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The North Ipswich Roundhouse

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From its beginning in 1864, the area of North Ipswich has had a link with the operation of the railway industry in Queensland. Incorporated into the original workshop location was the first locomotive servicing area for Queensland Railways. In Queensland, major steam locomotive depots tended to be of two designs: a 'through shed' arrangement (similar to the Mayne Depot); and a round turntable, with tracks radiating from a central point, such as the roundhouse found in Rockhampton and at the Ipswich Railway Workshops. The Roundhouse and its running staff at Ipswich were separate from the Workshops, and maintained its own separate identity.

□ *Railway, workshop, locomotive, roundhouse, rolling stock, accomodation.*

G. Hallam
Queensland Rail



The story of the railways in Queensland and the site of the railway reserve at North Ipswich are inextricably linked. From its beginning in 1864, the area of North Ipswich has had a link with the operation of the railway industry in Queensland. In this area the first workshops were provided for the maintenance of these items. Incorporated into the original workshop location was the first locomotive servicing area for Queensland Railways. Steam locomotives were labour intensive pieces of machinery and required regular maintenance to ensure their safe running. In Queensland, major steam locomotive depots tended to be of two designs – a ‘through shed’ arrangement (similar to the Mayne Depot) or around a turntable, with tracks radiating from a central point. Examples of this design (roundhouse) could

be found in Rockhampton, Willowburn and North Ipswich. The early story of the North Ipswich Roundhouse was related to the need to provide adequate accommodation for locomotives based there. The Roundhouse was also known by a number of other names, such as North Ipswich Running Shed, or Depot, and was known colloquially as ‘the shed’. For the purpose of this paper, the term ‘roundhouse’ shall be used to encompass the physical structure of the building, its ancillary buildings, and the locomotive servicing areas associated with it. Aerial photos show that the building and facilities of the Roundhouse lay outside the Railway Workshops (Figure 1). It is important to remember that the Roundhouse and its running staff were separate from the Workshops, maintaining its own separate identity.



FIG. 1. The Ipswich Railway Workshops looking south, showing the Roundhouse to the mid-background of the photo c.1964. Image courtesy Keith McDonald.

'AN EERIE PLACE EARLY IN THE MORNING...'

In 1906 the locomotive servicing facilities then in existence at the North Ipswich Workshops were inadequate for the operation of rail traffic at this busy railway location. Following a visit by the Railway Commissioner to Ipswich Station and Workshops in 1906, it was decided to investigate the cost of establishing a new Locomotive Depot.

The Chief Engineer advised the Commissioner that:

... the cost of 30 stalls of a Roundhouse which when completed will hold 50 engines is estimated at £13,500 ...the building to be erected on the Tivoli line opposite the "new" [work] shops. (QSA A/12564; QSA A/24236)

By 1908 the situation had deteriorated further, with the following being reported:

The siding accommodation in the station yard at North Ipswich is utterly inadequate for the conduct of public traffic without great delay in the marshalling of trains, and the Commissioner, after careful consideration and inspection is of the opinion that the yard should be remodeled and an engine-house capable of holding 30 engines be built. Estimated cost £20,000, and as extra siding room is now urgently required the Commissioner has decided to authorise the commencement of this work and to expend £5,000 for which provision was made on the estimates for 1907-8. The expenditure of £5,000 to be charged to "Loan Ipswich circular engine shed and sidings". (QSA A/24236)

Construction of the Roundhouse and facilities was estimated to take eighteen months. On 24 September 1908 work began

and according to a memo from the Chief Engineers Office, the Assistant Engineer was placed in charge of the work. In November 1909, it was authorised to vote more funding to the work being undertaken. A further expenditure of £7,016, the 'estimated cost of excavation, sidings, water supply, lighting etc' was approved (QSA A/24236). It had been hoped that by the end of February 1910 the Roundhouse would be ready for occupation. However an inspection carried out at the end of that month showed that much work still had to be carried out.

These included the following additions and alterations (QSA A/24236):

- small overhead traveller (for lifting dome covers) in at least two of the bays;
- a furnace or other appliance required for drying sand;
- one ash screen boarding,
- small tool store for furnishing tools;
- large stationary reservoir for air supply to turntable reservoirs;
- hardwood steps with pine treads at one end of all pits;
- stops fixed at ends of all roads to prevent engines over running the track; and
- writing desk six feet long for drivers.

Examination of memos in the months of March and April show a growing sense of frustration being felt by the Traffic Branch, as they attempted to take up occupation of 'the shed' (QSA A/24236). An example of this was the effort to gain access to the Roundhouse by the running staff. The position of the staff section for the Tivoli Branch, meant that points to gain access into the Roundhouse, were outside the shunting yard. Consequently, due to safe working procedures it was impossible for locomotives, and crew, to get into the Roundhouse (QSA

A/24236). This impossible situation was to exist until June of 1910 when 'the matter of points' was rearranged. However prior to this date, one memo dated 26 April 1910 pleaded the following:

Will you please have the matter of points settled as soon as possible. We have been waiting now for over a month to get into the shed and cannot do so on account of being blocked by this Tivoli staff section... we are considerably hampered for the want of running shed room.

It was not until June of 1910 that alterations to the building, facilities and points were completed. It was then considered possible

to hand over the Roundhouse to the Traffic Branch and the running men. This official handover of the Roundhouse meant that it was ready for occupation, and the basing of steam locomotives. The location of the North Ipswich Roundhouse (or Running Shed) lay in an area to the south and east of the present North Ipswich Railway Workshops. The major boundaries of the site were North Street, Wide Gully to the south and to the west, the Railway Workshops. To the north of the Roundhouse building ran a series of 'roads' associated with shunting and storage of railway rolling stock. From this location a branch line extended further to serve the coal mines of the Tivoli area.



FIG. 2. The Roundhouse with the turntable in the foreground. Note the doubling of the locomotives on the roads, 1965. Image courtesy Brian Martin.

THE ROUNDHOUSE DESIGN

The central point of the Roundhouse design was a series of short tracks radiating from a central point (Figure 2). This enabled a rotating length of track to be moved in a 360° circle and in doing so gave access to other lengths of track used for the storage of locomotives. These lengths could then be placed under a form of building/shelter to provide cover for locomotives in storage and for workers involved in their maintenance. North Ipswich Roundhouse was officially described as being a 'semi-circular engine shed', having 30 'roads' under cover. Access was gained to these lines from an air operated turntable. Each 'road' was approximately 40 metres in length, with the last 19 metres of the 'road' being under shelter. The entire Roundhouse building was built off a radius

of 60 metres from the centre of the Turntable (Figure 3). On-site inspection in 1993 showed that at its farthest extent the Roundhouse was 100 metres across (from the end of No. 1 road, across the Turntable to the end of No. 30 road). The Roundhouse was divided up into four bays, each bay holding seven roads. Inspection pits were recessed into the floor to allow for examination of the locomotives below rail level. Each pit was approximately 13 metres in length, and was constructed of concrete which was recessed 1.3 metres below rail level. The Roundhouse was roofed by sheets of corrugated iron, sloping from the rear of the structure forward to the entry roads. Ventilator shafts were mounted on the roof to allow for the escape of smoke during the lighting up procedure for locomotives housed in the shed. Interior supports inside

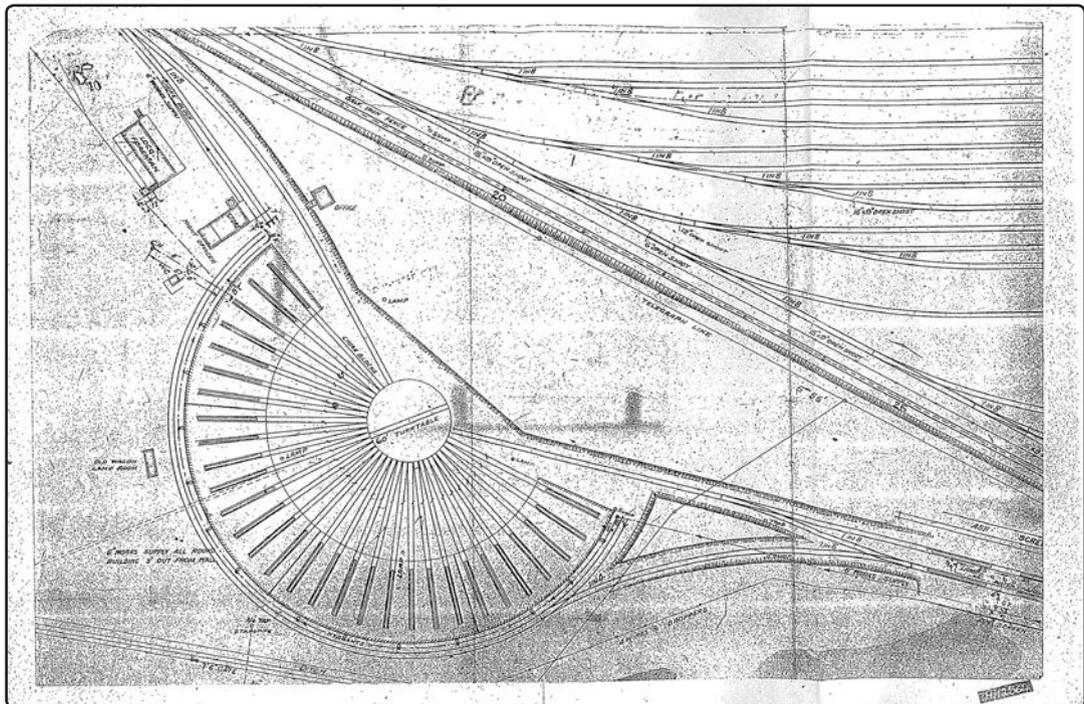


FIG. 3. North Ipswich Roundhouse, 1920 (QSA A/12564).



FIG. 4. C17 class locomotive No. 803 at Ipswich Roundhouse, 1969. Windows visible on left hand side. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.

the Roundhouse were made of hardwood (QSA A/24236).¹ Divisions between Bays were constructed of brick. Rear walls utilised corrugated iron as an enclosure material, with windows recessed into the rear walls, to provide ventilation and also lighting. Approximately 27 windows were recessed into the walls (Figure 4).² Originally it had been intended to construct a full roundhouse similar to that at Rockhampton, and preliminary blueprint drawings show an anticipated structure capable of holding about fifty locomotives (QSA A/24236). However financial restraints meant that the planned full Roundhouse was cut back to a semi-circular design. Materials for construction of the Roundhouse building were to be obtained locally, with the Ipswich Railway Workshops being given charge of construction (QSA A/24236). Construction of the Roundhouse, and its associated yard works was expected to take two years. Access to the Roundhouse building from the North Ipswich yards and sidings was the most vital role of the depot. The turntable formed the focal point for movement.

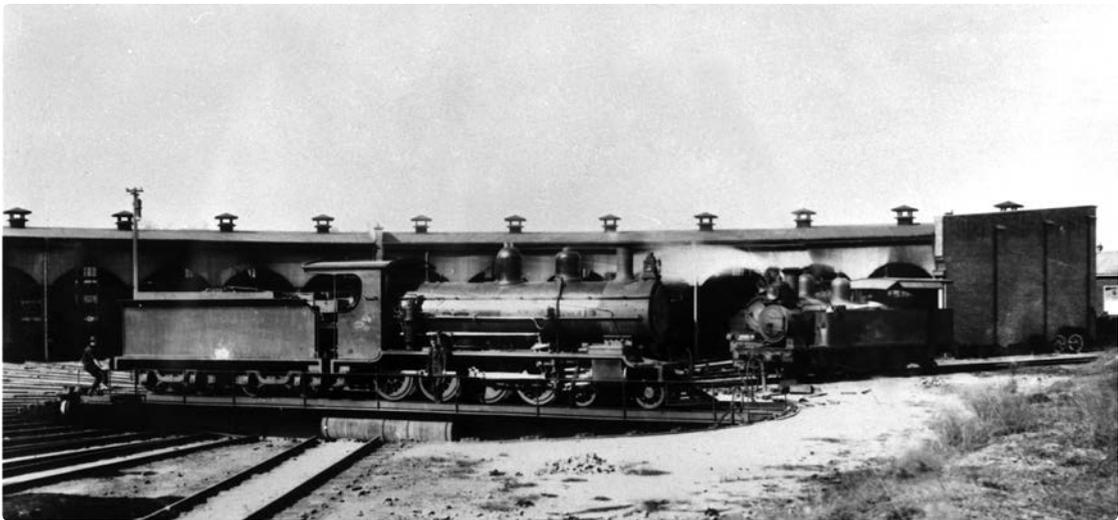


FIG. 5. The Roundhouse looking towards Bay 1, c.1920. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.

OPERATION OF THE ROUNDHOUSE

Steam locomotives (apart from tank engines) were designed to travel in one direction, that is to say smoke box end forward. Travelling the tender first entailed difficulties for the crew, and also hampered the ability of the crew to maintain a safe lookout when working the locomotive. Queensland utilised two forms of turning engines, the engine turntable and the turning triangle (or angle). Of these two methods, the turntable was the more expensive option to install and maintain. In the operation of the Roundhouse, it was important that access be maintained to all 'roads' leading into the building. Locomotives could be placed or 'spotted' into specific parts of the Roundhouse for maintenance purposes, or preparation. The quickest method of achieving this objective was through the turntable.³ The central location of the North Ipswich Turntable in relation to the rest of the Roundhouse environment can be seen in Figures 2, 5 and 6. The turntable was aligned so that locomotives arriving

or departing the Roundhouse could be set into roads for stabling, or given access to water columns ash pits or coal storage. Physically, the turntable occupied a pit some 19 metres in diameter. The turntable was 19 metres in length, constructed of riveted steel plate, with two metal handrails running its length. The decking on the turntable was metal.⁴ The turntable was an air operated device which could be attached to the locomotives' Westinghouse brake pump to provide compressed air to move it around its pit. Compressed air could also be stored in large reservoir tanks slung below the decking on the turntable. These tanks were manufactured at the Ipswich Railway Workshops (QSA A/24236). Control of the turntable was from a single location at one end of the structure. Levers allowed for forward/reverse operation (Figure 6). A specified driver was in charge of operating the turntable. The turntable was installed in 1910 and powered by a pneumatic mule supplied by Detroit Hoist and Machine Company.



FIG. 6. The Roundhouse showing the C17 Class locomotive on the turntable, c.1969. Note the location of the motor and control point on the Turntable. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.

In 1910 the Locomotive Engineer gave the following description of the Turntable and its operation:

The motor has now been in operation for four weeks and has so far worked well. Compressed air for driving is supplied from two reservoirs 2 feet 6 inches in diameter by 12 feet long fastened underneath floor of table, these being charged by means of a standpipe having ordinary Westinghouse couplings which can be attached to train pipe coupling of any engine under steam which is on the turntable. The reservoirs are of sufficient capacity when once charged, for 3 revolutions of the turntable. The turntable is 60 feet in diameter and makes a complete revolution in one and a half minutes (QSA A/24236).

The turntable ran on a single circular rail mounted in the turntable pit. The base of the pit was concrete. The turntable itself revolved around a large single pivot point running through the decking, set at a centre point in the concrete pit as seen previously in Figure 3.

Like the Roundhouse, the coal stage that was situated at North Ipswich was demolished

following the ending of steam operations out of the depot. The coal stage itself was not within the physical environment of the Roundhouse but was situated adjacent to the 'Mainline' that linked North Ipswich to Ipswich Railway Station. The location of the coal stage was at a point one kilometre from Ipswich Railway Station, roughly half way between the Roundhouse and the connection to the Western Railway over the Bremer River.

At present the only physical trace remaining of the coal stage is a concrete base, or pier, at the one kilometre mark on the connecting line. This base is set recessed into a sloped grass embankment. Three metal rods project upwards from the base (a distance of 45cm). Full dimensions of the base have not been recorded but the approximate dimensions are of a height of 1.5 metres, with a width 1.3 metres. The concrete base extends approximately 3 metres into the grass embankment. A railway kilometer marker (a white rail; marked '1km') is at the Western end of this object. Figures 7 and 8 show the remaining concrete base at its location in 1993. Figures 9, 10 and 11 show the coal stage when it was still a functioning part of the railway environment of North Ipswich. The coal stage acted as a refueling point for locomotives attached to the Roundhouse.



FIG. 7. The only remaining evidence of the coal stage – a concrete pier base, 1993. Photo Greg Hallam.

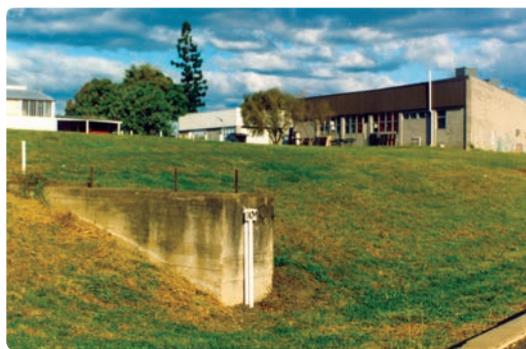


FIG. 8. Close up view of evidence of the coal stage – a concrete pier base, 1993. Photo Greg Hallam.



FIG. 9. A C17 Class locomotive propelling wagons up the coal stage prior to discharging the hoppers, c.1969. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.



FIG. 10. A C17 Class locomotive positioning coal hoppers above discharge bins prior to transferring coal into the bins, c.1969. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.



FIG. 11. Coal being discharged into a locomotive tender from coal bins, c.1963. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.

Regular replenishing of the coal and water supply was needed in the running of steam locomotives, to maintain adequate fuel and water levels. A gravity feed system was used to deliver coal to the tender of locomotives. Coal was stored in a series of bins, and was then fed into the locomotive tender by chute. Transfer of coal into the bins was undertaken by a locomotive propelling a rake of loaded coal hoppers up a rising track. This track was supported by a series of wooden piers (28 in number) on a rising gradient. (Figures 9 and 10). The coal discharge bins were located at the end of this elevated track (Figures 10 and 11). The operation of coal loading into tender was controlled by the steam locomotive's fireman. As the figures show, the method of coaling a locomotive could be a hazardous operation. The departing locomotive receiving a tender of coal from the elevated coal stage had to be positioned so that coal would discharge into empty areas of the tender. It was also an operation that generated a large amount of dirt and dust. From reconstruction from available photographs it would appear that the maximum height of the coal stage above ground (rail) level was 10 metres. The stage itself was constructed of hardwood timber piers and the discharge bins were milled and sawn timber. Handrails and walkways either side of the 'top' of the coal stage acted as a safety feature for the person responsible for the operation of the stage. Safety platforms were also provided at staggered intervals so that maintenance workers could move out of the path of shunting trains advancing up the elevated structure.⁵ The coal stage was also built on a rising trestle, situated on a curve, making for difficult operation for the engine crew. The coal stage appears to have been built between 1923 and 1925 to replace a smaller structure (QRAR, 1925:22-23).⁶ The photographic evidence indicates that there were nine coal shutles available for the delivery of fuel into the locomotive tenders.

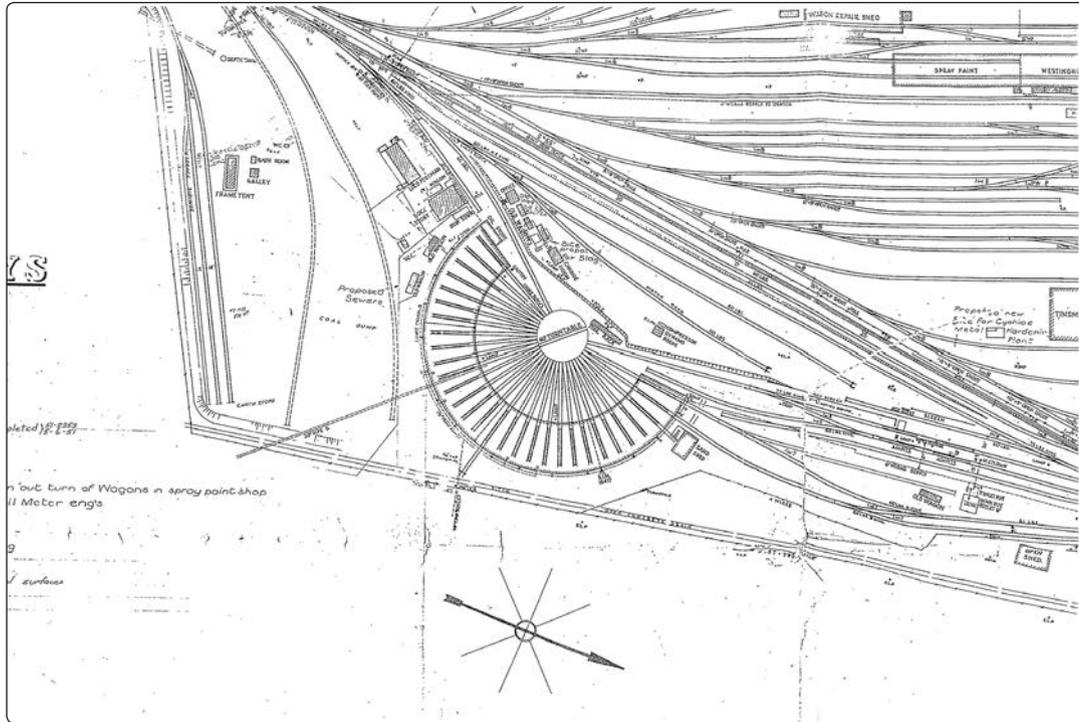


FIG. 12. Details from Queensland Railways – Ipswich Workshops Yard, Section of Roundhouse and associated yards, 1968. Queensland Rail Archive.

The other major facilities associated with the roundhouse consisted of ash pits, watering columns and steam cleaning roads. The main area that was provided for the cleaning of fireboxes and smokeboxes on locomotives was on two roads, approximately 150 metres north of the Roundhouse building. Access to this point was on the Northbound road via a turntable, or from a through road parallel to the Tivoli Branch (Figure 12). Four ash pits were situated on two roads. Each ash pit was approximately 13 metres in length, with a width of 1 metre. From oral evidence it would appear that this area was filled in with dirt and rubble following the closure of the Roundhouse in 1974.⁷ During a site inspection in 1993 it appeared that, as the ash pits were excavations lined with concrete, it was possible that these structures although buried may still have been extant. At the ash

pits, locomotive fires were cleaned with burnt coal being dropped into the pits. This area, as could be imagined, was one of the dirtiest in the roundhouse environment. Ash was removed from this location by an ash hoist. The ash hoist was operated by a wire pulley system. Two rails were set into a large pit in the ground on which ran a small skip, similar to that used in mining operations. These rails then ran upwards at an angle of 50°, allowing ash in the pits to be transported by skip to a waiting dump vehicle. Generally this was an FJS goods wagon that was cleared by a daily shunt engine.

From available photographic evidence the ash hoist operated from the pits set approximately 2 metres into the ground. Adjacent to the ash hoist was a siding (dead-end) which was used to store dump wagons.⁸

Immediately to the south of the ash pits an ash screen ran 50 metres back towards the turntable road. This area was set aside for the clearing of locomotive smokeboxes. This was a task that was originally a manual operation, but in later locomotives a self cleaning smokebox avoided this job (Knowles, 2002:163-4). In earlier diagrams the screen was provided on both east and west sides of the ash pits. It would appear that post-1926 one of these screens was removed and the surviving west screen was extended.

Watering of locomotives was also carried out in this area by both ingoing and outgoing engine crews. Three water columns were available in between the ash pit roads. Two were located in the central part of the ash pit area (Figure 12). Water was supplied from a large elevated tank from which water was pumped into from an outside source.

At the time of the construction of the Roundhouse it was debated where it would be best to draw water from, town supply or river water. Initially it seemed that using river water led to operational difficulties and a strainer had to be supplied as ‘...a considerable quantity of shells etc is pumped up from the river to the high level tank’ and subsequently to the water cranes (QSA A/24236). The water cranes were made from cast iron and fed off a 15cm outlet pipe from the elevated tank. Being situated between outgoing and ingoing roads the cranes could be rotated manually to allow the filling of locomotive water tenders. Stop/open valves were located on top of the boom of water cranes allowing locomotive fireman to control the flow of water into the tender. The water cranes used were of a standard design, approximately 4 metres in height. Both water cranes were 3 metres apart in the central ash pit location, allowing for two locomotives to take water simultaneously.⁹ The entire ashpit area/water location was concreted over, covering an area of 50 x 20 metres. Two

hardwood lamps, with enamel lampshades, were provided for night operations. Illumination was supplied by incandescent electric light. The operational activity in the ash pit location around 1962 can be seen in Figures 13-18.

An extra ash pit and water column was also provided at the southern end of the coal dump siding (Figure 12). This was included at the request of a deputation from the Engine Drivers, Firemen and Cleaners Association:

...there were two roads running in the roundhouse, but one of these was frequently blocked with an ash wagon and that consequently delays to both ingoing and outgoing engines were frequent and resulted in correspondence with the Traffic Branch. A water column and ashpit at the South end of the roundhouse would facilitate working considerably to save delays. (QSA A/12564)

It was only after protracted negotiations that these facilities were eventually added to the other service facilities of North Ipswich (QSA A/12564).

The major structures within the roundhouse environment discussed so far have mainly been associated with locomotive operations. A comparison of Figures 3 and 12 shows that initially the majority of buildings provided in the early years of the Depot were administration or store buildings. Two of these buildings in particular appear to have been important from the opening of the Roundhouse, the Loco Foreman’s Office and Loco Store. In an aerial view of the Roundhouse (Figure 18), the two larger buildings of single story construction at the south end of the entry/exit road were the Foreman’s Office and Store.

Oral evidence¹⁰ and photographs show



FIG. 13. Showing water crane in operation and fireman supervising water flow into the tender. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.



FIG. 15. Two locomotives, B18 1/4 and C17 Class taking on water. To the right of the leading locomotive an elevated water tank and lamp posts can be seen. Ash screens and blowdown board are to the right and ash pits in foreground. Water cranes are visible in the mid-ground. To the left there is an ash hoist with a dump wagon. Smaller water hydrants can also be observed with hose attachments for dampening down ash. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.



FIG. 14. Ash hoist pulley system is observable in the background. The locomotive is taking on water. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.



FIG. 16. A locomotive is seen blowing the boiler down near the "blow down" screen. This was done to clear the boiler of scum that formed on top of the water level in the boiler. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.



FIG. 17. A locomotive blowing down at ash pits, showing a water crane in the foreground and an elevated water tank in the background. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.



FIG. 18. An aerial view of the Roundhouse, showing a group of buildings at the entry/exit to the turntable. Image courtesy TWRM/QR.

that these structures were made from weatherboard and corrugated iron roofing. The Loco Foreman's Office was 16 x 6 metres and the Loco Store was 16 x 16 metres. As originally built the Loco Store also contained an extension for the use of the Night Officer. Figure 19 shows the office building that existed until the closure of the Roundhouse, and the 1968 plan (Figure 12) shows the newer office drafted in.

A smaller office existed opposite the Loco Store, until the 'new' office was provided. In Figure 12 the building drawn behind the telegraph pole is a change room. Amenities such as the change room were much later additions to the Roundhouse. Figure 12 also shows that old wagons were stored at various locations. These were mostly condemned goods wagons, removed from bogies and used for storage purposes. To the south east of the Foreman's Office in between the storage sidings and Coal Dump were a small group of outbuildings. These

four small buildings were used as part of the crew, or camp quarters, for those crews based at Toogoolawah on the Brisbane Valley branch. Quarters were of spartan appearance and even more spartan furnishing. A frame tent building 16 x 4 metres was provided for sleeping arrangements. A cooking area, bathroom and toilets were located externally. Oral sources indicate that these quarters were used three times a week.¹¹ Three other structures observable in Figure 12 also deserve explanation – the oil store, tool rack, and the sand shed.

The Oil Store was an addition to the south western wall of the Roundhouse (Bay 1). This shed was a small structure 10 x 5 metres and flat on the ground. Lubricating oils for the locomotive were stored there. At the north western edge of the turntable, opposite Bay 4, a covered tool rack was provided.¹²

At the rear of the Roundhouse, (Bay 4, Road 27) there was a shed set aside for providing sand carried by steam locomotives to provide



FIG. 19. The Roundhouse turntable, showing C17's No. 763 and No. 934 shunting PB15 No. 486 on the turntable with 'New Office' change room in background, c.1970. Image courtesy Brian Martin.

traction in wet or greasy conditions. Attached to this was an elevated bin. Sand was dried out in this area, using a furnace arrangement, and then stored in the bin provided. It was manually loaded into a reservoir or dome (in Queensland practice) located on top of the boiler.

One feature noted in an examination of the diagrams of facilities provided at the North Ipswich Roundhouse was the lack of amenities provided for workers. For example, a lunch area for staff was not supplied until the late 1950s.¹³ Another example of the difficulties endured by staff was the failure to provide adequate washing facilities. In June 1920 the Ipswich Branch of

the Australian Railways Union:

...made applications for wash basins to be placed in each bay at the running shed, Ipswich... The present facilities consist of taps placed at different positions around the shed whilst there are four wash basins on the office verandah... (QSAA/24236)

The General Manager's Office had refused the application by the union as the facilities were considered adequate. However following inspection by the Commissioner in September, four extra wash basins were provided. Running staff were forced to wash out of the back of locomotive tenders prior

to this.

“DIRTY, DANK AND NOISY...” – THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF NORTH IPSWICH ROUNDHOUSE

The history of the North Ipswich Roundhouse is as much about people as locomotives and buildings. At its largest extent according to oral evidence nearly three hundred men found employment in and around the depot and eighty to ninety engine crews were on roster.¹⁴ In this part of the paper the atmosphere of the Roundhouse will be explored further through excerpts from five oral histories conducted with retired and or current railway employees. Their testimony and stories provide so much of the human story of working in the steam era.

WHY JOIN THE RAILWAYS?

In July 1939, when Jack Smith first went to the Roundhouse:

...entry to the railway was by public examination, and the financial situation was much like it was today...jobs were very hard to come by... [At my examination] two hundred turned up and they only wanted ten. Ten of us were started on the job ...The railway was a career job at the time...

For Bill Fullelove, Graham Bushnall and Jack Coogan, their reasons were different:

July 1945...I always wanted to be an engine driver...on holidays at Manly, an old fireman, who was a real gentleman would take us for a ride to Lota and back on his engine – which was a tank engine... I was seventeen and a half when I joined. I've never regretted it. I think it was the greatest days of my life... Bill Fullelove

August of 1947. I worked as a storeman

at Cribb and Footes, then a counter assistant...and at a grocery shop. Then at Hancocks Plymill. Jim was forced from these jobs, as with the Second World War over, the policy was to give returning men their 'old jobs back'. Some of my friends were joining the railway, so I thought, why not? Graham Bushnall

...1952, on the second of June. Because I had a childhood ambition. All I ever wanted to do was to be a train driver. They tell me, all my people...that I was about four and all I ever wanted was to be a train driver. My father, of course, was a driver... Jack Coogan

Entry to the railway was by examination. The young men starting out as running staff initially were put on as cleaners, or as 'call boys'. The job of cleaner entailed exactly what its title suggested, although for Graham his first job involved his introduction to a push bike – as a 'call boy'. The duties of a cleaner were varied, but revolved primarily around the cleaning of a locomotive. When Jack Smith came on to the job in 1939 he remembered men who had been cleaners for fifteen years. Due to the depression, they had been unable to undertake examination and classification to fireman. 'They gave us a good education, as far as roundhouse life were concerned, however...'

Jim Gough remembered starting his first day, being told to report to the S.M.E.U.S. (Shed Man Moving Engines Under Steam). From there he was told to report to the cleaners hut:

Evidently, I must have been expected... There was a bucket of water waiting for me, I opened the door, the door was partly closed ...and this was my greeting into the railway a bucket of water, that was greeted with a lot of laughter and mirth. This was not to be the first bucket of water I got in my career in the railway.

All the men interviewed recalled the atmosphere of the Roundhouse as being one of a sense of comradeship. Jack Coogan summarized the Roundhouse in the following manner:

Dirty, Dank, Noisy...a lot of camaraderie that we haven't got now ...

I guess, I shouldn't be talking about it now, but we used to take it in turns to go to the old Rialto Theatre. If we were required urgently, a notice would come on the screen. We were very busy in those days, because we were lads...sixteen, seventeen and a half...and we used to have to care for up to forty engines...on a morning shift.

Bill Fullelove and Jim Gough similarly reminisced:

You met a special breed of people, they were always friendly, fun...fair few fights, but we had good fun. Bill Fullelove

One thing about Ipswich engines...they were always noted for their cleanliness, they could always be picked out, whenever they went into a station. Jim Gough

The steam era, not only meant entry into a career for those young fellows who went 'into the job' at North Ipswich. It also meant long, hard and extremely arduous work. Career progression meant entry as a cleaner. Training and preparation was gained through working with peers, of 'learning the road as you went'.

I might mention, the place was manned twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. That was continuous shift work... and the shifts were eight to four, four to midnight and midnight to eight...and you worked those. You rotated on those all the time. Weekends...when we started

it was a forty-four hour week. You'd do five days of eight hours, and a short day. And you might work your short day during the week or on a Saturday. The place had to be manned, so you'd take into consideration. Jack Smith

At its height over three hundred workers were employed in or around the Depot. They covered various occupations and jobs (Figure 20). It would be erroneous to think that such a busy environment functioned purely on running crews. Yet, they represented the most visible element of the Roundhouse. Supporting them were storemen, clerks, fitters, labourers and shed hands. It was a large and involved industrial operation. For the 'running men' progression from cleaner, to acting fireman then fireman involved getting to know and understand the locomotive. On average it required two to three years to gain enough knowledge and experience to sit for classification as locomotive fireman. Bill Fullelove remembers his first pay as Fireman being:

...something around 8 pounds for the fortnight...As Engine Cleaner,...you'd have to do a fires test...and then you went for an exam for Fireman. On Saturdays I would slip down to Shorncliffe to get a practice run. Over the years, when I was a fireman at Ipswich...the drivers always taught you – how to drive an engine... That was why there were so many good drivers that came out of Ipswich...They were all taught well.

One feature that was drawn up as rostering of engine crews was the creation of a "link". This was a regular teaming of driver and fireman. It was an important facet of working as a team, that driver and fireman got to know each others methods. The role of engine driver or fireman was a varied occupation. Crews working on a roster could find themselves driving and



FIG. 20. The North Ipswich Roundhouse required maintenance for the steam locomotives and for the physical fabric of the place. The photo shows part of the roof receiving attention. To the rear of the work gang ventilators used to exhaust smoke into the air can be seen. A water proofing material was used underneath the metal covering of the roof. Just imagine this job on a hot North Ipswich day! Image courtesy TWRM/QR.

firing on trains, operating shunts, suburban passenger trains, goods trains servicing the metropolitan or country areas, or long distance passenger services. The majority of services, however, were those centred on suburban and branchline workings. Some working on main line passenger services also took place on mail trains, through to centres such as Toowoomba.¹⁵ Rostering was done through the roster office located in the complex. Diagrams of train workings, and crew workings, interspersed with working maximum of hours, balanced with time off and working between shifts meant that the life of the roster clerk was never boring. Antagonism amongst the roster clerks and those who drove or fired, or worked as guard, or cleaner, was common through locomotive

depots all over Queensland. The most common form of communication was via a chalkboard which listed available locomotive power, train number (or working), and crew. The roster, which was placed on a wall near the roster clerk office, was also known as 'the wailing wall', – a humorous reference to the noises that went on when crews found out what their working was to be.¹⁶

A former Mayne depot roster clerk, George Kelso, explained in relation to rosters:

You'd have men rostered on a specific working, and because you didn't have an engine you'd have to defer that one back and the men who were on the first train would come ahead of the others... you'd have to change them over. It was a game of draughts, your move next, often

times in the early hours of the morning, because you'd be short of engine power.

Bill Fullelove also recalls the divisions between engine crews from different locomotive depots, (Mayne, Ipswich and Toowoomba):

...Jack was raving on about Ipswich in the old days. We were all about the same in seniority. Ipswich, and Brisbane. We all had great mateship, we were always friendly, everybody got this...well it got too much for me. I stood up and yelled out - Bullshit – Jack!! Well ...it brought the house down. ...Because it was bullshit. We used to snipe at each other left, right and centre!

It was the divisional arrangement that gave such an independent sense to crews from Depots. Yet, for classification purposes, part of the progression from fireman to driver required that the trainee be transferred away from the home depot.

Centres varied where fireman would go to be classified to driver. Bill was classified at Ipswich, then was transferred to Charleville. Jack Smith was transferred to North Queensland for service during World War II. Graham also made his way to Western Queensland.

North Ipswich Roundhouse was the stabling point for anything up to 40 locomotives (not to mention rail motors). The Roundhouse as mentioned was divided up into four separate bays.

Graham Bushnall described the working of the Roundhouse for maintenance of locomotives:

Number One Bay was mostly for passenger engines...and running repairs. A drop pit in number two road (Bay One)...the pit itself had a false set of rails. Once they uncoupled the

[engine] wheels, they could drop the ... line down and wheel the faulty wheels out, and exchange them for new ones.

Number Two Bay was used for overhauling engines and washouts. [For locomotive boilers].

Number Three Bay was [for] washouts and storage and locomotives. A lot of locomotives for country runs.

Number Four Bay [was for] some ash wagons...where they'd pick up ashes out of the shed, and [for] steam cleaning. Engines to go into the workshops all had to be steam cleaned before they went in. We used to have two old locos: when you qualified your fires test, you'd have your turn keeping steam and water up so the steam cleaner could clean the locomotives for repairs.

Number Three Bay was referred to by Graham as the 'Branch line Bay'. When asked about the Branch lines for the North Ipswich Depot, Graham and Jack responded:

Well in my time, there used to be Mount Edwards, Boonah, Toogoolawah [part of the Brisbane Valley line to Yarraman] and Marburg. ...C17, C16 and PBs were the engines [to work the branches].

The passenger engines? Well, when I first joined they were B18¼, some with small tenders – tenders that weren't self trimming... The later model B18¼ come out, they had the enclosed cab and a larger tender.

In those days we used to work, Petrie, Shorncliffe, Pinkenba – think that was about all, oh, yeah – Mitchelton also! We never went to Ferny Grove in those days. We didn't have tank engines, only tender engines. Graham Bushnall

...the Mount Edwards branch was a good one to run...mostly it was daylight

running. Yarraman was night work, and it could almost be up to a twelve hour trip to make your way up there. Jack Smith

So what was the atmosphere like with anything up to 40 engines (or more) being attached to the Roundhouse? Jack Smith said:

Saturday night, to Sunday afternoon, that was when most engines would be in the shed. And, you would estimate that there would be forty to fifty engines. Rows were double-banked everywhere. And there were very few spaces left. You'd start lighting up about four o'clock – between four and six on a Sunday night. You'd get all the engines all ready for it. For the start of the week of it, on Monday morning. The first engine out would be a shunt engine at three o'clock on Monday morning.

According to Jack Coogan most of North Ipswich and Woodend were '...nests of railway workers.' Graham and Jack Smith recall that 'so many of the running staff lived close to the Roundhouse'. On Monday morning a huge pall of smoke would hang over the Roundhouse and its surrounds as the lighting up of engines would proceed. Marge Coogan also said that for people in the area the clothes washing could only be carried out at certain times, and on certain days. The pall of smoke from shunts (such as the coal stage) would drift across the homes of families in Woodend, and North Ipswich coating the washing in soot and grime.

[The Fellow on fires? His duties?] ... Well he'd come in at four o'clock in the morning and get a list off the Foreman of engines that had to be lit up. You'd light up and virtually tend to the engines that were there already in steam...we were lucky. The labourers would see that wood was placed ready for lighting up. Jack Coogan

I asked Jim Gough what was his favourite working out of Ipswich. When one talks to the engine crews one is struck by the number of runs, or jobs, the crew 'could pull'.

Oh well, there was those coal trains to Murrarie things like that on it – they were good. Used to have trains up to Coominya, on the branch line they were good they used to run at midday.

Coal trains on the Marburg Branch, they weren't so good, they were really long hours. Three o'clock in the morning I'd think, it was on. You'd be lucky to finish by two in the afternoon. You'd start at eleven o'clock, in the afternoon, you'd be lucky to finish at one o'clock in the morning – or even midnight... Passenger working was alright.

Other jobs included yard shunts or turntable duty. Engine Crews could be sent from Ipswich to act as Relief Fireman or Drivers at branch line depots, such as Toogoolawah, or act as crew on 'banking' engines at main line depots.¹⁷ Jack Smith for instance worked on assisting an engine over the Little Liverpool Range at Grandchester.

One of the more lively and possible hazardous crewings was working the coal stage and shunt at North Ipswich. Graham detailed this working:

Well, we were booked on at 7.00am. That was the loco shunt they used to call it. You'd come in and you'd shunt the ash pits, first. You'd get rid of all the wagons full of ash, and replace them with empties. Then you'd go down and go up to the coal stage. Check the wagons up top they'd be all virtually empty. You'd bring them down. Get a rake of five hoppers, away you go, you'd get right back near the Tarpaulin Shop [the former Railway Historical Centre, today part of the Riverlink shopping precinct] – make

a run...you'd go up there. Always generally the first two rakes you'd generally drop straight down. The third rake you'd leave up there. Then you'd go out and do whatever shunt that had to be done.

For Bill, an unfortunate illness in his family meant that he had to remain 'shedbound' until 1966, when his wife passed away. He described his job as:

...a general muck around in the shed. Greasing engines, stabling, preparing them.

We had an engine clerk, power clerk, we called him. His job was to write up on this big board, what engines were due for greasing that day. On average it was every two days. You'd grease all the engines, they were all grease jobs... Whenever we got a chance, we'd play cards! At lunchtime you'd go flat out for a game of cards.

It was hard and dirty work, yet all of them were young men and all commented that no matter how bored and tired, someone would be ready for some fun.

One enjoyable part of researching this paper has been listening to the antics that went on within the Roundhouse. Bill Fullelove for a time ran an unofficial barber shop within the confines of the Roundhouse. He also recalls a social club:

We used to have a social club over there at the Roundhouse. Fitters, Labourers, Fireman, Cleaners, Clerks – everybody. We were all members of this social club. We used to put in so much every pay, and then they'd send a few of the women to Brisbane, to buy some presents for the children. We used to have a Christmas Social with Santa Claus, then they'd have a Bucks night.

Pubs featured very much in the social life of

the crews. Jack Smith recalled social life as an engineman:

The job certainly interfered with your social life. Amongst ourselves, we seemed to work it out pretty well. We worked for each other and we covered each other. If a bloke wanted to go somewhere, he'd manage it. We protected each other. There's a paddock near the running shed – the horse paddock we'd call it. Used to play football there in the lunch breaks. We did have a cricket team for a while... we used to play Saturdays and take on some of the local teams.

It was also as much a part of life to disappear up to the Bellevue Hotel (The Ding-Dong) that stood where the Monaco Motel now is. One story concerns the publican who blew a whistle and held up a green flag, yelling out 'Time for you enginemen to get back to work!' to clear the bar in one instance. Jack Smith recounted:

For a single man, it wasn't so bad, but the job was hell if you were a married man... It was a physically demanding job...and I still don't know how the women put up with it.

END OF THE STEAM ERA

The Ipswich Roundhouse was built and designed in an era when steam locomotion was the predominant power. In 1952 the first diesel electric locomotive entered service on Queensland Railways. By 1969 steam would be extinguished from operating as regular motive power. The Ipswich Roundhouse was the last stronghold of 'steam' in southern Queensland. From 1966 onwards, according to Jim Gough, the end "was as plain to see as anything", for steam. Jack Coogan recalls that 1969 was a time of great anxiety for the running men at the North Ipswich Roundhouse. Planned diesellisation of the North Ip-

swich shed meant hardship for the men and their families. The Queensland Times reported in a Newspaper article on 13 June 1969:

The public is to be asked to support a case for the retention of railway staff in Ipswich, said to be redundant by the Railways Department because of the now almost completed dieselisation of the service.

The Ipswich branch President and State Councillor of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, Mr C Dywer, said that his union had been informed that 11 drivers, six firemen and five cleaners attached to the running shed at Ipswich were being declared surplus by the department, as well as a foreman, an assistant foreman and six labourers. (QT, 13 June, 1969)

They were talking about something similar to redundancy, that was only because there were so many crews lowered down to diesels. Diesels of course take heavier loads...meaning less trains. With the natural attrition, things settled down, nobody got transferred.
Bill Fullelove

In 1969, Jack Coogan was an officer, and Union Secretary, of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen (AFULE) at Ipswich:

They were going to transfer, I think, ten men, ten drivers, anyway, firemen too – so that’s ten sets. I can remember vividly, blokes who lived in this area [Goodna]... and the junior men they were going to transfer them to Mayne...they were to go. We were able to agitate, and strike, to put up arguments; I was able to explain that by the advent of a holiday roster – by the cutting of overtime and various other methods, we dutifully saved our jobs at

Ipswich.

...I remember when Boonah closed (1964) all those men went to Mayne. Yarraman men I think came to Ipswich. Toogoolawah men, I think, the same. Some retired. Yeah, they all came to Ipswich. I think they got a choice.

...I came into it only as Branch Secretary...Yeah, the feeling was pretty high. Everybody was on their toes. We were very fortunate we had a bloke, I was privileged to work with Cedric Dyer. He was President of the [AFULE] Branch... He had that gift where he could negotiate. He could negotiate beautifully.

On 18 November 1969 the Queensland Times reported:

The threat of redundancy in their jobs, which has been hanging over Ipswich railway engine drivers and firemen for several months has been lifted... At the end of May, 11 drivers, six firemen and five cleaners at the Ipswich depot, together with five drivers and four firemen from the branch line depots of Yarraman and Toogoolawah were declared surplus and faced compulsory transfer with all the consequent hardships.

Later, the Queensland Times reported:

“The AFULE believed this action was unnecessary and unwarranted,” said Mr Coogan “and set out to find ways and means of convincing the railway administration of the fact”. As a result...all Ipswich drivers, firemen and cleaners will remain in this depot (QT, 29 November 1969).

Officially steam had only twelve days left to operate from the North Ipswich Roundhouse. Its last stronghold, Graham Bushnell called “its backbone” was the Brisbane Valley

Line. On Saturday 29 November, 1969 the Queensland Times headlined its paper on its front page with a photo of two C17 locomotives and the following caption:

“END OF THE STEAM ERA”.

The last two steam locomotives to run in South East Queensland were C17 class Nos. 917 and 997. The train's last run was on the Brisbane Valley Line from Ipswich to Yarraman last night – 104 years after the first steam train ran in this state (SE, 1972: 34).

Whilst the last official rites were said over the ‘steam’ era by the press, at the Roundhouse there was similar farewell gathering by the running crews. Bill Fullelove recounts:

There were some mighty days there...I decided with a few of my mates, that I'd get there [on the roof of the Roundhouse] and put something up there to remember us by. So I crawled up on the roof, went around the back, got up on a tender of an engine standing in the First Bay, shinned up a piece of bloody rotten old timber. Looked over the top...I don't know how I'll do this, ...sat on a pole...wrapped me legs around it, swung upside down and painted: RIP '69 down about five feet from the top...anyway I got there.

THE LAST STEAM TRAIN TRIP?

Progress last night caught up with southern Queensland's last steam train route. More than 30 members of the Queensland Railways Historical Society flocked to Ipswich Railway Station to see locomotive C17 set out on the 101 mile trip to Yarraman. From Monday diesel locos will take over the run. C17, with one sleeper car, several goods wagons and the guard's van represents the second last regular out on the 101 mile trip... The

last will run from Mackay late next month. The final train was crewed by Driver Charles Jones, Fireman Des Tillach and Guard Frank Haim (CM, 30 November 1969).

The Roundhouse, like the steam locomotives based there, lingered on after the ‘official end’ of steam. The new diesel hydraulic locomotives were based in the same location as the steam engines that they had finally replaced. On 23 December 1971 five steam locomotives were still held in the Roundhouse. A C17 class engine was turned on the Turntable on the same day. However the Ipswich Station and the South Yard gradually assumed a more important role in rostering and operations (SE, 1972: 83). In March of 1972, C17 No. 934 was seen shunting in the yard at North Ipswich and South Ipswich, continuing a role that had been associated with Ipswich for over a century. On Thursday 6 April 1972 it was announced that from this date, North Ipswich Loco was to close, along with it also would close the Roundhouse.

Following its official closure, the site became derelict (Figure 21). Final demolition took place in July of 1978:

On Monday, 3rd July the old Ipswich Roundhouse was finally demolished after standing for about 7 to 8 years since steam was last kept there. Also, the surrounding buildings which included the ‘as required’ room, amenities block and the Roster Clerk's officer were demolished (SE, 1978: 139).

This left the Rockhampton roundhouse (Figure 22) as the only extant example of a Roundhouse in Queensland.

In 2007 the site of the Roundhouse was an open paddock, all buildings on the site being leveled. The major physical evidence of the



FIG. 21. The Roundhouse lying derelict following its closure. The stripped turntable, tool rack to the left (former tool box store) and roof ventilators are visible, 1974. Image courtesy Brian Martin.



FIG. 22. Rockhampton Roundhouse c.1917 (QRAR, 1917).

previous occupation of the site was what was thought to be the concrete foundations of a toilet block 60 metres from an access point from North Street, along with a large rubble pile was located on the site. Close inspection of the site showed that at that time the engine pits could still be located by indentations in the ground, and the discoloured grassed areas radiating around the site. This uniform spread corresponded to the position of engine inspection pits in the Roundhouse. All track work into the site, had been removed, apart from the truncated Tivoli branch. However railway sleepers were observed, half buried,



FIG. 23. Sleepers remaining in ground and coal dump siding, 1993. Photo Greg Hallam.

approximating a former siding into the Coal Dump and the main access line towards the Roundhouse and Turntable was still visible as tracks on the ground (Figures 23 and 24).

Seventy years after construction initially started, the Roundhouse finally ceased to exist. Today, a level paddock and car park for North Ipswich Workshops and The Workshops Rail Museum mark the site. Yet its memories still remain vivid for those who made it a place of work, for so long in their lives.



FIG. 24. Vehicle path in foreground approximating entry road to Roundhouse, 1993. Photo Greg Hallam.

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□ ENDNOTES

1. For additional information see QSA Item ID A/24236 General Correspondence, Deputation to Commissioner, “Roundhouse Accommodation” March 28, 1916
2. Jack Coogan interview
3. Jack Smith interview
4. For comparison see still extant examples of turntables, at Ipswich, Caboolture, and on Mary Valley Heritage Railway, Gympie, Imbil and Amamoor
5. Jim Gough interview
6. £3364 on Ipswich elevated Coal Stage
7. During the course of research for this paper five interviews were conducted with retired or still serving railway employees who began their railway careers at the roundhouse
8. Bill Fullelove interview
9. Graham Bushnall interview
10. Jim Gough and Graham Bushnall interviews
11. Jack Smith interview
12. The tools were stored in boxes, and allocated to a driver for ‘taking out’ on a locomotive. Individual drivers’ toolboxes carried the initials of the driver painted on them
13. Graham Bushnall interview
14. Jack Smith interview
15. Jack Smith interview
16. Bill Fullelove interview
17. Jack Smith interview

