

The Future ???



WORK PARTIES

Remember that the Park is open every Thursday Evening for Tram Work Parties from 7 p.m.
Entry by Middle Gate.

S.T.G

TROLLEY

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The Magazine of Summerlee Transport Group

TEMPORARY PARK CLOSURE



BOB CONNER and BOB SUTHERLAND are given their "The Last Shift" plaques by the Provost Cllr. PATRICK CONNELLY

Last Tram

By GEORGE BROOM

Sunday 22 October 2006, the last day Scotland could boast an electric tramway due to the temporary closure of Summerlee Heritage Park. An event the STG were going to mark as best we could with the limited resources at our disposal.

The Park Management were obviously also keen that the Park should close with some ceremony, and to their credit took on board all our suggestions and developed them even further. The Friends had also planned for this event ensuring traction engines would be in steam guaranteeing a memorable weekend.

One of the closing ceremony attractions would be the penny squash, a tradition of last trams everywhere. The only problem being the last, last trams were in the days of real money when you got 240 pennies to the pound. Some research was required to find the perfect new coin to recreate that satisfyingly bent and battered souvenir. Bob Sutherland sacrificed a number of coins during a quiet spell on one of his Sunday shifts identifying the best location to place 2p coins to acquire their makeover and take on this starring role. (As Bob is also our treasurer I think it may be prudent to gloss over any slight shortcomings in this years accounts because of this).

The Group also sought publicity, e mails were sent to radio stations and the press asking them to at least mention the event. John Traynor went up to the Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertisers offices, who appeared to be very interested in our work. We thought we were quids in, when a photographer turned up and spent about an hour taking photographs one Monday afternoon. Unfortunately it must have been a good news week as our efforts came to nothing.

The Tram shed was to be open to the Public. Andy Jamieson took charge of some of the Thursday night work party ensuring that all items were properly stored away and generally spruced the place up, with 1017 being subjected to a thorough clean and polish regime in readiness for public inspection.

Unfortunately, and very unusually, the Thursday work party before the closure was cancelled because of other commitments meaning final preparations would have to take place on the closure Weekend.

Saturday morning was an early start for Andy, Joyce, John Traynor and Charlie Morrison who had the tram shed ready for visitors' inspection at 10am. Various tram pictures were on display to show what our Coronation car could look like if restoration funds could be found. Charlie Morrison was the duty motorman for the day and we all found time to have a final twirl of the handles of 53 while she was laden with passengers.

The sheds were open throughout the day, visitors being warmly greeted and given a tour of the trams and an explanation of the STG role in the park and our aspirations.

Sunday morning, the last day. all the gang arrived early. Bob Connor prepared Graz and took her out for the early morning service. As we chatted in the morning sun about the forthcoming events, we were all delighted to see that May and Willie Wilson had turned up

to witness and take part in the day. Willie, as always was keen to look round the depot and examine progress. Willie is now a wheelchair user and I was keen that he should see what we had been doing to the Düsseldorf car which was brought out for his inspection. Willie was keen to look inside and was determined to climb aboard. We asked Willie if he would be prepared to be a guinea pig for the day and allow us to try out the wheelchair lift properly for the first time. Willie agreed, Bob Sutherland and I operated the lift and Willie was successfully boarded. This was a real learning experience for us; Willie has an electric wheelchair, which he was able to maneuver around the car with ease. It also has a lot of weight at the base giving it a low center of gravity making it very stable in the car. With Willie and May in the car, it was about time this car had its inaugural run with a wheelchair user. Bob Connor was by this time bringing in the Graz car. Bob Sutherland took charge of 53 which was blocking Düsseldorf and took her to the end of the line. I had the privilege of taking May and Willie out for a couple of jaunts up and down the line creating our own small part in the Summerlee history.

The day I felt belonged to the two Bobs and for most of the remainder of the day I remained in the car sheds with John, Charlie and Joyce meeting visitors and imparting the virtues of the STG.

However, just after 3pm, the sound of the pipe band heralded that the end was near so we shut up the tram shed and headed to the top of the line. I arrived at the top and was advised by Bob Sutherland that he was taking one more load down then he was making ready for the final run. I found Tommy Gallagher, the duty manager for the day, and was given one hundred and fifty 2p coins which we had previously requested. Once the tram returned the coins were laid out on the track.

The Provost arrived fully bedecked in his gold chain and the ceremonies began. I was delighted our senior tram crews, the two Bobs, were being presented with gifts from the Provost as befits a tramway closure. I could not help thinking this same event had occurred almost exactly 50 years ago during the Edinburgh tram closure ceremony.

Lots of pictures were taken and miraculously no one kicked over any of the coins. All the dignitaries boarded, more pictures were taken. Then members of the public were invited to fill up the car. More pictures, then finally with a cheer Bob Sutherland was given the signal to set off. Then the tram hit the coins and we experienced the cacophony of one hundred and fifty mundane 2p coins being transformed into desirable souvenirs.

After the tram passed Charlie and I quickly picked up the coins and thoroughly washed them before presenting them in readiness to pass to the Provost.

The fully laden tram returned and every passenger was presented with a coin from the Provost as they alighted from the tram. The pipe band started up and the public were ushered to the entrance for the march out of the park led by TIGGER and the pipe band.

Our part in the ceremony over this left us with the tram ready for the real final run. Bob Connor took charge for this last run and with little ceremony we pulled away from the stop. Arriving at the Depot Bob Connor stabled the car and switched off the power on this last day of operation.

