



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

The public image of the Australian Railway Historical Society, Steamranger and the Victorian organisation Steamrail was enhanced by the running of steam engine R761 in South Australia from 4/6/87 to 8/6/87 inclusive.

The tour was organized to celebrate and commemorate the running of the first steam powered Intercolonial Express between Adelaide and Melbourne in 1887, the forerunner to the present Overland service.

Steam Extravaganza

Joint tours in South Australia with Victorian loco R761 - June 1987

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AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY (S.A. DIV.) INC

STEAM EXTRAVAGANZA

6th - 8th JUNE, 1987

One of Victoria's finest express steam locomotives will make a brief visit to Adelaide this June. Built by the North British Locomotive Company, Scotland in 1952, Engine R761 has been painstakingly restored by Steamrail Victoria after languishing for more than a decade in storage. Its impressive 6'1" drivers, powerful beat and legendary performance is the epitome of steam at its best. One-hundred-and-ninety (190) tons of throbbing steel at our doorstep for just 3 days — a once in a lifetime event! To take full advantage of this historic visit we offer a cavalcade of fabulous opportunities.

The visit of R761 to Adelaide is a joint venture of SteamRanger, Steamrail Victoria, Australian Railway Historical Society (Victorian Division) and the Association of Railway Enthusiasts.

The public image of the Australian Railway Historical Society, Steamranger and the Victorian organisation Steamrail was enhanced by the running of steam engine R761 in South Australia from 4/6/87 to 8/6/87 inclusive. The tour was organized to Celebrate and commemorate the running of the first steam powered Intercolonial Express between Adelaide and Melbourne in 1887, the forerunner to the present Overland service. Planning for the tour had commenced about 2 years ago and a lot of money and time had been invested in the success of the venture. A previous attempt to run Victoria R class engines to Adelaide in the early 1970's was aborted when the mechanical condition of the engines was questioned, although on that occasion the train did get as far west as Serviceton.

Planning for the 1987 tour was just about completed when the whole operation of it was thrown into doubt by industrial action involving members of the AFULE. The union took strike action on 1/6/87 and stopped all trains on the South Line. The consequence of the strike for the running of the tour were obvious and a go/no go decision had to be made before 2115 hrs EST on 3/6/87, the time when the train was due to leave Melbourne. Delicate negotiations between Tours Manager, Dean Harvey, and representatives of the AFULE and AN eventually succeeded in allowing the tour to operate in South Australia. The final 'go' decision was given as late as 4 hours before the train was to depart Spencer Street. To the credit of both the AFULE and AN, who both would not have lost any public prestige over the decision, the train and all associated movements were exempted from the strike action.

Melbourne-Wolseley

The tour from Melbourne was a week-long affair with Adelaide and Mildura both included in the itinerary. The train departed Melbourne with K190 and R761 hauling the train to Geelong. K190 blew a bearing near Lethbridge and diesel engine T400 was called to assist. The diesel was in front of R761 when the train passed through Kaniva on 4/6/87. The original plan for the tour called for the K and R to double-head to Tailem Bend and thoughts of a V/Line T class in Tailem Bend were tantalizing. In any event a T class in Wolseley would have been a unique event.

The train surprisingly stopped at Serviceton and T400 was detached and run onto the solitary goods siding which is all that is left at Serviceton. This may be the last time that a train is stopped at the former Border station for an alteration to the loco power of it and this event added to the historic nature of the Tour. The R hauled the train single-handed from Serviceton to Wolseley where the V/Line crew were replaced by an AN crew.

Wolseley - Tailem Bend, 4th June 1987

The train upon leaving Wolseley consisted of R761, open wagon VOCX196Y carrying coal and cars 15CW, sleeper Goulburn, 7ABE, sleeper no. 3, sleepers Acheron, Coliban and Pekina, shower car Carey and sleepers Loddon, Inman and Wando. The train made good progress to Bordertown where the train stopped for some time while the engine was coaled and watered. A photo-stop start from Bordertown was followed by the re-start on the Adelaide side of the level crossing. The train came to a grinding halt less than 2 minutes from the restart. On the 1 in 80 grade that faces Up trains ex Bordertown the train ground to a halt when the threads on the discharge pipe from the air compressor stripped resulting in the pipe letting go and breaking. In the circumstances it was probably just as well that no trains were running on the line because the main line was blocked for some time. If a normal service had been operating the R would have had to be pushed or hauled back to Bordertown for repairs. In the present case repairs were made on-site. The setting sun reflected off the train and it made a spectacular sight steaming up the grade on the long curve out of Bordertown. The train then proceeded across the desert in darkness to Tailem Bend arriving there around 2000 hours.

The Tailem Bend loco depot was heavily populated with AN diesel locomotives, stranded by the strike, and presented a sight reminiscent of the days of the South Australian Railways when Tailem Bend had a significant number of engines and crews stationed there. If normal operations were being carried out the depot would have been almost deserted. R761 was stabled in the Roundhouse to the accompanying light of many photographic flash units.



Tailem Bend loco at night on 4th June 87

Photo: G. Doecke

Tailem Bend - Adelaide, 5th June 1987

Hauling a heavy train across the relatively level plains from Wolseley presented no problem for the R but having to take the same load to Adelaide was an entirely different matter. The train consist was split and diesel engine 843 hauled cars No. 3, Acheron, Carey, Loddon, Inman and Wando to Adelaide departing Tailem Bend before the steam engine. R761 took cars 15CW, Goulburn, 7ABE, Coliban and Pekina for the historic run over the Mount Lofty ranges. Early morning fog was present when the train crossed the Murray River but the lighting conditions improved at the Callington photo-stop. Another photostop was held at the approach to the Yantaringa Tunnel. Before the weekend was over the R was to go tunnelling a further 23 times. To get the same experience in Victoria the engine would need to run 12 return trips to Bendigo or South Geelong. The train arrived at Mount Lofty at 1241 hrs and departed two minutes later.



R761 between Callington and Petwood on 5th June 87 Photo: R.oger Currie

The train had a clear run to Keswick due to the lack of any other train movements resulting from the strike and the 27 kilometre run was covered in 48 minutes at an average speed of 33 km/h down the hill. Arrival celebrations and formalities over the train departed for the ARMS Depot at Dry Creek and stabled overnight. The sleeping cars were stabled in the Mile End Yard adjacent to the Terminal area.

Adelaide - Peterborough, 6th June 1987

The first public run in South Australia was made to Peterborough on 6/6/87. Overnight the AFULE had lifted the strike action and AN's operations were slowly returning to normal. This particular run will probably be the first and last time that a Victorian R class steam engine will go to Peterborough and may be the last broad gauge steam engine to grace the timetable at Peterborough as AN propose to close the section of the line north of Hallett in the very near future.

For this train and the 'Southern Encounter' the next day the passenger cars were provided by Steamranger. The train departed from the Adelaide Rail Passenger Terminal at 0747 hrs and consisted of R761 and cars 503,606, 704,602. 712, 710, 706, 701 and brake AVAY5-J, a load of 360 tonnes.

	Scheduled Timetable	Actual Timings	Average Speed (actual)
Adelaide Terminal	dep 0730 hrs	0747 hrs	-
Dry Creek	0750	arr 0804	37 km/h
Salisbury	arr 0759	dep 0805	47
Gawler	dep 0800	arr 0817	
	0818	dep 0818	61
Roseworthy		arr 0837	
Hamley Bridge	0828	dep 0839	47
	arr 0852	0851	62
Tarlee	dep 0910	arr 0913	
Riverton	0930	dep 0930	54
	arr 0945	0940	54
Saddleworth	dep 0957	arr 1003	
Manoora	1007	dep 1014	54
	arr 1019	1024	57
Farrell Flat	dep 1020	arr 1036	
Burra	1040	dep 1037	60
	arr 1059	1058	70
Hallett	dep 1117	arr 1116	
Terowie	1157	dep 1150	61
	arr 1225	1219	68
Gumbowie	dep 1237	arr 1248	
Peterborough	1249	dep 1301	37
	arr 1300	1320	60
		1331	

The highest speed recorded on the down journey was 80km/hr between Hallett and the former station of Uloloo. The average speed for the down joiurney was 58km/hr.

The average speed for theUp journey was 9km/hr.

These averages do not take into account time when the train was stationary.

The table above shows the scheduled and actual timetable for the broad gauge run. After the train departed after the photostop at Riverton it was venturing into latitudes unknown to the engine. It was now past the northern - most point on the Victorian railway system.

At Peterborough the engine ran to Loco for turning and watering. The Peterborough Loco Depot has a general air of abandonment about it. The locomotive repair building built as part of the Standardization Project in the late 1960's appears to be little-used and through one of the holes in the wall could be seen the remains of GM5, damaged in the recent Port Augusta accident. The building was closed and locked. Not that many years ago the Peterborough Loco was a round-the-clock operation. Many of the tracks in Loco have apparently not seen the weed-spraying train for a little while. On some tracks the weed growth is prolific.

The engine returned to the main yard for coaling while most of the passengers went to Orroroo on the Steamtown train hauled by PMR720. Due to difficulties encountered by the PMR in raising steam the train from Orroroo did not arrive back at Peterborough until 1745 hrs enabling R761 and its train to depart at 1755 hrs, 55 minutes late. The train stopped at Burra for tea and later for 60 minutes at Hamley Bridge due to problems the engine was having raising steam pressure. The quality of coal obtained at Peterborough was such that clinkering occurred on the grate and persistent efforts were necessary to free it. The train arrived back at the Adelaide Rail Passenger Terminal at 47 minutes past 12 midnight, 184 minutes late.

Adelaide - Victor Harbor, 7th June 1987

The usual 'Southern Encounter' tourist train on 7/6/87 was operated by R761 and cars 66, 62, 52, 81, 56, 54, 61 and GB40. The locomotive performed well on this journey in the hands of the AN crew to Strathalbyn and the volunteer crew to Victor Harbor. The life of the fireman on this engine is made a little easier by the presence of a mechanical stoker. With good quality coal adequate steam pressure is maintained to power the 72 inch diameter driving wheels. The 'Cockle Train' run to Goolwa was operated by the R class engine. Local interest in the train was considerable and crowds of people lined the route and crammed onto the Victor Harbor platform as the train arrived from Adelaide. All seating accommodation on the Cockle Train was sold early and a number of late arrivals keenly accepted the standing-room-only tickets on sale. The train returned to the Adelaide Terminal that evening after another successful steam event.



R761 crosses Currency Creek bridge on 7th June 87 Photo: G Doecke

Adelaide - Lameroo - Pinnaroo, 8th June 1987

The original plan for the tour called for the train, in two sections to travel to Tailem Bend where, because the R cannot travel via Pinnaroo due to track limitations engine 621 and K190 would take the train to Lameroo. At that point 621 would return to Adelaide with its train and the K would carry on to Mildura. At Mildura K153 would take over and haul the train towards Melbourne, meeting up with the R on the way. While K153 was at Mildura local trips would be run using that engine. These plans had to be changed following the failure of K190. K153 was still involved in the local tour programme in Mildura over the weekend and following the last of these on 7/7/87 the engine departed Mildura running light to Ouyen. From there it ran across to Pinnaroo arriving at midnight. In the early hours of 8/7/87 it became the first steam engine to traverse the line to Tailem Bend for some considerable time. The engine arrived in Tailem Bend at approximately 0500 hrs.

At 0350 hrs a train departed Adelaide Terminal consisting of diesel engine BL31, steam engine 621 and cars CW15, ABE7, Wando, Inman, Loddon, Carey, Pekina, Coliban, Acheron, No. 3 and DC783. The load was too heavy for 621 and the BL assisted to Monarto South from where it returned light to Mile End. 621 continued with the train to Tailem Bend.

Meanwhile R761 and cars Finniss, 503, 602 and 712 prepared to leave Adelaide at 0610 hrs. The train departed as scheduled and made a good run to Tailem Bend. The trains were remarshalled and the R was replaced by 621 and K153, which was running tender first. The two engines struggled to lift the load of VOCX196Y full of coal, a TW water tank, CW15, the 10 Victorian cars and the 4 Steamranger cars out of Tailem Bend. The line from Tailem Bend to Lameroo is undulating with some stiff grades and due to priming in the K, engine 621 was required to haul the entire load on one of the hills.

At Lameroo the train was split, the engines coaled and watered and both trains prepared for their respective journeys. The K with the VOCX wagon and the 11 cars departed east for Pinnaroo and Ouyen and 621 returned via Tailem Bend to Adelaide with cars 710, 602, 503 and Finniss to conclude a very successful steam extravaganza weekend in Adelaide and South Australia. Car DC783 was returned to Dry Creek later in the week courtesy of an AN goods.

Next year engine 3801 is scheduled to visit South Australia for the Bi-Centenary.

	ENGINE 520	ENGINE R761
Builder	SAR, Islington, 1943	North British, 1951
In Service	10/11/1943	9/4/1952
Length	87 ft 4 ins	77 ft 3 1/4 ins
Height	13 feet	14 feet
Weight	111 tons 6 cwt - Engine 80 tons 12 cwt - Tender 191 tons 18 cwt Total	107 tons 12 cwt - Engine 79 tons 16 cwt - Tender 187 tons 8 cwt Total
Wheel Arrgt	4-8-4 "Northern"	4-6-4 "Hudson"
Wheel Diam.	66 inches	73 inches
Tractive Effort	32600 lbs	32080 lbs
Boiler Pressure	215 lbs/sq inch	210 lbs/sq inch
Axle Load	15.8 tons	19.5 tons
Water Cap.	9100 gallons	9000 gallons
Fuel	9.75 tons coal or 5 tons coal and 1450 gallons of oil	6 tons coal
Grate area	45 sq ft	42sqft
Cylinders	20 1/2 ins x 28 ins	21 1/2 ins x 28 ins
Valve Gear	Walschaerts	Walschaerts
Tender	2x6 wheel bogie	2x4 wheel bogie

Editorial Note

The article printed in the *Recorder* included a further 21 high quality photos which have not been included in this downloadable version in order to minimise download time