PRECEDENCE BY SENIORITY:

“Start the way you mean to go on!” The N.S.W. Government Railways took this to heart on the Illawarra line; the first engine to work through from Sydney was the oldest surviving loco on the system. No. 5, “Governor-General,” was such an antique that she boasted a four-wheel tender, and as originally built had neither cab nor spectacle plate (early enginemen were tough—they had to be!), though these concessions to a weaker generation had been added long before she came down the coast. She had been imported in 1856 by William Randle, contractor for the original Sydney to Parramatta Junction line, who had secured the contract for the extension to Liverpool. She was an 0-4-2 with 4’6” driving wheels (obviously not built for speed), and weighed, with tender, about 30 tons. On completion of Randle’s Liverpool contract, she was sold to the Government, and spent over thirty years on unspectacular workings—construc-
tion trains on the Blue Mountains, Parramatta suburban services, and the like.

Her moment in history came on 20 September 1888, when, although the Waterfall-North Clifton section was not officially open, she was able to get through to provide relief for the overworked “Bogan” on the isolated line between North Clifton and Bombo.

But “the old grey mare, she weren’t what she used to be,
   Many long years ago.”

In March 1891 she was relegated to hauling trucks in Bombo quarry, where her last job was supplying steam for the crushers. She was scrapped in 1893. She had been a good old maid of all work in her day, and she founded a tradition, which lasted almost as long as steam, of the kind of loco the Commissioner for Railways would allot to Illawarra:

“You’ll soon get used to her looks,” said he,
   ‘And a very nice girl you’ll find her —
   She may very well pass for forty-three
   In the dark with a light behind her!”

Still, elderly as they were, and ugly as some of them may have been (the most devoted lover of steam could hardly have seen much beauty in an 1-class [26] saddle-tank), they were infinitely nicer than the faceless things that have usurped their place.