

“The Seekers” at Riverstone

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It was during September 1967 and through the local “grapevine” at Neil Murray’s shop, I found out that “The Seekers” were filming a television special in the area on a steam train running between Riverstone and Mulgrave. After making further inquiries of the railway staff at the Riverstone Railway Station, it was confirmed that the four members of “The Seekers” would be filming in the area for about five days on a special train operating out of Riverstone.

Apparently the reason Riverstone and Mulgrave were chosen was because of the loop-lines, which meant the engine could turn about and again connect up with the carriages, thus running back and forth between the two locations. The special train was scheduled to run between regular train services on the Richmond Line.

The loco was a 30 Class Tank-Engine and I recall seeing this engine hauling two very large maroon/red carriages with the door in the centre, on several occasions during the five days of filming. Working for Neil Murray’s shop, I was out on the road much of the time delivering groceries to the shop customers in and out of town. The first time I encountered the train I was driving the delivery van along Railway Terrace from Schofields. I saw the tank engine on the up line at the set of points at the junction, and the two carriages were standing parked at the main platform at Riverstone Station.

The second time that I saw the special train, I was returning to Riverstone from a delivery at Vineyard, along Riverstone Parade. At that time, the train was travelling along the line heading in the same direction at a slow rate of speed, so it made it a lot easier to see what was going on in the carriages. It would have been about 2.00pm in the afternoon, and I stayed alongside the train from Otago Street at Vineyard to Melbourne Street. During the brief drive alongside the train, I saw several people on board who occupied the two carriages. In one carriage, two cameramen were busy using their cameras, aiming them in the direction of the woman inside the carriage. In those days they either used 16mm or 35mm film, and not video film like today.

The third and final occasion that I saw the train, was one afternoon about 3.00pm, when I was held up at the gates at the Railway Crossing in Garfield Road. At the time I was heading out to Marsden Park. I was first in line, and the train at that stage was heading back to its depot on the up line, prior to the peak time commencing on the line. As the train passed, I could clearly see the “Seekers”, Judith Durham, Bruce Woodley, Athol Guy and Keith Potger on board and peering out from the windows up Garfield Road. They were possibly taking a last glance of the town, as were the other passengers who accompanied them on the special train.

With the departure of this train, it was all the talk of the town and the residents of Riverstone were now eagerly awaiting the special presentation to appear on their television sets.

The screening of the special eventually took place on Monday night 29 April 1968 when “The World Of The Seekers” was presented at 7.30pm on TCN 9. It was an hour long show which was thoroughly enjoyable on our black and white television sets [no colour TV sets until 1975] and it was the main topic of conversation at Neil Murray’s Shop the next day.

As I watched the special, one of the songs titled “Angeline” came on. This segment was filmed at different locations in the area. At first it showed Bruce Woodley walking across the railway tracks at Mulgrave and up onto the platform. Then there were glimpses of an actress, Helen Shoults, as “Angeline” peering out of the window of the train carriage on her way to meet up with Bruce Woodley at Mulgrave Station. This scene on the train was taken over many re-takes, and in the background the tall iron bark trees in the Riverstone Meat Works Paddock at Vineyard appears, then more scenes were filmed to mix in along the line to Mulgrave, and another scene which showed more trees flashing by, which I feel was along Riverstone Parade on the way to Riverstone.

When the steam train is seen racing along the tracks, it is coming along the stretch of line nearing Vineyard Railway Station, the iron bark trees in the background giving the location away. Other scenes featured in the song, show the viaduct spanning Rickaby Creek between Windsor and Clarendon. There were two scenes of the viaduct, with the first on the northern where the farmer takes his hat off to the train as it crosses the viaduct from Clarendon side, and one scene from the southern side where the train crosses over again from the Clarendon end.

As the train arrives at Mulgrave from Riverstone, the steam engine goes directly under the camera. As there was no overhead bridge over the railway line, and it was doubtful that the camera man hung from the signals nearby, it is not clearly known how this scene was filmed. The steam engine used was a 30 Class Tank No. 3024. Film of this engine hauling the carriages was taken from a moving car. In all, the co-ordinated three minute segment filmed locally, and the song to go with it, was a pleasant one and one worth waiting for.



Whilst “The Seekers” were working in the area on the special television production, I was the projectionist at the Olympia Theatre Riverstone. A film that stays in my memory is “Georgy Girl” which was screening at the Olympia at the same time. The film featured “The Seekers” song hit “Georgy Girl” which was performed on the soundtrack.

In 1967, it was full steam ahead on the Richmond Line and possibly the reason why the location was selected for the segment for inclusion in the television special. At that time, steam trains still had two years to run on the Richmond Line before they were phased out.

The line was one of the last to use steam trains, and the last run was a “P” Class Steam Loco 3324 which made a brave showing as she pulled out of the Richmond platform on the 7.56am run to Sydney on Saturday morning of 25th October, 1969. As though aware of the significance of the occasion the old loco poured out a billowing cloud of thick black smoke from her funnel and a trail of steam hissed out from her valves. Fireman Colin Watkins and Driver Frank Breen took the old loco on her last run from Richmond. As from Saturday 25th October 1969 the few remaining “P” Class and small “S” Class tank locomotives were taken off the line and were replaced with the 48 Class Diesel-Electric Locomotives.