



## SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

### BACKGROUND

SteamRanger's steam excursions have always been limited by the need to conform with state government summer fire restrictions which cut in in October or November depending on the assessed risk year by year.

In 1983 we operated a final steam excursion trip to Burra on a Saturday with Rx244 which was followed on the Sunday with by a trip to Victor Harbor with the larger 520 loco  
This file contains reports on both

### Steam Finale 1983

Final steam excursions for 1983 to Burra and Victor Harbor

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### Saturday 8th October - Burra

The barrier light glows, the Guard's whistle blows and the green flag falls at 8.50 am. as triple 900 class diesel gurgle into number 11 platform with the Overland on Saturday 8 October 1983 veteran Rx 224 commences to lift its load out of the Adelaide bound for Burra and Hallett.

A signal check for the incoming Overland means a two minute deficit as the Rx slowly lifts its load of centenary cars 60, 63, 83, 53, 54 and GB40 over the various crossovers to head for the North main. Hard steaming still meant a loss of one minute on the tight timetable to Salisbury with a total deficit of three minutes from that station. Through Gawler still three minutes late with the Signaller leaning out of the window to photograph the 'old timer' as it prepared for the long struggle up the Roseworthy bank.



Roseworthy 5 minutes late and a stop for water. A cross with the Up Peterborough was also scheduled for this point, however on completion of watering the Station Master advised that the Peterborough had become lost between Riverton and Tarlee so it was all aboard for Hamley Bridge with a three minute late arrival. It was soon learnt that the Peterborough had hit a road vehicle and was about to leave Tarlee. 29 minutes later we were on our way again with the engine steaming hard to regain lost time. About four kilometres from Tarlee the site of the accident was passed with a road vehicle torn in halves at the side of the track — fortunately the driver had stood clear of the vehicle prior to it being hit by the train. The leading car of the Peterborough (car 258) had suffered damage to the front left hand side with the cow catcher being pushed back in and consequently had been detached to the goods siding at Tarlee.



Rx224 passes failed railcar 258 at Tarlee on 8/10/83 Photo: G. Doecke

39 minutes late at Riverton and time for a quick drink for the engine — the overhead tank had been cleaned out during the week but the water issuing forth from the column was a vile black colour and had a putrid smell with a result only enough was taken to run through to Burra. From Riverton to Burra stops were made to change the staff at Saddleworth, Manoora and Farrell Flat. Through Burra station a 1.02 p.m - 35 minutes late with many comments from the by-standers - he's not stopping - and out across the bridge to the Burra Showgrounds for passengers to alight. All off and the train then pushed back into the Burra yard where the engine was coaled and watered.

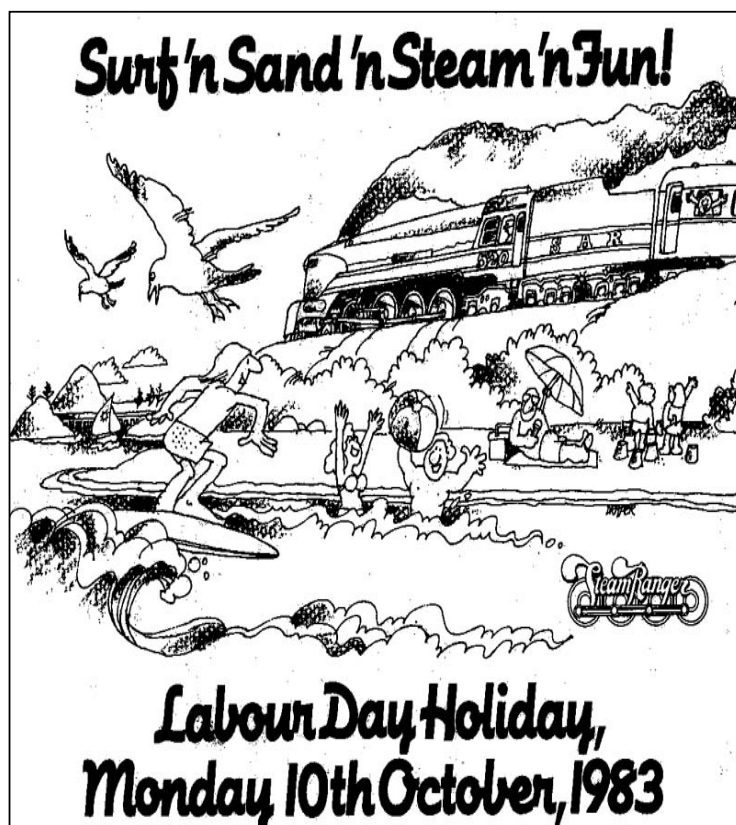
A steady stream of customers arrived for the local trip to Hallett as train control pondered on what to do with the late running down Peterborough passenger (Indian Pacific connection). Finally it was decided to send the steam train over to Hallett in front of 449. 2.40 p.m. (on the advertised) Rx 224 once more headed towards the showgrounds to pick up more passengers then off to Hallett. A steady pace all the way meant an arrival of 3.25 p.m. - 10 minutes ahead of schedule - which in turn meant no further delay to the already late 449.

Whilst Rx 224 trundled around its train passengers enjoyed a glass of complimentary wine on the platform. 449 on its way to Peterborough and time to depart when up comes the taxi with crew relief. Eventually departure was made at 4.05 p.m. - 5 minutes late and the Rx headed off tender first to Burra - 10 minutes early arrival at the showgrounds and a wait to pick up the Adelaide passengers before running into the yard.

The train stopped short to allow 224 to cut off and run back onto the turntable for turning. The turntable itself had recently been restored by the Burra Branch of the National Trust with a Tourist Grant and the efforts have to be seen to be believed - even in the heydays of steam one would have had to look hard to find such a well maintained turntable with quarry rubble spread over the pit floor and around the walk way - 224 turned slowly around to the click of many cameras. Back on the train turned and watered it was merely a matter of waiting time for a 5.45 p.m. departure for Adelaide. Hard steaming on a tight schedule meant that although nothing was gained on time running was maintained as we stopped for staff changes at Farrell Flat, Manoora, Saddleworth and Tarlee before arriving at Roseworthy for a well earned drink. Still on time ex Roseworthy with a one minute ahead through Gawler but back on time leaving Salisbury after allowing passengers to alight.

An unscheduled stop for passengers at Dry Creek resulted in a five minute late arrival back in Adelaide after a fine days steaming - the last for Rx 224 for 1983.

Monday 10th October — Victor Harbor



6.50 a.m. and wireless station 5DN has SteamRanger Director Dean Harvey telling Adelaide of the magnificent run planned for that day to Victor Harbor behind engine 520 — the last run for the 1983 steam season. At 8.05a.m. engine 520 with its load of steel cars 503, 710, 706, 712, 704 & baggage 83 steamed out of Adelaide Station. A quick stop at Mile End Junction and the big engine is soon on its way again showing everyone that its in top form as it prepares for the struggle up the hills.

Through Blackwood on time just 30 minutes after leaving Adelaide with an occasional slip as the engine hits the flange greasers then up to the top (Mt. Lofty) 3 minutes early at 8.59 before slowing down for a train order at Bridgewater. Mt. Barker for water 5 minutes early in but 5 late out due to the slow supply from the leaking column. Still four down at Strathalbyn and six down due to speed restrictions at Goolwa. A fast move at the gates sees us only 3 minutes late departing and finally arriving at Victor Harbor at 12.00 midday 5 minutes late.

The train was shunted to reverse the 500 and baggage after which the engine was dispatched to the turntable to turn and water courtesy of the fire brigade whilst the regular passengers arrived considerably late behind 963 the first corporate coloured diesel to visit Victor with air-con cars AD2, AD5 and CD6 in tow.

At 2.30 p.m. the big green giant again whistled its way out of Victor bound for Goolwa and return with a local trip. Arrival back at Victor was on time at 3.30 p.m. at which stage the 520 was sent back for water and the Alco placed its train in the station ready for departure. The regular out of the way 520 again backed onto its train ready for departure at 4.30.

On time from Victor but delayed several minutes at Goolwa account clearance of the regular train and into Strathalbyn on time. Chicken tea for passengers and a check of the coal on 520 before off up the grades once more on time. Water at Mt. Barker then it was soon back on the main evident by the increase in train speed before coming to a stop at Long Gully to cross a goods and the *Overland*. Down hill with the lights of Adelaide glistening across the horizon to finally steam into Adelaide 3 minutes early at 9.08 p.m. a magnificent end to a successful year.

Congratulations must go to the Loco maintenance team for the excellent performance of the engines during the year an effort which we trust they will be able to repeat next year.