

Karrie Young
Open Foundation Course
History Tues - 1.00 - 3.00

Research project on regional history.

The railways have always been an important part of the Newcastle and Hunter Valley lifestyle. Newcastle has always been a leading freight terminal because of three resources: coal, ~~and~~ agricultural and pastoral products. The advantages of bulk rail transport encouraged mining companies to run lines between mines and the Port of Newcastle. Agricultural and pastoral products were freighted from the north towards principal markets of Newcastle and Sydney, and the B.H.P. being located meant that there was an influx of ores and raw materials for the steel products and an increased demand for coal in the city. The rail system has undergone many changes over the years, particularly the last three decades. The train as a mode of transport ~~has~~ and freight has gone from being the fastest and in some cases the only way to travel, to facing competition from trucking companies and cars. The engines themselves have undergone many changes from steam to diesel, to electric, to the X.P.T. Safety aspects have changed, as well as the number of crew for each engine. [Mr Leonard John Young has worked on the railways for close to thirty five years and has experienced these changes first hand.

Mr Young started to work for the railways in 1954 as an engine cleaner for an average pay of £17 per week. On the 5-3-54 he passed his "Acting Fireman" exams, which included eighty hours "shunting" at Port Waratah and then a "main line trial" which meant you "fired" to Muswellbrook, spent the night in the barracks and then came home. "Acting Fireman" and "Fireman" are terms that are no longer used. When Mr Young started

all crews consisted of three men, Driver, Acting Fireman or Fireman and a guard. Nowadays the crews consist of a Driver and a Guard. An Acting Fireman or "Fireman's" duties consisted of shovelling coal, sometimes up to four (4) ton per shift, to keep the steam pressure as close to 160 pound per square inch without going over that amount. If the steam pressure did exceed 160 pounds the engine would "blow off", that is emit steam from a safety valve. They also kept an eye on the water levels in the tender and had to stop at various points on any given journey, to refill the levels. The steam engines could work up considerable speed for their weight. Mr Young "fired" on various types of engines and he was also studying to become an "Acting Driver", the next step on the ladder. This study included emergency repairs on the engine.

Mr Young had to pass examinations on various types of engines: coal burners, oil burners "a good job as you didn't get so tired shovelling coal", passenger and goods engines. Mr Young became a fully qualified driver on the 14-6-66. After trial runs to Karee, Muswellbrook and Sydney, a driver could be sent anywhere on their runs.

The class 38 engine was the fastest passenger engine. The now most beloved of this class (the 3801 was a Newcastle Flyer, and has distinguished itself by breaking a record in 1964, that had stood unchanged since 1938. The 3801 hauling 240 tons covered the distance between Newcastle and Sydney in 2 hours 1/2 mins down and 2 hours back. Mr Young had the pleasure of driving 3801 "quite a few times". "Driving 3801 meant that you were senior in your grading as a driver, but it was by no means an exclusive domain". 3801 has

also had the distinction of being Australia's last
crack express to be worked by steam. Mr Young
became a small piece of history when he
drove the 6042 Garrett engine on its last run
between Awaba State line and the Wangi Power
Station in 1973. In an article published in the
Sydney Morning Herald on Saturday 3 March
1973, Mr Young is quoted as saying "they (the
Garretts) were the dirtiest and hottest engines
we've had. But they'd lift a load anywhere
which is more than you can say for ~~others~~".

Mr Young has also noted changes in
passenger services. There were runs to and from
Belmont, Singleton, Cassnock, Toronto and Dungog.
These services were well patronized, for example
the Cassnock run would have ten carriages and
these would be nearly always full. Now the
services to most of these places ~~is~~ non-existent.
Mr Young said that as people could afford cars
the trains became redundant.

Safety too has changed. On the steam
engines goggles were given to both driver and
Fireman but the usage of the goggles was entirely
up to the individual. In the diesels and electrics
there are "dead man" switches. If pressure on these
is not maintained by the driver, air escapes and
the brakes are automatically ~~worked~~ applied. There are
also the vigilance control. This device works on
air pressure and the driver has to acknowledge
this in a certain area of the gauges. If it is not
acknowledged before it reaches a certain level a
whistle blows; If there is no response to the whistle,
the brakes automatically work and the train stops. This
vigilance control has eliminated the crashes caused
by drivers nodding off to sleep or becoming negligi-
ent. The X P T is a silent train and because

of this the headlight has to be on day or night so that it attracts attention and the general public know that it's coming.

Mr Young also says there is a great deal of stress involved in train driving. The Driver is responsible for passenger safety on the trains but he is also constantly aware of the possibility of someone falling or stepping from the ~~train~~ platform or cars or people "racing" trains through level crossings. The trains usually win these races and the Drivers suffer tremendously.

Mr Young has seen many changes in the railway system since he started nearly 35 years ago. The changes from three man crews to ~~to~~ two man crews, changes in engines themselves, steam to diesel electric X.P.T. There have been strikes and changes in pay. The stress factor has been constant but seems to be more pronounced now a days. The passenger services too have changed with a lot of service runs being discontinued. Despite the changes Mr Young has enjoyed his time on the railway.

Bibliography

All quotations are from the interview with Mr Young

Article published Sydney Morning Herald March 1973.

Various articles found in "Broadmeadow" in Regional Library

Information on 3801 found in Newcastle Flyer Special
Published by the Railway Museum in Sydney.

Kerric Young —
Open Foundation Course
Tuesday 1.00 - 3.00 pm.
History —

Summary of Interview conducted with
Mr Leonard John Young, Engine man.

Changes in Railways.

Mr Young has been on the railway for 35 years and has seen a lot of changes, both on the engines themselves and in the personnel. Changes have also occurred in the use of trains as a mode of transport. He has driven the 3801 and has also driven the X.P.T. He discusses the stress drivers face and relates an incident in which a death occurs. He also speculates on the changes to come.

Mr Young started on the railways in 1954 as an engine cleaner, polishing boilers and tenders with a mixture of kerosene and oil. Later that year he became an "Acting Fireman" and worked and studied hard to become a "Fireman". The "Acting Fireman" and "Fireman" terms now longer in use, had to shovel coal to keep the steam pressure up to 160 ^{pounds} per square inch and also keep an eye on water levels and also observe for the driver. The "Fireman" could shovel up to 4 tonne of coal a shift. The work was physically hard and the pay was not ~~about~~ above £27 per week. The study required to become an "Acting Driver" was done ~~it~~ in his own time. It included how to make emergency repairs so that you could get the engine back to the depot.

Mr Young qualified as a Driver in June 1966 after more study and trial runs to Taree, Muswellbrook and Sydney. Mr Young has driven the 3801 which was the Newcastle Flyer. The 3801 had the distinction of being Australia's last crack express to be worked by steam. Mr Young also drove the last Garratt 6042 on its last run from the Araba state line to the Wangi Power station.

1973. The event was reported by the Sydney Morning Herald.

Mr Young also comments on the changes in passenger patronage. Belmont, Dangog, Singleton, Cessnock all had passenger service runs, now due to the availability of buses and cars these runs are now redundant and most ceased operation.

Safety has changed. Goggles were issued to both Drivers and Fireman on the steam train but it was up to the individual if the goggles were used. Mr Young discusses the usage of dead man switches and vigilance controls now used on the diesels and electrics.

Mr Young discusses the stress faced by engine drivers. They are responsible for the passenger safety that are on the trains, but they are also aware that people have been known to step from platforms to commit suicide or people and cars "race" the trains at level crossings. Usually if not always the trains win and the Drivers suffer tremendously. Mr Young discusses an incident in which he was involved as an example. He was firing and neither he nor the driver had realized they'd hit anyone till the police stopped them at the next station and they discovered blood on the front of the steam engine.

Mr Young also speculates on the future of the railways. The Novarail is in the news, and Mr Young and a lot of drivers feel that it would not be a particularly good idea as "people don't like changing trains", and with luggage it would even worse. Mr Young also discusses that one day trains will reach certain speeds

and then be taken over by computers. He is not keen on the idea of travelling at around 300 miles an hour and would rather fly.

Mr Young has enjoyed his time on the railways despite charges and some unpleasant incidents that he was involved in.