

## Pinelands Tramway, Widgee Creek

### *Location*

The sawmill site lies beside the former through road along Widgee Creek linking Hillview and Darlington. GPS 28 min 15 min 21 sec S 153 deg 3 min 30 sec E. The tramline extended up Widgee Creek, reportedly for five miles from the mill into the border ranges. The recommended site is a tramway cutting. GPS 28 deg 15 min 40 sec S 153 deg 3 min 41 sec E.

### *Recommended Heritage Boundaries*

The recommended heritage site is the rock cutting and the boundaries recommended extend eight metres either side and beyond each end of the cutting so that the cutting is visible in context. Further study might result in a longer tramway route being positively identified.

### *History*

Around the ridge from Darlington, Campbells established a sawmill on Widgee Creek by 1904.<sup>1</sup> They referred to it as Widgee. The school established there was, however, known as Readville and operated from 1904 to 1912, which probably indicates the life of the sawmill. Locally the mill was known as Pinelands. The logs, felled near the border ranges, were hauled by bullock teams to a tramline which reputedly ran for five miles, steadily descending by gravity, horses only being required to haul the empty trolleys back from the mill for loading. Sawn timber was hauled by horse team down the creek, and, after the Beaudesert Tramway was built, stacked at Hillview for loading.<sup>2</sup>

The remains were photographed and described by the current landowner as the mill site did not have the layout of a mill, more closely resembling a house. On the sawmill site itself, even in 1985, the residue was no more than foundations. The need to ensure that log trolleys would not stop short of the mill dictated a steadily graded line, and this would be the reason for construction of a deep cutting through rock, now full of lantana which prevented obtaining clear photographs. Rock cuttings of any kind were unusual on timber tramways and this one presumably required considerable explosives to blast it out. It is a permanent feature of a distinctive sawmilling enterprise. Further work may determine whether the tramway turntable near the mill has survived.

### *Site Description and Condition*

Only a few stumps remain on the hillside on the western side of Widgee Creek which the land-

owner told me was the site of the sawmill. The stumps suggest the site of a house. Closer to the creek are larger flatter areas. I did not locate a site which was clearly a sawmill site nor the turntable remains reproduced by photograph in the Darlington school reference. This publication indicates that only surface remnants are visible.

The rock cutting is filled with lantana growth and without clearing it was not possible to accurately measure or even adequately photograph the site. The cutting was up to three metres deep and ten metres long. Such cuttings through solid rock are unusual, especially on a timber tramway. The cutting would appear to have been essential for the tramway to act as a gravity one. It is possible that the tramway was originally built without this cutting on a higher level, closer to or on the present road but this is difficult to establish.

The tramway having been out of use for some 80 years, no remains of the formation were found. A more extensive study might be able to identify more of the formation and bridge sites.

### *Assessment of Significance*

Pinelands Mill was an isolated sawmill and community with its own school and an example of the independent bush sawmilling establishment. Virtually nothing of this remains.

The tramway was an important component in the viability of the operation, bringing logs for several miles to the mill. Tramways operated by gravity over long distances were rare and the cutting was a substantial work to make this possible. It demonstrates a dedication to this solution, although not technically creative. Rock cuttings are rare on timber tramways in Queensland. This is surviving evidence of the comparative small number of tramways built in Queensland to serve sawmills. (Criterion b)

### *Recommendations*

Keeping the cutting clear of vegetation would assist in both the appreciation and preservation of this cutting. The lantana is presumed to be growing in soil washed into the cutting since it fell out of use as a tramway. Suitable signage would provide an interpretation of what appears to be a curious isolated enduring remnant of former enterprise.

### *References*

1. School File, Z311, QSA.
2. *Pictorial History of the Upper Albert River*, pp. 14, 17, 18.

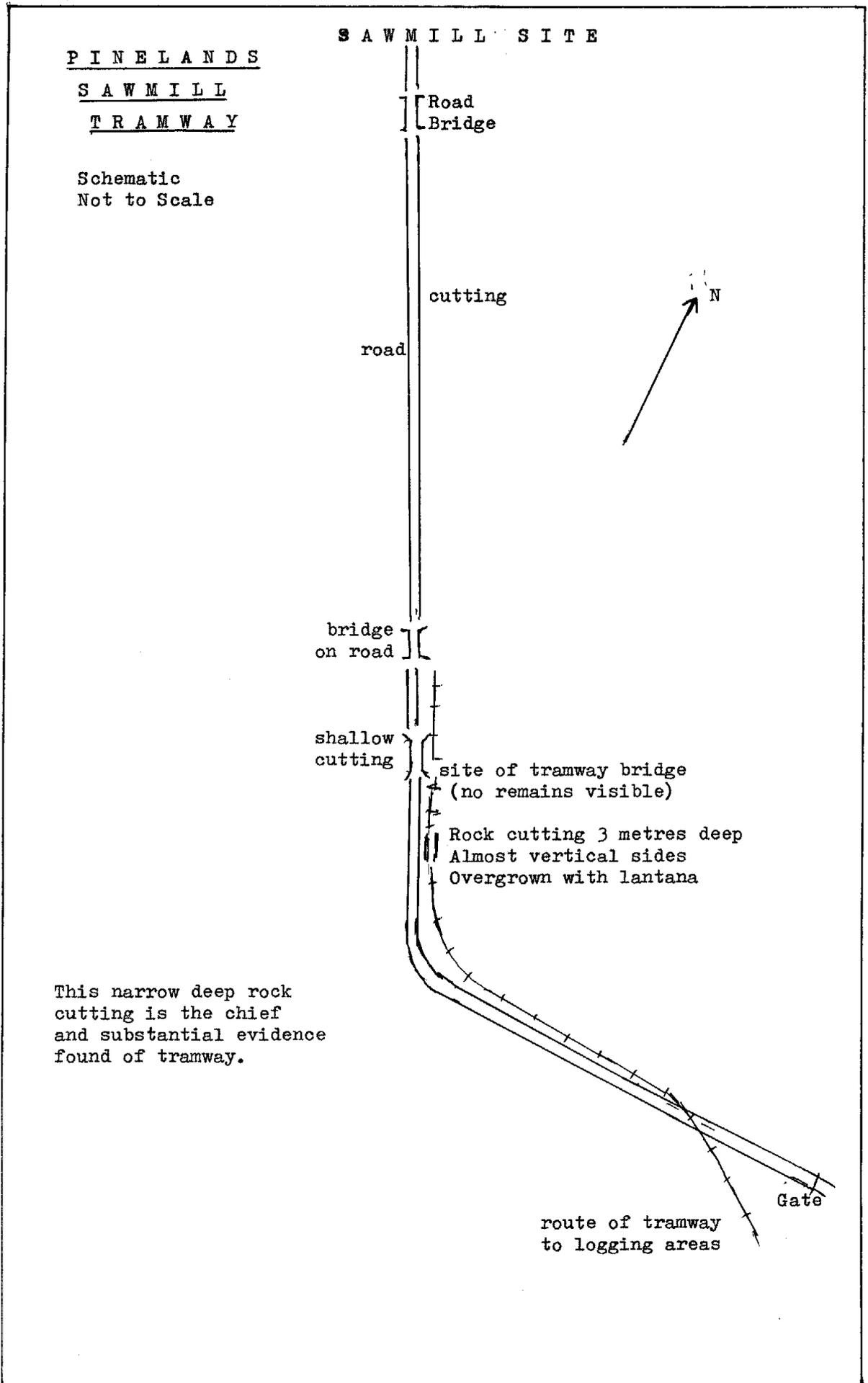
## Pinelands Sawmill and Tramline, Upper Widgee Creek



Narrow deep rock cutting on tramway, heavily overgrown obscuring rock slides



Stumps of building, part of area of sawmill site



This narrow deep rock cutting is the chief and substantial evidence found of tramway.

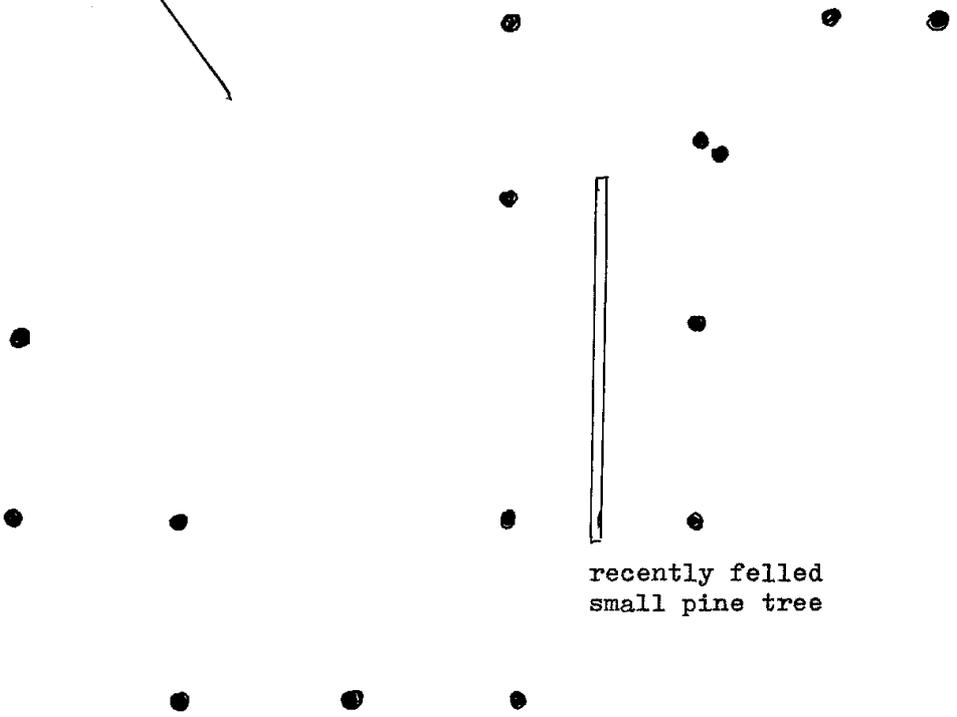
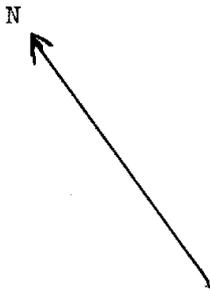
P I N E L A N D S   S A W M I L L  
UPPER WIDGEE CREEK DISTRICT

Remains in area stated by property owner to be sawmill site. Appears to be site of building, possibly a house.

Remaining posts, 300-500 mm above ground level. Sloping ground.

Scale 1:100

↑  
to roadway  
(more level area across road devoid of buildings and much vegetation may be sawmill site proper)



recently felled  
small pine tree

## Queen Mary Falls Sawmill

### *Location*

The sawmill is located on the southern side of the Killarney-Boonah road just east of the kiosk and turnoff into the carpark for Queen Mary Falls. GPS Latitude 28 deg 17 min S, 152 deg 26 min E.

### *Recommended Heritage Boundaries*

Recommended boundaries extend five metres in each direction from the outer perimeter of the sawmill shed and associated portable boiler.

### *History*

Sam Smith operated a case mill opposite the short road into Queen Mary Falls, just on The Head side of the kiosk and houses near the Falls. It was powered by portable steam boiler. Although electricity has been connected, possibly since it effectively closed, the portable steam boiler remains in situ and the sawmill, although small, is complete and comparatively well preserved.<sup>1</sup>

### *Site Description and Condition*

This case mill was substantially in operating condition and unchanged layout when inspected. Electric power had been provided, chiefly to enable small scale use of the equipment but the portable boiler remained in situ and apparently intact, along with the belt drive pulleys and belting although not necessarily in operable condition. The benches, tramways and shed itself were essentially as the mill was in its operating days.

### *Assessment of Significance*

The Queen Mary Falls mill is a rare surviving example of a case mill complete with portable steam boiler and engine. It is both a rare example of an almost intact case mill and of an apparently intact portable steam boiler and engine in situ (Criterion b). It is also a typical example of the small family business case mill of which there were once hundred in south east Queensland (Criterion d).

### *Recommendations*

The mill exists because it is on private land close to the owners residence and under their care. The site has considerable potential as an intact site for its value in understanding aspects of the timber industry that have virtually disappeared. The owners need encouragement to retain the mill intact and resist possible offers to move or sell the

equipment. Its location near a major tourist attraction gives it potential to attract considerable visitor number but increase the need for protection from vandalism and theft.

### *References*

1. Kevin Ahearn, p. 19.

## Queen Mary Falls Sawmill



General View of sawmill shed from above (looking towards road)



General view of machinery inside mill and hanging saw blades

## Queen Mary Falls Sawmill



View of Portable Steam Boiler and engine used to power sawmill



View of old machinery stored to east of sawmill on sawmill property

