

Steam school recognises painstaking restoration

The painstaking, 11-year restoration of a 1923 Peckett 1630 steam locomotive has won this year's Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) Shantytown Steam Locomotive Restoration Award.

The Huntly-based Bush Tramway Club picked up this year's award at this weekend's Federation of Rail Organisations of New Zealand (FRONZ) Annual Awards Dinner in Blenheim.

TPP Steam School tutor Ian Tibbles says the award recognises the enormous effort of the small group which dedicated the past 11 years to fundraising and overhauling the historic locomotive.

"Bush Tramway Club is a small organisation with minimal resources. The mechanical team consisted of three or four members who also shared responsibilities for other aspects of the club's operation. This year's award recognises the resourcefulness of this small dedicated team who, with limited facilities, resources and skill base, not only raised the funds and organised the work but also overhauled the machine.

"The award also recognises this significant industrial engine which is very much a part of Waikato's industrial heritage and which, through its restoration, connects the coal industry of Pukemiro's past with today's generation," Mr Tibbles says.

The Shantytown Steam School is a West Coast-based joint venture training program between the West Coast Historical and Mechanical Society (Shantytown) and TPP. It enables students of all ages to gain qualifications to operate steam powered locomotives. Operating since October 2009, the Shantytown Steam School has graduated more than 50 prospective engine drivers.

The Steam Locomotive Restoration Award is offered in association with FRONZ, with the aim of encouraging excellence in the restoration of steam powered rail vehicles by individual or group members of FRONZ within the railway or tramway, tourism or heritage sectors of New Zealand. The Award comes with an Excellence Trophy and a \$2000 grant donated jointly by Shantytown and TPP, which is used for further locomotive restoration and/or mechanical upgrades.

The Bush Tramway Club is a heritage railway 12 km west of Huntly along the Rotowaro Road, in the Waikato region of New Zealand. It regularly operates restored locomotives along a 5.4 km Rotowaro-Glen Afton section of the former Glen Afton Branch. The club was founded in 1965 to preserve equipment from New Zealand's former bush tramways and light industrial lines, railway lines which were used to remove timber from the bush and transport coal to and from mines and dairy factories.

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