

# All Aboard

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

March 2005

## Excellence honoured

IN EARLY DECEMBER last year, Chief Minister Clare Martin unveiled a plaque at the Big 1888 Railway Bridge that recognizes the engineering heritage significance of the bridge.

The day of the ceremony, 3 December, marked 116 years to the day that the bridge was officially opened.

The ceremony was attended by about 100 people including some 40 students from the Adelaide River Primary School, Chief Minister's Heritage Advisor Dr Mickey Dewar, Bob Alford, Chair of the Heritage Advisory Council, Greg Lambert and John Blockey from Lands, Bob Cush from Freightlink, Brendan Lawson, Deputy CEO of AustralAsia Railway, NT Tourist Commission staff including Chris Bond, Maria Purvis and Sally Patterson.

Locals included Patsy Fawcett, Mark and Sue O'Hagan and Lee O'Hagan. Of the former NAR employees were Robin Jessop, Kevin and Betty Gould.

In attendance representing the Friends of the North Australian Railway were Mick Kent, Marion and Barry Slingsby, Judy Richardson, Fran Briggs, Ann Kanters, Mark Powell and special friends Leo Izod, Tom Bertonshaw,

Ken Frazer, Ingrid Van Oostrum and Barry Sharp from Larrimah.

Engineers were represented by Owen Peak, David McHugh, Peter Poole, Fred Finch and Trevor Horman.

The event was organised by Engineers Australia and the Friends were contracted to provide morning tea. We were delighted that Fran Briggs organised this for us. Fran always puts on a great spread and this was no exception. With tea, coffee and cold drinks on tap, a variety of scones and Christmas cake, it was a superb spread - and it was served in china cups and saucers (no disposables for this replica 1888 show).

What goes unnoticed is the effort required to organise such an event so that it runs smoothly. Ann and Fran in particular put in days of effort to get the venue and the morning tea ready.

On the day, it was 4pm when the last cup was washed and returned to its normal place of abode at Fran's conference centre.

As part of the preparations, Mick Kent was out early patching the Dorat Rd Level crossing in readiness for the big day and Ann was out cleaning out the very flash country dunny.

More pics from the day overleaf.



*L to R: David McHugh of Engineers Australia, Trevor Horman, Chief Minister Clare Martin and Owen Peake.*

### FNAR Annual General Meeting

The 2005 AGM will be held at the station on Sunday 27 March at 1000 hours. The new *Associations Act* requires us to alter our Constitution. The amended Constitution has been approved by the Committee and will be put to members at the AGM. Please ensure that you are financial so that you can vote! See you there.

# MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone - Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby enclose:           \$30 (\$15 pensioners) - Membership Subscription  
                                      \$\_\_\_\_\_ donation (all gratefully accepted)

**Please return to FNAR, GPO Box 3504, Darwin NT 0801.**

## NEW•NEW•NEW•NEW - EFT PAYMENT

If cash and cheques are passe, what about EFT? You can pay your subscription that way, too. Our BSB is 065-901 and our ACCOUNT is 1045-3230. Bank is the Commonwealth, Darwin. If you use this method, please indicate your surname in the vendor box!

# At the bridge ceremony



# Brolga Awards

MEMBERS MAY BE aware that we submitted an entry in the Heritage Category of the Brolga Awards for Tourism Excellence last year. Fran Briggs and Robyn Smith attended on our behalf. It was a gala event with 60 people on the waiting list for tickets.

Whilst we did not take out the Heritage Category (there's always THIS year!), we were thrilled to be conferred with the Tourism Minister's Award for Special Recognition for Contribution to Tourism. This was announced close to midnight and Fran did the honours by accepting the award on our behalf, and the announcement was enthusiastically received by those present.

This is an important milestone and will be most useful in promoting our cause. It means that our efforts have been acknowledged and that Adelaide River is placing itself firmly on the tourism map.

## The great bridge heist

THANKS TO GERRY WOOD, we have been receiving support on our disappearing bridges. The bridges are on the old railway line between Darwin and Noonamah and some are rather remote, so it can be some time before theft or vandalism is discovered.

This is very valuable heritage and we urge everyone to be on the lookout and report any suspicious to the police, who have also been working on tracking the thieves.

The bridges were built in 1887 by Charles and Edwin Millar & Co who employed Indian labourers for the earthworks and Chinese labourers as plate layers. Much of the steel for the bridges came from Dorman Long in Yorkshire, the same firm that supplied the steel for the Sydney Harbour Bridge some 45 years later. The NAR was Darwin's most important transport link to the Territory's gold mining towns during the 1880-90s gold rush and, during World War II, was used to transport vital munitions, supplies and troops.

The sad fact is that even if these people are apprehended, we will never be able to put the bridges back as they were. A valuable part of our heritage has disappeared.

## Calendar 2005

The Committee has proposed the following programme for this calendar year. Please make a note of the dates. We will send further info in due course.

Sun 24 Apr	Possible outdoor movies at the Railway Precinct
Mon 25 Apr	Anzac Day – Dawn Service – Activities at the ARSS
Mon 2 May	May Day and our traditional Heritage Open Day
Sat 4 Jun	Adelaide River Cup
Sat 11 Jun	Adelaide River Show
Mon 13 Jun	Queens Birthday Holiday – Heritage walk with Bob Alford or rail trail walk with Mick Kent
Fri 22 Jul	Darwin Show Day – Adelaide River Gift?
Mon 1 Aug	Picnic Day – Railway Picnic at Station
Sat-Sun 3-4 Aug	76th Anniversary of the first train to Birdum
Sun 12 Nov	Anniversary of bombing raid on Adelaide River, a full moon in 1943, and the last raid in Australia.

# Adelaide River briefs

## PLACE NAMES

WE HAVE BEEN researching street and place names in Adelaide River:

DORAT Road – an acronym for Darwin Overland Road Authorities Transport, which was a collective name used to describe the various state authorities who constructed the Stuart Highway in the early 1940s.

Michael Terry, in his 1945 book *Bulldozer: the war role of the Department of Main Roads, NSW* wrote of the road:

*...got together, planned and instituted their men, transport organisation and called it Dorat – abbreviation for “Darwin Overland Road Authorities Transport” and started business in March 26 (1942).*

The road was formerly a section of the Stuart Highway, named under the *Military Roads Act* of 1942. (source: [www.lpe.nt.gov.au/place](http://www.lpe.nt.gov.au/place))

## BOMBING OF DARWIN

THE STATION was visited by almost 100 veterans of WWII and their carers following the Bombing of Darwin commemoration in February.

Hosting on our behalf were Marion and Barry Slingsby, Kay Goon and Richard Luxton. The vets enjoyed our museum and the gardens, and we loved hearing their stories of how it was back then.

Make sure you take note of the calendar and the anniversary of the last bombing aid on Adelaide River in 1943 (hint: it was a full moon on 12 November, 0230 hours)!

## ADELAIDE RIVER RAILWAY HOUSE VISIT

FOLLOWING A committee meeting at the Slingsbys, we visited an old railway house that belongs to Shirley Hollingsworth at 3335 Virginia Road. The house was relocated from Adelaide River by Roy Jansen in May 1980 and, according to Shirley, in one piece. Shirley has original plans dated 1950, which is the date of the standard house drawing

but is not indicative of the construction date of this particular house.

Keith Smith's 1965 photo of three houses in his book *Railway Odyssey* suggests that the houses were quite recently constructed at that time.

Shirley reported that the price of the house was \$1 and Roy's price to relocate it on to Besser block stumps installed by him was \$5999.00.

## BEST WISHES

HERITAGE MINISTER Marion Scrymgeour has been unwell following recent surgery. We wish her all the best for a speedy recovery.

## DONATIONS

**BILL ROMAN**, a former NAR employee, has kindly donated 10 items of NAR history including fettlers tools. Bill said he has lots more on his Humpty Doo property. Thanks, Bill.

## LOCO SHED REINCARNATION?

FROM JIM HARVEY'S BOOK *Never, Never Line*, we are aware that a locomotive servicing shed was built at Adelaide River during WWII. We've discovered a line of concrete foundations, but we never knew what form the shed took above the ground - except one suggestion that there was another shed like it at Birdum. Recently, we were digging through Jim's research papers at the NT Library and found a photo taken by Jim which shows the shed in the distance (with at least three steam locos in the shot). It was a simple gable roofed structure with a curved ridge vent for smoke relief and cooling. There were no ends. The span was probably a 30' Sidney Williams truss. The walls seemed to be full height corrugated iron, whereas the Birdum photos indicate that only the top half of the walls were clad on that shed. We'd love to re-create this important item of WWII railway history. Any offers?





**SOME, BUT BY NO MEANS ALL, OF OUR VOLUNTEERS AT VARIOUS TIMES AROUND THE TRAPS. WE DO APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORTS (NICE THREADS, MICK...)!**



**FNAR**  
**All Aboard!**

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

# STOP PRESS!

FRIEND, COLLEAGUE AND NURSING HISTORIAN **Janie Mason** was this week recognised in the Chief Minister's annual Tribute to Northern Territory Women awards. Janie, who is Senior Lecturer in Nursing at Charles Darwin University, was described thus by Vice-Chancellor, Helen Garnett:

*Janie...played a major role in the transfer of nursing education from hospitals to tertiary education in the 1980s, helping to ensure that nursing was available from VET to higher education level for Territory students.*

Janie is working with us to dedicate a plaque to the role nurses played at Adelaide River during WWII and we extend to her our heartiest congratulations!