



SteamRanger's Heritage - an insight into our past

BACKGROUND

Dean Harvey OAM was the motivating force behind ARHS (SA) train operations throughout the 60s, 70s and 80s

He filled the positions of Tours Manager and SteamRanger Director as well as serving as society President for in 1955 and 1956

He prepared the following list of highlights for publication in the "Recorder" in January 1989

A CONCISE HISTORY OF STEAMRANGER 1961 - 1988

Compiled by Dean Harvey

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1961

First chartered steam train — last run of 504 on 15th October.

1962

Two chartered steam trains, both weekend tours

5th-6th May Moonta — Gladstone — Wilmington
621 on the broad, T48 & Y97 on the narrow

12th-14th October Pichi Richi Pathfinder
520 class on the broad,
T on S.A.R. narrow & NM on the C.R. narrow

1963

16 steam trains including last run of a 500 class mountain type engine
No. 500 to Angaston and Penrice on 11th May.
Last run to Mount Pleasant on 3rd March (Eng. 706)

1964

15 Steam Trains Notable tours included:

The Sundowner' in March featuring 520 class to Terowie, double header T class Nos 23 and 256 to Quorn, NM 34 through Pichi Richi Pass, GM with air conditioned sleeper consist to Marree hauling steam engine NM 25 piggy back in light steam, NM 25 Marree to Alberrie Creek.

Hawker & Port Augusta via Pichi Richi in October.

1965

11 steam trains Notable trips included:

F class No. 240 to Bowmans (round trip)
Broken Hill featuring 520 class, T class & W class No. 22.

10 steam trains including

'Border Patrol' powered by 718 to Tailem Bend,
523 on to Mount Gambier and J 538 to Heywood in Victoria.
Last steam engine operated on a regular scheduled service on the broad gauge.

1967

11 steam trains including a mallee trip to Nunkeri and Perponda using 710 class over the mountains and Rx from Tailem onwards. In October another Pichi Richi trip with NM 34, also Y 97 and T 199 on the S.A.R. section.

1968

11 tours including:

Yinkanie	75 class railcar
Pinnaroo & Ouyen	520 & J
Victor Harbor	700 & 718 (Last Run of 700 and 710 class)

Railways Commissioner agreed to ARHS proposal to retain steam locomotives Nos. 526, Rx 207 and Rx 224 in service provided ARHS paid all maintenance and servicing costs! First such arrangements on a Government railway anywhere in the world.

1969

17 Tours including:

Willunga (Last train 30th May)	Rx 207
Gladstone & Jamestown	526, T
Wilmington, Port Pirie, Broken Hill & Eurelia	520, 400, 2/T, Y97
Morgan (Last train 2nd November)	526
Quorn	Model 75 (B.G.) T199 (N.G.)

1970

12 Tours including another Quorn Tour with 520 & T class.

S.A.R. agrees to cancel plans to cut up for scrap locos 520 & 621.

Major fund raising campaign launched to restore semi-derelict No. 621 to working order.

The first campaign to restore a steam engine in Australia.

Last train to Milang on 15th June (Rx 224).

1971

Engine No. 621 returned to service in April and named 'Duke of Edinburgh'.

Later in the year another fund raising campaign launched to restore engine No. 520 to service as S.A.R. considered the boiler of No. 526 had limited life and did not warrant further expenditure to keep it operative. Over \$20,000 raised.

33 tours in the year. First year with 4 steam locos under the ARHS banner.

1972

Engine No. 520 ran its first trip as a Society engine on 6th May.

Total of 33 tours during the year.

1973

26 tours in the year.

1974

49 tours — a record prior to VHTR. (The heyday of Bridgewater school holidays specials.)

ARHS to take over responsibility for minor work on locos and was required to initiate all major work preferably with contractors.

1975

40 tours — included Cudgewa and Bright in Victoria.

27 tours including 7 day Pt. Lincoln Division tour and Mt. Gambier.

First major working bee of ARHS members on loco maintenance — removal of superheater elements from 520 carried out at the Mile End Museum.

1977

First rollingstock purchases:-

Sleeping Cars 'Angas' & 'Finniss', Brakevan GB 4420, M Van 7216.

In late 1977, SteamRanger obtained permission for volunteers to carry out work on steam locomotives stabled on a siding adjacent to the Mile End Diesel Depot. Most Saturdays and Sundays a small dedicated group carried out minor repairs and servicing at Mile End.

The name 'SteamRanger' was registered in December.

1978

Australian National advised that operation of our steam trains was to cease permanently on 30th June. After intensive negotiations this decision was finally reversed by Chairman Keith Smith of AN but severe restrictions were placed on the number of trips allowed with timber bodied carriages.

In September AN gave notice that SteamRanger must vacate Mile End Diesel Depot site by Xmas 1978 and obtain its own depot.

A number of different locations were examined including Sandy Creek, Lonsdale, Edwardstown and Dry Creek. The latter was selected as best meeting the long list of criteria for our operations.

40 tours were programmed in 1978 and included a chartered diesel train to Alice springs spanning 8 days of rail travel.

The Festival of Steam on 21st May to launch publicly the new name 'SteamRanger' was highly successful and included a special train conveying the Governor from North Adelaide to Adelaide, 5 shuttle trips to Woodville, 2 to Penfield and one train to Bridgewater.

S.T.A. handed over custody of a fleet of centenary and suburban cars to ARHS. Other centenary cars were obtained by tender from AN.

ARHS, with the assistance of a small State Unemployment Relief Scheme grant, carried out repainting and repairs to 14 of these cars on a S.T.A. siding at Edwardstown.

1979

Engine No. 621 withdrawn from service for boiler overhaul and major valve work.

Lease negotiated with S.T.A. for a site at Dry Creek for the SteamRanger Depot. The site was low lying with the only vegetation being saltbush and similar unattractive grass species — the whole 3 hectare site supported only 1 horse until SteamRanger obtained the lease.

April

SteamRanger obtained a State Unemployment Relief Scheme Grant of \$152,000 to provide labour for construction of a railway depot. SteamRanger contributed most of the cost of materials for sheds, facilities etc. and provided significant volunteer input into some aspects of the construction phase.

August

Centenary baggage car No. 377 placed at the Depot and cyclone scaffolding fitted to the sides and roof. Known as the 'Monkey Cage', No. 377 provided an ideal mobile platform on rails for workers constructing the 150m long carriage shed.

November 2nd

Red Hen and trailer 824 ran from Adelaide to Dry Creek to enable members to inspect the partially completed facilities.

November 21st

Engine No. 520 powered train consisting Car No. 81, 3/50 class cars, 3/60 class cars and sleeping car 'Finn iss¹' to Dry Creek Depot. The purpose of this train was to check clearances in the main shed structure and test the locomotive on the severe curves outside the eastern end of the shed on Road 5. The train returned to Adelaide after these tests.

December 13th

Travelling Crane, match wagon, centenary car 367 and sleeping car 'Angas' were picked up by a SteamRanger special returning from Noarlunga Centre and placed at Dry Creek Depot. The passenger train then continued to Gawler. Sleeping car 'Tambo' arrived at the Depot direct from Peterborough during late December in a derelict condition.

1980

January 21st

Steam engines Rx 207, Rx 224, 520, 621 and GB 4420, M7216 hauled from Mile End Diesel Depot to the nearly completed SteamRanger Depot at Dry Creek.

January 22nd

2/400 class DPM's hauled trailers 824 and 820 to the SteamRanger Depot from Adelaide.

January 23rd

Cars 83, 66, 60, Finnis, 56, 54, 53, 52, 50 & GB 40 transferred from Adelaide to the SteamRanger Depot.

January 24th

Cars 73, 72, 426, 463, 461, 81, 71, 70, 65, 63, 62 and 61 transferred from Adelaide to the SteamRanger Depot.

August 29th: Official opening of SteamRanger Depot by Premier David Tonkin.
34 Tours operated.

1981

February 24th

Cars 823, 830, 465, 260, 411 and 356 transferred from Adelaide to SteamRanger Depot.

39 Tours operated in the year.

A remarkable year considering both engines 520 and 621 were unavailable account major overhauls. All trains were worked by Rx class engines or visiting K190 from Melbourne.

Steel cars 701, 706, 710, 503, 602 and 606 purchased from Australian National in November

SteamRanger's first diesel electric loco No. 351 was hauled from Moonta to the Steam-Ranger Depot on 2nd October.

1982

20 tours operated including last broad gauge steam train to Port Pirie on 11th September and last broad gauge movement of any type on 27th November (250 & 100 Bluebirds).

June

Engine No. 520 returned to service after major work including retyring driving wheels and replacing or retensioning all springs plus reconditioning or replacing associated pins and bushes.

1983

After extensive overhaul by volunteers, diesel shunter 351 restored to service.

15 tours operated.

One of the highlights was the Hills Line Centenary celebrations which featured Rx224 on a shuttle service from Blackwood to Belair and 520 on a trip to Bridgewater.

SteamRanger purchased cars 704 and 712 from Australian National at a cost of \$20,000 each

1984

29 revenue trains operated.

A feature of the year was the long distance tour to Mount Gambier behind engine No. 520 and doubleheading with K153 (ex Melbourne) between Bordertown and Mount Gambier.

Car 602 was extensively overhauled and rebuilt as the luxurious tavern car "Bowmans". It made its debut on the Mount Gambier train.

A regular weekly service, plus an extra train on the Labour Day holiday, operated to Victor Harbor between 19th August and 28th October — 12 trains in all.

Diesel electric shunter 350 purchased from Australian National.

1985

17 Tours operated.

Success with submission for C.E.P. grant of \$1,256,000 plus State Government input of \$770,000 for rehabilitation of the Strathalbyn to Victor Harbor railway. Project to be managed by S.T.A. at Government's request.

1986

March 17th

Work commenced at Goolwa on the Victor Harbor Tourist Railway (VHTR) upgrading project.

October 18th

Opening Day for SteamRanger services on the partially upgraded VHTR. Two trains from Adelaide, one powered by No. 520 and the V.I.P. train by No. 621 which was returned to service for the first time since 1978 after major overhaul. No. 520 also worked a Victor train on Sunday, 19th October.

Insurance problems prevented operations after 19th October for the balance of the year.

Problems were compounded by cessation in October of all work on the VHTR upgrading project as S.T.A. Finance Branch considered expenditure had already exceeded available funds.

17 trains operated over the year.

Diesel electric main line locos No. 907 and 909 purchased from Australian National by tender. Delivery taken of 909 on 3rd April but 907 delayed at Islington account refitting of stripped parts etc. until late 1986.

1987

Work recommended on VHTR upgrading project in June after 9 months delay. By then it had been established that the available funds were indeed adequate to complete the project. This delay seriously affected SteamRanger's operations.

Until November when the Goolwa Depot was completed, SteamRanger was unable to operate services as planned resulting in a severe reduction of anticipated revenue.

June

Speed limit of the AN line between Mount Barker Junction and Strathalbyn progressively reduced from 70kph to a maximum of 20kph with sections as low as 10kph.

November

Australian National announced their intention to seek closure of this section of line. SteamRanger immediately launched a campaign to raise funds to assist in rehabilitation of this railway.

During the year SteamRanger operated 41 Southern Encounters from Keswick to Victor Harbor, Cockle Trains on 40 days and 8 non VHTR tours.

1988

VHTR operations again were the mainstay of SteamRanger activities and Cockle Trains were operated on 69 days and in addition 21 Southern Encounters operated from Adelaide. The reduction in Southern Encounter trips was a direct result of the low speed limits on the AN line between Mount Barker Junction and Strathalbyn.

9 non VHTR tours were operated including those with visiting NSW engine 3801

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August 14th

Very successful Open Day at the Dry Creek Depot.

Note

A tour for the data above is a train event promoted by SteamRanger. It may involve more than one train and sometimes may span several days of operation. A tour often includes extension runs for a new group of passengers or a series of shuttle services e.g. Dry Creek Open Day trains to Dry Creek and Gawler.