SOUTHERN DOWNS STEAM RAILWAY
PRESENTS

DOWN THE LINE

a unique railway journey

A chance to escape the rush and demands of our modern lifestyles.

Step aboard a timber carriage, take a comfortable seat with your travelling companions and be ready for a day's return journey into the granite hills south of Warwick Queensland all the way up to Ballandean, a short way from the New South Wales border at Wallangarra.

We follow the route of the 'Sydney Mail Train' which once was the fastest way to travel between the state capitals.



PLEASE CONSIDER
$1 DONATION
TO COVER COSTS

SOUTHERN DOWNS STEAM RAILWAY
HOME OF THE 'DOWNS EXPLORER'
PO Box 928
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From the window

South of Warwick, the nature of the country can be seen to be changing.
The climb through the Silverwood Range, especially after the former station of Silverwood, is generally inaccessible by road. Many of the original engineering features of the 1880 railway line have survived. South of the Gorge Dam, the culverts at the base of the embankments are sandstone. Beyond this point, however, concrete has been used instead. At the exit points to cuttings, spoil tips can be observed, where rock was deposited during the construction of the railway.





Beyond Silverwood the now demolished Mineral Creek Crossing can be seen. The first of these, with its sandstone piers, is at the 272km point. The first of the major deviations was carried out on the Mineral Creek Bridges in 1960, to the north of this point. The bridges originally carried wrought iron spans.

Both bridge crossings were replaced in the 1960's by heavy embankment works, leaving the sandstone piers and the abutments still in existence. Army reservists subsequently demolished one of the bridges, as part of an exercise.

From there we travel to the Gorge Tank. It is classed as one of the most interesting locomotive water tanks surviving in Queensland.



The tank stand was erected in 1881. Trains on the Silverwood range used to take water here in the period of 1881 – 1912 as part of regular traffic operation. After 1950, it was designated as an emergency water supply. However, goods trains still used its facilities until the 1960's. Some of the timber supports have replacement dates of 1903 and 1935 marked on them.

SOUTHERN DOWNS STEAM RAILWAY
Operating on Queensland Railways mainline to destinations including Hendon, Wheatvale, Clifton, Toowoomba, Inglewood & Goondiwindi as well as our present journey South, where as an option you may leave the train at Stanthorpe for a winery tour and lunch or a bus tour and lunch.

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Water supply & tunnels



This dam is located on the range side of the climb, and can be seen from the left hand side of the train. However, as we pass by, we only see it briefly.

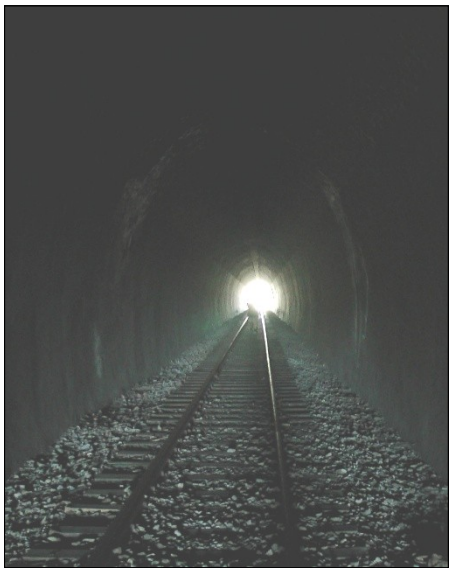


The Chief Engineer for Queensland Railways, H C Stanley, designed this dam. A cast steel plate was fixed to the dam when it was originally built with the date AD 1880.

Originally it had a holding capacity of 400, 000 gallons. The dam was raised in 1901 – 1902 due to either the drought of that year, or because of the large locomotives on the southern line.

However, the water supply still dried up in the drought of 1920. This dam has been identified as the oldest concrete arch dam in the world, and still holds a good water supply.





From here it is just a corner or two away from the Cherry Gully Tunnel. Construction of the tunnel started in 1878, and during construction, exceptionally hard rock was encountered. Several drilling machines failed, and they had to resort to hand drilling.

The tunnel was also one of the first in Queensland to have a concrete lining instead of the more common brick lining. However, the crown of the tunnel was still lined in brick.

The tunnel was known as the 'Big Tunnel' and a substantial camp was established, including its own school on the ridge above.

The tunnel is 272 metres long and is on the Queensland Heritage register.

So far, from Warwick Railway Station to this tunnel, we have risen 300 metres (1000ft) in the space of 25.5km.

From the tunnel, we then travel to Cherry Gully, at an altitude of 2415 feet. This was the end of the first section to be built. The line was opened between Warwick and Cherry Gully on 8th December 1880.

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Our final destination used to be Wallangarra, right on the border between Qld & NSW. Sadly a bushfire destroyed several wooden bridges and as we were the only full time operator, it was deemed too expensive to repair. Until further notice we now operate as far as Ballandean township.

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Up in the high country

Shortly, after leaving Cherry Gully, we come to the two Rosenthal Creek Bridges. The first bridge, which we pass over, was built in 1881 and is one of the oldest surviving plate girder bridges in Queensland.
It incorporates timber-skewed trestles, along with riveted plate girders, and clay brick piers.
The second bridge was also opened with the line in 1881. The surviving hollow brick abutments can be seen from the train along with the rendered brick piers. This bridge was replaced by a new concrete and steel bridge in 1964-65.
The girders of the original bridge were removed in 1965.
From here we enter a hard climb of a grade of 1 in 50 past the former locations of Kerrick (2482ft). Temangum (2506ft) and then wind back and forth through bushland before we reach the Dalveen Tunnel.



The length of this tunnel is only 141 metres, and it is situated only 1 kilometre from Dalveen.

The Dalveen Tunnel was constructed to pierce a spur in the Silverwood Range. It was one of the major works on the second contract to Stanthorpe. The tunnel is of semi-elliptic cross section, and is brick lined with brick arches and brick portals which features a date of 1880.
It was noted that the tunnel work here was something to be proud of, perfectly straight, true curves of arch, bright red brick and pure whiteness of stone facing, the whole tunnel being on a 1 in 50 grade.
The works were noted as being a great credit to all.

Upon leaving the tunnel, the climate seems to change suddenly, as we continue our climb all the way to Dalveen (2902ft). From the tunnel, we have risen another 500ft, all in the space of about 7km from Kerrick to Dalveen.
At Dalveen, we enter the Granite Belt, which is home of some of the state's best wineries. A new 'tunnel' has been created by the construction of the highway overpass over the railway line. From here we travel to Cottonvale (3002ft), where the Heritage Winery is located, being one of the many wineries located in the district. Cottonvale, having been the location of the Amiens branch line, which ran through to the soldier settlement district to the west of the railway. Stations were named after major battles that the AIF fought on the western front during the Great War. The Amiens branch closed in 1974.



Cottonvale Station was relocated to our Warwick yard and is now home to our small museum

SOUTHERN DOWNS STEAM RAILWAY
Our staff on board the carriages, as well as the driver, fireman & guard and those behind the scenes who maintain the locos and rolling stock, take the bookings, look after publicity and keep on top of all the paperwork & running costs, are all volunteers, who give up their time to make this trip so special.

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Over the summit

From here, we continue our way through the many wineries and orchards, passing the little station of Thulimbah (3010ft). The present station building dates back to the early 1900's. The Summit (3035ft) is the next station that we pass.
This is the highest point of the Southern Line and is also the highest railway station in Queensland. It was the last loading location for fruit trains, the last of which ran on the 29th of March 2007.





We now cross the New England Highway, as we descend into the outskirts of Stanthorpe. Known since the early part of the twentieth century, as one of Queensland's most attractive station environments, the railway opened in Stanthorpe (1662ft) in 1881.

Stanthorpe is a latinised name meaning 'Tin Village', a reference to the mining discovery that helped give birth to this town.

An attractive location with its curved platform, this station is well known not only for its plantings of flowers and trees, but also its high altitude, and late flowering seasons, it often won the Railway Commissioner's Annual Garden Contest.

Continuing south of Stanthorpe, we soon cross the Quart Pot Creek Bridge. This bridge was constructed over Quart Pot Creek in 1885-87. The local name of 'Red Bridge' is a reference to its original colour scheme. The bridge of lattice girder construction, with concrete piers, was designed in 1884.



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Joining our railway group as a member really helps us financially and we will keep you up to date with newsletters etc. Simply visit our website
www.downsexplorer.org.au/membership

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The last leg of our trip

Leaving Stanthorpe, we continue to descend through Passmore (2639ft), then Severnlea (2529ft) before reaching Glen Aplin (2491ft), where we start to rise for a short time into the Fletcher Bank (2545ft), before descending once again to Ballandean.

Ballandean is home to the many wineries, and vineyards, many of our passengers will be taking a winery & lunch tour, having left the train at Stanthorpe. Those travelling the full trip from Warwick receive a boxed lunch at Ballandean. Anyone taking the short tour from Stanthorpe can find lunch options at the local Ballandean Pub.

Ballandean Station in it's last days.
All the local stations of the Granite Belt were once very busy with the carriage of fruit and vegetables and also the transport of seasonal workers.



The Wallangarra station was built on an island platform, with station awnings on both sides.
The Queensland side was built to Queensland design and that on the standard gauge side to New South Wales style. Both colonies had name boards in their usual style, the Queensland one having a hyphen between Wallan-garra, whilst New South Wales substituted with Wallangarra.
In the official Queensland Railway correspondence post 1908, and in timetables the name Wallan-garra was subsequently referred to. In 1889 the Refreshment Rooms were opened in the station building.
Wallangarra was the major interstate link and reached its busiest period prior to the Second World War in the 1930's.
With the opening of the interstate standard gauge link through Kyogle in 1930, the importance of the Toowoomba Wallangarra Railway diminished.
During the Second World War the strategic importance of Wallangarra was vital in providing an inland transhipment and staging point during the defence of Australia.





Left: SDSR train crossing Devil"s Elbow trestle
Above: Queensland leg of the Sydney to Brisbane train about to depart, passengers & freight had to transfer due to the different state rail gauges.

NOTE: at the time of publication, there is once again a serious discussion at the highest State level to repair and reopen the fire-damaged section of track to Wallangarra. This would be great news for the whole community and local tourism industry. Fingers crossed, as they say!

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SOUTHERN DOWNS STEAM RAILWAY

About us

Brief History of the Southern Downs Steam Railway

Southern Downs Steam Railway began in 1995 as a community project to restore the former Warwick Locomotive Depot. Volunteers, with the assistance of training programs for the unemployed, set about rebuilding the site that is known today as the Warwick Railway Precinct.

The original locomotive depot, built here in 1912, had a seven bay locomotive shed. Attached to the shed were machinery shops that had all the facilities required to carry out major repair work to locomotives and rolling stock. There was a 60ft (18.2metre) locomotive turntable, two 80ft (25metre) tall water towers and many other buildings associated with a locomotive depot. However, with the opening of the coastal line between Brisbane and Sydney, came the closure of many local branch lines, and the cessation of passenger services. Warwick's pre-eminence as a railway centre faded into history.

When it closed in 1970, all the buildings above ground level were demolished and removed. All that survived was the turntable.
In 1996 a second group called the Southern Downs Steam Railway (SDSR) was formed for the purpose of restoring a steam engine that had once been based in the very depot.
The two groups soon amalgamated and now the Warwick Railway Precinct is home of the Southern Downs Steam Railway and its C-17 locomotive DH45 diesel and vintage carriage fleet.



Re-construction of the engine shed in the 1990s



Our very popular children's ride-on train is a regular sight during school holidays



OUR LOCOMOTIVE
What does C-17 mean?
"C" class means it has four sets of driving wheels.
"17" refers to the 17-inch piston diameter.
It was built in 1951 by Walkers of Maryborough Queensland

WALLANGARRA ROUTE: FAST FACTS
There are 53 bridges of various shapes and sizes, adding up to a total of 1.8 km
There are 2 tunnels, 292m and 141m long
There are 28 road crossings.

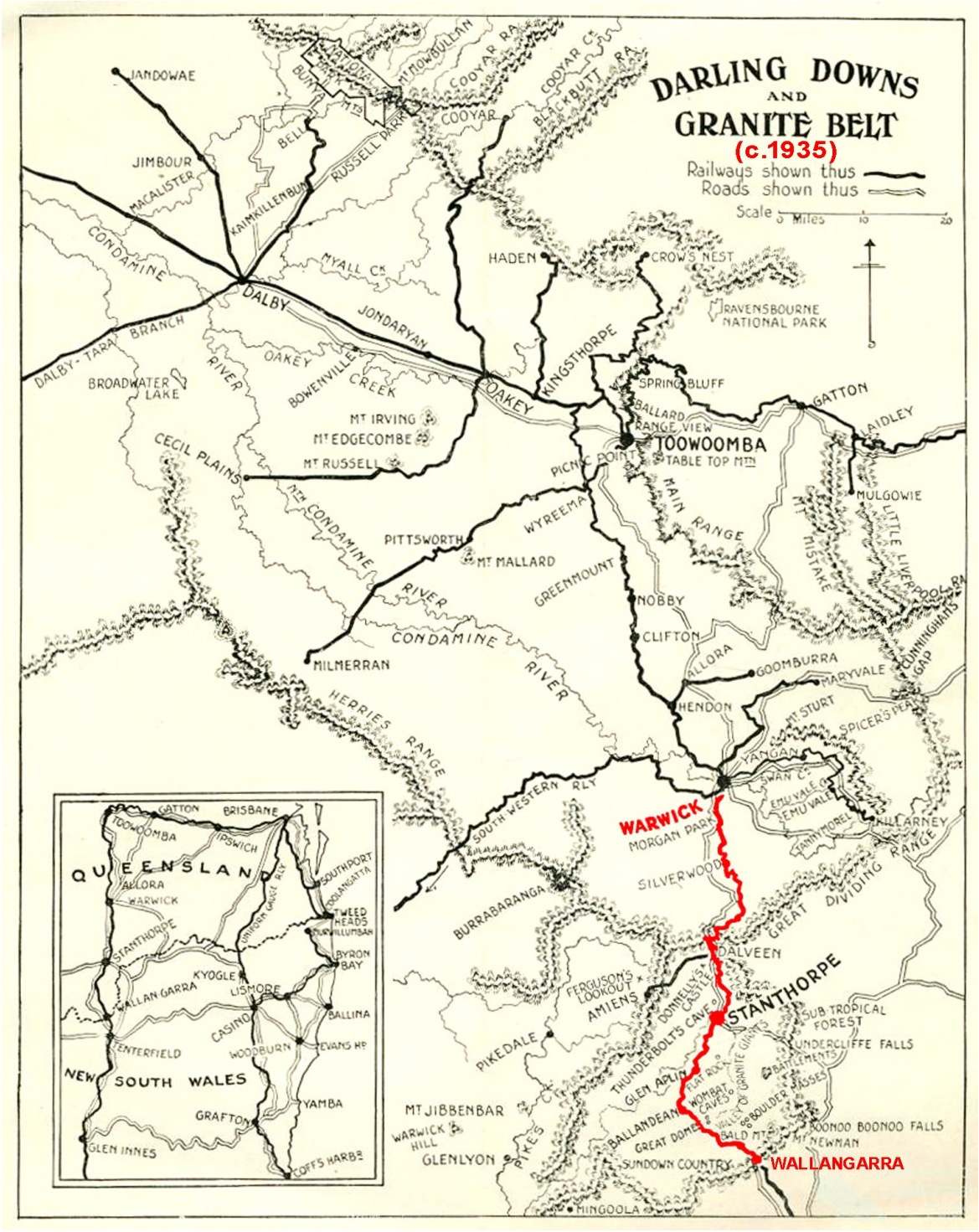
SOUTHERN DOWNS STEAM RAILWAY
Would you like to join our happy band of working volunteers?
Our working days are Wednesday & Thursday each week in Warwick yard where we maintain and rebuild our rolling stock. Or if you are only available at weekends you can help on our train trips up to twice a month. Drop in for a chat!

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OUR ROUTE

Darling Downs Railways 1935



SOUTHERN DOWNS STEAM RAILWAY
Thank you for travelling with us.
Every dollar raised from ticket sales is re-invested into maintaining and improving our railway. We hope to see you again soon. *From all the volunteers*

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