

**OBERON TARANA HERITAGE RAILWAY INC.**  
**NEWSLETTER**  
**APRIL 2017**



**.....bringing your rail heritage back to life.**

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**Proudly sponsored by**



**Committee:**

**President: Tim Arnison**

**Vice President: Peter Culley**

**Secretary: Elaine Boxer**

**Treasurer: John Brotchie**

**Track Manager: Graham Williams**

**Public Officer: Elaine Boxer**

**General Committee:**

**David McMurray: Fundraiser, Acting Newsletter Editor/Publicity**

**Ian Davis: Document Writer**

**Martyn Salman**

## Editor's thoughts

Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. is nothing if not consistent.

Back in 2006 our first committee had a vision.

That vision was a fairly lengthy statement that said in essence "OTHR has a vision for the development of a vibrant, professionally run tourism centre initially based on the area bounded by the railway yard, with the possibility of extensions in the future"

Who would have envisaged that that vision captured by Shane Moorhead, Margaret Connors Bill Muldoon, Marjorie Webb and the general committee of 2006 remains the constant theme ten years later with another entirely different committee.

That vision is the one constant that drives us all today; its basic fundamentals never change.

Those basic fundamentals are the basis of our business plan today.

Of course the boundaries have changed over time and your committee now contends with never ending and increasingly difficult sets of regulations that need the enquiring mind of a Queen's Council to interpret so as to not trip us up. Our Masters are consistent in throwing up walls, hurdles, impediments and blockades, that once we overcome throw up others.

Whilst your committee contends with the twists and turns that must be made to counter and meet changing regulations, one thing has remained consistent and that is OTHR's vision remains the same and one day with the help of many hands and brainpower, that vision will become a reality.

"Success is neither magical nor mysterious. Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying basic fundamentals

Jim Rohn"



## And the winner is...

Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. is pleased to announce our offline fundraising donation giveaway has been won by...

1<sup>st</sup> Prize, **Original art work** by Mike O'Kane:

Phillip Bramich, Oberon NSW.

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize, **Two tickets to Mayfield Gardens**

J. Gray.

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize, **Hamper.**

Don Capel, Oberon NSW.

Congratulations to all winners.

Watch out for the next offline fundraiser coming soon.

## NEXT MEETING

General Meeting

5<sup>th</sup> April 2017

7.30PM

## General meeting

Save the date, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017, and come to our next general meeting. Oberon RSL is the venue; location is the old dining room and time is 7.30PM.

“Canberra’s Surprising Rail Heritage!”

A 45 minute presentation with 15 minutes for questions will reveal some of the surprising railway stories from our nation’s capital.

Canberra Railway Museum volunteer and rail history enthusiast, Garry Reynolds, has taken a keen interest in writing the story of the Oberon-Tarana Railway and our endeavours. Now, we have invited Garry to share the intriguing stories of railways that were built at significant human and financial cost and several that ended up as pipe dreams in his home city of Canberra.

Hear how lofty ambitions and logic is defied and political deals win out yet again.

No ‘alternative facts’ here, just years of research to celebrate the achievements and expose the quirks and stuff-ups of railway planning and construction in the National Capital Region.

An entertaining and educational evening awaits.

## Some Oberon Facts.....

- Oberon Shire boundaries are almost entirely defined by rivers.
- The Great Dividing Range runs through the shire east of Oberon. The rivers to the east of the divide drain ultimately into the Pacific Ocean. To the west of the divide the rivers eventually drain into the Murray River and enter the sea in South Australia.
- Oberon Plateau is a broad area of uplifted rock. No matter which direction you proceed, you descend to much lower countryside.

- Eels are found in the eastern but not western flowing rivers.
- Deep water erosion over 300 million years formed the spectacular steep cliffs of Kanangra Walls while the Jenolan Caves were formed by slightly acidic waters dissolving limestone.



*Oberon’s Fish River... famous for trout fishing.*

## Customer Management

Last month we discussed the potential source of our customers when the project becomes operational.

Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway will collect statistical and general information about our visitors so that we can send information from time to time about the latest attractions on offer at the railway. From information collected OTHR will provide the following:

- Newsletters
- Email messages
- SMS messages
- Regular updates on our website, Facebook, twitter and Instagram.
- Articles in local papers, community newsletters and tourist magazines.

From time to time OTHR will add or change railway tours. Our special rail events will re-engage visitors for even more experiences. Stages 2 and 3 will make our railway tours even more compelling.



*It is 1979 and this, the last train to run on the line, winds its way up the steep hill to Hazelgrove. The loco is 4901 driven by Bryan Williamson. The load consists of an S truck and an LLV with JHG Guards van. 21<sup>st</sup> Sept. 1979. Photo Dennis O'Brien.*

**Next Working Bee**  
**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017**  
**To**  
**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

## Working Bee News

April working bee will be in accordance with the priorities list taken from the latest Strategic Plan and will follow on from last month.

Tasks to be tackled include:

- Completion of the store room. This has been under construction for the last couple of months.
- Commence work on the Plough Van
- Reposition the Signal ladder.

This is an ambitious task list so it would be appreciated that anybody up to it comes along and helps out.

Remember to old saying: “many hands make light work.”

Remember the conditions of offering up your labour for a day or two:

- Morning and Afternoon tea.
- A great lunch
- Accommodation for out of towners at Oberon Men’s Shed
- Hot showers at the caravan park.

Come on, be a part of it; you won’t regret it.

A special note of thanks to those who gave up a bit of time to keep the tasks moving along last month. A larger group descended on the railway precinct and quite a deal of progress was made.

We always need volunteers to help out even for an hour or two and that extra pair of hands really makes a difference.

## Ah.....Memories.....



The photo above is remarkable! Who would believe that the small figure of a year 6 Oberon Central School pupil standing on the platform edge, just to the left of the JHG, is none other than the founding President of OTHR – Shane Moorhead. He wishes that the same locos and wagons were there now!

Thank heavens school teacher John Kember had the foresight to take the kids to view the last train. 4901 is shunting in the yard – 27<sup>th</sup> Sept 1979. Photo Dennis O’Brien

## Welcome New Members

Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. is always looking for new members.

Interested in railways or the Oberon to Tarana line in particular, why not give your support by becoming a member?

## Not so well....

If anyone hears about any member on the sick list, please let the editor know via Secretary Elaine so we can send get well wishes on behalf of the association.

## In Memorium.

If anyone hears of the passing of one of our members please let the editor know via Secretary Elaine so we can make a special mention.

## Say Whaaat???

Somebody threw a bottle of Omega 3 pills at me;

Luckily my injuries were only super fish oil!



*This is a rare event. CPH 34 is seen winding its way up the hill between Carlwood and Hazlegrove on*

*the Oberon branch line. This was a special trip in 1974*

## Oberon – Burruga Railway

Now there’s a heading that might surprise a lot of railway buff!. It’s true that the original line was scheduled to go all the way to Burruga, approximately another 60 kilometres to the south of Oberon. At the time Burruga was host to the biggest and richest copper mine in New South Wales.

Whilst looking for items of historical interest I came across a copy of the Lithgow Mercury, Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1913 a copy of which is held by the National Library of Australia.

### “Tarana-Burruga Railway

#### Evidence before the Public Works Committee

#### At Burruga.

As stated in the last issue, the Public Works Committee sat in the Burruga courthouse on Tuesday evening, to take additional evidence in regard to the proposed Tarana-Burruga railway. Mr. John Storey, MLA. Chairman of the Committee, briefly explained to those present the object of the visit.

The first witness called was John Oscar Armstrong, manager of the Lloyd copper mine, who deposed that he had spent four years at Burruga. He did not wish to either supplement or amend the evidence he gave previously. The mine workings had recently been extended 150 feet and there were at present 500 hands employed there. As far as a mining eye could see, the prospects were bright. They were not going up to capacity, owing to the difficulty of getting labour – principally experienced miners. Places were open for quite 50 additional miners and between 70 and 80 hands could be given work. The works were being added to by the installation of a mineral separating plant for treating concentrates. The company put in over 40,000 pounds at the time of re-opening the mine. The mine was now regarded as in a self- supporting position, with large ore deposits and good prospects. The timber drawback had been

overcome, and the plant was giving satisfaction. The timber supply in the vicinity of the tramline would last many years. If the line were made from Tarana, they would bring to the mine 300 tons of coal weekly; there would always be a considerable quantity of machinery and general stores coming forward. If the line terminated at Oberon it would be no advantage to Burruga, while if it terminated at Campbell's River it would be of no use in wet weather. If the railway were constructed the mine would greatly contribute to its traffic.

Eric Edwin Booth, underground manager, deposed that he put down the fuel tramway, which cost 2500 pounds per mile; the Shay engines were 28 tons and they had pulled 80 tons of wood; 50 tons was the average load; their speed was a little over eight miles per hour. After the mine closed down four years ago, nearly half the houses in the town were burnt down, and the company was now doing its best to provide accommodation for its workmen. The company had made no estimate as to the cost of working the tramline; there was no geographical hindrance to its being readily extended an additional 10 miles. A record was kept of the wood consumed at the mine; it cost the company 2s less per ton than when teams brought fuel in. If the railway was made from Oberon to Burruga it would have to come along the main ridge and down a spur at the head of the Campbell's River.

Walter Henry Martin, mine manager, Mt. David, deposed that he had resided in the district for 15 1/2 years. His mine had employed up to 130 men when in full work; there were now only 36 employed on development work. When this was completed quite 100 men would be on the job. At present he paid 85s for the carriage of concentrates and mining requirements from Perthville, a distance of 29 miles. He was strongly in favour of a line from Tarana to Burruga, which would pass within 7 miles of Mt. David mine and township. The population of Mt. David was about 200. The line would pass through one of the greatest forests of timber it was possible to find, it was suitable for all purposes, and would be used extensively for wood blocks for Sydney streets. He had reason to believe that if the line were constructed four sawmills would be established. The district generally is an

ideal one, the average rainfall being 36 inches per year.



*A rare photo showing the turning of the first sod of the Oberon Tarana Railway by Mr. Estell, May 28 1921. Mr. Estell was the Minister for Works and Railways. Also present were the Acting Premier (Mr. Dooley), Carl Wood Johnston (MLA for Bathurst and the acknowledged "father" of the line) and various other Parliamentary representatives. Both the Acting Premier and Mr. Johnston gave assurances that the line would be complete in 2 to 2 1/2 years - a promise which was subsequently kept! Photo Alan Sharp.*

Ewan Morgan, store keeper and hotel proprietor, Burruga, stated that he had been a resident for 25 years, and knew the country through which the proposed railway would pass. It would open up a good class of agricultural land. He got all his merchandise through Tarana, as it meant 29 miles less freight than Perthville. The teamsters on both routes charged the same rate. He paid 30 pounds per month in railway freights, and 50 pounds per month for team haulage. All the timber used for building purposes in Burruga was procured from Beaconsfield, through which the proposed line would pass.

Frank M. Luther, auctioneer etc., Oberon, stated that he was thoroughly acquainted with the country between Oberon and Burruga, and thought a railway could be constructed from the former place to within six miles of the latter, at a very low cost, as the proposed line practically followed a main mountain range. In the event of the line being constructed a large tract of first class agricultural land would be opened up. A vast belt of good quality timber existed in the neighbourhood. With

railway facilities this would be utilised in enormous quantities.

William James Hinton of Isabella, grazier, deposed that he held about 900 acres of freehold and A1 land, about 8 acres of which were under cultivation; with a good market he could cultivate much more land. The average yield of potatoes was about four tons per acre; he had grown 208 bags on an acre; the country was also suitable for growing cauliflowers and tobacco. His father held 2000 acres, and cultivated four; he could cultivate 40 or 50 acres with a ready market. The country between his place and Swatchfield was particularly good. He was strongly of opinion that the Tarana-Oberon route was the best possible.

David Bremmer, farmer of Mt. David, deposed that he and his brother held 780 acres freehold and c.l. of which 30 acres were cultivated. If a reasonable facility to market was afforded, they would get 200 acres under cultivation. The average potato yield was four tons per acre, and oaten hay ran 20cwt to the acre. The locality would grow apples and cabbages well. During last year, which was droughty, he carried 700 sheep. There was a large deposit of limestone handy, and an immense area of agricultural land within a ten mile radius.

John Thomas Hinton, of Isabella, farmer, was the holder of 700 acres of c.p. and c.l. land, and cultivates four acres for his own use. He could cultivate 200 acres with a market, his principal products were potatoes and oaten hay; the average yield of potatoes was from three to four tons per acre, and he had grown 200 bags per acre. He now ran 150 sheep and could run 300. Cauliflowers and tobacco also grew prolifically. The country through which the proposed line would pass was particularly good.

The meeting terminated near 11 o'clock, and in thanking the witnesses for the assistance the Committee had received, the chairman made specific reference to the very capable and valuable help rendered by Mr. M.J. Looby, hon secretary of the Oberon Railway League.



*The train arrived in Oberon and is standing in the platform. The engines will uncouple and 1957 will run around the train to take it back to Tarana. 1919 will travel "light engine" 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1963. Photo-Dennis O'Brien.*

### **Evidence at Oberon**

On Wednesday evening, at Oberon courthouse, further evidence was taken.

James Whitely, auctioneer, said he had resided in the district 25 years. He supplemented his previous evidence by giving statistics as to the quantity of timber dressed at Beacon field sawmills during the last seven months. If the railway were constructed, he knew of three or four firms who would establish sawmills in the district; the timber supply was practically unlimited. Teamsters charged 8s per 100 feet for carting wood to Tarana. He believed the estimated cost of the railway was too high; he knew professional men who were of the same opinion; he could not see where the annual loss of 15,000 pounds on the working of the line would come in.

The chairman remarked that there were 189 holdings in the district representing 65,000 acres of which only 2000 acres were under cultivation. The Government would look for a reasonable return if it laid out nearly half a million on a railway.

James Doust, auctioneer, deposed that he was a native of the district. He thought the estimate of the departmental authors as to the cost of a line from Tarana to Oberon was excessive. He knew the country well, and considered the conformation thereof from six miles from Burruga to near Tarana practically level and no grade need to be more than

1 in 30. The tourist traffic to Oberon was increasing every year as also was the area under cultivation in the district. If it were not feasible for the line to be carried to Burruga, then would be glad to see it constructed to Oberon, and it would bring settlers into closer touch with markets for their produce. He would not mind if the line were of a light description. Because of the high haulage rates, many people did not bother to increase their cultivation areas.

There had been inquiry for land in the district; good potato land was worth from 3 pounds to 3 pounds 15 shillings. Local potatoes were much in demand, one week recently there were six or seven Sydney buyers in the district. The sale of stock during the past year was greater than during any previous year. The potato buyers gave 9 pounds 10 shillings per ton and found the bags.

Referring to the remarks as to the excessive estimate for the proposed line, Mr Donaldson gave figures to show that the estimate of 8876 pounds per mile had not been arrived in a hap-hazard fashion.

James Robinson, grazier, of Jerula said he had resided in the district 40 or 50 years. His holding comprised between 800 and 900 acres of which 50 acres were under cultivation; he ran between 60 and 70 head of cattle and grew rye, oats and potatoes. The excessive haulage rates retarded expansion in agriculture. He knew the country well and would be willing to take a surveyor over the proposed route from Oberon to Burruga; he could point out where the route could be improved upon.

Archibald Stevenson, grazier of Essington Park stated his property consisted of 7,000 or 8,000 acres and averaged one sheep per acre. The whole district would greatly benefit by railway as the high charges for haulage took the heart out of settlers. He really believed the estimated cost of the line per mile as set down by the departmental officers was too high. Re the suggested extension from Oberon to Burruga, the wrong route had been explored. (Witness described an easy route which would carry the line to within six miles of Burruga.) He was sure the line to Oberon only would be acceptable to every person in the district and that in a very few years the line would be more than self-supporting.

This concluded the evidence and Mr. Stevenson thanked the Committee for the patience and courtesy extended to witnesses both at Burruga and Oberon. Mr. Looby supplemented Mr Stevenson's remarks which were duly acknowledged by Mr. Storey.

## Work at the Oberon Railway Station.

Oberon Review 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017.



Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway (OTHR) members are replacing the leaking roof to prevent rain from entering the historic building at the Oberon Railway Station.

The pre-cast concrete building was built at Oberon Station when the railway line was constructed in 1923.

It contains a parcel room with double doors to the platform and similar doors to the parking area at the rear.

OTHR President Tim Arnison said the building contains the office and the station master's private office complete with open fireplace.

"The other end of the building is the waiting room and adjoining toilet," he said. "The asbestos tiles which had become damaged over time have all been removed by a licenced EPA- approved asbestos removal company."

"The area was cleaned and inspected by a supervising hygienist to ensure no asbestos remains on the roof or roof cavity."

Mr Arnison said heritage consultants for John Holland Rail have approved the installation of a corrugated iron roof to ensure the building is made weather-proof.

OTHR, which holds the lease on the building, is delighted that John Holland Rail was able to arrange to have this work carried out.

OTHR now plans to expand its display of railway history and memorabilia to “make this an exciting and informative place for locals and visitors to come and view a small part of transport history.”

## What's this thing called luv?



C'mon Gunzels.... Have a guess!

This month's curiosity is a NSW Railway Ambulance Corp 1936 RT & T efficiency medal, 9ct gold enamelled.

It was awarded for efficiency and outstanding conduct. As well it was thought that such recognition encouraged staff to excel in their duties.

## Contacts For all enquiries

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