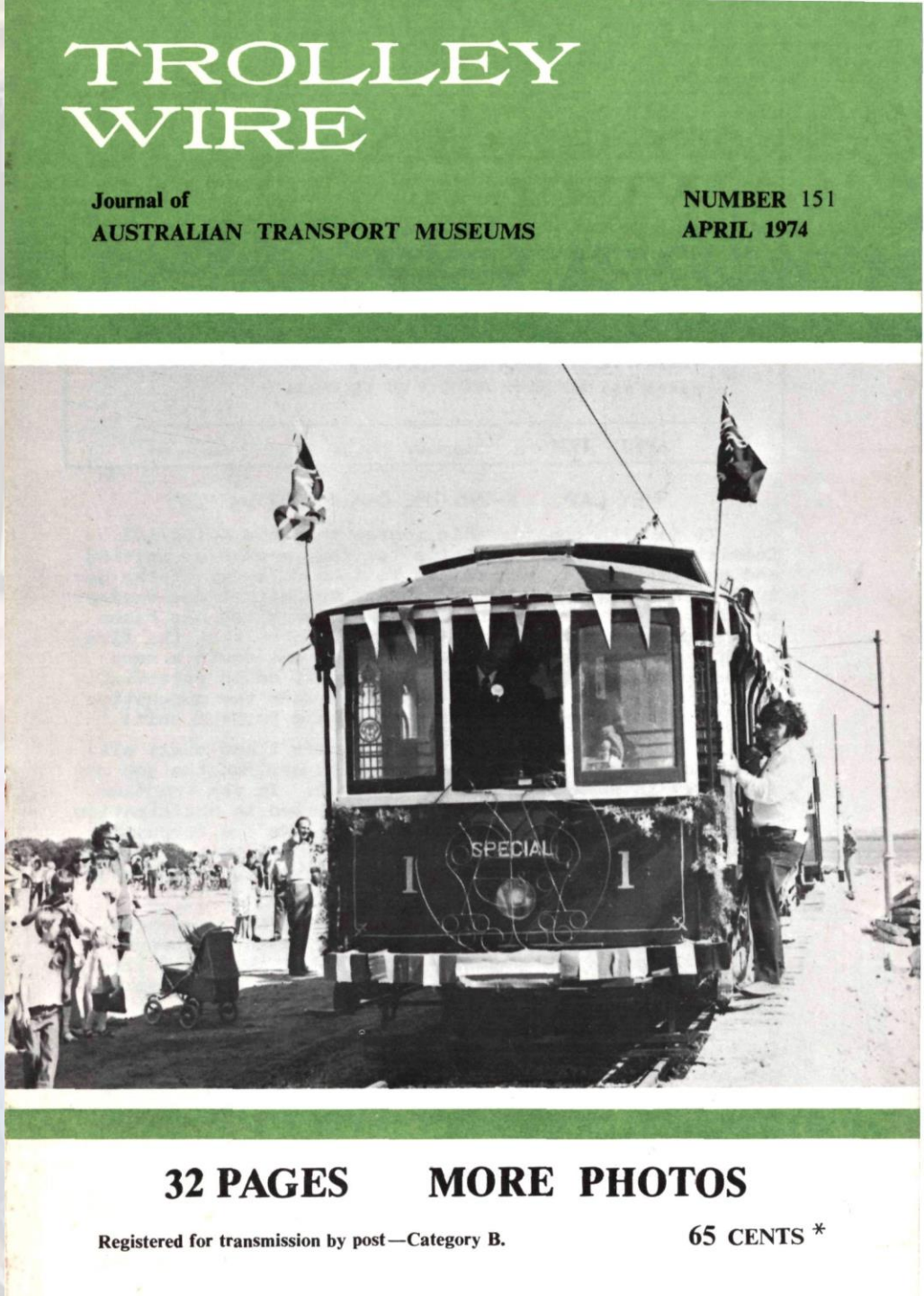
telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

And yet wider

- From June 1969 *Trolley Wire* welcomed the members of the AETM in Adelaide as subscribers.
- In April 1974 it featured prominently the opening of the AETM St Kilda museum near Adelaide.
- The orientation to a national focus came easily to the magazine, as its editors and contributors perforce tended to travel a lot, in search of trams to ride and photograph.

WELCOME ABOARD!

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome members of the Australian Electric Transport Museum (S.A.) Inc. as regular readers of "Trolley Wire". The progress made by the AETM at St. Kilda will be receiving regular coverage in these pages together with details of their new acquisitions as they are obtained. We trust they will find interesting reading in "Trolley Wire".



Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

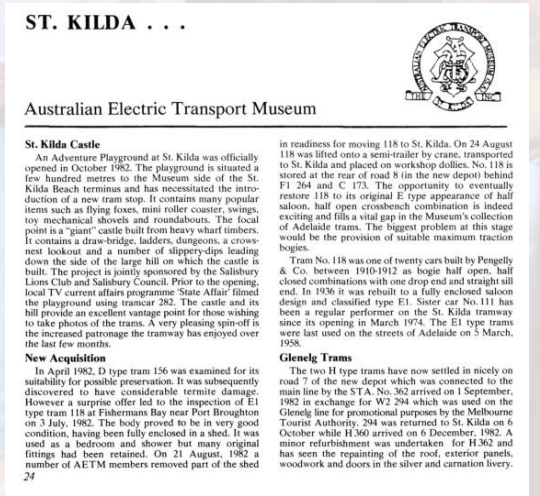
TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

The Adelaide connection

- Heroically, *Trolley Wire* was published six times a year from 1964 until the end of 1986, reduced to quarterly from February 1987.
- Adelaide news became significant since, from 1968 to 1988, *Trolley Wire* was the magazine of both SPER and the AETM (SA).
- Colin Seymour (pictured memorably attired at the opening at St Kilda on 23 March 1974) was long-term Adelaide correspondent.
- Colin and others provided regular reports from the AETM (SA) and also feature article on historical themes such as the Adelaide tramway closure.





ST. KILDA . . .

Australian Electric Transport Museum

St. Kilda Castle

An Adventure Playground at St. Kilda was officially opened in October 1982. The playground is situated a few hundred metres to the Museum side of the St. Kilda Beach terminus and has necessitated the introduction of a new tram stop. It contains many popular items such as flying foxes, mini roller coaster, swings, toy mechanical shovels and roundabouts. The focal point is a "giant" castle built from heavy wharf timbers. It contains a draw-bridge, ladders, dungeons, a crows-nest lookout and a number of slippery-dips leading down the side of the large hill on which the castle is built. The project is jointly sponsored by the Salisbury Lions Club and Salisbury Council. Prior to the opening, local TV current affairs programme 'State Affair' filmed the playground using tramcar 282. The castle and its hill provide an excellent vantage point for those wishing to take photos of the trams. A very pleasing spin-off is the increased patronage the tramway has enjoyed over the last few months.

New Acquisition

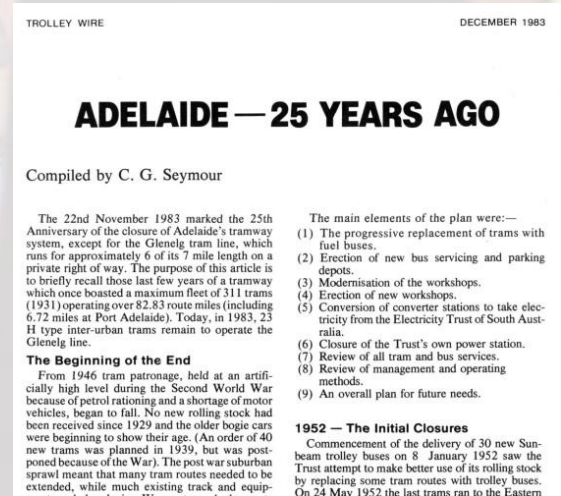
In April 1982, D type tram 156 was examined for its suitability for possible preservation. It was subsequently discovered to have considerable termite damage. However a surprise offer led to the inspection of E1 type tram 118 at Fishermans Bay near Port Broughton on 3 July, 1982. The body proved to be in very good condition, having been fully enclosed in a shed. It was used as a bedroom and shower but many original fittings had been retained. On 21 August, 1982 a number of AETM members removed part of the shed in readiness for moving 118 to St. Kilda. On 24 August 118 was lifted onto a semi-trailer by crane, transported to St. Kilda and placed on workshop dollies. No. 118 is stored at the rear of road 8 (in the new depot) behind F1 264 and C 173. The opportunity to eventually restore 118 to its original E type appearance of half saloon, half open crossbench combination is indeed exciting and fills a vital gap in the Museum's collection of Adelaide trams. The biggest problem at this stage would be the provision of suitable maximum traction bogies.

Tram No. 118 was one of twenty cars built by Pengelly & Co. between 1910-1912 as bogie half open, half closed combinations with one drop end and straight sill end. In 1936 it was rebuilt to a fully enclosed saloon design and classified type E1. Sister car No. 111 has been a regular performer on the St. Kilda tramway since its opening in March 1974. The E1 type trams were last used on the streets of Adelaide on 5 March, 1958.

Glenelg Trams

The two H type trams have now settled in nicely on road 7 of the new depot which was connected to the main line by the STA. No. 362 arrived on 1 September, 1982 in exchange for W2 294 which was used on the Glenelg line for promotional purposes by the Melbourne Tourist Authority. 294 was returned to St. Kilda on 6 October while H 360 arrived on 6 December, 1982. A minor refurbishment was undertaken for H 362 and has seen the repainting of the roof, exterior panels, woodwork and doors in the silver and carnation livery.

24



TROLLEY WIRE DECEMBER 1983

ADELAIDE—25 YEARS AGO

Compiled by C. G. Seymour

The 22nd November 1983 marked the 25th Anniversary of the closure of Adelaide's tramway system, except for the Glenelg tram line, which runs for approximately 6 of its 7 mile length on a private right of way. The purpose of this article is to briefly recall those last few years of a tramway which once boasted a maximum fleet of 311 trams (1931) operating over 82.83 route miles (including 6.72 miles at Port Adelaide). Today, in 1983, 23 H type inter-urban trams remain to operate the Glenelg line.

The Beginning of the End

From 1946 tram patronage, held at an artificially high level during the Second World War because of petrol rationing and a shortage of motor vehicles, began to fall. No new rolling stock had been received since 1929 and the older bogie cars were beginning to show their age. (An order of 40 new trams was planned in 1939, but was postponed because of the War). The post war suburban sprawl meant that many tram routes needed to be extended, while much existing track and equip-

The main elements of the plan were:—

(1) The progressive replacement of trams with fuel buses.
(2) Erection of new bus servicing and parking depots.
(3) Modernisation of the workshops.
(4) Erection of new workshops.
(5) Conversion of converter stations to take electricity from the Electricity Trust of South Australia.
(6) Closure of the Trust's own power station.
(7) Review of all tram and bus services.
(8) Review of management and operating methods.
(9) An overall plan for future needs.

1952 — The Initial Closures

Commencement of the delivery of 30 new Sunbeam trolley buses on 8 January 1952 saw the Trust attempt to make better use of its rolling stock by replacing some tram routes with trolley buses. On 24 May 1952 the last trams ran to the Eastern

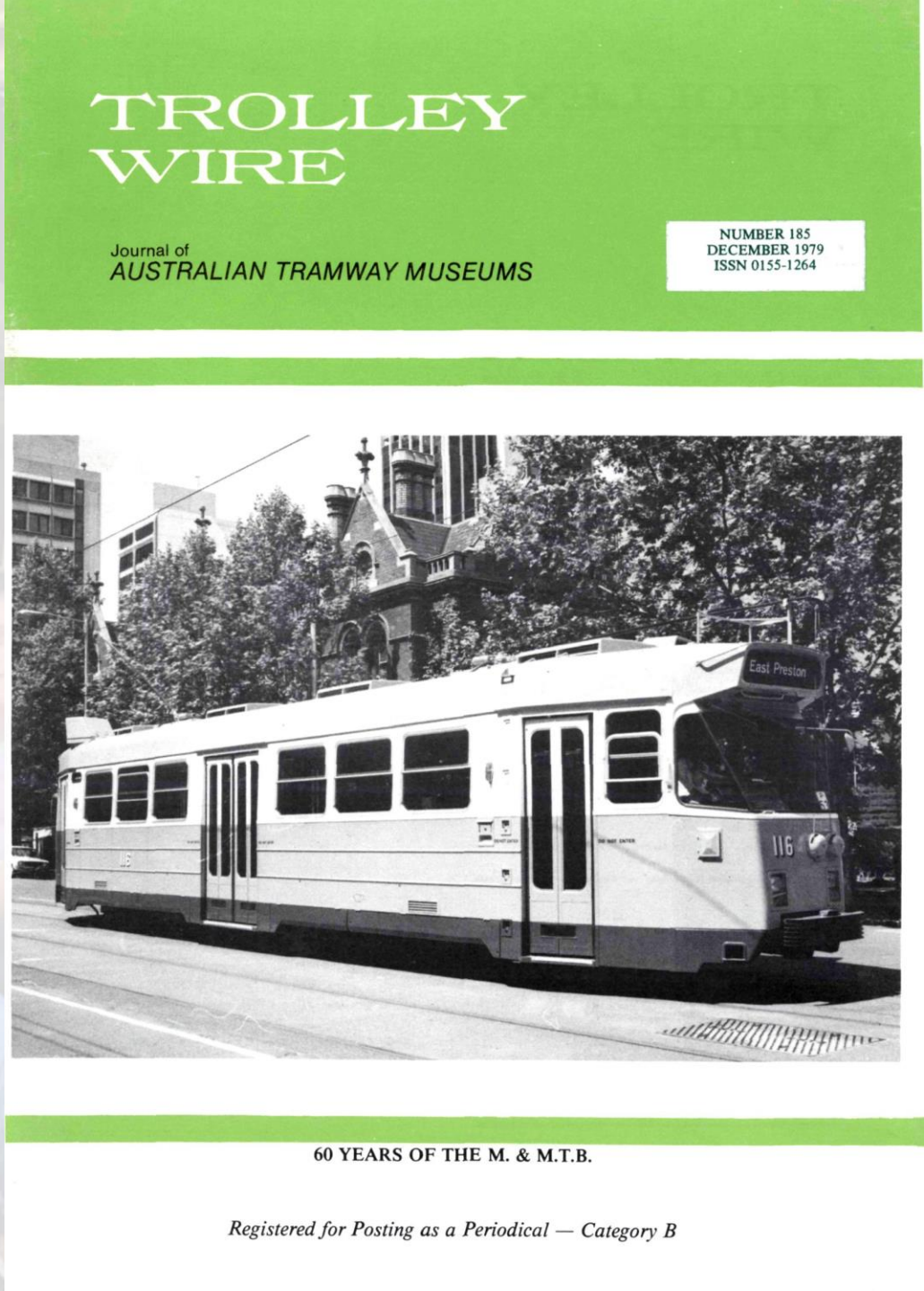
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

The 1970s: national news!!

- Some might think World Series Cricket or the Whitlam government were the most memorable features of Australia in the 1970s.
- But *Trolley Wire* readers knew the big news was the closure Ballarat and Bendigo tramways, coming hot on the heels of Brisbane's closure of in 1969.
- They also learned that not all hope was lost, in Victoria at least, with the fall of Bolte and the delivery of new MMTB Z class trams after a gap of two decades.



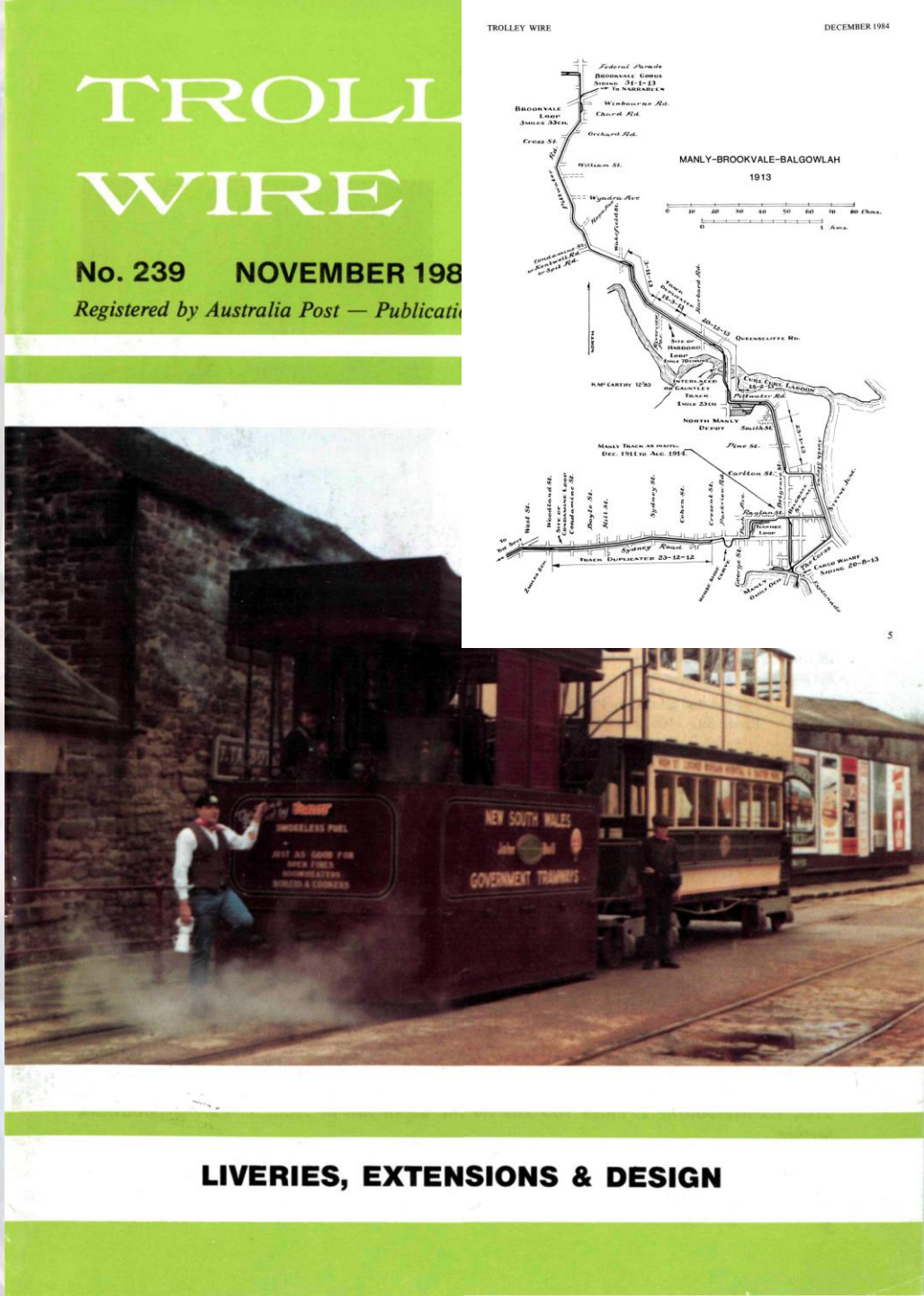
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

The 1980s: international news and detailed research

- From 1987 *TW* had a colour cover and articles increasingly were based on detailed research.
- Ken McCarthy's map of the Manly lines in 1913 in the November 1984 issue is a good example.
- International stories also became more common, even an international colour cover, although in this case the steam tram's main claim to fame was its few years as an abject failure in NSW.
- Norm Chinn's article on liveries was meticulously researched using a wide variety of archival and physical sources.



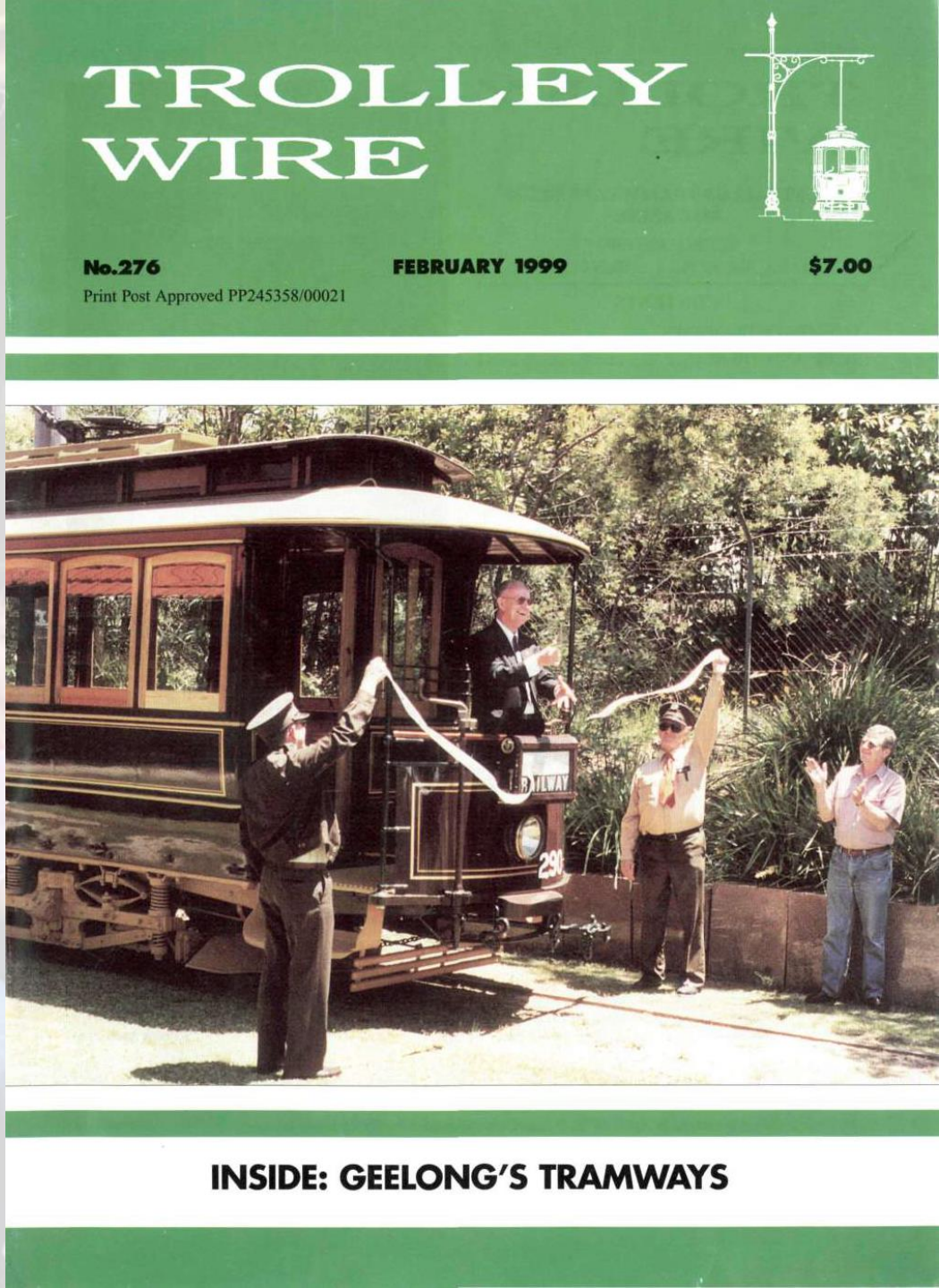
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

The 1990s: past meets present

- The 1990s a period of consolidation for the Museum and for *Trolley Wire*, after the STM's move to its present site, with its greater needs.
- Howard Clarke's first full decade as an extremely energetic Chairman, seen with Norm Chinn at the celebration to launch newly restored C 290.
- But note the lead article: research-based and dealing with Geelong's tramways.
- Seeking a balance between publishing museum news and historical research and NSW news and national and international news.



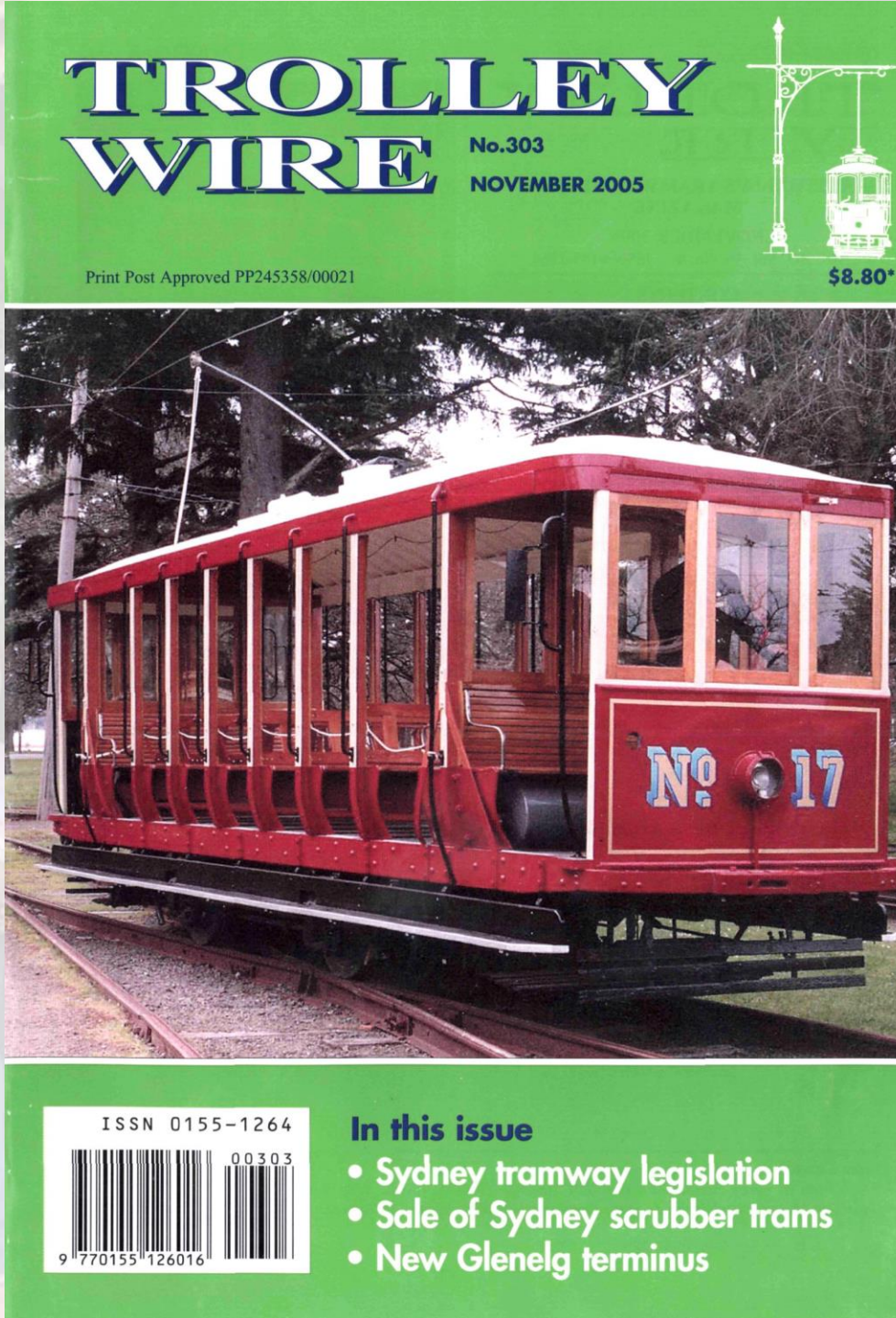
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

The 21st century

- Are we still relevant? Were we ever? Or are we just a bunch of superannuated old fogeys, intellectually atrophied, drenched in self-indulgent nostalgia?
- Is *Trolley Wire* still a useful means of communication in the digital age? Obviously the newsletter function is better handled digitally.
- *Trolley Wire* remains the tramway heritage sector's journal of record, with copies in deposit libraries.
- It still covers three topics like nowhere else:
  - Australian tramway heritage and museums, and their history;
  - The Australian tramway industry, especially in NSW; and
  - Articles on tramway history, both academic and antiquarian.



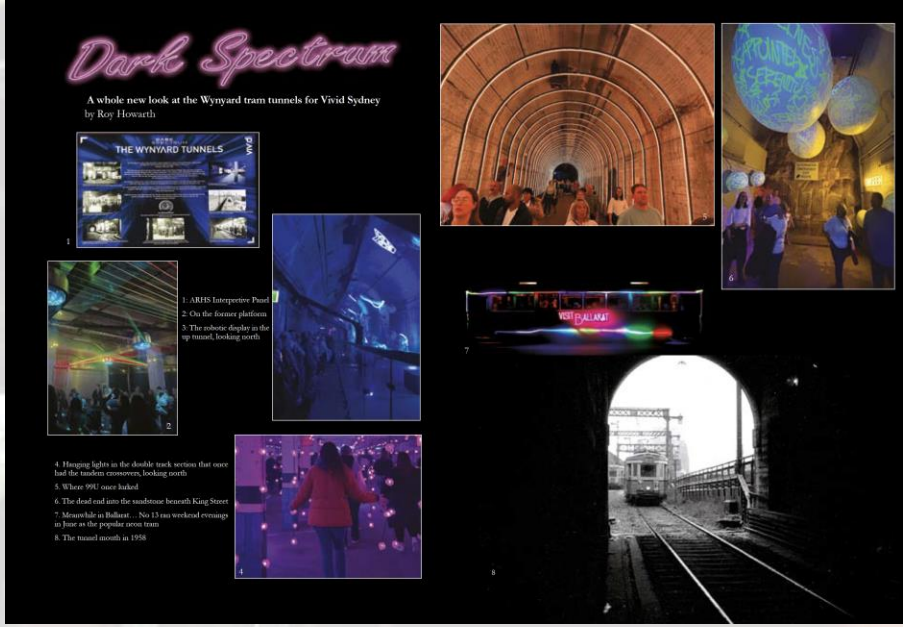
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

Youth and cultural diversity

- The Sydney Tramway Museum as an organisation and venue is doing better than *Trolley Wire* in attracting young and diverse visitors and volunteers.
- The editors and most contributors are ancient. But we did have Roy Howarth's adventurously presented (on black pages!) 'Dark Spectrum' article in the August 2023 issue. James Sediakin, photographer of the cover of the November 2023 issue, is 19 years old.
- The Museum is genuinely a place for culturally and gender diverse people of all ages, including the young. It's far from just an old men's shed. Also it's a safe and welcoming place for LGBQTI+ people.
- *Trolley Wire* aims to be the same.



Images from the latest issues of *Trolley Wire*
Above: Dancing in the dark in Sydney and Ballarat
Below: Grooving in Bendigo



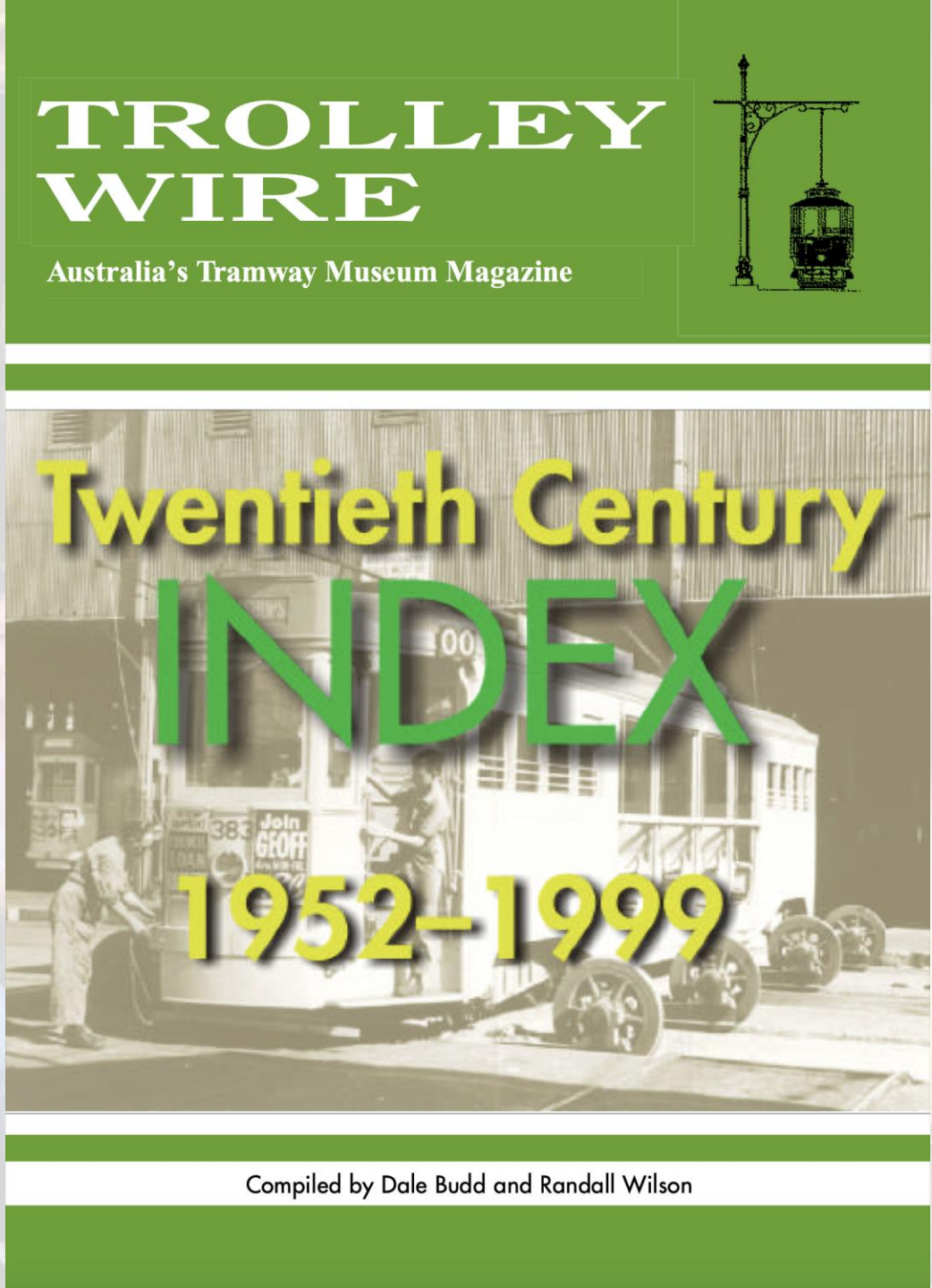
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

Indexes, or even Indices

- The entire archive of *Trolley Wire* up to 2018 is available online and free at the STM website: go to Enthusiast's Corner, then Library, then Trolley Wire. The collection is arranged by decades.
- Having a great collection of isn't much use if you can't research the topic you're interested in – unless you have a lot of leisure.
- *Trolley Wire* has two indexes prepared by Dale Budd and Randall Wilson: 1952-1999 and 2000-2017.
- Available online and arranged by jurisdiction and geography, not alphabetically.
- Issues online and the index will be updated.



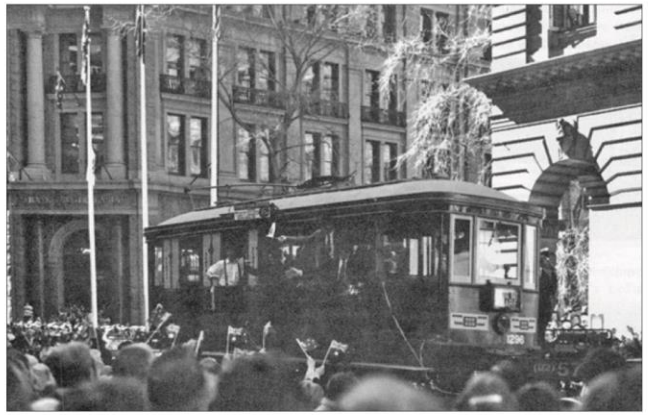
Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

Google it!

- Google, and probably other search engines, can search *Trolley Wire*'s online archive directly.
- For example, to check if 138s became 10W or 11W in Melbourne for my first slide (I confess: I couldn't remember), I simply googled 'Sydney tram 138s' and at right is what came up at: https://www.sydneytramwaymuseum.com.au/members.old/Trolley_Wire/333%20-%20Trolley%20Wire%20-%20May%202013.pdf.
- A direct link to Vic Solomons' excellent article on K 1296 in No. 333, May 2013.



Flags are waved, and streamers and shredded paper drift down over K 1296 as it moves up George Street past Martin Place as part of the parade to mark the 50th anniversary of the declaration of Peace and the end of World War II on 15 August 1995. R.I. Merchant



K 1296 moves down George Street past Bathurst Street towards the end of the parade on 15 August 1995. H.R. Clark

the museum was arranged and K class 1296 was chosen. It appealed to the radio station representatives and was small enough to be loaded without cranes by using a tilt-tray truck. K 1296 arrived at the spot reserved for it outside the northern end of the Overseas Terminal at Circular Quay West early on the Tuesday morning, having been loaded the previous afternoon at the museum and stored there overnight. No. 1296 basked in the attention it received from other participants and passers-by. As well as staff from 2UE, on board were three museum members dressed in suitable tramway uniforms. The parade moved generally smoothly up George Street and passed the Town Hall around 1:00pm. The size of the crowd and their enthusiasm was very impressive and the tram attracted much interested comment from spectators. From George Street the parade route led down Liverpool Street and terminated near Darling Harbour. K 1296 appeared in the Channel 7 live telecast of the parade. After the parade, 1296 immediately returned to Loftus where it was unloaded and returned to the depot.

At present 1296 is unfortunately not available for operation pending repair and is on static display at the museum. K 1295 remains unrestored off site.

In addition to 1295 and 1296, two other K cars exist in operating condition, being first batch cars 763 and 797. They were significantly rebuilt at Randwick Workshops as scrubber cars 138s and 139s, entering service in February 1952 and July 1953 respectively. The two cars were sold to the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board in June 1959, becoming 10W and 11W respectively, and soldiered on as scrubber cars for more than 40 years. 10W is now in the care of the Tramway Museum Society of Victoria at Bylands, whilst VicTrack made 11W available to the Sydney Tramway Museum. It is presently stored off site.

Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

Style Guide

- Editors by definition are perfectionist, fussy and even neurotic people. And are very proud of it!
- Dale Budd has prepared a very useful Style Guide, which the present editors occasionally update or violate, depending on perception.
- A guide to tramway nomenclature, acrostics, hyphenation, capitalisation, numeration and classification, among other things, this is an essential reference tool for every writer before putting finger to keyboard.
- English usage has changed a lot since the 1940s, so the style of sources may not be appropriate 'to-day' (as my late father always hyphenated it).
- So far it's only in Word format but we intend to put it up on the website.

TROLLEY WIRE

Twenty-first Century

INDEX

2000–2017



Compiled by
Dale Budd and Randall Wilson

Kōrerotia te pūrakau COTMA 2023

TROLLEY WIRE

telling the story of Australian tramway preservation since 1952

Questions and comments

We have explained the riches available to everyone in *Trolley Wire* and its archive.

Here's an opportunity for questions and comments, but remember, as JFK really meant to say:

Ask not what *Trolley Wire* can do for you, but what you can do for *Trolley Wire*.

And the answers are…

- Research and write articles
- Subscribe
- Order in bulk (and we mean bulk!) for sale through your organisation