

NZRLS AGM 2020
ANNUAL REPORT:
For year ending 30th June 2020

Issued September 2020

THE PRESIDENT

For any organisation reviewing the year ending 30 June 2020, the focus will inevitably be on Covid-19 and lockdown. This virus has severely affected the world economy and has forced people to reconsider their values. Fortunately the New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society came through the shut down period very well and it became clear that there is a greater need for electronic communications.

The Society has had a good year in every respect, but one cannot become complacent. Financially we achieved a good result, however much of the positiveness was because of donations from members, both deceased and very much alive. That trend has continued into the 2021 year. It is still very important that the day to day trading activities generate a positive outcome for the Society.

Publications has had a good year and we are now starting to use digital printing more and more for low print run works. This has been a good result as publications that may not have been financially viable in the past are now viable. This is particularly so with the two tram books published during the year, and the extent that trams interest Society members has been very pleasing.

Membership saw a decline over the year, although at the end of the year there was an upturn. This trend has continued into the new year. It is hoped that our publication activities is a reflection of this membership growth.

The Society was hoping to celebrate our 75th birthday with an excursion. Due to equipment certification issues with the N Z Transport Agency and heritage operators plus restrictions on gatherings brought about by Covid-19, the Board reluctantly decided to cancel any plans that we had.

During the year, the Board has discussed the future of the Thomas McGavin Building at North Street, Petone – our headquarters. With the continual acquisition of archives, space is becoming a premium. Coupled with this there is a concern about climate change and the effects of rising sea levels. It is predicted that the land our building sits on could become under water.

A subcommittee will shortly be formed to examine all aspects of our North Street operations and it is very possible that we will relocate our activities to a more suitable location. The Board has already established a building fund reserve to meet our future requirements.

The New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society is in good heart and all aspects of the Society are functioning well. Members continue to value the association with us, and this is very encouraging, however the Board is very aware we must continue to always be relevant. Board members devote much of their time to the activities of the Society, and on behalf of all members I would like to thank each member for their dedication.

Graeme Carter, President

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Administration Committee comprises David Cuthbert (Chairman), Colin Barry (Secretary), Ken Lankshear (Treasurer), Chris Benson, Graeme McClare, Bruce Taylor, Ray Thomson and Glen Summers (Minute Secretary). The committee normally meets as often as necessary to attend to its responsibilities, but normally not less than six times a year, at least one of these is held at North End, Silverstream. This year the lockdowns and related restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in only four meetings, one of which was attempted remotely.

The committee is responsible to the board for the day-to-day running of the Society. A key part this is financial oversight with particular attention given to payments made to suppliers of services.

Regular reports were received on the state of and improvements to the Society's premises (the Thomas McGavin Building at Ava [from Bill Prebble] and the North End [from Rob Merrifield]), the preservation work on the former Wellington and Manawatu Railway (WMR) carriages (again from Rob Merrifield) and the digitisation of the photographic archives.

The committee had previously expressed to the board its concern that there were no clear rules for the lease and/or disposal of heritage assets. It was agreed that the committee take responsibility to compile a list of such items held either at Ava or Silverstream deemed worthy of special protection and to develop a draft policy on the issue. This work is ongoing.

The committee receives reports from Bill McGavin (Membership Administrator) on membership details (including the two magazine groups) and approves new membership applications (refer to Bill's Membership report).

In May last year Sandra Knight joined us as a part time contractor taking on the duties of Publication Administrator. She processes the orders for publications and is assisted by John Dwyer, a volunteer who dispatches these.

Rod Murgatroyd, the Society's Web Master had indicated his wish to hand over the task of managing the site. Sandra agreed to take this on and with Rod's assistance has progressively done so. She has moved to improve the profile given to new publications (again refer to Rod's Website report).

Sandra, with assistance from Graeme McClare developed a Facebook page for the Society, this became effective from September and has already generated interest in the Society's archives and services (refer Sandra's Facebook report).

Sandra has catalogued the Society's holding of second hand publications, promoting their availability on both the website and Facebook page.

During the year Stu Ingram, the secretary of Magazine Group A took over responsibility for the Magazine Group B, from Ray Thomson. He reports regularly on the operation of two groups (refer to Stu's Magazine Groups report).

It is again worth highlighting the work committee member Bruce Taylor undertook to prepare a background paper and recommendations for the board to align the Society's membership and financial years. These were adopted by the board, approved by the last AGM and the membership year now commences on 1 July.

I would like to thank committee members and contractors for their work during the year to ensure that the administration of the Society was efficiently managed.

David Cuthbert, Chair Administration Committee

MEMBERSHIP

This report covers the Membership during the period of the last six months of the 2019 year (1 July to 31 December 2019) and the full 2020 year (a six month period from 1 January to June 30 2020) noting that the 2021 year commenced July 1 2020 as per the AGM ruling at the October 2019 AGM of the NZRLS. The details of the membership are as recorded in the 2020 financial year books.

Total Members

- NZ Members 654
- ROW Members 81
- UK Members 34

Total NZRLS members worldwide as recorded for the 2020 financial year was 769 members.

Lost to the Society

For the period July 1 2019 to June 30 2020, we were sadly advised of and recorded the unfortunate passing away of the following members:

4452	Mr Alan J Cubie	Rotorua
1338	Mr Jim C Mann	Palmerston North
1927	Mr Robert B Malone	Invercargill
970	Mr G R (Gus)Weir	Wellington
4477	Mr Philip A Wrigley	Red Beach
2621	Mr Jim W Brown	Invercargill
3469	Mr John S McCrossin	Australia
958	Mr Brian Moosman	Masterton
4085	Mr R Neil Garrett	Auckland
748	Mr John Shanks	Christchurch
2467	Mr Kenneth A James	Rangiora
4700	Mr Bruce P McNeill	Christchurch
4454	Mr Michael S B Hunter	Methven
969	Mr Keith G Brown	Christchurch
3861	Mr Reid McNaught	Mosgiel
4210	Mr Barry S Craig	Pukerua Bay
4323	Mr Ray D Butler	Whanganui
3672	Mr Owen W McCutcheon	Christchurch
4917	Mr Gary J Knight	Rangiora
367	Mr William C Townshend	Springfield

Since June 30 2020 we have been notified of the following deaths:

5003	Mr William (Bill) Falconer	Dunedin
492	Mr Bill Lloyd	Dunedin

New Members who joined the Society July 1 2019 - 30 June 2020

A total of 21 new members joined the Society, plus an additional 4 former returning members. A total of 25. Of note is that since the 30 June 2020, we have had 30 new members join the Society, in part due to the great work of the NZRLS becoming active on the Social Media pages of the Internet.

Life Members as at 30/6/20

The Society had 11 Life Members

Bill McGavin, Membership Administrator

FINANCE

The Society made a surplus of \$37,446 for the year to 30 June 2020. This compares favourably with the 2019 and 2018 years (\$15,319 loss and \$56,126 loss respectively). Part of the improved performance can be attributed to three generous bequests, totalling \$65,000.

Where they could, the Executive Committee managed costs to keep them at similar levels to the previous year. Exceptions were the restoration of the W.M.R. cars and the costs of publications, which are driven by the level and type of restoration activity, and the number and type of publications printed, respectively.

The Balance Sheet of the Society remains healthy. Investments have increased, thanks to the bequests and donations received during the year and an increase in the number of members choosing to pay their subscriptions in advance.

I would like to thank the Society Administration Officers, Sandra Knight and Bill McGavin, for the sterling work they do during the year, keeping the income rolling in and processing subscriptions.

Ken Lankshear, Treasurer

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

The publications committee comprises of Bill Prebble (Chairman), Graeme Carter (Editor of the *Observer*), Graeme Jupp and Rob Merrifield. Our calendar editor, Dave Turner, has continued to work remotely, producing the Society's high quality desk calendar.

New Zealand Railway Observer

As has been the case in previous years, *Observer* was published every two months during the year within the time frames set by the editor. When New Zealand went into lockdown at the end of March, *Observer* 360 was in the final stages of pre-press work and so was unable to be printed until mid-May. However production of that issue was sufficiently advanced that the magazine was able to be produced electronically and emailed to those members who had supplied their email address to the Society. This was done at the end of March and was greatly appreciated by members. The very positive feedback the Society received was hugely encouraging.

As has been the case in previous years, articles have covered a wide variety of rail topics. Articles of an unusual nature always create the most reaction, and Paul Mahoney's article on the small railway used to build the Homer Tunnel provided a lot of interest. Articles about current developments with KiwiRail also continue to be enjoyed.

Sales of *Observer* through retail outlets continue to be steady; which is very gratifying as retail magazine sales overall continue to decline. Our steady sales are a reflection of the quality of articles published and to those authors who have contributed their research, the Society is very thankful. There is a small supply of articles on hand to be published and more articles are always welcome. Rob Merrifield continues to compile the index at the conclusion of each volume and we thank him for his dedication to this work.

Graeme Carter, Editor

Desk Calendar

Earlier in the calendar year the Publications Committee completed an in-depth financial and strategic review of the Society's desk calendar. In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to break-even on our calendar, let alone turn a modest profit for the Society. Alternative formats were investigated and costed, but for numerous reasons these did not provide a turn-around position. It was then with a degree of sadness when we announced earlier in the year that the 2020 desk calendar would be our last.

We are deeply indebted to Dave Turner who for 47 years edited the Society's calendar, producing high quality images and captions year after year. The unseen background work that Dave has performed restoring aged images to the exceptional quality they were finally seen in the calendar, is simply impressive. Thank you Dave for your exceptional work for nearly 5 decades.

Wall Calendar

While New Zealand Railfan ceased publication of their magazine, they decided to continue production of their wall calendar.

Given the demise of the NZRLS desk calendar, we initiated discussions with NZ Railfan and are pleased to report we have joined forces for their 2021 calendar. While calendar production and financial responsibility remains with NZ Railfan, NZRLS have assisted with images and have facilitated an attractive member discount for the 2021 *Passing Trains* wall calendar. We see this arrangement of benefit to NZ Railfan, our Society and members.

Other Publications

We continue to work hard to fulfill our objective of publishing the Observer and stand-alone books for the benefit of our members and the general public. Through this process we provide enjoyable reading material, fulfill the objectives of the Society, and generate a modest income which helps fund future publications and other activities of the Society. The 2019/2020 year has been an interesting and somewhat diverse year of publications.

First book out of the blocks was *Riding With Ces Gledhill*. Published in August, the book immediately captured strong anecdotal feedback, the book being accorded with positive reviews by reviewers and readers alike. Sales have been pleasantly buoyant. Given the 1925 to 1952 era that this book is set in, it is unlikely that we will ever receive another manuscript covering such an early era, so while the book was designed to engage the reader, it is also an important historic account of footplate life during that period.

Following on from this was the first tramway book published by the Society for many decades. Renowned author Graham Stewart entrusted his work *Napier's Royal Blue Trams* to the Society. This book was published in September and quickly filled a void in many member's shelves.

A chance discussion with Graham shortly afterward generated the seeds of a further book. Noting that the interface of New Zealand's tramway and railway stations and tracks had never been covered in the past, Graham set about researching. The culmination was *Crossing Ahead: When Trams Met Trains In New Zealand*, which we published in May. Both of these tramway books have completely sold out.

The highly-anticipated new work authored by member Jon Shingleton on the story of the K^B class, took an unexpected turn earlier in the year. After many years of primary research and crew interviews, Jon has assembled the ultimate story of New Zealand's K^B class locomotives. We have started work on this title and were well into the book lay-up when "the world turned upside down" with Covid-19. During this time Jon has been at sea in the Indian Ocean and unable to return to New Zealand. At the time of this report, due to these challenges we have been held up completing the pre-press work, but are confident the book will be published during the next six months.

It is pleasing to advise we have a number of other titles in various states' of completion, so the future of further interesting reading is assured. However, if you have in mind a book or even a short article, please make contact so we can assist with the concept and discuss options.

Through our publications policy we continue to ensure our members receive value from their membership by offering significant member discounts off our publications.

In closing, I wish to thank members, authors, and the Publications Committee for their support. Also, thanks are extended to Sandra Knight and John Dwyer who process the orders and ensure efficient dispatch of our publications.

We look forward to bringing you more high quality New Zealand railway reading during the year ahead.

Bill Prebble, Chairman of Publications

TURNTABLE

I have edited six issues of *Turntable* (Nos 178 – 183) with four pages each for a total of 24 pages. Each issue was distributed at the same time as successive issues of the *Observer*. *Turntable 182* was ready for printing and distribution when the Covid-19 shutdown took effect, heavily delaying its production and distribution. With help from a number of people, including our printer, we eventually were able to issue it via the internet to those members who had advised the Society of their e-mail address when they renewed their subscriptions. Those people who had not supplied this information had to await the printed version unless other members told them where to read it on line.

Covid restrictions caused us to reconsider the idea of distributing *Turntable* as an electronic newsletter. Once enough members are able to receive it electronically, this would relieve us of the cost of printing *Turntable* and make a small but significant reduction in the weight of the *Observer* as posted. Electronic publishing would also ease the perpetual problem of giving copy and illustrations better space by reducing the need for keeping within a limit of four pages per issue.

We welcomed some 20 new members through the year. Two notable deaths, Gus and Win Weir, were recorded in a report that complemented an obituary for them in the *Observer*. An obituary for the late Keith Brown of Christchurch was very kindly written for *Turntable* by Wayne McClintock, President of Canterbury Railway Society.

We introduced to members Sandra Knight, our part time publications administrator. A number of important notices to members have been published through the year. These have included details of subscriptions payment changes following our alignment of financial, subscription, and *Observer* publishing calendars.

Some Groups provide good copy that we can publish advertising their regular meetings. There are also some Groups we never hear from. I would like to give more specific coverage to their meetings when I can get reports.

Regular reports have recorded progress with our archival digitisation project and with the restoration work on our Wellington & Manawatu Railway carriages.

SILVERSTREAM/NORTH END PREMISES

The original part of our workshop building, now more than 20 years old, required some maintenance where rust had attacked the corrugated metal sheathing at a door lintel. The rusty metal has been cut out and an access door lintel flashing replaced. Some electrical work has been done to improve the lighting over machine tools as these are overhauled and being brought back to good order.

I have been controlling the vegetation adjacent to the building, including finding and killing some gorse and blackberry seedlings. A small shrubbery has been planted across the approach end of the building to soften its appearance a little.

Within the building, slow progress is being made on the overhaul of our woodworking machines. Overhaul of our big Wadkin table saw was completed. This machine is now being re-painted as temperatures permit. The bandsaw has been overhauled. A new vee-belt drive and 2 HP electric motor have been fitted to replace the original flat belt system.

At the end of the year the safety covers were being prepared and trial fitted prior to their being painted.

Some donations of equipment and materials have been received during the year. These were in response to an advertisement in *Turntable*, and leftovers from the closure of a small workshop. We are grateful for the generosity of those members who have helped us.

New storage racks have been completed along the west wall of the workshop, and shelving has been built inside our Kp 1916 that we are using as a tool room. We appreciate the thought and work of the people who have built these for us.

One workbench has been raised to a more convenient working height and has been re-topped, complete with two bench vices. Two other vices have been donated that we will fit to a second bench similarly as resources permit.

Mice and a rat came into the building during the year. Neither survived the incursion. We have poison laid and a rat trap set in a purpose made tunnel.

Members were invited to inspect the workshop on the morning of the 2019 AGM. A small number attended, showing by their questions and discussion their interest in what we have been doing.

The workshop was closed 21 March to 20 May, in conformance with the Covid-19 Levels 4 and 3 restrictions. The principle factor in our slow progress, however, continues to be the very small number of people who make themselves available to work on our projects. Three very useful workers who have helped this year are not members of the Society, have no specific interest in railways, but have enjoyed both the working atmosphere and the satisfaction of doing a good job. We thank Dan Harawira, Matt Walker, and Rob Wood for their contributions. Society members Mike Dutton, Lionel Ford, and Selwyn Roberts have done much good work through the year.

No meeting of the joint NZRLS/SSR management committee has been called in the past year.

PRESERVATION: WMR CARRIAGES

WMR 48 had its body satisfactorily top-coat painted during the year, following which dZine Signs Ltd applied all external signwriting, scroll-work and pin striping. Menzshed Upper Hutt completed the frames of the seats, enabling Cover Me Ltd to make and fit the upholstery. Both firms are based in Upper Hutt. Their work was funded mainly from three grants our Secretary was able to obtain. Our carriage looks very smart, as photographs published in *Observer 360* show.

Two coats of natural finish decking oil have been applied to the interior floors of 48.

We have obtained eight sandblasted glazed panes to go in the entry doors and the internal communicating doors for carriages 48 and 52. These have been made displaying the WMR monogram all to original WMR drawings. We have four original entry doors that are being restored to return them to their original appearance for both No 48 and No 52. This is very time-consuming and difficult work that can be discouraging, but has to be completed if the doors are to look right.

The entry steps for the end balconies of 48 were taken down, painted or varnished as appropriate, and reassembled using tie-bolts made by Selwyn Roberts offsite.

A full set of matching cast iron axlebox covers were made complete with Company initials and year of construction of 48 applied, painted, and fitted in place of the previous motley assortment of covers dating back to NZR ownership.

One set of Woods patent safety gates as used by the WMR has been fully erected on 48. A second set is assembled and being mounted in its correct location.

A number of foundry patterns have been made for parts including eyebolts and hooks for the safety chains between bogie corners and carriage bodies, for pawls to hold the handbrakes on after these have been applied, and for dead buffers as fitted by the WMR to its bogie rolling stock. Other patterns for parts that will be needed later are being worked on.

Some of the new parts and glazing obtained during the year will be used for the restoration of WMR 52. Most of the air_brake parts required to replace underfloor equipment removed from 52 by previous owners have been obtained, overhauled by Selwyn Roberts, and are now stored for when they will be needed. The principal item still needed to go with this is a compatible triple valve.

Progress is slow, mostly because our work team is very small. I am grateful to members John Churchouse, Mike Dutton, Lionel Ford, and Selwyn Roberts for their contributions through the year. Non-Society members Dan Harawira, Matt Walker, and Rob Wood, have contributed their work to our achieving necessary steps along the way. Other members who have made significant contributions in kind through the year in response to our appeals for tools or materials are Colin Barry, Colin Jenner, Syd le Quesne, Bill Macpherson and Lorne Thomson. I would like to record my thanks to all.

We would welcome additional workers! Our main Society member-workers are over 70 years old, two of whom are in their 80s. These people cannot continue for ever. Any member who lives within a reasonable distance of our workshop and is looking for a project would be very welcome to join in.

Rob Merrifield

ARCHIVES

I guess it would be fair to say that the 12 months ending 30 June 2020 were like a game of two halves. Prior to Christmas 2019, it was pretty much business as normal, but unknown to us then trouble was brewing overseas. That trouble was a corona virus, which inflicted a highly infectious illness called Covid-19 on literary millions of people, including some here in New Zealand.

The virus and associated illness arrived in New Zealand in March this year, and in an attempt to contain it and stamp it out, at the behest of the Government the whole of New Zealand went into a lockdown from late March, with everyone except essential workers being told to stay at home. Under these circumstances we could not operate as normal, so the archive was closed and the computer systems shut down for the duration on 25 March 2020. We resumed pretty much normal archives activity in mid-May.

At the beginning of our review period our long standing archivist, Mark Cole, was still in charge. Health issues meant that Mark's absences from Ava started to become more frequent, and he was last in the office as archivist on 15 February 2020. A few weeks later he retired from that position, and a morning tea was held on 8 August 2020 to celebrate his many years' service as archivist, and to make a presentation to him as a token of our thanks.

Only about a week or so before the lockdown started, and much to my surprise, I was asked to be the Society's archivist. I'm still not sure that I am the right person to do such a job, but I undertook to "give it a go", and I am still there, so far.

All the normal archive activities such as answering people's questions, supplying requested images, receiving donated materials, sorting and cataloguing existing as well as new items have continued as before. Some items which don't meet our collection criteria, such as

movie film, video tapes and sound recordings, have been rehomed to more appropriate depositories.

Scanning of photographic images as well as plans has been one of our major activities during the year. This comes under the umbrella of the Digitisation Working Group, and their leader will report separately.

However, there was one thing which became apparent during the year which we would have preferred not to have, and that is the so-called Vinegar Syndrome. This is basically the degradation of black and white film negatives, and in the process acetic acid is formed, which gives off the characteristic vinegar smell. The negatives which get this affliction seem to be ones from the early to mid-1950s, through to about 1970. From my observations both at Ava, and at home (the E J McClare Collection), Ilford film seems to be affected the most. Robert Finley produced a very good article on this topic and how it has affected his collection in *Observer* 359, starting at page 253.

The vinegar smell was noticed by me a few months ago just before the lockdown, emanating from the area where the boxes containing Graham Stewart's tramway negatives were stored. When the lids of those boxes were lifted, we certainly found what the Vinegar Syndrome is all about! Fortunately, most of these negatives have already been scanned, so most of the boxes have been moved into quarantine in our building at the Silver Stream Railway. The remaining boxes have been taken home by Brent Efford so he can check the negatives against the scans already done. Once it has been confirmed that each affected negative has been scanned, then that negative will be discarded.

But what about the rest of the Society's photographic collection? Although we couldn't smell anything, it doesn't mean that the degradation process hasn't already started. By the time you can smell anything the process is already well under way, and you are really too late to try and save the negatives in pristine condition. However, there are some test kits available and one of these was purchased from a New York supplier. These comprise of test strips which are put in the negative envelopes and boxes, and are then left for a couple of weeks. The strips detect acidity and change colour (a bit like litmus paper) according to the strength of the acidic fumes. The result of this testing was much better than we had dared anticipate, in that only half a drawer of negatives in the Graham Radcliff collection was affected. Everything else got a clean bill of health. We still have plenty of these test strips left, so we will be scattering them around the collection again on a periodical basis.

I wish to thank many people for their assistance to our archive during the year. They include Bob Bevan-Smith and his digitisation team, John Churchouse, Kevin Crosado, Tony Hurst, Brian Pearce, Bill Prebble, Phil Rundle and David Sharp.

Graeme McClare, Society Archivist

WEBSITE

Since we have changed our subscription year (July to June), this report will be the last one that does not cover a full subscription year. Subsequent reports will be made after the financial year end (in August or September) and can report on a full year of activity.

This year we have continued using the WordPress application which, due to its what-you-see-is-what-you-get editing can be shared with users not familiar with the internet language HTML. The decision to use this application has allowed the Society to transfer the web site maintenance to our Publications Administrator at Ava, whose familiarity with other computer apps has allowed her to take over with a minimum of training.

The Publications Catalogue has been revised to include members' prices as well, removing the need for two separate catalogues. Member's prices are also included in the text version of the catalogue as well as showing the stock availability position.

NZRL's second hand books library has been catalogued and we have added the Second Hand Books Catalogue to the publications tab on the website. Sales of second hand books has really taken off since it was put on the website and the catalogue is updated regularly.

Rod D Murgatroyd, Retiring Web Master

Since taking over the role I have spent considerable time on the web site updating articles, archiving old articles, moving information into the appropriate area and ensuring that the contact group details are correct.

I have also set up a donation tab for donations to the restoration of the WMR carriages. The plan is that when we do updates on the carriage restoration, we will mention the donation option.

Sandra Knight, Incoming Web Master

FACEBOOK

It was agreed that the Society should develop its own Facebook page to both promote its activities and to aid the recruitment of new members. I undertook, with assistance from Graeme McClare, to deliver this and in September the page was operational.

In the last 10 months we have had 592 'post engagements' and 291 total page 'likes'. These figures keep growing and include 'likes' from overseas.

Since the Facebook was launched, we have been able to share with our followers notifications of our new publications, progress of restoration on WMR carriage 48, photographs from the NZRLS collection along with a glimpse of some of the treasures we have housed in the Thomas McGavin Building at Ava. We were able to update our members during the Covid-19 lockdown of our opening hours and to keep them of informed about what was included in the *Observer 360* due to its printing being delayed by the national shutdown. With help from our printer, a PDF version of *Observer 360* was e-mailed to those members who had supplied an e-mail address when they renewed their subscription. We also provided information on our magazine groups, along with information on the second hand books we have for sale.

Graeme has located interesting historic photographs from our archives and elsewhere and these are posted to the page. They generate feedback which we appreciate and we do encourage members to check out our page and feel free to contribute to the comments section.

Sandra Knight, Publications Administrator

THOMAS MCGAVIN RESEARCH GRANT

No formal applications for a grant were received in the 2019 to 2020 financial year.

MAGAZINE GROUPS A AND B

Group A

This year has been different in that COVID-19 has had a definite effect on the group. Even so, five sub-groups, totalling four members in each, were in receipt of between 12 and 13 bags throughout the year, all of which have been returned to me for sending on to another sub-group. One bag, sent to the Auckland sub-group on 6th April, has not been returned despite several inquiries as to its whereabouts. One other despatch was delivered in a completely saturated state and the magazines were unreadable. This had occurred somewhere within NZ Post 'care' as a bag in Group B sent on by the same member, was also affected in the same way. These magazines had to be written off.

With all groups having only a maximum of four members, I would have thought that bags would have moved between members considerably quickly, but often this has not been

the case. Other delays may have been due to COVID-19, but it would also appear that NZ Post does not treat the movement of bags with any great urgency and no doubt this causes delays.

As usual, I receive magazines from the Society without any problems and these are sent out to members promptly. I receive notification from time to time from members noting the delays for whatever reason and this is appreciated. If members are able to move magazines more quickly within their group, it would assist in cutting down bags being withdrawn due to the editions being deemed too old to be of much interest.

Group B

I took over responsibility of Group B on 26th February, 2020, so this report covers only from that date. On or around this date, I sent out a despatch of magazines to each of the five sub-groups within this group. Unfortunately, this distribution fairly quickly was affected with the COVID-19 lock-down and there have been several problems experienced since March. With the exception of one sub-group, all others have been issued with five lots of magazines and all of these have been or are in the process of being returned to me for further action. As with Group A, one bag had also to be destroyed after being saturated. COVID-19 may have had its effect on magazine distribution throughout the country, despite NZ Post working through the lock-down. On looking at the distribution sheets enclosed with each shipment, members' notes completed prior to the bags being sent on or returned to me indicate in numerous cases there appear to be considerable delays within the system. Again, with only a maximum of four members in each sub-group, I would have expected rotation of each bag to have been quicker. I have had to withdraw a couple of bags as the content, by the time these were returned to me, I deemed to have been too old to send out again. As with Group A, I receive magazines from the Society regularly and these are sent out to members as quickly as possible. Once again, it would be appreciated if members would advise me of any reasons for possible delays, so these can be dealt with to ensure all members receive material in a timely manner.

Stu Ingram, Convenor

DIGITISATION WORKING GROUP

This report attempts to inform the progress to date, and the problems we have to overcome, in the target to have all the images in the Society's Archive digitised to an acceptable standard, and described in terms suitable for a database search to allow them to be found quickly and simply. That will enable the Archive to quickly respond to requests from enquirers for particular images.

Digitisation progress to date

We now have more than 30,000 photographic digital images, which is more than 10% of the total of photographs held at Ava. There is a caveat: an unknown but probably small percentage of these had been digitised prior to the start of the project.

However, a significant proportion of those have deficient, or no, descriptions. Also, some collections arrived on CDs, some with a lower standard of resolution, which we are unable to change as we do not have the originals. These also do not have explicit descriptions.

Database of images

This year, we have devised a design for a database of the photographic images, which will enable a search for individual images or groups of images meeting a specific requirement. We spent some time investigating database systems, including those operated by several New Zealand institutions with large collections of images. Unfortunately, the costs associated with such systems are unsustainable.

The database system we have chosen is a mainstream product used by, amongst others, Cambridge University of United Kingdom. It was purchased by a donation from Alan Smith, a member of the DWG. Unlike other products we investigated, it does not demand

large annual fees. It uses standard tools to allow the database to meet needs for particular types of data. The system is being developed by member Len Chisholm.

The database itself is now in test mode, prior to loading the current stock of digitised images. A sample of images was loaded, and a communication system allows DWG volunteers to access the system for trial purposes. We have chosen the name 'TrainFinda' for the system.

The database is now available for editing of image descriptions. Updating and loading the current stock of images has begun. Subsequently, we have loaded the images of four photographers.

Also, we are in the process of creating a document describing the procedures and processes in use in the Archive, together with data concerning the collections in the Archive. That will include processes for future updates to the database.

Equipment and systems at Ava

We have installed a fourth PC, which was second hand, and we have installed the latest version of Windows software. We attached a scanner, which had been donated to the Society. It is connected to the local network within the Archive. That setup is adequate for scanning images to the desired standard. It may also be used for access to the database.

We have been using individual spreadsheets to collect information about the images of each collection which are digitised. In most cases, these are filled in as the images are scanned. However, some are not, as the person doing the scanning had no knowledge of the subject. We have begun to transfer that data into the database system.

Issues to be resolved:

People working for the DWG

The number of people active in digitising the collections has dwindled to a very small number. This will extend the lifetime of the project substantially.

We have stopped sending physical negatives and slides by courier to volunteers working at home to scan and describe. The process of selecting images, packaging them securely, recording to whom they were sent, and receiving the images returned, then returning them to the correct place in the Archive storage was time-consuming. The cost of courier services was also a large factor.

Instead, we are now trialling sending batches of digital copies (at low resolution) of images that have already been scanned, but not adequately described, by email to volunteers working at home. The volunteers write the descriptions into a spreadsheet which is returned by email. That will help us deal with the large number of images for which we do not have adequate descriptions.

Receipt of donated digital collections

A number of collections which had already been digitised before being donated have issues which we will have to deal with at some stage.

- One collection in particular has used identical file names for thousands of images stored in dozens of discrete folders. These will have to be renamed to ensure that each image is uniquely identified before being added to the database.
- Other such collections have little or no descriptive data.
- Many of the collections have been digitised in a different format to our standard.

Other matters

In order to adequately describe images which may have been photographed half a century or more ago, we need to draw on the institutional knowledge of people of a certain age. We know that the pool of likely candidates is inevitably diminishing. This will become more serious as the years go by.

There are a number of paper-based sources of information in the Archive. These include handwritten notebooks from people who travelled on excursions, or watched from the lineside, and whose photo collections have subsequently been donated to the Society. To make those most useful, it would be great if they were transcribed into word documents, available for reference. However, that is a time-consuming and often difficult task. We do not have the resources to do that.

A small but significant number of our photographs are actually copies made from originals supplied by another photographer. In many instances, we do not know the name of the originator.

Technical drawings

A large collection of drawings was salvaged from A & G Price when that company became insolvent.

The Society was fortunate in being given a plan scanner by the Lower Hutt City Council. Some thousands of technical drawings have been digitised by a couple of dedicated volunteers, who are Society members but not members of the DWG. These are valuable resources, but are not regarded as a part of the digitisation project. These are generally on very large sheets of paper, which are not in imminent danger of decay. Many of these are signalling diagrams and station layouts.

Robert (Bob) Bevan Smith, Digitisation Working Group

AUCKLAND GROUP

The Auckland Group met five of the six times scheduled during the year ended 30 June 2020, the April 2020 meeting being cancelled as due to Auckland's first Covid-19 lockdown.

Programme topics included:- the group's banking arrangements, finances and future; recent visits to the Bay of Islands Vintage Railway, Steam Incorporated and the Rimutaka Incline Railway; Stephenson's Rocket; a selection of Auckland trolleybus photos; a selection of railway photos taken by the late Trev Terry; a recent visit to South Australian urban and heritage railways; the Helensville Railway Station & Museum; LNER's New Azuma Trains; recent video footage of Rm 31 & F 163 in action; New Zealand's longest train?; a selection of railway slides taken by the late Alister Tewsley.

Appreciation is expressed to all those who presented programme items and/or helped in other ways, especially: Richard Croker, Ann Hulena, Floyd Hulena, Trevor Lees, Linda Malcolm, Adrienne Millar, Scott Osmond, Richard Stratford, Robert Sweet, John Webley and John Wise.

Sean Millar

BAY OF PLENTY

The Bay of Plenty Group has met monthly except for the three months under Covid 19 lockdown. DVDs have been varied with the topics being USA Durango and Silverton railway, Steam around South west great Britain, Hitler's Railways of Nazi Germany. Fielding Wab 794. Chinese Steam and Garratt locomotives of Australia and South Africa, all of which created much discussion.

Although small in numbers our members continue to be enthusiastic about attending the meetings. Our year ended on a sad note with the passing of one of our long standing members.

David Kent

HAWKES BAY

Hawkes Bay Rail Inc has mostly continued to meet every second month in the past year in the old Customhouse, Ahuriri, Napier. Meetings could not be held during the major

Covid-19 lockdown but our newsletter "Hawkes Bay Rail Scene" has been produced throughout. The usual range of meetings was held with the annual outdoor model railway visit and barbecue at Keirunga Gardens in December. Attendance at our meetings has continued steady. The main local rail interest has been the reinstatement of the Napier-Wairoa line and resumption soon after Covid-19 stoppage is anticipated. Visitors to the area are always welcome to the meetings as advertised in "Turntable" and "Hawkes Bay Rail Scene".

David Pryor

ROTORUA

Our Rotorua group has continued our monthly meetings throughout the year, but did not hold a couple during the lockdown. We have a hard core group of around seven members who attend.

These meetings are held at the Ngongotaha Rail Park club rooms, with some held at member residents homes.

Murray Farquhar

MANAWATU

During the year the group lost one of its stalwarts, Jim Mann, who had been a member of the Society since 1963. Jim was a regular provider of programmes and his company is being missed. The attendance at meetings averages five, so we now meet in members home's which is very convenient. In spite of the small number at our monthly meetings, we enjoy each other's company. The programmes are usually DVDs or power point presentations of slides. Due to lockdown restrictions we were unable to have our usual visit to a place of interest but we did have a lunch in Levin, which was enjoyed by all.

Graham Stewart

DUNEDIN

As a consequence of Covid 19 our Group met on only three occasions during this period. The meetings were hosted by Ian Wylie and myself and the average attendance was eight members.

Ian showed a selection of Otago, Southland and Wellington railway and shipping views, Grant arranged an evening of Cecil Bachop's tram and trolley bus slides and at the February meeting Dale screened a video of London's underground Piccadilly line.

It is with real regret that we recorded the deaths of two members who contributed much to our informal meetings: Cecil Bachop and Reid McNaught. Their banter and deep railway knowledge are sadly missed.

Once the danger of Covid 19 has passed we hope to reinstate our meetings with the first scheduled for November.

Bill Cowan

INVERCARGILL

The group is still meeting bimonthly, each odd numbered month at member's homes on the 4th Sunday of those months.

We still have only five members in the group with an average age of about 79. As with a lot of hobby organisations it is difficult to attract new members.

2020 has been difficult with the Covid 19 lockdown as we have not been able to have two meetings directly related to that. There have also been months where meetings are not practical because more than one member is unable to attend.

Our agenda typically for meetings is railway news & update, a DVD of New Zealand interest and members' photos, both current & from the past. Members' recent trips are featured in the presentations. Late last year Peter Lankshear related his experiences on his trip to

see and photograph Big Boy, UP4014, up close while in the US. (This was a birthday present from his family on his 90th birthday – a present a lot of us would like.)
Noel Joyce

This report has been compiled from information supplied from a number of sources as credited above.

Colin Barry, Secretary