

# All Aboard

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

April 2006

## A really BIG wheel lathe

IT WAS LEO IZOD WHO rang the bell about the need to rescue the railway wheel lathe from Stan Kennon's former workshop in Winnellie. After failing to secure a response from the government in 2001, Leo contacted the fledgling Friends of the NAR.

It has been long road since then to rescue the lathe. It was a big job to disassemble it for transportation to the old Railway Workshops at Stuart Park (which are now the home Engineering workshops of the Power and Water Corporation). Storage and cleaning of the lathe, courtesy of Norm Cramp, was ironically carried out in the 1970 wheel lathe shed.

In late 2005, the lathe was transported to Adelaide River for display in the Sidney Williams Hut, which will, we hope, be its last resting place. Leo Izod, Owen Peake and Kerry Moran are to be congratulated for their commitment and work on this project.

The lathe has been installed on an RSJ frame 16 inches from the floor of the Sidney Williams Hut. Lots of jacking and shimming was required to get the lathe bed level and firm.

An engine hoist was borrowed from Motor Vehicles Enthusiasts Club to install the head stock and tail stock.

Owen Peake presented with a brand new 'Cumalong' which did a very smooth job at sliding the heavy drive shaft in to its four bearings.

The next job was the installation of the heavy rotating faceplates. After a couple of shots, the spindles decided which position they preferred and nestled down beautifully in to their bearings. We were surprised at the fine tolerances that still exist on this old machine.

Finally, gear wheels and drive pulleys were installed.

The heavy erection work is now complete. Owen took measurements for future work, such as mounting arrangements for the electric motor, machinery guards to protect little fingers, lubrication, replacing some missing nuts and then sourcing minor components like lathe tools



*The wheel lathe in its new home at Adelaide River. Photo: Owen Peake*

and interpretive signage.

Members and friends are advised to stand by for the official unveiling of said lathe in the very near future.

# The history of the wheel lathe

The wheel lathe probably dates from 1888 and weighs 9 tonnes. It started life at the Railway Workshops at Paraparap. Auditor George Hobler and Engineer Robert McCallum recorded it in the Machine Shop on 15 February 1915. At that stage machines in the shop had just been mounted on a concrete plinth, after presumably spending 27 years on compacted, oil-soaked dirt. The railway workshop *in toto* was moved to Katherine during WWII.

Smith & Coventry Ltd, Gresley Iron Works, Salford, Manchester, Lancashire, UK existed in 1857 and had Exhibit M28 at the Brussels World Exposition in 1910.

One of the founders, Arthur Coventry, lived from 1836 to 1929 (93 years) and was a master engineer. The company made a large range of equipment used in the textile and railway industries. Students from Salford Technical and Engineering Association visited the works on 5 May 1915. The company ceased to exist after WWI whilst it was being run by Arthur's eldest son Theodore and the son of the original Mr Smith. It may have been sold or gone bankrupt in 1928.



Wheel turning at the Evacuated Workshops Katherine.

*Photo courtesy of Australian War Memorial, Canberra.*

## Another heritage house saved

FOR THOSE WHO MAY not know, the only remaining NAR house in Darwin is very close to the wharf redevelopment.

After the NAR had no more use for the house (1976), it was used by nuns from the Leprosarium.

In about 1980 it was given to Stella Maris for a seafarer's lodge. In the 1990s, the International Seafarers Union invested in a major new accommodation block on the site.

Now that waterside activities have moved to East Arm, the original justification for the hostel is evaporating. As such, it may well become a target for developers.

Twelve months ago, Les and Clare Fern came to us seeking assistance to save the house. We expedited its heritage listing and sought and obtained a grant for Stage One preservation of the building.

Peter Poole from Engineering Heritage Australia has checked out the house structurally in order to help us organise the necessary repairs. Whilst the house is showing its age, necessary repairs are fairly straight-forward. Les and Clare are keen to develop a



*Clean Up Australia Day crew at Stella Maris.*

sub-group with us to preserve the house. There is a wonderful ambience inside the house with its high ceiling, polished floors and old stove recess.

Another threat to the site is the widening of McMinn Street to service the wharf redevelopment. The front fence of Stella Maris will go and the entrance driveway will be re-ramped. This may in fact provide an opportunity to arrange it so that the original front stairway to the house can be reinstated.

# Local hero Peter ‘Porky’ Cornell

IN APPRECIATION OF THE many things Peter does for ‘The Friends’ nominated him for Local Hero NT in the Australian Day Awards. We broke the news to Peter that he would have to turn up on the Awards night and we were a bit worried that he would do a runner, so Geoff Goodrich and wife Estelle were assigned to see that he made it to the event.

It was a proud moment for us when it was announced that Peter was the winner of the Local Hero – Metropolitan.

Peter was most gracious and humble in accepting this well deserved award. Estelle was bursting with pride and we were all jumping up and down and cheering.

As a result of this award Peter went to Canberra on Australia Day for the National Awards on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra.

Peter and Estelle looked very stylish on the

lawns of Parliament House and had photos taken with the PM, Major General Stretton, Peter Cosgrove, Dick Smith and many others. The images of Peter with a suit on will be priceless in years to come. He assures us that the blue singlet was underneath.

The National Award for local hero was won by the lady from Queensland who blew the whistle on ‘Doctor Death’

We are privileged to have Peter as a member and supporter and we are deeply appreciative of his continuing generosity and good humour which always accompanies him and think that it is most fitting that he has been recognised by fellow Territorians in this special way. We doubt if any of us know the extent of support that Peter and Estelle give to a range of worthy causes. We do know the incredible job that they do for us and we are eternally grateful.



*Clockwise from top (talk about Name Dropping!): Major-General Alan Stretton (ret'd) with Porky and Estelle; Dick Smith with the Local Hero; Porky and the delightful Estelle backed by Black Mountain in Canberra; Porky and the Prime Minister (and you can share the joke any time you're ready!); Porky and Estelle with the Governor-General, Major-General Michael Jefferies (ret'd). See back page for one more!!!!*



# East Point WWII signage unveiled

On Tuesday 7 March, the Chief Minister Clare Martin and Lord Mayor of Darwin Peter Adamson jointly launched new WWII interpretive signage at East Point Reserve.

The project was a collaboration between the Tourism NT and the Darwin City Council, resulting in \$55,000 being spent on 22 signs at various sites around the area and a central interpretive shelter opposite the Military Museum.

The interpretive work was undertaken by Military Historian Bob Alford.

Both the Chief Minister and the Lord Mayor said they were hopeful of more collaboration (and hopeful of some Federal funds) for further interpretive work at East Point, including interactive interpretation inside the large gun turret, which has been the subject of conservation and stabilisation works in recent months.

## FNAR Sponsor's Roll

- **Ghan Preservation Society**
- **RM Dehne Crane Hire**
- **Steelcon**
- **Darwin Container Services**
- **Shoal Bay Mulch**
- **RS Gardening Care**
- **CS Services**
- **Coomalie Community Government Council**
- **Community Benefit Fund**
- **Tourism NT**
- **Toyota Landcruiser Club**
- **Marko's Towing Service**
- **Power Line Supplies**

## Ghan Preservation Society

OUR CARETAKER MEL reported to us that he had seen a triple road train tooting as it passed and carrying what appeared to be railway wagons. We raced out to Truck City to meet the Steelcon road train and its indefatigable driver "Bags". After an incident free trip of 1500km the goodies kindly donated by the Ghan Preservation Society had arrived back in Darwin safe and sound. This included a 1945 WW2 vintage oil tanker wagon NTO-730. A fuel tank and cowcatcher for the NSU, a cattle wagon and lots of other things which we will treasure and put to good use.

We owe a debt of gratitude to:

- STEELCON for transporting the 40 tonnes of gear from Alice to Darwin and a special thanks to "Bags";
- R&M DEHNE CRANES in Alice Springs. Ron and Marilyn helped us with the big lifts at short notice;
- the GHAN PRESERAVATION SOCIETY for gifting the equipment – some of it very special to us. Special thanks to Chris Vaughan;
- WORKERS AT GPS who assisted including Mal Reid, Greg and Ian Buckley;
- DARWIN CONTAINER SERVICES – for logistics co-ordination and encouragement and introducing Ron Dehne and for storing our rolling stock;
- MIKE BOWMAN for liaison services over a couple of years;
- CHRIS RENEHAN & JARED ARCHIBALD for producing facsimile Coats of Arms for the Ghan Preservation Society.

# Adelaide River briefs

## Bombing of Darwin

WE HAD TWO BUS LOADS of visitors on Monday 20 February following the Sunday Bombing of Darwin commemoration at the Darwin Cenotaph. Nola Smith and her catering crew did the honours and provided Devonshire teas for the visitors. Thank you to Nola and her team, and to Richard Luxton, who helped host the day. Thanks also to Caretakers Mel and Jill for their assistance with the set-up and set-down of gear, and with dealing with the visitors.

## Wet Season Caretakers

THIS IS THE FIRST YEAR we have been open through the Wet Season. A big thank you to Mel and Jill Jobst who have endured a very wet few months. We really appreciate the effort you have made to welcome visitors and to read up on everything so that you are the full bottle on the station precinct. We hope that you will be with us for a little while longer. For the Dry Season, we need to have some relief for Mel and Jill so they can have some days off (see ad, page 7).

## Gradient Board

THANKS TO PETER Mangold for helping to unload heavy RSJs and for the restored Gradient Board. It is much appreciated. Gradient boards along the track helped steam train crews know how steep the next section of track would be.

## Ida Bay Railway

THIS IS THE MOST southerly railway in Australia. It is 7km of 2ft gauge railway at Lune River more than 100km south of Hobart.

The new owner is a Meg Thornton, who is ex-Sydney. Meg is described as sixty-something and, after her husband died a couple of years ago, she thought this defunct railway would be a good challenge. The limestone-carrying railway was built in the 1920s and ceased that operation in the 1970s.

It was operated by someone else for many years, but really only managed to limp along. Meg bought it two years ago in a non-operational state and invested over \$300,000 of her own funds to get it going.

The official opening was on 17 December. Interestingly, the locomotive power is a couple of Malcolm Moore WW2 locomotives to which Bob McKillop has introduced us. Trains run every two hours and the ticket price is \$20.00.

## Gerry Wood at Birdum

GERRY WOOD, MLA is the Independent Member for Nelson and the bloke who gets around his electorate (and others) a bit in his 4WD Falcon Ute. He proudly told us that he had walked from Larrimah to Birdum and back and had a shower at Birdum. Ann Kanters confirmed that he stayed with her. Gerry also enthused about No 9 Store at Gorrie which we have not yet seen. We'll include it in this year's itinerary.

## Fay Miller, MLA

FAY MILLER, MLA is the CLP Member for Katherine who, unfortunately, suffered spinal injuries following a motor vehicle accident 100km north of Alice Springs earlier this month. Fay is presently in the spinal unit of Royal Adelaide Hospital. We send her railway wishes for a very speedy recovery and hope to see her in the precinct again soon.

## Film Night

Trevor has obtained a copy of the movie *The General*, a 1926 Buster Keaton film which uses 1860 locomotives ex-the Civil War in America. We hope to have a showing of the movie in the Sidney Williams Hut in the near future.

## Ron Neist

WE HAVE RECEIVED a letter from Ron saying that he is not returning this year. We had

# Adelaide River briefs

got quite used to Ron just turning up each year from Narooma and will miss him. If you know of anyone who would like to look after our wonderful Heritage Precinct, please steer them our way (and see advertisement, facing page).

## Estelle Harris

BEST WISHES, TOO, go to Estelle Harris, one of Nola's and Rilla's gardening recruits, who underwent an emergency appendectomy at Royal Darwin Hospital earlier in the month. Estelle is now at home and making a good recovery under the watchful eye of daughter Coleen.

## Birdum in 2006

ANN KANTERS HAS had an idea that we should all go to Birdum in period costume this year. Don't forget we will be running the event again in September. We are looking for a

theme for the event and a slogan for this year's T-Shirt. Themes were *Back to Birdum* and *Birdum Alive in 2005*. Get your thinking caps on.

We will have a special guest in 2006: Mrs Ethel Webb from Brisbane, along with members of her family. Ethel is the daughter of Bill Jacobsen who was killed at Birdum in January 1936. Ethel was only a toddler at the time and has a lovely photograph of herself in her father's arms.

## *The Idlers and Could have been champions*

Do you remember *The Idlers*? Trevor has long been a fan and was recently invited onto their program. We got about 12 minutes of exposure on ABC Local Radio which will hopefully target some Grey Nomads and inspire them to visit us.

# Rosewood Railway Museum

JUST 60KM WEST OF Brisbane, this railway has many similarities with ours. They started in 1984 and had to rebuild the old branch line. A bridge was washed away in a flood so they have just 2.5km to play with. They run a steam train on the last Sunday of the month. They have an 1881 Cowans and Sheldon Crane, which is very similar to the 1883 crane at Larrimah. The Rosewood Crane has been fully restored and will be a valuable reference piece for us.

They used the crane during the reconstruction of their track.

They also have railcars that still have "Iced Drinking Water" as signs. As ours was stolen, we may be able to borrow one to make fac-similes.



# Clean up Australia day

The “Friends” were once again involved in this very worthy cause. We were pleased to be joined by the Toyota Landcruiser Club who chose our site to donate their time.

We had three groups working. Some went to Stella Maris, some to the Heritage Precinct at Adelaide River and the rest to the Narrows, where, besides cleaning up the area, we managed to replace some missing rail.

Peter Cornell then delivered the Fettle’s Trolley and a very merry time was had by all riding up and down the track.



*This is how we attract volunteers: we bribe ‘em!*



## WANTED

A Caretaker is required for the Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct in the Northern Territory’s Top End.

Adelaide River is approximately 112km south of Darwin. The railway precinct is heritage listed and is drop-dead gorgeous.

A powered site is available for the right person/couple who must have their own accommodation in exchange for light tourism, hospitality and maintenance duties.

For further information, or to express interest in writing, please contact Nola Smith, PO Box 40645, Casuarina NT 0811 or telephone Trevor Horman on 0417 838578.

# Mick's going like a train

FORGIVE THE PUN, but Mick Kent has been somewhat side-lined owing to ill health.

This has, to an extent, prevented him from doing the robust things he normally does every weekend in the precinct - much to his disgust.

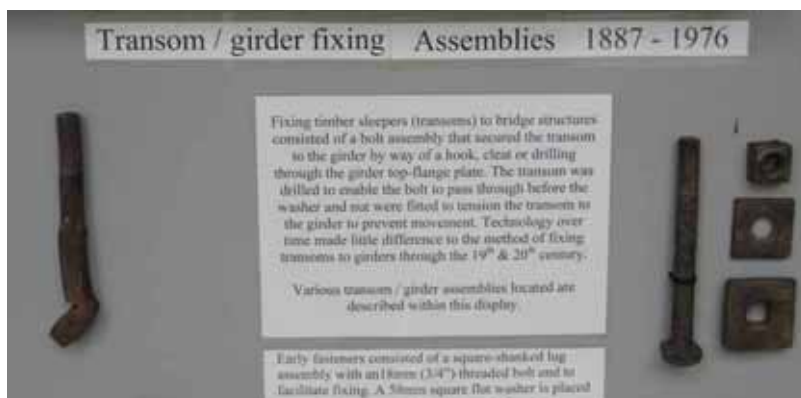
Being confined may have inhibited Mick's physical production in the precinct, but it has meant a very impressive contribution in another - invaluable - way: Mick has made massive progress on a range of interpretive signage for display in the Sidney Williams Hut.

And this from a man who is effectively on 'restricted' or 'light' duties!

A visit to Mick's Howard Springs property, aptly named *Hafta-Do*, is an enlightening railway history experience, to be sure.



Above: this magnificent beast (the interpretive panel, Silly!) is a Siding Location Map from 1887 to 1976. Mick has painstakingly marked each siding, listed them and colour coded them along the track. It really is outstanding work.



Left: this interpretive panel describes the history of Transom/girder fixing assemblies between 1887 and 1976, aligning samples with the explanations.



Left: at Chateau Hafta-Do, there is a wealth of material. Watch it and weep! Here we have remnants of sleepers (various), fish plates, the Overland Telegraph line, rail posts, carriage wheels and myriad other treasures nestled in tropical gardens. Eccentric? No way!

# 2006 membership renewal now due

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

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

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

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

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

I hereby enclose:

\$30 Individual      \$15 Pensioner      \$40 Family  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ donation (tax deductible and gratefully accepted)

**Please post to FNAR, GPO Box 3504, Darwin NT 0801**

**OR** EFT details:      BSB: 065 901      Account No: 1045 3230

## 2006 Calendar of Events

- **ANZAC Day Services**  
Tuesday 25 April, Coomalie Community Government Council
- **Heritage Day, Precinct Open Day**  
Monday 1 May at the Precinct
- **Murder Mystery Dinner (tentative)**  
Saturday 27 May, Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct
- **Adelaide River Races**  
Saturday 3 June, Adelaide River Show Society
- **Adelaide River Show**  
10-11 June, Adelaide River Show Society
- **Annual Railway Picnic Day**  
Monday 7 August, Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Sunday 23 April 2006, 10am, Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct.**

**Please note that you must be a financial member in order to vote (see details of membership renewal, page 9).**

**If you are not already serving on the Committee, please consider it. There are plenty of jobs for plenty of different skill sets, so don't be shy!**

**Traditional sausage sizzle will follow.**

**If you haven't been to the precinct for a while, you'll notice the difference!**

## Latest arrivals for FNAR

The photographs below record the arrival in February in the Top End of a Steelcon road train carrying very precious cargo gifted to FNAR by the Ghan Preservation Society in Alice Springs: wagons! One is a petroleum wagon (22,500 litres) and the other is a cattle wagon, which is similar to the one used for troops in WWII on the *Spirit of Protest*, a parody of the name *Spirit of Progress* which ran between Sydney and Melbourne.





How does the precinct look so gorgorous? It is through the efforts of Nola Smith (pictured), Rilla Kerr and thier trusty band of gardening volunteers, as well as good corporate citizens such as RS Gardening Care and CS Services who regularly slash the precinct - not to mention Leslie at Shoal Bay Mulch for their very generous mulch donation. Thank you to everyone who makes an invaluable contribution.

## **FNAR All Aboard!**

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



*Porky with Ian Kiernan, AKA a 1986-87 BOC Solo Around-the-World Yachtsman and latter day Mr Clean Up Australia.*

*The Editorial staff have some comments:*

- (1) Nice suit, Porky*
- (2) Lovely Art Deco backdrop at Yarralumla*
- (3) Didn't they have stubby coolers?*
- (4) Ya 'dun good, Mate!*
- (5) Congratulations!*