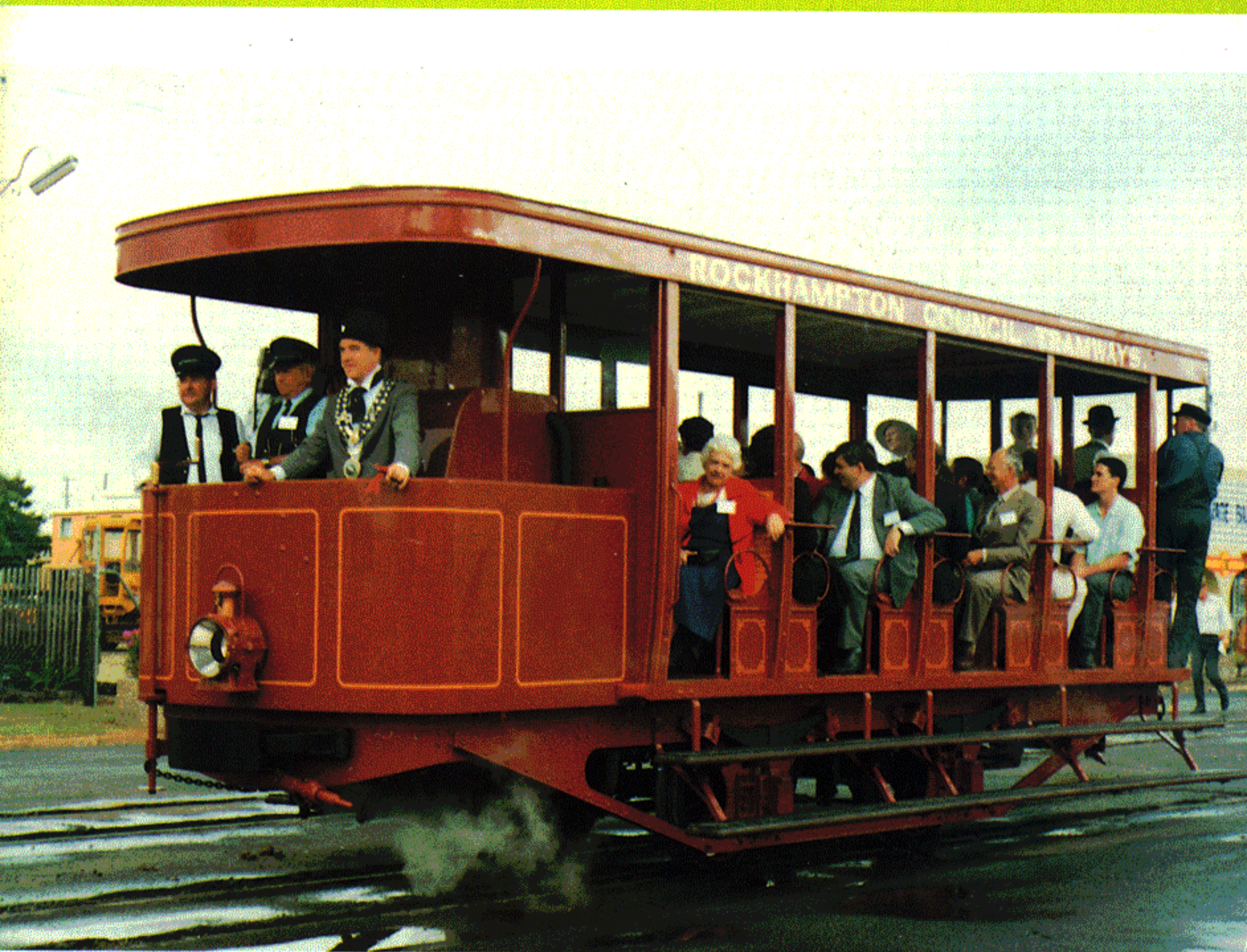


TROLLEY WIRE



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ROCKHAMPTON'S PURREY STEAM TRAM

TROLLEY WIRE

AUSTRALIA'S TRAMWAY MUSEUM
MAGAZINE

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FRONT COVER:

*Rockhampton City Council's Purrey steam tram makes its first passenger carrying run
down Denison Street on 5 June 1988. The Mayor of Rockhampton, Alderman Jim Webber,
is riding on the front platform of the tram.*

BOB MERCHANT

BACK PAGE:

*Top: Sydney R1 class 1979 stands in Tramway Avenue at the Sydney Tramway Museum,
Loftus on 1 May 1988.*

BOB MERCHANT

*Bottom: Restored Davenport locomotive "Kiama" and former Melbourne cable tram trailer
430 pose for Heritage Week publicity photos at the Albion Park Museum on 2 April
1988.*

KEN McCARTHY



*Rockhampton's restored Purrey steam tram
moves slowly through the crowd lining the track
in Denison Street on the morning of 5 June 1988.
The tram is heading towards Stanley Street where
official photos will be taken.*

BOB MERCHANT

TRIUMPH IN THE NORTH

THE RECOMMISSIONING OF THE ROCKHAMPTON PURREY STEAM CAR

by K.A. McCarthy

On Sunday, 5 June 1988 a steam tram returned to the streets of Rockhampton. Just after 9am the restored Purrey steam tram moved under a triumphal arch, following a ribbon cutting ceremony, in Denison Street at the Derby Street intersection. This repeated the ceremony held exactly 79 years before when the Rockhampton Council Tramways were opened under a similar arch in William Street near Bolsover Street.

Between 1909 and 1939 self-contained steam tramcars built by the firm of Valentin Purrey of Bordeaux, France, operated on the town tramways of Rockhampton, Queensland. The routes, which consisted of a circular line around the central city area with branches to Dawson Road, Showgrounds-Wandal, and

Gardens, reached a maximum extent of 10.5 km in 1922. With the final rolling stock deliveries at that period the tram fleet reached nine self-contained steam trams and six trailers.

The Queensland Railways purchased two Purrey steam cars and matching trailers in 1924 and these worked the local Rockhampton suburban rail trips until the mid 1930s.

Articles published in the Australian Railway Historical Society *Bulletin* and this magazine *Trolley Wire* during the early 1970s stimulated interest in Rockhampton's unique transport heritage. The "18 to 35 Year Old" group of the Rockhampton Branch of the National Trust launched a search for tramcar



The Purrey stands in the sunshine in Stanley Street with the restored 1885 colonial railway office building forming a backdrop.

BOB MERCHANT

parts, working through the City Council's disposal lists for 1939-40. The nature and amount of retrieved relics was remarkable.

With matched grants being available for heritage projects through the Bicentennial Scheme and the Commonwealth Employment Programme, the possibility of rebuilding a working Purrey steam car now seemed possible. The City Council co-ordinated the restoration project from 1982, reconstruction being supervised and managed by Mr. Doug Press, the Passenger Transport Manager, in the bus workshops. Mr. David Neish of the National Trust group and Mr. Steve Kele, a local machinery merchant with a lifelong interest in steam machinery, were members of the sixteen-man Council Steam Tram Committee.

The saga of this major restoration project has been reported in this magazine since 1976. During the reconstruction, parts were located in many unusual places. The Antique Machinery Society in Brisbane provided a Purrey steam engine unit which once powered

one of the Queensland Railway steam cars. A genuine Purrey boiler steam feedwater pump was discovered in the Ipswich Railway Workshops. A complete water tube boiler was found on a Biloela farm which provided the patterns for the new unit. A plethora of parts were found at the North Rockhampton Scout Camp where at least one trailer and two power cars were taken in 1940. Local residents, as well as tramway enthusiasts, returned a considerable quantity of collectable souvenirs to assist the project.

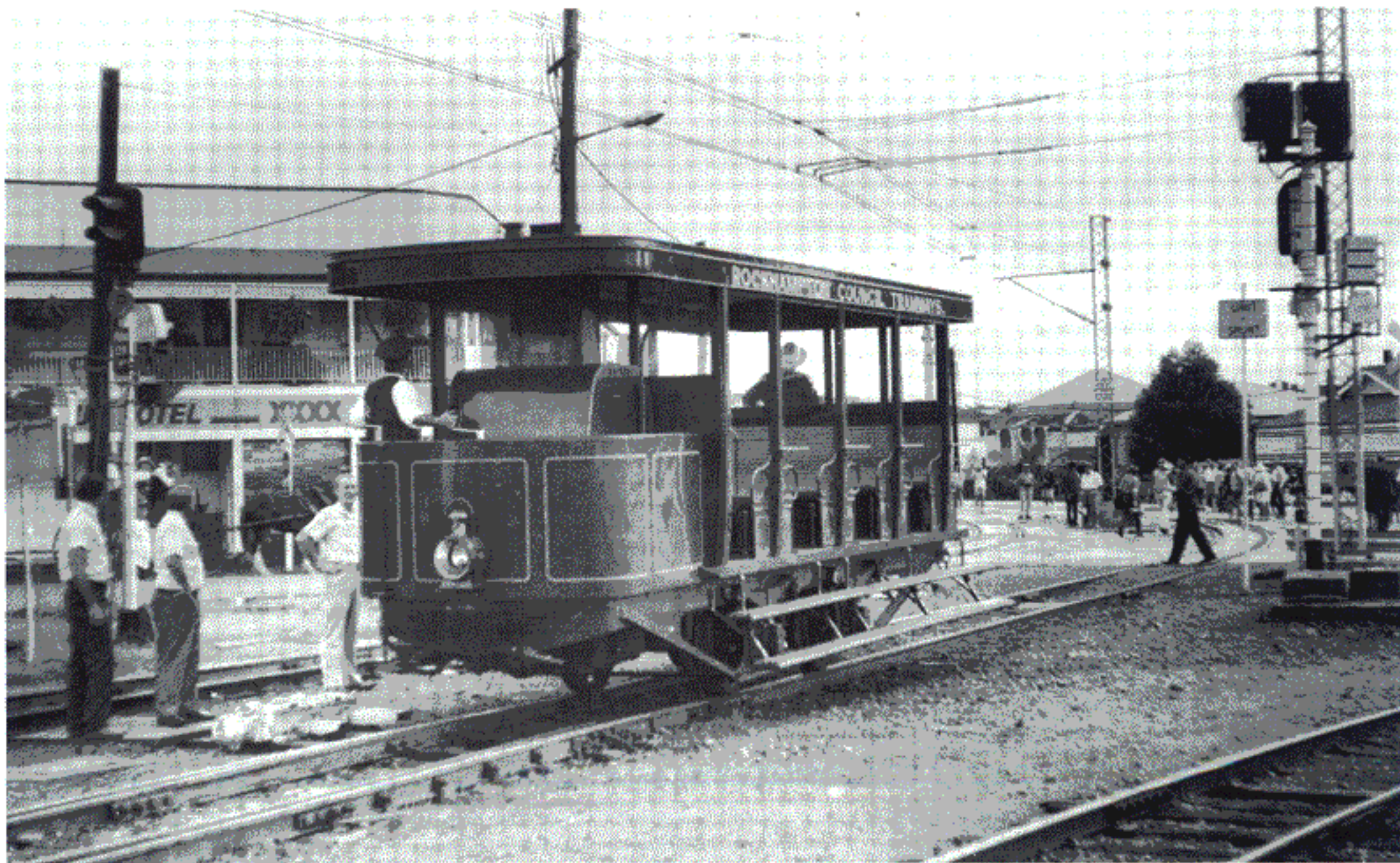
The most unusual coincidence occurred in 1985. A back hoe unearthed two leaf spring buffer units when carrying out excavations behind the old tramway workshop site to extend the bus parking concrete slab. These items were in sound condition and required little major work before being fitted to the new tramcar.

The project was officially launched in June 1984 at the Transport Ball which was held to mark 75 years of continuous public transport operation by Rockhampton City Council. This



The Purrey steam car and Queensland Railways railmotor RM16 stand in Stanley Street while the Rockhampton City Band form up across the intersection. Official guests enjoyed a champagne breakfast at the Railway Training Centre on the site of the old railway station, seen in the top right corner of our photograph.

BOB MERCHANT



8.45 am on 5 June 1988. The Purrey steam tram moves under the new 25kV overhead wire from the Rockhampton station yard into Denison Street for the recommissioning ceremony.

KEN McCARTHY

is now the longest continual period of municipal transport service in Australia.

During March 1985 after preparation of working drawings and a period of resource co-ordination, work commenced on the construction of new main frames. Many industrial undertakings assisted with the project. The Rockhampton firm of Burns & Twigg, who conducted much of the heavy engineering work during the original tramway period, worked on the new boiler components. Mr. Peter Olds of W. Olds & Sons of Maryborough renovated the main engine unit using new cylinder castings manufactured by Fidax Foundry of Sydney. The Queensland Railways carried out work on the running gear, their main contributions being the reconstruction

and supply of wheels, axles, bearings and axle boxes.

As the reconstruction progressed on the old Canning Street tram depot site, two public open days held during June 1986 and February 1987 drew large crowds and much favourable publicity.

During the latter half of 1987 the tram was placed on wheels, the body fitted out, the steam motor unit and boiler placed in position. On 24 December 1987 the tram operated under steam for five hours with the frame blocked up to allow the wheels to revolve freely.

On 28 March 1988 the tramcar was transferred to the Central Queensland Cement



V. Purrey step-plate on the restored tram.

BOB MERCHANT

plant and on the following day it ran on the 3ft 6in gauge sidings at that factory. There were some teething problems with jammed steam valves and a sticking water level float but these were eventually overcome. A major setback occurred on 29 April when the engine seized and the right cast iron piston fractured. On 10 May two new steel pistons and rings were fitted to the engine unit. With three weeks to the recommissioning day the tram was ready for service . . . at a cost of \$211,925.

The main North Coast railway passes through Rockhampton along double tracks in Denison Street. For five city blocks the tracks are paved in the manner of a street tramway. The Railway Department allowed the City Council to operate the tramcar from 7am until 4.30pm on Sunday 5 June for a distance of just over 1km in Denison Street between Stanley and Fitzroy Streets, traversing four city blocks along a neighbourhood of shops, hotels and houses.

During the first few days of June, Rockhampton had been deluged with unseasonable rain. In fact several downpours occurred on Saturday evening, the day before the recommissioning. The weather lifted on Sunday morning and by 9am the city was experiencing a clear warm day.



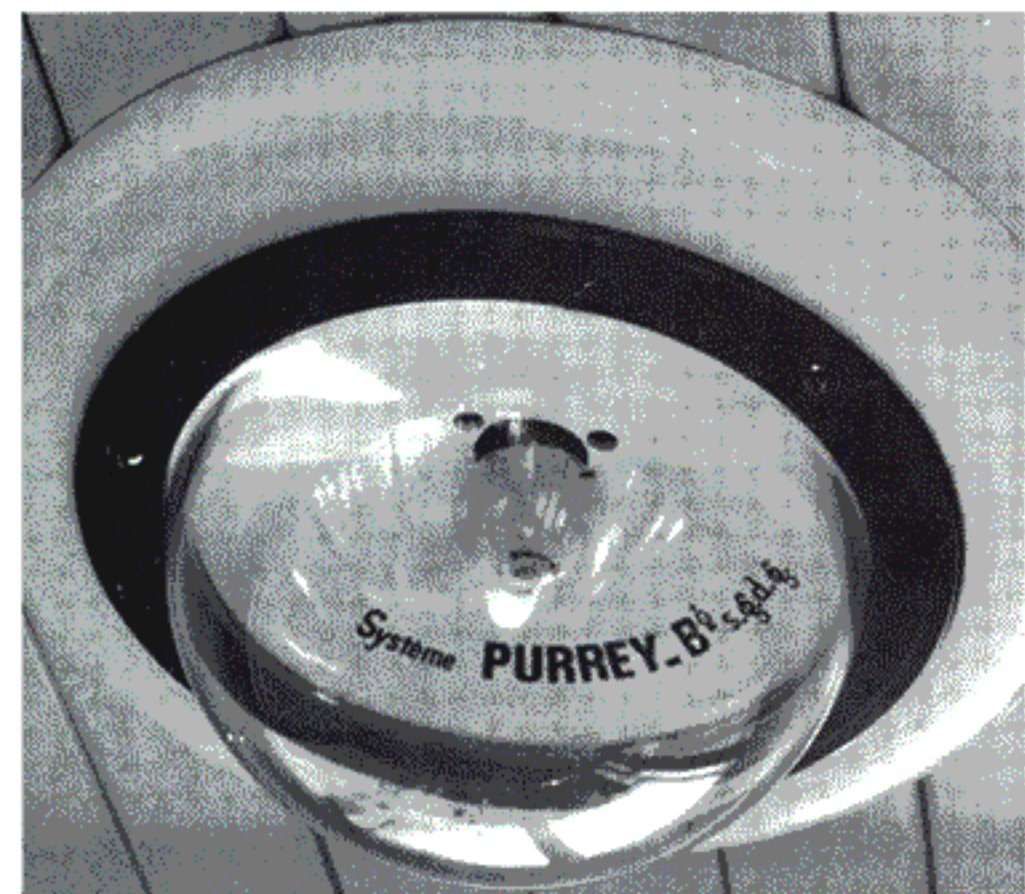
In vintage clothes, City Transport Manager Doug Press gives a resume of the steam tram restoration project during the ceremony.

KEN McCARTHY



Mayor of Rockhampton Jim Webber cuts the ribbon to mark the completion of the steam tram restoration project. A similar floral arch was erected in William Street for the official opening of the tramway on 5 June 1909.

BOB MERCHANT



The interior lights were originally acetylene gas lit with the change to electric lamps powered by batteries taking place during World War I. The reconstructed vehicle has been fitted with electric lamps for convenience.

BOB MERCHANT

The steam tram was wheeled out of its temporary home, the rail motor shed near Stanley Street Station, around 5am when steam was raised. By 6.30am it had steamed onto the former town wharf branch line in Stanley Street where minor servicing was performed and photos taken of the tram outside the two-storey restored colonial railway office block. Considerable interest was created when the Purrey car was joined by Queensland Rail Motor No. 16 in Stanley Street.

Around 8am the very large contingent of invited guests were entertained to a champagne breakfast in the Railway Institute building at the old Stanley Street Station. Just prior to 9am the tram moved from Stanley Street into Denison Street to the arch and platform in Derby Street. The location was packed with a crowd in excess of 2,000 people . . . a little greater than that which witnessed the original opening ceremony in William Street on 5 June 1909.

The official party included Alderman Jim and Mrs. Webber, the Mayor of Rockhampton; Alderman Ron and Mrs. Peters, the Mayor of Maryborough; Railway Superintendent Mr. Kevin Neil; and Mr. Laurie Strange, the Queensland Bicentennial Autho-



The Purrey steam car in Denison Street at Stanley Street at 1.20pm. The tram is receiving a routine service with clinker being removed from the fire box and the ash being drawn from the ashpan.

KEN McCARTHY



The Purrey car seems at home in the Rockhampton streetscape, seen here on 5 June 1988 in Denison Street at the Denham Street intersection.

KEN McCARTHY

rity Chairman. Mr. and Mrs. Doug Press were certainly pleased that the weather had cleared and Doug expressed the wish in his speech that the tram, affectionately known as "Old Red," would behave itself during the day . . . he need not have worried; the very high standard of restoration resulted in the tram working without a hitch for the entire day.

Just prior to the Mayor cutting the ceremonial ribbon Mr. Mike McCarthy, the General Manager of the *Morning Bulletin*, presented a cheque for \$20,000 to the Mayor as a contribution towards the construction of a permanent tourist tram route.

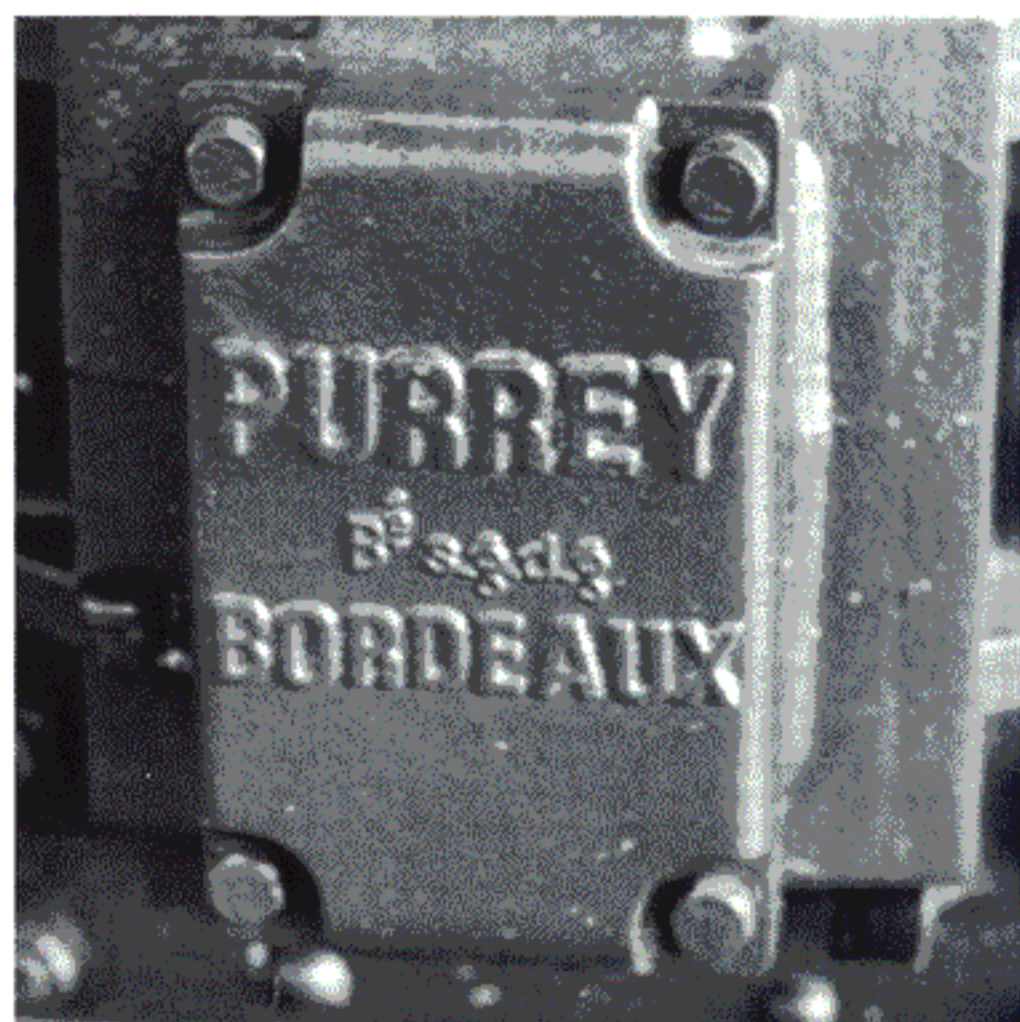
Following the ceremony the tram made several trips for invited guests along Denison Street and at 9.30am public service commenced at \$1 per trip between Stanley and Fitzroy Streets. To handle the crowds, which by late morning amounted to almost 4,000 people, trips were limited to one direction, the return journey being made in former Sydney double-deck Atlantean No. 1169 which is now in the City Council bus fleet.

Although the tram only seats 40 passengers, over 2,600 were carried on 5 June. Many potential riders had to be turned away at 4.15pm when the last trip departed resembling peak hour in Calcutta!

Some unusual features of the operation and some highlights of the day should be mentioned here . . .

The tram was operated by a joint Council and Queensland Railway crew. Reg Davis and

Jim Bambrick were the assigned drivers. The Council personnel carried "R.C. Tramways" on their hat bands which blended with their vintage uniforms. The railway guard was resplendent in a uniform with loops of piping up the sleeves topped by a white pith helmet. As the crew grew more familiar with the tram's operation, so did the service speed increase. By late morning it was traversing Denison Street at 60 kph.



A Purrey of Bordeaux axlebox cover.

BOB MERCHANT

The tram was free of pollution and very quiet in operation. The new chain drives were silent while the only obvious sound was the occasional working of the steam water feed pump. When driven under load a soft beat could be heard, the frequency of which was quite rapid due to the chain gearing between the engine unit and the road wheels. The tram was drawn up to the Denison and Stanley Street corner for the occasional service stop where water was replenished and the ash and clinker removed from the firebox pan.

The bus drivers and workshop staff at the bus depot have been very interested in the project. They can now hold lengthy conversations on feed pumps, horn blocks, eccentrics and Dee valves as could their colleagues prior to 1939!

Several former tramway employees were present at the day's events. All seemed to gain a new lease of life on the strength of the occasion.

As the tramcar traversed the Denison Street route for the first time it was accompanied by a wave of loud applause along the entire kilometre. Several in the crowd, who were boys during the tramcar era, were heard to call out "two with sauce" as the tram steamed through the city. The cars were known as "pie carts" during the 1930s.

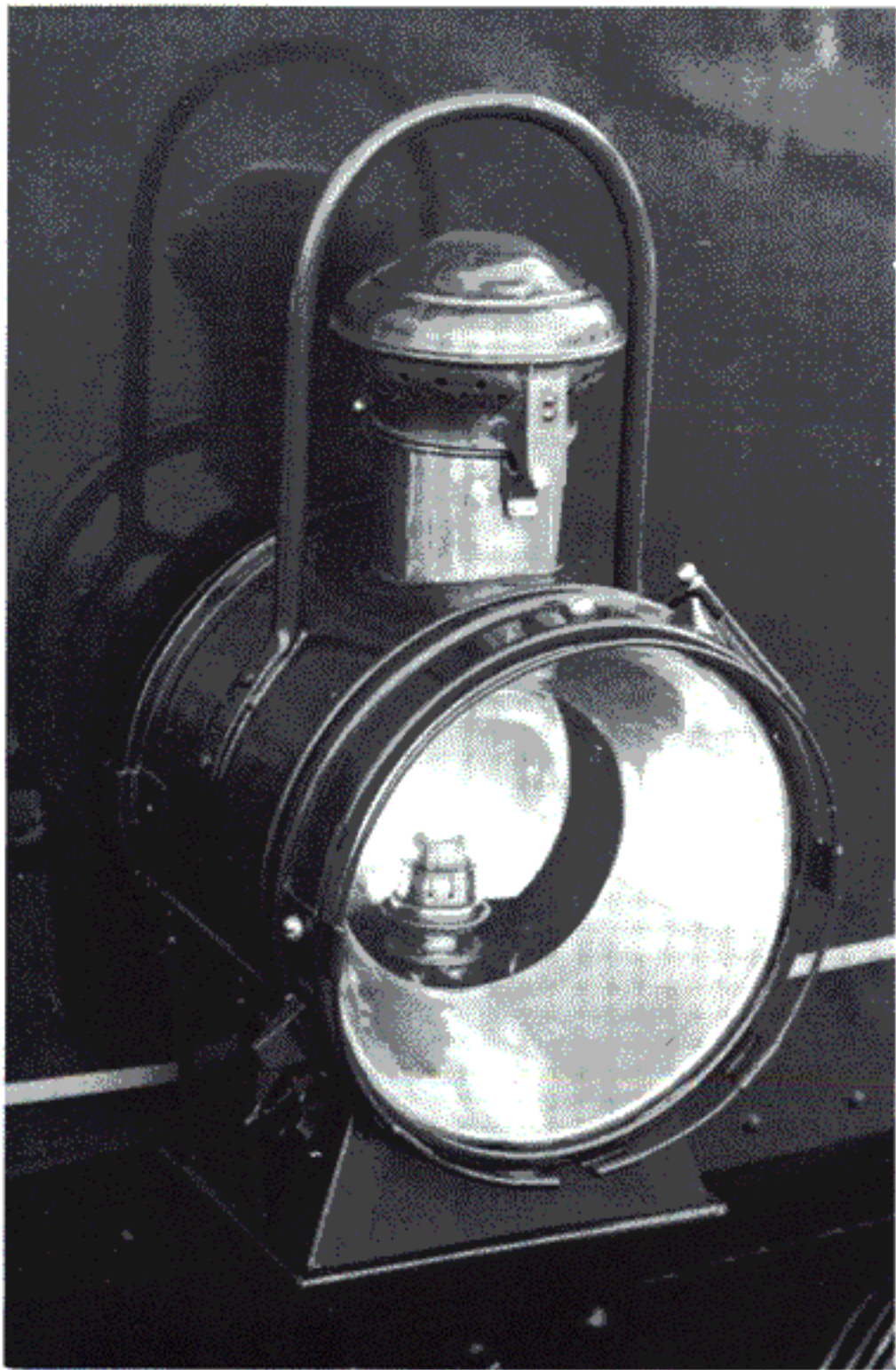
At the conclusion of the day's activities Doug Press was a pleased but relieved man . . . the occasion had been a resounding success and the tram had operated faultlessly. He had experienced many sleepless nights as the target date loomed closer . . . he solved many mechanical problems with only photos to help him . . . the co-ordination job was in addition to his usual heavy workload as Council Transport Manager, which includes both the bus fleet and the airport traffic. Let us hope he will now have time to return to his main leisure activity of golf.

The Council is now gearing up for regular tourist tramway operation. The underframe of an open toastrack trailer is to be fitted with a new body, and three Billard diesel locomotives have been donated by Citra Construction.

These diesel units were used on the recent local railway electrification contract and will enable the tramway to operate regularly without the need for continual steam working. The Mayor has obtained an open toastrack horse car from Andalucia Park, near Surfers Paradise, and this can be converted to operate on both flange wheels and pneumatic road tyres. This car has been repainted in Tramway colours and operated on 5 June in Denison Street on road tyres hauled by a tractor to relieve the load on the Purrey car.



The cross bench horse car at the corner of William and Denison Streets. This tram normally operates on flanged wheels but can be fitted with pneumatic tyres for off-rail running and it ran in this mode during the day hauled by a tractor. KEN McCARTHY



The kerosine headlamp was picked up in a Paris flea-market.

BOB MERCHANT

The tramway's permanent home has been narrowed down to two routes. One school of thought wants the tram service to traverse the old railway wharf track in Stanley Street and then run along the river bank in Quay Street in the historic city precinct. The other proposal requires track to be built from a tourist centre adjacent to the highway on the southern edge of town from where it will skirt Yeppen Lagoon to terminate in the famed tropical Botanical Gardens. This proposal links across the former Dawson Road and Gardens terminals served by the 1909-1939 tramways.

Both proposals require almost 2 km of 3ft 6in gauge tramway. On the evening of 6 June the City Council came out in favour of the Yeppen Lagoon to Botanical Gardens tourist route, so the next stage of this very interesting project should commence soon.

During dinner on Saturday evening 4 June, Doug Press was a person from whom a mantle

of worry was about to be lifted in 24 hours time. Peter Olds, on the other hand, had his mind on possible future restoration activities. He has been involved with the restoration of Queensland Railway locomotive B15 class No. 299 (built by Walkers of Maryborough in 1897) to working order and has an international reputation as a live steam model engineer. Peter expressed the proposal over dinner that as all the patterns and working drawings are now available, another Purrey steam tram could be built for half the cost of the original project. Doug Press's response to this suggestion was to gaze into the distance and possibly dream of his favourite golf course!

Further Rockhampton Notes

A 48-page book dealing with the history of Rockhampton steam trams entitled "Rocky's Puffing Billies" was prepared for the recommissioning ceremony.

The history was prepared by Judy Nicholson and in addition to material acknowledged from the ARHS *Bulletin* and *Trolley Wire* the author has been able to present new information obtained from Council records and the local press.

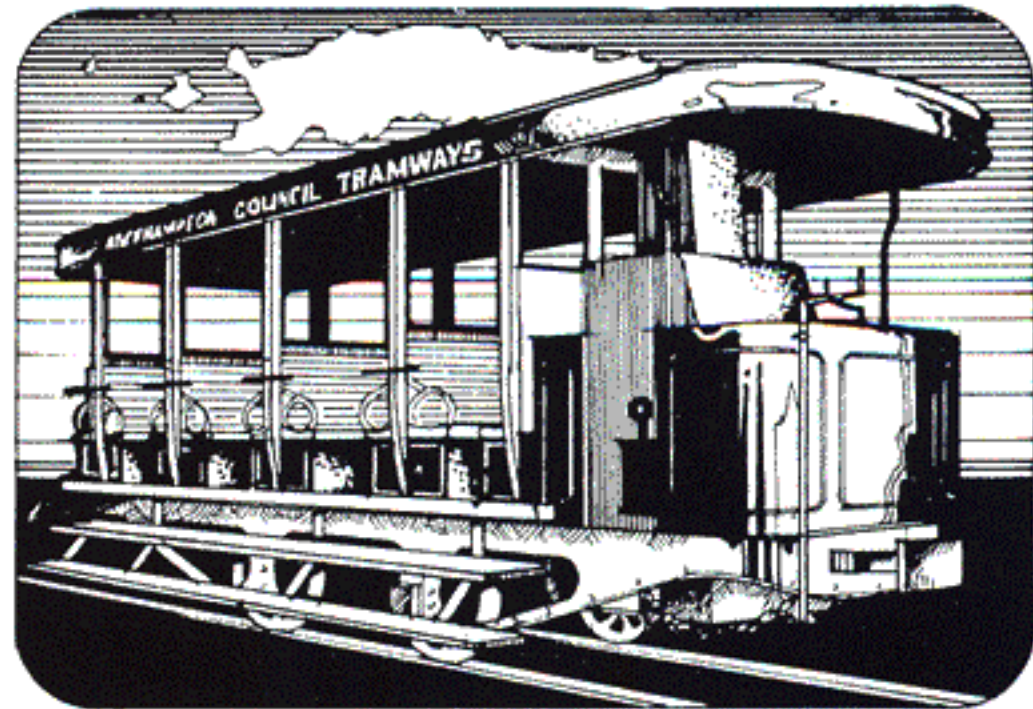
This new publication was released at a ceremony held at North Rockhampton Municipal Library on Friday evening 3 June.

The tram was fueled on a mixture of Blair Athol coal and industrial coke obtained from Mackay.

The front kerosene headlamp was causing some concern as the Purrey car restoration neared completion. A Citra Corporation official identified the lamp from photos as being a standard French railway model from the turn of the century. The Citra representative was able to obtain an identical unit from a flea market in Paris and this was delivered by M. LaCosta during March 1988.

The firm of Purrey constructed over 200 steam tram units for street operation around the turn of the century. We believe that this is the only example of his products in operating condition.

Valentin Purrey (1861-1928) would have been very pleased with the Rockhampton activities of 5 June 1988.



*Rockhampton City Council
Bicentennial Project*



*Sponsored by
Rockhampton Branch National Trust of Queensland*

Peak hour in Rockhampton! The last run of the day at 4.15pm approaches the Denison Street-William Street intersection. BOB MERCHANT



Former Atlantean bus No. 1169 and the restored Purrey tram near Fitzroy Street in Denison Street, Rockhampton. The 1972 bus contrasts with the 1909 steam tram to span 75 years of continuous Municipal transport. KEN McCARTHY