



# All Aboard

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

December 2011



## Happy birthday to us - we're 10!

DESPITE SOMETIMES BEING a really hard slog, we have made it to being 10 years old – congratulations to all concerned.

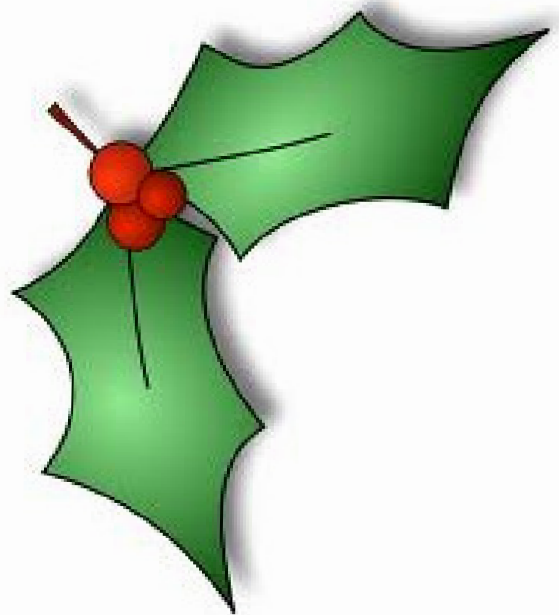
It would be nice to have some government support and encouragement, but, like most heritage organisations, we've become used to battling away on our own and relying on the extraordinary generosity of private benefactors and our little band of incredible volunteers. Happy birthday to us!

## And seasons greetings to you....

PHEW! OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER for the year is coming out just in time for Christmas – just made it (as was the case last year)!

From the Committee of FNAR to you and yours, have a wonderful festive season. Stay safe and enjoy the company of family and friends.

Have a great New Year and rest up because 2012 is going to be a whopper with the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin, the 150th anniversary of John McDouall Stuart's epic crossing of the continent and the 140th anniversary of the massive engineering feat that was the Overland Telegraph Line.



# Gongs for our Mick Kent

MADAM ACTING Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to pay tribute to an organisation called Friends of the North Australia Railway.

In August, I had great pleasure in joining the National Servicemen's Association of Australia, more commonly known as the Nashos, and the seniors who did a bus trip that was organised as part of Seniors Month.

We took off from Darwin and headed down the track, through Charles Darwin National Park, where we examined some of the bunkers in there where all the World War II ammunition was kept, and more recently a lot of RAAF armaments up until the 1960s.

As Members will know, the organisation known as Friends of the North Australia Railway turns 10 years of age this year. They have painstakingly restored the Adelaide River Heritage Precinct. I must say, it is a great credit to them.

In particular, I would like to pay tribute to the Friends of the North Australia Railway's Vice President, Mr Mick Kent. He is a quiet laconic bloke who gets about his business with a no-nonsense approach and who is more at home with a meat pie in his hand than anything more fancy, although I am told he will eat a smoked salmon canapé under duress.

Mick Kent is responsible for the majority of restoration and interpretation in the precinct, including the two Sidney Williams huts, which have been respectfully dedicated to the precinct's Overland Telegraph and World War II history.

Mick Kent was born in Tantanoola in the Coonawarra region of South Australia in 1953. Mick took an interest in engineering heritage following a trip to Tasmania in 2000 which included heritage railways. It was then he realised that the remaining artefacts of the North Australia Railway, which had closed some 24 years earlier, would quickly disap-

*The Member for Sanderson, Peter Styles MLA, had occasion to visit the precinct earlier this year and was very taken by the work of our Vice President **Mick Kent**. In fact, he was so impressed that he made this speech to the Legislative Assembly on 26 October.*

pear as the new standard gauge railway was built, much of it in the North Australia rail corridor.

Mick went on numerous field trips between Darwin and Birdum, interviewed former North Australia Rail-

way employees, and visited other states to track down rolling stock which had been used in the railway.

He researched various archival sources and read existing publications on the history of the North Australian Railway. Just a fact that a lot of people do not realise is that Mick walked – and I repeat – he *walked* that railway section, which is over 500 km, three times. That is 1500 km he has walked, and not too many people know exactly how many kilometres either side of the railway he has walked to gather up what is a magnificent display of railway memorabilia in Australia, let alone the North Australia Railway.

It is truly a remarkable achievement that he has – when you go down and have a look at it and walk through the museum, I could not believe the sort of stuff that is in there that has been recovered simply by walking the length and breadth of that railway three times.

He is to be commended, and it will be his legacy of leaving one of the greatest railway museums in Australia in relation to the type of artefacts that are in there.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, the Overland Telegraph became part of the project because the railway line essentially followed the corridor of the Overland Telegraph Line.

The Adelaide River guest book includes a comment that the precinct contains 'the best Overland Telegraph display in Australia,' and I can attest to that, having been there and wandered through and seen not only the quality of the artefacts but just the number of them.

Mick has completed a detailed documentation of the overland telegraph line and is working on an account of the first two years of

operation of the NAR.

His contribution to the preservation of engineering heritage was acknowledged in 2007 when Engineers Australia recognised Mick as a person who had made a significant contribution to the recording and preservation of engineering heritage in the Northern Territory.

There is only one other Northern Territory recipient of this award, that is Leo Izod, a person who is known to many Territorians.

I was hoping that Mick could be here as my guest this evening, but sadly, he is unwell at home so we send Mick our very best wishes for a speedy recovery

and, again, congratulate him on the fabulous job that he has done and the legacies that he has left for future Territorians to see just what the North Australia Railway was all about in those early years.

## Woo-hoo! Hear, hear for Mick

As I have said, the Friends celebrate their 10th birthday this year and they have achieved incredible progress at the heritage precinct. Not only is the precinct a testament to the hard work and thousands of hours put in by volunteers, but it is a tourism hub and serves as the Visitor Information Centre for the township of Adelaide River, which presently has a population of about 200, but in the past, has been a bustling railway, telegraphic and major strategic military camp.

The Friends thrive on the smell of an oily rag and reckon they could spend the entire NT government heritage grants allocation of \$200 000 per year simply on their own display at Adelaide River. They go to extraordinary lengths to raise funds. I had the pleasure

of taking part in the national servicemen's seniors' day out in August and we had lunch at the railway heritage precinct.

The lunch was prepared volunteers from Darwin who track down there regularly to put on a good show. They did it again in September when they served morning tea to an extremely

large group of ex-United Nations Peace Keeping Police who were here for their national conference.

They hold heritage open days on May Day and Picnic Day each year. After all, the original reason for picnic day holiday was for railway workers and their families. They have restored an impressive selection

of rolling stock, steam locomotives and wagons and they have more works in progress at a secret site in the greater Darwin area.

On display at the precinct is an 1885 Smith & Coventry wheel lathe which is original to the Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway and was located at the Parap workshops from 1888.

Restoration works have included the installation of steam pumping devices next to the hand dug reservoir at the back of the station, which was used to fill the overhead water tank, which, in turn, supplied the trains as they passed through the only refreshment room on the railway between Palmerston and Birdum.

The World War II history is equally fascinating with a lurching cattle car known as *Leaping Lena* servicing the line for both troops and fresh produce. Unfortunately, the trip from Darwin to Adelaide River took 14 hours and fresh meat from the Vestey's Meatworks in an open cattle car did not travel at all well. The troops in Adelaide River routinely unloaded the carriage and immediately buried the putrid meat in massive pits.



*Your editor's favourite photo of Mick – deep in discussion with a visitor and – Man! – if you don't speak Engineering, you're gonna need an interpreter... Photo: John Cocks.*

There is also a significant ambulance siding which the Friends have marked and cleared. It does not fall within their boundary. It stands as a tribute to the nurses of World War II who accompanied and cared for wounded servicemen.

Some hilarious stories have emerged from diggers who served in Adelaide River at the time. One such story is from Max Cathrow, who was in the Army Logistics Operations Centre in Adelaide River and was ordered to clear some bush to make way for construction.

Max knew a bloke who knew a bloke who had some gelignite. Those of us who know anything about explosives know that they are extremely volatile in humid conditions. Max and his mate, being young and adventurous, probably stupid and bullet-proof, took some gelignite to get the job done without too much in the way of manual labour. They blew a huge crater in the hill adjacent to the railway precinct, which is now a great touring point on open days and for specialised group tours.

Adelaide River regularly copped a caning during the Japanese air raids which usually coincided with a full moon for better visibility.

During the Reunion of Ex-Servicewomen in 1995, a woman who served as a nurse in Adelaide River recounted the hours everyone spent clearing the bush to create an oval for sporting endeavours. During an air raid following all the hard work, Japanese pilots mistook the oval for an air strip and bombed it. No Aussie Rules was ever played on that patch.

Of the 64 air raids over the Top End during World War II, Adelaide River was front and centre as Australia's front line. It is no wonder, then, that the last bombing raid on 11 November 1943 included Adelaide River.

Looking to the future, the friends are preparing for a big year in



*This is the handiwork of Max Cathrow and his mate. They're bloody lucky they didn't kill themselves (or others). What a great touring point on open days, though! Photo: John Cocks.*

2012. 24 July marks the 150th Anniversary of John McDouall Stuart's epic crossing of the continent from south to north, and August marks the 140th anniversary of completion of the massive engineering feat that was the Overland Telegraph line, which had its terminus on the site of this magnificent building [Parliament House in Darwin].

I wish the Friends of the North Australia Railway a happy 10th anniversary, and urge them to keep their exceedingly good work up.



## All Aboard

**Editor:** Robyn Smith

**Copy Writers:** Trevor Horman, Robyn Smith

**Chief Photographer:** Judy Richardson

**Proof Reader:** Diane Lunn

**E-mail:** [rail@northernexposure.com.au](mailto:rail@northernexposure.com.au)

**URL:** [www.northernexposure.com.au/rail](http://www.northernexposure.com.au/rail)

**Postal:** GPO Box 3504, Darwin NT 0801

**All Aboard phone:** 08-8985 1909

# The next big thing

EARLY (VERY EARLY) IN 2012 we will undertake yet another difficult logistical challenge: bringing an original railway cottage from Katherine to the precinct at Adelaide River.

You may recall that a couple of years ago, a team of volunteers went down to Katherine to clean out the cottage, which had been overtaken and quite abused by a series of vagrant occupations.

Our team spent the entire weekend cleaning the little house and getting rid of much 'furniture'.

Since that time, the boys have been working on stumping the site of the cottage at Adelaide River, which is where the cottages were sited during the life of the NAR.

Lucy Stokes, who worked in the Refreshment Room for Mrs Fawcett in the 1940s, recalled taking beds out from the bedrooms and putting them on the verandah during particularly hot Wet Season nights.

Moving the cottage from Katherine to Adelaide River, of course, requires a great deal of skill, a number of permits, a bloke with a really big truck (that would be Porky) and a police escort or two.

This sort of stuff can't be set up overnight and a great deal of planning has gone into it.

Once on site, the cottage will be further restored and – hopefully – appropriately furnished to add yet another dimension to our interpretation of the precinct.

If anyone has period furniture or linen, your donation will be most gratefully accepted.

No doubt our next newsletter will include some documentation of this exercise taking place.

If you happen to be free during early to mid-January, we'd love to hear from you. We can never have too many volunteers on an undertaking such as this one.

## It was a big Wet & a bumper Dry

AFTER A MASSIVE Wet Season during which over three metres of water fell in the Top End, the station suffered fairly severe inundation, but, fortunately, no flooding.

Things were compounded in February by Cyclone Carlos, which dumped huge rains over the Top End (800 mm in two days!).

As the Met Bureau reported, the 2010-11 Wet Season has been one of records:

Prior to this year, only one station has ever surpassed the three-metre mark during a wet season, anywhere in the Northern Territory - when Pirlangimpi recorded 3048.6mm during the 1998/99 wet season. We now have three extra stations in this category, including a new NT wet season rainfall record. The three-metre club includes Karama with 3016.2 mm, Wagait Beach with 3142.4 mm and Leanyer is the new NT record holder with 3165.1 mm. On 16 February the rain gauges at Karama and Leanyer overflowed due to the extreme nature of the rainfall during Carlos. Consequently, these rainfall totals will be an underestimate of the true amount.

At the station, leaks were discovered in the

Sidney Williams Huts and remedial action has been taken to repair them.

The garden areas were more akin to ponds and when water did abate, the ground could be described as 'swampy'.

The Magpie Geese had a lovely time in our gardens and have done quite a bit of damage to the grounds.

Happily, it all dried out and we had another sensational Dry Season which brought large numbers of tourists to the station.

As Peter Styles mentioned [see story, page 2], we undertook a lot of work during the season with our usual Open and Picnic Days as well as some special catering for large interest groups such as the Nashos and ex-UN Peacekeeping police.

In 2012, a major undertaking will be for a bunch of women in Red Hats (watch this space) and some cranked up promotion of the precinct as a rustic function venue.

If you or your organisation is looking for something different, why not consider Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct?

# Gong for our Trevor Horman

OUR PRESIDENT Trevor Horman was a finalist in the NT section of the Senior Australian of the Year awards [and he wasn't particularly thrilled about the 'senior' bit] in November.

The awards, which are run by the Australia Day Council, were presented at a very nice ceremony held at the Darwin Convention Centre.

Trevor was one of four finalists, each of whom deserve recognition for their own fields of endeavour.

The winner was Laurie Baymarrwangga from the island of Murrungga in Arnhem Land whose commitment to education and conservation is breathtaking.

Other finalists were Alice Springs writer and artist Rod Moss and Tennant Creek's best known culinary export Karen Sheldon.

The Master of Ceremonies was the ABC's Charlie King who was extremely complimentary about the precinct when he was introducing Trevor.

He urged anyone who has not been to Adelaide River recently to do so because the work that has gone on in the precinct is extraordinary.

Trevor was accompanied by a small band of supporters, including Committee members and our legendary benefactors Peter and Estelle Cornell.

Estelle – who is looking fabulous after a particular health regimen – is renowned for her beautiful voice and certainly did not let the side down when Trevor's name was called.

Oh! And we congratulate Estelle for being named NT Business Woman of the Year.

## Hands on Heritage at Easter

THIS YEAR'S EASTER BREAK was an indulgent five days because it coincided with ANZAC Day.

On Good Friday and Easter Saturday, Pine Creek Railway Station came in for some attention. Work completed included:

- comprehensive guided tours of all aspects of the precinct (aided by design drawings just found in the national archives);
- bringing the garden at the 1889 employee's residence under control;
- welcoming caretakers Ursula and John Cheeseman from SA and showing them life in Pine Creek;
- rail trail walks north and south along the NAR formation until it joins the new standard gauge corridor;
- painting the Heritage Green trim on the railway station and the employee's house
- replacing an external door on the railway employees house;
- applying some triple grips to a number of timber frame connections in the employee's house;
- cutting some trees away from the house; &
- cleaning and cataloguing of railway artefacts in the railway station.

On Easter Sunday and Monday, it was off to Katherine where the singular mission was to freshen up the appearance of the 1926 NAR Station.

Since the erection of the security fence we are not experiencing the constant graffiti attacks and vandalism so instead of washing and repairing, we gave the station a much needed freshen up.

Katherine Town Council kindly provided a Community Grant to assist with the purchase of materials which made the project possible.

A week earlier, with the assistance of Brian Murphy, Sue Christie and Marion Townsend, we removed some of the larger objects to O'Keefe House to make room for the internal paint job.

Professional painter Scott Bray serendipitously gave us some Pollyfilla to fill some of the bigger holes in the 85-year old walls.

Marion Townsend delighted us by the provision of delicious fruit scones and hot cups of tea.

Guided tours of the railway heritage precinct which dates from 1926 and was massively expanded during WW2 were also undertaken.

# Cleaning up the Narrows

ON SUNDAY 6 March we gave the 1887 remnant of the NAR at The Narrows its annual clean-up.

Nola, Di and Judy did a sterling job and collected more than 10 bags of rubbish (separated in to 'recyclable' and 'other' this year). They also weeded the section adjacent to the bridge so that it looks superb.

Our good friend Kerry Moran brought in a petrol powered high pressure water blaster and thoroughly cleaned the concrete abutments for the first time in 123 years.

Kerry had the small matter of water supply all worked out with a nearby business (and a long hose).

As usual, he exceeded all of our expectations. He not only blasted the abutments clean but also the concrete lining for the drain under the bridge. And whilst Kerry's three hour non-stop efforts cleared the mould, it exposed years of vintage graffiti. When the concrete dried it was not so noticeable.

This good work also highlighted the signwriting of the number 4 that Chris Renehan completed several weeks earlier.

About 11am, when everyone had finished and gone, the *NT News* fronted up and wanted to get a story on Clean-up Oz day.

Trevor was still there finishing the paint and got caught with them.

He suggested they find another site with more elegant 'talent' but they just wanted to shoot and go.

To Trev's surprise (and embarrassment) we ended up with a colour picture on page 6 of the glorious *NT News* and a story that was not too far from the truth. Plus they were taken

with the story of the bridge and the railway and want to come back when we unveil the interpretive signs to run a heritage story.

As talent goes, Trev was pretty good because he was filthy after all the work they'd done and the picture was perfect for a Clean Up Australia Day illustration.

Many thanks to Kerry, Judy, Nola and Di for getting stuck in to The Narrows. It's looking great. When we look back to the condition of this remnant of the NAR in 2003 when we first took an interest in it, the difference is amazing.



*Below the bridge: Kerry Moran water blasting  
Above the bridge: Di Lunn on emu parade*

# Adelaide River Races

OUR NEIGHBOURS AT THE ARSS Club hosted a race meeting, their second of the year, on Saturday 20 August and were gracious enough to name one of the five races on the card after the Railway Heritage Precinct.

After racking our brains for something catchy that would promote the precinct, we were delighted that organisers came up with the Railway Museum Handicap.

And the word is that none other than Fran Briggs cleaned up on said race.

## Maker's plates for 'NT' class locos

LATE LAST YEAR, we had a call from a bloke in Port Lincoln seeking information on steel sleepers.

Trevor referred him to Mick Kent who kindly supplied him with quality information.

Mick subsequently reported that during a recent visit to South Australia, he called into the railway museum at the old Port Lincoln railway station and introduced himself.

By pure chance, Murray Wright was there, and it was he who made the inquiry about steel sleepers on the NAR.

Murray has been working on sleeper displays at their museum and was confused by the information provided in Harvey's book, *The Never Never Line*.

It appears that the original Palmerston & Pine Creek Railway pressed steel sleepers were trialled on the Cummins to Kimba extension during the 1912-14 era through sandy areas.

These sleepers ended up being used as fence posts and the samples that Murray acquired all had rusted sections because they had been buried.

Murray has cut and welded several sleepers for display, and Mick reports that he has done a good job.

Murray invited Mick to his home to collect the NT maker's plates and for a cuppa.

He used to work for the railways and came across the many maker's plates that the railways had removed from all locos that came

to Eyre Peninsular Railways.

These plates collected dust in the store until they had a big clean up when ANR was sold off to Australian Southern Railroad in the 1990s.

Mick is somewhat confused in the process of twinning relevant plates to locomotives because the builder's numbers listed in Harvey's book do not correspond to the plates. NT73 is stamped on the plate with the completion date of 4/68

In any event, Mick thanked Murray for the gifts and mentioned that if there are any other items that relate to the NAR, it would be appreciated if we could acquire them.

Thankyou so much for making all this happen, Mick. And a big thanks to Murray Wright for donating the Maker's Plates.

For information, the 'NT' class locos were diesel-electric locomotives that were brought to the NAR to service the Francis Creek iron ore traffic in the 1970s.

Thirteen of these locos came to the Top End. One was totalled in the big crash at Francis Bay in November 1972.

At the time, these were the most powerful locomotives in the world for their weight (1400 horsepower).

The 'NT' classification is derived from the fact that they were narrow gauge locos and were made by Tulloch in Sydney.

Sadly, they have all been scrapped except one (NT76) which is at Pitchi Ritchi in SA.

## We need concrete stair treads

WE ARE ON THE LOOKOUT for some common concrete stair treads as used in thousands of elevated houses in Darwin.

These stair treads are exactly 3ft wide ( 915 mm ) and they last forever - the one in the image are 40 years old.

The concrete versions are required to replace rotting wooden steps into some of the railway carriages both on site in the precinct and in the machinery works-in-progress yard.

If you have any surplus stock lying around your place, we'd be grateful for them.



## 1927 NAR photograph



A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, Peter Dunham gave us some photocopied images of work happening on the NAR extension from Katherine to Mataranka in 1927.

We asked Peter if he had the originals and one has arrived - it is sensational because it encompasses so much of the story of the NAR in the 1920s.

In this case, we believe that it's a sand pit between Pine Creek and Emungalan where they collected sand for use in making concrete for the Katherine bridge in 1925.

The steam shovel was used to load the hopper type wagons.

We're not sure what the Fordson is doing, but perhaps it was ploughing the sand up to within the range of the steam shovel.

At least three accommodation tents can be seen in the background.

And the shovel operator has just pulled the rope to release the bottom of the bucket.

The fellow at the back of the steam shovel must have had the prize task of feeding and monitoring the boiler.

## 1918 Commonwealth Railways Fares & Charges

IN LATE MAY, Trevor discovered on his desk a very well used copy of a book of all the charges applied by the Commonwealth at the end of WWI and subsequently.

The book is chock-a-block full of amending slips of paper that have been carefully pasted in over the years and hand-written amendments in red ink.

One typed note inserted at the end of the book explains to the Station Master at Darwin that the rates published as a placard in 1894 were superseded by the rates in this book and were current in 1934.

Another amendment says that politicians will enjoy the same rates and privileges as railway employees.

Trevor finally discovered that the book was left by Mark Skinner whose mother was the Librarian at the Commonwealth Railways (1960s?).

She returned from leave one year to discover that they had 'cleaned all the old stuff out of the Library' and basically thrown away the history of the organization.

How about a medal for Mark's mum?

# Wild weather in Cyclone Carlos

WHAT A RIDE IT WAS with Cyclone Carlos!

It started on Monday 14 February down towards Pine Creek as a Tropical low.

It worked its way up the Track and basically sat over Darwin for two days, dumping heaps of rain (800mm).

Then overnight it worked its way south-east to about 40km east of Batchelor.

On 17 February it dumped big time on Adelaide River and particularly on the catchment area.

The river had been up to 12.2m deep, which meant just touching the concrete beams for the new railway bridge.

It rises and falls quickly as the catchment area is smallish and is just up river from the township.

In terms of the Rail Heritage precinct, caretakers Barry and Joy White reported that it was awash.

The 'WW2' ambulance that we deposited on the access road had water up to its axles.

The station and buildings were safe, although the WW2 power station appears to be the structure that will be the first to go under in any future drenching.

In the big floods of 2007 we had about 300mm of water through the Sid Williams exhibition hall and the railway station.

We specifically set the height of the Visitor Centre to cater for floods of that magnitude (a one in 500 year flood).

The only benefit that Barry could see from this was that the expanse of water totally camouflaged the damage to the grass that has been done by magpie geese over the Wet Season.

## At the Narrows

There was extensive tree damage at The Narrows.

The big shady tree near the bridge was blown over.

If anything, culling some of the trees will expose the wonders of the railway a little more.

There appeared to be no damage to the Millar Brothers' railway.



*Various examples of flooding and damage from Cyclone Carlos. Photos: NT News photo gallery*

# Estimates 2011 - heritage

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, if you look at the amount of money given to assist privately owned heritage

places that, basically, has not gone up and probably if you count the CPI it has gone down. If you look at investment to maintain our publicly-owned heritage places, that has not gone up. In fact, less money was spent last year than what was estimated. Would it be fair to say that, in terms of at least keeping the status quo, the money actually has gone backwards in relation to maintaining heritage places both privately and publicly?

**Mr HAMPTON:** This financial year, there is \$1m to maintain public owned heritage places.

The following is extracted from the *Daily Hansard* of 21 June 2011 when our good friend Gerry Wood MLA questioned the Minister for Heritage, Karl Hampton, about the 2011-12 Budget.

**Mr WOOD:** Which there was in 2009-10, 2008-09, 2007-08.

**Mr HAMPTON:** In terms of 2010-11 there is \$375 000

to support community based heritage initiatives, including \$200 000 for the annual heritage grants program to assist private owners of heritage places and \$120 000 for the annual grant to the National Trust of the Northern Territory. We continue to implement the government's Heritage 2010 Initiative which is to provide \$1m per annum for repairs and maintenance of publicly owned heritage properties and the long-awaited new Heritage Act. It has been something like 11 years, member for Nelson [*don't we know? - Ed*].

*continued overleaf*

## 1931 station master at Katherine

THE FOLLOWING IS extracted from the *Northern Territory Times* of 11 August 1931 and was supplied by Simmone Croft:

Mr Cummings, station master at the Katherine, has been transferred to Darwin and will remain there for 16 months, while his place at the Katherine has been taken by Mr H. Robinson.

The community singing that has been conducted at the Katherine by Mr Cummings has been much enjoyed and when it was known that he was being transferred elsewhere a request was made that the night should be altered from Friday to Wednesday, so as to give all an opportunity to bid him farewell. A large gathering of friends met at the hall, to say good bye to Mr and Mrs Cummings. Rev. H. Griffiths on behalf of the Athletic Club spoke regretfully of Mr Cummings departure and presented him with a cricket bat as a token of appreciation from the Club

Mr Ferguson then spoke, regretting the departure of two such splendid workers, and said that he had been asked to make a presentation to Mrs Cummings, on behalf of the citizens and parents at the Katherine, and he specially mentioned the fact that, owing to there being no school at the Katherine, Mrs Cummings had spared as much of the time as she could give to helping the children in their school work.

Mr Cummings thanked all present for their kindly wishes, both for himself, and for his wife and said that they both regretted leaving the Katherine, where they had met such good friends,. The only compensation was the fact of now being able to obtain more suitable schooling for their son.

At the conclusion of the singing and the speeches a dainty supper was served and dancing then continued till midnight.

Cummings is thought to have been the first Station Master at 'the Katherine', serving from 1926 until 1931.

# Estimates 2011 - heritage

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, it is actually the Heritage Act in the true meaning of the word.

**Mr HAMPTON:** I thought I would bring that one up, but there were extensive public consultation processes involving all sectors. A draft bill was released for public comment in February this year and comments closed on 19 March this year. A number of public forums were held, and I am looking at tabling the bill in the Legislative Assembly later this year.

## Myilly Point Heritage Precinct

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, the heritage houses on Myilly Point still use septic tanks. When will the government connect these houses to the main sewer or rather, should these tanks be heritage listed?

**Mr HAMPTON:** I might ask Mr Darcey to answer that one. I introduce Michael Wells from the Heritage division.

**Mr WELLS:** The department is aware of that problem. The situation at the Myilly Point precinct is there are five blocks of land in the precinct which is surrounded by roads on all sides. It is true they are septic systems and leach drain systems there which we believe were installed in the late 1930s when the houses were built. Those same systems survive today, and is what is being used for sewerage disposal on the site today.

We have discussed this issue with other departments and all parties recognise it is not a good situation. The issue is the cost of connecting to the nearest reticulated sewerage, which runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Commonwealth owns two of the properties at the present time and the National Trust, which owns the other three, has been in discussions with the Commonwealth to resolve the immediate issues around the disposal of sewerage, but they failed to secure the Commonwealth's agreement to make any substantial contribution towards connecting to reticulated sewerage. The Commonwealth believes it only needs to solve the immediate problem.

**Mr WOOD:** Minister, could you please con-

firm the North Australian railway corridor from Darwin to Adelaide River is either vacant crown land or belongs to Land Corp so that it can be made to a rail trail for the enjoyment of tourists and locals alike. The question is: have you given any thought to making sure that corridor is protected for ever and a day so it can be used as a rail trail? Part of it is being protected now, because it is getting some black stuff put on.

**Mr HAMPTON:** I am aware there is an assessment report to the Heritage Advisory Council in relation to the North Australia railway corridor; however, I am not sure if Mr Wells has any further details on the land tenure?

**Mr WELLS:** I could not say what the tenure is all the way from Darwin to Adelaide River.

**Mr WOOD:** It varies.

**Mr WELLS:** I am sure it does, but in direct answer to your question, there have been moves to have cycle paths along the route, which is slowly ...

**Mr WOOD:** Happening right now

**Mr WELLS:** Yes, that is right, and they are slowly but surely extending. It is happening in Katherine. Starting from the Darwin end, we have been working closely with DCI on the work from Yarrowonga to Howard Springs Road. This work is currently under way and almost complete and involves building a cycle path on top of the route of the old NRA and reusing the bridges. It is an excellent outcome in regard to heritage.

I attended a site meeting only the last week with DCI representatives who were proposing to extend the cycle path further from Howard Springs Road to Girraween Road.

**Mr WOOD:** That is in the budget.

**Mr WELLS:** I did not know that; however we had the meeting and we are discussing getting appropriate heritage outcomes there. It will be a similar result to the area between Yarrowonga and Howard Springs Road.

**Mr WOOD:** You will have to find a bridge that was stolen - that is where the stolen bridge is. Remember? We will fill it in with something.

**Mr WELLS:** We did look at that bridge,

# Estimates 2011 - heritage

bridge number 22. They count the bridges from number one from Darwin. Yes, that was stolen a couple of years ago I am informed. The abutments and the ...

**Mr WOOD:** The *Chicago Tribune* announced it as well.

**Mr WELLS:** The abutments of the old bridge and the footings on which it was established are still there. We plan to source the original plans of the bridge and attempt to construct something close to a reconstruction of the old bridge in new steel works so it can be used as part of this cycle path.

## WWII heritage preservation

**Mr WOOD:** My last question. What are the government's plans for the protection, preservation, and promotion of the Territory's World War II heritage? I will ask another one to go with it. Where are the heritage parks, as in the agreement I have with the Chief Minister? Does your department oppose or support the concept of World War II heritage parks.

**Mr HAMPTON:** There are a couple of questions in there. The current status of the heritage parks: the proposed Defence of Darwin Trail will be designed to create a memorable visitor experience of the impact of World War II on the Top End, in particular, the Darwin region. Sites that will form the Defence of Darwin Trail have been identified. We have committed \$567 000 in 2010-11 to undertake work on several of the sites that make up the Defence of Darwin Trail. Regarding the other question of World War II airfields?

**Mr WOOD:** The agreement is about having World War II heritage parks.

**Mr HAMPTON:** I will get Mr Grant to give you a bit more on that.

**Mr GRANT:** We are very supportive of the heritage parks. People are generally excited about the whole World War II museum and the heritage parks right through. We are doing some very good work at the 17½ Mile right now. I do not know if you have seen what is going on out there.

**Mr WOOD:** Or the 27 Mile. Strauss Airstrip is the 27 Mile.

**Mr GRANT:** I know, but I am talking about 17½ Mile as well. Michael has more details. There is a lot of good stuff happening.

**Mr WELLS:** Just to be clear, we are proposing a World War II heritage park; the genesis of that being your proposal for heritage parks that was made a couple of years ago, with the first cab off the rank, so to speak, being a World War II heritage park for the Darwin region to be known as the Defence of Darwin Trail, as the minister alluded to. The concept is that it is linked to the new Defence of Darwin Museum based at East Point.

The museum is conceived as a hub at East Point in what, in museum speak, they call a distributed experience which is, basically, a group of 10 sites in the Darwin region which will form what we are calling the Darwin Defence of Darwin Trail - working title - but is, in effect, a World War II heritage park for the Darwin region.

**Mr WOOD:** We have rangers maintain these parks? That is what I thought heritage parks would have.

**Mr HAMPTON:** Mr Grant or Mr Wells.

**Mr WELLS:** The answer to that question is tied up with the governance model which is going to be used for the Defence of Darwin Museum as a whole. That governance model has not been finalised as yet.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you.

## CATERING TEAM

Thanks to our stalwart catering team who get very busy during the Dry Season – Nola Smith, Di Lunn, Estelle Harris, Margaret Kirkup and Yvonne Burgess for the Rejex Rally, Picnic Day, the Nashos and the UN Police Peacekeepers' functions. Thanks, too, to the BBQ boys from Batchelor – Graham Cheater and Darryl Butler.

# Rotting heritage - a crying shame

LIKE MANY, WE have been saddened to see historic steam locomotive NFB88 languishing at the back of Ryan Park in Katherine. It is being vandalised and generally declining.

We believe that this locomotive has historical significance to not only Katherine but the whole Top End in terms of its technology, heritage and role during WW2.

NFB88 was built by James Martin at Gawler in 1892 entering service in South Australia on 20 September that year.

James Martin built up a large enterprise in Gawler manufacturing railway equipment, farm machinery, etc.

NFB8 was converted to burn oil on 22 May 1950 (there was a huge national coal strike) and was recorded as still being in service in November 1955.

As such, it was 63 years old and the last steam locomotive in service on the NAR because diesel-electrics took over.

NFB88 is now 118 years old and ranks alongside NF2 at Pine Creek and *Sandfly* in Darwin as a precious example of motive power of this once proud railway which helped to build the Territory and sustain towns like Katherine.



The locomotive and tender weighed in at almost 50 tons. NFB88 was rebuilt in Adelaide in 1919.

Eighteen of these locomotives were purchased by the Commonwealth (from SAR) during WW2.

NFB88 was sold for £500 on 29 October 1943. It was dispatched overland to Larrimah and entered service on the NAR in December 1943.

So this 50 year old locomotive from the Victorian era was pressed in to war service where it racked up high mileage running between Larrimah and Darwin.

Perhaps it's time we started thinking about caring for NFB88 as part of the Territory's (and the nation's) heritage. This loco was made in Australia and served its nation proudly in a time of peril.

The image above shows a Baldwin locomotive beautifully restored, plinthed and sheltered in Denver, Colorado (photo courtesy of the Gunnison Pioneer Train Museum web site).

Perhaps we could contemplate an adaptive, modest version of this concept for NFB88 at Katherine Railway Station. Any suggestions or volunteers would be appreciated.

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

## Caretakers

FROM APRIL until July, Barry and Joy White were assisted by Maurie and Shirley who hail from Queensland but are now best described as nomadic.

Despite heavy rain in the lead up to Easter, they did a power of work to spruce the place up.

Barry recycled some materials to create a bridge across a lingering body of water and installed a gate across the access road to assist our visitors to access the property.

Our long term caretaker Graeme Stuart headed south on the Ghan in February. Graeme had been with us since Christmas 2009 and put in lots of time and effort into beautification of the grounds and gardens, receiving many positive comments.

We are delighted that Harcourt Phillips from Port Lincoln will be returning in June.

Graeme and Judy Robinson from Victoria are expected 'June-ish' for a couple of months. They spent several months with us in 2010 and they will be more than welcome to bolster our resources. Thank goodness for bleak southern winters!

We were surprised when Neil McIntosh rang from Queensland to enquire about being a Wet Season caretaker (we desperately need those).

And to make this year really special we will have Ursula and John Cheeseman from Moonta at Pine Creek.

We are also on the lookout for Ken and Jan Wilson from Walhalla who are doing the big lap.

## Gifts

THE GENEROSITY and spontaneity of people is both touching and contrary to common societal stereotypes.

Mick Kent handed over the proceeds of a 100 Club he ran at his workplace. For a bloke who is so busy with so many other matters and who does so much for FNAR, this is truly inspiring.

Whilst we were in Katherine recently, our

good friend Bob Petersen responded to our mention of the fuel required to mow the precinct with a generous offer.

Also in Katherine, Geoff Newton, the local saddler, dropped in to the 1926 railway station to offer some plants to re-establish the garden that had been wrecked whilst there was no fence.

Peter and Adina Poole noted our plight re fuel for the Kubota and generously donated \$100 worth of diesel fuel which was a great help to get the precinct back to scratch after the grounds dried out. Peter and Adina also donated a box of pre-loved books and a map of Katherine showing the Evacuated Workshops. Adina also donated what was the lounge room carpet (very handy in Sid Williams 2) and Pete a carbide lamp that has a railway story.

Peter Cornell kindly took a Kubota tyre for fitment of a new tube.

Leo Izod has donated four vintage spark-plugs and a magneto for the 1923 Fordson Trackson tractor that is being restored for Katherine.

Thank you all for your thoughtful support.

## Kalamazoo Crossing

ABOUT 12 MONTHS AGO, we were approached by Peter Rusk who had a mad idea of pumping a Kalamazoo from Adelaide to Darwin. There were to have been about 25 of them and their visit was planned for early August. Sadly, however, various legal problems, including insurance, got in the way and the undertaking was scuttled.

## Bombing of Darwin commemoration

NEXT YEAR MARKS the 70th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin and Darwin City Council organisers are expecting many veterans and their families to travel to the Top End for the event.

New branding for the commemoration was released this month, and next year's activities will fall under that branding. Community

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

events are encouraged and will be listed on the dedicated page on the Council's web site.

Next year, 19 February falls on a Sunday and the Council is proposing a two week heritage festival a week either side of the Sunday.

## More anniversaries

NEXT YEAR also marks the 150th anniversary of John McDouall Stuart's crossing of the continent from south to north (24 July) and the 140th anniversary of completion of the Overland Telegraph Line (22 August).

It was extraordinary that the OT Line was completed within 10 years of Stuart reaching the north coast (and it was not until December 1862 that Stuart returned to the districts of Adelaide).

## Gongs

CONGRATULATIONS to FNAR supporter Yvonne Forrest who was gonged with an OAM on Australia Day.

## Katherine rail trail progress

WE WERE DELIGHTED to see the voluntary work that has already gone in to improving the Rail Trail from Stuart Estate (5km north of Katherine) in to town.

Work has been carefully done to preserve the integrity of the NAR formation.

From Conroy's Gap to Emungalan the route has been given a drink of herbicide.

We congratulate John Leo, Bob White, Richard Morris and others who have contributed to the evolution of this important community infrastructure based on a heritage theme.

## Vale Stan Kennon

SADLY, WE RECORD the passing of long-term Territorian Stan Kennon. Back in the 1960s and 1970s SG Kennon was the only respectable hardware store in the NT and catered

for large customers like the mining industry (down to Tennant Creek). Stan had a large mechanical workshop in Winnellie and machined large parts for the mining industry. He also had a quarry at Mount Bundy with a mains powered crusher (and he was cranky when there was an interruption to supply). Fortunately Stan was a hoarder and a bloke who could make old things work. We found the 1885 Smith & Coventry wheel lathe in the remains of Stan's workshop and were astonished at the other old gear there. In recent times, Stan donated to FNAR the 50 ton weighbridge that used to be at Frances Bay Railway yard. Stan's very well attended funeral was on Friday 28 January.



*Stan and Audrey Kennon with the 50 ton weighbridge that had just been restored by Rowan Charrington at Qantas Parap.*

## Annual General Meeting

OUR AGM WAS held on 27 April at the Darwin Sailing Club. The Committee remains unchanged, with the exception of Kay Goon who had the misfortune of dropping into the club for a quiet drink on her way home from work. Welcome back to the Committee, Kay!

## Heritage Bill

TRY NOT TO FAINT – Minister Karl Hampton introduced the Heritage Bill in the August sitting of the Assembly. It went through in October. That didn't take long, did it? Almost 10 years. Time to review it, we think!

# Can't get down to the River?

FEAR NOT. THERE'S PLENTY to be done in the Darwin area. If you have an interest in restoration and some skills [we need nearly everything - welding, electrical, steam, mechanical, elbow grease, painting, etc, etc], we have a project (or several) for you!

We have a yard in the Darwin area where a number of exhibits for the precinct are kept. They are in a variety of conditions – some requiring a lot of work, others not so much.

If you are interested in taking on one of these projects, please contact Trevor on 0417 838578.



*1936 First Class NSW carriage that was converted to an Ambulance carriage during WWII.*



*1885 Cowans Sheldon 10 ton railway crane*



*1910 Hudswell Clarke saddle tank steam locomotive*



*1926 Niles 200 ton wheel press*



*1954 Air-conditioned Gloucestor Rail Car NDH6*



*1888 'Short Tom' carriage with end-platforms*

## Vintage oil syringe



WE BELIEVE THIS IS an oil syringe that was found along the NAR south of the King River last year by Eddie Webber of Mataranka.

Tom Bertenshaw got stuck in to it: cleaned, stripped, polished and painted. It's about 500 mm long.

As you can see it has a copper spout and a brass cap at the top end. It looks superb!

Inside the syringe had two cups back to back. One cup sealed against the wall on the upwards stroke when oil was being sucked up in to the syringe. The other cup sealed against the wall as the oil was being expelled. We suspect that oiling the axle bearing reservoirs inboard from the main driving wheels on a steam loco could have been a good use for such a syringe.

Thanks again to Eddie for the gift and to Tom for the restoration.

## 'Sparra' farewelled

ON SATURDAY 13 AUGUST a small crowd gathered at the 87 Jump Up to farewell our mate Sparra.

In fine trucky style they turned up with picks and shovels and concrete and form boards and proceeded to construct a memorial to Sparra. His ashes are interred in the memorial which overlooks the infamous 87 mile. Sparra's daughter Marie spoke of Sparra's life and his mates contributed stories about his exploits. On top of the memorial a genuine gearstick from a Foden truck is cast in to the concrete. Some great stories about Foden trucks were told.

## Rescued OT pole

RECENTLY, LEO IZOD helped us to rescue an Oppenhiemer pole from Phillip Street in Fannie Bay.

It had been used as a power pole in Edgar Dunis' yard since 1948.

It is seven metres long and in amazing condition after 138 years of service, first on the Overland Telegraph and then as Edgar's power pole.

Mick Kent inspected it and declared that it's the one we needed to complete our collection of Oppenhiemer poles.

There are round poles and oval section poles. And there are normal diameter ones and big ones.

This one is a larger round section pole.

It is now at the River ready to be displayed. Well done, everyone!

## Parap Rail Yards – circa 1976



*A Shunting tractor in the Parap rail yards soon after 1976. That's Peter Poole's son at the controls.*

# Positions Vacant

AUSTRALIA BE BUGGERED! Adelaide River has a skills shortage! Are you into:

- Carpentry
- Cabinet making
- Glazing
- Signwriting
- Painting
- Bituminous roofing
- Electrical work
- Mechanical (bogies - new bushes, etc)

And 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.

Work can happen at any time to suit people's preferences. Early morning (eg 7am start) or late afternoon (finishing at dark) are all possible.

**Remuneration?** Well, 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 network of friends so diverse that the *Karma Sutra* looks like a Kindy text.

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

Please contact us with your skills rating and we can put you straight to work - pronto! The beauty is that you suit yourself.

**FNAR  
All Aboard!**

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

## Gear required for the precinct

- hundreds of #17 Tek screws to screw off the roofing iron on the SHORT TOM protective shed
- an extension ladder to leave at Adelaide River.
- a steel work bench (preferably with a vice) to store at Adelaide River.
- a block and tackle hoist (minimum one tonne) to leave at Adelaide River.
- pallet racking to go in the container that Peter Cornell has kindly placed next to the Hudswell Clarke steam locomotive project. The racking will enable parts to be stored efficiently.
- 6" x 2" hardwood timber for the running board on Caboose GB5588.
- washing machine
- windmill
- money – we always need money
- people – carpenters and cabinet makers especially
- cement

If you can help out with any of these requirements, please let us know. We can collect!

**Telephone: 0417 838578 • E-mail: [rail@northernexposure.com.au](mailto:rail@northernexposure.com.au)**