

LETTERS

Dear Sir

The new Improved Meyer (LR 225) – for sale to Rhodesia

By late 1917, the First World War had been in progress for over three years and the needs of the munitions industry had created an inexhaustible demand for essential raw materials. During this period the tonnage of chrome carried over the Beira & Mashonaland Railway in Rhodesia had doubled, while the tonnage of copper from Katanga, in the Congo, had increased fivefold.¹

This increase in traffic led to a corresponding decline in the condition of the locomotives on this railway as it struggled to both handle the increased tonnages and maintain the available locomotives. New locomotives were unavailable and, by 1917, the railway was incapable of carrying the volume of traffic unless extra locomotives were received. In an attempt to resolve this problem the Commonwealth Government received, in October 1917, a cablegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London requesting the loan of ten 3ft 6in gauge locomotives for use in Rhodesia.

The Prime Minister's department immediately forwarded a copy of this telegram to the Premiers of Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania in the hope that one of these states may have been able to supply the required locomotives.² Tasmania immediately replied stating that a new locomotive, belonging to Millars Timber & Trading Company, was at present in the TGR's Launceston Workshops.³ This locomotive was an 0-4-0+0-4-0 "Improved Meyer" that had been built by Andrew Barclay in 1912 (builders No.1303) for the Huon Timber Company as their No.7.⁴ With an axle loading of 14 tons, it was too heavy for use in Tasmania and 'instructions [had] been received to ship this locomotive to Manilla (*sic*)', but instead it could be sold to Rhodesia 'for approximately £5000'.⁵ Both Queensland and South Australia also offered to sell locomotives to Rhodesia, rather than loan them, with Queensland offering six 'B13' class engines,⁶ while South Australia would sell either two 'T' or 'Y' class locomotives.⁷

In reply to these offers the United Kingdom government stated that these locomotives were unsuitable and that the type of locomotive required was an eight coupled tender engine, with a tractive effort of at least 26,000 pounds and a tender capacity of eight

tons of coal and 3,000 gallons of water.⁸ The closest that any state could come to meeting these requirements was Western Australia, who offered to sell to Rhodesia four 'F' class locomotives, a 4-8-0 which developed only 20,530 pounds tractive effort and had a tender capacity of only five tons of coal and 2200 gallons of water. However, this sale would be conditional on that the United Kingdom government releasing for export material required by the WAGR to repair four other locomotives.⁹

Almost three months elapsed before the Commonwealth Government received a reply to this final offer, when the Secretary of State for the Colonies cabled Australia in March 1918 to inform the government that Rhodesia's locomotive requirements had been met.¹⁰ In late 1917, the Chemin de Fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga (BCK) had commenced to take delivery of twenty-four new 2-8-2 locomotives that had been built by HK Porter in the United States.¹¹ However, the BCK was still largely only a proposed railway¹² and the Beira & Mashonaland Railway had managed to borrow six of these locomotives, which had resolved their motive power problems.¹³

References

1. Anthony H. Croxton, *Railways of Zimbabwe*, David & Charles, London, 1982, p.119.
2. Decypher of cablegram received from the Secretary of state for the Colonies dated London, 20th October 1917, 12.40 p.m. National Archives of Australia (NAA) Series A2939/1, Item SC75.
3. Premier Tasmania to Prime Minister, dated 1 November 1917. NAA Series A2939/1, Item SC75.
4. R.T. Horne, 'Andrew Barclay Locomotives in Australia, New Zealand & Fiji', *ARHS Bulletin*, Vol.35, No.560, June 1984, pp.121-136.
5. Premier Tasmania to Prime Minister, dated 1 November 1917. NAA Series A2939/1, Item SC75.
6. Decypher of cablegram despatched to the Secretary of state for the Colonies on 2nd November 1917. NAA Series A11803/1, Item 1917/89/932.
7. Premier South Australia to Prime Minister, dated 8 November 1917. NAA Series A2939/1, Item SC75.
8. Decypher of cablegram received from the Secretary of state for the Colonies dated 23rd November 1917, 12.10 p.m. NAA Series A11803/1, Item 1917/89/932.
9. Decypher of cablegram despatched to the Right Honourable the Secretary of state for the Colonies, London, on 19th December 1917. NAA Series A11803/1, Item 1917/89/932.
10. Memorandum dated 18 March 1918. NAA Series A2939/1, Item SC75.
11. *Porter Steam Locomotives*, National Model Railroad Association, Inc, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 2001, p.261.
12. S.E. Katzenellenbogen, *The Railways and the Copper Mines of Katanga*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973, p.90.
13. Edward D. Hamer, *Locomotives of Zimbabwe and Botswana*, Stenval's, Malmö, Sweden, 2001, p.62.

Mark Langdon
(via email)

Dear Sir,

The New Improved Meyer No.7 (LR 225)

Scott Clennett's excellent article on this locomotive has done much to dispel the pre-existing near total absence of any technical detail concerning the engine itself and its history while in Tasmania. It certainly fulfilled the term 'new' in one sense. It arrived brand new and some years later finally left the state still 'new'. The justification for the word 'improved' in its

description so far as its sojourn in Tasmania is concerned is hard to find.

The significance of the engine being identified as 7 suggests that there were six other engines under company ownership before this engine was ordered and this indeed was the position. Scott has referred to four of them; namely *STANLEY*, the Manning Wardle 0-4-0ST (371/1871) which had arrived at Hopetoun in 1901, the ex-TGR Baldwin 0-4-0ST (7108/1884) which was purchased in 1902, the Lima Shay (2029/1907) and *THE HUON* (Andrew Barclay 959/1902). Apart from *THE HUON*, which was located at Geeveston, all of the other three were at Hopetoun. They had been owned by the Tasmanian Timber Corporation (TTC) before that company was absorbed by the Huon Timber Corporation (HTC). The other two locomotives owned by the HTC at the time No.7 was ordered were the Lima Shay (698/1902) ex-North Mt Lyell Copper Company, which was at Geeveston, and a vertical boilered Oliver/Markham that had been imported by Edmund Tyler in 1890 to work on his tramway at Ida Bay. In 1898, it passed into the ownership of Hay and Chopping, who worked an extensive tramway serving their Hastings sawmill and coal mine. This sawmill, tramway and engine fell into HTC ownership in 1907 but as operations continued at Hastings, the VB engine remained there, and apparently at work.

The probable reason why the Meyer was dignified with a number when none of the prior six engines had been so identified probably lies in the fact that they were spread between three owners and three different locations. There would have been little need for numbers for the small number of locomotives operated by the individual companies. Once all six engines had passed into the ownership of the HTC, the opportunity to rationalise a listing of engines became possible and probably desirable. However, I am unaware of any attempt to number the other engines, or even any suggestion that they be numbered.

The fate of all seven of the HTC engines was largely determined by the fluctuating fortunes of the company and its ultimate failure. Following the abandonment of the Hopetoun Mill and tramway, *STANLEY* and the Lima Shay (2029/1907) were transferred to Geeveston. With the closure of operations there the Lima Shay was left with little likelihood of being needed, and Millar's Timber & Trading Company, of which the Huon Timber Co was a subsidiary, transferred it to their timber operation on Vanikoro Island in the Solomons. In 1934, *STANLEY* went to Jaeger's sawmill tramway, near Redpa in the far north west of Tasmania, where it worked until about 1937 when it lost its boiler. Surprisingly, that was not quite the end of the story for this interesting locomotive for, in February 1943, Jaegers used the frame and wheels to mount a Sentinel steam lorry motor in the construction of a rather bizarre locomotive. About 1924 the little Baldwin appeared on the tramway serving an HTC-owned

sawmill near Dunalley. Lima Shay 698/1902 does not appear to have worked after the Geeveston operation closed and was possibly scrapped at Geeveston. *THE HUON* was to see several years of service. In 1926 it was shipped to Western Australia, where it worked on various sawmill tramways for about 15 years. It was scrapped in 1958. The vertical -boilered Oliver/Markham has survived and is on display at the Tasmanian Transport Museum in Glenorchy.

It would be interesting to learn how No.7 survived the period of Japanese occupation of Mindanao, and to what extent it was used then and in the immediate post war years.

Ken Milbourne
Montrose, Tasw

owner converted the vessel to a lighter for carrying timber to Regatta Point near Strahan. When Howard closed his sawmill the *Glenturk* was tied up at Risbey's wharf (at Risbey's Cove which is between Regatta Point and Strahan) where at some later date it sank. Its 'bones' are still visible today.

And so the SS *Glenturk* served two interesting Tasmanian industrial railway systems associated with the timber industry during its existence: from transporting an Improved Meyer articulated steam locomotive to carrying valuable Huon Pine logs.

With thanks to Mr Peter Reid of Queenstown for his valuable assistance.

Ross Mainwaring
St Ives, NSW

This accident was much more than an 'incident' for those involved, which included my father, Edgar Plater, who suffered a fractured spine, broken pelvis and lost all his teeth amongst other injuries. The loco involved was the *EUDLO* (John Fowler 16207 of 1925) and it still shows evidence of that accident. Dad, aged 19, was the fireman at the time and returned to work after about a year recovering; he went on to clock up 51 years service with the Moreton Mill.

The 'incident' occurred when a bridge about 40 feet long across a saltwater inlet to the Maroochy River about 400 yards downstream of Dunethin Rock collapsed. The loco ended up upside down in the inlet with about six trucks of cane all around it, Dad was crushed between the loco and one of the cane trucks. Retrieving the loco from the inlet was a major exercise which included driving four piles and constructing a lifting frame above it.

EUDLO is on display at the Nambour Museum, along with photos of the accident and Edgar Plater's story.

Clive Plater
Eudlo, Qld

Dear Sir,

**SMR Stanford Merthyr line
(LR 225, p34)**

The year 1963, mentioned in connection with the closure of this line, may refer to the replacement of the overbridge at Heddon Greta by earth in-fill, but the railway was taken up long before that. On 9 December 1943, Kearsley Shire Council secured passage of the *Stanford Coal-Mine Railway (Amendment) Act*, under which SMR could seek government approval to close all or part of the line, notwithstanding certain provisions of the original Act. The Shire Council wished to resume portion of the railway land for a proposed deviation of the Maitland-Kurri road, thereby eliminating the overbridge at Heddon Greta. Although nothing came of this proposal, SMR proceeded to close the line between Ayrfield No.1 colliery and Kurri Kurri under the powers of the Amendment Act, and reclamation of the track on this section commenced in December 1944. The remaining section was retained as a refuge siding.

It is interesting to note that immediately north of the former road bridge is the preserved Heddon station platform, closed in 1929, and which will not be affected by the new Branxton link road.

Robert Driver
Killara NSW

Research Editor: The ARHS publication *Australian Railway Routes, 1854-2000* was consulted for a closure date of this line and this gives December 1963. Perhaps an amendment is required for any update..

Cover Photo (LR 225)

The nice photo of an SMR coal train on the cover of LR 225 is somewhat more revealing than the caption might suggest. The location is actually the gentle rise through



Dear Sir,

**Strahan jetty tramway (LR 223 & 225)
and The new Improved Meyer – a sorry
saga (LR 225)**

Mention is made of the SS *Glenturk* in LR 225, page 9. By coincidence, this vessel built in 1905, and once owned by the West Coast Timber Co, came into the possession of the Pine Export Company of Strahan in 1919. The 84 feet long steam scow frequently called at the Mill Bay jetty at West Strahan with a load of Huon Pine logs. A steel rail tramway was used to transport the logs from the jetty to the nearby mill, which was the Pine Export Company's principal sawmill as described in LR 223 and 225.

When the Pine Export Co became insolvent in the 1920s, Mr Bob Hamer, appointed as company caretaker, took possession of the vessel and operated it as his own with the permission of the defunct company's management. In 1938 the *Glenturk* ran aground on Sophia Point reef (between Strahan and Kelly Basin in Macquarie Harbour) suffering considerable damage. No suitable slipways were available at Strahan for the necessary repairs. The boiler and engine were removed and the vessel came into the possession of a sawmiller, Mr R J Howard, who had timber interests at Zeehan and Strahan. The new

Dear Sir,

World War I Light Railways

The image above was originally sent as a postcard to members of my family, both in Australia and the UK, in June 1918. The group are men and NCO's of the Third Australian Light Railway Operating Company (3rd ALROC).

The image was most probably taken in Provin Northern France in late May 1918 and includes my Grandfather Sgt Jarvis William Latham, Service No 14053. He is the third man from the left in the top row. I am attempting to identify the others in this image and was wondering if any *Light Railways* readers could help

Bill Latham
via email

Editor: Any relevant information may be forwarded to the editor, via the postal or email addresses on page 2.

Dear Sir

Petrie and the Eudlo Flats (LR 225)

In Rod Milne's article, mention is made of a newspaper report of an incident that occurred on Saturday 19 September 1936 and Rod was unsure where this may have occurred.

Bee Siding, which was the railway name for the locality originally called Weston Soldiers Settlement, but now known as Loxton. The Bee Siding station platforms, which the train has just passed, were erected by the settlers as a self-help project in early 1928, but the signal box and Up and Down storage sidings had existed since 1914. In this view, the train is passing the 'new' brick signal cabin, constructed by SMR at a cost of £360, after the original building fell victim to arson during the unrest of 1930, when the mines and railway were in a prolonged shut down.

Bee Siding was abolished as a Block section in 1961, and the signal box, along with most of the SMR station buildings, was demolished in 1975, having been declared 'eyesores' under Cessnock Council's 'Coalfields Beautification' program.

Robert Driver
Killara, NSW

Dear Sir,

Facts, certainties and imbrolios at Cobar (LR 225)

I was rather bemused by the 'fanciful' response in LR 225 to my correspondence concerning the possible fate of the two missing Great Cobar, John Fowler & Co locomotives. I would humbly suggest that my suggestion was somewhat less 'fanciful' than the long held notion that the two Brooks & Co 2ft 6in gauge Fowlers were consigned to Sydney, NSW rather than Cuba!

However, I digress. If one examines the John Fowler & Co loco list, although the cancellation of locos 4481 and 4482 may have happened at another time, it appears that it occurred in either December 1882 or January 1883. Based on Richard Horne's advice that the four original Great Cobar locos ordered were despatched as normal from the works, the cancellation of 4481 and 4482 seems to have taken place at much the same time as the missing Great Cobar locos would have arrived in Sydney, only to find that they were unwanted at Cobar.

Although Richard Horne quite rightly indicates that the two missing Great Cobar Fowlers may not have gone to Cuba, the apparent very close coincidence in timing with the date of manufacture of the Fowler loco supplied to Casas Aulet in December 1882 (4451) makes Cuba I believe very difficult, if not impossible, to ignore, especially

as it seems unlikely that Casas Aulet would have gone to all the trouble of changing the gauge of its tramway/s for just one loco. The Fowler cancellations in 1881 and 1884 mentioned by Mr Horne on the other hand, are in my opinion simply red herrings.

While re-examining the imbrolio of the two missing Great Cobar Fowlers, I note that Richard Horne revisited much of my earlier advice in the LR 158 article regarding which locos arrived at Cobar and when.

I feel, however, that a couple of additional points need to be addressed. Firstly, although it was originally intended that two Mort's Dock locomotives were to be used at Cobar and despite the purported presence of two Mort's Dock locos in the 1884 Mines Dept Report that may well have only been prepared to some extent as a desk top exercise, definitive evidence is only available that one Mort's Dock loco arrived and worked at Cobar. Ignoring the 1884 Mines Dept report, the maximum number of locos specifically noted at work on the Great Cobar tramway as I recall was five, presumably four Fowlers and one Mort's Dock specimen, although it is possible I guess that one of the Fowler locos could have been out of action and two Mort's Dock locos were hard at work.

It seems quite clear that the Mort's Dock loco/s proved unsatisfactory, or that it/they faired poorly in comparison with the Fowler product, and that situation became apparent very early in the piece. Bearing that in mind, it isn't clear if the second Mort's Dock Great Cobar loco was delivered to Cobar, or even whether it was actually built. Richard Horne pertinently notes, that there are no known photographs of the Mort's Dock Great Cobar locomotives. More tellingly, however, except for the corroborated recorded early use of the first Mort's Dock loco at Cobar, as I recall, unlike the Great Cobar Fowlers, outside of the 1884 Mines report there are no known subsequent mentions of two Mort's Dock locos at Cobar, or for that anywhere else. If the second Mort's Dock loco ordered by the Great Cobar Copper Mining Co was actually built, what happened to it, and why is there no long term trace of either Mort's Dock loco, when other Mort's Dock locomotives gave quite lengthy service?

Ron Madden
Wagga Wagga, NSW

ERRATA

In the article 'The new Improved Meyer – a sorry saga' in LR 225:

The builder's number and date is correctly given in the photo caption on page 3 of LR 225, but is incorrectly given as 1303 of 1913 twice in the text – on page 3, third last paragraph, and in the first line after 'Vale', on page 10.

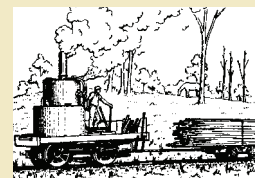
Also, in the last paragraph on page 5, where it states that the two relevant locomotives "... were built in 1912/13 ...", in fact both had build dates of 1912.

In reference No 34, on page 11, the date

given should be April 1915, not 1913, and in ref No 35, the date should be 30 March 1915, not 1015!

In the article 'PETRIE and the Eudlo Flats', also in LR 225, the photograph on page 24 was taken at the loop south of Didillibah Road, adjacent to Eudlo Flats Road, not at the loop adjacent to Paynter Creek Road.

The item in Research, on page 34 of LR 225, 'SMR line to Stanford Merthyr, NSW' was from the Yahoo site, but was not submitted by Jeff Mullier.



LRRSA NEWS

MEETINGS

ADELAIDE: "Richard Horne's Light Railway Photos"

The topic for the August meeting is Richard Horne's light railway photos. Bring along an item of light rail interest. We would like to hear from any member who can supply current information on heritage or tourist light rail sites in South Australia.

Location: 150 First Avenue, Royston Park.

Date: Thursday 2 August at 8.00pm.

Contact Les Howard on (08) 8278 3082

BRISBANE: "Dave Rollins' Travels Pt 2"

David Rollins has volunteered to show more slides of his recent overseas trips.

Location: Brisbane City Council Library, Garden City Shopping Centre, Mount Gravatt.

Date: Friday 10 August at 7.30pm.

MELBOURNE: "Annual General Meeting and Pickering's Sugar Pine Railroad"

Following our brief Annual General Meeting, Phil Rickard will introduce a DVD on Pickering's Sugar Pine Railroad, which is considered by many to be California's most spectacular logging railway. It was close to the Yosemite Valley, and the video includes historic photographs, early colour film, and recollections from two people who worked there.

Location: Ashburton Uniting Church Hall, Ashburn Grove, Ashburton.

Date: Thursday, 9 August at 8.00pm

SYDNEY: "Sugar tramways of our northern neighbour"

Ray Gardiner will present some of his excellent videos on Indonesian sugar cane tramways which he personally photographed on one of his many trips to that country. Not only were there many exotic narrow gauge steam loco's working in the cane fields but the sugar mills themselves had very interesting stationary steam engines to power the cane crushing machinery. These videos are now of great historic value as steam rail operations in the Indonesian canefields are practically extinct.

Location: Woodstock Community Centre, Church Street, Burwood, (five minutes walk from Burwood railway station).

Date: Wednesday 22 August at 7.30pm