

This booklet was put together by Sue Belcher and is a compilation of two books previously published about the railway by Reg Barltrop and notes gathered by Noel Hardy in preparation for publication – a task that Noel was sadly unable to complete.

This publication does not claim to be an in-depth history of the area of Castledare Miniature Railway. In the production of this booklet it has become evident that records are incomplete and that personal recollections can differ. However, people have passed down what they know to be the history of the Castledare Miniature Railway. This publication is a celebration of the history and the determination of the people to build and maintain club values.

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COMPILED WITH A REMEMBRANCE TO THOSE MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED ON AND THOSE WHO
SPENT MANY DEDICATED YEARS OF THEIR LIVES HELPING TO BRING TO FRUITION TODAY'S RAILWAYS
OF CASTLEDARE

All the founding members have their own memories of how the Castledare Miniature Railway started. Here are their stories.

BEGININGS OF CASTLEDARE RAILWAY

BY KEVIN PERRY

How it all started.

During 1956-1964 when I worked at Boans Furniture Factory in East Perth, one of my work mates came to me and told me about a 3½" gauge railway in Rossmoyne near the river. This railway happened to belong to a man named Ernie Nelson. After a few years he donated his 3½" railway to the Model Engineers Club and placed it around a pond at Clontarf Boy's Home.

I heard about the railway and this is where I met Keith Watson, Bob Moss and Ken Foster. They were running 3½" gauge steam engines. I was completely wrapped in these little engines, and I discovered that Keith Watson was building a 7¼" gauge locomotive which became known as "Nellie".

This inspired me to the point that I too must have a 7¼" gauge locomotive, so off I went and built a small petrol powered engine. It drove the six rear wheels and the six front wheels were free running, known as a co-co arrangement.

The year was 1962 and the engine became named as The Commonwealth Diesel.

After completing the locomotive, I made some track out of 5/8" x 5/8" steel bar for the rail line. I also had to work out the minimum radius for the curves, make a workable point and a turntable all in 7¼" gauge for the trains to run on. This had not been done before in W.A. This locomotive was run at Castledare on the first piece of track which was laid down for a Field Day in 1963.

When I completed the track I went around to Keith's place in Rossmoyne and told him that I had just completed a 7¼" gauge track at my home in Canning Vale. His reply was "You Bugger you kept that quiet". He told me he would like to take Nellie for a run to see how she performed, and it was a great success. We both enjoyed running our trains at night and daytime, and the year was 1962. Keith said he would like to build a railway somewhere to run for the public and give joy rides, so he went to the Castledare Boys Home. The answer came back "no" until he mentioned the magic words; "You can make money out of this by us giving the public train rides". The response was "When can you start?" We got to work and dug up some really odd bits of track measuring 80-100ft if I remember correctly. The railway was poor and we ended up more times off the track than on it. I think we made about \$6-00 for the whole day.

This is my story of the beginning of Castledare Miniature Railway.

By Kevin Perry

Founder Member

IN THE BEGINNING.....

BY BOB MOSS

I first met the late Ernie Nelson when I joined The Society of Model Engineers in 1954 at the first meeting I ever attended. In those days I rode my auto cycle in to the city, parked it outside the Railway Institute building in Wellington Street and, believe it or not it was still there when it was time to ride home. This gave me ample time to think about Ernie's invitation to accompany him to his Keysbrook property on the following Sunday morning for a ride on his 3½" gauge railway.

Ernie lived at the Shaftsbury Hotel in Stirling Street where he asked me to meet him at 8-00am so I could travel down to Keysbrook in his car. My impression was that he lived somewhere in the country, came to Perth occasionally for a break then went home again. I approached the receptionist and asked if there was a Mr. Nelson staying at the hotel. "Staying here" she said, "he owns the place". Ernie showed up in a matter of minutes handed me a bag to carry as we walked to the rear of the hotel to the garage where he kept his monstrous Buick sedan.

The journey to Keysbrook seemed to be over in no time, which was sad because riding in a motor car in those days was something of a novelty to an ordinary young bloke like me. Suddenly, there it was, Ernie's elevated 3½" gauge railway. The circuit was only about half completed but it certainly looked a picture standing in the beautiful green grass in this quiet area surrounded by many large trees.

Barely had we unloaded the locomotive, tender and riding truck from the car when more club members arrived and in no time Ernie had the fire lit. It was indeed a wonderful day mainly because it was the first time I had ever driven a 3½" gauge steam locomotive. The whole day seemed much less than 2 hours long.

Work on the Keysbrook railway ceased shortly after my first visit when the Nelson family decided to build a home nearer to the city and chose an area of land between First Avenue and Bull Creek in the suburb of Rossmoyne which in those days was real bush country.

The railway seemed to take precedence over the house and work started on clearing an area for the track with natural bush being left in the centre. A large brick building containing a workshop and a club meeting room was constructed nearby whilst lawns and gardens were established. The track was elevated above ground level allowing those riding the rails to sit astride the wagon with their feet clear of the ground. Timber construction was used, as in Keysbrook, except that sheoak timber sleepers were obtained as these would not be damaged by water. They lasted for many years and were still in use when the track was finally taken out of service some years later.

Operation of the railway on the Nelson property became a regular event running days held at least once a month. It was indeed a place of great pleasure to those who enjoyed operating miniature locomotives and attracted many members to the Society of Model and Experimental Engineers.

That was until late in 1961 when the club was advised that the Nelson family had decided to sell the property on which the railway located but, like all sad news, there was a bright side. The railway was to be given to the club. Now just where were we going to establish the new club railway?

Members of the Society discussed the problem and made approaches to various property owners, shire councils, people with large tracts of land, with no success until an approach was made to Clontarf Boys Home on Manning Road with, at long last, a successful result.

Removal of the track from the Nelson property to the new site commenced immediately and, almost before the first truck load had been unloaded an event took place which led to the name Turtle Creek Railway being given to the new adventure,

Construction proceeded quite rapidly, so much so that the first public run was scheduled to take place on April 29 1962, and so it did. Additionally, an exhibition of members' model engineering activities was to be included.

A total of 700 persons visited the railway with 663 passengers spending a total of 61 pounds 12 shillings. For those who don't remember pounds, shillings and pence that converts to \$123-20.

As time went by more members of the Model Engineers club became involved with the Turtle Creek Railway and drifted away from the former club dedicating more time to the new miniature railway until the number of members there exceeded those remaining. People interested in miniature railways moved away from the Society of Model Engineers to the 3½" gauge railway, whilst members interested in general model engineering activities remained with the old club.

The wide open spaces, or so seemed, enticed one of our associates into thinking big, like as big as 7¼", which led to a request being made to the authorities for the group to lay a track of that gauge in a westerly direction along the bank of the Canning River. Refusal of this led to a search in April for a suitable place to establish such a track, resulting in the group being granted permission in July 1963 from the Christian Bros of Castledare Boys Home in the area of Wilson, on the banks of Canning River.

Whilst this may sound to be an easy answer to the club's problem, the Castledare Boys Home requested if the railway could be up and running to help raise money for the home, at the Annual August Field Day in three weeks time.

Bob Moss, Kevin Perry, Ken Foster and Keith Watson pooled their resources and purchased enough steel from the ANI Belmont Steel Division where the manager was sympathetic to our cause and doubled the quantity of the steel bar and timber to build 160ft of 30mtrs of track in time for the Field Day. Keith Watson at that time had completed a narrow gauge saddle tank locomotive, "Cranmore" and Castledare's first locomotive "Nellie" which took 21 months to construct.

The first 8 lengths of 7¼" track were constructed at the home of each member, and were laid parallel to the banks of Canning River in the grounds of Castledare Boys Home. These started from the present carriage shed to an approx distance of 160ft; from there the track grew along the curved fence to the right, around the existing signal box (A box) and over Fern Tree Bridge and down to Penrhryn, following the river over a stream and swinging inland around a 18m radius curve into Wormhill Tunnel and alongside the present day Carriage shed into the station.

It may be interesting to learn that the original Signal Box (B box) south end of the station was a bird aviary (gratefully donated).

One of the Christian Brothers became our main encouragement. He would barter goods with companies for sleepers, and concrete pipes for the first two tunnels. Construction started in earnest. Foundations for the station were underway with the help from the boys of the home and a man named Jack with big ideas. Instead of using a shovel he arrived on site with a tractor fitted with a front end loader. Jack said "Get out of the way, you will never build it with a shovel". The railway soon took shape as we all worked together building embankments, bridges, tunnels, and the 3 road corrugated iron loco storage shed. Rolling stock was next; this consisted of a wagon based on a U.K. design from the Model Engineers Magazine. It was similar to our existing gondola style we run today, except it had 4 seats, 2 facing front and 2 facing the rear and it was only 20 inches wide. In later years the enclosed gondola wagon was adopted.

By Robert Moss, Founder Member - to many known as Honest Bob [DFC].

KEITH WATSON'S STORY

Keith Watson was one of the original founder members of the Castledare Miniature Railway, along with Bob Moss, Kevin Perry, and Ken Foster

I came from the UK to Western Australia in June 1950 and stayed at the Shaftsbury Hotel in Stirling Street, Perth. I didn't realise that the owner was Mr Ernie Nelson who had built a beautiful 3½" gauge Pacific steam loco and ran it on a raised track at his Keysbrook property. Later it was moved to a property in 1st Avenue, Rossmoyne where I first saw it and was able to run my first two 3½" gauge steam locos – a Tich called "Eccles" and Cramove" – an 0 – 6 – 0 Saddle tank.

The 3½" railway was eventually moved to the Clontarf Boys Home where it became known as "The Turtle Creek Railway"

At this stage, I had become friends with Bob Moss, Ken Foster, Jack Stanbridge and Kevin Perry and in 1961, I started building my first 7¼" steam loco called "Nellie" – an NG Side Tank engine.

Kevin Perry at the same time was building a 7¼" petrol powered Co-Co loco called "Commonwealth Diesel" He went on to build a track circuit on his property n Canning Vale and in 1963 I ran my "Nellie" on his track, which was wonderful.

We talked with Bob, Ken and Jack about building a railway somewhere, where we could carry the public, and the ideal place seemed to be Castledare Boys Home alongside the Canning River.

At this point, I was given the task of approaching the head of Castledare Boys Home, Brother O'Shanessey. His reply to my request was a blatant "NO" but after several visits showing him pictures of other 7¼" railways around the world and finally say the 'we could earn some money for Castledare' – his response was 'When can you get started!'

This was July 1963 and we had to have a line running in just a few weeks for their Annual Field Day.

I went to ANI Perkins in Rivervale. The Manager was very sympathetic to our cause and doubled the quantity of 5/8 steel we requested.

The first 8 lengths of track were fabricated mainly by Jack, and laid from the area now occupied by "Niana" {Home of the Oak} Station to where our Carriage Shed is now.

Our railway was an instant success and we raised £17.10.00 which was quite a lot of money in 1963. Our first public run was actually in October 1963.

Over the following years, out line grew and Castledare Miniature Railway have donated many thousands of pounds to the Boys Home.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CASTLEDARE MINIATURE RAILWAY (INC)

Compiled by Jack Stanbridge

(This story was written in 1993, and the railway has developed further since then)

The Castledare Miniature Railway of Western Australia (Inc) came into being through the action of a model engineer, Mr. Keith Watson. Having completed a 7¼" gauge 0-4-2 tank steam engine named "Nellie" in early 1963 (this engine is still running today with a different owner), he required a track somewhere to run and operate it to give pleasure to others. He never realised what he was starting.

Up to this point in time (1963) there were no known 7¼" gauge tracks in Western Australia, so an experimental section of straight track approximately 100' (30 metres) long was built. After searching around, Castledare Boys Home, on the banks of the Canning River was located and appeared to be an ideal location to build a railway of 7¼" gauge.

An agreement was made with the Brothers of Castledare Boys Home orphanage, whereby a proportion of monies raised by the railway would be paid to the boys home. The boys of the home would be encouraged to help build the railway.

The first 100ft of track was laid approximately where the present south signal box stands at the railway main station and from the footbridge to approximately the north end of the station. The track consisted of 5/8" (16mm) square steel bar, with 7¼" spacers welded between the rail bars nailed on 3" x 2" (75mm x 50mm) jarrah sleepers at 15" spaces which were laid on the grass with sand used to fill up the gaps under it - no ballast.

The first public run on this track coincided with the boy's home Annual Field Day in October 1963. The railway was an instant success raising the sum of £17.10s. (\$35.00) for the days running; a lot of money in 1963. This amount was the beginning of donations to the home, by the railway, of many thousands of dollars, while the orphanage existed. The Home has now been closed. Currently the railway operates and donates monies to selected charities together with developing the railway. Castledare has been a strong supporter of Channel 7's Telethon. The Telethon run day in October 1992 raised \$3,200 for the day.

At the time of writing, in 1993, track runs for approximately 5kms from the Castledare Home grounds, across a creek, out through the wetlands to Wilson Park near Kent Street weir on the Canning River, and returns along the river banks to the Castledare grounds.

Happily, the railway has a splendid safety record, which we believe has been achieved only by the members of the railways adhering to Club safety rules and regulations.

All drivers, guards, signalmen, whatever age they be, submit to and adhere to proficiency running rules. We trust riders will help us to maintain this good record. Steam locomotives are built to a strict code.

The present track work has been developed from an English Model Railway standard, namely Greenleys Model Railway Standards, and now Australian Association of Live Steamers Code, which used some standards formulated at Castledare Miniature Railways over the years.

Rail is now 1" x 1½" (25mm x 12mm) steel bar, welded to steel straps 12" x 1" to 7¼" gauge and fixed with screws to sleepers 4" x 2" at 10" spacing on blue metal ballast. The minimum main line track radius is 18 metres (approx. 57' 6"). Sleepers are 17" in length. The trackways are under constant surveillance in order to maintain the safe running of the railway. Likewise the signalling system is maintained in good order to control safe passage of trains.

Special rules apply to signals persons in the signal boxes. At present there are signal boxes at North and South ends of "Niana", our main station. The name "Niana" was derived from the name of the main home at Castledare Boys Home, which is nearly 100 years old. A further signal box exists at Canning Station. There is a full size signal frame in Canning Box.

In the early days of the railway, when only 2 or 3 locos existed, owners of locos took them home between run days. Today, a large roundhouse loco shed exists with a 12' 6" turntable and 18 service tracks and some 8 diesel locos and 16 steam engines are stored at the railway sheds. More are currently being built. These are protected by electronic surveillance system against intruders to the sheds. Most locos are privately owned by members, many being built by the owners. The Club owns 3 diesels, Comet Vale (green), "Carabao". There are approximately 40 passenger carrying wagons and six work wagons, together with a fire fighting water train and some privately owned wagons.

The first oval of track circled what today is the picnic area and ran along behind the club rooms, approx. 2,000' (700 metres). Extensions were made in 1967 southwards to the Canning Station area through swamp land and beyond to return again to the original circuit. This extension doubled the existing track. In 1970 extensions began northwards, past the present Canteen area, through a then new tunnel, then turning around the enlarged lake and returning across the largest engineering feat of the railway, a 95' bridge, Stan-Bridge, of 5 spans over the lake to return and join the existing track, thus making the track three times the original oval length. A 5" gauge dual gauge track was built in Canning Station area of approx. 110", also 800' of 3½" gauge raised track. All this development was across swamp land. An Australian Association of Live Steam Convention was held at Castledare in 1979 on this track.

Further development took place and the railway extended further north to the area known as the Fern Road extension, where plans were made to construct a rather ambitious station. The area was designed and begun to be constructed, but this station plan was eventually discarded and dismantled.

In 1980 ideas began to surface to extend the railway across the Tea Creek and out into the wetlands towards the then undeveloped Wilson Park and Kent Street weir area, over a double track steel bridge, approx. 45' long. A further steel bridge, single track, was built out of army Bailey Bridge sections, of 40' span.

A Government grant enabled this idea to be carried out with a paid work programme assisting construction - and so developed the wetlands area, to Wilson. This doubled the then existing track work to approx. 5km of track. The wetlands extension was completed in time for the Australian Association of Live Steamers Convention in 1986. A concrete platform has been constructed at Wilson Park (60' in length) for use on special run days from the Wilson Park area.

Slight alterations have been made from time to time to the track layout to obtain better running of trains.

Communication on the railway is by phone and radio. Radios on trains (guards to control area), radio between station control and signal boxes and phones between other areas.

Semaphore (arm) signals and colour light signals are in use on the Castledare railway. All trains carry guards for safety of the riding public.

The track has been extended to include dual gauge 5" and 7¼" locos and trains to run over a large section of our track - mainly the southern loops, Canning station area, through our main station Niana, turning back across our 95' bridge Stanbridge, and returning to Canning station area.

In 1991 the main station Niana area was redeveloped from the original station, built in 1965, with a roof of 30' x 20' over three tracks, to our new curved station roof over an area of 60' x 26' with a further track, making four tracks, and 4 new concrete platforms. This has greatly improved the running of the railway and the handling of large crowds that now frequent the railway on our run days.

A large picnic area exists, together with swings, barbecues, bridges, etc. in tree shaded areas. There is no admission charge to the railway, we charge only for rides.

The railway may be hired for private running by Clubs or organisations. Membership is invited from all those interested in the railway, to either help run, build or maintain it.

The railway is located at the junction of Fern Road and Bungaree Road, off Leach Highway, Wilson - approx. 6km. from the City of Perth, Western Australia.

October 1993 saw the 30th year of operations at Castledare of a 7¼" gauge passenger carrying miniature railway. The third AALS Convention was held at Castledare at Easter of 1993.

Jack Stanbridge - November 1993

THE HISTORY OF CASTLEDARE MINIATURE RAILWAY CONTINUES:

{Reproduced in part from the book compiled by R Barltrop telling the story from 1963 to 1976}

The beginning of the Castledare Miniature Railway was in the early part of 1963 when a short length of track 100 feet [30.4 metres] long was laid in the approximate position where the south signal box is at present located. The track consisted of ½" square steel bar welded to 7¼" # steel spacers nailed to jarrah timber sleepers, which were placed upon sand spread out over the grass to fill in the hollow spaces.

The first public running of the railway coincided with the Castledare Boy's Home annual field day held during October 1963. The railway was an instant success bringing in £17.20s {\$35}. This amount of money, although only a small amount, was the commencement of donations to the home which has now throughout the years amounted to many thousands of dollars.

The little 0-4-2 tank locomotive "Nellie" ran on this occasion over the short length of track work. This engine was later joined by the Commonwealth diesel [not the locomotive seen on the tracks today] as the railway extended to form a complete oval of track work, described later in the text.



In addition to the donations made to the Boy's Home, the Club has made contributions to several other organisations, including the St John's Ambulance Corps, whose members are seen in attendance during the running days. Happily, the railway has a splendid safety record which we believe has been achieved only by the members adhering to the Club safety rules and regulations. All the drivers and guards of the trains, whatever age they may be, submit to a proficiency examination of the running rules.

The track ways and signal installations are constantly under surveillance in order to retain the safe running of the railway. Special rules are also applicable to the members stationed in the signal boxes, which are situated to the south and north of Niana Station. A third signal box is under construction at Canning Junction, toward the southern section of the railway.

Returning to the evolution of the railway from the first 100 feet straight length of track work commenced during 1963, a start was made on the first continuous length of track and the carriage storage sheds. There only being two running engines on the line, the owners took them home every week. Incidentally all the locomotives seen running today belong to individual Club members, as do various passenger carrying wagons. The first oval of track swung towards the river, over Ferntree Bridge, which has recently been rebuilt, along the river bank to Penrhyn, which was once a culvert bridge, thence swinging inland around a 60 foot radius curve, through Worm hill tunnel and back to the Station. It may be interesting to learn that the signal box situated at the south end of the station was originally an aviary!

Extensions were commenced northwards during 1967, a further tunnel being constructed, the lake cleaned out and the largest engineering feature of the railway, a bridge over the lake. The bridge is 95 feet long and consists of several spans of steel beams supported by steel reinforced concrete pylons – the bridge became known as “Stanbridge”.



The Original “Stanbridge” Bridge



Refurbished in 2001

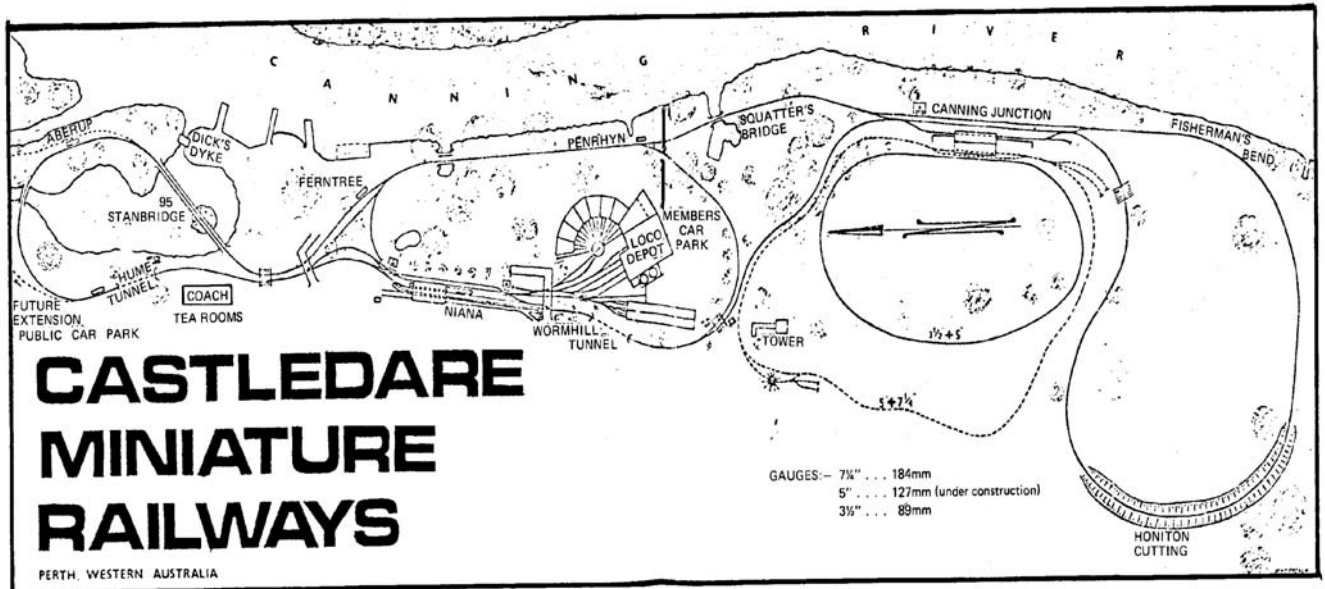
Further extensions commenced at Penrhyn southwards during 1970-71, extending to Canning Junction where the 3½” # elevated track may be seen, then the track curves away from the station and returns to Niana.

The present track work with a total of 5,300 feet is constructed with steel bars 1” high and ½” wide to a gauge of 7¼”. This is welded on to a 1” x ⅝” steel strip 12” long which is affixed or spiked on to 4” x 2” jarrah sleepers at 10” centres. The track base is mainly earth or limestone, with rock ballast directly underneath the timber sleepers.

Communications between the signal boxes is maintained by telephones with extensions to the engine shed and the stations. The track is signalled automatically with coloured light signals except the section from Canning Junction and Honiton Cutting. In this section a staff system is used.

Adjacent to Canning Junction Station may be seen the 7¼” x 5” dual gauge ground level track, the 5” gauge track is laid between the 7¼” gauge track work. Members owning 5” gauge locomotives therefore have the advantage of using a 7¼” gauge passenger or riding wagon. This arrangement lends itself to greater riding stability, therefore maintaining a better safety factor. Within this circuit is placed the 3½” gauge elevated track. This track work is currently being upgraded and will be rebuilt converting the line to dual 3½” and 5” gauges.

The dual gauge track work is a noteworthy feature of the railway and should prove to be an attraction for any proposed miniature railway convention of the future.



The track plan as it was in 1976.

The story continues –

RENEWAL FOR A NEW CENTURY

By Dr Richard Stuart - President, Castledare Miniature Railway, 2003-2008

By the late 1990s, the Castledare Miniature Railway was faced with a changing world. There was competition from new forms of entertainment. Parents and children were leading busier lives, with ever increasing demands on shrinking leisure time. Legislation, regulations and legal obligations were becoming ever more stringent. Costs were going up. There was uncertainty over the future of the site, club membership was shrinking, passenger numbers were falling away, and much of the railway's infrastructure was seriously showing its age. Castledare was facing a stark choice: adapt to the harsh new world, or fade away.

The challenge was taken up, and the 21st Century opened with a major project to kick off the railway's renewal. The "Stan Bridge", a five span steel viaduct across a lagoon beside the Canning River, had been the pride of the railway when built in 1967. Three decades later it was rusting away and needed urgent replacement. With the support of a grant from the Lotteries Commission, and assistance from a number of companies and club members, a new bridge was designed in accordance with modern regulations, fabricated and installed. This showed what could be done, and encouraged club members to greater efforts.

More new projects followed. The ageing and ramshackle Canning Signal Box was badly damaged by fire and replaced with a new steel structure. The old 5-inch gauge steaming bay area was extended and enclosed to form a new workshop, named after the late Gerry Broom, a much respected stalwart member of the club. A new water tank was installed, the clubroom was re-roofed, a water bore and reticulation were installed in the picnic area, and tonnes of scrap materials were cleaned up and removed from the site. The club's existing passenger rolling stock was re-furbished, new passenger cars were brought into service, and a new diesel locomotive was purchased to boost the operational capability. A second new diesel was commissioned after several years of construction effort by club members.

All this effort by club members started to bear fruit, as the new century brought a steady resurgence of passenger numbers. New locomotives started to appear, after years of painstaking construction work by their owners. In 2003, Castledare celebrated its 40th Anniversary with a new climate of optimism, and a membership that was slowly starting to grow again.


One of the biggest challenges was repair of the railway's 5km of track. After decades out in the elements, many thousands of wooden sleepers were succumbing to rot and termites, and needed replacement. This involved hard, backbreaking labour by the club's volunteer members, who nevertheless set to work with determination. A decision was made to switch from wooden sleepers to a new recycled plastic material with better durability, and by 2007 thousands of these had been installed, along with over 100 tonnes of new ballast to support and stabilise the tracks.

Another successful project was the enlargement of the railway's canteen, enjoyed by visitors to Niana Station on public running days. This was a great team effort by members, who completely gutted and re-built the interior in a one month window between public running days.

The Castledare Miniature Railway enjoys an idyllic riverside setting. Maintenance and care of the grounds is a major job in its own right, and club members spend much time and effort keeping the site looking its best. The railway has built up a relationship with the Wilson Wetlands Action Group (WWAG), the local environmental volunteers who look after the flora and fauna in the riverside and wetlands area.

It appeared that the railway's efforts did not go unnoticed. The Canning City Council, led by the Mayor, Dr Mick Lekias, provided much needed support and encouragement. This support led to a successful application for funding for a new station on Canning City Council land at Wilson Park. Provision of funding was led by the Council, together with the Federal Government Regional Partnerships Programme, and Lotterywest. CMR itself contributed by purchasing a new locomotive and new set of passenger carriages to support the train service from the new station. The railway also initiated an extra monthly run day, operating from Wilson Park on the third Sunday of every month. This successfully began to build up the passenger clientele at Wilson Park, in advance of construction of the new station. Construction finally started on site in February 2007, and we look forward to many years of successful operation from Wilson Park, in addition to our home base at Niana.

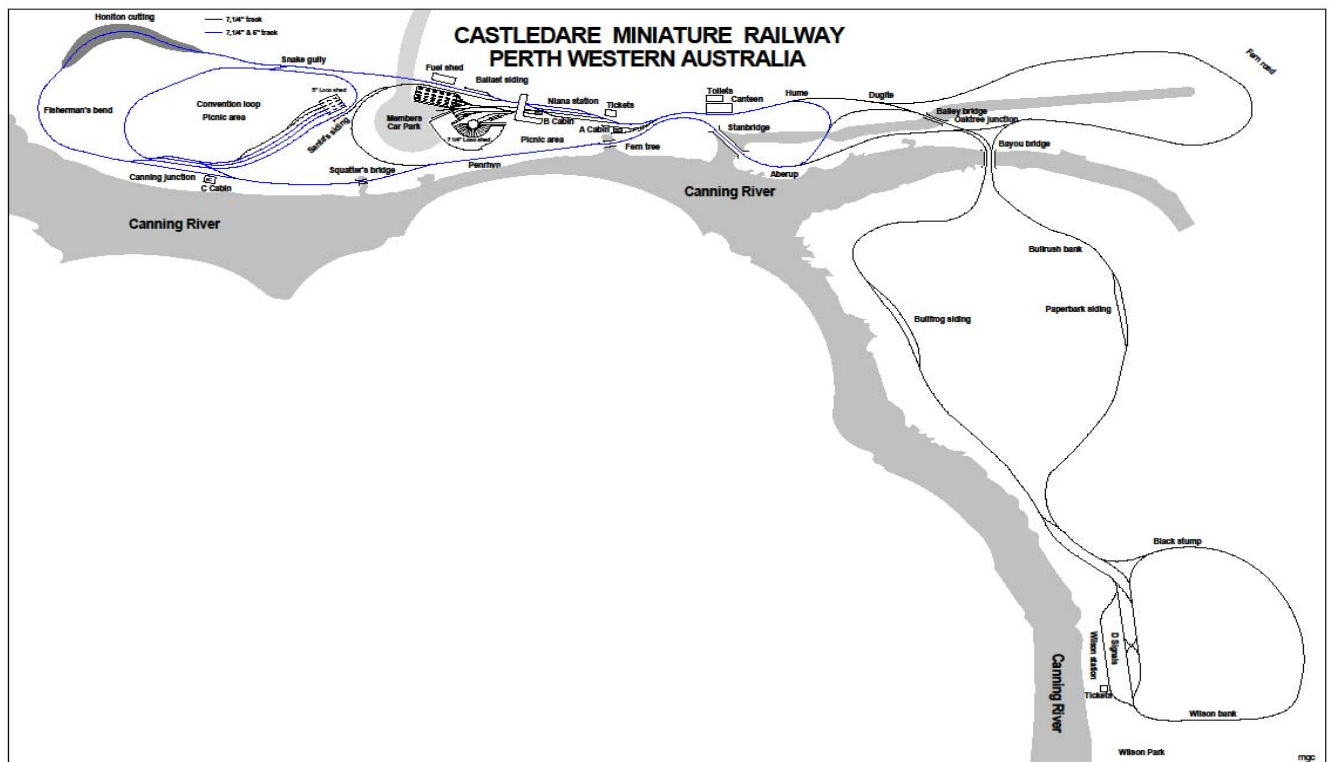
Now, at the 50 year mark, the club has continued to grow both in physical size, membership and the locomotive and rolling stock which is utilised. The track and infrastructure has been extended, improved and, we trust, will continue to serve our members and patrons well. From very humble beginnings and the dreams, foresight and a lot of hard work of a few dedicated model engineers and the membership they encouraged, the track now extends through the wetlands to our Wilson Park station which is located near the Kent Street weir on the banks of the Canning River. The signalling system is now, for the most part, electronically operated and quite sophisticated thus further ensuring the safety of all at the track. Communication between the train driver/guard and the main station on a public run day is now by UHF radio – a far cry from the old telephone system !

The majority of the sleepers under the track at Castledare have now been replaced with approx. 19,000 recycled plastic sleepers which is purchased in 3metre lengths and cut to size by the members. Some sections of the rail have replaced with new lengths made in the form of 'T Rail' – a system made up of 25mm x 12mm steel bar on it's edge welded to 32mm x 6mm flat bar to provide the base – thus giving the  shape.

A group of members have almost completed a new main Niana "A" Signal cabin and this will be electronically operated. Yet another sign of the railway moving into the 21st century.

The normal 1st Sunday public run day from Niana Station was held on 6th October 2013 and I am pleased to say that the railway operated 79 trains carrying approx. 1,605 passengers for the day. Two 'supertrains' were operated – 1 steam and 1 diesel – each being hauled by 3 locomotives with a double consist of wagons and 50 passengers each – 1 for every year of our public operations.

These photos show the flags flying and the refurbished ticket box with the new signal box in the background – celebrating 50 years.



As can be seen from the above track plan [2013] the track work is now quite extensive with a new station building erected at Wilson Park with the support of the Federal Government, City of Canning, Swan TAFE and the membership of Castledare Miniature Railway.



The Wilson Park Station 2007

As a club, we have successfully hosted 4 national conventions over the years {1979, 1986, 1993 and 2009} and this has provided the opportunity for a large number of visitors from other clubs both national and international, to experience what Castledare has to offer – a beautiful site on the banks of the Canning River and estimated to be the largest club operated track in Australia, now measuring approx. 5km in length.

The club now owns quite a substantial fleet of passenger carrying wagons, work wagons and fire fighting tank wagons in addition to 6 locomotives – Betsy, Denis P Moore, Dependable, Comet Vale, City of Canning and Carabao. These locomotives are usually available for members to drive after they have gained the relevant experience, training and license. The remainder of the fleet of locomotives seen on our public open days are privately owned by the members.

Locomotives, like some members, have come and gone – some have remained since the club's inception. Keith Watson, one of the founding members, can still be seen at the track on most run days as can "Betsy" one of the first diesel locomotives to arrive at Castledare.

The club comprises an entirely voluntary membership – the members carry out all routine infrastructure and ground maintenance tasks, track work, etc. and although there are many times when the work force reflects only a small percentage of the membership, quite a lot is achieved by working together for the benefit of the club and the wider community who continue to support and enjoy our railway. This combination of voluntary effort and community support has continued for almost fifty years to the present day.

Over the past 50 years, the Club has supported many and various charities with donations beginning with the Castledare Boy's Home in the early days, on to Channel 7 Telethon, Princess Margaret Hospital, Junior Diabetes Foundation, Retinitis Pigmentosa Foundation and Conductive Education – to name a few.

The Castledare Miniature Railway is more than a group of railway enthusiasts; it is a community institution enjoyed by thousands of people every year. A common tale is told to us by visitors to the railway. They first rode on Castledare's trains as children, a long time ago. Years later they brought their own children. Now they are bringing their grandchildren to enjoy the scene that they remember so fondly. Keeping the railway running is hard work and totally unpaid. The reward is the satisfaction of opening the railway on public days; watching visitors arrive as we steam up the locomotives; seeing the station buzzing with activity and savouring the atmosphere of train whistles, steam, and station announcements from our own "Fat Controller" in the signal box. Those of us who manage and operate the railway today have a deep sense of responsibility, as custodians of the legacy handed down to us through the hard work and vision of many people over many years. This booklet tells a small part of their story and like the railway itself, is the result of the support and contributions of many people.

In closing, the generous and ongoing support of the Christian Bros must be acknowledged. Christian Bros continue to not only make available to us the land which our club occupies but also provide support and

encouragement to allow the Club members to pursue their hobby and at the same time, provide enjoyment to our many patrons. Without this support, the club would not exist as we know it today.

Following are some photos of the club owned locomotives and infrastructure that have contributed to the enjoyment of well over 1,000,000 passengers over the past almost 50 years



Carriage & Engine sheds including turntable c.1975



The Carriage & Engine sheds and turntable 2013



Niana Station as it was originally and a current view of Niana Station

[both photos taken from the wooden footbridge]

The Locomotives of Castledare



Comet Vale



Dennis P Moore



Carabao



Betsy [driver Bob Moss, DFC]



City of Canning



Dependable



Mural near the entrance to Castledare site



It is quite common to see the Niana Station picnic ground set up for birthday parties on the 1st Sunday public open days.