

THE RIESLING RAILWAY

The history of the Riverton to Spalding Railway, will be a book published in July 2018, to mark the centenary of the opening of the railway to Clare.

Newsletter no.1

4 July 2016

Exactly 2 years to go!

I plan to produce one of these e-mail newsletters every three months. You are on my distribution list because you have asked to be included, or your details have been forwarded to me as someone sincerely interest in my project. If you do not wish to receive future updates please reply “unsubscribe”.

We had a meeting in Clare of the informal group interested in the railway centenary, on 10 April that was attended by a small but enthusiastic group, and agreed to formalize a committee. David Lloyd is chairing the group, with Doreen Hill as secretary. My (self-appointed) role is to push on with the book as my own personal project, and to keep the group informed of progress. The next meeting is scheduled for 18 August.

I have commissioned Watervale artist, Harry Sherwin to paint an early morning scene of the Clare Railway Station, and the Model 55 Brill railcar ready to depart for Adelaide in March 1924. The plan is for this to feature on the cover of the book. I am investigating the process and costs of getting a limited run of prints done from the original.

On 25 June there was a gathering of interested persons, looking at what remnants of the Clare station yard were options for future projects. One is the turntable pit which has become overgrown with feral vegetation. There was a commitment to clean that up and preserve what is left.

The text for the book is about 90% done – know I said that six months ago, but there are still gaps to fill, and I keep tinkering with the text as loose ends get tied up.

There are some enigmas that I fear are destined to remain mysteries:

Why was the railway not upgraded in the 1920s to carry the 700 class Mikados?
Was it that the ferro-concrete bridges could not be strengthened? Or was it that there was no way of testing those bridges?

The Model 55 railcars were delivered with a blue/light primrose/gold colour scheme, which would have made them look quite smart. They were soon painted a drab chocolate brown. Who directed the change, and why?

Progress on the Diagram of Gradients and Curves. At the time of writing I have walked the Riesling Trail (Barinia to Auburn) in its entirety, several times, and made a start on the Rattler Trail (Auburn to Riverton) checking the redrawn diagram (of the original that was drawn in 1935). I am checking distance markers, and adding details of crossings, rivers/creeks and sculptures etc.

In relation to the above, I have produced a strip map of The Riesling Trail.

There are four diagrams that will be printable as A4 sheets that you can take with you when you walk or cycle the Riesling Trail. Gradients, curves, mileages from Adelaide, kilometres from the datum point, positions of cuttings, embankments, bridges, road crossings, sculptures, and other features. Directions and distances to town facilities such as toilets, hotels. With these maps it is possible to know exactly whereabouts on the Trails you are.

Over the last three months there have been many good photographs uncovered, but I am still interested in looking at more. I am particularly interested on obtaining a good photograph of the Brill Model 75 railcar in regular service on the Spalding line.

The Clare Regional History Group has provided a photograph of the Combined railway committees (of Auburn, Clare & Spalding), posed in front of the old Clare Town Hall – but we don't have names for most of the faces. Does anyone know whether there is a copy of this photograph with names of those in the picture?

USB Stick: (or it could be a CD ROM) that will be tucked inside the back cover. There are a lot of maps and diagrams and "other stuff" that won't fit in the book. Here is the inventory of this Treasure trove as it presently stands.

1. The whole 1924 Public Timetable (208 pages) complete with adverts
2. The 1913 map of the line of the railway, and the designated Railway District.
3. The 1935 R. H. Chapman diagram of Gradients and Curves
4. The diagram of Gradients and Curves redrawn to include features relevant to The Riesling Trail and The Rattler Trail.
5. Diagrams of station layouts.
6. Weekly Notices relating to the opening of the line to Clare and Spalding.
7. The complete collection of poems by Harrold Dridan.
8. Sundry images including the 1936 "English Cricketers at Clare". The quality of the scan of the English Cricketers special is good. I have had Officeworks do an A1 size enlargement (cost me about \$23) and it looks good.
9. Chief Commissioner Webb's 1929 *Railway Facts*.(124 pages).

10. A strip map of The Riesling Trail, showing gradients, curves, cuttings, embankments, road crossings, rivers, bridges, sculptures and other features. This will be a series of A4 size pages, with each page representing about 8 km of the Trail.
11. The surveyors' drawings of the topography showing the cuttings and embankments.
12. Drawings of the Broughton Bridge, and other ferro-concrete structures.
13. Reproductions of Clare's *Northern Argus* detailing the opening of the railway to Clare. Also newspaper entries relating to the shooting of Percy Brookfield in 1921.
14. Some of John Evans train orders. There is one that details 4 trains in the Clare station at one time! And a crossing order from the days of Permissive Block working.

The Riesling Trail Management have kindly "given" me a page on their website, which will be updated quarterly, concurrent with the release of each newsletter.

Over the last couple of months, the greater part of my energies have been concentrated on the Riverton end of the line. I have been delving into the history of the Railway Refreshment Rooms, and the 1921 shooting of Percy Brookfield, and uncovered a lot of hitherto overlooked material on those topics. The gunman, Tomayeff, was travelling from Broken Hill to Clare.

In the last couple of weeks, I have slipped out copies of the (90%) manuscript to a few close associates for their critique. I expect to have some reviews to publish with the next newsletter.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter on to anyone else likely to be interested, and I invite them to in turn forward their e-mail address to be added to the distribution list.

John Wilson