



# 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 3**

**June 2009**

## ITSRR’s New “Carrot and Stick” Approach



On April 27 three directors attended a seminar held by ITSRR. The new Chief Executive, Len Neist (who has replaced Carolyn Walsh) introduced himself and went on to indicate that he basically wants to clear up outstanding Safety Management issues as they relate to heritage operators. To this end, a questionnaire will be sent to each operator to be completed during June 2009. So far as we are concerned much of the information ITSRR seeks has been previously forwarded. Following submission of the completed questionnaire, Len Neist personally, together with other compliance officers, will visit each operator in an effort to get to grips with whatever is outstanding. He made it clear that this would be the last opportunity for heritage operators to get their SMS’s up and running.

This is a laudable idea and should have been done by ITSRR long ago rather than sticking with their “arms length” approach that has dogged our efforts in the past. Not least of our problem in completing our Safety Management System has been the different interpretations and emphases given by different audit teams. Many has been the time when we have

thought we had documentation “done and dusted”, only to have it rubbished by the next auditor.

So much for the “carrot”. Not mentioned at the seminar, but obviously in the pipeline at the time, is the introduction of a bit of “stick”. Effectively “on-the-spot” fines for various infractions where a Rail Safety Officer has evidence and reasonable grounds to believe an alleged offence has been committed and in their opinion, a penalty notice is the most appropriate and practical deterrent. This will come into effect on July 1. Improvement and or prohibition notices can also be issued, additional to the penalty notice. A “period of grace” will apply for the month prior to July 1. Penalties range from \$100 to \$5,500 and can be levied on individuals and or legal entities with obligations under the Rail Safety Act, 2008. As of going to press, further detail was not available.

Rail Safety Workers will be advised of the new provisions under separate cover. A Penalty Notice Fact Sheet is pending receipt from ITSRR and will be displayed in the depot as soon as it is received. RSW’s should make themselves fully aware of its provision.

## Bendigo— Return of the Commuter Tram?

Bendigo trams ceased operations on 16-4-1972. The entire North Bendigo route together with the Golden Square line as far as the Central Deborah Gold Mine was retained for tourist purposes, along with the entire depot and fleet. Since that time, under the auspices of the Bendigo Trust, Bendigo’s “talking tams” have been one of the great success stories in rail preservation. To date, the line has been strictly a tourist driven operation but there could be a new and additional direction for it in the future.

In conjunction with a local commuter association, Bendigo Tramways initiated a trial shuttle service running over five days from December 8 2008. The aim of the service was for car drivers to leave their cars near the tram termini and catch a tram to the city and thus relieve some of Bendigo’s city parking problem.

Three tram cars were put into service with two plying between the North Bendigo terminus and the city centre (Charring Cross). Tram crossing took place at Lake View loop. The third tram plied between the Central Deborah Gold mine and Charring Cross. A 15 minute headway was maintained in both directions.

The trial was deemed moderately successful with about 197 passengers being carried over the period. It was determined that a longer trial period would be undertaken between March 16 to April 9, 2009.

This trial was varied with only two tramcars being utilized and the journey being through-routed from

North Bendigo to Central Deborah. This made for more economical running with a corresponding reduction in crews needed. The headway was marginally increased to 20 minutes. The journey from the city centre to North Bendigo contained two

intermediate stops whilst the journey from the city centre to the Gold Mine proceeded without stops. Fares were \$2 return.

Over the period the numbers carried amounted to 473. Running was incident free save for a truck clipping a wing mirror off one of the trams.

So what were the conclusions from the trial? Tramway Superintendent, Darren Hutcheson indicated that despite the relatively small numbers carried, feed-back from the public was extremely positive. Despite a lot of publicity, many people were unaware of the nature of the trial. It takes some time for something like this to sink into the community’s psyche. In the short term, a promotion of the tramways’ “Friends” scheme will take place.



## From the Editor

*There is only one thing that seems to come around faster than Christmas (and one’s birthday) —the end of the financial year. Books are no sooner ruled off, tables and reports drawn up and audited, presented to the AGM in November, then it is July once more and all to be done again!*

*Concurrent with the close of a financial year, is the renewal of our subscriptions. You will have received your notices by now and hopefully have the matter in hand. As mentioned in the renewal advice, despite the economic turn-down we do hope you can maintain your membership and gifting with us. It would be easy to caste it off as an expenditure saving. But please keep in mind, we are viable only because of your support and what patronage we receive through the gate. Unlike many other “community advancement” organizations, funding from government sources for private rail heritage, is not flavour of the month and is drying up. Your continuing support of the society is critical to our survival.*

*Till next time, Bruce Irwin. Editor*

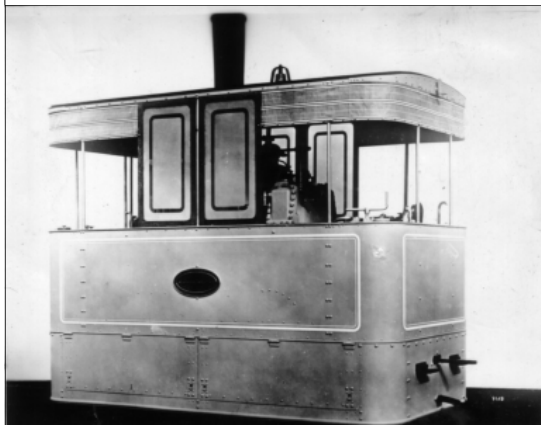


**Bendigo trams in their heyday. An Eaglehawk bound tram is about to leave Charring Cross (city centre) and ascend View Street. Could we see a return of trams to View St. in the future?**



## The “Odd-Ball” Steam Tram Motor - the later story of “John Bull”

In the February issue of *SS*, the story was related of member Dr. Bob Tebb's visit to Sydney from UK. The story of the Wilkinson designed experimental steam tram motor “John Bull” was also touched upon and the fact that it now resides back in the U.K. at Crich. Bob has sent the following entertaining story of John Bull's early restoration during the 1980's that culminated in it being driven on the streets of Blackpool in 1985.



Neat and tidy yes, but not a lot of character about poor old “John Bull”, compared to the Baldwin type that was used in Sydney. Sweeping along the streets with no visible moving parts, “John Bull” would have been a sight to behold.

### John Bull's Early Mysterious History

The story of John Bull (“JB”) is clouded in many mysteries. Apparently it was built as a massive but speculative “demonstrator” by Beyer Peacock of Manchester, England. Its design was patented as a vertical-boilered geared design of William Wilkinson. It never received a NSW fleet number for the period it was in use though if it had, it would perhaps have been 97. It arrived in Sydney in 1886 and was the last

imported steam motor for a number of years.

Its vertical boiler contains “Field” tubes and thus raises steam very rapidly but it has poor capacity for sustained steaming. These are more likely reasons for its failures than its oft-quoted one-man operation design.

For many years, the lack of photographic evidence of “John Bull” in Sydney coupled with the absence of a fleet number, made me wonder if it ever really arrived there! Fortunately, David Burke's researches for his book “Juggernaut” revealed that it had indeed been trialled but “We have done trying the motor for the present and though she is by no means a success on these roads, Mr. Samuel hopes (with the aid of a 50 pound note) to dispose of her to Mr. Downe without any reduction in price”. This unsuccessful bribe was followed by further mysteries. Its subsequent history in Australia— if it had one (Wollongong is a possibility) - is uncertain. Perhaps it was just hidden away until a suitable ship was available to take it back to England.

### The Beyer-Peacock Shunting Years

Being excessively large by normal British steam tram standards, Beyer Peacock failed to find a buyer for JB and turned it into their works shunting loco “No.2”. In the process it was stripped of its skirts and fitted out with buffer-beams, buffers and draw-gear. In this guise, it eventually assumed a certain amount of celebrity status, even being mentioned in Bennett's classic 1927 book “The Chronicles of Boulton's Siding”. Mentioned as an interesting design curio, “A surviving specimen was stated in 1921 to be still shunting in Beyer Peacock's yard.” He noted that this type of engine “...is said to run best when the water tank was quite full, otherwise when running bunker first with a load, the pinion had a tendency to creep up the spur-wheel so as to take the weight off the springs...”! This was yet another operational disadvantage, the truth of which we were to discover during the preservation era.

It can occasionally be glimpsed in “official” photos of new Beyer Peacock locomotives over the next seventy

years or so but apart from being re-boilered to the original design c. 1930, its life was pretty sedentary until withdrawn from service around 1960. By this time Beyer Peacock was on its last legs, building just a few diesels for British Railways. “JB” had by then had its chimney replaced by a stumpy version, lost its dual controls and its Eames brake. A straight steam brake was substituted. Interestingly, its Eames brake was operated, not by a separate lever as in a Baldwin motor but by bringing the regulator back past the “off” position whereby the brake port was opened— modern “joystick” control in 1885!

By the time the Tramway Museum Society in the UK found its site at Crich, the availability of a British steam tram for the collection was minimal. Two narrow-gauge Kitsons were in museums in Hull and Belfast, whilst a Manchester, Bury Rochdale and Oldham “Wilkinson” (in very poor condition) was in the National Collection. One dummy by Thomas Green (believed to be ex-Bradford) survived in Kimberley, South Africa. A Dutch operated Merewether example was a static exhibit in Utrecht. Just one other survived—“John Bull”. Thanks to the negotiations by the then TMS chairman, Geoff Hyde, JB was secured for the museum at Crich.

### Museum Placement

It arrived at Crich on May 19th, 1962, the author as a 14-year old school boy, assisting the craning-off. Having no motive power of any kind at this time, the haulage contractor was prevailed upon to winch-tow this near 15-ton brute up the line to a storage siding, accompanied by the plethora of riding members. Here, it had to stay for a couple of years as the museum still had nothing capable of moving it further. When it arrived, its wheel tyres had been turned to tramway profile but otherwise it was unrestored. It was later noted JB had a slightly bent driving axle. This gave rise to a curious “graunching” noise when in motion (even audible on a BBC record of tram noises) and a rumour that it had fallen into the sea whilst being loaded onto the ship for home! In a further twist, during restoration in the 1980's, we discovered this axle to be stamped “Krupp 1884”. This shows that German engineering was perhaps not as good as often claimed and that Britain's Victorian export successes quietly relied on imports from other countries!

### Early Museum Operation

Eventually a number of steam-experienced members managed to undertake the necessary basic boiler work and have it inspected. By 1965, it finally moved under its own power. Trials were made initially hauling a variety of strange trailers, including Porto mule car 9, Sheffield horse car 15 and Blackpool & Fleetwood electric tram 2. Such haulage put undue strains on these historic passenger cars and such haulage was stopped. Engine only operation however continued intermittently. This state of affairs continued for a number of years. A policy of “make do and mend” and a succession of so-called



Proudly bearing the Union Jack and the Aussie flag, John Bull steams majestically along.



“experienced” (but of limited staying power) steam volunteers resulted in rare excursions. Some progress was achieved by others, including the fabrication of new “skirts” to hide the wheels. Also removed to safe storage, was the completely life-expired patent “steam-drier”. No attempt was made however, by these teams to progress any other cosmetic restoration.

During a period of heavy unemployment in the UK in the 1970’s, a relief scheme known as “job Creation” was set up. This provided “free” labour to progress charitable projects. A number of Crich tramcars were restored by this means, including JB. In retrospect, this “restoration” was more a case of a “dismantle, clean, re-paint and re-assemble” rather than an overhaul job. In the process with JB, a curious mistake was made during the re-assembly which, unspotted at the time, was to haunt the active steam tram team almost throughout the 1980’s!

What became clear with all these brief operational periods was that steam tram running at Crich did not sit comfortably with that of electric trams. The superb engineering and operational facilities and practices developed at Crich were geared for electric operations not those of steam with all the attendant dirty by-products and on-the-go maintenance. Being also on the top of a fairly remote hill side, the museum was not well provided for with water supplies. JB could well drain off the entire museum fire-fighting reserves at one filling of its tank!

**Centenary Restoration**

After yet another period of inactivity, the author suggested in 1983 that with JB’s centenary due in 1985, another attempt should be made to re-activate the loco. As nominated project leader, an approach to the Agent-General for NSW in London produced interest and some money. It was by no means sufficient to restore the motor but certainly enough to “pump-prime” the project. First job was to livery it as a “NSW Government Tramways” loco. A small project team of three people, managed to strip the boiler down for the necessary insurance inspections etc, remake a number of bearings that had become somewhat egg-shaped because of the bent axle, then re-assemble the loco.

This was the time the national coal miners’ strike in Britain and getting hold of any coal was difficult. First steaming trials were thus with wood before eventually securing some very smoky household coal. We found JB ran quite well although passengers on open-top double-deck trams in the vicinity had other opinions. Anyway, in the presence of representatives of the NSW Agent-General, on May 19th 1985, the motor was named (re-named?) “John Bull” by Councillor, Stanley Parkinson the Chairman of Blackpool’s Transportation Committee. Blackpool had been the first electric street tramway in Britain in 1885, shunning steam in favour of the new-fangled power.

I must admit to a “cunning plan” here as I had dreamed of a mad venture of celebrating JB’s own centenary by running it in Blackpool as part of their own celebrations. An enthusiastic political chairman was the ideal person to make such things happen. This proved to be the case, the excuse being to demonstrate the technology rejected by Blackpool in favour of progress, (“Progress” being the town’s motto). Whenever I look at JB today in our jobsworth safety culture, I wonder how we pulled it off in 1985.

We knew we could only steam and run it on the Centenary Day itself (September 29) but Her Majesty’s Railways Inspectorate (from whom we had expected some concerns) kindly adopted their then usual pragmatic approach and merely said, “Don’t have more than four persons on the foot-plate.” There were no questions about brakes, driver visibility, wheel profile compatibility etc! Blackpool Transport provided a pilotman for the day but otherwise, it was entirely up to us to insure, fire and operate it, including operating JB in mixed traffic on very busy sections of urban public highway on a real operational tramway (gulp!).



**Out on the streets of Blackpool in the middle of mixed traffic. The Railways Inspectorate made no queries about brake sufficiency, profile compatibility etc.**

**A Hiccough on the Big Day**

Of course nothing was going to be that simple and JB had a nasty surprise up its sleeve or rather its clack-valve. One of the studs holding this fitting started weeping steam at an unacceptable rate, just as we were about to make a test run, a couple of hours before the Centenary Parade itself. Taking the decision to fix the stud or bust, the problem really demonstrated the virtues of a vertical Field boiler. In under two hours we dropped the fire, emptied the boiler of steam and water, removed the stud, made a new one in the tram workshops, fitted the stud, refilled the boiler with cold water, relit the fire and raised steam again!



**An enormous crowd of well-wishers for the Centenary Grand Parade. John Bull to the left.**

**The Grand Parade**

Just in time, steam was raised enabling us to set off from the depot along public streets to the Promenade. One trammy magazine reported “...and after a quick test of the brake, they were off.” Like heck there was a test of the brake! With limited boiler pressure, it was “full forward gear, full regulator and trust to the Lord!” We three team members took turns at driving and I felt a somewhat out-of-body experience to a steam driver, waiting at traffic lights for a “green” (the first time ever in Britain). As you might imagine, we stuffed everything flammable we could find into the firebox when raising steam for the second time. We never put another lump of fuel (smokeless, supplied free from a local Derbyshire producer) on the fire for the whole two hours or so we were out on the road. We were the twentieth and last vehicle in the fabulous Grand Procession which included six Crich museum electric trams.



A crowd of 200,000 folk watched the event. To say driving JB was an exhausting event would be an understatement.

Back in the depot yard we gave all the Blackpool tramway staff who had helped in our crisis, a drive. We then prepared JB for its return to Crich. The Centenary was well and truly celebrated, now we could concentrate on making JB go properly and restore it to 1885 tramway condition.

#### Serious Restoration

One of the first jobs was to run a series of load test to find out what exactly JB could pull, given its Sydney reputation. Actually, it could pull quite a lot. This was

the answer arrived at, on the museum's short one mile line. The loco however, simply refused to operate with short cut-off. At this, it turned into a "bucking-bronco".

We studied the mechanism, we towed it around with a shunting loco, watching the motion carefully—still we remained baffled. Finally enlightenment!

The Job Creation scheme restoration had re-assembled the valve gear as they expected for a British steam tram; the firebox and the driving controls are at the front and the vertical cylinders are at the back. The loco had however, been built by a railway builder who regarded the cylinders as rightly belonging in the front, with the firebox and driving controls at the rear. So what? You may ask! Well "left" and "right" swap over in these scenarios. When we moved all the valve gear stamped "L" from the left side of it as a "tram" to the left side of it as a "railway loco" and "ditto" with the "R" bits, everything worked properly!

By 1989, a separate restoration project had restored the body of a Dundee double-deck steam tram trailer. This was mounted on un-braked but otherwise correct-patterned ex-cable tram bogies. We thus had a glorious day (with the museum closed) on April 10, running JB with a proper trailer at last. That was most satisfying. Some trips I drove wearing a STARPS T-shirt, with elder son Peter, acting as conductor, wielding a genuine contemporary "Kay's fare-box"!

#### A Bolt that Changed Everything

Further tinkering continued until one day in 1989, a simple spring-hanger bolt sheared. Now unfortunately, we reckon Messrs. Beyer and Peacock (and their pals) must have started with that particular bolt and built the rest of the motor around it because, there was no way, other than by reversing this process in its entirety, that we could change it.

Restoration standards now at Crich are that this could only be contemplated, if a full re-build to current standards was undertaken at the same time. Cursing the old components frequently as we had over the last five years, it became progressively clear that, virtually everything on JB was genuine 1885 vintage. This was excepting the boiler. Even this though, was made to original drawings. Likewise flanges for

long-lost tramway bits. With such a restoration policy in place, the archeological value of John Bull would be destroyed.

The workshop programme was also committed for some years and so reluctantly, JB had to become a fine static exhibit with a Dundee trailer in the museum's exhibition hall, whilst options were thought through.

#### A Windfall—Another Wilkinson!

Then around 2000 came a bombshell; good for the museum but perhaps less so for John Bull. Almost unbelievably, Crich was offered the now dismantled but genuine ex-Manchester British operated Wilkinson steam tram motor from the National Collection FREE "...on ten pallets..."!! IF WE WANTED IT ! (Would the cat like a goldfish?) The incomplete kit of parts, many in heavily re-built condition, can one day be restored to give us a workable, genuine British steam tram motor of proper size and scale. In the mean time, JB can be carefully conserved as the archeological Victorian masterpiece it is.

#### John Bull v. Baldwin

So sadly, for you folks in Oz, this windfall means that JB will probably never run again. You will not get the opportunity to properly compare it operationally with a Baldwin motor. Uniquely—and thanks to STARPS—I have had that privilege and I can reassure you that the NSWGT got it right in 1886 by rejecting John Bull. It is quite suitable perambulating along twisting and congested narrow streets, frequently stopping, using a single trailer car. It was well and truly out of its depth for the longer runs with fewer stops and multiple passenger trailers, the likes of which ran in Sydney. (Thank you Bob, for a delightful story, update and photos on the history of John Bull. Ed.)

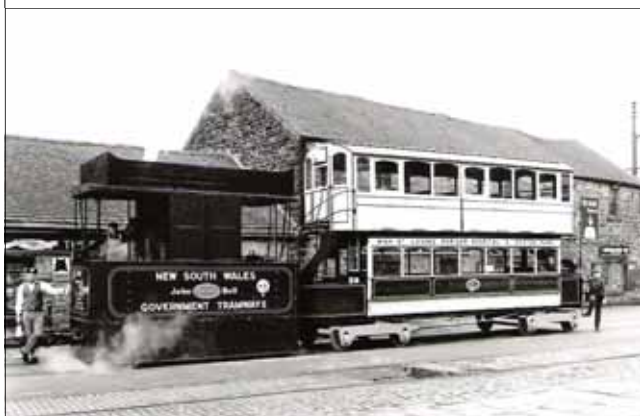
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#### John Bull's Creation and Sydney Experience

(From "In and Around Sydney With the Steam Tram", Book 1"

"John Bull" as it was later named, arrived on approval from England in 1886. It was manufactured by Beyer Peacock and Co. of Manchester and was their No. 2464 of 1884. This was one of a type built by them under licence from William Wilkinson, an engineer who had a small foundry at Wigan. In 1881, Wilkinson built a small engine for the local tramway company. This engine had a vertical boiler and two vertical cylinders that drove the four coupled wheels through spur gears. This engine attracted much attention and soon orders for its type flooded the patentee, so much so, that contracts were let to such firms as Thomas Green and Son, Black Hawthorn and Co. and Beyer Peacock.

The Sydney motor had 7in X 10in (approx.) cylinders and the gear ratio about 2½ to 1. The boiler was about 3ft. 6in in diameter and about 6ft high. The wheels were 2ft 6in diameter on a wheel base of 5ft 6in. These engines were also enclosed by a cab. In spite of the flare of popularity in England, after about a week's trial on the Redfern Station line, this engine was found to be totally unsuited for Sydney tramways. Apparently among its disabilities was the great fuel consumption, it being said that it burned four times the quantity of coke that a Baldwin used. This could however, be attributed to lack of knowledge and experience of this unusual type of tram engine, rather than a fault in design. It is believed that it was eventually returned to Beyer Peacock, after a period of service on the Wollongong-Clifton railway.



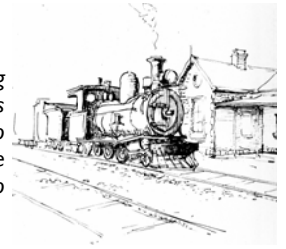
A glorious day was had in 1989, hauling a restored ex-Dundee steam tram trailer around the closed museum, with John Bull in the lead.

"I can reassure you, NSWGT got it right in 1886 when it rejected John Bull."



## Australian Train Robberies of the 1930's (Part 3)

We perhaps think of trains being robbed as something belonging to the era of Jesse James and the Wild West. The thing that has surprised me in researching these stories, is the number of robberies that have occurred over time on Australia's railways. This is the last in the series on this subject. Although other robberies did occur on Australian railways prior to and after the 1930's, those that have been covered give a broad idea of the extent and audacity involved that were the hallmark of these sorts of crimes. Indeed, there is material a-plenty to write a book on the subject! This time we go to Queensland where we check out the robbery of a mail train near Duchess in Queensland in 1938.



On August 26, 1938, bank clerks at the Townsville branch of the Bank of New South Wales, parceled-up £3,000. The consignment was for the bank in Mount Isa, to be paid as wages for local miners. In parceling the money, the numbers of the notes were recorded and the money placed in the safe, awaiting transit. Following this, on August 29, the money in packages was taken to the Post Office, registered placed in a small bag and placed inside the normal mail bag for Mount Isa. A contractor took the mail to the railway station and transferred it to railway officials all signed and sealed.

William Owen Barclay, the Acting Postmaster at Mount Isa, went to the station at 8 am on the morning of August 31 and proceeded to the mail van of the train. On examining the two mail bags for Mount Isa, he found that both had been interfered with and the registered mail from each was missing. He subsequently handed the bags to the Mount Isa police. They had been loosely tied with non-standard string. Somewhere, between Townsville and Mount Isa, the registered mail, including the pay-roll had been taken from two standard bags out of a total of sixteen bags.

Local police immediately set about an investigation. The railway locks on the mail van were intact at Cloncurry but by the time the train had arrived at Mount Isa, one of the locks had been wrenched off and a strange lock substituted. With fourteen other mail bags left untouched and the thieves obviously having knowledge of mail handling and transit arrangements, the robbery had all the hallmarks of an "inside" job. Details of the numbers of the stolen money were quickly circulated to all police stations and to major business houses, banks and hotels. Despite local investigations, two detectives were sent by air to Cloncurry, their arrival being reported on September 5.

They proceeded by train from Cloncurry to Mount Isa. On September 10, the newspapers reported that the detectives had made "considerable progress" and confirmed that the robbery had taken place between Cloncurry and Duchess. On the 14th, reports state that they had narrowed their enquiries down to a "narrow field" concentrating between Duchess and Mount Isa. By the 16th, it was reported that Francis Walsh (42) a guard, had been charged with the robbery at Cloncurry Police Court and bailed.

As the evidence unfolded, circumstances pointed towards Walsh, even though none of the missing money had been recovered. At Duchess, Walsh handed over to guard Smith. In evidence, Smith stated that Walsh had deliberately prevented him from entering the mail van at Duchess. Nevertheless, Walsh handed over the keys to the van. Under cross examination, Smith admitted that there was nothing to prevent him entering the van at that stage. He also admitted he was not suggesting that Walsh would have used violence to prevent him

between Duchess and Mount Isa) he had unsuccessfully searched the train for a "train jumper". On the train's arrival at Mount Isa, it was met by railway staff and police but nothing further of the alleged "train jumper" was evidenced. The robbery that had occurred in transit however, was not known of at this stage.



Questioned about certain string that was found in Walsh's kit (and found tied around the two mail bags), Detective Lloyd admitted that string of that type could be picked up at any railway station where there was not a Post Office. Indeed, a postal official later stated that such string had been used to tie-up loose letters at Townsville Post Office, that were en route for the mail train. Lloyd admitted he had not enquired about the possibility of other railway-men having similar string in their possession.

In evidence that could be construed against Walsh, he admitted that he intended going to Melbourne with two other friends. In later evidence Walsh stated that in a report he made, Driver Hides had gone sick at Devencourt (between Cloncurry and Duchess) and went back to the guard's van. Walsh then took his place on the engine. This report, he later amended to the extent that he said he had joined the engine at Cloncurry. This vacation of his post, gave opportunity for the thieves to enter the mail van undetected.

Despite the plethora of witnesses for the prosecution (and only one for the defense), on October 5, Walsh was discharged due to insufficient evidence. The evidence pointing towards him was entirely circumstantial. Thereafter the case melted from public view and went into obscurity until 2004.

A current Rail-Page web site entry discloses: "deathbed confession has reopened a 66-year-old unsolved train robbery which had become folklore in north-west Queensland. Tongues were wagging in Mount Isa yesterday when police revealed they were investigating that a "well known" local had confessed to committing the Duchess payroll robbery in 1938.

(Continued on page 6)

(Above) Duchess railway stn as it was in 1910, replete with camel train and coach. (Below) A poor photo of a typical train of the robbery era at Cloncurry station.



Map showing the section of line between Cloncurry and Mt. Isa. Devoncourt, Duchess and Rifle Creek are ringed. (Courtesy Hema maps.)



## "Preserving the past, 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.

## Last but not least.....

### PERSONAL

Spoke to Joanne Power (Cliff Currell's daughter on May 1, re the hike they did to raise money for research into Crohn's disease.

Commencing the hike at Teralba near Newcastle, their efforts were dogged by bad weather. Son Ben had to miss out of the first day's adventure because of a chest infection. The hike proved a challenge to the team's fitness and the leaches were as thick as flies! Because of the weather, the team had to be collected on a couple of occasions to spend the night in accommodation. A couple of short sections remain to be done. In all Ben, Joanne and company have raised a little over \$13,000 for the cause. A mighty effort and congratulations to all those who participated.

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Had a call from Beth Fielding (Joanne Power's sister) on May 4, alerting me to the fact that another society great (apart from Jack Midgley) was also born on July 15, our late great secretary

Cliff Currell. Thank you Beth for alerting us to the coincidence.

Beth was to have hiked along with Joanne, Ben and Co. but was unable to participate because of ongoing treatment for skin cancers. Too many fabulous days in the sun and surf when younger! Great to hear from you Beth!

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### OTHER NEWS

#### Work on LFA 179

Effort is being made to prepare our most recent addition for entering service. Work now centres on this project and includes a general clean-up, withdrawal of each bogie to enable a thorough check of wheel bearing and journals, brake rigging and dye testing of the wheels to check for any cracks. The hand brake spindle has been dismantled, checked, greased, painted and re-assembled ready for re-installation.

Of course the LFA is currently isolated track-wise. Our Works Manager Craig considered that it would be timely to carry out this necessary work so that the car

will be ready to press into service when the line is connected up. An operational risk assessment and management plan will need to be prepared and approved prior to operations.

If you are able to spare a couple of hours on a Saturday (not prior to a steaming day) and are able to scrape away some accumulated grunge off a bogie frame and wheel set, give Craig a ring. He would be grateful for any help he can get.

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#### Coal Supply

Museum member, Terry Matchett, has been able to source and have supplied, 4 tonne of coal for our use. It could be the first of a periodic supply. The cost to us will be much less than usual commercial rates, that's if suitable coal was available! Sincere thanks Terry.

#### Rail Motor Trip

David Lewis is organizing a vintage rail motor trip to Newcastle and environs for November 29. David is taking expressions of interest and if you would like to go, give him a call asap. His number is 9630 6304.



**Works Report: LFA 179:** Progress on cleaning bogie and parts prior to testing.  
**103A:** Replacement of gauge glass (not without complications).

(Continued from Page 1) Membership of this costs an adult \$30 p.a. with a family costing \$70. For this, members will be able to take advantage of the recently introduced ½ hourly tourist tram headway. For some one with inner city work, it could be ideal to be able to leave your car at say, North Bendigo and catch the tram into the city. At present, trams operate between 9.30 am and 5 pm.

There is some talk about expanding the tram system up View St, (part of the Sebastopol line) then along Barnard St. and returning to the inner city via Nolan St., similar the Christchurch NZ loop arrangement.

It's early days but there could be a revival for the commuter tram in Bendigo yet.

(Continued from page 5) The resident allegedly told a friend that he and two accomplices stole the Mount Isa Mines payroll – around £3000 in bank notes – from the Townsville to Mount Isa mail train on August 31, 1938. It is alleged that two men jumped from horseback on to the moving train somewhere near Duchess, about 90km south of Mount Isa, between 7pm and 7.30pm. From an unguarded wagon they stole two mail bags filled with wages intended for miners. A third man is believed to have helped with the horses and it is alleged the men rode to Camooweal where they had established an alibi. The money, said to be worth around \$300,000 today, was never recovered. The two alleged accomplices are also believed to be dead. A police spokesman said yesterday that a retired policeman who heard the man's confession had reported it to police and subsequent inquiries had confirmed the trio were likely to have been involved in the robbery. Detective Senior Constable Steve Weber told ABC radio the alleged robbers had "used the money to set themselves up over the years and have grown to be reasonably wealthy from it". Mount Isa Mayor Ron McCullough said the talk around town regarded three families in particular, but he did not wish to name them. "I think the community at large has had their suspicions," Cr McCullough said. "There's a lot of heads nodding and saying 'yeah – we knew'. There's been a bit of comment and a few grins about it now that it has been raised again." He said the mystery surrounding the train robbery had never really died. "It's been part of the historical stories that go around this place . . . it is mainly talked about among the older people." [The Courier-Mail](#) Cr McCullough said he didn't think the families of the alleged robbers would like being connected with "illegal wealth".

Bibliography: Brisbane Courier Mail, issues bet. 1/9/1938 and 6/10/1938. Rail Page web site.



### "ON-THE-SPOT" FINES

RSW's will be advised under separate cover of the regulator's introduction of "on-the-spot" fines for certain offences under the Rail Safety Act. A fact sheet will be on display in the depot and RSW's are obliged to make themselves familiar with its terms.

### USE OF MOBILE PHONES & OTHER DEVICES

RSW's should be aware that the use of mobile phones and other listening devices such as radios, can prove distracting in the course of carrying out safety critical work around the tramway and infrastructure. In the meantime of adopting formal prohibitive SMS documentation in this matter, the Board discourages the use by RSW's of any of the devices mentioned, when carrying out safety critical work around the tramway or rolling stock.

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**Members are reminded, society management holds a zero tolerance of alcohol and drugs for all Rail Safety Workers.**