

BUNDABERG FOWLER LOCOMOTIVES

By Lynn Zelmer



Nipper (BFC 3 of 1952, 0-4-2T) and Dobbin (BFC 6 of 1952, 0-6-2T) double head into Qunaba Mill with a full rake of cane bins, 1977. Ross Driver photo

Queensland's sugar mills were still looking for steam locomotives in the post World War II period, regardless of the dieselisation occurring in other parts of the country. The Bundaberg Foundry (BFC) constructed eight side-tank locomotives under license from the UK in 1952 and 1953. Patterned after the John Fowler & Co (Leeds) locomotives last supplied from the UK in 1935, they were primarily coal burning and employed welded rather than riveted side tanks, roller bearings and other modern improvements.

All were 20 ton 0-6-2Ts except for BFC 3, a 16 ton 0-4-2T and had reasonably long working lives. They worked in the Queensland cane fields for roughly twenty-five years until the last three locos being withdrawn in 1979. All still exist, although not all are operational.

BFC 1 worked all of its life in the Bundaberg area and is currently at the Australian Sugar Cane Railway (ASCR), Bundaberg, awaiting preservation. BFC 2 worked in the Mossman area and continues to operate on the Bally Hooley tourist railway in Mossman. BFC 3 started its working life at Innisfail, then moved to the Bundaberg area and is now one of two steam locomotives operating on the Australian Sugar Cane Railway.

BFC 4 worked at the Bingera Mill before moving to tourist operations in NSW, and is currently being restored privately in Victoria. BFC 5 worked in the Mackay area before moving to the Australian Narrow Gauge Railway Museum Society (ANGRMS) and is currently in out-of-service for major maintenance at Woodford, Queensland. It has operated during Nambour's Sugar festival sev-

eral times since 1997 and in 2000 travelled around Queensland during filming for a TV special.

BFC 6 operated in the Bundaberg area before being acquired by the Mossman Mill for tourist train duties, where it continues to operate with the Bally Hooley Steam Railway. BFC 7 operated in the Bundaberg area before being donated to a Bundaberg heritage operation. It subsequently moved to Victoria and operates on the Coal Creek Tramway. BFC 8 worked at the Proserpine Mill before being put on public display in the area. It subsequently was acquired for private restoration and remains in Queensland.

Queensland's sugar cane railway modellers work in a variety of scale/gauge combinations but the recent worldwide popularity of On30 has led to the introduction of a quality model of the Bundaberg Fowler. Marketed by ANGRMS and Berg's Hobbies, the RJ Models kit is aimed at the advanced modeller. Fortunately, there are a number of professional model builders able to assemble the kit for those of us, like myself, who lack the required tools and skills. As well, an HOn30 or 009 white metal and brass kit using a Bachmann mechanism was marketed by Colonial Model Railways and may still be available on the second hand market.

Scratch building an O-16.5, On30 or HOn30/009 representation of a Bundaberg Fowler, using a commercial mechanism, is likely no harder than building one of the more accurate kits. Both Bob Dow and Rob Nesbitt have provided basic instructions for a 009 Fowler-type loco on the web, while Steve Malone has built an excellent 16mm scale model of 'Petrie', an 0-4-2T Leeds Fowler.

Modelling a specific locomotive requires access to photographs specific to an era or mill as the locos appeared in a variety of liveries over the years, giving the modeller lots of options. Bright colours were common in the 1970s, although the restored locomotives tend to be more sedate with black, red or gold lining.

Acknowledgements

The genesis of this article was a 2001 presentation by Ken McHugh on the disposition of all the Bundaberg Fowler locomotives and includes information from Greg Stephenson, John Browning, Jim Fainges, Ross Driver and Brian Wilson. Additional information can be found on the CaneSIG web site (www.zelmeroz.com/CaneSIG).

This is hopefully the first of many articles for modellers of sugar cane railways, particularly the Queensland 610 mm gauge lines. The articles, a mix of historical and current sugar cane railway or heritage information, as well as modelling tips, will have input from a number of modellers and railfans and should encourage me to expand my modelling skills. —

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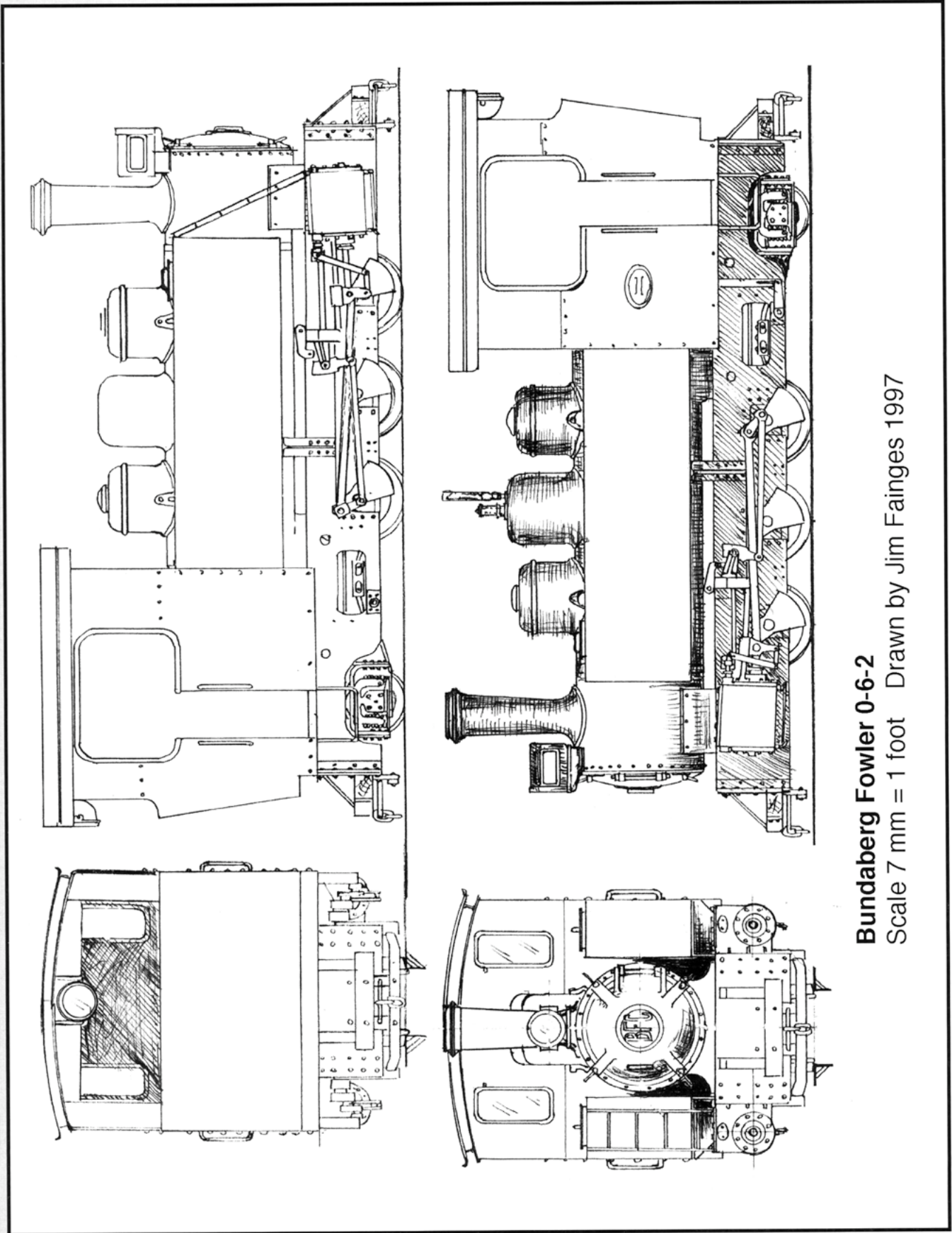


ABOVE: BFC Fowler 0-6-2T kit from RJ Models, marketed by ANGRMS and Berg Hobbies. This model was professionally assembled and painted by The Model Works Australia. It represents the locomotive as it might have appeared in the 1970s, but with a straight stack, rather than the more common balloon stack. Lynn Zelmer photo.



BFC 3 (1952, 0-4-2T) pulling a string of passenger carriages on the Australian Sugar Cane Railway, Bundaberg, 2004. Brian Wilson photo.

BELOW: A BFC Fowler 0-6-2T drawn by Jim Fainges using photographs and field dimensions from BFC 5 at ANGRMS, Woodford.



Bundaberg Fowler 0-6-2
Scale 7 mm = 1 foot Drawn by Jim Fainges 1997