



# A TRAIN- RIDING WEEKEND

Illustrated by R. J. Meyer

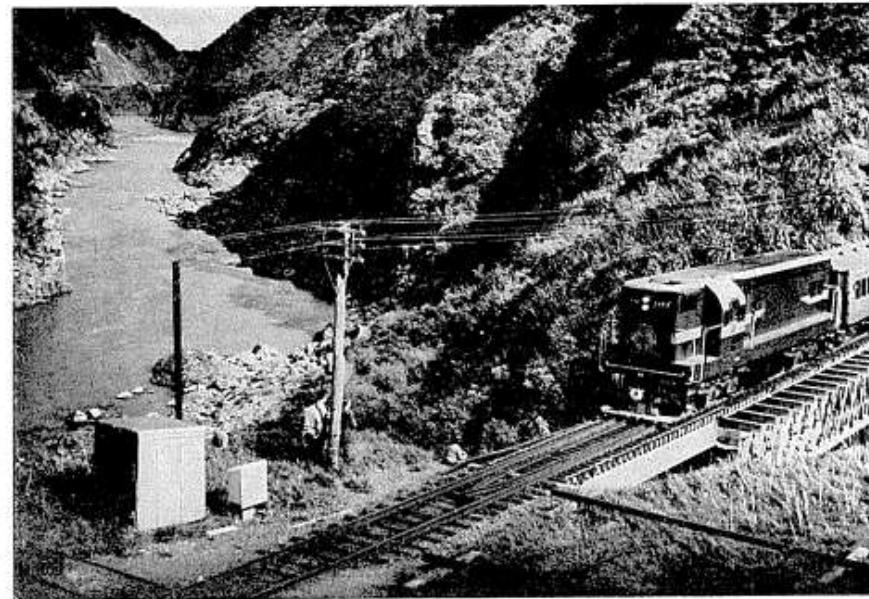
The NZRLS special from Palmerston North to Napier on Sunday, 25 October 1970, crossing the Pohangina River between Ashhurst and the Manawatu Gorge.

A varied and interesting programme was capably mounted by our Society's Manawatu Branch for the entertainment of members visiting Palmerston North for the Annual General Meeting on Saturday 24 October 1970. During the day, members visited the 10½-inch gauge Manawatu Miniature Railway at the Esplanade Gardens, where the scale model of a "Da" class locomotive was being put through its paces on the half-mile circuit with loads of passengers. We have been promised an article on this most interesting project, for which we understand a large scale model of a "Ka" class 4-8-4 steam locomotive is under construction.

Later in the afternoon, members gathered at the Manawatu-Oroua Electric Power Board Hall, where Society and other railway publications were on display and for sale. After a sumptuous buffet dinner, enjoyed by a large crowd, an illustrated talk on modern track maintenance methods and equipment was entertainingly presented by Mr Morton of the Railways Department's Way and Works Branch. The meeting proper wound up the evening.

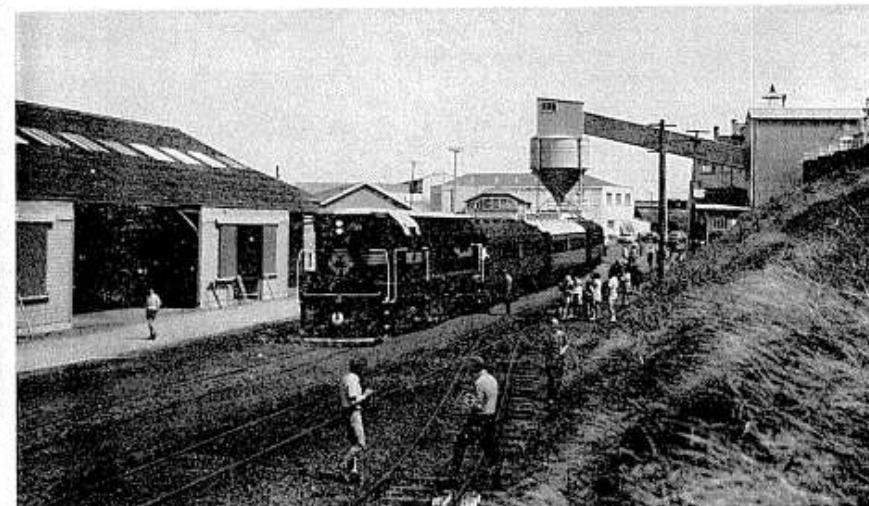
Sunday 25 October was given over to an excursion to Napier and back. Billed as the "Ahuriri Port Express", the train regrettably did not get as far as the port because departure from Palmerston North had to be delayed half an hour as a result of Sunday hotel breakfast complications. But "Da" 1484 with its 5-total 130-ton train left Palmerston North at 8.30 a.m. and reached Napier, 112 miles, at 12.24 p.m., after several photo stops and some long speed restrictions on the northern stretches. On the return journey, the train left Napier at 1.16 p.m. and was back in Palmerston North shortly after 5 p.m. The Manawatu Gorge near Woodville, and the viaducts north of Dannevirke were as interesting as ever.

Your editor was unable to stay for the "Castlecliff Caper" on Monday 26 October, but all reports indicate that this too was a most enjoyable day. This trip, timed out of Palmerston North at 8 a.m., included a stop for a visit to the Palmerston North Diesel Depot, and was due back at 3.15 p.m. after a fast run from Wanganui.



ABOVE: From a normally inaccessible vantage point in the Manawatu Gorge (except by rail), the special "Ahuriri Port Express" is seen emerging from the eastern portal of the No. 2 Tunnel.

BELOW: "Castlecliff Caper?" The Labour Day 1970 special at the end of the line, showing the industrialised character of this one-time private railway.





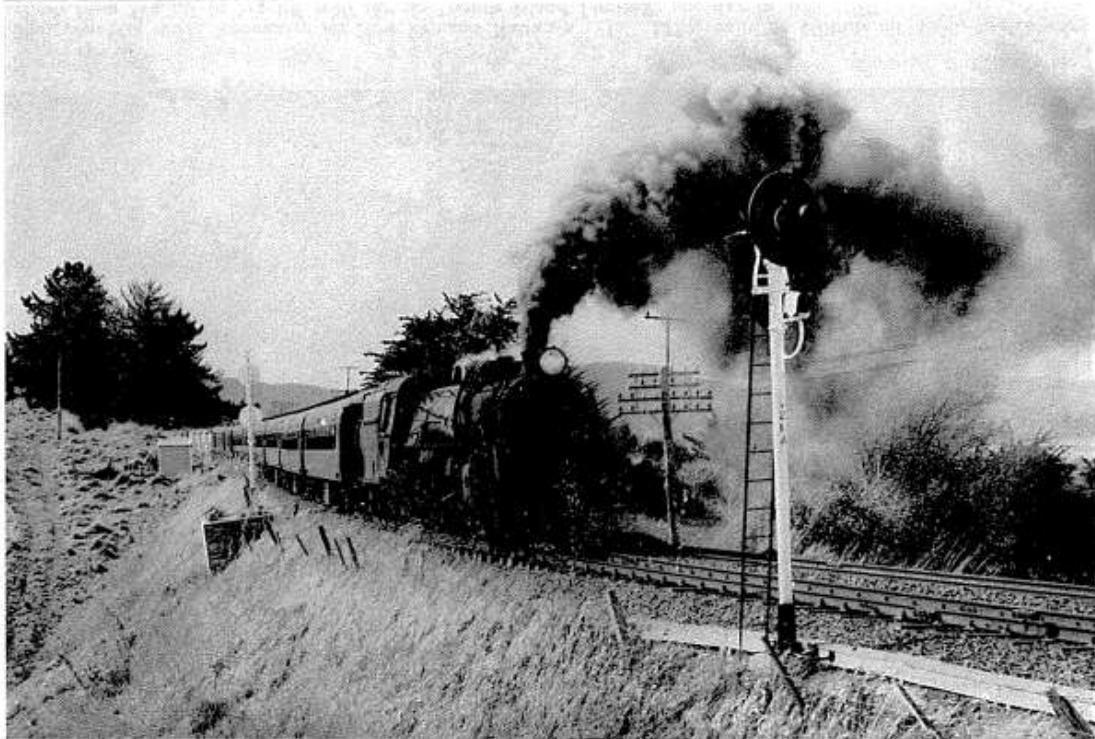
Photograph: D. L. A. Turner

In September 1970 one of the few surviving "J" class 4-8-2 locomotives of North British extraction, No. 1234, attacks the climb from Merton to Puketeraki with the down "South Island Limited".



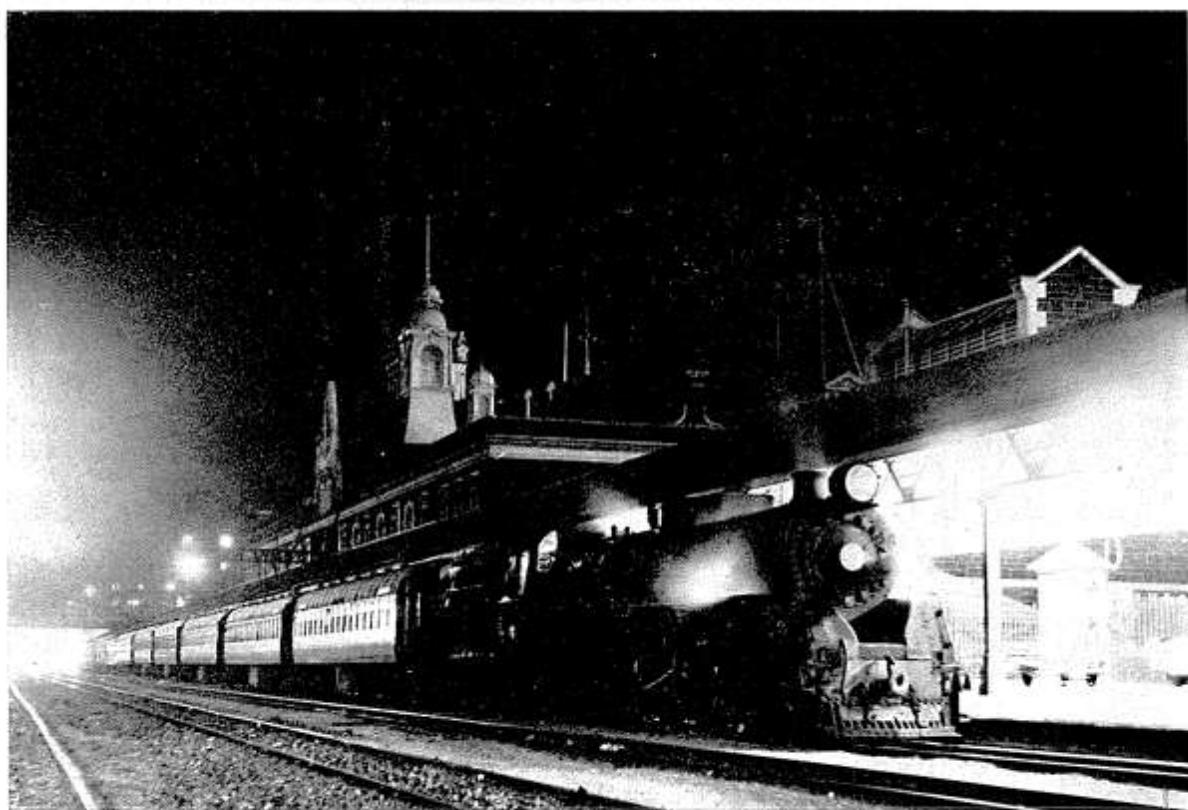
Photograph: D. L. A. Turner

The youngest steam locomotive on New Zealand Railways, "Ja" 1274, built at Hillside in 1956, begins the climb from Waitati to Seacliff with the up "South Island Limited" one day in July 1970.



Photograph: B. R. Poulsen

Near the last days of steam operation on the "South Island Limited", "J" 1234 is seen again, this time in October 1970, approaching Puketeraki on the climb from Merton to Seacliff (between Oamaru and Dunedin).



Photograph: B. R. Poulsen

Steam locomotive working on the NZR by the close of 1970 was confined to Friday and Sunday overnight expresses on the Invercargill-Dunedin-Christchurch route. Here "Ja" 1258 stands at Dunedin with train 190 in October 1970.