



# *Whispers from the depot*

Newsletter of The Rail Motor Society Incorporated

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## **COVID-19 UPDATE**

You are all aware that we are in unprecedented times and our Society is now faced with a great number of challenges. Fortunately, we have no ongoing financial obligations that necessitate a regular income stream to support. However, we do have to anticipate a very lean year for our financial bottom line.

Effective from the 21 March 2020, all Society passenger services, Open Days and depot inspections have been suspended until further notice. Work train commitments will continue to operate as required, subject to the concurrence of the hirer, any other contractors involved and, of course, the current and future Government COVID-19 restrictions.

Our Paterson Depot will be closed until further notice. This means our regular Wednesday workdays will be suspended for the time being. Projects that are currently underway in the Depot by contractors including drainage works, restoration of the ends of CPH 1 and the new siding fence will continue with the contractors taking on responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. Urgent activities requiring immediate attention may be undertaken at the discretion of the respective Line Manager. Strict hygiene measures will be enforced to avoid the transmission of the virus.

If you feel unwell, then please follow the mandated self-isolation requirements and hygiene procedures.

Stay safe and we all look forward to the containment of COVID-19 across the country and the eventual return to normal operations. I will continue to keep members updated as circumstances change.

**Arthur Burgess**  
President

## **Secretary's Report**

**By Mick Walsh**

Further to the President's message regarding the COVID-19 situation, it has unfortunately put us in the position of having to rethink the status of the Society's Annual General Meeting, which was planned to be held on 16 May. Preparation of the Annual Report and Balance Sheet will continue with the view of deciding on a date as the COVID-19 situation is made clearer. In

the meantime, we are waiting on advice from the Office of Fair Trading on our position in regards to the AGM. As soon as we have clarification and able to set a date, due notice will be given and the Annual Report distributed.

On the bright side we have received a 2019 Transport Heritage Grant from the Royal Australian Historical Society which is being put to good use in refurbishing the ends of CPH 1. We also received two Federal Government grants, facilitated by the Member for Lyne, Dr David Gillespie for the relocation of our eastern boundary fence to include the abandoned siding (\$7,000) and a grant (\$20,000) towards the drainage works on the western side of the Main Shed.

An approach was made to Comsteel's General Manager Lindsay Reid, who agreed to donate funds to purchase a defibrillator for use in the Depot and the wider community of Paterson. Lindsay has arranged the purchase and a small plaque attached acknowledging their donation. We were to arrange for Lindsay to visit the Depot where a small ceremony would be held for the presentation. With the COVID-19 situation the official handover will be held when the current crisis ends.

The Board is seeking some guidance from Members regarding a proposal for an alternate Christmas function. It has been suggested a self-catered function be held at the Depot with Volunteers and their partners invited, in lieu of the present situation where the function is held at a licensed premises. This proposal shall be discussed at the next full Board Meeting. *Could you please let any of the Board members know your feelings regarding which you would prefer?*

During this period the Board is still functioning and in constant contact with each other to administer the affairs of the Society. We will continue to share updates and advice with you to keep you informed. Please take care and stay safe.

## **Rolling Stock Report**

**By Mick Walsh, Acting Rolling Stock Manager**

First up I would like to thank Rod Howard for taking on and carrying out the Rolling Stock Manager's duties in my absence.

621/721 has been performing faultlessly after returning from Broadmeadow Maintenance Centre where both engine/transmission modules and both fuel tanks were changed out. Warren, Ted and Kevin have been busy modifying the seats in 621/721, affixing metal plates to the bottom of the wooden seat frames to prevent further seat breakages (passengers would occasionally stand on seats to retrieve luggage from overhead storage racks).



*An example of the metal seat frame bolsters attached by Kevin*

CPH 1 is undergoing refurbishment of both ends following a Royal Australian Historical Society grant of \$20,310. When the outside cladding was removed it revealed more evidence of dry rot than expected and this has led to a blow out in costs which will exceed the grant money. Whilst removed the opportunity is being taken to have the radiators cleaned and flushed.



*Glen Davies strips back the roof covering from the rear of CPH 1*

On its last trip CPH 1 suffered “slipping of the transmission”. The transmission was removed and sent

away where it appears there is a “Clutch Toggle Adjustment” problem. This problem is still under investigation.

After the Christmas break the CPHs were taken out of service to allow their Annual Inspection to be undertaken. These are still in progress.

An ongoing problem with 402’s No. 1 transmission has seen it placed out of service for most of this year to date. We are hopeful of a resolution of this problem shortly. At the time of writing a refurbished transmission is being tested.

Peter Macfarlane and his helpers have diligently undertaken the labour intensive task of painting shunting locomotive 7344. He reports completion of virtually “all above the gunnels” with the exception of the engine bay covers which have just returned after being repaired. The locomotive now looks very impressive with its original colour scheme now restored. Windows are yet to be refitted and the lower painting will take place when it can be accessed, once extricated from behind CPH 1.



*Peter applies a coat of red paint to the front face of the underframe*

The previously damaged “cow catcher” from 7344 has been repaired and refitted to the locomotive thanks to the efforts of depot metal workers.

Meanwhile, with regard to progress on trailer car CTC 51, Stephen Davies reports that with most of the major “above floor” work now completed, focus has switched to fitting smaller items such as the toilet and wash basin along with associated plumbing. The effluent containment tank was temporarily slung up underneath by Rod and John to enable the trailer car to be moved

when necessary. Its position still needs be determined to suit the effluent plumbing.



*Gary has 7344's cow catcher well under control*

The metal protection strips that are attached on the corners of the drivers' cabin have been located by Paul. Charles has screwed them in position along with the flat kick plates at the bottom of the cabin.

Seating is now finished with the back section of the small two-seater having been reupholstered, returned and fitted.

The driver's cabin still needs to be fitted out with air pipework, gauges, along with associated wiring.

## Operations Report

**By Bruce Agland, Operations Manager**

The year 2019 has proved to be a very successful one, with our rolling stock accumulating some 27,195 operational kilometres.

The year's operations concluded with a 2-day operation from Sydney to Bundanoon in conjunction with St. James Rail. This was followed by our New Year's Eve Mystery Tour. The destination on this occasion was Stroud Road where our patrons were entertained at Stroud Golf Club with an excellent meal followed by a comedy show (arranged by the Society).

The start of 2020 saw 621/721 journey to the North Coast where the set operated services out of Coffs Harbour to Bonville, Landrigans, Glenreagh and Grafton for holidaymakers. The services marketed as the "Rain Forest Rattler" proved highly successful with well over 4,000 passengers being carried over the twelve days of operations. The return empty car

movement to Paterson also attracted an excellent number of passengers from Coffs Harbour to Wauchope and Wauchope to Gloucester. Thanks go to Coffs Harbour member Neil Manson for his work in promoting these operations.

The oppressive heat and threat of bush fires in January resulted in the cancellation of our regular 'fish and chips' run to Nowra for the Australian Railway Historical Society and the Tamworth Country Music Festival trip for Maitland Rotary.

We ran a trip for Cruise Express from Sydney to Albury in February, with passengers travelling on to Melbourne to join their cruise ship back to Sydney. On the return leg, we spent a night in Goulburn where we amalgamated with NPF 623 and NTC 723. This unit had been undergoing maintenance and restoration at Chicago Freight Car Leasing Australia's Goulburn workshop. At the request of Transport Heritage NSW, the set was transferred to NSW Trains' Broadmeadow Maintenance Centre for supplementary work on the electrical and braking systems. With 623 being able to provide traction, the movement of the 4-car set to Broadmeadow proved uneventful.

Cruise Express provided us with our first visit to Queensland for 2020 with a Brisbane service. On this occasion, we were returning Queensland passengers home after travelling to Sydney aboard their cruise ship, the Sea Princess. An ARTC shutdown on the North Coast over the weekend meant the train spent the weekend isolated in the dead end at Roma Street. The return journey, however, proved popular with patrons joining the train for a run from Brisbane to Grafton and the next day from Grafton to Wauchope. One intrepid passenger journeyed all the way to Paterson with us.



*721/621 amalgamated with 623/723, seen on 24 Feb just south of Fassifern.  
Photo Brock Emmett*

This year we moved our Open Days to the third Sunday of the month with the plan to attract more visitors due to kid's sport being held mainly on

Saturdays. We also extended our associated train journey from Wallarobba to Dungog. This has proved successful in both January and February, with the March run being curtailed due the ARTC's North Coast shutdown.

Sunday, 8 March saw us operate a lunch trip on South Maitland Railway. An excellent meal was served at the Neath Hotel by the new chef. This may be last passenger trip on the SMR for some time due to the suspension of operations at the Pelton Mine. We expect the line beyond East Greta Junction to be placed in care and maintenance mode until further notice.

Thank you to all involved in making these operations such a success.

Our application for accreditation in South Australia and the remainder of Victoria is proceeding following a number of successful face-to-face meetings with representatives of the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator.

The spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) has resulted in the suspension of our passenger operations from 21 March 2020. At this stage, with a required lead time of 6 weeks for a timetable, the most optimistic date for a return to operations appears to be at least September-October.

## Infrastructure Report

**By Rod Short, Acting Infrastructure Manager**

As reported in the last edition of Paterson Points, preparations to extend the concrete floor under the gantry on No. 2 Road were completed and all that was needed was the concrete. The concrete was poured in January.



*Newly poured concrete on No. 2 Road. In the background Paul Horder (just visible) removes marker lights and other electrical components from CPH 1, watched by Glen who will repair the body ends.*

Jim Lambkin and his team have fastened side sheets to the roof canopy frame to fully enclose the KB's roof. The external cladding now fully protects the KB Goods

Van from the elements. This vehicle has been fitted out with shelving to house vital rail motor parts and spares.

Ray Kildey and Brenton Elsey have commenced work at the far end of the BR carriage to transform this area into a guest lounge, and later renovate an adjacent former ladies lavatory compartment where a second flush toilet will be installed.

Greg Duncan has painted the internal walls of a room repurposed to house a hot water unit in the TAM carriage. This unit will provide hot water to a hand basin and later to the showers (once renovated). A hot water unit has been purchased, along with a hand basin. Both are ready to be installed. Recently Greg has put the finishing touches to the vestibule ceiling in the BR carriage with a coat of white paint.

The Ladies now take full advantage of the refurbished BR carriage, understandably abandoning the small meal room in the Stationmaster's Cottage for a far more comfortable abode.



Work has commenced on the safety painting of the A-frame gantry on No. 2 Road. The gantry will be used to lift and work on heavy components, for example, bogies.

The safety rails on the depot platform will be painted yellow as time permits.

The boilermakers have installed a new heavy duty bench to better enable them to carry out their tasks.

The box trailer is in the process of having a new floor installed, to replace the rusty one.

The new tractor has arrived and is working well. All enjoy driving it. The old tractor has been sold and it has gone to a good home. Preparations such as establishing site access have been completed to enable the

installation of new drainage pipework on the western side of the Main Shed. The new drain needs to be installed before construction of the new No. 4 Road can commence.

### Off the Rails

**By Bruce Gehrig, Welfare Officer**

At the time of preparing this issue, the Society is aware that three of our members are presently “off the rails” and undergoing medical treatment. We wish Jim Dietsch, Eric Larkins and Jim Foster all the very best on their road to recovery. To any other of our members who may also be “off the rails” at the present time, the Society extends its best wishes for a speedy recovery.



*It was pleasing to see Eric recently able to visit to the depot. Photo by Graeme Holloway*

Also at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Society hopes that members follow the national health protocols set out by the government. If we maintain these standards, we will all come out of this situation in good health when things return to normal.

### Depot Open Days

**By Bruce Gehrig**

Sunday 19 January was the first of a three month trial of holding our open days on a Sunday. On this occasion we had 53 visitors inspect the depot. Six tours of the depot, 621/721, CTC 51, HPC 402, the TAM and BR were conducted. The 11am shuttle trip to Dungog carried 48 passengers.

On Sunday 16 February we had 41 visitors inspect the depot. Six tours of the depot, 621/721, CTC 51, HPC

402, the TAM and BR were conducted. The 11am shuttle trip to Dungog carried 39 passengers.

Sunday 15 March was a very quiet day with only three visitors turning up to inspect the depot. No doubt health matters influenced numbers. The usual shuttle trip to Dungog did not run as there was a complete rail shut down on the North Coast Line.

In addition, the Society also opened the depot on Sunday 22 March to coincide with the annual Paterson town walk, which was led by Dr Cameron Archer, President of the Paterson Historical Society. Of the 39 people who did the afternoon town walk, 6 would go on to visit our depot. The depot tour started at 3.30pm and finished one hour later after inspecting CPH 7, HPC 402, 621/721, TAM, BR and cottage.

### Passenger Attendant Refresher

Bruce Agland has conducted refresher sessions for train passenger attendants dealing principally with matters of Rail Safety, as well as passenger attendant duties and expected conduct. Participants each received a copy of the Rail Industry Safety Induction Handbook.

### Thank You

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the many members who have enquired and shown sympathy regarding our daughter's battle with cancer. While it has been a trying time for our family, it has been great to know that so many genuinely care about others. While our daughter is not 'out of the woods' yet, she is making steady progress.

**Brenton Elsey**

## Scenes Around the Depot



The CTC 51 crew test out their new work platform. Photo Robert Spencer



The allegedly rare sight of Bruce Agland 'with tools in hand'. Photo Graeme Holloway



Rod gives the new tractor the thumbs up, no doubt eager to put it to work. Photo Graeme Holloway



7344 recently restored to original colour scheme. Photo Robert Spencer



Mick, Stephen, Arthur and Rod discuss matters. Photo Robert Spencer



Depot workers take a break. Photo Graeme Holloway