



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

BACKGROUND

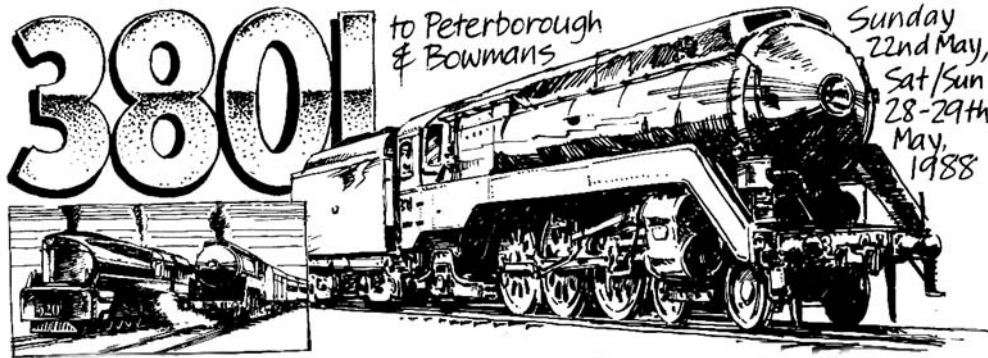
Classic New South Wales 38 class preserved steam locomotives visited northern areas of South Australia twice in the early 1970s but did not venture down to Adelaide

This omission was rectified some 16 years later in 1988 when steam loco 3801 detoured southwards from Pt Augusta on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1988, on its return from a cross-continent trip to Perth, and on successive weekends operated local tours to both Peterborough and Bowmans, including a "Great Train Race" with 3801 running in parallel with local loco "621"

### The Bicentennial Train

NSW Loco 3801 visits South Australia

*ARHS Recorder July 1988 pages 148 to 151*



"The New South Wales Rail Transport Museum is proud to be the sponsor of an event unique in railway history — the one and only, first and last, crossing of Australia by a steam train. In a spectacular salute to the service given by steam locomotives for over a century, four railway systems are combining to run a steam locomotive over tracks which are ushering in a new era for rail transport - an era in which steam locomotives will play no part but for this one memorable appearance."

That statement was made 18 years ago by the NSW Rail Transport Museum to publicize the running of the train that was known as the "Western Endeavour" hauled by NSWGR steam engines 3801 and 3813 from Sydney to Perth and return. That train entered South Australia from Sydney on 24/8/1970 and on 9/9/1970 on its return journey from Perth.

Everyone thought that engine 3801 would not be back in SA again, however, the opening of the railway to Whyalla attracted a special steam-hauled train from Sydney hauled by 3642 and 3801. That train entered SA on 6/10/72 and arrived in Port Augusta that evening. Engine 3801 did not run to Whyalla but, instead, made a historic run to Marree on 8/10/1972. The train left South Australia on 11/10/1972 and everyone thought that that would be the last that we saw of 3801. After all, the bicentennial celebrations were still 16 years away and no-one could foresee the day when 3801 would again cross the continent from east to west. It was the end of an era.

The story would have ended there if it had not been for a dedicated group of railway enthusiasts in Sydney who rounded up commercial sponsorship, assistance from the New South Wales and Federal Governments and the Bicentennial Authority and restored the engine to full main-line running condition.

### **Peterborough - Port Augusta, 1st May 1988**

On 1/5/88 the Bicentennial Steam Train departed Peterborough and followed a late-running Indian-Pacific train to Crystal Brook. The train consisted of engine 3801, two WT class water tanks nos. 1186 and 1174 and cars L516, a combination sleeping/dining car, LHY1615, a brakevan used as a mobile store of spare parts etc., two FS class second class compartment cars nos. 2017 and 2123, MFE1858 another second class compartment car, MCE583 a 1928-built compo first/second class compartment car and FNR2185 the Bicentennial Trains buffet car.

Then followed BV485 a lounge car which seats 44 passengers in two lounges and two compartments, MBE62 a first class compartment car, MCE114 (the same type as MCE582) and MHS1863 a combination second class car and brakevan.

As the train proceeded toward Port Pirie it became apparent that the published schedule was not going to be maintained. Two photostops (at Caltowie and the Crystal Brook bridge) were held even though the weather (sunlight) was not particularly kind to photographers. As the train was scheduled to call into Port Pirie on the return journey it used the eastern leg of the Coonamia triangle to head north to Port Augusta. The train arrived in Port Augusta after the sun had set. After the carriages had been stabled in Platform 2 the engine, tanks, 1516 and LHY1615 ran around to the Diesel shed and stabled overnight.

To enable the train to run across the water-less desert the same technique that was used for the Western Endeavour was used. This time engines GM1 and GM2 were used instead of CL3 which 18 years earlier had attached to the front coupler of 3801. AN attached 13 cars to the rear of the train for the trip to Perth. These carriages provided sleeping accommodation for the journey and comprised cars CDF924, BRJ999, BRJ271, BRJ915, BRJ918, BRJ300, AFA099, DF928, ER208, HRGA97, BRE181, AVDP187 and AZSY902. The load for the two GM's was 26 for 1314 tonnes and although departure time was scheduled for 12 noon it was nearer 1330 hrs before the train got going. A photostop was held at the approach to the bridge at Yorkeys Crossing and with the sun shining the long train made a spectacular sight against the back-drop of the Flinders Ranges. The train headed west at good speed and crossed the border on 3/5/88.

Reports reaching South Australia indicated that 3801 suffered mechanical trouble in Western Australia which caused the cancellation of all local tours planned for the train.

The train departed Perth Terminal on 16/5/88 and arrived in Kalgoorlie the next day. Due to a lack of bookings for the Perth-Adelaide leg of the journey it was decided not to work the train as a separate working across the desert but to attach it to the back of a scheduled AN Goods train to Port Augusta. The train chosen, No. 4300, is the daily Parkeston-Broken Hill express goods which was scheduled to depart Parkeston around 1630 hrs on 18/5/88 and arrive at Spencer Junction at 2256 hrs on 19/5/88.

### **Port Augusta - Adelaide, 20th May 1988**

A number of enthusiasts made the early morning trip north expecting to see 3801 in steam at Port Augusta as it was scheduled to depart south at 0930 hrs. The news that 4300 goods was running late was not well received. At that time the goods was already 9 hours late and another 3 hours were to go by before the headlight of CL4 could be seen at Spencer Junction. When 4300 eventually arrived at the Junction, at about 1230 hrs, the Bicentennial Train set which was attached at the back of the goods detached and 3801 hauled the train to the Port Augusta platform. No reason was given for the 12 hour delay to the express goods and no-one seemed to care anyway.

The steam train got going around 1430 hrs, about 7 hours late. A photostop was held on the bridge at Mambray Creek and due to the lateness of the special it was decided to eliminate Port Pirie from the schedule. The train used the eastern leg at Coonamia to bypass Port Pirie. Local school children rode the train between Port Augusta and Coonamia and from there to Crystal Brook. The elimination of the stop at Port Pirie saved about 2 hours from the schedule. The train arrived at the Adelaide Terminal at 2130 hrs and despite the late hour a large number of people were on hand to witness the historic arrival on 20/5/88. Between then and 30/5/88 when the train was scheduled to return to Sydney, the engine and carriages were made available to SteamRanger to use as appropriate. A unique tour programme was planned and executed efficiently.

### **Adelaide - Peterborough, 22nd May 1988**

An express steam train to Peterborough was run on 22/5/88. The train consisted of engine 3801 and cars MFE1858, MCE582, FNR2185, BV485, MBE62, MCE114, MHS1863 and L516. The train evoked memories of those famous steam-hauled NSW passenger trains of yesteryear such as the Newcastle Flyer and the Riverina Express.

The train departed on time at 0730 hrs to follow a schedule which limited the top speed of the train to 80 km/h because of the wooden-bodied cars being hauled. Due to the excellent performance by the engine and the expert handling by one of the few remaining steam crews on AN's standard gauge system the scheduled 40 minute run to Bolivar was completed in 30 minutes at an average speed of 64 km/h. The train averaged a shade under 80 km/h for the next 70 kilometres to the first stop at Bowmans. It became apparent that some motor-caders were experiencing trouble keeping up with the steady progress of the 38 and some had not seen it prior to Bowmans. The local CFS crews filled the tender from two water tanks stabled at Bowmans and the train steamed out for the first photostop at the Wakefield River Bridge.

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

The train completed the next 90 kilometres to Rocky River which included the only notable grade on the Crystal Brook line, the Nantawarra Bank, in a little over the hour at the designated average speed on 80 km/h. It was noticed that motor-caders were having to put up with at least two obstacles on the road. The first was a police car that appeared to be following the train and the second a large V/Line bus which seemed a little out of its way. A V/Line bus chasing a NSW SRA train on AN tracks in SA. Can only happen in Australia?

Another photostop was held in the big cutting in the Huddleston hills and the train stopped at Gladstone to enable the tender to be 'topped up' again using the assistance rendered by the local CFS crew. A non-stop run to Peterborough was only interrupted at Yongala where the train had to stop on the main line to allow the west-bound Indian Pacific hauled by 964 and GM34 to use the passing siding. The train arrived in Peterborough at 1333 hrs some 47 minutes ahead of schedule. All stops included 3801 had completed the forward journey from Adelaide at a respectable average speed of 46 km/h. Not bad for a product of 1943.

The same performance characteristics were recorded on the return journey which was completed at an all-stops-included average speed of 44 km/h. The stops on the return journey were at Caltowie to allow the Broken Hill Bluebird passenger to pass eastbound, Gladstone for water, Nantawarra for the Indian-Pacific to cross, Bowmans for water and between there and Long Plains for a listening stop. The special departed Peterborough on time at 1632 hrs and rolled to a stop at Adelaide Terminal exactly on time at 2209 hrs, a sparkling performance,

### **The Train Race, 28th and 29th May 1988**

The engine was given a week to rest before its next outings on 28/5/88 and 29/5/88. These tours took the form of runs to Bowmans and return on each day. However, another dimension had been added to these trips. Because of the paralling broad gauge tracks between Adelaide and Salisbury the temptation of having a race between NSWGR's finest and that of the SAR was too good to resist.

Engine 520 was originally proposed for the 'Great Train Race' but due to its unavailability engine 621 was substituted. A statistical comparison of the two engines is made elsewhere in this issue. The loads for each engine were calculated on the basis of the tractive effort for each engine. Engine 621 hauled cars 704, 503, 710, 602, 706, 606 and 712 and 3801 hauled cars FS2017, FS2133, MFE1858, MCE582, FNR2185, BV485, MBE62, MCE114, MHS1863 and L516 in its consist. The actual race was made from a steady start at Greenfields to the finishing line at Salisbury, about 5 kilometres. On both days 621 won the race. The broad gauge train continued to Hamley Bridge where passengers were transferred between there and Bowmans, the terminus of the standard gauge train, by bus. Both trains ran parallel to each other between Salisbury and Mile End Junction on the return journey.

While under charter to Steamranger, 3801, the carriages, its NSW crew, AN crews and ARHS volunteers had performed efficiently and combined to make the ten days in May a memorable event in the Bicentennial rail calendar.

### **The Homegoing, 30th May 1988**

The complete Bicentennial Train commenced its return journey to Sydney on 30/5/88 and arrived in Broken Hill on 31/5/88.



3801 waits at Two Wells on 30th May



3801 photostopping near Mallala on 29th May

*Both photos Geoff Doecke*



3801 passes under the Bakewell Bridge at Mile End Junction

*Photo: G Doecke*



621 and 3801 stand at Salisbury 29th May 88

*Photo: Roger Currie*