

PUFFING BILLY PRESERVATION SOCIETY

ABN 79 004 621 505 ACN 004 621 505

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2020 – a very difficult year for everyone, including the Society.

The period July 2019 to June 2020 has seen continuing challenges for the Puffing Billy Preservation Society, as it has undergone changes associated with separation from the Emerald Tourist Railway Board, while both organisations are wanting to see the continued successful operation of Puffing Billy Railway. Matters related to the organisational upheavals in 2018 are ongoing.

The Society continued to address matters related to historical abuse. Personal apologies have been provided when requested and four writs have been addressed with contribution to settlement through mediation. The Society is in the process of joining the National Redress Scheme and learning the administrative processes associated with this.

July 2019 to March 2020

During the first nine months of the year, there was much activity involving members and/or of interest to members including:

- Four members of the Society attended the *Second Forum on Asian Industrial Heritage Conservation* held at Chiaji in Taiwan in July 2019. This was run in conjunction with Alishan Forest Railway. Rob McUtchen presented a paper at the Forum and Caleb Fielding, Tim Heeks and Chris Tasker attended the Field School which looked at the preservation and practice of Asia-Pacific Railway Heritage. Reports of both these events were provided to members in *Narrow Gauge*, as well as an extensive on-line report prepared by the Field School attendees.
- The Graeme Breydon Memorial Film Night was held on Saturday 31 August 2019. A wide range of films were shown at the GEMCO theatre to members, volunteers and their friends and families. Thank you to Jenny Baker for organising this event.
- ETRB invited Society representatives to be involved in the Interpretation study for the Lakeside Visitor Centre and a number of members including David Baker, Jenny Baker, Andrew Hennell, Peter Medlin, Andrew Rayment, John Thompson and Andrew Wheatland helped to provide input from the Society perspective into the material provided to the Board.
- Members of the Executive Committee joined with representatives of other Tourist and Heritage Railways in Victoria to provide input into the Vintage Rolling Stock Strategy being prepared by VicTrack.
- The Climax Locomotive Operating Committee (CLOC) conducted a successful Twilight Train on Saturday 12 October 2019, with Climax 1694 travelling from Menzies Creek to Lakeside and return, followed by an evening at the Museum, with a spit roast dinner. Thank you to Caleb Fielding and his committee for organising the event.
- The annual luncheon for members with over 50 years of continuous membership was held on Sunday 13 October 2019 at the Menzies Creek Museum. This successful event was well appreciated by those members attending. Thank you to the Museum team for supporting these two events held over the same weekend.

- An acknowledgement of the volunteers who worked on the Wright Station reconstruction project occurred on Saturday 26 October 2019 with unveiling of a commemorative plaque and an enjoyable BBQ. Thank you to Robert Smith for his leadership on this project. Robert continued with work on the feasibility of reconstruction of the Landslide area with return of the original water tank and stand and loading platform. Recovery of the 1950s water tank from the owner occurred on Monday 25 November 2019.
- The Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 10 November 2019 and was well attended by members.
- Following up on a concept from Neil Elfick and developed by Robert Smith, the 100th anniversary of the release into traffic of carriage 8NBH was celebrated on Sunday 8 December, when a special consist for the Gembrook train showed representations of the differing configurations of NBH carriages over the past 100 years. A leaflet for travellers was prepared and thank you to those who contributed to this and also to the shunting required to enable the consist to be prepared for traffic.
- Members of the Society who had supported the restoration of NG/G16-129 locomotive through donation of time and/or funds were invited to join with others involved with the project on Wednesday 18 December for travel behind the unique double header of G42 and NG/G16-129 from Belgrave to Menzies Creek. Thank you to the ETRB management and staff for organising this event. Supporting this launch into traffic was the publication of '*SAGA to Steam*', the story of how this project was achieved. This publication took the work of Roger Willsher and material provided by Peter Ralph, Alan Gardner, Don Marshall, John Brady, Russell Hicks and Harry Hibgame and others and with the addition of photographs and additional research and editing by the Publications Committee produced a publication that celebrated the many involved and the work undertaken.
- Following joint meetings in late 2019 with ETRB staff on planning for a Great Train Race 2020, ETRB advised the Society that they were holding their own running event and that they would not be supporting the Great Train Race in 2020.
- On Wednesday 29 January, carriages 6NB and 8NB from Ocean Grove were transferred to new accommodation undercover and offsite to be prepared for restoration. Thank you to Bernie Holmes, Kevin Taig, Robert Smith, Hugh Markwick and Gareth Hunter for their assistance with this transfer. The Heritage Rolling Stock Committee, during the prior six months, provided proposals to the ETRB for conservation of NQR129 and for undercover storage for wooden bodied heritage carriages under threat of deterioration in the open air at Emerald (both to be funded by the Society).

Administration Matters

- From an administrative point of view, the year started with physical movement of our membership administration to Kings Road, after many years at Belgrave. At the same time, all financial processing was transferred from the ETRB Finance team. MYOB AccountRight was implemented and with delays in receiving data from ETRB, our 2019-2020 accounts could not be finalised for the Audit until early September 2020. Taking on this new work, led to a considerable unexpectedly high workload for the Executive Committee, but was manageable, especially with the assistance of the newly formed Finance Committee.

- The Finance Committee, working with Archive material, cross-checked the Asset Investigation work undertaken in 2019 from a financial viewpoint and this involved going back through documents to 1964. They have undertaken a number of other projects during the year to assist the Society and many thanks to Sandra Beldman, Eric Platt and Tim Horton for their support of the Executive this year.
- Sharing the Kings Road offices with the Archives team led to a much greater understanding of the wealth of material that the team of Geoff Tasker, Ted Godwin and Maggie Lambert (and other assistants) were cataloguing and conserving. A joint work party with the ETRB was being developed to work on separation of ETRB material until the sad passing of Geoff. The closure of Kings Road in early March following the discovery of ETRB-stored documents in the water tower and the ongoing closure due to COVID-19 has seen little further progress. Thank you to Ted and Maggie and all who support the Society Archives.

And then we came to COVID-19 (after the early start to the year of bushfires and smoke)

- Many thanks to Gareth Hunter who quickly got the Society Executive meetings organised to run under ZOOM, delaying our March meeting by only one week. In May 2020, we held our first member gathering by ZOOM, followed by another in June. These continued to be enjoyed by members attending as we provided Q&A style presentations. Phil Matthews and Gareth continue to provide support for the smooth running of these meetings using ZOOM technology.
- Member communications by email increased from January 2020 to ensure members were up to date with matters impacting on the Society. These included updates on discussions with the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions on outcomes from the PwC Review, advice of caveats placed by ETRB on Society-owned land and information about important dates in the Railway's history, especially in this year of celebrating 120 years since the first opening of the line.
- From late May 2020, weekly communications have been sent to members by email to accompany the range of film clips developed into Society playlists by Jenny Baker. These playlists have been greatly appreciated by all and provide an enjoyable hour every week of rail interest. Thank you, Jenny, for the hard work involved in putting these together.

Additional Thank Yous

- Thank you to all the donors and supporters of Society projects over the years. All support is greatly appreciated, as they enable projects to be undertaken and grants to be made to the ETRB.
- Thank you to the Publications Committee for the work they undertake to prepare publications for member enjoyment. This committee includes Max Raynor, Larry James, Andrew Hennell and Andrew Webster. This year, the Committee has been joined by Robert Smith who, from June 2020, has been the editor of *Narrow Gauge*. Please support Robert in making this magazine a great history of the Railway. Thanks to Greta van Malenstein who continues to support the Society with her work on design and layout of *Narrow Gauge*. Also working on Publications are Phil Matthews, Rod Davies and John Thompson, who have worked on a number of projects this year, including *Saga to Steam* and two series of PBPS Jigsaw puzzles, and are continuing to work on the publication *A Day in the Life of Puffing Billy*.

- Thank you to Peter Medlin and Bruce West for their ongoing support of G42 with the monthly operation of the ‘G42 Shop’ at Emerald and thank you to their regular customers. Unfortunately, the shop has been closed for most of 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Thank you to all the others who have supported the Society during the year. All of you have contributed in some way.

A Special Thanks to the members of the Society Executive over the past 12 months

- Every member of the Society Executive has contributed voluntarily their time and efforts to support the Society and its members, in times that could only be called difficult and challenging.
- Thank you to John Conway and Andrew Stephens for their support of the Executive in the first five months of the year, prior to standing down at the AGM in 2019. They both contributed knowledge and skills to the table, which were appreciated and both continued to be involved. Andrew supported the Society in legal matters related historical abuse from February 2019.
- Thank you to Max Raynor, who stood down in May and continues to be involved in sub-committees of the Society. His wise words and forward thinking were always appreciated and his support with the legal matters of 2020 was appreciated.
- Thank you to other members of the Society Executive who are not continuing in 2020-2021. These include Rob McUtchen, who developed an updated portfolio structure for the Society in May 2020, worked on strategy matters and provided great assistance; Ben van der Linde, who supported the Society as Vice President and provided assistance with Museum liaison and heritage matters; Jenny Baker who supported the Society in many ways with her expertise in historical research, playlist development and asset investigation; and Andrea Coffey and Dylan Haywood who contributed in their one year on the Executive.
- Thank you also to the members who are continuing on – Gareth Hunter, Graeme Kidgell, Phil Matthews and Alf Grigg. We look forward to the support of other members into the future, as all members can greatly assist the Society Executive as we work on projects and we look forward to welcoming those taking up one or two year positions at the AGM.
- Thank you also to Kevin Perry, our minute secretary for much of the year, who continued even though he lost his home to bushfire earlier in the year. Kevin became very talented at doing minutes in a Zoom environment.

In this coming year, the Society will be continuing to get its house in order, so that it can better achieve its objectives and work towards the vision of a Society that engages people in supporting the preservation of Puffing Billy for current and future generations.



Anne MacLeish

PBPS President

October 2020