



## CHAPTER 12

# GOING HOME

**MATT**



Alfie and I had been chosen to drive the Vice-Regal special to convey His Excellency, Sir William Robinson, as special guest of the Governor of Victoria, to the Melbourne Cup. It was a great honour for an engineman and his fireman, even though we had to observe the correct protocol. We couldn't speak unless spoken to and had to answer questions in a respectful and courteous manner. Alfie said it was a load of baloney.

My real concern was that Bob, who of course was coming with us, might try to shake hands and scatter coal dust on His Excellency's person.

Alfie and I had decided that Bob should go into Victoria, and in great style, and make an appearance at the Melbourne Cup. So it was arranged for Bob to ride in the tender of the Vice-Regal special as it crossed the border, thus establishing Bob, and not His Excellency, as the first traveller to cross into Victoria on the new railway to Melbourne.

It wasn't until we had laboured through the hills that Alfie took a breather. "Want to hear my latest," he said leaning on his shovel.

*Today we're off on a very great trip,  
And we're going to cross over the border.  
Sir William's aboard. He's not going by ship,  
'Cos the rails to Melbourne are now in order.  
With these colonies now connected by metal,  
Our express will be one of historic event.  
It's time for old fighting and barneys to settle,  
While hostilities of past years we repent.  
Our illustrious Gov'nor to the Flemington course,  
On a railway special to the Cup he's a fleeting.  
But whether he choses the right or wrong horse,  
'Tis a journey which will sure take some beating.*

At Murray Bridge we were greeted by the Town Band playing 'God save the Queen'. When the school children sang 'The Song of Australia', Bob joined in with a few hearty woofs.

I felt a certain sense of pride when people waved and cheered us as we rattled onwards. Bob, as was his usual style, gave cheerful barks to children, but was restless as we passed through Cold and Wet.

**TOP OF PAGE.** Ballarat. A full-page engraving plate from *The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*

### The Song of Australia

In 1859 the Gawler Institute in South Australia celebrated its second anniversary with a contest for a song that was intended to become our National Anthem. There were 93 entries and the winning entry was this *Song of Australia*, words by Caroline Carleton, and music by Carl Linger. That the contest had been won by a woman caused some waves in conservative Adelaide, to which Mrs Carleton replied:

*A thousand faults the critics find  
To shreds and tatters rend it  
One only fault I find with them  
Is that they cannot mend it.*

It is forgiveable that most Australians don't know the words because there have been many fiddlings with the words over the years. We have included below the original five verses from the *Adelaide Observer*, from 5 December 1895. We accept that the 3rd and 5th verses may need to be adjusted to align with the times.

The *Song of Australia* was much loved and performed in South Australia but was little embraced by the eastern states and is now rarely encountered.



HERR LINGER.



MRS CARLETON.

**There is a land where summer skies  
Are gleaming with a thousand dyes,  
Blending in witching harmonies.  
And grassy knoll and forest height  
Are flushing in the rosey light,  
And all above is azure bright—  
Australia!**

**There is a land where honey flows,  
Where laughing corn luxuriant grows,  
Land of the myrtle and the rose.  
On hill and plain the clustering vine  
Is gushing out with purple wine,  
And cups are quaff'd to thee and thine—  
Australia!**

**There is a land where treasures shine  
Deep in the dark unfathomed mine,  
For worshippers at Mammon's shrine;  
Where gold lies hid, and rubies gleam,  
And fabled wealth no more doth seem  
The idle fancy of a dream—  
Australia!**

**There is a land where homesteads peep  
From sunny plain and woodland steep,  
And love and joy bright vigils keep;  
When the glad voice of childish glee  
Is mingling with the melody  
Of Nature's hidden minstrelsy—  
Australia!**

**There is a land where, floating free  
From mountain top to girdling sea,  
A proud flag waves exultingly;  
And FREEDOM's sons the banner bear  
No shackled slave can breathe the air—  
Fairest of Britain's daughters fair -  
Australia!**

"Not stopping here today Bob," I said when I noticed his head swivelling, eyes darting. Emmeline had not been there to wave. "Probably too cold, and it is getting dark," I said giving him a head rub when he jumped down onto the footplate.



BOB

Matt slowed the engine at Cold and Wet but I knew we wouldn't be stopping there. My eyes searched but there were no lamps. My doggy ears found no happy sounds coming from the house. Maybe the family had gone to bed. In spite of my loudest barks, no one stirred. Emmeline did not come.

There was a bit of messing around at Serviceton when Matt and Alfie took off their engine and another crew hooked up a different engine to the Governor's train. My skin began to shiver, not from the cold. I was about to ride in a new engine, meet a new crew and go on another adventure.

"They'll look after you Bob," Matt said. "And guess what, you're going to the Melbourne Cup. These men know all about you, so best behaviour and manners."

At the word 'manners', I knew what I wanted to do. Best thing about shaking hands with engine crew, you don't have to worry about coal dust.

I didn't want to say good-bye to Matt and Alfie, but my legs were restless for more adventures. And I wanted to find out about the cup that people were talking about, a cup that had something to do with horses. Matt thought it important enough for me to take a look.

### SOME MONTHS LATER

How can I tell Matt that I never saw the cup, and that something more important had attracted my attention.

When the train had stopped at Ballarat, my doggy ears picked up the sound of a pipe organ somewhere in the town. Two sounds had become very special for this railway dog, Yankee engines and pipe organs. At the memory of Yankees, I had given a whine for Ferry.

Jumping onto the platform, I had given two hearty barks to thank the engine crew for the ride, then headed off to explore the streets of the town. When I'd found the building with the organ, I'd stayed and listened a while before hurrying back to the station to board another engine.

I soon discovered that there were lots of different engines going to lots of different places and I wanted to ride them all. But somehow I got a bit lost, not bad lost, just a bit confused lost.





Every day I was at a different station meeting new people, greeting stationmasters and engine crews. When I greeted them all with a raised paw, these railway people realised I was a special dog. They read my collar and called me Bob. At my last station, at the end of each day, the engineman took me to his home to meet his family. I played 'fetch and catch' with his children, was given a hearty meal and sometimes a wash.

Still my urge for adventure pushed me on. One day, after the engine had rattled along a bridge over a big river, I found I could jump across the tracks with a short running leap. I must be in New South Wales. I remembered when Alfie had tried to teach me about gauges. Narrow gauges I could cross with a leap from a standing position. Broad gauge I needed a long running leap. Alfie had told me about the Sydney gauge when he'd scratched those lines in the dirt. I remembered I had once been in New South Wales. This time I would be on my own if there was a sandstorm.

Having no idea where I was or where I was going, I did what came naturally to me. So, I made many friends while riding on coal tenders and footplates. But I always thought of my old friends. Where were they? Was Mister Skipper writing stories and Alfie poems? I wanted to sing Ulooloo with Matt. Was Ferry missing his dog? I was a long way from home.

When the country became very dry and dusty, I would ride in the guard's van. The guard talked a lot and gave me drinks of water and shared some food from a tin. He kept giving me head rubs and turning my collar. When we stopped at stations, he would let me out for a run and to find a tree. Although sometimes I had to make do with a bush.

At a place called Nyngan, men loaded a heap of machinery onto the train. It didn't interest me much, but my ears become very interested when I heard the load was going to Broken Hill. That word. How often had I heard it.

If I followed the machinery, it would lead me to Broken Hill and from there I knew I could find my way to Petersburg.

When the railway line came to an end, we were not at Broken Hill. The guard, who had become a very fine paw-shaking friend, told me we were at Bourke station. I could only stand and stare as my machinery was about to be loaded onto a paddle-steamer at the wharf nearby. Realising I had to go with it if ever I was to reach Broken Hill, I prepared myself for another riverboat journey. Boring. Boring.

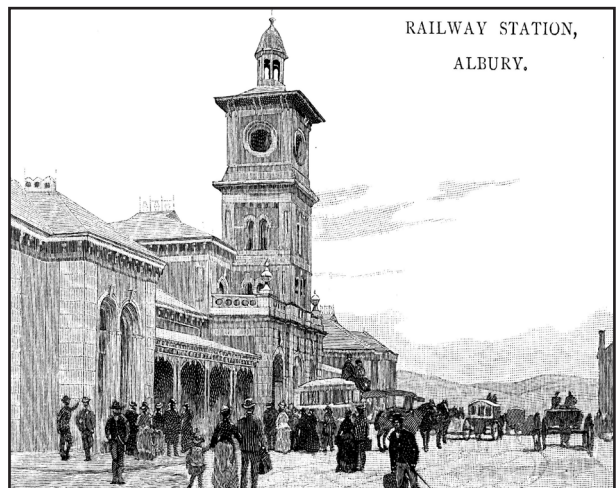
**CAPTAIN GUS** (of the *Gorgon*)



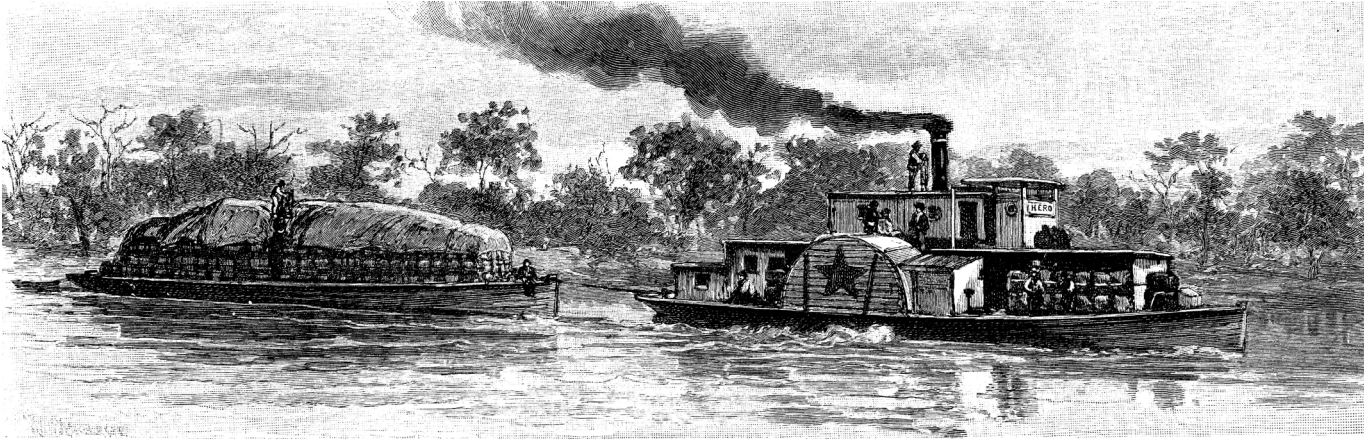
The Darling River at Bourke was down and falling fast, although it had enjoyed continuous good flows for the past 18 months. All the riverboats were frantically getting their loadings aboard and starting to move downstream. It was the nightmare of every riverboat captain to be stuck in a dried-out river. The machinery for Broken Hill was larger and heavier than our other cargo, wool bales, and so was last to be loaded onto the *Gorgon*.

Amid the panic and mayhem on the wharf, I was pleased to welcome Bob to my boat. Although he seemed to have some peculiar attraction to the machinery, he was obviously comfortable roaming the deck. And it was clear to me that he knew where the food was stored. I wondered if he'd previously been on a paddle-steamer.

It didn't take me long to realise that Bob's arrival at Bourke was associated with a case of mistaken identity, or rather, people jumping to conclusions. Within the course of a couple of days he had undergone a remarkable elevation of status. The stationmaster at Nyngan couldn't quite work out the SAR on Bob's collar. He decided it had something to do with Sydney Administration. The guard added his bit and stated that the R must be for the Latin word Regina, meaning Queen. "So, he's a government dog," he said.



From the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia



WOOL BARGE ON THE DARLING.

**ABOVE:** *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia.*

**NEXT PAGE:** This is as much a celebration of the art of the engravers of *The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* as it is a celebration of Bob finding his way home.

When Bob arrived at Bourke, the guard introduced him to the stationmaster as Bob, a special police dog. The guard said at first he had trouble working out the machinery, but after having a good look at it and considering possibilities, concluded that it was something to do with smelting silver bars for the Sydney Mint. By the time Bob came aboard the *Gorgon*, he had been elevated to the status of the Sydney Mint's top security dog.

The *Gorgon*, with its shallow draft and narrow side paddles, was a boat well suited for the Darling, itself being a narrow river. The boat was powerful and could manage a couple of barges and could turn on a good speed. She had been named after the mythological being that grew serpents out of her head, and had been a strange looking boat. I had made a few modifications and although the carved likeness of a gorgon's head on the bowsprit was extremely ugly, I kept it there. I kept the name and, ugly or not, she was a sturdy vessel.

Already I had been advised that the water level at Walgett had dropped markedly overnight. However, on the brighter side, there was a flow coming down the Culgoa. The trip would be a race against time, and I was in no doubt that I would be breaking rules on the Darling banning night travel for boats going downstream. Barges could get out of control in strong currents, and along with river boats, come to grief.

My stoker, Sam, was keeping a good boiler pressure ready for a rapid departure when we had a full load. Although we had a good supply of redgum, the *Gorgon* consumed about one ton every three hours. I hoped we had enough to get us to Wilcannia, for there would be no stopping at wood cutter's camps. The *Gorgon* would be running the race of her life, a race to stay ahead of the falling river levels.



#### **BOB**

My new friend, Captain Gus, was a very busy man, checking the load, calling to men on the wharf, watching the pile of wood and staring at the water. I stayed out of the way, because after all, there wasn't much a railway dog could do. So I explored the boat.

My nose told me there were two important places. First was the firebox which wasn't burning coal, not like in Alfie's firebox. There was wood, just like in Captain Richie's boat.

"Well hello," a voice said. "Captain has told me about you. I'm Sam."

I walked a little closer, but not too close to the fire. Alfie had taught me to be careful. I could already see that Sam's fire sometimes spat and hissed.

"Good dog. Stay well back. Don't want sparks in ya hair," Sam said giving me a head rub. "You picked a particularly bad time to travel the Darling. The one thing us rivermen fear most is being stuck in this old river. And, at the moment, I'd say things are looking more than a bit grim. Let's hope we make it, else we'll all be eat'n roos 'n snakes."

It was clear to me that Sam had a very important job to do, so I gave several quick barks, then held out my paw.

"Blimey, Captain was right. Gentleman dog you are."

My nose, then the rest of me, found the other smell. Cook was cutting up things that made him sneeze. Water dripped down his face. "Onions for the stew," he said dropping them into a big pot. "You have to be Bob. Captain says I have to look after you real well. You'll get first rate food while you're of the *Gorgon*. Have me own secret recipe for bullock stew. See that's what's in the pot."



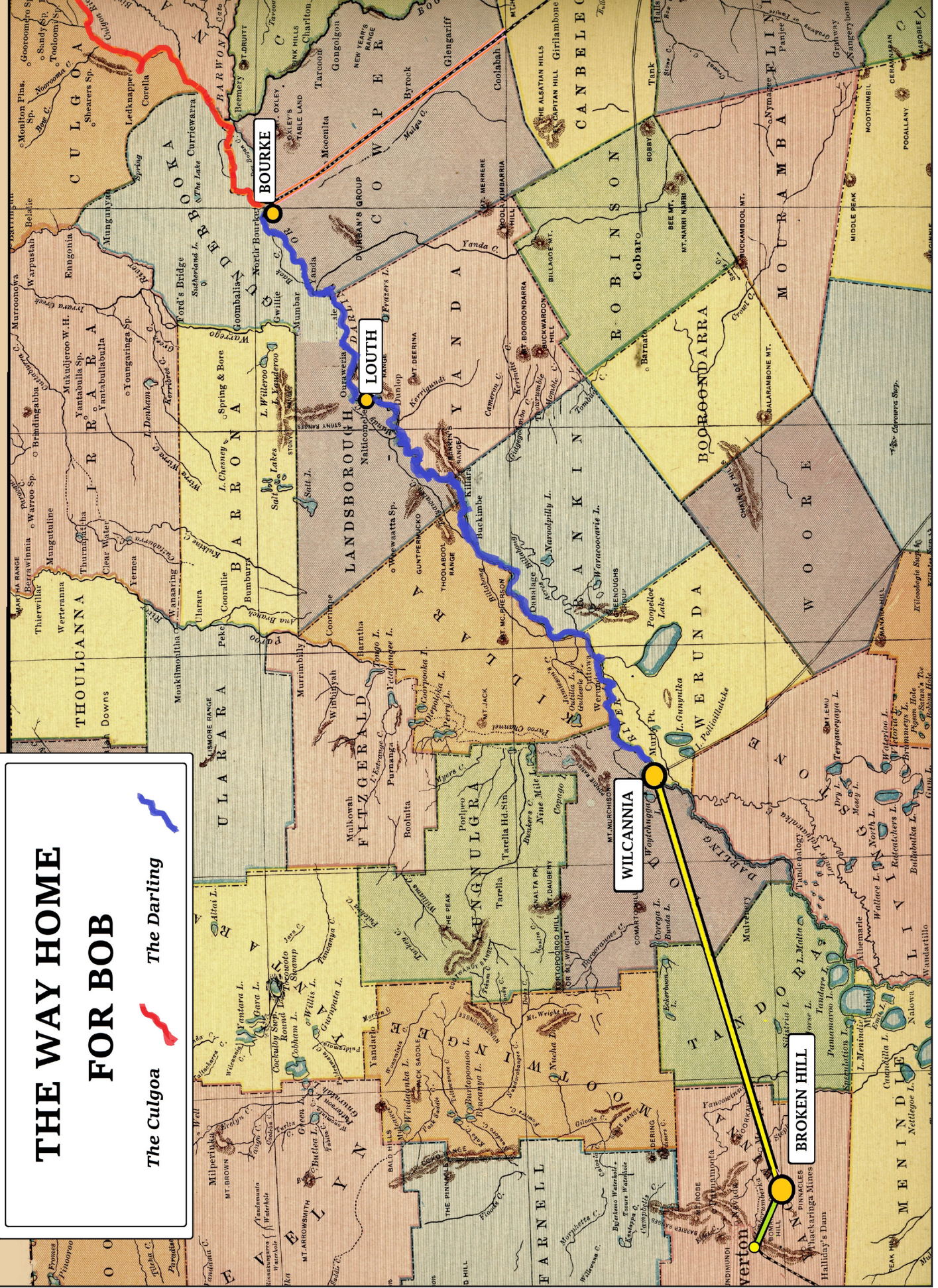
# QUEENSLAND

## THE WAY HOME FOR BOB

The Culgoa



The Darling



**BOURKE**

**LOUTH**

**WILCANNIA**

**BROKEN HILL**



I was surprised when he tapped me on the chin. Maybe it was a particular kind of greeting. But then he whispered. "Don't tell anyone." Then he stared into my eyes. "You understand a lot about humans don't you Bob? I reckon you and I will become great pals on this trip. See Captain and Sam and me and the others are part of a family, a riverboat family. And you are now one of us."

I hoped my soft woof told Cook that while I didn't understand all of his words, I liked the way he said them.

"Now a reward for your patience, my canine brother." Cook reached into a bucket by the cooking pot. "Bullock meat comes with big bones. And this one is for you. Probably different to the ones you usually have, but it will last a while, probably to Wilcannia."

I soon settled into my new travelling home. And quickly realised, that because Sam couldn't see where the boat was going, he took instructions from the bells and whistles that Captain sent from the wheelhouse. The whistles sounded like some railway engines but the chuff of the boat was different. And so was the smell.

Captain would always stop for a chat when he saw me stretched out by the machinery. "Good dog," he would say. But he always walked away shaking his head. I don't think he realised that the machinery was my ticket to Broken Hill.



## CAPTAIN GUS

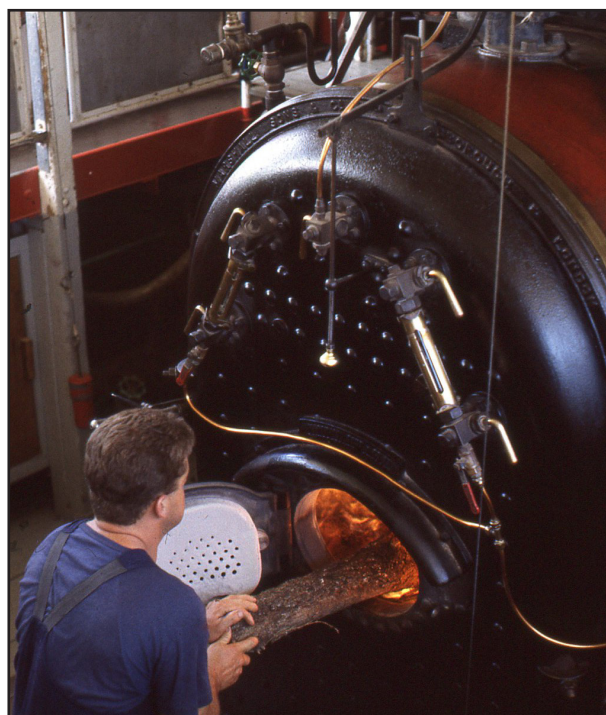
When we passed Louth the river level was showing three feet, the lowest I had ever seen it at that point. Normally it would have been a stopping place for wood, some of the best redgum along the Darling.

I had travelled the river for many years and knew it well. As we approached a particularly narrow section which ran over a rocky reef, I noticed ripples. That told me there wasn't enough depth of water. We scraped the bottom. I signalled for the paddle wheels to stop. Then we tried 'slow astern', but the *Gorgon* was stuck.

"Don't panic anyone," I called out. "I have an idea. But we have to wait for the Culgoa to flow."

I hoped I was projecting a confidence not felt by the rest of me.

Then I told my men about old Dan Arnold, one of the early river boat captains on the Darling, and how he got himself out of trouble when the *Elfin* was stuck on a reef. After they had tied a good hauser rope to the nearest sturdy redgum on the bank, the crew slowly winched the boat backwards off the reef until they could get some traction with the paddle wheels.



JLW PHOTO

They finished up about 100 yards back from the reef where there was still some depth of water. Dan knew he had to give it his all, as he only had one shot at getting the boat over the reef.

The stoker got full pressure up in the boiler, and the mate took over the wheelhouse. While Dan told the crew to hang on tight, one of them tied a rope around Dan's waist then secured the other end. With the hauser rope taugth and the crew all battened down or hanging onto anything solid they could grab, Dan yelled to the wheelhouse for 'full ahead'.

With the paddle wheels going flat out, and the rope on the redgum holding tight, the boat rocked and shook so much that Dan feared she might shake herself to pieces. Then, yelling to the crew once again to hold tight, Dan took an axe and with one mighty swipe at the rope, the boat lurched forward.

Dan swore it must have become airborne for a second or two, and had it not been for the rope around him, he would have ended up in the Darling. The boat rode on its own bow wave and made it over the reef.

"Of course this could simply be a tall yarn, or a bit of embellishment, or maybe never actually took place," I said glancing around at the long faces of my crew. "However, I'm telling you all, we are in a predicament. And tall yarn or not, we have to give it a go."

"Did Dan say anything about the galley when the *Elfin* flew over the reef?" Cook asked, a deeper frown spreading across his face.



"Can't recall. But that is a good point," I said. "Could be wise to kill the fire in the stove, and make sure everything is safely stowed. We don't want our dinners ending up in the Darling."

"And what about Bob?" Cook asked glancing at Bob stretched out by the machinery, his bone lying beside his front paws. "We should tie him to something. Can't have him flung around which could happen even if he was inside. If anything happened to him, we'd have the Sydney security after our hides."

"Right you are," I said. "Tie him to the machinery and you stay with him. But hang on tight."

So we got everything in readiness for the Culgoa flow. After the rope had been tied around a very large redgum, we winched the boat. Then the mate positioned himself in the wheelhouse.

I had to make sure the axe had the sharpest possible edge, so it was with fierce determination that I honed the sharpening stone up and down the axe head. While I was desperate for the flow to come, I needed time to prepare the axe. Sitting at the rear of the boat I kept watch, my eyes straining to the distance upstream. We all waited in silence for what seemed a long while. Apart from the occasional heavy sighs and nervous coughs from my crew, the only other sound was the occasional blowing off steam through the safety valve.

At the first rush, one of my crew tied a rope around my waist then secured the other. A quick glance at Cook told me that Bob was secure. When I gave the order for 'full ahead', the boat shuddered. The paddle wheels turned up a whirlpool. "Get ready and hang on!" I yelled hoping that everyone could hear me. Then I swung the axe.

By my standards it was only a small flow that came down the Culgoa but enough for the boat to ride its own wave over the reef.

There was yelling and cheering. "Hooray for Dan, hooray for Captain Gus. And three cheers for Sam."

"And God bless our riverboat and all who travel in her," I added.

"And God save the Queen," the mate shouted from the wheelhouse.

But not everyone was happy. Bob, who was still attached to the machinery, was giving out a most mournful whine.

"Bone overboard!" Cook yelled.

## CAPTAIN GUS



Although we encountered no further trouble, I was extremely pleased when Wilcannia came into my sights. However, speaking for Sam and Cook and myself, it would also represent a parting from Bob. If he was going to Broken Hill with the machinery he would have to leave us at Wilcannia and climb aboard a jinker. He seemed almost obsessed with the machinery and would give a few short barks every time I mentioned Broken Hill. As we pulled into Wilcannia, it suddenly dawned on me that Broken Hill must have some special significance for Bob. And it wasn't so much the machinery itself that held his interest, but it's destination.

"Broken Hill is a wild place and not safe if you are a cat, which I'm pleased to say you are not." Kneeling beside him, I put my hand around his neck. I had not previously noticed his eyes. They were a deep pool of golden brown and seemed to hold a knowing. "You be careful in Broken Hill Bob," I said tapping his nose. "You'll find there are very few, if any, cats in Broken Hill. They are in the pies." He gave a soft woof, then licked my hand. "Clever dog."

At the wharf we set about unloading even though we had arrived on a Sunday. There was a strict rule which applied to all shipping in New South Wales. Skippers were not permitted to load or unload on the Sabbath. Some skippers obeyed the rule to the letter while others gave it the same degree of non-compliance as other rules. I was one of the latter.

Among the other boats at Wilcannia, was the *Jandra*, skippered by Pickhills who claimed to be very religious. He owned a white bulldog, a fighting dog. Pickhills loved nothing more than finding an excuse to put two dogs in a pit, then find a circle of spectators who would wager. Not that there would be any wanting to put money on the bulldog losing. They would wager on how soon it took the bulldog to prevail.

Pickhills took offence that I was unloading and fronted up to the bottom of the *Gorgon's* gangplank with his dog.

"I should report this to the Maritime Board," he said in a snarly voice. "But we will let the dogs settle it. Yours against mine."

Bob was leaning against my leg. I could feel his body twitching. When I placed my hand over his snout, his breath was hot against my fingers. There was no doubt in my mind that if Pickhills didn't have a sturdy plaited leather leash holding back his killing machine, the dog would have charged up the gangplank straight for Bob's jugular.

I looked around for help but the other men were busy on the wharf or maybe unaware of the duel that was about to unfold. The wheelhouse would be a safe haven for Bob and myself. However I dare not turn my back. I didn't trust Pickhills.



## BOB

Although I was much bigger than the drooling beast in front of me, I did not believe that size would win. I suspected this dog was a stupid dog, but if he was even a bit clever, then I was even cleverer. We stood, separated by enough space for me to see fire in the snarling dog's eyes.

When Captain Gus placed his hand on my snout, I felt his fear. I wanted him to know that my doggy know-how was telling me what to do.

'Stay Bob. Hold your ground' it was saying. I couldn't bark so I turned a little and stroked Captain's leg. Then I obeyed my doggy know-how. Not a muscle moved. Not a hair shifted.

I stared straight into the bulldog's eyes. It seemed a long while, and just when my eyes were getting tired and needing to blink, the dog gave a mournful howl. His shoulders twitched and his back legs began to shake, his claws scraping the gangplank. He began to snort as if he had something stuck in his throat while shaking his head in a very strange way.

Gradually a warm feeling, like I would feel lying safe in front of Ferry's fire, began to flow over me. I hadn't lifted a paw, not opened my mouth. Yet, the dog in front of me no longer had power and was a quivering confused animal.

While I couldn't shift my eyes off the bulldog, my doggy ears were telling me that the words Pickhills was throwing at his dog were coming from a very angry human.

Suddenly the dog turned and pounded off pulling Pickhills with him. Leaping aboard the *Jandra*, the dog cowered in a corner still making the most terrible howls, which I could only imagine might come from a dying dog.

Humans are like dogs. There are clever humans and stupid humans. Whoever bred a dog just for the purpose of ripping at the throat of another dog, was stupid. And so were the men who stood around in a circle paying money. Captain Gus had said Pickhills had religion. Sure was different to the one at Moonta. Cousin Jacks had the religion of clever people. And there was the man with the camels that would be pulling the jinker with my machinery to Broken Hill. He had religion for he was kind to his animals.

Before I left Captain Gus and Sam and Cook and the others who had been my riverboat family, I noticed that the camel man sat on a special mat and said lots of words.

"He's praying for a safe journey Bob," Cook said.

I gave three hearty barks. One for Captain, one for Sam and one for Cook. I wanted them to know that my travel aboard the *Gorgon* had been one fine adventure. And definitely not boring.

Then I leapt into a place on the jinker.

**These stories of the riverboats** have been inspired by the characters and yarns contained in *Riverboats*, by Ian Mudie (Sun Books 1965). Harry Payne was the skipper who rode his own bow wave (p 96). The *Jandra*, Pickhills, the white bulldog and the circle of men standing around the dog fight is from page 102. Arnold was one of the skippers who had one of the longest active careers on the river boats (page 190). Mudie quotes Henry Lawson's description of the typical riverboat skipper looking more like a drover. The edict regarding Sundays is on page 107. There were two skippers called Gus. Gus Lindquist and Gus Pierce.

## CAMEL TEAM AT WILCANNIA *from the Picturesque Atlas of Australasia.*

