



Whispers from the depot

Newsletter of The Rail Motor Society Incorporated

5 Webbers Creek Road,
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President's Report

Well, it has been a year like no other with COVID-19 and the cancellation of many of our planned trips and jobs.

Although the depot was closed to volunteers for much of the year, work continued on 621 with contractors coming in to complete the repair work following our involvement in an accident in April, near Griffith. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Noel Price for his dedication and expertise in the rebuilding of our beloved train and also Peter Macfarlane for being available to repaint the train for the second time this year. We just have a few minor things to complete, and then we plan to do a test run to Stroud Road and return in mid-December to confirm that everything is okay.

Whilst everyone works together for the benefit of the Society, and we are thankful for every one of the volunteers, it is also important to recognise the hard work of some individuals and acknowledge the contributions they make to the Society. In doing so, if I fail to make mention of individuals or important accomplishments, then I apologise for this.

I would like to thank the following:

- Our Operations Manager, Bruce Agland, for his tireless work and diligence in gaining the contract with Sydney Trains for the testing of overhead wiring in the Metro area. This contract is for 5 years with an option of a further 3 years. Bruce handles all the operational matters for the Society and I thank him for a job well done.
- Graeme Holloway for his diligence as our Roster Clerk.
- The maintenance team, under the supervision of Robert Spencer (Engineering Manager) and Mick Halls (Maintenance Co-ordinator). I thank both for their dedication.
- Mick Walsh for persistently drawing our attention to funding grant opportunities and the many hours he spent compiling and submitting application forms. Mick is also our dedicated Secretary.
- Our treasurer, Trish Short, has continued to maintain the financial records of The Rail Motor Society. She is instrumental in the planning and organisation of many of our trips, to the financial benefit of the Society.
- Bruce Gehrig our Welfare Officer, for his kind and caring approach to his fellow members. Bruce also conducts tours of the depot on our monthly open days.
- The Board members for their support and dedication to The Rail Motor Society during what has been a difficult year. Some hard decisions have had to be made but everyone has 'stepped up' and we have had a productive year.
- To all the volunteers for your support and contribution to the Society. You are highly valued and greatly appreciated for all you have done. Thank you.

To any members who have suffered the loss of a loved one, please accept my condolences.

Next year we have a very busy calendar of events. This will impact our operational crew, passenger attendants and maintenance team. I have every confidence our team of volunteers are up to the challenge of working together for the benefit of the Society to achieve success on all our trips.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members and their families a happy and safe Christmas and a COVID safe new year.

Rodney Short - President

New Members

The Society is pleased to welcome the following new members: Lance Nelson (Woodberry), Wayne and Suzanne Curtis (Metford) and Andrew McGloin (North Arm Cove).



A recent communication forum for Depot staff

Operations Report

The Society's operations have been curtailed by COVID-19 Delta variant restrictions since July 2021.

During early October, CPH 1 and 7 were hired to Lachlan Valley Railway for an inspection train to the south-western branches for UGL Regional Linx. Society crews delivered the train to Goulburn where it was handed over to the LVR crew on Monday 11 October. Our crews collected the train from Goulburn on Friday 15 October for the return run to Paterson.

Our first passenger operation was a Stroud Road tour for Tuncurry Coaches on 28 October. Over the weekend of 29 October–1 November, 7344 travelled to Branxton to assist Sydney Rail Services with the first mainline steaming trials for their converted Victorian R Class locomotive R766. 7344 was coupled to R766's tender and led the loco (running tender first) to Singleton before returning to Branxton. This trip was repeated a second time.

Our next passenger operation was another Stroud Road tour, this time for Southern Cross Coaches, on 2 December. We are pleased to welcome a new customer, Captains Choice, for a western circle tour, commencing from Sydney on 5 December. CPH 1 and 7 did the honours, substituting for 621/721 which is now completing its final repairs from the April accident. The tour visited Hawkesbury River on the way from Sydney before

overnighting in Maitland. Our passengers were picked up at Muswellbrook on Monday, travelling to Gulgong (2 nights), Dubbo, Orange (2 nights), Rylstone, Kandos, Medlow Bath (1 night) with the tour concluding in Strathfield on Saturday afternoon.

It is planned to take 621/721 on a 'shakedown' trip to Stroud Road on 16 December following the accident repairs, before returning to revenue service.

We have been successful in re-negotiating the contract during October for the Sydney Trains Overhead Wiring Measurement project. The contract is for five years with up to three 1-year options. This contract is extremely important as it guarantees us an income stream for HPC 402 for at least five and up to eight years.

Two Safeworking Recertification classes were held on 29 November and 3 December with 17 members of our crew panel attending to continue to maintain their qualifications current.



Our Access Agreements with Transport NSW for the Sydney Trains and the Country Regional Networks have been extended until 30 June 2022.

Bruce Agland – Operations Manager

Rolling Stock Report

CPHs

Despite previously reporting CPH 3's transmission problems had been resolved, this was not to be the case. Although now producing fluid pressure, the torque converter would not develop the power output it should be capable of, leading mechanical staff to speculate there was clutch slippage. Further inspection revealed that the internal fluid level had risen well above the full-mark on the dipstick, indicating failure of an internal pump seal. Our rolling stock maintainers were left with no choice but to remove the failed unit and it was promptly returned in mid-October to the engineering firm who had overhauled it.

CPH 3 currently remains non-operational, awaiting repair of its torque converter. This is the second time this particular transmission unit has failed, having barely left our depot except on a test run. The original transmission, which had failed in late-June, was recently sent to a Brisbane workshop which specialises in Twin Disc torque converters.

Before CPH 3 was moved off the inspection pit, two outstanding matters were attended to: a jammed clevis pin in the brake assembly was freed up to provide full adjustment,

and an alternator mounting bracket was repositioned to improve the pulley belt alignment, thus prolong belt life.

CPH 1 and 7 were made Ready for Service in mid-October in preparation to convey UGLRL and John Holland personnel on an inspection of south-western branch lines. After the rail motors return to Paterson, the maintenance team undertook an inaugural 'Post-Trip' Inspection and service. This is a deliberate change in the timing of our inspection regime. Previously, our maintainers would perform a Pre-Trip Inspection within the seven days prior to the next scheduled departure. By instead conducting a Post-Trip Inspection shortly after each rail motor returns to the depot, as well as completing necessary servicing tasks, any repair tasks discovered will receive prompt attention. In addition, a member of the carriage maintenance crew also performed a Post-Trip Inspection, proactively looking for any defects within the passenger saloons.

In CTC 51, all electro-pneumatic brake pipework and controls have been reinstalled in the driver's cab and subsequently tested. A Triple Valve, which will supply air from the Auxiliary Reservoir to, and exhaust it from the Brake Cylinder, has been stripped down for cleaning and inspection. After the Triple Valve is plumbed in, attention will turn to the brake cylinders. I thank Paul Heron for his dedication and diligence in performing this work.



HPC 402

Quite a number of tasks have been attended to:

- An existing air service unit was replaced and associated pipe-work altered to suit.
- Both 75 amp alternators were replaced with new units, each having 140 amp capacity.
- A 'sender unit' was fitted as part of the new Data Logger system.
- Repairs to the base of wooden window frame uprights in the passenger saloon are complete and the passenger seats have been reinstalled.
- Dash-cams were installed in the No.1 and No.2 end driver's cabs by Paul Horder.
- Existing incandescent marker lights were converted to LED (work also performed by Paul, who found the job far more difficult than expected). The absence of slack electrical wire to work with made the job especially challenging to carry out.
- Bruce Agland has installed a Public Address system throughout the train which also incorporates an integrated

crew intercom system. This will greatly improve communication between our train crew and technical personnel conducting overhead wiring inspections for Sydney Trains.

- LED downlights (24 volt) were fitted to Driver Assistant stations at both No.1 and No.2 ends. This will greatly reduce the amount of internal light entering the driver's cab during night-time train operations.
- A full vehicle service was performed (in expectation of a charter in December, but which failed to eventuate).

621/721

Repair of the damage caused by the collision with a truck on the outskirts of Griffith, and subsequent repainting, have both been completed. Much of the progress has been noted in the last two issues of the Whispers newsletter. More comprehensive coverage will be reported in the next issue of Paterson Points.

Grant Saunders, a Sydney Trains Engineer assigned to report on 621's repair, paid us a visit in mid-October to inspect work completed, in order to finalise his report. He was satisfied with the quality of the repair work.

Our maintenance staff, with assistance from our boilermakers, have carried out additional work to further free up the brake mechanisms on both 621 and 721 to ensure all components operate to achieve maximum brake effectiveness. This was in further response to an earlier 'cold wheel' detection alert.

Steve Bruty has finished cleaning and servicing the passenger saloon fans. As well as ensuring they all work properly, the refurbished fans now operate with much less noise.

Tony Price has designed, fabricated and installed a new wooden partition in 721, to create a compartment to house a full-size refrigerator. There is provision for a battery storage compartment in the rear, as well as storage space on the shelf above. The new fridge installation necessitated the removal of one pair of seats from 721 (ones which had permanently fixed seat-backs, facing inwards).

Other Matters

- 'Danger Do Not Operate' tags are being trialled by our rolling stock maintainers. Their purpose is to tag out isolation switches in the off position whilst equipment is being worked on, to prevent machinery from being started. Each tag identifies the maintainer who placed the tag. On our rolling stock, the tag will be used in conjunction with existing Red Flag procedures.
- Lovells Springs have refurbished the CPH leaf springs recovered from CPH 19's bogie frames and obtained new coil springs to replace former springs deemed too badly pitted to repair.
- Eight axle-boxes have been removed from the four wheel-sets for cleaning and inspection.
- Arrangements are being made for the wheels to be re-profiled, to ensure they will meet the current Engineering Standard for the wheel profile and permissible wheel diameter variation.

- A new 24 volt hot water urn was purchased to replace a failed unit, and a second spare unit has just been ordered.
- The Board has appointed Charles Smith to manage a project to determine the feasibility of restoring rolling stock units 602 and 707 to operational status.
- 20 October marked the final work day for Mehdi Sazegar, who announced he will be moving to Sydney to take up full-time work. He joined our Society in second half of 2020 and would become a regular Wednesday attendee, working diligently to maintain our rail motors. The time he spent with us was greatly appreciated and I wish him well in his new career.

Robert Spencer – Engineering Manager



Rodney thanks and farewells Mehdi on behalf of assembled depot staff

R766 Trials, Saturday 30 October

R766 was a former express steam passenger locomotive introduced in the early 1950s by the Victorian Government Railways. After withdrawal from service in 1968, it passed through a number of operators and owners into preservation. R766 was converted to standard gauge by Steamrail at Newport West Workshops and transported by road to the Hunter Valley Railway Trust North Rothbury Museum near Branxton in December 2007. After many years of further restoration, R766 was finally ready for main line trials at the end of October 2021.

Our Society was asked by Sydney Rail Services, who will be the operators of the locomotive in NSW, to provide an assistant loco for the main line trials to cover any contingencies should they arise. Consequently, on Friday 29 October, and because of a main line shut down over the weekend, 7344 ran 'light engine' from Paterson to the Rothbury Riot Museum at Branxton to be in position for the trial runs of R766 the following day.

On Saturday 30 October, R766 with 7344 coupled to its tender, ran from the museum to Branxton siding. From here, two trial runs from Branxton to Singleton and return were held. 7344 was only required to be in idle, and was either propelled or hauled by the R-class.

Due to the historic nature of the trial as the first gauge-converted Victorian steam loco to run in NSW, there were numerous photographers both at Branxton station and lineside.

The two trial runs were a success and 7344 was not required to provide assistance. It stabled at the museum for the rest of the weekend and returned to Paterson on Monday morning, after the weekend shutdown had concluded.

Bruce Gehrig



Steam locomotive R766 and TRMS diesel locomotive 7344, 30 Oct 2021

2021 Open Days Report

Last year (2020) with the advent of COVID-19, our monthly Open Days were cancelled for six months, leaving just five months that would see total visitor numbers of 192. This year we fared no better with Open Days cancelled for a further six months due to COVID-19 and its aftermath. In addition, the March Open Day was cancelled because of flooding over the ARTC rail lines. Despite having only four Open Days this year, our visitor numbers were a creditable 412 for the year. The two Open Days held in January and the running of the Dungog shuttles attracted 170 visitors to our depot.

Next year we have two Open Days scheduled again in January on the second and third Sundays with shuttles to Dungog. Also, there will be a Corroboree camp at Tocal Agricultural College in January, similar to the event held in 2018, and we will be showing another 500 scouts through the depot over three days.

Should you be able to help out on any of these days, your assistance would be gratefully accepted.

Bruce Gehrig – open days tour officer

Cautious Restart of Train Tours

Stroud Road, 28 October

After the COVID-19 lockdown, which had started on 5 August for the Hunter New England Health District and go on to last for two months, the Society was finally able to resume running day tours in late October.

Protocols adopted by the Society were in accordance with guidelines issued by the NSW Department of Health. A key requirement was that all crew and passengers had to be double vaccinated, with evidence of this being duly recorded.

Our first charter was for Tuncurry Coaches on Thursday 28 October to Stroud Road. The passengers arrived at the depot at 10.30am, which allowed 30 minutes to visit the museum in the former Station Master's cottage, as well as make use of our amenities before boarding the train. This would be the first post-COVID-19 lockdown outing for both organisations.

With our 38 passengers and the coach hostess Lisa McMahon on board CPH 1 and 7, we departed the depot at

11.00am. Also on board was Society member Bradley Alderton and his carer Toni. Commentary was provided by Bruce Agland over the public address system on points of interest along the journey.

Stops were made near Kilbride waiting for a track machine to clear the section and at Wallarobba to allow a Sydney bound freight train to enter the loop. During these proceedings, morning tea was served to our passengers. At Dungog station we were held for a late running XPT from Grafton to pass via the back platform. During this delay, the opportunity was taken for passengers to have a group photo taken on the platform next to CPH 1 before resuming the journey to Stroud Road.



Despite the delays early in the journey, the return run from Stroud Road had us back into Dungog on our timetable. On arrival, our guests left the train and joined their waiting coach to take them to lunch at the local RSL club, before heading home. All had enjoyed their trip on our rail motors with several buying souvenirs as reminders of their journey.

With tabled crossings not eventuating, a non-stop run back to the depot followed, with our arrival being some 45 minutes early at 1.45pm.

Stroud Road, 2 December

Such is the popularity of this short charter to Stroud Road and Dungog that it was run again five weeks later. The second trip was identical to the previous trip with the same timetable and two rail motors, but this time with 46 senior passengers from the Pine Needles Village at Erina. After alighting at Dungog at 1.00pm, they headed to the local bowling club for lunch before returning home.

Bruce Gehrig

Off the Rails

As this newsletter was being prepared, the Society was aware that Trevor Hooker and Spencer Ross were 'off the rails'. We wish them well on their path back to good health – our thoughts and best wishes are with them both.

To any other members who might not be in the best of health, the Society hopes that you will be feeling better very soon.

To those members who have suffered family bereavements in recent times, the Society extends its deepest condolences and sincerely hopes that loving memories help you through this difficult time.

Bruce Gehrig – Welfare Officer