

History alive

Orange & District Historical Society newsletter

Autumn 2023



Rare photos
discovered
of earliest
days of
Returned
Soldiers
Club



In this issue



Celebrating 100 years of electricity
Page 8



Banjo's birthday
Page 9



Fascinating history of Collits' Inn
Page 9



Plans ahead for East Fork
Pages 10 & 11

Cover images

Main photo: An enhanced version of the original photo showing early members of the Orange Returned Soldiers Club, taken in Robertson Park in 1918. Photo enhanced by Robert Bruce..

Inset: The framed original photo is presented by Orange & District Historical Society to the Orange RSL Museum: Historical Society president Bob Curran, photograph donor Jean Kennedy, Historical Society committee member Liz Edwards, RSL Museum volunteer Charlie Everett, RSL vice-president Brad Bliss and RSL president Chris Colvin.

This newsletter is designed to keep members and other interested people informed about the society's activities as well as matters of interest in the wider field.

If anyone would like to contribute to it they should contact editor Liz Edwards.

Our newsletter requires a considerable amount of money to produce each quarter with paper, printing and postage all adding to the cost.

Therefore, wherever possible, we email it to those members and others on our mailing list who have an email address.

However, if anyone with an email address would prefer also to receive a paper copy, they may do so simply by contacting the secretary.

Those who do not have access to email will continue to receive their copies by ordinary mail.

Orange & District Historical Society

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Membership fees from January 2023

Family \$45; individual \$30; single concession \$20; couple concession \$30.

Contact secretary or treasurer. Please pay promptly.

Research inquiries:

For research inquiry and membership forms, see our website, above

Cost: \$25 for the initial inquiry (plus additional charges for more extensive research).

Please provide your name, address, phone number and email address, details of your inquiry, any information you may already have, and the reason for your inquiry.

Bank:

Orange & District Historical Society, Orange Credit Union, BSB 802-129, A/c No 34252 (please include name and reason for payment). If you are transferring money from your account at Orange Credit Union, please add \$1 to our account number.

A message from the president

Summer has gone for another year. It was supposed to be a short quarter for the society, and it was, as we had the last week of December and all of January off, but it wasn't a quiet quarter: lots happened. Sorry I missed you all at the Christmas party: a second bout of Covid isolated me. Thanks to all the committee for another year of great work,

We had our usual planning meeting at Liz's in late January where we assessed various projects and planned the coming year, but while we had a month off, items were still left at the cottage and people dropped in with queries while the lawns were being seen to, and we also had email inquiries arriving. It never stops!

Then our first day back, February 1, was a huge day at the cottage with a committee meeting that night. We had the sad news that Sally Watson was leaving us after many years of valuable volunteering. This left us a person down in the accessioning group, a job she had done on Mondays for years, until John Smith and Jim Coffey put their hands up to say they would try and fill the gap.

There is plenty coming in. As I said, while our doors were shut for a month items kept coming in, and when we returned we soon had much to do when our first accessioning day rolled around. This work keeps us busy and more volunteers are needed to help us keep up. If you know of anyone who has a love of Orange and its history we would welcome them; no experience is necessary.

Please remember that membership fees are now overdue and if you haven't yet paid, please don't forget as your annual subscription helps us do the great work of recording Orange's history. It will ensure you are kept informed of upcoming events that the society plans.

We had an interesting event with the donation of a 1918-1919 Returned Soldiers League photo, which caused much discussion and research. We were trying to identify the soldiers pictured only to have Jean Kennedy drop in with a donation of the same photo, in a large frame, with ALL the names on it. Just another 'Cottage Coincidence'. This item was expertly photographed by Robert Bruce and the original photo was donated to the RSL Museum.

We also received a donation of a framed photo of a temperance group, which we think was taken at a conference held in this region in about 1910. The photo had our internet wiz Jim Coffey searching for hours. Meanwhile photographer Robert Bruce once again did a marvellous job of improving the clarity of this old photograph. We are so lucky to have talented volunteers. We welcome Julie Sykes back into ODHS on Wednesdays: her wealth of knowledge and experience is invaluable to us.



We are planning a Sunday outing and more information will follow soon. In a first for ODHS, we were given a half-hour to explain the value of our society to Orange City Council recently. I would like to thank Councillor Steve Peterson, CEO David Waddell and the other Councillors, who gave us a warm welcome, I hope we can continue our close association with the Council.

Our railway history expert Euan Greer has done a lot of work recording the history of the Lachlan Valley Railway's work at the old East Fork site. In time, this will be yet another asset to the city. Jim Coffey has done amazing work researching some old WW1 photographic postcards and found their connection to Douglas's timber yard, which provided the timber for many homes and other buildings around the city.

The important site of the discovery of the first payable gold in Australia, Ophir, has suffered greatly because of two flood events, and some of our members went and had a look to see if we can help in any way. Read Liz's item in this newsletter – this is an important site for Orange and I sincerely hope our society can help in some way raise awareness of its current sad state, which is no reflection on the hardworking Ophir Management Board.

- Bob Curran



We recently hosted a morning tea to farewell Alli Campbell (centre) from Orange Regional Museum, who has been a good friend to our society and offered us much valuable conservation advice over the years. Alli has taken up a position with Burnie Regional Museum in Tasmania.

Reminder regarding membership fees

Members who have not yet paid their annual fee, due on 1 January, are reminded that it is now overdue.

We would love to retain you as members but if fees are not paid this month you will no longer be a member and will not receive the quarterly newsletter.

Details of fees are listed on page 2.

Please pay promptly to ensure you are kept up-to-date with historical happenings in the Orange district.

Rare photos bring to life earliest days



By Elisabeth Edwards

It all started with a donation of a package of photos from Orange resident Jean Kennedy, brought to our cottage by Greg Tracey.

Most were of Orange Town Band and featured her grandfather William Drew Eyles, a noted bandsman for many years. As interesting as these images were, I was immediately struck by a photo of a group of soldiers from World War I. It had clearly been taken in Orange because the photographer was the prolific William Bursle, whose studio was for a time in Summer Street. Bursle incidentally lived to 103, leaving a prolific collection of photos in his name.

The photo depicted 18 privates and officers, all without their hats, some seated on benches, some standing, in front of a two-storey brick building.

The only person I recognised was Arthur Colvin, his deep-set eyes staring from centre front. Colvin was a doctor who specialised in eye surgery.

During the war he served for a considerable time on the battlefields in France, including a term as Divisional Gas Instructor for the Anzac troops. In November 1916 he was transferred to the medical section of AIF headquarters in London, where he joined fellow Orange doctor Neville Howse. His duties included attending to the welfare and rehabilitation of AIF convalescents.

Colvin made a point of writing to the relations of sick or wounded soldiers; many of these letters were published in the *Orange Leader*.

Colvin would have served longer but he contracted a pleural effusion in London and, with the rank of Major, was sent back to Australia in late 1917 where he was discharged.

He immediately set about working for the welfare of returned soldiers, many of whom had been wounded in Gallipoli and France.

Colvin served three terms as Mayor of Orange (1923-4, 1925-29 and 1935). Later he became a member of the NSW Legislative Council, serving for 21 years.

The first task was to identify where the photo was taken. This did not take long, thanks to our members Jim Coffey and John Kich, who both said it was the western side of the Parkview Hotel, known then as Tattersall's. The photo was taken from the eastern edge of Robertson Park, and those seated had clearly commandeered park benches for the photo session.

Robertson Park was a focal point for public gatherings during the war years. On 17 April 1918 Captain Ambrose Campbell Carmichael addressed a recruitment meeting in the park. Carmichael was aged 44 when he enlisted in December 1915. In 1917 he was wounded in the face and eyes in France and later in the leg and arm in Flanders. He was awarded the Military

of Orange's Returned Soldiers Club

Cross, promoted to Captain and sent back to Australia. This didn't stop him: he set about recruiting a thousand men in the early months of 1918. While the number of recruits from the Central West was not great, Carmichael did raise his 'thousand' and they left Australia in June 1918, too late, unfortunately, to take part in the war effort as hostilities ended in November that year.

I wonder whether our photos were taken on that day in April 1918 when the park would have been filled with military men.

The photo was rather faded but our member Robert Bruce, who is an expert in restoring old photos, worked his magic, resulting in a much clearer image.

I was keen to identify the men and the occasion so took the photo to the Orange War Memorial Museum in Anson Street. There I met our member Charlie Everett, who is a volunteer there. Charlie found another version of the photo in the museum's collection, but this time the soldiers were all wearing hats or caps. Now we could see quite clearly who were officers and who were privates. Most importantly, this version had a faded inscription on it: 'Orange & District Returned Sailors and Soldiers Club 1918. Presented to Alderman E T McNeilly and Mrs E T McNeilly in appreciation of acts of kindness, on behalf of the Club'. I knew Colvin had returned to Australia, now a Major and sporting a Military Cross, after his distinguished war service, in mid-December 1917 and, given that the photo was presented to Ald and Mrs McNeilly in late June 1918, the photo must have been taken in the first half of 1918. A few bare tree branches in the top left of the photo suggest it was taken in autumn or winter.

Alderman Ted McNeilly was a popular Mayor of Orange for much of WWI and Mrs McNeilly was known as 'The Mother of the Diggers' for her energetic war work, which included aiding the Red Cross and the War Chest.

Now we were getting somewhere, but apart from Colvin and Private William Drew Eyles, we still didn't know the names of the others. I spent hours sifting through the *Orange Leader* online, making lists of early members of the Orange RSL Club and attendees at club functions.

Suddenly we had a breakthrough: Jean Kennedy found a third version of the photo, among her family memorabilia, in a large frame, and this time all the soldiers were named under the heading 'Orange District Returned Soldiers Club 1918-1919'.

Orange RSL president Chris Colvin and vice-president Brad Bliss are as delighted as Charlie Everett to have copies of the photos and the Historical Society decided that the original framed photo should go to the RSL Museum.

There is much research to be done before we can tell the full stories of these soldiers, but here are some glimpses of the lives behind the faces.

William Drew Eyles was aged nearly 24 when he enlisted in September 1915. In July 1916 he received a

gunshot wound to his thigh while fighting in France and was transported to hospital in England. When it was clear his wound would prevent him engaging in further service, he was shipped back to Australia in February 1917. Eyles supplemented his Army pension of £3 per fortnight by working as a painter, but his real love was music and he was a prominent member of Orange Town Band for many years.

Malcolm Stewart's military service goes back to 1911 when he was chosen to join a contingent of cadets to represent Australia at the coronation of King George V. Three years later, at the outbreak of war, he volunteered for service and landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 (later known as Anzac Day). In August that year he was shot in the left elbow and right leg in the fierce fighting at Lone Pine. He was placed on light duties in Egypt and served time at the School of Instruction, rising to become Company Sergeant-Major. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. His serious injury forced his return to Australia, where he was given a rapturous welcome on his arrival in Orange in September 1916. More than 1000 people gathered around the rotunda in Robertson Park where the Mayor, Ald McNeilly, spoke of relief for those soldiers who had been spared, tinged with sadness for those who had died in Gallipoli and France.

Stewart was a founding member of the Orange District Returned Soldiers Club and was a staunch member throughout his life.

Robert James Holm, the man sitting in the front row with a dog, was the son of Jens Holm of Moulder Street, Orange. He enlisted in March 1915. The 6 foot 4 inch soldier was sent with the 17th battalion in May 1915 to Egypt. In August 1915, before he could be shipped to Gallipoli he contracted cellulitis in his arm. After a prolonged period in hospital he was shipped back to Australia, where he arrived in March 1916.

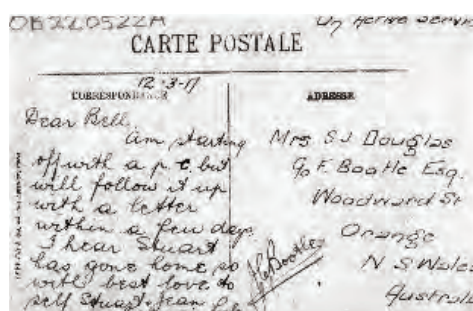
His family did not hear from him for months and in October 1915 his sister, Mrs Frost of Parramatta, wrote to Army headquarters desperate for news: "I am very sorry to hear you have had no tidings of our darling brother's illness as we are very anxious about him . . . He is our only brother and the pride of all who know him . . . Our dear old father is now over 80 years and he just seems to wait for every mail that arrives for a scrap of news of him."

The authorities were on the whole prompt to inform relations of their loved one's illnesses or injuries, but in Holm's case his sisters and father were kept waiting for months for news.

Reginald Errol Linklater enlisted at the start of the war and sailed from Sydney on 19 August 1914.

* Continued Page 7

Four postcards and three names provide



By Jim Coffey

J C Bootle came to the attention of ODHS when some volunteers were accessioning four postcards at the Heritage Cottage in mid-November 2022. The four cards, all in good condition, were of similar vintage and origin but on first blush appeared to have little to do with Orange's history. They had been donated to the society as long ago as 2009, had languished in a box on the rear verandah and had become separated from details of the donor. Two of the cards only had original printed details revealing a French origin, and one appeared to be from the Middle East. However, the fourth card had been written upon and appeared to have been sent from France to Orange during World War 1.

The sender was J C Bootle and the card was addressed to Mrs S J Douglas, C/o F Bootle, Woodward St, Orange. It noted that it was just a postcard and that a longer letter would follow in a few days. It did not have a stamp and in its stead had the notation 'On active service'. It was posted in 1917.

Initial investigation

If J C Bootle was indeed on active service in France in 1917 he would have a war record. Courtesy of the NBN/Telstra Broadband service recently installed at the Cottage, a quick search was made on the National Archives of Australia (NAA) website and Bootle's war record was quickly found. J C was John Carlisle (known as 'Lisle') Bootle, and he was a 2nd Lieutenant with the 5th Battalion, having first gone to Gallipoli and the Middle East before serving on the Western Front in Europe. He was awarded the Military Cross during his service. Lisle was a draftsman in civilian life and his next

of kin was his father, F J Bootle, who lived in Woodward Street, Orange, and was a surveyor. The war record had no reference to Mrs Douglas. There is a reasonable possibility that the Middle East postcard is in fact a photograph that includes Lisle Bootle. The connection to Orange having been made, the four cards were accessioned to the ODHS Collection.

Further Details

The following day a more detailed search of online records (including NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages and Ancestry.com) was conducted and revealed much about the Bootles, Mrs Douglas, and their connection to Orange.

F J E Bootle (the addressee)

F J E Bootle was Lisle's father and at the time of Lisle's enlistment in 1915 his address was Woodward Street, Orange, although Lisle had been born 20 years earlier in Moree (source: NAA). Turning to other records, Lisle's father was Francis James Essington Bootle, and he was a government surveyor (source: Ancestry). The 1932 Electoral Roll gives his address as 5 Woodward Street, Orange (caution: street numbering would have changed since then). An article about the wedding of his son in 1922 gives the father's address as *Courtenay*, Orange (Trove: Dubbo Liberal). He retired as the senior surveyor at the Lands Office in Orange on 23 October 1925, having been appointed to Orange in 1906 after serving at other offices around the State (NSW Government Gazette, various). Francis Bootle then worked as a private surveyor in his own right for several years in Orange. He died on 25 January 1939 at his home in Sampson Street, aged 79 (Obituary, Leader, Orange).

* Continued next page

link to Orange families

* From previous page

Mrs S J Douglas (the recipient)

The recipient of the postcard was Lisle's sister Isabella Mary Essington Bootle who, by 1917, was Mrs J S Douglas, having married James Stuart Douglas in Orange in 1914 (Ancestry & NSW BDM). James Stuart Douglas was the son of James Stuart Douglas Snr of *Blair Athol*, Orange (SMH Notices, 1914), who was a builder and contractor in Orange, and died in 1917 leaving a considerable estate. James junior, who served as a Captain in the AIF in WW1, established the Orange Timber Company with Leslie Lane in 1921 (Trove, G/Gazette). In March 1965 the Company James Stuart Douglas (Orange) Pty Ltd was dissolved (G/Gazette). J S Douglas died on 30 September 1971 (Probate Notice). Isabel died in Orange on 26 May 1982 at the age of 95, having been born at Walgett in 1887 (Ancestry and NSW BDM). Their daughter, Jean Margaret Stuart Chambers, died in Orange on 20 May 2008 (Ancestry & NSW BDM for surname). It may well be that shortly after this the four Postcards came into the possession of the society.

J C 'Lisle' Bootle (the sender)

J C 'Lisle' Bootle enlisted as a Private on 22 January 1915, with the 4th Reinforcements, 1st Battalion, but underwent fairly rapid promotion. It is noted that Lisle had been in the Army Cadets and the 42nd Militia Company prior to enlisting. He was promoted to Corporal on 1 March, then to Sergeant on 1 April 1915. He embarked from Australia per *HMAT Kyarra* on 13 April 1915 and joined his battalion at Gallipoli on June 17. By early 1916 Lisle was a quartermaster with the 56th Battalion but was soon transferred to the 1st Battalion and by now was in Tel-el-Kebir, having served with a trench mortar battery and broken his arm. In March 1916 he

was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant and in August that year joined his unit in France. He was hospitalised from late 1916 to early 1917 and then in March was promoted to Captain. In April 1918 he was specially mentioned in the despatches of Sir Douglas Haig. In March 1919 he returned to Australia on the ship *City of Poona* and was awarded the Military Cross. Lisle was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force in July 1919 (source: NAA). J C Bootle appears on the Orange WW1 Honour Board, and the Moree Public School WW1 Honour Board (source: AWM). His brothers both served: Norman, a private, with the 1st Machine Gun Battalion, and Francis, a sergeant in the 4th Battalion, who died of disease on active service in 1917 (source: UNSW AIF Project).

In civilian life Lisle was a draftsman with the Land Board where in May 1920 he was transferred to the Dubbo Office from a position in Armidale. In September 1922 Lisle married Beatrice Cadell, a local girl, at Dubbo where brother Norman was his best man (Trove: NSW Gazette and Dubbo Liberal). In 1932 Lisle was a draftsman with the Prickly Pear Destruction Commission, and his salary rate indicates he was the senior draftsman there. During WW2, while living in Mosman, he reenlisted in the Army and served in the Sydney Anti-Aircraft Group (NAA). In September 1946 he was appointed first draftsman in the Department of Lands (Trove: NSW Gazette). Prior to his life as a draftsman, Lisle had attended Wolaroi Grammar School in Orange where, in 1911, he was awarded a University Silver Medal for Algebra (Trove: Sydney Daily Telegraph, Lists). John Carlisle Bootle died in Sydney in February 1958 at the age of 63, late of Mosman (NSW BDM and Ryerson Index).

Lisle and Billie had four children: Elizabeth, John and twins Elwyn and Alan. It appears they had only one grandchild, a girl by their daughter Elwyn.

Rare photos of Orange RSL Club members

* From Page 5

A year later he received a gunshot wound to his right arm and shoulder. He was shipped back to Australia later that year. His service record doesn't convey the details of how he was injured other than to state he was promoted from second lieutenant to lieutenant. However, Corporal Harry Sullivan, who himself had received 'honourable wounds', recalled that he was under platoon commander Lieut Linklater and remembered Linklater's bravery as outstanding. Sullivan helped to carry Linklater from the battlefield as he was lying wounded.

Linklater was appointed recruiting officer for the Orange district and spent some time in the town before returning to Sydney to live.

The Orange RSL Club was formed on 10 January 1918. The list of the founding members in the *Leader* does not entirely coincide with those in the photo, but perhaps some were working or otherwise occupied.

A number of men in the photo show the pain of injury and the anxiety relating to their war experiences, both of which would haunt them for years to come.

One more thing: Did you notice that there is a woman staring out of an upper window of Tattersall's Hotel? Whether she was a maid or a guest, we will never know, but she was clearly taking a keen interest in the proceedings below her. She only appears in the framed photo - her image has either been deliberately erased or she was called away when the other photos were taken or processed.



Re-enacting the gathering around the pole. Below: the original group in 1923.

Celebrating 100 years of electricity

The tall wooden pole with an old-fashioned looking electric lamp in Byng Street near the former Town Hall looks ordinary enough, but it represents an important milestone in the history of Orange.

It was the town's first electric high-tension electricity pole, erected on 8 September 1923 when electricity was finally switched on in Orange.

The grey ironbark pole was sourced from a sawmill at Telegraph Point on the NSW Mid North Coast.

While Dalton Brothers and car sales company E C Cameron had organised their own electricity some years previously, most businesses and households relied on gas or candlelight. For years lamplighters travelled on horseback or bicycle each night to light the lamps, covering about 16 miles, returning to extinguish them at midnight.

On 24 February Essential Energy hosted the centenary commemoration of the erection of the pole. The event was attended by key employees of Essential Energy and its predecessors, Orange Deputy Mayor Gerald Power and council staff, and representatives from Orange & District Historical Society and other interested people.

Essential Energy CEO John Cleland and Cr Power unveiled a commemorative sign at the site.



Below left: The commemorative sign. Below right: Cr Power speaks to the crowd.



Perfect evening for Banjo's birthday

By Elizabeth Griffin
President of Friends of Banjo Paterson Park

What a beautiful evening it was as we sat in the shade of first shelter in Banjo Paterson Park. About 30-35 people help to celebrate Banjo Paterson's 159th birthday this year, with visitors from Western Australia and Queensland who were in town for the Australian Bush Poets Competition.

Orange City Council had been working hard to have the second shelter, tables and seats ready for the birthday celebrations. They also did a wonderful job of mowing the long grass within the park and it really did look lovely.

John Watkins from Springsure entertained us with some of his original poems, and people from Orange shared some of their favourite poems.

Members of Orange Rotary Club made use of the new barbecue and cooked up a tasty sausage sizzle with extras that went down very well.

Next year will be special because it will be Banjo's 160th birthday and, because it falls on a Saturday, we are planning a full day's celebration.

Meanwhile Orange City Council will be laying the connecting paths between the sites and developing a lovely walk around the park, with more seats and more information boards explaining the importance of different aspects of the park (and yes, they are going to get rid of the pile of crushed bricks that is currently an eyesore).



Left: The crowd at Banjo's birthday celebration.



Right: John Watkins.



Left: Kate O'Connell



Ray Norman cuts the birthday cake with Michelle Holland.

Author gives fascinating talk about Collits' Inn

More than fifty people attended a talk at Orange City Library recently by Christine Stewart about her book *Collits' Inn: Uncovering the Past*.

The book covers not only the history of the inn, which was built 200 years ago by Pierce Collits, but the extensive renovations she and her husband did, and the story of Pierce Collits and the early days of the inn.

Christine's formidable amount of research has resulted in an outstanding contribution to the history of our region.

The book, which is available in hardcover or paperback, is lavishly illustrated. It can be purchased from Collins Books in Orange.



Author Christine Stewart (second right) with her daughter Hilary (left) librarian Julie Sykes and Historical Society president Bob Curran at the talk.

Locomotive Depots of Orange Part 3: East Fork

By Euan Greer

There have been at least two attempts to bring East Fork back to life by railway preservation groups. The first was by the Central West Railway Preservation Society (CWPRS).

For a few years from about 1985, the CWPRS was resident on the site. It was formed basically to prevent demolition and thereby preserve the depot. The intent was to establish a static museum of stock and other memorabilia. To that end, the cement company at Portland offered to donate a small, redundant locomotive on the proviso that the society provide the transport to East Fork.



The shed erected by The Central West Railway with grant funding in 991-92. Occupation of the site was granted by the then State Rail Authority. Photo; Euan Greer, 29.10.2014.

The CWRPS occupied the turntable, the roads (tracks) surrounding it and the two brick buildings within the depot area. Notably it was involved in the restoration of the Ben Chifley steam engine, 5112, before legal litigation led to its demise and return to Bathurst in about 1992.

Following that, the remains of the depot quietly mouldered away, deteriorating until the arrival on the scene of the Lachlan Valley Railway (the LVR of the title of this article).

What is the LVR?

The Lachlan Valley Railway is a long-established railway preservation society based at the old locomotive depot in Cowra. It collects and restores railway rolling stock and memorabilia relevant to Cowra's history. Included are heritage steam and diesel locomotives and passenger cars which are used to provide living history experiences by running local and wider train trips. Income from these ventures funds the operating expenses and preservation projects of the LVR. Short trips from Cowra to places like Woodstock on the line to Blayney and Koorawatha on the Young line, plus longer tours elsewhere in NSW, were run successfully for quite a few years.

All that came to an end when the NSW Government decided to close all the lines to Cowra. The LVR became landlocked and had nowhere to run trains. To continue earning income, engines and carriages were moved to other locations (at great expense) in the State, including Sydney and Junee. Being distant from their main engineering and volunteer base in Cowra made it difficult to maintain and repair rolling stock; a more convenient site was needed.

Why Orange East Fork?

The old East Fork Depot had been unused for many years as the NSW railways went through various government-directed re-organisations and function out-sourcing. Included in the latter was the privatisation of maintenance of the Country Rail Network which brought with it a level of interest by the contractor to find uses for idle assets which they were committed to maintain.

Management of the LVR saw this as an opportunity to facilitate its operations. Possible considerations included:

1. Despite being dilapidated and missing many former facilities, East Fork still retained all the necessary infrastructure of an operational locomotive depot.
2. It had space for the construction of extra facilities.
3. The depot was close to Cowra and thus much more accessible to volunteers from that town than current remote bases.
4. Orange is on a fully operational main line from which all areas of the State can be readily accessed for the running of local and longer (often multi-day) train trips.
5. Orange and district has a large and growing population, offering ready patronage for local part- or full-day trips. The success of this has already been seen.
6. The district population is a source of potentially large numbers of new volunteers.
7. District businesses included those able to supply many of inputs and services required.
8. There was considerable sympathy and support for the situation of the LVR in the city and surrounding centres.

All the above and more led to the LVR being granted a licence to occupy East Fork and begin restoring it as a functional locomotive depot. Official occupation of the depot was on 27 April 2017 but volunteers had been working there since 2016.



An impression of LVR's planned construction at East Fork Locomotive Depot with the new partial roundhouse and carriage shed. Courtesy LVR.

Loco Depot: Revival Under the LVR from 2017

Plans for the future

A few months ago, in preparing for this article, I was given a guided tour of the depot by Orange resident Phil Pedley, the voluntary depot manager. We also discussed current progress and the LVR's future plans for East Fork.

In its overall vision, East Fork will become an operational and maintenance base and the Cowra Locomotive Depot will be a restoration hub but also continue as a railway museum devoted to Cowra's railway history.

Most importantly for the future of East Fork, LVR has now been granted a lease and secure tenure of the site as opposed to the previous licence to occupy. The lease includes all infrastructure within the confines of the current security fence and extends to the main lines of the East and West forks, thus providing rail access to the depot.

At the time of our discussion work was concentrated on two areas. Most pressing was continuing repair of the track to be certified as fit for purpose. The other was making the two brick buildings weather-tight and secure; all original windows are being repaired or rebuilt as per original. Similarly, as heritage listed structures, any non-original doors and windows are being replaced by new timber windows to original design and are made on site by skilled volunteers.



An example of the trackwork to be done throughout the depot. Photo; Euan Greer, 2.03.2022.

Considerable work has been undertaken by volunteers to restore the tracks in the depot so they are safe to use. The trackwork required has been divided into four phases of decreasing urgency:

Phase 1. Centrepiece of the depot, the turntable, has been returned to use and many of the roads from it have been made trafficable.

Phase 2. Track in the depot has been reconnected to the main line along the West Fork and some stock has already been moved to the site allowing local trips to be run.

Phase 3. Provide an entry road for a carriage shed which will be 100 metres long and be wide enough (10 metres) to cover two roads to protect passenger cars from the weather. The first priority is to lay the track to make carriage storage and handling more efficient.

Phase 4. Longer term, reconnect the depot track to

the Broken Hill main line at East Fork. This will greatly simplify rail access to the main line for trains heading east towards Bathurst and Sydney.

A more pressing need is repair of the present large Colorbond shed (erected by the late Central West Railway Preservation Society). It needs to be made weather-proof and secure, and have power and water reconnected to be used as a workshop.



The Colorbond shed to be restored as a workshop until the new roundhouse is built. The diesel loco is standing on what was the first covered road in the old round-house while the wagon on the right stands on the last. Photo; Euan Greer, 2.03.2022.

Another necessity is to build a new sector roundhouse on the site of the old. Whether it will cover just the original five roads or the extra two roads with inspection pits as well is yet to be decided. The LVR estimates it will take about three years to complete the shed but construction is dependent on obtaining grant funding, as does the desired carriage shed.

Development of the depot will be a long, slow process as much of the work and buildings needed are beyond the resources of the railway and will largely be dependent on grant funding and/or bequests. Only thinking big and building community support will achieve big aims.

I am grateful to Barry Potter for talking me through



A taste of things to come. Just some of the stock already on site. Restored turntable in the foreground but still much to do. Photo; Euan Greer, 2.03.2022

the story of the Central West Railway Preservation Society and to Phil Pedley for his time, guidance and information on the LVR's progress on, and future plans for, the revival of East Fork as a working locomotive depot. For more information see the LVR website: lvr.com.au

Diary April - June 2023

Orange Regional Museum: Open daily 9am-4pm.

Millthorpe Golden Memories Museum: Open weekends and public holidays plus school holidays 11am-3pm.

Molong Museum: During renovations for the next few months the museum will be closed to general visitors. It may be open on Thursdays but please phone ahead to book an appointment.

Contact secretary Sue Milne on 0400 425 015 or email: susanmilne55@gmail.com

Wentworth Mine: Open Saturday and Sunday on the

first full weekend of the month 10am-2.30pm.

See www.orangemuseum.com.au/wentworthmainmine

Wednesdays and Fridays: Volunteer working days at Heritage Cottage. Visitors with inquiries are welcome. Phone Liz Edwards on 0408 390 918 before your visit so we can start working on your inquiry.

Wednesday 5 April: ODHS committee meeting 5pm.

Wednesday 3 May: ODHS committee meeting, 5pm

Wednesday 7 June: ODHS committee meeting, 5pm

Concern for future of Ophir Reserve

By Elisabeth Edwards

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the erection of the obelisk at the Ophir Reserve, it is time to assess the state of the reserve and what can be done to improve it.

On 28 December 1923, as part of the Home to Orange Carnival, the obelisk was unveiled in the bush above the junction of Lewis Ponds and Summer Hill creeks, where the first payable gold was discovered in Australia in 1851.

The trachyte obelisk, made by Orange stone-masons McMurtrie & Co, was unveiled by Minister for Mines J C L Fitzpatrick and attended by nearly 600 people, including descendants of John Hardman Lister and James and William Tom. Also present were descendants of Edward Hamond Hargraves, who had claimed the honours for discovering the gold, although a Parliamentary inquiry led by MLC Thomas Dalton in 1890 found that while Hargraves had taught the Tom brothers and Lister how to pan for gold, it was the latter three who actually found the gold.

A number of memorial trees were planted at Ophir over the next few years and some remain to this day, clearly identifiable as non-native species.

Over the years, Ophir became a favourite camping, picnic, swimming and gold-panning spot. The Ophir Management Board has responsibility for maintaining the site, but in recent times it has faced significant difficulties.

Two major floods late last year wreaked havoc on the site. The picnic ground was inundated and one camper was lucky to escape with his life before being winched to safety. Evidence of the height of the flood can be seen in debris caught high up in trees.

Recently board members Paul and Janelle Culverson, Lyn Bartlett and Dr Andrew Rawson (Cabonne Council's representative on the board) met members of our society at the site to discuss the challenges facing the board.

Insurance payouts will assist the clean-up process al-



Inspecting the site near the obelisk with one of the commemorative trees at left.

though it is difficult to find tradesmen to carry out the work. As well, other areas of the site require urgent attention. These include the Obelisk site, which is accessed by a series of steep, slippery steps. The original writing on the obelisk has all but disappeared (although we know the wording from newspaper reports). A small plaque was placed at its base in 2001.

Further north, the small cemetery is also in a parlous state. Accessed by a very rough track, only a few grave-stones are visible, although it is believed many more people are buried there. The area is filled with weeds and the remaining headstones are in poor condition.

The management board urgently needs funds and manpower to enable it to maintain the various sites at Ophir.

Our society is hoping it can assist the board by providing historical information and ideas to gain funding and manpower for future work.

As Janelle Culverson pointed out, Ophir is a site of national significance and visitors from throughout Australia and overseas come to the area to see where the gold rushes began.