

**OPENING OF THE 2014 REDWATER CREEK STEAM AND
HERITAGE SOCIETY'S STEAMFEST
BY
THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
SHEFFIELD - SATURDAY, 8TH MARCH 2014**

It's good to be back here in the Kentish Municipality and at the Redwater Creek Steam and Heritage Society's Steamfest. Four years have passed since I was last here and it is a special pleasure for me to be back here to open the 20th Steamfest. The Redwater Creek Steam and Heritage Society is a success story created and driven by the energy, innovation and industry of Chairman Chris Martin, his committee and all the many volunteers who pitch in to help make Steamfest an exciting and informative event.

As Chris Martin says, Steamfest "is the largest event in Sheffield on an annual basis and a meeting of like-minded enthusiasts all taking delight in showing off their machinery/heritage/craft passions to the community. It has become a great occasion to catch up with friends from across Australia. [Now, there are] many regulars who travel from the big island because they enjoy the atmosphere and camaraderie at our event."¹ Congratulations also go to Mayor Don Thwaites and the Councillors and officers of the Kentish Council for the critical support that they give to the Society and this Steamfest. As Chris says, the Redwater Creek Society's

¹ <http://www.redwater.org.au/history/interview-with-chris/> accessed 24th February 2014.

“growth is limited only by the enthusiasm and volunteers’ time to make it happen.”²”

The Spring edition of Tasmanian magazine “40 Degrees South” contained an article about steam trains in Tasmania written by Mr Mike Kerr.³ In the first part of the article the author examines that age-old question, “why do steam engines have a fascination for so many of us?” He quotes a railway official in the United Kingdom at the unveiling in 1960 of the last steam loco, who said:

“No other product of man’s mind has ever exercised such a compelling hold on the public’s imagination as the steam locomotive. No other machine, in its day has been a more faithful friend to mankind and has contributed more to the cause of industrial prosperity in this, the land of its birth and throughout the world.”⁴

As Mr Kerr wrote:

“Here is the embodiment of purpose. Fired by coal or wood, their massive boilers drove heated water vapour into pistons or across turbines, creating the power that fed the vats and spun the shafts, drew the water and expelled the fumes. The steam engine

² Ibid.

³ “Tasmania – 40 degrees South” Spring edition; No 70 “Steam Driven” by Mike Kerr at page 14.

⁴ Supra at page 14.

brought life to the workshops, factories and towns everywhere.”⁵

Whether at work on rails, on roads, in fields, on water or in factories, steam engines are akin to living things. They exude strength and power. They might have been overtaken in terms of efficiency and cost by the internal combustion engine as the common workhorse of today, but they have never lost that special place in the hearts and imaginations of all generations of people.

The large number and variety of steam engines at this Steamfest and the large crowds that are drawn to this annual event are proof of that assertion. Mr Kerr’s article concludes with the proposition that:

“perhaps part of the abiding bond between man and machine, reflected in the attribution of human characteristic to steam engines is a form of communication, personal and fundamental, an interaction between nature and the man-made.”⁶

“Steam combines air, water, fire and earth in the form of coal. These are the essentials of life.”⁷

⁵ Supra at page 14.

⁶ Supra at page 20.

⁷ Attributed by Mr Kerr to John Kingston of New Norfolk, former steam loco driver.

At this year's Steamfest we are not only celebrating the big steam engines but also the model engines. An idea that began some time ago has now become a reality thanks to the innovation and energy of the Railway Model Group. This small, but hardworking group has created a room in in the Loco Shed and set up a model railway in there. It makes an important addition to the stock of the Redwater Creek Steam and Heritage Society and will be a popular attraction for people like me who never really got over their love of model railways – mine was a Hornby OO I think it was.

So Steamfest, a wonderful traditional event, now in its 20th year, just keeps on getting better and better. Long may it continue for many years to come. I do, indeed, have much pleasure in declaring open the 2014 Redwater Creek Steam and Heritage Society's Steamfest.