



CHAPTER 8

A PORTENT OF DOOM

Evandale Junction (Tasmania) and Kadina (South Australia).

It is bad enough having a break-of-gauge. It is worse if that break-of-gauge station is a junction station of two jurisdictions (e.g. Albury, Wallangarra, Port Pirie). Worse still is where a government network and a private railway company meet in the same break-of-gauge station.

This situation presented itself in Australia's first two break-of-gauge locations.

EVANDALE JUNCTION

The Launceston and Western Railway (L&WR) was a broad-gauge (5 ft 3 in) private railway between Launceston and Deloraine in the north of Tasmania. Construction was commenced in 1868 and it was formally opened in February 1871.

Meanwhile plans were underway for another private railway in Tasmania. This was the Tasmanian Main Line Company's (TML) line from Hobart, that was to eventually reach Launceston. Contracts were signed in March 1872. The gauge was 3 ft 6 in.

KING'S BRIDGE In 1861 West Tamar Road Trust of Launceston invited submissions for the design of a bridge across the South Esk River at the Cataract Gorge. The design was by William Doyne, the railway engineer who had previously worked for the London & North Western Railway under Robert Stephenson and had designed and built the Dun Mountain Railway in New Zealand.

Doyne was an outspoken critic of the narrow-gauge, and deserves credit for being the first in Australia to ring the alarm bells about the veracity of the claims that were being made by Abraham Fitzgibbon and Robert Fairlie.

After his involvement with the Dun Mountain Tramway (and Abraham Fitzgibbon) he was active in Tasmania and Victoria. He was the consulting engineer for the Launceston and Western Railway.

The King's Bridge was a wrought iron arch of 190 feet (58 metre) span. Its components were fabricated in Manchester. It was opened in 1864.

Engraving from the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* 1888.

The Launceston & Western Railway was soon in financial difficulty and was taken over by the Government in August 1872.

Now, this is where the story gets rather messy. Between the various Acts of Parliament and the contracts there was no clear consistency of how the trains on the Tasmanian Main Line Railway would get to Launceston. There was general agreement that the trains from Hobart would get to Evandale, which was a location (but not a station) on the L&WR. The documentation was so vague that some referred to the northern end as the 'opposite terminus'.

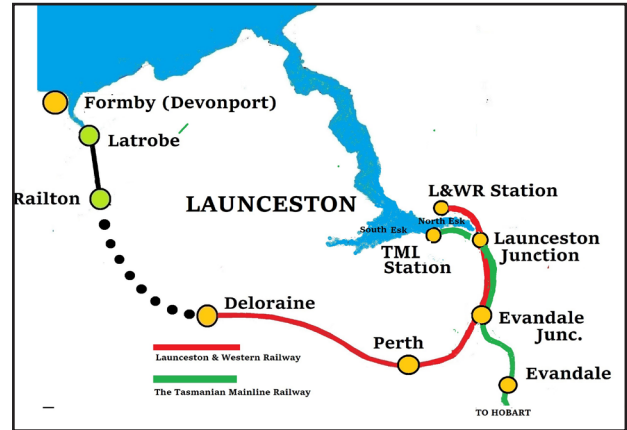
There were three possible ways forward. The Tasmanian Main Line Company could terminate its trains at Evandale Junction and passengers could change trains to travel the short distance to Launceston on the broad-gauge train that was now a government operation. In fact, this is what did happen from 1 March to October 1876 because the two operators were still in negotiations. Thus, the break-of-gauge at Evandale Junction was the first time that passengers changed trains in Australia but as it was a temporary arrangement, some may consider that it was not Australia's first break-of-gauge station.

The second option was to have an agreement that allowed the mainline trains to have running rights over the government line to Launceston. There was an obvious problem here. It has been suggested that back in 1871-72 someone in Government had drawn up various papers but had been quite oblivious to the fact that they were dealing with different gauges. To make it happen one of the operators would have to put down a third rail. In the end, that happened.

A third option was for the Tasmanian Mainline Company to have a separate right-of-way and run its trains all the way into Launceston. This does not appear to have been a serious plan but it served a purpose. It was left hovering in the background and provided some 'hurry-up' to the negotiations.

The enquiring mind will put the obvious question - why was this not sorted out in 1871-72? Maybe the accord between the two companies was of a harmonious spirit, and they had not allowed for the hard-nosed involvement of the Government.

By 1875 the rails were complete between Hobart and Evandale (Junction). But many questions had to be resolved. Which of the two operators would put down the third rail and who was to pay?



LAUNCESTON AND ADJACENT COUNTRY

The route of the Launceston & Western Railway and the Deloraine & Mersey Tramway. Note that the Launceston & Western Railway, and the Tasmanian Mainline Railway had their respective Launceston stations on opposite banks of the North Esk River.

The difficulty in researching this is that the original records have been lost.

And if a passenger from Evandale Junction wanted to travel to Launceston could they travel aboard the mainline train or did they wait for the train on the L&WR track?

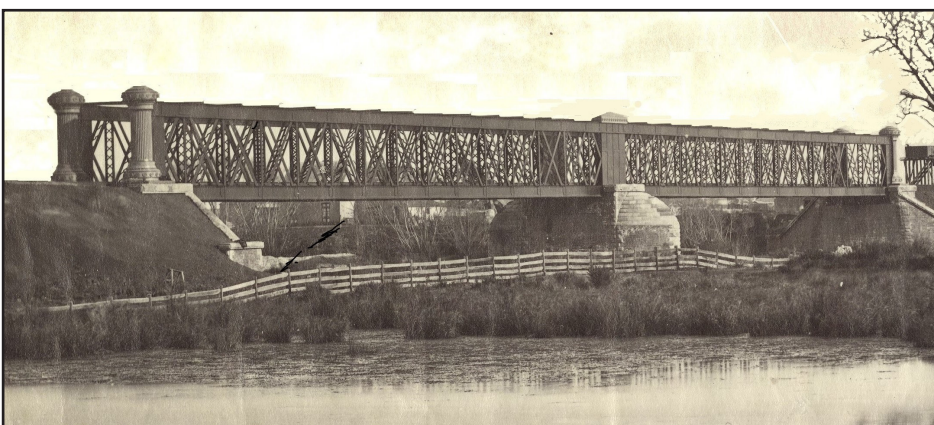
What facilities (if any) needed to be provided at the (L&WR) terminus in Launceston to meet the needs of the mainline passengers?

If things were messy, they got messier. The junction was not at Evandale (proper), and had no buildings. The town of Evandale was about 3 miles further south and would only be serviced by trains of the Tasmanian Mainline Company.

And of course there would be passengers from Hobart wishing to travel to Deloraine. Would they be able to alight at Evandale (Junction), and then board the Deloraine train?

Was Evandale a break-of-gauge location, or was it Evandale Junction? Was Launceston a break-of-gauge location? It appears that in the case of goods items, consigned say from Hobart to Deloraine, there was no transfer of goods at Evandale Junction.

The railway junction was originally known as Evandale Junction. The name was changed to Western Junction in 1916.



THE LONGFORD RAILWAY BRIDGE. Built for the Launceston & Western Railway. It was designed by William Doyne. The ornate columns at each end were of cast iron and hollow. They were purely decorative and are no longer in place. The type of structure is a lattice truss. Each is 100 feet (30.5 metres).
Photograph from Tasmanian Archives

Evandale Junction was a break-of-gauge station, certainly from 1 March to October 1876, because a traveller from Hobart to Launceston could go no further on the narrow gauge, and had to complete the journey on the broad gauge.

Was Launceston a break-of-gauge? The railway terminus of the L&WR was on the northern side of the North Esk River. The terminus of the TML Co. was on the south side of the river.

I don't believe that Launceston was a break-of-gauge location, but Launceston Junction was. It was here that the third rail that had been laid from Evandale Junction diverged and the track curved into the terminus south of the North Esk. If there had been loading from Deloraine that was destined for Hobart, there is enough evidence to show that the transfer would have happened at the Launceston Junction.

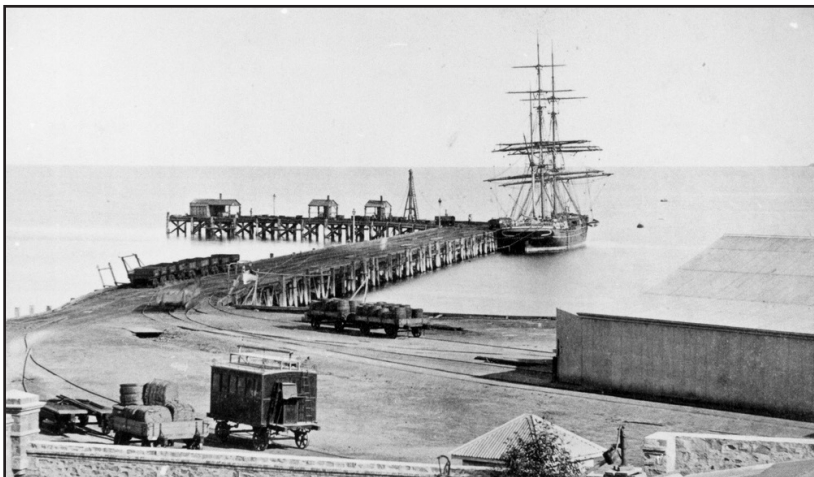
So, Launceston Junction, and not Evandale (or Evandale Junction) takes the cake as Australia's first break-of-gauge location. I have not listed Evandale Junction as a break-of-gauge location because its function was for only a few passengers and its role was temporary.

The Tasmanian Main Line Company deserves acknowledgement for having the first break-of-gauge device* in Australia. Construction of the Tasmanian Main Line required the placement of two locomotives at Evandale Junction. This was done by loading each engine onto a broad-gauge 'trolley'. The first such movement was in November 1873.

* Chapter 13 deals with 'break-of-gauge devices'.

KADINA

The three 'Copper Coast' towns of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta are clustered on a waterless plain at the 'thigh' of Yorke Peninsula, but in very close proximity to the sea. The Wallaroo Mine was the first mine, and the first shaft at Moonta was a few months later in June 1861. The smelting was done at Wallaroo Bay. The 'Cousin Jacks**' of Moonta regarded their community as something very special, so much, that to them it was the 'hub of the universe'. There was an irony about that, because when they were eventually connected by rail to the rest of the universe, their journey would begin and end travelling on the broad gauge. In between, the greater part of their journey would be over the narrow gauge.



In 1862 a private tramway had been built from Wallaroo Mines to the Wallaroo Bay. It was about 5 miles (8km) from the mine to the smelters and the gauge was 5 ft 3 in, which was consistent with all other lines in South Australia at that time.

The Kadina and Wallaroo Railway & Pier Company operated primarily to transport copper ore from the Wallaroo Mines, but also carried other incidentals to the operation of the mine. The rails were 35 lb and were second-hand from the contractor of the Bendigo railway. It was operated with horses. Passengers were conveyed in two covered wagons, described in one report with the unlikely names of *Prince Albert* and *Garibaldi*.

The Moonta ore was richer than the lode at Wallaroo. Moonta was about 11 miles (17.5 km) south of Wallaroo. The tramway was extended to Moonta Mines in 1866. At the Moonta end there was an extension to the town in 1868 and a further extension to Moonta Bay in 1878. The Moonta Bay line was provided for the transport of mine timbers that were shipped in coastal vessels from Kangaroo Island. That line soon became very popular with the Moonta townspeople. At Kadina there was a branch into the main street in 1863. Maps from 1877 show that there was quite an extensive network of sidings and short shunting lines to the mines and smelter.

The three towns were situated in marginal agricultural country. The country further inland had some of the best agricultural country in the colony. Hence the call for railways.

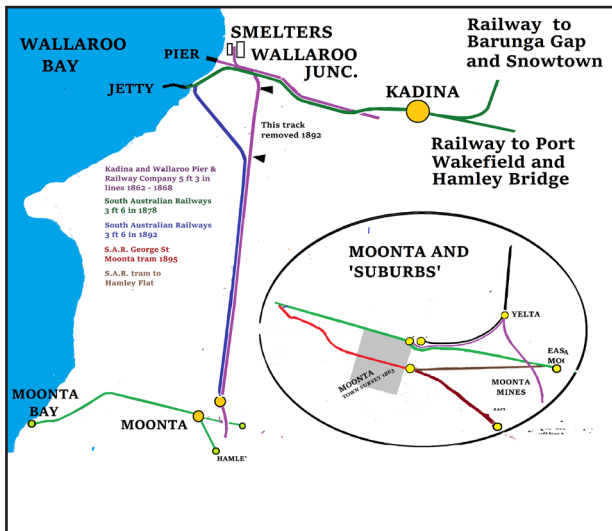
In 1874 the Government established a Railway Commission to investigate and recommend new lines. (This report is covered in more detail in Chapter 10). Of relevance to the present topic were several lines that were for the purpose of shifting the wheat harvest towards Moonta and Wallaroo. There were lines recommended by the Railway Commission that weren't built. There were others that were built that had not been recommended. There was a call for direct railway communication with the capital.

The first narrow-gauge in the northern agricultural district of South Australia had been the Port Wakefield Tramway opened in 1870.

**Cousin Jacks', the Cornish miners.

JETTY OR PIER? There have been two such structures at Wallaroo in the 19th century. To complicate matters the present structure at Wallaroo dates from the 1920s and is at the same location as the original pier built in 1862. The jetty was built in 1877 and was about 500 metres south of the original pier.

Of particular interest is the railway vehicle in the foreground. This is one of the tramway conveyances or omnibuses, as they were called. Note the longitudinal seating aloft and the ladder. **Photograph said to be c1870. State Library of South Australia.**



The Port Wakefield Tramway was the line that Captain Bagot had lobbied long and hard to prove the superiority of the narrow gauge. In fact, it had never been proven, and successive governments had passively accepted its existence and had set about extending it at both ends. It had been initially worked with horses but locomotives were introduced in 1875. It is the western extension of this line, from Port Wakefield to Kadina, that is a central to this chapter. The extension of the Port Wakefield line to Kadina would naturally be 3 ft 6 in gauge. There remained the gap between Hamley Bridge and Balaklava. That is for the next chapter.

In September 1876 the Government had decided that the break-of-gauge should be at Hamley Bridge. It would save the colony £16,000 to build the line to Balaklava to the narrow gauge, when compared to the alternative which was to have a broad-gauge line with the break-of-gauge at Balaklava. In Chapter 7 we had met Arthur Lindsay who had so offended the editor of the *South Australian Register* in 1871, and was showing no sign of changing his tune.

In future this break of gauge, which we were now adopting would be a serious drawback for the colony.

In 1875 the Government had opened negotiations with the Kadina and Wallaroo Railway & Pier Company. The sale of their tramway to the Government was completed on 1 March 1878. The rails on the original section of the line were in poor condition and not suitable for working locomotives. The Government decided to lay a narrow-gauge line alongside the old tramway track from Kadina to Wallaroo. This was laid on the south side of the tramway track.

The original pier was considered too small to meet the needs of the mine and its smelter, as well as the wheat. A new jetty, further south from the pier, was constructed in 1877. This allowed the narrow-gauge trains, with their trucks loaded with bagged wheat, to proceed through Wallaroo Junction direct to the jetty.

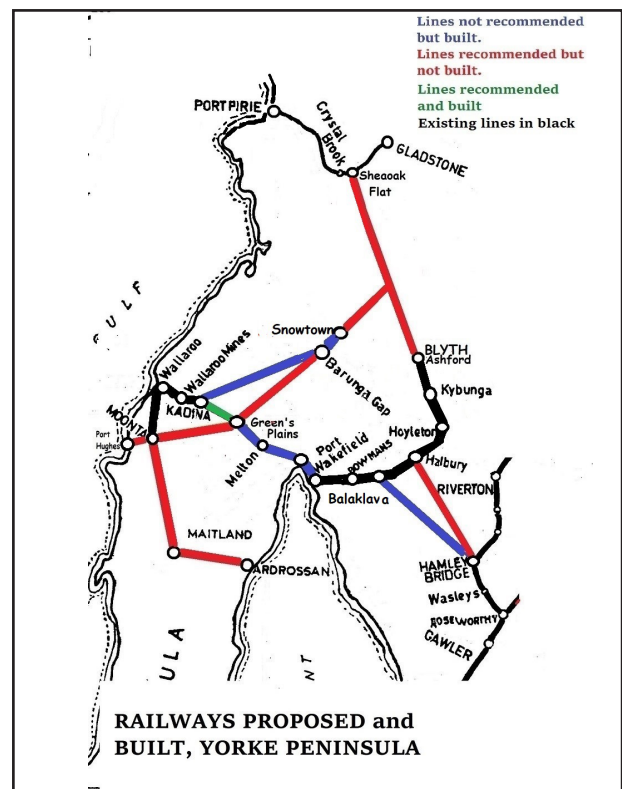
The broad-gauge line was retained and continued to deliver the ore to the smelter and service the pier. A third rail was provided on the track to the new jetty. The passenger service between Kadina and Wallaroo continued to use the broad gauge service until January 1880 (when the line from Hamley Bridge to Balaklava was opened). Passengers from Adelaide, destined for Moonta, had to change 'trains' (at Wallaroo) to complete their journey on the broad-gauge line.

The Governor, Sir William Jervois, and the official party departed Adelaide by the 7.00 am train on 9 November 1878, and alighted at Hamley Bridge. The party then travelled overland to Balaklava where the special train was waiting to take them to Kadina.

The newspapers that day were full of praise and optimism befitting the opening of a new railway, but nowhere in their columns was mention of the new railway creating a break-of-gauge. It was quite the opposite. There seemed to be a belief, in the minds, of those who shared the celebration that day that it had been eliminated by shifting it down the narrow-gauge track to Wallaroo. If there was loading to be transferred from one gauge to the other it would not happen at Kadina. There was no hint that this was the first break-of-gauge on the Australian mainland. In earlier times Arthur Lindsay would have reminded them, but he had departed Parliament earlier that year.

But as the events unfolded that afternoon it turned out that the opening was a portent of doom. The official opening of the railway was of many speeches and salutations conducted from a small temporary platform at Kadina.

RAILWAYS RECOMMENDED BY THE 1875 RAILWAY COMMISSION (THE BOUCAUT REPORT).



It was after many such welcoming speeches and their appropriate responses that His Excellency mounted the platform to declare the line open.

The *Yorke Peninsula Advertiser* of 11 October 1878 tells it in their own words:

He then called upon Sir William Jervois to open the line for traffic.

HIS EXCELLENCY said—I have great pleasure in declaring this line open. (Cheers.) I have travelled over it to-day, and I have no hesitation in saying that it is an excellent line. (Cheers.) [At this juncture a portion of the platform upon which His Excellency was standing collapsed, but the height from the ground not being great no serious mishap occurred.] His Excellency continued; It is an admirable line, and reflects great credit upon those by whom it has been constructed and upon the officers in the engineers' department of the Government. (Cheers.) I will only add that I hope thousands and thousands of bushels of wheat will pass along it; that it will tend to the development of the resources of the district, in no common degree; and that you will all derive great benefit from the line that is now opened. (Cheers.)

The Cousin Jacks were a very superstitious people. They had brought with them from Cornwall stories of 'piskies' and 'tommyknockers' who lived underground and warned miners of shifting ground and other perils. They could also cause mischief if there was something not to their liking. The collapse of the platform at the very moment of the Governor declaring the opening of the railway must have rattled some who witnessed the event, and left them wondering if the new railway had somehow offended these subterranean gnome-folk.

For indeed, that short section of railway between Kadina and Wallaroo has been a troubled gauge saga unlike any other in the land. The South Australian Railways had purchased the broad-gauge tramway which it continued to operate side by side with the new narrow-gauge lines. There was a gradual conversion by the mines and the smelters of the sidings to the narrow gauge.

There had been an expectation of enormous quantities of wheat coming to Wallaroo, for which the original pier would not cope. The working of the broad-gauge trucks on the original pier ceased and mixed track was provided on the new jetty from about 1880. This was not without some badgering between the mining companies and the Government regarding who would be paying. It should be remembered that it was not until 1889 that all mining and smelting was united under the one company, the Moonta and Wallaroo Mining and Smelting Company. The plan for the broad-gauge lines, as was announced at the opening of the Kadina line was that:

The plan for the old 5 ft 3 in line, together with its rolling stock, will be allowed to wear out.

The last broad-gauge car to Moonta was on 31 October 1891 and at 5.00 am next morning the first locomotive-hauled train pulled out of the Moonta station. The last working of the broad-gauge was between Kadina and Wallaroo on 5 January 1892.

But in the greater Moonta the 'suburban' trams continued. Here was an anomaly. Trams in Adelaide were standard gauge. The Moonta trams were broad gauge.

The broad-gauge tramway from Wallaroo to Moonta was finally converted to narrow gauge. For a few years the station at Moonta served both the railway (to Wallaroo) and the tramway (to Moonta Bay). This arrangement continued to 1895 when the town tramway was redirected through George Street which was three town blocks away. Did they still haul the Kangaroo Island timber over the Moonta Bay line? If so, it could be said that the break-of-gauge at Moonta/Wallaroo existed from 1878 to 1895. The Moonta trams came to an end in 1931, but there were a couple of significant events in the meantime.

Here we are leaping forward to the 1900s, and these events strictly belong to some subsequent chapters but some brief comment is here appropriate.

The lines radiating from Wallaroo became part of what was known as the Western System of the South Australian Railways.

THE (1877) WALLAROO JETTY. Note the railway track that has the third rail. The information with the photograph is that it is 1870. But the jetty was not built until 1877. The narrow-gauge rails were laid on this jetty about 1880-1. **Photograph from the State Library of South Australia B-7904.**



In 1922, the decision was made to convert these narrow-gauge lines to broad gauge. It is not hard to imagine that once again the South Australian Railways would be asking the Company to change the gauge of its sidings, and the chorus ringing out from the Mine Mangers' office 'here we go again!'

The war machine had been a great consumer of copper with many new mines all over the world, but at the close of hostilities the world was over-supplied and the world price of copper fell.

All the high-grade copper ore was gone but the company continued to mine the low-grade deposits at a loss, in the hope that the price would recover.

On 1 November 1923 the directors announced the closure of the mine. It was not the first time that the Company had threatened closure but this time, the first time in the history of the mine, the great pumps that had kept the workings dry, were silent.

And on 1 August 1927 the gauge conversion of the Western System was complete, the people of Moonta, or those that remained, could start and finish their trip to Adelaide on the broad gauge, travelling broad gauge all the way.

So that little section of railway between Kadina and Wallaroo was gauge-converted again.

We have not finished. Fast forward to 1982, the year the standard gauge finally reached the Adelaide area. A third rail was provided for the section from Snowtown to Wallaroo. So that little section of railway had now seen all three gauges and the broad gauge twice.

I suspect that what followed was a world first. Australian National did some experiments on the line between Snowtown and Kadina. They assembled a train consist of broad-gauge and standard-gauge trucks and successfully travelled over the mixed-gauge track. What they hoped to achieve is a mystery.

The broad-gauge connection was unceremoniously severed in 1988. the standard-gauge line followed. There are some in senior railway positions who regard that as having gone too far.

This had all come at some cost. Loans, debt and interest. It is strange how governments can shuffle figures from one fund to another but in the end the debt doesn't go away. The revenue from a few standard-gauge wheat trains over the next five years was not going to balance the books. The railway land has since been sold, which probably goes some way to reducing the debt. At Kadina, where once there was a temporary platform, there is now a shopping centre. We are left to wonder how the piskies and the tommyknockers have adjusted to their new digs.

PISKIES AND TOMMYKNOCKERS

Cornish tradition and mythology describes tommyknockers as underground spirits of departed miners who cause knocking of the mine timbers as a warning of imminent collapse. Their appearance in print in Australia is one item in the *Sydney Times*, 7 May 1905. That item was syndicated to the *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill) and the *Geelong Advertiser* later that month.

Piskies have enjoyed a greater presence in Australia. We are left in no doubt that the piskies are alive and well in this country. A search of Trove returns 481 references. But none of those references indicate piskie activity in the vicinity of the Moonta mine. There is a reference in the *Kadina and Wallaroo Times*, 25 October 1911, which reported the formation of a branch of the Cornish Association at Kadina:

...they were all aware of the antiquity of their race. It could be traced back to the building of the tower of Babel. At that period of history there was only one language spoken. Some piskies, however, got to work and created confusion, and as a result, Gomer, who was the son of Japhet, who was the son of Noah left the tower and with his people went west and settled in the land known as Cornwall (Laughter).

Regarding piskies in Cornwall, it seems that they are different to pixies. Pixies are reported to be of neighbouring Devon.

In May 2023, this chapter had been effectively completed. The collapse of the Governor's platform had begged the involvement of some mythological entity and a search had been made of the traditions of the Cornish miners. Hitherto there had been no linking of that incident with mythological beings. There had been nothing about piskies and tommyknockers in Pryor's classic, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, so we wrote the piskies into the story. I admit that it was a little cheeky and irreverent.

It was in that month that an approach was made to the family of the late Tim Fischer in regard to dedicating the book to Tim's memory. A request was sent to the family with a document that provided a brief summary of each chapter that had been completed.

Of course, the summary of this chapter included the mention of the piskies and tommyknockers. There was a prompt response from Judy Brewer Fischer.

"My grandfather came to Australia from Cornwall and I have a piskie on my front door to ward away the bad imps and to protect those of us within. I'm attaching a pic of the Piskie on our front door at Mudgegonga. It's been there all my life so I'm not sure where it came from though I guess from Truro where my grandfather, Sid Brewer's family came from."

I'll leave readers to draw their own conclusions but I am firmly of the belief that this, and every other piskie in the land, along with the tommyknockers, share the vision of a uniform railway gauge for Australia.

