

Early Days in Victorian Railways by George Brown

George Brown, a retired locomotive driver, provided a series of articles for publication in The Footplate newspaper of the Victorian Engine Drivers, Firemens and Cleaner's Association (the forerunner of the AFULE). Beginning in 1919 it continued until August 1924. The following is a transcript of these articles.

Notice was given of the future articles in The Footplate of 29th January 1919, Vol 2 #1 page 12

"Mr George Brown, who is known to a great many of the older members of the organisation as an ardent worker for the Association, and one who suffered for acting up to his Unionistic principles in 1903, has kindly volunteered to supply some interesting facts bearing upon the past history of the Association.

It is hoped to be able to publish some of his experiences in each issue of "The Footplate" during the year, the first instalment of which will in all probability appear in February issue, and should prove of considerable interest to both past and present day Enginemen of the Victorian Division."

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Early Days in Victorian Railways

Introduction

It is with great diffidence that I attempt to write my history of the Enginedrivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association. I find that to make matters clear I must bring in my own personal experience and my own personal doings. So I trust that readers will understand that I intend to confine my statements to my own personal knowledge; but I trust to interest those who would like to know a little of the past of the Victorian Railways.

The first engine that I had a ride on was called Dusty Bob. I was then about eleven years of age, and was receiving five shillings per day working with the platelayers as a boy, or nipper, as the lads were called, making the line from North Geelong to the Moorabool. The building of the viaduct being just started, a temporary line was first laid down by my father and John Richmond, both of whom were afterwards permanent way inspectors. The bluestone ballast was quarried and hand-broken at the Moorabool, and run down in small tip-up wagons. The empties were pulled back to the Moorabool with horses. There were two sidings where the empties were pulled into to allow the loaded ones to pass, which were braked down by a guard with a brake on the last wagon. Of course they had to run to a time table. Peter Petit was traffic manager and timekeeper. He was for many years afterwards a signaller on the viaduct. Many

enginemen will remember him. His widow is living now, or was a short time ago in a cottage on the up side of the bridge. A son of his is at present an officer in the Railway Department.

And so I now come to the first engine to run on the Ballarat line, namely Dusty Bob. There was no name or number on her. I think she must have got her name on account of her always being covered with dust from the ballast trucks. I did hear them say that she was called after the driver who also always looked dusty and his name was Bob. His proper name was Robert Armstrong. He was related to the Armstrong firm of engineers in England. About eight years ago he came to me when I had a hotel at Clarendon, near Ballarat. He was tired, footsore and hungry. He stopped with me for some time. I expect he is knocking about yet. One could hardly kill him with an axe.

I remember the day Dusty Bob (the engine) was brought from North Geelong to the Moorabool. She would move under steam about a quarter of a mile then stick up. They had a team of horses to pull her about another quarter of a mile, then Dusty Bob would get enough steam up to go another similar distance. There were crowds of men to help to shove and hurrah when she made a start to move.

When they got her to the Moorabool, Jerry Riley, afterwards passenger driver from Bendigo to Melbourne, fitted her up so that she could pull about five of our present trucks, and so she cut out the horses. Where she came from I don't not know. I expect she was bought by Evans, Merry and Co. Railway contractors, from the old Hobson's Bay Railway Co. The next engine was the Warrenheip. This engine was taken across the river before the bridge was finished.

There was a line of rails laid down on the up side of the bridge, down the hill and up the other hill, with a bridge across the river. The blocks of stone to build the pillars for the viaduct were brought from the Muddy Water Holes, now called Lethbridge. The empties were pulled back with horses. Charley Guest (father of Charley many years loco driver, North Melbourne, now living retired in Geelong), drove a winding engine at the foot of the hill on the down side, which worked a drum and wire rope for lowering the trollies loaded with stone down to the flat. It was a double line of road, the empties taken up to steady the loaded lowered down, Guest's engine regulating the balance of weight. Tom Crockett, afterwards night foreman at North Melbourne also worked there. I was working as a boy for some time for both these drivers. I fired for Tom Crockett some years afterwards on the Woodend goods and some of the other firemen could not understand how I got on so well with the old gentleman.

A great number of people came from both Melbourne and Geelong to see this engine taken across. She was lowered down the hill on the up side by a winch and wire rope, and taken across the temporary bridge all right; but when about one quarter up the opposite hill, the wire rope broke, and she ran back and just escaped tumbling into the river. They got her safely up at last. When she started running to Lethbridge, John

Grey, driver and Tommy Askel, fireman, were on the footplate. Both these men were afterwards on the Bendigo to Echuca line.

When we laid down the first permanent line from North Geelong we had finished about one mile when the first shipment of fishplates arrived. We had to take out all the rails and drill holes to fix the fishplates. I was given the honor as a nipper to fit on the first one. Jack Richmond, afterwards , metropolitan yard inspector, was then a mate of mine and we took on a contract to have the water in the “navvies” billies boiled morning and night at one shilling per billy per week. We had to find the water and fuel, which consisted mostly of dry cow dung, wood being too expensive. So we were at it from early morning till late at night. If I remember rightly, it did not pay. I held several positions at this time. Greaser, that was to crawl under the small trucks and plaster anti-friction grease up on the axles which were run in pedestals as, of course, there were no axle boxes. I was always covered with grease from head to foot. I was also pointsman for a time. Of course there were points and “V” crossings as there are now. You just shoved one end of the rail against the other and put a pin in to hold the rail in its place. When working with the platelayers, start at six a.m., breakfast eight till nine, dinner one till two, knock off six p.m. It is a God’s mercy this is now altered. I assisted to lay the rails across the bridge when it was finished. Only ashes were to be used as ballast, the bluestone being thought at that time as too heavy. I was allowed to throw out the first shovel of ashes.

(To be continued.)

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The next engine I had a ride on was No. 18 saddleback, Joe Stone, driver, and Mose Wells, fireman. They had brought a load of rails and other material from Geelong. My father got Stone to let me ride on the engine to Geelong to get a new pair of boots. Of course I had to walk back. Joe Stone and Mose Wells had a row and a fight on the old coal stage, Geelong. I think Joe won, though Mose was the biggest.

These were the good old times when there was not so much red tape and “Please explains”. Matters were generally settled with the fist. I saw a good fight once, between Albert Dancey, afterwards passenger guard for many years in Ballarat, and J. W. Styles, afterwards member of Parliament. They could both use their hands. There is no doubt there was a very rough lot at the Moorabool at that time when many hundreds of men were employed. They had come out from all parts of England, Ireland and Scotland, and I believe of the three the old English “navvy” was the worst. There was a sort of mixed up language used. What with the different counties of England and the broad Irish and Scotch, it was hard to understand one another. I know that at that time I spoke so broad myself that I could hardly be understood. When I wanted to know when I had to get under the trucks to grease them, I used to say, “will I fat them the noo?”

and so I got the nick-name of "Fat em 'e noo." So it was no wonder there were plenty of fights on Saturday nights. Senior-constable Savage had six or seven constables under him, and although a good many men were locked up on Saturday nights they were generally back at their work at six a.m. Monday. The police court cases were few. Five shillings per yard was paid for the bluestone broken to pass through a two and a half inch ring. At that time there were no stone crushers. The contractors, Williams, Little and Co., who took over from Evans, Merry and Co., had a large tent erected to conceal the building of a patent stone crusher that had been invented. There was a great crowd present to see the machine start. The tent, being pulled down, revealed a circle of hammers to be worked by machinery. The spawls were laid round ready to be broken up. As soon as the hammers started to work, stones were flying round for a quarter of a mile. The driver had the presence of mind to shut off the steam. Otherwise all those looking on would have been killed, driver as well. The next stone crusher that appeared was the jaw crusher as used to the present day. About this time a sad thing occurred. The driver of the engine for working the crusher beat his wife to death with a she-oak stick. I was sleeping in a tent near them and could hear her screaming. But there was so much going on on Saturday nights that no one took much notice. The driver was sentenced to fourteen years hard labour.

The first railway accident I heard of was at the Little River station, Geelong and Melbourne line. The station, then on the Geelong side of the river. As of course in those days there were points and crossings the rails being merely shifted end on. They could not have been properly placed, as the engine of the last passenger train from Melbourne to Geelong ran straight off and turned upside down. John Guest, the driver and Jim Willet, the fireman. There was no one injured. The driver and fireman were both under the engine when she turned over. I think it was No. 16, a saddle back. Poor old Guest must have been knocked a bit dazed as the first thing he wanted to know was what had become of the tallow kettle. It appears he set great store on a nice little copper tallow kettle he had. I think if his son Jack Guest, who lately retired from the position of loco. foreman at Geelong, was asked for the same kettle he could produce it, as I understand it has been preserved as a memento of the accident. Everyone about Geelong knew old John. He always wore a grey belltopper on the engine. I saw the grey belltopper many a time on the engine taking material up to the Moorabool.

Two others I would like to mention that I knew at this time- Peter Street, who was loco. foreman in Geelong, for the Melbourne and Geelong Railway Co. When the Government took over the line they had also to take over a certain number of their servants. Peter Street was one, and the Government could not deprive him of his job as long as he was able to do it. They tried several times.

Continued in our next issue.

I now have to pass on to the year 1866. On the 5th of November I passed the Government Officer, Dr. M'Crae. The doctor was a good friend to the enginedrivers, as I will relate later. I had to report myself on the 11th of the month at the loco. sheds, Bendigo to start as engine cleaner. On the same day as I received a memo. to start cleaning I also got a memo. appointing me as a permanent hand to start as a platelayer under Ganger Robert Scott at Goornong. But the call to the footplate was too strong, so I gave up the moleskins for the dungarees. How some simple thing alters the whole of one's life. Had I stuck to the moleskins I might now have been a retired, respected road-master, instead of an outlawed engine driver. To my surprise when I stepped out of the train at the platform, I was met by Mr. Robert Watson, then resident engineer at Bendigo. He was afterwards Chief Engineer of the Victorian Railways. When I was working at the Moorabool Viaduct. I was for some time a messenger boy between his office and Mr. Lunt, who was over the stonemasons, and Mr. R. Ford, who was over the ironwork. Mr. Watson said that he expected that I would come by that train. He took me across to the loco. shed, and introduced me to Mr. Jacks, Loco. Foreman. I thought Mr Watson had forgotten all about me; but apparently he had not. I knew then that he must have had a hand in getting me on as an enginecleaner. I told him that I would try and not disgrace his recommendation. I am pleased to say that years afterwards I made it my business at one of our Association banquets in the Masonic Hall, Collins Street, where he was one of our honoured guests, to privately thank him, and remind him of my promise, and to let him know that I was then in the first-class as a driver, and that I had never been fined or punished. He was greatly pleased. I was started that night on the night shift. The hours were: 6 a.m. till 6 p.m., 6 p.m. till 6 a.m.; on night shift, off 8 p.m. to 9 p.m., supper 12 p.m. to 1 a.m. I suppose one should call this midnight dinner. The cleaner was supplied with a hose about ten feet long, with a heavy gas burner. This was attached to a pipe in the pit. You thus could move light to both sides of the engine. My mate was Joe Armstrong. There being only two cleaners on night shift. Joe was afterwards driver-in-charge at Warrnambool.

A special being ordered out that night, Joe had to go firing. John Hoskins was the lighter up, so that there were only two of us during the night. I admit I got a bit of a start during the night. Hoskins usually went home about midnight and had something to eat at home. Thus I was left in the shed by myself. There happened to be an engine at the far end of the shed that had the whistle handle put on the wrong square, and as steam fell in the boiler, the handle of the whistle would fall and open the valve, and then would start a horribly shrill screaming noise. It struck me, of course, that someone was on the footplate and was playing a trick on me. Hoskins had taken the hand lamp. I had no matches. My hose and gas light I could not take that distance. So I took the coal hammer off the engine I was cleaning, and sneaked up to the engine that was making the noise, climbed up on the footplate, and was astonished to find no one there, the whistle screaming away all the time. In trying to locate the handle of the whistle I burned my hands on the front before I found it and stopped the whistling. Jack Hoskin came tearing into the shed and wanted to know why I had not stopped it at

once; did I want to bring the boss on top of us? He laughed when I explained matters until I felt inclined to give him a tap with the coal hammer.

To be continued.

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I must now take a retrospective view of what had transpired between 1861 and 1866, when I started engine cleaning. The engines of the old Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company had been laid aside in their old loco. Shed, Geelong. These engines had names instead of numbers, viz, Tubal Cain, Hurricane, Samson, etc. To give an idea of this class of engine, I think I can best do so by describing a trip I had on one as a fireman. It occurred this way. One of these engines was purchased by the Government. It was numbered forty. What its previous name was I do not know. This engine was sent through from Melbourne to Bendigo to be taken on to Echuca to do the shunting in the Echuca yard. Now, Loco. Foreman E. Jackson at Bendigo– he always signed his name as Jackson, and it was some years afterwards that he signed his proper name of Jacks, so if I refer to him again I will just call him Ned Jacks, as he was afterwards so familiarly well known to all. Now our loco. foreman, Ned Jacks, was very fond of taking a run out as a driver when he could get the chance of taking a light engine for repairs to the old Williamstown Workshops. As he could book his own fireman on the running sheet, he could pick and choose who he would take. The majority of us did not care to go with him, being a bit nervous, he being the Boss. However, I was determined when he booked me with him first that as he preferred to be a driver, that he would only be treated as a driver as far as I was concerned. I soon discovered that he preferred that way best. He got no “No, sir,” or “Yes, sir,” out of me, and I was often booked out. My first trip with him was taken on engine No. 39 to the shops. We had to run her tender first, as the flange of one of her leading engine wheels was damaged a bit, and it was not considered safe to run engine first. Going up Chewton bank Jacks sent me to the toolbox on the tender to bring him a cigar. He always fancied himself a lot when he was driving. There were two cigars. I brought both down. I also observed that there was a bottle of wine in the box. I gave him one of the cigars, and as he lighted up I also lit up the other. After a bit he said “There is a bottle of wine up there, too.” I said that I knew that. He said, “Well, you won’t get a drop of it.” I told him wine was no good to me, that I preferred a pint of beer, and that I thought he might shout me one at Woodend. He then insinuated that I had had too much beer the night before, and so came our first row. It was terrible cold after we left Woodend, and running tender first did not improve it. I slipped up to the tool–box, and found a big lump of cotton waste. This I wrapped round my neck and across my chest and felt better. He said that was a good idea, and for me to get him some down. I told him there was no more there. He then said to give him part of what I had. I said that I did not think there was enough and it was no use both of us being cold. Another row. When we got to Footscray

Junction, he asked me how many whistles to give to get turned on to the Williamstown line. I admitted I did not know. He said he expected as much and it was not likely I would ever know anything. I pointed out that I knew how to keep myself warm, anyhow. The signal-box was a very small affair stuck up about fifty feet. The signalman who turned us across was John Cambel. He is alive yet, and is about ninety years of age. He resides in Canning-street, North Melbourne.

(Continued in next issue.)

30th June 1919, Vol 2 # 6 page 75

I have written this to explain how I came to fire for Ned Jacks on No. 40, an old engine of the Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company. This engine had a seven-foot driving single-coupled wheel. There was no shelter cab. The driver stood off the footplate on the right hand side of the boiler, so the fireman had the small footplate to himself, and he certainly required it all. There was no ashpan to drop the fire. The firebars were dropped out into the pit and put in again from underneath to light up. The damper was a round iron plate to cover the funnel and swing round off and over by a rod worked from the footplate. The coal shovel, handle and all, was about two feet long. The bottom part of the foundation ring of the firehole door was on a level with the footplate. I found the easiest way to fire was to get down on one knee. We had not gone far when the steam commenced to go down. Jacks told me to chuck some coal over into the other box. I asked him what other box. He said, "The front box." I asked, "What front box?" He said if I looked I would see it, as it was put across instead of fore and aft. I then found that there was a front box right enough, but no fire in it. The lighter-up had not seen this box either. I got at some lumpy coal, and half filled up the front box and put a lot of slack on top. It kept out the cold air and we managed to get along. When we got to Rochester, Jacks said, "Now we will see how she can travel." We ran the seventeen miles to Echuca at one mile per minute. It was just like a bird flying. She just swept along with the big wheel, with not a sound or knock to be heard. At this time the shunting engine in Echuca was being worked without a fireman- I suppose to save the wages of one. Now this engine was not suitable for shunting purposes, and certainly not for only one man to work. When we handed over to the old driver, Jacks told me stop on the engine for a while to assist, but I soon found this would not do, as the old chap would leave his side of the engine and crush his way through the small footplate and grab the brake from me, nearly knocking me off the engine. He thought he was bumping into a truck when he was yards away. He was not used to the short tank engine, so I could see it was no good, I would only get knocked off the engine. I went across to Jacks, who was sitting laughing on the platform. He sent me to tell the driver that if he thought he ought to get a mate he would see and get him one, but he said he could manage all right. Jacks said, "Well, he is a fool." I had heard that Jacks

was to blame for the one-man business. I then saw that he was. Guard Maxwell was run over and killed some time afterwards, and that put a stop to the one-man on the footplate.

(To be continued)

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Note- Owing to a typographical error, the word "not" was dropped out of the final paragraph of the last issue, and it was then made to read that Mr. Ned Jacks was to blame for the one-man business on the engine. It should be made clear to my readers that Mr. Jacks was not to blame in this matter. - G.B.

In giving this description of my trip on No. 40, I have tried to give a practical idea of the earlier kind of engines. The most of these engines had neither pumps or injectors, the water being forced into the boiler by a small force pump worked by steam, much the same as the Westinghouse air pump. Many engines had no lubricators. There was a small tap on front of each cylinder, much the same as an ordinary water tap. When steam was shut off over the crown of a bank one had to go round to the front of the engine and kneel on the front buffer beam and open the tap on each cylinder and insert the mouth of an oil feeder of melted tallow and allow about three sucks to be taken on the back stroke of the piston. There was nothing to hold on to but the handle of the tap. Poor Ned Hautinville, a driver, fell off and was killed after leaving Woodend while doing this. His fireman was Jim Green, a brother of Mr. Green, one time railway commissioner. Many of the drivers preferred this way of lubrication, even after lubricators were fitted on. I was very glad when these cylinder taps were taken off. I have gone round eight times in a trip Bendigo to Woodend and return to give the cylinders a suck. On Nos. 1 to 9 class there were no sand rods. One had to go to the front and put the sand down the sand pipe by hand. I have been out dark, rainy nights on No. 5 engine hand sanding. The driver on the footplate by himself; the hand brake on the tender tied hard on, and the engine running reversed for a couple of miles going into Castlemaine. There were no spring-boards for the drivers to stand on. Each driver had to get a block of wood to suit himself. Harry Sagar, an old driver, afterwards loco. foreman, Geelong, now living at Moonee Ponds, tried putting pieces of indiarubber under the block of wood to take off the heavy jar, but eventually with the help of Dan Locke, shed carpenter, (father of George Locke, an officer now in the Department) they invented and got adopted the present spring board.

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30th August 1919, Vol 2 # 8 page 101

In the following original text it appears that a typographical error occurred in the Christy report where the type setting flowed over into the adjacent columns. I have amended this in the transcription.

After giving a crude and simple description of the old class of engine and the working of them, I will now try to give an idea of the old class of enginemen employed in the opening up of the railways in the early days. As the Geelong to Ballarat and Melbourne to Bendigo lines were opened about the same time, it was very hard to obtain mechanics or loco. drivers with running experience. Of course there were a few drivers and firemen who had been employed on the ballast engines for the contractors in the making of these lines; but these were not sufficient when the lines were opened for passenger and goods traffic. Again a number of them preferred to take their chance at the gold-diggings, then a great attraction. The railways at this time were the control of the Board of Land and Works, with Minister of Railways as political head. Mr. Thos. Higginbotham was engineer-in-chief, Richardson, traffic manager; F. C. Christy, loco. superintendent. I must say that these officers were well-liked and respected by all the employees; in fact, I do not remember any dissatisfaction being expressed against any of the old class of officers we had in those days. To find men to man the engines was no easy matter. Again, the idea at this time was that the engine driver must be a mechanic. And it was not until seven years later that this idea was exploded. The workshop was at Williamstown, Mr Haughton being shop manager. To give one example of this trouble to find men for the footplate, Mr. W. Crawford (at present living in Middle-street, Ascot Vale, was working at the bench in the shop in 1861. He was driving afterwards for years and was foreman when he retired. He was waited on by Mr. Thomas Higginbotham and Mr. F.C. Christy, and asked to go on the footplate. He did not want to go but they pointed out how short-handed they were, and persuaded him, and he went firing for Ned Jacks, Melbourne to Diggers Rest. The line was not opened through to Sunbury. And so he went out to get running experience. About this time there were twelve men imported by the Government from Great Britain, who had running experience. Certain promises were given these men which I regret to state were not always fulfilled. I have before me at the present moment the original report of an accident that occurred in Feb. 1861. This report was sent to F.C. Christy, loco. superintendent to Thos. Higginbotham,, engineer-in-chief. The following is an exact copy:-

“Williamstown,

28thFebruary, 1861.

“Sir,-

“I have the honor to report a collision which took place to-day on the Essendon line, between No. 8 engine, driver (Thomas Higgins), fireman (J. M’Kenna) and No. 10,

driver (Edward Jackson), fireman (no name give). Upon the accident being reported to me I immediately preceded upon No. 8 engine up the line with a train of passengers for the races. I found the trains in utter confusion, no time being kept, and the time of starting, and not being aware of the arrangement of running. On proceeding as far as the Essendon Junction. The signal for entering the line was given. I then enquired where the other two trains (the race train and the Essendon) were. This no one seemed to know. We put our train into the Junction siding. The siding being too short to hold the train, it blocked both lines. I immediately jumped from the engine and gave instructions for the train to follow me slowly. I ran ahead of this train, and stopped Jackson's train at the Newmarket siding. I brought my train into this siding and sent Jackson on to Melbourne with instructions to return immediately from Melbourne with passengers, and that no train should leave Newmarket until he returned. This he did. In the interim the Essendon train had returned from the Racecourse to Newmarket, and was shunted up the Essendon line letting Jackson proceed to the races with passengers. I then saw that it was advisable to take one train off as there being only one siding two trains could not work safely upon a single. Consequently I returned with No. 8 and ceased running for the day.

“Accompanying are the reports of both drivers. I do not attach any blame to either of them as they appear to have lost time and got into confusion. Higgins' statement, together with that of the fireman, is that they were ordered to start by Mr. Richardson, so as to clear the Essendon Junction before the arrival there of Jackson. This they failed to do and met in the cutting. The accident would have been serious had not both been running very carefully. As it is the only damage done is three buffers broken. All the hands were perfectly sober and steady. The two drivers are the oldest on the Victorian lines and have been driving ever since the commencement of the lines, and before they were open for traffic.

“I have the honor to be,

“Your most obdt. servant.

“F.C. CHRISTY.

“Thos Higginbottom,

“Engineer-in-chief”

This report gives the names of the two drivers and one of the firemen. The E. Jackson is the Ned Jacks I have already written about. T. Higgins was driving for some years on the Geelong to Ballarat line. J. M'Kenna, the only fireman's name given, was afterwards loco. foreman at Ballarat and Melbourne; so it is pretty well certain that these were about the first enginemen employed on the Government Railways. This report also throws a light on the difference in the race traffic in 1861 and 1919, and the electric trains now running over the spot where the collision happened. The Essendon line was

made by a private company and had running privileges over the Government railway from Newmarket to Spencer Street. The line Spencer-street to Newmarket was built by the Government for the cattle market and then extended to the racecourse for the race traffic. It was evident that the Essendon Railway Co. was running a special race train on the day of the accident, from Essendon. This Co. afterwards went into liquidation being a losing concern and was closed for a number of years. It appears as if the Government railway officers had a certain supervision to see that only capable drivers were employed by the Company. An amusing thing occurred at about this time. A new driver had been engaged by the Co. and the night foreman at the loco. shed, which was then where the island platform is now in Spencer-street station. The night foreman's name was John Hoskins. He was afterwards loco. foreman at Benalla. However, "Old Johnny Hoskins," as he was usually called, went across to the passenger platform to meet the new driver, who was running his first trip. When he got on the footplate he asked the driver how he got on. The driver said "Oh, splendid." Old Johnny looked at the gauge glass and said it was not showing any water in the boiler. The driver "Oh, I forgot all about the water. The old man jumped off the engine and ran towards the loco. shed, crying "Drop the fire, you fool; drop your fire" Needless to say, the Company had to find a new driver.

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The way the driver who forgot to put water in the boiler came to be on the engine was the result of an attempt to obtain cheap labor. The Essendon Railway Co. had notified their drivers of a reduction of 3 s. per day. The driver then gave a week's notice that he was leaving their service. They found this individual, who agreed to drive at the reduced wage. The Co. had then the front to send this man to ride on the engine to learn the road, and during the week that their driver had given notice of. The driver and fireman got off the iron steed at once and told the new man he could take the engine. The Company got some one to act as fireman, so nothing else but trouble could be expected.

The Government had then to send the Co. a reliable driver until they could find a better than the one that had proved such a failure. As they could not find one they had to reinstate the old one and give him proper wages.

Even in those early days there was a union or understanding amongst the old enginemen to protect themselves. And they paid the full wages to this driver until the Co. reemployed him. So this must have been the first strike of drivers and firemen in Victoria.

Mr. Christy's report also throws some light on the amount of race traffic, as it is evident that Higgins' train could only have been a very short one, as the engine No. 10 could only pull about nine short four-wheeled carriages; yet there was not sufficient

length of siding for one train to shunt for another. It was thought that Higgins' train could get back in time to Kensington Junction before Jack's train arrived there. But the two trains collided opposite where Kimpton's flour mills are now. It appears one small engine ran all the race traffic in 1861.

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31st October 1919, Vol 2 # 10 pages 143-144

At this time there was no thought of taking on young men as enginecleaners, with the object of training them to become enginedrivers. The men taken on as cleaners were mostly elderly men, and they were classed as labourers. A number of old soldiers who came out to fight at the Eureka Stockade, whose time of service had expired, and who preferred to remain in this country and draw their small pensions, were given employment as enginecleaners. It was soon apparent that there would be a great shortage of driver. But the idea that drivers should be mechanics still held good. But a circumstance occurred that was about the first to have that idea altered. Of course there were some men driving who had running experience only and had not served their time at the bench. These men were not allowed to interfere with their engine if it broke down on the road. A mechanic had to be sent from the Williamstown workshop. The circumstance I have referred to was an engine breaking down at Footscray. Mr. Houghton, shop manager, and a fitter came by special train from Williamstown shop. After some consultation, the fitter said it would take a certain time to get the engine going again. The driver said if they left him alone he would have it running in less time. He was allowed his own way and he did as he said he would. The name of this driver was understood to be John Heffernan. As a number of detentions had occurred through drivers sitting down and waiting for someone to be sent from the shop to do what they should be able to do themselves, the system was altered. A circular was issued that in future drivers would be punished if it were possible to so repair their engines when breaking down on the road and they did not do so. It was soon seen that they would have to train up the young men in this country from enginecleaners to enginedrivers, so a new system was introduced about 1865, and a regulation was passed by the Board of Land and Works (the railway system being then under the control of that body) to the effect that cleaners had to be taken on between the ages of 17 and 21, and the following regulation was passed and posted up in every loco. shed: "Cleaners, after serving two years would be entitled to the position of second-class firemen, at 9s per day; second-class firemen, after two years as second class, to be entitled to first-class firemen, at 10s. First-class firemen, after three years, to the position of fourth-class driver, at 12s. per day; fourth -class driver, after twelve months, to third-class driver, at 13s.; third-class driver, after two years, to second-class, at 14s. per day; second class driver, after three years to first-class at 15s." With good luck one could get from a cleaner to a first-class driver's position in 12 years. The breaking of this very plain and simple agreement by the officers of the Department was the principal cause of the formation the E., F. and C. Association. About the first

trouble that arose was that after a few young men had started under this understanding a regulation was passed which should have been part of the agreement at the time. It was that all cleaners should pass a strict medical examination, should be able to read and write, and had to be a certain height. Jimmy Dick, afterwards loco. foreman, Geelong, had been on for some time under the promise of promotion, prior to the medical examination being introduced. It was then found he was under the standard height and he was to be debarred going on the footplate. But Jimmy had a large number of political friends, and after he had proved that he was a quarter of an inch taller than Tommy Hulse, afterwards loco. foreman at North Melbourne he was granted his turn on the footplate, after being kept back cleaning a long time.

Again there was trouble. A certain number of the men who had been driving and firing on the contractor's ballast engine, and who did not stop on when the Government took over the new lines, thinking that they could do better for themselves. Some of these men commenced to try to get back to the footplate, but without going through the process of starting cleaning. Of course a few of the old enginemen in the service showed sympathy with them as some of them thought that us young cleaners would never be fit to take charge of an engine. One such case was about the first thing to cause us to start a union for our mutual protection. I came in one night about eight o'clock, firing for Jim Willet, on engine No. 19 and found that Willet was booked out at 3 a.m. as Woods' fireman. I had been firing off and on for about four years, and was then expecting to be constantly firing. So now I had to go back again cleaning.

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Any injustice done, even to a single individual, either in the Government employ, private firm, or private home, will create a discontent that will fester and spread. This Peter Woods had been an engine driver on a ballast train for Cornish and Bruce, contractors for the making of the railway from Melbourne to Bendigo. He had tried his luck at the diggings, and, not being successful, now wanted to get back to the footplate again. I had been cleaning, and spare fireman for some years, and it was my turn for constant firing. Now I had to go back cleaning again. It was evident that something had to be done. Up to that time the old enginemen had a kind of union or understanding amongst themselves. We could now see we would have to start a united association. The old drivers could look after themselves very well. They were a very straightforward and independent class of men. But the junior drivers and firemen were in a different position. So a movement was at once started to form a combined union. We soon found that a majority of the old enginedrivers were prepared to help us. We as cleaners and spare firemen in Bendigo, started a secret correspondence with our own class in Melbourne. This correspondence was carried on the evening passenger train in a secret place on the engines. Of course the driver and fireman were not aware of this.

Thus we were in constant touch with our mates in Melbourne, such as Ted Fewster, Alex. Crocket, and others. So we soon came to a general understanding. We could not get into such close touch with Ballarat, as at that time the engines did not run through.

And so, through the Department breaking their agreement with us as laid down for our guidance, and posted in each loco. shed, the present Enginedrivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Association was formed for mutual protection. Up to this time we had worked contentedly under the system of turn by seniority. If one man entered the service one hour before another, he claimed all rights and privileges before the other, and every one of us was satisfied. My experience is that at any time this system is departed from, dissatisfaction at once takes place. And so with the help of many of the old drivers, such as Wm. Crawford, H. Sager, H. Lewis, Tom Purvis, Tom Danks, Jim Craig, Mick Perry, and many others, the beginning of the Association was formed.

I had made up my mind that cleaners should be allowed to join.

But I could soon see that there would be strong opposition to this. A few meetings were held under the coal stage at Bendigo, which consisted principally of junior drivers, and firemen. The junior drivers, such as Tommy Holt, Joe Norton, P. Fahey, Jim Galloway, of that class. Of course, they could see that their chance of getting regular driving was about the same as such as I, getting regular firing, if men were to be brought in from outside the service. As last we got so far that a meeting was called by W. Crawford, an old driver and firemen to meet in the gentlemen's waiting room. As it happened, there was a large number of spare firemen back cleaning that day, and although we had been firing on and off for some years, we were still cleaners. I went round among them and pointed out that cleaners were not invited to attend, so none of us turned up. Of course I got into great trouble with the old class of enginemen for doing this. Another meeting was called, signed by W. Crawford, inviting cleaners to meet in the gentlemen's waiting room. I went round then and got all the cleaners to roll up. There were two junior cleaners who had received notice that day that they were put off until further notice. This meant until the next busy season. The system of cleaners entering the service was this: Any young man between the age of 17 and 21 could personally apply to the loco. supt. for employment, with the promise of being able to rise to the position of enginedriver. He had to produce a reference from some reputable person, and pass a medical examination.

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Cleaners were generally taken on at the commencement of the busy season. They were subject to being put off in the slack time. Their names and addresses were taken, and they were called back in turn by seniority for the next busy season. I, myself, was off

one winter. Sometimes they might be off in this manner two or three times before they were constantly employed.

The names of these two cleaners were Jack Hamilton and Jack Evet. I got both of them to come to the meeting. The Chairman was Driver Crawford. A great debate arose over allowing the cleaners in the union. But, eventually, it was agreed that all those present be admitted, and that the future admittance of cleaners would have to be considered. I then pointed out that there were two cleaners who had notice that night that they were off until further required. Then the row started. I contended that if these two cleaners paid the dues during the few months they were likely to be off, and as we had no secrets to hide, what harm could they do; also, that sometimes the youngest cleaner in the shed was put out firing on the early morning trains if the regular fireman did not turn up; and that there would be two men on the footplate—one man would be protected in case of an accident, and the other not. However, it was eventually decided that until a cleaner had to be firing for one month in his proper turn before he would be admitted to the union, and that it was to be called Enginedrivers and Firemen's Association. This was in 1871.

And so the case of Peter Woods brought about the Union. But we had a hard fight to get the matter put right. We got him put back as a lighter up in the loco. shed, Melbourne. A week or two after I was firing on an engine at Malmsbury, when we saw a special train go past, with Peter Woods driving. So we had to start the fight again. Peter then left the service and took the hotel at the corner of Bourke and Spencer Streets, known for a long time as Woods's Hotel, but now known as Carlyon's. Some years afterwards I happened to meet Ned Jacks in Spencer Street. He asked me if I ever went to see my old friend Peter Woods. I said I had not. He said: Come in and have a yarn with him. You will find he is not a bad sort. When we went in Peter opened a bottle of champagne, and thanked me for anything I had done to keep him off the footplate. He said he was worth about £6000, which he would never have had if he had been in the Railway Service.

(To be continued.)

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I think the last case that we had to deal with in our fight to protect our system of promotion from engine-cleaning to engine driving occurred at Bendigo.

A fitter name Tom Melbourne, working in the shed got it into his head that he would like to get out on the footplate. He was a very nice young fellow, and every one liked him. He must have had influence of some sort, as he was put out as a fireman to learn the road and the work. He was sent to Echuca to fire from there to Bendigo. In a few months he was brought back to work at the bench and to run any specials on the

Echuca line. I think he ran about half a dozen sheep and cattle specials, but always stuck up either on Bagshot bank or on the first White Hill, the fireman then having to walk into Bendigo station to get the pilot engine out to bring in the train. I was booked out as his fireman the last trip he ran. I was determined that I was not going to walk from the first White Hill to get assistance. So when he started his usual rush when passing the Epsom Racecourse by dropping the lever over two notches at a time, to get, as he thought, a good run at the Hill, I just stopped him. He always had a great respect for me afterwards, and did not report me for the way I did stop him. However, we got as far as the Williamson Street crossing before we did stick up. A few pops of the whistle brought the shunting engine out, and it pulled us in. Tom was not long in the service after this. He held a good interest, along with Bell and Watson, in the Garden Gully United mine when they struck the rich reef. Tom's dividend was a good few hundreds per month. He gave a few week's notice to the Department and went for a trip to the Old Country.

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31st March 1920, Vol 3 # 3 page 29

WHEN THE EIGHT HOURS BILL WAS PASSED.

In giving my experience I must state that I think that there is only one man in ten that is fit to strike out for himself and so control his actions as to be able to make a success of his life. The majority of men do better under a certain amount of control of supervision. And so I find that only one in a hundred is fit to have the control of his fellowmen on his own. Unless he has sufficient self-mastery to keep him from being idle and careless, is bound to be a failure. A foreman over others has to control himself as regards greed for profits, and so deal fairly by his employer's interest without doing injustice to the employees under him. As the employer is apt to be led astray by greed of gain or profits, so the foreman, for his own selfish advancement, is apt to deal unfairly with the men under him. And so I come to explain what occurred when the engine cleaners got the eight hours per day. The Eight Hours Bill was being debated in Parliament, and there was much talk as to whether it would be passed or not. We all felt sure that if it passed the platelayers were sure to get it. But amongst us cleaners we were not so sure of our getting this great privilege.

One day our foreman, Ned Jacks, handed me a printed form and said that all the cleaners were required to sign their names to it and that I was to get it done and give it back to him the next Monday. On reading it I found that it was to the effect that if us cleaners would sign the paper and agree to a reduction of 6d. per day that we could start at once at eight hours per day instead of 10 hours as at present. However, I had to lay it before my mates, so I called a meeting of cleaners on the Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock, in a large bark hut near the present goods shed in Bendigo where several of

the cleaners were batching. I only mentioned to one of my mates what the meeting was called, and asked him to stick to me, and if it was carried at the meeting that the paper was to be signed we would tear it up. Of course I knew there would be a row, so I told Harry Ludwick to be sure and sit next to me. He generally wanted to fight, so I thought he was now likely to get one. I was voted chairman as I had called the meeting. I explained the position as well as I could and pointed out that the Eight Hours Bill was bound to pass, and that us cleaners would get the same benefit, and begged them not to sign it. I said we would get the eight hours and not lose the 6d. per day. We were then getting 7/6 per day. Then the arguments started. Fancy working two hours for 6d.! Fancy not having to go to work until 8 o'clock instead of having to turn up at 6. Of course it was a big temptation, as we knew the men of the footplate would not get it, and they thought the cleaners would be out of it. So in spite of all I could say it was agreed that the paper should be signed. They wanted me to sign first, but I said the chairman should sign last as chairman, so the paper passed round and was signed. When it came back to me I tore it up, and then the fight started.

On the Monday morning the foreman came to me and asked if the paper had been signed. I just pointed to the two black eyes I had and said "Yes." He said, "Then, where is the paper?" I told him I had torn it up. He said, "A good job you did."

About the middle of the week a notice was posted in the shed that the cleaners hours from the following Monday were to be eight hours; not a word of the case of the 6d. per day. That night they dragged me up to the hotel on Quarry Hill (though I don't think I required much dragging), and we had a good time, and some of us did not work even eight hours the next day.

As I previously stated, the temptations of each officer in the railway in charge of a department to try and work his particular section cheaply, and so get a good name for himself, makes him do things that he would not demean himself to do if he were owner of the business. This, as a rule, is the principal cause of much of the discontent on our railways. The public, who really are the masters, would not countenance such things if they knew of it.

The paper I tore up was signed and issued by the then loco superintendent who had just been imported from the old country, and no doubt he thought to cut things down a bit. However, he turned out a real good fellow, and we were all sorry when he left for the old country again.

(To be continued.)

In a previous issue of the "Footplate" I gave a short account of a bit of trouble among we cleaners over the introduction of the eight hours for day's work.

I desire now to give an account of how we got our first holidays. It must be understood that up to 1872 there were no such things thought of as the present system of annual holidays. There were always the four national holidays, for which the employees got double pay when they worked on those days, which, of course, in nine cases in ten had to be done. I know I had been in the service from 1866 until 1871, and the only holidays I had was four days without pay, and then I had to pay my railway fare to where I could visit my father and mother.

At this time - viz 1871- there was a certain enginedriver named Harry Lewis. He afterwards became loco. inspector. He was then a young man and was very proud of keeping the status of enginemen up to a high standard. I have often seen him step off his engine on arrival in Bendigo at 11.15 p.m. passenger train from Melbourne, dressed like a gentleman-belltopper, etc.- with Mat. Murray, his old fireman, fixing his clothes on, and seeing him making his way to the Shamrock Hotel (the leading hotel in Bendigo). This was the driver that got the first Annual holiday for the employees on the Victorian Railways. This driver (Harry Lewis) was a great friend of the Hon. B. J. Davis, Speaker in the House of the Legislative Assembly. Both Welshmen. No matter what country they came from, they did a good turn to we railwaymen.

The question of the constant vibration of the footplate and the effect on the nerves of the enginemen was discussed in Parliament, and in the end, backed up by the advice and report on the subject by Dr. McCrae (at that time the Government medical officer), it was arranged that all enginemen should get a relief from the footplate every year for so many days: drivers to get nine days, firemen seven- clear off the footplate- each years for a rest, and a pass from one station to another stated station. I must state here that it was some time afterwards before such as stationmasters, guards, platelayers, and other employees got the right of annual holidays and a pass; and so, in 1871, I got my first holiday and a right to a pass.

As there was a notice posted outside the loco. foreman's office intimating that I was entitled to seven days' holiday and a pass, I thought I would get married on the 8th July, which was a Saturday; so to give the boss time I went and interviewed him on Tuesday, 4th, to ask for holiday and pass.

He was in a very bad humor, and told me he could not let me off. I pointed out that he had let off on holidays together Joe Norton and Mick Perry, when there were less men in the shed to do the work. He then ordered me out of the office.

I was back cleaning that day through a slack time, and was cleaning the top of an engine near the office. As soon as I saw him come out of his office, I called, "Are you going to let me off to get married next Saturday, or are you not?" He then called me

into the office again, and our arguments ended the same way. As soon as I saw him come out of the office I sang out again, "Are you going to let me off to get married?"

This time the whole shed took up the cry, "Why don't you let Brown off to get married?" The boss again called me into the office, and said I had not given him sufficient notice, and ordered me out. But every time he came out of the office the shed called out, "Let him off to get married." At 4 p.m. they were all yelling out again when he called out, "Yes." I asked when I would come for the pass, and he said 7 o'clock; and so I got married on the Saturday, and left with a pass on the 12.15 p.m., Mose Wells driving. Fog signals laid nearly to the three arch bridge. All the men outside called out, "He's got married at last". I also observed our old boss around the corner of the loco. shed, smiling.

(To be continued.)

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Between the years 1867 and 1868 I was transferred as a cleaner from Bendigo to Echuca. This transfer occurred as follows. I was cleaning on night shift when the Boss came out of the office in a great hurry, and told me to get across and get into the van of the Echuca train, which was about to start at 8.3 p.m. He must have received an urgent wire to send a cleaner at once. Now I had promised to meet my best girl at the supper hour, so this came as a great shock to me. I pointed out that I had no coat or hat on. He said that it was a warm night and he would send on my clothes by the first train the next day, and for me to run as the five minutes bell had rung. I started to run and him after me. I stumbled and fell twice and just missed the van by a few inches as the train started. He stood and looked at me and then remarked that he thought that I had managed that very well and that he had only intended me to remain a short time to relieve another cleaner. But now as I had proved so smart that I was to go by the first train next day and remain in Echuca.

Now Echuca was about the last place a cleaner would wish to go to. When I arrived there I found that my only mate was an old soldier, Peter Murphy. As I previously stated, there were a number of old soldiers, who came from home at the time of the Eureka Riots and as some of them were due to retire on a small pension. Those who desired to remain here were given work by the Government so my new mate was one of them and a fine old fellow he was. I found that there were only two drivers, one of whom was in charge. Each driver had two engines. There was No. 1 and No. 7, 6-wheeled coupled, also No. 4 and No. 10, 4-wheeled coupled. The drivers of the present day would be a bit surprised if they were given two engines each to handle when required instead of , as they do now jumping on to the first engine they can get. If it was known that there was going to be a heavy load they used the goods engine; with light loads they took the passenger engine. These engines were the first imported

made by Beyer and Peacock. They are now known as the P class. So we two cleaners had four engines to look after, shed to be kept clean, also the coal stage, pits, turntable. So we had our work cut out. When I first started the job was not so bad as the first engine left at 8.30 a.m. and returned at 1.30 p.m. The other left at 4.30 p.m. and returned at 10.30 p.m., so that as we cleaned together it was all day shift. Echuca at this time was a very rough wild place, especially during the wool season, many hundreds of teams of bullocks bringing in wool to the railway station. There were about 200 blackfellows around Echuca at this time and their favourite place to camp in the cold weather was the loco. shed.

Just before I came a cleaner had been dismissed for taking an engine that was under steam in the shed and running it out to nine mile point with half a dozen blackfellows on it to fire for him. They lost the shovel in the firebox and finished the trip by firing with their hands. Of course the cleaner was sacked. He was off for about two years when he was put on again and finished as a driver in the North Melbourne loco. shed. I was quite contented for some months. I had no responsibility as my mate got an extra sixpence per day and was responsible for the lighting up. Then a disagreement took place between the driver in charge and the old soldier. What it was about I never learned. The first intimation I had of it was one night I was firing the driver in charge, his fireman being off sick. After we left Bendigo he said: you will both go on night shift now; that will serve the old beggar out. I pointed out that it would be punishing me as well. He said that as I was young I would be able to stand it. I tried to get the old soldier to kick up a row about it, and that I would back him up; but he would not do so and begged me to put up with it for a time, as he thought it would come right soon. The outcome of this became a serious matter afterwards.

To be continued.

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The outcome of the private quarrel between the driver in charge and my old soldier mate was the posting of the notice in the shed. (I took a copy of this at the time, and still have it.) Cleaner Murphy to start work at 10.30 p.m., finish at 10.30 a.m. On this shift the engine shed and pits to be kept clean. Cleaner Brown to start 7 a.m. till 9 a.m., resume work at 1.30 p.m., finish at 10.30 p.m. On this shift to clean ash pits and oil turntable. Change shifts each alternate week. Sometimes through extra heavy loading or rough weather a few bags of coal would be taken from the stage. If a truck came to replenish this stock the cleaner on this shift had to discharge the truck. In looking back now I can hardly imagine such hours and work. Here was one engine standing in the shed all day until 4.30 p.m., and yet the cleaner had to come on from 10.30 p.m. till 10.30 a.m. to clean it. The other engine in the shed nearly all day, yet the cleaner had to do a broken shift to clean it. No evening off for either man.

The first trouble arose through the fireman having to help in turning the turntable. This led to a fight between Tim Judge and myself. Tim was a well-known wild character. Everyone liked him, but everyone was afraid of him. He was a great boxer, and wrestler, and was always prepared to fight anyone and everyone. He was about sixty years of age at this time and was generally known as Tim the devil. He had been put back firing for burning the boiler of engine No. 33. This was Tim's engine, and he had christened her Old Biddy, and the engine went under that name for many years. I dare say she is often called that name yet in Bendigo. However, Old Tim and I fell out over the turning of the engine on the table, which was really too much for only two men to turn. Tim said that I was loafing on him, which I certainly was not. The driver having gone home, I got on the footplate with Tim to run the engine into the shed. While the engine was moving he reached out and pulled my nose. I said all right I will pull your nose presently. As soon as the engine stopped in the shed and Tim had pulled the lever into the centre notch I got a good hold of Tim's nose. Then the fun commenced. We could soon see that if we kept fighting on the footplate we stood a good chance of both being killed. So Tim proposed that we should have it out in the enginemen's room. There being four bedrooms and a large room for cooking purposes in the shed. When we started in the room I soon began to think that the roof was falling down in places. Tim was too clever with his feet. At last we went out together to the tap under the coal stage to wash the blood off our faces. Old Tim put out his hand and said it was all his fault, and that I was a regular young brick. We were the best of friends until his death in the Bendigo Hospital. He was always greatly pleased to see me when I went to see how he was getting on. There is no doubt that the hours we worked and the work we had to do hastened my old mate's death. There was no chance of our getting proper rest or sleep. I have gone into the shed and seen old Peter lying on the shed floor alongside his slush lamp and perhaps two or three blackfellows trying to help him by trying to clean the engine wheels. Anyone could see that the old man could not stand this long. But he would not complain or let me do so. But it happened that Mr. S. Miris, who afterwards became loco. supt. (he was then clerk in the office of Mr. F. C. Christy, Loco. Supt.) came to Echuca on a holiday. I prevailed on Peter to go with me and explain matters to him. He said that we should write in about it at once and that he would then see about it. I wrote out a statement and both of us signed it. An answer came back which I have still in my possession, stating that Mr. F. C. Christy would shortly come to Echuca to inquire into our hours of cleaning. By this time the old man was dying. I tried to explain the memo. to him but he was too far gone to understand it. I was shortly afterwards shifted back to Bendigo and the cleaners were put back on the day shift.

So this was my first experience of having to fight for what was right.

(To be continued.)

31st July 1920, Vol 3 # 7 pages 81–82

I previously gave a description of how cleaners were appointed on the railway. They were not considered as permanent for some time. They were always liable to be put off for reduction of hands at a slack season. I was lucky enough to be only put off one year. That was in 1867. Several men were put off that season, leaving their postal address and were to be called back in their turn by seniority. One young fellow named Murray, told me he would not come back; that he was sick of the dirty work; and as his father had a large boot shop in Melbourne, he would stop and help him. I told him if that was the case, he would do us cleaners a good turn if, when he was sent for again, he would go into the Loco. Supt's office and explain to him the kind of dirty work– the stink of the slush lamps, and the long hours on night shift we had to work, and that he would not take on the job on any account. I got a letter from him some time afterwards, stating that he managed the job so well that he got run out of the office into Spencer Street. But I think it did good, as the Superintendent was not so hard on the cleaners afterwards when they committed an offence. At the time I was put off my father was ganger between Goornong and Elmore; so I set to to look for a job. I heard that they were building a bridge over the Campaspe river at the Clare flour mills; so I went there. As it happened, I had on my blue dungarees. I was at that time rather proud of them. I found they had just started the bridge near the flour mill, which was a three– storied wooden building. There was also an hotel, called the Clare Inn. The owner, Mr. Nicklos, also owned the mill and was also the contractor for building the bridge. I found him and asked for work. He asked me what I had been working at. I told him I had been working in the Bendigo engine shed, and that I was off through reduction of hands. He said that I was just the kind of man he required to drive the engine in the mill. The wages were 25s. per week and keep. I said I would take on the job. This was on a Saturday, and I agreed to start at 8 a.m. on the Monday. He then showed me round the engine room. The mill was stopped. I suppose waiting for a driver. Of course I knew mighty little about the engine. I knew how to clean it right enough and I could see that it wanted cleaning badly. At 8 a.m. on the Monday I was there. Nicklos had steam up waiting for me. He told me to give her a start, so I opened the regulator and felt a bit surprised when she did not start. Nicklos said give her a start with the fly–wheel. I went to the fly–wheel, thinking here is a mess, as I did not know which way to turn it. By good luck, I turned it the right way. Nicklos appeared satisfied and told me to keep the steam at about 40 lb. by the steam gauge. He then left me at it. The miller, a man named Jones, came in and cross–examined me as to where I had been working before. About ten o'clock I found that when I opened the valve for putting water into the boiler there was not water going in, and as the water in the boiler was getting down pretty low, I was just thinking of knocking out the fire. I had sense enough for that. Nicklos came in. I told him that the pump had stopped. He said, oh, the tank is empty, you must fill it again. I will show you. So he went and slipped a belt on to the fly–wheel, and told me to slip it off again when I saw the tank overflow. I then saw the tank outside for the first time, and that it was filled from the

river. After that I got on all right as far as the engine was concerned. I soon had the engine and engine room in a proper clean condition. But I soon found that I could not stand the tucker provided. I had to grub in with the men employed building the bridge. They were about the roughest lot I have ever since seen. The meat was placed in a large tin dish and everyone took a whack at it. Sometimes there would be a bucket of Irish stew or hash, and then everyone helped himself by filling up their plates with their tin pannikins. The potatoes were place on the centre of the long table in their jackets inside the hoop of a barrel to keep them in their place. I had to sleep with the men in the loft over the stables. I told Nickles I could not stand it, so he agree to give me 30s. per week and find myself and sleep in the engine room, but without using a light. I was watching them putting up a sawbench just outside the mill one day when the miller came in and told me that most likely Mr. Nicklos would ask me to use the engine to work the saw to cut the timber for the bridge and turn the stones to grind in the mill too, and for me not to do it, as if I did he was off, as he thought the boiler was old and rotten and on no account to put more steam in than just enough to turn the stones. I told him that I would take care that no more pressure than 40lbs would be put in. A few days afterwards Mr. Nicklos told me that the engine would have to work the saw and run the mill too. I said the engine could not do it, as it was as much as it could do to turn the stones as it was. He said to put more steam in the boiler. I said that the boiler could not stand it; so he gave me the sack. I was put back cleaning shortly afterward. One day I read an account of the bursting of the boiler at the Clare flour mills and the narrow escape of a lot of men. It had occurred in the dinner hour. The mill was destroyed and part of the boiler was blown right across the river. Some time after I was firing on an engine standing at the Goornong station when Mr. Nicklos came up. He said so you got back on the railway again. I wish I had taken your advice. It would have saved me a few thousand pounds. After he had gone my driver asked me what the man was talking about. I said he was speaking about the boiler blowing up at the Clare mill. Yes, he said, but what had you to do with it. I told him I was driving the engine there. He said, you were; no wonder the boiler blew up.

30th September 1920, Vol 3 # 9 page 108

A Great Holiday Enjoyed by the Railway Employees.

Railway employees are certainly placed at a great disadvantage as regards enjoying the universal holiday that the public always look forward to with pleasure. For nearly forty years I did not get off duty above four times on Christmas or New Year. Railwaymen do not look forward to Easter and Christmas with anything like pleasure. The Easter and Christmas time tables are one of the greatest worries. He thinks then of the extra responsibilities of life and property that then falls upon his shoulders, and while the general public are enjoying themselves with their relations and friends, the men in the

running branch are out of all this. When he does get holidays there is no one to make holiday with, and it is generally in the winter time. It is no use asking a railway man where he is going on Christmas Day. He does not himself know until he sees the running sheet the night before. With these facts in mind, it is no wonder that some of us old fellows look back to one great holiday that we all enjoyed.

When the first flying squadron of war ships arrived in Melbourne there were many special trains run to allow the people to see them. Of course the majority of railwaymen were unable to enjoy this privilege, so the Government arranged to give us a chance. They agreed to give us special trains, to be run on a Sunday. We had to provide volunteer guards, drivers and firemen, they being the only ones who would have to work. We had to see to the safety of the train and passengers. A certain number of us were picked out for this duty. Each one had to wear a white rosette to show his authority. I thought I was lucky when I got picked for one; but I soon discovered there was more work than fun about it.

One special ran from Echuca to Bendigo, picked up all station staff also platelayers at their different lengths. Two specials were run from Bendigo to Williamstown, and two from Ballarat. The first train picked up all station staff and any employees living near stations. The second picked up all platelayers at their several camps. So every one had a show. Young unmarried men were allowed to take their sweethearts. Plenty of work was cut out for those wearing the white rosettes, who had to see that no one got into the trains who did not work on the railway. It was not a nice job—they were continually wanting to change carriages as they recognised their old mates whom they had not seen for some time. However, they were a jolly lot and it was splendid weather, and everyone enjoyed the trip. A sad accident occurred at Woodend on the return journey. A young man, a telegraph operator, got run over and killed. We did not know of this until we got to Castlemaine. His name was M'Taggart. This caused a gloom over the last part of the trip. The cost to the Department was the guards, drivers and firemen's wages, cost of coal and wear and tear of the trains.

We gave these men a handsome present each as a recompense for working for us.

A Day of Mourning.

The terrible accident on the Melbourne to Geelong line, known as the Little River accident, when two trains met head on and two drivers, Jim Craig and Tom Kitchen, met their death; and on the same night and about the same time, the boiler of an engine blew up at Jackson's Creek, near Sunbury, and Hutchinson, the fireman, was killed and the driver, Jim Harris, severely injured. (Jim Harris is at present living in North Melbourne).

This came as a great shock to us enginemen. Jim Craig was one of the founders of the E.D., F. and C. Association, a man wonderfully respected by officers and men. In fact,

they were all liked and respected, and the regret about the two accidents was very widespread.

The enginemmen determined to have one day of mourning and obtained leave from the Department to put a band of black crape round the dome of each engine, so that one morning every engine that left a loco shed had on the band of crape, which showed we were united in our grief and we had the sympathy of the public.

A comical thing occurred this morning. A driver had just started after being on holidays and did not know anything of this. It was an early morning train and as it commenced to get daylight, he remarked to his fireman; "Do you see anything black around the dome?" His fireman, who knew what it was, said he could not see anything. After a bit the driver drew his mate's attention to it, but he still contended that the driver must be mistaken. At last, as it grew more light, the driver made a run round the engine and nearly fell off. When he got back to the footplate he again asked his mate if he could see black crape. When the fireman said no again the driver then said: Then I am going mad and this is a warning to me. Black crape has been used on the footplate also to show disrespect. Some years ago a certain employee in Echuca was not very well liked and was removed to another station. On the day of his removal the driver and fireman on the train that took him away got an old gray belltopper each and wore them on the engine with about two yards of crape hanging down. They were each fined two pounds for their bit of fun.

31st January 1921, Vol 4 # 1 page 16

In looking back over my life as a Railway servant, there has always been an outstanding fact that has struck me as most unfair.

The public, whose servants we are, always appear to think that a railway servant has a safe and permanent job for life. This idea is continually being fostered by the daily press for political purposes. In conversation even with my relations and friends I find there is a want of sympathy and complete ignorance of the very responsible duties performed by railway men.

A heavy responsibility will always fall on anyone who has the care of life and property, and I do contend that this is not properly realised. I give one instance. I was coupled on to a train to take about 400 cadet boys from Ballarat to Melbourne to attend a review. While standing on the footplate I saw two gentlemen pass the engine several times. At last they stopped, and one of them said to me, "Well, driver, I have often felt envious of you enginemmen. What a fine life you must have. Here you are on this beautiful morning on a beautiful engine- (the engines were kept clean those days)-

going to run down through that beautiful Bacchus Marsh. It must be a great pleasure trip." I stepped on to the platform and told him that I had observed them repassing the engine and that they both appeared to me as a fine sample of intelligent men, but his remark had dispelled that idea. I said "What do I care about your beautiful morning, beautiful engine, and your beautiful Bacchus Marsh? Are you aware that I had very little sleep last night, knowing that I had to run this train this morning, filled with the picked boys of Ballarat and land them safely in Spencer Street. It was well for him to talk, but if, by perhaps, some simple mistake I caused the death of one of these boys, he would most likely be the first to try and hang me." He was completely taken aback, and admitted he had made a great mistake to speak as he did, and that few of the public understood it the way I had explained. We then shook hands, and he wished me good luck.

I am sure if these matters were properly understood there would be a better feeling between men and masters. I am certain that if a return was obtained of how many enginemen are able to hold on the footplate until they attain the age of sixty and the men who have to fall out before that age, that it would prove the life is not what people think. And as regards promotion from the footplate the chances are not one in five hundred. The chances are all the other way. In addition to the risk of accidents, the anxiety attendant on the periodical medical examination for eyesight, when, if they fail, back they go as cleaners at reduced pay in their old age. Again, in my experience there is always a fight to keep the hours and mileage run within reasonable bounds. The tendency of those in charge to show a saving by cutting out a little here and there, the whole saving is not worth the trouble created. To give a sample of this kind of thing. The others and myself were and had been for some time on a certain roster which was considered fair and reasonable, when the yards-man, no doubt, to show a small saving in his particular line, thought to use the train engine, if there happened to be a cattle truck on the train to run the truck to the cattle yards. Some of my mates had done this, and had not got paid for it. When it came to my turn, the foreman happened to be standing near. I asked him if I was to get paid for it. He said, it is only for about an hour. I said that I did not mind the work. I did not mind if it was digging post holes, but, I said, that I valued my job at about £1000, and my job was my farm and it had taken me years to get it, and that if I killed someone or made a mistake while doing this for nothing, would he guarantee that I did not lose my farm. He laughed and said, go on and do it and I will see that you get paid. I mention this to show the continual fight that goes on to keep the hours of work from being encroached on.

To be continued.

In describing the early days on the the railways I want to give an idea of how matters were in early times, and leave it to those of the present day to compare the difference. I do not intend to write dry, historical facts, but desire to present it in as entertaining a manner as possible. Many things were done in those days that may appear ridiculous at the present time. The first loco. running shed was just where the island platform is at the present time in Spencer street station. Of course, there was no large goods shed as at present; that portion was what we called the swamp, a place wherein we used to settle any dispute amongst ourselves; there might be a little blood letting, but no pen and ink spilling. Our goods shed was alongside the iron fence in Spencer street, and not very large at that. Our whole goods and passenger yard consisted of only five or six roads between Latrobe and Bourke streets. Our head traffic and loco. offices consisted of those old buildings now the telegraph offices. The chief over all was Mr. Thos. Higinbottom, who was respected by everyone. The loco. superintendent was Mr. F. C. Christy; the loco. foreman was Mr. Harrison. He was a very straight and fair-dealing man. It may appear funny to those of the present day when I tell them that the loco. superintendent, F. C. Christy, used to ride an old gray horse to his office every morning. A small shed was put up to stable in, near where the lost parcel office is at present. Of course, there were no suburban trains, trams and conveyances as at present. An arrangement was made that one of us engine cleaners took it in turn to meet Mr. Christy at 9 a.m. and take his horse and feed and groom it, and have it ready for him again at 5 p.m. Now, we cleaners considered this position of groom for Mr. Christy's horse a most important and lucrative job to get, as there was always a tip at the end of the week. So to avoid any friction we each held the position in turn by seniority. How the loco. lost and the traffic obtained this important post was as follows:- George McKinley, then a cleaner, who when he left the service was relieving foreman in Geelong, took his turn in charge of the horse. Now, George did not know anything about a horse; but I knew he was an expert with billy goats, because we were boys together in Geelong, and a boy in Geelong in those days that did not own a billy goat was no class. George got on all right until Saturday morning, when, I suppose, he thought to outshine the lot of us, he got a tallow patch and shined up the old gray horse. The horse looked so well that Mr. Christy gave him an extra tip. Alas, on Monday there was board of inquiry, and George was at it to explain how Mr. Christy's clothes got into the condition they were. And so we lost the job, which was handed over to one of the porters.

In speaking about goats, few would believe that they were actually employed in railway construction in the early days. A boy named Wilkinson had a contract from Evans, Merry & Co., contractors for the construction of the Ballarat line, to carry the masons' tools to and from the blacksmith's shop at Moorabool to be sharpened. He had two goats and a little cart for this purpose.

An old, lame gentleman named Arnold could often be seen taking an airing in Moorabool street, Geelong drawn in a nice little coach by two white billy goats. His son is at present a leading fitter in the North Melbourne loco. shed.

31st May 1921, Vol 4 # 5 page 64-65

OPENING OF THE WANGARATTA TO BEECHORTH RAILWAY.

This line is only one of many that thousands of pounds was spent on needlessly, and involving an everlasting loss of thousands per year of extra miles of haulage and heavy grades to climb through political influence in the early days. Had there been a railways standing committee as at present, a great deal of this would not have occurred. One of the surveying engineers who surveyed this line showed me plans of surveys one from Glenrowan and one from Benalla, that passed through splendid country near to Bright, and through to Beechworth, bringing Beechworth country miles nearer to Melbourne, with a grade of 1 in 75, instead of 1 in 30. But political influence intervened, and brought about this great loss to the State. The last 10 miles, Everton to Beechworth cost £100,000-£10,000 per mile. The line was opened from Wangaratta to Everton for some time before the last section was finished.

There were two drivers stationed at Everton, named G. Harris and D. Phillips, and Bob Spavia, guard. Everyone round the country knew Bob, and liked him.

At last the great day of opening the line right through to Beechworth arrived. There was a great deal more excitement over the opening of a new line than there is now. Harris, who was the senior, and Phillips had their engines decorated splendidly. Even old Bob had his four-wheeled van done up. The engines were what they call the "U" class, but we know them best by the name of "Buswinkers." Their wheels were only 3ft. 6in. They were designed by Mr. Meikle, Loco. Supt. and were powerful little engines for light lines. No. 17, then a shunting engine, was sent from Melbourne and I was sent with her to Everton the day before the opening to run the regular trains Everton to Wangaratta. I had run the morning train and had returned to Everton.

I observed Mr. Thos. Higginbotham (our engineer-in-chief) on the Everton platform. He must have come up the night before. Soon we could hear the quick beat of the engines of the opening train climbing the rise into the station. Mr. Higginbotham called me off my engine and asked me if I thought the two engines could take the train through to Beechworth up the heavy grades. He said it would be a bad job if the train got stuck up, and if I had time to assist them and get back in time to run the afternoon train to Wangaratta. I told him I had time. He told me when the train stopped to couple on in front. Now this was right into my hand. I knew that Harris and Phillips had had a dispute about taking the first engine into Beechworth, and I enjoyed the fun of coupling on to the front with No. 17 that had not been cleaned for a month. Geo.

Harris called out that they could take the train through without me, but the old chief would not listen.

Just as we started Mr. Meikle (loco. supt), Mr Lewis, (loco foreman) and Mr. Hardy (district engineer) came on my engine. Wm. M'Kinley (now living retired in Geelong) was my fireman. We were soon round the Horse Shoe Bend and into the grade of 1 in 30. We had not gone far when Mr. Meikle, who had stood behind me, said that he did not think I was doing enough with my engine. I pointed out to him that I had to be careful of the water in the tender as I knew that there was none too much. When we got about half way he ordered me to let the lever out another notch. I did so. Of course we were going in some places no faster than a walk. After a bit he told me to give her another notch. I told him I would not. He said I was not doing as much as the other engines. I told him that as I had a larger wheel they were bound to give nearly two beats to my one. After a bit we started again, and said if we stuck up he would hold me responsible, and ordered me to let her out another notch. This I refused to do. I had kept the injector on my side going all the time and expected every minute to hear it blow out. At last we got near the top of the last bank, where there is an overhead bridge when the injector blew out. I told M'Kinley to drop the damper and open the firebox door. Mr. Meikle told him to lift the damper again and he shut the door himself. I opened it again and told M'Kinley to drop the damper again which he did. In a few minutes I shut off steam altogether. Mr. Meikle then tried to open the regulator again saying that there was over three parts of a gauge glass. I told him that I had heard that we would after topping the bank drop down on a grade of 1 in 30 and that we had not enough water. In the meanwhile I could hear the drivers behind dropping their levers over as I kept shoving Mr. Meikle away from the regulator till we topped the bank, when we found there was no water showing in either gauge glass or test cocks. I kept pulling the lever back to pass some water, if possible, over the crown of the firebox, with Mr. Meikle standing behind me asking can you see any water in the gauge yet. Of course there was a big fire in the box. Mr. Hardy got down on the step and Mr. Lewis got as far back as possible. To make matters worse we could not get near the platform or watercrane. There were hundreds of people between the platform and goods shed and mounted troopers trying to get the line clear. As soon as we stopped my three passengers were down off the footplate and off. When we got to the watercrane I got the injector to start, a job that, under the circumstances I did not care about. It was a long time before I saw any water in the gauge glass. The lead plug must have been pretty solid. I did hear afterwards that the top of the fire-box had been burned a bit. Mr. Meikle asked George Harris what my name was and said that it would be a long time before he would interfere on the footplate again. However, he was very good to me afterwards, and any little trouble of myself or my mates be fixed up when I saw him. I do not think that either Bill M'Kinley or I will ever forget the trip. When we were taking the engine back to Everton the engine was reversed for half way down the bank and the wooden blocks on the tender burnt out. I hope to write some more about the Beechworth line.

September–October 1921, Vol 4 # 8 page 118

OPENING OF THE NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

It would astonish anyone at the present time to read the discussion in Parliament, and the opinions of the Press, on the proposal to build this Railway. A large number of people considered it would be a great waste of money, and that it would not pay for itself in a hundred years. However, it soon proved the most profitable of any in the State. It was laid down with 60lb. steel rails, and as the goods engines then in use were considered to be too heavy Mr. Meikle, the then Loco. Supt., designed a lighter engine that would pull as heavy a load. These engines were called the greenbacks on account of their being painted all green and little brass work showing. They are now the “Q” class. They were certainly smart little engines, built in the Phoenix Foundry, at Ballarat. Mr. Meikle was very proud of them and he deserved to be.

There were great arrangements made for the opening to Wodonga. Seven special trains were to start from Spencer Street for the run of 187 ½ miles. A mistake was made in expecting too much from these engines with only a four foot six inch wheel. Of the seven which started from Spencer Street only two managed to get right through, caused by hot boxes, big ends, etc. They were to maintain an average of 40 miles an hour, which was too fast, and it being a very hot day made matters worse. Thus a great block and delay occurred. At this time I was firing for Jack Harris on engine No 83. We were allowed a shed day to get our engine ready for the special. We were on the “Ball” train. Leaving at 2 p.m. we managed to get our engine through, but it was nearly 10 p.m. when we got to Wodonga through being blocked so much by the trains ahead of us. On our arrival, Mr. Higginbotham met us as he had done other enginemen. There was a set of men to take the engine from us, and get it ready for the return trip. He then sent us to a tent where we got a wash, and then to another large tent where refreshments were provided. He said there was plenty to eat and drink. So we sat down to a splendid feed of roast duck, etc. We afterwards picked up with seven or eight of our mates, including Tom Smith, who was afterwards manager of Newport shops. He was in charge and to do any small repairs that might be required to the engines. We had a look round. There were a number of tents, and dancing was in full swing in the goods shed. We then thought to have a look at the dancing. We got in and were standing well back out of the way of anyone; but the police came and ordered us out. This hurt our dignity very much. We found the Engineer-in-Chief walking on the station platform. Tom Smith explained that we did not know what to do with ourselves, and that there could not be much harm if we were allowed in to see the dancing, as we could keep well back out of the way. He said, “Come with me,” and took us to the ticket office. This office had been turned into a storeroom, and the refreshments that

were required were passed out of the ticket window. At this time the station buildings were merely several small wooden houses. He told the person in charge to pass out a drink for each of us. He then took us to the sergeant of police, who said he would allow us to see the dancing to help us to pass the time, so we went into the ball room again. I could see the constables did not like it. As soon as it came 12 midnight the police changed shifts for supper. Now, I thought, there will be some fun. I then hid behind a curtain. Of course the police going off quietly, forgot to leave the order about us. In a short time three policemen got a hold of Tom Danks and J. Harris, both stout men, and twirled them round and dropped them off the goods platform. They did the same to the others. I would have alright only J. Harris was calling out to where his mate was. A constable soon found me out, and I left in a hurried manner to join my mates. We then held a meeting. Some proposed to go to our Chief again, but he was such a fine old gentleman that we would not bother him again. I then took a look round by myself. I went to the large refreshment tent, where I found the constables off duty enjoying a good feed. As soon as they saw me they called out for me to join them, so I soon tucked into some more roast duck. At last my mates came poking round, and were astonished to see where I was, and called me a blackleg. We then picked up with a fine old chap who used to pump water for the engine when we opened to Violet Town. He was well dressed and wore a black belltopper. We walked round and round till we got tired of it. We got back to the station building again and got old John Owen, with the belltopper, to knock at the ticket window and order a drink each. Of course, he could not get one himself, as it would not do for the boss to drink with his men. Harris and I left with the ball special at 4 a.m., and got into Spencer Street at about 11.30 a.m. I never before saw or have seen since such a deplorable miserable lot get out of a train. Some of them had to be dragged out. They were completely knocked out. What with the dancing and the long trip, they appeared as if they did not care what became of them.

November/December 1921, Vol 4 # 11 page 143

In one of my previous papers I gave a short account of the opening of the Wangaratta and Beechworth line, which was the first steep grade line built- of 1 in 30. The deficiency of brake power caused great anxiety as to the safe working of this line. But it was the means in the end of bettering the then system of brake power. The brake power on the engines consisted of wooden blocks on a tender of four wheels and a guard's van of four wheels. These wooden blocks were sometimes burnt out before we reached Everton a distance of ten miles. This was altogether unsafe. Mr. W. Meikle, the then Loco. Superintendent, invented the first continuous brake used on the Victorian Railways. It was a very simple affair. The train consisted of a first and second class

carriage. The carriages were placed next to the engine, with the guard's van at the end of the train. Brakes were fitted to the two carriages, and a small cylinder and piston under each. A steam pipe was attached to the engine. The driver opened a valve which allowed the steam to pass to the cylinders under the carriages, which forced the pistons home, and applied the brake. By shutting this off and opening a release valve the steam was allowed to escape and release the brakes. The flexible pipe between the vehicles consisted of a telescope pipe and was kept steam tight by means of rubber washers. We found this extra brake of great assistance.

(To be continued.)

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The next advance made was that of putting on of cast-iron brake blocks on the engine wheels, worked as a hand-brake. The drivers had been asking for years to get a brake on the engine wheels, but were invariably informed that it would injure the machinery of the engine. I often thought how foolish this idea was. It was merely theory, which practice soon disproved. I have often thought when I have been on an engine reversed the engine wheels skidding, the outside rods not revolving, the strain on them must have been great. I have seen them bent out like an elbow. The packing burned out of the stuffing boxes through the hot air passing through the tubes and down the blast pipe from the fire-box, that it was foolish not to have brakes on the engine wheels. After I left the Beechworth line and was running from Benalla I happened to be in the shed one day when Mr. Meikle, loco. superintendent, paid a visit, and I asked him if he would allow me to have cast-iron brake blocks on the tender of my engine instead of wood. I pointed out it would be no expense, as I had measured the hangers on the Beechworth engines and those on my engine, and they were the same. He said that he regretted to inform me that the cast iron blocks had been condemned by an engineer who ought to know. He said that the reason given was that the cast iron wore away the tyres of the wheels. I told him that I did not believe it from my experience on the Beechworth, and that it would be a great saving of the tyres as the cast iron held better and did not skid the wheels so much as wooden blocks. Holes were cut in the tyres, and they had to be put in the lathe very often and turned up to the depth of the hole. However, some time afterwards I saw engines sent out with iron blocks which were soon proved to be too hard, and the cast iron blocks were reverted to. From then on they commenced to put brakes on the engines as well as on the tenders, which made a wonderful difference to our safety in running. In conversation with some of the young enginemen, they say it is quite evident we did not know much in those days. But I venture to affirm that if they live to be as old as I am the young men at that time will say the same about them. I have fired on old No. 1 and have seen electric trains running. I am sure when they are over 70 years of age they will see such advancement.

They will be surprised that they could not see that at the present time. An engineman's life is a continual school of learning, and a very hard school at that.

April - May 1922, Vol 5 # 4 page 50

In my last paper I mentioned some of the progress in railway working during the past sixty years. There has been and always will be a continual advancement, and enginemen who wish to be a success must keep their knowledge up to date. As a rule the general public has but little idea of the training and study that an engineman has to undergo. Driving the engine is only a part of their duties. They have to pass examination after examination. The public would be surprised if they read through the book of rules and regulations, which is only a small portion of what he has to learn and thoroughly understand. The Appendix, Weekly Notices, etc. The electric train examination has now to be passed. I have often heard passing remarks at the great number of signals. All these have to be learned and properly understood. There are various other duties that keep the mind at a strain all the time. I know that when an engineman finishes his trip a relapse takes place, showing that the nerves have been under a strain. Just to give a sample of some of his duties, besides just driving his engine. Take the case of providing against sparks from the engine setting fire to grass and crops. I have heard it said that the Department does not take proper precautions against this danger. A driver has to report if he observes any fire, and state the exact mileage and about the distance from the line, which way the wind was blowing, from or towards the line, and the exact time he passed the spot. What class of grade he was on, the tonnage of his train, what expansion he was working his engine at, what notch he was working the damper at, whether there was a single or double arrester, also when it was last cleaned, also the area of the blast pipe. This report mad out in his own time and left in the office before going home. It must take a few hundred a year to protect the farmer. Another examination that worries the railway employee, especially in the running branches is for the eyesight. This is a con-...

(To be Continued).

12th August 1922, Vol 5 # 7 page 85

SENIORITY AND EXAMINATION

(Continued from April-May issue).

Another examination that worries the railway employee, especially in the running branches, is for the eyesight. This is a continual menace to the men, as they get up in years, as if they fail, back they go to a lower grade and lower pay. Yet one can hear it said: "Oh, anyone can drive an engine." For want of knowledge they say the same about

guards. Take the van of any passenger train leaving the Flinders Street station for Bairnsdale. They will find it many a time filled up to the roof with parcels and luggage to be checked and sorted out and delivered at each station. Not many shops in Melbourne will deliver as many parcels in the same time. There are many other rules and regulations that the guard has to carry out. To make examinations worse, there was in my time, and I don't think it has been altered much, a practice that was altogether unfair and unjust, and not at all likely to create contentment and good discipline, viz. juniors being placed over seniors. This is a very serious step to take in either public departments or private firms. There is nothing so likely to lead to discontent and destruction of discipline as this. A body of men will always work better under their senior, and will do all they can to help him, even if he is not quite up to the highest standard. But it is quite the opposite working under a junior. They pretty well know that the junior is not always best qualified to take charge of men, even though he might have passed an O.K. examination.

9th December 1922, Vol 5 # 11 page 141

COMPENSATION AND LIFE ASSURANCE.

The Civil Service Act of 1862 carried certain rights and privileges under Clause 160 of that Act. At this time there was great difficulty in getting anyone to enter the Public Service. This was particularly the case as regards Loco. enginemen. The opening of the railway to Bendigo and Ballarat about the same time intensified this. Some drivers were imported from Great Britain, France and Russia. No doubt Clause 160 of the 1862 Act was inserted as an inducement to enter the Government service. A reduction of 1/- per day was generally agreed to and Clause 160 was passed. The fact that the Public Servants have thus contributed towards their pensions have been quietly ignored by the press and public, while the several Governments have on many occasions tried to break through this agreement. The legality of this agreement was never properly settled until the case of Brown v. the Victorian Railways Commissioners came before the courts in 1903. When the Public Service Act 1862 was passed in 1881, it was found that neither the Education or Defence Department had ever been legally entitled to the rights of the 1862 Act. It was then decided to legalise all past payments and start under the Life Assurance system. These two departments were not in existence at the time of the passing of the Act. Such defence provisions as existed were provided for under the old volunteer system, the Education Department came in in 1874. The Railways Commissioners Act was passed in 1883, and all past rights and privileges legalised up to the passing of the Act and a start was then made on the compulsory insurance system. At the time John Woods was Minister of Railways, there was a great deal of press writing anent the Pensions to Public Servants. Mr. John Woods made a proposition to pay up all compensation due and start with a new scheme, viz.,

sixpence in the pound to be taken out of our wages to be funded, the Government to place £10,000 in this fund. This would give all servants about the same benefits, as the 1862 Act. This we were prepared to agree to. But he would insist on a clause being put in the Bill, that on a servant being dismissed he would forfeit the sixpence in the pound that had been taken out of his wages. We pointed out this would be most unfair, especially to the men engaged in transport work, as their risk as quite double that of any other servants in the Department. He said that he thought to make the servants more careful. We pointed out that in railway working that in the accidents which took place, not once in a hundred times was it one man's mistake alone. But he would not give in. I have often been sorry since that we did not accept as the clause was so unjust we could have got it altered afterwards. I am sure had we done so the men would be more contented than under the present system. Another mistake was when the Life Assurance started we did not combine together to invest only in one Life Assurance Company. Had this been done they would by now have had a complete working control of such Company and been able to rectify many anomalies that exist at present, such as a driver as he gets extra wages being compelled to increase his life policy, probably when up in years at considerable expense. And then through, perhaps defective eyesight and hearing, being reduced in status and wages, having to go on paying the increased premium or forfeit that which he had paid in. This is only one of the many matters that could have been put right.

To be Continued.

15th July 1923, Vol 6 # 5 page 229

CO-OPERATIVE STORES

Several attempts have been made by public servants to work co-operatively to obtain a reduction in the price of retail goods. I think the first start was made in Bendigo about 1864. A shop was opened in Mitchell Street, and a Mr. Catlin placed in charge. I had a few shares in it and was interested in the success. The reason why this store was started was the non-lowering of prices after the line was opened through from Melbourne. The prices should certainly have been lowered, when goods were being carried much quicker and cheaper than they were by bullock teams, and as a large number of men were being employed on the making of the railway to Echuca, the shares were quickly taken up. The price of retail goods was soon brought down to a reasonable level. The store was for many years a success, until was decided to close it up. It paid very well, both to the Commissioners and shareholders. The different shops had commenced to cut down on several small articles, which soon led the women shareholders to wander round, as it is nearly impossible to keep women purchasers in one shop. When the store closed they soon found out their mistake, for the prices went up again, though not to the same extent as before.

The next co-operative store I had to do with was started in Benalla for much the same reason as the one in Bendigo. This was about the year 1880.

As the North-East railway was opened up the retail prices were not reduced as they should have been, considering the better facilities for carriage. Previous to this I had been in Benalla about four years and was transferred to Ballarat in 1878. My father at this time was Road Master, Benalla to Seymour. I had come back to Benalla on a holiday. When my father showed me a prospectus of a co-operative store with his name as convener and chairman, I told him that I felt sure there would be trouble over it, as all the storekeepers along the line would rise in arms against it. He said that he did not care, as he could not stand his men having to pay such high prices on their small wages. The store was started and did bring down the prices, and succeeded for a time and paid its way at a profit to both shareholder and consumer.

A combination was soon formed amongst the storekeepers and small articles were sold at greatly reduced prices at Wangaratta, Wodonga and other townships. Of course the ladies must go after cheap bargains, but soon found out their mistake when their own store closed down. In the meantime my father got a memo. to attend the office of the Minister of Railways, the Hon. Duncan Gillies. Mr. Gillies said that there was a deal of agitation amongst the storekeepers on the North East, and that he was very sorry, but he must be removed from the district. He said that he thoroughly sympathised with, and understood, why father had started the store, and that he could pick out any other district he would care to go to, but he had to be shifted. As I was then in Ballarat, he said he would prefer to go there. This was heavy loss to him, as he had some property in Benalla then a rising township.

The next was the Civil Service Store, in Flinders Street. There were many reasons for the opening of this store. A large number of civil servants had not forgotten the curtailment of their franchise, when even a police magistrate had not the franchise that a Chinaman had. Also, it was not forgotten how the many thousands of pounds had been taken out of their pockets by the percentage reduction on their wages to help along the country during the boom and drought periods. This was to be refunded as soon as the country recovered financially. But as the country has apparently never recovered, either in finance or honesty, this money is still owing, although legally due.

Again, the feeling of the public was so worked on by the press and others who always appear to think that public servants are too well off. I can never understand how business people join in this cry for the policy of reducing working men to hob-nail boots and moleskin trousers will not surely improve their business.

This and other matters brought about the Civil Service Stores, and the same mistake was made by shareholders and consumers as in the case of the two other stores I have mentioned. If only one half of the shareholders had purchased at their own store it would have been in existence and flourishing to-day.

9th August 1923, Vol 6 # 7 page 241

The death of Mr. Solomon Merls came as a great shock, and a severe loss to the employes in the Loco. Department. This gentleman had been in the service since his boyhood. He was chief clerk for the first Loco. Supt., Mr. F. C. Christy.

When Mr. Merls was appointed Loco. Supt. The men were well satisfied. He had an intimate knowledge of all the employees, and a good idea of both their faults and good qualities. His judgment was always respected by the men. The previous transfer of his chief clerk, Mr. George Gibbs, who had also been with us since his youth, and had made himself liked and respected was to us a real loss. And the death of Mr. John Anderson, traffic manager, appeared as if it was the end of the old happy relations, that had existed between the men and officers. Mr. Merls' funeral was on a Sunday. The Railway Department ran special trains so that all up country employes could attend. There has been no such honor done to any railway employe since.

Consideration was then given as to what steps to take to show our respect for our late Superintendent, and suggestions were asked from all Branches.

Some proposed a monument to be placed on the grave, others that an annual sum be provided to enable Mr. Merls' son to become a doctor or whatever profession was suitable. The suggestion that was finally adopted was sent from Ballarat. This was that a piece of land be purchased somewhere near the bottom of Ireland St., and as near the station as possible, and a building erected to be The Merls Memorial Enginemen's Home. This was to be in the way of a coffee palace.

The up country men took the view that there should be some place in Melbourne where they could meet their mates when in town, and have a general meeting room with reading accommodation, etc.

But, above all, what they wanted was some place where they could get a bed and something to eat at any time, day and night. Many a time I have been driving in a train at two or three o'clock in the morning, and had to stop on the footplate until some place was open, and perhaps have to return again up country without a proper meal or rest. At the present time there are train crews from up country who have to spend four or five hours in Melbourne, and have no proper place to spend this time. One can see them sitting about in the streets where there are seats to be got. Again, men complained that there was no place while working broken shifts to have a rest and something to eat at any hour of the day or night.

It was proposed that there should be a large room for convivial and business meetings. Arrangement was at once started to carry the idea out. About this time I was over as a

delegate to the annual meeting of the New South Wales Drivers F. & C. Association. I received a wire to return as soon as possible as all the funds were gone. I could not understand this, as I had sent £75 to the general fund only a month previous from Ballarat. I soon found that it was only too true. When the two trustees went to the bank to draw a sum of money to pay for the land, they were staggered when the bank manager told them there was no account there, and had not been any for some time. It appears that our treasurer had been placing a false bank book before them, and they had never gone to the bank to verify it, and so our beautiful idea of an enginemen's home went squash.

Our treasurer got three years in gaol, which was not much of a consolation to any of us. I troubled more over the £75 which I had so much trouble to collect and send in only a month previous. If I had only kept it back a bit we would have had that anyhow.

24th January 1924, Vol 6 # 12 page 305

In looking back to the days before the Telegraph, telephone, block sections and other wonderful improvements for the safe working of transportation it is cause for wonder how we escaped with such few accidents. Of course the amount of traffic has increased, and without the modern improvements safe working would be impossible.

In a former paper I pointed out how two small engines were booked out to run all the Cup race traffic in 1861, and how they had a collision head on on the single line between Newmarket and Kensington junction. Thirteen years afterwards, in 1874, I was on the race traffic, and there were twelve engines to do the work. Each train left Spencer Street within a few minutes of each other, so that it was like one moving train to the Course.

Platelayers were stationed with flags to see that the trains kept a certain distance apart. In this way we could carry a large number of passengers, although they were in the old four-wheeled carriages. At the Racecourse a spare engine was stationed. When the passengers were discharged the train was pulled over the crossing. The spare engine then coupled on, and streamed away on the return trip. The train engine then became the spare engine to couple on to the next train. The same was done at Spencer Street. I was amused at one thing that occurred that day. John O'Malley, the stationmaster at Spencer Street, arranged that the trains should consist of first and second class, and should depart from first and second class platforms. A red disc to be carried on the front of the engines on first class and a white disc on the engines of the second class to denote to the pointsman which platform to turn the trains into. However, as it was a windy day and no provision in front of the engine, as there is at present, to fix the

discs to, in a short time the most of the discs were missing, and first class trains running to the second class platforms. Poor old John did jump around for a bit. But the people did not growl so much then as I think they do now. They appeared to take it as a good joke. One accident spoiled the day. One of the passengers was pushed from the Racecourse platform in between two carriages during the rush and was killed.

The opening of the single line– Newmarket to Wodonga– brought many difficulties as regards arranging the traffic. When there was nothing but regular time table trains to run, and they ran to time without accident, it was all right. When specials were run and the traffic increased, matters used to get mixed up a bit. To give an example of how a mix up could take place. I was running on a “goods” to Seymour; on reaching Craigieburn on the return trip we were timed to pass a time tabled goods there. When the goods train passed us we saw that a red disc was on the back of the van. Now, a red disc or an extra red light at night denoted that a special train was following. If a red disc was carried or a red light at night in front of an engine showed that he was crossing a special at the next station. So when the train passed us with a red tail disc we waited expecting to see the smoke of a special coming up the Broadmeadows bank. But there was no sign of it. Tom German was stationmaster, and Andy Duffy guard. After a consultation we agreed that it was not safe to go on. This was about twelve noon. So we waited until we did see an engine coming. But it was an empty engine with the stationmaster, Melbourne, and the loco. foreman on board. They wanted to know why we were stopping there all the afternoon. We pointed out that there was a red disc behind the van of the train that we passed at twelve o’clock. They said the disc had been put on on account of a special that was to leave Melbourne at half–past three p.m. We wanted to know how we were to know that; and so the goods train that passed us stopped all the trains she met right through to Seymour.

In a future paper I may have more to say re this, also the beginning of the staff and ticket system.

31st March 1924, Vol 7 # 2 page 320

Staff and Ticket Adventures

I have endeavoured in my last paper to give an idea of the train working on single lines in the early days.

The opening of the North–Eastern line from Newmarket to Wodonga, a single line, with increasing traffic, demanded a safe system for the crossing of trains. The first system proved so unsafe that red head lights were lit at Newmarket on the down journey and extinguished at Newmarket on the up trip as it gave some protection against head on

collisions. Then the staff and ticket was introduced. At first the staffs were simply a piece of iron about three inches wide and six inches long, with a short piece of chain and a key attached. The line was divided into sections for crossing purposes, each sectional staff was painted in different colors, such as green, black, white and yellow. At each sectional the "S.M." was provided with two small locked boxes, in which the ticket was placed, to be opened by the key attached to the staff for that section. He was only supposed to take out one ticket at a time, but of course he could take out two if he liked, so there was not much security about that. However, it was better than the old system. My first experience was while firing for J.Harris. He placed the staff on the shelf in the cab in front of him, and when we were running between Broadford and Tallarook he hung it on a nail on the side of the cab and remarked to me that he thought that would be a good place to keep it. After a while we heard a rattle and away went the staff down between the footplate and fire-box. Now its gone, Harris said. What are we going to do? When we got to Tallarook Harris explained matter to the S.M., who said that he would fix it up by giving us a ticket on the return journey, as he had a couple that he had taken out of the ticket box and that perhaps the platelayers might find the staff, but, of course, the loss would have to be reported. Harris reported it and explained how he had hung it on a nail. I got him to suggest that a small box should be placed on each engine to put the staff. Hence the present staff boxes. The next day when I came to work I found Bill Douglas as the driver. I asked him where Harris was, and Douglas said that Harris had to ride with us and get off at Broadford and walk to Tallarook and find the staff. He did find it, but it had been run over and was all smashed up. One serious, if comical case, occurred about this time. A driver had been off duty for about a month and started again on the three a.m. goods to Seymour. He was not aware of the new system. When nearing Newmarket his fireman told him that they had to stop there and get a staff or ticket from the S.M. The driver replied, "What rot, the S.M. would not be up at that time in the morning." Nearing Essendon the fireman said that they should get a staff or ticket there, too, but the driver said that was all nonsense. At that time there were a pair of double gates where the bridge now crosses the Mount Alexander Road. The engine ran through and smashed these gates. The driver stopped the train then and wanted to know why the gatekeeper did not have the gates open. The gatekeeper said that if the train had stopped at the station for the staff or ticket, he would have had the gates open. The driver said he thought everyone had gone mad as he had heard nothing but staff and ticket since he had left Melbourne. He went on to Seymour without any staff or ticket. I met him next day on the Spencer St. platform. I asked him how he was getting on. He said that the "Chief" had sent for him to explain something about a staff and ticket. He asked me if I knew anything about it, I tried to explain but he said that it was not at all likely that station masters would be up at that time in the morning. Plenty will say what a stupid way us "old fellows" done business, but they must recollect that there were no telephones, few telegraphs, and no electric systems in those days. I hope in a future paper to trace the gradual advance in safe working from that time to the present.

24th May 1924, Vol 7 # 4 page 349

STAFF AND TICKET SYSTEM

The adoption of the staff and ticket system created many other alterations. It was certainly safer than the way we had been working previously. It was soon discovered that a stationmaster could not remain on duty both day and night. And as the traffic increased it soon became necessary to shorten the staff sections. In many instances the stationmaster would leave the staff or ticket at night on the ledge of the ticket window and the driver would get off his engine and change them himself. Of course, this could not last long, and then there had to be an extra man placed at each staff station. The rule at this time was that the guard changed the staff or ticket between the station master and driver, thus giving the guard a certain amount of responsibility, as he was not supposed to start the train until he had seen that the driver had received the staff. This instruction could not be carried out with long trains without great loss of time. After the Little River accident, the Commissioners ruled that the exchange of staff should only take place personally between stationmasters and drivers. The guards were not sorry when this regulation came out. But then another trouble arose at a station such as Maryborough or Ararat. The stationmaster would have to leave his office and walk down or up the yard to exchange the staff with a goods train driver, and perhaps a passenger train standing at the platform, so he soon commenced to send a porter or guard to exchange the staff. Many guards refuse to do this, as according to the regulations, they were well out of the responsibility of changing of staff. Then drivers refused to change staffs with anyone but the station master. At Creswick a porter came and I changed the staff with him. He took it in his hand and then went on letting passengers out. At last he put the staff down between the two handles of one of the passenger's luggage bags, while he assisted another passenger. I just caught the passenger walking down the subway, carrying away the staff with his luggage. I then put in a suggestion to the office that there should be some way of letting a driver know who he was changing staffs with, as twice I had handed the staff at Stawell over to a cabman in mistake for the officer on night duty. I suggested that only one man should be appointed for this duty if the stationmaster could not attend to it himself, and this deputy should wear either on his cap, or a band round his right arm with the word "staff" on it. This was adopted, and in a short time was altered to the present silver band of the assistant station master. As the telegraph system came more and more into use, the stationmaster had to learn operating. This was another great safeguard. About this time another valuable safeguard was adopted by starting trains by day with a green flag and at night by a green light. This was brought in by Ned Proctor, now a retired stationmaster. He was running guard between Bendigo and

Echuca. Where there were very long trains the guard's signal at this time was to hold up the lamp pretty high, showing a white light and wave it from left to right. But when there were two or three moving about on a platform, it was hard for the driver to tell which was his guard's signal light. As there were only two drivers running from Echuca, Proctor came to an understanding with them to show a green light as the starting signal. And it was in use long before the Department adopted it. There are many excellent safeguards that have been brought out in just such a way, and mighty little credit given to those who did bring them in. I hope in a future contribution to explain the growth of the block and interlocking systems.

6th June 1924, Vol 7 # 5 page 364

Having tried in my previous paper to explain the running of trains before and after the introduction of the staff and ticket system, I will try and give an account of further improvement in safety running. The general use of the telephone and telegraph was a great factor. Then came the splendid system of interlocking worked from signal boxes and the division of sectional running brought about the question of what should denote a complete train. It was considered that a red light at night and an ordinary lamp by day should show a complete train, but it was soon found to be very unsatisfactory and led to all kinds of trouble and expenses. The tail lamp at the back of an engine attached to a train had to be taken off and put out of sight somewhere. When an engine was running tender first that meant three lamps to be taken off, and as they were pretty heavy, and no where to put them, things got mixed up. A large number of large Yankee lamp were in use at this time, and as it took two men to take them off, the drivers usually carried an old bag to cover them up. Again, an engine attached to a goods train at night, although it showed a white light, had to light it while shunting at a road-side station and blow it out again on starting away again. The shifting, handling and planting of these lamps amongst the coal bunkers must have cost a few hundred pounds in repairs. A deputation of drivers waited on the Commissioners on this subject. Mr. Speight said that there was no trouble in England over this matter. But it was pointed out to him that the lamps used in England were only half the size of ours, and asked where we were to put the big Yankee lamps. He asked what we would suggest to take the place instead of a lamp to show the tail end of a train. I, as one of the deputation, suggested that a white disc should be used. He asked me where any signal was used. I told him that I had just spent my holidays in Sydney and that they had brought it into use there and it had proved a success, and we thanked him for giving us the inter-State pass, as it enabled us to see what was being done on other railways. After further discussion it was decided to leave it to the signal engineers. But it was twelve months before the white disc was adopted and many a

lamp was smashed in the meantime. The same deputation made complaint of the gauge glasses on the "Y" and "D" class engines being too short and that drivers always liked to see the movement of the top of the water in the glass so that they could detect at once if there was stoppage. The shop manager being present, said that the top mounting could not be made higher on account of the bevel of the firebox, but he said that the bottom mounting might be lowered. I interjected that would not do as some of the bottom mountings were below the top of the firebox now, and that some of the drivers had recently been punished for dropping the lead plug on certain engines, although they contended water was showing in the glass when the plug went. Mr. Speight wanted to know whether they were Colonial or English engines, I said on both.

When I made the statement I dropped into a warm time for a few minutes. Mr. Allison Smith and the shop manager contended that I was mad, and did not know what I was talking about. But Mr. Speight, who was always a gentleman, gave me fair play, and gave instructions that the boilers should be examined at once. I said that I should know if my statement was true or not and if true the men should not be punished who had recently dropped lead plugs; to this Mr. Speight gave me a promise. A month after this my foreman told me that he had been instructed to let me know that my statement had been found to be correct and the trouble would be rectified. Incidents of this description go to show the value of men being united and officers sympathetic to make good service.

8th August 1924, Vol 7 # 7 page 391

In looking back to old times and the many changes that have taken place, one wonders what the future holds. It does not seem many years ago when the only lubrication on carriages and trucks was anti-friction grease. It was shoved into the axle boxes by the train examiner with a flat piece of wood, through a small hole and was fed on to the journal, the box had to be so warm one could hardly bear the hand on it before the grease commenced to melt. The saving of fuel when castor oil was used must have more than repaid the cost of the oil. With the anti-friction grease it took two men on a frosty morning with a pinch bar each to move a six ton truck on a level. What was the actual tonnage an engine was pulling out of the Melbourne yard on a frosty morning was hard to say. The grease would not commence to get warm until Sunbury was reached. The goods load from Bendigo to Woodend was fourteen trucks. An attempt was made to increase the load by an extra truck. The trial was made on a very hot day. Of course it was said to be a success, but it did not last long. As soon as the weather changed the engines stuck up. A few drivers were punished because they could not do the impossible. There were no dynameters as there is at the present time to show what weight was actually being handled by the engine, which can with this instrument be

proved to a pound. I was once mixed up on the question of loading. I was running a goods train between Benalla and Seymour, and 31 and van was the stated load up Avenal bank, which was more than the engine could fairly pull. We sent in complaining that this load was too heavy. Soon after Mr. Meikle, Loco. superintendent, came to Benalla and I tackled him about it. He said it was no use talking, that he had ridden on Driver Steel's engine No. 91, and that there were 28 trucks loaded with sleepers, and that Steele had three notches of the lever to spare, and that we should easily take 31 trucks, and that he had gone to the trouble to find out if she could pull more than the others, and also obtained the exact weight of Steel's train. I said there must be a mistake somewhere, and that No. 91 would require an extra notch to pull the load of what we had to take. He said, "You have been taking this load, that you say is too much, how do you take them?" I said, "By putting my hand on the spring balance on my side and mate doing the same." This was before the patent Ramsbottom valve was adopted. He said "How dare you tell me you press the boiler." I said, "I think you are the one I ought to tell; you have been a driver yourself and must know that a driver is not going to stick up within 20 yards of the top of a bank with a load that he is told he must take; that it was no pleasure to a driver to have to do it, and that he had not got the correct weight of Steel's train, and that if I could prove it to be so, would he reduce our load." He agreed to this. From the Roadmaster I got a list of the number of sleepers that were loaded from a stack at Barnawatha. The average per truck was 51 sleepers. My fireman (W. McKinley) who is living retired in Geelong, carried some sleepers from the stack and weighed them separately on the platform scales; the heaviest was 1 ½ cwt., so 51 sleepers per truck would be 3 tons 16 ½ cwt.- total loading, 97 tons; our train at 6 ton per truck, 186 tons.

Mr. Miekle's Answer:- "Taking 3 ton 16 ½ cwt. modifies the matter very much, and I am much obliged for the information, which gives me the opportunity of checking the rule I use in determining what an engine should take up a given bank. But it was doubtful if there was 6 tons in a truck of wheat." - W. Meckle, 20/9/76.

The next trip I refused to take more than 28 trucks. I got Mr. Hussey, S.M., to report it, but I heard no more of the matter. The correspondence at this time was conducted on ordinary note paper. I have the original report and Mr. Miekle's answer on the back of it.

This entry appears to be the last of the series although he continued to contribute to The Footplate occasionally.

On the 9th August 1927 there was an obituary for a "Peter Brown" a driver who had recently died. This was his brother. The obituary was by-lined "G.B."

In Volume 12 # 2 on page 416, dated 7th March 1929 it was his turn to be part of history. Under the heading of "PIONEER RAILWAYMAN. George Brown of '03 Strike Passes Out." The Footplate devoted over half a page to his career and contributions to the union cause. He died on 15th February and was buried in Fawkner cemetery.

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