Name: *Triumph in the Tropics, 1959*

**Section name:** Part Two, Chapter XXIV, Transport and Communication

**Pages:** 299–311

**Printing Notes (Adobe Acrobat):** For best results “Page Scaling” should be set to “Fit to Printable Area”. “Auto Rotate and Center” should also be checked.

CHAPTER XXIV

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Linking the frontier posts, the sprawling settlements, and the fledgling towns and cities

No history of any country or State would be complete without an account of the development of its communications, for they are the sinews of civilization. Without them it could not develop, much less function. Bullock dray and horse, camel and mule, coach, train, motor car and aeroplane mark successive stages and have aided the mail, telegraph, telephone and finally the radio to send messages with the speed of light!

Moreover, because they have largely reduced distance, and abolished isolation, they have been one of the greatest factors in successful settlement. The greatest handicap to it was loneliness, a most destructive deterrent.

The year 1824 was the beginning of Queensland, and also of its communication services, for it saw the establishment of Moreton Bay not only as a convict settlement, but as the site of a militarily-controlled Post Office. (Incidentally, postal service in Australia was then fifteen years old, for the first Post Office had been opened in 1809—at Circular Quay in Sydney. Australia's first Postmaster was a man named Isaac Nicholls.)

The Post Office at Moreton Bay remained under military control for eighteen years and, in that time, hardly developed at all, because the tiny settlement that was Moreton Bay was restricted within its own rigid boundaries. Mail to and from the settlement was carried either overland from Sydney or by the vessels touching the two centres at odd intervals.

In 1842, not long after Moreton Bay ceased to be a convict settlement and became a free colony, the Post Office was transferred to civil control. It was conducted by the Clerk of Petty Sessions who also held office as Postmaster; and the first so designated was Gilbert Whyte. On his death the following year, he was replaced by a Mr. Slade (Christian name unknown), who held the position until 1848 when W. A. Browne took over.

In 1843 the Australian Steam Navigation Company's vessel "Sovereign" began to ply between Sydney and Brisbane, carrying passengers, mail and freight. In 1845 the first mail service (by horse) from Brisbane and the second Post Office (the first outside Brisbane) were established for "The Springs." (The name was changed later to Draytown, an obvious choice: being the terminal of the lines of settlement both from the east and the south, it was notable for the number
of drays that constantly creaked their way into the town. Subsequently, the name was shortened to Drayton, and so remains.)

In 1847 another trafficable route was discovered through Spicer’s Gap, and a new dray road with some terrifyingly steep grades and razor-backs was built.

The opening of the road in 1847 touched off a rapid expansion in the development of the southern Downs, and the township of Warwick was founded. An office had been opened in 1846 at Ipswich (then known as Limestone) and that centre was a calling point on the Brisbane-Drayton mail service. A mail service between Armidale and Drayton, via Warwick, was established in 1847 and, in 1848, a Post Office at Warwick was opened. This was the third country office to be opened in Queensland.

In 1849, Post Offices were opened at Callandoon, Gayndah and Maryborough, followed the next year by others at Goode’s Inn, Burnett (now Nanango), and at Woogaroo (Goodna), and a new mail service was established between Drayton and Gayndah, Warioela and Callandoon.

By 1852 Post Office business at Brisbane had so increased that the appointment of a full-time Postmaster was necessary. The Clerk of Petty Sessions was therefore relieved of the extra burden he had been carrying and Captain J. E. Barney was appointed Postmaster. To Barney, therefore, goes the distinction of being the first Postmaster in what was to be Queensland since he was the first full-time occupant of the position.

The Post Office was established in a tiny building in Queen Street where Edwards and Lamb’s premises now stand, and next to the Old Town Hall.

Captain and Mrs. Barney lived on the premises. The staff at the "G.P.O." then consisted of Captain Barney and a letter carrier, the latter being appointed to carry out the newly-introduced town mail deliveries. In 1853 a clerk for the Postmaster was provided and was paid £90 p.a.

Captain Barney was not to reign long. He died in 1855 and was succeeded in office by his widow.

By that time the postal lines and mail service between Warwick and Callandoon, Armidale and Drayton had been extended to Gayndah and new services had commenced between Gayndah and Maryborough, and between Ipswich and Burnett, Tamworth and Callandoon, Drayton and Callandoon, and Drayton and Gayndah. A Post Office at Myall Creek (Dalby) was opened in 1854. By this time there were ten Post Offices in the State and all established settlements were served by mail services.

The carrying of mails was a hazardous business. Horses and drays were the only available means of transport, for coaches had not then made their appearance. (Later, however, coach transport speeded up the development of the new Colony considerably.) Mail contractors were not only forced to battle along unmade roads, to ford rivers and streams and to cope generally with natural hazards, but they had to live with the ever-present danger of hostile blacks and bush-rangers.

By Separation (1859) the postal service comprised nineteen mails covering 1,721 miles of country and embracing the Darling Downs, the plains surrounding the Condamine, the Brisbane Valley and the north coast as far as Rockhampton, with sixteen Post Offices in operation. The G.P.O. staff consisted of the Postmistress, three clerks, two letter-carriers, one messenger and a sortor.

Soon after the inauguration of the Government of Queensland, the Honourable R. R. Mackenzie, the Colonial Treasurer, became acting Postmaster-General.

Mackenzie was described by Governor Bowen as "a gentleman of ancient Scotch family—a man of high honour and integrity... ." He was the second son of the 8th Baronet of Coul and through the death of his brother he later became 10th Baronet. He was Premier of Queensland for one year (1866). He lived at New Farm in Brisbane and was noted for his hospitality and friendliness. He died in 1873, not long after returning to Scotland to claim his inheritance. His name is perpetuated in the town of Aramac (derived from "R.R. Mac").

In November 1860 Queensland's first postage stamps were issued, replacing stamps provided previously by New South Wales.

In 1861 the Government decided to make the post of Postmaster-General a non-political one, and Thomas Lodge Murray Prior, on 6 November, became Postal Inspector and, on 1 January 1862, Postmaster-General.

In 1861 another important advance was made in communications. On 13 April a telegraph line erected between Brisbane and Ipswich provided the first telegraph communication in the State, and later in the same year, Brisbane was linked telegraphically with Sydney. The telegraph office at Brisbane was erected on portion of the land now wholly occupied by the Executive Building between George and William Streets, and faced William Street.

By 31 December 1868 the extent of the Queensland postal routes was 8,749 miles, which was an increase of 1,396 miles on those in operation twelve months before. This was the era of the Cobb and Co. coaches, which were to become the principal inland links for the carriage of mails.

In 1862 there were nineteen Post Offices in Queensland. The office of Postmaster-General had reverted to be again a political appointment and, for a time, John Douglas was P.M.G.

Murray Prior, however, who had been elected to Parliament, later again became Postmaster-General and held office until 1872, when he was succeeded by George Thorn, Jnr.

In his report to Parliament for the year 1870, Murray Prior said: "The present unsightly buildings used for the Post Office have been found totally unsuitable for the purpose to which they were devoted. Steps were therefore taken with the view of providing proper accommodation; the result is, that a new Post Office is now in course of erection which, it is estimated, will be ready for occupation early in 1872."

So began Brisbane's present G.P.O. The builder was John Petrie,
Brisbane's first Mayor, son of Brisbane's first Engineer of Works. For £4,500, Petrie built the wing nearest Creek Street. It was completed on schedule in October 1872.

Five years later the Government decided to move the Postal and Telegraph Services into the same block—although they were administered separately. The two Departments were not amalgamated under one control until many years later.

In 1876 the Police Court, situated between the new G.P.O. wing and the present site of the Commonwealth Bank, was demolished and tenders for the erection of a telegraph wing on the site were invited.

The builder was again John Petrie, and in 1879 he built—for £19,000—the telegraph wing, the central archway and the clock tower.

On 10 March 1876 one of the greatest single advancements in communications was made when, for the first time, the human voice was transmitted over wires. The new invention was the telephone of Professor Alexander Graham Bell. Queensland was quick to take advantage of the new medium. The Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs had this to say in his annual report for 1877:

"Some very interesting experiments with the telephone took place at my office on January 26th and subsequent dates. The instruments used on the occasion were roughly manufactured in Brisbane, and not well adapted for the purpose; however, fair results were obtained, which under the circumstances may be considered satisfactory.

"Prof. Bell, the inventor of the telephone, is sending me two of his improved instruments, and on their arrival further experiments with this scientific wonder will be made. In its present stage of development this instrument appears incapable of transmitting sound through long distances, but should its capabilities be increased, as are long they doubtless will be, this remarkable invention must create quite a revolution in telegraphy throughout the world."

In 1880 Queensland's first telephone exchange was established at Brisbane. Prior to this, however, Messrs. Quinlan, Gray, and Co. had telephone communication provided between their Queen Street office and their Milton Brewery. This firm was therefore Queensland's first telephone subscriber. Continuous service was introduced at Central Exchange on 23 April 1883; 175 subscribers' services were then connected. (It was reported, however, that it took some considerable time and trouble to waken the boy on night service!)

The first country lines were also point-to-point private lines. (One was from Tewantin to Cootharaba for use by McGhie, Luya and Co., and the other from Maryborough to Mungar for Ramsay and Co.)

By 1880 there were about 300 mail services totalling 20,976 miles and travelling over 200,000 miles annually; 264 Post Offices had been established; 159 telegraph stations had been opened, and the telegraph line network totalled 5,888¾ miles. The Post Office was handling nearly 10,000,000 postal articles yearly.

Queensland's postal, telephone and telegraph service continued to develop, so that, when Federation was effected, it was a compact, highly efficient and smooth-running machine. On 1 March 1901 administration of all Australian postal and telecommunications services was transferred to Commonwealth control.

In the years following Federation, the Australian communications services developed rapidly. Melbourne and Sydney were linked by telephone in 1907, Sydney and Brisbane in 1923, and, in 1930, a trunk line was completed between Perth and Adelaide. With the laying of a telephone cable between the mainland and Tasmania in 1936, the interstate communication chain was complete.

Queensland's first automatic telephone exchange was opened in 1925—at South Brisbane; the 1920's and 1930's saw the birth of the Australian airmail service; the development of broadcasting; the opening of radio-telephone communication between Australia and overseas countries; and in 1925, Radio Station 4QG, Brisbane, was opened. (It had been anticipated by an experimental station, 4CM, set up by Dr. Val McDowall in 1921. In 1924-25 the Commonwealth permitted bi-weekly broadcasts financed by the radio traders of Brisbane and continued until 4QG operated.)

Modern, high-speed teletype services have replaced entirely the Morse Code system of transmitting telegrams; modern telephone carrier systems span the State to provide a no-delay and highly efficient trunk-line service; most principal cities have automatic telephone lines and the automatic network is being expanded continuously. Radio stations—both National and Commercial—cover all the State to provide radio entertainment and information. Modern mail-sorting machines—operating with uncanny precision—have replaced in part the manual sorting system, while automatic stamp-cancelling machines postmark 600 letters every minute. Queenslanders post 650,000 postal articles every day; send over 13,000 telegrams each day; and make more than 446,666 telephone calls each day; they have more than 1,630,000 trunk calls every month. There are over 190,000 telephone subscribers busily transacting their affairs along 1,000,000 miles of wire—enough to wind round the earth more than thirty times! (J. W. Rawlinson, Public Relations Officer, C.P.O., Brisbane.)

THE STORY OF TRANSPORT

So much for the written and spoken word. Progress in personal transport and heavy goods and supplies was equally dramatic. In 1859 there was not a mile of railway either open for traffic or under construction; nor, save between Brisbane and Ipswich, was there a formed or metallised road, the only avenues of transport being along the bridle paths or the teamsters' tracks.

Enterprising and adventurous individuals, however, had started, with their own teams, hauling wool and other merchandise to and from Ipswich, Maryborough and Rockhampton. With the advent of the railways, the railheads became the termini of the haul. Conditions brought about the evolution of a larger type of waggon, more suitable to local conditions. The box waggon had a capacity...
of six to eight tons and teams of sixteen to eighteen oxen, or up to fourteen horses, kept the five-inch tyres turning.

The famous "Morning Star" was built in 1913 by William Grice of Charleville. Costing between £150 and £180, these waggons could carry up to 14 tons. The average load was 60 bales of wool, but Kenton T. Cameron (145) refers to a load of 94 bales of wool from Oakwood to Charleville, a distance of 80 miles. This load was drawn by 27 horses.

Cobb and Co.'s Coaches

The American style thorough-brace coach swung on stout leather braces which could cope with the rough bush tracks was first introduced into Victoria by Freeman Cobb, an American. With Murray Peck, James Swanton, and John Tamber, he founded the famous mail contracting firm of Cobb and Co. in 1853. Another American, James Rutherford, was at the head, when in 1865 the first offices were opened in Mary Street, Brisbane. The first coach opened up the Brisbane-Ipswich run with the Queensland manager, Harry Barnes, strapped to the driving seat.

Twelve horses drew the coach with its fourteen passengers and Her Majesty's mails. Soon there was a service twice daily from Brisbane to Ipswich, and from Helidon to Toowoomba. A weekly service ran from Condamine to Roma and, three times weekly, from Toowoomba to Warwick. At one stage the mail contracts reached £24,000 annually.

By 1890 Cobb and Co. boasted that a passenger could go "from the Border to the Gulf" by coach, and return to Port Douglas. It was using 4,000 horses a day and travelling 16,000 miles a week with a salary pay-out of thousands of pounds each week. One of the four coach-factories of the company was built at Charleville.

A Cobb and Co. coach was the first vehicle across the Victoria Bridge in 1874 and the Third Queensland Mounted Infantry Regiment was transported by Cobb and Co. coaches during the Boer War. In the bushranger era at least thirty-six hold-ups of Cobb and Co. coaches were reported. The last Cobb and Co. coach ran in Queensland on the Yeulba to Surat run in 1924, after a proud record of only four fatal accidents in seventy-five years' running.

The drivers of these coaches were a unique breed. The first drivers were Americans, but very soon Australians were taking the "ribbons," for teams of 6, 8, 12, 16 or even 22 horses. "Cabbage Tree Ned" Devine, who drove the first English Eleven on a tour of Australia; Harry Barnes, whose son became a State Treasurer; Ned Murdoch, who built the first Royal Mail Hotel at Tewantin; and "Yankee Bill" are names that form part of a story as astonishing as anything ever produced in America's "Wild West."

Camels and Mules

The great achievements of the horse must not be permitted to obscure entirely the half-forgotten fact that camels and mules played important roles in transport in Queensland in the early days,


PLATE LVII.
PLATE LVIII.

Cobb & Co.'s coach leaving Australian Hotel, Queen Street for Gympie (circa. 1869).

(Courtesy of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland.)
Coach on the Almaden-Georgetown trail (note anthill).

Construction staff on "Pioneer," Stony Creek, N.Q.

PLATE LIX.  
(Courtesy of Queensland Railways.)
The Grain Train: Drawn by a single diesel electric engine, this train, which was made up of 27 bulk grain carrying wagons and was a quarter of a mile long, made a successful test trip from Toowoomba on the Darling Downs on June 17, 1959, carrying a thousand tons of barley, wheat, and sorghum. This picture of the train, the longest in Queensland Railway history, was taken as it passed through the Lockyer Valley, at Gatton, 62 miles west of Brisbane. The Minister for Transport (Hon. G. W. W. Chalk) can be seen on the left of the group of railway officers in the foreground.

PLATE LX.

(Courtesy of State Public Relations Bureau.)
especially in the pastoral and mining industries. Camels were first imported into Australia in 1846, and a second lot was introduced in 1860 for the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition. Two Afghans, Faiz and Tagh Mahomet, were among the most notable handlers of camels in Australia's history.

Apart from some few camels used by Afghan hawkers, they were first used extensively in Queensland by Elder, Smith, and Company, pastoralists and stockbrokers of Adelaide, South Australia. Supplies were brought by camel to their properties, which extended up from Beltana, near Leigh Creek, to Cordillo Downs, near Haddon Corner, on the Queensland border; and wool was transported to the (then) railhead at Hawker, South Australia.

Heaton's camels from Wilcannia, N.S.W., also used to return south with wool from stations over the Queensland border.

Camel strings and teams were also owned by numerous Orientals.

The camel was especially adapted to the long dry stages, a rough sparse pasture, and the endless sandhills. Although handicapped in stony country and on muddy flats, the camel was able to plod apparently tirelessly over miles of heavy sand, bad for horses. A bale of wool was slung on each side of the camel; the beast was trained to kneel between the loads so that these could be secured or loosened from the pack-saddle morning and night. Each camel was tied to the camel in front by a line about six feet in length, from the nose button to the packsaddle of the leading beast. Twenty to thirty camels comprised a "string," with a rider on the leading camel. Owners of camel strings usually insisted on the bales weighing not more than 2½ to 3 cwt., according to the condition of their animals, although Kenton T. Cameron (Secretary of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland) records that he has seen a camel carrying two 44-gallon drums of petrol.

A day's stage under normal conditions was six to eight hours without a halt. The distance a camel can travel without water has been grossly exaggerated by persons who have no actual knowledge of camels. Long waterless treks are carefully planned by experienced camel men. Loading, such as bore casing, which obviously cannot be packed, was always drawn by camel teams.

Camels were used most extensively from as far east as Thargomindah and the lower Cooper's Creek to Birdsville, and as far north as Boulia. (At least 500 camels were used in the camel trains taking the ore to Mungana and coke to the smelters from the township of “O.K.” in the Chillagoe district.)

In the romantic heyday of mining in pioneer North Queensland the hardy sure-footed little mule was the most important factor in transport. Teams of mules were used by carriers and packers along the steep winding mountain trails with tin ingots from Irvinebank to Herberton, Boonoonoo, and Mareeba in the early days. Teams of horses and bullocks were also used by many carriers, but for half a century the mule was celebrated for transporting enormous loads over the steep ranges inland from Cairns.

Glenville Pike records that mule teams a hundred strong wended their way down the mountains from the Herberton and Irvine-
bank tin mines to the port of Cairns, returning with stores for the mining towns. Herberton, founded in 1850, was entirely dependent on mule transport. The track wound up the coastal range covered in tropical jungle and rising in places to 4,000 feet across the fertile Atherton Tablelands (later cleared for maize and dairying), then over the barren, boulder-strewn Herberton Range to Herberton township—sixty gruelling miles in three days. Often, small children were transported in caride drums slung each side of a mule! Household furniture, corrugated iron, and mining machinery were all brought in on muleback before a road was found over which a bullock waggon could travel. In 1893 Mareeba became the railhead, but from 1880 to 1930 mule teams continued to be part of the life of the Herberton district; for, even after railway communication was established, they packed ore to the sidings.

On the authority of Glenville Pike, the biggest packer was Donald McDonald, who had forty-five mules, and mule-packed 1,000 tons of tin from Irvinebank and Montalbion to Port Douglas, with his teamsters and packers.

The mules were hardy and tough; so were the bronzed and bearded packers, young and old, who came out in all weathers all the year round; lived mainly on salt beef and damper; and had to load and unload forty to sixty mules night and morning. (Some of them were not loaded without difficulty; the saying, "a kick like a mule," has a solid foundation.)

The tradition of the prowess of the men who "worked" camels and mules, survives among the older people, in areas where a camel (or, indeed, a mule!) would bring schoolchildren, crowding, in wide-eyed wonder.

The dray, the box-waggon, the bullock, the camel, and the mule gradually surrendered to the coach and its horses, each leaving its legacy of tradition and achievement in local legend. The coach, in its turn, gave way to the motor car and mechanised transport, but all had helped to change Queensland from a roadless wilderness to a land accessible from border to border.

Motor Transport

By 1914 the motor car was no longer a highly expensive and somewhat unreliable novelty. The first automobile on the streets of Brisbane was a steam buggy which James Trackson himself made here in Brisbane, about the turn of the century. (The municipal by-laws on the running of steam-rollers applied and a man with a red flag had to walk in front of it to ensure that its speed was restricted to walking pace.)

In 1900 Trackson imported Queensland's first petrol-driven car, a two-cylinder De Dion Bouton. With other early motorists he encountered considerable official resentment and public hostility: the majority regarded the motor car as a fad and all motorists as "cranks."

But successful mechanisation demanded adequate roads or rails.

In 1864 the Municipal Institutions Act gave power to incorporate as city, town, or rural district, and such divisions were to be responsible for minor road improvements. The State was divided into seventy-four divisions in 1879 by a Divisional Boards Act for the administration of this road improvement. In 1902, by the Local Authorities Act, local authorities became responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads and, in turn, were entitled to levy rates. (The Government also made grants.)

It was not, however, until 1920 that any real attack was made on the problem of better roads for modern transport. The Main Roads Act of that year authorised the appointment of a Main Roads Board for the control of roads and vehicles, and this was amended in 1925 to provide for a Commissioner. In 1951 the Commission became a department.

The 1925 Act, apart from setting up the machinery of administration, lightened the financial load on the local authorities by limiting the amount of the liability for maintenance costs and spreading the cost over a thirty-year period. Equity was sought by the provision that the total expenditure should be split in (roughly) equal portions between the northern, central and southern roads. This meant that, at last, a co-ordinated road plan was possible.

The Federal Aid Roads Act of 1926 provided Federal funds for just such a planned system of arterial roads and lightened, to some extent, the burden on the local authorities. The money was derived from customs duty and from an excise duty on petrol.

As in any rapidly expanding community, there is a serious problem in Queensland in the number of vehicles using the roads. More than 220,000 motor cars, 102,000 "utilities," 38,000 trucks, 1,300 buses, 410 motor ambulances, and 20,000 motor cycles were on the roads in 1959—the number of vehicles had doubled in ten years to reach those figures.

Moreover, a factor deciding policy has definitely been the idea that road transport should not be allowed to jeopardise the returns from the railway system—which is chronically a loser of revenue.

The Railways—the "Iron Horses"

The railway history of Queensland began in 1863, four years after the Separation of the Colony from New South Wales, and with a population of only 23,500. The first section of railway from Ipswich to Bigge's Camp (now Grandchester) was opened on 31 July 1865; and the line reached Toowoomba in 1867. Ten years elapsed, however, after the opening of the first section, before Brisbane itself was connected in 1875! In subsequent years the lines were extended to the Darling Downs, the Maranoa, and further south-west; the southern line reached the New South Wales border at Wallangarra in 1887, and the western line was completed as far as Charleville (483 miles from Brisbane) by the end of 1888.

The Central Division railways were commenced in 1867, with thirty miles of line inland from the port of Rockhampton. In the eighties a spurt of railway building connected the ports with the interior: e.g.: 1880, Townsville; 1881, Bundaberg; and Maryborough (to Gympie); 1885, Mackay; and Cooktown; 1887, Cairns; 1889, Normanton; and 1890, Bowen. In 1888, Maryborough had lines established to Bundaberg, Gympie, Childers, and Kilkivan, which were
further connected to the Brisbane section in 1891. By 1892 the Central Line from Rockhampton had been extended to Longreach (427 miles), but connection between Rockhampton and Brisbane was not completely established until 1897. Townsville, the port for all the country to the west, was connected with Winton (368 miles distant) by 1899, but was not linked with the capital until 1923.

In 1910, when the North Coast Railways Act provided for linking the existing systems by means of a coastal railway, there were 3,806 miles of railway in Queensland. (The last of the coastal links was completed in 1924.) There was a remarkable development of railways after 1910: in the six years from 1910 to 1915, for example, 1,572 miles of line were opened. (The maximum mileage of 6,567 miles was reached in 1932, and included the South Brisbane-Border section of the “uniform gauge” railway to Sydney—69 miles of 4ft. 8½in. gauge track—opened in 1930.

At 30 June 1956 the mileage remaining in operation was 6,456. Queensland’s railway system of 6,456 miles, which is State-owned and controlled, is the largest route-mileage of the Commonwealth States, and consists essentially of five transverse lines running hundreds of miles inland from four ports—Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns; these are themselves connected by a line following the coastline. This coastal “Sunshine Route” of 1,043 miles (from Brisbane to Cairns) is the second largest unbroken railway journey in Australia. (The only two Queensland railways not connected with the general system are the Cooktown-Laura and the Normanton-Croydon lines.) The great mileage was rendered necessary by geographical considerations, especially the fact that the State includes one-third of all the occupied area of Australia, but has no trafficable inland waterways. However, railways, themselves, are gradually giving way to road trains which have become numerous on the inland highways. With a prime mover of 150 h.p. equipped with hydraulic brakes, hauling three trailers equipped with Westinghouse air brakes, these trains travel at from 12 to 20 m.p.h. with loads of up to 800 shorn sheep, or 80 cattle, or other burdens.

Interstate hauliers of all descriptions take an undue toll of the roads, which are not built for such weights and power.

In 1954-55 this led to a legal battle between the State Government and the interstate hauliers when the former attempted to levy taxation or licences to force the use of the railways or to obtain compensation for road destruction. The Full High Court ruled in June 1955 that the legislation contravened the constitutional provision for freedom of trade and commerce.

Queensland, by the Roads (Contribution to Maintenance) Act of 1957 made a charge on all users of vehicles with a carrying capacity of more than four tons, in an attempt to finance the maintenance of roads to a sufficiently high standard to meet the requirements of swift and efficient transport.

Constant research is being carried out into the provision of better roads and better traffic systems. “Clover leaf” and “elcross” construc-

(147) The general gauge is 3ft. 6in., which was deliberately chosen in the early period of railway construction because it was more suited to the limited financial resources of the Colony. The choice was between less lines with more speed, or more lines with less speed.

Aviation

Queensland, the most decentralised and, potentially, the richest of all the States of Australia, fronting Indonesia and so South-east Asia and its vast populations, and midway between the equator and Antarctica, is, by these bio-geographical facts alone, destined to play a prominent part in the air history of the world.

Men like the late Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith and “Bert” Hinkler were not men budding surprisingly from unexpected stocks, they were the modern counterparts of those pioneers who drove the bullock waggons across the trackless bush or along the dusty ruts of the outback tracks four score years before. Just as those men gave way to the confident drivers of streamlined, high-powered cars, or immensely powerful semi-trailers, or earth-moving machinery, these pioneers of the air will (and do) traverse virtually every square mile of the air above Queensland—or anywhere else—as casually as Brother Jimmy rides his “bike” to the corner store. Queenslanders are among the most air-minded people of the world.

The fifth largest airline in the world had its birth in Queensland and still proudly retains the name “Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services” (Qantas), despite the fact that it had the honour of inaugurating the first “round-the-world air service” through New York.

The story of Qantas is one of the world’s most romantic stories of aviation achievement.

In 1919 the Commonwealth Government offered £10,000 to the first Australian to fly from England to Australia and among those who nominated were two former pilots of the Australian Flying Corps of the First World War—Hudson Fysh and P. J. (“Ginty”) McGuiness. The death of their backer, however, forced Fysh and McGuiness to withdraw. Ross and Keith Smith(148) made the first successful England-Australia flight.

Later, Fysh and McGuiness surveyed the northern Australian sector of the route—from Longreach to Darwin—at the request of the Government. (Hudson Fysh laid out the first Darwin airstrip at Fanny Bay during this expedition.)

About this time, McGuiness went to the aid of a Queensland pastoralist, Fergus McMaster, whose car was stuck in the bed of a creek and learnt that the grazier had very positive ideas on the future of aviation and the contribution it could make to the development of Queensland, and the rest of the Continent.

(148) Sir Keith Smith later became a Director of Qantas.
The creek-bed conversation resulted in a conference with other grazier colleagues of McMaster, and on 16 November 1920 an airline was founded. This airline was the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Limited, and Fergus McMaster (later Sir Fergus) was chairman of directors. Dr. Hope Michod was also associated with the company. With Dr. C. V. Watson-Brown and (later) Rev. Dr. John Flynn he had laid the base on which was ultimately built the Flying Doctor Service (see below) by a pioneer effort in this regard round Longreach and Barcaldine.

Established in Queensland on 16 November 1920 the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services had a capital of £6,037 and two flimsy First World War aircraft with a cruising speed of 65 miles per hour! Proudly claiming paternity were P. J. ("Ginty") McGuiness and Wilmot Hudson Fysh (who was later to be knighted).

Ticket No. 1 was issued to a pioneer pastoralist, 87-year-old Alexander Kennedy, of Longreach (see page 249), who was flown in 4 hours 35 minutes from Longreach to Cloncurry. It had taken him, 53 years previously, eight months to do the same trip by bullock waggon.

In 1929 the first direct connection with the coast came with the opening of a Charleville-Brisbane service; the total route mileage was 1,484. In 1930, Qantas moved its headquarters and workshops to Brisbane. In 1931 came the first oversea link, when Qantas co-operated with Imperial Airways (later to become B.O.A.C.), then reaching down towards Australia with an experimental airmail. In 1934 this co-operation grew into a partnership, Imperial Airways and Qantas contributing capital to form the new company, Qantas Empire Airways Ltd. Although the reshaped company now had an "overseas" touch to the name, the original flavour of the lonely "outback" still found expression in the first word, formed of the initials of the original company.

In December 1934 Imperial Airways and Qantas pioneered the through service from the United Kingdom to Australia. In 1958 Qantas is servicing five continents with a route mileage of 67,000 miles by some forty aircraft, valued at £18 million.

But Qantas is only one of five major airlines operating in Queensland. T.A.A., Ansett-A.N.A., Q.A.L., and Butler Bros. are familiar names in the air history of this State. Competition, co-operation and mergers between these companies have given Queensland an unexcelled air service with fast luxury airliners linking Birdsville and Bagdad, Thursday Island and Toronto.

In 1934 Queensland was the jumping-off ground for the first regular passenger and air-mail service between England and Australia, breaking new ground and confounding the critics.

The "Flying Doctor" Service

A unique service for outback settlers, begun as a private venture by Dr. Hope Michod was expanded by the quiet but indomitable efforts of the Reverend Dr. John Flynn of the Australian Inland Mission. He inspired Qantas to inaugurate the Flying Doctor Service, at first unique to Queensland, and a blessing to many thousands of sufferers.

Medical men and pilots receive calls for help from hundreds of miles away; calls powered, in the early days, by a "pedal-wireless" transceiver invented by A. H. Traeger, O.B.E., a South Australian, specially for the purpose.

Linked with the Flying Doctor and the Flying Ambulance Services is another unique organisation.

The Bush Pilots' Aireways Limited is owned by 120 shareholders—all graziers. The organisation was established in 1951 after the present (1959) managing director and chief pilot, Captain Bob Norman, successfully completed an urgent mercy flight in an Aero Club Tiger Moth. It operates charter flights to more than 200 airstrips at station homesteads and missions throughout 250,000 square miles of far North Queensland.

The Bush Pilots have four regular mail runs from Cairns, but more often than not they are transporting cargo, running "mercy" flights, searching for missing stock or inspecting fences. The organisation is typical of a number of small companies such as Somerset Aireways which fill in the gaps left by the major companies.

These are the companies, but the readily increasing air-mindedness of pastoralists and businessmen has resulted in a situation where virtually every homestead or tiny town in the outback has a cleared patch of ground for a tiny plane to land.

Whether it is the latest pressurised turbo-jet flying at 20,000 feet, or a battered Dragon Rapide skimming the treetops, in the outback; or a modern fighter guarding our air-approaches, Queensland airmen have built up a record of service based on outstanding courage, initiative and skill—the legacy of their pioneer forefathers.

In its Centenary Year, 1959, Queensland has the greatest railway mileage of any State in the Commonwealth; it has the reputation of being the most air-minded of any State of the Commonwealth, and a vast network of air routes criss-cross the State; it has more than 64,000 miles of formed roads and a further 60,000 miles of unconstructed roads; and its many excellent ports use some of the most up-to-date machinery in the world to cater for a busy coastal trade.

Truly, indeed, they have hitched their (bullock) waggons to the stars!