

## Railway Blog - Australia 1: Tasmania

There will be many more photos than I can use in the report and these will appear in [the Flickr Album](#). There will also be a brief Mainland Australia blog focussing on Puffing Billy. I plan to include non-railway items that may be of interest to a rail enthusiast.



Hobart Harbour has a formerly rail mounted steam crane from [Jessop & Appleby of Leicester](#). This crane is preserved at the main yacht harbour where the Sydney - Hobart boat race yachts were berthed.



We visited the [Coal Mines Historic Site](#) on the Tasman Peninsular south east of Hobart. There was a tramway and incline here.

En route, we passed through Taranna in both directions and there is a small outdoor museum with steam and rail items here. We visited after it had closed so the views are through the gate. It's almost opposite the Tasmanian Devil Unzoo which is well signed.



We drove down to the South Cape area south west of Hobart and stayed in Southport for 2 nights and rode the Ida Bay Railway. On our way, at Franklin, there is a steam ferry Cartela berthed. This view is of the stern and clearly the

ferry could steam in both directions.



[Click here for more on the Cartella.](#)

We also did a walk to [Duckhole Lake](#) in an area that had been logged and there was evidence of former tramways. One item we saw two of in the bush also appears in an illustration of traditional logging. Does anyone know how these heavy iron plates rounded at one end with a hole at that end seen in both the photos and the drawing was used?



[Southport](#) the last major settlement heading south also had a logging tram and various items can be seen in the fields between the caravan and camping site and the harbour.



Loco-type boiler



Another half buried on its side



Vertical boiler



3ft 6in axle and wheels

### **Ida Bay Railway**

My main reason for visiting the area was to travel on the Ida Bay Railway:

<http://www.idabayrailway.com.au>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ida\\_Bay\\_Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ida_Bay_Railway)

This 2ft/600mm line once carried limestone to the port and when the port silted up, the line was extended further. The current operation uses one Malcolm Moore loco on a passenger train 4 times a day with a run-round loop for the whole train at both end. The railway leaves the road immediately and access along the line is most likely only by boat. There were boats at the end of the line from Southport which was just across the bay. On return to Southport, we were able to spot a train arriving at the eastern end once we knew where to look. This was the only train ride we had in Tasmania having rejected the West Coast Wilderness Abt Line as just too expensive.





En route - at Dover - is a sign for a Steam Museum but this is reported to be long closed.



We did a walk to the most southerly point of Australia [South Cape Bay](#) and near the start of the walk is the concrete base and the flywheel of a large stationary engine used in a sawmill. See also [this overview](#) of logging in the area.



We then drove to Queenstown in the west. This is the eastern terminus of the current West Coast Wilderness Railway (formerly the Mount Lyell Railway).

### **Mount Lyell Mining & Railway Company**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount\\_Lyell\\_Mining\\_and\\_Railway\\_Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Lyell_Mining_and_Railway_Company)

Queenstown also once known as Copperopolis was at the centre of the mining operations.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queenstown,\\_Tasmania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queenstown,_Tasmania)

West Coast Wilderness Railway

<http://www.wcwr.com.au>

The eastern terminus is in Queenstown with the western terminus in Strahan at Regatta Point.

We had already decided that \$160 - \$225\* full line return and the more-normal half day \$100 - \$165\* return to Dubbil Barril from either end was outside our budget (the lower prices representing £80 and £40 compared with a major UK preserved line charging around £20 to ride as many trains as you like for the day at a gala event and probably more like other rack railway prices although the Snowdon Mountain Railway is only £29 return for adults) so I concentrated on filming the train at both ends. The departure from Strahan can be chased for several kms along the bay from near the Regatta Point until the dirt road ends at Rowana.

\* the higher price gets you a reserved seat in the balcony carriage with food and drink along the way. The basic price gets you an unreserved seat.



Perhaps because it charges so much for a ride, the railway is very keen to deter enthusiasts from trying to access the line especially to see a loco working a train on the rack. This is an interesting line that is targeting tourists rather than enthusiasts and is not accessible to lineside photographers apart from at both termini.



Probably the best way to cover it would be to join an occasional enthusiasts charter if run pasts are included.

Two [Dübs 0-4-2RT](#) steam locos were in use - one from each end with the spare loco at Queenstown. The workshops at at Queenstown so the Strahan loco can work through with a change of train loco at Dubbil Barril where trains meet up. A diesel can also be used on the Regatta Point - Dubbil Barril section but not

on the rack section above Dubbil Barril.



### **North Mount Lyell Railway**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North\\_Mount\\_Lyell\\_Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Mount_Lyell_Railway)

Our major reason to stay in Queenstown was to [walk the former railway track to Kelly Basin](#). This railway was built in competition with the Mount Lyell Mining & Railway Company by a company director who fell out with the managing director. It tapped its own copper ore from an area behind Queenstown and survived only as long as the owner did. On his death, the company collapsed, the two companies were combined and the line closed allowing the area to return to wilderness with a few trappings of the old industrial set up.

To get to the start of the walk, you are advised that a 4-wheel drive vehicle is required. If you don't have one, you face an additional 5 km walk each way to the start along the 4WD track (also on the old railway trackbed). We did this (getting a lift part-way back) but the local young woman who gave us the lift had sensibly rung up the Parks & Wildlife Service and found out that the notice was mainly to deter too many tourists trying to drive the single-track road to the start of the walk. Certainly the track was fine for normal road vehicles but two 2WD vehicles trying to pass on the single track road could have resulted in one of them getting stuck in the mud beside the road.



*North Mount Lyell Railway Avonside 4-6-0 No. 1 "J. Crotty" at Kelly Basin, circa 1900*



*Cutting on the walk*



*Boiler at East Pillinger (one of 2 there)*



*The largest surviving trestle near the start of the hike*

At Strahan, there is a [Grafton Cranes](#) (from Bedford my home town) steam crane identified as No. 387 relocated from Teepookana where there was a short lived port on the Strahan - Queenstown Mount Lyell Railway.



While staying in Queenstown, we also did another [old tramway hike to Montezuma Falls](#), this time along the [North East Dundas Tramway](#) which was built to serve the [Hercules Mine](#). Near the start of the walk, a turn off for lunch revealed an [excellent incline](#).



*Photo in the Zeehan Museum*

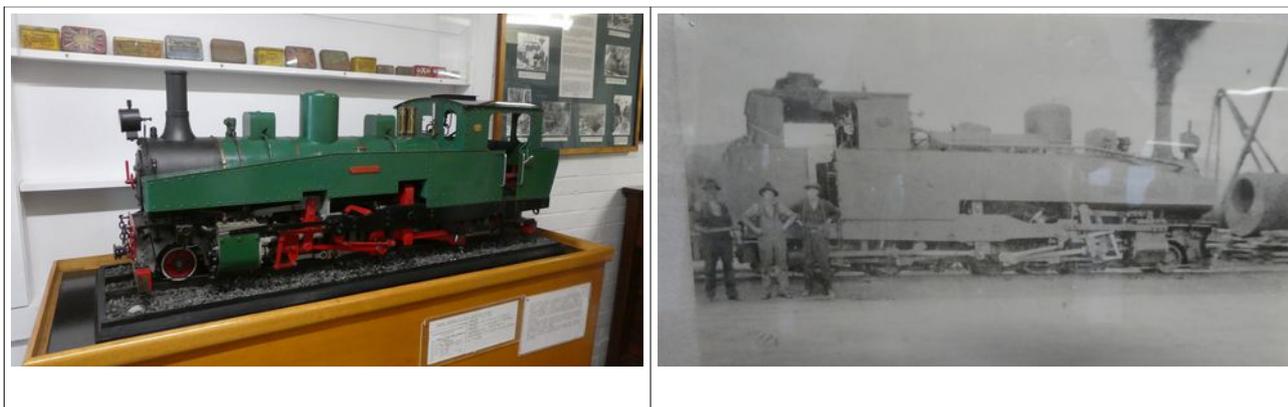
We visited the excellent [West Coast Heritage Centre Museum in Zeehan](#) which has photos and relics from the railways and mines in the greater West Coast area. Of particular note were:

[Emu Bay Railway](#) loco

See also [Melba Line](#)



Model of the Hagan 2-6-4-0T [North East Dundas Tramway](#) articulated loco



We dropped in at the [Wee Georgie Wood Steam Railway](#) on our way to Deloraine. The short 2ft/600mm line operates for tourists but is based on a former feeder railway for the Emu Bay Railway. See also:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wee\\_Georgie\\_Wood\\_Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wee_Georgie_Wood_Railway)

The line's two working locos are shown below.



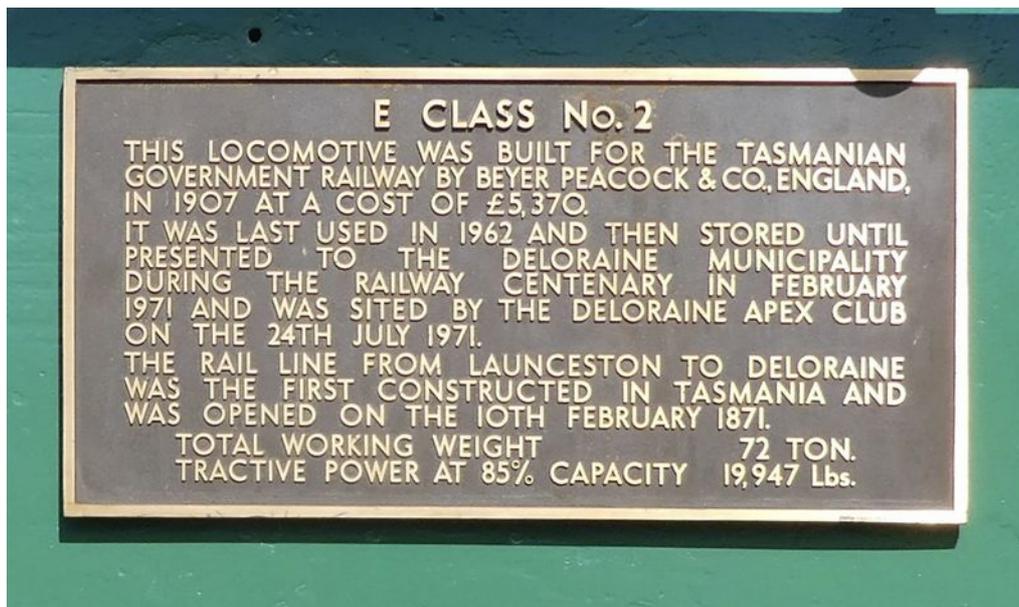
*Wee Georgie Wood*



*Italian Romeo diesel*

We came into contact with the surviving Tasmanian railway at Deloraine and heard one train overnight from our accommodation. Down by the river in town there is an attractive railway bridge, water tower in place at the former station and a loco plinthed.





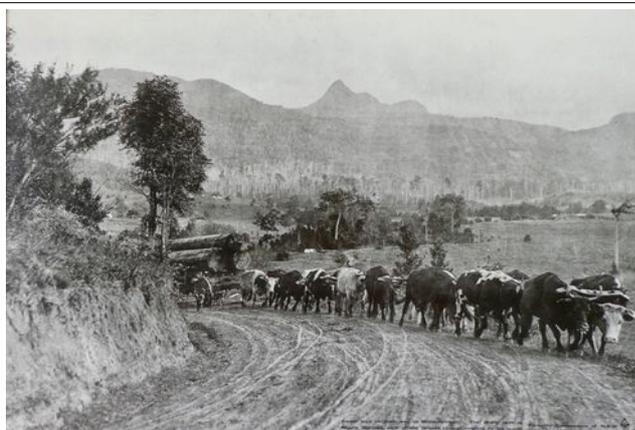
Our hotel in Deloraine had old posters of logging but using road trains to haul the logs. I assume there were also some tramways in the area.

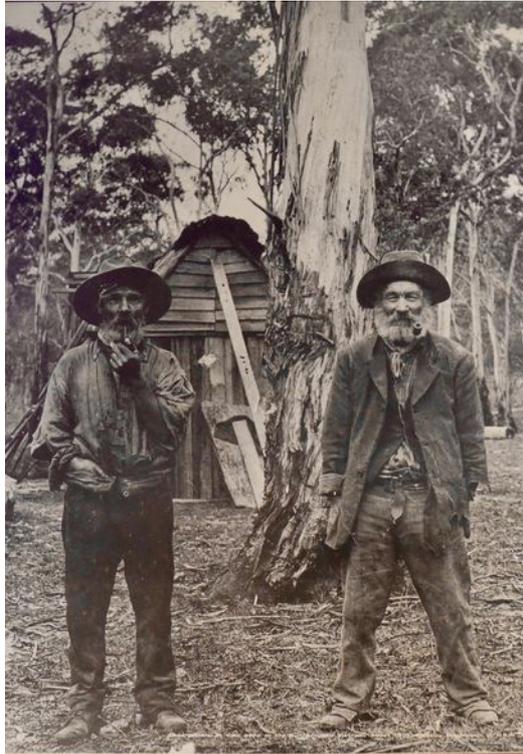


*Logging method*



*Stump of tree logged using this method*





[Pearn's Steam World](#) is between Deloraine and Launceston on the old highway.

Neither of the Launceston tram lines were working:

[Launceston Tramway Museum](#)  
[Penny Royal](#)

but we took a quick look at the remains of the railway workshops now turned into a museum and the Don River workshops behind the [Queen Victoria Museum](#) but didn't go to see the main railway exhibits inside the museum.

Much as in Kyoto, Japan, the first HEP station in Launceston up the Gorge powered the first city trams here.



The rail line from Launceston towards Scottsdale sees no trains and the road-rail crossings are marked as the railway not in use. This line then becomes a bike trail called the [North East Rail Trail](#) from Scottsdale, 62 km north east of Launceston to Tulendeena.

Bicheno once had a house drawn coal tram. The remains (apart from a Bicheno street name) are apparently inside a wildlife centre:

*In the late 1840s, coal was discovered to the north of town and in 1849 the Douglas River Coal Company started operating here. Convict labour was used to build a tramway for transporting the coal to the harbour, which was expanded in 1854. At East Coast Natureworld 7 km north of town you can still see the remains of the coal mines. This is a good place to see Tasmanian wildlife, including Tasmanian devils.*

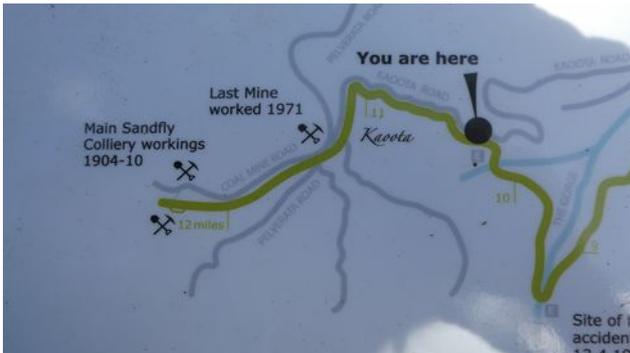
*(<http://greataustraliansecret.com/tasmania/east-coast-tasmania/bicheno/>)*

Once back in Kingston, we walked several sections of the Sandfly Colliery Tramway/Kaoota Tramway track with Wilson.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandfly\\_Colliery\\_Tramway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandfly_Colliery_Tramway)

and

<https://www.greaterhobarttrails.com.au/track/kaoota-tramway/>



We also went to see the Margate Train which functions as a shopping centre with local beer and ice cream as well.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margate\\_Train](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margate_Train)



There were several preservation schemes in Tasmania that we didn't visit. You can find out more about those here:

<http://www.greatrailexperiencetasmania.com.au>

A current posting on that webpage says that the Ida Bay Railway (see above) is for sale.

**John Raby**  
**6 February 2017**