



## *Eyre Peninsula Railway Preservation Society Inc.*

PO Box 2736, Port Lincoln SA 5606

# NEWSLETTER

March 2016

### TRACK RECORDING DEVICE

An interesting, and unusual, piece of equipment is one of the recent additions to the Museum's collection. It is a "Gauge and Cross-Level Track Recorder", and was very kindly donated by GWA. This particular one had been assigned to the Port Lincoln Division of the SAR/AN.

More commonly known as a Gauge Master, the device measured track gauge and superelevation and recorded those on a paper roll as it was propelled along the track. It was manufactured by Proxima in Austria in 1950. Its operation is best described by quoting the manufacturer:

*The instrument is provided with a driving stick for propelling purposes, the single operator walking beside the instrument; a warning bell fitted to the recorder rings when the instrument is passing over a portion of the track where gauge tolerances have been exceeded. Track measurements are obtained by three rollers which extend below the carriage structure and ride on the inside edges of the rails, actuating a series of levers connected to the recording instrument.*

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*The Gauge Master device in its storage box. The driving stick is disconnected, and is to the right of the main unit.*

*When approaching a crossing the guide rod should be turned slightly to the left, and after passing the point of the crossing, the guide rod should be released, this preventing the guide rollers from entering the inside of the crossing point.*



## Track Recording Device

The Procedures sheet accompanying the device tells a slightly different story, stating that it records best at 8 to 10 km/h and that the speed while recording must not exceed 15 km/h. It also states that the device must be hand propelled through all switches, to avoid damage and derailment. Presumably on open track it could have been propelled by a motor section car. With 750 km of main line, it was an interesting exercise to check the whole network on foot!

Coloured dots were to be marked on the chart to indicate road crossings, bridges/culverts, points (crossings), kilometre posts and the start and finish of each curve.

The Gauge Master is now on display in the freight shed. It is a fascinating example of a rarely-seen aspect of track management, and provides a dramatic contrast to the highly sophisticated electronic devices used nowadays.



*Top right: With the cover open, the workings of the chart recording mechanism are visible.*

*Above: The superelevation dial, with spirit level for calibrating before a recording run.*

## MEETING ARRANGEMENTS AND AGM

There will be no regular Museum meeting in July this year. As a result, the Annual General meeting will be held on Thursday 18 August 2016 (following the monthly meeting).

All members and interested persons are welcome at our monthly meetings, which are normally held on the third Thursday of each month at 4:30 pm, at the Museum.





## Mount Hope Barracks

In 1925 it was moved to Wudinna where it functioned as the station building until it was burnt to the ground in 1964.

Another Simplex structure was used as the Resident Engineer's office in Port Lincoln. It was located just behind the main station building, on Railway Place and in line with Liverpool Street. After the new stone building was erected, the old RE's office was not needed so it was moved to Rudall in 1930. It was used as the station building there until replaced with a smaller masonry structure in 1966.

The E&WS Department also used at least one Simplex building during construction of the Tod scheme.



*Above: The Simplex station building at Rudall. The Mount Hope barracks was a similar, although shorter structure and lacked the wide verandahs.*

EPRPS Archives

*Below: This advertisement appeared in The Advertiser on 15 January 1910. The Simplex system included a variety of panels with common dimensions, giving flexible assembly options.*

# LION TIMBER MILLS

(RICHARD HONEY)

FRANKLIN-STREET, ADELAIDE (adjoining G.P.O.)  
LIPSON-ST. and COMMERCIAL-RD., PORT ADELAIDE (close to  
Railway-Station).



**TIMBER, JOINERY,  
AND  
BUILDERS' SUPPLY MERCHANTS**

Manufacturers of Joinery, Mouldings, &c.

Wooden Houses of all classes prepared ready  
for erection.



**Sole Manufacturers in S.A. of "SIMPLEX" Portable Buildings**

*Do you enjoy tinkering with machinery? Doing handyman jobs? Talking to visitors? Searching documents and books for historical details? **Whatever your interest, we can use your skills!** Volunteering for just a few hours a month would be a valuable contribution to the museum and the community.*

## THE LIGHTER SIDE: 'BULL ANTS AND FLOOD'

*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.*

*It was towards the end of one of the wettest winters recorded on the Coast in years. Snow Whelan was the Guard of a Mount Hope, Yeelana and Tooligie special, which he, Len and Mud had worked from Cummins to Yeelana where the train was reversed on the triangle, ready to depart for Mount Hope.*

*Snow passed the train order for the movement to Mudrock, who scanned it said, 'Sufferin' hell, how can anyone read that bloody scrawl', and he returned the offending document to the Guard.*

*'Whatsa' matter with you, you drongo, are yer blind or summint?' as he read it aloud. 'To the Engineman and Guard of the train number one five three, engine number four nine at Yeelana on twenty-seventh of July. Proceed to Kapinnie. If you can.' 'There yar, what's wrong with that?' asked Snow.*

*'What's this "if you can" bit?' queried Mudrock. 'Well that's what it bloody well says', replied Snow, 'now how abouts you quit wasting time and let's get on with the job.'*

*With this remark he passed the order to Lennie to place in the clip. 'Right away when you're ready Len', he said as he turned towards the brakevan. 'Don't forget, take it at low speed through the lakes, cause the water's dammed near up to the rails.'*

*Mudrock reached for his shovel. With a long string of empty wagons behind them, the heavy upgrade kept Mudrock working pretty solid for the next forty minutes where, almost on top of the hill, there appeared to be a large gravel pit, a couple of acres in area on one side of the rail tracks. In truth, it was the home of a giant colony of millions of bull ants which used the two rails as a dual highway for four or five hundred yards to the crest of the hill to a field of grassland where they gathered food.*

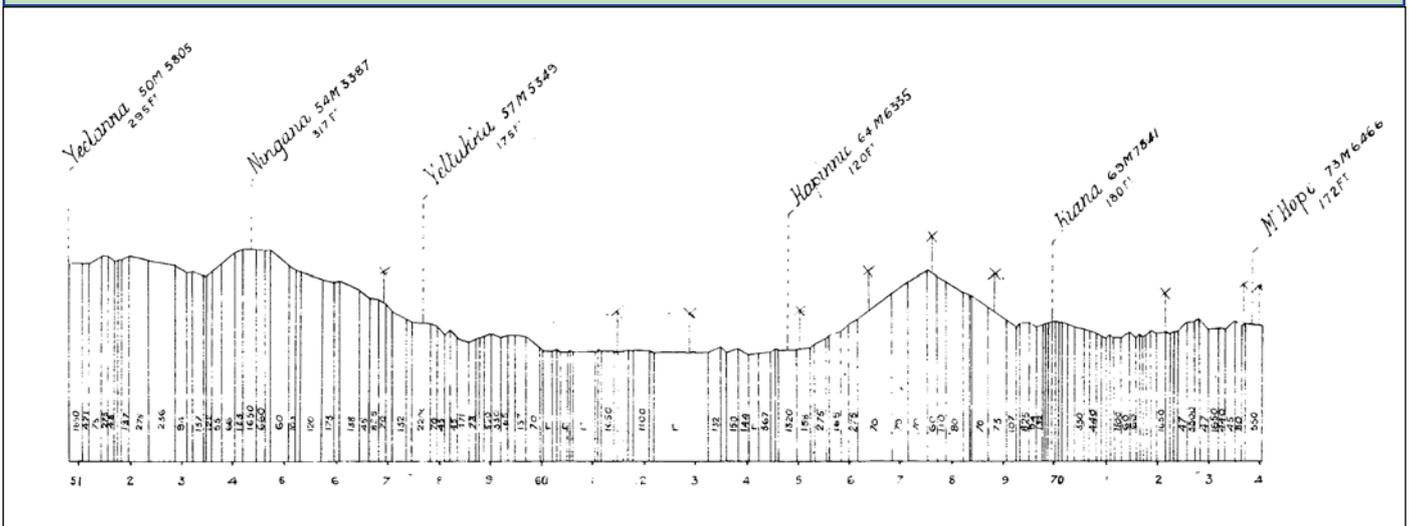
*The engine crew would attempt a Yankee start for this grade. In more technical terms,*

*T180 arrives at Yeelanna from Port Lincoln with a Kapinnie-bound goods in 1963. The loco will turn, pick up the Qx livestock van, reverse the train and then head out towards Kapinnie.*

Graeme Westwood



## ‘Bull Ants and Flood’



meaning a full head of steam, plenty of water in the boiler and the train rolling with as much speed as it was possible to obtain. As the engine approached the ants' nest Lennie took hold of the sand operating lever with his left hand, causing sand from the sand boxes on the footplate to be piped onto the rails immediately in front of the driving wheels.

Under normal conditions this gives the locomotive added traction but, as soon as it ran over the ants, squashing them by the thousands, it had the effect of greasing the rails and the engine would slip. From that moment on it was solid work for Lennie; opening and closing the throttle with his right arm and operating the sand gear with his left, he endeavoured to maintain maximum momentum with the train.

The further they advanced, the worse it became and the stench of the crushed ants was almost unbearable. They were almost to the top of the grade, only a few yards to go. Engine wheels spinning in an uncontrolled slip, Lennie working the throttle and sand levers frantically, trying to jerk the train the last few yards over the top.

Mudrock took hold of his shovel and swung down the steps of the cab onto the ground where he pushed the shovel into sandy soil alongside the track then, running ahead of the almost stationary locomotive, he trickled

The gradient profile for the Yeelanna - Mount Hope line, showing the sharp 1 in 55 climb up to Ningana.

the sand off the shovel onto the track to give added traction. To his dismay he saw a horde of ants turning as an army. The ground was black with them as they moved towards him from all directions, climbing onto his boots and trouser legs to his greater agitation. He stamped his feet attempting to dislodge them. Finally, admitting defeat, he threw his shovel away and ran directly through them to the cab steps. He was never so glad to be back on the footplate. Dropping his pants, he was making haste to get rid of his unwelcome boarders.

Without the added assistance given by Mudrock, Len would not have made it over the grade. It would have necessitated pushing back to make another attempt, as had been done by countless train crews previously.

But Mudrock had had those ants right up to his eyebrows so at the next phone station Mudrock went back personally to report to Train Control and tell them about these ants in no uncertain manner. The controller, hearing his story over the phone, apparently decided to humour him and asked, 'Well Mudrock, are they big ants or little ants?' 'Big?' queried Mud, 'I'll say they're big, if the buggers stood up on their hind legs they'd bit yer bloody knackers off'.

## ‘Bull Ants and Flood’

*Leaving Yeltukka and the ants behind, the train crossed on a low embankment through the centre of the Kappinie Lakes, normally a dry salt pan but now, because of the severe winter and heavy rains, the lakes were full, the water almost lapping the rails. At less than walking pace they moved into the flooded area, Old 49 rocking and swaying from side to side, her springs and compensating gear moaning and groaning under the strain.*

*Lennie was worried that the track would sink on one side, derailing them in the middle of the shallow lake, but regained confidence as they progressed until Mudrock, in his usual helpful manner said, ‘You think this is wet, you should have seen it rain the day Ginger Pointer came off the road at Warrambo. It was that bloody wet the track sunk in the mud under the train. It just got heavier and heavier till they couldn’t keep going, and the cow-catcher was spreading mud like a snow-plough. Gees did it rain’, he continued, ‘they had to knock the fire out and hoof it into Warrambo. Fair dinkum, it was that bloody wet, the ducks were standing under the*

*verandah and the station master was getting his fishing gear ready ‘cause he reckoned the fish would be swimming up out of the sea, and should have been biting around there any minute.’*

*He must have caught the look on Lennie’s face because he hastened to add, ‘Don’t worry mate, these bloody T Class are good, they’ll run around the rim of a pisspot before they’ll come off’.*

*The sunshine of the morning had been obliterated by dark clouds. The lakes were whipped into waves by a cold southerly wind. How miserable and bleak it appeared, as the wind-lashed rain pelted into the dismal grey waters.*

*Three months previous it had been the prettiest sight Len had seen in all his life. The lake, only a dry saltpan, covered with salt crystals white as snow, reflected the setting sun with all the lovely shades of mauve, pink, blue and red to violet. A low fringe of yellow and orange coloured hills, dotted with darker patches of mallee and ti-tree edged the lake for miles over towards Mount Dutton and Greenly. Huge granite hills, dark blue and*

*purple on the shadowed side, brightly caught and held the full pink rays of the setting sun on their western faces, standing twin sentinels to nature’s magnificent beauty.*



*The causeway across the Kapinnie Lakes, as seen during the 1956 floods.*

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