**Essays on Mount Crosby - The Train to Mount Crosby**

There was a time when you could catch a train from Mount Crosby to Southport - admittedly a couple of changes were needed - but some certainly did it. Among them was James Brown, who ran a shop at Mount Crosby selling goods to workers engaged in local construction, and another at Southport managed by his wife. Interesting arrangement.

Convenient as that may have been for James, he wasn't the reason for the train. No, the train was all about coal for the pumping station and the awkward distance from the nearest supplies.

Whereas there was coal at Moggill, it was a difficult road and an impossible river journey to get it from the mine to Mount Crosby. This favoured the alternative Tivoli coalfields, but even they were distant and on the wrong side of the river. From the beginning, the haulage of coal was a big part of the cost and the Board sought ways to be more efficient, even building the first bridge near the pumping station (1894) to shorten the distance.

A train from Mount Crosby to Brisbane via Brookfield had been suggested as early as 1872, but by 1912 no-one seriously thought the government was going to build one. The Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board, however, had just succeeded the Brisbane Board of Waterworks and they looked favourably toward projects that could show their capability (their new duty of sewering the city had not yet broken them - as it later would). They looked at the Mount Crosby coal transport problem with interest, and formulated an idea to build an aerial ropeway from Tivoli to the pumping station. Regrettably, because I would have liked to have seen that, they never built it, but instead opted to build a tramway on the same route using a combination of contractors and day labour.

In November 1912, the Governor in Council (within government) approved the Board's plans and a Bill providing for the tramway was passed through Parliament.

Though it occasionally took children back to boarding school or into town with their bicycles (my friends have told me of both), and many times it carried heavy goods to town, it was really all about coal and never a commuter service (unless by some happenstance the train was leaving at the right time). After the Second World War it was clear that the pumping station would soon be electrified and that motorised transport could carry coal for the remaining years of steam. By 1947, the line was essentially unused, and in 1948 it was ripped up for scrap.

And that might seem like the end for the old railway, but actually it didn't die quite so quickly. Through the second half of the century hundreds of scouts marched from Allawah along it, new steel water pipes were laid upon it, and I spent many of the happiest days of my life walking it and imagining (often incorrectly) what it must have been like.

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