



Historical Notes: Mossman District/Mossman Central Mill

From the Ted Ward Collection

Mossman is the most northerly sugar district, situated 1100 miles north of Brisbane.

A plantation and mill existed in the district in 1884 known as Brie Brie, on or near the farm now owned by Senator Crawford.

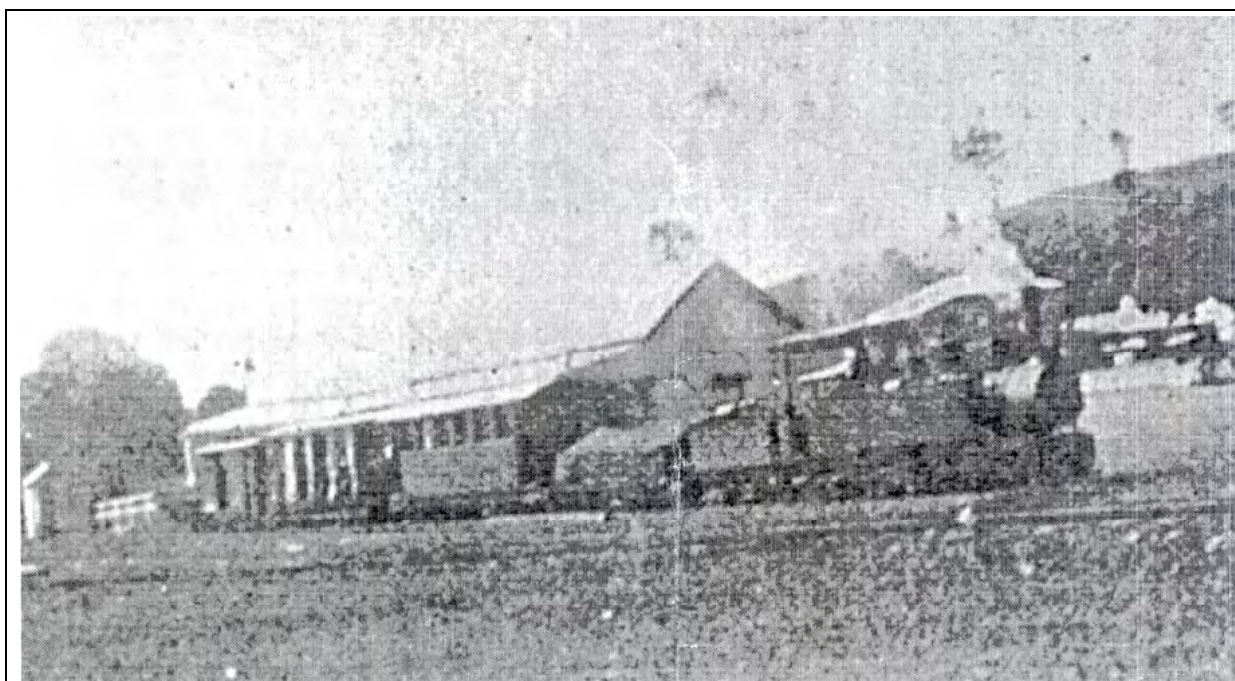
The Mossman mill was erected under the provisions of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act of 1893 and 1895 whereby the State Treasury advanced the company an amount covering the original cost of plant, then consisting of two sets

of 6 ft rollers, and other equipment comprising a sugar factory.

In 1893 the tender of W M Sutherland was accepted for the construction of a tramline to the Company's wharf, which was completed in time to receive the mill machinery.

On 5th Oct. 1896, the barque 'Westfield' discharged machinery for the mill off Daintree Heads.

Crushing commenced 1897. [Ted Ward notes]



Sugar cane tram at Port Douglas, 1919. The Cairns Historical Society ©, Accession 95/174, CLIB1/jpeg/P05668.jpeg, scanned from a low resolution print in the Ted Ward Collection.

1893-1915

In 1893 the tender of W. M. Sutherland was accepted for the construction of a tramline to the Company's wharf which was completed in time to receive the mill Machinery. [Collinson: More About Cairns].

Tenders called for manufacture and erection of machinery and buildings of a sugar factory for Mossman Central Mill Co. Ltd. [Courier 8-7-95]

About 10 years ago the owners of Brie Brie Estate erected a small mill, and cleared and planted 300 acres of cane. After the second crushing the enterprise was abandoned, and since then the mill has stood as a silent witness to

the folly of attempting to make the sugar industry pay with small and defective machinery.

Shortly after the passing of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act, the Mossman Central Mill was established. The owners of property on Saltwater Creek also formed a company, but eventually amalgamated with the Mossman Company.

The site chosen for the mill is on the Little Mossman River, about half a mile from its junction with the main stream.

There will be about 20 miles of tramline. Three branches will be required to tap the lands on the two rivers. Another to Saltwater Creek and a short line from the Mill to the Company's wharf

near the mouth of the Mossman. [Courier 23-7-95]

Mossman Central Mill Co; Tenders are invited for the first section of the Mossman Central Mill tramline, 1 mile 65 chains, including a bridge over little Mossman River, and wharf. [Courier: 24-3-1896]

In March 1897 the purchase was arranged for: 3 miles of portable tramline, 12 sets points and crossings; 1 locomotive, 8 1/2 x 12, from Fowler & Co. for £1435: 300 sets truck wheels and axles and 300 cane trucks from Bundaberg Foundry, the whole to be delivered by July. [Collinson: More about Cairns]

The Port Douglas & Mossman Tramway was formally opened during the month. [Sugar Journal & Tropical Cultivator, 9-1900]

Mr E. Muntz is surveying for the Douglas Divisional Board a branch line up Cassawary Creek. It will be about 3 miles in length. [Sugar Journal & Tropical Cultivator, 6-1901]

It has been known for a considerable time that the Guards Van on the Mossman Port Douglas Tramway was practically a travelling poker van. [Cairns Morning Post: 26 June 1902]

The Divisional Board's wells at Port Douglas and Killaloe are both dry, and the Board's two locomotives had to be sent out to Mossman on Saturday last to give their boilers a washout, and the Tramway superintendent has been obliged to place a tank of water at the Port Douglas tramway station for the use of the cane loco. [Cairns Morning Post: 24 October 1902]

Part of Mr. M. J. Jones' [sic] tramline is being constructed in preparation for next season.

Tramway being extended to Saltwater Creek. [Sugar Journal & Tropical Cultivator, 4-1903]

Port Douglas and Mossman is the farthest north district in which sugar growing is carried out in Queensland. Mossman is 12 miles from the port connected by tramway.

Mossman tramway was constructed by the Shire Council with a loan from the Government Gauge 2 feet.

When 10 miles from the port the tramway comes on to the scrub.

Mossman Central Mill, serviced by the tramway was erected under the Sugar Workers Guarantee Act in 1896. £66,300 borrowed.

3000 tons of sugar were made first year. [Courier 3-12-1904]

Mossman purchased three miles of portable line, 1/2 mile of main line, and 100 new trucks. [Mackay Mercury: 29-4-05]

A new bridge erected costing £147 at Smith Bros., Saltwater. [Mackay Mercury: 9-9-05]

Port Douglas Shire: Statistics for 1907

Length	15 miles
Train Miles	15432
Total Expenditure	£35819
Locomotives	2
Passenger Cars	2 (capacity 60)
Goods & Live Stock Vehicles	192
Passengers Carried	12,766
Goods Carried	11,592 tons
Sheep	200
Pigs	10



PASSENGER CARS and LOCOMOTIVE at MOSSMAN TRAM STATION

Passenger cars and loco at Mossman Tram Station. Australian Sugar Journal, 7/1909; G Bond Collection, scanned from the Ted Ward Collection.

A feature of Mossman is its network of narrow gauge tramways necessary for the conveyance of cane from the farms to the mill, and sugar from factory to port.

Of 40 miles of permanent line, 14 are owned by the Douglas Shire, and 26 by the Mill Co., besides which the latter has 35 miles of portable line.

The Shire's line between Port Douglas and Mossman is well equipped with rolling stock; the long open 1st Class carriage being especially comfortable, affording ample opportunity for observation. In the crushing season the services of 3 locos are needed to keep the mill supplied with cane, while a fourth is busy hauling

passengers and sugar, and general merchandise. [Australian Sugar Journal, 7-1909]

Cassowary Tramway: The Cassowary lands are to be opened up by 3 1/4 miles of tramway to be constructed by the Douglas Shire at a cost of £4300, by a loan from the government. [Australian Sugar Journal, 8-1909]

The Mossman Tramway will shortly be extended to the Daintree. [Australian Sugar Journal: 7-1910]

The Douglas Shire Council is offering a reward for the best tramway track to the Daintree River land which can be tapped within 8 miles of the present terminus of the Mossman Mill's line with the object of securing a better supply of cane to the Mossman Central Mill. [Cairns Post: 27 April 1910]

Douglas Shire: Tenders are invited for the construction of the second section of the Cassowary branch line. [Cairns Post: 7 June 1910]

Permanent 2' tramway belonging to

Mill 26 miles

Council 17 miles

Portable 2' tramway belonging to

Mill 35 miles

Growers: 5 miles [Parliamentary Papers: 1910]

Mossman has 30-35 miles of permanent tramline. [Royal Commission, 1912]

Bad washouts along tramway. [Courier 6-4-11]

Cyclone damage to Mossman tramline is estimated at £2500.... Repairs can be effected in 14 days to enable cane being taken over the Mowbray line.... A low-level bridge will probably be built at Millett's. [Australian Sugar Journal 5-1911]

Port Douglas: It is proposed to extend the tramway towards the ranges to the north of Saltwater. [Australian Sugar Journal 6-1911]

Cassowary Creek Tramline: Mr Theodore, MLA received a wire from Port Douglas Shire on 16th asking him to interview the treasurer with reference to a further loan of £600 to complete the Cassowary line which is now partly constructed. [Daily Mail, 21-6-1911]

Saltwater Creek was the limit of Port Douglas Tramway. Special trains were run to social events at Lunn's Hall at Mossman from Port

Douglas. [Collinson: Tropic Coasts and Tablelands, 1913]

A meeting of Mossman Central Mill shareholders moved that the Directors be authorised to purchase or lease the Douglas Shire Council's Fowler locomotive and their cane trucks. [Australian Sugar Journal 4-1913]

A mile of 40-lb. rails arrived at Mossman Central Mill to replace those that have been worn out. [North Queensland Register, 26-5-1913]

Mossman Mill now has 25 miles of line laid with 40-lb. rails. [North Queensland Register, 7-7-1913]

The 2-ft. tramline has a total length of some 50 miles. [North Queensland Register, 8-1915]

c1920-1937

Port Douglas & Mossman: 40 miles of 2-ft. gauge tramway, 14 of which are owned by the Douglas Shire and the balance by the mill company who in addition have about 35 miles of portable line.

The town of Mossman is 12 miles from Port Douglas. [Cairns & Hinterland (A Railway Guide) Melb. Lib. Qld. History Pamphlets Vol. 111; 994.3 Q3.]

Of the 40 miles of permanent tramline, 17 are owned by the Douglas Shire Council, and 23 by the Mill company, besides which the latter has 35 miles of portable lines for use in the canefields.

The Shire Council's line between Port Douglas and Mossman is well equipped with rolling stock... see 1909. [Parliamentary Papers, 1920]

Their bridges and tramways (25) miles are valued at £4544, 100 trucks were valued at £4294. Locos were valued at £3915. [Australian Sugar Journal, 4-1924]

A new loco has arrived. [Australian Sugar Journal, 6-1925]

Report for the year ending June 1925: Proposed extension to the mill tramline to the Daintree River. [Parliamentary Papers, 1925]

A new tramline extension of three miles up Wyanbal Creek is projected for the year, the line to be completed for one mile only this year, and completed when the rest of the land is opened up. [Australian Sugar Journal, 6-1925]

Douglas Shire: Loan for Daintree Line agreed to. Line will be ready for July 1st 1928 to take the cane for that year. The survey is to start in June this year. [Daily Mail??, 26-4-26]

The work of laying the balance of the Wyanbal Creek tramline is shortly to be commenced. The rails are already laid along the route and only the sleepers are wanted. [Daily Mail, 13-4-26]

To Mossman a little train puffs its way over a line of two foot gauge. It is really a tramline and is not a State concern, but it has its passenger cars, two of them, one for first class passengers provided with a cushion on its long narrow seat, and the other cushionless.

The ticket seller collects your fare in the office then on the train as conductor and guard he punches your ticket to show you are on the right train and have paid your fare.

Ahead of you will be sugar trucks and trucks of firewood and so on, and behind the train trails a little car that brings bread and meat to the populace.

Through cuttings and over bridges it goes stopping every now and then to set down or take up a passenger, or pausing while the engine driver hooks a length of steam pipe on to a pump alongside the line and takes in water.

[Queenslander 12-3-1927]

The tramway to the Whyanbul Creek section is being extended nearly 1/2 mile. [Australian Sugar Journal, 7-1927]

Earthworks on the Wyanbeel tramline were extended another 41 chains, and two more bridges on this section were built.

A short section has been added to the Bamboo Creek line.

The Main Roads Board are to build a composite bridge over Saltwater Creek on the Mossman - Daintree tram route. [Australian Sugar Journal, 3-1929]

I wonder how many visitors have gazed on the Port Douglas Express without feelings of wonder and amusement. It is a wonderful train. Drawn by a puffing little locomotive it covers the 14 miles from Mossman to Port Douglas at a speed equal to that of any mixed train in the north, perhaps even a little faster.

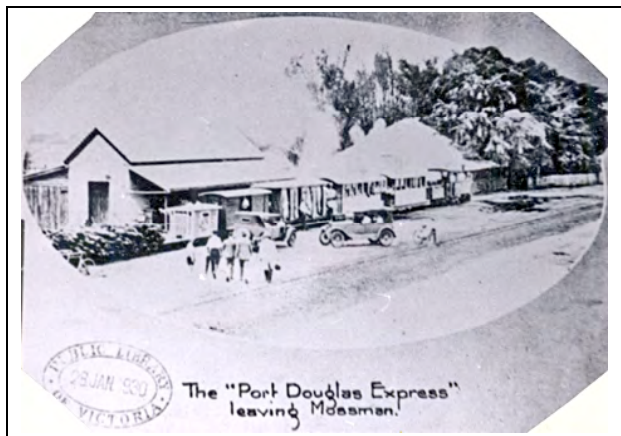
The carriages are weird relics of a by-gone age, but they serve their purpose and are not unpicturesque. I don't know whether the train dates back to the days of the 'Old Shako', but it is safe to assume that one could sing {?} of them 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, years ago without being inaccurate.

Despite their assumption of age I found the first class carriage, a tram-like compartment infinitely more comfortable to ride in than are many of the 1st class carriages running on some of the northern railway lines. It felt safer. There was no body sway, nor did I suffer from the uncomfortable feeling which is experienced when the swaying of the old rolling stock suggested the possibility of the compartment doing the concertina trick.

The Port Douglas Express cannot be said to come under the heading of things that creep and crawl, nor could a ticket collector claim that a boy who was under the age when he commenced the journey be entitled to pay the full fare by the time he reached his destination. [Queenslander Jan. 23.1930]



Miles of tramlines of the Mossman Sugar Mill. Queensland, 9-1-30, G Bond Collection, scanned from the Ted Ward Collection.



The 'Port Douglas Express' leaving Mossman. Queensland, 28-1-30, G Bond Collection, scanned from the Ted Ward Collection.

Under supervision of Chief Engineer, Mr. A.J. Crees, tested use of bagasse as fuel for locomotives.

A trial was made on an ordinary Fowler loco without any alteration to the fire-box and using green bagasse containing 46% of moisture,

compressed into 10 or 12 lb blocks. The experiment consisted of a 12 mile run, 12 miles out and back, with a load of over 100 tons behind the loco. The quantity of fuel consumed was 12 cwt. Proved a success.

Mr. Crees reports that during his visit to Java, one mill there ran nine locos on bagasse fuel. [Australian Sugar Journal, 2-1931]

A meeting of shareholders was held in Dec. 1930 for the purpose for discussing the advisability of constructing a tramway to the south bank of the Daintree River. The cost of the line would be £36,000. The proposed line would be 12 miles 5 chains. The only costly portion would be the Rocky Point section.

The meeting passed a motion requesting the Directors to complete a loan to construct the tramline.

The shire Council has made arrangements with the Main Roads Commission to have the South Mossman Bridge built as a composite traffic and tramway bridge. [Australian Sugar Journal, 1-1931]

The Mossman shareholders decided to go on with the construction of the tramline to the Daintree areas. Loan arranged through an English firm. [Australian Sugar Journal, 9-1931]

The Douglas Shire has decked the Tramway bridge at South Mossman so that the cars can cross until the new traffic bridge is built. [Australian Sugar Journal, 4-1931]

Work has been commenced on the line extension to connect the North Saltwater cane areas with the main tramline. Portion of this line was laid last season. The proposed Daintree tramline will follow this route. [Australian Sugar Journal, 5-1931]

The South Mossman Tram and traffic bridge will be completed next month. [Australian Sugar Journal, 7-1931]

The South Mossman tramway bridge sank somewhat whilst one of the Mill locos was crossing.

The Douglas Shire Council is purchasing two new sugar trucks. The Council intends running the rail motor for the slack season traffic. [Australian Sugar Journal, 11-1931]

The branch tramline to Lower Saltwater was continued and would be extended to the composite bridge over Saltwater Creek. A

Cheney Spark Nuffifier was tried out on one of the locos and proved effective.

A suitable Petrol Loco, acting as a feeder on the four branch lines at Miallo, it is stated, would considerably reduce the mileage travelled by the Fowler locos. [General Manager's Report: 2-1931]

Shire Council purchasing two extra sugar waggons. [Australian Sugar Journal, 6-1932]

New bridge built over Skeleton Creek, and three piers of the Wyanbeel Creek bridge renewed. [Australian Sugar Journal, 4-1937]

1949-1965

The new locomotive ordered by the Shire Council is expected to arrive in time to haul the first of this year's crushing to Port Douglas. [Australian Sugar Journal, 7-1949]

The new locomotive for the Douglas Shire Council has arrived, and has drawn its first load of sugar to port Douglas. It was not a very big load, the idea being to run in the loco slowly and carefully until it has proved itself. [Australian Sugar Journal??, 1st Aug, 1949]

The new Bundaberg Fowler loco has arrived at the mill after a 50 mile haul by low loader over the Cook Highway. It will greatly assist in giving better service over the longer runs. It weighs 18 tons, and is of the 0-6-2-type. Photo on page 321. [Australian Sugar Journal, 7-1952]

An additional Diesel locomotive, heavier than the present one, will be delivered before the season starts. (MOWBRAY).

All cane trucks are to be converted for fully automatic greasing.

Major tramline relays are being carried out. [Australian Sugar Journal, 3-1957]

100 new cane trucks procured.

The new loco is ready for shipment in Brisbane; being delayed by crane drivers stride.

For the first time all the trucks will have fixed staunchions. [sic] [Australian Sugar Journal, 6-1957]

The Mossman Central Mill has a new 150 h.p. Clyde Diesel, which is carrying the name plates 'Mowbray'. However, I understand they may be substituted for 'Mossman' and the new 'Mowbray' plates put on the older Baguley diesel locomotive. This revives the name of the very first Mossman Central engine, an 0-6-0 Fowler identical with 'Pioneer' and 'Faugh-a-Ballagh'

and arrived at Mossman 'officially' in March 1897.

When the first diesel came here there was a tendency to give it the limelight and let it haul the biggest loads and let the steam performance fall off. Anyway even the biggest diesel doesn't haul the loads we used to do with steam in the old days and doesn't handle the equivalent of what we haul with steam on the Council's line today, despite its 50% advantage (?) of rated horsepower over our biggest steam locomotive. However the mill has a steam driver who won't co-operate and the old steamers once again may be seen handling the long rakes! [Bulletin No 240, Oct. 1957 (E. M. Loveday)]

Work is proceeding on the re-laying of O'Brien's line for a distance of one mile.

The new tramline bridge at Miallo will have two 60-ft. steel spans. [Australian Sugar Journal, 2-1958]

Mossman mill relaying with 45-lb. rails so that the heavier locomotives can be used on these lines. [Australian Sugar Journal, 3-1958]

Discussions have been held between the Directors of the Mill and the Douglas Shire Council regarding the purchase of the Douglas Shire Council's Tramway by the Mill. [Australian Sugar Journal, 11-1958]

At a meeting on 24th Nov. agreement was reached between the Shire Council and the Mossman Mill whereby the Council would dispose of all its tramline and equipment to the Mossman Mill. Final details are now being worked out, and it is expected the mill will take over control at an early date.

The tramline originally carried passengers and freight from Port Douglas before the opening of the Cairns Railway took the major part of the trade away from Port Douglas to the port of Cairns. In recent years the tramline has been used for the haulage of sugar to Port Douglas, and cane to the Mill. [Australian Sugar Journal, 12-1958]

Arrangements have been made with the Douglas Shire Council for the Mossman Mill to take over the Shire Tramway as from 1st January. [Australian Sugar Journal, 1-1959]

The Mossman mill purchased the Port Douglas Shire tramway on 1-1-59. Bagged sugar was formerly carried on the line to be lightered from Port Douglas to Cairns but it is now carried by

road from Mossman to Cairns. [Bull 261 - July 1959]

This mill operates a total of 48 miles of tramway including some of the former Shire Tramway taken over on 1-1-59. The line is at present operated with fibre steam locos and two diesel units (Com Eng 0-6-05 [sic]) most of which are equipped with two-way radio for traffic control purposes. [Bull 266 - Dec 1959]

Bill Validates Sale Of Old Mossman Tramline

BRISBANE, November 4. The transfer of ownership of a 60-year old tramway line in the Mossman district is validated under a bill introduced in Parliament to-day by the Local Government Minister (Mr. L. H. S. Roberts).

The bill validates an agreement between the Council of the Shire of Douglas and the Mossman Central Mill Co. Ltd. For the acquirement by the company from the Council of the tramway line, with certain of its appurtenances.

Cane Haulage

Mr. Roberts said the tramway was used to carry passengers and goods from Mossman to Port Douglas when it was built 60 years ago. It was now used solely for the haulage of sugar cane to Mossman Central Mill.

In view of this, he stated, it was obvious that the tramway should be operated by the Mill.

Under the Mill, the tramway would be deemed to be vested in the Mossman Central Mill Co. Ltd. as from January 1, 1959.

The Mossman Mill will take over £60,545 in loans on the tramway, and in addition pay the Council £2000 a year for five years.

The Opposition leader, (Mr. J. E. Duggan), said the amount of money mentioned seemed to be conservative for the sale of an undertaking which had operated over 60 years.

He sought an assurance from the Minister that the mill had not forced any unduly hard terms on the Douglas Shire Council.

Mr. Duggan said that if a sugar mill or any other sector of the State's economy elected to take advantage of mechanization to make it more economic to market a commodity, there was an obligation on them to accept, as part of the capital cost of new plant, the cost of transferring homes of people, particularly in isolated places such as Port Douglas.

He said that waterside workers at Port Douglas had lost employment on the wharf, and had difficulty in obtaining alternative work in the town or nearby.

No Home Sales

It was impossible for Port Douglas people to sell their homes at an economic price, and some of them were still living in the town and travelling to and from Cairns each day to work, he added.

Mr. H. A. Adair, (Q.L.P. Cook), said he felt the council had been bulldozed by the mill and the Government into agreeing to the price for the tramway.

Rate-payers in the Douglas Shire believed the 24-mile tramway was conservatively worth £300,000, he added.

Mr. Roberts said he could not visualize any great market for used tramline in Queensland.

'I feel that when the time comes for this line to be pulled up, you will find that Mossman Mill has paid quite a handsome price for the service they get from it.' said the minister.

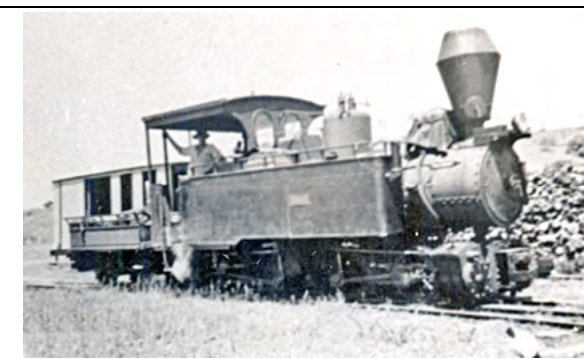
'Ridiculous'

The minister said it was ridiculous to suggest that the council would have the line valued in its books for anywhere near £300,000.

It was expected the life of the tramway would be a very short one, because motor transport could play an increasing part.

The mill could be faced with very heavy expenditure in building a new railway bridge. It was considered, in the main, that the price being paid for the tramway under the present conditions was fair and just, said Mr. Roberts.

[Likely The Courier Mail, c 4 Nov 1959]



Port Douglas Shire No 2: 'Douglas' (0-4-4-0T, side tank Mallet Compound type, Orenstein & Koppel #943 of 1902, landed Jan 1903, 15 tons 12 cwt, scrapped 1948). Note open wagon behind loco and carriage on adjoining track. JB Goggs

photographer, 1943, G Bond Collection, scanned from the Ted Ward Collection.

Mossman Mill Will Buy Line

The Minister for Public Works and Local Government (Mr. L. H. S. Roberts) announced on Monday that Cabinet had approved the preparation of a bill authorizing the Douglas Shire Council to sell its tramway undertaking to Mossman Central Mill Company Limited.

Mr Roberts stated that the tramway had been constructed some 60 years ago and, in the early days of the Mossman district, was use to convey passengers and goods from Mossman to Port Douglas which was the then only outlet for the district.

Subsequent to the opening of the Cook Highway in 1936, restricted to the haulage of the use of the tramway was sugar cane to Mossman Central Mill, and the transport of bagged sugar to the wharf at Port Douglas for shipment.

Consequent on the decision in 1958 to use road transport for the transport of sugar to Cairns, the tramway was now solely used for the haulage of cane to the mill.

In view of the remaining limited use of the tramway it was obvious that it should be operated by the Mossman Central Mill Company Ltd., which, itself, operated tramway in the locality.

Mr. Roberts stated that on a number of occasions prior to 1958, the company had negotiated with the council for the purchase of the undertaking but such negotiations had proved abortive.

Following on a decision of Cabinet in June, 1958, representatives of the Council and the company met in conference under the chairmanship of the Director of Northern Development (Mr. W. Hansen) and an agreement had now been signed by the parties covering the sale of the tramway by the council to the company.

The bill provided legislative authority for the sale of the tramway by the Council. [Likely The Courier Mail, c Nov 1959]

Rails to carry cane

Two North Queensland sugar mills have bought 32 miles of railway line from the State Government at an undisclosed figure.

The Milgrave and Mossman mills have purchased the materials in the Kairi-Millaa rail line, west of Cairns, which was closed on June 30 last year.

Railways Department Acting Secretary (Mr. A.J. Neeson) said yesterday that the mills had accepted an offer of sale by the department.

Mossman Mill Manager (Mr. L.J.F. Prince) said tearing up the line would begin soon.

He said the line would be used for maintenance and extension of existing tram lines opened by the two mills. [The Courier-Mail Thursday Jan 21 1965]

Acknowledgments

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The collection also included drawings of Douglas, Faugh-a-Ballagh and the Perry, and locomotive/rolling stock photographs, etc. These are accessible, along with other images and plans, from the online Queensland Rail Heritage Image Collection:

<http://QldRailHeritage.com/mrqc/> or

<http://www.zelmeroz.com/CaneSIG/>

Researchers should always check primary sources before relying upon information extracted from journals, newspapers, etc., as errors may have been introduced through typing/retyping, etc.

The best resource for more recent research on Mossman Mill tramway activities is the Light Railway Research Society of Australia.

<http://www.lrrsa.org.au>

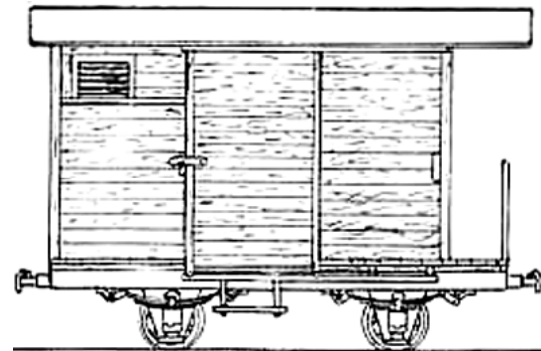
A copy of any Cairns Historical Society picture can be obtained from phone (07) 4051 5582 or fax (07) 4051 5586, and quote the picture number you wish to obtain. Other images may also be available from public collections.

Kerr, John (1979). **Northern Outpost (Mossman Central Mill)**. Mossman: Mossman Central Mill Ltd. [history]

Pike, Glenville (1986). **Port of Promise: An illustrated history of Port Douglas, North Queensland**. Mareba: Pinevale Publications. [local history]



Rake of cane passing down Mill Street to Mossman Mill. Locomotive is 'Mossman' (0-6-0T, John Fowler #7980 of 1897, landed May 1897, 12 tons, scrapped 1934). HCP Crees photographer, Australian Sugar Cane Journal, 9-1-1920, scanned from the Ted Ward Collection.



Douglas Shire Tramway 4 ton box wagon. Verandah later closed in to increase capacity; steel underframe as in swing door wagons. Scanned from Jim Fainges 1997 drawing based on EM Loveday drawing.



Another view of No 2 'Douglas' with carriage behind. JB Groggs photographer 1943, G Bond Collection, scanned from Ted Ward Collection.