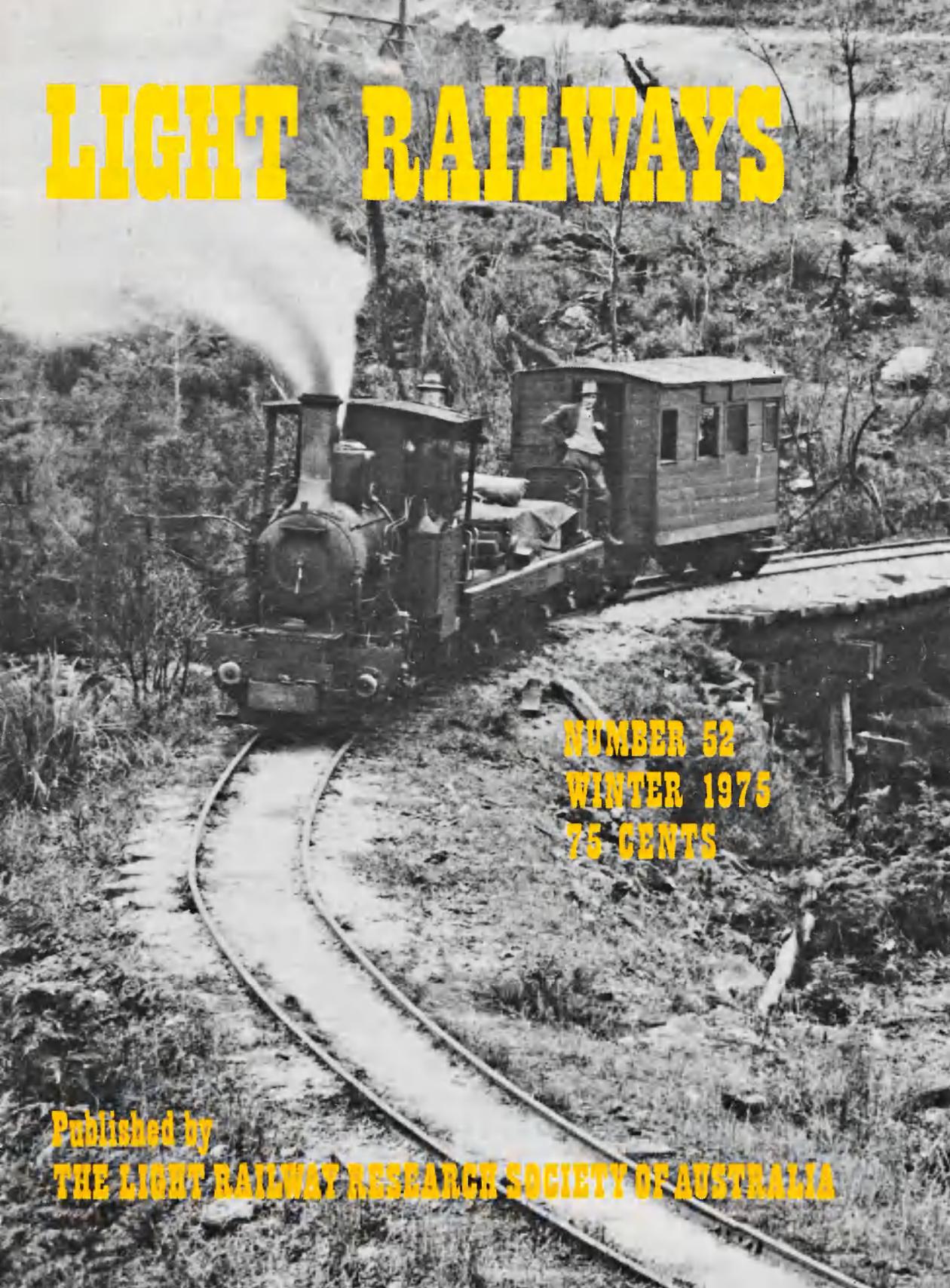


# LIGHT RAILWAYS



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THE LIGHT RAILWAY RESEARCH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

## ***Recommended reading:***

SAWDUST AND STEAM by Norm Houghton. A comprehensive history of rail transport in the East Otways, including the Forrest railway, timber and mining tramways which connected with it, and tramways of Apollo Bay, Wye River, Kennett River and Lorne. 106 pages, 12 plans and maps, 60 photographs, three-colour fold-out map. (LRRSA publication) \$4.20

THE SHALE RAILWAYS OF NEW SOUTH WALES by Gifford Eardley and E. M. Stephens. The story of a series of interesting private railways which served the shale oil industry in NSW. Numerous magnificent photographs in really rugged scenery. Extensive text and many maps and plans. 240 pages. (ARHS publication) \$6.80

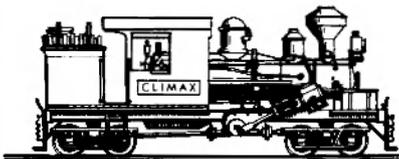
TASMANIA REMEMBERED A hardbound book of 160 pages containing many really interesting photographs depicting aspects of Tasmanian history, including an excellent railway section. (The Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston: publisher) \$9.95

WEST OTWAYS NARROW GAUGE by Norm Houghton. The story of the Beech Forest 2 ft 6 in gauge railway and its connecting tramways. 52 pages, over 30 photographs. (LRRSA publication) \$1.75

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Map, TYERS. THOMSON VALLEY AND WALHALLA AREA (Victoria) A one inch/mile map in three colours showing tramways, creeks and roads in great detail. Off-set printed. (LRRSA publication) .20



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### Editor's column

#### INTERVIEWING IS ESSENTIAL

Some historians doubt the worth of interviewing as a research technique, as readers of our *Letters* section in this issue will note. Experienced researchers know that it is unwise to accept any source as absolutely accurate without checking it against other sources. Hence any historian who attempts to write a complete article based only on the memory of one individual is asking for trouble.

But when interviewing is used as an additional source in conjunction with written records, site investigations, photographs etc it becomes extremely valuable to the light railway researcher. Far from creating new errors it acts as a cross check to help judge the accuracy of other sources, especially newspapers. *It helps prevent errors.*

Any experienced timber tramway researcher will know that interviews are essential to improve the accuracy and completeness of articles on this subject. Criticism of the interviewing technique has not come from tramway researchers, but from historians working in different fields who can rely on a vast quantity of written material and physical evidence. Such critics have no appreciation of the difficulties faced by a researcher who sets out to record the history of privately owned timber tramways, where written evidence is scanty and misleading.

Interviewing (known also as 'Oral History') is an accepted source of historical material, and the LRRSA'S work in this field has gained some recognition. The Society has accepted an invitation to provide a speaker at the Third Annual Oral History Conference to be held at Melbourne University next February. This Conference is being organized by the History Departments of the Melbourne and LaTrobe Universities.

Interviewing has been found particularly useful to confirm or deny theories which were developed from other incomplete evidence; to point out significant details in photographs which would otherwise have been overlooked; to describe unusual and unconventional operating procedures; to point out errors in maps; to give an insight into conditions and life styles of the time; and to describe various accidents and disasters (like fire and floods) and how they were faced.

Very detailed and accurate railway histories can be written without the use of interviews, there is no doubt of that. But timber tramway research needs different techniques.

*Front cover* 2 ft gauge Tullah Tramway, west coast of Tasmania. Photo: Winter's Studio, Burnie.

# The Wielangta and Blackman Bay Tramways

by David Beck

The south-east coast of Tasmania has supported quite a variety of steam powered logging tramways; perhaps the best known being those of the Geeveston area, south of Hobart. Such was the nature of the many lesser tramways, that even a few years after their demise, little remained as evidence of their being. They were, indeed, crude, short term affairs, constructed not with regard to permanence, but for the consideration of least cost. In their time they attracted minimal notice outside their area. Consequently, to study these lines and reach any definite conclusions is unusually difficult. Sources of information are minimal and invariably conflicting. The following notes relate to two such tramways.

## THE WIELANGTA TRAMWAY

Intensive timber milling in the Sandspit Valley began in 1911, when the Hobart engineering firm of Russell Allport & Sons set up a mill at Wielangta for the Tasmanian East Coast Timber Co., and constructed a wooden-railed tramway seven miles down the valley to a wharf at Rheban.<sup>1</sup> A steam loco was used from the outset, and official boiler records record it as being by Russell Allport (Cowley boiler) of 1911, new, for East Coast Sawmill, Rheban; Geared loco for bush haulage. The engine had a locomotive type boiler. It was idle in 1914, and again registered in 1916, this time under E. W. Gay, Wielangta. I have no further details of this locomotive; but a very hazy photograph of Rheban jetty in 1913 suggests that it just may have been six-wheeled and without cover over the footplate. The locomotive or boiler is supposed to have eventually gone to Bruny Island.

It is suggested<sup>2</sup> that the Wielangta mill and tramway were rebuilt circa 1922, presumably following a fire; the seven mile tramway being considerably upgraded in order to take more conventional locomotives. The mill and tram at this time came under the ownership of the Huon Timber Co.; later to become (1925) Millers Timber & Trading Co.

The second locomotive on the tramway was a vertical-boilered 0-4-0T of unknown make.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not it was the same engine as that ex Hastings and now at Sharps (see LR. 30, p.17) is questionable. However, the known movements of the Hastings engine correspond to some extent with the Wielangta machine. The Sharp brothers purchased their loco from Miller's Timber & Trading Co. ex Prince's Wharf, Hobart about 1936, which is about the time Wielangta folded.<sup>4</sup> The Sharps were told that the engine had worked in the Hastings area, so it would be

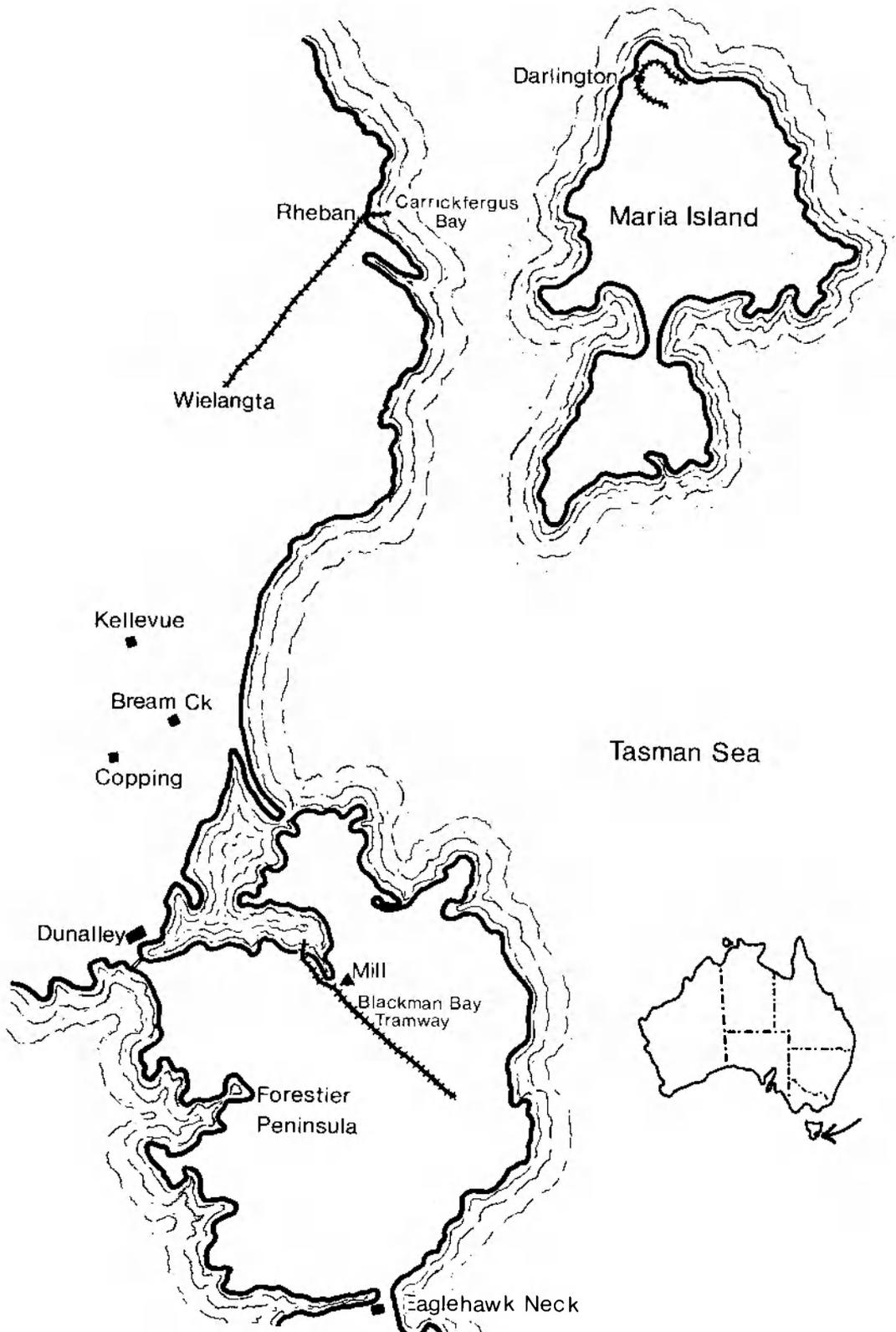
interesting to know exactly when this engine ceased work in southern Tasmania. Known details of the Wielangta locomotive are that it had side tanks, was geared 4 to 1, had an extremely large whistle, and had an unusual oiling system.<sup>5</sup> Each morning large pieces of suet were rammed into cups mounted on the engine, where steam dissolved it into fat to provide necessary lubrication.

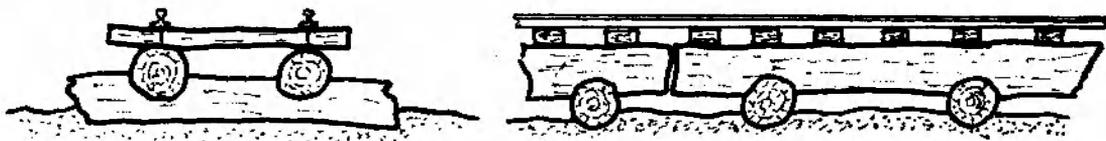
Mr A. Wiggins, who worked on this engine as a lad, remembers it as being bigger than Sharp's engine, having inside frames and a handrail around the motion. It may be mentioned that Mr Wiggins is today an accomplished model engineer who has, among many other things, built quite superb working models of steam locomotives and engines, including the Wielangta mill engine and second tramway locomotive. So in the absence of a suitable photograph of this engine, perhaps Mr Wiggins' recollections are not to be taken too lightly.

The third locomotive arrived at an unknown date, but certainly a few years after the vertical-boilered machine. The official boiler records are puzzling, as the boiler is listed as Andrew Barclay B/No. 6237 of 1912, bought new, and first inspected on 5 March 1913. Despite this record (which is perhaps a new boiler number; certainly not a loco B/No.), this engine was an 0-4-0 ST named *Stanley*, which had previously worked in Port Esperance and probably Geeveston. (A photo exists of this engine at Port Esperance in 1901,<sup>6</sup> which suggests that it was in a very worn condition even then.) It is popularly presumed to be a Black Hawthorn.

This engine arrived at Rheban jetty in pieces, where it was presumably put together and hauled to Wielangta for fitting out. It may be noted that nearly all movements of locomotives between tramways on the south-east coast of Tasmania involved dismantling and shipping in sections, as the coastal craft and landings had not the lifting gear to tackle heavy loads. Even sawn timber was loaded onto boats by hand.

The 3ft 6in gauge railway between Rheban jetty and Wielangta made little use of earthworks. The line was supported on swampy ground by cross members, along which were erected large transverse logs, and the sleepers and rails were laid upon these. The gradients along the line were generally in favour of the loaded wagons, but grades were quite steep in places. 'About a mile below the mill, the line negotiated a section known as the Gorge, which involved a tight hairpin under the cliff face. On every trip down it was the loco assistant's job at this point to hop down with a big brown teapot of heavy oil, and oil the rails. In spite of this oiling, the loco would round the





Details of track construction

bend screaming like a banshee and could be heard for miles. Immediately after emerging from the gorge, the line crossed the valley on a long and very high trestle bridge, crossing which was a hair-raising experience for anyone making his first trip. It called for great skill by the driver to negotiate the steep hills. The brakes on the trucks were connected by a rope and applied by the great strength of the driver, who would brace his foot against the back of the loco and pull with all his might. Even so, at times the train would reach terrifying pace going downhill when the load was unusually heavy'.<sup>7</sup>

The tramway was mainly used for hauling sawn timber from the mill to Rheban jetty, where it was hand loaded onto coastal craft for shipment. Nearby along the coast near Rheban jetty are the remains of the 96 ton ketch *Annie Taylor* which broke free from the jetty in a gale and was wrecked. She was at the time loaded with sawn timber from Wielangta. The tramway from Rheban, as it travelled towards Wielangta, at first traversed sandy coastal flats, then veered to the south west to follow the steadily narrowing valley of the Sandspit River, which eventually opened out into a pleasant valley near the mill. Little remains today of the former settlement.

#### THE BLACKMAN BAY TRAMWAY.

The Forestier Peninsular is well known for its rugged and inhospitable terrain. It is hardly surprising that, lost in this sparsely populated and remote area, which recently proved so testing for the survivors of the *Blythe Star*, there should have operated a steam hauled tramway which almost totally escaped notice whilst it was operating, and was all but forgotten upon its demise. Unlike the Wielangta tram, it did not connect with any communities, but was simply a conveyance of logs from the forest to the Blackman Bay mill, and thence of sawn timber to the wharf. Like the Wielangta line, it was about seven miles long, and laid in a similar fashion upon a platform of timbers. The Blackman Bay mill was built for the Huon Timber Co, on the estuary of the Blackman Rivulet in about 1919. Power for the mill was provided by a Marshall portable engine.

The tramway was built some two or three years after the opening of the mill, and a locomotive brought up from southern Tasmania to work the line. This was Baldwin 0-4-0ST B/No. 7108 of 1884,<sup>8</sup> which had previously worked for Tasmanian Timber Corp. at Hopetoun; and before that as a construction engine on the west coast railways. It had been reboilered by Cowley in 1913.<sup>9</sup>

Some time later the *Stanley* was transferred from Wielangta to Blackman Bay, but it proved unpopular as it



Base of incline, Blackman Bay tramline, showing siding for empties on left.

Photo: D. Beck collection



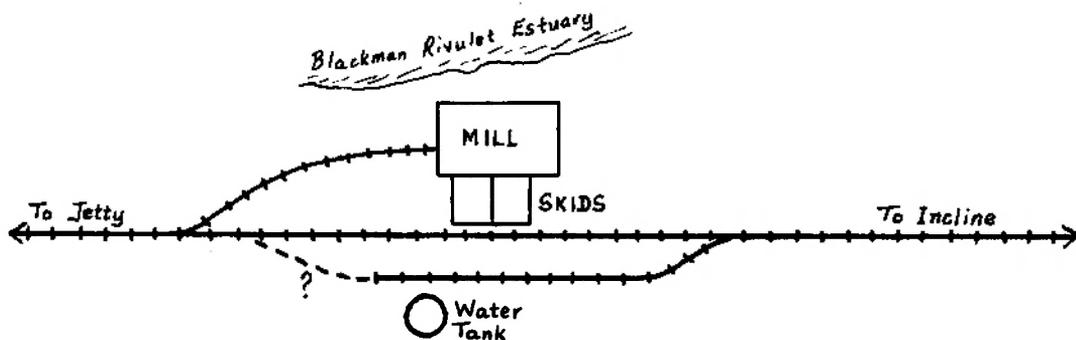
The mill at 'Wulungta' (Wielangta) Tasmania, in 1911.

Photo: courtesy State Archivist, Tasmania

Baldwin 0-4-0ST, B/No. 7108 at Blackman Bay.

Photo: D. Beck collection





was very prone to derailment, and it became the standby engine.

The Blackman Bay tramway was worked in two sections. Twice a day the train would work the seven miles to the railhead and return with logs. The arrangement at the railhead was as follows: The four empty log dummies would be hauled to the base of an incline, then backed into a dead end siding. The waiting loaded wagons were then lowered by cable onto the locomotive for despatch to the mill. As the train departed, the empty dummies would be hauled up the incline for loading. The layout at the mill was similarly primitive, as shown in the diagram.

From within the mill wagons of sawn timber were propelled the three-quarters of a mile or so along the coast to the jetty. Much of the adjoining land between mill and jetty was used for stacking sawn timber for seasoning. There was no siding on the jetty line, and both horses and locomotives provided motive power along this section. The mill and tramway closed in 1938 and the plant was disposed of.<sup>10</sup> It is not known what became of the wagons and rails etc., but it is believed that the rolling stock, which never amounted to more than about six sets of log dummies, would have been abandoned. The *Stanley* locomotive next appeared in the Smithton area, where the frame and wheels were incorporated into a Sentinel boilered contraption with an all-over cabin most resembling a country 'loo' on wheels.

The fate of the Baldwin is still unresolved, save for a note in the boiler records that its boiler was last inspected in 1963 at C. H. Walsh's electroplating works at Devonport. The frame of the locomotive ended its days at Welcome Swamp, having been fitted with an internal-combustion engine in place of its boiler. If any connection exists between this locomotive and the engine popularly known as *Fantail* then it must have been per the medium of cannibalisation; as I am quite satisfied that the real *Fantail* was in the Smithton area well before 7108 arrived there.

Today the route of the tramway appears to be readily traceable; and plenty of sleepers, dogspikes, and a few rails remain scattered about. The layout at the mill has been levelled and sown to pasture, and the mill itself has been dismantled. A derelict vertical boiler at the mill and

a smokebox (probably ex-Marshall portable) at the jetty are the only items of steam equipment found so far; although the outer terminus has not yet been explored.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 *Tasmanian Mail*, 5 June 1913
- 2 Mr A. Wiggins, ex-employee Wielangta tramway
- 3 There does not appear to be a reference to this locomotive in Department of Labour & Industry boiler files. It is however the most widely remembered locomotive on the tramway.
- 4 It is extremely difficult to get an exact date, as no one lives at Wielangta anymore. The last inhabitant died last year.
- 5 Mr A. Wiggins
- 6 *Tasmanian Mail*, 12 October 1901
- 7 Verbatim, *Saturday Evening Mercury* (Hobart), 15 November 1969, containing reminiscences of Mr A. Wiggins, Hobart
- 8 Department of Labour & Industry boiler records, Hobart
- 9 As for 8
- 10 Mr Dunbabin, contemporary resident and landowner, Blackman Bay

## THE SHALE RAILWAYS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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## North west Coastal Tramways

### **Roebourne**

by Ian Crellin and Frank Stamford



Gold fever swept Western Australia in the 1880s. Adventurers searching for the precious metal discovered it in the West Pilbara area. Administrative headquarters for the Government on the West Pilbara goldfield were set up at Roebourne, some 1205 miles (1939 km) north of Perth. The town is situated on the banks of the Harding River, some miles from the sea. Few suitable sites for large settlements exist on the coast in the vicinity, because of large tidal swamps which fill and empty with the huge rise and fall of the tides in the region.

Finding a satisfactory port site for the area proved a problem. Early ships anchored offshore while cargo was lightered ashore in small boats; or vessels were beached on the sands at high tide to be stranded high and dry at low tide when bullock wagons came alongside to be loaded directly from the ship. As early as the 1860s the roadstead port of Tiensen's Harbour had developed on a dry spit of land near the mouth of the Harding River, to serve the needs of the area's pastoralists and prospectors. In 1871 Governor Weld visited the port in the steamship *Cossack*. In honour of his visit the name of the port was changed to Cossack<sup>1</sup> (and in later years the town's public house was the Weld Hotel).

At Cossack, cargo, passengers and livestock all were lightered to and from the ships anchored in the roadstead in Port Walcott. A stone landing was provided in Cossack Creek, as was a livestock loading facility where — according to Public Works Department records — the depth of water was 18 ft 6 in at high tide, but only 4 ft at low water.

Some years later a jetty was built at nearby Point Samson which enabled cargo and passengers to be handled normally, greatly improving the service to the area. Those pioneers who settled there would look in wonder if they could see today the development taking place at nearby Cape Lambert with the discovery of iron ore, especially seeing modern engineers solve the problem of shallow port sites and wide tidal ranges with a giant jetty stretching several kilometres offshore, loading the waiting ore carriers within sight of the old ports.

#### Tramways

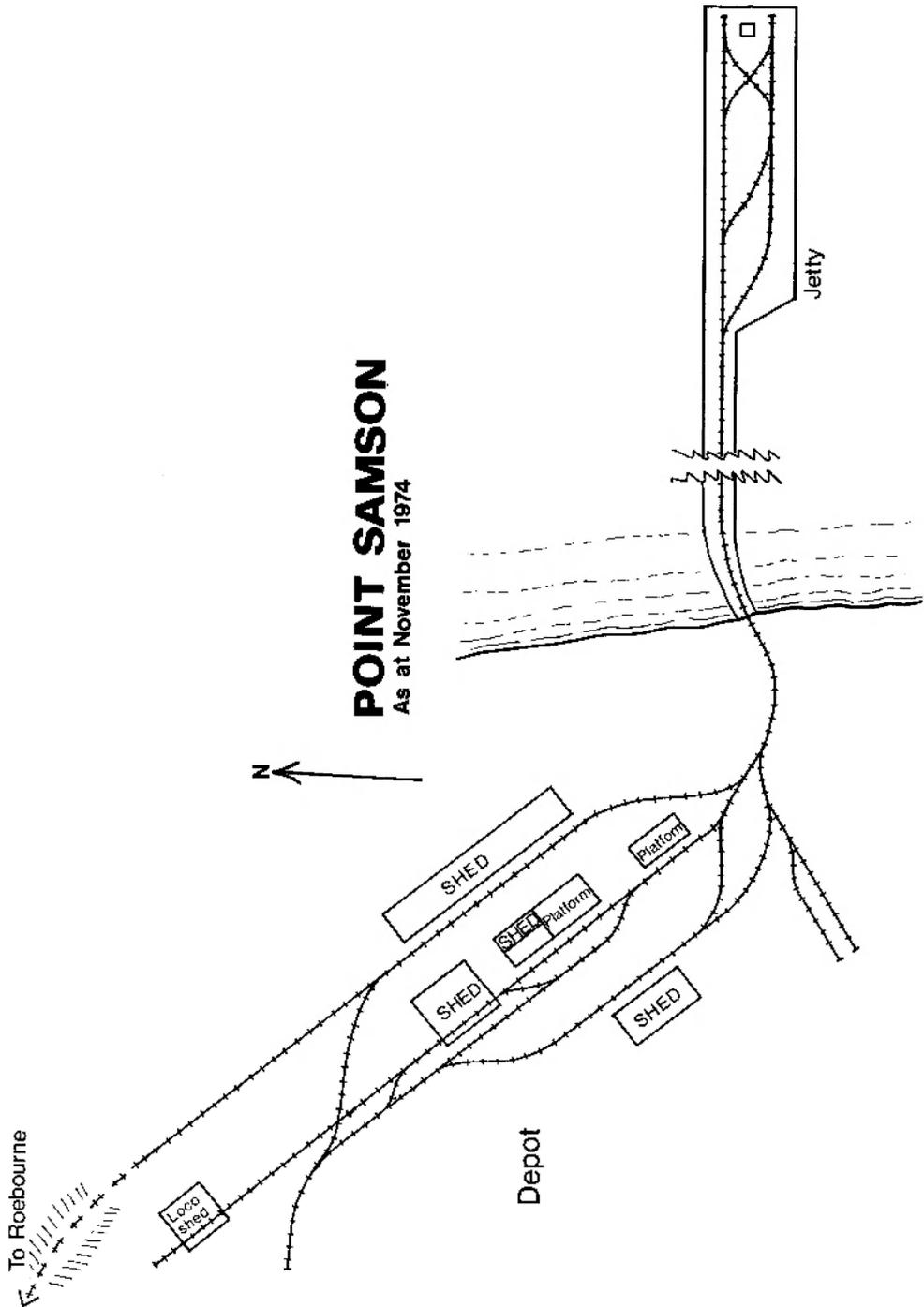
Because Roebourne is some distance inland, long tramways were built to link it to its ports; much longer than those at other north-west ports. Cossack was connected by an 8½ mile narrow-gauge horse tramway, constructed around 1881.<sup>2</sup> The exact gauge is a matter of conjecture — 2 ft or 2 ft 6 in, but more on that question later! It was operated by the Western Australian

Government Railways during the period 1885 to 1910, being the only sub-3 ft 6 in line operated by the WAGR.<sup>3</sup> Cossack grew to be a thriving town with a large Customs House, Court House and other substantial stone buildings. With the rise of the rival port at Point Samson, Cossack went into decline until today it is a virtual ghost town with many of the old buildings in ruins.

Point Samson jetty was built some miles to the north-west of Cossack in the 1902-04 period. It was initially only used for the loading of livestock for transport to market at Perth or South-east Asia. Sheepyards were provided at the shore end and a loading race and gangway on the jetty.<sup>4</sup> Cargo could not be handled as no tramway was provided on the jetty in its early years. The two ports co-existed for a number of years as Point Samson was in an inaccessible and isolated position. Despite this, Cossack could not handle the larger ships appearing on the coast and silting of the port sealed its fate. Some years later a tramway was built on the Point Samson jetty. It is clearly shown on the photograph (p. 12) taken about 1910. Evidence in the form of an old bogie recovered from the seabed nearby suggests that the jetty tram was 2 ft 6 in gauge. The Roebourne to Cossack line is listed in early W.A. Yearbooks as being 2 ft gauge; a fact supported by the transfer of 2 ft gauge rolling stock to this line on the conversion of the Carnarvon tramway to 3 ft 6 in gauge in 1909 (see LR 50, p.6). The situation with the gauges is however not resolved beyond question.

About 1910 a new 3 ft 6 in line was constructed the 12 miles from Roebourne to Point Samson. It wound its way through the swamps, passing closer to the sea than the existing roadway. The line was steam operated, providing services for both freight and passengers. Unfortunately no details of the locomotives which worked the line are known to the authors. At the jetty the 3 ft 6 in tracks were continued on to the decking. The jetty then became dual-gauge. The original jetty served well until destroyed in 1925 by the tropical cyclone which also damaged facilities at Onslow (see LR 51, p.9). The jetty was not replaced immediately and when Sir John Kirwan<sup>5</sup> visited the area in 1932 all cargo at the port was still being lightered ashore in small boats. It was subsequently replaced by the jetty which stands today. The tramway between Point Samson and Roebourne fell into disuse during this period and is believed to have closed in the early 1930s,<sup>6</sup> with the rise of road transport. The portion of the line at the jetty was retained and survives to the present day.

Cossack's fortunes were not so bright. The 1910 map of the West Pilbara Goldfields produced by the W.A.



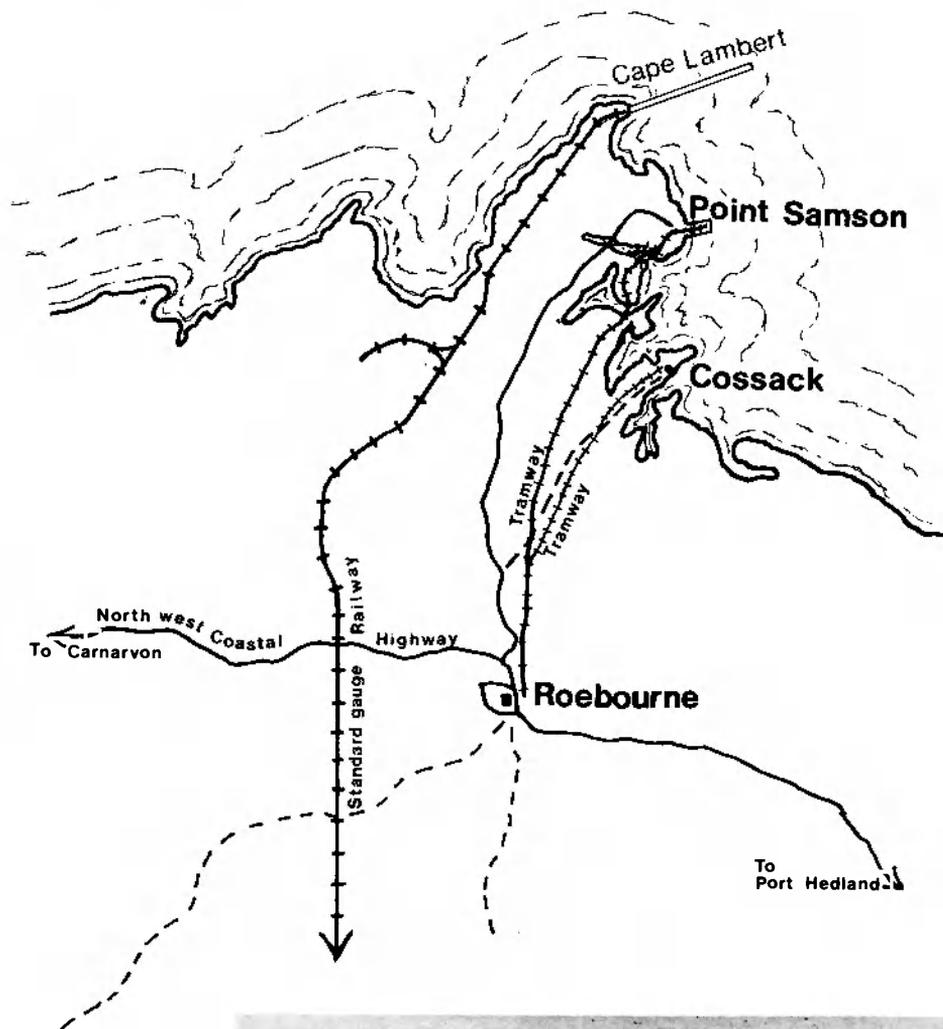
The Roebourne — Cossack horse tramway in the main street of Roebourne



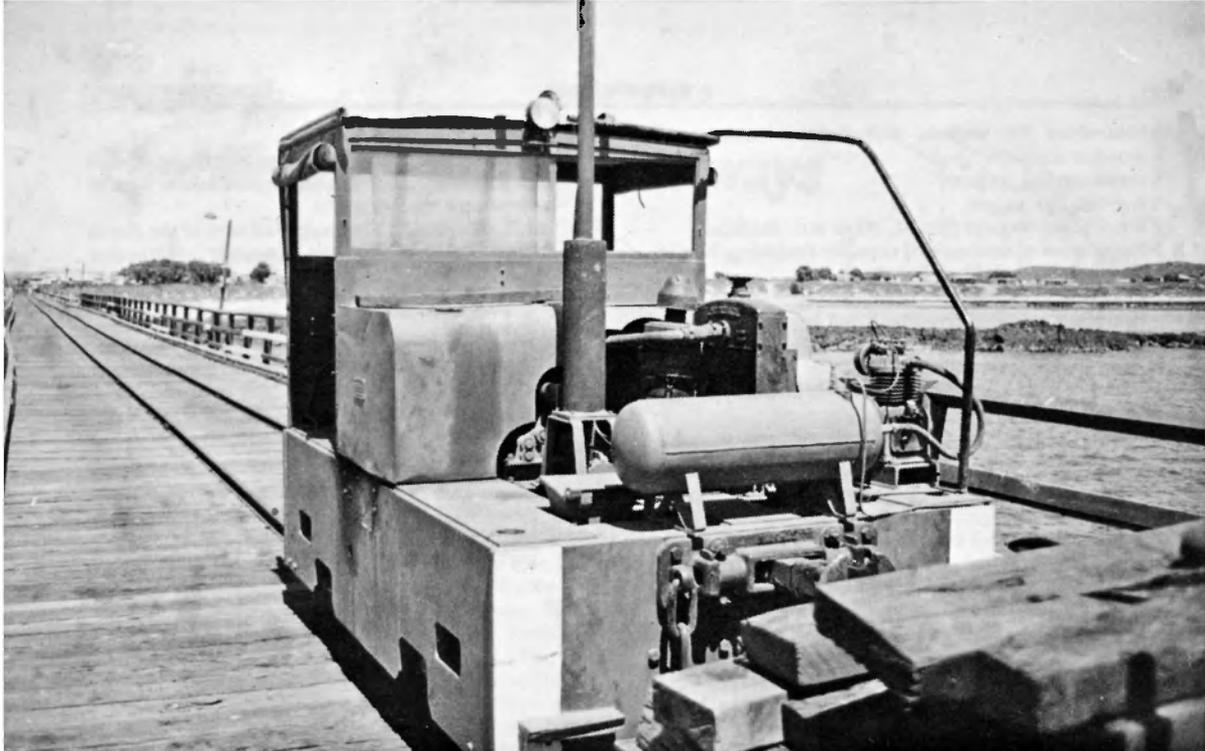
Narrow-gauge Orenstein & Koppel locomotive on the Roebourne tramway. Since preparation of the Roebourne article further information on the early narrow-gauge system has been found and this will be published in a subsequent issue.

'Both photographs: Courtesy Roebourne Tourist Bureau'.





Point Samson jetty, c. 1910 showing the sub-3 ft 6 in gauge track.  
Photo: Ian Crellin collection



Simplex-Dorman four-wheel diesel locomotive on the jetty at Point Samson, 25 November 1974

Geological Survey shows only the Point Samson line and no connection to Cossack. The Cossack line appears to have been defunct following the opening of the Point Samson line. About 1950 an unusual venture was established at Cossack. A Sydney based syndicate called Australian Canning Co. set up a turtle-soup plant. The remaining portion of the tramway was used to transport the turtles from the luggers at the landing to their factory nearby, with men providing the motive power.

Point Samson continued to serve as the outlet for the pastoral industry and mines of the area until better roads reduced the dependence on sea transport. Lang Hancock's asbestos mine at Wittenoom shipped its production here until its closure in 1966.<sup>7</sup> After the loss of this traffic, the port handled little until the revival of the late 1960s when large quantities of development materials for the Pilbara revived its fortunes. Some 15 768 tons of rails, 4702 tons of tie plates and 39 531 tons of sleepers<sup>8</sup> for the Robe railway were landed using the facilities, including the tramway.

#### Present position

As at 1965 official Public Works Department records showed the following rolling stock at Point Samson:

- 33 H class open wagons
- 4 HA class open wagons
- 2 J class wagons
- 23 GC class wagons
- 7 GA wagons
- 1 water tanker

A total of 70 vehicles, plus two Simplex four-wheel diesel locomotives, Nos NW 12 and NW 14. At the time of Frank Stamford's visit to Roebourne in November 1974 the jetty was being maintained but was not in general use. The last State Shipping Service vessel to use the Point Samson jetty berthed there early in 1974 and on 21 June 1974 *MV Wambiri* departed from Fremantle to commence the new service to the area using the modern jetty at Cape Lambert, owned by Cliffs Robe River Iron Associates (who also own the nearby iron-ore loading facility). The Harbour & Lights Department has arranged for cargo to be transferred from the new jetty to the existing goods sheds at Point Samson.<sup>9</sup> There was still plenty to see at Point Samson, with one loco in service while maintenance work was underway on the jetty. Locomotives and rolling stock seen in November 1974 comprised:

- 3 Simplex-Dorman four-wheel diesel locomotives (Nos PW 22, PW 23, and PW 24)
- 1 Rodley crane (diesel, converted from steam) with match truck
- 2 bogie flat wagons (R 2918, other unidentified)
- 1 four-wheel wagon with compressor mounted on it
- 31 four-wheel wagons with two-plank sides and five-plank ends (including Nos 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 26, 28, 32, 33, 35, 37, 40, 41, 49, 54, 55, H3, 8H, GC38, GC48, GC52, GC53, GA46; others not identified. Nos 7 and 41 were fitted with cylindrical tanks).

- 13 four-wheel flat wagons, with bolsters (most have wooden frames)
- 8 seven-ton flat wagons
- 1 five-ton flat wagon
- 2 ten-ton flat wagons (No.44, other not identified)
- 5 flat wagons of unidentified capacity (including Nos 26 and 30, others unidentified)
- 3 unidentified wagons locked in shed (appeared to be of two-plank side and five-plank end type)
- 5 wagons with two-plank sides and four-plank ends (Nos 30, H5, others unidentified)
- 1 four-wheel tank wagon of extremely ancient vintage
- 1 four-wheel open passenger car (derelict)
- 1 four-wheel wagon with five-plank ends and no sides (No.57)
- 2 small four-wheel cranes

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- 1 *Hammersley Region Western Australia*, tourist pamphlet issued by Western Australian Tourist Development Authority
- 2 J. L. Buckland, 'The Early Railways of the North West Ports of Western Australia', *Australian Railway Historical Society Bulletin* No. 415, May 1972, pp 114-119
- 3 J. L. Buckland, *ARHS Bulletin* No. 415
- 4 *Western Australian Yearbook*, 1902-04 edition
- 5 Hon. Sir John Kirwan, *An Empty Land*, Eyre & Spottiswood, London 1934.
- 6 J. L. Buckland, *ARHS Bulletin* No. 415
- 7 Harbour & Lights Department, *Annual Report*, year ended 30 June 1967
- 8 Harbour & Lights Department, *Annual Report*, year ended 30 June 1972
- 9 Harbour & Lights Department, *Annual Report*, year ended 30 June 1973



Derelict passenger car at Point Samson, 25 November 1974

# The Mount Ellison Tramways

by R. K. Morgan



In a pamphlet entitled *Mining in the Northern Territory*, published about 1900, there is a reference to a company called 'The Northern Territory Goldfields of Australia Ltd.', and states that about 1896 this company purchased many mines as a basis for their operations.

One of these mines was referred to as the Grove Hill mine at Yam Creek.<sup>1</sup> (This was probably the Iron Blow mine). Another was the Faded Lily Mine at Woolwonga nearby, and their claims extended to Mount Ellison several miles north. At this point, the North Australian Railway runs roughly east and west ('west' to Darwin), and the claims extended north to Mount Ellison, 11 miles from the NAR, and south to Iron Blow, 2½ miles away.

The siding on the NAR at this point was called Yam Creek, or Grove Hill, and even Iron Blow by travellers.<sup>2</sup> Apparently its official name was always Grove Hill, and for the purposes of this article, it is consistently referred to by that name. It had quite an elaborate platform (by Northern Territory standards), and several sidings branched off from the main line. It had once been the busiest station on the line (apart from Darwin).<sup>3</sup>

The Iron Blow was apparently discovered in 1873, but little work was done to develop the mine before 1886. About the time the deposit was worked as a gold mine, the outcrop yielding six to ten pennyweights of gold per ton.<sup>4</sup> As mentioned, the mine changed hands about 1896.

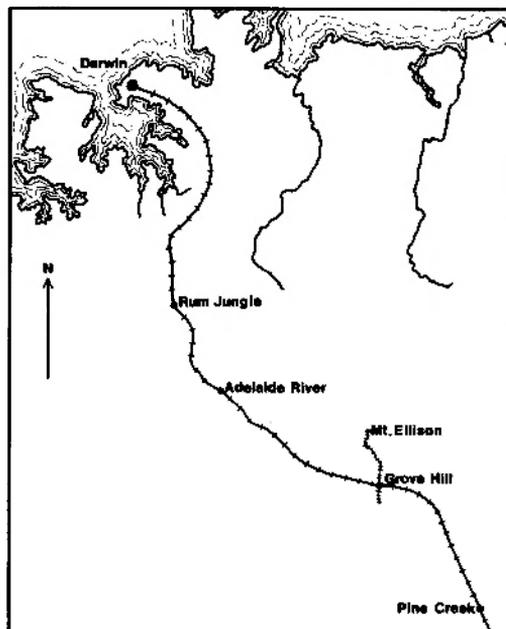
A tramway 400 yards long was reported at the Faded Lily mine by the warden in 1900,<sup>5</sup> seemingly worked by hand, and by 1902 another had been built at Yam Creek, 100 yards long, also hand operated.

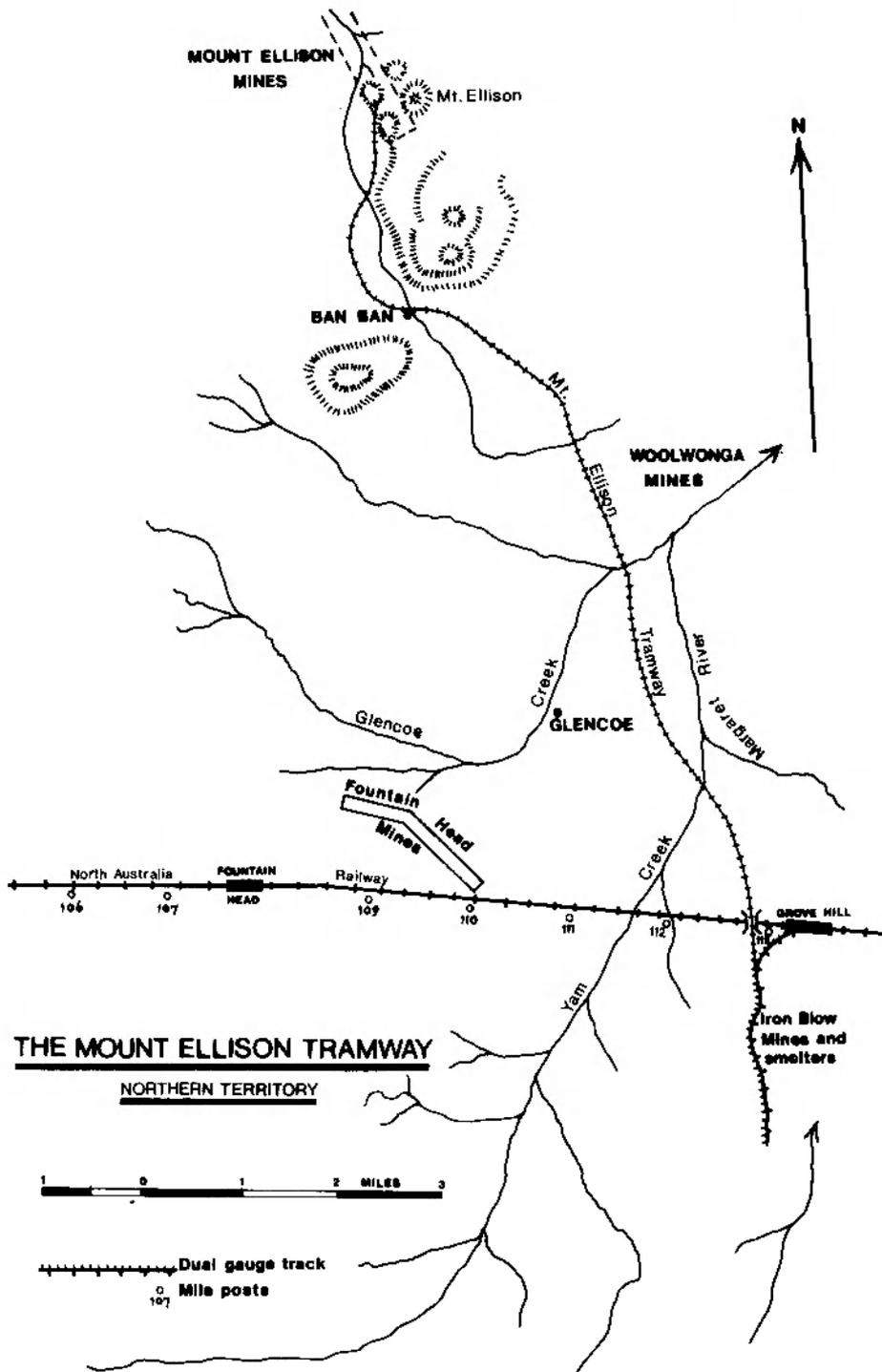
The Chief Mining Warden reported on activity in 1902: 'The N.T. Goldfields of Australia Co. arranged for a Mr Plant, a mine owner in Queensland, to inspect and report on the Iron Blow mine. He recommended the erection of a smelter to be connected with a steam train with the Mount Ellison Copper Mine owned by the company. Capital is being raised for the erection of a 40 tons smelter, purchase of the Mount Ellison Copper Mine, and for the making of 12 miles of steam tramway to connect such mine with the Ironstone Blow'.<sup>6</sup>

During the year 1902 the name of the company was changed to 'Northern Territory Mining and Smelting Company Limited'. That same year the Northern Territory Administration (the N.T. was under South Australian control at the time) reported on the construction of the tramway, and added: 'A siding has been put in to connect with the Government Railway at Grove Hill station, thus enabling Government trucks to be hauled right into the smelting sheds. The rolling stock

consists of a locomotive and 40 ore and wood trucks. The locomotive is capable of hauling 35 tons up a 1 in 50 grade. This information was supplied by Mr H. Roberts, General Manager of the N.T. Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd. The tramway will be completed within three months. The company paid £8,000 freight to the Railway during the year'.<sup>7</sup>

J. Y. Harvey notes that, while the Act of Parliament (S.A.) was not passed until 21 September 1904, by that time most of the line was already complete.<sup>8</sup> I would say this was pretty typical of the way they did things in the Northern Territory then. The Act provided for a three rail (mixed gauge) connection from the smelters to Grove Hill station. The actual wording of the Bill reads: 'Bill passes authorising the Northern Territory Mining and Smelting Company Limited to construct, maintain and work by steam traction or other mechanical means, a tramway, through, over and along a certain strip of Crown Lands, from the east side of Iron Blow on land comprised in Gold Mining Lease No. 558, in the Northern Territory of South Australia to the south western corner of the land





comprised in Mineral Lease Section No 213, near Mount Ellison.....and along another strip of Crown Lands from the said tramway to a siding in the Grove Hill station yard on the Palmerston Pine Creek Railway'.<sup>9</sup>

The Mining Warden reported in 1902 that 'a steam tramway with a third rail was laid down from the Grove Hill railway station to connect with the Iron Blow Mines Smelters; and a 2 ft gauge steam tramway line was constructed from the Ironstone Blow mine past the smelters and towards the Mt. Ellison mine as far as Woolwonga Creek'.<sup>10</sup>

A map shows the dual gauge extending right to the terminus at the Iron Blow mine (2½ miles from Grove Hill), whereas all written references to this dual gauge section refer to it as extending from Grove Hill only as far as the smelters (1½ miles). It would appear to me that on this count, the map is in error.

The rails used were 41 bs per yard on the 3 ft 6 in gauge section, and 22 bs per yard on the 2 ft gauge line. It is interesting to note that J. Harvey also indicated a rough loading gauge for both lines: '8 ft limit for the 3 ft 6 in gauge width of carriages; 4 ft limit for the 2 ft gauge width of carriages'.<sup>11</sup>

After the construction of the mixed gauge line from Grove Hill to the smelters, and the 2 ft gauge extension from the smelters to the Iron Blow mine, the 2ft gauge line to Mount Ellison was proceeded with. The existing dual gauge line was used for the first mile from the smelters back toward Grove Hill, and about half a mile from the station yard, where the dual gauge began to swing away to the east, a 2 ft gauge branch was laid in taking the line straight on in a general northerly direction. It is assumed that the bridge which took the tramway over the Government line was at a place where the Government line was laid in a convenient cutting. Although I have no record to confirm this, perusal of a photograph in the *A.R.H.S. Bulletin* No 394 (August, 1970) illustrating an article by J. Y. Harvey indicates that on the Darwin side of Grove Hill there is a slight grade ascending a low rise, the crest being in a cutting which appears to be about half a mile distant. This photograph, taken in 1915, shows that the activity which made it the 'busiest station on the line' had apparently subsided quite dramatically.

The line continued in a general northerly direction to Mount Ellison.

When completed, the tramway totalled about 13 miles, making it by far the most extensive tramway in the Northern Territory.

A Mr Colin Cox, a former employee on the tramway, wrote a number of letters to Mr George Bond of Brisbane in 1956 about the line:

'There was only one bridge on the line that could be called such. That was to cross the Government line at Yam Creek (Grove Hill). The brickwork still stands there'. (That was in 1956. The brickwork would probably have been the bridge abutments).<sup>12</sup>

Earthworks on the line were not extensive, about six shallow cuttings up to three feet deep, and a few embankments up to about eight feet high. Several small creeks were crossed on simple spans of eight to ten feet.<sup>13</sup>

One of the major works on the line was the incline,

ramp and staging which took the line up over the ore bins at the smelters. The incline was about a hundred yards long, ending in a three span trestle and the stage over the bins. Since the height reached was about twenty feet, the grade was rather stiff. Colin Cox says it was about 1 in 20, but if his dimensions are anywhere near accurate, it was closer to 1 in 15. He says that while a loco could haul twelve to fourteen trucks from Mount Ellison (a gross load behind the engine of about 30 to 35 tons), it could take only six tons (three trucks at the outside) up this incline per trip.

The first locomotive arrived in either late 1903 or early 1904.<sup>14</sup> It was a Kerr Stuart, their works number 743, an 0-4-2 side tank with builder's plates mounted on the side tanks. It was named *McDonald*, after one of the directors of the company. The line had almost reached Mount Ellison when the second loco arrived. It, too, was a Kerr Stuart 0-4-2T, works number 797, and named *Heasman*, also after a prominent member of the company.<sup>15</sup> The names were painted on in gold lettering, but it is not clear if this was done by the builders or at Grove Hill....probably by the builders.

The locos were shipped in a partly knocked down condition. Colin Cox was working in the fitters shop at the mine, and put *Heasman* together, after which he took on driving the locos, bringing ore in on the Mount Ellison leg of the line.<sup>16</sup> He does not say what qualifications (if any) he was required to have to qualify him as driver.

Both coal and wood were used to fire the engines... 'wood when the coal was light on'.<sup>17</sup> However, no spark arrestors were fitted in the chimneys.

The ore trucks were simple four-wheel side-tipping hoppers constructed of steel, of two-tons capacity. There were also a number of four-wheel firewood trucks, with steel frames and timber decking, having bolster posts at each end to contain the load.<sup>18</sup>

Run round loops were situated at the smelters and at each end of the line. Water tanks were sited at the smelters and at *Ban Ban*, a tank about two miles from the Mount Ellison terminus.

One engine was employed on the Mount Ellison leg of the line, hauling ore and firewood for the boilers at the smelters (coke was used in the smelters themselves). The other loco was used for hauling ore from the Iron Blow mine, and handling the traffic from the Grove Hill station yard. No information has been available to indicate if this loco handled any 3 ft 6 in gauge traffic over the line, or if this shunting was done by a Government engine. If the former was the case, it would be interesting to know what coupling arrangements were made for the movements.

One correspondent wrote of those times on this line in *Cummins and Campbell's Magazine*, the November 1936 issue:

'As it was my intention to visit the mining territory, the Government Railway was left at Yam Creek (Grove Hill), and the small steam tram which served the mines and the smelters of the Northern Territory Mining Coy (sic) was boarded.' (Did he ride on the engine, in a hopper, or on a firewood truck?) 'An immense amount of capital has been invested by this company in plant and equipment. About a mile and a half from the Government Railway the smelting plant was erected.....'

'Ore supplies were obtained from Iron Blow, a short distance from the smelters, and from Mount Ellison, where the principal copper deposits were situated. Mount Ellison had also been connected by a steam tramway, built for a distance of twelve miles over extremely rough country and at great cost.' (This latter statement does not tie in with Colin Cox's remarks about the earthworks....I suppose it depends on what you call rough....)

'The white officials (the mine employed many Chinese) were most lavish in their mode of living, each man had his Chinese servant, and the quarters were equipped with billiard tables and many luxuries usually unknown in distant mining camps'.<sup>19</sup>

Shades of North Mount Lyell!

Another writer, J. S. Litchfield, in his *Far North Memories*, says:

'The Iron Blow! A monument of colossal folly! It had been owned by one of Horatio Bottomley's English companies, it is said, and at least £70,000 had been spent on elaborate buildings and machinery before the capabilities of the mine had been fully tested. When the shareholders became impatient for dividends, an inspector was sent out to report on the mine. He promptly condemned the place. Some say his report was written before he left Darwin to inspect the property.

'Despite strongly worded protests from the Government, and despite heated representations from the workers and the management, all employees were dismissed and the mine closed down. The machinery, all the latest and most up to date, was sold for scrap iron; yet during the six weeks elapsing between the word for closing the plant and the final day, over £11,000 worth of copper had been smelted from the ore at grass.....

'The houses had coloured doors, and there had been electric light and telephones. Water, of course, had been laid on to every home. There were tennis courts and golf links, artificially made gardens, wrought iron fences and gates, billiard rooms, and an immense concrete reservoir, said to have been a swimming pool, and holding 100,000 gallons.

'The mine and smelters were on a rise, but the old battery was about one and a half miles down in the hollow. The tram track ran down to the battery. Therefore, if we wanted to get either to the station (Grove Hill) or to the bore site (Iron Blow mine) in a hurry, we simply jumped on a flat topped truck and let her go!.....

'Iron Blow mine had once employed over 1,000 miners'.<sup>20</sup>

During the years 1904 to 1906, from 5000 to 7000 tons of ore were mined annually, but in the latter year the mine was abandoned.<sup>21</sup> The company came under severe criticism because, despite reports that it was a profitable venture, it had been closed. Attempts were made during the years 1912 to 1914 to reopen the mine, and considerable money spent with this end in view, but the attempts were unsuccessful.<sup>22</sup>

The chief warden reports that in 1906, the last year of operation, the steam tramway was completed, 'but this work was carried out more to obtain a refund of the deposit lodged with the Government as a guarantee of the construction than for the future utility of the tramline'.<sup>23</sup> This later construction was short section at the Mount

Ellison end, and of a minor nature. The line had been operating quite successfully without it up to that time.

Colin Cox had been driving for eighteen months, and had gone to Sydney when the works closed down. He returned to Iron Blow in 1906, and he and his father took a twelve month tribute at Mount Ellison, and used one of the locos to bring copper ore to the railway at Grove Hill, from whence it went on to Cockle Creek, near Newcastle (NSW) for treatment. He also mentions that they eventually went broke, and no doubt the freight bills would have contributed handsomely toward that abysmal state of affairs!<sup>24</sup>

In 1907 the mine machinery was brought by Cameron and Sutherland of Melbourne. Colin Cox drove the locomotive for them taking equipment to Grove Hill to be railed away. A lot of this machinery went to Tasmania (not as scrap, as one writer quoted earlier suggested!) The two locos went to Melbourne.

The tramway itself remained intact till about 1911 or 1912, although Colin Cox says that the Government got most of the rails.

The later movements of the two locomotives are obscure to the writer. Kerr Stuart 743 was apparently reconditioned by Walkers Ltd, of Maryborough, Qld, (although they have no record of it), and from there it seems it went to Block 10 Misima Mines, where it arrived in 1920. However, this leaves a gap of 1907 to 1920, and the burning question is ... where was it for those 13 years? It is unlikely that Cameron and Sutherland had it on their hands for all that time. After it went to Misima, it was said by people there that it had come from a sugar mill in Queensland. It may have done so, but on the other hand, this may have been assumed because of its 2 ft gauge, and its apparently having been shipped from Queensland, if it was in fact reconditioned by Walkers.

This locomotive was out of service on Misima Island in 1924, and came back into the possession of Cameron and Sutherland that year. It was then purchased by Russell's Mill, Gembrook, Victoria. Russell had it regauged by Day's Engineering Works, South Melbourne, to fit their 3 ft tramway. However, it developed the bad habit of jumping the lines, especially on curves, and was placed out of service soon after. But that's another story.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Mr George Bond in preparing the above. He supplied me with all the material, and asked me to sift through it and write it up. I trust I have done justice to what is really his work.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Chief Mining Warden's Report, 1899
- 2 *Far North Memories*, J. S. Litchfield,
- 3 As for 2
- 4 Commonwealth of Australia Department of National Development, Bureau of Mineral Resources: Bulletin No. 12, *The Geology and Mineral Resources of the Brock's Creek District*, by C. J. Sullivan and K. W. B. Iten
- 5 Chief Mining Warden's Report, 1900
- 6 Chief Mining Warden's Report, 1902
- 7 Northern Territory Administration Report for 1902

8	J. Y. Harvey	19	<i>Cummins and Campbell's Magazine</i> , November 1936
9	South Australian Parliamentary Papers 1904, Messages from the House of Assembly, No. 37	20	As for 2
10	Chief Mining Warden's Report, 1902	21	As for 4
11	J. Y. Harvey	22	As for 4
12	Letters from Colin Cox to George Bond	23	Chief Mining Warden's Report, 1906
13to 18	As for 12	24	Letters from Colin Cox to George Bond

# The Cootharaba Tramway

by R. K. Morgan



Eighty miles due north of Brisbane lie a number of lakes connected to the Noosa River, the largest of which is Lake Cootharaba (with emphasis on the first 'a'), seven miles long by about three miles wide. It is only a mile or so inland from where the Pacific Ocean rolls against the low sand cliffs known as the Teewah Coloured Sands. Behind these cliffs is low-lying, flat 'wallum' country where the lakes are located, with low hills to the north, south and west.

Fed by a high rainfall, the lake in question is really a widening of the Noosa River. Stands of big timber were to be found in the area, hence the existence in the early days of sawmills.

One company milling timber was McGhie, Luya and Co. The *Courier* of 22 August 1878, carried this news item: 'The company is preparing to lay down four miles of railway with 16 pound rails which would carry five ton waggons so logs could be hauled by three or four horses or by a small traction engine.'

This railway operated for some years. The gauge is not stated, but from all accounts, haulage was always by horse power, and it is unlikely that the traction engine ambitiously spoken of eventuated.

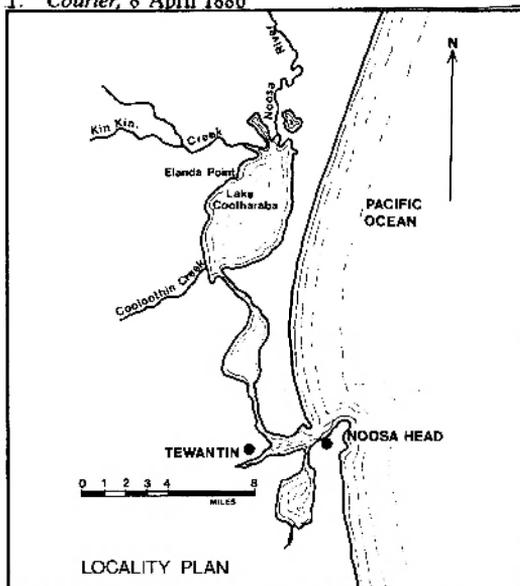
A correspondent, writing in the *Courier* eight years later, spoke in an informal manner of a visit to the area under the heading, 'A Tramway Through the Forest:

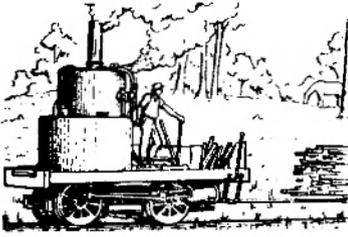
'One of the chief and most expensive accessories of the mill is an iron tramway, about four miles in length, which runs through the forest to the cleared space beyond where the logs are mostly brought from the outlying districts, and placed on skids ready for transhipment to the waggons... Our ride along the tramline was a treat. The trees on either side were all more or less tall and stately, and the infinitude of shrubberies, which rose up to their fullest development, made the road a magnificent avenue, redolent of the scent of wild flowers and of gum... The timber we passed comprised blue and flooded gums, kauri and hoop pine, box, beech and some others. As far as the

line runs there are little signs of the axe or of the nine bullock teams and the horse team employed by the company. In fact, some of the logs are dragged along ten or fifteen miles, or rafted along Clothen Creek for ten or twelve miles to the tram terminus.'

Not much more than this is known of this light railway. Its exact location is not known to the writer, but the *Sunday Mail* of 8 February 1970, reported that 'At Elanda Point on Lake Cootharaba once stood the remains of a sawmill built in the mid-1800's. Timber cut in the north was milled there and sent to Sydney by sea for many years.'

*J. Courier*, 8 April 1886





## News, Notes & Comments

### NEW SOUTH WALES

#### METROPOLITAN WATER SEWERAGE & DRAINAGE BOARD

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 28 June 1975 carried an advertisement that the following items of railway equipment belonging to the MWS&DB were to be auctioned on 15 July 1975: two Gemco battery-electric locomotives of 610 mm gauge, and twelve Gemco mining trucks. This equipment was used on underground works on the South Coast. The actual project is still under construction using various types of rail vehicles.

(Dick Audley)

### QUEENSLAND

#### 2 ft GAUGE CARRIAGE PRESERVED AT INGHAM

A carriage with long associations with Ingham district 2 ft gauge tramways has been restored and placed in a local kindergarten for the little tots to climb over. The work was done by the Apex Club of Hinchinbrook in conjunction with CSR who own the two mills in the district. The coach is now in the Lower Herbert Kindergarten at Halifax. The handover ceremony in late June 1975 was the highlight of 'Under Fives' Week' at the Kindergarten.

Until recently the coach was in service transporting permanent way workers around the Victoria Mill tramway system. It was reputedly known as the 'Decauville Coach, First Class' and to have been assembled at Victoria Mill in 1885. It served for many years on the passenger and mixed trains which ran on the lines from the port of Lucinda to the town of Ingham and to the rural districts beyond. These services were finally abandoned in the 1930s when motor transport and good roads superseded the tramway services.

(Ian Crellin)

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

#### EUCLA JETTY TRAMWAY

Eucla is seven miles west of the WA/SA border on the Eyre Highway, and is 897 miles east of Perth. Today it consists of little more than two motels and a road house, but long before the construction of the highway Eucla was an important telegraph station in the link between Western Australia and the eastern colonies. This station was built in 1877 and a small settlement of stone buildings was established around it, three miles to the south of the present highway. Half-a-mile from the telegraph station a wooden jetty was built with a tramway (gauge unknown but probably 2 ft).

The new settlers at the telegraph station brought with them various animals which soon denuded the area of vegetation, resulting in giant sand dunes being formed. These have now almost buried the telegraph station and surrounding buildings, and whilst the jetty still stands the actual extent of the tramway can no longer be judged as its formation vanishes under the sand dunes. For a stretch of about a quarter-of-a-mile near the jetty the tramway formation is still quite clear, with some sleepers still in place. A row of steel telegraph poles stretches for hundreds of miles from the station towards Perth.

(Frank Stamford)

## Railway Scene

A truly international English language railway magazine, published in Sweden, Railway Annual subscription (six issues per year) is:

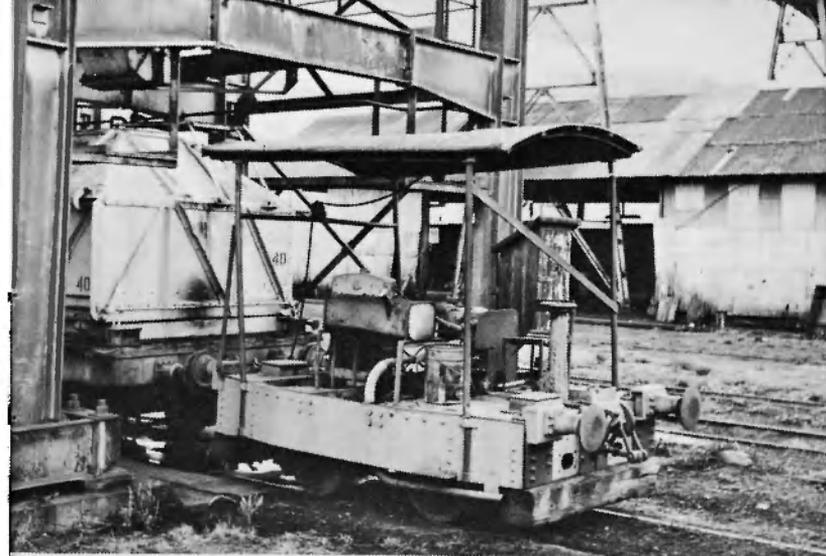
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**Left:** Simplex (?) four-wheel 3 ft 6 in gauge diesel locomotive at Hambledon Sugar Mill, 15 November 1974

## **Queensland sugar scene 1975**



**Right:** Planet (B/No. 3950) four-wheel 2 ft gauge diesel locomotive at Mourilyan Sugar Mill, 16 November 1974

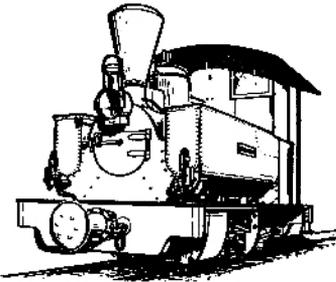


**Left:** *Kilrie* at Pioneer Sugar Mill, 18 November 1974. All photographs: R. Graf

STEAM LOCOMOTIVES 2 ft GAUGE

MADE BY PERRY ENGINEERING CO. LTD

Martin/ Perry Consec. Nos	Works No.	Order Issued	Type	Made for	Loco name	Latest position, 1975
281	9351	5/34	0-6-2	Kalamia Sugar Mill	Ivanhoe	Preserved at Home Hill
282	6776	3/38	0-6-2	Kalamia Sugar Mill	Chiverton	In park at East Ayr
283	8403	2/39	0-6-2	Proserpine Sugar Mill	No.1	In store at mill
284	8967	3/39	0-4-2	Pioneer Sugar Mill	Pioneer	Scrapped
285	2382	2/41	0-6-2	North Eton Sugar Mill	No.6	Keith Duncan, Megalong
288	9737/45/1	3/45	0-4-2	Sth Johnstone Sugar Mill	No.6	Now at Millaquin - Qunaba Sugar Mill
289	1850/46/1	8/45	0-6-2	Millaquin Sugar Mill	Perry	At Qunaba Sugar Mill
290	6160/48/1	7/47	0-6-2	Proserpine Sugar Mill	No.7	At Millaquin-Qunaba Sugar Mill - 'Flash'
291	7650/49/1	6/48	0-4-2	Douglas Shire Council	R. D. Rex	Preserved at Mossman Park
292	7650/49/2	6/48	0-4-2	Sth Johnstone Sugar Mill	No.7	Scrapped
293	7650/50/3	6/48	0-4-2	Sth Johnstone Sugar Mill	No.8	Scrapped
294	7967/49/1	6/48	0-6-2	Tully Sugar Mill	No.6	Illawarra Light Rly Museum Society
295	7967/50/2	6/48	0-6-2	Tully Sugar Mill	No.7	Not in service
296	7967/50/3	12/48	0-6-2	Babinda Sugar Mill	No.7	Green Bros, Bendigo, Vic.
297	7967/50/4	12/48	0-6-2	Kalamia Sugar Mill	Delta	At Qunaba Sugar Mill
298	2601/51/1	5/49	0-6-2	Marian Sugar Mill	No.9 ?	Still in use at mill
299	2714/51/1	9/49	0-4-2	Mourilyan Sugar Mill	No.7	Bruce Belbin, St Ives, North Shore, Sydney
300	5643/51/1	5/51	0-6-2	Bingera Sugar Mill	Perry	Bruce McDonald, Goulburn
301	6634/52/1	10/51	0-6-2	North Eton Sugar Mill	No.7	Keith Duncan, Megalong



## LETTERS

### MEGALONG VALLEY SCENIC RAILWAY LR 50, p.23

Further to my letter in LR 50, p.23, my apologies to the original source of the information concerning the identity of the two ex-North Eton Sugar Mill Perry locomotives, formerly Nos 6 and 7 on that mill's register.

Official advice from Perry Engineering Co. Ltd confirms that their works (or job) Nos 2382 of 1942 and 6634 of 1952 respectively, are now owned by Keith Duncan, of Megalong Valley.

It appears I was wrong about no mill locos having been built by Perry Engineering during the last war, No. 2382 having been ordered and work started thereon in February 1941. In addition, Perry also built for the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd., Iron Knob, South Australia, two Bo-Bo electric locomotives for quarry operations during 1940-42, about which further details are being sought. They were built to BHP requirements to drawings supplied by that company and were probably identical to Metropolitan-Vickers locos already in use at Iron Knob.

A full and official list of all the 2 ft gauge steam locos built by Perry Engineering Co. between 1934 and 1952 and the current disposition of each of the nineteen locomotives is appended on page 22. Of particular interest is the apparent fate of Babinda No. 7 which is listed as currently being owned by Green Bros at Bendigo, Victoria.

**John Buckland**  
East Brighton Vic

### REFERENCES

I cannot but sympathize with any reviewer who criticizes the lack of references in an historical work. It is not that the reviewer may in any way doubt the authenticity of that work; but without some references how can those who have no personal knowledge of the authors know whether to trust what is in print. Having references that one can check can not only increase one's confidence in the work, it can also provide helpful clues to further research in related areas.

Back in the September 1967 *A.R.H.S. Bulletin* I remarked how the lack of references could result in one person's error being repeated with no way of checking on the sequence of events. Some picturesque but imaginary history in early issues of the *Bulletin* would probably not

have passed as history had there been attention to references. I made a plea for the inclusion of references and have been pleased by at least partial response. There are difficulties in referring to publications headed 'For officials only' and other times difficulties in preventing the references dominating the article when, as for some government railway research, one has hundreds of references.

Just as the saying goes, any book, however bad or good, may be improved by an index, so any author, however trustworthy and reliable, will have his reputation enhanced by suitable references, even when they are of the kind 'Personal inspection on foot, 1945'.

**John Kerr**  
St Lucia Qld

### HOW TO RESEARCH A TRAMWAY

Having devoted many years of my own time to researching and writing on railways in Victoria, I cannot help but comment on the Spring issue of 1974. Mr Stamford advises intending writers and researchers to 'assume all facts are wrong until you can prove them right from independent sources (LR 49, p.5) and quotes an example as being the 'Redcastle and Costerfield branches of the McIvor Tramway which are shown on maps in some articles, apparently for no other reason than at sometime in the past someone thought that they might have existed.'

It is really a pity that your writer did not carry out a little more research into why it has been put into print that the two branches in dispute may have existed, as very few of your present readers would be aware of the earliest recording of the history of the McIvor tramway. That these two lines were allegedly built is attributed to an interview in about 1940 by Mr John Buckland with Mr W. Prince, the Manager of the McIvor Company, and Mr N. Prince, Engineer of the line at the time it was opened. Further research by *Light Railways* writers with the children of the above, official maps, aerial photographs and on site investigations have failed to confirm that these branches (in actual fact temporary spurs which could have existed for only a few months or even a few weeks), and the possibility of their existence in the earliest days of the line cannot at the moment be either proved or disproved. Yet it is stated on page 16 in the same issue that such men as Messrs Prince 'are the best type of people to interview'!!! (the exclamation marks are my own).

I disagree with your comments on page 8 regarding interviews. The unreliability of retired railwaymen and the 'oldest inhabitant' as well as some early newspapers has been responsible for two publications in the last few years which would have better been left unpublished. As a classic example of the former one only has to look at *Memories* which was based entirely on the individual memory of an ex-railwayman with no attempt made whatsoever to correct the numerous inaccuracies which it contained, even though the publisher's foreword admitted that some of the text was wrong. I have found personally that such informers memories tend to dim and become confused over the years, and in addition, they tend to flavour the remains with their own individual personalities and the end result, whilst usually colourful, is of little use to the present day historian.

Another trap which should be watched for appears in many early newspapers. Whilst provincial newspapers of the earlier days considered integrity above sensationalism they also copied from each other verbatim without acknowledgment, a researcher reading through (this is a hypothetical example) the *Ballarat Star* might find an interesting item, and confirm it by reading the *Ararat Advertiser* of a day or so later. The same news item then appears in the *Geelong Advertiser* a couple of days later. This could to an unwary researcher be taken as confirmed positive proof when in actual fact the original report was wrong and so, therefore, were the unacknowledged reproductions.

Yet at the same time I cannot let your vicious and unwarranted attack (LR 49, p.8) on the review in the

*A.R.H.S. Bulletin* on Mr Houghton's booklet on the West Otways tramways go by without comment. After reading this publication, which by the way I thoroughly enjoyed, I could not help but think, after reading through the sources of reference, that over-emphasis had been placed on 'evidence' from those whose memories had possibly been dimmed and confused over the years. I am sure that the hobby, and in general, the handful of devotees who give so much of their own time towards compiling more and more of the history of our railways, tramways etc, can do well without such unwarranted attacks, particularly after your own review of *The Shale Railways of New South Wales*, which has aroused the ire of far more historians than what you have heard from so far.

Keith Turton  
Blackburn, Vic

(Editor's comment: *West Otways Narrow Gauge* could not have been written without the use of interviews. Virtually no official files could be found dealing with the tramways in this area because most were built on private property. The author, Norm Houghton, went to the best possible sources of information available in the circumstances, the people who owned the tramways, built them and worked on them. The only alternative was not to record their history at all. I would be delighted to be proved wrong regarding the Costerfield and Redcastle branches of the McIvor line, but evidence so far obtained from a wide variety of sources indicates that these branches were definitely proposed but never built. FES)

## Book Review

**ORAL HISTORY 74, Papers Presented at the First Oral History Conference, Joan Campbell (Editor), Published by LaTrobe University, Bundoora, Victoria.**

The importance of interviewing as a technique in historical research into tramways was discussed in *Light Railways* No. 49 pp 8-9 and 16. *Oral History 74* will be of interest to researchers wishing to develop this technique. It is a collection of papers presented at the First Oral History Conference, held at LaTrobe University in 1974. It is not a 'how to do it' guide, as the conference was intended to define and discuss broad problems and the overall potential of interviewing, but the results of a number of practical applications of oral history are discussed. These covered a very broad spectrum of projects in Australia, New Guinea, the USA and Africa.

The introduction, by Joan Campbell, is particularly interesting. It refers to the urgency of oral recording,

and to the way that oral and literary sources can be used to complement each other to make a more interesting history – the feeling of 'what it was like to be there' can best be recreated through the medium of oral history.

The accuracy of oral history is discussed, and the general opinion seems to be that when it is handled properly oral history is not less accurate than history obtained from written sources. This is not really surprising, as many written sources are not as accurate as one might expect. The importance and necessity of proper documentation of the historian's sources of information is also mentioned.

LRRSA members interested in developing the interviewing technique are welcome to borrow the Society's copy of *Oral History 74* from the Publications Editor. Copies are also available for \$4.00 from the Department of History, LaTrobe University..

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