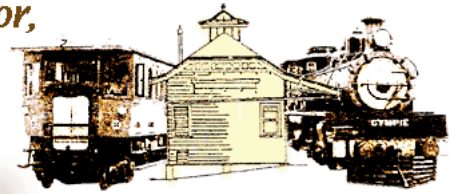


Queensland's Pagoda Roof Stations

Adapted by A C Lynn Zelmer, CaneSIG Coordinator,
from clinic notes provided by Jim Hutchinson

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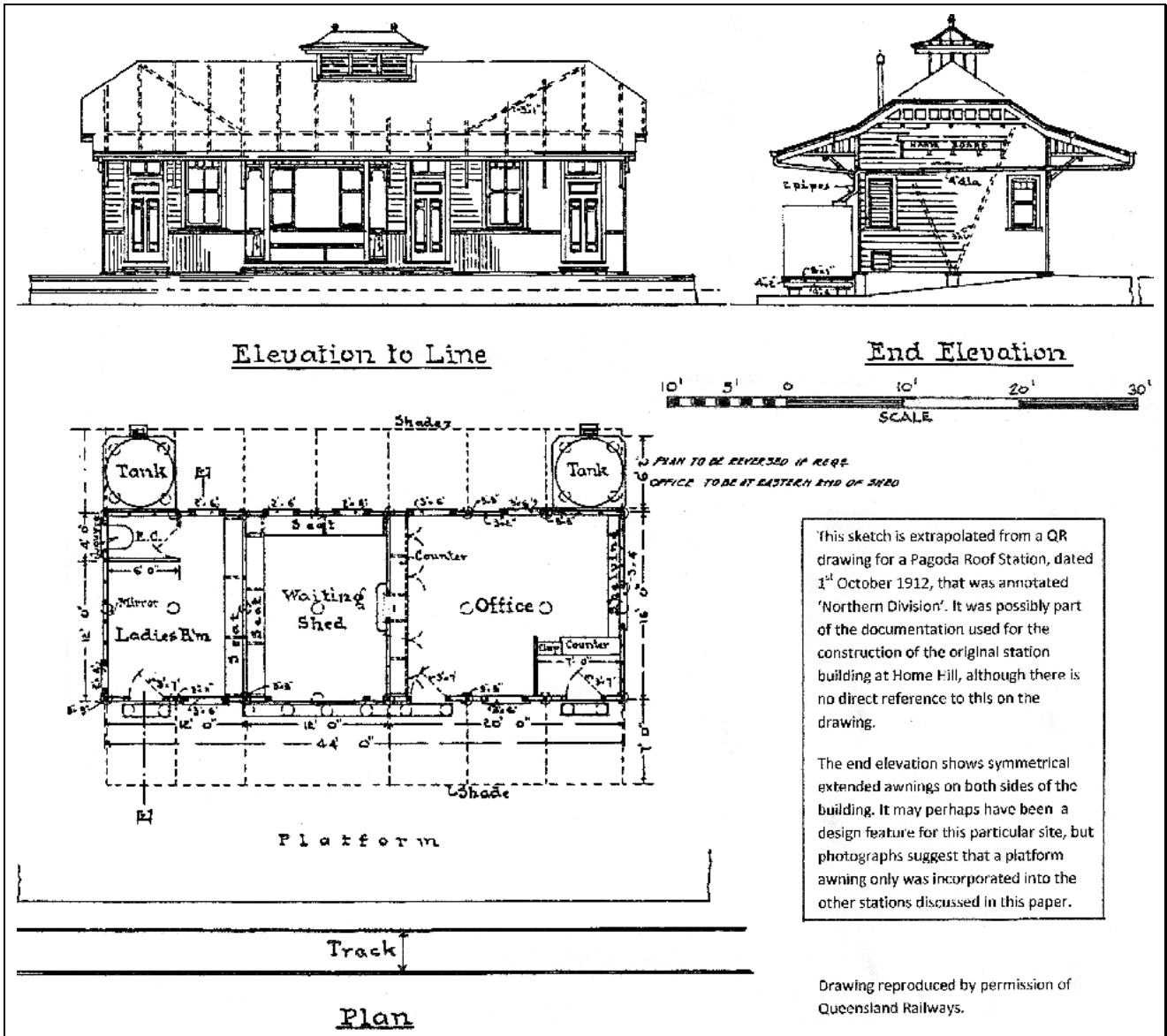
Introduction

The station building outline that forms part of the logo for the 2008 Modelling the Railways of Queensland Convention (see head image above) was derived from a Queensland Railways drawing for a standard class station designed in the early years of the last century. Only a few were ever erected to this design. In recognition of 2008 Convention theme, 'Uniquely Queensland', I included a brief history of the stations as a supplement to the 2008 Convention Book.

Queensland's standard timber station buildings, whilst acknowledging vernacular 'timber and tin'

principles, were in the main utilitarian structures with modest architectural features. One of the more appealing designs, however, and arguably the most aesthetically adventurous of its time and type, was the so-called Pagoda Roof style.

The early years of the twentieth century saw a considerable expansion of Queensland's rail network, encompassing ongoing extensions to main routes as well as the completion of a number of branch lines. However with large distances being traversed to offer services to a relatively small population base, encom-



passing ongoing extensions to main routes as well as the completion of a number of branch lines. However with large distances being traversed to offer services to a relatively small population base, financial considerations determined that allied infrastructure such as station buildings remained reasonably austere, and any architectural enhancement was necessarily of a minor nature!

An exception was the 'Pagoda Roof' design, which was arguably one of the most interesting of all QR's standard timber stations in both its form and detailing.

An Overview

In plan the building comprised the usual accommodation of Office, Waiting Shed (Queensland Railways terminology) and separate Ladies' Room with earth closet (some later upgraded to WCs) - a layout that was standard practice for many of the smaller station designs. Its overall appearance, however, was enhanced by a double-pitched hipped-gable roof capped with a prominent ventilation tower, together with some timber joinery details that were not provided on most other standard stations.

On an original drawing dated 1st October 1912 (see previous page) there is no hint that this design was considered to be of any special significance - the title simply refers to it as a SHELTER SHED, OFFICE, ETC.: 44' x 16'. An addendum at the top of the drawing does include the notation 'A CLASS', but there were other stations of similar classification, size and importance that were far more modest design-wise.

Station buildings are an important interface between a railway and the public it serves, both visually and functionally, and one may speculate that this particular style was selected to symbolise the perceived importance and prestige of the then rapidly expanding rail network, one that promised potential economic growth and better travelling facilities to new areas an ambition that sadly was not always realized and sometimes faded within just a few years!

It may be of interest to note that all of the buildings identified here were situated at termini, either permanent or temporary. Brooloo, Cooyar, Dirranbandi, Kilcoy and Yarraman were all located at the end of their respective branch lines, while Home Hill and Meandarra were temporary terminus stations before their lines were ultimately extended.

The Stations

My research has found eight buildings that were based on this design, although there may have been others - further information would be welcome. Five of them were opened in one year - 1913. A very brief history of each is given below.

Cooyar, opened on 28th April 1913, was the terminus of a branch that ran almost 39 miles north

from Oakey, west of Toowoomba on the Darling Downs. Like many other short branches it proved to be unprofitable and the station eventually closed on 1st May 1964 when the line was truncated to Acland.

Yarraman, terminus of the Brisbane Valley Branch, opened on 1st May 1913. Despite income exceeding expenditure in the first year of operation the line was never again profitable, although regular services to Yarraman continued until the late 1980's. For some time after the branch's closure the building was utilised as a freight depot for road transport. It was eventually relocated to the town's Heritage Centre where it has been carefully restored by members of the local history group.

On 21st May 1913 the South Western Line was opened to **Dirranbandi**. At the time of writing it remains the terminus despite threats to close the final section of this line. Perhaps best remembered as the destination for Australia's last designated (and some what idiosyncratic) 'Mail Train', in 2008 the station continues to be used for general freight services.

Part of the then fragmented North Coast Line reached **Home Hill** on 3rd July 1913, although the final rail link between Brisbane and Cairns was not completed until December 1924. Home Hill continues to provide freight and passenger services. It appears to have been the only pagoda roof station erected in the state's north, but subsequent alterations and additions have obliterated much of its original form.

Kilcoy opened on 22nd December 1913 and was the terminus of this 34.5 mile branch from Caboolture (on the North Coast line) until its closure on 1st July 1964, when the track was truncated to Wamuran (purportedly to avoid the cost of raising part of the formation above the rising water level of an enlarged Somerset Dam). The station building was subsequently relocated to a private property where it has been sympathetically restored and maintained.

Brooloo, which opened on 30th April 1915, was the terminus of the Mary Valley branch, nowadays home to the preserved 'Mary Valley Heritage Railway'. Although it was provided with adequate facilities for handling goods and passengers, Brooloo itself was never a major contributor to the viability of the branch. The station building was removed in 1965, being replaced by a small shed, and five years later the railmotor service was terminated. The branch was officially closed beyond Melawondi on 1st January 1994, by which time the only remaining visible infrastructure at Brooloo was a name-board and the remains of the turntable pit.

On 3rd August 1915 the North Coast Line was opened to **Kunwarara**, located 74 kilometres north of Rockhampton. Like Home Hill, it became a 'temporary terminus' on this fragmented route until the next section was opened to Marlborough almost nineteen months later on 31st March 1917. The building was removed to Barcaldine Workers'

Heritage Centre where it has been restored and placed on display, being re-named 'Artesia'.

The remaining station based generally on this outline, albeit with some design modifications and lacking some of the finer detail, is located at **Meandarra**. Opened on 2nd July 1927, it remained a temporary terminus for this branch from Dalby until the track was extended to Glenmorgan some four years later. This building remains in use and at the time of writing

seems to have become the unofficial terminus once again, with the track beyond being 'unavailable'.

Opened in 1927, Meandarra appears to be the last of the pagoda roof stations to be erected. Whilst retaining many features of the original design, it lacked the roof ventilator and gable infill embellishment. Examination of the lineside elevation suggests that the building is also longer than the earlier standard design.

Photographs



Cooyar Station, as it appeared on 7 March 1964, with Railmotor RM 63 and trailer PL81. John Armstrong photo.



Yarraman station still looked like a railway building when photographed in 1989, a few months after it had seen its last train. Most of Yarraman's yard infrastructure was still in place at this time (and the hanging baskets were still being tended) although the building was by then being used as a road freight depot. At some stage during or after the 1960's the passenger waiting area had been enclosed, presumably to provide additional storage space.



Although its outline is that of a pagoda roof station, **Dirranbandi** lacked some of the detailed treatment of the original standard design, including the gable infill joinery and louvres on the ventilation tower. The arrangement of the platform wall elevation is also different. Photo 1996.



The original fabric of **Home Hill** station is almost hidden behind the platform awning and other later additions in this 1996 photo.



Kilcoy station was relocated to a private property following closure of the branch in 1964. It has since been carefully restored to its original condition, and apart from a new colour scheme it is arguably the only building that most faithfully retains the major characteristics of an original pagoda roof type design. Photo November 2005.



Two views of **Brooloo** station and yard (above and next page) photographed before removal of the station building in 1965. Both John Armstrong photos.



Brooloo station and yard photographed before removal of the station building in 1965. John Armstrong photo.



The ex-**Kunwarara** building is an excellent example of a pagoda-roof station, having been restored to original condition when relocated at the Barcaldine Workers' Heritage Centre. Photo October 1996.



Meandarra Station as photographed in 1996.

Epilogue

With the exception of Home Hill and Kunwarara these stations were located in the south and south-east of the state. The reason for this is unclear, although possibly it was considered that this particular design was less appropriate for the state's warmer and wetter areas. Certainly Home Hill received additions that were not sympathetic to the original architectural style, maybe in response to climate or maybe, being located on the main northern line, it had become much busier than its southern cousins and needed to be modified to cope with the additional traffic.

Not all of the buildings were identical. Photographic records indicate that Cooyar, Kilcoy and Brooloo retained the original design features right up to their closure. Yarraman appears to have remained untouched until, in its later years, the passenger waiting area was enclosed. The appearance of Home Hill has been changed considerably, as mentioned above, whilst Dirranbandi and Meandarra were modified (either as built or subsequently altered) as shown in the accompanying photos.

In the years immediately following the First World War severe financial constraints curtailed railway (and other public works) spending, with several proposed and approved schemes being shelved. The 1929 Depression exacerbated this situation. The fiscal limitations thus imposed on railway development during these years ensured that new buildings would of necessity be functional but simple in appearance, and by the time the economy had recovered from the burden of the Second World War, quite new and different design approaches were

being implemented to keep up with the needs of a new and different railway era.

References

Kerr, John (1990). *Triumph of Narrow Gauge: A history of Queensland Railways*, Boolarong Publications.

Acknowledgements

Adapted, with permission, from Jim Hutchinson's clinic notes for the 2008 Modelling the Railways of Queensland Convention. Jim indicates that the paper was originally written as the introduction for a modelling article, *which may yet eventuate one day!*

The author and adapter/editor are most grateful for assistance and information provided by the following people: John Armstrong, John Newell, David Mewes, Peter Jones, John Carroll (QR) and the Yarraman Heritage Museum volunteers.