

The Future ???



WORK PARTIES

Remember that the Park is open every Thursday Evening for Tram Work Parties from 7 p.m.
Entry by Middle Gate.

S.T.G TROLLEY

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The Magazine of Summerlee Transport Group

TEMPORARY PARK CLOSURE



BOB CONNER and BOB SUTHERLAND are given their "The Last Shift" plaques by the Provost
Cllr. PATRICK CONNELLY

Last Tram

By GEORGE BROOM

Sunday 22 October 2006, the last day Scotland could boast an electric tramway due to the temporary closure of Summerlee Heritage Park. An event the STG were going to mark as best we could with the limited resources at our disposal.

The Park Management were obviously also keen that the Park should close with some ceremony, and to their credit took on board all our suggestions and developed them even further. The Friends had also planned for this event ensuring traction engines would be in steam guaranteeing a memorable weekend.

One of the closing ceremony attractions would be the penny squash, a tradition of last trams everywhere. The only problem being the last, last trams were in the days of real money when you got 240 pennies to the pound. Some research was required to find the perfect new coin to recreate that satisfyingly bent and battered souvenir. Bob Sutherland sacrificed a number of coins during a quiet spell on one of his Sunday shifts identifying the best location to place 2p coins to acquire their makeover and take on this starring role. (As Bob is also our treasurer I think it may be prudent to gloss over any slight shortcomings in this years accounts because of this).

The Group also sought publicity, e mails were sent to radio stations and the press asking them to at least mention the event. John Traynor went up to the Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertisers offices, who appeared to be very interested in our work. We thought we were quids in, when a photographer turned up and spent about an hour taking photographs one Monday afternoon. Unfortunately it must have been a good news week as our efforts came to nothing.

The Tram shed was to be open to the Public. Andy Jamieson took charge of some of the Thursday night work party ensuring that all items were properly stored away and generally spruced the place up, with 1017 being subjected to a thorough clean and polish regime in readiness for public inspection.

Unfortunately, and very unusually, the Thursday work party before the closure was cancelled because of other commitments meaning final preparations would have to take place on the closure Weekend.

Saturday morning was an early start for Andy, Joyce, John Traynor and Charlie Morrison who had the tram shed ready for visitors' inspection at 10am. Various tram pictures were on display to show what our Coronation car could look like if restoration funds could be found. Charlie Morrison was the duty motorman for the day and we all found time to have a final twirl of the handles of 53 while she was laden with passengers.

The sheds were open throughout the day, visitors being warmly greeted and given a tour of the trams and an explanation of the STG role in the park and our aspirations.

Sunday morning, the last day. all the gang arrived early. Bob Connor prepared Graz and took her out for the early morning service. As we chatted in the morning sun about the forthcoming events, we were all delighted to see that May and Willie Wilson had turned up

to witness and take part in the day. Willie, as always was keen to look round the depot and examine progress. Willie is now a wheelchair user and I was keen that he should see what we had been doing to the Düsseldorf car which was brought out for his inspection. Willie was keen to look inside and was determined to climb aboard. We asked Willie if he would be prepared to be a guinea pig for the day and allow us to try out the wheelchair lift properly for the first time. Willie agreed, Bob Sutherland and I operated the lift and Willie was successfully boarded. This was a real learning experience for us; Willie has an electric wheelchair, which he was able to maneuver around the car with ease. It also has a lot of weight at the base giving it a low center of gravity making it very stable in the car. With Willie and May in the car, it was about time this car had its inaugural run with a wheelchair user. Bob Connor was by this time bringing in the Graz car. Bob Sutherland took charge of 53 which was blocking Düsseldorf and took her to the end of the line. I had the privilege of taking May and Willie out for a couple of jaunts up and down the line creating our own small part in the Summerlee history.

The day I felt belonged to the two Bobs and for most of the remainder of the day I remained in the car sheds with John, Charlie and Joyce meeting visitors and imparting the virtues of the STG.

However, just after 3pm, the sound of the pipe band heralded that the end was near so we shut up the tram shed and headed to the top of the line. I arrived at the top and was advised by Bob Sutherland that he was taking one more load down then he was making ready for the final run. I found Tommy Gallagher, the duty manager for the day, and was given one hundred and fifty 2p coins which we had previously requested. Once the tram returned the coins were laid out on the track.

The Provost arrived fully bedecked in his gold chain and the ceremonies began. I was delighted our senior tram crews, the two Bobs, were being presented with gifts from the Provost as befits a tramway closure. I could not help thinking this same event had occurred almost exactly 50 years ago during the Edinburgh tram closure ceremony.

Lots of pictures were taken and miraculously no one kicked over any of the coins. All the dignitaries boarded, more pictures were taken. Then members of the public were invited to fill up the car. More pictures, then finally with a cheer Bob Sutherland was given the signal to set off. Then the tram hit the coins and we experienced the cacophony of one hundred and fifty mundane 2p coins being transformed into desirable souvenirs.

After the tram passed Charlie and I quickly picked up the coins and thoroughly washed them before presenting them in readiness to pass to the Provost.

The fully laden tram returned and every passenger was presented with a coin from the Provost as they alighted from the tram. The pipe band started up and the public were ushered to the entrance for the march out of the park led by TIGGER and the pipe band.

Our part in the ceremony over this left us with the tram ready for the real final run. Bob Connor took charge for this last run and with little ceremony we pulled away from the stop. Arriving at the Depot Bob Connor stabled the car and switched off the power on this last day of operation.

Leaving the Park I was delighted the event had gone so well, the weather had been kind throughout we had a good crowd which had generated a real festival atmosphere. Nobody could fault this closing ceremony. My euphoria lasted until I had passed the Kirk-o-Shotts transmitters and was heading downhill to the Harthill service station. Then it hit me, the Park was closed. This was my first tramway closure, if I felt deflated about this temporary closure how would I feel if, heaven forbid, Blackpool tramway closed. What must it have felt to have known the Edinburgh or Glasgow system and witness its disappearance?

Perhaps some of our members who have recollections of these closures could write an article for Trolley about your memories of such events?

Importantly this is definitely not the end, The Park is being refurbished under a multi-million pound project. As members of the Summerlee Transport Group you have access to our trams. Yes, we will still be running them when the Park is closed. We are currently looking forward to a really dark evening when we will test run a car on the now seldom used track and enjoy the sparks on the wheels as the current cuts through the rust on the rails.

This temporary closure is now a real opportunity to get some long overdue maintenance done on the cars and the tramway infrastructure. We have a small band of very keen active volunteers. Would you consider helping us, or do you know anyone who is looking for a worthwhile hobby with good company? Thursday is still a work night and there is a strong possibility of daytime working in the near future.



The Chairman's Last Run with 53

Last Day of Operations

(As seen by BOB SUTHERLAND)

After watching the weather forecast anxiously for a few days, it came as a pleasant surprise that Sunday 22nd October was scheduled to be at least dry and, for the time of year, mild. I had indicated to David Sloan that if it was pouring down I should don my Glasgow Tramways raincoat, rely on the waterproof cover on my cap, and still take 53 for a last service run – fortunately such was not to be required!

My grandson, Callum, came through from Rosyth for the occasion so suitably fitted up with my “summer cap” (white top, Edinburgh Transport badge which had been his great-grandfather’s, to the fore) and T.I.M. suitably inked and loaded, he was ready and we set off for Summerlee. At the depot I found my “trustworthy, and regular, conductor” Andy Jamieson had beaten us to it and we lost no time in carrying out the usual checks on both 53 and 225.

225 was trundled out for a test run as we were joined by Bob Connor, the Group’s most senior motorman and who had been asked particularly to turn up for the occasion. 7 runs were completed by 225, 53 brought out, and Bob Connor ran 225 into the lye for the last time – that seemed a bit sad. Between Bob & I, we ran 13 runs with 53, Callum & Andy working as a team to get the pole swung, seats turned, tickets issued, assistance given to passengers boarding & alighting who required it, etc., etc. – a total of 293 souls were carried between the two cars.

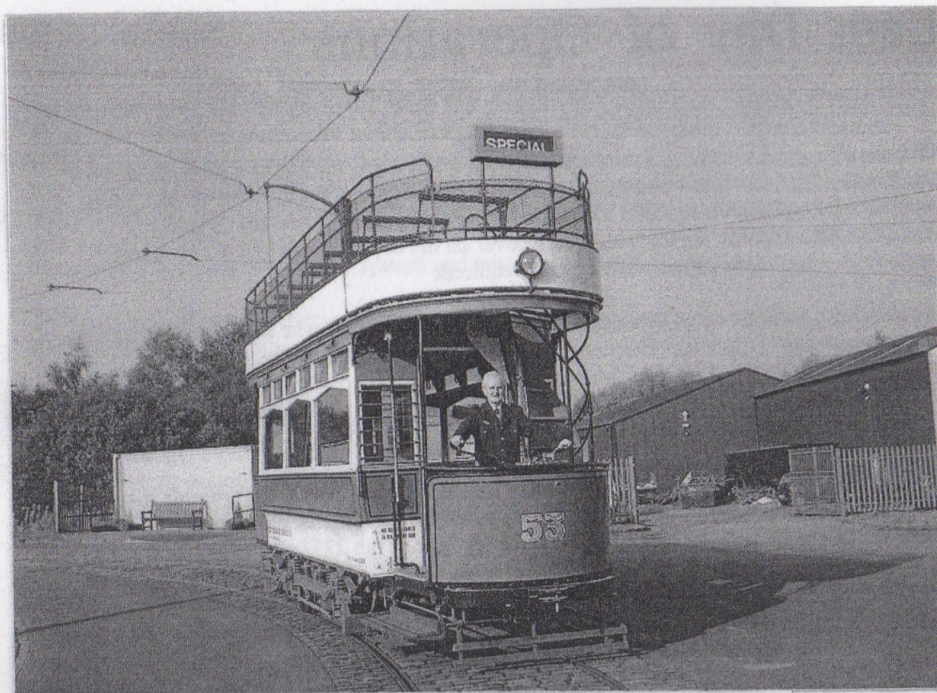
We saw, with pleasure the arrival of Mr & Mrs. Willie Wilson and George Broom brought out Dusseldorf 392 to give Willie a tram ride. First time in long enough, we were exchanging single line token as two cars were under power. Shades of days past! Public attendance grew as time wore on until the Park seemed quite busy.

We became aware of the pipe band assembling and that the steam roller & “Tigger” were in evidence. I was approached at the main gate terminus and told “You must be here at 4 p.m. – last public run is 3.30. The procession will be from the top of the slope, which goes down to the canal, and out the front gate – so you won’t be involved”. We duly did the 3.30 round trip and the official photographer, Provost & councillors “took over the car” for a short time for a “photo opportunity”. Bob Connor & I were asked to join the Provost, Cllr. Patrick Connelly, on the pavement so he could present each of us with a coal-plaque to mark our long service to the tramway – most unexpected!

Callum had meantime been given a load of coins to position on the track for the car to “mangle”. When all dignitaries were aboard, “open house” was declared to the public and we did a very loaded round trip – a great atmosphere onboard, lots of laughter, lots of balloons, etc. As we moved off, the coins caused a noise like distant machine gun fire and on our return, the Provost was given these coins to distribute amongst the alighting passengers as a souvenir.

Bob Connor ran the car into the depot and there was an air of finality in throwing off the canopy switch – but I felt a very successful day had been achieved.

The title of the plaques by the way was “The Last Shift” – quite possibly appropriate for me at least!



JOHN TRAYNOR'S Last Run with 53



The 2 "BOBS" prepare for the Final Run



WILLIE and MAY WILSON boarding 392



CALLUM SUTHERLAND prepares the Pennies for 53 to run over



Provost PATRICK CONNELLY presents The Last Car passengers with Bent Pennies



THE LAST RUN



ANDY JAMIESON and BOB SUTHERLAND watching the "Tram" Pennies being given out



The Last Run is over

A Modern Highwayman

By PAUL GEISSLER

There was much amusement for the citizens of Melbourne when they opened "The Age" newspaper on 19th April and read the following report:

Guess what he wants to be when he grows up ...

In stealing a \$3 million tram on Sunday and driving it 30 kilometres round Melbourne a 15-year-old boy was acting out his fantasy job, police say.

The great tram robbery ended after 45 minutes, when power was cut and police rushed aboard with guns drawn.

Police marvelled yesterday that the youth, who they say stole the keys to the tram from a Box Hill depot three weeks ago, had been able to drive the high-tech vehicle from Southbank to Kew.

During the trip the youth, said by police to have 'a tram fetish', collected about 15 passengers and twice used a manual metal rod to move track points and change direction. The boy told police he had learned by watching drivers at work.

One witness, who boarded at Luna Park and rode to Hawthorn, said the teenager treated the passengers to a commentary describing the sights along the way. "Tram drivers never make these announcements, that's why I thought it was odd," he said.

The young man is alleged to have stolen another tram from the Southbank depot on Friday night and driven it to Port Melbourne.

Yarra Trams deputy chief Dennis Cliché said he was embarrassed that the teenager had been able to steal two trams within 48 hours. "We are quite shocked," he said. "It is a complicated the vehicle to drive. There are safety systems built in that he would have had to study. This is someone who has spent a lot of time and effort to go about this."

On Sunday night, police say, the boy drove the tram from the depot along route 109 and shunted it onto St Kilda light rail. He turned into Fitzroy Street, taking in bay views on the way to Carlisle Street, Hawthorn Road, Glenferrie Road, Kew, where he was stopped.

The alarm was raised when a passenger complained to Yarra Trams that the tram was moving erratically and the driver had asked passengers for directions.

Another tram driver also reported erratic driving. Control centre staff called the police and shut off power.

But another passenger told Southern Cross Radio: "He was actually a pretty good driver. It was smooth and ... there was only one bit where he missed somebody's stop and slammed on the brakes."

A motorist, David Iliff said he saw the police rush onto the tram. "Approximately three of the police officers had their guns drawn, were pointing it directly at the boy and screaming at him," he said. "I can understand that the police were taking no chances, but it definitely had the feel of a SWAT team raid."

Police say the boy need not give up on his dream of becoming a tram driver. Detective Senior Constable Barry Hill said: "He's a good lad. I think his obsession just got the better of him."

Mr Cliché said Yarra Trams had a good recruiting policy, and anybody suitable was considered, "provided he's old enough."

A Sunshine youth has been charged with nine offences, including two counts each of theft of trams, and conduct endangering life. He was bailed to appear at the Children's Court on June 20.

Thanks

The Committee would like to take this opportunity of thanking North Lanarkshire Council and the office staff for the use of the photocopier in the production of our magazine
Ed.