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 at 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.

Ornithology around the River


Study up, everyone! We might just use this as the basis for a bracket of questions at our next Quiz night - with a special prize for anyone who can produce an original colour drawing of any one of them within 15 minutes.
The Cowans Sheldon story

by TREVOR HORMAN

THE COWANS SHELDON 10 ton travelling crane (#1407) is a hand-operated crane that was built by Cowans Sheldon at Carlisle in northern England in 1885 for the South Australian Government Railways (SAGR).

It was delivered to Palmerston (as Darwin was originally named) in 1886 so that it was available to unload the thousands of tons of materials that were used in the construction of the Palmerston to Pine Creek railway.

Museums and Art Galleries recovered the crane from Stan Kennon’s yard in 1983. It was on display at Fannie Bay Gaol until 1994 when it went to Larrimah and returned to Darwin in April 2006.

Note that all castings are identified as SAGR #1407.

The crane was gifted to FNAR by Museums and Art Galleries of the NT and generously loaded and transported from Larrimah by Darwin Container Services. The official description of the crane is:

**Date:** 1885

**Description:** Manually operated travelling crane which could be used for lifting light loads around goods yards. No. 1407 was manufactured by Cowans Sheldon, North England against an order raised by SA Railways Chief Engineer Henry Mais in May 1885. It entered service with the North Australia Railway in 1886. It was probably rated at 10 ton (to be confirmed). There is no record of a “match wagon” which usually accompanied these cranes to protect the boom and carry the ancillary equipment.


**Provenance:** South Australian Railways,
Northern Territory Railway, North Australia Railway, Commonwealth Railways.

**References:** Book on Cowans Sheldon by Prof Earnshaw.

**Ownership:** NT Museum has kindly assigned it to the Friends.

**Built by:** Cowans Sheldon & Co Ltd, Engineers, Carlisle.

Beyond all of the official material, we know a little about this precious item. It probably ranks up there with the Baldwin saddle tank locomotive SANDFLY and the Beyer Peacock locomotive NF5 at Pine Creek in historic and heritage significance.

Four bright young engineers started Cowans Sheldon at Carlisle near Glasgow in 1846. They started manufacturing railway cranes in 1866.

When the SAR embarked upon construction of the NAR in 1885 they ordered items like the rails from Krupp in Essen and the sleepers from Ibbottson Brothers in London for issue to the construction contractor C&E Millar when they commenced work in 1886.

The travelling crane was ordered by SAR Chief Engineer Henry Mais in May 1885 for initial use in unloading the railway construction materials at Darwin in 1886. The makers plate on the crane is dated 1885.

Through peacetime and two world wars, the crane served the NAR. Somehow it escaped the steel salvaging contract by Fujita Salvage company in 1959.

What happened to it in 1976 is unclear at this stage. It may have gone to the NAR display at the old Town Hall with NF5 and the carriage that is now at Pine Creek. In any

*continued overleaf*
event, Leo Izod (who worked for the Museum) advises that the crane was on display at Fannie Bay Gaol Museum in the Colin Jack-Hinton era (1980s). In particular, it was exhibited for a number of years from 1983-84 in a corner of the Railway/Technology Exhibit at Fannie Bay Gaol. It is during that time that it got a coat of paint (courtesy of Wayne Brown now of Karama). John Coe was a key figure in the collection of No. 1407.

After Jack-Hinton left the Museum, the new management decided to remove the trains from the Gaol and it appears that it was a free-for-all. The long, barrel-roofed shed ended up partly in Pine Creek and partly in Alice Springs (from whence it had come). NF5 and the carriage ended up at Pine Creek (after being loaned earlier for the film Never Never Line). How and why the crane ended up at Larrimah is unknown. A fellow called Karl Drummond was very active in Larrimah in the early 1990s and he may know.

Knowing of the Museum’s involvement, we approached NT Museum in November 2004 seeking to clarify ownership and offering to care for and display the crane at Adelaide River Railway Museum. This took some time to resolve as the records kept on the matter were “limited”. The Museum consulted with Larrimah Progress Association as a courtesy and LPA agreed to the relocation of the crane. Similarly, Birdum Historical Society had no reported objection.

With ownership formalities resolved, attention turned to the physical challenge. We consulted with our transport logistics expert Peter Cornell, whose four simple operating rules are:- (1) tell me where it is; (2) tell me how much it weighs; (3) tell me its dimensions; and (4) don’t tell me when you want it.

The answer to #1 was easy. For #2 we guesstimated 9 ton. For #3 it was well within dimensions for road transport. We provided Peter with the one image that we had. Magically, the stars aligned at Easter 2006 and during a trip with a big load to Bootu Creek, Peter’s drivers Brian and Terry called in at Larrimah on the return run when they were empty. With the assistance of Barry Sharp they shunted #1407 on to a suitable track in the extensive Larrimah Yard and attempted to winch the crane up the loading ramps and on to the low loader. Karl Roth kindly assisted with the LPA tractor. After five hours (and a couple of interludes for refreshments and inspiration) they secured it on the truck for the 500km ride of its life to Darwin.

We saw it go through Adelaide River on Easter Sunday afternoon and the excitement was the same as when we saw SANDFLY on the back of The Ghan in July 2004. Brian estimated that it weighed 12 tonne all up.

We extend a huge thanks to everyone at Larrimah who assisted with the loading, and another huge vote of thanks to Peter Cornell for being so thoughtful and helpful.

Ann Kanters and Barry Sharp share the view that the crane is likely to get some TLC and be restored in Darwin whereas there are no facilities for such an undertaking in Larrimah.
This crane was manually operated. It must have required a team to make any productive sense out of it.

Upon arrival at a job site some of the following would occur (the wagon never had brakes):

1. Adjust the screw jacks above each wheel to immobilise the springs during crane operations.
2. Lower the rail clamps and use a turnbuckle to firmly connect the wagon to the rails (each corner).
3. Lower the side platforms on to the swinging support brackets to provide somewhere to stand whilst winding the crane.
4. Winch the lifting cable in (by hand) to lift the boom to the desired operating height and pin the stay rods (it must be lowered for transit).
5. Release the two pins and the cam that restrain the counterbalance arm during transit.
6. Install the outrigger beams as appropriate and either weight them or chock them.
7. Slew the whole 5 tons of the crane (by hand) to a position over the load.
8. Lower the hook using the hand winch and winch brake.
9. Attach the load, select the High or Low gear for lifting.
10. Adjust the position of the counterweight (using the screw threaded rod) until it balances the weight of the load.
11. Put plenty of back in to the lifting effort. Provision exists for one man each side.
12. Try to slew the combined weight of the crane and the load to the unloading position.
13. Go through all of the above in the reverse order.
14. Ponder life on the wharves in 1886 when 10,000 tonnes of rail from Krupp had to be unloaded.

The construction of the crane is a work of art and worth a quiet visit and inspection. Every bearing cap is punched with a unique number which corresponds to a number punched in the frame. The crane has suffered some serious damage over the years as is evidenced by several steel bandages that have been expertly applied to cracked major castings. Every casting on the crane is marked SAGR #1407.

Would you like to assist?

Some very serious high-class welding will be required on the central pedestal.
More welding is required on the swing brackets for the side platforms. Complete chequer plate platforms will need to be fabricated.
A welded steel box will be required to carry the counterweight. Small flanged steel wheels carry the counterweight box.
An 18’ boom will need to be fabricated based on measurements taken from the Adelaide crane. Its similar to the Ransome and Rapier yard crane at Adelaide River.
Operating crank handles will need to be fabricated.
If any of this sound like your cup of tea, please let us know.

Further information

With items like this, we often find that information comes from unsuspected quarters. If you have information about Cowans Sheldon #1407 which is not listed above, please share it with us. If we have made errors or omissions in our information, please alert us to them. Psst: and if you wanna just play on a crane, we’ll keep you posted for the Restoration Completed party!

Notable date: 30 June 2006 will mark the 30th anniversary of the closure of the North Australia Railway
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.

Extra drum storage (!!)

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

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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
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 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 Hetherington 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 weir 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 weir 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.

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 weir 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 weir 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.

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 Services. 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.

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News of Verburg’s death as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald. Verburg died on 13 March 1965.

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Vintage Oil Tanks at Shell Depot

The boys from Steelcon with their new crane loading the fuel tanks ready for transportation. Note that sensational Dry Season sky! More photographs of the exercise, page 12. Photos by Richard Luxton.
It was a big - HUGE - Wet!

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 to 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.

As it happened, larger communities escaped major damage, although parts of Arnhem Land were affected, including Oenpelli and Maningrida.

Adelaide River and surrounding areas, however, were drenched on several occasions 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!

These pictures of the gorgeous lagoon at the precinct was taken by Judy Richardson in last couple of weeks. The lagoon is very full, thanks to the Big Wet.
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 sloshed 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 Alice Springs and Port Augusta. John’s knowledge of the NAR is proving to be very valuable both to us and to visitors.

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.

Australian Senior

WE HAD SOME outstanding responses to our call for a caretaker in the Australian Senior magazine. Applicants included heritage carpenters, former NAR employees, former Army personnel who had been posted in the NT and people with tour guiding experience!

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.

Of many talents

AS YOU KNOW, we have an extraordinary range of talented people who are Friends. Most recently, we have needed the services of a safe cracker, would you believe? When the mystery has been solved, we’ll be in a position to report more fully on the story.

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, page 14.

Rope

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

The fuel tanks at what used to be known as the Tank Farm in McMinn Street, Darwin

Just before the dismantling exercise began...

The first one hoisted out of its resting place and onto the truck ready for transfer.

Steady as she goes...

Straight into place in a perfect execution.

OUR THANKS!

to Damien Collis and the boys at Steelcon

and to

Peter (Porky) Cornell and the boys at Darwin Container Services.
THE NORTHERN TERRITORY government has launched a six-week public consultation process into the naming of localities across the Northern Territory.

Planning and Lands Minister Dr Chris Burns said numerous localities have “unofficial” names, while others have no name at all.

“As a result, different organisations may use different names for the same place,” Dr Burns said.

“To resolve this issue, all suburbs, towns and localities in the Northern Territory that have not already been officially named will be registered under the Place Names Act.

“Most of these localities are outside the greater Darwin area.

“For example, residents of Katherine and Alice Springs have no official suburbs.

“It is proposed that the unofficial names used locally for these areas will be legally defined.”

Outside the population centres, areas that are currently defined as NT Portions will receive official locality names.

Registering place names under the Place Names Act will mean these names are recognised nationally, and will allow organisations such as emergency services, Telstra, government organisations and other service providers to align their services or respond to emergencies more easily.

Names have been selected by the Place Names Committee, and are now open to public consultation.

Some names affecting our region and/or heritage issues close to us include: Burrundie (NE of Pine Creek), Connellan (Central Australia), Daly River, Darwin Harbour, Eaton (Darwin Airport), Edith (south of Pine Creek), Elsey (east of Mataranka), Emungulan (suburb of Katherine), Fleming (adjacent to Douglas), Ghan (Central Australia), Glyde Point (Litchfield), Koolpinyah (Litchfield), Mount Bundey (note the ‘e’), Nauiyu (Daly), Ooloo (Daly area), Pine Creek (the town), Point Stuart, Robin Falls and Shoal Bay.

The list is far too extensive to publish here (it runs to 25 pages), but you can go through the entire list by following the Internet links listed below for both an explanation of the name and location/boundary maps.

Public forums will take place during June in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs.

Further information on dates and venues can be found at www.placenames.nt.gov.au. To check proposed names, click on “inspect the proposal”, click on locality maps, and select a region from the menu on the right hand side.

Suggestions or comments on the proposed names may be submitted before 14 July 2006.

Submissions will be considered by the Place Names Committee, with recommendations forwarded to the Planning and Lands Minister for approval.

For more information, or to submit a comment or suggestion, visit www.placenames.nt.gov.au, your local library or council office, email the committee at placenames.dpi@nt.gov.au, or telephone 8999 6440.

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.
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.

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.

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

• Back to Birdum Weekend
  2-3 September 2006