

Oberon TARANA HERITAGE RAILWAY INC. **NEWSLETTER**

July 2017



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

PO Box 299 Oberon NSW 2787

Website: www.othr.com.au

Email: admin@othr.com.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OTHR.Inc

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

Patrons:

**Daul Toole State Member for Bathurst, Minister for Lands and Forestry,
Minister for Racing**

Andrew Gee, Federal Member for Calare

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 Salmon

Our Mission Statement

To operate voluntary run tourist trains between Oberon, Hazelgrove and ultimately Tarana.

To have the Oberon Station precinct as a vibrant Heritage Railway Display run by volunteers as a professional tourist centre.

Editor's thoughts

Last month I talked about owning your mistakes. Well this month it's my turn to own my mistake. I recently published some historic photos in this newsletter and failed to acknowledge the owner. Ron Preston was a great train man and author who recorded many photos of the Oberon railway and these are now housed in OTHR's photo collections.

So to correct an error, I wish to acknowledge Ron as the owner of the photos used and will publish more of those photos from time to time.

Like the late Ron Preston and his son Steve, and all members of Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. we have an avid interest in the Oberon – Tarana branch line and its history.

History is a record of times past listed in order of occurrence and preserved for the betterment of future generations. History can be the recording of times past as photographs such as the rare and valuable ones taken by Ron Preston and located in OTHR photo collection or written documents such as those of Alan Sharp or unknown correspondents in local newspapers and records of the time.

Our Website and Facebook are modern instruments for recording our history, as are our volunteer's unfettered work in refurbishing and restoring the station precinct and railway line as living history.

Look again at the OTHR Mission Statement as it is telling us how we go about preserving our history by way of operating tourist trains on a heritage line and building a professional tourist centre.

All members can be very proud of our history, good and bad. It is imperative that we write it down, photograph it, rebuild it, refurbish it and use it for the betterment of those who come after us.

"If you don't know history then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree

- Michael Crichton"

Know Matt McMahon...

I guess most members know Matt McMahon. Matt is a local bloke and a straight up type of bloke who calls a spade a f...g. shovel; no mucking around as far as Matt is concerned!

If Shane was the King of OTHR and Rick was the Knight Commander then Matt had to be the Sargent at Arms.

I know Matt as a can do person with a love for local history both past and present, a fine collector of militaria and a first class tradesman.

As one of the early committee members I'm told that Matt was always a tower of strength, both literally and metaphorically. He is remembered as being able to sling a sleeper onto his shoulder and casually toss it into place – leaving lesser mortals struggling, with four volunteers on the sleeper tongs trying to attempt the same thing.

Matt was OTHR's first track manager and was dynamic and outstanding in that role. Importantly, he kept the workers on-side and effectively trained new inexperienced members.

Matt knew and appreciated that volunteers were GOLD and treated them as such.

It is believed that Matt was the first person to organise and carry out the first and only survey of the full length of the line in modern times. A lot of time and effort went into organising and recording the details. Later he became the Systems Manager and was equally effective in that role.

We can't be too effusive in recognising the work of the likes of Matt, Shane and Rick amongst others, who worked so hard in laying the groundwork for all others who have followed.



Matt McMahon as we know and love him



A small part of Matt's military collection.

NEXT MEETING

General Meeting

2nd August 2017

7.30PM

General meeting

Reserve the date, 2nd August 2017 for the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. general meeting.

Secretary Elaine is enlisting a mystery speaker for the August meeting.

You'll have to attend the meeting to find out who he/she is and hear his/hers entertaining story.

Important Information.

Membership Renewals due 1st July!

Members should pay fees for 2017/18 now. The fees are used in the day to day administration of Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. so it is important to send your renewal in as soon as possible.

Any member who has not renewed by 1st September 2017 will be deemed to be unfinancial and their membership cancelled. You can apply to re-join any time after 1st September but a joining fee in addition to annual membership fee will apply.

A membership renewal form is located at the end of this newsletter for your use.

About Oberon.....

As the days grow shorter and the nights grow long and the winter winds blow in from the West it's a sure sign that winter's come.

Time to sample the romance of Oberon! Come and experience a couple of cosy days in one of our many B & B's or farm stays. Snuggle up in front of a roaring fire, savour a wonderfully

nourishing country meal at one of Oberon's fine dining establishments or sip a port or two or share a beer at one of our quaint hotels.

Explore Oberon's countryside; visit the world famous Jenolan Caves or cast an eye over the winter beauty of Mayfield Garden and partake of a coffee at its café.

Its truffle time in Oberon in winter. Enjoy a Saturday truffle hunt and ploughman's platter. (Bookings essential)

But most of all come and see what your fellow members have been doing at the Oberon Station precinct, open first Saturday of the month in conjunction with Oberon's Community markets.

If you're really lucky a snow fall may just complete a wonderful Oberon experience.

Some words and phrases are attributed to the late Shorty Ranger.



Winter in Oberon - Simply Spectacular!

Welcome our new Co-Patron

Andrew Gee newly elected Federal Member for Calare has agreed to become Co- Patron of the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. Andrew lives in Orange with his family and has expressed a keen interest in seeing our project succeed.

Andrew joins our other Co-Patron, Paul Toole State Member for Bathurst.

Welcome aboard Andrew!



Andrew Gee MP.

Our fund raising isn't dead!

Donations are still required to help achieve our aim of putting a train back on the track. The immediate aim is raise \$20K to fund a couple of essential studies to allow us to apply for big funding that will help us achieve our ultimate target.

Nothing can happen unless you rail gunzels donate.

Wouldn't it be a shame if the project didn't reach its goal and languished as a static museum – or worse?

We have a saying here at OTHR:
"You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone."

Don't look back in years to come and wish you should have made the donation of the dollar that would have allowed the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. to bring your rail heritage back to life.

We are keeping all donations so far especially to move the project forward. All donations are tax deductible.

Make that donation and do it now!

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 299, 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.



*4857 winding its way around the 5 chain radius curves.
John Kramer Collection.*

Before the train runs....

For some months we have been discussing the era when the train runs. Essentially the column was an extract of our business plan but there are also heaps of other things to consider before the train runs.

How does one operate a fully-fledged tourism operation on a heritage line?

Your committee needs to consider things like Insurance, risk management, legals, quality control, community impact and engagement, a sustainability and environmental/resource impact just to mention a few issues.

By now you would be getting an idea of the amount of work that has gone into Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc.'s plan for the future.

But for all this to work, first we must get a train on the tracks. For that to happen, your committee has a number of plans in place being five years, ten years and fifteen years into the future. Those plans also incorporate the business plan we have examined over the past few issues of this newsletter.

So what are those plans all about? Next month we will start to discuss them and what they mean and what really is the term of a plan.



Three lever ground frame donated by Garry Leamey, State Rail Signals Engineer for Blue Mountains. Garry has been a great help in sourcing bits and pieces like this lever frame to help with the restoration of the Oberon line. The frame is in great condition having recently been repainted and now retired from active service.

The three lever frame will be placed on display at the Oberon station shortly. President Tim together with members Bob and Col brought the piece back to its final resting place in Oberon.

Next Working Bee
Saturday 2nd July 2017
To
Wednesday 5th July 2017

Working Bee News

July 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 and is almost complete.
- Commence work on the Plough Van
- Reposition the Signal ladder.
- Start to move stored items from station area to the new storage shed.

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 also 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....

So many of you know our long term member, Wayne Dempsey.

Wayne has been having a rough trot lately but is apparently on the mend.
Get well Wayne; we want to see you back at Oberon Station very shortly.

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 Whaat???

For those of you who love a touch of the absurd, here’s two for this month:

1. Q. How many Opticians does it take to change a lightbulb?

A. Is it One or Two? One...or Two?

2. My friend asked me to help him round up his 37 sheep.

I said “40”



*1942 has been left in the very primitive loco line just north of the station.
Photo from the Ron Preston Collection.*

Museum Display moves forward.

The storage shed within the rolling stock shed is almost complete. Members will shortly start to move all the gear currently stored at the station so that a professional Oberon Railway museum display can be prepared.

To this end we are proposing to approach Janelle Middleton, Manager of the Bathurst Council's museums for advice on setting out our displays. Bathurst Council will soon have a railway museum at the heritage Bathurst Station and OTHR wants to work in conjunction with that museum for everyone's benefit.

OTHR intends to become a member of Museums Australia, Central West Division in due course.

A little step forward for a Potential Big Gain.

In a step forward your committee is now satisfied with the draft Heritage Operators Licence. The draft document for variation of our accreditation was sent to ONRSR for comment. The committee has accepted the draft without change.

Further developments to come!

A Vote of Thanks

Your Committee voted a thank you to tireless worker Barry Webb for his work in clearing vegetation from the station to Rutters Ridge, a distance of about two kilometres.

Donated Timber.

You will recall some months ago, OTHR was donated timber which was sawn and stacked to season.

The timber will now be cut into planks by Warwick Armstrong.

We should be able to show a good profit on the sale of timber surplus to our own needs.



*Timber stacked to season.
Will be shortly cut into planks.*

Snakes Valley Bridge News.

Col Bembrick has prepared a survey for the repair of Snakes Valley Creek Bridge in due course. Graham Priddle has prepared a quote (in today's prices) for its refurbishment/replacement. The bridge is just north of the Carlwood halt and is likely to figure in Stage 3 of the line's rebuilding in due course.

I hope all members are putting pressure on their local members to, in turn put pressure on the State Government to provide precious funding for our project.

Controversy continues to dog the building of the Tarana to Burruga Railway.

“The long controversy regarding the rival routes, for the proposed railway to Burruga may now be fairly closed. We have for many months given the fullest opportunity which we could afford to all the leagues, witnesses, and sundry correspondents to ventilate their opinions and support their own choice of route. The Public Works Committee, in the course of its investigations, has visited and taken local evidence at Blayney, Bathurst, Rockley, Burruga, Oberon, Tarana, Rydal, Jenolan Caves and other places. After a protracted inquiry, the Committee declined to approve the suggested line from Perthville to Burruga, but recommended instead that “a line be constructed from Tarana towards Burruga via Oberon”. This is the conclusion reached by an independent body after hearing the available evidence and weighing the merits and demerits of each scheme. The inquiry appears to have been conducted fairly throughout, and it cannot be said that any section of those interested was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to express its views. That being so it would be well for all parties to accept the decision and render such assistance as they can to have it carried into practical effect. It is well to bear in mind that the recommendation of the Public Works Committee does not assure the immediate construction of a railway. It places the Oberon – Tarana in the first place, but until the work has been sanctioned by Parliament and actually commenced there is always the liability to indefinite delay through political changes, scarcity of loan money, and a variety of other causes. The best way to facilitate the work of construction is for the hitherto rival leagues to combine in urging it. There is no longer any justification for a policy of rivalry which can only result in further delay. Let the leagues unite and push the work to the construction stage. Mr Beeby, who represents the whole district, has up to the present, been compelled to adopt a neutral attitude. He could not advocate a line from Blayney without alienating his eastern supporters. He could not support the route from Rydal without estranging his constituents in the western end of

the electorate. As a politician without any special engineering qualifications he would not be justified in urging any personal view on the Government or the House. Under the circumstance he took the only course open to him – an absolutely correct course – by securing an inquiry into the various proposals by the Public Works Committee. As a minister and a member for the district his influence may now be fairly claimed in urging the construction of the line over the route recommended by the Committee.

Naturally many will be disappointed; this was inevitable whatever the way the recommendation ran. But there is this to be said by way of consolation: a line from Tarana to Burruga via Oberon will bring the railway closer than at present to a great number of those who advocated one or other of the rejected schemes. At least some portion of the Rockley district will be thus assisted. Jenolan Caves will be seventeen miles nearer to railway communication than it is now. The settlers along the Fish River and between that river and Oberon will obtain a more or less substantial advantage. An equal or even greater gain must accrue to those living around Essington, Black Springs, Shooter’s Hill, Ginkin, Swatchfield and Campbell’s River, Burruga as the terminus, will, of course, have its prospects enhanced by every mile of construction completed from Tarana. The benefit will be felt to some extent even as far out as the Abercrombie. That is, if the shire councils do their duty by making good connecting roads to the wayside stations. And since land values are certain to increase if the line is constructed, the shire councils will be justified in asking the ratepayers to contribute more in order that they may have better roads. Finally, in order to rescue this great and promising district from its comparative isolation of the past half century or more, the wisest cause is for all to pull together with the object of seeing the rails laid over the selected route within the next couple of years. Let unity in the future take the place of rivalry in the past.”

Lithgow Mercury, Friday, 3rd November, 1911.

Isn’t it amazing how there was so much political wrangling between local groups known as Railway Leagues and the State Government and even this article suggested that our local shire had a role to play. This was 106 years ago and not much has

changed in the meantime, only the nature of the arguments.

Nevertheless Oberon was extremely fortunate to have a railway in its district.

We must fight to retain this important part of our district history at all costs.

Oberon Railway Station Building.

Politics, rival Railway Leagues, disagreements on where the line should go and whether it ever got there; Oberon was lucky to have a life line to the outside world and in the end the community was thankful.

So let's have a look at the construction of the Branch Line

Back in 2014, Stuart Sharp wrote a paper on the Oberon Station.

His story continues.....

“The Bathurst Times newspaper, 19th February, 1912, P3 reported that “the Government surveyors are now busily engaged surveying the route for the railway between Tarana and Oberon.” The same newspaper six months later, on 8th August 1912, P2 stated that “in respect to the proposed railway from Tarana to Oberon, two camps of surveyors are now midway with the permanent survey and hope to be completed to Oberon, a distance of 15 miles in a month or two”

The NSW Parliament authorized construction of the line by legislation passed in 1919.

Peter Neve, veteran rail historian, wrote the history over 40 years ago and stated that construction commenced in May 1921.

The Canowindra and Eugowra News, 10th June, 1921, P4 has a report about turning the first sod for the Oberon line project. It demonstrates the varying power of local railway leagues and suggests that, for some unknown reason, the power players at Eugowra erroneously thought that they were being out-gunned by their rivals at Oberon.

As it turned out, Eugowra got its railway ten months (December – 1922) before Oberon people got to ride the rails. The report stated:

“Is it any wonder that an earthquake shock was felt at Edith in the Oberon district (says the Orange Leader), when the Parliamentarians, headed by Jim Dooley were turning the first sod of the Tarana-Oberon railway, and promising the parsnip and carrot growers along the line route that the line would be finished in two years! Oberon will get a railway all right, but none of those present on Saturday will be alive to see it, notwithstanding the promises of Messrs. Dooley and Co. that it will be completed in two years. Here is Oberon with a population of 700 and a district which is not a primary producing centre, being given a railway, or rather a promise of one, while on a line most urgently required and one on which six hundred thousand pounds has already been expended, that linking up Canowindra and Eugowra, the Government are closing down “owing to be unable to procure sleepers.” Of course there will be plenty of sleepers available for the Oberon line, only that the speakers at the function forgot to mention the fact. We are sorry for the people of Oberon and Tarana, but would like to tell them that if they live to see their line completed they will put one over on old Methuselah for sure.”

How wrong was the writer of the above article, obviously a Eugowra person! The main reason for the agitation by the Eugowra people may have been the closeness of the Oberon line to Sydney. Was it a case of the proximity of the push and pull of the power players? After all, only the pre-cast concrete platform building at Robertson was and is closer to Sydney than the structure at Oberon. Construction of the Oberon line benefitted from two strong NSW Government policies – one, promotion of the policy of economic and population growth in rural areas and – two, employment of out – of –work, unskilled men on nominated government projects.

The report from the Eugowra Star was not an isolated instance where there was substantial pessimism about the construction of rural branch lines. For example, the Bathurst Times, 24th May, 1921, P2 shared the rural gloominess. It stated:

“THE FARCE OF THE FIRST SOD – On Saturday next the first sod of the Oberon-Tarana Railway is to be turned. The day is to be one of great rejoicing. The best people of Oberon and district are to be there and Oberon has some very excellent people. There will be music and laughter, and speeches and eating and drinking, and then the night will close in and the people will return to their homes. The Minister will be himself back to Sydney with his little silver spade as a memento of the day, and then silence, so far as railway construction is concerned.

All who know Oberon and its wealth and the great need “for a quick and ready way to the markets” of the State will devotedly hope that the railway, for which the people of Oberon have so long fought will soon become an accomplished fact. But common-sense must take its proper place in the minds of the people. Where is the chance of Oberon succeeding while other railway works are being hung up? In recent days, the press of the State has been full of reports of branch railway works that have been, or are likely to be hung up indefinitely. All sorts of reasons are given for the action or proposed action, even to a lack of sleepers, but whatever the cause the fact must be patent to Oberon that there cannot be much hope for them while other works, more or less nearing completion, are being closed down. There appears but little hope for the proposed railway, unless the district to be benefitted can help itself.

The Government purse is in a chronic state of emptiness, despite the enormous sums that are being poured into the Treasury. By some means best known to those who are controlling the finances of the State, the expenditure is always in excess of the revenue. The best that the Government can do is to turn the first sod and that will be carried out on Saturday with all the solemnity that goes with such a proceeding. But unless we are out in our estimate it will be many a long day before the ring of the pick and the sound of the hammer will be heard anywhere on the proposed route.

There is just a glimmer of hope to be gleaned, from the function that is to take place, and that is to be found in the pledge which the ceremony will give.

Once the sod is turned Oberon has a claim on the Government when that impecunious happens to have a few thousand in hand and begin looking for a place in which to lay it out to advantage. In that case there may be no proposition offering equal to that of the Oberon-Tarana railway. May the time be soon.”

Of course all the gloom proved to be untrue. The Oberon branch line got underway quickly.



*A rare photo showing the turning of the first sod of the Oberon-Tarana Railway by Mt 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 assurance that the line would be complete in 2 to 2 ½ years- a promise which was subsequently kept.
Photo - Alan Sharp.*

The preceding two articles indicate that the commencement of the Oberon-Tarana line was mired in petty jealousies, pessimism and gloom. What a way to get a project off the ground that would prove to be such a boon for Oberon and district!

Next newsletter discusses the building of the line and more drama.

Federal Member for Calare visits OTHR.

Federal Member for Calare, Andrew Gee recently visited the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. complex.

Andrew toured the site and inspected the work done so far in restoring and refurbishing the Oberon Station precinct. He expressed amazement of the site and was very complimentary of the completed job to date.

He graciously accepted the position of Co-Patron of OTHR and said he would like to assist wherever he could. OTHR greatly appreciates his acceptance and is delighted with this new patronage.

He joins our other Co-Patron Paul Toole, State member for Bathurst.



Some members of OTHR on a typical chilly winter's afternoon.

(From left) Martyn Salmon (Committee Member), John Brochie (Treasurer), Arthur Robinson (Member), David McMurray (Publicity, Newsletter Editor), Andrew Gee (Federal Member for Calare), Elaine Boxer (Secretary), Tim Arnison (President), Graham Williams (Track Manager).

What's this thing called luv?

Steve Preston advises that the NSW brass builders plate No 175, featured last month, was off TF Loco 5426.



Q. When you were making a decision on where to go for your vacation, what would you use?

A. A vintage NSW Railway Travel Planner of course! This item was approx. 24cm in diameter. Who would have thought!

Contacts
For all enquiries

Secretary: Elaine Ph. 02 6336-0441

Email admin@othr.com.au

OBERON TARANA HERITAGE RAILWAY INC

PO Box 299, Oberon, NSW, 2787

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL/APPLICATION

Name:.....

Address:.....

Telephone No:.....Mobile:.....

Email address:.....

Enclosed cheque/cash/Money Order: \$20.00

Donation: \$___ (optional but very welcome)

Total: \$

Or by Direct Deposit: BSB: 062-632 Account #: 1004-9851 quoting your name as reference

Receipt # (Office use only)