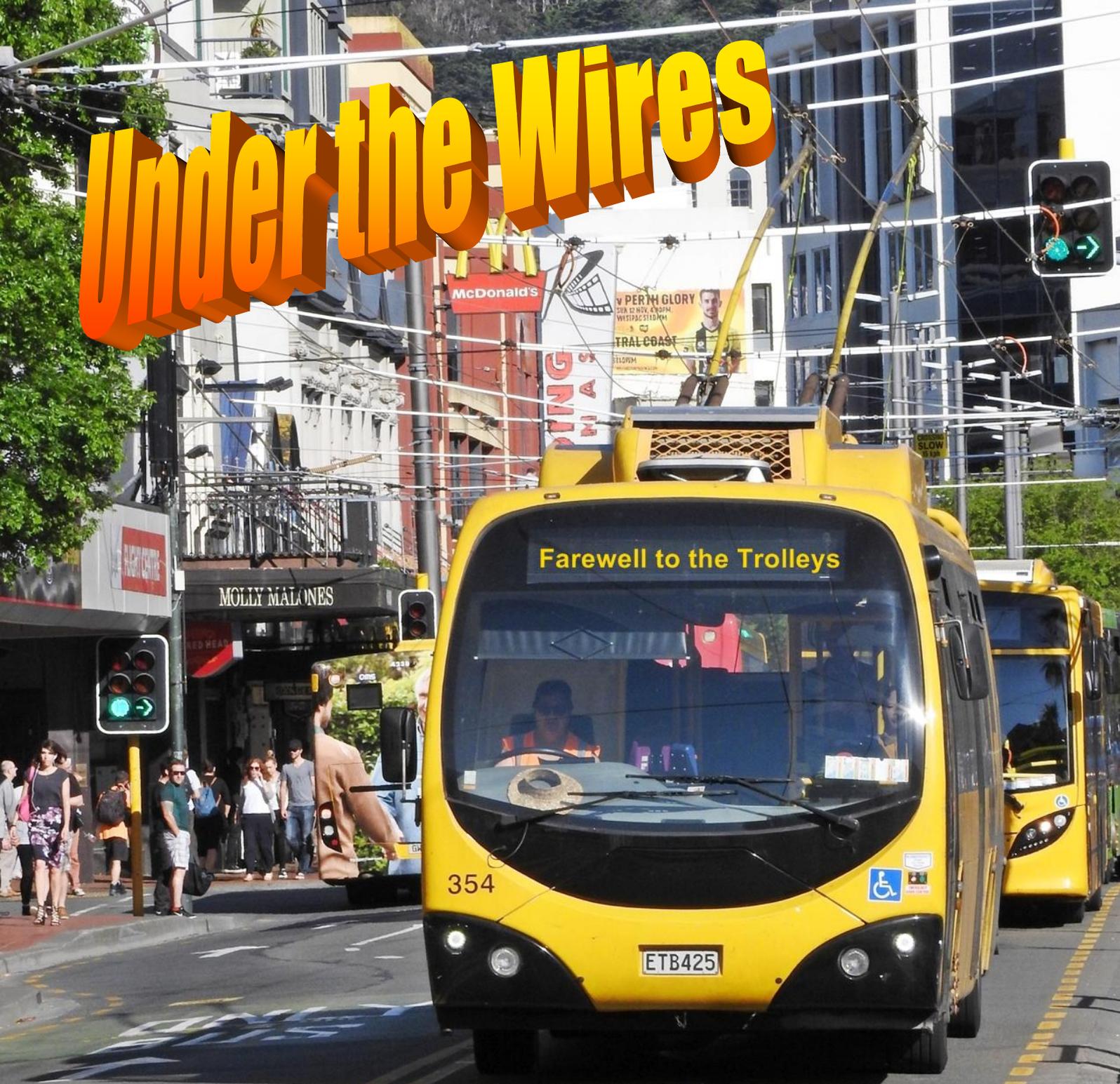


# Under the Wires



## *The Very End Special Edition*

November 2017

Compiled by  
Alan Wickens

## INTRODUCTION

Tuesday 31 October 2017 will be recorded in the history of trolleybuses in the Capital as the very last day of operation. In fact to be absolutely correct, the final trolleybus, 384, brought the curtain down just after midnight on 1 November when it entered Kilbirnie depot. It was not often that trolley duties ran so late but I trust because of this notable occasion the “powers that be” made sure that the event would be marked for the hardy enthusiasts and well-wishers who wanted to see history made – sad though it was.

The final day dawned fine and clear which enabled plenty of opportunities to take photographs and video. On a personal note I was at Kilbirnie depot just after 7am to hopefully record the very last trolleybus to leave the depot and start work but unfortunately I was too late; I would have needed to be present a bit earlier but nonetheless the event was recorded as you will see.

My goal for the day was to at least record a trolleybus on all of the routes one last time, and I can say I ticked that one off easily. There were in fact just under half the fleet still operating on the last day, twenty-nine in fact, unless I missed an elusive one somewhere. By a stroke of luck I also managed to photograph all twenty-nine in action, so I count that as a bonus.

I believe these to be the twenty-nine vehicles that operated on the last day.  
**332, 338, 339, 341, 346, 347, 350, 351, 352, 354, 358, 359, 360, 367, 368,  
369, 371, 373, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 383, 384, 386 and 387.**

During the morning it was announced that despite protestations at the closure, the new Minister of Transport, Phil Twyford, would not be intervening in the due process because of the cost involved. (See report on page 41 of November’s issue). With that announcement in mind there was little left to do other than to enjoy the final hours of operation.

At around 6pm that evening, a group of about thirty enthusiasts met outside Unity Books in Willis Street to voice their feelings about the closure decision. Television crews had been tipped off about the event and were on the scene recording speakers for their late news bulletins that evening. Having voiced their opinions some of the group embarked on a farewell trolleybus ride and chose a service to Miramar worked by 341. Later that evening they reminisced over a drink at the Roxy Theatre in Miramar.

Meanwhile, with the clock ticking, the final trolleybus workings were coming to an end. I was not one of the hardy who stayed out till after midnight. Having spent almost 12 hours out and about in the city I was feeling footsore and “trolleyed out.” I left it to others to record the dying moments.

Sadly, despite this being the end of sixty-eight years of continuous trolleybus operation and one hundred and thirteen years of electric traction when trams are added to the equation, neither the GWRC (Metlink) or Go Wellington marked the event in any way. All that can be said for Metlink is that they put a couple of full page advertisements in the Dominion Post (as featured in November’s issue) advising readers of the end of trolleybus operation and the removal of the overhead, and then on the final day advertised the time of the very last trolleybus departure for those interested. When the tram services ended in Wellington on 2 May 1964 there were thousands of well-wishers lining the streets. The end of the trolleybuses saw no such interest. The vast majority of people either didn’t know, didn’t care or weren’t interested.

384 ended up having the honour of working the final trolleybus duty that brought the curtain down. I understand that within minutes the power was turned off. Later that day work started on the decommissioning of the overhead with Broadspectrum staff starting to remove the wires in Victoria Street between Manners and Webb Streets. There is no turning back. It is over. Thanks trolleys, you have served us well for so many years. Lots of people, including drivers, enjoyed riding and driving you. Well done, good and faithful servants – we will remember you. Rest in Peace. The bureaucrats wanted you gone and they succeeded.

The following pages record “the end”. I won’t say “I hope you enjoy this last day tribute”, but you will understand the context in how it is said. Thanks to all those who contributed to this special edition. The photographs are mine unless otherwise stated.

*Alan*

## THE END OF THE ROAD FOR 364 AND 366 – 27 OCTOBER 2017

Many trolleybuses didn't make it to "the end" for a number of reasons. Some had already been partly dismantled whilst others were faulty and needing repair. Two of the fleet, 364 and 366, were transferred to Karori depot for storage on 27 October. Kilbirnie depot supervisor **Peter Coventry** participated in the transfer of the buses from Kilbirnie to their new home and provided these photographs recording the event.



*Left:* 366 about to make its last journey from Kilbirnie to Karori. Peter Coventry is at the wheel.

*Below:* As this was likely to be the last time this view could be composed the opportunity was taken to record the moment at the western end of Hataitai tunnel. Used for many decades by trams and trolleybuses the tunnel has now seen the last electric wire working through its bore.



*Left and below:* En route to Karori depot 366 and 364 stopped for photographs in Glenmore Street alongside the Botanic Gardens. After turning at Karori Park terminus they made their way to the nearby depot in Darwin Street for storage.



Photos: Peter Coventry.

# Capital opportunity to save city trolleybuses

Victor Komarovsky

**OPINION:** With the change of Government comes an apparent breakthrough towards action on climate change. We're told it's this decades' nuclear-free moment. We'll soon start to see New Zealand transition to a low-carbon economy. Yet Wellington is on the verge of a backwards step. Today the carbon emissions from Wellington City's public transport will increase by around 30 per cent overnight. That's because Wellington is scheduled to begin destroying the trolleybus overhead wires, swapping its much-loved and environmentally-friendly trolleybuses for dirty diesel replacements. The Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) says it is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality. But when the policy rubber hits the road, the council is doing the exact opposite. Their answer is to say that "cleaner diesels" are coming in a few months – new diesel buses with a lifespan of decades. If this goes ahead it could be 2040 before we have zero-emissions public transport in Wellington. This backwards leap comes at the dawn of a new era in New Zealand climate policy, when climate change is finally being seen as a serious priority. There is strong support within our new Government for zero-emissions public transport in Wellington, including a long-term solution such as light rail. We need time for a fresh look at the options before irreversibly pulling the plug on the trolleys and the infrastructure. Let's keep the trolley buses running for at least another few months and allow everybody to get around the table and look for a more climate- and people-friendly solution. Wellington City Council owns the overhead wires. It could create breathing space by keeping them in place while creative solutions are explored in the new political environment. We call on our Mayor Justin Lester to seize this opportunity to show climate leadership. As for the GWRC, it says it's a done deal and all tied up in contracts. In fact, it would be easy to incorporate the trolley bus system into the new routes, and tweak the new contracts to achieve this. Claims about costs don't stack up: the ratepayer has recently spent millions renewing the 80 kilometres of overhead wire and is now at risk of spending millions more to take it down again. It would actually be cheaper to modify the wires for the new routes than to remove them all. The major stumbling block has always been the cost of upgrading the substations and underground power supply. With the change of Government this shouldn't remain a problem. The power supply is a key ingredient for light rail. There's no doubt that it would be cheaper to upgrade existing infrastructure than to pull it out, only to put it back in again years down the track. Overcoming these obstacles unlocks the big opportunity: with a new supportive Government, the GWRC could choose to own an electric bus fleet and tender out its operation, just as it does with the trains. Right now there are buses for sale that combine trolley and battery technology. These buses can run on overhead wires where they exist, but aren't limited by them. Such hybrid technology would be superior even to battery-only buses, and could replace almost all diesel buses in Wellington. We can also reuse the existing trolley buses by fitting them with new batteries, giving an off-wire range of up to 20km for about \$50,000 per bus. What this means is that there's the potential to create an entirely zero-emissions fleet for Wellington in a matter of years – if, and only if, we keep the trolley overhead wires. Otherwise, in a few weeks that potential will be gone, and we'll have committed to a decade of diesel at least. The context has changed and it's time for Wellington City Council and the Greater Wellington Regional Council to seize the opportunities a new Government offers. We need to save our trolley bus infrastructure to protect our future.

**Victor Komarovsky is a spokesperson for Generation Zero Wellington, which is working to cut carbon pollution through "smarter transport, liveable cities and independence from fossil fuels".**  
 Source: Stuff 1 November 2017.



*Left:* Unfortunately, Victor Komarovsky's opinion piece came too late. The politicians had made up their minds and nothing was going to get in the way of their decision. By the time his words got into print the wires had gone silent. However, as the end approached, 383 was ready to depart from the Interchange to Island Bay with the 10:40pm service. This was the second to last scheduled service to Island Bay that evening. The previous service at 10.10pm to Island Bay used 387 driven by reader Tom Dowling. Also noted was 346 working the 10.15pm service to Seatoun. It is not known if any later scheduled services with a trolleybus departed the station after 10:40pm, so 383 may well have been the last. It was certainly one of the last.  
 Photo: A Reader.

## TROLLEYBUSES THAT RAN ON THE FINAL DAY – 31 OCTOBER 2017

332, 338, 339, 341, 346, 347, 350, 351, 352, 354, 358, 359, 360, 367, 368,  
369, 371, 373, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 383, 384, 386 and 387  
all ran on 31 October 2017.

*This is their story.*



*Above:* At 10.38am 332 descends Brooklyn Hill on Brooklyn Road with the 10.31am service from Kingston to the Railway Station. The clean, green trolleybus fits in superbly with its lush surroundings. Too bad the GWRC wanted rid of these emission-free buses.

*Right:* A few minutes later 338 passed in the other direction with the 10.22am duty to Kingston



*Below:* The Ridgeway, Morningside. This was the terminus for Route 7 until 1987 when the route was extended approx 900m to Kingston. The 10.11am service to the Railway Station is worked by 339. There was once a turning loop here hence the trolleybus still turning off the road at this point.





*Left:* 341 had not dewired despite the “Poles Apart” appearance. The driver of 341 had noticed in time that his bus was on the wrong wire and, out of sight behind the bus, was in the process of putting things right. This photograph was taken at 2.57pm at the end of a duty from Island Bay.

*Right:* The 8.20am departure from Lyall Bay was worked by 346 which is seen having just left the terminus and travelling alongside Wellington Harbour in Queens Drive.



*Left:* At 5.05pm I photographed 347 near the end of Manners Street on a run to Lyall Bay. As can be seen, the fine weather lasted throughout the day.

*Right:* This is the last but one trolleybus operated Route 10 service from Newtown Park in Manners Street at 5.47pm and worked by 350.



*Left:* Over in Berhampore, the 9.52am from Island Bay turns from Luxford Street into Rintoul Street as it heads towards Newtown and ultimately the Railway Station.



*Left: 352 worked the very last trolleybus service to Aro Street, the 6.10pm departure from the Railway Station. Six minutes later it was photographed travelling south in Willis Street. It is passing the intersection with Mercer Street where until late 2010 all buses turned left, prior to Manners Street reopening throughout to traffic.*

*Right: 353 retained its *The Project* full size advertisement even though it was removed from others in the fleet. At 1.59pm, 353 ambled through Manners Street with the 1.21pm departure from Miramar. The lunchtime crowds had mostly returned to their offices and businesses.*



*Left: Superb afternoon lighting contributed to this view of 354 at 3.16pm starting to climb Bowen Street with the 2.35pm Lyall Bay to Karori Park service. The Cenotaph stands in the background.*

*Right: It could well have been from one of the offices in the Beehive that the Minister of Transport decided not to intervene in the decision to scrap the trolleybus service. 358 is passing the notorious building at 3.11pm with an unidentified outbound service from the Interchange.*



*Left: 359 reaches the end of the long straight stretch of Darlington Road and is about to turn right into Rotherham Terrace with the 9.06am service from Miramar to the Railway Station. Miramar terminus is just out of sight in the far distance.*

Right and below: The 1.15pm service from the Railway Station arriving at its destination, Aro Street terminus.

Driver Faaotaota Muauu poses for the camera to record the last day he will drive a trolleybus.



Left: The 5.05pm Route 2 service to Miramar is recorded travelling through Manners Street at 5.19pm. 367 is a couple of minutes late but considering how busy the CBD is with buses at this hour it is not surprising.



Right: A near-side view of 368 as it approaches the Intersection at 3.43pm with the 3.11pm Route 7 from Kingston.



Left: The 1.02pm service to Island Bay is photographed pulling into Stop A at the Interchange and worked by 369. In the days of trolleybus operation it was here that one could board a Route 1, 2 and (very occasional 6) and at Stop B to its right a 7, 9, 10 and 11. The 3 was the one route that in modern times didn't originate at the Interchange, diverting off and rejoining Lambton Quay at the intersection with Bowen Street. As mentioned in last month's issue there are two evening Route 3 departures working a shortened service to Kilbirnie only, plus the very first service of the day at 6.11am.

Right: Four minutes later 371 turns at the Interchange to work the 1.08pm Route 2 to Miramar. The Railway Station dominates the background.





Left: Back in Manners Street again and at 4.40pm 373 is passing Te Aro Park with the 4.30pm Route 10 departure from Newtown Park.



Above: 376 pulls away from a bus stop in Queens Drive with the 8.10am service from Lyall Bay to Karori Park.



Left: Having just crossed the intersection of Lambton Quay with Bowen and Whitmore Streets, 377 is approaching the Interchange with the 3.07pm from Island Bay. The Supreme Court stands behind the ADL motor bus that is following it.



Right: A trolleybus in the suburbs. 378 is drifting down Rintoul Street in Berhampore and is about to turn right into Luxford Street with the 9.28am service from the Railway Station to Island Bay.



Left: Midway through the afternoon at 3.38pm 379 begins the climb up Bowen Street with the 3.15pm Lyall Bay to Karori Park duty. It is about to pass Turnbull House.



Left: Lyall Bay terminus. It's 8.31am as 381 arrives in Queens Drive and begins to make its turn – briefly into Hungerford Road. Wellington Harbour is on the right of the photograph. 381 departed immediately forming the 8.30am to Karori Park, due to arrive there at 9.27am.



Right: Flying the flag, but not for trolleybuses. I am not sure of the significance of the Samoan flag fluttering at the rear of 383 as it entered the Interchange with the 2.54pm departure from Island Bay and arriving a few minutes early at 3.28pm.



Left: The 8.35am departure from the Railway Station to Miramar was worked by 384 which is running a few minutes late as it reaches Darlington Road. In a minute or so it will be at the terminus at Miramar.



Right: The protest meeting outside Unity Books in Willis Street was in progress as 386 passed at 6.09pm with the 5.35pm Route 3 duty to Karori Park. At least one other person with a camera took some interest in the trolleybus.



Left: 387 completes this portfolio of trolleybuses that ran on the final day. At 6.00pm it stopped outside Unity Books while working the 5.50pm duty to Island Bay watched by cameramen from the two news broadcasters covering the event.

I am reasonably confident that this list is accurate but if anyone believes they saw any other trolleybuses working that day I would be pleased to hear from you.

# ACTION AT UNITY BOOKS



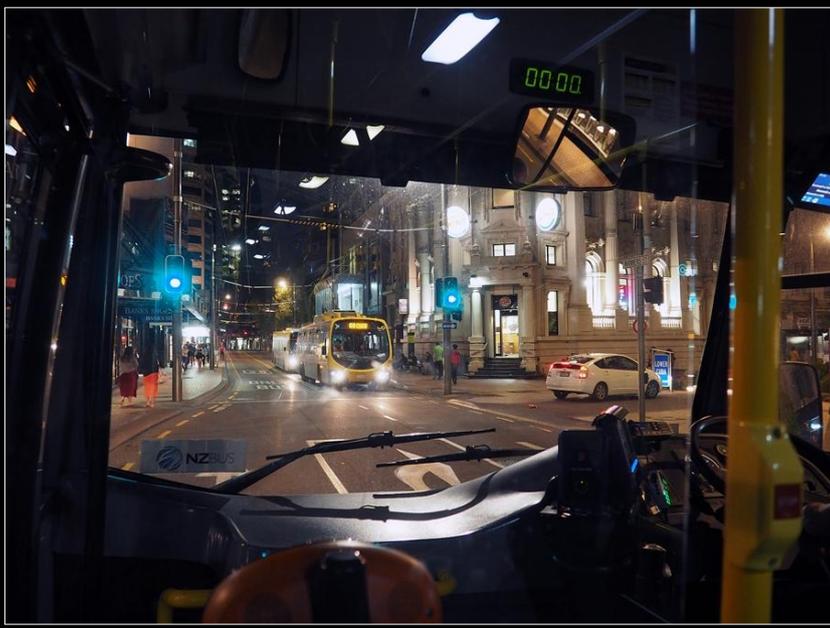
Right: Save the Trolleys poster outside Burger King in Manners Street.  
Photo: Tom Dowling.  
Left and below: Speakers being interviewed by the news media.



Left: 350 heading for Miramar and passing the meeting in Willis Street.



Right: Seen attached to the windscreen of 387. Never a truer word spoken!  
Photo: Alex Ellis.



Left: 381 was photographed by Michael McKeon as it travelled not in service back to Kilbirnie depot. Its working life as a trolleybus over. Are the people wandering the streets at this late hour aware of the significance of the trolleybuses passing them – I somehow doubt it. For the record the photograph was taken aboard 383 inbound to the Railway Station. Later that evening 383 worked to Island Bay. See page 12.



Left: 387 was photographed at Seatoun terminus by Tom Dowling. Note the "dirty diesel" notice (seen on the previous page) attached to the windscreen. It is believed that 387 was the third to last trolley back to the depot on the night of 31 October.



Right: Meanwhile... a message "Last Trolley 31/10/17" mysteriously appeared above the windscreen of 341. This was the trolleybus that some of the group outside Unity Books used to travel out to Miramar although the 'graffiti' is not attributed to them. Photo: Mike Mellor.

Left: 383 ready to depart to Island Bay with the 10.40pm service. This was the second to last scheduled service to Island Bay that evening. The previous service at 10.10pm was worked by 387. Also seen was 346 which operated the 10.15pm service to Seatoun. It is uncertain if any later scheduled services with a trolleybus departed the station after 383 left so it could well have been the final trolleybus to leave the Interchange. It was certainly one of the last. Photo: A Reader.



Right: Meanwhile, it was almost time for 384 to depart on its final service – Karori Park to Kilbirnie. Departure from "the Park" was scheduled at 11.50pm. This meant that by the time 384 reached the depot trolleybus operation actually finished in the early hours of Wednesday 1 November. Photo: Mike Mellor.

Mike commented that there were around 16 people aboard this final service which was probably unusual for a Tuesday night. He also claims to be the very last person to board a trolleybus when he got on 384 at Kilbirnie.

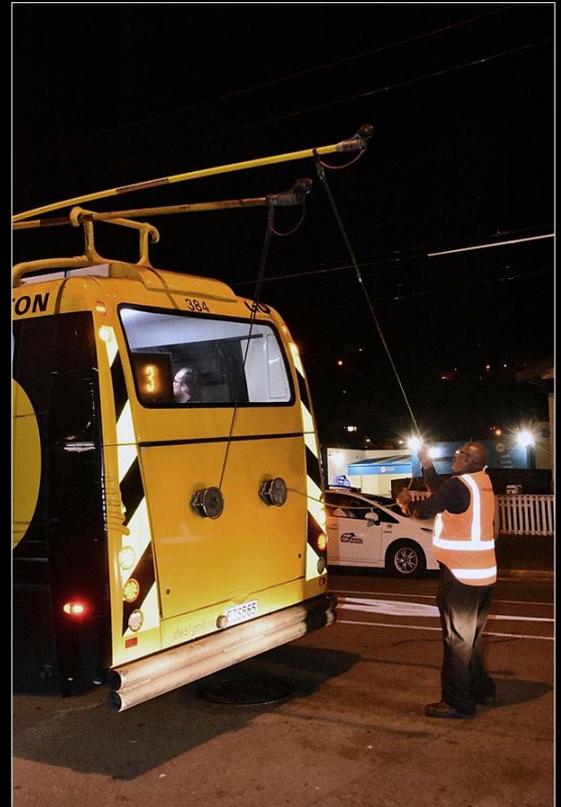


Left: Certainly not what happens on a usual day, but this day was special and was the last working. An impromptu stop for photographs was made by 384 in Lambton Quay outside the David Jones department store. No doubt most, if not all, of those who were on the bus were enthusiasts so there wouldn't have been any niggles about the short delay. Photo: Ben Foden.



Left: It's past midnight as 384 pauses in Courtenay Place. The bars and restaurants would still have been fairly busy but little interest, other than from enthusiasts, was shown in the very last trolleybus to ever pass this way. Photo: Mike Mellor.

Right: With its last journey almost over and 384 now in Onepu Road by the Pak 'n Save supermarket, a request was made to the driver to drop the poles and have the bus travel on battery power for the last 100m or so to the depot. Under the circumstances the driver was happy to oblige. Photo: Ben Foden.



Left: 384 has finished its final duty and there's just one last movement to make – into Kilbirnie depot. Photo: Ben Foden.

Right: At 12.45am on 1 November 2017, the end came for Wellington's trolleybuses. The applause ceased, the small crowd started to disperse and 384 was shut down one last time. There was just one last thing to do... Photo: A Reader.



Left: ...bring the curtain down or should I say close the door. Trolleybus use in Wellington and the last substantial left-hand system in the world had finally ended. Photo: Ben Foden.

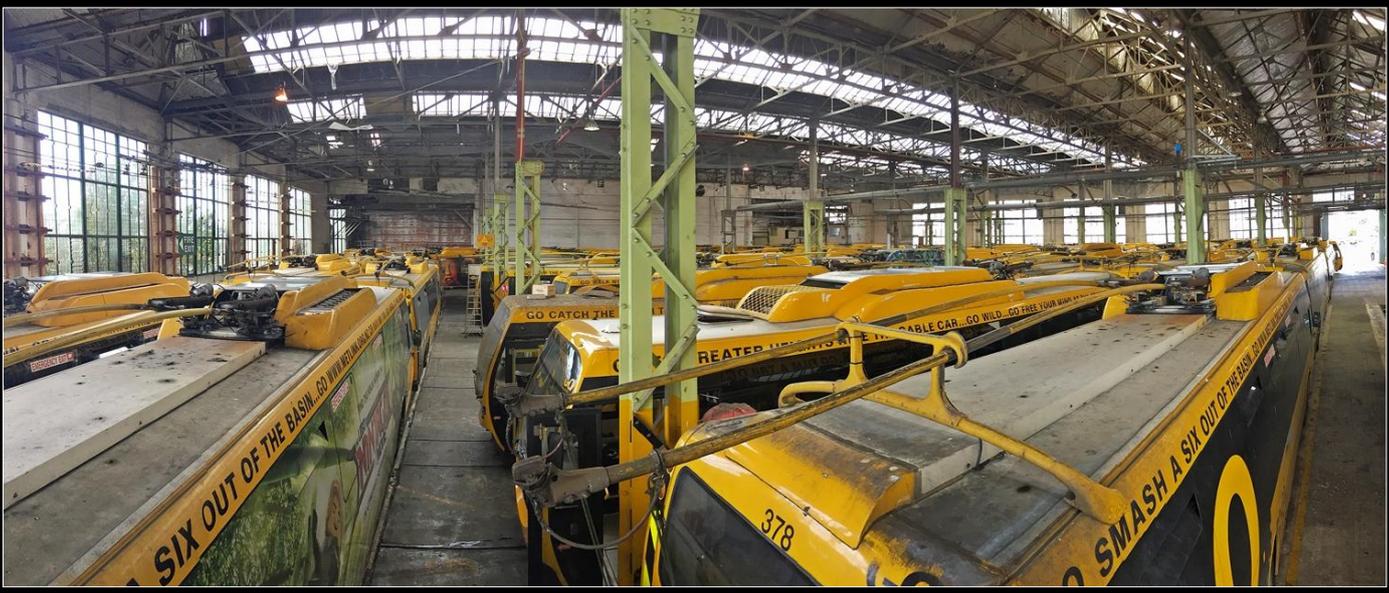
THE NEXT DAY AT THE INTERCHANGE AND KILBIRNIE – 1 NOVEMBER 2017



Above: Where trolleybuses once roamed and lay over. This was the scene on Wednesday 1 November with “dirty diesels”, as some refer to them, as far as the eye can see. The overhead is scheduled to be removed in about 2 month’s time.



Above and below: This remarkable view was taken inside Kilbirnie depot. It is believed all bar eleven of the fleet are pictured in this rather sad scene. Exceptions are 372 and 375 which were parked behind the wall at the far end, 357 and 384 which were out of sight to the left of the main bunch, 332 and 361 which were near the depot entrance, 347, 354, 366 and 380 which are in store at Karori, and finally 362 which is at the Wrightspeed conversion premises.





Above: I have published similar photographs before but never with so many trolleybuses in view. From an elevated position at the south end of the depot this array of around 80% of the Designline fleet packed in tightly to enable other buses to be accommodated and worked on as necessary could be seen. 351 in the foreground is not a "bendy bus" – the panorama camera setting it was taken on created this peculiar impression. 372 and 375 can be seen behind the wall on the right, a position they have held for a very long time.



Left: 384 had been moved from where it was last seen in the photograph on page 13 and by the time of my visit was keeping company with 357.



Above: 376 (and all its colleagues) have been earth tested for the very last time. From now on they will either have to be moved using their onboard battery power (for how long that lasts) or be towed by the depot tractor. The electricity to the overhead has been switched off.



Left: 361 had its roof equipment, poles and its electrics removed many months ago. For a long time it stood over one of the inspection pits but recently it was moved closer to the depot door. Sister 362 was similarly stripped in 2016 and became the prototype for the Wrightspeed engine project. Not that much news has emerged on that subject. With the relative ease to gain access is it possible that 361 will be departing to the Wrightspeed conversion premises in Newlands soon?

My thanks to depot staff for authorising my official visit.



# Also on the last day...



A Reader writes: "Three trolleybuses at Miramar terminus at 3:23pm - a unusual event in normal circumstances but it happened on the last day. I took a ride on 369 from Island Bay into the station, then as a No 2 to Miramar. 369 got to Kent Terrace on a full load where it became apparent to the driver that a RHS rear suspension airbag had collapsed. He radioed for a replacement bus to meet us at Kilbirnie, and when we got there, the Shiftman had brought in 346 to our surprise and delight, so we transferred to it for the remainder of the ride to Miramar. Arriving at Miramar terminus I found 375 waiting to depart, and then 338 arrived. I just managed to get the photo of the 3 together before 375 left. The photograph shows 338 on left, 376 on right, and 346 with its poles down behind. When we got to the next bus stop, 346 went storming past on battery and then the driver decided to put his poles up half way along Rotherham Terrace and followed us at a distance to Kilbirnie. In Caledonia Rd we passed 350 on another outbound Route 2 service. So there were four Route 2 operating trolleys east of the airport at this time."

Below: Also on the last day of operation, 378 has arrived at the Island Bay turning circle in The Parade. The actual bay is a couple of minutes walk away either along Reef Street seen behind the bus or a short walk through the park on its left.





## What readers have been telling me...



Since posting the news that there would not be any reprieve for the trolleybuses I received many emails from readers expressing their disappointment and disgust. Here is a selection from the mailbag.

*"Now, instead of the wholesale shutdown of the system and bringing in a whole lot of diesel buses, why couldn't they have kept the trolleys operating and just taken one bus out of service at a time to convert it to a Wrightspeed? (Probably too easy...) Thanks for all the good work you do giving us the news."* Ronald Mayes.

*"I cannot believe that the incoming NZ Government didn't tell the Council something like – "hang on for three months until we (the new mob in the Beehive) take stock." The urgency reminds me of the action performed over here (Australia) when in the dying days of the failed one-term Liberal State Government, they signed a multi-billion contract for a road system that nobody wanted and the incoming Labor Government were forced to pay out billions to cancel the contract and then proceed to pour vast sums into the rail network although not entirely to the full benefit of the rail. Thus I am reluctant to open this sad issue (but I will) as I would like to remember them as they were. I have realised that my last trips on them were back in 2008 when only the first three Designline buses were in operation and since then many, many things have prevented my returning for a last visit. I will continue to view the few Designline buses over here in a kindly light despite them being fossil fuel buses and wonder what they would look like running through Melbourne under wires. Thank you for creating this fantastic record of this transport system and it will live on as a memorial to a green transport system. Unfortunately there will continue to be stupid people who make stupid decisions for selfish reasons."* David Langley.

*"Most unfortunate news but not surprising. The saying is "You can't cure stupid". Obviously the Mayor, City management and the transit commission could care less. I sincerely hope that it backfires on them. Of course by then it will be too late. Politicians, regardless of where they are share one thing in common, ignorance and stupidity. If I remember correctly, the majority of the trolleybuses are only a few years old. When information is available please inform me the readers of their disposition. I am truly sorry to receive this news. Many thanks for your great issues. Well done."* Tom Shepherd

*"What a super duper bumper issue, more than a little tinged, with a lot of sadness and anger. A lot of our group have worked our butts off with letters to the editors and emails to members of local bodies and government to no avail."* David Donald.

*"Thank you VERY VERY VERY much for all the effort you have put in over the years into making this publication. The trolleybuses will be missed!"* Alex Prodan.

*"You will be feeling very sad - as am I; indeed I am more angry than sad. Wellington's politicians and the arrogant transport authority have been totally stupid. The obvious solution would have been to retain the trolleybuses and follow the example being set in numerous European cities to adopt "in-motion charging" and cost-effectively move to a 100% electric fleet. Instead you have diesel buses replacing the trolleys and the Wrightspeed nonsense failing to take off."* Andrew Braddock.

*"Very, very sad! But we all did our best."* Gunter Mackinger.

*"Last week air pollution figures were released for the most polluted places in Britain. One of them was Norwich near where I live. The pollution is measured in a street that has been closed to private cars for years. The pollution is coming from masses of diesel buses that use this street. Norwich last had electric traction on street in 1931. Now that the transport authorities in Wellington have carried their short sighted and stupid decision this is what residents of Wellington can look forward to now. It seems to be an example of the same blinkered thinking carried by London Transport bosses in 1954."* Brian Pittman

*"R.I.P. Wellington trolleybuses. How embarrassing to be replaced by second-hand diesel buses from Auckland. The new Minister of Transport should be thoroughly ashamed of himself and in my opinion is not fit to be in office. He didn't even halt the dismantling of the wiring. I suppose a lot of people are happy in Wellington now that the trolleybuses have gone and I suppose they will be even happier when the last of the running wires are down. A very sad day indeed."* Andrew Henbest.

*"R.I.P. Wellington's famous trolleybuses. I deem myself fortunate to have ridden these on my two visits to Wellington and have fond memories of them. Such a short-sighted, blinkered attitude by the Minister of Transport and the relevant authorities. It is a pity the new Government couldn't have seen fit to reverse the decision as one would have thought they'd be more environmentally aware."* Peter Ferguson.

*"I've greatly enjoyed Wellington since 1969. It won't be the same next time. Provincial parochialism at its blindest!"* James Bradley.

*"Thanks for letting us know, it's a sad day and shameful of the new Minister to wimp out on their promise. Seems like they are going to be an "all talk" government! I was really looking forward to the Nats being thrown out but when you have the Greens involved, you have big trouble, for all their bluster about conservation and so on, when they get into a coalition or any power, they turn into the "new right" and have seldom done anything for electric transport but they are great at talking! I could go on for hours but won't, it's a sad day for Wellington, it's now just another boring bus city and, having been there several times, there is nothing to draw me back."* Greg King.

*"For the life of me I cannot understand why a working system is being disbanded and turning the clock backwards. If new electric buses were ready to go I could perhaps understand the decision based on costing of overhead maintenance etc but this does not add up one*

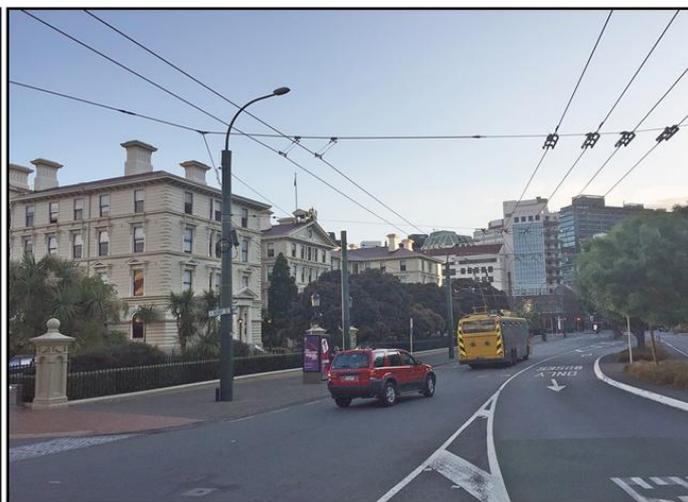
bit. Thanks for all your on-line magazines. I have enjoyed every one even if I don't comment much. All the very best to everyone, let's hope Foxton can be revived to still see the trolleybuses running as a tourist attraction away from the bureaucrats who summoned their demise." Wallace Trickett.

"It is certainly a black day in Wellington transport history and your "black edition" captures the mood of the people who care against those that do not. The official notices about the trolleybus withdrawal are very patronising and just give the residents what they want to hear (like in most newspaper stories!). The enthusiasts and staff that did care about the loss marked the occasion in their own way but to not have a proper closure is bad on so many levels. I have nothing against diesel buses (as I have driven them over the last 31 years) only when they replace trolleybuses, which happened time and time again here in the UK until 1972. My thoughts are with you Alan, so much time and effort has gone into reporting the trolleybus system over the years. It is like losing one's best friend. You dropped a hint that UTW may change direction with the new circumstances. A good move was to open it up for world news past and present. Never has a trolleybus system been covered in detail right up the last hours; with modern technology we can all share the experience. I bet the enthusiasts who travelled to Wellington and rode the network are pleased they did so. A future visitor to New Zealand could still enjoy the preserved fleets at Foxton or Ferrymead. I look forward to the "last day" edition and I hope you will continue UTW for as long as you are able even it is reporting vehicle disposals or overhead dismantling." Phil Waters.



Left: With 384 holding the honour of being the very last trolleybus to return to Kilbirnie depot, 387, the highest numbered bus in the 60-strong fleet of Designline trolleybuses vehicles, was the last to leave Kilbirnie depot at 6.50am on 31 October. It travelled to Seatoun where at 7.20am it started a long day's work carrying passengers throughout the final day. Photo: Peter Coventry.

## HOW WE REMEMBERED THEM IN 1964 – HOW WE DIDN'T IN 2017!



The very last tram ran on 2 May 1964. Huge crowds turned out in many Wellington streets to farewell a much loved form of transport. Charles Burles photographed the occasion as the departure was made from the Railway Station in Lambton Quay. Source: Facebook. Fifty-three years later it was not possible to reproduce a similar scene due to the very late timing of the last trolleybus but at 7.09pm on 31 October 2017 as light faded, 351 quietly left the Interchange for Island Bay. The trolleybus is in approximately the same position as the tram. I was the only one who recorded the event. What a telling contrast!

Finally, reader **David Castle** has kindly offered to make available his website to host back copies of *Under the Wires*. David has asked that because of the size of the files could you please use your discretion and not attempt a bulk download of all 50 copies at once.

[www.valleysignals.org.nz](http://www.valleysignals.org.nz)

David also has a keen interest in railways and signalling so if this interests you there will be plenty to enjoy on his website.



Over the years it has been a pleasure to bring news and views of our trolleybuses to enthusiasts far and wide. I trust you will allow me to indulge myself in presenting the final photograph of this special issue with me in the driver's seat of 384 at Kilbirnie depot the day the wires went silent.