

OBERON TARANA HERITAGE RAILWAY INC.

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2017



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

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GoFundMe: <https://gofund.me/2mhftk44>

Committee:

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Editor's thoughts

You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.

How many of us are familiar with this statement and worse how many of us don't understand what it really means?

The Tarana to Burruga railway was proposed as early as 1908 when a group of locals formed the Oberon Railway League and lobbied hard from that time until the line was opened as far as Oberon in 1923, a period of 15 years.

The railway line was instrumental in the prosperity of the Oberon district and up until its suspension in 1979 was Oberon's lifeline to the greater economy of New South Wales. From 1979 the line was left to moulder; no one cared if it went back to nature.

The greatest instrument in opening up Oberon to the prosperity it enjoys today and no one cared!

That was until in 2006 a group of locals realised that if the railway and its entire infrastructure disappeared, Oberon would never be able to get it back and a major part of the town's history would be lost.

Under the first presidency of Shane Moorhead, a small group formed the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. with the vision of restoring and running again a railway so important to all of Oberon residents and train enthusiasts alike.

That group, who held that vision, knew what they had and were determined never to see it gone. In 2017 the committee and members of OTHR still have that vision and are absolutely determined never to see the line gone for its loss will be Oberon's loss and NSW railways loss forever. A small part of New South Wales development but a very large part of Oberon and districts development has to be preserved at all costs.

It's more than time for Oberon's leaders and business community to stand solidly behind the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. and provide the physical and financial assistance that the committee needs.

Don't let our history fade into dust; our community showed that it was strong and overcame the odds in the recent fight for council independence.

Let's do the same and convince the NSW Government that it's vital to preserve the history of one little town in New South Wales.

It's no good lamenting our history's loss in the future when it's too late.

Let's not find ourselves in the position of saying:

"We didn't know what we had and now it's gone!"



The photo was taken just before 4 pm on Wednesday the 3rd October as the official train has yet to arrive for the official opening. The skies were clear and the day must have been cool judging by the coats and the turned up collars. The bunting suggests a gentle southerly breeze. But at least the shadows suggest the sun was out.

The Down Home signal visible in the photo is set to allow the train to enter the platform on the main line.

The Loop Line and the Goods Siding are visible to the right. People are standing on this siding and a train has been made up adjacent to the loading bank with a number of S trucks, a four wheeled lowered van and a 4 wheeled water gin closest to the camera.

The gentleman on the left of the photo is Mr David Jamieson of Edith School and his pupils are behind him on the platform. There is at least one T Model Ford in the gathering behind the other cars which may belong to the officials as there were various railway Inspectors, a Loco Inspector and the District Superintendent at the opening. These were all important people in the 1920's. The trucking yards seem to be just visible in the distance.

To the extreme right of the photo there is a covered sulky and just behind the goods shed there could be the rough frame of a fettler's tent but this is a guess.

The goods crane clearly shows its 2 ton load capacity.

The state of the sleepers on the main line and loop line are interesting - the main seem to be sitting up on the formation but the loop and siding sleepers seem to be well buried perhaps as a result of fair usage during construction.

Know Rick Fletcher...

If Shane Moorhead was the King of OTHR, then surely Rick Fletcher had to be Knight Commander!

Older members would remember Rick and from time to time, your Editor likes to acknowledge people instrumental in the operations and history of Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc.

Shane and Rick were the two original members who started with a grand idea of refurbishing the Oberon to Tarana railway line and running a train again.

Maybe it was a dream or a vision and maybe they realised the significance of the railway to the early prosperity of Oberon.

Rick was the first Secretary and did an enormous amount of heavy lifting to get the project off the ground. He had to overcome hostile opposition from other groups laying claim the rail corridor, fight for funding, win the inevitable arguments and climb walls constantly being put up to slow us down or stop us altogether.

It was Rick and Shane who organised the purchase of our two locomotives and beat the odds to deliver them to Oberon. No problem was insurmountable and with unbridled enthusiasm no problem was too big to overcome.

Rick's forte was administration. There was a tremendous amount of paper work, as there is today, and he set out to give Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. orderliness. He set up the early regulatory requirements and prepared our safety systems. These requirements and safety systems form the basis of our association today.

Rick was a great public speaker, promoting the OTHR vision at every opportunity and lobbying council and service clubs to gain advantage for our association. He became heavily involved in the heritage rail governing bodies.

Even after moving on from Oberon, he returned for a considerable time to volunteer in our working bees.

Know Rick Fletcher? We all owe Rick a huge vote of thanks for the effort he put into the OTHR vision in the establishing years.

Thanks Rick!



Rick Fletcher pursuing his other passion, his lovely 1960, Triumph TR3 pictured at the TR Register Australia's Echuca Concours in 2013.

NEXT MEETING

General Meeting

7th June 2017

7.30PM

General meeting

Reserve the date, 7th June 2017 for the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. general meeting.

Secretary Elaine is working on a suitable person as a guest speaker and we'll let you know who it is shortly.

Some Oberon Facts.....

- Gold was found in the Oberon district on 15th February 1823. The find was suppressed and in April 1851 gold was officially found at Ophir near Orange, NSW.
- The discovery was suppressed by the Government of the day to avoid a rush of the population of the colony of Sydney to the new gold field.
- Gold was mined throughout the Oberon District in earlier times and some made their fortune.
- Exploration companies are still looking for valuable minerals to this day.
- In addition to gold, silver, sapphires, diamonds, talc, bismuth and asbestos amongst other minerals have been discovered and mined over the years.



Fossicking in Oberon, NSW.

Not at the last General Meeting?

It's disappointing that we can't attract more of you to our general meetings.

Your committee has changed the format to bi-monthly and the meetings now have less emphasis on formality and more on matters of interest. We have had guest speakers Bill Harrison from Glenreagh Mountain Museum, Janelle Middleton from Bathurst Museums and Gary Reynolds from Canberra Railway Museum. All have had interesting tales to tell and words can't capture their passion in their respective interests; you had to be there to appreciate them.

And so to the last meeting in April; Gary Reynolds promised 45 minutes of interesting stories about the lost Canberra Railway System and gave us over an hour of the most fascinating stories about the grand plan for a Canberra railway system, all told passionately and from the heart.

Canberra was planned around a complete railway system to service the Nation's Capital and now largely lost because of bureaucratic decisions to abandon it piece by piece.

His theme was "You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone!", the very same theme your editor has spoken about recently and again in this newsletter.

His message was about the Canberra Railway system and how it has been lost to history but it applies equally to Oberon. Everyone has a responsibility for saving our history.

Painting Prize most welcome!

Local Oberon man, Phillip Bramich was the winner of the main prize in the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. inaugural Offline donation draw.

Phillip was excited when he heard about his good fortune and told President Tim that he had just the spot on his wall at home to hang it.

OTHR also thanks local artist Mike O’Kane for providing the painting as a donation towards our vision of getting a train running on the tracks again.

Thanks also to the many generous donors who supported the Offline donation programme.

Look for the next Offline donation draw in due course.



President Tim officially hands over Mike O’Kane’s painting to a much chuffed Phillip Bramich.

GoFundMe isn’t dead!

Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. is always seeking donations and sponsorships to help get a train on the track.

There are two ways to make a donation:

- Go to our GoFundMe page and make your donation there.
- Or send a cheque to our Post Office Box 399, Oberon NSW 2787 marking your envelope “fund raiser”.

If you are a business person large or small and would like to sponsor OTHR, please contact our Secretary for information on how you can help.

Services to be offered when we are operational.

In April we spoke about customer management, but how do we actually get customers in the first place? After all, once you’ve ridden on an historic train you’ve done it.

Well no, there’s much, much more.

Our plan shows that we will offer:

- Standard tourist train rides to Hazelgrove and return.
- Enhanced train ride experience to include restaurant and gourmet food experiences on a regular basis depending on demand.
- Enhanced train ride experience promoting local musical talent. These experiences could include but not limited to folk, rock & roll, country as well as drama, murder mysteries and special occasions.
- Hire for local special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, celebrations, etc.
- Souvenir Shop.

- Guided tours of our facilities by appointment.

Don't be cynical about these plans; they have been done before at other venues world-wide, are extremely popular and produce very good sources of profit.



*There's been a murder!
A murder mystery tour is always popular and usually includes a gourmet dinner and other benefits. These mystery dramas are very popular.*

Next Working Bee
Saturday 6th May 2017
To
Wednesday 10th May 2017

Working Bee News

May 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 too, the 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.

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

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.

Sadly we record the passing of Bruce Stephenson last Friday 21st April.

Bruce would have been known to many of you as he was a very enthusiastic supporter of OTHR and a genuine local identity.

Bruce was a gentleman in every sense of its meaning.

Vale Bruce

It is noted also that Len Truscott passed away last Tuesday 18th April.

Len was a surveyor and provided OTHR with surveying assistance in the past.

Vale Len.

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???

People in Dubai don't like the Flintstones

But people in Abu Dhabi do!



A196, later 1945 on a construction train between December 1922 and May 1923. Oberon Goods Shed under construction in the background.

Railway league at Oberon

"A public meeting in favour of construction of a light line of railway from Tarana, through Oberon to Burruga was held in the Federal Hall on Friday night. There was a good attendance, including representatives from Swatchfield, Black Springs, Tarana, Gingkin and Wiseman's Creek.

Mr G.F. Pickering, J.P. was elected to the chair and explained the object of the meeting. Afterwards a committee was formed to be known as the Oberon Railway League. Mr. Pickering was elected president. Messrs Brennan, Doust, Dr.Coane and F. Gilmore, Vice Presidents, Mr. M.J. Looby Hon Secretary and Mr. Jas Whiteley Hon Treasurer. Committee: Messrs Morton, Cox, Kelly, E. Robinson, V.E.Smith, F.S.Graham, A. Stevenson, C.E.Richards, A.W.Salter and H.V.Fox, with power to add to their number.

The Oberon League is arranging for leagues to be formed in Hazelgrove, Black Springs and Burruga. Mr. W.Knight was appointed to arrange meetings at Black Springs and Mr. F.Gilmore at Hazelgrove. It was also decided to write to Tarana Progress Association re same. Mr.J.Williams of Burruga is to be requested to form a league there. The sum of five pounds was collected in the room towards the movement, and no time will be lost in bringing the matter before the authorities. A line this way would run through country already opened up by closer settlement."

Lithgow Mercury, Wednesday, 19 August 1908.
Copy of which is held in the National Library of
Australia.

This is the earliest mention I can find to establish a
railway line from Tarana to Burruga via Oberon,
NSW.



Rear view of Hazelgrove Halt, facing east.

Photo courtesy Oberon Library.

Oberon Railway Station Building.

Over the next few issues of our newsletter I will
publish extracts from a Paper written by Stuart
Sharp in 2014.

The Paper is essentially a history of Oberon Railway
Station. It describes some of the politics in play at
the time.

Why the Branch Line came to be built.

“.....Yes, Oberon did get its railway but why was it
authorised in 1919? When it was built, it reflected
very low infrastructure and operational
characteristics, that could only be served by fifty
year old, light-weight 0 – 6 – 0 locomotives – the
“A” or later, 19 class. Why did the NSW Railways

want to open and manage what appeared like an
antiquated and out dated railway?

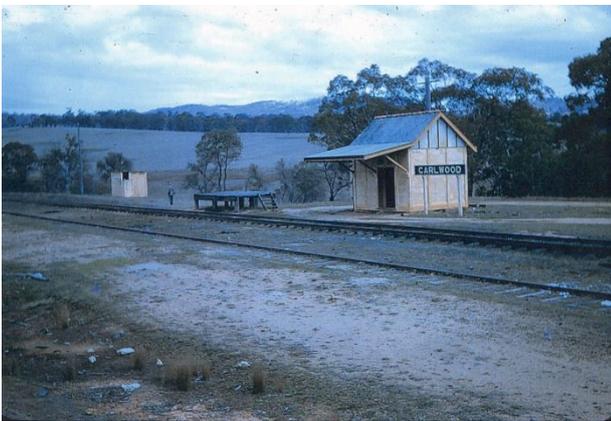
It is very difficult for rail observers today to
understand what a railway, such as the Tarana-
Oberon branch line, was knowingly built to such
low standards at the same time as massive, high-
class, ultra-modern works were underway to
electrify Sydney’s metropolitan railway system, to
build the city underground and to erect a huge
bridge over Sydney Harbour. Was it a case as clear
as day versus night? Was it a good case of the
dominance of Sydney versus the Bush? No, it was
not! It was not just a case of high building
standards for Sydney and low standards for rural
areas. That was true but it was not the rationale for
the difference in building standards.

The reason for different building standards
between the Oberon line and infrastructure works
in Sydney lies in politics and economics. In rural
areas, the allocation of capital expenditure was
dominantly in the hands of State Governments of
all persuasions in fulfilment of a fantasy to maintain
NSW and Australia as primarily an agrarian
economy. However, the free market capitalist
forces had been working against the concept since
the second half of the 1880’s. In Sydney, the capital
expenditure and economic growth was more
undertaken by the private sector than
governments, notwithstanding the large
investments in the metropolitan rail system. While
the financial rate of return in rural areas was
steadily declining, especially in the 1920s, the rate
of return from manufacturing in the urban areas
was growing, even booming. Moreover, it was
increasing without the financial support of
government.

In regard to politics, it was the unattainable dream
of all governments from 1903 to 1930 to fulfil the
fantasy of a large rural population achieved by the
breaking up, or what was known in NSW as closer
settlement of existing large rural properties. In
1919, the Country Party, the first time rural voices
coalesced into a political party, was formed in NSW.
Neville Pollard wrote an article about the one-time
Premier, Joseph Carruthers, who in 1919 and 1920
was involved in a campaign supposedly to improve
agriculture. Typical of the fantasy of the time it was
Carruthers ambition to settle “a million farms with

a million families". Governments relied on ever increasing profits from the primary sector following the opening of each new railway line in country NSW. They made a big mistake. They forgot to examine the declining productivity per acre of land sown to crop. The NSW Railways was a part of the dream because rail lines allowed rural holders to transport their goods by the comprehensive, easily accessible rail network. However this official priority to rural areas itself does not explain the low construction standards on the Oberon line.

In the early 1920s, the State Government of NSW and some other States entered an Agreement with the British Government to assist British migrants with settlement on rural holdings. The migrants never arrived in the numbers anticipated. In response to the failure of the dream, the British Government in 1925 guaranteed to supply loan funds specifically "to enable suitable areas of land to be made available for settlement or to enable such public works to be carried out as will tend to develop and expand settlement areas or will enable areas already settled to carry greater population."



Carlwood Halt

What's this thing called luv?



O.K. Gunzels.....

Here's another piece of memorabilia that's bound to delight your senses!

The image is of a New South Wales Government Railways Parcel Stamp with a value of one penny and was issued in 1891.

A parcel service was introduced on the New South Wales railway system in 1868 but it was another 23 years before the parcel stamp was introduced.

Contacts
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