

3801 Turns 80 Many happy returns to a Grand Lady the Queen of Australian Steam

3801 Was a pacific or 4-6-2 steam locomotive operated by the New South Wales Government Railways between 1943 and 1974. It is one of the most well known and loved Australian steam locomotive It is the only one to have visited all mainland states and territories. The 38 class were first conceived in 1938. They suffered many delays during construction due to material shortages caused by World War II. 3801 was the first engine completed late 1942 and entered service on 22 January 1943 to little fanfare. It became known at the time as the Grey Nurse due to its drab, all grey colour scheme, a wartime camouflage scheme.



Construction:- 3801 was built in 1943 by Clyde Engineering as the first of an order of five built by Clyde Engineering to a streamlined design. 25 more in non-streamlined form were constructed by the NSWGR themselves at Eveleigh and Cardiff Locomotive Workshops

In service: - (From Wikipedia)

On 25 February 1943, 3801 worked the Newcastle Flyer for the first time. When joined by 3802 in April 1943, these engines were allotted to working the Melbourne Limited expresses between Sydney and Goulburn. In early 1947, 3801 was given a heavy overhaul and was painted in its standard colour scheme of green with yellow lining.

In 1955, 3801 was overhauled again, being painted black with red lining as a cost-cutting measure. It was around this time that diesel locomotives started appearing on the rails of NSW. These would take the "glamour workings" away from the 38 class, the intention being to replace steam with diesel power, and to confine even modern steam to all-stations passenger and even goods trains. This intention was not realized until the end of steam on the NSWGR in 1972, as the available diesels were unable to match the speed performance of the 38s. In December 1956, 3801 was the first in its class to accrue 1 million miles (1.61 million kilometers).

In early 1963, 3801 was given a major overhaul during which it was repainted green. It was often used on special services operated by railway heritage organizations, the most famous being a non-stop run from Sydney to Newcastle on 28 June 1964.^{[5][6]} Just failing to break the two-hour barrier, this remained the fastest journey from Sydney to Newcastle by rail (2 hours 1 minute 51 seconds) until bettered by an XPT in 1988.^[7] On the return journey 3801 again fell just short of the two-hour mark.

In October 1965, the locomotive was found to have serious boiler problems, so was withdrawn and placed in the care of the New South Wales Rail Transport Museum. The museum contributed \$18,000 to return 3801 to service and the boiler from 3819 was fitted. In October 1966, 3801 returned to service. However, the following year boiler problems re-emerged, and the locomotive was withdrawn. Another boiler exam gave the locomotive a reprieve and allowed it to return to service. During this time, it operated a train celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Newcastle Flyer on 31 May 1969, as well as the Western Endeavour special across the continent to Perth between 22 August and 12 September 1970.^[4] In October 1972, 3801 worked to South Australia with 3642 as part of celebrations to open the Whyalla line. In April 1973 it ran to Melbourne with 3820.

First Facts: -

- 3801 was the first steam engine to cross the Australian continent from Sydney to Perth and return "The Western Endeavor "

- 3801 Fastest steam speed record unbroken between Sydney and Newcastle, a distance of 104 ½ miles in two hours one minute this is an average speed of 52.3 mph. When you take into account the descent of the Hawkesbury Beecroft bank and other steep slopes this is a sterling effort.
- 3801 ran 1.5 million miles in the 30 years in service of the New South Wales rails North Southwest and on the Illawarra.



38 Class facts: -

30 locomotives were built five (3801-3805) were streamlined and 25 (3806-3830) were non streamlined

- Nominal tractive effort was 36200.
- Boiler pressure 245 psi
- Produced over 2000 Hp
- Coupled wheels 69 inches or 5' 9"
- Coal 14 t & 8100 gallons of water
- Total weight of 195 tons in all
- Maximum permitted line speed 70MPH (they often ran faster)

Personal Memories: -

Anyone who grew up in New South Wales in the 1940s 50s 60s and 70s would be familiar with the 38 class pacifics Until this engine was developed the most powerful traction on the New South Wales lives with a 36 class 4-6-0 The 38 class was designed around the express passenger services and country mail trains up over quite difficult and challenging terrain but in fact became a very useful mixed traffic engine later in its career. It was extremely powerful developing over 2000 HP.

Probably the best-known Express services was the Newcastle Flyer. The train faced enormous obstacle in its descent and ascent of Hawkesbury River estuary. To say nothing of Beecroft bank and other very steep grades with some as steep as 1:40. The 38 class locomotives managed this run with alacrity.

Personal Memories of the 38 Class:- My very first experience of a 38 class loco was when my mother took my brother and I to the side of the railway line near Epping station to see the Royal Train go by in 1954.

My mother was very interested in seeing the Queen yours truly aged 4 was far more interested in the pilot engine which happened to be a nonstreamlined 38 class and the blue diesels that followed. These were the recently introduced NSWGR Alco 40 Class Diesels specially painted in Royal Blue and Yellow for the Royal Train

My next encounter with the 38 Class was the NSWGR Railway Centenary in 1955 My dad took us to see the full size Loco display and model railway layout at Central Station.

I now know it was 3813 on display demonstrating the automatic staff exchanger.

Back then it was just a big green engine.

I grew up in Sydney and moved to the Sutherland Shire from Epping in 1955 so whenever we went "Into Town" (City) we took the train because even in the 1950s and 60s traffic was gridlocked in the city.

The Illawarra line trains(from the South Coast and Sutherland Shire) ran very close to Everleigh engine and erecting depot. It was not uncommon to see the 38 class on the track nearest to the Illawarra line.

My brother and I would look anxiously out to see if there was a green engine to be seen. As some of you will know the paint scheme varied between green and black but to spot a green engine was to spot the top of the engine world as we knew it.

We had friends in Queensland and often would visit them and in the early days we went by train. This was usually the Brisbane Ltd express and was steam hauled usually with two 36 class or 35 class engines

We would sometimes see an incoming 38 heading the Southern Express or the Newcastle Flyer at Strathfield station when we went to visit our grandparents at Ryde

I only ever travelled behind a 38 once. That was when I was 15 and on my way to a Christian convention at Wattamondara . The train was hauled by one of the 46 class electrics to Lithgow and this was changed to a "green" 38 (non-streamlined) class from Lithgow to Blaney

I changed trains to the slow engine from Blaney to Cowra. It shunted at every station and took a number of hours to travel a short distance. But what is time to a 15 year old train spotter. The engine up front was a 30 class tender engine converted from a 30 class tank. I finally arrived at Cowra and was met by my friends maybe a little grubbier than when I started the journey. Of course coal smoke and cinders found their way into my hair and clothes.

My final contact with a 38 was when we returned via the North Coast daylight express to Sydney and it was diesel hauled but on approaching Broadmeadow we ran parallel to the returning Newcastle express on his way to Sydney. Hauled by a none other than 3801 herself Despite our diesel power 3801 left us for dead with just a smoke and steam trail to tell her passing

Another memory that still lingers is that when I was a little older (may be 7 or 8) I drew a picture of 3801 crossing the Hawkesbury River Bridge for my young girl cousin (aged 5 or) to colour in. I remember taking great Umbridge when she coloured it the wrong colour !!!!!!!!!!!!!

Models produced: -

- O gauge house were the first to produce a kit in O gauge
- Maurlyn produced a sort of 38 streamlined loco in tinplate
- Early ready to run models in HO were brass imports
- Lima produced the 38 Class first in non-streamlined Green. Later in non-streamlined black Both models were a compromise using existing Lima mechanisms.
- Sometime later due to a joint venture they added the streamlined version in green and black.
- Workshop 5 and later AR kits produced A Super detailing kit for the tender and the streamlined cowl
- Later in association with DJH a combined brass and white metal kit was produced
- Eureka Models now have the 38 in their production runs
- Australian Models have produced all 4 variants very recently

Personal Memories of Models:- My memories go back to the Royal Easter Show in Sydney .The NSW Railway Department had an O gauge display and of course this featured the 38 class I am not sure if it was 3801 Later on we went to the Sydney Model Railway Exhibition in Lower Town Hall and I saw an O gauge streamline 38 with a beautiful rake of handmade teak finished coaches to match (TAM,MFE,MHO) When I was older (not grown-up mind! Boys never grow up)Lima produced initially the 44 class diesel followed by the 38 in non-streamline form. The 44class Diesel was not too bad but the 38 was a slight disappointment. The Body was good but the running gear was a steal from one of their European models (to save on tooling costs) and



the tender was from another European model but the bogies were close approximation

Well, that did not last long before I had super detailed it and modified the tender in non-streamlined form However this was not the end as a company in the late 70's (Workshop 5) produced the correct tender and a streamline cowl with new cylinder casting and extra detailing. NOW!!!! I could at last have 3801 however it took some years, I was in the UK doing further study and became captured by the products of Wrenn and Hornby Dublo so a detour into British prototype. However when we finally settled down in Ipswich Qld I returned to my first love the NSWGR of my child hood and 3801 was finally complete with full repaint, hand lined, correct tender and valve gear !!!!



Since then I have acquired 3 more Lima 38's and the full set of Australian Models. The eureka model is great but at \$650 + and rising not for this lad.



So to return to my mother and the Royal Train in the words of Sir Robert Menzies He asked the Queen to ***'remember in this country of yours that every man, woman and child who sees you will remember it with joy – remember it in the words of that 17th century poet who wrote these lines, "I did but see her passing by and yet I'll love her till I die"*** So as my Mother appreciated the Queen so too many have fallen under the spell of the Queen of Australian Steam.

