THE GENESIS OF THE QUEENSLAND RAILWAYS

"Great Oaks from Little Acorns Grow!"

[By GEORGE BOND, Member Australian Railways Historical Society.]

(Read at the meeting of the Society on 22 July 1965.)

That is a proverb appropriate to our State Railways.

The oak tree that is the Queensland Railway system as we know it today took root over 100 years ago with the symbolic "planting of the acorn" at the ceremony of the turning of the first sod at Ipswich by Lady Bowen on 25 February 1864.

Today we are on the eve of the centenary of the commencement of growth of this tree as its first limb stretched westwards.

The comparison between the acorn and the fully-grown tree is evident as we compare the 22 miles of that limb of 100 years ago with the full extent of the growth of its limbs and branches at 5,954 miles!

A MEMORABLE DAY

A memorable day in Queensland's history was 31 July 1865. The Government of the day, and the people, were well aware of the significance and the portent of that 22 miles of railway just completed, which was the first step in the transformation of their unsatisfactory mode of inland transport. They looked westward beyond Bigges' Camp towards Little Liverpool Range and beyond to the Main Range where further construction was then in progress, and they knew that in their lifetime they would see the products of the Darling Downs rapidly transported to the head of navigation at Ipswich, and the line extending further westward, bringing settlement and development in its wake.

It was a great day for the people of Queensland!

It was a great day with special significance for several individuals, and it is of their association with this opening ceremony that I wish to speak tonight.

The Hon. Robert George Wyndham Herbert (later to be Sir Robert) would have travelled from Ipswich to Bigges' Camp for the official opening with the Vice-Regal party in his capacity as Premier and Colonial Secretary. His thoughts
would have been of the part he had played in the inauguration of this railway. It would have been a great day for him as he thought of what he had accomplished since leaving his profession as a barrister in England to accompany Sir George Ferguson Bowen to Brisbane as his private secretary. On 10 December 1859 his name had been published in Queensland's first Government Gazette with his appointment as Colonial Secretary; and with the opening of the first Parliament on 22 May 1860 he assumed the additional role of Premier.

HORSE TRAMWAYS PROPOSED

In the formulation of Government policy, transport was given due priority, and it was Herbert's references to light, cheaply constructed horse-drawn tramways that he had seen operating in England that first attracted attention to a means of inland transport other than roads, giving promise of a faster and all-weather mode of travel.

This led to the formation of "the Moreton Bay Tramway Company," the prospectus of which was published in the Brisbane Press on 25 October 1860. The idea was the ultimate construction (when funds had been raised) of a tramway of 4ft. 8¼in. or 5ft. gauge constructed entirely of timber, i.e. rails, bridges, etc., the timber to be cut along the route which was to connect Ipswich with Toowoomba. The cost was estimated to be £1,700 per mile. A fuller account of this undertaking is faithfully given in a paper written by Mr. A. E. Cole in the Journal of the Historical Society of Queensland of April 1944.

Mr. Cole recorded its proposed operation thus:

"Relays of horses were to be used to pull the trams from Ipswich over the range to Toowoomba and vice versa, and the company made provision in the estimates for 70 of these animals at £50 each. The rolling stock was to consist of 50 luggage trucks and four passenger trucks, and the staff included eight drivers, ten stablemen and four station clerks."

Following the survey of the route, the necessary Bill was brought before the Legislative Assembly in August 1861. Parliament at the time was agreeable to the means of payment for the tramway which is explained in detail in Mr. Cole's paper. Inability to raise sufficient capital led to the failure of the venture, though the first sod had been turned at the Basin, Ipswich, on 12 August 1862.

A MORE AMBITIOUS PROJECT

The great increase of population, and inspired confidence in Queensland's future prosperity, prompted Parliament to
The historic day. On 31 July 1865 official guests posed for this photograph before the grand opening of Queensland's first railway from Ipswich to Grandchester.

—Block by courtesy Queensland Railways.
consider a Government-controlled railway on a more ambitious scale and more fitted to meet the needs of rapidly increasing population, whose greatest need was a faster and more reliable means of transport than the quagmires that were the roads of the day.

Herbert would remember his visit to England in 1862 and finding there that Queensland’s credit stood high in the money market and that money was available on reasonable terms. He returned to Queensland an advocate for a Government-controlled railway system.

Three years had passed and the acorn had not yet been planted; but thanks to the advocacy of Premier Herbert, money was available, and on 31 July he could look back and feel proud of the part he had played in the planting of the oak tree. It was a great day for him!

“FATHER OF THE RAILWAYS”

A central figure at the opening ceremony was the Minister for Lands and Works, the Hon. A. Macalister.

It was a great day for him as he considered the role he had played in bringing the events of this day to fruition.

Macalister has earned for himself the name of “Father of
the Queensland Railways," and justly so. From the time of his appointment as Chairman of Committees in the Legislative Assembly, he took a keen and active part in the transport debates, and as Minister for Lands he introduced the first "Railway Bill" in the House on 19 May 1863. This was two days after Premier Herbert's return from England with the glad tidings that money was available to furnish a loan for the construction of a Government controlled railway. His Bill was to take advantage of the offer and put the Colony's railway programme in progress.

"PREJUDICES AND JEALOUSIES"

The passage of the Bill was not plain sailing. Individual prejudices and parochial jealousies came to light. An amendment was moved by members opposed to the proposal that consideration of the Bill be postponed for six months, and as it appeared that the House would be evenly divided on the issue, the Premier had no alternative but to dissolve the House.

The issues at stake centred on the fact of the greatly increased population since Separation, and the consequent need for more electorates to give fairer representation, particularly because of the increase of population in Central and North Queensland. The Northern settlers felt that if a railway programme was to be embarked upon, a proportionate route mileage should be constructed in the centre and the north, to bring development to these areas.

BRISBANE-IPSWICH RIVALRY

Parochial jealousies stemmed from the rivalry that existed between the towns of Brisbane and Ipswich. Ipswich had been considered the logical point from which to commence construction. With the rapid settlement of the Darling Downs a railway connection with a port and the capital city was essential for the export of the wool, hides, and tallow which were our main products at the time. The limb of the oak tree needed to be trained to grow further westwards into the interior to pave the way for further development, and as New South Wales had a railway planned to tap the rich New England district and extend to the border, Macalister's Bill had in mind the provision of a line south from Too-woomba to eventually connect with that of New South Wales at the border. Hence our proposed railway was to be known as the Southern and Western.

Macalister maintained that the line need not extend right to our east coast. Navigable water would convey the traffic
between Ipswich and Brisbane. Right up to the time agitation for the connection of Ipswich with Brisbane by rail prevailed, Macalister remained opposed in principle. The fact that his home was in Ipswich may have made him parochial in his outlook and it did not endear him to the Brisbane people.

The election was held in June, fought on the railway issue, and the Government was returned with a workable majority.

Following the failure of the Moreton Bay Tramway Company, another company, Robert Tooth & Co. of New South Wales came to Queensland with a light railway proposition to be built on the Moreton Bay Company's route, but on 3ft. 6in. gauge, the idea of one Abraham Fitzgibbon!

THE VEXATIOUS PROBLEM OF GAUGE

At this stage it would be appropriate to have a look at the gauge question and the vexatious position that had come into being in other Colonies.

Let us bear in mind that in the year 1863 no steam-operated railway was in existence on 3ft. 6in. gauge anywhere in the world. George Stephenson had started the world's first public railways on the gauge of 4ft. 8¼in. more by chance than design. With the revolution in land transport that followed, the various English companies started building their lines on their own individual gauges, going as far in some cases as to space the rails seven feet apart. With the passing of the years and the resultant confusion, standardisation was inevitable, and though in the case of England's Great Western Railway their seven feet gauge lingered until the 1890's, the field had narrowed down to the "broad" or "Irish" gauge of 5ft. 3in., and the "narrow" or "Stephenson" gauge of 4ft. 8¼in. As other countries commenced their railway building, for the most part they chose either of these two gauges.

KEEN CONTROVERSY

The Australian railway-building movement originated in New South Wales through private enterprise, and before a spadeful of earth was turned, the distance between the rails had developed into a subject of keen controversy.

In 1846, Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, sent a despatch to Sir Charles Fitzroy, Governor-General of New South Wales, urging the observance of the Stephenson gauge of 4ft. 8¼in. This advice was seemingly ignored, and Australia had to contend with the resultant break of gauge problem. It would be timely to quote some of the wording of Earl Grey's despatch:

"I have to acquaint you that it has appeared to me to be
highly desirable in the event of railways being established in the Colony of New South Wales that one uniform gauge should be established with a view to the probability of the meeting at some future, though probably distant, period, of the lines, not only in the same settlement but by a junction of those constructed in the adjacent Colonies. I have communicated with the Commissioners of Railways in order to ascertain the width of gauge which might be best suited for general adoption, and I have been informed that, in their opinion, the most desirable gauge would be that prescribed by an Act for Railways in England, and which is the width of 4ft. 8¾in."

THE BATTLE OF THE GAUGES

We must all applaud Earl Grey’s far-sighted wisdom and shake our heads in regret because his advice was not followed. I would like to set out salient dates and events in the Battle of the Gauges in Australia that preceded Queensland’s acceptance of Mr. Fitzgibbon’s advice for a 3ft. 6in. gauge. I quote from Eric Harding’s “Uniform Railway Gauge,” published in 1958:

1846. Earl Grey recommended 4ft. 8¾in. gauge to be adopted in Australia.

1850. On the recommendation of the Sydney Railway Company, the Governor-General of New South Wales wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies stating 5ft. 3in. was favoured.

1851. The Secretary of State approved of 5ft. 3in. gauge and notified South Australia, which had already passed legislation for the Adelaide-Port Adelaide railway. The Colonial Secretary, New South Wales, notified the Colonial Secretary, Victoria.

1852. New South Wales passed an Act regulating the gauge of railways to 5ft. 3in. The penalty for constructing a railway of any other gauge was £10 per mile for every day that the offending railway was open.

1853. The New South Wales Colonial Secretary wrote to the Victorian Colonial Secretary stating the Government’s intention to repeal the Act of 1852 and adopt 4ft. 8¾in. gauge. Victoria appointed a Select Committee of the Legislature which examined witnesses, including the chief engineers of the three railway companies preparing to operate railways in Victoria. The outcome was that Victoria approached the Home Government, requesting that Royal Assent be with-
held from the New South Wales Act which was to provide for a change-over to 4ft. 8½in. gauge.

1854. In January of that year New South Wales forwarded to Downing Street for Royal Assent an Act to repeal the Act of 1852.

1854. The Secretary of State for the Colonies requested the Governor-General, New South Wales, to re-submit the question to the New South Wales Legislature.

1854. Melbourne to Port Melbourne railway opened, 5ft. 3in. gauge, 12 September.

1855. The New South Wales Act of 1852, which provided for 5ft. 3in. gauge, was repealed, and the Act of Repeal was assented to by the Governor-General on 14 August.

1855. Sydney to Parramatta Railway opened, 4ft. 8½in. gauge, 26 September.

1856. Adelaide-Port Adelaide railway opened, 5ft. 3in. gauge, 21 April.

The guilty party responsible for bringing about this gauge bungle at such an early date was the Sydney Railway Company's first Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. W. F. Wentworth Shields, who was directly responsible for persuading the New South Wales Government to change its first allegiance from the English standard 4ft. 8½in. gauge to the Irish 5ft. 3in. gauge. Mr. Shields, incidentally, was an Irishman who came to Sydney in 1843 to take up the appointment of City Surveyor, and in 1849 at the youthful age of 29 was appointed Engineer of the Sydney Railway Company. He eventually fell out of favour in 1852 and was succeeded by a Mr. Wallace, of the 4ft. 8½in. school, and his arguments influenced the Government to repeal their first gauge Act.

QUEENSLAND ENTERS THE ARENA

And now Queensland is about to enter the arena of the gauge battle by being prepared to listen to Abraham Fitzgibbon's advocacy for a gauge of 3ft. 6in.

With Parliament reassembled on 21 June 1863, the Minister for Lands resubmitted the Railways Bill in the Legislative Assembly. Robert Tooth's proposed railway had met with disapproval. But Mr. Fitzgibbon's report which had been prepared for that company was of interest to the Government. Mr. Macalister based his arguments in favour of the Bill on Fitzgibbon's report, the main feature of which was the advocacy for 3ft. 6in. gauge. Understandably this led to
heated debate in the House, the untried gauge of 3ft. 6in. being considered too narrow.

Before the final acceptance of the Railway Bill, a Committee of the Legislative Council summoned a number of engineers, surveyors and contractors to the Bar of the House for cross-examination concerning proposals for railway building generally. As could be expected, the gauge question was paramount.

We now come to the most important personage of the day.

FITZGIBBON'S PERSONAL TRIUMPH

The Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Abraham Fitzgibbon, was waiting at Bigges' Camp to welcome Sir George and Lady Bowen. It was a great day for him—a day of personal triumph. We are now face to face with the sponsor of our 3ft. 6in. gauge railway, and whether he merits praise or censure for that sponsorship is a matter that has been debated over the past century and will be the subject of discussion for many years yet to come.

Fitzgibbon arrived in Queensland two days after the dissolution of Parliament two years previously, a total stranger. He had been engaged by the construction firm of Robert

Abraham Fitzgibbon, the Irish-born Engineer who became Engineer-in-Chief of the Queensland Railways in 1863 and was first Commissioner (1863-64).

—Block by courtesy Queensland Railways.
Tooth and Company of New South Wales to advise them in his capacity as a civil engineer regarding a proposal they had for presentation to the Queensland Government for the construction of a light railway between Ipswich and Toowoomba, and beyond to Dalby, at the attractive cost of £4,000 per mile, exclusive of rolling stock and land. The outstanding feature of this proposal was the recommendation of a gauge of 3ft. 6in.!

Fitzgibbon had served an apprenticeship with a leading civil engineer in Ireland, and had had considerable experience in railway surveying and construction in Ireland, the United States, Canada, Ceylon, India and New Zealand. He had just completed the construction of New Zealand's first public railway, a 14-mile mineral line connecting Nelson with Dun Mountain, worked by horses and by gravity, and on a gauge of 3ft. Tooth and Company could not have engaged a more able adviser!

THE SITUATION IN 1865

Let us view the situation as Fitzgibbon saw it.

The minimum length of any railway that could be expected to serve a useful purpose in Queensland would need to be of about 100 miles. This was necessary for the transport of supplies to, and the export of primary products from, the rapidly populating district of the Darling Downs, and to promote further settlement there. Not only was this length far in excess of the mileage of the first railways constructed in other Colonies, but the terrain to be traversed involved the crossing of two mountain ranges and the bridging of many streams. Fitzgibbon knew what the cost of such a railway would be if built to 4ft. 8½in. gauge. Even if the necessary capital could be obtained, it would impose a crippling burden on posterity. The route proposed, from Ipswich to Toowoomba and Dalby—130 miles, and from Toowoomba to Warwick, 62 miles—demanded economy in construction, and as the railway was intended more for a goods than a passenger service, a speed of about 15 miles per hour was all that need be provided for. (What other mode of transport at that time could be expected to give a comparable all-weather around-the-clock travel?) No immediate extensive traffic could be expected for years to come, until the railway had brought closer settlement in its wake.

THE MAIN OBSTACLES

When Fitzgibbon first inspected the route, realising that a cheap railway had to be planned, he had to carefully study
the main obstacles—the surmounting of the two ranges, one 700 feet and the other 1,400 feet above the level of the country at their bases. To quote his own words he had this to say regarding the engineering difficulties as he saw them:

"The sides of the ranges are cut up by very numerous and deep ravines, and their slopes are steep.

"The existence of these ravines involves the construction of an unusually large number of viaducts, bridges and culverts, and the spurs between them in many cases have to be tunnelled through; of these tunnels there are eleven—the longest being 27 chains, or over one-third of a mile in length.

"The low-lying country at the base of these ranges is intersected by numerous streams and watercourses, which in the wet season become torrents, overflow their banks, and lay extensive tracts of country under water.

"To provide for this condition of things, an amount of bridges and waterways had had to be provided, greater perhaps than any equivalent mileage of railway yet made in any country."

THE SAVING IN COST

Fitzgibbon then set out to explain the difference in cost between a railway built on 3ft. 6in. gauge and one on 4ft. 8½in.—a difference not very obvious to the layman. Surely a difference of a foot or so would not greatly affect the cost. Patiently Fitzgibbon explained how on the narrower gauge a minimum radius of five chains was possible. On the wider gauge eight chains was the equivalent. On the basis of his calculations, the crossing of the Little Liverpool Range and the ascent of the Main Range on the wide gauge would have cost threefold that of the narrow! In the items of viaducts alone, the cost per mile on 4ft. 8½in. would have been £35,000 as against £6,000! In the case of the permanent way, it had been found that on the New South Wales line, the cost per mile was £2,996/7/6, as against his estimate for Queensland of £2,162/4/-, giving a difference of £854 in favour of the narrow gauge.

Among other comparisons made was that of bridges, where a difference of £50 per running foot favoured the narrow gauge.

FITZGIBBON SUMS UP

Summing up his arguments, Fitzgibbon said:

"If it had been determined to adopt a gauge of 4ft. 8½in. in this Colony, the construction of any railway of sufficient length to open up the country would have been postponed
indefinitely, and we’d have been pauperised by the pressure of an unproductive debt.

“Advantageously the Colony would be provided with internal communication at a much earlier period than it could otherwise have been, and at a cost which it could afford, instead of having these advantages postponed ‘sine die.’

“It would be burdened with a very much smaller debt than it would otherwise have to incur, while its means of carrying the necessary traffic will be ample for many years to come.”

The main disadvantage depicted by Fitzgibbon was

“The low power of the machinery employed will limit the speed at which the traffic is to be carried and the quantity to be conveyed in a given time.”

These quotations are from a “memorandum for His Excellency Sir G. F. Bowen, G.C.M.G., Governor of Queensland, from A. Fitzgibbon, Chief Engineer, Southern and Western Railway; dated Ipswich 31 July 1865,” and presented by Fitzgibbon, with understandable pride on the opening day, to His Excellency.

Both Fitzgibbon and Macalister staked their careers on the success of their advocacy of the narrow gauge. The successful operation of the railway on opening day vindicated Fitzgibbon in the eyes of many of his critics. It was indeed a great day for him!

BRASSEY’S ASSOCIATION

It was a great day for Sir Thomas Brassey, principal of the Railway Constructing Company of Peto, Brassey and Betts, the successful tenderers for the first section of the Southern and Western Railway, from Ipswich to the foot of the Little Liverpool Range.

In October 1863, two months after the Railway Bill had been passed by both Houses of Parliament, tenders were called. Messrs. Peto, Brassey and Betts contracted to do the work for the sum of £86,900, and undertook to complete the work before 1 June 1865. Other engineering work had been done by this firm in Australia, and they will be remembered as having been the builders of the iron bridge which spanned the Brisbane River, and which was washed away in the 1893 flood, and replaced by the present Victoria Bridge.

Thomas Brassey’s association with the day is worthy of mention because of his world-wide fame as a railway builder. The “Railway Encyclopedia” records that by the time of his death in 1872 he had built 6,600 miles of railway throughout
the world. His story begins with his discovery by the "Father of Railways," George Stephenson. Stephenson personally supervised many of the railways he built, and on his Liverpool and Manchester railway construction, he had to attend to every detail himself. On that road one of the finest works was a viaduct over the Sankey Brook and canal, a long bridge 70 feet above the valley with nine arches each of 50 foot span built of brick with stone facings.

As the stone had to be of exceptionally good quality, Stephenson was advised to try that at Stourton. There he found the manager to be Thomas Brassey, a young land agent, who was born in Cheshire in 1805. When sixteen years of age young Brassey had been articled to a land surveyor, who, after taking him into partnership, died, leaving him the agency of a large landed estate.

A WORLD FAMOUS CONTRACTOR

The result of that visit was that Stephenson not only used the Stourton stone, but invited Brassey to begin business as a railway contractor, which he did, at the age of 29. In England alone he built 92 separate lines, and at times he and his partners had 80,000 men in their employment upon works that cost £17 million. Brassey and a partner built the first railway in France, and he laid tracks of rail in Canada, Italy, Spain, Austria, Poland, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Argentina, India, Mauritius and New South Wales. It was a great day for him when in 1865 he put another pin in his map of the world. A great man on a great day!

It was a red-letter day in the life of Samuel Wilcox, the Engineer-in-Charge of the construction of the line, under the Queensland Railways Engineer-in-Chief, Fitzgibbon. He had looked after his firm's interests faithfully, capably hosting the social events where necessary and seeing that the terms of the contract were exactly executed.

BUILT TO FITZGIBBON'S SURVEY

The line was built to the survey prepared by Fitzgibbon dated 29 December 1863. A study of this plan reveals the original route of the first section of the line. The commencement point, which would have been the site of the turning of the first sod on 25 February 1864 was at a point near the confluence of the present southern edge of the Terrace and the western edge of Down Street, North Ipswich. This spot is shown on the survey plan as being the commencement point of No. 1 contract. The 13½ chain section from the Ipswich station and over the Bremer River would appear to have been a separate contract.
The route was northerly, with the Bremer River on the left. At the 50-chain point the first and longest bridge was encountered. This was across a wide gully, located at the southern boundary of the present railway workshops. The bridge was of three iron spans each 60 feet in length, which, with approaches, made a total length of 265 feet. This was the first bridge to be completed and was tested on the afternoon of 14 April in the following manner:

**TESTING THE BREMER BRIDGE**

An engine and tender with a ballast truck, weighing altogether about 33 tons, was first run over the bridge. The deflection of each girder was found to be at its centre, half an inch, while the load was passing over it, and the permanent set was one-sixteenth of an inch. In the case of a train of three engines and tenders containing a supply of fuel and water (the aggregate weight of the train being about 69 tons) the deflection was found to be five-eighths of an inch and the permanent set the same as before.

Engines were then run over the bridge at a speed of 20 miles an hour, and in each case the result was most satisfactory.

The route continued north between the river and the Rifle Range which was on the site of the present workshops. Where the river reached its northernmost extremity and swung back southerly, the line curved sharply to the left on a six-chain radius curve to cross Mi Hi Creek which joined the river at that point. Here was the second bridge, consisting of three spans of 50 feet each, which, with approaches, totalled 260 feet in length. Incidentally, by 1867 this curve was found to be too sharp and a new bridge was built further upstream. This was more safely approached on a nine-chain radius curve.

Our limb then stretched out on its true course westwards, crossing Iron Pot Creek, the third major bridge, at 2 miles 40 chains from Ipswich. This bridge was of similar length and construction to the original Mi Hi Creek bridge. Continuing to 3 miles 46 chains the line came to the site of the present-day Wulkuraka signal box, and from there on to Bigges' Camp the route was the same as it is today.

Near Mi Hi Creek, Wilcox had established a quarry for the supply of crushed stone, for the ballasting of the line; river gravel, the usual medium, not being readily available. The supply of this crushed stone, of course, added to the cost of construction.
CONSTRUCTION DELAYS

The Bremer Bridge and the Ipswich Station were a source of worry to Wilcox. Both were of iron structure. A ship bringing out material from England was wrecked, and the consequent delay postponed the actual opening day of the railway. On 31 July, the station was a mere framework and was not completed until January the following year. The bridge, constructed for both rail and road traffic, a joint enterprise of the Railway Department and the Ipswich Council, was completed sufficiently to take rail traffic on the day previous to the opening. This bridge, still in existence today and until a few weeks ago the main traffic link between North Ipswich and the city, was built on the site of a pontoon bridge which in its turn had superseded a ferry service.

Wilcox had the line in perfect order for the opening day. Traffic that had passed over it previously, including an excursion train, run on 25 April conveying 50 invited guests in three carriages to a point seven miles distant, had eased the minds of those who had doubts as to the safety of the narrow gauge.

THE ROLLING STOCK

It was a great day for Mr. R. T. Darker who had been appointed by Fitzgibbon the previous year to take charge of the assembly of the rolling stock as it arrived at Ipswich, and for Mr. Hart, the resident engineer, who was Fitzgibbon’s second-in-command. So much depended on these two men on this day in seeing that there was smooth and trouble-free operation of the locomotives. The critics of the 3ft. 6in. gauge would be out in force to watch for incidents or mishaps that could be directly associated with Macalister’s and Fitzgibbon’s baby. Many people on that day would be having their first train ride. The locomotive would be regarded in much the same light as we today regard a spaceship, and the younger fry would give hero-worship to the enginemen in the same manner as that bestowed today upon astronauts.

Our first four locomotives would be the centre of attraction, and a novelty to many people present that day. They would seem as toys to those who had previously seen the larger locomotives on the railways in England. Let us remember that at the time of proposal of the Colony’s railway, no steam locomotive on 3ft. 6in. gauge was in service anywhere throughout the world, and at the time of interrogation before the Bar of Parliament, Fitzgibbon had admitted that the only 3ft. 6in. locomotive of which he had knowledge was a working model.
THE FOUR LOCOMOTIVES

Our four locomotives were the result of tenders called in 1863 for our first consignment of rolling stock, and the lowest of four tenders received was that of the firm of Slaughter, Gruning (sometimes spelt “Grunning”) and Company, whose premises were located in Avon Street, St. Phillips, Bristol. In 1864 the name of the firm was changed to “The Avonside Engine Company Limited.”

These four locomotives were obtained at a cost of £1,716 each. After testing in England they were shipped to Queensland in a dismantled state. For their erection and preparation for service at Ipswich a group of skilled mechanics were engaged in England by the Queensland Government’s representative, Fitzgibbon’s previous employer—the construction firm of Fox, Henderson and Company. These nine men arrived in Moreton Bay in November 1864 on the ill-fated Black Ball liner “Fiery Star” which, on her return trip, was burned at sea. The first consignment of railway material had arrived three months previously.

THE PIONEER MECHANICS

Of these nine mechanics, one, Mr. J. W. Bedford, became the first locomotive foreman connected with the Queensland Railways, later rising to the position of Locomotive Superintendent. Another, Mr. Henry Horniblow, an apprentice at time of arrival, eventually became Locomotive Engineer. When that position was abolished in 1899 he received the appointment of Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer.

Mr. Darker had arrived at Ipswich to take up his appointment prior to the arrival of these mechanics, having been brought over from New Zealand by Fitzgibbon.

Under Darker’s direction, these mechanics got busy with the assembling of the first locomotive. Their operations were screened by a tarpaulin, not necessarily for protection from the weather, it being summer time, but perhaps to ensure that the secrets of their trade were guarded from prying eyes!

Our first four locomotives were given names prior to a numbering system being adopted. The names allotted were “Lady Bowen,” “Premier,” “Pioneer,” and “Faugh-a-Ballagh.” The first three were appropriate and understandable, but Faugh-a-Ballagh needs explaining. The literal meaning of this Irish name appears to be “Get out of the way or else fight!”—an appropriate enough name for a locomotive whose weight and power would imbue it with a bullying attitude!
The locomotive, "Lady Bowen," which is believed to have hauled Queensland's first scheduled passenger train. The "Lady Bowen" is one of the original four Avonside locomotives brought to Queensland from England in 1864.

—Block by courtesy Queensland Railways.
FIRST OF THE QUARTETTE

"Faugh-a-Ballagh" was the first of the quartette to be put together. Another great day for Resident Engineer Hart was 11 January when he took Faugh-a-Ballagh on her trial run. A description of this trial—the first time that a locomotive had run in Queensland—could not be better given than in the words of an eye-witness. The editor of the "Queensland Times" of Ipswich saw fit to make the occasion the subject of an editorial the following day. It read as follows:

"We were quite unprepared for the event, for no intimation had been given that a trial was to be made. We found the engine, with a very long passenger carriage (known as the "composite" from its containing compartments for two classes of passengers) and a goods truck, plying up and down that portion of the line which extends from the Ipswich terminus to Wide Gully, beyond which place further progress was impossible in consequence of the bridge there not having yet received its iron girders. The train travelled not only along the line proper but up and down the very steep branch rail which leads from the sheds down to the wharf. The gradient on this branch is one in twenty-five—that is twice as steep as any gradient on any portion of the line proper. It also contains a curve of five-chain radius. There was a considerable number of passengers and the goods truck was heavily loaded. Mr. Hart, Resident Engineer, was in charge, and drove the engine. The motion of the train was extremely even and pleasant, and the quick way the engine was stopped and started again in ascending and descending the steepest parts of the line certainly surprised us. The object sought was not speed, but to ascertain practically that the engine and line were in good working order, which was abundantly evident."

Summing up the event, the Editor says:

"The first start of the locomotive is like the vessel's launch. She is not indeed ready for sea, but she is afloat; all the slow preliminary processes have been got through, and she is at length a thing of life."

A fitting tribute to our first locomotive!

The other three locomotives were soon assembled and put to work hauling ballast and construction material.

To suit the light construction of the track, they were of necessity small locomotives, weighing as little as 22 tons in working order. A large spark-arrester was fitted to each chimney to prevent any danger of bushfires arising from the
use of wood fuel. An open-sided cab partly protected by small side-plates, and a large overhanging roof supported by four stanchions, provided the only protection for crews.

THE OPENING DAY

It was a great day for these little engines and their crews on opening day. Engines and carriages were gaily decorated with laurels and newly made flags in which red, white, and blue were arranged in every variety of combination possible. The first train was hauled by “Pioneer,” with W. Brown as engineman, Harry Holmes, fireman, and W. Neverson, guard. It was a great day for them too. This train conveyed the Ipswich Band, and seven mechanics to deal with any breakdowns that might occur. This train left at 10.5 a.m. Twenty minutes later, the second train, loaded with excursionists, followed, hauled by locomotive “Premier” driven by J. Kenna, Fireman Hough, and G. Moore as guard. The third train left at 10.45 a.m. with “Faugh-a-Ballagh” at the head; J. Smith, engineman; J. Whitehouse, fireman; and J. Bailey, guard.

The passengers on these three trains were at Bigges’ Camp to welcome the arrival of the Vice-Regal party’s train, proudly piloted by “Lady Bowen,” with R. Lawson at the throttle, J. S. Welch firing and G. Robinson as guard. This train had left Ipswich Station at 10.45 a.m. The time of the journey from Ipswich to Bigges’ Camp was one hour 35 minutes. With the introduction of the first public timetable following the opening of the line, the time scheduled for the journey was one hour 15 minutes each way, with one intermediate station at Walloon, 7½ miles from Ipswich. At the suggestion of Sir George Bowen, the name Bigges’ Camp (named after a Frederick Bigges who is reputed to have camped at the site in 1842) was changed to Grandchester.

Many of us expect to be at Grandchester for the Centenary celebrations. Let it be a great day for us as we look back with pride at the growth of the oak tree over the past 100 years—a tree that is now showing its age, but which has justified the faith and hopes of those who were at Bigges’ Camp on that opening day of 31 July 1865.