

The inner firebox has been completely removed, but the outer box is complete, although damaged at the points where it would have been attached to the frame. Both the firehole ring and foundation ring are complete. The boiler barrel has been removed, either for scrap or for use elsewhere. This was obviously done with some care, as all of the rivet holes at its throat are intact. Some water space stays are partly in place. Anchor points suggest that there were brackets for two Salter-type safety valves and it appears that they were mounted on top of a steam dome mounted on the firebox. Other brackets suggest a water gauge on the left of the boiler back plate and test cocks on the right. At the time of the 1892 inspectors report the boiler was limited to a working pressure of 40 lbs per square inch (275.8 kPa) only.

Measurements taken of the firebox in situ do not match

up exactly with those supplied by the manufacturer, which are in turn at slight variance with those provided by Cornish and Bruce at the time of the sale of the locomotive. However, the variations are slight and the ravages of 127 years could be considered partly responsible. The only other part of the engine to be found nearby is the chimney, which is half buried in a bog and almost completely rusted away. The owner of the property confirmed that the remains have been untouched since 1937.

Although some reservations must arise because of the differences in dimensions, which for reasons given above may be irrelevant, it is considered highly likely that the remains near Sprent are actually those of the "Bruce". Because of the historical value, surely some museum would provide a fitting resting place for it.

THE ALTON DOWNS BRANCH

by Rod Milne

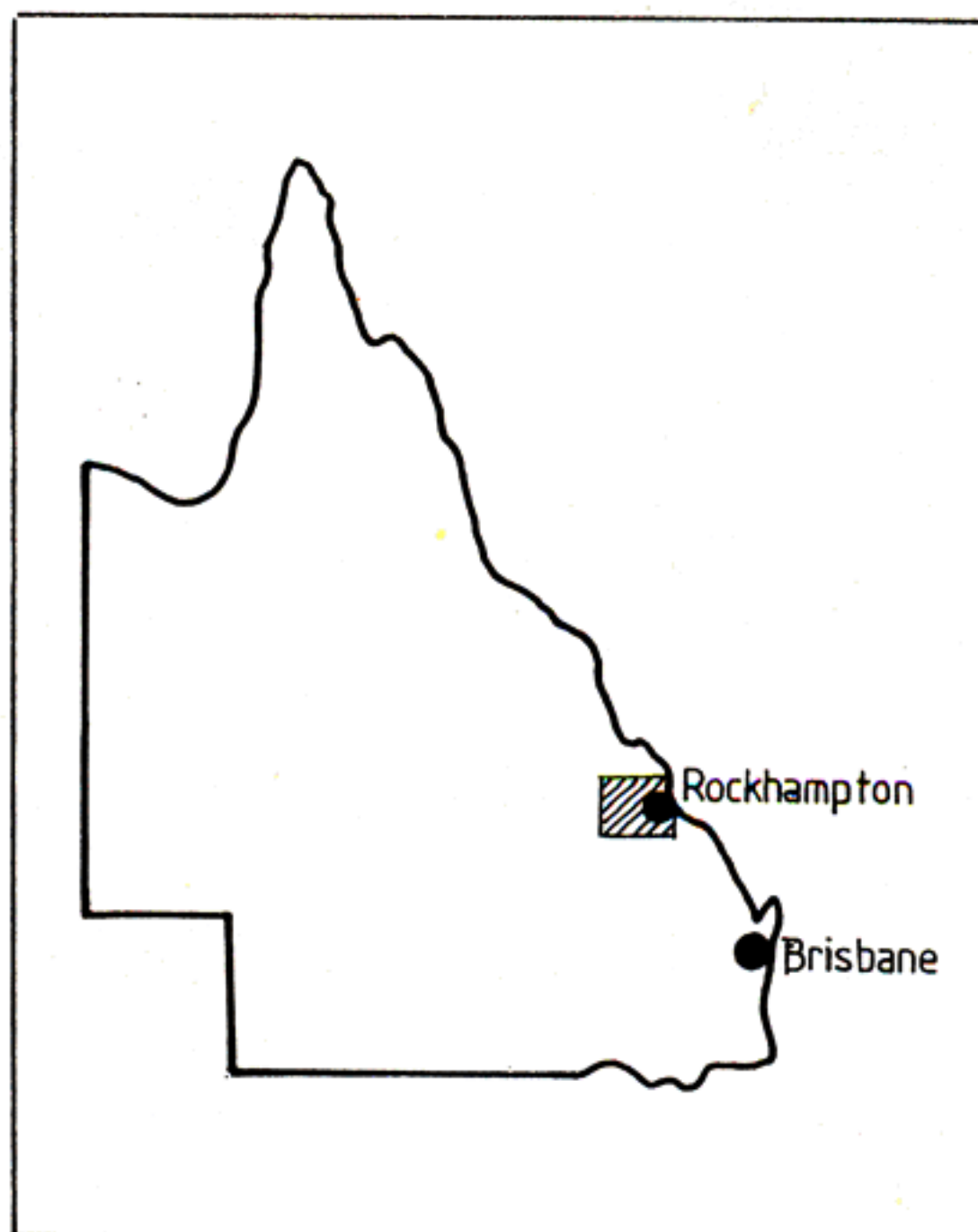
Introduction

In a State where unremunerative branch lines were once quite common, the Alton Downs Line, in the Rockhampton district, shines like a beacon for sustained unprofitability. Built for all the wrong reasons in the wrong place at the wrong time, this 28.2 km branch line carried meagre loadings for almost its entire life, and it was worked largely by railmotors after 1942.

When the line was first mooted, there were grandiose schemes for a vibrant sugar industry centred on Alton Downs, where an early mill named the "Pandora" once crushed the output from nearby cane farms. Local settlers lobbied for a central mill in the area on several occasions, sites at Alton Downs, Jardine (on the North Coast Line), Bushley and Stanwell (on the Central Line) being suggested for this operation. A private sugar mill operated for a while with some success at Farnborough near Yeppoon at the turn of the century, but the lack of a direct rail access with potential cane growing areas in the Fitzroy Valley hampered further development. Highly dependent on proximity to a viable sugar mill, the sugar industry floundered early on amidst indecision and uncertainty, but cotton, maize growing and dairying fared a little better on the alluvial flood plains up river from Rockhampton. There was a butter factory at Rockhampton, so dairy farmers had a ready market that was relatively accessible, except in times of heavy rain.

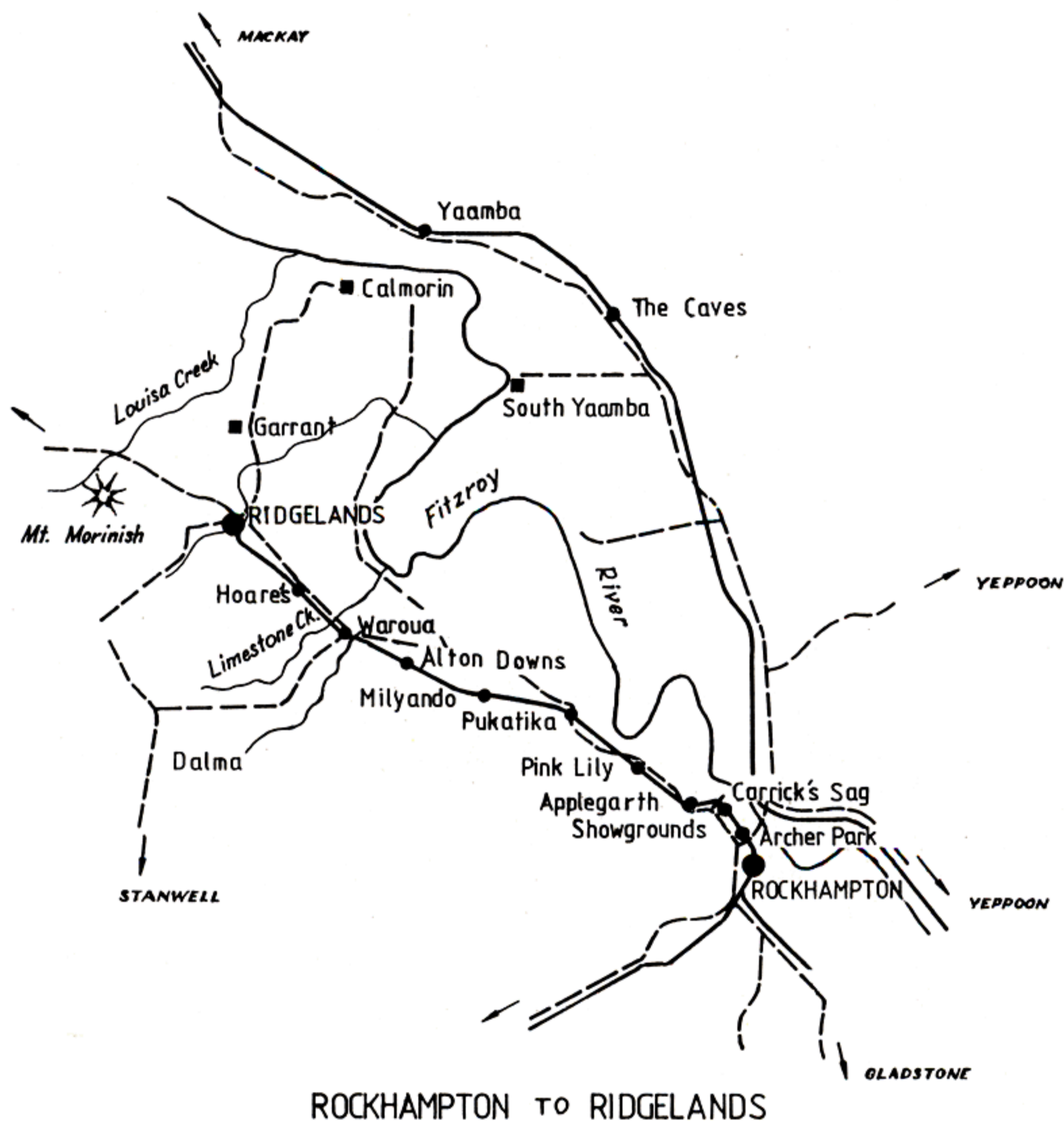
Authorised in 1914, the Alton Downs Line was probably an attempt to capitalise on the agricultural potential of the Fitzroy Valley, for it was anticipated that expansion of farming would occur with the impetus of improved transport. In time, these hopes proved groundless, as the farmers slowly moved away from unprofitable maize and cotton growing to concentrate on dairying and light grazing.

With war raging in Europe, and a drought threatening in the upper Fitzroy, construction commenced on the line in October 1915. The omens were clearly not good, but work pushed on, despite a brief halt in November 1915 for reasons not clear. As the earthworks were minimal, and only four bridges of any size were necessary, the branch was an easy construction task, and this was particularly the case on the



flat riverine plains between Rockhampton and Alton Downs. River sand ballast was obtained from a large pit north of Yaamba, and railed the long way around via Rockhampton where it was put on construction trains bound for the head of steel.

After a fairly short period of construction, the line was eventually opened for traffic on Monday, 9 October 1916, when the Premier (Hon. T. J. Ryan) stood atop a water gin in Ridgeland's Yard to give his opening speech. The water gin rostrum was highly appropriate, for the area was in the grips of a harsh drought, and the surrounding lands were



parched and dry. Even in those days, enthusiasm for the new line was somewhat subdued, and the opening train steamed through lands described as "God forsaken" in the local press!

The Alton Downs Line quickly proved to be a financial disaster, and not the boon to local agriculture originally anticipated. In 1923, a proposal to extend the rails some 10.5 km beyond Ridgeland to Louisa Creek was aired, and a standing committee investigated its merits. Although here there was the possibility of marble and limestone loadings from a pit beyond the proposed route, the country to be served was, if anything, of a poorer quality to that already traversed, so members of the committee were hardly enthused. A new rail head at Louisa Creek probably would have been better placed to serve the cattle pastures of the

upper Fitzroy, but increased convenience for local graziers was not enough to warrant such an expense. In support of the extension, the prospect of sugar cane growing was yet again suggested. Involving a haul of some 321.8 km by rail to the nearest mill at Bundaberg for crushing, a sugar industry centred on the proposed rail head at Louisa Creek would scarcely be viable, even in those days of relatively low costs.

Description of the Line

The Alton Downs Line was not one of Queensland's better known routes, despite its proximity to the State's fourth largest provincial city. Serving a back water grazing district

away from the main through traffic routes, the branch was familiar only to those utilising its curious railmotor service, which lead a quiet unhurried existence with few marks of pretence.

Leading away from the main North Coast Line at Alton Downs Junction, the line ran in a gentle curve to the Showgrounds, where Lion Creek Road was joined in a shared "right of way". Slinking out of town on one side of this thoroughfare, the kinked and buckled rails ran past front gardens and parked cars, passing in succession Carrick's Siding and a meagre halt, Applegarth, at the end of the built up area. The Rockhampton airport was located nearby, and planes occasionally swooped in low over the bucking and swaying Ridgeland's railmotor as both made their respective approaches to the city.

A 10-span timber trestle at Applegarth carried the rails across Lion Creek and out onto the lightly wooded flood plain of the Fitzroy River, where dairy farming and light grazing were the predominant pursuit in contrast to the more intensive activities of the city. Running parallel with the main road to Ridgeland's, the line passed Pink Lily, another small halt with a shed, before striking away from the road near a meander of the Fitzroy to take its own alignment to Pukatika. At the shedless halt here, the main road was crossed again on the level, and the railway entered more wooded country, with carbeen (a pale barked tree with a dark lower trunk) and red gum predominant.

Apart from a few small pockets along the river, agriculture in this portion of the Fitzroy Valley had been tried earlier largely without success, and many of the former sugar cane, cotton and maize paddocks were left to regenerate with grass, often accompanied by an abundant regrowth of the original scrub. Even as dairying country, this was fairly marginal land, for the local pastures nurtured only moderate butter fat yields in the cows' milk. Cream from dairy farms further out around Ridgeland's usually moved to the Rockhampton dairy factory by the railmotor, which performed this useful service to an otherwise flagging industry.

At Milyando, the country became much more open, and the distant cerulean peaks of the Native Cat Range behind Wycarbah could be seen dominating the low relief surroundings. Those early visions of vast crop lands stretching away into the distance could be readily appreciated at this point, as the track straddled a long low ridge line on the approach to Alton Downs.

Alton Downs itself was an unconsolidated place comprising a hall, school, church, post office and several farm houses, drawn out over a wide plain from Milyando. The station was some distance away from the main road, but both transport modes gradually converged thereafter to rejoin for the crossing of Black Gin Creek just before Waroula. Comprising a church, race course and railway siding all nestling amongst shady white gums and palms, Waroula was probably the prettiest place encountered on the line, and a road at the station lead off towards Dalma and distant grazing properties in the west. Yet another watercourse, Limestone Creek, was crossed beyond the station by an 8-span bridge, one of the four largest on the line.

Hoare's was a small halt serving a dairy farmer with the same name, located where the railway once again headed away from the main road, this time to surmount a low watershed in the wooded hills to the west. This was probably one of the sharper pinches on the line, but it was of little concern to the railmotor, or most of the trains for that matter. After passing through a low cutting in dry timbered country at the summit, the line dropped to cross Ridgeland's Creek by means of the line's principal engineering feature, a rather

nondescript 11-span timber trestle. Gold was once plucked from the hills in this area, but there was little but ironbark and sparse grass on both sides of the track in later days at this point as the line swung through a long curve into the terminal station, located at the foot of Ridgeland's main, and only, street. Sweltering in the hot tropical sun, the huddle of timber and galvanised buildings on this unsealed thoroughfare included a general store, hall, church, post office and school, providing only the most basic of services to meet the needs of the surrounding graziers. Beyond the rail head, more dry pasture lands sprawled, as scenically uninspiring as the "forsaken" country encountered on that first trip on the line in the drought stricken spring of 1916. East of Ridgeland's though, dairies prospered on the river flats of the Fitzroy around Garnant and Calmorin, in sufficient number to generate considerable quantities of cream for despatch from the rail head. On the more granitic soils in the area, oranges and lemons thrived, and the local citrus fruits from Ridgeland's had a particularly good reputation in the Rockhampton area.

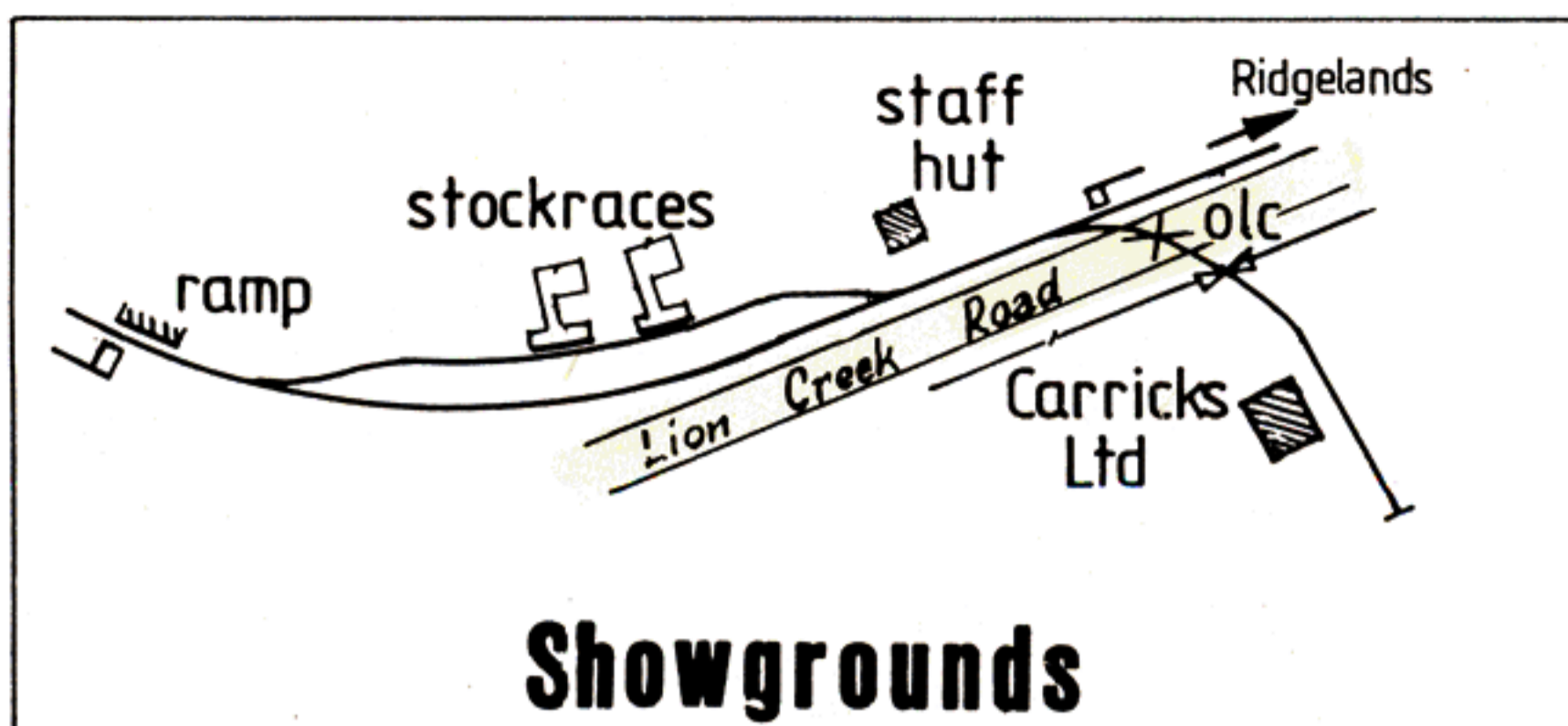
Stations and Sidings

NOTE: Distances computed from Archer Park

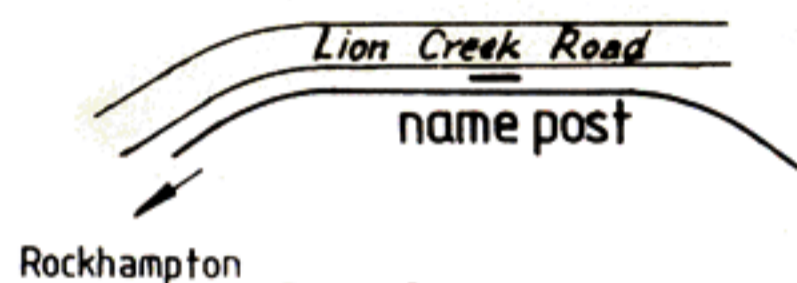
ALTON DOWNS JUNCTION (462.3m: 10.7m): Where the dual track North Coast Line curved sharply to the north on the approach to the Alexandra Bridge, a turnout and cross over were in use to enable access to the branch. Worked from a small signal cabin adjoining, the points were protected on each approach by standard Home signals, that on the Ridgeland's branch also protecting a diamond crossing at the intersection of the line with the Vacuum Oil Company siding (laid in about 1920). Up until 1920, Alton Downs Junction was manned by a full time signal man, but the signal box was subsequently opened only for branch line movements using staff stationed at the nearby Archer Park Station.

SHOWGROUNDS (1.3 km: 9.5 m): Sandwiched between Lion Creek Road and the Showgrounds fence, this halt was provided with a long loop siding to enable the receipt and despatch of live stock and exhibits at show times. The imaginatively named Showgrounds Station was the only intermediate staff station on the branch, and single arm Home signals were provided along with throwover levers, a staff box and telephone cabinet. Crossings were not common at this point, even at show times, for the short section to the junction enabled a relatively quick turn around for shunting trains. The latter could run as far as the Showgrounds, and Carrick's Siding without a brake van, and were run if required for loading during the week.

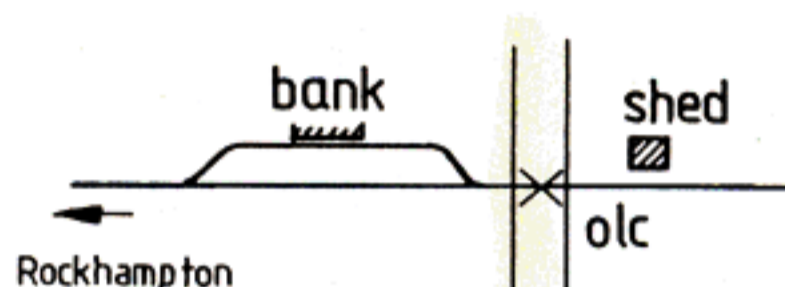
CARRICK'S SIDING (1.62 km): A dead end siding with points facing east at this point served the large sawmill of Carrick and Sons (previously Skyring and Sons prior to 1944). Taken over by prominent Queensland sawmillers Hyne and Sons after the branch beyond closed in 1955, the siding was retained for several years more to receive log timber supplies from distant forest reserves. A Stop signal protected the siding at the Ridgeland's end, and it was possible to shunt the siding from the Showgrounds without the Showgrounds-Ridgeland's Staff on board, provided the signal was at "stop". Thus, shunts with logs could work to the siding while the railmotor was out at Ridgeland's.



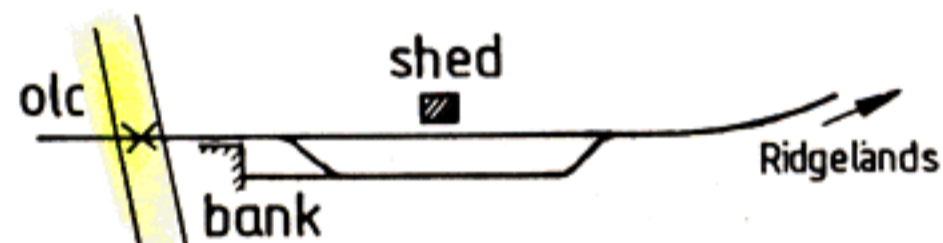
Showgrounds



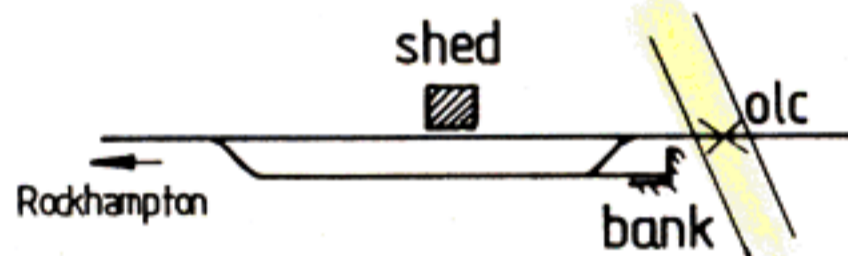
Applegarth



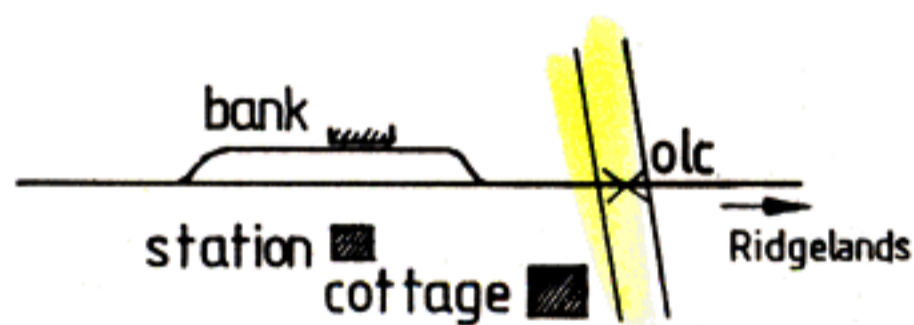
Pink Lily



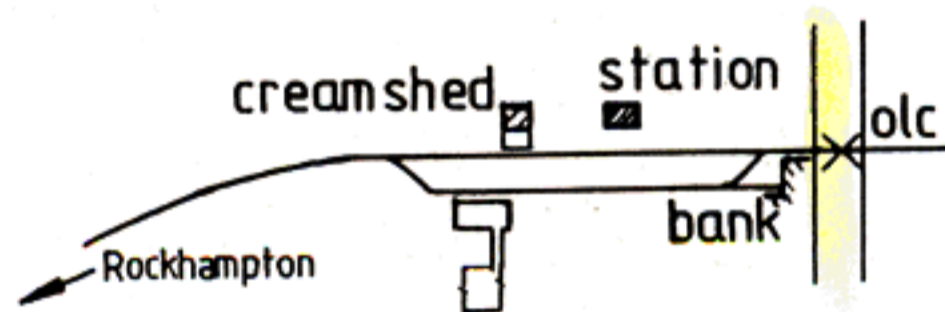
Pukatika



Milyando



Alton Downs



Waroula

J.McC

APPLEGARTH (4.5 km: 10.1 m): Applegarth was the simplest of halts, for there was never anything more than a rail level landing and name post there for the benefit of railmotor patrons. Originally known as 2.4 km, the name "Applegarth" was bestowed shortly after the line opened.

PINK LILY (4.75 km: 9.1 m): Despite its colourful name, this station was not in the least flamboyant, and only a waiting shed, loop siding and loading ramp (erected in 1924) were provided. Sand and screenings from pits in the nearby Fitzroy River were once loaded here, as were pigs in "MG" class vans until relatively late in the 1940s. In a classic case of "coals to Newcastle", sand was railed for a while in 1929 from this point to Yeppoon, a seaside resort about 64 km away, though the reason for this arrangement is not known. Although the halt remained

of use as a railmotor stop until the end, the siding was pulled up in 1949.

PUKATIKA (10.1 km: 10.1 m) Yet another siding serving nothing in particular, Pukatika boasted a shelter shed until 1932, when it was somewhat abruptly transferred to Karloo near Carmila. A siding and loading ramp remained, but saw spasmodic use, the loading bank being demolished in 1933 and the siding in 1949. The delightful name "Pukatika" is derived from an aboriginal word for "wattle".

MILYANDO (14.6 km: 16.2 m): As opened, Milyando Station was clearly intended for better things, but it ended its days as a mere nameboard by the line like most other halts on the branch. In 1928, the goods shed was removed, and the loading bank and siding followed in 1933 and 1949 respectively. To shelter railmotor passengers and

cans of cream from the hot tropical sun, the shelter shed lingered a little longer, but it too was abolished in 1954. The station name is derived from an aboriginal word meaning "bandicoot".

ALTON DOWNS (18.1 km: 26.2 m): Alton Downs was not, as may be expected, the biggest station on the Alton Downs Line. Indeed, after the station building was removed in 1943, only a loop siding and loading ramp (erected in 1927) remained to mark the site, and even they were threatened with removal in 1952.

WAROULA (20.9 km: 18.6 m): Like most other intermediate stations on the line, Waroula had a spectacular fall from grace, and it finished its days as a cream shed by the station level crossing. Up until December 1930, a gatekeeper (or station mistress) was in charge to account for local loadings in cream and stock, but the station was subsequently worked under no one in charge conditions. Facilities were progressively disposed of, the cattle yards going in 1939, the goods shed in 1941 and the station building in 1943. The loss of the stock yards effectively discouraged the use of the siding for anything other than departmental business, and it was closed completely in 1951 almost a decade after railmotors replaced the weekly mixed train on the line. Named from the aboriginal word for "dingo", Waroula was once the siding for the Limestone Creek district to the west.

HOARE'S (23.3 km): Essentially a railmotor stop in later years, Hoare's opened in 1917 as a halt to serve Mr F. Hoare's nearby residence. Despite its unofficial status, it was surprisingly enough listed in several Q.R. documents, the most notable being the passenger fares table for the line.

RIDGELANDS (28.6 km: 39.1 m): As the cattle outlet for a large tract of grazing lands in the Upper Fitzroy, Ridgeland Station fared somewhat better through the years than the intermediate halts on the line. Laid out on a gentle curve, the yard included a fork line opposite the canopy roofed station building and cream shed, and a long siding serving a galvanised iron goods shed and cattle yards. A railway house at the station entrance completed the arrangements here.

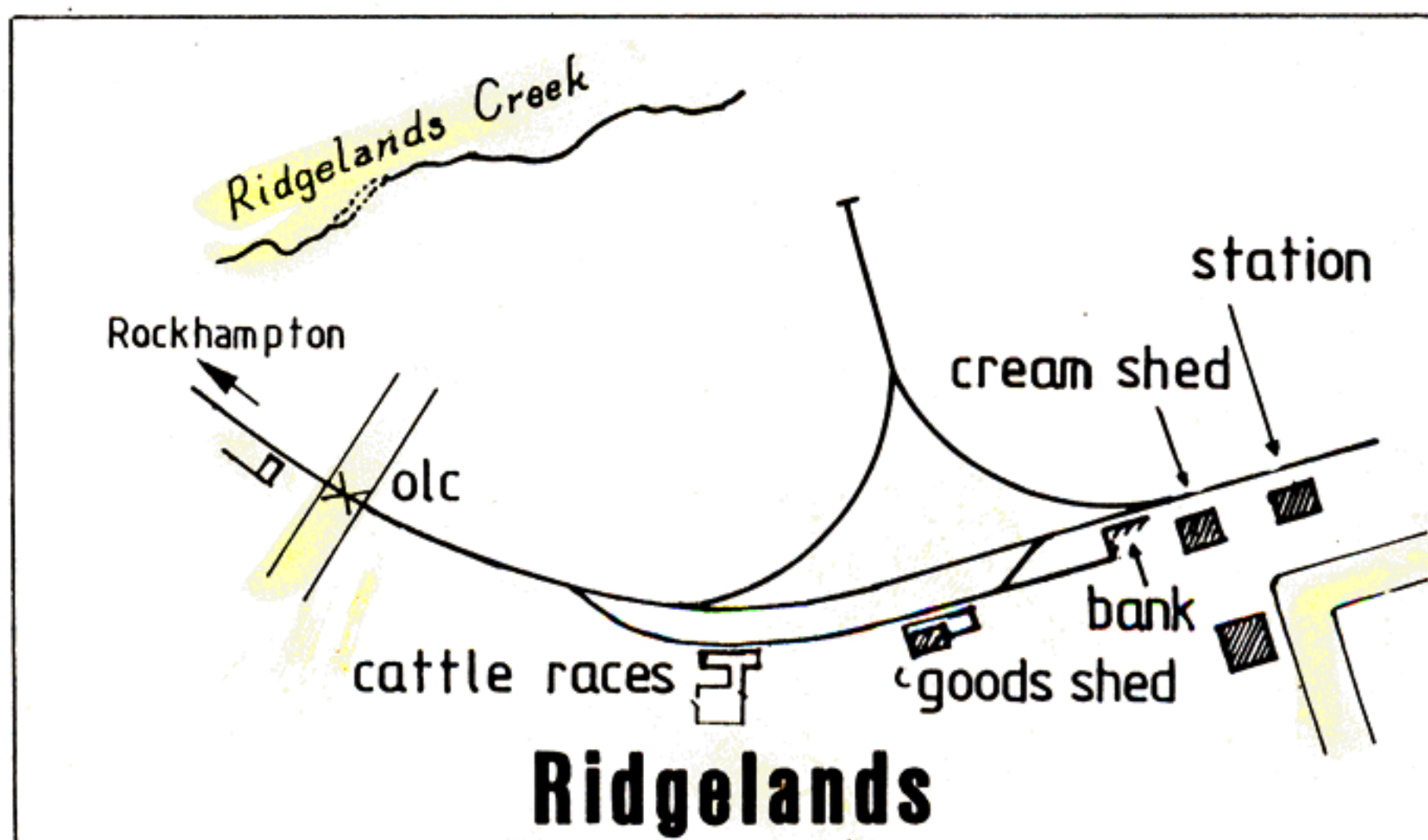
Despite the presence of steady local loadings in cattle and cream, there was never any need to man Ridgeland

with a station master, and a station mistress catered quite adequately right up until April 1953, when unattended working was instituted. Subsequently, the station master at Archer Park accounted for Ridgeland and intermediate sidings, while the porter on the railmotor sold tickets to intending passengers. Cream consignments usually amounted to some 182 or 227 Litres per trip, so both porter and cream loader were busily engaged for most of the time the railmotor was at Ridgeland. Although cream and stock were the main commodities handled at the terminus, other traffic was sometimes loaded in the earlier days. In early 1936, a second-hand engine was railed from Ridgeland to Gin Gin, while marble and firewood also occasionally went by train. Until quite late in the piece, the local general store received most of its supplies by rail as well.

A solitary Home signal protected Ridgeland Yard at the Rockhampton end, and it was worked by a standard lever near the station. Crossings occurred at Ridgeland very rarely, though when they did, the fork line was presumably used for such purposes.

Train Working

This relatively short line was always worked by engine crews and motive power based at Rockhampton, a curious combination of mixed and goods train services being provided initially on a thrice weekly basis (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays). Because of the short run out to the terminus, it was possible to provide a return for local residents utilising facilities in Rockhampton by running two trains on the same day, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. To keep track maintenance to a minimum, most, if not all, steam trains on the line were worked by diminutive B13 class engines up until quite late in the piece. Remarkably, there was for a while in the 1930s a weekly passenger train to Ridgeland and back on Fridays, this service presumably also being regularly allocated to a B13. One can well imagine this particular "Ridgeland flyer" trundling along the side of Lion Creek Road, the passengers of the lightly filled coach taking in the sights of suburban Rockhampton as the B13 whistled bossily at cars on approaching crossings.



June 1935 Timetable

		Railmotor MW	Pass. Fri.	Railmotor Mon.	Mixed Wed.	Pass. Fri.
ROCKHAMPTON	dep.	a.m. 7.10	a.m. 7.10	p.m. 3.30	p.m. 3.25	p.m. 3.55
Archer Park		7.20	7.20	3.45	3.45	4.10
Alton Downs Jct.		..	..	..	..	..
RIDGELANDS	arr.	8.25	8.35	4.45	5.25	5.25

		Railmotor MW	Pass. Fri.	Railmotor Mon.	Mixed Wed.	Pass. Fri.
RIDGELANDS	dep.	a.m. 9.30	a.m. 9.40	p.m. 5.20	p.m. 6.10	p.m. 6.0
Alton Downs Jct.	..	..	..	..	..	..
Archer Park		10.35	10.55	6.27	8.02	7.22
ROCKHAMPTON	arr.	10.43	11.03	6.35	8.10	7.30

With the introduction of railmotors in 1931, it was possible to cut down expenses considerably, and these units made further inroads at the expense of trains until 1942, when regular engine hauled services (apart from a monthly train) were replaced completely. In May that year, the Friday only Ridgeland mixed was cancelled, though arrangements to work a train in place of a railmotor if needed on the third Monday of the month were subsequently instituted. In many respects, it's surprising that this did not happen earlier, for the Q.R. had been working several similar lightly trafficked lines by this motive power for some years. The only time a train was ever really required was for occasional stock movements from Ridgeland, and from time to time per way and gang watering purposes. On Friday 24 February 1944, such arrangements occurred when train Nos 25 Down and 48 Up railmotors were replaced by an engine and coaches. This train primarily to lift a "CH" class bogie box wagon in Ridgeland Yard destined for Rockhampton.

Of the railmotor services, the mid week run on Wednesdays was susceptible to replacement by a train, for graziers mostly preferred to load cattle that day. Some 3000 head of cattle, averaging about three "K" class bogie cattle wagon loads per week, moved in good years from the railhead at Ridgeland to abattoirs, saleyards and distant pastures. Most week days, special shunt trips also worked as far as the Showgrounds and Carrick's Siding to place logs and clear processed timber. At show time, they also ran to the Showgrounds to convey stock, and in days of old, passengers. Shunting trains could work as far as Carrick's Siding without the Showgrounds-Ridgeland train staff on board, provided the signal specially provided was placed at "stop" prior to leaving the Showgrounds.

Despite inroads by road transport in the late 1940s, the Ridgeland Line retained a relatively frequent service up until quite late. In 1948, the Saturday railmotor and afternoon run on Monday were cut out, leaving two days only (Monday and Friday) for return trips based on Ridgeland. In due course, the Monday afternoon railmotor was also scrubbed, and only four trips per week (on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (two trips)) remained at the line's closure.

Because of its proximity to the Fitzroy River, the line was occasionally truncated by flood waters, with resultant disruption to services. This occurred in 1922, when

washaways and track damage occurred along the permanent way halting all trains until Tuesday, 3 January. That day, a ballast train finally got through to Ridgeland, but its work was all in vain, for further serious flood damage occurred in subsequent weeks. Regular services recommenced once again on or about Tuesday, 7 February.

Apart from a few sharp pinches on the approach to Ridgeland, the line was relatively level, and quite good loads could be taken with a small engine. Thus B13s found ready application on the branch, in addition to the larger PB15s and B15Cons (the heaviest allowed). A single "PB" could take 274.3 tonnes as a through load up to Ridgeland, returning with 228.6 tonnes (274.3 tonnes if Waroula was passed non stop). Attached engines could haul 660.4 tonnes, a ludicrous load considering the light loading usually offering. Conceivably, one or two big trains could have run from Ridgeland to clear heavy cattle movements.

Only two staff sections were needed on the line, the first encountered being less than a mile long. The staff for this section (Alton Downs Junction-Showgrounds) had a Yellow half diamond shaped head, the subsequent Showgrounds-Ridgeland section boasting another staff with a Red diamond shaped head. Although tickets were available, they were rarely needed, for it was possible to complete a return trip to Ridgeland in a relatively short time without tying up the train staff unnecessarily.

Closure

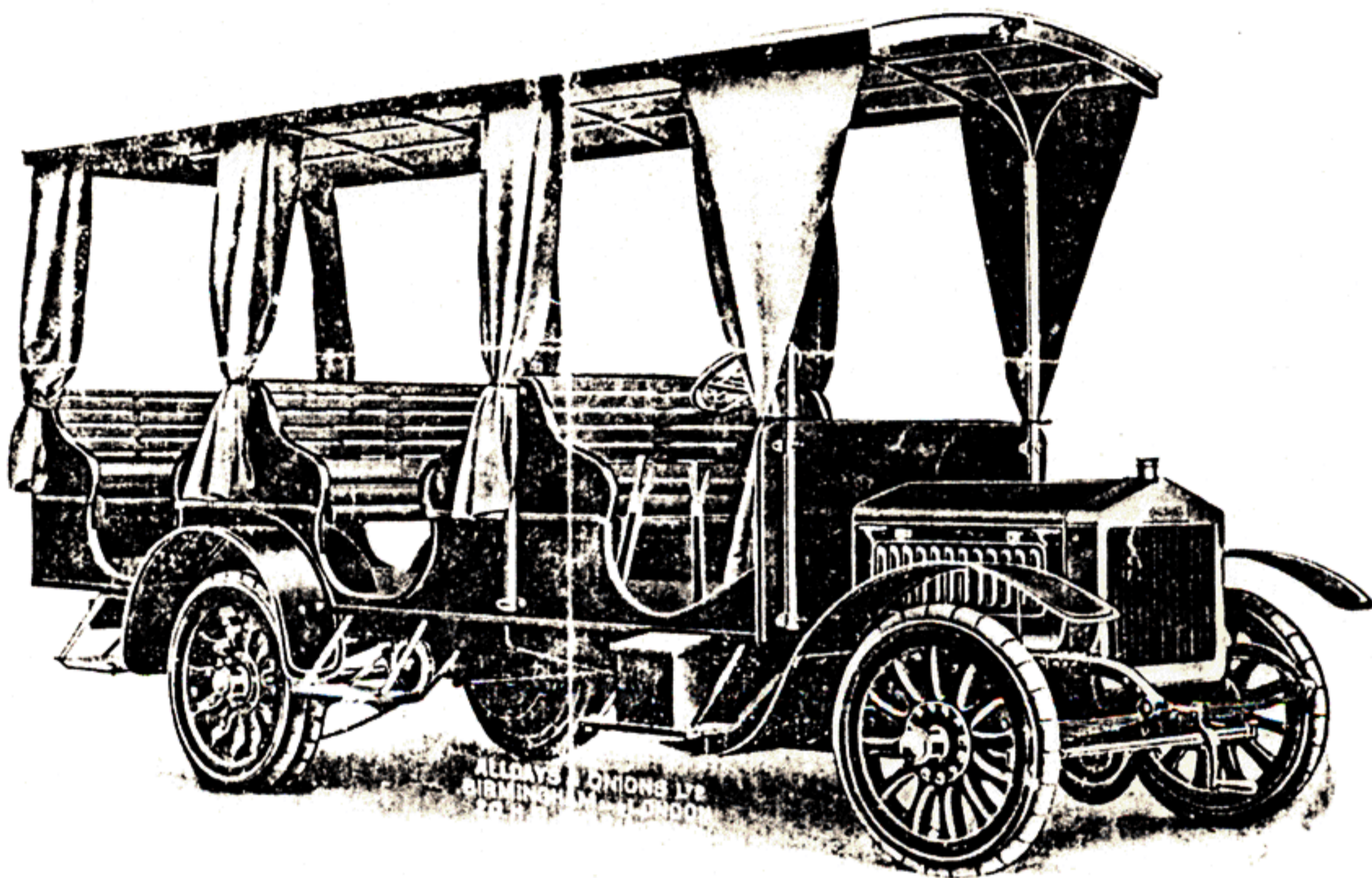
That the Alton Downs Line lasted as long as it did is surely a miracle. Lingered merely to carry cream, a few parcels, and some 3000 head of cattle yearly from Ridgeland the branch was never a success, even in the early days when road transport was barely a threat. Its retention for so many years was very much an act of benevolent neglect on the part of successive administrations. After 1942, maintenance was minimised to some extent by working virtually all services by railmotors, with engine hauled trains running only for stock or other traffic purposes.

After surviving almost 40 years, the line closed for good beyond Carrick's siding in the Rockhampton suburbs on Thursday, 30 June 1955. The last railmotor from Ridgeland

presumably was the morning run the day before, timed to depart the terminus at 9.30 a.m. To convey logs for the sawmill and stock at show time, shunts continued to operate if required to the Showgrounds and Carrick's siding under the supervision of the station master at Archer Park, but these too ceased to run in 1968, when the short stub from Alton Downs Junction was closed to business.

Apart from a few low embankments and cuttings near

Ridglands, the route of the line is barely discernable nowadays, as nature has taken its course to steadily erode all remainders. Around Ridglands, Morinish, Calmorin and Waroula, the dairy farms that once relied on the railmotor to convey cream to the Rockhampton butter factory have disappeared, their place being taken by broad acreage beef cattle properties with a resultant decrease in the district's population density.



ALWAYS' 20 H.P. 4 CYLINDER CHAIR-A-BANC

THE GOONDAH—BURRINJUCK RAILWAY

BULLETIN Nos 596, 597, 598, June, July, August 1987

Since the publication of the article, further research has revealed additional information about the railway.

Two diagrams, both drawn in 1907, have been discovered and are reproduced hereunder. One is the Longitudinal Section of the Line which is largely in agreement with the sketch as published, but also shows the elevations in feet above sea level and typical cross sections in through-cutting, easy sidecutting and heavy sidecutting.

The other diagram is a map showing the various (standard gauge) trial lines and the adopted (narrow gauge) line. The map as published in Bulletin is substantially in agreement with the 1907 diagram except for the location of a property known as Emu Flat. The position of Emu Flat published in

Bulletin and shown as being between Illalong Creek and Binalong was derived from the ordnance map for Binalong (Series 8628-I & IV Scale 1:50 000 published by the Central Mapping Authority of N.S.W.). The 1907 map shows Emu Flat as being located between Goondah and Illalong Creek, which was recently confirmed by a person who used to live near the locality. The Emu Flat Trial Line as depicted on the 1907 map is the correct location. There is also cause to believe that Emu Flat was a railway station on the original Great Southern Railway, but State Rail Authority records do not acknowledge this.

Lake de Burgh — The height of the concrete arch dam used for locomotive water supply was omitted; the height is 4.88 metres.

Locomotive Names — There is an error in the names of the Krauss locomotives with respect to their Builder's Numbers. This error is also present in the article "The Goondah — Burrinjuck Tramway" published in The Railway