

NEW SOUTH WALES NEWSLETTER



ENGINEERS
AUSTRALIA

RTSA

Railway Technical Society of Australasia
NSW Chapter
Mail: PO Box 6238, Kingston, ACT, 2604

NOVEMBER 2008

NSW CHAPTER MEETING

Wednesday 3rd December

11.30 for 12.00 in the

CENTRAL STATION - CONCOURSE MEETING ROOM

(next to Lost Property, opposite platform 2)

**SUSTAINING THE STATE'S RAIL HERITAGE FOR FUTURE
GENERATIONS**



Marianne Hammerton, Director, Office of Rail Heritage, RailCorp.

As usual our final presentation of the year looks back at where we have come from with a look at our railway heritage. This year Marianne will talk about the future of NSW Rail Heritage.

In order to ensure its railway past is there for the people of NSW into the future, RailCorp has developed a Sustainable Rail Heritage Management Strategy. This plan will conserve and display the rich railway heritage across the state as well as valuing the contribution of volunteers. The NSW Government will invest \$20 million dollars over five years into this strategy, which will be delivered by the Office of Rail Heritage.

This new office is responsible for managing the state's rail heritage items and determining the best display locations for them. The strategy acknowledges and will build upon those groups with a demonstrated track record of quality conservation and strong links with their local communities. There will be opportunities for these important custodians of NSW rail history to share their skills and experience with future generations of volunteers and rail enthusiasts around the state. This will ensure the continuation of skills necessary to conserve, display and restore these fine heritage assets.

The usual refreshments will be available prior to the meeting proper.

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METROS – FUTURE RAIL FOR SYDNEY

This Symposium was held at the Customs house at circular Quay on Wednesday 12th November and by any standards was an outstanding success. A close to full house heard a varied range of speakers who all had very worthy messages to impart and points to make. In particular the overseas speakers not only brought new ideas and concepts but did so with a sense of enthusiasm for their subject. All who attended the Symposium felt it was a very worthwhile event, making a significant contribution to the understanding and concept of a what a Metro system might be and do in a city like Sydney.

Delegates were given a memory stick with the proceedings on it – these are also expected to be up on the RTSA web site in the near future. Anyone who couldn't get to the Symposium but who is interested in the subject of urban transport should keep an eye on the web site.

PROPOSED STORE STUDY TOUR TO ASIA

Planning for the STORE study tour to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong is moving rapidly forward. The focus will be on the Metros and light rail in each of these cities, including depots, operations centres and manufacturing plants. However it will not be all Metros – there will be some time for sight-seeing at each of these cities to enhance the whole tour and make the "Asian Experience" memorable.

At this stage the indicative cost will be in the order of \$4000 Singapore to Hong Kong inclusive. Travel to Singapore and return from Hong Kong will be the responsibility of each participant – this has been done to enable a 'get the best fare you can' and to allow additional (personal) travel and tours before and/or after the STORE tour.

The editor was in Beijing recently and can report that it was nothing like what he expected. It has a prosperous and very active lifestyle, with much signage and instructions being in both Mandarin and English. Restaurants were of excellent quality and a huge range of nationalities can be found if you look – the Ed dined Chinese (several styles, ranging from Peking Duck to hotpot to Shanghai dumplings), Japanese, Myanmar, Indonesian, French, Spanish, Arabic (North African), Greek to name just some.

The Beijing Metro has doubled in size recently (the oldest line is only around 40 years old but is into its second or third generation trains) and is an excellent way to get around, particularly as the single trip fare is 2 Yuan (roughly 45 cents) and trains run every few minutes on every line (There are 6 lines plus the airport line now). A new line (Line 4) is due to open in mid 2009 while an ambitious plan intends to more than double the size of the network in the next 20 years. Despite its relatively small size the Beijing Metro handles around 3.4 million passengers per day – more than all the suburban rail systems in Australia put together. The numbers that might travel on the expanded system rather beggars the imagination.

Highlight tour destinations for the Ed were the Great Wall (we went to Mutianyu – approx 100 km from Beijing on good highways), The Summer Palace, (north west of the city centre and accessible by canal boat) and the Olympic site which is far more impressive in the flesh than on TV during the games. We were also impressed by the fact that in 14 days we had sun and blue skies every day with only light smog on a couple of those days.

STORE presents a great opportunity to hook into a wonderful Asian tour with a bit of professional development (and CPD credits) attached. Keep an eye on the RTSA web site (www.rtsa.com.au) or email MetroTour@rtsa.com.au

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POINT OF VIEW: Max Michell

There is a suspicion that if you visit a soothsayer, a palm reader or tea leaf reader they will size you up, watch how you react and in general try and give you a 'reading' that will satisfy whatever they think you were after. In other words they keep a fairly open mind about what and how they see things, and they try and satisfy the customer in a way that might be good for their business.

The rail industry on the other hand has a very black and white approach to its view of things. Many (very many now) years ago the general freight trains from the goods sheds that adorned prominent places in all capital cities (which notably have now all been redeveloped for non rail use – think about that!) to just about all places on the network were regarded as premium services. Daily departures would serve such pillars of the railway empire as Bridgetown, Naracoorte, Orbost, Cooma and Southport, while even the lesser burghs had their once or twice a week departures. Off would wobble long trains of vans and opens, many balanced on their very traditional four wheels, looking all very prosperous. In fact many of these wagons had little more than fresh air in them (many a door was flung open at the destination to reveal a single lonely package huddled in the corner), and even when they were reasonably full their revenue was rather paltry. In time the 'conventional wisdom' of the day was turned on its head and LCL traffic was seen as a financial sinkhole rather than the premium traffic it once purported to be. Bit by bit this traffic was contracted, rearranged or sold off until the only remaining vestige is now in Queensland, albeit mainly in railway trucks (highway trucks that is).

The shift in thinking then started to focus on other low productive (and as Thomas would say, 'troublesome') parts of the operation, one of which was shunting. So in time shunting was contracted and rearranged until shunters, once the lords of every yard, were almost completely wiped from the face of the (railway) earth. Then came wagons and wagon loads, which as a result of their association with shunters were also targeted as a 'bad thing'. Containers gained a charmed life as a result of the dislike of conventional wagons. If it wasn't for the intransigence of the Pillars of Containerisation in National Rail we might never have seen the SCT alternative that used real wagons as part of a complete logistics chain. Starting from a base, when NR gave them a choice of containers or nothing, of around 20 wagon loads a week on the east – west route SCT business has grown to several hundred wagon loads a week now, an outcome that can be laid quite squarely at the feet of a few divergent thinkers who even at that early stage understood logistics better than most.

The pity of all this latter purging – of shunters, shunting and wagon loads – was that much of the useful regional traffic was cast asunder along with the dross. Look at a place like Goulburn, with a population of maybe 30,000, which supports zero rail traffic inwards or outwards. Since the populace require food and consumables to survive, and they do useful productive things to get the money to pay for those items, there must be some significant flow of traffic to and from the town, yet not one tonne of it now uses rail. There are many other examples – the NSW North Coast which apart from some outward sugar, inward cement and coal at its lower end is almost bereft of local rail traffic despite passing through a continuously productive region. Canberra is a glorious example of a squandered opportunity – in excess of 300,000 people generate no more than three modest freight trains a week carting liquid fuel and nothing else (mind you there is not much outward traffic, unless Canberra's key product can be compressed and conveyed in pressure tanks!!).

There is a place for wagon load and small block loads of traffic on rail. Look at FreightLink which shunts at Port Augusta (when required to attach gas tankers, steel or the Military), Wirrida, Alice Springs, Tennant Ck and Katherine on its long trek north to Darwin. None of these places would justify a train (let alone a railway) on their own, but together they each add a little bit to the overall net value of the railway. The Darwin line is unique as far as inter-capital railways go in this country in this respect.

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There are times when the industrial glaucoma clears momentarily and new sidings are installed. Take the facility at Picton for Allied Mills, which has a new purpose built siding capable of handling a modest train load of grain for milling. Similar places continue to operate for grain at Beresfield, Sulphide Junction, Berrima, Blayney and the several Manildra facilities suggesting that in fact these can actually work, albeit with small train loads rather than simple wagon loads.

Regional container terminals can be found in some parts of the country, but mostly associated with consolidation of export containers. One of the more interesting examples is that at Bowmans in South Australia, started by some locals with a belief in their town (Balaclava) and a desire to create local jobs and wealth by exporting local hay. The business grew to the point where a siding was built at nearby Bowmans to allow railing of containers to port, as a result of which the business has further grown to include containerised products from diverse origins some considerable distance away which now generates a twice daily train.

Bowmans is in some respects (apart from an actual train) a good example of the close alliance between a location, its community, its industry and its transport that is needed to make a regional business work. It highlights how rail can re-enter the regional freight market, requiring relatively little investment but with a large amount of good business sense. In this case it was the locals and not the rail industry that got this up and running, even though it was (and remains) of advantage to rail.

If a simple rural operation such as Bowmans can be made to work for train loads then maybe there are other opportunities where wayside wagon load traffic could be successful? The key requirement is that there is some sort of train service that can be enhanced, or at least an aggregation of wagon loads that will make a reliable train load. There are some examples, apart from the FreightLink activity mentioned earlier. QRN now use their Melbourne – Adelaide train to handle through Perth loading as well as thrice weekly regional traffic to Horsham in the Victorian Wimmera. In WA the Kalgoorlie freighter remains as one of the more interesting main line freight trains with a pot-pouri of traffic out of Perth that requires placement to sidings and/or tripping to multiple end destinations at 'Kal'.

It is evident that in the land of The Private Railroad that wagon (car!) load traffic, sidings and even marshalling yards are a fundamental part of their railroad scene. Structurally they are more progressive, with short lines and regionals doing much of the local pick up type work and leaving the major railroads to concentrate on line haul. Many short lines are closely associated with local industries which in turn are the economic lifeblood of the area served by the line – a railroad virtuous circle! In the end it is this low level activity, picking and poking wagons, that helps to build the great flows of rail borne commerce that typifies the American Class 1 trunk routes.

It would have been far better back in times past if the railway industry here had taken a more objective view of what needed to be achieved. If instead of creating a self fulfilling mantra that led to the abandonment of a goodly proportion of potentially viable freight on rail we had taken a clear attitude of adapting rail freight to be financially (or even economically) viable we could have retained a significant volume of incremental traffic that would have added support to the whole network. As it is now we have drought ravaged regional lines dying for lack of their single remaining traffic while east coast main lines are not even holding their own in a rapidly rising freight market for lack of competitiveness – the latter being in part from the investment drought wrought by earlier owners, which can itself in part be traced to rapid die-back in underlying traffic as a result of 'The Mantra'. Railways should be a high volume operation, but most of our east coast main lines (with the singular exception of the Hunter Valley) are anything but. While we don't have a high and decentralised population the problem of traffic density is quite a bit harder, but it has certainly not been helped by the pursuit of the

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'easy way out' abandonment of most of the potentially supportive freight traffic within the regions. A very un-virtuous circle indeed!

LAST MEETING – 5th November:

The write up of the presentation by Graham Hayward on the new 92 class locomotives will be published in the next issue of Newsletter. From all accounts the meeting was very well attended and the topic was of great interest

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor are very welcome. In general letters should be relatively concise (no more than half a page) and should relate to either past material in the Newsletter, events or activities of interest, or reminiscences or future watching of the rail industry as a whole. If in doubt write anyway – the editor is quite pleasant to deal with after that first cup of coffee in the morning.

There were no letters to *Letters*.

MEETINGS

Future meetings are listed in the table toward the back of this Newsletter. Meetings are normally on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 11.30 for 12.00 in the large meeting room off the main concourse of Sydney Central (Steam) Station. The venue can be found in the North West corner of the main concourse opposite platform 2, next to the Lost Property Office.

AN ONGOING APPEAL

There are a multitude of activities and developments happening within our industry, again highlighted by both the editorial and last meeting report this month. Issues ranging from the high level (policy and the like) through major construction and acquisition to relatively minor matters that often go completely unrecognised and unreported are all part of our industry and in most cases are only known in detail by relatively few of us.

We are always on the lookout for interesting and varied topics for meetings later in the year and beyond. Basil has done a great job in getting an interesting and varied program up over the last 12 months, but he would welcome any, all or more bright ideas from members. So if you have a pet topic, or are overcome with curiosity about something of interest in the rail domain, then contact Basil at basil.hancock@railcorp.nsw.gov.au and let him know your thoughts.

AN INTERESTING PROPOSAL

An interesting change from our regular program has been suggested, which the Committee is looking at. In conjunction with a meeting (possibly in conjunction with the AGM, or as an end of year event) it is proposed to have an RTSA Chapter dinner. The idea would be to find a suitable venue that members could easily get to (and afford) where we could have a pleasant convivial evening with an entertaining speaker during the proceedings.

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Victoria already does this, as does South Australia. There is some support for the SA venture in the way of sponsorship which is an avenue that we will also follow up here. Victoria, on the other hand, tend to sell 'tables' to industry groups and thus come at the issue from a different perspective.

We would be interested in member's views on this subject – when should it be; where should it be; what venue might suit; what format should it follow or should we even do it at all.

Forward your views, comments and ideas to Chris Venn-Brown at rpes@bigpond.net.au or to Andrew Honan at ahonan@pacific.net.au so that we have can gauge support for this proposal and hopefully get some ideas as to how we should do it.

COMING NSW MEETINGS: (black indicates confirmed, red indicates tentative)

DATE	SPEAKER	TOPIC	LOCATION	TIME
Wednesday 4 February 2009	David George Chief Executive, CRC for Rail Innovation	Rail CRC Program	Central Station Concourse Meeting Room	11.30 for 12.00
Wednesday 4 March 2009	Peter Moore Executive Director, UITP Australia	Presentation on the UITP	Central Station Concourse Meeting Room	11.30 for 12.00

There are some very interesting topics in the pipeline for later in 2009 and they will be listed in the table of coming meetings once speakers have been confirmed, but of course if you have something you would dearly like to see or hear about (or share with members) then by all means contact Basil Hancock and let him know.

We will continue with lunch time meetings at Central for the majority of our 2009 gatherings.

CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS:

CEO --Chief Embezzlement Officer.

CFO-- Corporate Fraud Officer.

BULL MARKET -- A random market movement causing an investor to mistake himself for a financial genius.

BEAR MARKET -- A 6 to 18 month period when the kids get no allowance, the wife gets no jewellery, and the husband gets no sex.

VALUE INVESTING -- The art of buying low and selling lower.

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P/E RATIO -- The percentage of investors wetting their pants as the market keeps crashing.

BROKER -- What current conditions have made me.

STANDARD & POOR -- Your life in a nutshell.

FINANCIAL PLANNER -- A guy whose phone has been disconnected.

MARKET CORRECTION -- The day after you buy stocks.

CASH FLOW-- The movement your money makes as it disappears down the toilet.

INSTITUTIONAL INVESTOR -- Past year investor who's now locked up in a nuthouse.

PROFIT -- An archaic word no longer in use except by oil companies.

AND WHAT'S MORE –

The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.

I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.

She was only a whisky maker, but he loved her still.

A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.

A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart (and his probable retreat).

Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.

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John Watsford	Committee	Paul Harris	Committee
Chris Venn-Brown	Committee	Lucie Mitchell	Committee
Malcolm Cluett	Committee	Katharina Gerstmann	Committee
Candice Ng	Committee		

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SYDNEY NEWSLETTER

Part of the function of RTSA is to keep members in touch with what is going on in the industry and with each other and to that end we are only too happy to publish items of interest. Articles, letters or editorial comment for Newsletter are very welcome. We have several hundred members locally some of whom have stories, events or developments of interest that could make an interesting item for our NSW Newsletter.

Contact details are –

The Editor, Max Michell,

- e-mail to samrom@bigpond.com,
- phone 02 9331 5662 or
- post to P.O.Box 279, Potts Point, NSW, 1335.

For all other matters relating to RTSA Sydney Chapter contact Andrew Honan (Chair) or Bill Laidlaw (Secretary) as above.

CPD CREDITS

Engineers Aust members who attend RTSA meetings and events will qualify for CPD credits as per the Engineers Australia criteria. Members are responsible for recording their own CPD for audit.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS RECEIVING RTSA NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL

If you receive this Newsletter by post but would prefer to get it by e-mail (quicker and more reliable) then please let the Canberra know (address in the page header). E-mail saves time for you and costs for RTSA, which in the end can only mean better service to our members. There are occasions when email members are able to be advised of events or changes at very short notice which cannot get to mail members in time to be of any use.

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