

ARCHER PARK STATION & STEAM TRAM MUSEUM



ROCKHAMPTON
Central Queensland

THE PURREY STEAM TRAM STORY

In 1908 Rockhampton Council ordered four steam tramcars made by Monsieur Valentin Purrey of Bordeaux, France for a new city tramway.

June 5th 1909 saw passengers carried for the first time as 200 guests in two trams with trailers steamed up to the Botanical Gardens following the official opening in William Street. The return trip took an astounding eight minutes.

Cover Images

Archer Park Railway Station c. late 1910s (note uniformed man extreme left of photo).

Tramwaymen 1911. The conductor (man with white hat) was Mr Arthur Emmet Mills.

The driver operated the tram by keeping steam pressure, speed and brakes in the right balance. The conductor collected the fares and helped passengers on and off. With the boiler at their backs the drivers sweltered in summer and without windscreens copped the foul weather straight in.

The tramwaymen gave personality to the trams and often competed against each other for best speed and times.



Opening of Rockhampton Tramways, William Street, 5 June 1909. Officially opened by Premier W. Kidston. Rockhampton District Historical Society Collection

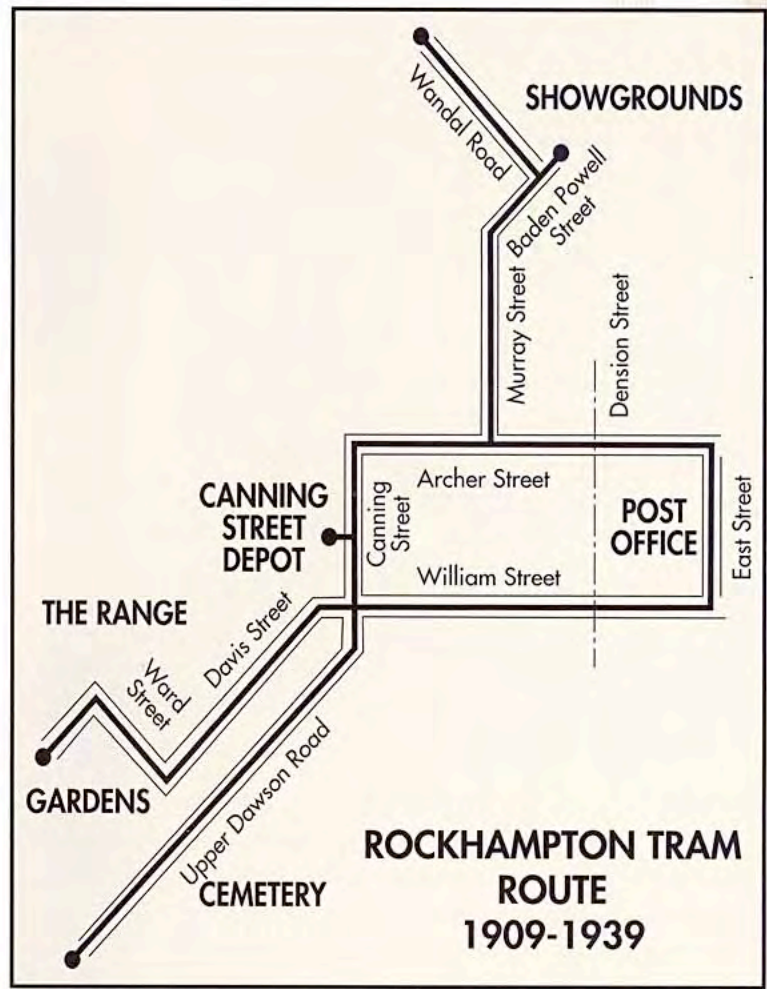
Locals enjoyed special services with a lunchtime express to get home and back, trams waiting outside cinemas until all shows had finished and an 'extra late prowler' to help revellers make it home. Trams ran around a beltline of William, East, Archer and Canning Streets with routes to the cemetery along Upper Dawson Road, to the Gardens up Ward Street, to the Showgrounds via Murray Street with a later extension along Wandal Road.



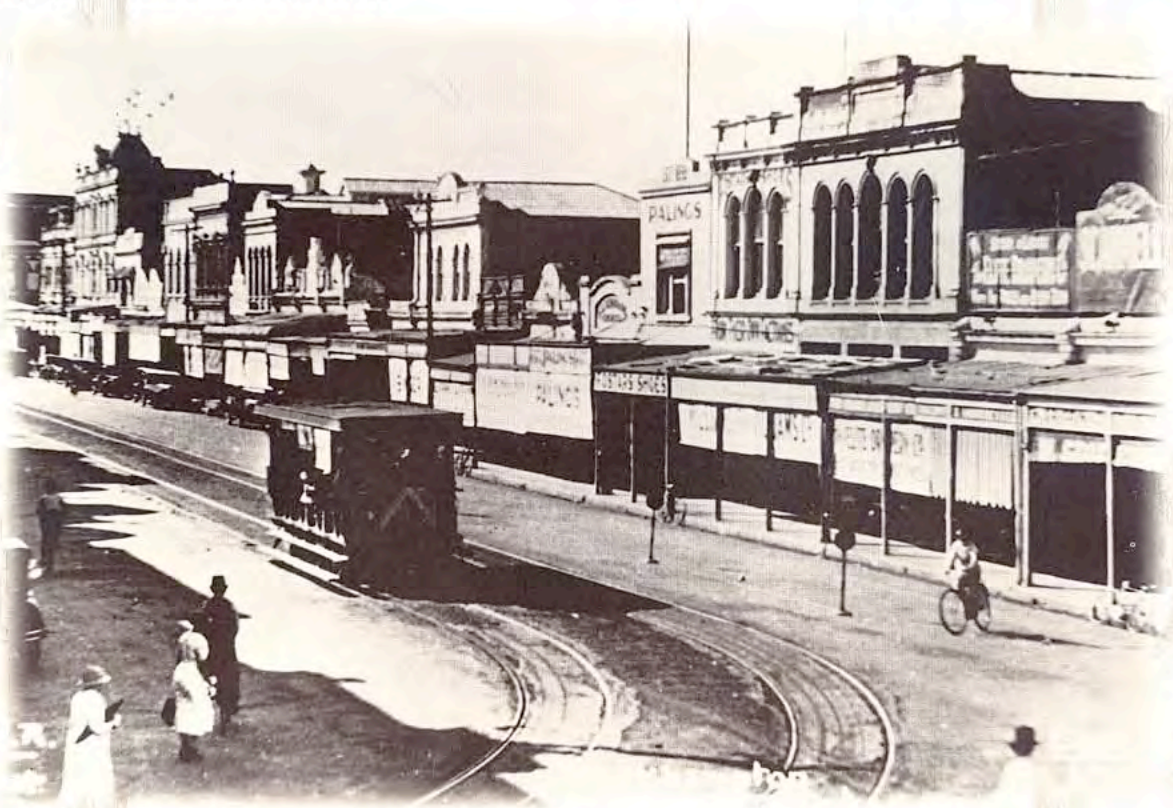
Peak hour East Street c. 1915. Two trams travelling out of the City and two travelling in. Rockhampton District Historical Society Collection

The tramcars were a four-wheel passenger toastrack with an under floor steam engine and the boiler and the driver on a front platform. Toastrack trailers were attached to carry passengers.

A number of accidents occurred during the 30 years of tram operation. However considering the total number of passengers carried and distance travelled, the steam trams were a safe and reliable mode of transport.



Map of the Tram Route 1909-1939.



East Street looking North, the tram has just turned from William Street c.1920. Rockhampton District Historical Society Collection.



Alighting for an afternoon shopping trip. Corner of William and Bolsover Streets.

Rockhampton District Historical Society Collection



The restored Purrey steam tram running in Denison Street during Bicentennial celebrations 1988. The arch is a copy of that used at the official opening of the tramways in June 1909.

In 1976 the 18-35 year olds of the National Trust in Rockhampton made a decision to restore a tram and started searching for surviving components. Supported by donations and by hundreds of hours of work by dedicated volunteers, the new tram steamed up on June 5th 1988.

TRAM FACTS

Constructed in Bordeaux, France

Commenced operating on June 5th 1909

Ticket prices up to 1920 /1920 -1939
child 1d/1¹/₂d per journey,
adult 1d/1¹/₂d per section
(1d each extra section)

Nine tramcars and six trailers in the fleet
Unluckiest was No. 15, involved in 3 separate fatalities

Last to operate was No.6

Ceased operating on June 24th 1939

Carried 40,514,932 passengers

Collected £356,476 in fares

Travelled 4,526,932 miles

ARCHER PARK STATION STORY

Archer Park Station opened to the public on the 11th December 1899. Henrick Hansen, an architect employed by Queensland railways, designed the station. Hansen designed many stations throughout Queensland, and the large curved roof covering the track and platform was one of his innovations. This roof protected both the trains and passengers from the effects of the weather and thus alleviated the need for a separate carriage shed.

Initially, the train serviced only local areas such as the popular weekend seaside destination of Emu Park. In 1903 however, the Brisbane-Rockhampton Line was established and Archer Park became a major termination and starting point for mail, passengers and goods. Up to twenty-five trains a day passed through the station at this time.

A refreshment room was added to the station in 1907 and became known as the 'Hole in the Wall'. It proved a popular drinking place at various hours of the day and night for locals, rail staff and visitors. It is believed that during the Second World War entrepreneurial teenagers obtained scotch from the 'Hole in the Wall' and sold it to the American troops.



Relieving Manageress, Vera Picking (nee Suell) c.1949, sitting on an 'exploded' beer keg outside the 'Hole in the Wall'.



Mr Jack Munk with 'Molly' c.1915

As the station grew busier unforeseen problems emerged. The platform was too short. The rear carriages of long mail or goods trains that stopped at the station blocked the main line crossing. When this happened, it was impossible for the signalman to see the train driver from his box, making communications difficult.

The importance of Archer Park Station began to decline. In 1923 it was the nearby Stanley Street Station that was extended. By 1957 only local trains and rail motors regularly stopped at Archer Park Station. Some unused space was used as an Appeals Court, while Queensland Rail converted other areas into records storage.

Queensland Rail made the decision to withdraw the rail service from Archer Park Station in 1969, and the station officially closed to passengers in February 1970. The station was then converted for use as a freight terminal.

Within a few years the weight of the trucks and forklifts used at the site was causing the platform to sink and break up. Local residents were annoyed by the noise and inconvenience caused by the freight operations. The Rockhampton City Council petitioned Queensland Rail to hand over the site to them for use as a museum, and on the first of May 1990 the Council's request was granted.



*Wedding Party at Archer Park Station c.1920.
Photo courtesy of The Morning Bulletin*

STATION QUIZ

Questions

1. Who designed the Station?
2. When did the Station open?
3. When was it connected to Brisbane?
4. How busy was the station?
5. When did the Station close?

5. 1970

4. Up to 25 trains a day

3. 1903

2. 11th December 1899

1. Henrick Hansen

Answers



Train leaving Archer Park Station travelling to Yeppoon, November 1964. Prior to Rail motors.

Archer Park Station and Steam Tram Museum is a project of Arts and Cultural Services, Rockhampton City Council, with support from a team of dedicated volunteers.

Located on Denison Street between Cambridge and Archer Streets.

For further information telephone 07 4922 2774

