



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

In 1964 SteamRanger ran a special double headed steam train from Adelaide to Milang which made history as the first locomotive hauled movement to Milang in 22 years.

Passenger services in the interim had been exclusively run with Brill railcars

The train was hauled by Rx locos Rx195 and Rx233.

The last revenue train on the branch was run with Rx224 on 15th June 1970 with the line being officially closed two days later

'LAKES LIMITED'

ARHS Recorder June 1964 page 5

Contributed by R.E. Hann

At 8.06 a.m. on Saturday, 30th May 1964, beneath leaden skies Rx engines 195 & 233 drew out of No.1 platform Adelaide for Milang, on the shores of Lake Alexandrina. The loco crew were, on No.195, K. Harrison Driver and A. Meter Fireman while No. 233 was in the capable hands of K. Fitzpatrick with M. Cosina on the shovel. Our train comprised Inspector A. Wilson, Guard J. Treloar with Ticket porter F. Ward. Loco Inspector was J. Merrigan.

Our late departure (booked 7.50) was due to the lack of a rostered porter and one had to be taken off a barrier for the train. As is usual with a late-running train we lost our track resulting in three trains in Ambleside at once. The special pulled in first to take water then the "down" Victor Harbour Bluebird No. 251 pulled in on the same road and No. 336 "up" Tailem Bend hauled by an 830 class DE No.843 crossed both trains following which the Bluebird reversed back onto the main line and proceeded on its way.

Prior to our arrival, the 2 Rx's had made good time in the hills with only an occasional slip by the leading engine on the wet rails. A highlight of the run to Mt. Lofty was the commendable non-stop (on our part) cross at Long Gully with an up Red-Hen. With excellent work on the part of the engine crews and the signalman the train was not halted even though we were well in the yard before the other train came out of the tunnel. Two photo stops were made between Ambleside and Balhannah, the first, as we left Ambleside and the other on a small stone bridge approaching Balhannah. Stops were then made at Mt. Barker, Bugle Ranges and Strathalbyn where the locos took water. Shortly after arrival at Strathalbyn, railcar No. 55 with box car attached, departed for Milang after connecting with the "Bluebird" from Adelaide. (No. 55 left Milang shortly after our arrival, returning to Strathalbyn to await the arrival of the 12.55 pm train from Adelaide).

The Milang branch line commences at Sandergrove, five miles distance from Strathalbyn.. Shortly after leaving Sandergrove, a photo stop was made at 57 1/4 miles on a rising grade following which we had a non-stop run to Milang. Arrival was at 1.20 p.m. some 70 minutes late. While the engines and the "Dolly Vardon" brake were turned, many passengers from the 8 Centenary cars partook of an excellent luncheon provided by the Women's Auxiliary in the Institute for the moderate fee of 4/- each.

Departure was at 2.38 p.m. with 2 photo stops between Milang and Sandergrove where we crossed 75 class Railcar No. 55 with 2 OBF cars in tow heading for Milang. Such was the traffic on the branch on that day! Strathalbyn provided a supply of water to the locos and refreshments to many passengers. The locos had been changed about at Milang so that No. 233 was leading on the "up" trip. Owing to the failing light only one of the two scheduled photo stops was made between Strathalbyn and Bugle Ranges. The balance of the return run was uneventful, water being taken at Ambleside, a stop at Aldgate to cross a Bridgewater loco and at Long Gully to cross the Tailm Bend Bluebird being the main items of note. The "Overland" was crossed on the double track at Sleeps Hills. Arrival time at Adelaide was 7.51 p.m., 64 minutes down.

Our thanks go to all who helped to make the trip a success including Kim Bird, the car captains and not least the Women's Auxiliary at Milang.



Double heading Rx195 and Rx223 30th May 1964

Mortlock Pictorial Collection, SLSA B 46528/157

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