

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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NEWSLETTER

No. 80 AUGUST, 2011

The Historical Society has sponsored the story board located near the site of the old Railway Station. It is one of four story boards recently installed by the Friends of the Rail Trail between the old Railway Station site and Burn's Hill. Thanks to Marlene Robb for the photo below featuring our President, Heather Terrell.

The rail service began on 10th April 1916 with daily trains leaving Orbost each morning at 8.30 a.m., arriving at Bairnsdale at 12 noon, then returning after the arrival of the afternoon train at Bairnsdale from Melbourne. These trains generally combined passengers, freight and livestock.

In May 1924 the passenger steam trains were replaced on the Orbost line by a rail motor service which ran once daily from Orbost to Bairnsdale and return until 1930, when steam trains were used once again, but with limited facilities and an unpopular light carriage.

While goods trains continued to serve the district, passenger services ceased in 1935 and never resumed. Jack Ryan then began to run a motor passenger and mail service between Orbost and Bairnsdale.

The line operated, principally carrying timber and farm produce, until it was officially closed on Monday, 24th August, 1987. The track infrastructure was dismantled in 1994.



'Snowy River Mail'
Wednesday, May 21, 1924:

RAIL MOTOR FOR ORBOST

COMMENCES MONDAY, MAY 26

GREAT REDUCTION IN TRAVELLING TIME

The new motor rail service on the Orbost-Bairnsdale line will be commenced on Monday. It will convey passengers and luggage between Orbost and Bairnsdale, and the following time-table has been announced by the Commissioners:—

Leave Bairnsdale at 3.45 p.m. daily in connection with the morning train from Melbourne, Bruthen 4.40, Nowa Nowa 5.30, and arrive Orbost at 6.50 p.m.

Leave Orbost at 10.30 a.m. (Thursdays excepted), Nowa Nowa 11.50, Bruthen 12.45 p.m., arriving at Bairnsdale at 1.50 p.m.

On Thursdays the motor will leave Orbost at 8.30 a.m., Nowa Nowa 9.40, Bruthen 10.33, and arrive at Bairnsdale at 11.25 a.m.

It is understood that the rail motor has seating accommodation for about eighty passengers.

The present train service will be continued for the carriage of goods, livestock, parcels, etc.

The advantages of the new service will be recognised when it is seen that the journey of 60 miles will be made in about 3 hours eliminating the present unsatisfactory and annoying stoppages at side stations.

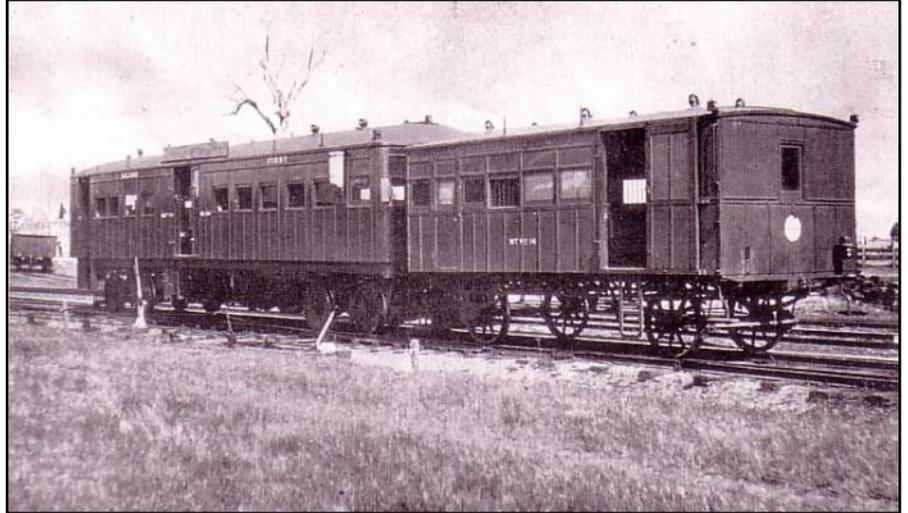
THE MOTOR TRAIN

SATISFACTORY TRIAL RUN

ORBOST TO BAIRNSDALE IN TWO HOURS FORTY MINUTES

SLOGAN:— "Help us to help You. — Hurry off Please."

Last Saturday, at the invitation of Mr. Robertson, about 23 prominent Orbost residents made a trial trip in the new motor train. At several stations along the line passengers boarded the train, and on arrival at Bairnsdale it was ascertained that there were 32 persons in the first class compartment, and 28 in the second — a total of 60 — and there was no undue "packing". The train has been constructed to carry 70 passengers, besides mail matter and newspapers. It was stated that a "crush load" would be about 110 passengers.



THE TRIP

Punctually at 11.2 a.m. the driver sounded the horn, there was a roar from the powerful engine, and we were on our way. For such a light vehicle it sustained a high speed where the grades would permit, and it was an exhilarating novelty to be whirling along in what is really a closed-in motor car on rails. We arrived at Nowa Nowa about mid-day, where dinner was served. The journey was continued at 12.30, and after picking up passengers at Bruthen, a splendid run was made to Bairnsdale, where we arrived at 23 minutes to 3 p.m.

The return journey was commenced at 3.2 p.m.

COMMENDATORY SPEECHES

AT BRUTHEN

At Bruthen, after a ___ minutes run, Cr. Archibald on behalf of Bruthen passengers and residents said they were enthusiastic about the innovation of a motor train, which was an undoubted success. He trusted the people, who were the real owners of the railways, would make every use of the new service. It was the filling of a long-felt want on the Orbost-Bairnsdale line. It was considered that the people were entitled to a better service than had been in vogue, and the Commissioners, seeing the justice of representations made had granted a service which, he was sure, would be appreciated. On behalf of the people he thanked Mr. Robertson and staff for the very fine initial trip made that day, and he trusted the people would back up the Commissioners by patronising their own transport service, which, to his mind, left nothing to be desired. (Applause).

Mr. Robertson suitably responded.

AT NOWA NOWA

Arriving at Nowa Nowa at 4.28 p.m., the train made a short stop. Mr. Ilton, on behalf of Nowa Nowa residents, said: After riding in the motor train to-day I am more than satisfied with the new service. By my watch, we left Bairnsdale at 3.4 p.m. and arrived here at 4.30, whilst with the old service we never knew when we would reach our destination.

A voice: Any old time. (Laughter).

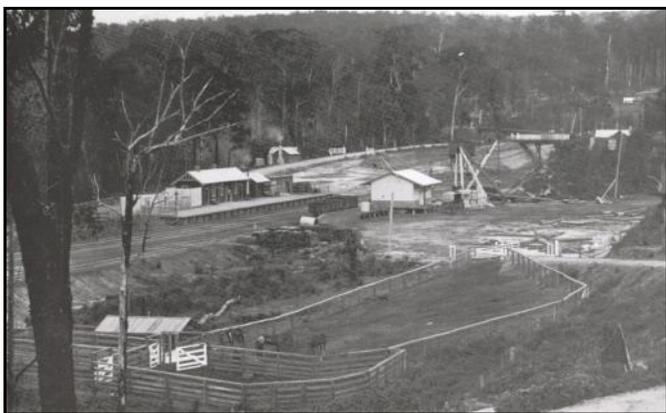
Continuing, Mr. Ilton said all residents along the line would be enthusiastic supporters of the rail train immediately it began running, and he sincerely hoped it would receive the support of everybody. The district deserved such a service, and he heartily thanked the Commissioners on behalf of Nowa Nowa residents and Progress Association, through Mr. Robertson for the very enjoyable outing and the excellent service inaugurated that day.

AT TOSTAREE

Mr. D. Jonson, in a few well chosen words, endorsed the remarks of the previous speakers concerning the new service. It was an unqualified success.

AT ORBOST

Cr. James (in the unavoidable absence of the shire president (Cr. Cumming) said: On behalf of the Orbost passengers on the motor train I may say that we appreciated the action of Mr. Robertson in arranging this outing. But above all we appreciate the fact that the journey between Orbost and Bairnsdale has been considerably lessened. The old service was very inconvenient, and when the matter was put



Nowa Nowa Railway Station, about 1917

before the Commissioners they saw the justice of our request and granted us this motor train. The result is that the service inaugurated to-day is a success in every way. This morning I came to the station with a certain amount of bias. Motor trains had been adversely criticised, and I expected to be very disappointed, but now I am more than satisfied with them. On the journey criticism was made, and to thoroughly test the service I was in five different places on the train. (Laughter). I concluded it was more comfortable in some places than others, but after the novelty had worn off it was evident that the arrangements were all comfortable. When people realised the great improvement given by the Commissioners they would undoubtedly respond. There is nothing of luxury in the motor train, and we don't look for it, but the railway is owned by the people and should give a satisfactory service. I hope the district will expand to such an extent that the train will soon be too small for requirements. The Commissioners would then realise that the people were in earnest and would expect a better and bigger passenger service. I compliment the officials concerned in that they took us away and landed us back safely on time. They must remember this is a motor train. (Laughter). I congratulate the train crew for their courtesy to-day, and as I was in the driver's seat at one stage, I concluded it was the best seat in the train. (Laughter and applause).

Cr. John Johnston supplemented the remarks of the previous speaker. He had been one to criticise the train along the journey, but concluded there was not much wrong with it. (Applause).

Cr. Watt extended appreciation of the courtesy of the train crew and officials. Looking back a few more years the horse and coach were the means of conveyance. They were "bush-whackers" then, and that service was good enough. Then came the steam train. They thanked the Commissioners for this new service, and considered they were now nearer "Paradise". There was some misapprehension as to the goods service. Some thought it would not fit in, and would cause interference with the new service. However, he hoped the two services would be made satisfactory. He sincerely thanked Mr. Robertson and train crew for the pleasure given to passengers.

MR. ROBERTSON'S REPLY

Mr. Robertson said: I deeply appreciate the

remarks made by speakers to-day. The inauguration of the new service involves the use of the internal combustion engine powerful enough to do the journey. The Commissioners propose to run many of these trains in different parts of the State for the taxpayers of the State, and the Commissioners want the service to pay. The Commissioners realise the futility of carrying on satisfactorily a goods and passenger service combined, owing to the unavoidable delays which are inseparable from such a service, but how to make both ends meet is the question. I am pleased that the trial run to-day has met with such general satisfaction and that all have enjoyed it. The staff also enjoyed the run very much. It has been said you have a very competent staff at Orbost. (hear, hear). I trust the staff and train crew will work in harmony for a better service under improved conditions. With regard to the fitting in of the goods service I think that that can be arranged satisfactorily, Mr. Robertson concluded:—

It's your service. We look to you for support. If you improve the traffic we will give you a better and larger service. On behalf of my colleagues and the train crew I thank you for your remarks. Remember it is up to you to do your best for this new service, for we are equally out to run to time schedule. You do your part! (Loud applause).



Orbost Railway Station

THE TRAIN

Railway officials on the train were Mr. Robertson, District Superintendent; Mr. Carter, District Rolling Stock Superintendent; Mr. Ward, train running officer; Mr. W. Osborne, officer in charge of motor services. The driver of the train will be Mr. McLinney, and emergency driver, Mr. Geraghty. The latter was a driver on a steam engine during the construction of the Orbost line, and naturally is familiar with the grades and curves.

The train comprises one first-class car attached to which is the motor engine, and a second-class car which will also carry mails and light freight. There is accommodation in the first-class car for 37 passengers, and 28 in the second class car.

The driver operates the car from an enclosure in the front of the first-class compartment. The signal for starting is given by the ringing of an electric bell when

the doors automatically close by the operation of levers near the driver's seat. The train quickly gathers pace.

The average speed is curtailed somewhat by the numerous grades and curves on the line, but in some places the train travels forty miles an hour. The speed for ordinary running will be up to 35 miles per hour.

The motor engine is of the four-cylinder A.E.C. type, of 45 h.p. The petrol consumption is twelve miles to the gallon, which is regarded as a world's record for economic running. The engine has five gears — four forward and one reverse, and is equipped with a Zenith magneto.

The cars have four-wheel brakes which are electrically controlled. The cars are also artificially heated by means of exhaust pipes, and have electric light throughout.

'Snowy River Mail', Wednesday, January 16, 1929:

STEAM TRAIN SUPERSEDES RAIL MOTOR

CHANGE ON ORBOST-BAIRNSDALE LINE

Since the disaster to the Geelong rail motor all such modes of conveyance on the Victorian Railways have been superseded by steam drawn trains. The new regulation came into operation on the Orbost-Bairnsdale line last Friday, which necessitates the placing of an extra train crew.

This limited mixed train will continue till further notice to the schedules as shown in the working time table. Henceforth trains will not now stop at any of the

rail motor stopping places between Bairnsdale and Orbost in either direction.

The daily goods train service on this line will continue as scheduled until further advised.

'Snowy River Mail', Wednesday, January 7, 1931:

RAILWAY REDUCTIONS

THE ORBOST "CRAWLER" INTRODUCED

On all sides drastic reductions have been made by the Railway Commissioners in the running of trains, and the country lines have come in for a severe pruning. Vigorous fights are being put up against such curtailments, but in the main an obdurate front is presented to deputations.

It could not be claimed even in the past that the Orbost line was possessed of facilities, in view of the few slow moving trains, but the present time-table is a slipping back in an abysmal form, and is viewed with aversion not only by travellers and consignees, but by those whose business success depends on quick and complete mail arrangements. The doleful note of the service is that it takes the train 4 hours and 10 minutes to make the journey of 62 miles from Bairnsdale. View this in face of the fact that the journey by road can be accomplished by motor car in an hour and a half!

It certainly looks as if the Railway authorities are paving the way to even greater competition than in the past, with a proportionate increase in the already swelling losses.

