

Queensland Rail - A Proud Heritage

A HOME (HILL) AND AYR AWAY FROM HOME ...

Believe me, Bowen gets a railway...

Bowen badly wanted a railway, for a long time. Surprisingly, it was because Bowen wanted a railway, that the Burdekin ended up with two.

Bowen residents had agitated for a railway after one was built from Townsville to the golden centre of Charters Towers (opening in 1882). Bowen considered itself better, having a port superior to Townsville and wanted a line to the Haughton Gap, 37 miles (59 kilometres) from Townsville. The railway from Bowen to Guthalungra opened on 1 October 1891 and to Bobawaba (then known as Wangaratta) on 1 October 1891. The extension from Bobawaba to Home Hill opened much later on 3 July 1913.

With the ongoing political wrangling over the completion of the isolated Bowen Railway to the Townsville Railway, the local authorities of the Townsville Municipal Council, Thuringowa Divisional Board, and Ayr Divisional Board formed the "Ayr Tramway Joint Board". The Board was granted a government loan to build a line along their preferred coastal route to Ayr. The line was built to a fairly basic standard, very cheaply, and opened on 2 April 1901.

... AND WHAT ABOUT AYR?

After the *North Coast Railway Act* in 1910, negotiations were finally concluded so that the line from Stuart to Ayr became a Government railway from 1 January 1913.

The section from Home Hill across the bridge to Marali opened on 1 September 1913 with the bridge being named the Inkerman Bridge.

TAKE THE LOONG WAY HOME...

The Burdekin River was always the great unknown on the North Coast Line.

In 1928 an inland railway link was completed between Longreach and Winton, allowing for a connection between the Central and Great Northern Railway via Hughenden. In times of flooding of the North Coast



Train being towed off Inkerman Bridge by donkey engine. Flood Feb 1922.

A mixed train (carrying both goods and passengers) carefully makes it way across the flooded Burdekin River and the Inkerman bridge, in 1922. At the rear of the train one of the Inkerman sugar mill steam locomotives gives a helping pull (unusual, as this locomotive normally only operated on the private sugar tramway).
- Queensland Rail Historical Collection

Line, trains could travel via this inland route. Unfortunately the distance from Rockhampton to Townsville was nearly 1,000 kilometres via the inland journey, compared to 600 kilometres on the coastal route. One always had to be hopeful in the northern 'wet' not to get caught when the Burdekin was 'up'.

Although the first bridge across the Burdekin river was completed in 1913, it was washed away, or covered with water a number of times. In 1947, work began on a monumental high level bridge, combining both the North Coast Line and the Bruce Highway. The 'Sliver Link', or 'Iron Lung' for the workers, was finally opened in 1957. —

THE LONGEST BRIDGE IN QUEENSLAND

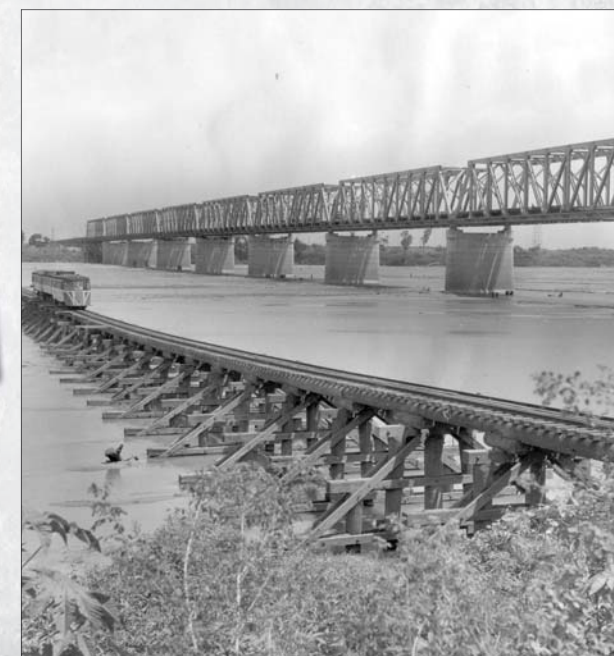
“ One of the first official acts performed in public by Mr. Charles Evans, the Railway Commissioner, during his present tour was the opening of the new bridge over the Burdekin River at Inkerman... This bridge is said to be the longest in Queensland, being about half a mile in length...”

Arriving at the bridge, the Commissioner joined the engine, and drove it across the bridge, pulling up at the station, immediately in front of Drysdale Brothers' new sugar mill. The ribbon stretched across the line was held by Mrs. Cheeseman, of Ayr, and Miss Marian Blane, of Bowen... The opening of the Inkerman Bridge is another link in the chain of the Great Northern Railway of Queensland that has thus been forged.”

The Queenslander,
Saturday 20 September 1913,
page 29.



In the early years of the twentieth century an Ayr Tramway train waits at the original Ayr station. A crowd of locals greet the recently arrived passengers.
- Queensland Rail Historical Collection



Shortly before opening of the new high level Burdekin Bridge crossing a 'streamliner' Gardiner diesel railmotor makes it way across the old low level structure.
- Queensland Rail Historical Collection