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NEWSLETTER – 10th May 2005

We will periodically contact all members by email or mail to keep you up-to-date with progress. At the last meeting, the Treasurer advised (See report in Minutes below) that we currently have 72 members which is encouraging news. However, if you think progress is slow and that trains should be operating next week then you will be disappointed but it has become increasingly clear following our attendance at the recent “Running a Viable Heritage Railway” workshop (also see below) that we are on the correct path to success. We need a professional organisation and a strong competent Board to properly plan for the future. Our intention is to be here in ten years time as a solid *viable* operating business and this will not happen if we take shortcuts and poor planning methods. Work on the line will only commence in force when we have guaranteed our insurance cover; have proper accreditation to facilitate construction and have proper access rights to the rail corridor. This is necessary to protect your interests and the interests of the community.

Meetings

The meetings will continue on the first Wednesday of the month but we will be changing the venue as the RSL club does not always have an appropriate room available. For the immediate future we will meet in the barn on my property where we will have more room than the 2 smaller meeting rooms at the RSL. We will also have tea and coffee making facilities and access to a toilet and refrigerator. If members care to “bring a plate” or BYO drinks, we can have a more relaxed social gathering.

Location: “Yarrandoo” corner of Black Bullock Rd. and Hazelgrove Road – travel from Oberon via the Albion St by-pass road, turning North towards Tarana on the Hazelgrove Road. Arrive at Hazelgrove village after 5km and turn left into Black Bullock Road (the first road on the left). Turn left through the gate only 20m from the corner. Parking near the barn is available by driving through the gate into the next paddock.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday the 1st of June.

News

The material in this section is drawn in part from the bi-weekly articles appearing in the Oberon Review. Many members living out of the district will not have access to this material.

A team led by track manager Matt McMahan has carried out a detailed survey of the rail line and associated infrastructure between Oberon and Tarana. Every item including the bridges, culverts, drains, rail line, sleepers, signs, crossings, fences etc. was measured, assessed and photographed. Matt has prepared a comprehensive report which will be integral to the development of our business plan. It is clear that we are lucky to have Matt as the Track Manager and this important task couldn't be in better hands.

The unseasonable hot weather made the work of clearing blackberries and other weeds an arduous task. It also produced a few encounters with a number of active snakes still sharing the line. It would be nice to report that the line was 100% intact but unfortunately in a few places, sleepers and sections of rail have been deliberately removed and the track formation damaged. (*see minutes of the last meeting, attached, for more detail*)

President Shane Moorhead and I recently attended a workshop in Sydney where the focus was on “How to Run a Viable Rail Heritage Organisation”. The workshop was sponsored by Rail Heritage Australia (NSW) Inc. and provided us with valuable resources, information and contacts to better prepare us for running the railway. As a consequence we intend to:

- strengthen the professional mix of our board of directors
- continue with the development of a realistic business plan
- provide the community and visitors with a marketable service
- ensure that customers have a memorable experience

The president of Rail Heritage Australia (RHA) is David Hill the former CEO of State Rail, Managing Director of the ABC and Chairman of Soccer Australia and he has clearly put together a strong organisation to try to preserve the remaining stock of irreplaceable rail heritage items. The Oberon Tarana branch line

clearly falls into the preservation category and we have been warmly welcomed to RHA as a member organisation.

The workshop focussed on successful heritage railways including 3801 Ltd., the Zig Zag railway and Puffing Billy in Victoria. The latter organisation has over 500 dedicated volunteers and has a very professional operating plan. Considerable emphasis needs to be given to encouraging and supporting volunteers and it is our intention to recruit interested community members ranging from the young to the not-so-young and train them in a variety of areas. Some of the tasks will involve physical work eg. sleeper laying but many other tasks need to draw on the skills and expertise that people have eg. there are rail employees and ex-employees who still have knowledge of the working procedures which can be passed on to a new generation. In other words, *we need you to train us!*

One item which I mentioned in the last Railway News related to “safe working” and the term “staff”. John Stuart contacted me to advise that he had worked with the railway department as a signaller in various areas of the state (including Tarana) and that the correct term is “Staff and Ticket” operation. Where more than one train or perhaps “trike” was to occupy the section, the first train to enter the line from Tarana carried a special “Ticket”. The driver or ganger would need to sight the “staff” held by the Station Master so that he knew that his was to be the only train in the section. Once underway, he could not “set back” (reverse). When he arrived at Oberon the Officer there would notify Tarana and then the next train could enter the section with another “ticket” or with the “staff” if it was the last train.

Happenings

For your diary: keep part of Sunday the 4th of September free (Fathers’ Day). Famous steam locomotive 3801 will be making a brief stop at Tarana for a photo opportunity at our request. There will be some social activities at Tarana based on the railway station and the Pub. More detail to follow.

Member Arthur Robinson has been active on his “one-man-band” maintenance operations. Working under the Museum’s insurance cover he has done a superb job on clearing most of the culvert and crossing drains from Hazelgrove to the vicinity of the factory. If you are driving along Lowes Mount road, have a look at the rail formation as you go past. The crossing over the Tip Road is well worth a look. When our own Insurance is organised and the leasing and operational paperwork is complete we intend to have small teams operating on similar projects. It just goes to show that one person *can* make a difference.

Just a reminder – our website is at: www.ozsite.com.au/oberonrailway

Important Change to the Constitution

We need to alter the rules of our constitution to conform to requirements of the department of Gaming and Racing in relation to our application for Charity status (in order that gifts can be tax deductible) as well as to facilitate our membership of Rail Heritage Australia (NSW) Inc. Accordingly we are notifying you either by mail or email of the intention to propose the following resolution as a special resolution at the next general meeting on Wednesday the 1st of June:

Proposal: *“That the Model Rules be altered by the addition of the following paragraphs to Part 5 Section 36:*

(3) The assets and income of the association shall be applied solely in furtherance of its objects and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the association except as bona fide compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the association.

(4) In any winding up or voluntary cancellation of incorporation of the association the surplus property shall be distributed to an organisation as determined by special resolution of the association which organisation shall have objects the same as or similar to those of this association which is not carried on for the profit or gain of its individual members. The distribution shall otherwise be in accordance with the Act.”

Note: paragraph (3) is designed to reinforce our “not-for-profit” status and paragraph (4) is a “winding-up” clause.

Minutes of Monthly Meeting

held on Wednesday, 4 May 2005 at 7.30 p.m. at Oberon RSL

Present: Shane Moorhead (Chair), Marjorie Webb, Rick Fletcher, Bob Conners, Nola Brown, Fred Brown, Ray McMahon, Matt McMahon, Peter Culley, Arthur Robinson, Kevin Hoffman, Keith Jones, David McGowan, Dot McGowan, Aiden Clark, Richard Webb, Greg Richards, Margaret Conners.

Apologies: Bill Muldoon, Laurie McMahon, Charles Hazelwood

Minutes from the meeting held on 6 April 2005:

Amendment noted that F. and N. Brown sent their apologies for their absence at the last meeting. *Moved*, B. Conners *seconded* M. McMahon that the minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record. Carried.

Correspondence in:

1. Letter from 3801 Ltd regarding the excursion west on 4 September. The train will not be able to stop long at Tarana Station due to a planned connection at Blayney later in the morning.
2. Public liability insurance correspondence and forms from Willis for completion.
3. Information from the Australian Taxation Office regarding the requirements for an organisation to be registered as a charity.
4. Information about the Railfest Verse Competition which will be judged at the National Rail Heritage Conference at Tamworth on 28-30 September 2005.
5. Copy of the Glenreagh Mountain Railway Business Plan and Articles of Association.
6. Copy of the Crookwell-Goulburn Business Plan.
7. Information from Dot McGowan about "winding up" clauses for inclusion in the OTHR Constitution.
8. Copy of the Independent Transport Safety & Reliability Regulator's (ITSRR) "Exemption from Accreditation" regulations.

Correspondence out:

Letter to Greg Verdon, Regional Property Manager ARTC and to Bruce Fitzpatrick, General Manager of Oberon Council regarding damage caused to sections of the rail line in Oberon.

Moved B. Conners *seconded* R. Fletcher that correspondence be accepted. Carried

Committee Reports:

Secretary's report:

Rick Fletcher reported that both he and the President recently attended the "Running a Viable Heritage Railway" workshop in Sydney that was sponsored by Rail Heritage Australia (NSW) Inc. (RHA). Information provided at the workshop will assist OTHR in laying the groundwork for successfully running a heritage railway.

The president of RHA, David Hill, has offered to assist OTHR and suggested the names of 2 prominent people who may be prepared to join the Board of Directors. He stressed that it is critical to have a competent Board with appropriate management skills and to prepare a realistic business plan. A government grant may cover the salary of an employed general manager. The workshop attendees were told that their heritage railways should provide a marketable service for the public. Carparks, a children's playground, kiosk facilities and souvenirs are all items which will help to make it a total experience for visitors. Marketing literature and media information should be well presented and understandable.

In June the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) will be releasing the new "Licence to Occupy" agreement. This may present the OTHR with a more viable alternative to leasing the rail corridor.

Willis, can provide Public Liability Insurance at the reduced premium of \$6,000 for Public Running. Rick will complete the questionnaire which has been sent to OTHR by Willis.

The barbecue and tour which was to be arranged for OTHR members by Lithgow State Mine Railway on 24 April was cancelled due to lack of support and problems caused by the Anzac weekend. It is hoped another mutually acceptable date can be arranged later in the year for members of both groups.

Treasurer's report

The treasurer reported that there are now 72 members of OTHR. There is a credit balance of \$1,109.80 in the bank account. An account for the Incorporation Seal and Stamp of \$42.50 has been paid.

Moved M. Webb *seconded* R. Fletcher that the treasurer's report be accepted. Carried. The Treasurer will make enquiries about making an application for GST exemption status for OTHR.

Matt McMahon (Rail Manager) reported on the comprehensive assessment that he and a small group of assistants conducted recently of the line between Oberon and Tarana. Photos were taken of every section of the line for future reference. There is very bad damage to the line between Oberon Station and Rutters

Ridge. One in 4 sleepers will need replacing and the line is covered by up to a metre of soil in some places. This has caused rusting and pitting of the tracks. He identified 20 locations where major damage has occurred to the line. Matt will prepare a costing for the restoration of the line to Hazelgrove. He stated that the assessment revealed the following information:

- 60 road crossings along the line (46 unofficial)
- 83 culverts, including 23 concrete, 7 good double box culverts, 5 bad double box culverts, 20 good single box culverts, 25 bad single box culverts. 3 culverts are completely missing. There is soil erosion around many culverts.
- 19 greasers on the line but only 6 are complete.
- 24 ramps on the line with 11 in a bad state
- 16 fences built across the line and only 5 have gates
- 490 metres of track missing mainly between Carlwood and the Fish River bridge.
- 1,100 metres of track with missing sleepers
- 20 locations with major damage on the line.
- the line is satisfactory with minimal repair for trike use between Rutters Ridge and Carlwood. Snakes Valley Creek Bridge is also suitable for limited trike use (subject to confirmation).
- In some sections there is erosion due to damage by stock.

Ray McMahon has been advised by Correctional Services that they are very keen to assist in track clearing activities but cannot start work yet until they have replaced 9 staff members. Ray also has located 250 ironbark strainer posts which could be cut down and made into round back sleepers. The price quoted was \$32 for each post (1 post = 2 sleepers) for delivery to Bathurst.

General Business

1. R. Fletcher advised that the rules of our constitution must be amended to conform to the requirements of the Dept. of Gaming and Racing to receive approval for charity status to enable gifts to be tax deductible. These amendments will also help with OTHR's application for membership of Rail Heritage Australia (NSW). *Moved* B. Conners *seconded* M. McMahon that R. Fletcher and M. Conners prepare the appropriate clauses and circulate them to members for consideration at the next meeting. Carried
2. *Moved* R. Fletcher *seconded* M. Conners that OTHR apply for an ABN. Carried. President Shane indicated that he would approach a local accountant to assist in the application for ABN, gift deductibility etc.
3. The brief visit of the 3801 locomotive and train at Tarana station on 4 September was discussed. Entertainment was promised from the Tarana Hotel. This event will be publicised in the local media and an OTHR flyer will be produced to give out to train passengers. Further discussion about the 3801 visit will take place at the next meeting.
4. Allan McVay, from ITSRR has contacted the Secretary in reply to previous communication and is keen to come to Oberon and talk to a meeting of OTHR members. Mr McVay also provided information on a new policy which permits organisations like OTHR to seek an exemption from accreditation before becoming an operator. The fees for an application for exemption have been waived by ITSRR. He also indicated that a bridge inspector at ITSRR may be able to assist us in examination of the rail bridges once we have applied for accreditation. The Secretary has been advised that it will probably not be necessary for volunteer track workers to undergo medical examinations. A medical exam is required for Category 3 train crew (i.e. trike operators) every 5 years.
5. R. Fletcher reported that the President of GMR (Colin Sambrook) advised that concrete sleepers (although only costing \$11.00 each) were proving difficult and heavy to handle at Glenreagh. Also, the cost of the "jewellery" to attach them to the track is expensive and Mr. Sambrook recommended that wooden sleepers be used when restoring the track.
6. A vote of thanks was moved for the recent work carried out by Arthur Robinson for the clearing work he has been undertaking along the line between Oberon and the tip.

The meeting closed at 9.40 p.m. The next meeting is to take place on Wednesday, 1 June 2005 at 7.30 p.m. at Rick Fletcher's barn on the corner of Black Bullock Road and Hazelgrove Road, Hazelgrove.

By the time you read this we will have presented the Business Plan and track report to the Council 355 Committee. We will report on this in our next communication.

Best wishes from your Management Committee

*PS – if you know somebody who might like to join, there is a **Membership Form** on the back page*