

MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

RAILWAY LUNCHEON CLUB WARATAH

Gary Hughes reports:

On 20 July thirty members and friends defied the inclement weather and made the journey to Waratah for the Luncheon Club's annual visit to the Hunter region. Aply led by local historian and ARHS member Ed Tonks, the group heard from Ed the history of this station and the surrounding area, interspersed with frequent Hunter railcar services, an empty coal train hauled by three 92 Class locos and frequent heavy showers.

Originally opened in 1858, over the years Waratah has seen no less than four different station buildings, the current one being constructed in 1986. Along the way, the original line has seen duplication in 1864, and then the construction of the coal roads in 1914. Early documents suggest that Waratah was to be the transfer point for the line to Sydney, this line being referred to in the enabling legislation as 'Homebush to Waratah Railway'. The surrounding suburb was once considered the western limit of Newcastle, and was a major industrial area. Nearby Vickers Commonwealth Steel (now part of Onesteel) and the now closed Newbolds brickworks were major employers in the area with rail connections, and Waratah was also the change over station for trains on the Wallsend branch. It has now retreated to a more subdued suburban environment.

In between showers, the group made a retreat to the Town Hall Hotel for lunch, where Ed gave us a short history of this establishment. Our thanks go to Ed and to Stuart Sharp for the day.

The next outing is to Lindfield on 17 August. We meet on the overhead bridge at 11.00am. ARHS life member Ian Brady will be talking about the operation of this station. Lunch will be at Chatswood RSL.

In September it's our fully booked two-day tour of Goulburn. This tour will be led by local historian Leon Oberg, and some vacancies still exist. If you have booked for the Goulburn tour, the notes for this tour should be available for collection from the ARHS bookshop at Central from early August. In October we are going to Lidcombe and in November to Thirroul.



In pouring rain, our group alights from one of the locally-built 2-car Hunter railcar sets at Waratah on 20th July 2011. Image Ed Tonks

Forthcoming tours

August 6/7: Winter Winelander to Wallangarra

August 17: Luncheon Club: Lindfield Station

Sept 20/21: Luncheon Club: Goulburn
Tour fully booked.

October 13: Normanton (Sunshine Express Tours)

October 20: Luncheon Club: Lidcombe

November 17: Luncheon Club: Thirroul

December 3: 3801 Limited to Kandos

For more info call our Tours Hotline on 02 8394 9019.

Please note: A tour to the North Island of NZ is under consideration for Autumn or Spring 2012.

Vale RK (Bob) Booth

It is with deep regret that we advise members of the death of the NSWRTM's renowned signalling expert Bob Booth on Saturday 23 July.

The Booth brothers, Bob and Peter, were responsible for the signalling collection of the NSWRTM. Thirlmere's signalling annex was, until its demise to make room for Trainworks, an attraction for museum visitors and enthusiasts.

Bob's acute memory for signalling matters was a feature of the several entertaining lectures he gave at the Modelling the Railways of NSW Petersham conventions. He also authored the many articles titled *Byways of Steam* in *Roundhouse* and latterly in Eveleigh Press' *Byways of Steam* volumes.

He retired in 1999 after thirty-nine years as a science teacher and Science Master at Sydney Technical High School, Bexley. He is survived by his two sisters Wendy and Susan, and brother Peter. His funeral service was to be held at Woronora Cemetery on Tuesday 2 August.



Waratah today. Three 92 Class power an empty coal train on the Down coal road behind Waratah Station on Wed 20 July. Image Ed Tonks.