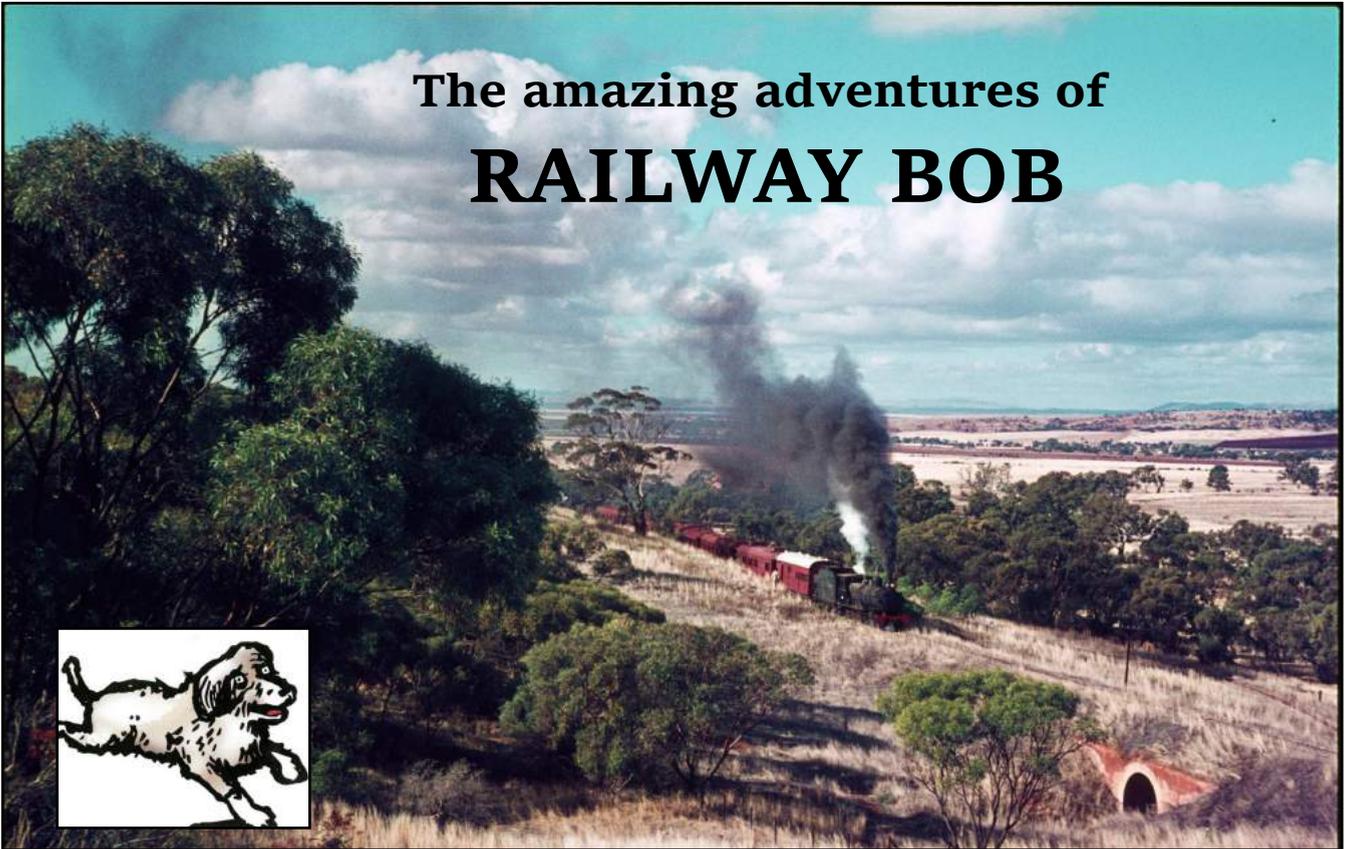


The amazing adventures of RAILWAY BOB



ABOVE. Pichi Richi Pass, between Port Augusta and Quorn in the Southern Flinders Ranges. Photograph from the collection of the National Railway Museum.

There is a steam train slowly working up the narrow pass. It is still 2 or 3 km away and we are watching from a distant peak. There is only the sound of the wind. We hear a crow flying overhead. We don't hear the sound of the engine other than the occasional distant whistle. At some distance, faintly, there are children at a fettler's camp, singing Bob's song – and skipping with a rope.

Hey, my name is just Bob

Of the Petersburg mob

Where the northern railways junction

I ride up on the coal

While those driving wheels roll

Watch those engine side-rods function

CHORUS

Jog-a-jog jog

I'm a traveling dog

And I like train riding

All the children love me.

BOB !

Get a wave at every siding.

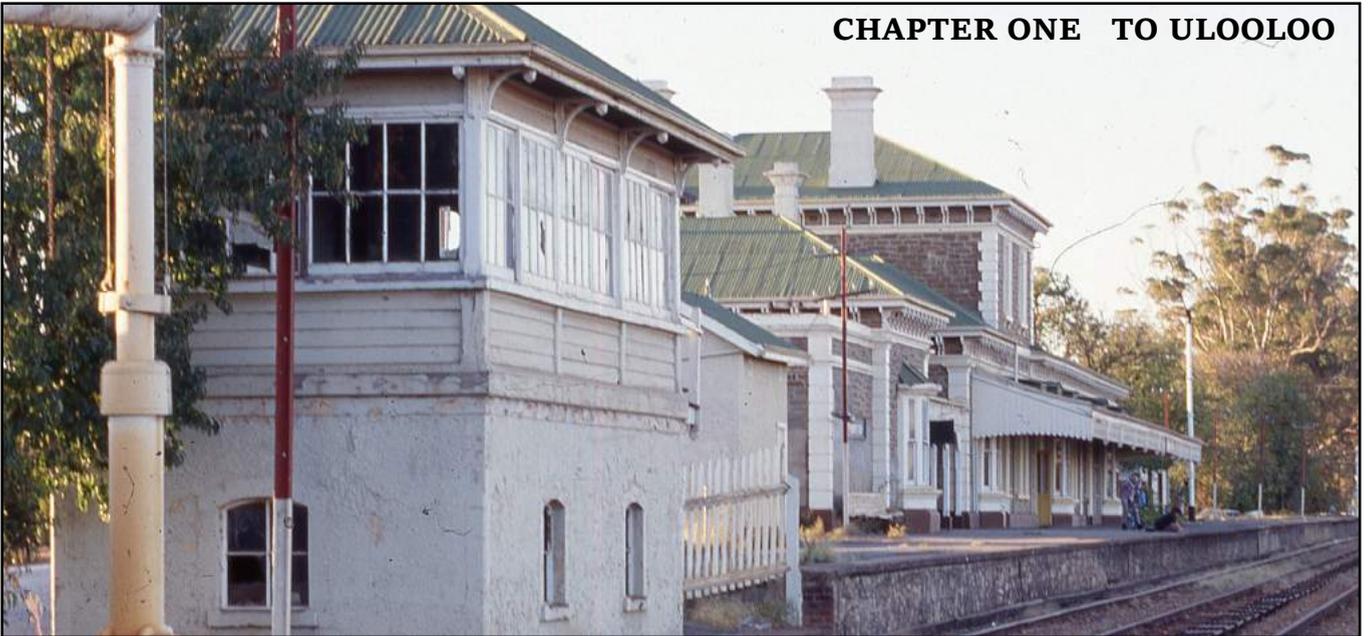
The singing is getting louder, then the instruments of the orchestra, the triangle and piccolo; then then the violins then the brass. By this time the children are silent but we have the full ASO playing *fortissimo*, and as the train nears the station then the pipe organ. The combined energy of steam, orchestra, and organ reverberate off the sheer rock faces of the narrow pass until finally the train comes to a halt in a cloud of steam. All we hear is total silence for 5 seconds – a dog barks.

We get our first glimpse of Bob, riding on the locomotive tender. There is a gathering of passengers with travelling bags. They set about boarding. We watch as the fireman shovels coal, and the engine driver polishes the glass face of the steam pressure gauge. We get a look at the engine cab with its complexity of levers and fittings, quietly oozing tufts of steam.

We get a good look at Bob, sitting up on the coal. Clearly, a very intelligent dog - but more to the point - while we have been crystalising our judgement about Bob, his doggy mind has already worked us out.

THE MUSIC. The intention is to generate an overwhelming aura of energy with the full Adelaide Symphony Orchestra *fff* and the power of the pipe organ in the Adelaide Town Hall. It will be at some cost but sends the message right at the start that this series about Bob has been done with a real dog, real trains and real music.

Musical score and 2nd & 3rd verses are on page xx.



RIVERTON RAILWAY STATION photographed about 1988 at which time the passenger trains were no longer running but there were occasional freight trains clearing wheat from silos at Saddleworth and Farrell Flat. It was co-incidence that there was a dog on the platform. JLW



G'day, I'm Bob!

Bob is short for just Bob, not Robert, Bobby or Rob.

I'm a railway dog. There are watch-dogs, guide-dogs, hunting-dogs, companion-dogs, sniffer-dogs. And there is doggerel. Being a railway dog, I am a sort of canine travel-writer.

I am aboard the morning express on the north line. I have taken my seat. We will only be going as far as Terowie with this engine.

I have been down in Adelaide for a few days, came down from Terowie with Matthew Eyes, our driver. I was pampered like royalty and got lots to eat. Matt's wife, Jane, gave me a wash. I still don't look like me. And the smell is not right. I don't want to seem ungrateful, but I can't wait to get into some coal dust.

Matthew lives in Adelaide, but when he drives the express to Terowie he has a room that he shares with another driver called George Hiscock. He drives on the broad gauge. I like George.

Matthew Eyes was a real-life character and probably the most famous driver on the South Australian Railways in his day. He was born in England in 1847 and claimed that, as a child he had seen Stephenson's *Rocket* in steam. That claim is doubtful. He had theories about rain-making and on two occasions sent explosives up in balloons at Terowie. It didn't work! He died in 1913, almost to the day of his retirement. There is a three-page biography in my book, *The Riesling Railway*.

George Hiscock was a real-life character whose interest in photography has given us the classic Bob studies, surrounded by lamps and oil cans. George also drove the broad gauge express between Adelaide and Terowie.

George Stephenson is recognised as the 'father of the modern railway', and built his *Rocket* in 1830.

George says that Matt is the most famous driver in South Australia.

My eyes are fixed on Matt in the cabin, and Alfie too. Alfie is our fireman. Boy are they busy.

My fur is shaking with excitement and my nose is twitching. We are getting ready. Matt is so clever. I once heard George say that Matt is a musician and composes music and sings.

I've seen Matt blow into an instrument that makes music, the sounds sometimes reminding me of wind swirling through hollow logs out in the dry country. Alfie calls it a clarinet. Alfie and I know that Matt can also make music on something else. He is such an expert and I bet no one else can do it. I hope Matt does it this trip.

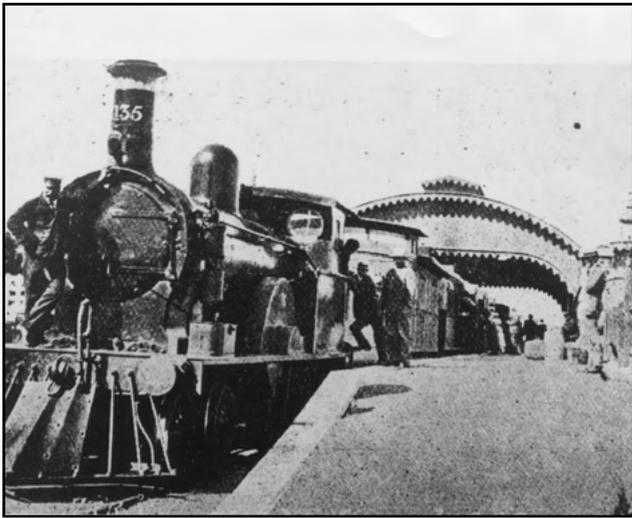
Matt has pulled his watch out of his pocket and checks it against the big clock on the station. It is 10 past 7 on the big clock up there," Matt says leaning over to give me a head rub. "Not long now Bob."

And there it is. The guard's whistle.

Matt has just released the air brake and there is the last *hissss* of air as he nudges the engine throttle. We are moving. Slowly. Then, as we gather speed, we go over the maze of points and crossings in the station yard. *Clickety clack-clack-clack, grack grint tack a grimble and clack.*

And the engine is talking to us. My ears hear music.

Chuff-chuff, getting faster, signals all clear up the track. Today its Terowie and then I'll come back.



ABOVE. The Broken Hill Express at Burra (from Broken Hill to Adelaide) with Matthew Eyes standing at the front of the locomotive. The engine is the S class express locomotive, the first of which entered service in 1894. This photograph was from the Kapunda Herald 1908.

I am not in the carriage, and I am not locked up in the dog-box in the guard's van where dogs normally travel. This railway dog has the best seat on the express. It is on the heap of coal in the tender. I am king of the castle and with the wind in my face, I have a perfect lookout. I can see what Matt and Alfie are doing. And if I want to, I can move and ride on the footplate.

No one has ever given me a ticket, first or second class. In fact, I have no ticket at all. A railway dog does not need a ticket.

As we rush through stations, our engine picks up speed. "North Adelaide, Ovingham, Islington, Dry Creek," Matt yells as the signs flash past. This is what the engine crews call the 'race track'.

It is not long before Alfie bursts into poetry. He is prone to this sort of activity. Most of it is doggerel, but I like it. Most words I don't understand but I like the way Alfie says them. Matt tolerates these outbursts of Alfie's doggerel. Sometimes he suggests a different rhyming word or a whole new line. Matt says that some of Alfie's poems have a quality air about them.

The north-line express is our job

There's driver, Matt, me and our Bob

In the engine cab we're a smart team

Making speed out of coal, smoke and steam

At Terowie, on time, we should lob.

"I have heard both better and worse from you," Matt says, slapping Alfie on the shoulder. He does that sometimes. It means they are friends. I give a bark of approval.

Meanwhile we are whistling our way ever north.

Woo-a-woo-a loo-a loo

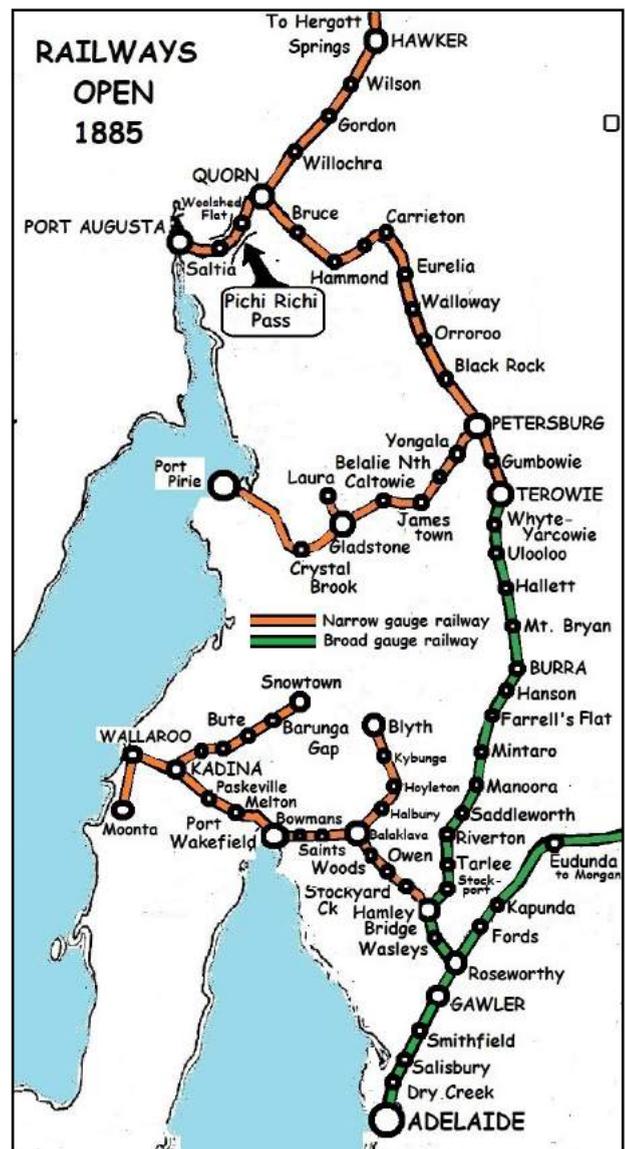
There are many new words that a railway dog hears and some meanings only become clear with time. Matt talks of 'electricity' and how he experiments with it, and does stage shows. I think that means to entertain people. He also takes pictures of people and places and things using a flash light. This must be something new because he gets quite excited when he tells people about it. Matt is so clever. This railway dog is still trying to understand about electricity. I also had a problem understanding gauges but I think I have got that worked out now.



MATTHEW EYES

Alfie and I would have to be the luckiest blokes on earth to have a mate like Bob. We talk to him as if he really understands, like a person would. Sometimes I know he does and could run rings around some people I know. Our Bob has a lot of 'know how'. Other times, all the technical jargon we use, just seem to slip past his whiskers.

Crews have to keep the many levers and instruments in the engine clean and polished. There is the pressure gauge.



It is the fireman's job to keep the pressure a whisker under 130 which is the level he needs to have the engine running its best. There is also the water gauge and the Westinghouse gauge. The Westinghouse brake allows the driver to bring the express to a stop smoothly.

The fireman needs to know when we are approaching an upgrade because I will need more steam. And he has to ease off with the coal shovel when we are approaching a station. Alfie and I work as a team. And Bob is one of that team.

When Alfie wants a reaction from Bob, usually a whine, he'll say, "What steps would you take Bob, if the safety valve became stuck and the pressure was 150?" Bob has heard this question a few times and each response, that is the whine, gets longer and louder. "Longest ones possible hey Bob." Alfie would always answer his own question. In my opinion, Bob could tell by Alfie's expression and urgency in his voice, that we would all have to run faster than a dog chasing a hare at the races.

The confusing thing about gauges is that there are railway gauges which have nothing in common with the gauges in the engine cab.

Alfie tried to teach Bob about railway gauges, that is the distance between the tracks. Bob had already worked out that he could jump over the narrow gauge track from a standing position. But not the broad gauge. That needed a running jump and a flying leap. When Alfie was trying to explain to Bob about the Sydney standard gauge, he scratched two lines in the dirt. At first Bob was real keen to help, sending red dirt flying. I reckon he soon lost interest when he realised Alfie wasn't looking for a bone. Narrow gauge drivers and broad gauge drivers meet at Terowie.

And half way to Terowie is Riverton.



ALFIE

Soon be at Riverton. "RRRR - Riverton Railway Refreshment Rooms - positively the best pies anywhere!" Mrs Potter and her 'Refresh girls' will have pots of tea and coffee ready for the rush when we arrive with the express.

When the express reaches Riverton, Matt stands by the engine and talks to the passengers. Matt is immediately recognisable by his white coat and bushy eyebrows. There was one occasion when the express was behind schedule as the boiler tubes were leaking. Matt requisitioned some oatmeal from the Mrs Potter's kitchen and poured the oatmeal into the injector.

Mary Potter was a popular lady with travellers on the north line. She had taken the lease of the Riverton Refreshment Rooms when they were first established in 1874 in partnership with her husband, James. He later acquired the licence for the Refreshment Rooms at the Adelaide Railway Station. Mary and her daughters continued to operate the Refreshment rooms at Riverton. Mary died in 1915, and her son, James Jr. took over the lease. The tenure of the Potter family at Riverton ended with the death of James Jr. in 1917.



RIVERTON. About 1905, showing the railway staff and the 'Refresh' staff, which would have included Mary Potter. The Riverton Railway Refreshment Rooms were enlarged in 1885 and included the second storey which provided living quarters for Mary Potter, her family and the 'Refresh girls'. Photograph from the collection of the Riverton History Room.

That blocked the leaks and Matt was able to get the express into Adelaide on time. Matt says he learned to drive engines in England. Matt says that when he was in England he saw the *Rocket* in steam. George Hiscock thinks that is not true. But Matt is one to remind the rest of us in the cab. "If it hadn't been for George Stephenson, you my friends, would not be where you are right now."

MATT



The passengers in the front carriages are generally the first to the counter. Then some will come down to the engine for a look and a chat before the signalman rings the 3-minute bell. I get a certain pleasure from telling folks about the workings of the Westinghouse brake. One bloke, after inspecting a few wheels, remarked. "Well I'm blessed! Smooth. Not like the old days when we stopped with a jolt. Remarkable, quite remarkable."

If the passengers are all-out interested and not just time-wasters and nosey, I show them the air compressor on the side of the engine, singing its song: *kjar-kumph, kjar-kumph-kar, psss- kjar-kumph-kjar*.

BELOW. Q class locomotive 84, was built by Dubs & Co of Glasgow. There were 15 of these express locomotives that entered service in 1885. An additional order of 7 locomotives was placed with James Martin & Co of Gawler. These Martin locomotives were known as 'colonial Qs' and were designed by the SAR locomotive superintendent, William Thow, who made the circular side window his trademark. **STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA.**



My education session was interrupted by several barks. Bob was trotting towards the engine. A few paces behind him a man seemed quite at ease to be following a dog who seemed in no doubt about where he was going. I wondered what this bloke had done to get Bob's attention. Our Bob doesn't easily take to anyone not smelling of oil or grease.

SPENCER SKIPPER



I could scarcely believe my luck when I came upon the railway dog known as Bob. He was clearly wary of strangers. I had to make his acquaintance.

Considering all options, I decided to squat on the platform so my head would be level with the dog's. Across a distance of a few yards, I told him my name and purpose, keeping my words unrushed. "And I wish you 'good morning' Mister Bob. I had previously only heard of you and now I meet you in the flesh. It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance."

What happened next startled me so much that I toppled backwards in a most undignified manner. Not only had Bob leaped towards me but stood beside me, one paw firmly on my chest. He had what I can only describe as a lilted whine. What was behind those staring eyes?

He waited until I had dusted myself down, then nudged my knee. Was it a message? Then, turning away from me he stared down the platform. Then I knew. There was no way I could have kept pace with the dog, who in spite of his large frame, was extremely fleet of foot. By the time I had reached the engine, Bob had leapt inside the cab and was barking in my direction. There was no doubt in my mind that I was being invited to join him.

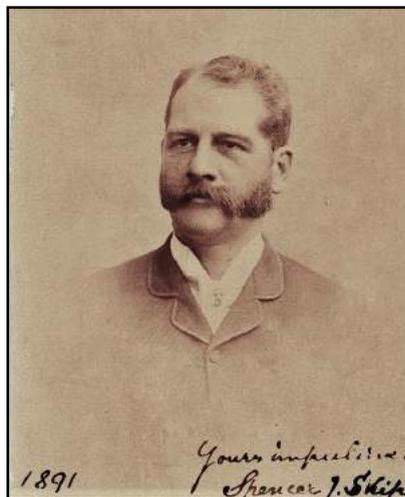
Having absolutely no intention of leaping into the cab, I remained a few moments watching the interaction between the dog and the fireman. Bob emitted several levels of barks and whines. I am certain I heard him sigh. I wondered if it was indeed possible for a man to understand canine language.

"Hey Bob, you've brought a friend," the fireman said acknowledging my presence. "Any friend of Bob's is ... well you know how the saying goes. But I am curious how you were able to gain his trust."

"It must have been what I said. But could he understand when I addressed him as Mister Bob?"

"To be sure," the fireman said as he rubbed his sooty hands on an even more sooty rag. "Our Bob knows a gentleman when he sees one. And it is indeed a rare treat for Bob himself to be treated like one."

Petersburg is now called Peterborough. The name was changed in 1918. There were many South Australian localities with German or Turkish names that had their names changed in that year. Hergott Springs was another locality that readers will frequently encounter within this book. It is now Marree. Mintaro railway station was renamed Merildin.



SPENCER SKIPPER a journalist for *The Register* newspaper, which also published the *Evening Journal* and the *Express and Telegraph*. He sometimes used the pen name 'Hugh Kalyptus'. He had a flamboyant and colourful writing style and appears to have met and reported about Bob many times over the years. He has inscribed the photograph 'yours impressively'. **State Library of South Australia.**

"Well, bless my soul! I must tell you Mr Fireman

"The name's Alfie."

"Alfie, I myself am having a rare treat at this moment. Permit me to introduce myself," I said taking a card from my breast pocket. "Spencer Skipper, a reporter from *The Register* newspaper. I am on my way to Silverton to report on the Broken Hill mine."

"That must be a new one. I haven't heard of that one before. There seems to be a new mine every week. Funny name for a mine - Broken Hill." Alfie said. "And Bob hasn't heard of it either. See the way he cocks his head. New word for him too."

Alfie stared at my card, turning it around and over between his fingers. "A reporter, aye," he said. "Well, Mr Skipper, sir, maybe you could remember us in your reporting. 'Us' being me and Bob and Matt down there talking to the passenger folk. See we're family, not regular family kin, but railway family."

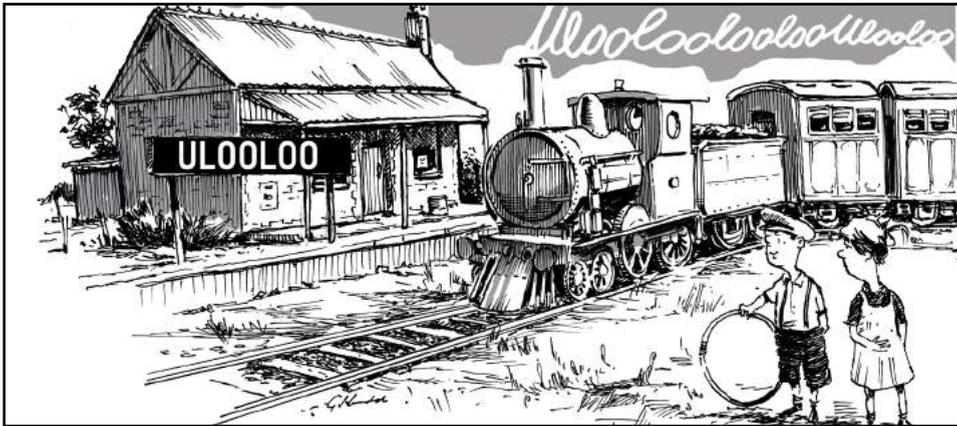
"Bob is your dog?" I asked as I glanced up at Bob gazing down at us from the top of the coal.

"No, although one could be excused for thinking so. He belongs to William Ferry who is with the railways at Petersburg. He is commonly known as Seth."

"So, am I correct in assuming that the racehorse trainer, Seth Ferry, is a relative?"

"His uncle. It seems one is into horses, the other dogs. Actually, only one dog, hey Bob."

The dog gave a woof and Alfie a chuckle. "All right, yes I know," he said. "We have done this trip several times Mr Skipper, and Bob knows Ferry will be on the train from Petersburg and will meet us at Terowie this afternoon. Then they will go home to Petersburg."



LEFT. There is anecdotal evidence that some of the engine drivers on the north line did have a special whistle call for Ulooloo. Greg Judd has drawn the cartoon.

“I am staying at the Royal Hotel at Terowie to-night,” I said watching Alfie move about the cab checking gauges. “It would be interesting for sure if I could speak with Ferry about Bob.”

“Reckon you be on the stage coach for Silverton in the morning, so we will arrange it tonight. When we get to Burra, I’ll have the station master wire Terowie and let Ferry know.”

I was about to offer my thanks when Alfie leaned out the cab. “Sorry Mr Skipper, there’s the 3 minute bell. Make way for Matt. Can’t go nowhere without him.”



BOB

I gave a soft whine when Mr Skipper walked away from us. He seemed a good sort of bloke and I know Alfie liked him too. The way he spoke to the ‘non-railway’ man about my home was a dead giveaway.

I am very happy to already be in our engine. The rush of people pouring out of the eating and drinking place is sometimes a little frightening even for a travelling dog. They obviously do not want to be left behind, although I do not think Matt would ever do that.

Although Alfie didn’t say much after we left River-ton, the look on his face said his mind was definitely working on something. Sure enough, when Matt was ‘cracking the throttle’ as we drifted into Mintaro station, Alfie burst forth. I know those words because Matt uses them often when Alfie does his poems.

*Some men go stark crazy ‘bout holes in the ground
And script writ on paper they’ll pay a good pound
But the ones that get rich from that silvery mine
Are the ones who sell them strong liquors and wine.*

Alfie was true to his word at Burra. Ferry would know about Mr Skipper coming to Terowie.

Matt calls out station names as we approach them. Not many people at Mount Bryan. A few children wave to me at Hallett.

We are coming up to Ulooloo, then Whyte Yarcowie, and finally Terowie. Humans could have found better names for those stations. ‘Owie’ sounds like a dog in pain.

After we leave Hallett, I jump down into the cab. I want to be under the whistle cord when Matt whistle calls approaching Ulooloo. I have watched him work the whistle cord which is strung across the roof of the cab. This is Matt’s other special musical instrument. Sometimes he uses his little finger and other times his pointing one. I hear different whistle calls depending on which finger he uses. Most humans could not tell the difference, but the ear of a railway dog can tell what station is coming next.

My feet are restless and I can hear my claws scraping on metal. I wonder if Matt and Charlie can see my tail wagging. I am watching, ready. I have a surprise for them. Matt’s pointing finger reaches for the chord. The moment he gives the first tug, I join in with my best melodious howl.

Ulooloo-loo-loo-loo-ulooloo-loo-loo

Railway dog and engine whistle. Perfect timing, although I did add one more *loo-loo* just to make sure they heard me above the whistle and engine noises.

I could tell Matt and Alfie were surprised when they spun around to stare at me. Their faces had fixed grins. Matt was even wriggling his eyebrows.

“Clever Bob,” Matt said giving me a head rub. “What do you reckon Alfie, a very clever dog?”

“Can’t find no fault with that.” I give a short bark which means I agree with Alfie.

My paws tingle when I hear them laugh. We are such good mates. Good mates have jobs. So we all go back to ours. Alfie is watching the coal, Matt watching for animals straying onto the track. And me, on lookout duty, watching for anything.

I must have dozed off because next sound I hear is Matt. “Eight minutes to twelve Alfie,” he says then puts his watch back in his pocket. “We’ll be in on time.”

When we pull into Terowie station I give a few barks to make sure Ferry knows I’m here. We are all mates, but Ferry has a special place in this railway dog’s heart.