



Eyre Peninsula Railway Preservation Society Inc.

PO Box 2736, Port Lincoln SA 5606

NEWSLETTER

January 2015

NEW AT THE MUSEUM

Two new items have been added to the displays at the Freight Shed recently – a bag elevator and a forge assembly.

The bag elevator was very kindly donated by Mr M J Cabot of Yallunda Flat. It gives the museum an example of a piece of equipment which was used for many years at railway sidings. Prior to the introduction of bulk handling in the late 1950s and 1960s, grain was delivered bagged to sidings, and lumpers skilfully built large bag stacks to store the grain prior to shipment by rail to the ports at Port Lincoln and Thevenard. Bag elevators were used on farm to assist with loading bags onto trucks, and at rail sidings to make life a little bearable for the lumpers building stacks.

The forge display was reconstructed by museum member John McGeever, and it



illustrates the self-sufficiency of the railway workshops. It is displayed alongside the blacksmiths' swage bench from the workshops at Port Lincoln.

For many years the South Australian Railways manufactured in-house much of what they needed, from tools up to whole locomotives.

FROM THE ARCHIVES – SHUNT HORSE TRAGEDY

Two Railway Horses Drowned

FALL FROM JETTY WHEN ENGAGED IN SHUNTING TRUCKS

Last Friday three railway shunt horses when working on the main jetty fell over the side into the sea. One got ashore, but two were drowned.

An eyewitness states that before the occurrence, the three horses which work in tandem were standing quietly near the edge of the jetty. A sudden movement of the rear horse threw the centre horse against the leader. The leader appeared to be taken off his balance and fell over the whaling piece of the jetty and the chains pulled the other two after him into the sea. The horses, although trammelled with their harness, immediately started to swim, but the tail hook

had caught on a mooring line and as they drew this tight it forced the horses' heads under water.

About 20 men climbed down the piles and went to the animals' assistance. They were now getting excited and when freed from the mooring line they swam under the jetty and got into difficulties among the timber. One man managed to free the leading horse, and this horse immediately dived under a cross timber of the jetty and swam ashore. The other two horses were also freed, but too late to save their lives. The two horses not saved were Champ and Bonzer, while the one saved was Andy. The loss of these horses is almost like the loss of a fellow worker because they had always co-operated in the work in such an intelligent and willing manner.

Shunt horses on the jetties and wharves are always objects of interest to passengers on the steamers and other spectators. Their behaviour in carrying out their work constantly disproves the pedantic statement that animal activities are only reactions to blind instinct.

The account above appeared in the Port Lincoln Times on 12 February 1942, and described the scene at the jetty six days earlier. At the time of the accident Andy and Bonza were nine years old and had only been at

Port Lincoln for four years. Champ was sixteen. The well-loved shunt horses were included in the SAR's Personnel Registers, and the register entries for these three are reproduced below:

Champion	[↑] to near shoulder	1926	Brown gelding, white blaze, white near foreleg, white off hind leg to below hock. Received 18-2-38. SPL 219/38.
Andy.	[↑] off high 0201	Born 1933.	Bay Gelding, narrow blaze, flesh lower lip. N.F. $\frac{1}{4}$ Cannon outside front mid/hock inside & behind. Off 4 Cannon front. Full Cannon behind. N.H. On to fetlock inside, broken white stripe down front of gaskin to mid hock. Off. 5 gaskin front, on hock behind Received 18-2-38. SPL 219/38.
Bonza.		Born 1933	Brown Gelding N.V.B Blaze. Off fore $\frac{1}{4}$ Cannon. N/Hind to point on hock. Off hind stripe in front to hock. Received 3-5-38. SPL 219/38.

THE LIGHTER SIDE: 'BEATING THE WINTER COLD'

This is another story from the collection of the late Norm Hann, a former SAR steam driver. Twenty of his wonderful narratives have been donated to the Museum by David Richardson, who fired for Norm in the Murraylands.

Working with the engine in reverse between Yeelanna and Tooligie was no joke, especially in the early hours of the morning in the middle of winter.

They had only travelled one section with the icy wind pouring in over the coal tender into the engine cab, before both Lennie and Mud were almost frozen stiff.

The engine working backwards with the funnel facing the leading trucks offered absolutely no protection from the bitterly cold wind that their passage was raising. So, at the next station Lennie stopped the train to seek some protection from the inclement weather. Mudrock, never at a loss returned after a few moments with a truck tarpaulin, which he dropped over the tender then up over the cab roof, lashing it down with the tie ropes, completely isolating the cab from the elements, leaving only the bottom corner of the tarpaulin loose, allowing both men access to the cab. Squeezing through the narrow flap into the cab, both boys were happy as the warmth of their improvised shelter spread through their ice cold bodies. They were as snug as two bugs in a rug, as Mud so aptly described it.

Only one thing was wrong. Len couldn't see where they were going. Mudrock looked at him and laughed saying, 'You could only see two bloody yards before, so what's the difference,' which was true enough as there was only a tiny marker light on the tender anyway. 'Open your window and stick your head out', was Mudrock's unsympathetic reply. 'Anyway, if you put the headlight on full beam and look through the cab windows you'll be able to see where you've been.'

They arrived snug and warm at Tooligie a few hours later for their relief. Mudrock,

Len and Snow made their way towards the barracks, which were only discernable as a darker patch in the scrub which surrounded them. The running lights of the locomotive distorted by a haze of steam behind them accentuated the darkness. The grass crackled under foot, and reflected silver shimmers from Snow's kero lamp as they walked.

Again they felt the bitter cold and as they approached, the three men quickened their pace over the frost covered ground. Walking through the open gateway onto the barracks verandah, Mudrock and Lennie stood back to allow Snow to precede them with the lamp.

Leading the way to the kitchen door, Snow slipped the strap of his tucker box off his shoulder, lowered the box to the floor and, cradling his handlamp in the crook of his arm, inserted a large key into the doorlock. With a loud scrape the door was thrust open. The three men entered the room depositing their tucker boxes on the floor.

Snow then lit the two kero lamps and the room's interior became visible. It was a very austere room, some fifteen feet in length and almost as wide. A large black cast iron wood stove dominated one wall, a large zinc lined box filled with cut wood and stumps located beside it. In front of the woodbox on the floor was an old paint tin partly filled with kero swabs. Lennie, taking one of these swabs and placing it under the kindling of the pre-set stove, struck a match, and the small flame ran up the swab into the kindling wood and soon a fire danced merrily in the stove, dispelling the damp cold from the room, its warmth embracing the train crew as they pulled wooden chairs forward to sit as close as possible to the warm glow.

The room was lined with quarter inch

galvanized iron, which had at one time been painted a light grey, but years of dust, grime and smoke from the lamps and stove did nothing to improve its appearance. The floor was simply railway sleepers layed edge to edge, very rough, but cleanly swept. On nails tacked into the wall adjacent to the stove hung a bevy of frypans several saucepans and a wire grill. Along the other wall was a bench with sink and drainboard, a recent addition to the amenities of this room. Above the bench likewise suspended by nails hung the old washup dishes, their wire cage of soap beside them. It was on one end of this bench that the men placed their boxes for easy access, with the meat and food safe in its tray of water occupying the further end.

One of the kero lamps Snow had placed beside the teapot and alarm clock on the wide wooden mantel piece which spaced the top of the stove, the other lamp burned brightly in the middle of the large wooden table which occupied the centre of the room. The single window in the room was without covering of any kind, its four panes of glass fogged as frost

melted, and droplets of water ran down the glass. The fire in the stove spat and crackled, burning brightly warming the room.

With the kettle coming to the boil, the tired train crew were reluctant to leave the warmth of the fire. Finally Mudrock moved to his box, obtained mug, spoon and sugar. Placing a generous handful of tea leaves in the pot, he brewed a pot of tea. The aroma encouraged Lennie and Snow to fetch their pannikins from their respective boxes. Lennie also fetched a pack of biscuits which he opened and shared with his mates.

Mudrock was moved to speak! 'Gees it sure is bloody freezing, the beds'll be like bloody ice. Have to do something about it.' Picking up Snow's handlamp, he left the room, returning a few minutes later with a couple of old bricks and a couple of towels.

He wrapped the bricks in the towels, opened the oven door and placed the bricks on the oven tray. Jokingly he remarked, 'You blokes can climb into cold beds, but, I'm going to make my own bedwarmer.' Drinking the tea gave the boys heart enough to do something



Puntabie barracks, seen here in 1945, illustrates the corrugated iron construction of many early SAR barracks buildings.

Rhonda Dorward

about breakfast and, as the single window began to brighten with the dawn light they moved around, obtaining the necessary equipment from their tucker boxes and soon the room was filled with the smell of freshly cooked bacon and eggs. Each bloke sat down at the table. Using their teatowels as table mats, plate full of bacon, eggs and baked beans, freshly made toast heaped with butter and the inevitable cuppa, the crew enjoyed a meal fit for a king, not in the least disturbed by a couple of nosy mice, lured from their home behind the woodbox by the smell of the food.

While Lennie and Snow indulged in yet another cuppa and cigarette, Mudrock collected his bed warmer from the oven and left the room. When dishes had been cleaned and replaced in the box and utensils hung on their respective nails, it was time for rest.

Lennie went to his bedroom. A small room lined with fluted iron just large enough for a bed and chair. The single small window was

covered with a black blind. A small mat on the floor accentuated the sparse furnishings of the room. He struck a match, removed the chimney glass from the kero lamp which stood on a small shelf bracketed to the wall adjacent to the window and, lit the lamp. With fresh sheets and pillow slip from the linen bag they had fetched on the train with them, Len made up his bed. The blankets he took from pegs on the wall, were stiff and cold as ice. He knew it would be quite a while before he would be warm enough to sleep and decided then and there that he'd be leaving his socks on.

Next moment there came one hell of a roar. Sounded like Mudrock had gone mad. Lennie raced from his room almost colliding with Snow, who likewise was alarmed. Together they burst into Mudrock's room, where he was almost howling with rage. His bedwarmer carefully placed midway in the bed between the sheets, had melted the frost in the blankets and the centre of his bed in an eighteen inch circle was soaking wet.

Winter wasn't the only challenging season for steam loco crews! At the height of summer in early 1964 the crew of T229 have the opposite problem to Mudrock and Lennie, and have attempted to arrange some suitable shade for the cab.

Bill Lewis



UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 19 April 2015, 2 pm: Official opening of the museum's *Eyre Peninsula Railwaymen at War* display, including the unveiling of a commemorative shield for World War II and later conflicts to accompany the World War I shield which is in the museum's collection. The display will be featured in the *About Time History Festival* throughout May.

Thursday 16 July 2015, 4:30 pm: Annual General Meeting of the Eyre Peninsula Railway Preservation Society.

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