

# STATION STORIES

If railway stations could talk they'd have some interesting tales to tell; here are a few told through Australian news articles

## Port Adelaide, 1930



Conflicts between strikers, voluntary workers, 'scab' labourers and police occurred at the Port Dock Railway Station (pictured in 1952) during the strikes. The station was located where the Port Adelaide Police Station and this Museum now stand  
Doug Colquhoun Collection

### PORT ADELAIDE TROUBLE ON WATERSIDE CLASHES WITH POLICE WOMEN ATTACK VOLUNTEERS

Serious trouble occurred at Port Adelaide today, when the waterside workers left their jobs under threats from reputed leaders of the unemployed.

A number of shop windows were smashed and several clashes took place with the police. Near Robinson's Bridge the police charged with drawn batons into a crowd of about 1,000. There was not a casualty. The people quickly dispersed. Attempts will be made tomorrow to force the members of the Carters, Drivers, Storemen and Packers Union to withdraw.

Shortly before 8 o'clock this morning trouble broke out at Jervois Bridge, [and] at the Port Dock Railway Station. A woman rushed a volunteer near the bridge, knocked him down and jumped on him, scratching and screaming. A policeman forced the woman to release him. A crowd estimated at 1,000 waited at the dock for the arrival of the volunteers who were embarked on the city bound train under strong police guard, without further trouble.

During the morning £100 worth of damage was done to private property.

*Geraldton Guardian and Express, Thursday 28 August 1930, page 3*

## The Port Strikes

In 1929 the Great Depression hit, causing severe economic hardship for people around the world, including Australia. Global unemployment rose to all time highs, and on the streets of Port Adelaide striking labourers clashed with volunteer or 'scab' labourers and the police.

Lower pay, reductions in overtime rates and the scrapping of minimum shift lengths, plus the introduction of the 'Trade Workers Act' known by workers as the 'Dog Collar'\* (which required trade workers and labourers to carry a licence issued by the government) led to violent protests. Weapons were brandished, from firearms through to tools used by the labourers, such as bale hooks. As reported in the article, family members and wives of the striking labourers were also involved in some of the protests.

\*The Act requiring workers to carry a licence was referred to as the 'Dog Collar Act' because it made people feel like 'dogs on a leash'.



State police troopers on guard at Robinson bridge (no longer standing), near Todd Street, Port Adelaide, during the waterside workers strike, 27 September 1928  
State Library of South Australia B4918



Waterside workers queuing for workers licences, known as 'dog collars', outside the old Port Adelaide Police Station (now the Port Adelaide Visitor Information Centre). These licences were made compulsory by federal law  
State Library of South Australia B4917

## Broken Hill, 1915 and 1939



A photograph of the passengers aboard the Manchester Unity picnic train on the fateful day in 1915  
Image courtesy of The Broken Hill City Library, www.brokenhillaustralia.com.au

### FIRST BLOW OF WAR IN AUSTRALIA

#### WAS IT STRUCK AT BROKEN HILL?

If the explosion and fire at Broken Hill aerodrome were caused by an alien unfriendly to the British Empire, the first blow of the war struck in Australia will have again been in Broken Hill.

It will be recalled that in the early stages of the Great War the first blow struck in Australia was by two Turks, who fired on a picnic train proceeding to Silverton.

That was on 1st January 1915, and four persons were killed in the attack.

*Recorder (Port Pirie, SA: 1919 - 1954), Monday 11 September 1939, page 3*

## The Picnic Train Attack

The first half of the article refers to an explosion, which occurred in suspicious circumstances, at the Broken Hill aerodrome in 1939 at the start of World War II.

The explosion called to mind the event known as 'the Battle of Broken Hill', which occurred on New Year's Day 1915, during World War I. During the event two gunmen (incorrectly referred to at the time as "Turks") attacked passengers aboard a picnic train. The Y12 (the engine that pulled the picnic train that fateful day) and more information about the event can be found in the Fluck Pavilion within this museum.



Servicemen and local men return to Broken Hill township after the final gun battle at White Rocks  
State Library of South Australia PRG280



Sulphide Street Railway Station in Broken Hill. The site from which the picnic train departed shortly before the passengers were attacked  
State Library of South Australia PRG280

## Riverton, 1921



Portrait of Percy Brookfield, MP for Sturt from 1916 to 1921, who died while defending others from a gunman at the Riverton Railway Station  
State Library of South Australia B69875

### MR BROOKFIELD THE VICTIM CONDITION SERIOUS

A sensational shooting affray occurred at Riverton Railway Station about 8 o'clock on Tuesday morning during which Mr Percy Brookfield, MLA, was dangerously wounded. It is reported that a Russian got out of the Broken Hill express while the train was standing at the station and fired about 40 shots from a revolver, which he kept on reloading. The names of those shot are: Percival Brookfield, MLA. Two shots in stomach; Mrs M E Rice, Argent Street, Broken Hill, shot in the right breast; Mr D Crowhurst, farmer, Pinnaroo, shot in leg; William Smith, Peterborough, shot in thigh; William-John George, Wannup/West Australia, shot in leg.

It is stated that the Russian took complete charge of the Riverton Station, shooting all over the place until Mr Brookfield attempted to stop him, Mr Brookfield was despatched to Adelaide by special train. Other persons who were shot, but not so seriously injured as Mr Brookfield, are being treated locally. The man who did the shooting has been arrested.

*The Wyalong Advocate and Mining, Agricultural and Pastoral Gazette NSW Friday 25 March 1921*

## The Shooting of Percy Brookfield

The sad events that took place at Riverton Railway Station in March 1921 led to the death of politician Percival Stanley Brookfield, a man known for his passionate defence of the poor, unemployed and wrongly imprisoned. Brookfield was a member of the Australian Labor Party until 1919, he then joined the Industrial Socialist Labor Party.

Mr Brookfield was known as a radical politician and it was suggested at the time that the attack was an assassination plot, but this is doubtful. Mr Brookfield died while trying to stop the gunman, who reportedly suffered from mental illness. As his friends and colleagues reported at the time, his act of bravery in protecting and defending others was in keeping with his character.

Mr Brookfield was the only person fatally wounded during the event, and his actions prevented the endangerment of the others at the station that day.

Today at least one of the bullet holes can still be seen in the wall near the station refreshment room.



Riverton Railway Station, the site of the tragic shooting event of 1921  
State Library of South Australia B68909