

**The Institution of Engineers, Australia**  
**Engineering Heritage Australia**  
**National Engineering Oral History Program**

**INTERVIEW TAPE LOG**

**Interviewee:** Keith Smith

**Tape Numbers:** IEA.EHA PD1,  
IEA.EHA PD2,  
IEA.EHA PD3,  
IEA.EHA PD4

**Interviewer:** Peter Donovan

**Number of Tapes:** Four (4)

**Dates of Interviews:** 25 March 2002 (PD1 & PD2) and 8 April 2002 (PD3 & PD4)

**Restrictions on Use:** Nil

**Log prepared using:** Sony TCM-5000EV

Tape: IEA.EHA PD1, Side A		
Counter	Subject	Proper Names & Keywords
0	Date of birth	May 1915
4	Details of father and his occupation in the railways	Archibald Smith, Bathurst
12	Details of grandfather's engineering business	Newcastle
21	Details of mother's upbringing and background	
29	Number of siblings and position in the family	
33	Gaining an apprenticeship with the NSW Railways	Eveleigh
39	Family life and railway influence	
44	Brothers' careers	
50	Early life, primary schooling, high school	Orange, Lithgow Canterbury, Bathurst High School
76	Apprenticeship examination and final schooling in Sydney	Neutral Bay High School
96	Presbyterian upbringing and Sunday School and peers who became influential in the railways	Jack Bannister, Bill Wake, Joe Heath
107	Move to Sydney and effect of Depression, first work experience. Influence of aunts.	Murdoch's, Canterbury, Artarmon
134	Contemporary engineering works, Harbour Bridge	Bradfield
156	Apprenticeship, fitting and turning, conditions	Eric Adam, Eddy Memorial Scholarship

206	Apprentice of the Year (1934), winning scholarships to attend university	Peter Nicoll Russell Scholarship
234	Social life as an apprentice, married at 25 in 1939	Epping
259	Preparations for university, studying for matriculation in several months at night school	Kings, Knox, Scotch Colleges, Great Hall, Sydney University
284	Study in engineering, experiences at university, vacation employment, leave without pay from the railways	Peter Nicoll Russell School of Engineering, Colin Rigby, Alan Prescott, Wollongong
439	Returned to railways after graduation to a junior post in the drawing office, a measure of resentment	H. Young, Forster
<b>End Side A, Tape PD1</b>		

<b>Tape: IEA.EHA PD1, Side B</b>		
<b>Counter</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Proper Names &amp; Keywords</b>
0	Early experience and frustrations as a junior draftsman with the NSW Railways	Forster, Harold Young
25	Married before graduation. Met Norma in 1932, married in 1939, lived originally with his parents-in-law.	Presbyterian Fellowship, Fernleigh, Epping Summer Hill
44	Won engineering prize at university in metallurgy	Garnsey Prize
64	Transferred to Locomotive Testing Section, sat on several boards, fitting out an dynamometer car	Harold Young, Viv Armstrong, dynamometer car
108	Worked on the Beaufort Bomber and Cruiser Tank projects during World War II	Chullora
143	Returned to locomotive testing and became familiar with all aspects of the operation of the NSW Railways	
164	Broad comment on NSW Railway operations at the time and attitude to diesel locomotives	
211	Transferred to Tasmanian Railways (TGR) in 1948	Wilson, Bart Anderson, Jack House
255	Comment upon TGR at the time, first experiences	
314	Early responsibilities in Tasmania, involvement with Boxing Association, sitting on boards and gaining experience in transport beyond railways	Baird, Hobart, Railways Officers' Conference
368	Interest in a position with the Commonwealth Railways [Phone: break in recording]	George Gahan, Pat Hannaberry, Melbourne
386	Railway politics in Tasmania	
433	Achievements in Tasmania, re unions, breakdown procedures, machinery	
<b>End Side B, Tape PD1</b>		



Tape: IEA.EHA: PD2, Side A		
Counter	Subject	Proper Names & Keywords
0	Achievements in Launceston, boxing activities, musical associations, a productive time, family life	Launceston, Baird
37	Appointed Chief Mechanical Engineer (CME) of the Commonwealth Railways (CR)	
49	Comment on CR at the time and plans in progress, diesels, new train, new lines, Budd Cars	Pat Hannaberry, Eric Adams
71	Early memories of Port Augusta and new responsibilities as CME for railways across to Kalgoorlie, to Central Australia, Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory	Port Augusta, Alice Springs, Birdum, Darwin, Kalgoorlie, Queanbeyan, Canberra
107	Early issues to confront before diesels, memories of the workshops, national office was a 'Bastion of Mediocrity' based on safety first, fulfilling multiple roles as an engineer and Justice of the Peace	Stirling North, Leigh Creek
156	Status and influence in Port Augusta, which was a 'Commonwealth Colony',	Maureen O'Hara, Peter Ustinov
184	Relations with Melbourne office, annual inspections	
200	Contemporary operation of CR, arrangements of workshops, ingrained croneyism, an incident served to enhance his authority	Marree, Quorn, Cook, Rawlinna, Kalgoorlie
264	Northern Territory operations, a 'Fantasy Railway'	
284	Apportionment of rolling stock, eradicated vacuum brake to ensure common features, Central Australian Railways in 'Terminal Decay'	Westinghouse Brake, Tarcoola
322	Financial aspects of operations, generally had a free hand when compared to states, relations with ministers and government, benevolent arrangement	Hubert Opperman, 'Oppy', Menzies
397	Good relations with state contemporaries, regular meetings at conferences, general comments on contemporaries, CR dependent on 'imports'	
End Side A, Tape PD2		

Tape: IEA.EHA: PD3, Side A		
Counter	Subject	Proper Names & Keywords
0	Appointment as Chief Mechanical Engineer (CME) of the Commonwealth Railways, SA opposition to route of the Port Augusta to Leigh Creek line, leading to Royal Commission, 'Dark Side' of the matter led to the resignation of Frank Harrison and the death of Robert Chapman.	Port Augusta, Leigh Creek, Frank Harrison, Robert Chapman, Fargher Institution of Locomotive Engineers, London
52	Implications for KS of CR plans for the future, re diesel locomotives and changing perspectives. KS drove the first diesel from Port Pirie to Port Augusta	
91	The new train from Germany set the standard for passenger travel in Australia	Dusseldorf

111	Introducing long welded rails permitted the use of the longest trains in Australia	Leigh Creek
124	Practical relationships with SAR and WAR were well established.	
139	KS's main innovation was implementing a new maintenance program for locomotives and rolling stock, which was converted to roller bearings	
157	KS was largely independent of national office	
168	KS combined roles of CME, Chief Civil Engineer and Chief Construction Engineer after differences between Hannaberry and his chief engineers, role of Hannaberry in initiating change	Ron Fitch, George Ryan, Hannaberry, George McLeay, Percy Spender, World Bank, Paltridge
221	Coal came from New South Wales, by boat, then by train via Broken Hill, diesels revolutionised this	Newcastle, Maitland, Broken Hill
241	Issues concerning the Northern Territory, changed from Melbourne to Port Augusta control, reason for closing the railway	Birdum, Darwin
278	KS relations with unions, derailments, social issues across the Trans, introduction of concrete sleepers, success with line from Port Augusta to Whyalla, concrete sleepers more revolutionary than diesels	Whyalla, Carnegie sleepers, Katherine
345	KS and community issues in Port Augusta and across the Trans, re sports and clubs	Marching Girls Association
385	Entertainment of dignitaries	
397	Appointed Acting Commissioner in 1960, long associated with other Commissioners after meetings and their travel	Hannaberry, Hubert Opperman, Windsor, Bill Wentworth, Standardisation
463	Moved to Melbourne and lived near St Kilda Road	
<b>End Side A, Tape PD3</b>		

<b>Tape: IEA.EHA: PD3, Side B</b>		
<b>Counter</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Proper Names &amp; Keywords</b>
0	Few major new issues confronted as Commissioner except for closer association with government and annual request for funds	Hubert Opperman, Bob Menzies
36	Became closely involved with standardisation of the line to Melbourne and protection of Commonwealth interests, he later assessed and signed off on every standardisation project throughout Australia, came under pressure from the states	Garfield Barwick, Silverton Tramway
106	KS established the standards for construction, sleepers, rails etc	Crystal Brook, Leigh Creek Charlie Court
144	KS travelled regularly through the system, also Commonwealth nominee on transport conferences overseas, participated in Colombo Plan, consulting overseas, had the status of Colonel for discussions with armed services	Colombo Plan, Indonesia, Sudan, Christmas Island, Geneva, Japan Joe Heath



184	Engineers were generally recruited from outside CR	
192	Only real major concern as Commissioner was the iron ore traffic in the Northern Territory, poor state of railways, many derailments	Mount Bundy, Frances Creek
217	KS was intimately involved in railway amalgamation after early meeting with Whitlam, decided to base headquarters in Adelaide rather than Canberra,	Gough Whitlam, Parkeston, Oodnadatta, Pine Creek, Gosford, Charlie Jones,
	NSW reneged because Commonwealth would not take metropolitan network, KS was involved in numerous meetings with unions and communities, was assisted by people in the Labor movement	Don Dunstan, Charlie Court, Tailem Bend, Ralph Taylor, AFULE, Clyde Cameron
317	New role as chairman of Australian National Railways Commission, became more ceremonial as railways were run by a general manager. KS met Charles Halton in Toronto, Canada	Harold Bell, Collin Freeland, Vern Dyason, Charles Halton
384	General managers mainly responsible for effecting amalgamation, but KS gave it credibility	
402	Standard gauge to Alice Springs, report in 1965	Gough Whitlam,
417	Line to Alice and amalgamation were supported by successive governments	John Kerr, Malcolm Fraser
<b>End Side B, Tape PD3</b>		

<b>Tape: IEA.EHA: PD4, Side A</b>		
<b>Counter</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Proper Names &amp; Keywords</b>
0	Labor was a great supporter of amalgamation	Gough Whitlam
12	Comment on Dr Don Williams and his choice as General Manager, KS most proud of the appointments he made and happy with consensus approach to management	Don Williams, Maunsell, West Gate Bridge, Australian Submarine Corporation
67	Retired in 1981 to horse-breeding in Strathalbyn, moved to West Lakes, decided to travel Australia but settled in Orange where KS was elected as alderman to City Council, and chairman of Finance Committee, returned to South Australia, writes articles, books and interested in computers, has avoided appointments to boards	Strathalbyn, West Lakes, Orange
121	CR had a luxurious Commissioner's Car, built for the tour of Duke of Windsor in 1924, it was used by many illustrious travellers. KS had the car restored after a bad accident.	Bob Menzies, Pat Hannaberry, Houghton's White Burgundy, Bill Harmsby, Louis Mountbatten, Salisbury, Coles GM1, Sandfly
175	GM1 is still working, KS saved the Sandfly, was patron of the Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society	
220	KS intimately involved in decisions concerning modern wagons for AN to take advantage of standardisation, new working practices	Lithgow, Sydney, Broken Hill, David Hill

275	Generally KS worked well with unions, largely because or railway and workshop background	
297	Good relations with ministers	Hubert Opperman, Peter Nixen, Ian Sinclair, Ralph Hunt, Ed Clark
347	Brief survey of extent of changes to railways during the course of KS' career. Perhaps problems of break-of-gauge were overrated	
400	Some ideas imported from overseas. Idea of concrete sleepers came from British Railways, first diesels from America	Butler, John Hedley
446	Overseas consultancies, Christmas Island, Indonesia, Sudan [Phone: break in recording]	
<b>End Side A, Tape PD4</b>		

<b>Tape: IEA.EHA: PD4, Side B</b>		
<b>Counter</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Proper Names &amp; Keywords</b>
0	KS last drove locomotive 36-42 into Orange about 12 years ago	Orange, Molong
17	KS did not consider becoming Commissioner of another system: state railways were always political. KS was never headhunted by industry	Clyde
45	Comparisons with other commissioners, he had served as chairman on three occasions, talk on rates at commissioners' conferences were always difficult, meetings prior to amalgamation were apprehensive, the current situation was virtually inevitable given the decision to amalgamate	Clyde
101	KS had no say in appointment of successor who was not a railway man.	Lou Marks
115	KS is most proud of his contribution to Standardisation, perhaps more instrumental than anyone else in facilitating the work, and very proud to have been an Eddy Memorial Scholar.	Port Augusta, Broken Hill, Port Pirie, Eddy Memorial Scholarship
<b>End of Side B, Tape PD4, End of Interview</b>		