

SPECIAL EDITION

STEAM SCENE

Newsletter of the Steam Tram and Railway Preservation (Co-Op) Society Ltd.
t/a Valley Heights Steam Tramway.
Affiliated with the Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia and
Rail Heritage Australia (NSW) Inc.

"Preserving the past,
enriching the future."

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THE STEAM TRAM IS BACK!

Some said we'd never make it, some said we could make it, some didn't want us to make it, but some said we will make it!

To again repeat the comments by our longest serving member, Frank Moag, when being interviewed by a television news presenter in Parramatta Park the day after the fire: "we'll put the cabs back on, throw a fire in 'em and drive them out of here". Fighting words indeed. Though not necessarily in that order, the end result was the same. THE STEAM TRAM IS BACK!

Another milestone in saga of the society's return to becoming a fully operating tramway occurred on Wednesday, 24th August last. This was the occasion when steam tram motor 103A passed its boiler test and, at the same time, had the safety valves correctly set. Many, many hours have been expended by a dedicated group of members and friends since the fire of 1993. Motor 103A had been moved to the Rail Transport Museum workshops, Thirlmere, where a most comprehensive overhaul of the fire-damaged mechanical components commenced. At the same time a new cab was being built at a private location, also in Thirlmere. Subsequently 103A was transferred to Valley Heights for completion of this major rebuilding programme, along with 1022 and *Stepho*.

A decision was made several years ago to return 103A and tramcar 93B to service to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the society's foundation in June, 1954. Alas this sentimental goal could not be satisfactorily achieved as we firmly believe that such a project should be undertaken thoroughly and not just put together for the sake of a dateline.

The boiler of 103A had been examined about 12-months previously, but it was deemed prudent not to bring it "on stream" until the majority of the motor's restoration work had been completed. This decision was made on the basis the society should hold back its final inspection to the day of issue of a certificate. The reason is that the countdown commences towards another comprehensive examination in 10 years time. The 10-year period is based on expired time, not hours in steam. The motor will, of course, still



Like an expectant father and father-in-law, Craig (on the footplate) and the Boiler Inspector Russell McKenzie (ground) await the "birth"



"Dad" Craig gives the "thumbs up". The head (of steam) is beginning to show (on the gauge.)

be subject to annual boiler and compliance examinations.

Thus on the appointed day our boiler inspector Russell McKenzie was present for the lighting-up at 9 a.m. by Craig, David and Steve, assisted by Ted and Peter and later by Andrew. This procedure gave the opportunity for the boiler inspector to observe the behaviour of the boiler and appliances. When sufficient steam was available, the "safeties" were set to operate at the boiler's



From the Editor

Good news is hard to hold down and when it is this good why should it be! Yes, "Rickety Dick" is back on the track again. 103A and 93B are up and running. There is still work to be done, but the basics are there. By the time you receive this edition, the head-lamps and brass-work will be in place along with a host of other little jobs.

The museum will be open from Sept 18 to Oct 7 for the Railways 150th celebrations. The tram will be in steam on both the Saturdays and Sundays occurring in that period, so come along and view what's been achieved.

Next issue will be our usual mix of news etc. but will also include an article by Assistant Works Manager, Steve Tolhurst on what goes on behind the scenes in the mechanical department—old skills revived.

Till next time, Bruce Irwin

Special points of interest:

- The Annual General Meeting is on Saturday, November 5 at the museum. Come along in the a.m. and see what has been happening.
- Give the editor a call for your copy of "The Apricot Mail—A history of the Rogan's Hill Railway 1923-1932"



103A with car attached, moves gently onto the turntable.

(Photo, Peter Stock)



The trailer car looks resplendent as the tram heads out towards the outer end of the compound. Handbrakes have since been installed and footboards painted. Doors are still to be fitted. (Photo, Peter Stock)

Once coupled this historical consist undertook four trips to the boundary gate. This gave the six members present an opportunity to carefully inspect the motor's mechanical components, to observe how the car's re-built bogies performed and have a ride. Once these slow moving trials were concluded, the motor and car were returned to the roundhouse. But not before Robyn had a ride (as a small schoolgirl she witnessed, with her father, the motor undergoing trials at the Homebush backyard in the 1950's).

An operating steam tram was again running in NSW!

Many little fiddly jobs remain to be completed, both on the motor and the tramcar. Once these have been completed, the initial compliance inspection procedures can be undertaken. With the mandatory tasks completed, the society can, with confidence, plan to present the steam tram into limited museum service for visitors on the occasion of the Sesquicentenary of NSW Railways celebrations at our home at the Valley Heights Locomotive Depot Heritage Museum.

A special and sincere thank you to the many people, both from within and outside the society, who have in one way or another, generously led/assisted/guided/encouraged the society through its endeavours to return an operating steam tram to museum service. This includes everything from finding a new home after being denied re-establishment in Parramatta Park, rescuing B-cars from the demolition site at Berowa to re-building the steam tram motor.

P.S. The Regulator has approved of limited operation of the tramcar with hand-brakes only.



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The museum is located in Tusculum Road, Valley Heights. Ample parking is available. Public transport 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 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month. Trike rides on the 1st Sunday, steam loco rides on the 3rd Sunday only.

