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More than work

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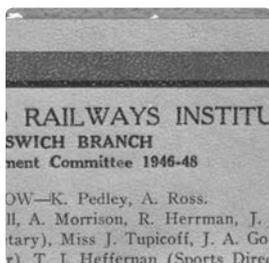
The workshops were more than just a place for work. Workers participated together in a range of social and cultural activities that broadened not only their knowledge and interests but also added to the camaraderie and sense of community at the workshops. This paper explores some of these social and cultural activities such as the Queensland Railway Institute, the Railway Band and educational lectures and talks for the employees. There were a number of other organisations that were part of the Ipswich Railway Workshops culture and included the Queensland Railway Ambulance Corp and the Southern and Western Fire Brigade. Many of these activities in turn directly influenced social and cultural activities in the wider community.

□ *Railway, workshop, social, industrial, Fire Brigade, Ambulance, Band, Ipswich, Institute, sport.*

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THE QUEENSLAND RAILWAYS INSTITUTE

The Queensland Railways Institute was formed on 31 January 1894, three years after a Railway Institute had been established in New South Wales. Such institutes were based on a concept developed in Great Britain in which various British railway companies established institutes to provide recreational and cultural activities and facilities for their employees (QRWN, 29/92). It provided a library for members, conducted courses in a range of subjects and organised sporting and recreational activities. In the March 1909 edition of the Queensland Railway Express for instance, the Queensland Railways Institute advertised the services available at its Roma Street premises: "library, good billiard table, recreation rooms, concert hall, courses in shorthand, telegraphy and typewriting". A monthly magazine was published intermittently with the first

edition of the QRI Magazine released in 1948 at sixpence each. This publication is currently known as the Lifestyle Magazine.

For country members, library books were loaned by mail. The 1918 Library Catalogue for the Queensland Railways Institute stated the main objectives of the library as

...the delivery of lectures; classes for instruction in railway and other subjects; the encouragement of social, intellectual, and physical recreation...No political or religious subjects shall be introduced at any of its meetings. (Queensland Railways Institute, 1918: 1)

As the number of members grew throughout the state, branches were established at centres with a substantial number of railway employees including Bowen, Cairns, Emerald, Gympie, Ipswich, Maryborough, Toowoomba, Townsville and Warwick (Queensland Railway Institute, 1950). The Ipswich branch (Figure 1) was formed in 1946 (QRIM June 1948). Initially the branch rented rooms in a building on the corner of Brisbane and West Street in the centre of Ipswich. With the Ipswich branch expanding to 800 members by 1950, larger facilities were needed and eventually the branch moved into the former stores office at the Ipswich Railway Workshops. The stores office was a large timber building that was adapted and renovated to provide recreational facilities for members. While it was available for all rail workers in the Ipswich district, it was predominantly used by workshops employees for social and recreational activities. Today the Queensland Railways Institute has over 8,300 members, 24 branches and social clubs, 8 cafes and function centres and 3 holiday homes. It is also involved in organising social activities such as dances and Christmas parties, and sporting clubs and competitions such as ten pin bowling,



FIG. 1. Queensland Railway Institute (QRI), Ipswich Branch Management Committee 1946-48. Image courtesy Mrs G. Jones.

basketball, cricket, indoor bowls, snooker, tennis and darts (<http://www.qri.com.au/>).

QUEENSLAND RAILWAY AMBULANCE CORPS

The Queensland Railway Ambulance Corps played a prominent role in the history of first aid in Queensland. As a result of the importance placed on the knowledge of first aid in the workplace by railway employees,

the Queensland Railway Ambulance Corps was established in 1892 to train railway employees in first aid (Figure 2). Free first aid classes, attracting 85 applications, commenced that year under the instruction of Dr John Thomson, Railway Medical Office. Thirty employees from the organisation’s traffic, locomotive and enginemens’ branches were selected to attend (Queensland Rail,



FIG. 2. The first Railway Ambulance team: J. Woods, T. Dimmick, C. Newman, G. Stirling and on stretcher H. Jackson, c.1914. Image courtesy Madeline Mullins.

1992: 2-3). In 1908, the Commissioner for Railways, James Forsyth Thallon, established a fund which introduced the Thallon Medal for outstanding results to the student with the highest marks in the annual first aid examinations. Following his death in 1911, the fund was used to provide a further two gold medals annually. From 1912 to 1962, one medal was awarded to the son and one to the daughter of a Queensland Railway employee who achieved the highest results in the State Scholarship examination (QRD, 1 February 1973).¹ In 1991 the criteria changed to enable females to be eligible for the award.

The Thallon Medal is still awarded today and is considered to be one of the most sought after and prestigious medals a Queensland Railway employee can receive.

In 1914, the Committee of the Railway Ambulance Corps was re-formed and the title, 'Queensland Railway Ambulance Corps' was officially accepted. Annual first aid competitions were introduced in 1914 to provide Corps' members with an opportunity to test their skills in a competitive environment (Queensland Rail, 1992:3), even travelling within Queensland and interstate

...we got a third in Sydney. We got that because a boot lace stretched...

for competitions (Figure 3).

We used to have a railway ambulance. We had a very good record in team competition. We won one Australian Championship in Melbourne. I think



FIG. 3. The Railway Ambulance team which won the Commissioner's Shield at Narangba c.1932. Left to right are: Robert Sneyd, "patient" F. Boulter, team captain A.J. Meyers, V.E. Nozette and S.H. Haley. The team built a stretcher in the record time of 5 minutes. Image courtesy Robert Sneyd.

we got a third in Sydney. We got that because a boot lace stretched, otherwise, we would have been further up the ladder. See, what happened, one of the events was you had to make a stretcher out of standing timber and whatever apparel you might have been wearing. Each man was allowed a pocket knife and the team was allowed one tomahawk. They let you loose on the bush and you had to cut the poles and the cross pieces and construct this stretcher to a template design. They had a template they put over the top of it. If it diverged from the size of the template then you lost points. Not only that, it was tested for comfort and stability. They'd turn it up on its end and see-saw it backward and forwards and see if it would break up.

Well, down in Sydney, we used new bootlaces but when we put them on the stretcher, they stretched when we'd tie them up. When they examined them after the event to see that everything complied with the regulations, they measured our bootlaces and they were an inch or so over the regulation size and we lost points and we lost our place on the ladder. But oh, we won the Queensland Shield so often that they eventually broke us up and made two teams out of us. All the other teams were getting a bit discouraged throughout the state. That was the Ipswich Workshops A Team. Bob Sneyd

The Queensland Railway Ambulance Corps transformed into the Queensland Rail

First Aid Services in 1992 and continues to provide excellent assistance to Queensland Rail employees. Recognition of excellence in first aid continues through the Thallon Medal Challenge, the St John Ambulance Challenge Cup and the Chief Executive Officer's Silver Challenge Shield.

IPSWICH RAILWAY WORKSHOPS DINING ROOM

Following his tour of Canada and Great Britain in 1909, Thallon, the then Commissioner of Railways, proposed that a Dining Room should be provided for employees (QRAR, 1909:17). As a result a Dining Room with a 2.5 metre veranda was built at the Ipswich Railway Workshops in 1911. Later it was referred to as the Dining Hall and/or Canteen, the building including a reading and smoking room, kitchen, large pantry and storeroom, and a small shop for cigarettes and sweets.

Over 1400 men were employed at the workshops at this time and 650 had arranged to be supplied with a hot lunch on five days each week (Buchanan et al., 1995:71). The siren signalled at 11.57am each day and hundreds of workers poured into the dining hall/canteen for a hot meal. It was noisy and crowded as workers jostled for a seat at a table to talk and eat. Previously workers had their meals in their workplace. Dorothy Young worked in the Dining Room from 1948 to 1973 and

...battered a lot of bread...[and] started at 7.30am. We made sandwiches and salad rolls. The pies were made fresh in the kitchen...there were 300-400 diners at lunch for three course cooked meals... the men would come up to dine from the workshops with their dirty shoes and we had to scrub the pine floor on our hands and knees once a week. We were on our feet all day. We worked! Dorothy Young

Meals could also be ordered and eaten away from the canteen (Figure 4), as George Berrell explains:

They used to have a message fellow or runner to the canteen. The workers of a morning used to come in and place their orders at the canteen or they'd leave an order on a supervisor's table and a labourer from the shop used to go up to the canteen...and he would pick up their smoko or their lunch and bring it back to their shop for the fellas to have for their morning or afternoon tea or their lunchtime. George Berrell

Throughout its different phases of existence, the Dining Room continued to play an important role in the social activities of the workers across the site.



FIG. 4. Runners with baskets on the Traverser Track, about to collect orders from the Canteen, 1995. Image courtesy Lyle Radford.

ROSTRUM

Near the Canteen at The Workshops Rail Museum is a steel speaker's platform – a reminder of a former workers' institution known as the Rostrum. The Rostrum appears to have started in the early 1920s when a committee was formed to organise a program of educational talks during the lunch break. These were originally called the Traverser Lectures, but within a few years, the term "Rostrum" was being used (QT, 14 June 1923).² On lecture days, a portable rostrum and blackboard were set up on a platform and the listeners simply stood around on the Traverser track. The Railway Commissioner and Chief Mechanical Engineer were supportive, but were insistent that work time should not be lost. The talks had to stop a few minutes before the end of the lunchbreak, and the men had to return promptly to work (QT, 6 October 1926, 8 February 1927). The purpose of the lectures was self-improvement and initially there seems to have been a loose connection with an international movement, the Workers Educational Association which was founded in Britain in 1903 to promote "the higher education of working men", it spread to Australia and by the 1920s, there was a branch in Ipswich. Fred Paterson, later well-known as Queensland's only Communist parliamentarian, was appointed as the Workers Educational Association organiser for the Ipswich and Brisbane area in 1924 (QT, 15 November 1924).

In Ipswich, the Workers Educational Association conducted literary classes and presented lectures on subjects such as industrial history. However the committee said that workers were "somewhat backward" in taking advantage of the opportunities offered, and thought that classes should be "carried right onto the job". Although the Workers Educational Association does not appear to have organised Rostrum, there

was an overlap of ideas, and some of its committee members including A. Ewings, A. Duyvelshoff, A. E. Welsby and P. Cassidy were also on early Rostrum committees. Their reasoning seemed to be that if workers were too tired after a long day of manual labour to attend educational talks, then speakers could be brought right on to the Traverser track in the lunchbreak (QT, 1 August 1924).

The 1925 Rostrum chairman Joe Rivers was quite clear about the aim of the lectures. He wrote about "efforts to educate the workers" and said that many speakers were "men of learning and culture, and representative of the highest thought in the state". These early speakers included prolific British author and atheist Joseph McCabe whose topic was "Is science in conflict with religion?". Other speakers included the Bishop of London, and a Mr R. Milton who spoke on "Revolution or Democracy?" Fred Paterson gave a series of lectures on economics at Roma Street Railway Station at this time, and was also asked to address a Workshops meeting (QT, 14 June 1923, 2 July 1924, 30 July 1925, 12 February 1927).

The original, very basic meeting place was gradually improved. The Chief Mechanical Engineer allowed the platform and blackboard to be repainted at railway expense, and provided a canvas awning for summer months. In 1927, the platform was moved to the lawn near the Dining Hall. At this site, with the help of some Workshops ingenuity, it developed into an open-sided structure with a corrugated iron roof. The floor was dirt and listeners sat on seats made of wagon boards. Further improvements were made, and it eventually included a stage with a curtain, a small dressing room, a sound system and a turn-table to play records (QT, 15 September 1927).³

The Rostrum became an important part of Workshops culture and rules were



FIG. 5. The stage used by Rostrum entertainers. Pictured are singers June and Lois Twidale with pianist Norm Duce, 1949. Image courtesy June and Vic Kay.

formulated for its management. A ballot was held regularly for the chairman and committee, and for at least one election in 1924, an unusual method was adopted. It was decided that “to ensure that only sympathisers should take part in the ballot” a charge of threepence was made for people wanting to vote (QT, 26 November 1924). Speakers had to be non-sectarian and non-political. Although many ministers and priests were Rostrum guests, their talks were ecumenical or ethical, and politicians gave general talks, not party-political speeches. For example, a 1920s politician A. E. Elphinstone spoke about his visit to Britain and the Wembley Exhibition. However, when Robert Menzies gave an election speech it was held at the gate (QT, 13 September 1924).⁴ During

World War II, outside speakers were difficult to obtain, so the Rostrum relied on talks by the workers themselves, with a quiz once a week and regular talks on economics (QT, 1 February 1943).

In 1949, the committee published its own song book for community singing. About this time, an extra open-air stage was built near the Dining Room and the committee purchased a piano. On paydays, entertainers replaced serious speakers (Figure 5). Many made free appearances including Slim Dusty, Kamahl, George Wallace with his “Naughty Forties Revue”, Col Payne, circus performers and brass bands. A notable appearance was by Aboriginal tenor Harold Blair who was introduced by his friend and supporter Harry Green, chairman of the West Moreton

Trades and Labour Council.

While the Rostrum founders seem to have been politically oriented to the far left (and included at least one Communist), the range of speakers expanded and the whole spectrum of thought was included in the lunchtime meetings. Politicians included Ned Hanlon, Vi Jordan, Vince Gair, Neville Bonner, Sir Gordon Chalk and Bill Hayden. Ministers Fraternal provided a speaker on Fridays. Other guests included Miss Australia entrant Barbara Larter, well-known race-caller and journalist Keith Noud and Aboriginal poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal. A speaker from the Queensland Museum brought a selection of stuffed animals while snake expert Ram Chandra brought a live taipan.

A representative from the organising committee was always allowed time off work to meet visiting speakers, and the Canteen provided a meal. A typical large audience was about 600 for a popular pay-day entertainer, and the lowest was an embarrassing five.

Rostrum continued into the 1960s and 70s, but it became difficult to attract volunteers to take on committee positions and the advent of television made live speakers less important. Talks became less frequent then eventually ceased, and the structure was pulled down in 1985.

The last office bearers were Stan Walker (President), Snow Hendrickson (Secretary) and Arthur Forbes (Treasurer).⁵ The Ipswich Rostrum is thought to have been the only institution of its type in Australia at a government site. It began with a serious educational aim, and in an era before television, it brought interesting and important people face to face with Workshops employees and made them aware of the latest issues. It kept alive a great tradition of freedom of speech, and continued for more

than 60 years.

GARDENS

Gardens are another little-known feature of life at the Ipswich Railway Workshops, with workers putting a great deal of effort into caring for the areas around their workshops. Landscaping went as far as establishing fruit trees, bowling greens and fish ponds (Figure

... It encouraged the fellows a bit, a bit of incentive with this little shield...

6), as George Berrell, who worked at the Workshops for over 30 years from November 1965, reminisces:

...Johnny Jeffcoat...the Chief Mechanical Engineer of those days...started off a garden competition between each shop. He encouraged the labourers, the bosses, the supervisors. A lot of it was done in lunchtime periods, but he did encourage you, that if you had nothing to do, and the supervisor agreed, he didn't mind anybody spending time tidying up the areas outside the shop and they used to have every so often, a garden competition and they would go around and inspect the gardens and landscaped areas and those sections would get a little medallion or plaque to say they had won the garden competition, and it really did help to tidy the areas up a lot.

But as you can imagine, a lot of gardens have been built up over the years and not having the staff there now to look after them, some of them have just deteriorated. You probably noticed the fruit trees too that have been planted around the place, avocado trees, mango trees. We used to see carrots, beetroot, lettuce.

Lloydy [Hughes] had a lovely garden there. In spring time, he had sweet peas and all the fancy flowers that you

could imagine. He was a bowler and the bowling greens years ago went from a certain grass into what they called a Tip Dwarf grass and he brought in some of the cutting from this Tip Dwarf and he had a little mini bowling green down there. It may have been 12 ft long and 4 ft wide, it looked like a bowling green too, there wouldn't have been a weed in it, nice and level and it used to really look nice with the nice strip of bowling green with the sweet pea background.

Whatever flowers were in season, Lloyd

had them growing down there and he used to do that as well as do his own job - he got his work done and any spare time or lunch time was put in keeping his area tidy. It encouraged the fellows a bit, a bit of incentive with this little shield, each one tried to outdo the other one.

Behind the Plumbers is one with a fish pond, I probably had a hand in that, that's been a gold fish pond... [It] beautified it.
George Berrell

The gardens and trees were recognised as an important feature in the social fabric of



FIG. 6. The garden and fishpond near the Plumbers' Shop, 1995 (Buchanan et al 1995).

the Workshops with their inclusion in the heritage listing of the Workshops site in 1997 (Mate & Moritz, this volume).

RAILWAY BANDS

The Railway Band established at the Ipswich Railway Workshops was another important part of social life at the Workshops. It proved to be successful enough to perform at interstate competitions. A group known as the Ipswich Southern and Western Railway Volunteer Band existed in the very early years, but little is known about its history (McCartney 1918). A later organisation,

the Ipswich Railway Band, was formed at the Workshops in February 1913. It existed for only 21 years, but during that time, it reached a high standard and was a source of pride for both the Workshops and the Ipswich community. When it was established, the band received a subsidy of £100 from the Commissioner to assist with buying instruments. Further assistance was received in 1919 when the Brisbane-based “Queensland Railway Band” was abolished and its instruments were transferred.⁶

Ipswich at this time had several bands including the Blackstone Band, the Model



FIG. 7. The Railway Band in 1926, the year it was judged the best band at a national competition. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.

Band and the famous Ipswich City Vice-Regal Band which frequently won state and national championships. The Railway Band took turns with the other bands to play in Queens Park on Sunday afternoons, and it played for functions including the annual Anzac Service. It entertained other workers at lunch-time, and it also began to practice for competitions, although it was hampered by the retrenchments of the early 1920s. In 1923, it took part in the Commonwealth competition. The A Grade section was won by the Ipswich Vice-Regals, and the Ipswich Railway Band won the Country Grade. The only other railway band at this time, Townsville, won the B Grade competition. It was a heartening result, and Ipswich was promoted to B Grade, winning the street march and quick-step sections at the Easter Competition in 1925. The following year, the band reached its highest – and lowest – point. It won the A Grade competition in New South Wales, beating established groups such as the City of Sydney and Leichhardt (QT, 19 January 1926). Next day, it was disqualified. Two members were ill, and replacements had been made. However the competition rules were different from those in Queensland and as the technicalities had not been observed correctly, the band was stripped of its prize. A photograph was nevertheless taken proudly in front of the Powerhouse after their return to Queensland, with the Chief Mechanical Engineer specifically asked to be present (Figure 7). It had, after all, been the best band, if not actually the winning band.

The band went on to win other major competitions and had other successes. For instance, their performance at Eveleigh Workshops in Sydney in 1926 generated such enthusiasm that a band was formed there. This group, however, was given generous subsidies to help it along. The Ipswich band asked the Queensland Commissioner for similar help. When the Depression began

to take effect in late 1929, it also begged the Workshops management not to retrench people who were so valuable to the band. Times were becoming difficult and these requests apparently could not be met, as band numbers dropped and the financial situation deteriorated. Money had to be borrowed to buy new instruments and by 1932, at the height of the Depression, it was reported that the band was “slowly but surely sinking into oblivion”. The instruments were called in and it closed in early 1934.

OUTSIDE THE TIN FENCE

In addition to the active role the Railway Band played in entertaining the people of Ipswich, the town gained other advantages from the presence of the railway. The S&W Railway Fire Brigade was established in 1865. Its hand-worked fire engine arrived from England in May, but its first use under the command of Locomotive Foreman J.W. Bedford was for a fire at Cribb & Foote’s store a few weeks later. It was also used for a fire at Harris’ cotton gin on the banks of the Bremer River. The town continued to rely on the Railway Brigade until 1878 when the Ipswich Fire Brigade was established. The members of the brigade shared other interests and formed a cricket club which played other local clubs (McCartney 1918; QT, 3 May 1916).

The Workshops itself had a number of sporting clubs through its history, including cricket, football, rifle and athletics. Teams competed in internal competitions and collectively represented the Workshops in the Ipswich community. Games between different workshops included an inter-workshop cricket challenge played on Friday afternoons in the 1920s. An external club was formed at that time, The Railway Cricket Club, which went on to field teams in both A and B grade in the Ipswich competition.⁷

The Moulders Rugby League Football team of 1944 (Figure 8) was similarly successful becoming Premiers for that year, part of a long history of successful Rugby League teams associated with the Ipswich Railway Workshops.⁸

The institutions, clubs and social activities that workers at The Ipswich Railway Workshops participated in provided an important facet of the everyday working environment. Although coming and going

through the history of the Workshops, and clearly dependent on both economic conditions and the support, directly or in principle, of the management, these activities greatly enriched the lives of the workers. The Railway Band, the Railway Ambulance Corp, the sporting teams, the Dining Room and even the gardening competitions contributed to the shaping of the Workshops as a workplace that has endured in people's memories, both behind and outside of the tin fence.



FIG. 8. Moulder's Football Club was formed by the Railway Workshops in 1943. The Club won the 'Old Buffers Cup', League Cup and Premiership for 1944. Photograph includes, Back row: L. Moore, E. Wallace, P. Mole (Treasurer), M. Taylor, M. Ross. Second Row: D. Jackwitz, C. Jordan, V. Kay, S. Gillis, E. Oakley, R. Heise. Sitting: C. Grice, L. Sorenson, P. Keenan (President), A. Moulden (Captain), R. Bowers (Trainer), E. Meteyard, P. Bassett (Vice-President). Image courtesy Picture Ipswich.

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QT Queensland Times
QRIM Queensland Railway Institute Magazine
QRD Queensland Rail Digest

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□ ENDNOTES

1. Queensland Rail Digest, vol. 7, no.1, 1 February 1973
2. A lecture is known to have been held in 1923, but there may have been earlier talks
3. Comments from Stan Walker, Rostrum Chairman in the 1950s
4. Comments from Stan Walker, Rostrum Chairman in the 1950s
5. Personal communication from Stan Walker
6. Queensland Rail Governance and Heritage Collection Catalogue, 'Railway Brass Bands: 1903-1932', Series 181
7. Information courtesy of Colin Wriggles, Northern Suburbs Cricket Club Inc, provided in commemorative text in 1993
8. Information from Northern Suburbs Football Club Inc, provided in commemorative text in 1993