



Council of Tramway Museums of Australasia Inc.

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News Update – August - September 2008

From the Chairman

The Launceston Conference during August 2008 was well attended, successful and a very enjoyable event. The Launceston Tramway Museum Society put on a great show, with their tram plying the Museum precinct at night on the opening evening. The weather throughout the time days, even though cool was fine and sunny during the day with a little rain at nights. A great conference and thanks to the organisers. For many of the Launceston Museum members, it was the first occasion that they had been involved in a COTMA event and an opportunity to meet many of their fellow COTMA Museum workers.

Launceston No. 29 operates at this time by coupling it with a generator wagon. At night, the lights are very dim when power is applied. Running on lower than normal voltage can result in some problems though. On the opening day, Friday afternoon, while the tram was running in brilliant sunshine, the compressor started to squeal. Fortunately, Ian Seymour of Adelaide was soon on hand to diagnose the problem; not enough oil being thrown around inside the compressor crankcase to keep the bearings lubricated.

The Conference papers comprised an excellent mix of information, advice and were thought provoking. They were well received and many thanks to the various authors and presenters. Most of these are already available on the COTMA web site for viewing, along with Conference reports and the group photo. The remaining papers (two at the time of writing) will be placed on the web site by the end of October, along with the discussions that took place after the presentations themselves.

The post conference tour visited Queenstown to ride the West Coast Wilderness Railway. Contrary to expectations, the weather was sunny. For those of us who had not been to Queenstown for some time, it was amazing to see the growth on the hills surrounding the town that was once a moonscape. The journey on the railway was great and we were warmly welcomed by the Railway. Our visit to Hobart had been co-ordinated by Jeremy Kays and Leon Parker; we viewed all the Hobart tramcars in their various stages of restoration and finished up with a great afternoon at the Tasmanian Transport Museum at Glenorchy.

The next Conference is in Wellington during 2010 and currently timetabled for New Zealand's Queens Birthday weekend. Further information and preliminary thoughts of a post conference tour should be available by mid 2009. We look forward to seeing you there, many great things are happening in the New Zealand heritage tram scene.

Changes in the Air – One Regulator and Other Changes – the news continues

One thing that affects all the Australian tramway museums that operate trams is the Rail Safety legislative environment. Possible changes are in the air – a single national regulator. For the major interstate rail operators, the state regulatory environment remains fragmented with different "legislative rules" in each state and unlikely to be common for many years. While for the heritage movement, the fragmentation is not so important, but any changes should cater for the sector and indeed foster it, rather than inhibiting us as it now often does. COTMA will be working with the Association of Tourist and Heritage Rail Australia (ATHRA) to try and achieve a more appropriate regulatory environment for heritage than it currently is. Early discussions with the consultants for the National Transport Commission who are preparing a Regulatory Impact Statement have already occurred. It is good to know that this time around we are recognised as part of those who

will be impacted by any new regulatory environment – there are over 80 heritage rail operators in Australia; some very small community based operations.

Disappearing Consumable Items Slotted Head Screws –

Leyton Chan of MOTAT, has researched this growing problem and advises.

“We have found that round head and oval head screws are all but extinct in our country; and only the largest hardware stores still stock a pitiful selection of flat head screws (at exorbitant prices). As far as I can see the only market which still demands these screws are the traditional wooden boat builders. At present I source all wood screws through a company in Rhode Island USA called Jamestown Distributors; whom still have a very large selection of all types including larger sizes (up to 24 gauge) in silicon bronze. Service is excellent and ordering is easy online. For hard to find or custom sizes it is heartening to know that there are at least two companies who are able to make sizes 2 to 24 gauge, both in USA - the Narragansett Screw Co, and Goulet Specialties. I did get a quote once for 100 24g x 2½” brass oval headed screws (for attaching handrails); needless to say it was a 4 figure sum! There continue to be many suppliers of the smaller flat head screws from online mail order firms such as Lee Valley & Vertitas (Canada), Woodcraft USA etc. One thing though I still can't find any reliable supply is for bright nickel or chrome plated screws (for trams built from late 20s on such as Auckland streamliners and Adelaide H cars). My only solution there is that when we come to need these we will have to get standard screws electroless plated. Perhaps France, with it's ebeniste tradition may be the last place we could find these?”

Thanks to Leyton for the advice.

Another item that may be hard to find is plain trolley rope, or heavy sash cord. Recently the Ballarat Tramway Museum found that it cannot get plain rope in Ballarat, it now comes with red flashes in it – not quite the right look.

COTMA Web Site

The COTMA Web site has changed servers. Our formal address www.cotma.org.au will work as before, but if you had bookmarked the main page rather than the index page, you will no longer be in the correct server and will get a redirection message. The change has been necessary because of the 2008 Conference papers and their size. Thanks to Andrew Cox for hosting the COTMA web site on his system for many years. Currently it is sharing space with the Ballarat Tramway Museum's host as a separate identity.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning in the heritage rail sector and museums in general, seems to be something that is seldom done by organisations – what are you doing to ensure you survive? There is plenty of advice out there on how to do it, but something in the rail environment may assist you. Greg Sutherland of Sydney Tramway Museum picked up an interesting presentation of the method by the West Coast Railway Association, Canada. A copy of this presentation is attached with the electronic version of this News Update. Also included in a separate file are notes from the Museum's Australia workbook for small museums about Strategic Planning.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of COTMA was held on Wed 26 September. This meeting is necessary to formally accept the accounts in Victoria as part of being an incorporated association. Minutes of the 2007 and 2008 Meetings are enclosed within the Annual Report – itself enclosed within this mailout.

Next News update – November 2008