

CHAPTER SIX

A YANKEE AMOK



BOB

After we had finished our jobs, I wanted to teach Scotty how to shake hands with a dog. At first I could tell that he wasn't sure what I was asking. Maybe Scotty had never been a man with a dog. But I kept at it, and soon he was giving me a head rub and saying, "clever Bob."

Being a bit tired after all that teaching of dog manners, I was stretched out on the platform having a kip, when my ears picked up the sound of the slow goods. Scotty looked a bit anxious pacing up and down the platform, muttering, "four hours behind the express." It appeared that the train was a very slow goods.

I wanted to tell Scotty there was not a problem so long as the engine took me to Matt and Alfie. I barked, and when he gave me a head rub, I knew he was glad I was still with him.

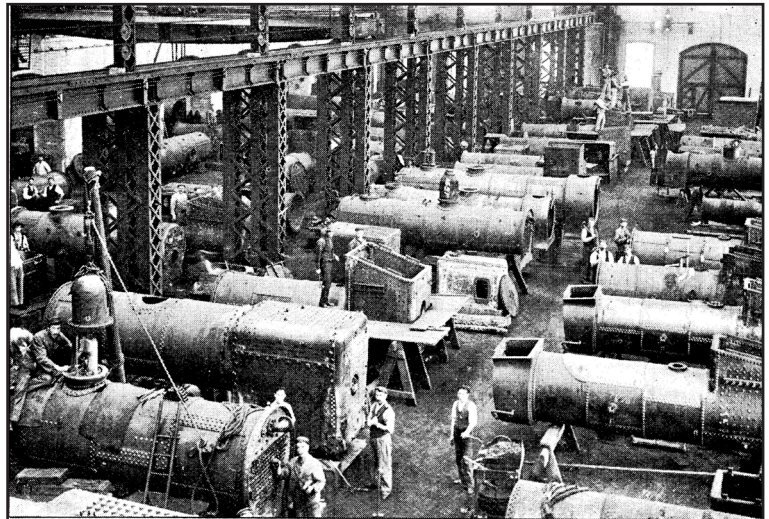
The engine was old. It squeaked and rattled and wheezed as it limped past me to finally stop at the end of the platform.

What luck! The driver was George Hiscock. He would let me ride on the coal. The fireman was called Arthur. He worked with George, like Alfie worked with Matt. I didn't know Arthur but already I liked him after he had called out my name when the engine limped past me.

I could tell George was getting anxious and probably a bit angry as well. He kept slapping his thigh and letting out big sighs as well as yelling strange words. I heard Matt once tell Alfie not to say some words in good company. I think what George said were 'not in good company words'.

There was one thing I had to do before I leapt on board. Slowly I walked towards Scotty as he stood alone on the platform. But before I could lift my paw, he held out his hand towards me. "Thank you Bob," he said. "You have been a good pal." There were raindrops in his eyes even though there were no clouds in the sky.

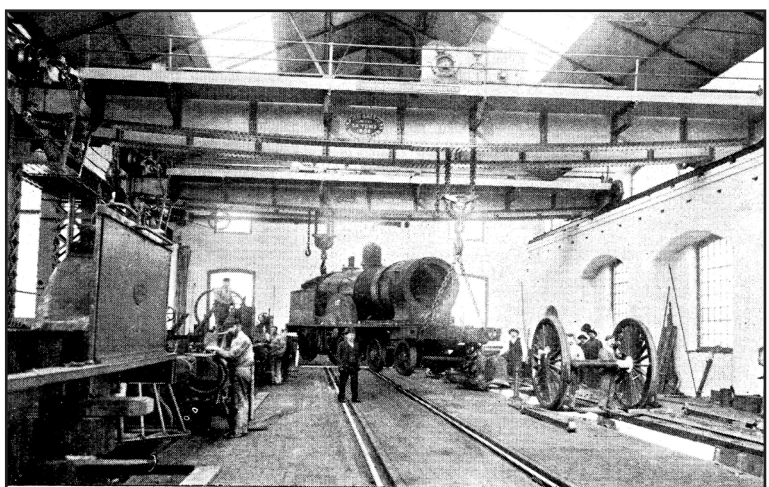
The next station was Saddleworth, and the stationmaster there could see that the engine was failing. As we limped past the ticket office, George called out "can you give us a push!"



BOILER SHOP, ISLINGTON.



SECTION OF LOCOMOTIVE WORKSHOPS, ISLINGTON.



ERECTING SHOP, ISLINGTON.

ISLINGTON WORKSHOPS. *The Cyclopedia of South Australlia.* 1907.

I could feel myself frowning. What a silly thing to say, George. But then I knew he was joking.

I was glad when we came to Riverton. George would be able to do some nuts and bolts work "to stop the steam escaping," he told us. And I could have a run and search out Mrs Potter. But I didn't have to.

She was waiting on the platform with a bone in one hand and a pot of coffee in the other. I really liked Mrs Potter.

While George and Arthur worked on the jobs I munched on my bone. There wasn't a lot a railway dog could do to help them.

While I was munching and slurping and listening to George's 'not in good company words', my ears picked up other sounds. My paws began to twitch and my nose wrinkled. Cows. We Smithfields are dogs bred to round up cattle and sheep. I wanted to get at the cows and bark from behind. But the cows knew where they were going. I sat and watched, more than a bit annoyed that I hadn't been able to show off my herding instincts.

"Milking time, Bob. The refresh kitchen doesn't close just because the express has gone," Mrs Potter said as she and her daughters got ready with their stools and their pails. "Come into Potter's Paddock, its where we keep our cows. Busy time now, Bob. The express from Adelaide will be heading back to Terowie in the morning and passengers will need cream for their apple pies, butter for their toast and marmalade, and milk for their tea."

Mrs Potter and the girls called each cow by name to get them in a line. There was Clara and Sara, and Bella and Nella and Daisy and Maisie. These words sounded good to my ears. I wished I could tell Alfie.

I wanted to learn about this cow milking so I plonked myself next to Mrs Potter's stool and Clara's hind legs. Clara flipped her tail which whipped across my head.

The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia



"Better move Bob. Cows don't like anyone near their hind legs."

Of course. How could I forget. My instincts sure needed a polish up. So I moved to the other side of Mrs Potter's stool.

"Open your mouth Bob." But before I could she squirted milk which not only missed my lips, but sprayed my nose and eyebrows. Quickly I licked my nose but had to use my paw to get the drops from my eyebrows.

One of Mrs Potter's daughters squeezed milk from Sara into a bowl.

Every other bowl of milk I have had was nothing like this. This was warm and creamy. After another bowl my insides felt warm and full and I was feeling like a kip. I wondered how George and Arthur were getting on fixing the engine. Wally could help even though his place was in the brakevan.

GEORGE



The old engine stopped a lot during the night, picking up a truck or two at some stations, dropping a few at others. The load got heavy, then very heavy. I could see that Arthur was having trouble keeping up the boiler pressure.

After passing Hamley Bridge the old engine got slower, then very slow, as it tackled a long uphill grade. I was listened to its struggling and wondered if we would ever get to Adelaide. Suddenly it gave a last gasp. Then stopped.

So here we were on an uphill grade with a struggling engine which had suddenly become stationary. The sensible solution was to let the train roll back. Arthur got a roaring fire going, then with a full head of steam, we had another go at it. The asthmatic old J class puffed its way up the hill. "Come on, come on," I yelled. Alas, just as it was nearly at the top, it gave a last gasp. How many times would we have to repeat this manouvre?

I glanced across at Arthur who had just banged his shovel on the footplate. I was feeling a bit that way myself. It was difficult to know what Bob was making about all the messing around. He seemed content enough up on the coal.

"We'll have to halve the train," I said as we began to roll back again. "Getting this load up with this ancient J will otherwise take longer than the slow mixed to Hergott."

BOB



Arthur uncoupled the last few trucks with the brake van. When the engine chugged away to take the first half of the train, Wally was already walking back down the track with the bag of detonators. I raced ahead and was standing on the sleepers waiting for Wally.



GAWLER

Photograph dated 1880. It was here that Wally the guard was transferred to the capable hands of the Gawler doctor.

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When Wally had placed the detonators on the rails behind the brakevan, the train was then protected, should another engine come from behind.

Wally had not finished. Detonators had to be placed on the rails ahead of the stranded rear half of the train. George and Arthur would be back soon, with the engine, running tender-first. When I travelled with Matt and Alfie, Alfie would often say on a very dark night that it was 'as dark as a fireman who hadn't washed for a month'. Well, this night was...well, just that. George and Arthur would be listening for those detonators to let them know they had arrived. Otherwise, they could crash into the stranded trucks.

Not that one needed to listen for detonators. They declared their presence with quite a bang. I wasn't allowed to touch the detonators, not even hold one in my mouth but I wanted to help. So I sat on the ground beside the rail holding up a front leg. Wally was smart. He got the message.

"Here Bob you can carry the empty bag. Then we'll get more detonators for the next part of our job."

We were doing good work. George and Arthur would be happy now we were protecting their train. Where were they? I couldn't hear the funny old wheezy engine. But I heard something else. Wally screamed as his hands had reached up to grab the handles to hoist himself into the brake van. But he never made it. He toppled backwards onto the track holding his shoulder and saying those 'not in good company words.' You'll be alright. I'll get help I wanted to tell him. But I barked furiously to let him know I was calling for George.

I pounded to the front of the train but no one came.

If I couldn't hear George then he couldn't hear me.

Wally was groaning and panting like a dog who had just chased rabbits. I gave soft woofs and pushed my head against his legs. Get up Wally. He started to wiggle and soon was sitting on the ballast against the brake van wheel. But still he groaned. George where are you? Then Wally started rambling about the detonators that George and Arthur would be listening for. They had not been put out. George had taken off with the front half of the train without checking that the detonators had been placed on the rails.

I lay down next to Wally, my head in his knees. He didn't give me a head rub, but that was all right because I knew his good hand was holding up his hurt arm. George will know how to help Wally. George hurry up.

And then I heard the engine.

But there were no detonators. We hadn't finished our job. My eyes fixed on to the lantern that Wally had left on the ground behind the brakevan. Its handle was cold in my mouth and it hurt my teeth, but I knew what I had to do. Pounding up the track I made some distance until I saw the engine. Time to put the lantern down and hope that George could hear my barking above the noise of the engine. He slowed and finally stopped just a few leaps in front of me.

I could tell George and Arthur knew something was wrong. No detonators and a railway dog and a lantern sure gave them a surprise.

GEORGE.



We had left the trucks at Wasleys and were running tender-first to pick up the rest of the train. When I first saw the flashing light I thought I was having hallucinations but then I heard the bark. It was still night and the sound travelled far.

Clever Bob had placed the lamp on a sleeper in the middle of the track and was running backwards and forwards across the track in front of the lantern, thus causing the lamp to appear to be flashing.

Whilst it was a bit of bad luck for Wally it was fortuitous for myself. The Order of St. John had been established in South Australia only a few months before and those of us in the locomotive department had been offered training in first aid. There were training sessions offered for crews at Terowie, in which I enrolled. After that I always carried a few bandages in the bottom of my tucker box.

I soon had Wally's arm in triangular bandages and he seemed much more comfortable. He kept saying he'd busted his shoulder but I could reassure him it was a dislocation and would soon be sorted out with the doctor at Gawler.

After I made Wally comfy in the brakevan I headed back to the engine.

"Coming Bob," I called. "Time to go."

Not according to Bob. Moments later I was giving him a lift up into the van where he proceeded to lie down beside Wally. When I closed the door, Wally was giving Bob a hearty head rub.

When we arrived at Wasleys we picked up the trucks but more importantly I had the stationmaster wire through to Gawler to have the town doctor meet the train.

BOB



When the doctor met the train I made sure he knew that I expected Wally to get fixed up. A few woofs and several whines told him we expected our Wally to be looked after.

Before we left Gawler I leapt onto the footplate. George gave me a head rub.

"Good dog, clever Bob," he said. Arthur must've agreed because he wanted to shake hands. I showed my best manners and then leapt onto the coal. I was on my way to Adelaide.

There were no more hills to climb and the old J was now easily steaming. George turned to me and said, "Y'know, Bob, you're a real life-saver. When we took off to Wasleys with the first half of the train we hadn't checked that Wally had placed all the detonators.

That was against the regulations, not that we had deliberately set out to break any rules. If we had crashed into those trucks there would have been an enquiry and probably some penalties. Railway kin looking after railway kin."

I gave a hearty woof.

There was one more stop on the way to Adelaide, where I would meet Matt and Alfie. Our train had to stop at Islington, which was where the engines were fixed.

I had been there before and was always welcomed by the men. They were good men who smelt of oils and grease.

When the slow goods arrived I spied an engine simmering away on one of the sidings. It was my favourite. I could never resist the chance to ride on a Yankee, so I bounded towards it. I knew George and Arthur would tell Matt where I was.

The Yankee was bigger than the ones in Petersburg and I had to give an extra push to make sure I landed in the cab. I could tell that the crew were happy to see me because they shared their tucker boxes with me. Then they had to leave the engine to report to Mr Thow's office. "Back soon Bob," the fireman said giving me a head rub. "Make yourself at home."

After spending a long night on the old engine, I snuggled down near the firebox on the cold Adelaide morning. When my paws began to twitch, I knew I would soon be asleep.

During my travels I have learned to listen to engines. They talk to me. I can tell if they are happy or sad. And even through my sleep, my doggy ears are alert for their sounds.

I woke with a jolt. Something was not right.

The engine was moving. Slowly. And going backwards. There was no driver and no fireman.

I leapt onto the tender. Ahead of us men were working on an engine, some on it, others under it. Not one of them had seen the Yankee heading towards them.

My mind knew what I had to do and my legs agreed. Once on the ground, I raced towards the repair crew, and barking all the way, got ahead of the delinquent engine. With only seconds to spare, they were out of the way. And I was almost out of breath.

CRASH!!

That impact then caused the Yankee to go forwards. It moved faster and belched steam and large amounts of scalding water went up the smoke-stack. A boy scrambled into the cab. I think he was trying to slow the engine.

Further on she crashed into another engine. Then the two engines collected a travelling water tank. I was glad to see the boy jump out of the Yankee. He ran towards a group of workers, some with their hands on their hips, others covering their eyes.

There was nothing much a dog could do, except watch and be ready to get out of the way of any engine that wasn't sure where it was supposed to be.

No one would have heard my barks above the terrible din of hisses and crashes and crunches. There was mess everywhere. But there was worse to come. The Yankee, all by itself, crashed through closed doors and into the paint shop.

People came running, yelling and waving their arms. I knew it was safe to follow them. This was a different kind of adventure for me, and I was curious.

Red paint was all over the buffer and dripping off one of the side lamps. It could have been part of a murder scene. Cans of other paints which had been tipped over or crushed, lay scattered across the floor.

I was careful to keep away from them. One worker slipped and landed with a thump. I could see he had more than his shoes covered in colours.

But I wasn't careful enough. Green paint was splattered beside the big driving wheels.

And before I could fully realise my predicament, I had left a trail of pawprints across the paint shop floor.

When Mr Thow came to check out the damage, his eyes told me he was a good man. He was happy that no workers had been hurt, and that my warning had saved many lives.

THE PAINT SHOP INCIDENT

Throughout this book we have created incidents based on factual information relating to the era, however we accept that an occasional anachronism may have slipped in. In this chapter we have created the incident with the halving of the train, the detonators and the first aid training of railway employees by the volunteers of St John, that was established in South Australia in 1885. It was a different story with the Yankee running amok at the Islington workshops and demolishing the Paint Shop. This really happened on 29 May 1886, but we have added Bob's involvement, and Mr Thow as the fictional components. I have included the full report from the *Register* in my previous book, *Bob's Railway* as Appendix Item 3, page 142.

Amok is an interesting phenomenon that is of Malay culture and etymology, referring originally to an individual in a crazed and destructive state. In Scandinavian cultures it is called berserk.

So, I was to get free travel anywhere on the trains and all crews had to be friendly towards me. He didn't know that in my opinion all crews were already my friends.

But best of all, I was to get a special collar which would be my 'all lines ticket'. When Mr Thow squatted beside me, I wanted to shake hands. But quickly decided not to.

The boy who had jumped into the Yankee cab rushed over to me. I wanted to thank him for trying to stop the engine.

When I held up my paw, I could tell he had sparkles of happiness in his eyes. A few splotches of paint wouldn't matter on his already greasy and oily overalls.

Everyone must have talked to everyone else about the excitement in the paint shop, because it wasn't long before Matt and Alfie arrived. Alfie was ready with a poem composed for the special occasion. Mister Skipper wasn't far behind them. He had been sent to write the facts for his newspaper. I was happy to show him around the yards and walk him through the paint shop. I even found the boy, who had more sparkles in his eyes when Mister Skipper told him he would get a mention in the newspaper.

Workers were gathering to listen to Alfie. Those who had started to clean up the floor leaned on their shovels and mops. What a very good way to end a hard morning's work. Of course, that was only my opinion.



ALFIE

*From crews on both up trains and down trains we'll hear,
How of Pennywise Pendleton's audits they fear.
For he'll check all the tickets and tally the sheets
And sniff out evaders hiding under the seats,
But of his arrival at Riverton that May afternoon,
No way of lives saved could he ever have 'knoorn'.
If our four legged friend had stayed aboard the express,
The outcome at the works could've been anyone's guess.
So, thankyou to Pennywise for being out on the job
And the hero of course was our train-riding BOB.*

BOB



I wanted to say 'Railway kin looking after railway kin', but I gave long and hearty barks instead.