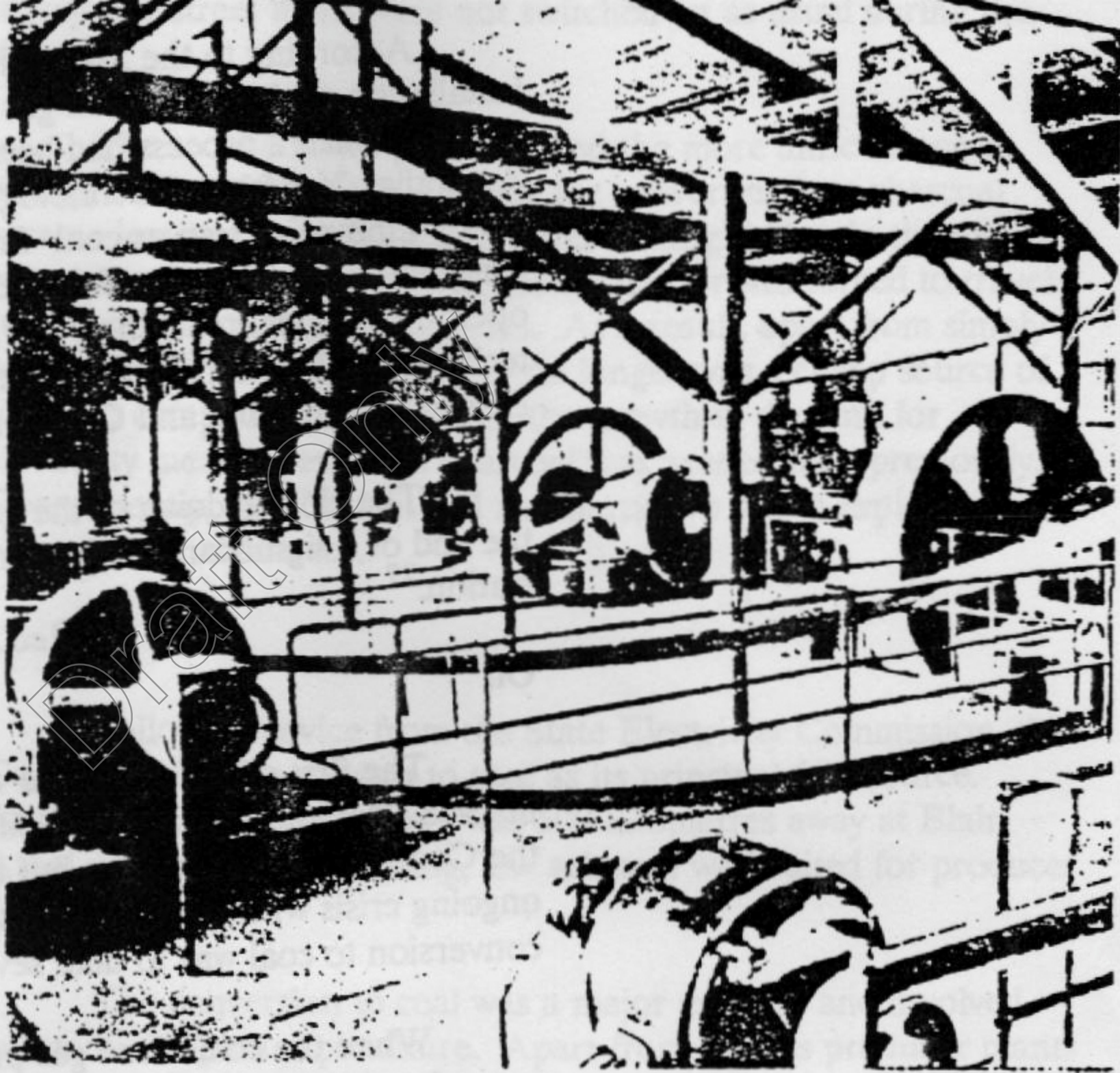
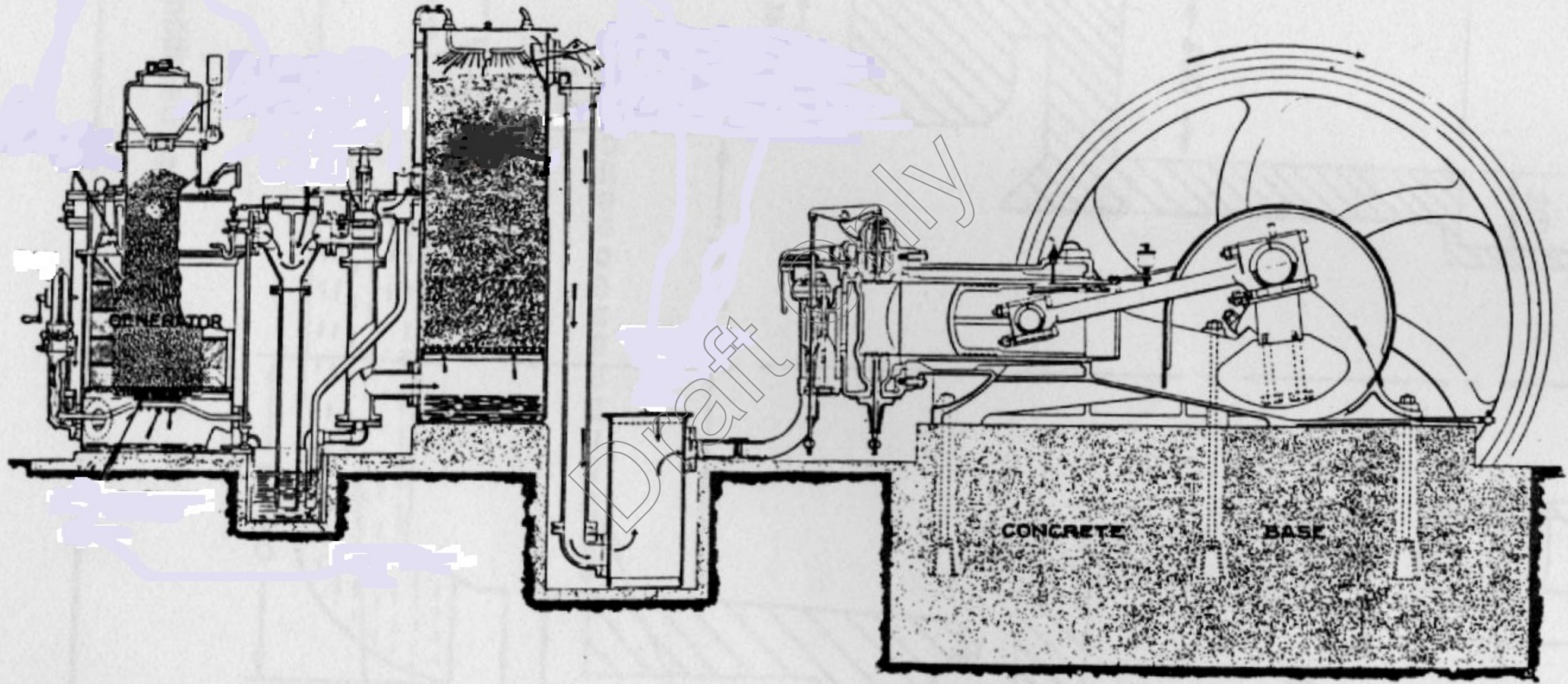


Interior of Longreach power station showing the Ruston and Hornsby engines and belt driven generators [*Longreach Leader*, 3 December 1932].









**I**N EXAMINING the cultural significance of any place, a wide range of qualities can be considered. Not only the aesthetic qualities, or how a place looks, but also the social, historic, scientific values that are sometimes less evident must be taken into account. Not all aspects of the significance of a place will be of equal value and one aspect may be more important than others. By fully appreciating the whole range of qualities the judgement as to what is significant is made more straightforward. Appropriate plans for the protection of those significant qualities may then be prepared.

## **5.1 SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The former Longreach Powerhouse is significant

- for the evidence contained within the surviving fabric that the generation of electricity was formerly a local undertaking;
- for the manifestation in the scale and extent of the buildings of the major influence that the powerhouse operation had in the local community;
- for the historic evidence in the buildings and machinery of the earliest generation of electricity in Longreach and of the development of that industry within the district.
- for its site containing among other elements the bore and former swimming baths

The equipment is significant

- for the evidence of one of the first applications of coal fired gas producers in the electricity industry in Australia.

## **5.2 THE SITE**

The powerhouse was constructed within a local government precinct that comprised the town bore, shire clerk's residence,



recreational facilities such as swimming pool and tennis courts and the QATB. The construction and development of the powerhouse on this site signifies the role of the Longreach Shire Council in electricity generation until 1985 as one of a number of services to the local community.

Conversely, the site is close to the centre of the town and the development of the power station over sixty years eventually dominated the site and had a major impact on the town itself and the community. The noise and vibration of the engines and generators, the presence of coal wagons and railway locomotives within the residential area and the scale of the buildings made electricity generation a tangible component of Longreach life. That period of Longreach history is held with affection in the memories of many residents.

The site is also significant to the town for it contains the town bore. This bore was first sunk in the late 1890s and was the principal supply of water for many years. Swimming baths were built in the early 1920s adjacent to the bore. Evidence of the baths still remain on the site.

### **5.3 THE BUILDINGS**

As a series of large, interconnected, galvanised iron sheds, the Powerhouse is a distinctive structure within the Longreach townscape. The size and scale of the building indicates that task of generating electricity was a major local industry.

The introduction of an electricity in 1921 came at a time when local authorities were expanding the services they provided. The Council saw the introduction of an electricity supply as an important part of their responsibilities along with the implementation of other amenities such as roads, reticulated water, drainage and sewerage. Electric lighting was tangible evidence of progress. It gave the town a 'civilised' image.

The Powerhouse was constructed within a local government precinct that comprised the QATB centre, artesian bore, shire clerk's residence, swimming pool and tennis courts. The proximity of the powerhouse to these other buildings and features signified that it was an responsibility of the local authority.

Now that Longreach's electricity supply is no longer a locally produced product but is 'imported' from outside the shire, the powerhouse stands as a reminder that electricity generation was once not only a local enterprise but also a vital part of the regional economy.

### **5.4 THE EQUIPMENT**

Of the surviving engines and equipment, the items that are of most interest are the two gas producers. They were manufactured specifically for the Longreach power station and



were reportedly the first coal-fired gas producers used in the electricity industry in Australia.

For local authorities in western Queensland, the generation of electricity in the western regions of Queensland was not an easy task. Once the supply of timber became scarce, there was no immediate source of fuel. Either oil or coal had to be transported from the most suitable fuel the only immediate source of trying to supply electricity

The gas producers illustrate the difficulties the Shire Council faced in supplying electricity as cheaply as possible to consumers. Timber was initially used as a fuel source because it was cheap to obtain and in plentiful supply. Once it became scarce however, the decision to switch to coal was made. Although the technology of coal fired gas producers was somewhat outdated, it was nevertheless seen as the most viable option.

Of the engines, the diversity of types and manufacturers indicate the development of electricity generation in country centres did not necessarily followed an ordered pattern. The various makes and models of engines reflect the influence of diverse factors including the availability of fuels, the necessity to acquire equipment quickly to meet increasing demand and the use of engines which had become redundant in other power stations in Queensland.