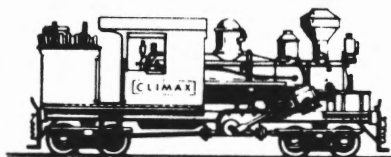


WOODEN RAILS TO KINGLAKE AND FLOWERDALE

by R. ALGER



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Timber tramways of Whittlesea
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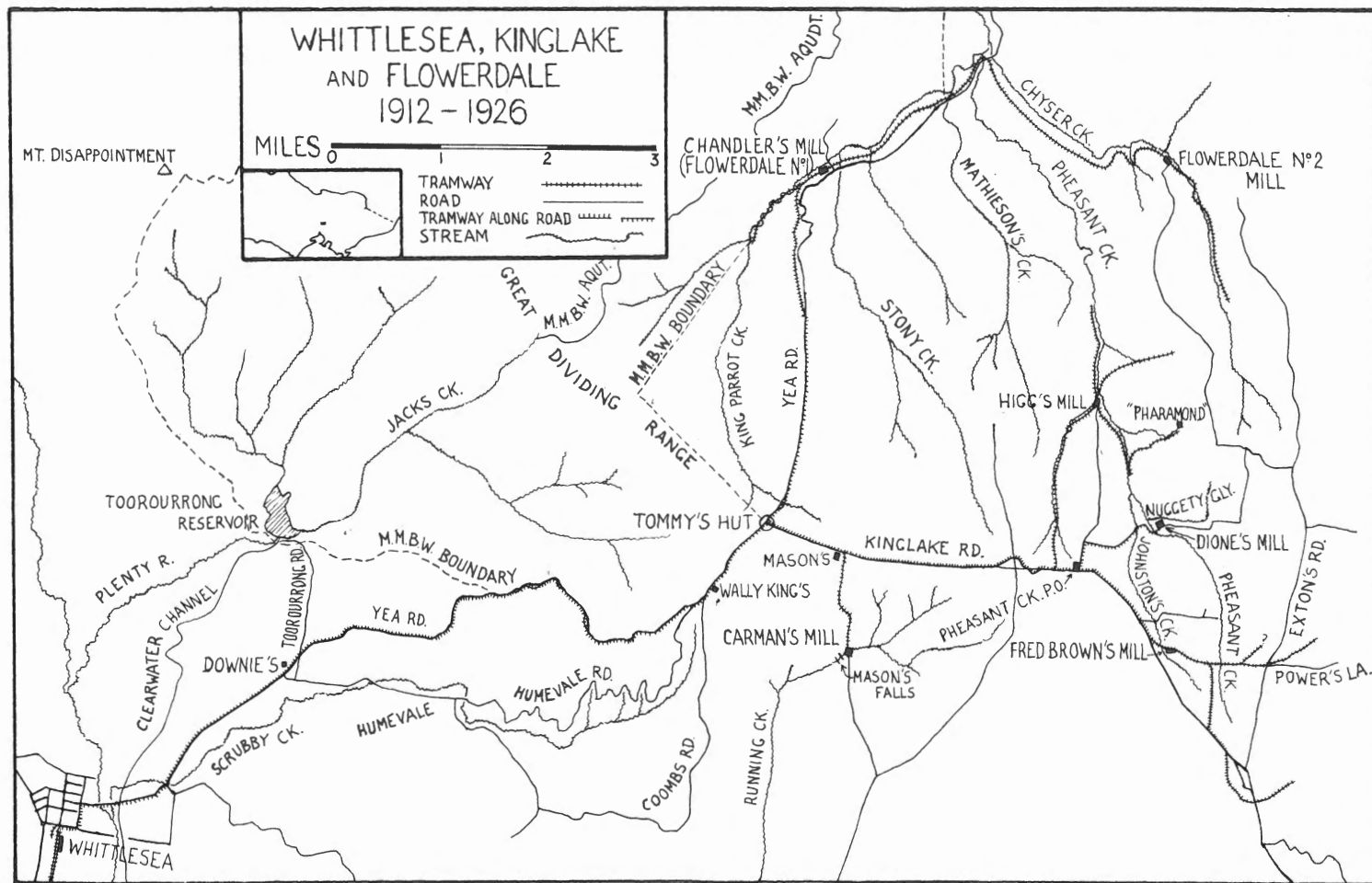


Front cover: John Dwyer with a seven horse team bringing a load of sawn timber along Yea Road, at Keables, one and a half miles from Tommy's Hut, on the way to Whittlesea .

Photo: courtesy John Dwyer

Above: 'Tommy's Hut' in 1925, showing the tramway in the foreground. The original Tommy's Hut building had disappeared by the time this picture was taken.

Photo: Late F. Rayment courtesy P.J.Rayment



Wooden Rails to Kinglake and Flowerdale

by Ralf Alger

Between the years 1911 and 1926 a 3ft gauge tramway was operated from Whittlesea to Kinglake and Flowerdale. Its original purpose was to transport timber from the bush mills to the railhead at Whittlesea but it was also used to carry farm produce, mainly potatoes, to Whittlesea and to a less extent to carry goods in the opposite direction.

Whittlesea, 28 miles north-north-east from Melbourne is situated at the foot of the Great Dividing Range. From as early as 1853, forests to the north on the slopes of Mount Disappointment had been worked, firstly by piling splitters and then by timber millers. In 1857 Yan Yean Reservoir was built and those same forests were its watershed. A few years later the activities of the timber-getters were causing such massive soil erosion that the water run off was often too silted for use. As a consequence the watershed area was closed to logging in 1871. The loggers then turned their attentions to the Kinglake Plateau, ten to twenty miles to the east where there were virgin forests of magnificent timber.

Settlers had first come to the Kinglake area about 1860 but the absence or inadequacy of roads had delayed development. Gold was discovered there in 1863 and in the years 1868-1870 there was a gold rush at Nuggetty Gully where hundreds of Chinese were said to have worked. Timber mills operating in the area had the problem of transporting the timber to Whittlesea or other centres over poor roads. Timber wagons were hauled by bullock or horse teams and one enterprising firm, Munro & Raynor, with a mill at Pheasant Creek, used a steam traction engine.

A piling splitter named Tommy Gibson carried his palings 8-1/2 miles to Whittlesea by wheelbarrow. Later Tommy used his crude hut at Kinglake West as a sly grog shop and for many years after, this locality was known as Tommy's Hut. But whatever the means of locomotion, the road to Whittlesea (which had a rail connection to Melbourne from 1889) was proving quite unequal to the demands being made on it and was rutted and dusty in summer and a mud bath in winter. (In this connection it is interesting to note that when this road was being rebuilt more than forty years later, pieces of timber which had been used to extricate

bogged vehicles were found 3ft 6in below the surface.)

The tramway was built to solve this transport problem. Munro & Raynor (Kinglake Sawmills Pty Ltd) with a new mill at Johnston's Creek were the builders of this first line. Over the next fifteen years other mills to use the tramway were Higgs', Dione's, Carman's, Chandler's (Flowerdale No.1) and Flowerdale No.2. In all about forty miles of tramline were laid, including logging lines, and it was almost entirely wooden railed. Motive power throughout was provided by horse teams of from two to nine horses although on two occasions attempts were made to use mechanical power.

Johnston's Creek Mill

This mill was often known as Fred Brown's Mill after its manager, an Englishman, and was 12½ miles from Whittlesea, at an altitude of about 1800ft. Logging lines were laid as required to bring in logs after timber around the mill had been used. The first of these ran due east from the mill, crossing the infant Pheasant Creek on a log bridge 25ft high and continuing on to Exton's Road, which it crossed at Power's Road corner. It then ran north-east for about a quarter of a mile to log an area at the head of Harts Creek. A second line branched from this one just before the log bridge and ran south to Kinglake Road which it followed on the north side for a short distance before crossing it and entering a forest area to the south. This line was further extended easterly to cross Kinglake Road again, near the present site of the SEC substation and continued on to log an area at the head of Island Creek, a tributary of the Yea River. The end of this line would have been about fifteen miles from Whittlesea.

A platform for loading potatoes was built by a local farmer, John Lawrey, near the first crossing of Kinglake Road. He used to hire bogies from the timber company on which he mounted a contrivance to carry the potatoes, and had his own horse team which he drove along the tramline into Whittlesea. He had built a loop-line around Fred Brown's mill.

A third logging line branched off the first on the far side of the Pheasant Creek bridge and turned northerly probably to forest areas at the head of

Captain's Creek. (This line should not be confused with a line operated between 1935 and 1948 along or parallel to Exton's Road and running from Kinglake Road to Mount Robertson.)

The first attempt to use mechanical power on this tramway was made when a McDonald internal-combustion tractor, converted to run on rails, was used on the logging lines into Fred Brown's mill. It was unsuccessful due to having insufficient traction. Drivers of horse teams were delighted at its failure.

This mill was unusual in that its machines were driven by rope belts and a retired sea-captain, Captain Stoddart was employed to splice them.

The line from the mill towards Whittlesea sidled round a hillside to join Kinglake Road which it followed on the north side all the way to Kinglake West or Tommy's Hut, about four miles. This section was along the crest of the Great Dividing Range and although this part of the range is comparatively level there were undulations with a few short steep grades. At Tommy's Hut the line crossed Kinglake Road and then followed Yea Road on the south side. At Wally King's, near Coombs Road there was a passing loop. (Wally King was one of the first employed to do maintenance work on the line but this job was taken over later by Dave Beattie).

More undulations with a few small cuttings and embankments for about 2¼ miles took the line to a point, altitude 1600ft, where the descent off the range began in earnest. In the next couple of miles the line dropped 400ft. There is a ten chain forested reservation along the south side of the road in this section and use was made of this to keep a workable grade by sidling around some of the hills that the road went over. Four miles past Tommy's Hut the line crossed to the north side of the road and levelled out for a short distance - a kind of lull before the storm because a sudden steep descent dropped 300ft in just over half a mile at an average gradient of about 1 in 11. This section had more accidents than any other part of the tramway.

It was the custom here and on other steep downgrades to unhitch the horses and let them come on behind while the driver let the load down with careful use of the brakes. Brakes consisted of bell-shaped wooden blocks which could be pulled up between the wheels of a bogie by means of levers and a system of ropes (one inch in diameter) and pulleys. The normal consist between Tommy's Hut and Whittlesea would be two loads of timber carried on four bogies and the driver would ride on the rear load operating the brakes by leaning sideways or backwards on the ropes. Brake failure

could occur if brakes blocks were burnt out or if wheels would not grip on frost or ice-covered rails.

John Dwyer has given an account of one occasion when he arrived at the top of this descent with burnt out brakes. He took the horses off and decided to let the load run down by itself. One load stayed on, the other came off, breaking the draw bar. It was not uncommon for timber or potatoes to be scattered over the property on Toorourrong Road corner at the foot of this hill. Jim Thomas tells of the time a butcher's cart pulled by two horses tried to race him down the slope. 'They had to gallop to keep up with me,' he said and, still showing regret, 'but they got away from me on the level.' (This story by Jim Thomas has been disputed by both John Dwyer and Leo Lawrey who said it would have come off. However if the track was in fairly new condition it is possible, as shown by the fact that one of John Dwyer's loads stayed on, running down without brakes.) Drivers did not always escape unhurt. George Brain was thrown off and fell with a hand under the wheels.

John Downie

The line continued still on the north side of the road and in a quarter of a mile there was another passing loop outside John Downie's property. Downie, farmer, cattle dealer, and contractor had a contract to operate the line between Whittlesea and Tommy's Hut over the whole period of operation but this did not preclude others from using it. No operator was permitted to carry goods or passengers for hire. Behind Downie's house on a nearby hill were stables for 36 horses (the stables are still there) and he had the weekend job of shoeing horses and was helped by his wife in maintaining harnesses and nosebags.

From here into Whittlesea the line followed the road on a fairly level grade through cleared farmlands, crossing to the south side on a short length of steel rails just before the first of five bridges. These road bridges were used by the tramway and spanned Scrubby Creek (a double bridge named Whisky Bridge and Brandy Bridge), Clearwater Channel, (connecting Toorourrong Reservoir and Yan Yean Reservoir), Scrubby Creek again and the Plenty River.

Whittlesea

In Whittlesea the tramline took a left turn down the east side of Forest Street then a right turn along the south side of Laurel Street, making use of the street margins to ease the curves. A left turn on steel rails took it into the rail yards. The terminal arrangements here were simple but effective. The line divided, with the left hand branch being the

arrival track which was elevated on to a platform to facilitate unloading into rail wagons. When second or third trams arrived the horse teams would be unhitched and led down the escape ramp as shown in the photograph.

Unloaded bogies were left on the right hand track ready for return to Downie's or one of the mills. The interests of the saw-millers were watched over by Ned Harding, tally clerk, who lived in Whittlesea next to the railyards.

Higgs' Mill

The next mill to have a tramway connection was Higgs' Mill built about 1916 and lasting till about 1924. It was later known as Flowerdale No.3. Situated in the valley of Pheasant Creek nearly two miles north of Kinglake Road and with fern gullies all around, this must have been a very beautiful spot before the tall trees started falling. The mill machinery may have come from Fred Brown's Mill as Munro & Raynor had been bought out by Coghlan & Baxter who in turn were bought out by John Higgs.

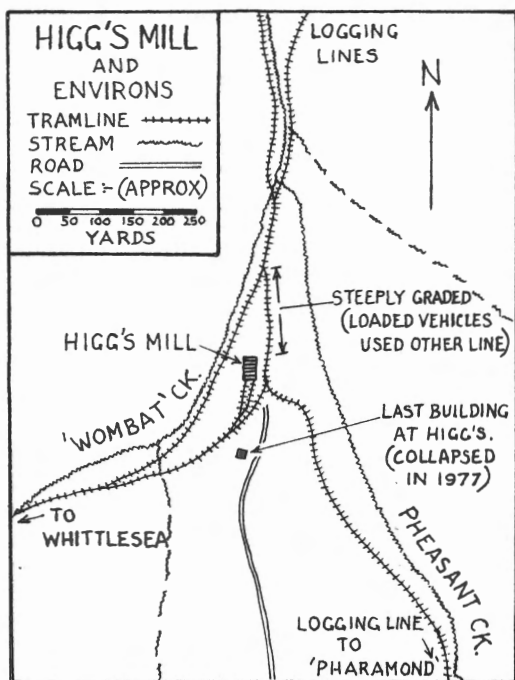
There were three logging lines each about a mile long radiating from this mill as well as the access line which would have served for logging too. One of these lines ran upstream along the west bank of Pheasant Creek for just over half a mile, then

crossing it almost at water level to a dead end. From here the track ran out in a reverse direction via points to sidle around the east side of the creek, climbing steadily to finish just short of 'Pharamond' homestead. This line was used to log the Pharamond Estate owned by C.E. Collier, who also had a job on tramline maintenance. (Note: The 1:50 000 Military Survey Map of 1958 'Glenburn' shows Pharamond at grid reference 317796 but this is incorrect, the point shown being Higgs' Mill at which site the last building collapsed in 1977. Pharamond is at 329794.)

Another line crossed Pheasant Creek about a quarter of a mile north of the mill and climbed up the east side of the valley fairly steeply, sidling around the hillside and turning into a small gully which it followed in an easterly direction to nearly reach the top of the spur between Pheasant and Chyser Creeks. The third line crossed Wombat Creek and followed Pheasant Creek downstream (north) on the west side bank always fairly close to the rushing water. (There is some doubt about the name 'Wombat Creek'. Bert Giddons called it Wombat Creek, but seemed unsure about the name, and no one else has been able to verify or contradict him on this.)

Hauling timber out of Higgs' Mill was a trial for both horses and drivers. To join the main tramline along Kinglake Road nearly 300ft had to be gained in a distance of $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles at an average grade of 1 in 32. The line followed 'Wombat' Creek mainly on the east bank except for a short stretch on the west bank about half a mile from the mill. It joined the main line less than a quarter mile west of Pheasant Creek P.O. This line was usually worked by Jack Johnston who had a much admired team of nine large horses.

It was the practice of drivers from the mills to take a single load to Tommy's Hut (or sometimes to Masons, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile short of Tommy's Hut) where it would be picked up, two loads at a time, by John Downie's drivers for the run into Whittlesea. Unloaded bogies were left at these points for return to the mills. Sometimes Downie's drivers would work right through to the mills. John Dwyer has related how on one occasion when he had to take a load of timber from Higgs' Mill, Jack Johnston and Ned Harding were standing by. Johnston remarked that he (Dwyer) would 'never make it'. He says it was important to know when to rest the horses and when to drive them hard. Horses were driven by word of mouth and although whips were carried some drivers used them rarely.





The tramway loading platform at Whittlesea railway station, showing a horse team coming down the ramp, after having brought in the trucks of timber on the right. From left to right are John Dwyer, Bert Brown, and Ned Harding. Photo: I.C. Gibbs, courtesy Mrs Hillier

Steam Power

The steam traction engine which had been used ten years earlier to road-haul timber into Whittlesea turned up again here, this time fitted with flanged wheels. It proved unsuccessful on the tramline because of frequent derailments. Doubtless it split many rails. One can only wish for a photograph of this monster running on the 3ft gauge.

Dione's Mill

The dates of operation of Dione's are not known but it was short-lived. Situated in Nuggetty Gully with Fred Brown's Mill on one side and Higgs' on the other its reserves of timber were probably not extensive. It had a tramline along Nuggetty Gully Road to join the main line at Pheasant Creek Post Office. It is interesting to recall that Nuggetty Gully was the site of a gold rush fifty years earlier.

Carman's Mill

Carman's Mill operated between the years 1919 to 1922 and was situated right at the top of Mason's Falls on Running (or Sugarloaf) Creek. It was the

only mill on the Whittlesea tramline situated south of the Divide. Logs for the mill came from the valley of Running Creek above and below the falls and also from the slopes of Mount Sugarloaf but it is not known whether there were any logging tramlines. Timber from the mill was hauled up an inclined tramway by winch and cable, rising 250ft in a quarter of a mile at a grade of 1 in 6. Beyond the winch where the line rose another 100ft the horse teams took over, reaching the main line along Kinglake Road in half a mile. Part of this line ran through Mason's Farm property.

Carman's drivers drove right through to Whittlesea but the junction at Mason's was often used as a transfer point where timber from Higgs was picked up by Downie's drivers and empties were left for return to the mill. The use of this point instead of Tommy's Hut was probably for economic reasons as the easier grades against the load from here into Whittlesea permitted two loads to be hauled by the horse teams.

Chandler's Mill

In 1920 Chandlers established a mill near the

confluence of King Parrot and Stony Creek (also spelt Stoney). This mill was later known as Flowerdale No.1 and also as Stony Creek Mill. A tramway branched from the earlier Kinglake line at Tommy's Hut and followed the Yea Road on the east side for $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, crossing the road right at the mill site. This line was built under contract by J. Cummings and T. Brain. Jim Cummings has given a brief description of building the lines.

Earthworks were done with pick and shovel and horse drawn scoop. Rocky sections were blasted. Hardwood sleepers, usually 4in x 6in x 5ft were set in the earth. Hardwood rails were 3in x 4in x 18 or 20ft and nailed to the sleepers with 6in nails. Usually spaces between the sleepers with 6in nails. Usually spaces between the sleepers were filled with timber. Some track layers had trouble on the curves but rails could be curved satisfactorily if one end was nailed down and then the loose end levered around with crowbars before being nailed down.

For this line the Shire of Yea required the tramline to use its own bridges. Only one sizeable bridge was required being about 12ft high over the infant King Parrot Creek about half a mile out of Tommy's Hut. The last mile or so before the mill, running by the roadside was steeply graded with sharp curves and where many derailments occurred. Quite early, a deviation was built, being about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and running up a gully on the west side of the road, then crossing the road to the original alignment.

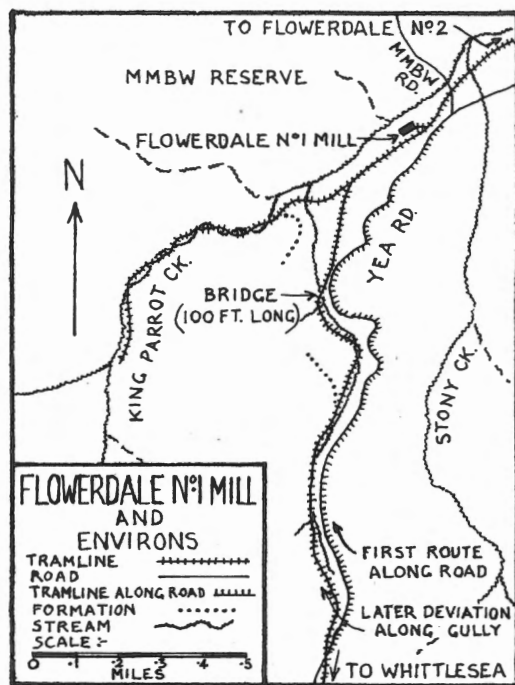
Chandler's, or Flowerdale No.1

Chandler's Mill was situated on the narrow strip of reserved land between Yea Road and King Parrot Creek and a quarter of a mile upstream from Stony Creek. The other side of King Parrot Creek was reserved too - miles of it as the watershed area of Wallaby and Silver Creeks including a system of aqueducts built in 1883 to bring water from north of the Divide to supplement the supply to Toorourrong and Yan Yean Reservoirs. Unfortunately for the timber company this area was not open to them. Most of their logs were to come from the King Parrot Valley to the south-west. Half a mile upstream from the mill the creek runs through a narrow twisting gorge with vertical cliffs in places up to 50ft high. A logging line was built through this gorge, crossing the creek eight times in half a mile and entering the forest area where the valley widens.

Most of the bridges were fairly simple consisting of a log on each bank to serve as an abutment with two logs placed across them to carry the track. The

eighth bridge was long enough to require a pier in the middle. They were subject to damage by flood. At the point where this line entered the gorge a formation can be readily found, joining it in a reverse direction and sidling rather steeply up the spur. Was this another logging line? Leo Lawry who used to live at No.1 Mill does not remember it. It was probably a formed and graded snig track similar to one which leads to the main line about a mile from the mill.

As with Higgs' Mill but more so, horses and drivers faced a severe task hauling timber out of Flowerdale No.1 as the line climbed 350ft in the first $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles at an average grade of 1 in 22. One of the drivers on this section was John Lawrey and it is interesting to note that he drove on various parts of the tramway over its whole period of operation. He was an Englishman, or more precisely a Cornishman, and migrated with his family in 1865 at the age of four. They became orchardists at the property 'Trenowen' in Diamond Creek. At the age of 19 John took up land in Kinglake. The first time he travelled to Whittlesea he had to cut his own track towards Kinglake West. He served a term as President of Eltham Shire and died in 1940 at the age of 79. He was still driving horse teams on this difficult section of tramway at the age of 64.





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The first quarter mile from the mill was easy enough to where the logging line branched off on its way to the little gorge, but then the main line turned southwards climbing steadily up the east side of the gully. It reached a point quite close to, and about 20ft below the road where the gully side was steep and rocky and then turned on to a bridge up and across the gully to the other side, which was not so precipitous. This bridge was over 100ft long and for most of its length was 10 to 12ft high. The piers were the usual 'pigsty' construction (criss-crossed logs).

A few yards further on there was another bridge 3ft high and 25ft long over a side gully. Immediately after this came quite a tight spot with the line curving upwards round a narrow rocky ledge in a section where the gully floor was rising rapidly so that when the line turned into a narrow opening it was just about level with the small creek. From this point on the gully is evenly graded and becomes wider so that the line ran either on the west side with a slight sidling cutting or right up the middle with a small ditch on either side. The line emerged from the gully on a rise, dropped slightly to a hollow where it crossed to the east side of the road exactly two miles from Tommy's Hut.

This gully was the site of an accident which happened to Bert Lawrey, brother to Leo and who drove only occasionally. He was returning to No.1 Mill one evening at dusk with a rake of empties and a seven horse team. He had not allowed for the steepness of the grade and had brakes only on the bogie he was riding on. With the horses nearly bolting down the gloomy gully he wisely decided to bail out. All the horses went over the edge near the bridge. Some bogies came off; some stayed on; one crashed into the wall on the far side of the bridge. Surprisingly there was only one casualty, a badly grazed horse, and help was not far away at the mill.

Flowerdale No.2

In 1922, Flowerdale Timber Company built a new mill on Chyser Creek and extended the tramline to serve it. Leaving Chandlers Mill, the line ran through the strip of forested land between Yea Road and King Parrot Creek crossing Stony Creek, Mathieson's Creek, Pheasant Creek and two smaller creeks on its own bridges. There were passing loops on the far side of Stony Creek and the near side of Pheasant Creek.

Immediately after crossing Pheasant Creek, two miles from No.1 Mill the line turned sharply right, crossing Yea Road, then through a farm property and headed up the valley of Chyser Creek, on the south-west side on a well graded track rising 350ft in a further 2½ miles. The valley of Chyser Creek at this point is steep and rocky with waterfalls just below the mill site. Above the waterfalls the valley levels out to some extent at an altitude of about 1500ft - a very beautiful valley. To the north and east the folded hillsides rise steeply to about 2000ft and at that time were densely covered with tall forest growing from fertile red soil. Chyser Creek was a clear stream gurgling between banks of ferns.

A logging line went on from the mill following Chyser Creek on the west bank for about half a mile then crossing to the east bank on a 12ft high bridge. There was a loading ramp here but soon the line crossed back to the west bank, this time almost at water level. Another low level bridge and it was on the east bank again. A Lands Department map of 1923 marks 'Excision for Tramway' on the east bank for 2¼ miles above the mill but it is doubtful whether the line was built to this point.

Chyser Creek

About 1½ miles upstream from the mill an area on the east bank about 50 yards across had at some time in the past been sluiced out; two old water races led to it from higher up the creek. It is probable that these works were done in the gold rush days of 1868-70. Leo Lawrey said that 'Chyser' means 'no good' or 'worthless' (for gold), so this operation may have given the creek its name. Later maps spell it 'Shiser'.

Before reaching the sluiced area, the tramway turned up a small gully and crossed it on an inclined log bridge. Traces of a line have been found on the rim of the sluiced area but apparently it went no further. The inclined log bridge is aligned with wheel tracks which lead up to the Mount Robertson Road. It is possible the line was laid here but obliterated by later logging operations as so often happens. A winch hauled line was operated somewhere on the eastern side of Chyser Creek but this location seems hardly steep enough. The winch, wherever it was, was belt driven from a steam traction engine (Old Faithful again?) and was also used to haul logs into the loading point. Ernie Westworth (Jun.) mentioned another site about half a mile north of this, where there are more wheel tracks but again not very steep. A winch operated at this place driven by a single-cylinder kerosene engine but this may have been at a later date.

Left: The tramway between Flowerdale No. 1 Mill and Chyser Creek, shortly after closure; about 1927.

Photo: C. A. H. Alger

Life at the Mills

There was a boarding house at No.2 Mill run by Mrs E. Westworth (Sen.) and also huts where some of the mill workers lived. Some too, may have lived on farms two or three miles away although road access to the mill was usually rough. Work went on in all weathers and a man with wet clothing had little chance of drying out except to stand by the boiler while eating his tea. One well remembered character who worked on the logging operations at No.2 Mill was Ferdie Denerez (pronounced Deneary). He was well known to soak his socks in dripping (to keep them dry?) and when his feet emerged from the mud and slush he would be seen to be wearing a boot on one foot and a dancing pump on the other (due to a permanent injury to one foot). A story is told about him when he was sharing a hut with Herbie Campbell. One night they had sausages frying on the fire and noticed a dirty looking black stuff dripping into the pan. It turned out to be coming from Ferdie's socks hanging up to dry in the chimney. Doubtless Ferdie had all the sausages that night.

Children living in the mills had to make their own amusements. Bert Giddons lived at Higgs' Mill as a child and had to walk 3½ miles to school at Kinglake West. In cases of sickness or accident,

and timber mills have always had their share of accidents, it was not much consolation to anyone needing urgent medical attention to know that the nearest doctors were at Whittlesea, Yea or Yarra Glen, several hours away over rough roads.

A Trouble Spot

The route out of Flowerdale No.2 being mainly downhill on a fairly easy grade would have presented few difficulties except for one place about half a mile below the mill. Here a steep little branched gully came in from the south. As originally laid, the line entered this gully and ran to a dead end. A reverse in direction via points then took the line out along the other side of the gully. A lot of work went into this arrangement as the dead end, about 15 yards long, had been blasted out of solid rock. A ramp for exit of the horses had been built with a rock fill bridge across the small creek, to transfer the horses to the other end of the tram. However this proved to be a very cumbersome procedure. In addition to unhitching and hitching the horses, all brake ropes had to be re-arranged and this hassle happened in both directions.

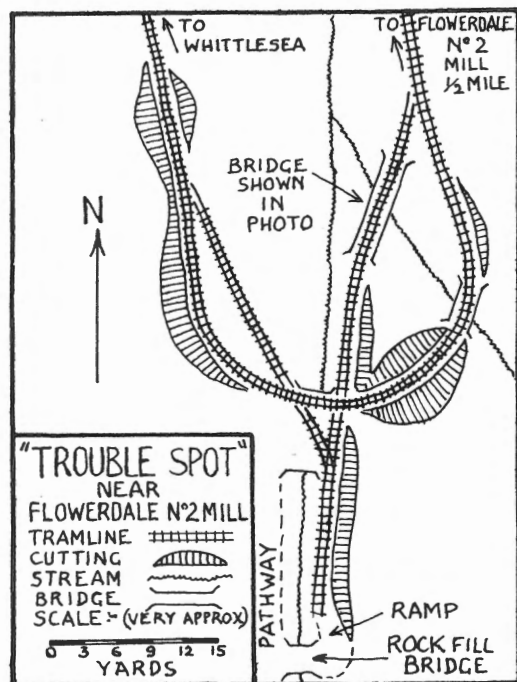
Before long the dead end was replaced with a curve, rather sharp and laid in iron or steel rails. To do this a new line was constructed into the branch gully where another bridge was built, and a short cutting through a rocky spur brought the line back into the centre gully. Here the bridge was re-positioned and a scallop cutting was made in the far side of the gully.

So far, so good, but the troubles were not over. Leo Lawrey, driving a seven-horse team with a string of empties up to the mill had his three rear horses pulled off the bridge into the creek, fortunately a drop of only about five feet. One had a bogie on top of him. The cause of this accident was not hard to find. With the lead horses pulling forward and the load pulling back, the rear horses at the apex of the curve were subjected to an irresistible sideways force.

Henceforth only three horse teams would be used on this section. A three horse team was able to manage a double load on the downhill grade to King Parrot Creek but at the Pheasant Creek loop the load was divided, each part being taken on to Stony Creek separately. Leo Lawrey had his own team of horses which he stabled at No.1 Mill and over most of the period of operation of No.2 Mill made two trips each working day.

Safe-Working

This tramway system was well used, particularly in its middle years when it handled the output of up





Tramway bridge over Pheasant Creek, near Fred Brown's mill.

Photo :Courtesy Arnie Exton, Shire of Yea

to five mills as well as giving right-of-way to four or five drivers carrying potatoes or other farm produce. The obvious question is how was the traffic regulated? No definite answer has turned up. There was no system of telephone communication but there appears to have been some generally accepted timetable.

Downie's drivers picked up their horses and bogies at Downie's in the early morning and set off for Tommy's Hut or beyond. On the return journey the practice was apparently to travel in convoy, stopping at Downie's for lunch, then going into Whittlesea and back to Downie's by about 4.00 p.m. (2.00 p.m. on Saturdays). This enabled drivers so inclined to play football or other sport on Saturday afternoons. Other drivers, such as Charlie Blair driving for Carman's had a different schedule, driving into Whittlesea after Downie's drivers had finished and sometimes returning to Carman's late at night by the aid of hurricane lamps.

The assumption that there was a timetable is further strengthened by Perc Opperman's statement that you could set your watch by certain drivers; and by Les Russell, one of Downie's drivers who said that 'John Lawrey was often late at passing loops'. Actually passing loops were not always needed because sometimes unloaded bogies

would simply be pulled off the line to allow someone else to drive through. Then they would have to be rerailed by pulling back and using a 'Tom', a shaped piece of wood to guide the wheels back on. Jacks were also carried.

Difficulties sometimes occurred. One driver returning to Kinglake with two loads of chaff and fertilizer found stationary loaded bogies blocking his path. Rather malicious actions were taken to remove this obstacle and now, more than fifty years later, he does not want his name mentioned.

The safety record over the years seems to have been good with no fatalities to drivers and few injuries. Jim Thomas who drove for Downie's for five years was asked if he had had any accidents. 'No', he replied, 'I was good with the brakes'. On one of the logging lines, a horse was killed when brakes failed to hold on frosty rails.

On one occasion, Snowy Johansen fell off the 25ft high bridge he had helped to build near Fred Brown's mill. Wattle saplings nearby had been recently slashed and he could have been impaled. However he landed in a clear spot, got up and walked away.

The story is different concerning the logging and milling operations. Gruesome stories were told of accidents at the mills.

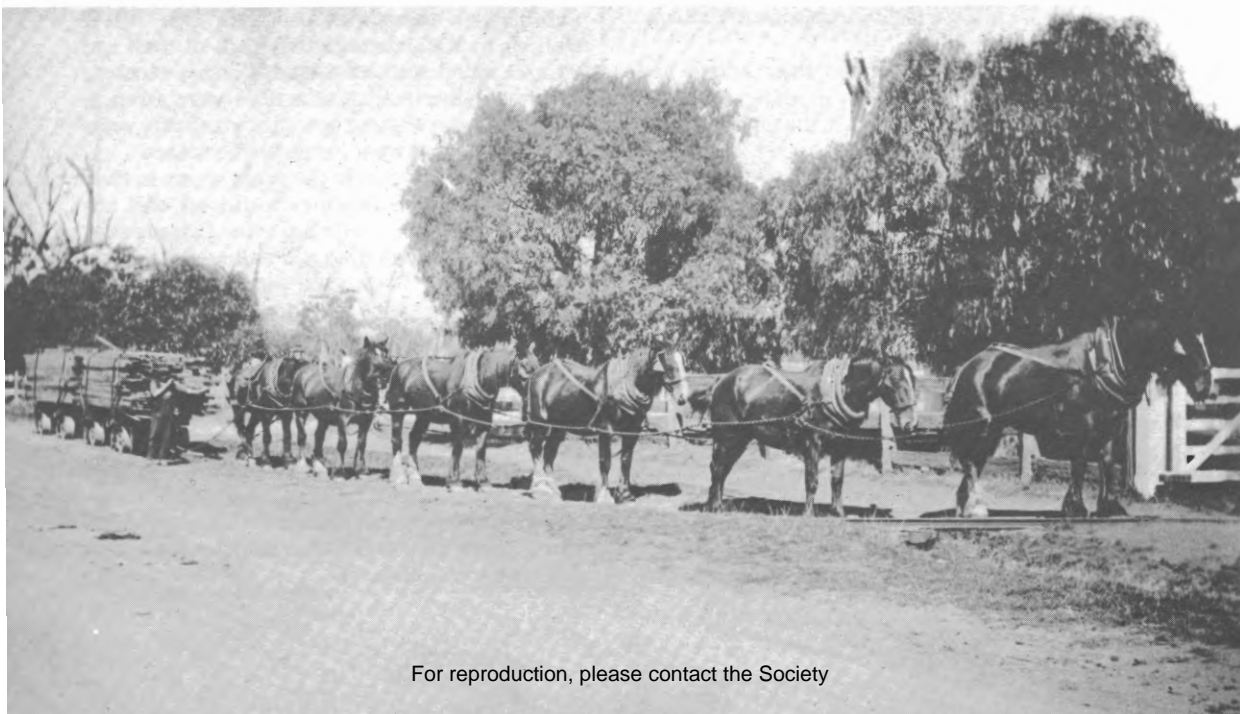


Above: Whittlesea station showing the departure tramline in front of the raised platform, with loaded bogies on the far side. The station buildings and goods shed can be seen in the background.

Photo: I.C. Gibbs, courtesy Don Baker

Below: John Dwyer with a six horse team entering Whittlesea station. Note steel rails on curve entering station yard.

Photo: I.C. Gibbs, Courtesy Mrs Hillier



Decline

As the years went on various mills closed as they exhausted their timber resources. By the end of 1925, probably only Flowerdale Mills Nos. 1 and 2 were still working and apparently there were management and financial problems as well. Track maintenance was suffering: 'the owners were mean with materials', said John Dwyer. Rails were used until they were only one inch thick, the wheel flanges making grooves across the sleepers. This presented problems of how to mate up a new three inch thick rail with an old rail one inch thick. The practice was either pack the thin rail up or nail a wedge shaped piece of wood on top. This made for very uneven track and caused derailments. The sleepers and packing between them got worn so that in wet weather the horses splashed along.

There were production difficulties at Flowerdale No.2. Some days Leo Lawrey would arrive at the mill and have to wait around while a load was made up. There should have been no shortage of logs as the mill was within reach of the area which was worked by a later tramline along Exton's Road from 1935 to 1948. A new manager, Hugh Sanderson, was appointed at No.2 and in an effort to increase the supply of logs he started the practice of winching two logs at a time down the tramway incline instead of one as previously. The load must have been too great for the winch for one day it flew to pieces. One of the workers, Alan Mitchell was narrowly missed by a heavy piece of flying machinery which landed at his feet. The logs on the incline sped away and one buried itself ten feet into the hillside on the opposite side of Chyser Creek.

This apparently was the last straw for the ailing company which could not afford repairs to the winch. Most machinery had been removed from the mills by the end of 1926 and as for the tramline - it was a free-for-all as far as the local residents were concerned. Many a farm out-building in the area still has ex-tramline rails in its construction.

Today

Relics of tramways are still to be found in the Kinglake - Flowerdale district but in many places tramline formations have been obliterated by activities such as road improvement, forest clearing crop cultivation, building of dams and subsequent timber-setting operations. Of all the mill sites, Higgs has been the least disturbed. The grassy clearing appears to have been slumbering for its half century of idleness. The four lines radiating from the mill are still to be found along with an occasional rail or sleeper. The access line is scrubby but

easily followed to within half a mile of Kinglake Road where clearing and a dam have removed every trace.

The site of Carman's Mill too has been fairly well preserved as it is now within Kinglake National Park. The sawdust heap and the incline tramway can still be found.

At Flowerdale No.1 the sawpit and machinery bases are still to be found. This pleasantly shaded area on the banks of King Parrot Creek is readily accessible from Yea Road and is popular with picnickers and fishermen. The route of the tramline back towards Tommy's Hut is marked by a clear track as is the junction of the logging line. From here it is heavily overgrown but can be picked up again as a rocky ledge up a steep sided gully just below the road. Both bridges are readily found.

The logging line into the little gorge on King Parrot Creek can be followed without trouble but the old bridges have all gone and if the creek is running high, it is hard to get through. Few scars remain. The narrow tramline ledges do not detract from the natural beauty.

The thought comes that the old method of snig track and tramlines was much kinder to the environment than the more modern methods.

Where the tramline to Flowerdale No.2 turned into Chyser Creek valley there is now a poultry farm but beyond the farm the tramway formation is still there although widened into a dirt road. In a mile or so the road turns downhill and from there the tramline with occasional rails and sleepers can be found again. From here it is a short distance to the 'trouble spot' where most of the evidence of the original dead end and the second layout is still there including bridge abutments of hand laid rock. Just past here on a dry hillside some of the track has survived very well with rails still nailed to sleepers. A log bridge has survived here, hidden under a large fallen tree.

At Flowerdale No.2 the site has been obscured by later bulldozing. Even the position of the mill is hard to determine but was probably next to a level area where logs would have been stored. The logging line had led off from this point but has been bulldozed into a dirt road for the first quarter mile. There are a few levelled sites up the hill but none seems large enough for a boarding house. The logging line beyond the bulldozing is scrubby but can be followed. The first bridge has disappeared without trace. The old loading ramp across the creek is still there with snig tracks radiating over the steep hillside. The line can be followed without great difficulty to the sluiced area. The incline



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bridge is still there although now also partly obscured by a large fallen tree.

But what about Tommy's Hut, that erstwhile tramway junction? The name might have disappeared but recently a cafe has reopened on the same spot and is called Tommy's Hut, so hopefully this interesting little memory of history will persist. The road via Humevale was the main road from 1928, but eventually its sharp bends became unsuitable for modern traffic. The (old) Yea Road was remade and put into service about 1958. In the rebuilding a lot of tramway formation was obliterated. Only those sections where the line sidled around the hills away from the road remain.

These can be found as follows, measuring from Toorourrong Road corner towards Tommy's Hut. North side of the road 0.7 miles, 0.9 miles, south side 2.2 miles (20 yards off road), 2.4 miles (25 yards off road), 2.7 miles (35 yards off road) and 3.1 miles (90 yards off road and partly obscured by later works). The big bridge in the gully near No.1 Mill can be found 0.6 miles from Stony Creek bridge back towards Tommy's Hut.

Between Stony Creek and Mathieson's Creek the reserved forest has been churned up by all manner of vehicles, making it difficult to follow the tramway although shallow cuttings and pairs of logs on low-lying ground may be relics. Between Mathieson's Creek and Chyser Creek the road has been re-located right over the tramline. The only place it was found with certainty was 0.8 miles from Stony Creek bridge towards Flowerdale opposite the property 'Tree Lodge' and about 20 yards off the road.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DRIVER

As told by John Dwyer

John Dwyer was a driver for John Downie during the period 1917 to 1924 during which time he boarded at Downie's along with other drivers, Len Russell, Alf Blair, and Bruce Downie. For them the day began at 6.00 a.m. when 'Old Jack' Downie first to rise, woke the others. While they fed the horses and prepared harnesses, he cooked the breakfasts. On Saturdays all times were two hours earlier to allow for sport in the afternoon but there was no work on Sundays.

By 7 o'clock horses were hitched up to the bogies (or trucks as they called them) standing on the loop outside Downie's and the convoy of two or three teams of eight horses each was ready to set off for Tommy's Hut or beyond. Last driver off the loop had to reset the points for the mainline: stub points with moveable rails pushed against a stop.

Very soon the big climb up the range commenced but the light loads were no trouble to the horses. Maybe the drivers of the occasional early-model cars struggling up the same hill would not have minded some of the excess horsepower. Cars were quite a rarity on the roads in those days and you could probably have counted on the fingers of one hand those calling Whittlesea their home. There were Carman's 'Hotchkiss', McKendrick's 'T model Ford' and Dr Day's car, make unremembered. There were a few motor cycles around too, such as Claude Rusack's 'Indian' but if Claude was in a hurry he rode his pushbike, or so it is said.

On most days, Dave Beattie would be discovered somewhere along the line doing maintenance work. This was an opportunity for drivers to tell Dave which places needed attention and for him to say where he required rails or sleepers dropped off.

With the worst part of the climb over, the going was fairly easy but a driver had to keep his wits about him, not like Wally Draper. One time Wally had forgotten to apply the brakes on a downgrade with the result that the front bogie on which he was sitting had run under the heel horse so that the horse sat on him. Popular rumour had it that poor Wally had been entranced by the sight of a young lady riding by on Sid Brown's mail coach. It may have been so. The mail coach was a four-wheel vehicle drawn by two horses. There were seats along both sides and a canvas roof.

Also to be seen along the road was Sassella's butcher's cart, a two-wheeled box-like vehicle with two horses and like a mobile shop in which meat would be cut, weighed and sold.

People in those days used to walk much more than now, and it was not unusual to pass men on the road walking to or from Kinglake, Flowerdale or Yea. The luckier ones went on horse-back. Push bikes were not seen much on this road because of its ruts or mud.

This morning run to Tommy's Hut was well established and it was unusual to find anyone else on the line. However at the crossing loop outside Wally King's, John Lawrey would usually be found (in the potato season) with his load of potatoes bound for Whittlesea.

Left: Ernest and Brent Curry on the tramway between Flowerdale No. 1 mill and Chyser Creek, shortly after closure - circa 1927.

Photo: C. A. H. Alger

Bogies being returned to the Flowerdale mills were left on the loop at Tommy's Hut while those for Kinglake would be taken on to Mason's. The rule was always empties on the loop, loaded bogies on the mainline as derailments were more likely on the loop.

For the return, departure from Tommy's Hut was at 10.00 a.m. and was usually again in convoy. Spare rails and sleepers were carried on top of the load to be thrown off where required. In the first two miles there were a couple of upgrades and on these John Dwyer made it his practice to walk by the side as his presence was enough to make all the horses work. While explaining this, John had a dig at Jack Johnston; 'He had a team of nine large horses', he said, 'but only half of them would be pulling'.

For the descent off the range a driver's main job was to apply the brakes when required. The risk of derailment was always present with consequences that could be slight or serious. John remembers the time they came on John Lawrey, derailed near Bert Brown's. He should have been two hours ahead of them but there he was still off the rails with potatoes lying all around. All drivers bucked in to collect his load and send him on his way.

As previously mentioned, the worst accidents happened on the steep descent to Toorourrong Road corner. The horses would be taken off and drivers, by careful use of the brakes, let the loads down, usually at little more than walking pace. They would stand on the rear load of timber leaning on the brake ropes but a derailment, if it occurred would cause a lurch that could throw a driver off. With brakes thus released, anything could happen. Fortunately bad accidents were few and far between.

The horses used to follow on behind of their own accord and seemed to understand the whole operation perfectly, even presenting themselves to be hitched up again at the bottom of the incline. As mentioned this run was well established and it was unusual for the convoy's right-of-way to be challenged. But it did happen once. Right at the foot of the incline they came upon young Dick Higgs' with a load of supplies for Higgs' Mill. There was even some argument as to who should pull off but weight of numbers prevailed and Dick had to give way. Why he did not wait at Downie's loop just a quarter of a mile away is hard to understand.

The sign at Tommy's Hut in the fog, showing the tramway in the foreground - 1925

Photo: Late F. Rayment, courtesy P.J. Rayment





Remains of one of the bridges at "The Trouble Spot". A tree has fallen across the bridge. Ralf Alger took this photograph in 1977, over fifty years after the tramway closed.

But anyway, Downie's was the place where lunch was waiting for John and his mates and also a drink and feed for his horses, their first since leaving in the early morning. The loaded bogies were left standing on the straight line and the horses were unhitched to find their own way up the hill, first to the dam and then to the stable and mangers.

After lunch the last part of the journey into Whittlesea was made, an almost flat run with few problems. Loaded bogies were left on the raised track in the railway yards and each driver collected four empty bogies to take back to Downie's where they were left overnight. Any supplies for the mills were left here also and in wet weather sacks of horsefeed must have been soaked through. A driver's last job for the day was to unharness the horses and let them into their paddock, usually done by 4.00 p.m.

On a Saturday of course, work would finish by 2.00 p.m., leaving the rest of the afternoon for sport

or other recreation. For John Dwyer this often meant going for a ride on his 'JAP' motor cycle. (This was of English make, and the letters JAP were the initials of its manufacturer.) Saturday night was the traditional night for entertainment and in Whittlesea there was a choice of movies at the Mechanics' Institute, or a dance in McKendrick's barn at Glenvale, about four miles out on the Wallan Road. The movies were shown by Ben Owens and Wally Eades and in those days, of course, they were silent but with fitting piano accompaniment provided by Mrs Eades.

The barn dances at McKendrick's were popular and in the early evening a stream of vehicles, mainly horse-drawn, would be seen converging on Glenvale. The warmth and gaiety of such affairs seems to elude us these days, sixty years on.

Drivers on the Tramway

The drivers listed here operated on the tramlines between the mills and Whittlesea carrying timber or



On the left is a view of track remnants about half a mile on the Whittlesea side of Flowerdale No. 2 Mill site, as it was in 1972. The gauge could still be measured, and was 3 ft. On the right is a 1969 scene along the logging line by Pheasant Creek, downstream from Higgs Mills - "never far from the rushing water".
Both photos: Ralf Alger

back-loading and some on their own account carrying potatoes or other farm produce. The list is not necessarily complete but includes regulars such as John Dwyer and Les Russell and others who drove only occasionally such as Harry Hyland and Wally Draper. Drivers on the logging lines were usually mill employees and, except for the few listed, are not included here.

For Fred Downie: Fred Benson, Alf Blair, George Brain, Bruce Downie, John Downie (Sen.), John Dwyer, Wally Draper, Harry Hyland, Jacob Lorenz, Les Russell, Jim Thomas.

For Carman's: Charlie Blair, Ben Archer (also drove for Flowerdale No.1).

For Higgs': Dick Higgs, Jack Johnston and sons Bill and Alan.

For Flowerdale No.1: Bill Brown and son, Bob, John Lawrey, Bert Lawrey, Dave McKimmie.

For Flowerdale No.2: Leo Lawrey

Others: Ivo Tuckett, Jim Johnston.

Logging Operations: Harry Collins, Dan Collins, and Ferdie Denerez (who later drove on the Dindy Mill line out of Healesville).

Memories

Time softens memories of hardships and sometimes casts a veil of romance over them. The people who in days past battled to keep the tramline and mills working seem to remember the old times happily and chuckle over their reminiscences. It was all so long ago. Those teams of horses plodding and straining along in single file between wooden rails, quite a common site in many places, will never be seen again except in memory. Perc Opperman said 'I can still hear in my mind the shriek of the brakes coming down the hills and the clatter of horses hooves in the early mornings'.

Note by the Author

A chance meeting with Mr Bert Giddons in 1969 set me off on the search for the wooden rails. Bert had lived at Higgs Mill as a boy and was keen to revisit it. For myself, I had seen the Flowerdale line in operation but did not even know the Kinglake line existed. Since the first visit to Higgs with Bert, I have interviewed many people and pushed through a lot of scrub. I have done no searching of company records or old newspapers. I have used the Imperial system of measurements because it was used and understood by those who built and operated the tramlines.



John Lawrey with a load of timber on the tramway along the Kinglake - Whittlesea Road. The photo was taken from Salisbury's Paddock, on the Whittlesea side of Burtons Road.

Photo: Courtesy Leo Lawrey

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Maps:

Flowerdale, County of Anglesey, Dept. of Lands and Survey, 13/12/23

Whittlesea, Victorian Railways, 1/7/79

Kinglake, Military, 1 inch-1 mile, March 1925

Yan Yean, Military, 1 inch-1 mile, May 1935

Kinglake, Military, 1:50 000, 1958

Glenburn, Military, 1:50 000, 1958

Central Highlands, Forests Commission, Victoria, 1965

Book: *The Plenty, A Centenary History of the Whittlesea Shire*, by J. W. Payne (for information on the pre-tramway history of Whittlesea).

Persons Interviewed

Bert Brown: Lived on Yea Road about five miles out of Whittlesea for nearly 70 years. Worked on building line from No.1 to No.2 Flowerdale Mills.

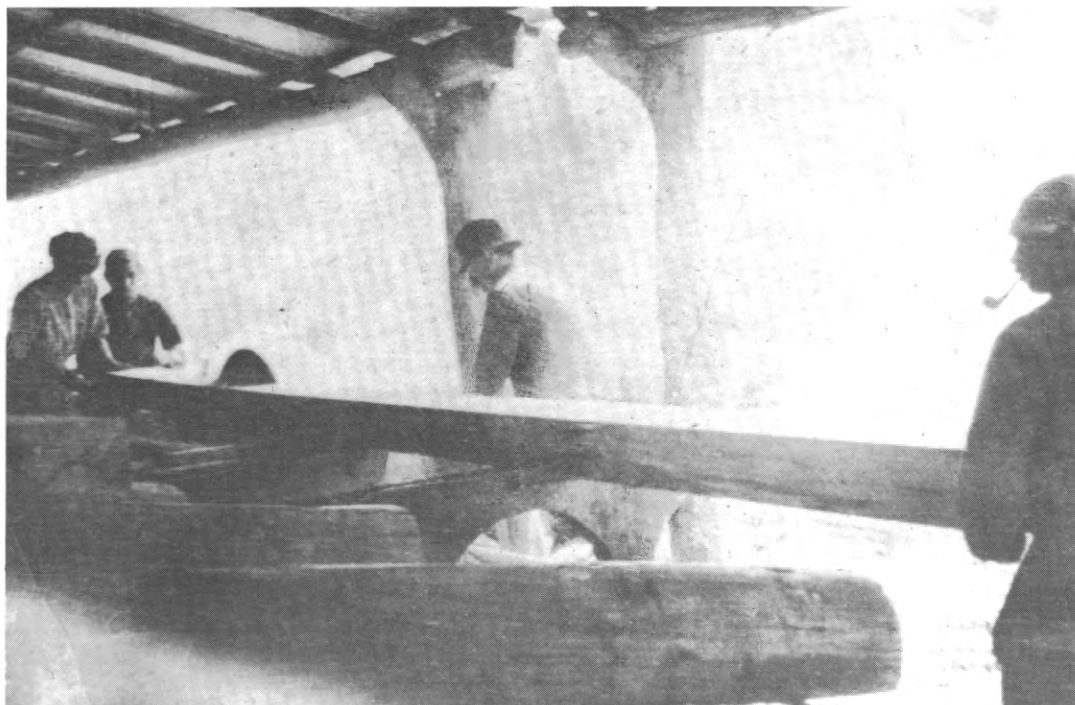
Harold Collier: Was Postmaster at Pheasant Creek for 45 years. Gave information on early history of Kinglake. Son of C. E. Collier, first owner of Pharamond Estate and who did maintenance work on tramlines around Higgs' Mill.

Mr and Mrs Jim Cummings. Jim Cummings with T. Brain contracted to build line from Tommy's Hut to Flowerdale No.1 Mill. Mrs Cummings gave information about Tommy Gibson.

Jack Downie (Junior): Son of John Downie, contractor to operate line between Whittlesea and Tommy's Hut.

John Dwyer: Driver for John Downie. See 'A Day in the Life of a Driver', page 17.

Arnie Exton: The Extons were one of the pioneer families in Kinglake. A Yea Shire Councillor. Nephew to Les Exton



At Higg's Mill. Left to right: Jim Owen, Ned Harding, and Eric Westworth (Snr). The identity of the man on the right is not known.
Photo: Courtesy Mrs Ned Harding

Mr and Mrs Les Exton: Used to live in house at Toorourrong - Yea Roads corner. Stories about Ferdie Denerez.

Bert Giddons: Lived at Higgs' Mill as a boy. Information about traction engine converted to run on tramline.

Mrs Harding: Wife of Ned Harding, tally clerk at Whittlesea for the timber mills.

Mr and Mrs Hayton: Information about rebuilding of (old) Yea Road.

Mrs Hillier: Sister to Alf Blair.

Mrs Hutchens (nee Burton): The Burtons were one of the pioneer families in Kinglake.

Leo Lawrey (Son of John Lawrey): Lived nearby during period of operation of Fred Brown's and Higgs' Mills. Gave information about internal-combustion rail-tractor. Later lived at Flowerdale No.1 Mill where he stabled his horses. Was driver and contractor to operate line from No.1 to No.2 Flowerdale Mills. Information about disintegration of winch at No.2.

Perc. Opperman: Lived for a time at Toorourrong/ Yea Roads corner so had ample opportunity to hear 'clatter of hooves in the early morning and shriek of brakes down the hill'. Son-in-law to Dave Beattie who did maintenance work on the line between Whittlesea and Tommy's Hut.

Eric Rowlands: Was a driver (of road vehicles) for Carman after closure of mills and tramway.

Les Russell: Driver for John Downie

Jim Thomas: Used to live 'next door' to Downie and drove for him for five years. Was a grandson of Moses Thomas, prominent in Whittlesea Shire affairs over the years 1852 to 1878.

Frank Thompson: Oldest native inhabitant of Kinglake; historical information.

Ernie Westworth (Jun.): Son of Ernie Westworth (Sen.) who worked at several mills in the area, and Mrs Westworth who managed the boarding house at Flowerdale No.2 Mill. Ernie (jun.) was a driver on the later Mount Robertson tramline.

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A short tramway near Kinglake Central township, in the vicinity of Wright's Falls. This tramway was some miles to the east of those described in this issue.

Photo: LRRSA Archives