



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

Although not operated by the ARHS (SA Division) the Western Endeavor was an historic enthusiast excursion .

Headed by NSW class 38 steam locos it was the first steam train to cross the continent east to west.

This file contains the full text of the article and the one included photo (unattributed)

The Western Endeavour

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Reported by Kim Bird



The Western Endeavor at Dowds Hill near Peterborough

At 8.34 a.m. on Saturday, August 22nd 1970, the historic "Western Endeavour", the first and only steam train to cross the Australian Continent, set out on its 2,451 mile journey from Sydney to Perth. Six years of intensive planning by the New South Wales Rail Transport Museum and various railway administrations lay behind the momentous departure from Central Station. Although it was originally proposed " to use 2 "36" class 4-6-0 engines, final choice was the "38" class 4-6-2's, considered by many to be the peak in Australian steam locomotive design. It was certainly a magnificent way to celebrate the completion of the standard gauge "Indian Pacific" Railway, the Captain Cook Bi-centenary year and the important role played by the steam locomotive in this country's development.

Standing at Sydney Central amid a crowd of thousands, the train presented an immaculate spectacle. Streamlined 3801 and non-streamlined 3813 were painted apple green and lined out in red and gold, while the 13 cars were refurbished in dark brown, relieved by yellow bands at waist level and above the windows. The roofs were silver and the official New South Wales Government Railways crest adorned the side of each car - truly an impressive sight.

The train consisted of 2/FS class cars (for day trippers to Bathurst), MAL 1862, TAM 748, TAM 500, MAL 541, TAM 912, AB90 (Diner), BV 931 (Lounge), TAM 913, MAL 565, TAM 905 and Brake-van. The TAM sleepers were built between 1913 and 1938 and represent the standard NSW sleeping car accommodating 20 passengers while the MAL sleepers, holding 18 passengers, were converted from sitting cars in 1954. The Dining Car AB90, was built for the Broken Hill Express in 1927, but has not been used in regular traffic since this ceased running in 1937-BV 931 was converted from a sitting up car in 1938 for the Newcastle Express and with large and comfortable loose chairs was much in demand.

"46" class electric locomotive No. 4620 was attached at Penrith and assisted on the 1 in 30 ruling grades to Katoomba (68m), where the town's brass band welcomed the "Western Endeavour". Motor-caders were out in force to witness our progress over the Blue Mountains and apparently there were several minor traffic jams. One was continually amazed at the ingenuity of the early construction forces, blasting deep cuttings out of solid rock and the now disused but very elegant viaducts forming part of the Zig Zags at Lap-stone and Lithgow are always of interest.

At Kelso (147m), 3801 was detached and ran light to Bathurst (149m), 3813 followed with the train over the original bridge spanning the Macquarie River built in 1876. The 2/FS cars were detached at Bathurst and a VHO brake-van containing spare parts and fitted out as a mobile work shop was attached. 2-6-2T No. 2604 and Baldwin 2-8-2's 5904 and 5907 were also noted.

On the famed Tumulla Bank, a large group was lined up on the edge of an old embankment and as the two green 38 class engines blasted their way into the station yard, the crowd was observed clapping in time to the locomotive beats! Eventually the train arrived at Orange East Fork at 5.46 p.m. where it was split into two divisions for the journey to Parkes.

A special 7,000 gallon water tank (SWT5) was attached at Parkes. A small cabin at the leading end of the tank housed an 8HP Wankel engine driving a pump capable of delivering 16,500 gallons per hour to the locomotive. On Sunday 23rd, 3813 hauled the train from Parkes to Ivanhoe where it was replaced by 3801 which had run ahead light engine some hours previously. This arrangement saved considerable time servicing the engines, as 3<31 3 then followed the train to Broken Hill after attention.

"Aerocaders" in a Cessna 206 followed the train from Medindie to Broken Hill providing some interest for passengers on this stretch. After several photo stops adjacent to the Medindie Lakes water storage scheme and the ranges surrounding Broken Hill, the train eventually arrived at the Silver City at 5.02 p.m. to be greeted by several thousand onlookers.

Across South Australia

The "Western Endeavour" departed Broken Hill at 7-15 a.m. on Monday, August 24th, with South Australian Loco Crews and Guard, and GB 8364 replacing the trailing NSWGR van. A second water tank (SWT6) was also attached at Broken Hill. At Cutana, No. 651 goods hauled by 602, 601 was crossed and eventually Peterborough was reached at 12.13pm. 3813 and 3801 were watered at the Loco Depot through a 4" fire hose and after considerable delay, the train left at 2.47 p.m. - 37 minutes late, amid very wet and windy weather. After two rather sodden photo stops, -j Port Pirie was reached at 5.27 p.m. The countryside near Gladstone looked tremendous with its lush green rolling fields and gum trees and was in direct contrast to the drought stricken areas of New South Wales through which we passed. Despite the weather, hundreds of school children were on the platforms at Peterborough and Jamestown to cheer the travellers on their way. One group at Peterborough were overheard suggesting to their friends, "Let's go down to the Dining Car and watch them eating".

AB90 and GB 8364 were replaced by Commonwealth Railways Lounge Car BRFC 114, Dining Car DD 156 and Power van HRGA 96 and the two engines and tanks were turned. Departure from Port Pirie was at 9.00 p.m., and after crossing GM 20 on a goods at Winninowie, we arrived at Stirling North at 11.17 p.m. where the cars were stabled on No. 1 road of the marshalling yard. The two engines, tanks and crew vans then proceeded to Port Augusta.

Tuesday, August 25th, was a free day, however a bus tour to BHP steel works at Whyalla was organised for those interested. Unfortunately activity was at a low ebb because of a strike and no trains were operating between Whyalla and Iron Knob. In the evening, passengers were entertained by the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner (Mr. K.A. Smith) and senior officers at Eloura Lodge, his official residence when at Port Augusta.

On Wednesday, 3813 departed Stirling North at 7-26 a.m. for Port Augusta with the "Western Endeavour" consist, where it was replaced by CL 3 (a new 3,000 hp Clyde Diesel) and 3801.

The "Western Endeavour" departed Port Augusta at 7-53 a.m., the diesel engine providing assistance for the steam engine over the 1,100 mile journey to Parkeston and thus reducing the amount of coal and water consumed.

Across the Nullabor

Near Ooldea, the line passes onto the desolate Nullabor Plain and at 495i miles the longest straight stretch of track (297 miles) in the world commences. At several locations the diesel was uncoupled and ran ahead, the 38 then moved the train forward for the photographers.

About noon, a 20 minute halt was made at Pimba for crew change. Every child for miles around had come to the tiny station and queues were quickly formed to inspect both locomotive cabs. The interest in 3801 was fantastic, "What is that white fluffy stuff coming out of the top?" asked one child.

Tarcoola was reached at 4.41 p.m. against a howling north-westerly gale and 3801 and water tanks were despatched to the old Locomotive Depot for coal and water. Bagged coal was supplied from a TLX louvre van attached at Port Augusta. Departure from Tarcoola was at 9-34 p.m. and after travelling all night we arrived at Cook at 7.15 a.m. C.S.T. As the C.R. works on W.S.T. beyond Cook, we put our watches back 90 minutes and could thus have a few extra minutes in bed! No. 463 West-bound Trans Australian Express hauled by GM 29 and 28 passed the "Western Endeavour" while 3801 was coaled by mobile crane from a NSWGR open waggon. Several "L" class tenders minus bogies were noted at Cook, apparently used as bulk fuel storages. Once again the local school children, most of whom had probably never seen a steam locomotive, were out in force to inspect the train. The South Australian/West Australian border near Deakin was crossed about noon and the East bound Express hauled by GM 7 and 9 was met at Forrest.

The TLX of bagged coal was detached at Rawlinna on arrival at 8.30 p.m. and 3801 coaled and watered. At Tarcoola, Cook and Rawlinna the old two road engine sheds are still standing, although in a somewhat dilapidated condition.

On Friday 28th, the train departed Rawlinna at 1.33 a.m. and crossed the Sydney bound "Indian Pacific" at Golden Ridge (12 miles from Parkeston). Diesel engine CL 3 and water tanks were detached at Parkeston and 3801 hauled the train to Kalgoorlie arriving there at 10.18 a.m. Passengers were taken on a bus tour of the City and mining areas, then to Kambalda, the scene of the recent nickel development and Coolgardie where the museum attracted considerable interest. The wide main streets of Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie bear mute testimony to the gold rush fever of by-gone days.

That night, many passengers were entertained by the departure of a crowded narrow gauge Express to Perth and later by the West bound "Indian Pacific" hauled by a Western Australian Government Railways new 3,000 hp "L" class. 3801 hauling the "Western Endeavour" departed Kalgoorlie at 12.46 a.m. on Saturday, August 29th, for Perth on the new standard gauge line where the maximum permissible speed was 70 miles per hour. Time was taken at Merre-din for volunteer forces to restore 3801 to her former pristine glory for a triumphant entry to Perth. A highlight of the day was the run through the picturesque Avon Valley and photo stops were held at some of the large earthworks involved. With a ruling grade of 1 in 200, the dual gauge Avon Valley route replaces the steeply graded narrow gauge line over the Darling Range and since February 1966, when narrow gauge trains were diverted to the new line, considerable operating savings have been made.

Arrival in Perth

As the "Western Endeavour" neared Perth, spectators increased, and for the last few miles to the City, there was almost a ceaseless line of onlookers. A crowd estimated at 8,000 was on hand at Perth Terminal to give 3801 a tumultuous welcome after her historic 2,^51 mile crossing of the continent, and passengers were warmly received by the Lord Mayor of Perth, the Minister of Lands and the Railways Commissioner in a short but impressive ceremony.

On Sunday August 30th, the Western Australian Division of the A.R.H.S. organized a tour of the Perth metropolitan area featuring parallel running by 3801 and "DD" 592, a *k-6-k* tank, between Spearwood and Fremantle. The standard gauge train terminated at Leighton Yard where opportunity was taken to photograph 3801 standing on the shores of the Indian Ocean, while a few hardy souls went for a dipl. The narrow gauge train then returned to Perth via Kwinana, Mundijong, Armadale and Midland Junction.

Tours in Western Australia

"DD" 592 departed Perth City station at 8.55 a.m. the following day with the "RESO" tour train to Midland Junction where green "S" class 4-8-2 No. 548 took over for the run over the old Great Southern Railway to Albany (340m) opened in 1889. This narrow gauge train consisted of 6 sleeping cars, shower car, lounge car, dining car, provision van, staff car and brake-van (12/350 tons). Some of these vehicles had a rather chequered career, the shower car had been built in England as a second class car, then converted to a buffet and finally to its present form, while two of the sleeping cars formed part of the Royal Train in 192? for the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. Albany was eventually reached at 7.45 a.m. on Tuesday and passengers were greeted by the Mayor and a large group of towns-people as "S" 548 broke through a banner held across the railway. A very interesting morning was spent touring Albany and environs.

A visit to the Whaling Station was made in the afternoon and much to the delight of all, soon after our arrival a "chaser" was seen rounding the headland with a 50' whale in tow. Some of the passengers considered that the time could have been more fruitfully spent observing the steam at Bunbury and this prompted a correspondent in the "Daily Round House" to question whether the sponsors of the tour were in fact the New South Wales Whale Transport Museum! (The "Daily Round House" was an informative bulletin published each night on the train.)

"S" 548 departed Albany at 6.47 a.m. on Wednesday for Katanning where "W" class 4-8-2 Nos. 945 and 917 took over for the cross country run to Donnybrook, traversing fantastic scenery abounding in 1 in 40 grades and tight curves. At Donnybrook, the centre of a rich fruit growing industry, "S" 545 and 547 came on for the short run to Bridgetown changing again with "W" 907 and 958 for the trip to Northcliffe, the southern end of the line. By this time we were passing through tall timber country and some terrific photo-runs were held early on Thursday with the morning sun trying to make an appearance through the misty forests.

"S" 545 and "W" 931 replaced the "W's" at Bridgetown and the RESO train arrived at Bunbury at 3-32 p.m., after crossing the Perth bound "Australind" at Picton Junction. The City of Bunbury is a major port for the south western part of the State and boasts a large terminal grain storage and fertilizer works. The modern round-house accommodates PM, PMR, S, V, W, F's and G class steam engines as well as a varied assortment of diesel power.

Friday September 4th, was perhaps the most interesting day for the rail-fan on the South Western Tour. G class No 123 and 233 (similar to S.A.R. "Y" class 2-6-0 except that 123 is a 4-6-0) wheeled the train at a sedate 25 miles per hour from Bunbury to Brunswick Junction where two massive green "V" class 2-8-2 Nos. 1203 and 1215 took over for the run to Collie. Traffic on this picturesque line consists mainly of coal to Bunbury and Perth and the railway climbs 500 feet in 15 miles on a ruling grade of 1 in 40. Some 50 engines of various classes were noted stored at Collie. Two black F's class 4-8-0 goods engines, Nos. 460 and 452, hauled the train from Collie to Cardiff colliery and return, a distance of 18 miles. Introduced in 1902, the 57 "F" class were the standard goods engines on Western Australian metals for many years, however, now only 3 of these appealing engines remain in service.

"V" class 1204 headed the train back to Brunswick Junction where green "Pmr" 4-6-2 No. 730 was waiting to speed us to Perth, arriving on time at 7-45 p.m. At Yarloop, while waiting for "the Australind" to pass, one of the last remaining timber mill locomotives, an ex WAGR "G" class 2-6-0 owned by Mi liars Timber and Trading Co., was steamed out of the loco shed much to the delight of the fans.

3801 heads back eastwards

On Sunday September 6th, the "Western Endeavour" turned east and at 2.00 p.m., 3801 began the long homeward haul. Despite the arrival of a cold front, which incidentally followed the train practically all the way to Sydney, about 1,000 people braved the elements at Perth Terminal to farewell us. We arrived at Parkeston at 6.17 a.m. next morning (after stalling for 8 minutes on the grade out of Kalgoorlie) and the loco was watered and coaled by the use of skips transferred by the overhead gantry crane from WAGR narrow gauge flats. After allowing the Sydney bound "Indian Pacific" to pass and attaching CL 5 for the long desert stretch, the "Western Endeavour" departed Parkeston at 10.10 a.m., and after crossing the West bound Trans Australian Express hauled by GM 30 and ' at Kitchener, arrived at Rawlinna at 6.33 p.m. where 3801 was serviced. The TLX louvre van of coal detached on the West bound movement was also attached and taken through to Broken Hill.

Tuesday morning, at 5-56 a.m. we arrived at Cook and advanced watches by 90 minutes to CST, quite a slice to take out of a night's sleep! The Perth bound Trans hauled by GM 25 crossed and the "Western Endeavour" departed at 10.30 a.m. C.S.T. A photo stop was staged at the end of the 297 mile tangent at the 495th mile near Watson and at Ooldea the train passed out of the Nullabor Plain. The transition from the flat and treeless plain to the sand dunes and stunted growth is most marked in a few short miles. A further 2 hour halt was made at Tarcoola on Tuesday evening to water and service 3801.

Port Augusta was reached at 10.25 a.m., 90 minutes late, on Wednesday September 9th, and the train stopped short at Tassie Street while CL 5 was detached. 3801 then hauled the consist to the station. Victorian members of the A.R.E. travelling on the "Western Endeavour" had made prior arrangements with the Commonwealth Railways to charter a Budd railcar during the stop. CB 1 departed the station at 10.35 a.m. for Stirling North, then reversed to the Curlew Point Power Station following by a sprint to Emeroo on the Marree line before returning to Port Augusta at 12.35 p.m.

3801 and 3813 were attached to the "Western Endeavour" and the train pulled out of Port Augusta at 2.15 p.m. amid wet and windy conditions. After a damp photo stop at Mambray Creek, we arrived at Port Pirie at 4.10 p.m. and caused considerable delay to the West bound Trans as the "Western Endeavour" consist fouled the movement of the light engines to work the Express. The three Commonwealth Railways vehicles at the rear of the train were replaced by the NSWGR Dining car and SAR GB 8371. After watering and turning the engines and tanks, departure --from Port Pirie was 46 minutes late at 7-46 p.m. After an uneventful run on Wednesday night, we arrived at Broken Hill at 4.44 a.m. Thursday morning.

A trip to Cockburn on the narrow gauge Silverton Tramway behind ex SAR "T" class No. 181 had been cancelled account condition of track and hurried arrangements were made to charter a special to The Gorge consisting of 2 cars and brake-van hauled by a Clyde diesel No. 4910. The pitfalls of staff and ticket working were evident on this trip. As a goods train was scheduled to follow us from Broken Hill and cross at The Gorge, the special travelled on a ticket and after 4910 had run around at The Gorge, the train was shunted to the siding to wait the cross. Imagine the crew and passenger's surprise when instead of a goods train, a bright red Holden sedan appeared in the distance travel 1- J ing at break-neck speed, only to pull up at the station with the staff . for the passenger to return to Broken Hill. Apparently the goods had / been delayed.

Into New South Wales

3801 ran light engine to Ivanhoe and 3813 departed Broken Hill at 7.46 p.m. with the train. At Ivanhoe the locomotives were changed and 3801 headed the train to Parkes arriving at 12.07 p.m. At Konoble in the early hours of Friday, the West bound "Indian Pacific" hauled by 4476 and 4481 was crossed and at Condobolin, the "Silver City Comet", resplendent in silver finish was witnessed by all.

The train ran in two divisions from Parkes to Orange hauled by 3801 and 3813 respectively. This was one of the highlights of the whole tour with a fantastic photo-run at Bumberry water hole, then the stack music as the 38 assaulted the 1 in 40 grades between Molong and Orange in typical fashion. From Orange East Fork to Orange the first division was hauled by 5kk2 and the second by 5390. SWT 5 was also left at Orange East Fork, SWT 6 was detached at Broken Hill the previous day.

After a cold night at Orange, the "Western Endeavour" departed at 7.30 a.m. on Saturday September 12th behind 3813 and 3801 on the last lap to Sydney. As on the forward journey, crowds thronged every vantage point to witness our progress and at Bathurst, 2/FS class cars were added for day trippers from Sydney. 3801 ran light from Bathurst to Kelso where it took the lead over the Blue Mountains to Sydney.

Instead of attaching the customary "46" class electric locomotive at Lithgow to assist to Zig Zag, a "50" class 2-8-0 standard goods engine was provided to triple head up the 1 in 30 grades. A photo stop was held in the shadows of the old Zig Zag viaducts and the sound of the exhausts reverberating across the valley as the locomotives strained to lift the loads was almost deafening. Once again, hundreds of sightseers lined every available foothold in this rugged valley to witness the magnificent spectacle.

All too soon, the "Western Endeavour" was descending the Range to Sydney and after stopping at Parramatta and Strathfield, Central Station was reached on time at 4.43 p.m.

That virtually no mechanical hitches occurred in the operation of this tour across what is normally diesel territory reflects great credit on the railway systems concerned, particularly the NSWGR.

Acknowledgment is made to the "Daily Round House" for much of the above and to Glen Mills for the actual running schedules and crossing details.