Sugar Cane 2024

A look at the current operations of Queensland's sugar cane railways

Part 1: Isis Central to Proserpine

Chris Walters

Stretching from Isis Central Mill in the south to Mossman Mill in the north, there are currently 17 rail-served sugar mills[1] dotted along a stretch of over 1,500 kilometres of Queensland coast supported by twelve distinct railway networks. During the annual 'crushing season', which usually runs June to December, an estimated 203 locomotives and 52,000 cane bins are used to haul freshly harvested sugar cane billets along an estimated 4,190 kilometres of narrow-gauge track (all of 610mm gauge, except for one mill with a 1,067mm network), from farms and transhipment points to those 17 mills, ensuring they are crushed within 24 hours of being cut. That collection of locomotives range from 1950s-era, rigid-wheelbase, side rod-driven 0-4-0 and (more commonly) 0-6-0 diesel locomotives, through 1970s bogie-fitted cane units, as pioneered by EM Baldwin & Sons in NSW, to 1980 and 1990s 40-tonner machines, most of which are rebuilds of former Government owned, Walkers Limited built DH, 73 and M Class locomotives. Meanwhile, the bins range from simple four-wheeled, four-tonne bins, to bogie-fitted wagons with a capacity of up to 13 tonnes.

Around 359,000 hectares of Queensland farmland is given over to the sugar production in Australia – an industry worth about $2.5 Billion to the Federal economy. No other industry in the country can boast such an elaborate or far flung 'internal' transport network, which in this case keeps a daily estimate of 18,000 to 25,000 truck movements off the regions' roads. To further our perspective, here are some key Australia sugar industry stats from the 2020 census:

- *31.1 million tonnes of sugar cane were produced in 2020*
- *355 thousand hectares were harvested for sugar cane milling*
- *3,830 sugarcane businesses produced sugarcane*
- *7.3 million tonnes of sugarcane were produced in the Burdekin Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2), which is the largest sugarcane producing SA2 in Australia.*[2]

1. Maryborough Mill, currently inactive and within the town of the same name, and Rocky Point Mill, between Brisbane and the Gold Coast, will not be covered in this article, as neither facility employs its own railway network.
2. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/agriculture/sugarcane-experimental-regional-estimates-using-new-data-sources-and-methods/latest-release

Not made clear in those statistics is the expansion by the Australian sugar industry into a more diverse range of products and services via its mills, including fertilisers, molasses, green chemicals (which reduce or remove the risk of hazardous substances) and the development of bagasse into the basis for electricity co-generation. Bagasse is essentially the dry cane husk left over from the crushing/juicing process, and by using it to fuel sugar mill boilers, the substance not only provides a biofuel to reduce the industry's carbon footprint, but allows the mills to co-generate excess power as part of the crushing process, to be fed back into the local energy grids.

Despite all of this, Queensland sugar cane industry, and its railways, tend to 'hide in the background' when we talk about the Australian rail industry – be it because they largely operate away from major cities, only operate for half a year or because, being disparate narrow-gauge operations, they just don't 'make headlines' in the manner by which larger rail operators such as Aurizon, Pacific National and Qube can. This article seeks to introduce these operations to those readers not familiar with them, while providing an update for those are who are. Starting in the south with Isis Central near Childers, we'll work our way north, essentially along the famed Bruce Highway. Part 1 of this will look at the mill systems up to Proserpine on Queensland's Whitsunday Coast, while Part 2 will cover the mills from the Burdekin region up to Mossman in the far north.

Isis Central

Since the closure of Moreton Mill at Nambour at the end of the 2003 season, Isis Central Sugar Mill is now the closest sugar mill to Brisbane with its own railway network. The mill itself, which opened in 1897, is 330 kilometres and three-and-a-quarter-hours drive north of Brisbane, between the towns of Childers and Cordalba, and sits just over a kilometre north of the Bruce Highway. During 2022, Isis Central crushed 1,423,000 tonnes of cane to produce approximately 210,000 tonnes of raw sugar, all of which is exported through the Port of Bundaberg, north of Bundaberg itself on the Elliott River.

Most Isis Central branches head north and east away from the mill, with New Valley Road, just south of Bundaberg Airport, being the northern

Left (page 32): On Saturday 2 September 2023, EM Baldwin B-B DH *Mia Mia* heads due east near Sandiford en route to Racecourse Mill, having spent some hours dropping off empties and collecting loaded bins in its namesake area, southwest of Mackay. Malcolm Holdsworth

extent, while other lines reach eastwards into areas around Childers, Doolbi and Goodwood. A more recent extension has seen Isis Central tap into farming areas around Booyal, Duingal and Wallaville, areas that were previously served by the now-closed Bingera Mill. This new railway utilises part of the Cordalba-Dallarnil section of the former Queensland Railways Isis branch line. Isis Central currently also crushes cane formerly taken by road to Maryborough Mill, before it closed in 2020.

Isis Central's main line exits the mill via a sweeping, double-track alignment that ascends a grade that can be observed from Mill Road, north-east of the mill. The mill's railway network totals 164 kilometres, and the locomotive fleet is dominated by six Walkers B-B diesel-hydraulic rebuilds, supported by two EM Baldwin units. Isis Central No.1 was actually the first rebuild of a former Government owned Walkers locomotive for the sugar industry, but the initial 1991 'rebuild' consisted only of an overhaul, modification to the couplers and of course the re-gauging of its bogies from 1,067 to 610mm. It was not until 1993 that the locomotive was fully rebuilt into its current form, which formed the basis for Isis Central's five ensuing QR DH Class rebuilds. There is also one Clyde locomotive, although it is only very rarely used, and then only for navvy/infrastructure related duties. There used to be a larger group of Clyde locomotives, however these were sold by Isis Central to the Fiji Sugar Corporation as the Walkers units came on line.

Available for service:

- **1** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1991), B-B DH (Walkers 602 of 1969 – ex-QR DH20)
- **2** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1994), B-B DH (Walkers 598 of 1968 – ex-QR DH16)
- **3** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1994), B-B DH (Walkers 600 of 1968 – ex-QR DH18)
- **4** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1994), B-B DH (Walkers 656 of 1970 – ex-QR DH69)
- **5** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1998), B-B DH (Walkers 617 of 1969 – ex-QR DH35)
- **6** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (2002), B-B DH (Walkers 610 of 1969 – ex-QR DH28)
- **10** – EM Baldwin model DH24B, B-B DH (7267.1 6.77 of 1977)
- **11** – EM Baldwin model DH28B, B-B DH (10130.1 6.82 of 1982)

Stored:

- **9** – Clyde 0-6-0DH HG-3R, 1975 (75-812)
- Ex-Mount Isa Mines 5804 – Walkers GH500, B-B DH (589 of 1969 – ex-QR DH7)

Bundaberg Sugar, Millaquin Mill

20 years ago, there were three sugar mills, with a combined 330-kilometre rail network, located in and around Bundaberg. Since then, Bundaberg Sugar has consolidated its assets with the closures of Fairymead (2005) and Bingera (2020), which crushed only 450,000 tonnes of cane in its last season, leaving Millaquin, opened in 1882 and only three kilometres north-east of the city centre, as the company's sole operating sugar mill. Millaquin is around 375 kilometres from Brisbane, and 55 kilometres from Isis Central, its nearest neighbouring mill. During August 2023, Belgium-based parent company Finasucre announced that it was investigating the sale of Bundaberg Sugar.

Farming areas formerly served by the now closed Bingera Mill, on the northern/western side of the Burnett River, are currently cut off from direct rail access to Millaquin Mill on the southern/eastern bank. A new railway bridge is planned for the river crossing at the Strathdees Boat Ramp near Rubyanna, to link the two halves of Bundaberg Sugar's rail network directly.

Isis Central's main line exits the mill via a sweeping, double-track alignment. On Sunday 3 September 2023, Walkers B-B DH number 6 (formerly Queensland Rail DH28) climbs away from the mill with a long train of empty bins. James Chuang

The new bridge will feature a centre lift-section for river boat traffic. For the time being, cane is hauled along the former Bingera/Fairymead networks to the north side of the Burnett River, where a transhipment compound has been set up to road truck the bins across the river to Millaquin Mill. The mill currently crushes around 1,100,000 tonnes of crushed cane to produce approximately 175,000 tonnes of raw sugar.

As it stands, Millaquin's network extends north through Rubyanna to just south of the Port of Bundaberg, east to Innes Park, and south to Elliott Heads and Kinkuna. On the north side of the Elliott River, the railway network extends north to Bucca and east through former Fairymead Mill territory to Moorlands and the Kolan River. A sub-depot is still maintained at Fairymead. Together, both halves of this network amount to around 330 kilometres of track.

Bingera Mill used to also pull cane in from branches fanning out from a sub-depot and yard at Wallaville. This railway employed the corridor formerly used by Queensland Rail's Wallaville branch, before it was closed in 1964, and then later sold to and rebuilt by the now gone Gin Gin Mill at Wallaville. Since 2022, the condition of some bridges along the route have seen the line cut back and any cane from that region destined for Millaquin is now trucked direct to the mill.

Bundaberg Sugar's locomotive fleet was always a traditionally eclectic one, given it has come from the consolidation of several smaller fleets from closed mills. During more recent times, Millaquin's fleet has been consolidated into a more organised group, dominated by Comeng six-wheelers and Baldwin locomotives, most of which are bogie units. Many of Bundaberg Sugar's older Clyde, Comeng and Baldwin units have been sold to the Fiji Sugar Corporation over the last decade or so.

Two current Millaquin locomotives worth spotlighting are *Elliott* and *Booyan*, both built in 1991 by Bundaberg Foundry Engineering under license to Hunslet in the United Kingdom. Their 'off centre' cab design sets them quite apart visually from most Australian sugar cane locomotives while their bogie-mounted draw gear is also unique to this pair. *Booyan* was in fact built for Babinda Mill (then also owned by Bundaberg Sugar) up north, but was not suited for use at Babinda and so it was transferred to Millaquin in 1999, reuniting the pair once more.

Available for service:

- ***Invicta*** – Comeng model AA, 0-6-0 DH (A1513 of 1956)
- ***Sharon*** – Comeng model AE, 0-6-0 DH (A1935 of 1959)
- ***Wattle*** – Comeng model FD, 0-6-0 DH (FD4789 of 1965)
- ***Tegege*** – Comeng model FD, 0-6-0 DH (FD4799 of 1966)
- ***Perry*** – EM Baldwin model DH18, 0-6-0 DH (6/1576.1 8.66 of 1966)
- ***Manoo*** – EM Baldwin model DH20 Mk1, 0-6-0 DH (3875.1 7.71 of 1971)
- ***Calavos*** – EM Baldwin model DH22B Mk6, B-B DH (4983.1 7.73 of 1973)
- ***Vulcan*** – EM Baldwin model DH24B Mk6, B-B DH (5317.1 11.73 of 1973)
- ***Moorland*** – EM Baldwin model DH15B, B-B DH (5565.1 10.74 of 1974)
- ***Oakwood*** – EM Baldwin model DH26B Mk2, B-B DH (5800.1 5.75 of 1975)
- ***Givelda*** – EM Baldwin model DH26B Mk2, B-B DH (5800.2 6.75 of 1975)
- ***Delan*** – EM Baldwin model DH26B Mk2, B-B DH (5800.3 7.75 of 1975)
- ***Bucca*** – EM Baldwin model DH24B Mk3, B-B DH (6104.1 8.75 of 1975)
- ***Barolin*** – EM Baldwin model DH24B Mk6, B-B DH (6456.1 11.75 of 1975)
- ***Miara*** – EM Baldwin model DH26B Mk3, B-B DH (8988.1 6.80 of 1980)
- ***Fairydale*** – EM Baldwin model DH28B, B-B DH (10048.1 6.82 of 1982)
- ***Booyan*** – Bundaberg Foundry Engineering model SDH650, B-B DH (001 of 1991)
- ***Elliott*** – Bundaberg Foundry Engineering model SDH650, B-B DH (002 of 1991)
- ***Kolan*** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (2002), B-B DH (633 of 1969 – ex-QR DH51)

Stored out of use:

- ***Thistle*** – Comeng model AA, 0-6-0 DH (A1207 of 1955)
- ***Burnett*** – Comeng model AH, 0-6-0 DH (AH2967 of 1963)
- DH41 – Walkers model GH500, B-B DH (623 of 1969)

On Tuesday 3 October 2023, Bundaberg Sugar's EM Baldwin B-B DH locomotive *Barolin* is about to cross Alexandra Street, Bundaberg East, while working in the Millaquin Mill yard. Stephen Whitaker

Right: Bundaberg Foundry Engineering B-B DH *Elliott*, one of only two such locomotives in existence – both operated by Millaquin Mill – is seen here near Asmus Loop on the Calavos/Clayton mainline with a loaded train rounding the curve to follow 3 Chain Road on Saturday 22 July 2023. Tony Bennett

Below: Wilmar Sugar's Walkers B-B DH No.3 *Koumala* is performing a shunt between Dawlish and Sarina to pick up some more loaded cane wagons, on its way to Plane Creek sugar mill at Sarina on Saturday 14 November 2020. Peter Reading

Plane Creek Mill, Sarina

Sarina's Plane Creek Mill, which opened in 1896, is the southernmost of the larger Singapore-based Wilmar Sugar family, with its nearest Wilmar neighbour being Proserpine Mill, 160 kilometres further up the Bruce Highway. That said, being 590 kilometres from Millaquin (its nearest mill neighbour to the south) and 940 kilometres from Brisbane, Plane Creek being 'southernmost' is all a bit relative. The mill is also Wilmar's 'quiet one', crushing 1,200,000 tonnes of cane for 180,000 tonnes of raw sugar annually. Produce was once railed by QR to Mackay Harbour but it is now trucked.

The mill's network stretches north as far as Alligator Creek and west to Whitakers Road and Shinfield, but the longest runs are those down south to Koumala and the Karloo yard at Carmila, 65 kilometres south of Sarina. Cane harvested from Clairview is trucked the 35 kilometres north to Karloo for transhipment. It is this line that used to feature Plane Creek's distributed-power (DP) trains employing a pair of the mill's original four Walkers rebuilds – one leading, one mid-train. The empty train would work south as a double header. More recently, these DP operations have ended, but the longer south runs still feature the Walkers locomotives. The route south is interesting for another reason too as, for several kilometres, it parallels not only Aurizon's North Coast Line, but also the double-track electrified Goonyella coal railway, which approaches the ports on Hay Point via Yukan, through which all three lines can be seen side by side for some distance. Crossing them all is Hutchings Road level crossing, just north of Yukan, and from here can be seen three very different rail operations in action.

The smaller Comeng locomotives tend to be used closer in to Sarina, and for shuttling loads between the Shannons Flat yard north of town and the mill itself. The sole EM Baldwin locomotive, D12, can be found on any of the branches radiating out from the mill, although it does not run the full distance of the south line. A fifth Walkers unit, *Victoria*, has more recently been transferred south from its namesake mill.

Available for service:

- **D4** – Comeng model FA, 0-6-0 DH (FA1037 of 1960)
- **7** – Comeng model FC, 0-6-0DH (FC3776 of 1964)
- **D12** – EM Baldwin model DH32B, B-B DH (6890.1 10.76 of 1976)
- ***Allan Page* QR1** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1995/2020), B-B DH (594 of 1968 – ex-QR DH12)
- ***Karloo*** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1992), B-B DH (632 of 1969 – ex-QR DH50)
- ***Koumala* QR3** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1995/2019), B-B DH (651 of 1970 – ex-QR DH64)
- ***Carmila* QR4** – Walkers GH700 rebuild (1996/2018), B-B DH (676 of 1971 – ex-NSWSRA 7317).
- ***Victoria*** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1994), B-B DH (599 of 1968 – ex-QR DH17)

Stored:

- **D8** – Comeng model FC 0-6-0DH (FC3777 of 1964)

Mackay Sugar

Mackay Sugar's current trio of mills literally surround the city, with Farleigh Mill about 13 kilometres north-west, Marian 28 kilometres west, and Racecourse Mill six kilometres to the south-west. In terms of age Farleigh is the oldest, built in 1883, while Marian is the youngest, opened in 1895 following on from a short-lived mill of the same name that briefly operated nearby from 1885. Racecourse was commissioned 1889.

Mackay itself lies 980 kilometres north of Brisbane, the nearest mill to the south is Plane Creek at Sarina, 38 kilometres away, while to the north is Proserpine, 126 kilometres' distant. Both of those mills are owned by Wilmar Sugar. Previously a cooperative, formed in 1988 by the amalgamation of the local milling businesses, Mackay Sugar itself has now been part of the German-based Nordzucker Group since 2019. A program has commenced to repaint the locomotive fleet into a Nordzucker livery of white, green and blue, which is quite the change from the sugar industry's traditional yellow based paint schemes.

During the 2023 season, Mackay Sugar's three mills combined to crush approximately 5,500,000 tonnes of sugar cane, which was processed into approximately 702,000 tonnes of raw sugar. The combined railway network, which is interconnected between all three mills, totals 852 kilometres of rail. It stretches 70 kilometres north to Wagoora, 23 kilometres south to Munbura (coming to within two kilometres of Plane Creek's line near Dawlish) and 76 kilometres west to Finch Hatton. This latter line, and others in the areas west of Marian, were at least partly built on the formation of former Queensland Railways branches. Due to the diverse range of areas and landscapes Mackay Sugar's extensive network traverses, there are some very interesting sections of infrastructure to appreciate. To start with there is the $20 million Summit railway cutting on Farleigh Mill's North Coast line near Habana, built during 1997/98. Measuring about 30 metres down to the rail head, it is believed to be the world's deepest 610mm gauge railway cutting, and was built to ease a bottle-neck section that included grades of 1-in-60. The 1.5-kilometre cutting is on a 1-in-200 grade.

A couple of bridges are worth noting also, including the *George L Vickers* bridge coming in to Marian from the north across the Pioneer River. Although not a road/rail bridge in the strictest sense, the 610mm railway is built right adjacent to the Marian-Habana Road across the river, with the line then cutting across Anzac Avenue on the south side of the bridge. In a similar vein, but on this occasion an actual road/rail structure, is the *John Cook Bridge* over the Pioneer further east near the former Pleystowe Mill site. With Pleystowe having closed down as a mill in 2009, cane from its area is now sent on to other mills. Among those are trains running north to Farleigh, which start out of Pleystowe Yard, cross *John Cook Bridge* and start the climb north. Banker locomotives are required for this run, as the section immediately north of Balnagowan-Mandarana Road, climbing Church Hill, features a grade that tops out at 1-in-25 up to the Bruce Highway.

Also, crossing the Pioneer River, albeit further west near Mirani, is a former Queensland Railways structure. This impressive bridge is the second permanent railway bridge built on the site, after the original 1897 structure was washed away in 1958. This second structure opened in 1959 and carried Queensland Railways traffic until the last train operated in 1990. Since being rebuilt for Mackay Sugar, the bridge has been in daily service during the annual crushing season.

The Mackay Sugar rail fleet consists of a total of 37 operational locomotives, most of which are employed to haul 6,640 sugar can bins. Those not used in cane haulage are held for shunting and navvy related duties. Mackay Sugar also has a sizeable collection of spare locomotives, most of which have been stored out of use at the site of the former North Eton Mill for many years. Of that operational locomotive fleet, the bulk of the group is made up of Walkers rebuilds (known locally as 94 Class, for the year they were introduced), Clyde six-wheelers, and EM Baldwin bogie locomotives. In addition to these are the four B-B diesel-hydraulic locomotives produced by Eimco in 1990, which are generally devoted to the northern and western lines.

Worth also mentioning is *Pinnacle*, which is believed to be the last of Mackay Sugar's Comeng locomotives still used in cane haulage. *Eton*, the only other operable Comeng in the fleet, is believed to be used only for shunting and navvy duties. Speaking of Comeng, Mackay Sugar is in possession of B-B diesel-hydraulic *Finch Hatton*, which was not only the company's sole bogie sugar industry locomotive, but also the second last

Left (page 36): Mackay Sugar Eimco B-B DH *Farleigh* crosses the Pioneer River bridge with a train of empty cane bins on Sunday 13 August 2023. Mirani's town watertower is in the background. Built in 1959 to replace an earlier structure. this bridge carried 1067mm gauge Queensland Railways traffic until 1990.
Above: Church Hill, on the connecting line between Pleystowe Yard and Farleigh Mill, features a formidable 1 in 25 gradient. On Wednesday 15 December 2021 Clyde 0-6-0DH locos *Pleystowe* and *Palmyra* push hard on the brake wagon of a long loaded train hauled by Walkers B-B DH *Tannalo*.
Right: Walkers B-B DH *Tannalo*, wearing the Nordzucker livery of white, green and blue, is approaching Wundaru and about to cross the QR North Coast line with a full train load of sugar cane, on Monday 1 August 2022.
Three photos: James Chuang

unit they built for the industry at all – Tully's No.18, built later that year, was to be the very last. Unfortunately, *Finch Hatton* has not operated for over a decade and is now part of the collection of stored locomotives at North Eton.

Finally, there is *Balmoral*, which was not only the last sugar industry locomotive produced by EM Baldwin, in 1983, but it was also built not for any of the Mackay mills, but for Tully Sugar. In 2009 Tully and Mackay Sugar arranged a swap – Mackay Sugar took the former Tully No.7 and re-named it *Balmoral*, while Tully got the locomotive *Balberra*, a Walkers rebuild that was previously a QH DH Class – like the remainder of Tully's Walkers units.

Available for service:

- ***Te Kowai*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0DH (56-103 of 1956)
- ***Sunnyside*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0DH (57-160 of 1957)
- ***Conningsby*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (61-232 of 1961)
- ***Seaforth*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (61-233 of 1961)
- ***St Helens*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (61-234 of 1961)
- ***Alexandra*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (61-235 of 1961)
- ***Palmyra*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (63-273 of 1963)
- ***Pleystowe*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (64-321 of 1964)
- ***Melba*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (64-377 of 1964, rebuilt by EM Baldwin 1985)
- ***Lacy*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (65-439 of 1965)
- ***Victoria Plains*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (66-490 of 1966)
- ***Munbura*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0 DH (67-570 of 1967)
- ***Palms*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (70-708 of 1970)
- ***Broadsound*** – Clyde model DHI-71HS, 0-6-0DH (70-710 of 1970)
- ***Pinnacle*** – Comeng model AA/AN, 0-6-0DH (AA1549 of 1961, rebuilt AN5849 of 1975)
- ***Eton*** – Comeng model FB, 0-6-0DH (FB3170 of 1963)
- ***Farleigh*** – Eimco B-B DH (L254 of 1990)
- ***Gargett*** – Eimco B-B DH (L255 of 1990)
- ***Narpi*** – Eimco B-B DH (L256 of 1990)

- ***Boonganna*** – Eimco B-B DH (L257 of 1990)
- ***Little Baldwin*** – EM Baldwin model DH5-PS, 0-4-0 DH (5/774.1 2.64 of 1964)
- ***Hampden*** – EM Baldwin model DH32B, B-B DH (6706.1 5.76 of 1976)
- ***North Eton*** – EM Baldwin model DH24B Mk9, B-B DH (6780.1 8.76 of 1976)
- ***Shannon*** – EM Baldwin model DH24B, B-B DH (7126.1 5.77 of 1977)
- ***Foulden*** – EM Baldwin model DH32B, B-B DH (7220.1 6.77 of 1977)
- ***Charlton*** – EM Baldwin model DH32B, B-B DH (9562.1 6.81 of 1981)
- ***Langdon*** – EM Baldwin model DH32B, B-B DH (9562.2 6.81 of 1981)
- ***Mia Mia*** – EM Baldwin model DH28B, Mk2 B-B DH (9815.1 10.81 of 1981)
- ***Inverness*** – EM Baldwin model DH32B, B-B DH (10123.1 5.82 of 1982)
- ***Balmoral*** – EM Baldwin model DH32B, B-B, DH (10684.1 4.83 of 1983)
- ***Walkerston*** – Walkers GH700 rebuild (1994), B-B DH (672 of 1971 – ex-NSWSRA 7313)
- ***Calen*** – Walkers GH700 rebuild (1995), B-B DH (692 of 1972 – ex-NSWSRA 7330)
- ***Tannalo*** – Walkers GH700 rebuild (1995), B-B DH (705 of 1972 – ex-NSWSRA 7343)
- ***Miclere*** – Walkers GH700 rebuild (1996), B-B DH (664 of 1970 – ex-NSWSRA 7305)
- ***Dulverton*** – Walkers GH700 rebuild (1997), B-B DH (690 of 1972 – ex-NSWSRA 7328)
- ***Cedars*** – Walkers GH700 rebuild (1997), B-B DH (693 of 1972 – ex-NSWSRA 7331)
- ***Netherdale*** – Walkers GH700 rebuild (1997), B-B DH (699 of 1972 – ex-NSWSRA 7337)

Stored:

- ***Homebush*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0 DH (55-058 of 1955)
- ***Nellie*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0DH (58-188 of 1958)
- ***Chelona*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0DH (59-201 of 1959)
- ***Rosella*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0DH (64-317 of 1964)
- ***Racecourse*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0 DH (65-440 of 1965)
- ***Devereaux*** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0DH (67-568 of 1967)
- ***Bassett*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0DH (67-596 of 1967)
- **10** – EM Baldwin model DH15, 0-4-0 DH (8860.1 8.79 of 1979)
- ***Richmond*** – Comeng model AA, 0-6-0DM (A1308 of 1955)
- ***Septimus*** – Comeng model AE, 0-6-0DH (A2128 of 1958)
- ***Pioneer*** – Comeng model AI, 0-6-0DH (AI2358 of 1962)
- ***Barcoo*** – Comeng model FB, 0-6-0DH (FB4383 of 1965)
- ***Finch Hatton*** – Comeng model NA, B-B DH (NA59112 of 1977)
- (unnumbered) – Motor Rail Simplex model 20/28hp, 4wDM (9577 of 1951)
- **7306** – Walkers GH700, B-B DH (665 of 1970 – ex-NSWSRA 7306)
- **7308** – Walkers GH700, B-B DH (667 of 1971 – ex-NSWSRA 7308)
- **7341** – Walkers GH700, B-B DH (703 of 1972 – ex-NSWSRA 7341)

Older and smaller locomotives are usually employed hauling navvy and infrastructure trains. On Sunday 3 September 2023, Clyde model DHI-71 0-6-0DH *Devereaux* of 1967 vintage dozes on a siding a few hundred metres west of Pinnacle Loop (east of Finch Hatton), coupled to a loaded ballast train, as smoke from a small cane burn stains the sky. Malcolm Holdsworth

Above: On Sunday 13 August 2023, Walkers B-B DH *Walkerston* leaves Howell Loop heading for Farleigh Mill with a loaded train. The hills of Cape Hillsborough National Park rise in the background. James Chuang

Below: Having ended its outbound trip at Wagoora, a double header bound for Farleigh Mill climbs into We Wak Junction near Calen with a short rake of loaded bins on Sunday 3 September 2023. The lead loco, Walkers B-B DH *Cedars*, will detach, pick up another dozen wagons and push back onto its partner, Walkers B-B DH *Dulverton*, and the rest of their train for the remainder of the run south. Malcolm Holdsworth

On Tuesday 5 September, Proserpine Mill Walkers B-B DH number 14 powered back and forth a number of times just north of Bloomsbury, assembling its train, as a self-propelled irrigation cannon blasted O'Connell River water onto a young sugar crop. Malcolm Holdsworth

Proserpine Mill

Opening in 1897, the new mill led to the development of Proserpine township around it, 126 kilometres north of Mackay, and 1,101 kilometres from Brisbane. Proserpine is also 168 kilometres south of Inkerman Mill, its closest milling neighbour to the north. For most of its history, it remained an independent cooperative, until it was acquired in 2011 by Wilmar Sugar. Proserpine typically crushes around 1,700,000 tonnes of cane for 260,000 tonnes of raw sugar annually.

Proserpine's network extends west to Red Hill, Kelsey Creek and Silver Creek – operating both sides of the Proserpine River in doing so. The system also extends north to Myrtlevale and east to Cannon Valley (a particularly scenic line) and Preston, and south to Lethebrook and even as far as Elaroo, which is 32 kilometres from the mill. Currently Proserpine's export product is railed out under contract between Wilmar Sugar and Pacific National, with the latter using its 83 and 88 Class locomotives to shuttle export sugar south to Mackay Harbour.

Proserpine has consolidated its locomotive fleet in recent years, with several of the older Clyde units either scrapped or sold to the Fiji Sugar Corporation. Since its acquisition by Wilmar, a pair of additional Clydes (*Canberra* and *Lucinda*) have been transferred down from Victoria Mill, while the mill's former 73 Class rebuilds, 12 and 14, have been cycled through the current Walkers rebuild program, and have been replaced by a 'new' 12 and 14, the freshly refurbished, former Westrail M Class pair that also used to work at Victoria Mill.

Available for service:

- **5 *Canberra*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0 DH (65-433 of 1965)
- **6 *Lucinda*** – Clyde model HG-3R, 0-6-0 DH (65-436 of 1965)
- **7** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0 DH (65-442 of 1965)
- **8** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0 DH (65-443 of 1965)
- **9** – EM Baldwin model DH26B Mk3, B-B DH (6626.1 7.76 of 1976)
- **10** – EM Baldwin model DH26B Mk5, B-B DH (9816.1 10.81 of 1981)
- **11** – Walkers GH500 rebuild (1996/2018), B-B DH (628 of 1969 – ex-QR DH46)
- **12** – Walkers GH700V rebuild (1996/2022), B-B DH (680 of 1972 – ex-Westrail M1851)
- **14** – Walkers GH700V rebuild (1997/2022), B-B DH (681 of 1972 – ex-Westrail M1852)

Stored:

- **3** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0 DH (58-195 of 1958)
- **5** – Clyde model DHI-71, 0-6-0 DH (60-218 of 1960)

Terms and acronyms

- Baguley – E E Baguley Limited, Burton-on-Trent, England
- Clyde – Clyde Engineering Company
- Co-generation – electricity generation associated with sugar mill activities
- Comeng – Commonwealth Engineering
- DM – diesel-mechanical
- DH – diesel-hydraulic
- Eimco – Eimco Australia, Alexandria, NSW
- EMB – EM Baldwin & Sons, Castle Hill, NSW
- Navvy – Crews and assets allocated to physical track and infrastructure maintenance
- NSWSRA – NSW State Rail Authority
- QR – Queensland Railways/Queensland Rail

The author would like to express his sincere gratitude to John Browning and John Hoyle for their invaluable assistance in preparing this article.
The listings of locomotives "Available for service" and "Stored" have been researched to be as up-to-date as possible, but the author acknowledges that reports on the status of some sugar cane locomotives, particularly the more obscure ones, can sometimes be hard to come by, and Railway Digest *would be grateful for any updates and corrections to the information contained in these articles. To be continued in Part 2.*

Above: EM Baldwin B-B DH number 9 picks up some full 10 tonne Bins from Mackay Corner, clearing the way for EM Baldwin number 10 to deliver some empty 10 tonne bins, on Sunday 8 January 2023. The notice on the cabside reads "CAUTION This locomotive is remote controlled and can move without warning". Luke Horniblow

Below: On Sunday 8 January 2023 Proserpine Sugar Mill is still crushing into the new year as PN unit 8314 leads Proserpine to Mackay Harbour loaded sugar train 6ZP6 past the station so that the mill siding points can be reset for the North Coast Line before departure. Luke Horniblow