

# **OBERON TARANA HERITAGE RAILWAY INC.**

## **NEWSLETTER**

**October 2019**



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

**PO Box 299 Oberon NSW 2787**

**Website:** [www.othr.com.au](http://www.othr.com.au)

**Email:** [admin@othr.com.au](mailto:admin@othr.com.au)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/OTHR.Inc](https://www.facebook.com/OTHR.Inc)

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

**Patrons:**

**Paul Toole,**

**State Member for Bathurst, Deputy Leader of the New South Wales National Party, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads**

**Andrew Gee,**

**Federal Member for Calare, Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister**

**Committee:**

**President/ Systems Manager/ Public Officer: Gregory Bourne**

**Vice President/Asset Manager: Martyn Salmon**

**Secretary: Vacant**

**Treasurer: John Brotchie**

**Track Manager: Graham Williams**

**Public Officer: Gregory Bourne**

**General Committee:**

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

**Ken Lingabala**

## **Managers**

**Operations Manager: Timo Kanko**

**Rolling Stock Manager: Timo Kanko**

**Catering Manager: Elaine Boxer**

**Catering Staff:**

**Brenda Lyon, Roy Smith.**

**Asset Manager: Vacant**

**Finance Manager: Vacant**

**Infrastructure Manager: Vacant**

**Safety Manager: Vacant**

**Engineering Manager: Vacant**

**Curator, Oberon Station Interpretive  
Display: Vacant**

**Events Manager: Vacant**

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## **....from the President's desk....**

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30 PM on Wednesday 2nd October at the Oberon RSL.

As we move forward with shunting in the yard, members will be able participate in driving our trains. This is an important part of skills development of members and opportunities for members to be involved in activities that are perhaps more interesting and challenging than track repairs and maintenance.

The successful tenderer for the work on the station platform has been notified. Work will commence in the second half of October and we expect it to be finished mid-November. In the last month we have continued to work closely with John Holland Rail (CRN) and Transport for New South Wales. Committee members have had an onsite meeting with JHR on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August and ONRSR on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> August. These were extremely valuable and gave us a clear idea of the some of the more significant responsibilities that will emerge as we move forward to becoming an active tourist railway.

The next major working bee will continue with work on the line in the yard. The dog spike puller has had new parts fitted to the head that clamps onto the spike. A new plug has been added to the electrical connection to the starter motor – easier starting means more work will be done!

Greg Bourne  
President/ SMS Manager  
Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc.  
Email: [gpbourne@gmail.com](mailto:gpbourne@gmail.com)  
Mobile: 0437 389 684



*President Greg Bourne*

## **Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. Mission Statement**

**To be an accredited rail operator to run a tourist train from Oberon station to Tarana station on the main western line. This would allow for tourists to ride a heritage train along the Oberon Tarana branch line which was also known as the pioneer line.**

**Further, the running of this train would generate tourist related jobs in the Oberon area and give residents in the Oberon/Bathurst area an opportunity by volunteering at OTHR to enhance rail heritage in the local area.**

**Network with other rail heritage groups and museums at Valley**

## **Heights, Lithgow, Zig Zag, Bathurst and Cowra to form a Heritage Railway partnership to prioritise and promote the area as a Railway Tourist Precinct.**



*New parts being fitted to the dog spike puller. Volunteers left, Mark Langdon and Graham Williams, right.*

### **Editor's thoughts**

October is an important month for Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc.

This month sees the advent of our Annual General Meeting and it's a time to reflect on the year just passed.

This is the time when all members can make real decisions for OTHR. This time is an opportunity to ensure the association moves ahead in an orderly fashion.

Are you satisfied with the way your association has been run during the prior twelve months and are happy to leave the status quo? Is this the time you stepped up and nominated for a place on the committee?

The choice is yours.

Or do you think you have the skills to apply for one of the newly created Management roles. These positions are appointed by the committee and whilst you have a strong degree of autonomy,

you are guided by the committee and accordingly report to them.

OTHR is developing certain vibrancy about it and the next twelve months are going to be progressive and exciting.

Be a part of it!

Nominate for a committee or management position today.

"Progress is not inevitable. It's up to us to create it"

Anonymous.



**SHARE THE JOURNEY**

October is Mental Health Month in New South Wales and the ACT. Mental Health Month is an opportunity to raise awareness around mental health & wellbeing, centres around World Mental Health Day, which is marked each year on October 10

Share the Journey means:

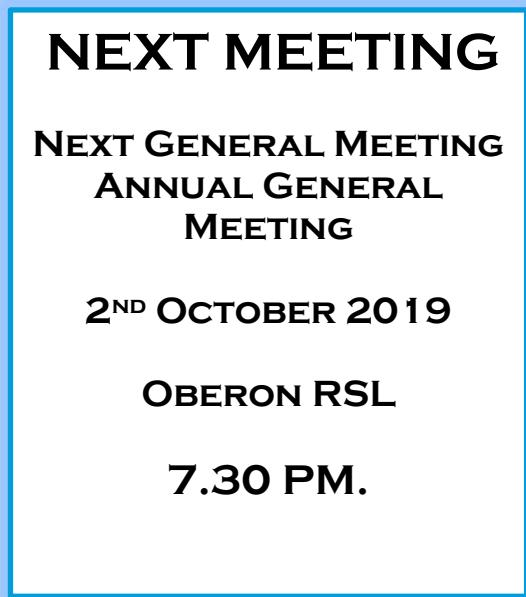
- Telling your friends and family when things are a bit tough
- Finding others who have been through something similar
- Connecting with your community
- Finding a health professional you trust
- Connecting o social media
- Giving your pet a cuddle
- Organisations working together for the best possible wellbeing for everyone
- Sharing your stories with others
- Creating a sense of security within families and communities
- Reaching out to someone who might need your help
- Decreasing the isolation people feel when things aren't great

Mental Health Month can decrease stigma and empower people to seek help for themselves and others.

Please give Mental Health Month your consideration and see if you can help just one person to a better place.

## **Membership Renewals due 30<sup>th</sup> June.**

Anyone who had not renewed their membership by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 is now unfinancial.



2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 is the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. Annual General Meeting. This is one of the more important meetings in our year and is an opportunity to hear about the progress we have made during 2018/19 and what our future plans hold for 2019/20.

This is also a great opportunity for you to nominate for a committee position or take on a management role in OTHR. The next twelve months promise to be an exciting time and you could actually have a management role in it.

Give this meeting plenty of thought during the next month and let the current committee know in advance if you would like to nominate for any committee role or any of the management roles that have so far been identified.

## **Immediate Goals**

Existing goals 1 and 2 have now been achieved as a result of our accreditation recently granted. Your committee has now set a new range of goals to be achieved in the near future as follows:

1. Obtain track certification for most of the Oberon Yard area.
2. Gain approval (having applied) for the HOL North of Albion Street to just south of the Snakes Valley Creek Bridge "stop block" at 208.409Km.
3. Apply for variation to existing accreditation for RIM & RSO (for use of TMV's) to just south of the Snakes Valley Creek Bridge "stop block" at 208.409Km. Time frame 3 – 6 months.  
After the federally funded restoration of Stage 1 being the line North to Hazelgrove.
4. Apply for variation to existing accreditation to operate work trains to Hazelgrove. Time frame 3 – 6 months.
5. Apply for variation to existing accreditation to operate tourist trains to Hazelgrove. Time frame 3 – 6 months.

## **Positions Vacant**

As you have read earlier, your committee is looking for members to step up and have a part in the responsibility of running a large scale volunteer enterprise, namely the Oberon to Tarana Heritage Branch Line as a tourism attraction.

Within the next few months and into the future OTHR will be commencing the building of a wonderful community project involving the operations of trains as a tourism attraction that will be the envy of the Central Tablelands and the Central West, if not New South Wales.

Specifically the following positions have been identified and will need to be filled in due course:

- Secretary – the position needs to be filled ASAP.
- Asset Manager – needs to be filled ASAP
- Finance Manager – needs to be filled soon.
- Infrastructure Manager – needs to be filled soon.
- Safety Manager – needs to be filled ASAP
- Engineering Manager – needs to be filled soon.
- Curator, Oberon Station Interpretive Display.
- Events Manager – needs to be filled soon

All positions will be filled by members or the railway community or the general public with appropriate skills suited to the job.

Please contact President Greg Bourne on [gpbourne@gmail.com](mailto:gpbourne@gmail.com) or [admin@othr.com.au](mailto:admin@othr.com.au) or mobile 0437 389 684 with a CV of experience.

OTHR also needs skilled tradespersons of all types. For example, Carpenters, Plumbers, Electricians, Boilermakers, Painters plus more. Please also contact Greg Bourne as above with your experience.

As a result of our recently granted accreditation to shunt locomotives in the Oberon yard we are seeking volunteers who would like to train as drivers or ancillary staff.

Please contact Vice President Martyn Salmon by email at [admin@OTHR.com.au](mailto:admin@OTHR.com.au)

OTHR is a volunteer group so you will be volunteering with a fun group but with serious intent.



A great example of a Flanders motor car outside of the Oberon Heritage Station precinct. These vehicles were manufactured between 1910 and 1913.

## So... you think you want to volunteer?

WOW, look at all the volunteer positions now becoming available!!

I want to drive a loco or the tractor for shunting or a track maintenance vehicle to haul materials around the yard.

But what do I do?

Step one: contact President Greg or Vice President Martyn via our email address and indicate interest.

Step 2: when advised, organise a medical at the appropriate level (there are three levels of rail medical).

Step 3: when advised, our trainer will instruct you in controlling trains, tractors or TMV's to the appropriate certificate level.

For all other volunteers there is a site induction and further training depending on the type of volunteer assistance you wish to undertake.

All this is a requirement because as an accredited rail operator we need to comply with the national health standards and qualifications as set out by the National Transport Commission.

Shunting in the yard will not be frequent but regular as movements are required. Typically shunting would occur in bringing rolling stock to the station for display at open days, special events and rallies.

Still interested in volunteering? Then let's hear from you.



*A mock-up of our future uniform featuring OTHR new corporate colours.*

## Important Information.

Help us bring our heritage railway to life by becoming a financial member of the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc.

Membership of Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. is a valuable way you can contribute to our vision.

Individual annual membership cost \$20.00 per year and new members are welcomed at any time during the year.

Membership is required to cover insurance for any volunteer work you are able to contribute.

Membership is due at the end of June annually.

Refer to OTHR website to download an application, or complete the form at the end of this newsletter.

## Work on Oberon Railway Station is underway.

OTHR is pleased to report that the tender for the refurbishment of the historic Oberon Station Platform has been let.

Work is expected to commence in late October/early November.

The work should be completed by Christmas.

## New merchandise delivered

The first of the new range of merchandise has been delivered.

OTHR caps are now available for purchase now and are of very good quality.  
Prices: \$15.00 members, \$20.00 non-members.  
Get in for yours now.

An online store is being set up to allow distant members to purchase our merchandise. Look for it soon as part of the OTHR website.

Further additions to the merchandise range will be added slowly throughout 2019.

## Sleepers

You are reminded that we have a supply of sleepers for sale. Some are suitable for landscaping and some suitable for firewood. See the advertisement later in the newsletter about firewood. If you want to purchase landscaping sleepers, contact President Greg Bourne. These sales are a good source of income for your organisation.

## About Oberon.....

Spring and Summer in Oberon is a combination of stable, temperate alpine climate with more than enough attractions to keep a group of visitors occupied for a week or more.

It's always a challenge for an association's events manager or co-ordinator to continue to come up with interesting places to go and see.

Have you ever considered Oberon?

Oberon is the first authentic country town west of the Blue Mountains. It is the home of the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. Within the heritage railway precinct you will find a vibrant and active heritage railway interpretive centre, the only Skoda Tatra Car Museum in Australia, and a regional museum. Nearby is one of the best private museums featuring tractors and other memorabilia and a fantastic military museum.

Nearby is the largest cool climate garden in the world, over 160 acres in size; the World Heritage listed Jenolan caves; the museums and world famous racing car track and shopping delights of nearby Bathurst and of course the sites and delights of the famous Blue Mountains also within 50 minutes' drive of Oberon.

Piqued your interest? Who do you contact?

To get you started you can contact Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc., (0408 606 889 Dave) the Oberon Visitor Information Centre on 6329 8210 Mat, Debbie or Lynne)

We have the expertise in organising group stays, from a day to a week, and can assist you in organising a visit to Oberon.

Some major events coming up in the next couple of months include:

- Insight Railway Tour
- The annual "Downunder Jampot Rally" organised by the AJS and Matchless Motorcycle Club.

Past events have been:

- Morgan Muster (an anniversary tour by the Morgan Owners Club).
- Triumph Car Club weekend.
- Geelong Car Club week-long visit.
- Peugeot Car Nationals over an extended week end.
- Various seniors bus groups.
- School Children.
- 7<sup>th</sup> Horseless Carriage Club International Tour.

Oberon, the perfect place to base yourself for a week or a few days or even just a day!

Oberon is just two hours from Sydney's Western Suburbs, two and a half hours from Canberra, and an easy and lovely drive from Dubbo and the Hunter Valley.

There is a team of friendly locals here to help.

One thing's for sure, you will be more than welcome in Oberon

Contact us any time to discuss.

Oberon, Simply Spectacular!

Email [admin@othr.com.au](mailto:admin@othr.com.au)  
Or phone 0437 389 684 Greg, or 0408 606 889 Dave.

We would appreciate you passing this newsletter to others who might be thinking about a wonderful and vibrant trip to a spectacular part of Australia.



*What a line up!*



*Never ending spectacle; wow!*

## **Veterans Grace Oberon.**

Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019 saw Oberon overrun with Veterans, and by that I'm not referring to the locals.

That day saw a run as part of the 7<sup>th</sup> International Horseless Carriage Rally visit the Oberon Heritage Railway Station and Oberon NSW. This was the first time that the event was held outside of the USA. Based at the adjacent city of Bathurst, the event attracted a contingent of overseas visitors and their vehicles who were overwhelmed at the simply spectacular countryside and roads that surround Oberon.

After stopping by at the Oberon Heritage Station, viewing our wonderful interpretive display, the Skoda Tatra Museum and the Oberon District Museum all located at the station, and Barry Hughes Tractor Orphanage, the Oberon town folk threw open their doors in the usual laid back fashion for all entrants to stroll the main street, browse the gift shops and eat at one of the many cafes, restaurants and club of their choice.

The visitors lingered for many hours and thoroughly enjoyed their visit to Oberon – yes Simply Spectacular!

## **Peugeots hit Oberon.**

The Peugeot Car Club of NSW hit Oberon on the 6<sup>th</sup> September for a short three day visit. Despite a brutal weather event (yes we have them occasionally) members of that club visited the Oberon Heritage Railway Station precinct to see what we have been doing in recent times. The last official visit from that club was a couple of years ago when we hosted the Peugeot Nationals in Oberon.

## **Next Working Bee.**

**Keep an eye on the  
News/What's On"  
Section of the  
Website.**

## **August/September Working Bee wrap....**

For a number of working bees OTHR's volunteers have replaced all the timbers supporting the compensators and cranks, replaced a number of chairs and refurbished a number of turnbuckles. These activities have resulted in the "C" frame levers now being fully operational and can operate the 3 turnouts and the Derail. The last time the "C" frame was operational was 40 years ago.

Other activities included:

- Installed some racking in the storage container and re-organised the storage container.
- De-clutter under awning continues
- Unload 8 tonnes of timber for the station platform.

**We are always on the lookout for volunteers for working bees.**

**Generally volunteers are required to participate in allocated tasks.**

**If you can help, contact President Greg.**

**Not all work is onerous and can be as little or as much as you can put in.**

**We would like to see anyone with railway trade experience but that's not a requirement.**

**There is a job for everyone.**

**You don't have to attend every working bee, just the ones that fit in your timeframe.**

**You will take away experiences from your time at Oberon.**

**Some of the benefits of volunteering are:**

- Developing new skills
- Meeting new people
- Assisting with a meaningful and important cause
- Contributing to the community
- A sense of belonging.



*Operational "C" frame levers.*

## **Important Dates for Volunteers**

Open days are held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month to coincide with the Oberon Farmers Market.

Volunteers will be required to meet and greet visitors, show them through the displays and try to answer any questions.

If you wish to volunteer at the open days please contact President Greg. All that's required is a broad knowledge of OTHR history and an ability to talk with people. The work is rewarding.

## **Monthly Open Days.**

The Oberon Station precinct holds open days on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month, the same day as the Oberon Farmers Markets.

Some changes have been made, with the establishment of a professional though small railway interpretive display; an entry fee of \$5.00 pp (children under 18 free), and a pop up café serving a Devonshire tea for an additional \$10.00.

The result has seen a large increase in visitors comprising locals and tourists.

Your committee is also actively advertising for group visits and we are providing a railway experience bar none.

Groups are starting to line up and results so far have been encouraging.

If you are a member of another group, say a car club or Rotary or Probus or a gardening club, etc. and that group is looking for an excursion, please suggest they book a group visit to Oberon station.



*Hosting a recent group tour*



v

28<sup>th</sup> April 2018

To: David McMurray

Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc

Dear David,

I am writing on behalf of the TR Register Australia Club to thank you and your Heritage Rail Group for the fantastic hospitality you showed us during our recent Autumn Run to Oberon.

The high tea on the station platform was very well received by our group, especially the ladies who enjoyed Victoria's scones and jam afternoon tea.

The viewing of the Oberon rail station, the rail memorabilia and the rolling stock including the old carriages bought back many fond memories to all of us.

Please extend our thanks also to Wayne, Greg and of course Victoria for the great time shown to us

We wish you the best in your continuing endeavours to get the trains moving to Tarana and rest assured we will be back to enjoy another high tea soon.

Thanks again

Gavin Rea



*A very rare Empire motor car on a visit to the Oberon Heritage Station precinct. These vehicles were manufactured from 1906 - 1919. A beautiful pre-1916 T-model Ford is parked beside.*

## 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 President Greg so we can send get well wishes on behalf of the association.

## Remembering....

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

## Say Whaaat???

- Sweet dreams are made of cheese.  
Who am I to dis a brie?

- I was always taught to respect my elders, but it keeps getting harder to find one.
- Aspire to inspire before you expire.
- My wife and I had words, but I didn't get to use mine.

## The Quest for funding continues....

Donations are particularly important now as we have the certainty of running a train to Hazelgrove soon.

With your help, your committee can start to introduce all the refinements that will make a journey to Hazelgrove an experience to remember.

To donate go to OTHR GoFundMe site and donate there, or alternatively send those donations to PO Box 299 Oberon. Please make it clear that you are donating to the rebuilding of the Oberon Branch line.



*Another rare visitor to OTHR recently.  
Manufactured between 1905 and 1908, it was  
considered to be a luxury motor car.*

## Sponsors

Seeking funding continues to be one of your committee's priorities.

Sponsorships are a very important part of the funding of our activities. It matters not whether a person or company contributes cash or kind, each will be considered as a sponsorship. The reason is that any person or company that contributes in kind is helping us in as much as we don't have to pay for those services and the sponsor is foregoing income. The committee needs to seek cash sponsors and this task is ongoing.

Currently we now have five sponsors on board, all sponsors offer in kind support for which we are extremely grateful.

## What's happening at the other end of the line?

"Well over one hundred people braved the cool conditions and came along to welcome the Bathurst Bullet Mark 1 & 2 to Tarana this morning. After many years of hard work by residents, local councils and our local member Paul Toole, the idea the idea of a fast train to Sydney stopping at Tarana and Rydal became a reality. For Oberon residents in particular the convenience of driving twenty minutes or less to catch a train to the city rather than forty five minutes to Bathurst or almost an hour to Lithgow or Mt. Victoria is much appreciated. There was a definite party atmosphere as well as a brass band on the station platform and many residents boarded the train with Paul Toole to take the inaugural journey to Central. Lithgow City Council supported by the Tarana Valley Community Group went above and beyond to ensure everyone who braved the cold were fed.... Our thanks to them. I urge as many folks as possible to use this service now we have it, the next step is to work towards a bus to service the Oberon to Tarana route but this needs to be justified."

Oberon Council



The exciting scene at the Tarana Heritage Station included President Greg Bourne front and centre together with Cr. Brenda Lyon, one of OTHR Members.



The Bathurst Bullet stopping for the first time at Tarana Heritage Station, the end of the line for the OTHR branch line.

## Skoda & Tatra Museum update...

Our Skoda and Tatra Partners are gearing up for a most interesting event in November 2019.

The Skoberon Art Prize is earmarked for Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2019 from 11.00 AM to 1.00 PM. The Skoberon Art Prize aims to celebrate and appreciate the design and function of Skoda and Tatra vehicles through artistic expression. Enter for a chance to have your work added to the museum's permanent collection. The theme will be Skoda and Tatra Cars.

Entries will be accepted in kids and teens categories 10 years and up while Adults will be accepted from 18 + years.

There are prizes to be won.

Entertainment will include a BBQ and live music.

Here's a great chance for artistic OTHR members to support our partner Skoda Tatra museum!

Let's do it!! Enquiries to Oberon Skoda Tatra Museum via their Facebook page.



## Visit OTHR every time you come to Oberon

Make sure you keep up to date with work in progress at the Oberon Station Precinct and the Oberon branch line.

The heritage listed PC3 station building contains a small interpretive centre consisting of memorabilia and a photo display of the history of the Oberon to Tarana branch line.

The wider Oberon Heritage precinct house a variety of rolling stock most of which is rare and has a story to tell.  
Ask any of our enthusiastic volunteers for the low down on the machinery.

OTHR and the Skoda Tatra Museum are open between 10 AM and 2 PM on the first Saturday of

each month, coinciding with the Oberon Farmers Market.

Admission \$5 (18 and over), Devonshire Tea \$10. Skoda Tatra Museum entry by way of a donation.

For group visits: see <http://othr.com.au> (contact us) or contact President Greg.



*Our artist's impression of the heritage tourist train hauled by "Carlwood" in the foreground, 1897 End Platform Carriages in the centre and "Hazelgrove" bringing up the rear.*

## Consider Railway our History

Patsy Moppet, Town Planner and Heritage Consultant recently completed a heritage impact study on the Oberon Heritage Railway Precinct.

Much of the report contains a fascinating report on Oberon and the Oberon to Tarana heritage railway and the history of the station and railway precinct through the eyes of a Heritage Consultant.

So let's consider the Oberon to Tarana Branch Line history as seen through her eyes.

"From early days up until the 1950's roads were the main line of transport in the area, and due to the climate were very often in very bad condition. The bridge over the Abercrombie River built in 1937, certainly assisted in connections to the south. When the timber industry began in the 1940s the only sealed road was down the main street of Oberon, some road patches were corduroyed, made worse by the logging trucks.

Most of the sealing of the Shire's roads happened in the 1960s with funding from the Commonwealth Aid Roads Act., and bridges over the Duckmaloi, Little River and Running Stream were built. A whole network of new roads has now been put in with the establishment of the pine forests. In addition, the timber industry has necessitated the building of by-passes to keep the huge trucks out of the town centre.

The railway had reached Tarana in 1879 on its way to Bathurst, replacing the Cobb & Co coaches and bullock teams, and reducing the time taken for the trip from Sydney. Tarana then became the staging point for Oberon traffic heading east, instead of Hartley.

Oberon began calling for a branch line from Tarana, however until 1923 Oberon was still dependent on bullock wagons for transporting produce. In 1884 public meetings were held to support construction of a branch line to Oberon from what became Tarana Junction. Railway proposals then bounced about for decades without result. With the onset of World War 1 discussions ceased. The Oberon Railway League, formed in 1908, had nothing to show for years of lobbying of politicians and NSW Government Railway (NSWGR) Administrators.

At last, in 1919 it was decided by the government that the longed-for line should go ahead. The NSWGR's traffic estimates and experience strongly suggested that it was not economically viable on a normal operating basis. However, legislation was passed in 1919 and construction commenced in 1921, before even planning for the line was actually completed in 1923.

However, the resulting solution was to build the cheapest line possible. NSWGR demonstrated its pessimism by installing the smallest second-hand jib crane it could find, building the smallest size of conventional goods shed and not even including a weigh bridge for horse and petrol-driven vehicles. The line required the construction of a steel truss bridge and two substantial timber truss bridges and initial installation of one turntable at Oberon. The route from Tarana towards Sydney was seen as favourable to others considered, due in part to

the shorter distance to Lithgow and Sydney from this route, the possibility of closer settlement along the route, and the potential to extend the line as far as Jenolan Caves, thus justifying the line to Oberon.

The lightly constructed railway had some of the steepest grades and tightest curves in the State and instead of expensive deep cuttings and tunnels, the wandering railway skirted rolling green hills, which did provide fine views while lengthening the journey. The Oberon yard didn't even have a water supply for the locomotives. But, compared to the challenge of the substantial roads, the railway was a viable alternative especially during the long cold winters.

Finally, in 1923 the first train arrived, a reward for the efforts of the long-standing Oberon Railway League. This meant a major change in the local economy, particularly the pea and timber industries. The line was originally intended to continue to Burraga to service the copper mine, but production there had ceased before the line was built. However, the line suffered from having been built at minimum cost. With the steep gradients and numerous sharp curves, only small class 19 steam engines could run on it. The mixed goods and passenger train had the engine running backwards to ascend the hills! In addition, the line was unfenced, so the driver had to look out for stock on the line. The original station yard included goods and loop sidings, the 85 metre platform, Type 5 stockyard (for sheep and cattle), ash pit, turntable and additional sidings.

Even before the railway came into being, standards for the line had been documented. A paper was read before the Sydney Engineering Society in 1897 by engineer J.W. Roberts, which contained details of standards as to gauge, rails, bridges & cuttings, stations, rolling stock and much more – including some scale diagrams.

However, by the 1950s, roads were becoming sealed and trucks could deliver peas to the markets competing strongly with the train. Hardwood production has almost ceased, and pine and pine products were carted by road. In 1950 there was a stationmaster and two porters permanently allocated to Oberon Station. To run

the little train there was an engine driver, fireman and guard, and four fettlers to maintain the track.

The steam train continued until 1963. Heaps of ashes around Oberon station were a feature of the landscape, as Lithgow coal was notable for its high ash content.

The line struggled on, offering diesel-hauled passenger services until 1971 when patronage had become "almost non-existent" according to railway authorities. Tenders were called for the demolition of the two small station buildings on the line at Hazelgrove and Carlwood. There were no bulk loading facilities at the Oberon station and it finally closed in 1979.

In attempts to remove heavy transport of pine products from the roads, the State government and CSR negotiated reopening the line in the early 1990s. CSR won the contract to log the forests around Oberon on the understanding it would use rail transport but to the disappointment of the community, the Carr government decided the expense of reopening the line was unviable.

Although the Oberon to Tarana pioneer railway has one of the steepest gradients of any rail line in NSW, it is unique, and the community has long had the desire to not allow the facility to disappear.

The interest in obtaining the original railway line was formally initiated by the Oberon Railway League in 1908. It took many years for the branch line of 24.3Km to commence running in 1923, using steam locomotives. Diesel replaced these in 1963. However, passenger services were suspended in 1971 and freight services in 1979, although the line has never been officially closed.

In 1975 the Oberon Historical Society investigated the possibility of purchasing steam locomotive 1904 to run heritage tourist trains with an appropriate carriage. However, it soon discovered that the requirements of the Public Transport Commission would prove too onerous for the Society to meet and local landholders were worried about fire risk. Later that year a group of enthusiasts formed the "Oberon Tarana Steam

Train Company Ltd" with the object of purchasing a vintage steam engine such as Loco 1904 and three heritage carriages to run on the Branch Line.

At first a local group, Rails to Trails, sought to use the old rail track as a walking and riding path. In the year 2000, when it was announced that the Tarana Oberon line was being considered for a trail and the line would have to be ripped up. A group of rail buffs was galvanised into action and came up with its own tourism proposal around operating trains.

In 2005 a local rail lobby group was formed, the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. (OTHR). In 2006 the NSW State Government endorsed a Sustainable Rail Heritage Asset Management Strategy to ensure the State's rail heritage assets are conserved for current and future generations. The Strategy aimed to encourage the ongoing care of the State's most significant items of railway heritage by volunteer-based organisations that are committed to sharing the rail story with the community.

Although plans are underway to restore the track to its former glory and run tours out to Hazelgrove as Stage 1, with Stages 2 and 3 taking the line to Carlwood and then Tarana, this has not eventuated as yet, pending the issue of a Heritage Operators Licence (HOL), among other things such as funding. The group is able to perform shunting exercises in the Oberon Station yard and holds accreditation to move track maintenance vehicles. They have completed a safety interface agreement with John Holland for the area where the HOL meets the rest of the corridor to Tarana. In recent years OTHR secured a grant from the Royal Australian Historical Society to re-roof one of the end-platform cars located within the precinct.

In 2010 OTHR acquired some 1897 heritage carriages and took delivery of two 73 class diesel locomotives. A new rolling stock shed was erected in 2014 by OTHR volunteer labour through a government grant, and in 2015 the Albion Street level crossing was rebuilt. The carriages have had considerable restoration, and the shed was the first new rail infrastructure at

the Oberon precinct since 1942. Some 10,500 wooden sleepers have been replaced by the dedicated volunteers on the rail line to Hazelgrove.

The station precinct now houses the Oberon Museum, the Skoda Tatra Museum and the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway group. The OTHR Museum also has a display of memorabilia in the old parcels room at the station.

The OTHR group have now achieved funding of \$133,000 from the NSW Government through the Stronger Country Community Fund, to undertake repairs and restoration work to the station platform. The Stronger Country Communities Fund is investing in infrastructure projects in regional NSW communities to improve the lives of residents and enhance the attractiveness of these areas as vibrant place to live and work, supporting local infrastructure and sports projects to provide greater access to quality local facilities, and to help sustain the social bonds at the heart of strong regional committees. The platform restoration will be part of the infrastructure that includes the working museum display and interpretive centre which explores the decades in which the railway operated as part of the lifeblood of the Oberon economy."

Whilst this article is a little long, it gives an excellent resume of other articles that have appeared in this newsletter in the past.

It gives an insight as to why the Oberon to Tarana Branch Line must receive the strong support of Federal, State and Local Governments, our Federal and State politicians and the wider community. The Branch Line, its history and close association with Oberon's community and economic fabric must be saved at all costs.

Since this article was prepared as part of the Heritage Impact Statement for the Oberon Station precinct, OTHR has received a further grant of \$1.5 million to assist with refurbishment of the line to Hazelgrove. OTHR is currently negotiating with the NSW State Government for further funding to cover the shortfall between the Federal Government Grant

and the OTHR budget. Oberon Council has been and is working in close consultation with OTHR to help make this project happen. By and large the Oberon community, most particularly the Oberon Retailers are cheering enthusiastically from the sidelines. Some key businesses are now stocking our merchandise.

## 1923 and all that jazz!

To anyone who knows our history, 1923 was a year to remember. WW1 was over by 5 years and the country was just starting to get on its feet.

- Stanley Bruce was elected Prime Minister
- The Country Women's Association (CWA) held its first annual conference
- Work started on Parliament House
- Hooligans looted the city of Melbourne during a Police strike
- The Townsville to Mt. Isa railway in Queensland was completed
- "Yes, We Have No Bananas" by Billy Jones was in the "hit parade"
- As was "Who's Sorry Now" by The Original Memphis Five
- And the Oberon to Tarana Branch Line was officially opened to change the face of Oberon forever.



Oberon Council is a proudly independent council which has supported OTHR from its very beginning. The council administers the Oberon Shire and is second to none when looking after the community

### Bronze Sponsor

Jenolan Holiday Park offers a range of accommodation in Oberon to suit everyone. Would you like to book your accommodation now?  
Mob: 0418 619 709  
7 Cunynghame Street, Oberon NSW 2787

### Winter Special

**Firewood grade sleepers for sale**

**6 x 4 Box trailer load**

**\$50.00**

### Bronze Sponsor

Highlands Motor Inn, quality accommodation at an affordable price.  
We don't work to a budget; we work to exceed tour expectations.  
Contact (02)6336 – 1866  
77 – 79 Dart Street, Oberon NSW 2787

### Contacts For all enquiries

President: Greg Bourne, 0437 389 684  
Email [admin@othr.com.au](mailto:admin@othr.com.au)

### Proud Sponsors Primary Sponsor

### Bronze Sponsor

Along with the Australian specialised construction brands Orminoid and Lanko, Davco is part of the international ParexGroup. ParexGroup is a truly global company and a leading producer of speciality dry-mix solutions with 3,905 employees. The group has a strong local focus.

## **Bronze Sponsor**

Haymes Paints are a family owned Australian business. The business started in Ballarat in 1935 is now in the hands of fourth generation of the Haymes family. Over the years, each member has taken care to hand on the commitment and passion for crafting quality products. As they say their name and reputation is on every can.

## **Bronze Sponsor**

Oberon Trash-Pak is a family business owned and operated by Wayne & Michelle White. Services offered are regular out of town garbage service, septic tank and grease trap pump outs. Oberon Trash-Pak offers Domestic & Commercial Mini Skip Bins, Portable Toilets, Rubbish Removal. "You don't have to live in town to get a regular garbage service" Contact: 0427 104 318 or 02 6336 – 2049.

Would you like to become a sponsor? Contact our President to find out how you can participate in OTHR's exciting sponsorship deals. There are a number of sponsorship levels available. By sponsoring OTHR and its vision you will become a partner of the programme.

Contact: Phone/Fax 6335-6239



## Official OTHR Merchandise

**Buy Now.**

### OTHR Cap.

New Product, Bottle Green with white OTHR logo, fits all sizes.

Purchase today and be a part of the OTHR team. Proceeds go towards the refurbishment of the Oberon to Tarana line.

**Priced at \$29.00 non - members, \$24.00 members.** Price includes GST and Postage and Handling anywhere in Australia. Overseas will incur extra postage.

Payment:

**Direct Bank Transfer - BSB 062632. Account Number: 1004 9851.** Please include your name as a reference.  
Cheques – made payable to Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. and mailed to PO Box 299 Oberon NSW 2787.



Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc.  
PO Box 299, Oberon NSW 2787  
email: [admin@othr.com.au](mailto:admin@othr.com.au)  
Website: - [othr.com.au](http://othr.com.au)  
Phone President 0437 389 684  
ABN 98 107 506 208

## Merchandise Order Form

Official OTHR Cap      \$29.00 non - members      \$24.00 members.  
Price includes Postage and Packing

Product/Quantity:	
Name:	
Mailing address: Street Number	Street
_____	
Or Post Office Box Number	
Suburb or Town	
State and Postcode	
Your contact details	
Phone: _____	
Email address: _____	

	Number	Total
Caps at membership price \$24.00	<input type="text"/>	\$ _____
Caps at non-members price \$29.00	<input type="text"/>	\$ _____

Payment can be made in the following ways

- **Cheques** - made payable to Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc. and mailed to PO Box 299 Oberon NSW 2787
- **Cash** - can be paid direct to our Treasurer at any of our bi-monthly general meetings or at an Open Day.
- **Direct Bank Transfer** – our bank details are **BSB: 062 632 Account number: 1004 9851**. Please include your name as the reference statement