

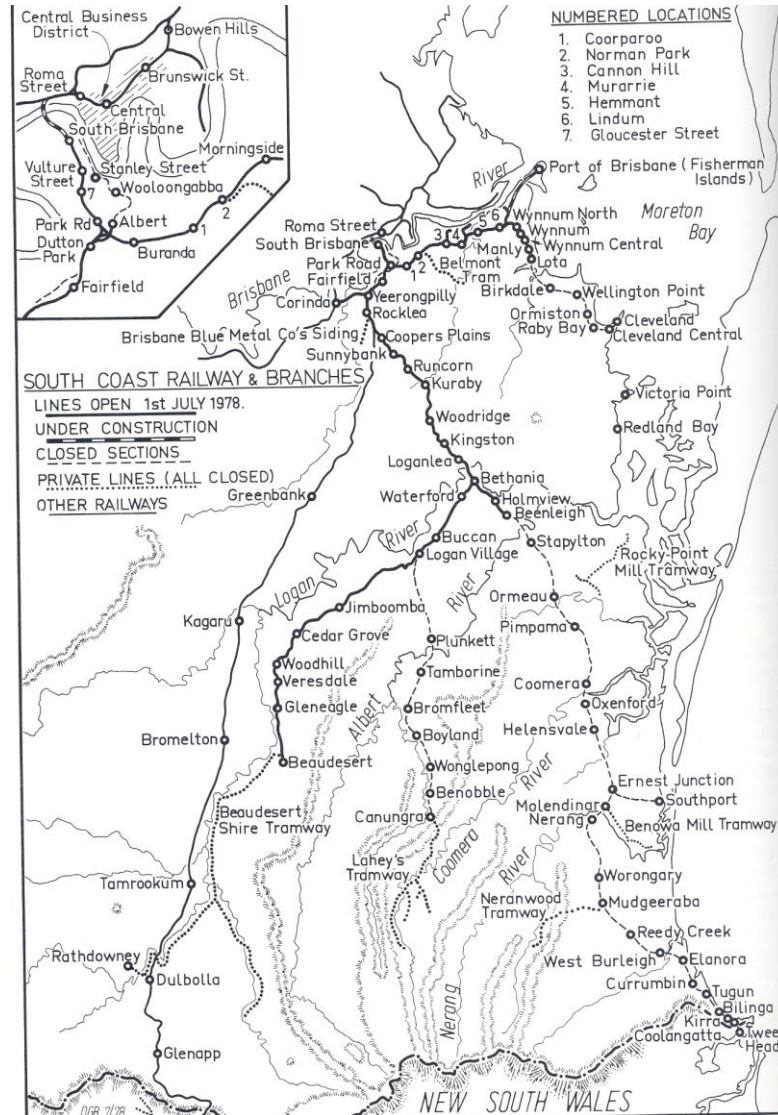
# **“Over on the Southside” The Railways on the Southside: The South Brisbane Railway of the 1880s and early 20th century.**

Prepared by Greg Hallam (Queensland Rail)

## Over on the Southside

When the Railway Surveyors were sent to Moreton Bay in 1856 to find a suitable line to the Darling Downs, their instructions included examining the country between Ipswich and Cleveland. They eventually selected a site on the Brisbane River near the mouth of Norman Creek for the start of a railway to the Darling Downs via Ipswich.

John Armstrong, John Kerr: Destination South Brisbane. ARHS Qld Division. 1978



## Over on the Southside

Steaming to Southport...

“Right Away!”, yelled the fireman as the platform foreman’s whistle shrilled along platform 1. Responding to the call, the driver pops the whistle of his PB15 locomotive, pushes forward the ponderous reversing lever and eases open the regulator. Steam and condensed water hiss from the open cylinder drain cocks and the characteristic wet whoof of the exhaust from the chimney slowly begins, gradually accelerating as the train gains momentum. Another brief response from the steam whistle to acknowledge second right away from the guard... and yet another Southport Express is on its way.

John Armstrong & John Kerr. Destination South Brisbane. ARHS (QLD Div). 1978. Page 5

Such was the scene at South Brisbane station over six decades ago. However, today the old Southport –Tweed Heads expresses with their antiquated carriages, small locomotives, and old trackwork are gone, replaced with a modern high speed interurban railway.



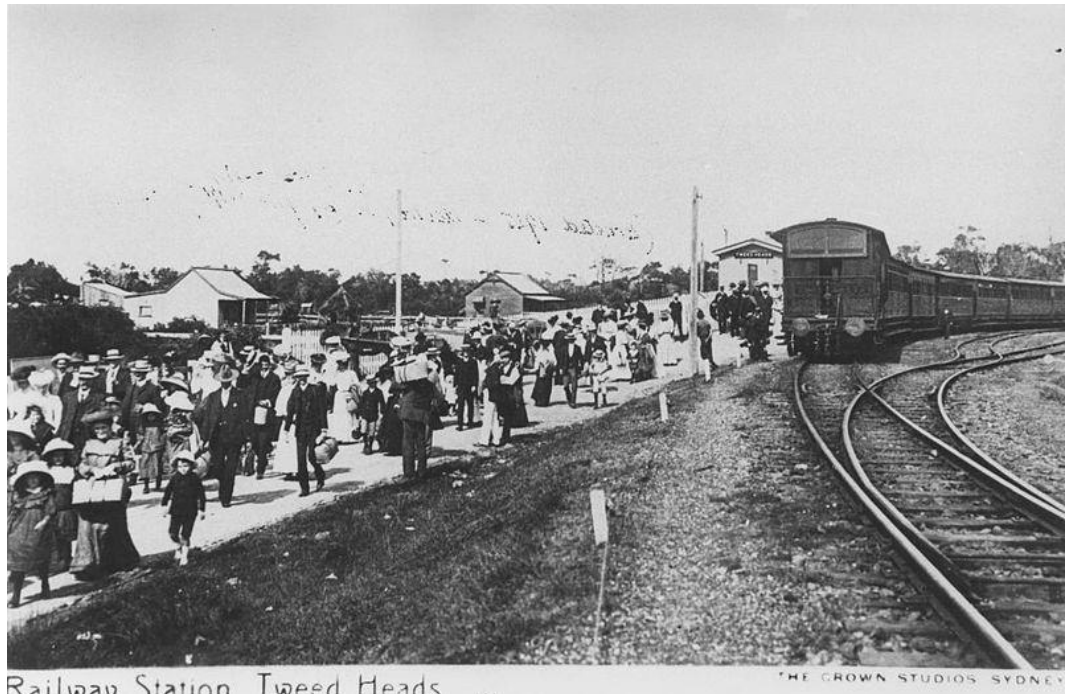
## Over on the Southside

Whether it was made on the vibrating footplate of the PB15 4-6-0 engine at the head of the train, in the wagging tail of the rear guard's van, or in a compartment of the swaying, jerking, lightweight excursion cars that formed the passenger's lot (or even in a suburban style coach if it was holiday time) the experience was one not readily forgotten! Yet this remarkable journey encompassed a mere fifty miles- or sixty-nine if you were going all the way to the border just past Coolangatta and over it to Tweed Heads.

What made it such a remarkable journey?

For most passengers, perhaps for the weekend, perhaps for longer. Day trippers also formed part of the complement aboard. The journey was reasonably fast, but it was also rough. Track was not the best, so lightweight rollingstock was used to keep within the capabilities of the diminutive, old fashioned looking PB15 engines that were the largest that could be used because of the state of the bridges. For these engines timekeeping was hard, and for the crews it was a challenge.

John Armstrong & John Kerr. Destination South Brisbane. ARHS (QLD Div). 1978. Page 5



Railway Station Tweed Heads

## Over on the Southside

My first trip made a lasting impression. It was a trip from South Brisbane to Coopers Plains in 1961. I had come down from Cooroy on the mail train to Roma Street, taken the tram from there to South Brisbane Railway Station and then climbed the stairs to join a Beenleigh train to Coopers Plains. It was part of my school holidays. It was mid afternoon. A train of Evans cars was in the station (bench seats and doors on both sides) and the tank engine locomotive had run around to the front – on the southern end, to travel bunker first.

The train cleaners, a group of women, came out of a room on the South Brisbane station with brooms and mops to clean the passenger train. I thought to myself that they talked among themselves a lot; they wore very long maroon coloured dresses and the work seemed like drudgery.



## Over on the Southside

Suddenly it was time to board the train and a mass of people surged forward and into the carriages. There was of course no where to put your bag ('port' for Queenslanders) on a suburban train. Passengers with bags were not expected to travel on these trains. The train was an all stops.

The noise of banging of doors at each station was striking. (In wet weather these doors used to stick and it was hard to get in or out.) The train seemed to travel along smartly and I looked out at the cattle at the Animal Research Institute at Yeerongpilly.

There were two short tunnels near the Vulture Street and Gloucester Street stations. Decades later these carriages were still in service though several sets had been replaced by steel carriages and were hauled by diesels. This type of service was typical of the Brisbane suburban rail service in the early 1960s.



Southport train at South Brisbane, 1961. PB15 No. 738 and parcel truck with deliveries on the platform. Courtesy: Arthur Robinson /QR Historical Collection

Over on the Southside



6D17 class tank locomotive No. 56 arriving at South Brisbane station in the 1950s. QR Historical Collection

## Over on the Southside

The construction of a railway to Brisbane in the 1860s and 1870s was controversial as Ipswich and Brisbane vied with each other for influence. The growth in the size of ships and the cost of dredging the Bremer River decided the issue. The line from Ipswich to Grandchester and then to Toowoomba had already been built in 1865 and 1867 respectively. A further complication was a proposal in the 1860s to have the Brisbane railway traverse George and other streets down to Parliament House.

The proposal for a Brisbane city railway in the 1860s was defeated and it was not until 1875 that a railway arrived in Brisbane from Ipswich at Roma Street. There was still a ferry across the Brisbane River between Chelmer and Indooroopilly until the following year.

The Queensland government was keen to build cheap branch lines around the edge of Brisbane, but there was no requirement or urgency to build lines serving the suburbs as population was low and decentralized. The 1880s were boom years in Australia – agriculture, mining and regional development accelerated throughout the decade.



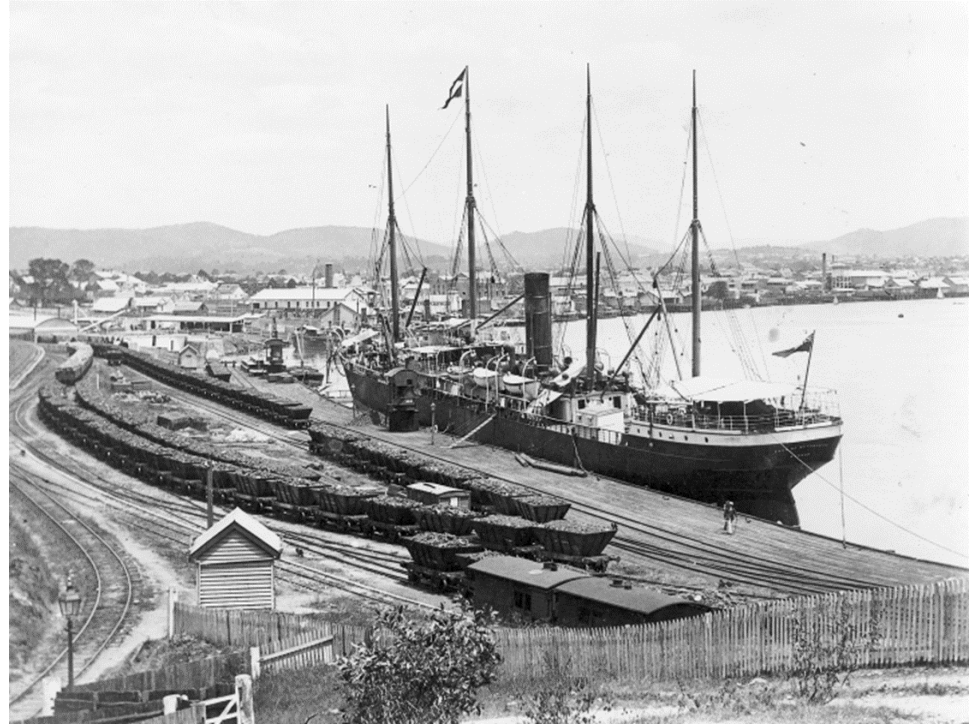
Roma Street station, probably late 1880s. QR Historical Collection

## Over on the Southside

There was an urgent necessity to convey coal from the West Moreton field to the Brisbane River wharves. On 11 October 1881 parliament approved the proposal to construct a railway from Corinda on the Ipswich line as far as Woolloongabba where coal wharves could be built. Corinda to Stanley Street via Woolloongabba was opened on 2 June 1884 (also called South Brisbane line at the time).

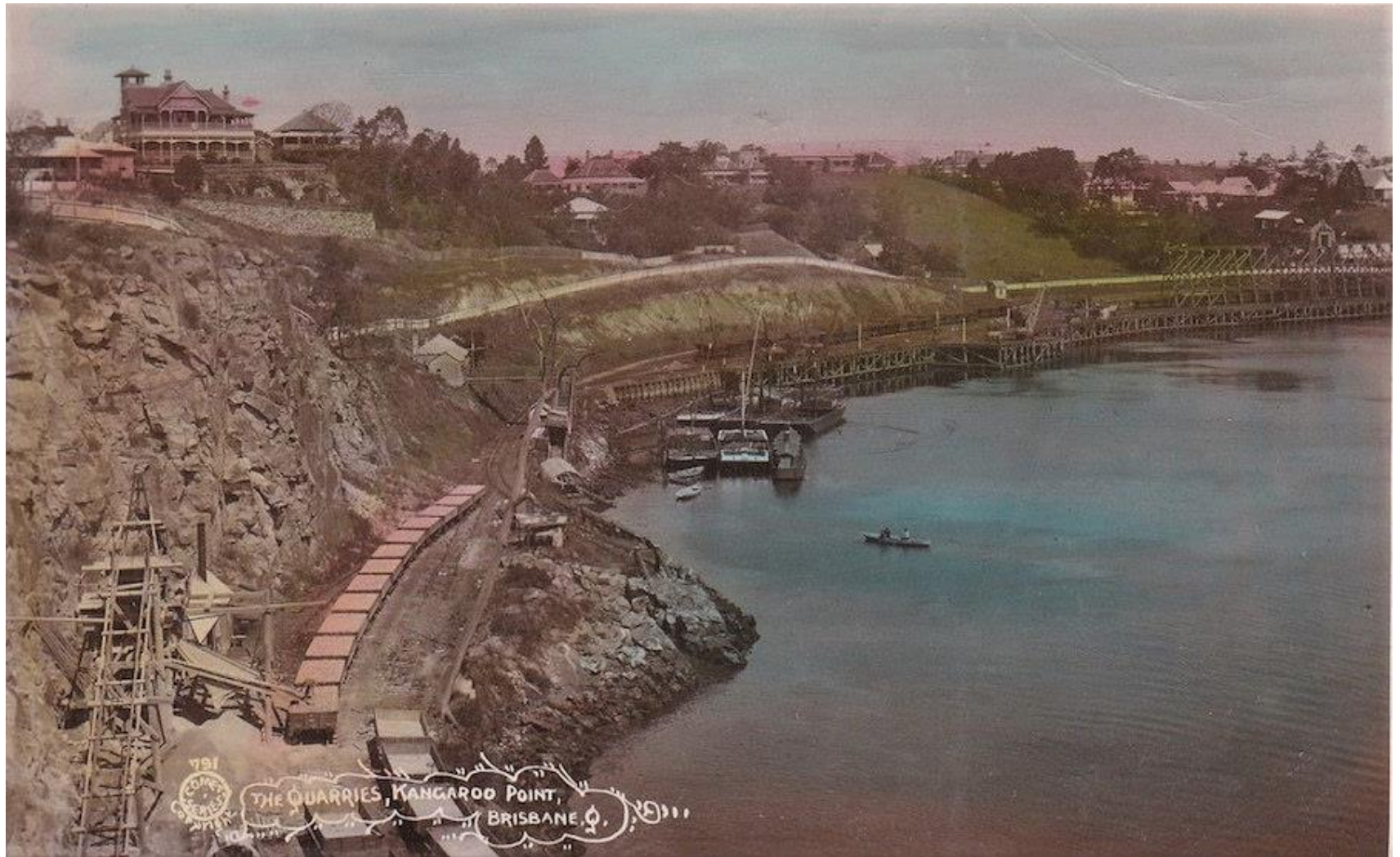
Stanley Street station was on Vulture and Stanley Streets, and the line ran past the wharves which were known as Woolloongabba / South Brisbane / Coal Wharf, so the line there was opened the same day, but the wharf did not open for coal until a little later. Work had commenced on construction of a dock in January 1876 by contractors J and A Overend at a cost of £62,796.

It was completed in 1881 and could accommodate vessels up to 320 feet (97 metres). The Woolloongabba Wharf Extension, downstream from the coal wharf, to quarries along the Kangaroo Point was the last extension opened - on 30 March 1897.



Kangaroo Point and South Brisbane coal wharves. QR Historical Collection

Over on the Southside



## Over on the Southside

The opening of the line was delayed whilst a deviation was built between present day Burke Street and Woolloongabba. The line now ran slightly more to the west, crossed Ipswich Road on an oblique angle, and swung through a wide curve to enter the water reserve at Woolloongabba. From planning to completion, it took two and a half years to complete the South Brisbane railway.

The government of the day had stipulated the use of cost cutting measures in the awarding of the contract, and the railway line was surveyed to run along part of both Fairfield & Ipswich Roads. (The Woolloongabba divisional board was none too pleased with the prospect of trains running along such a major thoroughfare).

The contract did not include the wharves and sidings the branched off to the area of the South Brisbane Dry Dock. The line was to be extended from its original terminus in the government reserve at Woolloongabba to Stanley Street, South Brisbane. The intention at this point was to extend the line to the planned wharfage development alongside the Brisbane River for coal and produce. Passenger traffic would be managed at the Woolloongabba.



South Brisbane dry dock, and Stanley Street station, in 1890. Courtesy: State Library of Queensland.

## Over on the Southside



On the way from the South Brisbane wharves, in 1967. Courtesy: Eric Marggraf / QR Historical Collection

## Over on the Southside

The construction of the line to Southport and Nerang was expensive and required a high standard almost to contemporary main line specifications. The crossings of the Albert, Coomera and Nerang River necessitated this. The Commissioner's concern about ensuring that these standards were achieved in the contract delayed construction.

The line opened on 25 January 1889 to Southport after the Queensland National Bank took over the contract from the insolvent George Bashford, and Nerang on 25 July 1889.

Dignitaries travelled from Brisbane to Southport station where they were greeted by several hundred people celebrating the occasion.

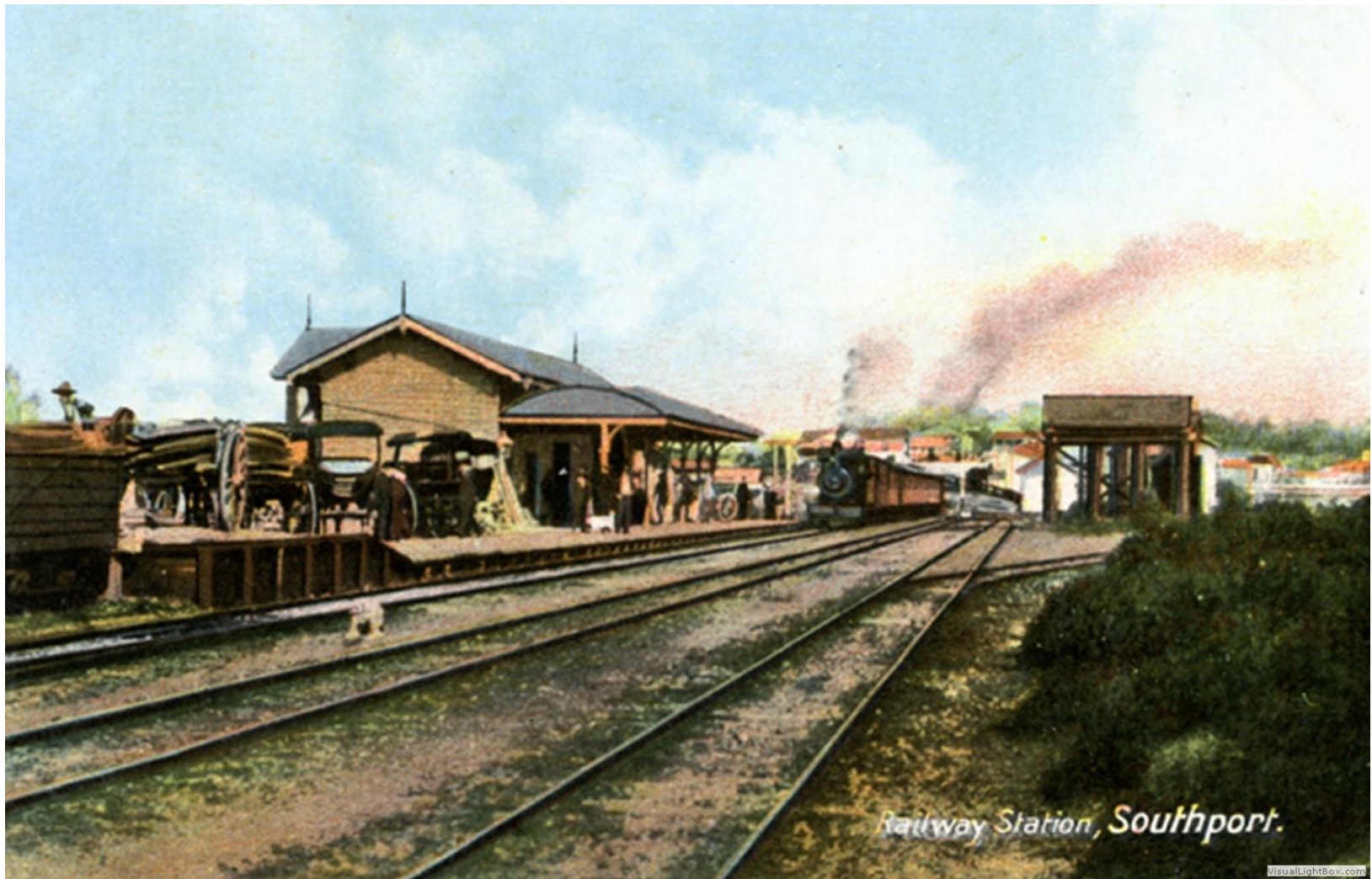
Tweed Heads was reached on 14 September 1903.

The opening was reported in the Telegraph which stated that the 'railway to the Tweed Heads will be opened today without ceremony'.

It was hoped that the Tweed Heads line would eventually link up to the New South Wales rail network, however, this did not eventuate.



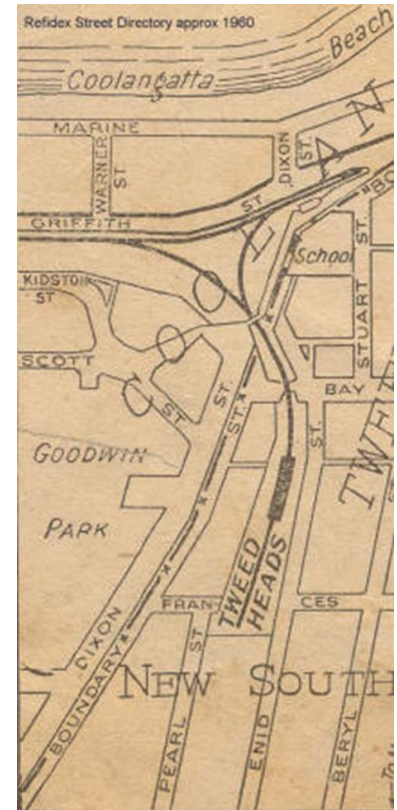
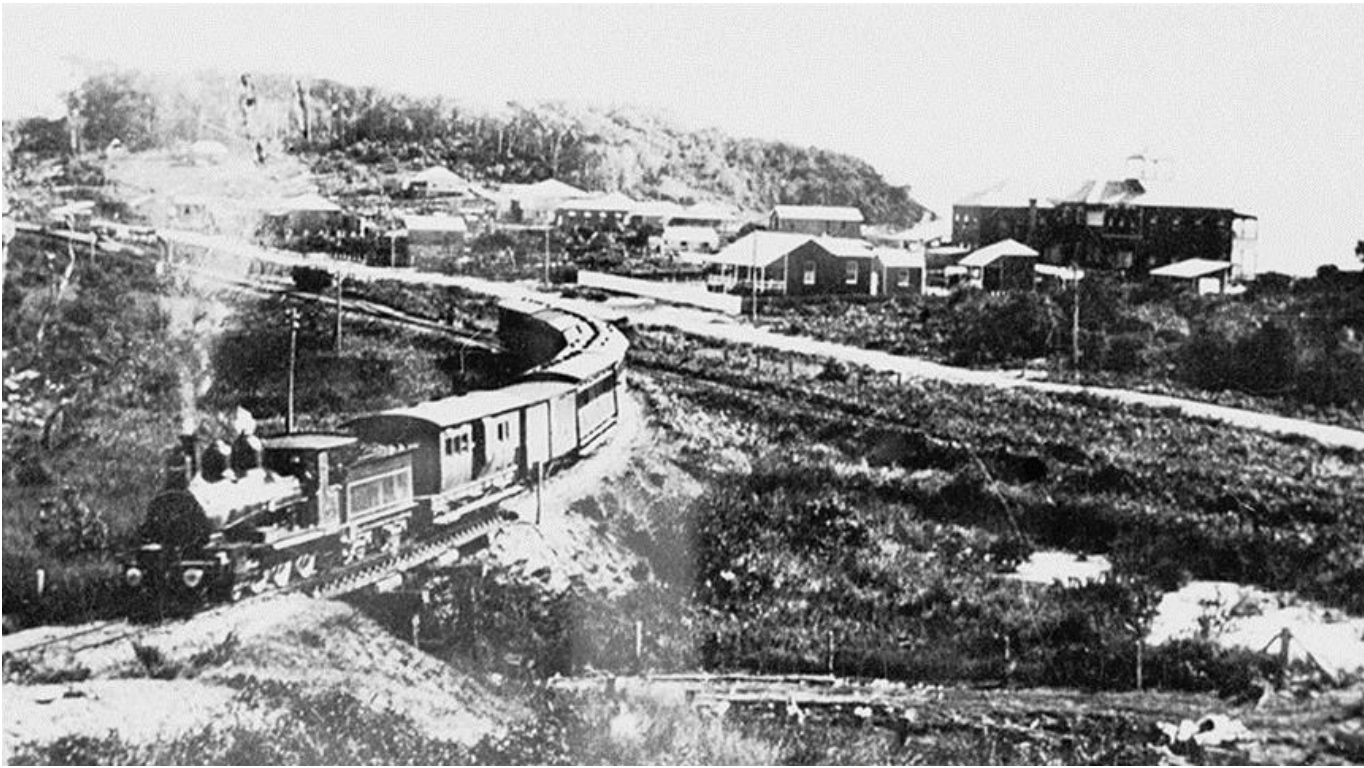
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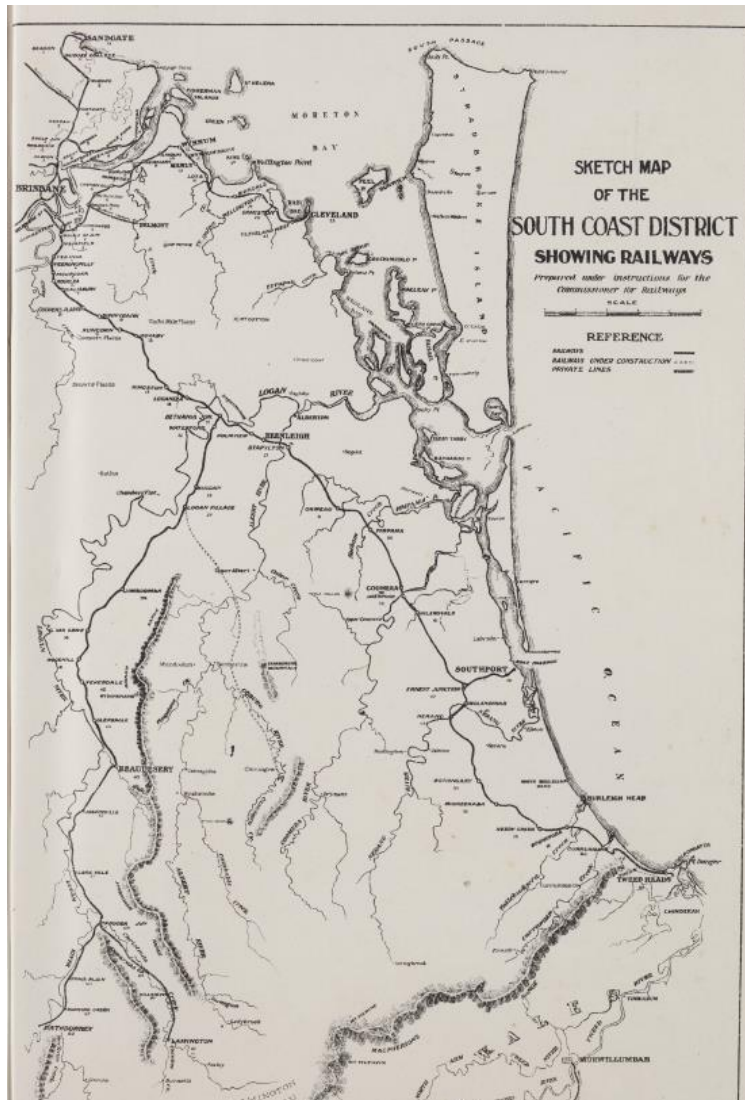
Railway station at Southport 1906/09.

## Over on the Southside



An early steam train working through to Tweed Heads (early 20<sup>th</sup> century). Courtesy: George Bond Collection

Over on the Southside



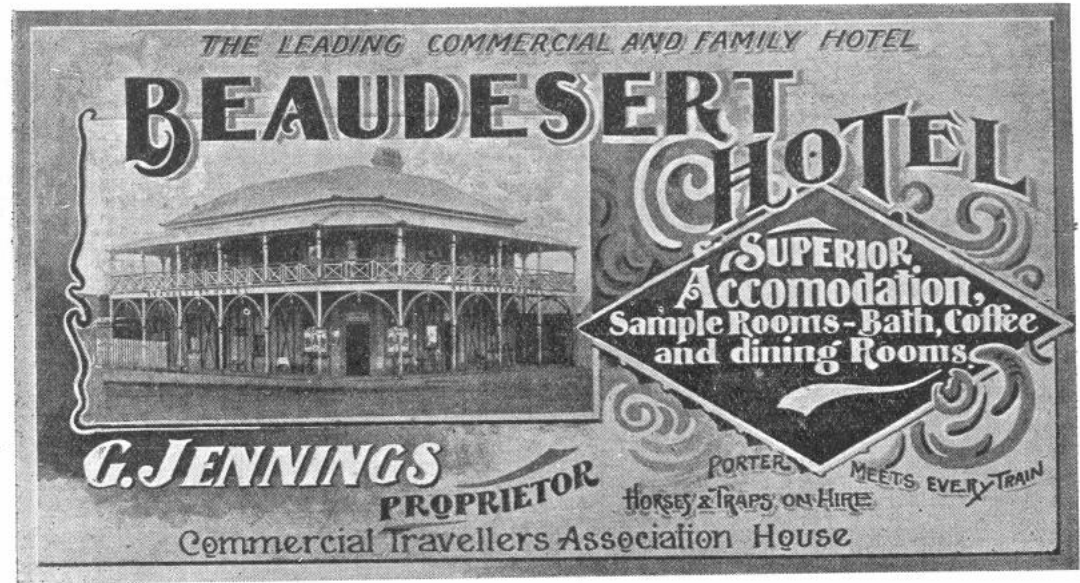
Tourist Booklet for the South Coast Line, around 1906. State Library of Queensland.

## Over on the Southside

The rivers and coastal shipping provided the transport for agricultural products on the south and north coast. The line across from Corinda to South Brisbane provided a new opportunity for a railway to Beenleigh and Logan Village to service the sugar, arrowroot and burgeoning dairying industries.

Agitation succeeded in having the line built by Fountain Brothers to these places, approved by parliament, and opened on 9 April 1885 to the Logan district and to Beenleigh on 25 July 1885. There was an immediate campaign to build a railway to Beaudesert where there were extensive timber resources and new interest in agriculture and dairying.

The construction of the Beaudesert Tramway in 1903 stimulated further agriculture, and construction of sidings to service the dairy factories. Declining shipping services necessitated a south coast line beyond Beenleigh to service the sugar cane, dairying and timber areas.



## Over on the Southside...

The South Brisbane station was built at high level to allow for a cross river rail bridge. Surveys were begun in 1885 but the line from a junction now called Park Road near Boggo Road Gaol to Melbourne Street was not approved until 25 July 1889. The contractors, Murphy and Company, commenced on 2 April 1890. Contractor, H Pears, built the brick South Brisbane railway station and the line and station were opened on 21 June 1891. Floods of course immediately affected the line in parts during the 1890s - Fairfield was four metres under water in 1890 and twice as much in 1893.



South Brisbane (Melbourne Street terminus) railway station, early 20<sup>th</sup> century. QR Historical Collecton.

## Over on the Southside

The Woolloongabba depot & railway yards arose from humble beginnings. Originally the depot featured a passenger station, goods shed, carriage shed engine shed, and a small turntable. A small workshop area was also provided. Goods facilities were catered for with the provision of a weighbridge & crane. As a result of its central location the Woolloongabba yards was the most convenient goods depot for businesses on the southside. As well the yards managed most of the traffic for the network of railway lines centred on south Brisbane. In 1893 the first Albert bridge at Indooroopilly was washed away in the floods of that year.

As there was no link between North Brisbane and South Brisbane the goods traffic for all of the Southern & Western railway system was managed by the Woolloongabba railway yards.

The extent of the yards increased over the years, but only managed passenger traffic through to Stanley Street (South Brisbane) until 1891. This line bypassed the Woolloongabba railyards and made redundant the Stanley Street station of 1882-4



## Over on the Southside

Wooloongabba was the locomotive depot from the opening of the line to South Brisbane in 1884, however the passenger carriages were stabled elsewhere. The carriages of the southside were without a doubt the most eclectic group assembled. A sixty-foot turntable the length of which was able to accommodate the majority of locomotives based at the depot was constructed in 1921.

The number of locomotives based at the Gabba increased along with the growth of passenger and goods trains worked from its confined yard.

Engine crews were forced to contend with the small PB15 class engines being stored mostly in the open due to the lack of space within the engine sheds provided.



The Wooloongabba depot in 1967 and turntable. The turntable itself was unique in Queensland in that it was of elevated construction. Courtesy: Eric Marggraf/ QR Historical Collection

## Over on the Southside



The Wooloongabba depot in 1967 and turntable. The turntable itself was unique in Queensland in that it was of elevated construction. Courtesy: Eric Marggraf/ QR Historical Collection

## Over on the Southside...

Most passenger workings arrived or departed from the Melbourne Street terminus at South Brisbane. A common sight was these engines (up to twenty-three a day) making their way to South Brisbane. The engines were worked light (no wagons attached), and could be coupled together, travelling singly, or sometimes attached to the rear of goods trains.

The Flag and Bell Man who became synonymous with the road crossings of the 'Gabba was a featured part of the exercise in moving trains and engines ever since 1885, when trains were only allowed to proceed at a speed of 4 miles per hour on the level crossings.



## Over on the Southside...

Although South Brisbane station was only a mile away from the depot, each locomotive taking up passenger duties had to make a circuitous journey of 3½ miles via Dutton Park. After leaving the depot, it proceeded across the open level crossings,{including Ipswich Road, Stanley Street} an employee walking in front ringing a bell, and waving a red flag by day and a red lamp by night. In the wee small, hours the fireman sometimes had to perform this duty.

Trams and motor vehicles reluctantly stopped as the engine or engines, with or without a train behind them made their way slowly across, with much whistling to warn of their presence. Listeners to test cricket matches from the 'Gabba ground were accustomed to hearing the broadcasts punctuated with frequent blasts from passing trains.

John Armstrong & John Kerr, Destination South Brisbane. ARHS (Qld Div) Publications. 1978. Page 15.



Over on the Southside...



The Flag & Bell man leads the procession across Main Street at Woolloongabba, in 1967. Courtesy: Eric Marggraf /QR Historical Collection

## Over on the Southside...

One of the well known names associated with locomotive, wagon and carriage construction in Queensland from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was the foundry and Engineering works of Evans, Anderson and Phelan. EAP as it was known was established in 1877.

The works were relocated to Kangaroo Point in 1898. Up until 1927 the Company built 185 steam locomotives for Queensland Railways along with boilers, plus dredges for the Queensland Government. The works were situated at the eastern end of Main Street, Kangaroo Point and the locomotives had to be delivered to the Woolloongabba locomotive depot 2 kms away at the other end of Main Street. Short sections of track were assembled and laid along the street. Two locomotives were coupled together in steam, and moved along the section of track to its end.

A team of horses pulled another section of track into place at the front of the existing section of track, progressing the movement along Main Street. This was a highlight for the children at the Kangaroo Point State School who gathered to cheer and clap.



C17 class steam locomotives No. 253 and No. 254 built at Evans, Anderson and Phelan engineering works being moved to Woolloongabba via Main Street.

## Over on the Southside



C17 class steam locomotives on delivery from EAP, in the early 1920s. QR Historical Collection

Over on the Southside



THE TIME OF DERAILMENT, TAKEN FROM THE RECORDS OF LOCOMOTIVE NUMBER 3604  
IN THE ARCHIVES OF WYNARD STATION, SYDNEY, REVEALS THE YEAR AS 1932

REPRODUCED FROM ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS  
TAKEN BY BERYL WELLAUER OF FAIRFIELD  
VIEWED FROM THE FOOTBRIDGE

## ENDNOTES:

*Courier Mail* 19 March 2014 p. 15; *Australian Property Investor, National* 1 March 2014 p. 5 and 1 April 2014 pp. 20,26; *Roads National* 1 March 2014 p. 63; *Satellite* (Northern Edition) 23 April 2014 p. 3; 'Richlands – Springfield Central railway opens' by John Hoyle (*Railway Digest* vol.52 no.1, January 2014 pp. 34-37); Queensland Railways spelt

'Woolloongabba' with one 'l' throughout the railway's operating life until 1969. The suburb is otherwise known as 'Woolloongabba'.

John Kerr, *Triumph of Narrow Gauge: a history of Queensland Railways*. (Brisbane, Boolarong, 1990, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1998) p. 69;

John Kerr, 'The Railway System of South Brisbane', Institution of Engineers, Queensland Division Technical Papers, April 1990, vol.31 no.7 pp. 12-15;

*Australian Railway Routes 1854-2000*. Compiled by Howard Quinlan and John R. Newland. (Australian Railway Historical Society (NSW Div), 2000) p. 37.

John Kerr and John Armstrong, *Destination South Brisbane*. (Brisbane, Australian Railway Historical Society (Qld Div) 1978) pp. 78,90.

John Kerr, *Brunswick Street, Bowen Hills and Beyond*. (Brisbane, Australian Railway Historical Society (Qld Div), 1988) p. 91.

Howard Quinlan and John R Newland, *Australian Railway Routes 1854-2000*, Sydney, Australian Railway Historical Society (New South Wales Division), 2000, p. 37.

Letter to Editor by John Knowles, *Railway Digest*, May 2014, vol.52 no.5, p.55 and articles by him in ARHS *Bulletins* September 1985, June 1986 (letter) and December 1999.