

OTHR's Carriages

Recently OTHR became home to two former NSWGR passenger carriages, LCA 850 & HLF 854. These two cars were part of the fleet known officially as "American Cars" and derogatorily as "Cowboy Cars". This name was bestowed on the cars by Central Coast commuters in the 1960s. [Well what would you prefer; a Electric stainless steel heated interurban car or a draughty wooden open ender?]

History of the American Cars.

Sleeping cars #1 & 2

The story of the American cars commenced in October 1877 when car #29 was delivered from "Jackson and Sharp" of Wilmington Delaware USA. It was quickly renumbered to Sleeping car #1 and commenced service between Sydney and Harden on the South Mail three a week. It was latter used on other mail trains through the state It had a varied career as sleeping car, ministerial car, ambulance car (during WW1) then as an estate agents(?) car It was condemned in 1931 but survived as an "Off rail" band practice room at Clyde till the 1970s It had a tare weight of 18.90 tonnes and a capacity of between 12 & 36 depending on its configuration and whether it was being used as a sleeper or as a 1st class sitter.

A similar sleeping car was imported from "The Gilbert Bush and Company" in April 1880. It was numbered sleeping car #2 with a capacity of 20 berths. In 1905 it became an eyesight testing car {but available as a sleeping car if needed} It was condemned in 1946 but became a works wagon in 1947. This car is preserved at Thirlmere (These two cars had clerestory roofs, open platform end and four wheel bogies.)

Sitting cars

With the sleeping car from Jackson and Sharp came two sitting cars which were numbered 28 & 94 (These two cars also had clerestory roofs, open platform end and four wheel bogies.

Car 28 was delivered as a 1st class sitter while #94 as a 2nd class sitter . Car 28 had a varied life as a fist class car then converted to a composite car in 1897 and finally condemned in September 1937.

Car #94 remained as second class car all its life till condemned in May 1929

As with the sleeping car from Jackson & Sharp two sitting cars arrived with the sleeping car from Gilbert Bush & Co

#49 entered service as first class car in April 1890, renumbered to BB 238 and then was reclassified to second class in 1897 as FA 238. It was condemned July 1939

#2 entered service April 1890 and saw a varied service life becoming a composite car (first/second) in April 1881, a first class car BB488 July 1897 and reverted to second class FA classification September 1930. It was condemned in October 1951 It then became a works van and survived till October 1982 (102 years old)

All 4 cars were used through the Sydney Metropolitan area as well as short country trips to places like Wollongong Blue, Mountains and the Central Coast.

These four cars are the ancestors of our cars

The First Australian made “American Cars”

In the late nineteenth century, there being no income tax at the time, most government revenue was from Customs Duties and as such the government of the day (being the NSW Government) used such duties to encourage local production where ever possible Hudson Bros of Auburn was contracted to build eight first class and eleven second class suburban carriages. These carriages entered service between 1879 & 1881. All were fitted with Clerestory roofs and oil lighting. The last of these cars were condemned in 1941 but one remained as a works vehicle till 1980. During the 1880s addition clerestory roofed cars were received from several Sydney manufacturers

The 1890 cars.

In the 1890s the Sydney Suburban traffic was expanding a almost exponential rate and extra cars were urgently needed. These cars were similar to earlier cars except for

- Mansard roofs instead of clerestory roofs
- 5'9" bogies in lieu of either 6'0" or 6'6"
- Break (Guards) ends now included in sets
- Sets were now to be close coupled.

Contract number 6/(18)96 was let to Ritche Bros of Auburn to construct and deliver two sets each of 6 cars being #s 21 & 24 Set 21 was delivered in May 1897 as a five car set shown from the buffers at Central as

- BB 790 Terminal car
- BB 811 *Both 1st class*
- FA 847
- FA 850
- FA 854 Terminal Car *Three 2nd class*

The first class cars were marshalled at the buffer end to allow the 1st class passengers a short walk at night and a quicker exit to the trams in the mornings.

The sets history as recorded is

- May 1897 Set entered service in Sydney Coded “21”
- 1914 set now coded BAB
- June 1930 FA 720 added between FA 850 & FA 854 to make 6 cars
- Set now coded BEB
- March 1941 Having been fitted with 2 toilets per car, positioned in the middle, the cars were recoded FA terminal car became HLF
- FA car became LFA
- BB car became LBB

The set was then was made up as HLF LFA LBB LBB LBB HLF, ie three first and three seconds. The set was till coded BEB.

Nov 1946 LBB 850 was recoded to LFA, now the set had two first and four seconds but the car was still coded BEB.

It was easy to convert BB 850 to LFA 850 because the first and second class American cars were identical in capacity and every thing else. No wonder first class suburban patronage was declining. Set 21 remained unchanged from 1946 being used in both Sydney and Newcastle on suburban and short country trips until 1969

1969 While the set was in Newcastle it was broken up into 2 x 3 car sets being.

Set 19 HLF 790 CBA811

Set 20 HLF 847 CBA 720

Set 21 HLF 850 CBA 854

These sets were used as rail motor relief sets at Dubbo (21) Cootamundra & Narrandera (19 &20). With the cancellation of most country passenger services in 1974 Sets 19, 20 &21 were condemned but set 21 was transferred to the Illawarra region again as a rail motor relief set. Because of the, hopefully, irregular requirement for Set 21 to be used it was used each Saturday for one return Wollongong-Sydney-Wollongong which was effectively a 100 mile trip to recharge the batteries. Although condemned in 1974 set 21 remained in service until the end of 1977 when it was sold to Australian Iron and Steel at Port Kembla. The set remained at Port Kembla under the control of the Rail Transport Museum until transferred to Oberon in May 2010 .

Open end wooden framed American passenger cars were built between 1877 and 1910 with a total of 659 entering service

| Manufacturer | Origin | Sleeping Cars | Sitting Cars |
|---|--------|---------------|--------------|
| Jackson & Sharp | USA | 1 | 2 |
| Gilbert Bush & Co | USA | 1 | 2 |
| Clyde Engineering | AUST | | 270 |
| Ritchie Bros | AUST | | 133 |
| Hudson Bros | AUST | 15 | 141 |
| C.G. Hudson | AUST | | 18 |
| John Morrison | AUST | | 68 |
| Australian Engineering and Rolling Stock Co | AUST | | 20 |
| Carriage works Eveleigh | AUST | | 5 |
| | | 17 | 659 |

In 1913 another 195 steel framed American cars were built but all of these were widened to 10".6' for use as electric trailers in the 1920s

Reference "Coaching Stock of NSW Railways Volume 2

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