

# Teralba Railway Station. Ed Tonks

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**How & Why of Station Names.** Located 147.565 km south from Sydney at an altitude of 13.1 m. Opened 15. 8.1887. Construction name was FIVE ISLANDS and LAKE MACQUARIE. Aboriginal word meaning *Place where edible bush grows*. Name mentioned in 1848 Directory as *being on the shores of Lake Macquarie* and was said to be the name of Ranclaud's grant. In the 1866 Gazetteer it is described as *Teralba Flat, lying off Cockle Creek to the north-west of Lake Macquarie*.

Main secondary sources of information for the period from the 1880s to the 1960s are;

*The Australian Historical Society Bulletin, NO 340. February 1966. C.C. Singleton.*

*Byways of Steam 22. 2004. Eveleigh Press.*

In places additional information has been sourced from a range of local newspapers.

For the period after the 1960s much of the information has come from personal observation and recording.

**15 August 1887.** When opened it was built as a typical small, country single- line station, with timber buildings, crossing loop and goods siding. The Lake Macquarie Herald on 30 December 1970 gave a little insight into Teralba Station in its early years, "Teralba Railway Station has always had an interesting history, but perhaps it is unique in one regard; its first station master was a fully qualified master mariner. It was not till he left the sea for the land that he got his first command---stationmaster cum postmaster at Teralba in 1887. Mr. Harry Frank Nesbitt served in both the Royal Navy and merchant fleet trading between England and Australia before deciding to settle in the colony of New South Wales. His decision to settle in this country was made after several trips in sailing ships. It was a decision based on matrimonial persuasion: his Irish bride-to-be, with the logic of her sex, pointedly compared the then deathrate of sailors and those who lived on solid earth. Mr. Nesbitt, like most stationmasters of that era, automatically became the local postmaster. Till federation at the turn of the century, each colony had its own postal service, and the pattern was for Government departments to merge where convenient. Mr. Nesbitt became a well-known and popular figure in Teralba and environs, always associated with coal mining. He stayed at Teralba for 13 years before moving to Quirindi, where he stayed till 1909, moving from there to Hamilton, where he retired in 1916. He raised a large family, and nine of the 12 children survived, though his salary was only 100 pounds a year. He was respected for his acts of charity. During the frequent mining strikes it was not uncommon for miners' wives to successfully approach the stationmaster for food and money."

1887 Teralba's first hotel, the Lake Macquarie hotel opened. It was located in the eastern section of the town towards the lake. The first licensee was Thomas Williams.

**Local collieries feature in the Teralba story very early.**

**The Great Northern Colliery, on the up side, commenced production on 23 July 1887. It was renamed the Northern Colliery in 1890, Pacific Co-operative Colliery in 1893 and the Pacific Colliery in 1914.**

**On the down side, Gartlee Colliery siding was brought into use on 4 October 1890 and its name was changed to Northern Extended Colliery in 1902.**

The output from these two collieries soon overtaxed the line and resulted in early duplication. The new second track being opened from Cockle Creek on **31 May 1891**. The duplication from the Sydney direction had to wait for another 19 years.

The duplication arrangements of 1891 were not interlocked. The junction of the single and double lines was attended by a member of the station staff who operated the ball lever for all trains.

In Newcastle's Sandgate Cemetery a grave of special railway interest can be found in the Anglican 1 portion, Section 22, Lot 90. The cemetery's web site when accessed late in 2013 showed the headstone pushed over. The details on the headstone read, "Sacred to the memory of GEORGE COCKROFT, Fireman. Native of Invercargill New Zealand who was accidentally killed in the railway disaster at Fassifern **30 Sept 1891**. Aged 26 years. This stone is erected by railway employees and public friends as a mark of sympathy. Tho, a stranger, yet a brother." The base of the marble headstone featured an excellent carving of a (C) 79 class, later Z12 class tender locomotive, bearing the number 86. (No 86 was later to become 1204 in the 1924 renumbering system. It was built by Beyer Peacock, builders no. 1631 of 1877 and entered service in June of that year. Thanks to Peter Neve.)

Even though the headstone stated the disaster as at Fassifern some newspapers of the day record it as occurring near Teralba. An example is the Evening News (Sydney) 1 October 1891, " An accident of a serious character occurred to the mail train yesterday afternoon near to Teralba. It appears that the passenger train which left Fassifern at 4.22 pm got off the rails about a quarter of a mile on the south side of Teralba. The engine and tender capsized, and the brake van was smashed to pieces. Most of the train got off the rails, and one carriage was greatly damaged, while another was thrown completely off the line. The fireman, G. Cockcroft, was picked up in an insensible state from underneath the engine, and conveyed to Newcastle Hospital, where he expired shortly after admission. The engine driver, B. Bailey, escaped with only slight injuries. The cause of the accident has not yet been ascertained." As an aside the driver, Brierley Bailey had a number of other near misses. During September 1891 he had a miraculous escape on the South Burwood line when his engine left the rails at a bridge. On 23 January 1911 he was the driver of a loaded

coal train that crashed into the dead end at Adamstown station after the loco's brakes failed whilst descending the 1 in 40 grade from the Redhead Tunnel.

The Evening News article for 1 October 1891 continued with some explicit details, "The fireman's body was frightfully scalded. The head was battered in, and the hands were nearly cut off. The deceased had only come to Newcastle three days since, having been transferred from Goulburn. The train was running tender first. The latter left the line first, and ran some distance, tearing up the rails, and eventually turning over and dragging the engine with it. The tender went down the bank, and the engine turned over and is lying right across the line."

Teralba's second hotel, the Great Northern Hotel located to the immediate east of the railway station was licensed from 3 July 1892. The foundation licensee was John Hodges who remained as licensee until July 1908 when succeeded by Arthur Parry. Periodic meetings of the Pacific Co-operative Coal Company were held at the Great Northern Hotel Teralba during the 1890s as reported by the Newcastle Morning Herald on 20 August 1897, "At an adjourned meeting of the Pacific Co-operative Steam Coal Company, held at Hodges' Hotel, Teralba, yesterday evening, the half-yearly report of the directors was adopted."

On **8 October 1891**, Teralba Gravel Siding was opened. Locks at the points were released by key staff for the section Fassifern-Teralba.

The Teralba Station precinct is not without its human sadness. On the morning of **24 May 1898** the body of an old man named Thomas Lyons Ford was found on the line near Teralba Railway Station. It was thought that the deceased, who was 75 years old, fell over the embankment and thus met his death.

On **18 May 1899** a brick signal box was brought into use on the up platform. It then became an island platform. It is not clear whether the terminal back platform was provided at this time or earlier with duplication. Both the up (island) and down platforms were 453 feet in length. The track diagram of the time shows a back platform road and a run round siding on the up, or eastern side of the island platform. A short goods siding, with a shed measuring 24 feet by 12 feet was laid in off the southern end of the run round siding.

The Fassifern - Teralba deviation was brought into use on **1 February 1903**.

The construction of this deviation created concern about law and order issues as reported by the Newcastle Morning Herald on **26 February 1902**, "Men are now engaged putting in brick culverts for the deviation at the point nearest to the Teralba Station, but there will be more than a handful of men in this neighbourhood in the course of a week or so judging by the number of drays that are on hand. Local people have been advised that 200 men will be paid in Teralba on Friday, and that between 400 and 500 men will be engaged there on deviation work within the next three weeks. If the local residents have not already done so, they should certainly make application for more police protection. However good an officer

First-class Constable Thomas Fallon may be, he cannot be looking after a big district without neglecting portions of it to some extent, and, with hundreds navvies around about, the township of Teralba is sure to be lively at times. Even under ordinary conditions there ought to be an extra constable, the police district of Teralba, extending to Toronto, Awaba and Rhondda. Teralba proper has a population of over 800, and at Rhondda (nearly two miles away) there is about half that population. More protection will be absolutely necessary now that the deviation works are to be recommenced.”

A Newcastle Morning Herald article on Teralba as a township, published on 17 April 1905 , highlights the attractive nature of the station under a sub heading of “Platform Gardens”. “At the majority of the stations the officials delight in planting flowers, shrubs and creepers upon and around their station premises. Mr. Lansdown, the station- master here, and his assistants, are enthusiasts in the art of floriculture. At no station between Newcastle and the metropolis is there a similarly – sized platform space so beautifully set out. At either end, within an enclosure, are two oblong plots bordered with symmetrically dressed “altermanthera,” in the centre of which appears the word “Teralba” in finely formed letters. Here an arch of creepers meets the eye, there a rare collection of shrubs. In other places dahlias and marigolds, with other flowers, make up a pleasing scene. The soil for all these growths had to be brought by wheelbarrow, and when the evident care bestowed upon the flowers and plants by Mr. Lansdown and his assistants is considered,, it will be admitted that all deserve much credit for their perseverance in bringing their platform gardens to such perfection.”

The completion of the deviation early in 1903 necessitated certain alterations to the Sydney end of the yard. A portion of the original line was then retained to serve loading shoots of Mr. Hodge, brought into use on 28 August 1903. On 15 December 1909 a short siding was taken off this line to the gravel loading shoots of Gardner & McNulty. These two quarries were taken over by Teralba Gravel Quarries Ltd. in 1922. Both were closed in 1939. Occasionally, the old line was pressed into use for refuging purposes.

When the duplication came from Fassifern on 31 July 1910 the yard was enlarged by the provision of an up refuge, up coal siding and weighbridge and an up storage siding. The work was completed by **16 May 1911**.

A tragic event on Saturday **17 December 1911** was to cast a pall of sadness and regret over the Teralba community. At about 2.15 in the afternoon Ada Augusta Duncan, aged 10 years and 9 months, Clara Duncan, aged 8 years and Gladys Duncan passed through the wicket gates about half a mile north of the Teralba Railway Station. They were about to cross the rails when they noticed an empty ballast train travelling from Teralba towards Newcastle. As their attention was directed towards this train, they failed to notice the Tamworth mail which was dashing towards Sydney. After the ballast train had passed the children attempted to cross, but Ada and Clara were struck by the engine of the Tamworth mail. Ada was dragged about six yards and killed instantly. Clara was thrown clear of the rails, but was

badly injured. She was brought on to Newcastle Hospital, where she died at 7.30 that night. Gladys appears to have had a narrow escape. The little girl Ada who was killed instantly, was a cousin to the other two girls. Ada had arrived from Dora Creek about midday, and the three children were taking a walk when the accident occurred. Clara and Gladys were sisters and lived with their mother in Victoria Street, Teralba. Their father, Robert Duncan, died recently. On 18 December 1911, cousins, Ada and Clara Duncan were buried together at Sandgate Cemetery in the Anglican 1 cemetery, Section 79, Lot 56.

An overhead pedestrian bridge was completed on **22 January 1913**, to provide access to the platforms and to link the eastern and western sides of the town. Apart from the pedestrian footbridge at the station, all other access between the eastern and western sides of the railway at Teralba was via a level crossing at the Fassifern end of the station. With both road and rail traffic increasing, it was deemed necessary to replace this crossing with an overhead bridge. On **20 December 1913**, a new road bridge was commissioned north of the station, beyond the northern end of the up sidings.

Teralba Station's role as a community focus was reinforced when the eastern approach to the station's pedestrian bridge was selected as the site for the local Great War memorial. Other sites considered by the memorial committee included, Toronto Road at the intersection with Lake Crescent Street, the School of Arts and Frith's corner. The memorial was unveiled on **27 April 1918** during the course of the conflict. Many war memorials throughout the country have been unveiled by high ranking dignitaries such as Colonels, Generals, Mayors, Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers and at times national and state leaders. Not so, for egalitarian, coal mining Teralba. A lowly ranked Lance Corporal, W.N. Miller did the honours. However Miller's status and relevance went well beyond his rank—he was the first Teralba man to enlist and thus he personified the spirit and values of the local citizen soldier. Mason's for the memorial which cost 147 pounds were Meldrum and Markey. Photographs taken during or shortly after the unveiling give an insight into the character of the town and the station itself. The memorial became functional as well as commemorative when on Thursday night, 4 August 1927, a lamp post was switched on above the pedestal bearing the names. An illuminated memorial would have been a great asset for those using the eastern approaches to the station's footbridge at night. During early August 1937 the Teralba Advisory Committee referred the matter of vandalism to the memorial to Lake Macquarie Council for attention. On 21 June 1963 it was reported that the Teralba branch of the RSL had approved the relocation of the memorial. Today the memorial complete with its lamp post stands in Anzac Park a block or so east of its original site. It bears the names of 72 locals who served in the Great War, 15 of whom were killed. A percentage rate of 20.8 which is slightly higher than the national average.

During the **early 1920s** the "oldtimer" Great Northern Hotel was demolished to make way for a more modern hotel designed by Newcastle architect, Wallace L. Porter. The year "1923" was incorporated into its external design.

On Saturday night **29 December 1928**, Thomas Wilkinson, 55, a labourer had his left arm severed when he fell between the platform and a moving train at Teralba Station. Railway officials raced to the injured man's assistance, and great presence of mind was shown by the night officer, Mr. Wright, who seized and held the pressure point of the sub-clavial artery in the stump area while Wilkinson was lying under the train. A tourniquet was applied later by members of the Lake Macquarie Ambulance, and Wilkinson was taken to Wallsend Hospital, where he was admitted. Wilkinson had travelled from Sydney on the Singleton train which reached Teralba at 10.30 am.

An occupational fatality occurred at Teralba Station on the evening of **14 May 1934**. That night G. George Whittaker, a railway guard of Nelson Street, Mayfield was caught in an automatic coupling while shunting a train at the station. He suffered injuries to the spine and pelvis. He was taken to Newcastle Hospital where he died shortly before midnight.

On **27 August 1934** it was reported that people travelling at night would find conditions soon improved as Teralba Station was to be lit by electricity in about three weeks. Apparently this improvement had been advocated and pursued by Mr G. Booth, the local member since December 1927. The wheels of government turned slowly even then.

During **1936**, a huge quantity of gravel was excavated from the ridge along the old original line for the formation of the Broadmeadow Marshalling Yards. An added purpose was to form a future regrading of the line eliminating the 1 in 40 Fassifern Bank, to be used by through trains in both directions thus saving over a kilometre in distance. Suburban trains would still travel via the 1903 deviation to serve Booragul, as well as trains requiring to be passed. This scheme however was never carried out. As a result of the old timber openings near Teralba having deteriorated badly, the long construction siding of the original line was closed in May 1962.

On **9 August 1937** it was reported that the Teralba Advisory Committee had resolved to ask the Department of Railways to gravel the surface of the overhead traffic bridge between William and Railway Streets.

**Late August, early September 1937** it was reported that the repair work being carried out to the Teralba Railway Station overhead bridge was not causing any inconvenience to the users of that bridge.

The legacy of the art of "floriculture" established by the Stationmaster, Mr Lansdown and his staff in the early 1900s extended well into in late 1940s (and in fact well beyond). The Newcastle Morning Herald on **29 November 1949** reported under the headline, "State Railway Garden Prize to Teralba". "Teralba won the railway station garden championship of New South Wales for 1949, as well as the second championship for stations between Narara and Nundah (near Singleton). Apart from framed certificates, the championships carry cash of five pounds and five shillings for State and four pounds for section. Teralba won the

section championship in 1947 and 1948. The gardens are judged twice a year—in April for sections , and in October for State. The stationmaster, MR S. McLaughlin, spends most of his official time in the garden, and is assisted by a signalman, Mr W.Alchin.”

On 25 November 1950, Brian McMaugh, 18, of Darby Street, Cook’s Hill, a porter at Teralba Station escaped with minor injuries when a train struck his tricycle on the line between Booragul and Fassifern. Part of the broken machine was flung against him causing an abrasion to the elbow and wrist. Lake Macquarie Ambulance took him to Royal Newcastle Hospital.

On 16 July 1948 the days of Teralba’s oldest hotel, the Lake Macquarie Hotel were numbered when approval was given to transfer the hotel’s licence to new premises to be erected at Wangi Wangi. On **29 April 1955** the hotel’s licence was effectively transferred to become the Wangi Wangi Hotel. Today (2014) the former double storey hotel still stands at Teralba along side the road that links Toronto and Glendale.

On the night of **5 July 1951** a member of the travelling public would have caused some concern at Teralba Railway Station. Henry McDonald, 63, of Macquarie Street, Fassifern climbed back into a train after having four toes of his left foot cut off near Teralba Station. McDonald was walking from one carriage to another when he fell onto the line. One of the wheels ran over his left foot, cutting off four toes. He insisted that he was all right and climbed back into the carriage and continued his journey to Fassifern a distance of some five kilometres. Railway officials had a doctor and ambulance waiting at Fassifern Station and they took him to Wallsend Hospital. Doctors said later that his condition was satisfactory.

The body of Herbert Patfield, 81, of Teralba, was found beside the railway line near a level crossing at Teralba Railway Station on the morning of **2 September 1953**. It was believed that he was hit by a train.

The troublesome curved diamond leading to Northern Extended Colliery was replaced by tandem crossovers in **1960**. However, at this stage the Rhondda Road level crossing at the Sydney end of the yard was kept operational.

The Maitland Mercury for **18 November 1964** reported that the Northern Extended Colliery at Teralba, one of the oldest in the north was to close soon. The company decided to close the mine because of economic conditions in the coal industry. Brian Robert Andrews reported that the colliery closed on 27 November 1964 and that underground mining equipment was removed along with most of the surface facilities. However, part of the branch railway near the entrance to the mine remained in situ until the early 1990s although the connection with the main line had been removed.

Teralba’s other colliery, Pacific Colliery, closed on **22 December 1967**. The colliery lease was taken over by the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd, and a new colliery, Macquarie Colliery was developed on the site but it was not connected by rail.

In a "then and now series" on Teralba, the Lake Macquarie Herald on **30 December 1970** provided this information on Teralba Station, "The present incumbent (stationmaster) at Teralba Station is genial Mr. M.W.Smith, who has held the post for the past past 11 years. He has been in the railway service for 37 years. Though only a sixth-class station, Teralba has gained prominence in the department for its outstanding garden and floral displays, originated by a dedicated stationmaster of other years, Mr J. McLaughlan. He spent many hours of his leisure time to lay lawns and arrange gardens, which won awards year after year in the annual railway garden competition. This work has been carried on a lesser degree and the station won a third prize three years ago. The station has two platforms for the main Northern line and an auxiliary one on the south side. It is one of the few stations that has a signal box on a main platform. The station was once very busy when Pacific and Northern Extended Collieries were working at peak production. They are now closed. The station still gets industrial patronage; it recently figured in the transport of 80ft. Long concrete girders for a major construction job in Canberra. Made by Basic Industries, Teralba, the girders, three at a time, were stretched over three long table top trucks. The girders were put on swivel bolts at the two end trucks to permit free movement as the trucks swung around the curves. These girders are believed to be the second largest of this type moved by rail in Australia. They weighted 20 tons each. Eight were sent to Canberra."

By **2 May 1982** Teralba Signal Box had closed. Its name plate had been removed. It was demolished shortly after. The advent of electrification to Newcastle caused a massive alteration to the track arrangements at Teralba Station. As at 2 May 1982 a new down track was in the cause of construction to the west of the previous down platform. Thus with electrification the previous non island down platform became an island platform, the previous down line became an up track and a new down line was commissioned. The older up main was removed and the previous older island platform that housed the signal box was demolished.

Reportedly the last Stationmaster at Teralba was Ken Newby.(Lost Newcastle Facebook site 2014)

By **10 June 2010** a notice appeared in a prominent position on the main station building at Teralba advising travellers and residents that the station facilities were being upgraded. The notice read, "Teralba Railway Station. New platform canopy, resurfacing the existing platform and carpark. Dear Resident, As previously advised in June 2010 Teralba Railway Station is being upgraded as part of a station upgrade and maintenance program to provide a new platform canopy and resurfacing the existing platform and carpark. Once operational, Teralba Railway Station will \*Improve comfort for passengers waiting for trains (ie shelter from heat, rain and wind); \*Reduce train dwell-times as waiting passengers are distributed more evenly along platforms. This also has the advantage of distributing passenger loads more evenly on trains; \*Reduce potential for slips and falls as passengers will not need to hurry in inclement weather to obtain shelter from the elements. This notice is to advise you



that the upgrade works will commence on 12 June 2010 and will continue until 30 November 2010. Proposed construction work hours are ; Monday to Friday 7am to 5 pm. Saturday 7am to 5 pm.” This considerable amount of information or bureaucratic “verbolese” generally disguised the fact that the nineteenth century buildings were about to be demolished--- in other words the old was to make way for the “new”.

By **24 July 2010** demolition work on the nineteenth century buildings had commenced. It is to be believed that Cityrail commissioned a photographer to visually record these buildings before they were demolished.

**Byways of Steam 22** makes these points about a couple of rail features to the near north of Teralba Station. “Apart from a few houses on the outskirts of Teralba, much of the land in this area is covered in open scrub or mangrove swamps when closer to the tidal waters of Cockle Creek. Two stations once existed in this section, both located at the southern extremity of the curve leading up to Cockle Creek. The first to open was Boolaroo Racecourse platform, at mileage 92m. 69ch. Opened on 6 October 1910, the two platforms at this location served a dual purpose. Trains stopped regularly to set down and to pick up miners working at the nearby Seddon’s Teralba (later Stockton Borehole) Colliery and also patrons attending race meetings at the adjacent track. A notification in the *Local Appendix to the Working Time-table, Northern Division*, dated 1 August 1930, stated that whenever a special train was required to stop at Boolaroo Racecourse platform, a flagman was to be in attendance to protect trains and persons crossing the running lines. On the 14 April 1942, Boolaroo Racecourse station was closed and from the same date, a timber landing known as Boolaroo Landing was opened 7ch. on the Teralba side of the former platform. This new facility continued to provide access for staff working at the nearby colliery, the low level platforms being 370 feet in length.”

**This therefore is something of the history in and around Teralba Railway Station; there is no doubt more to tell and to record. -----Ed Tonks. July 2014.**