

# Last train to Larrimah

older carriage with an end platform, a bit like the NABP carriage at Pine Creek - only more modern.

Further to this, John has been busy searching his memory and contacting friends to provide more details on the last train to Larrimah, which has revealed:

As stated in my phone call 19/08/08 the last two vehicles on the goods consist was a passenger consist and last the break van, this van was the working guards station, sleeping and cooking compartments for the resting crew. These break vans were referred to as 'Relay Vans'. The vans were used on all narrow gauge trains operating on the CAR and NAR systems thus allowing for four engine crew and two guards to work between Stirling North and Alice Springs, Darwin to Larrimah and Frances Creek in relay without the need for rest houses being constructed; as was the case along the standard gauge east west line between Port Pirie SA and Parkston WA.

The break vans as shown in the photo directly behind the engines were placed in that position on any goods train consist whenever a Locomotive Inspector or Traffic Inspector was required to travel between Darwin and Larrimah and return. Traffic and locomotive inspectors were, for want of a better description, Policemen. Their role was to ensure all aspects of train operations were conducted safely and correctly as per the rules and regulations, so they had to remain separate and impartial from the relay working crew.

I have no doubts that the train shown in the photo was in fact the last goods train to Larrimah.

The tonnage hauled between Darwin, Larrimah and return only required one working NT class locomotive. I think the second engine would be travelling 'dead' to Larrimah as by this date

some rollingstock etc. was being sent down south.

On the return trip only one locomotive was in use. Any rolling stock standing at an unattended station was picked up and returned to Darwin.

The photo shows behind the second locomotive an inspector's van; in fact the last train did require inspectors to travel to Larrimah and return. The inspectors were required to close down all operational train crossings, Larrimah Siding, Katherine Station. This would have included all safe working forms, train control 'train order books' and returned to head office in Darwin.

Behind the inspector's van is a louvered van, which I believe was bound for Ah Toy's General Store at Pine Creek, then what appears to be a larger white van. If I am correct, this vehicle was a tradesman work van having the same layout as a break van i.e. sleeping quarters, kitchen, shower and toilet etc allowing plumbers and carpenters etc to be dropped off at sidings that required repairs to railway dwellings and buildings. Following required repairs, the van and tradesmen were picked up and returned to Parap Workshop. Again, this van was probably being despatched south.

The Darwin goods shed and shunt yards were closed in December 1976. By then a lot of rollingstock had been sent south. I finished my NAR career on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 1976.

We are indebted to John for sharing these precious insights with us. In this piece he covers quite a few aspects of railway operations that we hear little about. It will make a great addition to our archive.

In a separate piece of detective work, John believes he has worked out where the Weighbridge was in the Darwin Yard. We'll cover that separately.

## Wet season caretaker required.

The Wet Season is a time when visitor numbers are down but it is as important as ever to have a presence on site to safeguard our precious collection.

If you have a caravan and are interested in this position, please contact our Secretary, **Judy Richardson**, on **0439 843 747** to discuss the position.

A shaded caravan site is available in a special setting in this historic precinct.

Adelaide River is a delightful township just 112 km south of Darwin on the Stuart Highway. Perhaps you know of someone who may suit this position.

If so, please mention it to them.