

SAVING THE BIG “O”

(*The Overland* express between Melbourne and Adelaide, and “The Serviceton Summit” of 19 June 2020.



The Overland at Ballarat

In the town we now call Danbourne,
And out west at Stevealaide,
Colonials once lived in harmony,
And a binding pact was made
To build a border station
And a through express as well.
Would it lead to Federation?
Only time alone would tell.

James Service led that eastern town.
John Downer was at the other;
And Service, he held him in esteem
And was treated like a brother.
That lonely border station
Would need a noble name;
Serviceton! Did Downer cry
Befits that man of fame.



Sir James Service



Sir John Downer

But time brought many changes
And within the halls of power,
New faces surely did emerge;
It all got rather sour.
The day the new expresses ran,
Each crossing midst the plains
No champagne or brass band event
M.P.'s snubbing these great trains.

Serviceton railway station

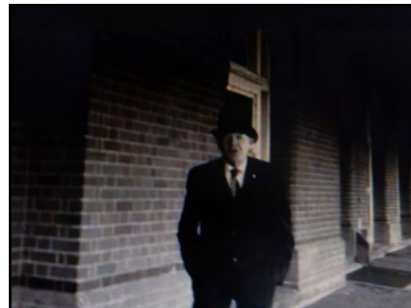


In the decades since that followed
Many names for her were coined
“Footy Express”, “The Overdue”
When the colonies were joined.
The name that stirred the passions,
And well suited her the best
Was by engine crews at Ararat,
“The Grand Old Lady of The West”.



The Express at Callington. Photograph by the State Library of South Australia. B 1256

By March of twenty twenty
The old girl was near done.
A few still held some slender hope
That reprieve could yet be won.
Of Serviceton there was an ask:
Separate the squabbling States,
With a chalk-line on the floor;
To talk reason and be mates.



Mark Radford with his introduction to the Serviceton Summit.

That border station summit
Didn't happen quite as planned,
But an electronic gathering
Rallied friends across the land.
You may see her in your travels,
Give a hearty toot or wave;
But better still, buy tickets,
For her future thus we'll save.



The Overland from Adelaide approaching Horsham.

John Wilson

7 December 2020,

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The Serviceton Summit is a 55 minute video that can be accessed on Youtube.