



Whispers from the depot

Newsletter of The Rail Motor Society Incorporated

5 Webbers Creek Road,
Paterson NSW 2421

www.trms.org.au

Vol.8, No. 17, **September 2025**

From the Boardroom

Fellow members, welcome to this edition of *Whispers from the Depot*.

Firstly, the Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Brett Williams to fill a casual vacancy on the Board. The Society is also delighted to welcome new members: Kat Hamilton from Lemon Tree Passage, Gary Sambridge from Terrey Hills, and Warren Byrnes from Cowra.

At the last meeting of our Board, we felt it necessary to reinforce upon our members the requirement for train crews to wear the correct uniform, being for males, green shirt, black trousers/shorts and black shoes with black socks (shirts tucked in), and for females, blue blouse and black skirt/pants with black shoes, unless during hotter months polo shirts for males and females are permitted by our Customer Service Manager.

Operations Manager Steve Harper reported receiving very favourable feedback from ONRSR (Office of National Rail Safety Regulator) following their recent onsite audit. This is a great result and reflects well upon the management and operation of our Society. The Board especially acknowledges Steve for his significant contribution in producing this excellent result.

In mid-September, our Rolling Stock Manager and Train Crewing Coordinator attended a Strategic Planning Workshop organised by Transport Heritage New South Wales, and held at Murrurundi. Representatives from other heritage societies were also in attendance. Several learning exercises were conducted throughout the day to reinforce the concepts being taught, with the aim that the participants and their peers would develop a one-page strategic plan in the format of a supplied template over the coming weeks.

Around the depot, much activity has taken place. The new meal room is nearing completion. Good progress has been made with our new platform beside the TAM and BR cars, with the concrete now having been poured. CPH 14 has been relocated to its permanent home near the front gate, where it is now visible to the public. We intend to put a roof over it to protect it from the elements.

Lance Nelson (resident caretaker) is busy building a garden in front of the aforementioned platform, in which he plans to grow a hedge and various plants, which I'm sure will be a great enhancement. He has also been busy weeding and replanting the gardens around the depot precinct in readiness for the Society's summer Visitor Open Days.

Our Depot has seen several recent visitations by Vintage Rail Journeys, who utilise former Southern Aurora carriages

to provide vintage rail travel for their guests. Paterson provides a convenient passenger disembarkation point for local sightseeing. Many of their guests delight in being shown around our depot and inspecting our rail motors, and are surprised to learn that our operation is run entirely by volunteers. These visits offer an opportunity to showcase our operations to new visitors and encourage them to return for further visits. The Board acknowledges the time and effort Lance puts into these visits, welcoming and showing around visitors and ensuring the depot grounds are clean and tidy.



Vintage Rail Journey's Southern Aurora train at Paterson on 22 Sep 2025

The Board still encourages more volunteers to participate in our workdays. If Wednesdays or Mondays are unsuitable for you, please contact the Secretary to explore alternate arrangements that will allow you to contribute. We are particularly in need of more qualified fitters to help maintain our rolling stock and additional crew members to operate our tour trains.

The remainder of 2025 has a busy tour schedule, which includes a rescheduled TRMS Brisbane tour in late November. The 2026 tour calendar is already looking busy, with over 20 tours under consideration!

I would like to extend a big thank you to my fellow Board members for their tireless work behind the scenes to ensure our Society operates at its full capacity.

A date to take note of—our **Christmas luncheon** is scheduled for **Saturday, 6 December**. The venue will be Club Macquarie, Argenton. Further details will be provided closer to the event.

To any Member who has suffered a bereavement, we offer our sincere condolences.

Finally, the Board would like to extend its thanks to all our volunteers for the great work you do. If not for your efforts

and commitment, we would not be able to run such a successful operation.

Tony Dunn – Secretary / Public Officer

Operations Manager's Report

This year is flying by with many tours and Open Days already completed.

We have just completed our South by Southwest tour for Cruise Express with many happy customers. Unfortunately, we were unable to travel to Lake Cargelligo by rail due to time constraints. But overall, a great tour.

The next upcoming major event for TRMS will be the Heritage Expo over the long weekend in October, which will involve both our CPH and 620 rail motors.

The CPH 1 and CPH 3 will be stabled on the platform at Sydney Terminal, while our 620 two-car set will be travelling to Waterfall from Sydney Terminal several times over the course of the Expo.

We have a Central West Explorer tour departing on 1 November for Railway Adventures. As we are currently not permitted to travel over the Ulan line, our only option to make this tour work is the long trek to Gulgong via Werris Creek and Binnaway!

Our Open Days continue to be very popular and are always well-attended.

Our last tour for the year will be to Brisbane, with shuttles to Casino and a few local trips prior, which will cap off a very busy year.

Steve Harper – Operations Manager



This was the unusual sight that greeted members on 4 Aug 2025. The two Hunter Car sets, stranded at Maitland due to flooding at Sandgate, had been transferred to our depot compound to prevent further vandalism.

Rolling Stock Report

Our rolling stock maintainers have been kept busy with several major undertakings (see later in this report), and I wish to acknowledge their hard work and dedication in preparing our rolling stock for service and ensuring it meets our tour commitments. We can always do with more help, especially from suitably qualified tradespersons, as well as

general helpers.

CPH 1, 3 and 7

As previously reported, CPH 3 was withdrawn from service until it receives a new set of bogies. At the time of preparing this report, a new bogie is being installed under its No.2 end (drive bogie), and a new bogie has been positioned, ready for installation under its No.1 end—see further details at the end of this report.

CPH 1 and CPH 7 are performing well. Air gauges have been replaced with those that have recently been recertified, and the removed units will be sent away for recertification. Brake valves have been replaced with recently overhauled units, and those removed have been sent away for overhaul.

The failed transmission from CPH 3 has been sent to Twin Disc (Pacific) Pty Ltd, Brisbane, for assessment and expectation of its eventual repair.

HPC 402

Worn and damaged floor linoleum in the No.1 end driver's assistant cab was removed and replaced with new linoleum. This required skilful cutting by Brett Williams to fit the irregular cabin floor layout. A damaged (torn) driver assistant seat was removed for upholstery repair.

A loose No.2 air compressor drive belt was replaced with a smaller belt, and its adjustment mechanism was worked on to make it operate properly. Upon restarting, the air compressor was heard to have a nasty knock under load which signals that it must be removed for repair. We have a replacement.

NPF 621 and NTC 721

The Annual Service was completed by Kevin Stobbart, leaving Gary Delaney and Steve Watt to focus on changing out the intermediate drawgear (half-size couplers, spring packs, new pins and bushes, plunger bars and coil springs), helped by others at times. An S2 THNSW Grant funded this project. The drawgear noise has significantly reduced, which will greatly improve passenger comfort. In parallel, 621's rear brake cylinder was overhauled, and new air coupling hoses, which had been made up off-site, were fitted.

While the unit was undergoing its annual service, the opportunity was taken to repair a leaking water service filter housing (the service provides water to 721's toilets and handbasins). Unfortunately, the housing was discovered to be made of mild steel and had badly corroded. It was deemed irreparable. Arrangements were made to bypass the housing until a replacement is fabricated, preferably made from stainless steel. The water reservoir tanks were also noted to be in poor condition, with many past patches evident, suggesting these will also require remediation or replacement in the near future—a potential S2 Grant project!

Trevor Hooker and Greg Robertson have replaced the battery isolation switch on 621. This was the culmination of many weeks of work spent on configuring electrical cables and finding a suitable replacement switch. Trevor deserves special recognition for the time he spent working beneath

621 on the concrete floor despite being told by his doctors that his knees are 'stuffed'. The old battery isolation switch was tough to operate, especially when 621 was stabled beside a platform. The new isolation switch is easy to operate.



Fitter Gary Delaney works to install a half-size coupler to 721. The new plunger bars can be seen protruding.

Loco 7344

The remaining three final drive gearboxes were finally drained and filled with fresh transmission oil after the locomotive was able to gain access to the shed's inspection pit, following the amalgamation of 621 with 721 and its subsequent release from No.1 Road, thereby freeing up the inspection pit.

CTC 51

Nothing significant to report during the past quarter. Options are still being considered for generating power for the toilet vacuum pump, fridge and hot water urn. A set of newly reprofiled solid wheels has been set aside for CTC 51 to replace its spoked wheels.

NPF 629 and NTC 729 Refurbishment

Peter Macfarlane continues to patch the outer cladding on 629, as well as make internal repairs, to get it ready for repainting.

WFP 602 and CT 702 Restoration

Work is presently focused on window refurbishment.

Other Projects

The CPH bogie overhaul project is nearing a key milestone, with three sets of bogies, along with one from HPC 402, now having been comprehensively overhauled. As noted earlier, CPH 3 is currently receiving the third set that has been overhauled. When cracks were discovered in one of the bogie frames being reassembled, it was necessary to send this

frame off-site for repair by a specialist welder and receive certification. I wish to acknowledge the skill and expertise of our two key dedicated bogie overhaul team members, Ross Goodman and Mark Bennett, as passersby watching on with keen interest will readily attest. It has been an absolutely monumental task, and one that will stand our CPH fleet in good stead for many years. Besides the excellent rebuild quality, it has saved the Society considerable expense, compared to outsourcing this work.

Our Maintenance Coordinator is formulating a plan to recover a set of 2PG bogies (suitable for our 620-class power cars), along with engine/transmission modules from the private owner of a 900-class DEB set located at Pokolbin. TRMS proposes substituting life-expired 2PG bogies from our collection to maintain the authentic look of the DEB set for its owner. Crane hire and truck transportation costs, once ascertained, will be submitted to our Finance Executive for project approval. If successful, these critical spares will be set aside for 629/729.

Robert Spencer – Rolling Stock Manager



Ross Goodman and Mark Bennett operate a drill equipped with a powerful magnetic base to enlarge old rivet holes to accept new bolts in a CPH bogie frame

Infrastructure Report

As usual, there is always much activity around the Depot, most notably the concreting of the platform next to the TAM and BR carriages, as well as the path leading to our new meal room. The new meal room itself is progressing well; see the separate report that follows.

Due to prolonged wet weather, construction of a new platform beside the TAM and BR cars has taken longer than expected. However, a recent break in the weather has allowed the concrete to finally be poured, marking a significant milestone. The ends of the platform have yet to be dressed, and the white and yellow demarcation lines have not yet been painted. The project calls for the installation of a platform roof next. Great job by all who helped Project Manager, Graeme Holloway, accomplish the work to date. The project will significantly enhance the setting of the two carriages.

Our two forklifts have received well overdue attention to ensure they are operational. The large forklift was repaired just in time to lift and transfer the old trailing bogie off CPH 3 from No.2 Road to No.1 Road, thus enabling an overhauled bogie to be positioned under CPH 3.

Neil Dein has been busy upgrading the compressed air supply to the workshop, with new piping, valves and air gauges. This will benefit the various high-pressure/volume job demands within the workshop.

Recent torrential downpours of rain and runoff from Webbers Creek Road led to several stormwater pit grates becoming clogged with debris. This caused floodwater to pond within the depot yard (see the June issue of Paterson Points, page 5). Graeme Turner has raised one of these grates a couple of inches to prevent it from becoming clogged, as well as cleaned out the stormwater drainage channels, to mitigate future flooding.

Bruce Storey has refurbished two station platform parcel trolleys, which will add authenticity to the new platform with their presence.

The usual smaller jobs are happening, which are far too numerous to mention.

Bruce Greenham – Assistant Infrastructure Manager

New Meal Room

The lunchroom is nearing completion. The kitchen extensions, both outside and internal walls, have been fitted. Tony Price has installed the donated sink and cupboards and is currently tiling the kitchen walls. Tony also fitted shelving on each side of the kitchen window for the microwave and 'Pie Oven', allowing for uncluttered bench space. Donated ceramic tiles will be fixed to the floor in the kitchen area.

Filtered plumbing has been installed to service the hot water urn and the sink. Wastewater piping has been connected to the sink.

It should not be too long before we are ready for the internal and external painting, followed by the installation of the laminated floating timber floor, the donated split-system air conditioner, and the completion of the 'GPO' installation (general power outlet).

I am seeking any member who has experience in floating floor installation to assist, or who can share their experience, which would be greatly appreciated.



One of two platform parcel trolleys refurbished by Bruce Storey



The newly poured concrete platform beside the TAM and BR carriages

Graeme Turner has been doing some patch-up painting to prevent rust and preserve the untreated timbers. He also brought his own 'Gerni' in to wash down all the external walls in preparation for painting.

The steps and path from the lower level have been installed. Thanks go to our resident boilermakers for installing the safety handrails.

My thanks go to all the volunteers who have assisted with the numerous tasks that have kept the project moving forward.

Mick Walsh – Project Manager



Tony Price affixes tiling to the kitchen walls in the new meal room

Off the Rails

As this Whispers issue was being prepared, the Society is aware that Stafford Payne and Margaret Agland are presently 'off the rails'. We wish them well on their return to good health.

To any other members who may not be enjoying the best of health, the Society extends its best wishes for your recovery.

Bruce Gehrig – Welfare Officer

Open Days

In July, we had 50 people visit our Depot, with 39 travelling on our CPH rail motors to Dungog.

In August, we had 83 people visit our Depot. This is the highest visitor number for four years. Sixty-seven people travelled on the Dungog shuttle, and we were unable to accommodate another five, as we had only two CPHs in traffic on this occasion.

In September, we had 18 visitors to our Depot, who all travelled on our CPH rail motors to Dungog.

Thank you, as always, to all those who helped out at the Depot and on the train.

Bruce Gehrig

Recycling

At the time this issue was prepared, the Society had processed 38,153 empty containers, which helps to offset the costs of soft drinks, water, tea and coffee provided for our volunteers.

The Society thanks the members who bring in their empty cans and bottles to help support our organisation.



The kitchen area within the new meal room building, 15 Sep 2025



CPH 3 seen raised on hydraulic jacks and its No.2 bogie removed, 17 Sep 2025



Four classes of rail motors in our Depot: Hunter, 620, CPH, and 400, 4 Aug 2025



TRMS Loco 7344, with Brimble track machines, passes Paterson Railway Station on its way to Martins Creek Quarry siding on 14 Jul 2025