

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE B.C.C. TRANSPORT DEP'T.

When, on the 1st December, 1925, the Brisbane City Council took over the tramway system from the Tramway Trust, it acquired 50 $\frac{1}{4}$  route miles of line and 225 trams, ranging from the original electric fleet of 1897 to the new Drop Centres which had been introduced that year. There was no major change in policy accompanying the move, the general manager, Mr. Steer, and his staff remained, and the Department proceeded to build on the good foundation laid by the Trust.

At the time, work was in progress on a number of the Trust's extensions, and these were opened during the next year: Ascot to Criel Pk: 14/12/25; New Farm Pk: 14/2/26; Greenslopes to Holland Pk: 1/8/26; and Kelvin Grove to Newmarket: 6/9/26. After much controversy, mainly over the route to be taken, extensions were built to The Grange, opening 30/6/28, and Halinga, opening 2/2/29. This completed the extensions planned by the Trust, and there was a lull until 1935, punctuated by the Rainworth extension, opening 13/10/30. There were also a number of minor extensions, including Barry Prd., opened 4/8/27, Albion Pk. loop (30/9/27) and Davies Pk. loop (31/12/27), this last being subsidized by the Speedway Co. to the extent of £1,000.

Several important "accessories" to the track also came into use in the late 20's. On 15/4/26, 4 Bundy clocks were introduced, on the Kedron, Clayfield, Ipswich Rd. and Paddington lines, and they were later used elsewhere. In April, 1928, it was decided to purchase a set of automatic point controllers, which were installed at the Baker St. junction on the New Farm line, and proved most successful.

In spite of the Trust's enthusiastic car-building programme, there was still serious overcrowding, and a shortage of modern cars. Christmas Eve, 1923 was thus far the heaviest day in the history of the tramways, with 377,384 passengers being moved. During the 1929 Exhibition an average of 273 of the Department's 275 cars were in daily service. At the time of the takeover, there were 25 Drop Centres on order, which were delivered in 1926, while over the next four years another 49 were built,

the last of these going into traffic on 20/1/31. However, declining patronage due to the depression temporarily stopped building at this stage, and 4 bodies lay in the Council workshops, partly completed, until 1934. At the end of 1931 there were 293 cars, since 5 had been scrapped and one (14 or 15) had been converted into a rail grinder, entering traffic on 14/7/31. It was also decided, in July 1929, to dismantle the three street sprinkler cars.

There were, of course, a number of improvements in design during this period. In October 1926 a Drop Centre was tried with a rubber floor covering, instead of wooden laths, and this feature was generally adopted, while the following month it was decided to fit windscreens to all future trams, the first to be so fitted being No. 200. In November, 1927, one car built in the Council workshops (probably 216) had the front panel extended around the off side of the platform, and this design was subsequently adopted for all Drop Centres, all being converted by 1934. In November, 1929, one Drop Centre was fitted with sprung seating in the saloons, and more may have been so fitted.

Although in their first year the Council tramways made a loss, a profit was turned in 1927, and this continued for many subsequent years. This was in part due to a fare increase on 1/8/26, which, however, was the last increase until 22/3/48, and indeed several concessions were introduced, notably weekly tickets giving a 25% concession on 11/12/33. Minimum fare cars, one per line in the evening peak, were introduced on 16/6/27, and proved quite successful. In September, 1927, it was decided to introduce a uniform ticket system, with numbered sections, while in 1934 stops were also numbered.

On the 5th May, 1927, the new Depot at Ipswich Rd. was opened, replacing two older depots at Logan Rd. and Lang St. The former was leased, virtually as is, but the latter was dismantled and re-erected at Paddington. This extension, from 10 to 13 tracks, was opened on 5/11/28, relieving overcrowding so serious that at night some trams had to be left in the street.

On 23/11/27, the Council Motor Bus service, which had in its two year life lost £19,792, was withdrawn, nine of

occurred on Sunday, 2/12/34, when the Customs House siding was taken out of use, being replaced by an extra crossover in Wharf St. In order to cope with the greater number of cars, Ipswich Rd. Depot was extended (14 tracks lengthened by 154 ft.) as was Light St. Depot, which had a bay added, increasing its capacity by 24 cars.

Despite the crippling effects of the depression, the Department was able to continue to operate profitably. Even at its lowest ebb the return of nett earnings to capital never fell below 8%, that figure being reached in 1938-39 when the economy was well on the way to recovery.

The late 30's saw more extensions, many of which proved to be the final extension on some lines. A short (2 ch.) extension to the Clayfield line was opened on 27/8/36, followed by one to the final Bardon terminus on 4/1/37, to Moorooka on 8/5/37, and to Doomben on 19/9/37.

Drop Centres continued to be built up to 1938, so that when, in that year, the last car of that class, No. 386, entered traffic they became the largest class of cars in Brisbane, with 191 members. But on 20/10/36 the Council had approved the construction of a new type of car, to have four motors, equal wheels, and a streamlined body design, and this car went into traffic in 1938 as No. 400, the prototype FM (Four Motor). After extensive trials, the design, with some modifications, was adopted, its reception being almost universally favourable. By 30/6/40 17 FM's had been built, giving a fleet of 381 cars, since 17 old cars had been scrapped since 30/6/36. In 1936 four Standard 10 Bench cars, Nos. 86, 89, 93, and 94 were converted to "Baby Dreadnoughts", Nos. 97, 96, 95 and 94 respectively, for use on the Gregory Tce. line.

During the war years enormous demands were made on the tramway system. In four years patronage jumped by 70% to the all time high of 159,678,738 passengers in the 1944-45 financial year, while car miles in 1943-44 were 1,500 per day higher than the figure for 1942-43. This extra traffic had to be handled largely by the existing fleet, since a shortage of materials prevented any large scale car building programme, although 36 FM's were built up to the 30/6/43, a tribute to the efforts

of the Department in view of the shortage of men and materials and the necessity to keep as many cars running every day as possible. Manpower problems were also acute on the traffic side, and over 300 conductresses were employed to ease the position.

There was also much agitation for extension of the tramway system, but this too was almost impossible. Extensions started before the War were opened to Dutton Park (8 chs.) on June 20, 1939 and to Stafford (January 27, 1940) but the only line planned and built during the War was the extension to Salisbury, to service the Commonwealth Munitions factory there. This extension, built in reserve track to save time and money, was opened on September 22, 1941, replacing a temporary bus service which had run between Moorooka and Salisbury from August 4, 1941.

The Council was able, however, to provide a wider service by again venturing into the field of Bus operation. 12 Albion TX13 chassis with 6LW Gardiner diesel engines were purchased and fitted with Hope bodies, while a new bus garage was built adjacent to the Light St. tram depot. The first bus service began on July 6, 1940, between Herston and Stanley Bridge, and this was soon followed by the Jubilee, Oriel Rd., and Chatsworth Rd. routes. At the height of the War years these services were so well patronized, each bus carrying over 800 passengers per day, on the average, that at peak times it was necessary to use conductors. To supplement the Albions the Council purchased a number of 4 ton chassis, on which they built their own "austerity" bodies, the final result being reminiscent of the buses of the late 20's. They had a capacity of 25 seated passengers. The opening of the Jubilee bus route meant the discontinuance of the Red Hill tram service on November 11, 1940.

Another 4 FM's were built in 1943-44, and 10 more the following year. As well, in 1943 two single truck cars were rebuilt to an improved design as Baby Dreadnoughts, becoming Nos. 98 and 99. Hence this design was still very much in the minds of the Workshops' staff when they were called upon to rebuild Brill No.104, which had been seriously damaged in a bad accident.

As a result, 104 received a completely new body which was very similar to that of the Baby Dreadnoughts, although lengthened and fitted instead with an FM type roof. This produced a quite attractive car, the ultimate bogie centre aisle design in Brisbane, although it had the faults of narrow entrances and a small size in comparison with the FM's. The case of 104 is illustrative of the Department's principle that cars damaged in accidents were to be rebuilt, usually to their original condition. This policy was adhered to up until 1965, when the impending closure of the system made it somewhat uneconomical, and car 477 was put into storage after an accident.

After the War, tram patronage began slowly to decline, and this decline continued up to the closure of the system. Nevertheless, the Council continued its policy of building new FM's, and each year from 1945 to 1952 between 10 and 16 new cars were placed in service. Obsolete cars were withdrawn at a slightly lower rate, so that the passenger fleet increased slowly in number to a peak of 428 vehicles in 1950. A total of 150 FM's was envisaged by the post-War Council. An extensive programme of track relaying in concrete, route extensions, and track duplications was pursued in this period. On June 22, 1946, the Trafalgar St. loop and Nile St. duplication were opened to traffic to cater for the large crowds attending the Woolloongabba Cricket Ground. In 1946, the Department was for the first time appreciably affected by traffic congestion, and undergrounding of tram lines at Petrie Bight was proposed as a top priority measure to overcome this.

By 1947 the somewhat neglected maintenance of the overtaxed rolling stock caused by the War had been largely rectified, and permanent way improvements were also proceeding apace. Experiments were also carried out for the first time with sliding doors, upholstered seats, and other refinements in new cars, and these were destined to become standard equipment by 1948, as were resilient wheels. On July 16, 1946, the Ann St. loop line was opened as an emergency line in case of traffic

interruptions at Petrie Bight. On March 30, 1947, a major route extension in the form of the Lutwyche to ChermSIDE line was opened, as was a duplication of the substantial existing single-track section in Lutwyche Rd. In that year, however, the Gregory Tce. to Gardens tram service was replaced by Diesel buses as it was considered antiquated and inefficient, only single truck cars being usable on the line because of vertical curviture. The lines in Edward St., and the turning circle at Gregory Tce. were taken up almost immediately.

A double track junction of Brunswick St. with St. Paul's Tce. was opened on August 7, 1947, followed by the single track junction of Queen St. and Wharf St. on April 2, 1948. On July 31, 1948, a 55 chain extension to Belmont became available for traffic, together with a duplication of the remaining single-track section to Camp Hill. A year later, on August 15, 1949, the extension from Newmarket to Enoggera was opened, and a single track section at Newmarket was duplicated. In the same year the remainder of the Ashgrove route was also duplicated. Light Street Depot improvements included provision of an entrance from Ann St. from July 13, 1949. In the following months there was also a short duplication at Dutton Park and replacement and duplication of the worn section between Vine St. and Holland Park terminus (which had been laid using second-hand rails), in connection with the proposed extension to Mt. Gravatt.

Times were changing, however, as in the 1949-50 financial year the Transport Dept. made an overall loss for the first time since 1926 and, in common with most other public transport systems, has remained in the red ever since. Another milestone was reached on March 14, 1951, when the long (1 mile 51 chains) extension from Holland Park to Mt. Gravatt was opened - it was destined to be the last of Brisbane's suburban route extensions. Car building continued, however, and the BCC's goal of 150 FM's was raised to 156; Milton Workshops continued to expand its operations, and controllers and contactors began to be produced there.

Junctions between Roma St. & Countess St. and

Leichhardt St. & Wharf St. were both opened on April 25, 1952, and the laying of new tracks then ceased for some years. 1953 also saw a large drop in the number of new cars constructed per annum, the number then and in successive years dropping to between 2 and 4. The rate of scrapping began to rise, resulting in the first substantial fall in fleet numbers. There was, however, no plan to replace trams with buses at that time. A new sub-station at Holland Park was opened in 1954 which also supplied the trolley bus services destined to serve the area following closure of the Cavendish Road tram route on November 14, 1955. Simultaneously with the closure services were increased on the Belmont line to give a 16 minute headway from Belmont and 8 min. from Camp Hill. Two years later, on January 25, 1957, car 213 closed the short Greenslopes line.

In 1946, the BCC had 12 diesel buses and 7 smaller petrol buses in service on its four routes. Of these, only the Stanley Bridge - Ballymore route was enjoying increased patronage and it in fact accounted for about half the total number of bus passengers. 17 diesel buses had been added to the fleet by 1947 to coincide with the replacement of the Gregory Tce. tram service and extensions of the Oriel Road route to Hendra and the Chatsworth Road service to Spica St. Application was made to the Commissioner of Transport to take over all 20 private bus services then running from the suburbs to the city, one of the main reasons being that none of these traversed the city area, but terminated at North Quay, King George Square, or the Valley. All 20 routes were acquired between October 6, 1947, and April 30, 1948, as were some of the private buses, bringing the Council fleet to 69 diesel and 71 petrol. The routes involved were Newman Avenue, East Brisbane (Stanley Tce.), Swann Road, Tennyson, Wilston, Birdwood Tce., Norman Park, Dornoch Tce., Doomben, Hendra (the former Hendra service became known as Alexandra Road), Duke Street (Toowong), Teneriffe, Yeronga, Greenslopes Hospital, Tarragindi, Moorooka, Pinkenba, Everton Park, Indooroopilly, Walton Bridge (Ashgrove), Stanley Tce. (Taringa), and Mt. Cootha.

In 1949 the Dornoch Tce.-Merthyr through bus service was inaugurated, and the BCC's first express services ran. By 1950 almost all the petrol buses taken over from the private companies had been replaced by diesels. The first underfloor engine buses appeared in 1953. Extensions were made to the East Nundah and Alexandra Rd. services in 1952, followed by Grovely and Indooroopilly in 1953, and Chatsworth Rd., Jubilee, Tarragindi, Cracknell Rd. and Wavell Heights in 1953-54. In 1954-55 a feeder service was introduced between the Cavendish Rd. tram terminus and the future trolley bus terminus at Elgar St.

As early as 1934, the Council had considered proposals for trolley bus services, and although they rejected at least two, one to Teneriffe and one to Archerfield Aerodrome (8 $\frac{1}{4}$  miles!), a service from the Valley to Woolloongabba via Kangaroo Point was planned. The plans however were put off until the 1946-47 financial year, when tenders were first called for trolley bus chassis, and 30 were ordered. All had been received 2 years later, and the first service was inaugurated on August 12, 1951 between the Gardens and Gregory Tce., this causing an immediate increase of 50% in patronage along that route. The number of trolley buses rose steadily until it stood at 20 when the Prospect Tce. - Stanley Bridge route was opened on 29/11/52. All these buses had a very high seating capacity, in accordance with Departmental policy of the period to have as little standee space as possible. The next route to see trolley buses was that to Carina - Seven Hills on 7/11/54, soon followed by the Cavendish Rd. route as far as Lade St. on 14/11/55, by which time the fleet comprised 30 vehicles. An extension of this route to Elgar St. was opened on 16/12/56. Partly as a result of these extensions, orders were placed for another 6 trolley buses, with a more up to date body design, these going into traffic in 1960, the last, No. 34, on 23/2/60.

One-way traffic was instituted in Elizabeth and Ann Streets, City, on April 20, 1959, resulting in the rearrangement of a number of bus routes in the inner

city area. During August 1959 information signs were erected at 16 city tram stops in Queen and Adelaide Streets. Centre-Aisle car No.128 was adapted for advertising duties in November, 1959, this being the first example of a bogie car used as an advertising car on a full-time basis.

An unusual ceremony took place at Milton Workshops on the 9th December, 1959, when the then Lord Mayor, Ald.Groom 'launched' a new tram, a trolleybus and a diesel bus. The new car was No. 546, the trolleybus was No. 32, the first of the second and final batch of trolleybuses for Brisbane and the diesel bus was No.221, the first of 10 buses with Leyland "Worldmaster" chassis and bodies by Freighter Lawton of Adelaide. On the following day (10.12.'59) a "Cavalcade of Transport" was held as part of Queensland Centenary celebrations. The recently constructed horse car No.41, Cross-bench car No.65, Baby centre-aisle car No.99, Dropcentre No. 366 and the brand new FM No.546 took part in the procession. The financial results of the Transport Department for 1958/59 revealed a tram loss of £2,489 and a bus loss of £343,802.

On the 24th March, 1960, the B.C.C. announced the construction of a 36 chain single track tram line along O'Keefe St., Buranda, at a cost of £39,000. Gardens-Gregory Tce. trolleybuses began to traverse Alice, Albert and Turbot Streets from the 28th March, 1960, when one-way traffic was introduced into Edward and Albert Streets, City. Diesel bus services from Oakleigh and Grovely, which formerly terminated at Turbot St. were re-routed down Edward St. concurrent with the new scheme. New tram and bus fare scales were brought into operation on 23rd October, 1961.

£500,000 worth of damage resulted from the disastrous fire which destroyed Paddington tram depot on the evening of 28th September, 1962. Six Centre-aisle cars, 47 Dropcentres and 12 FM cars were destroyed in the conflagration. Fifteen 31-seat buses were rushed to Brisbane from Sydney following the fire

to ease the vehicle shortage, and many more Dreadnoughts took to the streets; but the position was still acute, and so, on the 24th December, 1962, the Toowong, Rainworth, Kalinga and Bulimba Ferry tram lines were closed, initially only for a trial period of three months. The last regular cars on the routes were Nos. 461, 525, 546, and 497 respectively. Following the Paddington fire it was announced that 8 new FM cars would be built at a total cost of £82,750. During Easter of 1963 car 546 traversed the four closed routes as part of the A.E.T.A. convention. On the 2nd July, 1963, the Council voted to retain diesel buses on the four routes converted the previous December.

The first of Brisbane's "Phoenix" cars, No. 547 entered service on the 24th September, 1963. Eight Centre-aisle cars were withdrawn from traffic in December, 1963, and stored at Milton Workshops. The last of the Phoenix cars, No. 554, was delivered from the Council workshops on 20/4/64. A further 10 Centre-aisle cars were scrapped during May, 1965, while on 5/6/67 scrapping of handbrake Drop-centres commenced. On the 4th August, 1965, the Wilbur Smith Traffic Report was presented to Parliament; it recommended the scrapping of trams and trolley buses within three years.

Concurrent with the introduction of decimal currency on 14th February, 1966, new tram and bus fares were introduced. Express bus services were introduced on the Mt. Gravatt and Belmont tram lines during peak periods on the 11th July, 1966, and were subsequently extended to other lines. An order for 114 Leyland "Panther" buses was placed in June, 1966, and on April 10, 1967, the new bus depot at Toowong was officially opened. At the same time, trolley buses began operating only on Mondays to Fridays, during business hours. On the 26th October, 1967, the announcement was made that tram tracks would not be laid on the new Victoria Bridge.

On the 21st June, 1968, the Lord Mayor announced that tram and trolley bus services would be phased out in the current financial year. On Monday, August 5th, 1968, the Ashgrove and Grange lines were closed,

FM No. 469 being the last car from Ashgrove and No. 441 was the last car from Grange. On the following morning two bus drivers refused to work a one man bus to Ashgrove, and were suspended. After a 23 day strike, the union agreed to one man replacement buses, in return for generous retraining and severance benefits. The Gregory Terrace - Gardens trolley bus route was converted to diesel bus operation on 25th October, 1968, and on Sunday, 1st December the four Adelaide Street tram lines, Bardon, Stafford, Enoggera, and Chermside were converted to diesel bus operation, thereby ending over 50 years of tramway operations along Adelaide Street. The scrapping of Drop Centre cars, which were all now surplus to traffic requirements, was completed by January, 1969.

The Stanley Bridge - Prospect Terrace trolley bus route was converted to diesel bus operation after Friday, 29th November, 1968, and trolley bus operation ceased in Brisbane on Thursday, 13th March, 1969, when the remaining routes, to Seven Hills, Carina, and Cavendish Road (Elgar Street), were converted. Trolley bus No. 9, which had opened the system 17 years, 7 months and 1 day previously, was rostered for the final run, returning to the Depot at 8.09 pm.

On Sunday, 13th April, 1969, the sun rose for the last time on Brisbane's tramway system. After a memorable day, in which the people of Brisbane gave their trams a rousing farewell, FM No. 534, the last service car, entered Ipswich Road Depot a few minutes before midnight, thus ending 84 years of tramway operation in Brisbane. The system was officially closed when the Lord Mayor, Alderman Jones, drove Australia's newest tram, Phoenix No. 554, in Milton Workshops and handed it over to the B.T.M.S., after coming from Warner St., Valley via Queen Street.

The post tramway period has been one of change, with the dismantling of the tramway system, the opening of the new Carina bus depot, the extension of bus routes into new areas such as Zillmere and Upper Mt. Gravatt, and the rationalization of the existing system, a process which will extend into the future.

In its 45 years of existence the Brisbane City Council Transport Department has led a progressive, exciting and sometimes controversial existence. It is sometimes easy to forget in the era of the private motor vehicle that it was largely through the operation and expansion of the Transport Department that this City grew to a stage of maturity which was hardly dreamed of on the night of the 30th November, 1925, when the Brisbane Tramway Trust ceased to exist and the Transport Department was born.