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MAIN LINE STATION DESIGN POLICIES

John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, approved the plan for Rydal station. It was the first example of a new type of combined office and residence, a building type the NSW Railways had used since 1855 for small communities. Whitton revised the design of platform buildings he had been using after the trunk lines after he had completed the designs for Marulan in 1868, Bowenfels in 1869 and Murrrundi in 1871. Interestingly, he did not use a consistent design policy for the three main lines. He spent the public's money in different ways.

On the Main South, he used temporary platform buildings to a very large degree. Yes, Goulburn got a magnificent but relatively small building in 1869 but that and at Bathurst in 1876 was the only time before 1880 that lavish amounts of money was allocated to platform buildings on new lines. Even at Bathurst, Whitton did not complete the building before the opening of the line, completion taking another six months On the Main North, he reduced the length of his standard Georgian design and applied this design to a far greater degree than the other trunk lines, such as at Muswellbrook, Scone and Murrurundi. He decided not to spend any great amount of funds on platform buildings before 1880. For the Main West, Whitton used combined offices/residences to an extant greater than the other trunk lines. Whereas on the Main South, Goulburn was the signature platform structure in 1869, Whitton split the available funds at that time amongst three buildings in 1869 – a beautiful, all-stone Georgian structure at Bowenfels, an Italian Villa design at Wallerawang and a beautiful Gothic structure at Rydal.

Whitton used the same design as he approved for Rydal for Tarana, Brewongle, Georges Plains, Blayney and Spring Hill.[1] Probably, he used a combination structure at Newbridge but evidence of what existed there has not yet been located.

Bathurst was destined to have a special design, as was the case of Goulburn in 1869, because Bathurst was regarded as one of the early destination towns of the NSW Railways. Two stations were in the vicinity of Bathurst that Whitton decided should get a treatment different to the use of combination structures.   He approved a temporary, brick building for Raglan in 1873. While this was a very simple structure with a gabled roof, its significance was that the structure was built of brick. This was the only time a temporary building was erected on the NSW rail system using bricks, rather than timber or corrugated sheet steel. Whitton believed that his design for Raglan was, in fact, a station for Bathurst.

Not much is or was neat and simple with the NSW Railways at any time since 1855. The story of the NSW Railways is as much a tale of the odd, inconsistent, non-standard and peculiar as it is of normal and standard. This was demonstrated by the

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[1] John Forsyth's official station notes state that the structure at Spring Hill was not built.

use of a Georgian design at Kelso in 1876, some five or so years after the previous example was used at Murrurundi and seven years after the previous example on the Main West at Bowenfels. Once the railway line passed Bathurst, Whitton reverted to combination buildings – at Perthville, Georges Plains, Blayney and possibly at Newbridge and Spring Hill.

He used a combination building at Orange, but in the form of a two storey structure. After Orange, Whitton stopped using combination offices/residences altogether. On the Main South, Whitton used the combination model only once at Binalong in 1877 and once at Willow Tree also in 1877. These last two were approved after Whitton stopped using the design for the Main West.[2] The cessation of using combination offices/residences for new lines marks the time when Whitton changed the overall design policy for a third and final time.

The Main West can be separated into four main periods in relation to the design of platform buildings.   These were 1859 to 1869, in which the Georgian style dominated, 1869 to 1877 when the style changed to Gothic, 1877 to 1880 when there was a period of design nothingness and 1880 to 1886 when a genuine NSW Railway style emerged. Combination buildings of four different styles were used in the first two periods for new lines.[3]

RYDAL STATION

At Wallerawang, John Whitton had approved a new style of two-storey combined office/residence along the Italian Villa style. This style was not repeated elsewhere on the NSW rail system. Although the name of the style seems impressive, the Wallerawang building was very much a small, well-executed structure with substantial architectural restraint. The evidence for the selection of a two-storey building, being the first use on the Great Western Railway, at Wallerawang appears to be his intention to provide a special marker for the end of the railway line across the Blue Mountains.

It would seem that John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, was of the view that he could not revert to an old style of platform structure for the station after Wallerawang, namely Rydal. Whitton was also under a certain amount of pressure to approve a pretty building, considering what magnificent work his subordinate, William Mason, had approved in his absence overseas at Goulburn.

The main features of the building were:

1. Small size 50 feet x 30 feet with the residential rear part one step lower

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[2] An example was also built at Helensburgh in 1889 but this was not Whitton's work
[3]   Occasionally, combination offices/residences were used on existing lines, as at Emu Plains in 1882, which was approved by George Cowdery

2. Very ornate Gothic style with ornate barges and entry over the residence

3. Slate roof

4. Stone quoins on the building corners and openings

5. "A D 1869" plaques on both sides of the building

6. Awning 9 feet 9 inches wide, supported by timber posts

7. Finials and date plaque on gables

8. Front rooms are TO, GWR with a small section for parcels, LWR - 3 feet 6 inches wide corridor and, at the rear, two bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen

9. Sandstone used for quoins and around doors and windows

10. Kitchen fireplace is 7 feet wide and other fireplaces 3 feet wide

11. 11 feet ceiling height for front and 12 feet for rear

12. 10 feet vertical clearance between the platform and awning at the coping

13. 12 feet yard between main building and parapetted top toilet block (skillion roof only over closet)

14. Timber posts supporting the platform awning

15. Contractor, R. McIntosh

The platform building has been mutilated a few times and much of the work has concerned the toilet block at the down end. It is still possible to see where the original urinal was located, men being required to use the facility in the rain because of the presence of a roof only over the closets. The wall of the toilet block on the rail side is different to the other walls and seems to have taken the brunt of attention of those evil-doers desirous of ruining the original, well-executed structure.

The platform was 220 feet long, inclusive of ramps. Consistent with the time, the platform was narrow, being 7 feet wide but extending in width in front of the building to 10 feet wide. The wall of the platform was stone sloping to the toe and the platform was at the then standard height of 2 feet 9 inches above the head of the rails. Gates were placed on the platform on the diagonals at each end of the building where the platform changed width. On the platform surface was stone flagging for a distance of 89 feet 6 inches, which is the distance of the building inclusive of the toilet block. At the rear of the platform was diagonal braced fencing, as was used at Goulburn in the same year. A 40 foot long carriage dock was located at down end, the remains of which are visible.

The down platform was extended at the down end with a brick wall according to secondary Railway Archives sources but a physical inspection does not accord with the written information. Today, the down platform face is composed of two products – a sandstone section at the up end and a brick wall for the remainder, which includes that part of the platform in front of the building. Which section of the wall is the older is a puzzle that remains to be solved.

For many decades, there has been a World War 1 monument on the down platform with a machine gun mounted on top of the monument. It was extant in 2013.

At the down end of the 1869 building is the timber signal box with skillion roof. It dates from track duplication. The size, style and materials are consistent with the period of construction.

John Forsyth's documentation states that, in 1891, a "new" platform was provided. There is no evidence to confirm that this "new" platform was on a loop or anywhere else but K. W. Kershaw writes in his article on crossing the Blue Mountains that the "new" platform was located on the loop.[4] Duplication through the station was opened in 1915 and the new up platform wall was brick. There are archaeological remains on the up platform which suggest that there was a 20 feet by 10 feet waiting shed. It would initially seem that the only building he up platform was the small timber waiting shed. However, there is a photograph opposite the station on an information display that shows that there was an Out Of Shed immediately on the Sydney side of the waiting room.

Just off the down end of the up platform was a small, timber-framed building about 40 feet long with a loading stage. This was the former goods shed. A photograph of it is in *Byways of Steam* (1), p.61. Bob Gallagher described the structure as "a pea shed" for loading vegetables directly into the vans of main line trains.

TARANA

Tarana has been a hotspot for people interested in the NSW Railways for many years. Perhaps no other station on the Main West has been treated so extensively in various publications. Bob Booth drew a lovely plan of the yard layout in 1964 in "Byways of Steam: Tarana", *Roundhouse*, Vol. 16 No. 3, April, 19179, p. 3. Life Member, Peter Neve, also had a comprehensive article in the April and July issues of *The Railway News* in 1971.

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[4]   K. W. Kershaw, "The Railway Crossing of the Blue Mountains – 9 – Wallerawang to Bathurst, *Bulletin*, Vol. 10 No. 259, May, 1959, p. 71

In 1999, Life Member, Graham Harper wrote that "the location of Tarana is symptomatic of the type of railway we have, located on a short straight, where straight sections are rare".[5] Graham also wrote another article, entitled "An Atypical Station on the Main Western Line", *ARH*, March, 2011, pp. 9 & 13. His article also contained a track diagram (p. 12).

R. and B. Wheatley, *Railway Portraits*, privately published, 2006, p. 55 shows the two water tanks and a workmen's vans in the dock siding in 1965. Ron Preston, *Tender into Tank*, Second Ed., p 106 et seq has photographs of the goods shed at Tarana and of Oberon line working. *Byways of Steam 1, 2* and *16* also have excellent photographs of the station, yard and goods shed.

While the structure at Tarana was built to the same overall design philosophy as the 1869 building at Rydal, the Tarana building which was approved in 1872 was much less ornate than the Rydal building. The comparison of the two buildings demonstrates the severe tightening of the expenditure of capital funds in just three years from 1869 to 1872.

The Table below shows the differences between the two buildings.

TABLE - A COMPARISON OF RYDAL (1869) AND TARANA (1872) PLATFORM BUILDINGS

BUILDING FEATURE	RYDAL	TARANA
Name of approving officer on plan	John Whitton	Nil
Size	50 x 30 feet	50 x 26 feet
Roof style	Hip and valley with end transverse gables	Hip and valley with end transverse gables
Chimney design	Individual, tall terracotta pots	Standard brick chimneys
Number of fireplaces and width of hearth	Five –hearth three feet wide– kitchen fireplace 7 feet wide hearth	Four – hearth two feet six inches – kitchen fireplace hearth 3 feet 3 inches wide
Gables	Ornamental bargeboards with finials	Ornamental bargeboards but without finials
Roof material	Slate	Corrugated iron sheets

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[5] G.Harper, *Railway Digest*, Vol. 59 N0. 736, February, 1999, p. 69

BUILDING FEATURE	RYDAL	TARANA
Date plaques	Yes	No – replaced by ventilators
General waiting accommodation	Enclosed General Waiting Room	Open "verandah" with fixed seating attached to three walls without backs
Ladies' Waiting Room	Yes	Yes, but with a fixed seat in the "Covered Passage' to the female closet
Booking and Parcels offices	Both	No Parcels Office
Office for Station Master	No	Yes, but oddly in the residence part of the building
Number of bedrooms	Two	Two
Provision of kitchen	Contained within the main building	Contained within the main building
Differences in floor levels	Rear section is one foot lower than front section	Constant floor level
Ceiling height	11 feet ceiling height for front and 12 feet for rear	Constant height of 11 feet 6 inches
Ornamental entrance to residence	Yes	No
Use of sandstone quoins on openings and building corners	Yes	No
Posts supporting platform awning	Timber	Timber
Toilet arrangements	12 feet yard between main building and parapeted top toilet block (skillion roof only over closet) – one closet for each – arched entry to male toilet – urinal partitions 2 feet wide – at	12 feet yard between main building and parapeted top toilet block (skillion roof only over closet) – one closet for each – arched entry to male toilet – urinal partitions 2 feet wide – at

BUILDING FEATURE	RYDAL	TARANA
	down end	up end
Use of 6 inch thick sandstone flagging in front of building for platform surface	Yes	No - restricted to a width of two feet at base of urinal
Material used for platform wall	Stone	Brick
Type of fencing at rear	Box frame with diagonal bracing, as at Goulburn	Picket with concave pattern
Name of contractor	R. McIntosh	Fred Horn, Goulburn
Has the original building been altered?	No, apart from replacement of original timber awning posts with steel pipe	Yes. Additions at rear and up end at unknown date

It would be a fair guess to say that Tarana was a very tiny hamlet when the railway arrived in 1872. This is reflected in the use of a combination office/residential structure, the omission of a centre pedestrian access through the building and the direction of the approach road oriented to the goods shed and not the passenger building.

The platform was 210 feet x 7 feet wide, expanding to 12 feet wide in front of the building. The platform wall was brick sloping down to the toe in typical Whitton design. The platform was earth filled and the coping was 2 feet 9 inches high but 3 feet 3 inches high at the rear of the platform. The entry gates to the platform were placed each side of the 1872 building, being 10 feet. At the time of the plan preparation, it was proposed to break with typical NSW practice and place the gates not on the diagonal between the change in platform width but on straight sections. It seems that this was altered at the time of construction to conform with prevailing practice. At the rear of platform, there was a picket fence with six feet high posts and with a concave shape like Bathurst. At each end of the platform were the traditional, 15 foot long ramps. There was a 60 feet by 7 feet "wool platform" where a down dock would normally be located. The goods warehouse, measuring 60 feet by 30 feet, was very close to building and, in fact, was located behind the platform. This very squashed layout was also applied to Singleton.

The platform awning was 10 feet 9 inches wide and was supported by six timber posts with cast iron brackets above the capitals.

A locomotive water supply was available from the time the station opened. An elevated tank, measuring 26 by 17 feet was located at the up end of the platform. The pump engine was located 380 feet distant on Solitary Creek. De-ashing of locomotives was another function undertaken at Tarana from 1872 and the ash tramway has been well-documented in various publications. An ash dump remains to help illustrate the functional role of Tarana.

There was a second and newer toilet block on the down platform at the up end measuring 14 feet 3 inches long by 10 feet 9 inches wide. It was approved by R. V. Pennefather the then Chief Civil Engineer, on 19th February, 1952, and completed on 16th October, 1953. The external walls were weatherboard to the three feet level and 3/16" thick asbestos cement sheeting above. The most interesting aspect was, naturally, the urinal. It was a "standard concrete urinal" consisting of five stalls. The urinal back was slightly sloping towards the users' toes. Half height partitions divided each of the stalls. There was 9 inch thick brickwork "around" (behind) the urinal to a level of 5 feet high. Human liquid waste gravitated to a rubble absorption trench 30 feet long opposite footbridge but, at an unknown later stage, the waste was redirected into two in-ground septic tanks in the forecourt of the station. Graham Harper, *Railway Digest*, Vol. 59 N0. 736, February, 1999, p. 69 wrote that the former ladies' toilet was at that time uni-sex and that the Ladies' Waiting Room was then the only public space in the 1872 building.

At the down end of the 1872 building is a timber framed signal box with a skillion roof. It was built in 1916 when the yard was re-arranged and amplified in connection with duplication of the main line. It is a typical platform signal box of the duplication era between 1910 and 1922. The design was seen on all main lines and branches. Oil heating to the signal box was provided by 1976. It could be assumed from that event that staff at the station worked exclusively from the signal box and not the 1872 building. The existence of a second ticket window (the first was in the 1872 building) in the signal box also indicates that staff had abandoned the original offices.

It appears that a platform was provided on the loop in 1899. On the up platform is a timber framed waiting room, planned and also built in 1916. Its gabled roof, timber construction and awning are typical of duplication structures used on all lines between 1892 and 1919. It measures 20 x 12 feet internal and 20 feet 10 inches by 12 feet 6 inches external. The width of the awning, supported by standard steel awning brackets, was also set at 9 feet 6 inches, which was one of several "standard" widths.

The pedestrian bridge linking the two platforms is one of only two remaining platform to platform footbridges on the Main West, the other being at Mount Victoria. The Warren truss steel bridge was erected in 1916 using steel from Larnakshire and Dorman Long.

Electric lighting and one power point was provided at the station in 1950.

OBERON
RAILWAY STATION BUILDING

OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

This document is neither a history of the Tarana-Oberon line nor a history of the railway at Oberon but is a focus on the heritage significance of the Oberon platform building and related infrastructure. Some contextual material is provided to gain an understanding of the heritage values of the station building.

WHY THE BRANCH LINE BECAME TO BE BUILT

There are secondary sources that indicate the railway was intended to link with a copper mine at Burraga. The legislation to authorize the construction of the line made no mention of that proposal and authorized only construction between Tarana and Oberon. Why was the line built to Oberon?

Two forces separately co-exist that combine at a particular time to end up with the construction and operation of a rail line. These two forces in New South Wales (NSW) are geographically based. One is in Sydney and the other is in Oberon. In Sydney, the institutions that make up the combined force are Parliament, the political parties, lobby and interest groups and the head office of the NSW Railways. These institutions have to act in unison in order to exercise power or be subservient to another institution before there is agreement to provide a railway. In Oberon, there must be a strong pre-railway lobby group that has sufficient power to persuade the Sydney-based force to build a line to its nominated site and not to other towns or regions. To summarise, the Oberon line resulted from the exercise of a power push from Sydney and a power pull to Oberon.

Yes, Oberon did get its railway but why was it authorised in 1919? When it was built, it reflected very low infrastructure and operational characteristics that could only be served by 50 year old, light-weight 0-6-0 locomotives – the "A" or, later, 19 class. Why did the NSW Railways want to open and manage what appeared like an antiquated and out-dated railway?

It is very difficult for rail observers today to understand why a railway, such as the Tarana-Oberon branch line, was knowingly built to such low standards at the same time as massive, high-class, ultra-modern works were underway to electrify Sydney's metropolitan rail system, to build the city underground and to erect a huge bridge

over Sydney Harbour. Was it a case as clear as day versus night? Was it a good case of the dominance of Sydney versus the Bush? No, it was not! It was not just a case of high building standards for Sydney and low standards for rural areas. That was true but it was not the rationale for the difference in building standards.

The reason for different building standards between the Oberon line and infrastructure works in Sydney lies in politics and economics. In rural areas, the allocation of capital expenditure was dominantly in the hands of State governments of all persuasions in fulfillment of a fantasy to maintain NSW and Australia as primarily an agrarian economy. However, the free market capitalist forces had been working against the concept since the second half of the 1880s. In Sydney, capital expenditure and economic growth was more undertaken by the private sector than governments, notwithstanding the large investments in the metropolitan rail system. While the financial rate of return in rural areas was steadily declining, especially in the 1920s, the rate of return from manufacturing in the urban areas was growing, even booming. Moreover, it was increasing without the financial support of government.

In regard to politics, it was the unattainable dream of all governments from 1903 to 1930 to fulfill the fantasy of a large rural population achieved by the breaking up, or what was known in NSW as closer settlement, of existing, large rural properties. In 1919, the Country Party, the first time rural voices coalesced into a political party, was formed in NSW.[6] Neville Pollard wrote an article about the one-time Premier, Joseph Carruthers, who in 1919 and 1920 was involved in a campaign supposedly to improve agriculture. Typical of the fantasy of the time was Carruther's ambition to settle "a million farms with a million families".[7] Governments relied on ever-increasing profits from the primary sector following the opening of each new railway line in country NSW. They made a big mistake. They forgot to examine the declining productivity per acre of land sown to crop. The NSW Railways was a part of the dream because rail lines allowed rural land holders to transport their goods by the comprehensive, easily-accessible rail network. However, this official priority to rural areas itself does not explain the low construction standards of the Oberon line.

In the early 1920s, the State Government of NSW and some other States entered an Agreement with the British government to assist British migrants with settlement on rural holdings. The migrants never arrived in the numbers anticipated. In response to the failure of the dream, the British Government in 1925 guaranteed to supply loan funds specifically "to enable suitable areas of land to be made available for settlement, or to enable such public works to be carried out as will tend to develop

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[6] D. Aitkin, *The Country Party in NSW*, Canberra, ANU, 1972, p. 21
[7] N. Pollard, "A new Spirit of Co-operation", *Australian Railway History*, Vol. 64 No. 908, June, 2013, p. 9

and expand settlement areas or will enable areas already settled to carry greater population".[8]

The low infrastructure standards of the Oberon branch are explained by the knowledge of the NSW Railway Commissioner that rural branch lines did not and would not pay their capital costs or even working expenses. Yes, power forces combined to provide the rail line but the NSW Railways was not a willing playing in the decision making process. The Commissioner showed his displeasure by providing low construction and infrastructure standards. He marked this type of branches as Pioneer lines. So as not to waste money, the Commissioner allocated the minimal expenditure to rural branch and connecting lines. He did this by:

1. Mandating a maximum train speed of 25 MPH,

2. Building steep gradients - as high as 1 in 25,

3. Providing very tight, five chain radius track curves,

4. Eliminating any form of stone track ballast,

5. Using of timber rather than steel for small openings,

6. Omitting fencing along railway boundaries, apart from station yards,

7. Eliminating intermediate safeworking staff stations,

8. Eliminating rail level platform structures for intermediate stations,

9. Avoiding initially platforms at intermediate stations, with later platforms made of second-hand sleepers – waiting sheds remained at ground level,

10. Removal of turntable in 1927 for engine turning at Oberon after the decision was made not to provide one at Tarana,

11. Using relatively small, pre-cast concrete unit platform style buildings without some of the typical passenger facilities, &

12. Ensuring the absence of an official residence for the Station Master.

At Oberon, the NSW Railways demonstrated its pessimism about the financial viability by the allocation of the following goods infrastructure:

- Installation of the smallest size, outdoor jib crane – two tons relocated from Girilambone,

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[8] 1929 official year Book of the Commonwealth of Australian, quoted by E. A. Boehm, *20th Century Economic Development in Australia,* Melbourne, Longman, 1971, p. 40

- The allocation of the smallest size of conventional goods shed – 30 feet by 12 feet, &

- The absence of a cart weighbridge.[9]

It is as clear as Heaven and Earth that the Railway Commissioner thought that the Oberon branch would never be profitable. Unfortunately, that did not matter as the NSW Railways was then as it is today owned and managed by governments, not Railway Commissioners. It was a simple case that construction of the branch fulfilled government political and financial objectives.

The nature of the infrastructure along the branch line and at Oberon was not only the response to a conscious decision to minimize capital expenditure, it was an act of departmental revenge against the NSW government for making the NSW Railways build and maintain a knowingly unprofitable branch line with inadequate public funds.

The line between Tarana and Oberon was opened in 1923. C. C. Singleton described the line as "an unfortunate political accident".[10] Its completion can be contributed not only to the power brokers in Sydney but the strength of the rail lobby in Oberon. Research of local newspapers would probably reveal who were the key, local power players and why they wanted the line constructed and why it occurred between 1919 and 1923.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE BRANCH LINE

The *Bathurst Times* newspaper, 19th February, 1912, p. 3 reported that "the Government surveyors are now busily engaged surveying the route for the railway between Tarana and Oberon." The same newspaper six months later, on 8th August, 1912, p. 2 stated that "in respect to the proposed railway from Tarana to Oberon, two camps of surveyors are now midway with the permanent survey and hope to be completed to-Oberon, a distance of 16 miles in a month or two."

The NSW Parliament authorized construction of the line by legislation passed in 1919. Peter Neve, veteran rail historian, wrote the history of the line over 40 years ago and stated that construction commenced in May, 1921.[11]

The *Canowindra Star and Eugowra News,* 10th June, 1921, p. 4 has a report about the turning of the first sod for the Oberon line project. It demonstrates the varying

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[9] The opening of line Circular (No. 297 dated 29th September, 1923, shows no weighbridge. The *Carcoar Chronicle,* 29th September, 1922, p. 6 contained an article which stated that the Railway Commissioner had resolved not to install any further weighbridges and to attempt to control existing weighbridges to local government authorities.

[10] C. C. Singleton, "Crossing the Main Divide", *Bulletin*, Vol. 5 No. 30, April, 1940, p. 46

[11] P. Neve, "Branch Line Review No. 7 – Tarana to Oberon", *The Railway News*, Vol. 23 No. 3, April, 1973, p. 4

power of local railway leagues and suggests that, for an unknown reason, the power players at Eugowra erroneously thought that they were being out-gunned by their rivals at Oberon.   As it turned out, Eugowra got its railway ten months (December, 1922) before the Oberon people got to ride the rails. The report stated:

> "Is it any wonder that an earthquake shock was felt at Edith in the Oberon district (says the Orange "*Leader*"), when the Parliamentarians, headed by Jim Dooley, were turning the first sod of the Tarana-Oberon railway, and promising the parsnip and carrot growers along the line route that the line would be finished in two years! Oberon will get a railway all right, but none of those present on Saturday will be alive to see it, notwithstanding the promises of Messrs. Dooley and Co. that it will be completed in two years. Here is Oberon with a population of 7OO and a district which is not a primary producing centre, being given a railway, or rather a promise of one, while on a line most urgently required and one on which £600,000 has already been expended, that linking up Canowindra and Eugowra, the Government are closing down "owing to being unable to procure sleepers." Of course there will be plenty of sleepers available for the Oberon line, only the speakers at the function forgot to mention the fact. We are sorry for the people of Oberon and Tarana, but would like to tell them that if they live to see their line completed they will put one over on old Methuselah for sure!"

How wrong was the writer of the above article, obviously a Eugowra person! The main reason for the agitation by the Eugowra people may have been the closeness of the Oberon line to Sydney. Was it a case of the proximity of the push and pull of the power players?   After all, only the pre-cast concrete platform building at Robertson was and is closer to Sydney than the structure at Oberon. Construction of the Oberon line was used as a government project to employ men who had little employment since their return from the Great War in 1918 and 1919. In this way, the Oberon line benefitted from two strong NSW Government policies – one, promotion of the policy of economic and population growth in rural areas and, two, employment of out-of-work, unskilled men on nominated government projects.

The report from the Eugowra Star was not an isolated instance where there was substantial pessimism about the construction of rural branch lines. For example, the *Bathurst Times*, 24th May, 1921, p.2 shared the rural gloominess. It stated:

> "THE FARCE OF THE FIRST SOD - On Saturday next the first sod of the Oberon-Tarana railway is to be turned. The day is to be one of great rejoicing. The- best people of Oberon and district are to be there and Oberon has some very excellent people. There will be music and laughter, and speeches and eating- and drinking, and then the night will close in and the people will return to their, homes. The; Minister will hie himself back to Sydney with his little silver spade as a memento of the great day, and then silence, so far as railway construction is concerned.

All who know Oberon and its wealth and its great need 'for a quick and ready way to the markets' of the State will devoutedly hope that the railway for, which the people   Oberon have so long fought will soon become an accomplished fact. But commonsense must take its proper place in the minds of the people.

Where is the chance of Oberon succeeding while other railway works are being hung up? In recent days the press of the State have been full of reports of branch railway works that have been, or, are likely to be hung up indefinitely. All sorts of reasons are given for the action or proposed action, even to a lack of sleepers, but whatever the cause the fact must be patent to Oberon that there cannot be much hope for them while other works, more or less nearing completion, are being closed down.

There appears bur little hope for the proposed railway, unless the district to be benefitted can help itself.

The Government purse is in a chronic state of emptiness, despite the enormous sums that arc being poured into the Treasury. By some means best known to those who are controlling the finances of the State the expenditure is forever in excess of the re venue. The best that the Government ran do is to turn the first sod and that will be carried out on Saturday next with all the solemnity that - goes with - such a proceeding. But unless we are out in our estimate it will be many a long day before the ring of the pick and the sound of the hammer will be heard anywhere - on the proposed route.

There is just, a glimmer of hope to be gleaned, from the function that, is to take place, and that is to be found in the pledge which the ceremony will give. Once the sod is turned Oberon has a claim on the Government when that impecunious body happens to have a: few hundred thousands in hand and begin looking for a place in which to lay it out to advantage. In that case there may be no proposition offering equal to that of the Oberon-Tarana railway. May the time be soon."

Of course, all the gloom proved to be untrue. The Oberon branch got underway quickly.

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21st June, 1921, p. 7 refers to the Oberon project as an employment scheme reported that:

"A plough team and eight drays made a start on the Tarana-Oberon railway this morning. About 15 men from the Labour Bureau, Sydney, arrived at Tarana on Saturday, and 50 more from Bathurst presented themselves this morning. The engineer, however, had no authority to start the latter batch, but it is probable that work will be found for them in a few days. The men are working about two miles and a half from Tarana, near Mutton Falls Creek. "

The *Bathurst Times*, 22nd June, 1921, p. 2 had the following report.

"TARANA-OBERON RAILWAY Over eighty men are already engaged in the preparatory work in the construction of the Tarana Oberon railway, and the engineer in charge Mr. Thorne states that the number will be increased to about 300 in the next fortnight. "

Not only were there fundamental differences between railway operations in Sydney and rural NSW, there were also differences between rural locations. A year or so after work had commenced, the *Herald*, 15th March, 1922, p. 16 wrote:

"The tragedy that took place on the Tarana-Oberon railway construction work on Saturday last suggests the lack of moral tone that characterises navvy camps in recent times more so than in previous years. The lax supervision by both Public Works and Police Departments in regard to the camps is nothing short of deplorable. At long intervals of time, a mounted constable may ride in on some routine business or other, his stay being of only a few minutes duration. "Two-up" while daylight lasts and "Nap" until the small hours of morning are the order of gambling, to the accompaniment of drink, foul language, curses, and Imprecations. Where the Commissioners for Railways' carry out deviation and duplication work in connection with existing lines through parts more populated, a little stricter supervision is exercised but, on lines through country hitherto untapped by railway communication, and known as "construction" work, next to no camp control at all is In force. It can easily be understood that the camps are seldom visited by anybody other than a few itinerant hawkers and vegetable vendors, although a Government motor car having Messrs. Dooley and Johnstone, Parliamentary candidates, as passengers suddenly appeared on the scene a few weeks ago and posed in strong contradistinction to the bag and calico village wherein the candidate bought votes ".

Two years after the turning of the first sod trains were operating. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12th June, 1923, p. 9 contained the following report:

"A report from Hazelgrove states that the first lot of goods carried on the new Tarana to Oberon railway passed Hazelgrove station last Friday, when several truckloads of merchandise were despatched. The line is not completed, and goods are conveyed from Tarana to Oberon at an owners' risk and only by truckload. It is, however, a great convenience to storekeepers, especially at present, when the roads are bad."

News of the completion of the line was conveyed by many regional newspapers. Typical was *The Voice of the North*, a newspaper based in Newcastle, on 12th

November,1923, p. 8 which reported that Oberon was a "delightful spot" and stated that "the railway to Oberon was opened a few weeks ago, and this should serve to make known to many people, as yet in ignorance of it, the beauties and the delightful natural Australian conditions in and around that centre.

Oberon was a beautiful spot it was but it wasn't necessarily a bountiful spot. Some rural residents seemed at times to be in fantasy land or at least a state of excitement about the benefits that a railway could bring. Before the opening on 3rd October, 1923, the *Construction and Local Government Journal,* 14th February, 1923, p. 7 reported:

> "Residents in the Bathurst (N.S.W.) district are agitating for the extension of the Tarana-Oberon railway line to connect with the Blayney-Harden line at Garland."

As the Oberon line was never extended, it may be concluded that some level of sanity did exist within NSW governments in the 1920s. It was a case of no political push and a shortage of local political pull.

THE DECISION TO USE CONCRETE FOR THE OBERON STATION BUILDING

The amazing feature of railway operations in NSW in the period 1910 to 1930 is that the NSW Railways correctly assessed where to place its limited capital funding. It chose urban areas, not rural NSW. The Railways provided better trains, stations, safeworking, workshops and all sorts of other initiatives to serve the growing manufacturing sector in urban areas where the economy and population were growing, rather than in the declining rural locations. The extant facilities at Oberon tell that story.

Concrete building construction had been in use in America and England from 1900. The Americans preferred mass concrete while the British went for pre-fabrication. NSW Railways followed the system adopted by the Queensland Railways in 1913. The NSW Railways commenced concrete building construction in 1917.

The introduction of concrete construction was made by the Railway Commissioner, James Fraser, who was pro-efficiency and anti-trade union. The objective of the concrete unit system was to minimize the need for skilled tradesmen for the construction of buildings, especially for new branch and connecting lines in rural areas. The initiative was all about cost control, though some comments were made about the advantage of being able to relocate buildings, if required. As it turned out, not one platform structure was ever relocated between 1917 and 1932[12]. Fraser

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[12] Paul Horder has identified that a Pc1 building was relocated from an unknown station in about 1970 to replace a Pc2 building.

knew that concrete construction was not suitable for urban areas as the buildings did not mirror any beauty. As Paul Horder, the specialist historian on NSW railway concrete buildings, said, "the buildings were functional with little aesthetic appeal."[13] By some unexplained miracle, two station buildings were in fact built in Sydney, one at Toongabbie in 1919 and at Croydon in 1923.

The Toongabbie and Croydon buildings do give a hint of what was happening within the NSW Railways about concrete building construction – chaos. The whole history of pre-cast buildings is a statement of bureaucratic mismanagement or incompetence or both. So many bizarre things occurred that it can only be concluded that those men who were supposed to be in charge of construction policy had well and truly taken their eye off the ball. They were so many random events occurring with concrete building that the concept of having a standard construction system was, in fact, almost the total opposite.

The buildings at Oberon, Toongabbie and Croydon were all approved in what is loosely known as the early period of concrete building construction. The NSW Railways did not really understand how and where to use the product. Within the organization, there was no universal support for concrete construction and, in fact, more buildings were built in brick or timber than concrete in the 1917 to 1932 period when concrete buildings were constructed. Paul Horder considers that this statement needs a little clarification. Yes, most of the branch lines opened in that period had concrete buildings but the NSW Railways opened new stations and rebuilt buildings on existing lines and this latter group were much larger in number than the total of concrete buildings.

A REVIEW OF THE PLATFORM AND BUILDING

1. THE CLASS OF BUILDING – RE-INFORCED CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION

William Hutchinson, the Chief Engineer and Head of the Railway and Tramway Construction Branch of the NSW Railways, approved the construction of a concrete unit building of the Pc3 type at Oberon on 25th June, 1922. As standard plans existed, no architectural plan for Oberon was prepared. The approval of the building was part of Hutchinson's signature on the Station Arrangement plan, which included all buildings and structures at Oberon. The platform building and all other

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[13] P. Horder, "NSW Precast Concrete Station Buildings", paper presented to *Modelling the Railways of NSW 28*, 23rd July, 2011, p. 15. Paul has identified that, in 1966, the Department of Railways relocated Windowie to Goolgowi as a goods shed

infrastructure at the station were constructed by departmental labour, as opposed to construction by contract. This was consistent with the period.

The NSW Railways had been using an alpha-numerical coding system for buildings from 1897 and introduced the "P" type in 1917, the "P" standing for "portable". The concept of portable platform buildings had been introduced in 1915 without the alpha-numerical coding. They were to be used only on "the cheaper class of lines".[14] Lower case "c" denoted a concrete unit "P" type building. So far the alpha system is intelligible. Now comes the funny part. Why call the Oberon type of building "Pc3" when all the examples of the Pc3 had four rooms? Obviously, the numeral referred to a bureaucrat's typology and not any worldly reality.

Paul Horder has worked out that there were 147 platform buildings made of pre-cast concrete in NSW. A total of 86, or 58%, were one room Pc1 Shelter Sheds. There were 25 examples (17%) of the Pc2 and 17 examples (12%) of the Pc3 type. There were a further 19 structures built to variant designs.[15] Paul has calculated that the Oberon building is one of seven extant Pc3 type and is the oldest of the group and the only one surviving using the larger 15 inch wide units. The year in which the Oberon structure was opened, 1923, was the year in which the most (38) concrete unit buildings were erected.[16]

A major feature of pre-cast, concrete buildings is their relative small size. Neville Pollard well illustrates this aspect in his article on border railways. He included a photograph of a relatively large, attractive, brick platform building that Victorian Railways erected at Moulamein in 1923, the same year that the Oberon building was erected.[17]

The only near-consistent measurement of the concrete units, or slabs as they were also called, was the width. The Oberon building has the units with a width of 15 inches. In the second half of the 1920s, the width was reduced to ten inches to make the panels easier to carry by a single person. There were three "standard" lengths of three feet three inches, three feet nine inches and four feet, according to the generic plan of 1920. However, Paul Horder points out that use of the word, "standard" does not mean too much when the words New South Wales Railways are applied to the same sentence. For example, Paul states that the concrete ordering lists for ten inch wide concrete units for Pc buildings show not three standard lengths but seven different sizes of slabs.

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[14] NSWGR standard plan for Re-inforced concrete construction, dated 4th December, 1917

[15] Horder, op. cit., p. 16

[16] J. Longworth, "Precast Concrete Station Buildings in NSW", *Australian Railway History*, Vol. 56 No. 811, May, 2005, p. 165

[17] Pollard, op. cit., p. 8

The Oberon building is 14 units long. Of those, the dominant length is three feet three inches, with ten being of that length. The flush-mounted slabs as at Oberon were not rain-proof and emitted rain between the joints. They also allowed wind into the buildings. Either the penetration of rain or wind or both was a problem at Oberon as the rear wall of the structure was completely sheeted with Fibro at an unknown time.

When first introduced, one benefit of using concrete units was the lack of necessity to paint the concrete and Fibrolite surfaces. While this was done to signal boxes and other non-passenger examples, the evidence is that concrete unit buildings were painted in a range of the traditional stone colours.

2. LOCATION AND POSITION OF THE PLATFORM AND BUILDING

Oberon belongs to a class of buildings that were designed primarily for freight. At Oberon, this feature is mirrored by three characteristics. Firstly, the goods yard rather than the passenger platform is closer to the town centre, making it more convenient for freight customers. Secondly, there is no provision for pedestrian to enter the platform by a door in the rear of the platform opening into a waiting room. Centre, rear access was a fundamental characteristic of virtually all platform buildings containing three or more rooms, until the arrival of the buildings used on Pioneer lines from 1897. Pedestrians had to walk across the tracks from North Street to reach the platform or make the longer journey via Scotia Avenue. Thirdly, the first room of the building reached by pedestrians was the "Shelter Shed", which was used for goods, not the ticket office. Fourthly, tickets were not initially sold through a traditional ticket window but over the parcels counter. Only concrete unit buildings contained this feature.

3. THE MATERIALS USED FOR THE PLATFORM

The concrete building sits at a level of six inches above the platform level, which was the traditional building height above platforms. While today, CityRail endeavours to match the height of buildings with the height of platforms and with the height of the floor of rail vehicles, this standard has only been embraced in the last decade. It was the traditional view of the NSW Railways to step up into a building and stepped up into a carriage.

The platform surface at Oberon was covered with crushed granite from the now closed quarry at Locksley. This was the traditional platform surface material up to 1955. There was no fence along the rear of the platform, which was consistent with most concrete unit buildings.[18] The platform measured 250 feet long by 12 feet wide. These measurements were consistent with other branch line termini and large,

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[18] Paul Horder advises that there was a picket fence at Gwabegar and a fence at Macksville due to the vertical drop behind the platform.

intermediate stations in country areas. The width of 12 feet was the standard width from about 1880.

The platform itself is formed of compacted earth with a timber wall facing the line. The coping, sometimes called the kerb, of the platform sits on top of the wall and at Oberon it is timber. The coping was a height of three feet two inches above the rail head, which was consistent with the then standard. Again, the distance from the platform coping to the track centre was the then standard five feet one and half inches.[19] The platform has the traditional 15 feet long ramps at each end with a gradient of 1 in 5. The rear of the platform is battered to provide a gentle slope. The use of timber for the platform wall is of interest. Why were concrete units not used, as was done for the Nimmitabel-Bombala extension and at Brewongle in 1921. The answer is that there was no policy that dictated the use of materials for walls and copings. Mass concrete poured in situ was used for the Menindee-Broken Hill line in 1919 and at Mangoplah in 1923. Timber was also widely used where concrete buildings existed. It was just a case of build what you like.

At the rear of the station, there was a Railway-owned, gravelled access road from Scotia Avenue that terminated at the platform building with a semi-circular forecourt 50 feet wide. This was the standard arrangement of road access to passenger platform from at least 1900.

4. THE MATERIALS USED FOR THE BUILDING

The number of locations were concrete products were made was an indicator of the lack of strong management for the process. At the time the Oberon building concrete units were made, pre-cast concrete products were being manufactured at five locations, namely Clyde, Goulburn, Auburn, White Bay and Sydenham. It was not until 1926 that a new concrete workshop had been established at Chullora and, even then, the works at Auburn continued to operate. Further research and good fortune may reveal the source of the concrete units used at Oberon. All that is known is that the concrete units were to be supplied by the Signal Engineer. This was consistent with all other locations as all the concrete works were, at the time of the construction of the Oberon building, under the Signals and Telegraph Branch.

The floor of the building is formed by pre-cast concrete units with one inch thick timber planking on top. Where the Station Officer had his desk there was often a piece of departmental, brownish carpet.

The roof of the building is gabled, meaning the ends are vertical. The gables are covered by Fibrolite sheets with timber cover strips over the joints. Only the timber

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[19] Apart from the track in front of the platform wall, the structure gauge provided a distance of five feet six inches to track centre. The platform wall, as opposed to the coping which projected beyond the wall, was five feet six inches to the track centre.

work was painted in a shade of stone, the traditional NSW colour up to 1955. Affixed to battens are what the NSW Railways called concrete slates of Fibro slates, which were small sheets of Fibrolite, with a concave section on one side.[20] This product was introduced on the NSW Railways in 1911 and first applied to the Tramway Inspector's building at Sutherland, which still stands. The slates were laid in the diamond pattern with four inch overlaps. Along the roof ridge was terracotta cover which extended the full length and terminated in a terracotta finial or terminal at each gable. In all ways, the building at Oberon was typical of the class of concrete unit structures.

There is one very interesting feature of the Oberon building that is not visible on other examples of the type of structure. The moulds into which the concrete was poured were made of steel on one side and timber on the other side. It would seem that this use of two material types was later altered to all-steel moulds. On the external walls of the Oberon building, every concrete unit shows the impression of the timber moulds. Great care has been taken to make sure that all the concrete units have either the steel or timber sides uniformly showing, rather than a random display of some timber and some steel mould impressions. For this reason, the Oberon building has high technical significance.

Peter Neve wonders about the need for an awning on such primitive buildings, keeping in mind that this feature had been omitted from some earlier designs, including the standard "P" type. Some very early examples did not have an awning, such as those of the branch line to Rand. It seems that, by the time the Oberon line buildings were erected, the NSW Railways had decided to provide awnings for all concrete buildings. However, with everything else in life there are to sides to the ledger. Paul Horder considers that the "awning appears to have been the weakest part of the building".[21] The Oberon example has the standard platform awning for its class of structure. The awning is nine feet wide and made of corrugated iron. It is supported on timber struts, which sit on small, pre-cast concrete corbels or bases. Paul says that the awnings were not designed to withstand strong winds, with the struts pulling away from the corbels. Thankfully, this has not happened at Oberon. It was a long-held design 19th century policy in NSW to change the material used for the awning to that applied to the roof. There was a practical component to this decision in that there was greater difficulty with some materials, such as slate and terracotta tiles, in eliminating capillary action of rain water moving upwards when the angle of the pitch was mild. In the 20th century, has the majority of roofs and awnings were sheeted with corrugated iron (actually steel) as the departmental

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[20] This statement is based on an inspection of the roofing slates at Broken Hill station. Paul Horder writes that he has only seen roof slates which are diamond shaped and have had a triangular section removed from two corners.
[21] Horder, op cit, p. 19

concepts of building prettiness and attractiveness dropped away with the general lowering of design standards.

The building at Oberon sat on pre-cast concrete piers. This was typical of the practice for concrete structures.

At each end of the building is a circular, pre-cast concrete water tank, each with a separator. This is consistent with the standard plan for this class of building.

THE INTERNAL SPACES

The structure at Oberon, containing four rooms, was built to a standard plan dated 1920. The Oberon building was to measure 52 feet six inches by 12 feet seven inches external. The building was 12 feet wide, which was the traditional and preferred width of NSW platform buildings. The rooms were named "Shelter Shed", "Office" (with internal ticket and parcel counter) and "Office" (on other plans this space is called "Living Room"), and "Ladies' Waiting Room" and Lavatory. Apart from the titles, "Office" and "Ladies' Waiting Room", the titles of the other two rooms reflected anything but functional uses. "Shelter Shed" made sense for a one room structure that provided a seat for passengers and space for small goods items. In all reality, at Oberon the room contained "out ofs" (parcels conveyed at goods train rates). "Living Room" was another stupid title, erroneously suggesting the building was partly a residential structure.

What is blatantly absent from the Oberon building is a General Waiting Room. Only a small seat was provided in the Office. Moreover, Paul Horder writes that only 12% of all pre-cast buildings had a Ladies' Waiting Room and female toilet upon construction. For the remaining 88% of stations, female travellers had no dedicated waiting room and no toilet.

It was a tradition of the NSW Railways to provide a Ladies' Waiting Room in a platform building of three or more rooms, except pre-cast concrete buildings. As well as providing safety for waiting women the Ladies' Waiting Room also acted as an anti-chamber to the ladies' lavatory. Paul Horder exemplifies the Ladies' Waiting Room as a measure of the seemingly departmental chaos that applied to the approval process for concrete unit buildings. He has written that "with at least eight different arrangements for the 17 Pc3s, there doesn't seem to have been any standard".[22]

Although it was NSW Railway practice, the allocation of any waiting rooms at small, terminal stations is somewhat questionable as people intending to catch trains usually

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[22] Ibid.

timed their arrival at the station just prior to train departure time. The fact that the NSW Railways abandoned the use of the Ladies' Waiting Room for women at Oberon seems to prove the point but its omission was related to the specifications of the class of building rather to any conscious thinking related specifically to Oberon.

At some stage – perhaps from the opening of the station, the Ladies' Waiting Room at Oberon was converted for a ticket hall for the purchase of tickets, thus eliminating the need for passengers to enter the Office. The 1961 plan that was prepared for the installation of the brick fireplace does not show the additional door that gave access to the ticket window. The plan may not be reliable as the same plan did not show the rear double door in the Shelter Shed.[23] The conversion was all about more space for the staff rather than any thought of improved passenger facilities. Anyway, who would sit in the Ladies' Waiting Room or its conversion in the absence of heating in winter?

There are many variations amongst the members of the class of concrete buildings. The Oberon structure reflects this characteristic with the addition of an additional door leading from the platform directly into the Living Room. It appears the original four-panel door was relocated from the doorway to the Ladies' Waiting Room to the Living Room. The change is obvious as the up end door is now sheeted on the platform side. On the standard plan, the only entry into the Living Room was indirectly from the Office.

One major difference between the "P" type of timber building and the "Pc" type was the method of heating for staff. In the former, brick fireplaces were erected but, for the latter, metal stoves were to be used. Something must have gone wrong with the plan, at least as far as the Oberon building was concerned. A 1961 a brick fireplace replaced the metal stove in one corner of the Living Room.

There are two room designation signs presently attached to the building, one reading "Ladies" and the other "Ticket Office". The official NSW Railway name for these signs on cast iron brackets is tablet. They are recent additions, allegedly made by Stephen Preston. They are painted in the authentic colour scheme. The large station nameboard was also painted in this scheme, namely white letters on a black background. While the colour scheme for tablets remained constant up to 1950, the colour pattern for station nameboards changed in 1915. From that time, there was discrimination between urban and rural stations, with urban stations in Sydney having black letters on a white background and stations in rural locations retaining the reverse scheme. While a significant number of improvements were made to the goods and locomotive facilities at Oberon between 1945 and 1965, there was no improvement in passenger facilities at the station.

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[23] The puzzle is probably explained by the fact that the plan of the Coolah building was used for the addition of the fireplace at Coolah.

The last Station Master left the station on 1st October, 1979. Since then, the building has been occupied, firstly, by the Oberon Historical Society, and, from 2005, by the Oberon Tarana Heritage Railway Inc.

TOILETS

As stated, the female toilet was integrated into the platform building. This was conventional practice for the NSW Railways between 1855 and 1960. Female toilets were always known as lavatories on the NSW Railways. It was also NSW policy to place the entrance to the male toilet as far away from the entrance to the female toilet. At rural locations, this usually meant off the platform. This is the case at Oberon.

Off the Tarana end of the platform and behind the building line was a "Cc2" toilet, also made of pre-cast concrete units. The toilet block was not randomly placed but positioned exactly one chain (66 feet) from the up end platform ramp and set back 25 feet from the platform wall. The toilet block measured 18 feet x 12 feet seven inches external and contained an unusual zig-zag shaped urinal, if it accorded to the standard plan. Male toilets were officially named "closets" or "public closets", but never lavatories or toilets. Like the main platform building, the plan for the male toilets followed the preceding toilet plan, officially coded "C". The major difference was in the roof shape. "C" toilets had curved roofs whereas Cc toilets had single-pitched roofs.

The pans in both the male and female toilets were changed by Per Way staff, not station staff. Liquid waste from the male toilet discharged into an unusually short "absorption trench" at Oberon, which lead to an officially named "rubble pit".

FURTHER INFORMATION

A good photograph of Oberon and the other stations on the line is in R. G. Preston, "The Tarana-Oberon Branch Line", Bulletin, Vol. 9 No. 249, July, 1958, p. 102. The article also has track plans for all stations from Tarana to Oberon. Byways 1, pp. 61-65 has several excellent photographs as well as a track diagram.

CONCLUSION

Oberon is blessed to have a very typical and authentic building made primarily from pre-cast concrete units. Because of all the aspects that are both standard and non-standard, it has considerable further research potential. It is a very significant railway structure and it is extremely fortunate that it is occupied by a tenant which knows its heritage values.

Austin Mooney is thanked immensely for his effort to locate newspaper reports. Paul Horder and Peter Neve are also thanked for their help.

BATHURST

WHAT THE HERITAGE FABRIC AND HISTORY OF THE RAILWAY STATION REVEAL

THE VISIBLE HERITAGE - WHAT'S VISUALLY IMPORTANT AT THE STATION (from left to right)

THE SYDNEY END OF THE STATION

- Bathurst East signal box, opened in 1946, sheeted externally with Fibrolite,

- The curved platform – one of only two curved platforms between Lithgow and Broken Hill

- The subway – the first application of a pedestrian only subway on the NSW rail system

- The existence of two platforms – the second added in 1882 – for a railway that is single-tracked each side of Bathurst,

- The face brick, detached building at the Sydney end, composed of four distinct additions in 1917, 1927, 1934 and 1950,

THE MAIN BUILDING

- The small size of the 1876 building, considering the very high importance of the place it served,

- Unusual building style of the main structure – a mix of Gothic and Tudor – the first station – in 1876 - to feature mixed design influences,

- The symmetry of the 1876 building, balanced on both sides of the centre, pedestrian entry,

- The balanced, faceted bay windows, with rendered brickwork – one of the very rare times John Whitton used bay windows for platform buildings,

- The 1882/83 extension added for a Railway Refreshment Room at the Sydney end, the architectural detailing for which matched the 1876 building,

- The somewhat authentic colour scheme of the building, a mark of the creation of Countrylink in 1989,

- The open, double doors fronting the forecourt, indicating the accessibility provided for disabled passengers,

THE FORECOURT

- The large forecourt, with a car park taking the place of an original, centre garden and wide footpath – other indicators of the existence of Countrylink between 1989 and 2013,

- The termination of the visual corridor from Keppel Street at the station,

THE BLAYNEY END

- The extension of the platform awning beyond the building alignment at the Blayney end, denoting the former additions for the Parcels Office and Out of Room,

- The pedestrian access between the forecourt and the former RSA building – denoting former close working links and one-time common ownership was not broken with John Holland management of the Country Rail Network from 14/15th January, 2012. The physical link was expressed in an Interface Agreement between the various parties.

ON THE PLATFORMS

- On the platform, the wide range of authentic NSW Railway seats and platform signs,

- The timber building on the Blayney bound side, dating from 1902 and 1921 – a representative example of the most frequently built design of platform building – the dominant feature being the single-pitch roof sloping towards the tracks – one of only ten extant examples in the State out of a total 324 built – also, an excellent example of the discrimination the Sydney based NSW Railways held against rural locations

- The use of face bricks for the platform wall of the Blayney bound platform – the only example on the NSW rail system of brickwork being used instead of mass concrete for platform frames using recycled rails, &

- The pre-cast concrete unit coal bin at the extreme end of the Blayney bound platform.

THE HISTORY – WHAT'S NOT NECESSARILY VISIBLE BUT IMPORTANT

THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF BATHURST RESIDENTS

In his book, *All Stations West*, Sydney, Haldane Publishing, 1970, p. 39, G. H. Fearnside wrote that "The development of the Bathurst district *did* (sic) demand a railway link with Sydney, with its growing markets". Well, did it? Don Hagarty, in his book, *Sydney Railway 1848-1857* (Redfern, ARHS, 2005, pp. 28 and 31) indicates that meetings were held in 1846 and 1849 to connect Bathurst with Sydney. However, when work started on the Sydney-Parramatta line in 1848 and 1849, there was only one terminus in mind – Goulburn. A railway to Bathurst was, nevertheless, not far behind taking advantage of the provision of the 1849 legislation incorporating the Sydney Railway Company that described the proposed railway "to Goulburn and another ……..through such places in the County of Cumberland as may be deemed the most desirable route for carrying a railway towards Bathurst".[24]

Don Hagarty, a one-time District Engineer at Bathurst, has published articles and the definite book on the early days of the NSW rail system. After reviewing the initial draft of this document, Don commented that

> "Your opening paragraphs I feel are too short and do not do justice to the mood of the Bathurstians over the period. The organisers of the Sydney Railway Company initially had an open mind on which direction the railway went from Parramatta and Sheilds, the Company's Engineer, surveyed West and South but the Goulburn line was the easiest and the Goulburnians jumped at the idea. Thomas Woore, a Goulburn local, agreed to survey a route while out west the Company knew that there would be difficulties getting over the Blue Mountains. Initially, no one was prepared to find a suitable route to Bathurst in the light of the relatively easier route to Goulburn.
>
> There is a number of newspaper reports of meetings of Bathurst residents promoting a railway and suggesting routes together with progress reports of government surveyors that the Mountains can be crossed by rail and also an announcement that a survey had been completed.
>
> I suggest you just change your article to say, in general terms, that the Sydney Railway Company selected Goulburn because it was considered easier to start the Company in that direction while surveyors found a route over the mountains."

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[24] J. H. Forsyth, *Historical Notes on Railway Lines*, Vol. 2, 1985, SRA Archives, p. 78

The influence of the power of some Bathurst residents was displayed in an early press report. *The Empire*, 17th October, 1857, p. 3 stated:

> "RAILWAY SURVEY.-By Saturday's mail from Sydney one of Mr. Henderson's staff of surveyors arrived in Bathurst, where we understand he awaits others, for the purpose of commencing operations from Bathurst down wards. The gentleman in question comes provided with his instruments, evidently meaning work, and a few days hence, we suppose the first step will be taken towards a future Bathurst railway. We are not sanguine enough, however, to look for its accomplishment in three years. Mr. Barker, the Government engineer, who has spent some two or three weeks exploring the country eastward of Bathurst, will also, we understand, be very shortly employed in taking levels and measuring heights and distance for a line of railway This looks something better than hitherto, thanks to our improved transit association."

By 1858, it seemed a certainty that the line to Bathurst would be built. Another press report indicates that the survey to Bathurst had been completed. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th March, 1858, p. 5 stated:

> "BATHURST RAILWAY SURVEY.—It will, no doubt, be gratifying to our readers to know the state in which the survey from Bathurst to the Nepean progresses under the management of Mr. Barton, the gentleman appointed by Captain Martindale, the sole Commissioner of Railways, six months ago, to undertake the survey of the Bathurst line. From enquiries we have made we learn that Mr. Barton has already completed nearly one hundred and fifty miles of survey. This includes one from Bathurst along the north side of the Fish River, crossing the road at Solitary Creek to Piper's Flat. This line does not cross the Fish River, but continues, as we have already said, on its North side, an advantage which will much diminish the cost of its construction."

Discussion in the press about the route was evidence that the NSW Government had decided to take the railway to Bathurst. It was just a matter of which route to adopt. The *Sydney Morning Herald,* 10th February, 1860, p. 4 indicated that "the Minister said the Government was not yet decided whether the Bathurst railway would be carried up the valley of the Grose. Though that line offered some advantages, it presented great difficulties, and a further survey was found to be necessary."

By later in 1860, politicians of all types seemed to be of the mind about the need to build a railway to Bathurst. The *Sydney Morning Herald,* 4th August, 1860, p. 3 stated:

> "Mr. Robertson, the Minister for Public Works, in reply to Mr. Hawkins, said that, because of the high expenditure to maintain the roads, he was of opinion that the only proper road for Bathurst would be a railroad, without which it would be impossible to convey their agricultural produce to market, and

without which It would be a waste of time and money to attempt to develop the mineral resources by opening up their copper mines, &o., &c. He believed that the claims of the West for a railroad were not merely as great but absolutely greater than those of the North and South, for while the northern and southern districts had other facilities for communicating with the metropolis, the western districts were dependent entirely upon the roads. Some parties objected that many years had passed away and that nothing had been done for railways. This was not true for, in fact, much had been done. The Valley of the Grose had been surveyed, and the line over the mountains had also been surveyed. The Grose route was not found to be, as was supposed, impracticable, but it was discovered that the road over the mountains could be completed at much less cost. In a word, so much bad been done, that as soon as Parliament meets again the Government will be prepared to lay before it the plans and sections, and estimated probable cost of the whole lines from Penrith to Bathurst, from Picton to Goulburn, and from Singleton to Murrurundi. Whether it would be wise to ask at once for the necessary sums of money to complete the whole was not decided. He was of opinion that the money ought to be expended in proporti0n to the population."

The Wagga Wagga Express and Murrumbidgee District Advertiser, **7th July, 1866,** p. 2 contained an optimistic article about the year when the railway would reach Bathurst. It stated:

"Mr. Byrnes informed the inhabitants of Bathurst in reply to an address that the railway would be opened to Hartley in twelve months and to Bathurst in three years and that a large gaol would be built in the Western Districts, but that the Government had not yet determined upon the site. Mr. Byrnes was to be invited by the townspeople to a public banquet."

Two months later, the *Wagga Wagga Express and Murrumbidgee District Advertiser*, 15th September, 1866, p. 3 noted that:

"The railway surveyors have entered Bathurst and are laying down the course of' the line at the foot of Russell Street."

The *Evening News*, 9th October, 1874, p. 2 gave a report on the extension of the trunk lines.

"The surveys for the Southern extension of the Railway line from Wagga to Albury are completed. Parliament will be asked this session to vote a sum for the work. The survey north of Tamworth is being proceeded with and the *Western Advocate*, an Orange paper, says: 'It does not look as if the terminus at this town will remain very long the last station on the Western line, as it is pretty clear that it is the intention of the Government to push the railway ahead through Ironbarks, Dubbo and into Bourke, as trial surveys are even

now being made by Mr. Mann, one of the most experienced of our railway surveyors.'"

Bathurst was considered to be the terminus until 1868 when the people of Orange petitioned the NSW Government. In that year, tenders were called for the bridge over the Macquarie River. There was much discussion on the location of the Bathurst terminus. The NSW Railways preferred Kelso, thus avoiding the construction of a bridge at that time[25]. The debate was exactly the same as at Goulburn, where the NSW Railways wanted to place the station initially at North Goulburn, thereby eliminating the crossing of the Mulwaree Ponds. The site for the Bathurst station was settled in 1868.

The *Sydney Morning Herald,* 7th September, 1870, p. provided details of the location of the terminus. Naturally, the residents of the town were annoyed about the terminus being located at Kelso. The Herald reported:

> "THE BATHURST RAILWAY TERMINUS. - Yesterday a deputation consisting of Mr. E. Webb, M.L.A.; Mr. W. H. Suttor, M.L.A.; Mr. Spring M.L.A. ; Mr. A. B. Rae (Mayor of Bathurst) ; the Hon. F. Lord, M.L.C. ; Dr. Machattie, Messrs. W. Ross, John Boyd, W. T. Atkins, J. Atkins, and John de Cloet, had an interview with the Hon. Minister for Works, for the purpose of urging the immediate extension of the Great Western Railway into Bathurst. Mr. Rae presented a petition signed by about 900 of the inhabitants and ratepayers of the City of Bathurst, in favour of the object in view. The petition set forth that it was a matter of vital importance to the welfare of Bathurst, and would be conducive to the good of all classes of the community, that the extension of the railway to the city should be completed as soon as possible. The petition went on to say that the claims of the petitioners were irresistible, inasmuch as other towns of far less importance than Bathurst had had for some time past the line of railway carried to them, and had thus been connected with the metropolis, whilst Bathurst seemed to have been ignored. Mr. Rae, in presenting the petition, referred to a deputation that lately waited upon Mr. Sutherland to advise that the railway line should stop at Kelso, instead of its being taken to Bathurst; and he expressed his opinion that the gentlemen who formed that deputation were actuated by motives of self interest in not desiring the line to go beyond Kelso for the present. He also urged upon the Minister for Works the necessity for having the railway station as near the centre of the town of Bathurst as possible.

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[25] D. J. Chamberlain, *Diary of a Challenge*, privately published, no date, p. 29

Another member of the deputation stated that one of the reasons why the petition had been presented was this: there appeared an inclination in some quarters to have different kinds of railways for any future extensions, such as a narrow gauge, or rails for a lighter description of rolling stock than those now in use. Bathurst would prove a convenient site for the erection of sheds and workshops, and would be a suitable place for a new description of line to commence at. But if the present line was not carried beyond Kelso, as some appeared to desire and a change of gauge took place there, it would prove very inconvenient and troublesome to the Bathurst people. The Hon. F. Lord said that, even though he was a member of the deputation, he did not feel so much interested in the matter as to oppose the Government in fixing the terminus whole they thought proper. But he thought it should be in the town of Bathurst. Mr. Webb said the petition had been got up, he believed, with the avowed object of inducing the Government to fix the terminus nearer the centre of the town of Bathurst than the site which had been recommended by the railway authorities. He believed that eight-tenths of the people were in favour of having it in the centre of the town. He had been informed that there were no engineering difficulties in the way of the site asked for being adopted; and every facility would be afforded for extending the railway beyond Bathurst. He was sure that the Government, if it adopted the site recommended, would not only give satisfaction to the Bathurst people, but also to the people of the surrounding neighbourhood. If the site that was originally fixed upon, between Russell and Keppel streets, had been adhered to, those who now supported the Ordnance Ground as a site would have had no supporters. There was no land to be purchased on the site proposed by the deputation; it was the land that was withdrawn from sale some years ago for the purpose of a railway terminus.

A plan of the township was laid before the deputation, and Mr. Whitton pointed out the difficulties in the way of granting their request. The site that had been decided upon, he said, was considered to be more suitable, and would involve far less expense to the railway department. Mr. Sutherland said the present plan was adopted by a previous Ministry, and the present Ministry would not alter it unless they had very good reason for doing so. His own desire was to accommodate the people of Bathurst as much as possible without injuring the rest of the community. If the passenger station could be where the deputation desired it to be, he should like to see it there. But there seemed to be engineering difficulties in the way. It would be near to a sharp curve, and it would be dangerous to have a station near a curve, where trains could not be seen until they got close to the station. No doubt Mr. Whitton would again examine the place, and see if it was practicable to have the station where the deputation desired it to be. The present site had been adopted mainly because it would prove more convenient for any extension being made beyond Bathurst without much difficulty or expense. He could not

state when tenders would be called for the bridge over the Macquarie; that formed one of the principal obstacles now to carrying the railway into Bathurst from Kelso.

Plans and specifications for the work had been prepared, but tenders had not yet been called, because it was a very heavy and expensive work. It had been represented to the Government, by gentlemen holding influential positions, that it was desirable that the railway should for the present stop at Kelso, and that the people of Bathurst were almost equally divided on the question. But he was glad to see by the representations of this deputation that the people were not equally divided on the matter. The Government would now know what the majority of the people wished for, and would carry out the desire of the people as far as practicable. He would immediately lay the representations of the deputation before his colleagues, and he promised that everything should be done to meet the wishes of the people as far as possible. The deputation thanked Mr. Sutherland, and withdrew."

Whitton and the NSW Government delayed the decision about the terminus for three years. *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 15th July, 1873, p. 3 reported "The Government has decided on cancelling the contract for completing the Bathurst railway". The NSW Government had taken the decision to bring the railway line across the Macquarie River on 19th September, 1873. *The Mercury* (Hobart), 23rd September, 1873, p 3 had an article that said that "tenders have been called for the completion of the Bathurst Railway. At a large public meeting held today, it was resolved to urge upon the Government to extend the railway into the city."

While residents of Bathurst had been influential enough to secure a railway, they did not initially have the power to overthrow John Whitton's decision to place the terminus at Kelso. Clearly, positions of power changed. Whitton eventually lost and the influential people of Bathurst won.

The construction of the line to Bathurst had been caught up in the hoo-haa about the nature of rural railways – big or small, narrow or standard gauge, horse or steam traction - as well as the location of the terminus. James. H. Byrnes was the Minister for Public Works between 1870 and1872 and was described as "penny pinching". He suspended further planning and sacked the surveyors on 31st January,1871.[26] Robert Lee described Byrnes as "parsimonious and suspicious of Whitton". [27]   With a change of government, Public Works Minister, John Sutherland, had a Bill passed on 21st Novemner,1872, for the construction of railways to Bathurst, Wagga and Tamworth.

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[26] David Burke, *Making the Railways*, p. 63
[27] R. S. Lee, *The Greatest Public Work*, p. 70

John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, on 10th March, 1875, approved the design of the present building at Bathurst. The style has been variously called Victorian Tudor or Jacobean/Gothic/Tudor revival. These are meaningless terms to non-architectural students and meaningless as a way of indicating how atypical the design was in the context of the NSW Railways.

Whitton had to build the trunk railways with less capital than he wanted. He was mindful that he had been trumped about the location of the terminus. He must have known that a bridge over the Macquarie River would have to be built in order to extend the railway beyond Bathurst. Was his decision merely based on a self-belief that he knew what to build and when to build or about allocation of expenditure in particular years? We shall probably never have the answer. When it came to building the present station building at Bathurst, it was Whitton's opportunity for departmental revenge. Now was the time for Whitton to take revenge on being over-powered about the terminus location. Whitton has a litany of places where he avoided construction of permanent building by the use of temporary structures, as at Raglan, half-completed buildings or by-passed town entirely, as at Yass. It now was the turn of Bathurst to feel Whitton's power.

The present platform building was incomplete on the opening date of the railway, 4th April, 1876. Whitton, being an astute bureaucrat, knew that he saved money by not doing anything. This had been his strategy in not extending the line over the Macquarie River at an early date. In addition to the do nothing strategy, he also employed the do as little as possible strategy. Using this approach, Whitton knew that, once he stated that a line was ready to be opened, all subsequent expenses were not included in his budget. They became the financial responsibility of the Railway Commissioner. The building at Bathurst was not finished until five months after the line opening date. The *Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser,* 23red September, 1876, p. 4 stated:

> "The finishing touch has been given to the Bathurst railway station for passengers and goods, (says the *Free Press*), and we understand the works have been handed over complete to the authorities. The passenger station is, without doubt, the handsomest structure of its kind on any of the lines out of Sydney. It is in the Elizabethan style, and is built of brick and freestone. As far as we can see, every convenience has been made and neither the public nor the railway officials will have cause to complain on this score. The following are stated to be the dimensions of the principal apartments:- Porters' room, 14 feet by 16 feet; Waiting-Room, 17 feet 6 in by 30 feet 2 inches; Ladies' Room, 14 feet 6 inches by 14 feet; Telegraph Office, 14 feet by 12 feet; Ticket Office, 20 feet 9 inches by 20 feet ; Luggage Office, 20 feet by 14 feet ; Parcels Room, 32 feet by 17 feet. The goods shed is very commodious and strongly built on piles, and is 100 feet in length, by 15 feet wide. The engine shed is 108 feet long by 40 feet wide and 20 feet high. Mr. Cains, the contractor, is a gentleman of large experience in this description of work, and

his efforts in Bathurst have been as successful as those in other parts of the colony."

Although the influence of the people of Bathurst was mirrored in the design of the building, Whitton used a couple of tricks to further minimize expenditure and, possibly, show the people the extent of his power. On the rail side of the building, Whitton eliminated the scalloped gables that are visible on the road approach.[28] He used timber posts, rather than cast iron columns, to support the platform awning.

Whitton did another thing that tricked the people of Bathurst. He used the same floor plan that he applied to every station above two rooms, excluding the combination offices/residences. He set out a floor plan of the building using a transverse, centre axis. This axis was the pedestrian access to the building and, through it, to the platform. The rooms of the building were balanced each side of the central pedestrian access so that the floor plan was completely symmetrical. This was the same approach he used at Wagga Wagga, Tenerfield, Dubbo and almost everywhere else in NSW. However, the people of Bathurst did not see or care that, so far as the floor plan was concerned, the building at Bathurst was no different. He covered his standard design concept with different detailing and it was the detail of the building style, not the floor plan, that marked Bathurst station as different to other stations in NSW.

The Gothic influences are evident in the steeply-pitched slate roof, which has small, dormer vents. The articulated stone quoins on the openings and building corners show a flash of Italianate and the tall, octagonal, paired chimneys manifest a tinge of Tudor style. Bathurst station was the only building to featured ornately scalloped twin gables but it was not the only station building to follow a mix-and-match style process. The gables on both sides have date plaques showing "1876", which is another highly unusual feature of NSW stations, again telling of the existence of influential people living in Bathurst. The use of faceted bay windows on platform buildings was a rare stylistic feature and was rarely used, especially by Whitton.[29] Today, the brickwork on both the protruding bays is rendered but it is unknown whether this was done at the time of construction or at a later time.

The design follows the style of the then major private house in Bathurst, Abercrombie House on Ophir Road. The first successful tenderer for the station building was David Jones but he made an error in his calculations and the NSW Railways allowed him to withdraw his tender. He went broke. Tenders were re-advertised, closing on 8th June, 1875. The station structure was built by contractors, William and Charles

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[28] In J. M. Cottee, *Stations on the Track*, Charnwood, Ginninderra Press, 2004, pp.92-96 are photographs and plans of both sides of the gables which show the different treatment.

[29] George Cowdery, the Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines, used faceted bay windows for replacement structures, such at Morpeth in 1888.

Cairns and T. Adams with contract date of 5th July, 1875.[30] By July, work had not started on station building. In December of that year, the contractor advertised for the supply of wooden poles for scaffolding to do upper level brickwork. The foundations are a series of jack arches. A significant effort was needed to provide the foundation as the contractor had to supply a considerable amount of fill in order to raise the station about six feet from its natural level.

Conservation Architect, David Sheedy, prepared a Conservation Management Plan in 1988. In it, he confirms that the design was influenced by the major estate house at that time which was Mt. Pleasant, later renamed Abercrombie House. That place was designed by the Mansfield Brothers (George and Albert) from Sydney in 1869 or 1870. David adds that this was a case of John Whitton using his English experience where it was usual when a railway line was near the local large estate (sometimes placed for the estate) to design the station in sympathy with the main house." David said Abercrombie House was based on a Scottish baronial home at Dumfrieyshire owned by the Duke of Buccleigh.

The station building was largely consistent with the prevailing features of prominent, private dwellings. Stone was rarely in the Bathurst district with few stone houses in the town. In regard to the station, stone was used only for quoins and openings. Similarly, two-storey houses were rare in Bathurst. Again, the station building was consistent with local practice.[31] While Abercrombie House was the source of the design of the station, Abercrombie House was atypical of local Bathurst architecture and materials, it being two-storey and made of stone. So is the father is the son. Abercrombie House, the father of the design, was atypical just like the son, the Bathurst railway station. Who was this bloke who owned Abercrombie House?

Whitton used a few additional touches to show that he acknowledged the social and political importance of some influential residents and he did deliver what authors, Ellis and Ward, described as "an arresting composition".[32] Whitton provided five ornamental platform seats just like the ones he had planned for the second Sydney station, which opened in 1874, two years before Bathurst was opened.[33] The use of

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[30] There is conflicting information about the builder for Bathurst station. The *Construction and Local Government Journal,* 5th November, 1917, p.17 reported the death of pioneer builder, James Douglas, last week at Bathurst, at the age of 80 years. The *Journal* stated that "Mr. Douglas supervised the work of building every railway station between Kelso and Bathurst, and also the Bathurst (St. Stephen's) Presbyterian Church and the Church of England parsonage." It is possible that the Cairns brothers held the contract and Douglas was the site supervisor or sub-contractor at Bathurst. There is evidence that Douglas was the contractor for Brewongle, Kelso, Georges Plains, Orange, Nashdale, Amaroo, Wongarbon, Nyngan and Girilambone station buildings. In some of these cases, Douglas signed the contract with co-contractors, as at Georges Plains.

[31] B. J. Webb, *Bathurst Architecture*, Bathurst Historical Society, no date, pp. 1-3.

[32] R. Ellis and A. Ward, *Railway Stations of Australia*, South Melbourne, Macmillan Co., 1982, p. 3.

[33] Ibid.. Ellis and Ward refer to the design of the seats as being formed from "gnarled tree limbs".

free-standing platform seats was highly unusual at the time as the NSW Railway custom of the 1870s had been to secure benches without backs to the external wall of the buildings. This was not done in the case of Bathurst. Also, the design of the fence at the rear of the platform was unusual for the time. Normally, the top rail of the fence would be horizontal but Whitton used a different pattern that had been applied only to a few other stations. The top of the fence was concave in the same manor that was applied to some houses. The original fence was still extant in 1956.[34] This fence style is known to have been used only at Tarana (1872), Sydney (1874), Newcastle (1877) and Wagga Wagga (1879). A final feature of the planning process was a real winner. Whitton positioned the station at the end of Keppel Street so that vistas along the street terminated at the station. The positioning of the building at that location suggests one feature of local political behaviour. There was no single, dominant influential resident who demanded that the station be located outside his house, as was the case with Captain Hovell at Goulburn in 1868.

On the 4th April, 1876, the Colonial Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, with the Colonial Secretary, John Robertson, opened the line to and station at Bathurst. In the days when Governors could critise governments, he said it had taken four years to go from Brewongle to Bathurst and, in that period, the south was extended to Gunning (31 miles) and the north to Murrurundi (40 miles) but the west was only nine miles. To great local support, he reminded the crowd that, at that rate, it would take 90 years to get to the borders. The trouble was that the people of Kelso and Bathurst were not unified as the location of the station. This had not been the case at Goulburn where the four local settlements, North Goulburn, Goulburn, Kenmore and East Grove, unified as to the general station site at a very early date. Politicians love local disputes as they provide the best opportunity to do nothing or do it slowly and this was the case at Bathurst. In addition, no one really knew where the western line should go to, considering all the settlements where pretty small and there were obvious destinations like the Colonial borders and the capital cities of the other colonies. This ambiguity did not apply to the south or north of Sydney.

Before passengers entered the building at Bathurst, they had to pass through a forecourt that measured 260 feet x 90 feet. In the centre of the forecourt was a garden but it was much larger than it is today. The use of a garden forecourt was a classy touch that Whitton applied only to the largest stations, such as Goulburn, Junee and Wagga Wagga. By the presence of the forecourt garden, the people of Bathurst knew that they lived in an elite town and that took satisfaction in not only the pleasant, visual appearance of the garden. As equally as important as the physical aspect, the forecourt garden was a psychological reminder to the people of Bathurst that the NSW Railways understood and acknowledged the importance of Bathurst as a town.

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[34] see C. Mackey, *The Railways at Work*, Vol. 1, p. 29

In the end, how much is the design of the station due to John Whitton and how much to the influential residents of Bathurst? It was Whitton who was antagonistic to the location, took departmental revenge in not completing the building for the opening and exercised a couple of tricks to minimize expenditure. On the other hand, he gave the town a unique design and a design that was based on the town's above-average social and political status. It would not be surprising that evidence will emerge one day that shows that someone else, and not Whitton, was responsible for the design process. Nevertheless, Whitton approved it. The influential town residents got a railway line to their town, got a station where they wanted it and got a building design that was never repeated elsewhere on the NSW rail system. In the game of power, the score looks pretty even.

THE SMALL SIZE OF THE NSW RAIL SYSTEM AND THE SMALL AMOUNTS EXPENDED ON STATION BUILDINGS

In 1875, when the plans for Bathurst station were approved, the Colony of NSW was a relatively small place with an appropriate small railway system. To give an idea of how small the rail system was, Table 1 below shows all other building plans approved in 1875, the year the Bathurst plan was approved.

TABLE 1 – BUILDING APPROVALS IN 1875

LOCATION	EXISTING OR NEW LINE	TYPE OF BUILDING
Brewongle	New line	Combined office/residence in a single storey building
Bathurst	New line	Ornate, First Class brick building
Gunning	New line	Prototype of what was to become the standard roadside design – gabled roof
Yass Junction	New line	Combined office/residence in a two storey building
Bowning	New line	Combined office/residence in a two storey building
Hamilton	Existing line	Small, brick building – gabled roof
Zig Zag	Existing line	No building on platform

From Table 1, it could not be said that the NSW Government in 1875 allocated excessive amounts of public funds to the construction of ornate, lavish railway stations. The year, 1875, was one year of the whole decade between 1870 and 1880 when expenditure on railways generally and platform buildings especially was reduced to a minimum. In short, it is a safe bet to say that the town of Bathurst was very lucky to get such a pretty building. However grand it may be, it is only grand in the context of the other buildings erected elsewhere in the Colony at the time. It was only 108 feet long and contained eight rooms, including the male and female toilets. Also, keep in mind that the contract for the Station Master's residence was not put out to tender until 1880, thereby removing the funds to build the house from the new lines budget. On a Colonial-wide basis, the building at Bathurst was one of only 40 First Class platform buildings of the approximately 1,500 stations opened between 1855 and the present. All but two were built before 1895 and only 28 were built or partly built at the time of the opening of the respective lines.

Table 2 gives an indication of the relative expenditure of the station buildings at the three largest towns in the Central West of NSW.

TABLE 2 – EXPENDITURE ON RAILWAY BUILDINGS IN CENTRAL WEST, NSW

LOCATION	YEAR APPROVED	EXPENDITURE IN POUNDS	TYPE OF BUILDING
Bathurst	1875	18,884	Gothic/Tudor Revival
Orange	1876	7,463	Combined office/residence in a two storey building
Dubbo	1879	10, 461	19th century NSW Railway style

PLATFORMS AS AN INDICATOR OF BUSINESS LEVELS AND SPATIAL, SOCIAL STATUS

The majority of railway platforms in NSW followed the British model of raised platforms, as opposed to the American model of ground-level platforms. The platform at Bathurst was raised, being three feet above the top of the rail at the base of the building and two feet nine inches at the edge of the platform.

The NSW Railway policy relating to platforms provided that some physical characteristics were fixed while others were variable. The three fixed components were the height, termination design and width. The height of platforms was one aspect that was supposed to be fixed at two feet nine inches vertical distance above the top of the rail in the 1870s. The terminals of platforms were to be ramped on an incline of one in five and be 15 feet long. Platform policy widths remained in a band from seven to ten feet until 1880. At the opening, the Bathurst platform was ten feet wide. It possessed 15 feet long ramps with a gradient of one in five at each end.

There were three variable policy components. These were the method of support for the platform deck, the length of the platform and the provision of carriage docks at one or both ends. Whitton had the following choices as to the type of platform he wished to provide at Bathurst.

- No platform – passengers entrain/detrain from ground level

- Raised platform, with a structural frame made of timber with hardwood planks or secondhand sleepers and no vertical wall facing the line

- Raised platform, filled with compacted earth with either a timber, brick or stone wall

At Bathurst, Whitton made the platform 295 feet long. This was longer than most platforms. The only platforms longer than that at Bathurst were Parramatta at 325 feet (in 1855), Sydney from 325 to 650 feet (in 1874), Gunning at 300 feet (in 1875), Redfern down platform at 340 feet (in 1876) and Auburn at 390 feet (also in 1876).[35] Apart from the termini of the 1855 Sydney-Granville line, platforms were never built to the 300 feet mark until the mid 1870s.

The platform length at Bathurst tells that story of change in railway design policy in the 1870s. Platforms at stations hold a lot of information about local conditions of the town served. The type of platform is used separately from the building as a measure of the social status of the place served by the station. At Bathurst, Whitton used a compacted earth platform with a face to the rail made of brick. In order to give the platform an extra bit of umph to reflect the higher status of Bathurst, he

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[35] The length of Goulburn platform in 1869 is unknown.

capped the brick wall with a standard coping for the full length of the platform.[36] Whitton thought he would provide an even extra touch. He extended the coping beyond the wall towards the rail. This was a rare attribute and he had just applied this to his design of the second Sydney terminus in 1874.[37]

Whitton made the Bathurst platform to the standard height of two feet nine inches; he allocated the standard ramps to each end of the platform and he designed the wall in the conventional manner, being 14 inches thick on a foundation of 18 inches with the wall sloping to its toe adjacent to the rail. What was unconventional at Bathurst was his use of carriage docks behind each end of the platform. It was extremely rare to feature two carriage docks and, at 80 feet long, they were perhaps the longest outside of Sydney.[38]

The lengthening of platforms is a measure that shows growing patronage. As more and more carriages were added to trains, longer platforms were needed. If platforms were not extended, two or more stops had to be made by passenger trains. This became a real pain when passengers wanted to use the services of the Railway Refreshment

Room on the platform. Table 3 below sets out information about the evolutionary lengthening of the Bathurst platform. It would be a safe bet to say that the need to lengthen the platform at Bathurst would be manifest several years prior to the physical work being done.

TABLE 3: PLATFORM LENGTHS AT BATHURST

YEAR	PLATFORM/UP PLATFORM (feet)	DOWN PLATFORM (feet)
1876	295	
1897	395	
1911	Length of extension unknown	
1929	528	300

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[36] The platform wall is visible in R. Preston, *Time of the Passenger Train – First Edition*, p. 20

[37] A photograph of the second Sydney platform is in RTM, *150 Years of Rail Service in NSW Souvenir Booklet*, p. 6

[38] Even West Maitland ended up with one dock despite the approved plan showing docks at each end.

YEAR	PLATFORM/UP PLATFORM (feet)	DOWN PLATFORM (feet)
1934	588	
1935	Length of extension unknown – platform also widened	
1944	650	300
1973	657	657
1990	653	

SOURCE: *Local Appendices to the General Appendix*

While the up or main platform was eventually asphalted, this was never done for the down platform, which retained its original surface material from the 1880s of crushed quartz from the quarry at Locksley. At some stage after 1921, a concrete pad was poured in front of the two room building on the platform but the remainder of the platform was untouched.   The grass was allowed to grow on the platform from the 1990s.

In 1882, an additional platform was constructed opposite the 1876 platform. A station having two platforms in locations where there was a single main line was highly unusual. So rare was it that the NSW Rail Transport Museum commented about the platform in its *Western Endeavour* notes for the opening of the standard gauge link across Australia in 1970. The Museum wrote that Bathurst "is notable as possessing two platforms of which the up (the 1876 platform then used for trains to Sydney) is used for nearly all passenger trains in both directions".[39]

Don Hagarty was a one-time District Engineer at Bathurst and he recalls that the Sydney bound platform was used for passenger trains in either direction. He stated that, when two passenger trains met at Bathurst, the more important train used the Sydney bound platform, regardless of the direction of travel of the train. Signalling historian, Graham Harper, explains that "the 1884 signal diagram for Bathurst shows double line working between Bathurst East and Bathurst West signal boxes, although Blayney bound trains could also be signalled into and out of the Sydney

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[39] RTM, *Western Endeavour*, no details, no page. It is strictly wrong to say that two platforms existed on a single line because the line was duplicated through the station between Bathurst East and Bathurst West signal boxes.

bound platform, all under the control of East Box. This was the case until quite recently when West Box was abolished. The working between the two signal boxes changed in 1903 from double line working to a system called station yard working and remained the same until Bathurst West Box closed in 1995".[40]

The platform configuration at Bathurst in 1882 was parallel, though the new platform was shorter. It is of note that the platforms were parallel as the NSW Railways was very slow to change its policy that had existed from 1855 of having staggered platforms. Quite a few platforms constructed after 1882 throughout NSW were staggered. The use of parallel platforms was a marker that Bathurst station was sufficiently important to receive the latest policy change. The number of trains operating through Bathurst had grown sufficiently that the NSW Railways decided to duplicate the main line through the station. The 1876 platform now served the Up Main (to Sydney) and the new platform served the Down Main line. The NSW Railways was always a penny-pinching organization and it was quite consistent with the prevailing policy to avoid any buildings on the new platform. The same absence of building on a duplicated platform occurred at Goulburn. However, the NSW Railways did realize that it could utilize the new platform to mount advertising hoardings, which it did in 1893. A small waiting room was not provided until 1902.

A very unusual feature of NSW stations outside of Sydney is the use of subways. At Bathurst, a subway was used in 1882 to connect the two platforms. It had a brick arch with stone stairways flanked by brick walls capped stone copings. The use of sandstone was fairly common during Whitton's time for steps and thresholds. While it may have looked attractive, it was not able to sustain a large amount of pedestrian traffic over decades and, eventually, stone treads became a safety hazard at many places. During the 1990s, any remaining use of sandstone for stepways and thresholds was eliminated. The unusual use of a subway may have been the lowest cost option when compared to the erection of a pedestrian bridge. After all, the NSW Railway engineers had to build up the surface level so they would have been aware of the nature of the material they would face in building a subway. Whatever the case, until other evidence comes to light, Bathurst did receive not only the first inter-platform subway on the NSW rail system but the first use of a pedestrian subway under railway tracks.[41] Locked gates now restrict access to the subway.

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[40] Bathurst East signal box closed in 2003.
[41] Another early subway was in 1883 in the vicinity of the present Illawarra Junction

COMMERCIAL FORCES THAT CHANGED THE DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF THE 1875 BUILDING DESIGN

There were three commercial forces that affected the design and layout of John Whitton's approved 1875 design. These were the NSW Government's decision for the NSW Railways to enter the catering and liquor business, the expansion of parcels business and an increase in the amount of rail traffic passing through the station. These three forces are discussed seriatim.

CATERING AND LIQUOR BUSINESS

The NSW Railways had approved private enterprise to undertake the sale of food and some form of alcoholic beverages at a few stations from 1855. The number of locations grew in line with the expansion of the railway system. The Sydney based *Evening News*, 4th May, 1874, p. 2 gave the following status report on the location and operation of Railway Refreshment Rooms.

> "The arrangements for the establishment of decent refreshment rooms upon the southern and western railways are now complete, and during the tedious journey to either Bathurst or Goulburn, a comfortable meal can now be obtained at Mount Victoria or Mittagong[42]. Passengers can, if they chose, have a telegram sent from a station before they arrive, and so secure a menu ready packed, which they may discuss at their leisure. The dishes are being collected at the terminus. These refreshments do not include spirituous or intoxicating beverages, which "visitors" most still provide for themselves."

There is some clashing evidence about the date of the opening of the Railway Refreshment Room at Bathurst. The *Evening News,* 1st October, 1881, p. 4 stated "extensive alterations are being made at the Bathurst railway station; - Increased accommodation, which has been much needed for a long time, is in progress." That newspaper reference puts the date at 1881 but other evidence indicates 1883. It could well be that a temporary refreshment facility was set up in late 1881 or early 1882 but a permanent arrangement or more extensive services were not available until 1883.

It was not until 1883 that the NSW Licensing Court allowed the NSW Railways to sell all forms of alcohol to customers. This co-incided with a settlement in 1882 between the NSW Railways and a very astute businessman, named John Castner, with a decision that the Railway Department, and not Castner, would provide the

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[42] A photograph of the Railway Refreshment Room at Mount Victoria in the 1870s is in P. Attenborough, *Central West Express,* Matraville, Eveleigh Press, 2011, p. 10

accommodation in which refreshment rooms would operate. In that year, he stitched a deal to operate all Refreshment Rooms on the NSW rail system for a period of five

year.[43] What a genius! He had completely avoided the capital expenditure to set up his business.

It is commonly stated that the 1875 plan for Bathurst did not contain a Refreshment Room because the Railway authorities considered that Bathurst would be the terminus of the Great Western Railway. The evidence is to the contrary. Before Whitton had approved of the plan for Bathurst, work was proceeding to extend the line towards Orange. The Bathurst building did not have a Refreshment Room because John Whitton did not consider it to be a priority, keeping in mind the small amount of funds he was allocated. When Refreshment Rooms were opened before 1882, they were mostly contained in basic timber sheds with the walls sheeted with corrugated iron.[44]

It was not long before Castner advised the NSW Railways that he intended to operate a Refreshment Room at Bathurst. Now obliged to provide space for bar and food service, the NSW Railways had two options. The first was to build a new, detached structure and the second was to adapt the existing structure. Table 4 below sets out the method of provision for Railway Refreshment Rooms on the Main West line.

TABLE 4: RAILWAY REFRESHMENT ROOMS ON THE MAIN WEST LINE

DATE OF STRUCTURE	LOCATION	METHOD OF PROVISION
1873	Blackheath	Two-storey building – not constructed
1874	Mount Victoria	Detached or semi-detached structure at the down end – opened instead of one at Blackheath
1880	Penrith	Accommodation within existing building
1883	Bathurst	Extension of existing building at Sydney end
1884	Mount Victoria	Large, two-storey extension of extensive building

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[43] A. Messner, *Trains Up*, State Rail Authority, no date, pp. 14 & 18
[44] There were exceptions, such as Mittagong in 1873 and a failed attempt at Goulburn in 1868.

DATE OF STRUCTURE	LOCATION	METHOD OF PROVISION
1885	Wellington	Two-storey, detached building placed at rear of platform
1885	Nyngan	Two-storey, detached building placed at rear of platform
1897	Orange	Accommodation within existing building
1912	Wallerawang	Detached timber building – not built
1917	Wallerawang	Accommodation within existing building
1917	Blayney	Accommodation within an existing building
1925	Dubbo	Detached building erected at rear of platform
1960	Lithgow	Accommodation in Sydney end for light food only

SOURCE: J. Forsyth, *Station Information*, three volumes, SRA Archives, 1997, various entries

Table 4 shows that large, detached buildings were erected in the 1880s when more capital was available than in the 1870s and when the lines were reaching or had reached the colonial borders. None were approved by John Whitton. Large, detached Railway Refreshment Rooms were located mostly where there existed a large locomotive depot. The idea was to align the time taken to change locomotives with the time allowed for passengers to obtain food and drinks. With that strategy in mind, one would think that Bathurst would be the location of a large, detached Railway Refreshment Room. For some strange reason, such buildings were not usually provided at large towns. Goulburn, Wagga Wagga, Albury, Bathurst, Newcastle, Tamworth or Armidale did not have large, detached Railway Refreshment Rooms. The exception was Wellington. They appeared to be placed mostly at junction stations, such as Moss Vale, Cootamundra West, Junee, Muswellbrook and Werris Creek. Again, Wellington is the exception. Accordingly, Bathurst missed out on having a large, detached Railway Refreshment Room because it was not considered to need the bedroom accommodation for passengers that the large, detached structures contained.

Having decided that a Railway Refreshment Room at Bathurst would be provided by a c30 feet long extension of the platform building at the Sydney end, George Cowdery, the Engineer for Existing Lines in 1883 approved the plans. The opportunity was taken to make several other changes to the building; the most interesting was the conversion of an "old Lamp Room" into to a waiting room. He provided a new gents' toilet and the expansion of the Parcels Office at the Blayney end of the building.

While Cowdery did not provide a detached Refreshment Room, he did approve a new brick building 36 by 15 feet in the location where the locomotive, 5112, is located. It contained a Guards' Room (which was converted for RRR staff in the1917/1919 period) and a new Lamp Room. To confirm the status of the town, Cowdery designed the extension and the new building to match the details of the 1875 approved structure. These alterations mark the start of the evolutionary development of the station precinct.[45]

Building the Refreshment Room was just the first act in supply food and drink to passengers. Table 5 below sets out the additions and alterations that occurred over the next 60 years of operation of the facility.

TABLE 5: ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE BATHURST RAILWAY REFRESHMENT ROOM

YEAR OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	NATURE OF THE ALTERATION/ADDITION
1891	Cellar excavated under the floor
1904	"rubbish destructor" (incinerator) provided, using parts from a former incinerator
1906	Expansion of the facility using space for toilets – wall between RRR and the Ladies' Waiting Room (LWR) partly removed to provide a counter for women, avoiding use of the main, public counter- kitchen located to forecourt side
1910	Extension of the RRR by converting the LWR into a bar and conversion of part of the area from counter service to a dining room with individual tables – the 1906 access

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[45] C. Mackey, *The Railways at Work*, Vol. 1 p. 29 shows in 1956 the 1883 detached Guards'/Lamp Room, the existence of ornate advertising signs and two-rail fencing with two wires on platform No. 2 and the concave fencing and a little hand with' refreshments' sign attached to a lamp post on platform No. 1. It also shows the filthy condition of structures

YEAR OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	NATURE OF THE ALTERATION/ADDITION
	from the LWR to the RRR was removed –
1911	Dining Room lengthened
1917	NSW Railways takes over management of all RRRs, including Bathurst on 4th February, as part of a quasi-socialist government policy to support the rural economy – extension of RRR – additional bedroom accommodation for RRR staff – the Gentlemen's Waiting Room was converted into a bar
1919	Additional bar space
1922	Unspecified alterations
1927	Extension of counter area to the wall adjacent to the subway -
1929	Unspecified additions
1935	Additional bedrooms for RRR staff, totaling five bedrooms, including one for "boys"
1937	RRR staff quarters connected to the city's sewerage system, as was the rest of the station
1942	Kitchen enlarged
1944	New staff change room, boiler room and lavatory built
1955	Provision of additional refrigeration, alterations to fixtures and provision of drainage
1957	Plan to re-design the quarters for the RRR Manager at the rear of the building near the SM's residence – possibly not done
1959	RRR leased to private enterprise from 1st July
1968	RRR closed – staff accommodation was demolished

The *Western Herald,* 3rd July, 1959, p. 6 reported that "the Railways Department refreshment room at Bathurst, for which tenders were recently called, has been let to a Bathurst publican, Mrs. Cec Speed, who was the successful tenderer. To cut its losses on many refreshment rooms, the Commissioner for Railways has reverted to

the system of letting them to private individuals, which was in vogue fifty years ago". Table 5 above shows that the NSW Railways did implement changes to meet the ever-rising passenger demand for food and drink. With widespread ownership of private motor cars and on-train catering, the Bathurst Railway Refreshment Room was doomed.

Today, there is no trace of its existence, apart from the 1883 extension of the main building at the Sydney end, apart from some render on the end wall.

PARCELS TRAFFIC

While it was the Railway Refreshment Room that had a large, physical impact on the Sydney end of the building, it was parcels business that had a similar, physical impact on the Blayney end.

The original Parcels Office was first extended by a length of 24 feet and a width of 16 feet. It contained separate space for both parcels and for out ofs, which were parcels carried by goods trains at lower rates and on slower services than those carried by passenger trains. In 1943, 1971 and again in 1983, the Parcels Office was extended. In 1978, the Parcels Office was "modernized". The former Out of Room was now the "Mail Room" and there was a special room for COD parcels. State Rail removed itself from the parcels business in 1987. All trace of the building extensions to accommodate the parcels office was removed some time before 1990.

EXPANSION OF PASSENGER AND FREIGHT TRAFFIC THROUGH THE STATION

As passenger and train numbers increased, additional pressure was placed on the relatively small platform building to cope with the need for extra passenger and staff accommodation. To give an idea of rail traffic through the station, see *Byways of Steam* 3, 5, 16, 21, 23 and 25. Table 6 below sets out the known changes, which took place at one of four locations – either in the centre of the building, along the 1876 platform, to the rear of the 1876 platform or the other platform.

TABLE 6 ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS AT BATHURST STATION, EXCLUDING REFRESHMENT AND PARCELS RELATED CHANGES

YEAR OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	LOCATION OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	NATURE OF THE ALTERATION/ADDITION
1882	New Down platform	Parallel to 1876 platform
1892	Along platform at Sydney	Awning extension

YEAR OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	LOCATION OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	NATURE OF THE ALTERATION/ADDITION
	end	
1893	On Down platform	advertising hoardings erected
1901	At the rear of the platform on the Blayney side – formerly located on the platform	Relocation and expansion of Boiler for footwarmers
1902	Down platform	Provision of a 15 feet x 10 feet waiting shed on the down platform
1910	Towards up end of the centre of the building	New earth closets for women, now requiring pans to be removed from the forecourt, with a corrugated iron wall covering the rear of the closets
1912	Towards down end of the centre of the building	Former male toilet at down end converted to office for the SM - new male toilet added to the down end, including a "dog box" inside the toilet –gas stove in SM's office
1917	Sydney end of the platform	New, detached brick Telegraph Office after fire destroyed existing facility – new Gentlemen's Waiting Room in former Telegraph Office – new Lamp Room – relocation of SM's office
1921	Down platform	Room 15 feet x 10 feet added to the exiting 1902 Waiting Room for the Traffic Inspector, with the awning extended
1922	Centre of 1876 building	ticket racks removed from one of two ticket windows and second window used "only for rushes" – door to platform in Booking Office in two halves –

YEAR OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	LOCATION OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	NATURE OF THE ALTERATION/ADDITION
		bottom half to be ledged" to hold a guard's boot"
1923	Forecourt of building	Asphalt path in front of building on road side
1927	New, semi-detached brick building adjacent to 1917 Telegraph Office, on the Sydney side of the subway – rear wall extending beyond the Office	New Ladies' Waiting Room and lavatory
1934	Along platform and at Sydney end of platform	Vertical posts supporting the platform awning and the roof itself at Bathurst were replaced by cantilevered bracket awning on no. 1 platform - Gentlemen's Waiting Room in the main building adjacent to the Lobby at Bathurst converted into office for Station Master - new male toilet on the Sydney side of the 1917 Telegraph Office
1935	Along the platform	provision of awning following extension of platform
1937	All buildings	Connection of toilets to city sewerage system
1943	Towards down end of the centre of the 1876 building	Existing male toilet converted into an Out of Room and a new toilet provided adjoining the Telegraph Office
1944	Sydney end of the 1876 building	Replacement of a timber frame wall sheeted with corrugated iron with face bricks on the forecourt side of the building
1950	At the Sydney end of the Telegraph Office building	Room 8' long x 16' wide for P.M.G.'s Travelling Post Office

YEAR OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	LOCATION OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	NATURE OF THE ALTERATION/ADDITION
	and in the centre of the main building	staff - improved office accommodation for S.M. and staff at Bathurst – aluminium window frames holding glass louvres – louvre operating mechanism to be cadmium plated steel – earlier plan dated 3/2/1949
C1952	1876 building and additions	External walls painted white
1956	Centre of 1876 building	Proposed additional room for SM – cancelled
1964	Centre of 1876 building	conversion of a store behind the SM's office to a Telegraph Office
1970	All parts	End of use of coal fires for heating – replaced by LP gas heaters until Countrylinkification when air-conditioning was installed – Bathurst station was in the first group of stations to receive replacement of its coal-based heating
1971	Part of former RRR	Converted into offices and staff locker space
1974	Part of former RRR/TCS	Remodeling to accommodate Roster Clerks, Female Amenities Room and Male Amenities Room (meal rooms) and a Shunters' Locker Room
1977	Centre of 1876 building	modernisation of office for Area Sales Manager
1978	Centre of 1876 building	SM's office and staff offices were air-conditioned

YEAR OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	LOCATION OF ALTERATION/ADDITION	NATURE OF THE ALTERATION/ADDITION
1982	Centre of 1876 building	New rectangular ticket and enquiry window – amendments in 1983 – Waiting Room provided for the first time in 10 years with new seats
1984	Centre of 1876 building	upgrading of both toilets – urinal reduced in length to accommodate only two people
1987	Centre of 1876 building And part of former RRR	Ceiling in SM's office and Booking Office lowered from 4900mm to 3400mm - combined meal, shower, locker and toilet space for shunters and drivers – separate locker and toilet space built for female staff
1989	1917 detached Telegraph Office building	•Station staff get their own toilets and showers by converting the former Ladies' Waiting Room
1992	Centre of 1876 building	Tenders closed on 16/12 for a Countrylink Travel Centre
Post 1992	1876 building	Painting of the drivers' room – former Ladies' Waiting Room is now used as an office and storeroom - no changes to the floor plan since 1992

One major physical change at Bathurst station that it is not clear from Table 6 is the aggregation of four functional changes that were combined over a period of 33 years to form a large, separate building at the Sydney end of the 1876 station. The face brick building comprised the following alterations.

• The 1917 Telegraph Office

• The 1927 Ladies' Waiting Room and toilet,

• The 1934 men's toilet, &

- The 1950 room for TPO staff

What also do we distill from the rather lengthy and, at times, tiresome Table 6? Well, there are a few more interesting features which are not entirely visible from Table 6. Firstly, there is a pattern about railway station buildings into which Bathurst fits. In the 19th century, the later a building was constructed, the more likely it could accommodate alterations without needing to extend or replace the structure. Let's start with the 1850s. Buildings in the 1850s were replaced generally very quickly because they were simply too small. This applied to Sydney, Newcastle, Maitland and virtually all the other stations along the lines. In the 1860s and 1870s, buildings were not so much replaced as lengthened. Structures at Mittagong, Moss Vale, Singleton, Muswellbrook and Murrrurundi were all lengthened rather than replaced. Bathurst falls into this category. In the 1880s and 1890s, buildings were mostly never extended because they were built with surplus capacity and/or their layout featured open spaces linking a main structure to one or two detached/semi-detached pavilions. These open spaces were very often in-filled. When Bathurst was erected, the trunk lines were unfinished and it was impossible for approving offices to foretell how busy stations would be. Those station buildings erected from 1880 onwards were better designed with an idea of the impact of the completed trunk system.

Another interesting comment not visible from Table 6 is the determination of those alterations/additions which made a significant visual impact on the station. Apart from the brick building at the Sydney end, there are only three other changes made to the station since 1876 that are extant today. One is the 1882 second platform. The second is the 1883 extension for the Railway Refreshment Room. These two features have had the major, visual impact of all the various alterations. The third feature is the extension of the platform awning at the Blayney end of the original platform. Although the extensions to the Parcels/Out of Office/Room have been removed, the platform awning still extends to aid in the interpretation of the now-demolished features. There exists marks on the 1876 building at the Blayney end that shows where the extensions started.

Today, passengers see a much changed railway station. These changes were the result of the creation of Countrylink in 1989. Tenders closed on 9th December, 1992, for the proposed internal works. The Countrylink Travel Centre was opened on 15th November, 1993. Much protesting took place at the time about the radical impact of the proposed design but, eventually, the heavy hitters from State Rail were victorious over those people and groups concerned about the loss of heritage fabric. In conjunction with the provision of the Countrylink Travel Centre in 1993 a lot of good work was done to make the station look presentable. Internally, a waiting room was provided with a high level of visibility so that any naughty behavior by waiting passengers could be identified. Next, clean toilets were provided, adjacent to the waiting area, thereby eliminating the need for waiting passengers to proceed along the platform to the toilets. Disabled passengers also received their own toilet as part of the deal. At the Sydney end, the Countrylink Travel Centre was built with direct

access from both the forecourt and the waiting area. There were also external changes. The extensions for the Parcels Office at the Blayney end were removed and, more significantly, the 1944 brick wall outside the Railway Refreshment Room facing the forecourt was demolished. Tenders for the preparation of the station forecourt closed on 21st April, 1993. The work was not completed at the time of the opening of the Countrylink Travel Centre. The footpath outside the building was renewed and widened and the garden in the centre of the forecourt was minimized and converted into a car parking area. Of the then nine rooms/spaces in the building, all but three – a waiting room and male and female toilets – were allocated for staff use. The 1876 building, both internally and externally, was painted in 1993 using the same palette of colours as every other Travel Centre and most every other NSW heritage station building.

It would be very fair to say that the changes implemented at Bathurst under the Countrylink banner was the first and only time in the history of the station that the NSW rail organization implemented a major plan to make rail transport attractive by showcasing its shop window. Lewis Cross was the architect in charge of the project and he recently stated that "functionally, the building did not seem to have changed significantly since it was originally built. I think tickets were being sold through the original "hole in the wall" and the waiting facilities were primitive." [46]

Countrylink spent close to $1 million dollars in 1993 to revolutionize the appearance of the station building and, for the first time since 1876, made the residents proud of their railway station.

BATHURST STATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STATEWIDE RAIL SYSTEM

 The pattern of alterations and additions shown in Table 6 to the building generally accords to the pattern that applied to the whole NSW rail system. Little was done in the 1890s, 1930s and 1950s due to funding shortages. In the 1950s and 1960s there was a significantly high level of disinterest by NSW Labor Governments in rail transport. These 20 years are practically barren of capital improvements due to official, government malaise as much to inadequate funding. Improvements in the 1970s and 1980s are the result of efforts by the new rail organisations which governments created, namely the Public Transport Commission (1972-79), State Rail (1980-1989) and Countrylink (1989 to date)

Today, the station appears as it was in 1883, with one major exception. From 1917, a second brick building was erected on the platform – initially for a Telegraph Office.

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[46] On the eve of his retirement from RailCorp, Lewis Cross's memory was not entirely accurate. The original, small ticket window was replaced in 1982/83.

This was and is an important building in the history of NSW station design. The plan was issued in May and revised in October, 1917. It was designed along a style first introduced at Kiama in 1892 and modified for Turramurra in 1912. The major design features are a gabled roof and a cantilevered, 11 feet wide platform awning supported by "standard brackets". It was a small, one room structure measuring 21 feet x 16 feet internal. It was erected in 1918 using departmental day-labour. For a small building, it had a couple classy features, namely stone (rather than concrete) corbels on which the base of the awning brackets sat. The mortar between the face bricks was tuck-pointed. The funny thing was that there were two unusual aspects of the structure. The most obvious of these was the absence of a moulded string

course around the exterior walls of the building. The use of string courses was a feature applied to all bring examples in Sydney up to 1922 yet this was not done at Bathurst, where the structure had a very high level of visibility to the travelling public. Why? The other unusual feature was the fitting of a fixed hood over the window in the rear of the building. While this was common in the period, it was only applied to smaller, timber structures at small towns – not to buildings on busy platforms like Bathurst. The answer seems to be that the NSW Railways viewed Bathurst station

in a rural rather than an urban context. It was an insult to the city of Bathurst.

The Bathurst Times, 20th January,1913, p. 2 had a demand that "The Commissioners should raze or burn it (i.e. the station building)" and stated that there was an "urgent need for a modern building. If the Bathurst railway station is ever tree of human life for one hour, advantage should be taken of the opportunity to send the old caboose sky-high". This was a feeling shared by many towns and such requests were all declined by the Commissioner. Table 7 below lists all stations west of Lithgow where the original buildings were approved for replacement.

TABLE 7 – STATIONS WEST OF LITHGOW WHERE THE ORIGINAL BUILDINGS WERE REPLACED AND APPROVED FOR REPLACEMENT

YEAR	STATION	DETAILS
1890	Raglan	Relocation after a train run-away
1933	Orange East Fork	Not built
1939	Orange	Not built
1946	Orange	Not built
1946	Narromine	Not built
1956	Nevertire	Not built

YEAR	STATION	DETAILS
1959	Trangie	Fire destroyed original building
1967	Bourke	Fire destroyed original building

SOURCE: S. A. Sharp, *The Railway Stations of NSW 1855-1980*, unpublished M. Ec. (Hons) thesis, Faculty of Economics, University of Sydney, 1980

From Table 7, it is evident that the only station buildings rebuilt on the Main West were those related to a catastrophe. The NSW Railways did not have the capital funds even to build those stations for which it had given approval. In relation to Bathurst, the NSW Railways never considered rebuilding the station.

This 1917 brick building at Bathurst did not remain as a single room. In 1927, a face brick building was erected between the subway steps and the 1917 Telegraph Office. It was used as a Ladies' Waiting Room and toilet, the closets extending further to the rear of the Telegraph Office). The architectural features matched those of its 1918 neighbour. The third room was added in 1934. It was a male toilet but this time it was placed on the Sydney end of the 1917 building. The final of the four rooms was added in 1950. This was a room for PMG staff working on the Travelling Post Offices (TPOs) on the various mail trains. Even in 1950, the plan allowed for the corner of the addition which addressed the platform to have cement rendering to replicate the stone quoins that existed on the 1876 building.

A simple explanation of the degrading of building standards would be that, as the 20th century rolled on, there was increasingly little attention allocated to provide a good looking addition or alteration. Witness the daggy, timber hut provided in 1902 on the down platform! The explanation for the simple, nay primitive, building with its absence of lining boards and heating, is a bit more complex. Declining standards tell only part of the story.

Declining standards were happening over the entire NSW rail network. Have a look at what was happening at other locations in 1902, the year of the provision of the Bathurst timber building. The same design of building was used for all intermediate on three branch lines opened or extended in 1902, namely Goulburn to Crookwell, Culcairn to Holbrook and the extension from Delungra to Inverell. The same design was also used for the ten buildings approved for existing lines, viz. Mullumbimby, Cardiff, Barmedman, Pinecliffe, Gadara, Gurranang, Ootha, Cubbaroo, Merah North and Narrabri. So, what was placed on the Blayney bound platform at Bathurst accorded with what the NSW Railways was using elsewhere in the State.

Now, another very important factor emerges. The NSW Railways was duplicating the main line over the Blue Mountains between Glenbrook and Mount Victoria. Did the NSW Railways use simple timber sheds for the island platforms? No! The

organization provided at most locations elegant, brick buildings 75 feet long. Even the detached Out Of Rooms were brick. Moreover, any person who built a residence between Penrith and Mount Victoria received a First Class season ticket, free of charge, for a period of five

years.[47] Clearly, there was a bias between Sydney and its near areas and The Bush. Even though Bathurst was a city before 1902, it received a daggy structure because that was what was provided anywhere in The Bush. This structure is clear evidence of the bias against rural areas of NSW.

There is more evidence of the bias towards the city and against country NSW.

Examine the rural interpretation of the 1917 Telegraph Office and, worst of all, the hideous brick wall facing the forecourt in 1944 covering the yard of the Railway Refreshment Room. The explanation needs a bit more effort. As well as the location of a station, the quality of every change to the station building depended on the pride of the people involved in all the stages of design and construction. Analyse the reasonable effort in 1950 to make the TPO room fit in with the 1876 building or the work in 1982 to improve the ticket sales and enquiry functions and, most recently, the massive effort to provide a station with a new look for Countrylink in 1993.

Amongst the top initiatives that damaged the appearance of the station was the decision in the early 1950s to paint the external walls white on all platform buildings throughout NSW, from Redfern to Reefton to Tenterfield and to Wagga Wagga.[48] This was in accordance with a Statewide policy and was implemented as a measure to make the filthy, smoke-damaged structure look presentable for the royal tour by Queen Elizabeth II in 1954. The building was excessively glary and as equally as repulsive. The repainting of the building in more authentic colours in 1993 removed this hideous aspect.[49]

It was general Railway policy to enact Agreements with local government councils about the maintenance of station forecourts. Usually, the NSW Railways would asphalt the forecourt and, from that time, maintenance would become the responsibility of the council. This was the case at Bathurst. However, the Railways often irritated councils for various reasons and this also was the case at Bathurst. *The Goulburn Evening Post*, 8th October, 1940, p. 6 reported developments. It said: "BATHURST STATION - Agreement Cancelled - The approach to Bathurst railway station is the subject of dispute between the Bathurst City Council and the Railway

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[47] A similar concession was also granted to people who built new residences between Campbelltown and Moss Vale and Como and Clifton.

[48] A photograph of the building taken in 1954 showing the white paint is in Cottee, op. cit, p. 94

[49] Neville King, *There's No Railway There Anymore*, privately published, 2012, p. 86 has a photo of station in the 1950s painted white

Department, and the Council has decided to cancel its agreement for the maintenance of the area and hand the whole thing over to the Department".

Like all other stations on the NSW rail system, Bathurst station has had to be modified to accord with legislation that provides minimum standards to allow mobility for disabled passengers. These standards have changed from time to time and, in the last three to five years, new glass doors have been fitted to the inside of the authentic timber doors in order to meet minimum widths for doorways. Now, the original timber doors on both the forecourt and platform sides of the building remain open. Alterations are also proposed to increase clearances for the door to the disabled toilet.

In 2013, the station was painted externally. This is the second time the building has been painted since 1993. The colour scheme is based on a generic concept and does not reflect former colours of the building. Before the station was painted white in the early 1950s, the external walls were a much deeper red colour, based on a paint scrape at the Blayney end of the 1876 building.

END REMARKS

Local historian, Bernard Greaves, wrote that "the railway, with its workshops, has been the centre of industrial activity and has continued to make a major contribution to the city's payroll to the present day". [50] Well, the workshop is in the process of being sold. With that complex is sold, the 1876 platform building remains as the sole structure still occupied by railway staff of the NSW Government. The building's role as an indicator and, more significantly, a measure of Bathurst's railway history is more important than ever before.

This paper would not have been possible without the kindness and considerable effort by veteran railwayman, Austin Mooney. He is responsible for discovering all the newspaper extracts and his tireless help is much appreciated. The help of Don Hagarty, Graham Harper, Gary Hughes, Col Millard and Len Truscott is also acknowledged and appreciated.

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[50] B. Greaves, *The Story of Bathurst,* Third Ed., Angus & Robertson, 1976, p. 153

GEORGES PLAINS

THE PLATFORM BUILDING

John Whitton approved on 4th February, 1876, a single-storey, brick combined office and residence. Substantial foundations were provided, like at Bathurst station, indicating that the station building was built above the original ground level. The contractors for the construction of the Georges Plains building were C. J. Douglas, J. Robertson & W. Shiels and the contract was dated 9th July, 1876. This gave the contractors four months to undertake construction. The station was opened on 1st November, 1876. Probably, the building was complete by the station opening date but there is no evidence to date to confirm this thought.

While the structure belonged to the same family of buildings as at Rydal, Tarana, Brewongle and Spring Hill, it was not the same as the first two. Indeed, the structure at Tarana was a stripped-down version of Rydal. So, four siblings in the family and there are two boys and two girls.   So what's different about Georges Plains (and Spring Hill) compared to Rydal and Tarana? Heaps!

Yes, the buildings shared an overall Gothic Revival influenced design, as evidenced in the steep roof pitch and the ornate bargeboards. Typical of NSW stations, the Georges Plains building was relatively small size, measuring only 50 feet by 28 feet wide. The symmetrically placed chimneys with terracotta chimney pots were not overly ornate. The residential part contained only two bedrooms, an internal kitchen and a sitting room. The ceiling height of 11 feet was typical. There was no toilet for the station officer's family, everyone having to use the single closets, one each for males and females. The toilet block was detached from the main building 12 feet six inches from the structure and the family had to enter the toilets using the platform rooms. Living conditions for the family could safely be described as spartan.

Normally, fireplaces are a standard width of two feet six inches. The two bedrooms had such facilities but, in the kitchen and the sitting room, the hearths were a massive five feet six inches wide. With such an unusual element in the design, attention is directed to other details of the building. To do that, let's take a stroll along the three feet three inch wide corridor that separates the residence from the business offices and enter the Booking Office. That doorway is the sole, internal access point between the two parts of the structure, namely the residential part and the office part.

There is nothing unusual about the Booking Office, which has a ticket window facing into the General Waiting Room. Hang on! That's unusual! The room is called Waiting Room, not General Waiting Room. Wow! It was in 1876 that the NSW Railways started to introduce on a wide scale the term, *Waiting Room*, thereby omitting the "General". If that wasn't enough, there was no Ladies' Waiting Room but a Ladies' Room, this time omitting the "Waiting".   These new nomenclatures

were unheard of on both the Great Western and Great Southern Railways but, somehow, they had been used on the Great Northern Railway. On Whitton's plan for Singleton in 1862, he omitted the "General" and "Waiting" for both waiting rooms. While the term, *General Waiting Room*, was not again used until 1876 at Georges Plains and its sibling sister at Quirindi, the term, *Ladies Room* was in fact used a couple of times later, at Morpeth Junction/East Maitland in 1865 and at High Street in 1873.

As soon as the observant traveller stepped onto the platform, he/she saw a couple of things that were not seen elsewhere. The first was the double entry door to the Waiting Room. It was usual the usual four-panel affair but had the upper half glazed and panels only in the lower half of the door. The other two doors facing onto the platform were similarly treated. Glass in doors? That was certainly something not see at all at that time.

The most amazing feature of all was the omission of a platform awning. Unbelievable! Never since the days of 1855 had this feature been omitted from a platform building. Moreover, the awning that was built later was a jerry affair. The vertical posts were placed at the extreme edge of the awning near the platform coping, making the origin of the awning singularly unusual. Usually, the posts supporting the awning would be placed about three feet back from the roof gutter. John Forsyth, the late Railway Archivist, wrote that a waiting room was established in 1881 at the station. It is possible that the platform awning was added at that time or was, in fact, the alleged waiting room.

The brick toilet block was located at the Bathurst end of the main building. As normal for the time, the parapet roof hid a lower, skillion roof only over the closets. The urinal, being open to the elements was 13 feet long. On the NSW Railways, the standard allowance for men standing at a urinal was two feet wide. Thus, the facility at Georges Plains accommodated simultaneously six men and one boy. The men were prevented from gazing on to fellow users by full-height, slate partitions. Both male and female toilets were described as "water closets" but it is not known how they worked. At some unknown time, the officer's family was allocated their own toilet.

While our observant traveller of the past is still standing on the platform, she/he notices something again very different about the station. It is the three-rail, timber fence along the rear of the platform, with twin sets of six feet wide gates at each end of the building. Messrs R. and B. Wheatley, *Railway Portraits*, Vol. 2, privately published, 2006, p. 93 has a photograph taken in 1966. Up to 1876, timber pickets and box-frame, timber fencing had only been used. From the time of Georges Plains, there was now a new player on the field.

Also, 60 feet long docks were located at each end of the 220 feet long platform. It was unusual to find docks at both ends of the platform at such a small station. What

was normal for the time for other stations was the platform width at Georges Plains. The platform was narrow, being nine feet wide, except in front to the building where it was 12 feet wide. Also normal were the 15 feet long ramps at each end of the platform with a slope of one in five.

The brick wall of the platform facing the track looked normal – but it wasn't. It was the usual height above the rail head of two feet nine inches and it did slope downward to the toe of the wall for a total distance of five feet (i.e. two feet three inches were underground). Here's the unusual bit. There was no significant foundation for the platform wall. The wall was 14 inches thick but sat on a base only 18 inches square – not much at all. Since the wall hasn't fallen down, it has proven that John Whitton knew his stuff.

In 1902, an additional bedroom had been erected at the rear. It survives.

In 1956, the residential part of the building had eight electric lights, one for each room. The whole of the residence had only one power point – located in the kitchen, which had been installed in 1950. In 1956, the Maintenance Engineer at Bathurst approved the installation of a second power point in the dining room.

In 1966, local approval was granted for a small improvement to the Georges Plains building. The residence received a new laundry and bath room. The changes were constructed with a timber stud frame and asbestos cement wall sheeting both externally and internally. Up to that time, the then occupant, the Assistant Station Master, used an "open laundry". At the same time, the Lamp Room off the platform at the rear was demolished.

THE RESIDENCES

There are three surviving residences at Georges Plains. There is the combination residence/office on the platform. There is also a gatehouse, with the original structure erected in 1879 at the level crossing. The third residence is on the corner of Railway Lane and Vale Road. It was approved in 1947 for use by the Station Master. Its main features are its squarish floor plan, hipped roof, side entrance and timber and Fibro wall materials. It was built to a new standard plan, which the NSW Department of Railways released in 1946. Another feature of the design was the application of weatherboards on the exterior walls up to window sill level and Fibro sheeting above that point. Very, very few platform buildings, apart from signal boxes, used Fibro sheeting because of the techniques of Junior Porters transferring (read carelessly throwing) parcels between the platform and train easily cracked the Fibro sheets.

There is a bit of a puzzle about the gate house. It appears that the original gatehouse was replaced in the period between 1901 and 1912. The puzzle is that the approved plan shows the proposed residence facing the railway line, whereas the existing building faces the street. There is often something amazing about NSW

railway buildings which give a glimpse into the minds of senior railway bureaucrats. One such instance is found on the plan for a detached kitchen in 1911. It was proposed to provide a kitchen measuring 12 feet by ten feet and an adjoining bath house of the same dimensions. Only the kitchen was approved. What did the approving officer think the Gatekeeper was going to do to have a bath?

The gatehouse was also known as the Night Officer's residence. It would seem that, while the man of the house worked at the station, his lady worked the gates. This was a common arrangement throughout the NSW rail system.

The two detached residences possess hipped roofs. This style of roof was long the preferred roofscape for the NSW Railways. Gabled roofs were cheaper to build and it is no wonder that they first appeared from 1885 when the overseas flow of colonial capital funds was beginning to slow. In the 1890s, gabled roofs became popular, especially with the New Lines Branch. Hipped roofs continued to be widely used, especially after 1900 by the Existing Lines Branch and it seems that it was in this period that the present gatehouse was erected. Gabled roofs continued to be erected up until 1920 but, with the introduction of the Californian Bungalow style used for pres-cast concrete residences in the 1920s, the gabled roof system was doomed. From the 1930s, the hipped roof entirely replaced the gabled roof until World War Two, when cheapie hutments were built along with more normal, larger, hipped roof designs. The last official Railway residences were erected in the 1950s and these featured hipped roofs.

END REMARKS

The three remaining houses combine to form a very important suite of railway buildings. Georges Plains is the only location between Sydney and Orange to have a Gatekeeper's residence remaining in situ and occupied, though sadly not by Railway staff.

The platform building still shows its unusual platform awning and this one feature acts as a window into a station which had a significant role in the mid 1870s when much station and residential design policy was changing fundamentally.

Col Millard and Stuart Sharp

24th June, 2013

SIGNALLING NOTES

SUMMARY

Opening of the line

01.03.1870	To Wallerawang from the east
01.07.1870	Wallerawang to Rydal
22.04.1872	Rydal to Locksley
01.07.1872	Locksley to Macquarie Plains (Brewongle)
04.03.1873	Brewongle to Raglan
04.02 1875	Raglan to Kelso
04.04.1876	Kelso to Bathurst
01.11.1876	Bathurst to Blayney

Duplications of the line

31.10.1915	Cox's River (near Wang Power Station) to Wadina (west of Wang) #
14.03.1915	Wadina to Rydal #
12.10.1910	Rydal to Algarara #
09.05.1915	Algarara to Sodwalls #
22.10.1916	Sodwalls to Tarana #
05.11.1916	Tarana to Locksley
24.09.1922	Locksley to Brewongle
22.10.1922	Brewongle to Raglan
12.03.1922	Raglan to Kelso
19.02.1972	Kelso to Macquarie River
Single	Macquarie River to Bathurst East Box
By 1884	Bathurst East Box to Bathurst West Box

Single   Bathurst West Box to Georges Plains

Note: # Line subsequently singled in June 1996

Automatic Signalling

05.11.1916   Tarana to Locksley (with duplication)

16.04.1988   Locksley to Raglan

19.02.1972   Raglan to Kelso

RYDAL

Rydal was the terminus of the line between July 1870 and April 1872. After that date it was a crossing loop until duplication to Algarara on October 12, 1910, at which point it was first interlocked as the junction between single and double lines. The system of working over the single line sections was Ordinary Train Staff and Ticket after the 1878 Emu Plains smash, but was converted to Electric Train Staff on September 20, 1892.

In 1891, traffic through Rydal loop travelled on Up and Down lines, and it is assumed that this arrangement continued until duplication. On October 26, 1891, probably the date of adoption of this working, an additional Up platform was provided on the Up loop, that on the Down side having been the original.

On October 12, 1910, double line working was introduced to the west of Rydal. The new double line section from Rydal to Algarara, about 3km west of Rydal, was worked under Tyer's One Wire Block instruments. Kershaw maintains in the May 1959 ARHS *Bulletin* that this was done to facilitate the crossing of mail trains.

On March 14, 1915 the double line eastwards from Rydal was opened to Wadina. This section was also worked under Tyer's One Wire Block instruments. The 1929 Local Appendix indicates that starting signal control (where it is impossible to clear the starting signal unless the relevant block instrument was showing 'Line Clear') was provided at Rydal (but nowhere else in the area).

On July 14, 1958, as part of an ongoing drive to remove diamond crossings from the main lines, the connection between the Down Main and the Goods Siding at the western end of the station was replaced by two tandem crossovers. The first of these was between the Down and Up Main lines, and the second was a facing connection between the Up Main and the Goods Siding. Again, as part of a state wide drive to reduce rodding runs for points that were only infrequently used, the new connections were connected to a three lever ground frame, rather than to the signal box. The ground frame was released by key from the signal box frame, reducing the number of points directly operated from the box to one (the Down Dock siding).

The safety crusade was as strong then as ever, as represented by the horror of being able accidentally to turn an Up express train into the goods siding through dreaded facing points. The interlocking within the ground frame therefore made it impossible to set the points for a move

between the Up Main and the Goods Siding, it being necessary to reverse the main lines crossing before operating the Goods Siding points.

Exactly one year later, the Tyer's Block between Rydal and Wallerawang West was replaced with the newer and safer NSW Standard Block, the instruments in all probability having been made redundant the year before with the introduction of automatic signalling between Springwood and Mount Victoria. This had the effect of making it impossible for Rydal to switch out due to a different system of block being in use on each side. From this point in time it was necessary for Rydal to be staffed whenever trains were running.

On April 3, 1974, the signal box at Sodwalls was closed. It had been little used since dieselisation, and prior to closure, was staffed for a single shift each day, and was used to cross two Up freight trains using its surviving Up Refuge Loop. The purpose of this manoeuvre was unclear from the Train Register, and one might suspect that it was organised purely to ensure that the officer was on duty and awake!

In June 1976, minor changes were made to the positions of signals, and the Up Second Home signal was removed. Around this time the level crossing gates were replaced by flashing lights and booms, the Sydney end Goods siding connection was removed and the shunt ahead signal disappeared from the Up Starting Signal post. The Dock Siding also disappeared.

Diminishing traffic level, and no requirement to open / shut level crossing gates, saw a fully manned Rydal Box as an unnecessary expense, so on July 14, 1976, the Tyer's Block between Rydal and Tarana was replaced by NSW Standard Block, making it possible for Rydal to switch out once more. From that point, Rydal was only normally switched in for trackwork and the very occasional shunt to the Goods Siding.

The mechanical Down Distant signal was replaced by a colour light signal, and incidentally relocated nearly 1½ km further out on May 3, 1988.

On June 9, 1988, a new facing crossover was installed to allow flexibility in single line working. A new eight lever frame C replaced the three lever one, and this new frame operated the facing and trailing crossovers as well as the facing goods siding connection. Keys to release various levers in this frame were obtained from the signal box frame.

Rydal station staff was withdrawn from May 27, 1989. Within about a month, station staff had been withdrawn from Wallerawang, Rydal, Tarana, Georges Plains and Newbridge, although signallers remained on duty at most of these.

The new arrangement allowed track upgrading and concrete sleeper replacement to take place over (largely) the Up Main between Wallerawang West and Tarana, and once this work was completed the way was clear to single this section and use only the newly upgraded line for all traffic.

In June 1993, all the points were removed and, finally on June 24, 1996, the line was singled and Rydal Box, if it then still existed, was officially closed.

Rydal does not appear on the closures list which accompanied the diagram of the single line arrangements, but there is no reference to its earlier closure either. It is reasonably safe to assume that it remained as a points-free, switched-out block station until the line was singled.

TARANA

At the beginning, the single line sections were Rydal – Tarana and Tarana – Locksley; the crossing loop at Tarana being on the Up side. In 1892, staff and ticket working was supplanted by electric train staff.

To support the increasing traffic, and ballast trains run in conjunction with duplication works, additional crossing loops were provided on either side of Tarana. Birumba was opened on 7 March 1910 to divide the section to Sodwalls, while Gemalla was similarly opened on 18 December 1907, originally as a relocated Stoney Creek, and changing name to Gemalla two years later; Gemalla divided the Tarana to Locksley section.

On 21 October 1916, the line was duplicated from Sodwalls to Tarana, and Tarana was fully interlocked for the first time. On 5 November 1916, duplication was introduced over the long and winding route from Tarana to Locksley.

So Tarana was then an interlocked double line station. Tyer's one wire three position block instruments were used to Sodwalls, Rydal or Wallerawang West Box, depending on which boxes were switched out.

The section to Locksley was signalled with automatic signalling from the commencement of double line working, using upper quadrant signals. The reason for this was the lack of any sidings or other facilities near the mid-point of the section requiring sufficient interlocking to necessitate a block signal box. Gemalla Loop was supplanted by two platforms with no other traffic facilities, while Tarana Quarry, which was too close to Tarana itself to divide the section equably, had a subsidiary lever frame, released by track circuit, to allow the siding to be shunted from either direction.

The double line arrangement at Tarana was simple and typical of the times. The 24 lever signal box was that which stands out of use today on the down platform, and at the Sydney end, there was a down refuge siding trailing before the platform. At the Bathurst end of the platform was a similar siding which served as an up refuge siding. There was a trailing main line crossover with a single slip on it connecting to the goods siding. These connections were all operated directly from the signal box with appropriate shunting signals being provided into and out of the refuge sidings. The connection between the goods siding and the down main was located a little further west and beyond the mechanical rodding reach of the signal box. It was released by a key from the signal box frame.

On 3 October 1923, the branch line to Oberon was opened and the signal box was extended at the western end to accommodate an additional eight levers. While the documentary evidence exists for this extension, so too does the on-site evidence – the northern wall of the box shows clearly a vertical line at the point from which it was extended. The junction for the Oberon line was a positively venomous concoction involving a double junction for a single line complicated by slip

points – typical of its time and very British Board of Trade in design! This arrangement lasted for 41 years until 1964 when the crossing diamond and slip points were removed and replaced by a more rational layout involving tandem crossovers.

For a time during April and May 1950, following a major washaway in the Sodwalls section, there was a short period of single line working, initially between Sodwalls and Tarana, and later between two temporary signal boxes in mid-section, allowing repairs to be made. Tyer's block working was in use between Sodwalls and the eastern junction and between the western junction and Tarana, while the single line bit between east and west junctions was worked by electric staff. I don't think they would bother with such elaborate facilities these days!

On April 3, 1974, Sodwalls, which had been reduced to a single shift daily, was closed altogether. Subsequently, on July 14, 1976, NSW Standard Block was installed between Rydal and Tarana, allowing Rydal to be switched out as required. This became the norm, and Rydal was only cut in for track work, the section normally being Wallerawang West to Tarana.

In 1996, the line between Wallerawang West and Tarana was singled, with these two signal boxes together with those at Wallerawang East and Rydal being closed. The section from Wallerawang East (Cox's River Junction) to Parkes and beyond is now controlled from ARTC Control Centre at Broadmeadow (!) with the local signal box at Raglan being still operable.

The arrangements at Tarana have been severely pruned with the singling of the line to the east. The junction between the single and double line is at the western end of the platform, and the former goods siding is in use as a perway siding, supplemented by a short section of the Oberon branch. The connections to these sidings and shunt signals to and from them are operated from an adjacent ground frame, and the junction points are controlled from ARTC Broadmeadow. The down refuge siding disappeared in the late 1970s, as it would have been of little use for a train proceeding into an automatic section, and the up refuge went just prior to singling. Anecdotal evidence exists of the Oberon Line being used, after closure, as a refuging facility for longer Up trains and even of drivers requesting the Oberon staff before proceeding on the stub.

LOCKSLEY

Locksley was opened as Lock's Platform on April 22, 1872 and served as the terminus of the line until July 1 in the same year, when the line was extended to Macquarie Plains (Brewongle). On September 15, 1879, the name was changed to Locksley.

It was always a crossing station, and electric staff was installed through Locksley on September 20, 1892. During this period, Locksley was provided only with Down and Up Home and distant signals with all points being operated from nearby hand operated levers. There was no interlocking until 1913, just prior to when the line was duplicated.

The original single line section was Tarana to Locksley, but this was divided at Stoney Creek on December 8, 1907, while Stoney Creek was renamed Gemalla a year later.

To allow greater flexibility of train working, Down and Up refuge sidings were laid in during May and June 1912. The Up refuge was an extension of the crossing loop back towards Bathurst, and while it is not possible to determine the location of the Down refuge, it may have been a similar extension of the loop at the Sydney end. Or it may have been placed into position in anticipation of duplication – on the down side with points trailing to Down trains.

The station was interlocked on October 8, 1913. On November 5, 1916 duplication reached Locksley from Tarana and Gemalla signal box was closed.

On September 20, 1908, the long section between Locksley and Brewongle was divided at Wambool, where an interlocked crossing loop and new island platform were provided.

Heavy deviation works over the section to the west delayed the opening of the duplication to Brewongle until September 24, 1922. So circuitous was the new line that it crossed the single line at grade at a point between Locksley and Wambool, and so, on August 8, 1921 a *permanently manned* staff station was set up, named Dowlers Crossing, to allow ballast trains to cross the existing line in safety. The only connection with the main line was a diamond crossing and no main line trains could cross there. Dowler's Crossing closed with duplication.

The arrangements at Locksley after 1922 are simply stated. A trailing Down refuge siding, a trailing main lines crossover and a dead end goods siding on the Up side comprised the layout with all points being operated from the signal box. Automatic signalling was in use to Tarana using two position upper quadrants for mid section signals. This meant that each automatic signal had its own distant signal half a mile or so before it, and these distant signals, although upper quadrant, were fitted with fish-tailed arms as was the practice of the time. The fish-tailed arms were subsequently replaced by conventionally square ended arms. The reasons for this isolated automatically signalled section are give in the Tarana section of this Work.

Tyer's block working was in use from Locksley westward to Wambool, Brewongle or Raglan, depending on whether Wambool or Brewongle was switched out.

Wambool floundered on as a block station until September 14, 1976, when it closed. Locksley now block worked with Brewongle (only rarely switched in) and Raglan. Wambool had been attended on night shift only a few years prior to its final demise, apparently to divide the block section for the mail train and parcel express.

On April 16, 1988, automatic signalling was extended from Locksley to Raglan. This was achieved by placing an automatic single light colour light signal in each direction at the surviving block station of Brewongle, each signal having its own distant signal, of course. The trailing crossover and goods siding points were connected to a new six lever Frame A, while a facing crossover which had appeared at the western end of the platform was operated from a three lever Frame B. All connections were fitted with facing point locks for single line working, and both frames were released from the bottom lock of a new duplex lock AB. To release the key from the bottom lock it was necessary to insert a key in the top lock. To obtain the key for the top lock, it was necessary to get it from ... wait for it ... Bathurst East Box. There was no way you could do anything hasty!

RAGLAN

The line reached Raglan on March 4, 1873 and until the opening to Kelso on February 4, 1975, Raglan was the terminus. Kershaw (*op cit)* notes that a turntable was provided at Raglan during its terminus days, although no mention is made of any turntable at other temporary termini west of Wallerawang.

The station was interlocked on August 4, 1887, as an intermediate siding. Home and distant signals were operated from a lever frame on the platform, together with the points and facing point lock for the western end of the goods siding. The eastern end points were operated from a subsidiary ground frame, released by key from the main frame. An additional Down distant signal was provided to protect shunting at the subsidiary frame, and was operated therefrom. This gives an indication of the lack of confidence on the part of authorities in the staff and ticket system!

On April 25, 1890, a serious accident occurred near Bathurst station when a mixed train parted couplings at Raglan platform, causing the rear part of the train to take off down the hill towards Bathurst. The speed reached was said to be phenomenal, until the runaway collided with the Up passenger train which had just left Bathurst. Four people were killed in the accident which was found to be caused by weaknesses in the couplings and the use of incompatible couplings.

To ensure that the circumstances could not be repeated, the layout and signals at Raglan were substantially altered on October 20, 1890.

A crossing loop of the 'Down and Up Main' variety was established, together with a new island platform closer to Sydney than the original. The sidings were somewhat remodelled, although the original Bathurst end connection was retained and operated by Lever B. The down and up loops islanded the platform and all trains were strictly expected to use the correct line. The Bathurst end loop points formed a crossover, with the trailing part not operated from the signal box. This feature was weighted in such a way that any runaway from the Up platform would be directed to the goods siding rather than to the main line, thus obviating the risk of further catastrophic unadvertised trips to Bathurst on runaway vehicles.

Standard distant, home and starting signals were provided, together with an auxiliary Up home to protect Lever B points and to bring them under the direct control of the Raglan signaller. Raglan signal box was provided with a 16 lever frame.

In 1892, electric staff supplanted train staff and ticket working.

On December 4, 1905, the Up loop was extended, absorbing part of the siding, while the siding terminated in points towards the Sydney end of the Up platform. This connection survived until very recent times. In 1905, it was operated from Lever C. The connections at the western end, including the runaway provision, were unaltered.

Duplication reached Raglan from the west on March 12, 1922, and from Brewongle to the east on October 22 of the same year. Tyer's Block working supplanted the electric staff sections, and Raglan worked east to Brewongle, Wambool or Locksley, and west to Kelso.

Double line arrangements at Raglan comprised a goods siding connected to both Up and Down main lines and a bank engine siding between the main lines, for which a bank engine could be detached from a train standing at the Up platform and proceed direct into the siding via a facing connection. While the Up train could then proceed without further delay, the banker could sit in the siding until a path was found for it to be returned to Bathurst, which it achieved by a trailing connection in the Down main.

The goods siding was connected to the Up main by the same points described in the 1905 alterations, except that they were now connected to and operated from the signal. The Down main connection was trailing and crossed the Up main by way of a diamond crossing. A trailing main lines crossover was placed to the east of the dead end of the loco siding and operated from a ground lever, key released from the signal box.

On October 8, 1946, the lever frame in the signal box was replaced by a 20 lever machine. The reason for the extra four levers is unclear, as the new frame had four spaces to represent the additional levers. It is assumed that this was in fact a renewal of the 1890 interlocking machine which could have been a bit the worse for wear after 56 years service.

Automatic signalling using single light colour lights was introduced between Raglan and Kelso when that signal box was abolished on February 19, 1972. Three days earlier, the facing points leading to the engine siding were replaced by a trailing set. It was now necessary for a banker to set back into the siding, which now resembled an elongated trailing main lines crossover. So great was the resemblance that the existing trailing crossover was pulled out as being redundant.

On September 4, 1978, the diamond crossing in the up main was removed and two tandem crossovers were brought into use in lieu. The goods siding was extended westwards as a master siding, and off it ran a short spur to serve the Uncle Toby's plant. This was possibly the time of final demolition of the old dock, last surviving remnant of the original platform, abandoned 88 years earlier.

On April 16, 1988, automatic signalling was brought into use between Locksley and Raglan. The intervening box at Wambool had closed in 1974, and Brewongle was basically switched out all the time, so normally the block section had been Locksley to Raglan for some time. With automatic signalling on both sides, Raglan was fitted with a closing lever, and its declining years saw it only switched in to shunt Uncle Ben's siding.

Finally in 2011, with Uncle Ben having gone to meet his maker, Raglan signal box was closed and all connections taken out of use. For some years, it had been the only interlocking using full sized mechanical levers between Lithgow Coal Stage Box and Perth.

KELSO

The line reached Kelso on April 4, 1876 and was extended to Bathurst on November 1 of the same year. It was a staff and ticket crossing station until 1892 when electric staff was introduced. Interlocking did not arrive until April 7, 1911 when the crossing loop was extended.

The style of interlocking chosen was one of those awkward arrangements which occur from time to time when for some reason it is not feasible to rod the loop points at both ends to the signal box. In this case, a 20 lever frame A was placed on the platform, and a 16 lever frame off the platform about 150 metres toward Bathurst. Frame A controlled the loop and siding points at the Sydney end of the yard, while Frame B controlled those at the Bathurst end. As there should have been no difficulty with sighting of the points at each end, it is assumed that the length of the loop was too great to allow direct connection of the points. The positioning of the platform, and therefore the staff instruments and Frame A was markedly closer to the Sydney end points. All signals, except the Down Starting, Loop to Main, and the Up Home, Main to Loop were operated from Frame A; the two named signals were operated from Frame B, which was released by a key from Frame A.

At the time of interlocking, the goods yard was a hotchpotch of two loop sidings and four dead end sidings. The arrangements were rationalised somewhat during 1920 when two loop sidings and a dead end were organised into Goods, Stock and Grain sidings. The connections to Frames A and B were unaffected by this reorganisation.

In 1922 various changes were made to the siding connections in preparation for duplication, which arrived from Raglan on March 12. Tyer's block working was then instituted over the new double line between Raglan and Kelso. At this stage the signal frame appears to have been relocated to the Bathurst end of the station building and enclosed in a signal box building for the first time. The focus of operation was now the western end of the station where the single line junction was placed, while the original platform was now the Down platform, a new facility having been provided as the Up platform.

The junction arrangements were very similar to the now removed Sydney end loop and goods siding connections. All points at the western end of the station were operated from the signal box; no shunting signals were provided.

The prospect of another 1890-style runaway occurring was recognised soon after the duplication, and accordingly, later in 1922, was addressed by converting the junction points to a crossover, with the trailing section unconnected, but weighted to allow any runaway to deflect into a dead end siding. This had the effect of making a single slip, with the first part going to the Up main and the second to the goods yard.

The runaway situation having been sorted out for once and for all, things settled down for a while at Kelso. However, on February 16, 1943 a new yard known as Commonwealth Sidings was brought into use on the down side of the line, connecting with the former Down dock siding at the western end of the platform. An additional Up home signal was bracketed to the original Up home, and this allowed an arriving Up train to be signalled directly into the Commonwealth yard. A down starting signal was also provided in the Commonwealth yard for movements onto the main line and on to Bathurst.

On September 24, 1946, single line track block working was introduced between Kelso and Bathurst East Box, which was replaced by a much larger installation on the same day. This dispensed with the electric staff for the section, and all train movements were made through the single line section on the authority of the signals alone. At Kelso, a new upper quadrant down starting signal was brought into use about 100m into the single line section; this signal was provided with a banner type shunt

ahead signal which was worked by the same lever. The instructions do not specify how the signalman determined which signal should be cleared but a running – shunting shelf switch is probable.

Automatic signalling in the form of single light colour light signals reached Kelso from Raglan on February 19, 1972. On this date, Kelso signal box closed and all mechanical signals were removed. The double line was extended to a point just short of the Macquarie River bridge, and control of the junction points was absorbed by Bathurst East Box. Kelso itself was controlled from a 20 switch relay interlocking panel in Bathurst East Box. All siding points were connected to ground frames and electrically released from the Kelso panel.

The Commonwealth branch line and yard were booked out of use on November 24, 1981. The former Down accepting signal was converted to an automatic signal, and the first two of a rash of spare switches appeared in the Kelso panel at Bathurst East Box.

On June 4, 1989, some siding connections were removed and shunting signals altered. Removal of the main lines crossover meant that shunting trips were now permitted to return wrong line via the Up main to Bathurst.

On November 23, 1994 further rationalisation took place and the sidings at Kelso were reduced to a single loop, the wheat siding and two dead end sidings off the Sydney end of this siding for Clyde Engineering.

Finally, after all the rationalisation, a new siding was brought into use for Patrick Portlink. This siding connected roughly where the Commonwealth line had done and points were power operated from WRMC Orange.

BATHURST

Bathurst was a large yard for many years, and grew over many more. The purpose of this treatise is not to try slavishly to note each alteration which occurred, but rather to give a general overview of the major changes which make up the history of this once busy yard.

The line reached Bathurst on April 4, 1876 and was extended to Blayney on November 1 of the same year. Bathurst was a loco depot and a crossing station from day one; and was probably fitted with a station semaphore like the one displayed on the Up platform. The item on display was not the Bathurst signal, but came from Girilambone or some such place with a similarly preposterous name.

Bathurst was interlocked by 1884, an isolated outpost in a part of the world where such a facility was rare indeed. Another peculiarity was that the line between East and West Boxes was laid out and signalled as a double line, with trailing connections only, and slip points to avoid the dreaded facing point connections. East and West Boxes were tiny affairs. East Box had 21 levers at its zenith, but this was eclipsed by West Box, which had a massive 26 lever frame.

The diagram of the time shows that even then, the Up platform was signalled for two way operation, and Down trains could arrive and depart from it in signalled moves. The staff and ticket working of the 1880s was replaced by electric staff by 1892.

At East Box in early 1903, a shunting key was provided in conjunction with the Kelso staff instrument to allow a shunting engine to follow a preceding Up train into the section to shunt Tremaine's siding. The points of this siding were well within the Bathurst Down distant signal, but too far away to be connected to the East Box frame, if indeed there were any spare levers to allow this. The shunting key locked the staff instruments at both ends of the section so that even when the first train reached Kelso and the staff was returned to the instrument, no staffs could be withdrawn until the shunting key had been returned to its place at Bathurst East Box.

The foregoing was included as being indicative of the high levels of traffic which must have prevailed at the time. The section to Kelso could be run by a goods train in as little as five minutes; to put two trains into a section so short reeks of desperation!

There is a suspicion, so far unsupported by documentary evidence, that Preece's block working was in use between the Bathurst boxes in the early days. From December 12, 1903, however, it was replaced, if it was ever there in the first place, by yard working, which prevailed until the 1990s. This basically involved close liaison between the boxes, particularly as the East Box Down Starting signal was in no way controlled by West Box. A joint arrangement was available on the Up Main, with the West Box Up Starting signal, a scant 200 metres before the Up platform, also being controlled by East Box as its Up home. East Box, incidentally, was located just off the Sydney end of the Down Platform, while West Box was located a little to the west of the more recent West Box. Block bells were in use at an early stage, and a form of absolute block was enforced by use of these bells for acceptance of trains.

Nothing major occurred with the Bathurst track layout and signalling until the advent of World War II. Then, major upgrading work occurred as it did at many places throughout the state. And, as with many places throughout the state the work was not brought into use until after the cessation of hostilities.

Bathurst acquired two, much larger, replacement signal boxes, and a new one at Bathurst Commonwealth Sidings.

The new Bathurst West Box was brought into use on February 26, 1946. It contained more than twice as many levers (64) as the box it replaced (26), and it worked a much more elaborately signalled layout than previously. The ladder of slip points connecting the Down and Up yards was replaced by tandem crossovers late in 1945, and shunting signals were now provided for any conceivable movement. A new power operated crossover at the very western end of the interlocking allowed, for the first time in the history of the place, an Up goods train to proceed directly into the Up reception sidings without the need to shunt back.

Commonwealth sidings were laid in on the Up side to the west of Bathurst some time earlier and Bathurst Sidings Box was brought into use at the same date as West Box to control the entrance to these sidings. It was a platform level affair with a 20 lever frame inside. It was manned only when necessary to access the Commonwealth Sidings, and was not a 'block' box for main line working, being electrically released from West Box. All of its points and signals were located between the West Box Down Starting and Up Home signals, and its raison d'ĕtre appears to have been to avoid the additional expense of motor points, electric signals and track circuiting that would be required if the whole area were to be controlled by Bathurst West.

Two releasing levers in West Box supervised the operations of the Sidings Box. One was for the main line, while the other permitted operation of points and signals which did not affect the main line.

The new West Box contained a 64 lever frame of which 57 worked something.

On September 24, 1946, the new East Box was brought into use. It was situated at the Sydney end of the Up platform, where it can probably still be found today. Like the West Box installation, it featured a large increase in the number of levers (from 21 to 56), and a motor-operated single line junction connection in tandem with a new connection to in this instance, the Down, Reception sidings. Again it was the first time such access could be had without the need to set back. Only three levers were unconnected, making 53 working levers. The layout at East Box had never been as plush at that at West Box, but the new East Box jollied up its end of the yard with a rather lavish approach to the Up platform from the east. As at West Box, shunting signals were provided for most possible movements.

Although traffic between the two boxes was conducted on Down and Up main lines and signalled as such, it was possible for movements to be conducted all the way between the boxes on the wrong running line, on the authority of shunting signals. The instructions, however, noted an expectation that wherever possible trains should be worked on the correct lines. The facility for trains in both directions to use the main Up platform was exempted from that instruction, and it was possible, as it had been since at least 1884, to work a Down train through the Up platform on the authority of full running, rather than shunting signals.

Concurrently with the opening of the new Bathurst East Box, single line track block working supplanted electric staff working to Kelso. Working of traffic between the Bathurst boxes remained officially yard working, but there was sufficient slotting or dual controlling of signals to make it more like track block, without the track circuits.

Again, things settled down at Bathurst for some years, while main line traffic gradually dwindled, diesels reduced the need for bank engines and local goods traffic fell to zero.

On August 19, 1995 the first major rationalisation occurred, when West Box was abolished, and its (few) remaining functions were taken over by East Box. The main line was deemed to be via the Up platform, and the old Down main was designated the Loop Siding. A facing and trailing connection to each of Down and Up yards was preserved, and were worked from ground frames, electrically released from Bathurst East (now just Bathurst) signal box. Only the junction points at each end were power operated from the box, and all mechanical and shunting signals were removed and replaced by single light colour lights. The Down Starting signal was interlocked with the staff for the Georges Plains section.

At the same time, Bathurst Sidings Box, which had been disused for many years, was officially abolished.

The staff section to the west had been Bathurst West to Georges Plains since the introduction of token working in the 1880s. However, just two weeks before the alterations at Bathurst, the loop line was abolished at Georges Plains and that place became a staff station for follow-on movements only. It is thought that Georges Plains was closed altogether as a staff station sometime the next year. When this occurred, the staff section became Bathurst to Newbridge, the intervening signal

boxes at Tumulla, Wimbledon and Gresham having already succumbed to progress and lack of traffic. Even Newbridge signal box had been closed, and the staff instrument had been placed in a traffic hut some distance closer to Blayney.

On December 21, 2002, the mechanical levers were abolished at Bathurst Signal Box, and a new VDU Signaller's Workstation was provided. The panel controlling the remnants of Kelso was also removed. This was done in conjunction with the introduction of Rail Vehicle Detection between Kelso and Newbridge, and the abolition of the electric staff working between Bathurst and Newbridge. The workstation controlled the whole kit and caboodle from Kelso to Newbridge.

Finally, by 2010, Bathurst and Kelso had lost local operational control altogether, and are now controlled from ARTC Broadmeadow.

The days of lots of passenger and goods trains, shunting through the night, bank engines, mechanically operated signals and points, a loco depot and lots of staff are now but a distant memory.

OBERON

The line opened between Tarana and Oberon on October 3, 1923. Facilities at Oberon were minimal – a run-round loop, a single goods loop extending back towards Tarana as a stock siding and a short loco siding with an ash pit and a turntable. There was no loco watering facility provided at Oberon.

A single home signal was provided at the entrance to the yard, and was operated from Lever A, to which two annet locks were attached: one to the front and one to the rear. The key from the front lock unlocked the ground frames which operated the points, with the exception of the Tarana end of the stock siding extension, which was released by the staff for the section. The points at the terminus end of the station were spring loaded and normally set for the run round loop; engines running round their trains could trail through these points without having to operate the lever.

The key from the rear of Lever A was a closing key and once withdrawn prevented movement of that lever.

The line was worked from the outset by Ordinary Train Staff and Ticket over a single section, Tarana to Oberon.

A 1929 diagram of Oberon shows no turntable in situ, and Weekly Notice 42 of 1926 states that the 'Engine turntable [at Oberon] has been dismantled and withdrawn'.

On March 9, 1944, an extension at the Down end of the goods siding was brought into use as a Public Works Department siding. The connection between the dead end and the goods siding was removed, and the goods and PWD siding could only be shunted from the Sydney end of the yard.

After this dramatic change, Oberon slumbered on until all traffic ceased and the line was closed. A trip over the line took about an hour and a half for the fifteen miles, or an average speed of ten miles per hour. It was, and probably never had been, competitive with road traffic.

Graham Harper 6/13