

MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP



Editorial

In this issue we continue our regular series as before – this time reaching a record number of pages.

We have another article by Sonya Cameron on what was going on in Middle Park 100 years ago, this time about an event we would not condone today. She has also contributed an article on the history of our beloved trams.

Bruce Armstrong, who grew up in Middle Park through the 1920s–1940s, has committed his memoirs to paper and offered the MPHG a series of

vignettes of his life, thousands of words in total. In this issue the newsletter publishes the fifth in a series of reminiscences from Bruce.

This issue is without a new mystery object, the first time for a while. I would love a photo to publish next time and short explanation for the following issue. October's mystery object is explained at the end of Sonya's article on the tramways.

Gary Poore

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This is the fifth of a series of collected memories from Bruce Armstrong (left, aged 92 years in 2016), a former resident of Middle Park. Bruce remembers an environment very different from what we now experience. Bruce has contributed a series of vignettes recounting his life. These have been assembled into chapters by the editor with Bruce's permission but the words remain largely his own – Gary Poore



Childhood, growing up and salad days in Middle Park. Chapter Five

B r u c e A r m s t r o n g

Boys and dogs were made for each other, and other animals

Many households had a dog and allowed them the freedom of the streets, so there were occasional dog-fights and a lot of faeces in the nature-strip grass where we played and sometimes wrestled. One memorable day, I wrestled one of my mates and discovered too late that a large dog had been there before me. I went home and my mother really flipped. I was made to hose my clothes on the clothes line before being allowed in the house. I couldn't see what the fuss was about, it didn't seem to be that bad. The council had a motorised dog-cart patrolling the streets to snare dogs. There was no tagging or registration and if your dog disappeared you might retrieve it for a fee at the pound.

Now and then we'd find a dog obviously poisoned by someone who didn't like them. We had a nasty mongrel living at a close-by home near the rear of our place and it got into our yard, killed our pet rosella 'Joey' who had his freedom with one wing clipped and tethered on a long

string. My outrage impressed an older brother and suddenly the dog vanished, found dead in a gutter. Some time later, he confided that he bought some strychnine from the pharmacy and baited a sausage. Adults were able to buy strychnine if they produced evidence of their bona fides and signed a poisons register. I could have kissed him. Being country bred, my brothers were skilled at killing foxes, cats and dogs. They often baited foxes for their pelts which they sent to Melbourne to be dressed and made into fashion furs.

My gang thought the funniest thing in the world was to watch two dogs having what we called 'a scrape'. Now and then a group of dogs would appear, a bitch obviously in season, followed by a train of randy dogs, slavering in anticipation. We would join in the chase to see which dog won the prize. Once the bitch had made up her mind, the victor went about his business and the losers squatted around to watch, whimpering and grumbling in despair.

Middle Park was plagued with cats. They

disturbed our sleep with their howling and fighting. Owners allowed them total freedom. We seldom heard of tom cats being castrated. If Middle Park had had a veterinary surgeon the cost would have been prohibitive, money was spent on essential things. Butcher Edgar Bailey had his shop in Hambleton Street and one Saturday afternoon we heard loud caterwauling from within his shop. His son told that one of his customers asked if he could do something about her cat. The problem was its adventurous habits at night and being a very large animal, she couldn't restrain it. Edgar offered to sterilize it, assuring the lady the procedure would alter its social habits totally, and it did!

Circa 1935 and walking home from school I came across a black and white heavily pregnant cat which meowed plaintively and started following me. I was sorry at its plight, patted it and urged it to follow me home where I begged my mother to let me keep it. She agreed provided it stayed outside in the shed. A saucer of milk and some meat convinced this moggie to stay. I liked the way it purred and followed me around. I was in love and used to hurry home from school to cuddle her – we were inseparable. Five kittens arrived and on coming home one day, three were gone. The distraught mother was searching everywhere but soon settled down to

nursing the remaining two. My mother said she had drowned three because the cat was so scrawny, it would be best if she just managed the survivors. My mother too became attached to the cat and it followed her around the house all day. The object of my love had been accepted and the kittens thrilled me with their antics. But it was not to last – my siblings, particularly one older brother, had a deep-seated antipathy to cats and on returning home one day the cat and kittens were gone. There was no tangible explanation, my mother simply said that 'Jack had taken all three to the lake.' Albert Park lake was often used by the locals to dispose of unwanted animals, we spoke of it as 'yabbie tucker'.

Open duck season on Albert Park

Ducks and yabbies were supplementary food source for some. Brown ducks frequented the lake. The trouble was, how to catch them? Some enterprising people had devised a clever method. A baited rat-trap attached to a flat piece of timber fixed to an inflated inner tube of a car tyre was floated towards the ducks by throwing stones behind it causing ripples. Slowly, and hopefully assisted by a breeze, the apparatus tethered to a long piece of twine, would bob along the water and an unsuspecting duck would grab at the bait of bread or cake. With its neck broken, the flapping duck would be drawn in.



Aerial view of Albert Park Lake and the South Melbourne Cricket Ground in the foreground with a football match in progress (in 1920s-1930s, Bruce Armstrong's days as a child) (SLV)

JR Cunningham had a licenced grocery store on the corner of Hambleton and Harold streets. A two-story ornate building of about 1920 vintage, it survives still but is now residential. Being inquisitive kids, we often overheard him comparing notes with old cronies. JR was extremely deaf and spoke loudly, almost shouting. They would discuss the times they went duck-shooting on the lake, then known as 'the lagoon'.

A naturally-formed depression, it was not supplied by piped storm-water or a creek. Recreational shooters and their spaniel water-dogs visited from many districts and were not constrained by licencing in the size of their 'bag' of ducks.

Over time, the lagoon was edged in timber, then concrete to form Albert Park Lake. It relied on fresh water gravity-piped from the Botanic Gardens lake. It in turn was pump-fed by a pipe from the Yarra River at Dight's Falls, Abbotsford. When Albert Park Lake was at

capacity it overflowed at the southern end via a covered concrete channel into the bay at West St Kilda.

Yabbies

With some crude equipment and bits of meat from the butcher, patient hungry folk ate well on yabbies from the lake. 'As good as prawns!' they said, but one could be deterred at the thought of 'What did yabbies eat?'

When desperately short of food, people will settle for unusual sources of nourishment, particularly if they have children. This was to be seen at South Melbourne Market. At the close of trading each day people would be stuffing rejected 'spec' fruit and vegetables into bags to take home for their evening meal. If lucky, the meat stalls would give sausages or chops that didn't pass the nose test.

Dragnet fishing

When the wind blew hot from the north, the tide receded and small tiddly fish appeared in large



CHINESE FISHERMEN IN HOBSON'S BAY.—SEE PAGE 203.

Chinese fishermen Hobsons Bay 1873 (this and the drawing opposite composed in 1865 long before the events recounted in Bruce Armstrong's story) (SLV)

numbers in the shallows of Port Phillip Bay. The bay was calm and we occasionally succeeded in catching flathead on hand-lines off the piers and jetties. Mussels were the easiest bait. Flounder spear-fishing was OK at dusk, though better in the dark.

Early one Sunday morning circa 1935, it was as though a clarion call had been sounded – men, women, kids and dogs were hurrying to the beach.

Between Harold and Wright streets there was activity – a number of men were busy hauling ropes that disappeared into the smooth water. There were about four ropes, two men per rope. As one waded into waist-deep water and started walking backwards hauling something heavy ashore, the other was laying it down in a figure 8 pile to prevent tangling.

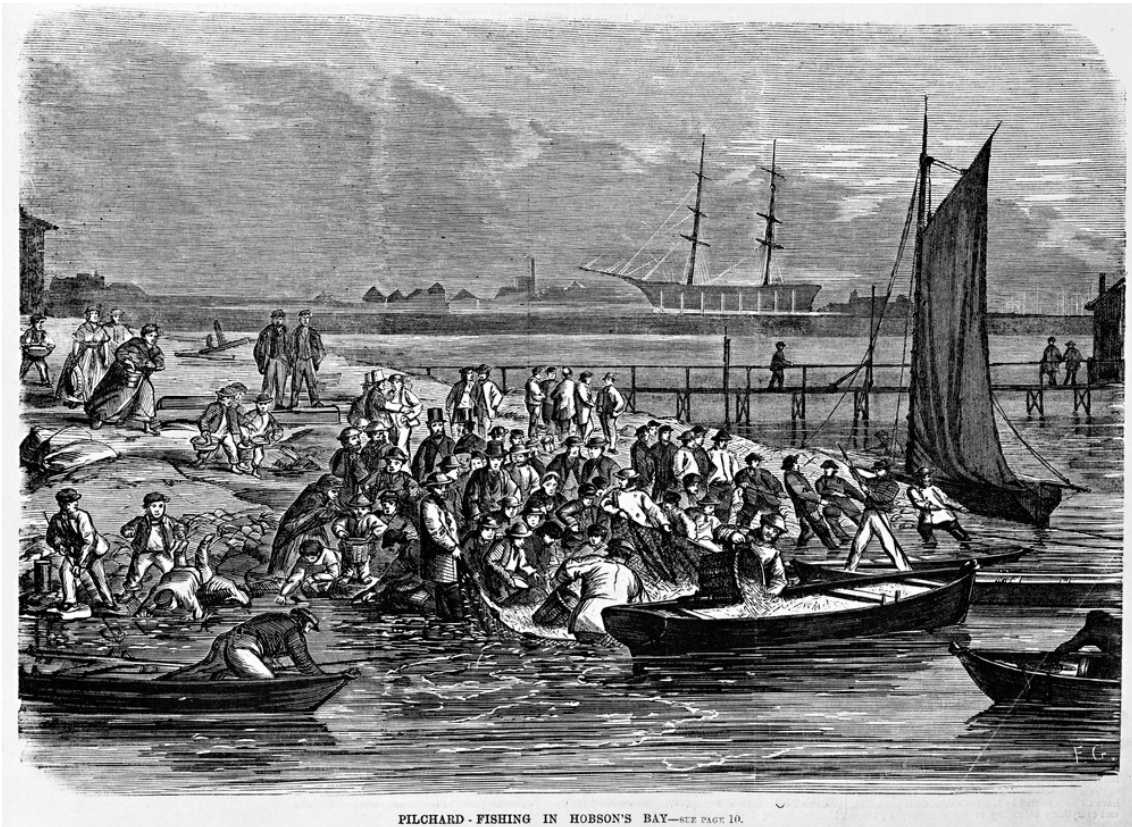
They then changed places and slowly emerged a long line of large cork floats which were supporting an approximately 60-cm-deep net weighted along the bottom to keep it suspended. We estimated the net as about 60 metres long and must have been put in place offshore some distance during the night by the same men working from a rowboat. Attempts to

engage them in conversation failed – they would not talk.

Slowly the net came ashore and as it collapsed in the shallows there was a thrashing and splashing because of its impressive haul of fish, mostly flathead, some bream and a few pike. Small octopuses were also present. The fishermen quickly bagged the catch while fending off a flock of seagulls grabbing and quarrelling over the small fry that failed to get through the net while it was still in deeper water. By mid-afternoon it was all over, the net, ropes and fish were gone, only traces of seaweed remained.

Would the fishermen have been licenced? Did they have approval? Nobody knew. It was obviously a well-planned ‘grab and run’ operation by people who knew their business.

We inquisitive kids ear-wiggled a small group of Beaconsfield Parade residents discussing the event, the agreed strand of thought was that it was known to have occurred a few times in the past but further around the northern end of the bay, contingent on hot, north-wind conditions.



PILCHARD - FISHING IN HOBSON'S BAY—SEP PAGE 10.

100 years ago

CIGARETTE EVENING.**DELIGHTFUL MIDDLE PARK
FUNCTION.**

A most enjoyable "cigarette evening" was held on last Saturday evening, in aid of Australian soldiers, at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ince, Middle Park.

Much delight and enthusiasm was experienced by the young folk through a "ring" competition, which was won by Miss Edna Myers and Master Bill Hallo; also in the "bird" competition, which was won by Master Jack Paulin.

The dining and reception rooms were most artistically decorated with flags of the Allies, and aainty supper was served in the morning room, which was prettily decorated with miniature sunowers and gum leaves.

Amongst the guests present who were received by Mr. and Mrs. Ince and their sons, Gordon and Ted, were Misses S. and N. Myers, L. Hill, S. Crockford, B. Young, N. Temby, R. Bennett, E. Bostock, L. Pash, Molly Grut, Dorothy Bray, Vida Foreman, Irene Dixon, Messrs. Bob and Bill Hallo, W. Thompson, Baden Hill, C. Focken, F. Ross, B. Grenness, Jack Paulin, B. Strangward, E. Balentine, Doug. Farrow, and Sergt. Spence.

For the WW1 soldier cigarettes were regarded not as a luxury but as a necessity. To meet these needs the Overseas Club established The Southern Cross Tobacco Fund whose aim was to supply Australian-manufactured cigarettes and tobacco to Australian troops. Throughout the nation, countless fund-raising events were held on the home front and names of donors were published in the newspapers. A report of such an event in Middle Park was published in *The Record* on 23 February 1918, p. 3 – though whether this event was under the auspices of The Southern Cross Tobacco Fund is unknown.

The hosts of this event had a son, Russell Ince, serving in WW1 - he enlisted in August 1916, served in France and returned home in June 1919.

Sonya Cameron

SOUTHERN CROSS TOBACCO FUND

SMOKES FOR MEN AT THE FRONT.

3/ WORTH SENT FOR EVERY 1/ SUBSCRIBED.

APPEAL FOR SHILLINGS.



Make
him Smile
— and keep him Smiling

Tramway for Middle Park

Sonya Cameron



The Number 12 tram in Danks Street travelling through Middle Park, 2017

Early cable trams in Melbourne

The Melbourne cable tram system was developed during the boom period of the 1880s. The first cable tram to operate in Melbourne was the Richmond line which opened on 11 November 1885. This was followed by another fourteen lines before the cable tram connecting South Melbourne to the city was opened on 17 June 1890. In a cable tramway system the cable was powered by a stationary motor housed in an engine house, with the cable, moving at a constant speed, passing along a tunnel underneath the rails. The tramcar began to move when a clamping device, called a grip, passed through a slit in the road and grasped the moving cable beneath. The car was dragged along at the speed of the cable until the grip was released and

the car stopped. Being the 'gripman' was a skilled occupation, requiring him to take up and release the grip slowly so as not to jar the passengers. When one cable tramway crossed another, one cable had to pass beneath the other. The car attached to the lower cable was released just before the tracks crossed, the tram continued by momentum across the intersection, and then was picked up by the gripman on the other side.

Cable cars ran in pairs. The forward car contained the 'grip' and was known as the dummy. It also had seats for passengers (only men in the early years) and was roofed but otherwise open to the weather. The second, larger car, which was towed along by the dummy, had doors and windows and was for ladies, children and older people.



*Cable tram engine room, City Road, c.1930s
(Port Phillip City Collection sm 1113)*

South Melbourne cable tram

The South Melbourne and Port Melbourne lines were connected to the engine house in City Road by three cables: “The first cable extends from the corner of Market and Collins streets along Market street and City-road to the engine house. The second cable from the engine house along City-road, Bay and Beach streets to the Port Melbourne Railway Station. The third cable, which is the longest, extends from the corner of Clarendon-street and City road, along Clarendon, Park and Montague and Bridport streets and Victoria-avenue to Beaconsfield-parade.” (*The Record* (Emerald Hill, Vic.), 14 June 1890, p. 2).



*South Melbourne cable tram in Collins Street c.
1890-1930 (SLV)*

When the tramway opened in 1890 the South Melbourne cable tram terminated on the corner of Market and Collins streets via the new Queen Street bridge. Passengers could then transfer to a Collins Street tram for the same fare, travelling either to Swanston Street or Spencer Street. Later, the cable tram turned into Collins Street and terminated at Eastern Hill. But in 1930 the city terminus reverted to Market Street when Collins Street was converted to an electric tramway and the South Melbourne tramway remained cable.

Early cable trams had their route name sign-written on the lower part of the tram and were coloured for their particular routes. The colour for the South Melbourne tram was green – but as route colours were limited to six, this colour was shared with the North Melbourne and the St Kilda Beach–North Carlton trams. Eventually in 1923 the Tramways Board decided to have all trams painted a uniform brown and cream.

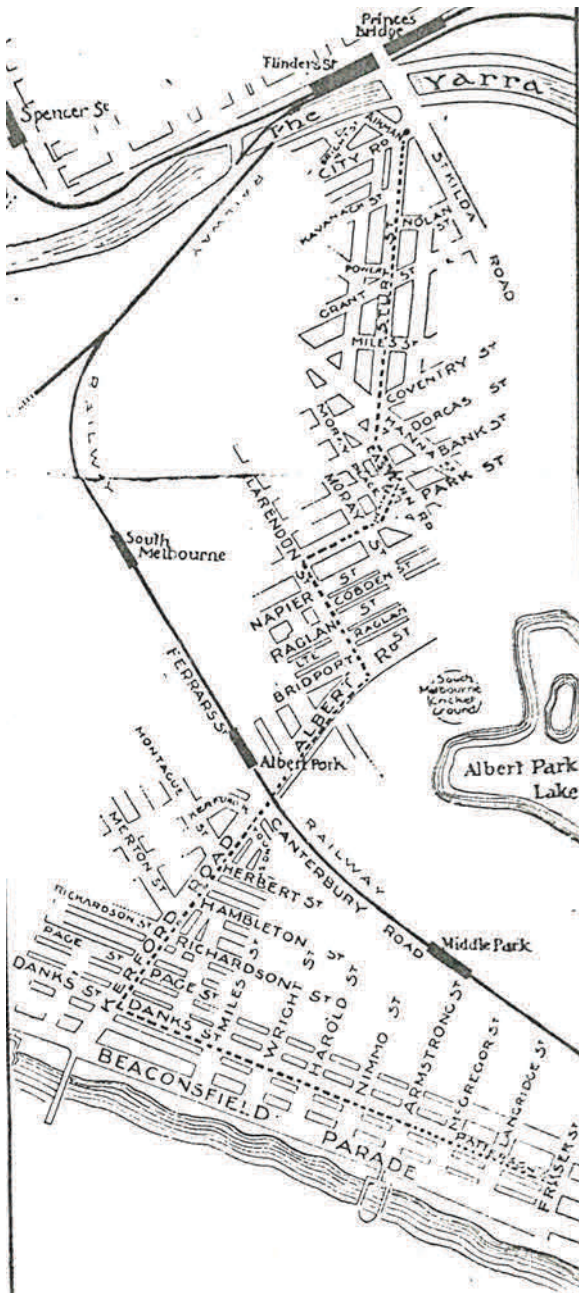
Proposed tramway for Middle Park, June 1912

This tram route opened up the beaches of South Melbourne and Albert Park to the residents of Melbourne, but did not service the residents of Middle Park. So at a South Melbourne council meeting on 12 June 1912, Councillor Strangward, who was also Secretary of the Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust, proposed



THE ROSE SERIES P. 3499
BRIDPORT STREET, ALBERT PARK, VIC.

*Cable tram, Bridport Street, Albert Park, c. 1920s
(SLV)*



Proposed electric tram route to Middle Park (The Record (Emerald Hill, Vic.), 13 July 1912, p 5)

an electric tramway that would connect Middle Park with the city. The preferred route would commence at Princes Bridge, proceed along Sturt Street, Eastern Road and Park Street to the intersection of Clarendon Street. It would then run along Clarendon Street to Albert Road/Kerferd Road before turning left into Danks Street, finishing at Fraser Street. The residents at that time had no tramway service and it was a



Councillor Strangward 1914 (courtesy SLV)

considerable distance to either the Albert Park or Middle Park train stations. This proposed route also had the advantage of providing a direct route to the South Melbourne Cricket Ground and other sporting venues and would also benefit the shopkeepers in Clarendon Street. The total length would be 3 miles, 17 chains.

At a meeting on 10 July 1912 the South Melbourne Council endorsed the recommendation of a sub-committee to proceed with the construction of the tramway at a cost of £60,000. The council now required the consent of Parliament (under the Tramways Act 1890) to proceed. In giving evidence before the Railways Standing Committee in November 1912, Cr Strangward stated that the new electric tramway would not compete with the existing South Melbourne cable tramway apart from about one mile from the corner of Clarendon and Park Streets to the beach. Also, when the present cable tram was built about 30 years ago, the

population south of Kerferd Road was practically non-existent. Today (i.e., in 1912) the population was over eight thousand and was only partially served by the railways. In October 1913 an enabling bill was introduced into Parliament. In the meantime, the South Melbourne and St Kilda councils were in talks to extend the tramway from the end of Fraser Street to St Kilda to link up with the Prahran and Malvern lines. However, the Premier, Mr Watt, was annoyed at this eleventh hour proposal put to him by a deputation of South Melbourne and St Kilda Councillors. He rejected the proposed amendment, stating that the Railways Standing Committee had already reported favourably on the current proposed tramway and that any alterations would need to be referred back to that Committee.

Finally, at the beginning of 1914, the South Melbourne Tramway Act was passed by Parliament and the South Melbourne council could now take the necessary steps to borrow £64,000 to finance the project.

War delays funding for proposed new line in 1914

But world events, namely the outbreak of war, intervened and the council was unable to borrow the necessary money. From time to time the matter was discussed in council. One proposal was for the South Melbourne Council to become a member of the Prahran and Malvern Tramway Trust and for the Trust to take over the building of the tramway and for it to connect with one of the existing tramway networks. But raising the necessary finance was still an issue and there was the added problem of being able to find rails and other materials necessary for construction.

In 1919, when Australia was no longer involved in WWI, there was a revived interest in an electric tramway for Middle Park. Two members from the South Melbourne Council met with the newly formed Tramways Board and asked that the new Board take over the funding and construction of the tramway as the amount of £64,000 provided for in The South

Melbourne Tramway Act was now inadequate. The Chairman replied that, once the board had taken over the entire tramway network, the board would consider the construction of new lines, of which the South Melbourne line would be one of the first. On 2 February 1920 the Tramways Board took over full control of all the electric and cable metropolitan tramways and the Middle Park tramway from Princes Bridge would be one of the first new works undertaken – though the route would need to be re-surveyed. It should be noted that Cr Strangward, the most vocal proponent of the Middle Park tramway, became secretary of the Tramways Board. One advantage of the metropolitan tramways now being run by a single body meant that the proposed Middle Park tramway was no longer confined to being just within the boundaries of South Melbourne and could extend to join up with St Kilda trams.

New line still being considered in 1921

At a meeting of the South Melbourne Council in November 1921, a letter from the Tramways Board once again reiterated that the proposed Middle Park tram was still being considered in connection with the general development of the metropolitan tramway system.

Meanwhile, pressure was mounting from local residents. In March 1922 the Albert Park Progress Association complained that the overcrowding of trams due to beach goers travelling to South Melbourne beach meant that locals were unable to get on a tram and that if the Middle Park tram were constructed, it would relieve the congestion on the cable tram. In September of that year they proposed that a bus company run a separate service to the beach as “At present, in the busy hours, tinned sardines are fortunate compared with passengers on the cable trams”.

In October 1922, spurred on by local residents, the progress association and local sporting clubs, the South Melbourne Council once again approached the Tramways Board and this time received a promise that the Middle



Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 12800 P3, ADW0250

© State of Victoria

Kerferd Road railway bridge with one span, from Albert Rd looking toward Kerferd Rd. [undated PROV]



Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 12800 P3, ADW0898

© State of Victoria

Kerferd Road railway bridge with three spans, from Albert Rd looking towards Kerferd Rd., [undated PROV] (Writing on left hand span reads 'Tramway Traffic Only')

Park tramway would be constructed within 18 months. However, in February 1923, other metropolitan tramway services (such as the West Brunswick, Hawthorn and Richmond-Prahran lines) were prioritised over the Middle Park one.

Problem with the Kerferd Road bridge 1923

More delays were forecast when it was reported in June 1923 that the Kerferd Road railway bridge was not high enough to run tram lines beneath it. To lower the road below the foundations of the bridge would be impossible and to raise the train line was problematic due to the proximity of the Albert Park railway station. In July 1923 the Tramways Board announced it would be commencing works soon, once gas and water mains had been removed and the Kerferd Road railway bridge underpass had been widened. The South Melbourne Council was asked to contribute half of the £20,000 required for the widening of the bridge (the eventual cost was only £7000). The problem was eventually solved by enlarging the bridge from one span to three spans. Six double girders, each about 40 feet long, were required to cover the three spans. It was proclaimed by the South Melbourne Council as being an 'engineering achievement' without any mishaps nor any trains being delayed. The overhead cables were laid through the southern span which has resulted in the tram track running along the south-east side of Albert Rd. rather than down the centre of the road, as is usual.

A change to the proposed route 1924 then construction can begin in 1925

In July 1924 the Tramways Board made a formal submission to vary the route – "The route, as authorised, commences at Princes-bridge, then runs along Sturt-street, Eastern-road, Heather-street, Park-street. Clarendon-street, Albert-road, Kerferd-road, Danks-street, Patterson-street, Park-street, Mary-street and Beaconsfield-parade to Fitzroy-street, St Kilda. The recommendation of the board is to deviate the route, so that the tramway, after passing under the St Kilda railway at Albert Park, shall run



Tramway construction, Sturt Street, 1925 (SLV)

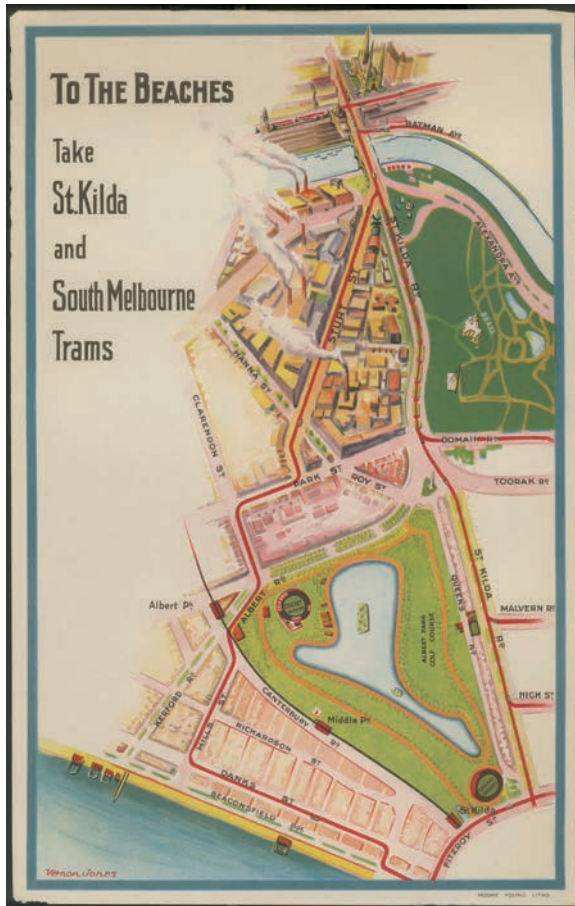


Linking up the South Melbourne line with Swanston Street, 1925 (SLV)

[Note: former YMCA building corner Sturt Street and City Road]

southerly along Canterbury-road to Mills-street, then along Mills-street to Danks-street, instead of continuing from the railway along Kerferd-road to Danks street, as originally authorised." (*The Age*, 25 July 1924, p.10). Apart from removing any interference to the plantation in Kerferd Road, this new route was more centrally located between Albert Park and Middle Park and would service those who were furthest away from the existing tramway and railway.

In October 1924 further approval was given to extend the tramway at the intersection of Mills and Danks Streets, southwesterly along Mills Street to Beaconsfield Parade.



To the beaches, c.1930s (SLV)

This spur, known as a ‘tram shunt’ (whose purpose has intrigued many a local resident), was built to cater for the football and beach crowds. On Saturdays, in winter, when the South Melbourne Football Club was playing at home, large crowds needed to be transported away from the football ground as quickly as possible. Trams were parked in this spur line until the end of the game when the tram could be driven quickly to the ground. In summer, the arrangement was a bit more ad hoc. If the weather was going to be hot, particularly on a weekend, a decision was made to run extra services to the beaches and this Mills Street spur was used to deliver and pick up beachgoers from Middle Park beach. Today it has a similar purpose, being used to stable trams during the Australian Grand Prix.

On Friday 13 March 1925, the mayor of South Melbourne, Cr M.I. Jones, performed the ceremony of driving in the first spike in the

Sturt Street section of the new tram line. The line was eventually opened on Friday 30 October 1925, with the Mayoress (Mrs J.S. Kent) cutting the ribbon at Princes Bridge. The route was divided into four sections, each with a fare of 1½d (2d on Sundays and public holidays) and with a through fare of 3d from Princes Bridge to Armstrong Street.

Electrification of the tramways

Melbourne had had successful electric tramways since 1906. However, a report in September 1911 by a Royal Commission into improving passenger transport in Melbourne recommended the electrification of the entire metropolitan tramways – using the overhead span wire system we see today. Apart from serious overcrowding on the cable trams, which were limited in how many passengers they could carry, there was a need to extend the tramways to the outer suburbs. Electric trams were cheaper to construct and they could also travel much faster than cable trams.

As part of this plan to remove all cable trams from Melbourne and convert them to an electric tramway, the cable trams along Swanston Street were progressively replaced during January 1926. This resulted in the Middle Park tram now joining up with the East Preston and West Preston electric tramway, which previously ended at Lonsdale Street. The new electric tram service opened on Sunday 31 January 1926. Melbourne now had the longest tram route in Australia, running from Preston to St Kilda Beach (via Albert Park and Middle Park), a distance of 12 miles, the whole trip taking 65 minutes. In October 1930 further changes were made to tram routes when both Collins Street and Brunswick Street were electrified. The East and West Preston route now went to Spencer Street and the East Coburg tram went down Swanston Street to St Kilda Beach via Albert Park and Middle Park.

In January 1930 a new bridge across the Yarra, linking Spencer Street with Clarendon Street, was opened. The chairman of the Tramways Board, Mr Cameron, proposed that



Opening South Melbourne Electric Tram, 30 October 1925, Mrs S. Kent (Mayoress) cutting the ribbon (Port Phillip City Collection sm0188)

an electric tramway be built along the southern portion of Spencer Street, across the new bridge, then along Clarendon Street to City Road, to link up with the South Melbourne cable tram when it was converted to electric. The Railways Committee gave approval but postponed any works until an improvement in their finances. By January 1936, with still no electrification of the cable tram to Albert Park, the South Melbourne Council once again approached the Tramways Board. The mayor, Cr Nuzum, complained that other cable trams had been converted, despite the Depression, but “poor old South Melbourne had been left out in the cold”. Residents and businesses were suffering and many people avoided the South Melbourne cable tram because they had to walk into the city from Market Street. Finally, in February 1936, the Tramways Board gave approval for the conversion of the South Melbourne cable tram at a cost of £131,000. Work would commence in June. “The line will be converted from the beach terminus at the corner of Victoria-avenue and Beaconsfield-parade, and after reaching the corner of Clarendon-street and City-road, will proceed to Spencer-street-bridge, on which tramlines were laid when the bridge was being built. The line will join the Spencer-street line at the intersection of Flinders-street, and it is the board's present intention that the trams should

reach the city by a curve into Collins-street.” (*The Age*, 7 Feb 1936, p. 10).

On 23 July 1936 the first pole to be erected in the conversion of the South Melbourne cable tram route to electric was “planted” by the Mayor of South Melbourne (Councillor R. Nuzum) at the south-eastern end of the Spencer Street bridge.

Change of tram routes

It is this particular tram route along Clarendon Street that we think of today as being the current number 12 tram which services Middle Park. However, in 1936, it did not go through Middle Park, instead it turned right from Clarendon Street into Park Street and then proceeded through Albert Park to Beaconsfield Parade via Victoria Avenue. The tram servicing Middle Park was the new route which commenced in East Coburg and its initial route was via Sturt Street. In 1936 it turned left at Park Street into Clarendon Street and ran along Danks Street, terminating at St Kilda Beach. It was not until January 1953 that these two tram routes were



Terminus of the St Kilda Beach tram at the corner of Fitzroy Street and Beaconsfield Parade, c. 1930s (source Mal Rowe)



Erecting the first pole 1936 (Port Phillip City Collection sm1744)

rerouted, as the intersection of Clarendon and Park streets was considered to be dangerous due to the turning trams. The South Melbourne Beach tram would now service East Coburg by continuing across Clarendon Street and the South Melbourne/St Kilda Beach tram would now service East and West Preston by continuing along Clarendon Street.

In 1959, due to traffic congestion, the St Kilda Beach tram which turned right into Mary Street from Park Street and then left into Beaconsfield Parade, terminating at Fitzroy Street, was altered to continue along Park Street to a new terminus at Fitzroy Street.

The coming of the Grand Prix 1996

A connecting track into Fitzroy Street from Park Street was not built until 1995 and its purpose was to service the Australian Grand Prix which came to Melbourne in 1996. In order to get the crowds away from the event at the end of the day, trams could now come down Fitzroy Street from the city and turn right into Park Street.

There they could wait, empty, until the race finished and then travel quickly to collect race goers (NB – route 12 trams were replaced by buses on the Saturday and Sunday of the Grand Prix). A report on the transport logistics for the first year of the race (1966) includes how trams servicing Middle Park were stabled on race days:

“While the main race was on, trams were lined up ready for the end of the race on the light rail line between St Kilda station and Middle Park. A total of 22 B2 trams also were stabled in Park Street, St Kilda (route 12) for return via the new connecting curve into Fitzroy Street to St Kilda Road. Also on route 12, in Mills Street on the Down track were 13 B2s, while in Albert Road on the Down track were four B2s at the Canterbury Road end.” (*Transit Australia*, vol. 51 no. 5 May 1966 p. 119).

The map (p. 17) was prepared for the use of tram drivers from other depots who were not familiar with the Middle Park route.

Today, 2017, the number of the Middle Park tram is 12. But this number has varied over the years. A Melbourne-wide numbering system for trams began around 1929 and the tram servicing St Kilda Beach via Middle Park has had the numbers 1, 2, 2A, 9, 9B, 10, 11, 12 and 112. The most recent numbers were 11, 12 and 112. In about 1997, the number 11 (City to West Preston) and the number 12 (City to St Kilda) were amalgamated to form the number 112. Then, in 2014, in order to increase the number of trams in Collins Street, the number 112 to St Kilda Beach was broken up into the number 11 (West Preston to Victoria Harbour Docklands) and the number 12 (St Kilda/Fitzroy Street to Victoria Gardens, Richmond).

This article was written using newspaper accounts of the period. I was also helped by Geoff Brown and Warren Doubleday from the Melbourne Tramway Museum in Hawthorn. Geoff had also written an article on the Middle Park tramway for the September 2017 issue of The Bellcord and I was able to draw on some of



Driving the first South Melbourne electric tram 1936 (Port Phillip City Collection SM2394)



MMTB Tramway Map 1930s (SLV)

Note: Middle Park tram route in red and South Melbourne tram route in green, before the changes in 1953

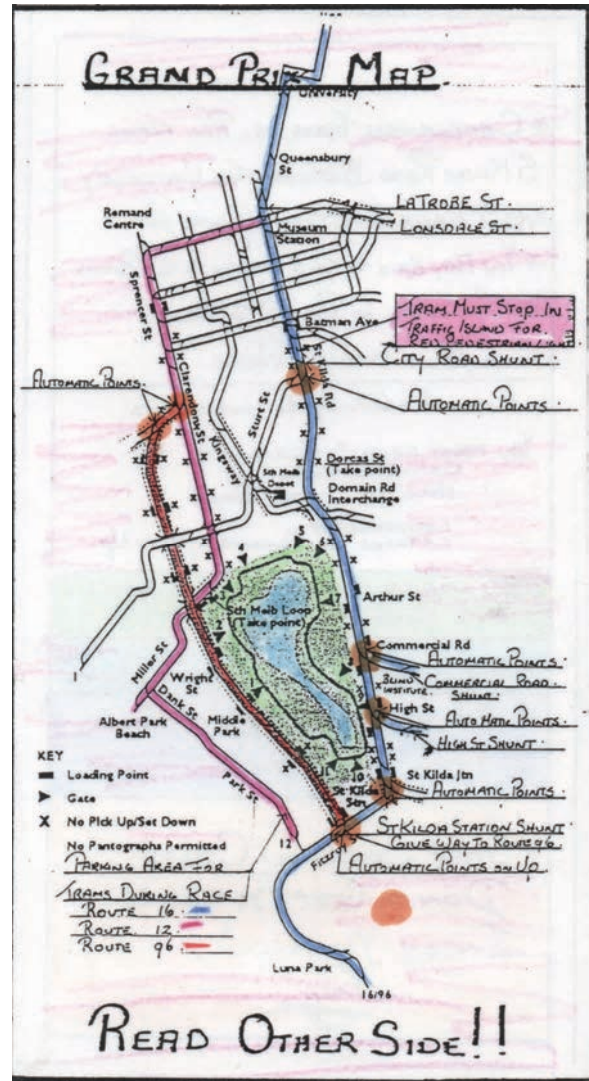
his later information that was not available in the newspapers. Warren made various route maps available, some of which I have included in this article. Mal Rowe was also helpful in providing images or links to images. For further

information on the history of Melbourne's trams look at the website of the Melbourne Tram Museum (<http://www.hawthorntramdepot.org.au/index.htm>) or visit the museum in Hawthorn].



Mystery object solved:

One of three remaining former tram poles in Mary Street, West St Kilda, looking toward Beaconsfield Parade (2017)



Grand Prix map 1996 (Melbourne Tramway Museum)

MPHG activities

Monthly meetings – December 2017

Colin Crawford, *Memories of Middle Park State School*. Colin and his wife Geraldine are long-time residents of South Melbourne. Colin spent two periods at Middle Park School, the first in 1966–1967 as a young teacher, but more importantly as headmaster over the years 1979–1982. He spoke about school life back then, the students, the parents and the staff, and the school's role in Middle Park life, as he remembers it.

MPHG committee

The Executive committee meets every second month at the Mary Kehoe Centre.

The small but active Executive has been busy over the last few months. Some of their key activities have been to continue a project of collecting and indexing all maps and photos relevant to Middle Park. Most of these photos are public property (e.g., SLV, PROV) but some

are private photos that have been donated to MPHG. So, if any member has in their possession any family photos which relate to Middle Park, the Group would be happy to receive them (or a copy).

We are also developing a series of free self-guided walking tours of aspects of Middle Park. When published, we hope to distribute them via various outlets such as libraries, shops, etc. Another significant project is the publication of a book which tells the story of the family which built *Somerset*, the house now known as the Mary Kehoe Centre. And, of course we are presenting our bi-monthly speakers at meetings the Baptist Church to which all are welcome.

All these activities keep the executive members very busy, and they would welcome additional help. So, if you think you would like to be a member of the Executive, or even just assist by undertaking a specific research task, we would love to hear from you. As part of our efforts to engage members, we are hoping to invite some members to a social get-together to explain, over a glass of wine, or a coffee, how you can assist – even in some small way.

MPHG meeting schedule 2018

- Monday 5 February 2018 **Brian Carter**, Urban Forest in Canterbury Road. Brian was influential in planning and creating our urban forest. He will speak about his efforts to gain community involvement in the project.
- Monday 9 April 2018 **Meyer Eidelson**, The convict William Buckley and Emerald Hill
- Monday 4 June 2018 **Janet Bolitho and Margaret Bride**, Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society, will speak about Mapping Port Melbourne's past. Using historic maps and aerial photos they are tracking changes to Port Melbourne and Fisherman's Bend.
- Monday 6 August 2018 **Brian Hegarty**, Growing up in Middle Park/Albert Park. Bryan will be providing an insight into growing up in our local area as during the 50s, 60s and early 70s through the eyes of a child and teen

All meetings are at 7:30 pm at the Albert Park Baptist Church Hall, corner Kerferd Road and Richardson Street (entry through OFFICE door in Richardson Street)

Your MPHGH committee

President:	Max Nankervis
Vice-President:	Meyer Eidelson
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Sonya Cameron
Liaison officer:	Diana Phoenix
Committee member:	Annette Robinson
Oral history:	Annette Robinson