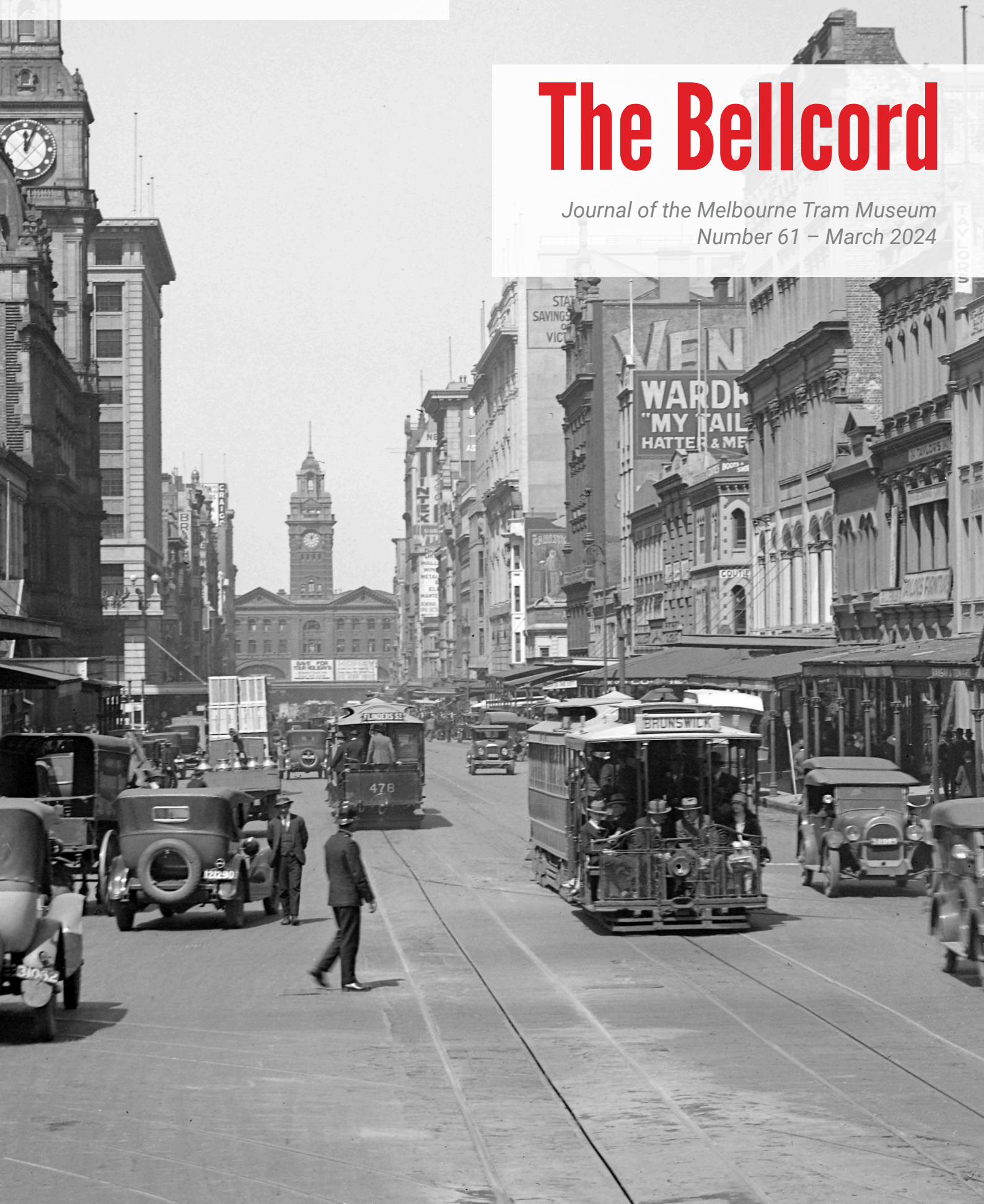




MELBOURNE
TRAM MUSEUM

The Bellcord

Journal of the Melbourne Tram Museum
Number 61 – March 2024



Front cover

A Brunswick-bound cable tram in Elizabeth Street crossing Lonsdale Street (early 1930s). The curved tracks beneath the tram were used by the West Melbourne line to travel via Lonsdale Street and Spencer Street.

The curved tracks at the lower left of the photograph were opened in February 1924 to through-route North Melbourne trams to the Brighton Road terminus, relieving congestion in Elizabeth Street. This operation ceased in July 1925 and the curves were eventually disconnected from the Elizabeth Street tracks.

Photograph by Rose Stereograph Co, in the collection of State Library Victoria.

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Editor: Noelle Jones

In this issue

The current Brunswick Tram Depot was completed in 1936, but there are few traces left of the cable car shed that operated for almost 50 years on that site. Geoff Brown explores the history of the earlier Brunswick cable car shed.

PCC tramcar no 1041 has a unique place in Melbourne's tramway history. It also entered service just before the initial trial of a pedestrian mall in Bourke Street, with the two captured in a photograph from the museum's collection. Warren Doubleday outlines the notable characteristics of this tram and the city's initial efforts in 'pedestrianising' central Melbourne.

And finally, Noelle Jones describes the results of our detective work to discover the story behind a new museum acquisition – an elaborate gold medallion. It's a puzzle that may not have been solved yet.

Plus latest museum news.

Contents:

Museum news	3
Brunswick Depot's hidden past	4
PCC No 1041 and the Bourke Street mall	15
E. Murphy and a golden medallion	17

Visit by the Minister

On our open day on Wednesday, 14 February 2024, the Minister for Public and Active Transport, Gabrielle Williams, the Member for the Southern Metropolitan Region, John Berger and the Chief Executive Officer of VicTrack, Chris Olds, visited the museum for a photoshoot to announce that the museum will receive funds from the VicTrack Community Grants Program for 2023/24. The sum of \$10,000 will be provided for improvements to air-conditioning in the archive / plan room / Driver Training room and for new carpet in the shop.

The visitors enjoyed a tour of the museum and met our volunteers – it was the first time any had visited the museum. The minister also purchased a number of items from the museum shop for her young son.

Museum collection now online

Online access to the museum's collection is now available via [Victorian Collections](https://victoriancollections.net.au) (victoriancollections.net.au). This cloud-based system is operated by a partnership of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association and Museums Victoria with funding from Creative Victoria.

Start by clicking on Search and enter a search term to see what comes back. Have fun and explore!

For any queries, contact warren.doubleday@trammuseum.org.au.

New visitor record in January

A new monthly record for a non Open House month was set in January. Over the three open days that month, the museum hosted 1,130 visitors. Many thanks to the contributions from our tireless guides, sales staff and backroom people who create such a great experience for all our visitors!



John Berger, Chris Olds, Retail Manager Carolyn Cleak, and Minister Gabrielle Williams in the museum shop, 14 February 2024. Photograph by Alan Scott.



Brunswick Depot's hidden past

Sydney Road, Brunswick is lined with double storey buildings, many dating back more than a century. Behind the seemingly endless row of shopfronts and brick walls, are stories of Brunswick's hidden past.

Brunswick Tram Depot, pictured above, has such a story. Located at the northern end of Sydney Road, Brunswick, it was designed by tramway architect, [Alan G. Monsborough](#), and opened by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) in April 1936.

Nearly ninety years on, this depot continues to play a key role in Melbourne's tram network with future extensions to its facilities and stabling capacity announced in 2022.

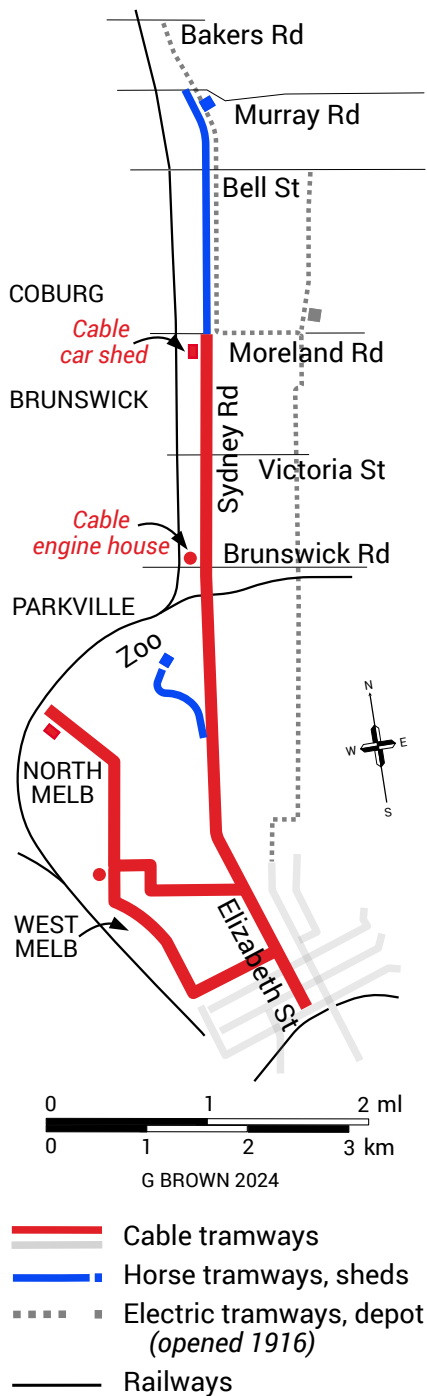
But hidden behind its cement rendered façade and row of faded shops is the story of an earlier tramway enterprise – one that operated on this site for nearly 50 years prior to the current depot's construction. First known as the Brunswick cable car shed, it was the 'depot' for Sydney Road's cable trams.

Above: The newly completed traffic office, retail shops and tram shed at Brunswick Tram Depot, c1936.

Official M&MTB photograph in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.

This article looks back at the construction and subsequent expansion of the Brunswick car shed and the uncertainties surrounding what would replace Sydney Road's cable trams.

Sydney Road Corridor 1890



Transport options in early Brunswick

Sydney Road was Brunswick’s first main thoroughfare, drawn on Robert Hoddle’s survey maps in 1837 and 1839. By the 1850s it was a dusty and often muddy track used by farm traffic and travellers to the goldfields and Pentridge Stockade. The Stockade was established in 1851 and was progressively replaced by Pentridge Prison between 1858 and 1864.

Waves of immigrants clustered along Sydney Road – some establishing hotels or selling supplies to travellers, others finding employment in nearby quarries, brickworks and other industries.

From 1878, horse drawn omnibuses provided public transport along the potted roadway. The main service carried passengers between Flinders Street, Melbourne and Victoria Street, Brunswick where a feeder service conveyed passengers on to Coburg, terminating at Murray Road and Pentridge Prison.

Rail transport arrived in Brunswick with the opening of the Melbourne to Coburg railway in 1884, the Brunswick cable tramway in October 1887 and the connecting Northern horse tramway in February 1889.

The cable tram soon became the preferred mode of transport due to its direct route to the city, its frequent services and the facility of hailing a tram at almost any location. As the local population grew, so did the cable tram’s patronage.

In 1881 Brunswick’s population was estimated to be in excess of 6,200. According to the Victorian Year Book, this increased to more than 24,000 by 1902, 44,500 in 1921 and 56,500 by 1928.

Land purchase

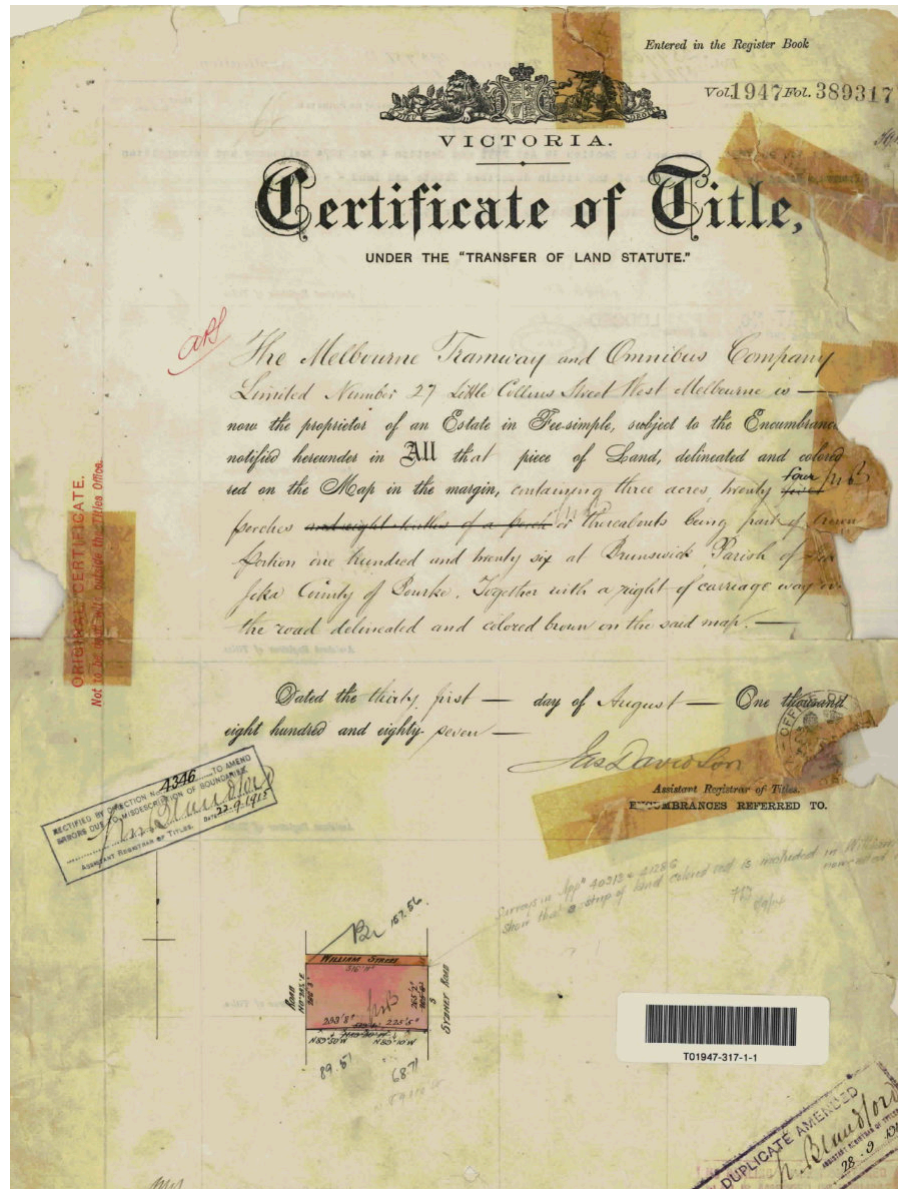
To house its cable trams, the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company (MTOC) purchased vacant land in Sydney Road, Brunswick, just south of the proposed Moreland Road terminus. It was MTOC’s practice to locate such buildings close to the end of each line. Fortunately undeveloped land was still a feature of Sydney Road until the early 1900s as seen in the photograph on page 7.

The newly acquired land appears to have been purchased in separate parcels then consolidated into a single Certificate of Title dated 31 August 1887. This certificate depicts a roughly rectangular three-acre block bounded by Sydney Road, William Street (renamed Peveril Street) and another road (named Cameron Street around 1890). It also shows later corrections to the block’s original dimensions.

This title passed to the interim Tramway Board when it took over operation of the cable network in July 1916, then to the M&MTB in November 1919.

Note that ‘car shed’ was the term used by MTOC into the early 1900s. The terms ‘car house’ and ‘car depot’ grew in prominence after that.

Certificate of Title, dated 31 August 1887, for land purchased by MTOC. The document shows evidence of several repairs and annotations, and records an earlier company address of 27 Little Collins St West. Courtesy of Public Record Office Victoria.



Twentyman and Askew

MTOC contracted architects Twentyman and Askew to design the Brunswick car shed. As MTOC’s preferred architects, they designed 30 major and minor works between 1884 and 1892, including many similar car sheds.

Edward Twentyman and David Askew were both originally from the town of Workington in England. Twentyman arrived in the Colony of Victoria in 1854 and Askew and his sister Margaret arrived in 1869. Edward married Margaret Askew while her younger brother studied civil engineering at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1882.

That same year Twentyman and Askew formed an architectural business. They designed many prominent homes, hotels and warehouses across Melbourne and Victoria, as well as the prestigious Block Arcade in Collins Street and MTOC’s head office at 673 Bourke Street, Melbourne.

Brunswick car shed in Sydney Road with two trams waiting in front of the traffic office – one with a longer 30-foot bogie car; the other with a standard 22-foot car (c1905).

Note the undeveloped land and the grazing cow in the foreground. This land was built upon after 1910.

Photograph courtesy Merri-bek City Libraries.



An interesting footnote is that Twentyman's grandson, Alfred Edward (A.E.) Twentyman (1901-1983), became a prominent tramway historian and enthusiast, being the first to preserve a cable tram set during the 1930s.

The original Brunswick car shed

Twentyman and Askew's design was a functional structure built on concrete and brick foundations with timber framed walls and roof – both clad in corrugated galvanised iron. The shed included three inspection pits, a turntable, car wash, lamp room and store room. Numerous timber uprights within the shed supported the pitched roof with skylights.

The shed's 18 roads (storage tracks) were short in length and laid on a concrete base. The trams were moved to and from their allocated roads using a traverser, manhandled by shedmen. Access was through a single doorway fitted with timber sliding doors. Licence records show that 30 tram sets were initially allocated to Brunswick.

A single storey brick traffic office was located at the northern end of the shed at Peveril Street. Inside were rooms for the line manager, the receiver in charge of revenue, conductors' bell-punches and tickets, and facilities for gripmen and conductors. The successful tender price for the shed's construction in 1887 was £3,345.

Shed expansion

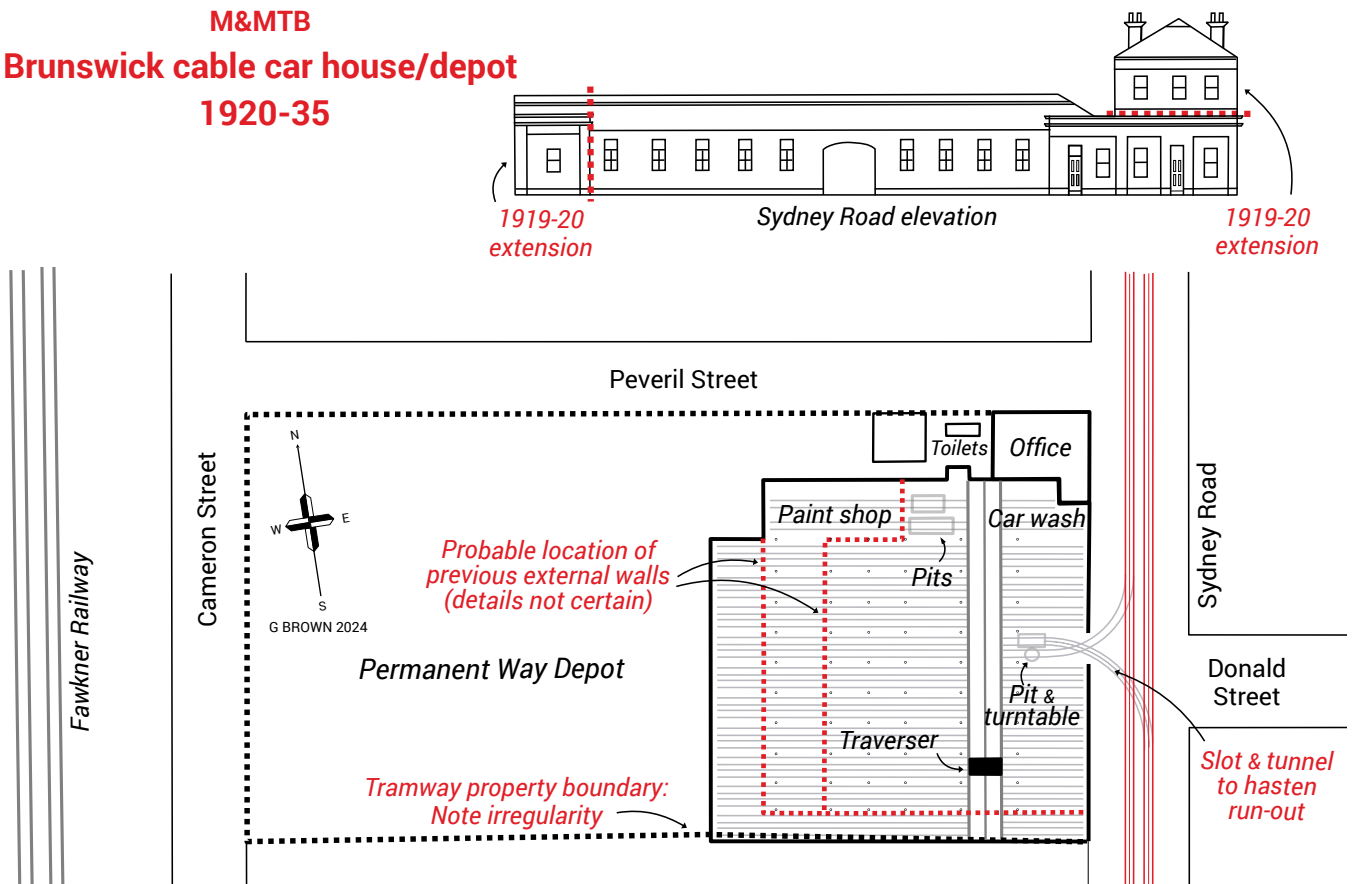
As tram patronage increased during the following decades, the shed was modified and expanded to accommodate extra trams and longer trailer cars. From 1900, MTOC gradually replaced the Brunswick line's standard 22-foot cars with higher capacity 30-foot bogie cars. The latter were a unique feature of the Brunswick line.

These bogie cars required lengthening of the traverser and widening of its running track. The increased weight of the longer cars and the larger traverser now required horsepower rather than manpower to move them.

MTOC head office, 673 Bourke Street (c1891), designed by Twentyman and Askew. The building still stands today. Hand-coloured photograph from the collection of State Library Victoria.



**M&MTB
Brunswick cable car house/depot
1920-35**



Brunswick cable car house/depot at its largest extent, when owned and operated by the M&MTB (1920-1935). Note that some details are uncertain.

The tramway property boundary includes an irregularity not recorded on the original 1887 Certificate of Title, but later recorded by surveyors.

Sources: M&MTB records, Keith Kings drawings, Macmeikan written description.

In 1910 the rear wall of the shed was relocated westward and the storage roads were extended. A paint shop was also established around this time because the bogie cars were more difficult to transport to the Nicholson Street workshops for repairs and painting.

In July 1916, control of the cable network passed from MTOC to the interim Tramway Board, which in 1919 commissioned further shed modifications and extensions. These modifications were underway when control of the cable network then passed to the M&MTB in November of that year.

Frank Stapley

The architect contracted for these 1919 extensions was Frank Stapley (1858-1944). His brief was to design and oversee the addition of a second storey to the traffic office, the relocation of the southern wall to the southern boundary and the addition of two extra roads. Also, the rear wall was to be relocated and all roads lengthened.

Stapley emigrated from England with his wife Eliza and joined a leading Melbourne architectural business. He worked with the city surveyor's department of the Melbourne City Council from 1887 to 1893 and later practised on his own and in partnership, designing domestic and commercial buildings, including the West Melbourne Stadium (destroyed by fire in 1955, subsequently rebuilt and renamed Festival Hall). He was president of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in 1920-21.



Frank Stapley (1858-1944), architect, Mayor of Melbourne 1917-18 and reformer. Photograph courtesy State Library Victoria.

Stapley was Melbourne's chief advocate of town planning and an influential figure over three decades. After holding a number of key planning positions, Stapley became the foundation chairman of the nine-member Metropolitan Town Planning Commission in 1922. He was a member of Melbourne City Council from 1901, mayor in 1917-18 and represented the council on the Melbourne Tramways Trust – the municipal body that built and owned the cable tram track and engine houses. He was also a member of the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, the Health Commission and the National War Memorial Committee.

Stapley was known as a reformer who urged Melbourne to plan for its increasing population.

Increased capacity

Following these extensions, the shed's capacity increased to 70 tram sets, including 58 longer bogie cars, over 20 roads.

For comparison purposes, the future Brunswick electric depot that would open in 1936 would have a capacity of 72 W5 class trams over nine roads. The W5 class tram was approximately the same length as a cable dummy plus 30-foot car (i.e. 46 feet or 14 metres), but the W5 class had a greater passenger capacity and a faster speed.

Around this time, one of the run-in/run-out tracks to Sydney Road was equipped with a tunnel and slot for the grip. This permitted the grip on the dummy to be lowered while over the pit inside the shed and thus hasten run-outs in peak hours. The tunnel was a unique feature of the Brunswick shed and did not include a cable.

By the early 1920s, a Permanent Way Depot had been established on the undeveloped land behind the car shed. This stored rails, sleepers, ballast and other track building materials and equipment. The M&MTB fenced the yard and improved roadway access to the site in 1924.



A 30-foot bogie car being hauled into the Brunswick car house/depot by horse (late 1920s). Photograph from the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.

Conductors and gripmen outside of the Brunswick traffic office (1914). Some conductors appear ready to board their trams with ticket strips pinned to their tunics and bell-punches hanging from their shoulders. Fares collected were carried in their tunic pockets. Official MTOC photograph in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.



Increased patronage

It appears that MTOC did not publish performance data on a line-by-line basis. However, it was required to provide such traffic statistics to the 1911 Royal Commission into Melbourne’s railway and tramway systems.

These figures included a breakdown of patronage and tram usage for all lines for a weekday in October 1910. They showed that the Brunswick line was the busiest on the network, carrying 25,718 passengers on that day and operating 51 trams at an average frequency of one tram per minute.

Over the following decades, patronage continued to increase. In 1923 the Brunswick line was reported as operating 64 trams, equivalent to an average service frequency of one tram every 50 seconds. This information was included in a 1950s report by the assistant superintendent of the cable workshops, Ian Macmeikan. The accompanying table includes figures from both the Royal Commission and the Macmeikan report.

For comparison purposes, the future Sydney Road electric line that would replace the cable tramway in 1936 would operate a peak hour frequency of two minutes using the higher capacity W5 class electric trams. Today the average peak hour frequency is five minutes operated by even higher capacity trams.

Cable lines	Line length (miles)	Total daily passengers (1910)	Average time between trams (1910)	Trams used (1910)	Trams used (1923)
Brunswick	4.45	25,718	1.0 min	51	64
Clifton Hill	3.79	23,339	2.1 min	29	45
Richmond	3.60	17,775	2.4 min	24	38
South Melbourne	3.60	14,688	2.0 min	25	36

Table showing passenger and tram statistics for the four busiest cable lines. 1910 figures from the 1911 Royal Commission; 1923 figures from the Macmeikan report.

Traffic congestion

Congestion in Sydney Road increased as more trams and motor vehicles used the thoroughfare. One bottleneck was between the car shed and Moreland Road.

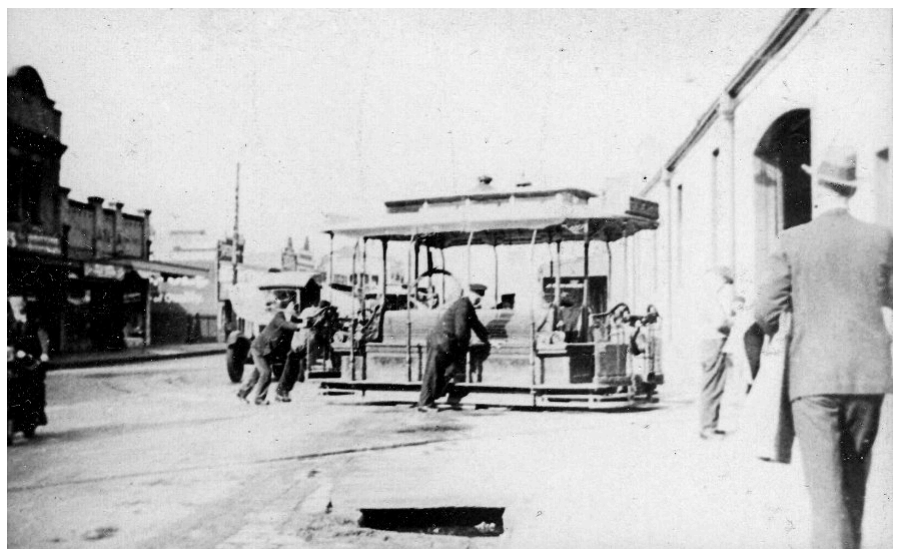
Outside the shed, the running in and out of trams slowed traffic and was the site of numerous collisions and injuries. Between the shed and Moreland Road, further congestion resulted from peak hour trams queuing to use the crossovers just south of Moreland Road and awaiting departure to the city.

The Moreland Road intersection became a particularly troublesome spot. In 1916 the [Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg Tramways Trust](#) opened an electric tramway, replacing the horse tramway. Dual electric tracks rounded the narrow corner at Sydney Road and Moreland Road and the overhang of turning trams increased traffic delays and the number of collisions. When plans for the intersection's reconstruction were announced, newspapers applauded the decision.

One well-publicised collision occurred in front of the car shed at 12.30am on Sunday 15 December 1935, just four weeks before the Brunswick cable line ceased operations. Tram conductor John Leyshon of East Brunswick was struck and fatally injured by a motor car while running a dummy into the shed. The shed's horse was also badly maimed.

The coroner's inquest heard that a motor car driven by Dr Albert Hughes of Collins Street and North Melbourne was travelling south in Sydney Road at about 25 miles per hour, colliding with the dummy, horse and conductor. Police charged the driver of the motor car with being intoxicated.

Dr Hughes was subsequently committed for trial on a manslaughter charge but this was later withdrawn, replaced with a fine of £30 for drink driving. Newspapers reported the case in detail over a number of months including the ensuing controversy about the downgraded charge and relatively minor penalty.



Cable dummy being manhandled into the Brunswick car house/depot by the tram crew and shedman, late 1920s. Photograph from the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.

Replacing the cable trams

With ageing rolling stock and increasing congestion, locals questioned how much longer the Brunswick cable line could remain in service. In 1923 the M&MTB had taken a decision to replace the cable network. But this was a mammoth task in terms of finances, engineering and labour – and the Brunswick line had not been at the top of the conversion list.

First to be converted were the southern and eastern lines operating along Swanston and Flinders Streets in the city centre and the cross-suburban line between Windsor and St Kilda Esplanade. These works were undertaken between 1925 and 1927. But changing circumstances soon presented obstacles for the remaining eleven lines.

Challenges

One such challenge was a recommendation by the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee in late 1927. It proposed pausing the remaining conversions for up to ten years, thus allowing time to build tramway financial reserves while continuing to utilise the remaining cable tramway assets.

The chairman of the M&MTB, [Alexander Cameron](#), strongly disagreed with this recommendation. He contended this would be false economy and provided extensive evidence to back his judgement. Cameron argued that cable tramway assets were deteriorating quickly and would require further and wasteful refurbishment.

Following this rationale, during 1929 and 1930 the Board went ahead with the conversion to electric traction of Collins Street and its Victoria Bridge and North Fitzroy cable lines.

While these works were underway, a second challenge arose – a public campaign against allegedly ‘noisy’ electric trams in Collins Street with their ‘unsightly’ overhead wires. This campaign was championed by The Herald newspaper with criticism mostly directed at the M&MTB chairman.

Cameron maintained his steadfast belief that electric trams were the future. He had a long and successful track record of tramway development and managing tramway finances. But he was also portrayed by some as too focused on tramways to the exclusion of alternatives.

Economic depression

A third and all-pervasive challenge then struck Melbourne. After the 1929 stock market crash, economies around the world sank into severe depression. The resultant high unemployment and loss of income led to reduced tramway revenue. This meant that the work of converting the remaining nine cable lines could not be funded. So cable trams continued to operate along Elizabeth, Market, Lonsdale and Bourke Streets in the city centre.

Cartoon from The Herald, 16 September 1929, depicting the last Collins Street cable tram with ‘conductor’ Alexander Cameron taking ‘Peace and Quiet’ from Collins Street. Courtesy National Library of Australia (Trove).





Looking south from Moreland Road, Brunswick at the Brunswick cable tram terminus, c1910. The car shed can be seen between the two tram sets.

Photograph by Gabriel Knight, in the collection of State Library Victoria.

A fourth challenge gained momentum during these years. Support for trams throughout the western world was waning. Overseas transport operators were adopting trolley buses and diesel buses as the so-called 'modern' replacement for trams – and similar views were forming in Melbourne.

M&MTB manager, A.D. Murdoch, conducted a fact-finding trip to Great Britain and Europe. On his return in February 1934 he delivered his report to the Board recommending a delay of further tramway conversions:

With regard to the recent development of the crude oil (diesel) engine and trolley bus, some of the remaining conversions in Melbourne will not justify the high capital costs of tramway tracks. It would be desirable to postpone the conversion of any further tramways for a period of at least 12 months or more for two reasons.

Firstly, for the purpose of building up renewals and reserves [of funds]. Secondly, to permit of developments on the other side of the world to proceed a little farther and to indicate more definitely the relative merits of the trolley bus and the oil bus. [*The Argus*, 19 June 1934]

Murdoch was a respected senior officer of the Board. He had previously been the Engineer and Manager of the English firm that operated the North Melbourne Electric Tramways and Lighting Company. In late 1923, he joined the M&MTB to take over the existing management role of the Board's secretary W.O. Strangward.



Alexander Cameron (1864-1940), solicitor and councillor of the City of Malvern, sole chairman of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust (1908-1919) and founding chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (1919-1935). Photograph from the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.

With all of these challenges, the future of the remaining cable lines, including the Brunswick line, was uncertain.

Unexpected decision

Just four months later, in June 1934, the M&MTB Chairman unexpectedly announced that the Brunswick line would be converted to electric traction. This decision took some by surprise given the recent pressures to reappraise the conversion program. Cameron invited those with alternate proposals to meet with the Board's officers.

The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) and the traffic committee of the City of Melbourne expressed their preference for trolley buses in Elizabeth Street. But after a meeting with Board officers, the press were informed that the RACV representatives had failed to submit any effective arguments to induce the Board to alter its decision. Neither trolley nor diesel buses were suitable for Elizabeth Street for several reasons:

- At least 25% more buses would be required than trams, increasing congestion, road damage and road repair costs.
- Buses could not perform U-turns at the terminus, requiring the introduction of one-way city streets as a mitigation measure.
- Trolley bus overhead wiring was complex to integrate with tramway overhead at intersections and would result in more dewirements and delays.
- There was also a scarcity of experienced diesel mechanics and spare parts in Melbourne.

The Board repeated that the most efficient replacement for the Brunswick cable tramway was an electric tramway – and the expected high patronage would fund the capital costs of constructing new trams, new track and a new depot. Cameron and the Board were not for turning. The electric conversion of Elizabeth Street and the Brunswick line would proceed.

However, Cameron's 16 years as chairman would come to an abrupt end 18 months later – before the completion of the new Brunswick Depot and the opening of the new North Coburg electric line.

A future article will look at the design and early operations of this new electric tram depot, along with Cameron's departure from the Board.

Geoff Brown

Acknowledgements

My thanks for the valuable advice and assistance from Warren Doubleday, Rob Green, Noelle Jones, Mal Rowe and Brian Weedon.

Thanks also to the resources available at Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Library of Australia (Trove), Public Record Office Victoria, State Library Victoria and the Melbourne Tram Museum.



PCC No 1041 and the Bourke Street mall

The Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramway Board's PCC class tramcar, No 1041, entered service on Sunday 28 August 1973, after a rather embarrassing breakdown on its way to the official launch on 19 April 1973. Now on display at the Melbourne Tram Museum, the tram was notable for:

- being the prototype for the new generation of M&MTB trams, starting with the Z class
- representing the end of an era, being the very last tram built by the M&MTB's Preston Workshops and signalling the end of the M&MTB as a vertically integrated operator
- being used less in traffic than any other M&MTB tram due to its unreliability (for more details see [PCC 1041](#) on the museum's website).

Over its operational life, the tram was allocated to Preston Depot and used primarily on Bourke Street routes.

Above: M&MTB PCC No 1041 in Bourke Street, October/November 1973. Orange was a hugely popular colour in the 1970s – for interiors, clothing and of course trams. PCC No 1041 was the first Melbourne tram to use the M&MTB's new orange livery. Photograph by Ron Scholten in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.

The above photograph shows the newly built tram in Bourke Street, between Elizabeth and Swanston Streets. Over the period October to November 1973 a pedestrian mall was being trialled in that short stretch of Bourke Street, the home of major department stores (including Myer and Buckley & Nunn) and many other retail outlets. As can be seen in the photograph, only a cursory effort was made with temporary landscaping and street furniture.

The trial was not a success – the closure resulted in protests by local traders and caused traffic chaos, with many preferring trams to be removed as well.

Who was Bourke?

Bourke Street was named after Irish-born Sir Richard Bourke (1777-1855), Governor of New South Wales from 1831 to 1838. In 1837 he commissioned Robert Hoddle (1794-1881) to plan the layout for the city that Bourke named Melbourne after the then incumbent British Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne (1779-1848). Bourke's late wife was commemorated with the name of Elizabeth Street.

In fact, the M&MTB had previously considered removing trams from central city streets. In 1962 it had examined relocating tramways underground in the city area, following concepts that had been implemented in several European cities – Brussels, Köln and Essen. Under this plan the Bourke Street tramline from Spencer Street through to Carlton Gardens would have been moved underground. Although initial investigations for the engineering design and costs were undertaken, the proposal was never implemented.

It was not until 13 February 1978 that a section of Bourke Street was permanently closed to vehicular traffic, becoming the Bourke Street mall. By 1983 seating, lighting and landscaping works had been established, however trams continued to run through the pedestrian mall.

To the right of the tram is the heritage-listed Buckley & Nunn Emporium, dating from 1911-12 and designed by Bates, Peebles & Smart (predecessor of the architectural firm now known as Bates Smart). Buckley & Nunn was originally established in Bourke Street in 1852 by Irish-born Mars Buckley (1825-1905) and Englishman Crompton Nunn (1828-1891) after Buckley set up a successful drapery business on the Ballarat goldfields in 1851. An adjoining extension, the Moderne-style Men's Store (shown in the photograph below), was constructed in 1933 and won the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects Street Architecture Award in 1934. The Buckley & Nunn business and property were purchased in 1982 by the retail firm David Jones, that still operates a department store on the site.

More photographs of PCC No 1041 from the museum's collection can be found at [Victorian Collections](#) – enter 'tram 1041' in the search box.

Warren Doubleday

M&MTB W6 No 986 in Bourke Street, 24 June 1955, two days before the electric line officially opened. The Buckley & Nunn Men's Store is just to the right of the tram. Photograph by Geoff Grant, in the collection of the Ballarat Tram Museum.



E. Murphy and a golden medallion

A recent addition to the Melbourne Tram Museum's collection was an elaborate engraved medallion. It is nine carat gold, stamped 'Catanach' on the reverse, together with makers marks for Willis & Sons.

The front is engraved with the initials EM, while the reverse bears the inscription:

"Presented to E. Murphy as a token of esteem from fellow employees at Malvern Tramways."

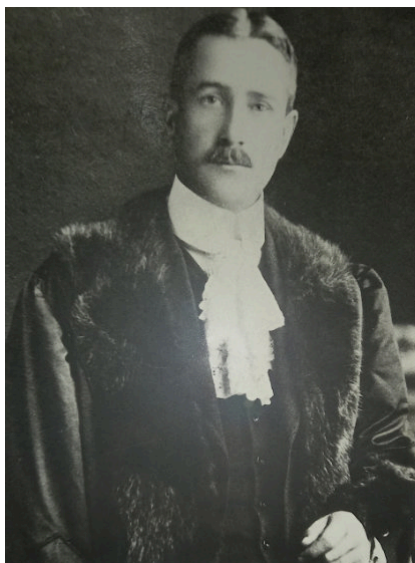
This suggests that the medallion dates from the time of the [Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust](#) (PMTT), which operated trams from 1910 until February 1920, when it was taken over by the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) as part of the State government plan to create a single tramway authority for all of Melbourne.

Catanach's is a well-known Melbourne jeweller, founded in 1874 and celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Operating initially from a workroom in Elizabeth Street, Catanach's relocated several times within the central city area up until 1893 when it moved to Little Collins Street, on the corner of the Royal Arcade, where it remained for the next ninety years. In 1985 it moved to High Street, Armadale, where the family-owned business is still located.

Melbourne-based Willis & Sons was established even earlier, in 1858. By the early 1900s the firm had become one of Australia's most prolific manufacturing jewellers, maintaining that position for the next two decades. From 1908 it was located at 350-356 Little Collins Street, just west of Elizabeth Street and within a few minutes' walk of Catanach's.



Front and reverse of the gold medallion recently added to the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.



Edward Charles Murphy (1870-1950), auctioneer, councillor of the City of Caulfield and member of the Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust. Photograph courtesy of the City of Glen Eira History and Heritage Team.

So who was E. Murphy? It was not unusual for tokens or medallions to be provided to tram employees – such an item enabled the holder to receive free tram travel. However the various examples seen by the museum have been of simpler shapes and less expensive metals. Such an ornate gold medallion from Catanach's suggests that the holder may have been someone special, and not just a typical employee.

The museum has no record of any PMTT employees named Murphy – we have a PMTT employee list from 1913 and an M&MTB Eastern Division list from 1920 – nor are there any Murphys among our Tramway ANZACs.

As far as we are aware, the only E. Murphy with a connection to the Malvern Tramways was Edward Charles Murphy (1870-1950).

An auctioneer, E.C. Murphy joined the Caulfield Town Council as an independent in 1911 – he was the only nominee after the previous councillor retired. Murphy was appointed as the first mayor of the newly proclaimed City of Caulfield in 1913. In that role he officiated at the opening ceremony of the PMTT's Balaclava, Glen Huntly and Elsternwick electric tram extension on 13 November 1913.

Murphy became a member of the Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust in 1915, continuing in that role until 1920. He resigned from Caulfield Council in 1921. A keen golfer, Murphy was a foundation member of both the Elsternwick Golf Club (1909) and Kingston Heath Golf Club (1925). He was awarded a life membership of Kingston Heath in 1945.

However, being a Trust member, Murphy was not a regular tramway employee. The badge inscription may be a measure of high regard from tramway colleagues to some other unknown Murphy.

Noelle Jones

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the City of Glen Eira, Glen Eira Historical Society, Kingston Heath Golf Archives Group, National Library of Australia (Trove) and Warren Doubleday.



Bronze PMTT officers pass (left) and white metal employees pass (right). From the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.