Hi all, the dry season is apparently on us and there has been much happening!!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

To our many members and supporters, welcome to 2013 and welcome to our new newsletter editor Bryn Channing. Bryn comes to FNAR with some impressive railway credentials and very importantly Bryn is a young fella. Last year Bryn restored the Fairmont section car and he then proceeded to write the safe working documentation for submission to the Rail Safety Manager.

Bryn is full of good ideas and enthusiasm and we have asked him to take over the newsletter production after our founding editor Robyn Smith advised that she was no longer able to do the job.

I take this opportunity to thank Robyn most sincerely for carrying this task for more ten years and also for hosting our website. All of our newsletters since 2001 can be accessed on the website.

2013 promises to be an exceptional year for FNAR with major work commencing on the 4km Snake Creek Railway project thanks to incredible assistance from the work camp established by Correctional Services at the Rail Heritage Precinct. Further reports are included in this newsletter. I strongly encourage all members to become involved this year when so much is on offer to us, but we need to be there to guide the work and to fund the supply of materials etc.

Our AGM is an important event to report on our efforts and I encourage the attendance of all financial members on Wednesday 29th August at 6pm. We will adjourn to a nearby eating establishment at 7pm.

I trust that you will enjoy this and following newsletters as we have in the past.

HERITAGE OPEN DAY – Monday 6th May 2013

This year our Heritage Open Day was a little different to other years. To start with we had thirty overnight campers with green shirts. The result of these campers is that the Rail Heritage Precinct looked sensational and was widely commented upon.

Visitors came from far and wide including an MVEC member, Kevin from Katherine, who rode to AR on a motor bike. It was also a pleasure to see some eminent citizens enjoying the Devonshire Teas and ambience. In current parlance I would happily refer to them as people of calibre. The day was a beautiful Dry Season day with South-Easterly breezes. The turnout of volunteers to run the show
was very modest which meant excessive workload for those few that did participate. A huge thanks goes to Darryl Butler, Graeme Cheater, Judy Richardson and Geoff Goodrich. They performed magnificently in the circumstances. The advertised walk to the WW2 Hole in the Hill was well patronized. The visit was considerably enhanced by the fact that the entrance track and the hole itself had been cleared out by the boys with green shirts.

After the show Judy made up a tray of cream scones for the boys in green and that put big smiles on their faces.

**CARETAKERS**

Geoff Goodrich has needed to go to Queensland to follow his business and pulled out last Thursday. We wish Geoff well in his future endeavours. We confidently expect to see Geoff back in the Top End.

So right now the precinct is staffed by four prison officers and 30 prisoners. They do try to open up the Exhibition Halls and entertain our visitors but its not really core business for them. If anyone could spare a day or two each week it would be most helpful as our visitation rates increase,

I spoke with former caretaker Alf Williams in Townsville today. Alf says that he is suffering loneliness after losing Ethel last month. I told Alf that he would be welcome at AR if that was any help to him.

**ATHRA BOARD MEETING**

Over the Easter weekend we attended the board meeting of the Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Australia in Canberra. This is our peak national body and we are the Territory reps.

The business of the meeting covers the whole range of issues that will confront us with our vision of running a heritage and tourist railway. These include National Accreditation, Safe Working, new Boiler Code, Rolling stock restoration, importance of record keeping, managing volunteers, etc, etc. An importantly we heard lots of experiences from other groups like ourselves all over Australia.

One outcome of this meeting is that we are negotiating to bring Peter Ford from Mackay to inspect four boilers and advise us on restoring old wooden carriages

**WORK PARTY PROGRESS**

During the past week the prisoners have again done heaps of work. This has included :-

Restoring the goat yard that Widgee Nelson and other Tea Ladies had used ( serving it up as “veal”).

Turning our back yard from long grass to lawn

Re-constructing our boundary fence with our neighbours (ARSS).

Cutting trees beneath the 500ft long bridge #139 on the NAR (a big job).

Mowing the yards of a few pensioners in Adelaide River

Helping the ARSS prepare for the Show in a few weeks

Welding bases on five sets of outdoor seating that Mick scored the last time the Darwin Mall was renovated.
Welding a secure frame for the ICED WATER DISPENSER in the 1936 carriage BC329 (to replace a wobbly and unsafe job).

Cutting the tops and bottoms from ten 200 litre drums to make some formwork for the foundations for the Loco shed.

Building a ramp to help passengers alight from the ANZAC GHAN next year

Hole in the hill, cleaned out by Work Party Bridge 137, now cleaned up

PROGRESS WITH THE LOCOMOTIVE SHED (120ft long by 38ft wide).

When complete this magnificent shed will securely house our rolling stock. It will accommodate three roads 30m long.

The site is parallel to the WW2 vintage locomotive shed.

A couple of years ago we filled the site with almost a metre of fill.

Trevor Menzies surveyed the position of the columns for us. Trevor is currently on site re-checking to see that we have not moved any survey marks and that the pegs are accurate.

Today Bob Smith loaned us his forklift to shift some of the roof beams that we impeding the survey.

The prisoners are about to start descaling and painting the columns and beams.

We are hopeful that someone will turn up and bore the 450mm diameter foundation holes 1600mm deep in the next week or so.

Steelcon has donated the foundation cages (Alan Speziali).

Mick Loone will be in charge of concrete operations.

The prisoners will be critical to many of the labour intensive tasks. E.g. shoveling spoil away from the earth auger, preparing the columns for paint, fabricating the foundations sleeves from 200 litre drums, etc.
The installation of the locomotive shed is perhaps the most important item that could happen at the moment. It will allow the storage of rolling stock, currently stored outside at Berrimah to be enclosed for restoration. It will also provide a basis for the acquisition of other heritage rail items for display and possible restoration. This humble shed will be the beginning of a new chapter for Adelaide River.

THE GHAN STOPPING AT ADELAIDE RIVER

A significant event happened at Adelaide River in April, with the Ghan stopping for a few hours at the station

Read the exiting report from Trevor

“Today was one of those days that is a pleasure to remember. The primary feature of the day was the arrival of the ANZAC Ghan at Adelaide River ex Darwin.

To begin with, the Rail Heritage Precinct looked sensational courtesy of the great work done by Senior Corrections Officer Ray Petrie and his crew. The grass was trimmed to perfection. WW2 Marsden Matting was used to form the pathway across the barbed wire barrier. Many of interpretive signs in the yard had been renewed for the occasion. Trevor Wardrope was most thoughtful in supplying and installing a brand new Territory flag on the flagpole to replace the motley bunting from another era.

The Community Craft Market stalls were setting up at 0800. Margaret Wardrope handed out little Territory flags for us all to wave when the train approached. Nola, Di, Yvonne and Margaret turned up nice and early to prepare the station and the catering effort (home made boiled pineapple fruit cake). It was a long day for them but well worth the effort. Geoff Goodrich and Bryan VanDerStelt prepared the disembarkation facilities for the Ghan. This ultimately included two lengths of 80lb/yard railway line which some able bodied Berrimah crew lifted.

Finally the GHAN arrived at 1220 almost an hour later than anticipated. GSR must have made an effort to have the ANZAC Ghan hauled by NR74 and NR75 both of which have “Ghan” livery. Both locos could have done with a decent wash. The train included 37 carriages and was 970m long. Disembarkation proceeded in an orderly fashion until the Fat Controller bounced out of the carriage and broke the plank that GSR had supplied. Fortunately he was not hurt and the situation was recovered. Some great ideas and offers for the next years plank were made.
An impromptu highlight occurred when “the boys from Berrimah” offered to perform a welcome dance. They lined both sides of the goods platform (like a guard of honour) and danced on the spot as the visitors alighted. It was very well received by all concerned. The VIP Guests were bussed to the War Cemetery whilst “the others” browsed around the craft market and sipped tea under the black wattle. Geoff Goodrich and Geoff offered guided tours of the WW2 Exhibition. Peter Cornell OAM visited and assisted with logistics in his inimitable style. At 1345 the Administrator Hon Sally Thomas AM and party arrived. Sally mingled with the Berrimah boys (many of whom knew her from another life) the GSR crew and the Market Stalls. She then graciously agreed to appear in visitor photographs with groups of visitors before farewelling the train. The visitors were most impressed that our Vice-Regal representative had come to meet and farewell them.

A memorable moment occurred when a prisoner proudly told the Administrator that he is a law man in his country. Sally responded instantly that she is also a lawman. I thought this was great repartee, but it was poignant when I later heard that Sally had sentenced the prisoner. He is due out in July and has the lowest security classification.

The Ghan finally departed for Katherine at 1430. We all relaxed for a while.

Soon after 1500 the Administrator and party arrived for the official visit which had been planned for some weeks. We entertained them under the shade of the trees in the yard after giving them a tour of the Sidney Williams Exhibition Halls. It seemed that most people knew the Administrator and the conversation was open and cordial. Nola, Di, Yvonne and Margaret served afternoon tea and shared conversation with Sally on a range of issues. Corrections Officer Ray shared some courtroom anecdotes with Sally whilst Geoff Goodrich reminded Sally of some memorable moments from VARIETY bashes. Sally’s partner Duncan is a self-confessed Rail Fan and told us about his model rail accomplishments. I took the opportunity to outline FNAR aspirations to the Administrator and she seemed to be most understanding and supportive (in spite of some general mirth at the audacity of the proposal from Ray and others). More than an hour later the party left and I expect that we will hear more from them.

Although our takings were modest for the day, we not only had a good time, but we did demonstrate that we can rise to such occasions and that we can put on a good show.”

It is particularly appropriate to thank the following:

Commissioner Ken Middlebrook, Senior Prison Officer Ray Petrie and the officers and prisoners who worked so hard to get the precinct to such a condition.
Trevor and Margaret Wardrope for organizing the Craft Markets and liaising with FNAR
Yvonne and Margaret for organizing the station and the catering for the whole day
Geoff Goodrich for multiple roles including meeting and greeting the Administrator.
Geoff’s mate Geoff for hosting visitors.
Bryan Vanderstelt for liaising with GSR re the train disembarkation arrangements
Officer Phil and the prisoners for assisting Bryan with the “heavy lifting” associated with the ramp.
The prisoners for the “welcome dance The GSR crew including Melanie Reid the PR person

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our books have been audited and so we are ready for our AGM which must be held before the end of May.
Current plan is that the AGM will be held at 6pm on Wednesday 29th May.

Venue is probably going to be on the lawns at Burnett House at Myilly Point Heritage Precinct in Darwin. TBC.

I will be calling office bearers regarding reports for the meeting.

**THE BEGINNING OF THE ULTIMATE GOAL**

Have a look at the pics below. Thanks to the work gang, the roadbed is now clear. This marks the first step of the restoration project on relaying the track to snake creek. After many years of the old railways saying “hurry up and wait” its begun !!!!!

I’ll bet you can see the locomotive steaming through here with a load of tourists!!! Its now within reach!!!!