



MELBOURNE  
TRAM MUSEUM

# The Bellcord

*Journal of the Melbourne Tram Museum  
Number 64 – December 2024*



**Front cover**

*Family in their Sunday best travelling west towards the beach on a South Melbourne cable tram in Bridport Street, Albert Park, near the corner of Montague Street, c1919. This city to South Melbourne Beach line was well patronised by workers, shoppers and Melburnians seeking a day at the seaside.*

*Original glass negative from the Rose Stereograph Company, courtesy of State Library Victoria.*

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Editor: Noelle Jones

## In this issue

In an update to his history of Brunswick Depot in the [March 2024 issue](#) of *The Bellcord*, Geoff Brown notes the findings of recent archaeological excavations performed at the Depot prior to upgrade works.

The Melbourne Tram Museum recently acquired a certificate issued by the Melbourne Tramway Employees Mutual Benefit Society in 1909 to Alexander McNaught, who had a long career as a track oiler on Melbourne's cable trams. Noelle Jones uncovers details of McNaught's life and his essential but highly dangerous job.

Another recent museum acquisition provides insight into the running of Melbourne's cable trams on 21 February 1938, when only three car houses were still in operation. Warren Doubleday describes events on the cable tram network, as well as across Melbourne and Victoria, on that day.

Plus latest news about the Museum and Melbourne's tram network.

Best wishes to all our readers for the holiday season. Enjoy reading!

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## Chairman's report 2024

The current program of improving the side lighting has been completed.

Currently we have a deficiency in the higher lighting on the north side. We intend to replace the metal halide side lights with efficient and more powerful LED lamps.

The leaks along the north side gutter have been frustrating and we are looking at improving the access because presently it requires an access permit to access from the depot yard. Although this access is a VicTrack issue, it will benefit us in the long term.

The restoration of the depot floor hasn't progressed due to the issues with water leakage, but we are about to do a partial restoration, with completion after the solution of our leakage problems.

The government has decided that it will disestablish the Malvern Tram Museum and a few members have been assisting VicTrack in this task over the last three months. We have been the recipients of several important photographs and various tramway ephemera, with which we intend to enhance our displays. We have applied for a VicTrack community grant to upgrade the presentation and conservation of these important photographs.

The tramcar drawing digitising project is still progressing but we are reaching the stage where completion is imminent. The physical drawings will then be placed in the care of the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) for preservation / conservation and our digital database of the drawings will be used in the future. Currently we have approximately 2000 drawings scanned and listed. We assisted VicTrack with tramway expertise, photograph identification and negotiations to provide appropriate homes for items.

Warren Doubleday has been interested in expanding the reach of our photograph collection. He has commenced combining our collection plus additions into the Victorian Collections. We currently have 8000 records listed and we are currently receiving two enquiries per month, which is satisfactory considering the short time of the listing.

The shop continues to bring in important revenue as well as providing our customers with socks and museum souvenirs. Some problems occurred with stock as a carry over from the effect of COVID. Many thanks to those that staff the shop.

Membership is flatlining at the moment with the current financial situation. Whilst a few more of the faithful have departed their place has been taken by younger brethren. During the year our committeeman Russell Jones succumbed to indifferent health. We thank Russell for his assistance in past times and better health in the future.

*Kevin W. Taig*



### Introducing our new committee member

The museum committee has a new member: Sam Goodchap.

Sam has been a museum member since 2022, when he and his soon-to-be wife Emma were scouting around for locations for their wedding photographs.

Originally from New Plymouth in New Zealand – believed to be the smallest municipality worldwide to operate electric trams powered by overhead wires – he moved to Melbourne in 2001.

Sam is currently Chief Concierge at the Sofitel Melbourne on Collins. He is also a keen collector of tramway memorabilia – especially tickets and badges.

Since joining the museum Sam has become a valuable addition to the museum’s archive team. He describes cataloguing the recent additions to the museum’s collection as both challenging and rewarding, and is looking forward to helping curate a new exhibition at the museum.

Sam’s favourite tram? The M&MTB T class, due to its unusual design.

### Other news

After a short delay, the depot building floors at the museum have now been painted dark red. It looks much improved from the previous hotch-potch of worn red surfaces and plain concrete.

The museum has recently hosted groups from the Department of Transport, the planning division of the City of Melbourne and a Dandenong Low Vision group.

Many thanks to all our volunteers who have hosted visitors to the museum over the last 12 months.



*Sam Goodchap, with his favourite tram, M&MTB T class no 180, Melbourne Tram Museum, November 2024. Photograph by Noelle Jones.*



*In October, the museum hosted the launch of Mitchell Toy’s new book, The Poky Gully Postie. Mitchell is the author of the popular children’s books The Midnight Tram and The Midnight Tram Flies Again, available at the Museum shop.*

*Photograph by Noelle Jones.*

# Around the tracks

**Connecting the Maidstone Depot** – A tramway connection to the new Maidstone Tram Depot was built in the three weeks from 8 to 26 November. The junction at the corner of Williamson Road and the reserve near Wests Road allows movement in any direction and a new tramway down Hampstead Road makes the connection to the new depot. The first tram to use the new tramways was E class 6034. Museum member Mal Rowe was there to capture the moment.

A video flyover of the construction site is available on [YouTube](#).



Above: Yarra Trams E class 6304 on the new track in Wests Road reserve.  
Below: The same tram in Hampstead Road, about to use the new crossover.

Photographs by Mal Rowe, 26 November 2024.







Entrance to the new Maidstone Depot,  
6 December 2024.

Photograph by Mal Rowe.

**Next Generation trams:** The new G class trams are expected to be available for testing on the network in 2025. These high-capacity trams are claimed to accommodate up to 150 passengers and are based on Alstom's Flexity 2 design used in Blackpool, Basel, Antwerp, Ghent, Zürich and the Gold Coast. To be numbered from 7001, G class trams will operate initially on routes 57, 59 and 82 from Maidstone and Essendon Depots.

**New franchisee for Melbourne trams:** On 1 December 2024, Yarra Journey Makers (YJM) commenced a nine-year contract for operation of Melbourne's tram network. YJM is a joint venture between Transdev and John Holland and will continue to operate the network under the Yarra Trams brand.

**Domain Road:** While Domain Road has now reopened to traffic and cyclists, the route 58 tram will continue to run along Toorak Road West.

**Park Street Link:** The proposed 300 metre extension along Park Street, South Melbourne, from Kingsway to Heather Street, has been cancelled. This extension, originally included within the Metro Tunnel project, would have re-directed routes 5 and 64 trams along Spencer Street, rather than Swanston Street, and increasing tram services in the western part of Melbourne's Central Business District.

**Elizabeth Street terminus:** Plans for a connection from Elizabeth Street onto Flinders Street have also been cancelled. This connection would have extended routes 19 and 59 to Jolimont and route 57 to Melbourne Park, rather than terminating at Flinders Street.

# Excavation at Brunswick Depot

Upgrade works at Brunswick Tram Depot have recently unearthed remnants of the cable car shed that occupied the site between 1887 and early 1936. Brick footings and bluestone plinths were uncovered in the southwest corner of the property during installation of a new drainage culvert. This will soon be the location of a new run-out track from the depot to Sydney Road.

Archaeologists from Jacobs, an international engineering and technical services firm, were contracted to monitor the works. Karen Murphy, the technical director of archaeology and cultural heritage, kindly provided a summary of their findings so far.

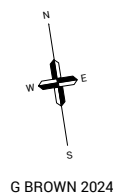
My thanks to Jacobs and Yarra Trams for details of the excavation and use of their photographs.

*Site plan of the Brunswick cable car shed (depot) 1920-35, including the approximate location of recent archaeological findings. Drawing based on supplied photographs and description, and subject to verification by Jacobs.*

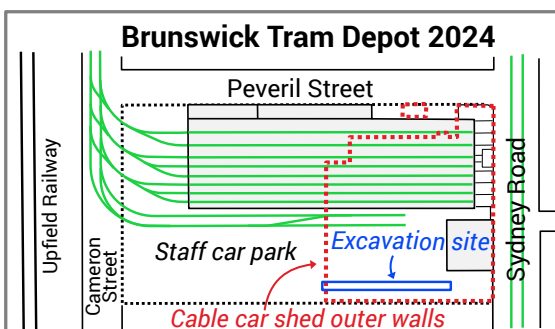
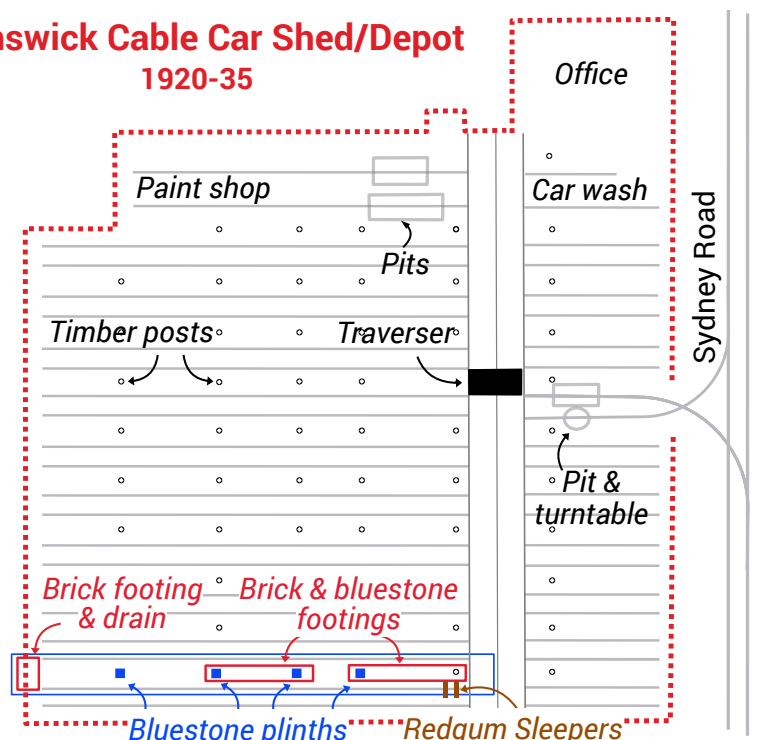
*Also an inset of the current Brunswick Tram Depot indicating the location of the external walls of the cable car house and the excavation site.*

*Sources: M&MTB, Keith Kings drawings, Macmeikan written description, Jacobs, Google maps.*

## Brunswick Cable Car Shed/Depot 1920-35



G BROWN 2024



We found the brick and bluestone footings of the 1880s cable tram shed, some of the red gum sleepers from the tracks inside the shed, and remains of the hard, black tar-like flooring that would have been inside the tram shed (see Photograph 1).

We also found chamfered bluestone plinths with the interior brick footings, which would have had posts to support the roof of the large open galvanised iron cable tram shed. They appear to correspond with the dots that are on the early depot plan.

We didn't find any evidence of the traverser running north south, but I expect given mid-twentieth century drainage works in that location, it was destroyed then or during demolition of the tram shed and construction of the admin building in 1935-36.

The bricks were made at the Hoffman Brickworks, just up the road from the depot, and we also found ceramic drainpipes from within the tram shed that were made at the Brunswick Pottery, located at the Brickworks site.

By comparing the locations of the finds with the early plan of the depot, we have found the back wall of the original tram shed. It is a double course of bricks, and to the outside of it (further west) was what appeared to be a shallow brick lined spoon drain that likely ran along the outside of the cable tram car shed. It was quite disturbed, but still discernible. The shallow drain appeared very similar in design to the one that still runs along the southern edge of the tram depot site today (see Photograph 2).

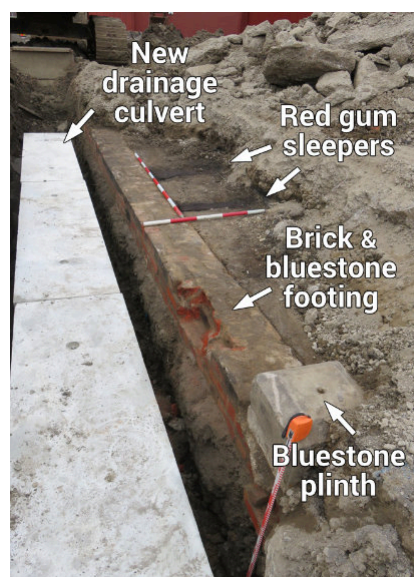
Our finds will help us understand what else might be found in the carpark behind the admin building in later phases of the project.

*Karen Murphy, Jacobs*

Photograph 1 (right): Excavation at Brunswick Depot, looking east towards Sydney Road.

Photograph 2 (far right): Excavation at Brunswick Depot, looking west towards car park.

Photographs courtesy of Jacobs.





## Backstory

In 1887 prominent architects Twentyman and Askew were commissioned by the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company (MTOC) to design the original tram shed for the new Brunswick cable line. The design was a functional structure built on concrete, bluestone and brick foundations with timber frame walls and roof, both clad in corrugated galvanised iron. The Sydney Road frontage of this early building is pictured in the 1905 photograph below.

**UPDATE:** By late December the new employee car park at Brunswick Depot had been completed and was in use. The former car park, and where the archaeological excavations were carried out, has now been covered with a complex of temporary buildings to enable the refurbishment of the offices and employee facilities.

As tram patronage increased on the busy Brunswick line, MTOC extended the shed in 1910. A nine-page contract with builders Wilson and Sly of Elsternwick detailed the works and materials required for the foundations, drainage, walls and roof, and included instructions on how the extension was to be joined to the existing structure. The contract fee of £397 indicates that the extension was on a smaller scale than the original 1887 construction that had a contract fee of £3,345. Unfortunately, no site plan was attached.

In 1919 a second extension was commissioned by the interim Tramway Board and designed by prominent architect, Frank Stapley, an influential town planner. Stapley's design moved the southern (side) wall to the property boundary, the western (rear) wall further from Sydney Road and added a second storey to the traffic office. To date no contract fee has been located.

It was this extended structure that was demolished in stages during 1935 and 1936 to make way for the new electric tram depot and administration block that still stand today.

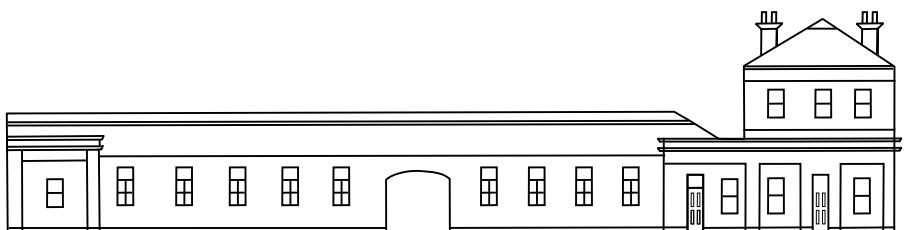
The history of the Brunswick cable tram line can be found in 'Brunswick Depot's hidden past' in the [March 2024 issue](#) of *The Bellcord*.

*Geoff Brown*

*Brunswick cable car shed on Sydney Road (c1905), as designed by Twentyman and Askew and built in 1887. Note that the front corrugated iron wall does not appear to abut the neighbouring brick building to the left.*



*Drawing of 1920-35 car shed with extensions designed by Frank Stapley, namely a brick/bluestone extension on the south (left) and a second brick/bluestone storey to the traffic office to the right.*



*Photograph courtesy Merri-bek City Libraries. Drawing from Keith Kings drawings of M&MTB records.*

## 'Wee Alick' McNaught: head track oiler

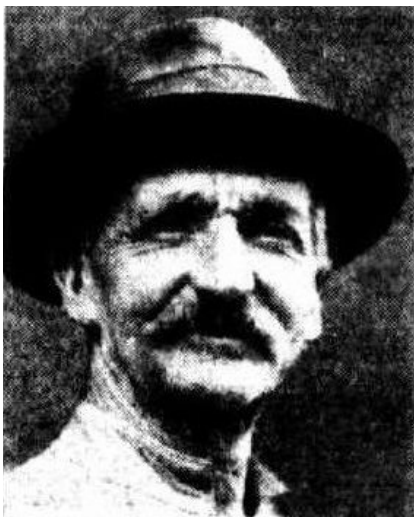
A recent donation to the Melbourne Tram Museum set us off on the trail of one of the men who kept Melbourne's cable trams running – Alexander ('Alick') McNaught (1865-1932). He initially worked for the Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Company (MTOC), followed by the short-lived interim Tramway Board and then finally the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramway Board (M&MTB), where he eventually became head track oiler.

### Early years

McNaught was born in 1865 in Tradeston, a small dockland district of central Glasgow, the third child of James and Jane McNaught.

Industry, shipbuilding and banking were delivering enormous wealth to Glasgow, but also attracting a huge influx of immigrants seeking employment in the new industries, aggravating various social problems, including poverty, crime and disease. These conditions caused people, such as the McNaughts, to seek a better life abroad, with many settling in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

*Alexander McNaught, M&MTB head oiler, from The Herald, 3 December 1925.*



Over the period from 1871 to 1885, New Zealand experienced a massive influx of migrants, encouraged by Government-subsidised passage. Many came from Germany and Scandinavia, however conditions were even more favourable for British immigrants who, from 1873, were eligible for free passage.

Fourteen-year-old Alexander, his parents and his five siblings arrived in New Zealand in March 1880 as assisted migrants, settling in Dunedin where his father was employed as a ship joiner.

Around one fifth of New Zealand immigrants during this time were from Scotland. The McNaughts were fairly typical examples of New Zealand's Scottish immigrants: most were from the Scottish Lowlands, with many settling in the Otago and Southland regions of the South Island.

This certificate was issued to Alexander McNaught by the Melbourne Tramway Employees Mutual Benefit Society for his services on the Managing Committee from 1906 to 1909. Item donated to the Melbourne Tram Museum by Sam Goodchap.



According to the New Zealand electoral rolls, by 1887 Alexander was a blacksmith in Dunedin. His elder brother James was a tram conductor with the Mornington Tramway Company in Dunedin – where MTOC consulting engineer [George Smith Duncan](#) had previously worked.

But by the mid-1880s life had become tougher in New Zealand, the country having fallen into a deep economic depression. Many people left, with ‘marvellous’ Melbourne – then one of the world’s richest cities due to the generation of wealth from the gold rush and in the midst of the 1880s land boom – being a popular destination.

Alexander was part of that exodus. In 1888 he married Agnes Robinson in Victoria. She was also Scotland-born, having emigrated with her family to New Zealand in 1874. Over the period from 1889 to 1901 the couple had seven children, one dying in infancy.



*The Great Flood of July 1891: Chapel Street looking south from about Malcolm Street, north of the South Yarra engine house and car shed, which are clearly visible in the background. The clock tower of the Prahran Town Hall can be seen in the distance.*

*Photograph courtesy State Library Victoria.*



The Great Flood of July 1891 saw the McNaughts losing all their belongings when the flood waters reached the roof of their South Yarra house, which was at the foot of the hill below the South Yarra engine house and car shed. After two days of non-stop rain the Yarra River had burst its banks and flooded low-lying suburbs. Around 3,000 people were rendered homeless, mostly in the suburbs of Collingwood, Richmond, Prahran, South Melbourne and South Yarra. Cable cars on the Toorak line had ceased running, with the water in Toorak Road near Chapel Street being around four feet deep. The South Melbourne and Port Melbourne lines had also been disrupted.

The McNaught family did not appear to stay long in any one spot. They moved from South Yarra to South Melbourne, then Port Melbourne, back to South Melbourne, to Albert Park and then to Prahran before a final shift to Oakleigh in 1927. This last relocation is likely to have coincided with Alexander retiring from the tramways.

The South Yarra engine house, located on the north west corner of Toorak Road and Chapel Street, South Yarra, was designed by the Melbourne Tramways Trust's architect Robert Gordon and constructed in 1888. The car shed, designed by the MTOC's architect Frederick Williams – the first Port Melbourne council representative on the MTT (1884-86) – was located adjacent to the engine house. Opening in 1888, it faced Chapel Street and extended north to Daly Street. It operated until 1 October 1926.

The site was converted in 1936 for the Capitol Bakery, being extensively remodelled in the Jazz Moderne style. Demolished in 2016, it was the last remnant of the Prahran and Toorak cable lines.

*M&MTB track oiler at work at the corner of Bourke and Spring Streets, 1938. Photograph from Commuting by Cable, courtesy of the Ballarat Tramway Museum.*

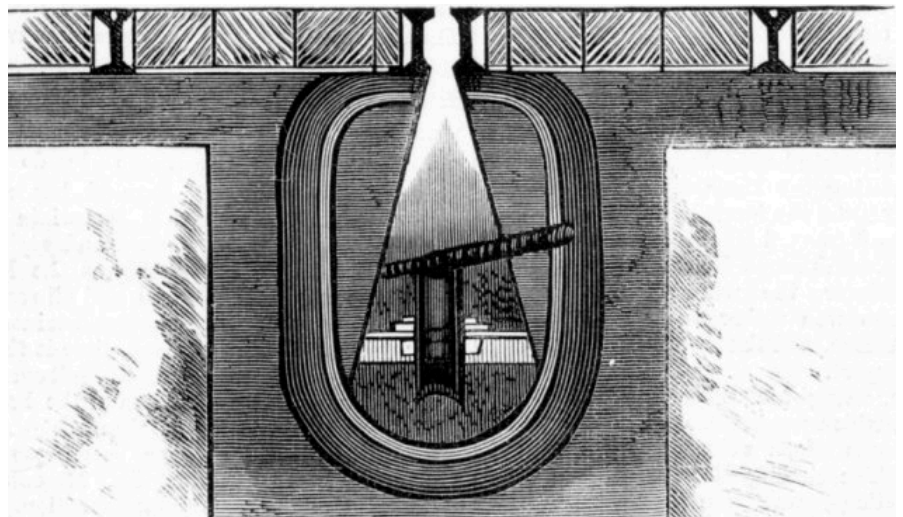


### **Cable tram oiler**

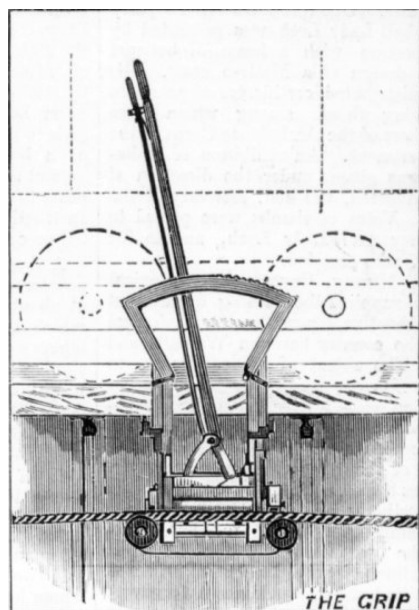
Around 1889 Alexander started working for MTOC. He became a track oiler.

Oilers were essential to the operation of the cable tram system. They lubricated the underground cables, which were comprised of steel wires arranged in six strands around a hemp core. Without sufficient lubrication, the cable would not run smoothly over the pulleys, resulting in rapid wearing of both cables and pulleys. A mixture of tar, sludge oil and 'plumbago' (graphite) was applied to the cables three or four times a day until the rope was filled. Rope oil was also applied once or twice a day.

Installed every 33 feet (10m) along the track – and more frequently on pull curves, where the apparatus was more complex – were small inspection manholes, each measuring 21 inches by 14 inches (53cm by 36cm), together with pulleys for the cable. The track oilers descended underground through these manholes, where they could inspect the cables and mechanisms, and apply the lubricant to the pulley bearings, which supported a spindle upon which the pulley was pressed.



*Cross section of yoke pulley. 1885 drawing by Samuel Calvert (1828-1913), published by David Syme and Co, courtesy of State Library Victoria.*



*Gripping apparatus. 1885 drawing by Samuel Calvert (1828-1913), published by David Syme and Co, courtesy of State Library Victoria.*

It was a dirty job, as well as being highly dangerous. Track oilers worked in pairs, with one remaining above ground to warn his workmate of approaching cable cars. When a cable car was spotted the track oiler was supposed to exit the manhole and wait until the car had passed before returning underground. Despite this official procedure there were a number of horrific injuries and fatalities as a result of track oilers remaining in the manhole and being struck by the grip of a passing cable car. A further hazard for oilers was from being hit by vehicles or horses travelling along the tram tracks.

In addition, the various compounds in the lubricants used for the pulley bearings and the cables were very likely to have included complex hydrocarbons – now known to be carcinogenic or toxic.

Perhaps in recognition of the risks involved, oilers were paid well in comparison with gripmen and conductors.

At one point, Alexander suffered a serious workplace injury, which resulted from an attempt to clear a stranded cable. Several operations were required to treat his injury.

Given the frequent moves of the McNaught family, Alexander may have been assigned to several different lines over his working life, as it was common then for jobs to be located relatively close to workers' homes. One line he did work on was from South Melbourne to Queen's Bridge, out of the South Melbourne engine house.

In a 1925 interview with *The Herald*, Alexander spoke about the many and varied objects that fell into the cable tunnel slot. With the jolting movements of the cable cars, coins dropped by conductors often found their way into the tunnel – the spot was noted by the conductor and then the coins would be collected by Alexander. People who had lost items would visit Alexander at home, his findings being kept in his shed. He once found a 60-guinea diamond ring – probably worth several thousand dollars in today's money.

After 26 years Alexander became head track oiler, in charge of a gang of men, and no longer needed to go underground himself.

Role	Daily rate
Head track oiler	11s 3d
Leading track oiler	10s
Track oiler assistant	9s
Leading ropeman	12s
Other ropeman	11s 6d
Leading driver of power house engines	13s 4d
Driver of power house engines	12s 6d
Gripmen and conductors, first year of service	8s 6d
Gripmen, second year of service	9s
Gripmen, after second year	9s 6d

*Extract from the schedule of the agreed daily rates for selected MTOC staff over the period from 10 August 1912 to 30 June 1916. Source: The Leader, 5 October 1912.*





*Alexander McNaught, from a 1909 group portrait of the Committee and Officers of the Melbourne Tramway Employees Mutual Benefit Society in an album of photographs belonging to John Garibaldi Roberts (1860-1933). Roberts was chief accountant of MTOC and from 1920 to 1923, manager of the M&MTB cable system. Image courtesy of State Library Victoria.*

### **Melbourne Tramway Employees Mutual Benefit Society**

Working in such a dangerous environment, Alexander would have been well aware of the risks involved. He clearly took a keen interest in workplace conditions and was actively involved with the Melbourne Tramway Employees Mutual Benefit Society (TBS), being the South Melbourne engine house representative on its Managing Committee from 1906 to 1909.

The TBS was a non-profit workplace-based friendly society, established in April 1888 to provide various benefits – including medical care, sick pay and funeral allowances – to its members and their dependants.

At that time, Australian workers did not receive paid sick leave from employers, so friendly societies assured that members and their dependants would receive some income if the wage-earner became incapacitated.

Furthermore, health care in Victoria was based on a fee-for-service model, with the poor, who could not afford care, being treated by public or charitable hospitals. It is estimated that in 1913 roughly half of all Victorians were beneficiaries of friendly societies, with medical services to members and their dependants being supplied by providers under contract to the societies.

MTOC promoted the establishment of the TBS as a means of discouraging its employees from unionising. TBS members paid a contribution, initially 6 pence per week, increasing to 7½ pence by 1910 (\$5.15 in 2023 dollars), with MTOC matching its employees' contributions. A minimum membership period of nine months was required before members became eligible for full benefits.

### **Death**

Alexander died on 10 June 1932 at his home, 17 Skipton Road, Oakleigh, aged 66, survived by his wife and six children. He was buried in the Presbyterian section of the St Kilda cemetery.

His death certificate noted that he had been suffering from suspected lung cancer for 12 months. While it is not possible to conclude that his tramway job was a contributing cause to his death, he had certainly been exposed to toxic substances over many years.

*Noelle Jones*

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Warren Doubleday, Sam Goodchap, Robert Green, Russell Jones and Brian Weedon, as well as Peter Read of the Otago Settlers Museum. Also for the resources of Archives New Zealand, Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria, National Library of Australia (Trove) and State Library Victoria.

# On this day: 21 February 1938

In the previous issue of *The Bellcord*, we examined a daily report from the Superintendent of the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramway Board's Electric Running Sheds for 28 February 1939. Unsurprisingly, his counterpart at the Cable Running Sheds also filed a daily return. The museum has an example in its collection, for Monday 21 February 1938.

This report lists the depots (or car houses), with the number of cars (trailers) and the dummies (grip cars) available to each of the three car houses that remained in use at the time. While the pre-printed report form has spaces for seven car houses, only three – Carlton, Nicholson Street and Clifton Hill – were still in operation at the time of this particular report. Carlton closed on 15 April 1939, while the last two car houses closed on 26 October 1940.

Both Carlton and Nicholson Street car houses had a complete complement of their rolling stock available while Clifton Hill had four grips and trailers in the car house but not available for traffic. At the time there were some 107 trailers and 120 grip cars in stock, 227 vehicles in total. This is less than one-fifth of the vehicles recorded in the M&MTB Annual Report of 1925: namely 539 four-wheel trailers, 58 bogie trailers and 590 grip cars – a total stock of 1187 vehicles.

Grip car No. 563, belonging to the Clifton Hill car house, was taken out of service due to a collision with a motor car which damaged the front corner of the grip car. There must have been an unfortunate incident on trailer 498, belonging to Nicholson Street, which resulted in blood on the seat and the window and the cable tram set being taken out of service for cleaning.



*Cable tram set being towed out of the Nicholson Street car house, late 1930s. Photograph in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.*

Superintendent of Cable Running Sheds' daily return for 21 February 1938.

In the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.

**Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board**  
**SUPERINTENDENT OF CABLE RUNNING SHED'S DAILY RETURN**

State of weather Warm Day Monday Date 21st Feby, 1938.  
 Any special Traffic conditions \_\_\_\_\_

**CAR STOCKS**

DEPOT	Cars in Stock		Repaired		Available		Not Available			
	Cars	Dmys.	Cars	Dmys.	Cars	Dmys.	In Depot	In Depot	In Workshops	In Workshops
	Cars	Dmys.	Cars	Dmys.	Cars	Dmys.	Cars	Dmys.	Cars	Dmys.
<b>Brunswick</b>										
<b>Carlton</b>	26	34	12	12	26	34	-	-	-	-
<b>Clifton Hill</b>	58	60	50	50	54	56	4	4	-	-
<b>Nicholson St.</b>	23	26	17	17	23	26	-	-	-	-
<b>North Carlton</b>										
<b>Howard St.</b>										
<b>South Melb.</b>										

**CARS TAKEN OUT OF TRAFFIC**

Date	Car Number	Depot	Defect Stated	Defect Found
21-2-38	Dmy 563	C.H.	Accident, Collision motor.	Front corner of dummy damaged,
	Car 498	N. St.	Traffic change.	Blood on seat and window.

**REMARKS:** \_\_\_\_\_

Supt. Cable Running Sheds.

The West Melbourne stadium, built in 1913 and designed by well-known Melbourne architect Frank Stapley (1858-1944), was destroyed by fire in 1955. It was subsequently rebuilt and renamed Festival Hall.

From 1907 Wirth's Olympia was the home of Wirth Brothers Circus, Australia's largest and most prestigious circus company. The Olympia was destroyed by fire in 1955, with the site subsequently becoming part of the Arts Centre Melbourne complex.

What else was happening around Melbourne and Victoria at that time?

On 21 February 1938 *The Argus* reported the funeral of Mr Elcon Baevski Myer, the Chairman of Directors of the Myer Emporium, attended by more than 3,500 people, including about 2,000 staff members.

On the previous day, an incident occurred at the Yallourn power station, which resulted in a stoppage of tram services as people were going to church at 10:40am. Power was not restored until about 11:20am.

The weather at the time was hot and dry, a typical February day with bush fires in Victoria. The Stony Creek Bridge at Nowa Nowa, one of the largest railway bridges in Victoria, caught alight several times on Sunday. This bridge remains an icon of the district and is now a feature of the East Gippsland Rail Trail.

Victorian Transport Unions were intending to serve claims on both the Victorian Railways and the M&MTB for a 40-hour week and penalty rates. A mass meeting was planned for 6 March at either the West Melbourne stadium or Wirth's Olympia.



Cable car set at the Lonsdale Street terminus, September 1939. The building behind the cable car is the Lonsdale Street store of the Myer Emporium.

Photograph by Wal Jack, in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.



What had happened to the four car houses for which the report has no information?

- Brunswick had closed in early January 1936 for the conversion of Sydney Road to electric trams (see *The Bellcord* no 61).
- North Carlton, which had operated the line along Rathdowne Street, closed on 1 August 1936 and was replaced by a bus service operating out of the Central Bus Garage, North Fitzroy.
- South Melbourne closed on 13 March 1937 – buses were then used until the South Melbourne beach electric tram line opened on 27 July 1937 (see *The Bellcord* no 46). This depot had absorbed the Port Melbourne cable cars when the two routes were truncated to Market Street as part of the Collins Street electrification project.
- Howard Street – the last car house built in Melbourne – had closed on 20 July 1935. Where was Howard Street? All will be revealed in the next issue of *The Bellcord*.

Warren Doubleday

The former Victorian Railways Stony Creek Bridge, one of the largest railway bridges in Victoria, last carried trains in 1987.

Photograph by Warren Doubleday, October 2005.

