



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

Written just 12 years after the formation of the SA Division of the ARHS, when all ARHS excursion trains used locos and rolling stock chartered from the SAR, this article describes an excursion with Rx class locos Rx195 and Rx224 to Clare and Spalding in the mid north of the State

Rx224 is one of two Rx class locos later preserved in running order by SteamRanger Heritage Railway, the other being Rx207.

The attached photo by the author illustrates the frequent length of ARHS enthusiast trains in those days, with at least 10 cars accommodating over 500 passengers.

AWAKENED MEMORIES OF THE Rx-CLASS LOCOMOTIVES

by G. Bakwell

ARHS Bulletin No 324 October 1964, pages 196, 197

On the 21st September 1963, the South Australian Division organised a trip to Clare and Spalding, situated on a branch line which leaves the main Northern track at Riverton, some 63 miles North of Adelaide.

The train was hauled by two Rx-class locomotives. They are vintage locomotives now but I remember them best over 40 years ago as "main-liners", when they hauled the Melbourne-Adelaide Express before it became a named train as the "Overland".

As the two locomotives backed on to the train at Adelaide, prior to departure for Clare and Spalding I could see that an attempt had been made to restore the shining brasswork round the top of the chimneys and that the letters "Rx" on the cab side of each chimney had been polished.

It reminded me of the many times I had seen Rx's backing on to the Adelaide-bound Melbourne-Adelaide Express at Murray Bridge in the mornings or at Adelaide, in the afternoons, on the return journey to Melbourne. At that time, Murray Bridge and not Taillem Bend was the changeover station for the locomotives.

I thought, too, of the many local journeys I had made while in Adelaide particularly on the "Hills" line, behind an Rx, when there were more tunnels than there are today and there was a viaduct between Sleep's Hill and Eden. In those days, the Rx's seemed to be the backbone of the South Australian Railways, just as the A2-class was to the Victorian Railways.

There were 84 of these locomotives used altogether on the South Australian Railways.

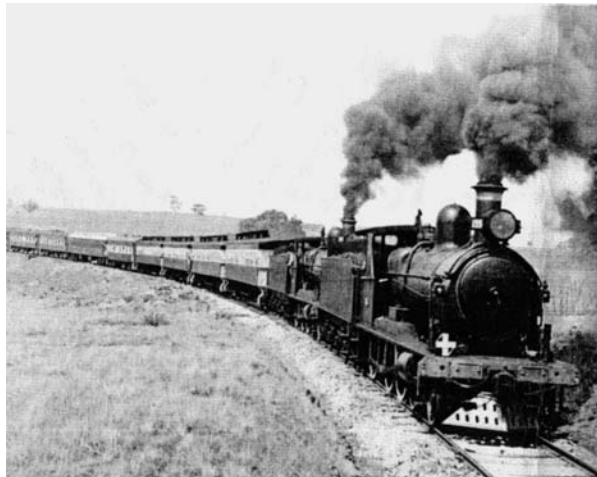
Some were of an improved design of an original R-class, all the latter being rebuilt to Rx-class standards. Twenty one were built in Scotland (Dubs, 6; North British, 15) and the remainder in Australia (S.A.R. Islington workshops, 14; Walker, S.A., 25; Martin, S.A., 24).

During the 1920s, the Rx's were ousted in pride of place by the larger engines of the Webb regime although, ironically enough, it looks as though they may outlast them.

Today, Rx's are used mostly for shunting and goods transfer operations but, to a limited extent, they may still be seen on main-line working. Many have been fitted with narrow stovepipe chimneys, which are not as pleasing in appearance as the original ones.

The Rx-class has a 4-6-0 wheel arrangement, driving wheel diameter of 4ft 6ins, 18ins x 24ins cylinders, 175 lbs. boiler pressure and a tractive effort of 21,420 lbs. The road-worthy weight is 88 tons 12 cwt.

A double-headed train hauled by these locomotives still provides a somewhat nostalgic re-creation of the past.



SAR 4-6-0 Rx class locos Rx195 and Rx224 with the train to Clare and Splading
22nd September 1963 Photo by author G. Bakewell