



All Aboard

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

June 2009

Belated new year wishes

IT SEEMS SILLY TO SAY IN JUNE, but we extend Happy New Year wishes to all our Members and Friends.

It also seems to be in somewhat poor taste, given what our Victorian and Queensland counterparts have been through, with fire and flood contemporaneously and respectively.

One of our own was involved in Australia's worst natural disaster, the Victorian bushfires. You may recall that Owen and Helen Peake relocated to Victoria in August last year after Owen had put in a great effort to commission the Smith & Coventry wheel lathe and to wire the Sidney Williams Hut that is now our exhibition hall.

On Saturday 7 February their new home was burnt to the ground by the Callignee bushfire, which had been deliberately lit. Owen and Helen were in Melbourne visiting relatives at the time. Not only have they lost their home and belongings but Helen's large

collection of art and craft that she has created over many years, and Owen's vast archive of Engineering Heritage.

In Owen's inimitable style, he is weighing up the options and making plans for the recovery project. His credentials for this include the restoration of power supplies in Darwin after Cyclone Tracy.

Owen and Helen have been heartened by the good wishes of Territorians and the offers of assistance that have been made.

Heritage Rail in Victoria has also taken a big hit with these fires.

In particular, the Yarra Valley Heritage Rail lost five of its six wooden bridges. All were perhaps more than 100 years old. One bridge in particular was a long curved bridge and images at the height of the fire were akin to fireworks on Sydney Harbour in terms of the spectacle.

The image the next day of two rails laying across a charred paddock with no sign of any bridge would make any rail enthusiast cry.

To our Victorian rail friends, please know that our thoughts are very much with you as you try to rebuild these valuable national resources.

Those of us who went through Cyclone Tracy (and other disasters in other places around the globe) are familiar with the work involved in rebuilding after such a devastating catastrophe.

Editor's note: you will see from this issue that whilst we have been 'complacent' on the newsletter front, we have been exceptionally productive on many others. Please forgive us for taking so long to produce this edition.



Owen Peake standing before the 1885 Smith & Coventry Wheel Lathe at the railway precinct at Adelaide River in July 2008.

The year 2008 in retrospect

IT IS ALWAYS USEFUL (even as a management tool) to reflect on our progress in the past 12 months.

The year 2008 was our seventh year of operation and the following is an attempt by President **Trevor Horman** to capture some of what happened.

Events

WE HAD A NUMBER of significant events during the year :

- it started with several busloads of visitors (90 all together) for the Bombing of Darwin commemorations in February. Nola and the girls provided morning tea;
- early in March we did our bit to Clean Up Australia by tidying up the NAR remnant at The Narrows (including work on Bridge #4 which got media coverage);
- on 3 April, at a ceremony in Parliament House, then Heritage Minister Len Kiely launched our web site (developed by Robyn Smith);
- on ANZAC Day we provided morning tea following the Dawn Service at Adelaide River;
- on May Day we conducted our Heritage Open Day;
- then Heritage Minister Len Kiely made a lengthy and very positive statement about FNAR in Parliament on 7 May;
- in June we operated a promotional booth at the National Trust's Heritage Fair;
- *Sandfly* was spirited away from the wharf (finally!) on 11 July for restoration;
- early in August we hosted a lunch for the Rejex Rally (120 intrepid motorists).
- We back up REJEX with the traditional Railway Picnic on 'Picnic Day', Monday 4 August 2008.
- on 18-19 August, we hosted a visit by the first motor vehicle to cross Australia – the 1908 Talbot from the National Motor Museum.
- later in August we hosted a visit by a British Parliamentary delegation and received warm feedback from Lord Faulkner (a Director of West Somerset Railway);
- on the weekend of 3-9 September we conducted the annual expedition to Birdum where Ann Kanters and Barry Sharp were our hosts;
- on the last Sunday of each month in the Dry Season, Nola Smith and Estelle Harris prepared Devonshire Teas (a real winner);
- in October 2008, a party of six participated in our first interstate expedition. This was a week-long event which included riding on the legendary *Gulflander* and the *Savanahlander*;
- in November we held the third Works in Progress exhibition at Allora Gardens Nursery at Berrimah which is specifically to show our many generous sponsors and stakeholders what we are up to.
- finally, on Wednesday 3 December we commemorated the 120th anniversary of the official opening of the bridge with a modest late afternoon ceremony at the bridge.



Editor: Robyn Smith

Copy writers: Trevor Horman, Judy Richardson

Chief Photographer: Judy Richardson

Proof reader: Margaret Tucker

All Aboard

E-mail: rail@northernexposure.com.au

URL: www.northernexposure.com.au/rail

Postal: GPO Box 3504, Darwin NT 0801

All Aboard phone: 08-8985 1909

Projects

- Owen Peake completed restoration work on the Smith & Coventry wheel lathe and actually saw it rotating before he left the Territory;
- we started work on additional shelters for caretakers;
- Mike Bowman and Owen Peake continued with the restoration work on the Hudswell Clarke 1910 steam locomotive #928 culminating in it actually moving in November;
- the restored 1888 Water Column was plumbed in to the original 6" cast iron water main by Peter Soulos;
- Owen Peake completed the installation of new fans and lights and power supplies in the Sidney Williams Exhibition Hall.
- the 1949 cattle wagon (that Mick had restored) and the 5,000 gallon petrol tanker were taken from Darwin to the River and placed on Road Three;
- ballast was installed north of DORAT Road Level Crossing in the railway track that we had lifted in 2003;
- extensive vegetation that had been growing through the NAR track north of the 1888 bridge was removed so that the track is now clear;
- earthworks were executed to widen the NAR embankment in Adelaide River to comply with a requirement that we are 6m from Freightlink.
- bridge #138 was uncovered after being buried for years;
- we uplifted an 80ft Sidney Williams hut in world record time, Peter Cornell took it to Adelaide River at 70kph and we had it stumped by the end of the year;
- the 1970s breach in the wall of the 1888 railway reservoir was restored;
- work commenced on an all-weather carpark near DORAT Road.
- a large pad was created for the erection of the Locomotive shed.
- the 20m long 1937 steel carriage BC329 was towed to Adelaide River by Peter Cornell and lowered in to place by Steelcon. It is now the Visitor Information Centre and will allow us to convert the

- Refreshment Rooms to a railway museum;
- Mick Kent restored the large FAIRWAY platform scales at the station.
- we restored 1887 railway bridge #4 at The Narrows by fitting 30 new wood sleepers;
- Mick Kent cleaned and painted the Allied Works Council roller AWC124; and
- Peter Poole 'pruned' the large Black Wattle trees near the station building to protect the building if they blew or fell down.

Acquisitions

- Great Southern Railway (Yvonne Lamotte) gifted a Toyota TG10 tow motor – as used on large railway platforms;
- Diane Lunn kindly donated a battery powered drill;
- Peter Cornell donated a quantity of WW2 Marsden matting (Pierced Steel Planking);
- Mike Bowman donated many items for the Hudswell Clarke steam locomotive including gauges, oilers, valves and lanterns;
- Brian Bate donated a set of AVERY platform scales;
- Barry MacKenzie donated a 5kVA Dunlite generator;
- Jack Devlin donated an extension ladder, a welder, a cut-off saw and an angle grinder;
- Allora Gardens Nursery donated more than 80 mature plants for the grounds;
- NTG donated a refrigerator and library shelving;
- Judy Richardson donated a CD player;
- Power and Water donated a 80 kVA generator which is powered by a legendary GM4/71 engine;
- Steve Pendle (in Ireland) donated a GM2/71 engine which is still in transit from SA;
- Trevor Menzies donated some rare 1942 survey maps of Larrimah and Adelaide River;
- the estate of John Crossing (former SAR employee) kindly donated railway artifacts, literature and photo collections;
- a quantity of steel sleepers (about 80) was gifted by Power and Water;
- Cameron Stone donated an 80ft Sidney Williams hut; and

- our library was expanded with a number of new and special donations.

Members

- Membership exceeded 80
- During the year members contributed more than 10,000 hours of volunteer effort.

Administration

- Several significant grant applications were submitted;
- we participated in the Adelaide River Tourism Group;
- we maintained our good relationship with our neighbors (ARSS);
- we maintained our Associate Membership with the National Trust;
- we maintained our Associate Membership of Tourism Top End;
- we maintained our relationship with the Association of Tourist Railways (Victoria);
- the peak national Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Australia amended its rules to permit FNAR and Ghan Preservation Society to participate without forming an NT organisation (very special treatment);
- more than 5,000 visitors to the precinct with many leaving complimentary comments in the visitors book;
- Mike Bowman maintained our link with Don Valley Railway in Tasmania;
- Rob Davies continues his fine work in being our link with The Bellarine Railway;
- Mick Kent organized two successful 500 clubs to purchase eight customised postcards for merchandise; and
- we made presentations to the Rotary Club of Palmerston/Howard Springs and the Lions Club of Cooktown.

Publications

- Robyn Smith, in collaboration with Bob Alford, produced a laminated A3 poster chronologically documenting the 64 air raids on the Top End for merchandising;
- Robyn Smith developed and published our web site.
- John Evans published his book *Proceed*

to Hawker in July (John has the largest collection of Train Orders in the world);

- Coleen Harris picked up the good work that Kay Goon had done in researching tea ladies at Adelaide River and extended the research as part of her studies at CDU. The result was so good that it has been nominated and accepted for inclusion in the next *Journal of Northern Territory History*.
- we produced the five-page technical paper on the Smith & Coventry wheel lathe in the December Newsletter.
- during the year we published three newsletters and distributed them locally and internationally (thanks to Robyn Smith and Judy Richardson); and
- Mick Kent continues his detailed working of documenting the railway.

Corporate sponsors

WE WERE AGAIN FAVOURED with many services and gifts from corporate sponsors. A sponsor's recognition board is prominently displayed in the Refreshment Rooms. Significant recent sponsors include:

- Darwin Container Services (Peter and Estelle Cornell);
- Allora Gardens Nursery (Estelle Cornell);
- The Community Benefit Fund;
- Heritage Conservation Services and the Heritage Advisory Council;
- Women That Work;
- Power and Water Corporation;
- Coomalie Community Government Council;
- Darwin City Council;
- Litchfield Shire Council;
- Federal Dept of Family and Community Services;
- Tourism NT;
- Tourism Top End;
- CS Services (Cameron Stone);
- PDQ Builders (Jeff Fleming);
- Moonbeam Building Design (Chris Renehan);
- Gwelo Developments;
- Al and Brenda Hocksema;
- Adelaide River Inn (Bob Smith); and
- Territory Weed Management (Murray Fuller).

Caretakers

ALF AND ETHEL WILLIAMS looked after the precinct through the 2007-08 Wet Season before heading for Hermannsburg in March.

John Nixon (commenced July 2007) continued on until December 2008, the longest straight stay by any caretaker.

Then in mid year Des and Laura Williams joined us following more advertising by Nola and Estelle.

We also had Gary and Gloria Holmes for a few weeks during the peak of the season.

Later in the year, Alf and Ethel returned for a term through until mid-October.

We were well served by these people in 2008 and we are most appreciative of all of their efforts.

Farewells

IN AUGUST, OWEN PEAKE left the Territory after 40 years to settle in Victoria. Owen put in a lot of time and effort and materials and we will miss him greatly. Hopefully he will visit in 2009.

Our long time friend Rilla Kerr relocated to Rockhampton.

And our supporters Bill Lane, Albert Albany and John Herre departed this mortal coil. May they rest in peace.

In conclusion

THANK YOU MOST SINCERELY to everyone who helped to make it all happen in 2008. We can be proud of what has been achieved. We still have a way to go, but we are making good progress. The ultimate goal of re-establishing the NAR to Snake Creek is moving closer to reality.

We look forward to a very exciting year in 2009. You'd be more than welcome to join us in any capacity that may interest you. Feel free to make obligation free contact by phone or e-mail.

If you would like to become a member or renew your membership the relevant form is available on the website.

One beneficial aspect of the World Economic Recession for Heritage Rail is that the value of scrap steel is zero. If only we could go to the merchants and buy back the precious steel sleepers for zero!!

To cap off the year, we were honoured on Australia Day with an Australia Day Award from Coomalie Council for **Best Community Group** (and aren't we tickled pink!). Local Government Minister Rob Knight made the presentation before a large Australia Day crowd at Batchelor. It is comforting to know that our efforts are appreciated by the wider community. Comments were again made that our project has regional (not just local) significance.

ALL ABOARD FOR RAILWAY REFRESHMENTS

Devonshire Tea will be served on the last Sunday of each month of the Dry Season between 11 am 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.

Remaining 2009 Dry Season Dates:

Sunday 28 June

Sunday 26 July

Sunday 30 August

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



A gong from Coomalie Council

WE WERE HONOURED AT the Australia Day ceremony at Batchelor, winning the **Community Group Award**.

Local Government Minister Rob Knight deviated from his prepared citation to commend the highly developed lobbying skills of the Friends.

In our response, we thanked Coomalie Council (and Lisa Wain in particular) for its support.

We also took the opportunity to mention the Rail Trail proposal linking Batchelor and Adelaide River. This attracted considerable informal support during tea and lamingtons that followed the ceremony.

It was particularly pleasing to hear that the nomination of FNAR had come from a Batchelor resident who had only come to be aware of our work during 2008. She was particularly impressed with the modest ceremony to celebrate the 120th anniversary of the railway bridge on 3 December.

The transcript of FNAR Nomination for Australia Day Award is:

Community Group of the Year Friends of North Australia Railway

Friends of the North Australia Railway (FNAR) at Adelaide River Inc was established in 2001 at Adelaide River. Using their own words the group is 'a bunch of blokes and sheilas in the Top End of the Northern Territory in Australia which is dedicated to the preservation of our history and heritage.' They have a range of skills such as architecture, engineering, heritage, journalism, history, cooking, cleaning, woodwork, metalwork, metal fabrication, fettling, felling, photography, flood recovery, gardening, grass cutting and slashing and so it goes on. In essence, they are people who want to get on with a job and preserve a fabulous precinct

for the rest of the world to love. Most of them live in Darwin, some 112km away but some of them reside in the picturesque townships of Adelaide River and Batchelor.

The first stage of the project was to preserve and restore the historic 1889 Railway Refreshment Rooms at Adelaide River. With a contribution of about 6,000 hours of volunteer effort every year since 2002 this has been substantially achieved. An annual event that has been recreated is the Railway Picnic.

The second stage of the project is to recommission 4km of the legendary North Australia Railway (the Never Never Line) between Adelaide River and Snake Creek WW2 Armaments depot. This spectacular section of the NAR includes the 500ft long Victorian bridge over the Adelaide River, a straight run through the township parallel to the Stuart Highway followed by a scenic section which clings to the flanks of Mount Carr above the Wet

Season flood waters of Snake Creek before the line enters Snake Creek WW2 military site.

Since 2001 a great deal of restoration work has been undertaken and improvements continue to be made. Of particular note are the steam pump and boiler to drive water from the reservoir into the elevated water tank at the rear of the Station overlooking the reservoir the Overland Telegraph display housed in the Sidney Williams Hut in the precinct and a plaque dedicated to WWII nurses on 11 November 2007 at an adjacent Ambulance Train Siding.

The FNAR recognize that the precinct has cultural heritage significance in the areas of the Overland Telegraph Line, mining, governance, ethnicity, railway, social history, engineering and construction, the cattle industry, World War II, nursing and most recently, tourism and hospitality.

Congratulations to all concerned. This is outstanding recognition from our peers and supporters of the work that we have achieved. A big thank you, too, to the lady in Batchelor who nominated us!



Clean-Up Australia Day at The Narrows

SUNDAY 1 MARCH WAS Clean-up Australia Day.

We nominated the 700m remnant of the NAR at the Narrows and were pleased to be joined by the Landcruiser Club of the NT for this project.

One critical item was to replace a number of steel sleepers adjacent to Bridge #4 which have been missing for years. This required some preparation, which fell to Mick Kent on Saturday afternoon. Mick found six of the flat trough sleepers that we needed in his stash. That was the easy bit. He then set about finding and reconditioning the cleats and bolts that these sleepers need. It was hard work for a couple of hours.



The effort at The Narrows kicked off at 0700 with Nola Smith, Di Lunn, Monique and Kristin Smith taking registrations and commencing work. Peter Poole and Justin DeZylva were naturals at fettling after previous experience.

Judy Richardson took hold of a hammer and cold chisel and chipped concrete away from the ornate iron work of the bridge.

At least 16 members of the Landcruiser Club turned up to lend a hand.

As a result, our achievements were:

- a full clean-up of the 700m Reserve from end to end. This involved 10 people and about 30 bags of rubbish were taken to the dump;

- the vegetation overhanging the railway was 'pruned' so that the 700m of railway track is now visible from end to end (what a wonderful sight it is with the 120-year old railway framed by greenery).



- 'new' steel sleepers were installed adjacent to Bridge #4 on the railway to replace steel sleepers that had been stolen when scrap metal prices were high. This involved excavating channels to slip the 'new' sleepers in, springing the rails towards each other to get the outside cleats in, installing the inner bolts and cleats, and finally packing the ballast back under the sleeper.
- rust converter was applied to the wrought iron superstructure of Bridge #4 which had been built in 1887 by Charles Millar using Dorman Long Iron from Middlesbro (ref Sydney Harbour Bridge) and fabricated by James Martin at Gawler in SA. Much effort was applied to remove concrete splashes left by the latter day municipal authorities who had formalised the drainage at The Narrows. The bridge looks better already and is now ready to paint.
- an electric warning signal that was used to confirm to train drivers that the Level Crossing (LX) lights were working at the Winnellie LX was replaced. This galvanized column had been sand-blasted on Friday by

continued on page 8

continued from page 7

Peter Soulos at Qantas Parap. We are incredulous as to how those involved erected it without killing themselves. It is now painted gloss white and we will refit its hardware over coming months.

- a 1.5m deep hole was excavated to enable the 5km marker to be reinstated (it disappeared a couple of weeks ago when a government contractor was in the vicinity).
- a work party went and collected two pieces of railway line (it weighs 80lb/yard) and delivered it to Qantas Parap to be cut and drilled to form the new 'mile' post.
- Simon Love brought along some herbicide and used it judiciously.

It was a fantastic result and an outstanding demonstration of what can be achieved by volunteer organisations on public or Crown land. There was no meeting convened, no calling of tenders, no probity audits, no financial outlay and a tangible result!

Members of the Landcruiser club put on a sausage sizzle and said that they had learnt something about the NAR and had enjoyed themselves. That's a win-win.



Monique and Kristin Smith (between wildlife rescues)
Members of the Toyota Landcruiser Club



'New' caretakers for 2009

LAST YEAR, GORDON AND Myrlene Wilkinson visited us and enquired whether they could come back next year and be our caretakers for a few months.

We were most impressed and jumped at their offer.

Gordon and Myrlene are New Zealanders so we were doubly impressed that they wished to return to Adelaide River.

They arrived in May and set up camp and have been labouring away ever since.

Gordon has been mowing lawns, digging trenches, erecting fettler's sheds, making bread and cooking at our sausage sizzle.

Myrlene is our hostess with the mostess and has taken to meeting and greeting and explaining the history of our precinct as though she had been there for years. We are very impressed.

They even have very good computer skills and are trying their hand at writing brochures.

We are going to block the roads so they can't escape.

Welcome Gordon and Myrlene – it is our pleasure to have you as caretakers in our Railway Heritage Precinct.



ANZAC Day at the River

THIS YEAR, OWING TO THE FALL of the calendar, ANZAC Day did not provide us with a long weekend. Nonetheless, events proceeded as usual and it was a great success.

The Dawn Service at Adelaide River War Cemetery was quite moving with dawn breaking at about 6.05am and the birds starting to twitter whilst we listened to presentations by His Honour the Administrator, our local MP and a military Chaplain.

A highlight was the *Last Post*. As no brass bands were available, Major Trevor Smith from the Army had kindly provided a CD full of Ceremonial Music. Coomalie Council tried desperately to find a bugler or trumpeter including on talkback radio on Friday.

At the last minute of Friday an 11 year-old girl from Howard Springs made contact and attended the rehearsal at 5.30 that afternoon. She was very calm and humble, yet she rose and played the *Last Post* and *Revellie* as though she was in the bathroom playing only to herself. Not a jitter in the world, and plenty of wind. It was spine-tingling stuff at dawn.

After the service, many people adjourned to the ARSS club for breakfast (they had been preparing it since 0400). We caught up with

a lot of supporters and well-wishers such as Doc Doherty (WW2 tours of Fenton), Tim Baldwin, Richard Luxton, Sandy MacLean, Max Corliss and others.

At the station

WE OPENED THE PRECINCT bright and early and boiled the billy for anyone wanting an alternative to the traditional 'one day of the year' fare (we offered a cup of tea and an ANZAC biscuit).

Soon after opening, Geoff and Merry Goodrich arrived with Sharon. They kindly looked after business whilst some of us went networking. Thanks to Geoff and Merry.

With next to zero promotion, we served more than 50 visitors during the day.

We ran guided tours of the precinct and entertained several prospective members and supporters.

There were two groups of boy scouts that came through. Full of enthusiasm, these guys wanted to climb on everything, push and pull everything, lock each other in the communication pillbox - not to mention souveniring dog spikes.

Visitors who were there early were treated to a southern transit of *The Ghan* at 1030.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Expressions of Interest

Casual Tour Guides - Parliament House

Expressions of interest are invited for casual Tour Guides to conduct public tours of Parliament House in Darwin. Tours are conducted every Saturday at 9am and 11am, and, during the Dry Season, on Wednesdays at 10.30am. A tour usually lasts 1-1.5 hours, depending on demand.

A roster system for guides will be established, so not all guides will be required to work every session. A typical tour involves a description of the building, a brief history of governance in the Territory, our floral and faunal emblems and Coat of Arms, basic parliamentary procedures, and the bombing of Darwin (Parliament House is built on the site of the pre-WWII Post Office).

Some tours coincide with parliamentary sitting days, so it is beneficial if guides are knowledgeable about Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Tour Guides need to be well presented and have a friendly nature, be experienced in public speaking and have a knowledge of the history of Darwin and the NT. Guides will need to adhere to confidentiality, be impartial in their presentations and be prepared to answer questions or refer them to others.

Tour Guides will need to undergo Criminal History and Police checking requirements.

Training will be provided by the Parliamentary Relations and Education Unit.

Pay rates are pro-rated at the AO6 level (\$66,238-\$74,047). For further information, please contact Caroline Cavanagh on 8946 1430 or by e-mail: caroline.cavanagh@nt.gov.au

May Day Open Day success

MONDAY 4 MAY (the May Day public holiday) was a memorable day in our 2009 Calendar. Up to 400 visitors passed through the rail heritage precinct and enjoyed the displays, the wonderful Dry Season weather and the sensational sounds of the Darwin City Brass Band.

Three major trains were also laid on for our guests, thanks to Freightlink.

An enthusiastic group of walkers trekked to Norm MacMahon's WW2 signals site which is still in great condition. On the return journey, we visited the alternate Sigs station site, 1888 railway bridge, the 1874 QCE Hotel, the Pioneer Cemetery and the Fettle's Trolley shed site.



The Darwin Brass Band set up under the large shade trees and played from 11am until 2pm. They were sensational and it was probably the first time that some people had listened to a brass band in many years. Joan and Andy Frazer came from Pine Creek to hear them and Ken and Mali Frazer came from Perth!

Nola Smith and Di Lunn organized our first ever Trash and Treasure sale. People were seen going away with arms full of 'treasure'. Similarly we saw people with a handful of our pre-loved books.

Devonshire Teas were a hit once again and are being asked about regularly (it's the last Sunday of the month during the Dry Season!!!).

Mick Kent and Ross Cowells staffed the

BBQ and did a roaring trade in sizzled sausages.



Mick Kent sizzling the snags and onions

Chris Renehan drove the *Ben Parry* fairground train after carting down some 'treasure' of his own.

There were many comments on the pristine state of the grounds, which is a credit to Mick Kent who has mown and snipped the grass for weeks in preparation for this event. Congratulations, Mick. You can feel justifiably proud.



One of the sale racks on Open Day

We had lots of VIP visitors during the day including Joan and Andy Frazer who open the Pine Creek Railway Station, Marilyn Reeves from the *LingaLonga Festival*, Sharyn & Max Innes who tantalized us with tales of their recent visit to railway heaven in Central Africa, Peter and Estelle Cornell, Bruce 'Crikey'

May Day Open Day success

Jones and Roz from Batchelor, Bob Foster (*Birdum or Bust*), Yvonne Forrest (Historical Society), Barry MacKenzie (I kid you not), and Lisa and Colin Wain from Coomalie Council.

A big thanks to all of our volunteers who helped to put the show together including Nola Smith, Di Lunn, Estelle Harris, Coleen Harris, Del and Ross Cowells, Mick Kent, Fran Briggs, Judy Richardson, Chris 'Casey Jones' Renehan, Mike Bowman and Peter Cornell.

You did us proud - again.



Budget 2009 - little for heritage

AS HAS BEEN THE CASE since the introduction of the *Heritage Conservation Act* in 1993, the annual heritage grants budget remains at a trifling \$200,000.

Given the nature of economics and small considerations such as inflation and CPI increases, the budget today is worth less than it was in 1993, and it must support a great many more heritage properties.

If anyone can explain the rationale for this, please burst forth and serenade us with your dulcitol tones!

Also as usual, Heritage comes way down the list for scrutiny of the budget during the Estimates process in June of each year.

We gleaned this year that the new Minister for Heritage, Alison Anderson, is finding the extraordinarily long gestation of the much-mooted *Heritage Act* as tedious as the rest of the heritage community.

As we keep saying, the new act was to have taken 18 months when the review was announced in 2002.

The situation has become ridiculous, and the Minister is obviously aware of it: 'We are working through the process of bringing that saga to an end,' she said when questioned by the Shadow Minister for Heritage, Peter Chandler, about it.

For once, the Minister did not proffer the very lame excuse that the legislation was with parliamentary counsel, as her predecessors have done.

The Independent Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, asked about the proposed rail trail in the following terms:

Minister, will your department somehow secure the old North Australia Rail corridor - from Noonamah across to Darwin River and through to Batchelor and Adelaide River - to ensure it is not sold? I know there were small amounts of it sold, but not all sold; so in time it may be developed as a multi-purpose rail trail as part of our recreation and tourism infrastructure.

Minister, I believe most of the old North Australia Railway line did have a conservation zone, or a heritage zone, over it at one stage, that is zone in the *Planning Act*, but that seems to have dropped off. Would the government give some consideration to securing this corridor so it is not slowly sold off and the rail trail idea could not then be possible, where the bicycle path will one day be built?

The Minister responded that she was advised the government had never received such a proposal, to which Mr Wood responded: 'You have now. This has come from the Adelaide River Railway historical group, and it is something I also support'.

Also revealed during the Estimates process is that the level of funding to maintain government-owned heritage facilities has remained at \$1m for several years.

It seems that we still have a way to go to convince government of the value of heritage.

New ground: our first evening event!

ON SATURDAY 6 JUNE, we held our first night-time event: a silent movie night.

There was a fair bit of trepidation in the approach to this event because we have never attempted a night time event before, we are novices with DVD players and digital projectors, the new Sidney Williams hut has no lights or power or fans, we used a ghetto-blaster for the sound system and a bed sheet for a screen and we developed the event concept at short notice.

It was a frantic effort on Saturday afternoon to install the floor carpet, erect the 'screen', set up the audio system (thanks to last minute offer by Coomalie Council), run power leads across from the original Sid Williams hut, install some lighting and prepare for the sausage sizzle.



Our 'new' Sidney Williams Hut - thanks to Cameron Stone and Porky

Towards 6pm, as the sun was setting and the full moon was rising, everything seemed to fall in to place. The sausages were sizzling, everyone had showered and looked sparkling, Richard Luxton rolled in with 40 luxury seats and patrons began to arrive and share the ambience at the Railway Refreshment Rooms gardens before adjourning to the cinema. The movie title and lead-in music was playing in the Sid Williams Hut and Myrlene's boiled lollies were for sale for consumption during the show.

At 7pm we thanked Coomalie Council for the concrete floor and the sound system and

Dean Harvey from South Australia wished us well with the Snake Creek railway project.

Then it was show time! For the next 75 minutes we enjoyed a nostalgia trip back to the American Civil War era and some fantastic images of 1860s locomotives getting in to all kinds of fixes with Buster Keaton doing his own stunts climbing all over moving locos, etc.

About 50 patrons enjoyed the show with a significant contingent from Batchelor, which was great to see.



The freshly-poured concrete floor, thanks to a grant from the Coomalie Council

Heartfelt thanks go to Judy, Myrlene and Gordon for organizing the catering; Judy, Mick and Gordon for helping to set up the 'cinema'; Adelaide River School for the use of the projector; Coomalie Council for the audio system; Richard Luxton for supplying and bringing the chairs (plus lotsa patrons); Peter Cornell for lighting; and Bob Foster for running the ticket box. *Voila!*



In brief...in brief...in brief...in brief..in brief



NOW, THESE THREE may not be pretty, but they're rolled gold as far as we're concerned. Left is **Peter 'Porky' Cornell**, a great benefactor to us (he looks as flash as a rat with a gold tooth in a morning suit). In the middle is our Vice-President **Mick Kent** who toils away on any range of projects at any given time and fully meets the definition of a quiet achiever. And at left is the legendary **Leo Izod** of Qantas Hangar Parap fame. Leo's particular skill is that he puts almost anything together from a range of stray bits - and then devises an engine to make it operational (see example at page 15).

John Evans visit

IT WAS A PLEASURE TO host a visit in early March by **John Evans** from Adelaide along with John's mum **Pauline**.

John works for SA Tourism and is a Board Member of the National Rail Museum. He was the Darwin Airport Manager for TAA in the early 1970s.

John was most interested in Adelaide River and the activities of FNAR. He kindly offered valuable insights in to rail operations and into marketing and promotion.

Pauline was a nurse during WW2 and enjoyed the Lorna Laffer story. Pauline said that the nurses who came back from far flung places such as the Territory were always the most fun to be with. We need no convincing about that!

Another gong for Estelle

ALLORA GARDENS NURSERY in Winnellie won yet another award at the Nursery and Garden Industry Awards in Canberra last year.

The award was for 'exceptional commitment and exemplary attitude towards encouraging learning and development in their staff'.

Allora Gardens is operated by **Estelle Cornell**, wife of Peter 'Porky' Cornell, and they are extremely generous sponsors to us. Congratulations, Estelle, on yet another gong for your business.

Cultural Stereotypes

ONE DAY EARLIER IN THE YEAR, we were covered in sweat, concrete and red dirt when a visting family from India happed across the station. The lady of the family quietly took Judy aside and asked if it would be okay to take a photograph of 'Europeans' working physically. Of course! Irony: about 3,000 Indian 'coolies' were employed to do the hard earthworks on the NAR in 1887-1889.

Gifted Tool

DI LUNN KINDLY DONATED a brand new battery powered drill. This will be very handy, not only for jobs that are distant from power points. They are great in spots where long hanging leads are a hazard, and also when the power is off during works on the actual electrics.

Thanks, Di, for a very useful piece of kit. Donations such as these are helping us to progressively become more productive at the River and more self-sufficient.

Another special gift

THANKS ALSO TO **STEVE TWENTYMAN** who donated some interesting photos for our collection and thanks to Mike Bowman who was the conduit. We are presently considering the best custodian for our collections (stable temperature, etc).

Carriage BC329 finally stumped

BC329 WAS BOUGHT AT AUCTION in Darwin in 2004. Since then it has been sandblasted and painted, had new windows fitted and had a whole new 'period' wooden interior installed. It has spent several years in Peter Cornell's yard at Allora Gardens Nursery.

The carriage (minus bogies) weighs in at 20 tonne so its not easy to move.

Fortunately, Pete found time to take it to Adelaide River in the 2008 Dry Season. Then we had to 'cut out' the road bogie that had transported it from Port Augusta to Darwin late in 1991. Steelcon had a 50 tonne crane going past one day and they lowered the carriage down from its high perch to a manageable level, thanks to Damien and Peter Cornell.

We borrowed some 15 tonne hydraulic jacks from Leo Izod to do the final levelling. We got it close enough (before we were rained out) to give ourselves confidence that we could order concrete. It was highly desirable to get this job done before the Wet.

To make sure that we gave this the best shot we left Darwin at 0530 on Saturday 13 December last year and arrived at the River at 0645 when it was cool enough with good daylight. The first hour was spent jacking and packing to get the carriage level. To do the levelling we used that well proven and simple clear plastic tube water level.

The next two hours were spent cleaning out the holes in the ground that were to take the large steel stumps. Thankfully there had been no rain overnight and none during the morning. The holes cleaned out well and had firm bottoms.

We rang Phil at Hanson's at Batchelor and ordered the concrete for 1100. He said that he would batch it when the rain stopped!

We had everything ready when the concrete arrived, but we were exhausted. Again, we were lucky to have no rain and even luckier to have Phil deliver the concrete as he cheerfully hopped in and helped us well beyond the call of duty.

We finally got lunch at 1400.

We used Leo's jacks again to remove the temporary timber supports and lower the carriage on to the permanent steel stumps.

We were stunned at how much damage that white ants had done to the wooden sleepers on the ground. The sleepers are now stacked well up in the air with spacers between them.

The final job was to check to final levels of the carriage now that it is stumped. It was found to be perfectly level and in addition it is above the 3 March 2007 flood level (more than 1:100 years).

This carriage will serve as the Visitor Information Centre. A big thanks to Judy and Mick plus Phil from Hansons.

Manna from...politicians!

WHO'D HAVE THUNK IT?????

We were delighted (enraptured, doing cart-wheels, etc) to learn that we are to be the recipient of an NT Government grant of \$2,500 for the saddle tank on the Hudswell Clarke locomotive.

This was at the instigation of the Member for Daly, **Rob Knight**, and his heritage-conscious Electorate Officer **Sharon McAlear**.

And if you think *that* means Christmas came early, consider this: **Gerry Wood** (Independent, Nelson) and **Kezia Purick** (Country Liberals, Goyder) donated \$500

each from their Electorate Allowances to the very same cause.

This is wonderful news, and we are thrilled to bits about it.

We could sit complacently and preen our feathers, but the truth is that none of this money would have been forthcoming were it not for the berating of said politicians by our Steam Team Captain, **Mike Bowman** - the man who has been undertaking said restoration (and several politicians have made reference to our lobbying prowess...).

Thank you all for your generosity. You won't be disappointed.

Historical Society field trip

ON MONDAY 8 June (Queens' birthday holiday), we whisked Myrlene and Gordon off on a tour of the Goldfields Loop with the Historical Society of the NT.

It is important that our people are familiar with the region in which we operate.

Max Corliss very kindly offered to run the show whilst Myrlene and Gordon were away (and Max did a great job of keeping the station open prior to the arrival of Myrlene and Gordon). Thank you on both counts, Max.

Later in the morning, Max was joined by Nola Smith and Estelle Harris who dished up Devonshire Teas to the visitors. It must have been a busy day because Nola and Estelle were late home that night. Their Devonshire's are irresistible.

Meanwhile Trevor, Judy, Myrlene and Gordon had a great day with the Historical Society. We thoroughly enjoyed our guided tour and lunch at the Grove Hill Hotel.



Gordon and Myrlene at the entrance to the rustic Grove Hill pub accommodation



The most impressive bottle collection at Grove Hill Pub

Brand new 1904 Oldsmobile

IF YOU WANT TO SEE the miracle of making a silk purse from a sow's ear, just visit Leo Izod at Qantas Parap.

A couple of months ago Leo acquired what was purported to be a 1904 Oldsmobile – very quaint. It turned out to be a total fabrication and very poorly done. Leo set it aside as a bad joke.

Instead, he decided to build one from the ground up. He had quite a few photos to go by and someone found a drawing on the Internet. Knowing the actual length of one component, Leo was able to scale the whole drawing.

This vehicle is little removed from a horse and buggy carriage and its chain driven from a single cylinder motor of about 2.5 horsepower.

Nevertheless, like a phoenix from the ashes,

it rises out of the ground each day.

Where do you find a chain driven rear axle with differential? Well, you grab a T-Model Ford axle assembly out your paddock, clean and blast it, remove most of the appendages, take it out to Porky's and mill the slots in it for the chain to pass through and then back to Qantas and fit the chain. How else?

Leo had a cylinder block for the ancient engine but no piston or con-rod. He modified another piston but could not find a suitable con-rod. So he simply cut an existing connecting rod in half and extended it a couple of inches with another piece of con-rod.

At the rate that he is going he will be finished by Christmas.

In between all of this, he is hosting visitors to the Hangar and chatting with any retired bloke who drops in for a yarn.

Ash pit archaeological dig

SINCE THE FIRST EVIDENCE of the the ash pit appeared last year, we have dreamt of excavating it.

The pit is located between the rails just outside the WW2 locomotive running shed. The one at Birdum is only about 2ft deep and ash is fairly light and easy to dig. On that basis, we anticipated hand excavation would be viable and mentioned it as a project to the Conservation Volunteer Trust.

However a backhoe became available on 6 June, courtesy of Peter Bruce from Bruce Construction, so we thought it would be good to do the bulk excavation mechanically and just tidy up by hand.

We did not really know what we would find or what condition it would be in.

As soon as the backhoe dug in it started hitting hard material and those present thought we had a very shallow pit. The backhoe pulled out the first steel sleeper along with clouds of black dust, then a wooden sleeper with a steel switchpoint fitting attached came out. Then came many more steel sleepers, mostly in very sad condition. The ash pit had obviously been used as a dump at some point in the past, and our best guess is about 1976.

Finally, the backhoe found the concrete bottom at a depth of over three feet. The pit has concrete steps to access it at both ends.

The backhoe stopped before it did any damage and it is clear that the concrete pit was well made in 1941-1942 as it had to support heavy steam locomotives.

The walls and stairs that are visible seem to be in good condition. A grate came out with the rubble, which may indicate that there was a sump in the bottom of the pit.

Thanks, too, must go to Peter Mousellas for a digger to remove tree stumps on the project.

Since then, caretakers Gordon Wilkinson and Ken Wilson have hand-cleaned out the remaining material in the ash pit plus exposed all of the bolts holding the rails along the rim of the pit. At the southern end of the pit they found a small sump and cleaned that out as well. A pipe was found in the sump heading south. Its outlet has not been found yet.



Peter Bruce clearing out the northern half of the pit



The southern half of the ash pit excavated



*The excavated ash pit on 21 June
See also 1944 photo by Jim Harvey on page 19*

Fettlers trolley shed is up!

JEFF FLEMING FROM PDQ Builders has been most generous to us in recent years. PDQ fabricated the frames for the 2003 toilet block and the 2005 Disabled toilet block.

Last year, we asked Jeff if he could have a look at a shed to replace the original fettlers trolley depot at Adelaide River (the concrete foundation and the original rails are still in place). We provided dimensional details.

To our great delight, in February Jeff rang to say that the job was underway and asked whether we wanted it fully assembled or as a flat pack. We opted for the latter.

Then on 28 March, PDQ delivered the shed.

We have been most anxious about the Fairmont fettlers trolley being out in the weather and so this addition to the precinct will be both historic and functional.

In April, Kerry Moran and Trevor excavated 11 holes for the foundations for the revitalised shed.

On 16 May, Kerry Moran and our new caretakers Gordon Wilkinson and Barry Truman helped pour the concrete foundations and carefully placed the steel plates that had to be cast in, to connect to the wall frames.

On 24 May the frame of the fettlers trolley shed was erected. This involved standing the PDQ wall frames on the cast in steel plates and welding it all together. An expert team involving boilermaker Jack Devlin, Kerry Moran, Gordon Wilkinson and Barry Truman made it all look easy.

Jan and Ken Wilson arrived on a visit from Walhalla Goldfields Railway and we discovered, to our delight, that Ken is an expert at erecting sheds. He was soon hard at work cutting and measuring whilst Judy, Trevor and Gordon screwed our heritage corrugated iron in place.

Jan helped Myrlene in the Station.

We all had a great day and it was such a pleasure to welcome two very willing workers in the form of Jan and Ken.

*Right: Ken Wilson (what a day **HE** picked to visit!) measuring before cutting the pre-loved corrugated iron for the door. If you drop in, it's highly likely that we'll find a job for you! More photographs on page 18.*



Above and below: Kerry Moran barrowing the concrete to the foundation holes on 16 May.



Fettlers trolley shed is up!



Gordon Wilkinson (striking a risque pose!), Barry Truman, Kerry Moran and Trevor Horman pouring the concrete foundations on 16 May.



The fully erected steel frame on 24 May.



Peter Poole and Judy Richardson on Peter's fettlers trolley



The finished product! We did say 'pre-loved' corrugated iron...



The Fairmont fettlers trolley at Adelaide River. The shed is specifically to give this vehicle a Wet season home.

More on the ash pit (from p16)



Unidentified NFB locomotives
Adelaide River 28/3/1944
SOURCE J Harvey PROPRIETOR

NO. 1366

An image of the loco shed in 1944 taken by the legendary Jim Harvey. It shows two steam locomotives of the day on the road that ran through the shed. Perhaps one of them has just used the ash pit which was in front of the shed. Photograph courtesy of the Northern Territory Library Collection.

Coming events at the River

Saturday 1 August - RAIL TRAIL WALK

In conjunction with the *Linga Longa Festival* we will be conducting a walk along the NAR formation from Rum Jungle in to Batchelor. This is an historic part of the NAR and will be a thoroughly interesting walk at a sensational time of the year. The muster point is at Batchelor Oval at 3.3pm.

Monday 3 August – PICNIC DAY

The purpose of this day was to give employees of the NAR at chance to recreate and have a day of fun. On many occasions the Picnic Event was at Adelaide River. So it's a public holiday for FNAR these days (with interloping by the horsey folk at Fannie Bay). This is one of our big events for the year.

**For more information about our events calendar, see:
<http://northernexposure.com.au/rail/events.html>**

For more information about FNAR, see: <http://northernexposure.com.au/rail>

Gear required for the precinct

(we can collect!)

- 6" x 2" hardwood timber for the running board for the "caboose" GB5588
- 5" x 2" timber to complete the protective cover over the Short Tom carriages.
- Bondek sheeting to make a new fireproof floor in the shipping container.
- Kliplock roof sheeting for the additional caravan shelter
- 1.8m star pickets and pigwire for rear fence.
- 1.4m ceiling fans for the 'new' Sidney Williams hut.
- outdoor pavers (paving stones) typically 150mm square
- flags (Australia, Territory and Eureka).
- large projection screen
- galvanized mesh (40mm squares) for securing the breezeway under the Sid Williams
- purlin bolts.
- glass louvre blades to replace missing ones (size TBA but about 450mm)
- mobile clothes hanging racks
- steel railway sleepers

Telephone: 0417 838578 • E-mail: rail@northernexposure.com.au

**FNAR
All Aboard!**

If undeliverable, please return to FNAR, GPO Box 3504, Darwin NT 0801

Positions vacant at FNAR

ARE YOU INTO:

- carpentry • cabinet making • glazing
- signwriting • painting • bituminous roofing
- electrical work • mechanical work (bogies - new bushes, etc)?

IF SO, we have *jobbies* for you.

FURTHER, there is *lots* of unskilled work including rubbing back flaking paint, cleaning, storing spare parts, making stencils, photographing parts before dismantling and recording progress, etc.

Hours are flexible to suit yourself - & the work isn't all in Adelaide River; some is can take place in Darwin.

Remuneration? Actually, there isn't any - *HOWEVER* we can guarantee you plenty of laughs, a great sense of achievement and reward, a little sense of learning and historical appreciation and a diverse network of friends.

Can money buy that? We don't think so.

Please contact us with your skills rating and we can put you to work - pronto!