

All Aboard

News from the Friends of the North Australian Railway at Adelaide River
www.atr.org.au/fnraar

May 2006

WIP exhibition success

THE FNAR COMMITTEE hosted a Works in Progress exhibition for our VIP sponsors, the media, industry authorities and government.

Held on 17 May at the Berrimah block of our very generous benefactors, Peter (Porky) and Estelle Cornell, the exhibit was a great success and a chance to show off various works in progress that are taking place off site from Adelaide River, including the Cowans Sheldon Crane, Railcar NDH6 (formerly the bar in John Spellman's restaurant), Carriages BC329 and BC330, a Cattle Wagon used for troop transportation, known as the *Spirit of Protest*, an Oil Tanker Wagon, signals gear, a fettlers trolley, steam pump and axle among others.

Some 60 people were in attendance, and we were delighted that the Chief Minister and Minister for Tourism, Clare Martin, was able to join us.

Thanks to everyone who worked to make the evening a success, and thanks to all our sponsors and 'significant others' who attended.

Media attendance was disappointing, but we extend a big thanks to Mark Wood of the *Territory Times* who gave us a great half-page in the May 26 edition of the paper (and then a further full page in the *Social Snapshot* section of the same edition)!

The more the general community knows about our work, the better...



Guests milling around the Cowans Sheldon crane, which was the jewel in the crown of the exhibit.



Mrs Teresa Lugg inspecting the NACDF cattle wagon. Six similar wagons made up the hospital train in 1942.



President Trevor Horman pointing out features of the various items on exhibit.



Remnants of the Cowan Sheldon crane, cared for by Don Smith (with stick), a former fettler from Adelaide River and Peter Hateley. Below: special guests at the function, including Leo Izod (centre, wearing cap, arms crossed).



Estelle and Peter (Porky) Cornell. Remember this bloke in the morning suit at Yarralumla?



Chief Minister and Minister for Tourism Clare Martin looking at various features being pointed out during the exhibition. To her right is Kevin Gould, the last Paymaster on the NAR in Darwin.



It was a BIG Wet Season!

THIS YEAR'S WET SEASON set all kinds of records - and it put Adelaide River under a fair amount of water on more than one occasion (as it did in Katherine!).

Cyclone Monica was the biggest surprise. Whilst this massive low pressure system moved slowly across the Gulf, residents of the Top End were bracing (just as some had remarked about how this was the first cyclone-free Wet Season we'd had for years!).

Darwin went on cyclone alert on ANZAC Day eve, and authorities decided that ANZAC Day services and marches would be too risky, so they were cancelled for the first time in history.

As Darwin braced, the system turned in an unusual direction and began tracking for Adelaide River. Darwin residents who had evacuated to Adelaide River were moved on to Katherine by the police.

In the event, larger communities escaped major damage, although parts of Arnhem Land were affected, the school at Galiwinku included.

Adelaide River and surrounding areas, however, were drenched and are only just now drying out enough to be mown.



These photographs are of the Adelaide River at Tortilla Crossing (above) and Whitestone Creek, taken by Chris Whatley of the Bushfires Council on 2 May. Chris is stationed at Tortilla and was flooded in at the time, although he and his family had plenty of supplies and were in no danger - other than of getting very wet!



The Owen Bennett

MR OWEN BENNETT of New South Wales was stationed at Adelaide River from 1941-43. He recently saw our advertisement for a Caretaker in the *Australian Senior* magazine, and the story they kindly ran for us, and sent us these photographs from his time at the River. Thank you, Owen. We hope to see you in the Top End next year. A big thank you to *Australian Senior* for your support and co-operation.



First Australian BIPOD Fuel Depot at present day Finlay Road, Adelaide River.



One of the trucks bogged on the original road to Darwin just past where there turnoff to Stapleton Station was, which is the present Coach Road turnoff.



The 1888 railway bridge which had a machine gun nest at the northern approach.

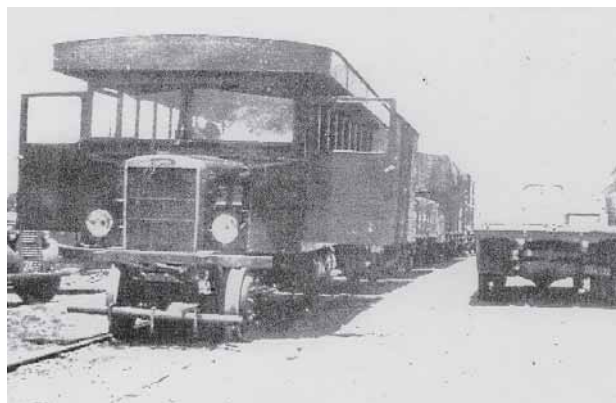
Below: Leaping Lena. Owen notes that she was built on a Leyland chassis in 1942. Lena used to carry freshly slaughtered carcasses from Darwin to the River without ice. 'Every shipment was loaded onto a truck and buried as it was rotten,' he noted.



Driver Sergeant Owen Bennett (1943), who kindly gifted us this fabulous photographic collection.



Extra drum storage (!!)



Collection



*Above and left: 1942 construction of the Stuart Highway. The gravel loader was known as a 'Chinaman'.
Below: The existing low level bridge being constructed in 1942. Prior to the bridge, the Ford in the foreground was used for crossing.*



Above and below: living quarters. None other than the very versatile Sidney Williams Hut!



The original cook house and mess. Check out the size of the mangos on that tree!

more photographs overleaf



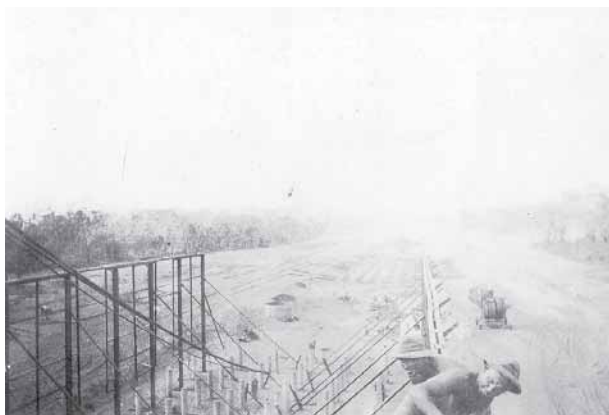
Original tent camp



The original Verburg cottage on the river bank near the existing Adelaide River Inn.



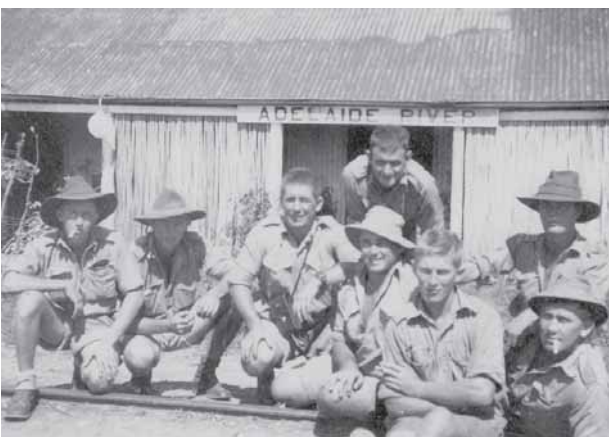
Above and right: the 'Palace of Gems', which is the name given to the Supplies Store.



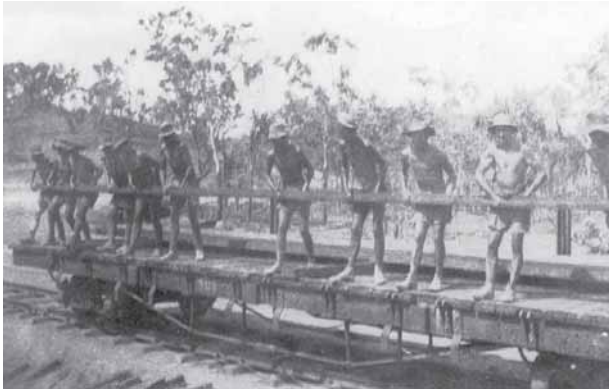
Construction of the sheds for the Field Supply Depot just north of Silverton Road in 1942. Railway sidings were built along each side. The clearing on the left is the current alignment of the Stuart Highway.



Two steam locomotives from the 1880s which were overhauled in 1915 and still operational in 1942.



This photograph was taken in front of the station and pub. Leaning over Owen Bennett to the rear right is Mark Anthony. Left to right: Ron Betts, Charlie Smith, Fatty Riddle, Albert Englis, Polly Heterhington and Lloyd Bodell.



Unloading rails to build the FSD sidings north of Silverton Road. The rail weighed 60lb/yard and was 40ft long.



A great shot of the substantial remnants of the Verburg wier taken from the railway bridge in 1942. Note the low level bridge being built in the background. It's rumoured that the Army destroyed the wier and this photo suggests that the Army may well have 'cleared it up a bit' to protect the new bridge. It appears that the railway bridge had not been decked for Wet Season use by road traffic.

A PIONEER DIES AT 96

DARWIN, Tuesday.—"Old Verburg," one of the Territory's most famous identities, has died at the age of 96.

Edwin Verburg came to Darwin more than 50 years ago and established the first farm at Adelaide River, watering it from a weir he built himself.

That farm was taken over by the Army during the war and vegetables

from it fed thousands of troops.

But "Old Verburg" had seen much of life before he came here.

He ran away from home in Holland at the age of 12 and went to sea.

He settled in America and fought in the Spanish-American war of 1898, for which he received a pension of £60 a month ever since.

Until last year he had looked after himself in a small farmhouse near Darwin.

He kept himself fit with two 15-minute sessions every day on a bicycle built on a steel frame with the rear wheel raised.

PIANOS

Wanted, small iron frame models, like Kemble, Dreyer, Beale, Bijou, Symphony, Thalberg, Bentley, Paling Minor, Rogers, Eungblut, Gors-Kallmann. Highest prices given.

PHONE

51-1441, 51-6983

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PIANO MERCHANTS.

News of Verburg's death as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1965.

Adelaide River briefs

Sad Farewell

IT IS WITH REGRET that we must farewell our first ever Wet Season caretakers, Mel and Jill Jobst, who are leaving for family reasons.

Mel and Jill have been with us for eight months and have battled fire, flood and famine - well, perhaps not famine, but they have had to cope with a very very wet season and Cyclone Monica.

The grounds were often flooded but Mel and Jill kept a smile on their faces as they slogged about in their Wellies.

They always welcomed us with a smile when we turned up on the weekend to work on some project or other.

The FNAR thanks you both very much. We will miss you and hope that you will keep in touch.

Warm Welcome

JUST AS MEL AND JILL leave us, we welcome our latest caretakers, John and Judy O'Donohoe of Townsville. John was the last Station Master at Darwin in 1976 and is well acquainted with Adelaide River. John and Judy have subsequently lived and worked in Alic eSprings and Port Augusta. John's knowledge of the NAR is proving to be very valuable both to us and to visitors.

Vintage Oil Tanks at Shell Depot

OUR VERY BUSY PRESIDENT Trevor has been negotiating with Shell Oil Company regarding three 55,000 litre fuel tanks that started life at Brocks Creek in 1943. Late one afternoon, Shell rang and said that we could have them. Thankfully, Damien Collis from Steelcon once again stepped up to the mark with his brand spanking new 50 tonne crane, and Peter Cornell of Darwin Container Services supplied the transport and a place to store the very large tanks. Trevor said that it was a sheer joy to work with people like Damien Collis and Alan Speziale at Steelcon and Peter Cornell at Darwin Container Ser-

vices. One of the tanks is to be installed in Finlay Road, Adelaide River at the location of the wartime BIOPOD (Bulk Issue Petrol and Oil Depot) site.

Rope

MANY THANKS TO PAUL Carrigan who donated some 'once used' rope. This is always in short supply and it was very much appreciated.

Carriage BC329

OUR PAINTER MICHAEL has finished the final coats of paint on our Visitor Centre. We are now waiting for the availability of the contractor to oil the ceiling, and an electrician .

Carriage BC330

THIS CARRIAGE HAS BEEN sandblasted and primed on the inside and outside. It has also been painted in its former Commonwealth Railways livery of Claret with a silver stripe.

Rail Trail: Stapelton to Adelaide River

THE INAUGURAL WALK along the rail trail is planned for Saturday 10 June 2006. The muster point will be Adelaide River Railway Station at 0930. We'll drive in convoy to Stapelton and walk back. The rail trail is within 200m of Coach Road at all times, so it will be possible to bail out as necessary.

We hope to have the company of an experienced archaeologist who has studied the area. Being a Rail Trail, the grades are very modest. Sturdy footwear is required as we will be walking on ballast. The distance is about 12km and so it should take three to four hours at a leisurely pace.

Devonshire Teas

SUNDAY 28 MAY MARKED the start of Nola's Devonshire Teas. Nola is running this as a fund raiser for the precinct and Devonshire Teas will be available on the last Sunday of each month in the Dry Season. See photos,

Adelaide River briefs

WANTED

A Caretaker is required for the Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct in the Northern Territory's Top End.

Adelaide River is approximately 112km south of Darwin. The railway precinct is heritage listed and is drop-dead gorgeous.

A powered site is available for the right person/couple who must have their own accommodation in exchange for light tourism, hospitality and maintenance duties.

For further information, or to express interest in writing, please contact Nola Smith, PO Box 40645, Casuarina NT 0811 or telephone Trevor Horman on 0417 838578.



Perfect for tea in the shade at the station!



Above: Trevor and Mike. Below: Nola, Estelle and Mel.



Below: new caretakers Judy and John O'Donohoe with local friend Sue Gullefer.



ALL ABOARD FOR RAILWAY REFRESHMENTS

Devonshire Tea will be served on the last Sunday of each month of the Dry Season between 11am and 3pm. The cost is \$5 per person.

Drop in to say hello, enjoy a Devonshire Tea and inspect the latest exhibits and works at the Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct.

2006 Dry Season Dates:

Sunday 28 May

Sunday 25 June

Sunday 30 July

Sunday 27 August

Sunday 24 September

All our labour is voluntary and all proceeds go toward the continued improvement of the precinct.



Rilla lending a hand.



2006 membership renewal now due

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone - Work: _____ Home: _____
Mobile: _____

Postal Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

I hereby enclose:

\$30 Individual \$15 Pensioner \$40 Family
\$_____ donation (tax deductible and gratefully accepted)

Please post to FNAR, GPO Box 3504, Darwin NT 0801

OR EFT details: BSB: 065 901 Account No: 1045 3230

2006 Calendar of Events

- **Precinct Open Day**
Sunday 11 June, Adelaide River Heritage Precinct
- **Murder Mystery Dinner**
Date TBC, Adelaide River Railway Heritage Precinct
- **Adelaide River Races**
Saturday 24 June, Adelaide River Show Society
- **30th Anniversary of the closure of the NAR**
30 June 2006
- **Traditional Railway Picnic**
Monday 7 August 2006, Adelaide River Heritage Precinct
- **Adelaide River Show**
19-20 August, Adelaide River Show Society
- **Birdum Weekend**
2-3 September 2006

**FNAR
All Aboard!**

If undeliverable, please return to FNAR, GPO Box 3504, Darwin NT 0801