

Serving the Community



An old postcard - BTM Collection



From the BTM Collection

From 1887 to 1913

Horse Tram No. 1

For many years, members of the Ballarat Tramway Museum knew of an odd-looking 'bungalow' behind a house in Ballarat East. It was an old horse tram.

The Museum was able to take delivery of the tramcar, the original No. 1, in December 1985. Within a year funding had been obtained to start work. The tram was placed on the wheels and parts of an old Melbourne cable tram trailer.

All four corner pillars needed to be replaced - along with much of the rest of the tram. Garry Wood, Dave Macartney and Jacqui Edwards slaved away - replicating this part, restoring that. Four of the roof ribs required replacement, so an Echuca company bent the timbers with steam.

Roof slats, top rails, window sashes all started to be 're-created'. Warren Doubleday juggled pieces of metal and timber to create the spiral staircases, handrails and the end aprons. Painting and sign-writing were satisfying tasks.

And then on 7th November 1992, the resplendent Horse Tram No. 1 ventured out onto Wendouree Parade. Ajax and Hercules, two magnificent Percheron horses, handled the loads with great aplomb and ease. A horse tram had been resurrected!

On 26th December 2012, a special celebration saw No.1 running through the Gardens 125 years to the day since it first entered Wendouree Parade.

Ballarat Trams are Ballarat History

Ballarat's Horse Trams



Wendouree Parade.

Photo: Alastair Reither

Ballarat Tramway Museum

Ballarat's Horse Trams

Horse trams began running through Ballarat's streets on 21st December 1887. Six trams conveyed some 300 guests from the City to the Gardens, where speeches and a banquet followed.

Service to the general public started five days later with three trams which were well patronised. Ballarat Tramway Company Limited housed the double-deck trams and its horses in a large corrugated iron shed on the north side of Lake Wendouree.

Two horses were used for each tram and on very steep hills, a third horse was hitched up. Horses and their feed were costly.

While the conductors wore uniforms, the drivers did not always do the same, preferring warm and water-proof outer clothing in winter. The crews worked long hours and were permitted only one day off a month.

Passengers crowded onto the trams during late night shopping on Saturday, especially on the long Sebastopol route. So a 'top' (deck) conductor was added to help with the extra people.

The horse trams ran around Lake Wendouree, carrying almost no passengers in winter, but overcrowded on sunny summer days. Late in January 1888, it is reported that the trams carried 10,000 to the Gardens in one day.

Horse trams were replaced by electric trams in 1905. However, they continued to run on the Sebastopol route until 1913.



Unloading the remains at Depot, December 1985.
Photo Dave Macartney.

Inaugural running in Wendouree Parade, November 1992.
Photo W. F. Scott



Ballarat Vintage Tramway Botanic Gardens Lake Wendouree

Trams operate every weekend and on public and school holidays during the afternoon. Special arrangements for club and school visits, weddings and parties, can also be made. Guided tours are available at most times.

The Museum's Horse Tram No1 operates about once a year and on special occasions.

The Ballarat Tramway Museum is run by volunteers dedicated to preserving Ballarat's tramway heritage for future generations. Established in 1971 following the closure of the State Electricity Commission's tramway system, we have been operating trams at the museum for over 40 years.

We invite you to consider membership to support us in achieving the Museum's goals. There is no obligation to take part in working on the tramway. Members receive a news publication every two months.

However if you would like to assist us at the depot to operate or maintain the trams then you would be most welcome.

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