

NEWTOWN RAILWAY STATION

A STUDY IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE RAILWAY RESPONSE

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A NOTE ON TIME PERIODS

The time periods used in this paper relate not necessarily to the development of changes at Newtown but to design changes for platform buildings on a statewide basis.

THE PRE-WHITTON PERIOD – 1855 TO 1857

Although no plan survives, there was a combination office/residence that had been erected for the opening of the line to Parramatta on 26th September, 1855. This is confirmed by three items of evidence. The first is that there is documentary evidence which states that the building was erected in accordance with the plan for the station at Ashfield, where there was a combination office/residence. The second is the appointment of Edmund Herald as the first Station Master, who started work on 24th September, 1855.¹ He would have needed an office and a residence. The third is that an image of the structure is engraved on the William Randle Testimonial Cup, engraved in 1856.²

While it is widely known that the only part of the 1855 Sydney-Parramatta line that featured duplicated track was the section between Sydney and Newtown, it is less well-known that the duplication did not extend through Newtown station in 1855. Duplication terminated short of the station, thus allowing funds to be saved by the omission of an up platform.³ This practice of terminating duplication before a station was fairly common practice in NSW and Newtown seems to have become the first use and, hence, a precedent. The up platform was built in 1956 and the plan of a timber waiting shed survives. It was about 30 feet in length with an open front. The roof was single pitched, sloping away from the rail line and was sheeted with corrugated iron. This style of building remained in use until 1889, when there was a change of the people in charge of design under the recently appointed Chief Commissioner, E. M. G. Eddy. Newtown station was built before Whitton's arrival and possessed two characteristics that Whitton did not use. The first characteristic was the application of an awning over the platform for small waiting sheds. The second characteristic was the method of support for the awning. At Newtown, the awning was supported not by the use of vertical posts but by cast iron brackets attached to the building's exterior wall on the rail side.

Evidence remains of one interesting feature of the pre-Whitton period. That feature is the existence of two plans that show two styles of roof for the awning – one showing a

¹ T. Edmonds, "A Locomotive Blown to Fragments", *Australian Railway History*, Vol. 63, No. 898, August, 2012, p.6

² D. Hagarty, *Sydney Railway 1848-1857*, Redfern, ARHS, 2005, p. 430. The image of the Cup was presented in an article on the 50th anniversary of the NSW in 1905 in an article by W. M. Fehon entitled, "Jubilee of the NSW Railways", in *Railway Budget*, 1905, p. 356.

³ Don Hagarty reminds the author that this statement is based on guesswork rather than on evidence. He finds it hard to believe that the NSW Railways could complete duplication of the entire 22km of the Sydney-Parramatta line by 1st June 1856 without having some work completed prior to opening on 26th September, 1855.

straight roof and the other a concave roof. The lack of design uniformity is a hallmark feature of the pre-Whitton period between 1855 and 1857 and the surviving evidence for Newtown conforms to the design policy of the period. A sketch of the up platform waiting shed is in A. Sharpe, *Colonial NSW 1853-1894*, (Artarmon, 1979, Harper and Row, p. 129). It shows that the awning roof was painted in contrasting, alternate coloured bands of paint.

A goods yard was opened in 1856, validating the heavy bias towards passenger traffic in the first year of rail operations. The goods yard remained in existence until 1988. A photograph taken by C. C. Singleton in 1955 of steam locomotive 5211 shunting the yard is in *Australian Railway History*, May, 2010, p. 186. Member, Bob McKillop, tells the story of his father railing hay from the Narromine area to the Newtown goods yard in the 1960s.⁴

In her book, *Sydney*, Lucy Turnbull attributes the growth of Newtown to the arrival of the railway.⁵ She cites that the first public school opened in 1863 and St. Stephen's church in 1874 as evidence of the post-railway growth.

THE MODERATE EXPANSION PERIOD 1858 TO 1877

There was a steady increase in local population. The Municipality of Newtown was incorporated in 1862. By the 1870s, there is a relative substantial population at Newtown and along the whole line to Parramatta. At Newtown, this is shown in the erection of a footbridge to connect the two platforms and provide safe access across the tracks at the pedestrian crossing between the overlapping platforms. The footbridge had a short life and was replaced by a second footbridge in 1878, when a new brick building was erected on the down platform. It was the 1870s in which the NSW Railways started to replace the original 1855 buildings along the Sydney-Parramatta line and add facilities, such as booking offices and toilets, to existing stations. John Whitton approved a replacement train shed for Sydney, though it was not built until 1874. He approved a traditional two-storey combination office/residence at Ashfield in 1874 and in 1876 he approved the first large building on a side platform at Newtown. The design was the same as used in many locations in NSW in previous years from 1858.

By 1871, Whitton had used the design family of which Newtown was an example at the following locations on the opening of the three trunk lines:

- Campbelltown
- Picton

⁴ B. McKillop, Letter to the Editor, *ARH*, Vol. 63, No. 898, August, 2012, p.31

⁵ L. C. Turnbull, *Sydney – Biography of a City*, Milsons Point, Random House, 1999, p. 482

- Mittagong
- Moss Vale
- Parramatta
- Penrith
- Mount Victoria
- Bowenfels
- Singleton
- Muswellbrook
- Scone
- Murrurundi

It is of interest that each of the trunk lines received four buildings of the same design.

Whitton had Government approval and funding to take the three main trunk lines to Goulburn, Bathurst and Murrurundi and these lines represent the first period of trunk line development. When the lines reached their initial destinations, there was a lively debate in government and elsewhere about the best way, meaning cheaper, of extending the trunk lines further. What emerged as Government policy was a need for Whitton to build cheaper platform buildings in the 1870s. Throughout the 1870s, Whitton moved away from his beloved Georgian influenced design, and used temporary structures and combination offices and residences. He also commenced trials, at Gunning, with a new design in 1874 using for the first time a gabled roof as the dominant form of roofscape.

From the mid to late 1870s, there emerged a design for more structures with much higher levels of ornamentation and much larger size. Buildings at Newcastle, Sydney (the second station), Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Albury and other locations became locations for the use of Whitton's First Class design. He used his gabled roof design, later known as the standard roadside station, as a third class of platform structure. How did he plug the status gap between the First and Third class buildings? He re-introduced the Georgian influenced design that he had applied at Picton and elsewhere. The work of replacing buildings was taken from Whitton in 1879 but there was no change in the design for the second class of platform building. The list below shows those examples where Whitton and his subsequent design colleagues used the same design as at Newtown as replacement structures or new structures on existing lines between 1876 and 1889.

- Binalong
- Blacktown
- Burwood
- Honeysuckle Point

- Eskbank
- Greta
- Harden
- Morpeth
- Newbridge
- Newtown (1876) – asymmetrical with one attached pavilion
- Richmond
- Riverstone
- Lawson (1879)
- Stanmore (1886) – with hipped roofs on the attached pavilions
- Windsor

Unusual is the fact that 12 examples were built as the First Class of platform building between 1858 and 1871 and 17 examples were built as the Second Class of platform structures between 1877 and 1890. All 29 examples shared the same, simple hipped roof and attached pavilions with parapeted walls.

As well as a new platform building, the NSW Railways built a new, free-standing, two-storey brick residence for the Newtown Station Master in 1872. It was a prestige building, with a faceted bay window, a feature only shared by residences in the 1880s at Blayney, Orange and East Maitland. Only 44 of the approximate 2,000 official railway residences in NSW were two storey. That itself is a reflection of the prestige of Newtown. Perhaps more significant is the fact that it was only the second two storey residence to be built, having just been beaten to the first position by the existing residence at Goulburn. By the design, the floor plan, the level of ornamentation and the timing, the building at Newtown was a hallmark structure that signified that the NSW Railways understood the prestige status of Newtown, the suburb. Indeed, the status of the suburb was more reflected in the residence than the 1876 platform building.

In 1875, the first mortuary structure was provided at Newtown. It probably was relocated to the new station site in 1892 and lasted until 1910, when a replacement was built. The second mortuary building existed at least to 1965.

In 1876, John Whitton approved a replacement brick station building for Newtown with a hipped roof, adjoined end pavilions with parapets and a centre transverse roof gable. All the corners of the structure featured stone quoins. The platform awning was supported by eight timber posts. The rooms comprised a combined Parcels and Lamp Room, a Parcels Office, a Ticket Office, a Waiting Room, a Telegraph Office, a Ladies' Waiting Room and male and female toilets. Unlike the use of plain timber posts on the rail side, Whitton used ten sets of ornate, cast iron, paired posts on the road side. The building was 108 feet long by 18 feet through the Waiting Room. The structure was

asymmetrical so far as the layout of chimneys was concerned. It measured 91 feet by 15 feet at the ends, with the Waiting Room measuring 28 feet by 20 feet 5 inches. Each pavilion at the ends of the building had parapeted roofs and were 18 feet 6 inches long. This building was erected in 1877.

Mr. Whitton sent a copy to his junior engineering colleague, William Mason on 21st August, 1876. Mason took over the approval system for works on existing lines in October 1876, two months after Whitton had approved the plan for Newtown. During 1876, Whitton was implementing fundamental changes to the design policy of both platform buildings and residences throughout the Colony. It is very significant that Whitton decided to use his pre-1869 First Class design as a new Second Class design at Newtown rather than continue with his design of combination office/residences that he built at Ashfield in 1874. In fact, Newtown was the first time that Whitton re-assigned his design for use at Second Class stations. A very significant point to note about station designs is that, in Whitton's time from 1857 to 1889, there was no different design used whether Whitton, William Mason or George Cowdery approved plans and no difference in design policy between new lines or existing lines. These features suggest that the origin of the designs used in NSW between 1868 and 1889 were not those of Whitton but of Mason and Cowdery.

The suburb of Newtown was fortunate to receive Whitton's legacy but the design he used was not oriented in any way to reflect any social or political significance of the locality. The suburb received what Whitton deemed appropriate for a location of a certain status. Other places of similar size and status also received the same size and design of building. Newtown got a standard, but of an above-average standard, NSW railway building of its time.

A block signal box opened in 1878 at Newtown but there was no interlocking until 1884.. Block working would have been conducted with telegraph instruments, while the signaling would have comprised a two arm station semaphore and a distance signal for each direction.

When John Whitton, William Mason and George Cowdery left office in the years up to or in 1889, they departed leaving a suite of building designs. By 1892, not one of these Whitton era designs was in use by those who followed them. Even the design of the simple, one-room waiting shed was fundamentally altered. The physical orientation of the single roof pitch waiting sheds was reversed. Additionally, in the case of larger structures, the provision of cantilevered brackets replaced the use of vertical posts to support the platform awning.

THE ACCELERATED EXPANSION PERIOD 1878 TO 1889

The 1870s, especially the second half of the decade, witnessed a plethora of new stations, replacement of existing station buildings and the addition of facilities such as waiting rooms and toilets to stations already open on the Sydney-Parramatta line. As a part of the rapid growth of the railway line between Sydney and Parramatta, the NSW Railways built a replacement waiting shed on the up platform at Newtown in 1879.

In the 1882 *Illustrated Guide to Sydney and its Suburbs*, Newtown was the only location, apart from Glebe and Forest Lodge, west of the Sydney C.B.D. to be mentioned.⁶ It is described as a “thriving suburb adjoining the city boundary”.⁷ Thus, it is not surprising that in 1882 the Member of Parliament for East Macquarie, Sydney Smith asked the Minister for Public Works, John Lackey, in Parliament a question without notice. Smith said that the “Newtown railway station is “totally inadequate to the requirements of the locality”. Evidence of the growth of the suburb was also mirrored in the start of the first tram service in 1881 between Newtown and Marrickville. In 1882, a tram line connected Newtown with the City. Another addition in the 1880s was the existence of horse tram services along King Street and to Macdonalton and to Canterbury.

An interlocked signal box was provided at the Sydney end of Newtown Down platform on 29 July 1884, just three years after the first NSW interlocking had been installed at Burwood.

The layout at that time comprised staggered side platforms, two main line crossovers, a short Up siding and a goods yard connection to the Down Main, some distance to the west. Distant, home and starting signals were provided in each direction, and a Down Advance signal was also provided beyond the goods yard points. A diagram of the interlocking, taken from the new ARHS Track and Signal Diagrams DVD-ROM Version 3, appears below.

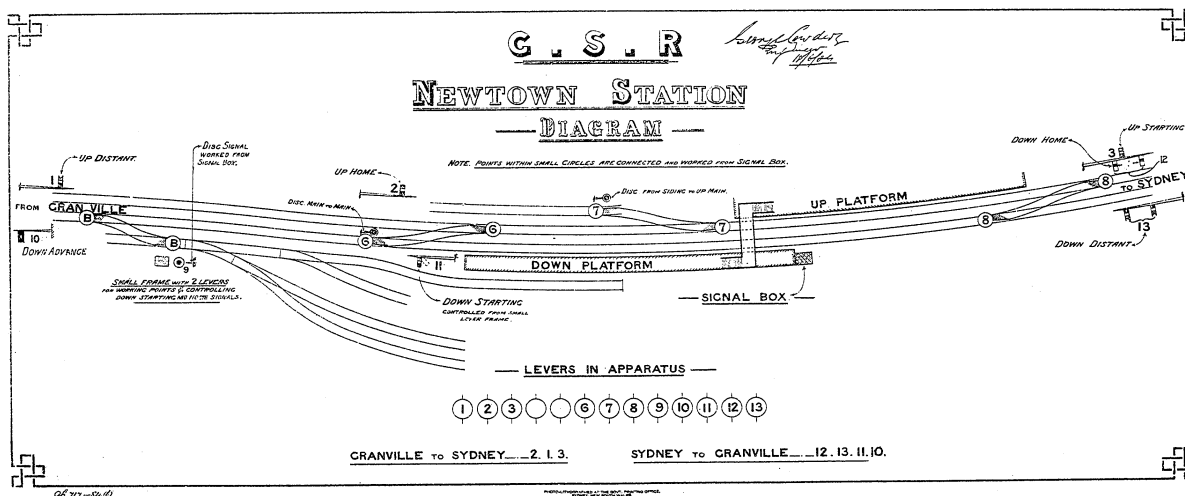
Graham Harper writes that the instructions accompanying the diagram make for fascinating reading. He explains that, firstly, train drivers were warned to be prepared to stop at the distant signals if they were showing an adverse indication, and satisfy themselves that the line was clear to the home signal before proceeding. This was a hangover from the days of the old station semaphore when the line could be fouled between the semaphore and the distance signals. It reflects a lack of confidence in the signalman, whose job was now to ensure that the line was *not* obstructed in any way. Further, drivers were requested not to run through and points until they had been set by

⁶ Gibbs, Shallard & Co, *An Illustrated Guide to Sydney and its Suburbs*, Sydney, 1882, Angus & Robertson, facsimile edition, pp. 35 and 74.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74

the signalman - another hang over from pre-interlocking days when trailing points could be run through, as there was no point rodding to be strained or other interlocking equipment to be damaged.

The operation of the goods yard points requires some comment. These were some distance from the signal box, and, possibly because of the length of rodding required to connect to the box, were operated from a ground frame beside the points. Such an arrangement also reflects the philosophy of having all the operations of



shunting – attaching / detaching / signaling the driver / operating the points – done from the scene of the action. This philosophy continued until recent times, and is the reason why so many points leading to goods and other sidings at stations were operated from ground frames. The fact that it was a cheap alternative was also relevant.

The Newtown ground levers comprised two levers. The first exercised a secondary control on the Down Home and Down Starting signals and had to be restored to normal, placing those signals to stop before the second lever, operating the points, could be pulled over. The key to release the lock on the signal lever came from the signal box, it is true, but not from the lever frame! It was 'hung in the appointed place' by the signalman when not in use.

To add to the peculiarities of the arrangement, a disc signal, operated by No. 9 lever in the signal box was provided, ostensibly to authorize movements out of the sidings. However, the instructions clearly state that this signal authorized the shunter to operate the yard levers; he was not to do so until this signal had been cleared. Presumably the operation of this signal provided the physical interlocking with the signal box, and while No.9 lever was pulled over, it was impossible to clear the Down Home and Starting signals. It was a very nebulous arrangement indeed; in later days, No..9 lever would

have been fitted with an Annet lock releasing the key for the siding, still providing interlocking with the protecting signals.

It could be construed that this cumbersome arrangement may have been caused in some part by the heavy traffic passing through on the Fast and Slow main lines. It meant that during the walking time between the signal box and the ground levers the slow lines could be worked normally for through traffic, always assuming that the shunting train was completely clear of the running lines in the goods yard. Again, with later technology, an electric releasing switch itself released from the signal box would perhaps have been installed.

It would seem like the rising traffic along the line was not restricted to Newtown and that a solution on a much broader scope needed to be applied in order to meet passenger and freight traffic on the Sydney-Strathfield line.

THE CITY VERSUS COUNTRY PERIOD 1890 TO 1914

In 1891 Chief Commissioner, E. M. G. Eddy, obtained Government funding to double the number of tracks between Illawarra Junction and Homebush from two to four. At Newtown, this involved the relocation of the station from the west to the east of King Street. The road overbridge at that location pre-dated the arrival of the first train, having been built in 1853.⁸ Discussions with the local government authority dragged on for some time about the impact this relocation had on the local network. It was not until 1897 that the NSW Railways paid compensation to the local council for alterations to the local road system.

Why was the station relocated from the west to the east of King Street? It was not the result of any request by the local government authority or even the colonial government. It was simply a matter of prevailing NSW railway policy. Eddy instructed James Angus, his new Engineer-in-Chief to prepare plans in accordance with Eddy's concept of station arrangements. The fundamental basis of the concept was entry to stations by either subway or overhead bridge and the placement of Booking Offices in either subways or on bridges or both. At Newtown, this was easiest achieved by connecting the station to the existing King Street road overbridge. The stations at Macdonaldtown and Burwood were also relocated across roads for the same reason.

James Angus approved a brick overhead Booking and Parcels Office. It was designed in the Queen Anne style. The Booking and Parcels Office was very ornate and remains today. The roof ridge had ornamental terracotta moulds and finials and a cupola

⁸ C. Meader et al, *Marrickville People and Places*, Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1994, p. 37

penetrating the roof ridge. This building, along with a sister structure at Redfern and the Railway Institute building in Devonshire Street, was the only railway structures in NSW to be designed on the Queen Anne style. The three buildings date from the same time. At Newtown, the roof was so filthy for decades that it appeared to be covered with dark slate rather than bright red tiles. As part of the present upgrading to the building, the roof shingles have been cleaned and look spectacular. One set of double doors lead from King Street, with the name of the station expressed in a triangular pediment above the doors, a very unusual element for NSW stations. There were two doors on the other side of the building connecting with the footbridge, which gave access to the platforms. When the Tramway Institute building at the Newtown tram depot was opened in 1918, it featured the Queen Anne style, including the terracotta roof shingles. It has since been demolished.

The internal wall separating the Parcels and Booking Office from the public Booking Hall featured ornate wall panelling. The upper window sashes were composed of 16 small, coloured window panes. One feature of special note is the use of circular windows in all three sets of doors. The use of circles as a design element is highly atypical of NSW practice but was peculiarly used in a number of ways in 1891. Circular water tanks and the circular window openings of locomotives are two other well-known uses. The circle was also applied to the design of gussets in awning brackets. It was even used to form the semi-circular awning roof for the milk stage at Oak Flats in 1891. The circle as a design concept continued to be used until 1899, but with diminishing usage. A photograph of the overhead booking office at Newtown was shown in the 1893/94 NSW *Annual Report*, the first time that photographs had been in these annual documents.

Three new platforms were applied with the standard arrangement of platforms being one island platform flanked by a side platform on each side to accommodate the four tracks. This station was opened at a new site on the eastern side of the King Street bridge.

The main platform building, on platform No. 2, was 109 feet 6 inches by 9 feet 8 inches internal. In this way, the floor plan was fundamentally changed from the pre-Whitton era. Rather than using a transverse floor plan based on a centre General Waiting Room as in Whitton's time, Angus approved the introduction of a linear floor plan, starting with staff offices nearest the main or only pedestrian access, following by public waiting rooms and, at the far end, the toilets. This arrangement of rooms became standard NSW practice up to 1960. Also, the use of very narrow buildings was another feature that was contrary to Whitton's practice and remains NSW design policy today, mostly due to the physical constraints of platform and corridor widths.

The room designations at Newtown were (from the up end): – Public Urinals and Closets, yard, Ladies' Closets and Lavatory, Ladies' Waiting Room, General Waiting Room (24 feet by 11 feet external) and Station Master. Note that there was no booking office on the platform. The two side platforms each had waiting rooms 24 feet by 11 feet. They had doors and fireplaces. Like all other stations on the Redfern to Homebush section at the time, the platforms were numbered 3, 2 and 1 from the up direction. Not only was this atypical of NSW practice but platform No. 2 served two platforms, namely the Up Slow and the Down Fast lines. In 1900, the NSW Railways added Ladies' Waiting Rooms and toilets on the Down Slow platform building at both Newtown and Stanmore.

David Scott, Member of Parliament, asks the Colonial Treasurer, Bruce Smith, in Parliament about the change from brick to timber for the Redfern-Homebush quadruplication buildings. Smith confirmed that tenders had been accepted for brick buildings and then fresh plans for timber structures were prepared. Smith further replied that what Scott had said was correct due to the difficulty in obtaining face bricks. Therefore, the tender documents had to be modified for the use of brick only for the Booking Offices. Smith claimed that the change "greatly expedites" the project and asserted that the appearance will be equal to the original design. Smith advised that the foundations would be brick and the roofs unaltered.

On the platforms, were timber platform structures with medium-pitched, hipped roofs partly obscured by wide fascias formed by vertical boarding. The contractor was John Ahearn, a builder who erected most of the stations on the Strathfield-Homebush line in the early 1890s. The platform awnings were supported by extensions of the ceiling joists but also used smallish, ornate brackets and a few vertical columns beyond the building alignment for extensions of the awnings. The design represented the first major move away from posted verandahs on platforms. The buildings and platforms were illuminated by gas at the time of opening.

Two excellent photographs of the station in the quadruplication period are in W. A. Bayley, *Sydney Suburban Steam Railways*, Bulli, Austrail Publications, no date, pp. 26 and 27. The only extant relic of the 1891 buildings is a former Lamp Room that was built into the abutment of the King Street road bridge, which is visible from the present platform. There is a photograph in Ron Preston's book of the Lamp room.⁹ The use of cavities in abutments and piers as office space was common on the NSW Railways.

William Foxlee, the then Engineer in Chief for Existing Lines, approved the addition of two shops to the northern side of the 1891 overhead booking office in 1894. The design of the shops was not done by the NSW Railways architects but by a private architect on behalf of the foreshadowed shop owner. The architect was J. Nagle of 84 Elizabeth Street,

⁹ Op cit., p. 68

Sydney. A waiting room in the overhead Booking Office was incorporated into the design changes. It is possible that the present awning over the footpath in front of the building on King street was added at this time. It remains in position today.

How did the 1891 and 1894 works contribute to the development of a city versus country split in government thinking? The buildings at Newtown were part of a group of works on the Redfern-Homebush line that shared a common design. Apart from one example at Katoomba also in 1891, no examples were built in country areas.¹⁰ It was significant that the Redfern-Homebush section of line was provided with similar buildings, which were very elegant despite the timber construction of the platform structures.

In 1897, the NSW Railways introduced a new design of building, called the Pioneer style. There was a low-cost version, of which 17 examples were built, and a classier version, of which ten were built. A total of 23 of the 27 examples were built in timber and on both existing and new lines. What was common amongst all 27 examples was that all were in country areas. The Pioneer design was used up to 1912. In 1913, a modified Pioneer design was used but only two examples were built, both in the country. In 1916, another design of low-cost timber structure was introduced for use exclusively in country areas. It was used only in 1916 and 1917 at which time the NSW Railways decided to introduce the use of pre-cast concrete units for country buildings. The split between city and country that was introduced by Eddy in 1891 was continued after 1900 until the 1930s.

By 1891, trams in Inner West Sydney were the mode of transport for poor people and trains, and the suburbs they served, were the mode and locations for rich people in Sydney. There was an additional consideration beyond the physical discrimination of the use of Eddy's building design as used at Newtown. The concept of booking offices located off-platform, either above or below platforms, was a design element not used in country areas. The sophisticated nature of Newtown and of Sydney generally was enhanced by the 1894 addition of the two shops above the rail tracks. This appears to be the first time in the history of the NSW Railways where air-rights were used for retail purposes. What the NSW Railways provided at Newtown station was not to be seen at a NSW country station. The NSW Railways was one instrument of the NSW Government to mould Sydney with values of an urban area with a unique built environment in NSW.

When the new station site opened on 10th January, 1892 in conjunction with quadruplication, the 1884 signal box was replaced by a new 24 lever block box, on the down side of the Slow Lines, virtually at the siding points. Because of the distance from

¹⁰ Katoomba was a special case because of the high status of the Blue Mountains as a Summer home for affluent Sydney people.

the new station, the new box was named Newtown Goods Yard Box, and Newtown station ceased to be involved in block working. Newtown Goods Yard Box was better positioned to divide the block section between Macdonaldtown and Petersham, and Newtown station became a mid section station.

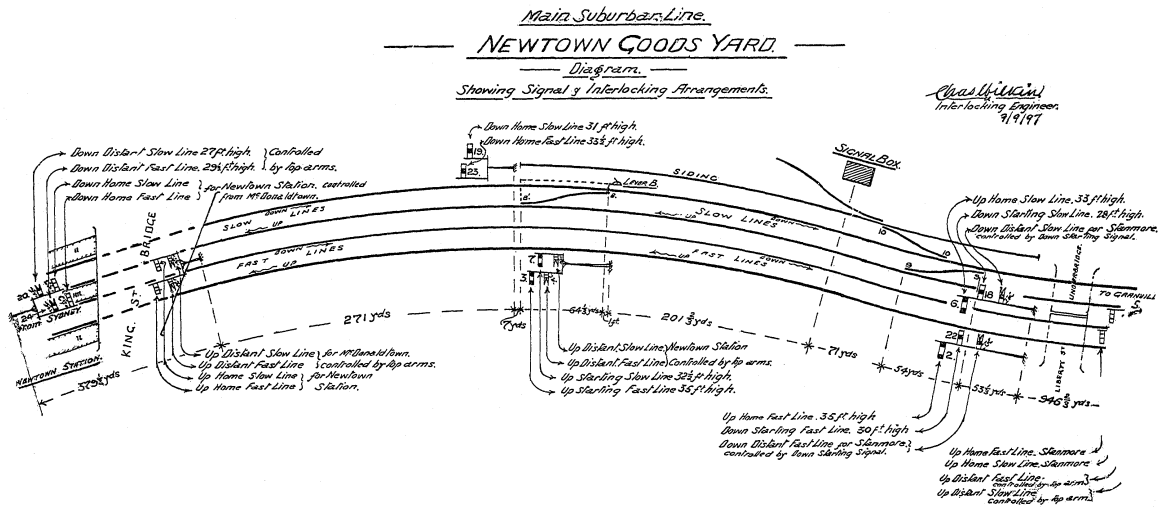
Two crossovers were provided between the slow lines to permit running round of terminating goods trains. The easternmost of these was located back towards the station, and was operated by a ground lever, unlocked by a key from the signal box frame. The western crossover was located close to, and operated from, the signal box.

At the station, home and distant signals were provided on each line to protect the platforms. Each of these signal pairs was operated from its own, probably old pull-over type, levers on the platform concerned. The arrangement, which was common on the main suburban line, seems to reflect appallingly on the efficacy of the block working of the time, as a train stopping at a platform mid section should not require any signals to protect it. Protection should have been solely afforded by the block instruments at each end of the section, in this case Illawarra Junction or Macdonaldtown and Newtown Goods Yard or Petersham.

The station staff was required to return these signals promptly to danger when a train was standing at the platform, but they were enjoined to remember to clear them again once the train was on the move. The protection afforded by such an arrangement is nebulous to say the least!

There have even been instructions for train guards to operate these signals in the absence of station staff. In this case, it would be necessary for the guard to clear the signals again before rejoining his train, and the margin of safety then offered by these signals would reduce from nebulous to wildly optimistic.

The signals in use for the four tracks were conventional home and distant signals, often placed on the same mast where signal boxes were close together. In an apparent attempt to save on signal posts, the applicable signals were mounted on a bracket (like the turnout signals of more recent times). For example, the Up Starting signals for the fast and slow lines in the diagram below shared the same post, with the higher bracket pertaining to the Fast Line



In 1907, Goods Yard Box was attended for about 14 hours most days: from midnight to around 1300, from 1630 to 1900 and from 22.25 to midnight. The box was basically closed on Sundays.

The block instruments used were probably Preece's One Wire although this changed to Tyer's Three Wire at some point prior to 1913.

Ron Preston writes that Goods Yard signal box existed until 1927.

With the relocation of the station to the eastern side of King Street, the former station site remained in railway ownership. A siding was laid in 1898 on the site to serve the existing flour mill for Mr. Crago, which had started operations in 1896. The mill continued in operation until 1984. In 1903, a goods shed was erected in the goods yard. A five ton pillar crane was also provided. Additional photographs are in *Byways of Steam 21*, pp. 121-123

In 1910, a new mortuary structure was built. It measured 21 feet by nine feet six inches and was located on Platform No. 1, the Down Slow platform. It was a smart looking, timber-framed building and featured diagonal placed weatherboards on the external walls. There were tables either side of the entrance, the tables being fitted with rollers to facilitate the movement of coffins. The roof followed the Dutch Gable style with Fibro cement slates and terracotta ridging and terminals. It had no awning over the platform.

On September 7, 1913, a new Down Relief line was opened between Newtown Goods Yard and Petersham. The purpose of this line was probably to allow diversion of stopping trains which were to terminate at Petersham, in the Back Platform Road which had been brought into use earlier in that year. In this way, the Slow Line could be cleared for a following through service.

Facilities were provided for the goods yard to be shunted from either the Down Slow or the Down Relief and the two crossovers between the slow lines were retained and operated as earlier described. A shunt signal, operated from the ground frame which operated the points and controlled from the signal box, was provided for the eastern crossover. It was also possible for a Down goods train to be switched to the Down Relief, clear of the Slow Lines, and to shunt the yard without disrupting Slow line traffic.

The position and layout of the goods yard made for easy working by Down trains; an Up arrival would have to run round its train prior to shunting, and if it was to continue to Darling Harbour, again run round before proceeding.

Concurrently with the opening of the Down Relief was the introduction of automatic signaling between Illawarra Junction and Petersham. This resulted in the demise of the signal boxes at Macdonaldtown and Stanmore and the removal for all time of the platform levers at Macdonaldtown, Newtown, and Stanmore. Track circuits are obviously infallible; human signalers are not!

Newtown Goods Yard Box survived automatic signaling, but lost its control over the Fast lines, which, having no point connections, operated purely automatically.. At the same time the Fast lines were renamed 'Main' lines and the Slow lines were renamed 'Suburban' lines. These changes applied to the lines between Sydney and Homebush.

The automatic signals were (then) conventional two arm signals; a 'home' arm at the top and beneath it, a fish-tailed distant arm. The scheme of indications for these signals was identical with that of the block signals they replaced. However, the block section was reduced to basically the distance between any two adjoining signals rather than between the block signal boxes that had been supplanted.

THE POOR PERIOD 1915 TO 1940

Whereas the 1910s were years of relatively attractive platform buildings in Sydney, Newtown did not benefit from any new works until the 1920s.

In the early 1920s, Newtown was described as a "thickly populated suburb adjoining the city".¹¹ Frank Burke informed Richard Ball, Minister for Railways, of "the considerable congestion at the ticket office during the busy hours of the day and also when the funeral trains are using the station." Burke request for more adequate provision for the sale of tickets.

¹¹ F. Pollon (Ed.), *The Book of Sydney Suburbs*, Pymble, Harper Collins, 1996, p. 186

Whereas Newtown was very fortunate in 1876 to receive the first example of John Whitton's newly established Second Class building, this was not the case in 1926 when the time had come to approve a new building on a new island platform in connection with the track sextuplication. In 1925, the NSW Railways found itself against a severe drain on its capital resources, possibly due to commitments with the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the widespread electrification works. *The Staff* magazine referred to 1927 as "the most disastrous in the history of the NSW Railways."¹² Thus, the worst financial year occurred between during 1926, the year the building was approved, and 1927 when the Newtown building started operation.

It is interesting to compare the presentation of the 1926 platform building at Newtown approved by the Engineer-in-Chief, Robert Ranken, in the NSW Railways and the 1926 platform and subway buildings and entrances at St. James and Museum stations approved by Dr. J. C. C. Bradfield, who was in charge of the Metropolitan Construction Branch of the Department of Public Works.

One casualty of the financial crises within the NSW Railways was the design of suburban platform buildings. Everything had been mostly fine up to 1924, though changes had started to occur in 1922 when porched entry to the female toilet was introduced (as at Griffith and Fairy Meadow) and the rendered string course around the external walls (as at Rockdale No. 1 platform) started to disappear but other aspects remained in use. In 1924, the Regents Park-Cabramatta line was opened. While most of the buildings on that line were short and unattended, at least they retained much of their prettiness. From 1925 to the end of the use of the design in 1935, the buildings were stripped of their ornamental features and reflected the financial ugliness of their time. Unfortunately, what was approved for Newtown was a typical example of the NSW Railways in times of severe financial austerity. In the ten year period between 1925 and 1935, the platform buildings were of lower design attractiveness those of the World War 2 period, notably because the NSW Department of Railways obtained large amounts of funding from the Commonwealth Government in the Second World War.

Capital funding was not the only problem faced by the NSW Railways in the 1920s. Rail transport had been a very important mode in 1876 when Whitton provided the second station building at Newtown but rail was not the primary mode of public transport in Newtown nor Sydney generally in the 1920s. Indeed, by 1900 only 24% of journeys were made by rail while 60% of journeys were made by trams.¹³ In addition, there was rising competition from the private motor bus industry. NSW Governments in the 1920s also had to initiate policies, procedures and laws to control private motor cars. The very

¹² 12th December, 1928, p. 706

¹³ R. Gibbons, "The 'fall of the Giant': trams versus trains and buses in Sydney, 1900-61, in G. Wotherspoon (Ed.), *Sydney's Transport*, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1983, p. 156

first Police visit to schools to talk to pupils about road safety occurred at Newtown Public School in 1932. It is, thus, little wonder that the platform building at Newtown in 1926 did not look as sweet as its brothers and sisters in the decade before World War 1.

Amongst the relative gloominess of 1926, Robert Ranken approved the provision of a brick building for the new island platform, containing seven rooms. The economy of the Newtown building was reflected in the following features:

1. Ugly, dark brown face bricks from the State Brickworks,
2. Use of monochrome brickwork, rather than contrasting colours,
3. Absence of rendered string course around external walls,
4. Omission of ornate window heads,
5. Square window and door reveals, rather than shaped or chamfered reveals
6. Elimination of finials at the roof terminals,
7. Omission of tuck pointing for the brickwork,
8. Bullnose bricks for window sills in place of render,
9. Absence of heating in waiting rooms,
10. Use of clear rather than multi-coloured glass in the nine small panes in the upper window sashes,
11. Absence of glazing over the door to the Store,
12. concrete corbels supporting the awning brackets rather than stone,
13. The thresholds for the doorways into the GWR and LWR were one and one quarter inch thick slate but six other thresholds were concrete
14. Concrete for the urinal back, in place of slate &
15. Elimination of terracotta airbricks to provide sub-floor ventilation

Other features of the platform building were:

1. roof was covered with corrugated Fibrolite
2. The full-length awnings were the same width on each side of the building, being nine feet six and five eighths of an inch wide,
3. The use of concrete for toilet and Out of Room floors
4. The name of the station was at the bottom of the lower window sash
5. Mill Rolled glass louvres used in toilet windows,
6. Brick arches over doors and windows,
7. "G" class glass in all lower window sashes ,
8. terracotta roof ridging,
9. 12' ceiling height &
10. small corrugated iron for ceilings
11. application of a traditional NSW Railway palette of stone shades

The above features of the building were not restricted to the building at Newtown but were applied to all buildings erected between Sydney and Strathfield for the sextuplication, namely Petersham and Burwood Nos. 4/5 platforms and at Croydon Nos. 3 & 4 platforms. It was not because Newtown and other inner city suburbs lost 10% of their populations each decade between 1910 and 1930 and it was not because Newtown was a “slum” suburb in the 1920s that it received an ugly platform building.¹⁴ There were further examples of the austerity brick structures built at Flemington, on platform No. 1 at Lidcombe in 1924 (now demolished), at Epping in 1928 (now demolished) and a timber version at North Strathfield also in 1928 (now demolished). These structures were amongst the last of the Federation-influenced style to be built in the Sydney suburban area. What Newtown received was what was being built at other railway stations at that time.

The 1926 platform building was connected with Newtown’s sewerage system when it opened. For the ladies’ toilet facilities, Ranken used what was known as a porched entry to the toilet. Porched entry means that, unlike all female toilets up to 1921, it was not necessary to enter the Ladies’ Waiting Room before entering their lavatory. Consistent with statewide railway policy at the time, there were three water closets in the ladies’ toilet but only two possessed penny-in-the-slot locks. This was an act of sexual equality with men, who did have to pay to use the urinal. By leaving one closet without a lock, women also were not required to pay to urinate. All the closet doors were glazed in the top half and all doors were kept eight inches above the floor to facilitate cleaning. Each cubicle measured five feet by three feet six inches, which was six inches below the NSW railway standard for women at the time. Ladies had the luxury of a wash basin but it was railway policy not to provide one in the male toilet.

At Newtown, the closets for men were the same size as for women, a rare example of female/male equality in NSW railway toilets. Normally, ladies were provided with an extra six inches of cubicle width compared to men, presumably in order to help adjust or store their clothing. The entry to the male toilets was positioned at the further end from the entry to the platform, which was standard NSW policy. A timber screen protected the entry using six inch wide by one inch thick vertical boards, the usual material. The walls were Kalsomined, not painted. The walls in the Store between the toilets were not plastered. These were a money-saving measure applied at every station. The urinal was concrete, the concrete back being five inch thick, being equal to the thickness of the toilet floor. Clearly, Ranken envisaged heavy and penetrating usage in the future. Probably, the extreme thickness was related to the unusually muscular male passengers that used the Newtown rail service.

¹⁴ P. Spearitt, *Sydney’s Century*, University of NSW Press, 2000, pp. 37 and 70.

As part of the sextuplication project, the NSWGR decided to widen the entrance at King Street and provide more ticket issuing facilities to accommodate the passenger growth since the overhead booking office had opened in 1892. Ranken approved in 1926 alterations to the Redfern overhead booking office. He provided for a 14 feet wide opening was made on the northern side for pedestrian entry into a Booking Hall. The existing Ticket Collector's Cabin was re-fixed. An indication of the traffic growth is reflected in the plan for the entry/exit gates. As well as the three feet wide entry/exit sliding gate with pipe barriers guarded by the Ticket Collector, two sets of "crush" hinged gates were erected, each gate being two feet six inches wide.

One of the two sets of double doors in the 1891 Booking Office facing the footbridge was bricked up. The remaining set of double doors provided access to the Parcels Office, this being the first time that the Parcels Office had its own room and own, direct entrance. Two short awnings were provided on the footbridge side 8 feet 9 inches wide using standard console brackets mounted on standard concrete corbels. It was covered with corrugated Fibrolite sheeting, an early use of the material. The sills of the three ticket windows were placed 3 feet 6 inches above the floor, the usual height. Underneath the windows, four inch by 5/8th inch vertical boarding was used and, above the windows, 1/4 inch thick wired glass was featured, a most unusual use. One of the ticket windows faced King Street and was used only for the issue of season tickets. The ticket counters in the Booking Office were the standard two feet six inches wide. Old materials were used during the alterations. The Booking Hall connected to a new footbridge, from which a stepway connected to the platform.

In 1927, the NSWGR planned for the diversion of the local lines under the now extended King Street road bridge. To accommodate the overhead catenary for electric train operation, the tracks under the King Street bridge had to be lowered between two and three feet. Substantial amounts of earth had to be removed. The present level of the platform is about the height of the rail tracks before work started in 1927. At that time, temporary buildings were on the platform and provision was made for the brick structure that would be soon built. The jack arches of the extension of the bridge over the present Down and Up Local lines can be seen from the down end of the platform. Arthur Dunstan endeavoured to emphasise the size of the works when he wrote that the existing station was "razed" and he referred to "the amount of arduous work that was required to install the additional roads".¹⁵ A photograph of the platform and buildings being constructed is in *The Staff*, 22nd March, 1927, p. 137. Unlike many works on the network today, Arthur stated that "practically no interference to trains was caused".¹⁶

¹⁵ A.H. Dunstan, "The Roaring Twenties on the Main Suburban Line", *Bulletin*, Vol. 17 No. 347, September, 1966, p. 209

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The room designations for the proposed Newtown platform building were, from the up end, Urinals, Store, Ladies' Lavatory, Ladies' Waiting Room, General Waiting Room, Station Master's Office and Out of Room. The structure was 103 feet five and a half inches external in length and ten feet wide external. The internal width was eight feet six inches, one of the narrowest versions of the design due to the extremely confined location. Despite the unattractiveness of the Newtown building, it was a significant elevation of what the NSW Railways was building on new lines in rural areas. There, the dominant building materials used were concrete and timber. Heating in rural areas was achieved with stoves, not fireplaces and male toilets were off-platform. Like the 1891 station at Newtown, the 1926 design also reflected the higher status of city over country.

The 1926 building at Newtown was an example of a design first implemented at Kiama in 1892 and used until 1935, the last brick example being at Condobolin and on No. 1 platform at Pennant Hills in 1935. A total of 266 examples were constructed, with 143 in brick (54%) and 123 in timber (46%). About 86 examples, or approximately one third were erected in Sydney, used both for new and replacement buildings. Of these, all but 17 or 80% of the Sydney structures, were constructed in brick. In 1911, the NSW Railways decided to adopt the policy of using brick exclusively in Sydney and Newcastle for new platform buildings. Why, then, were 17 built in timber? They were four reasons. Firstly, some were rebuilds of earlier structures, such as Peshurst, Oatley, Artarmon and Punchbowl. Others were associated with track or signalling projects at the time, such as North Strathfield No. 3 platform. Thirdly, there was a severe budgetary shortfall in capital funds, such as for Waverton in 1892. Of note is that all the timber examples fall in four time periods, either 1890-1892, 1897-1901, 1915-1917 and 1928-1935. Lastly, there were those structures that the NSW Railways were forced to build at Government request. These involved local organisations soliciting political direction for projects the railway organisation thought financially unviable, such as new stations at Asquith and Jannali or additional buildings at Yennora No. 1 platform and Pennant Hills No. 1 platform. A large number of the 17 timber buildings were affected by the shortage of funds as well as one of the other reasons. Most were small structures.

In 1937, the NSW Bookstall Co. opened a bookstall on the overbridge at the entrance to Newtown station.

Graham Harper explains that the two arm type automatic signal had fallen into disfavor soon after its introduction, and by 1915, upper quadrant automatic signals were being placed at new installations, and also replacing the older two arm signals. This occurred on the Main Suburban Line later in the 1910-1919 decade. However, a 1923 working sketch purports to show a hotch-potch of both old and new types in the vicinity of Newtown Goods Yard.

The last lower quadrant automatic signals existed until about 1980 between Farley and Lochinvar, in the Hunter Valley.

Electrification brought with it the need to re-signal. It was felt that the indications given by signals with arms could be compromised by the overhead wiring, and hence, they were largely replaced on the Main Suburban and Illawarra Lines in conjunction with electrification in the mid-1920s. At this time, the preference was for the new double light colour light signals to be placed above the lines to which they applied, and the Main Suburban line in particular had business-like gantries spanning all six lines, with up to six signals on each gantry.

When the sixth running line was added in 1927, Newtown Goods Yard signal box closed. It was replaced by a four lever Frame A at the siding points and a new single lever B to operate the eastern local lines crossover. Levers 1 and 4 in Frame A were released by keys from nearby releasing switches. These were in turn released by the absence of approaching trains on the relevant track circuits, and by the train to be shunted drawing past the protecting signal. Nos. 2 and 3 levers operated the siding and western crossover points.

Curiously, says Graham Harper, the eastern crossover was released by a key from No.1 lever in Frame A, rather than from its own releasing switch which could have been placed much closer to it. This was an unusual (although by no means unique) practice in NSW. The arrangement was even more curious as, the eastern crossover, being closer to the station, was electrified and could be used to turn back an electric train set in an emergency. But it would have had to be a *significant* emergency to justify all the palaver involved in operating this crossover.

Even after the decline in goods traffic through the 1970s and 1980s, these installations were all used on at least a daily basis for wheat traffic until the mill closed. Generally a special shunting trip would come from Enfield, run round at Newtown Goods Siding, shunt and then return with the empty wagons to Enfield. This was, of course, before through Liverpool services were routed via the Local lines routinely for part of the day, and there were sufficient gaps in traffic to allow both Down and Up Local lines to be obstructed for the running round movement,

In 1940, the arrangements were insufficient to prevent an Up electric train from ploughing into a goods train which was standing on the Up Local while the engine ran round its train. The electric train driver was killed and a number of passengers were injured in the accident.

THE WAR PERIOD 1941 TO 1945

Newtown station did not serve any military bases during World War 2. Hence, it did not receive any additional works. Nevertheless, the station did receive one of the popular improvements that many other stations received. This project involved the application of asphalt to the surface of the platform in 1944. Research continues to evaluate whether projects such as asphaltting of platforms, the provision of bicycle racks and the installation of hot water heaters were merely initiatives to keep peace with the railway unions or whether they were indeed essential projects to help finish the battles of World War 2.

THE LONG DECLINE PERIOD 1946 TO 1971

This period is marked by a preference of people to reside in suburbs more distant to the Sydney C.B.D. than Newtown. The Housing Commission of NSW did not build accommodation in Newtown and other inner city areas because their clients wished to reside in the outer suburbs.¹⁷ The period was a time of nothingness so far as Newtown station was concerned. However, it would be wrong to think that the NSW Department of Railways gave priority to those outer Sydney stations that served the newly developing suburbs. The Department did not undertake any capital works other than those sanctioned because of Second World War but not completed before the end of the War. Indeed, not one major railway project started during World War 2 was completed at the time the Japanese surrendered in 1945. Generally speaking, the 1946-1971 period was a time when railway travel did not receive support from NSW Governments. Things only started to change when the Public Transport Commission was established in 1972 to replace the Department of Railways.

Nothing happened in the late 1940s, the 1950s and the 1960s at Newtown station. This was consistent with the pattern at most other NSW railway stations, whether they were in Sydney or in the country.¹⁸

In 1979, the then General Manager of the Way and Works Branch, Doug Neil, approved the construction of a cantilevered awning on the platform at the down end of the brick platform building. It measured mm x 2688 mm wide, with a butterfly design roof. It was demolished about 1990 when the station received its initial CityRail branding. The State Rail Authority thought at the time it would be aesthetically pleasing if the pitch of the gable roof of the 1926 building were lowered from its angle of 35 degrees to about 20 degrees to match the new awning. This initiative ruined the appearance of the 1926

¹⁷ S. Fitzgerald, *Sydney 1842-1992*, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1992, p. 231

¹⁸ There were some exceptions, such as a new station at Broken Hill opened in 1957, which by chance happened to be in the electorate of the minister for Transport at the time.

building and, from this time until its demolition in 2011, the 1926 building look out of proportion and decidedly ugly.

No history of Newtown station site would be complete without mentioning that, just above the station, was located one of the largest tramway signal boxes on the Sydney system. Its 20 levers controlled the junction of the Cooks River and Marrickville/Earlwood lines, together with a double line triangular connection to the Depot. This signal box was taken out of use after 28th September, 1957, when all tram services on the Green Lines (i.e., those through Newtown and served mainly by trams from Newtown Depot) were replaced by buses.

THE REBIRTH PERIOD 1972 TO 1988

In 1980, the State Rail Authority was established. The election of the Wran Labor Government in 1976 gave a big boost to urban and country rail transport and public transport in general. Wran appointed the energetic and supportive David Hill to the position of Chief Executive. Newtown station was not forgotten in the places to benefit from the massive injection of capital funding.

Rob Schwarzer, the then General Manager of the Way and Works Branch, approved alterations to the booking office in 1986. He added a mezzanine level in the former ceiling cavity. There, he provides a staff meal room and a staff toilet. He also air-conditions the area. The mezzanine level has now been removed as part of the 2013 redevelopment of the King Street structure for commercial purposes.

Not all work at Newtown was beneficial to the structures. One major casualty in the 1980s was the decision to paint the face brickwork of the platform building. Considering the ugly colour of the bricks, this would seem to have been a good proposal. However, two bad decisions were made. Firstly, sickly pale yellow was applied and, secondly, subsequent repainting of the building was restricted to applying a further coat, notwithstanding the condition of the previous finish.

A very familiar part of the railwayscape at Newtown disappeared in December, 1988. Visible from King Street was upper quadrant signal No. L 1.99 (meaning a signal on the local line at 1.99 miles from Sydney), which was located adjacent to the Down Local line just before trains departed the station. It was replaced by a double light, colour light signal. The replacement was part of the resignalling of the lines between Illawarra Junction and Strathfield. Ken Date's image of the old and new signals is in *Railway Digest*, February, 1989, p. 71. Ken advised readers that it was, at the time, the last remaining upper quadrant semaphore signal between Redfern and Strathfield.

The imposing signal gantries fell out of favour in the late 1980s, with stringent Occupational Safety and Health requirements making themselves felt, and in conjunction with a major re-cabling project, the old gantries were largely torn down. Where there was no room for signals to be placed between the running lines, new gantries were provided, but many signals were also placed on their own posts, free of any overhead structures. No example of this exists at Newtown, although some can be seen at Stanmore, Petersham and Lewisham.

THE EMERGENCE OF A DEDICATED URBAN RAILWAY - 1989 TO PRESENT

CityRail was established in 1989 as a business unit off the State Rail Authority. For the first time, there existed a rail management entity focused solely on urban rail transport. About 1990, Newtown received treatment to brand it as a CityRail station. It received the most obvious element, namely red paint on platform seats, lamp posts and rubbish bins. It also received tri-level station nameboards on the platform. All of these have disappeared when CityRail entered its second phase, the post 1996 period when its parent organisation, the State Rail Authority, became a passenger-only body and was divested of all responsibility for freight services.

As part of a system wide programme, CityRail provided new workstations during 1996 in the Booking Office. Two new ticket windows were installed featuring bullet-proof glass. An entry door giving staff access to the Booking Office adjacent to the left ticket window and a third ticket window in the rear wall were removed at the same time.

In 2001, canopies were built over the stepway and along the platform to the existing canopy. Because of the different levels of the two platforms, a concrete hob was constructed in the middle of the platform at the down end to prevent people falling over. This work had first been proposed in 1985 but the project did not proceed at that time.

In June 2003 Ken Date reported in *Railway Digest* (June p. 6) the redevelopment of the former goods yard site. The goods yard had closed in 1984. The work involved the partial demolition of the closed Crago Four Mill. Ken wrote that the project included the conversion of the six 1936-built concrete silos into apartments.

Plans for the present station were initially prepared in 2004. At that time, it was thought that the station would be part of a major redevelopment of the area that embraced the former tram shed, which was and is still in NSW railway ownership. It was envisaged that the site developer would fund the new station works. This strategy did not come to fruition because of a limitation of opportunities to make the project financially viable to the developer.

In 2006, the then Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport visited Newtown station “after requests from the Member for Marrickville, Ms Carmel Tebbutt, to review local facilities”. Ms Tebbutt is reported to have been campaigning for “new Easy access facilities”. Watkins replied that “we’re looking at forward budget projects and the operation impact at upgrades”, strongly hinting that Sydenham station had higher priority. Strangely, the Easy Access facilities and completely new station at Newtown were completed well before those at Sydenham station.

CityRail announced that work on “Easy Access” at Newtown station would commence in May, 2010. *The Railway News* reported that, at the time, 10,000 people a day were using the station¹⁹. On the 4th May, 2010, the NSW Deputy Premier, Carmel Tebbutt, who was still the local Member of Parliament for the area, released “a new design plan, which incorporates feedback from residents and community groups”. The then Minister for Transport, David Campbell, joined the Deputy Premier and announced that physical work would begin not in May but “soon”. Neither the announced date of May nor “soon” eventuated as a start date. Physical work had not started by March, 2011, when the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre initiated a campaign “to make Newtown station accessible”.²⁰ That campaign helped to start the physical works shortly thereafter, nearly a year after the announced start date. Shane O’Neill wrote an article in *Railway Digest* (December, 2010, p. 5), which covered the scope of proposed works and included excellent images of the 1891 Booking Office on King Street as well as the adjacent derelict tramway buildings.

Shane O’Neill wrote in *Railway Digest* a progress report in the April, 2011, issue (pp. 4 & 5). He noted the demolition of the 1926 brick platform building on 19th and 20th February, 2011 and the erection of temporary facilities. He stated that “recent changes to the redesign of Newtown station indicate that the stationmasters (sic) office will remain in the existing booking office located on King Street.” This proved to be incorrect. His article also included good photographs of the railway-owned building over the tracks adjacent to the 1891 Booking Office, known as Bridge House.

DESIGN ANALYSIS OF THE 2012 STATION

Transport for NSW issued a press statement stating that “the upgraded” station opened on 29th October, 2012. It went on to say that passengers “enjoy a new station concourse, lifts and covered entry walkway, among other improvements”. These formed a Stage One of the project with Stage Two to be concluded in 2013. This second stage involves ‘refurbishment of the old booking office to create retail space and conversion of the old stairs into emergency stairs’. The staging of the work was said to

¹⁹ Vol. 57 No. 4, October, 2010, p. 92.

²⁰ *Cooks River Valley Times*, 30th March, 2011, p. 5

have been done to ensure customers “can benefit from much needed access upgrades as quickly as possible, before getting on with the remainder of the works”. In reality, the staging of the work suggests different sources of funding and, possibly, the truth is that two parts of the same organisation, namely station upgrading and property, could not get their acts together to provide a single, co-ordinated strategy. The specific works included:

1. New centrally located concourse with new ticket office,
2. New covered entry walkway from King Street to the new concourse,
3. Refurbished heritage buildings along the entry walkways for retail use, while maintaining the historic character of the station and the surrounding buildings,
4. New lift and stairs from the concourse to the platforms, and from the entry walkway to the new Thomas Street entry,
5. Upgraded toilet facilities including a family accessible toilet,
6. Upgraded retail premises in Bridge House,
7. New platform canopies, &
8. Improved CCTV, lighting, signage, tactile tiles and bike racks.

The frame of the overhead structure above the platforms is formed using galvanised steel, with feature brickwork. The ticket office windows are set at the new, lower level to allow the purchase of tickets by people in wheelchairs as well as operation by staff in wheelchairs. Extensive use was made of Vitrabond aluminium composite panels for the ceiling of the platform canopy. Drainage is interesting. There is a notable absence of a centre drain on the platform. Perway engineers would be unhappy with the thought that water is allowed to discharge onto the tracks. Gated entry gates were to commence service on 12th November, 2012.²¹ They are now in operation.

Shane O’Neill reported the opening in the December 2012 issue of *Railway Digest* (pp. 6 & 7), including images. He spoke eulogistically of the new works saying that the facilities were “sorely needed”. He condemned the 1926 arrangements referring to the “tawdry, inconvenient and totally inadequate nature of the previous station, that made no concessions whatsoever for disabled persons”. He also mentioned the interpretive measures of the site’s earlier transport history but wondered “how many passengers in their haste to catch their modern Waratah service will have the time or inclination to stop and ponder the transport delights of their forebears”. In this article, he says that it was intended to have the Station Manager’s office in the old tramway buildings.

Shane ended his article by a self reflection. He wrote “who was it who said that ‘things were good in the olden days’. That certainly did not apply to Newtown station between 1891 and 2012!”. Perhaps Shane answered his own question, by his reference to the

²¹ Article by Allan Miles, *Railway Digest*, December, 2012, p. 15

“transport delights” of the past? More importantly, Shane’s mixture of attitudes and analysis between the past and the present direct transport analysts to consider the appropriateness or otherwise of evaluating yesterday’s projects with today’s criteria. In addition, his remarks stimulate contemplation of a methodology to examine the Newtown station upgrade project that transcends the semiotics of departmental language and visual first impressions.

A regular railway commentator, Allan Miles, mentioned one avenue of investigation. He said that the upgrade “seems to provide no benefits for the long-suffering bus passengers at its front door”.²² He was dismissive of his own criticism when he wrote that “Newtown is not really an interchange station”.²³ In recent time, both NSW Governments and CityRail have used the terms “station” and “interchange” as interchangeable words and, especially when buses and trains are to come under the one umbrella of the new organisation, *Transport for Sydney*, it is appropriate to consider the work at Newtown from a broader perspective than solely rail transport. The criteria for evaluation that Allan Miles refers to is the ability of a station design to manage the flow of travelers between rail and other modes of transport. The summary term is labeled, interchangeability.

In another article, Allan Miles summarises the problems of the previous station as “narrow, cramped, difficult, always busy”.²⁴ He also refers to other possible criteria for evaluation of the effectiveness of modern station design. He mentions:

- the existence of toilets,
- a “light and airy”, wide concourse centrally located above the tracks,
- the provision of a special window where people coming to catch a train can look down to see if a train is arriving, or if they have just missed it”,
- the construction of two entrances, one from King Street and the other from Thomas Street,
- stairs and lifts &
- the narrowness of the platform²⁵

Before establishing criteria to examine the effectiveness of a design, the objectives of a design need to be stated. Such design objectives may include:

- the architectural attractiveness of a building to enhance a streetscape or landscape or to mirror local political considerations,

²² Allan Miles, Letter to the Editor, *Railway Digest*, January, 2011, p. 58

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Alan Miles, “First Day Impressions at Newtown”, *Railway Digest*, December, 2012, p. 15. In this article, the author’s Christian name is spelt “Alan”.

²⁵ ibid

- a physical form to encompass the functional design inputs.
- the elevation of the ambience and comfort of the station precinct to enhance the passenger and staff experience,
- the improvement of passenger flow times between rail and other modes,
- the ease of access within the station area and to connecting pedestrian access routes for all users,
- passenger and staff safety,
- the supply of correct and timely information to passengers, or
- a combination of some or all of the above &

Let’s see if Alan Miles summary expression of “a big ‘double-plus congratulations’ to CityRail” is appropriate for the new Newtown station. The schema for analysis of the new Newtown building, and for any other new station structure, is formed by the criteria set out in the Table below. The Table states the criteria, indicates what is included in each criterion and also states how the Newtown facility measures up in relation to each criterion.

TABLE: EVALUATION OF NEWTOWN STATION

DESIGN CRITERIA	EXPLANATION OF CRITERIA	DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT TOWARDS THE CRITERIA
Architectural design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attractiveness of design – style, materials and palette, 2. Floor plan, 3. Quality of workmanship 4. Integration with surrounding physical environment, 5. Role as a political or social statement, 6. Ability to provide seamless invisibility to peak hour commuters, 7. Ambience 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newtown is a box made of factory & office block components, with a high lid, Excellent treatment of platform canopy, Visual inconsistencies on platform & concourse 2. Office space on two levels, requiring a dedicated staff lift, 3. Attractive but impractical wall materials, Inconsistent treatment of finishes, 4. Absence of aesthetic recognition of nearby urban streetscape, 5. Lack of local identity, 6. Excellent, seamless flow for peak hour commuters, 7. A pleasant ambience though encouraging loitering with a large, unpaid forecourt with seats
Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff contact 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent interface between staff &

DESIGN CRITERIA	EXPLANATION OF CRITERIA	DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT TOWARDS THE CRITERIA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Minimisation of locations for miscreants to hide 3. Rail/platform interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> customers on concourse, 2. Excessive hiding places on platform, 3. Poor layout with stepways, one being largely unused by boarding commuters
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easy Access lifts 2. Toilets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent 2. Unisex toilets confusing to open & to use, Toilet for disabled staff
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Signage 2. Low-level ticket window 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent, though excessive around ticket windows, 2. Provided
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cleaning of high-level areas (e.g. windows and ceilings) 2. Ease of changing flicking lights 3. Drainage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excessive and difficult areas to clean, 2. Impossible to easily change ceiling lights, 3. Platform does not obviously camber to centre
Intermodal interface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access to bus services 2. Ease of parking for disabled people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent, King Street footpath has been repaved & slightly widened - Bridge House remodelled, 2. Thomas Street entrance providing safe transfer for disabled people
Product branding	Identification of ownership - symbols	No strong identification of ownership – no logos, no words – reflects the current transition in ownership
Heritage management	Recognizing the past history of the site and its buildings	Interpretive initiatives are thoughtful but relate to trams only (though references in the pavement to the singular “the green line” are incorrect)

Another way to assess the merits of station design is the measurement against a number of design rules. There are a few key rules. Firstly, to maximise peak hour pedestrian flows, there should be an almost seamless flow-line from the entry to the platform. That is half achieved at the new station because of the poor location of the down end stepway. Secondly, in order to keep customers happy, facilities need to be adequate and easy to use. Both the number of toilets and number of ticket vending

machines are too few for large crowds, which are common at the station. Small crowds of people are often seen waiting to use the toilets. At the time of the inspection, the toilet doors were tricky to open and there was no indication inside to identify the difference between the full and half flush of the cisterns. Lastly, in order to help staff take pride in their local management of the building and to sustain its long-term attractiveness, the building needs to be easy to clean and maintain. This is not well done at Newtown. There are too many difficult wall surfaces and glazing without adequate access. At other stations, provision has been made to access external window surfaces with special cleaning doors and walkways. This provision is not obvious at Newtown.

The platform retains its narrowness but now contains more vertical intrusions than previously. At least, most are painted a pleasing dark grey and most are void of ugly yellow paint that identifies the bases, as at Ashfield station. However, there is inconsistent treatment of the two overhead wiring stanchions that penetrate the platform canopy. The near full-length platform canopy is well finished with a ceiling above which contains the various electrical conduits.

The present Newtown station addresses its fundamental role of assisting commuters transfer between rail and road. This is achieved by the very high roof, which is largely invisible to speeding commuters walking to the station. Basically, the station is a box with a funny roof shape. The stepways are poorly placed in relation to the entry barriers. Virtually every person proceeding to the platform uses the up end stepway because the down end stepway is visually hidden by the barrier attendant's office. This has been caused by a lack of planning to position the entrance in such a way that both stepways are seen after the entry barriers are passed. There is inconsistent use of the wall panel fasteners. This is obvious in the treatment of the Control Room on the platform but, more obviously, around the entry barriers on the concourse. The use of polished stainless steel for wall finishes on the concourse appears initially sleek but it is a cleaning nightmare with kids unable to resist leaving hand prints on the walls.

While the overall structure looks engaging, it provides a considerable challenge for everyday cleaning and maintenance. It is only through the use of stylistic wall panels or mural, if it is called such a thing, from King Street to the entry barriers that keep the eyes straight ahead, rather than diverting the eyes for too long at the orange paintwork on the ceiling of the roof. Bright colours on NSW railway structures are doomed to have short lives as attractive features. The Ross Sayers' red-paint-everywhere policy of 1988-1992 showed the uneconomic life of bright colours. The use of red paint in the wall panels, although protected by a canopy, is a puzzling application since CityRail has taken the past decade to eradicate every speck of Sayers' red paint policy.

Veteran railway commentator, Tony Bailey, believes that the mural's purpose is to make it difficult for graffiti artists to use what would otherwise be a long, bank wall. Why red? Despite all the design philosophy about avoiding criminal and anti-social behaviour through good design, the architects have made a fundamental error in the design of the long mural between the concourse and King Street. Nearer to King, the mural wall takes two 90 degree bends. In so doing, a hide-hole has been created whereby evil people can safely hide and possibly assault passengers walking from the concourse. A close inspection of the mural in places will reveal the untidy use of exposed fasteners.

One area where CityRail often fails in the designs for station upgrading is the provision of canopies. Often they are supremely ugly, as at Redfern and Ashfield. This is not the case at Newtown. Instead, Tony Bailey points to the uselessness of the canopy linking the new entrance and King Street when rain is conveyed by a strong southerly wind. Commuters also get wet using the stairs to the platform when there is a strong northerly wind pushing rain because the concourse canopy is too high to provide adequate weather protection. Also, Tony Bailey notes that there is no canopy protecting people using the second entrance from Thomas Street.

The CityRail Easy Access program is now in its 20th year of operation. A major problem arises far too often. That is the neglect to understand that station access is only one component of a transport system and more thought needs to be given to the physical interface between motor vehicles, both private and public, and stations. Too often, Easy Access lifts are located atop of busy roads, making it impossible for vehicles to stop to facilitate the transfer of disabled passengers between the station area and road transport. Stations such as Campsie, Riverwood and Kingsgrove typify the problem. Even before the new Sydenham station is open, Marrickville City Council has identified the intermodal problem for disabled train users.²⁶

The physical space is limited on King Street at Newtown does not provide much of an opportunity for improvement for commuters waiting for buses. Despite the difficulties, as much as possible has been done. There is new paving on the footpath. The Bridge House shops have been renovated. They look fantastic²⁷. The footpath has been widened by about a metre. These initiatives have brightened the vicinity substantially and, at the moment, are keeping the anti-social people away. Graffiti is an ongoing problem but the station is well managed by enthusiastic staff, who are keen to present the station in the best possible light. The station is blessed by the appointment of an enthusiastic Station Manager, who is aware of all the social and physical issues relating to his station and is doing all he can to assist local train users.

²⁶ *Cooks River Valley Times*, 10th January, 2013, p. 3

²⁷ The roof of Bridge House is tiled on the side facing King Street and sheeted with metal on the platform side.

The overall station structure is hidden away from King Street and the location of the station is only identified on King Street by a single post with a light box atop. Social problems will continue to exist at and in the vicinity of Newtown station, keeping in mind the preponderance of younger people who use the station. Loitering is an on-going issue but this occurs more towards King Street in daylight hours. Undercover Police with drug sniffer dogs patrol the area.²⁸ The new Ticket Office already has the marks of several graffiti attacks and these will continue because of the isolated location of the new station. Work is nearing completion on the refurbishing of the 1891 Booking Office and, when completed and occupied, will help in the creation of a physical environment that is less encouraging to those who wish to loiter in the vicinity. It seems one of the benefits of the work will be the restoration of the impressively high, curved ceiling in the 1891 structure. However, a new canopy at the rear of the building detracts from its appearance.

Clearly, the new station provides much improved access to the platforms. Is it fair to criticize the inadequacies of the previous station? The answer is both yes and no. In practical terms, criticism is fair but it is also unfair to apply today's analytical criteria to a period in the past. No one in 1926, when the previous building was designed, would have thought that disabled people should have the same access to or work in public transport as it is considered today. Interestingly, there was not a single public criticism of Newtown station in the press for the following 75 years after the previous platform building's erection in 1927.

SUMMARY

Newtown station possesses one of the most interesting histories amongst NSW railway stations. It has served a variety of functions throughout its 158 years of operation. Its Station Masters and Managers have seen the surrounding catchment change from rural, to semi-rural, to working and middle class housing, to 30 years of slum status, to trendy dwellings and, lately, to an iconic gay housing area.

What has been the NSW railway response to the environmental changes? The five stations that have been built at Newtown have all been the outcome of departmental practice on a system-wide basis and have never had anything to do with unique features of the Newtown area. So far as Newtown station is concerned, its history is one that reveals how the railway bureaucracy made decisions, not how the railway

²⁸ For example, see *Cooks River Valley Times*, 31st May, 2012, p. 1

helped Newtown develop. The heading of this paper mentioned the role of the railway response to urban development. The answer is that there was none.

Newtown station is an excellent study in the benefits of land ownership. Land ownership was an important factor in locating the present station where it is, on former tramway land. After the closure of Newtown tram depot, the Department of Railways decided to retain ownership of the tram shed as a store for components used in the Gosford and Lithgow electrification projects in the 1950s. Had RailCorp not owned the land between King Street and the 1901 tram shed, access adjacent to the side of the rail corridor may have prevented expression of the present station arrangement.

Perhaps the former goods yard and first station site would have made a better location for a new station? It could have allowed a wider island platform or even side platforms, an easier interface for disabled commuters, a possible bus/rail interchange, provision for a staff car park and a better layout for a concourse to provide a seamless passenger flow from platform to street. It could have been paid for by a developer of the flour mill. That option unfortunately was lost after the sale of the railway land.

The help of Tony Bailey, Dr Donald Ellsmore, Don Hagarty and Peter Neve is recognised and appreciated. Graham Harper wrote all the parts relating to safeworking and signaling. He has made a very valuable contribution, for which the author is indebted.

Stuart Sharp

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