

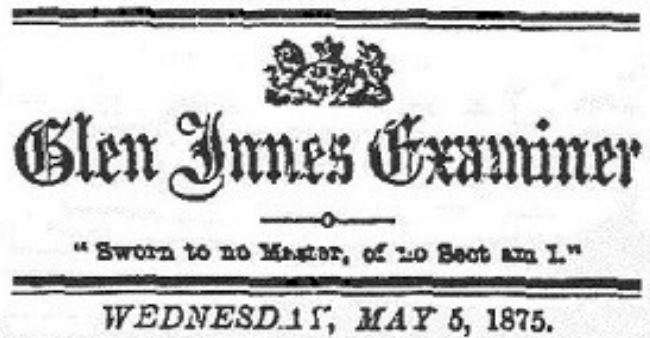
## Chapter 11 - Quinn's Rail Route

What came to be called after 1875 'Quinn's Route' for a proposed railway down to the coast at Grafton galvanised The Glen and our whole tableland region for nearly a decade before rail even arrived in Glen Innes. Ribbons of rail iron had been snaking out across this wide land for twenty years ever since the Sydney to Parramatta line opened in 1855.<sup>1</sup> Growth of rail across the colony was removing the tyranny of distance between our widely scattered communities, opening up whole regions of primary productivity to the markets of our growing cities and indeed the world. Transport time and costs were shattered by the challenge of the locos. Coastal shipping the fastest transport to the Capital, at most a matter of days compared to months in a dray, provided well for me as mail rider on the overland section to the tableland. But gradually steam driven drays in the form of rail rolling stock revolutionised colonial land transport. Proximity to technology just one step beyond the bullock dray had every civic centre of any note pushing their community claim for a rail connection.

Even ten years before rail finally arrived in the Glen the newly establish Examiner was calling in 1875 for a public meeting to agitate for a branch line down to the Grafton port. Hugh Quinn, myself, would propose, at the meeting, a money saving route for a rail line from the coast to the table land. Our politically canny servants of the public purse in Sydney had already sent surveyors to examine the possible cost but their circuitous route was rather long and expensive.

The Glen Innes Examiner promoted a meeting 'at the Court House, to adopt the draft of a petition to be laid before Parliament, setting forth the urgent need of a Railway, and pointing out the easiest mode of bringing it on to the tableland'. I was introduced as 'a practical man of long residence in New England, and one having an intimate knowledge of the country'. The editorial proclaimed that 'Mr Hugh Quinn surveyors' by which a Railway ... at a far less cost than has been estimated' could be brought to the tableland. It pointed out that I had 'traced the route on a map' and proposed to point it out at the meeting that evening.

The editor maintained that 'when private individuals thus step forward to give the public the benefit of their research ... their zeal should be rewarded by a corresponding



THE question of a Railway from the seaboard of the Clarence to the tableland of New England, is one which is fraught with a degree of importance to the inhabitants of this district of no common moment. Such being the case, it is hard to reconcile the fact, or rather to assign a reason for the apathy displayed by the public in the matter. Doubtless an opinion obtains, that the cost of such an undertaking would be so enormous that no Government will be found with the temerity to even ask for a vote for a railway from the coast to New England. Whether such a deduction is right or not, at this juncture is of little consequence; what we wish more particularly to urge is, that if a persistent agitation and organised action on the part of this and the Clarence district were continued, it would be the means of removing much of the opposition to which the scheme is at present subjected. A public meeting is called for this evening, at the Court House, to adopt the draft of a petition to be laid before Parliament, setting forth the urgent need of a Railway, and pointing out the easiest mode of bringing it on to the tableland. Mr. HUGH QUINN, a practical man of long residence in New England, and having an intimate knowledge of the country between here and Grafton, has found a new route unknown to the surveyors who recently made the trial survey, by which a Railway can be brought to the tableland at a far less cost than has been estimated.

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amount of interest and activity on the part of the public'. He hoped 'that some lasting results will follow the praiseworthy action of Mr. Quinn who most certainly deserves the thanks of the community for the time and trouble he has expended in pursuit of the object he has in view'.<sup>2</sup> Well with an introduction like that you would think I and the editor would be the best of friends for ever. But as you will soon see in the short space of five years he editorialised to disparage me in his efforts to enlarge a news story to promote his paper.

But in '75 the northern rail line was progressing towards Glen Innes and interest was running high in town. With local clamour in The Glen for an east west rail line to the coast, every new mile north became a step towards turning our town into a regional railway hub. By 1872<sup>3</sup> on the 'fourth of the fourth' the main north line had reached Murrurundi, half way from Sydney. As the line pushed on, up into this difficult terrain and onto the tableland, progress would be slowed. The tableland escarpment was expected to slow the work but Glen Innes was preparing for great future development. Progress was promised and Civic pride running high as recorded a year earlier in an 1874 May 30<sup>th</sup> edition of The Australian Town and Country Journal. Our town crier my Dad had access to a wealth of newsprint.



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'There are not very many districts in the colony that can show a greater variety of resources than that of which Glen Innes is the centre, and I may be pardoned for again referring to the extensive area of rich pastoral and agricultural country around it, particularly to the south and west; to the fine flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle on the well conducted stations around; the sheep farms of numerous incipient squatters; and the hundreds of persons doing well on "the richest tin mine in New England" within a few hours drive of the town.

It was a just appreciation of all these resources that no doubt influenced the townsfolk to erect such fine buildings: business premises, hotels, stores, &c.<sup>4</sup> In carrying out their various spirited undertakings they were assisted greatly by a building society, which worked admirably

during its short career. The inhabitants have now established a permanent building and investment society, and at the time of my visit over 600 shares had been taken up. In addition to the buildings already described, there has been erected a fine Temperance Hall, at a cost of £500, which will be used for amusements and entertainments as well as the business of the flourishing society, to which it owes its origin. At the time of my visit there had just been completed on an excellent site, in the principal street, a fine pile of business premises, an engraving of which appears in this issue. (see above, Mr James Munro Stores, Glen Innes)

Those stores have been erected by Mr. James Munro formerly of Araluen, in the Braidwood district, and he has spared no expense in making them among the most complete in the north. The buildings are of brick, two stories in height with spacious

balcony, and the exterior presents an imposing appearance. The handsome plate-glass front reminds one of a fashionable Pitt or George street establishment. The ground floor contains the stores and offices, and the dwelling apartments are above. The fittings



throughout are of polished cedar, from Newton Boyd. The buildings were designed and erected by a local firm, Messrs Simpkins and Williams, and the manner in which they have carried out the contract reflects great credit on them. Other large

It was in the year following this praise for our growing Glen that the 1875 Examiner editorial eulogised my zeal in promoting the 'Railway Movement'. It suggested the reward of my efforts should be a 'corresponding amount of interest and activity on the part of the public'. At this time the editorial policy of the Examiner towards me was, to say the least, somewhat complimentary. At the time I was also attracted to its slogan that read 'Sworn to no Master, of no Sect am I'. And on several occasions this new community resource was very supportive of worthwhile activities in the district. 'The question of a Railway from the seaboard of the Clarence to the tableland of New England' was aptly described in that Wednesday edition of May 5 1875 as 'one fraught with a degree of importance to the inhabitants of the district'.<sup>6</sup>

The editorial continued 'Such being the case, it is hard to reconcile the fact, or rather to assign a reason for the apathy displayed by the public in the matter. What

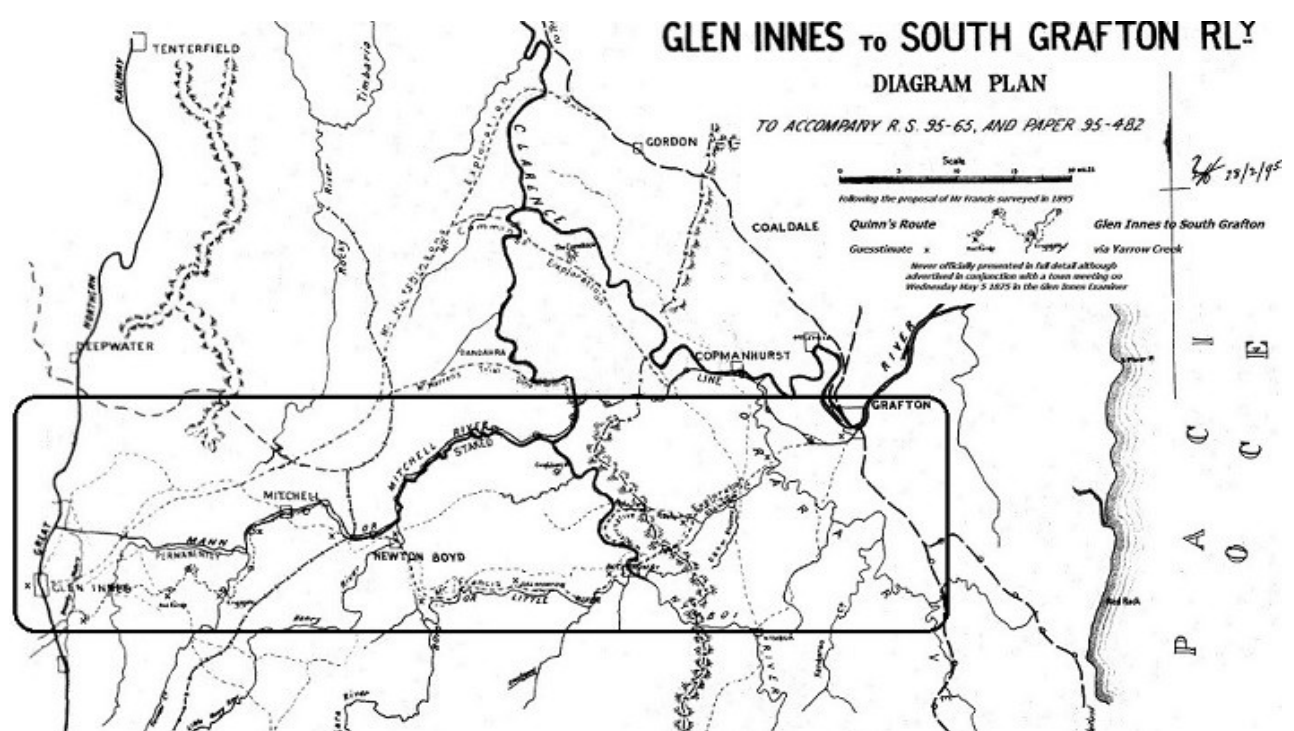
stores in the town are Mr. James Mattin's long established business, and Messrs H. and B. Á. Lewis's. There are four hotels in Glen Innes. The principal patronage is pretty evenly divided between the Commercial and the Telegraph. I put up at the former and was well treated; the latter was about changing hands. There was in course of completion for Mr. O'Keeffe in Grey and Ferguson streets a fine new hotel of brick, containing 23 rooms. I understand it is let to Mr. Ahoy, of the Grant Hotel, Tenterfield.

Among other places worthy of mention are the Bank of New South Wales, a very pleasantly situated and neatly designed building under the management of G.N. Halloran, Esq.; the Great Northern Exchange, the auction rooms of Mr. W. C. Rodgeron, & a book selling establishment and Town and Country Journal agency of Mr. Thomas McDonald, to whom I am indebted for much valuable information. I must not omit to add that Glen Innes boasts of having two solicitors and a newspaper, the Glen Innes Guardian. (From Journey to the North, Conclusion 1874).<sup>5</sup>

**Mr. HUGH QUINN, a practical man of long residence in New England, and having an intimate knowledge of the country between here and Grafton, has found a new route unknown to the surveyors who recently made the trial survey, by which a Railway can be brought to the tableland at a far less cost than has been estimated. He has traced the route on a map, and this evening he proposes to point it out, and to afford much valuable information, which may possibly tend greatly to the ultimate success of the Railway movement. When private individuals thus step forward to give the public the benefit of their research and experience, we think their zeal should be rewarded by a corresponding amount of interest and activity on the part of the public. We trust, therefore, to see a large attendance to-night, and that some lasting results will follow the praiseworthy action of Mr. QUINN, who most certainly deserves the thanks of the community for the time and trouble he has expended in the pursuit of the object he has in view.**

we wish more particularly to urge is that if a persistent agitation and organised action on the part of this and the Clarence district were continued, it would be the means of removing much of the opposition to which the scheme is at present subjected'. With such intensity did our newspaper support the Court House meeting to be held that very evening 'to adopt the draft of a petition to be laid before Parliament, setting forth the urgent need of a Railway, and pointing out the easiest mode of bringing it to the tableland'.

One could get the impression that the editor was my intimate friend. Apparently honoured was he to introduce me as a friend of all the fine folk who patronised his new paper. Here was our new local newspaper championing a local solution for reducing costs. The editor was well aware of the value of being seen to be promoting such a local project. Just maybe he valued it for its intrinsic merits as much as for its utility as a tool to promote distribution. The editorial went on to praise private individuals who 'step forward to give the public the benefit of their research' and urged, as a reward 'a corresponding amount of interest and activity on the part of the public'.



Public interest in the project grew and so I suppose did my interest in a reward. My research in the area had been done years before when I regularly rode between Glen Innes and Clarence Mouth as a mail rider. Before me the overland option of travelling mail by road was slow and often delayed by seasonal flooding of the several rivers that needed to be crossed along the inland route from the south. Coastal rivers and jungles, though opening up, were still neigh impenetrable. However mail delivered swiftly by coastal shipping to the mouth of the Clarence known locally as Big River was carried inland on horseback by me thus cutting days off any land trip of that time. Honed by Lodi my bush skills sought out and found the fleetest route up the escarpment and this was what I proposed to present to the public.

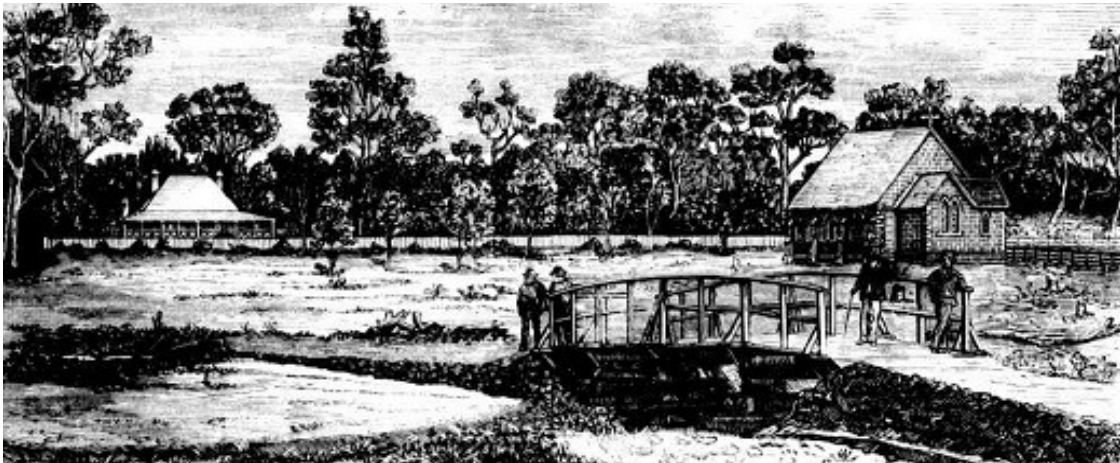
The question of a reward first raised by the editor eventually soured my relationship with the Examiner. Advantage came to form the focus of this editorial fiend in friends habiliment. Time wounds all heels and in a short space of five years his commendation turned to condemnation. It eventually became painfully apparent to me that controversy was at the core of his kudos. The attention of the townsfolk was his main motivation as it increased the sales and circulation of his newspaper in our flourishing community. But more of that anon.

Glen Innes as a growing township is well portrayed in that 1874 Town and Country



Journal. My family was domiciled 20 miles north west in the company town on Vegetable Creek. But the growth of The Glen our major civic centre was attracting attention across the colony. The AT&C journal continued its article with a documentation of the growth of the houses of Religion in our district.

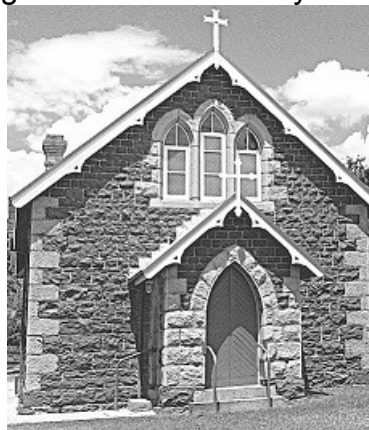
'The churches in Glen Innes are all of a substantial character, and some are well designed edifices. The Church of England is situated across the stream from the business portion of the town. It is a handsome edifice, built of blue-stone, at a cost of £1200. The interior is very tastefully fitted up, particularly the chancel, which has a beautiful altar cloth in scarlet and gold. The dimensions of the nave are 60 feet in length, and 30 feet in breadth. The Rev. J. H. Johnson, B.A., is the incumbent. The parsonage near the church is a neat, pleasant residence, in a nice flower garden. The parsonage was erected at a cost of £800. The accompanying engraving is from a photograph by Mr. Conrad Wagner.<sup>7</sup>



C of E: West of Rocky Ponds, Glen Innes Ck <sup>8</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church is situated near the high road to Grafton; it is built of blue-stone and is a plain unpretending structure. The resident priest is Father Kelly whose presbytery is a neat brick building recently erected.

The Presbyterian Church is not far from the Catholic Church and in the same street. This is also built of blue stone and of a neat design with bell turret and metal spire at the north west angle; a shallow porch in stone surmounted by a triplet and flanked by lancets is at the west end; there are double lancets flanked by buttresses on the north and south sides. The Reverend Archibald Cameron is the Presbyterian minister for the district. There is no Wesleyan Church in the town.<sup>9</sup> St Pats RC church was to increasingly become a focus in the life of my family. I later reflected that my apparent abandonment of the Examiners motto about not being a sect member may have turned the editor against me.



Saint Patricks Church, in 1874 cnr Church and Meade Street.

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## Chapter 11 Endnotes

- 1 Wikipedia, Granville near Parramatta Junction, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Granville\\_railway\\_station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Granville_railway_station)
- 2 Glen Innes Examiner May 5 1875. Wednesday May 5 1875 Public meeting on Railway Route
- 3 NSW Rail.net History Timeline, Main North Line: [http://www.nswrail.net/lines/show.php?name=NSW:main\\_north](http://www.nswrail.net/lines/show.php?name=NSW:main_north)
- 4 Wikipedia, et cetera, &c, and the rest, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Et\\_cetera](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Et_cetera)
- 5 Australian Town and Country Journal Saturday May 16 1874, p 24 NLA <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70474593>
- 6 Op.Cit. Glen Innes Examiner Wednesday May 5 1875 Public meeting on Railway Route
- 7 Australian Town and Country Journal, Saturday 16 May 1874, p. 20 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4767810>
- 8 Australian Town and Country Journal, Saturday 16 May 1874, p. 20 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page4767810>
- 9 Australian Town and Country Journal, Saturday May 16 1874, p 21 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70474593>
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