Evolving the National Railway Museum – a 45 year Success Story

National Railway Museum
Lipson St, Port Adelaide South Australia 5015, Tel. +61 (0)8 8341 1690
www.natrailmuseum.org.au

Dr John Radcliffe AM, FTSE
Government-appointed Board Member
john.radcliffe@csiro.au
In 1960, several of those establishing Adelaide’s tramway museum at St Kilda, South Australia, recognised that a small tank engine, SAR P class 117 of 1893 was about to be scrapped. They envisaged taking it to St Kilda.

There was no rail connection.
In the event, and it was agreed that locomotive P 117 could be made available for a museum by the South Australian Railways. It went into storage on an industrial siding.

It was realised that the physical and ideological problems of developing a combined tramway and railway museum would be difficult.

A search began for a site for a separate rail museum.
The Tramway Museum went on to develop separately, now with 23 trams and a two kilometre line.

That is another story!
A site secured was at the southern end of the Mile End railway yards on the western side of Adelaide, with direct 5’3” rail access already available.

A group of volunteers established an incorporated association, Mile End Railway Museum (SA) Incorporated,
The members started developing and laying track on the site to accommodate exhibits.
The first locomotive to be shunted onto the site was P class locomotive 117, 24 August 1964
Large locomotives such as this “Mountain” type, built in Britain in 1926 and used to haul Adelaide to Melbourne expresses, arrived.
As railways of other gauges moved out of steam, standard and narrow gauge tracks were laid, locomotives came by road, unloaded with the SAR’s venerable steam crane. - Silverton Tramway Co W25
The Mile End Railway Museum gradually developed the site and assembled its collection, albeit all in the open with little security or cover.
Mr Ken Whicker, Mr Ron Fluck, Hon Geoff Virgo (Minister for Transport) and Mr Ron Fitch (SA Railways Commissioner) at the opening of the Mile End Railway Museum on 5 December 1970
The Museum settled down to regularly opening to the public on the afternoons of the first and third Sundays of each month and quietly accumulating new exhibits.
The big engines couldn’t be run, so a small 18 inch gauge railway was laid around the site. Mitzi” (left) was an early locomotive while a real steam locomotive, “Bub” (right), was built.
Before long, “Bub” was in business.
Maintaining the rail equipment in the open was a never-ending job – like the continuous painting of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.
Despite the best laid plans, space began to become a problem
Australia was to celebrate in 1988 the bicentennial of the establishment of the first European settlement in Australia.

The Commonwealth government invited the States and Territories to each submit several major projects for celebratory funding.

The History Trust of South Australia developed a proposal to re-establish the railway museum on a new site in purpose built facilities on condition that the volunteers continued to run it. The South Australian Premier, Hon John Bannon, submitted it and was successful.
The site chosen was Port Dock Station, Port Adelaide, terminus of Adelaide’s first railway, built in 1854 as the first government-owned railway in the British Empire.
A new pavilion was erected and tracks laid within it under the supervision of the History Trust of South Australia. Ron Fluck, effectively the founder of the Mile End Railway Museum, was employed as curatorial overseer.
Locomotives and carriages were repainted and transferred to Port Adelaide.
A model railway was built

Exhibits were installed in the new Main pavilion
Volunteers laid trackwork into the new museum as their contribution to its development. Much of the track is now triple gauge (1067mm, 1435mm and 1600mm) - of considerable interest to railway enthusiast visitors.
A building on site was developed as the “Steam Shed” workshop for volunteers to service rolling stock.
The Premier of South Australia, Hon John Bannon, formally opened the Museum on 10 December 1988
The Premier unveiled a plaque adjacent to the driving wheels of one of the first three 1854 locomotives that started the Port line
The original, now heritage listed, Port Dock Goods Shed became part of the Museum
A new pavilion commemorating the creation of the Commonwealth Railways was opened on 21 October 2001.

Federal Minister Peter McGauran and Ron Fluck
The Museum today

Location and pavilions leased from South Australian Government (Department of Arts) for nominal rent

110 items of rolling stock

33 items owned, loaned by State (History Trust of SA), include Pullman Dining Car, Vice-Regal Car and Commissioner’s Car

Remainder directly owned by Museum

Major archival collection
The legendary Tea and Sugar train which traversed the Nullarbor Plain carrying essential provisions for railway employees. Carnegie-Mellon (USA) and Uni SA students assisted with design and interpretation.

Visitors enjoy the former East-West Wegmann car.

The reconstructed “Man in blue” train departures sign, Adelaide Station.
## Operating rolling stock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Gauge</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Locomotives</strong></td>
<td>801</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge diesel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>515</td>
<td>1435 mm gauge diesel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peronne</td>
<td>1067 mm gauge steam loco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Railcars</strong></td>
<td>400-875-321</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge Red Hens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vehicles</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1067 mm gauge carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>144</td>
<td>1067 mm gauge carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7553</td>
<td>1067 mm gauge carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V1990</td>
<td>1067 mm gauge van</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allambi</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>375</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>446</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GB 8394</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge brake van</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>606</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>276</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge van</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4074</td>
<td>1600 mm gauge carriage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Museum today

Key
- Railway track
- Train Ride track
- Toilets and Baby Change
- Entrance
- East West Cafeteria Car
- Vending Machines
- OS Operations and Signals
- WR Women in The Railways
- MR Model Railway
- RD Railway Development

Woodville Signal Box

Entrance and Bookshop

Steam Shed

Callington Station

Jackett's Siding

Goods Shed

Broad, standard & narrow gauge

Standard & narrow gauge

standard & narrow gauge

standard & narrow gauge

standard & narrow gauge

standard & narrow gauge

Break of Gauge Platform

broad gauge

broad gauge

broad gauge

broad gauge

broad gauge

broad gauge

Narrow gauge
The Museum today

Adopted National Railway Museum title (T Fischer advice)

Paid Staff (from 1 November 2009) 1

Number of Members 600

Volunteer staff (all submitted Police Checks in 12 months) — 125

Annual Income $600 000

(includes Thomas Week $180 000)

Visitor numbers / year 65,000
Major Special Activities

• Fulfilling Archival Requests
• School and Probis Club visits
• “Break of Gauge” Bookshop
• Thomas the Tank Engine week (July School Holidays)
• Corporate dinners and Promotional Launches in Main Pavilion
• Children’s parties in Cafeteria Car
• Operation of 18 inch gauge Semaphore – Fort Glanville railway
• Membership of Heritage Rail South Australia and ATHRA
Archives Programme

Visitors inspecting Periodicals and Archives work room

Secure controlled-atmosphere Archival store
"Break of Gauge" Bookshop

Annual income $160 000

Discounts for Museum members
The Museum produces a high quality bi-monthly magazine describing new railway developments and the operations of railway museums and tourist railways, especially in South Australia.
Thomas the Tank Engine week
– train trips on 457mm, 1067mm, 1600 mm gauges – 17000 visitors.
Commemorative events
Rail enthusiasts special days
Occasional members’ mainline trips

Increasingly hard to organise – reducing 1600mm gauge tracks

Museum’s “Red Hens”, Adelaide Station

TransAdelaide railcars, Outer Harbour
Functions

Children’s birthday parties in Cafeteria car

Convention diners and Promotion delegates can come from Adelaide Station by railcar
Current Restoration projects

Travelling Post Office 18, used on the Adelaide – Melbourne Intercolonial Express 1887-1908

Onkaparinga, built 1911, one of 14 sleeping cars built by Victorian Railways for Melbourne-Adelaide services.

Donated by Marbury School, interior restoration by Museum members is nearly complete.
In 2009, the Main Pavilion was named after Mr Ron Fitch (aged 98) who, as the last SA Railway Commissioner, facilitated transferring many of the initial exhibits. The Commonwealth Railways Pavilion was named after Mr Ron Fluck whose leadership and vision has played a crucial role in the Museum’s development.
Beach-front Semaphore – Fort Glanville Railway

- Rail track owned by Port Adelaide-Enfield and Charles Sturt Councils
- Operated by National Railway Museum volunteers
- Steam hauled using Museum’s 457mm rolling stock
- Runs Weekends and School Holidays October – April
- 18,000 riders annually
- Valuable additional revenue source
Governance, Managerial Structure

DRAFT ORGANISATION CHART

Port Dock Station Railway Museum (SA) Inc trading as the National Railway Museum

Chairperson (Elected from among Board Members)

BOARD
Members – Elected (5), Govt Appointed (2), Co-opted (7)

Rail Safety Manager (Board Appointment)

Legal Counsel

OPERATIONS
Operations & Maintenance Manager
   Employed
   Technical & Safety Oversight

RESTORATION PROJECTS
   Leader for each

SEMAPHORE RAILWAY
   Manager

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS
   Leader for each

OTHER PROJECTS
   Board-approved

ADMINISTRATION
Volunteer Coordinator

Museum Curator

CURATION

DISPLAY RESTORATION & EXHIBIT GROUP

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT GROUP
   Chair:
   Rolling Stock
   Archives

FINANCE
   Sub-Committee
   Orders & Bookkeeping

Treasurer, Chair
(Co-opted Board member)

VENUE HIRE
   Sub-Committee

PROMOTION & EVENTS
   Sub-Committee

PUBLICATIONS
   Sub-Committee

DAILY OPERATION
   Officer in Charge

BOOKSHOP
   Sub-Committee

OSM, GROUNDS
   Support

DEMOLITION
   Support

SECURITY
   Officer in Charge
Primary Policy Documents

Rules under the Associations Incorporation Act (Sth Australia)

Annual Rail Safety Management Plan (internally and externally audited)

Requirement for National Police Certificates

2009-2013 Corporate Plan incorporating Strategic Directions

History Trust Handbook of Registered and Accredited Museum

Site Development Plan

Business Plan

Collections Management Plan

Vehicle Conservation Plans

Volunteer handbook

Statement of Ethics
Issues for the future

• Need to broaden national base of collection
• Recognising change from government to private railway operation
• Visiting public less experienced with rail travel
• Continued recruitment of volunteers for Museum and Semaphore operations
• Loss of traditional railway skills
• Dependence on revenue from “Thomas” and risk of loss of interest
• Increased operational, staff and safety accreditation regulations
• Escalating operating costs, especially insurance
• Recent closure of complementary local tourist railways (Limestone Coast, Steamtown Peterborough, Yorke Peninsula)
• Probable replacement of 1600 mm Port Adelaide railway with 1435mm electric tramway and keeping access into Museum for group visitor attraction
We all need to work together to keep our rail heritage vibrant and alive.