

# LIGHT RAILWAYS

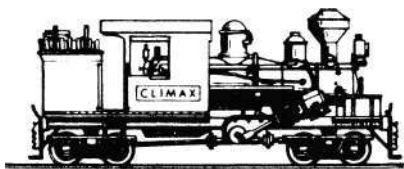
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## Editorial

**With this *Light Railways*** we again offer a special issue focussing on a particular topic: the extensive system of timber tramways of the Erica district in Victoria. As with *LR. 77*, this issue will also be produced in booklet form for sale to a wider public.

Mike McCarthy's article on the Erica district brings together the results of extensive field research into the origins of 24 sawmills and associated tramway systems to provide an in-depth, local history of the timber industry. Mike focuses on the pioneer sawmillers and their entrepreneurial flair, which made the exploitation of the forest resources possible in face of physical hardship. In particular, bushfires regularly left a wake of physical destruction, shattered hopes and, in some instances, loss of human life.

*Light Railways* serves as a vehicle for recording and analysing the role of light railways and tramways in the development of Australia and her overseas territories. In most cases, material published in the journal seeks to provide an accurate descriptive record of light railway lines and their operation. However, we particularly welcome articles which offer a historical analysis of the role of railways in shaping our present society. Such historical analysis may take a social (the impact of the railway on settlement patterns or cultural characteristics such as the innovativeness of "bush" pioneers), institutional (e.g. the features of the organisation which built the railway or locomotives, including managerial practices), or economic perspective, but it will also rely on the interpretation of the writer, including the theoretical framework used. Thus there is scope for different interpretations of the impact of timber tramways on the development of Erica district, for example, as well as research into a vast number of sugar and timber tramways, mining ventures, industrial railways and manufacturers of railway equipment which have not yet been covered in this journal. In general articles should be up to 6000 words in length with accompanying photographs, maps and drawings as appropriate. Additional information and comment on published articles for inclusion in our "Letters" columns is also welcome.

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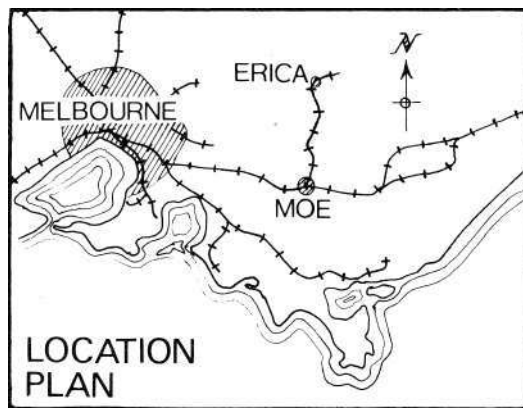
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Cover: One of Ezard's rail tractors crossing the Narrows Trestle on the Thomson Valley Tramway.

# TRESTLE BRIDGES AND TRAMWAYS: THE TIMBER INDUSTRY OF ERICA DISTRICT, 1910-1950

by Mike McCarthy

The township of Erica, situated twenty miles north of Moe and approximately one hundred miles east of Melbourne, has been involved with the timber industry since soon after the opening of the narrow gauge railway to Walhalla in May 1910. Sawmilling was active in the area prior to that time, but only to the extent necessary to satisfy the needs of the Walhalla mines: the lack of a connecting rail link to the main Gippsland line prevented any major exploitation of the Telbit and Moondarra forests. The railway was constructed as much as an outlet for the timber as to provide access to the mines of Walhalla, and over the ensuing forty years thousands of tons of sawn timber were despatched annually to Moe for transhipment into broad gauge trucks destined for Melbourne.



An early view of Erica, probably taken about 1913, showing Morgan's tram next to the fence in the foreground. G. Maynard

## Early Tramway Ventures

Closely associated with the opening of sawmills was the construction of a network of tramways radiating from Erica or Harris, as it was known in 1910, and the three nearby sidings on the railway: Collins Siding to the south and Knotts and O'Shea and Bennetts Sidings to the east. Tramways played a major role in the timber industry of the district until the 1940's when the availability of crawler tractors and heavy duty motor trucks spelled the end of what had been the most efficient method of moving heavy tonnages over rough country.

With one or two exceptions the establishment of sawmills and the construction of tramway outlets at Erica took place in two directions. The first was a step by step expansion west along the Tyers River Valley, skirting the southern end and south western slopes of Mount Erica. The second involved the extraction of timber from the northern sectors of the Eastern Tyers River and the Thomson Valley further north.

### Morgan

G. V. Morgan had the honour of being the pioneer sawmiller at Erica. In 1911, Morgan, who was president of the local shire and a prominent merchant in the town of Walhalla moved a mill he had been operating on Ostlers Creek, south east of Walhalla, onto the banks of Watsons Creek just below the Erica (then Harris) Cemetery.<sup>1</sup> The mill was connected to the railway by a three feet gauge wooden rail tramway laid along the east side of the road leading to the railway station. It passed over the road bridge at the southern end of the station yard to enter the goods area on the west side of the railway.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of a short winch hauled section covering the final three hundred yards or so to the mill, the tramway was worked entirely by horses. The mill was badly damaged in a local fire in 1913 but was rebuilt and continued to work the site until 1921 when the plant was shifted to Gould, three miles to the south.<sup>3</sup>

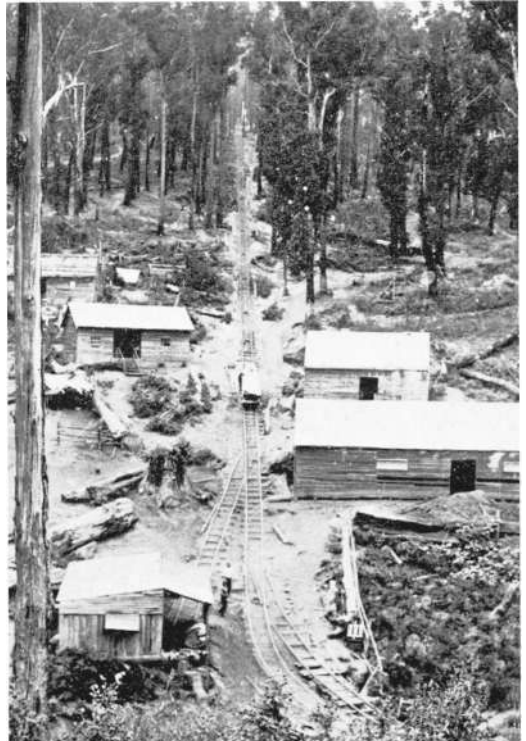
### The Development To The West Murie, O'Shea and Bennet, Munro and Sons

A few months after Morgan commenced operations at Erica, another former Walhalla identity, William Murie, shifted his mill from Jubilee to a site on Hotel Creek about two miles north from Erica. In March 1912 he laid a two feet six inch gauge tramway from the mill to a surveyed road running past the present site of the Erica school and then extended the tramway along the west side of the road for most of the distance to the station yard<sup>4</sup>. In 1915 Murie sold the mill to a former employee of

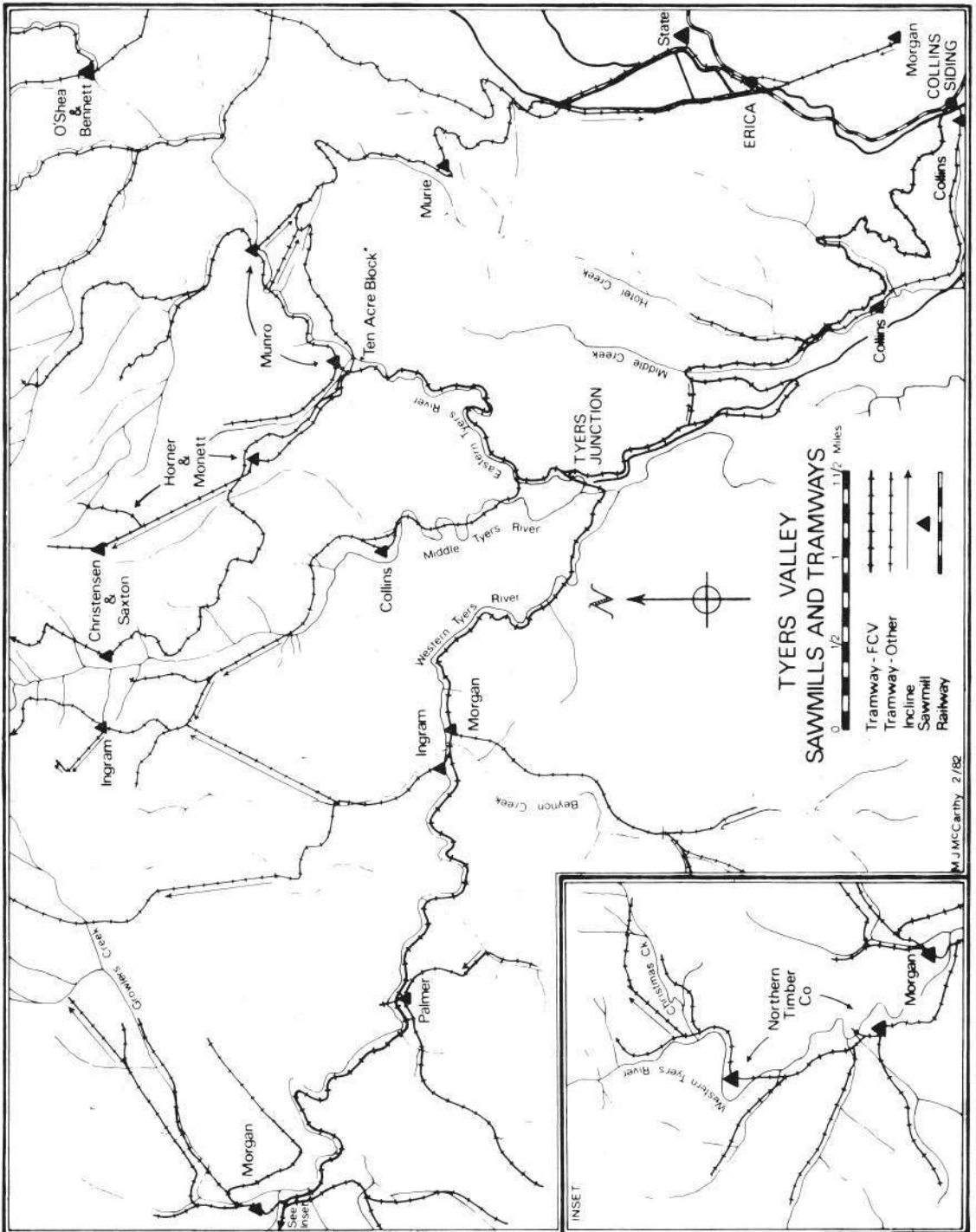
Morgan, William O'Shea and his sons who, in partnership with Bennett, a newspaper proprietor from Moe, extended a logging tramway beyond the mill to extract the timber from the west branch of Hotel Creeks.

O'Shea and Bennett worked the site until 1919 when, after having cut through all the accessible timber, they sold the plant to the Melbourne firm of Munro & Sons. The new owners moved the mill a mile further west onto the Eastern Tyers River and installed a winch hauled incline to connect with the logging tramway from the old site and thereby gain access to the railway at Erica<sup>6</sup>.

Although the tramway was originally worked entirely by horses, the section along the road past the school was very steep and proved to be particularly hard on the animals. To alleviate the problem, Munro installed a winch on top of the hill, not far from the school and used this to haul the trucks over the rise<sup>7</sup>. This arrangement existed for only a short time as in 1922 a new, more favourably graded road was constructed which did away with the steep climb into Erica and Munro was quick to



Munro's incline on the Eastern Tyers River in 1925.  
M. Collins



M.J. McCarthy, 2/82

capitalise on this. He abandoned his earlier tramway and laid a connection along the new road and around into the station yard, the new route taking the tramway past the front of Lundy's General Stores.

Several lengthy 2ft 6in gauge log tramways were laid by Munro and Sons to extract the timber from the slopes of Mount Erica to the north and the property of John McKenzie to the west. Log hauling was largely carried out by horses, but around 1920, Munro and his mill manager, Fred Rayner, constructed a rail tractor to replace the horses. This strange contraption consisted of a motor car engine mounted on two log bogies with a chain drive transmitting power to the rear wheels. Owing to its penchant to break down on a fairly regular basis and its meagre power output, the tractor was not considered to be a success, but for a time it was employed in hauling empty trucks from the mill to the logging areas.

The mill was moved to a site further down the Eastern Tyers River in 1920, where under the management of I H Nelson, it continued to cut timber from McKenzie's property. At this site, it was later let out on contract to a succession of

people including Smith and the Richards brothers, who worked it until it was finally purchased by H. Kirchhubel and moved to Moondarra in 1936. The mill was later moved to Tanjil Bren<sup>9</sup>.

#### **Horner and Monett**

In 1924, the Phoenix Sawmilling Company laid an extension to Munro's Eastern Tyers tramway to serve a sawmill erected by the firm on a small tributary of the Middle Tyers River not far from Ten Acre Block. The mill was worked by the firm for only six months, as in August 1924 it was sold to Horner and Monett from Powelltown<sup>10</sup>.

The new firm abandoned the tramway constructed by the Phoenix Sawmilling Company and laid a new line down to the Eastern Tyers River at Ten Acre Block, and then up the east bank of that river to connect with Munro's tramway into Erica at the top of the incline, close to where the line crossed Finn's Track. This new line was built in conjunction with Christensen and Saxton who were working further to the west, but it was used for only a short time. In February 1926 a bushfire swept the area and completely destroyed the tramway. The line was not rebuilt, instead, another incline, parallel with Munro's, was constructed to join with



The Rayner-Munro tractor on Munro's log line in 1925. This tractor was hired to the Forests Commission for a brief period in 1926 to assist with construction of the Tyers Valley Tramway. M. Collins





The despatch of the first load of timber from the Phoenix Sawmill in 1924.

M. Collins

the tram to Erica. The new haulage was used for only a little over a year, as late in 1927 the Forests Commission of Victoria (FCV) completed a tramway through to Ten Acre Block and from that point in time, all output was despatched through Collins Siding<sup>11</sup>.

Horner and Monett obtained their timber from the southern slopes of Mount Erica. To extract the logs, they laid a half-mile long incline up the side of the mountain, extending it in 1934 when the mill was moved to a higher location, but the venture suffered a series of setbacks. A fire all but destroyed the plant in 1938 and soon after it was rebuilt it was again destroyed, this time in the notorious 1939 bush fires. The mill reopened later in 1939 but worked the site for only about another two years before its final closure around 1941<sup>12</sup>.

### **Christensen and Saxton**

In 1924, following the decision by the Phoenix Sawmilling Company to sell their mill to Horner and Monett, one of the subscribers to the Company, Paul Christensen formed a partnership with Jack, Ben and Eric Saxton from Gilderoy, near Powelltown, and installed a water powered mill on the Middle Tyers River about five miles west of Erica. They milled the area to the west of Horner and Monett and like the latter firm extended three feet gauge log tramway up the side of Mount Erica.

Two steeply graded inclines were incorporated in this tramway, which stretched for about a mile and a half up the ridge above the river.

Christensen and Saxton had several large winches either hauling logs or operating the inclines. A vertical boilered unit was used for tramway and incline construction work. One of the larger winches used for log hauling was constructed from the engine out of a *Bucyrus* steam shovell previously used in the Yallourn open cut coal mine. The cylinders were badly scored when purchased, but with the typical resourcefulness of the Saxton brothers, a small pelton wheel was installed to drive a grinder in an effort to recondition the cylinders. The result was a perfect job.

With such a novel but effective approach to a difficult problem, it is little wonder that the Christensen and Saxton partnership had a reputation for being one of the more efficient operators in the district. The mill was fitted with a water powered electric generator which supplied lighting to the huts. Immediately on rising each morning, Jack Saxton would set the generator going in the mill shed to provide lighting for the men as they had their breakfast and similarly at night the generator was kept going long enough for everyone to have their evening meal. As the mill was situated in a deep valley and received only a few hours of direct



Christensen and Saxton's mill on the Middle Tyers River, c1930.

J. Saxton

sunlight each day, the lighting provided by the generator was greatly valued by the mill residents<sup>13</sup>.

Timber was despatched over a two feet six inch gauge tramway to Ten Acre Block, the line running past Horner and Monett's mill and onto the old formation abandoned by that firm when they took over the mill from the Phoenix Sawmilling Company in 1924. The first load of timber was despatched from Christensen and Saxton's mill on 29 July 1926. The timber was hauled up the incline installed in partnership with Horner and Monett to

join Munro's line into Erica near the present site of Finn's Track. This arrangement continued until late in 1927 when traffic was diverted to Collins Siding over the newly completed Forests Commission tramway.

Christensen left the firm in 1937 and opened a mill at Mirrimbah near Mansfield. The Saxton brothers continued on for another year before shifting their operation to Tanjil Bren in 1938<sup>14</sup>.

### **Collins and Ingram**

Collins Siding, located on the Walhalla Railway about 1.5 miles south of Erica, was opened for traffic in 1916 when Henry Collins moved his mill from Yinnar, south of Morwell and established it on the west side of the Moe Road close by the railway. Collins laid a three feet gauge wooden rail tramway across the road to the siding and later that year extended a tram line down the gully to Hotel Creek. From the outset the mill was intended to be only a temporary affair, its main purpose being to cut the wooden tramrails needed for a three mile long outlet tramway to be constructed to serve a new site on Hotel Creek.

The tramway was completed and the mill shifted to its new location towards the end of 1916 and from this site, Collins extended log extraction tramways north and proceeded to log through the valleys of Hotel and Middle Creeks.

In 1923, the sawmilling rights to an extensive area west of the Middle Tyers River were obtained and over the Christmas holiday period of that year, Collins shifted the mill to its third site about 9 miles further north on the Middle Tyers River. The tramway, was extended from the old site to serve the mill and incorporated a winch hauled incline to take the line over the ridge separating the Middle Creek and the Tyers River. The expense of running the haulage forced its abandonment in 1925 when Collins laid a contoured tramway around the ridge



Christensen and Saxton's tram construction winch, c1930. W. Saxton





Log winch at the top of the first stage of Christensen and Saxton's second incline, c. 1930. W. Saxton

and down through the locality which was later to become known as Tyers Junction. The winch was then used on a new incline forming part of a log tramway running from the mill up the steep slope of Buckles Spur, one of the ridges leading to Mount Erica<sup>15</sup>.

Chris Ingram, the manager of the Victorian Hardwood Company at Powelltown, purchased Collins' mill in 1925 and extended the logging tramway further up the side of Mt. Erica incorporating a haulage, a mile in length, in the new line.

Ingram had been working the mill only a few months when the bushfires of March 1926 swept the area destroying most of the prized Mountain Ash and the upper section of his log tram. This prompted him to install a second mill in the hope of salvaging as much of the dead timber as possible, but the trees proved to be very faulty and after only a few months of working, he scrapped the mill he had purchased from Collins, leaving him with only the new mill in operation.

Much of Ingram's tramline to Collins Siding was also destroyed in the fires, effectively cutting off his

access to the railway. However, this coincided with the Forest Commission's decision to lay a steel railed tramway to connect with the mills in the Tyers Valley. Ingram, therefore, made no attempt to rebuild his old line, but concentrated on installing the second mill and stockpiling timber to satisfy a



Collins' outlet tramway to Collins Siding in 1924. M. Collins



Shifting one of the two boilers at Henry Collins' mill to the new site on the Middle Tyers River in 1923.  
M. Collins

large order he had received from Sir Henry Jones (of I.X.L. fame). Delays in rail deliveries and problems in obtaining suitable motive power for the Forests Commission line saw that the tramway did not begin functioning effectively until September 1928. By this time, Ingram had lost his large contract leaving him in a poor financial position from which he never fully recovered.

In 1938, the mill was sold to Ingram's two sons, Neil and Ron, who formed Ingram Brothers Sawmillers Pty Ltd and worked the site until January 1939, when it was destroyed by fire<sup>16</sup>.

### **Erica Steel Tramway (Tyres Valley Tramway)**

In July 1925 the sawmillers working in the Tyers Valley, led by Chris Ingram, approached the Forests Commission of Victoria (FCV) to construct a steel tramway from Erica to replace the over worked and by now, run down tramways owned by Munro and Ingram. The proposal, which called for much of the construction work to be done by the sawmillers themselves, met with the approval of the Commission and after several trial surveys were carried out construction began on a two feet six inch gauge tramway from Erica.

By January 1926, about a mile of formation north of Erica was ready for rail laying and the piles and crossbeams for several of the bridges were ready on site but a month later a dramatic turn of events brought about a halt to the construction work. On the 5 March 1926, the Tyers Valley was swept by a bush fire which destroyed much of the timber the tramway was intended to tap. However, rather than remove the need for a tramway the fire provided an incentive for the rapid completion of the line. As much as possible of the fire killed timber was to be milled before the logs became cracked and useless, but before rail laying could commence an appraisal of the extent of the fire-killed timber brought to light a rather startling revelation. It was found that the tramway under construction would not be able to serve the area allotted to Morgan on the Western Tyers River as had originally been envisaged. This forced the abandonment of the original alignment and the adoption of a route from Collins Siding following an earlier Victorian Railways survey.

Under the supervision of Forest Engineer W L (Bill) Lakeland, construction work began along the new route on 24 May, 1926. Paul Christensen, a

local sawmiller, took control of constructing many of the bridges along the line and Chris Ingram provided horse teams for use by the construction crews, which were comprised principally of men from the surrounding district.

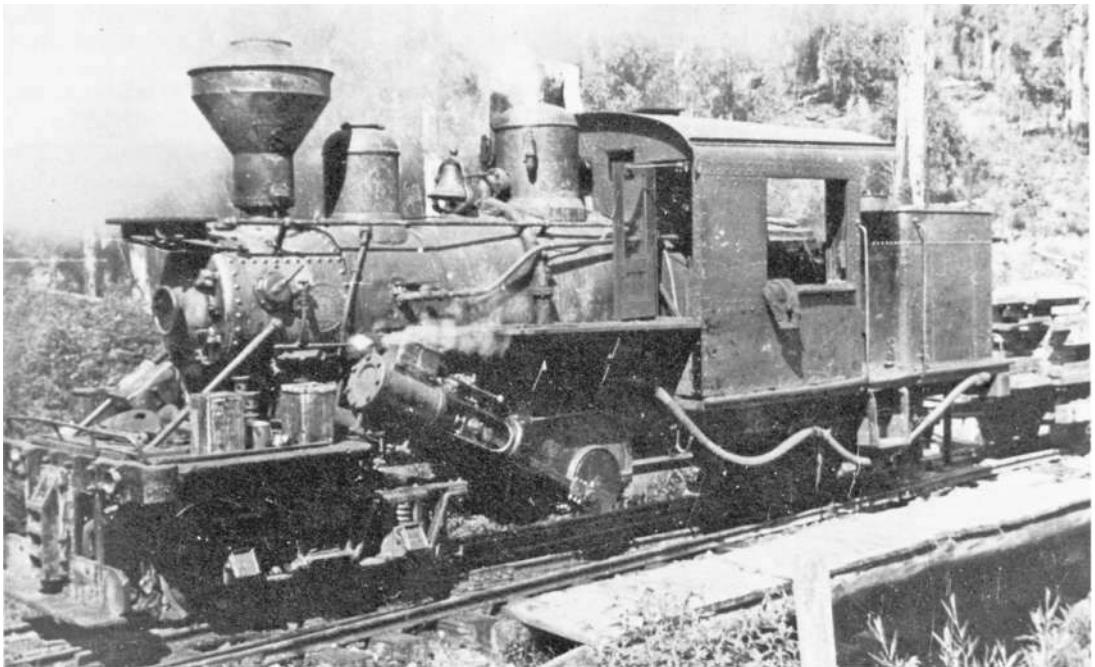
The alignment followed a route above Collins' old line up Hotel and Middle Creeks and skirted the ridge which separates the Middle Creek and the Tyers River, before it ran down to Tyers Junction at the confluence of the Middle, Western and Eastern Tyers Rivers. From this point branches were laid up the Eastern Tyers Valley to Ten Acre Block and up the Western Tyers to Growlers Creek where G V Morgan intended to erect his mill. Christensen and Saxton, Horner and Monett, and Munro all connected their tramways to the Commission's line at Ten Acre Block while Ingram's tramway met the new line about a quarter of a mile along the Eastern Branch from Tyers Junction. The line to Ten Acre Block was completed in April, 1927 and three months later platelaying reached Growlers Creek on the western branch.

Although a steam locomotive had been ordered for use on the line it was not ready at the time the tramway was completed. The sawmillers, under-

standably, were not content to sit back and await the arrival of the engine and they requested that operations begin at an early date using the *Nattrass* rail tractor which had been used during the construction of the tramway. Traffic subsequently commenced in April, 1927 using the *Nattrass* which was joined in January and May, 1928 by two Tractor Appliance Company Ltd (TACL) rail tractors built by Malcolm Moore, and together the three units handled the traffic through to Collins Siding.

The FCV ordered a steam locomotive from A Harman of North Melbourne in June 1927, delivery of which took place in November of that year. The machine was not a success. Handicapped with a poor power weight ratio and suffering from various mechanical problems, the locomotive failed to provide satisfactory service and in June 1928, after extensive trials, the contract with Harman was cancelled. The engine was given further tests on the line during 1929 but following further failures it was placed in a shed at Tyers Junction where it remained until scrapped in 1951. (Ed. See *Light Railways No. 42* for a detailed history of this locomotive.)

Following the failure of the Harman the Commission ordered a *Climax* geared locomotive from



The Climax at Tyers Junction.

W. Saxton

the USA which was delivered in September 1928 and proved to be an immediate success.

The tramway was operated by using the tractors to collect loaded timber trucks from along the branches and haul them to Tyers Junction from where the Climax would take a combined load through to Collins Siding.

One of the major problems associated with working the tramway was what to do when the Climax was out of action. The engine broke its axles on a number of occasions which usually required the removal of its bogies to the SEC workshops at Yallourn, where repairs were carried out. This would leave the line without a major haulage unit for days on end, seriously inconveniencing the sawmillers served by the tramway. The obvious answer to the problem was the provision of a second power unit and with this in mind the Commission approached the Railway Department in 1933, about the possibility of obtaining a VR 2ft 6in gauge locomotive. Following discussions between the Department and the Commission a trial was decided upon and accordingly on 20 September, 1933 a temporary connection was laid between the VR and FCV lines at Collins Siding to permit a test run of an NA class locomotive. With only a few minor problems the engine ran with ease as far as the Johns Creek bridge and following its return to VR metals the trial was declared to be a complete success. Subsequently work commenced on strengthening the bridges along the line to take

the extra weight, but, perhaps because of the likely high purchase price of the locomotive, the FCV shelved the plan and no further action was taken<sup>17</sup>.

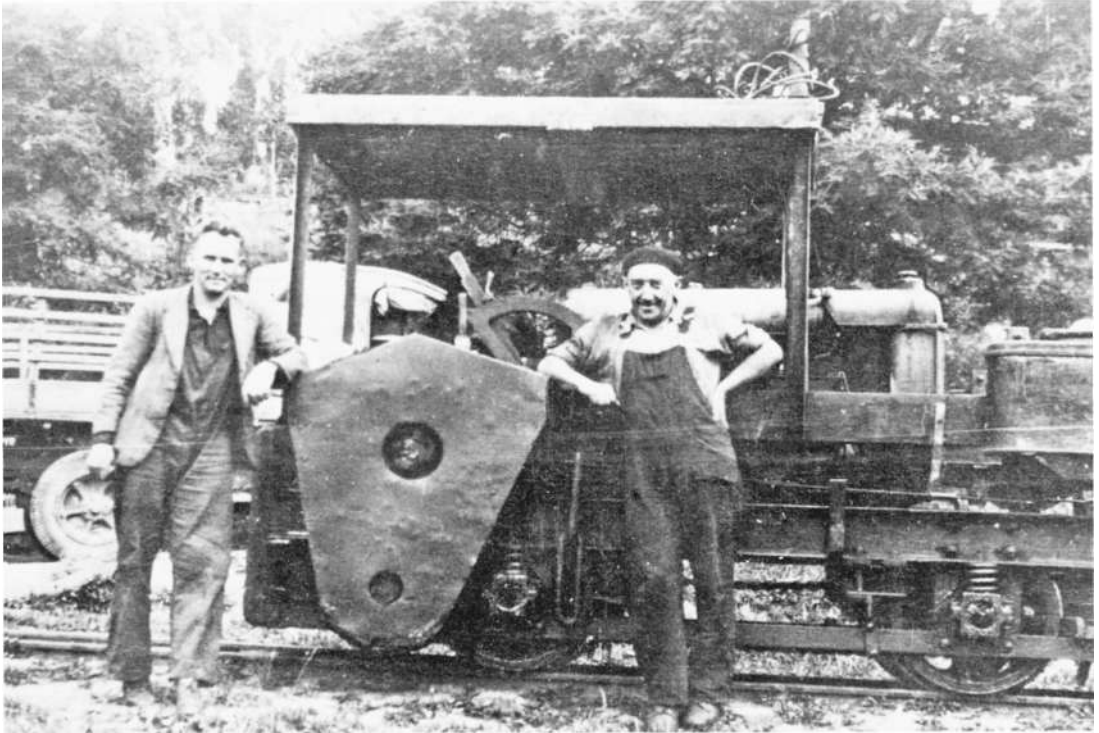
The headquarters of the tramway were at Tyers Junction where the Forests Commission constructed locomotive sheds, water tank, workshop and houses for the tramway employees. Management of the line was placed in the hands of the District Forester at Erica, a position held by several men during the time of the lines' existence including John Youl, Les Strahan and Charlie Elsey. Other men employed in operating the tramway included A M Earns, Oliver Lavery, George Arthur, Max Richards, Jack Edwards (locomotive driver) and Joe Botterill (tractor driver). Keith Ingram (a son of Chris Ingram) and Wilbur Saxton were also employed from time to time to operate the Climax when Jack Edwards was unavailable<sup>18</sup>.

The tramway was the same gauge as the VR Walhalla line, but, normally, no physical connection existed between the two systems. The timber was transhipped from the more ruggedly constructed tramway vehicles into railway trucks at Collins Siding where a contractor, W A Booker, was employed to supervise the proceedings. During the late 1930's the timber merchants, Strahan and Davies and Alstergren Pty Ltd, stacked large quantities of timber at the siding awaiting shipment to buyers.

Although it operated at a loss for most of its life, and despite the constant complaints from sawmillers



The FCV locomotive depot at Tyers Junction in 1927. Note the ballast truck constructed from two timber bogies. J. Westcott



One of the two TACL (Malcolm Moore) tractors on the Tyers Valley line with driver Joe Botterill on the left and brakesman George Arthur on the right. C. Eelsey

about the freight charges levied on them by the Commission, the tramway played a major role in the development of the district. Over 120 million super feet of timber was sent out over the line and in addition to this, considerable quantities of piles and logs were also despatched. But timber products were not the only source of revenue. In the early days potatoes from G V Morgan's farm at Tyers Junction were also carried to Collins Siding and at all times there was the backloading of equipment, baggage and provisions to be catered for on the return trips to Tyers Junction. The peak year of operations was 1935/36 when in excess of 10.5 million super feet of timber was hauled to Collins Siding.

Generally speaking the tramway was the only means of contact people living at the mills had with the outside world. Although the carrying of passengers on the line was forbidden, most people living at the mills would have enjoyed at least one

trip to Tyers Junction perched on top of a load of timber. Each sawmiller was permitted to operate two small pump trolleys but several other unauthorised conveyances were also used. These were usually only for the personal use of the owners but many could be hired to take the hirer to Tyers Junction from where McClelland's taxi service operated into Erica.

In all, the Tyers Valley Tramway worked for 21 years, the last revenue earning trip occurring in July 1949, when the lack of traffic and the dangerous state of the permanent way forced the closure of the line. The Climax was moved over the VR line to the State mill at Erica on the 14 December 1950, where it remained until loaned to the Puffing Billy Preservation Society's museum at Menzies Creek in 1962. The TACL tractors were also moved to Erica where one used for shunting around the mill while the frame and wheel of the other were incorporated into a mill truck<sup>20</sup>.

### The Western Tyers Area

One of the major reasons for the construction of the Tyers Valley Tramway was to open up for sawmillers the extensive stands of Mountain Ash, Messmate and Silvertop which lay in the valley of the Western Tyers River. In excess of 18,000 acres of prime forest comprised this area which prior to 1927 had been regarded as inaccessible due to the distance from Collins Siding, the nearest railway station. Within two years of the completion of the tramway three sawmills had moved into the region and over the ensuing two decades three other mills were to occupy sites in the valley. The first mill was that established by George Morgan.

#### Morgan

In December 1927, G V Morgan moved some of his milling plant from Gould and erected it near the junction of Growler's Creek and the Western Tyers River, seven miles east of Tyers Junction. Morgan



Morgan's incline at Growlers Gap. G. Morgan

had obtained the logging rights to an extensive area of forest on the south west slopes of Mount Erica and following the commencement of operations in April 1928, a series of logging tramways was extended into this country.

The first followed a route up Growler's Creek and carried the logs from the lower areas of the valley. The second followed a route high above the north bank of the creek and incorporated a long incline at its extremity which took the tramway to a winch site where logs were hauled in from about a mile around. Morgan's third logging tramway was laid above the Western Tyers River and served a large winch located at the head of a gully running up from the river.

To connect with the Forest Commission's tramway, Morgan laid his own line over a lengthy trestle spanning the Western Tyers River. The tramway was laid on a down grade which permitted timber trucks to be run down hill from the mill to the sorting sidings on the FCV tramway. A horse would haul the empty trucks back to the mill.

The mill worked this site until 1942 when it was closed down, only to re-open a short time later when Morgan began cutting through the abandoned Erica Hardwood Company's area to the west. This was cut out in 1943 and subsequently the mill was scrapped.

In 1937, Morgan installed a second mill adjacent to the FCV tramway at the junction of Beynon Creek and the Western Tyers River, about 4.5 miles east of his first mill.

Log supplies were drawn from the Beynon Creek valley to the south and in 1938 a steel rail, three feet gauge log tramway was laid a mile and a half into the area. Morgan cut through his block from the west to the east and to accommodate his logging operation the southern extremity of the log tramway was moved several times as the fallers worked through the gullies in the higher reaches of the creek. The tramway was used until road transport took over in 1950.

By bush standards, a substantial settlement sprang up around the mill. Known locally as "Morgans" the hamlet even sported a school which managed to survive until as late as 1968. The mill itself worked until 1972, and was the last of the 1930 era sawmills in this area<sup>20</sup>.

#### Northern Timber Mills Pty Ltd

A year after George Morgan erected the first mill on the west branch of the Tyers River, the Northern Timber Mills Pty Ltd moved their No. 1 mill from the Beenak area, south of Powelltown, and erected it about three quarters of a mile from Morgan's site.



This was followed in 1929 by the No. 2 mill which was also established on the Western Tyers River but at a location about two miles up stream from the No. 1 mill. Sir William Angliss was the principal shareholder in Northern Timber Mills and Fred Brown, who had managed the sawmilling interests of the Company at Beenak, supervised the operations of both mills at Erica.

In total the Northern Timber Mills commanded close to 4500 acres of forest containing principally Mountain Ash, Messmate and Mountain Grey Gum and many miles of tramways, radiating from both mills, were laid to extract this timber.

The No. 1 Mill, the larger of the two, was the centre of community life for both mills. Most of the workers employed by the Company lived at the No. 1 Mill and those who worked at No. 2 would make the trip up the tramway each morning and return at night, although a boarding house was located at the No. 2 Mill for those single men who wished to make use of it<sup>21</sup>.

The No. 1 was well endowed with amenities which included State School No. 4485, established in 1931, a cricket pitch, as well as houses for the married mill workers. This is hardly all that surprising when one considers that the settlement was about sixteen miles from Erica and the only form of

access was the Commission's tramway. Some of the residents had pump trolleys for use on the line and in most cases this would have been the only means of transport available. Max Horton was among the more enterprising with his Harley Davidson powered motor trolley which he would hire out to people wishing to travel down to Tyers Junction. Other people would forego powered transport and simply "borrow" a tramway bogie and use this to coast down the line, employing a pole for extra propulsion when needed. The truck would be left at Tyers Junction where, to the dismay of Forests Commission officials, it would have to be hauled back up the line by the rail tractor on its next trip.

The Northern Timber Mills Pty Ltd was renamed Erica Hardwood Sawmills Co Pty Ltd in 1930. Despite this, the mills were still referred to by the residents and other local people as the "Northern Mills" which identified not only the sawmills, but the community at the mill as well<sup>22</sup>.

The depression years were felt keenly by all sawmills in the state and the Northern Mills were no exception. The market for timber was severely depressed and this was reflected at Erica where the No. 1 Mill accumulated huge stocks of timber awaiting a buyer and the No. 2 Mill worked only



Northern Timber Company No. 1 mill on the Western Tyers River.

G. Maynard

spasmodically. Markets began to pick up again around 1934 and both mills returned to production, but by 1937 the No. 2 Mill had cut out and was shifted to Tanjil Bren, while the No. 1 continued working until 1942 when it was also dismantled and moved away<sup>23</sup>.

### Palmer

Bert, George and Chris Palmer had for many years worked mills in the Balook area in South Gippsland. In 1938 they moved to the Erica district and erected a mill alongside the Forests Commission tramway midway between "Morgans" at Beynon Creek and the Growlers Creek terminus of the line.

The Palmer's sawmilling area lay to the south of the Western Tyers River between the Northern Timber Company's area in the west and Morgan's Beynon creek area to the east. Employing traditional logging techniques, a three feet gauge wooden rail tramway was constructed running to the west late in 1938, only to be superseded in 1941 by the construction of another line, incorporating a winch hauled incline, running to the south of the mill. Following the bush fires of 1939, further logging was carried out in a small section of forest on the north side of the Western Tyers River and a short stretch of tramline was laid across the Forest Commission tramway and the river to reach this area. Much of the logging close by the mill was carried out by a large steam winch located at the end of the mill shed, but in the bush evidence of the coming age of mechanical logging could be found in the form of a crawler tractor employed for log snigging to the landings on the tramway.

The mill worked this site until 1947 when the plant was shifted to Morwell and later sold to the State Electricity Commission<sup>24</sup>.

### Ingram

The last sawmill to be established in the Western Tyers Area was that put in by Hector Ingram in 1940, following the destruction by fire of Ingram Bros' mill on Buckles Spur the previous year.

The mill was unusual in that it was powered by a water driven turbine fed from a weir on the Middle Tyers River just below Christensen and Saxton's mill. A two and a half mile long raceline carried the water to a dam located 400 feet above Ingram's mill and the final distance down the mountainside was traversed by a steeply graded steel pipeline which connected with the turbine positioned within the mill shed.

Although Ingram was in charge of operating the mill, ownership lay with Alfred Kirton until 1941 when it passed to his son-in-law, Alan Powell. Five years later, it was to change hands again when it

was sold to C H Tutton Pty Ltd, a Melbourne firm engaged in the supply of case timber, but throughout this time the mill was managed by Hec Ingram and for a short time, his brother Ron<sup>25</sup>. Hec was known for his abilities as a tree climber and used to lop spar trees for other millers in the district.

The logs for the mill were obtained from Ingram Brothers old area on Buckles Spur and to deliver these to the new site, Ingram laid a three feet gauge tramway incorporating a mile long incline up the east side of the Pitmans Creek valley onto Buckles Spur. The new line connected with the original tramway about a quarter of a mile below the old mill site. Logging in this area ceased in about 1943, when another incline with ancilliary logging tramway was put in to the north of the new mill and logs were extracted from the Growlers Creek valley above Morgan's area. A skyline was used to bring logs to the tramline where a Fordson rail tractor hauled the trucks to the top of the incline. After being lowered down the incline, the logs were hauled by a horse team to the mill but around 1949, the tramline between the incline and the mill was abandoned and road trucks took over in this section.

In 1950 Tuttons shifted the mill to Heyfield leaving Ingram to erect his own mill on the site and to continue cutting through Tuttons logging area. The new mill was completed by November of that year and Ingram continued working the site until



Mill houses at **Morgan's** on the Western Tyers River. The houses in the background belong to Ingram, those in the foreground to Morgan.

G. Morgan



Ingam's mill on the Western Tyers River with **Morgan's** in the left background.

H. Saxton

about 1954 when he moved to Mitta Mitta in north eastern Victoria<sup>26</sup>. George Morgan (son of G V Morgan) then took over operating the mill under an arrangement with Tuttons until 1957 when it was finally closed down<sup>27</sup>. Hec Ingram currently owns and runs the McDee Sawmills at Alexandra.

### **The Expansion To The North Knott, Fullwood**

Two years after Morgan established the first sawmill at Erica, G W (Billy) Knott, the well known Melbourne sawmill and timber merchant, erected a mill on the upper reaches of Hotel Creek and despatched his output over a three feet gauge wooden rail tramway to the Walhalla Railway<sup>28</sup>. The tramway terminated at the firewood siding formerly used by the Long Tunnel Mining Company adjacent to the Traralgon Road bridge a couple of miles east of Erica and from the beginning of 1913 both the siding and the locality became known as "Knott's Siding".

Knott had been allotted an extensive sawmilling area by the Forests Department to the north of the Eastern Tyers River about a mile and a quarter from the mill. He installed two inclines to take his logging tramway over the high ridge separating Hotel Creek from the Eastern Tyers River and established a logging winch on the south east side of his area.

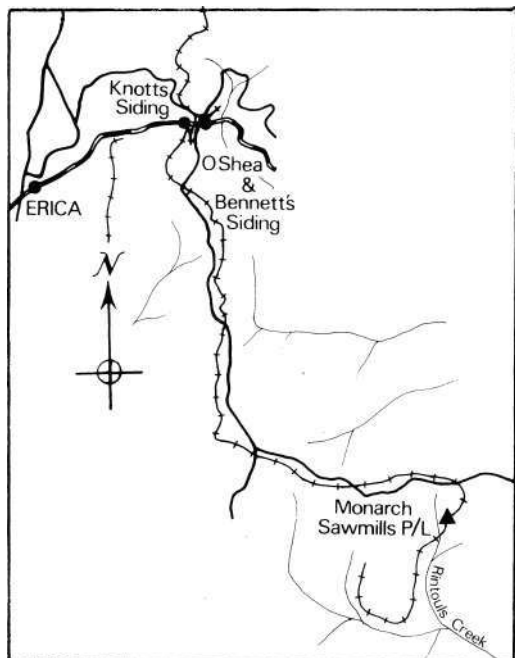
In 1918 G W Knott sold off many of his mills throughout Victoria and among these was the plant at Erica. The purchaser was Edgar Fullwood, the Managing Director of Melbourne Timber Merchants,

Henry Beecham & Company. Fullwood immediately set about extending the log tramway network already established by Knott and installed two large Harman winches to improve the log supply. In time the log tramways were to extend close to six miles out into the bush from the mill.

The 1926 bushfires caused considerable damage throughout Gippsland and Erica was not spared. Amongst the mills destroyed was Full woods on Hotel Creek where, on the 14th February, the mill shed and all but two of the mill houses were destroyed in a conflagration that also damaged Fullwoods main logging tramway. So extensive was the damage that four months were to pass before the plant could be restored to normal operations.

On the 1st July, 1933, ownership of the mill passed to Monarch Sawmills Pty Ltd, a company formed by Fullwood prior to expanding his interests into the Numbruk district, south of Knotts Siding. From this time Fullwoods original mill became known as the Telbit Mill, while the new plant to the south was called the Numbruk Mill.

Construction work began on the Numbruk Mill in October 1933, with the first timber being despatched over bush track on the 8th December of that year. In 1934 Fullwood completed a six and a half mile long, two feet six inch gauge tramway through to Knott's Siding and purchased a six-wheeled *Days* rail tractor to provide hauling power. The tractor not only hauled the timber output through to the railway siding but would also



Monarch Sawmills P/L tramway.

normally pick up a load of logs from the loading sidings along the line on its way back to the mill. Further logging was carried out to the south west along a horse worked log tramway down Rintouls Creek and one of its tributaries.

The 1939 bushfire destroyed most of the log tramway network serving the Telbit mill and this ultimately was to lead to its closure. However, even prior to that time, the Telbit and Numbruk mills were reported to be running at a loss, with 1938 seeing both mills working only spasmodically. Finally, in 1940, following an unsuccessful attempt at auctioning the mills as going concerns, they were broken up and the equipment sold to other sawmillers<sup>29</sup>.

### O'Shea and Bennett

Late in 1919 the firm of O'Shea and Bennett sold all interest in the mill they had operated on Hotel Creek to Munro and Sons and secured the sawmilling rights to five hundred acres of forest along what was to become known as O'Shea's Creek, a tributary of the Eastern Tyers River.

The mill was worked by the three O'Shea brothers, Bill, Jack and Frank, with timber being despatched over a steeply graded incline to the south east. At the summit of the haulage a connection was made with a timber outlet tramway constructed

as a branch from Fullwood's line just north of the Telbit mill. Timber was hauled over Fullwood's tramway as far as the Walhalla Road where in 1920 O'Shea and Bennett laid a branch to the tramway leading to their own railway siding located on the opposite side of the Traralgon Road to Knott's Siding.

O'Shea and Bennett logged the area using both bullock teams and steam winches to haul logs to landings on the two tramways constructed from the mill to the north and north east. The north east line gained additional importance in 1924 when the firm installed a mill on the Thomson River fall of Mount Erica about two and a half miles north of their first mill and extended the tramway through to serve the new location.

The No. 2 mill was the first to be established in the upper reaches of the Thomson Valley and heralded close to thirty years of sawmilling in an area which contained one of the finest forests to be



Incline rising from Hotel Creel on Knott's log line in 1918.

A. Fullwood

found in Victoria. O'Shea and Bennett had every intention of taking part in the exploitation of this magnificent forest, but luck was not to be with them. The February bushfires of 1926 swept down the Thomson Valley destroying first the recently established No. 2 mill and then, after crossing the ridge and burning through the valley of the Eastern Tyers River, it razed the No. 1 mill as well. With the aid of a Government grant the No. 2 mill was back in action after only a short delay, but although the No. 1 mill was partially rebuilt, it was never to operate again and was subsequently scrapped by 1928.

Much of the tramway connecting with Fullwood's line was also burnt and required a considerable amount of repair work which was in fact carried out, but it was to be used for only another year. Following the decision not to reopen the No. 1 mill O'Shea and Bennett constructed a new outlet tramway for the No. 2 mill along the watershed of the Thomson and Tyers Rivers, as far as the point where Fullwood's tramway met the ridge just to the north of Parkers Corner. The new line junctioned with the original tramway at this point and timber was carted through to O'Shea and Bennett's Siding as before. Not long after the new line was opened a stacking yard, for air-drying timber, was established at Amors near the junction with Fullwood's tramway. After 1926, tramway extensions were carried out to the north of the mill and around 1928 a logging incline, running to the east, was constructed from the main line about a half mile north of the mill.

With the downturn in the timber industry in the late 1920's O'Shea and Bennett found it increasingly difficult to finance further expansion of their logging activities to the north and in 1931 the mill was offered for sale. Later the same year, J F Ezard, a long established sawmiller from Warburton, purchased an option over the mill. Only a few months later misfortune was to strike again, only this time with even more tragic results. On the 4th and 5th of March, 1932, a bushfire swept down the Thomson Valley and destroyed the mill taking six lives with it, including that of Jack O'Shea, one of the owners<sup>30</sup>.

### **Ezard's Tramways**

J F Ezard took possession of O'Shea and Bennett's milling operations following the bush fire and immediately despatched his son, Jack from Warburton, with the assigned task of erecting a new mill on the burnt-out site. The mill was completed during 1933 and the following year, after the log tramway had been extended a further mile, a second mill was installed on the south side of the



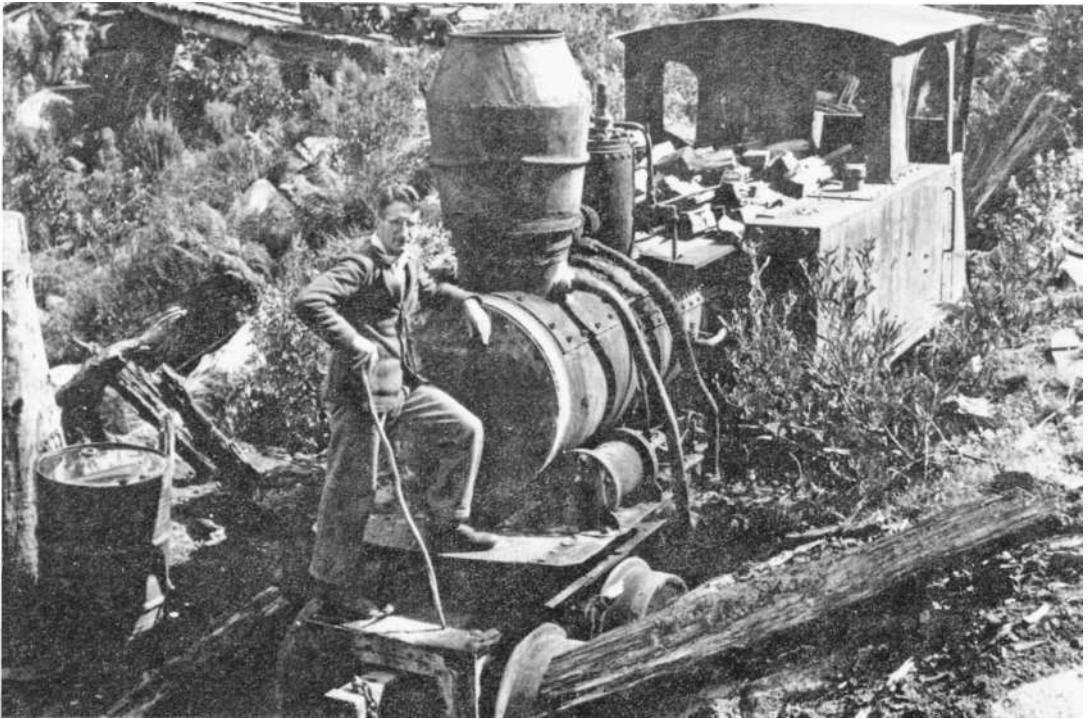
Days tractor on the Monarch Sawmills tramway south of Knott's Siding in July 1934.

#### A. Full wood

Talbot Creek firebreak at what was then the terminus of the tramway. Traditionally most sawmills were powered by a steam engine driving belts which in turn rotated the saws, but in this case Ezard connected a generator to his boiler and produced electricity to drive an electric motor connected to his rip saw.

In 1934 Ezard transferred his geared steam locomotive, constructed from parts obtained from two small engines (an Orrenstein & Koppel 0-4-0WT and a Krauss 0-6-0T) from Warburton for use on his log tramway at Erica. He continued to use horses on the outlet tramway to O'Shea and Bennett's Siding (renamed Ezard's siding in 1933) for only a short time after taking over at Erica. To him, horses were an expensive and outmoded form of haulage which could not compare with the convenience and power as well as cost savings associated with the use of rail tractors. But tractors required reasonably well laid track and the section of line between the No. 1 mill and the Road Crossing, one and three-quarter miles south of the mill, was particularly bad. So poorly graded was this section, that in 1936 Ezard abandoned the upper part of the tramway in favour of a well graded new line which incorporated a lengthy trestle bridge 30 feet high over "The Narrows", a low saddle in the ridge separating the Thomson and Tyers Rivers<sup>31</sup>. The new tramway typified the quality and sophistication of Ezard's operations, a feature which was also evident in his logging techniques.

No fewer than four logging inclines were constructed from his tramline, which by 1938 stretched as far north as the South Cascade Creek. From the tops of these inclines and from many other winch sites located along the line, Ezard installed skyline or high lead haulages to carry logs in the air across valleys and down mountainsides to the tramway. In



Ezzard's steam locomotive, rebuilt from the Goodwood Timber Company's Orrenstein and Koppel 0-4-0WT and Krauss 0-6-0T. F.C.V.

one particular case logs were winched to an isolated section of tramway; hauled along the tramway to the end of the skyline; lifted from the trucks and conveyed through the air to the top of the No. 1 incline, from where they were lowered down and then hauled to the mill.

Five huge logging machines, an endless rope engine and several loading engines, in total making use of in excess of eighteen miles of wire rope, gives some idea of the scope of Ezzard's bush operations. The rope itself was a source of great expense owing to its short lifespan in granite country. It is interesting to note that much of the rope used to drive Melbourne's cable trams eventually found its way to Erica for use by Ezzard's logging crews.

The Harman and Ledgerwood logging machines were marvels in themselves. Mounted on massive sleds, built up from two forty-foot logs, they could haul themselves from one site to another by attaching their ropes to a distant tree and then throwing the powerful winch into action. Approximately thirty five sites were worked by the machines and most moves were accomplished by using the

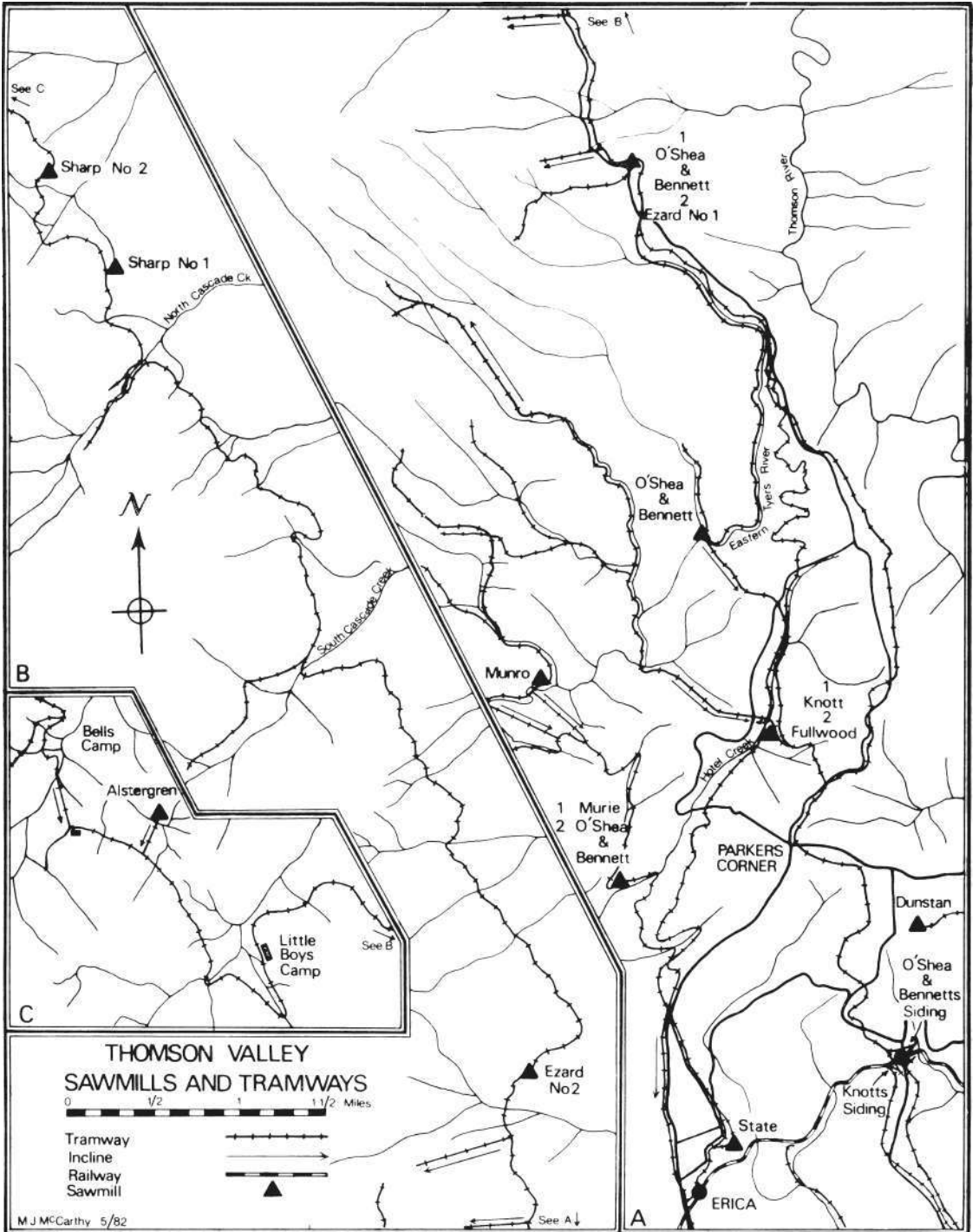
method described above.

By 1937, Ezzard's logging area stretched as far north as the South Cascade Creek. The natural direction of any expansion by Ezzard was further along the Thomson Valley and whether Ezzard or some other miller eventually moved further northwards, it was evident that the output from the area would pass along Ezzard's and Fullwood's tramways. Although Ezzard had regarded his line between the No. 1 mill and the stacking yards, the section beyond leading down to Knott's Siding and incorporating Fullwood's line, was poorly graded, wooden railed and in bad need of repair. In other words, the existing tramway could not hope to handle the heavy traffic expected from the upper reaches of the valley.

### **Thomson Valley Tramway**

In 1937, Ezzard began the construction of a new line following the valley of Hotel Creek past Fullwood's mill and on into Erica. The new tramway was built on a falling grade for most of its distance and was to be worked entirely by Ezzard's locomotives<sup>32</sup>. The tramway was about three-





quarters complete, when the 1939 bushfires swept through the Thomson Valley, killing most of the green timber Ezard had intended to mill. This was a severe blow as he had only just finished milling the burnt timber from the 1926 fire, and was banking on moving into the green timber shortly. The fire also meant that he alone would not be able to mill all the killed timber before it became cracked and useless and his expensive new tramway would be a 'white elephant'.

Ezard unsuccessfully tried to sell the tramway to the Forest Commission, but a compromise solution soon came to hand. The FCV decided to lay an extension to Ezard's line and open up the North Cascades-Bell's Creek area for salvage milling. Ezard in turn would complete the line through to Erica and would be paid a royalty by the Commission for use of his section.

Subsequently, three mills were erected in the vicinity of the North Cascade Creek, Swift Creek and Bell's Creek. Another mill was established by the Commission itself in Erica. John Sharp and Son had the mills on the North Cascade Creek and Swift's Creek while Alstergren's Pty Ltd established a mill on Bell's Creek with a steeply graded incline to connect with the Commission's tramway. The Forests Commission logged the area to the north

west of Alstergren and constructed the Bell's Incline to extract logs from Bell's Creek basin. Several minor branches were laid from the tramway in this vicinity, as the Commission loggers worked through the area.

Three camps were established for the bush workers and tramway construction crews. All were of a ramshackle appearance with mill offcuts, canvas and corrugated iron constituting the principal building materials. Little Boys Camp was located a couple of miles back from the terminus of the line and this was mainly used by crews engaged in construction and maintaining the tramway. Bell's Incline Camp was at the top of Bell's Incline, while Bell's Camp was at the bottom, both locations providing accommodation for the FCV loggers.

Joint ownership of a tramway is one thing, but the question of operating rights over the line is something else again. Originally, it was planned that Ezard would work the line in its entirety, using the tractors and the steam locomotive he had brought over from Warburton. These units were to be supplemented by a diesel hydraulic locomotive which Ezard was building at his No. 1 mill, but delays in the construction of this unit forced the Forest Commission into the position of having to provide rail tractors to haul timber and logs away



The South Cascade Bridge under construction in 1939. The bridge was built by Percy Dargie's tramway construction crew.  
Mrs. Dargie



Ezard's locomotive at the rear of a train of logs on the way to the mill. The loco always travelled at the rear of the train on the downgrade to the mill. F.C.V.

from the new salvage area around Bell's Creek.

With two operators and an immense quantity of timber passing over the line, traffic control was essential and this was more or less achieved by the use of a series of telephone check points with a Traffic Control Officer located at Rocky Knob, just past the South Cascade Bridge. Control was achieved by having locomotive drivers stop at each check point and phone through to the Control Officer who informed the driver if the section ahead was clear. The system worked well when the drivers abided by the rules, but the many collisions which occurred testified to the disregard with which many of them treated the system.

A timetable of sorts was also used on the line, Ezard having sole use of his section for logging purposes during the middle of the day. This usually meant that FCV crews had to leave Erica around 5.00 am in order to clear Ezard's line before the first train ran, and often they would not return until after 6.30 pm. Considering the cold and wet conditions that prevail in the area, the life of a tractor driver could not be described as easy and in fact, it could

not be called a particularly safe occupation either. Slime and grass on the rails in Summer and water and often snow in Winter, meant that little could be done to avert a collision or derailment when confronted with an obstacle such as a fallen tree or a train coming in the opposite direction.

### **Closure**

Sawmilling in the Thomson Valley ceased in 1950 when Ezard finally closed the No. 1 mill and shifted his operations to Swift's Creek, north of Bairnsdale. Alstergren's had closed their mill down in 1946 while the two Sharp's mills worked spasmodically until about 1948. The State Mill at Erica was the only one to keep on (as it does today under private ownership) and for some time after continued to draw logs from the valley, although from 1950 road transport was employed for this task.

The Thomson Valley Tramway ceased operating in 1950 when, following the refusal of the FCV to purchase his section, Ezard dismantled the line from Rocky Knob back to Erica leaving the Commission's section isolated. Two of the FCV



Ezard's diesel hydraulic locomotive in the workshop at the No. 1 mill. F.C.V.

rail tractors, a *WD 40* and a *Days-McCormack Deering*, were left at Bell's Creek and Rocky Knob for use in case of fire while the Thomson Valley Road was extended through to Bell's Creek. The tractors remained there until quite recently, the McCormack Deering being the one now on display in Erica. The final section of tramway was dismantled around 1957<sup>33</sup>.

### Bushfires

There can be no doubt that the greatest menace facing the sawmilling industry, and the people engaged in it, is the annual threat of bushfire. Erica has been seriously threatened three times in its history by fires which did great damage to the forest, and caused the deaths of local residents and sawmill workers. The first major fire took place in 1926.

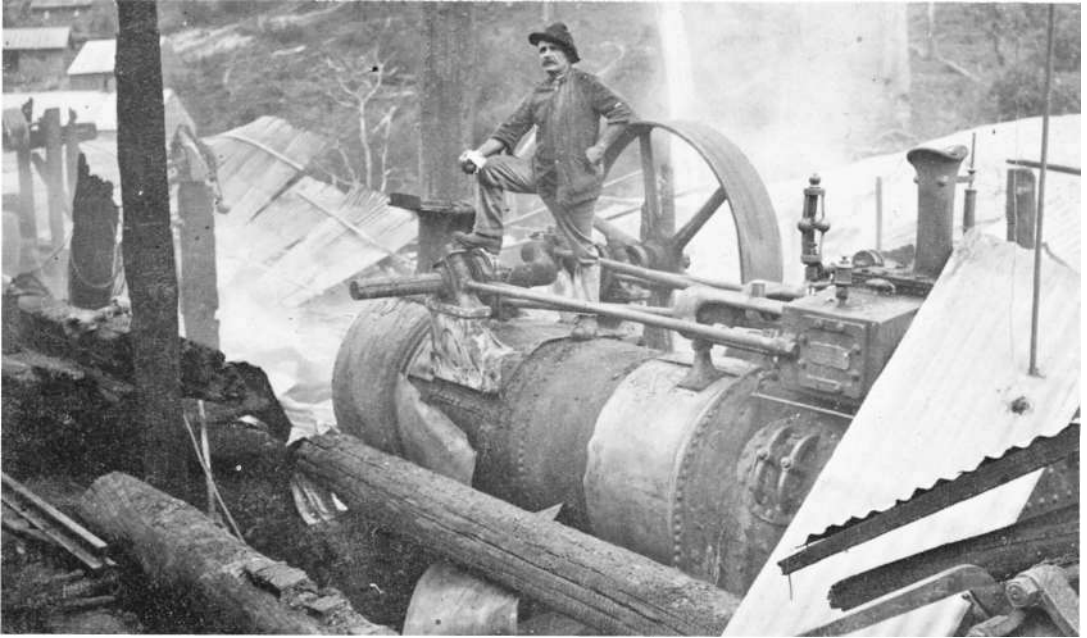
On 14 February 1926, several outbreaks of fire were reported in the Erica district, including one which swept through the properties of E Marks and M Richards to the north of the town. Fortunately

this was stopped by the townspeople on the edge of the school playing arena. By far, the most serious outbreak was in the vicinity of O'Shea and Bennett's recently completed No. 2 mill. The fire swept down the valley burning the No. 2 mill to the ground and then crossed into the Hotel Creek Valley where it destroyed the No. 1 mill, taking with it the life of Mr Fiske Snr., who at the time was visiting his son, a mill worker.

The fire continued down the valley and consumed Fullwood's mill in the gully below Parkers Corner. The houses here had a reticulated water supply pumped from Hotel Creek by the mill steam engine. As the fire approached, the workers had the foresight to stoke the boiler up, and keep the pump working while all the residents took shelter in two of the houses and the mill hall. Until the mill shed collapsed, the pump continued working and provided enough water to save the houses and hall, and consequently the residents. Dunstan's mill, located roughly where Jordan Court, Rawson is today, was also destroyed, along with many miles of tramways belonging to Munro, Horner and Monett, Ingram, Christensen and Saxton, and O'Shea and Bennett.<sup>34</sup>

In terms of loss of human life, the 1932 fires were the most devastating. On 27 January, a fire allegedly lit by prospectors or fishermen at Aberfeldy, crossed the Thomson River and began burning down the valley above O'Shea and Bennett's mill. Firebreaks had been cut near the mill and these along with the Talbot break to the north, seemed at first to hold the blaze. Circumstances were to change dramatically on 4 February. Gale force northerly winds swept down the valley, taking the fire across the breaks as if they didn't exist and, on the night of 4th, O'Shea and Bennett's mill was destroyed for a second time. Killed in the vicinity of the mill were John O'Shea, one of the mill owners, James Vague the school teacher at Knott's School, Edward Miller, John Schultz, James Moloney and Wilfred Richards, all mill hands. Jim Richeni and John Cabassi were the only men fighting the blaze at the mill who survived, and they were badly burnt. By 11.00 am on Friday the 5th, the fire was within 3 miles of Erica, but shortly before noon, the wind changed and rain fell averting what could have been far greater loss of life and property and damage to forest<sup>35</sup>.

On 12 and 13 January 1939, a fire, fanned by strong winds approached the Erica district on a broad front from the north. It completely destroyed Ingram Brothers mill on Buckles Spur and a short time later razed Horner and Monett's mill. Fortunately, by this time, many dugouts had been installed at the mills for protection and most of the



Jim Ferguson astride the mill boiler at Horner and Monett's mill after the 1938 fire.

M. Collins

women and children had been evacuated to Erica before the fire struck, so there was no loss of life.

In the Thomson Valley, the fire swept through the bush, with the same ferocity as its predecessors, but this time, perhaps because of previous experience, the sawmillers had more success. Both Ezard's and Fullwood's mills were threatened, but damage was confined to the bush around the mills. At Erica, the flames leapt twelve feet into the air at the rear of the homes above John's Creek, but luckily, the town suffered little damage<sup>36</sup>. By Saturday 14 January, the flames had gone. Erica was fortunate in losing only two mills and no lives. Seventy one people died elsewhere in Victoria during the 1939 fires.

### Erica District To-Day

Due to the efforts of the Forests Commission and National Parks Service in clearing some of the old tramways for either fire access or walking tracks, many of the mill sites in the Thomson and Tyers Valleys are today quite accessible. Visitors to the area will be well rewarded for spending some time at Tyers Junction and strolling out along one of the three cleared formations that radiate from that location. Similarly, sections of the Thomson Valley Tramway have been cleared for walking and the Thomson Valley Road passes through the Ezard mill sites as well as running close by the two Sharp

mills. A walking track has been cleared to the North Cascade bridge, which is still substantially intact, and the remains of the once magnificent South Cascade bridge can be sighted alongside the roadway. All in all, a visit to the area provides an opportunity to appreciate the entrepreneurial drive and innovations of Victoria's forest pioneers and the hardships they had to overcome.

### Acknowledgements

The writer extends his thanks to the following people for their assistance in the preparation of this article. Tom Brown (Dec), Bill Christensen, Charlie Elsey, Jack Ezard, Allan Fullwood, Ray Harbert, Max Horton, Hec Ingram, Keith Ingram (Dec), Eric Munro, George Morgan, Frank O'Shea (Dec), Bert Palmer, Jack Saxton, Wilbur Saxton, Ted Stuckey and John Youl.

A larger publication featuring the Erica district is planned. If you have further information or photographs to add to the history of the sawmills of Erica or if you can suggest corrections please write to the author C/- P.O. Box 21, Surrey Hills, Vic 3121.

### References

The bulk of the material for this article has come from the personal reminiscences of former mill owners and mill workers. The references below indicate the main sources of information. However, in almost every case information of a corroboratory

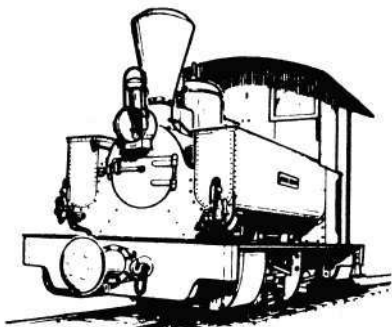


Erica station, d 948. Ezard's Morris Cowley railmotor is on the mainline leading through the gate in the foreground. F.C.V.

or minor nature was obtained mostly from people listed under *Acknowledgements*.

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|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 G. Morgan                                 | 20 G Morgan                                              |
| 2 V.R File                                  | 21 FCV                                                   |
| 3 <i>Walhalla Chronicle</i> , 17 April 1914 | 22 Mrs J Bolger                                          |
| 4 <i>Walhalla Chronicle</i> , 29 March 1913 | 23 FCV                                                   |
| 5 FO'Shea                                   | 24 B Palmer                                              |
| 6 Forests Commission of Victoria (FCV)      | 25 H Ingram                                              |
| 7 Mrs T Briggs                              | 26 FCV                                                   |
| 8 F O'Shea                                  | 27 G Morgan                                              |
| 9 FCV                                       | 28 <i>Walhalla Chronicle</i> , 18 July 1913              |
| 10 FCV                                      | 29 A Fullwood                                            |
| 11 W Saxton                                 | 30 F O'Shea                                              |
| 12 FCV                                      | 31 J Ezard                                               |
| 13 W Saxton                                 | 32 J Ezard                                               |
| 14 J Saxton                                 | 33 FCV                                                   |
| 15 M Collins                                | 34 <i>The Narracan Shire Advocate</i> , 19 February 1926 |
| 16 H Ingram                                 | 35 <i>The Narracan Shire Advocate</i> , 5 February 1932  |
| 17 FCV                                      | 36 <i>The Narracan Shire Advocate</i> , 13 January 1939  |
| 18 J Youl                                   |                                                          |
| 19 FCV                                      |                                                          |





## LETTERS

### **NORTH WEST COASTAL TRAMWAYS, LR.76**

With reference to David Whiteford's comments in *Light Railways* 76, it is possible to state definitely that the rail system at the North West Whaling Company's Carnarvon factory has used locomotive traction, and possibly still does. David has recently sent me a copy of a photograph taken on the Company's jetty at Carnarvon which shows a small battery electric loco handling a train of prawns which have been unloaded from trawlers alongside. This photo is stated to have been taken in 1967.

**John Browning,  
Taringa, Qld.**

### **JACKSON'S TRAMWAY, BEECH FOREST**

I am enclosing of photo of a light tramway built by my grandfather, Mr CW Jackson (standing by the horse), on his property 2.5 miles east of Beech Forest. According to my uncle, Mr RW Jackson (the boy in the photo, now aged 81 years), the tramway was about 3/4 of a mile in length, from his timber stand to the corduroy stack, where split timber was transferred to a wagon and transported



to the "Beech" station. The photo was taken about 1909.

**Doug Kirkman  
Colac, Vic.**

### **KERR STUART LOCOMOTIVES, LR.76**

With reference to the article "Kerr Stuart Locomotives" by John Buckland, I should like to query one point in the "Notes" at the bottom concerning No. 742. It is stated that this locomotive was reboilered in 1924 and sold to the Victorian State Rivers & Water Supply Commissioner for the Red Cliffs Tramway.

There is no evidence that this locomotive was reboilered during the time that is employed by the Irrigation and Reclamation Works Department (later known as the Irrigation Commission) on the Cobdogla/Loveday light railway. It was, however, reboilered about 1942, which considerably altered and, in my opinion, spoilt her appearance. The new boiler was not lagged and, whilst her old stack and sand dome were retained, the latter was moved forward and a new steam dome added. From this dome, lagged steam pipes appeared to run in all directions, the principal one being the main feed pipe to the cylinders, which ran along the right-hand side of the boiler, approximately level with the top until it reached the front of the smokebox, where it turned through an angle of 90 degrees and ran vertically to the right-hand steam chest. A branch slightly above footplate level ran across in front of the smokebox to the left-hand side steam chest. During the reboiling the old smokebox was scrapped and short round smokebox, about half the length of the original inverted 'U' substituted.

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**PINES & HARDWOODS LTD., SIMMSVILLE, LR.75.** After reading David Burke's article in *LR. 75* about the making of *Tall Timbers* I am inspired to contribute the following to round off the subject:

The locomotive named *Soward* used in the film was one of at least two Climax engines formerly employed on the logging lines of Pines & Hardwoods Ltd. out of Simmsville, near Stroud, NSW. According to information provided by Charles S. Small, this was a B-class engine with 10in x 12in cylinders carrying B/No. 1653 of 1923. The other was a smaller A-class Climax with B/No. 1265 of 1914.

The B-class engine was sold in 1939 to Australian Newsprint Mill Ltd., Boyer, Tasmania, for use on one of their logging lines operating in the Styx Valley from Florentine Junction, beyond Maydena, at the end of the former TGR Derwent Valley branch. After some five years it was set aside in 1945. When inspected by the late AR Lyell some

time thereafter it was found to be deteriorating in the bush, but bearing the smokebox builder's plate off No. 1265. The number 1653 was still plainly visible on the cab side sheets as was the name *Soward* on the side of the bunker, as can be seen from the photograph Mr Lyell took in 1957.

The engine had deteriorated further when I inspected it in 1965, but has subsequently been acquired by the Tasmanian Transport Museum Society and, I understand, been relocated in their Museum in Hobart.

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Ed. David Burke also provided additional information on the Climax locomotives at Simmsville, but unfortunately this arrived too late for inclusion in *LR. 75*. David advises that the mill is known to have operated three Climax locomotives, and very possibly four. These are thought to be A-class Climaxes 2225 of 1899 and 2515 of 1912, and B-class 2513 of 1912 and 1653 of 1923. The later locomotive was named *Soward* after a mill director. An inspection of this engine at the Tasmanian Transport Museum site in Hobart in April 1981 revealed that it is in pieces due to a cracked frame sustained during transport.



Climax locomotive No. 1653 at Maydeena, Tasmania in October, 1957.

A.R. Lyell, J.L. Buckland Colin.