

RAILWAY GATEHOUSE LOCATED AT 30 MILES 35 CHAINS 50 LINKS OR AT 71 MINTO ROAD, MINTO

The survey for the site was completed on 18th November, 1901. The evidence indicates that the level crossing was already in existence prior to the provision of the gatehouse. At the time, the land for the residence formed part of Minto Road. The Railway Department notified the public of its intention to resume land at Minto for the gatehouse in February, 1902.¹ It was the opening of a new residential subdivision served by Minto Road that prompted the allocation of a full-time gatekeeper at the level crossing.

On 20th May, 1902, the drawing room of the Existing Lines Branch issued a plan for a gatekeeper's cottage at Minto, located about 500 metres in the direction of Sydney from the station and located on the Campbelltown-bound side of the line. The structure was built in the same year the land was resumed and the plan was prepared – something that did not often occur.

The structure was timber framed and clad externally in horizontally Set weatherboards as was the custom at the time. The house was small, being 25 feet wide and 34 feet deep. It contained four rooms, namely three bedrooms, a living room and a “wash house” at the rear. The most modern feature of the design was the attachment of a single toilet closet to the rear of the house, contrasting to the 19th-century tradition of having the toilet at or near the rear boundary fence of the property. The closet measured five feet long and three feet wide, this being the usual width of a toilet cubicle in a male toilet on a railway platform.²

The dominant design feature of the structure was the transverse gable roof with the roof rafters extended forward at the front of the property to form a five feet wide verandah supported by four vertical timber posts. No alpha-numerical code was allocated to the plan, as was the custom in the Existing Lines Branch, though structure did accord with the K1 standard design of 1899. This design was only a smaller version of the more well-known J1 design, the main architectural differences were:

- the roof pitch (lower in the K1 design and steeper in the J1 style),
- overall dimensions (narrower by about six feet for the K1 style), &

¹ *Evening News*, 5th February, 1902, p. 2.

² Female toilets were usually six inches wider than male toilets.

- the shape of the building footprint (rectangular floor plan for the K1 design and “L” shape for the J1 building).

The small structures were used not only for gatekeepers but for pumpers, porters and station staff under the rank of Station Master.

The cottage at 71 Minto Road was the second official railway residence at Minto. In 1880, a timber house for the Porter-in-Charge had been built immediately on the Campbelltown side of the level crossing at the station. It appears that this first structure later was taken over on the status of the station was elevated and the residence became the house for the Station Master. In 1906, the third residence was erected opposite the 1880 house but about 50 metres away from the running line.

The cottage at 71 Minto Road belongs to a family of structures that date back to the mid-1880s when capital funding was under pressure. With the onset of the 1890s Depression, this type of structure became much more popular both on new and existing lines and continued to be used until about 1917. The use of gabled roofs on the New South Wales Railways was always regarded as a display of cheapness and the preferred roof shape was for a simple hipped or hip and valley style. After the First World War, hipped roofs became the norm and, while costing more to build, they were preferred as only a very small quantity were approved into the 1920s and beyond. The little building at Minto displays all the characteristics of a cheap structure with a complete absence of architectural decoration.

The level crossing was closed on the 22nd January, 1954.³

The structure is now the last surviving timber gatehouse in the Sydney metropolitan area.

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³ *Government Gazette New South Wales*, 2nd July, 1953, number 129, page 2295.