

# The History of the Brisbane Tramway Museum Society.

## From the Start to Opening to the Public.

April 13 1969 is regarded as one of Brisbane's blackest days, for on the last few moments of that Sunday evening, electric traction ceased to propel public transport in Queensland for another 10 years (Electric Trains).



On 15 June 1980, just after midday, tramway operation officially recommenced in Brisbane when the Lord Mayor, Alderman Frank Sleeman, drove 47 through a ribbon, in the presence of the Deputy Premier of Queensland, Dr Llew Edwards M.L.A., at the Brisbane Tramway Museum at Ferny Grove. The road to opening has been long and hard.

The first attempt at tramcar preservation was made when it was suggested that a Bogie Brill, then being replaced be kept for historical purposes, depot space was at a premium, and the request was refused. As a result, Bogie Brills are the only large class of Brisbane tram not preserved in a museum.

Following the AETA convention at Easter 1959 when 65 made its first appearance for many years, together with Baby Centre Isle 99, it was decided by the Transport Department that these cars should be restored and used together with a replica horse tram and other cars in the Cavalcade of Transport, which was part of the Queensland Centenary Celebrations on 10 December 1959. Subsequently it was decided to keep these cars as historic vehicles.



Dreadnoughts became surplus in 1961 and did not appear on the streets until after the disastrous Paddington Depot fire of September 1962. By Christmas, following the first major closures of the system, as a direct result of the fire they again went into mothballs prior to scrapping. It was following a trip in 136 on 4 July 1964 that Brisbane fans first knew that the Brisbane City Council (BCC) intended to preserve at least one of each type of tram. The list then stood at 41, 47, 65, 99 and 136

The Wilbur Smith Traffic Plan of 1965 announced that trams should be scrapped. Scrapping the handbrake cars commenced and several FMs with major accident damage were stored. It was only with quick action by Robert Thomson and Neil Elfick that 231, the first Drop



*The Tile Factory Ferny Grove*

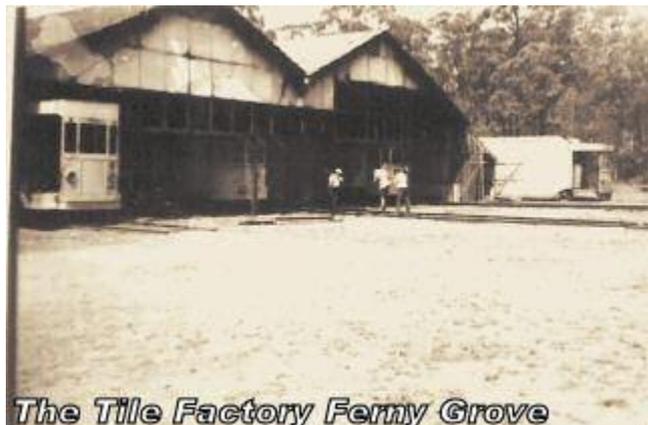
ARHS members, G R Ford represented a group of individuals, J A S Hoyle the AETA and S Tyrrell yet another private group. As S Tyrrell was the most advanced with his proposal it was suggested that all join with him.

As a result, notices were posted announcing that a public meeting would be held on July 1968 to discuss the establishment of an operating Tramway Museum in Brisbane. The obvious name had already been chosen. Sixty persons attended the meeting, including several BCC Aldermen and an interim council was elected. Bill Daniells become President and a meeting was called on 2 August to elect the permanent office bearers for the ensuing twelve months. It was finally resolved that the Lord Mayor, Alderman Clem Jones, be officially informed of the existence of the Society.

Even at this early stage the Society was organising tram tours, the first in 136, then in 553 on 7 August on the last day of the Grange/Ashgrove line with the last use of Gregory Terrace on 15 September.

And so it was that the Brisbane Tramway Museum Society (BTMS) now existed.

The Society is fortunate in having perhaps the most complete archival collection of any transport museum, thanks due to the activities of these members.



*The Tile Factory Ferny Grove*

Even before the Society was formed approaches had been made to the BCC for various tramcars and equipment needed to operate them. On 24 August 1968 the Acting Town Clerk, Mr I C Hawes, informed the Society that providing the formation was satisfactory to the BCC in all respects, the BCC was prepared to donate to the Society tramcars of historic significance and all the spares to run them. It was not realised how this magnanimous gift would cause problems for the infant Society.



*Present Site in Tramway St*

The interim council had submitted a proposal on 11 July. It was felt that it

would be fortunate if only a few of the tramcars on the list were gained. It was not really expected that all, plus all the spare parts and equipment and more would be given. The response was such, then, and over the next few years that, in hindsight, it was possible that the BCC would have given the entire system to the BTMS had it been asked for. As it was what was taken delivery of immediately upon closure was to provide enough headaches. Delivery was taken of the first vehicle, car 47, on 24 February 1969, when the Chairman of the Transport Committee, Alderman Roy Harvey, handed it over, with the other cars, to the Society, in trust, to preserve and operate for the citizens of Brisbane.



By 26 March the decision had been made for 554 to be the official last tram and around 11:50pm on Sunday 13 April 1969, 554 was handed over to the BTMS President Mr Bill Daniells by the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Alderman Clem Jones, so ending 84 years of tramway operation in Brisbane.

parts, plus patterns and other associated material, other vehicles and equipment was also given to the Society. Most track, buildings, etc, were dismantled and moved by Society members.

Apart from the initial request which resulted in the BTMS obtaining the trams, rails, and all the remaining spare

Many suggestions were made for the Museum site, ranging from Caboolture to Beenleigh, with the site of a former tile factory at Ferny Grove chosen. On 22 November 1968 the proposal to have Lanita Street, Ferny Grove (old Dayboro Railway right of way ideal for tramway operation) closed was gazetted. Unfortunately objections were received and the closure notice was refused. This plus the sale of the land for redevelopment made it necessary to find a new home for the Museum.

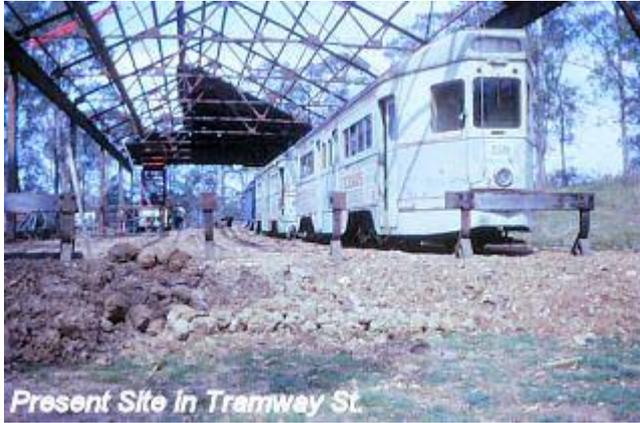


After several sites were looked at and rejected, the present site was offered, a disused sanitation depot, on 27 March 1972. Work immediately began on the transfer of the exhibits and equipment to the new site before the ink had dried on the letter. The land, ten acres, is leased from the BCC for a nominal amount on a twenty-year renewable lease.

much broken glass, was the theft of over \$1000 worth of brass fittings from some of the cars. The biggest problems, however, was the removal of hundred of tons of equipment that had been accumulated in such a short time. The enthusiasm of members in those days was exceptional and the society saw much progress achieved on the old site. To celebrate the New Year in 1969/70, 231 was operated on a short length of track, using the motor from

At last the Museum had a permanent home. The only unfortunate incident that occurred at the old site, apart from

trolleybus 1 as a generator powered by a V8 engine. Thus less than nine months after the closure a tram operated in Brisbane again. It was considered sure that the Museum would be open to the public within twelve months. This was not to eventuate however, and tram operations were discontinued because members wished to play trams and not work. The next movement under power was during the move to the new site when bus 34 was driven out of the scrub, using wandering leads, prior to being towed away.



The new site had two buildings, a large water tank and a run down cabin on it. The equipment was put in one shed and the older cars in the other. Unfortunately the rest of the vehicles and equipment had to be stored in the open. It was essential that further buildings be erected and existing ones improved. As a result a complete bay of Ipswich Road Depot was obtained. Ipswich Road Depot was closed on 5 January 1974 and by the end of May all the BTMS's

section had been removed and transported to Ferny Grove. In November 1973 work commenced on the substation. The building was completed by the end of February 1974. Work commenced in June 1974 on the erection of Depot 1 and was completed, except for the roof which was put on by members, by the end of the month. Associated track work was proceeding and on 2 November 1974 car 231 became the first passenger carrying car to enter the building. Again the problem of people wanting to play trams arose, so it was decided that no further tramcar operation would take place until the Museum was ready to open. Work has continued at a fairly steady pace since then and Depot 1 reached the lock up stage in August 1978. Construction of Depot 2 started in May 1976. For the first time since acquisition all exhibits were under cover by early 1979. On 1 February 1980 the substation was officially commissioned and to celebrate, car 554 was driven into the depot under its own power. It was during this time the decision was made to lay as much track as possible in mass concrete, since it was cheaper than using sleepers. The depot fan had been so laid in mid 1979 and its success prompted the decision



The Society started with no money and has opened with no money, but during the intervening years has spent over \$83,000 in getting the Museum open. Assets are worth over \$50,000 (1980 value) excluding the value of materials donated. Obtaining this has not been easy. All except for a State Government Grant of \$19,242 has come from member's pockets and from functions. This averages out to each member having donated approximately \$700 over

eleven years. Quite a good effort.

The first monies came from tram trips, the first in 136 in July 1968 and the last in 41 on 20 October 1974. (Yes 1974.) The last occasion that trams operated in Brisbane streets was this

last operation of the horse car (41) along the Belmont reservation (still existing today). The horse car had also operated at Chermside in August 1970 to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the commencement of horse trams in Brisbane. Boat, bus and train trips have also been operated.



Now the museum is open there are still problems, for as well as meeting operating costs, the revenue must also be sufficient to pay for the finishing of the complex. The extensions are not going to be cheap and everybody's help will be needed. Donations of goods or money to the value of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

His Excellency Sir James Ramsey, CMG, CBE, DSC, Governor of Queensland, officially opened the

Brisbane Tramway Museum Society at Ferny Grove on Sunday 10 August 1980 on the 95th Anniversary of the official trial of the first horse tramway in Brisbane, from North Quay to the Exhibition, witnessed by approximately 150 official guests and 550 other visitors.

The Official Party boarded car 47 at the bottom gate and departed for the depot at 9.57am, followed by car 65 carrying the Brisbane Municipal Concert Band.

A special trip was operated with 47 at 3.30pm, being the time of the first horse car trip. A fare of \$1 was charged on this 95th Anniversary journey with special overprinted tickets issued.

The Brisbane Tramway Museum Society  
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