Railway records

DR3061 - Engine house at the Ipswich Railway Workshops, ca. 1900

Research Guide to Railway records at Queensland State Archives

Queensland State Archives (QSA) is the official repository for Queensland Government records selected for permanent retention because of their continuing value. The archived public records are from state government departments, state courts, local government authorities and statutory authorities. The records are in our facility at Runcorn, Brisbane, and open records are available for viewing in the Reading Room, free-of-charge.

QSA holds records about all aspects of government administration of railways constructed by, or for the Queensland Colonial and state governments. Information is mainly in the records of the Railway Department. The amount and type of information available on individual railways varies. Some files include plans and surveys of the railway, tender documents and correspondence about its construction and maintenance.

Unfortunately, important series of Commissioner for Railways, Chief Engineer's Branch, and the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Branch (or Locomotive Branch) prior to 1887 did not survive to be transferred to QSA, Runcorn. Some railway construction and railway operations records created before 1887 are in Lands and Works Department (1862-1866) and the Works Department (1866-1887) records. The Works Department records are mainly correspondence between the Commissioner and the Minister for Railways on policy about construction, changes in operations, and indents for rollingstock, rails and timber.

There is some information at QSA about private railways constructed by mining companies under specific enabling legislation, and later owned by the government, such as Chillagoe, Etheridge and Mount Molloy. There are private tramway records involving the government, for example, sale of rollingstock for use on tramways and drafting of legislation for the construction of private tramways.

The main finding aid for records held at QSA is the Queensland State Archives' online catalogue (known as ArchivesSearch).

The following citation abbreviations are used throughout our catalogue:

  ITM   QSA Item (describes the item)
  PR   Physical Representation (generally the original or microfilm copy)
  DR   Digital Representation (for a digital image)
  S   Series ID (for series of records)
  A   Agency ID (for the creating or responsible agency).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that our catalogue contains images, names and voices of people who have died.

Queensland Rail Heritage Collection

The Queensland Rail Heritage Collection consists of 72 series of records transferred to Queensland State Archives from the Workshops Rail Museum, Ipswich, in 2019 and spans the years 1864 to 2007. In addition to the key series listed below, they also give us a glimpse into Queensland's past with railway brass bands, railway refreshment rooms and clock repair registers.

This heritage collection includes a series of glass plate and cellulose acetate negatives:

Railway Glass Plate Negatives
Circa 1/1/1864 – 31/12/1997
S21495

Digital copies of these glass plate negatives can be viewed online by following the series link to *Browse all items in series*. The negatives depict various subjects relating to rail travel and infrastructure and include

images of locomotives, carriages and wagons, stations, bridges and bridge construction, sections of track and special events. Negatives titled with 'E Series' are tourism and scenic images of Queensland. The glass plate negatives in this series have been carefully cleaned and restored by the Queensland State Archives Conservation team to allow them to be digitised.

To find all series of records in this heritage collection, search of our catalogue using title "Queensland Rail Heritage Collection". Each series has a Queensland Rail/Queensland Museum catalogue number. Refer to Appendix 1 of this research guide for catalogue numbers and corresponding QSA series citations.

Commissioner for Railways

Registers of Letters Received
Circa 1/1/1889–31/12/1967
S10001

These registers are used to find files numbers for General Correspondence, S6873 and Hard Batches, S9790. These registers record general correspondence received, including for various Queensland lines.

General Correspondence
Circa 1/1/1871–21/3/1991
S6873

To find general correspondence files, search Registers of Letters Received, S10001. The files are for business for which the administrative centre of the Railways Department was responsible.

List of Hard Batches, and Copies of All Indexes to Batches
Circa 1/1/1867–31/12/1960
S6839

This list is used to find records in Hard Batch Series, S9790. Note: S6839 is incomplete.

Hard Batch Series
1/1/1867–31/12/1970
S9790

To find hard batch files, search List of Hard Batches, and Copies of All Indexes to Batches, S6839. These finding aids are complemented by the *Guide to the hard batch series of correspondence 1867-1960* available on Reading Room computers under the *Finding Aids by QSA, Other* tile. These batches consist of bundles of correspondence files about particular subjects. These batches were grouped together for the convenience of the Railway Department. Examples of subjects include extension and construction of new railway lines, railway commissions and enquiries, accidents, strikes, Executive Council minutes, and the involvement of the railways in the First and Second World Wars.

Mail Books
10/4/1900-21/4/1965
S17461

Inwards Correspondence Registers
1/1/1888–31/5/1908
S17497

Minute Registers
Circa 1/11/1931–30/9/1964
S17503

Staff Records

Information on individual employees may be found in:

- General Correspondence 1876-1991, S6873
- Registers of letters received 1889-1967, S10001

Registers of Correspondence Relating to Staff
1/1/1910–31/12/1976
S17492

These registers are used to find correspondence files, S6873.

Registers of Letters Received
Circa 1/1/1889–31/12/1967
S10001

These registers are used to find files numbers for General Correspondence, S6873 and Hard Batches, S9790. These registers record general correspondence received, including for various Queensland lines.

General Correspondence (Railways)
Circa 1/1/1871– 12/3/1991
S6873

Staff Books
Circa 1/1/1875–31/12/1946
S9996

Staff book entries may include name and date of birth of employee, dates of appointment, transfer or promotion, position, location or place of gang, remuneration, offences and remarks. Some volumes are arranged by branches, districts, areas of work, workshops, etc. Other volumes are alphabetical by employee.

Passed List Register
1/1/1908–31/12/1949
S16638

This register for the Roma district is a list of staff who passed Railway Department examinations.

Registers of Employment Applications
Circa 1/10/1910-30/7/1956
S9986

This series of registers is of individuals applying for positions in the Railway Department.

Accident Books
12/11/1909–24/9/1936
S9982

Chief Engineer's Office

Registers of Southern Division Plans
1/1/1863-31/12/1970
S7698

These registers are used to find Southern Division plans in S4595 and S17692.

Indexes to Southern Division Plans - Railway Department
Circa 1/1/1863–31/12/1970
S7697

These indexes are used in conjunction with S7698 to find Southern Division Plans in S4595 and S17692.

Register of Central Division Plans
Circa 1/1/1895-31/12/1976
S7699

These registers are used to find Central Division plans in S4595 and S17692.

Register of Northern Division Plans
Circa 1/1/1908-31/12/1978
S7700

These registers are used to find Northern Division plans in S4595 and S17692.

Plans and Sections of various Queensland Railway Lines (C22-C5475, N19-N4010, S66-S10977)
Circa 1/1/1865 – 31/12/1970
S4595

To find plans, search the registers, Southern Division S7698, Central Division, S7699, and Northern Division, S7700. These plans show the routes and grades taken by the railway lines, as well as surrounding topographical features and details of settlement and station yard plans.

Plans of Queensland Railway Station Buildings, Residences, Bridges and Station Equipment
1/1/1865 – 28/4/1999
S17692

To find plans, search the registers, Southern Division S7698, Central Division, S7699, and Northern Division, S7700. These are original drawings used for tender purposes and maintenance of, or alterations to, the original structures. They are scale drawings showing elevations and often the type of building materials used.

Original Trial Survey Registers
Circa 1/1/1870–21/12/1953
S7696

These registers are used to find plans in S4593 and S4611.

Trial survey book of identification letters
Circa 1/1/ 1870–31/12/1953
S7695

These survey books are used in conjunction with S7696 to find plans in S4593 and S4611.

Plans and Sections of various Queensland Railway Lines (A535-Z529)
Circa 1/1/1865 – 31/12/1934
S4593

To find plans, search the registers, S7696. To search by specific alpha codes, search ArchivesSearch with the alpha code in the *Search for* field, and limit to S4593. These plans show routes and grades taken by the railway lines, surrounding topographical features and details of settlement, eg. main line to Toowoomba.

Plans and Sections of various Queensland Railway Lines (AA21-YB24)
Circa 1/1/1864 – 31/12/1983
S4611

To find plans, search the registers, S7696. These plans show routes and grades taken by the railway lines, surrounding topographical features and details of settlement, eg. Southern line to Stanthorpe and Wallangarra. To search by specific alpha codes, search ArchivesSearch with the alpha code in the *Search for* field, and limit to S4611. Examples of the rail line alpha codes are BCF – Bowen to Coalfields, AG – Atherton to Mt Garnet.

Plans of Queensland Railway Station Buildings, Residences, Bridges and Station Equipment (by code)
1/1/1866 – 31/12/1919
S17687

This series is plans of Queensland Railway station buildings, residences, bridges, livestock yards, turntables, footbridges, gates, grids, office furniture, tanks, boilers and pumps, wharves, gates for level crossings. In the Z - numbered plans there are some drawings of rollingstock and signalling equipment. The series is unindexed.

Railway Plans and Sections - Presented to Parliament
1/1/1876 – 31/12/1954
S17676

The plans and sections show routes and grades taken by the line. This series is unindexed.

Locomotive Branch

Register of General Correspondence Files - Chief Mechanical Engineer's Branch
Circa 1/1/1886–31/12/1930
ITM275586

This register is used to find general correspondence, S6440

General Correspondence
1/1/1883 – 24/6/1997

S6440

To find files, from 1886 to 1930, use Register – correspondence, ITM275586. Other years are unindexed. Files of the administration of the Branch, construction and repair of rollingstock (locomotives, rail motors, carriages and wagons), installation of machinery, and general staffing matters.

Numerical index to rollingstock drawings
Circa 1/1/1864–31/12/1955
ITM282292

This index of drawings is used to find drawings with the notation 'A' in S17732.

Railway Rollingstock Drawings
1/1/1867 – 31/12/1954
S17732

To find drawings, use Index, ITM282292. This is the major series of rollingstock drawings with approximately 1,000 drawings mostly on tracing linen to ISO A0 size. Included are drawings of rollingstock supplied by contractors such as Charles Fox of London, as well as those constructed by Ipswich railway workshops. Includes coaching, goods and departmental stock such as 1st, 2nd class and composite passenger carriages, saloons and parlour cars, passenger and composite brake vans, Vice-Regal saloon, mortuary car, travelling post office, coal/ballast hoppers, etc. Also includes wagons - covered, open, refrigerated, livestock, elephant, fruit, tank, and timber. Drawings for each class of vehicle include brake gear, bogies or wheel sets, buffing and draw gear, underframes, bodies, carriage windows and doors, lighting, fittings and furnishings.

Numerical Index to Locomotive Drawings,
Circa 1/1/1890–31/12/1929
ITM292716

This index is used to find drawings of steam locomotives, S17695.

Steam Locomotive Drawings
Circa 1/1/1864 – 31/12/1966
S17695

To find drawings of steam locomotives, search the Numerical Index to Locomotive Drawings, ITM292716. Drawings are arranged alphabetically by the name of the locomotive.

Rail Motor Drawings
Circa 1/1/1916 – 31/12/1951
S17703

This series is of general arrangement drawings of rail motors and trailers. The series is unindexed.

Register of Rollingstock
Circa 1/1/1890 – 31/12/1915
ITM292715 in S9058

This register lists rollingstock (locomotives, wagons and carriages) operating on Queensland railways, including some wagons from 1864. It includes original rollingstock list for wagons with class, number,

description, dimensions of body/under frame, materials used in construction of rollingstock with remarks about write-off dates, details of modifications and transfers to other divisions. There are separate registers for Southern Division, 1890-1916, S8839 and Central Division, 1890-1929, S8840.

Locomotive History Cards
1/1/1866 – 31/12/1969
S17520

These cards provide information about alterations and repairs made to the locomotive, as well as engineering specifications. These cards are arranged in numerical order.

Steam Locomotive Boiler History Cards
1/1/1915 – 30/6/1969
S17518

Arranged by locomotive number, cards record mileage by locomotives, boiler inspection and disposal details.

Rail Motor History Cards
1/1/1913 – 31/12/1971
S17523

Cards record manufacturing, alteration and repair details for rail motors.

Rail Motor Trailer History Cards
1/1/1918 – 31/12/1971
S17524

These cards list manufacturing details, repairs, alterations and dates condemned.

Queensland Rail

Queensland Rail (Aurizon) Administrative Records
01/06/1983–17/07/2010
S21542

Other sources of information

- *Research Guide to Railway locomotive and rollingstock drawings records*
- *Railway Department 1863–1991, Departmental guide* on Reading Room computers under *Finding Aids*
- *Queensland Government Railway indexes to staff records, 1878-1946*. This index was created from S9996, Staff registers (staff books) by the Caloundra Family History Research
- *Railway Employees* published in the *Queensland Government Gazette* between 1889 and 1941.

Need more information?

Check our online catalogue ArchivesSearch.
Phone us on (07) 3037 6777 or you can email an archivist.

Appendix 1
Queensland Rail Heritage Collection records in QR catalogue number order

These records were transferred to Queensland State Archives from Queensland Rail/Queensland Museum. Search ArchivesSearch to find series descriptions. A search of using the keywords - Queensland Rail Heritage Collection - will find all the series of records including hyperlinks to descriptions.

CAT 15 - *Books of Rules, S21287*, 1873 to 1986

CAT 16 - *General Appendices - Book of Rules & Working Time Tables, S21288*, 1903 to 1998

CAT 50 - *Locomotive Mileage Exam Cards, S21258*, 1922 to 1970

CAT 51 - *Locomotive Running Repair Cards (Tests & Exams), S21259*, 1912 to 1946

CAT 73 - *Ipswich Workshops Engineering Library, S21268*, 1871 to 1972

CAT 74 - *Specifications Civil and Mechanical, S21276*, 1876 to 1969

CAT 75 - *Staff Bios, Reminiscences, Published Articles & Cuttings, S21281*, 1857 to 1995

CAT 76 - *Ambulance Train for USA Forces, S21282*, 1943 to 1947

CAT 77 - *Queensland Rail Ambulance Corps - Published Histories, S21277*, 1893 to 2017

CAT 78 - *Parcel Stamps issued by rail stations, S21269*, 1880 to 1995

CAT 79 - *QR Officer Study Tour Reports, S21289*, 1911 to 1997

CAT 81 - *Haulage Contract Rate Cards, S21312*, 1966 to 1970

CAT 82 - *Queensland MLAs - Career Reference Book, S21313*, 1920 to 1953

CAT 83 - *Burdekin River Bridge Reports, S21314*, 1946 to 1980

CAT 84 - *Ticket Stock Reconciliation Books - Northern, Central, Southern and Western Railway Districts, S21318*, 1867 to 1993

CAT 85 - *Ipswich Workshop Powerhouse Log Books, S21319*, 1962 to 1984

CAT 87 - *Professional Officers' Arbitration Case, S21320*, 1944

CAT 88 - *Railway Ball Committee Papers, S21321*, 1980 to 1985

CAT 89 – *Lost Property Registers, S21290,* 1868 to 1992

CAT 90 - *Construction of North Johnstone River Bridge, S21294*, 1911 to 1951

CAT 91 - *Turntables in Central Division – Correspondence, S21301*, 1963 to 1983

CAT 92 - *Store Request Register, S21304*, 1914 to 1925

CAT 93 - *Phosphate Hill Railway Project, S21305*, 1975 to 1979

CAT 94 - *Innisfail and South Johnstone Tramway, S21308*, 1921 to 1932

CAT 95 - *Interstate Marshalling and Transshipping Yard, Acacia Ridge S21310*, 1975 to 1980

CAT 96 - *Authority to Run the Road, S21309*, 1920 to 1933

CAT 97 - *Gradients and Curves, S21286*, 1865 to 1972

CAT 98 - *Lists of Stations, Stopping Places and Siding, S21331*, 1950 to 2007

CAT 99 - *Train Register Books, S21322,* 1965 to 1979

CAT 100 - *Rail Motor Cars and Trailers Summary, S21323*, 1950 to 1963

CAT 101 - *Chillagoe Railway Design Specifications, S21302*, 1898 to 1902

CAT 102 - *Redbank Workshop Site Report, S21324*, 1955 to 1994

CAT 103 - *Train Staff and Hoop, S21325*, 1968 to 1973

CAT 104 - *Diesel Mechanical Locomotive No 1 Repair Register, S21326*, 1941 to 1983

CAT 105 - *Capital Works Cost Alteration Ledger, S21303*, 1884 to 1889

CAT 106 - *Northgate Workshop Order Book, S21327*, 1924 to 1926

CAT 107 - *Bridge Inspection Logs, Southern Brisbane Valley line, S21328*, 1980 to 1987

CAT 108 - *Callide Coalfield Railway - Contract Payments for Earthworks, S21329*, 1951 to 1952

CAT 109 - *Examination for Engineering Cadets, S21330*, 1912 to 1965

CAT 110 - *Bridge Books - Various Rail Lines, S21270*, 1873 to 1979

CAT 115 - *Wagon and Carriage Repair History Cards, S21278*, 1913 to 1980

CAT 124 - *Siding Files, Works South East, S21272*, 1904 to 1992

CAT 125 - *Commissioner's Meeting Minutes, S21273*, 1942 to 1990

CAT 126 - *Locomotive Officers' Committee Minutes, S21274*, 1943 to 1991

CAT 127 - *Station Yard Leases, S21275*, 1894 to 2000

CAT 144 – *Surveyor Field Books, S21253*, 1861 to 1991

CAT 186 - *Diesel Locomotive Engine Repair Card, S21257*, 1960 to 1997

CAT 212 - *Train Service Time Table, S21271*, 1874 to 2005

CAT 249 - *Diesel Locomotive History Cards, S21256*, 1883 to 1995

CAT 359 (consists of three series)

    Gang Motor Cards, S21260, 1958 to 1980

    Steam Locomotive History Card, S21261, 1926 to 1989

    Wagon and Carriage History Cards, S21255, 1864 to 1997

CAT 368 - *Timber Bridges Measurement Field Books - Maryborough District, S21284*, 1886 to 1923

CAT 369 - *Grade Alterations & Curves Field Books - Maryborough District, S21285*, 1894 to 1944

CAT 372 - *War Time Regulations/Standards, S21283*, 1939 to 1960

CAT 373 - *Maryborough Works File, S21279*, 1895 to 1990

CAT 374 - *Maryborough Lease, S21280,* 1904 to 1978

CAT 375 - *Cart and Wagon Weighbridges - Maryborough District, S21311*, 1923 to 1983

CAT 376 - *Maryborough District Cream Sheds, S21315*, 1916 to 1952

CAT 377 - *Maryborough District Cane Derricks, S21316*, 1921 to 1959

CAT 378 - *Maryborough District Loading Banks, S21317*, 1922 to 1945

CAT 379 - *Track Maintenance Issues and Method, S21295*, 1950 to 1978

CAT 380 - *All Lines Station Yard Maintenance Plans - Maryborough District, S21306,* 1930 to 1992

CAT 381 - *Works Progress Reports - Maryborough District, S21307*, 1950 to 1978

CAT 382 - *Works Authority Registers, S21291*, 1928 to 1991

CAT 383 - *Sleepers & Timbers, S21292,* 1989 to 1995

CAT 384 - *Design of Ashpits, S21293*, 1915 to 1972

CAT 385 - *Walkers Ltd Locomotive Contract Inspection, S21296*, 1955 to 1974

CAT 386 - *Standard Engineering Drawings - Maryborough District, S21297*, 1910 to 1975

CAT 387 - *Maryborough District Track Relaying Diagrams, S21298*, 1920 to 1940

CAT 388 - *Abtus Rail Drilling Machine, S21299*, 1952 to 1976

CAT 389 - *Bridge Register Book - Maryborough District Lines, S21300*, 1940