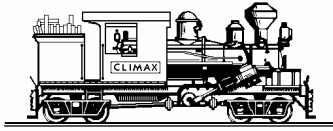


LIGHT RAILWAY RESEARCH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA



SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND GROUP FIELD EXCURSION No 7 TO MAPLETON TRAMWAY

Saturday 31 May 2003

ITINERARY

- 8.00 Depart hire car depot corner of Beaudesert Road and Lillian Av Rocklea (near Salisbury Station)
- 8.10 Pick up Dutton Park (Cornwall St / Kent St. corner / Eastern entrance to Dutton Park Station) thence via SE Freeway, Inner City Bypass and Gateway Arterial Road to :
- 8.40 Pick up at Bald Hills Railway Strn.
- 10.00 Arrive Nambour

We will be met by John Henley who will host a conducted tour of the tramway route including the Dulong branch. There will be some short walks to accessible sections, but as much of the formation is on private land, many features will only be able to be viewed from vantage points .

Bring along a picnic lunch. We will be lunching at a picnic area near Mapleton.

Returning to Nambour, features missed on the way up will be pointed out.

- 4.00 Depart Nambour
- 6.00 Arrive Rocklea

NOTE: Departure time is fixed but other times are approximate

TRAMWAY DETAILS

Route length:	10 miles 78 chains (17.66 km)
Termini:	Nambour and Mapleton
Gauge:	2 feet (610 mm)
Locos:	2 X Shay (Lima 13-2 shortened)
Passenger brake vans:	2 (with guard's compartments)
Cream Van:	1 (fully enclosed, central doors)
Covered Wagons:	2 (one was a roofed flat wagon)
Livestock Wagon:	1 (with slatted sides and end gate)
Flat wagons for logs etc.:	7

MAPLETON TRAMWAY

By John Henley

Starting in 1897, the Moreton Central Sugar Mill Co. Ltd. constructed a 2ft gauge tramway from its mill at Nambour to the canefields at Burnside and Perwillowen. The lands at Dulong, west of Nambour but 200 metres higher, were thought to be ideal for cane, so the Mill, to maximise its throughput, agreed to extend the tramway to Kureelpa and Dulong in return for the farmers supplying it with cane.

Rails reached the top of the Highworth Range in 1903 and the site of Kureelpa Hall in 1904. A line from the Hall south to Dulong was completed in 1905. A branch to Image Flat was built. The lines were worked by horses and gravity.

In 1905 the Mill purchased its first steam locomotive *Moreton*, but this engine could not manage the sharp curves (down to 59 feet or 18 metres radius) and steep grades (up to 1 in 20) on the Highworth Range ascent. It was felt that only geared locomotives were practicable for the gradients and curves on the line.

The first such locomotive, a Shay, was purchased in 1908 and named *Dulong*. It weighed 13 tons and was a two-cylinder loco, the second-smallest in Lima's catalogue. It was possibly the first Shay built to the gauge of 2 feet. With a tractive effort of 6060 lbs it could take loads of 15 tons up the Highworth Range and 45 tons down.

As the Mill was in financial trouble, in 1910 it began running passenger and goods carrying trams on its lines (including that to Kureelpa) to increase its income, especially during the slack season, when the tramway would otherwise be out of use. Knowing this, the farmers of the Blackall Range began to agitate for the tramway to be extended about 5 miles to Mapleton, as roads in the district were poor.

But as little sugar was grown on the Blackall Range, the Mill was not interested. Anyhow, growth of cane in the Dulong and Kureelpa areas was disappearing fast. The farmers had found that the soil was degrading badly, and most were going over to dairying. The branch from Kureelpa to Dulong, only ever worked by horses, was in the process of being closed after less than six years' use, and it was possible that the line from Highworth to Kureelpa could be closed.

The people of Mapleton then asked the Maroochy Shire Council to take over the line to ensure its survival, and to extend it to the top of the range. After much persuasion, the Shire Council obtained a loan from the government

and timber specials), a second similar Shay was purchased in 1914 and named *Mapleton*.

The line ran at a loss in its early years, and was never very profitable, but it was not such a financial disaster as the Buderim Tramway. Some staff, such as driver Bill English Snr and Guard Jock Simpson, worked on the tram for most of the line's existence.

There were no turntables, wyes or triangles to enable the rolling stock to be turned. The locos always faced Mapleton. *Dulong* was based in Nambour in an open engine shed, and *Mapleton* was stabled each night in a shed at Mapleton Station.

The Shire Council owned two passenger carriages, each with a guard's compartment at the Mapleton end, and 11 goods vans and wagons. All had two small four-wheel bogies, with a screw-operated hand-brake at one end working on one bogie only. Cane trucks were owned by the Mill and had four wheels. They carried stick cane and only a few surviving from horse days had brakes. Wheels were spragged before descending the two steep ranges.

Mapleton worked the regular tram which left Mapleton each morning (except Sunday) carrying passengers, livestock, farm produce, cream, sawn timber and logs. It would return to Mapleton in the early afternoon, carrying passengers, mail, newspapers, groceries, hotel supplies, parcels and other goods.

During the crush, *Dulong* worked the cane tram, which would leave Nambour at 5 am and drop off empty cane trucks at the farms en route. It was expected to reach Mapleton before the regular tram left. If it were running late, it would wait at Story's Siding at the foot of the Blackall Range to cross the regular tram. It would return to Nambour later in the morning, collecting the loaded cane trucks on the way, as the cane had to be at the Mill by 12.30 pm that day. The locos often sapped their duties. In the slack, *Dulong* was only used when it was needed, e.g. in the case of accidents, repairs, overhauls, landslips or track maintenance.

Timber specials carried logs from the Blackall Range and sawn timber from the Mapleton Sawmill (most of the timber for the Hornibrook Highway was sawn in Mapleton and carried on the tram). Day excursions for tourists from Nambour to Mapleton were on a few Sundays each year.

As with other tramways, improved roads and more reliable road vehicles made the tramway redundant and it was closed on December 31, 1944 after 29 years. The Shire sold the two Shays, rolling stock, rails and all equipment to Moreton Central Mill in 1946. Both locomotives were in need of heavy overhaul.

In 1948 *Dulong* was written off but some of its parts were good. Its engine replaced that on *Mapleton* and its chimney, sand dome and possibly a bogie were transferred too. A new steel cab and bunker were fabricated and the loco went to work for the Mill, shunting wagons of mill press residue down Howard Street to a wax factory.

Mapleton was renamed *Shay* in 1958 and continued in service on the Mill's tramway until 1960 when it was decommissioned. It was put on display firstly at the Mill, then at the local kindergarten opposite, then for several months at Mapleton, and now at the entrance to the Mill where it can still be seen.