
Full steam ahead
May 18, 2008 | By Kerryn Manifold



Clive Plater has fully restored the Eudlo steam train that his father, Edgar, once worked on transporting sugar cane to the former Nambour Sugar Mill. PHOTO: WARREN LYNAM/174783

The historic Eudlo steam engine owes its life to the Plater family for more than one reason.

After months of toil, Nambour and District Historical Museum president Clive Plater yesterday officially unveiled the cosmetically restored sugar industry icon, which his grandfather once retrieved from a creek off the Maroochy River about 70 years ago.

Edgar Plater, Clive's father, was the fireman on the engine in 1936.

He was returning to the Moreton Sugar Mill, hauling a load of cane, when a bridge over an inlet collapsed.

He was pinned between the back of the engine and the carriages.

"Dad was hurt with a broken spine and broken pelvis and a lot of internal injuries," Clive said.

"In those days getting the loco out of the creek was an exercise because it landed, more-or-less, upside down.

"My grandfather was ganger of the bridge gang and he was in charge of building the structure to get it out of the creek."

The engine was back on the tracks within months, but still bears the battle scars from that day.

"You can see where the chimney has been welded back on and you can still see bit of a dint where Dad got crushed between the back of the loco," Clive said.

"It's really one of the two most iconic locos from then."

Clive said people who had lived in Nambour during the town's sugar heyday would recall seeing Eudlo and sister engine the Shay shunting cane around the region.

The Eudlo was eventually retired in 1970 after about 45 years of service, when its boilers no longer passed safety checks and diesel engines were introduced.

The engine looked as good as new yesterday, thanks to a little help from a \$15,000 Community Memorials Restoration Program grant from the state government and a lot of hard work from Clive and his mates.

"It's restored cosmetically, but it doesn't work," Clive said.

"We had to make two new water tanks and they've been made to working specifications, so in the future if the opportunity comes up to make it fully operational again, at least the water tanks are built to keep the water where it's supposed to be."

It is kept in a shed except for special occasions, such as yesterday's official unveiling at the museum's open day.

Clive is hopeful the engine will have a long future, connecting the community with the sugar industry that all but disappeared when the mill closed in 2003.

"I've got a son and two grandsons, so one of them might take it on," he said.

The museum, on Mitchell Street, is open each Saturday and Wednesday from 1-4pm.
