

ARHSnsw Railway Luncheon Club.

Notes for the tour to Murrurundi

18th and 19th November 2015.

These notes describe some of the railway infrastructure that will be seen during the tour. They have been arranged in the order in which they will be inspected.

There will also be some additional notes and photographs handed out to participants during the tour.

MUSWELLBROOK RAILWAY STATION

BEFORE THE STATION OPENING

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22nd December, 1866, p. 8 contained the following report on progress of this construction of the line towards Muswellbrook. The *Herald* article contains a member number of questions asked in Parliament about progress on the Great Northern Railway relating to Muswellbrook. It refers to the proposed completion of the line to Muswellbrook in February, 1868, but this time it was not met and the opening to Muswellbrook did not take place until 19th May, 1869. The report also mentions that plans for the Muswellbrook station building had not been prepared at that time but that it was proposed that tenders would be called by June, 1867. This also was a little optimistic. Tenders for the construction of the building were not called until early 1868.

“With regard to the Northern extension, our readers are already aware that the bridge over the Hunter, at Singleton, is finished, and was formally named by his Excellency the Governor two months ago. The earthwork for the road and railway approaches to the bridge on the south side at the river will be finished by the end of the present month, and the approaches, including the timberwork of the bridge over the gully about midway between the Singleton Station and the river, will be entirely completed next month, if the timber for the bridge can be obtained. The whole of the earthworks, bridges, culverts, etc., on the extension from the north side of the river to Liddell are finished, and the contract for the extension from Liddell to Muswellbrook expires next month. Tenders have been received for ballasting and laying the permanent way on this extension from Singleton to Muswellbrook, and one will be accepted in the course of a few days. The work is to be completed by February.1868. Trial surveys have been made from Muswellbrook to Murrurundi, but the extension over this length has not been proclaimed, nor has anything been done towards starting with the line or preparing the working surveys and sections. The surveys were laid before Parliament and approved on the 27th March last.

On the 14th instant Mr. (James) White (Member of Parliament for The Upper Hunter) asked the following questions (Questions with Notice in the Legislative Assembly) in reference to the Northern extension:- "

QUESTIONS

1. With reference to the tenders now invited for laying and ballasting the permanent way on the railway extension from Singleton to Muswellbrook whether the rails and the materials not procurable in the colony necessary for the completion of that work have been provided and are now available.
2. If not, have such materials been ordered, and will they be provided in time to prevent any delay in the work?
3. Have plans been prepared for the necessary railway station buildings at Muswellbrook, and when will tenders for these works be called for?
4. What is the cause of the delay in calling for tenders for the railway extension from Muswellbrook to Murrurundi, the money for constructing which was voted last session?
5. When is it likely such tenders will be called for?"

ANSWERS

Mr. James Byrnes, the Minister for Public Works, in reply said:

- 1 & 2 the rails, etc., of portion of the line beyond Singleton were in the colony, and the rest being ordered would no doubt arrive in time to prevent delay in the completion of the line.
3. No. Tenders would probably be invited for station buildings in June next.
4. The money required for the construction of this part of the line had not yet been provided.
5. No time could be fixed at present."

BUILDING APPROVAL AND CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS

William Mason, as Acting Engineer, approved a brick building for Muswellbrook, being 70 feet by 15 feet internal with a slate covered, hipped roof.¹ In early May, 1868, one Mr. Hyndes, the contractor for the railway station, said that "he hopes to have stone, etc., on the ground in about ten days. He says he intends to push on with the work."²

¹ The plan is undated.

² *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 5th May, 1868, p. 2.

Later on in the year, the contractor indicated that he would finish the building by Christmas of that year.³ James Smithers, a brick maker from Maitland, supplied the bricks.⁴ The construction of the goods shed was conducted in a manner different to the station building. “The main portion of the building, or the superstructure, is being made in Sydney and will arrive very shortly, when all that will be required to be done will be to erect it, as it will arrive already fitted.”⁵

The building was designed to the Georgian-influenced design that had been used at Singleton but a shorter structure in accord with the trend after the approval of Singleton and Picton in 1863. John Whitton had implemented the first prototype example of the Georgian design at Campbelltown in 1858 and revised the design in 1862 for the first production examples at Penrith and Singleton and Picton in 1863. By 1874, Whitton had used the design family of which Muswellbrook belongs for the last time. Between 1858 and 1871, the following locations featured the Georgian influenced design upon the opening of the three trunk lines:

- Campbelltown (a slightly different prototype design)
- Picton
- Mittagong
- Moss Vale
- Parramatta
- Penrith
- Mount Victoria
- Bowenfels
- Kelso
- Singleton
- Muswellbrook
- Scone
- Murrurundi

³ *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 7th November 1868 p. 4.

⁴ His son, Edwin, moved to Muswellbrook in 1867 and was in charge of brick making for railway contractors and moved from town to town in the Hunter Valley. It is possible that the bricks in the station building were made at Muswellbrook. See *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 25th July, 1868, p. 4.

⁵ *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 16th February, 1869, p. 4.

At the same time as Whitton was facing sustained pressure from the New South Wales Parliament, there was another factor that adversely affected his economy measures. It was the findings of a NSW court for the redesign of platforms. The *Newcastle Chronicle and Hunter River District News*, 20th January, 1864, p. 2 reported on an accident. "We regret to have to mention, this month, more accidents than usual. One occurred on the railway at Waratah, when the station-master's child strayed upon the rails as the train was starting and, although the pace was slow, and the guard, on perceiving the child, did all he could with the brake, it was so severely injured as to die shortly afterwards. At the inquest, a verdict of accidental death was returned, exonerating all the railway officials from blame, but a rider was attached, recommending that all railway stations (i.e. platforms) should be enclosed with a fence, to obviate similar occurrences. This was the start of enclosed platforms which over the next five years that led to gravelled and fenced platform at Marulan, paved platforms at Muswellbrook and Mount Victoria. This then became the norm for all platforms in the colony, saving trees and reducing the import of Baltic pine for decking, plus hardwood for framing. This coronial recommendation was one of many that led to safer operations."

The impact of the coronial enquiry meant that Whitton could no longer build platforms using open-fronted, timber frames. The walls of the platforms had to be constructed of either stone, brick or timber, with brick being used in the majority of instances. In addition, the platforms themselves had to be earth filled behind the walls. The policy was not implemented quickly and open-fronted platforms continued to be built until 1868, mostly on the main western line over the Blue Mountains.

The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser, 18th April, 1868, p. 4 provided the following report in regard to the platform building at Muswellbrook:

"G. N. RAILWAY EXTENSION: - During the last few days large quantities of materials and tools, have been forwarded from hereto be used for the works on Mr. Amos's contract, No. 4, for the extension of the G. N. Railway, from Muswellbrook towards Murrurundi; and we learn that a commencement will very shortly be made in clearing the line and constructing the earthworks. Tenders are now invited for the erection of a railway station at Muswellbrook, to be sent in on or before the 21st instant. This station will be a very fine one, and will be constructed either of brick and stone, or of stone entirely, contractors being invited to tender for both. As there are large quantities of stone in the neighbourhood of Muswellbrook, of an excellent description, it is most likely that the station will be erected entirely of that material. The main building will be about eighty feet long, and will contain a large ticket office, a ladies' and a gentlemen's waiting room, and porters' room, besides out offices. An improvement will be introduced on the usual construction of railway platforms in the colony, for

instead of the horrid uneven flooring boards which form such a disagreeable feature of the platforms of all our railway stations, that of the Muswellbrook railway station will be laid with stone flagging. A commodious carriage dock will also be constructed adjoining the station, which, together with the platforms at each end of it, will occupy a length of about 300 feet. We congratulate our Muswellbrook friends on the prospect of having the finest railway station yet erected in the colony built in their pretty and picturesque town.”

It is interesting that tenders were called for both a stone and a brick and stone building. No all stone buildings were erected on the Main North railway line. In fact, the only line to have a few completely stone platform buildings was the Main West line, where the structures at Mount Victoria, Bowenfels and Dubbo were made of stone. John Whitton was always keen to obtain the best value for his dollars and it seems that the option of a sandstone structure from a local source could have been a cheaper option than carting bricks from another town, such as Maitland. No concession was given to the successful contractor in regard to the freight rate charged to transport bricks from the source of manufacture to the place of construction and lower transport costs equaled a lower tender price. The local press was favorably impressed by the use of stone flagging on the platform but it was standard policy to cover the surface of a platform with sandstone under the platform awning, in front of the building. Flagging was also used at the rear entrance to the station under the roadside awning.

A traveler in 1872 commented that the Muswellbrook building was “neat and commodious”.⁶ He also made an important observation about the buildings on the Main North generally noting that all platform buildings are from Singleton northward were “good” but those south of Singleton were “wretched” and he wondered why the more populous towns had been neglected so far as the quality of their platform buildings were concerned.⁷ The answer to his question was that the platform building at Singleton and those at Muswellbrook, Scone and Murrurundi designed John Whitton’s regime, whereas the buildings between Newcastle and Singleton exclusive were the work of Whitton’s predecessors.

IMPACT OF TRACK DUPLICATION

During 1914 and 1915 duplication of the Main North opened between Farley and Branxton. The New South Wales Railways had a dream of extending it through to Werris Creek but World War 1 cut funding for most railway projects. The first main line for which capital funding was reviewed was the North as it was the most unproductive of the three major trunk routes, especially that part of the line in north of Tamworth. As

⁶ The *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 27th August, 1872, p. 2

⁷ *Ibid.*

early as the 1890s, the Chief Commissioner, in this case Ted Eddy, had realised that the Main North was a loss-making entity. Priority for the allocation of capital funds for duplication was allocated to the Main South because traffic could be diverted from the Main West using the Forbes-Stockinbingal route, which had been opened on 4th August, 1916. Duplication of the line to Muswellbrook finally took place in March, 2009 – only 90 years after preparation of the plans.

One of the features of the New South Wales Railways in relation to platform buildings was the inexplicable, sustained approval of buildings which had no hope of being constructed, resulting in a massive waste of human resources. Typical of this was the ongoing planning for a new station at Muswellbrook in connection with the track duplication. The Railway Commissioners had made it very clear to the public in 1916 that no further money would be allocated to the Main North for duplication. Despite this being widely known, the Existing Lines Branch continued to plan for an expanded station at Muswellbrook.

THE REFRESHMENT ROOM

At Muswellbrook, there were local reports in 1917 of the proposal to provide “a refreshment room, and extra platform accommodation. Such improvements have long been needed, as the population and business of the town and district have greatly increased since the building of the present station house, (which had been approved in 1871).”⁸ For once, these local rumours were correct. Plans were indeed prepared in 1917 for the duplication of the main line at Muswellbrook with refreshment rooms on the existing platform and also a new Tamworth-bound platform. It was proposed that large, brick refreshment rooms would be provided, as had been done at Goulburn and Cootamundra West. Both refreshment rooms were to feature the newly introduced American bars. The facility on the Tamworth-bound platform was to be two storey and a one storey on the Sydney-bound platform.

The branch line to Merriwa had opened on 29th October, 1917. It was that event that prompted planning for the refreshment room in 1917. Unfortunately, the first sod for the branch line from Muswellbrook to Merriwa took place on 1 June, 1912, and the 50 miles of track had taken five years to construct. The poor people of Muswellbrook, having seen how slowly work had been undertaken on the branch line, had to endure another instance of lengthy delay, this time for the construction of the refreshment room, which also took five years from initial planning to opening between 1917 and 1922.

Unfortunately, insufficient funding also had a substantial impact on projects on existing lines during World War 1. All was not lost, just most of it. The construction of the existing refreshment room was authorised for construction in 1918 but did not open until

⁸ *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, 25th July, 1917, p.7.

1922. The newspaper article also says that “for years past there have been rumours to the effect that railway workshops were to be established at Muswellbrook and such were reports are again current.”

Detailed plans were prepared in 1921 for the proposed refreshment room after the failed 1918 attempt and work started early in 1921. The high-level windows were fitted with Preston’s openers and operated by cords connected to the ceilings. On the platform side, there was an awning 10’ 5 ½’ wide, which was supported by, using departmental shorthand, type “C” steel brackets which in turn sat on concrete corbels. This was the first time that concrete had been used to replace stone for corbels and would become pretty much standard practice from this time. The refreshment room opened on 16th October, 1922

The refreshment room building was drab in appearance and the Railways was lucky not to receive adverse publicity in the local press. As it turned out, the press remained silent on the aesthetics of the building, which was a mute condemnation of the structure. The facility was under the control of Miss Lawson, who had been transferred from the refreshment room at Singleton where she was of the Manageress for five years and previously at Glenn Innes for seven years. The only report in the local newspapers was descriptive in nature, pointing out that it would employ 10 people, four of whom were local residents. “Most of the food required will be brought from Sydney.”⁹ The building was described as a ground floor dining room 30 feet wide and 50 feet long and a bar area 30’ x 14’. There was a kitchen, scullery, pantry, store room and wash house, all on the ground floor. Upstairs, there were eight staff bed rooms, a bathroom and linen press for use by the staff.¹⁰

The Muswellbrook newspaper said that “the work of erecting the building was started 22 months ago, and it is explained that the reason why the work has taken so long to complete was because of the tradesmen having to leave on many occasions for work in other parts of the state. The building has only been a spare time job.”¹¹ With the opening of the Muswellbrook refreshment room, the similar facility at Singleton station was downgraded to third class, while the Muswellbrook refreshment room was to be first class.¹² In 1927, the first floor was altered to convert the staff double rooms into five bedrooms for use by the public for overnight accommodation and, when the highway subway replaced the level crossing in July, 1928, the bedrooms on the first floor were vacated entirely by the refreshment room staff, who were then relocated to the former

⁹ *The Scone Advocate*, 20th October, 1922, p. 4.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 17th October, 1922, p. 1.

¹² *The Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 7th October, 1922, p. 16.

level crossing gatehouse, which was converted to a staff hostel and their original bedrooms were then made available for public use.¹³

The Country Women's Association was not happy about the service received in refreshment rooms generally and the Quirindi Branch resolved "where special counters at railway refreshment rooms are provided for women and children, the Commissioners be asked to place a waitress on that section alone, as it is a common thing to see the women and children waiting until, in many cases, it is too late to get refreshments."¹⁴

The next change to the Muswellbrook refreshment room occurred in 1935 when, two public showers were installed in the upstairs bathrooms.

In 1942, up plan proposed the provision of a female staff change room for the RRR with a weatherboard exterior. It was lined and "ceiled" with Fibrolite and had a skillion roof with a two degrees pitch, being 9' high at lowest point. This was one of the few plans that indicated the degree of pitch of the single-pitched roof.

By the early 1950s, many of the refreshment rooms throughout the State work experiencing low patronage as a result of the introduction of on-train buffets. In 1953, the Muswellbrook dining room was converted to what was officially named an "Entrée Service". Oregon framed benches with ¼" thick Plywood fronts were provided along with pedestal tables 2' 6' in diameter with Formica tops and metal edging. After 30 years of service, the American bar was altered by the removal of the canopy over the counters. Linoleum was applied to top of bar counters. Masonite and asbestos cement sheeting were also used to carry out the alterations and both of these materials were to be painted. In 1954, a new boiler, piping and hot water tank was provided for the refreshment room. That event marked the end of the improvements to the Muswellbrook refreshment room.

In 1964, the Muswellbrook refreshment room was closed and converted into staff offices. A zig zag ramp with a gradient of 1 in 10 was provided at rear of the station to reach the parcels office, which had been moved into part of the space of the refreshment room. It is assumed that the 1942 timber parcels office at the up end of the platform was demolished at this time.

¹³ *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 19th August, 1927, p. 1.

¹⁴ *The Scone Advocate*, 4th November, 1927, p. 2.

OTHER ALTERATIONS IN THE 1910s, 1920s AND 1930s

Space was short at Muswellbrook station in 1918 for the expanding parcels traffic. A new parcels office was located on the verandah on the road side of the building. The verandah floor was removed and a single-width, standard-sized door measuring 2'10" x 6' 10" x 1 ½" was inserted at the end of the verandah. The new facility was clad externally with weatherboards. One window was refixed. The new facility was not completely satisfactory because all parcels to and from the platform had to be carried through the booking office. This awkward arrangement continued until a new parcels office was approved in 1942.

In 1923, the out of shed at the up end and the Station Master's office were both enlarged. In order to achieve this, the Department decided to use more of the verandah on the road side of the building and, once again, used weatherboard construction. To add to the dagginess of the additions, a skillion roof was used.

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR 2

During World War 2, the New South Wales Railways had a massive increase in the parcels traffic, resulting in the enlargement of many existing parcels rooms and the approval for some new facilities. One place that received an entirely new parcels office was at Muswellbrook. There, a timber framed and clad building with a gabled roof was erected at the Sydney end of the existing 1868 platform building and extending to a position near the buffers in the dock road at the Sydney end. A photograph showing the parcels office is in R. Love, "The Steam Locomotive Depots in NSW – Locomotive Out-Depots: Muswellbrook and Merriwa", *Byways of Steam 3*, Matraville, Eveleigh Press, 1991, p. 103.

In 1942, the Acting Chief Civil Engineer, W. R. Beaver, approved the new parcels office at up end of the platform. It was 20' long and 23' wide internal. The details were:

- Flooring 4" x 1" Cypress Pine,
- Structural timbers Cypress Pine and joinery Alpine Ash,
- Counter top 3' above floor, covered with Plywood and top covered with No. 26 gauge plain iron,
- Corrugated asbestos roof sheeting,
- Internal walls 3/8" thick asbestos cement sheets to window sills and 3/16" thick above with covers,
- 18" x 18" x 6" concrete pads supporting 9" x 9' piers with galvanised iron caps,
- No. 24 gauge, plain terne coated iron for back of shelves,

- Terne coated downpipes, &
- Ramped public access from the road side.

A second plan in 1942 shows the provision of new counters (2' 6" high) and a ticket stock cupboard in the ticket office. This time, the counter was made of 1 ¼" thick Pine with Plywood panel for the front. In 1944, a combined meal and locker room was built on the platform for the for Traffic Branch staff. It was located adjacent to the signal box, having been converted from a portable rest cabin. Weatherboards formed the external walls. It had no eaves.

POST WORLD WAR 2 CHANGES

Muswellbrook, like virtually every other station on the New South Wales railway system, saw virtually no change in the years of the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

In 1948, a bicycle room was approved for construction between the 1872 building and the refreshment room and completed on 24th August, 1949. By this time, the platform at Muswellbrook at the down end of the refreshment room was a series of unattractive, timber offices and workshops for various artisan staff.

In 1975, the ticket office was relocated into a part of the new parcels office. It was petitioned off, with the petition being 2100 mm high, with the top half glass. The ticket office measured 3600 mm x 3600 mm and the ticket window faced the platform.

The last change made to the station was in 2011 when CityRail completed its usual station upgrade, meaning the provision of new signage, seats and bins.

THE LOCOMOTIVE DEPOT

Rumours abounded for many years about creation of a substantial locomotive depot at Muswellbrook. *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 11th December, 1909, p. 2 was typical of the rumours. It stated that "a special meeting of the Upper Hunter P. and A. Association was held on Wednesday afternoon last, for the purpose of conferring with a sub-committee of the Municipal Council, with the object of coming to an agreement as to the conditions upon which the Council might offer the Showground to the Railway Commissioners for a site for the erection of engine sheds. After a good deal of discussion the following resolution was carried, on the motion of Hon. R. G. D. FitzGerald, seconded by Mr. J. W. Humphries: "That the Municipal Council be authorised to enter into negotiations with the Railway Commissioner with a view to

offering him the Showground for the site of railway engine sheds." This is a step in the right direction." Naturally, nothing happened.

Things hundred up in the years of World War 1 when the Railways Department was investigating changes in the operations of locomotive running and, hence, the location of locomotive depots. Ultimately, this involved planning for the creation of a new locomotive depot at Werris Creek in 1916. *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 16th September, 1916, p. 2 stated that "our Aberdeen contemporary takes it for granted that the railway engine sheds from Murrurundi and Singleton are to be transferred to Muswellbrook. So far as we are aware this course has not yet been decided upon. Several sets of loco men are to be transferred from Murrurundi and Singleton and to Muswellbrook so as to facilitate the more economical running of certain trains. But this does not necessarily mean the establishment of running sheds or the stationing of engines here." The Railways also investigated establishing a large locomotive depot at Wingen.

Through running of locomotives was introduced in 1917 between the depots at Hamilton and Werris Creek, thereby eliminating the need to change locomotives at Singleton. Also in 1917 was the opening of the line to Merriwa on 29th October.

The history of the locomotive depot at Muswellbrook is covered in detail by Ray Love in *Byways of Steam 3*.

Stuart Sharp

20th June, 2015

SCONE RAILWAY STATION

STATION OPENING

The railway station at Scone was officially opened on 17th April, 1871. The Colonial Governor, the Earl of Belmore, at the opening ceremony, gave a dig at the Government for their slowness in progressing with railway extensions. He pointed out that, when he opened the line to Muswellbrook on 19th May, 1869, the Government at the time promised that the line would be opened to Murrurundi within 18 months. That would have involved a distance of 39 miles but only 16 miles had been opened to Scone and the job had taken two years.

John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, also spoke at the opening ceremony and took the opportunity to mention a few topics at the time, such as the extension of all future railway lines to a gauge of 3'6" and also the use of the Fairlie design of locomotive. While they were important topics at the time, Whitton also reminded the public about the costs per mile of the various railways, as he particularly faced a number of critics about the high cost of the western line over the Blue Mountains and the selection of the route to reach Bathurst.

Whitton must have thought in advance what he was going to say because he went out of his way to emphasise the ease of construction of the line between Muswellbrook and Scone. The only major work on that section had been the bridge over the Hunter River at Aberdeen, which was the first iron lattice bridge in the Colony. He said "there are no cuttings of any importance, no sharp curves, and no steep gradients. For a considerable portion of the line, the rails follow closely to the surface of the ground."¹⁵ So, he had told his audience about the relative low cost of the line between Muswellbrook and Scone and used this information to contrast against other main line projects. In order to silence his critics, he provided the statistics in the Table below to show the relative expenses of a number of lines.

TABLE: COSTS PER MILE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF LINES

SECTION OF LINE	COST PER MILE (POUNDS)
Penrith to Bathurst	15,000
Picton to Goulburn	12,262
Singleton to Murrurundi	10,084
East Maitland to Morpeth	15,673

¹⁵ *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 22nd April, 1871, p. 241.

The point that Whitton was making was that it was far more expensive to build a line that was purely of political benefit. In this case, he was referring to the Morpeth branch, which had lost its strategic intermodal role by the time the railway had been opened to Maitland in 1858, thanks in part to the effort of John Whitton to extend the original Honeysuckle Point terminus to the wharves at Newcastle. The Morpeth branch also involved extreme expenditure in the resumption of high-cost properties for the rail corridor. Whitton had made two points. The first was about the expensive interference of politicians which provided no economic benefit to the Railways and to the New South Wales economy and, secondly, that resumption costs were an important factor in the expenses of building railway lines. Whitton mentioned, in relation to the Morpeth branch line, that “there are no expensive works, and the line is nearly level throughout.”¹⁶

The 1870s was a decade in which John Whitton experimented on ways to save money in all facets of civil engineering and this policy was applied to platform buildings. On the Main South, he used temporary platform buildings to a very large degree. Yes, Goulburn got a magnificent but relatively small building in 1869 but that and the platform building at Bathurst in 1876 were the only times before 1880 that lavish amounts of money were allocated to platform buildings on new lines. Even at Bathurst, Whitton did not complete the building before the opening of the line, completion taking another six months. On the Main North, he reduced the length of his standard Georgian design. He decided not to spend any great amount of funds on platform buildings before 1880. For the Main West, Whitton used combined offices/residences to an extent greater than the other trunk lines.

CONSTRUCTION

John Whitton approved the design for Scone on 19th July, 1870. Pressure must have been on him to approve the architectural plan as quickly, as work on the Scone station site generally had already commenced one month previously.¹⁷ In fact, tenders were called the very day Whitton approved the design. The brick building was 74 feet long of a constant width of 17 feet with two attached, parapeted wings. The bricks were tuck pointed. The Georgian design featured the usual hipped roof with asymmetrical chimneys as Whitton had used at Singleton and Muswellbrook. The rooms were, from the down end, porters and lamp room, parcels office, booking office, general waiting room, ladies' waiting room and male and female toilets. Six timber posts supported the 10 feet three inch wide platform awning and the awning on the road side also featured six timber posts. There was six inch thick stone paving in front of the building, under the awning and this was repeated under the awning on the platform side. When constructed, the building was topped with two tall brick chimneys, which were

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 18th June, 1870, p. 5.

asymmetrically placed. While it is possible today to note the position of the chimneys, it is impossible to interpret their grandeur as horrible people employed by the Railways truncated the chimneys to form two, ugly stumps.

At the station opening, the platform was 12 feet wide in front of the building but narrowed to seven feet wide beyond the building length. The platform was 107 feet long. The platform surface was gravel each side of the building. At the rear of the platform, attractive diagonal braced fencing 4'4" high was provided, the same that was used at other locations. At the up end, there was a carriage dock 60 feet long.

Rainwater was collected from the roofs of the building and piped into an underground water tank which was 13 feet high and 8 feet in diameter. It was of brick construction and lined with cement, this use of cement at this time was the very first application of the product so far as platform buildings were concerned.

Toilet accommodation was limited and the pavilion at the up end contained one closet each for men and women, each closet measuring 5' 1 ½ "x 3' 6", which was standard for the time. The urinal had a stone trough with cast iron partitions and could accommodate three men. Again, the small number of closets was typical of the time and evidence of the small size not only of Scone but of the Colony as a whole.

Tenders were called on 19th July, 1870, for the construction of the platform building and the successful contractor, William Cains, came from East Maitland, where he had just completed the building at Morpeth. He signed the contract on 18th August. With his brother, Charles, he undertook construction of several other New South Wales station buildings. In October, 1870, he had commenced work on the Scone building and had laid the foundation course of sandstone, which had been carted to the site nine miles from a locality known locally as "Gap". A newspaper correspondent thought the building rather small, writing "the station may be sufficient for the traffic but it does not appear on a large scale."¹⁸ In December, the brick walls had been erected up to the window sill level and, one month later, the brickwork for the structure had been completed and work was focusing on the roof.¹⁹ No other comment was made about the building prior to the station opening on 17th April, 1871. A correspondent from Sydney described the building in 1878 as "neat and commodious".²⁰ In the seven years since the station opening, the evidence would suggest that the traffic conducted at Scone station was not in excess of the capacity of the building. Another comment worthy of note is the description of the building as "neat". This was a word that was used on many occasions

¹⁸ *The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 15th October, 1870, p. 3, 6 December, 1870, p. 2 and 27th January, 1871, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27th January, 1871, p. 5.

²⁰ *Evening News*, 30th October, 1878, p. 8.

in the 19th century to describe a railway station building that was not attractive but functional.

1890s ADDITIONS

Tenders were called in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 20th July, 1891, p. 2 for the erection of a lamp room on the platform. It was a building about 10 ft.² and sheeted externally with corrugated iron. Its square appearance was complemented with an attractive, pyramidal roof. It was located at the far down end of the platform beyond the two elevated water tanks.

An out of goods shed, 12' x 10' internal and 12'9" by 10'9" external, was approved in 1899. It was sheeted externally with corrugated iron and originally was to have a single pitch roof without an awning. However, a photograph exists which shows a gabled roof and perhaps the original plan was altered to provide a more pleasing appearance. There was no awning. Four feet wide sliding doors were provided on each side. The building was located at the up end of the platform not far from the buffers at the end of the horse dock.

EARLY 1900s PROPOSALS

A photograph exists of the station in 1906. It was taken from the down end at the former Susan Street level crossing. It shows the following buildings and structures on the platform at that time:

- extension of the platform at both ends with matching brick work to the 1870 brick wall,
- two-rail fence at rear of platform, replacing the 1870 diagonal pattern fencing,
- corrugated iron clad lamp room,
- water tank on a timber stand,
- water tank on a steel stand,
- cream shed,
- platform nameboard with white lettering,
- the interlocking frame
- Main brick building,
- corrugated iron clad out of shed, &
- platform nameboard with white lettering.

The Chief Commissioner wrote to the Scone Municipal Council in 1909 about the proposed extension of the platform and, so serious was the proposal, that he sent a copy of the plan to Council. It required the closure of Susan Street at the down end of the existing platform and Council was supportive of the idea because of the

inconvenience to rail travelers at the station.²¹ The platform was extended and the project only took 24 years to implement.

1920s PROPOSALS

Scone Council in 1922 exchange correspondence with the New South Wales railways about the connection of the electricity supply to the railway station. The Secretary replied, declining the request with the following explanation.

“I am to point out that, in connection with the duplication of the line, it is proposed to remodel the station buildings at Scone and any expenditure incurred now in the direction of alteration to the lighting would be thrown away when the re-building of the station is put in hand. Further, there would be a fairly considerable disparity in the annual cost of the electric lighting, as compared with the present oil lighting, and in view of the above and the necessity for the strictest economy at the present time, the Commissioners feel that it would be inadvisable to make the alteration desired just now.”²²

Well, that duplication never occurred but, in 1923, it seems that there was a change of heart by the departmental officials, possibly because it had at last sunk in that track duplication was never going to occur on the Main North line through Scone. Scone Municipal Council had strengthened its argument for the electricity supply by providing an electric light at its cost on the road approach to the station, arguing that the use of oil lamps was “obsolete.” At a deputation, the Chief Commissioner is quoted as “very decidedly” in his agreement to the proposal, saying that “I’ll give you the electric light at the station.”²³

The 1870 timber, vertical posts supporting the platform awning were replaced in 1926 by cantilevered brackets and the local newspaper thought that the station was “looking up”. There is a trend amongst most country towns in New South Wales to continually lobby for improvements to the station and this occurred at Scone. The community was not restful at having been provided with the modern-looking, cantilevered brackets and the local newspaper said the station was “looking up” but sarcastically asked readers “looking up to what?” In particular, there was opposition to the extensive, large advertisements placed opposite the railway platform.²⁴ These were excellent revenue producing measures and no doubt existed until at least the 1950s, based on the evidence of other stations.

²¹ *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, 24th June, 1909, p.3.

²² *The Scone Advocate*, 27th January, 1922, p.5.

²³ Op. cit., 19th October, 1923, p. 2.

²⁴ Op. cit., 23rd December, 1925, p. 2.

Railway Commissioners should be careful about what words they convey to local government authorities. In 1927, there were extensive protests in the local newspapers about the absence of railway duplication, it having been proposed in 1922 and, of course, a decade earlier. It was contended that a considerable amount of earth works were undertaken many years previously for track duplication but “the alleged lack of money left the job unfinished.”²⁵ The job was still unfinished in 1927 and of course duplication never reach Scone.

One year later, in 1928, the Scone newspaper stated that rail traffic had “grown to such an extent that the buildings are now altogether out of proportion to the importance of such a busy centre right in the heart of the Upper Hunter, and the platform accommodation in particular for many years has been altogether inadequate to meet the demands of the lengthened trains and travelling public.”²⁶ In essence, the local community thought there was a strong case for a new station building and quoted statistics showing how much money was made for the Railways at Scone. Here was a case where the words of the Railway Commissioners came back to bite them as the local community had been made aware that an island platform and new building was to be built upon duplication.²⁷

When the residents of Muswellbrook realised that their compatriots at Scone were demanding a new station building, the people of Muswellbrook also put their hand up for a “more up-to-date building”.²⁸ Neither station received new structures. Scone and Muswellbrook were not singled out for worse treatment than anywhere else because not a single replacement building of moderate size was provided in the country between 1914 and 1957.

1930s AND 1940s CHANGES

In 1933, the existing platform of 480 feet in length was extended another 150 feet at the down end with park rail fencing at the rear platform. The Scone Municipal Council was happy to close Susan Street.²⁹ There is a photograph in *Bulletin*, May, 2003, p. 164 taken on 23rd March, 1938, that shows the following features of the station:

- the extended, concrete walled platform set at the then standard height of 3’2”,
- the 1870 brick platform wall set at a height of 2’5”,
- the 1891 lamp room,
- two elevated water tanks,

²⁵ *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 1st July, 1927, p. 2.

²⁶ *The Scone Advocate*, 24th January, 1928, p. 2.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 3rd February, 1928, p.3.

²⁹ *The Scone Advocate*, 19th May, 1933, p. 2.

- the cream shed adjacent to one of the water tanks,
- the replacement of the timber awning posts with cantilevered brackets,
- the tall, brick chimneys of the 1870 building, &
- the park style fencing at the rear of the 1933 platform extension

In order to give the local community a few crumbs of good news, the New South Wales Railways upgraded the status of Scone station in 1936 from fifth-grade to fourth-grade.³⁰

In 1948, the platform at the up end opposite the dock was widened from 7'5" to 12 feet and provided with "standard fencing" – at that time, the platform height was 2 feet 5 1/8 inches. It was necessary to cut back the dock because the brake handles of trucks fouled the existing brick wall. Also in 1948, the station building was connected to the town's sewerage system.

1950s AND LATER

By 1956, the porters and pre-1891 lamp room in the main building had been taken over as a parcels office, which was extended in 1956 by the provision of an attached timber framed and clad extension with a skillion roof. This roof had an almost flat pitch with the building being 11'6" high on the platform side and 10'6" high on the road side. Public entry to the enlarged parcels office was from the rear directly into the timber extension. The parcels office extended to the interlocking frame, which was uncovered. At this time, the cream shed, which was located on the opposite side of the interlocking frame, was proposed to be demolished but there is conflicting evidence that suggests it was not demolished. A photograph is in the *Australasian Model Railroad Magazine*, March/April, 1969, p. 11 that shows the timber parcels office extension and the enclosure of the interlocking frame. The photograph also shows the gable roofed out of shed at the up end.

In 1976, Don Archer, the District Engineer at Newcastle, approved alterations to the existing building. Most of the rooms were switched around but not everyone in the Public Transport Commission was happy with the proposed alterations. The initial approval was reviewed and alterations were made "to suit Operations Branch, Tamworth." All the rooms were re-giggled once again and the losers were the ladies, who lost their own waiting room. The opportunity was taken to demolish the out of room at the up end and the 1956 parcels room was used "to store barrows" and the parcels office was combined with the ticket office in the centre of the building. An electric heater was to be installed in the fireplace in the new general waiting room. A new entrance was made for women to access their single closet. By this time, the interlocking frame

³⁰ *The Scone Advocate*, 29th May, 1936, p. 1.

had been enclosed and, because of the similarity of the weatherboards, it appears this work was undertaken in 1956 when the timber parcels office extension was provided. Interestingly, the cream shed that was to be demolished in 1956 was possibly not demolished and the interlocking frame, for which enclosure was not approved, was enclosed.

The last change to occur at Scone was its makeover by CityRail in the 1990s. CityRail demolished the 1933 platform extension at the down end and provided an extension at the up end at the standard height of 1065 mm. At that stage, there was no staff in the station but the building for several years was leased as a café, which also acted as the town's Tourist Information Centre.

Stuart Sharp

20th June, 2015

PANGELA, ARDGLEN AND KANKOOL

Two stations, Ardglen and Kankool, and a crossing loop called Pangela, once existed between Murrurundi and Willow Tree. Both Pangela and Kankool were provided in 1908 – 1909 in order to break up the long and steeply graded Murrurundi / Ardglen / Willow Tree sections. The loop at Pangela has since been removed, but loops still exist at Ardglen and Kankool, suitably lengthened for the longer trains in operation today. When CTC working was introduced between 1986 – 1988 all staff were withdrawn from these sites.

PANGELA

There is no public access to the site of Pangela.

Pangela was opened in 1908 as a crossing loop in the section Murrurundi – Ardglen, about half way up the 1 in 40 grade. Whilst it had a short platform, this was for staff use and Pangela was never a passenger station. The original signal box which was on the up side was replaced in 1947 with one on the down side. This is the one shown in the photograph.*.

There were two residences which were built for staff, but these have been demolished.

The loop and all facilities have been removed and, as a Google image shows, other than the earthworks of the track formation, nothing remains.

ARDGLEN

Ardglen was opened on 21/6/1877 as Doughboy Hollow. It was changed to Ardglen on 29/6/1893. Doughboy Hollow was the name of a nearby pastoral holding but the origin of the Ardglen name is uncertain. Ardglen was provided with down and up platforms between 1909 and 1940, after which the working of Ardglen seems to have been changed to main line and loop. The both platforms were still extant in 1959 (see photograph*). The station had a collection of timber buildings, none of which had any particular significance. Both platforms and the buildings have been demolished and replaced by a brick relay room.

There were several residences provided for staff, and at least one of these is extant.

Of interest was the Ardglen Public school. It was opened as Doughboy Hollow in February 1876 and changed to Ardglen in March 1893. The school closed at the end of 1909 and then shared as a half time school with Willow Tree until October 1910. It appears to have re-opened in 1914 and finally closed in May 1965. The school building is still extant and the school's Honour Role from the 1914 – 1918 Great War is on display in the Murrurundi Museum.

A Temi Public school opened in August 1880. It closed in September 1882, and re-opened provisionally in January 1903, closing in May 1913. In early 1903 it was known as Doughboy Hollow Creek.

A Temi Shale Mine Public School opened provisionally in August 1911. It closed December 1911, re-opened July 1914 and finally closed February 1915.

KANKOOL

Kankool opened 10/2/1909, the name being an Aboriginal word for a *wallaroo*. It was listed as a passenger station, the 1960 Working Timetable showing nos.9 and 10, the then Werris Creek passenger trains, as the only trains to regularly stop there. From 1909 it had two, i.e. up and down, platforms, but the down platform was abolished in 1941 when main and loop working replaced the up and down arrangement. There was a 12 ft X 10 ft timber building on the up platform, and these show in the photograph.* All buildings and platform have since been demolished and a modern brick relay room has taken their place.

At least three residences for staff were provided. Two of them survive, but are no longer in railway ownership.

Assistance from Dr Stuart Sharp, Ed Tonks and Ray Love in the preparation of these notes is acknowledged.

Gary Hughes
October 2015

* Photographs to be distributed on the tour.

WILLOW TREE RAILWAY STATION IN THE PRE 1929 PERIOD

From the opening on 13th August, 1877, the railway station was named Warrah after the name of a local cattle grazing property owned by the A. A. Company. The property, which was widely known, was 30 miles long and 13 miles wide. John Forsyth's records state that the name of the railway station changed to Willow Tree in 1879 but there is an entry in the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate*, 10th January, 1878, p. 2 that states that the government has advertised that Warrah station would be known as Willow tree from that date. Warrah estate was subdivided, starting in 1914 and continuing for a decade. Warrah was also the name of the local government authority for many years.

In the days when John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, was fairly happy, he approved on 9th May, 1876, a brick combination residence for Willow Tree, then called Warrah. It was the first substantial building to be erected since the line reached Murrurundi in April, 1872.

The platform was earth filled with a timber wall sloping to the toe. It was 220 feet long by 9 feet wide. In front of the platform building, the platform widened to 12 feet. There were to be three offices adjoining the platform, namely the ticket office, the enclosed general waiting room and a ladies' room. Behind these offices was a passage 5'5" wide that separated them from the residential accommodation, which was to consist of three small bedrooms, a dining room and a detached kitchen.

The design was similar to structures built at Rydal, Tarana and Georges Plains. The building at Quirindi was an exact copy of what was proposed at Willow Tree. While the Quirindi building was erected, the one at Willow Tree was not.

The decision not to go ahead with the provision of a combination structure was not made hastily and it was not until 1 March, 1877, that the decision was made to provide a "temporary station" constructed of timber. The building that was provided was primitive in its accommodation and also lacked any design input. It was symmetrical, with a gabled roof but without a platform awning. No heating was indicated on the plan and this would have been pretty tough especially for people in the open-fronted waiting area. John Whitton was a pretty cunning character and he declined to sign the plan for the "temporary building in wood". So embarrassed were the designers of what they were told to provide that they omitted any label for the public waiting area, which was unlined as well as having no wall facing the platform. The external walls were covered with horizontal weatherboards and the roof was covered with corrugated iron.

The reason why the brick combination building was not built was that there was not a single dwelling at Willow Tree, apart from a hotel a short way away. Willow Tree existed as a name on a map as it was the junction for the division of the main road to Tamworth and to Gunnedah. It was at Willow Tree that the Great Northern Railway crossed the Great Northern Road for the last time before Tamworth.

The evidence indicates that a timber building was built and, by 1903, there was a platform awning, which was absent from the 1877 plan. Termites had eaten the timber posts supporting the platform awnings where they entered the ground. In 1903, "these bottoms were cut off, fresh pieces of wood dovetailed into them, cement blocks placed where the holes in the ground had been, and the post lodged on them instead of on the ground."³¹

The residents of Willow Tree in 1915 were unhappy about their rail service and even more unhappy about their railway station. A local newspaper reported that "the railway station which, owing to the rapid growth of population and settlement, is now altogether out of date. Australians have more or less grown accustomed to taking the promises of electioneering politicians with a grain of salt, but at the same time might reasonably expect that any promises made personally by the Railway Commissioners could be relied upon. Some 6 months ago, When the Commissioners visited Willow Tree, they promised a deputation that the badly needed new railway station and extended platform would be immediately put in hand. This item has evidently been forgotten, for so far no move has been made towards providing the badly needed improvements in question."³² Regrettably, the people of Willow Tree had to wait for a further 12 years until they received their new platform building which was provided courtesy of God.

Fire destroyed the existing platform building and its contents at 1930 on 6th March, 1927. It is assumed that the 1877 timber building was erected but there is no evidence to indicate what type of structure was existing on the platform in 1927 when approval was given for the replacement of the existing structure with a concrete unit type building, which was provided in 1929.

The original residence for the Station Master has been demolished but there exists a residence approved in 1908, which was provided for the Night Officer, it being erected in 1910.

Stuart Sharp

10th June, 2015

³¹ *The Maitland Weekly Mercury*, 1st August, 1903, p.7.

³² *The Tamworth Daily Observer*, 30th October, 1915, p.3.

WILLOW TREE RAILWAY STATION IN THE POST 1929 PERIOD

Willow Tree opened in 1877 with a timber station building. On the evening of Sunday 6 March 1927 the building, which was unattended at the time, was destroyed by fire. The fire was reported in the Newcastle Herald of Thursday 10 March:



Between 1919 and 1932, virtually all new lines were provided with precast station buildings. It was unusual for precast buildings to be provided on existing lines however the current precast building, type Ac5, was provided in 1929. The Ac type precast buildings were provided on lines where passengers were regarded as more important than freight.

Five rooms are provided: parcels room, booking office with ticket window and fireplace, general waiting room with fireplace and a ladies waiting room with two earth closets. A small enclosed yard was provided next to the earth closets. The slab for that yard and the foundations for the nearby water tank are still there. Galvanised water tanks were provided rather than precast concrete tanks usually provided with precast buildings.

Willow Tree is one of only two type Ac5 buildings. The other is at Leeton which was opened in 1922. Though the buildings are the same type there are a number of differences:

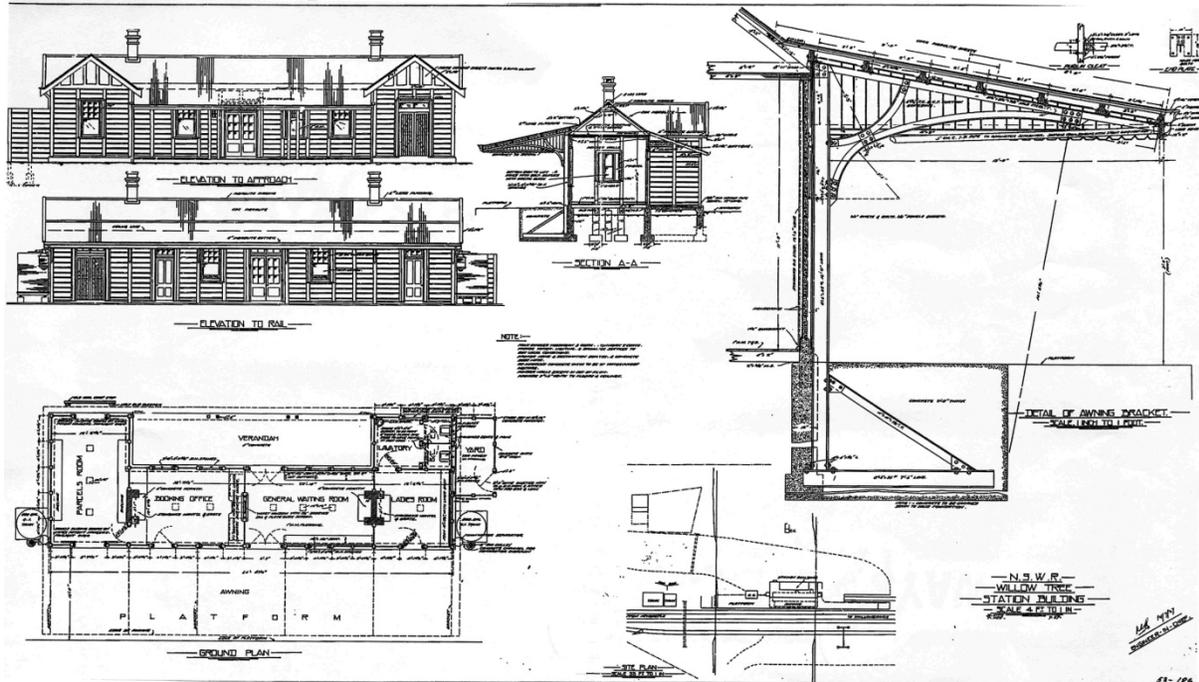
Willow Tree has 10" slabs, a corrugated iron roof without finials, double swing doors to the waiting room from the platform and verandah, cantilevered awning on the platform side, timber fanlights above the doors, plentiful windows with the top section divided into nine panes, fireplaces in the office, general waiting room and ladies waiting room and the underfloor area is enclosed.

In contrast, Leeton has 15" slabs, fibro slate roof with clay finials, single doors to the waiting room and verandah, precast concrete fanlights above the doors, minimal windows, traditional timber awning supports resting on corbels and an open underfloor area.

Fortunately, Willow Tree survives in near original condition with many features worth noting:

- The station name in the waiting room windows
- Timber seating in the waiting room and ladies waiting room.
- Fireplaces in the general waiting room, booking office and ladies waiting room.
- Rendered interior walls with decorative trim at the same height as the doorways
- A ticket window – only provided in the larger precast buildings.

Paul Horder.



MURRURUNDI

1871 PROGRESS REPORT ON CONSTRUCTION OF THE LINE

The Empire, which was a Sydney newspaper, provided a progress report on the construction of the Main North in October, 1871. It stated that:

“the terminus at Murrurundi will be similar to that at Scone, as far as the principal buildings are concerned, and will consist of a passenger station, in brick 70 feet long, with a platform of 200 feet, a good shed 120 feet, and engines shed 107 feet, besides a carriage dock, pump tank and turntable for reversing engines and tender. At this station also there will be 2 lines of rails, 6 engine pits, an engine store; the buildings dedicated to the secondary purpose of goods and machinery, standing on piles, hardwood and roof with galvanised iron; while the passenger station will have free stone dressings with a slate roof. Messrs. Stevens and Smith, the contractors, are actively engaged in leveling and preparing for the various buildings, which will necessarily cover a considerable area of ground. The timber is mostly brought from Sydney, as the local hardwood is either useless or inaccessible.”³³

At this time, the permanent way it was laid three miles beyond Wingen. The newspaper went on to say that “there will be no further passenger accommodation at Wingen than there is at present (which is limited), but a platform will most likely be established at Blandford for the convenience of the influential squatters and residents there; the Murrurundi a station, however, will probably be the terminus for some time to come, the Liverpool Range (for one reason) barring the way to the North, and making it doubtful for reasons both engineering and in the way of traffic, whether the lined should continue north or to the west.”³⁴

Interestingly, the Engineer for the contractors was George Cowdery, who in 1878 became Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines. Cowdery had entered the service of the New South Wales Railways in 1862 but was dismissed about 1870 because there was no work as the New South Wales Parliament had not approved the extensions of the trunk routes beyond Goulburn, Bathurst and Murrurundi. With Cowdery’s experience as supervising engineer on the southern and western lines for the Government, he had no trouble gaining employment as a supervising engineer working in the private sector. When Parliament approved the extensions for the trunk routes, Cowdery returned to the public sector. Was Cowdery’s dismissal by his then close workmate and boss, John Whitton, one of the reasons why Cowdery in the early 1880s turned against Whitton?

³³ *The Empire*, 31st October, 1871, p. 4.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

INTERPRETATION OF THE STATION SITE

The platform buildings at Murrurundi are a bit tricky to interpret, the main reason being that plans do not exist that show the original location of the refreshment room. The problem stems from the date of the brick structure at the up end, which is unusually two rooms wide.³⁵ There are three possible interpretations. The first is that the refreshment room was provided in the 1871 approved building and, at that time, a separate structure was built at the extreme up end to provide for waiting accommodations and offices. The second interpretation is that the refreshment room was initially provided in the detached brick building at the up end but, at a later date, the refreshment room was moved into the 1871 building and the original refreshment room became offices. There is also a possible third explanation in that the then free-standing brick building at the up end was originally only one room wide and the rooms behind those were added at a later date. The then free-standing building at the up end has a different form of support for the platform awning and this suggests that this was provided at a time other than the replacement of the posted verandah along the platform in 1890. At this time, interpretation of the platform buildings lacks certainty.

The interpretation presented in this paper states the best guess. Today, Murrurundi railway station is an unattractive composition of buildings which were provided at three periods. The first period was about the time of the line opening. The second period was in 1878 when the refreshment room was built and the third period was in 1890 when a structure was approved and constructed between the original building and the 1878 building. From the down end, the structures on the platform today are:

- The 1891, freestanding male brick toilet block with a parapeted roof,
- the 1871 brick building, which now only has one of its balanced parapet wings, located at the down end,
- an infill brick structure dating from 1890,
- the brick structure two rooms wide, dating from 1878 or a bit later, &
- interlocking frame with covering.

There was no signal box on the platform but, in the 1950s or earlier, the interlocking frame was enclosed on three sides with Fibro wall sheeting but retaining an open front facing the platform. The position of the frame is marked by the small opening at the extreme up end of the wall of the platform.

There are two photographs in *Bulletin*, May, 2003, p.174 which show a line of advertising hoardings and palm trees located at the down end of the platform. The photographs were taken in September, 1942, and clearly show that, by that time in the

³⁵ It seems that the reason why the structure was two rooms wide was that there was no further room along the platform as this structure was located at the extreme up end of the platform.

history of the station, its busiest days were well and truly gone. In fact, it seems the station's busiest days ended in the 1890s.

STATION OPENING

The station was opened on 4th April, 1872, but the contract to build the station and the buildings was not let until 6th September, 1871, and it seems that neither the platform nor the station were ready for the opening date.

John Forsyth indicates that a temporary platform was erected in 1875. The opening, therefore, is a bit of a mystery.

THE LINE OPENING PERIOD

There is one common element amongst the three termini of Goulburn, Bathurst and Murrurundi and that is that the station works were incomplete at the time of line openings. At Goulburn, while the platform building appears to have been completed, the two-storey residence for the Station Master had not even been commenced. The platform building at Bathurst was incomplete and so was the structure at Murrurundi. This tactic of not completing stations before they were handed over to the Railway Commissioners at the time of line opening was a deliberate ploy by John Whitton to save money as, after the opening date, any further expenditure came from the budget of the Railway Commissioners rather than Whitton's budget. It must have rubbed a lot of people the wrong way including those within the Railway organisation and town residents.

John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, approved on the 27th July, 1871, a brick building with hipped roof of the same design that he provided at Singleton, Muswellbrook and Scone. Murrurundi station was opened on 4th April, 1872 and the structure at Murrurundi was the last on the Main North to reflect the plain-looking but elegant Georgian style of architecture and it was the second last approved example of Georgian architecture on the entire system at the time of line opening, the last being at Kelso in 1874. The contractors were James Stephens, James Smith and others. The rooms were toilets, ladies' waiting room, general waiting room, ticket office, parcels office and porters' room. The building measured 74' x 15' and, unlike the similar structure at Scone, had stucco on the chimneys rather than face brick. The floor plan of the Murrurundi structure was the reverse of the building at Scone.

In relation to Murrurundi station, one newspaper said that the building "represents no remarkable feature, being about the same size as that at Scone and apparently similarly

provided with accommodation for the public.”³⁶ The location of the Murrurundi station had been a source of irritation since 1870 and, when the line was opened in 1872, an “omnibus service” was operating to take passengers between the station and the town. The station was located in such a position that a new public road had to be built to provide access.³⁷ The people of Murrurundi were more concerned with the inadequate size of the good shed and, six months after the opening, complained that it needed to be doubled in size and with a platform on the outside.³⁸

There was general disinterest in the passenger railway station by the town folk of Murrurundi. They were more interested in the problems they had with the small size of the good shed. “Owing to the accumulation of goods at the railway goods shed, and the consequent want of room, we understand that the railway officials have determined to charge a sum of one shilling per day for all consignments of goods allowed to remain in the shed. We believe that the scarcity of teams is the reason of this accumulation.”³⁹

When the line was opened to Quirindi in 1877, there was a similar complaint about the inadequate size of the good sheds at Willow Tree and Quirindi. One newspaper claimed that the New South Wales Railways had repeated the “absurdly adequate arrangements made at Murrurundi” and that “a similar serious mistake was being made of the goods shed at Quirindi, not to speak of the miniature at Willow Tree.”⁴⁰ In another article, worse statements were made and a reporter described the poor planning, stating that “a fatuous narrowness of the vision has characterised the whole design (i.e. the platform building and good shed), in spite of the lesson well learned (sic) at Murrurundi.” He went on to say that these were “blunders which are so inexcusable.”⁴¹

³⁶ ³⁶ The *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 6th April, 1872, p. 2.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 15th October, 1872, p. 2

³⁹ Ibid., 19th May, 1874, p. 3

⁴⁰ Ibid., 12th June, 1877, p. 4

⁴¹ Ibid.

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. The push for cheaper railways was not restricted to New South Wales. The colony of Victoria was having the very same debate.⁴² Throughout the 1870s, Whitton moved away from his beloved Georgian influenced design, and used temporary structures and combination offices and residences. He had 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. Whitton clearly was aware that the simple, gabled roof building was the most dominant form of station building used in the British Empire, Europe and America. It was applied where utilitarian and low-cost buildings were needed. He was on sure ground that the gabled roof building brought with it substantial cost savings. He also knew it could not be used in all locations because of the strength of local, influential men who demanded a higher level of ornamentation than was available with the Georgian design.

THE 1878 REFRESHMENT ROOM

Very few NSW stations before 1880 had refreshment rooms. Evidence exists that only Bathurst, Goulburn and Albury had this feature. It was also reported in 1878 that a refreshment room “is being fast proceeded with” at Murrurundi and a regional newspaper said that there “will be great competition for the right to supply the public with refreshments.”⁴³ The date of the opening of the refreshment room at Murrurundi is unknown. It was William Mason who planned the Colony’s first refreshment room at a country station and that occurred in 1869 at Goulburn. His belief in the need for refreshment rooms was in stark contrast to the policy of his then superior, John Whitton. It was Mason in 1876 who planned a refreshment room in Newcastle station much to the displeasure of Whitton. Mason also included one in the replacement building at West Maitland station because Whitton at that time did not have control of existing lines. Mason could place refreshment facilities in existing buildings without fear, or at least that is what he thought.⁴⁴ The two refreshment rooms at West Maitland were to be

⁴² A. Winzenreid, Introduction to a reproduction of Victoria, *Report from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways on the question of Selecting Localities For the Permanent Survey of Narrow – Gauge Lines*, 1896, reprinted in 1979.

⁴³ The *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River general Advertiser*, 7th September, 1878, p.6.

⁴⁴ Unfortunately, Mason was demoted later in 1878. Was it because Whitton complained about Mason’s insistence on refreshment facilities and the high capital and operational costs that they incurred?

located behind the right side of the verandah though there is a little doubt as to whether the refreshment facilities were in fact provided at West Maitland station.

In 1881, the combined length of the platform buildings was 152 feet and they were 16'6" at their greatest width.

It appears that, because the refreshment room occupied a large part of the 1871 building, the decision was made to provide additional office and waiting room accommodation by providing a most unusual brick structure, which was located at the up end of the platform. It contained a parcels office and booking office, as well as a new general waiting room though, as stated previously, this may not have been the case.

As part of the refreshment room changes, the rear verandah of the 1871 building had been enclosed in 1878 and two small bedrooms were provided at each end of the former verandah. Today, steps at the rear of the building mark the entrance to the general waiting room and the parcels office.

THE 1890 ALTERATIONS

The year, 1890, saw a significant change to the platform buildings. On the 31st December, 1890, both James Angus, the Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines, and Chief Commissioner Eddy approved the removal of the timber posts supporting the platform awning of the main building and their replacement by a series of cantilevered brackets attached to posts measuring 9" x 7" bolted to the external wall. These fabricated brackets remain in position today and the replacement of vertical awning posts at Murrurundi was amongst the very first installation of Chief Commissioner Eddy's policy to replace them with cantilevered brackets. Another significant aspect of the work to change the building in 1891 was the use of an external contractor, in this case Charles Baker, to carry out the work rather than the use of departmental employees within the Existing Lines Branch. Eddy used external contractors on a number of occasions in the early 1890s in an obvious attempt to lower costs in the light of the decline in available capital funds.

As part of the changes, Angus approved the expansion of the parcels office by the insertion of a connecting building between the 1871 building and an existing, brick structure. It had a parapet which hid a skilion roof to the rear. This structure survives today.

In 1890, Angus also introduced a standard lamp room 8' x 8' with a hipped roof topped by a timber finial. The external walls sheeted with corrugated iron. The very first

examples were provided at Murrurundi, Katoomba and Otford. At this time, the free-standing male toilet block at the end of the 1871 building was constructed.

THE 1919 INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

Nothing good came out of World War 1 for the New South Wales Railways. The returning soldiers brought with them the Spanish influenza epidemic and a number of stations on the rail system in 1919 had an “inhalation chamber” installed on the platform. The one at Murrurundi was installed on 19 April.

Everyone arriving by train had to walk through this facility in which their throat was sprayed with a substance to disinfect their throats and nasal passages and limit the spread of the disease. The disease was at its worse between January and August, 1919. There was no charge to the public.

No known plan exists of an inhalation chamber on a New South Wales railway station but Ray Love reports that he understands that these were simple, timber framed structures holding one person and covered with passion or canvas.

It is not known where on the platform the inhalation chamber was placed.

PLATFORM HEIGHT

The platform at Murrurundi was for many years below the standard height and in 1980 it was raised to the then current standard of 1085 mm by providing a gradient varying from one in 6.7 to one in 7.2, starting from the front of the platform buildings and rising to the edge of the platform. Before the work commenced, the height of the platform was 708 mm and it was raised 440 mm, thereby making the height of the platform in front of the interlocking frame 1137 mm – quite some height above the standard. In order to meet the required gradient, the platform parcels weighing scales had to be removed. It was a shame that the correct height could not be achieved at that time but such was the departmental policy at that time that the standard height was more nominal than mandatory – typical of the New South Wales Railway engineering practice, so far as customer policy was concerned.

OFFICIAL RESIDENCES

Two styles of official residences were used on the Great Northern Railway while it was being constructed – one being basically square in plan and identified by the pyramidal roof with the chimney at the apex of the roof and the other having a plan in the shape of a crucifix with a gabled roof.

There are four official residences extant in Murrurundi. The first residence is that of the Station Master and is located at this structure at 3 Polding Street. It is a non-standard structure but has similarities with the similar building at Greta dating from 1876 behind the building on the up platform and the now demolished residence at Willow tree on the down side of the station. From the evidence, it would seem that the Murrurundi building was not provided at the time of line opening but a little later. There are newspaper reports of its existence in 1879.

The second residence is a brick gatehouse dating from 1872 and the floor plan is in the form of a crucifix. This structure is located at 30 Polding Street.

The third residence is also in Polding Street on the corner of Victoria Street and is a timber building dating from 1908. It was around this period that many timber residences of similar design were provided on the Main North line, including the one at Pangela. What presents a little question mark is the use of the gabled roof on the structure at Murrurundi as virtually every other residence built after the line opening had a hipped roof.

The fourth residence extant is at 59 Haydon Street.

There is also a residence at the level crossing at the down end of the station on the down side and this may also have been a Railway structure. The lack of evidence stimulates a question mark about this building.

There were a few other residences at Murrurundi but they appear to have been demolished. As it was the case at Harden, two semi-attached residences were combined into a single building and used as the Railway Institute.

TRANSFER OF MANAGEMENT AND FACILITIES FROM MURRURUNDI TO WERRIS CREEK

The existing refreshment room at Werris Creek was intended in 1926 to have an additional 26 bed rooms but the project did not proceed. However, the office of the District Superintendent was relocated from Murrurundi on 28th February to Werris Creek, resulting in the addition of the first floor of the existing building. *The Staff* magazine, on 23rd April, 1926, p. 221 stated that "Werris Creek had always been regarded as having one of the finest country stations in the State and the (first floor) additions ...have added to the bold appearance of the buildings". This transfer of Traffic Branch staff in 1926 followed a similar transfer of the locomotive depot in 1917.

In 1973, the station was connected with the town's sewerage system and both the male and female toilets were renewed at that time.

Throughout the New South Wales rail system in the 1970s, it was a common practice to replace heating by coal with LP gas. It was Murrurundi's turn in 1976 when the office of the Station Master was fitted with gas heating. The unit was a Rinnai 82 SF console and two Rheem 108 kg gas bottles on a concrete pad.

Stuart Sharp

19th June, 2015

THE MURRURUNDI SHALE OIL INDUSTRY

Since the publication of The Wolgan Valley Railway in the ARHS Bulletin in 1959, interest in the oil shale industry in NSW has been maintained at a high level, and led to the publication of several books on the subject. One of these is the Society's own publication The Shale Railways of NSW (G H Eardley and E M Stephens). Since first published in 1974, it has seen several reprints and in 2015 an updated edition was published by the ARHSnsw. A copy of the chapter from this book on the British Australian Oil Company's operations at Murrurundi will be available for all participants during the tour. The Murrurundi and District Historical Society has also published a history on the industry in Murrurundi called "A Big Undertaking – or was it too big?" and copies of this should be available for purchase when we visit the Murrurundi Museum on our second day. Further, The Burning Mists of Time (P Hammon and P Pell, Philsquare Publishing 2009) contains a few details on this amazing project, and these sources have been drawn on, with permission, in the following notes.

There is also an essay on the British Australian Oil Company's operations written by Mark Langdon, and this is published in Byways of Steam 30 (Eveleigh Press). This essay covers the whole operation in some detail, as well as the corporate difficulties of the company and its ultimate fate.

In 1905, the Australian Kerosene Oil and Mineral Company (AKO & M) developed plans for a major enterprise at Temi, a deposit some 7km north of Murrurundi, that had been found in 1862 and then called Colley Creek. The plans included a mine at an elevation of 740m at Temi, a 5km long aerial ropeway over the Liverpool Range to a bank of retorts on a new rail siding at Temple Court (Murrurundi), and finally an oil refinery in Newcastle. It appears that within a year, the AKO&M had "run out of steam," (or more likely, run out of money!) and a new company called the British Australian Oil Company (BAOC) was set up in London to acquire the assets of AKO&M. This new company then set about completing the Murrurundi venture. By 1910 the mine was in operation employing 179 miners, mostly from Newcastle. Oil shale was stockpiled at the mine awaiting completion by Adolf Bleichert & Co of the aerial ropeway to take the shale over the intervening range to the crusher and retorts at Murrurundi. There were two benches of retorts, each with 48 Young and Fyfe patent mechanical action vertical retorts. The crude oil produced from these retorts was taken by rail tanker over their siding to Temple Court near Murrurundi, and thence to the Company's newly constructed refinery at Hamilton near Newcastle.

Whilst exact figures are uncertain, it would appear that in its 6 year life about 112000 tons of shale were mined at Temi, but the venture was a financial failure, and the BAOB never issued any dividends. The reasons for its failure were complex, but union problems and the effects of competition from American oil were mentioned, but, according to The Burning Mists of Time, the real problem was probably geology. An examination of the mine plan shows that the seam of torbanite (shale) sloped down quite steeply to the north at between 1 in 6 and 1 in 12, and was criss-crossed with intrusive dykes and faults. Most of the workings comprised drives and crosscuts with little pillar recovery. Water would have collected at the advancing headings, and this,

coupled with the small amount of pillar recovery or longwall mining, would have made mining very expensive.

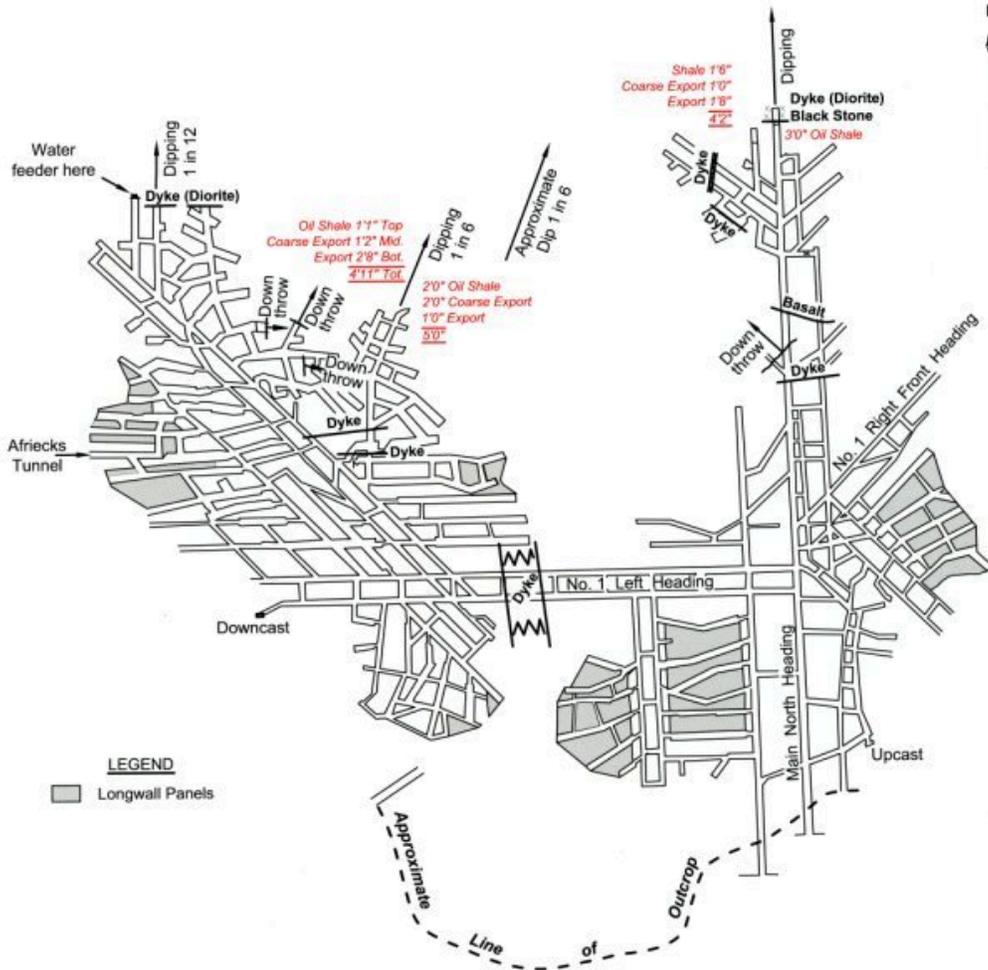


Figure 4-6: Mine plan of Temi at Murrurundi

Production from this remarkable venture is summarised below.

1910	1,500 tons, awaiting aerial ropeway
1911	9,200 tons
1912	40,000 tons, explosion of consignment of sulphuric acid at the refinery in Newcastle
1913	5,600, closure for "greater part of year"
1914	46,315 tons
1915	9,410 tons, operations closed

The above plan has been copied, with permission, from *The Burning Mists of Time*.

WHAT REMAINS TODAY

In short, not much. By the early 1920's the works at both Murrurundi and Hamilton had been demolished and the equipment disposed of. Unfortunately, there are only a few photographs available of the Hamilton Refinery, and so far no site plans have been found for either the refinery at Hamilton or the shale works at Murrurundi.

The siding from Temple Court Station to the Murrurundi works was removed in 1931. All that remains today are the remnants of the earth embankments either side of Pages River. All of the track has been lifted and track bed along Elizabeth Street obliterated by the street reconstruction. Temple Court Station was closed on 19/2/1975 and has since been removed and the site cleared.

At the Murrurundi works site, there are remnants of a brick tank stand and the brick loading bank. Buried in the nearby bush are piles of bricks and some discernible remains of the retorts. Perhaps the gem is the foundations of the bottom terminus for the overhead ropeway from the Temi mine. The immensity of what remains and of these foundations gives some clue as to the huge construction that was carried out to build the works.

The Hamilton Refinery site was acquired by the Shell Company in about 1925, and they set about establishing their Newcastle fuel depot there. This depot closed in July 2014, and since then the depot has been decommissioned. The fate of this site into the future is not known. However, there remains at Hamilton the manager's residence fronting Chatham Road, another building also on Chatham Road which could have been another residence or perhaps an office building or maybe a laboratory, and the remains of one of the original brick buildings which was part of the refinery.

Gary Hughes
September 2015