



NOVEMBER 2021

www.sarlinesbooks.com.au

IN THIS EDITION

SOME CHRISTMAS SUGGESTIONS

THE OVERLAND AND THE FUTURE OF FAST RAIL PASSENGER SERVICES BETWEEN ADELAIDE AND MELBOURNE.

A MOVIE OR TELEVISION SERIES ABOUT BOB THE RAILWAY DOG AND A BOOK OF 20 CHAPTERS.

A TRIANG TRAIN SET FROM THE 1960s

THE COVID DIARY

THE GREAT BREAK OF GAUGE BOOK

There's a lot in this edition. I contemplated taking the scissors to it, but I know that there are many on the distribution list who will be eager to read the whole lot.

SOME CHRISTMAS SUGGESTIONS

All the books in the Sarlines Railway Books range are presently in print, but stocks of The Riesling Railway and Bob's Railway are running low.

The cost of postage is something of which we have no control but remember that two books can travel for the price of one, and that we do an attractive deal if buying two books.

www.sarlinesbooks.com.au

Books are a bit like kids, in the sense that they consume much time and energy. And eventually, it is time to let them go and move on. But you never get rid of them, and they require attention in later years. There are two of my previous books that are presently demanding attention. Not that I am complaining.

The Overland – A social history (2020)

When I did the research for this book it was evident that the express had suffered many injustices over the years and this process has continued. The most recent insult that has been hurled at *The Overland* was the revision of the Thursday path to take 50 minutes longer for the eastbound journey. The COVID pandemic has hit *The Overland* hard and I expect that when the border is open in the next few weeks it will be back in business. Under the present funding arrangement it will probably struggle on for another 18 months but what will happen then? There is no plan for the long-term future of the Adelaide to Melbourne passenger service. The present carriages are 70 years old.

So, rightly or wrongly I have taken up the cudgels in support. She is old and slow. Whereas once she was 18 carriages and was seven days a week in both directions, she is now 5 cars and two return movements per week. She sits uncomfortably within the portfolio of *The Ghan*, *The Indian Pacific* and *The Great Southern*.

I believe that there is a future for fast passenger rail between Adelaide and Melbourne using Vlocity 160 kph trains. They have the potential to offer a level of social distancing not possible with air travel or interstate buses. I believe that it will be possible to travel from greater Adelaide to Southern Cross under 8 hours. By air it is about 4 hours. I believe that a fast modern rail service with a few 'bells and whistles' like WiFi would be competitive. But it will need track and safeworking upgrades and some other infrastructure. That will be big money (Commonwealth) and take years to happen. But we have to start somewhere.

The coming South Australian State election offers an opportunity. In June 2020 I was a participant in the on-line Serviceton Summit that sought to have a continuation of funding for *The Overland* in order to explore tourism options and improvements, like WiFi. Funding was sought for 6 months.

The surprise was that the Victorian Government provided 3 years of funding, and we were told by Minister Ben Carroll that the Serviceton Summit was a major contributor to that decision. However there has been no progress re WiFi etc. and the development of tourism packages for regional centres. That is largely a legacy of the COVID but I am not convinced that it is the only reason. I am seeking to have a reconvening of the Serviceton Summit to be held at Serviceton. I live in the very marginal electorate of Newland, presently held by Liberal with, I am told a majority of 100. I am working hard to have the revitalization of *The Overland* service to be an election issue ahead of the March election. Early indications are that this has the support of Peter Malanuskas. Peter has said that if Labor is to win the election it must win Newland.

The other initiative that deserves a look at is an O'bahn bus to Murray Bridge. Presently, if I want to get the Thursday am *Overland* (which departs 6.55 am) I must get a taxi to the Keswick Rail Passenger Terminal (which doesn't have public transport connection - that is another obstacle that has become a disincentive to travel on *The Overland*. The taxi fare is about \$60 which is about half of the economy rail fare to Melbourne).

There is an early morning bus from Tea Tree Plaza at 5.20 am, which will get me into the Adelaide CBD from where I can get a taxi to the rail terminal. JBRE say I must be at the terminal at 5.50 am. I can understand that if I have luggage to book through but it doesn't make sense if I have only carry-on luggage. It will require me to leave home about 5.10 am, which will make a fairly long day - *The Overland* arrives at Southern Cross at 6.50 pm. Now, supposing there was a bus departing Tea Tree Plaza at 7.30 am that travelled on the O'bahn via Paradise and Klemzig - then left the O'bahn track and did a pick up at Burnside and Mount Barker to get to Murray Bridge about 8.50 am. That would connect with the *Overland* that departs Murray Bridge at 9.10 am.

If you want to show some support for *The Overland* then the obvious is to buy a ticket, but failing that please consider the Facebook page, **The Friends of the Overland**.



***Bob's Railway* (2019)**

Almost from the very day that this book was released there have been two consistent responses. The first has been that Bob's story is begging to be turned into a feature movie or a television series. The second response has asked about other railway dogs. Yes, there have been other railway dogs in the world, but none with a history of adventures like Bob's. I've spoken to two movie producers. One said it ticked all the boxes but there are red flags. I have been told that the movie biz does not want historical documentaries (which is what we would get with ***Bob's Railway***) but a story based on a theme (or hero). It could be developed as a series of episodes for television that could be continued as a second and third series. Another "red flag" is that it could require multiple identical dogs trained for different roles.

Finding the dogs will be a challenge. Initially we considered using 'labradoodles' (Labrador x poodle) or "groomdoodles" (golden retriever x poodle) but the outstanding feature of Bob, was his wide-eyed facial features that gave him the appearance of being wise and intelligent. I am convinced that for filming purposes there will be scenes where the camera looks into those eyes - only a Smithfield will do. Smithies are fairly scarce on the mainland but are popular in Tasmania. The movie people wanted fiction. I agonized over this for some time. I think I have now got it worked out.

I am now reworking Bob's story into a form which will appear as the next book entitled:

The Amazing Adventures of Railway Bob. I describe it as "a children's book for grown-ups".

I expect it will be released mid-2022 and will be of similar presentation to previous books in the Sarlines range. My expectation is that the print run for this book will be somewhat less than with previous books. It is being produced with the intention that, sooner or later, a television series or full-length movie will happen. It is a significant departure from my previous style of publications in that it contains a lot of fiction, but it also contains a lot of history. There are 20 chapters, each one of which represents a 25-minute episode of a television series. These cover the period 1884-1888. There will be a musical component to the episodes. These will include variations of Bob's Song that was composed by Glen Hadden for the launch of ***Bob's Railway*** in 2019. There will also be music composed by Samuel Milbourn who was the photographer and music teacher at Terowie in the 1880s. One of his compositions was the Broken Hill Schottische, a slow waltz. One of the episodes is the *Pandie Pandie Piano*. Pandie Pandie is a pastoral station near the end of the Birdsville Track. The piano arrives at Terowie, waybilled to 'Hergott Springs - on forward to Pandie Pandie'. From Hergott Springs it is loaded onto the back of a bull camel. Bob is fascinated by this piano and goes with it up the Birdsville track. The piano is offloaded from the camel at night and we are treated to a piano concerto in the desert.

I do not seek to make any money for myself from this book and movie or television series. It has the potential to be a big money earner internationally. I envisage the money from the movie production going to a fund that distributes it to the heritage railway operations and projects in South Australia.

The front cover of the book is of the Yankee in the Paint Shop, a cartoon by Greg Judd. There was an incident in May 1886 when Yankee engine, O class No. 55 went out of control at Islington and wrecked the paint shop and did a lot of other damage. Bob didn't feature in the real event but was a 'must have' for this book.

Patricia, is a novelist and her first book ***Amy's Quest*** has been published under the Sarlines banner. Her second book is ***The Feather and the Stone*** which is nearing completion and will be released in 2022.

She has a knack of getting into the head of animals and she has applied that skill in Bob's case in the new book where we will be joint authors.

I have included, as a separate attachment, the first chapter of the forthcoming new Bob book.

I am expecting to have this new book available mid 2022 and will advise purchase details about April

TRIANG TRAIN SET c1960

I have received some useful pointers regarding the navigation of the maze of the movie industry, from a lady who has been there but is no longer. As a by-the-way she asked some assistance to find a home for a Triang train set of c1960s era, pictured. I am not a modeller and could only assist her to the extent of finding a modeller who was prepared to suggest a realistic price range of about \$100 to \$250. The set is in Adelaide. I have not seen it and there are only some pictures. It seems that she would be prepared to consider an offer closer to the high end than the low end. I will accept 'Expressions of interest' and pass on, and leave the interested parties to negotiate.



THE COVID DIARY

In the *Train to Oodna Woop Woop*, there are five pages within the Appendices which are a weekly entry of the state of thinking about COVID and the effect it has had on interstate passenger rail. I have written a lot about the COVID pandemic in the last two years because I felt that some of the truths and untruths will make a useful road map when we have the next pandemic.

It is entertaining reading to go back and read what was happening say 12 months ago. For example, this entry was on 15 November 2020 (yes 2020!):

Prime Minister Morrison has indicated an intention to have all border restrictions open before Christmas.

From 27 December 2020:

The airlines helped themselves to a Christmas present at the expense of those who opted to travel in the few hours before the lockdown. \$1,500 for a one-way economy ticket from Sydney to Adelaide. That is why we need a viable interstate rail passenger service.

These entries are sobering because they illustrate that the politicians and experts had no idea about what they were dealing with. I don't think it has changed. I am continuing my weekly COVID Diary but am not sure what I am going to do with it. Maybe in a year or two or three I may publish the whole lot. Some of the comments in recent months would have been rather risqué if published at the time. The interesting thing about the COVID Diary is that when I look back at what I had written 6 or 12, months ago, it makes me either laugh or cry - occasionally both.

THE LONG-RUNNING PROJECT OF THE GREAT BREAK-OF GAUGE BOOK

I have had a long-running project to produce the great break-of-gauge book. I keep putting it off, or more to the point squeezing in other projects.

It is a major project that is ongoing. I have no wish to recycle information that has already been published by others and this book will contain a lot of new thinking.

I see this book as being relevant to the present situation in the whole of Australia. One factor that has been behind my deferment of this project has been the state of retail outlets in the eastern states. The specialist railway booksellers have suffered as a result of the lockdowns and the indications are that they are not going to bounce back in a hurry.

OUR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR GREETING

We'd like to send you our best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. Having said that, we are not expecting 2022 to be easy but have faith that the year will end better than it starts.

John and Patricia Wilson