THE ROCKHAMPTON CITY TRAMWAYS (Qld)

(by J. W. Knowles)

(Continued from Bulletin No. 440 – June, 1974)

Springing was achieved by a leaf spring above each axlebox, outside the frames. Despite their spartan seats, rigid frame and long overhang, the cars were reasonably comfortable to ride in.

All cars were originally painted red, but were green for a time from 1919 to 1922 under Mr. Bennett's management, and then reverted to red. Bulkhead interiors were tramway brown and seats were varnished.

Bell ropes were provided, one on each side under the roof and were originally connected to trailers. Normally, however, passengers did not pull the bell – the conductor did it for them.

The original cars were provided with air bugles to warn other road users but these disappeared early and the cars announced their presence if necessary by means of foot operated steel or brass gongs.

From some time in the 1930's, the front of each car carried a large V and the rear an inverted V to assist in telling which way the cars were going, when seen from a distance on single track. At each end was a curved central buffing plate, and beneath the rear buffer, a coupling rod.

Brakes: The first six cars at least were originally provided with Westinghouse air brakes and presumably had an additional pump to provide the necessary air. There were air reservoirs under the floor at the rear of the cars. This form of braking was removed relatively early, although it still existed in 1913. After its removal, the cars depended for braking solely on the ratchet hand brake, worked from the same forward right hand lever as on an electric tram, through chains and levers. It is thought that cars 7 and 8 were built with the hand brake only. Each car had a second hand brake lever on the rear platform. In the handbrake form and apparently with air brakes, the brake blocks worked on the inner sides of each wheel only.

While the cars were fitted with air brakes, the trailers had similar equipment, and there were hose pipe connections between cars and trailers. With the removal of the air brakes, there was no continuous brake and stops were that much more difficult with trailer attached. On the steep downgrades on the Gardens line however, the conductor had to be aboard the trailer if attached, applying the trailer handbrake as required.

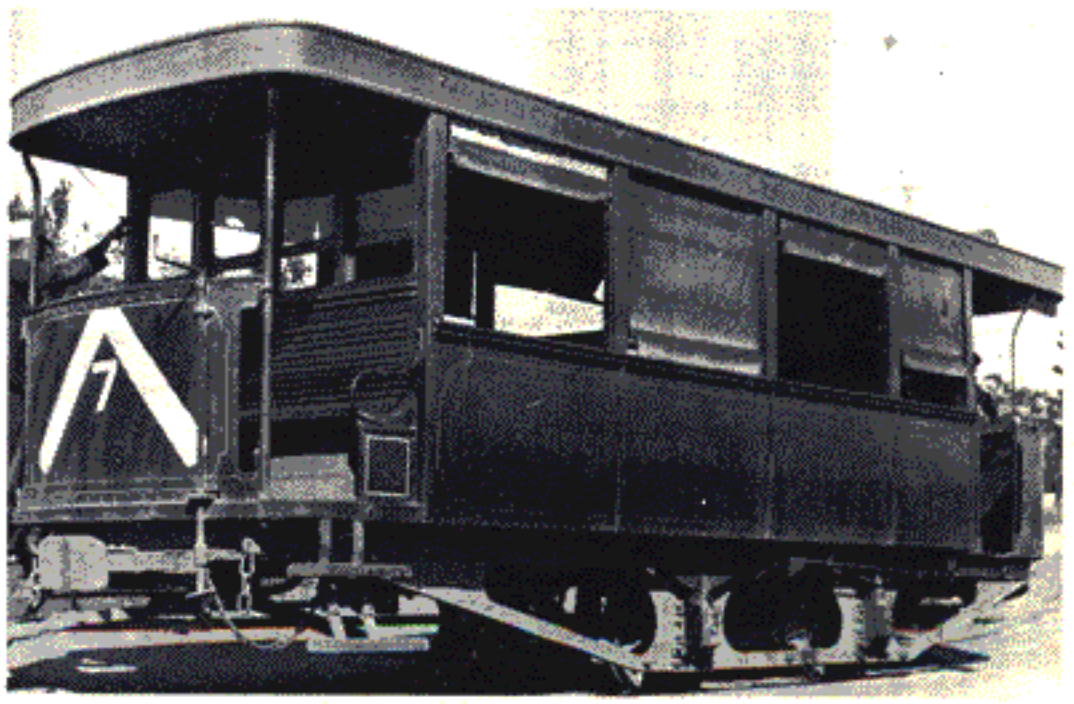
No. 15 was built with a steam brake, with the equipment under the floor behind the rear wheels. If steam pressure was low, braking efficiency was considerably reduced. If a big load was aboard, the rear of the car skewed downwards, and the equipment dragged on the roadway. The steam brake was removed, probably about 1930.

Operation: The water supply on each car was sufficient for about 6 hours' running and the coke for about 20 miles. This meant that early timetables had to provide for each car to go to Canning Street (Depot) on every second run to re-coke. The coke supply at Dawson Road after 1922 permitted greater flexibility. The coke hopper extensions on Nos. 3, 7, 8 and 9 were intended to further reduce the need for them to run to the Depot. The drivers always carried an extra bag of coke.

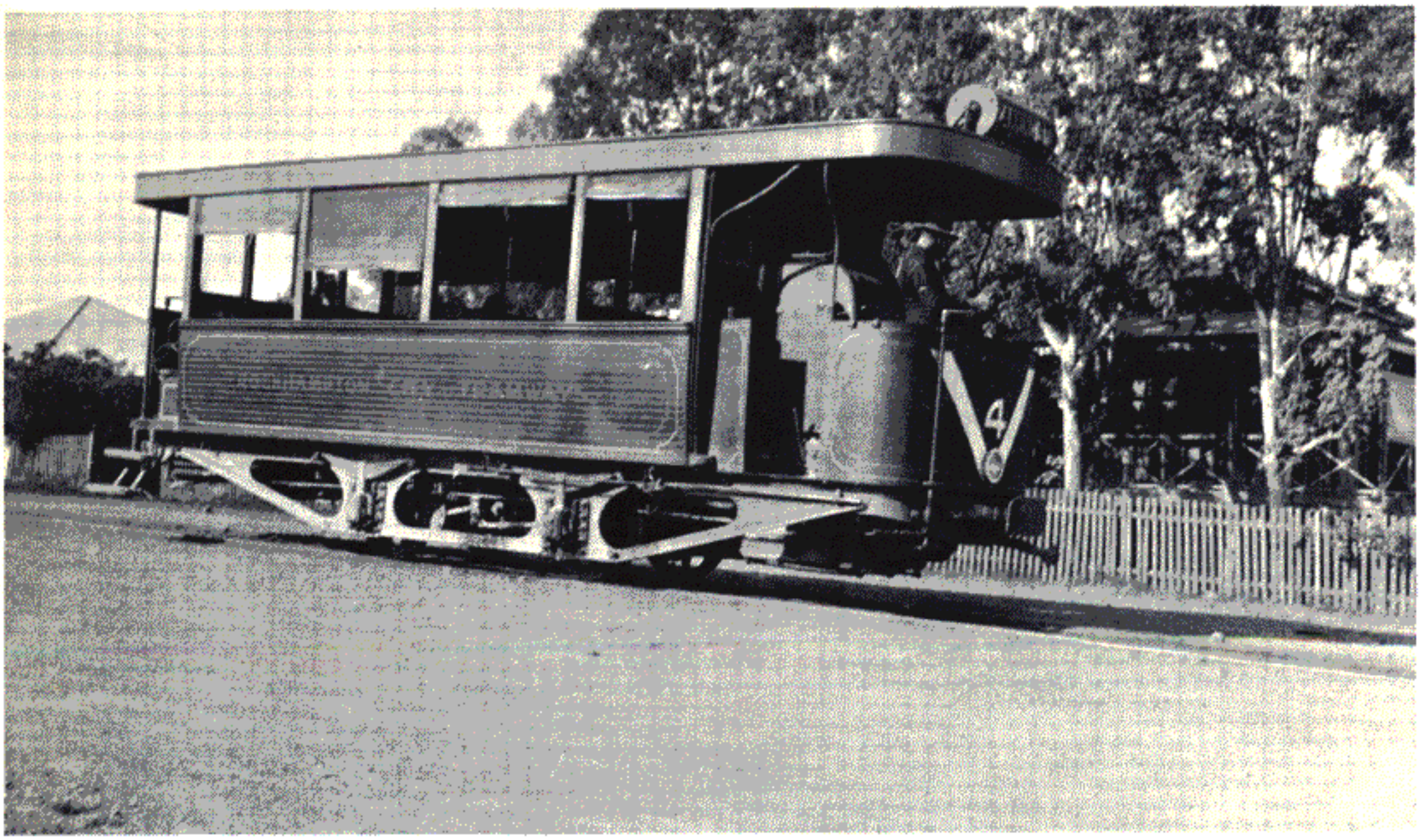
Carried on each car were: a points lever (also useful for quietening obstroperous passengers), the 10' – 12' long firebar (carried under a footboard) and a number of fishplates to assist rerailing as required. More often than not, the crews drove any cars which happened to derail back on to the rails (apparently even when one ran from the rails in the centre of a street and hit a fence; the management apparently did not know!).

At each terminus, the driver pulled coke down on to the fire with the long firebar, and took water. The conductor assisted at Dawson Road by topping up the coke hopper; he also changed points, uncoupled and braked trailers, looked out for trains as necessary and of course swung along the footboards collecting fares in all weathers.

The early cars originally carried sanding gear, at least until 1912, with a hopper located under the front seat. This apparatus was later removed, certainly by



Coming (on the left) and going (on the right) as indicated by the large V and inverted V respectively on the car ends. This innovation was in use for some time in the 1930's.
(Photos: Late C.C. Singleton and N.J. Thorpe Collection)



This 1936 suburban view of car No. 4 destined for Canning Street, shows the boiler to advantage.
(Photo: Late C.C. Singleton)

1922. Wheel slip was normally not a great problem and occurred only when the rear of a car was weighed down, or rail was greasy. Where it was likely to occur, the conductor would walk ahead with a tin of sand carried in the driving compartment.

The driver was unprotected from the weather and could have cold wind or rain streaming in on him from the front and the heat of the boiler on his back. Oil-skins were always melted by the heat. Not surprisingly, colds and aches were common among drivers. And then the indignity of being asked for "two with gravy" by local wags! A second class engine driver's ticket was required for the compounds, and a third class for the simples.

The driver stood right in front, behind the apron, and here worked his two basic controls. The throttle was worked by the left hand, from left to right, clockwise, to apply power, and quite large openings were given. The handbrake was wound off and on by the right hand. In general, as long as there was steam, there was no difficulty in moving along, even with a trailer. There was a 600 yards or so uphill section in Ward Street on the Gardens line where flowers from jacarandas would make the rails greasy in spring and this, and the gradients and curves on that line, were treated with extreme caution.

On special occasions, two trailers were hauled. This would have an all-up weight of up to 30 tons fully loaded. Normally only one trailer was taken, which with crush loads, could give all-up weights of about 23 tons.

Particular cars: Nos. 1 to 4 were the original order from France, placed in service in 1909-10. On the opening day, two were in service, one was the ballast car and the fourth had not yet arrived. According to the late C.C. Singleton (reference 4) all four were built by V. Purrey of Bordeaux, France, including the bodies, except for the ballast car.

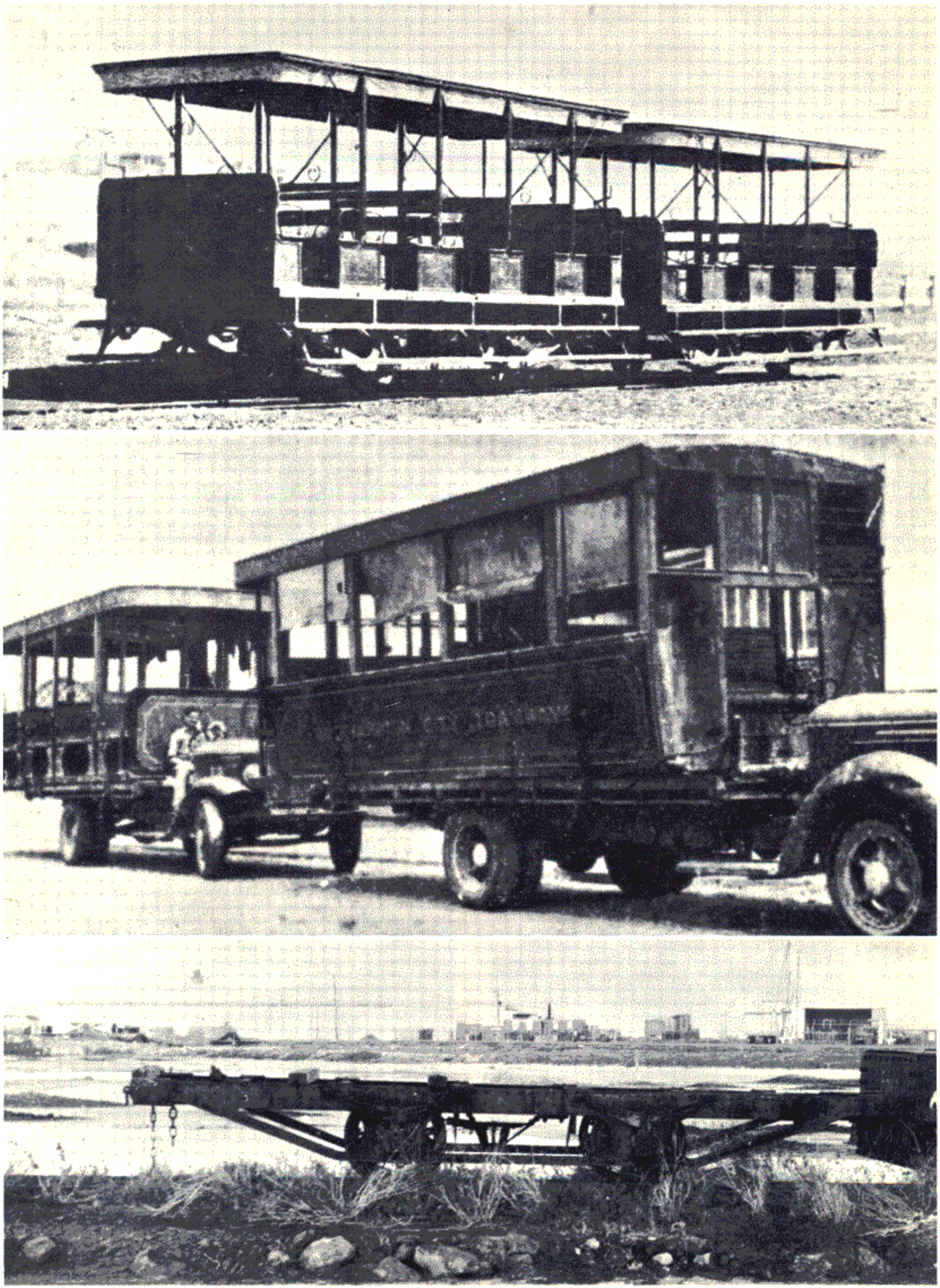
Just which was the ballast car is uncertain. If the two cars in service on the opening day were Nos. 1 and 2, the ballast car would probably have been No. 3, but it may have had no number for a time — all references are to "the ballast wagon". Mr. Boussignon however, fitted both a body to the ballast car and erected the last car of the order, and the number of the former ballast car, if it had no number in that form, may have depended on the order in which these were done.

Another explanation is that the ballast car, perhaps having been the first in use, could have been No. 1. It is not certain that the later numbering scheme was in use before 1911, when there is a definite reference to the construction of No. 6, so the ballast car could have been any of the cars later numbered 1 to 4, but was most probably No. 3.

No. 1 was rebuilt in 1924 and given a new engine frame in 1925. No. 2 was rebuilt and its engine remodelled to a compound in 1923. On account of some defect, this car did not operate for the last couple of years. No. 3 was rebuilt in 1922. No. 4 was rebuilt in 1920 and the off-side partially enclosed by about 1930.

Nos. 5 and 6 were built on imported chassis with local bodies and entered service in 1911. No. 5 was rebuilt in 1923 and No. 6 in 1920. No. 5 was partially enclosed on the off-side in 1934, and its firebox altered to be similar to those on the larger cars in 1936. No. 6 was involved in the accident on the Gardens line in 1913 and worked the last service on 24th June, 1939.

Nos. 7 and 8 were tandem compounds, with local



bodies on imported chassis, entering service on 3rd August and 13th September, 1912, respectively. Both were rebuilt in 1921. No. 7 was involved in the Archer Park accident in 1919. No. 8 was partially enclosed on the off-side in 1934, and No. 7 at some other time.

No. 15, renumbered 9 in 1933, was a four cylinder simple, probably with the cylinders in tandem form, with local frame and body and imported boiler; the engine was probably imported also. The body was originally a longitudinal seat saloon, built by Burns and Twigg of Rockhampton. The car was erected at the Depot, entering service in 1922. The seating capacity with this form of body proved insufficient, and the car was converted to a toastrack in 1924, while retaining the glassed-in rear wall and off-side half-wall of its saloon form except at the rear compartment. There was thus no bulkhead between the fourth and rear compartments. This car carried small sunshades just below the roof until closure.

Trailers: The first two trailers, both in service on the opening day, were the later Nos. 9 and 10. (Presumably no numbers, or different numbers, were carried by trailers until at least 1912, when car No. 8 entered service. It seems that there was a trailer No. 3 at some stage prior to 1914). These were both four wheelers, seating 40 in five compartments. There were half compartments at each end, with seats facing outwards and three compartments with benches facing each way; of these, the outer two were wider than the central one, being designed to accommodate standees. There were glass partitions above the seats between the end half compartments and the inner ones.

These vehicles had been built by Brown Engineering Company of London and had a wide fascia right around. Originally, they were lit by three acetylene lamps, but by 1914, were carrying only two. There were footboards on both sides and the same side roof boards as originally fitted to the cars, and they were fitted with air brakes. Conversion to electric lighting and removal of the side boards and air brakes probably took place at the same time as the motor cars, in 1916, by 1914, and after 1913, respectively, although a 1918 photograph still shows two trailers with the roof vents for acetylene lights, but none by then on the trams.

No. 10 received a new roof in 1924, similar to the original, and still had wide fascias in 1939. No. 9 (which was renumbered 15 in 1933 in lieu of tram motor 15 which became 9) is known to have had its roof replaced in 1923, but by 1939, it had a thin roof without fascias and was fitted with sunshades. There are two possible explanations for this;— it was the trailer involved in the Archer Park accident in 1919 (which trailer must have been one of Nos. 9 and 10 for while there were three trailers then, No. 11 had no glass bulkheads, and when the roof came off the trailer, glass was broken); or during some other rebuild, a new roof was fitted.

Trailer No. 11 was built at the workshops in 1911 as a "summer open trailer". It had a roof and the significance of "open" is that it had no partitions between compartments when built. In 1913, it was being used on "midnight excursions". Its roof was renewed in 1923. The seating arrangement was similar to that on Nos. 9 and 10, although all three inner compartments may have been the same size, and it seated 40. By the closure, it had been fitted with glass partitions behind each of the outer half compartments. It seems to have always had a roof without fascia, and by the closure, carried sunshades. It is not known if this locally built trailer was ever fitted with an air brake.

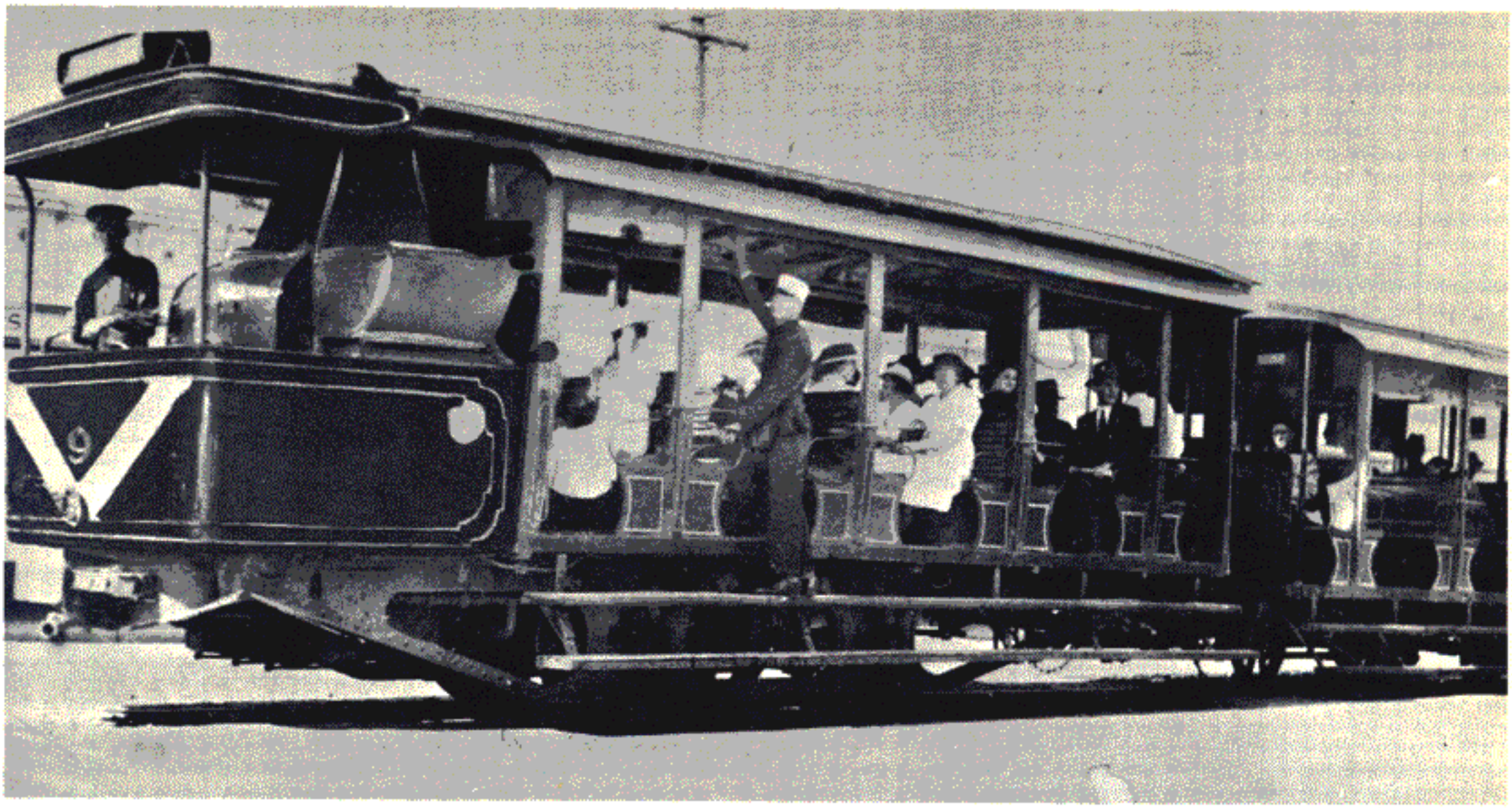
Trailer No. 12 was built at the depot in 1921. It was roofless. The actual seating arrangement is unknown, but it was a toastrack type and probably seated 40. At each end was a metal arch, carrying an electric light. In 1929, the open body was removed and a new roofed body, built at the workshops, fitted in its place. This new body was almost identical to that fitted to No. 10, with wide fascias and glass bulkhead above the seat behind each outer half compartment, but the inner compartments appear to have all been the same width and the roof was a few inches lower than on No. 10 and the motors.

Trailers 13 and 14 were built at the depot in 1922. They were slightly longer than the others and had five compartments, each with a seat facing both ways, the backs of which were merely two planks. The roof was supported by only five stanchions on each side, one at the end of each internal seat back, but only at one side at each end apron; there was a bracket support from the outermost stanchion on each side to the roof and above the apron to the unsupported corner of the roof at each end. Capacity was 50, or perhaps only 48 if the outer seats were a little shorter, as appears to have been the case. Compartments appear to have been of equal width, with little room for standees, if any. There were no bulkheads, but some extra strength was obtained from metal brackets from the top of each of the outermost stanchions to the tops of the seats. The original roofs were of canvas and were about 9" lower than those of the cars, and they were originally not fitted with sunshades.

By 1924, the original canvas roofs had worn out and in that year, they were replaced by wooden roofs without side or end fascias. These roofs (on one of these two trailers at least) were still lower than those of the cars. Apparently, sunshades were fitted on the ends as well as the sides about this time. In 1925, glass bulkheads were fitted above the seats behind the outer compartments. It would appear that there were then internal transverse advertising signs between the stanchions on each side of the central compartment, just below the roof.

Trailers were attached to the cars by fitting the coupling bar protruding from the rear of the tram into a socket on the trailer, and pinning it there. Trailers had curved central buffers similar to the trams and had the same two footboards on each side. There was a hand brake lever at each end. The protection bar was fitted on one side only; sometimes a trailer would enter

(Opposite) Three very different scenes relating to the Rockhampton Tramways: top, two of the trailers, thought to be Nos. 13 and 14 in 1922; centre, one tram and the trailer body being road hauled to Seeonee Park in November, 1940 and bottom, a trailer frame, one of those purchased by the Rockhampton Harbour Board, derelict at Port Alma in January, 1969. It had served there as a jetty trolley.
(Photos: J.W. Knowles' Collection)



A slightly re-touched close-up of motor No. 9 with trailer shortly before closure in 1939. Here again the prominence of the boiler is very evident. (Photo: R.L. Deskins' Collection)

traffic with the bar on the wrong side, forcing passengers to walk to the wrong side to board, but trailers were usually turned if necessary to avoid this.

Electricity for lighting was supplied from a storage battery on each trailer. Prior to the fitting of electric lighting, trailers 9, 10, and perhaps 11, may have had their own acetylene burners; however, the supply could conveniently have come from the motors.

Nos. 9 and 10 originally had pull down blinds on each side of the three inner compartments and Nos. 11 and 12 (when fitted with a roof) were similarly fitted. Nos. 13 and 14 had no blinds when built, but after the wooden roofs and bulkheads were fitted, it seems that they too had blinds on the three inner compartments. At the closure, these two trailers had side curtain blinds.

Disposal: After closure, the Council called tenders for the purchase of the trams and trailers for scrap. By January, 1940, it had received no bids. It decided against using them as shelters in parks.

The first item to go was a complete tram in March, 1940, sold to a farmer at Milman in the district. In August, 1940, seven tram and trailer bodies, including those of car 4 and trailer 10, were given to the Scouts Association for use at its Seeonee Park, on the Yeppoon Road. One engine unit went to the Rockhampton Technical College for instruction purposes and another may have gone to the Ipswich Technical College. The boiler at the Rockhampton College was sold for scrap about 1950.

In September, 1940, the Rockhampton Harbour Board bought two trailers and one tram, and adapted them for use on its wharves as large trolleys. The following month, car No. 6 was sold to another district farmer and in December, 1940, another body was given to the Scouts.

In July, 1941 a tram engine unit with a broken frame went to a farmer at Baralaba and in October, 1941, the last two bodies — one tram and one trailer — went to the Cricket Association for shelters and a tram chassis without boiler to a farmer at Biloela. The unit with a broken frame was possibly that of No. 2.

The fate of the remaining chassis and boilers in uncertain. The Harbour Board probably bought more frames and some boilers apparently went to local dairy farmers for steam cleaning cream cans and one to a local commercial laundry.

Some of this equipment may still be on local farms. Of the 8 bodies which went to Seeonee Park, only the shell of one remained in 1970, after 30 years of the effects of vandals, the weather and bushfires. The remaining body is apparently that of No. 3. Some remains of Nos. 4 and 10 are also there. The remains of one tram chassis was visible at Gavial Creek wharf in 1964 but not in 1970, and one trailer chassis was still on rails at Port Alma in 1969, both of these being Harbour Board purchases.

So ended the Purrey trams of Rockhampton. No trams of this type survived in their country of origin, France. There, the name was pronounced as in a certain kind of soup (puree); a Rockhampton paper once car-

(Opposite) These two views show No. 9 and 5 awaiting their fate outside the depot not long after the closure of the system. (Photos: J.L. Buckland)

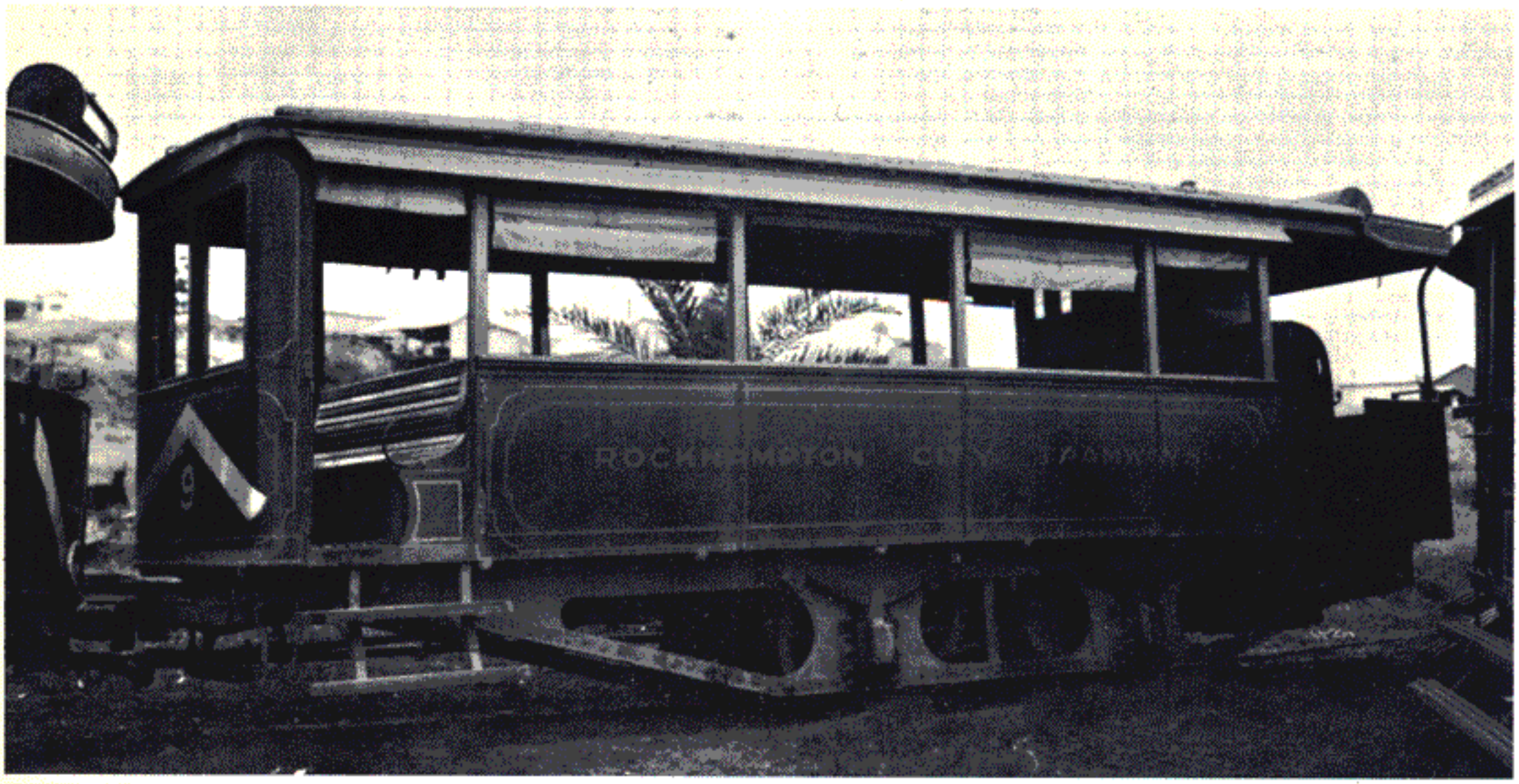
ried a cartoon of one aboriginal showing a tram to another, with the caption, "There you are — that's the plurry car". Much stronger adjectives were sometimes used to describe them!

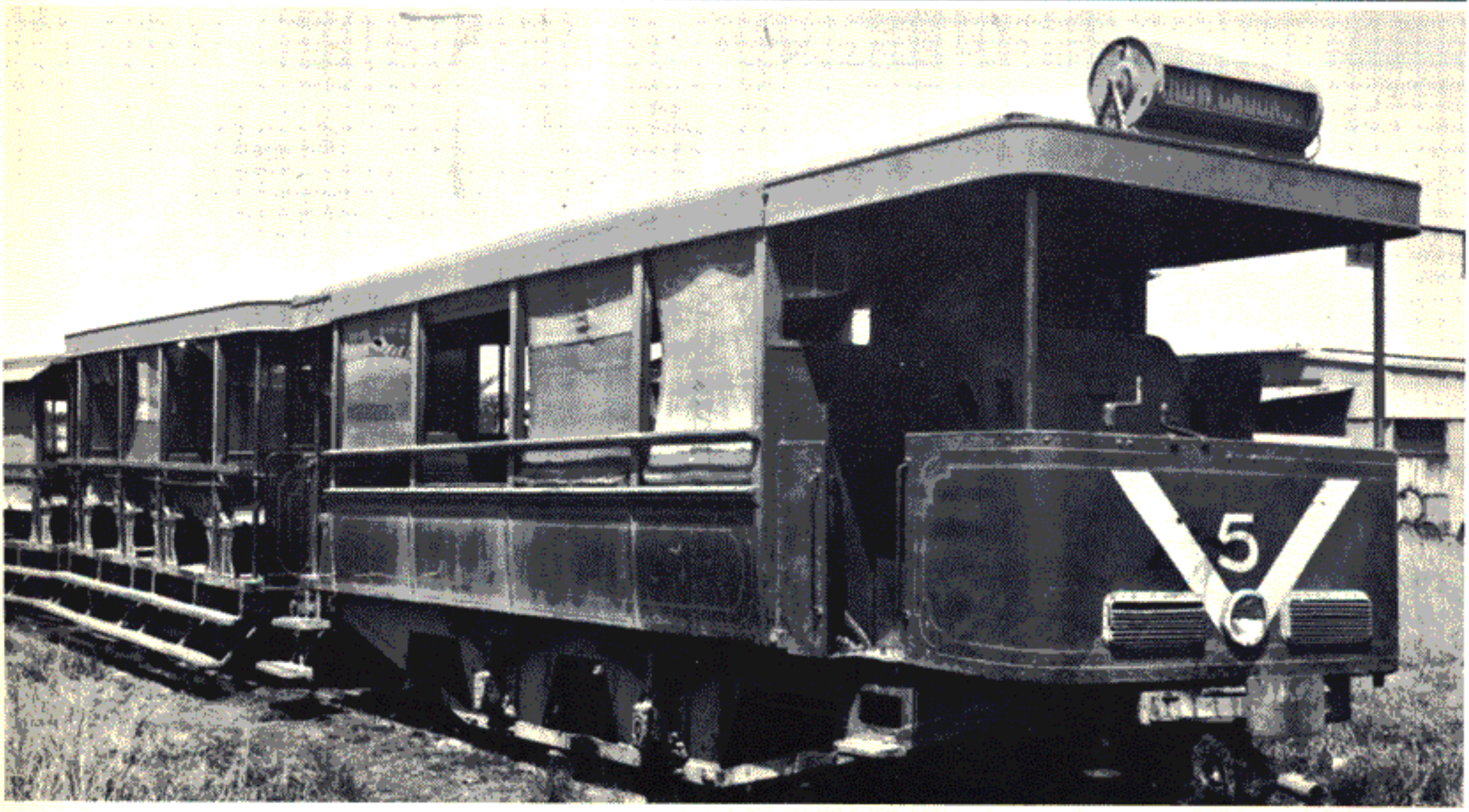
Early Timetables

Normal services on the Rockhampton Tramways were not particularly intensive, although in Carnival Week, for football matches, special occasions at the Gardens and on Saturday nights, every vehicle would be in service.

Basic frequency was half-hourly, but there were gaps of up to an hour. First inbound trams were about 7.35 a.m. on weekdays and 8.30 a.m. on Sundays, and last outbound trams about 10.40 p.m. on weekdays and 10 p.m. on Sundays.

The busiest period on weekdays was between 1 and 2 p.m., because passengers used the trams to go home for lunch. The arrangements included express trams. From at least 1920 until the closure, except for a short period in 1932-33 following the Wills Report, several cars would be at the Post Office at 1 p.m. About 1919, at 1.03 p.m., one would leave for the Gardens, not stopping to set down before the corner of Davis and William Streets; it was followed, also at 1.03 p.m., by a Dawson Road car, running express to Canning Street; a third car left at 1.04 p.m. for Canning Street via William Street serving all stops. In the opposite direction, a Show Grounds car left at 1.03 p.m., first stop Murray Street:





this was followed, also at 1.03 p.m., by a Canning Street car making all stops.

In 1926 and later years, the expresses were shown as not setting down to a particular point, but stopping as required to pick up. By then, too, the end of express running for the 1.03 p.m. Gardens had been brought back to West Street, and the following 1.03 p.m. Dawson Road made all stops, there being no following Canning Street car.

There were no corresponding inbound express runs, but a car left each terminus at 1.45 p.m. for the Post Office with returning workers.

Lunch hour activity was added to by one or two circuits of the city square while other cars waited at the termini for their 1.45 p.m. return runs.

In contrast to the lunch hour activity, Post Office departures a little after both 5 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. were simply one car for each terminus.

The timetable of about 1919 could be operated by four cars at all times except for a fifth car needed from 12.45 to 2.05 p.m. on weekdays and on Saturday nights. Other cars were probably also needed on Saturday nights, as many services were duplicated, especially the last runs. In this year, all last trams to the Depot ran via the Post Office and these were referred to in the timetable as "Extra Late Prowlers". The circular lunch-time runs were referred to as "City Square Lunch-Time Trams".

This timetable provided that on Good Fridays and Christmas Days, the Sunday service would be in operation unless advertised otherwise. This timetable included some runs of over 5 hours without the car returning to the depot, making use of the Dawson Road coke supply.

Generally, cars to operate the first inbound services ran out empty from the depot via the most direct route. The August,1926 timetable however, provided for the car going to Wandal for the first inbound Sunday service to run via William Street and the Post Office as a service car. This timetable required five cars on weekdays. One car ran out from the depot to Wandal empty in the evening to return at 5.52 p.m. to Post Office and Gardens. On a service from the Gardens at 6.23 p.m., it joined a car from Dawson Road at the Post Office to form a 6.40 p.m. to Canning Street in two divisions. One of these two cars on arrival at Canning Street apparently ran empty to Dawson Road to form the 6.55 p.m. from there to the Post Office and Wandal. Although not advertised, passengers presumably could have travelled to Dawson Road via Archer Street. In this year, the 5.47 p.m. from Wandal on Sundays was followed from Show Grounds to Archer Street by the 5.53 p.m. from Show Grounds, which from Archer Street ran to the depot.

The 1932 timetable reduced operations to four cars and cut out the lunch-time expresses and city circle services. As the four cars in service waited at the termini from 1.15 to 1.45 p.m., there were thus no services passing the Post Office between 1.03 and 1.58 p.m.

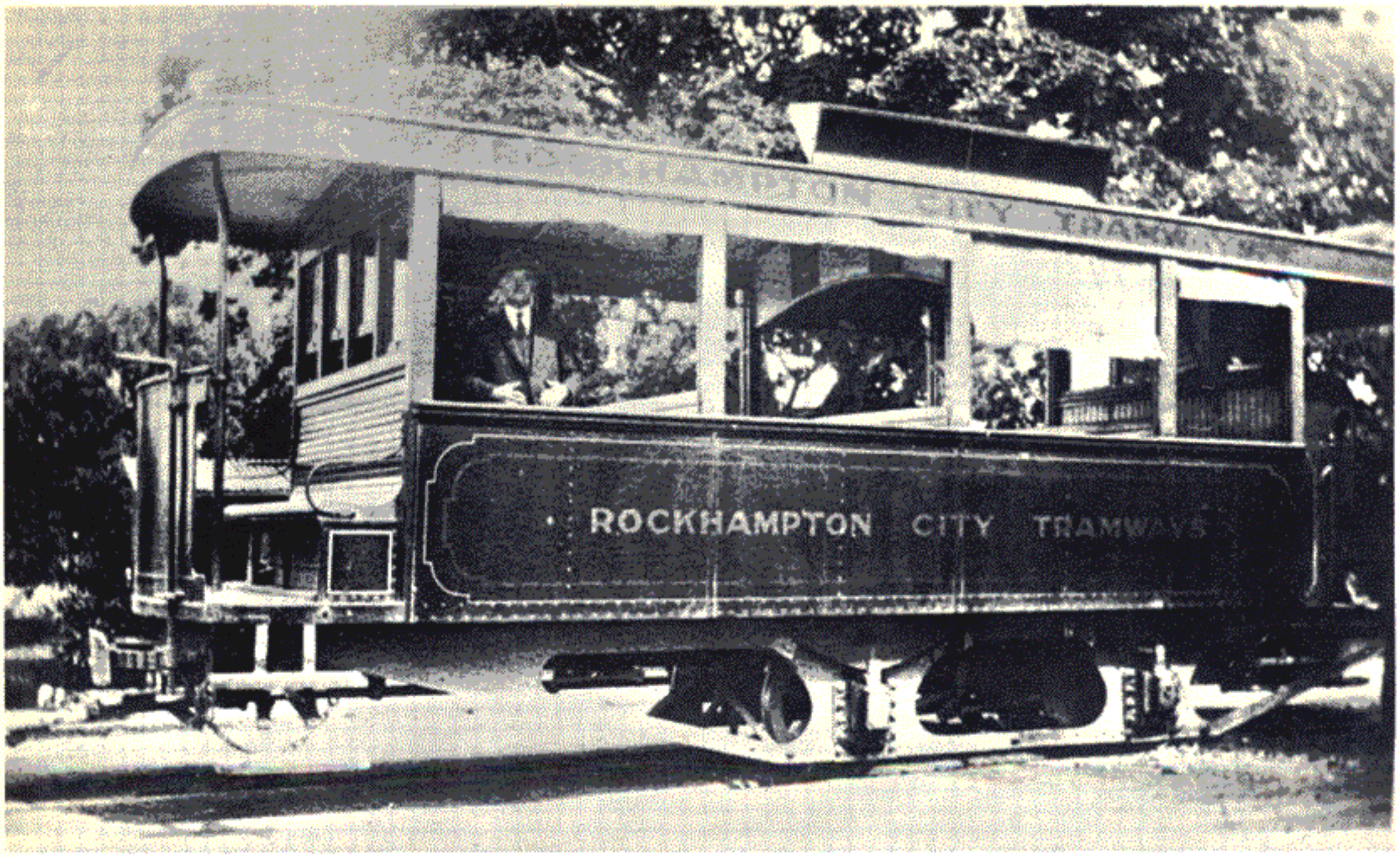
The 1934 Timetable

The timetable which came into effect in June, 1934, when buses ceased running in competition with the trams, improved considerably on the 1932 services; it remained basically unchanged until the closure. This timetable required up to 6 cars on weekdays, 7 on Saturdays and 4 on Sundays.

For each route, the times of the first and last trams and number of services per day are given, times being from the termini inbound, from the Post Office outbound.

Dawson Road: Mon. to Fri. Out, 7.50 a.m. to 10.40 p.m., 27, but in the interval 6.02 to 7.10 p.m., the 6.40 p.m. from the Post Office to Gardens connected at William/Canning Streets with a car for Dawson Road which had run empty from the depot; In 7.35 a.m. to 10.25

Possibly motor No. 1 at Showgrounds loop about 1916 when the paddle type destination board had replaced the roof mounted side boards. *(Photo: K.J. Magor Collection)*



This view of car No. 7 at Gardens in 1929, shows clearly the interior transverse roof strengthening arches and the reflected light roof mounted advertisement. (Photo: B. Dion)

p.m., 28. Sat. Out 7.50 a.m. to 10.40 p.m. 28, In 7.35 a.m. to 10.25 p.m., 30. Sun. out 7.50 a.m. to 9.40 p.m., 18; In 8.30 a.m. to 9.55 p.m., 18. Except on Sundays, there was also a last inbound car to the depot.
Gardens: Mon. to Fri. Out, 7.47 a.m. to 10.40 p.m., 9. The 1.03 p.m. did not set down before West Street, but was followed by the 1.03 p.m. Dawson Road; In 7.40 a.m. to 10.20 p.m., 28. Sat. Out, 7.47 a.m. to 10.40 p.m., 27; In 7.40 a.m. to 10.20 p.m., 27. Sun. Out, 8.40 a.m. to 10.10 p.m., 21; In 9.05 a.m. to 9.55 p.m., 20. In each case there was also a last inwards car to the Depot.
Wandal: Mon. to Fri., Out, 7.50 a.m. to 10.40 p.m., 30, plus one at 5.43 p.m. to Show Grounds. The 1.02 p.m. ran express to North Street, the 1.03 p.m. did not set down before Murray Street, but was followed by the 1.03 p.m. Canning Street, which did; In 7.35 a.m. to 10.23 p.m., 30; Sat. Out, 7.50 a.m. to 10.40 p.m., 28, plus three to Show Grounds at 3.40, 6.55 and 10.40 p.m.; the 10.40 p.m. Wandal was followed by the 10.40 p.m. Show Grounds; In 7.35 a.m. to 10.23 p.m., 29, plus three from Show Grounds at 3.50, 6.45 and 7.10 p.m.; Sun. Out, 7.55 a.m. to 10.10 p.m., 21, plus one at 1.55 p.m. Show Grounds (breaking an 85 minute interval in Wandal runs); In, 8.20 a.m. to 9.52 p.m., 20. In each case, there was a last inbound car to the Depot.
Canning Street via Archer St.: Mon to Fri. Out, 7.55 a.m. to 10.40 p.m., 28, plus one via William Street; the 6.40 p.m. service from the P.O. was operated by two cars; In, 7.35 a.m. to 10.25 p.m., 26, plus four via William Street; Sat. Out, 7.55 a.m. to 10.40 p.m., 29, plus three via William Street; In 7.35 a.m. to 10.25 p.m., 27, plus five via William Street; there was an inbound car at 10.25 p.m. via Archer Street and another at the same time via William Street; Sun, Out, 9.20 a.m. to 9.30 p.m., 16; In, 7.40 a.m. to 9.18 p.m., 18, plus one via William Street.

All cars were through routed. Those which ran to or from Canning Street via William Street were running the Depot to Wandal service or vice versa, except that one at lunchtime on Mons. to Fris. and two at lunch time on Saturdays, were circuits Canning Street to Canning Street which were in addition to the Gardens and Dawson Road services along William Street.

It will be noticed that lunchtime on weekdays was very busy; most city workers went home for lunch, and by tram! A return car left each terminus at 1.42 p.m. to bring them back to work. The ordinary peak hour in the morning and afternoon did not attract more frequent services (e.g. to Gardens at 4.25, 5.00, 5.35 and 6.05 p.m.), but trailers were attached at these times. One trailer was left at the loop at the Football Grounds during the morning and afternoon and attached to a tram for the lunch and evening peak services.

To meet travel demand at certain popular times, cars followed each other along East Street at close intervals e.g., westbound, there were cars at 8.55 a.m. to both Wandal and Canning Street, 12 noon to Canning Street, 12.03 to Wandal, 12.30 to Wandal, 12.33 Canning Street, 7.45 p.m. to both Wandal and Canning Streets; eastbound, there were cars to Gardens at 7.47 a.m., Dawson Road at 7.50, Gardens at 12.30, Dawson Road at 12.32, 5.00 to Gardens, 5.05 to Dawson Road and 10.40 was the last car to both Dawson Road and Gardens. During mid-morning and mid-afternoon, services

were better spaced, giving an improved frequency to the junctions.

Most crossings took place on the double track, although a fairly large number of short waits were necessary at each end, especially at the Campbell/William Streets intersection. In addition, the junctions at Canning/William and Murray/Archer Streets saw several crossings, mostly made by one car waiting on its line for the arrival of another car going to a different line. The former saw 7 crossings on Mondays to Fridays, 11 on Saturdays and 1 on Sundays, and the latter, 7, 8 and 6 respectively.

The Wandal line however, had proper crossings. The running of two cars to Wandal at 1.02 and 1.03 p.m. on Mondays to Fridays meant that the first had to await the arrival of the second in the turning circle at Wandal before it could leave on its return at 1.20, and on Saturdays, the 1.18 ex Wandal could not leave until the 1.05 from the Post Office arrived. Several Wandal services (3 on weekdays, 2 on Saturdays, and 2 on Sundays) crossed at Archer/Murray Streets, where one car had to shunt as there was no loop there.

There were two crossings at the Show Grounds on Saturdays — the 12.50 ex Wandal with the 12.43 ex Post Office, and the 6.45 p.m. ex Show Grounds with the 6.35 ex Post Office to Wandal. The football Grounds saw two crossings on Saturdays (6.55 and 7.10 p.m. services from both Post Office and Wandal) and one on Sundays (2.40 p.m. ex Wandal and 2.42 p.m. ex Post Office).

At Carnival Times, there would be crossings at all possible places. There were no staff or signalling systems, the timetable being the only authority. However, there were telephones at the Archer/Murray Streets corner and at the Show Grounds for crews to obtain instructions and an inspector was often stationed at the former location.

(To be continued)