



Queens Way, St Kilda 1969

Front cover

City bound L 101 and SW6 902 on the newly constructed Queens Way waiting to enter the tram stop on the other side of the Upton Rd Bridge (20 July 1969).

In late 1968 this new track replaced the abandoned Wellington St line which had operated for 77 years, first as a cable tramway then an electric tramway. (See article on page 11.)

Photo: Dale Budd

Updated layout

In moving to a digital format for *The Bellcord*, we can now bring our readers a greatly expanded quarterly newsletter, with more tramway content than was possible with print. This move to digital was precipitated by the increasing costs of printing and postage.

To assist with reading on computer monitors, tablets and mobile phones, the layout has been updated. It is designed for vertical scrolling with each new page appearing below the previous page. Hyperlinks are added in some places for easier access.

We hope that you enjoy reading our new issue. *The Bellcord's* production is made possible with the support of the museum's financial members.

Museum news

The museum has been closed since mid March due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The committee is following government directions and working on procedures to protect the health of our visitors and volunteers before reopening. The date of the first open day will be announced on our website and social media accounts.

AGM

The museum's Annual General Meeting will be conducted on Saturday 26 September 2020 via teleconferencing. Members will be advised of the time and logon arrangements.

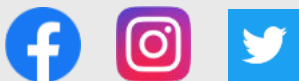
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Editor: Geoff Brown

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When will that cable break?



ABOVE: A crowded city bound cable tram on the Northcote line rounds the sharp curve from Smith St into Gertrude St, Collingwood, only six months before the line's closure (22 March 1940).

The sign on the dummy's roof reads 'New Palais Royale, Royal Exhibition Building', a popular dance venue.

Photo: Wal Jack

In 1940 Australia was at war and Melbourne's public transport was overcrowded, exacerbated by petrol rationing. While most of Melbourne's cable tram network had already been converted to electric trams or buses, the two heavily trafficked Bourke St lines soldiered on.

A headline in *The Sun* on 14 September 1940 caught the mood.

When Will that Cable Break?

AS the days pass and the Bourke-st. trams continue running, the cable — which refuses to break — is causing arguments between heads of the Tramways Board.

The reality was that these two remaining lines of Melbourne's robust but aged cable tram network would be operated until they were worn out. The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) minutes of the time have provided some interesting background.

Board decision

In 1938, Board Chairman Hector Bell had returned from a seven month overseas trip with a recommendation to use more efficient compression-ignition diesel buses for the conversion of the three remaining cable lines. The Board and government accepted his recommendation.

A decision to convert the Johnston St, Collingwood line to buses had already been taken in 1935 and this proceeded on 15 April 1939. This left two lines with two tram sheds, two engine houses and approx 70 car sets.

RIGHT: Passengers boarding a Nicholson St (North Fitzroy) bound cable tram at the Bourke St/Spencer St terminus (1940).

In the background W2 272 passes Spencer St Station heading toward its terminus at Lonsdale St.

Photo: Wal Jack



Both the Northcote and Nicholson St lines serviced Bourke St and had initially been listed for conversion to electric trams. But Bell's recommendation was accepted on the understanding that electric trams would be installed if the double deck diesel buses proved unsuccessful.

Buses

The implementation of this decision required the purchase of 45 double deck buses for the Northcote line and 14 additional single deck buses for the Nicholson St line. The chassis were ordered from Leyland in England in December 1938 and the body building work for the double deck buses tendered to Melbourne and Adelaide firms in the middle of 1939. The M&MTB supplied the aluminium body panels and other items.

However all did not go to plan. The Adelaide firm of Lawton and Sons failed to complete their fourteen buses to the required schedule with construction of the final four buses being re-allocated to the Melbourne builders of Martin & King and Cheetham & Borwick. Two convoys of five buses were driven from Adelaide to Melbourne via the Princes Highway, each taking four days for the trip. (*The Herald*, 4 April 1940)

Details of these double deck buses and the reasons for their subsequent unsatisfactory performance are explained in Russell Jones's article, *No Stairway to Heaven* on the museum website.

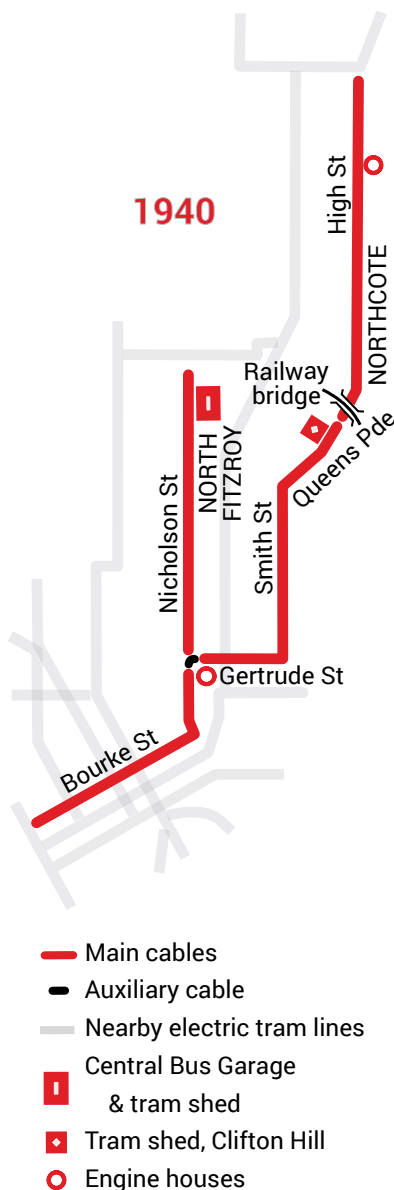
Railway bridge

Double deck buses were unable to fit under the railway bridge in Queens Pde, Clifton Hill. Work to lower parts of the road surface between the tram tracks and the bridge abutments was approved during December 1939 and completed by March 1940, leaving the tracks at their original level.

RIGHT: Looking west along Queens Pde, a Northcote bound cable tram crosses the Merri Creek after passing under the Clifton Hill railway bridge (6 May 1940).

The roadway at either side of the tracks had been lowered in March 1940 to enable the use of double deck buses.

Photo: Wal Larson



ABOVE: Melbourne's two remaining cable lines in 1940.

Map: Geoff Brown

The rope

The cable, known locally as 'the rope', was the mainstay of the cable tram network, in constant need of monitoring, repair and replacement. Each cable was approximately 3 cm in diameter and several kilometres in length, composed of over 40 wire strands wrapped around a hempen core. Australian industry could not manufacture cable to such specifications and so several of these cables were imported each year from England.

To continue operations, new cables were required. On 20 April 1939, the Board approved the purchase of 7.4 kms (24,300 feet) of cable for the Gertrude St/Smith St section and 0.6 kms (1,900 feet) for the auxiliary cable at the Gertrude St/Nicholson St intersection.

For the Bourke St section they purchased 6 kms (20,000 feet) of cable from the Country Roads Board, which was left over haulage cable from the San Remo Bridge project at Phillip Island. It was slightly longer than required. The cables in the Nicholson St and High St sections were noted as being secondhand.

These cables were put into service on Bourke St on 21 January 1940 and Gertrude St/Smith St on 28 January, estimated to run until the end of July.

Closure

During mid April 1940, the Federal Department of Supply discussed with the Chairman the possibility of continuing the cable system to conserve oil and petrol. Mr Bell advised, "the Board would do so as long as the existing ropes last, which might be a few months, but in view of the difficulty in obtaining ropes it would be necessary to start the bus system immediately the ropes showed signs of giving out."

The new cables installed in January 1940 lasted nine months – well beyond most expectations. Eventually they became too risky to operate and closure occurred on 26 October 1940. The exact timing was kept quiet

to avoid the problem of souvenir hunters and vandals experienced in previous closures. Buses were rolled out early that evening, repeating the successful tactic used for the April 1939 closure of the Johnston St line.

At the Board meeting five days later, it was “resolved that the Board’s appreciation be conveyed to the Manager, other officers and staff for the careful organisation which resulted in the satisfactory inauguration of the bus service.”

However the search for new cables continued after the closure. At that same meeting, the Board approved the purchase of new cables for £9,400. Approval was given by the Victorian and Australian Governments for this purchase, but the UK Government said “NO” to an export licence. Representations were made by the High Commissioner for Australia to the UK Board of Trade, but to no avail.

Bus garage

As buses began replacing cable trams, a large central bus garage and a workshop capable of housing and maintaining a bus fleet became a priority. Cable tram maintenance ceased at the car shops and was relocated to the Preston Workshops in 1931.

The Nicholson Street shops were subsequently re-modelled and extended for use as the bus garage workshops, store, clock shop, mess room and bus driving school.

However this was only a temporary measure. In the following years the site was greatly expanded and new maintenance and traffic facilities were constructed on Scotchmer St and at the rear of the site.

This then enabled the Nicholson St car shed and shops to be demolished to provide increased parking for buses and a site for a traffic control building. The depot, workshop tracks and remaining cable tram infrastructure were removed, thereby ensuring that this location would never accommodate cable trams again.



RIGHT: The Central Bus Garage in North Fitzroy with cable trams stabled in the open air and partially obscured double deck buses parked behind (1940).

Photo: State Library Victoria

RIGHT: A cable tram is towed by tractor into Nicholson St, North Fitzroy tram shed. To the right is the double storey cable car shop (1930s).

The tram shed and the car shop were demolished to enlarge the Central Bus Garage.

Photo: State Library Victoria



Just days after the line closure, trams briefly reappeared in the streets. The 35 car sets from the Nicholson St shed were ferried along Nicholson St during the early morning. They shunted in front of the Princess Theatre in Spring St and then travelled via Gertrude St and Smith St to Clifton Hill where they were stored. (*Twentyman/Govett, p101*)

Remaining assets

At the Board meeting of 6 March 1941, the Chairman advised that following a request from the Army he had approved the removal of seats from 69 cable cars. These were fitted to lorries for troop transport to Alice Springs.

During February 1941 the Northcote Council had approached the Board with a request to remove the tracks under the Clifton Hill railway bridge to allow a uniform road surface. Initially Chairman Bell responded that the cable may need to run again. However at the Board meeting on 15 May 1941, it was agreed that the tracks would be removed. This work was completed by the Board in July, thus isolating the High St section.

RIGHT: Clifton Hill tram shed with numerous cable trailers in storage after the system's closure (26 May 1941).

The front section of the shed had been demolished earlier, leaving the rear section in place.

Photo: Wal Jack



Also in July 1941, import agency B. K. Morton Pty Ltd advised that cable to the same specifications could be procured from South Africa. The rolling stock engineer advised that if purchased, the service could be operated for about 38 to 48 weeks. But at the Board meeting of 17 July 1941, it resolved to take no action. Melbourne's cable tram network was closed. The Board probably considered that the buses were coping with the traffic and that fuel supplies were holding up.

The death knell came at the 24 July 1941 meeting when the Board approved the disposal of cable tram assets. Tenders were quickly called and approved to sell the machinery and plant. This action finally broke the cables that had run under Melbourne streets since 1885. Up to that time, the engines and cables had been run for a short time each day.

The cables were withdrawn from the streets into the engine houses and stored on drums. The pulleys that had guided the cable through the under-road tunnels were also removed and stored. Most of the track and tunnels were left in place with the Board responsible for the maintenance of the wooden blocks and road surface in the centre of each road. They were only removed in 1954-55 when the new electric tramway was constructed.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 was to change thinking, but by then it was too late to revive the cable system. In March 1942 the Board advertised the sale of the 70 sets of grips and trailers without seats stored at Clifton Hill shed. They were quickly sold for £15 each with many potential buyers missing out. (*The Herald*, 17 March 1942).

My thanks to Brian Weedon for his assistance.

Warren Doubleday

References:

M&MTB Board Minutes 1939 and 1940, Public Records Office of Victoria
A Story of the Melbourne Cable Tram System, Twentyman/Govett
Newspapers (as noted)

RIGHT: Excavation of the abandoned cable tram track and tunnel at Queens Pde and Smith St corner, Clifton Hill (1954).

Photo: State Library Victoria



Melbourne's abandoned tram lines

From 1884 passenger tramways were progressively built along Melbourne streets. Horse and cable tramways were the first, then electric tramways grew in favour eventually replacing many of the original horse and cable lines. Approximately 30% of the current electric tram network is built along streets or reservations that were once horse tramways, cable tramways or railways.

But not all of Melbourne's tram lines survived. Many were abandoned – some had outlived their original purpose, others were unprofitable or the maintenance costs were too high.

The accompanying map shows the location of these abandoned lines. They varied from sidings and turning loops less than 100 metres in length to lines several kilometres long. The details of many of these lines can be found in articles on the museum website, in previous issues of *The Bellcord* or in other publications.

In this issue Russell Jones provides a description of two of the lines – Wellington St at St Kilda Junction and the Point Ormond line. Other abandoned lines will feature in future issues.

RIGHT: Melbourne Zoo horse tram in Parkville.

FAR RIGHT: Williamstown Rd terminus in Yarraville.

Photos: Ron Scholten collection



Request for photos

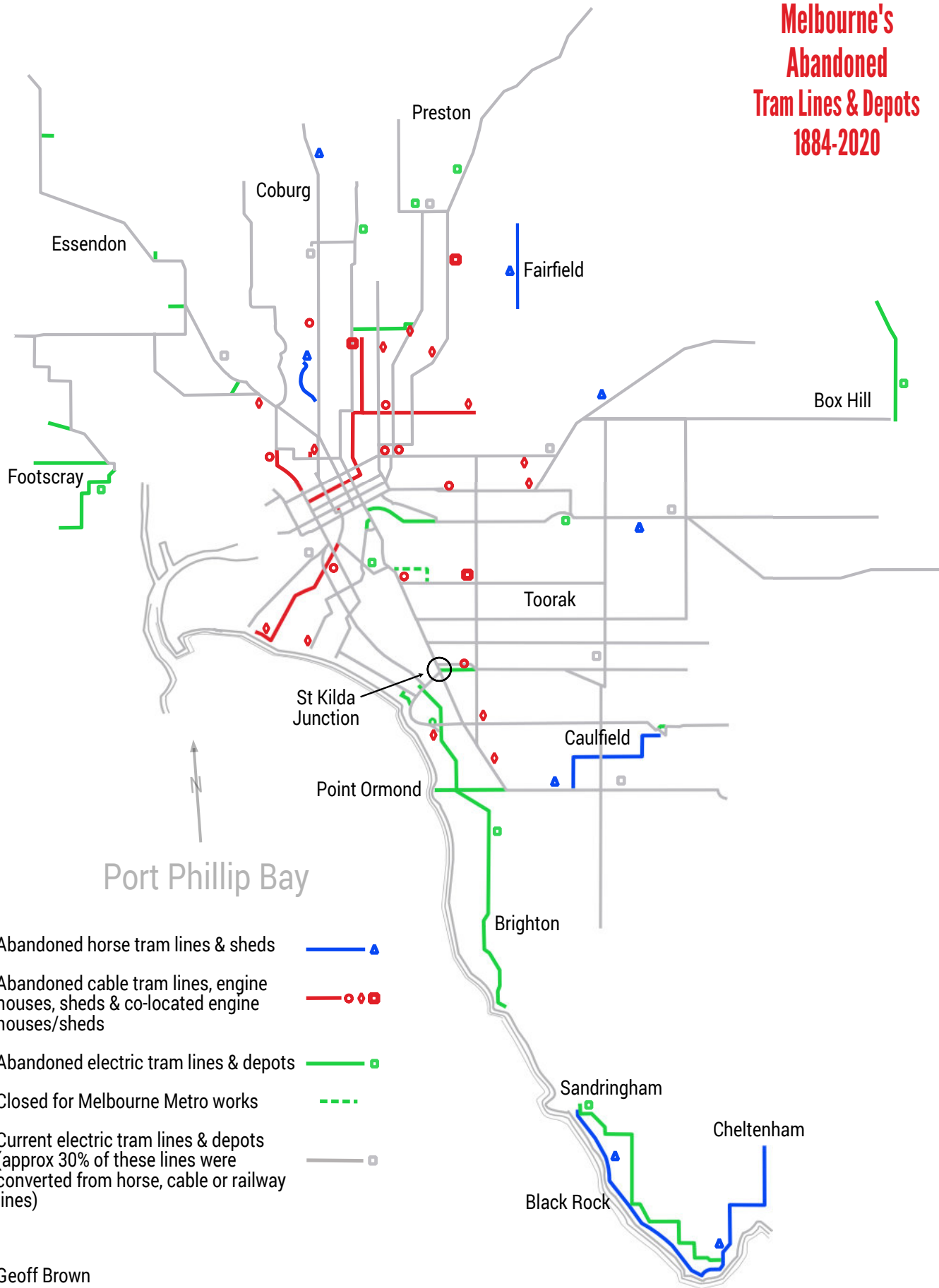
Can you assist us by providing photos that illustrate some of Melbourne's abandoned tram lines? They may be old photos that have not been widely published or recent photos showing a location today that could be matched with older pictures of the tramway in action.

For inclusion in the museum's growing collection, details of the photo's origin will assist us check and acknowledge the photographer and any applicable copyright. Some of these photos may be used in *The Bellcord* to illustrate future articles.

If you think you have an interesting historic photo or have taken your own present day pictures and would like to assist, please contact the editor at info@trammuseum.org.au, mention your interest in abandoned tramlines and I will make contact.

Editor

Melbourne's Abandoned Tram Lines & Depots 1884-2020



- Abandoned horse tram lines & sheds —▲
- Abandoned cable tram lines, engine houses, sheds & co-located engine houses/sheds —◊◻
- Abandoned electric tram lines & depots —◻
- Closed for Melbourne Metro works - - -
- Current electric tram lines & depots (approx 30% of these lines were converted from horse, cable or railway lines) —◻

Geoff Brown
Melbourne Tram Museum 2020

St Kilda Junction: local intersection to city bottleneck



ABOVE: Looking north through St Kilda Junction (c1900).

Note the north-south and east-west cable tram tracks and the double curves in the north-west corner.

Photo: State Library Victoria

Since the earliest days of Melbourne, St Kilda Junction has been a traffic nexus. It was an intersection of numerous roads, spreading like rays from a star. Four of those roads were laid with cable tramways – St Kilda Rd and High St in 1888; Wellington St and Fitzroy St in 1891.

The north-south line was powered by the engine house in St Kilda Rd at Bromby St, while the east-west line was powered by the engine house in Wellington St opposite Marlton Cres.

Initially the tramway junction was only a straight through intersection. In 1897 a double set of curves were added to the north-west corner to allow St Kilda Rd trams to reach the beach via Fitzroy St.

RIGHT: Looking south from St Kilda Junction with High St on the left and Barkly St on the right (1890s).

The distinctive Junction Hotel stands at the corner and was the photographer's location for the photo above. This hotel and all the buildings in High St were demolished for road widening in the early 1970s. High St was then renamed St Kilda Rd.

Photo: National Library Australia





ABOVE: Looking west above St Kilda Junction on a quiet summer day, likely a Sunday (c1926-1929).

Photo: State Library Victoria.

Electric tramway

When the cable lines were replaced by electric trams in 1925, the cable tramway junction was replicated and a second set of double curves added to the north-east corner. This allowed St Kilda Rd trams to access Wellington St and the south eastern suburbs.

Five city services and one cross suburban route traversed the Junction along with an ever increasing number of motor vehicles. The Junction became so busy that in 1929 a small elevated signal box was built over one of the shop awnings on the south-east corner. Here a signal man was perched day and night, controlling which road a tram would take. Signal box operations are explained in A R Bailey's article, [St Kilda Junction Signal Box Operation](#) on the museum website.

RIGHT: W2 360 waits in Wellington St at St Kilda Junction before turning right into St Kilda Rd (13 May 1967).

The signal box above the verandah on the south-east corner controlled the points and tram signal lights. For access, the signalman scaled a simple steel ladder attached to the pole at the right of the photo.

Photo: Mal Rowe



Major bottleneck

After the Second World War, St Kilda Junction became the site for a perpetual traffic jam during peak hours, due to the ever-increasing number of cars. A roundabout was tried there from 1955, but it provided only temporary relief to traffic congestion.

The Bolte Government commissioned a major project to fix the traffic problem, by putting Queens Rd in a underpass underneath the Junction, connecting with a new road called Queens Way that joined with Dandenong Rd in Windsor. The project was placed under the control of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. Construction work began in 1967.

Initially, the tramways were to remain in their existing alignments, although there was serious consideration of the tram lines being permanently replaced by buses. Major-General Risson, Chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB), lobbied for the relocation of the tram lines to be an integral part of the project.

This meant the abandonment of the tramway in Wellington St, and its replacement with a new line built to European light rail standards along Queens Way to connect with the Dandenong Rd tramway. The new tramway alignment was designed to be modifiable to take buses, for the then-forecast eventual closure of Melbourne's tram system.

RIGHT: Looking west over St Kilda Junction showing the demolition of houses for the construction of Queens Way (1967).

Note the tram in Wellington St and another crossing the Junction. The motor vehicle roundabout installed in 1955 remains but is difficult to see. At the top right, Queens Rd meets St Kilda Rd at a T-intersection.

Photo: State Library Victoria



RIGHT: W2 600 tests the newly laid temporary track through St Kilda Junction during redevelopment works (10 December 1967).

Photo: Keith Kings



Redevelopment

Over one hundred and fifty houses were demolished. Forty-two shops and fifty-two business premises shared their fate. One resident, Nellie Collins, refused to move from the home she lived in for forty years. Her house was demolished by heavy machinery when she was out.

Tram services were kept running throughout the construction project, by means of creative use of temporary tracks. The redeveloped St Kilda Junction opened in late 1968, improving the flow of trams significantly, although it was noted that motor traffic had increased. After 77 years of service by cable then electric trams, the Wellington St track was abandoned. The facade of the cable engine house in Wellington St opposite Marlton Cres remains as a testament to its history.

North-south traffic was still congested in narrow High St. So a new project began in 1970 to widen High St and relocate the tram tracks. One hundred and fifty buildings were demolished, including the iconic Junction Hotel, laying waste to both the High St shopping strip and local community. The project was completed by 1974 and High St renamed St Kilda Rd.

Russell Jones

RIGHT: SW6 917 in Queens Way after negotiating the redeveloped St Kilda Junction (3 August 1969).

Photo: Dale Budd



Tram to the seaside: Point Ormond

RIGHT: M&MTB all-night car Q 198 on daytime duty on the Elsternwick to Point Ormond shuttle. It is pictured in Glenhuntly Road near Broadway (1953).

Photo: Noel Reed



In 1915, the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust (PMTT) extended its existing Glenhuntly Rd tramway from Elsternwick to Point Ormond. A major objective of the project was to increase weekend recreational passenger traffic from the south-eastern suburbs, by providing easy access to the seaside beach at Point Ormond.

There was no direct route to the city. Instead, trams ran between Point Ormond and Darling Road, East Malvern.

M&MTB

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) acquired the PMTT in 1920.

As part of its General Scheme to expand the tramway system and convert the cable tram routes to electric traction, in 1927 it extended the Brighton Rd line southward to connect with the Glenhuntly Rd tramway. A triangular junction was built to allow Brighton Rd trams to turn east to Carnegie or west to Point Ormond.

The North Richmond to Prahran service along Chapel St was also extended to Point Ormond, but the passenger numbers did not warrant this level of service and it was truncated to Prahran in 1928.

A weekday peak hour service direct from the city and shuttle service using one-man trams was introduced between Elsternwick and Point Ormond. From 1934, regular weekend services were also run to Point Ormond from East Malvern as route 66.

Sunday travel

In Melbourne, Sunday mornings were reserved for church attendance, and no trams were run.

This changed in 1936, to great opposition from conservative Christians. They were further outraged that cheap family tickets for Sunday travel to beachside tram termini, including Point Ormond, were introduced to encourage patronage.



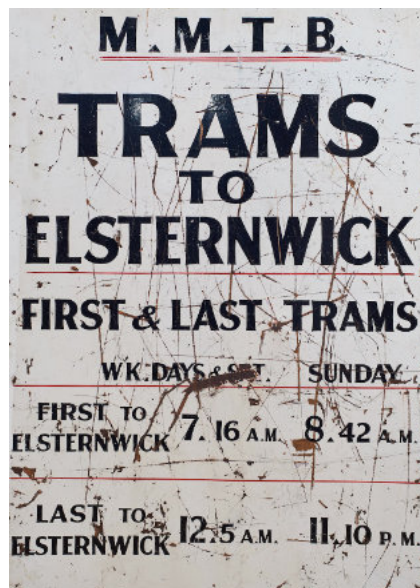
ABOVE: Late 1930s M&MTB advertising poster promoting Sunday family excursion tickets to Point Ormond beach.

Image: Melbourne Tram Museum collection

RIGHT: Point Ormond beach picturing a tram and passenger shelter at the terminus and the refreshment kiosk on the foreshore built in 1915 (December 1927).

The lighter coloured roads running left to right in the background are Broadway and Ormond Rd, the route of the Victorian Railways St Kilda to Brighton Beach tram line.

Photo: State Library Victoria



ABOVE: Street signage once located along the Point Ormond line and now part of the Melbourne Tram Museum collection.

Church groups claimed that the lower classes would be seduced away from the path of the righteous and godly by cheap Sunday tram tickets, and led into hedonistic and immoral ways.

The M&MTB was not swayed by their arguments, and Sunday morning trams became a fixture in Melbourne.

During the 1950s, increasing private motor car ownership reduced patronage on the Point Ormond line. As a cost saving measure, the weekend East Malvern and peak hour city services were withdrawn, leaving only the Elsternwick to Point Ormond shuttle operating.

The inconvenience of changing trams at Elsternwick further decreased patronage, accelerating losses. As a result, the Point Ormond tramway was closed in 1960. It was replaced by buses from Clifton Hill.

Russell Jones

RIGHT: M&MTB Birney X 217 at Point Ormond terminus, waiting for its next run to Elsternwick Railway Station (January 1954).

Photo: Noel Reed



1919 Flu Pandemic

RIGHT: A student's depiction of safe practices when travelling on cable trams and trains (College newsletter, Patchwork, May 1919).

*Image courtesy:
Presbyterian Ladies College,
PLC News, May 2020*

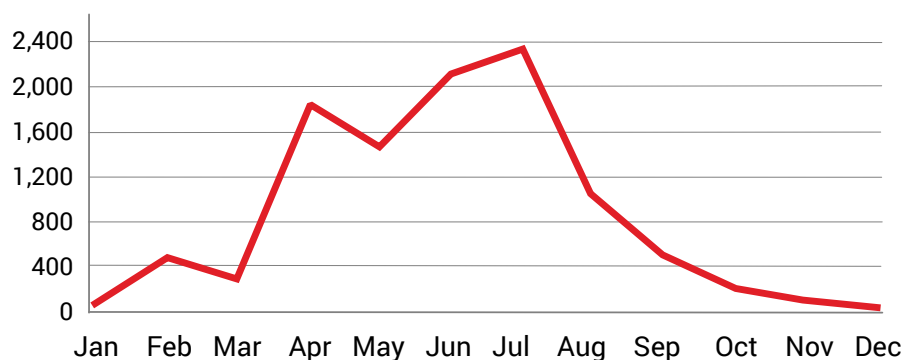


As the influenza pandemic spread through Melbourne in late January and February 1919, the Tramway Board took steps to slow its progress. The Board was the operator of Melbourne's cable tram network, the major form of street transport at the time. Peak period services were extended and notices placed on tram windows asking passengers to allow the windows to remain open to improve ventilation and minimise infection.

The sketch above by a student of Presbyterian Ladies College in Albert St, East Melbourne in 1919 depicts safe practices while travelling on cable trams and trains — leave open tram windows and doors; move away when others sneeze or cough.

The pandemic across Australia spread in two waves with the second wave being more severe. By October that year, the number of infections had significantly decreased.

The graph below records the total Australian influenza deaths each month for the 1919 calendar year. They totalled approx 12,000, but later estimates suggest deaths may have been as high as 17,000. In Victoria, up to 40% of the 1.5 million population became ill with influenza and approx 3,500 died, including 2,400 Melburnians.



RIGHT: Officially recorded deaths from influenza per month in Australia in 1919.

Source: Commonwealth Yearbook 1920, pp 1128-32



ABOVE: Tramway Board monogram on the front wall of the former tramway building at 476 Queens Pde, Clifton Hill (2011).

Photo: Mal Rowe

Cable tram passenger numbers

As the first wave of influenza struck Melbourne in January and February 1919, venues were closed, people travelled less and cable tram passenger numbers decreased. The graph below, from the Tramway Board's Annual Report 1918/19, records this reduction as the dip in the upper green line.

When the first wave subsided in late February/early March, the Board cut back its extra peak period services eliciting union complaints of lost wages and the return of overcrowding.

As autumn arrived in Melbourne, passenger complaints about the drafts through open windows spilled into the letter columns of newspapers. The Board removed the signs and one editor directed that the window debate in his paper was now closed. (*The Argus*, 11 April 1919)

Through late March and early April passenger numbers returned to record levels as shown by the graph's upper green line, perhaps driven by workers' need for income and a weariness of restrictions.

During these same weeks, the infection and death rates in Melbourne and around Australia increased sharply, heralding the arrival of the more severe second wave.

Management of the cable tram network passed from the Tramway Board to the newly inaugurated Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board on 1 November 1919, as the pandemic subsided.

Geoff Brown and Brian Weedon

RIGHT: The number of passengers carried by Melbourne's cable trams per four week period from July 1916 to June 1919.

The dip in the upper green line between January and April 1919 records the effect on travel of the first wave of the flu pandemic. No such change is recorded during the first months of the second wave.

Reproduction of a graph in the Tramway Board's Annual Report 1918/19

