

REPORT ON APRIL MEETING.

Speaker: Paul Tuckerman.

Topic: Thirroul Railway Institute.

Our guest speaker was the inaugural president of Thirroul Railway Institute Society and as such was able to provide us with so much information of the Railway Institute in 1920 as well as the work of the Preservation Society since its beginning in 1920.

Prior to 1920, the main rail depot had been at Waterfall but after the construction of the tunnels, the Helensburgh to Thirroul link enabled the transfer of the depot to Thirroul. The shunting yard and supply of coal needing to be transported to Sydney meant there were many railway employees in the town and the R.I. was formed primarily to educate these employees in technical subjects as well as providing secretarial and dressmaking courses for the ladies. There was also a library for local residents if they were members of the Institute.

The building also catered for the social needs of the town – dances, birthday parties, wedding receptions, local committees and trade union and ALP meetings.

In the 1970s, the building was no longer used in this busy way and it became obvious it needed repair. Many advocated for demolition, but the ALP took up the cause to keep it. It was able to stop the call for demolition and in 1991 the Preservation Society was formed with over 100 members. The task of repairing and restoring this unique building took the best of 15 years. It contains lots of Western Cedar on the walls and has a tallow wood floor. There are many photos of historical interest on display as well as a pendulum clock and an 1879 Bechstein grand piano. The hall is available for hire and is used 7 days a week. The committee's aim was to restore it to be the community facility it always was and those who were privileged to hear Mr Tuckerman speak, have every reason to believe this to be the case.

Margaret Bradley

Mr Paul Tuckerman answered satisfactorily a number of questions from the floor. Overall, a very interesting and informative talk about an institution, the last of its kind in the state. Paul kindly invited the members of the Society to the Institute on Sunday 26 May. See notice below.

Ed.