



STEAM SCENE

Newsletter of the Steam Tram and Railway Preservation (Co-Op) Society Ltd.
t/a Valley Heights Steam Tramway.
Proudly associated with the NSW Rail Transport Museum (Blue Mountains Division).
Affiliated with the Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia and
Rail Heritage Australia (NSW).

**"Preserving the past,
enriching the future"**

**Volume 6, Issue 1
February, 2009**

Australia Day at the Valley....

"Where the b...y hell were they!!"

Certainly not at Valley Heights! A miserable 31 souls came through the gate. There were thousands a little further down the mountains at Glenbrook, for their annual event and Parramatta Park (our old site) was expecting a through-put of 70,000 visitors for the day. Other venues of concentrated celebratory activity also had good visitor numbers. So what happened at Valley Heights? Last year we received a mention on radio station 2GB earlier in the day and whether this was a factor or not, a little over 100 came through the gate. Though a better figure than this year, it is still not great.

This year we didn't have the media publicity. That could have made a difference. As someone has said, if the public have a choice to go to something that's happening for free or going to something where they



(Above) A milk churn and a crate of chooks awaits loading but where are the real fare paying customers?

make a saving in the household economies, the leisure dollar is the most obvious one to be saved. But as we have noted in past tight-times, petrol strikes and the like, eventually people get tired of hanging around home. Sooner or later they have to get out for some fun, if only to shut the kids up!

We can't afford to sit on our hands and do nothing. It is imperative that the society and the museum work together in every endeavour to get more visitors through the gate. You too can be a help by just encouraging your friends to visit.



(Above) Operations Manager, Peter Stock attends the tram at the outer terminus. A museum staff member sits on the back seat and there are another one or two in the front compartment otherwise, the tram is bereft of fare paying customers!

have to pay, they will always in these times, opt for the former. So what do we do about it ?

The down-turn in visitors is just not an Australia Day problem, it is a year-round phenomena. The answer perhaps lies in a multi-faceted approach but by far the major push must be made in getting ourselves better known of, particularly to specialist groups. To this end the society, in conjunction with the museum intends to saturate bus companies, car clubs, Probus clubs and the like, getting ourselves known about and informing them of our unique attraction and facility. This will of course, necessitate operating on occasion during the week but if we can have say, two groups during a weekday, the effort will be well worth while.

Yes, we do have world-wide economic factors working against us at present and if people want to



The treasurer bemoans a depleted cash-bag.



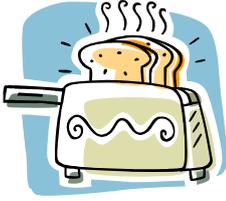
I was looking recently at a photo that was taken when we demolished the cottage that contained the two tramcars that we have. This was taken back in 1997. It was an exciting time as we enthusiastically embarked on the work. The thing that strikes me now is the number of workers we had then in marked contrast to the number we have now. Some have retired from our ranks by the attrition of age and several for many other reasons not least, geographical. Although we are now back operating after the fire disaster, I would have thought we could have maintained the number of active workers as the membership itself slowly grows (we presently have 70). It is not the case however.

Much of what has been achieved over the last few years has been done by very few and some of that few are now feeling the rigors of advancing years. If it were not for the interaction between ourselves and Valley Heights members, we could be finding it very hard to operate let alone maintain and restore anything.

Most museums are afflicted with the problem of ageing memberships and we are no exception, despite some younger folk who have joined of late.

I appeal to you our members, that if you could give us a hand now and then, get in touch. We've got a host of jobs waiting to be done, even if you can only give a day now and then. We need cleaners, shop-helpers, track-workers—the list goes on. The footplate gets a bit crowded at times but there is always room for someone to have a go at firing as a little "thank-you" for their help.

Go kindly, Bruce Irwin. Ed.



Retail—A vital Component for Survival

The following article was written by Chris Le Marshall and appeared in the ATHRA Newsletter of July 2007. With the reception/shop area of the museum progressively improving, I thought it might be timely to take into account how someone else in the heritage industry views retail sales in the never ending quest to win repeat and new visitors. Text in italics are by the editor.

Retail sales, both souvenirs and refreshments, are an important component of the revenue stream for any tourist and railway heritage railway or tramway operation.

Ideally, retail recovery per customer should be in the region of \$10 per customer. The significance of this figure is that unlike entry fees or revenue secured from the sale of tickets, the margins on retail are generally 100% plus.

Any tourist or heritage railway or tramway operation that seeks to recover the maintenance

and replacement cost of its infrastructure over time must see effective retail as a key means of securing essential surpluses

The Market/Product Mix

Many organizations in considering the market, view the type of products required as those that they see as being important. Before considering the type of goods that should be stocked, it is important to consider the make-up of the market. Many experts believe the market is divided in categories. The first 60% in terms of population numbers, affectively has access to 40% of the wealth. The remaining 40% of the population effectively has access to over 60% of the wealth.

Core Market

The 60% of the market that has 40% of the wealth is basically young families, mature people who are relying on government pensions and people in between that have very small disposable incomes. These people when visiting your operation, invariably will purchase a family ticket and will be quite happy with snacks such as potato crisps and/or other reasonably priced refreshments. They will also probably be looking for a small representative souvenir under the price of \$20. In terms of numbers, they are generally seen as the core customer base for many tourist and heritage operations.

Premium End of the Market

The 40% that control 60% of the wealth are made up of segments such as *the silvers*, those over fifty years of age with a touch of grey hair but with more disposable income. Others in the 40% segment include professionals and self-funded retirees. They are prepared to spend a little more than the former market to make their experience more comfortable and enjoyable. On

arriving at a venue, the premium end customer is looking for something a little more up-market to complement their visit. There are some basic needs that must be met however, in order to adequately service that segment of the market.

Ideally they like to buy a cup of brewed coffee—coffee from a coffee machine made from good quality coffee beans, as their preferred choice. Further, they prefer their coffee served in a china cup. A disposable cup with instant coffee doesn't meet the needs of this group.

It is of note that this group are also prepared to pay the additional cost for a premium product. *While of the subject of beverage, don't forget the poor old tea-drinker! It is quite easy just to throw an el-cheapo tea-bag into a cup and douse it with hot water. The premium market should be treated to a two-cup tea pot with a milk, sugar and teacup setting. If tea bags must be used, give the customer a choice of good quality tea bags.*

In terms of food, the premium market invariably won't buy pre-cut sandwiches, potato crisps or meat pies. Their needs are better met with simple but good Italian-style food. For example, a simple hot snack such as focaccia, quiche, toasted sandwich or a gourmet pie will meet their needs. Wide choice is not so important but quality is important to this segment. In terms of souvenirs again, they tend to purchase the hallmark item under \$20. They will however, buy higher priced items such as warm jackets adorned with logos, caps and windcheaters. Invariably, it is this segment of the market that is neglected by most tourist and heritage railway operations.

Days of the Past

In days gone by, many tourist heritage railway and tramway operations were exemplified by a trestle table in the corner of a waiting room or perhaps on a platform. There would be a range of dog-eared, tired and dusty, second-hand and new rail heritage publications for sale. Accompanying these would be the *de rigueur* disposable cups with teabags or instant coffee, jug of milk, tepid water and lots of smiles and good wishes. *A dollar-a-cup with a biscuit thrown-in perhaps was the order of the day.*

Fortunately or unfortunately, in this day and age this form of purveyance is no longer acceptable.

(Continued on page 6)



(Above) Plenty of cheerful shop attendants and the coffee machine is rearing to go. All we need are customers.

WHICH IS YOUR CUP OF COFFEE?

THIS?



OR THIS?





You Show Me Yours, Then Come and See Mine !

- Following-up a long standing invitation

Following on from the recent article about the trials of trying to get motor 100 repatriated back to Australia, Membership Secretary David Lewis, thought his experiences driving 100 on a recent holiday might be a nice follow-up.

In early August 2008, Robyn and I flew to Auckland NZ to watch the Bledisloe Cup rugby international against the All Blacks.

Ian Mison, one of the drivers of motor 100, had visited Valley heights a few years back and gave us a standing invitation to visit MOTAT (the Museum of Transport and Technology) in Auckland and have a bit of fun on 100. Our rugby excursion to NZ provided an excellent opportunity to take Ian up on his long-standing invitation. Having been in touch with Ian before we left Australia, I arranged a suitable day to visit the museum.

MOTAT is a wonderful place to visit, with lots of fascinating things to see and do. Many school groups visit the museum and it is open every day. The museum has a range of electric trams to give museum visitors a ride over their track which is about 1.7 km. in length.

Steam tram motor 100 has no trailer car, so it is only used for demonstration purposes. It can however be run at the same time as the electric trams. MOTAT seems to have no where near as many rules and regulations under which we operate at Valley Heights. Never-the-less, it operates quite safely and to everyone's satisfaction. Their safety-work is somewhat "relaxed" and uses visual and verbal communication between tram drivers, to ensure no untoward situations occur when the steam tram operates concurrently with the electric trams.

Ian lives an hour or so's drive north of Auckland. He had arrived at MOTAT the day before so as to "warm-up" 100 with a light fire. 100 runs quite happily on scrap timber and maintains more than enough steam pressure to enable it to perform all that is asked of it. The MOTAT track is laid almost entirely outside the museum perimeter and runs adjacent to a busy main road on a nature strip between the road and footpath. It crosses another busy road by way of a crossing controlled by traffic lights. A short steep grade (perhaps 1:20) is encountered either side of the crossing. On the number of roads that the tram crosses, there is generally no separation from the general public be they pedestrians or motorists. As mentioned before, safety-work is "relaxed" however, one must be very vigilant at all times with regular use of the whistle to warn any unsuspecting member of the public of the imminent arrival of the "steam fiend".

The controls on 100 are very similar to our own 103A except that the interconnected regulator levers are both on the driver's side of the cab. The brake levers are mounted on the cab ends rather than on the water tank as on 103A. Steam pressure is limited to 105 psi. Water level gauges are within the cab and mounted on the side of the firebox. Our motor used to have this arrangement prior to being re-boilered. The NZ motor has tramway profile wheels to accommodate the line used also by

electric trams. Some of the curves are very tight. Not being used to the sight of tramway profile wheels, they looked quite skinny however, they do the job.

With sufficient steam showing on the gauge, we set off through the museum grounds from the shed where 100 is housed. It is fairly level track for about 50 metres and one has to be careful to avoid any contact with the numerous parked cars

parked trackside. After this, we encounter a short steep climb on a right hand curve (I guess about 1:20, maybe steeper) and pass through the perimeter fence. After this, we move onto a level grade where the first "station" is located alongside the Great North Road. This is a major arterial road in Auckland. Here we pull up behind a waiting electric tram and talk to the driver. The conversation ran something like this: "We will follow you and see you at the terminus. Don't start the return trip until we are out of your way." So we give him a good head start then set off at a fair pace. We rock and roll along the track keeping a good look-

out for pedestrians and generally having a ball of a time. On our first trip with Ian driving, we got up a fair speed, much faster than we could ever go at Valley Heights. No doubt with much experience behind him, Ian found little reason to slow down. On the three or four subsequent trips that I drove the motor, our speed was much more sedate. I wasn't particularly interested in "hearing the beat" but preferred to savour the experience. Too fast and it is all over too soon. (where have I heard that before?) We slow down to negotiate a sharp downhill right hand turn at the intersection of Motions Road. Here there is a passing loop. The points are set to send you on the left hand track and to trail you through the points at the other end of the loop. (Continued on page 4)



(Above) Motor 100 and a Melbourne electric at the outer terminus.



(Above) David Lewis in his oversized overalls, perches nonchalantly on the window sill of 100.



I imagine that three or more trams might operate at the same time during periods of heavy traffic such as weekends.

At Valley Heights, the through braking to the car gives us more than adequate braking for all our situations.

Passing Western Springs College on the left, a number of driveways to an from its car-parks cross the line. The terminus is a little way further on near the aviation museum.

The terminal "station" has two tracks. (See the accompanying photo of the two trams side by side.) The 900 metre extension to the present terminus was opened in 2007.

The return trip was similar to the outward trip save for the left hand curve into Great North Road from Motions Road being quite sharp, as tram curves often are. It is also steeply graded with much squealing from the motor's wheels as they bite into the curve.

The time finally came to return 100 to its depot and top up with water. Shedding a pair of overalls I had worn that were many sizes too big for me, I profusely thanked Ian for a wonderful day.

I recommend that readers look-up the MOTAT web site and have a good look at the extensive range of trams and other exhibits at the museum.



(Above) Motor 100 looking spic and span outside the depot. Note the absence of a safety-gate in front of the "plough". These were a later innovation made when the motors in NSW were converted to one-man operation.

Continuing on, we travel a few hundred metres to the level crossing over Motions Road, past the zoo on the right. We have to stop well short of the intersection and wait until we get the green light to cross. A toot of the whistle and we scurry across the road, keeping a good eye-out for erring motorists. The level crossing is approached on each side by a short

downhill grade, especially on the terminus side. Running light engine, 100 has much better braking power than 103A and stops on the proverbial sixpence. 100's brakes have been modified though. The brake pan is of larger diameter than the original and is recorded as having come from some dairy application originally if I remember correctly what Ian told me. Mind you, you need really good brakes to negotiate those steep

Toongabbie Creek Railway Bridge

- Given proper recognition at last



David Lewis recently sent in the accompanying photos of the remains of the railway bridge over Toongabbie Creek. The bridge represents the most substantial remainder of the short-lived

in contact with the appropriate person in Council, David offered to give them a brief history of the line to form the basis of a suitable plaque. The information has been provided and we will report when the plaque has been installed.

Although the bridge was the most outstanding feature of the line, so far as we know, no photograph of a train passing over it seems ever to have come to light.

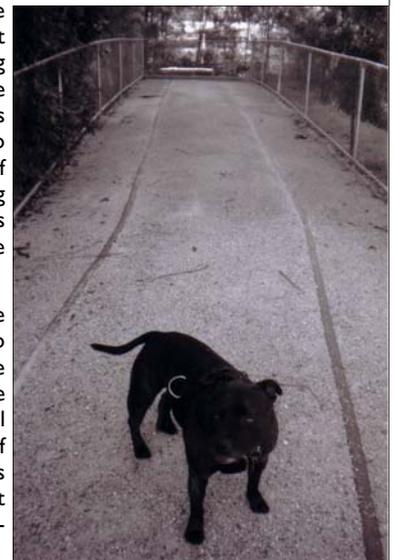
If anyone would like to know more about the Rogan's Hill line, a copy of the editor's "The Apricot Mail—A History of the Rogan's Hill Railway" is in stock. Please get in contact.



A close-up shot of the bridge abutments. A safety fence prevents a closer look at the works. (Photo courtesy, David Lewis)

Over the last couple of years, Parramatta City Council has done much to improve the area including a general cleanup and the building of a nearby board-walk. To further enhance what might have been the ordinary walker, a non-descript section of bridgeworks to nowhere, the City Council have added a short section of track up to one of the abutments. This leaves no one in doubt as to its original purpose and most certainly enhances interpretation of the site. Even so, it left the observer perhaps wondering what on earth a railway line ever did here.

This is where David came into the picture. Getting



This photo features the embankment with the recently installed track. David and Robin Lewis' dog "Dukey" (shouldn't she be Duchess) appears to act as a guard-dog, ready to lick anyone to death approaching. (Photo courtesy, David Lewis)



Second and Third Time Lucky

Another visit “down-under” to see 103A—After Two decades !

Dr. Bob Tebb visited the museum at Valley Heights in July 2008, to flesh-out a long cherished dream—to see 103A in action. Peter Stock has penned the story of Bob’s previous attempt to see the tram and his eventual success. Bob has now joined the society.

Back in 1985 or thereabouts a lone visitor from the United Kingdom presented at the Parramatta Park depot on the third Sunday of the month, with the intention to see our steam tram in operation. He cheerily introduced himself to Robyn and Peter, the “Arkwrights of the shop”, as Bob Tebb from Crich. He went on to explain his credentials as the “team-leader” of interested members restoring a vertical-boilered Wilkinson steam tram motor at the tramway museum at Crich, UK. The motor turned out to be the same one that was sent by Beyer Peacock, Manchester, for trials and testing on the Sydney tramways. Here it was known as *John Bull*. This motor’s trial and tribulation story in NSW is somewhat murky. Eventually it found its way back to its maker and there it was used for many years as a works shunter.

The day Bob chose to visit, 103A was at Thirlmere undergoing its Bi-centennial-funded restoration. Still Bob had the opportunity to inspect and be navigated through the mysterious confines of the shed and if the recollections are correct, enjoy a ride or three on 1022, 94B and 133A. Bob met with a younger member of the society, Craig, who made sure that he saw everything. It was from this chance meeting we began a long and valued friendship for the next two decades using the post and later email.

As part of a family holiday in Australia Bob’s family planned a tour starting and concluding in Sydney. By a curious coincidence the family were to be in Sydney on both the 2nd and 4th Sundays of July and thus was able to visit Valley Heights on both occasions.

I met Bob, Kath and son Mathew at the aerodrome pre-dawn the morning they arrived. Being early we retreated to the nearby Stock abode for refreshments before taking the family to their “digs” in the city. It was arranged for Bob to meet me the next Saturday and together we visited the electric tramway at Loftus as they were operating that day as part of school holidays. Here the members on duty made us most welcome and ensured that no nook or cranny of their operation was missed. A sincere thank you to their chairman, Howard Clark, who took the time to explain and guide us around the various aspects of their operations.

The next day I met Bob (the other family members opting for more serious touristy things) and drove him up to The Valley for a day with that elusive steam tram. Again Craig took Bob under his wing and made sure that our visitor had unrestricted access to the museum. The day was quite cold but Bob entertained our crew by strolling about in a white collarless shirt all day pretending that he was back in the “Old Dart” and did not feel a thing! And that white collarless shirt? It was later donated to the society for inclusion in the dress-up locker for use on operating days.

The same arrangements were repeated on the 4th

Sunday. Our visitor settled in with the crew. Yet another white collarless shirt was worn without any coat or other covering, despite the prevailing weather. It can be revealed however, that a “fleece” was secreted in the kitbag. Perhaps it was the warmth of the firebox that kept the cold out. Eventually the second (bonus) day ended and I returned Bob back to his family who this time, had ventured out on a whale-watching excursion. On the way back we drove through torrential rain and a hail storm. At one place on the M5 the hail had packed into drifts reminiscent of snow.

I am certain Bob enjoyed his visits to Valley Heights. I know he appreciated the warm welcome he received from the tram crews on both days and the acceptance of his presence in the lunchroom, yarning to every one there. I appreciate Craig, David L, Dave H, Steve, Col, Bruce C and Bruce I and others who went out of their way to make our visitor welcome whilst at the same time “stirring” about being oblivious to the so-called “unseasonable” weather! But it was a golden opportunity to closely inspect the work that the society put into rebuilding the Eames vacuum brakes, the task made easier by the location and copying of the letters patent by Bob in a library in Leeds.

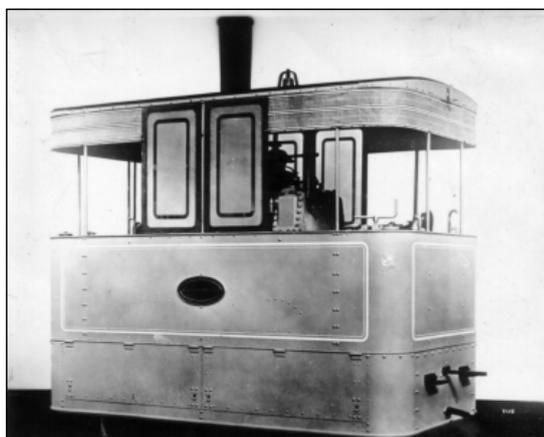
It would appear that the sentimentalists from Crich always wondered about *John Bull*’s apparent failure to impress the tramway authorities when on trial in NSW. After many trips up the coal road with its 1 in 20 grade, 103A just showed what this American-built motor could do. As Bob was in the rather unique position to reasonably compare 103A and *John Bull* in actual operating conditions, the reason for the decision of the Tramways here to return the UK motor was quite evident—lack of grunt.

More about these collarless white shirts. These are not readily available in Australia although they were in vogue several years ago as “grandfather shirts”. But they are usually available in the UK. In a parting gesture Bob pulled out a clean shirt from his kitbag. He then proceeded to change from the days collarless shirt and with yet another such gem presented the two to the society for the dress-up locker.

Since his return to the UK Bob has sent a thank-you note to thank everyone at Valley Heights who made his visits most enjoyable. This can be seen on the lunchroom notice board.



(Above) This photo has been used before in a different context. Bob Tebb is depicted smiling broadly in white shirt. He at last was able to sample our steam tram and as a former operator of “John Bull”, was able to make a comparison.



The Wilkinson designed English motor “John Bull”. It arrived in Sydney in 1886 and was trialed on the Redfern Stn. Line. With kilt all-round, he appears to be a modest little fellow perhaps disguising a middle-age spread. His appetite for fuel however, was legendary. Proving unsatisfactory for Sydney conditions and not least because of his gluttony, he was eventually returned to the UK. Today, it rests in pieces.



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enriching the future"**

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The museum is located in Tusculum Road, Valley Heights. Ample parking is available. A train service is available to Springwood. Valley Heights station is accessible for museum visitors but you must walk around to the Tusculum Road entrance and not attempt to short-cut across the tracks.

The museum is open between 10 and 4 on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. Steam operations on both days.

Works Report: 1308: Retrieval of remaining parts at Thirlmere. Moving of other parts from "S" truck to shed. **93B:** Floor paint touch-up and general clean. **103A:** Clean-up.

(Continued from page2) We must keep the smiles and good wishes but improve the offering to meet the needs of a more sophisticated total market. The facilities and stock detailed previously, effectively restrict revenue significantly and will have a negative long term impact on your business. The experiences that people want include good coffee, good food, the ability to sit and perhaps enjoy a publication that they have just purchased in your venue.

In considering the placement of your retail outlet to ensure maximum throughput and recovery per customer, there are a few basics that if met, will assist greatly. Ideally, the refreshment outlet should be co-located with the retail outlet. It should provide a warm, airy sunny place where people can linger over a cup of coffee, read through the \$15, \$20 or \$30 book they have just bought. Close at hand should be clean toilets and within view of the seating area but isolated in terms of noise, should be a children's playground area. All segments of the market love watching children play however, they don't like hearing children play. They also don't like children running around the tables in the retail area. A fine balance is required here.

Reality Check

Many tourist and heritage organizations are resource strapped. It follows that when a business is establishing itself there is little spare cash. All too often substantial amounts of money are required for the very important operational requirements.

An effective retail outlet is an important operational matter. Unlike a coat of paint on your locomotive- not saying that's not important- the investment in retail will provide a significant return and will enable you to fund major operational projects in the future.

It is a catch-22 situation: you need money to make money. If it is possible however to set aside funds for a good retail outlet, that does meet the needs of all segments of the market, then the return to your organization will be great.

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We at Valley Heights are fortunate in having a very good sales outlet for souvenirs, books and refreshments. It fulfills most of the requirements for a good outlet as detailed by Chris Marshall. This was due to the foresight and planning that went into the establishment of the museum. I have always maintained that the ideal customer is one who purchases a museum entry/ride, buys a refreshment and souvenir and goes home happy with his experience and is anxious to tell his friends about it. Chris Marshall is saying much the same thing. The difficulty is of course, that with only small numbers coming through the gate, one is reluctant to branch out into too much perishable foodstuffs, only to be left with much of it not purchased and left on hand. The ubiquitous pies and hot-dogs might be tuned to the lower end of the market but they are popular and a good earner. The installation of a coffee machine, although slow in public uptake will improve over the next cool seasons. At present we are feeling our way to gauge what moves and what doesn't sales-wise. We are taking an incremental approach on a path of improvement that I feel will eventually win the day without leaving us financially "in the soup".

Last but not least....



Dual member, **Ted Dickson's** wife Ellen is not too good at the moment and is under treatment for cancer. We wish you both all the best and assure you of our support. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

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Chairman Craig recently spoke to Life Member, **Ron Mills**. Ron is only middling at the moment having contracted "Parkinson's". Ron is however still keenly interested in what is happening at the Valley and is delighted that 1308 has returned "home". Our best wishes are with you Ron and Gladys.

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Can You Help?

Crohn's disease is a debilitating chronic bowel condition for which there is no cure. Our late Secretary, Cliff Currrell's grandson Ben has contracted the disease. Ben is the son of members Joanne and Matthew Power.

Last June, Ben received diagnosis and

subsequent treatment for the complaint at the Sydney Children's Hospital and is now a happier child. Not content with leaving it at that, Ben and his family now want to raise \$5,000+ to aid research into Crohn's with a view to ultimately finding a cure.

As part of the fund raiser, the Power family are embarking on a hike along part of the old convict road and walking trail from Thornleigh to Newcastle on April 9. The hike will take 15 days to cover the 210km. Ben and his supporters will be commencing their journey from Canterbury Boys High School on April 9 after a BBQ breakfast and school assembly.

Ben is going to do as much as he can of the walk but will be ably assisted by his family in including member and aunty, Beth Fielding. Ben and the family are of course looking for sponsors. You might even like to join in part of the walk/hike.

Further information can be found on the following websites:

everydayhero.com.au/benpower

ben-pooaintaboo.blogspot.com/

The society will be making a gift to the cause and we hope you can help also.

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Spoke with **Frank Millier** recently and am glad to report that he is improving after a bit of a health set-back. Frank is chuffed that his grandson, Daniel Kemp is now with the Railways as a Signalling Engineer. Signalling was of course, Frank's area of expertise when he worked for NSWGR.

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ITSRR have given us a tentative "pat on the back" for some of the SMS work submitted to them by Craig.

At a recent forum, in response to a query re the differing approaches of different auditors, ITSRR stated that they are working on being more consistent and reasonable in their approach to small operators. *(Has the penny dropped ? Ed.)*



If you notice anything that gives you concern in the operation of the tramway or indeed anything touching Health and Safety matters, please bring it to the attention of the Operations Manager, Peter Stock or the Works Manager Craig Connelly.

The society has an obligation to consult with its members and in particular, its Rail Safety Workers so as to have a broad practical spectrum, for input in matters of safety .

Your contribution would be welcome.