Moving People on Queensland’s Tramways

Lynn Zelmer
QldRailHeritage.com/mrqc

Below: Mapleton Tramway at Mapleton: 24’ passenger-guards van plus seating (likely fruit boxes and planks) on bogie flat wagons

Tramway Acts (1882-1890)

• ‘authorise the construction, maintenance and working of tramways on public streets and roads in such a manner as to not impede ordinary traffic’ [outside the municipality of Brisbane]. [Ozcase Qld]
• Sugar mills, mining, timber and construction companies, etc.; and various local authorities all operated light, narrow gauge railways under these acts.

Presented in absentia with sound track at the 2015 Australian Narrow Gauge Convention
Selected Tramways...

- Aramac, Ayr & Rockhampton (3’ 6”)
- Buderim-Palmwoods (2’ 6”)
- Innisfail-Mourilyan Harbour, Mapleton (2’)
- Sugar mills (2’): both passenger & workers
- And some modelling hints
  - [With special thanks to Greg Stephenson, David Mewes and Garth Fraser for their input]

Rockhampton Municipal Tramway

- 3’ 6” gauge running in city streets 1909-1939
- French-built Purrey steam trams (inadequate electrical power infrastructure for a more up-to-date system)
- QGR also used to Lakes Creek and Parkhurst
- The only preserved Purrey steam tram operates weekly at Archer Park Rail Museum

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Aramac Shire Tramway

- 3’ 6” gauge, 66.7 km rural line 1930-1975 connecting Aramac to QGR’s Central Railway (Rockhampton-Longreach) at Barcaldine
- Initially used wooden carriages, later Fairmont gang car and ex-QR rail motor and trailers
- Last Shire-owned railway operating in QLD and one of the few 3’ 6” gauge Shire lines NOT taken over by QR

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Ayr Tramway (3’ 6” gauge)

- Opened 1901 connecting sugar lands of the Lower Burdekin with Townsville
- 44 miles (69 km) long, hired QGR locos & rollingstock, taken over by QGR 1911
- 1901-2 normally three trains per week, except during sugar season with 4-5 per week
- Passengers, sugar, maize, hay, vegetables, etc.

Buderim-Palmwoods

- 2’ 6” gauge, funded through govt. grant to Shire and constructed privately, 11.5 km
- Well constructed permanent way, not simply along shire roads or easements in farm fields
- One or two loads of up to 150 passengers were carried for the 1 hour trip in one coach and on fruit-box and plank seats on flat top trucks
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Buderim-Palmwoods Tramway

- Krauss loco with typical train of 4w wagons, coach and guards van (yellow)

Innisfail & Mourilyan Harbour

- Common carrier, filled a gap between Innisfail and the QR North Coast line to Cairns (-1924)
- Only Government owned and operated 2’ gauge railway in Queensland
- 1899 a Shire-owned Geraldton Tramway, sold to QGR (1914), acquired Mourilyan Harbour Tramway (1915), ending life as sugar line and sold to nearby mills in 1977.

Mapleton Tramway (2’ gauge)

- Built 1897 by Moreton Central Sugar Mill -- 5.5 mile (9 km) line, from Nambour to Mapleton (climbing up the Blackhall Range)
- Extended 1914 after purchase by Maroochy Shire Council, closed 1944
- Two coaches plus flat, livestock and fruit wagons – mill era excursions used cane trucks with central longitudinal benches (five per side on fruit boxes & planks)

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Some mills operated passenger services from their early days...

...mill and shire services were a product of their times!

- Victoria Mill’s Decauville coaches were for whites only... in 1905 a visiting Japanese official was evicted to a ‘back to back’ ‘nigger’ coach [Salute to the Hudswells]
- In early years mill trains served isolated farms, plantations and communities... mail, freight, including groceries, as well as passengers
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Modelling

• Limited commercially model availability
  – Try UK/VIC NG models and/or 3D printing (e.g. Shapeways) for kit bashing potential

• Excellent scratch building potential
  – Free photorealistic card model kits available from MRQC web site (QldRailHeritage.com/mrqc)
  – Mountain Blue Miniatures cast metal underframe could simplify building a generic 18’ carriage

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QR rail bus (‘Red Fred’, On30)

- JG Models kit available from ANGRMS (also matching trailer)

Mapleton Tramway's short coach: 22' 10" with guards compartment, passenger area (both sides facing inwards) and cream cans. Note steps for guard only.

And a weathering challenge for the most ‘decrepit’ NG modellers?!
Navvies, tools, supplies, wagons.

Little Mulgrave, 1996
© Greg Stephenson

Finally, don’t forget to put the models in context (location, era, etc.)...

Main Street, South Johnstone c.1800
PG Dow, Robert Dow Collection

Many thanks and happy modelling!


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