

Report on Site Visits

The sites visited were selected to provide a representative selection of the surviving remains of the thousand plus sawmills in the study area.

To a considerable degree, the selection was determined by what was known to have survived. Because of the paucity of remaining evidence at most sites, any reasonably intact site which was known of and permission granted or accessible, was a candidate for selection. Intact sites were generally important for the rarity as surviving examples of once common family operated sawmills, now rapidly disappearing.

Most of the sawmills in south east Queensland were not specially significant individually in terms of their role in history other than in the district in which they were located. Only a few were associated with particularly significant persons in a wider context, and although many showed technological adaptation, it was rare for a sawmill to be noted for its part in technological or scientific achievement.

Industrial sites are particularly difficult in that heritage studies and legislation have generally focussed on the remains of surviving sites of old technology. For sawmills, as for other areas of industrialisation, the existing mills are those which best preserve the technology. Those sawmills which have not been modernised, and so are most in danger of demise from economic forces, are those which might best be classified as significant and heritage-listed. Frequently the essence of the old technology would be lost if the plant were modernised and heritage listing that prevented such changes would have economic consequences without a reasonable assurance that if closure were thereby accelerated, there would be a reasonable assurance that the plant would remain intact, whether through lack of maintenance, theft or vandalism.

Rather than duplicate work already done, sites which have received considerable attention were omitted from the selection. Such exclusions and the reports and publications concerning them are:

Pettigrew's Sawmill, William Street, Brisbane

Elanda Point Sawmill and Tramway, Lake Cootharaba

Pettigrew's Cooloola Tramway

Mungar Sawmill and Tramway

Fraser Island Sawmill and Tramways

Munro's Hampton-Perseverance Tramway

I have also not included the steam-powered Gillam family's Grandchester Sawmill which is already listed on the National Estate Register. It is valued for its rarity as an small operating steam sawmill, kept in operation by family commitment and almost a tourist attraction.

The sites covered in this report then, provide a comprehensive sample of what is available. The sites selected may be classified as follows:

Working sawmills in operation:

Rayner's Mill, Mudgeeraba

Enright's Sawmill, Beaudesert

Taromeo Sawmill [not measured]

Closed sawmills with substantial remains of machinery:

Cossart's Mill, Dugandan

Queen Mary Falls Sawmill

Elgin Vale Sawmill

Tiaro Sawmills, Tiaro

Cypress Sawmill, Jim Fleming, Builyan

Closed sawmills with shed but little remaining machinery:

Mount Cougal National Park,

Curumbin Creek sawmill

Bartholomew Sawmill, Woombye

Brandon's Bellthorpe Sawmill

Hancock's Townson Sawmill

Straker's Mill, Cooran

John Doyle's Mill, Kandanga Creek

Summers and Zwisler Sawmill, Builyan

Closed sawmills with no shed remaining but ground evidence:

Burnett's Creek Sawmill

Emu Creek via Emu Vale

Glastonbury Sawmill, Greendale

Timber Corporation, Nanango

Eureka Sawmilling Company, Childers

Kalpowar Sawmill

PHOTO NOT FOUND

Remains of swamp bridging at Lake End of tramway to Cootharaba Sawmills, Nov. 1971

PHOTO NOT FOUND

Embankment largely overgrown with trees, part of Cootharaba Tramway

Major pioneering sawmills with only minor above ground evidence:

Albert Sawmill, Pechey
Pettigrew and Sims Sawmill, Dundathu
Waterview Sawmill, North Bundaberg

Sawmills with no evidence [1st mill]:
Pettigrew's Brisbane Mill

Tramways with substantial evidence of formation:

Bunya Mountains Tramway
Cressbrook Creek Tramway
Lahey's Canungra Tramway Tunnel
Mungar Tramway
Neranwood Sawmill and Tramway
Pinelands Mill/Tramway, Widgee Creek
Scrubby Creek Tramway, Mary Smokes

The following sites were not selected because of their inclusion in reports prepared under the Regional Forestry Agreement (RFA) process:

Campbellville (sawmill with minimal remains)
Cootharaba Tramway
Fraser Island Tramways (remains of formation)
Jimna tramway
McKenzie's Mill, Fraser Island (few remains)
Munro's Hampton-Perseverance Tramway

A selection of photographs has been interspersed with these preliminary pages.

In summary, there are few relatively intact closed sawmills and no near intact tramways.

The sawmill and tramway sites examined follow in alphabetical name order within Forestry District in alphabetical order (refer the contents page).

Pettigrew's William Street sawmill, the first in Queensland, has been included by request, although no site evidence was found. The site reports then follow.

In the **South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement process** the following have been entered in the Department of Environment database have been proposed for listing on the Register of the National Estate.

1. Canungra Tramway Complex
2. Mount Cougal Sawmill Complex
3. Neranwood Tramway
4. Cossart's Sawmill, Dugandan
5. Grandchester Sawmill
6. Pechey Complex (including)
 - Albert Sawmill (Pechey Sawmill)
 - Munro's Argyle Sawmill
 - Palm Tree Sawmill Site
 - A. & D. Munro's Tramway
7. Bunya Mountains Timber Complex (including)
 - Newbound Collingwood Sawmill Site
 - Denning's Sawmill Site
 - Great Bunya Sawmill Site
 - McKenzie Sawmill Site
 - Sawmill Site - West Barker
 - Andersen's Tramway
 - Wengenville Sawmill & Township
8. Yarraman Tramway Complex
9. Cressbrook Tramway
10. Brandon's Sawmill Site, Bellthorpe
11. Campbellville Sawmill Complex
12. Elgin Vale Sawmill
13. Jimna Township Site (including)
 - Jimna Sawmill Site
 - Jimna Tramway
14. Cooloola Tramway Complex
15. Fraser Island (including)
 - Wanggoolba Tramway
 - McKenzie's Tramway
 - Urang Tramway
16. Tiaro Sawmill, Tiaro
17. Mungar Tramway
18. Pettigrew & Sims Sawmill Site, Dundathu
19. Waterview Sawmill
20. Fleming's Sawmill, Builyan

PHOTO NOT FOUND

Cutting on Cooloola Tramway formation beyond Camp Milo, 1970

PHOTO NOT FOUND

Embankment beyond cutting above on Cooloola Tramway to Broutha Scrub, 1970

Pettigrew's William Street Sawmill, Brisbane

William Pettigrew established the first steam sawmill in Queensland. He expanded it and remained the major sawmilling entrepreneur in the colony for some 35 years. Pettigrew provided employment and training that assisted materially in the expansion of the timber industry.

The site of his sawmill in William Street was naturally examined for inclusion in the list of survey sites. **In the absence of identifiable remains of the sawmilling era, it was not recommended for heritage listing.** The site was examined by Ann Wallin and Associates in 1996-97 prior to rebuilding on the site.

Pettigrew arrived in Brisbane in January 1849. Securing employment as a surveyor, he gained an appreciation of the extent of the colony's timber resources and its need for a sawmill to replace the labour-intensive methods of hand sawing. It was "the first significant industry development in Brisbane".¹

After a disagreement with his employer, Dr Stephen Simpson, Pettigrew came to Brisbane on 3 January 1852 looking for land and within three weeks secured title to the site on the bank of the Brisbane River at the upstream corner of Margaret and William Streets. His father died a few months later but William was assisted financially by his brother Robert. The initial sawmill shed was 24 feet wide, 12 feet high and some 80 feet long. John Petrie's workers started pile driving in October. The building was completed in January 1853 when a well was dug to provide water for the boiler.

Pettigrew transcribed the entry on sawmills from Penny's Encyclopedia at Wolston House and he visited the Brisbane windmill and John Petrie on 29 December 1852 to help design the 40 feet masonry chimney. Construction of the chimney by Petrie did not begin until May.

Meanwhile, on 23 February 1853, Pettigrew sailed to Sydney, visiting sawmills there and studying at the Sydney School of Arts library. The boiler, engine, flywheel and sawmill machinery reached Sydney on 13 March and after arranging for its forwarding, Pettigrew returned to Brisbane on the *Palermo* with the machinery, arriving in Brisbane on 20 April.

Pettigrew made a drawing of the machinery arrangement ensuring that the boiler setting and erection of the machinery met his specifications. The flywheel was set in place on 7 June. The

furnace was coal fired. Pettigrew had arranged with bullock drivers to ensure that logs were felled, brought to the river and transported downstream to provide the raw material for the mill. Pettigrew also applied for selections of 1,150 and 1,040 acres at Moggill at ten shillings an acre, thus assuring a degree of control over timber supplies, a strategy which was followed by many of his successors.

After several days of testing the machinery, the first sawing took place on 28 June 1853. The first sale, on 14 July to John Petrie, comprised 304 feet of one inch boards and 108 feet of five-eighth inch boards.

Although a very successful enterprise, Pettigrew had many tribulations. The mill was burnt down within a year, by a pit sawyer afraid of losing his livelihood to the machine.

Pettigrew extended his operations substantially (see page 37 of the overview).

The William Street mill was most profitable in the 1850s and 1860s and rapidly expanded, the rebuilt mill being housed in 1869 in an "enormous shed of two storeys on the river bank" milling cedar, pine and hardwood and producing a variety of mouldings and other products. As well as the large circular saw, Pettigrew had by 1869 a "patent band saw" and planing machine and had a mill workforce of 60.² This mill was burnt down in 1874.³

The William Street mill was inundated in the 1893 flood and by 1898 Pettigrew was bankrupt, and died on 28 October 1906. Operations at William Street ended around the turn of the century. Its riverside location was no longer an important asset and as proposals to build a railway siding to the city wharves, floated since the 1870s, were abandoned with the construction of the Bulimba branch in 1897, Pettigrew's mill was at a disadvantage without a rail siding.

References

1. R.S. Kerr, *RHSQ Journal* XIV (Dec.1990) 177-9.
2. BC 16 October 1869 p. 5.
3. W.F. Morrison, Volume 2, unpagd.



Pettigrew's Sawmill in the centre viewed from a distance upstream during the 1893 flood