

QR Livestock Trains

The transport of livestock by
train since the early railways in
Queensland

John Newell

LIVESTOCK TRAINS



There was nothing more stimulating during a long distance train trip in a non-airconditioned carriage than to have a stock train pull up on the loop beside you. If it was a hot night and all windows were open, even the most ardent sleeper would soon be awake, closing windows to try to avert the aroma emanating from the adjacent wagons. If one was lucky, one or more of the beasts would decide that it was time to exercise their natural bodily functions, with plopping and splashing right outside what one thought was one's comfort zone for the night.

For city people, this was just part of one's learning experiences of what country was all about.

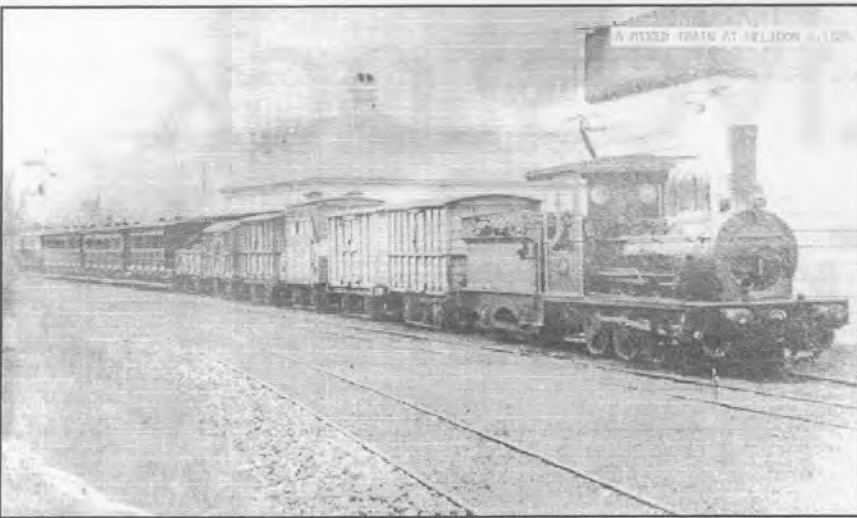
Livestock has been carried by rail in Queensland since the running of the first trains in 1865. These notes are not conclusive, but provide an insight to some of the issues regarding the transport of livestock on Queensland Railways.

The Ashbury Carriage & Wagon Co, Manchester supplied the first carriages and wagons to the embryo Queensland Railways. These were supplied in kit form for ease of transport and handling, being assembled at the original railway workshops on the north bank of the Bremer River at Ipswich.

The goods wagons supplied were all four wheelers, including four horse boxes and twelve wagons for carrying livestock - six each for sheep and cattle.

They were put to good use, as early photographs show that stock traffic was important to the railway, and necessary to the grazier. Most mixed and goods trains had at least one stock wagon attached,

whether it be a horse box, or a sheep or cattle wagon



A B12 on a westbound goods at Helidon ca 1880. The third vehicle in the train is a four wheel horse box, a feature on many goods, mixed and passenger trains in the early days. Later, bogie horse boxes were used.

As settlers took up large properties on the Darling Downs, and as the railway grew to provide for these settlers, so to the stock traffic increased.

The first livestock saleyards in Brisbane were set up in May 1877 at Newmarket, originally named 'The Three Mile Scrub' because of its distance from the city.

The sale yards occupied an area bounded by Wilston Road, Newmarket Road, Enoggera Road and Alderson Street.

Stock arriving by train was unloaded at Normanby and walked

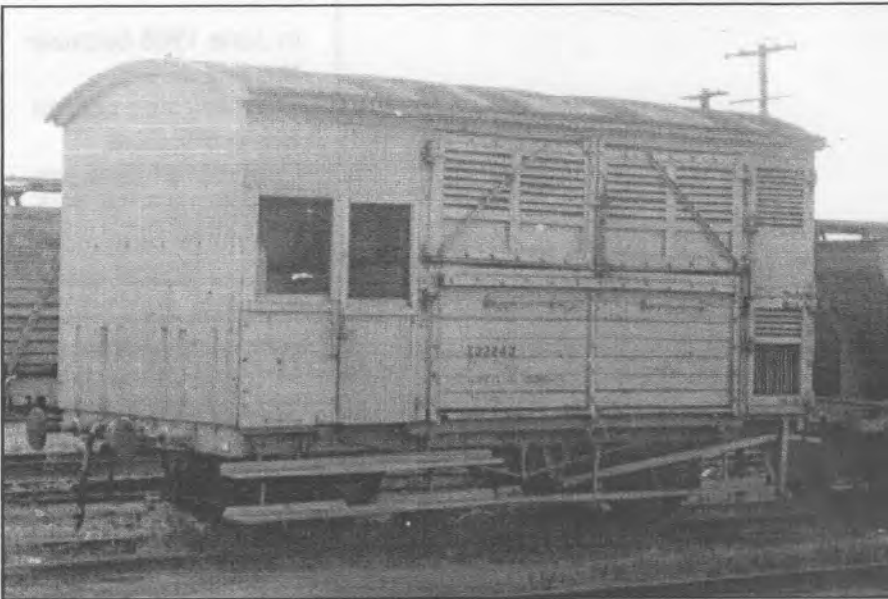
along Kelvin Grove and Enoggera Roads to the yards. This caused concern amongst the residents along the route with frequent complaints about the dust, noise, nuisance and damage to the roads.

Even after the Enoggera branch railway was opened on 5 February 1899, it was not until May 1899 that stock could be unloaded at Newmarket because of delays in erecting the receiving yards.

Stock trains were expected to generate considerable revenue, with consignments for weekly sales at Newmarket. With all stock now consigned direct to Newmarket instead of Normanby, residents along rapidly developing Kelvin Grove and Enoggera Roads were very appreciative of the change.

Newmarket railway station was sited next to the saleyards.

As residential development encroached on Newmarket, the sale yards became a problem with dust, noise and smell and in 1931 they were moved to Cannon Hill with the opening of the State Abattoirs there. The saleyards remained there until 1 October 1991, although the line was still used to transport stock to the public abattoir across Lytton Road.



The site of the saleyards, like the original at Newmarket, is now a housing estate.

With the construction of new railways in Queensland proceeding at a fairly rapid pace, official inspection parties made their forays to railheads and other places to check on progress or to attend official openings. Special trains were usually scheduled and as there was often a need for officials to travel around in the area to which they were going, horses and buggies were required.

The official trains apart from one or two special carriages and the guard's van, would include horse boxes and open wagons carrying buggies.

The transport of livestock soon became a major part of the railway's operations. As early as 1877, large sheep trucks and horse boxes were in short supply and new stock was urgently required.

The increasing need to transport horses is evidenced in 1884, when twenty-two horse boxes were on order for the Southern and Western Railway (20) and the Cooktown Railway (2). These vehicles were the first horse boxes designed with Grover's bogies, avoiding dangerous oscillations that occurred



Two images of a Z class four wheel horse box. An attendant's compartment is at one end, with a dog box at the other.

with standard 7ft rigid bases. The Grovers bogies were 11ft wheelbase, and were expected to be safe at 40mph on straight roads, with little friction on curves.

In the late 1800s, a number of KJ class cattle wagons were altered to carry sheep, to cater for the growth of the sheep industry, particularly in the south western and central western parts of the state. In 1901 twenty-one of these wagons were reconverted to KJ with the arrival of additional sheep wagons.

By 1903, three stall horse boxes were in use, with Robertson & Co. in Townsville constructing three for use in North Queensland.

Before the days of road horse floats, the railways were used extensively for the conveyance of horses to races throughout the state.



Roma Street c 1900. Cattle wagons and horse boxes are to be seen on various tracks. This was an era of extensive horse transport and a developing cattle and sheep business.

In June 1908 because the Beaudesert Tramway hire charge was prohibitive Queensland Railways provided clients with five horse boxes and one composite carriage for the Christmas Creek Races. The hire charge was applied only for the Beaudesert Tramway and not for movement between Brisbane and Beaudesert.

When races were run by the Sandgate Jockey Club at Deagon, special trains were run from Roma Street with empty horse boxes to Ascot, where horses

were loaded. The trains then ran to Eagle Junction, reversed and ran to Nudgee where tickets were collected before unloading horses at Deagon.

The trains were stabled at Sandgate Central until after the races when they returned to Roma Street via Ascot. The composition of the trains included passenger accommodation.

The horses were loaded from and unloaded to the passenger platforms at Ascot. Instructions were issued to staff and those in control of the horses that great care was to be taken with the loading and unloading to ensure the safety of passengers and to ensure that horses did not get away.

Horseboxes on these trains were to be Westinghouse or pipe wagons, and the train was to have a van at each end to facilitate shunting at Eagle Junction.

A light engine ran from Roma Street to Eagle Junction to take over the special train after it arrived from Ascot, the original locomotive returning to Roma Street. The return train was dealt with in a similar way in the reverse order. To allow for shunting at Eagle Junction on the return trip, the siding there was to be cleared of wagons.

In the 1920s when the Goodna Amateur Race Club held its races at Dingo Hill, now Gailes, horse boxes on special passenger and horse box trains were loaded at Albion and unloaded at Goodna. The horses were walked to the race track. On the return, loading took place at Goodna for the trip to Albion.

After unloading at Goodna, the train proceeded to Redbank where it stabled, the locomotive running to Bundamba to turn and wait until it was required for the return trip.

Following passenger trains to and from Roma Street detrained at Dingo Hill, the trains proceeding to Redbank, the locomotive working light engine to be turned at Redbank and wait for the return later in the day.

The passenger trains returned to Roma Street, but the passenger/horse box special ran via Exhibition to Albion, with passengers' tickets collected at Milton.



A Brisbane bound B17 crosses Devils Gully Bridge soon after commencing its journey from Ipswich. Between the locomotive and the set of Evans cars is a four wheel horse box. Four wheel horse boxes were allowed on suburban trains but not on mail trains.

Passengers from Up trains left the platform through the gate at Ipswich end, and on return crossing the tracks to the Down platform under supervision.

In 1924 Up and Down semaphore signals were provided at Dingo Hill. They were normally clear to be placed at danger by guards when trains stopped for loading and unloading horses and cleared when ready to depart. The signals were not lit at night.

Special passenger/horse box trains also ran to Strathpine and Bundamba and in Townsville to Racecourse (later Cluden).

Problems between customers and the railways have always been on the agenda. In 1884 a man wanted to send two horses by train from Oxley to Clifton on the Darling Downs.

He was informed that the Warwick train, the only day train to Clifton, would not stop at Oxley and that he would have to send them by train to Ipswich in a wagon or stable them at a hotel.

The outcome of the grievance the man had against the railway department is not recorded.

In 1904 it was decided a platform 100 feet long was needed for loading and unloading horses at Bundamba. After some debate between the railway department and the Jockey Club, a new platform 100 feet long and 2ft6 above rail was built at a cost of £29.

On the occasion of the Chillagoe Races in August 1912, horses in horseboxes conveyed over 80 km would be returned free on presentation of certificate from Race Club.

Over time, problems arose that had to be dealt with by official instructions.

Trouble was experienced with the three stall horse boxes with oscillation of the wagons and as early as 1916 and on a number of occasions after, guards on trains were instructed to be watch these wagons closely.

At the same time and on several later occasions, instructions were issued that horseboxes and IC wagons were to be swept clear of straw, chaff and manure to prevent risk of fire from sparks from locomotives. Bedding was not allowed on floors of horse boxes.

The practice of covering K wagons carrying horses with tarpaulins was the subject of many instructions over the years.

Livestock were not to be received for transport if the stock had to spend two nights in wagons unless agents were appointed to attend to them en route.

To assist in keeping stock cool in hot conditions appliances for spraying stock were fitted to water tanks

and water hydrants in a range of locations across the state. Sprays for cattle were fitted in 1925 at Charleville and Flaggy Rock, in 1935 at Bororen and Rosedale. The Rosedale spray was removed around 1950.



The western end of Ipswich station in the 1920s. Note the four wheel horse box in the dock to the left. These vehicles would most likely be ready for trips on the Fassifern Valley Branch to Boonah and Dugandan or the Brisbane Valley Branch to Esk, Toogoolawah and Yarraman.

Sprays for pigs were fitted in 1925 at Gympie and Biggenden, in 1935 at Ipswich, Helidon, Caboolture, Palmwoods, Cooran, Gympie, Gootchie, Woolooga, Murgon, Kingaroy, Biggenden and Mundubbera and in 1950 at Gayndah,

Ceratodus. By 1950 the Ipswich spray had been removed.

Railway Construction for Livestock

In 1920 a Royal Commission, Public Works was convened to consider a report on the construction of a rail connection between Charleville and Blackall.

It was recommended that a railway connection between Blackall and some point on the south-western railway system was a national necessity, especially in drought time for the relocation of starving stock. The line would be used mainly to carry livestock and would also be a link in the transcontinental line from New South Wales to the Northern Territory.

At that time, the Blackall- Charleville region was the largest sheep and wool area in Queensland not yet served by railway, and it was believed that stock traffic alone would make it pay.

The link was never constructed.

During World War 2, the United Graziers Association requested rail links between Dajarra and Camooweal, Charleville and Blackall, Boggabilla to Goondiwindi and Mungindi to Thallon, Yarraman to Nanango, Theodore to Wandoan and Lawgi to Monto, and Cannon Hill abattoir with standard gauge line to Sydney.

Although none of these lines eventuated, a standard gauge line now passes Cannon Hill en route to Fisherman Islands, but the opportunity to carry stock has long gone.

Railheads

Two very small towns that are just pinpricks on a map of Queensland, were once the largest trucking centres in the state. Today, both are quiet, laid back towns whose rail connections with the outside world have been closed and lifted.

These towns, Kajabbi and Dajarra, were central to extensive cattle stations, and were very accessible to properties further away, from which cattle were either walked or trucked. The yards in these places were set up for cattle only.

Drovers would walk cattle from as far away as Western Australia to put them on the train at Dajarra, while cattle would be brought into Kajabbi on foot from many properties in the Gulf Country. In the 1960s, road trains brought most of the cattle to these railheads until in the 1990s, road transport was used to link the properties with larger centres such as Mount Isa, Cloncurry and Julia Creek.

In the season from late April to late September up to five cattle trains a day, sometimes seven, pulled out of Kajabbi and Dajarra to rattle through the colourful countryside eastward on their long journey.

Livestock trucking today on QR is confined to cattle only. The transport of horses, sheep and pigs are no longer considered to be viable.

Loading points in 2006 have been trimmed to places like Charleville, Roma, Dalby, Mt Isa, Cloncurry, Julia Creek, Winton, Longreach and Barcaldine.

This is in stark contrast to days gone by when just about any locality had a loading point for livestock, whether it be cattle, sheep, pigs or horses.

In earlier times, livestock was conveyed by special livestock trains or in one or two wagons on mixed trains.

Operational Issues

In July 1931 it was proposed that a semi diesel electric engine, capable of hauling 3 or 4 trucks of cattle, be used on the Forsyth line. However, as these engines were in the experimental stage, the proposal was not recommended, but consideration was given to using a large railmotor. This did proceed, with the DL class diesel locomotives following later.

It was always acknowledged that it was a major financial loss to carry cattle on this line, but prevailing political conditions took precedence and the cattle continued to be transported.

Generally, cattle were transported from large railheads in block trains of 14 K and one KKB, while consignments of sheep were conveyed in blocks of 14 N and one NB. This was accepted as the load for a single steam locomotive, usually a C16 or a C17, and later for small diesel electrics of the 1170 class.

When loadings were heavy, double headed steam trains or multiple unit diesel electrics hauled two "blocks" - that is 14 K or N wagons and a KKB or NB followed by another 14 K or N wagons and a KKB or NB.

The 1920s and 1930s saw an increase in the number of trucking yards provided at stations where small consignments of stock were loaded. These were usually provided on loops off main lines, on one leg of a turning angle or on dead end sidings. This was not a problem as usually only one or two wagons were loaded or unloaded at a time.

In 1950, classifications of livestock wagons were:

- IC, ICG (Grover's bogies), with 8 IC reclassified EIC for elephants
- FP (pigs)
- ZXG (horses), MG, N, NB, NM, NW, NWB (sheep)
- K, KB, and KKB (cattle).

Interestingly, 126 H wagons were altered to carry cattle and classified HK.

In 1975-76 the number of stock transported was:

- cattle—1105180, the highest since 1969-70
- calves— 28772
- sheep—431369 , a drop of just over 100000
- Pigs—78996, a drop of 15000
- Horses— 5831, down 2500.

Wagons were often used for stock other than those for which they were designed. In July 1976 a down goods with 8 IC and 1 LIC of cattle were seen at Ipswich. These wagons were usually used for horses or single livestock.

Some trucking yards were limited to specific types of loading. For example, Rosewood had yards alongside the loop on the southern side of the main line. Although of a reasonable construction, by 1977 the trucking yards were available for loading calves and pigs only, with the facilities available to handle consignments of only one or two horses or cattle.

On the Kingaroy Branch, the majority of the yards were set up for pigs. However, loading was not necessarily restricted to pigs— calves in particular and cattle on occasions were also loaded on this line.

In the late 1950s, up steam hauled livestock trains were required to leave Gympie with a fully coaled tender so that they could run through to Cannon Hill or Murarrie. If necessary they could take water at Nundah. On a number of occasions in the late fifties and early sixties Beyer Garratt locomotives that had received overhaul at Ipswich Workshops would be trialled on Cannon Hill stock trains before being sent north to their depot at Rockhampton.

By 1954 big improvements were made in train drovers accommodation with the KKB brake vans. Most KB wagons had been converted, with only 26 remaining. In the meantime, until all KB wagons had been converted, the United Graziers Association asked that the KB be kept to shorter runs.

Bottlenecks around Gympie and Ipswich and Toowoomba were recognised. A deviation between Tamaree and Monkland would avoid a bottleneck of stock trains at Gympie, while the short section of main line single track and limited yard capacity at Ipswich needed to be addressed. It was agreed that after the rearrangement of the Toowoomba yards was complete, Gympie and Ipswich would be attended to. In the long run, changes at Gympie and Ipswich came too late to be of any use to stock trains.

In the early 1960s, the railway department was to look into the matter of stock trains in the south west with view to effecting improvements. Steam locomotives were being used on stock trains again, after the light diesel locomotives (later 1170 class) which had been used were sent to Mount Isa.

It was expected that light diesel locomotives would be returned to the south west after the rehabilitation of the Mount Isa line for heavy locomotives.

With the introduction of diesel electric locomotives, it was agreed that DEL hauled stock trains could stop at Helidon to enable drover to inspect stock, a necessity following range descent. As steam locomotives stopped at Helidon for water, this had not previously been an issue — diesel electric locomotives did not need to stop.

By 1960, diesel electric locomotives were displacing steam on many long distance goods and passenger trains, including livestock trains. This led to an increase in the overall speed of stock trains, much to the satisfaction of graziers transporting stock to saleyards and meatworks.

In June 1963 one of the largest cattle trains from west left Quilpie - 39 K, 1 KKB for 720 tons hauled by two 1600's in multiple to Roma, then a single 1250 class to Cannon Hill, while in May 1964 a record haul in one consignment was 5000 sheep in 27 N wagons from Dirranbandi to Cannon Hill.

The railways were often blamed for over-crowding of stock. The railways pointed out that this is the responsibility of loader— it was impossible to lay down fixed number. The railway department also said that stock loaded close together keep on their feet better.

Speed of Stock Trains

For almost all of the life of the railways, concern has been expressed at the speed of and paths given to stock trains.

Requests were made for special stock trains without any other cargo, as it was common for stock wagons to be attached to mixed trains and general goods trains, which slowed their progress.

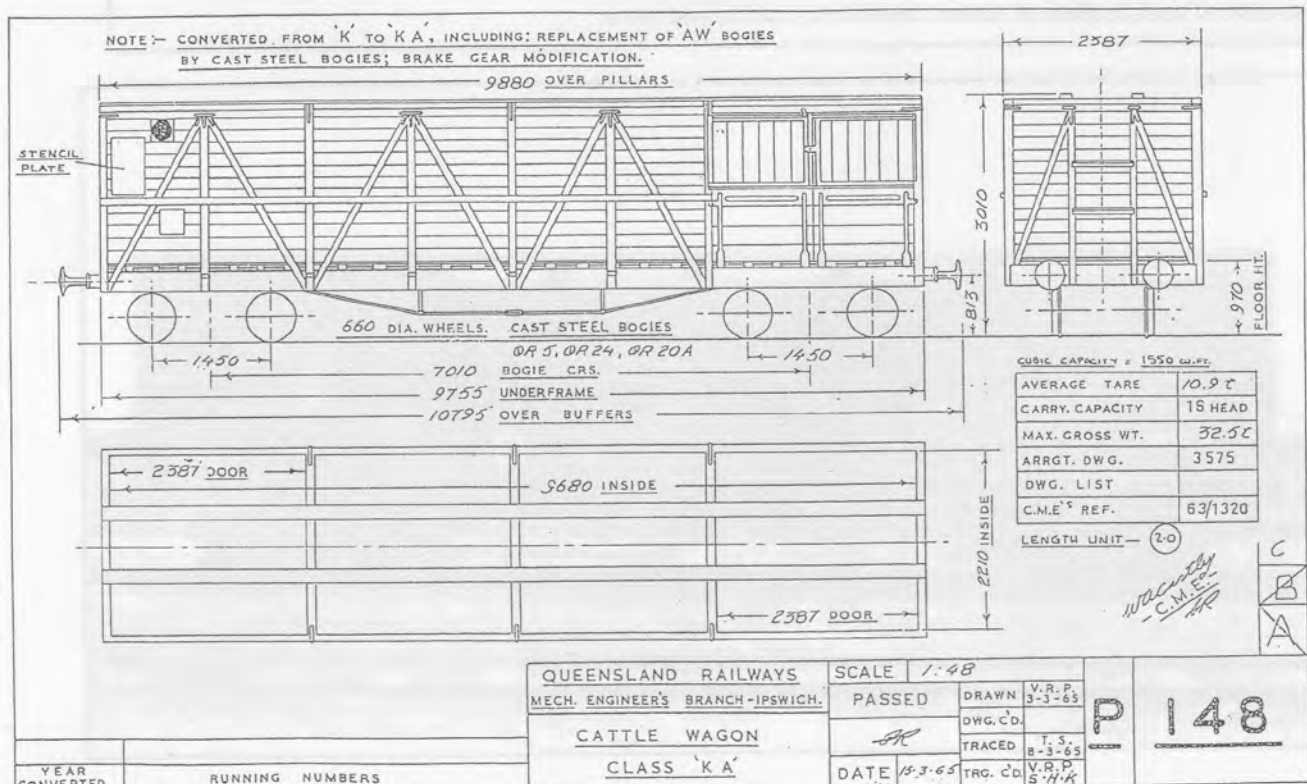
In 1938 the United Graziers Association asked Queensland Railways to speed up stock trains.

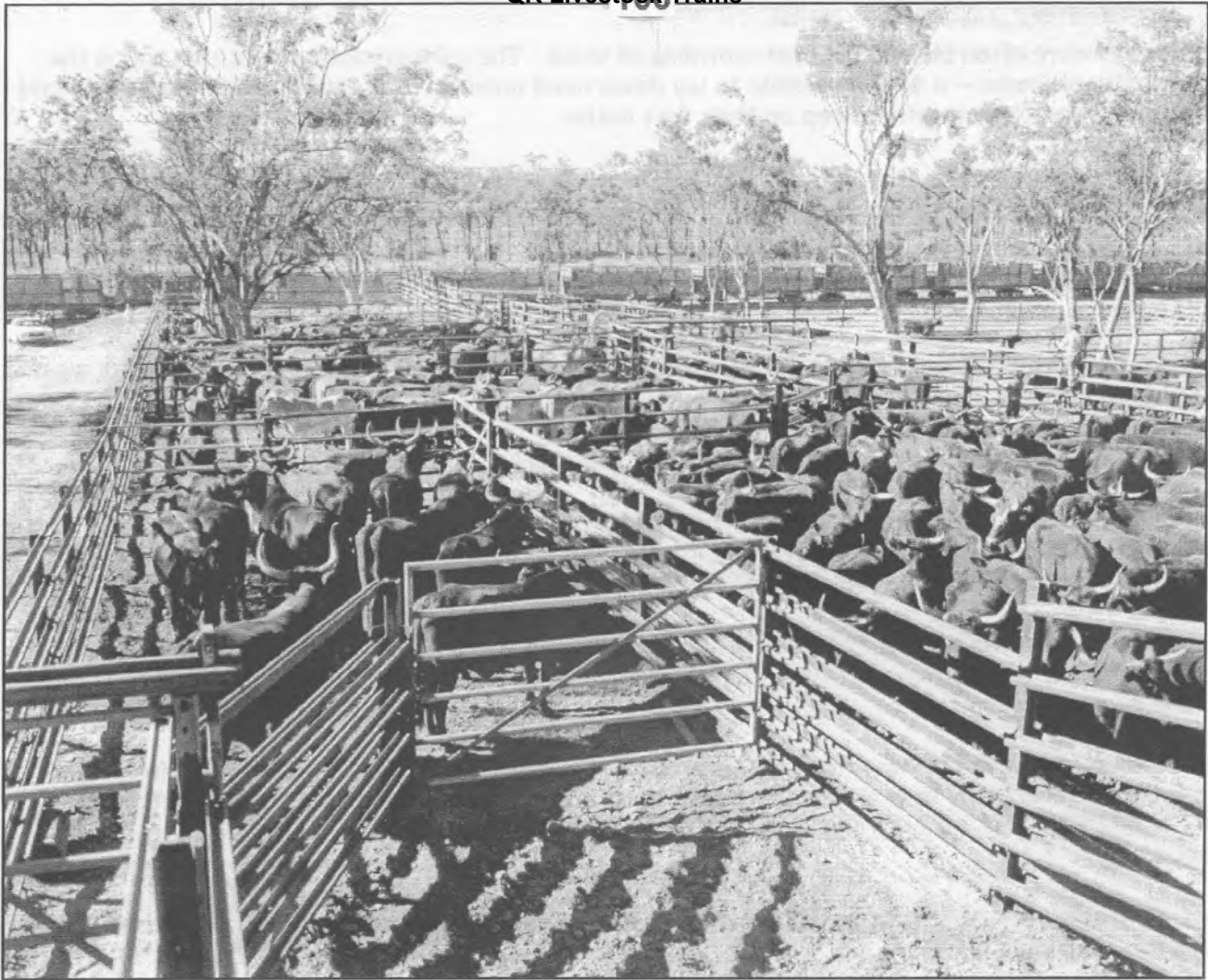
By 1941 growers had tolerated tardy stock trains and bruising through thoughtless jolting too long. They were sure that if rail had competition the situation would improve. Growers were adamant that QR provided the greatest exporting state with the crudest and slowest service in the country.

In response to those who wanted faster stock trains, QR said that it was dangerous to run stock trains very fast because the centre of gravity was high, and because load is a 'live' one, high speed on curves was dangerous.

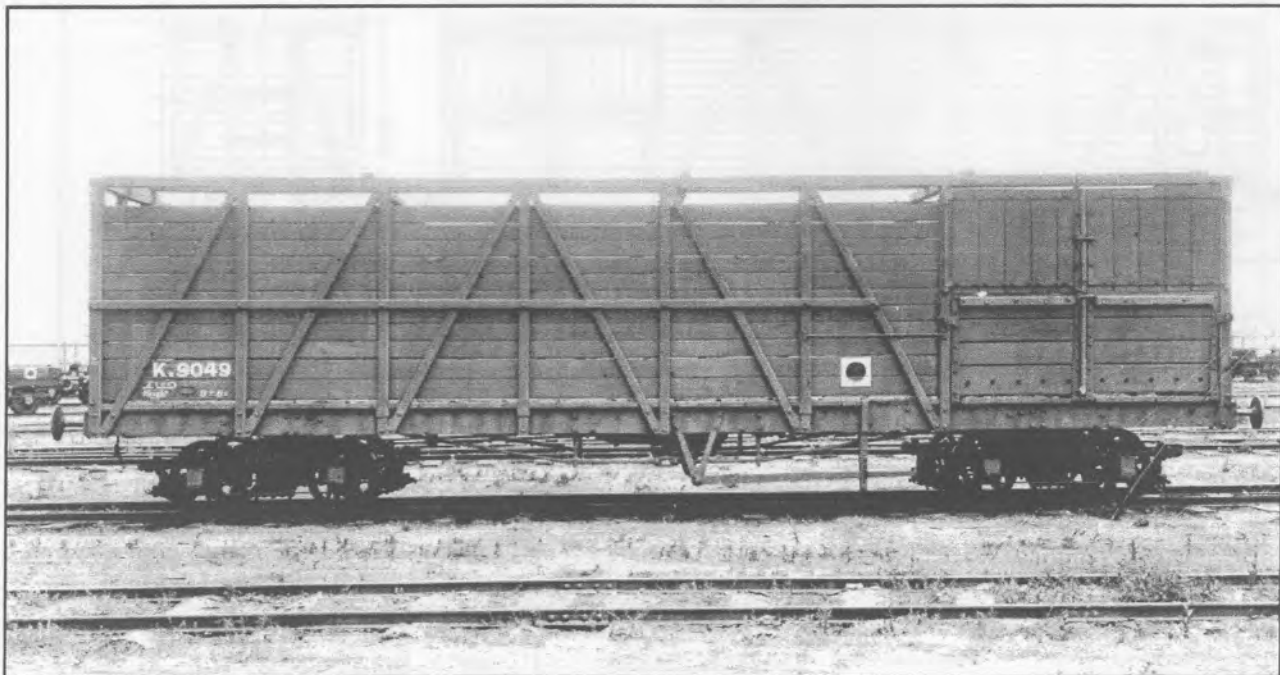
To appease graziers, the railways made it clear that it was their policy to give livestock trains preference over all trains other than passenger trains. In terms of priority over mixed trains, the Commissioner pointed out that mixed trains often had important passenger connections to maintain at their destination.

However, there were still many growers who wanted stock trains to take precedence over all other trains, including mail trains.

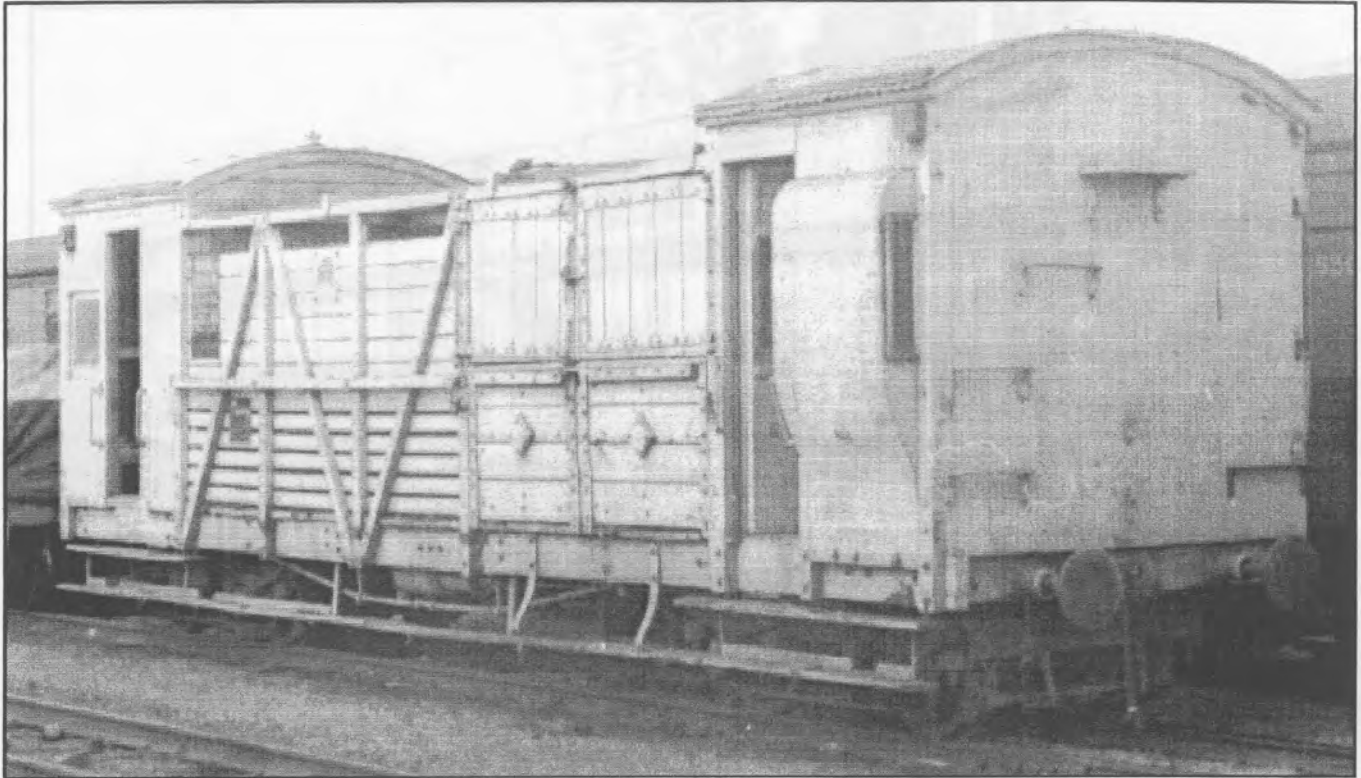




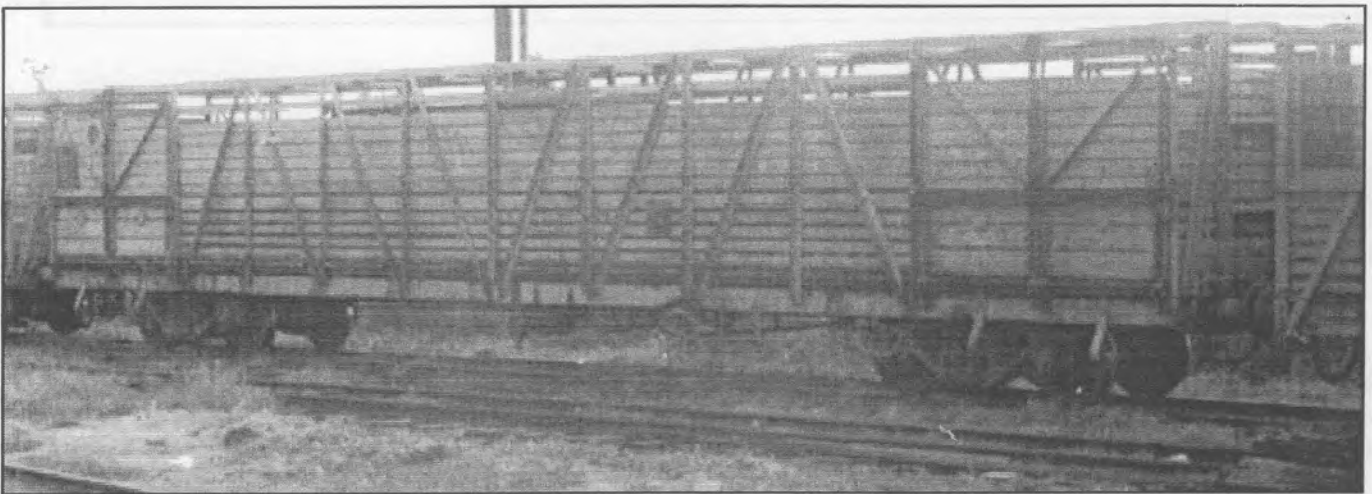
Loading cattle at Mount Isa, one of only a few trucking yards left in Queensland. Note that the yard is constructed of steel, in place of timber construction used in past years.



An early version of the K wagon.



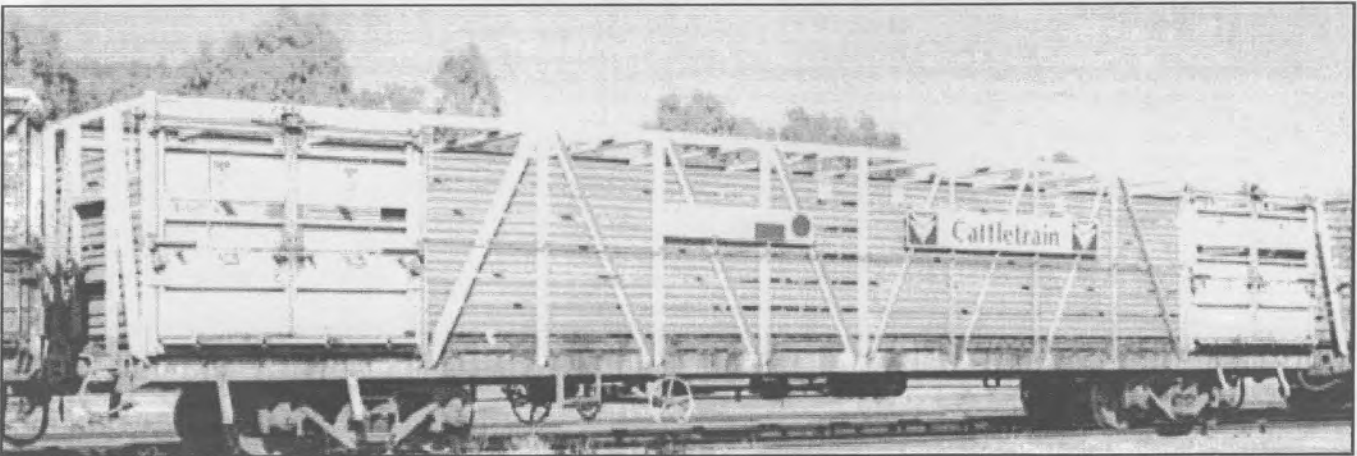
An example of a KKB combined cattle wagon with guards and drovers compartments. These were developed from KB wagons that had guards compartments only.



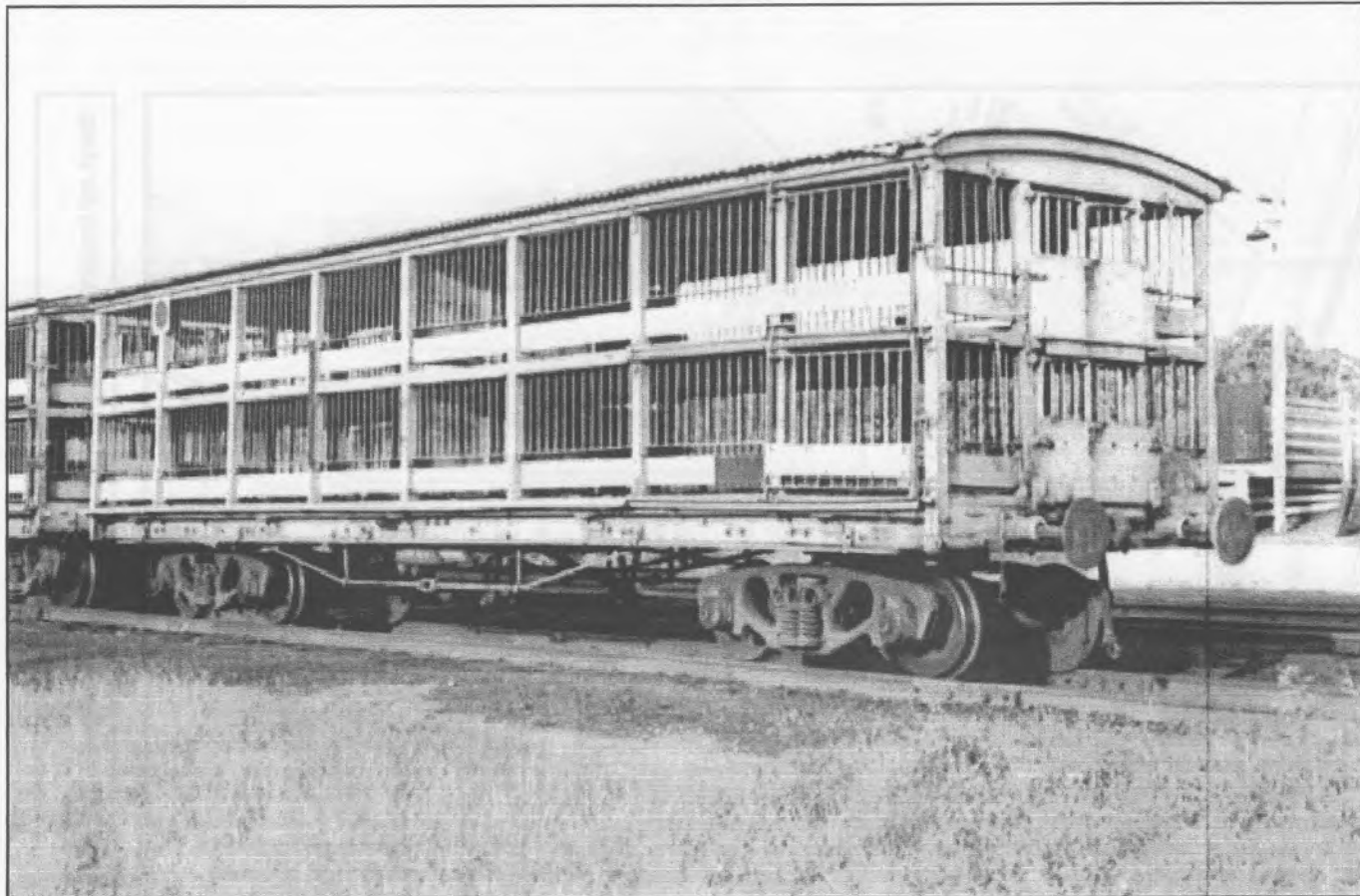
As QR developed its wagons in line with other developments—heavier and more powerful locomotives, better track and bridges and so on—cattle wagons became longer and stronger. Steel was used to a greater extent, although the side and end panels still used timber. More substantial bogies with larger wheels and automatic drawgear became standard. This is a KL wagon.



A further development was the all steel PCYK cattle wagon.



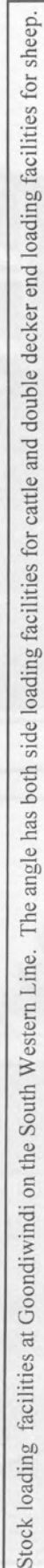
The optimum in named trains for great railway journeys — “Cattletrain”. A KLEX wagon.

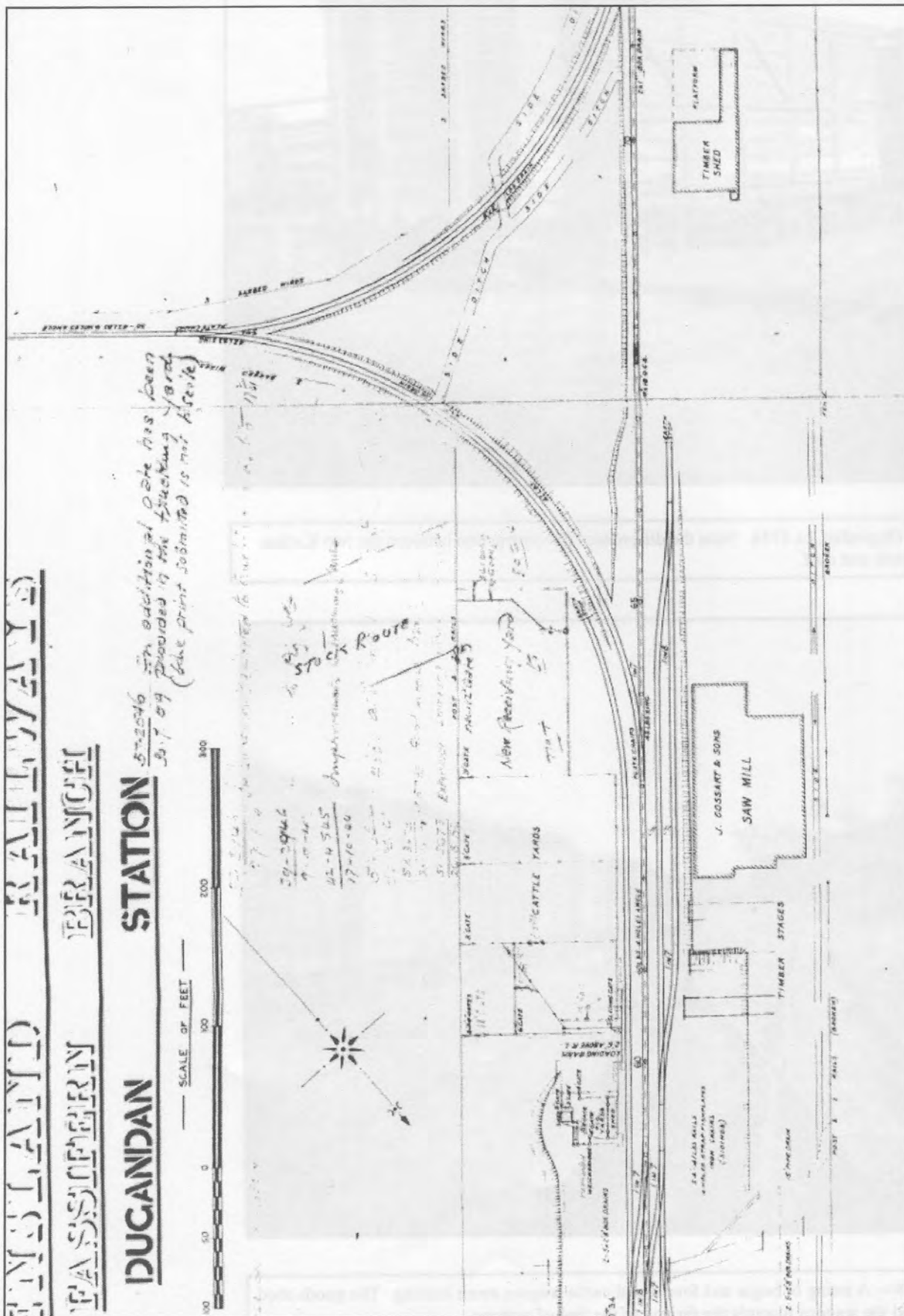


Sheep wagons were double deck and could be side or end loaded, as this NA wagon illustrates.

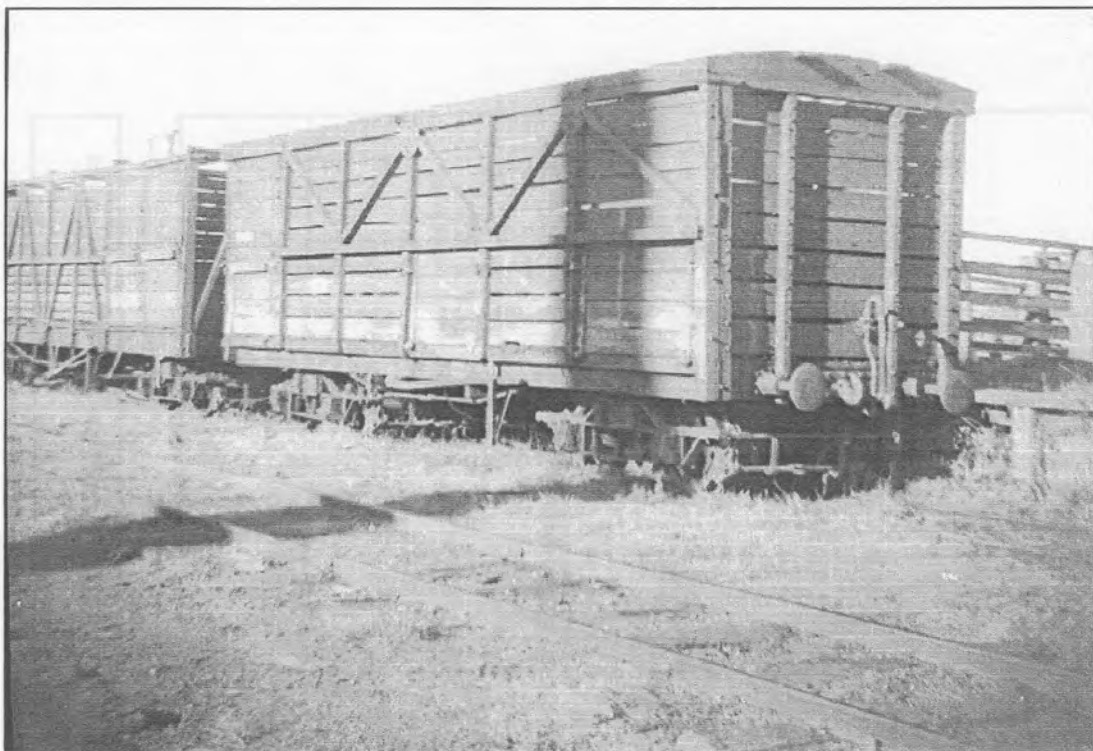


The NWB sheep wagon had the drovers and guards compartments at one end to allow continuous end loading.





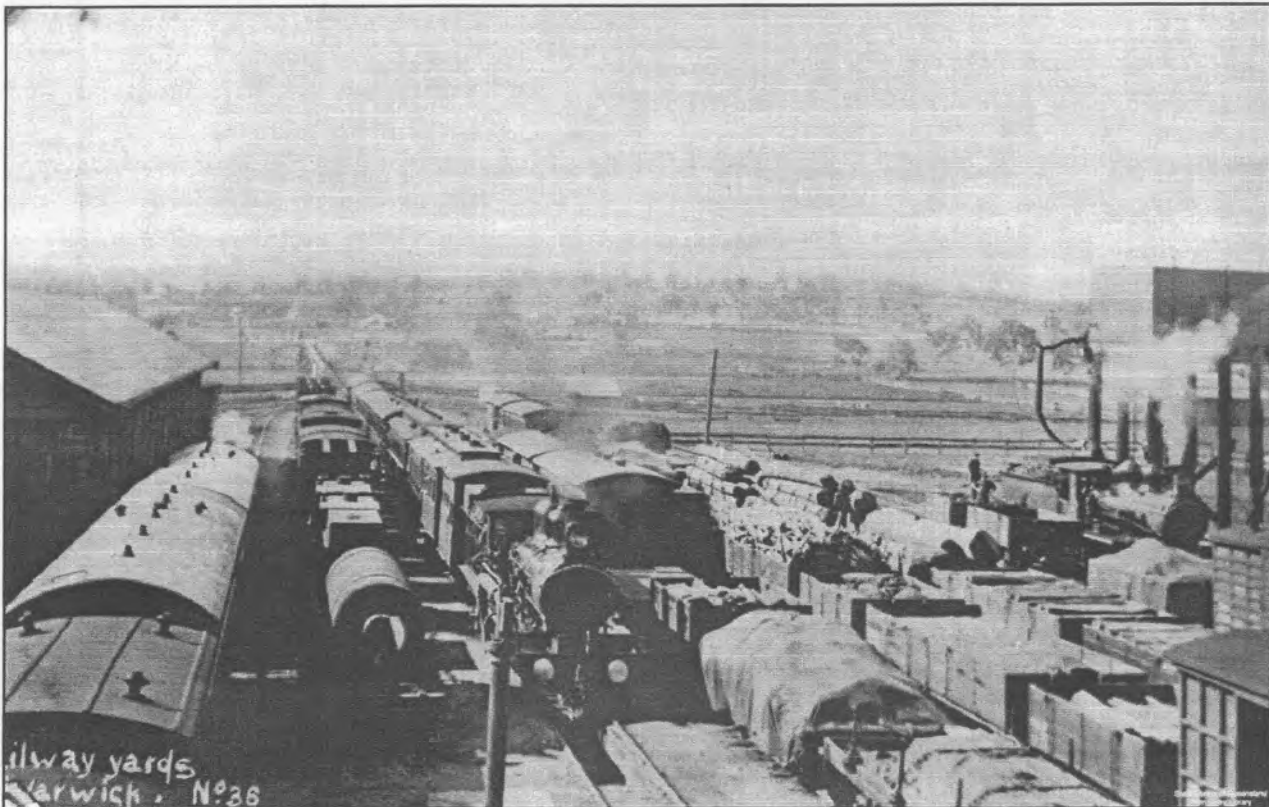
Stock loading facilities at Dugandan, terminus of the Fassifern Valley Branch were on a dead end siding off the extension of the main line. This siding also served the goods shed. Livestock wagons could only be moved to or from the loading facilities if the good shed road was empty.



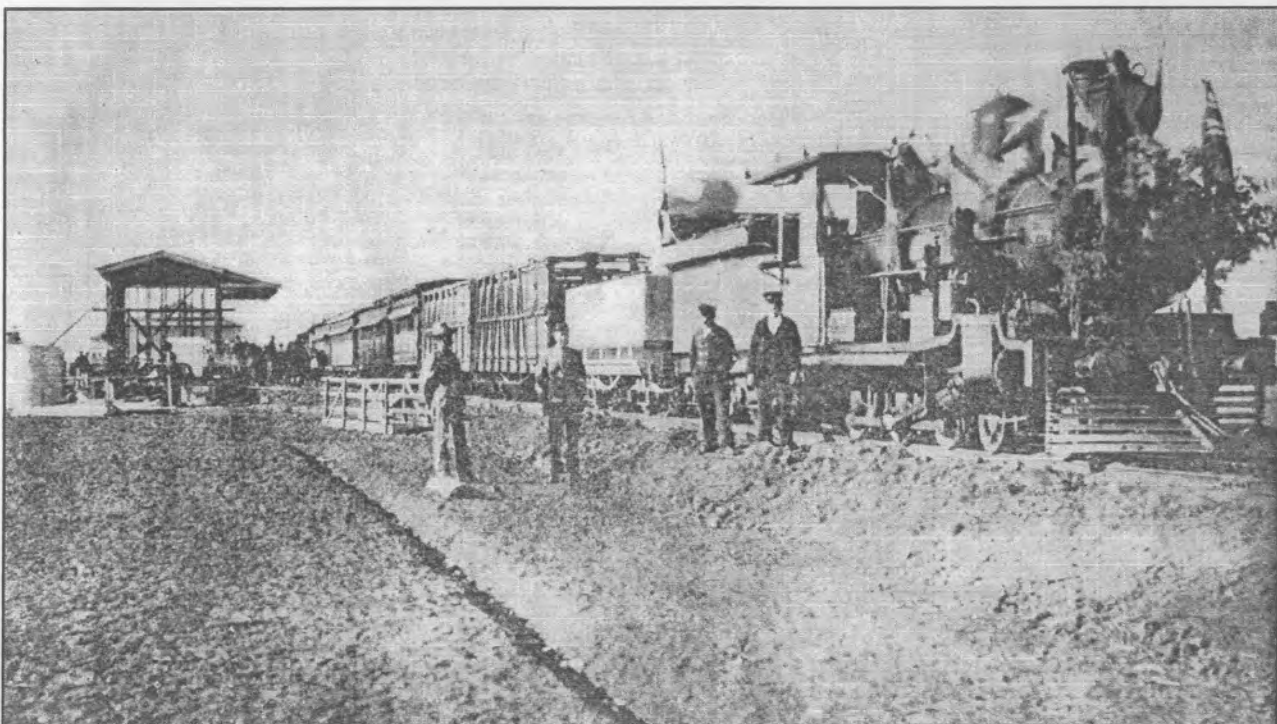
Cattle wagons at Dugandan, ca 1958. Note the differences in construction between the two K class wagons—sides, ends and roof.



Dugandan ca 1958— A string of bogie and four wheel cattle wagons await loading. The goods shed was located behind the wagons towards the far end of the line of wagons.



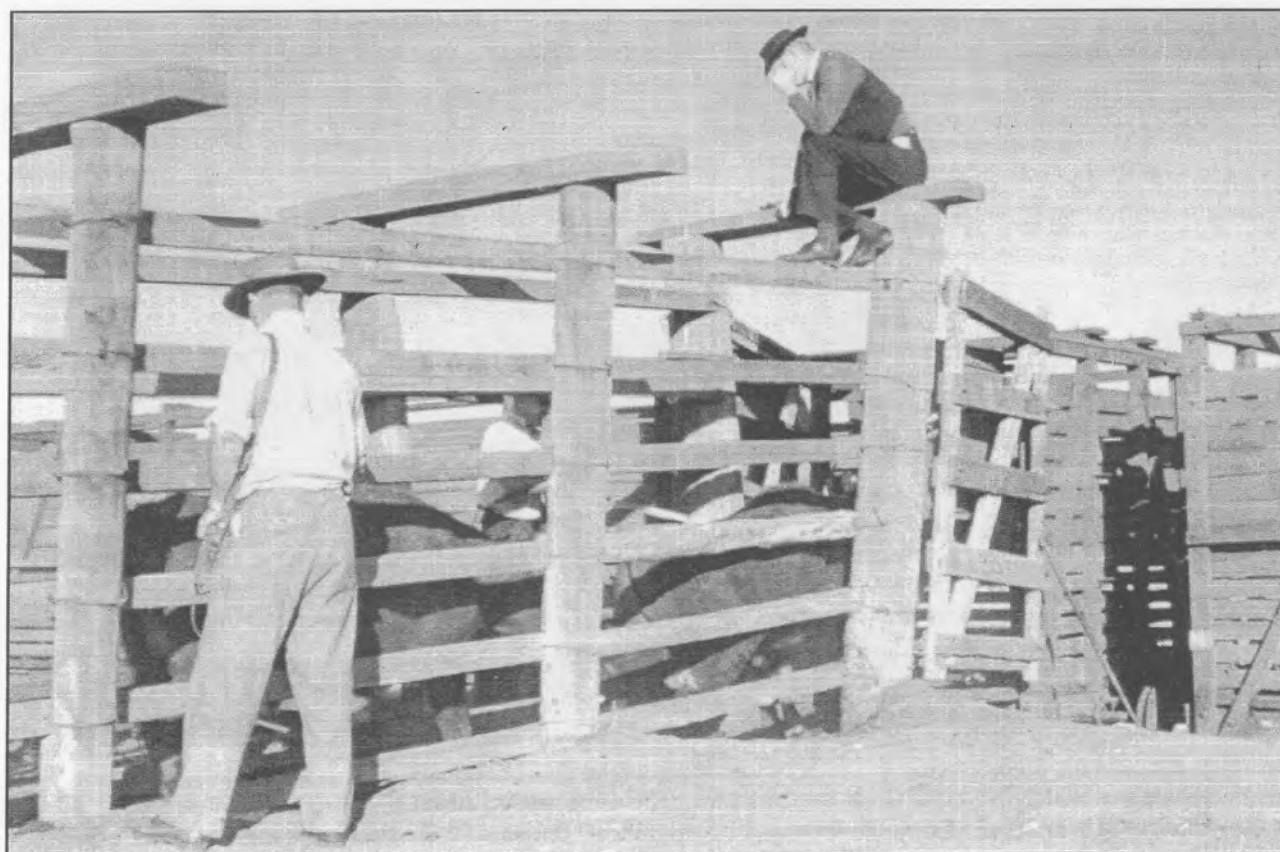
Warwick around 1900. This very busy scene is full of interest. Note the four wheel horse box immediately behind the locomotive on the incoming train—possibly the south bound Sydney Mail.



The first official train into Richmond on the Great Northern Line. The cattle wagons attached in front of the passenger carriages are indicative of the start of what was to become a very significant business for the railways in the north west of the state —livestock transport.



Ipswich Railway Workshops in the late 1800, with early four wheel cattle wagons in the foreground.



Loading cattle at Kajabbi in June, 1966.

Contemporary Issues

By 1977 the Rosewood trucking yards were available for loading calves and pigs only, although the facilities were available to handle consignments of one or two horses or cattle when required.

In 2001 farmers and members of parliament were critical of the prevailing and developing big business attitude shown by QR. The concern was expressed by QR customers who had been railing pigs and calves, when QR changed its policy on the minimum number of wagons that could be booked.

At that time, a minimum of 15 wagons could be booked, but this was to be changed to a minimum of 24 wagons. It was suggested that the change would result in a loss of that transport.

This had been a problem before. In 1931 livestock forwarders protested at new regulation requiring special stock trains to be 14 K and one KB or 14 N and one NB instead of 8 + 1 in past. To appease the protesters, the Railways Commissioner said he would not enforce new regulation for 4 months.

The issues raised by small consignments of stock would not go away.

In February 2001 pig producers were upset when QR decided to stop transporting pigs from Gympie to North Queensland. Pig producers claimed that road transport cost three times as much as rail.

Interesting Matters

- Early rail travel could be different. In November 1875, soon after the opening of the line between Ipswich and Brisbane, the 9.00am train to Ipswich didn't leave Brisbane until 9.40am because of insufficient carriages with passengers standing in horse boxes that were hurriedly attached.
- Prior to World War 1 military training exercises necessitated the transport of horses in K wagons and vehicles in open wagons.
- At about the same time a new dock platform was brought into use at Ascot. Instructions were given that large numbers of horses should not be loaded at the platform until all passengers had left.
- In 1931 an instruction was issued that dogs with their owners were allowed on rail motors, but not pigs or other animals.
- In 1918 it was ruled that only broken in horses and quiet cattle could be consigned to Bundaberg, as there was no provision for unloading unbroken stock or wild cattle at that place. Such stock was to be consigned to Thabeban.
- DH class locomotives were used on Cannon Hill stock trains between Mayne and Cannon Hill in July 1978 when a road vehicle damaged the Ipswich Road rail bridge.
- In April 1937, an Ipswich butcher Arch Taylor requested a small unloading bank at Abermain Junction on the Tivoli Branch. He wanted the facility as he was at that time unloading sheep from wagons by jumping them to the ground at his own risk. Any cattle had to be unloaded at Churchill and walked to his yards.

He said that if the bank for sheep and cattle was built, another butcher would also use it.

The response from the railway department was that as traffic was only half an L wagon every

three months it was not viable, even using old bridge transoms when the cost would be £18. It would also require a special shunt as regular traffic on the branch was limited.

The construction would be recommended if Mr Taylor paid for the shunt at £1-1-0 per hour. No further action resulted.

- A special train ran on 2 April 1978 from Chinchilla to Guluguba on the Wandoan line, and return conveying one N wagon of pigs.
- Rail Motor Goods Trailer No. 48 in 1939 was fitted with 2 crates for conveyance of pigs to be used on Etheridge line for a special consignment. The crates were four metres by two metres by 1.2 metres, divided into two sections.
- On a number of occasions – including 1925, 1935, 1950, 1962 – instructions were given that sheep and cattle wagons were to be kept separate when attaching combined loading on one train. This was to reduce shunting Newmarket in 1925 and at Cannon Hill in the later years.

Conclusion

The subject of livestock trains is not an easy matter to deal with. There are so many variants on a theme, that a paper such as this cannot consider all of the issues. Rather, this paper, with the associated presentation, has touched on as many items as possible that could make modelling and operating stock trains an interesting exercise.

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