



# The Times

January 2006

A journal of transport timetable history and analysis

## Mr Commissioner's Inspection Specials



Mount Cook Coaching Service, 1891



*painting by E.M. Lovell-Smith*

**Inside: Country tours in the Commissioner's car  
When Cobb & Co. ruled the roads  
The Circus Train**

RRP \$2.95  
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# The Times

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### On the front cover

Wouldn't be seen dead in one? It's a far cry from the Victorian Railways Commissioners' inspection car Norman, but it served the same purpose. From the look of things, we can place it in the North Eastern USA and probably in the 1870s. It was used, one assumes, for the kinds of inspection tours that are described on our pages 8 to 13, but it is hard to picture Sir Harold Clapp sitting up like Jackie on the leather sofa, with the cinders raining down the neck of his starched shirt.

From the same era is the Cobb & Co coach seen in the lower illustration. This one is from the Mt Cook service in New Zealand. It is not often realised that Cobb and Co operated coaches all around the Pacific and Indian Oceans— from South Africa to New Zealand and Australia to Japan (not *between* them, of course!). In Australia too, it was common practice to have matched sets of greys like this for the "flagship" services. In Queensland, nearly all Cobb & Co. coaches were painted white with bright red trim—quite a sight against the chocolate soils of the Darling Downs.

Welcome to 2006 and volume 23 of The Times. The Times and AATTC are very lucky to have a membership with high participatory activity and, as a result the contents of the magazine generally reflects the interests of its members. We hope therefore that you find things of interest to you in these 12 issues but, should that not be the case, we would urge you to take matters into your own hands by writing a few articles that rectify the deficiency. We are still very interested in receiving articles of the "why I collect" and "my favourite treasure" type. Perhaps *you* have a complete run of *Cobb & Co.'s Travellers Guide* (page 3). If so, we'd love to hear about it.

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**The Times** welcomes articles and letters Send paper manuscripts or word-processor files on disk or via e-mail to the editor at the address below. Illustrations should be submitted as clean sharp photocopies on white paper or scanned GIF or TIF format images with at least 300 dpi resolution on disk or via e-mail.

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# With the horses hot and steamy...

A few snippets of timetables from the world of COBB & Co.

**C**obb & Co operated perhaps some ten thousand miles of coach routes in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and even Japan— but trying to find timetables for any part of this extensive system, much less one for a whole region or a state is next to impossible. The reason is not hard to divine— Cobb & Co. was not one company, not even a consortium, not even a franchise, but a diverse mix of ever-changing operators who used the name Cobb & Co long after Cobb himself had vanished from the scene.

The “Cobb” of Cobb & Co was Freeman Cobb, a 23-year old American, who arrived in Melbourne in 1853, with three mates— “the boys”. Possibly they all had a prior history with coaching firms in America and possibly they came to Australia to expand this business, but later in the year they had established a carrying business between Sandridge and Melbourne. Unable to convince the American companies that there was money to be made in coaching, they struck out for themselves and, by the beginning of 1854, coaches bearing the famous name began to appear on the Melbourne-

**COBB & CO.'S**  
**Telegraph Line of ROYAL MAIL COACHES.**  
**IPSWICH AND TOOWOOMBA.**

**T**HE above Coaches leave HANRAN'S, North Star Hotel, Ipswich, for Brisbane—Morning Coach, at 5.45 a.m.; Evening Coach, 1.45 p.m., Daily. Fare, 6s. The Up Coach, from Bigge's Camp, to Toowoomba, starts on the arrival of the 8.15 a.m. Train from Ipswich. The Down Coach, from Toowoomba to Bigge's Camp, meets the 4.15 p.m. Train. Fare, £1 10s. each way.

All Parcels forwarded without delay, at moderate charges.

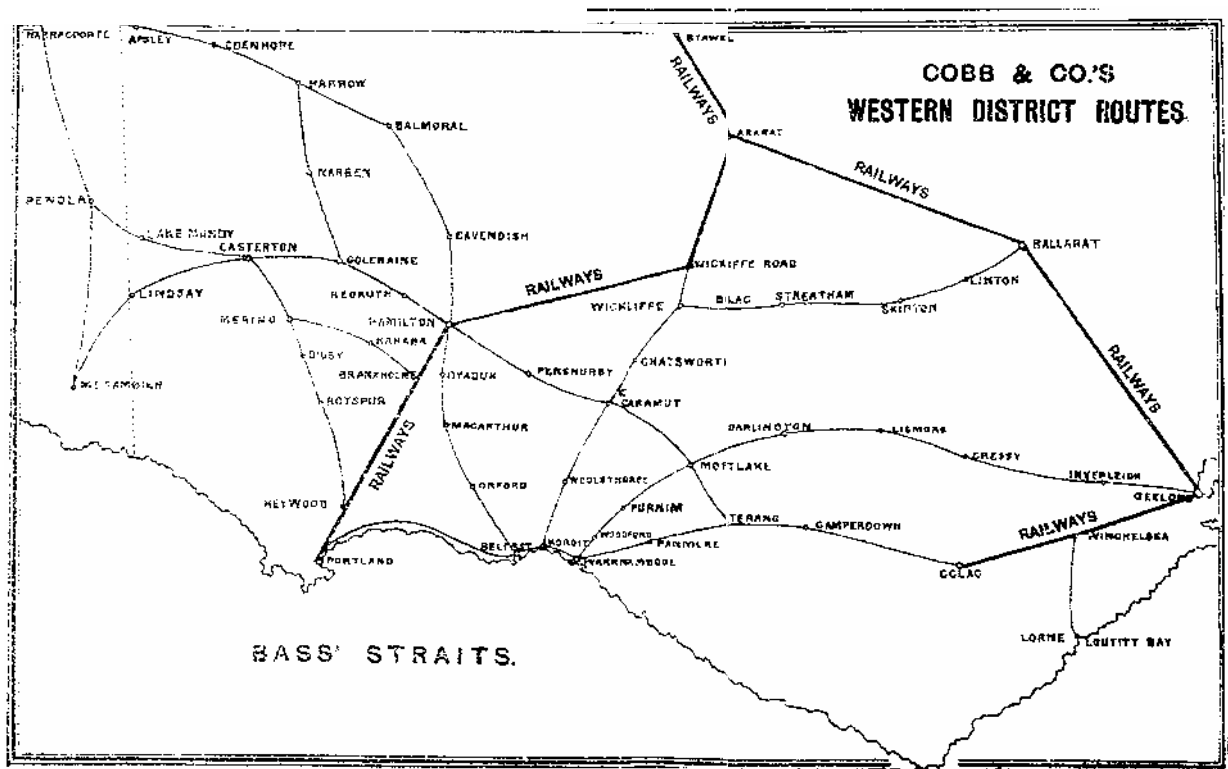
N.B.—Booking hours from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Typical newspaper advertisement for a Cobb & Co. service in Queensland. This is from some time in the second half of 1960s, when the only railway in the State ran to Bigge's Camp. The timetable is silent on how long it took to get from there to Toowoomba— but it must have been quite a journey. Note also that “Up” meant up

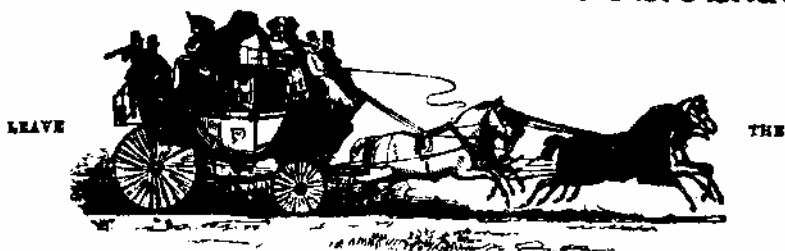
Bendigo run.

The crucial key to Cobb & Co.'s suc-

cess was the famous Concord Coach, specially adapted for rough road conditions and further adapted in Austra-



# COBB & CO's. TELEGRAPH LINE OF COACHES



BOOKING OFFICE, 23, GREAT BOURKE STREET EAST,  
FOR

**CASTLEMAINE, BENDIGO,  
MARYBOROUGH, AND DUNOLLY,**  
Every Morning, at 6 a.m., and at 8½ a.m.

Passengers by Six a.m. Coach go through to Bendigo the same day.

### FARES.

To CASTLEMAINE ...	£3 0 0	To MARYBOROUGH ...	£4 10 0
To BENDIGO ...	4 10 0	To DUNOLLY ...	5 5 0

COACHES leave the VICTORIA BOOKING OFFICE, 44, Great Bourke Street East, for

**BALLARAT AND WAY STATIONS,**  
AT SIX A.M. FARE, £3.

**THOMAS DAVIES, Proprietor.**

Passengers and Parcels booked by

**A. BUTLER, Agent, 23, Great Bourke Street, East.**

**N. L. BUTLER, Agent, 44, Great Bourke Street, East.**

In May 1856, when Cobb & Co was barely 2 years old, Freeman Cobb sold out to Thomas Davies, who had operated out of the same offices in Bourke St. Davies immediately took on the Cobb & Co. mantle— the first of many to do so.

lia. With frequent changes of horses, a start-to-stop average of 10 mph could be maintained by Cobb & Co.'s coaches, leading to daylight travel between Melbourne and Bendigo. The

record was 10 hours, set in 1857. Rival coaches took two and a half times as long. "Changes" or "stages" occurred every 10 to 30 miles along a route, depending on the road and the terrain.

Year	State	No of routes	Route miles	No of horses
1854	Victoria	1	112	70
1867	Victoria	12		
1867	NSW	8		
1870	NSW		794	
1880	NSW		2352	3000
1883	Qld+NSW		6000	
1885	Qld		3050	
1887	NSW+Vic	98		
1917	Qld		1156	

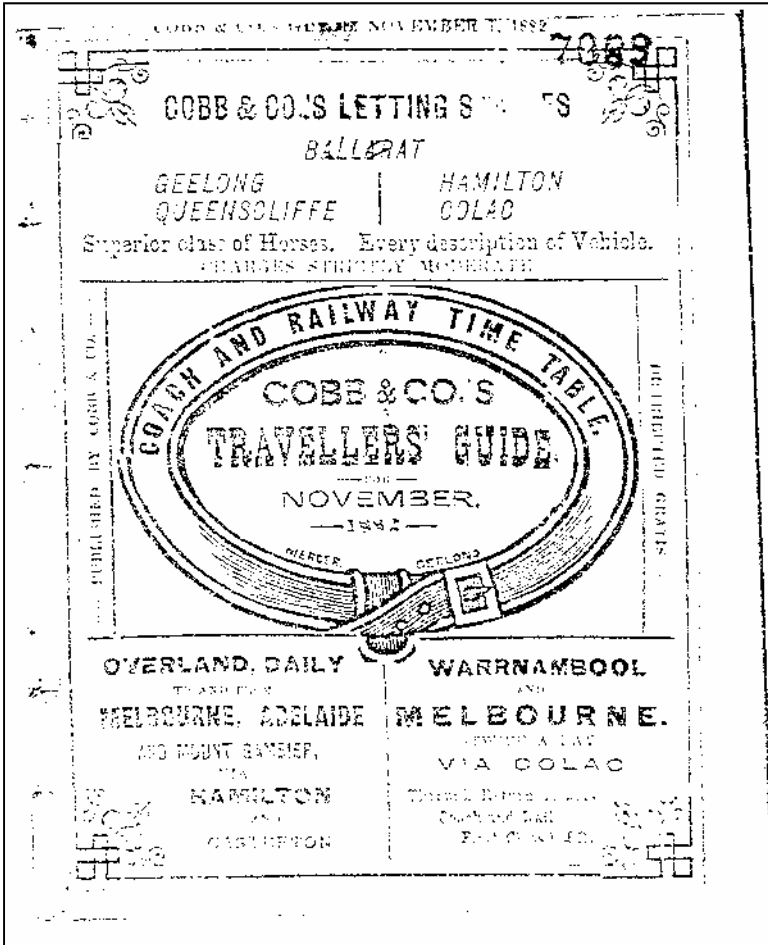
Often Cobb & Co. maintained its own stables at these places, although sometimes they were associated with an inn.

Coach lines depended upon mail contracts to be profitable—when the mail contracts passed from one line to another, it would not be long before the first line folded. As the colonial Post Office paid the piper, so it called the tune. While it never imposed timings as sharp as the quarter-minute sometimes called for in England, it nevertheless specified arrival and departure times and even the rate of travel upon the contractors, who were fined 10 shillings for every 10 minutes they were late at a "mail change", and the same fine for not leaving the post office on time. Mail contracts sustained Cobb & Co in Queensland into the 1920s when, of all things, the coaches were supplanted by Qantas mail planes for postal transport— quite a technological leap.

Some statistical snippets about Cobb & Co. appear in the table below. This has been compiled from a number of sources, but principally Geoffrey Blainey's *Tyranny of Distance* and *The Lights of Cobb & Co.* by K. A. Austin.

The timetables shown here also have a variety of sources, reflecting the heterogeneity of the firm itself. Most were taken from a couple of issues of *Cobb & Co. Travellers' Guide*— a monthly publication about which little information remains. As far as can be seen only two solitary issues of the guide remain in public libraries in Australia, although the National Library seems to have multiple copies of one of them. The Guide seems to have been a regional publication in most places, printed and published in a particular district. The 1882 copy shown here was for the Western District of Victoria and does not show coach times for any other portion of the state. Train times for the whole of the state do however appear and a coach timetable (perhaps not Cobb & Co.'s?) for the Albury-Wodonga gap in the railway appears with them. The other copy of *Cobb & Co.'s Travellers' Guide* reviewed here appears to be an 1887 issue from the Riverina.

Other timetables in this article mostly arise from newspaper advertisements, although it was known that hand-bill



and wall-poster timetables also existed at various times.

The 1st November 1882 Western Victorian edition of the *Guide* was a 14 by 10 cm booklet of some 48 pages (4 unnumbered). Its cover is shown above. Pages 2 to 13 contained the coach timetables, the rest of the booklet being taken up with maps, railway timetables and advertisements for Cobb and Co. and for commercial operations in the region served by the coaches. Probably most regional equivalents of the *Guide* would have been similar. There is a vague hint on the inside cover of the *Guide* that this was the first issue and it may well have been the last as well, since no other copy for this district appears to exist.

The fold-out map, inserted near the beginning of the book, and reproduced on our page 3 is quite interesting for the names which appear on it— including the old spelling of Bass' Straits, and some obviously important towns which are either not so important now, or have changed identities— Wickliffe Road, Hotspur, Biaduk and Orford. Note well the magical name Nareen— where have you heard that before? Many of these places and much of the connecting routes between them were to see railways later that decade as part of the "*Octopus Act*", but many have vanished as if they never were.

A coach for Hamilton, which met the train from Melbourne, left Colac at 10 p.m. on weekdays for Hamil-

ton, a 16½ hour journey that went all through the night and well into the next afternoon (this page, lower right). Given the state of the roads and the lack of modern electric lighting, it may surprise some that coaches ran at all during the night. However, night running was always common and the lack of lighting was little hindrance when both horses and drivers knew the route by heart. The dim starlight (more powerful than we modern city slickers suppose) was, in any event supplemented by candle or kerosene lamps and, in later years by acetylene lamps—hence "*The Lights of Cobb & Co.*"

The Up and Down coaches would have passed one another in the dark, on the long deserted section between Colac and Terang which was reached before dawn. The timetable doesn't say so explicitly, but it would appear that a trip to Hamilton involved a change of coach at Terang, with the Hamilton coach trailing a Warrnambool coach by half an hour between Terang and Mortlake. The railway was extended from Colac as far as Camperdown next year and presumably the coach route was then truncated.

Further north, across the Pleurisy Plains (known as such even then) a second route from Geelong paralleled the first, an 11 hour journey undertaken mostly in daylight— in summer, anyway. This trip ran only on Tuesdays and Fridays. The return journey on this route, like that of the Colac-Hamilton

Cobb & Co's Guide 2 November 1st, 1882

### COBB & CO.'S COACH ARRANGEMENTS, WESTERN DISTRICT.

*In connection with the Victorian Railways*

... The times for all intermediate places are given as nearly as possible at which Coaches pass.

#### Colac and Hamilton.—(via Terang and Mortlake.)

Miles	Date (Sun. & Mon. ex.)	Wk. Days	Sunday	Fares	Daily (Sun. ex.)	Fares
—	Leave Colac*	10 0 p.m.	8 0 a.m.	—	Leave Hamilton...	Noon
44	Terang ...	4 0 a.m.	2 15 p.m.	10 0	Hochkirch .....	12 25 p.m.
58	Mortlake ...	6 0 ..	4 15 ..	12 6	Penshurst .....	2 15 ..
68	Hexham ...	7 0 ..	5 30 ..	14 0	Caramut .....	4 15 ..
76	Caramut ...	8 15 ..	6 45 ..	15 0	Hexham .....	5 45 ..
90	Penshurst ...	11 45 ..	9 15 ..	15 0	Mortlake (arr.)	7 14 ..
104	Hochkirch ...	1 30 p.m.	10 45 ..	17 6	(Mon. ex.) (dep.)	7 30 ..
118	Hamilton ...	2 3 ..	12 0 ..	17 6	Terang .....	9 0 ..
					Colac .....	5 0 a.m.

\* This Coach leaves Colac at 9 a.m. Sunday, in lieu of Saturday 10 p.m., reaching Hamilton same day, at midnight.

\* This Coach leaves Mortlake at 11 a.m. on Sunday, connecting at Terang, with the Sunday Coaches to Colac, Warrnambool, and Ballarat.

#### Geelong, Cressy, and Mortlake.

Miles	Tues. & Fri.	Fares	Wed. & Sat.	Fares
—	Leave Geelong ..	6 0 a.m.	Leave Mortlake...	6 0 a.m.
18	Inverleigh ...	8 30 ..	Darlington ...	7 45 ..
28	Hesse .....	10 0 ..	Lismore .....	10 15 ..
43	Cressy .....	12 15 p.m.	Cressy .....	12 30 p.m.
60	Lismore .....	2 35 ..	Hesse .....	2 30 ..
78	Darlington ...	5 0 ..	Inverleigh ...	3 45 ..
92	Mortlake .....	7 15 ..	Geelong .....	7 0 ..

Colac to Belfast and Mortlake.  
Colac to Warrnambool—twice daily.

Miles		Day Coach	Night Mail	Fares
		Week Days	Sundays	Sa & Su. ex s. d.
—	Leave after arrival of Train from Geelong—			
1	Colac .....	11 30 a.m.	8 0 a.m.	10 0 p.m.
10	Larcent .....	12 15 p.m.	8 45 "	10 45 "
20	Pombornet .....	2 0 "	10 0 "	0 a.m.
30	Camperdown .....	3 0 "	11 30 "	1 30 "
44	Terang .....	5 0 "	1 0 p.m.	3 0 "
58	Mortlake .....	—	5 0 "	5 30 "
52	Gurvoe .....	6 15 "	2 15 "	4 15 "
54	Pannure .....	7 15 "	3 30 "	5 15 "
68	Allansford .....	8 0 "	4 30 "	6 45 "
74	Warrnambool .....	9 30 "	5 30 "	7 45 "
85	Koroit .....	—	6 0 "	8 15 "
97	Belfast .....	—	7 30 "	9 40 "
			9 0 "	11 30 "

Return Tickets, Warrnambool to Melbourne—Coach and Rail First Class, 40s. Belfast to Melbourne 13s.

Belfast and Portland.

Miles	Mon, Wed, Fri.	Tues, Thurs, Sat.	Fares
—	Leave Belfast .....	Leave Portland .....	6 30 a.m.
12	Yambuk .....	Narrawong .....	8 15 "
32	Narrawong .....	Yambuk .....	1 0 p.m.
44	Portland .....	Belfast .....	2 40 "

Through Fare, 50 or from Belfast and Portland, 15s.

stowe and Ballarat to Piggoreet. The former (it is hardly even a "place" now) was 28 miles west of Ballarat and the latter was closer to Ballarat, but towards the southwest. Both were in that extensive quartz mineralised area that surrounds Ballarat and which are dotted still with mullock heaps and other mining relics from the days of the *Guide*.

On our page 7 (top right) we jump back to page 9 of the *Guide* to show some services to the east of Ballarat. At the time of this timetable, a railway line ran from Ballarat, meandering through the dark soil of the potato fields to reach Gordons. This later became part of the Melbourne Ballarat (and hence Melbourne—Adelaide) railway. At this stage this was all there was of this important railway—the leg westwards from Sunshine was still under construction. There was a train service to Gordons four times a day, taking only an hour. Cobb & Co. nevertheless ran a coach over this route, taking twice as long, but continuing all the way through Ballan, Bacchus Marsh and Melton to Keilor Road (Sydenham) on the Bendigo railway line. One could connect (at Ballan, it seems) with a coach to Blackwood. Cobb & Co had, in the 1850s run a Melbourne—Ballarat coach service directly out of Melbourne—this was before the Bendigo railway was built. And, before that, in late 1852, Crook and Watt, two Bacchus Marsh innkeepers had combined to run a direct coach service—naturally with an overnight stay at the Woolpack or Border Inns. The fare between Ballarat and Keilor road

route, mostly mirrored the outward journey in clock-face times but took place a day later than it, needing therefore only one coach to maintain the service.

By (presumably) the same 10 pm Hamilton service out of Colac, one could also travel to Warrnambool (upper left). The coach bound for the latter town left Terang half an hour ahead of the Hamilton service and diverged from its route at Mortlake, reaching Warrnambool at 7:45 a.m., eventually continuing to Belfast (Port Fairy). There was also a day coach over this route on a Sunday, reaching Warrnambool late in the evening. On Sundays this (slightly altered) service continued as far as Belfast. One could continue from Belfast to Portland on 3 days of the week, one of the connections being only 30 minutes, but the other involving an overnight stay.

The next table we show (page 10 of the booklet and lower right on this page) shows some services west of Ballarat. Worth noting is the spelling of this place:—*Ballarat*, rather than *Ballaarat*. First is a service that connects with a train at Wickliffe Road (Willaura) on the Portland line, taking an hour and three quarters to go the mere 3 miles to Wickliffe and then streaking a further 7 miles to Lake Bolac in 75 minutes—Lake Bolac was something in those days and, for that matter, so was Wickliffe. Shown in the *Guide's* tables, but not on its map were services between Ballarat and Chep-

Wickliffe Road Railway Station, & Lake Bolac,  
(via Wickliffe.)

Miles	Daily, Sun. ex.	—	Fares	Daily, Sun. ex.	—	Fares
—	Leave Wickliffe Rd Rail Station	3 0 p.m.	—	Leave Lake Bolac	11 30 a.m.	—
3	Due Wickliffe ..	4 45 "	3 0	Due Wickliffe ..	12 45 p.m.	1 6
10	Lake Bolac ..	6 0 "	4 0	Wickliffe Road Rail Station	2 30 p.m.	4 0

Ballarat to Chepstowe.

Miles	Daily, (Sun. ex.)	—	Fares	Daily (Sun. ex.)	—	Fares
—	Leave Ballarat ..	6 0 a.m.	—	Leave Chepstowe	1 0 p.m.	—
20	Due Snake Valley	9 30 "	4 0	Carngam .....	2 0 "	0 0
23	Carngam .....	10 0 "	4 0	Snake Valley ..	3 30 "	0 0
28	Chepstowe .....	11 0 "	6 0	Due Ballarat .....	6 0 "	6 0

Ballarat and Piggoreet.

Miles	Twice Daily.	Twice Daily.
—	Leave Ballarat ... 6 a.m. & 4 p.m.	Leave Piggoreet ... 6 30 a.m. & 2 p.m.
20	Due Piggoreet ... 9 " 7 "	Due Ballarat ... 10 0 " 6 15 "
—	On Sundays leave Ballarat ... 3 " "	On Sundays leave Piggoreet 8 30 " "
—	Due Piggoreet ... 6 " "	Due Ballarat ... 11 30 " "

in 1882 was only 7/6— a big saving on the 25/- charged by Crook and Watt 30 years before— and even more on the £8 charged by Cobb & Co themselves in the late 1850s. This price was surely the influence of the railways— one could go from Ballarat to Melbourne (via Geelong) by train for 10/6 in about 4 hours.

The typesetters appear to have had a problem with the next table, which shows coaches between Ballarat and St Arnaud, a marathon 19 hours journey. The coach is described as “Midnight (Sun ex)”, but leaves at 11:30 p.m. There appears to be problems also with the fares shown— why was it so expensive to get to Landsborough?

One of the now almost forgotten gold rush towns of the 1850s was Blackwood, in the forest between Ballan and Trentham. Now Melbournite’s “getaway” destination, it once bustled with the noise of some 30,000 miners. By the time of this Guide, it was already well down the slippery slide of its dramatic decline. You could get to Blackwood by Cobb & Co. coach by a service that connected with trains on the relatively new Daylesford line. The nine mile journey took about 2 hours, and you could connect at Blackwood with another Cobb & Co. coach for Ballan and thence, via another connection, to Ballarat. This was the long way round to the Golden City compared with what came 8 years later, when the Daylesford-Ballarat line opened.

For our final Cobb & Co table we leap the Murray and 5 years into the future to August 1887 and some services in the Riverina. The Hay-Deniliquin trip shown here was not much to speak of— 12 hours for 80 miles across

Cobb & Co's Guide		9		November 1st, 1882	
<b>Ballarat, Gordons, Blackwood, Trentham &amp; Keilor Road</b>					
Miles	Daily, Sun. ex.	Fares		Fares	
—	Leave Ballarat ...	6 0 a.m.	—	Leave Keilor Road ...	7 30 a.m.
15	Gordons .....	8 0 "	2 0	Melton .....	9 0 "
23	Ballan .....	9 0 "	4 0	Bacchus Marsh ...	10 15 "
33	Blackwood .....	12 30 p.m.	6 0	Pentland Hills ...	11 30 "
34	Pentland Hills ...	11 0 "	6 0	Leave Blackwood ...	12 30 a.m.
38	Bacchus Marsh ...	12 30 "	7 6	Ballan .....	12 Noon
47	Melton .....	1 30 "	7 6	Gordons .....	1 30 "
57	Keilor Road ...	3 0 "	7 6	Ballarat .....	3 40 "
<b>Ballarat, Avoca, and St. Arnaud.</b>					
Miles	Midnight (Sat. ex.)	Fares	4 a.m. (Sun. ex.)	Fares	
—	Leave Ballarat ...	11 30 p.m.	—	Leave St. Arnaud ...	3 30 a.m.
45	Avoca .....	6 5 a.m.	5 0	Stewart Mill ...	6 0 "
57	Moonambel ...	9 0 "	5 0	Landsborough ...	6 30 "
60	Redbank .....	10 15 "	5 0	Redbank .....	7 0 "
75	Stewart Mill ...	12 30 p.m.	5 0	Moonambel ...	8 30 "
75	Landsborough ...	12 30 "	7 6	Avoca .....	12 0 "
94	St. Arnaud .....	2 30 "	5 0	Ballarat .....	6 15 p.m.
<b>Blackwood and Trentham,</b> via Barry's Reef, Garlicks, and Newbery—Twice Daily.					
Miles	Twice Daily (Sun. ex.)	Fares		Fares	
—	Leave ...	5 30 a.m.	—	Leave ...	11 30 a.m.
—	Blackwood * ...	5 30	1 45	Trentham ...	11 30
—	Barry's Reef ...	6 0	2 15	Newbery ...	11 0
—	Garlicks ...	6 30	2 45	Garlicks ...	11 30
—	Newbery ...	7 0	3 15	Barry's Reef ...	12 0
—	Trentham ...	7 30	4 0	Blackwood ...	12 30
* If Coach connects at Blackwood with Coach from Ballarat.					

the Hay Plain. But the trip to Wilcannia was an expedition worthy of Bourke and Wills. It is hard to discern now why one would want to make such a journey— except perhaps because they connected two inland river routes on the Murrumbidgee and Darling Rivers respectively. It was a trip of 260 miles, where one spent 60 hours on the coach and was £6 poorer by the end. It is said that drivers and passengers alike on these long flat straight trips were apt to go more than a little crazy and one wonders what the horses thought of it. But, Randolph Bedford spoke of a long Cobb & Co. trip across the inland plains as follows:

*The great plain which had seemed so mysterious in the moonlight became a yellow treeless meadow with the dawn.. A thousand crows circled in flight, a string of ibis flew to the sunrise; the only break in the dawn was the gum-belt that traced the meandering creek. The big sun—quick, decisive and majestic in rising—brought the smell of hay, and made that great expanse of withered grass fragrant as the breath of a cow; and the fragrance went with us all day until nightfall took away the sun and the hay scents, both together.*

August 1st, 1887						
<b>Hay to Deniliquin via Pine Ridge &amp; Wanganella</b>						
Miles	Daily (Sat ex)	Fares	Daily (Sun ex)	Fares		
—	Leave Hay .....	7 pm	—	Leave Deniliquin .....	5 30 pm	—
30	Pine Ridge .....	10 40 "	10 0	Wanganella .....	10 15 "	10 0
53	Wanganella .....	3 am	20 0	Pine Ridge .....	2 "	20 0
80	Arr. Deniliquin...	7 "	30 0	Arr. Hay .....	7 "	30 0
THROUGH TICKETS, Coach and Mail, issued as under:—To or from Melbourne and Hay and Return - 1st Class, £4, 2nd Class, £3 5s. Single - 1st Class, £2 10s. 2nd Class, £2 2s. 6d. Returns available for three months.						
79						
<b>Hay to Wilcannia via Booligal, Mossgiel &amp; Ivanhoe</b>						
Miles		Fares		Fares		
—	Leave Hay, Tues, Thur, Sat	7 30 pm	—	Leave Wilcannia, Mon, Wed, Fri	8 pm	—
50	Booligal, Wed, Fri, Sun	6 am	25 0	Ivanhoe, Tues, Sat, Mon	4 "	80 0
100	Mossgiel, Wed, Fri, Sun	4 pm	60 0	Mossgiel, Tues, Sat, Wed	8 "	60 0
195	Ivanhoe, Wed, Fri, Sun	7 "	80 0	Booligal, Fri, Sun, Wed	10 "	25 0
260	Arr. Wilcannia, Fri, Tues, Sun	9 am	120 0	Arr. Hay, Mon, Thur, Sat	7 am	120 0
THROUGH TICKETS, Coach and Mail, issued as under:—To or from Melbourne and Wilcannia and Return - 1st Class, £14 2nd Class, £13 10s. Single - 1st Class, £8 2nd Class, £7 12s. 6d. Returns available for three months.						

# On tour with Harold Clapp & Friends.

From the collections of **ROSS WILLSON** and **GEOFF LAMBERT** come some timetables for the Commissioner's special inspection trains.



Commissioners Eddy (NSW), Webb (SA) and—the most famous of them all—Clapp (VR). It was their annual pleasant or unpleasant duty to roam the length and breadth of their systems, ensconced in the Commissioner's special train, dispensing advice, running an eye over the books and receiving deputations. It must have suited Harold Clapp well—they knighted him for it.

  
**DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS, NEW SOUTH WALES**  
 For the information of employees  
 and not for publication

**Special Train Notice No. 435**

Instructions to Stationmasters, Guards,  
 Drivers, and all others concerned.

**COMMISSIONER'S  
INSPECTION SPECIALS**

**Coopernook to South Brisbane  
Old Casino to Murwillumbah  
and Dorrigo Line**

Commencing Sunday, 2nd July, 1972

Train to be marshalled in the following order  
 departing Sydney :-  
 Engine. PHO (30 tons), No. 7 Car (55 tons),  
 No. 8 Car (45 tons), and No. 9 Car (45 tons).  
 Total weight . . . 175 tons.  
 (Worked by a 48-class engine throughout).

Most Australian Railways, for most of their lives were Commissioners and/or had a Commissioner at their head. The Commissioner *was* the Railways in a very real and legal sense and had personal responsibility for everything that happened everywhere on the system. The legislation, the bye-laws, even public documents such as the timetable made it plain that when one travelled on a train, one travelled on the *Commissioner's* train and alighted therefrom at the *Commissioner's* stations.

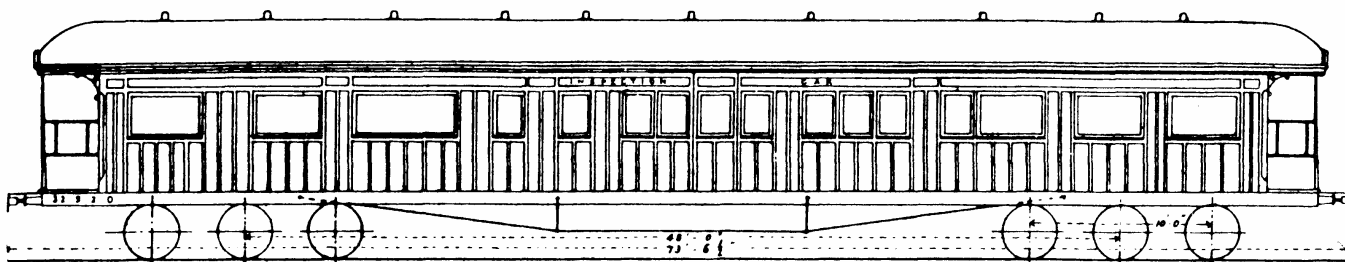
But there was another *Commissioner's Train*, one largely set aside for his own use—with its own carriages, its own locomotive, even its own special driver. The railway legislation of most Australian railways stipulated that the Commissioner (or Commissioners—there were sometimes more than one) must personally visit and inspect every mile of the system once a year. Inspection was more than sitting back in the armchair of the Commissioner's observation car and watching the miles reel

away behind one. It involved inspecting the lavatories at stations, running a fine-toothed comb over the station books, checking on the train registers in the signal boxes and receiving lobbying delegations from local luminaries on whether or not the milk train should call before 6 a.m. each day.

Tours generally lasted a working week, setting out first thing on Monday morning and returning last thing on Friday night. Such was the extent of the systems that two days might be eaten up just by the getting there and the getting back—leaving only 3 days clear for local inspections. Both the trips illustrated here are like this.

Our first train described, for the NSW North Coast in 1972, must have been one of the last "real" trains over the Dorrigo line in NSW, for it ceased to operate because of flood damage in October of that year. The STN for this inspection trip is rather a special job, being printed

NORMAN.





## COMMISSIONER'S INSPECTION SPECIALS—(continued)

Distance from Sydney		TUESDAY, 4th JULY—(cont.)		N6	
M.	Ch.	Arrive a.m.	Depart a.m.	Arrive p.m.	Depart p.m.
580	74	††	7 55	††	7 55
569	20	†	8 23	†	8 28
562	34	†	8 44	†	8 49
550	12	†	8 56	†	9 6
540	37	†	9 24	†	9 34
540	34	†	9 58	†	10 25
..	..	..	10 52	..	10 56
519	30	†	11 11	†	11 41
..	..	..	12 0	..	12 3
561	23	†	12 22	†	12 27
500	20	†	12 32	†	1 30
493	13	†	1 42	†	1 45
..	..	..	..	..	2 1
..	..	..	..	..	2 16
..	..	..	..	..	2 32
452	12	†	2 48	†	2 54
..	..	..	..	..	3 8
434	20	†	3 21	†	3 36
432	25	†	3 41	†	..

†† Detach EPT before departure.

† Inspect.

N6 will inspect stations indicated from Murwillumbah to South Grafton.

"Control" South Grafton will arrange for any freight trains required to run to be worked clear of N6.

Officers to be on duty where necessary for the passage of N6.

## COMMISSIONER'S INSPECTION SPECIALS—(continued)

Distance from Sydney		WEDNESDAY, 5th JULY		N8	
M.	Ch.	Arrive a.m.	Depart a.m.	Arrive p.m.	Depart p.m.
424	29	†	7 47	†	7 30
412	76	†	8 8	†	7 50
..	..	..	..	..	8 11
..	..	..	..	..	8 22
..	..	..	..	..	N9
..	..	..	9 54	..	9 57
448	12	†	10 57	†	11 0
..	..	..	11 35	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	N10
448	12	..	..	..	p.m.
..	..	..	..	..	p.m.
..	..	..	12 38	..	12 3
..	..	..	1 42	..	12 41
405	5	†	2 59	†	1 45

† Inspect.

N8: N9 will run from South Grafton to Dorrigo and inspect stations indicated.

N10 will run through from Dorrigo to Glenreagh and inspect Glenreagh.

Officers to be on duty where necessary for the passage of N8, N9 and N10.

"Control" South Grafton will arrange altered tables for any freight trains required to run to work clear of N8, N9 and N10.

as a small booklet of 12 pages. Bound collections of these Commissioners STNs were produced and are now in the NSW State Records Office.

It took all day for the train to get to the North Coast, half a day to inspect the Murwillumbah branch and a day to inspect the tortuous and steep Dorrigo branch.

Our pages 10 to 13 reproduce 4 of the 5 pages of VR S1768 of 1965, whereby the Commissioners toured most of the lines in the northwest of the state. Eight weeks before they had made a similar sojourn in the southwest. One imagines it could take 10 week-long trips to cover the whole system, meaning that the Commissioners spent at least 1 week in every ten gallivanting about the system.

At the time of this trip, the locomotive previously used almost exclusively for the Commissioners train D3 639 had just been retired and replaced with one of the new fangled Y-class. These rather peculiar machines were built upon the power bogies of 1919 vintage suburban passenger cars. They were slow, but they were light—a distinct advantage for a train that had to visit distant lines where most locomotives were forbidden to tread—some of them could not stand the weight of even a T-class loco. Behind the loco were the cars Norman, No 5 sleeper and Goulburn. Nor-

man was the original beaver-tailed observation car from the Spirit of Progress and ran on the latter train until gauge standardisation in 1962. But, even before that, a "Norman" nearly always graced the Commissioner's special—the version used throughout most of the first half of the twentieth century is shown on the opposite page.

This was the era when the IBM Selectric typewriter, plastic ribbons and paper-offset printing were new—the S-notice is crisp and clean and so different from those produced during the years when they were run off from a jelly-roll stencil.

Travelling on the western main line for most of Monday, the special met many other trains on this largely single line section. It was the middle of school holidays, so these other trains included holiday specials such as 24A, passed on the double line near Warrenheip. Once past Ararat, most of these trains would have been steam-hauled. On this 287 mile journey, the only actual inspections occurred between Ararat and Lubeck.

After a refreshing night's sleep in the yard at Serviceton, disturbed only by the passage of 7 Express Passenger and Goods trains, the gallant trio set out again for Horsham, inspecting as they went. As the footnote on page 5 of S1768/65 pleads,

the Commissioner's very much wanted to minimise the time spent on hearing deputations. It is a moot point, whether by the 1960s, residents really bothered to confront their Commissioners, but obviously they would have to be glib—the station stops for all inspection purposes including delegations were only 10 to 15 minutes.

After the relatively crowded-looking schedule of the first two page, the sparse ones of the following pages seem like an anticlimax. They may well have been regarded as paralytically boring. On the Wednesday, it took 9 hours to trundle over the 92 miles of track encompassing a return trip to Carpolac (120 minutes out in express style and 224 coming back hesitantly over the 36-mile branch, down the main-line to Murtoa and then the first leg of a 2-day long return trip to Patchewollock.

The long trip back to Melbourne from Patchewollock commenced following afternoon tea on Thursday, with an overnight stop at Warracknabeal and a whole day of travelling on mostly the main line. There were 10 trains to meet along the way, but the train arrived back at Spencer St dead on time according to my hand-written notes.—I saw it while waiting on Platform 4 to catch the train home to Bacchus Marsh.

Office of Chief Traffic Manager,  
Room 73, 'Phone 1802,  
24th August, 1965.

COMMISSIONERS' VISIT OF INSPECTION.

NORTH WESTERN TOUR.

ARARAT - SERVICETON; HORSHAM - CARPOLAC; MURTOA - HOPETOUN - PATCHEWOLLOCK.

S.1643/65 IS CANCELLED.

Instead the Commissioners' special train will run as under:-

MONDAY, 13th SEPTEMBER, 1965.

SPENCER STREET - SERVICETON

Miles from Melb.	DOWN -	A. M.	Train is to be marshalled Norman (large saloon round end leading) No.5 Sleeper, Goulburn, 'Y' Class locomotive and is to be docked not later than 8.55am
	Spencer Street (No.4 Platform)	dep 9.25	
1	North Melbourne	9.28*	
3½	Footscray	9.33*	
7¾	Sunshine	9.42*	
11	Deer Park	9.49*	
18½	Rockbank	10. 4*	
23½	Melton	10.13*	
29½	Parwan	10.25*	
31¾	Bacchus Marsh	10.31*-8 goods due dep 10.35am	
40½	Bank Box Loop	*	
49½	Ballan	11.24*	
56½	Gordon	arr 11.39*-38 fast goods due dep 11.51am.	
		dep 11.54	
		P.M.	
64	Bungaree	12. 9*	
69¾	Warrenheip	12.19*	
73½	Ballarat East	* -24A pass DL	
73¾	Ballarat	arr 12.28*	
		dep 12.30-24 pass. due arr 12.18pm - 12.35pm.	
74½	Nth. Ballarat Junction	*	
76½	Linton Junction	12.37*	
83½	Windermere	arr 12.48*	
		dep 1.13-82 goods due dep 12.36pm to wait	
86¾	Burrumbeet	1.19*	
97½	Trawalla	1.35*	
102½	Beaufort	1.43*	
112½	Middle Creek	2. 2*	
116½	Buangor	2.10*	
131	Ararat	arr 2.37*	
		dep 2.39	
136½	(Armstrong	arr 2.50	
		dep 3. 0	
141¾	(Great Western	arr 3. 8-66 fast goods due arr 3.6pm work clear.	
		dep 3.18	
150	Stawell	arr 3.35*-34 pass due dep 3.41pm.	
		dep 3.44	
154¾	(Deep Lead	arr 3.53	
		dep 3.58	
162½	(Glenorchy	arr 4.11	
		dep 4.31	
169	(Wal Wal	arr 4.41	
		dep 4.51	
175	(Lubeck	arr 5. 0-36 fast goods due dep 4.49pm to wait	
		dep 5.30	
185½	Murtoa	5.47*-164 goods due dep 5.46pm to wait	
192	Jung	5.59*	
198½	Dooen	6. 9*	
203½	Horsham	6.17*-88 fast goods due arr 6.23pm work clear.	

(CONTINUED ON SECOND PAGE)

MONDAY, 13th SEPTEMBER, 1965(Contd.)

Miles from Melb.	DOWN -		P.M.	
213½	Pimpinio	arr	6.34*	-133 Exp gds due arr 10.15pm -140 Exp gds due dep 11.55pm -139 Exp gds due arr 1.12am - 10 "The O'land" due dep 1.58am - 69 "The O'land" due arr 3.20am -150 Exp gds due dep 4.00am - 62 gds due dep 5.25am
		dep	7.14	
224¾	Dimboola		7.33*	
240	Kiata		8. 1*	
248½	Nhill		8.15*	
259¼	Diapur		8.34*	
272½	Kaniva		8.58*	
287	Serviceton	arr	9.25	
MILEAGE 287				

TUESDAY, 14th SEPTEMBER, 1965.SERVICETON - HORSHAM - NATIMUK

	UP -		A.M.	
287	(Serviceton	dep	9.15	Reverse carriages
278¾	(Lillimur		9.36	
272½	(Kaniva	arr	9.48	
		dep	10.13	
266½	(Miram		10.35	
259¼	(Diapur	arr	10.50	81 gds due arr 11.9am to be expedited
		dep	11.10	
255½	(Tarranginnie		11.19	
248¼	(Nhill	arr	11.31	147 fast gds due dep 12 noon
			P.M.	
		dep	12. 6	
242½	(Salisbury		...	
240	(Kiata	arr	12.21	
		dep	12.31	
235¼	(Gerang Gerung		12.50	
224¾	(Dimboola	arr	1. 8	Water carriages
				-9 fast gds due arr 1.04pm
				-34 DRC due arr 1.35pm
				-34 pass due dep 1.50pm
		dep	2.40	36 fast gds due dep 2.10pm
219¼	(Wail		2.58	
213½	(Pimpinio	arr	3. 8	25 pass due dep 3.39pm
		dep	3.42	87 fast gds due dep 2.40pm work clear
209	(Dahlen Siding		...	
203¼	(Horsham	arr	4. 0	Water carriages
	DOWN -			
203¼	(Horsham	dep	5.10	
208	(Remlaw Siding		5.24	
211¼	(Vectis		5.35	
214	(Quantong		5.48	
217	(East Natimuk		6. 3	
218¾	Natimuk	arr	6. 8	
MILEAGE 99½				

(CONTINUED ON THIRD PAGE)

WEDNESDAY, 15th SEPTEMBER, 1965

NATIMUK - CARPOLAC - MURTOA - MINYIP

Miles from Melb.	DOWN -	A.M.	
218 $\frac{3}{4}$	Natimuk	dep 8. 0-6 Altd. goods due arr 7.50am S.1777/65	
245 $\frac{1}{2}$	Goroke	9.30*	
254 $\frac{1}{2}$	Carpolac	arr 10. 0	
254 $\frac{1}{2}$	UP - (Carpolac	dep 10.20	
251 $\frac{1}{4}$	(Mortat	10.38	
251 $\frac{1}{2}$	(Goroke	arr 10.58	
		dep 11.28	
238 $\frac{3}{4}$	INSPECT	(Gymbowen	12. 0 P.M.
232 $\frac{3}{4}$		(Duffholme	12.22
227 $\frac{3}{4}$		(Mitre	arr 12.39
			dep 1.11
223 $\frac{3}{4}$		(Arapiles	1.27
218 $\frac{3}{4}$		(Natimuk	arr 1.44
			dep 2. 4 - Balmoral line to be inspected by road car
217		East Natimuk	2. 9*
203 $\frac{1}{4}$		Horsham	2.53*
198 $\frac{1}{4}$		(Dooen	arr 3. 3-25 pass due dep 3.09pm
		dep 3.12	
192	(Jung	arr 3.23	
		dep 3.43	
185 $\frac{1}{4}$	INSPECT	(Murtoa	arr 3.55-Water carriages
		(DOWN	-36 fast goods due dep 4.32pm
185 $\frac{1}{4}$		(Murtoa	dep 4.45-Reverse carriages
190 $\frac{3}{4}$		(Coromby	4.55
198 $\frac{1}{4}$		(Minyip	arr <u>5. 8</u>

MILEAGE 92

(CONTINUED ON FOURTH PAGE)

FRIDAY, 17th SEPTEMBER, 1965  
WARRACKNABEAL - MURTOA - SPENCER STREET

Miles from Melb.	UP -	A. M.
216½	INSP. (Warracknabeal)	dep 9. 0
206½	Sheephills	9.17*
198¼	Minyip	9.31*-2 gds. due dep 9am work clear -7 gds due dep 9.30am to wait Balangum line to be inspected by road car
185¼	Murtoa	arr 9.53*-147 fast gds due dep 9.54am dep 9.57
175	Lubeck	10.15*
169	Wai Wai	10.26*
162½	Glenorchy	10.38*-61 gds due arr 10.38am work clear
154¼	Deep Lead	10.54*-9 fast gds due dep 10.44am to wait
150	INSP. (Stawell)	arr 11. 4
		P.M.
141¾	Great Western	dep 12. 4
141¼	Seppelt's Siding	12.20*
136½	Armstrong	12.31*
131	Ararat	arr 12.43*-25 pass due arr 1.0pm. - 1.20pm dep 1.23
116½	Buangor	1.52*
112½	Middle Creek	2. 0*
102½	Beaufort	2.24*
97½	Trawalla	2.32*
86¾	Burrumbeet	2.53*-82 gds due dep 2.46pm to wait
83½	Windermere	2.59*
76½	Linton Junction	3.14*
74½	Nth. Ballarat Junction	3.18*
73¼	Ballarat	arr 3.21* dep 3.30-49 pass due arr 3.30pm
69¾	Warranheip	3.44*
64	Bungaree	3.56*
56¾	Gordon	4.10*
49½	Ballan	arr 4.23*-133 exp. gds due dep 4.9pm to wait dep 4.28
40¼	Bank Box Loop	4.43*-59 fast gds due dep 4.34pm to wait
31¼	Bacchus Marsh	4.57*
29¼	Parwan	5. 3*
23¼	Melton	5.15*-53 pass due dep 5.14pm to wait
18½	Rockbank	5.24*
11	Deer Park	5.36*
7¾	Sunshine	5.43*-57 pass due dep 5.43pm to wait
3½	Footscray	5.51*
1	North Melbourne	*
	Spencer Street (No.2 Platform)	arr 6. 0

MILEAGE 216½

\* Not required to stop for inspection purposes.

Passenger trains, also important goods train, are not to be detained by the Special and at crossing stations the former are not to be shunted from the platform road.

Stationmasters will please request district residents, who intend to interview the Commissioners on arrival, to elect one representative of each Association or Body interested to explain all proposals, so that the minimum time may be occupied in dealing with deputations.

J. R. REWELL,  
Chief Traffic Manager.

**CONVEYANCE OF Messrs. WIRTH BROS.' CIRCUS.  
Special Trains.**

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26.		K 28 a m
HAY .....	dep.	12 30
Carrathool .....	arr.	2 9
Do .....	dep.	2 19
Bringagee .....	arr.	3 3
Do .....	dep.	3 15 <sup>23</sup>
Wilbriggie .....	arr.	4 8
Do .....	dep.	4 20 <sup>25</sup>
Whitton .....	arr.	4 53
Do .....	dep.	5 3 <sup>27</sup>
Yanco .....	arr.	5 48
Do .....	dep.	5 55 <sup>29</sup>
Narrandera .....	arr.	6 40
Do .....	dep.	7 0 <sup>3</sup>
Grong Grong .....	pass	7 40 <sup>5</sup>
Matong .....	pass	8 2
Ganmala .....	arr.	8 24
Do .....	arr.	8 39 <sup>7</sup>
COOLAMON .....	arr.	9 9

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28.		K 30 a m
COOLAMON .....	dep.	4 0 <sup>5</sup>
Marrar .....	arr.	4 35
Do .....	dep.	4 45
Old Junee .....	pass	5 21
Junee Junction .....	arr.	5 41
Do .....	dep.	6 40 <sup>100</sup>
Harefield .....	arr.	7 5
Do .....	dep.	7 15 <sup>12</sup>
WAGGA WAGGA .....	arr.	8 0

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29.		J 21 a m	J 23 a m	J 25 a m
WAGGA WAGGA .....	dep.	5 55		
Uranquinty .....	pass	6 31 <sup>92</sup>		
The Rock .....	arr.	6 59		
Do .....	dep.	7 25	7 25	7 55
LOCKHART .....	arr.	9 18	9 18	9 48

J 21, on arrival at The Rock, will be sent forward to Lockhart in two divisions, as arranged by Transit Officer.

No. 3 Conditional Goods, The Rock to Oaklands, not to run.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30.		K 32 a m	K 34 a m
LOCKHART .....	dep.	1 0	2 0
The Rock .....	arr.	2 56	3 56
Do .....	dep.		J 27 a m 4 21
Yerong Creek .....	pass	4 54	
HENTY .....	arr.	5 24	

The following Conditional Goods Trains must not run:—  
Nos. 92 and 84, Albury to Junee } On September 29.  
No. 297, Culcairn to Albury..... }

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1.		J 29 a m
HENTY .....	dep.	4 20
Culcairn .....	arr.	4 50
Do .....	dep.	5 15 <sup>90</sup>
GERMANTON .....	arr.	6 30

The following Conditional Goods Trains must not run:—  
No. 5, Culcairn to Gernanton.  
No. 84, Albury to Junee  
Transit Officer to arrange for J 29 to be reduced at Culcairn, so as to go forward to Gernanton in one division.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2.		K 36 a m
GERMANTON .....	dep.	4 30
CULCAIRN .....	arr.	5 45

The following Conditional Goods Trains must not run:—  
Nos. 1 and 5, Culcairn to Gernanton.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3.		J 31 a m
CULCAIRN .....	dep.	3 45 <sup>80 84</sup>
Gerogery .....	pass	4 24
Table Top .....	pass	4 54
ALBURY .....	arr.	5 24

The following Conditional Goods Trains must not run:—  
No. 177, Culcairn to Albury.  
No. 173, " "

**Composition of Trains and General Instructions.**

The Special Trains will consist of bogie Goods brake-van, 2 18-berth sleeping cars (AH), 1 first-class Cleminson carriage (BF), 3 Express lavatory carriages (BX), 1 second-class American car (FA), 2 bogie cattle wagons, 5 four-wheeled cattle wagons (3 with raised roof), 10 "TF" trucks, and 2 louvred vans. Total load equal to 478 tons (approximately).

Authority is hereby given for "T" class engine to be assisted over sections where necessary.

The most suitable roads for unloading and loading must be given, and the roads to cranes must be kept clear to permit of wagons being placed under the cranes. All loading must be securely lashed.

Each truck must be carefully passed under the load gauge so as to ensure the height and width of any load not being greater than the measurements shown in standing instructions.

## From the Weekly Notice—1 The Circus Train

*Weekly, Fortnightly and Monthly notices have provided historians with a rich source of information about long-gone railway operations. In NSW, they were also the place to find Special Train timetables. This month, we begin a new series which examines our timetable byways, by drawing on the recently-published collection of NSWGR Weekly Notices on CD, courtesy of ARHS NSW. This month— The Circus Train*

Who can forget the circus train wreck in the 1950s film *“The Greatest Show on Earth”*? For me, the thrill of going down to the station to see the Wirth's Circus train pull into town, was always tempered by the ghastly prospect of seeing it upended and the elephants running rampage through the streets of my home town. Luckily it never happened or, if it did, I never learned of it. There were, however, “incidents” involving elephants over the years— in at least one case the beasts fell through the floor of their carriage, derailing the train—look for the pictures on Google.

The Wirth's circus train was never as glamorous as that of Cole Bros., shown right. In fact it was downright drab and dowdy, using long cast-off cars from the various state systems over which it roamed. It could hardly ever have been a pleasant trip for man nor beast nor Jungle Boy.

Opposite and below, we see some pages from a 1911 NSWGR STN, showing Wirth's slow progress over



several lines in the Riverina.

The circus' reputation for folding its tents and quietly stealing away in the night is shown well here— with most departures being before dawn of the morning after the night before— only 3 or 4 hours were allowed to dismantle the whole shebang. It was ever thus—

or it certainly was in my childhood. Arrival at the next town, which had already been plastered with lurid advertising posters for the previous week, was usually not long after breakfast, allowing an entire 10 hours to set up the Big Top and feed the lions and tigers before the Show Must Go On.

### CONVEYANCE OF Messrs. WIRTH BROS.' CIRCUS—*continued.*

A Transit Officer will supervise the loading and unloading at the different places, arrange for engine and Guard to be out when required, and accompany the Special Train, subject to the direction of the Superintendent of the District.

**Charges.**—Special arrangements have been made regarding the charges for the conveyance of this Circus, including the Advance Agent and his assistants; only those stations who have been so instructed by the Goods Manager are to collect charges. The amount collected should be included in the “Daily Goods Remittance” and a debit raised in “Goods Miscellaneous.”

The Transit Officer in charge must keep a careful record of the vehicles (numbers and description) attached to the Special Train, the number of trains and engines used, and the mileage run. If any vehicles in excess of those authorised are used, or any mileage is run in excess of that shown in this notice, particulars must be at once wired to the Goods Manager and “Tables,” in order that arrangements may be made for the collection of charges. The Transit Officer must also furnish a complete statement of the above information to “Tables,” when the journey is completed.

The Circus will subsequently play at Victorian towns, and the vehicles forming the Special train will be no longer required after arrival at Albury.

