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RAILWAY

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FOR ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED IN RAILWAYS

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SALISBURY CONTAINER TERMINAL

Part 1: Early operations and safeworking

DIVISION ENGINEER MEMORIES

Part 1: Narrabri Division

WHY THE 'COMET' WENT TO THE DOGS

Journal of the Australian Railway Historical Society



View of Narrabri station from the Sydney end circa 1970. Passengers with luggage await a train and luggage trolleys are loaded with items for the next train. Frank Johnson's account of his posting there commences on page 11.

G DORMAN IMAGE, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 028207A



We have not located images of the *Silver City Comet* trains operating the *Newcastle Express* or special trains to greyhound meetings in the 1940s. In this view, the *Silver City Comet* set, with an extra power car, is stabled in Kiama yard during its 50th Anniversary run to that centre on 27 September 1987. A S HAYNE IMAGE, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 077599

EDITORIAL

We open our 2018 January issue of *Australian Railway History* with Part 1 of Peter Cokley's history of the Salisbury Freight Terminal in Brisbane, which was a major facility for interstate freight, particularly containers, between 1964 and 1994. The facilities there were gradually expanded over the years to cope with increasing demands following the advent of containers, but eventually the limited length of the sidings in the yard led to its demise.

Frank Johnson follows up on his account of his time as a District Engineer in the August 2013 issue of *Australian Railway History* with Part 1 of his account of his time as Division Engineer at Narrabri. The challenges he faced during his two years at that location, particularly the impact of the January 1971 floods on railway infrastructure in the region, are featured. The article is illustrated with Frank's own photos together with a selection from the ARHSnsw Railway Resource Centre.

Don Estell explores the use of *Silver City Comet* power cars and trailer cars on the *Newcastle Express* and *Federal City Express*, and

as special trains conveying patrons to greyhound races at Wollongong,

Dapto, Wyong, Menangle Park and Broadmeadow from mid-1940. This occurred following a strike by railwaymen in the Far West when the Arbitration Court again adjourned their claim for the Western Climatic Allowance to compensate for the extreme heat they endured.

Don documents eleven *Newcastle Express* services operated by *Comet* power cars and trailers, while 22 race special trains were run, but the latter have received little attention by railway historians. Two years later, wartime regulations prohibited the running of race special trains.

Neville Pollard rounds off the issue with a short Explorer item on the accident that occurred at Young Tank on 7 September 1888 and its implications for safe working on the NSW railways.

Robert F. McKillop

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Cover: English Electric cab/hood locomotive No. 1252 has just passed Salisbury freight yard in the left background and Salisbury signal cabin on the right, circa 1970s. GREG CASH IMAGE

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Letters: We publish a selection of letters depending on space allowances. Letters should be kept to around 250 words and preferably be sent via email.

THE SALISBURY FREIGHT TERMINAL

Part 1: Overview and safeworking

Peter Cokley



QR GM loco 1474 and covered (or box) wagons photographed on the 1970s-built dual-gauge siding in the Salisbury depot in 1979. The closer gantry line siding was 1435mm gauge as was the run-around line in foreground. The signal cabin is on the left. GREG CASH IMAGE

Think of a terminal designed to cash in on the lucrative interstate rail freight! Then remember the same interstate line which reached South Brisbane in 1930, also reached Melbourne in 1962. That helps explain why in 1964, captains of industry opened a 17-acre (6.9-ha) private transshipment terminal in Salisbury with access to both the interstate 1435mm (4ft 8½ in) and local 1067mm (3ft 6 in) gauge lines. This new Salisbury yard even dispatched trains to Sydney.¹

The Queensland Railways (QR) Commissioner's 1962–1963 Report noted the increasing traffic on the 1435mm gauge line from South Brisbane to the NSW border due to the new Melbourne–Sydney standard gauge line. While that growth was a positive aspect, the report also noted that saturation point had been reached in terminal and transshipment facilities in Brisbane, and that a new goods yard was needed.²

That same Commissioner's Report also mentioned 395 acres (160 hectares) was acquired at Acacia Ridge. History shows this resulted in the giant Acacia Ridge transshipment terminal as well as the construction in 1966 of the 1067mm gauge line from Salisbury to Acacia Ridge. However, history also records that while the Acacia Ridge facility still functions, the Salisbury private terminal, a couple of kilometres north, lost its rail links in 1996.^{3 4} It remained as a road served depot until 2015, when TNT Express closed the depot and relocated its road based activities to Redbank near Ipswich.⁵

Rail passengers at Salisbury may notice the rusting remnants of the long-gone rail yard on the eastern side of the Gold Coast line near the Riawena Road overpass, south of Salisbury station. If those rails could talk, they would relate an interesting tale of about 30 years of life in what is termed the 'logistics chain' in modern jargon. Back when the Salisbury rail yard opened in 1964, it was more simply termed rail freight forwarder operations.

Corporate Trails

The company which established the Salisbury rail facility, Rudders Ltd, was a long-established customs, forwarding agent and shipping company which underwent ownership changes in the 1960s. In 1962 Rudders Ltd merged into Cargo Distributors Ltd,⁶ which sold Rudders Ltd to Thomas Nationwide Transport (TNT) in August 1966, thus giving TNT control of the rail yard.⁷ The terminal therefore opened in 1964 under Cargo Distributors Ltd ownership. Early QR documents for the terminal were variously labelled 'Rudders Transport Depot' or 'Cargo Distributors Ltd (Rudders)'.

QR's Weekly Notice (WN) 3/67 of 19 January 1967 showed the name change from 'Messrs. Cargo Distributors Ltd. (Rudders)' to 'Messrs. Thomas Nationwide Transport Limited', although the NSW Government Railways and its subsequent counterparts continued to refer to the site as Cargo Distributors Siding for quite some time. For example, the State Rail Authority of NSW WN 35/1982 of August 1982 used the Cargo Distributors name on the track plan. A possible factor for QR being somewhat prompt with the name change was that it owned the 1435 mm gauge line north of the state border and so levied charges. Thus, QR's WN 3/67 specifically mentioned the Schedule of Haulage, Shunting and Royalty Charges By-law No. 953. Or, put another way, QR's accounts people needed the correct name on their invoices.

Ongoing corporate manoeuvres in 1967 saw more brand names appear at the Salisbury rail depot. The original TNT, named after Ken Thomas, merged with Alltrans Pty Ltd which included Sir Peter Abeles. As well as Alltrans, other TNT brands seen at the Salisbury yard included Railfast and Contrans.

Brisbane's 1435mm gauge options

Any new 1435mm gauge Brisbane freight operator in 1960 wanting to use a pre-existing container or general cargo

handling facility only had a choice of four, none of which had free space that matched the 6.9-hectares site that eventuated at Salisbury. The four facilities were South Brisbane, Park Road, Clapham and Rocklea.

South Brisbane, the northernmost yard, was Brisbane's 1435mm gauge passenger and general freight facility. Park Road was 2.6km from South Brisbane and handled freight forwarder traffic. Clapham, 8km from South Brisbane and just south of the 1435mm gauge Yeerongpilly Locomotive Depot, was in heavy use as a transshipment terminal.

Clapham also included TNT's freight forwarding business, utilizing both gauges.^{8 9} One by-product of TNT's August 1966 purchase of Rudders Ltd was that Salisbury became TNT's second Brisbane transshipment yard. The Poultry Farmer's Co-op Society was another company with facilities for both gauges at Clapham. Their 1954 completed flour mill and silos occupied a half-hectare site north of the TNT facilities on the Fairfield Road side.^{10 11}

The next 1435mm gauge facility was the Rocklea Industrial Estate sidings, east of Beaudesert Road and 9.7km from South Brisbane. These served railway engineering firms Evans Deakin (both gauges), The English Electric Company (both gauges), Commonwealth Engineering (both gauges) and Bradford Insulation (1435mm gauge).¹²

A new entrant in the 1435mm gauge rail yard list was CSR, whose Gyprock



Gold liveried QR 'Centennial' locomotive 1461 heads a Railways of Australia Container Express (RACE) train leaving the Acacia Ridge line at Salisbury in the late 1970s. The 1435mm gauge main line is in the right background and Beenleigh lines in foreground. GREG CASH IMAGE

building products factory opened in 1963. They were located near the northern side of the Boundary Road level crossing, with the 1960s built Acacia Ridge rail yard on the southern side of that level crossing. CSR initially had a 1435mm gauge siding with a 1067mm gauge siding added later. While CSR's Building Products section still uses the site, they no longer use their rail sidings. General Motors-Holden (GMH) was another 1960s entrant in the Acacia Ridge area with access to both rail gauges.

The huge growth of the Acacia Ridge yard meant the base for shunting of the Salisbury yard on both gauges eventually changed to Acacia Ridge. That

growth can be illustrated by tracing the development of Acacia Ridge's signalling system. QR opened an interlocked 12-lever frame at Acacia Ridge signal cabin by 1968 for traffic on both gauges. By 1980, it had grown to a 22-lever operation which in turn was replaced by a Banyo Workshops-built electric panel. This in turn, was replaced by larger panels over the years.

In 2016, the Acacia Ridge facility was controlled from a panel within the yard. Traffic south of Acacia Ridge was controlled by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) at Broadmeadow in Newcastle, NSW. Rail traffic north of Acacia Ridge, irrespective of gauge, was controlled by QR at Mayne. The



Rudders CARGO containers on QR wagon HJS 25740 possibly at Salisbury, labelled in turn; Rudders 'R' logo, Cargo Distributors Ltd and Cargo-Rudders Ltd. ERIC LYON'S IMAGE COURTESY AMRA QLD BRANCH COLLECTION



Thomas Nationwide Transport refrigerated container, compared with a standard 'Darwin Service' container photographed at Hamilton, QLD.
IMAGE ERIC LYON, COURTESY AMRA QLD BRANCH COLLECTION

servicing of 1435mm gauge locomotives also moved to Acacia Ridge on 13 February 1997 from the original 1930 Yeerongpilly Locomotive Depot.^{13 14}

Salisbury's Transshipment

The key to the site was a building with a covered floor area of over 65,000 sq ft (6039 m²) with large sliding security doors over the rail access at each end of the building. The northern side was a raised dock with loading bays for road vehicles on the outside and rail wagons or vans on the inside. The southern side of the covered building comprised a concreted ground level storage area where forklifts managed the transfers between rail wagons and the store area.¹⁵

Transshipment between rail vehicles of different gauges used gravity roller conveyers, with forklifts for longer distances or between road and rail vehicles. Hand trolleys were also utilised in this process. Containers and other larger items were moved by a heavy duty mobile crane at the outdoor sidings.

The Salisbury yard also handled the distribution of new motor vehicles such as Morris 1100s. Some cars from southern assembly plants arrived by rail on two-deck carrier wagons and were transhipped at Clapham. Other shipments arrived by road, including from Brisbane wharves in the case of imported vehicles. Some cars were placed on QR flat wagons by forklifts while other deliveries were made by road to metropolitan dealers.

In 1966 most of Rudders interstate and long-distance intrastate freight

was handled in CARGOainers, the company's own design of containers, as well as bulk contract vans. The CARGOainers were very flexible for the company's operations and were particularly efficient in handling the volume requirement of the co-ordinated service from Brisbane to Mount Isa, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Darwin, being transferred to road vehicles at Mount Isa. Some containers also transferred back to 1067mm gauge on the Commonwealth Railways, as they were known then, for the final stage into Darwin from March 1962.¹⁶

Examples of these CARGOainers, with the 'CARGO' portion of the name in block letters, were photographed in a Townsville rail yard in April 1962.

These were two HJS wagons, with sides removed, each with containers labelled 'Rudders CARGOainer Service' and their large company 'R' logo on the upper side. The containers were very high for their base. Carrying capacity for a HJS was about 24 tonnes, so with three containers on a wagon as per the photograph, mass might have worked out at around eight tonnes gross for each container. Some of these containers were later rebadged as 'Cargo- Rudders Ltd' and 'Cargo Distributors Ltd' and eventually 'TNT Darwin Service'.¹⁷

In the early era of the Salisbury yard, rail wagons were shunted as required by an older road lorry. In the later era, TNT also had a private shunting tractor for use on the 1435mm gauge at Salisbury. This was fitted with a train brake in the form of a No. 7 automatic air-brake valve as well as the associated air compressor and air reservoir. The shunter's own brake is not remembered, but it was probably a foot-pedal or hand-brake.¹⁸ This writer would welcome any other details for this private shunter.

Photographic evidence in the 1970s show Salisbury loads were carried by a mix of vans, flat and open wagons with gantry cranes available for the load transhipments including containers.

1960s Yard Arrangements

QR's Chief Engineer's Office minute of 30 August 1963 outlined Cargo Distributors Ltd's (Rudders) proposal to construct their depot.²⁰ It showed



1966 aerial view of the Salisbury Freight Terminal with the key features listed.

QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & MINES¹⁹

the company had deposited a cheque to defray the cost of the sidings on company property as well as a level crossing on the South Coast Line to provide vehicle access from Sway Street. This Cargo Distributors Ltd cheque was for £25,000 (\$692,570 in 2016 terms). The total infrastructure cost was £57,000 (\$1,584 million in 2016 terms),²¹ which also included the signalling plus other track work between the yard boundary and the main line for both gauges.

Shunting charges were calculated on the 1067mm gauge from the time the engine left Rocklea until it returned there.²² On the 1435mm gauge, shunting costs were levied from the time the engine left Clapham until it returned there.

The track plan shows 1067mm gauge traffic entered the yard through facing points off the out-bound Beenleigh line about 580 metres south of Salisbury station. These led to a 251-metre dead-end siding with a 50-metre run-around loop siding mid-way along on the southern side.

Also shown on the track plan is a spur off the 1435mm gauge main line with facing points for southbound trains at 976.09km from Sydney, which was 890 metres south of the Beaudesert Road Signal Cabin, located at the Beaudesert Road level crossing at Salisbury. These 1435mm gauge points were operated by levers at Ground Frame B located over on the western side of the main line adjacent to the points. This 1435mm gauge spur line crossed the Beenleigh lines on the level and entered the yard to form a 397-metre inward road, with two loop sidings mid-way in the yard, that is, a 110-metre outward road and a 140-metre run-around.



QR English Electric cab/hood-bodied diesel-electric locomotive 1260 heads a train of containers off the Acacia Ridge Line at Salisbury yard in early 1979.

GREG CASH IMAGE

Lines of both gauges passed through the building with a 58-metre extension out the other end. The Ground Frame was termed 'B' as Salisbury cabin was designated Frame 'A'.

1970s Facilities Upgrade

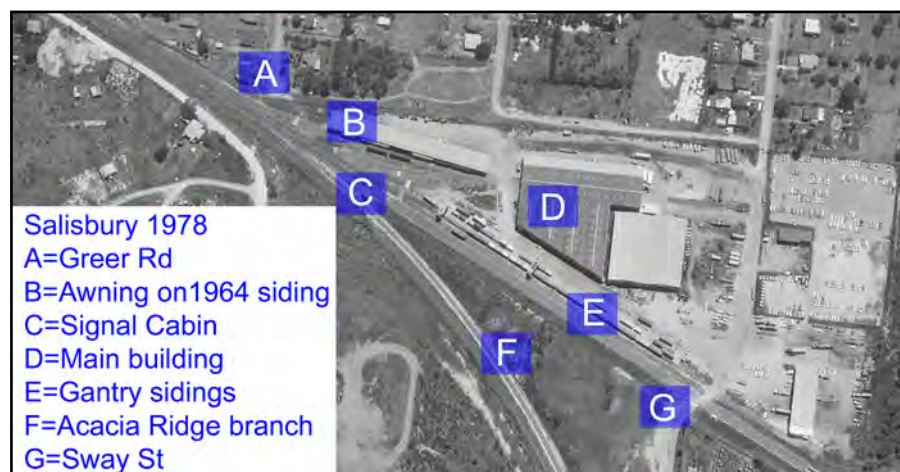
The transshipment activities were thriving to the extent that there were plans to install extra sidings of both gauges towards the Sway Street level crossing.²³ These are depicted on the accompanying plan. The 1435mm gauge sidings led off the 1964-built sidings inside the yard then crossed the 1067mm gauge sidings. This new 1435mm gauge line split into three sidings with the one nearest the fence alongside the Beenleigh line being a run-around type siding that terminated at points on the second line beyond the Sway Street crossing. Two gantry cranes serviced this second

1435mm gauge line as well as the third line, furthest from the fence, which was a dual-gauge siding that finished just before the realigned Sway Street level crossing. The 1067mm gauge link to the dual-gauge siding was off the sidings installed in 1964.

1974 aerial images revealed these new buildings and track work. They included weather protection for the transfer between trucks and rail at the north end of the 1964-installed external 1435mm gauge sidings. The other new buildings included an addition to the 1964 building as well as a new building east of the Sway Street level crossing. This yard was designed in the guard's van era when trains needed to be shunted before departure to ensure locomotives and guard's vans were on their correct ends. Further, any Salisbury trains for Sydney had to have the locomotive facing in the correct direction, which meant it had to leave Yeerongpilly locomotive depot facing correctly. The Alco hood 45 class locomotives were affected by this as crews desired them to run cab forward.

Standard Gauge Operations

Before March 1978, wagons from the TNT sidings at Salisbury were transferred to Acacia Ridge prior to being marshalled into south-bound trains, with similar arrangements for north-bound loading from New South Wales.²⁴ From March 1978, a certain amount of the loading from Salisbury, mainly containers, was railed direct to New South Wales. Similarly, some



Aerial view of the Salisbury Freight Yard in 1978 with the TNT container depot dominating the scene. QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & MINES



Standard gauge Alco 'Jumbo' mainline locomotive 44211 and a 48 class branchline locomotive shunt a container train into the TNT Alltrans Salisbury container depot in mid-1978, while three bogie box cars sit in the adjacent siding. The weather protection awning constructed in 1974 is behind the electricity pole. GREG CASH IMAGE

trains from the south ran direct to Salisbury after stopping at Acacia Ridge to pick up the shunters.

For departing trains from Salisbury to New South Wales, a shunting locomotive from Acacia Ridge, usually a 44 or 45 class diesel locomotive, marshalled the train. The train locomotives were brought from the Yeerongpilly Locomotive Depot by a local crew and the train departed

south around 7.00pm. A Grafton crew sometimes took over at Acacia Ridge, having been brought from the crews' rest centre by taxi. Wagons noted included JCW jumbo container wagons, OCY and OCX container wagons and sometimes a KLY louvered van.

A 1991 train list reveals that services still operated out of Salisbury as individual trains.²⁵ Mandatory train M6290 was

shown as departing Salisbury TNT sidings to NSW at 10pm Mondays to Fridays. It is not known if these were Salisbury loads only or included loading from elsewhere, for example, TNT's Clapham depot. Northbound TNT traffic was shown as from Cooks River yard in Sydney but its actual Brisbane destination was not shown apart from the Acacia Ridge time.

The 1977 NSW Local Appendix to the Northern Division Working Timetable lists the Salisbury yard's standing room as 59 of the 6.7-metre long standard vehicles used by the NSW Public Transport Commission as their measuring datum. A train of 59 of those vehicles equates to 395 metres in length. The 1979 NSW Northern Division Working Timetable (WTT) listed maximum train length between Clapham and Casino as 55 of these standard vehicles for a single main line diesel, which equates as 368.5 metres plus locomotive. Kyogle's 385-metre long crossing loop was the shortest listed south to Casino in 1977.

For comparison, South Brisbane's crossing loop was shown as 223 metres, Clapham's 616 metres, Casino's 450 metres and Grafton's crossing loop was 457 metres. The use of the short 6.7-metre standard vehicle would have



The tracks in the foreground as seen from a passing train are relics of rail use at the former Salisbury container terminal. ALISTER CAMERON IMAGE

been as a measuring datum value only, as that NSW 1979 WTT stipulated four-wheeled wagons were not authorised north of Grafton unless specially approved by the Freight Trains Manager.

The departure or arrival of trains of around 400 metres to or from NSW for Salisbury would have been interesting to watch as it meant reversing lengthy trains over the double track Beenleigh lines with all 1067mm gauge traffic halted. A train of this length could have been reversed out of the TNT yard onto the 1435mm gauge main line as there was ample room to the north. Salisbury's 1977 shunt limit was Beaudesert Road signal cabin's No. 4 Down (northbound) Home signal, located close to that cabin, over 850 metres to the north of Salisbury's Frame B.²⁶

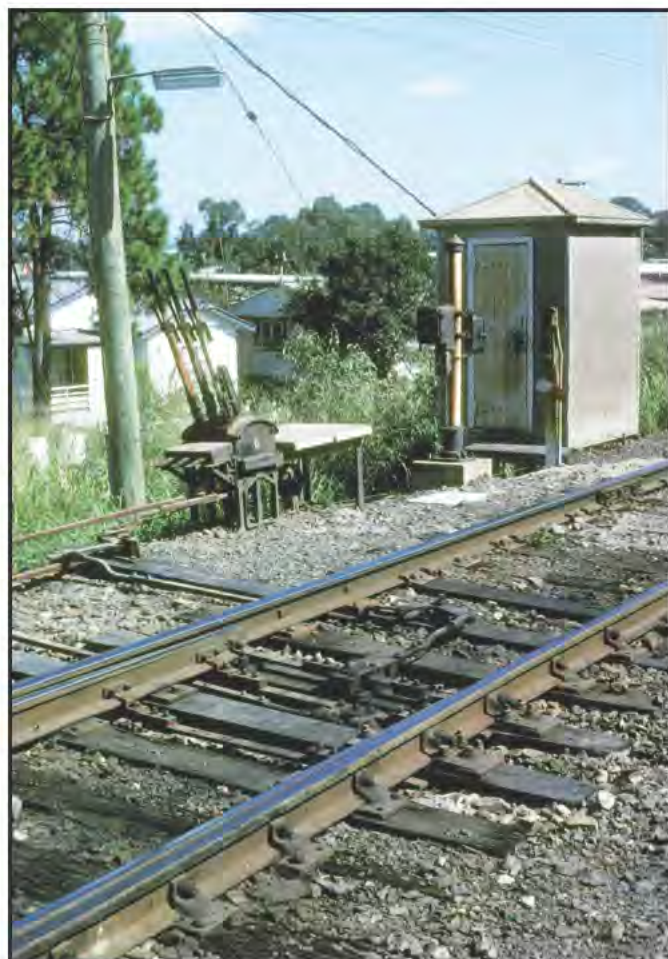
That Beaudesert Road cabin's No. 4 Down Home signal was stipulated in the 1977 NSW Local Appendix to the Northern Division Working Timetable as the location a train entering the Salisbury yard from the south was not permitted to proceed past. This applied when, at the same time, a train was coming from Clapham for either the Rocklea Industrial Estate sidings or heading towards Acacia Ridge. In these cases, the document stated both Beaudesert Road cabin's No. 4 Down Home and No. 6 Up (southbound) Home signal levers were kept at 'stop' by placing sleeves on Nos. 4 and 6 levers in the normal position. Interestingly, that 1977 document did not mention Beaudesert Road's northbound 1435mm gauge Outer Home signal, situated about 460 metres to the north of Frame B, although that space could also accommodate a 400-metre train from Salisbury.

After the Salisbury and Beaudesert Road cabins closed (see below), the shunt limit would have been the Clapham Outer Home. This signal, on the southern approach to the Beaudesert Road level crossing, would have provided protection for that level crossing. Again, ample shunt room for a 400 metre train out of Salisbury's yard.

National Rail Corporation (NRC) assumed control of the 1435mm gauge portion of the Acacia Ridge yard on 5 April 1993 and commenced crewing on the Sydney–Brisbane corridor from 25 July 1994.^{27 28} By NRC's time, TNT Salisbury trains had become a shunt job from Acacia Ridge and locomotives on their way to Yeerongpilly depot from Acacia Ridge could take the TNT traffic through to Salisbury on their way, thus, no complete trains were despatched from Salisbury for Sydney or arrived at Salisbury.²⁹ NRC later merged with other organisations into the national rail operator, Pacific National.

Another transfer method towards the final stages involved taking the loading to Salisbury after detaching from the NSW train at Acacia Ridge, with the loco returning to Acacia Ridge for other shunting instead of heading to the Yeerongpilly depot. After the wagons were unloaded and reloaded, a locomotive was sent back from Acacia Ridge to collect the loading to be attached to a southbound train at Acacia Ridge.³⁰

Towards the end of the yard's rail era, the 1435mm gauge shunt train returning to Acacia Ridge from Salisbury sometimes pushed container wagons such as the RQJW type. There was always a worry about the Musgrave Road level crossing, especially after one shunter had a near miss. The shunters' practice therefore was to ride on the trailing end of the leading wagon during pushback.³¹



The Salisbury Signal Frame B and the safeworking hut and assorted cabinets beside the track. PHIL BARKER IMAGE

1067mm gauge operations

The mid-1964 Salisbury opening predates the 1966 general introduction of diesel power on the QR Southside passenger services.³² That suggests steam locomotives such as the PB15 class 4-6-0s were possibly used within the Salisbury yard. Other steam types were also possible as larger locomotives were allowed south to Kingston while tender locomotives that hauled passenger services out to Kuraby used that fork line to turn.

The Acacia Ridge branch freight motive power included a BB 18½ class 4-6-2 locomotive as one was photographed hauling a train of GMH products on that branch.³³ PB15 class locomotives were allowed 350 tons Rocklea–Acacia Ridge and 415 tons return. The BB 18½ class was allowed 605 tons outbound and 710 tons return on the same route.³⁴

In the late 1960s, the 1720 class diesel-electric locomotives, as well as other locomotive classes, often worked the various freight yards as well as the peak commuter traffic. The 1969 QR Working Time Table (WTT) noted train No. 568 (Mondays to Fridays) from Mayne, on the north side of the city, conveyed loading for Corinda, Moolabin, South Brisbane and Salisbury. Another shunt train in that 1969 WTT, No. 573, was listed to shunt Acacia Ridge and clear loading from Salisbury.

The Salisbury QR shunt job was often worked by South Brisbane crews until the Merivale cross-river rail bridge revolutionised southside operations in 1978. After that, all South Brisbane work was transferred to Mayne as the South Brisbane depot ceased to exist.³⁵ 1970s observations indicated QR traffic into the Salisbury yard was not heavy and often a 1720 class branch line locomotive hauled a

Table 1: Salisbury Signal Cabin Opening Hours

Days	Times
Mon, Wed, Fri	5am to 9:40am and 1:22pm to 10:22pm
Tuesday	5am to 9:26am and 1:22pm to 10:22pm
Thursday	5am to 9am and 1:30pm to 9:30pm
Sat, Sun	Cut out all day unless required for 1435mm gauge trains

wagon or two from Acacia Ridge.³⁶

The list of places approved for 'Pushing Trains on the Main Line' in the QR 1982 General Appendix (GA) included between Acacia Ridge and Salisbury. This General Appendix permitted 1067mm gauge wagons to be pushed in front of the locomotive at a speed not exceeding 7 km/h, provided the brake pipe was continuous throughout the train and the guard or shunter, where no guard was provided, rode on the leading vehicle to attend to the brakes, etc. The 1982 GA specified the practice was confined to daylight. In these operations, the GA also allowed these trains to be worked without a brake van, then customary on most trains. The ability to push shunt trains on the main lines removed the need to ensure the guard's van and locomotive were at their normal ends of these trains.

Salisbury signal cabin

Salisbury Cabin was on the city-bound side of the Beenleigh line in the wedge formed with the Acacia Ridge line. Weekly Notice 26 of 1964 revealed it was a block station during opening hours, the sections being Beaudesert

Road-Salisbury (1.2km) and Salisbury-Coopers Plains (1.5km).

While obviously the cabin's initial main responsibility was to facilitate the operation of the mid-1964 opened Salisbury freight yard, there was other planning relevant to this area going on in the QR Chief Engineer's Office. One memo shows QR was aware by at least June 1963, 12 months before the cabin opened, that General Motors-Holden (GMH) had a need for sidings of both gauges to service Acacia Ridge land over which GMH had an option.³⁷ Accordingly, QR plans drawn in October 1963 covered the layout of the proposed Acacia Ridge yard and drawing EG29, dated 11 November 1963, indicated the proposed GMH sidings. The need for 1435mm gauge sidings was by the proposed GMH opening date of December 1965, with 1067mm gauge when the Acacia Ridge branch was ready.

This awareness of the need to eventually incorporate a junction for the future Acacia Ridge line was reflected in the initial Salisbury signal cabin layout. The 1964 trackwork included a crossover on the Beenleigh line with facing points enabling

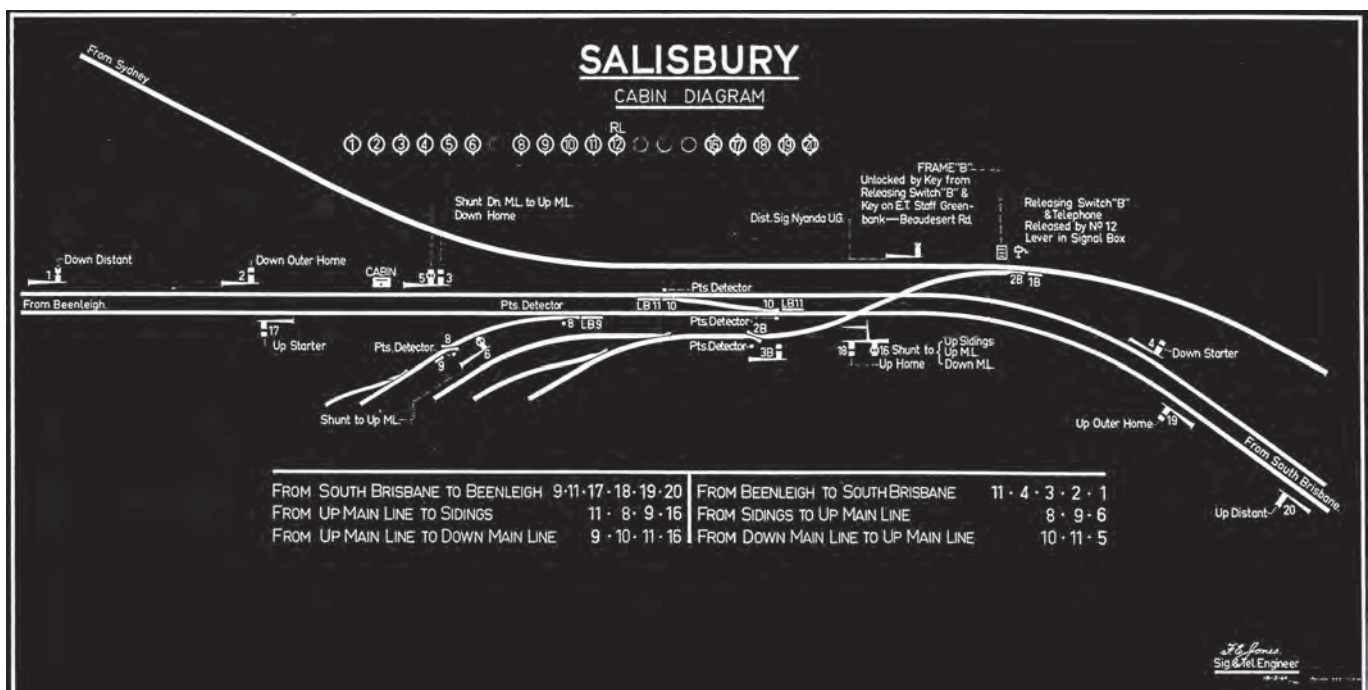
outbound trains to cross over to the inbound Beenleigh line and straight on to the branch line when built.

This crossover for the proposed Acacia Ridge line meant 1067mm gauge departures from the Salisbury freight yard were not very convenient as the crossover was back to front for trains exiting the Salisbury yard. It meant a train departing for perhaps the Roma Street yards in the city area initially headed 'wrong road' on the outbound line towards the Salisbury Station. Once the tail of the train had passed the crossover points, it could reverse through the crossover to finally reach the inbound Beenleigh line and travel forward towards Rocklea. This arrangement would have delayed other trains in both directions on the Beenleigh line for longer than if a departing train had a facing point crossover straight onto the inbound line.

Once the Acacia Ridge yard was established, 1067mm gauge trains from Salisbury for Acacia Ridge took advantage of this crossover. They simply reversed out of the Salisbury yard then went straight through the crossover to the Acacia Ridge line.

TO BE CONTINUED

Editor: Readers will find the end notes for this article on the ARHSnsw website: www.arhsnsw.com.au



The Salisbury signal cabin 1964 track plan diagram with the 1435mm gauge line at the top. QR DIAGRAM, COURTESY FRANK TYBISLAWSKI

MEMORIES OF A DIVISION ENGINEER

Part 1: Narrabri and the North-West Lines

Frank Johnson



The trackside view of the main Narrabri station building circa 1970 with the Metcalf silo dominating the background.

G DORMAN IMAGE, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 0282078

Editor: Frank Johnson's 'Memories of a District Engineer' was published in the August 2013 issue of *Australian Railway History*. Part 1 of Frank's account of his time at Narrabri as a Division Engineer is presented in this issue, with Part 2 to follow in March.

Introduction

The 1960s and up to 20 October 1972 were, in my opinion, the halcyon days of the New South Wales Government Railways (NSWGR). It was then a vertically integrated railway organisation that provided passenger and goods services to the length and breadth of New South Wales (NSW). It employed a workforce of around 45,000 making it the dominant employer in many country towns. I was fortunate enough to be part of those days, travelling and working at locations around the state of New South Wales.

Following four years as a Trainee Civil Engineer with the NSWGR, I graduated from the University of NSW in May 1968 and spent around two years at Goulburn as a District Engineer in the Way and Works Branch (see *Australian Railway History*, August 2013). This was followed by a period at Broken Hill as Project Engineer on the Standard Gauge Upgrading Works. There I witnessed that great moment in our railway history when the first *Indian Pacific* train from Sydney to Perth passed through on 24 February 1970, following completion of the standard gauge link across Australia.

My next posting was to the position of District Engineer at Wollongong. Here I looked after the tracks from there to Bomaderry and Port Kembla, but I only had three weeks there before being sent off to relieve at the next level up in the Way & Works Branch, namely as a Division Engineer (DE).

For maintenance purposes, the Way & Works Branch

divided the state into 11 Divisions: Metropolitan, Goulburn, Cootamundra, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, Dubbo, Parkes, Newcastle, Tamworth, Narrabri and South Grafton. The DE at each centre was responsible for the maintenance, construction and upgrading of track, bridges, buildings and other structures in his area. 'His' is used deliberately for, to my knowledge, there was never a female DE, such was the great gender divide in railway civil engineering at that time (nor were there any females in the senior management ranks of the Railway Department generally).

During my period as relief Division Engineer, I was posted to three of the NSW Railways' the most widely-separated postings: Wagga Wagga in the south, Tamworth in the north and Dubbo in the west. While at Dubbo, I received advice that I was to be promoted to the position of Division Engineer, Narrabri, taking me to the glorious grade of Professional Engineer, Class 2. I was to take up duties there on 2 November 1970.



The first *Indian Pacific* train to Perth at Broken Hill on 24 February 1970. FRANK JOHNSON IMAGE

In that era in the NSWGR, promotion was always by seniority and there was no choice. This practice reminded me of the old Negro spiritual: *Children, go where I send you!* Equally appropriate, the second verse of that spiritual asks: *How shall I send thee?* Of course, in the case of the NSWGR, the answer to this question would usually have been: 'By train!'

Settling into Narrabri

Narrabri was not a place I had ever been to or even contemplated visiting, let alone living at, but Narrabri it was to be. Following a weekend off at Goulburn with my girlfriend, it was time to pack the bags again, make sure my NSWGR All-Lines Book Pass and my engineer's slide rule were there, and drive off to Sydney, where I boarded the *North-West Mail* train at 7.10pm.

The night mail trains were then key elements of the Railway's passenger services and I always enjoyed the outer areas of the NSWGR network. I was fortunate enough to be a salaried officer. As such, I was entitled to travel in a sleeping compartment, which was usually in one of the 'heritage' TAM or MAL carriages. There was something very satisfying being able to go to sleep just out of Sydney and waking up on the other side of the Great Dividing Range, with the (usually) friendly conductor offering a cup of tea and a biscuit.

The great Australian bush bard, Henry Lawson, captured the contribution of the mail trains to rural communities in his 1922 poem *On the Night Train*:

Have you seen the bush by moonlight,
from the train, go running by? Blackened
log and stump and sapling, ghostly trees
all dead and dry;

Here a patch of glassy water; there a
glimpse of mystic sky?

Have you heard the still voice calling—
yet so warm, and yet so cold:

"I'm the Mother Bush that bore you!
Come to me when you are old"?

Did you see the Bush below you
sweeping darkly to the Range,

All unchanged and all unchanging, yet
so very old and strange!

While you thought in softened anger of
the things that did estrange?

(Did you hear the Bush a-calling, when
your heart was young and bold:

"I'm the Mother-Bush that nursed you;
come to me when you are old"?)

Back to 1970. Arriving in Narrabri
around 6 o'clock on the Monday



Staff at the Narrabri Railway Refreshment Room pose behind the counter for a photograph in 1951. Little had changed when Frank arrived at Narrabri. STATE RECORDS NSW

morning, I disembarked from the sleeper and headed to the Railway Refreshment Room for breakfast, no doubt wondering what the day would bring. The above photo shows the Narrabri RRR in 1951, but things did not change much in country towns, especially in terms of railway facilities.

After my tea and toast, I wandered down the platform to the Division Engineer's office and introduced myself to the inspectors and office staff. No 'Hail the conquering hero comes' stuff here! Rather, this was a real 'do it yourself affair', for my predecessor, Col Neal, was on holidays in preparation for leaving the town for his transfer to Division Engineer, South Grafton. Around mid-morning, Col came across to the office to provide me with a brief hand-over.

I was then on my own and in charge of the Narrabri Division. My four years of civil engineering at university had not provided anything to prepare me for something like this. For me, it came down to a 'seat of the pants' approach, though four years of industrial training with the NSWGR and a couple of years since graduation had equipped me with helpful knowledge and skills.

Role of Division Engineer

The position of Division Engineer (DE) was very different to my District Engineer role and my relief positions. The DE was solely in charge of all the senior managers in the Way & Works Branch, while my senior officers were

some 570km away in Sydney. I was totally responsible for all the track, bridges and buildings. I also had to know about anything that happened in the Division and I was also the point of contact for the other local controlling officers in the area, who covered both engineering and traffic (operations) issues.

I was now responsible for many more staff than previously, including four per way (track) inspectors, two bridge and building inspectors, a track mechanisation inspector, draftsmen, a principal clerk and five clerks, a secretary, some 300 field staff and a car driver. I also had a much wider range of duties and responsibilities, including:

- Ensuring that all the tracks, bridges and buildings were adequately maintained to support the safe operation of the railway;
- Management/staffing, including discipline where required;
- Planning works priorities, programmes and budgeting;
- Delivering works programmes;
- Reporting progress to Head Office;
- Emergencies and investigations; and
- Engineering tasks.

When I took over, I was only 23 and had completed my university studies less than three years previously. From recollection, my predecessor and I were the youngest ever appointments to the Division Engineer ranks. At this time, the available pool of civil engineers in the NSWGR had been depleted by a seemingly endless exodus due to a

THE NARRABRI DIVISION

The Lines

As would be expected for a first DE appointment, Narrabri Division was somewhat 'remote' as it covered all the main and branch lines north west of Werris Creek. These totalled around 900 kilometres of running line track plus crossing loops, yards and sidings. In 1970, all these lines were still very much in use for passenger and goods services. The key lines, together with their opening dates, were:

- Werris Creek to Narrabri West (1879–1882);
- Narrabri to Moree (1897);
- Moree to Mungindi (1913–1914);
- Moree to Inverell (1900–1902);
- Camurra to Boggabilla (1932);
- Narrabri West to Walgett (1903–1908); and
- Burren Junction to Pokataroo (1906).

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the NSW Government constructed a vast network of lines with a cheap class of construction designated 'Pioneer Lines' to service inland areas.¹ The key driver of this expansion was to assist farmers to carry their produce and livestock to the nearest railway siding and get back home in a day. Certainly, the lines of the Narrabri Division bore witness to this policy, for just about every station and some intermediate sidings had wheat silos and loading facilities for bulk grain. In addition, most stations had livestock yards with loading facilities and the then ubiquitous goods shed.



The Division Engineer's house at Narrabri was set in a garden next door to the Station Master's house and across the road from the Division Engineer's office.

FRANK JOHNSON IMAGE

mining boom. For us who remained, the expression, "being thrown into the deep end" certainly comes to mind, but what an incomparable way to gain railway and management experience.

The railway house

One of the conditions of my appointment was the requirement to occupy the Division Engineer's residence in Narrabri. This was a benefit as the rent was reasonable and the house was just across the road from the office. So, after a weekend away in Sydney and Goulburn to collect my belongings, I arrived back in Narrabri very late on Sunday night and let myself into my new house. 'House' is a generous term, for it was rumoured to have been a couple of air force sheds put together after World War II.

I reckoned that on a quiet night, you could still hear the drone of Spitfires flying overhead; that is if the noise of creaking floorboards did not prevail. During my first night in the house, I was sure someone was walking around inside so I got up with a torch to investigate.

One advantage of being Division Engineer was having control of all building maintenance staff. This meant the DE's house was usually well maintained but all we got was a shell, without even blinds on the windows. Thus, my first domestic task was to fit out the house to make it reasonably liveable, with the usual basic furniture and domestic items.

As a bachelor living by myself, I could not see the point of having too many rooms to look after, so I set up the lounge room as my 'bed-sit'.

This worked very well until one day Mr Ross Gordon, the Deputy Chief Civil Engineer, came to Narrabri on a visit. After dinner at the RSL Club, Mr Gordon decreed, much to my surprise: "Frank, we'll go around your place now" and he bought a bottle of port.

Luckily, my bed-sit was reasonably tidy but we ended up drinking the port out of my rather large cordial glasses. Fortunately, my musical tastes were a little more refined, for Mr Gordon proceeded to ferret through my record cabinet, plucked out a Beethoven symphony, said: "Put this on" and then turned up the volume a few more notches. Ah, those were the days!



Four-wheel GSV sheep vans await loading of this yarding onto a train at Walgett in 1960.

WWW.WALGETT.ORG.AU/WALGETT-HERITAGE-PROPERTIES/WALGETT-RAILWAY-STATION/

The Tracks

Track standards varied considerably over the length and breadth of the Division. The section from Werris Creek to Narrabri was a Class 1 line, while from Narrabri to Moree was Class 2. All the other lines were Class 4 or 5 branch lines. Around 1970, concrete sleepers were still some years away, so even the main lines had only timber sleepers.

Class 1 was the top specification with long lengths (360 ft) of heavy rail (107 lbs/yard) and was well ballasted. These tracks were well maintained and carried heavy loads while providing good riding qualities. The same could not be said for the lesser-graded tracks.

Local conditions in the Division also had a major impact on track quality. The broad black soil plains were notorious for swelling, shrinking and cracking during wet and dry conditions. Accordingly, keeping the track in good condition was a constant challenge for fettling staff.

Tracks on the 'Pioneer Lines' constructed from the 1890s comprised the lowest Class 5 lines, which had been constructed as cheaply as possible to open up the vast 'outback'. The rails were short sections of 60 lbs/yard track with timber sleepers set in dirt formations.

The implications for my track maintenance teams were regular washaways and bridge repairs, while trains using the Pioneer Lines were restricted to slow speeds and light loads. During my time at Narrabri, the line from Moree to Inverell was being upgraded from its Class 5 status, but the shortage of funds for this work resulted in slow progress. Sadly, all our work was in vain for the line was progressively closed to traffic between 1987 and 1994.

Bridges

Overall, there were few permanent or substantial watercourses around the Narrabri Division, although the Namoi, Mehi and Gwydir Rivers were crossed by various lines. While the majority of bridges were small openings made from steel, timber or concrete, there were a number of large truss bridges. The designs of the major truss bridges depended on the time of construction, the classification of the line and the level of funding available from the government.

The timber bridges were of a similar design to the one over Two Mile Creek near Walgett presented above. I recall climbing over these bridges with my



The timber truss bridge over Two Mile Creek near Walgett. Built in 1908, this bridge had three through truss spans, each 60 feet in length, together with 20 x 24ft and 10 x 24ft timber girder approach spans. The lack of rain is evident in this August 2017 view.

FRANK JOHNSON IMAGE

bridge and building inspectors at various times. Clambering up to the top chord of the bridge was always an interesting experience, particularly if a train passed over the bridge while you were up there.

Some years after I left Narrabri, the timber truss bridges over the Namoi River and Narrabri Creek between Narrabri West and Narrabri were replaced by new concrete and steel ones. However, the Two Mile Creek bridge still stands some 110 years after it was built, although no longer in use as the Walgett Line has been closed just east of the bridge. According to Don Fraser,² timber bridges such as those on the Narrabri Division were classified as 'temporary' and were expected to be replaced within 40 years. By the time I was at Narrabri, these timber bridges were thus well past their 'use-by dates' and hence provided serious challenges for maintenance staff.

Bridge inspections did sometimes have their interesting moments. On one occasion the bridge inspector and I went out to assess the bridge over Narrabri Creek after a flood, with a trainee civil engineer tagging along. We walked out over the approach spans, which were 'transom top'—that is no ballast and with the rails fixed onto the cross transoms (similar to sleepers). As we reached the main trusses I turned around to talk to the trainee, only to find he was low down on his hands and knees and way back

near solid ground. The inspector and I returned to him, carefully prised his hands off the transoms and escorted him back to terra firma. Not a good start to a railway civil engineering career and I wondered how he would have fared on something like the Hawkesbury River Railway Bridge.

Stations

Railway stations were the 'public face' of the NSWGR and they played a particularly important role in country towns. As the Narrabri Division covered a remote area of the state, one would not expect substantial stations like Moss Vale, Junee or Werris Creek and this was certainly the case.

At least up to the late 1960s, even the most outlying stations and their train services were well utilised. The following account from Walgett illustrates the key role of the railway in country life during this era:

This way of transport for Walgett thrived and grew for many years. We called the train the *North-West Mail*, although correctly a couple of carriages broke off the mail train at Narrabri, with the larger part of the train travelling north to Moree and Walgett, through Narrabri West, Wee Waa, Burren Junction, Cryon, dropping mail, papers and groceries at the sidings of Inverness, Kooliney, Beanbri, Keil Keil, Warrinda and Eurie Eurie on the way to Walgett. The train driver always blew the loco whistle as he was coming over the Two Mile Bridge

(viaduct) near the Walgett Silo. This was clearly heard by people waiting at the Station and they knew their train was not far away.

The railway thrived for many years, being an important centre for shipping out the wool, at one stage we held the record for the amount of wool sent to the selling centres of Newcastle and Sydney. Walgett also had yards and loading facilities for sheep and cattle being sent to Homebush Saleyards in Sydney.

Walgett has a Station Master's residence, barracks for the train staff, a water tank, turntable, goods shed and weighbridge.³

In my Division the stations were quite varied, with the bigger towns like Gunnedah and Moree having substantial buildings. Further out, one found typical timber station buildings, but even these had their charm, especially when located in an isolated area at the end of a line like Pokataroo.

All these stations had to be maintained to varying degrees, of course. Maintenance of the stations and associated buildings was almost entirely an 'in house' operation, with the local bridge and building inspectors each having a small team of carpenters, plumbers, painters and labourers to carry out this task. In most cases, these men were multi-skilled and could turn their hands to the required task.

This was in stark contrast to their metropolitan-based colleagues, for whom trade demarcations were a more significant issue. I did find that country-based railway workers were



Rail Motor CPH 7 stands at Moree station awaiting departure for Boggabilla, while a sister rail motor lurks in the background, May 1971.

N HARTCHER IMAGE, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 095824

much more cooperative and had a stronger work ethic than most, but definitely not all, city-based workers.

TRAIN SERVICES

Main Lines

The Division Engineer was allocated a basic Holden station wagon and driver, so I was not dependent on train services for getting around the Division. Nevertheless, I was a regular train traveller as there were good passenger train services around the Division in the 1970s, when the NSW Railways maintained passenger train services to most locations in the state, if not daily, then several times a week.

The main line to Moree had two passenger services each day to and

from Sydney, namely the overnight *North-West Mail* train and the daytime *Northern Tablelands Express*. The former was typical of mail trains in that era, comprising a mixture of pre-World War II first and second class sitting carriages, a couple of sleeping cars and, of course, parcels and mail vans. The *Mail* left Sydney around 7pm each evening, arriving at Narrabri around 6am and Moree some two hours later. It could be described as a 'leisurely journey' with stops at most stations *en-route* to service the needs of all the wayside towns and villages—large and small.

While the carriages were not air-conditioned, the mail trains were an essential service in country NSW and were generally well patronised. I certainly used them a lot, albeit always in a sleeping compartment. There was no catering on the mail trains, so it was always a rush into one of the Railway Refreshment Rooms (RRR) during the short stop at a major station.

On the other hand, the *Northern Tablelands Express* was a tad more modern, dating from the post-World War II era. It comprised an air-conditioned 900 class DEB set diesel train, which had been built at the Chullora Workshops during the years when the NSWGR was still a major manufacturing enterprise.

The *Northern Tablelands Express* left Sydney at 7.35am six days a week. On arrival at Werris Creek the front four cars continued on to Armidale, while the back three car set headed off the Main North Line and took the branch to Moree,



View of Pokataroo station in 1968, seven years prior to its closure.

IMAGE COURTESY CHRIS PEARSON

arriving at Narrabri just after 4.00pm.

The introduction of the *Express* certainly provided a better travelling experience than the *Mail*, being air-conditioned with comfortable seating (particularly in First Class) and there was on-board catering in the buffet car. The daylight trip from Narrabri to Sydney was some two hours faster than the mail train, with pleasant scenery down to Werris Creek and thence through the Hunter Valley.

There was a rather boring section from Broadmeadow to Gosford, but this was followed by the spectacular scenery along Brisbane Water, over the Hawkesbury River Bridge and up the Cowan Bank. I regularly took this train when heading to Sydney for work meetings or conferences, so being paid to do this trip made it even better.

Branch Lines

The branch lines out of Narrabri and Moree were also well served with passenger trains. These mainly met the mail trains in the morning and fed back into them in the evening. On the other hand, one would have to say that the branchline rolling stock was 'basic'. It mainly comprised a variety of self-propelled non air-conditioned diesel rail motors and there was certainly no on-board catering.

It was a wonder that people travelled by train on these branch lines, for the journeys were slow and the ride comfort left much to be desired. I was chatting with the guard on a train to Walgett one day when he mentioned he was walking through the train and



Branchline 4-6-0 locomotive 3062 shunts mail vans/brake vans off the *Down North West Mail* at Narrabri Station, September 1968.

I K WINNEY COLLECTION, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 102558

found a woman sitting on the floor. When he quizzed her, she responded that it was far too rough to sit on the seat. A sad reflection on the state of the track I suppose.

TRACK INSPECTIONS

The Way & Works Branch had very specific requirements for Division Engineers to inspect their areas by track vehicles, by walking and by travelling by train in the driver's cab (not from the dining car). We had to list all our inspections and send a monthly report to Head Office. Presumably, once there the reports ended up in a 'black hole', for I do not recall ever getting any feedback.

Track vehicles

Compared to my 'trike' trips at Goulburn, track vehicle inspections were certainly more civilised as a Division Engineer. For a start, my track vehicle was much larger and could take four people, including the driver. For some reason, these early type of track vehicles were called 'flivvers', probably from the American connections of the company that built them.

Another advantage was that the 'flivver' could be loaded on a trailer towed by the DE's station wagon. This enabled the track vehicle to be put on or taken off the track at any convenient level crossing, thus avoiding back tracking or relying on trains for transport back to the office. It also meant that the driver was always around when he was needed.

In previous roles, I had several less-than-favourable interactions with trains while undertaking track vehicle inspections, so by Narrabri I was much more wary. The first time I set off on an inspection trip to Walgett, I asked the Per Way inspector what the train running was like. He responded that we could get to a certain point on the line, where we would need to let the rail motor from Narrabri West pass us. On further questioning, he commented that: "The rail motor is always late because the station staff has to load parcels before departure". This rang alarm bells for me, so I declined his advice and we waited at Narrabri West for the rail motor to depart. In the end, the rail motor was late but that did not



The *Northern Tablelands Express* three-car DEB set headed by power car HPF958 rolls into Narrabri station in the 1990s. J RILEY IMAGE, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 114464

worry me as we were safe and well. In any case, I was the boss and that was it.

Once we eventually reached Walgett on that inspection, I certainly felt at one with the great Australian bush poet, A B Paterson, in his poem, *A Walgett Episode*:

The sun strikes down with a blinding glare,
The skies are blue and the plains are wide,
The saltbush plains are burnt and bare;
By Walgett out on Barwon side—
The Barwon River that wanders down
In a leisurely manner by Walgett Town.

Walking

Walking track inspections were the most onerous, but they were really the only way to make a detailed assessment of the track condition. I could check out the rails, ballast, sleepers and drainage, to see how the local track gangs were looking after their area. One key aspect was to ensure that the rails were soundly fastened to the sleepers, which involved checking out the 'dog spikes'.

The Way & Works Branch Standard Practice Circular (SPC) 1302 mandated that Division Engineers must walk three miles of track per week. This often involved hours of trudging along the ballast and sleepers. In NSW, sleepers were set at two feet apart, which made track walking easier for shorter people rather than the longer stride of a six-footer like myself. But then, if we came across a snake on the track, often along the foot of the rail, then long legs were certainly an advantage to getting away quickly.

On summer track walks, one looked forward to arriving at an attended station—though these were rare in the north west—where one could head to the water bag hanging in some shady spot on the platform. These bags came from the NSWGR Tarpaulin Factory at Enfield, offering another example of in-house manufacturing during this era. While the factory's main purpose was to manufacture the 24ft x 36ft tarpaulins for the ubiquitous 'S' trucks, it could also turn out just about anything in canvas or leather.

My association with the Tarpaulin Factory did not end there, for in a later role in Freight Rail it was in my portfolio as General Manager, Internal Business at Freight Rail. Unfortunately, by then open wagons had largely disappeared from the railway scene and the factory had to be closed as it was no longer viable.

Cab inspections

Riding in the cab of a locomotive or a diesel rail motor was certainly the easiest form of track inspection and it provided an important source of feedback from the drivers on track conditions. Most of the locomotive-hauled trains in my time were operated by 48 class diesel-electric locomotives, but their cabs were quite cramped and it was difficult to get a good view of the track looking back over the shoulder of the driver or observer. On the other hand, there was the comfort of several yards of steel in front of you in case a car or truck tried to beat the train over a level crossing, which did happen on several occasions when I was carrying out track inspections from locomotive cabs.

In contrast, cab inspections from a 900 class diesel train were much more useful in terms of observation, but there was virtually no protection in the case of accidents. Several years after I left Narrabri, the *Northern Tablelands Express* ran

into a motor lorry near Gunnedah Abattoirs and the local traffic inspector riding in the cab was killed. I felt a shiver down my spine when I heard about this accident, given my numerous rides in the cab of this train. Incidents such as this gave me a real empathy for the risks that train crews face every day of their working lives.

EMERGENCIES

During my time at Narrabri, the NSWGR sought to maintain service levels and field staff were required to provide a rapid response to any emergency, such as collisions, derailments, washaways, flooding, bushfires and the like. The Division Engineer was required to attend all emergencies that affected the running lines, even those in the remote outposts of the Division.

I was on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with no standby allowance or overtime of course. It was Head Office policy that the DE could not be off the Division for more than one weekend a month, and for that, he had to have specific approval from Head Office and to arrange for an adjoining DE to handle any emergencies. Further, with extra passenger services being run over the Christmas and Easter holiday periods, they were regarded as critical for operations and generally the DE was not allowed off his Division at all during these times.

Overall, this was not exactly conducive to a satisfactory social life, especially for a single fellow with a steady girlfriend living more than 438 miles away in Goulburn. However, despite the general lack of consideration from senior management, my now wife and I did manage to progress through to engagement and then to marriage while I was stationed at Narrabri.

Washaways

Just one week after I took over the Narrabri Division, I was up against my first experience with natural disasters. While I had seen some minor flooding and consequent damage in the Goulburn area, that was nothing compared with the all-too-regular occurrences in the north west of the state. The flood 'season' seemed to come with summer and November 1970 brought the start of major flooding—a 'baptism' into the life of a country DE one might say. The first line to be affected was the Inverell line, closing it for a day.

The Boggabilla line then suffered extensive damage on 9 December 1970, with water running one foot over the track. This caused extensive scouring of the track, closing the line for two days, but that was only a foretaste of what was to come. The very next day flooding of the line between North Star and Boggabilla damaged lengthy sections of the track. This line did not reopen until 15 December 1970.

On 23 December, the heavens opened again and caused further heavy washaways around Crooble on the Boggabilla line. The line was reopened on Christmas Eve. Under other circumstances, this may have cancelled my holiday plans, but now as a DE, I was required to be present and remain in my territory over the Christmas and Easter holiday periods.

I recall the washaway near Crooble showed to me that common sense was not all that common, even in country areas. At the washaway site, I stood with the Per Way inspector watching the flood waters rushing around a bridge end. As we contemplated what needed to be done to repair the line, a young labourer remarked: "The water's not

all that deep” and promptly jumped in to prove this point. He went under the water over his head, to emerge a few seconds later coughing and spluttering to admit: “It’s a bit deeper than I thought”. Needless to say, we did not turn to this young person for advice.

Several months later, this same labourer was given the task of ‘running the length’ to inspect the track with a track vehicle while the rest of the gang returned to Moree by road in the gang truck. Some way along the track he fell asleep with his conveyance heading towards a goods train. The train driver saw the track vehicle and blew his whistle, but to no avail. Fortunately, the slow goods train speeds on this track meant the driver was able to stop the train, but the track vehicle kept coming and slammed into the locomotive, awaking the labourer from his slumbers. Apparently uninjured, he jumped off the track and headed across the fields, never to be seen again. He didn’t even come back to collect his pay.

From washaways to real floods

The 1970 washaways were just a foretaste to what was to occur the following spring. Around the end of January 1971, the Hunter Valley and the north west of the state were subjected to exceptionally heavy rainfall resulting in major floods, with Narrabri experiencing a major inundation. Indeed, *The Railwayman* of June 1971 reported that:

“Over 1,000 miles of track, approximately one-fifth of the entire State network, were damaged by floods following heavy rains early this year.”⁴

As the flood broke at Narrabri, I was away on one of my monthly weekends off and I had in fact just proposed to the young lady who is now my wife. Once I heard the radio reports of the floods in the Hunter Valley and North-West, personal life took a back seat and I cut short my break, heading back as quickly as possible. This was easier said than done, for train services had been cut beyond Broadmeadow due to the Hunter River floods. Accordingly, I spent the first night of my return journey in the DE’s office at Newcastle, trying to find out what was going on and eventually sleeping stretched out between two chairs.

The following day, I managed to travel further along the line



Aerial view of Narrabri township during the 1971 floods. BRIAN MADDEN IMAGE

to Werris Creek, where I secured accommodation in the bedrooms associated with the Railway Refreshment Rooms (RRR) for a couple of nights. As Werris Creek was a major administrative and Train Control centre, I soon found out what was happening in my Division before pushing on to Narrabri.

Next, I managed to get to Narrabri West but had to spend several more nights in a sleeping car stabled in the yard, as both the road and railway line into Narrabri were still cut by floodwater from the Namoi River and Narrabri Creek. With the floods came huge number of mosquitoes, leaving me with the choice of closing the cabin windows and half-suffocating in the oppressive heat or opening them and being savaged by the hungry little blood-suckers. I chose the former.

The January 1971 floods were the

worst in the Narrabri area since the 1955 floods. Sadly, five people, including a child, died in the floods, namely:

- A baby girl in Wee Waa;
- A man who drowned in the cellar of the Namoi Hotel (in Narrabri);
- A man killed in a plane crash as it made an emergency landing; and
- Two stockmen drowned while rounding-up cattle, their riderless horses returning to the homestead.

The unfortunate fate of the two stockmen was clearly reminiscent of another Henry Lawson poem, *The Ballad of the Drover*. This is worth a read for those interested in the hardships of life in the Australian bush.

As depicted in the photo on this page, most of the town of Narrabri was inundated with water during the flood. There was extensive damage to shops and residences and road access to the town was cut off for several days. The

railway line from Narrabri West was the only means of access during the flood.

Although flood waters came through the yard of my railway house, they did not quite reach floor level. I had little time to think of 'domestic' matters for, with my railway colleagues, we were all focused on getting the tracks restored and the trains running again.

Official Railway Records

To indicate the magnitude of the tasks facing my maintenance staff across the Narrabri Division, the Way & Works Branch Operations Report for 1971 included an extensive list of all the flood damage in the Narrabri Division. The table on page 21 presents details of the major damages:

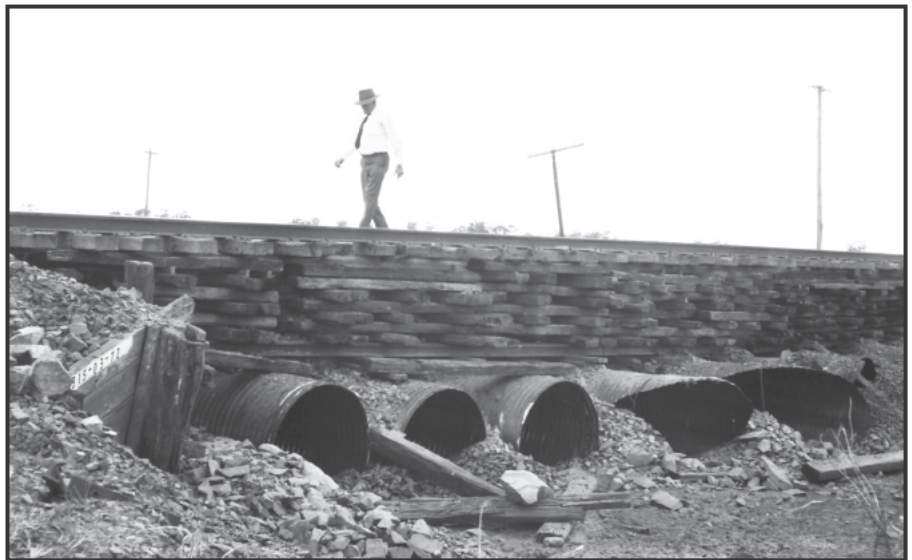
These samples from the official summaries only provide the barest details, but specific situations along the tracks clearly demonstrate the enormous power of nature in the widespread areas. The floodwaters often passed through in torrents, taking out bridge ends, culverts and embankments in its path. Along other sections of track, the floodwater rose more steadily, covering the rails but not causing too much damage.

Boggabri

One of the locations where there was rapid damage to the track was near Boggabri, between Gunnedah and Narrabri. Heavy rain in the hills caused a rapid rise in water levels with disastrous effects on the 20 x four feet diameter corrugated steel



Inspecting Engineer Ken Swan inspecting a washaway between Narrabri and Bellata in January 1971. FRANK JOHNSON IMAGE



Per Way Inspector Les Semfel inspecting the temporary 'pig-sty' restoration works near Boggabri in January 1971. FRANK JOHNSON IMAGE
(Armco pipes) culverts under the



Inspecting Engineer Ken Swan maintains his decorum with white shirt and tie as he inspects washed-away track between Narrabri and Bellata in January 1971.

FRANK JOHNSON IMAGE

main line. Most were washed away from under the track, with several of them finishing up hundreds of yards downstream. There were various methods of getting the trains running again over washaway sites. In some cases it was possible to immediately restore the track structure, as was the case at Boggabri.

However, at some locations access for plant and materials was not as easy and temporary repairs had to be effected. This was the case also at Boggabri, where the track was temporarily restored using a framework of old sleepers (called pig-sties for obvious reasons), with the sleepers and rails supported on top of the pig-sty. Such repairs would be subject to a speed restriction, with all trains passing over the site very slowly.

The work crews later returned to



The *Northern Tablelands Express* was the first train to pass over the restored 'pig-sty' track near Boggabri. FRANK JOHNSON PHOTO

END NOTES

1. 'Pioneer Railways in NSW' by J W Roberts, BE. A paper read before the Sydney University Engineering Society on 10 November 1897.
2. Fraser, Don: *Bridges Down Under*, ARHS NSW Division, 1995, p58.
3. <http://www.walgett.org.au/walgett-heritage-properties/walgett-railway-station/>
4. *The Railwayman* (house journal of the NSW Railways), June 1971.
5. Way & Works Branch Operations Report, 1970-1971.

make the permanent repair, restoring the embankment and track to its original state. After this, the speed restriction could be lifted and normal train running resumed.

Despite the major flood damage, the line from Werris Creek to Narrabri Junction only took five days to restore. This was a tribute to the resourcefulness and dedication of the track and bridge gangs of the time.

The rapid response by the railway gangs to emergencies such as these was assisted by our local inspectors

supported by their track gangs and bridge gangs. For instance, the Per Way inspector Les Semfel lived in Boggabri so was well acquainted with his territory. In the emergency, he quickly mobilised the necessary railway and external labour, plant and material resources to deal with these types of emergencies. As a newcomer to the Narrabri area, there was no way I could have provided this detailed knowledge and local contacts.

TO BE CONTINUED

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Bridge gang restoring Armco pipe culverts between Gunnedah and Narrabri in 1971. FRANK JOHNSON IMAGE



Bridge gang and earthmoving equipment restoring the Armco pipe culverts between Gunnedah and Narrabri in 1971.

FRANK JOHNSON IMAGE

TABLE SHOWING FLOOD DAMAGE 1971

Line Section	Date Closed	Date Opened	Damage to Line
Werris Creek-Narrabri Junction.	31/01/1971	5/02/1971	Water over the line, scours to 4-ft. deep, 20/4-ft. Armco pipes washed out, 21 miles affected.
Narrabri Junction-Narrabri	29/01/1971 31/01/1971	30/01/1971 11/02/1971	Water over the line, heavy scouring, three mileages affected.
Narrabri to Bellata	31/01/1971	30/02/1971	Scouring and washouts up to 10-ft. deep and 35-ft. long, 29 separate miles were affected
Bellata to Moree	31/01/1971	30/02/1971	Water over the line 6 in and scouring, two mileages affected
Narrabri West to Wee Waa	31/01/1971	10/02/1971	Scours and washouts to 12 ft x 4 ft deep occurred at 13 mileages.
Wee Waa to Cryon	31/01/1971	05/02/1971	10 mileages affected, the track being swept up to 8-ft. off line.
Cryon to Walgett	31/01/1971	03/03/1971	Water over the line.
Burren to Rowena Rowena to Pokataroo	31/01/1971 31/01/1971	17/03/1971 24/03/1971	Heavy scouring, washouts to 14ft deep and abutments washed out.
Boggabilla Line	31/01/1971	26/02/1971	Scours, culverts washed out, washouts up to 40ft x 3ft deep. The track was swept up to 27ft off line. There were 39 mileages affected.

WHY THE 'COMET' WENT TO THE DOGS

Don Estell



Silver City Comet power car DH101 and trailer cars ready to depart Parkes for Broken Hill on 31 December 1939.
Murray collection, ARHSnsw Railway Resource Centre, 006879

Several authors have written about the use of the *Silver City Comet* power cars and trailers on the *Newcastle Express* in 1940. But why was it only used in this one time of crisis?

The *Silver City Comet* began operating between Parkes and Broken Hill in September 1937 on three days of the week returning the following day. The next autumn with all the cars available the service was provided on six days a week both ways. About a year later the service was cut back to three days per week and the spare cars put to work on the *Federal City Express*. The two displaced FT trailers were stored at Elcar and later Punchbowl car sheds.

The Railways, like most government departments, used the Far West to move 'undesirables' out of sight. For several years the Arbitration Court had been considering the Western Climatic Allowance to compensate workers for the extreme climate. When in January 1940 the case was again adjourned, the western per way staff went on strike.

On Wednesday 17 and Friday 19

January 1940 the *Comet* terminated at Ivanhoe and returned the next day.¹ The following Monday, 22 January, the service was altered to leave Parkes on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays and return the same day. Adjustments were made to the Condobolin rail motor which was altered to run both ways on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The Narrandera to Roto rail motor services were altered to run on Thursdays in both directions. Anyone making a through trip onto the *Comet* had some three hours to spend in Roto. Was there a hotel there or did

they spend the time in the rail motor? The Broken Hill goods train also terminated at Ivanhoe, but ran only once a week on Thursdays, returning on Fridays. The overnight Monday Parkes to Broken Hill *Silver City Comet* and its Wednesday night return along with the Hillston connections were cancelled completely.

In March the Arbitration Court's actions upset another union and the coal miners went on strike. On 7 April 1940 with the coal strike in progress, services were curtailed.² The *Silver City Comet* was cut back to run



RIGHT: Power car DH102 leads the *Silver City Comet* as it loads passengers at the original Broken Hill station in the 1940s.
ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 006879



The first *Silver City Comet* power car and two trailers on the initial test run to Broken Hill in July 1937. Railway officials confer on the left. ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 040940

only on Mondays and Fridays in both directions from Parkes to Ivanhoe. The rail motor to Condobolin ran on Tuesdays and Thursdays in both directions. The Narrandera to Roto rail motor service was switched to Fridays in both directions.

A week later further curtailments of service were inaugurated.³ The *Forbes Mail* was cancelled and a combined mail train was run at the earlier times of the *Orange Mail*.

Rail motor CPH 15, newly released from workshops, was sent to Parkes to take over the Ivanhoe run.⁴ But as rail motors were limited to 50 mph rather than the *Comet's* 70 mph, it was not possible to make the round trip in the one day. The service now left Parkes on Mondays and Fridays returning Tuesdays and Saturdays. The Condobolin rail motor was reduced to a single service running both ways on Wednesdays. The Narrandera to Roto train now ran on Fridays and returned to Hillston for the night. It returned to Roto on Saturday to connect with the Up Ivanhoe rail motor and then made the trip to Narrandera.

The dog race specials

On Monday 15 April, a *Comet* power van and two trailers left Parkes at 8.45am and arrived at Carriage Works in Redfern at 6.20pm.⁵ The only scheduled stop was at Bathurst for lunch (1.08–

1.28pm) where, although the STN did not say so, it is probable that the driver switched over with CPH 15.

Also that day, a *Comet* power van (PH) and two trailers (BT and RFT) left Carriage Works at 4.35pm for Sydney Platform 5, from where they left at 5.15pm for Wollongong with booked seat passengers for the greyhound race meeting.⁶ The BT was to be labelled Second Class. The train was due in Wollongong at 7.01pm having stopped at Hurstville, Sutherland, Coal Cliff and then as required to pick up punters and dog owners between Scarborough and Balgownie.⁷ The RFT buffet car was open for the serving of refreshments.

The return journey was due to leave at 10.45pm and after similar stops it was timed to arrive in Sydney Platform 1 at 12.30am. The yard shunter was then to tow the train back to Carriage Works with no arrival time shown on the STN. On all these special diesel trains, the fare was to be single fare cost for the return trip.

On Thursday 18 April, the same procedure was required for the train which ran to Dapto where it was due at 7.18pm and timed to return at 10.20pm. These two trains were to run on Mondays and Thursdays for the duration of the strike until 13 May for Wollongong and 16 May at Dapto.⁸ That the same timetable was used between Sydney and Wollongong can

be explained in part by the fact that Wollongong dog track was six large blocks away from the station while that at Dapto was a mere three smaller blocks. After the first run an extra 13 minutes were needed to cater for the local stops. See Tables A, B and C.

On Friday 19 April, the diesel train was required to provide a race special to Wyong.⁹ The diesel train was again used on Friday 10 May.¹⁰ From Sydney Terminal Platform 5, the train left at 10.20am with stops tabled at Strathfield, Hornsby, Woy Woy and Gosford (10 minutes). Arrival at Wyong was to be 12.11pm. It was required to spend four minutes at Hawkesbury River to cross No 4, the Up *Brisbane Express* via Wallangarra, but it was not a passenger stop, as single line working applied on the Hawkesbury Rail Bridge at that time to prevent two trains passing over the faulty pylon.

The return journey began at 4.32pm and after making the same stops it was due in Sydney Terminal Platform 6 at 6.36pm. The same timetable was used again on Friday 26 April as presented in Tables D and E.¹¹

The following day a second division of the *Federal City Express* was run.¹² It left Carriage Works at 7.45am, then Sydney Terminal Platform 12 at 8.00am. It ran to the timetable of the regular train but non-stop to Goulburn where a two minute stop was made

RIGHT: *Silver City Comet* power car DP104 and carriages at Sulphide Junction yard on 7 October 1987, for the Railway Week celebrations. H J WRIGHT COLLECTION, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 064979

for loco purposes (probably to change drivers). The No. 8 Up Canberra train was crossed at Tarago and the Canberra arrival was to be 1.15pm.

The regular *Federal City Express* was run to an altered timetable. After leaving Carriage Works at 7.40am, the departure from Sydney Terminal Platform 5 was 8.24am. A stop at Strathfield was followed by a non-stop run to Goulburn, where a 35 minute refreshment stop was made (12.02–12.37pm). Canberra arrival was to be 2.31pm. This train made the return journey according to the normal timetable.

The special train made its return on the Sunday leaving at 4.40pm. A half hour stop for refreshments was made at Goulburn (6.37–7.07pm). A non-stop run was then to be made to Strathfield and Sydney Terminal Platform 3 arrival was due at 10.22pm, with the return to Carriage Works due at 10.45pm.

Short North Special trains

Tuesday 9 and 23 April, Monday 6 and Tuesday 7 May found the diesel train running special trains for the Newcastle races at Broadmeadow.¹³ The cars left Carriage Works at 8.58am for a departure from Sydney Terminal Platform 2 at 9.24am. Stops were tabled at Strathfield, Hornsby, then non-stop to Broadmeadow (11.44–11.45am) and then empty to Newcastle to arrive 11.53am.

The return journey left Newcastle at 4.53pm and picked up at Broadmeadow (5.00–5.02pm),



followed by a non-stop run to Hornsby and Strathfield to arrive in Sydney Terminal Platform 6 at 7.26pm and then empty to Carriage Works by 7.38pm. The same timetable was used on all days.

Races were scheduled for Menangle Park on Tuesday 16 April, while the Gosford race meeting was held at Menangle Park Racecourse on Tuesday 30 April.¹⁴ Wyong races were also transferred to Menangle Park in May.¹⁵ As there were no major grades on this run an FT was hauled as well as the regular BT and RFT buffet car. I wonder how much business was done in the RFT on such a short trip. Carriage Works departure was at 9.15am, with departure from Sydney Platform 10 at 9.45am. A stop was made to pick up at Strathfield with arrival at the Racecourse at 10.40am. The train ran empty to Liverpool (10.55–11.16am). Another trip was then made at 11.28am, with a pick up stop at Campbelltown and arrival at the Menangle Park platform at 11.50am.

The return trip was tabled to depart at 3.20pm, set down at Strathfield and reach Sydney Terminal Platform 5 at 4.24pm. A local Campbelltown to Liverpool steam train service was started from Menangle Park and extended to Sydney to cater for the stragglers. See Tables M, N and O.

As things turned out, the Wollongong dog meeting due on Monday 29 April was transferred to the Tuesday. The extra FT car was to be taken to Carriage Works by the power van off No 32 *Newcastle Express* while the other vehicles from the race train formed the Wollongong train.¹⁶

With further service curtailments to take place from 22 April, the *Newcastle Expresses* were to be worked by *Comet* cars. This was commenced by running No. 105 Express as a diesel train to Newcastle on Saturday 20 April. Departure from Sydney Terminal Station was at 6.05pm, the train consisted of two power vans, BT, RFT, FT, FT. The two stored FT power cars were moved to Eveleigh for this working.

On the Monday the *Newcastle Express* was tabled to start earlier from Newcastle at 7.00am (Table H). It no longer stopped at Gosford, but picked up at Broadmeadow and Wyong with set downs at Hornsby and Strathfield. Sydney was reached at 9.25am where one of the power vans was replaced by a newly refuelled van. A mere 15 minutes were allowed for the turn round. The same stopping pattern was used



LEFT: *Silver City Comet* power car DP104 and carriages on display at Cardiff Maintenance Centre as part of Railway Week celebrations on 9 October 1987. A S HAYNE IMAGE, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 077645



Silver City Comet power car DP101 and trailer cars pass through Austinmer station on their way to Kiama during their 50th Anniversary Tour on 27 September 1987. A S HAYNE IMAGE, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 077590

for the northbound trips.

The afternoon Up *Comet* service ran almost three hours earlier than the regular steam train (Table J). Leaving Newcastle at 2.00pm, Wyong was omitted from this service. Sydney arrival was at 4.26pm. The other power van was swapped for a refuelled van and 39 minutes later the return journey began. Wyong was not served on Fridays while set down stops were made at Fassifern, Broadmeadow and Hamilton. The day's work finished at Newcastle at 7.35pm.¹⁷ An Up service was provided on Saturday, 27 April (Table K).

All went well until Thursday May 2 when the train failed (probably PH 105) on Cowan Bank. This resulted in the service reverting to steam haulage. Over-all the diesel train operated the *Newcastle Express* on 11 days, but 22 race specials were run. Why are they never mentioned?

Two years later the wartime emergency regulations prohibited the operation of race specials. In the post war coal shortages the specials were the first to be cancelled.

Editor: The tables mentioned in the above text can be uploaded from the *Australian Railway History* section of the ARHSNSW website: www.arhsnsw.com.au

End Notes

1. STN 56/1940.
2. STN366/1940.
3. STN 406/40.
4. STN 411/40.
5. STN 411/40.
6. STN 419/40.
7. Balgownie is now Fairy Meadow, Towradgi did not exist.
8. STN 419/40.
9. STN 420/40.
10. STN 484/40.
11. STN 445/40.
12. STN 421/40.
13. STN 377/40; STN 396/40; STN 396/40.
14. STN 452/40; STN 452/40.
15. STN 495/40.
16. STN 457/40, Table C.
17. STN 441/40.



Locomotive 3352, Harden bound, climbs up Pitstone Hill with the midday connection to the Up and Down *Riverina Expresses* one day in the late 1960s. The site of Young tank was a couple of hundred metres below the train at the bottom of the hill. NEVILLE POLLARD IMAGE

ACCIDENT AT YOUNG TANK

Neville Pollard

In the January 2002 issue of *ARHS Bulletin*, forerunner to *Australian Railway History*, an article written by Dr Stuart Sharp titled, 'Chinaman's Dam Young' traced the history of locomotive water supplies in the immediate Young area. The first watering site, Young Tank, opened with the line in 1885, was located opposite Chinaman's Dam on the main line at the then 246 mile post. In the 19th century it was a common practice to locate water stops near sources of supply. The tank was closed in 1901 when a tank and jib was erected at the western end of Young station with water being gravitated from the aforementioned dam.

THE ACCIDENT

On Friday 7 September 1888¹ at 7.30am a serious accident occurred while a train hauling empty coal trucks, that had left Harden at 6.00am, was taking water at this tank. During this operation the train was hit from the rear by two locomotives hauling two brake vans, smashing the brakevan 'to atoms', with the first and third coal trucks from the rear derailling and many others damaged. Two of the crew of the second train, which was proceeding to pick up either coal

or livestock, were thrown from their engine without serious injury. We are told that one of the crew on the leading locomotive of the second train, a 93 class 0-6-0 goods locomotive numbered 96, was 'considerably injured', while the second locomotive was 93 class No. 102.

The locomotive of the stationary train proceeded to Young to raise the alarm and stop the Mail train, which by that time had reached Demondrille Junction. After gaining the necessary permission the Mail proceeded to the rear of the accident where passengers and mails were transhipped, 'to the trucks', and they arrived in Young about an hour late.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* article on the accident went on to suggest that an alternate site for the tank needed to be found. The paragraph is, however, difficult to interpret:

If the water was pumped up to the level of the line, it would find its way in pipes to the reservoir in Market Square, where the engines could be watered without the slightest risk.

But it took a further 13 years for a safer watering place to be found.

The article also mentions that a Mr Blackshaw, chemist,

and Mr Graton, shoemaker, were travelling back from Wagga Wagga where they had exhibited poultry at the local show. They no doubt had crates of poultry with them and were availing themselves of the direct route back to Young via the western fork of the Demondrille Junction triangle which had been opened on 26 March 1885 with the line to Young.

LACK OF SIGNAL PROTECTION

The *Sydney Morning Herald* article went on to describe how dangerous the position of Young Tank was:

When there was but the one train each way per day there was no danger, but since the great increase in traffic (there having been no less than three specials this morning before the mail train), and each train having to stop at this place for water, the danger is very great, as it is impossible to approach the tanks from Harden to see whether a train is at the tanks until within 150 yards from them. When the steep gradient renders it very difficult to pull up.

Given the adverse location and increased traffic on this cross country line it is strange that protection was not afforded by at least Distant signals as was the case in many places where trains were required to stop inside staff and ticket sections, either at intermediate sidings, platforms or water tanks (sometimes Home and Distant signals were provided at intermediate sidings). The 1894 Southern Local Appendix notes that signals were provided to protect watering places at Boggy Creek, S W Line, 318m 61ch and Possum Power (later Springdale, see below), Temora line, 278m 52ch.² In places such as this it was the guard's responsibility to set the signals at stop during watering and

clear them just prior to the departure of the train.

The second section of the Western Line Appendix indicated that signals were provided at Wilga Watering Place on the Bourke line, but were not lit at night were also mentioned. Crowther and Swan Ponds both on the Blayney–Harden line. Swan Ponds possessed no signal lights, but we are unsure whether these signals protected the siding or watering place or both.³ Interestingly, Young Tank was not listed with the places without signals. Perhaps this list was only meant to include sidings.⁴ Distant signals had been provided at Young Stockyards, a stone's throw from the accident, at this time.⁵

Springdale was another example of the use of Distant signals to protect water columns but was more complicated because of the presence of a signal box from 1912, which could be switched out when traffic was light. So the arrangement there was two additional levers, each about a train length in the rear of the respective water column, to control the relevant distant signal jointly with the signal box.

C C Singleton comments that where signals were provided at intermediate stations, sidings and water columns in an absolute block section (including electric train staff and tablet sections) it reflected officialdom's lack of faith in the operation of these systems, which, by definition only allowed one train in the section at a time. As people became more confident in safeworking, the intermediate signals were confined more and more to staff and ticket sections, where extra trains could legitimately be in the same section simultaneously, with one train in possession of a ticket and the second carrying the staff.

One of the latest applications for protection of watering trains was at the two water tanks on the Molong–Dubbo



Standard goods engines were common on the cross country Harden to Blayney line. 5461 has just arrived at Young from Harden with the afternoon *Riverina Express* connection around 1968. After taking water the diminutive train will proceed to Cowra. This tank replaced the original at Young Tank. NEVILLE POLLARD IMAGE

line. With the introduction of divisible ETS in 1933 (and consequently the possibility of more than one train in the section), the former Up home signals at the watering stations were retained together with landmarks to provide protection for watering trains. These automatic signals were operated by track circuit—a small reminder that once the whole line was so controlled.⁶

There are a number of things we can learn from this incident about railway operation at the time:

1. The ad hoc nature of safeworking which appeared to be evident; some watering places gaining protective signalling but Young Tank, perhaps in the most dangerous location of all, would have missed out.
2. The importance of the cross country line for movement of stock from west to south and transport of western coal to Victoria is demonstrated by the two trains involved in the accident. The newspaper article seems to indicate that the growth in traffic had recently been quite dramatic. Sharp comments on the traffic at this time:

The Blayney-Cowra section had only been opened since February 1888—seven months prior to the accident. Thus, it is no wonder about an increase in traffic levels from a near zero base.

It is of interest to note that the movement of stock from the west to the south was a major reason for building the line. Initially, there was a degree of stock traffic but, by 1900, the stock traffic from the west (apart from drought related traffic) mostly died off. Why? Because the Blayney to Demondrille line was one of the factors that led to over-stocking west of Trangie and actually eliminated the native grasses. It took 50 years for the grasses to regenerate.⁷

3. Transshipment of passengers and mails was handled expeditiously around the accident site with minimal delay. Transferring passengers 'to the trucks' would

not be possible nowadays as railway interpretation of WH&S and safeworking rules would not allow it. Passengers in later years would have had to wait at Demondrille, or return to Harden, until a school bus was available with arrival at Young being late by three hours or more.

4. The arrangements for resolving the accident appear to have been handled locally by the Young Station Master. In more recent times, the Junee Train Controller would presumably have done much of the work calling out gangers etc, and because of the distance, probably resolved the situation much more slowly. The report emphasises the importance of the station master in those days and what he was capable of doing when given the authority.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Dr Stuart Sharp and Graham Harper for assisting with production of this supplement to the original article.

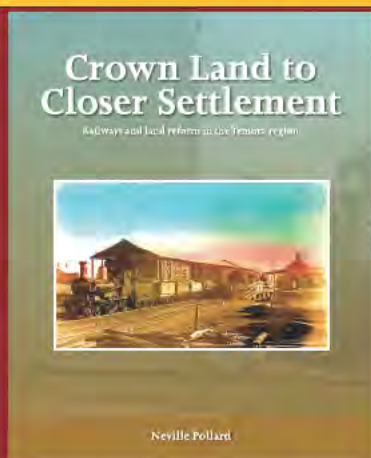
END NOTES

- 1 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September 1888, p12.
- 2 1894 Southern Line Local Appendix, p47.
- 3 NSW Local Appendix West 1892, pp4-5.
- 4 NSW Local Appendix West 1892, p5
- 5 Plan, Young Stockyards, 1888.
- 6 Personal Communication, Graham Harper, May 2010.
- 7 Personal Communication, Dr S Sharp, May 2010.

What's New at the ARHSnsw Railway Bookshop



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Book Review

RUNNING OUT OF STEAM & Catching up with Diesels

Published by Rosenberg Publishing, PO Box 6125, Dural Delivery Centre NSW 2158. This 194 page book has a card cover and is 248 x 169mm in size, 98 colour images, 34 greyscale images and seven maps. RRP \$30.00 (plus p&p if required) from the ARHSnsw Bookshop, 67 Renwick Street, Redfern NSW 2016.

David Burke's latest book covers the demise of steam locomotives on the seven Australian government railway systems before giving a more cursory account of the transition to diesel propulsion, commencing with the WAGR Governor class diesel-electric rail cars of 1938 and Harold Young's *Silver City Comet* diesel power cars that commenced service hauling passenger trailers, including a dining car, between Parkes and Broken Hill from 27 September 1937.

Coverage of the New South Wales Railways commences with the introduction of the NN class 4-6-0 passenger locomotives in July 1914, before moving to the C36 class 4-6-0s and the C38 Class 'Pacifics' from January 1943. The 1937-1938 NSWGR Annual Report is reproduced in a chapter and the New South Wales steam section closes with a chapter on the D57 Class 4-8-2 locomotives that entered service from August 1929.

A similar formula is followed for each of the state railway systems and the Commonwealth Railways. These sections are profusely illustrated with a heavy emphasis on the classic posters created by the various railway authorities to promote train travel and other elements of the various railway systems, together with a small

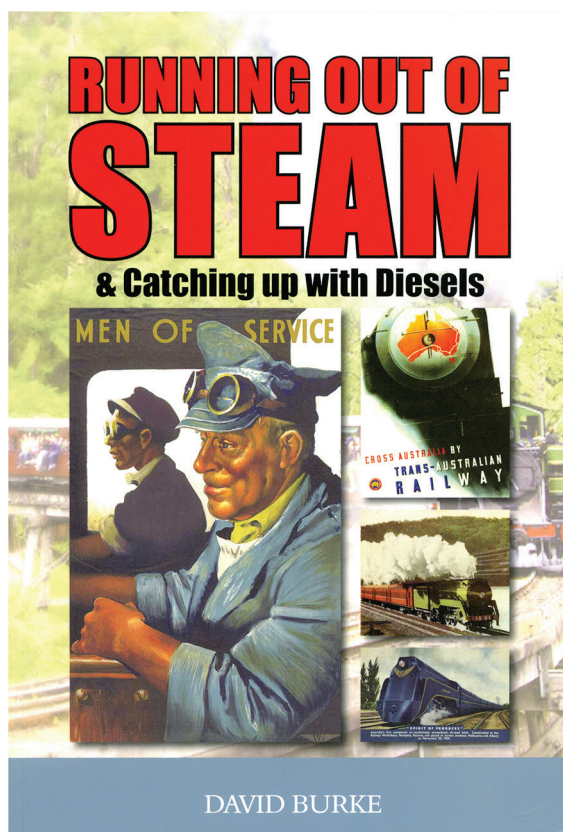
selection of railway stamps. The QR posters lack the finesse of those from other systems, while the letter B is missing from the header on page 84.

Chapter 8 'When Steam Runs Out' comprises just four pages of photographs of stored steam locomotives and their scrapping. Chapter 9 focuses on the role played by Fred Shea in the introduction of General Motors diesel-electric locomotives in Australia. It is followed by Chapter 10 'Memories from the footplate' which covers the recollections of well-known locomotive drivers and firemen in the steam era and the industrial unrest that accompanied the transition from steam to diesel.

The text of *Running out of Steam and Catching up with Diesels* is not among David Burke's better contributions, but as a source of a fine collection of Australian railway poster art at just \$30 a copy, this book offers enthusiasts an interesting selection of railway posters and similar promotional material

on Australian railways between the 1920s and the 1960s. It is therefore recommended.

Bob McKillop



In this month's **Railway Digest**

Melbourne rail works upsurge under way

Victoria's capital is experiencing a boom in railway construction activity at present and this is set to continue for several years. John Hoyle examines some of the projects that will transform areas of Melbourne's heavy and light rail transport.

Townsville to The Isa

The *Inlander* is one of the great survivors of the long-distance passenger era, though today it is constantly rumoured to be discontinued. Robert Gill decided to take a trip to The Isa by rail, while he still could.

Comeng Life Extension Program

Melbourne's Comeng trains have long been the 'workhorses' of the system. Following MTM being granted a seven-year extension to its contract it is expected that some units will be retired and replaced by High Capacity Metro Train, but around 150 three-car units are to be retained and be the subject of the Comeng Life Extension Project which commenced in 2016 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2021. Tim Sutherland reports.

Plus all our regular features



Commonwealth Railways, 1912-1920

ARH 960, October 2017

For many years the *ARHS Bulletin* and then *Australian Railway History* have published photos with captions to enhance the articles therein. While I can only comment on the areas of railway operations I know, on occasions the captions are not quite right and sometimes wrong. For the benefit of future generations, these captions should be accurate. While *Australian Railway History* has presented accurate captions in recent years, there are some issues regarding the captions in the October 2017 issue.

The cover photo is of a train approaching Port Augusta, not departing, as can be deduced by the water on each side of the track. The date would be the 1990s, not the 1980s, as the first locomotive is in the Genesee Wyoming colour scheme introduced in November 1997.

The top photo on page 5 depicts the workers' train that ran from Devonport to Burnie and returned in the afternoon with workers for the South Burnie paper mills. I only saw this train once from a distance when it was operated by the last steam rail motor when living in Tasmania in 1950.

The lower photo on page 9 has two tracks in the foreground, so it appears to be approaching Spencer Junction north of Port Augusta with a train bound for either Alice Springs or Western Australia, but probably the latter as few piggyback trains ran to Alice Springs.

The top postcard on page 17 has been published on a number of occasions as the 'first train'. It is certainly an early Trans-Australian train as the leading van appears to be one of the two brake vans designated as 'M' class temporarily, as stated on p23 of the article, until the purpose-built 'M' class mail vans entered service in 1918. On page 59 of the later Monty Luke's *Riders of the Steel Highways* book (published in 1997) the first train consist is detailed as eight carriages including the lounge car.

A photograph of Commonwealth Railways sleeping car ARB 13 is presented on page 2 of the October

ARH. Readers may be interested in some additional history on this carriage and its association with the ARHS SA Division some 60 years ago.

When the ARHS SA Division proposed a trip to Marree in a Budd railcar for the SA Labour Day holiday weekend in October 1957, the question of overnight accommodation arose. Marree was the obvious location as it had a two-storey stone hotel (built circa 1880), but it turned out that horse races were to be held at Marree on this weekend. A Commonwealth Railways official at Port Augusta suggested Copley as an alternative, which also had a hotel, but this was smaller than the one at Marree, so the Commonwealth Railways agreed to provide sleeping cars complete with all bedding as accommodation for any overflow of visitors.

When our Budd railcar CB1 arrived at Copley around 6pm on Saturday 12 October 1957, narrow gauge sleeping cars NARB 12 and NARB 13 were awaiting those of our group who slept in them for two nights. In April 1956 the Commonwealth Railways transferred a number of former standard gauge passenger cars from the Trans-Australian Railway to the Central Australia Railway, including ARB 13. The letter 'N' was added in front of the standard gauge classification. As narrow gauge passenger bogies were not then available, these cars were placed on narrow gauge plain journal 'Ride Control' freight bogies with springing alterations, including the fitting of shock absorbers. In 1957-1958, these former standard gauge carriages were fitted with Minden Deutz bogies converted from standard gauge. They continued to run on these bogies until the closure of the narrow gauge line in 1981.

By April 1961, sufficient air-conditioned passenger carriages and power vans had been provided to the Central Australia Railway from former Trans-Australian Railway standard gauge stock to allow the operation of a completely air-conditioned train for

the Marree to Alice Springs service. The non-air-conditioned ex-standard gauge TAR sleeping carriages on narrow gauge were returned to standard gauge and resumed their former standard gauge classification. Thus NARB 13 became ARB 13 again by 1962 and was mounted on standard gauge Minden Deutz bogies as shown in John Beckhaus' photo on page 2.

On 5 September 1967 our family travelled from Port Augusta to Marree in a fast mixed train that included three passenger cars—ARB 13, ARC 74 and AR 50. ARC 74 was formerly a Victorian and South Australian joint stock broad gauge Pullman sleeping car. For some unknown reason, ARB 13 was transferred back to narrow gauge in 1975, reverting to NARB 13 and remaining on narrow gauge until its closure. When last seen at Port Augusta in 1982, it was mounted on Bradford Kendall passenger bogies.

David B Parsons, Somerton Park, SA
5044

Editor: Many of the images received by ARHSnsw lack details regarding their location, subject and date, so the hard-working volunteers at our Railway Resource Centre are often hard-pressed to come up with accurate captions, particularly for interstate photos. The article 'Commonwealth Railways, 1912-1920' was reviewed by relevant individuals with specialist knowledge on the Commonwealth Railways in South and Western Australia. The caption of the top photograph on page 2, for instance was provided by a noted South Australian reviewer.

The John Beckhaus and Ross Willson article in the October issue of *Australian Railway History* brought back memories for me regarding my experience with the K class 2-8-0 locomotives of the NSW Government Railways.

I commenced my fitting & machining apprenticeship on 1 December 1947 at the Chullora Electric Car shops, which were the most recent maintenance workshops at the time.

Over the next five years I was moved at three and six month intervals to various railway workshops. I recall the excellent facilities at Homebush Instructional Workshops, but sadly the site premises are now a block of flats, courtesy of Premier Bob Carr. Later I attended lecture facilities at the Railway Institute in Castlereagh Street opposite the Museum Station underground entry.

The 2-8-0 goods locomotives that we referred to as 'the K class locomotives' were fitted with the distinctive Southern valve gear. It seems that most of the Standard Goods locomotives had their steam admission valves located between the axle box frames beneath the boiler, but the 55 class had this raised box located above the connecting rods and the coupling rods on the coupled driving wheels. The valve gear appeared similar to a child's swing in operation. The K^A class Commonwealth Railways locomotives described on pages 18 and 19 of the October 2017 *Australian Railway History* had a continuous flat footplate from the cab to the buffers. The valve gear appears to be mounted internally. Is there any explanation for this design variation?

I had not realised how much I appreciated the steam era

until it was gone. We saw the steam locomotives that were always there until they were phased out.

The NSW Railway workshops and the Railway Institute had a full time technically trained staff who produced apprentices and tradesmen who were far more aware of the details of engineering procedures and methods than the qualified engineers they were usually taking directions from. The decline of the whole system was a tragic loss to a mostly undeveloped industrial economy.

I enjoy reading about the wonders of full employment during that era, while there were then outstanding opportunities for the training of young people. There was very little crime as everyone who wanted a job could get one.

Australian Railway History helps to keep me in touch with our railways as I knew them, so many thanks for your efforts.

J P Cassidy, by email

A Real Australia Day

Another year has passed without acknowledgement or celebration of any kind, of the importance to railway people like us, and indeed to the rest of the population, of 14 June. One hundred and thirty four years ago the railway lines out of Melbourne and Sydney met at Albury. Of course they did not actually meet, but they were adjacent to each other due to the legendary break of gauge.

This now meant that travel between the two cities took two days rather than a sea trip of between eight and 16 days, often in bad weather, or worse, a ride in a coach with steel rimmed wheels over dirt roads, sometimes subject to flood, not to mention the consequent damage to bones in the posterior. The railways had led to a remarkable growth in commerce, although sometimes with unintended consequences, in that produce went from southern New South Wales out through river ports and other destinations in Victoria to Melbourne.

But this event had another result of enormous importance. The event

was celebrated by a banquet attended by the Governor and Premier of each state, as well as over a thousand prominent citizens. There were speeches in between courses and the issue was raised that the time had come for the various states to federate. There was, by this time rousing support for this not only for defence reasons but other reasons as well. For a full description of this day including a menu for the festivities see *Changing Trains* by Phil Belbin and David Burke, Methuen 1982.

Premiers Conferences took place in the 1890s leading to a draft constitution later passed by the British Parliament. Note that the railway reached the Queensland border before the end of that decade as well so travel around this vast country was becoming much more common.

There would be some justification for alleging it was this moment in time that started a serious push for federation of states and led to a country called Australia coming into existence on 1 January 1901. There

are constitutional lawyers who would argue that the push to federation started much earlier than 1883, but it would seem the process had stalled and was brought to life on 14 June 1883.

The present Australia day is becoming increasingly controversial with First Australians and suggestions the day be moved to Anzac Day also raises issues with those who have migrated here. The present Australia Day is really New South Wales day as it commemorates the arrival of the First Fleet. Thus I would argue that 14 June is a more relevant day, than the present Australia day.

I suggest at the very least, that those of us obsessed with railways should mark the day each year by having roast beef and a northern Victoria red wine proposing a toast to Australia, as the dignitaries did on 14 June 1883, and create a tradition much like roast turkey and cranberry sauce on Thanksgiving Day in North America.

Stephen Herrick, 'Railway tragic', Canberra, ACT



Diesel rail motor HPC401 stands at Delungra station on its journey to Inverell on 26 November 1976. Note the gangers' motorised trike in the foreground. GREG BLACKWELL IMAGE

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