
STATE TREASURES

Geoff Speirs



The 'Coffee Pot' at the Quorn Railway Station. Photo by Brian Homann

The 'Coffee Pot', Steam Motor No.1, was designed to provide an economical passenger service by combining the engine and coach as one unit.

Built in England in 1906 by Kitson and Company of Leeds (engine) and the Metropolitan Amalgamated Railway Carriage and Wagon Company of Birmingham (coach), two units saw service in South Australia. No. 1 worked on the Northern Division between Quorn and Hawker and No. 2 on the south-eastern system between Naracoorte and Kingston.

Steam Motor No. 1 provided a weekly rail passenger link, via trains connecting Peterborough, Terowie and Adelaide, for the communities of Quorn, Hawker and beyond and was not long in acquiring its popular nickname. It retired from active service in 1935, was ultimately acquired by the Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society in 1973 and was restored to operating condition in 1984 under the supervision of Hayden Hart.

The engine is significant on a number of counts. Although not made in South Australia it was designed

for South Australian conditions and modified in the South Australian Railways workshop shortly after arrival. It provided a specialised passenger service between Hawker and Quorn for many years. It was an ingenious solution to a common problem in the State - providing a cheap passenger service between sparsely populated communities. And it is now the only example preserved in South Australia. It is still popular for special outings and has been superbly restored, adding to its appeal.

The two locomotives pictured working in tandem across the Currency Creek Viaduct are locomotives 621 (*Duke of Edinburgh*) and 520 (*Sir Malcolm Barclay-Harvey*), operated by Steamranger Tours. (If you're ever in the vicinity of Currency Creek, it's worth going for a hike along the track by the Viaduct. It's a superb piece of masonry and engineering work.)

These magnificent locomotives were designed by the South Australian Railways and built at the Islington Workshops - as were all engines of the two classes. Their purpose was to provide a high speed passenger service over light track. Both classes were successful in

this and they roamed widely over the State's rail network, freeing the heavier Webb locomotives to work exclusively on the main lines.

Both these locomotives are 'State treasures'. They were designed and built in South Australia to meet South Australian demands, which they fulfilled admirably. They were the last two South Australian Railways built classes to operate in South Australia before dieselisation, and because of their light axle loading combined with high speed, were in common use. There is also a preserved example of both classes - numbers 624 and

523 - at the Port Dock Station Railway Museum. But to have two fine examples of South Australian Railways design and construction still operating passenger trains is something special.

I am indebted to the publication *Steam Locomotives and Railcars of the South Australian Railways*, by RE Fluck, R Sampson and KJ Bird (Mile End Railway Museum, [now Port Dock Station Railway Museum], 1986) for the historical information on these locomotives.

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Big power. Locomotives 621 and 520 on the Currency Creek Viaduct.

Photo by Roger Currie for SteamRanger Tours.