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Dining Car on Westgate

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Dining Cars provided seated meals (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner) on selected sectors on our trunk Mail Trains from around 1930 to 1970. Railway Refreshment Rooms (RRR) at various stations would provide light meals in the form of sandwiches, pies, drinks etc. Some larger locations provided sit down meals for sectors not covered by the dining cars.

Passengers not having meals in the dining cars need to wait for these stations for something to eat. Plus, many of these RRR had bars attached. In 1969 I worked Homestead (Mt Isa line, 73 Km's west of Charter Towers) which had a RRR, the manager lived on site, and her quarters were included in the RRR. It was privately run and I know a



cup of tea and a pie was not on the menu. When I arrived soft drinks were added to the menu. Mixed trains heading west, about one a day with five or six passengers would stop for

refreshments. It was more the local watering hole, most night around 10 o'clock you would be picking up the locals that went base over apex over the signal wires. Most were not in a condition to be able to return to their feet without assistance.

RRR managers a couple of hours before the due arrival of a train required train information, expected time of arrival and the train CANA. CANA was in the telegraph code was for number of passengers on the train. Hot drinks were served in china cups, the passenger would pay a deposit and be given a ticket which allowed the passenger to take the cup onto the train. At the next RRR the passenger could return the cup with the ticket and receive a refund. If a train was running late, the time at the station was reduced.

In 1970 all dining cars were converted to Griddle Cars which provided both meals and refreshments reducing the time required at stations, these cars were on the train for the entire



journey. Food Bar Cars were converted from first class seating cars for the western trains allowing the converted dining cars to work the Sunlander services.

The plan book does not show many Dining Cars, prior to the arrival of the Sunshine Cars, most appear to be conversions from other carriages. All up three Sunshine Express Dining Car were built, two (1255/1256) were built with first batch of cars and a third (1376) with the second series. Carriage 1376 was similar to other two carriages except for the windows in the kitchen end of the carriage. Car 1255 is in the current heritage fleet, Car 1256 became part of a Cooroy Restaurant in the butter factory siding and car 1376 was converted to a CW 74 camp wagon in April 1965.



In 1970, cars 1255 and 1256 were converted to Griddle Car. The kitchen area was extended to make a servery, gas bottles were added reducing seating from 30 to 22. These wooden cars were used on special trains that ran and

second division of mail trains running during holiday periods.

My model is a carriage from the first batch and is a 3 foot 6 model kit. During construction the only photos I had was of 1255 as a Griddle Car. Some features of the carriage were questionable as a dining car.



As per Norn, when finished you find the answers you were looking for, I located a John Armstrong photo of the carriage 1256 in 1964. My educated guess turned out to be correct.



The carriage body was painted with PGC "QR Passenger RED" lacquer paint. The dining area

was scratch build for styrene, very simple construction as only the top of the tables are visible. Seating was much the same, just blocks with backs made of styrene. The figures were given to me by Ken, an eBay purchase for a few dollars. I think the scale could be



1:100. The pack contained about 100 figures, with many repeats and not much detail. That would be OK given they were inside a carriage. The figures were hand painted with Model Colors. I find a drop of paint goes a long way and dries within a few minutes. The two cooks in the kitchen and the two waitress were Preiser figures.



From time to time some carriages had white wall types on the wheels, I don't think it lasted all that long, one of the Griddle Car photos shows the carriage with them. To give the carriage a smart look I added them with the view if I don't like it I can repaint them black.

The 1970 Supplement to Working Time Tables shows a 1720 locomotive can haul 510 tons on a passenger train consisting of ordinary carriages from Charleville to Brisbane. The maximum of vehicles must not exceed 15. The same locomotive can haul 370 tons between Murphy's Creek and Toowoomba in the UP direction heading west, that is about 12 carriages.

My second division of 13 down is marshalled similar to the Westlander at that time.

Loco, AL first class seating car, 2 DAS first class sleeping cars, dining car, 2 FBS second class sleeping cars, 3 BL second class seating cars, baggage car and mail van.

In the 1960/1970's a second division of the mail trains would run at Christmas, Easter and start and finish of school holidays. Roads around the state were not that good, many were just corrugated dirt roads that wrecked your car. Train was the way to travel, on holidays, kids to boarding school etc.

2ND WESTLANDER 15TH January 1975. DEL 1525, FBS 1245, AAS 1318, JCS 1175, FBS 1320, BL 1336/1246, MV 1059. (*Sunshine Express*)



Looking at the timetable, timing at Refreshments Rooms stops, staffing and the number of dining cars in service, plus the information in the *Sunshine Express*, I think having a dining car on train 2nd 13 would of been luxurious and most likely did not happen in real life. Management on the SWR looks after their passengers and goes the extra mile for their comfort, thus a dining car on my 2nd 13 down.

The train can be viewed running on the layout on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VAPDH29-eo>

Extra information on the operations of Dining Cars can be found on my blog <http://westgateswr.blogspot.com/2020/07/dining-cars.html>

Trust the information was helpful and assists with your modelling.....