



Heritage Happenings for July 2009

Tony's Tales

Hi again everyone. Winter is with us and so far I have been lucky enough to dodge most of it while travelling overseas. We have been on a big OE and last week we returned from Singapore where the temperature was in the mid 30s. Wellington seems strangely inhospitable after that.

Part of the trip was to go to Ireland where my ancestors came from. Castlegar in Galway was a revelation for me, seeing the little town and church where some of our family records are still held.

On a personal note Jim McRoberts is again unwell and at the time of writing is in Wellington Hospital. Get well Jim; we will soon have you rummaging happily through our Bunnythorpe collection again.

Obituary

It is with deep regret that we record the passing of Meynell Murray. You will recall that Meynell and the attached photo featured in our last Newsletter as we had just completed an oral recording of the lives of early North Island System Control staff at Meynell and Joyce's home. Meynell was a great mate to many in Transpower and had worked in various power station operating positions before moving to Whakamaru and Hamilton System Control.



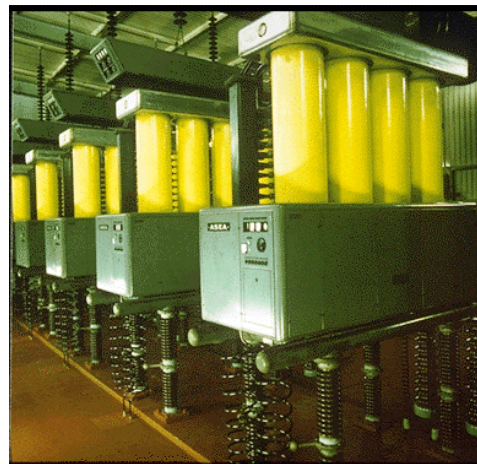
Alan Twidle, David Young, Roger Carleton, Joyce and Meynell Murray.

Meynell developed Motor Neurone Disease (MND) in 2001 and despite this he managed to remain deeply involved in his barber's shop singing and in the running of the MND organisation. Meynell's humour and positive attitude will be sadly missed.

Transpower was well represented at Meynell's Hamilton funeral.

HVDC Mercury-arc upgrade

Transpower is currently working on replacing the aging HVDC Pole 1. This equipment, which was commissioned in 1965, is the only remaining mercury-arc scheme in the world. When it was commissioned it was among the largest and is certainly an important part of our NZ history. For this reason GridHeritage is keen to retain as much as practicable for a historic display. Lack of space at Haywards may mean that any display we do setup would have to be located elsewhere.



Haywards Mercury-arc valves

To make an effective display it would be preferable to retain not only one or more valves but also the current dividers over the top plus the pedestal insulators below. This would require a display space with a high ceiling to do justice to the historic equipment.

GridHeritage activities

Things have been a little quiet with Tony away on his big OE but we are now back into business. Much of our effort will be going into the updating of our web site but we really have an urgent need to stop and have look at the direction that GridHeritage is heading. GridHeritage was setup to collect and protect equipment from the transmission part of the NZ electricity system. We probably now have the largest collection of this type in NZ and perhaps we need to re-look at our scope.

We have collected many items that are not directly related to our core business, mostly because we didn't want to see valuable stuff being lost to the industry. We had always hoped that there would be some other group set up a collection of generation equipment but so far this has not happened. There are some excellent collections of domestic electrical equipment, such as the one in Oamaru and the excellent collection in the Palmerston North Diesel Station. Perhaps it is time for all of the collections to somehow share their knowledge and resources? Any feedback on this would be very welcome.

Protection then and now

Protection, perhaps more so than most other areas of our industry has changed markedly over the recent years. The two photos below illustrate the development of protection relays used for detecting electrical short circuits on overhead transmission lines. The big black metal cased relay (weighing in at 75 kg) on the left of the attached photo is electro-mechanical 'watchmaker' technology developed in the mid 1950s.



Typical 1950s protection relay on a panel

To the left of this big black relay are relays using electronic technology developed in the early 1980s.

The second photograph shows the (relatively) modern computer-based technology of the late 1990s.

The small blue box can do what the big black relay could do plus a whole lot more (event recording, remote indications). And the technicians building the blue box schemes don't need to risk a hernia installing the relay in the cabinet, unlike

the big black relay. However, as far as actually detecting short circuits on overhead transmission lines, the big black relay is as good as the blue box.



Modern protection device

Not only has the technology changed (for the better?) but also the skills required in maintaining the equipment have changed. It is similar to the changes that have taken place in the watch industry. In the 50s a watch technician required intricate mechanical skills while today this has been replaced by digital technology. Computers have taken the place of tweezers and screwdrivers.

A challenge for GridHeritage is to find technicians who are still able to work on the old electro-mechanical equipment. This same problem appears with our collection of the all too familiar Gents Master Clocks that were in every major station. Who is able to get these beautiful gems running, and to keep them going?

Recent additions to our collection.

We are really lucky to have been given some valuable old test equipment ex-Nelson. Some of this collection is unique and will be a valuable addition.

We have also been really fortunate to have been gifted about 60 books, manuals and booklets of historic interest following a cleanout in Palmerston North Office. We are currently working on setting up a larger storage area at Bunnythorpe for our extensive collection of paperwork and photos. This is a huge job but is timely for the protection of our valuable documents.

Tony Silke...