



## Heritage Happenings for May 2009

### **Tony's Tales**

Hi again everyone. 2009 continues to be a busy time for GridHeritage. Oral recording continues and the collection steadily grows in size. The publication of 'Connecting the Country' has spurred a lot of interest in our collection and we have had many recent donations of treasures.

Things may be a little quiet for a while as I am off for a big OE shortly. Of course history will be a part of the trip as I try to find out more about my ancestors who came from near Galway.

### **What is a Lineman?**

This short gem was copied from a 1984 Electricity Division, Christchurch District Line Maintenance booklet that was given to us by John Claridge.

*Between the enthusiasm of youth and the disillusionment of retirement there is an unusual creature called a "Lineman" They come in assorted heights, girths, shapes and degrees of sobriety.*

*They can be found anywhere – in tents, in trucks, up poles, down manholes and in debt.*

*Bookies love them, technicians tolerate them, publicans rely on them and Worker's Compensation protects them.*

*A Lineman is an optimist with a tip for the 2.30, a superman in a 3-ton truck, an astronaut at the top of a pole and a cave explorer in a cable well. He has the cunning of a very old fox, the generosity of a spendthrift, the imagination of a Banjo Paterson, the thirst of the Sahara and the elusiveness of the Scarlet Pimpernel.*

*He likes overtime, beer, talking, more beer, public holidays and above all, an understanding Line Foreman. He hates cadgers, bosses men, upstart technicians, paperwork, and bill collectors. No other man can cram into a tool box, 6 rabbit traps, a fishing rod, a transistor radio, 6 cans of beer, a copy of the Sporting Globe and sometimes, some tools.*

*He gets more fun than anyone else out of races, smoking and putting one over. No one else could exist on his salary, yet remain so cheerful. A lineman is a magical creature, seldom appreciated but indispensable in time of trouble. You can lock him out of the exclusive club but you can't keep him out of your circle of friends.*

*He's a talkative, troublesome, argumentative, time wasting bundle of fun but when the storm breaks, the lines are down and the cable flooded, he can reassure you with seven magic words – "We'll soon have them working again, Boss".*

### **Visit to Bunnythorpe**

We have had yet another trip to Bunnythorpe to work on our main collection. We receive many donations and each of these requires us to document every item plus photograph them for our database. It is a very slow process but it is rewarding to see the growth of the collection.



Tony Silke sits while Les Davys and Richard Donaldson struggle with assembling new shelving.

We now have a temperature and humidity controlled area for storing our documents and photos and we are steadily getting everything there sorted so we can hopefully find them.

### **Oral Recording Sessions**

In March David Young and Tony went north to do a series of oral recording sessions in the Waikato area. We were keen to grab some of the history of the early North Island Control Centre at Claudelands in Hamilton. We conducted a most interesting group recording session of ex-System Control people (see photo on next page). The session was done at Meynell Murray's home and we were thoroughly spoilt by Joyce's hospitality.

As well as the group recording, David Young also did individual sessions with Doug Rowe in Tauranga and Colin Agnew and Jeff Hewson when we were all in Hamilton. It was a very busy trip but we gathered a great deal of information on life in early System Control.

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

Yet another interesting recording session that we have done is of a 96 year old gentleman who worked at the old Dobson Diesel station. It amazes me that there is so little written about local diesel stations that once flourished in many cities and for years provided us with electricity before the national grid developed.

### Transpower House Historic Display

System Operations in Transpower House were keen to add to their small display outside Kieran Devine's office so the GridHeritage team selected a variety of items from Bunnythorpe and put them on display. Lynne Turner arranged the stands and sorted out the pictures on the wall.



Transpower House Level 2 historic display

There are many black and white photos showing early transmission lines being constructed and some showing rather primitive live-line work in the 1930s. Because the display is in the System Operations area there is an especially good selection of early Control Centres and of Power Station control rooms. A surveyor's theodolite will bring back many memories to those involved in surveying and construction.



Ex Ian Bilbrough theodolite and leather case.

The one on display was used by Ian Bilbrough on transmission line surveying.

### Obituary

It is with deep regret that we record the passing of Jack Atkins (JJG) who worked in the operating side of the industry from 1961, when he was a Station Operator at Lake Coleridge and later worked in various power stations until his retirement from the position of Senior System operator at the South Island Control Centre at Islington. Jack will be fondly remembered as a fine person who passed on his considerable knowledge to many who followed him in the industry.

Jack's father also had extensive experience in the operating field, starting as a Junior Substation Operator at Addington in 1925 and ending up at the first Superintendent of Karapiro power station. There can't be too many families spanning such a long time in the industry.

### GridHeritage activities

We have added many interesting items to our collection and we are currently getting them into our PastPerfect database that we use. When this is completed we will go through the slow process of putting this information onto our GridHeritage website. We now list some 500 items, mostly complete with photos, but we still have some hundreds of unprocessed items listed only on spreadsheets that will keep us busy for a while.

### Recent additions to our collection.

Alex Joosten kindly donated us a paper entitled "Three Phase A.C. Systems under fault conditions" written by M.G.Latta in November 1934.

They don't get much better than that!!!

Tony Silke...