The Strathalbyn station has in recent years been lovingly restored to almost new condition. The front area has been continually beautified with garden plots since Thomas Adams came to the town as Station Master in 1871 and commenced planting four years later! Though some of his original work had to be compromised when the existing building was put up, much of the garden remains to this day and has now been named in his honour.

The stone goods shed, used by SteamRanger's track maintenance team, was built in 1884 while until 1964, two tracks south of the station platform served a locomotive shed. A siding adjacent to these still provides access to the turntable which was recently restored and is used to turn smaller SteamRanger locomotives. Prior to November 1968 this small table was used to turn the Model 75 railcar which ran between Strathalbyn and Milang on the shores of Lake Alexandrina. A small galvanised iron gang shed at the turntable houses SteamRanger track maintenance vehicles. The large water tank is no longer in use, and locos are topped up these days from the town supply.

Explore all of Strathalbyn!

Strathalbyn township consists of two main shopping areas - shops in the streets between the railway station and the river gardens and those in Historic High Street on the hillside beyond the church   The High Street traders invite you to explore their interesting antiques and craft shops or visit one of the friendly cafes. To assist our less athletic passengers transport may be available between the station and High Street so that you can visit both areas.

Listen for announcements through the PA system
on the train or check with the guard.

**But don't miss the train
which leaves at 2.00pm!**
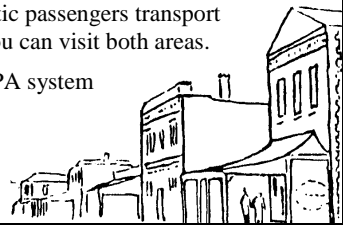
For your comfort

- All *Highlander* carriages are **non-smoking.**

- Children, accompanied or unaccompanied, **must not** travel on end platforms, in open doorways or in open centre vestibules of carriages. We also recommend that adult passengers do not travel in these locations and ask that all passengers follow the instructions of our staff, so that everyone has a comfortable trip.

Bookings and Timetable Enquiries

✱ Call 1300 655 991 (local call fee)
✱ Or visit our website "www.steamranger.org.au

SteamRanger

Box 960,
Mount Barker 5251

Revised Jun 2005

The Highlander to Strathalbyn

Welcome Aboard!

A passenger's guide
to travelling on SteamRanger's
"The Highlander" train
from Mt Barker to Strathalbyn

The Mt Barker Junction to Strathalbyn railway was constructed by Messrs Walker and Swann who had previously built the Adelaide to Aldgate line. The contract price was $287,357. The line to Mt Barker was opened by the Governor on 27th Nov 1883 with considerable pomp and ceremony and the 500 workers then pressed on to complete the line to Strathalbyn by 15th Sept 1884. Substantial stone buildings were constructed at Mt Barker and Strathalbyn and stations with sidings and passenger platforms at a number of other locations. Many of these were still in place into the 1970s. Passenger services operated by Australian National on the line ceased in April 1984 and the line was closed to all trains in 1989. With widespread community support SteamRanger subsequently took over the line and now operates tourist railway services to Strathalbyn and on to Goolwa and Victor Harbor.

Mt Barker (55)   The station building was constructed from Aldgate freestone during 1883. Next to it, on the Adelaide side, were once refreshment rooms of timber construction which were used up until 1963, and photographs of the time show tables and chairs with white linen laid out under the adjacent poplar trees. The District Council of Mt. Barker restored the historic Railway Station building to coincide with the transfer of SteamRanger from Adelaide in 1996 and the building now houses SteamRanger's souvenir shop and station facilities.

The water column at the Littlehampton end of the platform is rather unique; in that it was manufactured at the Glanville Dockyards which for a time were under control of the South Australian Railways. The water supply came from the railway and town reservoir, built just below the freeway and fed into the large overhead tank in the yard which in turn supplied two columns. SteamRanger's locomotive and carriage depot, just south of the station building, has been operating since May 1996 and is the new base of operations for SteamRanger following an enforced move from Adelaide itself due to standardisation of the main Adelaide to Melbourne rail line.

✱ *Figures following each station name show the distance from Adelaide - look for the kilometre posts alongside the line; usually on the left side travelling towards Strathalbyn*

*Like to know more?
Ask your friendly Car
Attendant*

Leaving Mount Barker station, the line winds past the loco depot and crosses Dutton Road and then two heavy steel girder bridges in quick succession. The bridges across the Mt Barker Creek replace original lighter examples put down in 1884. To the left of the train, across flat country, can be seen Mount Barker summit in the distance. The mount was named after Captain Collett Barker who first sited it from the Murray Mouth in the 1830s thinking it was Mount Lofty.   Realising it was not, Captain Sturt named it in Barker's honour. In the next kilometre and a half, a number of urban roads are crossed, including the main road to Strathalbyn, which is protected by flashing warning lights.

The Climb. Just past the 58 km.post, the climb to the top of the ranges at Philcox Hill begins in earnest. This section of track was restored by SteamRanger in 1990 following an extensive fundraising appeal. The 1 in 45 gradient continues up a long straight embankment and through tall gum trees to the Native Avenue road crossing from where the line passes through a number of cuttings to crest the hill at the abandoned Philcox Hill station site. Situated in a opening in the trees on level ground, the station site is the highest point on the line (1,304 feet or nearly 398 metres above sea-level)   In years gone by both a passing siding and goods siding existed and the goods siding for quite some time possessed loading bins for stone that was brought down from a local quarry by means of a one-kilometre long horse tramway to the east of the line. A walking track remains as evidence. Today remnants of a platform, a telephone box and well-kept station name board are the only things to indicate this rather interesting and once very busy location.

Beyond Philcox Hill (**61)** the line begins to fall on a 1 in 45 gradient towards Bugle Ranges, and views of the fertile farming countryside, the lower Murray and the Coorong start to open up. The base of Bonython Hill is passed as the track winds around in a semi-circle, then after going through some more cuttings, the grade eases as the Bonython Road level crossing is approached on a sharp righthand curve. This crossing was at one time known as Murapena and was a stopping place for passenger trains after railcars had been introduced in the 1920s.

The former Bugle Ranges station (64) is approached across a curving embankment. Though in the past there were quite a number of residents living in the area, the station was provided mainly to cater for Macclesfield people as compensation for the Government not being able to take the line through their town. This station initially had three tracks as well as lower-quadrant signals and its own signal cabin. In 1926, the station master was withdrawn. The sidings lasted well into the 1970s. The rather extravagant signal cabin on the other hand was removed to Long Gully in the National Park on the Main South line after less than two years use! A local farmer who has accumulated a treasure trove of old farming implements and other bric-a- brac now occupies the remnants of the station property.

On from Bugle Ranges, the track follows around the hills and the view on the eastern side now becomes more open and passengers can see as far as Lake Alexandrina and the Coorong. To the west however, the hills rise rather abruptly and restrict any view being had of the valleys on the other side of them. A long embankment then leads the line to the Pursell Road crossing, which is just by the 65.5 km post and which once boasted the stopping place known as Nonedia
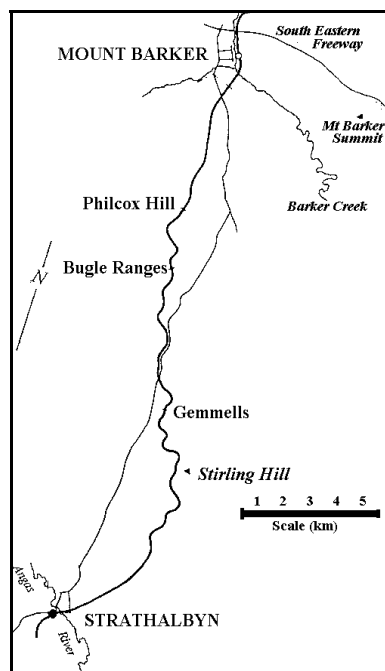
Gemmells (71)   After passing through a number of substantial cuttings the line then again crosses the main Mt Barker to Strathalbyn road with its clanging crossing bells and lights and a few more tight curves brings it into Gemmells siding, named after an adjacent land owner, Thomas Gemmell. This siding, originally laid out with three tracks, was closed in 1964 for all except the boarding and alighting of passengers. Stone from the nearby Quarry Hill was also loaded at this point for transport to Adelaide and other destinations. The road to the disused quarry, Stirling Hill road, is crossed at the southern end of the yard. This road, named after a local landowning pioneer, winds back and forth across the track between here and Strathalbyn. Today, SteamRanger regularly use Gemmells yard to top up water in smaller steam locos in preparation for the challenging climb back up the hill to Mount Barker.

Leaving Gemmells the line runs around the base of Stirling Hill and across an impressive horseshoe curve embankment, beyond which passengers can again see across the lakes and to Strathalbyn before the line crosses the road again. Another cutting and a long embankment take the train through Stirling Hill itself. A very high, though narrow, underpass originally put in for Mr Stirling's cattle is crossed.

Another cutting is followed by what could well be the highest (and most photographed) embankment on the whole line. At approximately 76.5 km, Burnside Road is crossed and this location was also known in years gone by as Panketyi. Beyond, the line is flatter and the long straight section into Strathalbyn was always a favourite with S.A.R. enginemen in the past who were willing to give their trains a quick burst of speed. At 78.5km the line passes the old Strathalbyn mine. Just before the line comes into Strathalbyn, the only wheat silos on the branch are passed north of the East Terrace crossing, originally served by a short siding leading off the main line on the left side of the main line. High Street is crossed soon after East Terrace, followed by the River Angas and then South Terrace. Next to the South Terrace crossing is the old Police Station which is operated as a museum by the Strathalbyn branch of the National Trust.

The Angas River bridge consists of two steel deck spans which replaced the original iron ones installed in 1884. The central pier is now concrete which encases the iron columns, but the two abutments were able to keep their original stonework when the bridge was rebuilt. In October 1926 when the girders were being exchanged, the first slipped while an attempt was being made to position it, just as it had during construction in 1884! History repeating itself!

Strathalbyn (82) A picturesque country town on the Angas River.   The town was first settled in 1839 by the Rankine families who had emigrated from Scotland. The name is a combination of *Strath* - a Scottish word meaning a small river valley; and *Albyn* - a corruption of the word *Albion* which had been a name for Scotland in ancient times. It is believed that Dr John Rankine also held an interest in the Albion Iron and Steel Works in Glasgow, which could have also given meaning to the name! The railway arrived in 1884 and at first, passengers going further south then transferred to a horse tram! Today Strathalbyn is a district centre for the surrounding wheat farming and pastoral districts and while the amount of urbanisation is on a smaller scale than Mount Barker, this has enabled it to keep a lot of its historic charm which is reflected in buildings such as the distinctive Presbyterian Church.

MOUNT BARKER
South Eastern Freeway
Mt Barker Summit
Barker Creek
Philcox Hill
Bugle Ranges
N
Gemmells
Stirling Hill
1 2 3 4 5
Scale (km)
Angas River
STRATHALBYN