



SA Railways RSL Sub Branch and the Adelaide Station Honour Boards

During construction of the present Adelaide railway Station, the Honour Roll Boards for the 1914-18 War were placed in storage. After the opening of the Station in July 1928, the Director of the Railways Institute, Mr G.H. Gillman and Mr S.H. Watson chose to have the Honour Boards placed in the Waiting Hall.

(Lieutenant Colonel Stanley Holm Watson DSO, MC, MID, later the General Traffic Manager and Deputy Railway Commissioner, served at Gallipoli and was not only noted for building *Watson's Pier* at ANZAC Cove, but was reputedly the last man to embark at the evacuation).

When the Honour Roll Boards were re-hung, Mr Gillman suggested to Mr Watson, Resident Engineer, that the Armistice Day Service on the 11th November 1928, be held in the Waiting Hall, thus making it the first one. The railway's Oval was under construction at the corner of West Terrace and Port Road, and a small Committee, consisting of Messers Gillman, Watson and Fletcher, felt that a suitable memorial be erected to the fallen railway men. Mr S. Johnson of the Institute staff was co-opted to design a memorial. The stone was used in its construction from the old station and the granite for the plaque was a piece from the base of one of the columns.

Devotions were led by Arch-deacon G. Jose and Rev H. Coles and Mr Anderson, the Commissioner of Railways asked his Excellency Sir Alexander Hore-Ruthven VC to unveil the Memorial. Lieutenant Colonel S. H. Watson sealed the casket on top of the Memorial containing the names of the men who enlisted, and the Last Post and Reveille were sounded. Corporal Phil Davey, VC, MM placed a laurel wreath on the Memorial. The ceremony concluded with the dedication of the memorial by Archdeacon G. Jose. (The casket was opened after the conclusion of WW II and names of enlisted railway men were added).

On the 11th of May 1931, the Railways Sub Branch of the R.S.L. was formed with a membership of 197 servicemen and one of its earliest and outstanding members was Lieutenant Colonel Stan H. Watson, DSO, MC, MID. Each year on the 25th April, ANZAC Day a service was held at the Railways Memorial for the men and women who served in the 1914-18 and 1939-45 Wars, and two wreaths laid and the Last Post and Reveille sounded. Over the years, in turn, three Boy Scout troops helped with maintenance of the Memorial and have participated in the ceremonies; something initiated by them as a gesture to servicemen in both World Wars.

It should be mentioned that following the end of World War II, the Railways Sub Branch's activities were for the most part concerned with routine matters involving members, ANZAC and Remembrance Day Services, visiting members in War Service Homes, the Repatriation General Hospital and home visits.

The Honour Roll Boards of 1914-18 War were placed in Marble Hall when the Station was re-built in 1928 and after World War II, two more Honour Boards were added showing the names of Railways personnel who enlisted. It was here that Remembrance Day Ceremonies were conducted until mid 1980, when the Boards were surreptitiously removed and most likely doomed to the scrap heap, during the conversion of the greater part of the Station building into the Adelaide Casino. The Sub-Branch became involved in the struggle to retain its presence at the Railway Station.

It centred around the future of the four Honour Boards with the transfer of all but Suburban Rail Services to the Australian National Railways as well as the conversion of the whole of the Station building, which included Marble Hall as part of the Casino. This meant that both the newly established Trans Adelaide and the R.S.L. Sub Branch were denied any control over the Boards. Indeed the Casino's authority had to be sought to continue with the Remembrance Day ceremonies and while approval was given, it used to be subject to the condition "that it did not interfere with Casino's patrons".

The situation deteriorated further when without any notice to the Sub-Branch, the Honour Boards were removed from the Marble Hall and most likely destined for the scrap heap again. Fortunately they were recovered and re-hung in the Stairway leading from Marble Hall to the Station Concourse. This unsatisfactory situation persisted for several years.

Fortunately, however, and following sympathetic action by Transport Minister Diana Laidlaw and Trans Adelaide CEO, Ray Arnold, in 2000, the Honour Board Rolls were moved to their current and excellent site on the north western corner of the Station Concourse. While this might have indicated the end of the problem, further matters remain unresolved.

The names of the World War 1 Boards were in order of enlistment, making it almost impossible for anyone to find the name they were seeking.

The Sub-Branch therefore asked permission to append an Index to the World War 1 Board, but once again met with opposition from the Department of Environment and Heritage. After yet another delay, this time for five years, thanks to the co-operation on the part of Mr Bill Watson, the then CEO of Trans Adelaide, and the coincidence with the Remembrance Day ceremony on 11th November 2005, an excellent index to the 1914-18 Honour Board was unveiled jointly by Mr Bill Watson and Mrs Ruth Harrington representing the RSL.

The death of Mr Jack McFawn at 85 years of age on the 10th July 2010, marked the sad end of 45 years unbroken and devoted service as Secretary of the Railways Sub Branch. Indeed, the wide respect with which he was held, both within and without of the Railways organisations, was manifest in the large attendance at his memorial service. So too was the debt owed to his widow Zoe, for her hospitality and support.

Jack joined the Signal and Telegraph Section of the SAR following his services with the RAAF in WW II and was posted successively to Port Lincoln and Taillem bend, before transferring to Adelaide in 1960, when in due course he rose to a supervisory position.

It should also be noted that in 2005, the Adelaide City Council graciously agreed to undertake the maintenance of the Memorial in the West Parklands, a gesture for which the Railways Sub-Branch was sincerely thankful. Sadly in February 2008, the Memorial was vandalised in an act of theft that

many memorials suffered, as metallic plaques were destructively stolen for sale as scrap. Fortunately, the Department of Veterans Affairs financed replacements.

The Railways Sub-Branch closed in 2010, its membership having diminished to a level below sustainment, the end of an era.