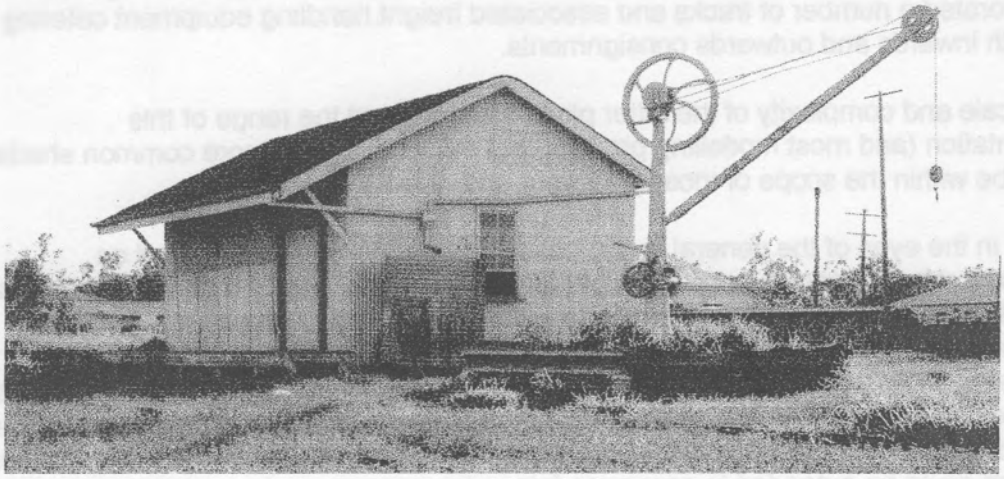


GOODS HANDLING FACILITIES

MODELLING THE RAILWAYS OF QUEENSLAND
CONVENTION 2006

Presented by
Jim Hutchinson &
Jim Fainges

Jim Fainges component in a separate file

Goods Sheds

In the decades before containerisation, super-freight trains and a general rationalisation of freight services, almost every station included some form of goods handling facility. Depending on the size and importance of the station, these facilities ranged from small, simple structures such as a cream shed to large buildings that incorporated a number of tracks and associated freight handling equipment catering for both inwards and outwards consignments.

The scale and complexity of the latter place them beyond the range of this presentation (and most modelling projects) but the smaller and more common sheds could be within the scope of most modellers and layouts.

Whilst in the eyes of the general public passenger services always played an important role, the conveyance of freight formed the backbone of a railway's business. The infrastructure associated with goods traffic was usually utilitarian if not Spartan, and consequently most goods sheds were by and large simple albeit soundly built structures. Most were timber framed, rectangular in plan and with a gabled corrugated iron roof. They were provided with a loading platform on the track side, and sometimes another dock at the rear to facilitate loading or unloading road vehicles. The trackside platform could be extended to accommodate extra wagons, and an additional loading bank might be provided as required by the type of goods handled.

A yard crane was provided at the busier yards to handle heavy loads. It could be positioned towards the end of the extended platform (requiring an independent footing, depending on its size) or it could be sited free-standing beside the goods loop(s). The lifting capacity of the crane was dependant on the type of freight handled.

'Standard' sheds appear to have been of three sizes – 22'0" x 14'0", 30'0" x 20'0" and 40'0" x 30'0". The wall cladding was either timber (weatherboards or chamfer-boards) or vertical corrugated galvanised iron. The roof was extended to partly cover the loading platform, and sometimes it projected over the roadside dock as well.

A few were designed as 'through' sheds, with the building extending over the track and the platform(s) located inside, but these were not very common. However in some of the more important yards, such as in the larger provincial cities, individually designed through sheds were provided to handle the greater volume of inwards and outgoing freight.

There were various non-standard sheds as well, with modified plans and elevations. Some smaller examples were built with skillion roofs, and a few were roofed with asbestos-cement 'shingles' rather than the traditional corrugated iron.

Although not officially designated as 'goods' sheds, many station complexes at least incorporated a Cream Shed, which despite its nomenclature often doubled as a small general purpose shed, particularly in the declining years of a branch or yard. In some instances the cream shed would be the only remaining building at a designated station in its latter years, particularly if the rail traffic was 'goods only'.

As well as general goods sheds, numerous freight facilities were provided for (or by) private enterprise, being served by one or more government or private sidings. Coverage of this aspect is a study all by itself, and is generally beyond the scope of this paper, but further research into these types of sheds could provide the modeller with additional modelling opportunities with respect to size, shape, built form and signage.

For the modeller, constructing a Queensland goods shed should be a straightforward scratch-building exercise (unless you are dead keen to replicate a facility such as at Warwick, or Toowoomba, or the former Roma Street complex).

In the following pages some standard and non-standard sheds are illustrated.

Thallon 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

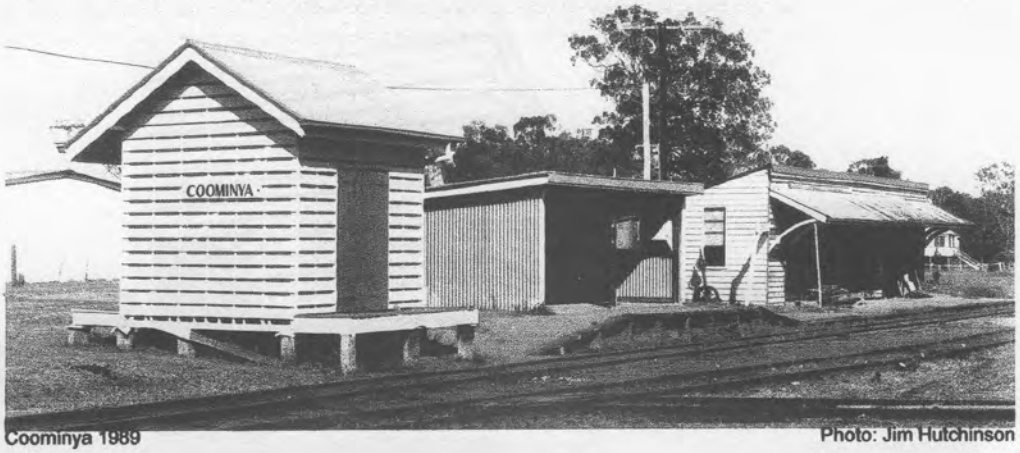
Arguably the most recognised shed found throughout the state was the ubiquitous Cream Shed. Their role often extended beyond their nominal description, catering for all manner of perishable commodities as well as small consignments of general goods.

Nurinda 1989 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Nurinda (above) on the Brisbane Valley branch, exemplified the typical standard cream shed, but it was also one of the less common structures to feature a 'fibro' slate roof. The shed at Moore (below) further north on the same line, would have been one of the smallest sheds, being maybe no more than 7'0" square in plan.

Moore 1989 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

In the final days of the Brisbane Valley branch it appeared that Coominya's cream shed (below) had become the main station building, having the honour of displaying the name-board and being presented as the best maintained of the three buildings.

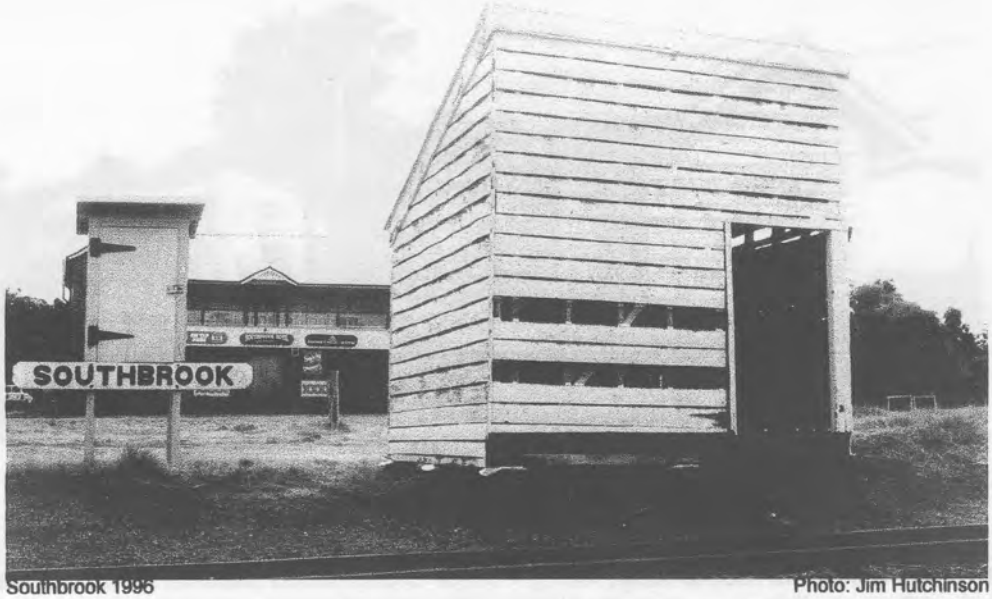


Coominya 1989 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

In 1996, along the Monto loop, Many Peaks' cream shed (below) remained as the only railway building, apparently fulfilling the role of goods shed (and any other function). An accompanying tank was a common feature of these structures throughout the system.

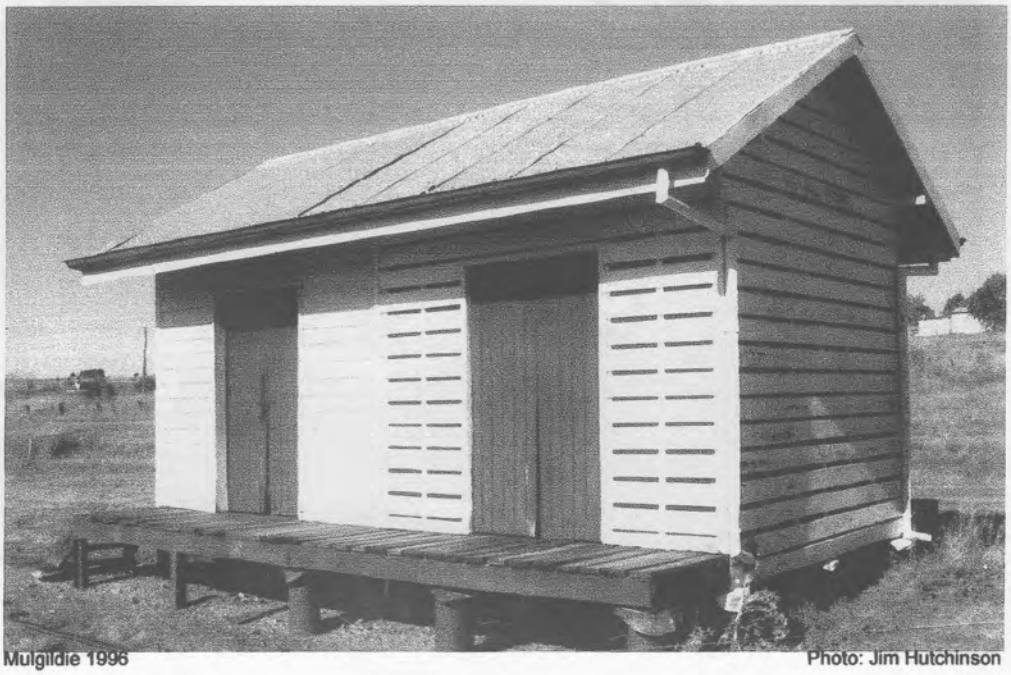
Many Peaks 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

The occasional small non-standard shed could also be found from time to time, the unusual skillion-roofed shed at Southbrook, on the Millmerran branch, being one such example.



Southbrook 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

A few sheds combined the functions of 'goods' and 'cream', having battened walls at one end and being fully enclosed for the rest of the structure. The sheds shown below at Mulgildie (Monto loop) and Dagun (Mary Valley branch) exhibited this type of layout.



Mulgildie 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Jim's model

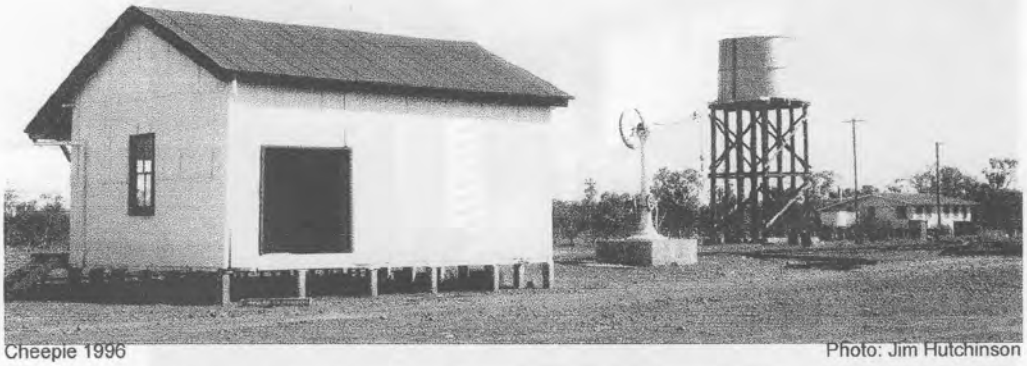
Dagun Goods Shed model Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Small simple skillion-roofed sheds were to be found along the main line south to Wallangarra, including those at Dalveen and The Summit (below).

Dalveen 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

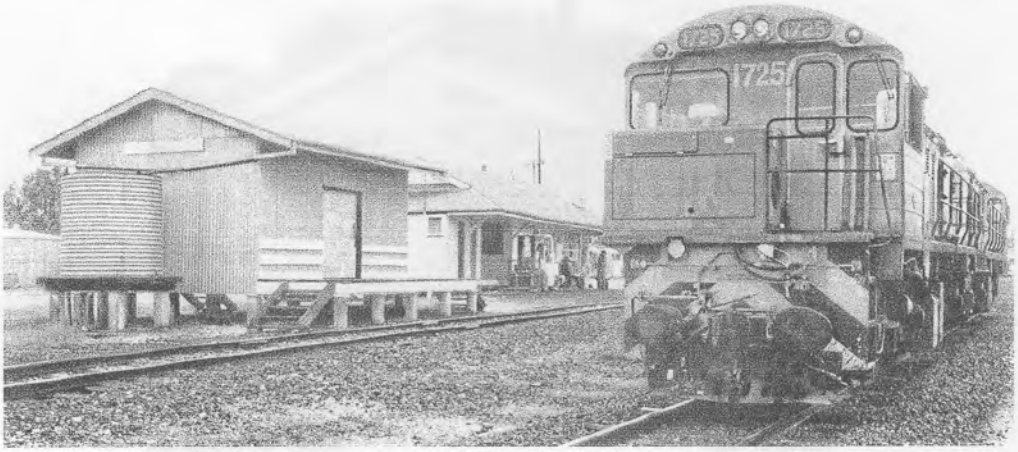
The Summit 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

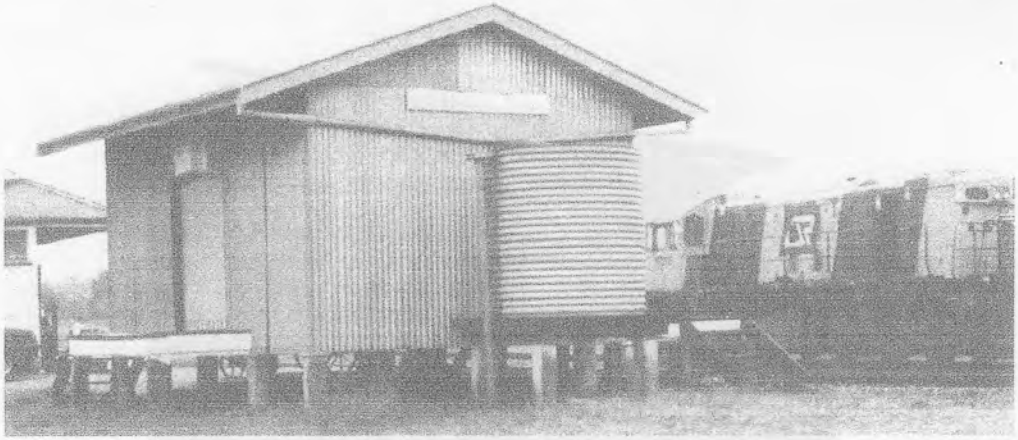
Larger sheds of **standard design** were located at the more important, and sometimes more remote freight handling centres. The yard at Cheepie, between Charleville and Quilpie, included what appears to be a standard 22'0" x 14'0" corrugated iron shed, painted white with a traditional red roof. A yard crane, 30,000 gallon water tank and barracks complete the scene.



Cheepie 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

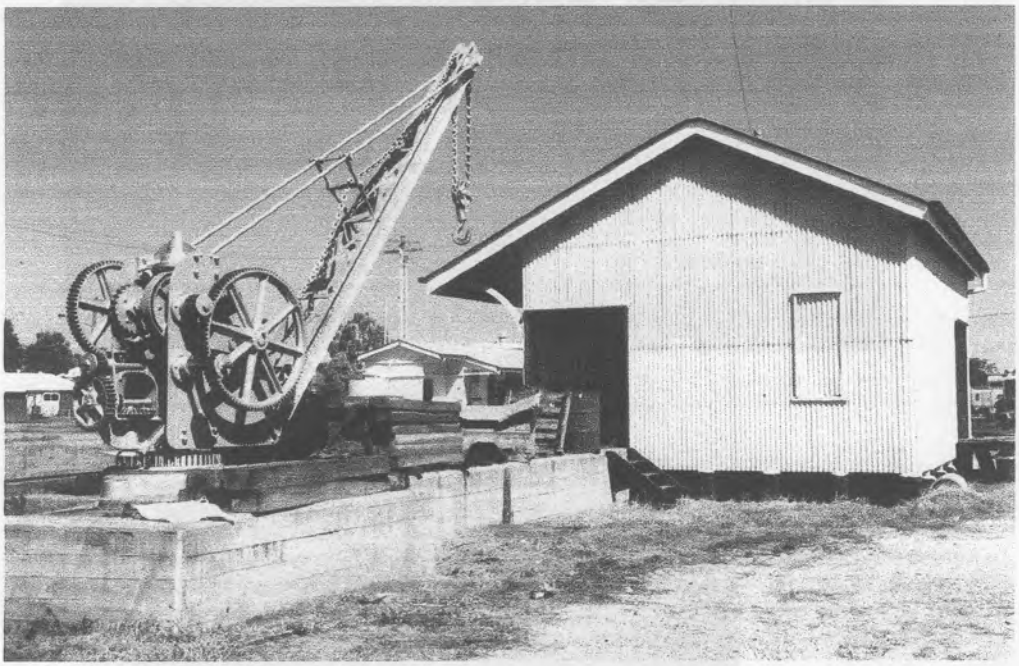
A similar shed was to be found at Thallon (below) but with the walls and roof unpainted. This shed was sited close to the station building, and interestingly also had a station name-board attached. A 'roadside' dock was also provided (lower photo) although there was no evidence of any road formation at the time the photos were taken.



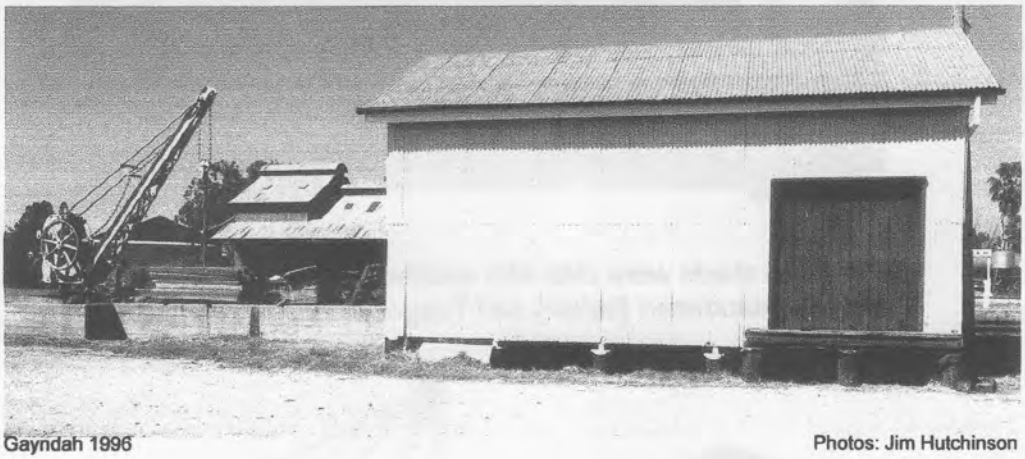


Thallon 1996 Photos: Jim Hutchinson

The shed at Gayndah (below) was representative of the 30'0" x 20'0" standard design. Note that the loading platform extension is supported with a concrete wall rather than being constructed with the more usual timber framing.



5 ton crane



Gayndah 1996

Photos: Jim Hutchinson

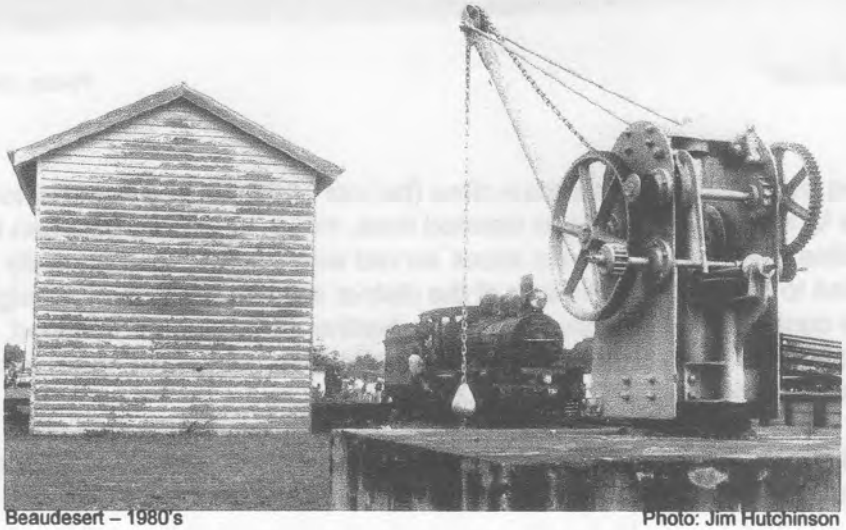
Some of the larger sheds were often (but not always) to be found at locations that were located along the more isolated lines, where distances between railway facilities were longer and the areas served were larger. Their capacity was thus related to the perceived needs of the district and/or the volume of freight they were consequently required to handle. Neither Baralaba nor Talwood, for example, are very large towns, yet their sheds (photos, next page) appear to have been the standard 30'0" x 40'0" type.

Most larger sheds were sheeted with corrugated iron, presumably for reasons of economy – but certainly not for comfort!

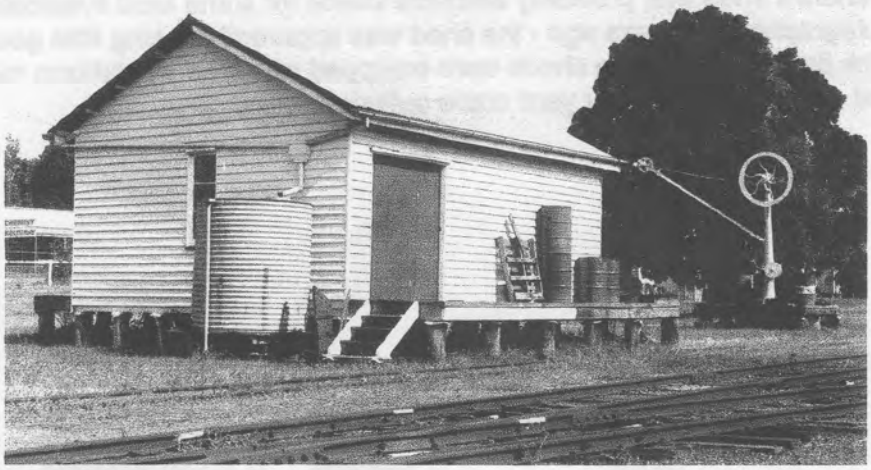
Baralaba Goods Shed – 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Talwood - 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

A few large sheds were clad with weatherboards, typical examples including Beaudesert (below) and Toogoolawah (next page).

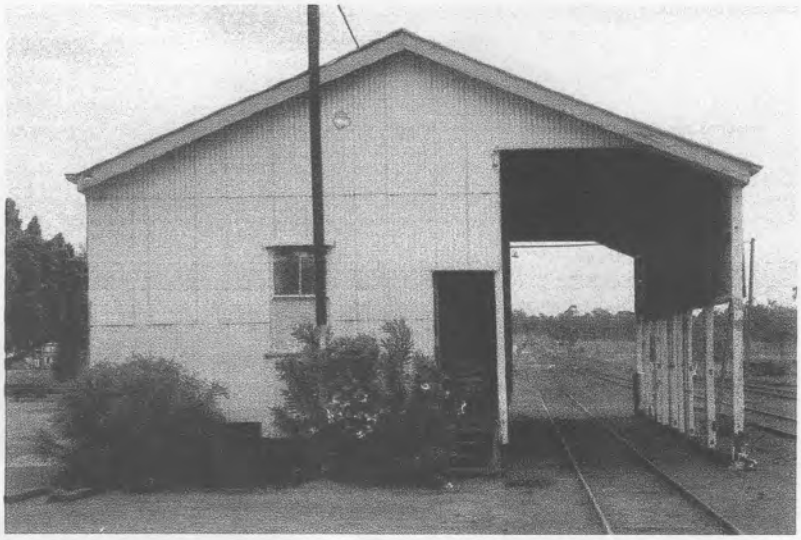


Beaudesert – 1980's Photo: Jim Hutchinson



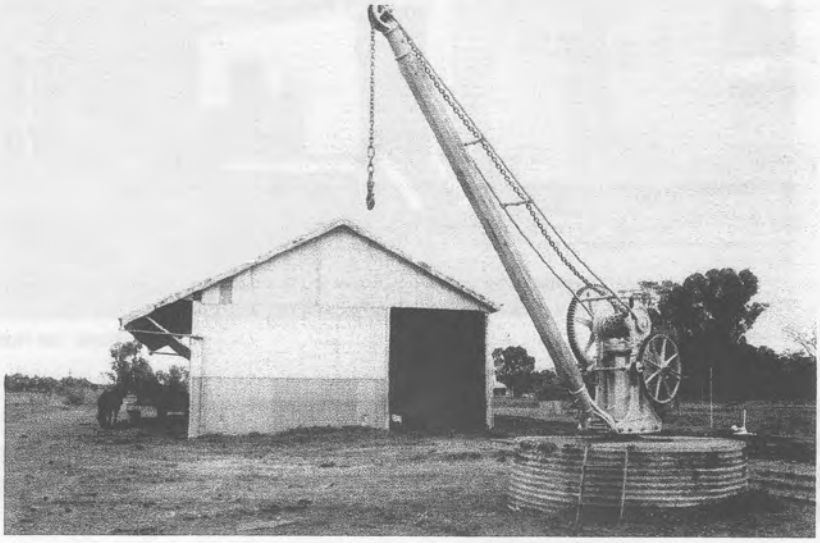
Toogoolawah 1989 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

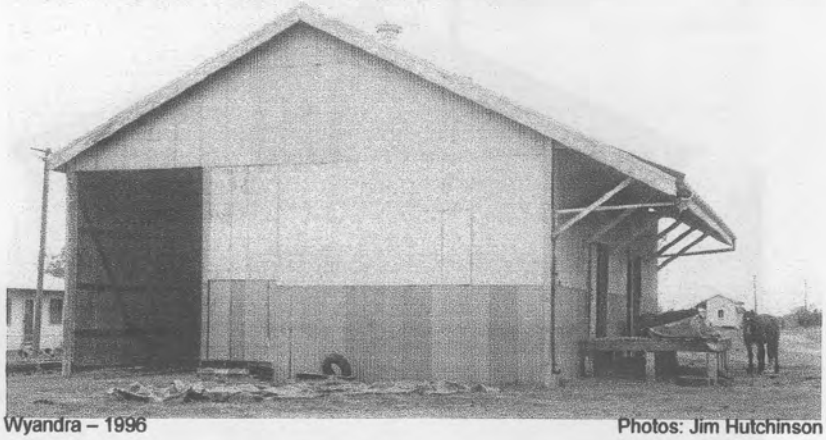
Apart from the custom-designed structures found in the larger cities, **through sheds** were provided in just a few country centres. Alpha was one such location, with the wall facing towards the road providing an opportunity for an officially sanctioned mural, courtesy of local artists.



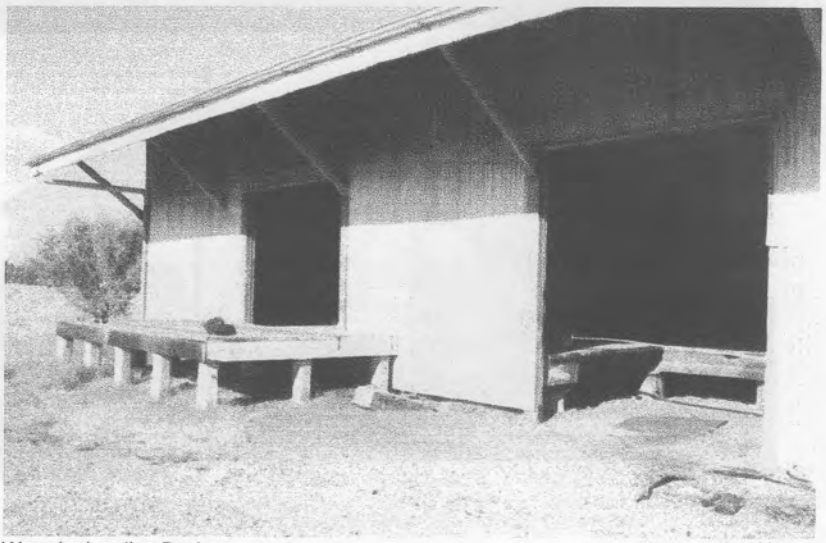
Alpha – 1996 Photos: Jim Hutchinson

Wyandra's shed was providing welcome shade for some local livestock when photographed ten years ago - the shed was apparently seeing little goods traffic at the time. Inside, these sheds were equipped with a small platform mounted hoist as well as the larger yard crane outside.

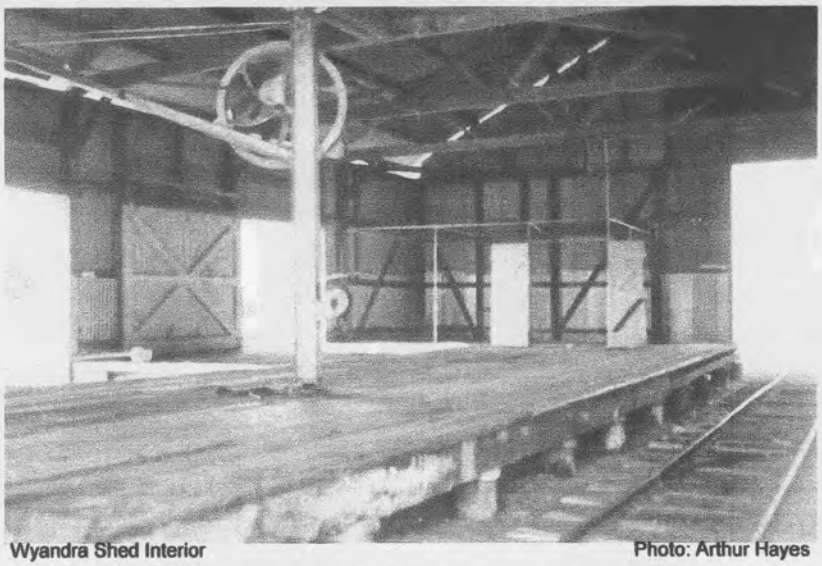




Wyandra – 1996 Photos: Jim Hutchinson

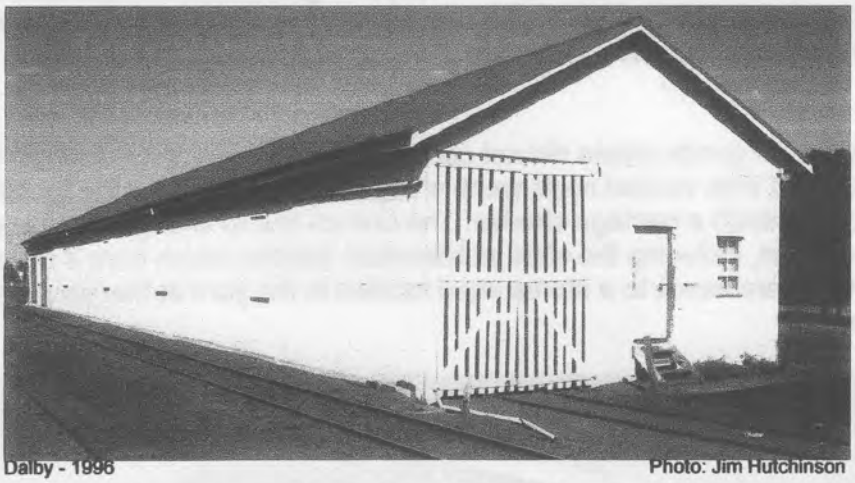


Wyandra Loading Docks Photo: Arthur Hayes



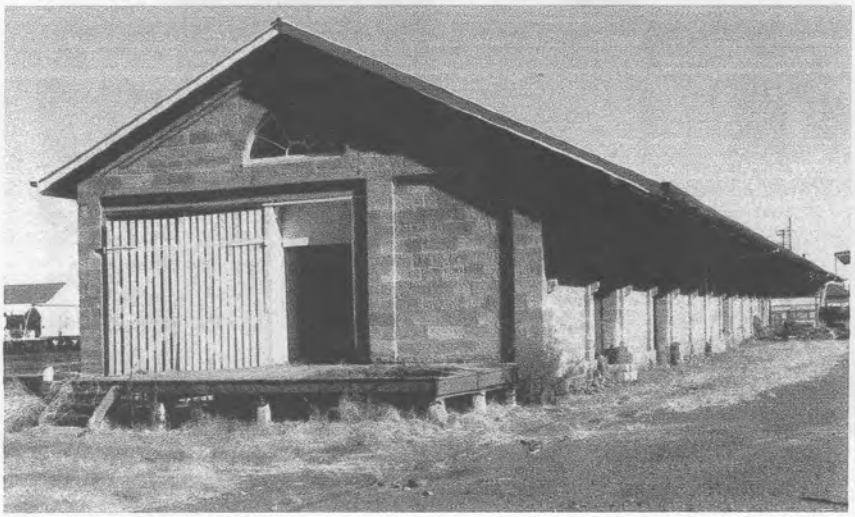
Wyandra Shed Interior Photo: Arthur Hayes

Dalby's larger corrugated iron through shed (below) should offer very little challenge for a modeller, apart from applying sufficient selective compression to install it on the layout.

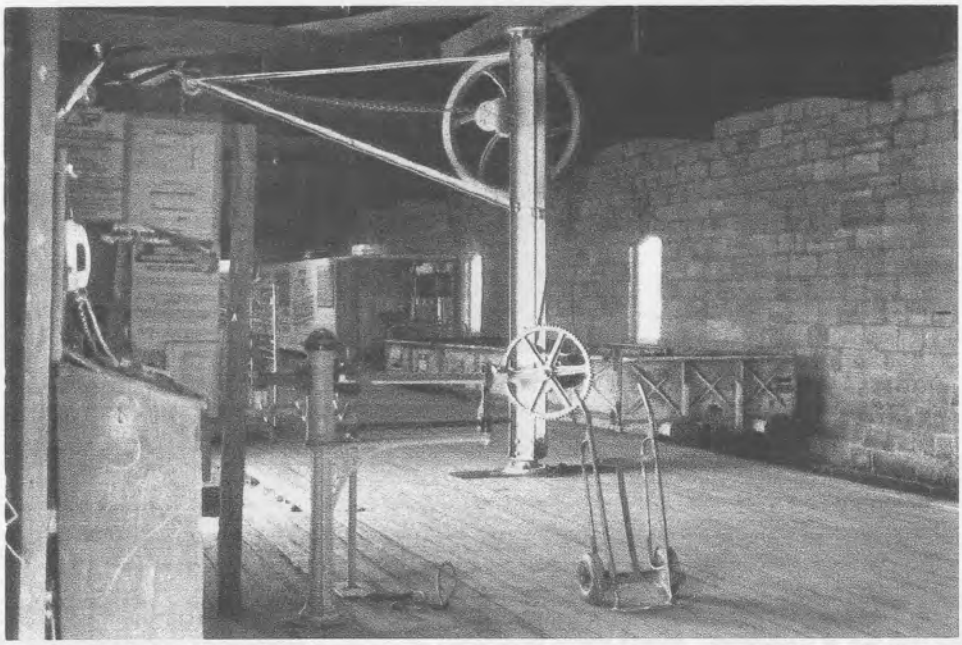


Dalby - 1998 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

One of the better known through sheds is that at Warwick. Its sandstone walls were complemented by use of the same material to line the nearby turntable pit.



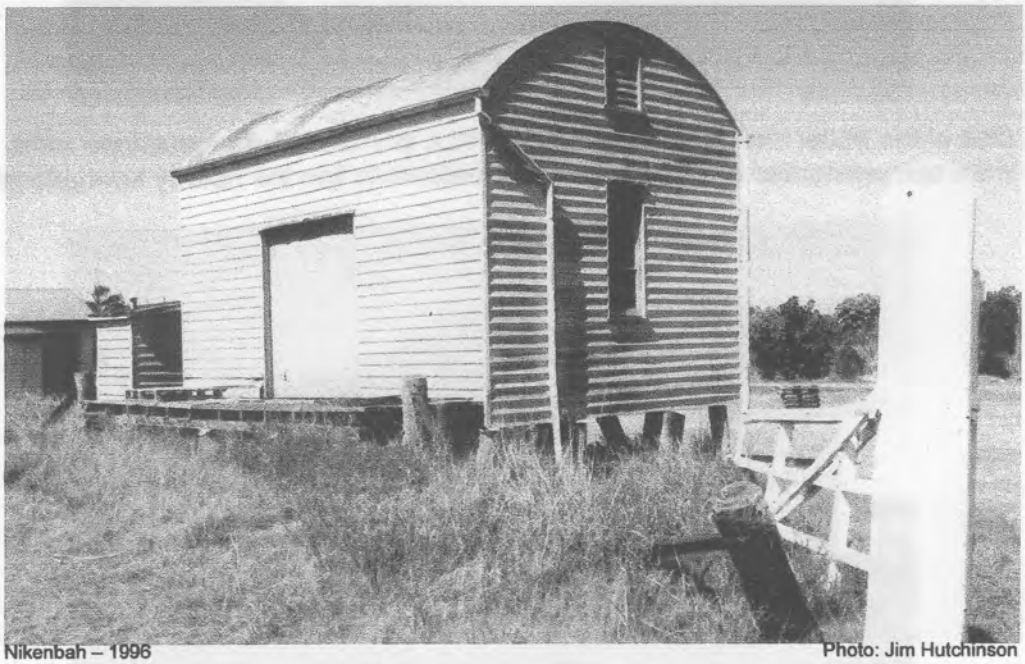
Warwick Goods Shed – 1995 Photo: Jim Hutchinson



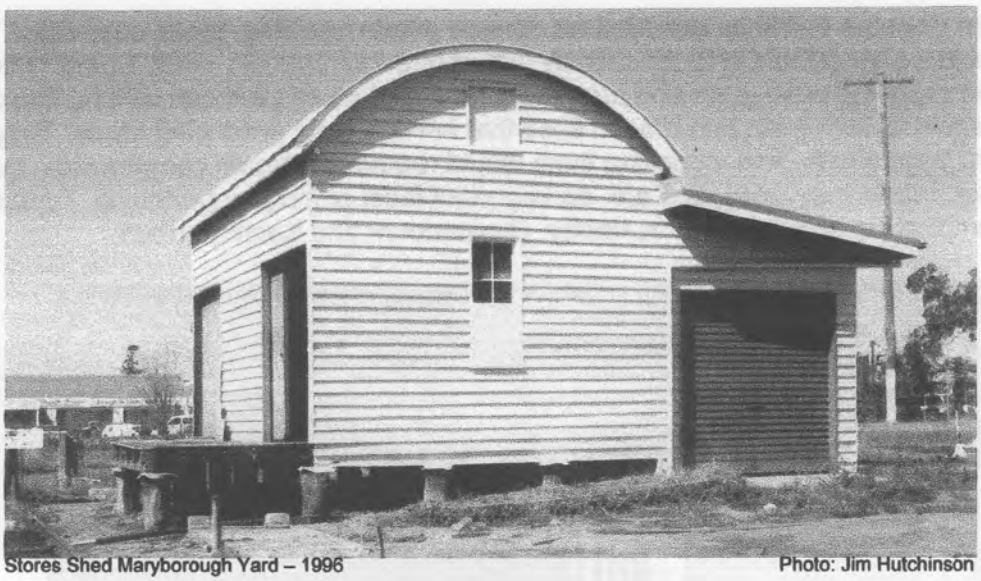
Warwick Goods Shed Interior – 1995 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Some of the essentials for any well equipped goods shed is seen in the above photo – hand-operated hoist, platform scales, hand trolley and of course the writing desk for all that paperwork!

A number of goods sheds did not conform to the image of a 'standard' building. For a short time vaulted roofs were in vogue, influenced possibly by other structures such a carriage shades. The branch line to Urangan saw some of these forms, including the shed at Nikenbah (below) which bore a remarkably strong resemblance to a stores shed located in the yard at Maryborough (next page).

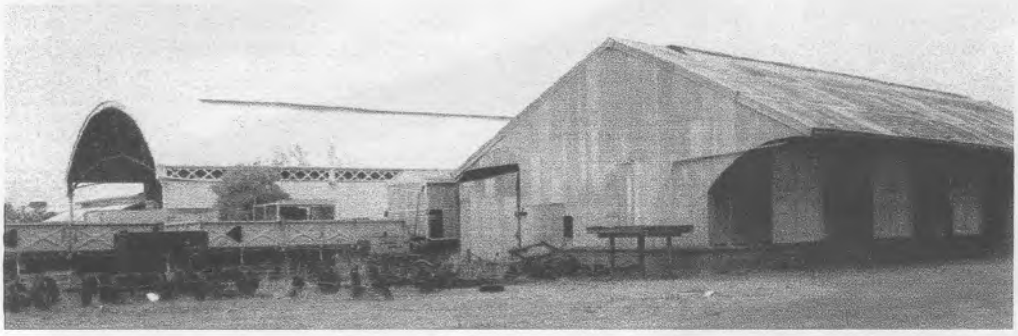


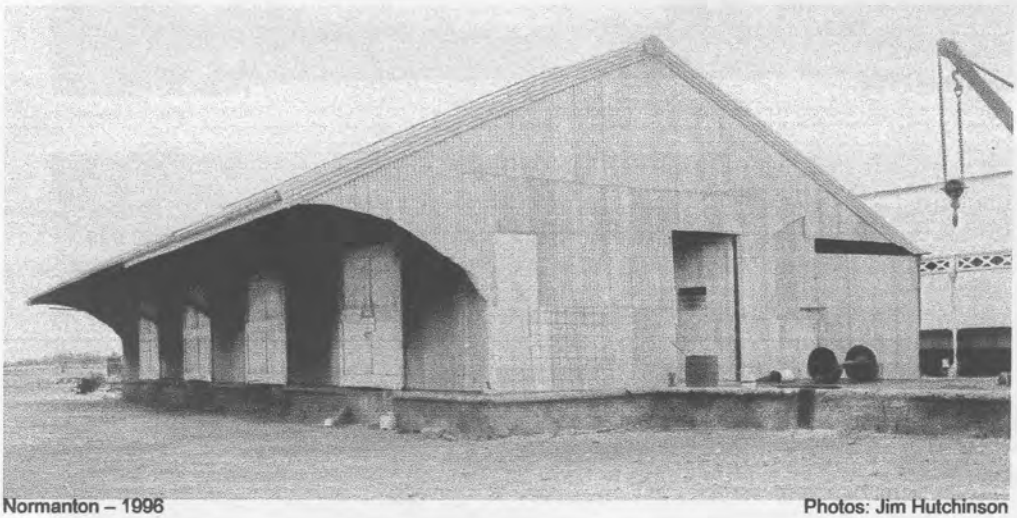
Nikenbah – 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson



Stores Shed Maryborough Yard – 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

In the north, another non-standard (albeit much larger) shed can be found at Normanton - a large structure considering the size of the township and the area serviced!

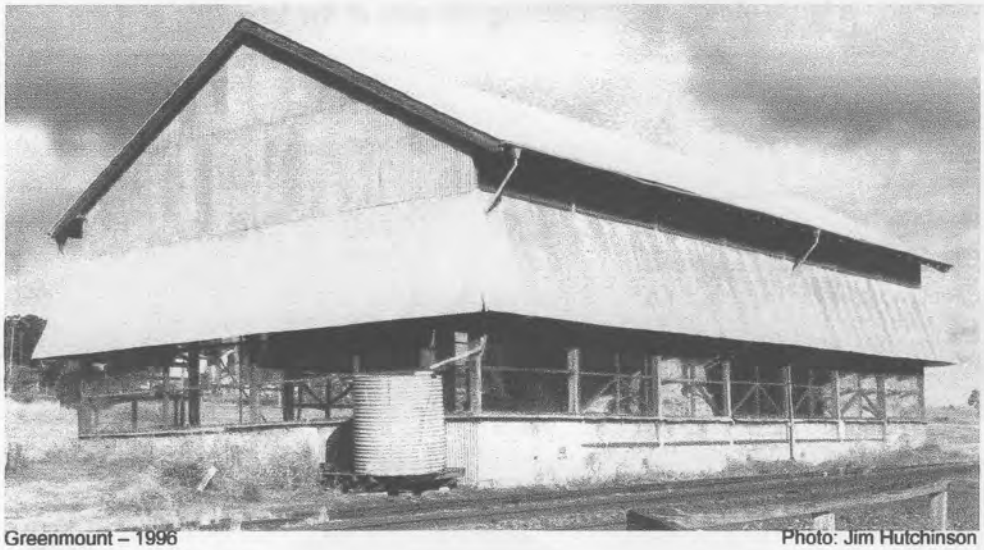




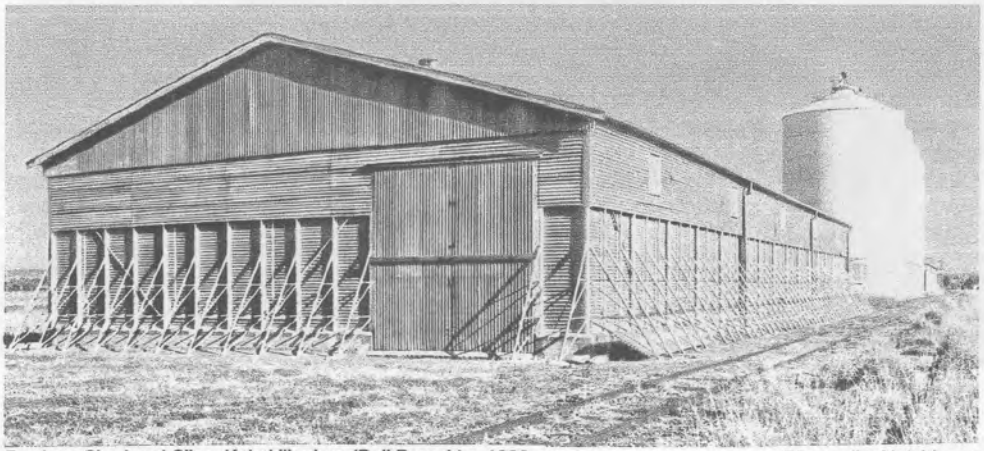
Normanton – 1996 Photos: Jim Hutchinson

Apart from the buildings provided for general goods handling, there were other structures associated with the railway that catered for specific loads. Some of the most imposing were grain and produce sheds, that could (and can still) be found adjacent to both main and branch lines that service grain producing areas. They were large sheds, and modelling them would require intelligent compression, but nevertheless they were, and are, an important facet of freight operations. Typical examples are shown below at Nobby, Greenmount and Kaimkillenbun.

Nobby – 1995 Photo: Jim Hutchinson



Greenmount – 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson



Produce Shed and Silos, Kaimkillenbun (Bell Branch) – 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Privately owned lineside sheds are yet another aspect of freight infrastructure. Illustrated below are a few typical examples. These types of structures offer the freelance modeller some degree of latitude in creating the fabric of the building, as well as any signage that may be appended.

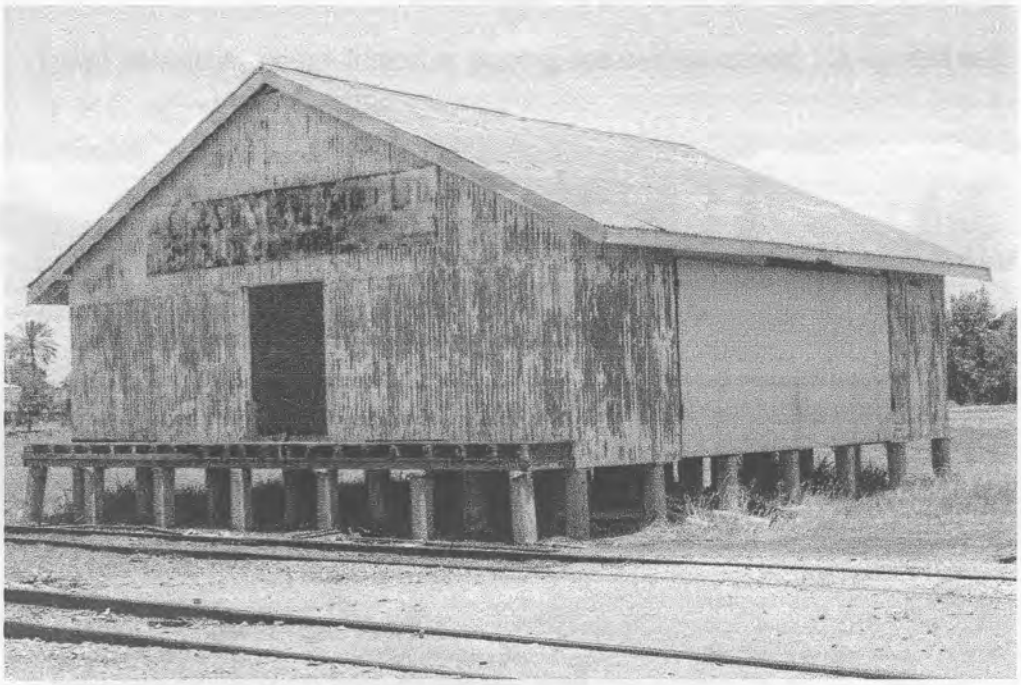
The sidings at Lowood served two groups of freight sheds, illustrated below.

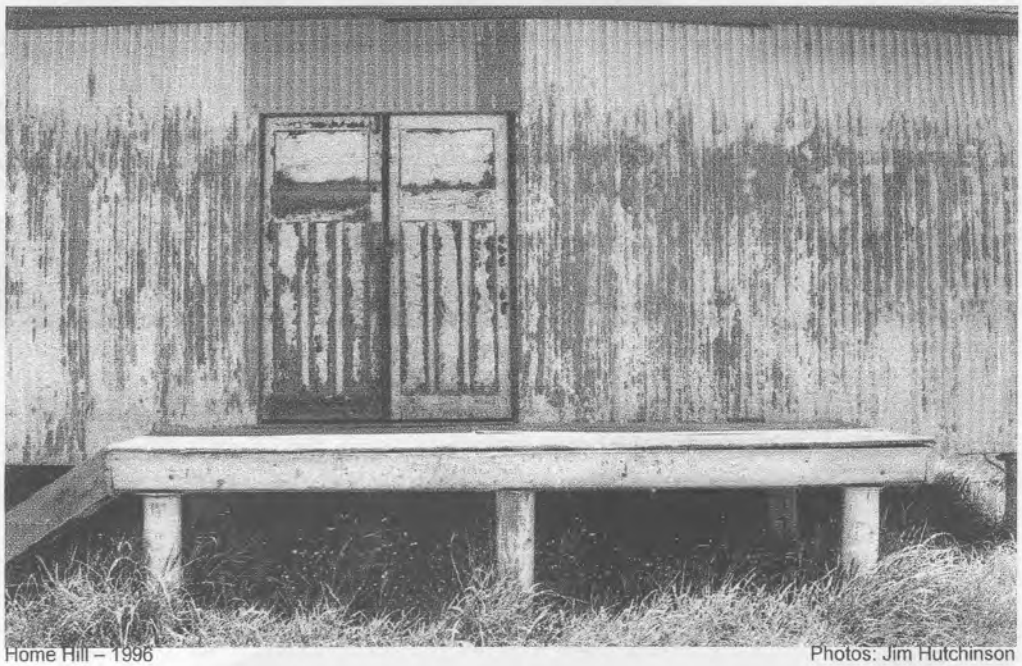
Lowood Sheds – 1989/1995 Photos: Jim Hutchinson

Stanthorpe yard included private produce sheds, including the Queensland Fruitgrowers' Society building shown below.

Stanthorpe 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Further north, the weathered facility of ACF & Shirley's Fertilizers at Home Hill presented yet another modelling possibility (photos below).

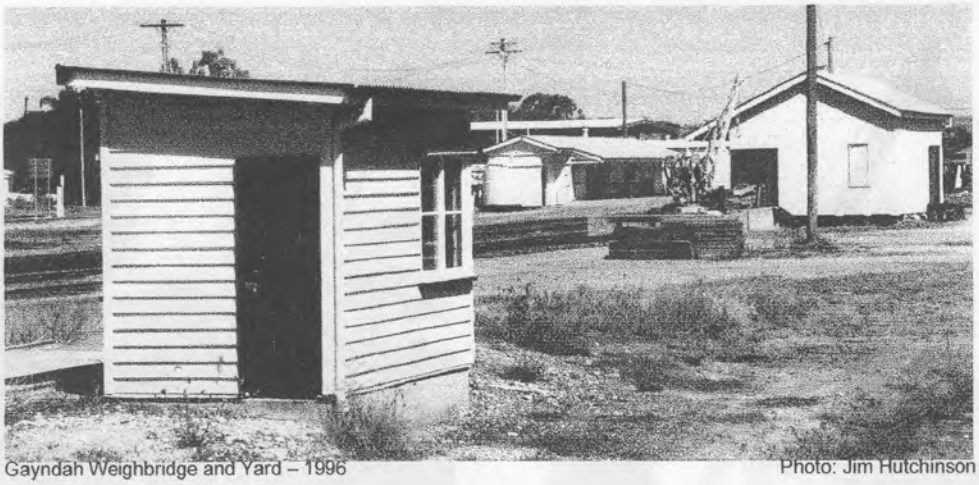




Home Hill – 1996 Photos: Jim Hutchinson

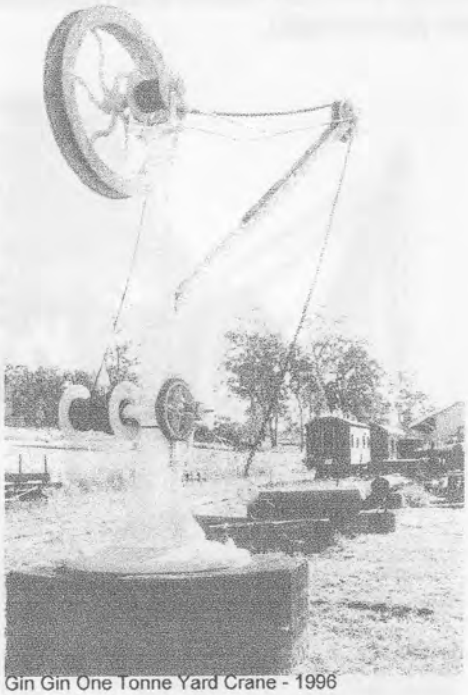
Apart from the sheds themselves, goods yards were typically provided with other facilities, including yard cranes, sometimes weighbridges and occasionally overhead gantries. The latter have recently come into focus again with the introduction of container traffic, but this is a recent study all of its own and is beyond the scope of this presentation.

Weighbridges should not be overlooked when modelling a busy yard. They are simple structures to model, and although they are now an anachronism in most goods yards, their inclusion in a facility representing earlier years is worthy of consideration.

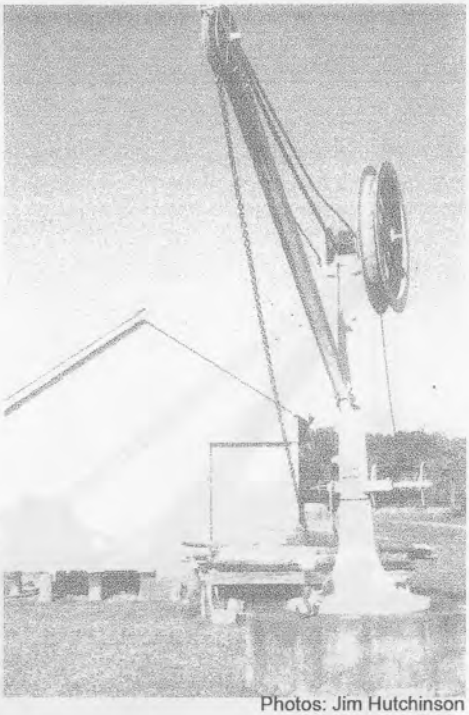


Gayndah Weighbridge and Yard – 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Another prominent feature was the **yard crane**, a mandatory adjunct for a goods facility of any importance. These came in a number of sizes, varying from one up to ten tons in lifting capacity, and Jim Fainges has provided details of several examples later in this paper. The one tonne crane was arguably the most common model, and examples can be found throughout the entire system. Gin Gin was but one of the many yards equipped with this type, pictured below.

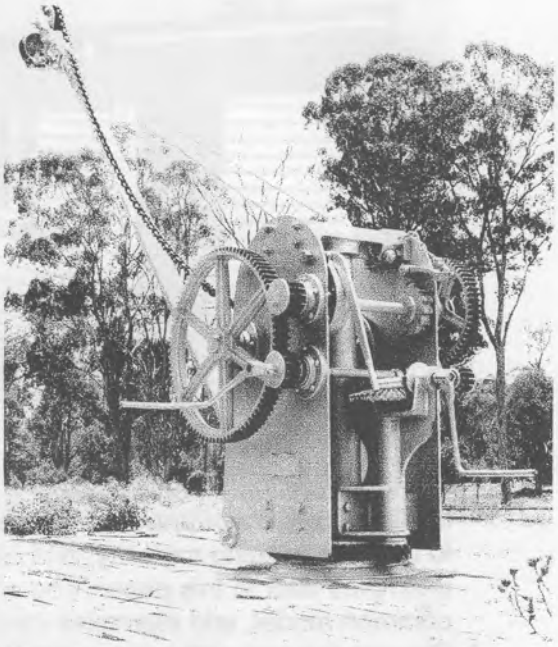


Gin Gin One Tonne Yard Crane - 1996



Photos: Jim Hutchinson

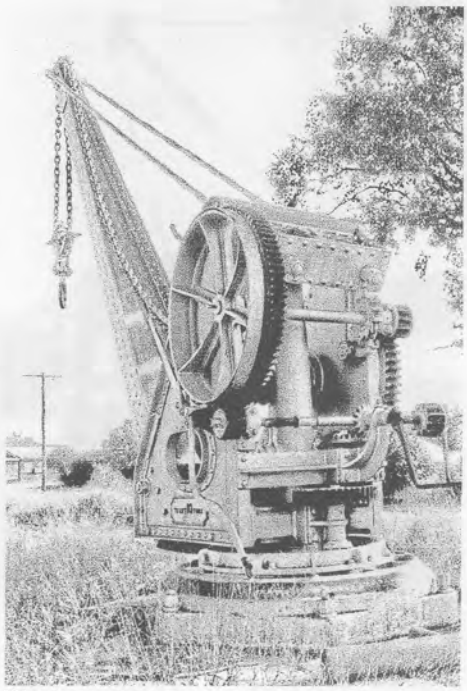
Three-ton cranes were found at a number of locations, typical of which was the Cowans, Sheldon & Co. crane at Yarraman, terminus of the Brisbane Valley Branch (shown below).



Yarraman Crane – 1989

Less common were the larger cranes, such as the 5 ton machine at Normanton (below left) and the ten-tonner at Wandoan (below right).

Normanton – 1996

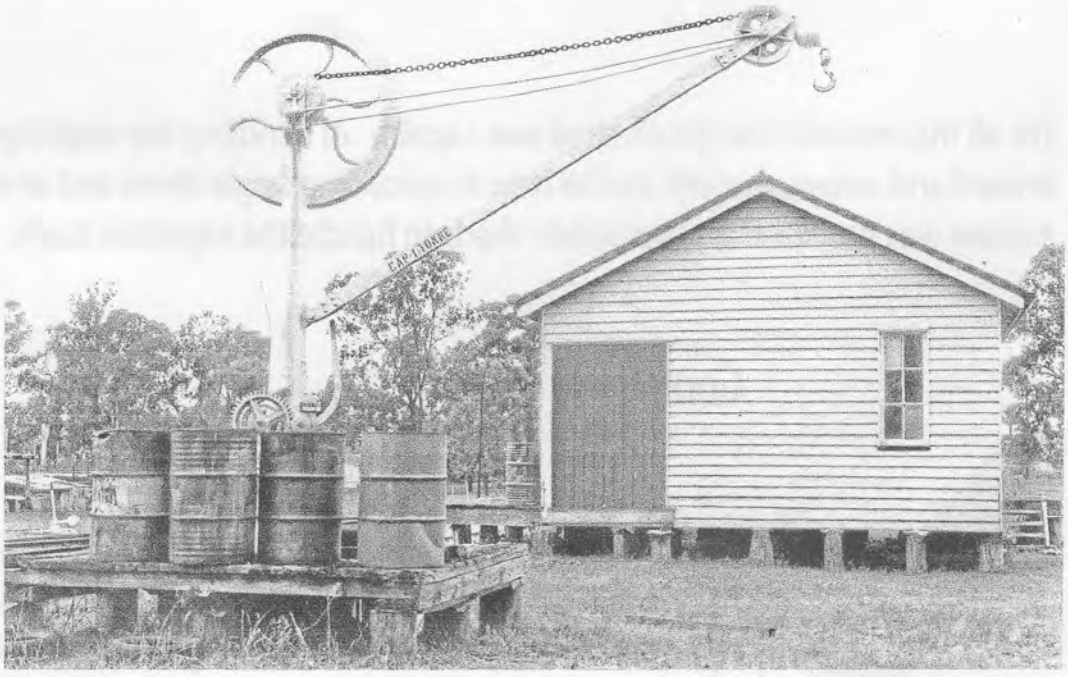


Wandoan – 1996

All photos: Jim Hutchinson

As with all modelling the amount of detail included always gives additional character to the scene being represented. So apart from the goods shed itself, the immediate environment – the rail-side and road-side docks, the crane and the ever present 'clutter' of drums, crates, old tyres and miscellaneous other bits and pieces all add to the quality of the presentation. Goods sheds were not provided to enhance the aesthetics of a yard; they were utilitarian buildings - their role was to provide a fundamental albeit unglamorous service to generate revenue.

Theodore Goods Shed – 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson



Toogoolawah – 1989 Photo: Jim Hutchinson

Wandoan 1996 Photo: Jim Hutchinson