

The Saga of 'Sandfly' and the Lost Tribe

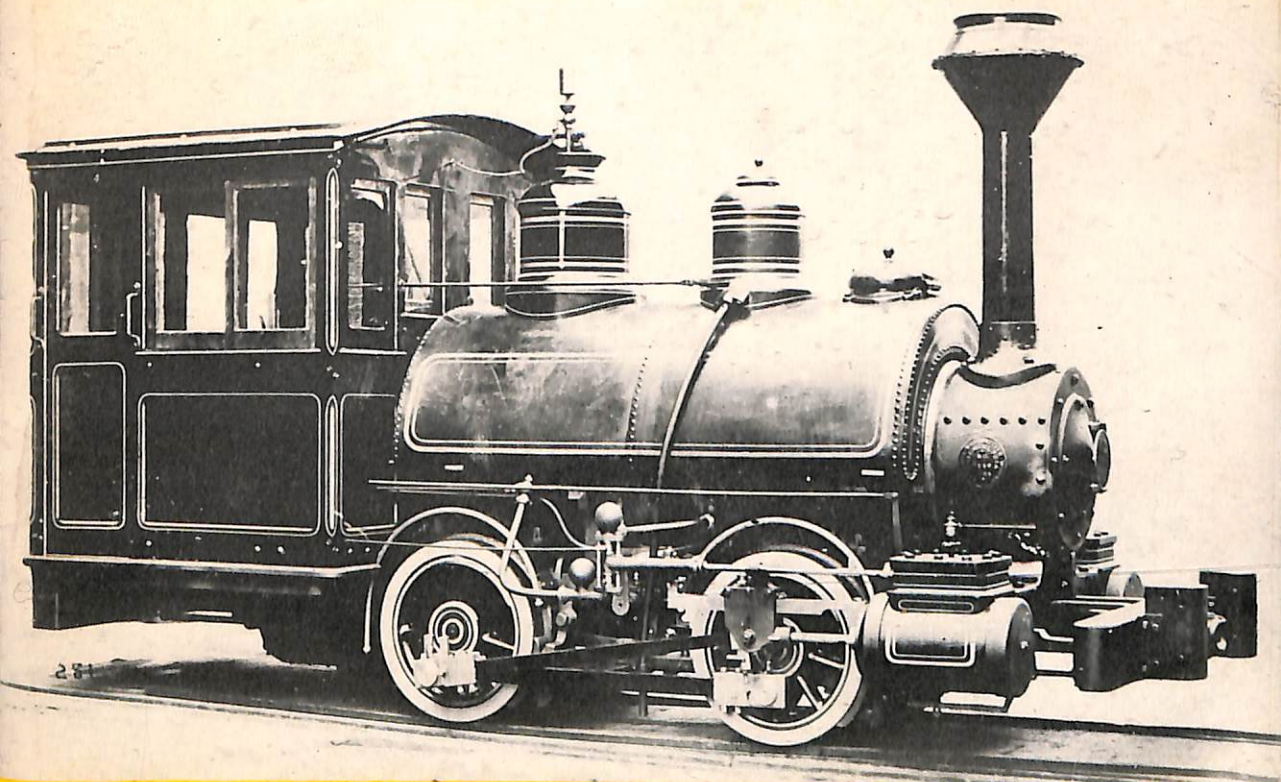
Baldwin-built 0-4-0 Saddle Tanks on 3'6" Gauge

By John L. Buckland

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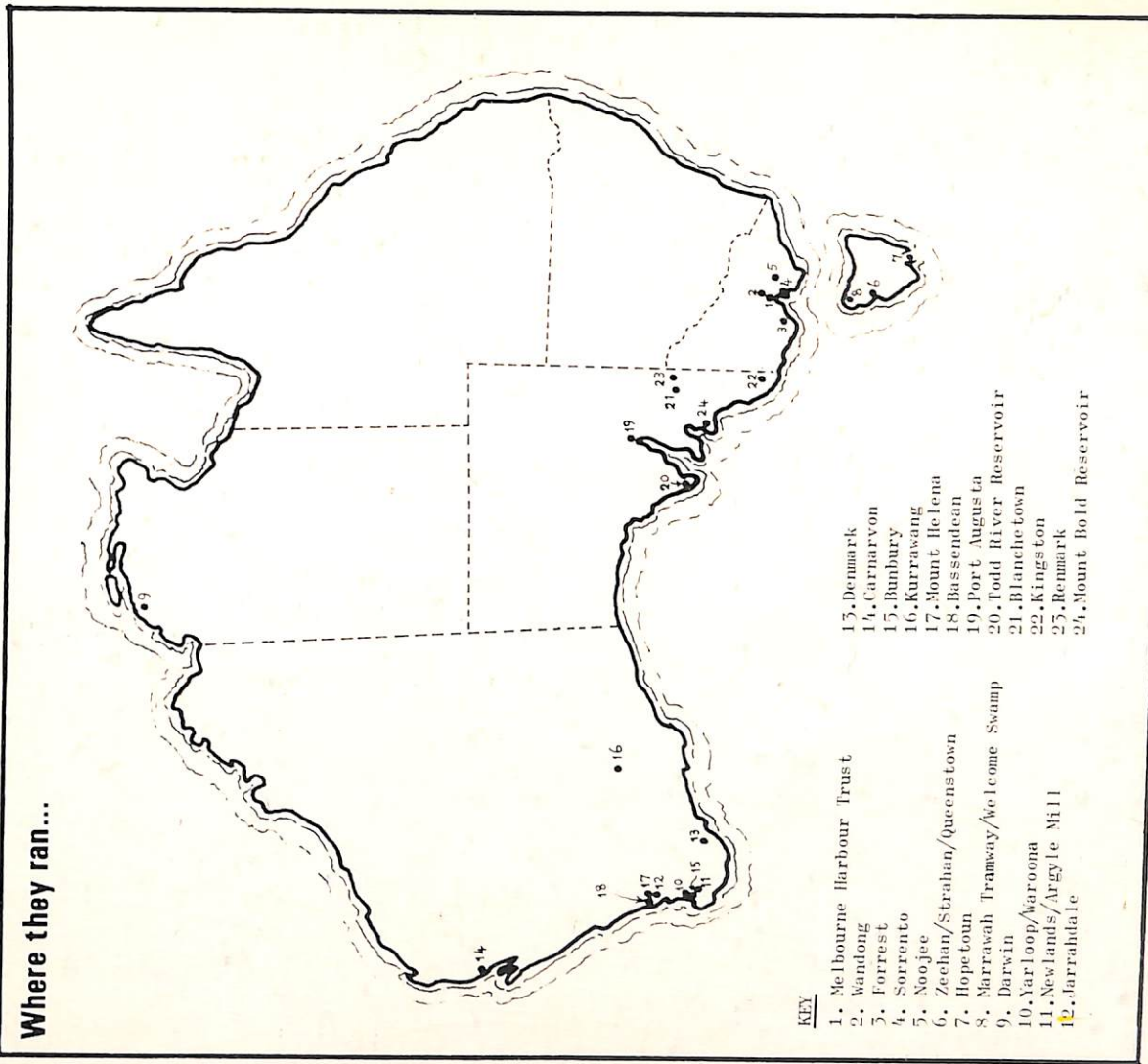
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Front Cover:
Official Baldwin builder's photograph of B/No. 7556 (Class 4-10½C28) as delivered to Newell & Co in 1885.
Photo: Courtesy G.M. Best

Right:
Sandfly in prewar days shunting the yard/wharf at Darwin, North Australia Railway.
Photo: O. Endacott

Where they ran...



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Deloraine Tramway after conversion to 3ft 6in gauge). The Baldwin can be identified in an illustration in the Tasmanian Archives showing scenes during the construction of the Strahan - Zeehan line, one of which is of a Baldwin 0-4-OST on a ballast train, the engine cab of which has a large numeral '1' painted on its side, but significantly the smokebox door number plate is bereft of any number, which raises the question as to whether in fact M.H.T. Nos. 1 and 2 were so adorned, although they were certainly so lettered on their saddle tanks on arrival.

Be that as it may, subsequent events prove quite conclusively that *Carbine* in this instance was in fact Baldwin B/No. 7108, which after the construction work was completed was left at Zeehan from 1892 until in November, 1894 it was employed by Garnsworthy and Smith, contractors for the Teepookana - Dubbil Barrel section of the Mt. Lyell Railway, as indicated in a report in the *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* of February, 1895. This stated:

At Teepookana, the contractors are pushing along with the works and the wharf is well nigh

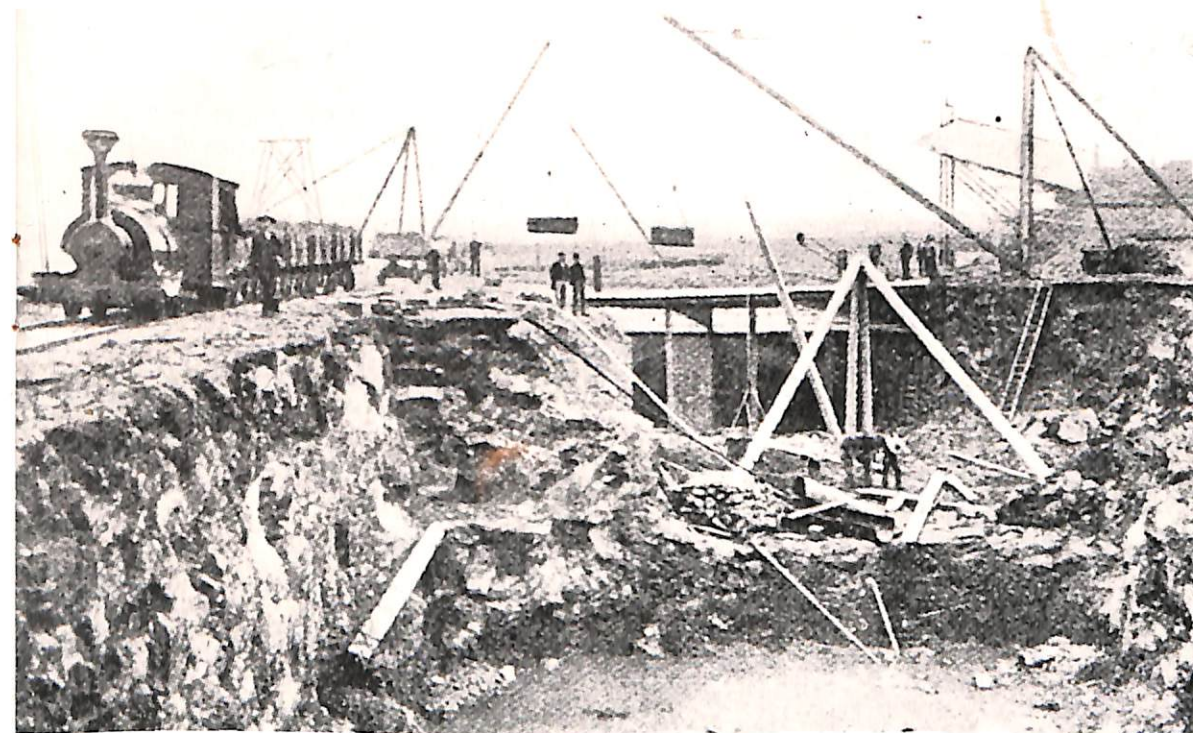
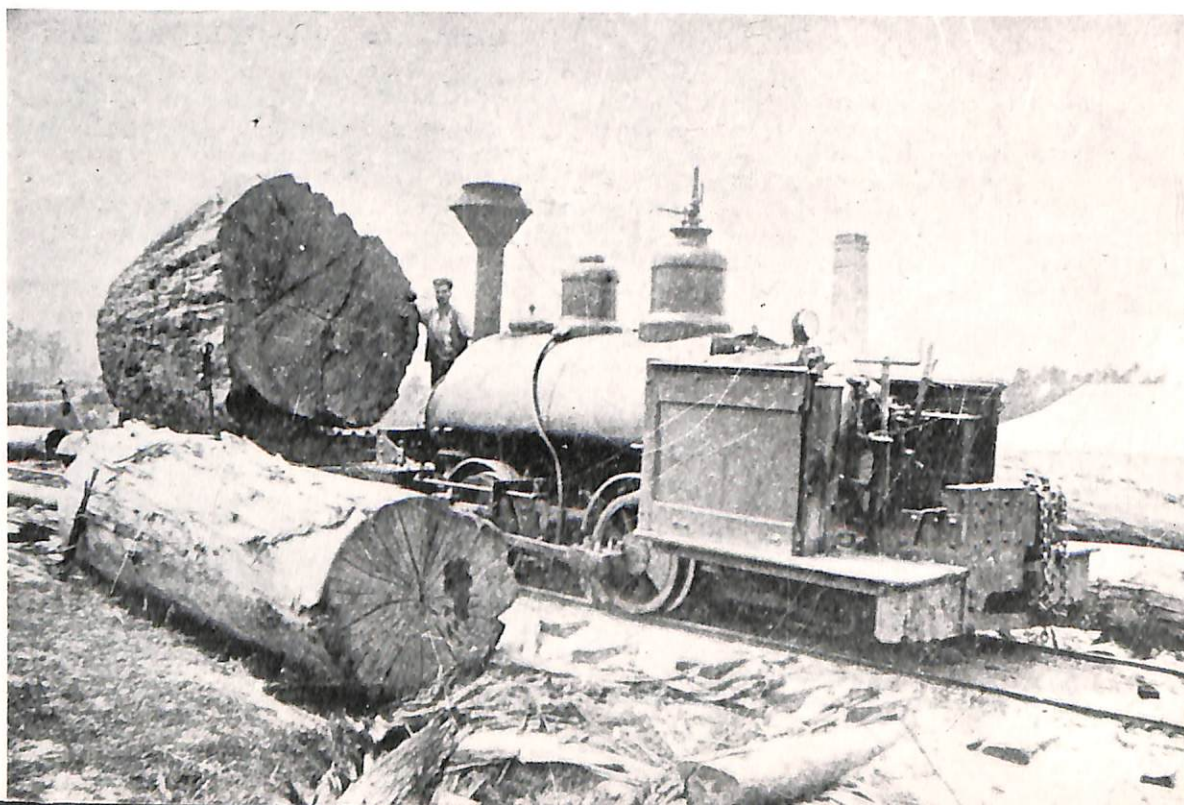
completed, with the ballast engine running upon the first section. When the ballast engine for the Dundas line arrived at Strahan, some was painted the name of the Melbourne Cup winner, 'Malvolio' upon it which name it bears to this day and 'Your Own' (the correspondent) would suggest christening this one after the Hobart Cup winner, 'Music'

On completion of the work on the Mt. Lyell railway construction in December, 1895 *Malvolio* (i.e. B/No. 7108) remained there (Queenstown) until it was purchased by the T.G.R. in the following year and it was returned to Zeehan where it worked until 1902 as 'Baldwin' on the T.G.R. locomotive register⁸ when sold to the Tasmanian Hardwood Timber Co. for use at Hopetoun, near Dover, in southern Tasmania. The Hopetoun operation became part of Millar's Timber & Trading Co. through the latter's take-over of the Huon Timber Co. in 1925. There is a well authenticated picture of this Baldwin, minus the top half of its cab, working at Hopetoun reputedly in 1902.

In LR 52 David Beck reported that B/No. 7108

Formerly T.G.R. *Baldwin* (B/No. 7108 of 1884) sold to Tasmanian Hardwood Timber Co. in 1902 for use at Hopetoun, southern Tasmania circa 1914, by which time it had shed the top half of its cab.

Photo: J.L. Buckland Collection



Excavation in progress for construction of the Spotswood Pumping Station on the west bank of the Yarra River circa 1893 showing unidentified Baldwin 0-4-OST (left) possibly B/No. 7108 or 7556 and right background, the shadowy outline of 4-4-OT broad gauge Stephenson B/No. 1987 of 1870 ex Launceston & Western Railway, Tasmania, No. 4, in use as a stationary engine driving a rock crusher.

Photo: J.L. Buckland Collection

appeared on the Blackman Bay Tramway, on the Forestier Peninsula of Tasmania's east coast about 1922 after having been reboilered by Cowley (Cowley's Eureka Ironworks, Ballarat, Victoria?) in 1913. The replacement boiler lasted until 1963, but the frame and wheels were converted to internal combustion power in the Smithton area, post 1958 and ended up abandoned at Welcome Swamp where they may still lie rusting.

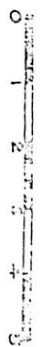
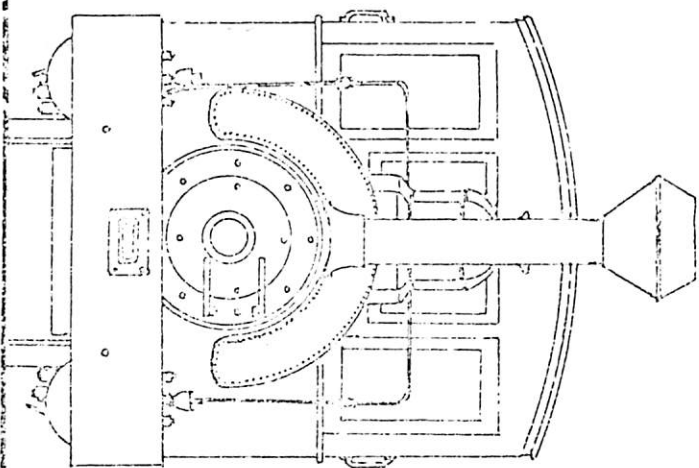
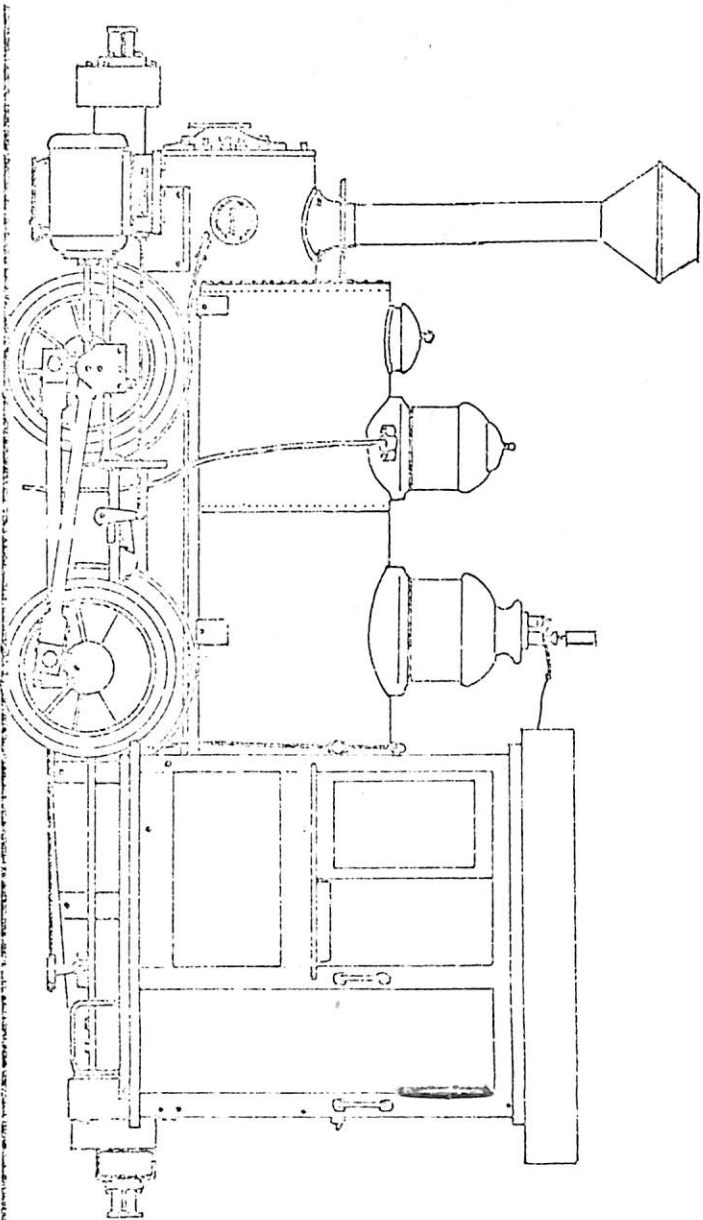
Meanwhile in Victoria . . .

Accepting that there were two different Baldwin 0-4-OSTs on Tasmania's West Coast, it may be assumed that on completion of the Zeehan-Dundas construction in 1892, *Carbine* (B/No. 7556) returned to Victoria and was employed by one of the contractors engaged in construction of the Spotswood pumping station for the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works Werribee Sewerage project between 1892-1896. This is proven by a somewhat indistinct photograph reproduced in an M.M.B.W. report on its sewerage project⁹ in which an unidentifiable Baldwin of 3ft 6in gauge can be

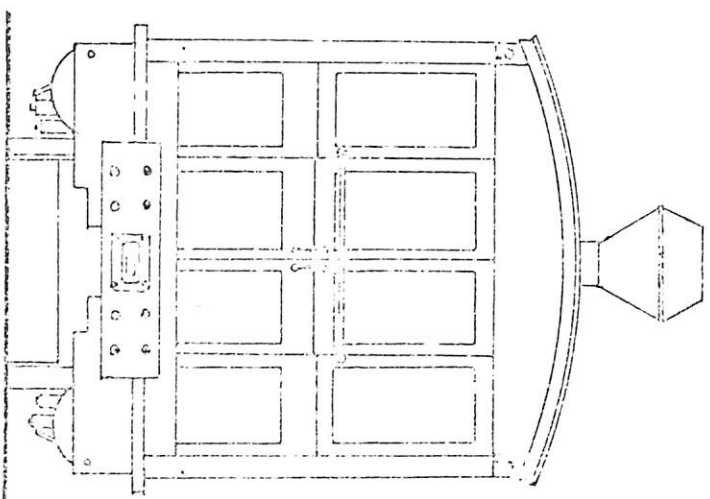
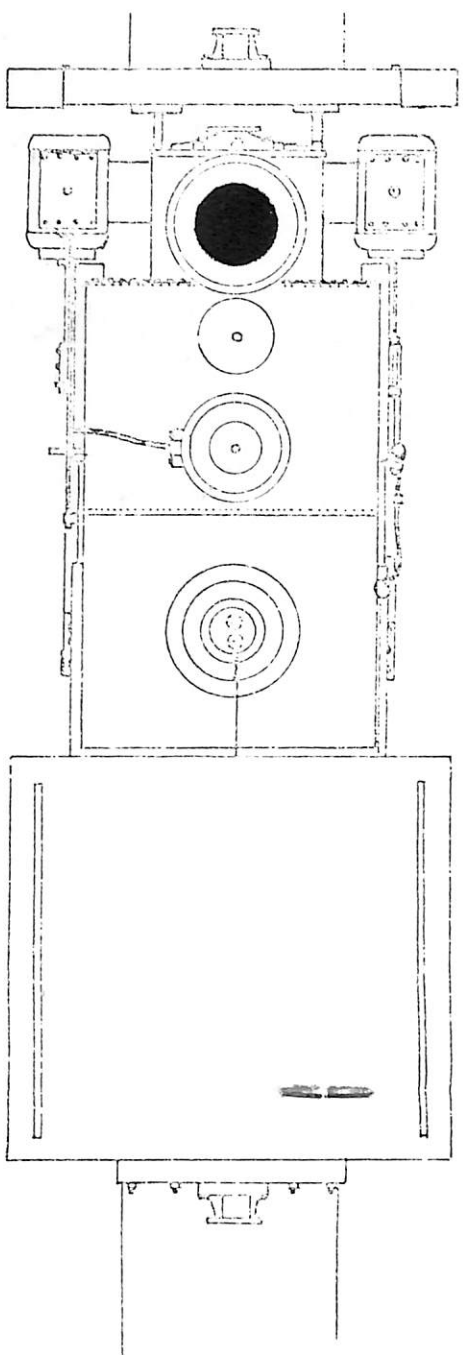
seen. And since B/No. 7556 is the only one of the class unaccounted for at this time, it may be assumed that this is it.

In the same photograph and in the background, by coincidence there is a 4-4-OT locomotive in use as a stationary engine driving a rock crusher on the Spotswood site. This latter has been identified as one of the four Stephenson broad-gauge engines of the former Launceston & Western Railway, Tasmania, displaced by conversion of the line to 3ft 6in gauge by the T.G.R. after 1888. This was T.G.R. A.2 (formerly Launceston & Western Railway No. 2) built by Robert Stephenson & Co. (B/No. 1915) in 1868.¹⁰

The precise history of B/No. 7556 thereafter is virtually impossible to determine; it could have been hired to the Sorrento Tramway between 1895 and 1897, for it is authenticated that they hired a third Baldwin. Subsequently it seems this was acquired by Sanderson's Tramway operating out of Forrest, in the Otway Ranges, where it was known either as *Black Angel* or possibly *Black Eagle* which would indicate its loss of the original green garb worn on delivery from America.



Baldwin 0-4-0ST 3ft 6in gauge locomotive



In August, 1914 B/No. 7556 was sold through the agency of Cameron & Sutherland, machinery merchants of Melbourne, to the Tasmanian Public Works Department, for use on their Marrawah Tramway, in north-western Tasmania. In the event, the engine arrived at Smithton in a delapidated condition, according to H. J. W. Stokes (LR 41) despite the allegation by the agents that it had not been in service for anything like its full life, nor during the protracted negotiations for its sale to the P.W.D. At Smithton it was known as *Fantail* - probably in eloquent testimony to its motion one surmises! - the details of which have previously been set out.

'Sandfly' in the Northern Territory

In August, 1883 after a long period of agitation by residents of Palmerston (Port Darwin) the Parliament of South Australia, based in far-distant Adelaide, authorised construction of a 3ft 6in gauge railway from Port Darwin southwards for 145 miles to Pine Creek. This was the northern segment of the South Australian plan for its proposed north-south transcontinental railway linking its Northern Territory with the capital, as evidenced by relentless construction northwards from Port Augusta of the Great Northern Railway. This had already reached Government Gums (Farina) in 1882 and was being extended towards Hergott Springs (Marree).

As the sum of £959,300 allocated for construction was insufficient to cover the cost of construction using white labour, contracts were let based on the use of Chinese labourers in May, 1886 to C. & E. Millar, railway contractors, who appointed one Teesdale Smith as on-site manager for the project. But after six months so little progress had been made in the way of construction that one of the principals, Mr Charles Millar, assumed personal supervision of the project from April, 1887.¹¹

He brought with him to Darwin a locomotive - 0-4-0ST Baldwin B/No. 7860 of 1886 which was supplied new by Newell & Co., Melbourne, and which had arrived from America late in 1886. From the time of its arrival at Darwin the little engine, which was complete with outsize oil headlamps fore and aft, was dubbed *Sandfly*, which like its diminutive namesake flitted to and fro in the course of performing all the shunting and marshalling of wagons to and from the wharf to land the construction material on delivery from the south. On completion of the contract in October, 1889 the South Australian Railways took formal possession of the line with its three locomotives, including

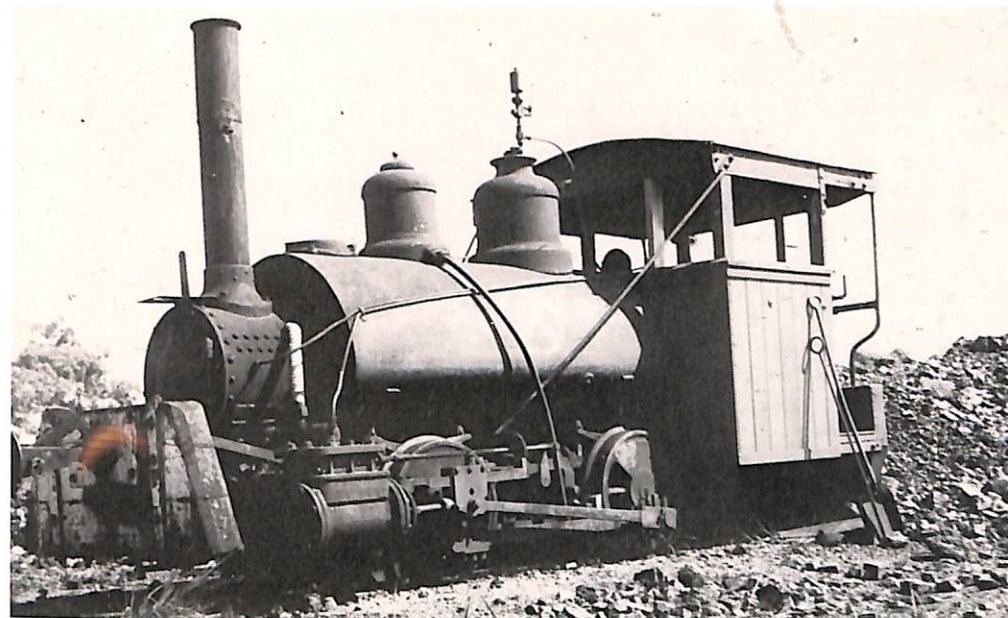
Sandfly which was allotted No. 107, without benefit of classification in the S.A.R. locomotives register.¹²

After January 1, 1911, when control of the Northern Territory was transferred from the State of South Australia to the Commonwealth of Australia, the railway, then known as the Palmerston - Pine Creek Railway, continued to be worked by S.A.R. on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, which ultimately assumed control of the line, together with its locomotives and rolling stock on July 1, 1918 on the formal establishment of the Commonwealth Railways administration. In the general stocktaking and reclassification of the physical assets of the railway which followed that event, the former S.A.R. No. 107 (still unofficially more widely known as *Sandfly*) was given pride of place with the No. 1 with the classification 'NA' in the C.R. register. However, so far as can be discerned neither number nor classification was ever physically bestowed on the engine.

Sandfly continued as yard, wharf and workshops shunter at Darwin right up until 1942-43, when it was temporarily set aside at Parap (Darwin) workshops prior to being transferred to the make-shift workshops established at Katherine, N.T., as a result of damage sustained at Darwin during the Japanese bombing raids. *Sandfly* which had been provided with a new boiler in 1917 was finally withdrawn from service and written off the books in June, 1950. But instead of being scrapped, as might have been expected, it was transferred south to the workshops at Port Augusta. There it was cleaned up, painted and finally installed on a short length of track on the station platform at Port Augusta. There *Sandfly* remains, an interesting if puzzling to the railway historian, link with the early days of the now-closed North Australia Railway, although it never had at any stage of its working life so far as is known, the remotest connection with Port Augusta!

The Sorrento Tramway Company

An illustrated article, by N.E. Wadson, on this short, but once busy passenger carrying line was published by the Australian Railway Historical Society in December, 1960.¹³ The Sorrento Tramway Company Ltd was formed by theatrical entrepreneur George Coppin, who owned property in the Sorrento area of the lower Mornington Peninsula. He also had interests in promotion of tourist development. The company opened its 1 mile 12 chains long double track 3ft 6in gauge line linking the Front (Bay) and Back (Ocean) beaches at



Sandfly set aside at the locomotive coal dump at Parap Workshops, Darwin, in October 1944.

Photo: J.L. Buckland

Sorrento, some 56 miles south of Melbourne during 1890. Except at weekends and on holidays, horses worked a single lightweight open cross-bench tramcar to provide the basic regular service.

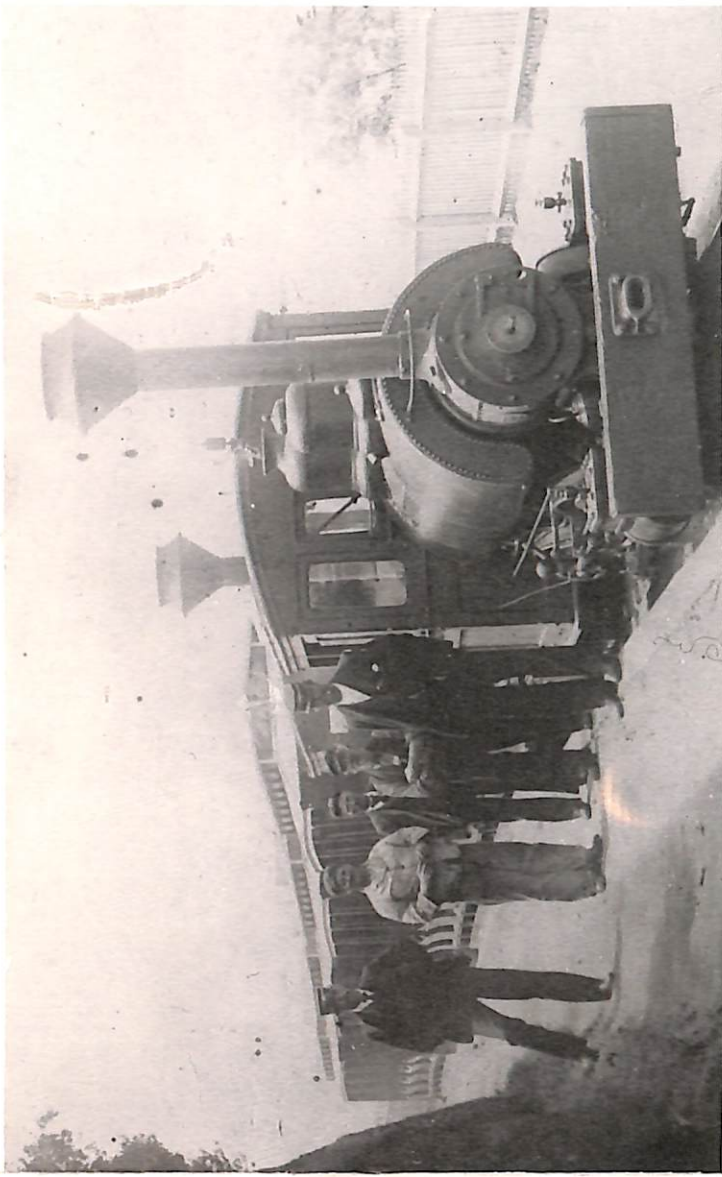
During busy periods at weekends and on holidays, the company's two steam locomotives were employed. They were a pair of the Baldwin 0-4-0STs; B/No. 9086 having been acquired probably new from Newell & Co., or alternatively bought another secondhand, which could have been one of the ex Melbourne Harbour Trust pair. Later, the company ordered through Newell & Co. in 1890 a new engine which arrived either late in 1891 or early 1892. This was B/No. 12007 of 1891. There is evidence also that the company used a third engine of the same class which they hired between 1895 and late in 1897 from James McEwan & Co. Melbourne hardware merchants, on a monthly basis, varying with the use made of the locomotive. This may be assumed to have been one of the ex M.H.T. engines, or possibly B/No. 7556 prior to its sale to Sanderson's Tramway at Forrester.¹⁴

However, according to the company's records, their 'second' locomotive arrived at Sorrento about February, 1897 through the agency of Austral Otis Engineering Co., of South Melbourne at a cost of some £872. This may be assumed to have been B/No. 7556, possibly after repairs, or reboiling.

There is an excellent photograph of one of the Sorrento engines bearing a rectangular plate on the smokebox side which appears to be identical with those applied by Austral Otis Engineering to machinery items it supplied. It is understood that one of the engines was reboiled about 1909 and that the photograph was taken about 1914.¹⁵

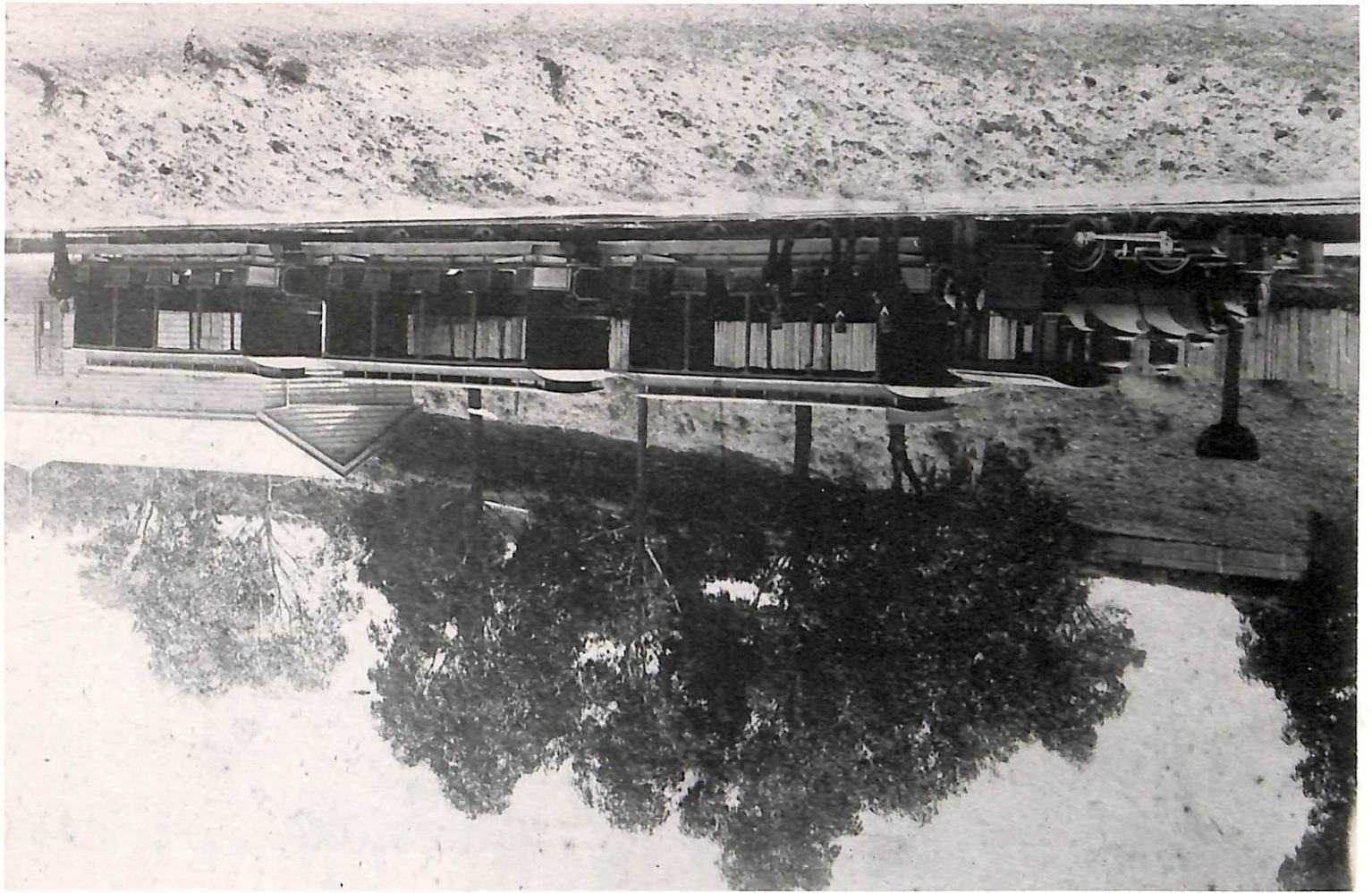
Certainly the Sorrento Tramway operated its services at peak times using two locomotives working a shuttle between the respective termini with three or four open toastrack four wheeled cars, depending on the traffic requirements. Trams may have been double-headed on occasion, but normally a single engine sufficed, though both were in steam to minimise turnaround time. The tramway company had its own repair shop facilities at Sorrento where running maintenance and re-tubing of boilers was carried out; a number of orders for boiler tube replacements were placed through Newell & Co. on the Baldwin works, one in August, 1895 possibly being in connection with a new boiler constructed by Austral Otis Engineering Co. Both Sorrento engines were reboiled while owned by the company.

During the latter part of the 1914-18 war period private motor cars began to make inroads into the numbers of passengers carried by the Bay steamers, so the need for the tramway services gradually



Above: Sorrento Tramway's two locomotives and four toastrack tramcars pose at the Front Beach station, above the pier awaiting the arrival of the paddle steamer from Melbourne. Note the lengthened stacks to carry smoke clear of the cars.
 Photo: N.E. Wadeson Collection per Late A.R. Lyell

Below: Sorrento Tramway at Front Beach terminus station, Sorrento, awaiting passengers arriving on the paddle steamer from Melbourne. Note the advertising hoardings on the roofs of the four tramcars.
 Photo: N.E. Wadeson Collection per Late A.R. Lyell



Sorrento Tramway at Front Beach terminus showing what is believed to be newly-arrived engine (B/No. 12007 of 1891) on three car tram in the early 1890s.
 Photo: Late A.R. Lyell Collection



Loch Valley Timber Co Baldwin engine photographed in VR Noojee station yard circa 1920. This is one of the two Baldwins bought from the Sorrento Tramway Co in 1920 (B/Nos 9086 or 12007) both of which had been reboilered, as indicated by the rectangular plate on the smokebox.

Photo: Courtesy F. Bawden from J.L. Buckland

declined until finally the line was closed at the end of the 1918-19 summer season. Subsequently, the two locomotives and the rails were sold to a timber milling company operating in the Noojee district of central Gippsland, north of Warragul.

The Loch Valley Timber Co.

In 1920, the Loch Valley Timber Company, with milling concessions in the valley of that name, a tributary of the Latrobe River, north of Noojee, terminus of the Victorian Railways steeply-graded and picturesque branch line from Warragul, bought the entire plant of the former Sorrento Tramway for £4,000, including the two Baldwin locomotives and the rails. With these it built a steel tramway up the Loch Valley for some six miles to the mill site. The locomotives were transported to Noojee on horse-drawn lorries for at least part of the way.

The company's line terminated in the V.R. yard where sawn timber was transhipped to V.R. wagons and the little Baldwins oftentimes rubbed shoulders with their much larger Baldwin-designed brethren on the broad gauge - the V-class 2-8-0 former Vauclain compounds built after an imported American pattern engine by the Phoenix Foundry

Co. at Ballarat. In February, 1926 disastrous bushfires swept through the heavily timbered country of the Upper Yarra and the Latrobe River valleys and the ranges in between, wreaking havoc and burning out huge areas of magnificent mountain ash and other valuable timber and destroying many small settlements and timber milling communities, among them Noojee and the Loch Valley mill and tramway, which lost eight miles of tramway and both locomotives which were left at the bush end of the line.

As the company did not possess the means to carry on operations, or restore the tramway, the Forests Commission cancelled the company's licence in June, 1929. The Commission paid £1250 compensation and took over the six miles of damaged tramway and timber bogies. Tenders were called in July, 1929 for reconditioning the tramway and reports to the Commission stated that 'the locomotives are lying in the bush at the outer terminal in practically an inaccessible location . . . stripped of all fittings and in a very bad state of repair.' They were estimated as being worth the price of scrap metal and as being unlikely to be used or needed by the Forest Commission. Sundry

bogies, wheels, axles and trucks more or less damaged were left lying in the bush at various locations, as were the two locomotives, one of which was described in another report as 'scorched' and the other as 'substantially undamaged'.¹⁶

Either immediately before or perhaps during the 1939-45 war the locomotives were either dragged from the bush, or cut up on site. But by a strange quirk of fate, the cut off firebox end of one of the boilers was left behind and clearly legible on the reverse lever quadrant, bolted to the firebox side was the identification '4-10½C44' which clearly confirmed the identity of the other of the Sorrento Tramway's locomotives as B/No. 9086.¹⁷

The Western Australian Trio

Three of the little Baldwins found their way to Western Australia; two having migrated from Victoria, and all saw service at some stage with the wellknown Millar's Timber & Trading Co. These were B/Nos. 7111 (secondhand from Victoria), 8130 (new from Newell & Co., Melbourne) and 10770 (new direct to Millar's Denmark Mill, via Albany, through the agency of Newell & Co.). The comings and goings of these three (and their change of identity in one case) provided a seemingly insolvable problem, but thanks to the W.A. Government boiler inspection records, the mysteries have been unravelled.¹⁸

Dealing with the three engines in order we have: **B/No. 7111 of 1884:** As already related this engine was disposed of by the Australian Seasoned Timber Co.; operations at their Comet Creek mill, near Wandong, Victoria, ceasing in 1898 and the locomotive was sold, probably through the agency of Cameron & Sutherland, machinery merchants of Melbourne, to Millar's Karri & Jarrah Forests Limited. In November, 1898, when first recorded in the boiler inspection records, it was working as yard shunter at Millars' Yarloop headquarters where it was identified as *Beetle* and the Baldwin builder's plate was still intact on the smokebox.

B/No. 7111 was recorded as Boiler No. 64 with 160 p.s.i. working pressure and 4.6 sq ft grate area, and inspections were made again on 28/9/1902 and 15/4/1903. Meanwhile by 1/10/1902, nine timber firms operating in the South-west of Western Australia had amalgamated to form Millar's Karri & Jarrah Company (1902) Ltd when *Beetle* was in use at the mill at Newlands, formerly owned by The Imperial Jarrah Wood Corporation Ltd, which incidentally, continued to operate under its own name for some years after amalgamation. Back at Yarloop by early December, 1904, the original boiler was condemned, removed from the frame and cut up and a new boiler (No. 1645) built in Millars' Yarloop shops was installed.



Public Works Department, WA, Baldwin *Kia Ora* (B/No.7111) on the Carnarvon Tramway linking the wharf on Babbage Island with the town, circa 1910.
Photo: Late E.R. Bowes Collection