

The Railway Luncheon Club

17 June 2009

PARRAMATTA

Some 32 members attended the June outing of the Railway Luncheon Club at Parramatta station. The members were warmly welcomed by the station manager Mr. Dave Neilson, who acted as an informative guide for the inspection of the station. He told the group of the daily doings and happenings that he has to encounter. Attendees received a three page handout prepared by Noel Reed and Stuart Sharp.

Parramatta was the only station on the NSW railway system to feature two large platform buildings before 1900. It was the first station on the system to be located on a curve. Platform 4 was the original platform when the station opened on 4th July, 1860. The spectacular feature of the brick 1860 building is the portico entrance facing Argyle Street. July 2010 is the 150th anniversary of the station. Members inspected the parcels office, opened in 1924 and extended in 1938 and again in 1947. There was much excitement to find the original male toilet building still in use. Members thought it was a handy facility.

The line from Granville was duplicated to Parramatta in 1879 and through the station in 1882. Duplication continued westward to Blacktown in 1886. The present brick building on Platforms 3 and 2 date from 1882. Architecturally, the 1882 platform building generally matches the 1860 building on Platform 4. The brick elevated signal box dates from 1886, though in a shorter version and was then equipped with a McKenzie & Holland lever frame of their cam and rocker design. The signal box was doubled in length in a sympathetic manner in 1911, using a Wilkin pattern lever frame which has simpler cam and tappet interlocking.

In 1942, the Signal and Telegraph Branch had trouble in fitting in additional mechanical levers for the new east end rail connection to Platform 4. A small electric panel using Kellogg keys was installed. A Selby electro-pneumatic route indicator was provided at the down home signal and required a small compressed air installation.

In 1944, the Department of Railways opened the four tracks between Westmead and Seven Hills and the main line crossovers at Westmead to permit the change from the double line through Parramatta Park to down/down/up/up tracks. They were remotely controlled from Parramatta box. This was the first use of remote control route setting on the NSW rail system. The box was closed in 1985 and the functions taken over by Granville Signal Box. The crossovers at Westmead were eliminated in 1987 with the use of flyovers as part of the Wran Government quadruplication project between Granville and Westmead. The tragedy is that today, there is no easy cross-platform change between all-stations and express trains at Parramatta. Platform 2 was opened in 1890.

Platform 1 was opened in 1942 at the time when four tracks passed through the station. The brick offices facing Darcy Street, reflecting the Inter War Functionalist style, date from that time. Four subways have been built at the station and members discussed the pedestrian orientation towards the Westfield shopping centre. In 1996, the Up end concourse was opened. In 2006, the Down end concourse was opened.

On the 15th July, the Luncheon Club will visit Newcastle station at 1100. The occasion is a joint outing with the Newcastle Branch. Members will catch the 0815 from Sydney Terminal, travelling in the second car from the front in the lower deck, and pick up additional members en route. Attendees will receive a 24 page handout covering heritage items along the route and at Newcastle. Special guest speakers at Newcastle will be Ed Tonks and Bob McKillop. Lunch will be consumed at the General Washington Hotel at Stockton and members will return home on the 1528 ex Newcastle. Members are encouraged to wear name badges.



Top image: Station Manager Parramatta Dave Neilson and Stuart Sharp address members at the commencement of the inspection. Intrepid reporter David Potter is on the right.

Middle: Platform 5 (Down Main) showing brick signal box & station building. Bottom: The 1886 signal box (that was extended westwards in 1911) contrasts with the new platform canopy constructed as part of the station upgrade. Images by David Wynter