Leo Hogan

Trevor Parsons

From: "Jim Evans" <jcevans@impulse.net.au>
Date: Wednesday, 13 June 2012 7:45 PM
To: <admin@bendigohistory.com>
Subject: FW: Leo Hogan - Railway History

From: lalb_hogan@iprimus.com.au [mailto:lalb_hogan@iprimus.com.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 13 June 2012 6:13 PM
To: Jim Evans
Subject: Leo Hogan - Railway History

Dear Jim, the following information is all I can recall relative to dad's railway career:

His love of steam trains (particularly steam locomotives of all shapes and sizes) was born, when as a young boy he visited his grandparents who lived in Peel St Bendigo, just opposite the Loco Depot and Railway Station. He would spend hours standing on the Mitchell St Bridge watching engines shunting goods trucks and marvelling at the big passenger trains that would pull into the station several times a day. His grandfather, Edward "Ned" Hogan was then the Depot Foreman at Bendigo, and he would take dad over the road to the depot for a first hand look at all that went into making the big trains run. This would have been around the early 1920s. I remember dad showing me an Honour Board in the drivers' room at the Bendigo Depot and proudly pointing out both his grandfather's name and his own, which of course, appeared many years later. He often referred to those days, which were some of the happiest of his childhood. His mother had died when he was only 3 years old and he was subsequently brought up by an aunt and uncle in Benalla. His uncle (Chris Lord) also worked on the railways at Benalla and retired there after serving many years as the Station Master. So railways were part of his life from almost day one.

* He started in the then Victorian Railways at the Benalla Loco Depot in the early 1930s. His first job was as an "Engine Cleaner", but he was soon appointed as a "Fireman" working out of Benalla on the North East goods trains. He also had other options at the time, of either taking up an apprenticeship as a fitter and turner or becoming a porter at the station with a view to perhaps following in his Uncle Chris's footsteps. But it was steam engines he wanted, and that's where he headed.

* I think he passed his Driver's Examination some two years after his commencement and graduated to driving passenger trains on, what was then known, as "The Big Wheel". The term was used for trains running from Melbourne's Spencer St Station to the Victorian terminal at Albury. There was no single gauge line in those years. The "Spirit of Progress", an express train from Melbourne to Albury and "The Albury", which did stop at the major towns, were the two trains that constituted the "Big Wheel". They were powered by the famous "S" class locomotives, beautifully streamlined in a royal blue cladding, that made them state of the art for that era. There were 4 of them and they were designated "S300" to "S303" respectively. They carried the names of Mathew Flinders, Sir Thomas Mitchell, Edward Henty and C. J. LaTrobe. They spent all their working lives on the North East line from the late 1920s to the mid 50s. I believe they were built at the Newport Workshops in Victoria and that they were scrapped once diesel locos were introduced in the 50s. Dad had a life long love affair with those engines, and I know he was bitterly disappointed when they were so unceremoniously dumped. Although he went on to bigger and better things in the Victorian Railways, I think the years spent driving those trains were his most enjoyable. He certainly spoke more about that than anything else. During that same period, he also drove the

famous "H" class locomotive which was nicknamed "Heavy Harry". It was also built at Newport and was the largest steam powered locomotive ever used in Australia. It was used only on the North East Line, and powered the "Albury Express" and numerous heavy haulage goods trains, which were so common back then. I think "Heavy Harry" survives in the museum at Williamstown.

Following his years on "The Big Wheel", dad was promoted to Night Foreman at North Melbourne Depot in 1950. In 1953 he became the "Westinghouse Brake Inspector" for the Victorian Railways. In that capacity, he travelled on the Royal Train in Victoria during The Royal Tour in 1954. He was introduced to the Queen and Prince Phillip at the commencement of the trip, and I remember him telling us, "that when you have someone that high profile on one of your trains, it's important to ensure it leaves on time, but it's a lot more important to make sure that it stops in time too, and that's my job!" (Jim, somewhere in your archives, you will have a copy of the Royal Train Schedule, and dad's papers and pass relative to that tour).

In 1954, we moved from Melbourne to Maryborough, where dad was appointed as Depot Foreman. He spent 4 years in that role, before becoming Loco Depot Foreman at Bendigo in 1958. Around 1970 he was enticed to apply for a position as Superintendent of Locomotive Running (or a title similar to that). He went to Melbourne to act in the position for some months, prior to a permanent appointment, but found the city life and extra stress not to his liking. He was living with us (my wife, Lin and I) in Melbourne during the week and travelling home to Bendigo at the weekend. It was evident to me that he was not enjoying the confines of a total office environment, nor the hustle and bustle of city commuting and city life in general (he loved going to watch the Blues play footy though) and he said to me that he would rather be a "big fish in a little pond" than spend his final years "floundering around in an ocean". So after a few months he declined the position and come back to Bendigo with a smile on his face again. I know that he had many friends in the Railway Historical Society. He was always prepared to assist on historical matters. As you know Jim, dad was instrumental in moving the "R" Class loco to the display sight near the VRI Institute and would often take visitors to see the display, whilst explaining the intricacies of moving it there. He retired in 1978 after over 40 years of service in the Victorian Railways, 20 years of which were spent as Depot Foreman at Bendigo.

I will look through our photographs and see if there is something appropriate. In the meantime, I hope this is of some use for your purposes.

Best regards,

Leo.