



## SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

On **Saturday 13th November** locos Rx207, 621 and 520 operated separate trains to Belair, featuring various periods of parallel running on the dual track. Trains then visited Port Dock Museum.

On **Sunday 14th November** Rx207 and 520 operated separate trains to Victor Harbor, with the Rx remaining at Goolwa for subsequent Cockle Train running and her passengers returning by road coach.

The report gives an interesting insight into the complexities of organising and operating such a multi consist operation.

This file contains the full text of the article, but omits one photograph

All photos in article: Geoff Doecke (except where attributed otherwise)  
Front page of promotional brochure artwork by John Draper

### STEAMRANGER LOCO BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

*Catchpoint January 1994*

*Contributed by Brian Busch*



1993 marks the 80th anniversary of engine Rx 207 (5 December) and the 50th anniversary of engine 520 (10 November) and to celebrate these two great events

SteamRanger organised a "Birthday Weekend".

Whilst the Operations Sub-committee had been looking at some alternatives for the weekend it wasn't until Ian Johnston happened to say to Kim Bird "have you got any ideas?" that Kim responded "Why not three trains from Adelaide to Goodwood, it hasn't been done before." Ian reported this comment to the Operations Sub-committee and I undertook to have a look and see what could be done.

Getting to Goodwood was the easy bit but what do you do with three trains when one is sitting on the wrong line? With a graph of the train services drawn up and a knowledge of the signalling system and what could and couldn't be done the plan gradually fell into place such that within a few days Kim had a phone call at work to say "yes please". His response was "I was only joking but if you think it can be done we'll have a look at it" That became the start of the project.

From that point SteamRanger set up a small sub-group to cover off all the various issues whilst STA, following an initial meeting with SteamRanger set up its own group to address the issues. Whilst it was acknowledged all round that the schedule was tight and everything needed to run right it was also felt that there was an opportunity for both SteamRanger and STA to "stand out" before the public.

Down at Goolwa Rx 207 was giving some problems with a loud knock coming from the motion. "Expert advice" indicated that the problem could be carbon build up in the cylinders and an examination showed there was considerable carbon accumulated from many year's work. An attempt was made to burn it out over one weekend but this was not successful. The alternative was to use a very high pressure water jet and this did the job. Carbon came away by the "bag full" but when Rx 207 was given a test run double heading between Goolwa Depot and Victor Harbor with engine 520 on the "Southern Encounter" the knock was still there, in fact it had got worse.

With time running out and the school holidays about to start a decision was made to work the September/October series of school holiday "Cockle Trains" with diesel 507 and send 958 down from Dry Creek to haul the Rx back to Dry Creek. This took place on Tuesday 28 September with "research work" commencing almost immediately on the Rx. A number of measurements were taken indicating a number of problems all of which need time to correct.

Concern was also expressed over clearances of platforms on the Port line and SteamRanger's Mazda HiRail was provided one Sunday morning so that a profile test could be run through all platforms from Bowden to Alberton inclusive. Whilst it was known that problems existed at both Cheltenham Racecourse and Cheltenham (as the redhens were hitting) it was not known that a problem also existed at Woodville Park. All three locations were rectified.

With work still to complete on Rx 207 and a tight timetable of Wednesday 10 November for a test run every minute was vital. Things were to get worse however as 520 working the down "Southern Encounter" on Sunday 7 November completely blew out one of its fusible plugs causing injury to the loco crew and two other persons. Loco Manager Ian Johnston was one of these. A tense wait occurred on Monday 8 November whilst the Dept. of Labour's Boiler Inspector closely examined 520 which by this time had had its rods removed and was towed back to Dry Creek for attention. Fortunately the verdict was "I have no reasons to withdraw the boiler's certification" but of course there was more work to ready this engine for service.

At the SteamRanger Office the phones ran hot as passengers clamoured for a seat on one of the trains. On Wednesday 10 November STA held a meeting of all its personnel involved with the running to go through in fine detail everything that was to occur. One or two last minute changes were necessary but generally the plans stood. SteamRanger Volunteers met at Port Dock that evening with some of the Port Dock Volunteers to hear first hand what was proposed and through a series of overhead slides had the train movements explained.

By the afternoon of Friday 12 November three consists were ready within the Dry Creek Depot and three engines stood waiting to be lit up. 520 had been returned to service complete with hydro test. Rx 207 had been given a good "work over", had a hastier speed recorder fitted and been given certification by AN to operate on the main line. One problem did arise with the hastier when it was tested out - it would only work when the engine was running tender first. The answer was simple. Someone had picked up a power supply source and taken it from a wire providing power to the tender headlight which was only turned on during tender first running a change of power source soon fixed the problem.

### **Saturday 13th November**

Saturday morning and the final shunting took place using engine 350. Consist 1 (62, 73, 426, 60) was coupled to consist 3 (712, 704, 81, 710 and 606 to be hauled to Adelaide by engine 520. Consist 2 (70, 66, 83, 706, 701, 71) was to go in behind Rx 207 whilst 621 had the task of working light engine from Dry Creek behind coupled consists 1 and 3. All movements had to turn on the triangle because of the nature of the day's running and to prevent track locking in turning on the return that night.

Almost as soon as 520 pulled into platform 4 at Adelaide engine 621 was coupled to the rear ready to pull the consist to the railcar depot. From here it shunted to platform 1 and detach the A cars for consist 1 then proceed to platform 3 with consist 3. In the meantime 520 moved out into the yard as Rx 207 and consist 2 came into platform 4. 520 became the shunt engine to coupled to these cars and finally place them in platform 2. Rx 207 then moved over to platform 1 meaning that by 1150 hours all three trains stood ready for departure.



The days events are about to start! 520 and Rx207 stand side by side in Adelaide station on Saturday 13 Nov 93 as part of the 50th and 80th Birthday Celebrations

When all other movements had cleared the up south main line Train Control set the switches and pegged all signals at Stop to Goodwood to enable a Train Order to be issued to 520 and consist 2 to work against signal indications. On platform 1 the signal indicated "proceed medium speed to the down south main" and on platform 3 it read "proceed medium speed to the down south suburban track". The Train Order for 520 was issued and delivered.

On the dot of 1230 hours Station Supervisor Tammie blew his whistle load and long and the three Guard's called "first right" to their drivers. With almost every train window framing a head and camera history was being made. Huge crowds lined the tracks to photograph the great event. Extra time had been built into the schedule to Goodwood to ensure no delays to STA trains but it proved unnecessary as the movements came to a halt some 8 minutes early. A wait whilst an Up Belair railcar cleared Millswood before 621 departed and crossed to bi-directional signalling at Millswood. The down Belair railcar trundled past and continued on its way to pass 621 and its train before Eden Hills crossover.



A couple of kms from Adelaide station saw 621, 520 and Rx207  
Hauling their respective trains south towards Goodwood  
- carrying about 800 passengers on 13/11/93

- Another Train Order for 520 to depart against signal indication and operate to Torrens Park thence in accordance with signal indication. Rx 207 and 520 came side by side and left Goodwood - the challenge of the hills was on. The two trains moved past one another then dropped back as they pulled steadily uphill then at Torrens Park 520 encountered a red signal indicating that 621 was not clear at Eden Hills. After a short delay the signal cleared and Rx 207 was soon found standing clear of the Lynton level crossing waiting patiently. More side by side running whilst up ahead 621 stopped at Blackwood for water then proceeded on through Belair to stop at the 22.5 km post heading towards Foster's Corner.



Within a couple of years this won't happen again!  
SteamRanger locos 520 and Rx207  
blast their way uphill heading the Birthday specials to Belair on Sat 13 Nov 93

520 moved into Blackwood and crossed back to the down main whilst Rx 207 waited for line clear to move ahead to take water with the Up STA railcar also waiting line clear to Adelaide. 520 ran onto Belair and was signalled in behind 621 and consist 3. It then uncoupled and moved ahead to consist 3. 621 uncoupled and ran towards Mt.Lofty to await a signal to return to the Belair station. Rx 207, in the meantime took water and was soon coming in behind 520 and consist 2. It uncoupled and moved onto consist 2 whilst 621 came back to couple to consist 1. All trains were air tested headed down hill. 621 took the lead to Goodwood whilst Rx 207 remained on the down at Blackwood and 520 went bi-directional. Further history - the first down hill parallel running in SA. At Millswood 520 again worked under Train Order to proceed on the down south suburban whilst Rx 207 ran on the Up south suburban with 621 on the Up south main.



The passing loop at Belair was quite full with 621, Rx207 and 520 with their respective trains ready for the run down the hill to Port Dock Satation Railway Museum

At Mile End Rx 207 crossed on a medium speed signal to the goal loop and then the Port main. Now being slightly behind schedule a slow run took place to Port Adelaide Junction account following the Outer Harbor service. Another medium speed signal saw Rx 207 turn into the Port Dock Museum to be met by SteamRanger's pilot at the STA "Stop Board".



Birthday stars Rx207 double heads with 520 as they pull away from Port Dock heading to Adelaide on Sat 13 Nov 93. Trackwork, jointly owned by AN and STA allow direct rail access into the Museum site. Photo: Ivan Marchant

With its consist in place Rx 207 ran around to become the "yard shunter" - something which disappeared with railcar operations. 621 followed and on coming to a halt uncoupled to allow Rx 207 to shunt its carriages. During the shunt 621 moved to the head of consist 2 brought in by the Rx. Finally 520 arrived and again Rx 207 pulled the consist. This time 520 stood at the head of consist 1, Rx 207 stood on consist 3 and 621 on consist 2 whilst in the background the Museum's Peronne stood in steam. Cameras whirred and clicked to catch this grand moment the culmination of many months of effort had at last been successful.



All lined up! SteamRanger locos 520, Rx207 and 621 pause at Port Dock during the special Birthday celebrations on Sat 13 Nov 93.  
Photo: Murray Billett

At 1645 (5 minutes late) 621 and consist 2 left for Adelaide. Some more shuffling at Port Dock and consists 1 and 3 were coupled with Rx 207 in the lead of 520 to celebrate 80 and 50 years of service. Finally at 1700 the two mighty machines pulled the consist away and headed back to Adelaide. When 621 arrived at Adelaide it pushed its consist to the north car yard then ran back into the platform. Rx 207 was cut off at the signal and ran into platform 9 and back into the north car yard to collect consist 2. 520 pulled the coupled consist into platform 6 whilst 621 came on the rear to work them to Dry Creek. Yet another move saw 520 "light engine" pass 621 and consist at Wye whilst Rx 207 followed behind with consist 2.

### **Sunday 14th November**

Some re-organisation of carriages for Sunday saw engine 350 kept busy at Dry Creek for some time. On the last move baggage 426 took a dislike to one set of switches meaning that some rerailling was in order. Sunday morning dawned with work still to do. 426 was examined and given "ok" to travel. 520 and Rx 207 were coaled and final shunting of cars with 350 was underway when 426 again objected to that certain set of switches. This time it had to stay at Dry Creek so after rerailling it was deposited in the shed. To prevent any further problems cars 73 and 70 were hand shunted onto car 56 attached to 350 and hauled outside to allow Rx 207 to couple.

With a late departure now evident 520 moved off to Keswick with cars 60, 62, 66, 83, 52, 54 and 71 to be closely followed by Rx 207 with cars 56, 73 and 70. Car 73 had been hastily set up as a baggage and makeshift buffet on this train.

As this train moved towards Keswick a phone call was made to the SteamRanger gang to repair a set of switches to allow the train back in that night and a further call to STA to discuss the parallel running. The later was granted subject to a 0920 departure from the terminal - final departure was a 0919. Once more both trains worked side by side up the hill although this time only to Eden Hills where an Up railcar waited for 520 to cross over before continuing its journey to Adelaide.



Slightly rare these days - an Rx taking water at Blackwood.  
Rx207 pauses at Blackwood whilst in charge of a Victor Harbor special  
on Sunday 14 Nov 93

Rx 207 stopped for water at Blackwood but by Bridgewater had to wait for the entering block signal to clear account 520 ahead. A further stop was made at Mt. Barker Junction account Train Order clearance before finally arriving at Mt. Barker. Prior arrangements had been made to serve tea and coffee from the SM's office as no heating facilities exist on car 426. The SteamRanger Track gang were the Mt. Barker Refresh staff for the morning reliving the days of this station being a refreshment stop for all Victor Harbor trains. They later "retired" to Dry Creek to make amends to track layout and switches.

Gemmells was commissioned as a "Control Point" to allow Rx 207 to follow the "Southern Encounter". A short stop at Gemmells to hand up the Train Order and Rx 207 dropped down grade to Strathalbyn. Pie and pasties for lunch from the bakery over the road before the Rx again continued its journey to Goolwa. Here the Train Order read "Proceed to MIDDLETON take crossing loop cross psg 1520 engine 520 then proceed to VICTOR HARBOR". Admist much level crossing whistling Rx 207 headed out of town and onto familiar territory. Into the loop at Middleton and passengers lined up to photograph the cross. 520 with the "Cockle Train" ran through before Rx 207 moved out onto the main line then on the final leg to Victor Harbor.

At Victor Harbor Rx 207 was turned and ran back through the holding road to push car 71 onto the consist (left behind by 520). Departure was via the holding road with car 56 being detached for the "Southern Encounter" and once more "into the loop" at Middleton for the return of the "Cockle Train". By 1525 and almost "on time" Rx 207 came to a halt at Goolwa where passengers changed to buses for Adelaide. Rx 207 and consist then ambled out to the Depot to stable for the summer "Cockle Trains". In the meantime 520 picked up car 56 and headed back to town with the "Southern Encounter" stopping briefly at Goolwa Depot to pick up the Rx crew.



The birthday girls meet at Middleton on Sunday 14 Nov 93.  
520 was heading the "Cockle Train" to Victor Harbor whilst Rx207  
was returning from Victor Harbor to Goolwa

520 apparently wanted to make amends for the previous weekend's problems as it stormed upgrade from Strathalbyn to Mt.Barker with a full 7 car load in only 37 minutes beating the "chicken man" to Mt.Barker. Final arrival at Keswick was five minutes late and a weekend of celebrations had drawn to a close.

#### **Footnote**

I must record my thanks to Kirn Bird, Phil Turbill and Karl Hample from STA for their efforts in "promoting" the proposal to fruition, to Port Dock Station Museum staff and volunteers who assisted, to the STA loco crews who donated their time to SteamRanger on Saturday 13 November and finally to all the SteamRanger staff and volunteers who put in so much time to make it all possible - thank you one and all.