



# **NEW ZEALAND RAILWAY AND LOCOMOTIVE SOCIETY INC.**

## **ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2024**

## THE PRESIDENT

The New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society was founded in 1944 – 80 years ago. In that year the Society was at the forefront of promoting interests in rail in New Zealand, and today that is still the case. It is a tribute to all who have been involved in the Society, both in leadership or as an ordinary member, that the Society is still active in encouraging and increasing one's knowledge of railways.

The last 12 months has been a good year for the Society. Our strengths are our magazine, *The New Zealand Railway Observer*, and our book publishing programme. This year *New Zealand Railways at Night* was published. This is an outstanding book and is undoubtedly the best book the Society has published. Bill Prebble is to be congratulated on the hours of work he has put into producing this landmark publication.

During the year the Board has dealt with two major issues. One was the decision to publish *Observer* in a digital format. Much consideration was given to the financial aspects of this challenge and the need to provide members with a choice. Although implementation of the decision did not occur during the year under review, much groundwork was done to ensure a successful launch of the digital version.

The other issue considered was an enlarged archive building. Our search has focused on two buildings in Upper Hutt, both of which we believe would suit our needs, and are within our price range. It is hoped to make a decision on the alternative to our North Street premises during the coming year.

The Society has a good Board, who are prepared to debate and make decisions on difficult issues. The Society has been well served by this team. At the Annual General Meeting this year, two Board members will be standing down. To Glen Summers and Rob Merrifield our sincere thanks for all the work you have done in promoting the Society. I especially want to pay tribute to the four decades of service Rob has contributed to the management of the Society. He has, and is continuing, to provide sterling service to a wide variety of the Society's activities. A Big Thank You.

Rail has been part of the New Zealand landscape for over 160 years, and our Society has been recording this progress for 80 of them. Long may both organisations continue to serve the nation.

*Graeme Carter, President*

## **ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE, SECRETARY, MEMBERSHIP and FINANCE**

### **Administration Committee**

In the last year the members of the Administration Committee have been David Cuthbert (Chairman), Bruce Taylor (Secretary), Ken Lankshear (Treasurer), Chris Benson, Glen Summers and Clark Simmons. The committee normally meets prior to the quarterly Board meeting and at other times as required. The committee met six times, one of these via Zoom.

The committee is responsible to the board for the organisation, control and day to day running of the Society. A key task is financial oversight, with particular attention given to payments made to the suppliers of services, including contractors. Ken Lankshear, as Treasurer, provided detailed monthly reports on these for approval. He also provided reports on financial performance.

Bruce Taylor, as Secretary, provided a report to each committee meeting which raised issues for the information of, and/or required consideration by the committee. The arrangements for the Society's AGM and the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary were considered and developed in this context.

At each meeting, the committee received reports on the state of, and improvements to the Society's buildings (the Thomas McGavin Building at Ava) from Bill Prebble and (Silverstream North End Shed) from Rob Merrifield. Rob also provided excellent illustrated reports on the preservation work which has continued on the former Wellington and Manawatu Railway (WMR) carriages

Bill McGavin (Membership Administrator) provided reports to each regular meeting; these included membership applications, which the committee is required to approve. In the last year 40 new and returning memberships were approved; this compares with 57 in the previous year. The committee again records its appreciation of Bill's work in following up with members which has resulted in significant numbers renewing.

Over 86% of Society members have provided their individual email addresses and we have continued to communicate with members using these. The expanded edition of "Turntable" is distributed every two months along with information regarding annual membership renewal and notification of information regarding the AGM including advice on the availability of AGM papers via the website.

Stu Ingram (Co-ordinator Magazine Groups) reported on the operation of the two magazine groups. The difficulties caused by the impact of Covid on the delivery of magazines from overseas were resolved during the year. Stu has continued to

experience delays in the movement of the bags of magazines due to the erratic delivery by NZ Post and the failure of some members to promptly forward on bags.

Sandra Knight (Publications Administrator) continued to provide a high standard of processing orders for the Society's publications. This has involved her in extensive communication with members and others regarding their queries regarding publications and related matters. During the year she took on responsibility for the dispatch of publications, both new and second hand; this task had previously been undertaken by volunteers..

Again, over the last year as Web Master Sandra both maintained the site and explored ways to improve its appearance and use. The site aims to be a venue to promote membership, the sale of publications and other products and provide information to both members and the public.

Sandra has continued to use the Society's Facebook Page to promote new publications as well as to post information about the Society. Graeme McClare (Archivist) has selected historic photographs from the Society's collection which have been posted and generated positive feedback and interest from followers. The intention is to expand the range of photographs to highlight the extent of the digitised collection.

Bill Prebble has continued to identify surplus reference publications and other items which Sandra in turn has used Trade Me to promote for sale. This generated useful income.

The Society needs to update its constitution (the rules and bylaws) to prepare to meet the new requirements for re-registration under the provisions of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. Work to review the constitution and identify changes required has continued over the past year, but priority is required to complete this to allow the board to determine the changes to be recommended to the Society to adopt. The aim is to complete this process in the next year.

I want to thank committee members and particularly our contractors, Bill McGavin and Sandra Knight, for their contribution during the past year which has ensured the efficient administration of the Society.

*David Cuthbert, Chairman Administration Committee*

## **Secretary**

One important role I have as Secretary is receiving and responding to correspondence to the NZRLS which comes almost entirely via the society's website or by email. A lot of effort goes into ensuring member's communications are responded to quickly and effectively by the appropriate officer. Every member's message is important and we hope we have dealt with your enquiry, your change of address, or your report of the non-delivery of the "Observer" in a courteous and satisfactory way.

The Secretary is also responsible for formal communications from the Board to members via our newsletter “Turntable” and via the society website (railsoc.org.nz). A reminder that important announcements will be in both places. On the website the information could be filed under “Latest News” or it could be under the “Members Menu”. Papers and minutes from the 2024 AGM will be filed under the Members Menu.

I play an active part in the overall administration of the society through my membership of the Administration Committee. Working with other members of the committee I have, for example, been involved in the planning and organization of society events, such as the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Luncheon and AGM on 19 October this year and, in the past, the Christmas Function.

Communication about the society’s insurance with our insurance broker is another responsibility of the Secretary. For the information of members, currently we have insurance coverage of the buildings at Silverstream and Ava and of stock and contents at Ava. At the Board meeting in August this year it was resolved that we set up a reserve account for self-insurance of the contents of the Silverstream North End building to which we will pay annually an amount determined by the Board. A quote had been obtained from our broker which indicated that taking out indemnity insurance for the WMRC car 48 would be expensive and this was an important factor in the decision to self-insure contents at Silverstream.

*Bruce Taylor Secretary*

### **Membership for 2024 Year (1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024)**

Total Membership for the 2024 year as at 30 June 2024:

- Paid and Un-Paid for 2024 = 764
  - Paid Members for 2024 = 733
  - Unpaid members for 2023 = 31 (These members were removed from the Society Membership privileges, on August 31, 2023)

There were 61 new members joining for the 2024 year made up of:

- 40 new members joined the Society and were placed in the 2024 financial year
- A further 11 joined late in the 2024 year and were directly put into the 2025 financial year.

### Deceased during the 2024 year

14 deaths of members are recorded with our sympathy.

Former Members:

4309	Mr Gilbert Taylor	Timaru
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279	Sir Ian Barker	Auckland
2828	Mr John Levey	Victoria, Australia
4977	Mr Clive Wymer	Waiuku
1999	Mr Ron Hamilton	Auckland
2805	Mr Murray Gowans	Porirua
4922	Mr Frank Lucas	Greymouth
1336	Mr Ray Mathewson	Levin
4291	Mr Ian Jenner	Lawrence
4904	Mr Cran Julian	Napier
2715	Mr Grant Edgecombe	Cambridge
5129	Mr Stan Trotter	Mount Maunganui
1321	Mr Peter Lankshear	Invercargill
1478	Mr John Price	Hamilton

If I have missed any, please accept my apology.

#### Life Members as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024

The Society has eight (8) Life Members. They are:

- Peter Dyer, Rob Merrifield, Ian Wylie, John Clayton, Dave Turner, Graeme Berry, Bill Prebble, Graeme McClare

#### Magazine Groups

(These are for New Zealand Members only)

- Magazine Group A: This group had 23 Paid members for 2024
- Magazine Group B: This group had 18 Paid members for 2024

#### The outlook beyond 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 from a membership viewpoint

The cost-of-living increases world-wide are certainly impacting on our members; all factions of our membership report the difficulties they have with day to day living expenses.

- To assist our members with renewing their subscriptions, we have endeavoured to make the renewal process as friendly and as easy as possible for our members. As such it was considered that asking for renewals in April, as we did last year was a little early for a subscription that was not due until end of June. We believe posting the renewals at the end of May is a lot less demanding and more friendly to our Society members. A reminder notice also goes out at the end of July advising any members still unpaid that they need to be aware that the loss of membership

privileges occurs from September 1 for those unpaid. Such notices normally have a high success rate.

- A valuable compliment to assist the cost-of-living increases is our introduction of the digital option of the “Observer” and this certainly is seen to assist our overseas members.
- The introduction of the Digital “Observer” has had very positive feedback from members. Approximately 6% of our members have enthusiastically embraced the Digital “Observer” as their exclusive reading choice for 2025. Interestingly, even those who opted to receive the paper copy, have still expressed delight in also being able to access the “Observer” online. They see it as a valuable complement to their print experience and from these comments it is expected that many more will switch to the digital version over time, as they become used to its operating format.

*Bill McGavin, Membership Administrator*

## **Finance**

A full financial report including financial results and explanatory notes can be found in the Performance Report for YE 30 June 2024 which will be tabled at the 2024 AGM.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **The Publications Committee**

The publications committee comprises of Bill Prebble (Chairman), Graeme Carter (Editor of the *Observer*), and Rob Merrifield. The Publications Committee largely communicates by email, optimizing time and providing an efficient process of meeting immediate needs.

### **New Zealand Railway Observer**

*Observer* continues to be published on-time every two months within the guidelines set by the Society. However, slow deliveries by New Zealand Post are a concern as some members receive their copy of the magazine considerably later than the Society desires. The magazine continues to attract a wide range of interesting articles and photograph selections, which readers enjoy. Authors who contribute articles are much appreciated, as are Graeme McClare for his Research Notes and Rob Merrifield for compiling the index for each volume.

Retail sales have been challenging this year with the closure of some independent bookshops and an overall reduction in retail spending affecting sales. Compared with overall magazine sales trends, as supplied by our magazine distributor, our sales are above average.

Much time has been spent implementing the production of *Observer* in digital format. Discussions took place with similar railway organisations in Australia and United Kingdom on their experiences with digital production and valuable ideas were used to implement our programme. Although the first digital version appeared after the end of the year, the work done during the year to create a good alternative has been well worth it. The Board considers this move will be of great benefit to the Society in years to come.

### **Thomas McGavin Research Grant**

This grant is available to all researchers and potential authors that may be able to contribute significant research and possible material for a future publication. This year there was no grant made within the period of review, but an earlier grant recipient has advanced their book project.

### **Other Publications**

We work diligently to fulfill our objective of publishing the *New Zealand Railway Observer* and stand-alone books for the benefit of our members and the general public. We strive to maintain our position as New Zealand's eminent producer of high-quality rail-interest books, something that continues to lift the profile of the Society and enhances the membership base. Through this process we provide enjoyable reading material, fulfilling the Society objectives of information sharing, and generate a modest income which helps fund future publications and other activities of the Society.

During the year under review, global paper prices have increased but there was a marked reduction of freight cost between Asia and New Zealand. Of ongoing concern are the escalating NZ Post local and international letter and parcel rates. Postage has become a significant cost to the Society and sadly dampens affordability of our both *Observer* and our standalone books to overseas purchasers. As an example, postage cost alone is over \$70 to send a book such as *Alpine Thunder* or *New Zealand Railways at Night* to parts of the world such as US or Europe. We do though ensure our members receive value from their membership by sharing generous member discounts on our publications.

This year, our key launch was *New Zealand Railways At Night*, by author Bill Prebble. This was a four-year project bringing together a broad selection of night images to both tell the story of NZR's night railway operation, share the almost forgotten passenger memories of riding the night trains, the gritty perspective from the railway worker on shift,



and finally turning the spotlight around on the photographers who made the images possible.

We were fortunate that Copyright Licensing New Zealand provided us a generous grant toward the publication of *New Zealand Railways at Night*. This enabled us to use high quality art paper, complete the book with an embossed hard cover and make this high page-count work affordable to our members.

Our next standalone book publication was a reprint of *Railway Houses of New Zealand*. Authored by Bruce Shalders and released in 2017, the book had been out of print for many years but we received ongoing requests for it. A local soft-cover reprint was arranged and this met with immediate interest. If you had ever considered a copy, now would be the time to act while there are some copies remaining.

In the pipeline are a number of works by numerous authors, including books on New Zealand railcars, early railway refreshment rooms and fare, a history of New Zealand Midland Railway Company, and New Zealand's last remaining operational signal box. As usual we are always on the lookout for established or novice authors. 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 early in the project.

In closing, I wish to thank members, photographers, authors, and the Publications Committee for their support. We look forward to bringing you more high-quality railway reading.

*Bill Prebble, Chairman of Publications*

## **TURNTABLE**

Another six issues of *Turntable* (202-207) were produced this year. The paper version had a total of 24 pages; the electronic edition 77 pages. We continue to receive complimentary messages about the latter; clearly our presentation and enhanced content are appreciated by members. "Thank you", to those members who have offered comments and suggestions. We have followed up on your suggestions whenever possible. One example of such has been our features introducing two people who work hard behind the scenes to keep our Society running as it should, Sandra Knight, our Administration Officer and Graeme McClare, our Archivist.

In these issues we have welcomed 31 new members to the Society and have provided an obituary for Mrs Gladys McClare, wife of foundation member E J McClare, and mother of Graeme McClare, our Archivist. A number of essential notices to members were published, as were two members' advertisements. Several news items unlikely to receive

fuller coverage in the *Observer* were reported, as was our AGM. Progress on archival and restoration activities have been reported as fully as possible.

*Rob Merrifield, Editor*

## **SILVERSTREAM NORTH END CARRIAGE WORKSHOP**

### **North End Premises**

Only minor works have been needed to our building in the past year.

Our intruder and fire alarm had two defective door sensors and its battery replaced. We believe that over the Christmas holidays some intruders attempted to break into the building but failed.

The electricity meter was altered by our electricity supplier to 4G technology so it could continue to be read remotely.

Some jiggers we have long been storing belong to Silver Stream Railway. These have now been returned to them, clearing badly needed floor space for other use.

A notable visitor early in May was 93 years old Lance Eastwood, a former manager of Woburn railway workshops. Those who were there at the time report him to have been well impressed at the work he saw.

### **Restoration of WMR Carriages**

Our restoration team has increased in the past year, with Kevin Cottle, Graeme Clover and Ben Davidge bringing their very helpful skills to our work. The rest of our workers, Mike Dutton, Lionel Ford, Bill Prebble, Selwyn Roberts, Bruce Shadbolt and John Vannisselroy, have worked steadily at various aspects of our restoration project. I would like to acknowledge the extensive work Ian Close has contributed in Christchurch to the making of many necessary parts or fittings.

Pahiatua Railcar Society very helpfully brought the last of our reproduction oil lamps and a number of other fittings from Christchurch to the North Island when Rm 31 returned after running charter trips in the South Island. We are grateful for their doing this without charge and thank that society for their consideration.

We wish to acknowledge donations by member Grant Bowie that have enabled us to proceed with two more expensive tasks, the making of the internal doors for WMR 48, and the making of four leaf springs for the bogies of WMR 52.

Work on WMR 48 has progressed well during the past year. The entry doors are fully completed, and all main windows have their associated fittings made and placed. Where possible when making fittings or parts of any kind, we are making enough of these for all three carriages at the same time. This will add to the “family resemblance” between carriages.

Interior doors to go between saloons and leading into the toilet compartment of 48 had been made by a tradesman at the end of May. Work has begun on hanging these.

Electrical second fix is under way to complete this feature of No 48. The electric lights in one saloon of 48 were first test energised on May 30, another big step forward. Other electrical work is still proceeding. All bulb-holders and half the individual control switches are in place and connected in this carriage. For practical reasons, we have had to adopt 12 volt DC supply for the lighting in our restoration work, as opposed to the original 50 volt DC used by the WMR Company. Other electrical work is as authentic as we can make it.

Reproduction oil lamps for all three carriages are now complete and held at the North End workshop in readiness for their being fitted in place. Bruce Shadbolt and Ian Close made these using variously laser cut parts and lost wax castings, brass sheet and tubes. I must pay tribute to their work; the Wellington-based team had always expected these lamps to be our most difficult fittings to obtain or to make.

A bogie has been withdrawn from under WMR 48 to be thoroughly checked. This is a first step in checking both bogies and fully servicing and checking the air brake system, together with all brake rigging.

No progress has been made on making reproduction dead buffers as used by the WMR (dead buffers were intended to prevent carriages closing up if a coupling were to break) for financial reasons.

WMR 52 is progressing well. During the year, support stands were made that now carry the walls framing and roof structure of this carriage after these were separated and lifted to allow working headroom above the floor framing. This latter framing has been stripped down to individual components. Wherever possible the original timbers are being repaired for re-use. As much as possible of the original ironwork fittings are being refurbished for re-use. Lost or too deteriorated items are being replaced.

Two bogies held for use under No 52 are being overhauled. This work also calls for the making of some replacement castings where deterioration is excessive, or where parts

have been removed in the past. A third bogie, also from the NZR tramway at Mamaku, has been obtained from Goldfields Railway at Waihi for parts that can be used in this work. It is being stripped and useful parts refurbished or stockpiled. New leaf springs have been made to replace those removed by NZR when the bogies we will use were altered for use as log carriers.



*Kevin Cottle working on a trial re-assembly of pieces for the central spine beam of WMR 52.*

*A mix of refurbished and replacement timber pieces are being used.*



*The first oil lamp was trial fitted to the ceiling of WMR 48 in June. Putting these in place is a big step forward in making the carriage interior look more complete.*

*Photos: Rob Merrifield.*

This year we have concluded we can complete No. 48 before the middle of 2025 by concentrating our work on to it. Major jobs for the carriage's completion include making and fitting the luggage racks to go inside the saloons (above the windows); making and fitting the dead buffers; checking that the air brake and bogies, etc. are all working satisfactorily; and completing a number of lesser jobs that are already in hand. A possible exception in this is to make and fit blinds on the main windows – that depends on our being able to afford them in time.

Work will continue on WMR 52, but at a slower pace than during this past year.

We would be grateful for your continued support in 2024-25 year. We trust that we will be able to continue the present pace of work on our carriages. Donations from members have been a big help in the restoration team's work, for which we thank all who have contributed thus far, whether workers or donating supporters. Please continue to help in our landmark restoration project.

*Rob Merrifield, North End Controller*

## **ARCHIVES**

We still continue to receive donations of archival material, and we are most grateful for the papers, books, plans and other items of a railway nature that are passed on to us. All these items are sorted and recorded before being put away, and Bill Prebble is very good at doing this. Some of the donated books and manuals we already have good copies of, so in these circumstances the surplus copies are added to our large cache of items available for sale, some of which are auctioned via the Trade Me website. A current list of the second hand books which we have available for sale may be found on the Society's website. All proceeds from these sales are used for archival purposes.

Our archive is getting very full, but we are still able to accept donations in the meantime. I know that the Board of Management is currently looking for new premises, and I have visited (with BOM members) one of the buildings which might be suitable.

There is still a steady stream of requests from members and non-members for information pertaining to railways in New Zealand. Sometimes these requests are for digital images of photographs and plans. These are usually supplied as digital files via emails, or if the quantity is large, we use a drop box.

Some of the requests for assistance are from groups or societies who are restoring locomotives, rolling stock or railway buildings, etc. In most of these cases, provided they are a bona fide preservation organisation, and there is no direct cost to our society, we provide this material free of charge. We firmly believe that scarce funds for preservation projects should be spent, where possible, on steel, timber, bricks, or other items directly used in these ventures.

We still get visitors, both members and non-members to our archive. Those who are visiting for the first time are usually very impressed with the wide range of items and material which we have. However, we don't have everything, and sometimes we are unable to help, but we can usually suggest another depository.

Kevin Crosado continues to do a very good job of digitally copying and cataloguing the drawings and tracings (mostly ex NZR) which we are holding in our Ava archive.

The leader of the group digitising photos and slides will report separately on their activities.

Like I said 12 months ago, I still wish to retire from the position of archivist as soon as a replacement can be arranged, but still wish to be involved to a certain extent on an occasional consultant basis.

Finally, I would like to thank members of the archive team for their assistance during the year. They include Kevin Crosado, Tony Hurst, David Parsons, Bill Prebble, Phil Rundle, and David Sharp.

*Graeme McClare, Honorary Archivist*

## **WEBSITE, FACEBOOK and TRADE ME**

### **Website**

During the year the Society has continued to use our website to promote new publications along with progressing updates on the restoration of both WMR 48 and more recently WMR 52. The website is also used to notify any temporary changes to the Archives hours (in relation to Statutory Holidays) and for notification of Annual General Meetings and supporting AGM papers (available to members under the Members Section).

Over the last year or two there had been ongoing discussions about giving the Society's Website a new look to better reflect the Society's current activities and this was worked on during the last four months of the financial year with a suggested 'look' provided to the Society's Board for their input and subsequent approval. The new look went live in early July.

### **Facebook**

The Society continued to use Facebook to promote new publications and advertise our second-hand books catalogue and the bi-monthly "New Zealand Railway Observer". This year we also featured a post on a NZR Goods Wagon and NZR Workers Hut given new life by a couple in Foxton Beach who had restored them (with both before and after photos provided). This article received good feedback. We also used Facebook to promote the fact that the Society has back copies of the "New Zealand Railway Observer", going right back to some of the first issues, for sale and that if anyone was missing a particular one for their collection we could possibly have it!

We also use Facebook to post progress updates on the restoration work of the WMR Carriages and it's a helpful tool to let members know the NZRLS Annual General Meeting date and the availability of associated papers.

Our Archivist also puts up posts about photos the Society has in its collection and this always generates good interaction with our Facebook followers.

The Society's Facebook page currently has 1,302 followers.

### **Trade Me**

The Society continues to put fortnightly listings on Trade Me. Our sales rate would be at around 98% with only a couple of publications during the year not selling at their first listing. Sales feedback is 100% positive. Proceeds from the publication sales go towards running the archives.

*Sandra Knight, Administrator Publications*

## **MAGAZINE GROUPS A & B**

The Magazine Groups have functioned well over the past twelve months, compared to the previous year. Membership numbers have remained fairly constant with some new members having made up for a few who have withdrawn for various reasons. Hopefully the new year will see more new members, but with the cost of postage forever increasing, this may mean that we lose some of the present lot. Time will tell.

I receive notifications from time to time, advising of forthcoming absences, whether they are for short or long duration. These are appreciated and help keep the distribution of magazines regular.

During the year I have to report that one bag has not been returned to me from the Deep South, in spite of several enquires made to those members.

In spite of postage being quite high and constantly increasing, NZ Post, to my mind, take far too long to deliver bags. I feel they do not provide an acceptable service on many occasions. Perhaps the time has come to consider other mail services?

New magazines are received on a regular basis, there being no delays in this regard. One magazine has been discontinued during the year, with one other having distribution problems which has since been rectified.

In the absence of comments from most members, it would appear that they find the group is functioning in an acceptable manner.

*Stu Ingram, Magazine Groups Co-Ordinator*

## **DIGITISATION WORKING GROUP (DWG)**

During the year July 2023-June 2024 the milestone was reached of 50,000 analogue (film) images from the NZRLS photo archive fully digitised and described since the start of the DWG project in 2017. This year the scanning was done by our team of 5 volunteers



- Bob Bevan Smith, Bruce Taylor, Clark Simmonds and Alan Smith, with high school vacation support by Jonathon Sun - working at Ava on Mondays, Wednesdays and/or Saturdays at the 3 scanning stations there. They are joined by 2 volunteers - Richard Stratford and Trevor Cheer - working in other parts of the country, to whom online access has been extended. The final check and inclusion of each new digitised image into the growing database now approaching 60,000 is done by Len Chisholm, who also administers our bespoke index and access description system, *Trainfinda*.

Some comments here may help explain the complexity of the process:

- So far 37 different photographers are represented in the digitised database, plus some 1,000 ever-elusive “unknown / anonymous” photos for which no record of provenance has existed since they were originally donated to the NZRLS Archive.
- Decisions on “which collection to do next” are made by the Archivists, in recognition of their deeper knowledge and of the potential value of each new collection to the Society’s wider research and publishing work. The first ever “preliminary inventory”, compiled in mid-2017, estimated that there were then some 200,000 analogue photos in the NZRLS archive, gifted from 81 named photographers. Since then, many thousands more have been added and the project now uses as a working assumption that 300,000 is a fair estimate at mid-2024. The 50,000+ achieved by the end of June 2024 is thus just under 20% of the total NZRLS archive photo collection.
- Each image is “described” on a standard template developed for the project, recording loco class and number, place, date, NZR line code and other useful information (e.g. turntable, semaphore distant signal, etc.) For some collections, this data is retrieved from the photographers’s own contemporary notebooks or records; for others, detective work to create the description is called for using both the knowledge of our volunteers and the Ava library, especially the standard reference works like the Quail/Yonge Atlas, Lloyd’s and Millar’s loco registers, and Graham Stewart’s street tram books.
- Each digitised image is assigned a unique number, and the database is securely “backed up”. The original slides, negatives etc. are kept in conservation conditions.

The Society’s photo archive is a magnificent resource, both for the work of NZRLS and as part of the wider New Zealand social, industrial and heritage record. The DWG goal is to protect this value by enabling access to the content of each image through the *Trainfinda* search system tailor-made for the project, and by creating digital copies so as to reduce any need to re-handle the unique originals.

At present member access is by representative photos on the NZRLS website and Facebook pages, and through the Archivists at Ava. DWG has begun work on a system

to enable members to browse the digitised archive on-line from their homes, as one of the privileges of membership. *Trainfinda* is designed as an in-depth search tool; the aim now is to parallel this with at least a browsing access without involving extensive IT costs or without requiring “help desk” support which would divert volunteers away from growing the collection.

Issues for the coming DWG year include:

- Starting a sustainable and reliable member browse on-line access.
- Growing the number of volunteers, with the consequential effects on IT systems, documentation and quality control.
- We can expect, as well as a continuing inflow of new analogue collections to the archive, a growth in donated “born digital” images from members’ cameras and mobile phones.

DWG thanks Bob Bevan Smith for his convenorship since the project began in 2017, Len Chisholm for his crucial and untiring IT work, and all colleagues at Ava and across the NZRLS. Most of all, our thanks go to the photographers who took the time and care to take such wonderful records of our pre-digital era railways, and to the Archivists who interpret these and the wider NZRLS collection for the long-term benefit of New Zealand’s “national record”.

*Alan Smith, DWG Convenor*

## **LOCAL GROUPS**

### **Auckland NZRLS Group**

The Auckland Group met six times, during the year ended 30 June 2024, as scheduled. All six meetings were held at the Railway Enthusiasts Society Clubrooms in Onehunga.

Programme topics included: Recent rail travels in Japan; China’s last major mainline steam railway; Recent rail travels in England and Doha; Recent track problems on the Auckland suburban network; A history of London’s Crossrail project; Dargaville’s new Rustic Rails accommodation; Recent experiences on the Hamilton-Auckland Te Huia rail passenger service; Recent rail travels in Northern Ireland and County Donegal; A video of a Mainline Steam excursion from Napier to Gisborne and return, hauled by J1211 in the 1990s.

Appreciation is expressed to all those who presented programme items and/or helped in other ways, especially: Robert Finley, Les Gubb, Ann Hulena, Floyd Hulena, Adrienne

*Sean Millar, Auckland Area Representative*

### **Waikato Railway Society**

The Waikato Railway Society has held bimonthly meetings over the past year. The programme is usually a presentation of slides covering railways in a variety of countries, followed by supper. One popular social occasion was dinner at a restaurant, followed by a quiz featuring items of railway memorabilia. The society has continued to produce the newsletter 'Trains Talk' which has become a valuable source of New Zealand railway history. The society is in good heart and gives the members an opportunity to meet and enjoy their hobby with like-minded enthusiasts.

*David Cumming, Secretary Waikato Railway Society*

### **Bay Of Plenty NZRLS Group**

We have met for most of the advertised meeting dates and held the annual social activity in November. The meetings have consisted of viewing videos and DVDs from around the world. Unfortunately, our numbers continue to diminish and now we have only seven members.

I am concerned for the future of the group as I turned 90 this year and there is no one able to take on the responsibility of being the Bay of Plenty Local Representative who can organize meetings.

*David Kent Local Representative*

### **Manawatū NZRLS Group**

As previously reported, the Group has been able to meet at a member's residence, with an average attendance of 5/6, where we enjoy a variety of interesting and informative programmes, either presented by someone at the meeting or viewing a suitable DVD. The Group's membership ranges from Whanganui to Wellington. The first meeting for 2024 in January was at Neville Wood's residence where Graeme Carter showed a video on the "*Dunedin Railway Celebrations 2006*" - a very interesting video.

There was no meeting in February. Instead, it was "Riding the Rails in the Wellington area" with a stop for lunch in Johnsonville; from March to June an interesting selection of programmes were presented; in July we had our Annual Luncheon, this year at Cafe 116 in Milson; good company and a great selection of food was available. The August meeting

was at Kevin Purchas's residence, with an interesting programme presented by Kevin and titled "Inside Passage to Canada by train, a boat & a car, bus". The September meeting, is being held on October 5th at Chris Saunders' residence. Chris will be presenting a programme of his older slides, plus a video if there is time.

*Neville Wood*

### **Wellington NZRLS Group**

The Wellington Group continues to meet on the 2nd Monday of alternate months from March to November.

Average attendance was below 15 for the second year running, possibly aided by the increase in the door charge for the hall hire.

Programmes included Transit in Wellington, A families' history with railways and tramways, travels in Europe and Australia, and archive photos from four men named John.

*Len Chisholm Local Representative*

### **Pleasant Point Railway and Historical Society**

What is going on at our railway? Our two former N Z Railways steam locomotives, D16 from 1878 and Ab699 from 1922 have just passed their yearly boiler certificate tests. One of our two diesel locomotives, the Ruston Hornsby, is being used a bit more at present due to our larger diesel locomotive, Tr18 from 1936, at present working when needed at Silver Fern's Freezing Works at Pareora, just south of Timaru as their locomotive failed in the wheels / axle area.

We are at present replacing sleepers in a section of our railway near Keanes Crossing where needed. Wood gathering, splitting into sections and stacking to dry out getting it ready for use for a future steaming day has been carried out. At times we get a work gang from the Corrections Department who come and help with track work, wood splitting and stacking out to dry plus loading dry firewood onto our two railway wood wagons, ready for the next steaming day.

Our tourist season starts shortly and so far a number of tours have been booked in for a ride on our railway behind a steam locomotive, lunch and to look over our site, plus a short movie or two in our 50 seat movie theatre. Grand.

Pacific Tours based in Melbourne bring around 20 tourist groups to our museum with mainly Aussie tourists, but there are some from the U. K. and the U.S. The cruise ships come to Timaru harbour. We have worked in with the South Canterbury Traction Engine & Transport Museum but to date have found few cruise passengers wish to visit our two sites.

Our monthly Saturday evening movie screenings still prove popular. Popular movies and newsreels from yester year are screened plus supper and a yarn follow. “Trumpet” ice creams are sold at half time.

We have some keen young members in our ranks and, like a lot of heritage groups, the costs for operating the museum aren’t getting any cheaper, plus there is all the “Red Tape“ we now have to deal with.

The museum was founded in February 1970 and I’m the last one left who is a foundation member. A lot has been achieved over all those years from a run-down railway station and by relaying railway track. The only original track left is what was in front of the railway station at Pleasant Point.

*Bryan Blanchard, Pleasant Point Museum President & Publicity*

### **Invercargill NZRLS Group**

Our numbers have remained steady with a regular membership of seven NZRLS members and one local visitor on an intermittent basis. We were saddened to lose during the last 12 months Peter Lankshear, a long-standing member of the Society and of our Group. While we have lost some of our older members, our numbers are steady with an encouraging increase in membership. Both NZRLS members and other like-minded people have been enjoying our normal meetings. Lindsay Buckingham has kept the group updated on progress with F150.

Our meetings will continue to be held at 7.30pm on the 4th Sunday of each odd numbered month. This is subject to the occasional change. Visitors are advised to contact one of those listed in “Turntable” to confirm the date and time if they are visiting and would like to come along to a meeting. We can try to organise a special get-together to suit visitors, if required.

*Noel Joyce, Invercargill Local Representative*

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

*Bruce Taylor*

Secretary

## **OFFICE HOLDERS AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS as at 30 JUNE 2024**

### ***BOARD OF MANAGEMENT***

G T Carter	President & Chairman of the Board
B S Taylor	Secretary
K J Lankshear	Treasurer
D Cuthbert	Director
A L R Merrifield	Director
W W Prebble	Director
G Summers	Director

### ***ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE***

D Cuthbert	Chairman
K J Lankshear	Treasurer
B S Taylor	Secretary
C J Benson	Member
C Simmonds	Member
G Summers	Member

### ***PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE***

W W Prebble	Chairman
G T Carter	Editor <i>Observer</i>
A L R Merrifield	Member

### ***ARCHIVES TEAM***

G J McClare	Archivist
T Hurst	
K Crosado	
D Parsons	

W W Prebble

P Rundle

D Sharp

***DIGITAL WORKING GROUP***

A E Smith      Convenor

R W Bevan Smith

L Chisholm

D Cuthbert

G J McClare

W W Prebble

C Simmonds

B S Taylor      Minutes Secretary

***SILVERSTREAM NORTH END JOINT-COMMITTEE***

A L R Merrifield

W W Prebble

***OTHER APPOINTMENTS***

R S Ingram      Magazine Groups A and B Co-ordinator

A L R Merrifield      North End Controller

***ADMINISTRATION OFFICERS***

S Knight      Administration, Publications, Facebook and Website

W McGavin      Membership

***AUDITOR***

K D McGavin

***LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES***

Auckland      S Millar

Waikato	D Cumming, A Turner
Rotorua	M Farquhar
Bay of Plenty	D Kent
Hawkes Bay	D Pryor
Manawatū	S Ingram
Wairarapa	M Brodie
Wellington	L Chisholm
Canterbury	C Barry
South Canterbury	B Blanchard
Otago	W Cowan
Invercargill	N Joyce
United Kingdom	R Durham

***LIFE AND HONORARY MEMBERS as at 30 June 2023***

**Life Members**

No	Name	Location	Year
532	P F Dyer	Paraparaumu	1968
514	A L R Merrifield	Upper Hutt	2006
655	I P Wylie	Dunedin	1993
826	J L Clayton	Paraparaumu	2005
1106	D L A Turner	Christchurch	2000
1168	G D Berry	Dunedin	1986
1965	W W Prebble	Porirua	2016
3095	G J McClare	Upper Hutt	2014

**Honorary Members**

Mrs E A Rudd	Paraparaumu	2000
Mrs J Spencer	Paraparaumu	2012