

# *3<sup>rd</sup> Australasian Engineering Heritage Conference 2009*

## **Heritage and the Modern Railway**

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**SUMMARY:** *Railways have a long and rich history, beginning in the 17th century in an industrial role, and meeting public needs from the early 19th century. In New Zealand, a nation of relatively recent European settlement, a national railway network (of varying scale and length) has been operating since 1863.*

*The role of railways in New Zealand's economic development is significant in providing reasonable access to and from the hinterlands of our many ports, and helping to open up large areas of land to timber extraction, farming, and mining, with the associated growth of towns and villages. Over time various isolated sections were linked to form a national network which reached its greatest extent in 1953.*

*With the help of statutory protection from longer haul competition that role remained generally stable until the 1960s, when improvements in roads and road transport introduced more serious competition, and competitive restrictions were relaxed. Over the next five decades the rate of change in the role of railways increased steadily, including in the 1980s when protection from competition was finally removed. Major governance and operating changes were introduced at that time, and the network moved rapidly to a generally arterial rather than a traditional more local role in the country's transport.*

*One of the results of such major change has been the functional abandonment over a relatively short period of buildings and structures, and some types of locomotives and rolling stock. Some of these structures and stock had high heritage value, and one of the themes of this paper is to describe the community and institutional responses to the rapid creation of such a heritage inventory. The role of volunteers has been crucial, both at the national and local level. The goodwill from most of the various railway authorities over this period has been critically important, as has the availability of funding from many sources for a wide range of community based groups. The result has been the retention of much valuable railway heritage within the framework of an operating railway.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This paper is not so much to celebrate New Zealand's railway heritage – and there is much to do in that regard – as to describe and comment on the ways that this rich heritage has been preserved and maintained; in effect, how that heritage has been managed.

Our railway heritage is a story of local industrial design, and adaptation from railways overseas; of local responses to New Zealand's challenging topography and widely dispersed settlement patterns, and of the response to limited budgets in a nation of small population and constrained funding for infrastructure expenditure.

Today, after nearly 150 years of railway operation, there is the continuing challenge of intense competition from road and air transport (for both passengers and freight), of serious questions from both government and vested interests about future funding and indeed the need for a railway network on its current scale, and the problems stemming from a range of significant legacy issues.

But first, an outline of the changing railway system over the last 50 years.

### **2. THE CHANGING RAILWAYS OF THE LAST FIFTY YEARS**

For several decades until the 1960s, New Zealand's national railway network was in a relatively steady state. A few branch lines had closed in the early 1930s, a few more in the 1950s, and railways to Kinleith (1950) and Murupara (1957) were opened. In 1953 the maximum route length was reached - 5689 kilometres - but then began a steady and inexorable decline over subsequent decades as branch lines closed. From 1945 to 1955 total route length reduced by only 11 kilometres; from 1955 to 1965 the net reduction was 378 kilometres. That trend was to continue, until in 2009 there are 4000 route kilometres of railway on the national network, a reduction of 1689 kilometres since 1953.

The scope and nature of the railway system's operation to the 1960s saw increasing change. Remaining passenger services were being withdrawn from some branch lines, a few stations were closed, but most effort was assigned to moving growing freight tonnage in the post-World War II years as increased prosperity created new transport demands. It was a period of major land development projects. Increasing quantities of fertiliser and lime were required for these projects, and transport needed for the eventual livestock and wool. The growth in demand for industrial and consumer goods kept steady pressure on a network that was still struggling to get over the heavy demands of the lack of investment in first the Depression then the war years. Labour and materials had been scarce in that period; significant recovery of asset quality on the railway was not to come until the 1970s.

The railway system in the 1950s was still orientated to meeting local and rural needs as much as toward longer haul inter-regional haulage. Since 1936 competition from road transport for freight alongside open railways had been limited by law to 30 miles (48 kilometres) for all but a few commodities, or for freight moved with a special permit.

With this degree of protection from road competition, the Railways Department was obliged to serve the many small communities and farming areas along its network. In 1952 there were over 1000 stations handling general freight on the network, plus many private sidings serving a single user. There were, in addition, over 150 small stations without freight sidings, handling passengers, parcels and small lots - consignments that could be handled by one man from the train to the station. In many areas these small flag stations were well used into the 1960s for parcels and smaller consignments: mail, groceries, newspapers, boxes of fruit and sacks of seed were all frequently seen, especially on routes where roads were poor.

Today (2009), there are 17 freight centres where all types of freight are handled, plus a few score private sidings for individual users and another small group of stations which see use for bulk freight traffic such as logs. The only small stations remaining without freight sidings are those used by commuters in the Wellington and Auckland regions, and a few on long-distance passenger routes.

In 1952 there were 74 stations between Christchurch and Dunedin with sidings handling general freight, plus numerous private sidings. In 2009 there are four such stations (Ashburton, Temuka, Timaru and Oamaru) plus a few major private sidings serving particular industries away from these four stations. A few other stations still have sidings and will handle bulk consignments in multiple wagon-loads as required. And the nine rural branch lines that left the Main South Line between Christchurch and Dunedin in 1953 had all closed by 2002, taking with them some 75 stations. Trucks, both those linked to the railway operation and those operating independently, now provide the freight transport needs for those areas.

### **3. THE REASONS FOR CHANGE**

The factors that brought about such change in railway operations in the second half of the 20th century are many and varied. Key elements included:

- Major advances in the capabilities of commercial road freight, with bigger and more efficient equipment becoming available. This trend applied particularly from the 1970s onward.
- The progressive reduction of competitive restrictions between road and rail in stages from 1961 to their complete abolition in the mid-1980s.
- There were significant changes in freight-handling practices on farms and in factories, timber mills and other industries. For example, from the mid-1960s on, most grain was increasingly handled in bulk, rather than in sacks. Farm storage incentives became available to reduce the intensive peak of activity at the annual harvest, which then relied largely on the railway and local stations to get grain to flour mills as it was harvested. Potatoes were increasingly handled in bins, rather than sacks. Forklifts and pallets became the norm for most freight handling. These and other efficiencies led to the centralisation of handling, production and processing in many industries, such as seed processing, flour milling, timber production and coal handling. The demand on local railway facilities to meet the needs of farmers and smaller towns diminished; and often railway wagons and older rail-served factories did not match the needs of the new handling techniques.
- Some traffic virtually disappeared. Coal carried by rail to dairy factories and other plants in the North Island was replaced largely by natural gas supplied via pipelines in the 1960s and 70s. Coal gas plants all over New Zealand disappeared from the 1960s to the 1980s, and with it a significant tonnage of coal carried by rail. Coal-fired steam locomotives disappeared from the network in 1971 after a progressive change to diesel power over the previous two decades. Domestic coal demand diminished sharply as the use of coal ranges reduced

and open fires were replaced by more efficient wood burners fed by local firewood, rather than coal from a distant mine.

- The rationalisation of the dairy industry saw, from the 1960s, a progressive reduction in the number of dairy factories. Where once there were seven factories along the 37km Opunake branch in Taranaki, by the 1970s there was only one specialist plant at Kapuni. Dairy processing in the southern half of the North Island was increasingly concentrated at three plants at Whareroa (south of Hawera), Longburn (near Palmerston North) and Pahiatua. Whareroa today draws milk from all over this area (much of it by rail). This is traffic on an industrial scale; it is no longer local, where the farmer can see his production go out of the local station and the coal come in to 'his' dairy factory via the same station.
- Ports, from the 1970s on, experienced major change in their demands on railways. The 'railway port', including most of the South Island ports, had begun to change cargo-handling practices by the early 1960s so that there was very little of the short haul and costly traffic between the ship's side and local stores or goods sheds. It was not unusual in 1959 to have over 1000 wagons stored under load around Christchurch after a 12 kilometre haul from ships unloaded at Lyttelton. It was inefficient, costly and not what a modern railway was really about. Change had to happen. From the 1970s traffic to and from ports was increasingly in containers handled in a terminal behind the port, or by truck. Wagons at ship's side are now a very rare sight - and the many small private sidings and small stations in both urban and rural areas to handle this short haul traffic became redundant.
- In rural areas (not only on branch lines) there was a further significant change: the release of any restrictions on livestock cartage in 1961, which saw the railway's very significant role in that traffic disappear in the 1970s apart from a few trial loadings in 1994.
- The free or cheap railage of lime, which produced many thousands of tonnes of traffic each year for Railways in the 1950s, much of it to smaller stations, was first reduced in scale then abolished. There was no longer the incentive to keep a station close to the farm for this traffic.

All these changes were matched by a decline in rural towns' commercial activity and an associated population reduction, as the cities and regional centres grew bigger and took over smaller town functions. Improved roads and road transport were important elements in this change.

In summary, the need for local stations and local lines (branch lines) diminished and disappeared. It was not a decline in farm output but a change in handling and transport methods. It happened with fertiliser: as bulk depots at central points served large areas, the demand for bagged fertiliser in individual consignments diminished. The then Railways Department moved quickly to close smaller stations and, in time, to remove their track and buildings. With that process came a significant visual change in the rural transport scene.

Thus, the local role of railway progressively disappeared. The process began seriously in the 1960s and moved quickly through the 1970s and '80s. The closure of rural branch lines was but part of that process. In the 1990s larger centres like Levin, Feilding, Pukekohe, Taumarunui, Balclutha, Gore and Westport lost their general freight role, leaving only a few private sidings or bulk traffic handled by rail. Stations within the main urban areas also lost their freight function, though not the passenger traffic in Auckland and Wellington regions. Papakura, Lower Hutt, Rangiora, Burnside, all formerly busy stations, had their long-haul traffic brought into or taken from central urban freight centres by road. The use of container transfer between rail and road is relatively simple, and wagon utilisation improved sharply with fewer stations. But the offset was the loss of direct rail access for some industries, some of which simply switched to long-haul road transport, or coastal shipping plus trucks for inter-island traffic.

There have been many judgements and generalisations made about this trend. Few have rested on a knowledge of costs, prices and the hard information held only by customers, road transport operators or the railway operator.

Today, in 2009, it is a very different railway from the 1950s. There have been huge operational changes within that 50-year span - from steam to diesel, in signalling, in mechanised freight handling, in train operation and reduction in shunting, in the scale and nature of passenger traffic, in the nature of competition and the perceived efficiencies of road transport, and in the qualities of management brought to all forms of transport. It is a tough, competitive, customer-driven industry - a far cry from the more informal, intimate, regulated yet rather more relaxed style of 50 years ago.

Those days are gone. If one yearns for their resurrection, it is but an exercise in nostalgia. They reflected a different pace of life, different transport technologies, an intimacy between rural areas and their railway, which was still the only

truly national transport organisation and operator until probably the 1980s. It has been an inexorable change, not without a price to customers, communities, road users other than for freight and those in the transport industry. But it had to happen. Today, the railway system carries more tonnes in a year than for any year before in its history. But these are different tonnes from earlier times, to and from different places and often in different and certainly much bigger wagons and trains. There is a huge increase in productivity.

For a comparison 'in the flesh' of the scale of these changes, one must visit railway heritage sites and compare the seemingly tiny wagons to the present fleet of 50-plus tonne capacity. Without changes such as those, there would now be only the remnants of the original railway system - or perhaps none at all.

#### **4. ATTITUDES TOWARD HERITAGE**

Like most nations of relatively recent European settlement, New Zealand's settlers of the 19th and 20th centuries were so busy in their first century of settlement that preserving heritage was not a high priority. The traditional museums were in time established, like the former Dominion Museum in Wellington, and contained lots of scientific displays, Maori artefacts and other items usually set out in a less than exciting manner. Local and district museums were often the result of the work of a few residents, who realised that their local history was disappearing and set out to collect it. But the overriding priority was still settling into a new country, and then being distracted by two world wars and a major depression. The recovery period from World War II left most people so busy (remember, those were the years of virtually nil unemployment), and with huge demands on public funds for replacing worn out public assets such as hospitals, roads, railways and schools, heritage just did not rate highly. Anyway, who wanted to recall a past which was dominated by two world wars and a major depression?

This began to change in the 1970s, as people sought to confirm their role as New Zealanders, not transplanted Scots, English or Swiss. There was a growing sense of our own history, both Maori and European, and of the need to recognise and record things which were changing very quickly. This was the case with railways, perhaps sharpened by the change from steam to diesel which began in the 1950s. Suddenly traditional technology was being challenged, and those with vision saw the need to hold, and perhaps restore, examples of what was going to disappear from the working railway scene. Already photographers and archivists had detected the trend, and were busy in their very valuable role.

The heritage and preservation aspects of technology - including transport - did not rank highly until relatively recently. NZ Historic Places Trust initially concentrated heavily on archaeology, and buildings and architectural history; technology was recognised with the Hayes wire strainer plant in Oturehua and a few other sites, but not much else. Industrial archaeology, as a discipline, saw little general recognition until the 1970s.

#### **5. RECOGNITION OF RAILWAYS HERITAGE**

Before the mid 1940s there were no formal heritage or rail history groups in existence in New Zealand. There were certainly individuals, with in some cases extensive collections of photographs and documents. Some of these people exchanged information and sources.

If one was interested in overseas railways before World War II, the literature came from Britain (e.g. the Meccano Magazine) or United States (such as The Railroad Magazine). In 1944 the New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society was established in Lower Hutt. Tom McGavin, the founder, along with a number of supporters, had a deep knowledge and interest in New Zealand's railways.

Tom McGavin's major interest was to record, in both files and by publication, the history and significant events in New Zealand's railway history, including light railways and tramways. He produced and edited the Journal of the Society, the NZ Railway Observer, for an astonishing 54 years, and maintained a lower- key role for some years after that.

The Observer brought together many people from around the country who at that stage were not aware of the scale and interest amongst others. Branches of the Society were established, and over the following decades, excursions run, branch newsletters sent out, and meetings held. Other groups were formed. The heritage of New Zealand Railways (NZR) was at that stage essentially recorded by camera, text, and 35mm film rather than by artefact. The railway network, in the 1940s and 1950s, seemed so permanent, as did many of the locomotives and structures. Why preserve it when it was still working?

But the process of serious change began in the 1950s, after the findings of the 1952 Royal Commission into the future of New Zealand's Railways, and the advent in the early 1950s of the first main line diesel locomotives. Diesel shunting locos were already on the scene.

The Observer recorded the closure of branch lines, the advent of the new diesels, and the progressive disappearance or reduction of well established parts of the railway scene – the provincial passenger expresses, local and suburban passenger trains outside the main centres, and some of the many small private railways and tramways serving sawmills, coal mines, and other industrial sites.

## **6. THE DEVELOPMENT OF RAILWAY HERITAGE GROUPS**

It was in Dunedin, in 1963, that the Ocean Beach Railway was established at St Kilda, with the general aim of rescuing and restoring smaller locomotives and rolling stock from both Railways and local industrial sites - some of the locos very old, and including examples of early NZR stock. Other groups followed in different parts of the country, with an increasing pace of saving locomotives (in particular), but also rolling stock. The rapid advance of main line dieselisation throughout the 1960s, with steam on the main line finishing in 1969 (North Island) and 1971 (South Island) prompted immense effort from individuals and small groups to obtain examples of locomotives before they were scrapped.

It was in this era - the late 1960s and the 1970s - that the major locomotive restoration projects were founded. While there was some rolling stock preservation, the wagons of the mid-twentieth century had not begun to disappear with the same speed as steam locomotives.

Carriage stock was increasingly disappearing from NZR holdings as the named passenger trains, with assigned stock, came into service. Wooden sheathed stock was no longer used from the 1970s, other than on private excursion or tourist services.

The main line passenger carriage fleet was rapidly diminishing; most sleeping cars were scrapped shortly after the Silver Star came into service in 1971; the original Northerner service kept four (refurbished) sleeping cars operating: two of these are now preserved.

From the mid-1970s onward stations and other infrastructure were beginning to become redundant on a large scale. Many rural branch lines had gone by then. The first signs of community interest in preserving stations were appearing. Community interest groups saw their local station threatened, and moved to save it. Carterton, Helensville and Ohakune are good examples. Loco watering tanks, already rare, became prized possessions; and railway groups with a mixed community/railway interest were established not only to save but also restore significant stations - Ormondville being a classic example. NZ Railways Corporation was sympathetic to these projects, developing the concept of heritage lease agreements which helped protect buildings and other assets.

The Rail Heritage Trust of New Zealand (RHTNZ) was established in 1991, to help record, protect and preserve significant elements of our railway heritage. With much help from others already in the field, the Trust's work began slowly, but increased rapidly, as the great four-wheeled wagon clearout began in the mid-1990s. The Trust's role evolved as providing links between heritage groups, the railway authority(s), and local government. This latter liaison has proved in some cases to be pivotal in the success of a project.

The Trust is an informal adviser to KiwiRail on heritage issues. Amongst other work, the Trust got NZ Rail Ltd's agreement to the concept of heritage leases for wagons, and some 120 wagons and carriages were transferred to groups around the country, usually with minimal cost to the recipients. The methods by which these wagons were chosen, allocated, and transported are best lost in the mists of history; all I can record is the quiet but very real support from many Railway staff for helping implement this project, which has contributed hugely to the fleet of heritage rolling stock in New Zealand.

In essence, RHTNZ was the result of an implicit outsourcing of the management of railway heritage. The work generated for the Trust was at times overwhelming, and continues to grow. It is operated on a semi-voluntary basis.

And I must pay tribute to the Federation of Rail Organisations of New Zealand (FRONZ), established in the 1970s, which acts as both a focal point especially for heritage operating groups, as well as a more general advisory role with all member groups in terms of information, lobbying and advocacy. Paul Dillicar, the current President, has spent some 35 years, along with his Board colleagues, as volunteers in this cause.

## **7. DEPENDENCE ON VOLUNTEERS**

The human basis for these developments was, with very few exceptions, volunteers. As groups grew in scale and range of activities and became more ambitious, funding was obtained from the trusts and charities which support good causes throughout the community. One could argue that the value of the resources within the groups' collections is such that the community should be looking to support the rail heritage sector in a more structured way, but without destroying the interest which those in the groups must continue to enjoy as volunteers.

Let's look more broadly. The two major and funded institutions with potential for involvement in railway heritage are the NZ Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) and the Department of Conservation (DoC).

NZHPT has a very broad brief on heritage matters, but it does not have the ability to become involved in potentially mobile exhibits. A most important role is its ability to register significant places. I believe that their current involvement in railway heritage is reasonable, in the context of the huge demands made on their limited resources for the entire heritage sector. There has certainly been a marked increase in railway station and site registrations in recent times, much of it prompted by the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) railway centenary in 2008 and RHTNZ.

The Department of Conservation (DoC) has come to the railways and industrial heritage scene relatively recently, as 'owners' of former railway and industrial sites within its estate. I am impressed with what is being achieved. The minor railways - bush trams, mining lines, and often associated sites, have been difficult to preserve in many cases, usually because of remoteness. Industrial archaeology, as a discipline and in practice, has not had much of a profile in our national heritage policies until relatively recently. DoC has begun to fill that gap, and I think it is doing it very well. Two people, Paul Mahoney and Jim Staton, (both from DoC), have taken a leading role in this work.

The contrast between the rail heritage sector in general, and NZHPT and DoC, is stark on two counts; the availability of funds and permanent employed staff, and the relatively less significant role of volunteers in the HPT and DoC situation.

## **8. CASE STUDIES**

Let's consider three case studies, with involvement from both parties to varying degree, plus others.

1. The reconstruction of the Brunner Suspension Bridge, re-opened in March 2004. This project cost some \$678,000, and apart from volunteer time in its administration, was planned and executed by professional bodies on a commercial basis. No local volunteer group could take on a project of this complexity and cost. It is a significant item of New Zealand's engineering heritage, linked to a major industrial heritage site.
2. The Charming Creek Walkway. A much older and smaller project, but just as significant in industrial archaeological terms. While the redevelopment of the former coal tram right of way was nothing like the scale of the Brunner Bridge, the need for interpretation, restoration and above all maintenance for safety and accessibility is critical. In this case, DoC has the funding, the infrastructure, and the skills to keep this deeply interesting and attractive site open, and to allow access to scenery and recreation as much as to industrial archaeology.
3. The restoration of Top Brake of the Denniston Incline, a challenging task carried out by a mix of contractors and DoC staff brought in from the West Coast as "volunteers".

## **9. RURAL STATIONS**

In the volunteer sector, some of the best local or community-based heritage has been applied to the restoration of rural railway stations - Ormondville, Waverley, Shannon (with its Manawatu Railway Company station), Ohakune and Moana are examples. Most have parts of the traditional freight handling facilities still standing and either restored or with restoration under way.

## **10. LARGER STATIONS**

Dunedin, one of New Zealand's most notable buildings, has been restored by Dunedin City Council, with major help from the Lottery Grants Board. The Taieri Gorge Railway headquarters is in the station; the remainder of the building is leased for other purposes.

Wellington Station has just had a major refurbishment (including seismic strengthening) completed, funded by the Crown. The traditional railway administrative presence occupies half the building, the other half is leased to Victoria University of Wellington.

Blenheim, a significant Troup station, was restored in the 1990s, and is used as the town's Information Centre as well as a railway station. (George Troup was employed by the Railways Department in the early years of the 20th century, and designed many outstanding railway stations in his time, including Dunedin).

Mataura (another Troup station) is sustained by rent from a café and is used by railway operations staff. And there are many other examples around New Zealand.

On the other hand, there are buildings threatened with demolition such as Ashburton and Whangarei; no practical use can be found for them on their current sites.

## **11. BRIDGES**

New Zealand's topography calls for ingenuity in design and construction of railway infrastructure. There are significant bridges on most routes; perhaps the most notable collections are on the North Island Main Trunk, and the Midland Line between Canterbury and the West Coast. The former Otago Central Railway, both on the extant section to Middlemarch, and on the Rail Trail, has a diverse collection of bridges, including many using local stone for abutments, right down to small culverts.

Many of these (and other) bridges have been strengthened, sometimes more than once, in their long lives. Others of note have had to be replaced recently: the timber truss structures at Cobden, near Greymouth, and Arahura (combined road and rail) between Greymouth and Hokitika are significant examples.

Routine and essential renewals will inevitably take their toll on remaining heritage structures, but in some cases ingenuity is applied as was the case at Paroa, near Greymouth, where steel supports were inserted and faced with traditional beams. In the case of the two large truss bridges noted above, spans have been kept and will be placed nearby, along with photographs and information to mark their heritage significance. A detailed photographic and design archive was created by the railway authority before the bridges were demolished.

## **12. LOCOMOTIVES**

The New Zealand locomotive fleet has always been a mix of local and overseas design and construction, with the balance varying over time for a variety of reasons.

There is a proud history of local steam locomotive design and construction, with the first steam locomotive built in a NZ Railways workshop dating from 1889 (Addington). The locomotive still exists, in working order, at Canterbury Railway Society's site at Ferrymead. It is owned by the Rail Heritage Trust of New Zealand.

Major classes of locomotive were designed and built in New Zealand. The K class (K, Ka, Kb) were in this group. Many of the Ab class, the workhorse of the fleet for many years, were built in NZR workshops, others at A & G Price at Thames, and in Scotland. The J class were built both in New Zealand and Scotland. Earlier locomotives were built in Britain, and some in the USA.

Not all classes have been preserved, but a good sample has been kept, a few at main line running standards, a larger number for operations on heritage sites or routes.

Mainline diesel locomotives have all been built in the UK, USA, Australia, Japan or Canada, although smaller diesel locos (shunters and industrial locomotives) have been built locally, both in NZR workshops and privately.

Most of the locomotive restoration work has been achieved entirely by volunteers. A significant exception is the collection developed by MainLine Steam, funded by Ian Welch. He has added notably to the range of restored steam locomotives, many of which operate on the national network.

### **13. ROLLING STOCK: PASSENGER**

Except for some early carriages, New Zealand developed its own designs for passenger carriages and guards' vans, and built them in New Zealand Railways workshops. Exceptions have been the last orders of guards' vans, the Silver Star express, most railcars, and suburban electric stock.

Modern suburban stock is either built overseas, or new designs developed and then rebuilt from pre-used imported carriage bodies.

### **14. FREIGHT STOCK**

This has been a mix of New Zealand and imported stock over the years. The lumpy pattern of investment funds over the later 20th century often led to large orders being placed overseas simply to get stock supplied quickly, while NZR workshops concentrated on overhauls and shorter runs.

Good selections of most of this range of rolling stock have been retained on heritage sites, and in many cases, faithfully restored. A limited number of carriages are certified for main line running, an activity which is carried out entirely by trained volunteers, all under clearly defined standards and practices set by the railway authority and the regulator.

### **15. FORMAL PROTECTION OF RAILWAY HERITAGE**

Buildings and sites can be registered with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, but not mobile equipment such as rolling stock and locomotives. The NZHPT has been listing railway stations, and other structures, for some time, with an increasing pace of registrations in recent years. As almost all railway buildings have been of timber construction, there is increasing pressure to see a good sample preserved. Stations listed in the Rail Heritage Trust register are listed in Attachment A, with NZHPT registrations noted. The RHTNZ Register has no statutory basis.

We have as well, in the context of railway heritage, an unusual registration - 200 route kilometres of the North Island Main Trunk railway.

The centenary of the NIMT in 2008 was a notable event, in terms of re-establishing links with the railway's communities, reminding Kiwis about the role of this railway, and celebrating a century of activity on what has been one of New Zealand's busiest railway routes.

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust has carried out a heritage research project in the Ruapehu District in the centre of the island (and the NIMT). The Trust proposed that a 200 kilometre section of the railway be registered as an historic site (between Makatote Viaduct and Taumarunui).

To register (and by inference, protect) a working railway is a novel move, and there was a natural concern within KiwiRail that there could be restrictions placed on repair, maintenance or reconstruction work while heritage issues were resolved.

Some years ago a detailed Memorandum of Understanding was signed between New Zealand Historic Places Trust and the then Transit New Zealand, the state highway planning and construction agency (now New Zealand Transport Agency). This document was used as a model for registration and protection of the 200 kilometres of railway, and with minor changes made, it should be signed soon. This, to me, sends a good signal about the links between heritage and the modern railway.

Local government is now registering a significant range of railway structures in their District Plans. This can provide statutory protection, which does not necessarily arise from either NZHPT or RHTNZ listing. RHTNZ is now taking a key role in prompting these registrations. If a site is pre-1900 it is protected under the Historic Places Act as an archaeological site.

## 16. REVIEW AND PROSPECT

First, some comments about transport and the public:

- All transport - including railways - is far more complex in its funding, operations and management than is generally accepted by the public.
- Transport - including railways - is a very public industry. It is ubiquitous. Mistakes, faults, (real or imagined), accidents and most of the sector's activities are there for the media, enthusiasts and others to remark on, which they do with glee. An industry confined to one site can usually contain all but their major mishaps within the plant site. Transport, and railways, cannot do that.
- The state has, and always will have, a role in transport as either an operator, owner or regulator. Thus there is always a political element in significant decisions.
- The public/political matrix produces at times a level of public debate about transport which can both inform and mislead, and is at times profoundly ignorant. Railways, for long a butt of comedians and political influence, have had their fair share of this.
- Given all this complexity, and public exposure, there is a tendency for railway and transport managers to despair of ever getting a message across which can both cover the complexities of their industry, and at the same time, not get boring. Many give up. remain quiet, and misinformed comment thus becomes folklore.
- Thus the transport system, critical to a nation's survival, battles on not only with all the normal challenges of operational survival, but also with a montage of perceptions, folklore and myth which settles like an aura around it.

These general points, which are by no means unique to New Zealand, provide a backdrop for both the current scene, and what has happened in the past.

I would suggest that the opportunities for misunderstanding which could occur between heritage issues and the modern railway are potentially legion. I believe the New Zealand solution, which I have outlined in this paper, has allowed both interests - the operating railway and heritage principles and practices - to co-exist, not without misunderstanding and tension especially in the earlier stages, but in most cases with a mutual desire to look for a solution.

This has been helped by our being a small country, with a small population. But I see a will and interest in the current railway authority to accept the existence of a significant rail heritage community, and to be reasonable and, at times, proactive, in contributing toward good relationships. The 2008 North Island Main Trunk centenary was a brilliant example in which Ontrack, the then infrastructure company, played a leading role in association with heritage railway operators (to their mutual benefit) and at the same time, met community desires.

## 17. SUMMARY

The growth of the rail heritage sector since 1945 can be summarised as follows:

1940s	Individuals, but no organised groups.
1945-1960s	Emphasis on recording rail history, and changes to the current scene.
1960s-1970s	Rapid movement toward establishment of groups to save/restore steam locomotives, and some passenger stock.
1970s-1980s	More heritage groups established, including the early community-based groups to preserve stations.
1980s-1990	Significant progress toward locomotive and rolling stock preservation, the establishment of private railways on abandoned branch lines or independent sites, and station preservation.

1990-2009 Continuing growth in the number of rail heritage groups throughout the country; heavy emphasis on acquiring soon to be extinct classes of wagons, and their restoration; increasing awareness of the need for heritage integrity in both building and rolling stock restoration; first moves toward seeking recognition of some sites as actual or incipient museum sites.

The establishment of a Christchurch based group to develop plans for a National Railway Museum based at Ferrymead.

Lying behind this picture of growth in both scale and quality lie four fundamentals:

- There is now a growing awareness of the economic benefits of heritage in the tourist and recreational sectors. Rail heritage fits well within that context.
- Rail heritage now plays a significant role in the recognition and recording of our social, architectural, engineering and economic history.
- Most of the sector's development has been achieved by volunteers and private support, but with an increasing major contribution by DoC in recent years in the industrial archaeology and industrial railways.
- The charitable funding sources for the volunteer sector are, to a degree, unpredictable, but without them there would have been little progress. And there have been significant contributions from a few individuals.

This is a picture of steady growth, with surges of activity at particular stages to salvage heritage items before they disappear forever. This huge voluntary effort has produced a situation where railway heritage is now a significant sector in its own right within the national heritage scene.

## **18. PROSPECTS**

For the modern railway, there are the challenges of survival in a highly competitive transport sector, and within a political context which shows a current preference for expenditure on roads rather than public transport and railways, a view well outside current thinking overseas. In the financial consequences of such a climate, expenditure and time commitment to heritage issues could easily become very marginal.

For the heritage groups, future risks include an ageing volunteer work team with only limited replacements available, and the loss of craft skills. There will often be a preponderance of older people in voluntary groups; they are the people with the time, largely free of children, mortgages and the need for full time work.

It is this group, in railway heritage circles, which holds much of the skill base for the maintenance and restoration of older equipment, especially steam locomotives, and the driving of this equipment. This risk is now recognised, with Shantytown Museum (near Greymouth) now providing an approved training course in steam engineering and operations. And FRONZ is also working hard toward solutions in this area.

But there are other challenges. Ageing equipment will in time lose its capability to run on the national network, and to comply with the high standards expected by both the rail operator and the regulator (and the public). Some of the older stock will become static exhibits, rather than able to operate; but not everyone wants to be in a museum environment where the rolling stock is static. But larger groups are responding with new and higher standards of rolling stock as the tourist demands continue to grow. The Taieri Gorge Railway is a good example

Today, I see heritage and the modern railway, in the New Zealand context, as in a healthy state. Heritage has no boundaries, and there will always be more to aim for, and to achieve. The strength of the volunteers who have done so much in their area over the last 50 years shows no sign of diminution. It is these groups who will keep this important part of our transport history to a good strength, along with the quiet but important support from professional groups such as NZHPT, DoC, IPENZ, RHTNZ, FRONZ and the communities in which those groups work.

## **19. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**RAIL HERITAGE TRUST OF NEW ZEALAND**  
**Buildings listed in the Rail Heritage Register, October 2009**

Name	RHTNZ Category	NZHPT Category	Region	Type	Built	Building Ownership	Current use	Notes*
Auckland Station	A	I	Auckland	Main city station	1930	Ngati Whatua	Student accommodation	r
Blenheim Station	A	II	Marlborough	Troup Vintage station	1906	KiwiRail	Information and travel centre	p,r
Christchurch Station	A	II	Canterbury	Main city station	1960	Christchurch Science Technology Trust Board	Science centre	
Dunedin Station	A	I	Otago	Main city station	1906	Dunedin CC	Tourist railway, museum, offices	p,r
Greymouth Station	A	I	West Coast	Vogel class 2 station	1897	KiwiRail	Travel centre, refurbished 1990s	p,r
Moana Goods Shed	A	Hist. Area	West Coast	Rural goods shed	c.1900	RHTNZ	Vacant, to be restored	
Moana Station	A	Hist. Area	West Coast	Troup class A station	1926	RHTNZ	Vacant	p,r
Ormondville Station	A	II	Manawatu-Wanganui	Modified Vogel class 5	c.1883	KiwiRail	Heritage railway	r
Pukerangi Station	A	-	Otago	Tablet station	1891	Dunedin CC	Tourist railway	p,r
Reefton Station	A	-	West Coast	Class 2/3 station	1892	Reefton Historic Trust Board	Vacant	r
Remuera Station and Signal Box	A	I	Auckland	Island platform suburban station	1907	ARTA	Small business	p,r
Ruru Station	A	I	West Coast	Vogel class 7 shelter shed	by 1920	KiwiRail	Vacant	
Solway Station	A	-	Wellington	Vogel class 6 shelter shed	1880	KiwiRail	Shelter	p,r
Te Kuiti Station	A	II	Waikato	Troup class B station	1908	KiwiRail	Offices	p,r
Waverley Station	A	I	Taranaki	Modified Vogel class 4 station	1881	KiwiRail	Museum, station precinct	r
Wellington Station	A	I	Wellington	Main city station	1937	KiwiRail	Railway offices, university, supermarket	p,r
Arthur's Pass Station	B	-	Canterbury	Post-war island platform station	1966	KiwiRail	Railway station	p
Ashburton Station and Footbridge	B	II	Canterbury	Troup Vintage station	1917	Ashburton Station Souvenirs Ltd	Vacant	
Carterton Station	B	-	Wellington	Vogel class 2 station	1879	KiwiRail	Museum	p,r
Cass Station	B	-	Canterbury	Shelter shed	?1911	KiwiRail	Passenger shelter	p,r
Gisborne Station	B	II	Gisborne	Troup Vintage station	1902	Office of Treaty Settlements	Heritage railway	p
Glenhope Station	B	II	Tasman	Troup class B station	1912	Private	Hay shed	
Hundalee Station (relocated to Waikari)	B	-	Canterbury	Troup class A station	1939	Weka Pass Railway Society	Heritage railway	p,r
Inangahua Station	B	-	West Coast	Class 5 station	1914	KiwiRail	Vacant	
Inglewood Station	B	I	Taranaki	Modified Vogel class 4 station	1876	Office of Treaty Settlements	Vacant	
Invercargill Station	B	-	Southland	Post-war station	1978	YWCA	Offices	
Kaiapoi Station (relocated locally)	B	II	Canterbury	Troup Vintage station	1904	Kaiapoi Railway Station Trust	i-Site information centre	m,r

