



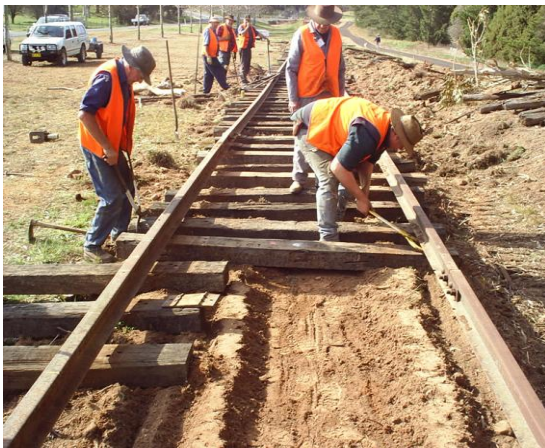
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## September 2007 Newsletter

### We are within sight of town!

As we write this newsletter, we can report that our September weeklong working bee has been an enormous success. The work gangs have passed Clover Lane and are well on their way into Oberon. The mills and the town skyline are now in sight and our spirits rise as the destination is nearing.

When this working bee concludes, over 1,100 sleepers will have been laid and two level crossings reconstructed. On two consecutive days 200 sleepers were laid each day – what a mighty effort!



*Some of our dedicated workers replacing the old, worn out sleepers with good second hand ones. This is a time-consuming task pinning the sleepers with dog spikes and ensuring the gauge is correct at each stage.*

Our progress has been speeded up by the use of the sled and Matt McMahon's workhorse bulldozer. However, congratulations to the dedicated OTHR fettlers who manhandled sleepers, gauged the line and replaced dog spikes. The whole team deserves the award of the "Crossed Sleeper with Double Dog Spikes."

Many thanks to our enthusiastic out-of-town members who worked during the week. They included Bob Wilson from Moss Vale, Ian McNeil from Maitland, Karl Rummans from Hazelbrook and Graham Williams from Bargo.

A big thank you again to the Big Trout Motel for providing free accommodation for these workers. And there is no accounting for dedication. Congratulations to Kevin Hoffman who celebrated his birthday working on the line on the 26th September – we wish you many more happy birthdays working on the line "Bluey".

### The OTHR Catering Corps

Once again our catering coordinator Lynette Ireland and her team have excelled themselves by providing delicious morning and afternoon teas and lunches every day at the Fettlers' Bistro. The efforts of all members who provided food are much appreciated. Seventeen OTHR members and friends donated food during the working bee with Kath Bellamy from Bathurst and Kathy Segardt from Sydney being the "furthest-travelled" cooks. Thank you everyone.

### Diary dates!

Remember that our goal is to complete the track from Hazelgrove to Oberon by the end of February 2008. It is within our reach if we continue to have well-attended working bees.

### Working Bee Dates

- ✂ Every Friday starting at 4.00 p.m.
- ✂ The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays in October starting at 7.30 a.m.
- ✂ Next weeklong working bee:  
**3<sup>rd</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> November**

*Contact the Secretary if you would like us to organise accommodation for you*

Phone our Track Manager, Peter Culley on 0427 042 448 if you need further information.

### Office of Rail Heritage

Negotiations are still continuing with the ORH for suitable rolling stock for our line. Members will be notified when we receive news about our first train.

### The Sleeper Club

What a success the "Sleeper Club" continues to be! Donations are still arriving from many members everywhere. A local property owner who is based in Sydney stopped by an OTHR work gang to enquire what they were doing. When told about the project, he was very impressed and sent a cheque for \$1,700 to buy sleepers. He wishes to remain anonymous but we appreciate his generosity.

At least 3,000 more sleepers are required to replace every sleeper to Oberon. If you haven't yet purchased a sleeper, OTHR would appreciate your support. See our website for more information.

### **Member's Profile – Rick Fletcher**

This month we introduce you to Rick Fletcher, our quiet achiever, one of the founders of OTHR, our talented web master and Special Projects Officer on OTHR's Board.

Rick was raised on the outskirts of Sydney when bread, ice, rabbits, clothes props and other staples were delivered by horse. Rick remembers travelling everywhere by train, tram and trolley bus in his youth and holiday destinations were reached by steam train. A visit to the Centenary of Railway display at Central Station in 1955 kindled a lifelong interest in railways, particularly steam trains.



*Rick takes a breather from removing old sleepers from the track.*

After completing his university studies, Rick spent 24 years teaching a variety of technical subjects in secondary schools around N.S.W. before spending 13 years training teachers in diverse technical fields at the University of Sydney. Rick became involved in computer studies in the early '70s and followed that through with consultancies in schools and lecturing in computing studies, electronics and IT at the University of Sydney.

Rick's interest in the Oberon to Tarana railway's restoration was initially stimulated by a proposal to remove the track and infrastructure to make way for a rail trail. Concerned that the region would be losing an important item of rail heritage, Rick worked hard with a group of local people with similar views to establish OTHR.

Although he now lives on the Central Coast of N.S.W., Rick still works very hard for our group

and distance from Oberon has been no obstacle for him. He designs and sponsors our website through his own website Ozsite Design and regularly represents OTHR at meetings held for heritage railway operators in Sydney. We always appreciate his visits to Oberon to help restore the track during the weeklong working bees and his encouragement and wise counsel when the challenges seem insurmountable.

### **Great Tourist Potential**

How fortunate we are to have in "our backyard" one of the most outstanding heritage pioneer railway lines in the state. It has one of the steepest gradients (1:25) climbing 332 metres over 24.3 kms from the main western line at Tarana station.

Many of the older local residents will know from experience, the railway track travels through some spectacular rural and bushland scenery. To add to our good fortune, the Oberon Station Group and the Tarana Station and Yard Group are listed on the State Heritage Register under the *Heritage Act 1977 (NSW)*.

The potential to attract tourists in general, not to mention history and train buffs to Oberon in the future will increase exponentially when the track restoration is completed. OTHR's Board has been developing plans to make the railway one of the key tourist attractions of the Central Tablelands. It plans to work with the Oberon Council and tourism-oriented groups to develop integrated tourist packages. In the future, tourists will be able to take a train trip, visit the museum, take a bus tour to Mayfield Gardens, the Jenolan Caves, Kanangra Walls, go fossicking or mushrooming or just relax by taking a bike ride or walking around this attractive district.

Imagine the huge attraction of providing heritage train trips from Central Station to Oberon in the future to co-incide with special events such as the Daffodil Festival and the Kowmung Music Festival. What an exciting future there can be for this region. Do you have any ideas to add to the list?

### **Christmas Function**

Set aside 15<sup>th</sup> December for our 2007 Christmas function. Details to follow next month.

### **Celebrating an anniversary**

Mrs Burcher, the wife of the President of the Oberon Railway League opened the Oberon to Tarana railway line on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1923. Come to our next monthly meeting at the Oberon RSL Club on **Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2007** to celebrate this special anniversary with us.