



**AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

MELBOURNE BRANCH

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ARHS Melbourne Luncheon Outing Group, Bendigo Tramways Tuesday 9th September 2025

Today Melbourne LOG will be travelling to Bendigo, to visit the new Tram Depot & Workshop and a surface visit to the Central Deborah Gold Mine. This will be done on our own charted tram over the full length of their network.

9:05am	Train to Bendigo
10:58am	Arrive Bendigo
	Walk or Bus to Charing Cross to meet our Charted Tram.
11:37am	Travel to Bendigo Tram Depot. Lunch at Bendigo Tram Depot. Tour of Depot & Workshops
1:30pm	Board Tram to the Joss House Temple at the Northern end of the line. We will have a quick (photo) stop before we depart for the Central Deborah Gold mine. About 35 minutes at the Gold Mine.
2:30pm	Re-board our Tram back to Charing Cross, then walk or Bus back to Bendigo Station
3:26pm	Catch Train from Bendigo back to Southern Cross Station
5:30pm	Arrive Southern Cross. Tour ends here.

History from Wikipedia

Bendigo's trams as public transport

The Sandhurst and Electric Tramway Company was the first to blaze a trail when it introduced battery trams to Bendigo in June 1890. Unfortunately, they had made a serious miscalculation, as the batteries quickly proved inadequate for the hilly terrain of Bendigo. After a couple of months battery trams ceased running and were later replaced by steam trams in February 1892. Steam trams were a reliable means of transport and successfully moved Bendigonians around for ten years, but the onset of the recession forced the Bendigo Tramways Company to sell up in 1899 to the Electric Supply Company of Victoria (ESCo) who continued to run steam trams until 1902.

This turn-of-the-century sale led to the introduction of electric trams to Bendigo in April 1903. These were a success from the very beginning. During peak hour people would be standing in the aisles, in the doorways, even on the running boards on the outside of the tram. In addition, the trams were also the first option for deliveries. Parcels, newspapers, movie reels for the picture theatres and even mail bags found their way onto the trams; sent from outlying post offices to the GPO in the city centre.

At the end of World War I, the Victorian Government constituted the new semi-government instrumentality, the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SEC). The SEC was to take over all privately owned power generating companies in Victoria and operate as a state owned monopoly ... Bendigo's tramway system was an integral part of the deal.

The outbreak of World War II was a testing time. Revenue and passenger numbers were declining as automobiles became more popular. Additionally, shortages in manpower and materials due to wartime economies caused difficulties. As a result, the SEC made several attempts at closing the tramways and handing over the passenger services to private bus operators. It took some time, but in July 1970 the Victorian Parliament finally granted the SEC's application for abandonment of the tramways.

April 1972 marked the closure of the Bendigo Tramways as a commuter service and an estimated 20,000 people gathered to say an emotional farewell.

Saving Bendigo's trams

Despite the seeming practicality of a shift to private buses, the idea of trams vanishing from Bendigo's streets did not sit easily with the community. Many felt that the legacy of the past was being squandered, and the newly formed Bendigo Trust was called upon to present a submission to the Bendigo City Council suggesting that a two year trial for a tourist tramway be undertaken. The Bendigo Trust's persistence was rewarded in September 1972 when the Victorian Cabinet announced that it had approved the two year trial.

However, in the lead up to the closure of the Bendigo Tramways (1970-72), tram museums and individuals had been making representations to acquire some of Bendigo's trams for their own collections. For instance, the SEC had allocated Birney No. 29 to the Australian Electric Tramways Museum (AETM) located in Adelaide.

The Bendigo Trust knew nothing of the promises made to the AETM. So, when it came to light that the AETM were on their way to fetch Birney No. 29 in October 1972, they had no idea of the uproar their activities were about to unleash, as questions were raised as to who actually had the rights to Bendigo's trams? It was felt that if one tram was to leave Bendigo, the flood gates would open.

As word spread that "Somebody was trying to 'pinch' a Birney", Bendigo Trust Board Directors and Tramways volunteers took extreme measures to ensure that the Birney stayed in Bendigo: it was pushed back inside the Depot shed, iron pipes were welded onto the rails in front of the tram and the carbon brushes from the motors were removed to make the tram inoperable. When Bendigo's Mayor Cr. Joe Pearce heard about the plan, he also jumped into action and enlisted the help of the media, calling for citizens to rally at the depot and form a blockade. The response was phenomenal with local business owners directing their staff to take company cars and block the depot yard. In the end, the tram could not be moved. Subsequently, a ministerial committee was set up to re-examine the use and distribution of Bendigo's trams, which culminated in the entire fleet being sold to The Bendigo Trust for a mere \$1.

It is important to note that retaining Bendigo's trams was by no means an uncontested act. While there was strong support in favour of introducing a "tourist service" there were others, such as a local progress association, who wrote to the Bendigo Advertiser saying that the idea was "childish and impractical", as it would prevent the building of a four lane highway through Bendigo ... "We want real progress, not sentimental stupidity blocking up the centre of the city". One has to wonder if their opinions have changed since then? Regardless, the ample community support for the trams has seen to it that 42 years later, the Vintage Talking Tram service is still in operation.

Bendigo Tramways: 1972 – Present

No other Australian city which closed its tramway system left track, trams and a depot behind in the manner that Bendigo did and this enables us to create a picture of the past for our visitors. A visit to Bendigo Tramways drives home the significance of how Bendigo has developed as a city, and the role Bendigo Tramways has played in that development.

Over the years, we have even attracted such dignitaries as HRH Prince Charles, who visited Bendigo in 1974 and took Bendigo Birney Tram No. 30 for a drive.

Today, Bendigo Tramways is Australasia's largest tourist tramway and welcomes over 40,000 visitors annually. The Bendigo Tramways Depot is the oldest operating tram depot in Australia and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. We currently have 45 trams in our fleet (13 of which operate as part of the 'Talking' Tram service).

We have an on-site Archiving Department whose sole mission is to preserve and catalogue thousands of tramways documents, photos, mechanical plans and artefacts. This not only ensures that the information we convey to our visitors is historically accurate, but it also ensures that the information and artefacts, which create a direct link to our heritage, are protected and available for future generations.

Our strength is in our people and many of our visitors' final comments about their experience refer to how much they enjoyed the company and passion of our staff.

Workshop from <bendigotramways.com.au>

Bendigo's Heritage Rail Workshop is world renowned for our ability to restore heritage trams in their entirety as well as repurposing trams for various uses or providing customised tram components.

We have all of the necessary skills and resources to assist with your tram project.

Below is more information about the services we offer and approximate costings.

For any further information please send your enquiries to: <workshop@bendigoheritage.com.au>

Tram repurposing

If you're thinking about repurposing a tram in a creative way, we can help make your idea a reality. Our workshop can design a layout to your specifications and provide a suitable price estimate.

To learn more about the basics of tram repurposing/restoration, please [click here](#). Takes you to a link on the site with lots more on repurposing a tram for many different uses.

Recent project:

Tram No. 33 was repurposed into a pop-up bar for Chandon Australia. The tram was featured at Chandon S Chic Easy events nationally throughout Spring 2017. Full details about the Chandon Australia Pop-Up Bar restoration [here](#) on YouTube.

Tram restoration

If you have a tram that you would like restored for return to service or even just static display, we can help.

The condition of the tram in question and how you plan to use the tram will determine the cost for restoration, so please contact us to arrange an assessment and quotation.

Recent full tram restoration projects include:

Overhauling Melbourne's iconic City Circle Fleet. The extensive work that has gone into these restorations has seen them re-classified as a W8 Class tram. Watch this time-lapse of the overhaul process on YouTube.

The restoration of Tram No. 7 into our own service fleet as a Vintage Talking Tram thanks to a crowdfunding campaign.

Tram components

We can source and manufacture a wide range of tram components that are customised to suit your requirements.

Purchase a tram

We have a limited number of trams available for sale. Let us know what you are looking for and we'll see if we can meet your requirements.

New Bendigo Workshops

The "new" Bendigo Tramways workshops refer to a recently completed, \$10.7 million expansion and upgrade of the facility, officially unveiled in May 2024. This expansion provides quadruple the original workspace for tram restoration, allowing the Bendigo Tramways to take on more ambitious projects, house up to 30 trams, and support job creation in the region. The project, delivered by local contractors, was a partnership between the Victorian Labor Government, the City of Greater Bendigo, and Bendigo Heritage Attractions.

Key Aspects of the New Workshops:

Increased Workspace:

The project quadruples the previous workspace, significantly enhancing the capacity for heritage tram restoration.

Enhanced Capability:

Upgraded equipment and increased space allow the facility to meet the growing demand for tram restoration for many years to come.

Community Benefits:

The expansion is expected to create regional jobs, boost local tourism, and revitalize a formerly vacant industrial area.

Project Details:

Announcement: The project was first announced in 2019.

Funding:

The expansion was funded by the Allan Labor Government and was delivered in partnership with the City of Greater Bendigo and Bendigo Heritage Attractions.

Local Delivery:

The project was designed and delivered by local Bendigo contractors.

Impact on the Bendigo Community:

Tourism:

The improved facility serves as a world-class tram restoration and tourism attraction.

Employment:

The project has already created local employment opportunities and will continue to create jobs for years to come.

Skills Development:

The expansion supports skills development within the region.

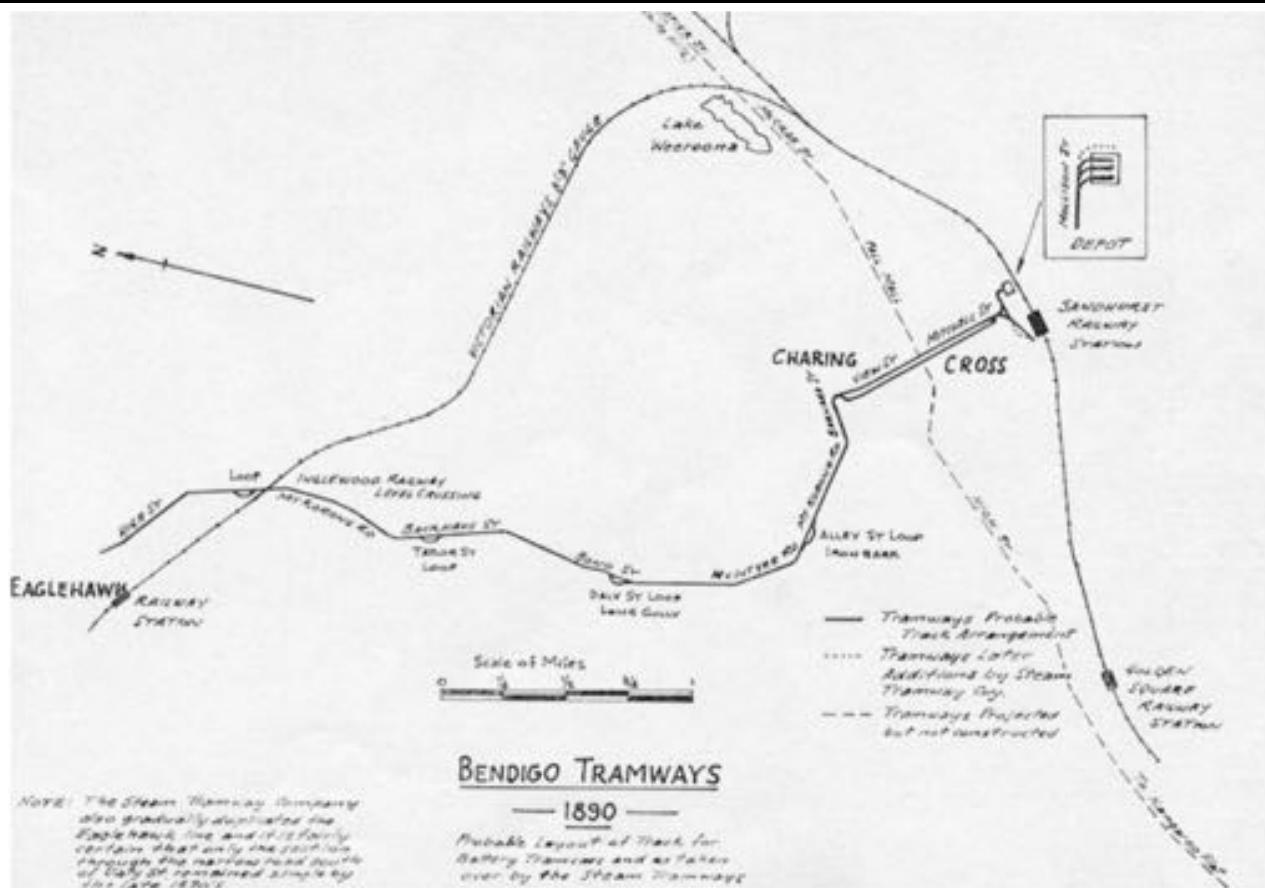
Public Access:

The opening of the new facility means that public tours can once again return, and a community open day is being planned.

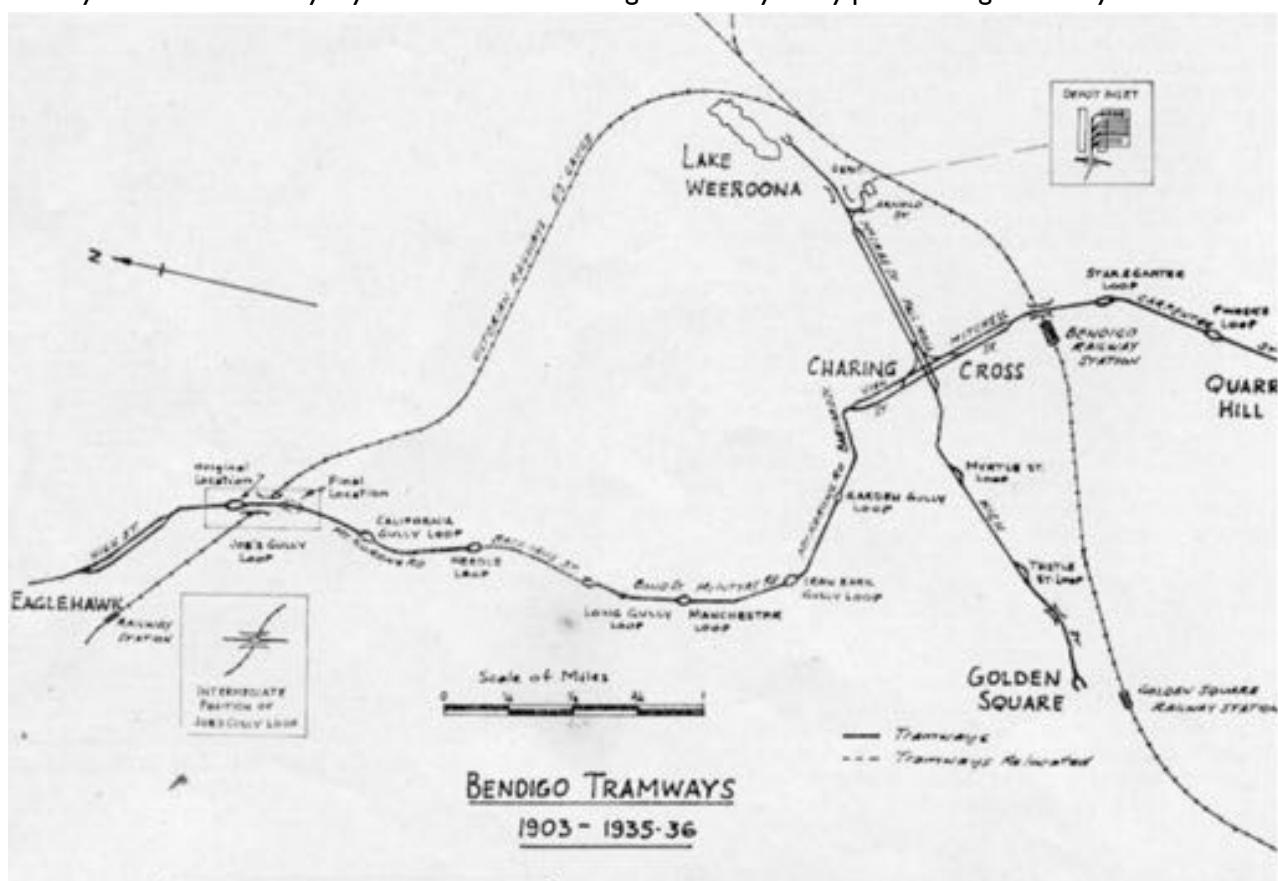
In summary, the new Bendigo Tramway workshops represent a significant investment in a pivotal regional tourism attraction, enhancing its restoration capabilities and delivering substantial economic benefits to the Bendigo



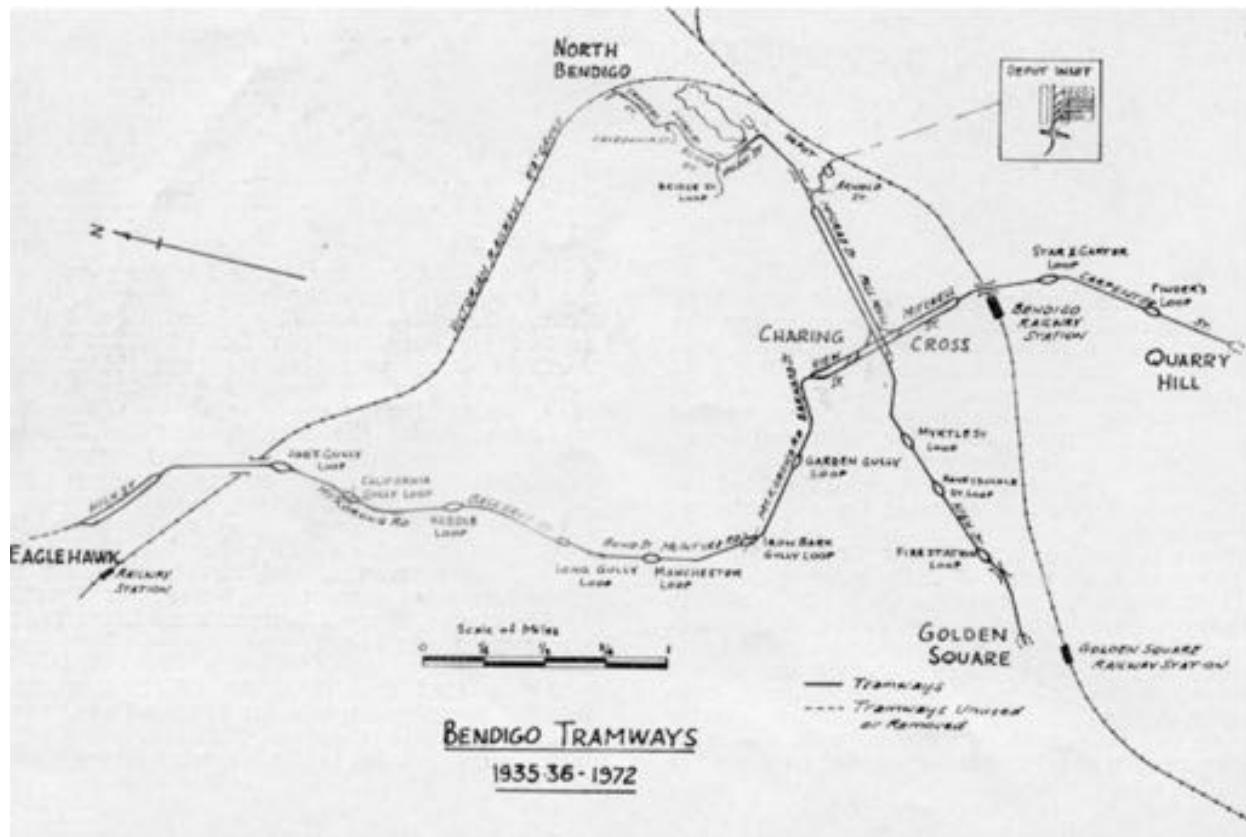
Pic of Trams and Staff c1900. The Bendigo Tramway Story.pdf <bendigotramways.com>



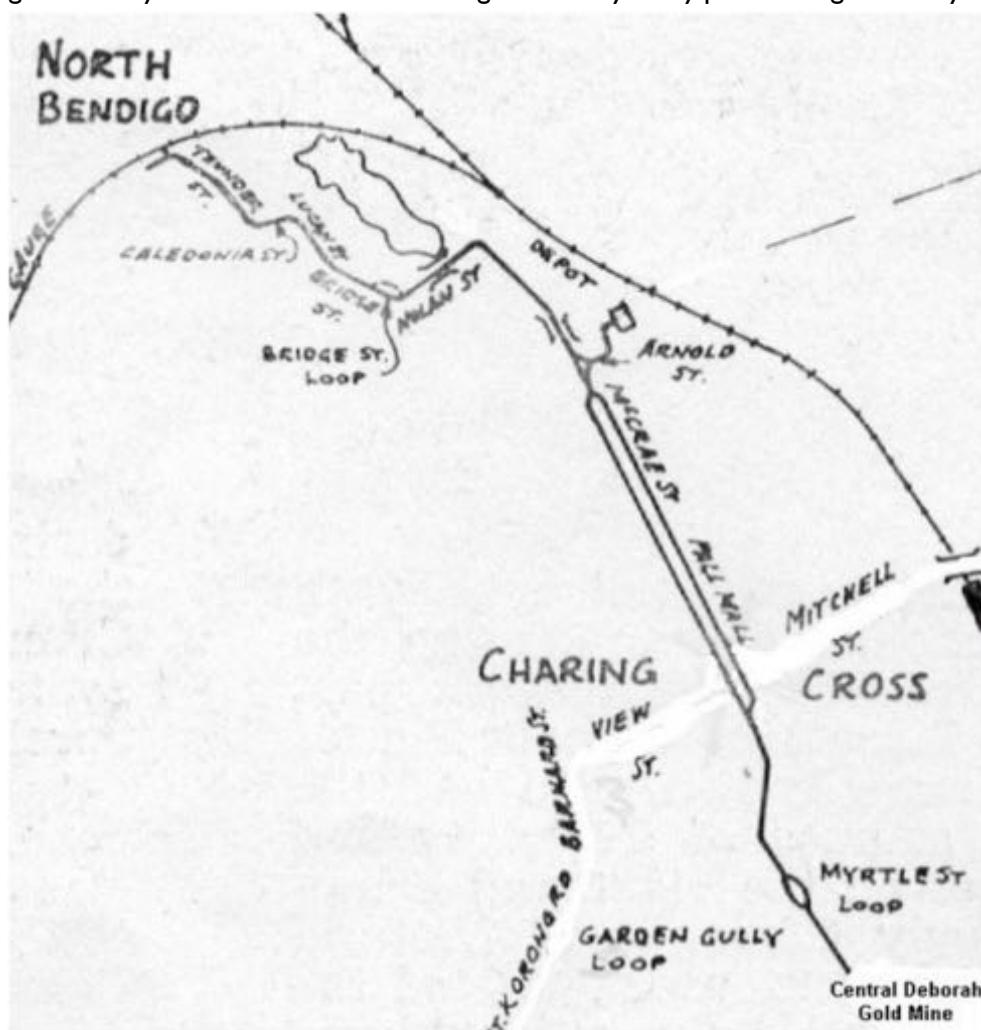
Battery & Steam Tramways system 1890. The Bendigo Tramway Story.pdf <bendigotramways.com>



Bendigo Tramways 1903 - 1935-36. The Bendigo Tramway Story.pdf <bendigotramways.com>



Bendigo Tramways 1935-36-1972. The Bendigo Tramway Story.pdf <bendigotramways.com>



Bendigo Trust Tramways 1972. The Bendigo Tramway Story.pdf <bendigotramways.com>



New shed with Burgundy W class City Circle tram J Scutt June 2024



New shed with W class J Scutt June 2024



New shed with W class City Circle trams J Scutt June 2024



New shed with W class trams J Scutt June 2024



New shed with W class trams south entrance J Scutt June 2024



The Tram Café <bendigotramways.com>



Museum Interior <bendigotramways.com>



Museum Exterior <bendigotramways.com>



No 15 This Birney tram was built in 1924 by J.G. Brill and Co. of Philadelphia in the USA for the Melbourne Electric Supply Company, who were the operators of Geelong Tramways. The tram was flat-packed and shipped from the USA in crates and then assembled in Geelong where it operated as Tram No. 15. Image John Ruddock 2024



#15 at the Depot. Image John Ruddock 2024.



No17 & 18 Outside the Shed. Image John Ruddock 2024.

#17 History This Toast Rack Tram was built in 1913 by Duncan and Fraser of Adelaide in South Australia for the Electric Supply Company of Victoria, who operated Bendigo Tramways from 1903-1934.

#18 History Construction on this M class tram started in 1917 by Duncan and Fraser of Adelaide in South Australia for the Hawthorn Tramways Trust. However, the tram was unable to be delivered until 1918 because the electrical components could not be obtained due to the shortages of WWI.

Photos by Johnathan Scutt, John Ruddock, information & photos from <bendigotramways.com> website & Wikipedia.

Notes compiled by Geoff Wallace

E&OE



YOUR UPCOMING VISIT

Australian Railway Historical Society

Tuesday 9th September 2025

In preparation for your visit, please consider and plan adequately for the following:

- To commence your time with us, please make your way to Tram Stop 2: Charing Cross (next to the Alexandra Fountain) by **11:37am**.
- Aim to arrive **at least 10 minutes** before the tram departure time.
- To check-in, simply speak to the tram driver on board.
- When you arrive at Bendigo Tramways, your driver will escort you to the Tram Café for your catered lunch.
- **Guided Depot & Workshop Tour:** Everyone must wear enclosed shoes. This is for your group's safety. Crocs/sandals/thongs are not permitted in the workshop.
- While the workshop is undercover, the temperature can reflect that of outside. Visitors should check the weather before arrival and dress appropriately.
- There are no bathrooms on the tour. We suggest using the bathrooms before heading to your tour meeting point.
- After the tour, your guide will escort you to the Vintage Talking Tram for a **1:25pm** departure.
- **Central Deborah Gold Mine:** A member of staff will greet you on arrival at Central Deborah Gold Mine and escort your group out to the surface of the mine to explore at your leisure.
- As much of the mine surface is uncovered, visitors should check the weather before arrival and dress appropriately.
- Maps of the surface of the mine will be provided to you when you arrive.



YOUR SCHEDULE

VINTAGE TALKING TRAM

From Charing Cross to Bendigo Tramways.
11:37AM – 11:45AM

LUNCH AT THE TRAM CAFÉ

Buffet-style lunch of assorted sandwiches and hot bites
(tea & coffee sold separately).
11:45AM – 12:30PM

DEPOT & WORKSHOP TOUR

Guided tour of the Bendigo Tramways Depot & Workshops.
12:30PM – 1:15PM

VINTAGE TALKING TRAM

From Bendigo Tramways to Central Deborah Gold Mine (via North Bendigo).
1:25PM – 1:54PM

CENTRAL DEBORAH GOLD MINE

Self-guided exploration of the mine's surface buildings and machinery.
1:54PM – 2:30PM

VINTAGE TALKING TRAM

From Central Deborah Gold Mine to Charing Cross.
2:30PM – 2:37PM

Your tour times have been scheduled around other tours and are time sensitive. If you are running late, please call us on 03 4444 2810 to advise.

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bendigoheritage.com.au

Patron:
Her Excellency Professor the
Honourable Margaret Gardner AC

STORIES YOU'LL
REMEMBER