

Queensland Rail - A Proud Heritage

THE RAILWAY THROUGH QUEENSLAND'S 'SOUTH AND WEST'...

From Charley's Creek to Chinchilla

Ludwig Leichhardt and his overland expedition of 1844 passed through the area that is today Chinchilla. Originally, it was known as 'Charley's Creek', in honour of Leichhardt's Indigenous guide. 'Jinchilla' was the local name describing the stands of cypress pine growing on the western Downs.

BUILDING TO CHINCHILLA

Approval was given for construction of a line beyond Dalby to Dulacca in two separate stages in September 1875. Initial surveys for the line had looked at following the former dray and coach route, via the Condamine township. The route eventually chosen followed the northern side of the Condamine River. The name Condamine features as one of the well known icons of the Queensland bush, the Condamine Bell.

The distance of the extension was 100 miles, (169 kilometres). Overend and Co. a railway contractor firm were awarded the tender in May 1876, for the first two sections of the contract. The 'official' first sod was turned in Dalby in June 1876, during a visit by the Governor of Queensland.

A TEMPORARY TERMINUS, AND A LOCOMOTIVE DEPOT

(Charley's Creek 325 kilometres on the Western Line), was established as a temporary railway terminus with the opening of the line on 3 January 1878. The opening of the railway virtually created the town. Further extension to Miles took place in August 1878. In 1880 Chinchilla was supplied with an engine shed, and crew cottages were also built. Chinchilla developed as a loco depot and crew change point. During the steam era the section worked by crews was from Toowoomba - Chinchilla, and Chinchilla- Roma. Chinchilla was a popular steam depot for the crews allocated to it.

Chinchilla was also the junction for the Barakula Tramway, to the north. The area had previously been known as Cutthroat. The line was not authorised for construction by Parliament, operating as a 'private railway' for the Queensland Railways, from 1912, until 1970 supplying timber



The railway station and signal cabin at Chinchilla in the early years of the 20th century.
- Queensland Rail Historical Collection

sleepers for the Queensland Railways.

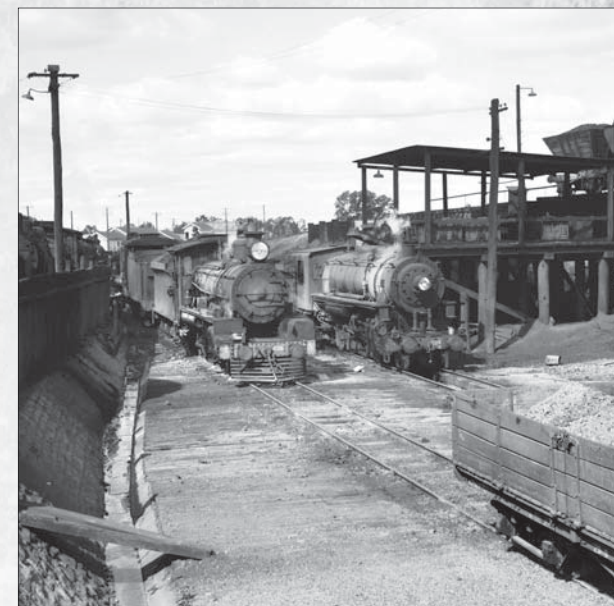
GETTING HUNG UP, ON THE WAY TO CUTTHROAT?

Harry Downs joined the Queensland Railways at Chinchilla as a cleaner in April 1955. At the time that he joined the job Chinchilla was home to around 20 sets of enginemen, 8-10 cleaners, 4-6 Assistant Station Masters and 6 clerks. Working out to Barakula, drivers said that it was dangerous to lean too far from the cab, as they might get hung up on the overhanging branches. —

“ They couldn't maintain the line to a great level. Heavy weather would just wash it away. You'd be going along, and you'd think "Good Lord, above, are we going to stay on this"? You'd go down and up, to get over banks you virtually had to almost exceed the speed limit or you'd be there all day. You'd take a couple of runs- and you couldn't get over it. You couldn't explain it until you went out there.

They had a phone in Barakula, through to Chinchilla it was always a code ring. Like two shorts and a long or something, you'd never get anybody because the line would be down. So nobody knew where you were.... ”

- Harry Downs



In 1965, photographer Eric Marggraf captured the busy locomotive depot at Chinchilla, in all of its steam age atmosphere. Steam locomotives AC16 No.224A, and C17 No.839 stand in the depot.

- Queensland Rail Historical Collection



In 1965, photographer Eric Marggraf captured the brave members of the Australian Railway Historical Society setting forth on the Barakula Tramway, from Chinchilla.

- Queensland Rail Historical Collection.