



Rananim

The Journal of the DH Lawrence Society of Australia

ISSN No: 1039-9658

www.cybersydney.com.au/dhl

Vol 16. No 2. March 2009

BY TRAM TO NARRABEEN WITH DH LAWRENCE



DHL Society members Rob Darroch, Sandra Jobson and John Ruffels (seated) with the O 1111- class tram which Lawrence and Frieda took from Manly to Narrabeen in 1922

By Sandra Jobson
Photographs by John Lacey

ON a balmy winter's Sunday in 1922 Richard Lovatt Somers, a visiting English writer and his wife Harriett (aka DH Lawrence and his wife Frieda) took a "ferry steamer" across Sydney Harbour to Manly, where, as Lawrence relates in *Kangaroo*, they wandered up the street which looked "like a bit of Margate lined with sea-side shops and restaurants" to the ocean beachfront where they ate some lunch before going back to an

"Now, 75 years later and following a four-year restoration the J train made its second debut."

After the unveiling ceremony, where a ribbon was cut, the various trams were ready to take visitors for a ride. We sat at the very front next to the driver on a

"eating-house" where they warmed themselves with some soup before setting off by tram for Narrabeen.

"They sat on the tram-car and ran for miles along a coast" before arriving at the terminus near Narrabeen Lagoon (the tram shed still exists on that same spot) before alighting and walking along the sandy road beside the Lagoon towards the ocean.

Lawrence and Frieda sat on the sand and ate some pears and watched the lazy antics of some locals, paddling and playing. Somers couldn't get over the Australian men's muscular legs: "They seemed to run to leg, these people."

Unlike their later trip to Thirroul, which was by train, a mode of transport which Lawrence describes in some detail, he didn't describe the tram they took to Narrabeen.

But I know what it looked like - for I saw it, (see photograph above), or one of its class, at the Vintage Tramway Festival Open Day on Sunday February 22, 2009, at the Sydney Tramway Museum at Loftus, when a small contingent of the DH Lawrence Society of Australia went tram-spotting and held a BBQ.

The "Lawrence" tram was not on public display that day but we were privileged to get a private view of it. It was an O 1111-class, one of nine that plied the route from Manly to the terminus at Narrabeen and back to Manly in 1922.

It is a green and cream semi- "toast rack" model with varnished wood seats. The front and rear sections (the rear became the front and vice versa as the tram went up-and-down the line to the terminus and back to Manly) are open, allowing passengers to hop on and off easily. The rest of the tram has sliding doors. (for another photo of the tram see [over page](#) with DHL Society Vice-President, Robert Darroch, Secretary, Sandra Jobson Darroch and Archivist John Ruffels.)

We also witnessed a rare event: the official ceremony for the welcoming of the sole surviving veteran J tram 675 (see photo [over page](#)).

John Lacey, our DHL Society President, is a serious steam train buff but his knowledge also encompasses trams. About the J tram, he says: "47 small four-wheel J Class were built in Edwardian times to operate the busy tram route along King St. Sydney through Kings Cross and out to Watson's Bay. It was one of Australia's busiest tram routes and also one of the most demanding, with sharp curves and steep grades. When modern corridor

F393 dating from 1902 and set off with a load of passengers (see photo [over page](#)).

We held up the admiring traffic as we crossed over the Princes Highway and then entered the Royal National Park, travelling along an old railway track through the bush (the tram and train gauge tracks were the same dimensions).

Back at the exhibition there was a whole lot more to enjoy with up to seven century-old trams in operation throughout the day, including C 290 of 1896, C 29 of 1898, F 393 of 1902, N 728 of 1906, as well as many more trams on display in the Museum..

These trams are surviving relics of Sydney's once thriving tram-network, which at its height, John Lacey relates, was the largest tramway system in Australia.

Lawrence had quite a lot to do with trams over the years. Not only did he travel to Narrabeen on one - he (or his alter ego Somers) also took a tram from Cremorne Wharf on Sydney's north side to Florence Avenue.

This tram was either the same model as the famous Bondi tram or the other one that went to Bondi via Bellevue Hill. (By the way, the legendary Bondi tram "shot through" at weekends because its passengers only wanted to get to Bondi Beach - as fast as possible - hence it cut out all the intermediate stops and thus gathered speed.)

Lawrence, in his youth, living at Eastwood, often travelled on the local double-decker colliery trams that plied up-and-down the hills between the Midlands villages.

In a lively short story, "Tickets Please", Lawrence describes the precarious journeys of "the most dangerous tram service in England as the authorities themselves declare with pride".

trams arrived in 1933, the elderly J Class were withdrawn and scrapped.



*Setting off into the Royal National Park
on the veteran R393*

The drivers were young men medically unfit to join in World War 1, but daredevils nonetheless, and the conductors were study local girls with sharp tongues and warm wit.

"The ride becomes a steeplechase. Hurray!" Lawrence writes, "we have leapt in a clear jump over the canal bridge - now for the four-lane corner. With a shriek and a trail of sparks we are clear again. To be sure, a tram often leaps the rails - but what matter! It sits in a ditch till other trams come to haul it out..."

This short story, with a lead character named John Thomas, is a joy to read.

Lawrence certainly had a soft spot for trams.

Click [HERE](#) to see more photos of the TRAMS

More photos and captions by John Lacey of the trams on display at the Open Day on Sunday February 22, 2009, at the Sydney Tramway Museum at Loftus



Members of the family of the carpenter who looked after the tram for 60 years, holding the ribbon at the unveiling ceremony

RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY

The J 675 is a Sydney Tram Car built in 1904 and retired in 1934. It was built to operate on the steeply graded and curved Watson's Bay line. The tram has been restored and was officially unveiled at the Open Day.

It had been withdrawn in 1934 and sold to a carpenter who lived in Punchbowl, NSW. The local Council did not like the idea of a tram being used as a shed so he covered it using fibro. This protected the body of the tram.

He used the tram's body as his "shed/workshop" and 60 years later the body was acquired by the Sydney Tramway Museum; it was restored to operating condition by the Bendigo Tramway and on February 22 it was launched into operation at the Sydney Tramway Museum by members of the family and the chairman of the Museum along with members of the Bendigo Tramway.

It is certainly a beautiful work of restoration. The wood work is especially fine.

This tram is 104 years old and has not run for for 75 years!

INTERIOR OF J675

The wood work is especially fine. Note the posters above the doors.



Detail of stylish poster for Romano's.



SIGNAL BOX

The old Elizabeth and Liverpool Streets signal box has been restored and put out to grass at the Sydney Tramway Museum.



A TRIO OF FINE OLD TRAMS

In front is # 393 built in 1902, behind is # 29 of 1898 and then # 290 of 1896. All are on display at the Sydney Tramway Museum.



BLUE 2001

The tram is R1 class 2001 a corridor tram built in 1951 and it is painted in a blue livery used to attract recruits to the Royal Australian Air Force in the 1950's

