

THE OVERLAND - A SOCIAL HISTORY

By John Wilson

A SHORT SYNOPSIS - 10 FEBRUARY 2020

Mission Statement 4

I believe that there is a future for a fast (160 kph) train between South Australia and Melbourne, and that the break-of-gauge at Ararat should not be an impediment.

The Mystery of the Winged Orb 6

The origins of the Overland name and the connection to the Southern Pacific Railroad

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The Intercolonial Express was a significant catalyst to Federation.

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Faster transit of the English mails drove the construction of the Intercolonial railway.

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All about faster passage of the mails from England.

The Adelaide Mail Service 18

In the early years the mail steamers did not call at Adelaide.

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All about Australia's muddled railway-gauges

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The mail route connecting Victoria and South Australia.

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The Kingston to Naracoorte railway.

From Ararat to Adelaide 31

Authorisation and construction of the Intercolonial railway and why there is a detour via Murtoa and Horsham.

Serviceton and Disputed Territory 35

Both colonies claimed a 2-mile strip which was where Serviceton was established as the border station.

Up the Long Cutting 40

The direct railway from Melbourne, via Bacchus Marsh, to Ballarat was at great cost but of little benefit to revenue. It is believed to have been the main factor in the fall of the Munro Government.

Inaugural Intercolonial Expresses 43

The first expresses ran on 19 January 1887. There were no banquets or speeches. The two Colonial Governments were at odds over the disputed border and other issues. The Melbourne press supported the government in snubbing the occasion.

The Intercolonial Carriages 44

There was a complex cost sharing formula and some carriages were supplied by Victoria and some by South Australia.

Potable Water and Sanitation 49

The first carriages (not the sleeping cars) on the Intercolonial Express had no lavatories, drinking water or hand-washing facilities. It prompted me to do a search “Serviceton and typhoid”. I wasn’t disappointed.

Charlie Kelly’s Breakfast 50

In 1897 Charlie was the lessee of the Murray Bridge refreshment rooms and put on a lavish breakfast for a train-load of VIPs. Over the next few days they would get on with the serious stuff of writing the Australian Constitution.

Standard Time 55

Adelaide and Melbourne are separated by 25 minutes and 34.74 seconds. In the 1890s they had two attempts at interfering with time.

The Coffin Traffic 55

There were some brake-vans specially equipped for this traffic.

The E Cars 56

The carriages introduced in 1907

The Great Western Express 61

After the opening of the transcontinental railway to Perth, additional trains were needed between Melbourne and Adelaide.

Improvements of the 1920s 63

The deviation to eliminate the Eden viaducts (actually it was 1919), the new Murray Bridge, train control, and stronger track.

The Pullman Cars 64

Bill Webb and Harold Clapp purchased three heavyweight steel cars from Pullman in the USA. Clapp should have got Parliamentary approval for such a large purchase from a “foreign country”. The only reason that Clapp did not get sacked was that the Hogan Government fell. If Clapp had been sacked, Australia would not have got the *Spirit of Progress* in 1937.

Events of 1929 73

The last thing that South Australia needed was a train-wreck. There was a derailment at Callington when the embankment was washed away in a storm.

The Locomotive Problem 76

A lengthy chapter that deals with the quest for the ideal locomotive to work the Adelaide to Melbourne Expresses.

1930s and 1940s 97

The Depression and the war years. The highlight was the arrival of General Douglas MacArthur in March 1942.

Allambi 105

Allambi was the first of the steel cars for *The Overland*, and entered service in 1949. They were designed and built at Islington Workshops of the SAR..

The Daylight *Overland* 110

A description of the early attempts.

The Serviceton Collision 111

On 7 September 1951 the two *Overland* expresses collided head-on at Serviceton. There were about 600 passengers but none were seriously injured. Fireman Hosking of the lead locomotive of the westbound express was killed. The driver of that engine was charged over Hosking's death, but was acquitted by a jury.

Feeding the Passengers 114

Dining cars, buffet cars and club cars.

Celebration of the Streamliners 120

The dream of the men and women at Islington was to achieve a "streamliner". It took a long time to happen, but from about 1972 to 1978 *The Overland* was generally a long train of all steel carriages and hauled by a streamlined diesel. This is a collection of quality black & white photographs that have been enlarged to full page size.

Platform 14 126

Platform 14 was the plan for a standard-gauge platform at the Adelaide Railway Station. Australian National Railways was formed in 1978 by the amalgamation of the South Australian Railways, Tasmanian Government Railways and Commonwealth Railways. In 1990 there was deregulation of airlines and cheap air fares. In 1995 the railway between Adelaide and Melbourne was standardised which caused additional problems. In 1997 Australian National's passenger business was sold to a private operator, Great Southern Railway. GSR is a tourism operator and *The Overland* now sits uncomfortably within their portfolio of "products". GSR (now Journey Beyond) has reduced the operation of *The Overland* to two return journeys per week.

Diesel All-sorts 132

From about 1978 to 1997 a wide range of diesels, and in many colours too, worked *The Overland*. This is a collection of colour photographs of the diesel era of *The Overland*.

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A listing of events etc.

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Changes to schedules with reasons where known.

Incidents and Accidents 152

For about 133 years the Express has been operating between Adelaide and Melbourne. Over the years it has had a few scrapes, but has never lost a passenger who has been safely confined within their carriage.

Victoria Reynolds 154

Victoria Reynolds was a reporter for the *Advertiser*, and in 1930, with the blessing of Commissioner Webb, rode the footplate of the Express to Serviceton and back. This is adrenalin journalism.

Stephen Quintrell 156

He was a driver for the SAR and his memoirs are held in the State Library of South Australia.

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A report of influenza quarantine arrangements 1919.

1891 Timetable 159

From an 1891 Almanac – gives mileages and elevations for every station.

1886 Overland Journey 161

A reporter for the Melbourne *Argus* made the journey from Melbourne to Adelaide, which included travel on the contractor's train.

E Class Sleeping Cars 164

\ These cars were named after rivers in the two states. More than half have been preserved.
1887 Joint Stock Carriages 165

There have been attempts by previous researchers to compile listings but there have been difficulties, and I have straightened out some irregularities – but I don't promise that this is the final word.

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David worked for many years at the Islington Workshops and has remained a valuable resource, particularly regarding the history of rolling stock items.

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It is my tradition to write two pages the day before I sign off with the printer.