

WELLINGTON RAILWAY STATION

THE LINE BETWEEN ORANGE AND DUBBO - A DISPLAY OF FUNDAMENTAL STATION DESIGN CHANGE

In the 1870s, the Main West line between Orange and Dubbo looked like it was some sort of giant architectural experimentation.

John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, approved of a moderate-sized, functional building for the now city of Orange and did not approve a First-Class structure similar to that at Bathurst. It must be assumed that the town of Orange was much smaller in the 1870s and that was the reason Orange received a combination office/residence similar to the ones at Rydal, Tarana, Georges Plains and Blayney.

The railway line west of Bathurst to Orange was one of the “cheap” lines that Whitton supervised and he was faced with very tight amounts of money. During the 1870s, he chose construction of combination platform buildings as a means of minimising expenditure. In the 1870s, Whitton experimented greatly with the use and design of buildings. This was reflected in the very unusual design of the gatehouse at Blayney, which was demolished 20 years ago, and the design of the surviving Station Master’s residence at Millthorpe. By the time the line was being constructed beyond Orange towards Dubbo, Whitton had settled on a new design for Station Master’s residences and then proceeded to use that design extensively from 1880 to 1889. However, he continued to experiment with platform buildings between Orange and Dubbo and had not settled on a new design until he approved the suite of platform buildings for Narromine station.

The extension of the line west of Orange manifested the change in design policy. The buildings at Mullion Creek, Warne, Stuart Town and Maryvale were to be built from a single plan. They were to be simple, brick, open-fronted waiting sheds measuring 26 feet by 12 feet. Over the following years, additions were made and, ultimately, the structures had the appearance of non-standard, brick buildings measuring 36 feet in length with provision for a ticket office as well as two waiting rooms.

The platform building at Wellington was more significant in design and larger in size than the building at Orange. It was simply a case of approving a larger building for a larger town. Moreover, the building at Wellington did not contain residential accommodation for the Station master and his family. Compared to the other intermediate station buildings between Orange and Wellington, the structure at Wellington was a giant.

An equally correct title for this section of line would be: The 1870s – a Time of Fundamental Station Design Change. The revolution in the platform building style had started at Raglan the construction of an unusual, brick temporary building. Patterns showing similar non-standard architectural explosions were seen on the other trunk railway lines.

It was John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, Railway Construction Branch, Department of Public Works, who was responsible for station design policy. Between 1869 and 1879, there was a period of station design policy uncertainty that applied to all three trunk railway lines in New South Wales. Several combination structures and temporary buildings were erected. At some stations, no building was provided while others portable structures were utilised. The western line demonstrates the change in design policy either side of Dubbo. The strange creatures that continue to exist at Wellington and Dubbo stations reflect the period of constant change.

What is a surprise is the unusual design adopted for both the platform buildings at Millthorpe and Spring Hill. Not only were those buildings unusual, there were many platform structures on the western line that were atypical of what was happening elsewhere on the New South Wales railway system. Other examples are at Springwood, Wellington, Dubbo and Trangie show strange design features. These are additional to the bizarre case in 1891 of erecting a building at Katoomba which was designed purely for the main western line from Sydney to Homebush. The existence of unusual design elements was not restricted to station buildings. In 1880, a house for the Station Master had been built at Bathurst; similar one was erected at Blayney in 1885 and a third example instructed at Orange in 1886. All three examples shared a similar but very rare design element – a faceted bay window on the street elevation. Nowhere else in New South Wales where there three examples in the same region. Why? Some heritage architects have considered the possibility of an external design influence on some buildings on the western line. The design that was used at Millthorpe and Spring Hill was never again utilised on the New South Wales railway system.

An unusual brick building was also erected at Petersham in 1878, with a roof structure identical to the building at Wellington. Was it a co-incidence that unusual brick buildings with the same roof style were approved in consecutive years – 1878 at Petersham and 1879 at Wellington? Were there three steps in the design process leading to the 1897 standard Pioneer terminus style – 1878 at Petersham; 1879 at Wellington and the issue of the standard design in 1897? I think not. Precedents for all three examples could be found in use for private residences in Sydney and country areas.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE WELLINGTON STATION BUILDING FROM A HERITAGE PERSPECTIVE?

Some commentators have expressed the view that the building at Wellington is a representative example of New South Wales railway architecture at the time of its construction. While the Wellington building is representative of departmental policies relating to the transverse layout of the rooms within the building and the basic near-symmetry based on the centre pedestrian entry, the overall design is not representative of 19th century New South Wales station architecture.

The reason why the building is important as an item in the history of New South Wales station buildings relates to the non-standard design and date of construction. For a start, the building is not representative of any other example of platform building, other than a close relationship to the platform building at Dubbo. Secondly, its absence of attractive design features was a marked contrast to the extremely attractive refreshment room that was built adjacent to the Dubbo end of the platform building. The refreshment room showed strong Italianate characteristics and stood in marked design contrast to the 1879 Main platform structure. The refreshment room was the work of George Cowdery, who was in charge of existing lines, and the archaeological remains of the refreshment room provide a reminder of the conflict between Cowdery and Whitton, the different policies of the Railway Construction Branch and the Existing Lines Branch and the differing amounts of money these branches had available to expend.

It is the very unusual design of the building at Wellington that is the foundation of its high heritage values. It is one of only a few surviving buildings from the 1870s that reflect the turmoil John Whitton was facing at the time in determining what sort of buildings to provide at the lowest possible cost, considering the huge task he faced in extending the trunk and other routes throughout the Colony.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE WELLINGTON STATION

It seems that, by January, 1879, the NSW Railways had informed the local community at Wellington that there were insufficient funds “for a decent railway station.”¹ One correspondent criticised the apathy of the townsfolk and wrote:

“the people of Wellington don’t say a word about it (the decision to build other than a First-Class station building). I believe they would be perfectly satisfied if the government were to build a portable shed on wheels, for a station to be

¹ *Evening News*, 4th January, 1879, p. 8.

moved on to the next town when the train (i.e. construction of the line) passes here and leave us without one at all.”²

Tenders closed first the first time on 19th November, 1878, but fresh tenders were called on 28th January, 1879, for the construction of the Wellington station building.³ Charles Grace was the successful builder and he was regarded both in his home town of Tamworth and at Wellington as competent and experienced. He had already completed the station building at West Tamworth in 1878 and the press reported pleasure with his work at that town. He also built the goods shed at Wellington. At the end of March, 1879, Grace was digging for the foundations at Wellington but stopped to show a newspaper reporter the physical size of the intended building. The reporter was impressed, saying:

“I must say that, from the ground they (i.e. the rooms) will cover, they will form a respectable block of buildings.”⁴

Building materials, including bricks, were starting to be stacked at the site in March, 1879. By April, the foundations had been completed.⁵ In May, tenders had been called for the construction of public roads to the station site.⁶ Tenders closed in June, 1879, for the sinking of a well for a water supply at the station.⁷

The building contractor reported in October, 1879, about the difficulty obtaining timber but work was, notwithstanding, reported as being “in a very forward state” and it was anticipated that the building would be completed at the time of line opening, which local people thought would be in December, 1879.⁸ In November, 1879, work was reported as continuing on the station building.⁹ By January, 1880, work was described as being “nearly finished” and, one month later, the good shed had been completed and “a little finishing off only remains to be done station-house and Station Master’s residence.”¹⁰

The local community was very satisfied with the location of the Wellington railway station. The *Freeman’s Journal* stated:

² Ibid.

³ *NSW Government Gazette*, 15th November, 1878, No. 359, p. 4589 and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8th January, 1879, p. 8.

⁴ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 29th March, 1879, p. 40.

⁵ Ibid., 19th April, 1879, p. 39.

⁶ Ibid., 31st May, 1879, p. 40.

⁷ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 21st June, 1879, p. 40.

⁸ Ibid., 11th October, 1879, p. 40 and 25th October, 1879, p. 39.

⁹ Ibid., 1st November, 1879, p. 40.

¹⁰ *The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser*, 24th January, 1880, p. 174 and *Freeman’s Journal*, 14th February, 1880, p. 8.

“the site of the station is admirable – only a few hundred yards from the main street; and from the platform and approaching train will be visible at a distance of two miles in either direction.”¹¹

The opening of the line between Orange and Wellington occurred on 1st June, 1880. The building at Wellington was described as “brick and is a particularly handsome and commodious building every accommodation, waiting rooms, ticket offices et cetera.” Another newspaper stated “the present station is a very pretty building, containing booking office, waiting rooms, lamp and porters room, parcels room, et cetera.”¹² The surprising feature of the station is that it was completed prior to the opening of the line. This was extremely atypical for a large platform building to be completed prior to the handing over of the line to the Railway Commissioners.

The Wellington building was large relative to the vast majority of platform buildings erected on the New South Wales rail system but was not large in any absolute sense. The building mirrored the very modest size of the New South Wales population and economy. It contained seven rooms in the main building plus a semi-detached toilet block, with a total length of 134 by 26 feet wide the ends of the main building. No plan survives so it is unknown who approved of the building and exactly where the original rooms were located. The structure was modest in size and could not be classified as a First-Class building. As well as the modest size, it looked unappealing and survives in 2017 to continue looking strange. There was no coherent design. It was asymmetrical, having only one pavilion. The roof was the funniest aspect. It was hipped on the road side and gabled on the rail side and covered with corrugated iron, not slate. Conservation Architect, David Sheedy, says the building is “a modified Victorian Italianate with a Railway Gothic influence to the main gables”. The toilet pavilion has a hipped roof and the reveals to doors and windows are stuccoed. The website of the New South Wales Heritage Office says that the bricks for the building were obtained from a local kiln.

It was reported in the press in July, 1880, that the station building “will be finished by the end of the month.”¹³ This was amazing! The platform building was completed seven months before the line opening. Such early construction was greatly inconsistent with the general trend of station building but, strangely, the building at Wellington had been completed well before the line opening.

Like Wellington, the Dubbo structure was not a First-Class building. Stone was a common building product in the town at the time for prominent buildings and its use was not a sign of special status as an available building product. One feature that made

¹¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 14th February, 1880, p. 8.

¹² *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 5th June, 1880, p. 16.

¹³ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 23rd July, 1880, p. 2.

both Wellington and Dubbo look attractive was the location of two-storey residences for the Station Masters at the edge of the station forecourts. This was a measure used by Whitton to trick local residents of the opulence of the station and, thereby, the reflected status of the locality served.

THE STATION OPENING

The station opening at the time of the opening of the line between Orange and Wellington – 8th June, 1880.

The opening of the line to Wellington was very important strategically for the development of the New South Wales economy and the physical direction of the railway system. At the opening ceremony, Sir John Robertson, who was the Minister for Public Instruction in the government of Sir Henry Parkes, said that the crowd was “the first grand gathering of the represent the people of this inland territory.”¹⁴ it seems that this seemingly strange and unexplained comment was hinting at the hoped discovery of the inland Nirvana in the centre of Australia. Robertson in the same speech provided a realistic balance to his dreaming when he said, “this railway business was a troublesome one.”¹⁵

At the time of the line opening on 8th June, 1880, there were three intermediate stations between Orange and Wellington, being Mullion Creek, Warne and Stuart Town, this latter station being described as a mining town. At these stations, the structures were described by one newspaper as “waiting sheds and other station buildings.”¹⁶ Another newspaper described the stations at Mullion Creek and Warne as a “brick waiting shed, a platform and ticket office.”¹⁷ A brick residence for the Station Master was under construction at Mullion Creek but there was no reference for a residence at Warne.¹⁸ It seems that the station building and residence at Stuart Town were incomplete as at the line opening but it was intimated that a similar waiting shed and residence were to be provided. There was an additional station at The Springs (Dripstone) but it was reported that there was only a platform and siding at that location.¹⁹

Brick gatehouses were constructed at a number of additional locations between Orange and Wellington and tenders for these closed on 17th June, 1879.²⁰ At Wellington, there was a two-storey residence for the Station Master at least three additional residences

¹⁴ *Evening News*, 2nd June, 1880, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 5th June, 1880, p. 18.

¹⁷ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 5th June, 1880, p. 16.

¹⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2nd June, 1880, p. 7.

¹⁹ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 5th June, 1880, p. 18.

²⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4th July, 1879, p. 9.

for various staff. Also, there were four gatehouses, these being at Maxwell, Wearne, Charles and Gobolion Streets. All the residences have disappeared.

Like a few other country towns in New South Wales, a racecourse platform was opened at Wellington but this did not occur until 1904. It is unknown when it closed.

THE WELLINGTON REFRESHMENT ROOM IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER REFRESHMENT ROOMS

When refreshment rooms were opened before 1882, they were small in size and mostly contained in basic timber sheds with the walls sheeted with corrugated iron.²¹

It was in 1883 that the Railway Department got its act together to provide additional railway refreshment rooms at Goulburn, Yass, Junee, Albury, Bathurst and Wellington.²² What is interesting about refreshment rooms in the 1880s is that quite a number were opened as temporary facilities. Those rooms at Goulburn, Yass and Wellington were opened in 1883 in temporary rooms. In 1884, Werris Creek and Armidale were also opened as temporary facilities and, lastly, the room at Nyngan was opened as a temporary facility in 1885. No similar refreshment rooms were open in the 1870s or the 1890s on a temporary basis. No rooms were open between 1885 and 1890 on a temporary basis. Why were those six rooms between 1883 and 1885 opened on a temporary basis? Not the case of money as there were plenty of capital funds available for works on existing lines.

It was not until late 1883 that the NSW Licensing Court allowed the NSW Railways to sell all forms of alcohol to customers. The Licensing Act allowed the sale of alcohol though each lessee of the refreshment rooms had to apply to the Railway Commissioner for a license, which lasted 12 months at a cost of £30. No gambling was allowed on the premises and no sale of alcohol was permitted to Railway employees. The request for alcohol service by an employee was an offence and a penalty was dismissal. Drunk people were not allowed entry into the refreshment rooms. The licenses could be cancelled if there were two breaches of the legislation.²³ The introduction of the sale of alcohol co-incided with a settlement in 1882 between the NSW Railways and a very astute businessman, named John Castner, with a decision that the Railway Department, and not Castner, would provide the accommodation in which refreshment rooms would operate. In that year, he stitched a deal to operate all

²¹ There were exceptions, such as Mittagong and Mount Victoria in 1873 and a failed attempt at Goulburn in 1868.

²² *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 2nd June, 1883, p. 6. The Wellington refreshment room, which opened on 4th June, 1883, was described in the press as small. Its design is unknown.

²³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21st November, 1883, p. 9.

Refreshment Rooms on the NSW rail system for a period of five year.²⁴ What a genius! He had completely avoided the capital expenditure to set up his business.

It is commonly stated that the 1875 plan for Bathurst did not contain a refreshment room because the Railway authorities considered that Bathurst would be the terminus of the Great Western Railway. The evidence is to the contrary. Before Whitton had approved of the plan for Bathurst, work was proceeding to extend the line towards Orange. The Bathurst building did not have a Refreshment Room because John Whitton did not consider it to be a priority, keeping in mind the small amount of funds he was allocated.

It was not long before Castner advised the NSW Railways that he intended to operate a Refreshment Room at Bathurst. Now obliged to provide space for bar and food service, the NSW Railways had two options. The first was to build a new, detached structure and the second was to adapt the existing structure. Table 4 below sets out the method of provision for Railway Refreshment Rooms on the Main West line.

TABLE 4: RAILWAY REFRESHMENT ROOMS ON THE MAIN WEST LINE

DATE OF STRUCTURE	LOCATION	METHOD OF PROVISION
1873	Blackheath	Two-storey building – not constructed
1874	Mount Victoria	Detached or semi-detached structure at the down end – opened instead of one at Blackheath
1880	Penrith	Accommodation within existing building
1883	Bathurst	Extension of existing building at Sydney end
1884	Mount Victoria	Large, two-storey extension of extensive building
1885	Wellington	Two-storey, detached building placed at rear of platform
1885	Nyngan	Two-storey, detached building placed at rear of platform
1897	Orange	Accommodation within existing building
1912	Wallerawang	Detached timber building –

²⁴ A. Messner, *Trains Up*, unpublished internal report to State Rail Authority, no date, pp. 14 & 18

DATE OF STRUCTURE	LOCATION	METHOD OF PROVISION
		not built
1917	Wallerawang	Accommodation within existing building
1917	Blayney	Accommodation within an existing building
1925	Dubbo	Detached building erected at rear of platform
1960	Lithgow	Accommodation in Sydney end for light food only

SOURCE: J. Forsyth, *Station Information*, three volumes, SRA Archives, 1997, various entries

Table 4 shows that large, detached buildings were erected in the 1880s when more capital was available than in the 1870s and when the lines were reaching or had reached the colonial borders. None were approved by John Whitton. Large, detached Railway Refreshment Rooms were located mostly where there existed a large locomotive depot. The idea was to align the time taken to change locomotives with the time allowed for passengers to obtain food and drinks. With that strategy in mind, one would think that Bathurst would be the location of a large, detached Railway Refreshment Room. For some strange reason, such buildings were not usually provided at large towns. Goulburn, Wagga Wagga, Albury, Bathurst, Newcastle, Tamworth or Armidale did not have large, detached Railway Refreshment Rooms. The exception was Wellington. They appeared to be placed mostly at junction stations, such as Moss Vale, Cootamundra West, Junee, Muswellbrook and Werris Creek. Again, Wellington is the exception. Accordingly, Bathurst missed out on having a large, detached Railway Refreshment Room because it was not considered to need the bedroom accommodation for passengers that the large, detached structures contained.

Like the brick/stone buildings at Wellington, Dubbo and Nyngan, the Bourke structure was completed before the official train arrived – something that did not happen often between 1874 and 1881 and continued through the 1880s on a more limited scale.

At Mount Victoria, George Cowdery approved a two storey refreshment room to match the existing single-storey building. It was stone and had slate on roof. The dining area was 42 feet by 30 feet. At Wellington, the public ramped up pressure on the government for a new refreshment room to replace the small, temporary facility that was reported as often being crowded. The residents cited a promise by the Minister for Public Works, Francis Wright, to act on the matter.²⁵ The announcement came in 1885.

²⁵ *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 21st June, 1884, p. 44.

On the Main West, Cowdery's major task in 1885 was to provide or supplement refreshment rooms. At Mount Victoria, he converted the existing stone refreshment room to a two-storey building with a 42-feet by 30-feet dining room. Upstairs, there were nine bedrooms, a private dining room, two servants' rooms and the manager's room. At the rear, the first-floor balcony has an ornate balustrade. The roof was covered with slate. Similar buildings were approved by Cowdery for Wellington and Nyngan.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE WELLINGTON REFRESHMENT ROOM

Tenders closed on 11th July, 1882, the lease of the right to sell refreshments at Wellington railway station.²⁶ John L. Caster was the successful contractor.²⁷ He held several similar leases on other parts of the rail system. Nothing is known of the design of the facility.

The local press was unhappy in the middle of 1884 that there was no action to replace the temporary refreshment room. It stated:

“Notwithstanding the fact the Minister of Works promised that a new and more convenient refreshment room should be erected at the station, the same inconvenient place continues to incommode travellers and attendants. It is generally crowded up on the arrival of the mail trains”.²⁸

George Cowdery, the Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines, approved on 21st July, 1885, construction of the large, brick, two-storey refreshment room. It was constructed at the Dubbo end of the existing platform building but set back approximately 20 feet from the rear of the platform. Archaeological remains exist in 2017 that identify the location of the facility. Tenders closed on 21st August, 1885, for the construction of the permanent refreshment room and accommodation.²⁹ The contractor was Frank Siebert, who signed the plan on 4th November, 1885.³⁰ He was a builder from Blayney. Wellington station building was the only platform work he did in New South Wales. He was declared bankrupt in 1888.³¹

The design features of the refreshment building were:

- Two-storey with a third underground level housing a three-room cellar,

²⁶ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 4th July, 1882, Issue 267, p. 3545.

²⁷ *NSW Government Gazette*, 25th July, 1882, Issue 299, p. 3862.

²⁸ *Evening News*, 25th June, 1884, p. 6.

²⁹ *NSW Government Gazette*, 21st August, 1885, Issue 359, p. 5478.

³⁰ John Forsyth, former Archives Officer of the State Rail Authority, states that the surname of the contractor was Siebird and that the contract date was 4th November, 1884, but these are both errors.

³¹ *The Australian Star*, 27th December, 1888, p. 5.

- Solid nine thick load-bearing brick walls in Flemish bond,
- Complex roof form using multiple hipped roofs covered with slate,
- tall brick chimneys with ornate moulding,
- Juliet balcony on first floor with pilasters,
- Italianate designed entry and vestibule with columns and sandstone brackets,
- Rendered banding around external walls at two levels,
- Moulded window heads and sills,
- Main dining area 50 feet by 25 feet,
- Separate bar 17 feet by 14 feet 6 inches,
- First-floor level containing 15 bedrooms and one bathroom,
- Heating in only two bedrooms (probably the manager's quarters)
- 16 feet ceiling height on ground floor and 11 feet on first floor,
- panelled ceiling with ornate ceiling ventilators,
- intricate panelled serving counter and bar &
- extensive timber panelling on internal walls on ground floor.

The announcement in relation to the provision of a permanent refreshment room for Wellington was made in March, 1885, when the public was informed that the design would be “in the shape of a large hotel” with upstairs bedroom accommodation.³² That announcement, and especially the preparation of the plan for the two-storey building in July, angered the public of the hotels in Wellington, who protested that the government should leave overnight accommodation to the public sector.³³ Construction work started in November of that year.³⁴ It was described as “handsome and commodious” and was completed in August, 1886 – a seemingly long construction time.³⁵

An extension was made at the same time to the platform awning and additional vertical, cast-iron support columns were made in the departmental workshop at Bathurst. There is an excellent photograph showing the extension to the refreshment room in G. and P. Oats, *Rails to the Western Plains*, privately published, Dubbo, 1981, p. 72. The awning extension is reflected by the use of the cast iron posts, the base plates of which are imprinted with the maker's plate, “GWR Foundry 1888 Bathurst”. The original timber posts supporting the platform posts were not replaced and remain today in timber with cast iron brackets above the capitals. These were the last structures on platforms to reflect the separate identity of the three major trunk routes, i.e. GNR, GSR and GWR. From Eddy's time, there would be no more "Great" anything, merely "NSW Railways".

³² *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, 25th March, 1885, p. 17.

³³ *Evening News*, 29th September, 1885, p. 6.

³⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25th August, 1885, p. 2 and *Australian town and Country Journal*, 28th November, 1885, p. 17.

³⁵ *Australian town and Country Journal*, 27th March, 1886, p. 17 and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2nd August, 1886, p. 4.

However, it must be remembered that it was Commissioner Goodchap in 1884 who had started the change from individual line titles to a single, corporate name. Eddy merely accelerated the existing trend.

In 1906, the counter in the main room was relocated and an additional 13 feet square room added to the rear of the new counter area. Further alterations were made to the refreshment room in 1917, 1928, 1938. It was in 1938 that the station, the refreshment room and residences were connected to this town sewerage system.

REFRESHMENT ROOM CLOSURE AND RE-OPENING

A detached refreshment room, located to the rear of the platform, was opened at Dubbo on 11th January, 1925, in conjunction with the opening of a new railway line from Molong.³⁶ Plans had been prepared in 1922 and 1923 and again revised in 1924 for a two-storey structure but only the ground floor level was constructed to save money. That building survives. At the same time, the existing larger refreshment room at Wellington was closed much to the displeasure of local travellers at that centre. On a visit by the Commissioner in November, 1925, the promise was made that the Wellington refreshment room would be open for light meals.³⁷ This occurred on 1st March, 1926.³⁸ The Wellington refreshment room has been demolished.

With the opening of the line between Molong and Dubbo, the refreshment room at Wellington was closed “temporarily”. At the same time, a new refreshment room was opened at Dubbo. The Commissioners would have loved to have kept the Wellington refreshment room closed but strong local political pressure forced the Commissioners to reopen the Wellington room in 1926.

Alterations were approved later in 1926 and the following changes were undertaken:

- reduction in the main dining area by one third,
- reduction in the number of bedrooms on first floor by two,
- relocation of first floor bathroom,
- provision of a hand wash basins in all bedrooms with hot and cold water,
- former ground floor lavatory converted into a railway Institute reading room,
- relocation of the kitchen to a smaller space,
- conversion of the original kitchen into a staff room,
- removal of a bathroom under one stairway and conversion into an office,

³⁶ *National Advocate*, 10th January, 1925, p. 2.

³⁷ *Wellington Times*, 19th November, 1925, p. 6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1st March, 1926, p. 2.

The work was undertaken in 1928.

In 1928, it was easy to understand why the press at Wellington, which was supportive of the community action to replace the existing gas station lighting, labelled the Commissioners as “penny wise and pound foolish.”³⁹

The sale of fruit in refreshment rooms was a significant enterprise in the 1920s. The local newspaper in April, 1928, note that, in the tea and coffee section of the refreshment room, graded supplies of David apples were plainly marked at 2/- a dozen. However, in the liquor bar next door, the price was 3/- a dozen! The newspaper noted that “these same apples are landed all the station from the grower at 6d a dozen. Eat more fruit!”⁴⁰

In 1947, an office was added to the ground floor of the Wellington refreshment room to provide an office for the Sub- manager. The work was completed on 6th November, 1947.

The Wellington refreshment room closed on 2nd September, 1956.⁴¹ It was demolished in 1967.⁴²

OTHER STATION DEVELOPMENTS

The platform was extended in 1899 at the Dubbo end and again in 1941 when it was extended a further 110 feet. The platform was raised in 1982 600 mm with concrete poured on top of the existing bitumen.⁴³

A foot warmer boiler was provided in 1900. Station was connected to a septic tank in 1907. An unusual change at the station was the provision of additional female toilets in the former open space between the main building and the male toilet pavilion at the Dubbo end. Between 1890 and 1893, female toilets were placed in that location but no further examples were provided after 1893. It is inexplicable why this was done at Wellington but was probably done either when the septic tank was installed in 1907 for the station was connected to the town sewerage scheme in 1938

³⁹ *Wellington Times*, 5th March, 1928, p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Wellington Times*, 5th April, 1928, p. 2.

⁴¹ C. Banger, “The Railway Refreshment Rooms of New South Wales 1855-1995,” *Bulletin*, August, 2003, pp. 297-304.

⁴² D. Sheedy, *A Heritage Assessment of the Impact of Proposed Alterations to the Interiors of Wellington Railway Station Building*, unpublished report to Countrylink, 1995, p. 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

There is a photograph taken at Wellington in May, 1978, which shows the very large out of shed at the Sydney end of the platform building, being approximately 25 feet long by 15 feet wide. Normally, out of sheds would be much smaller measuring about 15 feet by 10 feet and they would have a single-pitched roof. The Wellington facility has a gabled roof and is externally sheeted with galvanised corrugated iron sheets. For a photograph, see Tony Woodland, *Lachlan Valley Railway Society*, Volume 2, Elizabeth, Railmac Publications, 1994, page 17. The out of shed has been demolished.

THE FOOTBRIDGE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

A deputation from the Wellington Municipal Council met Chief Commissioner Eddy in August, 1892, requesting amongst other things a footbridge over the railway corridor. Eddy was reported to have replied favourably in relation to the request.⁴⁴ There are no press reports indicating the construction date of the footbridge but the website of the New South Wales Heritage Office says that the installation date of the girder deck footbridge was 1895. It is the only remaining timber footbridge of any type of construction in New South Wales.⁴⁵ Accordingly, the footbridge has high heritage values.

The existence of the footbridge acts as a reminder of what seems to be a peculiarity about towns served by the railway on the western line. In many instances, the railways chose to provide their railway station and yard on the edge of the existing town, as that was the cheapest land they could acquire. In a lot of cases, the railway has continued to act as a geographic boundary to urban development but this is not the case for the Main West line.

It seems to be that the railway in the western area of the State has not acted as this urban buffer but has witnessed residential and commercial development on both sides of the tracks. This development has prompted the construction of footbridges to allow people to move from side to side of the railway line while trains were blocking local roads. Pedestrian bridges were constructed at Blayney, Orange, Wellington, Narromine, Nyngan, Parkes and Mudgee solely to help local residents across the railway corridor. For this reason, the Wellington footbridge is doubly valuable as an item of historical and heritage interest.

While on the subject of important heritage items, it needs to be said that the timber, tripod crane that still survives in the yard is also an extremely rare item in the railwayscape.

⁴⁴ *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 27th August, 1892, p. 505.

⁴⁵ There is also a timber footbridge over the railway line at Bombala station at the branch line at that location is disused.

TRAIN WORKING

Graham Harper, the renowned safeworking and signalling historian, as provided the following comments on train working through Wellington. He wrote:

“There was certainly a thought at the time of transferring all or most of the traffic to and from Dubbo to the Yeoval route, but the sticking point was Wellington, which was far bigger and more important than the combination of all the towns and villages between Orange and Dubbo via Molong.

Because of the much easier grades between Dubbo and Molong, most up goods traffic came to use that route. The automatic signalling provided would do away with staff transfers endemic to operation of most traffic in one direction. The only steep bit was Molong to Orange, and bank engines could be provided from Orange, only a short distance away. Down goods trains could continue to use the Wellington route, as did the majority of passenger services. There was also a plan to deviate between Molong and Orange, with the new more easily graded line approaching Orange from the north west.

Four signal boxes and loops were permanently closed on the Wellington route around the time of the Yeoval route's opening. These were Cullya, Yukalgo, Warnecliffe and Eulomogo. Each was a down and up main setup, effectively requiring a signalman to be there for every train, so the savings would be immediate. Bob Taaffe says that some of these boxes were opened and closed on a seasonal basis prior to their permanent closure; I am not aware of any details”.

Stuart Sharp

11th June, 2017