

# Light Railways of Sydney Harbour

by Jim Longworth

The character of Sydney Harbour has changed radically over recent years. Now dominated by thousands of pleasure craft, once the harbour, coves, and tributary rivers were a bustling industrial waterway. Barges and lighters carried raw materials along the salty artery to feed countless industries congregated along the foreshores, and returned with manufactured goods for transshipment at the wharves of Darling Harbour and the port.

This is an initial listing of light railways that once connected the harbour with the industries and other activities along its shores, starting at North head and proceeding anti-clockwise around the foreshores to finish at South Head. Principal references have been included to introduce readers to the readily available literature.

LOCATION	DATES	NOTES
<b>North Head to Milsons Point</b>		
North Head	?-c.1956	A 2'3" gauge line was used to transport immigrant's bags and suitcases from the wharf, up an incline to the various buildings of the quarantine station. Powered by an internal combustion locomotive with a winch on its rear end (Simpson P. <i>LRN</i> No. 55 Dec 1986, No. 66 October 1988).
Manly Cove, Manly	?-1914	A c.3'6" gauge line carried passenger's luggage from the ferries along the wharf to the street tramway terminus and cab rank (McCarthy K. <i>LRN</i> No. 51 April 1986).
Suspension Bridge, Cammeray	1939	Narrow gauge lines were used to carry fill for the reclamation of Long Bay during reconstruction of the bridge (Rotary Club of Northbridge. 1992. <i>Suspension Bridge, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations</i> [booklet]).
Willoughby Bay	1899	A 2' gauge tramway was used in constructing the Folley Point sewage works ( <i>T&amp;CJ</i> . 21 Jan 1899).
Spit Bridge, Seaforth	1955	Two Planet locomotives hauled skips full of wet concrete for construction of the new Spit Bridge.
Beauty Point to Parriwi Head	1922-25	Narrow gauge skips were used to haul spoil that was being excavated out of the Northern Suburbs Ocean Outfall Sewer, from the tunnel face to be dumped into Pearl Bay to reclaim the mud flat ( <i>Tramway Weekly Notices</i> . 11 March 1922, ?. <i>TS</i> . 4 June 1925).
Bantry Bay	1911-?	Hand-pushed narrow gauge flat-wagons carried explosives between a series of store bunkers and several wharves along the bay (Champion S&G. 1988. <i>Forest History</i> . Authors).
Georges Head	1883-?	2' gauge lines connected underground armament magazines and gun emplacements (Dockrill M. 1989. <i>The Defenses of Georges Head from 1870 to 1945</i> . Dissertation for B.Arch, UNSW).
Chowder Bay	?-?	Incline ran from the harbour up the side of a hill to a military warehouse.
Chowder Bay	?-1893	A line carried anti-submarine mines from the shore out along the jetty ( <i>GPO</i> ).

Bradley's Head	?	A 3'6" gauge line ran along the stone pier to a flat area (store shed?) on the shore.
Mosman	c.1901	An inclined tram carried feed from the wharf up to the animal quarantine station ( <i>PWD AR</i> 1900, 1901).
Mosman	1878-1889	A 3-railed incline from Harnett's sandstone quarry ran down the hill to the wharf (Longworth J. & Fleming G. The incline at Harnett's Sandstone Quarry - Mossman Bay. <i>LR</i> . No. 140 April 1998).
Roseville	?	A funicular railway was used to haul telephone cables from the shoreline ( <i>NST</i> . 26 Feb 1986 ).
Milsons Point	1897	A standard gauge line carried bogie frozen meat wagons from a wharf to the Pastoral Finance Association cold store ( <i>T&amp;CJ</i> . 27 Nov 1897).
<b>Milsons Point to Meadowbank</b>		
Balls Head	1920-1976	A cable tramway transported coal from underneath a bunker on the shore along the jetty to load into ships (McCarthy K. The Balls Head Coal Loader. <i>TW</i> . December 1975, June 1976, October 1976).
Greenwich to Longnose Point, Balmain	c.1924	A narrow-gauge track ran along the floor of the NSW government railway's electric cable tunnel. The line was used to carry spoil from the tunnel face to a wharf where the 'V' skips were emptied into barges ( <i>TS</i> . 11 March 1924. Dargan J. 1984. <i>The Sydney Harbour Tunnel</i> . Lane Cove Library. <i>Sydney Caveclan</i> . www.).
Riverview	?	A 500' long incline connected St. Ignatius College with the river (Weston A. 1979. Unpublished manuscript).
Burns Bay, Lane Cove	1926-29	2' gauge skips brought tunnel spoil out to form the embankments for a sewer aqueduct across the bay ( <i>Sun</i> . 8 Jan 1926).
Woolwich	?	Lines were used for transferring locomotives from Morts Dock Engineering Company works to their wharf..
Nelson Parade, Hunters Hill	?	A single line of tramway ran along a timber jetty to a factory.
Boronia Park, Gladesville	?	? (Kramer J. 1997. Pers dis).
Kidman & Mayoh, Kissing Point	c.1920s	Self-propelled travelling cranes ran along tracks around the shipyard (Files. Ryde Historical Society).
Meadowbank		A standard gauge tramway ran from an agricultural equipment works down to a wharf (Longworth J & Fleming G. Mellor's Meadowbank Manufacturing Company Tramway. <i>LR</i> . No. 143, October 1998).
<b>Meadowbank to Parramatta</b>		
Meadowbank	1885-1886	Tramways were used to carry rock from a wharf during construction of the Meadowbank railway bridge ( <i>SM</i> 15 August 1885, <i>ISN</i> 15 September 1886).
Ermington Wharf	1854	A line was proposed from the Pennant Hills quarry to the wharf ( <i>SMH</i> . 24 November 1854, <i>DofM AR</i> . 1879).
<b>Parramatta to Rhodes</b>		
Parramatta	1856-?	A tramway ran from a wharf to the timber yard of Messrs. Hart, Hitchcock, & Co. (Matthews H. The Parramatta Wharf Tramway. <i>ARHS Bn</i> . No. 254 December 1958.).

Sandown	1897	A line ran from The Graziers' Meat Export Company canning works to their wharf ( <i>DMR</i> . Feb 1897).
Sandown	?-?	A standard gauge street tramway powered by steam tram motors connected Redbank Wharf with industries along the route carried passengers to the Parramatta Park Gates (Matthews H. <i>The Parramatta Wharf Tramway. ARHS Bn.</i> No. 254 December 1958.).
Duck River	?	A c.2'6" gauge, 4-wheel, wood bodied wagon, was seen in the mud between the tide marks (MacDonald B. Pers dis).
Newington	1909-1999	An extensive network of lines carried armaments from the wharf to a series of storage bunkers. The line was worked by battery-electric locomotives ( <i>Newington Navy Armaments Depot</i> . 1999. Rowlingstock Videos).
Homebush Bay	1953	A 2' gauge loco hauled skips of material to build entraining embankments, which were later filled behind with dredged silt (Wallace J. <i>Mud Flats to Modern Factories. Port of Sydney.</i> June 1959; Simpson P. <i>LR</i> . No. 147 June 1999).
Homebush Bay	1912-1939	A 2' gauge tramway ran from the State Brickworks to its wharf (Eardley G. <i>The State Brickworks Tramway. ARHS Bn.</i> No. 415 May 1972, <i>SM</i> . 24 Jan 1912 ).
Concord West	mid 1940s-early 1995	Steam tram motor No. 103 was acquired to haul bagged bagasse from the wharf up to the CSR Canite factory, but the system never worked as intended (Macdonald B. 1994. Pers dis).
Rhodes	c.1916-c.1948	A double tracked incline ran between the wharf and the Berger Paints factory (Coupe S. 1983. <i>Concord - A Centenary History</i> . Municipality of Concord; Evans P. <i>LR</i> No. 107 Jan 1990 ).
<b>Rhodes to Dawes Point</b>		
Mortlake	1886-1953	A network of 3' gauge lines carried coal from the wharf to the AGL gasworks. Operated by steam locomotives (Buckland J. <i>The Mortlake Gasworks Railway of the Australian Gas Light Company. LR</i> . No. 97, July 1987).
Nestle's, Abbotsford	1918-c.1962	A line carried coal from a bunker on the harbour-end of the wharf to the boiler house at the chocolate factory.
Abbotsford	1884-1998	A rope-worked incline connected the wharf and Lysaghts wire works on the ridge behind (Wilson C. 1984. <i>AWI, Growing up with Australia, Sydney Wiremill Centenary</i> , AWI; Hughes G. <i>LR</i> . No. 149, Oct 1999).
Iron Cove	1919	An incline ran up from a covered wharf to the Balmain Chemical Works ( <i>Signals</i> . No. 27, Winter 1997).
Balmain	1926-c.1960s	A standard gauge tramway ran from the wharf around the maintenance works of Sydney Ferries Limited.
Goat Island	1927-?	Tramways connected wharves, stores, and workshops (Semple Kerr J. 1985. <i>Goat Island</i> , MSB).
White Bay, Balmain	1898	A self-acting incline ran between the wharf and Lever Brothers soap and candle factory (Eardley G. Files. Mitchell Library).

Glebe	1864	A line ran between the stone wharf and Messrs. Cowan & Israel's soap & candle works ( <i>ISN</i> . 16 June 1864).
Pyrmont	1947	Hudsons timber mill had a travelling crane on an elevated railway (GPO).
Darling Harbour	1874	A 4HP vertical boiler steam engine and windlass hauled logs from the river up along an elevated traveller into the timber works of Goodlet & Smith ( <i>ISN</i> . 14 Nov 1874).
Ultimo	1930-?	A standard gauge battery powered dump truck carried boiler ash between the Ultimo Power House and an ash dumping wharf (Cooke D. Ultimo Power Station Ash Truck. <i>ARHS Bn</i> No. 594 April 1987).
Sydney Harbour Bridge	c.1930	A network of standard gauge lines carried self propelled travelling cranes around the construction site ( <i>SHB Photograph Albums</i> . State Archives, Browning J. Tramways of the SHB: the Crossley Locomotives. <i>LR</i> . No. 139, Feb 1998).
SHB	1930-on-going	Four rack-railway self-propelled creeper cranes run over the arch to aid in maintenance work.
<b>Dawes Point to South Head</b>		
Circular Quay	1836-1844	Light railways were used in constructing Circular Quay ( <i>NST</i> . 24-25 July 1992).
Lyne Park, Rose Bay	1901	A horse hauled tramway carted material for building entraining walls behind which were filled with dredged material ( <i>T&amp;CJ</i> . 23 March 1901).
<b>Islands</b>		
Spectacle Island	1896-?	Wooden tramways connected the wharf and ammunition loading buildings ( <i>PWD AR</i> . 1896-1903). Standard gauge lines connected various buildings (King L. Spectacle Island Naval depot. <i>LR</i> . No. 143, October 1998).
Cockatoo Island	?	Tramways were used in constructing the Fitzroy Graving Dock ( <i>ISN</i> 15 February 1886). Crane railways ran around docks and wharves (Parker R. 1977. <i>Cockatoo Island</i> . Thomas Nelson, McCarthy K. Cockatoo Dockyard Electric Railway. <i>LR</i> No. 88 April 1985).
Garden Island	mid 1880s-1960?	A standard gauge line linked the main wharves and workshops, and was worked by a series of locomotive cranes (Lind L. The Old garden Island Line. <i>Garden Island, Social &amp; Sporting magazine</i> . March 1980).

### Abbreviations

*ARHS Bn* - Australian Railway Historical Society Bulletin; *DofM AR* - NSW Department of Mines Annual Report; *DMR* - Dalgety's Monthly Review; *GPO* - NSW Government Printing Office, video discs in the Mitchell Library; *ISN* - Illustrated Sydney News; *LR* - Light Railways; *LRN* - Light Railway News; *NST* - North Shore Times; *PWD AR* - NSW Department of Public Works Annual Report; *SM* - Sydney Mail; *SMH* - Sydney Morning Herald; *T&CJ* - Town & Country Journal; *TS* - The Sun; *TW* - Trolley Wire.