The Times

March 2019

A journal of transport timetable history and analysis

Inside: By railcar and airship …

… from St Pancras to Spencer St

Stopping at the Hospital

RRP $4.95
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YESTERYEAR

Spencer Street Railway Station, Melbourne C.1930s

The Times

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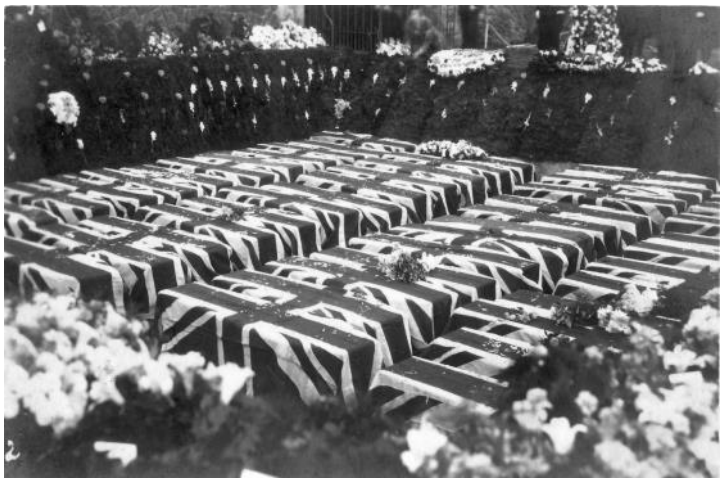

Dreams turn to Nightmares

STN Production: Today *versus* some 20 years ago

SCOTT FERRIS, *with a note by* **GEOFF LAMBERT**


Special Train Notice 0116-2019

SUNDAY JANUARY 27 TO TUESDAY JANUARY 29, 2019

Transport Sydney Trains

Train Planning
Phone: 21766 / 21784
Author: DL/TR

Date of issue: 11/01/2019

GOING BACK TO THE EARLY 2000s, there were a number of Trainee Train Planners appointed to Train Planning in the what was then the State Rail Authority. The STN Production Supervisors decided to adopt a method of producing a STN that would not deviate, irrespective of what the STN was to advertise—i.e. Event or Possession. The ability to use artistic flare or thinking ability was eliminated.

Train Planners were advised to use the previous STN that applied—if there were one—and adopt the same working unless, after the STN operated, feedback revealed operational problems.

The STN Production Management people said, even in the 2000s, that the ultimate aim was to dispense with STNs because the data and information would be available by other electronic means.

In the days before "Databases", "Downstream Users" and the *RailTable*© program, all of the planning was done by manual methods. Train Planners would use the SWTT as a base and make changes from that base. They would note those changes in a Word document, which would become the basis of the STN. The Train Planners would only mention the changes, and not trips which were not altered. It was very easy to see what had been altered from the SWTT.

If there was an Event at Olympic Park, with several additional trains to/from the city running over the same section, the additional trips would be shown in a so-called "Tabulated Form". Sometimes, under this situation, the Train Planner might also show existing unaltered SWTT trips, just to indicate how the additional trips would fit between them.

When it came to a Possession, the following is example of what would be shown in a STN in those earlier days of Train Planning. If there was (say) a possession on the Down Suburban Line from Illawarra Junction to Strathfield, the following is all the Train Planner would need to write, (unless a particular trip needed to be altered further or did something different):

Commencing with Run 95-D Pass, 1002 hours Central to Emu Plains, up to and including Run 129K 1345 hours Central to Richmond, all trains tabled to run on the Down Suburban Line between Illawarra Junction and Strathfield, will instead cross to the Down Main at Illawarra Junction , travel Down Main to Homebush, or North Strathfield Junction on the Down North Main, as the case may be, thence run as tabled, or run as otherwise shown herein.

Today, Sydney Trains prints about a dozen paper copies of a STN and there would not be a lot of people looking in detail at it.

All of the trips are contained within a Database which is fed to Downstream users (i.e. Customers or Stakeholders) for different reasons—for example, Crew Diagrams, Platform Working, Signalling and the data that passengers have downloaded to their phone apps.

Area Controllers (or Signallers) look in detail to ensure there are no clashes at a particular interlocking or Junction

OVER THE CHRISTMAS—NEW YEAR PERIOD for 2018/19, Sydney Trains issued no fewer than four 400-500 page Special Train Notices (STNs) covering Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Eve and New Years Day. Each was fundamentally an amended copy of the Standard Working Timetable. Then, three weeks later, they issued another such for Australia Day. I had already heard from "Informed Sources" that people were beginning to challenge the usefulness of all this stuff. I sent out an e-mail in the following terms:

A lot of people are starting to say that Sydney Trains has gone a little bit nuts in producing 500-page PDF files (essentially a single day SWTT) at the drop of a hat. Do paper copies for these exist? I hope not. Of course, I, like many others accept them gladly – but then I'm a timetable nutter (timetable hoarder?). I'd be interested to know how many people "look under the hood" of each and every one. They must take an awful lot of work to put together (these were done by dlal, whoever she, he or it may be). I just wonder whether dlal could be given more productive things to do? As I understand it, there may be moves afoot at a high level in TfNSW to curb these "excesses". Timetable hoarders will probably deprecate it, but logic will probably applaud it. Until then, keep them coming!

Scott Ferris commented:

We've had these STNs being produced for the last 20 years. Yes, I agree, 500 Page one (1) day STNs are silly. Yes, people (or Stakeholders) do look under the hood. Most of the work on such a STN would be in the data entry. Train Planners are told to comply to Specifications and/or copy a previously operated STN. Two (2) Train Planners worked on this STN, with initials DL and TR. They could be more productive if they were given the job from scratch, as they may come up with a more efficient train running scenario. If TfNSW makes a move to curb these excessive STNs, it's about time.

In the accompanying article Scott Ferris explains how this all came to be.

—Geoff Lambert

(e.g. Platform working), or when trains change tracks (e.g. Up Main to Up Suburban); the Signaller must ensure there is no Down Train on the Down Main at the same time).

The Australia Day STN 0522 was put together by two Train Planners (DL and TR). They would have started to work on this Event 12 weeks prior to Australia Day, working under the guidance of specifications which they needed to comply with or, otherwise, provide details as to non-compliance which Stakeholders, in turn, would need to agree to by 6 weeks prior to the STN operating.

The Database for Australia Day 2019 (which includes STN 0522), with altered and unaltered trips, would have been completed 6 weeks prior, when Crewing would receive a download of the data for their Op-Crew program to enable formulation of diagrams for drivers and guards. Crewing must have this complete some 3 weeks before the Event so rosters for drivers and guards can be posted up at the depots at least a fortnight before.

Continuing with the timeline, (which has always applied and still applies today): the Train Planners (DL and TR), between 6 weeks and 2 weeks prior, would need to work on any freight train that may require to be worked clear, and also make adjustments as requested from the Area Controllers (Signallers) and Crewing Officers.

Train Planners would need to send off the Start/Stable Sheets to all depots to ensure that all consists balanced and each siding or road could accommodate the train.

At the same time, "Defects" need the rosters to ensure train sets rotate through the rosters to maintain the maintenance cycle.

The Train Planners (DL and TR) together with the Production Supervisor will, 2 Weeks prior, Sign-off on the Database as "Final", indicating that all checks and analyses have been completed and there are no errors. If so, the STN is sent to PRESS (or sent for printing).

Today, it is quite easy for a train planner to print up the applicable section and give no detail as to what has been altered. Hence, this is why we have a reprint of the SWTT on a daily basis, especially at weekends.

Also, in the above possession scenario, the Train Planner today can make the alterations in a database, and each trip altered is stamped with the STN number. The Train Planner, can use a program called "Prosemaker", to insert all the trips stamped with that STN number into a Word document, dispensing with the above paragraph (which specified the working and encompassed the time frame from first to last train).

This then means that customers or stakeholders, where they are not in a position to extract the data, have to read numerous lines of text.

Therefore, today, we either have too much detail that is just a copy of the SWTT, that we don't need, or not enough detail to determine what has in fact been altered.

Downstream users don't worry too much because they only extract certain required data and may not need to refer to a STN at all.

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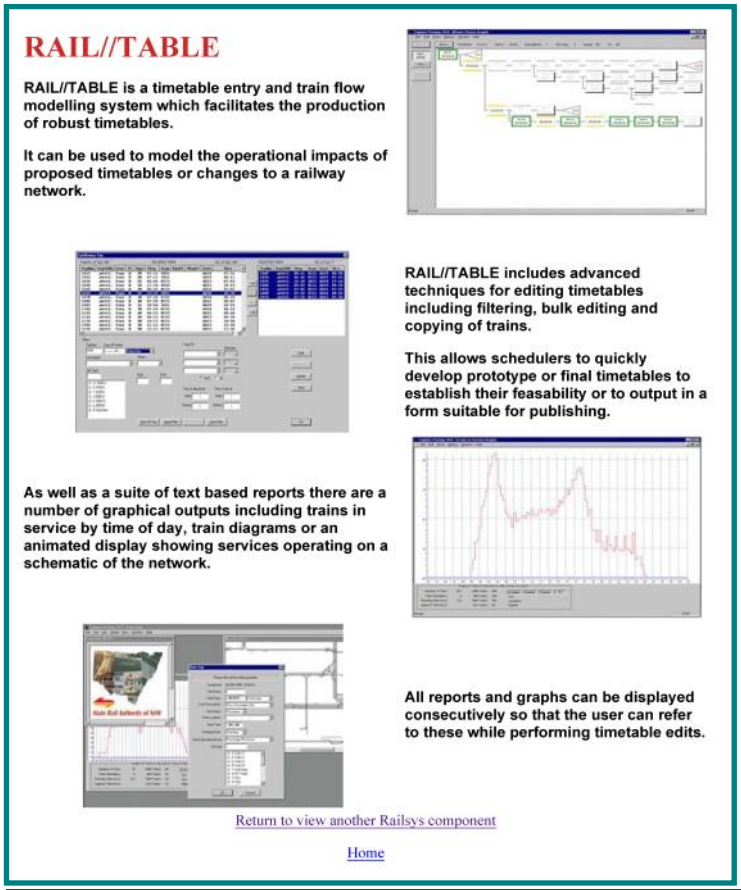
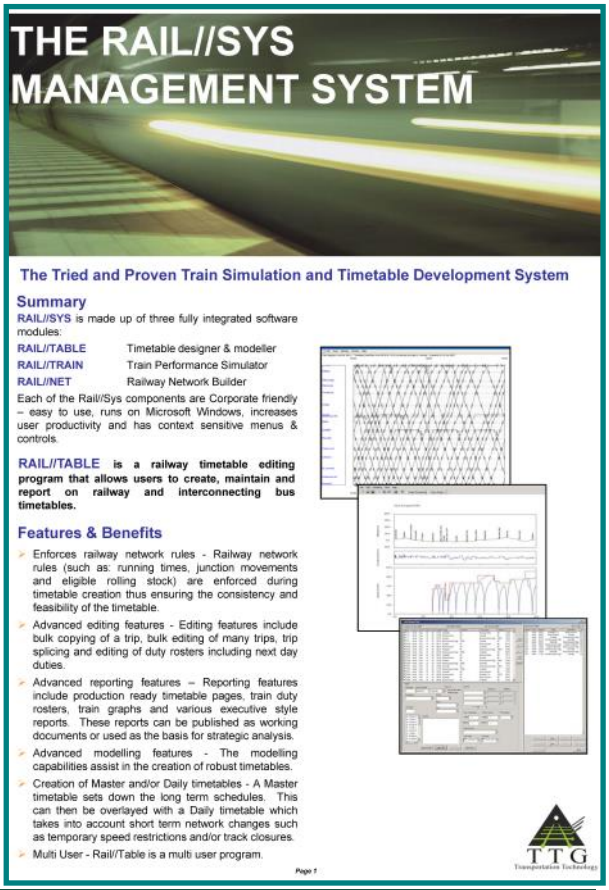




Changing at the Hospital

James T Wells

A STRANGE SITUATION commenced in Melbourne in September 2018 with the splitting of three bus routes—the 216, 219 and 220—into disconnected sections.

These routes ran from the Sunshine area in the West via the CBD to the Gardenvale/Brighton area in the South East. They all use Commercial Road / Malvern Road in Prahran, before turning south on either Williams Road (216, 219) or Orrong Road (220).

Before this "disconnect", after leaving the CBD, these buses used that wonderful boulevard, St Kilda Road, to reach Commercial Road. The disconnect is the result of Metro construction at the Domain, which has reduced capacity for southbound traffic on St Kilda Road.

These routes now have two termini in the middle of the route. The northern arms of the routes now terminate in the CBD and the southern arms terminate at the Alfred Hospital in South Melbourne. There is no indication or information in the timetables about how to connect between the two mid-route termini for passengers wanting through travel.

The information leaflet announcing the changes to the route suggests that through travel can be made by using the trams along Commercial Road and St Kilda Road. This leaflet is no longer readily available.

For the southern terminus at the Alfred Hospital in Commercial Road, the buses do an counter-clockwise loop to join Punt Road before making the right turn into Commercial Road. It is not clear which street the 220 uses to access Punt Road, but it doesn't matter if there are no stops in the area. The 216 and 219 go right down to Queens Way, about 1.2km from Commercial Road. Perhaps High Street is too congested to cope with buses as well as trams? It appears that there are no stops on the circuit.

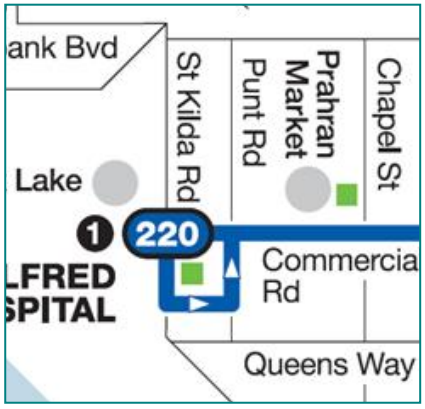
The only reason, then, to show the circuits on the map is to indicate to outbound passengers at the Alfred Hospital that they must catch the bus at the inbound terminus stop, rather than on the opposite side of the road, as would be normal.

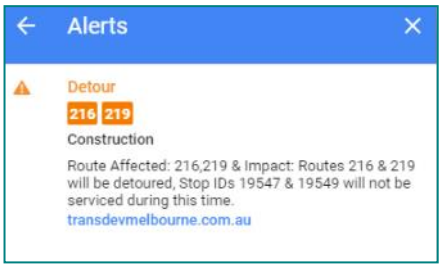
Bus stops and tram stops are not necessarily close together along Commercial Road. For example, there is no bus stop close to Prahran Market.

A quick word about Google Maps. Smaller scale maps do not show any public transport stops. Increasing the scale by pressing the + symbol (zooming in) results in railway stations being shown. Press + again (maybe several times) and symbols will appear along streets. However, they may only be tram stops. It is necessary to keep increasing the scale before bus stops also appear. It is a great pity that, for Melbourne, Google doesn't show Stop ID numbers, as happens in Sydney. In Sydney, these can be copied/pasted into the Trip (Journey) Planner app.

I have the impression that, in Melbourne, the system has not been updated for the truncation of these bus routes.

	Monday to Fri					
Wheelchair Accessible Services	♿	♿	♿	♿	♿	♿
Morning (am) / Afternoon (pm)	am	am	am	am	am	am
Sunshine Station/Dickson St (Sunshine)	8:50	–	9:00	9:19	–	9:49
Ashley St/Essex St (West Footscray)	8:58	–	9:08	9:27	–	9:57
Footscray Station/Irving St (Footscray)	9:14	–	9:24	9:42	–	10:12
North Melbourne Railway Station/Dynon Rd (West Melbourne)	9:23	–	9:32	9:50	–	10:20
Dudley St/Spencer St (West Melbourne)	9:27	–	9:36	9:54	–	10:23
Collins St/Queen St (Melbourne City)	9:42	–	9:51	10:08	–	10:36
Alfred Hospital/Commercial Rd (Prahran)	–	9:00	–	–	9:30	–
Robinson St/Williams Rd (Prahran)	–	9:14	–	–	9:44	–
Elsternwick Railway Station/Horne St (Elsternwick)	–	9:27	–	–	9:57	–
Bay St/New St (Brighton)	–	9:34	–	–	10:03	–
Brighton Beach Railway Station/South Rd (Brighton)	–	9:42	–	–	10:11	–





The alert above came up during a check. My attempts to find out which stops these are failed (they are probably the Alfred Hospital ones) but in the process a link to a very comprehensive list of bus stops in the City of Melbourne was found: https://data.melbourne.vic.gov.au/Transport-Movement/Bus-stops/ss79-v558. This link has a map, but data can be exported (downloaded) in CSV format. Sorry, but routes served are not shown.

For the northern arms, all the routes terminate at Queen and Collins Streets in the City. No turn around loop is shown.

Google Maps shows that the first stop in Queen Street for outbound services is just south of Collins Street, the next being right up near Bourke Street—indeed just outside the BookGrocery store. What a great place to have a bus stop!

For inbound services, Google Maps shows the stop just north of Bourke Street for these services, but almost certainly they use the one near Collins Street as the final one. There's no point in Google listing these services at this stop because there are no departures.

The PTV has "Stop Maps", accessible from Journey Planner but these probably can't be relied on to show bus routes.

A snippet from the current pdf timetable for the 216 service is shown on page 5. The timetable is in order of departure times, irrespective of terminal and so is not helpful for anyone wanting to make a through journey. It is a great pity that the stop list is not in two very clear sections, so that users would be in no doubt that the service is running in sections. All that is needed is a blank row after Queen Street. Even better, the two halves of the routes could have been given different route numbers, or at least separate timetables could have been issued for each half.

The assistance of Len Regan is much appreciated.

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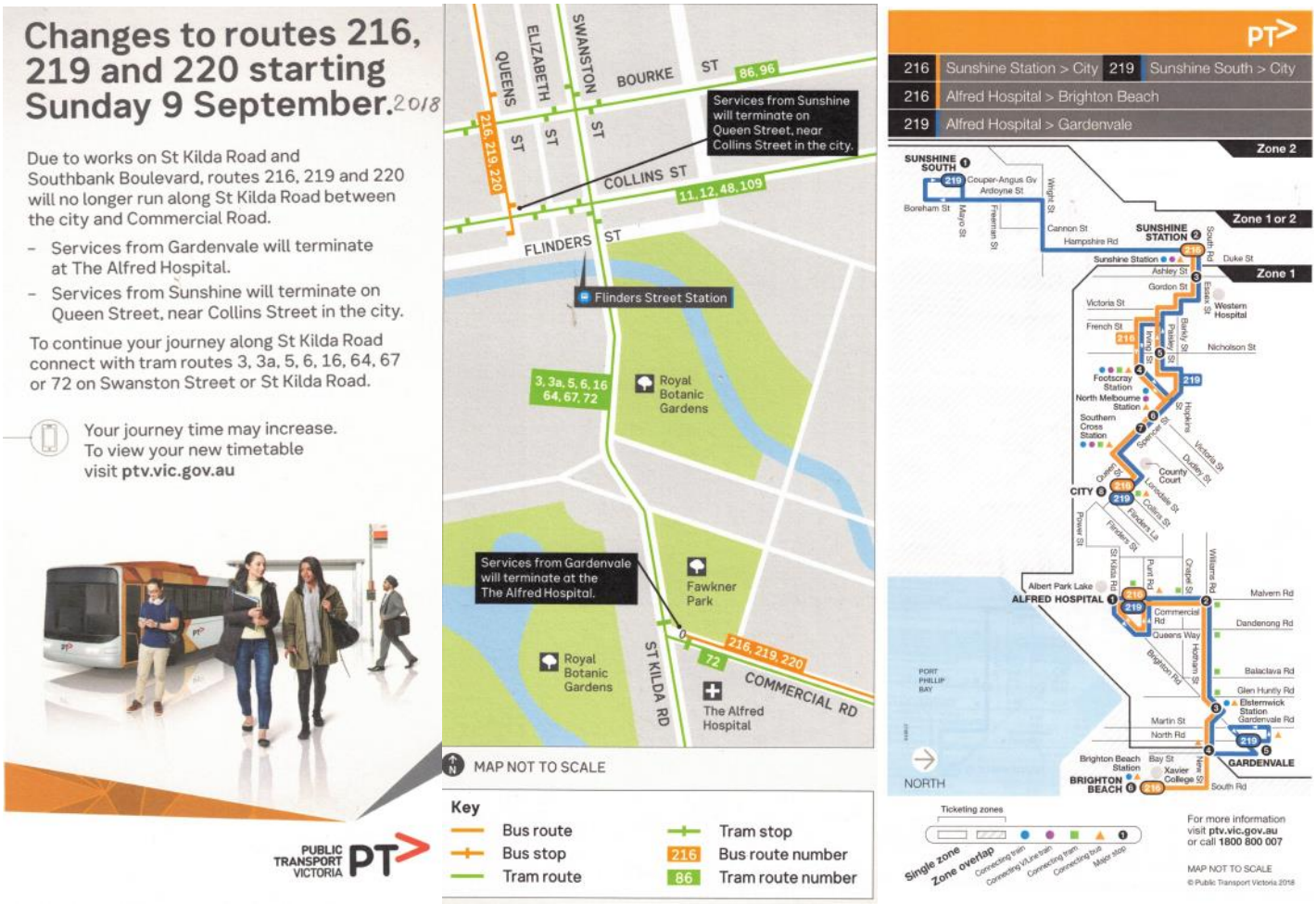


Oats, Rexine, Dynamite, Manure, Basalt—and Dirigibles

GEOFF LAMBERT *looks at some interesting sidings around Deer Park and the planned St Pancras to Spencer St railcar—airship—rail motor timetable for it.*

JACK MACLEAN, ATA founder, always liked Deer Park—a station a mere 11 miles from Melbourne but which "*can still give the impression of Pimpino … and the trains look for all the world as if they are still up in the Mallee or Wimmera.*"

Deer Park was opened in 1884 as "Kororoit" when the Melbourne to Melton line was opened. Its "Wimmera-like isolation" on the outskirts of Melbourne made it the ideal location for a number of what we would now call "noxious industries", including quarries, fertilizer works, plastics factories, explosive factories and munitions storage. All of these were connected to the VR network by sidings at various times, the peak being the 1920s and 1930s, when most of my story took place. Their residues can be seen from the air along with still-existing and newly-created lines. They make an interesting "stick-insect" pattern of tracks, as shown on our rear cover.

Ardeer/ Federal Manure Siding (9M70C)

This siding was opened as the Australian Explosives and Chemical Company Siding in 1903. By 1910 it had been renamed as the Federal Manure Siding and, later again (1926), as Nobel P/L Chemical Siding. The unifying element—literally an Element—of the siding and the industries it served, was nitrogen. Inorganic and organic nitrates are either explosives or fertilizers; one of them, ammonium nitrate, is both. Glyceryl trinitrate (Nitroglycerine), discovered by Ascanio Sobrero in 1847, was the active principle of Alfred Nobel's invention of Dynamite, which was made on the Ardeer site. Nobel's factory was later acquired by Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI). Ken Moorehead, my Sunday School Preacher, was an Industrial Chemist at ICI and always had entrancing chemical demonstrations of scripture—usually involving fire and brimstone. I still have the handbook he used for these and, for a while, made my own gunpowder in an old explosives magazine in our backyard (every word of this is true).

It is unclear which fertilisers were made at Ardeer, the choice seems to be between ammonium nitrate and some stuff called Super-Nitro, which was, I think, a calcium-based "nitrogen equivalent" of Superphosphate.

In my VR Traffic Returns book of the Western Line for the 1923-1935 period, total annual traffic in and out of Ardeer ranged from a high of 30,000 tons per annum (TPA) prior to the Depression, down to 8,000 TPA in the early 1930s.

For many decades, commencing in 1923, Ardeer and Deer Park had specially-timetabled passenger and goods trains, the passenger service being mainly for employees at the Explosive Works (see left, for an entry in the 1929 WTT). In addition to these local services, a morning Down and an afternoon Up train stopped at Ardeer. In later years, until at least the 1980s, a daily "Pilot" train ran to Ardeer and Deer Park to do "*put and takes*" around the explosives factory.

Leather Cloth Siding

This siding was worked out of Deer Park station yard, rather than being worked off the Main Line. It opened in 1929 for "Nobel Chemical Finishes (Aust) P/L".

"Leather Cloth" was artificial leather fabric. It was made of cloth surfaced with a mixture of cellulose nitrate (a low-power explosive known as gun-cotton), camphor oil, pigment and

MELBOURNE—DEER PARK LOCAL SERVICE
(GUARANTEED).

DOWN.		Electric Daily.	Electric Sats.	Electric Sats. Exc.
		A.M.	A.M.	P.M.
Flinders Street	*dep.*	6 49	11 7	4 15
Sunshine	*arr.*	7 10	11 30	4 38
		C	C	C
		Steam.	Steam.	Steam.
	dep.	7 12	11 34	4 52
Ardeer N C	...	7 18	11 40	4 58
Deer Park	*arr.*	7 20	11 42	5 0

UP.		Steam Daily.	Steam Sats.	Steam Sats. Exc.
		A.M.	A.M.	P.M.
Deer Park	*dep.*	7 25	11 48	5 7
Ardeer N C	...	7 27	11 50	5 0
	arr.	7 33	11 56	5 15
Sunshine		C	C	C
		Electric.	Electric.	Electric.
	dep.	7 41	11 59	5 18
			P.M.	
Flinders Street	*arr.*	8 4	12 21	5 41

C. Passengers change.

alcohol, embossed to look like leather. Again, the link was the element nitrogen.

One trademarked version was Rexine, produced in the United Kingdom by Rexine Ltd of Hyde, near Manchester. Used as a bookbinding material and upholstery covering, Rexine was also widely used in trimming and upholstering the interiors of motor vehicles produced by British car manufacturers beginning in the 1920s, and the interiors of railway carriages, its cost being around a quarter that of leather. The use of Rexine in a railway carriage contributed to the rapid spread of fire on the 15:48 West Riding express from King's Cross, near Huntingdon on 14 July 1951 [See Rolt's "*Red for Danger*" history of railway accidents].

Rexine was used by the British Motor Corporation in the 1960s and '70s, particularly as a surface for 'crash padding' on dashboards and doors. It was also used for British Teddy Bear paw and foot pads from the late 1930s to early 1960s. The author George Orwell, writing in his wartime diary on April 29 1942, reported on his visit to the British House of Lords: "*Everything had a somewhat mangy look. Red Rexine cushions on the benches - I could swear they used to be red plush at one time*." The caravan that my father built in the late 1950s was upholstered in the same Rexine that George Orwell saw in the House of Lords. We boys thought it was fantastic.

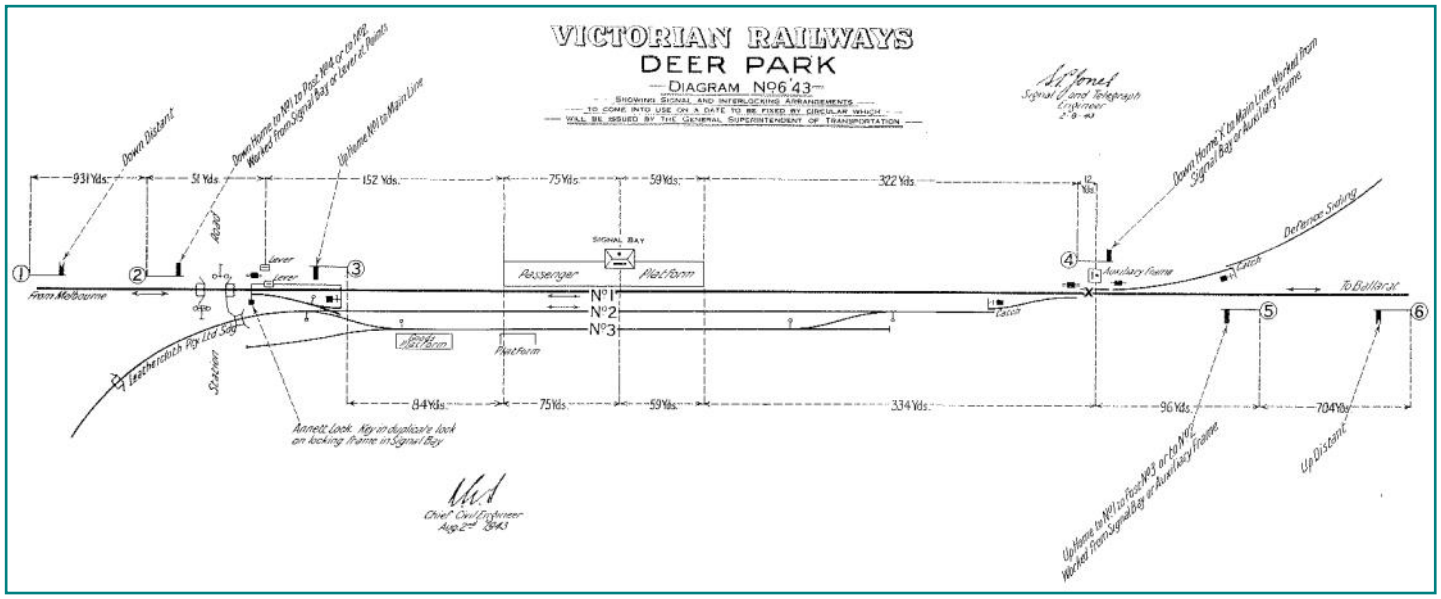
The Traffic Book shows Inward traffic of a few thousand tons per annum commencing in 1931/32. When I first started commuting to school in 1963, the siding was still in place but with a stop-block installed in 1955 which prevented access. The air around Deer Park was brown with nitrogen dioxide. Whether or not this was associated with the production of Leathercloth or explosives was never clear to me—not that I knew then what Leathercloth really was.

Deer Park (11M)

That Deer Park was rural and agricultural was evident even to me from the early 1950s. The main traffic then seemed to be oats, which were bagged (bag sewing was a common schoolboy holiday job along the line) and stored in stacks in the yard, to be taken away by the Roadside Goods—principally a Coal Train. In the 1920s/1930s, there was a modest coming and going of livestock trucks—mostly sheep—about two trucks per week on average. There was a great surge in goods tonnage to about 28,000 TPA between 1925 and 1929, when the Sandringham Council was operating a basalt quarry in the area (see below).

Defence Siding (Ravenhall)

This siding, at the Down end of Deer Park yard, 25 chains from the station, was opened in 1943. It ran in a southwesterly direction for 4,600 feet, through Ravenhall loop of 500 feet,



thence to a dead end 700 feet further on. Ravenhall appears to have been a munitions store—a natural fit with the nearby Nobel Explosives Factory, perhaps? The distance of "Ravenhall" was commonly given as 12½ miles. The siding was in use for some 46 years until well after the line through Deer Park had been "duplicated".

Sandringham Quarry Trust Siding (11.5 miles, according to the March 1928 "Index to the Working Time Tables" book).

In my many journeys over the line, I was always intrigued by what appeared to be a long-abandoned roadbed trending through low scrub in a northwesterly direction towards the Western Highway. Opinion among the railfan fraternity was that my eyes were probably deceiving me. In later years, when the Russian KGB briefly made its version of Google Earth available, I was able to see this roadbed. This, I am now pretty much convinced, was the Sandringham Quarry Trust Siding. Histories of the line assert that this was a siding on the south side of the line, but there is no on-ground or aerial photo evidence to support this.

The Public Record Office has a 1927 ("approx") record for a "Proposed Long Siding" at Deer Park. At any rate, a siding was opened in 1925 to serve a 50 acre quarry property owned and operated by the Sandringham Council, which was in a phase of rapid expansion of its roads and other infrastructure. The Council operated a small tramway system inside the quarry—probably to transport rock to the loading bins, which were about 1,500 feet (a little more than a quarter of a mile) from the end of the siding.

The quarry operated until 1928, when the Council either ran out of money or the need for it lapsed. It advertised in the Melbourne papers at the end of that year in the following terms:

TENDERS are Invited, returnable up to 4 p.m. on Monday, the 10th day of December next (1928) for the undermentioned:—

1. *Sale of the above mentioned Trust Quarry as a going concern.*
2. *Sale of the Land as a factory site, and sale of the Plant Complete for Removal:*
3. *Sale of the Land as a subdivision site, and sale of the Plant Complete for Removal.*

The land is situate adjacent to the Deer Park railway station, on the main Melbourne-Ballarat line. The area comprises approximately 50 acres. A railway siding is laid from the site on to the main line.

In 1927, land around Deer Park was undergoing rapid development or, to be more accurate, was entering a speculative boom ahead of the Wall St Crash. As we shall see later, the Prime Minster's Department was trying to keep secret its interest in purchase of land in the area. At any rate, no-one appears to have taken the bait and the siding was closed in March 1931. It seems that the tracks were not taken up until later.

It is worth mentioning here that another Quarry Siding (Albion Read Siding, later Boral Resources siding) opened at 13M4C some 40 years after Sandringham Council had abandoned its quarry. This quarry (now a waste disposal site) later attracted the name Ravenhall—which name is also applied to an Industrial Estate to the north.

The Stick-insect acquired its sixth leg with the Regional Fast Rail track, which branches off to the south at Deer Park Junction, about midway between Ravenhall (old) and Ravenhall (new).

Proposed sale yards and railway connections.

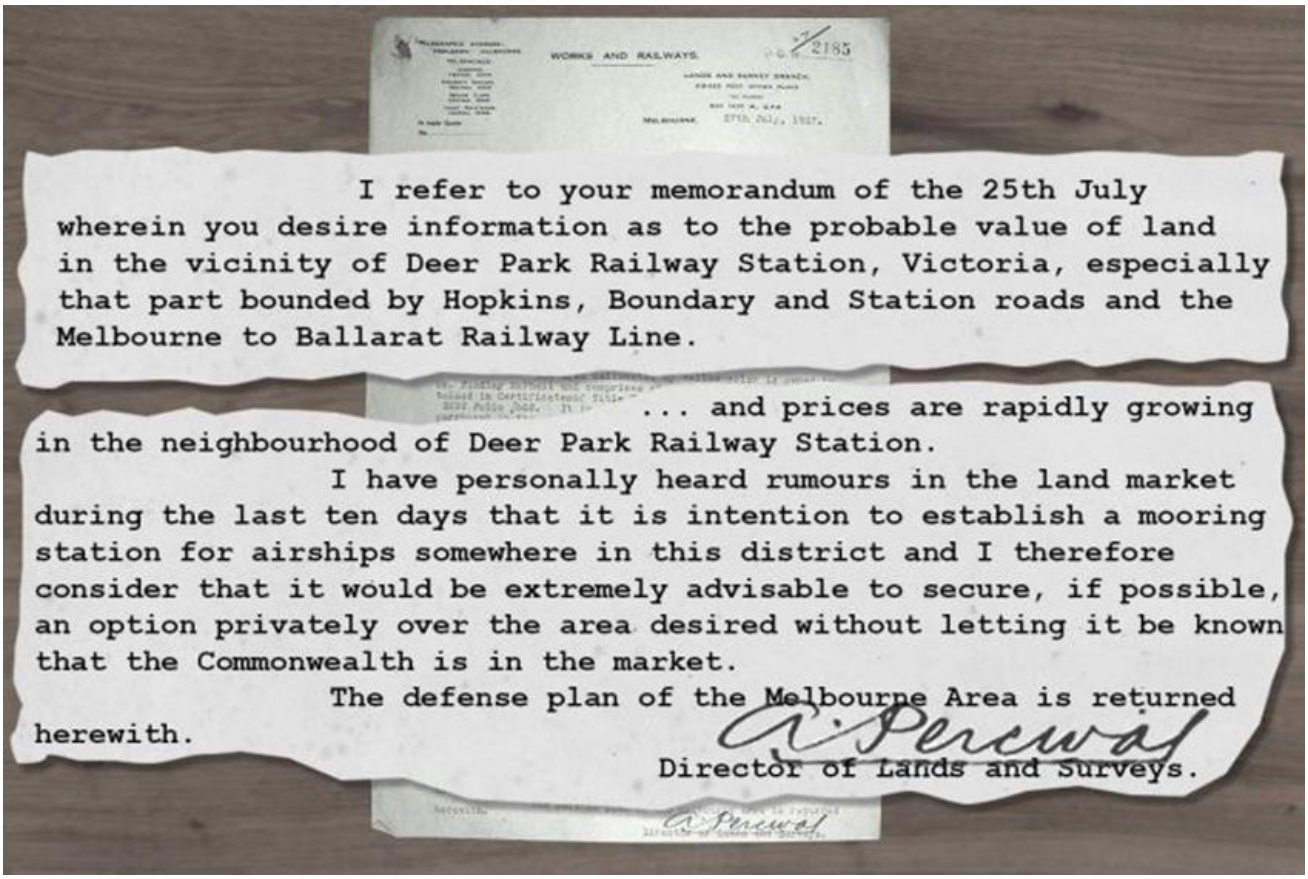
In 1928, a number of surveys were made for rail sidings to connect a (proposed?) Deer Park livestock sale-yard to the North East line, to the Ballarat Line and to Sunshine.

The Dirigible station

If there ever was a *never-was* railway station—this is it. As near as I can determine it would have been at the end of a branch line that would run from Sunshine to somewhere near the present Ravenhall waste-disposal site.

We need to go back to the London newspapers of early 1922, when the notion of an international airship service (the Burney Scheme) first seems to have emerged, as a result of discussions at the 1922 Imperial Conference (the forerunner of

The King and his Prime Ministers at the Imperial Conference of 1926. Stanley Melbourne Bruce, Australian PM and a reluctant airship enthusiast, is the middle gentleman standing. Fantastic pants, eh?



WORKS AND RAILWAYS

I refer to your memorandum of the 25th July wherein you desire information as to the probable value of land in the vicinity of Deer Park Railway Station, Victoria, especially that part bounded by Hopkins, Boundary and Station roads and the Melbourne to Ballarat Railway Line.

... and prices are rapidly growing in the neighbourhood of Deer Park Railway Station.

I have personally heard rumours in the land market during the last ten days that it is intention to establish a mooring station for airships somewhere in this district and I therefore consider that it would be extremely advisable to secure, if possible, an option privately over the area desired without letting it be known that the Commonwealth is in the market.

The defense plan of the Melbourne Area is returned herewith.

A. Perewal

Director of Lands and Surveys.

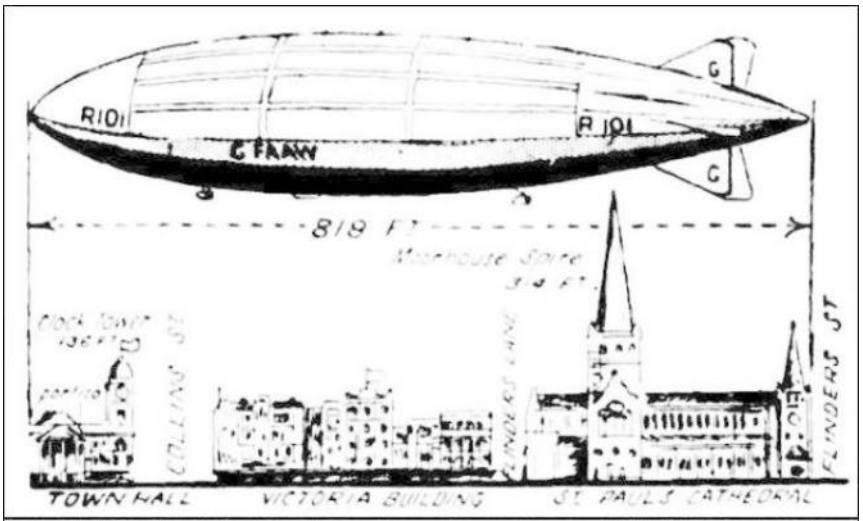
CHOGM). At the time, it was estimated that the elapsed time to Australia would be 11½ days, including 6 hours spent at each of six intermediate mooring masts.

The matter rumbled around the traps until the next Imperial Conference in October/November 1926, when a subcommittee made a long and detailed report on the feasibility of such a scheme—by now renamed "The Imperial Airship Scheme". This was part of a wider forum on Imperial Air Services, of which the following interesting discussion on air communications took place at the tenth meeting of the Conference on the 28th October. Statements were made regarding the progress achieved in civil aviation in the various parts of the British Empire. The Conference was deeply impressed with the great possibilities offered by the development of Imperial air communications and their importance from the political as well as the economic point of view.

The ultimate objective of this policy was to bring the most distant parts of the Empire within a fortnight's journey of London and, in the first instance, the Convenor of the sub-committee suggested that it would be advisable to concentrate on two main routes—England to Australia and South Africa. In summing up, the Committee made four recommendations, of which the third was: *(3) In view of*

(a) The great potentialities of the airship and;

(b) The present lack of constructional and other facilities which must prove a serious obstacle to the early development of regular airship services recommends that the Governments of the Dominions concerned and of India should examine the possibility of erecting nucleus mooring-mast bases to be available for demonstration flights in 1928-29 by the two airships now under construction, and of instituting such preliminary meteorological investigations as may be necessary to facilitate these demonstration flights and; that His Majesty's Government in Great Britain should consider the erection of a second shed at the Royal



A COMPARISON OF SIZE.—Some idea of the size of the R101 is given by this drawing to scale of the airship compared with the buildings on the eastern

ESTIMATE OF COST OF AIRSHIP MOORING TOWER & SHED BASE

MELBOURNE.

	Demonstration Flight.	Additional cost developmental operations.	Additional cost commercial operations.
	£	£	£
Land	30,000		
Clearing site 500 acres) Road - ¾ mile)	4,500		
Water Supply - 2 miles 6" pipe	4,500		
Permanent Supply - 4½ miles			9,000
Temporary electric power station 125kw.	6,000		
Cable - ½ mile	1,100		
or 4½ miles from Town Supply			14,000
	46,000		
Airship Tower Structure	20,000		
do Road	11,000		
Winches 2-75 h.p. each-Boilers &Motors	7,000		
Remote Control and Lift		9,000	
Snatch Block Anchorage and Sundries	3,000		
	41,000		
Hydrogen Plant, silicol 30,000 cubic feet per hour	16,000		
do additional units		14,000	
do Water,Gas output 3,000,000 cub.ft. per week			80,000
1,000,000 cubic ft. storage			
Accommodation Personnel, Office Buildings etc.	Tents on loan	4,000	20,000
	103,000	27,000	123,000
		103,000	130,000
		130,000	253,000
Airship Shed 850' x 180' x 170'			200,000
Railway Siding - 5 miles			40,000
			493,000
SAY:	£105,000	£135,000	£500,000

Airship works at Cardington.

Australian PM, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, in his own address to the Conference, ventured: *I must frankly say my knowledge in regard to airships is so limited and my views are so undefined that I could not say how far we would he prepared to go. However, the matter is one of such extraordinary importance to us that I think l can go so far as to say that, if it can be shown that there are reasonable possibilities of airships being perfected sufficiently to do the journey with safety, we would take the risk of a mooring-mast and certainly take the necessary steps to get the meteorological information that is desired. I certainly hope that all that is contemplated can be achieved by means of the airship, because, while the aeroplane will be a practical means of communication, it cannot*

possibly be so comfortable or so attractive to the ordinary traveler desiring to get from Australia to Britain or from Britain to Australia rapidly as the modern airship is going to be with all the luxuries the Secretary of State suggests will be provided in it.

The Conference agreed to set in motion all that was necessary to investigate the feasibility of bringing the scheme into operations in each country and, in particular, to evaluate potential sites for mooring stations in each country. This, mind you, was just a proposal to set up an initial demonstration flight (note the allowance for tent accommodation), but with an option for later permanency.

The announcement caused a great flurry of excitement in Australia and New Zealand. The NZ Parliament went so far as to publish the entire Conference Proceedings as a Parliamentary paper.

Bruce took a while to get up steam–well he didn't arrive back in Australia for some weeks—didn't have an airship, did he? … although he did fly across the Nullarbor—and boasted about it at the Conference. He was roused from this torpor by the arrival in Australia in mid-July 1927 of Mr. Sydney Nixon of the Royal Airship Works in Cardington Bedfordshire, with a Commission from the Royal Air Minister, inquiring into the local particulars affecting possible establishment of mooring stations in Australia.

A recent ABC feature story said of this, "*It was something local politicians and newspapers were only too happy to help them achieve. The preferred route from Britain to Australia was across the Indian Ocean, via India or South Africa, arriving in Western Australia. The Australian government began investigating, buying up land at Jandakot, in Perth, to establish a mooring site.*

Cardington station—Then


Cardington station—Now

But why would you go to the trouble and expense of setting up an airship service to the other side of the world if you were just going to deposit people in Perth? A second base on the east coast was a must.

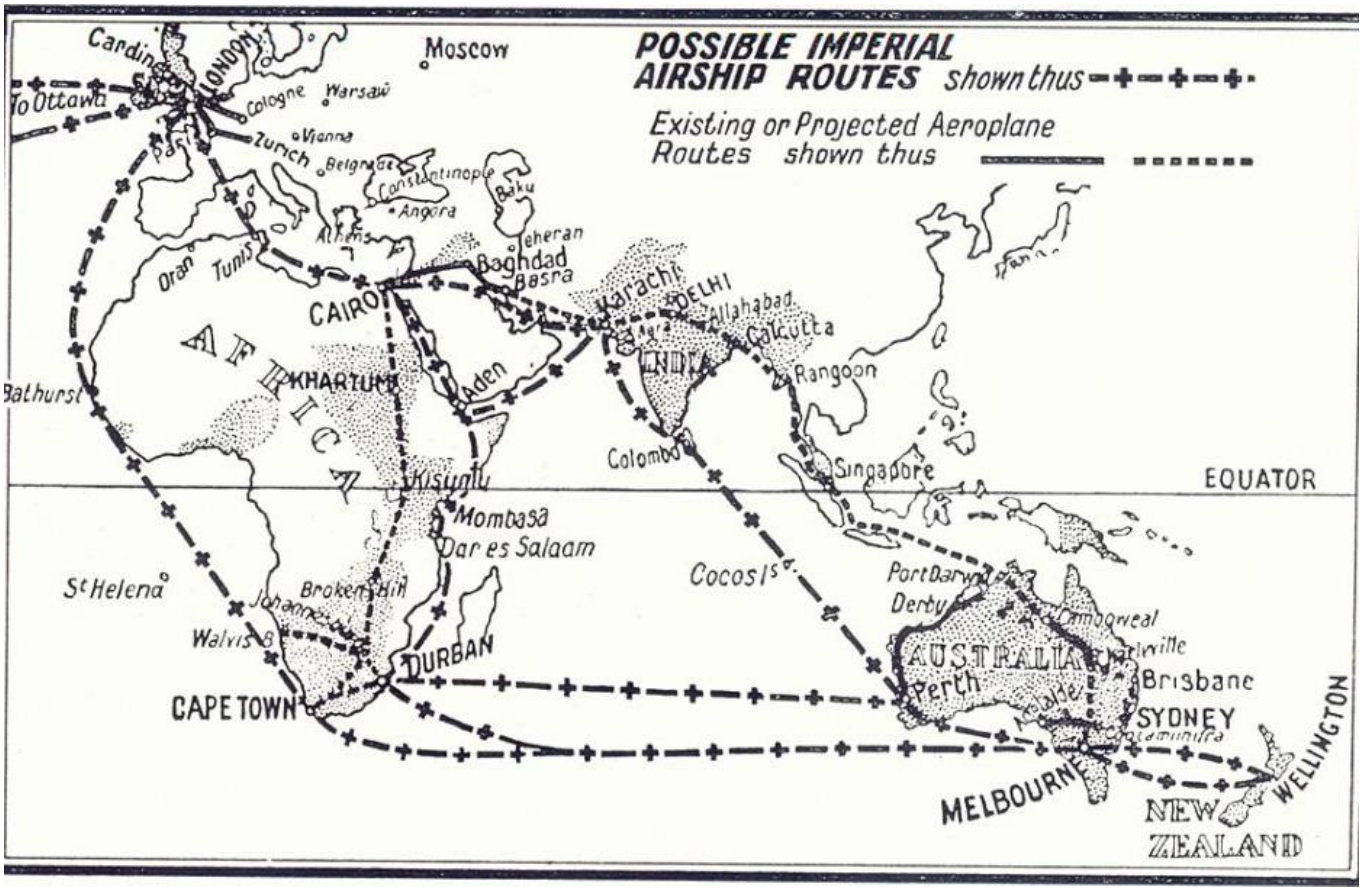
In an early victory in the ongoing intercity war, Melbourne was chosen ahead of Sydney thanks to the unchallenging terrain on the western

BEDFORD and HITCHIN.—Midland.

Miles from Bedford.		Week Days only.		A			S
		mrn	mrn	mrn	aft	aft	aft
	642 London (St. Pan.), dep.	4 25	6 25	9 25	1230	4 30	6 30
	617 Leicester ¶ ..... "	....	6 35	9 43	1128	4 15	4 55
	Bedford ..... dep.	6 20	8 54	1115	1 42	5 50	7 42
3	Cardington	6 29	9 2	1123	1 49	5 59	7 50
7½	Southill	6 38	9 11	1132	1 58	6 8	7 59
9½	Shefford	6 46	9 17	1138	2 3	6 15	8 5
12	Henlow	350 6 53	9 24	1145	2 10	6 24	8 12
16½	Hitchin 332, 346, arr.	7 1	9 32	1153	2 18	6 33	8 20
48½	346 London (K.C.) ... arr.	8 41	11H25	1 25	3 40	8 59	15

Miles		Week Days only.		A		T		S
		mrn	mrn	mrn	aft	aft	aft	aft
	344 London (King's C.) dep.	5 58	45	1025	1 53	0 5	50	7 42
—	Hitchin ..... dep.	7 25	9 55	1215	2 42	4 25	7 0	9 10
4½	Henlow	7 34	10 3	1224	2 53	4 34	7 12	9 18
6½	Shefford	7 40	10 9	1230	2 59	4 40	7 18	9 24
9	Southill	7 47	1015	1237	3 6	4 47	7 26	....
13½	Cardington ..... [644	7 56	1023	1246	3 15	4 56	7 36	....
16½	Bedford § 435, 606, arr.	8 2	1028	1252	3 21	5 2	7 42	9 48
65½	606 Leicester ¶ ..... arr.	1033	1222	2 40	6 4	7 30	1115	1115
66	644 London (St. Pan.). "	9 30	12 5	3 25	5 20	7 0	10 5	....

A Tuesdays and Saturdays. T Tuesdays only. H Arrives at 11 15 mrn. on Tuesdays. § Over 1 mile to L. & N. W. Station. S Saturdays only. ¶ London Road.



approach to the city and Sydney's tendency to experience what the Airship Mission described as undesirable weather phenomena" including sudden thunderstorms and intense rain.

It was estimated that the cost of establishing a mooring base at Deer Park, west of Melbourne, would be around a half a million pounds (roughly $40 million by today's standards) and that the base would be — get this — connected to the railway network!

The Australian National Archives has a voluminous Department of Works and Railways file on the entire process from the first request for budget estimates for construction and operation costs, to an ultimate decision on 27th July 1927 to establish the mooring station on land close to Deer Park Railway Station. The chosen area is that outlined by the red lines in the Google Earth map at the top of page 16. Mr. Percival, the Director of Lands and Surveys quietly sounded out the five landholders as to the value of their land. Unfortunately most of them had heard word of what he was about and jacked their prices up.

In the cost estimates for the 500 acre Deer Park set-up, we see that the infrastructure required was

- ¾ Miles of road
- 5 miles of rail siding
- 2 miles of water piping
- 4½ miles of supply pipe and
- 4½ miles of electricity supply line

I think that the 4½ miles figures might imply that the origin for their infrastructure would be Sunshine. The 5 miles of railway siding is harder to shoehorn into the map—perhaps the reference is to duplicating the Sunshine Deer Park railway line and extending track to the Mooring Mast. The Mast was clearly to be close to an existing road- probably to one of the three bounding roads mentioned in Percival's letter—either Hopkins, Station or Boundary Roads. I plump for the latter—a ¾ mile road running north from that road would place the mast where the Ravenhall marker lies on the current map. Water and power lines from Sunshine to the eastern

boundary of the site would be the requisite 4½ miles; a direct railway line to Sunshine would be the requisite 5 miles. That settles it then … doesn't it?

Cardington Railway Station

The Mooring Mast at the other end, was to be in a cow paddock at the Cardington Airship works, where the construction and storage sheds were located. These were adjacent to Cardington LMS station on the rather unimportant Hitchin-Bedford line, with a meagre train service (photos and timetables on page 12).

The ultimate termini were **St Pancras** and **Spencer St** stations.

The airship

By 1929, Britain had built two massive airships — the R100 and the R101 — which were housed in enormous side-by-side hangars at Cardington.

In 1930, the R100 completed a transatlantic flight to Canada in 78 hours and the return journey in less than 58 hours. The airship moored in Montreal for 12 days and attracted more than 100,000 visitors. It was a huge public relations success.

Britain pushed on with plans for another test flight to India, this time with the bigger of its airships — the R101. The R101 was, at the time it was built, the largest flying aircraft ever made, at a length of more than 220 metres. The British press, prophetically, called it "the Titanic of the skies". The R101 was luxurious compared to other aircraft at the time, with 50 passenger cabins, a dining room for 60 people and two promenade decks. Passengers could move about freely and the journey was comparatively silent. Worried about safety while you have a smoke? Have no fear: the smoking room is lined with asbestos for your protection.

With the airship built and a mooring station set up in India, the British now only needed someone to fly the thing. Lieutenant Commander Noel Grabowsky Atherstone had the rare distinction of being the only British airman to sink a German submarine from an airship in World War I — effectively leaning over the side of a gondola to drop a mine on it in a typically low-tech Great War endeavour. After the war, Atherstone sought a quieter life and moved overseas to Victoria. He was able to secure land at Fish Creek, east of Melbourne, under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.

The decorated soldier and daring airman became a pig farmer. But an extraordinary offer to be part of the new Imperial Airship scheme was enough to lure Atherstone out of retirement and back to Britain in 1927. He was appointed First Officer — effectively second-in-command — of the R101 in 1929. He had a chance to be part of history onboard the world's biggest flying craft on its maiden intercontinental voyage. Pig farming could wait.

Melburnian William Palstra had been awarded the Military Cross during World War I, later joining the Australian Flying Corps, where he was credited with shooting down six enemy planes. Palstra rose through the ranks of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) to Squadron Leader by 1928, when he was nominated for a course at the Royal Air Force College, travelling to Britain with his young family. A rising star in the RAAF, Palstra stayed on as a liaison officer in London. The young airman was due to return to Australia in 1930 when fate intervened. The Australian officer who was to be onboard the R101 for its historic flight — Flight-Lieutenant Charles Harman — retired and Palstra was chosen at short notice to take his place and report back to the Australian government on the voyage. Harman had been on test flights with the R101, which he described as "successful and wholly enjoyable", although he would later admit he thought everything about the airship "looked dreadfully inflammable". Palstra was said to have had reservations too. The Associated Press reported that he told a fellow officer he "didn't like the idea of that 5 million cubic feet of gas above me".

The timetables

An unspoken assumption in the scheme is that a passenger (a RICH passenger) would catch a First Class train from St Pancras to Cardington, transfer to the airship and reverse this process at Deer Park, catching a rickety old VR rail motor to Spencer St station.

The Prime Ministers attending the 1926 Imperial Conference were shown a scale model of a proposed 200-metre -long airship that could make the journey to Australia in just 12 days. Because the airship (presumably the ill -fated R101) had yet to be built, everything about it was pure surmise.

The R101, cruising at 63 mph had a range of 4,000 miles. The map on page 13 suggests that the airship route would follow the Clipper Ship route to catch the Roaring Forties from the Cape to Perth or direct to Melbourne. Either was an impossible ask for the R101, the distances being 5,400 and 6,400 miles, respectively. The route map further stretches credulity by suggesting a Cardington-Cape Town route entirely over water—a distance of some 7,400 miles. This would make the length of the trip 13,800 miles, which could be done in 9 days flying time. But the airship would have run out of fuel well before it reached the equator.

A more sensible routing would be London-Cairo-Karachi-Colombo-Perth -Melbourne … 10,200 miles for 6.7 days flying time. Total elapsed time, after allowing for 6 hours stay at each mooring post would be about 8 days. The dickiest leg would have been Colombo-Perth at 3,600 miles. The first part of this route (as far as Karachi) was chosen for the R101's maiden flight in October 1930.

Only the train timetables could be predicted. In keeping with the Art Deco tenor of the times, rail travel would presumably be by streamlined diesel railcars. The LMS had some (see front cover). VR did not (q.v.) … but surely Harold Clapp would have risen to the challenge?

On the assumption that airship travel time did in fact turn out to be 12 days each way, there could really only be one return service per month—at least until further airships (R102 and R103) were built.

Titanic of the Skies

Emulating the famous ship, the "Titanic of the Skies" set out on its

maiden voyage on 5-Oct-1930. It did not get past Allone in Northern France, 390 air miles from Cardington, after about 8 hours of troubled flight at 49 mph. Forty eight of those on board, including Palstra and Atherstone, were killed.

Back in Australia, Stanley Bruce had lost the general election in 1929, and it was left to the acting prime minister James Fenton to pay tribute to Palstra. "To know him was to know his worth, and we grieve for his sorrowing widow and family," he told parliament. Then-member for Kooyong, John Latham, lamented the loss of the airship and its crew, but told his fellow MPs that "this calamity, however, will be but a temporary setback; others of our race will press on to secure the mastery of the air".

The Imperial Airship Scheme was abandoned the following year. The proposed Dirigible Station at Deer Park naturally also fell from grace as a garbage tip (lower right), but Deer Park now sees almost 160 daily trains (timetable, below). At Cardington, the railway has gone but the airship sheds were used by Warner Bros for making films. One was rejuvenated for a 21st Century airship project. “Airlander 10”. Guess what? - it crashed.

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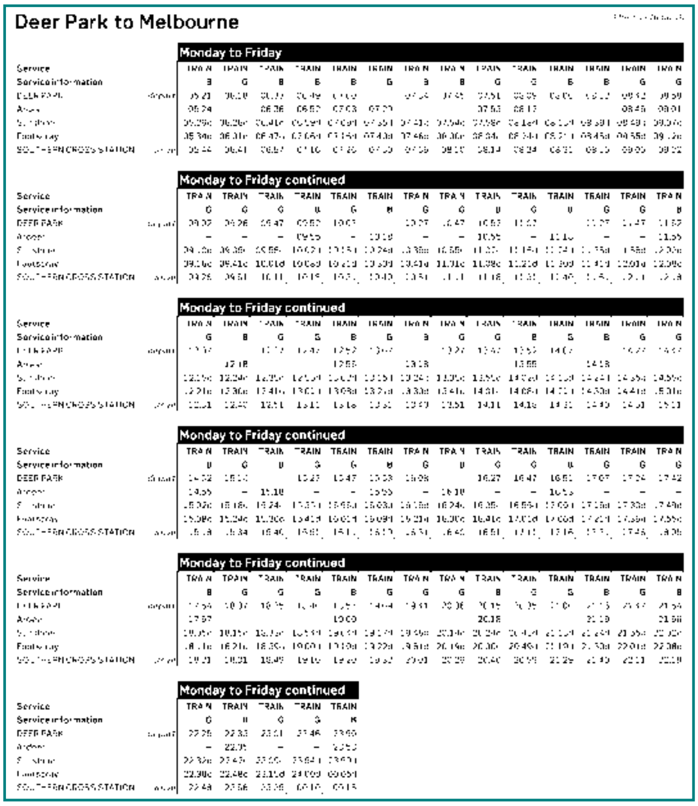
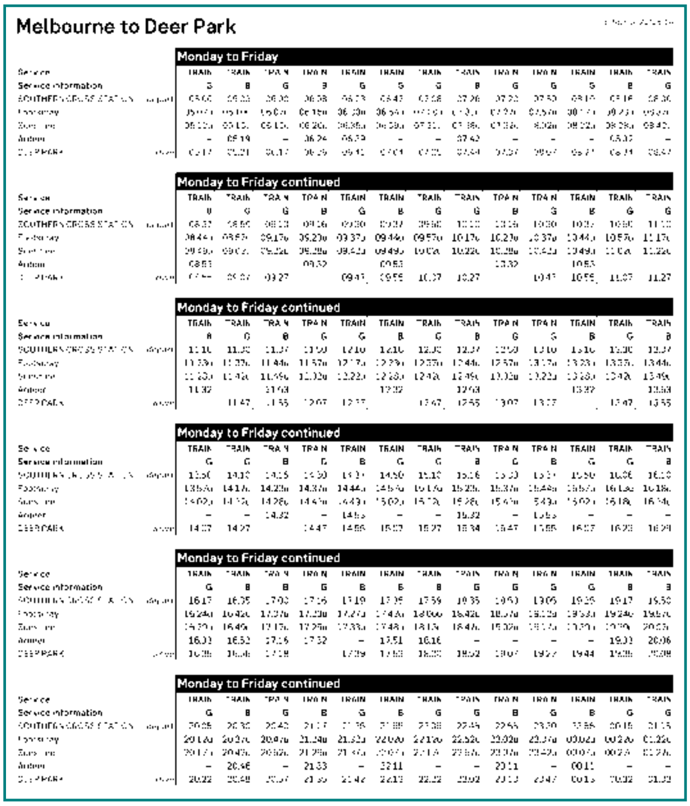
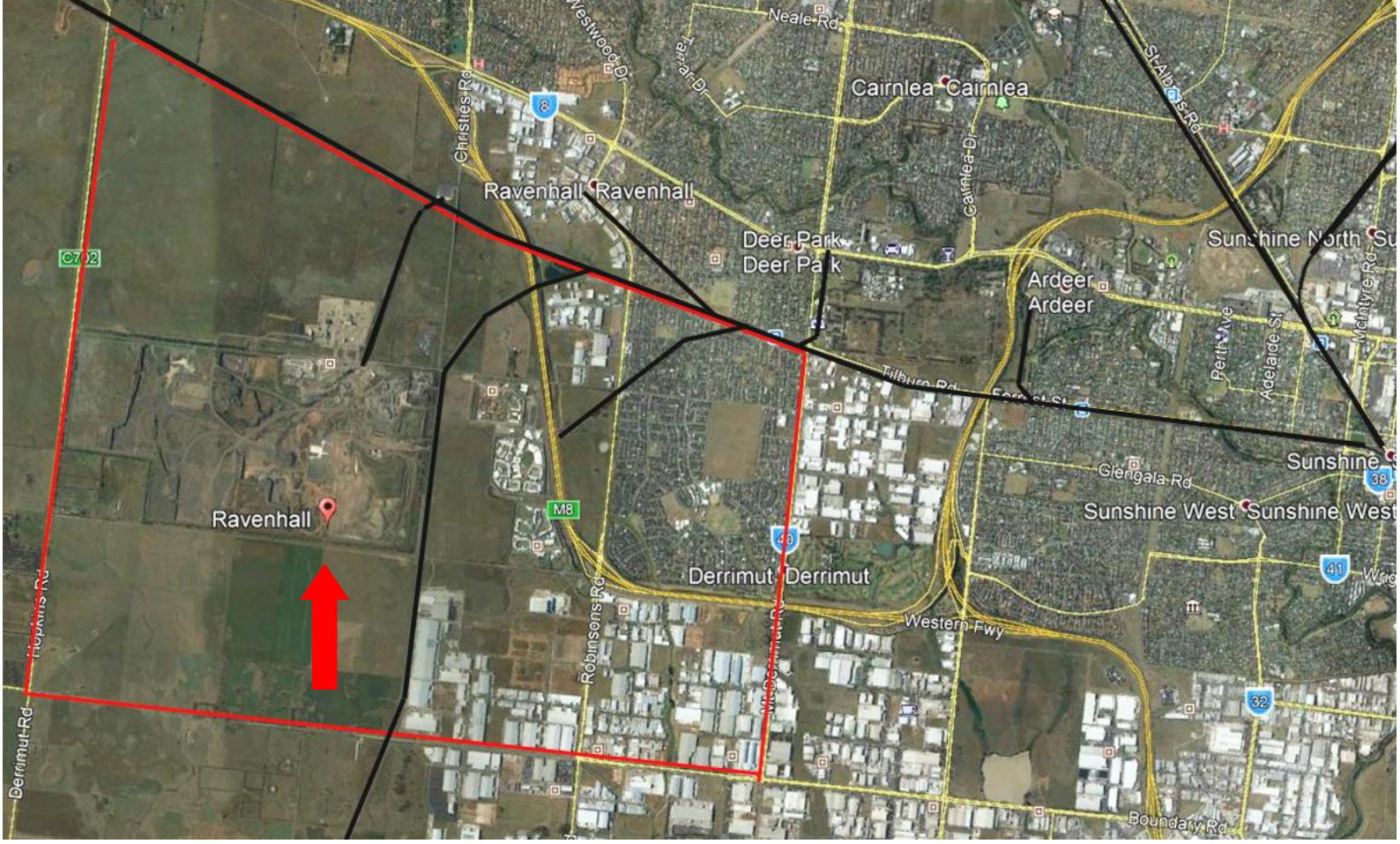
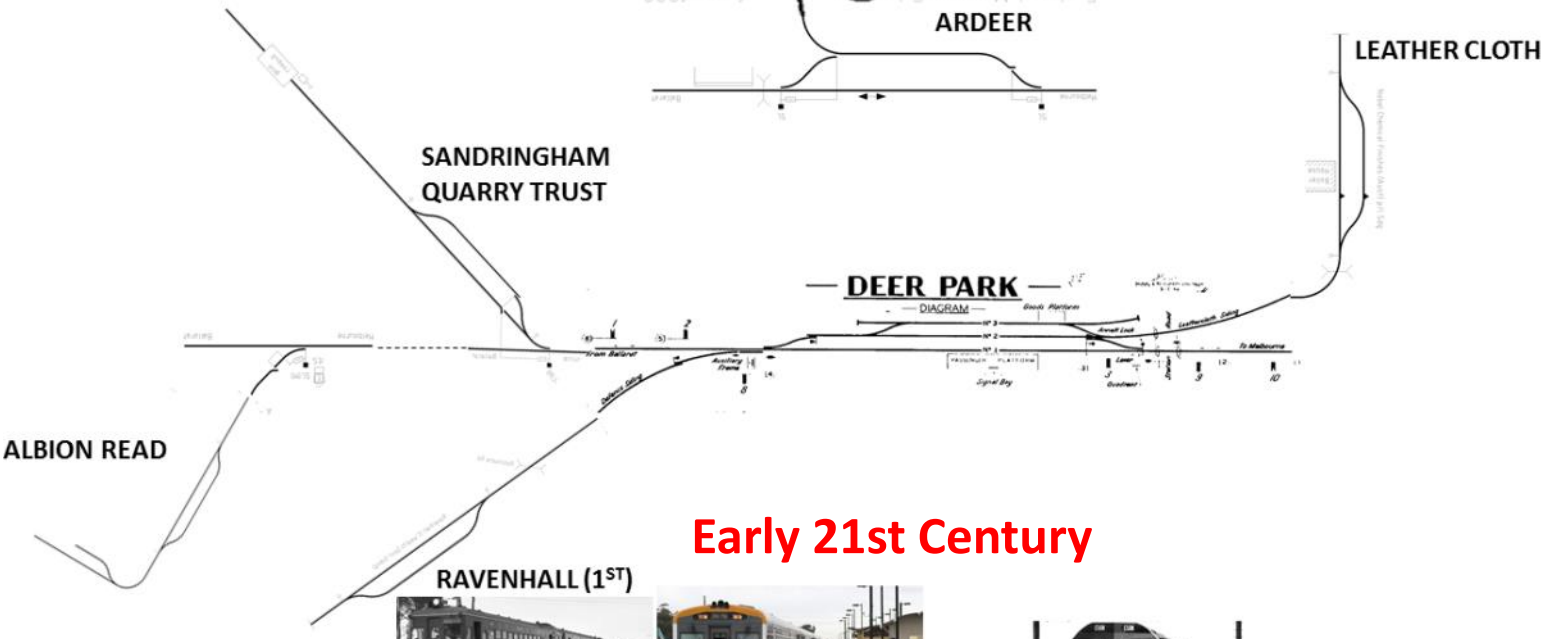






Early to mid—20th Century



Early 21st Century