

LAST TRAIN TO MILANG

MONDAY, 15TH JUNE 1970

TIME TABLE

Adelaide	dep 9.10 am	Milang	dep 2.08 pm
Blackwood	arr 9.43 353		
	dep 9.54 Water	3 Photo Stops	
Mount Barker	arr 11.16	Strathalbyn	arr 3.18
	dep 11.26 Water		dep 3.46 Water
Strathalbyn	arr 12.06 pm	Mount Barker	arr 4.32
	dep 12.30 Water		dep 4.43 Water
Milang	arr 1.08	Adelaide	arr 6.12

Load - Goods Brake-van - 4 Centenary cars
 Power - "Rx" class engine no. 224.

"Rx" CLASS ENGINES

In 1886, 6 "R" class engines built by Dubs of Glasgow were placed in service on the South Australian Railways, and a further 24 were constructed by James Martin of Gawler between 1890 and 1895.

"R" class no. 146 was rebuilt in 1899 with a larger boiler, extended smoke box and "Belpaire" fire box, increasing the boiler pressure from 145 to 175 pounds with a corresponding increase in the tractive effort from 16,800 lbs. to 21,420 lbs. The remaining "R" class engines were subsequently converted to "Rx" class between 1899 and 1911.

In 1909, the Islington Workshops issued a new "Rx" class no. 5 to traffic, and a total of 54 engines were then built by the Islington Workshops, North British Locomotive Company of Glasgow, and Walkers of Maryborough Queensland by 1916. Incidentally, some of these engines were issued low road numbers of smaller engines previously scrapped.

In February 1922, "Rx" class engine no. 213 was superheated and used in tests between Adelaide and Murray Bridge, comparing its performance with saturated "Rx" 199. A considerable saving in fuel and water resulted.

Before the introduction of large type engines by W.A. Webb in 1926, the Melbourne Express was regularly headed by 2 "Rx" class engines. In busy seasons, when the consist of this train exceeded eight cars, a third "Rx" class pushed from Keswick to Aldgate.

Despite their small coupled wheels, in 1912 they worked a 2 hour 58 minute Adelaide-Victor Harbour Express consisting of five side-loading cars and brakevan (145 tons) and were allowed a maximum speed of sixty miles per hour.

Ironically, the "Rx" class engines outlived most of the large type power introduced to supplant them in the post 1920 era, and they were used on almost every type of working on the broad gauge lines in South Australia. However, progress has eventually caught up with this versatile class of engine, and today only "Rx" 207 and "Rx" 224 remain in working order to haul our tours. The A.R.H.S. is responsible for payment of all maintenance costs incurred in running these two engines.

"Rx" 224 was built by Walker Bros. of Maryborough and commissioned on 27th April 1915.

EARLY HISTORY OF MILANG

Milang was founded in 1856 by A.H. Landseer, noted River Identity and agent for the famous paddle steamer pioneer, Frances Cadell. On January 15th of that year the first pile of the jetty was driven. It extended for 100 feet out into Lake Alexandrina (named after Princess Alexandrina). The jetty was connected to the township by a causeway made of earth and remains of this can still be seen. In 1859 the jetty was extended a further 100 feet and the present steel crane was placed on the end.

A flour mill was also built in the 1850's by Pavy Bros. to supply flour to the many small mines flourishing at that time in the upper Murray District. A second mill was opened by A.H. Landseer on February 11th 1871, and the first flour was exported from Milang a fortnight later. The remains of this mill and store can still be seen today just opposite the Railway Station.

On September 14th 1882, construction of the Milang Sandergrove Railway was undertaken by a contractor named Hudson. On the 14th December 1884, the line was completed and the first train ran on December 17th that year. Narrow gauge (3'6") tracks were laid from the railway station to the jetty and all goods were transferred at the wharf end of the railway yard. The old stone abutment to the left of the present goods siding is the original platform.

From 1866 until the completion of the Adelaide Melbourne Railway in 1884, mails for Melbourne were carried by horse-drawn coach to Milang, thence by paddle-steamer across the Lake to Meningee where transfer to coaches took place for the rest of the journey. After completion of the overland rail route, this service only served the Meningee district, until 1933 when it was discontinued in favour of more advanced modes of transport.

Royalty has travelled by the Mail Route to Melbourne twice, the Duke of Edinburgh in 1867 and Prince Albert and Prince George (later George V). For the second visit, the cannon in the present Soldiers' Park was fired.

Steamers used on the Mail Route were the "Despatch", "Telegraph", "Blanco," and "Jupiter". During the years this service operated, various Captains attempted to extend the distance of the paddle-steamer journey by navigating the Coorong down as far as Salt Creek. However, due to the uncertain hazards of this extended journey, the idea was dropped some years later, much to the delight of the Milang folk. If the scheme had been successful, Goolwa would have become the western riverport instead of Milang, depriving the latter of much commerce.

Milang also has an interesting paddle-steamer history. In 1857, the P.S. "Mosquito" was built at Northfield and pulled by bullocks to Milang and launched. Silver mines had been discovered in the vicinity of Strathalbyn and the precious metal was transported to Port Adelaide via the Murray Mouth in steamers operated by Cadell.

In 1873, the P.S. "Beltana" was launched at Milang by a local shipbuilder, Mr. Potts, and in the same year, Landseer launched a floating Dry Dock for servicing steamers on the lake. However its draught was too deep for the shallow Lake and it was sold to William Randell who towed it to Mannum behind the P.S. "Nil Desperandum" and beached it as a dry dock. This is the present resting place of the P.S. "Marion". During September of the same year, Potts launched his second craft P.S. "Bourke". The P.S. "Marion", last of the passenger steamers still in reasonable order, was launched at Milang by A.H. Landseer in 1897. This steamer was purchased by the National Trust in 1963 and made an epic journey from Berri to Mannum where it is now preserved in Landseer's Dry Dock. Trade between the islands of the lakes was handled by a fleet of small schooners, and it was not uncommon to see two or three at the Milang wharf with the paddle-steamers.

From the present jetty, a row of piles can be seen some distance from the shore. These were used by steamers waiting to unload wool etc. at the wharf when the port was in its heyday. All vessels using the wharf had to pay Harbours Board fees, however, one Captain, C.F. Kruse, decided it would be cheaper to build his own wharf for his ketch which traded between Milang and Meningie. Four piles were sunk near the present jetty before he was informed that all vessels had to pay wharfage fees when loading or unloading within half a mile of the Harbours Board's facilities, even when at a privately-owned jetty. The land half a mile either side of the present wharf was unsuitable for another wharf and the good Captain abandoned his attempt. The four piles remain today.

The present station building once served as a combined Railway Station and Post Office and one officer served a dual role as Station Master and Post Master. On the front of the station building one can still see the boards covering up the old letter boxes. This practice ceased in 1912, and since then two separate departments have been provided. The Station Master was withdrawn from Milang as from 1st September 1968.

At the present time approximately 650 people live at Milang. Their main occupations are fishing and general farming. Before the barrages were constructed in 1939, Milang was a flourishing fishing centre.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF SANDERGROVE-MILANG BRANCH

Sandergrove 55 $\frac{3}{4}$ m is the junction station for the Milang branch and we take the passing siding. After leaving Sandergrove, the line turns to the left, and after crossing over a small bridge, the only one on the branch, we turn left again and continue on in an easterly direction through Nurragi and on towards the lakes. About a mile before Milang the line begins an "S" bend, and from the Yard Limit sign we enter Milang on a sweeping curve and descend slightly into the Station Yard. Most of the line was laid with 60 lb. rails on steel sleepers and it is only partly ballasted. At the present time the Railway Yard comprises a main-line, passing siding and stock siding. The goods siding is an extension of the main-line. There is also a 53' hand operated turntable provided.

TRAIN SERVICES ON MILANG BRANCH

When the line opened in 1884, service was provided by a mixed train from Strathalbyn which connected with the Adelaide and Strathalbyn passenger trains.

It is interesting to note that in 1886 there was a direct passenger service to Milang on Sundays as under -

Adelaide	dep	9.05 am	Milang	dep	4.00 pm
Milang	arr	1.08 pm	Adelaide	arr	8.08 pm

however, as from 12th January 1887, this service only operated between Adelaide and Strathalbyn.

In May 1925, a "55" type passenger motor commenced running between Adelaide and Milang daily to the following schedule -

Adelaide	dep	7.02 am	Milang	dep	3.20 pm
Milang	arr	10.50 am	Adelaide	arr	6.48 pm

and a goods train worked several times a week from Strathalbyn. By the late 1930's, a "75" model passenger motor was stationed at Strathalbyn and worked all trains on the Milang line except on Tuesdays, when a locomotive-hauled mixed did the trip.

In March 1942 this was superseded and the entire service was handled by the passenger motor until Saturday November 30th 1968, when car 55 worked the last passenger service. Prior to 1960, petrol driven "Milk-bar" type cars no. 41 and 46 usually worked the Strathalbyn-Milang service, however,

after these cars were refitted with "Cummins" diesel engines, the schedules were operated mainly by "Gardner" diesel passenger motors nos. 40 and 55. During the period 1942 - 1968, the only locomotives to operate on the line were Rx engines nos. 195 and 233 on the Society's "Lakes Limited" tour on Saturday, May 30th 1964, and 830 class diesel engine no. 843 which hauled the weed poison train to Milang on Monday June 15th 1964. Any goods or livestock vehicles for Milang or Nurragi were handled by these passenger motor movements, subject to a maximum load of 50 tons behind the car. In 1931, "55" type passenger motors were permitted to haul 1 bogie livestock van between Strathalbyn and Milang, subject to a load limit of 25 tons.

PASSENGER MOTOR TIME TABLES - 1966

		Sat.	Tues. &		Sat.	Sun.	Fri.
		am	Wed.	Fri.	pm	pm	pm
			am	pm			
Adelaide	dep	9.00			12.55		6.10
Strathalbyn	arr	10.57a			2.47a		8.04a
	dep	11.20	11.45	12.45	3.10	4.00	8.30
Milang	arr	11.57	12.02	1.22	3.47	4.35	9.07

		Sat.	Tues. Wed.		Sun.	Sat.	Fri.
		pm	& Fri.		pm	pm	pm
			pm				
Milang	dep	1.35	2.07	4.50	5.10	9.40	
Strathalbyn	arr	2.12	2.45	5.25a	5.45a	10.08	
	dep			5.56	6.16		
Adelaide	arr			8.00	8.20		

a - Connected with Adelaide-Victor Harbour line trains at Strathalbyn.

The Sunday service was cancelled in 1967.

On Public Holidays, a connection was made with the morning Adelaide Victor Harbour and evening Victor Harbour-Adelaide services, however, prior to the introduction of passenger motors, a Milang coach and brakevan were occasionally attached to the Victor Harbour train as far as Strathalbyn or Sandergrove then continuing to Milang on the mixed train.

Following the withdrawal of the passenger service, no regular goods services have operated on the Milang branch. At present the traffic on the Sandergrove-Milang line is handled by the Victor Harbour goods train doubling back from Sandergrove or Strathalbyn when necessary. "830" class engines are the only diesel power authorised to work on the line, and at times twin 830s have been required to clear all loading.

Maximum loads for various engines on the line were as follows.

		Strathalbyn	Milang	Milang	Strathalbyn
		Passenger	Goods	Passenger	Goods
"G"	class 2-4-0	80	180	80	150
"H"	class 4-4-0	140	300	140	250
"K"	class 0-6-4	220	400	220	300
"Rx"	class 4-6-0	300	500	300	500
"830"	Diesel	-	1230	-	1230

Some of the Goods Working Time-Tables issued in the early 1950s show "750" class engines rated to haul 500 tons on this line, however, it is doubtful if this was ever put into practice.

Although originally worked by Permissive Block, the Sandergrove-Milang line is now operated under the Train Order system.

The maximum speed permitted on the line is 30 miles per hour.

CLOSING OF THE LINE

As early as 1931, in an effort to conserve state finances, the newly formed Transport Control Board requested the Railways Commissioner to furnish a report on the estimated savings to be made by closing certain non-profitable branch-lines, including the Mount Barker Junction-Victor Harbour and Sandergrove-Milang lines, to -

- a. passenger traffic only.
- b. goods and passenger traffic.

Detailed investigations at that time revealed that while the road system was adequate for private motor car use, heavy expenditure would be necessary to make it suitable for heavy goods transport, and, further-more, it was anticipated that Railway Revenue, depleted by the severe drought years of 1928-29 and the onset of the depression, would improve under normal climatic and economic conditions.

The amount of goods and livestock handled at Milang at ten-year intervals since 1890 is set out below.

	Goods		Livestock		
	Inwards	Outwards	Inwards	Outwards	
1890	1,101	566	x	5,313	
1900	1,756	1,490	x	14,000	
1910	3,576	1,970	x	16,000	
1920	3,807	1,422	x	13,000	
1930	1,613	1,674	1,218	7,391	
1940	1,764	477	2,267	4,044	
1950	1,580	1,615	861	1,948	
1960	1,043	1,090	1,556	2,834	
1969	234	650	Nil	Nil	x Not Available

Following the Road and Railway Transport Act Amendment Act of 1964, the Transport Control Board ceased to issue licences for the carriage of "Goods for hire" as from July 1st 1964, and the protection offered to the South Australian Railways since 1930 disappeared. The subsequent decrease in goods and livestock traffic is evident in the above table.

On May 6th 1968, the Minister of Roads and Transport, Mr. C.M. Hill, announced that as part of a rationalisation plan aimed at saving the Railways \$1.0m annually, several branch-lines would be investigated with a view of possible closure, including the Mount Barker Junction-Victor Harbour and Sandergrove-Milang lines. The usual Public Meetings were held at South Coast towns early in August 1969 before the Transport Control Board, and although much opposition was voiced about the proposed closure of the Victor Harbour line, little was said of the Milang branch.

Accordingly, on Friday 10th April 1970, the Chairman of the Public Works Committee, Mr. J. S. Clark, announced that the Mount Barker Junction-Victor Harbour Line would remain open, but the Sandergrove-Milang section would be closed.

On May 25th 1970, the Transport Control Board signed an order closing the Sandergrove-Milang Line from June 17th 1970.

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