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# RAILWAY

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## HISTORY™



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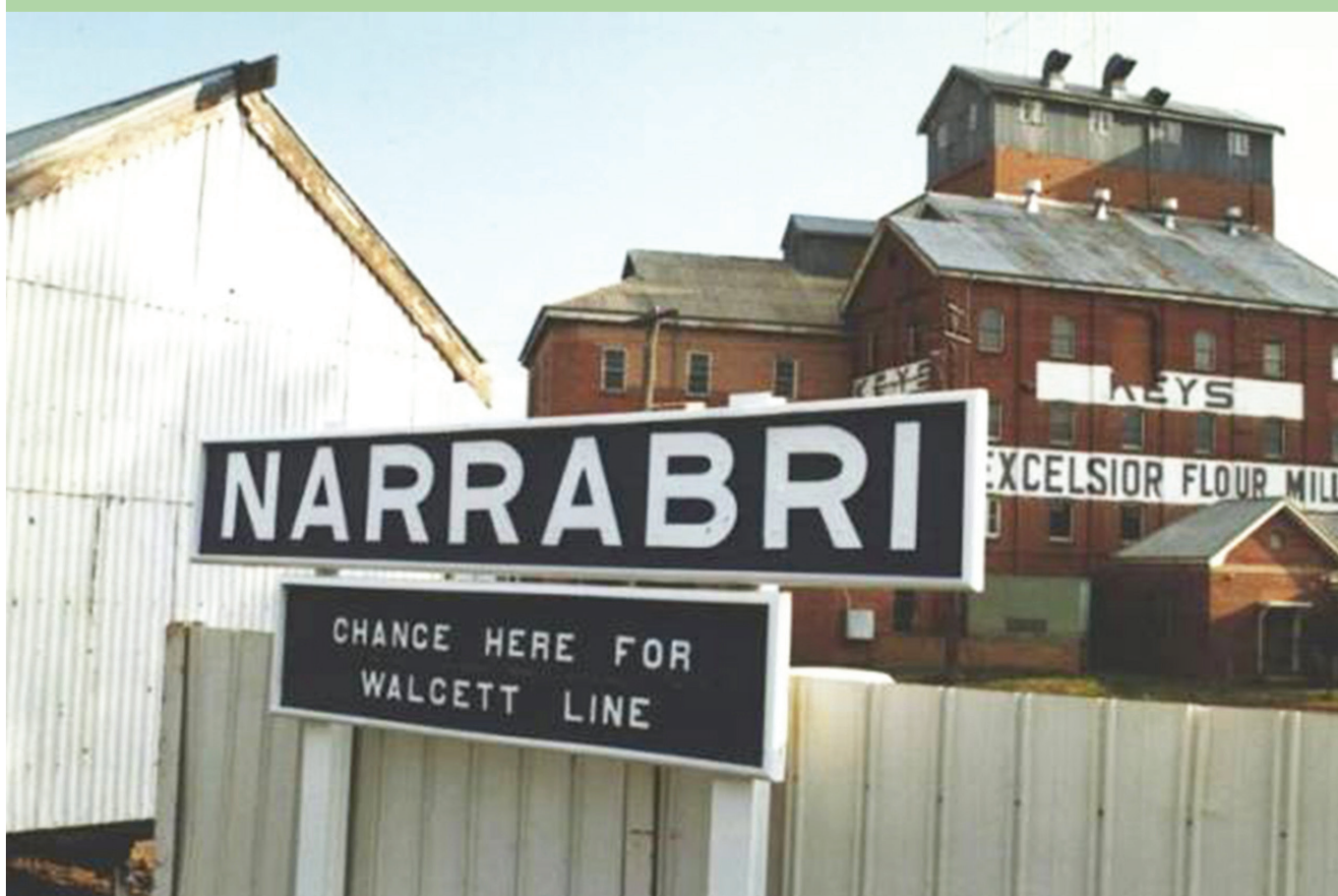
Rise and fall of the QR Allora to Goombarra Line

*Journal of the Australian Railway Historical Society*





A dirty NSW Alco 44 class locomotive 4474 heads a RACE container train into Salisbury yard in August 1978 with the transfer gantry in the background. GREG CASH PHOTO. Part 2 of the Salisbury TNT Container Terminal story commences on page 4.



The nameboard at Narrabri station advises passengers to change trains for the Walgett Line. Keys Excelsior Flour Mill dominates the background. GRAHAM DORMAN PHOTO, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 028208C

# EDITORIAL

Peter Cokley continues his account of the Salisbury Thomas Nationwide Transport (TNT) Container terminal with Part 2 of his story outlining the changes that occurred there through to its closure in April 1996. He also covers the planned terminals at nearby Acacia Ridge that did not occur and documents the traffic through the Salisbury container terminal during its operating life. Graeme Henderson's fine map of the railways south of Brisbane and the Salisbury and Acacia Ridge yards is a highlight.

Frank Johnson concludes his account of his time at Narrabri as Division Engineer, with additional details of the 1971 flood damage to railway track, an account of significant derailments that occurred and the impact of mechanised track maintenance equipment. He also covers Way and Works Branch conferences at Railway House in Sydney and his transfer to Sydenham to address track infrastructure issues in the Metropolitan area.

Frank also covers the Public Transport Commission era and its

impact on the New South Wales Railways, before concluding with an update on the North West Region in 2017.

Rod Milne's presents the history of the Queensland Railways branch line from Hendon to Allora and particularly the 13.6km extension from there to Goomburra opened on 8 July 1912. This extension closed on 30 June 1961, while the Hendon-Allora section opened in 1897 closed on 31 December 1993.

Rod covers the locomotives, trains, passengers, goods and livestock that used the line during its operating life, together with various mishaps. A map of the line and yard maps of the stations by Graeme Henderson complement the presentation.

Col Gilbertson rounds off the issue with Part 1 of a short essay on the demise of steam working in the Temora Region.

*Robert F. Kilop*

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**Cover Image:** Diesel rail motor HPC 402 ready to depart from Inverell station on the return journey to Moree as the final passenger service on the line, 25 November 1983. J W KRAMER PHOTO, ARNSNSW RRC, 005122B

**Editor and Layout:** Bob McKillop

**Editorial Team:** Ben Barnes, James Dalton, Ray Love, Richard Mathews, Neil Munro, Shane O'Neil, Bill Phippen, Peter Sellars, Paul Scells

**Editor Emeritus:** Alex Grunbach

**Phone (Editor)** 02 8394 9017

**Email:** editorarh@arhsnsw.com.au

**Website:** www.arhsnsw.com.au

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Email: resources@arhsnsw.com.au **Hours:** 9am-4pm Mon-Fri **Reading Room:** 67 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016  
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# SALISBURY QLD RAIL FREIGHT TERMINAL

## Part 2: Subsequent changes

Peter Cokley



A standard NSW signal passed by a QR Beenleigh bound train near Salisbury yard in the late 1970s. The prominent NSWGR shunting signal No. 3B Sidings to Main is explained in the text. GREG CASH PHOTO

Part 2 of this article covers the demise of the Salisbury Rail Freight Terminal as larger container trains resulted in new facilities being established at Acacia Ridge and more recently at Bromelton, some 49 kilometres south of Acacia Ridge.

### Acacia Ridge 1067mm gauge branch

The opening of the 1067mm gauge branch to Acacia Ridge in July 1966 naturally saw an expansion in Salisbury signal cabin's responsibilities. The 1964 cabin had levers Nos. 1 to 20, without 7 or 13 to 15. The 1967 cabin arrangement to include the Acacia Ridge branch still did not have a No. 7 lever but did gain levers 13 to 15 plus 21 and 28 to 30.

The QR Working Timetable (WTT) revealed that until the signalling arrangements were completed, Salisbury cabin handled the Acacia Ridge branch as what the WTT termed a 'lock-in' siding. This included having a permanent way ganger or fettler in attendance for each branch line train. His role was to unspike and unlock the main line entry points off the in-bound Beenleigh line and the catch point on the branch just beyond the entry points. He then respiked and relocked them in the normal position once the train had entered the branch. That way the main line points were locked and spiked safe for the passage of any in-bound main line traffic. The whole procedure was repeated when the branch line train returned from Acacia Ridge.

The new Salisbury cabin signalling procedures for the Acacia Ridge branch were finally brought into use on 27 October 1967.<sup>1</sup> They involved track circuits to ensure the 1067mm gauge line was clear of traffic before Salisbury cabin's signals could grant entry at either end. The exit signal at the Salisbury end was managed by that cabin and Acacia Ridge signal cabin's Home Signal managed the branch exit at that

end.<sup>2</sup> The QR WTT also revealed both Musgrave Road and Boundary Road level crossings gained automatic boom gates.

### 1435mm gauge tracks

The track plan shows 1435mm gauge traffic gained entry off the main line through the points at the three-lever Frame B, located about 260 metres from the Salisbury signal cabin. As the 1435mm gauge spur crossed the 1067mm gauge Beenleigh lines, permission was required from that gauge's safeworking system.

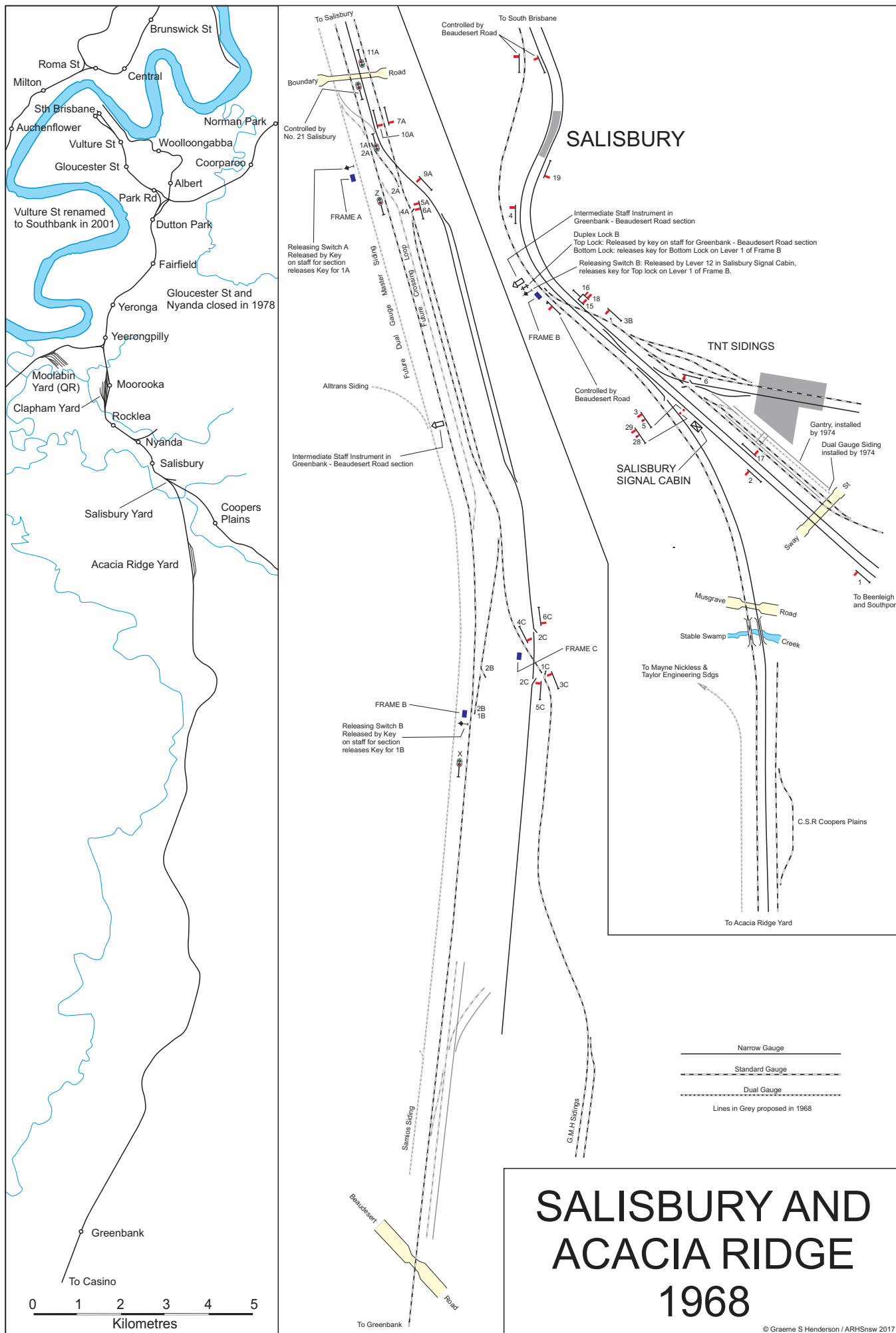
Salisbury cabin's way of granting this permission was to reverse No. 12 lever which locked all 1067mm gauge signals at stop. This No. 12 lever also electrically released a key in a cabinet, termed 'Releasing Switch B' cabinet, on a post over at Frame B. The key released was an Annett key which was a large key with a 'T' shaped handle commonly used on safeworking apparatus. Also on this post was a telephone cabinet linked back to the signal cabin.

Another Annett key came from a cabinet, termed 'Duplex Lock B' cabinet, which was on an adjacent post. Inserting and turning the key attached to the Greenbank-Beaudesert Road staff into the Duplex Lock B cabinet allowed withdrawal of the Annett key from the lower part of the same cabinet.

Both these Annett keys were needed to unlock No. 1 lever on Frame B. This had a lock termed 'Duplex Annett Lock' with two Annett key slots, as the Duplex part of the name suggests. Operating both keys, each engraved 'Salisbury', in No. 1 lever, allowed that point lever to unlock the facing point lock in the track. This also freed Frame B's other two levers as well. The facing point lock is a mechanism to prevent unauthorised movement of the points which might cause a derailment.

After having finally worked through the safeworking







procedures at Frame B, the 1435mm gauge train could enter the Salisbury yard. This allowed Frame B to be released enabling 1067mm gauge traffic to resume. But that created a problem as not only was the 1435mm gauge locomotive locked into the Salisbury yard, but so too was the Greenbank-Beaudesert Road safeworking staff which meant no other 1435mm gauge trains could operate in that section.

The 1967 solution was the installation of an intermediate electric staff instrument in a hut next to Frame B. This enabled the crew of the just-arrived 1435mm gauge train inside the yard to surrender the staff by inserting it into this device thereby permitting other traffic on the 1435mm gauge section. Trains departing the yard could also use it to obtain a new staff once the Greenbank and Beaudesert Road signal cabins gave permission.<sup>3</sup>

While all this may seem a bit of a rigmarole when compared with modern push-button electronic safeworking methods, it was effective and did provide safety in that era. Notice how items operated with Frame B had a 'B' in their names? The picture of the side of the lever frame even shows the letter 'B'. Signal and points names also matched the number of the lever that operated them.

Another safeworking feature was the electrical connection between the Greenbank and Beaudesert Road cabins' safeworking apparatus which also passed through Frame B's Duplex Lock B's cabinet. The electrical conduit is seen going up the post in the image. Thus, the key on the staff



**The Duplex Lock B at Salisbury with its Annett key plus electrical connections on top in 1982. P BARKER IMAGE**

not only released the Annett key, it also operated a switch which disconnected the electrical link between those signal cabins. This is termed 'broke the line wire for the electric staff section' and prevented any Greenbank-Beaudesert Road staff being released by the two 1435mm gauge signal cabins when Salisbury's Frame B was in operation. This was in addition to the fact that a withdrawn staff prevented another one being withdrawn.<sup>4</sup>

Salisbury's Frame B also had a link to the Musgrave Road level crossing, 720 metres to the south. As that level crossing had more than one track, its circuit activation was in two stages, an inner plus an outer stage. The inner component, termed the control track by QR, involves the flashing lights/boom lowering cycle. Its 1435mm gauge track circuit started just after Frame B so a train from Clapham for the Salisbury yard did not lower the booms across Musgrave Road.<sup>5</sup>

The outer stage, termed the approach track by QR, is for level crossings with multiple tracks. It prevents level crossing protection from clearing after the first train has used the level crossing, if the next train was very close. In Musgrave Road's case, the track circuit for the 1435mm gauge approach track started opposite the Salisbury station area, a few hundred metres north of Frame B. This meant a 1435mm gauge train for the Salisbury yard from the north would still activate the level crossing approach track, preventing the booms rising if a 1067mm gauge train had just used the Musgrave Road level crossing.

This approach track circuit was deactivated by a train at Frame B by using the key on the miniature electric staff in



**The signal levers at Salisbury with a Duplex Annett lock on No. 1 lever with two key slots in 1982. P BARKER IMAGE**



Frame B's Duplex Lock B cabinet. This allowed Musgrave Road crossing's boom barriers to rise if another train had just used the crossing, although probably they rose a bit later than if the train had continued to Acacia Ridge instead of stopping at Frame B. The technical term was the approach track circuit was 'subject to the safeworking staff lock' at Salisbury, which referred to the electrical switch gear on top of Frame B's Duplex Lock B cabinet. That was the second role of that electrical switch gear, with the other previously mentioned role being to switch off the link for the electric staff section between Greenbank–Beaudesert Road signal cabins.

Safeworking equipment on the 1435mm gauge line within Queensland was an intermixing of both QR and NSW types.<sup>6</sup> For example, NSW locomotives entered their Yeerongpilly Locomotive Depot by the authority of QR style siding signals as noted by the oval 'O' symbol on the signal arms.<sup>7</sup> The Salisbury yard reflected this mixture by its standard NSW shunting signal. This was shunting signal No.3B Sidings to Main with catchpoints 2B nearby, located at the entrance to the yard on the eastern side of the 1067mm gauge Beenleigh lines. Signal 3B was worked by No.3 lever on Frame B. Lever 2 operated both the mainline points and catchpoints No.2B and lever No.1 was the facing point lock.<sup>8</sup>

Safeworking specialist Dr Robert Taafe described this Salisbury signal as a standard NSW siding or shunting signal. For comparison, the QR version of a siding signal had an 'O' symbol on the signal arm and the QR shunting signal had the letter 'S' on the signal arm.<sup>9</sup> As evident from the accompanying image, this Salisbury 1435mm gauge signal did not have either an 'O' or 'S' on the arm. The NSW shunting signal arm had a horizontal white stripe while the Queensland version had a vertical, not horizontal, white stripe. The horizontal stripe NSW shunting signal cannot be confused with a Calling On Signal, also with a horizontal white stripe, as both QR and NSW Calling On signals were located beneath a Home Signal arm. Both NSW and Queensland Home or Starting Signals had vertical white stripes on the arms.

As noted earlier, No. 12 lever in the signal cabin locked the signals for the whole 1067mm gauge mainline layout in the area at stop. Perhaps prudence might have suggested that any 1435mm gauge train for the Salisbury yard would have paused at Frame B till a suitable time slot in the commuter timetable was available, before operating Frame B and thus stopping the other traffic. Similarly, outward 1435mm gauge trains waited within Salisbury yard for a similar slot.

But, sometimes passenger traffic was delayed by the shunting. The last train to Southport on the South Coast line, consisting of railcars 2002 and 2003, on the day of the line's closure, Tuesday 30 June 1964, had a four minute halt at the Home Signal at Beaudesert Road signal cabin caused by shunting in the depot opposite the then new Salisbury signal cabin. The railcar passengers spotted a NSW 40 class mainline diesel in the yard as they went past, which presumably had just entered the yard thereby causing the railcars' delay.<sup>10</sup>

## Salisbury cabin's closure

Salisbury cabin's time came to an end over the weekend 22–23 May 1982 as part of the Roma Street to Kingston electrification in preparation for the Commonwealth Games later that year.<sup>11</sup> The replacement was a colour light

signalling system with power-operated points controlled from Mayne Control centre, located near the inner-city Mayne railway yards.

At this stage, the new Frame B release process still required the key on the 1435mm gauge safe working staff but electric release No. 816 at Mayne replaced release lever No. 12 in Salisbury cabin. Frame B also now required release by No. 6 at Clapham Signal cabin.

The Beaudesert Road Signal cabin, opposite the former Nyanda passenger platform between Rocklea and Salisbury, also closed that weekend. The earlier Clapham–Beaudesert Road–Greenbank 1435mm gauge miniature electric staff sections had become Clapham–Acacia Ridge–Greenbank on 28 May 1980.<sup>12</sup>

The May 1982 changes were added to in August of that year when the 1435mm gauge safe working staff was replaced by single-line track block working between Clapham and Acacia Ridge.<sup>13</sup> From then on, instead of the safeworking staff key, Frame B required an electrical release from Acacia Ridge cabin's No. 103, along with No. 816 from Mayne. The Duplex Annett lock and associated key arrangement became redundant. Salisbury yard's NSW pattern semaphore signal 3B, Sidings to Main, for 1435mm gauge departing traffic, also was upgraded to a position colour light shunting signal at the same site.

The electric release for Salisbury's ground frame via Mayne Control Centre's No. 816 was part of a series of ground frame electrical releases installed with the Kingston electrification. Others include No. 815 for Kingston, there was no apparent No. 817, and the 1435mm gauge Rocklea Industrial Estate sidings was released by Mayne's No. 818.<sup>14</sup>

## Site road access

When the Salisbury Terminal opened in 1964, truck access was from the southern side of the yard via a new level crossing over the QR Beenleigh line at Sway Street, Coopers Plains.<sup>15</sup> Access to this level crossing was from Beaudesert Road via the western end of Musgrave Road which had a level crossing on the Acacia Ridge line, but not on the Beenleigh line. The Sway Street level crossing initially had a gate on the treminal side and just a cattle grid on the public side. In December 1964, the inevitable occurred when two suburban trains travelling in opposite directions sandwiched a semitrailer, scattering goods along the line.<sup>16</sup> This crossing was upgraded in 1967 to track circuit operated half-boom barriers.<sup>17</sup>

As the 1970s built sidings encroached over the Sway Street level crossing entrance within the yard, the level crossing was realigned about 30 metres to the east. While now clear of the gantry cranes, the new Beenleigh line level crossing still included the far end of two of the new internal sidings, giving it an overall size of about 70 metres. Because this now extended Sway Street level crossing was used by long slow vehicles, the lights commenced to flash 24 seconds before the booms lowered.<sup>18 19</sup>

These new boom barriers worked automatically for trains on the Beenleigh line and utilised push-button operation if internal shunt trains wished to cross. Four two-aspect (green over red) colour light signals were installed, two on each side of the roadway within the yard. Start and cancel buttons were installed in a box on each signal which normally showed a red aspect. When the start button was pushed, the signal cleared to green when the booms were horizontal





Clyde-built 1502 class diesel-electric locomotive 1526 heads a Beenleigh bound suburban train through Salisbury as NSW branch line locomotive 4847 shunts vans on the standard gauge in the late 1970s. GREG CASH PHOTO

and the booms rose automatically after the train had passed over the roadway. A cancel button was also installed in each box to raise the booms if they were lowered and it was later decided not to shunt over the roadway.

The Sway Street level crossing was closed in 1983 as a better entrance was available from the northern side off the newly built Riawena Road. This arterial road gave access to the Ipswich, Pacific and Gateway motorways.<sup>20</sup>

## Salisbury yard closure

Salisbury's 1067mm gauge siding points had been removed by September 1995 although the sidings and signal SY16, located on the southbound main line before the yard's points, remained for a while.<sup>21</sup> The siding was noted on the Working Plan and Section as removed 11 April 1996 and the 1435mm gauge ground frame points were clipped 30 April 1996.<sup>22</sup>

The yard's closure came at a time when major changes were occurring to the tracks outside the Salisbury yard. One of the inducements to change was the 1991 closure of the Roma Street rail yard in the centre of Brisbane with its operations transferring to Acacia Ridge. On the passenger aspect, the duplication from Kuraby to Beenleigh was finished in 1992 and the Gold Coast line was in planning at that time. The Yeerongpilly to Acacia Ridge 1435mm gauge line was dual-gauged in 1991, with dual-gauge later extended to Roma Street as well as to the Port of Brisbane.

The April 1996 closure of the rail components of the Salisbury Freight terminal was followed in August by the Salisbury end of the Acacia Ridge branch being modified,<sup>23</sup> including a 1067mm gauge link from the now dual-gauge line across to the Beenleigh line. The whole rail junction was once again modified in 2007 for the third track between Salisbury and Kuraby.

The Salisbury 1435mm gauge transfer yard itself was beneficial during its era as seen by that gauge's traffic volumes. But it did have an Achilles' Heel, namely what might be considered these days its short length of around 500 metres.



A TNT container is loaded onto a motor truck standing on the dual gauge track by the overhead gantry at the TNT Salisbury container facility in 1978. GREG CASH PHOTO



## Acacia Ridge early development

The track plan accompanying this article includes data from the plan titled 'Acacia Ridge to Clapham, Proposed Signalling Scheme' and produced by the Office of the NSW Railways Signal and Telegraph Engineer, Sydney, December 1965. It shows several proposed but never built private sidings along the western side of the route in the Salisbury and Acacia Ridge area. These were for Alltrans, Mayne Nickless, Taylor Engineering and Samios sidings. An analysis of each situation shows they either eventually used a rail yard in a different location or the firm's rail yard plans did not eventuate.

Alltrans Pty Ltd, headed by Sir Peter Abeles, had no need to bother with the huge expense of building their own private siding after their 1967 merger with Thomas Nationwide Transport (TNT). This gave Alltrans access to the extensive Salisbury TNT transshipment yard, a very short distance to the north. The proposed Alltrans siding was shown on the plan as leading off northward facing points diverting north-west. The points were marked at the Intermediate staff hut which the 1977 NSW Local Appendix to the Northern Division Working Timetable lists as 973.7km. The Boundary Road level crossing was listed as 974.5km so the Alltrans points, if built, would have been 800 metres south of the level crossing. An aerial photo dated May 1966 as well as one dated 1968, after the merger of Alltrans and TNT, reveals the land at that spot to be vacant without any rail siding.

The Mayne Nickless and Taylor Engineering siding was proposed as located on the western side of the line south of the Musgrave Road level crossing and Stable Swamp Creek. There is no mention of this on the relevant sheet 50 of the Working Plan and Section book SE23 Standard Gauge to Border. Aerial photos from 1966, 1968, 1970 and 1978 reveal no siding in that location west of the line. Eventually Mayne Nickless did have a siding south of Gay Street on the eastern side of the Acacia Ridge yard. This is mentioned on sheet 26 of Working Plan and Section book SE29 Salisbury to Acacia Ridge. This locates Mayne Nickless on Lot 54 at the end of one of the siding's off the Estoban Industrial Estate. Working Plan and Section Sheet 26 is also labelled E/A137.

The track plan shows the proposed Samios sidings on the western side of the 1435mm gauge mainline between the Beaudesert Road Acacia Ridge level crossing, 972.2 km, and a private level crossing, Pentlands at 972.8 km, which existed at the time. There is no mention of the proposed Samios sidings on either of the Working Plan and Section books SE 23, nor SE29. Aerial photos from 1966, 1968 and 1970 reveal no industrial siding on the western side of the line at that location. Another proposed but not built rail siding further north in the Salisbury Rocklea general area was for a company named by QR Plan B35 as Nestles Food Specialities Ltd.<sup>24</sup> This plan, dated 4 June 1954, used the term 'Siding Accommodation' although no tracks were drawn on the QR plan within the property. Measurements using the Google Earth tool suggest a 140 metre siding was possible with the yard.

The Nestles site was on the western railway line boundary near the Beaudesert Road signal cabin. The site was opposite the Nyanda passenger platform and the entry points for both rail gauges into the Rocklea Industrial Estate on the eastern side of the railway. The Nestles land parcel was situated at Heaton Street and did not include the houses and other small properties along Leeds Street nor the small block of land on

the corner of Beaudesert Road. Since no other references have been found either in *Trove* or railway historical literature, this writer would welcome any other details.

Also of interest was the eastern side of the Nestles land, as marked in red on the QR plan, as it included a very historical curved land parcel. This was part of the 2 miles 34 chains (3.9km) line to the quarry opposite Archerfield Aerodrome. This 1913–1923 line ran from the Rocklea rail yard, parallel to the then single track South Coast Line to the future Nyanda platform then headed south across Stable Swamp Creek and along the eastern edge of Beatty Road, past what is now Archerfield Aerodrome. The Nyanda platform was initially named Evans Deakin Stopping Place in 1930 and became Nyanda with the 1950 duplication. The line then turned south east to terminate at the Brisbane Blue Metal Company's quarry.<sup>25</sup> This quarry line predates the 1435mm gauge line.<sup>26</sup>

The track plan, 'Acacia Ridge to Clapham, Proposed Signalling Scheme' produced by the Office of the NSW Railways Signal and Telegraph Engineer, Sydney, December 1965, is also of interest regarding the signalling. The NSW plan shows different signal numbers to the QR Salisbury signal cabin diagram. The signal at the northern end of Acacia Ridge yard controlling entry onto the 1067mm gauge line to Salisbury is marked as Salisbury No. 21 on the NSW plan yet the QR plan has it as No. 30. Signal 21 on the Salisbury cabin diagram controlled southbound 1067mm gauge traffic over the Musgrave Road level crossing.

## Traffic volumes

It is assumed a load transhipped between gauges would appear in both sections as arrived on one gauge then outbound on the other gauge. As the analysis of the 1964–1984 traffic volumes presented in Table 1 shows, there was a marked difference between rail traffic arriving into the Salisbury yard from NSW compared to rail traffic leaving on the 1067mm gauge and similarly an obvious imbalance for NSW-bound traffic compared to what arrived into the yard by rail from the rest of Queensland.

The difference between the loading on each rail gauge highlights the Salisbury Terminal usage as a base for road haulage activities. In 1976 the Queensland Parliamentary Hansard revealed that TNT Alltrans of Salisbury was one of five road transport companies operating on the Brisbane Darwin road service.<sup>27</sup>

A snapshot in time style analysis of 1435mm gauge traffic for the week 19–25 August 1973 was sourced from the February 1974 (Federal) Bureau of Transport Economics report 'The Development of a Rail Freight Terminal at Acacia Ridge'. The inbound 1071 tonnes to Salisbury that week was 205 tonnes in open bogie wagons and 866 tonnes in closed vans. The Clapham tonnage would include transshipment with 1067mm gauge as well as loads that arrived or departed by road, eg. through any freight forwarders based there.<sup>28</sup>

The northbound 1435mm gauge tonnages for the Brisbane region 19–25 August 1973 were as follows in geographic order: Acacia Ridge 4195 tonnes; Salisbury 1071; Clapham 6822; Park Road 2454; and South Brisbane 5946 tonnes. The following southbound tonnages reveal the main traffic was northbound: Acacia Ridge 1309 tonnes; Salisbury 42; Clapham 5177; Park Road five tonnes; and South Brisbane 2281 tonnes.

That 1974 Bureau of Transport Economics report also



**Table 1: Rail traffic statistics Salisbury Siding 1964–1984<sup>30</sup>**

Years	1067mm Gauge Traffic		1435mm Gauge Traffic	
	Outwards Rail	Arrived Rail	Outwards Rail	Arrived Rail
1963–1964*	62	0	228	1632
1965–1966	7224	395	58,032	33,700
1966–1967**	6385	2595	66,184	15,325
1967–1968	2009	3659	41,449	27,195
1968–1969	2167	4825	30,145	40,185
1969–1970	2130	2552	26,674	48,606
1970–1971	3573	1615	26,899	49,334
1971–1972	2658	2841	27,160	53,875
1972–1973	912	791	25,444	57,913
1973–1974	845	450	31,699	65,224
1974–1975	1387	180	42,001	77,611
1975–1976	4217	341	60,691	76,905
1976–1977	4012	323	72,500	83,275
1977–1978	2242	966	95,185	80,703
1978–1979	1516	712	84,578	67,535
1979–1980	665	1227	93,693	63,059
1980–1981	1464	1663	95,648	82,312
1981–1982	190	1913	55,307	90,992
1982–1983	22	10,426	73,012	129,228
1983–1984	1142	3418	74,002	166,641

\*First year shown. \*\*Cargo Distributors Ltd to 1965–66, then TNT siding. Tons or tonnes as used at the time, tons to 1972–73, tonnes thereafter. One ton = 1.016 tonne.

noted that the Park Road freight forwarders rail depot was scheduled for closure within two years and the occupants planned to transfer their operations to Salisbury. Nevertheless, the Park Road rail depot was still receiving paper and steel products

traffic by 1435mm gauge trains in 1991 and finally closed 1994.<sup>29</sup> The site is now part of an expanded Park Road 1067mm gauge railway station and Eastern Busway passenger transfer facility. Some of the former freight forwarders site is also utilized as part of

the 1997 opened dual-gauge line to the Port of Brisbane.

The question of the benefits of a private freight yard like Salisbury is still open for debate. The alternative was construction of freight forwarders' sidings off a major yard like Acacia Ridge. Many companies have opted for sidings off the Acacia Ridge yard, yet, in January 2017, SCT Logistics opened their own Bromelton Intermodal Facility located 49 km south of Acacia Ridge. SCT Logistics operate their own wagons hauled by their own locomotives. Previously Aurizon hauled SCT wagons between Victoria and SCT's Acacia Ridge depot, but SCT Logistics commenced operating its own trains from 21 January 2017.<sup>31</sup> SCT also operate rail yards in Penfield SA, Altona in Melbourne, Parkes NSW and at Barnawatha on the NSW–Victorian border.

## Acknowledgements

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**Editor:** Readers are advised that the end notes for this article are available on the ARHSnsw website: [www.arhsnsw.com.au](http://www.arhsnsw.com.au)

## In this month's **Railway Digest**

### Where to for intercity passenger rail travel?

Max Michell looks at the outcome, and ponders the future, of the contrasting strategies adopted by NSW and Victoria in regard to longer distance commuting rail.

While NSW has provided significant capacity and improved train quality over a long period, but achieved little in the way of improved train transit speeds since the 1980s, Victoria has taken a more holistic view and improved tracks and infrastructure and acquired progressively better trains, thereby achieving some notable outcomes by Australian standards.

### Trainline 5: A Summary

Each year the Commonwealth Bureau of Transport, Infrastructure, and Regional Economics (BITRE), and the Australasian Railway Association (ARA) co-publish a statistical report on the Australian rail industry called *Trainline*. The latest edition, *Trainline 5*, was released in November 2017. As usual, this latest report contains a remarkable array of information regarding the current state of Australia's rail industry. Author, Rodney Avery, presents a summary of *Trainline 5*'s key findings.

**Plus all our regular features**



# MEMORIES OF A DIVISION ENGINEER

## Part 2: Later years at Narrabri and on to the Public Transport Commission of NSW

Frank Johnson



CPH railmotor 4 and a sister unit await departure from Moree station to rural centres as goods shed staff take a break on the adjacent platform. G W Lillico photo, ARHSnsw Railway Resource Centre, 056759

### Prelude

In *Memories of a Division Engineer*, Part 1 (*ARH*, January 2018), I covered details of the Narrabri Division of the then Way and Works Branch of the NSWGR and the disastrous floods of January and February 1971. Part 1 ended with the restoration of the main lines and Part 2 continues with the work on the Walgett Line, and then more memories of my life as a Division Engineer in the 1970s.

### Walgett Line flood restoration

After re-opening the line from Narrabri Junction into Narrabri (see Part 1), the next priority was the section up to Moree. With this underway, pressure then came from Head Office to get on with repairing the flood damage on the branch line from Narrabri West to Walgett. Before this work started, I made a reconnaissance trip by track vehicle with the local Traffic Inspector to survey the scene as far as we could get.

The trip was made the more interesting as:

- At several locations there was still water over the line, as the floods receded quite slowly in the flat river areas west of Narrabri.
- We made the first rail trip since the floods started, which gave the burrs plenty of time to flourish—and flourish they did! The local variety was aptly named ‘Bowena Beauties’—very large and very prickly. Our track vehicle had a bar on the frame just above rail level, which acted as a very effective scythe. We were subject to such a barrage of burrs that I had to put my raincoat on backwards.

The Walgett Line runs passes through extensive sheep

properties and sheep are well known as very dumb animals. The railway embankment was often the only dry ground and this attracted a lot of the said dumb sheep, as there were no fences. As we approached in the track vehicle, the sheep would run along the line until they came to a cattle stop, which is like a low bridge, designed to keep stock from straying into adjacent paddocks along the unfenced line.

Would the sheep then stop? No! Straight into the cattle stop with a running leap! This meant stopping and pulling out struggling, wet, dirty and smelly sheep at regular intervals. The live sheep weren’t too hard, it was the sheep that had died earlier and had made the cattle stop their last resting place that were the real challenge—both physically and olfactory.

Our reconnaissance proved that there was some extensive work to be done on the Walgett Line to prepare for the resumption of rail traffic. One of the key trouble spots was out near Cryon, with the track being washed well off line and leaving extensive scouring of the track bed.

For some reason, I did not take any photos on this trip but no doubt the flat areas between Burren Junction and Walgett would have resembled one of my favourite paintings by W C Piguenit, titled: ‘The flood in the Darling 1890’. One can just imagine a railway track, on a very low embankment as ‘pioneer lines’ were built, submerged somewhere below the very placid flood waters.

Back to the Walgett Line in 1971, with the limited access to the site, a different restoration method was needed from those used on the main line. Here the local fettling and bridge gangs had to construct a temporary track around





W C Piguenit's wonderful painting, 'Flood in the Darling 1890' reminded Frank Johnson of the damage caused to railway track on the Walgett Line in the 1971 flood. ART GALLERY OF NSW

the scoured area, using heavy bridge timbers as supports. As the as the following photographs show, this was all done knee deep in the water and all manually—no cranes or excavators here.

I came through on the first train after the track had been restored. Reaching the washaway site, I alighted from the diesel rail cars to observe it passing over the temporary track. As the train was about to move off, the driver stuck his

head out of his cab window and with typical country humour called out to us, "Don't just stand there, PRAY." His concerns were quite unfounded, for the fettling and bridge gangs had (as usual) done an excellent job and the train proceeded quite safely over the temporary track.

Thus, some four weeks after the floods hit, we could finally restore services as far as Cryon. Services to Walgett had to wait another week

or so, until the flood waters finally subsided, allowing a detailed track examination to be undertaken and repairs completed.

Between Cryon and Walgett, the floodwaters over the track took their time in subsiding and this section was not re-opened until 3 March 1971.

The lesser branch line from Burren to Pokataroo had also suffered heavy scouring, with washouts to 14ft. deep and abutments washed out. This was the last priority to be worked on, with the section between Burren and Rowena re-opened on 17 March 1971 and finally Rowena and Pokataroo on 24 March.

## Paperwork

Of course, whatever happens on the Railways there is always the dreaded "paperwork". After the tracks and bridges had been restored and trains running again, it was time to prepare and submit a comprehensive report to Head Office. I hoped that this justified the length of time it took us to get everything back in order – and all the money we spent.

However, I was not completely clear of bureaucracy, for I also received a whole raft of letters from the Irregularities Clerk in the District



Members of the local track gang working in flood waters to construct the new deviation near Cryon in March 1971. FRANK JOHNSON PHOTO





This two-car diesel train was the first over the deviation near Cryon in March 1971.  
FRANK JOHNSON PHOTO

Superintendent's Office, Werris Creek. For each mileage across the Division that was affected by floodwaters, there was a separate letter asking me to accept responsibility on behalf of the Way and Works Branch.

A real raft would have been quite useful in the floods but this was just bureaucratic nonsense. I regarded the floods as "acts of God" but I lacked any formal communication channel to the Almighty to ask Him to take responsibility. Hence all these letters were quickly filed in the often used round receptacle under my desk. And I never heard anything further!

## In Retrospect

Dealing with the flood damage was a real challenge for a young engineer, with long hours seven days a week over several months. However, I look back on this time as one of the most rewarding of my railway career. While my Head Office's senior management had sent up the Branch's three Inspecting Engineers in turn over the first couple of weeks to provide varying degrees of direction, advice and assistance, I still had responsibility for the Division.

There is a definite sense of achievement in overcoming the effects of the forces of nature and getting rail services back on track – something that one does not get in an office job and which made me glad I had opted for a career in track maintenance instead of the design office.

The other 'plus' out of all this flood restoration work was that the Assistant

CCE (Maintenance) noted all the extra hours and weekends I had put in (without overtime, of course) and gave me a day off. Just one day but still a day off – one should be grateful for small mercies, especially in the Railways. Thus, I could spend an extended weekend back in Goulburn with my fiancée to celebrate our engagement, which had been so abruptly interrupted by the start of the floods at the end of January. Just as well I had taken up with an exceptional young lady, who displayed great measures of understanding and patience.

After the major floods across the Division from December 1970 to March 1971 and the resulting widespread damage, the rest of my time at Narrabri was almost an anticlimax. However, the following anecdotes hopefully provide a few examples of normal life for a DE.

## Derailments

Floods were not the only problem on the Division, for there were the occasional derailments. In November 1971, a train left the tracks at Gurley, between Narrabri and Moree, even demolishing a small bridge.

The official railway telegram of the day read:

Gurley – Bellata

11.11.71 / 7.45p.m.

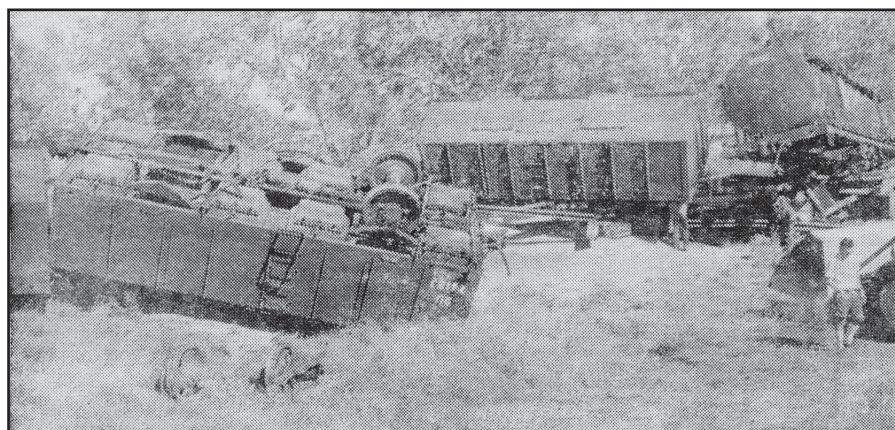
No.476, engine 4864, Driver Walton, derailed at mileage 389.75chs. Following vehicles derailed – RU.25301, RU.25324, RU.25136, RU.24183, RU.24477, BOT. Esso 83, BOT Caltex 148, S.5862, S.4765, S.4928, BOT Ampol 29. Delays, No.476 and No.479 terminated.

To be advised.

The 'To be advised' at the end of the telegram indicates that the cause of the derailment had not yet been officially determined.

The types of vehicles derailed are a good indication of the composition of goods trains in the Narrabri area at that time: four-wheeled wheat wagons (RU), four-wheeled open wagons (S) and bogie oil tankers (BOT). Up until the late 20th Century, the railways carted a lot of petrol around the state – from the refineries in Sydney to major country depots, whence it was delivered by road. This train had tankers belonging to Esso, Ampol and Caltex, showing the spread of oil companies that used rail in that period.

The upside-down wagon shown in the newspaper clipping below was one of the 'RU' four-wheeled wheat wagons. These were notoriously unstable and may well have been a



Two RU four-wheel wheat hopper wagons and a petrol tank wagon at the Gurley accident site in November 1971. NARRABRI COURIER





Railway accident crew members at the site of the Gurley derailment of 11 November 1971 with two petrol tank wagons in the background. NARRABRI COURIER

contributing factor to the derailment.

The newspaper clipping above shows the extent of the damage to the track. This was the challenge for the fettling gangs to restore as soon as possible after the Mechanical Branch crews had cleared the derailed vehicles.

The inevitable aftermath of any derailment or major irregularity was an official joint investigation. This involved the local senior managers of all the affected branches and was usually headed up by the District Superintendent (or DS) from the Traffic Branch. While the objective was to formally establish the cause of the derailment, one always looked for any contributing elements from other parts of the Railways. It looked better on the statistics to be half or even a quarter responsible, rather than having the track listed as the sole cause of the derailment.

The DS's of that era were real experts in the conduct of joint inquiries and ferreting out every single infraction of the NSWGR's multitudinous Rules & Regulations. I recall one such inquiry being conducted in a station master's office out on a branch line, with the DS quizzing an innocent ganger about everything he had done and when, while the Irregularities Clerk from the DS's office typed down everything he said. The only things that seemed to be missing from this inquisition were the bright lights and the thumb-screws.

Even derailments in yards required the DS's attention, although these were less frequent than during my brief experiences with Port Kembla Yard in my time as District Engineer,

Wollongong. As the following photo shows, on 6 March 1972 some carriages from the *North West Mail* were derailed during shunting in Moree, so presumably I was called up from Narrabri to attend the scene.

Given it was a yard derailment at a set of points (looking very much like the points had been 'split' with parts of the train going up different tracks), one would first look to the possibility that the shunter did not hold the points lever down if it was at manual points, or poor adjustment of the points mechanism if interlocked points. Of course, track condition could still be a probable cause but this was less likely with the slower speeds of train movements in yards.



The derailed *North West Mail* carriages in Moree yard on 6 March 1972. Frank Johnson stands in the middle distance taking notes with another railway official. I K WINNEY COLLECTION, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 101985

## Commissioner's Tour

he Commissioner for Railways, Neal McCusker made regular Tours of Inspection around the system and his north-west tour coincided with my time at Narrabri. Sadly, these tours were abandoned when the Public Transport Commission (PTC) was formed in October 1972, perhaps due to the incoming executive's strong push on cost cutting.

As an aside, the PTC also abolished the traditional head of branch titles, such as Chief Civil Engineer, which was replaced by the title of General Manager, Way & Works Branch. This was not a popular move in the railways, but was fortunately reversed when David Hill took over as Chief Executive of the newly formed Sizable Rail Authority in 1980. David Hill also reinstated the Commissioner's Tours, which was a good move.

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, these tours were a major event and local community members were invited to meet the Commissioner when he passed through their area. Of course, in those days the NSWGR provided services to country towns: parcels, small freight, stock (sheep and cattle), wool, fertilizer and even passenger trains. Thus, the railways were much more critical to life in rural NSW than they are in the 21st Century.

An invitation was also extended to local officials and business people to meet the Commissioner, and I recall touring the north-west before and,





Branchline diesel-electric locomotive 4893 heads the Commissioner's train at North Goulburn heading to Picton, 28 February 1972. L OBERG PHOTO, ARHSNSW RRC, 003788

with the District Superintendent from Werris Creek, to interview everyone who had requested an audience with the "great white chief" and to see what their issues were and check out any issues that might be raised. Simple requests like repairing stockyards were something that I could arrange before the tour (or at least promise) but more difficult requests like more services or reduced freight rates were definitely at the Commissioner level.

Also, in the lead up to the Commissioner's inspection, the whole area was always given a thorough facelift: some stations were painted, yards were cleaned up and stockyards repaired, with even the humble mileposts beside the track given a lick of paint. No doubt Mr McCusker was aware of this, as he had progressed right through the Traffic Branch ranks but at least the network received a good spruce up every couple of years.

The Commissioner had his own train, which also carried the branch heads for the whole tour and the local controlling officers just over their territories. On Sunday 29 August 1971, the Commissioner and his entourage set off from Sydney Station for his tour, taking in Gwabegar to Moree (excluding Werris Creek), Boggabilla, Inverell and Pokataroo Branches, as set out in Special Train Notice No. 650. For this tour of the north-west, the train comprised:

PHO, AAH 7, AAH 8 and AAH 9, worked by a 48 class diesel locomotive throughout.

This tour left on the Sunday evening and returned on the Thursday evening, with a very demanding schedule of some 3000 km travelled. This included about 1000 km of inspections, stopping at every station on these lines. The time allowed at each station was obviously an indication of the perceived importance of that place, with small stations such as North Star only rating four minutes and Wee Waa 10 minutes. However, Gunnedah was lucky to have the Commissioner for 49 minutes (albeit, allowing the *Up Northern Tablelands Express* to

pass through), while the train was in Narrabri for all the Wednesday afternoon.

The station stops were used to inspect facilities and talk to local staff from all areas of the Railways, together with local officials. Overall, the tour was very "civilised" and one would be woken up in the morning by a steward, with a pot of tea and some fresh fruit. Meals were carefully orchestrated, with local controlling officers like myself rostered to sit at Mr McCusker's table for at least one meal and one morning or afternoon tea. Unlike many others in the Railways hierarchy of the time, Mr McCusker neither drank nor smoked, so there was none of that while he was in the dining car.

By this time 1971 Mr McCusker was just short of a year from the end of his 16-year reign as Commissioner. 16 years! I would need all my fingers and toes (and more) to count the number of Chief Executives that the "Railways" in its unending permutations and combinations has had in the last 16 years. It would now seem that the Chief Executives' offices have revolving doors, remotely controlled from Macquarie Street of course and their tenures were short in many cases.

## Way and Works Branch Hierarchy

The Commissioner was not the only senior manager to venture



Railways Commissioner Neal McCusker at the Eveleigh Laboratories with Frank Heard, CME, and Bill Wait, Deputy CME, c1965. ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, II9976





View of *Railway House* with Wynyard Park in the foreground, circa 1940.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA, PIC-AN 23361795-VJPG

out of *Railway House*, for we were also honoured by the presence of the Chief Civil Engineer and/or the Assistant Chief Civil Engineer, Maintenance, from time to time. These visits were usually made in the AK Car, the Way and Works Branch Track Inspection Carriage, complete with track recording equipment, and self-contained sleeping and eating facilities. The AK could be attached to the rear of a suitable passenger train or run as a special train to cover whatever area was required. However, one would have to say that these were not hugely enjoyable experiences and the food was not exactly “fine dining”.

A more frequent and welcome visitor was the Inspecting Engineer, Ken Swan, who looked after the four northern maintenance divisions. Mr Swan (no first names for Head Office staff in those days) was more friendly and

personable, and provided invaluable direction, advice and support to a young (and inexperienced) Division Engineer. Sadly, Ken Swan left to run a youth campsite, which was a great loss to the Railways but probably more fulfilling for him.

### Also Rans

Moving from the sublime to the ridiculous, occasionally my Division was graced by the presence of some lesser mortals from Head Office. Our Assistant Chief Civil Engineer, Maintenance had a Chief Inspector of Permanent Way on his personal staff, whom he sent out to check up on what the DE's were doing; hardly a morale boosting move.

At one stage the Assistant CCE thought that we were putting in too many sleepers around Moree, so he sent his Chief Inspector up to sort us

out. The Moree Per Way Inspector, Tim Riley, had locked horns before with this fellow, apparently not with any fond memories. This Chief Inspector used to walk the tracks in a grey dustcoat, so my inspector rather affectionately dubbed him ‘the goat in the coat’—quite appropriate, I thought at the time.

## Conferences

The Way and Works Branch held four Head Office Conferences each year, which meant leaving the Division for at least two days away in Sydney. These conferences were chaired by the Chief Civil Engineer (CCE) and included all the senior Way and Works Branch head office engineers, plus all the Division Engineers and equivalent field engineers.

The conferences were held in *Railway House*, at 19 York Street, Wynyard, commonly referred to as “The Green House” from its green tiled façade. To us young engineers, it was just Head Office and I was totally unaware of its history and significance. When it was opened in 1935, *Railway House* was considered one of the most modern office buildings in Sydney, with cutting edge design features. Much of the interior was *Art Deco* in style, the building was air-conditioned throughout, and escalators, new in Sydney, ran down to Wynyard station below. The building was also awarded the Royal Institute of British Architects medal in 1939.

The building was clad above the ground level with distinctive green terracotta tiles which were the colour of the interiors of railway carriages at the time. Green thus marked the building as belonging to the Railways, and foreshadowed the use of green for Sydney’s public transport network for a time, when buses, ferries and trams were also green.

It is also worthy of note that *Railway House* was constructed by railway day labour staff, a controversial move at the time, with the country still suffering from the effects of the Depression. Even the steel and bronze components used in the building were manufactured at the railway workshops at Chullora. Thus, *Railway House* would join that list of highly significant civil engineering projects undertaken in-house by the Railways, including the new Hawkesbury River Bridge, Circular Quay Station and the John Whitton Bridge at Meadowbank. Of



course, this construction capability no longer exists within the current NSW government railway organisations, with even some maintenance activities now contracted out.

While the Conferences were a great opportunity to talk with one's fellow engineers and perhaps enjoy the architectural merits of *Railway House*, there could be some difficult moments. Each of the DEs had to submit quarterly budget forecasts and we knew we would be cross-examined on these by the CCE at the Conferences. Unfortunately, by the time of the Conference some four weeks later, the CCE had more up-to-date financial reports, against which to compare my probably optimistic submissions. Hence the comments from the CCE on my budget performance were, one might say, not always favourable.

The DEs did not have to budget for flood damage, so the category of 'Slips and Floods' was very useful if we had some major incidents on the Division, for this could then cover 'a multitude of sins' in other areas. We were also queried on incidents, such as derailments, but fortunately I was mostly lucky enough to avoid those while in Narrabri.

For some of the senior engineers in the Way & Works Branch, Head Office Conferences were sacrosanct and should not be missed, irrespective of one's personal life. At the end of my usual one-on-one interview with the Assistant CCE, Maintenance after one Conference, I mentioned that I would not be at the next one as he had approved my annual leave and I was getting married.

His reply really took me aback, "I wouldn't have approved your leave if I knew it meant you would be missing the Conference. You must get approval from the CCE or Deputy CCE." His only other comment was, "Well, if you're getting married, I suppose you won't be going away so often."

Wondering how I might break this news to my prospective bride, I wandered along the corridor of Level 10 in the now *Transport House* to see the Deputy CCE, Mr Gordon, who was more approachable than the CCE. Upon explaining my situation, Mr Gordon saw the issue in a completely different light and merely picked up his intercom phone, asking the Branch Staff Superintendent, "Can you get relief for Johnson in May?" The words

may have been thus but the tone of the voice was more like, "You **will** get relief for Johnson in May!" Of course, the response was positive but then Mr Gordon had been an army colonel and was not to be trifled with. I was then able to leave *Transport House* and head down to Goulburn for a weekend off, with no bad news to share with my bride-to-be but only a good story of a very considerate senior manager.

As an aside, some of our wedding preparations reflected the railways of that time. My bride-to-be and I headed to Grace Bros at Roselands in Sydney and ordered the furniture needed to supplement my rather basic bachelor items. Grace Bros then carefully cocooned our large household items in copious amount of cardboard and despatched them by train up to Narrabri Goods Shed, presumably via Darling Harbour. This, of course, was how most of the goods ended up in country towns like Narrabri, before road transport became the major and then the only mode of moving intrastate general freight.

My house was just across the road from the goods shed but this was too great a gulf even for the boot of my Holden Kingswood. However, DEs had a certain authority and my Per Way Inspector soon had the local fettling gang organised, complete with their truck. My furniture was thus quickly and safely relocated to the house, unpacked and all the cardboard packaging removed. Ah, those were the days indeed!

## Mechanised Track Maintenance

As noted in Part 1, one of my team was the Mechanisation Inspector. This position reflected the changing state of track maintenance across the New South Wales Government Railways since the 1960s.

In the early 1960s, the Way and Works Branch reviewed overseas track maintenance practices (including an overseas study tour) and determined that the types of machines and processes being established in the United States and Canada were preferable as conditions in those countries were more like those in NSW. This was probably a radical move at the time, as NSW Railways had traditionally followed the British methods and approaches.

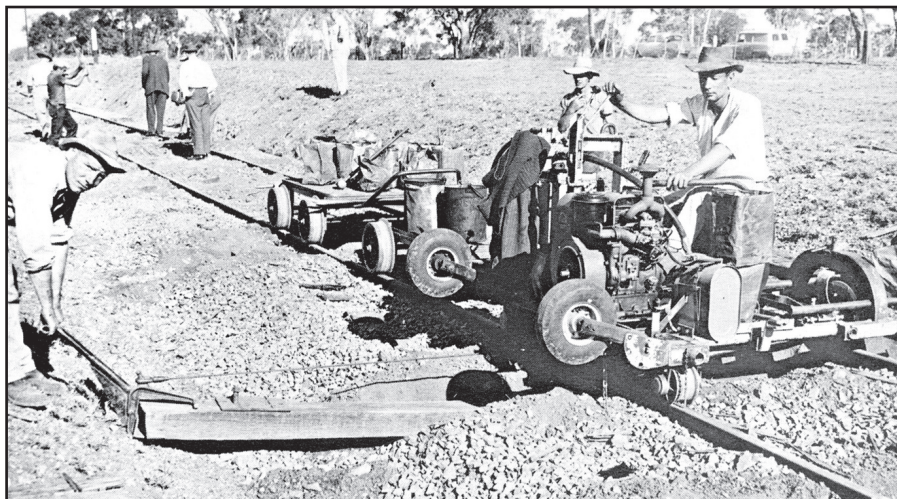
The new scheme of mechanised maintenance was essentially one of 'cyclic' maintenance. It eliminated the concept of small gang lengths and substituted what was termed 'production line' methods for the major maintenance tasks.

The key elements of this mechanised maintenance were:

### 1. The Tie and Surfacing (T&S) Gang.

This was the key unit of the new maintenance approach. It was a large mechanised gang composed of two sections, the first of which performed spot renewal of sleepers over a certain section of track per day with the second section following closely to lift, tamp, lie and trim up the ballast over the same section of track. The gang comprised about 11 machines and 38 men, including operators, labourers, flagmen and supervisors.

The objective was for the T&S gang to leave



A mechanised maintenance tie handler without the jib inserting a new sleeper in the 1960s. FROM N C VOGAN, 'TRACK MAINTENANCE IN NEW SOUTH WALES', REPRINTED JANUARY 1967



the track in extremely good condition, which would require little or no maintenance over the planned four-year cycle. Thus, the need for the traditional small track maintenance gangs was significantly diminished.

## 2. Resurfacing (RS) Gang.

In between the planned four-year cycle, it was thought that it would be necessary to lightly re-resurface tracks. For this purpose, the Resurfacing Gang was set up, comprising four machines and 16 men. However, the RS Gang did not work regularly over all the Division but on an as needed programme determined by the Division Engineer.

## 3. Maintenance Gangs

In contrast to the traditional system of wayside gangs looking after 10 miles or so of track, under the mechanised maintenance system the new track gangs covered from 35 to 45 miles with six to nine men. They were responsible for the small maintenance tasks not covered by the major gangs, such as rail joints, fastenings and points and crossings.

The other key difference to the old system was that the maintenance gangs did not find work for themselves. Except in cases of emergency, the gangs only worked as and when directed.

## 4. Track Supervisors

Rather than the maintenance gangers “running the length”, the new system provided for Track Supervisors, each examining some 60 to 90 miles, or two maintenance gang sections. These Track Supervisors used special track vehicles (TIC or track inspection car) and covered their areas every two or three days. While their prime responsibility was to report on track condition to their Per Way Inspector, they also carried hand tools to undertake emergency or minor repairs.

The role of the Permanent Way Inspector also substantially changed, now controlling two Track Supervisors and four maintenance gangs. The Inspector’s key duty now was to

compile a weekly work programme for each of his maintenance gangs based on the reports from the Track Supervisors. However, he still maintained his traditional duties, which were listed as:

He is also responsible for ordering plant, materials and equipment required on his District, the planning and direction of tasks such as weedicide spraying, forming firebreaks, burning grass, fence repairs, drainage, gathering up of old materials and general good housekeeping. He must also maintain discipline, see that safety rules are obeyed and promote accident prevention. He attends derailments, floodings and other accidents and takes charge of repair works. He travels his District by motor quadricycle but must also inspect in detail by walking a reasonable amount each month.<sup>1</sup>

One certainly had to be very capable, versatile and organised to be a Per Way Inspector. In the Way and Works Branch Report on Mechanised Track Maintenance of June 1962, it was noted that:

Most of the equipment has now been received for the introduction of a mechanisation scheme on the Narrabri Division on similar lines to that at Dubbo and in the meantime, preparatory work is proceeding with earthworks, including widening of cuttings, building up embankments, providing machine take-offs etc.

Even in the short time frame from the Dubbo Division mechanisation, track equipment had progressed. While the Dubbo Tie and Surfacing gang had a Kalamazoo Power Track Jack and a Plasser VKR-03 Tamper, Narrabri

Division had these two track surfacing functions combined in the VKR.04 Plassermatic Lifting and Tamping Machine. This machine could lift and line about 350m of track per hour.

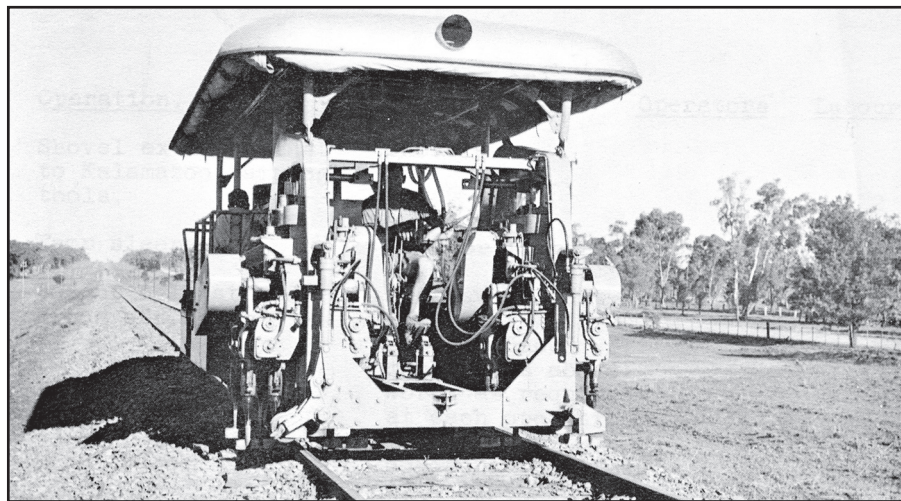
Thus, by the time that I took up at Narrabri in 1970, mechanisation of track maintenance was fully implemented. Unlike my track district in Goulburn (see ‘Memories of a District Engineer’, *ARH*, August 2013), there were no wayside gangs looking after short lengths of track and all major maintenance was undertaken by the Division-wide Tie and Surfacing Gang and Resurfacing Gang under the control of the Mechanisation Inspector. Whereas in Goulburn we “bunched” the small fettling gangs at weekends to replace sleepers, on Narrabri Division this task was now completely mechanised with a fleet of specialised small track machines.

As an aside, these two migratory gangs provided an interesting case study into the psychology of work place organisation and behaviour. The larger Tie and Surfacing Gang, while generally better paid, had a higher staff turnover than the Resurfacing Gang, and its performance was never as good. I put this down to the Resurfacing Gang members being all from the same area (Boggabri), with much more of a team spirit and commitment to the job. Perhaps a good lesson in how to motivate and retain staff, with a sense of belonging?

Of course, the organisation and management of track maintenance has continued to evolve since then. Come 2017, the humble VKR.04 Plassermatic Lifting and Tamping Machine of 1970 has been transformed over the years into the 09-3X Tamping Express. This single machine combines the functions of a tamper, liner, ballast regulator and dynamic track stabiliser (simulating the passage of trains and thus obviating the need for speed restrictions after surfacing work), with a production rate of 1800m/hr and a travel speed of up to 80km/hr, and the capability to tamp three sleepers at a time in continuous motion.

## Railway Ambulance Corps

Railway work, especially shunting and track work, was inherently risky and there was always the possibility of injury. Hence, the Railways started up its own Ambulance Corps in the



An early Plasser VKR-03 tamping machine in action on track in western New South Wales. FROM N C VOGAN, ‘TRACK MAINTENANCE IN NEW SOUTH WALES’, JANUARY 1967





Mechanised track maintenance has come a long way since the 1960s, as evidenced by this Plasser Australia 09-3X Tamping Express machine on display at the Rail Track Association of Australia exhibition at Clyde on 27 February 2013. JOHN BECKHAUS PHOTO

late 19th century to provide training for employees. This excellent initiative was taken very seriously and there were different levels of qualifications and state-wide competitions. If an employee achieved a high qualification level, then they were entitled to an extra day's annual leave.

When I turned up at Narrabri, I found that my draftsman was the local first-aid instructor. I thought that the DE should set an example to the rest of the staff, so I decided to join the lessons. However, I missed several sessions due to trips away from the office and wasn't around for the exam.

I was surprised, therefore, to be greeted by a stranger on Burren Junction station one day. He said, "You're the Division Engineer, aren't you?" I acknowledged that was the case and he introduced himself as the Railway First Aid Examiner. Then he went on to say that it was very good to see the DE's taking an interest in the Ambulance Corps and proceeded to give me a mini lecture on the three most important actions in first aid.

I was even more surprised a few weeks later when a nicely framed certificate turned up in the office, noting that I

had in fact qualified in the Elementary First Aid Course. This must take the record as the easiest exam I've ever passed. Fortunately, I was never called on to put my meagre medical knowledge to the test.

## Leaving Narrabri

One day in late August 1972, not quite two years after being appointed to Narrabri, I received a message from my office that I had been summoned to see the Chief Civil Engineer, Mr C.T. Parker, in his office in Railway House at Wynyard the next day. There was no explanation for the summons at such short notice, which of course left me wondering overnight what I had done (or not done!).

The next morning at the appointed time I fronted up to see the CCE, for what turned out to be a short meeting. The bottom line came very quickly: "Frank, I am appointing you to Deputy Division Engineer, Metropolitan." This meant I would be stationed at Sydenham, to be second in charge of the maintenance of all track, bridges and buildings in the Sydney Metropolitan area.

This appointment to Sydney so early in my Division Engineer career came as a complete surprise, as I had expected to do the rounds of various country offices working my way up the DE hierarchy to more important divisions. I knew that it would come as much more of a shock to my bride of just three months, a country bred young lady whom I had rather rashly promised that we would have at least 10 years in the bush before heading to the "big smoke".

As usual, the Railways had different ideas for my life and on 4 September 1972 I took up at Sydenham, working for the Division Engineer, Ron Christie. While mainly responsible for the maintenance of all the bridges, stations and other structures, I also had wider duties and had to stand in for the Division Engineer, as required. This resulted in more than a few nights and weekends out on the track, just to make life "interesting".

The interview with the CCE was followed up soon after by a letter personally signed by him. While I was not always enamoured by the management practices of the Way & Works Branch, it certainly gave one a



great sense of worth to be given details of my promotion in person by the CCE. Contrast this with later appointments in, say, the Public Transport Commission days, when my letters of appointment were signed by a Personnel Manager (these days a “People & Performance Manager” or other such fancy title, I suppose), a person with whom I had little contact and certainly no professional affinity.

Narrabri was my last country appointment with the Railways, although certainly not my last association with the country rail network. Within 12 months of my appointment to the Metropolitan Division, more changes took place in the Way & Works Branch and I was promoted to the position of Programme Engineer, in charge of the state-wide rerailing (or rail replacement) operations. Thus, the wheel turned again and I resumed my country travels to the length and breadth of NSW. But that, as they say, is another story.

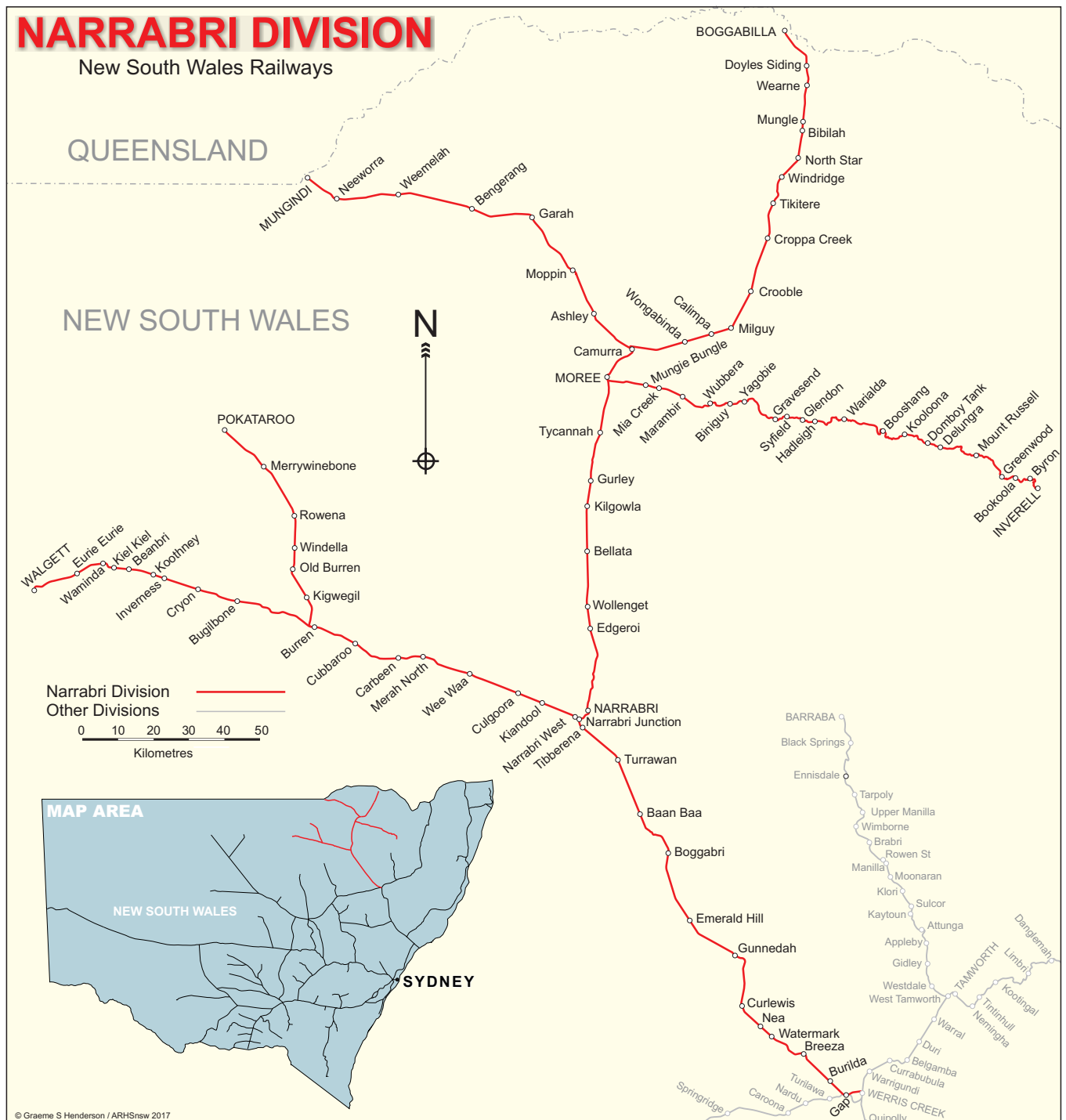
However, I do look back on my Narrabri time with a good

deal of pleasure and satisfaction. At the ripe old age of just 23 to be given responsibility for the safe operation of some 900 km of track, bridges and buildings, with 300 or so staff – this was a challenge that few engineers these days ever get to experience.

## The Public Transport Commission of New South Wales

Coincidentally, the end of my time at Narrabri almost coincided with the demise of the Department of Railways, New South Wales. Some six weeks after I left Narrabri, Commissioner Neal McCusker retired and the Public Transport Commission (PTC) of NSW came into being on Friday 20 October 1972. This ushered in what to some was

one of the worst chapters in NSW rail history—hence my comment in the opening paragraph to Part 1 of these





memories, that the halcyon days of the NSWGR ended on 20 October 1972.

NSW's new PTC was headed up by Chief Commissioner Philip Shirley, who had gained some notoriety in British Rail with the Beeching era cuts. The British Rail focus on cost cutting was continued in New South Wales, to the detriment of the system and infrastructure maintenance.

The PTC certainly promoted a new way of thinking in the railways, with the prime emphasis from the executives changing from 'technical' to 'management'. This rapidly percolated down to the lower levels of the organisation and even to Division Engineers. Before I left Sydney for my first field position in Goulburn, I had planned to continue my studies at the University of NSW and undertake a Master of Engineering Science (Construction Management). However, with the advent of the PTC, I thought this would not be the best way to get ahead and so undertook a Business Studies Degree instead. Thus, thanks to the PTC, I was stuck with six years' part-time study for the BBus, instead of only two years for the Masters course!

Fortunately for me, I only spent a couple of years on maintenance under the PTC but my Division Engineer colleagues certainly had extreme difficulty in safely maintaining their track and structures. This resulted in the 11 Division Engineers sending a letter to the Chief Commissioner on 27 November 1975, unequivocally setting out the problems that the PTC policies were causing and the likely consequences for system safety.

The DEs noted the reduction in maintenance due to: "Staff freezes, non-approval of critical staff submissions, current overtime ban and to a lesser extent, sleeper and ballast supply restrictions". This had led to the situation in some locations where track safety could no longer be guaranteed. The DEs cited recent derailments of passenger trains on the Cooma and Lake Cargelligo Lines but in these, due to: "good fortune, and for no other reason, no injuries occurred."

However, the DEs clearly warned the Chief Commissioner:

It is our duty to ensure that the resources needed for safe track (and bridge) maintenance are clearly defined and that the hazards of deficiencies are fully



Upgraded track at Bugilbone between Burren Junction and Walgett with steel sleepers and new stone ballast in September 2017. FRANK JOHNSON PHOTO

realised beyond this Branch. It is foreseen that if existing policies persist, current depressed maintenance standards will result in a derailment due to short notice track failure and incur an injury or fatality to employee or public. This must not be allowed to happen.

But it did less than 14 months later, when on 18 January 1977, Australia's worst ever rail accident occurred at Granville. The derailment of a commuter train brought down the Bold Street overbridge onto the train, resulting in the loss of 83 lives. On 1 June 1977, a \$200 million five-year track upgrading program was announced by the NSW Government.

The PTC lasted another three years, before its railway functions were taken over by the formation of the State Rail Authority of NSW on 1 July 1980. Since then there have been a multitude of changes in structure, governance and operations of the NSW rail network,

virtually now unrecognisable from the NSWGR that finished in 1972. Working through these changes would be a long and complicated story, so I shall merely look to the Narrabri area as a sample of where we are in 2017.

## The North-West in 2017

Forty-five years after I left Narrabri, it is interesting to reflect on the changes in the intervening period. What has changed? The short answer is, 'Lots!', reflecting the general changes across the NSW rail network. The Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) has taken over the main interstate rail network, together with other major lines in New South Wales. Maintenance and operational control of the rest of the NSW country network has been contracted out to the John Holland Country Rail Network (CRN).

Thus in 2017 responsibility for the former Narrabri Division is now



Holland Country Rail Network (CRN).

Thus in 2017 responsibility for the former Narrabri Division is now divided between the ARTC, which looks after the track from Werris Creek through Moree to North Star on the Boggabilla Line, and John Holland Country Rail Network (CRN) for the remainder. CRN has a depot in Narrabri but not in the old NSWGR Division Engineer's Office, for that burnt down in 2005.

The Division has been somewhat truncated, with the Inverell Line closed altogether, the Pokataroo Line closed to Merrywinebone, and the Walgett Line just west of the silos. This has reduced my original area, taking some 210 kilometres off my original 900 kilometres.

Turning to the passenger train front, NSWGR's once extensive passenger network over all the north-west lines is now but a distant memory. NSW TrainLink now operates a single daily service to Moree, with just one connecting coach service from Narrabri to Burren Junction. However, one can still get to Inverell via a coach service from Tamworth, or even to Walgett, via the XPT to Dubbo and then the coach service to Lightning Ridge, if one is so inclined.

On the freight (or goods) side, the changes have been even greater. Long gone are the traditional goods trains, picking up and dropping off different types of wagons at stations along the various routes. The State Rail Authority's last-ditch attempt to save the parcels and small freight business with TrackFast is also but a distant memory, with all goods sheds and regional distribution centres now closed.

However, there are some positives on the freight side, with the rail transport of bulk commodities such as grain, coal and cotton very much a major business in the north-west. Coal loading loops are now in use at Gunnedah, Boggabri (three loops) and Turrawan, and there is an Australian Wheat Board (AWB) loading loop between Bellata and Gurley.

In line with the move to bulk commodity trains (longer and heavier axle loads), there has also been a commensurate improvement in track standards. Even the line out to Walgett has been upgraded, and is now fully ballasted with steel sleepers. This is a major improvement on the 1970s.

## Acknowledgements

My main acknowledgement for this article is to my wife, Nadia, who very patiently put up with my posting to the rather distant Narrabri. This, of course, was not the beginning nor the end of such travels, for my railway career took me around most of NSW on various work ventures over several decades.

The key role of railway employees' families is often overlooked in biographical material but this should not be the case. Many railway employees were posted to remote locations, worked family-unfriendly shift work and on weekend track possessions, took on relief positions, or worked in migratory gangs right around the former NSWGR system. These days one often hears about "fly in / fly out" mining employees but the Railways had "train in / train out" long, long before the current mining booms.

Our railway employees' families (wife / husband / partner / children / parents) had to put up with a lot in providing support to the employee, while maintaining their family life. The importance of these families should never be underestimated or forgotten.

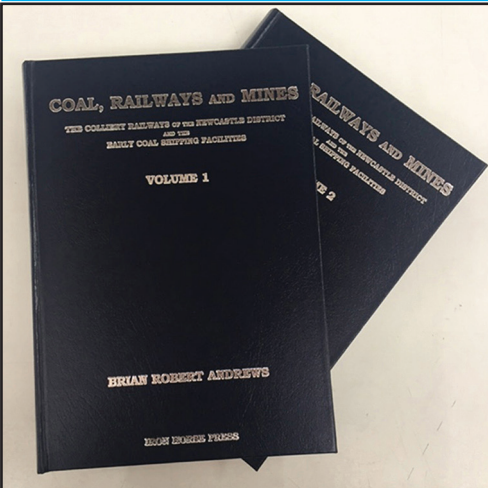
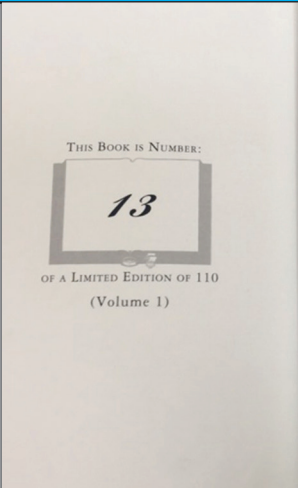
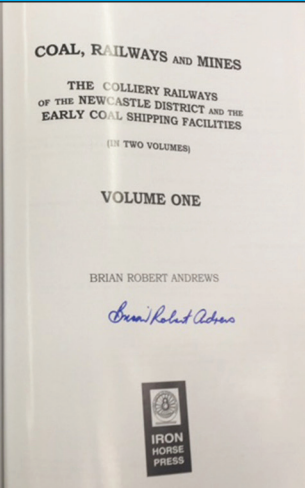
Back to the present, Nadia as the ever consummate teacher-librarian (now retired) also provided brilliant assistance to me in reviewing and proofing this article, no doubt making it a much more readable effort.

My thanks also to Bill Phippen, former ARHSnw Railway Resource Centre Manager, and Alan Logan, former Sales Manager of Plasser Australia, who assisted with material for this article.

## End Notes

1. Track Maintenance in New South Wales, N C Vogan, Chief Civil Engineer, presented at the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, Bangkok, October-November 1964 (Reprinted January, 1967). Mechanised Track Maintenance and Mechanised Relaying, N C Vogan, Chief Civil Engineer, Department of Railways, New South Wales, Way and Works Branch, June, 1962.

## The ARHSnw Railway Bookshop's Pick of the Month

	<p><i>Coal, Railways and Mines: The colliery railways of the Newcastle District &amp; the early coal shipping facilities; Volume 1 and 2 by B R Andrews.</i> <b>**Limited edition each numbered and signed by the author. Leather-bound covers. 1152 pages, \$250**</b></p>		
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These two volumes cover a very large field. Their author, Brian Andrews, very carefully researched original source material and newspaper reports over several years to produce these two excellent definitive volumes. Brian has been involved all his life in the northern coalfields, as well as working in and being associated with the coal industry for over half a century. These books serve as an outstanding historical reminder of what was once there in terms of the collieries and railways of the Northern Coalfields.



# SLOW TRAIN TO GOOMBURRA

Rod Milne



In June 1961, the morning goods train from Allora headed by PB15 class locomotive No. 600, stands at Goomburra's pretty station adorned with Aunt Mary's Baking Powder signage. The cream lorry behind the building has brought in cream for the train to take back to the Allora butter factory. IAN WITHNALL PHOTO

## Overview

The Warwick area of southern Queensland is blessed with some of the most scenic farming country in the nation. The Condamine River has a remarkably beautiful valley centred on Swan Creek and the verdant valleys of Farm and Emu Creeks, while Glengallan Creek runs down through Maryvale and Gladfield. North of there, over a low saddle range is the Dalrymple Creek valley centred on Allora.

The first European to explore the area was Alan Cunningham in 1827, who reported fine grazing and farming land, although it was not until 1840 that Patrick Leslie and his brothers settled in the area and established their run *Goonan*. Like other potential settlers, Leslie had to transport his goods and livestock a considerable distance that could take a number of days.

During the later years of the 1950s, on any Monday and Thursday morning, it was possible to see a small goods train head up the valley towards the morning sun. The locals often referred to it as the cream train because of its principal role, even though it catered for all freight offering. This was the Goomburra goods train.

## Construction

The line to Goomburra was a train service and branch line that lasted less than 50 years. Agricultural development of the valley east of Allora centred on the old historic property *Goomburra*, which was purchased by the Queensland Government for closer settlement, while the 3½-mile

Hendon–Allora Branch was extended another eight miles to encourage farming. It proved impossible for the branch to be constructed as a straight continuation beyond Allora railway station because the town centre occupied this area. The Commissioner's Report on this intended line noted that the route out of Allora was the result of the townspeople opposing taking the line along Warwick Street or shifting the station to Darling Street. Accordingly, the Goomburra line diverged from the station yard at Allora at the Hendon end, forever necessitating outbound trains to Goomburra reversing out of the station first to reach the junction, and inbound reversing in from the junction.

It was an easy construction task, running along the southern side of the creek valley. There were no heavy earthworks, the construction being on soft rich alluvial soils, and only small culverts were needed to allow water from the ridge line to the south to flow down to Dalrymple Creek. Public roads were to be followed, except at 7½ miles where there was to be a half mile deviation to avoid a steep hill. Light 41¼lb/yd rails were used and a station site was provided for every two miles or so, relatively close together. The formation was to be 13ft wide, 2640 sleepers and 880 cubic yards of ballast per mile. There were no creeks, merely one gully, to cross. The line was to be unfenced, although the short section off the road was fenced. The Goomburra extension was as cheap a railway to build as there could be. The Bell branch was cheapest of all QR lines, achieved in part by use of second hand rails. The Commissioner and a Parliamentary Select Committee recommended construction. The plans were approved by parliament on

22nd October 1910, construction commenced in August 1911, and the line was opened on 8th July 1912. The first sod was turned on 2 October 1911 by the Queensland Premier.

Leaving Allora, the new railway initially lay on the southern side of the surveyed road but beyond the site of the first siding, it deviated from it to ascend a low rise, re-joining the Allora–Goomburra Road's northern side. Of the 30 level crossings created between Allora and Goomburra, only five were private occupation type crossings. Many crossings at entrances to private homes existed on the urban section leaving Allora.

Provision was made for the first two stations, **Kital**, aboriginal for 'soldier ant nest', and **Berat**, to be attended by gatekeepers, classified as gates, to be staffed by a station mistress or a porter, with the third station, **Kunda** (aboriginal for 'mountain'), unattended from the very start. The terminus at **Goomburra** was equipped with the usual facilities of the time, including a triangle for turning locomotives. The station was attended by a station master when the opening train proudly headed out from Allora on Friday 21 August 1912

In the papers of the time, it was reported that 2000 persons attended the opening ceremony. It was performed by the Minister for Railways, Mr Paget, and the new branch line was away, though aspirations for the creation of a bountiful farming community were arguably not achieved. Probably for the first and only time, three trains ran to Goomburra that day, the second special of the day being timed to cross the first regular mixed train at the terminus

in the evening. The first and second trains (specials) were scheduled also to be at Goomburra at the same time, so that the little terminus experienced two crossings on its opening day. Another source states that A10 Class 2-4-0 locomotive SW 12 with 12 coaches was required to divide twice on heavy gradients. [Ernie Hills in *Pony Express* July 1974].

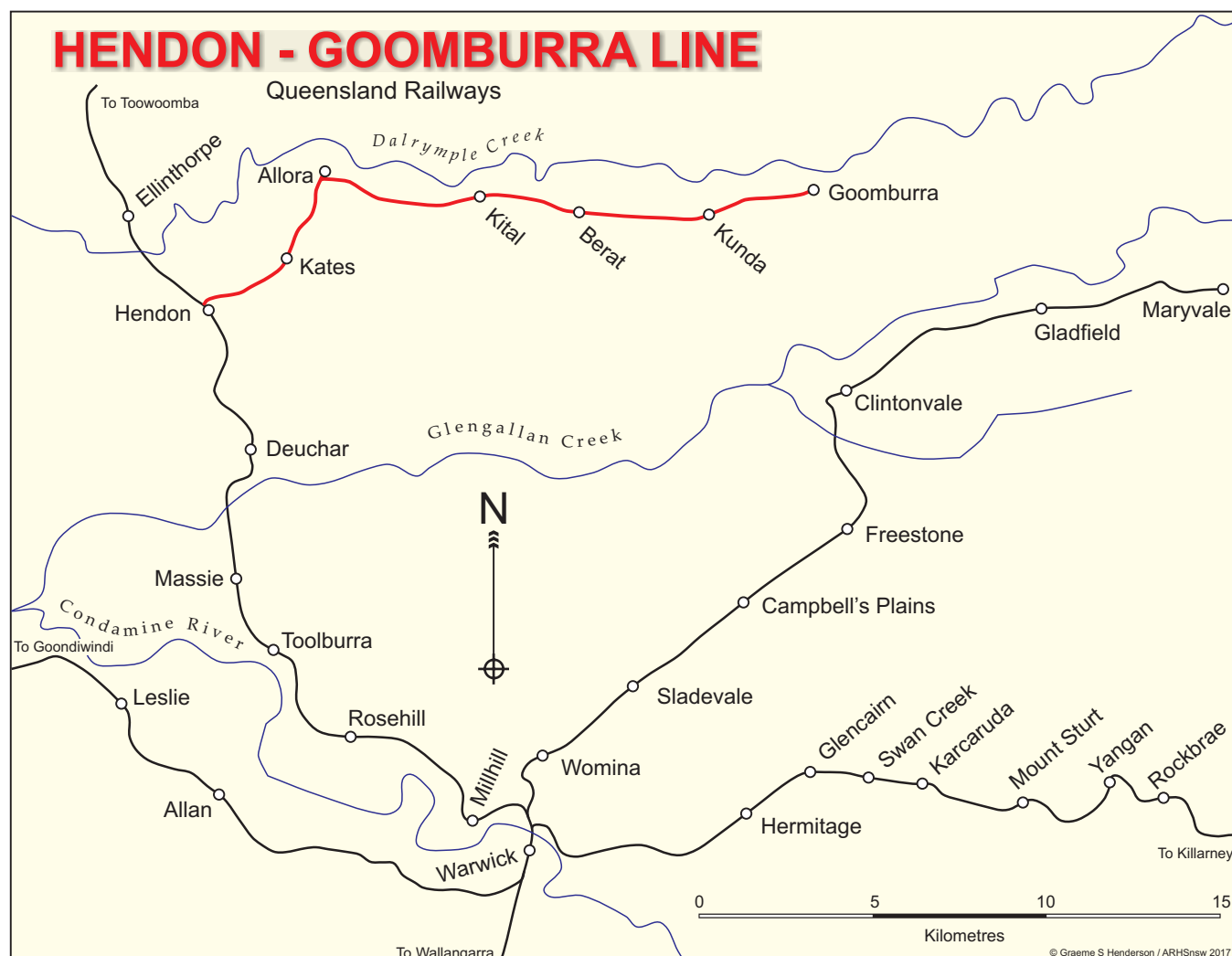
Goomburra was destined to be a quiet terminus. No significant town was spawned at the end of the line because Allora was close by.

## Train services

From opening until February 1917, the locomotive based at Goomburra ran to Hendon and return daily, plus extra trips Hendon to Allora to connect with Southern Line trains, so a driver, fireman, cleaner and guard were based at Goomburra.

After February 1917, the goods train for Goomburra headed out of Allora in the morning, heading east up the valley, while up to February 1917, it had headed into Allora. Leaving Allora station involved a set back from the platform towards the butter factory where the turnout to the branch was. Any passengers unaccustomed to train operations in places such as this were doubtless surprised when the train departed in reverse, but regular riders of course knew of the curious operation of the Goomburra goods.

The load was usually a meagre one, with a guard's van and two louvre box wagons used for conveying cream, together





with the odd parcel and consignment for stations down the line. In more recent grain seasons, empty W class flat wagons went out for loading with bagged wheat at the State Wheat Board grain sheds at Berat and Goomburra, while in the early years pigs were railed from Goomburra once a week. Up until the late 1920s, wagons of oaten and wheaten chaff left the Goomburra extension, it not being unknown for a small siding like Kunda to load up two open wagons with bagged chaff.

After the B12 and B13 class locomotives were replaced by the B15 class 4-6-0 locomotives from 1937, they ran Nos. 101/102 the Goomburra Mixed train. Subsequently, Warwick had a significant allotment of PB15 class 4-6-0 locomotives for use on the Killarney, Goomburra, Amiens and periodically, on the Maryvale line. For the Goomburra line, the load for a PB15 class locomotive outbound was 315 tons and 350 tons inbound from Kital, but the load to Goomburra was 150 tons outbound and 175 tons for the return journey. These locomotives also saw use on the small Goondiwindi day passenger train, as well as banking Hendon to Warwick, Warwick to Dalveen traffic, and double-heading what had been banked to Dalveen on to Wallan-garra. PB15 locomotives 386, 435, 444, 459, 551 and 600 were based at Warwick and doubtless all ran up to Goomburra from time to time. As PB15s and B15 Converted engines were allocated to depots most needing them after overhauls at Ipswich, most of those classes on the two southern divisions were possibly allocated to Warwick at some time. The engines initially based at Goomburra, later reverted to being based at Allora, and they returned to Warwick on an exchange when boiler washouts were due.

Journeys on the Line

The trip out of **Allora** was unusual in that there was quite a lengthy section of street-side running as the grassed track headed east along Darling Street past delightful old Queenslander houses, so the locals were used to the sight and sound of a train rattling past their front gate on the Goomburra run. There was at least one cross street and then the line curved to the south-east, joining the main Warwick Road as it went past the Allora showground. In days gone by, the

annual show was an important event, and it is presumed the train stopped at the showground when required during show days.

This section of the track was the part I recall from my past, as the light track ran along the side of Warwick Road until both road and rail intersected at an unprotected level crossing. In the days the Goomburra train ran past here, the only real protection was a lengthy blast or two from the whistle of the engine which was clearly heard throughout the town. For the station master at Allora, it signified the train was coming back in, or alternatively, it had reached the main road, later the New England Highway, crossing on the way out.

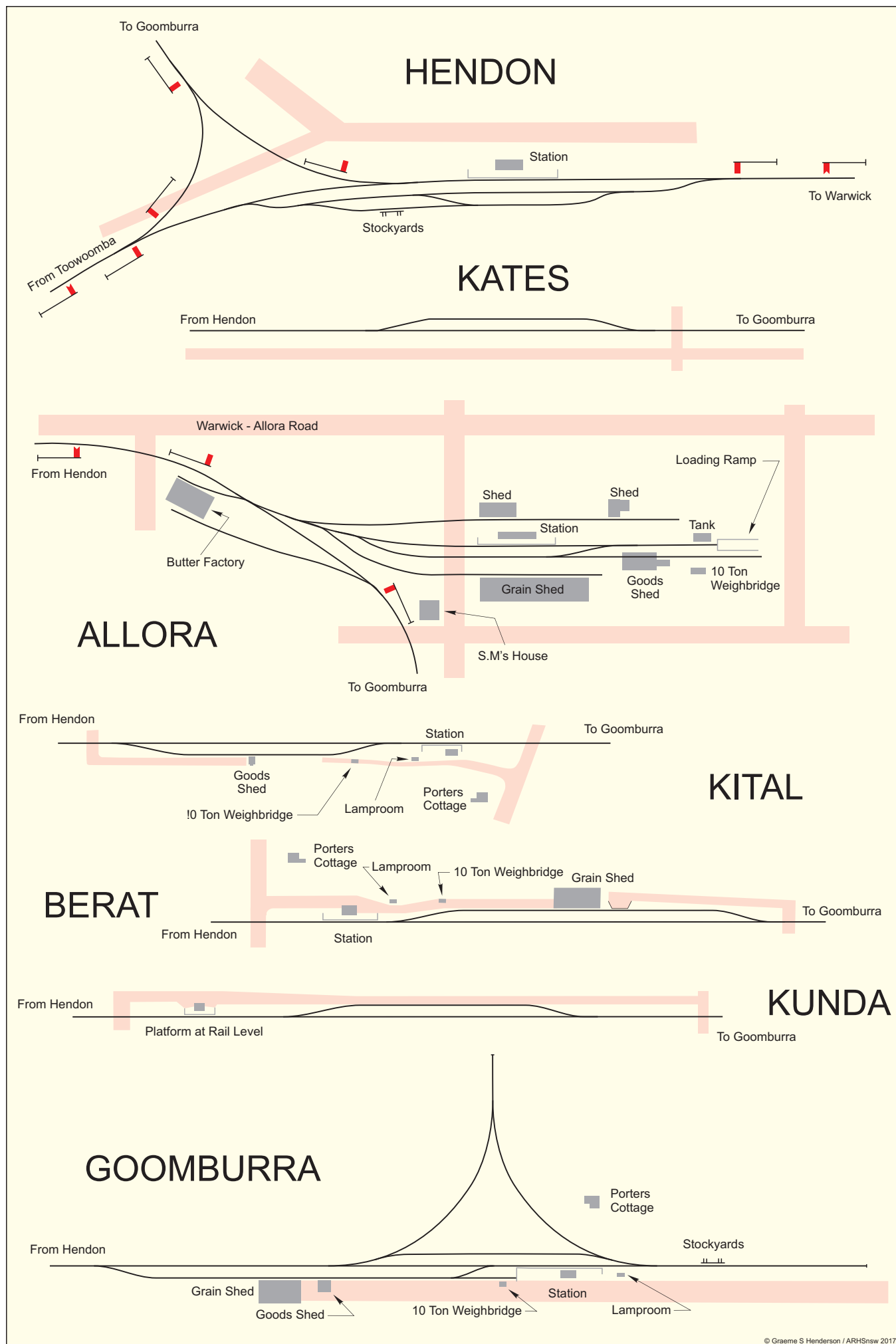
As the main road climbed the hill away from Goomburra, the branch track then veered east up the valley. The soils were rich, producing good crops of wheat and other grains, while wheat and oats were often cut and milled to make chaff.

**Kital** was once an attended station, but its lad porter was withdrawn on 20 April 1925. It initially had a simple lean-to roofed station like Berat, but it was replaced in 1939 by a less ornate shed used primarily for loading cream onto inbound trains and unloading return empty cream cans next outbound trip. A loop siding was provided which periodically accommodated open wagons for loading with bagged grain. On at least one occasion in mid-February 1925, four wagons were loaded with 512 bags of wheat bound for the Markets Siding at Roma Street in Brisbane. Although a permanent grain shed was established at Berat in 1923, Kital retained seasonal bagged grain loading, with the State Wheat Board building a wheat dumping floor on the southern side of the line in late 1932, but this was lifted in 1951. At Kital, the main Allora–Goomburra Road was about a half mile up the hill to the south, but both railway and road slowly converged over

ALLORA-GOOMBURRA BRANCH.							
UP TRAINS.							
Height above High Water Level.	Miles from Hendon.	Stations.		194	196	198	174
				Mixed. Monday Wed. and Fri.	Mixed. Tues. and Thursday.	Mixed.	Mixed.
Feet.	m. ch.			a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.
1503	..	Hendon—OS	.. depart	..	10 50	1 5	2 35
1527	2 7	Kates	.. ..	..	D	..	..
1538	3 49	Allora (W)	.. arrive	..	11 5	D 1 20	D 2 50
		Ditto—OS	.. depart	9 0	..	..	..
1568	6 38	Kital	.. ..	D	..	..	..
1654	8 28	Berat	.. ..	A	..	..	..
1688	10 1	Kunda	.. ..	D	..	..	..
1694	12 4	Goomburra	.. arrive	10 0	..	..	..
For instructions, see page 93.							

ALLORA-GOOMBURRA BRANCH— <i>continued.</i>											
DOWN TRAINS.											
Miles from Goomburra.	Stations.	171		173		175		189		163	
		Mixed.	Mon. Wed. and Fri.	Mixed.	Saturday only.	Mixed.	Tues. and Thur.	Mixed.	Tues. and Thur.	Mixed.	—
m. ch.			a.m.		noon.		a.m.		noon.		p.m.
..	Goomburra—OS	.. depart	10 30		..		..		..		..
2 3	Kunda	.. .. D			..		..		..		..
3 56	Berat	.. .. A			..		..		..		..
5 46	Kital	.. .. D			..		..		..		..
8 35	Allora (W)	.. arrive	11 30		..		..		..		..
	Ditto—OS	.. depart	12 0		12 0		10 0		12 0		1 35
9 77	Kates	.. .. D			D 12 0		D 10 15		D 12 15		D 1 50
12 4	Hendon	.. arrive	12 15		12 15		10 15		12 15		1 50
<p>The speed of trains must not exceed 12 miles per hour. The Fireman will assist the Guard to shunt if required. The Guard will receive and deliver the Train Staff or Ticket at Goomburra. A Train Staff Cabinet has been provided at Allora, and trains may work to and from Allora under Amended Rule 459.</p>											

1930 Hendon-Allora-Goomburra Up and Down timetables.





the next two miles.

Soon, the bagged grain shed at **Berat** appeared in the distance as the train approached the line's main intermediate stop. Berat's name was gained in unusual circumstances. Although there is a town of the same name, Berat is actually a misspelling of the name proposed by the resident engineer in charge of construction, which was 'Beral' meaning a spirit. The L was misread as a T and by the time the error had been noted, the naming process had been finalised with gazettal of Berat as the station name and remained so for the life of the line.

Berat village had a state school once, and there was a PMG agency at the railway station from 1922. A station mistress was posted there until 10 August 1931. The little lean-to roofed station building was located at the western end, right by the main road to Goomburra, and there was a residence for the station mistress and fettler nearby.

Otherwise, there wasn't much else, the simple loop siding serving a side-loading bank with choke blocks at each end. In August 1922, the State Wheat Board called tenders to erect a large open grain shed at Berat for storing bagged wheat for conveyance by rail, this structure being in use by January 1923. This was one of the first of these facilities to be erected in the state, it being common for open wagons to be used in bagged grain traffic. The wartime W Class bogie flat wagons were regularly used in the 1950s. Berat also handled a good quantity of cream traffic bound for the nearby Allora dairy factory.

From here on to the terminus, the train for Goomburra chugged along right beside the main road, in the fenced corridor. The train ran at a suitably sedate speed of 12mph for the entire journey, being passed periodically by the faster road traffic. In this quieter, less rushed time of the post-war 1950s, car usage was fairly limited in this district.

**Kunda** was named after an Aboriginal word meaning 'mountain'. It was a delightful little spot, with an old farmhouse right by the line notable for its magnificent flowering Bougainvillea which ended up in its later uninhabited era overrunning the whole building. There was a wooden shelter shed and a loop siding beyond the shed, right by the road, the latter

being periodically used as late as the 1920s. Both of these were on the northern side of the line between two open level crossings.

The chaff cutters used the siding at Kunda to load bags of oats and wheaten chaff. Mostly it was just one open wagon of bagged chaff per train, though occasionally two were railed from Kunda. This occurred early in July 1923, when two wagons (numbered 4860 and 14755) left Kunda with 295 bags of lucerne straw chaff and wheaten chaff.

Kunda's proximity to Goomburra and Berat in the end resulted in the demise of the siding in 1940, when rails were in short supply during the war. Although the Goomburra train ceased to shunt there, it still stopped there on most trips to handle cream traffic.

East of Kunda was a low bare hill around which both the road and the railway line curved. The locomotive began to do a little work here on both sides as it rose up a gentle rise and then dropped down the other side, the terminus near at hand. As the PB15 trundled down the last straight, the rustic buildings of Goomburra came into sight up the valley. The small buildings of the Goomburra township featured an impressive backdrop of low hills and the distant Main Range beyond.

At **Goomburra**, the first set of points led to the right as the train entered the yard, forming the goods shed siding which also ran past a bagged grain shed erected by the State Wheat Board. Tenders were called for it in August 1922 and it was used in January 1923, the iron and timber for the structure doubtless being delivered by rail. Then came the goods shed before a crossover re-joined the main running line near the end loading ramp and small hip-roofed timber station building. In days gone by, there was another loop siding located on the northern side but it was lifted in 1947 for want of use. It ran between the legs of the triangle, which lasted the full period of operation of the line. The western points were opposite the goods shed, the eastern points being just past the station platform. Beyond these points, the line faded out by the main road in the Dalrymple Creek valley, the cattle and pig yards being sited adjacent to the main line continuation east of the platform. Although Queensland Railways

approved the removal of the goods shed at Goomburra as spare, it simply remained at Goomburra railway station until the end.

Beside the eastern leg of the triangle and opposite the railway station was the railway house, where the station master, later the station mistress, lived. The station master's tenure was short lived as he was replaced by a Second Class station mistress from Friday 1 November 1912. She was usually the wife of the ganger or a member of the fettling gang. Her duties covered regular station work, as well as duties for the Commonwealth Postmaster-General's (PMG) Department. This included telephone exchange and postal work.

There were few passengers requiring assistance, so her duties at Goomburra railway station included issuing consignment notes for cream traffic and dealing with day to day freight consignments. Following withdrawal of the station master, however, Goomburra was regarded as an unattended station for safe working purposes. Rules 229 and 442 applied, and the train crew arranged the safe working.

## Goomburra Rail Traffic

The cream loaded in the metal cans bound for the Allora dairy factory was treated as coaching traffic, being subject to rates equal to those for parcels, but the empty cream cans were usually, but not always, railed back free of charge. Each year, several hundred pounds were collected from the cream consignors. Cream cans were marked with the name of the farmer, though they did occasionally get lost. The Goomburra-Allora cream traffic was a short journey (less than eight miles), so it was difficult for the cans to go too far.

Loaded cream cans were heavy, but not too hard to deal with when there was a shed or raised platform for loading. When full cream cans had to be raised from ground or rail level to the height of the wagon it was a far more demanding challenge.

Wheat was the main grain handled as well as some crop seed. Bagged wheat was loaded in open wagons as well as the post-war W Class flat wagons. Grain on both wagon types was covered with tarpaulins. In later years much of the bagged grain traffic was

destined for Brisbane flour mills, though there were other produce loadings in earlier years. In January 1921, 15 bags of onions were railed out of Goomburra on one train.

Oaten, lucerne and wheat chaff was also dispatched. September 1923 saw 68 bags of lucerne chaff sent out on the train. On Monday 9 August 1948, an extra goods train ran from Allora at 3.30pm to Berat to bring in bagged wheat on open wagons, the section east of Allora that day seeing two trains along with the regular Goomburra goods. This allowed the traffic to be taken to Hendon next morning, a day earlier than otherwise.

The pig yards at Goomburra were somewhat inconveniently located not too far away from the station mistress' house. However, Goomburra only had a small traffic in pigs and calves, which dwindled after the end of the Second World War when petrol rationing was lifted. Usually, MG and L Class four-wheel vans were used to haul pigs which often were railed to the bacon factory at Willowburn on the outskirts of Toowoomba. In the era prior to the 1950s, a number of small FP wooden four-wheel open roofed timber wagons were used for transporting pigs.

On Wednesday 15 December 1942, the train hauled two loaded wagons of livestock from Goomburra. An MG wagon contained pigs for the Willowburn bacon factory, while a four-wheel IC wagon carried cattle for Cambooya just up the main line. Earlier, on Wednesday 4 November 1942, the train left Goomburra with another MG containing pigs for Willowburn.

According to the Commissioner's Reports, in 1951-52, the section beyond Allora earned £470 from parcels and miscellaneous, so the cream was not a high value earner, despite representing the wage of many working class people at the time (the miscellaneous traffic is unknown, but could have included payments by PMG for running the post office, plus mails). There were 3104 tons out plus six horses and 384 pigs, and 106 tons in. In 1959-60, parcels etc, earned £445, there were 3403 tons out but no livestock, and 119 tons in.

During the later history of the line, the goods shed, which was a standard galvanised-iron structure, fell into disuse. In May 1951, Queensland Railways authorised removal of the redundant goods shed. There was a road vehicle or cart weighbridge in the yard behind, which could be used to weigh bags of grain despatched by rail.

Probably because it was only eight miles from Allora, Goomburra never really developed into a township. It had a general store, railway station with post office, church and hall, the state school being a little way out of the village.

Railway termini often gain a hotel because of their strategic location, but this did not happen at Goomburra, in contrast to Haden which gained two pubs. Later on, there were pubs just across the ridge at Gladfield and Maryvale in the next valley.

It must have been a quiet little place for the station mistress to work. Naturally, her busy time was the morning on train days, when the farmers and carriers brought their loaded cream cans in for the train and collected their empty ones off the train. She would have collected her parcels rates and issued the required paperwork, but after the train went back, the village returned to its quiet slumber.

She was, however, the official PMG officer at Goomburra, so for much of the day her duties focused on that work, namely issuing stamps, sorting mail and operating the local telephone exchange. The fact she remained classified as a Second Class station mistress until the very end is more a statement of her busy PMG work than her railway role.

## Incidents

The section between Goomburra and Allora rarely featured a traffic incident, such as a derailment or collision. A significant event occurred on the Allora-Goomburra section in 1924, as documented by newspaper coverage. This was a wet year, with a flow of six inches of flood water from Dalrymple Creek inundating the track at Goomburra in January. Repairs were made and it was expected that a train would be able to reach Goomburra on the afternoon of Monday 9 January 1924. That restoration proved to be short lived.

On Sunday 10 February 1924, the track east of Berat was again submerged in mud, and all trains were promptly terminated at Berat. It was stated that trains were not likely to be able to go on to Goomburra until the Thursday. One locomotive's cowcatcher was used as a 'snowplough' for mud and featured in coverage in one of the Brisbane papers. On Saturday 23 February 1924, it was reported that the line was still blocked by flood damage, with trains not able to operate beyond Berat.



Clearing mud from the track west of Kunda in 1916. Inundation of the line by floods was a regular occurrence at this time.

THE QUEENSLANDER, 1916



## ALLORA-GOOMBURRA BRANCH.

Height above Mean Sea Level.	Miles from Brisbane Central.	Miles from Hendon.	DOWN TRAINS.			101	105	—	—
			Stations.			Goods. Mon. and Thur.	Wed. only.		
Feet.	m. ch.	m. ch.				a.m.	a.m.		
1492	159 22	14 38	Warwick	..	dep	*6 35 <sup>21</sup>	11 10	..	..
1506	144 64	..	Hendon	..	arr	7 22 <sup>12</sup>	11 59	..	..
..	..	..	Ditto-OS	..	dep	7 50	12 25	..	..
1539	148 33	3 49	Allora (W)	..	arr	8 8	m12 43	..	..
..	..	..	Ditto-OS	..	dep	8 35	..	..	..
1573	151 22	6 38	Kital	..	..	..	..	..	..
1659	153 12	8 28	Berat	..	..	..	..	..	..
1693	154 65	10 1	Kunda	..	..	..	..	..	..
1699	156 68	12 4	Goomburra	..	arr	m9 35	..	..	..
							p.m.		

Miles from Goomburra.	UP TRAINS.			102	106	—	—	—	—
	Stations.			Goods. Mon. and Thur.	Goods. Wed. only.				
m. ch.				a.m.	p.m.				
..	Goomburra-OS	..	dep	10 10	..	..	..	..	..
2 3	Kunda	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
3 56	Berat	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
5 46	Kital	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
8 35	Allora (W)	..	arr	11 10	..	..	..	..	..
..	Ditto-OS	..	dep	11 55	1 50	..	..	..	..
12 4	Hendon	..	arr	12 13	2 8	..	..	..	..
..	Ditto	..	dep	*12 50 <sup>52</sup>	*2 25 <sup>54</sup>	..	..	..	..
26 42	Warwick	..	arr	1 40	3 15	..	..	..	..
				p.m.					

The speed of trains must not exceed 12 miles per hour.

The Fireman will assist the Guard to shunt if required.

The Guard will receive and deliver the Train Staff or Ticket at Goomburra.

A Train Staff Cabinet has been provided at Allora, and trains may arrive at and depart from Allora under Rule 442.

Telephone communication is available between Allora and Goomburra.

Van with passenger accommodation must be provided for 101 and 105 Down.

Nos. 101 Down, 102 and 106 Up will have passenger accommodation attached but are liable to cancellation or alteration without notice.

No. 102 Up will connect with 37 Down at Hendon.

Loading for Allora Branch and Warwick road wagon arriving ex Brisbane 640 or 644 must be despatched from Toowoomba by 36 Saturday, 652 Wednesday and Thursday.

No. 549 Down Wednesdays will attach loading reduced off 106 at Hendon.

For times between Toowoomba and Warwick see pages 20 to 30.

On Monday 26 February 1951, there was a strike by railway workers in the South-Western Division which saw broad-scale cancellation of rail services beyond Toowoomba. Only four trains ran in the entire division that day, one of them being the Goomburra 'cream train', probably worked by the Allora crew knowing full well the cream would go off if not collected. The other three trains run were the Willowburn workers' train, a goods train on the Injune branch, and a rail motor in from Maryvale, perhaps also conveying cream.

## Changing fortunes

The Goomburra train initially ran with a Goomburra based crew as a daily mixed train, but it declined to three days a week running during the First World War era and for the following years. The crew for the branch was located at Goomburra, with the train running to and from Goomburra every weekday by 1920.

Special trains augmented the regular Goomburra train. It was common for a train to run out to Berat on a day when trans did not normally run, particularly if there was bagged wheat traffic offering from the State Wheat Board. On occasions, the Berat wheat shed loaded more grain than the one at the terminus.

When the line was new, excursion trains ran to Goomburra. In particular, Queensland Railways ran what it described as 'Wheat Belt Excursions'. Killarney was a common destination, but Goomburra suffered because of the lack of a hotel at the terminus to serve meals, so there were few trips there in the days before cars became dominant in the 1920s.

Occasional excursion trains ran from the valley to the city. A proposed excursion train departing Goomburra at 4.00am to take school children to Sandgate in Brisbane was cancelled before it ran because the journey was judged to be too long for young children. Perhaps that was the last hoorah for excursion trains at Goomburra!

Between Allora and Goomburra, passenger traffic was never particularly brisk, barely warranting a mixed train. Thereafter it was simply a goods train, but, as with most rural goods trains in Queensland, there was provision for

### The QR July 1960 timetable for the Allora-Goomburra branch line.

Four years later, floods and rain again struck the Dalrymple Creek valley at much the same time as the 1924 event. It was reported that six inches of water covered much of the track beyond Allora, with the Allora-Goomburra train cancelled on Friday 17 February 1928. Restoring the railway was again a messy business involving considerable work with shovels removing the black dirt from the track.

Other weather damage also occurred, notably on Sunday 11 January 1920, when a strong wind partially unroofed

the goods shed at Goomburra. This district is susceptible to savage thunderstorms, often with strong winds embedded within them.

Otherwise, the most likely location for any incidents in traffic was the section along the side of Darling Street in the town of Allora and out past the showgrounds to the level crossing with the main road. Despite the traffic on this road and the presence of these unprotected crossings, no major collisions between cars and trains have been recorded.



QR BB18 1/4 Class 4-6-2 locomotive No. 1079 at the then Allora terminus with an ARHS Queensland tour train on 27 October 1973.  
A GRUNBACH PHOTO, ARHSNSW RAILWAY RESOURCE CENTRE, 207511

passengers to ride on the train if needed, though the train's running was always subject to alteration or cancellation without notice. Significantly, there was no outward same-day connection from big centres beyond Allora, even when there was a daily train service into Allora.

For a brief period at the very end, twice-a-week running for the Goomburra goods was tried. From 30 April 1956, the running declined to a Monday and Thursday frequency, but the old Monday, Wednesday and Friday running was reinstated from 31 August 1959. Presumably, this was done because the cream loaders suffered from the reduced service. From 1 April 1960, the twice weekly running on Monday and Thursday was resumed, but by then, the closure of the branch beyond Allora was in mind, and this took effect from 1 July 1961.

## Closure

It is a pity in a way that the line did not last until its jubilee in 1962, but it did well to outlast the Maryvale Branch in the next valley which ceased to operate from 1 November

1960. The last operating day for the Queensland Railways at Goomburra was Friday 30 June 1961. While the normal running day was Thursday, when the cream cans were taken into Allora by No. 102 Goods from Goomburra, perhaps closure was deferred until the Friday. The 5.8km line from Hendon to Allora closed on the 21 April 1993.

A list of remaining assets on the Goomburra Branch was duly made once the last train had run, these including stations at Berat and Goomburra, cream sheds at Kital and Kunda, and eight sets of points from the yards at Berat and Goomburra, together with the junction turnout at Allora. Two railway houses were also available at these locations, the Goomburra one remaining *in situ* for other occupiers long after the last train ran.

## Acknowledgement

Thanks are expressed to John Knowles for his detailed review of the text for this article and to Graeme Henderson for the line map and station diagrams that illustrate this article.



# STEAM WORKING IN THE TEMORA DISTRICT, 1962 to 1969

## Col Gilbertson

This essay coincides with the launch of Neville Pollard's publication *Crown Lands and Closer Settlement* at Temora on Saturday 17 March 2018. That weekend is also 50 years since this Society's Bethungra, Burcher and Blayney weekend tour, which was worked by 3324 from Cootamundra to Temora and then by branchline locomotive 3016 to Burcher and return on Saturday 16 March 1968. Part 1 of the essay looks at the effect that dieselisation had in 1962, together with subsequent changes and an overview of train operations in the Temora area during 1967–1968. Part 2 will appear in the April 2018 *Australian Railway History*.

## Introduction of 48 class Diesel Electric Locomotives

During 1960–61, there were major changes to Southern branch line workings. Following the allocation of ten 48 class branch line units, 4821–4830, which had been ordered in March 1960, to Goulburn, the final 15 of the first batch 4831–4845 ordered in January 1961, were allocated to Junee between August 1961 and March 1962. This resulted in dieselisation of the lower southern branch lines to Tumbarumba, Holbrook, Corowa, Rand, Oaklands and Kywong; as well as the South-West line to Hay and the lines to Tocumwal, Griffith and Roto, with effect from 11 February 1962.

Out of Cootamundra, the branches to Tumut and Batlow, together with the main trunk line to Temora and Lake Cargelligo were fully dieselised, as were most trains on the Temora–Griffith line.

The three Branch lines to Rankins Springs, Burcher and Naradhan remained steam worked, because the trains and crews remained overnight at the termini and the 48 class were considered too valuable to leave unused for this length of time.

## Subsequent Changes

In a surprise move, from 2 December 1963 steam was restored to the Temora to Griffith passenger trains (which connected with the *Temora Mail* on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays) and the afternoon train from Cootamundra to Temora (No. 33) that connected with the Down Riverina Express on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It was stated at the time that these arrangements allowed for better utilisation of 48 class units on wheat traffic.

Introduction of a new timetable on 21 June 1964 saw steam eliminated from all main line running beyond Goulburn. 3809 worked the last steam-hauled No. 6 *Temora Mail* from Cootamundra on Saturday 20 June. The new timetable also saw the demise of the *Temora Mail* as a separate train, except for Sunday nights out of Sydney, and the *South-West Mail* was renamed the *South Mail*.

## Operations Overview

Locomotives on allotment to Temora (Depot No. 32) as at 1 January 1967 were 3014, 3036, 3047 and 3088, with 3056 on loan from Junee; 3352 and 5032 were also allotted there, but were on loan to Narrandera (3352) and Junee (5032).

All services to Lake Cargelligo, together with some short-workings to Wyalong Central were tabled to be

worked by 48 class units, while the three branch lines to Rankins Springs, Burcher and Naradhan were still steam worked. The 30Ts were all fitted with bogie tenders, as the turntables at Griffith, the three Branch line termini and Wyalong were 60 feet in length.

The Temora–Griffith passenger trains, Nos 91 and 92, connecting with the *Temora Mail* on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, were also steam worked. All goods services on this line were worked by 48 class locos.

Mondays and Fridays were the two very busy mornings at Temora. On Mondays, No 5 *Temora Mail* was scheduled to arrive at 6.13am. On arrival at Temora, the train was broken up, with a CS and EHO to Griffith (No. 91) at 6.37am and a CR and EHO to Lake Cargelligo as No. 25 at 6.47am, worked by the 48 off No. 5.

On Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays No. 5, a connection off the *South Mail*, arrived at 8.04am, with the connecting services to Griffith at 8.37am and Lake Cargelligo at 8.47am. On Fridays, two goods trains with passenger accommodation ran, No. 81 to Rankins Springs at 8.50am and No. 89 to Naradhan at 9.10am (returning as No 90 the following day). So, there were goods trains to Rankins Springs on both Mondays and Fridays.

A CPH rail motor ran from Temora to Rankins Springs on Friday evenings, as No 35, an extension of the connection off the Down *Riverina Express* and departed in advance of the goods on Saturdays, for Temora and Cootamundra. The CPH ran to West Wyalong on Mondays and Wednesdays, returning the following morning, as No 34. On Saturdays, it returned to Temora as No 26 at 7.10pm to connect with No. 6 *Temora Mail*, which departed at 9.14pm, after connecting with No. 26 from Lake Cargelligo and No. 92 from Griffith.

Steam working from Temora to Griffith ceased on 30 October 1967, after two-car diesel unit 604/704 was sent to Temora the previous week for crew training. 3014 was withdrawn in mid-October due to poor mechanical condition, but there were still four other 30Ts based there. The two-car diesel operated to Griffith on Mondays and Saturdays and to Lake Cargelligo on Wednesdays and Fridays. The Griffith passenger remained loco-hauled on Wednesdays and Fridays, but was now worked by the 48 class off the *Temora Mail*.

## Demise of Steam Working

Introduction of a new timetable on 5 May 1968 saw the demise of the *Temora Mail* as a through service. Passengers were required to change trains at Cootamundra into the two-car diesel unit 604/704, which now ran as No. 91 to Griffith on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursday and Saturdays and as No. 25 to Lake Cargelligo on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Locos on allotment to Temora as at 1 January 1968 were 3036, 3065 and 3088, with 3016 on loan from Cowra and 3324 from Junee. 3036 was withdrawn from service the next day and during March, the number of steam locos at Temora was reduced from four to two, namely 3065 and 3088. Ironically, 3016 and 3324 were the two locos used on the Cootamundra–Burcher leg of the ARHS weekend tour, on Saturday 16 March 1968.

**To be continued.**



During the changeover period from steam to diesel on the south western branch lines, 4-6-0 3036 rolls up the Temora yard passing 48 class diesel locomotive 4846 heading the two-car consist on Train No. 25 for Lake Cargelligo. 3036 will attach to the two carriages of No. 91 Griffith passenger and precede No. 25 out of town. Three weeks after this photo, steam working from Temora to Griffith came to an end. COL GILBERTSON PHOTO

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