



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

One of the attractions that brings tourists to Victor Harbor is the horse tramway which plies between the mainland and Granite Island.

The service, now operated by the local Council has been significantly upgraded in recent years and runs daily year round

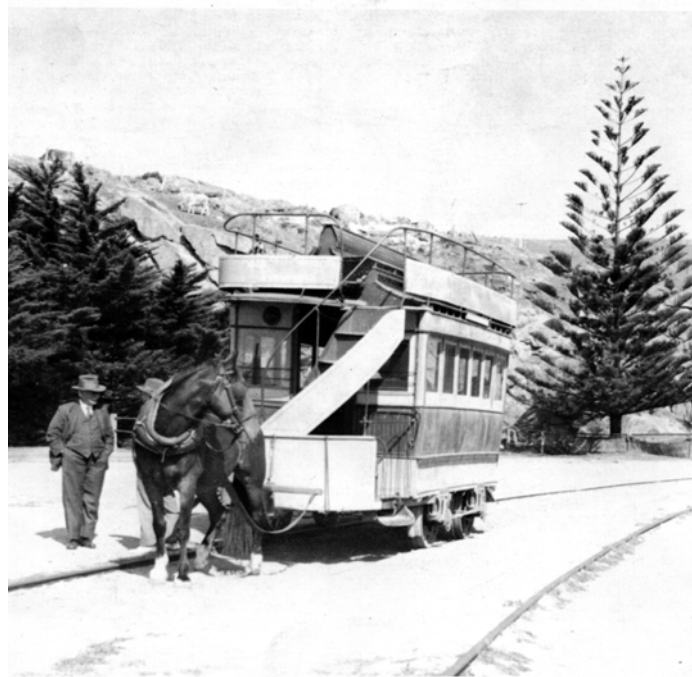
This download contains two articles

- * The first, written by Mr G.G. Harris in 1972 describes the history of the service in its various implementations and includes a number of rare photographs.
- * The second, extracted from a long 2004 *ARHS Bulletin* article on the overall Mt Barker to Victor Railway written by Mr W.H. Callaghan, gives some additional detail on services, including trams northwards from Victor station to the Hindmarsh River bridge

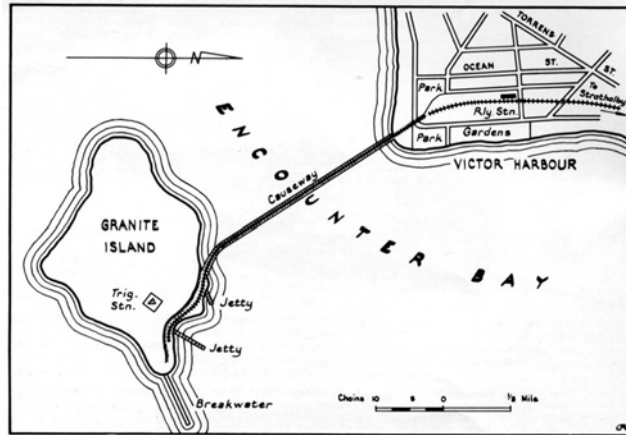
THE VICTOR HARBOUR HORSE TRAM

by G. G. Harris

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One of the attractions that brought tourists to Victor Harbor was the former horse tramway which plied between the mainland and Granite Island. In this photo, one of the operators, Mr Frank Honeyman is in discussion with an interested bystander back in 1937. Photo: G. Bakewell



The fish were not biting but several men and boys, some standing and some sitting with legs dangling over the side of the wharf, were gazing with concentration into the dark water of the Port River. After the initial shock of hearing and then seeing us trundle around the curve, they went on with the important business of fishing. Panting on the wharf in the crisp morning air of 1st May was a very clean and polished black Rx-class engine with a string of some of the oldest carriages available.

At right angles to us at another wharf about 100 yards away, a uniformed officer from a cargo vessel rushed down the gang plank with his camera to photograph our steam engine. While he looked in the view-finder, we on the Society trip saw, silhouetted against the sky, an even older carriage, recognised to our amazement and sadness as a former Victor Harbour horse tram, being loaded in a crate into his ship.

The tram seemed to be flaunting itself in front of Society members as several weeks earlier it had been seen passing the Islington workshops by road transport on the occasion of the christening of reprieved and painted No. 621 by the late Sir James Harrison, Governor of South Australia, on behalf of the Duke of Edinburgh.

It was sad to see the horse tram leaving South Australia, although it had been used merely as an advertising gimmick at a service station near Auburn, 75 ½ miles north of Adelaide, for many years. It was to be subjected to this lack of dignity no more however, and going back, bought presumably by a more wealthy society than our own, to its native United States. Native to the wheels and axles that is! They had come from Stevenson & Co. in Troy, New York, the body having been built here in Adelaide by Duncan & Fraser of Franklin Street, in 1883.

To the tourist, one of the highlights of Victor Harbour is Granite Island, one time wharfing station and overseas port. The island, just over half a mile from the mainland, was declared a reserve by the Surveyor-General on 6th May, 1856, but it was not until 1895 that the South Australian Railways started a horse tram passenger service across to the island. The length of the line was 1 mile 80 yards to the kiosk.

Horse trams were not rare in that area, Goolwa, 11 miles to the east, boasting the first railway coach to be used in Australia, which ran between Goolwa and Port Elliot, and was opened in May, 1854, a carriage now being on display in the town. Four horse trams have plied the broad gauge run from Victor Harbour to Granite Island, viz. Nos. 7, 25, 5 and 6.

A year prior to the opening of the passenger service to the island. Car No. 7 was sent to Victor Harbour. This car had been built by the English firm of Brown, Marshall & Co., and had been in service on the Strath-albyn, Goolwa and Victor Harbour line since 1879. In 1887, it was transferred to Kadina where it ran for four years prior to going to Islington for repairs.

No. 25, a double decker car able to accommodate 43 passengers, and a former Municipal Tramways Trust possession, was converted from 4'8" gauge to 5'3" and sent to Victor Harbour in 1910 where it remained until condemned in 1929.

Trams Nos. 5 and 6, built by Duncan & Fraser in 1883, were transferred from Moonta to Victor Harbour via Islington for repairs in 1931, where they remained in service until 1954. Both cars had a tare weight of 2 tons 2% cwt. No. 5 was repurchased by the kiosk lessee and ran from the end of the causeway to the kiosk for a short time. It was left on the island but vandals eventually defaced it, broke the windows and stole fittings and the remains were ultimately pushed into the sea near the kiosk. Parts of the skeleton can still be seen at low tide. No. 6 is now in the Northern Hemisphere.

On the decision of the Railway authorities to cease running trams to the island, Mr. George Honeyman, who had previously driven them for the S.A.R., accepted the lease. One of his sons, Mr. Darcy Honeyman, now in his seventies, is still living at Victor Harbour as was his young brother Vie until September of last year and has told me that his first job was as a conductor on the tram when the cars were run by the Department.

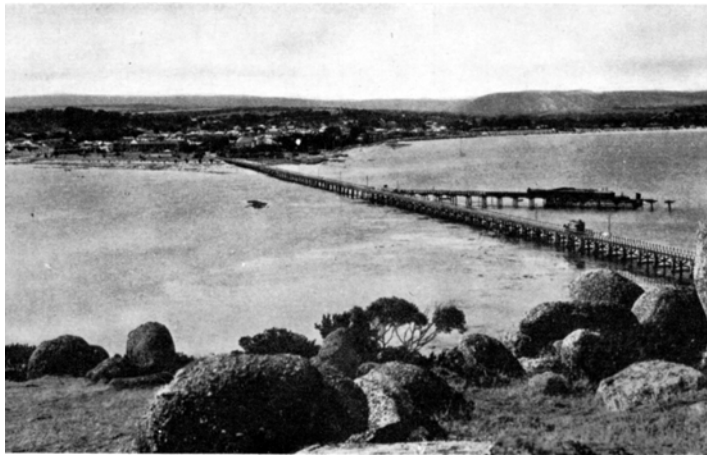
At one stage, the fares were 2d. for adults and Id. for children and for a considerable length of time George both drove the horse and took the fares, as did his brother Frank. During the summer months, the cars ran continuously day and night if the weather was good. However, business was so brisk on the New Years Day holidays that the car only went as far as the working jetty which was a short distance from the island end of the jetty and two cars were always used. George Honeyman drove one and a Mr. J. Kenny the other, with Victor and Darcy as the respective conductors.

When George Honeyman retired the lease was taken over by his brother Frank, who drove them until 1954. There were no offers for renewal of the lease.

I wish to acknowledge assistance from Messrs. A.A. Stempel and Darcy Honeyman and J.C. Tolley's publication "The Story of Victor Harbour".



Changing ends at the Victor Harbor terminus.
Of interest in this photo are the identification details showing the number "6" and the "SAR"
Photo: Late E.R. Bowes



Looking north from the summit of Granite Island towards Victor Harbor as the horse tram wends its way slowly across the causeway Photo: Late H.H. Matthews



The heavy loading that characterised the service at holiday times must have taxed the "one horsepower" tram as it heads north on a return journey. Photo: Late H.H. Matthews



There was little space for pedestrians to pass as the trams negotiated the causeway

THE VICTOR HARBOUR HORSE TRAM

Extract from "The Goolwa to Port Elliot Railway – Australia's First Public Railway"

W.H. Callaghan

ARHS Bulletin May 2004 page 171

One highlight of a visit to Victor Harbor was a walk round Granite Island. For the benefit of those who did not wish to walk the length of the causeway 'English' tramcar 24 was brought out of retirement in 1895 as No 7, having been listed for the Moonta system. It ran between Police Point and the screwpile jetty. In 1910 it was joined by car 25, which had been purchased from the Municipal Tramways Trust on electrification of Adelaide's tram system.

From 1911 to 1915 a tram ran to the Hindmarsh River Bridge and return, for which purpose it occupied the Port Elliot-Victor Harbor block section. In 1915 a tram ran to Granite Island's screwpile jetty every half hour from Police Point, weekdays from 9.30am to 9.00pm with an hour off for lunch and another at 6.00pm for tea.

On Sundays the service commenced at 2.30pm and finished with the 8.45pm return from Granite Island. This timetable appears to have lasted as long as the service. These trams were withdrawn in 1930 as part of the closure of SAR horse tramways but the Granite Island service survived by popular request. In their place newer cars, numbered 5 and 6, built in 1888 by Duncan and Fraser, were transferred from the Moonta system to Victor Harbor where they remained until 1954 when the service was suspended to enable the causeway to be renovated. The service was not restored until 1987.

Horses continued to haul goods wagons across the causeway until about 1910 when 'small locomotives', the goods motors and the G class, were permitted to cross the causeway. In October 1911 a stand pipe was provided so that they need not return to the mainland for water. This arrangement did not last long as the last large consignment from Granite Island, 438 bales of wool, was loaded aboard the steamship C3 in December 1914.