

# All Aboard

News from the Friends of the North Australia Railway at Adelaide River

April 2007

[www.atr.org.au/fnaraar](http://www.atr.org.au/fnaraar)

## Manna from heaven!

Okay, it's not *really* from heaven - but it *is* manna from Mount Isa....

MOUNT ISA MAY BE FAMOUS FOR ITS deposits of zinc, lead, silver and copper, but this page is dedicated to the wonderfully generous members of the Mount Isa Rotary Club who have gifted Locomotive #928 (which we have unofficially christened *Thomas*) to our railway heritage museum.

It all started when Mike Bowman noticed an unloved Hudswell Clark saddle tank, Steam locomotive (#928), whilst passing through Mount Isa and decided that it would be nice for us to have this magnificent old engine.

Approaches were made to Mount Isa Rotary Club, who owned the treasure, by local Rotarians Geoff Goodrich and Chris Renehan. Having no further use for the locomotive, Mount Isa Rotary kindly gifted the #928 to the FNAR.

Peter Cornell must have a touch of the Harry Potter.



*The last relocation of #928 in Mt Isa on 30 November 2001.*



*Loco #928 and steel sleepers loaded in Mt Isa on Saturday 3 March 2007.*

*The little prince safely in the grounds of Ascot Haulage in Darwin on 5 March 2007.*



To our great excitement a Hudswell Clarke #928 Steam Engine suddenly appeared in Darwin on 5 March, courtesy of Peter 'Harry Potter' Cornell.

We believe that it was picked up by a passing milk truck and spirited to Darwin.

It was an incredible operation planned and carried out by Peter and Estelle Cornell.

First, the trailer had to be towed to Mount Isa and positioned at the Shell Roadhouse. Paul White, our man on the ground in Mount Isa, oversaw the operations.

Dave Moore of NQX in Mt Isa is a Rotarian

*continued on page 2*

# Welcome to 2007

WE ARE ALREADY IN MARCH, which is difficult to believe, but there you are. Whilst we haven't delivered a newsletter since late last year, we have been busy.

We trust that you and yours had a safe and happy festive season and are ready for another year to charge ahead.

Since we last published, we've had over 300 pilgrims to the precinct in conjunction with the 65th anniversary commemoration of the Bombing of Darwin, and we congratulate Maxine Dowley of Darwin City Council for her untiring efforts for the myriad events associated with the commemoration each year.

Early in March - on the weekend of 3 and 4, in fact - our station was flooded by about one foot of water. The river level rose above the Edwin Verberg Bridge, and we understand that is the highest it has gone in living memory. The clean-up, as you can imagine, goes on.

On 5 February, we lost a great heritage pioneer in the form of Earl Gano who is probably most recently famous for his gold panning exhibit at Pine Creek (see story, page 9).

In March the Northern Territory 'lost' stalwart heritage practitioner Bob Alford who has 'retired' to Thailand, although we can still track him on E-mail (see story, page 6).

We were pleased to hear that the winner of the Heritage and Cultural Tourism category of the NT Brolga Awards, Discovery Eco-Tours, went on to win the Australian award in the same category. There is no shame in a wholly-volunteer organisation 'losing' to a commercial operator who goes on to be a national winner, and we congratulate Discovery Eco-Tours on their exceptional achievement.

We are gearing up for another big year and encourage old and new members to volunteer their services in various capacities.

## manna from Mt Isa (cont)

and Dave offered to load the locomotive for us FOC. When Dave's man went to collect the trailer at the Shell Roadhouse, he found that it had 'glad-hand' brake couplings rather than the more common RYCO type fitting.

Dave sent a mechanic to change the brake hose fittings, and finally the locomotive was loaded on 28 February using a large red 120 tonne crane from Barkly Engineering.

The locomotive's large red chimney stack (incorporating spark arrestor) had to be removed because it was too high for the transport.

Paul White did the deed and lowered the stack to the deck of the trailer. Incredibly, it was full of old ash trapped in the spark arrestor.

Peter Cornell arranged for Terry Douglas (of Sidney Williams Hut fame) to double check the load and then the magic happened.

Behind all this activity was the Rotary Club of Mount Isa who very generously donated the locomotive.

Mike Bowman has already sent images of the loco to the Industrial Railway Society in

the UK because they are most interested in keeping track of these locomotives.

Peter Cornell and Mike Bowman are charged with the restoration of our latest acquisition.

For the technophiles, the loco is a Hudswell Clarke saddle tank locomotive (Manufacturer's Number 928) and was delivered ex-works on 13 December 1910.

It is a 3'6" gauge 0-4-0ST fitted with 12"x18" cylinders. The loco was ordered by the Agent Geo, Harris & Co for the Wallaroo Phosphate Co in South Australia.

The loco was shown to be painted in 'medium green' and was sold for the princely sum of £820. In 1929, it was sold and relocated to North Broken Hill. We are still researching when it arrived in Mount Isa to work in the Mines (surface works).

We owe some HUGE thanks to a range of people, especially Peter and Estelle Cornell and the generous members of the Rotary Club of Mount Isa, without whose help this manna from heaven would not have come into our heritage precinct.

## But wait! There's *more* manna!

MORE THAN 12 months ago, our Friend Rob Davies from Victoria alerted us to a heap of steel sleepers at the Queensland Rail depot in Mount Isa. When we enquired about them, we were told that they were in sets that belonged to switch points. This is exactly what we need to replace the rotting wood sleepers currently under our switch-points at Adelaide River.

Upon being approached, QR kindly agreed to gift 130 sleepers to FNAR. The only hitch was how to shift eight tonnes of steel sleepers, some of which are 15' long, to Darwin. Fortunately, it all came together when Peter Cornell sent the trailer to Mount Isa for Hudswell Clarke #928. We ended up with an 18 tonne locomotive and eight tonnes of sleepers and clips on the trailer (see photos, p1).

Many thanks to QR's Brett Leo and Bob Thackeray for their generosity, to Paul White for co-ordinating the exercise in Mount Isa and to Rob Davies for the tip.

# Year 2006 in review

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE that 2006 was our fifth year of operation. There is still much to do, but it is useful to reflect on what has been achieved in the past 12 if only to remind ourselves that real progress is being made. Here are some highlights.

## Caretakers

For the first time, we had caretakers during the entire Wet Season. Mel and Jill Jobst were with us until May when John and Judy O'Donohoe joined us along with Fred and Jennine Williams. The year was been rounded out with Greg Wardrope. Thanks to these wonderful people we have been able to open the precinct for 364 days of 2006.

## Events

We had a number of significant events during the year. It started with several busloads of visitors for the Bombing of Darwin commemorations in February.

A special event, also in February, was the Adelaide River premier of the film *Letters to the Editor* which we showed in the Sidney Williams Exhibition Hall.

Early in March we did our bit to Clean Up

Australia by tidying up the NAR remnant at The Narrows and the Stella Maris property, which is the only NAR House left in Darwin.

ANZAC Day was washed out by Cyclone Monica, which was a shame.

In May we held a Works-in-Progress exhibition at Peter Cornell's yard at Berrimah which was specifically to show our many generous sponsors and stakeholders what we are up to. It was a great success.

In June we conducted the first Rail Trail walk from Stapleton to Adelaide River, which was well attended.

Early in August we hosted a lunch for the Rejex Rally (120 intrepid motorists) and followed it with the traditional Railway Picnic on Picnic Day.

On the weekend of 2-3 September we conducted the annual expedition to Birdum where Ann Kanters and Barry Sharp were our hosts. We were privileged to meet with the members of the Jacobsen extended family who travelled from as far as NZ to join us for this historic weekend.

On the last Sunday of each month during the Dry Season, Nola Smith and Estelle Harris prepared Devonshire Teas (a real winner and an excellent fund raiser). Details of this year's dates appear elsewhere in this edition.

*continued overleaf*

# Year 2006 in review

## Projects

Owen Peake undertook restoration work on the SMITH & COVENTRY wheel lathe. Alan Spargo went to Manchester Museum and sifted through their material on Smith and Coventry.

We constructed a large shelter for our caretaker's site and connected power and water to the site.

Nola Smith's gardening crew made considerable improvements to the garden and grounds which are now at their largest extent ever.

We completed the interior of carriage BC329 which is decked out in veneered timber.

We progressed the installation of the steel roof on carriage BC330. More than 1,000 hours has been spent on this carriage so far.

Peter Cornell collected the 1885 COWAN SHELDON crane from Larrimah and it has been dismantled and partly sandblasted and primed. Tom Bertenshaw has skilfully welded cracks in the cast iron axle boxes.

PDQ Builders fabricated the frame for the Disabled Toilet block and it has been installed on the concrete pad at the precinct.

Mike Bowman did a full restoration job on the Monkey Tail pump adjacent to the 5,000 gallon underground tank from 1889.

New interpretive signage has been installed at the entrance to the precinct and within.

The displays in Sidney Williams Exhibition Hall were updated and improved substantially. We now have a fully interpreted display of the eight different types of sleepers used on the NAR (thanks to Mick) Chris Renehan supplied some great wall displays.

The Heritage Branch funded the Department of Infrastructure to place rocks around the pier of the 1888 wrought iron heritage bridge to protect it from further scouring.

A major gate was installed on the access road (formerly the gate to East Point Reserve)

A proper flagpole was installed near the 1888 heritage earth loading ramp (courtesy of Ron Strahan from National Flags).

## Acquisitions

The NILES TOOL WORKS railway wheel press arrived from Bendigo Tramway Museum.

Mario Skapin donated the large ASQUITH radial arm drill press

Our second "Short Tom" carriage #86 arrived from Victoria along with a fabulous "caboose" #GB5588.

The Ghan Preservation Society provided a cowcatcher, a front coupling and a 950 gallon fuel tank for the NSU63 locomotive.

The Department of Justice donated a two drawer safe and several cupboards which have assisted storage in the kitchen department.

Peter Poole donated fettlers tools and signs.

Advance Civil Engineering donated 100 steel sleepers

Power and Water donated two ATCO toilet demountables.

## Members

Membership exceeded 80 for the first time. We joined the National Trust as an Associate Member.

During the year we published four newsletters and distributed them locally and internationally.

Sadly we lost three of our long term members during the year: Kevin Gould, Reg McGrath and Nan Bell.

Our Vice President Mick Kent had a trying year as he battled myeloma. At years end Mick is looking a lot better.

During the year members contributed more than 10,000 hours of volunteer effort.

## Administration

We amended our constitution to include clauses required by the Tax Department to enable us to become a Deductible Gift Recipient.

We opened a Gifting Account so that benefactors can make tax deductible gifts to us.

# Rediscovery: the hole in the hill at Adelaide River

VISITING THE TERRITORY FOR Bombing of Darwin commemorations, Signallers Norm MacMahon and Max Cathro were determined to find a 'hole in the hill' that Norm had dug during World War II which served as a Signals Station for 17 LoC Signals.

Because the boys were so busy with their commemorative itinerary, they didn't get down to Adelaide River (with time to forage) until 21 February, when they were hosted by local Trevor Wardrope. They combed the side of the Telstra hill looking for a large excavation that Norm claimed to have carried out in 1943.

The purpose of the excavation was to provide a secure and secluded site for the major signals station that was at Adelaide River. The original one was subject to flooding and it was understood that the Japanese had identified the original one (its slab is close to where the brass plaque cairn is near the railway bridge).

During his visit, Norm described how one of the crew had managed to secure a large quantity of gelignite (sweating and becoming unstable). They drilled holes 4ft deep and inserted the gelignite. Then lit a long fuse which connected all the holes and ran for their lives. An officer who inspected the site after one explosion observed the sweating gelly and retreated without thoroughly investigating the source of the large quantity.

Five or six blokes flogged away for three months with picks and shovels and a Broomwade compressor powering a rock drill.

Trevor W confirmed that it was solid rock where it was dug out and explosives were definitely needed.

The excavation was sufficient to just accommodate a Sidney Williams hut which was erected along with a concrete floor. All the signals equipment was moved in and operated for three months.

It all stopped when Army engineers inspected the deal and decided it was dangerous as rocks could fall on to the Sidney Williams and rushing water could flow through the shed. This was after only three months and all the gear had to be relocated back to the original shed.

Inside the excavation today is the concrete slab of the Sidney Williams hut and a number of trees. Trevor W reported that the rear wall of the excavation is 8-10m high, which accords with Norm's earlier suggestion that it



*Signallers Norm MacMahon (left) and Max Cathro at the hole in the hill in February.*

was 30 ft high.

The location of the "hole in the hill" is described as being below the Telstra tower on the northern side of the hill (the town camp side). There is a hairpin in the road leading up to the Telstra site, and its about 100m in to the bush, west of this hairpin.

Asked why the Signals camp was on the Northern Goldfields hill (north of the river) whilst the Signals station was to the south, he said: "That's ARMY efficiency". Perhaps the presence of the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) camp near the Sigs station was a good reason to segregate the camps. Many of the AWAS were signallers. One of the many AWAS huts was called *Cupid's Corner*.

# Alford 'retires' to Asia

IT'S NOT OFTEN THAT ONE is presented with a pair of framed World War II knickers (never in the life of this scribe!), but so it was that Heritage Practitioner and Historian Bob Alford was farewelled by the Heritage Branch and friends on 5 March.

Alford is finally carrying out his threat to 'retire' to Thailand, a plan that was to have been executed some five years ago but was thwarted when the Northern Territory government appointed him Chairman of the Heritage Advisory Council.

Announcing his 18-month appointment in July 2002, Minister Vatskalis said:

Bob is an historian and consultant with special interests in the heritage of the Northern Territory. He is a writer - he wrote the book *Darwin's Air War* that became a best-seller in 1992. He has lived in Darwin for 20 years and is an active member of community organisations. He is Public Officer and a founding member of the Professional Historians Association of the Northern Territory, he is the President of the Aviation Historical Society of the Northern Territory and he is the Secretary of the Thai-Australian Friendship Association of the Northern Territory.

That apparently short-term appointment stretched to five years, and Alford resigned from the position at the end of January, allowing long-suffering wife Pat to return to her country of birth at least on a semi-permanent basis, although Alford said that they would return to Darwin from time to time - always in the Dry Season.

Alford converted to heritage after a long career in the RAAF.

He served for a number of years as Research Officer for the National Trust of Australia (NT) and went on to be Director until he resigned to commence a private heritage consultancy in 1998.

Alford was Chairman of the federal government's *Australia Remembers: 1945-1995* Committee in the Northern Territory and served in a similar position in 1992 under the NT government, which commemorated the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. He has been highly instrumental in elevating the status of the Territory's wartime heritage.

His 'retirement' will include running a B&B and continuing with selected consultancy work.



Above: Director of the Heritage Branch, Michael Wells, making the presentation at a wet, windy and well attended gathering at the Museum. Left: the guest of honour making a gracious address in reply. Below: Knickers to you, too! Should every home have one? All Aboard understands that there was a somewhat more formal presentation made to Alford by the current Minister, Marion Scrymgour, at a later function.



# A late - but really big - Wet

*These spectacular photographs were sent to us by Friends - many thanks. They were taken on 5 March, two days after the railway station in the heritage precinct went under about a foot of water as the river burst its banks (and the Edwin Verberg Bridge) in the township and cut off both the Stuart Highway and the present railway, which terminated in Katherine until the line could be restored.  
For full report on flood damage in the precinct, see page 6.*



*Above and below: the Adelaide River  
(Arnhem Highway visible in photograph above)*



*Arnhem Highway barely over the South Alligator River  
(and if that tree line doesn't resemble the shape of a croc...)*



*Wildman River with the road under considerable water.*



*A washout and fairly major damage  
at the West Alligator River.*



*It may look like an ocean, but it is  
the Mary River floodplain.*

# And so the mop-up begins

A TROPICAL LOW pressure system, which was later declared Cyclone George, passed over Adelaide River on Saturday 3 March.

It dropped lots of rain on Oenpelli and Jabiru, isolating both communities, as it headed west towards Adelaide River, but it really did a job in the catchment area of the Adelaide River, as the photographs on page 7 amply demonstrate.

The river rose to record heights and actually covered the 1983 Edwin Verberg Bridge. Reports indicate that the flood waters went half way along the main street of the township. There are no reports of floods to these levels in living memory.

Our first report came from Trevor Wardrope, a resident of Adelaide River, who inspected the precinct at 0800 hours on Sunday 4 March. Trevor reported that: water had been though the station at least one foot (300mm) deep; on the verandah, grass was stuck in the seat weave of the steel chairs; some of our wooden chairs were found 100m down the yard near the vertical boiler; our 500 litre fridge has floated down the yard; water has been through the Sidney Williams hut; electrical "safety switches" had tripped as refrigerator motors were flooded; and flood waters covered the stacks of steel sleepers that were dropped in the yard a few weeks ago (more than 600mm high).

Trevor and Margaret Wardrope spent the morning at the station hosing out the mud and slush.

A lot of work was required at the Sidney Williams Hut to lift the heavy sleeper exhibits off the carpet to dry it out.

We suffered significant damage in the station because some furniture is made of craftwood. We also had some valuable stock (eg WW2 Trail books) stored in cupboards in the station. Many thanks to Nola Smith and

Estelle Harris who painstakingly went through and cleaned.

The direction of flow of the floodwater was obviously towards the south following the railway line, which confirms reports by Mal and Jill Jobst, our Wet Season Caretakers from last year.

The only other report of the station being flooded came from Don Roebuck who reported having seen three inches of water through the station in the 1950s or 1960s.

## Present railway

The flood waters also caused grief for the new railway line.

ABC News reported that a helicopter would be used to assess damage to a three to five-kilometre section of the Adelaide-to-Darwin railway line, which was washed out on Saturday 3 March.

Whilst reports implied that the line was washed out to the north of Adelaide River, early indications were that the washed-out section of track was actually south of Adelaide River across the Burrell's Creek floodplain, which was a notoriously difficult area for the NAR and for ADrail when it built the new line.

Importantly, it is that area to which our floodwater heads after it has been through the precinct.

ADrail placed 29 large culverts under the track about 1km south of the station. It seems now that was insufficient for this flood and raised questions about future flooding.

To compound the situation, this is a proposed area for the construction of a passing loop on the railway.

It seems logical that improved drainage would precede any such work. We shall see in due course, no doubt.

**This issue of the newsletter is full to overflowing, and we have to get it published. In the next issue, we will bring you the exciting news of our "new" vintage carriages that arrived from Melbourne in December.**

# Mourning a legend: the loss of Pine Creek's Earl Gano

A LIFE THAT BEGAN IN the air during a blizzard in the Canadian winter and ended in the air during a monsoonal storm in the Australian outback could be described as truly remarkable - and it is - but what happened in between is equally as remarkable.

This was the life of Earl Gano, a much-loved larrikin and free spirit who adopted the Aussie never-say-die attitude and embraced life like a man possessed.

The twin of Neil, he was born Earl Alton Gano in Calgary, Alberta in 1948, mother Irene having been evacuated by air to hospital because of blizzard conditions and impassable roads.

Gano grew up on the family farm and married Elaine Treleaven in the Copper Kettle Cafe in Madden, Alberta in 1969. The adventurous young couple embarked on a trip in 1971, arriving in Australia in 1973 after roaming around New Zealand.

Gano immediately fell in love with a country that was physically so different from his native Canada, and worked as a Ranger in Mataranka for four years before moving to Pine Creek in 1977. He opened *Back O' Beyond* tours in Pine Creek 1981.

This wasn't all. He ran buffalo hunting and tours, and was a driving force in the township of Pine Creek, being instrumental in the locomotive restoration, establishment of Miner's Park and the railway museum and Overland Telegraph Repeater Station.

In 1996, Gano closed the tour arm of the business to concentrate on a tourism gold panning operation at Gun Alley in Pine Creek.

Anyone who visited that operation will know that Gano was a great story teller with a fascination for history, and for gold.

Earl Gano died whilst being medically evacuated during a storm in February after losing a 20-year battle with leukaemia.

He is buried at Pine Creek Cemetery and is accompanied by two of his favourite items: Akubra hat; and new lizard skin boots.

Earl Gano is survived by his wife Elaine and daughters Crystal and Holly to whom we extend our condolences.



## *The Dream* by Earl Gano, 2003

The gift of dream is the head of steam  
that drives a man to win.  
It was the dream, I am sure, drove me to endure  
all the tough spots I've been in.  
Now it's very hard when they've drawn your card  
and your number's up, they say,  
and your dreams are dashed  
and your chips are cashed  
to regroup and fight next day.

It was dreams led me, far across the sea  
to the land of golden soil  
where I met my match diggin' out my patch  
in the Territory's rock-hard soil.  
Dreams can be a lure, they can kill or cure  
leave Midas without a dime.  
It's the friends you've made,  
while the game you've played  
that will balance the scales in time.

If it's dreams that drive, then you've got to strive  
to build more when hope is gone.  
It's the dream to win, that keeps Aussies in  
makes us toil from dusk 'til dawn  
fly Eureka's flag, back that Phar Lap nag  
play cricket like Sir Don.  
We're not quitters here, have no bloody fear;  
pull your socks up, and carry on.

# Adelaide River briefs

## Steam Whistle

MIKE BOWMAN HAS BEEN doing the diplomatic bit with Don Valley Railway. They have donated a steam whistle. Mike has visited Don Valley twice in recent times and must have done a lot of work for them. Thanks to both Mike and the Valley for their generosity.

## Grass Management

THANKS TO JOHN PIENING who found time to cut our grass for us just before we were due to entertain the Veterans for the Bombing of Darwin. You don't know what a life saver you were and it is thanks to community minded people like yourself that, as a volunteer organisation, we can manage to keep the precinct looking clean and tidy.

## Disabled Toilet

WE HAD BEEN MAKING big advances on the toilet but we have had a small setback owing to the floods! Mike has been hard at work repairing said flood damage.

## Rob Davies

A FRIEND AND SUPPORTER from Victoria, Rob Davies is seriously talking of retiring this year. For us, this may mean a visit of a week or two in the Dry Season. On the matter of Walhalla Railway, Rob understands that it was a relatively minor bridge at about the halfway point between Walhalla and Thompson that was burnt in the bushfires, still a major and heart-breaking setback. Fortunately, one locomotive and some rolling stock was left at Walhalla during the fire and hence operations are able to continue on a restricted basis during the important summer period.

## Veteran Vists

OWEN BENNETT, who ran the BIPOD in Adelaide River during WW2, was keen to visit

Adelaide River this year with other veterans for Bombing of Darwin commemorations, but his doctor has advised Owen that his heart is not fit enough to cope with the Top End in February. His mates were given similar medical advice in respect of their conditions. Perhaps we may see them in the Dry Season when the weather is much kinder to us all.

## Sidney Williams Hut

MICK KENT HAS DONE a tremendous amount of work on displays in the Sidney Williams Hut. We now have wall mounted displays covering the four different type of rails on the NAR, the many different types of dig spikes which hold the rails to wooden sleepers, transom fixing assemblies, early fettlers hand tools, signage used on the NAR, WW2 yard limit board and many other displays. Thanks and congratulations to Mick for his hard work and dedication. We also send a coo-ee to Mick who is again in Adelaide for treatment but hopes to be home soon.

Chris Renehan commenced the preparation of glass showcases for the display of precious small items (such as CR cutlery and crockery, CR packs of plays cards etc). Chris also did a great job on the makers plate on the wheel lathe, picking out Smith and Coventry in silver against a matt black background. The Sidney Williams Exhibition Hall is evolving in to a most credible museum on a national basis.

## Birdum 2007

THE DATE FOR BIRDUM this year is the weekend of 8-9 September. These dates will line it up with the VARIETY BASH, which should visit Birdum on Friday 7 September. Variety is a children's charity and they raise heaps of money each year. Apart from being our local hero for 2006, Peter Cornell was the top fund raiser for Variety in the NT. Pete and his crazy mates will be driving cars that are 30+ years old and having a ball as they travel from Alice to Darwin.

# Adelaide River briefs

## Wanted

IN ORDER TO MAKE PROGRESS on the Short Tom carriage, we need carpenters and cabinet makers. Does anyone have contacts? Does the U3A and similar organisations have retired carpenters who would be willing to put in a few volunteer hours for a very deserving organisation and project? It will be a most rewarding exercise.

## Tact and Diplomacy

MIKE BOWMAN IS CURRENTLY researching a particular steam locomotive. He was warned that the museum in Leeds where the drawings are held is notoriously understaffed and inefficient. Undeterred, Mike went straight to the Lord Mayor of Leeds (wearing his hat as an elected municipal official from the great shire of Litchfield in the Antipodes). Bingo! The wheels started to turn.

## Vale Reg McGrath aka “Brolga”

IT WAS WITH DEEP REGRET that we learned from “Big John” Smith in WA that one of our colourful members, Reg McGrath passed away in 2006.

Reg worked as a guard on the NAR right up until the closure of the legendary railway on 30 June 1976.

He then moved to WAGR as a guard before heading for Mount Newman where was a driver on the iron ore trains.

Reg became a financial member of the FNAR when he heard that we were functioning and he sent across several items of interest.

John O’Donohoe, the last station master at Darwin in 1976, fondly recalls *Brolga*, so named because Reg was tall, slim and essentially “all legs”. Rumour has it that when Reg had sunk a few that the legs became “really wobbly”.

He was well known to Darwin police (in the

1960s and early 1970s) as a loveable character. When he’d had a few drinks, they drove him home and he was never picked up for being drunk and disorderly (D&D, as it was in those days).

John recalls that Reg had a black Valiant Charger coupe which somehow ended up sitting on top of some 44 gallon drums that had been set up around some roadworks at Parap one night.

Reg showed a lot of interest in the daughter of a railway family in Darwin but it never developed and Reg was a bachelor all of his life.

And so another piece of the NAR story concludes and reminds us of the obligation that we have to collect and preserve the precious memories and artefacts of this important element of NT History.

Our thanks to “Big John” Smith (now of Australind WA) and to John O’Donohoe (Townsville NQ) for supplying information for this tribute piece.

## EFT Membership Renewal

COULD ANYONE who might be *12 February 2007 FNAR Family \$40* or *8 March 2007 Bendigo Bank FNAR \$15* (this is what appears on our bank statement) contact Trevor Horman, please? We have received your membership renewal, but we don’t know who you are. This is our preferred method of renewal, but please include a surname in the transaction so we know to whom we should credit it.

## Welcome Caretakers

WE EXTEND A VERY warm welcome to new caretakers Alf and Ethel Williams who originally hail from New Zealand but have been undertaking ‘laps’ of Australia for some years now and have a base in Mildura. Alf and Ethel have an impressive range of skills, which include working in the tourism and hospitality sector. They have a daughter living in Darwin, and moved their van into the precinct on 16 April, just in time for the tourist season.

# More briefs

## Tripe

THIS WORK OF PURE FICTION appeared in the *London Sunday Times* on 1 April (it was April Fool's Day). It is by the mob who claim to be 'racing' a train in a 4WD vehicle (not the references to speed) across Australia:

*The railway line up here is 30 miles west of the road. I drive blind and hope that — despite yet another nighttime break — I am in shape to make Darwin first. The LandRover Discovery has never been pushed so hard: the speedo is at 120mph all the time.*

*Adelaide River is the next road and rail intersection. There's a colonial railway station next to the level crossing that dates from the gold rush era. Trevor Horman is the station master. "She'll be here in 10 minutes," he tells me as I lean out of the window. "She won't catch you now — she slows right down into Darwin." I'm shattered, unshaven, full of junk food but on a high. Like Captain Woolf Barnato three-quarters of a century ago, I've proven that the car is still capable of beating the train.*

We could add hallucinogenic (Trevor does not know this man), fanciful (he thinks he was doing 120 MILES ph in a Landrover on a 130km/hour road) and one or two other descriptors to the man's list of self-appointed attributes, but that would be unkind.

Full text of the tripe appears at [http://driving.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life\\_and\\_style/driving/features/article1590764.ece](http://driving.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/driving/features/article1590764.ece) under the heading *Car vs Train Across Oz*.

## ALL ABOARD FOR RAILWAY REFRESHMENTS

Devonshire Tea will be served on the last Sunday of each month of the Dry Season between 11am and 3pm. The cost is \$5 per person.

Drop in to say hello, enjoy a Devonshire Tea and inspect the latest exhibits and works at the Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct.

### 2007 Dry Season Dates:

Sunday 29 April

Sunday 27 May

Sunday 24 June

Sunday 29 July

Sunday 26 August

Sunday 30 September

All our labour is voluntary and all proceeds go toward the continued improvement of the precinct.



## All Aboard

**Editor:** Robyn Smith

**Contributors:** Trevor Horman, Judy Richardson & some who prefer to be anonymous...

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**Other Informants:** Entirely welcome

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# The station over time



THE 1941 IMAGE ABOVE was sent to us by Norm McKinnon, a WW2 veteran who visited us on 18 February this year.

The station building looks as tired as its 52 years would suggest. This is before the bombing in February 1942 but certainly during the military build-up.

Note in particular the absence of the vents on the roof, and the garden is nothing like the neat and beautiful place that it was in the 1930s (above right) when Eve Sack was the Tea Lady.

If you look carefully in the 1941 image, you can see four telegraph wires in the sky above the station.



They passed just in front of the station. In 1888 there was just a single wire on top of the poles. The second wire was added in 1909; the others went in just prior to WW2.

Compare these with the Mark Hatch's 1947 images (the two bottom pictures). By this stage, there were vents on the roof and the additional shed had been built down the back.

The slab for the shed remains. Note the concrete slab at the front of the station. This was the floor of a small shed used by the military (purpose unknown but possibly train control) and it only appears in rare photographs. It obviously did not last long after 1945.

In both cases, note that the original rails are considerably lower than they are today. They were lifted in 1967 when the track was rebuilt for the iron ore traffic.

Note especially the motor bus driven right up to the door of the station over the tracks. Obviously, there were no trains on Sundays!!

# 2007 membership renewal now due

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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I hereby enclose:

\$30 Individual      \$15 Pensioner      \$40 Family  
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**PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR SURNAME WITH AN EFT TRANSACTION.**

## 2007 Calendar of Events

- **ANZAC Day Services**

Wednesday 25 April, Coomalie Community Government Council

- **Heritage Day, Precinct Open Day**

Monday 7 May at the Precinct

- **Adelaide River Races**

Saturday 16 June, Adelaide River Show Society

- **Adelaide River Show**

9-10 June, Adelaide River Show Society

- **Annual Railway Picnic Day**

Monday 6 August, Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct

**SEE PAGE 12 FOR DEVONSHIRE TEA DATES**

**FNAR  
All Aboard!**

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