

SteamRanger's Heritage

- an insight into our past

DRY CREEK OPEN DAY

8th April 1964

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The 1984 steam operating season for the SteamRanger Tours section of the A.R.H.S got off to a flying start with the Open Day at the Dry Creek Depot on 8th April, 1984. Three engines; Rx207, Rx224 and 520 were in steam and used to haul special trains between the Dry Creek Depot and Adelaide Railway Station. The Society's retained wooden Centenary and steel cars made up the consists of the special trains.

Three AN engines were also on display in the Depot grounds. The ageless and majestic class leader "Lady Norrie" No. 900 contrasted with AN's latest acquisition BL31. Engine 501 made up the AN trio. STA special cars, Commissioners Car "Murray" and Dining Car "Adelaide" were also on display as well as STA's Garford bus. The STA Information bus was also at the site. The Society's mobile diesel-electric loco No. 351, the former AN Motor Inspection Car MIC-3 and section cars were also in use. Besides the sounds of steam and diesel engines a local jazz band played on the lawns at the Depot.

The following contributed article is a resume of the amount of work needed to organise such an event and was written by one of our volunteers.

All it needed was one or two organisers!

The departure of the last happy visitor on the 8th April marked the culmination of over 6 months effort by the small band of SteamRanger members forming the Organising Committee.

Planning for the day commenced back in November when Brian Busch "invited" regular tours workers and their friends to an initial meeting. His short list of envisaged tasks very quickly grew to four pages in the meeting minutes and some subcommittees were seen to be essential.

Brian's intimate knowledge of train operations and John Smythe's loco responsibilities made them obvious candidates with Dean Harvey for the Operations Sub-Committee. John's hard working loco team, invaluable during the week by Max, Carl, Rusty Roy and Co. worked solidly right up until the day to have the three locos in traffic. Reportedly, minor adjustments were still being performed during the light up! From early in the new year train schedules were being drawn up, submitted to STA, tickets printed, instructions to ticket sellers and cashiers prepared and on-train and barrier ticket staff recruited. On the day these people were perhaps the most obviously busy of all our helpers — whenever we saw Eric Milne or Jack Forbes they seemed to be holding back at least one football crowd of intending customers.

Bob Green's long experience with Trading and Catering made him the obvious choice to gather a team to feed the hungry masses and hopefully empty their pockets at the booksales and souvenir stands. Rosemary Currie and her nine "turn of the century" ladies in dining car "Adelaide" had the formidable task of cajoling friends and relatives into cooking 1200 scones (many early in the morning of the 8th — thanks Loryse!) and then serving over 500 customers, washing 2000 odd pieces of crockery and attempting to keep Adelaide's wheezing and creaking wood fire going; inches from their sweating brows.

Outside on the lawn (near scenic Lake Frank) Executive Chef Trevor Dunstan swapped his well known top hat and tails for more practical gear and whipped a team into action to cook and serve 1000 or so hamburgers and 500 hotdogs. He was ably assisted by a top notch team of high speed tomato cutters and onion slicers. Not to be outdone, members of the hardworking loco team (several up all night at the light up) cooked and sold another 500 Fireburgers from the loco footplates. Other members of the T&C team sold 2000 ice creams, 2000 soft drinks and hundreds of souvenir items.

Our 'sub-contractors', the Balaklava Lions, seemed to have never ending queues at their donut stand — it was well after 3.00 p.m. before the Catering Manager could get served with his free samples. Inside the carriage shed John Whittle's finely tuned booksales team succeeded in transferring nearly \$1500 from visitors' pockets to the SteamRanger bank account. The only unhappy salesman at the end of the day seemed to be Mal Sparre, who for once was successful in hiding all the winning bingo tickets and reluctantly had to hand out several big prizes almost as soon as he opened for business.

All the things that these sub-committees didn't want to handle were rather uninspiringly termed "other activities" and were "enthusiastically(?)" taken in hand by a committee of Ralph Lee, Frank McDonnell, Malcolm Thompson and one or two other hapless souls. Perhaps they were hoping to get all the perks — not so! Ralph soon learnt that "other activities" meant oxying open gates when we lost the key, supervising the ladies conveniences (again and again), and trying to buy 200 loaves of bread on a Sunday when the baker forgot the order. In this group also were Peter Hoyer and his colleagues who enthralled thousands of old and young children with their traction engines and scale locos.

John Drennan kept a wary eye on his unfortunately non-mobile Garford Bus (the previous day's trip to Reynella proved too much for it), and Frank McDonnell, Jeff Wood and Steve Martin soon learnt that it was "push power" not "horsepower" that makes track trolleys go. A large team under the watchful eye of Vic Kolloosche supervised the rolling stock open for display and tried (mostly unsuccessfully) to keep little fingers out of dangerous places and away from loco whistles. Down at the Dry Creek Signal Cabin a group of helpers with "real .railway" experience (Bob Johnston, Ralph Renshaw and Ian Domleo) were in their element explaining the intricacies of interlocking and elaborating on Don Banner's archive displays.

Hidden away in the shed the various members of the Harvey clan tried to fill up seats on some of our future trips, the Lee family tried to sort out all the little bags of money coming in and Bill Mudie and Barbara Smythe looked after our public relations — finding lost parents and pointing people in the right directions. Some of our helpers such as Malcolm and Merridee Thompson hardly saw the Open Day at all — they slaved away in the gloom at Adelaide station, oblivious as to why several trains that headed off on time did strange things miles and miles away and only eventually turned up again.

In all we had some 140 helpers on the day. Only a few were mentioned above to illustrate the many tasks that were involved. However, everyone's help was very sincerely appreciated by SteamRanger and its executive. Perhaps one of the happiest was the roster organiser, who by then had issued his 8th version of who should have done what — surprisingly, it appeared most did!

