



On the Track: Researching New Zealand and regional railways

FOR a general introduction to New Zealand's railway system, the many useful books include such titles as: D.B. Leitch, *New Zealand Railways, the first 125 years* (1988); W.W. Stewart, *When Steam Was King* (1974); Tony Hurst, *Farewell to Steam* (1995); Churchman & Hurst, *The Railways of New Zealand* (1990); and Gordon Troup, *Steel Roads of New Zealand* (1973). The full range is enormous, covering everything from disasters to the technicalities of rolling stock, and the standard works are readily searchable in the Hocken's card and on-line catalogues.

But the books alone, numerous though they may be, do not make up even half the Hocken's considerable holdings in this popular and important field. The real meat is to be found in the section 'D' papers of the *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* which have annually recorded the history of the public railway system, starting with the D1 series on Government railway construction.

The D2 series covers a wide range: traffic statistics, private sidings charges, the amount of business at staffed stations, the volume of passenger journeys (calculated by the sales of single and return tickets), construction and importation of new locomotives and rolling stock, the traffic into and out of private sidings, and quantities carried of livestock, fruit, grain etc. Before 1916 the series also recorded the output of coal carried by rail from the various mine-heads, but the information was then classified as 'helpful to the enemy' and no longer included. Graphs, area maps and occasional photographs of stations or new rolling stock were sometimes included in the endpapers.

The D3 papers (from 1895 on) record details of employees appointed to the permanent staff (though not those who worked for the railways in a casual capacity) and are of considerable value to genealogists. For railway policy and performance, full transcripts of all parliamentary de-

bates appear in *Hansard* and are well indexed. And the official *Year Books* are another handy and valuable source of information, a special article in the 1894 edition providing particularly extensive coverage up to that date.

Timetables

Before searching individual documents or pamphlets, it is advisable to consult the *Summary of Accessions* to the Dangerfield Papers, which cover a broad range of railway activities, and also the listing of railways timetables associated with that collection. N.Z. Railway timetables are of two types — those sold to the public and the working timetables which were issued to operating staff. Both types contain much information in addition to the train schedules.

Of the public timetables, the Hocken has a small number dating from 1900 to 1967. The timetables list all passenger stations on each line, their distances from the starting points and their heights above sea-level. The earlier issues also list the fare to each station, 1st and 2nd class, adult and child.

Other details throw a surprising amount of light on social conditions generally and the place of the railways within that society. The 1900 timetable, for instance has several pages on special fares and concessions, including Family Commutation Tickets, Newspaper Reporters' Season Tickets, Worker's Season Tickets, Newsboys' Tickets, Teachers' Saturday Season Tickets (to attend examinations and training classes); and concessions for Delegates to Meetings of Religious Bodies, Maoris Attending Native Land Courts, Judges of Exhibits Proceeding to Shows, Sporting Teams, Theatrical Concert and Circus Companies. Charges are detailed for luggage, stock, dogs, fruit and vegetables, corpses and homing pigeons. All refreshment rooms are lists, whether 'counter' or 'set table', with menus and charges. The excursions advertised included Dunedin to Taieri Mouth, by rail to Henley, then

‘steam launch along the Taieri River to the Beach’.

The 1928 edition includes timetables for the Castlecliff Railway Co., Ohai Railway Board, Bluff-Stewart Is. steamer and Lake Wakatipu steamer, as well as 13p giving connecting services by motor-bus, steamer, launch and coach. The Hocken also holds some Special Arrangements Timetables from the 1920s, covering the sports attractions at Easter and Christmas and the trains servicing them. An incomplete run of summary timetables issued monthly by the N.Z. Express Co. Ltd in 1919–25 (presumably as advertising) not only covered regional rail services, but also coastal passenger steamers.

Working timetables issued to staff (in book form from October 1878) included, besides traffic schedules, information needed for operating each section of line: facilities at stations, speed restrictions, restrictions on certain types of locomotives and rolling stock, and local instructions regarding signalling, level crossings and combined road-rail bridges. They were issued in separate editions for the North and South Islands, and the Hocken holds roughly equal numbers for each island from the late 1960s, though for the period 1925–1935 the North Island holding is by far the stronger. The cover dates can be confusing, for the material was issued in loose leaf and sections were replaced and reissued from time to time. The Appendix to the 1908 working timetable, by the way, is a particularly comprehensive source. [National Archives, Dunedin, also holds a large collection of South Island working timetables]

Magazines

The *N.Z. Railways Magazine*, edited by G.G. Stewart and issued monthly from May 1926 to June 1940, when it became a war casualty, was intended to be ‘the officially recognised medium for maintaining contact between the Administration, the employees and the public, and for the dissemination of knowledge bearing on matters of mutual interest and of educative value’. It contained a wide range of articles written by staff and public on New Zealand and overseas railway news, technical material, travel and staff activities, particularly in sports. It also included a regular ration of short stories, poetry and history, the contributors included such well-known writers as James Cowan, O.N. Gillespie, Will Lawson and Leo Fanning. Hocken has an index, listed by author and subject, compiled in 1942 by Bertha Whyte.

Also available is the *N.Z. Railways Staff*

Bulletin, issued irregularly (5–12 a year) from 1951. Hocken’s 1951 set is incomplete, but it has the rest of the run, Vols 2–20 (1952–72).

Produced by the Publicity & Advertising Branch (and altered in title to *N.Z. Railways Bulletin* in 1960) these well-illustrated periodicals covered new developments, history and staff news. They were succeeded by *Staff News* in larger format, and then again by *Expressions*, which concentrates on personalities rather than practicalities.

The quarterly *N.Z. Railway Observer* began in 1944 and its first 14 volumes are mostly cyclo-styled, but from Vol. 15 it was properly printed and well-illustrated. Though issued by the N.Z. Railway and Locomotive Society, which had no official link with NZR, it was edited throughout by T.A. McGavin, who happened also to be an NZR employee. It mainly records technical operations, locomotives and rolling stock; politics and management issues are not discussed. *Rails*, a monthly, also records current developments and historical research; while *Points*, a quarterly, emphasises modern trends.

Yarn, founded by the Railway Enthusiasts’ Society in 1953, is still going strong; Hocken holds a complete run from 1961.

Trade Union activities

While these inevitably contain much ‘in house’ material which is now of limited interest, some — particularly the *N.Z. Locomotive Engineers Journal* — include reports giving useful insights into railway work. Hocken’s holdings include:

Minutes of the Palmerston (Otago) branch of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, 1910–50.

Pamphlets: *Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. Golden Jubilee, 1936*, 40p; *Engine-drivers, Firemen & Cleaners Assn. An Appeal to Reason*, Christchurch, 1908.

Periodicals: *Advocate*, journal of the N.Z. Railway Officers Institute, 1953–1991; *N.Z. Locomotive Engineers Journal*, 1967–90, and some loose copies before and since — a feature of this journal being the chatty reports from ‘Local Correspondents’ on the state of locomotives, work practices, politics and safety issues; *N.Z. Railway Tradesmen’s Association Journal*, 1950–77.

Regional coverage

As Hocken users tend to be interested in the southern region, it is worth mentioning further material relating to Otago, Southland and Canterbury. Almost all regional and local histories have sections on railway development that are

worth consulting, some including quite detailed information on contracts and construction, but it is impossible to list them individually. Booklets and pamphlets briefly identified here are those more specifically devoted to railway description and history.

OTAGO

Anon. *Dunedin Railway Station*, 1977; *Taieri Gorge Railway Ltd Establishment Plan*, 1995; Dangerfield, J.A. *Dunedin's Matchbox Railway*, 1986; *The First Railway in Otago*, 1991; *Hyde Railway Accident June 4 1943*, 1993; *Josephine and Her Friends*, 1964, 1994; Dangerfield, J.A. & Emerson, G.W. *Over the Garden Wall. Story of the Otago Central Railway*, 1962, 1967, 1995; Fox, G. ed. *Ocean Beach Railway, 25th Anniversary 1961–1986*, 1986; McGavin, T.A., *Dunedin and Port Chalmers Railway*; 1973; Meyer, R.J. *All Aboard. Iron Horses to Wakatipu and Shipping on the Lake*, 1963, 1980; Trask, E.E. *The End of the Line (Catlins)*, 1971, 1986; Tyrrell, A.R. *Catlins Rail*, 1996.

See Otago Provincial Council *Conditions of agreement, ordinances, acts etc to accompany plans and sections of the Otago Southern Trunk Railway, for the information of tenderers* (1869). The important OPC 1869 *Debates over . . . hundreds . . . and railway schemes* (1869) were published in book form by George Bell (see also CP 15/12); and the 1870 *Debates on the Southern Trunk Railway Loan* is in Pam. 15. John Millar (Pam. 15/11) recommended on 4 June 1870 the adoption of a 'medium narrow gauge' and the use of Fairlie's double-bogie locomotives; he also wrote letters to the Premier, Wm Fox, in June 1870 on 'Colonial gauges' and 'Colonial v Provincial'. In the Appendices to the Journals of the Otago Provincial Council, the section 'Correspondence with the Home Agent' contains material relating to the ordering of locomotives and stock from Great Britain.

Sir John McKenzie wrote two letters to J. Arkle, the Palmerston storekeeper, in June 1878 on the proposed Central Otago Railway. The *Report of the Commissioners* appeared in 1881; in 1895 the OCR League published the pamphlet *A Source of National Wealth*; E.D'Esterre's 1902 pamphlet, *Central Otago — Its Prospects and Resources* surveys production potential along the rail route from Taieri to Hawea; and Adolf Moritzon's scrapbook of photos and clippings covers a tour of Central Otago by the OCR League and Dunedin Chamber of Commerce in 1912. N.Z. Pams. 37 are all relevant to Central Otago.

SOUTHLAND

Emerson, G.W. *Coalfields Enterprise*, 1964, 1975; Miller, F.W.G. *Story of the Kingston Flyer*, 1975; Watt, J.O.P. *Southland's Pioneer Railways 1864–1878*, 1965.

Hocken also has 'Bluff Harbour and Invercargill Railway: Financial statement . . . (1869–70); the two scrapbooks of Theophilus Daniel (1817–93), including much on railways; and the 1915 Southland League *Report on Present and Future Railway Requirements of Southland*. Hocken Archives holds a rare original ticket for the Oreti Railway's first excursion on 18 October 1864.

CANTERBURY

Churchman, G.B. *The Midland Line*, 1988; *On the Trans-Alpine Trail*, 1991, 1994; Fairlie Flyer Cttee. *Farewell to the Fairlie Flyer*, 1968; Pierre, W.A. *Canterbury Provincial Railways*, 1964; Maffey, I.D. *The Mt Somers Tramway*, 1971; etc.

Also: Bray, W.B. 'Report on the effect of introducing narrow gauge on the Canterbury Plains' (Prov. Govt., 1870); 'Canterbury Great Northern Railway Bill, The' (Prov. Govt, 1864); *Canterbury Guide and Travellers' Pocket Companion, The*, No.7, 1874 (timetables, mail information and humorous articles); 'Committee on the Lyttelton and Christchurch railway proposals' (Prov. Cl, 1860); 'Contract for the construction of the Great Southern Railway from Christchurch to the north bank of the Rakaia' (Prov. Govt, 1865); Dobson, Edward. *An Enquiry into the Influence of Railway Gauge upon the Constructive Cost and Working Expenses of Railways*, Christchurch, 1871; P.W.D. — papers relative to the contract for construction of the Lyttelton-Christchurch railway (1868); Stephenson, G.R. *Lyttelton and Christchurch (N.Z.) Railway: report of George Robert Stephenson*, London, 1859.

Management and tariffs

Interesting items are to be found in the collections of bound pamphlets.

Anon. *Minister vs Miner* (1899); complaint against the levy on the line to the Fernhill coalmine, incorporating some history and comparisons with Walton Park.

Atkinson, J.J.: *Our Railways and How They Are Managed: or, a sequel to the Royal Commission report on railways* (1881). Examples of inefficiency from his own experience as stationmaster at Hillgrove.

Le Rossignol, J.E. & Stewart, W.Downie. *Railways in New Zealand*, Harvard University, 1909, reprinted from the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*; construction, earnings, rates and

deficits . . . 'should not be operated at a loss'.

Otago A. & P. Society. *Railway Management: opinions of agricultural societies, producers and manufacturers in Otago* (1893); the contributors favoured independent management by the Commissioners and opposed a return to government control.

Pearson, W.H. *The Financial Position of the Colony of N.Z.: its extrication by the sale or leasing of its railways* (1887)

Reid, Donald & Co. Ltd. *A Side Light Showing the Kind of Encouragement Given to Farmers and Others who Assist in Developing the Traffic of Our Railways* (1914); an exchange of letters over private sidings charges.

Vaile, Samuel. *Railways and Social Conditions* . . . (1894), proposed a system of rates and fares that would favour rural districts. A frequent critic of government policies and railways management, Vaile believed that railways should be used to discourage urbanisation and help place people on the land (see also *AJHR*, I-9, 1886).

Theses

The Hocken has six MA theses dealing with railways:

Baldwin, H.T.S. (1975): 'Labour Groups and Railway Construction in Otago, 1869–73'. Asks whether the construction workers of that period fitted the 'railway navy stereotype'. Finds that the Port Chalmers line was built by local unemployed with no experience of railway work, and the 'Taieri Contract' section of the Clutha line employed a significant number of Chinese, before Brogdens brought in their own immigrant labour and began the navy tradition.

Darling, M.J. (1974): 'A Study in Failure: Inadequacies of the Otago Provincial Council as Illustrated by their Railway Schemes, 1869–71'. The later provincial years, when a cohesive national base was needed to develop public works, were marked instead by jealousies. The thesis examines Otago's unwillingness to accept the Immigration and Public Works Act, 1870, lest Otago money would be used to fund North Island projects.

Espie, N.A. (1948): 'Introduction of Rail Communications into Otago'. Less concerned with politics and more with constructional details, including individual contracts and equipment. Lists the perceived advantages and disadvantages of Otago's railways.

Innes, R.S. (1976): 'Railways and the Re-union of Otago and Southland, 1867–70'. Mainly a study of politics, as the optimism over the proposed Bluff-Winton line turned to dissatis-

faction and the Provincial Council failed to solve the region's transport problems.

Kidd, P.R. (1974): 'Railway Developments in North Otago, 1863–87'. A study of the Moeraki-Waitaki area, going beyond the political arguments and describing the construction of lines affecting Moeraki, Awamoko, Waiareka Valley, Duntroon, Hakataramea, Livingstone etc.

Millar, M.A. (1976): 'Beginnings of the Otago Central Railway, 1870–78'. The debates and political manoeuvres involved in the 'battle of the routes'.

Photographs

To date, only some 10% of the Hocken's massive photograph collection is fully documented and accessible to public search, but to that extent the railway photographs in the Hocken are well classified and indexed with cross-references. Besides material listed under locality headings, it is worth checking through the prints relating to localities that particularly interest you, because railway equipment and structures appearing in the middle distance of photographs are often not mentioned in the captions.

An outstanding group of railway construction photos consists of 28 views of the Otago Central line, between Mullocky Gully and the top of the Taieri Gorge, taken by F.A. Coxhead in the early stages of work on the line. Also of interest are the portraits of 49 railway guards, past and present, taken in 1906 at the opening of the Dunedin railway station: they are indexed separately. But there are other interesting groups and collections, and a good coverage of the subject generally.

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The material listed in this bulletin is by no means exhaustive. The Hocken Library has extensive holdings of the booklets and pamphlets issued by the N.Z. Railway and Locomotive Society; material from leagues promoting the establishment of branch lines (Catlins, Roxburgh, Otago Central, West Coast, Nelson, Rotorua-Taupo etc); a great deal of secondary source material; and trained signal staff happy to shunt you on to the right sidings.

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Drafted for the Friends of the Hocken Collections by Jim Dangerfield. Expanded by David McDonald, George Emerson and George Griffiths to cover more of the Dangerfield Accessions that Jim modestly passed over. Designed by Gary Blackman.

