



All Aboard

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

December 2008

Season's greetings

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO one and all. Reflecting on the year 2008 cannot be done in the space we have here and belongs in another place (for example, 2009!).

Suffice to say that it has been an extremely busy year and we have had as many triumphs as we've had setbacks, so we are well pleased with ourselves.

We've consolidated our reputation as a professional (albeit entirely voluntary) organisation and this is reflected by the esteem in which we are held by the corporate and public sectors, kindred heritage organisations, the tourism sector and local government organisations. This kudos is in no small part down to the tact and diplomacy (not to mention dogged determination) of our President Trevor Horman who seems to be able to function on between zero and four hours sleep every night. Naturally enough, the rest of us can't (and don't try to) keep up, but we give what support we can and we have

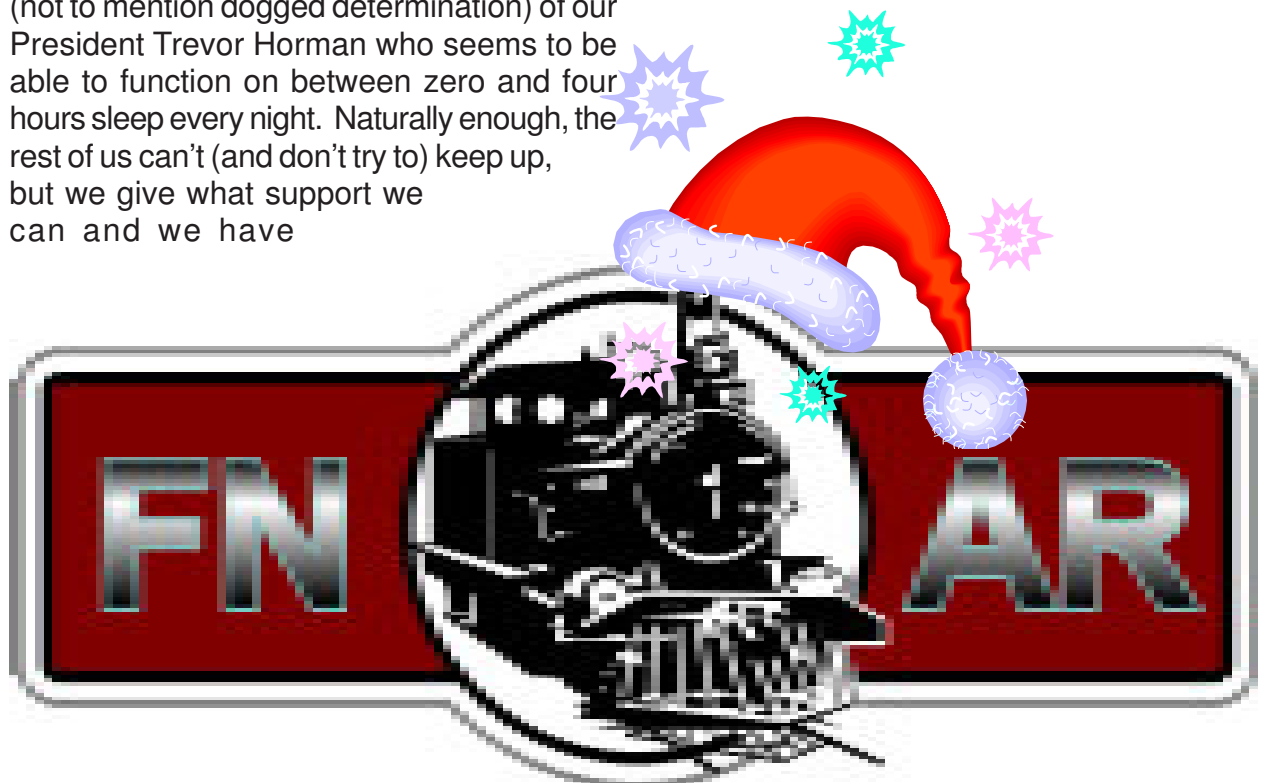
proved ourselves to be a dynamic little organisation.

We recruited new volunteers in 2008, and we hope we've created enough interest to retain them in 2009 and beyond.

We have members all around the world, and at this festive time of the year, we extend compliments of the season to you and thank you for your support.

Those of us in the Top End are hoping for an imminent Wet Season because it is a tad sticky hereabouts.

We do, however, wish you and yours all the best for a safe and happy Christmas and New Year and we look forward to a massive 2009.



History repeated as Talbot passes through the River

ON 18 AND 19 AUGUST, the National Motor Museum's *Off the Beaten Track: A Journey Across the Nation* exhibition celebrating the 100th anniversary of the first crossing of the Australian continent by motor car reached Adelaide River.

It was 100 years ago when Harry Dutton and Murray Aunger travelled from Adelaide to Darwin in a 1908 25-horsepower Talbot motor car. It was the first crossing of the Australian continent by motor vehicle at a time when there were no roads or service stations along the way.

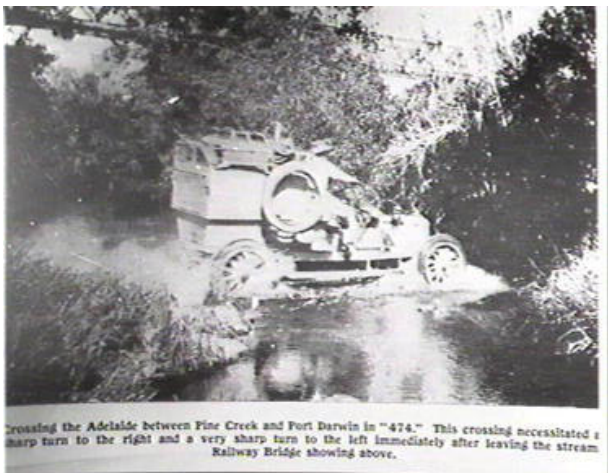
In fact, the Talbot was the first self-propelled vehicle ever seen by many people in remote regions.



At Oodnadatta 100 years ago. The Great Northern railway line embankment can be seen. Photograph courtesy of the National Motor Museum, SA



Crossing the Edwin Verberg Bridge.



Crossing the Adelaide between Pine Creek and Port Darwin in "474." This crossing necessitated a sharp turn to the right and a very sharp turn to the left immediately after leaving the stream. Railway Bridge showing above.

The Talbot crossing the Adelaide River and, right, the Talbot crossing the low level bridge 100 years on.



Editor: Robyn Smith

Copy writers: Judy Richardson, Trevor Horman

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

2008 WIP event another success

THE 2008 WORKS-IN-PROGRESS exhibition was another successful event for FNAR. Held on Friday 7 November, the WIP exhibition was our final formal function of the year, although work continues with lots of fervour in the precinct to complete work prior to the onset of the Wet Season.

The event was not as well attended as previous events have been, but it is a very busy (and hot!) time of the year. The yard at Berrimah was a picture and was somewhat different to how it has looked in previous years, given that several large items of rolling stock have been transported to Adelaide River.

Still, there was much to show off, and show off we did.

There is absolutely no truth to the rumour that the Hudswell Clarke saddle tank steam locomotive was fired up using a compressor and run along a small length of track. That would be contrary to railway safety rules and licensing arrangements. In the photograph below, Mike Bowman is merely talking guests through the work that he has completed on the dear little engine that was gifted to us by Mt Isa Rotary Club.



Guests, who included Dr Brian Reid, the Chairman of the Heritage Advisory Council, were treated to a guided tour with commentary provided by our most learned President, Trevor Horman, whilst being served a range of canapes - scordalia; avocado & tomato salsa pastry boats; Japanese prawn and Miso shooters; morsels

of rendang daging; and blood plum paste and blue castello pumpernickel rounds (and, yes, Mick, we know you would prefer a meat pie with tomato sauce...). The catering crew comprised Robyn Smith, roped in 'volunteer' Margaret Tucker, Coleen Harris on the bar, and Estelle Harris, Nola Smith and Margaret Kirkup on wash-up and assistance with service detail.



Explaining the finer points of railway heritage and preservation: Trevor providing running commentary.

Other volunteers on the day were Steve Tucker, Trevor Horman, Mike Bowman, Judy Richardson and welder extraordinaire Jack Devlin whom we recruited at last year's WIP exhibition.

Our thanks, as always, go to Peter and Estelle Cornell for the use of their block at Berrimah, to the volunteers who helped prep the block for the exhibition, and to all our valued sponsors and supporters who do so much to assist us in so many ways throughout the year. They include: Darwin Container Services; Allora Gardens Nursery; Steelcon Constructions (Alan Spexiale, Damien Collis, Nick, Bags, Brad and Scully); Gwelo Developments; the Community Benefit Fund; Ballarine Peninsula Railway; Ghan Preservation Society; Bendigo Tramway Museum; Museum and Art Galleries of the NT; Coomalie Community Government Council; Litchfield Shire Council; and the Power and Water Corporation.

Planning is underway for next year's event, which we hope to move to a more pleasant time of the year.

1885 Smith & Coventry wheel lathe:

THE PALMERSTON AND PINE Creek Railway (P&PCR) Act was passed by the South Australian parliament and gained Royal Assent on 26 October 1883. The SA government acted swiftly and a survey team was despatched on 27 October. The survey was completed in September 1884 and the ordering of materials was then able to commence. Krupp of Essen won the order for the rails in 1885 and the steel sleepers were ordered through Ibbotson Brothers in the UK. This was also the time when major plant for the railway workshop at Parap was ordered.



SMITH & COVENTRY Ltd from Manchester gained the order for the railway wheel lathe. This firm was based at the Gresley Iron Works, Ordsal Lane, Salford an industrial area of Manchester. It was already well established as a machine tool manufacturer (first mention is 1857). They had a major display at the famous Paris Exhibition in May 1889 (the Eiffel Tower was erected for this event). They also exhibited at Antwerp in 1892 and 1894 and at Brussels in 1910. The founders were still running the company until 1898 with Mr Arthur Coventry (1836 - 1929) continuing as an active director. FNAR member Alan Spargo searched through some papers from the company at Manchester Museum of Science and Technology in July 2006 and found some details of their profile in 1920. Part of Alan's report reads:

I was given access to two large boxes of papers and most were dated 1919 or 1920.

by **TREVOR HORMAN**

The first box had a collection of house magazines known as "The Gresley Magazine."

It contained all sorts of news of interest to employees including bowling, tennis and suchlike.

It did mention that Smith & Coventry had taken Stand 5 at the International Engineering Exhibition at Olympia in London 5-20 September 1920.

They were exhibiting the machines in which they were then specialising which were as follows:

Robey Smith Patent Spiral Bevel Gear planer.
Smith & Coventry patent Universal relieving lathe;
Single Pulley Plain Horizontal Milling Machine;
and
New Ball Bearing Sensitive Drilling Machine.

All machines would have been in action on the stand.



This advertisement is from Kelly's Directory of Worcestershire, 1892.

The company was sold off or went bankrupt (not sure) in the 1920s. By then it was being run by Arthur's eldest son, Theodore Coventry and the son of the original Mr Smith.

a story of restoration and revival

The purpose of a wheel lathe

THE STEEL TYRES ON railway wagons have a special profile which keeps the wagon running down the centre of the rails and reduces wear on the wheel flanges. After extensive running miles, the tyres wear and the profile becomes less than ideal. Railway wheel lathes are used to re-establish the correct profile on the tyres. In the case of the 1885 Smith & Coventry lathe, the complete railway axle with both wheels is mounted in the lathe. The two tyres can be machined at the same time if two lathe operators are available.

Technical terms

THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS of the lathe are explained on site using interpretive signs prepared by Owen Peake. The following is a brief summary:

The **bed** is a robust base that supports the **headstock** and permits the **tailstock** to be aligned parallel with the axis of the **spindle**. This is facilitated by hardened and ground **ways** which restrain the tailstock in a set track.

The **headstock** houses the **main spindle** and drive gears. The headstock is required to be made as robust as possible due to the cutting forces involved.

The **spindle** runs in precision bearings and is fitted with some means of attaching work holding devices such as **faceplates** (the big rotating discs on this wheel lathe).

The **tailstock** is a toolholder directly mounted on the spindle axis, opposite the headstock. The tailstock spindle on this lathe rotates and carries another faceplate.

The (two) **carriages** hold the tool bits and moves them longitudinally (turning) or perpendicularly (facing) under the control of the operator(s). The operator can move the carriages manually (but in this case the carriages will usually stay at 3ft 6 inch separation).

The **cross-slide** stands atop the carriage and travels perpendicular to the main spindle axis, this permits *facing* operations to be performed. The tool bit is mounted in the **toolpost** which is of the traditional 4 sided square style.

The term **tool bit** generally refers to the cutting tool used in metal lathes. The **cutting edge** is ground to suit a particular machining operation and may be resharpened or reshaped as

needed. The ground tool bit is held rigidly by a **tool holder** while it is cutting.

Cutting speed may be defined as the rate (or speed) that the material moves past the cutting edge of the tool (in this case the steel tyre rotating past the cutting tool). A cutting speed for mild steel of 100 ft/min (or approx 30 metres/min) is common.

History of the P&PCR wheel lathe

AFTER BEING MANUFACTURED at the Gresley Ironworks factory in Manchester, the lathe would have been lifted on to a train and hauled to Liverpool for shipment to Australia. It would have sailed via Cape Horn to Adelaide and then Darwin. When it arrived in Darwin, Wishart would have just completed the curved Railway Jetty. Its possible that the lathe was unloaded from the sailing ship by the 1885 10 ton Cowans Sheldon railway crane that we are restoring. It would then have been hauled to Parap by *Sandfly*.

The railway workshops at Parap (as it was then known) were quite extensive and were equipped with a range of machine tools. All machines (including the wheel lathe) were driven by belts from a lay shaft running the length of the workshop and driven by a steam engine just outside. The floor of the workshop was dirt (possibly ant bed).

The Commonwealth government inherited the Northern Territory Railway in January 1911. The facilities were inspected by a parliamentary delegation in 1912 (which has left us a legacy of some exceptional professional photographs).

Commonwealth Railways despatched Auditor George Hobler and Engineer Robert McCallum to conduct a complete audit of the neglected railway which had received minimal maintenance.

On 15 February 1915 McCallum recorded the presence of the Smith & Coventry lathe along with other machinery in the machine shop. At that stage he recorded that it had recently been mounted on a concrete plinth after presumably spending 27 years on the compacted oil-soaked dirt floor of the machine shop.

1885 Smith & Coventry wheel lathe:

After the bombing raids in February 1942, the railway activated its Emergency Plan and evacuated the whole workshop operation to Katherine. A large workshop was established by the river bank (the RSL is on part of the site now) and all equipment from Parap was relocated to what was called 'The Evacuated Workshop' at Katherine. This included the wheel lathe, and thanks to a military photograph we have the only image of the lathe in action.



Parap Railway workshops, 1912: visiting Parliamentary delegation (hence the white suits!)

After WW2, the workshop was repatriated to Darwin along with the wheel lathe. The Parap workshop suffered little damage so the wheel lathe was put back in service in 1946 and provided continuous service through until 1970 when it was superseded by a brand new \$250,000 'in-ground' wheel lathe as part of the upgrade for the 'one million tonne per year' Frances Creek iron ore haulage contract.

Stan Kennon purchased the lathe from the



Wheel turning at the Evacuated Workshops Katherine.

The lathe in wartime service in Katherine. The operators are two of Jim Harvey's 'Forgotten Volunteers' who had come to the NT from southern railways.

North Australia Railway and installed it at his workshop in Menmuir Street, Winnellie. It was the biggest lathe of its type in the NT and Stan was called on to machine special jobs for a range of customers, including Stokes Hill Power Station.

Leo Izod to the rescue

WITH THE CLOSURE OF Stan's workshop in 1999, Industrial Archaeologist Leo Izod became concerned about the potential fate of this important piece of 19th century engineering. Stan was happy enough for the lathe to go to a museum. In 2001, Leo approached the fledgling FNAR, impressing upon us the historical importance of this machine.



The Smith & Coventry lathe as it appeared in Stan Kennon's workshop when we went to dismantle it.

We first sighted the lathe in February 2002. The workshop and equipment was then owned by Nick Bjelica and we negotiated to purchase the lathe with personal funds. Kerry Moran, Leo Izod and Owen Peake gently dismantled the heavy machine and lifted the bed ready for removal by crane on 16 March 2002.

Ironically, we were permitted to store the disassembled lathe in the building which was formerly the 1970 vintage railway wheel lathe shed now owned by Power and Water Corporation.

In September 2002 Norm Cramp kindly arranged for Richard Summerauer and Gary Crammond to clean the parts and paint them.

a story of restoration and revival

We consulted Leo on the appropriate colour, after detecting some patches of green, and very appropriately settled on a colour called *Dark Ages*.

The intention had always been to display the wheel lathe inside the Sidney Williams Exhibition Hall at Adelaide River.

The concrete floor in Sid Williams was completed in August 2005 and Peter Cornell moved the lathe pieces to Adelaide River on 7 September 2005. The floor is especially strong to carry the wheel lathe and the complementary Niles wheel press.

Leo spent a whole day with Pete's forklift taking the pieces inside the shed. The 20ft long bed of the lathe, which weighs 4.5 tonne, took some effort and ingenuity to get through the door and in to position.



Reassembly of the lathe occurred in February and March 2006. Leo and Mike Izod donated the 16" x 7" universal beams on which the lathe is mounted. Spiceline supplied the rubber matting under the beams. Mick Kent helped to jack the lathe bed level and installed shims between the bed and the beams as it seemed that the bottom of the casting was not straight (anticipating concrete bedding).

The Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club loaned us their large engine hoist (ex Caterpillar) to assist with lifting and gently installing the many large pieces of the lathe. Many people assisted in this phase including Leo Izod, Owen Peake, Colin Oberon, Mike Bowman, Mick Kent, Mel Jobst, Peter Hateley and Max

Cathro (a WW2 veteran who was visiting).

For the last two years, Owen Peake has been largely progressing the project by himself, assisted by his brother-in-law Colin Oberon (on holidays from Melbourne). This has been an incredible effort for a fellow who has many other interests and responsibilities. Owen's work included:

- fitted the Headstock & Tailstock gear lever fittings and lowered the whole assembly on to the lathe bed;
- fitted the Tool Posts (which carry the cutting tools which actually machine the tyres);
- drive shaft (20ft long and 6inch diameter) retrieved, cleaned and fitted with 'cumalong';
- bolted down the head and tail stocks;
- fitted faceplates at both ends. (the faceplates are the big rotating 'wheels')
- supplied the electric motor and fabricated the motor mounting bracket;
- cleaned the whole machine again with wire brushes, cold chisels, etc;
- cleaned and restored the original electrical motor starter control box (for display);
- fabricated and installed the new electrical stater controls;
- rewired the entire Sidney Williams hut;
- fabricated the mesh safety cages around the rotating gear wheels;
- repainted the machine; and
- produced a set of interpretive signs to explain the elements of the wheel lathe.



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

Smith & Coventry wheel lathe (cont)

Owen left Darwin, after 40 years, in August 2008 but he has declared his intention to return in 2009 and undertake some more work on the lathe during his 'retirement'.

The official firing up

DURING THE RAILWAY PICNIC on 4 August 2008, with a crowd of 150 people in the Sidney Williams Hut, the 120 year old lathe was rotated for the first time in many years.

On this occasion Leo Izod did the honours and pressed the Start button, which completed a mission that he precipitated seven years ago.

All present were suitably impressed and broke in to spontaneous applause when the big machine began to roll.



Congratulations to everyone who was involved in this extensive and often daunting project.

It is one of the features of the precinct (we are beginning to have so many!) and is a credit to everyone who worked in so many different ways on it.

It is the case that Owen was often quizzed by visitors to the precinct whilst he was working on it, so it has been a case of heritage in action.

Rail thefts continue

THROUGH OUR AFFILIATION with interstate kindred organizations we hear that rail theft continues and is increasing.

In some places thieves are ripping up rail when a heritage rail is not used (eg weekdays). South Australian police are mounting a serious attack on the practice in that state. New Zealand has similar problems.

We were again gobsmacked when we heard that it is happening in our own backyard (and our own police have been on the case for some months).

A couple of weeks ago, a visitor noticed some steel in a local location had been cut and apparently left, and it appeared odd. When they returned past the same spot, the steel was gone and a vehicle hauling a trailer was spotted in the distance exiting the scene.

Please remain vigilant for this kind of activity and report it immediately to police.

Earthworks

DURING THE PAST FEW months some significant earthworks have been happening at the precinct. Major progress has been made with the carpark (which includes provision for the original run-off from Telstra Hill to fill the reservoir). The large breach in the wall of the reservoir (created by road builders seeking water in the 1980s) has been filled and the overflow is being formalized. Drainage, which has been a problem, has been improved (acknowledging that our flood waters flow south to Burrells Creek). Our frontage to DORAT Road has been cleaned up to the point that it can be slashed by the Highway Dept contractors. The frontage of our neighbours (the ARSS Club) has also been beautified and a walking track from ARSS to town is being formalized. Whilst the backhoe was on site we excavated a trench to install cabling to streetlights along our access road.

This work was funded by Tourism NT and the Urban Enhancement Program and was facilitated the CEO of Coomalie Council (Lisa Wain). We sincerely appreciate this major contribution to improving and presenting the precinct. CS Services was our contractor. Some minor components of the work remain to be completed.

Historical detective: the 1800s

YOUR EDITOR, FOR A VARIETY of reasons, has been sorting through early copies of the *NT Times and Gazette*.

Owned by Mr V L Solomon, who constructed Solomons Emporium (now known as Brown's Mart) in 1885, the paper seems to consider itself the political conscience of the residents of Palmerston (Darwin's then name), the 'residents', of course, being white, propertied and male.

It is not clear whether Solomon had input into the editorial missives fired by staff at the *NT Times and Gazette*, but there were certainly some vitriolic attacks on the government of South Australia at the time.

For example, after screaming blue bloody murder in the 1870s that Europeans were completely incapable of working in tropical conditions and that the only way the colony would thrive is by importation of Coolie labour, the tune had changed dramatically by 1887:

The Government has at last been forced to give relief work to European labourers, and a number of men have been put to work repairing the Gulnare jetty. This may be considered the first fruits of the optional labour railway contract, and the curse of every true Territorian will know every man who advocated the acceptance of the Millar Brothers' Chinese railway tender.

1 Jan 1887

This, of course, is a reference to the Millar Brothers who won the contract to construct the railway. By 1887, the paper was howling that Chinese labour was very cheap and European labourers couldn't compete with it. This is a typical extract:

The Government has this week arranged with Messrs. Millar Bros to give work to some 30 European miners. The men proceeded to the 18-mile camp on Wednesday last, and a depot for supplying them with stores has been established by the Government. From what we can learn, these men are only to receive a low rate of wages, which will go into the hands of the Government, who, after deducting the cost of their rations, will retain the balance until it amounts to sufficient to pay the passages of the men out of the country. This is the latest novelty in the way of colonising the Territory with Europeans. The scheme has not yet been

patented, but its value as an advertisement to attract white population to our shores will, doubtless, render it popular with the administration whose combined wisdom accepted the tender for a railway to be constructed with Chinese labour.

8 Jan 1887

There is no question that the language is colourful (and that is but a morsel); even more interesting is the correlation between the parochial rhetoric of the 1880s fired squarely at the seat of government in Adelaide and the parochial rhetoric of the 1980s in much the same vein fired squarely at the seat of government in Canberra!

However, returning to the issue of the railway, this missive was fired in relation to the railway contract and the Millar Brothers' management of it [Charles Millar was still in Adelaide at this time]:

A large number of Chinese employed by Messrs. Millar Brothers struck work last week. It appears from this that neither Europeans nor Chinese are inclined to work in this climate unless fairly paid for their labour. We expect to live to see the end of our Northern section of the great Transcontinental Railway completed by Billymuck, Pickles and Company who will be doled out a weekly supply of damaged flour and tobacco by our open-handed contractors.

12 Feb 1887

In the same publication appeared this advertisement:

**THE Q.C.E. HOTEL
ADELAIDE RIVER.**

CHARLES HAIMES

BEGS to inform his friends and the residents of the Northern Territory that he has purchased and thoroughly renovated the above hotel and offers *Superior Accommodation* to all who may favour him with their support.

The Proprietor's long experience in the trade will be sufficient guarantee that all Wines, Beers, Spirits will be the best obtainable in the market.

All Aboard readers will have to wait for a more extensive account of this research...

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

A gong

CONGRATULATIONS TO **COLEEN HARRIS**, an occasional volunteer for FNAR and daughter of regular volunteer **Estelle**, for having an undergraduate history paper on Eve Sack, former proprietor of the Refreshment Rooms at Adelaide River Railway Station, nominated and accepted for inclusion in the next issue of the *Journal of Northern Territory History*. This is a feather in Coleen's cap and will add to the body of historical work we have in relation to the precinct. **Key Goon**, who did a lot of research on the tea ladies at the River, steered Coleen in the right direction.

Another gong

CONGRATULATIONS, TOO, TO **ESTELLE CORNELL**, proprietor of Allora Gardens Nursery and major sponsor of FNAR with her husband Peter (Porky), who won the Nursery Industry category of the Australian Small Business Champion Awards for the second year running. We wonder whether the rolling stock in the background provides unique ambiance for the judges...

Guess who needs a diary...

FNAR SUPPORTER asked - two*weeks *after* the event - when the WIP exhibition was because he was really looking forward to it. Well, if you live *Around Palmerston*, perhaps you should consider a diary. After all, when you reach a certain age, your brain becomes something of a sieve...

British Parliamentary visit

ON 28 AUGUST WE hosted a short visit by members of a visiting British Parliamentary delegation, the members of which were guests of the Legislative Assembly in conjunction with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. One of the Lords was a Director of West Somerset Railway (a fabulous example for us to follow in the west of the UK). Another was a guard and a railway

clerk many years ago and was on the Board of a heritage railway before being awarded the life peerage. The delegation visited the War Cemetery and the Railway Museum at Adelaide River.

Following the visit, we received this e-mail from Lord Faulkner:

Coming to Adelaide River was particularly special for me, because I was able to combine my interests in war graves and railway heritage. I chair a parliamentary committee on the former, and as I mentioned to you, I am the chairman of the Railway Heritage Committee in Great Britain. I particularly enjoyed reading the railway literature you kindly gave me, and I was very impressed by your website.

Do please keep in touch and have a look at the RHC website if you are interested in what we try to do (www.railwayheritage.org.uk).

It's rewarding to hear compliments from kindred organisations. Many thanks to Robyn Smith for hosting the visit.

Vale John Crossing

JOHN CROSSING from the Darwin rural area had a long career with the railways in South Australia and was a supporter of FNAR. When John passed away earlier this year, his family kindly donated to FNAR an impressive collection of railway artefacts and literature. The donated items are currently being restored by Mick Kent and will eventually be displayed at the museum at Adelaide River after a specially prepared display unit has been constructed. Our grateful thanks go to the Crossing family.

Toyota tow motor

RECENTLY, GREAT SOUTHERN RAIL (GSR) donated a Toyota TG10 Tow Motor to FNAR. This small unit was used to haul luggage trolleys along the platform at Darwin (and Keswick in earlier times). **Yvonne Lamotte** (GSR Terminal Manager in Darwin) arranged the donation of the tug and kindly supplied the maintenance history of it. This indicated the items that may need some attention as we re-commission the tug. The tug will be very

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

useful around the precinct (it is golf buggy size) and will no doubt haul the fairground train from time to time. We thank Yvonne and GSR for this special donation.

Some more historical ditties

FURTHER TO THE TEASER on page 9, Rob is finding some absolute classic railway snippets and is assembling them into a comprehensive dossier.

A couple that she has shared with Trevor are sufficient evidence that this rag (the *NT Times and Gazette*) was the forerunner of the *NT News* of today. Here's one from 28 July 1888:

In another column will be found advertisements from Messrs. Millar Brothers, offering portions of their live stock and plant for sale. Surely "the powers that be" will make some effort to prevent the dispersion of such a complete plant until it has been decided whether the Transcontinental line is to be carried through or not. At the very least, they must complete the line to the Katherine, for without it, Maudie's Creek reefs, that already show great promise, will be shut out.

Note that Charles and Edwin Millar built the Palmerston and Pine Creek Railway. By July 1888 they were making good progress well past Adelaide River and they started the first train service from Palmerston to the north bank of Adelaide River. Perhaps it was time to dispose of some plant. Maude's Creek gold is still being mined today (near Katherine Gorge).

Then there was this from 29 September 1888:

A visitor to the country districts cannot fail to be somewhat puzzled to find out why thousands of pounds have been expended in constructing two immense reservoirs, one near the Darwin Bridge, and one within a very short distance of the Adelaide River, at both of which places a permanent supply of water is obtainable. The water is as good as any in the country, and unless the Government locomotives are far more fastidious than Government officials, and refuse to consume anything more impure than rain-water, we fail to see any reasonable excuse for the immense

expenditure upon these seemingly useless reservoirs.

Well, yes...the reservoir near the Darwin Bridge is presumably the Southport Reservoir. Its not that far from Darwin River. At Darwin River, water was pumped from the river in to an overhead tank (at least it was in a 1912 photo). Further, steam locomotives (and steam boilers generally) do need high quality water. It's tough for Members of the Fourth Estate to admit that they are not the keepers of all knowledge in all things.

A very I-o-n-g wait

WE NOTE, WITH FLAGGING stamina, that another parliamentary year has passed in the Northern Territory, yet we appear no nearer to seeing or hearing about the 'new' *Heritage Act* that was promised - oh, let's see, it will be seven years ago in March 2009.

Works in Progress Exhibition

AND ON MATTERS Parliamentary, it was good to see Members of the Legislative Assembly **Gerry Wood** and **Kezia Purick** attend the WIP exhibition. Several other members were invited. Some were obviously too busy - too busy, even, to *respond* to the invitation!

Wellness

WE ARE PLEASED TO report that **John Nixon's** leg continues to heal well and that **Mick Kent** is shaping up to be dangerously fit. John is far more mobile and has ditched his stick. Mick is putting in some serious hours both at the precinct and on restoration works at Porky's block.

More trains

NOT CONTENT WITH THE Gulflander and Savannahlander trip in October (see pp 12-13), **Judy Richardson** no sooner returned to Darwin than she jumped on *The Ghan* for another choo-choo ride...

FNAR explores eastward:

OUR 2008 EXPEDITION to remote 1880 pioneer railways in North Queensland was completed in October.

The group of six expeditioners - Judy Richardson, Mick Kent, Nola Smith, Estelle Harris, Di Lunn and myself - had a memorable experience thanks to the organization of Judy Richardson and Cairns Kuranda Steam.

Stage one of the expedition was a trip on the legendary Gullflander, a weekly service on a vintage railmotor over a 95 mile track which still has mile posts and 95 per cent of the original iron sleepers designed by Phillips as a cheap railway to the gold rush at Croydon in 1885.

We arrived on Monday for the Wednesday Gullflander and so had 24 hours free time on the Tuesday. We found that Normanton has heaps of heritage, magnificent wide thoroughfares (so that you can turn bullock teams), a fabulous Visitors Info Centre and lots of friendly people. The 1885 railway station itself is sensational.

We found that the butcher is the local rent-a-car man and Doug kindly hired the Maxi Taxi to us for the day at very favorable rates.



The crew of the 2008 expedition at Burke and Wills 1861 Camp #119

So what do you do? We headed for Normanton Cemetery (some great stories there). Then we went bush to Burke and Wills Camp 119. This was their final camp before the three day dash to the coast and back in 1861. We also did the day trip to Karumba

by **TREVOR HORMAN**

and enjoyed the famous Ash's fish and chips.

The train trip to Croydon was leisurely (about 20 mph) and lasted from 8.30am until 2pm. We crossed flood plains



The Gullflander paused at BlackBull to give passengers a cup of tea.

and the Normanton River before running through gentle Savannahland to Croydon.

Croydon itself was another place with plenty of its heritage in tact. We met plenty of colleagues of Lisa Wain who had been CEO of the shire up to about 2001. We even found ourselves have morning coffee with the Mayor.

We then bussed to Forsyth to catch the Savannahlander to Cairns. This was a two day journey sauntering through the savannah on an 1880s railway that had been built by



Di, Estelle and Nola on the Savannahlander at Mt Surprise.

Gulflander and Savannahlander



A vintage upturned hopper wagon - identical to hoppers on the NAR of which some came from Chillagoe. If only it were closer!!!



Crossing Copperfield Gorge at Einsliegh after stopping for lunch at the pub

Chillagoe Mining Company (cheaply) to supply ore to its huge smelters.

The crew provided comprehensive and humorous commentary and offered to stop anywhere we desired.

After the main expedition, Mick, Judy and I ventured north to Cooktown. We were again impressed with the heritage that has survived (even though they regret the carnage that was wrought when the town was "cleaned up" for the Queen's visit in 1988).

The James Cook museum is sensational. The local history society is also very active. Plenty of interpretive signage around Cooktown, Normanton and Croydon.

Our particular interest was the long defunct Cooktown-Laura railway (again 1888-1961). We found quite a few reminders of it. We even found the chassis of the last rail motor RM58. This now belongs to the Lions Club who were



Mick and Trevor studying hard at the spot where James Cook repaired the Endeavour in 1770 and where the Laura railway wharf was in 1888.

pondering what to do with it. Because of our inquisitiveness we were invited to the Lions Dinner meeting and we addressed the meeting.

Finally we visited Mareeba (another 1929 AEC Rail Motor) Atherton (vintage C17 locomotive 4-8-0) and Herberton (diesel loco 1181 and beautiful station plus vintage concrete underpass).

After such a wonderful adventure we are pondering ideas for a 2009 expedition.

Thanks again to Judy for organising this event and for the good company of Nola, Di, Estelle, Mick and Judy along the way. If success is measured in kilos, this was a great trip.

Apart from the good times, we observed what other people in the heritage tourism business are doing. We felt very much at home at Normanton, Croydon, Mount Surprise and Cooktown.

Last train to Larrimah

STEVE ASHFORD OF THE HERITAGE Branch forwarded this extract from the *Darwin Star* from July 1976:

It's a sad thought that future generations of Darwin kids will be denied the pleasure of counting the carriages of passing trains dreaming of far away place.

Let it be recorded for posterity that the last train to Larrimah had two locos and 19 carriages (counting flat-tops), and the not so far off place it was going to won't be there much longer.

When the dusty old train was ready to leave Darwin for the last time it seemed resigned to its fate and ready for the big permanent way in the sky, whence it has been consigned by government austerity measures.

After posing for the cameras and issuing a few off-key blasts, it choofed off right on time.

It was difficult to tell whether the motorists at the Darwin crossing were blaring their horns in final tribute or whether they were telling it to get its old carcass passed more quickly so that they could cross.

probably returned through Katherine on 29 June, reaching Darwin on 30 June.

John O'Donohoe, the last Station Master at Darwin in 1976 (who, along with wife Judy were our Caretakers in 2006), confirmed that he despatched the train from Darwin station bound for Larrimah. John (who now resides in Townsville) reported that there was one passenger on the train; an old bloke from Brocks Creek who was a regular passenger.

The train is headed by two NT Class locomotives followed by a crew relief van. This is a very small train for two powerful locomotives which were brought in to haul Frances Creek iron ore.

There was only one loco on the train that left Larrimah the next day for the return journey. Two locomotives is the big mystery. John cannot remember two engines on the Larrimah train. He contacted Bill Musgrave (the last NAR workshop manager) who



The article has created quite a bit of interest. The location of the photo had us a little intrigued. It was taken through very strong telephoto lens. The MOTORAMA sign suggests Salonika Crossing and if so the fence at bottom left is the carpark for Armidale Street power station. There is consensus that the image is with the train straddling Salonika Crossing and starting to turn east through the Parap railway yards.

The railway closed on 30 June 1976, so this train ran to Larrimah on about 28 June, and

confirmed that it did not happen. They wonder if one of the locos was being taken to Larrimah for transfer south because nine of these locomotives transferred south after the closure in 1976. John recalled:

The passenger carriage was probably down the back of the train and we wondered if it had been Spellman's NDH6 railcar with the drive shafts removed.

He also advised that the passenger carriage was not the NDH railcar, but was an

Last train to Larrimah

older carriage with an end platform, a bit like the NABP carriage at Pine Creek - only more modern.

Further to this, John has been busy searching his memory and contacting friends to provide more details on the last train to Larrimah, which has revealed:

As stated in my phone call 19/08/08 the last two vehicles on the goods consist was a passenger consist and last the break van, this van was the working guards station, sleeping and cooking compartments for the resting crew. These break vans were referred to as 'Relay Vans'. The vans were used on all narrow gauge trains operating on the CAR and NAR systems thus allowing for four engine crew and two guards to work between Stirling North and Alice Springs, Darwin to Larrimah and Frances Creek in relay without the need for rest houses being constructed; as was the case along the standard gauge east west line between Port Pirie SA and Parkston WA.

The break vans as shown in the photo directly behind the engines were placed in that position on any goods train consist whenever a Locomotive Inspector or Traffic Inspector was required to travel between Darwin and Larrimah and return. Traffic and locomotive inspectors were, for want of a better description, Policemen. Their role was to ensure all aspects of train operations were conducted safely and correctly as per the rules and regulations, so they had to remain separate and impartial from the relay working crew.

I have no doubts that the train shown in the photo was in fact the last goods train to Larrimah.

The tonnage hauled between Darwin, Larrimah and return only required one working NT class locomotive. I think the second engine would be travelling 'dead' to Larrimah as by this date

some rollingstock etc. was being sent down south.

On the return trip only one locomotive was in use. Any rolling stock standing at an unattended station was picked up and returned to Darwin.

The photo shows behind the second locomotive an inspector's van; in fact the last train did require inspectors to travel to Larrimah and return. The inspectors were required to close down all operational train crossings, Larrimah Siding, Katherine Station. This would have included all safe working forms, train control 'train order books' and returned to head office in Darwin.

Behind the inspector's van is a louvered van, which I believe was bound for Ah Toy's General Store at Pine Creek, then what appears to be a larger white van. If I am correct, this vehicle was a tradesman work van having the same layout as a break van i.e. sleeping quarters, kitchen, shower and toilet etc allowing plumbers and carpenters etc to be dropped off at sidings that required repairs to railway dwellings and buildings. Following required repairs, the van and tradesmen were picked up and returned to Parap Workshop. Again, this van was probably being despatched south.

The Darwin goods shed and shunt yards were closed in December 1976. By then a lot of rollingstock had been sent south. I finished my NAR career on the 10th December 1976.

We are indebted to John for sharing these precious insights with us. In this piece he covers quite a few aspects of railway operations that we hear little about. It will make a great addition to our archive.

In a separate piece of detective work, John believes he has worked out where the Weighbridge was in the Darwin Yard. We'll cover that separately.

Wet season caretaker required.

The Wet Season is a time when visitor numbers are down but it is as important as ever to have a presence on site to safeguard our precious collection.

If you have a caravan and are interested in this position, please contact our Secretary, **Judy Richardson**, on **0439 843 747** to discuss the position.

A shaded caravan site is available in a special setting in this historic precinct.

Adelaide River is a delightful township just 112 km south of Darwin on the Stuart Highway. Perhaps you know of someone who may suit this position.

If so, please mention it to them.

Sandfly restoration progress

THE ICONIC 1886 BALDWIN saddle tank locomotive nicknamed *Sandfly* is currently being restored by the Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club (MVEC) at the Qantas Hangar at Parap.

The club was engaged by the NT Heritage Branch to undertake this work on behalf of 'the people of the NT' to whom Great Southern Railway donated *Sandfly* in 2004.

Sandfly spent the intervening years sitting on Stokes Hill wharf suffering the effects of the elements, including salt water.

On 11 July 2008, *Sandfly* was 'rescued'

from Stokes Hill Wharf and taken to Qantas Parap hangar. **Tom Bertenshaw,**

Rowan Charrington and **Kurt Mussiger**

immediately commenced dismantling and preservation works.

Tom did his apprenticeship with the WA government railways whilst Rowan did his at the

famous Ipswich railway workshops in Queensland. They have worked energetically on this project since the day *Sandfly* arrived. They have stripped every part from her and cleaned them meticulously before effecting any necessary repairs. Every assembly has been photographed as the project proceeded. **Peter Soulos** has spent many hours in the abrasive blasting cubicle attending to the many items that needed to

be blasted clean. That's not exactly fun in this hot weather.

The boiler has been removed to facilitate works on the motion gear and to assist work on the boiler itself. Tom and Rowan report that the boiler tube end plates are in poor condition and repair/replacement would be a major exercise.

The many hundreds of parts that have been restored (and finished in very high gloss paint) are now almost ready for re-assembly. There is even talk that *Sandfly* could be back together again by Christmas!

MVEC President **Peet Menzies**

said: 'The project has brought out skills and talents that may well have been lost.

'It's been a pleasure to see experienced people like Tom, Rowan, Kurt, Peter Soulos and Leo [Izod] contributing their many years of experience so that *Sandfly* was given



Sandfly as she arrived in Darwin in July 2004. Her arrival was not announced, and we were stunned to see her go through Adelaide River hitched to the end of The Ghan!

the very best resto job.

'MVEC is pleased to have been involved and hopes to maintain a relationship with *Sandfly* when it goes to its new home - which we hope is the Adelaide River Railway Museum'.

FNAR congratulates MVEC and the 'boys' on the fine job they have done. We, too, hope to see *Sandfly* in the railway heritage precinct at Adelaide River!

Bequest thank you

WE EXTEND GRATEFUL THANKS TO Mrs Brenda Blackadder, the mother of Peter Blackadder of the Amateur Radio Club, who very kindly donated to FNAR all the correspondence and memorabilia of her grandfather Albert (Bert) Graham, an NAR Driver/Fireman in Darwin and Adelaide River throughout WW2. This treasure trove includes a number of photos, newspaper cuttings, posters - some original, including one of *Sandfly* - plus snaps of goings on at Adelaide River during WW2. Additionally, there are documents relating to Bert's cousin, William (Dicky) Joseph Graham who was also NAR and who, sadly, is also now deceased.

Happy 120th to our bridge!

ON MONDAY 3 DECEMBER 1888 there was a prestigious gathering of local identities (such as Haynes QCE hotel) from Adelaide River, VIPs from Palmerston, officials from the SA Railways department and management and workers from Millar Bros, the contractors for the Pine Creek railway line. The occasion was the official opening of the railway bridge across the Adelaide River.

The bridge was the biggest on the 145 mile railway and accounted for more than 10 per cent of the cost of the line. The bridge is 500ft long and is 54ft above the Dry Season water level. It cost more than 100,000 pounds to build.

It took all of the 1888 Dry Season to build the large wrought iron lattice bridge. To facilitate construction further towards Pine Creek, a temporary track was built across the river at a low level.

Steam trains snorted to get up the river banks hauling construction materials. Sometimes three attempts were required.

Surveying of the bridge position took place in the 1884 Dry Season. This included drilling holes in the river bank to check the geotechnical conditions for the foundations. With minimal hydrological data, it is amazing how well they designed the bridge. It has survived all floods for the past 120 years.

Components for the bridge girders were fabricated by James Martin at Gawler in South Australia and brought to Palmerston by sea.

The large cast iron columns probably came from the UK. The cast iron columns have 'rough concrete' on the inside. Cement to make the concrete would have come from the UK in wooden barrels. The large concrete

abutments for the bridge have no reinforcing metal inside them and are therefore immune to 'concrete cancer'. The wrought iron used in the bridge is far more corrosion resistant than mild steel which was only in its infancy in 1888.

The bridge has been subjected to engineering assessment and it is in good shape.

It was almost used for the new standard gauge track but it may have needed strengthening (it was strengthened once in the 1960s).

The bridge is heritage-listed and it has been recognised by Engineers Australia as an Engineering Heritage Landmark (see plaque at southern end of the bridge).

Until 1942, all road vehicles had to negotiate a ford across the river just

downstream from the low level bridge, which the Army built in 1942. To facilitate Wet Season access, the old railway bridge was decked by the Army in 1942.

This high level crossing was used until 1980 when the Edwin Verburg Road bridge was built. Sadly, the wooden decking on the railway bridge burned in a bush fire in 1983. The rails have simply flopped on to the iron framework of the bridge.

It is hoped that before too long the bridge will be back in business - including the decking to form a walkway between north and south Adelaide River.

On Wednesday 3 December 2008, a small birthday celebration was held on site to commemorate the vision and toil of those hundreds of workers who, during the 1888 Dry Season, created this engineering marvel.



The small gathering at the bridge on 3 December.

Ashpit discovered

FOR SOME TIME, WE HAVE KNOWN about the 1941 Locomotive Running Shed at Adelaide River. The concrete footings are still there.

We have two very poor photos of the shed. One shows many locomotives in the vicinity on Christmas Day in 1944. The site has been subject to post-WW2 activity (which we do not yet understand) and this has despoiled some of the WW2 features of the site.

The rails through the loco shed site are 60lb rails which were left over from the Mataranka-Daly Waters extension in 1929.

In August when we were doing earthworks in the vicinity of these rails, the excavator exposed a long section of concrete underneath the rails.

Subsequently it has been shown to be the ashpit. These ashpits ran between the rails for about 20m so that the steam locos could drop their ash during servicing.

Once the loco had gone, it was someone's pleasant job to empty the ashpit.

We have mountains of ash which suggests that a lotta shoveling was done up until 1954, although the majority of it was done during WW2.



Remnants of the foundations



Discovery of the pit in August this year

Nuthin' to do with trains, but...

THIS SOMEWHAT SURREAL PHOTOGRAPH was taken on 5 December from Parliament House in Darwin.

In the foreground is Government House, itself an imposing building on Darwin's Esplanade.

However, the official residence of the Administrator is being dwarfed by a cruise ship berthed at Stokes Hill Wharf (which is a reasonable distance from Guv House) for a re-fuelling stop and so punters could undertake a quick 'lap' of Darwin.

This vessel arrived after a sister vessel had graced the same place (and dwarfed Guv House in a similar manner) the day before.

It is at times like this that one comes to appreciate how modern day cruising on the high seas really does occur in a floating city!



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
- concrete

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