

# KIAMA RAILWAY STATION

## THE BIRTHPLACE OF AN ICONIC RAILWAY BUILDING

The provision of the railway station for Kiama was not part of the 1886 Parliamentary approval for the allocation funds for the extension of the line south of Wollongong. Yes, the proposed line from Wollongong was to terminate at “Kiama”, but that place name was loosely applied and related to a terminus at Bombo. The present platform at Bombo was the 1887 terminal structure. The building was far from impressive in size or design but it stands today as an icon of the tight financial situation facing the NSW economy in the second half of the 1880s. All platform buildings and all railway residences south of Wollongong were relatively small in scale and of timber construction.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising that the NSW Railways wished to terminate the line at Bombo, as the short extension into Kiama involved the construction of two bridges and a tunnel.

The residents of Kiama knew exactly what to do to get the railway into their town. Ever since the opening of the first inland railway to Goulburn in 1869, the NSW Railways tried to terminate railways at the edges of towns, if there were a substantial river to be crossed. The people of Kiama had noted that their cousins in Goulburn had protested the Railway’s intention to terminate the railway line near the site of the North Goulburn quarry and had won the battle. The NSW Government responded to petitions and deputations from the people of Kiama in 1890 by the authorisation of a line to the Shoalhaven River. A part of the project was the construction of the present station in Kiama.

Henry Deane was acting as Engineer-in-Chief for New Lines in 1890. Just as it is required today, senior staff were required to write a few paragraphs for insertion in the NSW Railways’ *Annual Report*. He took the opportunity to show that he was a new broom in the cupboard of railway bureaucracy. He wrote that “a new design of passenger station buildings had been prepared for ‘Kiama’ (i.e. Bombo) to Nowra”. Thus, almost three years before the line through Kiama opened he had already decided on a new design of station for Kiama. What he approved more than validated his conservative words for the *Annual Report*. His new design would be used by both the New Lines and Existing Lines Branches frequently for the next 43 years, with 267 known examples having been built in all parts of the State. For these reasons, the

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<sup>1</sup> There was one important exception. The Station Master’s residence at Kiama.

existing structure at Kiama station is an iconic building in the history of NSW platform structures.

There was a lapse of about two years until Deane approved the architectural plan for the current building. The draughtsman completed the drawing on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1892 and Deane approved the plan on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1892. Trains were allowed to operate into the station on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1893, and a well-known photo exists of the first official (down) train approaching the island platform on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1893, with the interlocking frame in existence. At that date, work had not begun on the platform building. However, it was clearly intended to be built because on the interlocking plan signed by Charles Wilkin, the Interlocking Engineer, in January of 1893 showed an outline of the building.

Further research needs to be completed to establish when the platform building was completed but, the evidence to date, suggests that Deane pulled a swifty like his predecessor, John Whitton, did on several occasions. Deane handed over the line to the Chief Commissioner, E.M.G. Eddy, without completing the platform structure. By doing this, Deane's capital budget was not debited the cost of completing the building, the outstanding amount being absorbed into Eddy's financial accounts. Deane was as shrewd as Whitton and, like Whitton, saved money to pay for the elegant Kiama structure by providing very low-cost buildings at all stations south of Kiama to the terminus at Nowra.

The design as used at Kiama was applied to a further 21 examples until 1906 in various locations. In that year, a new, less-ornate but still very attractive standard was approved at Wahroonga and this in turn became the new standard until 1925. After that, all examples until 1935 were stripped of much of the external decorations. After 1935, a new design was in use and ended the reign of the Kiama type of building.

The stylistic design features of the Kiama building show a slant towards the Italianate influence. With the introduction of the second, stripped version in 1906, the design influences were Federation. Although using the same overall design, in 1925 the third stylistic character was based on a functional, simple domestic design. No other class of railway structure in NSW maintained its design integrity for so long – 43 years – with, at the same time, possessing three different stylistic periods.

As well as the building at Kiama being a harbinger of new things, so too was the platform. There could not have been a more fundamentally different platform since the start of rail services in 1855. There were four characteristics that identified it as different to what John Whitton had used. Firstly, the platform was built in the island configuration. This was the first time, together with Raglan and Katoomba platform in the same period, that side platforms had been totally abandoned. Yes, James Angus

had used them for the Redfern-Homebush quadruplication in 1891 but he still used two side platforms as well as one island platform, rather than two island platforms. Secondly, Deane set the Kiama platform on a significant curve. This was a Whitton taboo. Thirdly, Deane redesigned the platform walls. Rather than Whitton's insistence of the wall sloping out the toe towards the rail, Deane made it vertical. Deane also changed the material. Rather than Whitton's use of brick or timber, Deane used concrete poured in situ. Lastly, the platform coping was rounded, rather than rectangular as in Whitton's time.

The NSW Railways has always had a policy of resuming as little property as possible, in order to minimise expenditure, when constructing a railway line. Now that Deane had done away with the use of awnings supported by vertical posts, he had to rely on cantilevered brackets to support platform awnings. 12 feet wide awnings was about the limit console brackets could support. Deane approved the concept that the width of platform awnings should be as near as possible to the width of the building to which the brackets were attached. This arrangement of near evenly balanced awnings and building gave an appealing visual engagement to the structure. Unfortunately, while improvements were made to other aspects of the design as used at Kiama, the internal width of the class of buildings remained the same or, even worse, was reduced to 11 or 10 feet or less. Narrow buildings on island platforms are a feature of NSW stations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The narrow width of the building at Kiama also reflected what James Angus, the Engineer-in-Chief, for Existing Lines, approved for the quadruplication buildings in 1891 between Redfern and Homebush. The main platform building, always 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. What Deane approved at Kiama was consistent with the policy of the Railway Chief Commissioner, E.M.G. Eddy.

The building at Kiama was an outstandingly attractive structure. In fact, so far as buildings on new lines were concerned, the buildings at Kiama and Milsons Point were the first time a Class 1 building had been approved following the opening of Tenterfield in 1886. Their construction is an indicator of an improved position for the Colony of NSW so far as its ability to obtain capital funding is concerned. Capital funding for new railway construction had peaked in 1884 and kept declining until 1893, with the opening

of the line to Bomdadery. The Table below shows the number of new miles of track opened between 1881 and 1893.

**TABLE: MILES OF TRACK OPENED IN NSW BETWEEN 1881 AND 1893**

YEAR	NUMBER OF MILES OPENED
1881	240
1882	454
1883	84
1884	478
1885	187
1886	254
1887	245
1888	138
1889	71
1890	20
1891	7
1892	213
1893	<b>222</b>

**SOURCE:** H. Quinlan, *Route-Kilometre Statistics Tracing the Evolution of Australian Public Railways to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1997*, Queanbeyan, ARHS, 2001, pp. 82 & 83

The opening of the line between Bombo and Nowra and the construction of the First Class building at Kiama mirror the start of the growth out of the 1890s depression.

The design features of the Kiama building are listed below:

1. 108' 6" x 12' 9" internal, though the building is of variable width – the side walls are straight between the pilasters but, overall, the building wall on the down side is slightly curved
2. there is no rendered string course around the exterior walls
3. no curved moulding under the window sills – standard 19<sup>th</sup> century treatment
4. One unusual feature was the provision of a parcels counter on each side of the building
5. Another usual aspect was the combined Parcels and Ticket Office
6. Three and four panel doors with triangular pediments above the external doors
7. Nine, multi-coloured window panes in the upper sash
8. Three small circular vents on roof over rooms and two large oblong vents over toilets on each side, now removed
9. Brick chimneys through the ridge with all rooms having fireplaces 3 feet wide and are in the centre of the walls except for the P & T O where the fireplace is on the down side wall
10. Ticket window 3' 10' x 1' 9" and the sill is 4' above the floor – straight headed windows

11. 12' wide awning supported on ornate, cantilevered brackets on engaged piers (called pilasters) ,not corbels used for support
12. Roof over steps to platform from Bong Bong Street
13. 13' ceiling height
14. A set of 10' wide gates are located at the bottom of the stepway
15. A timber store room and out of room provided under the stairs
16. High, splayed plinth around the base of the building
17. English bond brickwork
18. Use of engaged piers standing proud of the building walls to support the awning brackets rather than the later use of stone or concrete corbels on which to sit the awning brackets

The Kiama building was constructed by contractors Featherstone and Barbat. Kiama, Omega, Gerringong, Berry and Bomaderry. Interestingly, these men had constructed the platform awning at Orange in 1890, which was the first use of the circular gusset in platform awning brackets, which became a feature of 1890s high class stations and was to be an important design element at Kiama.

The lever frame on the down end of the Kiama platform that operated the signals and unlocked the subsidiary frames in the yard were in place on the newly completed platform before the construction of any platform buildings. The lever frame was finally enclosed in 1991, ninety-eight years after the station opened. The signal box design was the only "H" type structure south of Thirroul. The box was decommissioned in June 2002 and remains on the platform as an historical artifact with 18 of the 20 levers still in place.

There was a cream loading stage adjacent to but opposite the up end of the down platform. It existed in 1940.

In 1940, the Department of Railways approved the extension of the platform at the down end to 450 feet. By that time, a vertical concrete platform wall had been constructed for the down platform. It was proposed then to convert the track plan from down and up working to main and loop working, with the down platform being the main line.

In 2001, residents at the Kiama Downs estate demanded a new station at what they called "North Kiama" in conjunction with the electrification of the line. They thought that it was unfair that Bombo should have a station, considering the low patronage.<sup>2</sup> Nothing happened.

In 2011, CityRail painted the platform building and carried out minor repairs. Water-efficient taps were fitted and a baby change table was installed in the "Family

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<sup>2</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2001, p. 6

Accessible Toilet". The official words were "spruced up". At the time, CityRail had instituted a new program, called "Station Makeover" but no mention of what was to become a very short-lived program was made in the case of the works at Kiama.

Additionally, in 2011, Easy Access was provided at the station. The male toilet was fitted with a fancy vanity but, apparently, the status of the station was insufficient to warrant the supply of hot water to the hand basin. The most impressive aspect of the Easy Access project is a designated drop-off bay at the top of the stepway in Bong Bong Street. This enables motor vehicles to stop and pick up or set down disabled passengers without obstructing the flow of traffic. It is a great pity that this was not done at many other locations.

Official residences were often used as part of a composition of structures that form part of a railway station. This situation is clearly seen at locations such as Goulburn, Wagga Wagga, Narranderra and Tenterfield. In these cases, the residence for the Station Master is located at the side of the station forecourt. This was not the case at Kiama, where the brick residence was across the road at 28 Bong Bong Street. The platform building and the residence were not in direct visual contact. The building was a forerunner of what would become a standard "J2" design in 1899. The house is now demolished but it and the platform building were the only brick railway buildings between Wollongong and Bomaderry. The residence had to be brick because in the 19<sup>th</sup> century all residences for Station Masters were brick where the platform building was brick.

## **YARD INFRASTRUCTURE**

A single track loco shed and 50' turntable were sited south of Kiama station. These structures were brought from Bombo in April 1897. In 1914 the turntable was replaced with a 60' model. The turntable located south of the station is still in place and can be seen from the road overbridge. Although the turntable was restored in the 1980s, it sees little use today.

1901 saw the installation of two elevated, locomotive water tanks each with a capacity of 9,000 gallons each. The tanks were erected at each end of the island platform. Thus, up and down trains could take on water simultaneously. The water tanks eventually became redundant and were later dismantled.

## **BUDD RAIL CARS**

Comeng received an order in 1959 for the design and build of five Budd Type Railcars. The order was for four power cars and a trailer buffet. The cars were built by Comeng in Sydney to maximise local content rather than being fully imported from the US

The first two power cars began operating initially with an interurban trailer. This temporary arrangement commenced operation on The Canberra Monaro Express in January 1961. Later in 1961 when operating a Goulburn Day Train service this unit achieved 94mph. It was a record speed for NSW Railways that was to stand for the next 21 years.

By May 1961 all five Budd cars were in service on the South Coast Line [SCL]. The Budd cars were stabled and serviced at Wollongong. Initially the reliability of the Budd cars was compromised by in service fires. Breakdowns later in life resulted in the Budd power cars becoming downgraded to trailers and diesel hauled. A planned program of refurbishment in 1985 at Comeng was abandoned following the near destruction by fire, of the first car to be overhauled. The remaining four cars were cut up in 1993.

In contrast the US designed, built and operated Budd cars from the 1950s and they continued in service into the 21c. Budd cars in the US operated in multiple and at high speeds. At intermediate stops single power cars were detached to serve 'secondary destinations'.

In contrast the NSWGR dedicated the Budd cars to the SCL working the South Coast Daylight. Due to speed restrictions on the SCL alignment the high speed potential of the Budd cars (shown back in 1961), was never going to be achieved.>>

## **SOUTH COAST DAYLIGHT EXPRESS**

Titled or Named trains became the phenomena of railways worldwide, in the 1930s. In NSW 'The South Coast Daylight Express' (SCD) began operating between Sydney Central and Nowra (Bomaderry) on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1933. Two 32 Class locomotives were designated to work the SCD. The locomotives selected being 3306 and 3374 and were specially turned out in green. A CUB set was selected for the train and distinctively lettered and painted in a green and cream livery. The locomotives received nameplates one being '*Illawarra*' and the other '*Cambawarra*'.

By 1938 locomotives for the SCD were rostered from the 32 class generally and the locomotive nameplates fell into disuse.

November 1949 saw the introduction of air-conditioned cars when a 7 car HUB set appeared on the SCD. This heavier rolling stock led to the use of 38 class locomotives between Sydney and Thirroul. The 32 class however continued to be rostered to work between Thirroul and Nowra (Bomaderry).

Demand for air-conditioned stock elsewhere on the NSWGR system eventually led to the withdrawal in late 1957, of the HUB set from the SCD. By this time the giesl ejector fitted 3616 often worked the express in place of a 38 class. However the use of FS and BS cars from 1958 allowed the 32 class to be once again rostered, to work the SCD throughout.

The final steam hauled working of the SCD took place on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1960. Class leader 3801 was used between Sydney and Thirroul where a 32 class hauled the train from Thirroul to Nowra (Bomaderry) and return. The hitherto steam hauled express was initially replaced with a four car DEB set. The use of the DEB railcars on the SCD was a temporary measure prior to the introduction on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1961, of the then newly built Budd railcars.

The Budd 5 car unit was reinforced in the mid 1970s with Tulloch cars. This self-propelled consist continued in service on the SCD until 1983. Early in 1983 following their derailment, the combined Budd and Tulloch car set was withdrawn from service. By late 1983 the Budd/Tulloch cars had been downgraded to trailers and re-entered service on the SCD - as a diesel locomotive hauled train.

The diesel locomotive hauled cars continued to be rostered for the SCD until January 20<sup>th</sup> 1991. On this day the SCD passed into history some fifty-seven years after its introduction in 1933. The following day DEB and 620 class cars began operation between Wollongong and Kiama. The newly introduced Suburban K sets were put into operation on the SCL between Sydney, Wollongong and Port Kembla. The passing of the SCD in 1991 meant that passengers for stations to Kiama and Bomaderry/Nowra were required to change trains at Coniston (or Wollongong).

It would be 10 years before the eventual arrival of overhead electric power as far as Kiama in 2001. This would again mean that trains ran direct between Kiama and Sydney. However passengers for stations to Bomaderry/Nowra would still have to change trains. The new change point being Kiama (for the railcar operated shuttle) and this is still the case in 2012.

## **THE NAME OF THE LINE**

The earliest reference for trains to Kiama is in the 1894 Public Time Table for the Illawarra and South-Coast Service from Sydney to Nowra (Bomaderry). This early

reference to the Illawarra and the South Coast underlined the early ambition of the forefathers that the railway would one day, cross the Shoalhaven River.

For the next ninety-five years the Time Tables, both Public and Working, consistently referred to the railway line as the Illawarra Line. The absence of any further mention of the South Coast appears to be an acknowledgement that, enabling funds for bridging the Shoalhaven, were never going to materialize.

It was also during this period of time that the name of the terminus of the Illawarra Line came under scrutiny. The forefather's original choice of Nowra (Bomaderry) became Bomaderry (Nowra). The latter name being the more accurate, in railway terms, for a railway line that terminated in Bomaderry rather than Nowra on the opposite bank of the Shoalhaven River!

By 1990 the NSW PTT Time Table compilers recognized the wisdom of the forefathers by acknowledging that, whilst Bomaderry (Nowra) was the end of the line, it was surely the 'gateway' to the South Coast. It was time for change and 1990 saw the advent of the South Coast Line.

To-day CityRail continues to run with SCL to identify the railway from Sydney to Bomaderry (Nowra). Why did the same railway have to be renamed in 1990? What was wrong with the name, Illawarra Line? We know that for the best part of a hundred years the name Illawarra Line had earned its place, in the NSW railway system.

To-day the name Illawarra continues to be relevant to CityRail and coupled with the Eastern Suburbs constitutes the Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra Line (ESIL). This Line covers that part of the Sydney suburban system between Bondi Junction and Waterfall/Cronulla. CityRail offers its customers using the ESIL a priceless opportunity to escape from the 'urban jungle' to the native bushland of the Royal National Park (RNP). The RNP is accessible from Waterfall Station on the northern fringe of the Illawarra. If your preference is the beach and the surf what could be better than to travel CityRail's South Coast Line, to the Illawarra seaside town of Kiama.

## **GENERAL NOTES**

A Time Line for Kiama Station and Yard - *Distance 119.16 km Elevation 12.5m*

1887 South Coast Line (SCL) opened from Wollongong to N. Kiama

1893 SCL extended from N. Kiama to Nowra-Bomaderry and N. Kiama re-named Bombo

Kiama opened only as an island platform with exposed signal frame

Type 11 Brick station building erected subsequently

Residence 28 Bong Bong Street

- 1896 Provision of approach from Bong Bong St and small loading platform
- 1897 Provision of a single road locomotive shed, coal stage and ash pit; work includes installation of 50ft turntable removed from Bombo [see also entry for 1914 below]
- 1901 2 x 9000 gall. Elevated locomotive water tanks erected: one at each end of the island platform
- 1907 Provision of siding for milk receiving depot  
Provision of facilities for loading road metal
- 1910 Extension of (blue) metal siding
- 1912 Additional goods siding plus two additional metal chutes
- 1914 50ft turntable dismantled and replaced with a 60ft turntable which is still in existence
- 1918 Carson's Siding ½ mile south of station opened for transfer of blue metal from road vehicles to rail haulage
- 1930 Extension of siding by 7ft – Dairy Farmers Co-Op Milk
- 1933 Inaugural run of the daily 'South Coast Daylight Express' between Sydney and Nowra (Bomaderry)
- 1936 Concrete aprons etc. - Dairy Farmers Co-Op Milk
- 1943 Points removed at Carson Bros. siding (opened in 1918)
- 1945 Dairy Farmers Co-Op Depot and siding taken over by Jamberoo Co-op Dairy Company
- 1947 Siding opened by NSW Produce Company
- 1949 Air-conditioned HUB set introduced on The South Coast Daylight (SCD)
- 1958 SCD reverts to non air-conditioned FS and BS cars
- 1960 Steam haulage on the SCD replaced with DEB railcar set
- 1961 DEB set working the SCD replaced with the then newly built Budd railcars

- 1960s Platform signal frame fully enclosed to deter attacks of vandalism
- 1975 Spare Tulloch cars added to Budd railcar set
- 1983 Budd/Tulloch railcars derailed later returning to service as loco hauled rolling stock
- 1985 Budd car gutted by fire and remaining cars set aside and eventually scrapped
- 1991 The SCD disappears in the Time Table fifty eight years after its introduction in 1933
- 2001 Electrification of SCL reaches Kiama
- 2011 Kiama Station is spruced up - the renovations and repainting costing \$530,000

## **SOURCES AND FURTHER READING:**

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