



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

On Sunday, 9th May, 1976 the South Australian Division of the Australian Railway Historical Society organized three special trains to carry delegates to the 49th Convention of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons on an outing to the wineries of Nuriootpa

The locomotives used were 520, 621 and diesel 901 freshly painted. The following article from the "ARHS Recorder" is reprinted from The British Medical Journal of 28th August.



TO WINE — BY STEAM

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Contributed by Mr Leonard Goodman, Retired Surgeon, Guernsey UK

"The buses called after breakfast and took us to the station, where, to our surprise, each traveller received an elegant wineglass emblazoned in gold with the College crest, together with an ingenious sling in which to suspend it on one's chest in a convenient position for instant and continuous action.

Thence to the platform, and there she was: all 200 streamlined tons of her in green livery, gleaming with mirror-bright steel and burnished brass and copper: a gently simmering giant from which wisps of steam - at 215 psi - escaped. On the Brunel broad-gauge of 5'3" and her 4-8-4 wheelbase, she looked enormous, but certainly not a retired old lady with half-a-million miles behind her: a great credit to the Australian Railway Historical Society, which had lovingly restored, cared for, and now proudly lent No 520 to take the Fellows to the Barossa Valley vineyards.

I was unprepared for the enthusiastic reception en route — at every township, groups were gathered to see us pass, and, at vantage points, photographers and hi-fi enthusiasts waited with cameras and microphones. Where the track ran parallel to the road, convoys of cars filled with waving enthusiasts endeavoured, vainly, to compete with the old locomotive's 32000 lb of tractive effort.

And then there was the smoke and steam — billowing clouds rushing past the carriage windows and rolling for miles across the open landscape, ephemerally marking our progress. Within the surprisingly spacious coaches the passengers had other distractions: blonde Gretchens appeared with seemingly inexhaustible supplies of champagne and plates of delicious wurst. We arrived two hours later at the wineries, and met our vintner hosts who guided us, answered many technical questions on the mysteries of their craft, and then, unhurried, led us to an al fresco lunch, where, in the autumn sunshine, the subject was again discussed, together with ample and practical evidence of their skill.

In those pleasant surroundings - savouring the basic and comforting scents of sun-warmed earth, mature cheese, newly-baked bread, and excellent claret - England, devaluation, inflation, and even surgery, seemed far away. But time moved on and so, reluctantly, to our return run to Adelaide. A final look into the engine cab to thank the driver and the grimy, sweat-soaked, but enthusiastic, fireman, who on request, and to the delight of many, opened the firebox door to show the 45 sq ft of white-hot inferno - which he assured us, he had that day fed with six tons of coal - and then away to prepare ourselves for the morrow and the coming week “