



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

Article in the "Recorder" announcing award of the OAM to SteamRanger Director Mr Dean Harvey in January 1981

Later, Rx class steam locomotive Rx207 was named in his honour

The Tours Manager and SteamRanger Director of the Australian Railway Historical Society (S.A. Division) Mr. Dean L. Harvey was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the Honours List on Australia Day 1981.

The award of this honour is believed to be a first to a railway preservation group in Australia and indicates the recognition by Government and the community of the ideals and operations of such organisations.

Dean began promoting the running of special steam trains in 1960 for the Australian Railway Historical Society. In 1968 when all steam engines were being cut up for scrap, negotiated the retention of four of them on the basis that the Society would pay all maintenance costs. This is understood to be the first time in the world that such an arrangement was made with a Government railway.

In 1971 raised what in those days was regarded as the staggering sum of \$10,000 to restore engine No. 621 which with Royal permission was duly honoured with the name "Duke of Edinburgh" on re-entering traffic. Again in 1972 the sum of \$20,000 was raised and engine No. 520, "Sir Malcolm Barclay Harvey" was similarly restored from a rusting relic to an impressive working machine. It is the largest remaining non-articulated steam engine in Australia and weighs over 200 tons.

In 1977 when scrapping of 30 vintage carriages was planned he was largely responsible for them being saved from the oxy cutters torch. A submission to the Government resulted in a grant in 1978 towards the cost of repairing these cars and Dean organised a team of unemployed men to carry out restoration work at Edwardstown goods yard.

Initially the Society carried out all maintenance of carriages and locomotives in appalling conditions out in the open. Predictably this was far from satisfactory and in any case Australian National wanted the Society to find a place of their own for storing and servicing of the now quite large fleet of railway rollingstock. Dean Harvey searched the suburban area and eventually found a 6 acre paddock which was virtually low lying swamp land at Dry Creek. This was built up 4 feet with 100,000 tons of fill from a variety of sources and then rail tracks installed. A 500 foot carriage shed and various other sheds and buildings were constructed, lawns and trees planted and the site was transformed into an operating railway depot.

The Depot was officially opened by the Premier, Mr. D. Tonkin, in August 1980. The whole construction project was planned and directed by Dean Harvey.

The Dry Creek Depot is now the nucleus for the operations of the well known Steam-Ranger trains which operate on all the broad gauge lines of the State. These trains have become an important tourist attraction as well as preserving history itself.



*Dean Harvey prepares to cut the ribbon allowing the first train to enter the ARHS Dry Creek Depot on 2/11/79.
The ribbon is being held by ARHS Councillor Ron Stweien and site manager Frank McDonnell.
Photo: R. Currie*