



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

Written by a long serving SAR train traffic officer this article gives an interesting personal snapshot of services on the Victor Harbor line in the early 1970s when serious proposals were being prepared to close the line as a commercial railway

It highlights problems arising from inappropriate and poorly maintained rolling stock

The SteamRanger Heritage Railway continues to operate 930 class diesel locos on the line

VICTOR HARBOUR LINE LINE TRAIN WORKING IN 1974

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Contributed by Kim Bird

Of all the branch lines remaining in the State, the Victor line still has the most interesting assortment of train working. During July of the 8 goods trains that worked, 7 were hauled by 830 class, and the other by a 930. Of the 35 passenger trains operated 16 were locomotive hauled, 10 of these being 830 class, car and brakevan. Of the remaining 19 trains 6 were a single 250 class Blue Bird, 4 were 250 and trailer and the remaining 9 were 280 class baggage and trailer.

On Friday 7/6/74 Alco 858 worked the goods from Victor. Leaving Strathalbyn the load was 425 tonnes. Nearing the site of the old Gemmells siding the maximum load proved too much and the train slipped to a standstill. Rather than attempt to lift the load the consist was halved and the leading portion was taken through to Mt. Barker. 858 then returned light to Gemmells to get the remainder and clear the section. The train was delayed about two hours.

A shortage of SAR Jet type vans on Monday 10/6 culminated in an interesting consist on the 5.45pm Victor passenger. Instead of the usual SAR LX van, goods from Mile End were loaded into a NSWPTC TLX louvre van. The TLX is a modern, bogie exchange louvre van with interior modified to carry tinplate traffic. The van is painted silver. Consist was 940-TLX van - AD - CD.

For the third time since the restriction on 900 class on the Victor line was imposed last November a shortage of 830 and 930 class engines made it necessary to work a 900 on the line. On Wednesday 26/6 engine 907 - AD - CD were noted on the evening passenger.

The twisting grades between Strathalbyn and Mt. Barker through the Bugle Ranges often prove troublesome for Bluebird railcars and trailers and Sunday 7/7/74 was no exception. Baggage 281 and trailer 102 worked the evening service from Victor however the baggage slipped to a standstill just out of Strathalbyn and the consist pushed back into the station. Car 253 was sent from Adelaide to assist the train through the Ranges.

Trouble struck the same cars a week later. On Sunday 19/7 281-102 worked the train from Victor and collided with a motor car at Goolwa damaging one motor on 281. The train limped into Strathalbyn with only one motor. Car 254 was sent from Adelaide to assist the two cars home. In both cases the trains arrived in Adelaide about 2 1/2 hrs late.

On Saturday 10/8/74 railcars 257+106 left Adelaide at 9.00am for Victor Harbour, however one engine on car 257 developed mechanical trouble and by the time the train reached Mt. Barker Junction the other motor had also shut down. Cars 256+260 left Adelaide at 11.05am. Car 260 hauled 257 back to Adelaide and car 256 attached the trailer 106 to continue onto Victor Harbour. The train eventually left Mt. Barker Junction about 2 hours late but tragedy struck beyond Littlehampton when a motor car collided with the train at a wig wag controlled crossing. The passenger in the road vehicle was killed. The train eventually arrived at Victor at 2.30pm after a journey of 5 1/2 hrs,

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