

PARKES RAILWAY STATION

WHY THE NEED TO WRITE SO MUCH ABOUT PARKES STATION?

The history of Parkes railway station is interesting because of the events associated with the establishment of a railway refreshment room on the platform. It was a lengthy process which took place between 1902 and 1928. More interestingly, it is a story that contains:

- Many departmental promises not kept,
- Absence of initiative on the part of departmental staff,
- The critical role of local pressure groups,
- Denials by the Commissioners of information in the public arena,
- Bizarre ideas about the use of a nearby hotel for meals,
- Private enterprise operation of a refreshment room after 99% of them were managed by departmental staff,
- Absence of clarity as to the selection of a location for a refreshment room, &
- Unbelievable conduct to place a refreshment room 10 feet from the entrance to the male toilet.

Also, the 1893 building has had numerous additions, which require some degree of interpretation.

Three appendices have been prepared. Appendix 2 is a summary of the developments that affected the physical fabric of the platform buildings. Appendix 3 is a summary of events associated with the provision of refreshment facilities at the station. This incorporates a lot of huff-and-puff by various organisations and officials that did not necessarily result in any physical change at the station.

Appendix 1 tells the story of the origin of the design from which the building at Parkes emerged.

DESIGN APPROVAL

Henry Deane, the Chief Engineer, Railway Construction Branch, Department of Public Works, on 28th February, 1893, approved the plan for the building to be erected at Parkes. It was a composition of three structures with the centre, main structure 87 feet long and 16 feet wide. At the Condobolin end, there was a space 32 feet long between the main building and the detached pavilion, which housed the lamp room. At the Sydney end, there was a space 20 feet long between the main building and the pavilion that contained the male toilet. In the 20 feet space, three toilet closets were made available women.

THE DESIGN ORIGIN OF THE PARKES BUILDING

The history of the design family of which the building at Parkes is a member is outlined in Appendix 1.

Did Parkes railway station building possess a particular architectural design? No. While it had some features that made the structure look pretty, it had no distinctive form of architecture but the design did embrace the single Gothic Revival feature of the gabled roof with a moderate pitch. Hence, the design generally has been called by conservation architects using the following words – Railway Gothic, Carpenter's Gothic or simply, New South Wales 19th century railway style.

CONSTRUCTION

Tenders closed on 3rd May, 1893, for the construction of station buildings and other works at Gregra, Manildra, Meranburn, Bumberry, Moura (Mandagery), Bindogandri (Cookamidgera), Parkes, Tichborne, Daroobalgie, and Forbes on the Molong to Parkes and Forbes Railway. The tenders were to be packaged for three separate parcels, these being:

- No. 1. - Gregra, Manildra, Meranburn, and Bumberry.
- No. 2 - Moura, Bindogandri, and Parkes.
- No. 3. - Tichborne, Daroobalgie, and Forbes.¹

At Parkes and Forbes, the station accommodation was reported to be “large and similar. At both places, there is a neat and commodious passenger station building, built of brick, with iron verandahs to both road and rail approaches, and containing waiting rooms, parcels office, Station Master's office, lavatories, lamp-rooms, and sheds. The platforms are 330ft. x 12ft., and the carriage docks 50ft. long. At Parkes and Forbes, the water supply is obtained from the municipal water mains, the water being stored in circular wrought iron tanks of 20,000 gallons capacity, built on brick towers. The Station Master's houses and station buildings have the water laid on from the tanks. The contractors for the station buildings at Gregra, Manildra, Meranburn, Bumberry, Mandagery, Cookamidgera and Parkes were Messrs Thomas E. Spencer and Frederick K. Lenn. For the station buildings at Tichborne, Daroobalgie, and Forbes, Messrs. G. D. Fetherston and F. E. Barbat”.²

The reference to the connection of the station to the town water supply is a puzzle as the official record shows that the reticulated town water supply was not connected to the station until 1896, three years after the station opening. Another piece of evidence to validate the absence of a connection with the town supply in 1893 was the provision of a rainwater tank at the Condobolin end of the main building.

Henry Deane approved brick structures for Forbes and Parkes using the same plan. They were 87 feet 6 inches by 15 feet wide internal. These were the largest brick

¹ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 2nd May, 1893, No. 289, p. 3474.

² *Daily Telegraph*, 19th December, 1893, p. 5.

buildings approved since Kiama in 1892. The Parkes building was also described in the press as “handsome and commodious.”³ As a composition of three buildings, the suite was asymmetrical. The space at the Sydney end between the main building and the end pavilion contained the ladies’ toilets and was 20 feet long. The other space between the main building and the pavilion at the Condobolin end was a yard 32 feet long. The rooms were labelled Station Master, ticket and parcels office, general waiting room, gentlemen’s waiting room, ladies’ waiting room, ladies’ toilets and “Urinals”. All three waiting rooms and the ticket office had brick fireplaces. The cantilevered platform awning supports contained the then popular circular gusset in the ornate awning brackets but there was a posted verandah on the road side of the building. There were vents on the roofs of the buildings, as was done at Kiama and some earlier buildings. These roof vents had become, like the circular gussets and air closets, features of the 1890s.

The station building at Parkes contained all the 13 design elements listed in Appendix 1 in relation to the second modified type of the standard roadside station.

The designation of the rooms from the Condobolin end were:

- Lamp room pavilion (detached from main building)
- “shed” in 32 feet long “yard”
- Station Master’s office
- Ticket and parcels office
- General waiting room
- Gentlemen’s waiting room
- Ladies’ waiting room
- Female toilets in 20 feet long connection to the male toilet pavilion
- Male toilet pavilion

The inclusion of a waiting room for “gentlemen” was extremely rare and was always approved by staff other than John Whitton, who really did not have the budget for such luxuries.

The building at Parkes has had many physical changes. A summary of these changes is Appendix 2.

STATION OPENING

Parkes station opened on 18th December, 1893, with Forbes as the terminus of the railway line from Molong. Three kilometres on the Sydney side of Parkes station Parkes Racecourse station was opened on the same date. The racecourse platform was closed in 1937.

NO LOCAL DEMAND FOR REFRESHMENT FACILITIES - 1893-1901

³ *The National Advocate*, 21st September, 1893, p. 2.

The railway line opened to Bogan Gate in 1896 and to Condobolin in 1898. Parkes was now a junction station for the passengers on the platform heading to one of three directions. At that time, the only refreshment room on the line was located at Molong. Even in 1898, the crowding on Molong platform on the arrival of the train from Parkes was described as “unbearable and a disgrace”, mainly due to the presence of curious onlookers. One or two Policemen were on duty at night at Molong but the crowd was so great that one commentator said that “they (i.e. the Police) might as well be at home in bed for any real good the travelling public receives at their hands.”⁴ It was claimed that the crowd was so great that women could not reach the refreshment room. Consideration of a refreshment room at Parkes was not requested in 1899 by any party.

The Parkes local government authority was more concerned in 1899 about the lack of sensitivity shown by the contractor who changed the night soil pans at the station when the trains were in the platform.⁵ The sanitary contractor declined to change the time he exchanged pans at the station. All through 1901, the Sanitary Committee of Council debated the abilities of the sanitary contractor. Council’s attention to the matter was drawn by the Railway District Engineer, who said conditions were unsatisfactory and claimed that Council was not fulfilling its duties.⁶

In September, 1901, the local government authority resolved again to request the contractor to attend to the station toilets at other than train times.⁷ At the end of 1901, Council gave instructions to the sanitary contractor that he had to vacate the railway station by 0700 each day.⁸ The other major concern for the Parkes Municipal Council was the irritation caused at the Welcome Street level crossing, which was at the immediate Condobolin end of the station. Council desired the appointment of a gatekeeper for the construction of an overhead road bridge.⁹ The Commissioners said that nothing could be done because of the “urgent necessity of economy”.¹⁰

THE FIRST TALK ABOUT A REFRESHMENT ROOM - 1902

The local press had noted the growing role of the railway at Parkes, stating that:

“Some idea may be formed of the rapid increase of population in this district, from the fact that the Railway Commissioners have found it necessary to run the heaviest class of engine on the section Orange and Parkes in order to cope with the enormous growth in wheat and other traffic annually. Prior to running the heavy " T class " engines to Parkes, it was necessary to erect (at a big cost) a large turntable at Parkes, and also re-sleeper the line from Molong to Parkes. All this may safely be said to increase the importance of the local railway, and at the same time can be

⁴ *Evening News*, 9th May, 1898, p. 7.

⁵ *Western Champion*, 6th January, 1899, p. 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25th January, 1901, p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 6th September, 1901, p. 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6th December, 1901, p. 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24th May, 1901, p. 7 and 5th September, 1902, p. 12.

¹⁰ *Western Champion*, 3rd October, 1902, p. 11.

looked upon as something beneficial to this district. There can be little doubt but that Parkes will become a very busy junction station at no distant.¹¹

With the increase in activity, it was of no surprise in 1902 that the first mention of the provision of a refreshment room was made but the initiative was not made by any local organisation but by the Railway Department. The local press reported:

“The Railway Refreshment Room Inspector last week visited Parkes with a view to ascertaining the necessity of building a refreshment room on the Railway Station premises. The matter will be decided shortly. Already spare engines and men have been stationed at Parkes in order to cope with the work (from Condobolin). This is another indication that Parkes will become a very important junction in the near future, eventually engine sheds and rest houses will be erected.”¹²

The Railway Department created a lot of trouble for itself by prematurely announcing that new works would be undertaken “shortly” or when money became available. In the case of the foreshadowed refreshment room at Parkes, the facility would not open until 1917 – 15 years after the official made his announcement. Such actions unnecessarily activated local communities into sustained lobbying for those improvements which the Department itself had announced.

Another indicator of increasing passenger traffic at the station was the installation of a footwarmer boiler on 1st November, 1902.

THE FIRST PHYSICAL CHANGE TO BUILDING FABRIC – 1905

In the years between 1900 and 1906, hardly any projects were undertaken in rural New South Wales. The bulk of the capital funds and also the operating budgets allocated to the Railway Department were being expended on the construction of the new Sydney terminus. Indicative of this near absence of money was the minimal extent of work in 1905 on existing buildings on the western line. Only three minor projects were undertaken. The first was the provision of additional canopies at Blayney station. The second was the provision of a waiting shed at Miandetta and the third project was the provision of a roof over the area between the main building and the original lamp room at Parkes. The lamp room was the detached pavilion on the Condobolin side of the main building.

Even by 1905, the original lamp room at Parkes had been converted into a store room and a new, smaller lamp room measuring eight feet four inches by six feet had been built in one corner of the space between the main building a store room. Also within that same space was an “out-of shed” measuring 20 feet by nine feet.¹³ Additionally, within that space was an above-ground, circular rain water tank. The work at Parkes involved the following aspects:

¹¹ *Western Champion*, 14th March, 1902, p. 10.

¹² *Western Champion*, 9th May, 1902, p. 10.

¹³ “Out-of Shed” is expressed in inverted commas as the vast majority of references to these facilities omits the-between “out” and “off”.

- extension of the single-pitched roof over the out of shed towards the main building,
- extension of the second single-pitched roof over the lamp room towards the main building though sloping in the opposite direction,
- lowering the freshwater tank by six inches to fit under the roof extensions,
- removal of walls of the out of shed,
- provision of a new wall built of corrugated iron sheeting facing the platform with three glazed window sashes measuring two feet five inches by one foot three inches at the top of the wall, &
- provision of asphalted floor in that half of the area facing the platform and provision of concrete floor in the other half of the area on the roadside.

The work was carried out in 1905.

Part of the platform, no doubt that part in front of the main, centre building, was asphalted in 1907.

THE PROMISE OF A NEW STATION WITH A REFRESHMENT ROOM 1911-1916

The Forbes branch of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association in 1911 gave support for the establishment of a refreshment room at Parkes, pointing out that, with changes to the timetable on the Forbes line, trains stopped at Parkes there over half an hour and at times convenient for both breakfast and tea.¹⁴ Within six months, the Parkes Farmers and Settlers' Association threw its support behind the Parkes Municipal Council in an effort to secure a refreshment room at Parkes.¹⁵ The Railway Department advised Council that "plans for improved accommodation at the station are at present in course of preparation, and include provision for refreshment rooms".¹⁶

On Council's a shopping list was the conversion of the existing platform building into a refreshment room and the construction of a new platform building on the Condobolin side of the level crossing. This would involve the closure of the existing level crossing at the immediate western end of the station and the provision of an overhead bridge for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

Council was told that the Chief Commissioner for Railways and Tramways "personally looked into the subject". The proposal involved the provision new station buildings on the Forbes side of the then existing level crossing, including a refreshment room. The present railway yard was to be retained for goods purposes, with the closure of the level crossing gates at Welcome Street. Mr. Johnson promised that "the matter will be expedited as much as possible".¹⁷

¹⁴ *Western Champion*, 1st December, 1911, p. 16.

¹⁵ *Western Champion*, 10th May, 1912, p. 14.

¹⁶ *Western Champion*, 28th June, 1912, p. 16.

¹⁷ *Western Champion*, 5th September, 1912, p. 15.

The local Council was shocked by the advice as it had suggested to the Premier on a visit that the station should be moved eastwards, not westwards. Council was relieved by other advice it received stating that it was proposed to erect the refreshment rooms between the present railway station and the then level crossing – roughly in the position that exist today. The construction of the refreshment room was confirmed in 1913 on a visit by the Hon. A. C. Carmichael, M.L.A., Minister for Education and Labor and Industry at Forbes when he said that provision had been made for the inclusion of a refreshment room in the new station arrangements.¹⁸

Within one month, the talk in 1913 moved from the establishment of a permanent refreshment room to a temporary facility. Council was “despairing” of securing the establishment of even a temporary refreshment rooms at Parkes railway station. It decided to send a request to the Commissioner for Railways that the time of the mail train at Parkes should be extended to permit of passengers obtaining breakfast at the hotels. It seems that the Department also was despairing of the possibility of establishing a refreshment room, even a temporary one. The Department warmed to the idea that it could be possible for passengers to visit a local hotel in order to partake a meal and it instructed E. Milne, the District Superintendent, to make inquiries of Council to ascertain whether such an arrangement could be undertaken.

Milne asked three questions:

- (1) “what arrangements are suggested to enable Forbes passengers to visit the town to have breakfast and return within the time allotted,
- (2) if any expression of opinion had been obtained from the travelling public upon the question of closing the refreshment rooms at Molong which the Parkes proposal would involve, &
- (3) has any inquiry been made respecting the number of Forbes passengers that would be expected to take breakfast at Parkes, seeing that they reach home at 9.35 a.m.

Council provided the following answers:

- (1) that Davies hotel was close to the station, and offered all the facilities for breakfasting,
- (2) that Parkes was the most suitable centre for breakfast, passengers complaining that Molong was too early, and Forbes too late, &
- (3) that passengers travelling to destinations beyond Forbes, as well as those for Forbes only, would be accommodated by the proposed innovation.¹⁹

Following the exchange of correspondence, the subject of the Parkes refreshment room died for the next two years. The opening of the cross-country line Parkes and Narromine in 1914 might have added to the case for a refreshment room but the

¹⁸ *Western Champion*, 3rd April, 1913, p. 19.

¹⁹ *Western Champion*, 1st May, 1913, p. 19.

Railway Department ignored the event, so far as station facilities at Parkes was concerned.

It was in early 1915 that despair reached its climax when the Commissioners altered the timetable and reduce the time available at Parkes, thus ruling out any opportunity to obtain refreshment from Davies Hotel, if that ever did occur. The press reminded readers that the Commissioners had been talking about building a refreshment room at Parkes and had promised that it would not “become a white elephant”. The press stated that “if the new time table were adhered to, the Commissioners might as well abandon the (idea of a) Parkes refreshment rooms.”²⁰

The branch line between Bogan Gate and Tottenham opened in 1916 and, once again, the additional passenger traffic had no impact on station operations at Parkes.

In mid-1916, Parkes Council again asked Forbes Municipal Council, to support the efforts to have a refreshment room at Parkes railway station. Parkes Council pointed out that, on the journey from Orange to Forbes and Condobolin, Molong was the only station where refreshments could be obtained, the train arriving “at 6.10 a.m. on the down journey and 8.20 p.m. on the up journey”. Parkes Council worked out that the times for meals at Parkes, being 8.37 a.m. and 5.30 p.m., were far more convenient.²¹ Forbes Council agreed to assist Parkes in the matter.

At the same time that the Councils at Parkes and Forbes were tic-tacking, the Department announced in June, 1916, that most refreshment rooms would be “taken over” by the Railway Department from 1st July, 1916.

Another year passed and nothing happened. A rumour was circulating during 1917 in Parkes that the “want of funds would preclude the erection of a new railway station (in which the refreshment room was to be included) for some time to come”.²² This was confirmed at a deputation in December, 1917, when the Railway Commissioners passed through Parkes on one of their annual flying tours. The interview was described as “fruitless, a result which was not unexpected. The Chief Commissioners made no bones about the matter. He pointed out that the financial aspect was the stumbling block, and precluded any expenditure in the directions indicated by the deputation”.²³ The Chief Commissioner irritated the leading citizens of Parkes when he claimed that the town “was not seriously inconvenienced” by the non-provision of the refreshment room or the continuation of the level crossing at Welcome Street”.²⁴

MRS LEWIS' REFRESHMENT ROOM OPENS 1917-1922

In 1917, it appeared that the inability of the Commissioners to find money for the refreshment room was incorrectly reported. Suddenly, in April, 1917, a plan had

²⁰ *Forbes Times*, 15th January, 1915, p. 8.

²¹ *Forbes Advocate*, 2nd June, 1916, p. 4.

²² *Western Champion*, 17th May, 1917, p. 14.

²³ *Western Champion*, 6th December, 1917, p. 19.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

been prepared for a timber framed refreshment room 43 feet long by 45 feet wide at the Condobolin end of the platform. There was no reference to “temporary” anywhere on the plan or in the press. The facility was set back from the platform approximately 20 feet. The public entrance to the refreshment room was in line with the verandah on the road side of the main station building. It was located adjacent to the footwarmer boiler. It was necessary to extend the platform at the Condobolin end. The public area measured 30 feet by 22 feet and also contain a kitchen, store room and two bedrooms.

The former Archives Officer of the State Rail Authority wrote that, on 14th April, 1917, an order was prepared for the construction of the facility at the railway workshop.²⁵ That part of the event is correct. He also wrote “the Railway Department erected a marquee 12.1 metres by 6 metres built of Birkmyre cloth (i.e. calico) with framing and flooring as a refreshment room. The existing private refreshment room was utilised as a kitchenette”. That part of the entry is incorrect. The marquee was provided not in 1914 but in 1923 when the Department purchased the refreshment room from the private contractor, who had operated the facility between 1917 and 1923.

The next thing that occurred was a press article in July, 1917, saying that a tender had been accepted for the erection of refreshment rooms at the Parkes railway station, the amount being offered was £900. The rooms were to be erected to the right of the entrance to the station yard. In fact, the refreshment room could serve people and road vehicles along Welcome Street beside it as equally as easy as serving people on the platform.²⁶

It would appear that one Mrs Lewis was the successful tenderer and proprietor of the refreshment room from the outset in 1917 until 1923. She appeared in a charity competition for the local hospital in 1917 sponsored by the local Railway Institute Branch under the heading of “Queen of the Rails”. It would seem that she had opened the refreshment room in August, 1917.²⁷

The station was lit by gas in 1918, the same year as the cross-country railway line opened between Stockinbingal and Forbes.

The evidence suggests that the refreshment room established by Mrs Lewis was completely independent of the railway operations and perhaps was seen as a community refreshment room rather than one solely serving the railway station. There are three pieces of evidence which lead to that conclusion. Firstly, the Railway Commissioners did not manage the facility, which was completely contrary to the departmental policy that had been in operation since January, 1916. Secondly, discussion continued with the Railway Department about the construction of a refreshment room. There was no mention of a temporary facility. The “absolute

²⁵ J. Forsyth, *The When and Where of Railway and Tramway Events*, unpublished document, State Rail Archives, 1996, p. 317.

²⁶ *Western Champion*, 26th July, 1917, p. 16.

²⁷ *Forbes Advocate*, 20th July, 1917, p. 3 and 17th August, 1917, p. 4.

lack of funds" was given by the Railway Commissioners as a reason why they were unable to favourably consider the establishment of a refreshment room at Parkes. Thirdly, the press reported that an approach would be made to the Commissioners to establish whether a refreshment room could be established at the station by private enterprise.²⁸

In October, 1918, the Mayor of Forbes and the Town Clerk interviewed the General Manager of the Railway Refreshment Rooms. They were advised that "some months ago plans and specifications had been prepared and approved for this work but on the plea of want of funds the matter was hung up indefinitely". Subsequently, the Town Clerk, in company with the Secretary of the Commercial Travellers' interviewed the Chief Traffic Manager who gave the same "excuse" for the work not having been carried out.²⁹ Then there was another policy reversal, just as there had been in 1917. The next month the press reported that "estimates are being prepared by the Commissioners with a view to establishing a refreshment room here".³⁰

Suddenly, there was no further discussion about the establishment of a refreshment room at Parkes station until 1923 – a five-year period. All the talk about the railway at Parkes then focused on major changes to the station and the yard. In 1920, the Railway Department had made provision in the financial estimates for the remodelling the railway station and yards. The estimated cost was £150,000.³¹

The Parkes Municipal Council considered the plans submitted to it by the Commissioners in 1921 outlining the provision of a new island platform which would be reached by a stepway of an overhead bridge. Council noted that the Chief Commissioner had promised improvements at Parkes over 18 months ago, including the new railway station.³² Council was angry that the plans were incomplete and the press reported that "a suspicion is growing that the railway authorities have sold the Council a pup to keep them quiet by giving them something to play with".³³ Council was concerned about the inadequate access to the platform.

The Parkes Railway League had been re-established in 1908 and had an active career over the next 15-20 years. In 1922, the Railway Commissioners forwarded a reply to the Railway League, through Mr M. M. Flannery, M.L.A., in which they pointed out that "there are works of greater urgency than those at Parkes which are standing over owing to financial conditions and, until the Commissioners are provided with sufficient funds to enable such works to be proceeded with, the improvements at Parkes must also, be allowed to stand over".³⁴ The townspeople were rather depressed by the advice and the press commented "that the

²⁸ *Western Champion*, 19th September, 1918, p. 14.

²⁹ *Western Champion*, 3rd October, 1918, p. 24.

³⁰ *Western Champion*, 28th November, 1918, p. 13.

³¹ *Sun*, 2nd October, 1920, p. 3.

³² *Western Champion*, 13th January 3rd February, 1921, p.9 and p.13 respectively.

³³ *Western Champion*, 17th February, 1921, p. 13.

³⁴ *Western Champion*, 7th September, 1922, p. 15.

improvements at this centre have been shelved by the Commissioners for some time to come".³⁵

THE RAILWAY DEPARTMENT PURCHASES MRS LEWIS' IMPROVEMENTS 1923

All the references to the establishment of a refreshment room at Parkes cumulatively suggested that there was no establishment there from 1917 but this was not the case. The evidence dating from 1923 gives further support to the establishment of a refreshment room in 1917.

The press referred to "extensions" to the refreshment room at the local railway station in January, 1923, and reported that they had been completed. Second-hand material was used but the public was assured that the alterations "will have no significance or bearing on the quality of the refreshments to be supplied when the rooms are taken over by the Department. If the standard set by Mrs. Lewis during her tenancy of the rooms is maintained, the public will have no reason to complain".³⁶

The town residents were not favourably impressed with the alterations undertaken by the Railway Department. The press report stated:

"Viewed from the distance, an observer might gather the impression that some travelling circus had pitched its tent on railway property. We have been told that the structure is only of a temporary character (if a really good wind or dust storm happens along, the temporary nature of the edifice may be emphasised) but the term "temporary" has a meaning all its own in departmental dictionaries and frequently covers a very extended period. But if Parkes is prepared to put up with that kind of thing we suppose we should keep silent".³⁷

The date of the official takeover by the Railway Department was 1st March, 1923, as recorded in the local press.³⁸

Former Archives Officer, John Forsyth, records that:

"On 14th April, 1923, the Railway Department "erected" a marquee 40 feet by 20 feet (12.1 metre by 6 metre) marquee built of Birkmyre cloth (i.e. calico) with hardwood framing and flooring for the refreshment room. The existing private refreshment room was utilised as a kitchenette".³⁹

Forsyth continues stating that the Railway Department purchased the existing refreshment room and took control of the facility from 1st May, 1923. Both the date of the erection of the marquee and the date from which the Railway Department took

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Western Champion*, 4th January, 1923, p. 13 and 11th January, 1923, p. 10.

³⁷ *Western Champion*, 22nd February, 1923, p. 13.

³⁸ *Western Champion*, 22nd February, 1923, p. 10.

³⁹ J. Forsyth, *Station Information N to Z*, unpublished State Rail Authority document, p. 66.

control do not accord with what is recorded in the press, which contained articles complaining about the awful appearance of the tent in February, 1923.

Parkes was not the only location in 1923 where the refreshment room was a tent. The Department opened a refreshment room at South Grafton in November, 1923, using a marquee of the same size as applied to Parkes and did not make any improvements until 1930. The South Grafton refreshment room remained for its entirety a collection of simple, timber buildings. The marquee was the same size as the one at Parkes – 40 feet by 20 feet – and was erected at the northern end of the station. It was equipped with counter and seats and tables to accommodate about 40 people. A portable kitchen was provided. The only problem with the opening of the refreshment room at South Grafton was its location adjacent to the male toilet, which had to be relocated to the Coffs Harbour end of the station in 1924.⁴⁰

The Railway Commissioners were decidedly unhappy about the adverse press comments relating to the marquee at Parkes and its likelihood to blow over in a wind. They replied:

“Railway travellers who require to make use of the new refreshment room, which is now under the control of the Railway Commissioners, need have no fear of the stability of the structure which has been erected. It is only a temporary structure. It was never intended to be anything else. It would be most un-business-like for the Commissioners to go to the very heavy expense of erecting permanent refreshment room premises when it is intended, at as early a date as the financial position will allow, to remodel the entire railway premises at Parkes. The new refreshment room, together with the temporary housing accommodation connected therewith, is a very big improvement upon the accommodation which it replaces⁴¹.”

The press was critical about the Department’s reply and questioned what the word “temporary” meant, saying:

“What is meant by a “temporary” structure? Of course, it is refreshing to learn that it is intended at as early a date as the financial position will allow to remodel the entire railway. But in an official communication from the Railway Commissioners to the Parkes Chamber of Commerce just about the time that our paragraph appeared, the controllers of our railway system declared that considerable deficits have been realised during each of the last eight or nine years and the position shows little if any prospects of becoming easier. Rather, is there a prospect that the burden imposed on them in the general financial administration of the railways will become heavier? It would appear that the Commissioners do not anticipate that a “financial position will allow”

⁴⁰ *Daily Examiner*, 29th November, 1923, p. 4 and 3rd October, 1924, p. 1.

⁴¹ *Western Champion*, 8th March, 1923, p. 13 and 29th November, 1923, p. 4.

very much to be done for some time to come. Meanwhile, the "temporary" structure will remain. "Temporary," in the lexicon of the heads of the Railway Department is an elastic term, almost as elastic as the conscience of a politician. On the railway platform last Saturday morning we overheard a prominent resident describe the "temporary structure" as "a disgrace to Parkes." We did not hear any one contradict him.⁴²

THE NOTION OF BUILDING AN ENTIRELY NEW ISLAND PLATFORM 1924

In 1924, the press reported that "the refreshment accommodation has been somewhat improved". A footbridge had also been placed at the level crossing. The grand plan for modifications to the yard and station was being reviewed and "a modified plan was prepared for the more urgent portion of the work, and this plan is now in hand."⁴³

Two plans were prepared for the new station – dated 3rd and 10th January, 1924. The features of the overall station plan were:

- abandonment of the existing platform and station buildings,
- retention of the existing Welcome Street level crossing and footbridge,
- construction of a new island platform commencing approximately 600 feet west of the existing station,
- a replication of the station building arrangement that was approved in 1917 at Cootamundra West (which was based on the plan approved for Goulburn in 1915) – three platform buildings,
- provision of a large refreshment room,
- one in eight ramped entry at Sydney end of platform, as at Cootamundra West,
- provision of an at-grade pedestrian level crossing using old sleepers from the northern approach only to the end of the platform, &
- scissors track crossover at Condobolin end of station to allow access between Condobolin and Forbes Railway lines.

The second plan provided details of the three platform buildings. The first building houses the usual waiting room and offices. The details were:

BUILDING 1 – OFFICES/WAITING ROOMS

- brick construction
- 72 feet by 9 feet internal,
- 11 feet wide symmetrical awnings on both sides of building,
- rooms are parcels office, booking office, general waiting room & ladies waiting room and lavatory, &
- Porched entry into female waiting room and toilets.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Western Champion*, 17th January, 1924, p. 17.

Between the offices/waiting rooms and the refreshment room was a space 20 feet long.

BUILDING 2 – THE REFRESHMENT ROOM

- brick construction
- two levels,
- ground floor 110 feet by 30 feet internal,
- first floor 81 feet by 30 feet internal,
- “American” style bar (i.e. island arrangement with overhead storage),
- Main dining room separated from bar,
- Manager’s bedroom and sitting room on first floor,
- five other bedrooms for refreshment room staff, &
- underground cellar.
- Between the refreshment room and male toilet was a space 10 feet long.

BUILDING 3 – MALE TOILET

- brick construction,
- 20 feet by 12 feet internal,
- entrance facing away from other platform buildings,
- timber screen across entrance,
- six urinals,
- three earth closets, &
- internal rear access provided to change night soil pans.

On 12th August, 1924, the boiler of the footwarmer facility was increased to 50 units.

A deputation consisting of representatives of various local bodies met the Minister for Works and Railways, the Hon M. M. Flannery, to urge that funds should be made available for the erection of the new railway station at Parkes. Flannery stated that:

“He had received a letter from the Railway Commissioners stating that the details for the new station were not yet finalised and that, as soon as the Commissioners had finalised their plans, he would urge that the work proceed. It also promised to take up the matter of funds with the Treasurer.”⁴⁴

By the end of the year, rage against the Railway Commissioners was at its highest because the Chief Commissioner told a Parkes deputation that the Commissioners had never been promised a new station, though at the same time he admitted that the criticism of the refreshment tent was justified. Meanwhile, the refreshment marquee “still remains, a blot and an eyesore”.⁴⁵ The key groups in Parkes were determined not to let the matter rest and the Chamber of Commerce decided to

⁴⁴ *Western Champion*, 9th July, 1925, p. 15.

⁴⁵ *Western Champion*, 10th December, 1925, p. 11.

revive the agitation for a better refreshment room, and to enlist the co-operation of other local bodies and the Forbes Chamber of Commerce in the matter.⁴⁶

The matter was raised during Question Time in the Legislative Assembly. Minister Flannery confirmed that the new station “would not be built at the present time, but some relief would be given with regard to the refreshment room. People coming from considerable distances are called upon to take refreshments in a tent, which is most unsatisfactory in the summer as well as in the winter months”.⁴⁷

At this stage, Area Commissioners had been appointed for each main line and all that occurred in 1925 was the addition of yet another layer of top level bureaucracy without providing any improvement in efficiency. The case of the provision of a refreshment room at Parkes illustrates the inability of Area Commissioners and their Assistants to do anything in addition to the duties of the District Superintendent. The Parkes Shire Council and the Chamber of Commerce formed a deputation to the Area Commissioner and his Assistant in 1925 about the “removal of the unsightly and unsanitary tent doing temporary duty as a refreshment room.” The tent breached the local government sanitary code. The Area Commissioner said that a new refreshment room had been approved and promised to get in touch with the Chief Commissioner. The excuse was the same it had been since 1902 – the shortage of funds.

THE ABANDONMENT OF THE IDEA OF A NEW ISLAND PLATFORM 1926-1927

The idea in 1924 to provide a completely new island platform on the western side of the Welcome Street level crossing was abandoned.

Three plans were issued in March, 1926, featuring two options. The first option was a refreshment room on the Sydney side of the existing building ten feet from the entrance to the male toilet. This was an utterly stupid proposal as the same idea was applied to the refreshment room at South Grafton in 1923 with the refreshment room at that station being adjacent to the male toilet entrance. The result of that initiative at South Grafton was the relocation of the male toilet entirely in 1924 to the opposite end of the station platform. The Railway Department had learnt from its mistake at South Grafton and had planned to relocate both the female toilet and waiting room at Parkes to the Condobolin end of the main building and erect a completely new, detached male toilet block.

The public area of the eastern end proposal measured 45 feet by 30 feet. There was to be a separate bar 30 feet by 16 feet, again using the concept of the American bar. The platform awning was stated on the plan to be “over 18 feet wide”.

The second option involved the location of the refreshment room of a similar sized building to be erected on the site of the existing refreshment room, immediately

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Western Champion*, 24th December, 1925, p. 11.

adjacent to the Welcome Street level crossing. It was the option for the refreshment room at the Condobolin end of the 1893 building that got the tick. Additional changes were made to this plan in April, 1927, and November, 1928.

Although the proposal placing the refreshment room at the eastern end did not go ahead, the plan did provide an update of the arrangement of the rooms in the existing, 1893 building. The layout of the building from the Condobolin end was:

- Telegraph office (in the former, detached lamp room pavilion),
- 32-foot long out of shed (in the former space between the lamp room and the main building),
- Parcels office,
- Ticket office,
- Booking hall,
- Station Master's office,
- Ladies' waiting room,
- Female toilets in 20-foot long section between the main building and the male toilet, &
- Male toilet semi-detached pavilion.

In Parkes, the Chief Commissioner had announced in July, 1926, that a new refreshment room would be built in time for the opening of the line between Ivanhoe and Menindee.⁴⁸

In November, 1926, the Parkes Council was advised that "additional information has been called for by the Commissioners and when this is supplied the matter will be further considered". The local newspaper expressed despair, saying "we will get those improvements some time, someday, but no one will be able to accuse the railway authorities of undue haste in the matter".⁴⁹

THE ALMOST-FINAL PLANS FOR THE REFRESHMENT ROOM 1927

In January, 1927, the press announced that the Railway Commissioners were considering an amended plan and cost estimate for the provision of the refreshment room.⁵⁰

What was that amended plan being considered by the Commissioners? The evidence suggests that they were considering a more modest scheme at the Condobolin end of the platform but still a slightly larger scheme than that was planned for the island platform in 1924. In September, 1926, a plan had been prepared for the new refreshment room containing the following features:

- brick construction,
- two-storey,

⁴⁸ *Evening News*, 4th October, 1927, p. 11.

⁴⁹ *Western Champion*, 18th November, 1926, p. 13.

⁵⁰ *Western Champion*, 13th January, 1927, p. 11.

- 110 feet long by 45 feet wide on the ground floor,
- 110 feet long by 30 feet wide on first floor,
- 17 bedrooms on first floor as well as Manager's accommodation,
- a light refreshment room measuring 40 feet by 30 feet,
- a dining room measuring 40 feet by 30 feet,
- a bar area measuring 28 feet by 35 feet, &
- kitchen, scullery and other rooms to be provided.

In January, 1927, the Commissioners cancelled the construction of the first-floor bedrooms and the elimination of the dining room. There was to be a single public area measuring 40 feet by 30 feet. However, the brickwork for the refreshment room was to be constructed in such a manner that it could carry an additional first-floor to be provided in the future.

The platform was to be extended to a length of 500 feet and the ramp at the Condobolin end was to be eliminated and not replicated at the extended platform. The platform was to be raised to a height of three feet seven inches with a slope towards the rail of three inches. The entire platform was to be asphalted at that time. The signal box was to be relocated further towards Condobolin and the out of shed and the footwarmer heater were refixed to the Sydney end of the platform. It was at this time that the parcels office was extended to enclose the 32-foot former open space which contained the out of shed. At that point, the parcels office measured 47 feet long by 15 feet wide internal. The awning in front of the building on the platform side was extended to the Condobolin end in front of the former detached pavilion. A telephone phone booth was provided at a later time at the Sydney end under the verandah on the road side – a facility that exists in 2017.

Plans were submitted to the Parkes Municipal Council in June, 1927, when James Fraser said that funding was controlling the construction of the refreshment room. He said he was waiting on Council's response to the plans.⁵¹ Fraser also said that the proposal included a new parcels office and the extension of the platform as well as the refreshment room. He added that all of these initiatives "were only a portion of a larger scheme, involving remodelling the station but it cannot be carried out in its entirety through the lack of the necessary funds."⁵²

Robert Ranken, the Engineer-in-Chief, Existing Lines Branch, approved the near-final plan for the refreshment room on 15th September, 1927. The features of the plan were:

- single-storey construction with walls "arranged to carry another storey later"
- brick construction set in English bond,
- silicate paint added to external end walls as a protection against rain,

⁵¹ Ibid., 16th June, 1927, p. 6.

⁵² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18th June, 1927, p. 10.

- soldier bricks at head of windows and ordinary bricks set on an angle for window sills – “OK bricks to sills and arches”,
- public dining area 40 feet by 30 feet,
- bar room 28 feet by 18 feet – omission of American bar,
- omission of open fireplaces,
- two different roof styles applied – gabled roof running platform and parapeted roof at rear,
- platform awning 17 feet wide supported by eight, inverted steel brackets standing proud of the building wall,
- rendered internal walls and picture rails,
- Fibrolite cement sheets on ceilings with three-inch wide cover strips,
- 12 feet ceiling height,
- galvanised, corrugated iron sheeting on roof, &
- provision for future extension at Condobolin end.

The kitchen area in the existing refreshment room was utilised for the new parcels office.

Apart from attractive coloured bricks, the building was virtually void of any additional decoration, such as a moulded string course around the external walls, moulding at the top and bottom of windows and the fitting of finials to gables. The only ornamental use of the brickwork was the placement of bricks on edge at the top of the parapets at the rear of the refreshment room where members the public would not notice the decoration. This near-absence of decoration was consistent with all buildings of that style erected after 1924. The design was consistent with the Federation-influence style introduced from 1892 and used widely in all parts of New South Wales up to 1935. Another ugly feature of the work was the provision of a 40 feet long fence of galvanised, corrugated iron sheets at the Condobolin end. This material was frequently used to enclose yards at refreshment rooms but did absolutely nothing to enhance the appearance of the facilities.

In June, 1927, the Railway Commissioners announced that they were about to spend £10,000 at Parkes station in the erection of a new refreshment room and parcels office, and the extension of the platform. Once again, they said that the work was a portion of a larger scheme, which involved the remodelling of the station, but the additional work could not be carried out in its entirety “through lack of the necessary funds”.⁵³

By October, 1927, the people of Parkes were getting frustrated at the lack of action in regard to the construction of the refreshment room. The press commented that “the word ‘temporary’ must have a very elastic meaning in the lexicon of the Railway

⁵³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18th June, 1927, p. 16.

Commissioners.”⁵⁴ The railway line between Ivanhoe and Broken Hill opened on 7th November, 1927, but work had not started on the refreshment room at Parkes. One week later, it was reported in the local press that a start had been made and that travellers were looking forward to eating their meals in a building rather than the existing “large canvas marquee.”⁵⁵ The opening of the railway line and the embarrassment of their broken promise to have it ready for the Broken Hill line opening might have prompted the Commissioners into immediate action. Luckily for the people travelling on the Broken Hill Expresses between Sydney and Broken Hill, they were able to have the benefit of the first on-train dining car, thus mitigating the need for the refreshment room at Parkes for those passengers. However, there were still a lot of travellers from Condobolin, Tottenham, Peak Hill, Forbes and elsewhere who needed consideration.

THE NEW REFRESHMENT ROOM OPENS 1928

The status of Parkes station was elevated from third to second class from 1st January, 1928. Two first class night offices were appointed to the station.⁵⁶ The new grading brought Parkes station to the same level as Dubbo, Orange, Harden, and Cootamundra on the southern line.

By March, 1928, the brickwork had been completed, the steelwork to carry the awning over the platform in front of the refreshment room had been placed in position, but the extension of the platform westward across Welcome Street had not been started. The press commented that, “when the refreshment room is completed, the station building will appear very old and drab in comparison but the Commissioners may be able to spare sufficient paint to brighten it up a little. A considerable time ago, when it became evident, that all hopes of a new station being erected were dead, the railway authorities were asked to make some improvements to the entrance to the station buildings from the town side, but, as far as we are aware, no definite promise was given that the request would be acceded to. Perhaps the Commissioners are waiting to give us a pleasant surprise”.⁵⁷

The Chamber of Commerce at Parkes asked the Chief Commissioner in June, 1928, for two improvements to the station. The first was improvement to the pedestrian entrance to which the local newspaper recorded that, “as far as Mr. Fraser was concerned, the shot proved to be a squib. He declared that Parkes was a very good station and was better served in that respect than other places that were almost as important. As proof, he instanced Moree and Narrabri but he did not elaborate on what he meant by the comparison.”⁵⁸ In this case, Fraser was using the old argument of telling the complainer that they were a lot luckier than other locations,

⁵⁴ *Evening News*, 4th October, 1927, p. 11.

⁵⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15th November, 1927, p. 12.

⁵⁶ *Western Champion*, 8th March, 1928, p. 11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Western Champion*, 21st June, 1928, p. 14.

which were claimed to be worse off than the complaining town. The second request was to extend the electricity supply that had been connected in 1927 to the new refreshment room to the remainder of the station or at least the platform. Fraser said he would examine the cost estimate for the proposal but made no promises.

The perceived negativity of the Railway Commissioners amongst the general public was strong. When the James Fraser was at Parkes in June, 1928, the local newspaper remarked that:

“the Chief Commissioner, Mr. Fraser, learned to say ‘no’ very early in his life and has never forgotten the lesson. Parkes has grown quite accustomed to hearing the negative or its equivalent from the austere lips of the leader of the railway triumvirate, and accepted the necklace of negatives which was handed out to them on Monday in a philosophic spirit. There will come a time (someday) when even Mr. Fraser may unbend. We shall live in hope.”⁵⁹

This rejection of requests by a large number of town representatives throughout New South Wales did not provide any friends or allies for the Railway Commissioners. Unfortunately, they made problems for themselves as they promised to provide towns and cities with improvements which they either never delivered or delivered after numerous years of agitation by local town burghers. How popular were the Railway Commissioners? Not very popular is the answer.

The new refreshment room opened on 1st August, 1928.⁶⁰ The existing pedestrian bridge was removed because it was in the way of the platform lengthening and a new bridge erected.⁶¹

The work on the lengthening of the Parcels Office to 47 feet and the extension of the platform to 500 feet were completed in 1929.

PLATFORM ALTERATIONS FOR THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SILVER CITY COMET 1935-1937

The Railway Department got its act together for the planned introduction of the Silver City Comet, which would start in 1937. In May, 1935, the platform was lengthened to 689 feet and the Back Platform Road and dock platform at the Condobolin end were commissioned on 1st May, 1929. Between the main line and the Back Platform Road, the platform was 27 feet 8 inches wide. Another interesting feature was the height of the platform. In 1929, when the platform was extended to 500 feet, the platform height was set at three feet seven inches. However, in 1935, when the platform was extended to 689 feet, the height of both the main line platform, the dock platform and the Back Platform Road was set at three feet two inches, which was the standard height at that time.

⁵⁹ *Western Champion*, 21st June, 1928, p. 14.

⁶⁰ *Western Champion*, 9th August, 1928, p. 10.

⁶¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14th August, 1928, p. 12.

Was Parkes the only location on the rail system to have a dock platform on the main line side of the platform, rather than the usual position of behind the platform?⁶² No, says signalling and safeworking guru, Graham Harper. He advises that other examples were located at Liverpool Up platform (with a dock at each end); Cabramatta; Goondah; Albury (north end); Bathurst West Dock; Wellington (Dubbo end). One thing that Parkes platform could boast was that it was the longest platform at an intermediate station west of Penrith on the line to Broken Hill.

Also in 1935, Robert Ranken approved on 11th October, 1935 the construction of a new awning for the dock platform and the Back Platform Road measuring 201 feet long. The steel RSJ columns were offset to the centre with the awning 19 feet 3 inches wide on that side of the platform facing the main line and 7 feet 3 inches on the Back Platform side. The awning was covered with the usual galvanised, corrugated iron sheets but, whereas the practice of previous six decades was to use No. 26 gauge, oddly No. 24 gauge was applied to the roof. The plan was designed specifically for the commencement of what was called “diesel trains”.

The station was connected to the town sewerage system in 1935.

The counter in the refreshment room was redesigned in September, 1937, to allow the bar area and the main counter to be served by one rather than two groups of staff. This was achieved by inserting a door from the bar area into the main refreshment room. Another project in 1937 was the provision of a free-standing bicycle shelter for refreshment room staff. It was of modest proportions, being 10 feet 6 inches by 6 feet 4 inches” and held six push-bikes and was of timber construction with a skillion roof. Of interest, like the sheets on the 201 feet long platform awning, No. 24 gauge was unusually approved. It is unsure whether this building was erected because of the existence of another plan for the erection of a bicycle shed in 1945.

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR TWO 1943-1945

W. R. Beaver was the Acting Chief Civil Engineer during most of World War Two. On 18th February, 1943, he approved a 30 feet by 30 feet extension of refreshment room at the Condobolin end. The new extension formed the dining room, though the serving counter was not extended in any way. Customers had to go into the original part of the refreshment room to order/obtain food.

Unlike the nine-inch thick solid English bond brick walls of the 1927 approved refreshment building, the extension was formed by the use of 11-inch wide cavity brickwork in stretcher bond for the exposed end and rear walls, while solid nine-inch brickwork was provided under the awning extension, where rain could not penetrate. “Bricks to match” was the instruction on the plan but that applied only to the platform side.

⁶² The Local Appendix for the west line dated 1st December, 1944, incorrectly states the length of the platform at 500 feet.

The corrugated iron roof on the extension was covered with the usual No. 26 gauge sheets, unlike the unusual No. 24 gauge on the 1927 structure. In order to save a quid, the bargeboard on the original gabled was removed and refixed to the new end. There were two nine-inch diameter cowls through the ridge of the roof, which was the normal type of roof ventilation at the time. Luckily, the original end wall was covered with weatherboards as provision was made for the future extension of the facility. Other features were:

- removal of the partition that divided the original public area into two parts,
- one inch thick timber boards covered the floor,
- Alpine Ash was used for the joinery,
- internal walls rendered with half-inch thick cement,
- ceiling covered with 5/32-inch-thick asbestos cement sheets,
- internally “standard colours” were applied,
- 10-inch high cement skirting around base of internal walls,
- chair and picture rails to all walls,
- 12 feet ceiling height,
- platform awning 16 feet 7 ½ inch wide with three additional awning brackets, &
- the use of “old 80 pound rails” for the sub-surface base of the awning brackets.

The refreshment room was an attractive building but the Railway Department ruined the ambience by the construction of lengthy fences made of galvanised, corrugated iron sheets six feet in height. The work was completed on 8th February, 1944.

A free-standing staff dressing room measuring 13 feet square was proposed but not approved.

Further changes were approved in September, 1944, and were completed on 26 July, 1945. The major change was the conversion of the non-platform signal box into a two- room building with one part a store for the refreshment room and the other a store for joint use relating to diesel train operations and the Paymaster. The former on-platform signal box had become surplus and vacant on 12th July, 1944, with the construction of a new, elevated signal box on the western side of Johnson Street. In addition, the following works were undertaken:

- the existing yard was covered with concrete,
- a new coal bin was erected,
- a store room provided for the storage of trestles,
- removal of picket fencing at the bottom of the footbridge, &
- additional iron fencing provided for an enlarged yard area.

In 1945, an office measuring six feet six inches by three feet six inches was built inside the existing parcels office. Also in 1945, a bicycle shed was erected at the rear of the refreshment room on 1st August, 1945.

THE TIME OF UNION POWER 1946-1949

Because of the huge demand for increased staff and the significant competition for good workers, the railway unions were able to flex considerable industrial power and could obtain a wide range of benefits for staff, usually at the cost of customer facilities.

Major alterations to the 1893 building were approved in January, 1947. These included:

- conversion of the Traffic Inspectors office into additional space for parcels office (the Traffic Inspector was relocated to a space within the refreshment room),
- relocation of the 1945 built office within the parcels office,
- conversion of the Station Master's office into an office for Clerks,
- conversion of the ladies' waiting room into a new office for the Station Master,
- provision of a new ladies' waiting room in half the space occupied by the female toilets (in between the main building and the pavilion at the Sydney end),
- reduction in the number of female closets from three to two,
- fixed seating in ladies' waiting room to replace movable seats,
- replacement of the roof of the connecting section between the main building and the Sydney end Pavilion with an extension of the gabled roof of the centre building,
- recovery and re-fixing of barge boards, moulding, vent and finial from existing building to new gable, &
- alterations to brick walls and painting of new brickwork to match the existing paint on the 1893 building.

With the completion of these works, the platform building regained a symmetry that had been lost when the main gabled roof had been extended at the Condobolin end in 1929. Now, in 1947, the building appeared to be the same style at both ends.

Women have traditionally been the losers in the provision of passenger transport on the New South Wales Railways and the history of their facilities at Parkes demonstrated in part the adversity they endured. From the time the station opened in 1893 up until 1947, the number of female toilet closets had remained constant at three. In 1947, there was still three closets despite the huge increase in passenger transport. Moreover, their seating accommodation had been substantially reduced and comfortable, movable chairs had been replaced by a fixed bench. Approximately one third of the internal space of the building was taken over for parcels business.

In 1947, the layout of the rooms from the Condobolin end was:

- Telegraph office (in the former pavilion at the Condobolin end),

- Parcels office (partly in the former space between the main building and the Condobolin end with one room also in the centre, main building),
- Booking office,
- Booking hall,
- Clerks' office,
- Station Master's office,
- Ladies' waiting room (in the former connecting space between the main building and the Sydney end pavilion),
- Ladies' toilet (in the former connecting space between the main building and the Sydney end pavilion), &
- Male toilet.

After 54 years in service from 1893, only two internal spaces retained their original function and location. These were the booking office and the male toilet.

Indicative of the pressure of the unions to provide improved facilities, 1948 staff change room and a bicycle shelter were provided for employees.

The platform at what was called the West Dock was lengthened in 1948 but no details are available.

In 1949, there was only one ticket window serving the public. It was the same, sole ticket office window that had existed in 1893. However, a concession to the public had been provided in the form of a counter with access from the platform for people making enquiries or making bookings when the ticket window was not open. Alterations were made in 1949 under the banner of "improvements to booking office" which reduced the amount of public space by 50% that had been available in the booking office for people making such enquiries.

REFRESHMENT ROOM OPERATIONS & IMPROVEMENTS 1950-1960

During 1950, there were ongoing complaints about the crowding on the Parkes refreshment room. Apparently, the staff had stopped serving meals directly to tables in the dining room and there was a strong request for the former system to be reinstated.⁶³ Another problem was the pushing and shoving at the serving counter representations were made to local Parliamentarians "to install in the Parkes refreshment room a railing system which will necessitate the forming of queues and eliminate present overcrowding".⁶⁴ However, the Commissioners decided to take no action. William Sheahan, the then Minister for Transport replied:

"forming queues, where it could be avoided, was distasteful to most people and should be avoided unless absolutely necessary".

Sheahan continued:

⁶³ *Barrier Miner*, 7th February, 1950, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Barrier Miner*, 25th July, 1950, p. 3.

"The experience at Parkes, particularly, is that present service arrangements at the counter have been quite satisfactory, and the statement made by the Barrier District Assembly (of the Australian Labor Party) that congestion is not confirmed by local railway refreshment or traffic officers".⁶⁵

In other words, the Commissioners declined to accept that congestion occurred. The Minister's reply was rejected by the personal experience of six delegates of the Labor Party Assembly who had recently to attend a Party conference in Sydney.

A bottle room was built at the rear of the refreshment room adjacent to the rear, iron fence. A sandwich room was also provided in 1951. By 1951, the original store in the refreshment room had been converted into a personal dining facility for the manager of the Parkes refreshment room. A refrigerated, insulated cool room was approved for installation in the refreshment room together with "cooling heads to beer outlets" on the public counter of the bar. The work was approved on 26th June, 1951, and completed on 8th August, 1952.

"Improvements" were made to the to the parcels office and the Station Master's office for the nature of the improvements is unknown.

Complaints continued in 1951 about the food service both on board the Silver City Comet and the Parkes refreshment room.

The Minister for Transport (Mr. Sheahan) has informed Messrs Wattison and Wetherell on various aspects of the service on the Silver City Comet.

This time, Sheahan stated that:

"complaints about the food service had been justified. Insufficient supplies had been taken on board (i.e. the Common), and the recently appointed resident manager at Parkes was unfamiliar with some aspects of his work. Arrangements had since been made to ensure plentiful supplies of food".⁶⁶

Mr. Sheahan was reported in 1951 to say that "an extensive menu was regularly maintained at Parkes Refreshment room. This included soup, at least four entrees, cold meats and salads and two sweets for the evening meal and cornflakes and juice or six entrees for breakfast".⁶⁷

This action had been taken following complaints from the Parkes City Council also complained of unsatisfactory service at the refreshment rooms in 1952.⁶⁸

In 1952, instantaneous cooling heads were provided to beer taps in the bar. Interestingly, there was no complaints about the bar service. In 1953, and instantaneous cooling unit, a compressor and two separate tap outlet points were

⁶⁵ *Barrier Miner*, 8th August, 1950, p. 11.

⁶⁶ *Barrier Miner*, 4th April, 1951, p. 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Barrier Miner*, 29th February, 1952, p. 3.

provided. Again, there was no complaints about the bar service prior to the installation of the improvements.

The following improvements were made to the refreshment room:

1955	provision of additional refrigerator,
1956	provision of "Lightburn" electric washing machine, Dandee rotary electric ironer, power points, wiring and installation of Rotary Hills Hoist,
1957	recently vacated Traffic Inspector's office provide additional store room for Silver City Comet,
1959	replacement of glass washer with stainless steel sink and five-gallon sink heater in refreshment room,
1961	replacement of fuel range and double oven,
1962	installation of cool room in refreshment room

Since 1949, all the improvements at Parkes station and related to the refreshment room. That changed in 1962 when the drainage of the station approach was improved as well as the provision of a bitumen surface and curb and guttering.

THE STATION BECOMES PRIMARILY A STAFF OFFICE 1962-1987

In 1975, the rooms at the Sydney end of the structure were reorganised. From the entry room towards Sydney, the following changes were made:

- the former Clerk's office became a room for the Roster Clerk,
- the former Station Master's office became the new train working room,
- the former ladies' waiting room became the office for the Station Master, &
- a new door was inserted directly into the female toilet.

The loser in this arrangement was, once again, women. They no longer had a separate female waiting room. Even the Station Master suffered as he had a much smaller space than previously.

Alterations were undertaken in 1982 at the Condobolin end of the building. Half of the space in the parcels office was made available 40 lockers for train guards. A new door was inserted in the wall between the new locker room and the Condobolin end Pavilion which was a staff meal room.

In the mid-1980s, parcels traffic and been relocated to the Trackfast building and the goods yard. This resulted in the conversion in 1985 of the remaining half of the

former parcels office into new accommodation. Two new rooms were built – one for the Roster Clerk and the other a sign-on room for staff.

A new, aluminium-framed ticket office window was installed in the booking office in 1986. In front of the new window was an “Austral” shutter roller type” security cover.

The very last improvement to the station building at Parkes occurred in 1987 when the male and female toilets were modernised. In the male toilet, a new stainless-steel urinal accommodating four users was installed as well as a bench with two hand-wash basins, these being a rarity in New South Wales male toilets for this date. A bizarre installation was the provision of a seat in the toilet. If a survey were done of one million passengers who had used the male toilet at Parkes, it would be a safe assumption to say that not one of them would want to sit within the confines of the male toilet. Tragically, women were the losers once again and, while they had similar improvements such as new ceramic wall tiles, a hand-dryer and a mirror, the number of water closets was reduced from three to two.

The Western Mail between Orange and Parkes no longer operated from 1st June, 1986. That event probably resulted in the closure of the Parkes refreshment room in the same year. The refreshment room at Orange also closed in 1986.⁶⁹

With the establishment of New South Wales TrainLink in 2013, one small new orange and white sign has appeared on the forecourt side of the station.

Stuart Sharp

7th June, 2017

OTHER BUILDINGS HEAR TO THE STATION

Rest House	1912 with additions in 1928
Railway Institute	1962
Goods shed	1964

⁶⁹ C. Banger, “The Railway Refreshment Rooms of New South Wales 1855-1995,” *Bulletin*, August, 2003, pp. 297-304.

APPENDIX 1

EVOLUTION OF THE DESIGN – THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FIRST MODIFIED STANDARD ROADSIDE STATION BUILDING DESIGN

John Whitton had introduced what was officially labelled in the early 1890s the “standard roadside station” in 1880. There were three variations within that design family and the last example of any variation was approved in 1888. At that time, John Whitton retired.

Whitton’s replacement, James Angus, decided to use Whitton’s design for replacement buildings on existing lines, though in a modified form. That was the first time that the Existing Lines Branch had utilised the road side design. Angus approved the use of the design at seven stations, these being:

- 1889 St Leonards
- 1890 Lithgow, Carlton, Adamstown, Campbelltown and Wentworth Falls
- 1891 Fairfield

Also in 1891, an example was used for the terminus at Yass Town but this example was approved by Henry Deane and the plan had been prepared in 1889.

How was the modified form used between 1889 and 1891 different to the standard design used by Whitton between 1880 and 1888? Angus introduced 13 significant design changes. These were:

- Abandonment of the concept of overall, design symmetry,
- abandonment of the use of the general waiting room of the larger size than the other rooms in the main building,
- abandonment of porched entry,
- abandonment of the use of transverse gables in the centre of the main building to identify the pedestrian entry point,
- introduction of gentlemen’s waiting rooms,
- expansion and relocation of the toilet facilities,
- introduction of “air closets” to ventilate toilets,
- provision of a six feet wide verandah on the road elevation using a combination of single and paired cast iron columns to support the awning,
- utilisation of a concave shape roof for the road elevation in contrasting, striped painting,
- decorative rendered band of mortar along both sides of the structure and above the windows.
- extensive expression of cast iron lacework on the road elevation verandah,
- introduction of small vents on each side of the roof (usually, two or three vents),
- constant building width.

This modified design featured a higher level of presentation that had been seen in the pre-1888 examples. The additional embellishments were evidence of the surprising increased amount in capital funds made available in the early 1890s, compared to the last years of the previous decade.

The abandonment of the overall design symmetry was slight but evidence of the asymmetry was reflected in the variable distances between the main building and the pavilions. It was also seen in the off-centre location of the entry doors from the road side of the building.

In the modified version, the ladies' toilets were located in the connection between the main building and the male toilet pavilion. Prior to the introduction of the modified version, the female toilets were contained either within the space of the ladies' waiting room or in a small corner of the male toilet block. In both versions, the ladies' waiting room acted as an ante-chamber to protect the privacy of women using the toilet. The trouble with the pre-1888 arrangement was that only one or two closets could be provided because of the very limited space. The other difficulty with the previous arrangement was the non-existence or very limited existence of ventilation from the female closets. Female toilets had always been designed by men, who apparently thought that ladies did not produce adverse odours to the same extent as gentlemen. The use of ventilators up to 1888 was restricted to either the gables of or on the roof ridge of the toilet pavilion. In the modified version, the ventilators were replaced by tall, terracotta chimneys which were located over each individual closet.

By relocating the closets to the intermediate section between the main building and the male toilet pavilion, additional closets could be provided for women and any adverse odours – if women produced such fractured fragrances – were more effectively dealt with by the use of the “air closets.” For the first time, each individual female closet was vented to atmosphere through vertical piped shafts which discharged into above the male and the female closets.

THE EMERGENCE OF A SECOND, MODIFIED STANDARD ROADSIDE DESIGN

The second modification to John Whitton's standard roadside station occurred in 1893. There was only one but an important change in design in those structures that were modified between 1889 and 1891. That change was the abandonment of the use of vertical columns to support the platform awning and the introduction of cantilevered, fabricated awning brackets attached to the walls of the building. With the previous use of vertical columns, it was not possible to extend awnings to the edge of platforms as the columns would prevent the opening of doors on railway carriages. With the absence of vertical posts, the cantilevered awnings were considerably wider and extended close to the edge of platforms. Oddly, the narrow verandah on the road approach was still supported by vertical columns. Whereas those examples constructed to the first modification were located, with one

exception, on existing lines, those approved to the second modification were exclusively used on new lines.

LOCATION	APPROVING OFFICER & DATE OF APPROVAL	NO. OF BUILDINGS	LENGTH & WIDTH OF MAIN BUILDING (FEET) & MATERIAL	LENGTH FROM MAIN BUILDING TO PAVILION (FEET)	OTHER FEATURES
Corowa	Henry Deane 14/12/1891	3	56 x 16 Approved for either timber or brick. Built in brick.	20 to toilet block 61 to lamp room	No roof vents.
Cobar	Henry Deane 25/1/1892	3	56 x 16 Brick	20 to toilet block 61 to lamp room	No roof vents.
Forbes and Parkes (common plan)	Henry Deane 28/2/1893	3	87 x 16 Brick	20 to toilet block 32 to lamp room	Gents' waiting room.
Temora	Henry Deane 10/5/1893	3	56 x 16 Brick	20 to toilet block 32 to lamp room	Lamp room set back to the rear building alignment
Lismore	Henry Deane 11/8/1893	3	55 x 15 Timber	20 to toilet block 32 to lamp room	Lamp room set back to the rear building alignment.

LOCATION	APPROVING OFFICER & DATE OF APPROVAL	NO. OF BUILDINGS	LENGTH & WIDTH OF MAIN BUILDING (FEET) & MATERIAL	LENGTH FROM MAIN BUILDING TO PAVILION (FEET)	OTHER FEATURES
					No paired columns on road side verandah.
Byron Bay	Henry Deane 25/9/1893	3	55 x 16 Timber	20 to toilet block 32 to lamp room	Lamp room set back to the rear building alignment. No paired columns on road side verandah.

This second group of modified roadside design station buildings was not the only building style to receive the large, cantilevered awning brackets. They were applied to the prototype of a new style of brick island platform building at Kiama on 3rd September, 1892, and also to a set of atypical timber buildings at Waverton, which were approved on 15th September, 1892. In addition, bracketed awnings, as a means of eliminating vertical awning posts, was an innovation that Chief Commissioner Eddy introduced from 1890 with the building at Raglan being the first application.

While the platform awning support system was new, why did Henry Deane decide to utilise a posted verandah on the road side of the building? Perhaps, in so doing, Deane gave the structures an appearance of familiarity which travellers would recognize on approach to the station. After the last example of the second modified scheme was approved at Byron Bay station in late 1893, vertical awning posts went

the way of the dinosaur – never again to be used on a New South Wales railway station.

Seven examples were constructed to the second modified, post-Whitton standard roadside design. Five examples were built of brick, namely longer versions at Parkes and Forbes and shorter versions at Cobar, Corowa and Temora. Two timber examples were built of the shorter version in timber at Byron Bay and Lismore. These seven stations represented the very last of the 96 examples of the standard roadside design, which had first appeared in prototype form in 1874 at Gunning. These seven buildings represented the end of the Victorian-styled country railway station on new railway lines.

APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY OF BUILDING ALTERATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKES RAILWAY STATION

DATE OF WORKS	LOCATION OF WORKS	NATURE OF WORK
1896	all wet areas	connection of the station to the town to collating water supply
1905	32-foot long space between the main, centre building and the detached pavilion at the Condobolin end	Provision of an overall roof over the entire space and the erection of corrugated iron walls with glazed window sashes on the platform side
1907	Asphalting of part of platform	In front of the main, centre building
1917	Construction of timber framed refreshment room	Located at Condobolin end of platform but behind the platform
1918	Gas lighting in rooms and on platform	Station connected to town supply
1924	At level crossing	Footbridge constructed
12 th August, 1924	Footwarmer boiler at Condobolin end of platform	Capacity increased to 50 units
January, 1927	Approval for parcels office to be extended to 47 feet at the Condobolin end. Footwarmer heater an out of shed relocated to Sydney end of platform.	These works were carried out.
October, 1927	The floor levels of both end pavilions were raised to meet the 10-inch height increase of the platform.	Implemented
August, 1928	New footbridge	Platform extended and new footbridge built over the platform
1 st August, 1928	New brick refreshment room opens	After 15 years of promises, implemented
1929	the station was lit by electricity; parcels office extended and re-arranged, encompassing the space of the out of room; fencing and gates provided at the	Gabled roof of main building extended to the pavilion at the Condobolin end; out of shed and footwarmer boiler room relocated from Condobolin end to

DATE OF WORKS	LOCATION OF WORKS	NATURE OF WORK
	refreshment room	Sydney end of building
1 st May, 1929	Platform at Condobolin end	Main platform extended from 500 feet to 689 feet; Back Platform Road opened; Dock platform at Condobolin end provided adjacent to main line; Platform awning extended 201 feet; Station connected to town sewerage system
11 th October, 1935	Approval granted construction of platform awning 201 feet long	Condobolin end of the platform between the dock platform and the Back Platform Road
8 th February, 1944	Refreshment room	Enlargement by 30 feet by 30 feet
26 July, 1945	On-platform signal box; office built within parcels office	conversion into store room
January, 1947	Rearrangement of some internal rooms; reduction by half of the space of the ladies' waiting room	Works completed
1949	Booking office	Reduction in public counter space by half
1962	station forecourt	covert guttering provided and surface covered with bitumen
1975	The Sydney end of the 1893 building	Rooms rearranged to provide a new train working room; ladies' waiting room omitted
1982	the Condobolin end of the 1893 building	half of the parcels office converted into a guards' locker room and meal room provided in end pavilion
1985	Condobolin end of the 1893 building	remaining half of the parcels office converted into a sign on room and a room for the Roster Clerk
1986	new ticket window with roller shutter	booking office
1987	Sydney end pavilion	toilets modernised

APPENDIX 3

A SUMMARY OF EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROVISION OF REFRESHMENT FACILITIES AT PARKES RAILWAY STATION

DATE	EVENT	OUTCOME
May, 1902	Inspector visits station to assess the need for refreshment room. Railway Department announces refreshment room to be provided "shortly"	Nothing
May, 1912	Forbes Farmers and Settlers Association support the provision of a refreshment room at Parkes	Nothing
June, 1912	Railway Department says plans "in preparation"	Nothing
April, 1913	A.C. Carmichel, M.L.A., Minister for Public Instruction, on a visit stated that refreshment room to be incorporated in new station	Nothing
May, 1913	District Superintendent, E. Milne, ask whether a local hotel could provide breakfast	Nothing
January, 1915	press report that the refreshment room is a "white elephant"	Nothing
June, 1916	Parkes Council asks Forbes Council to join in requesting refreshment room	Nothing
1st July, 1916 onwards	Railway Department takes over most refreshment rooms	Nothing in relation to Parkes
April, 1917	Railway Department prepares a plan for a refreshment room	Nothing
May, 1917	Railway Department says there is no money for a refreshment room	Nothing
July, 1917	Press report that a tender has been accepted for a refreshment room	Mrs Lewis commences a refreshment room in August, 1917

DATE	EVENT	OUTCOME
December, 1917	Chief Commissioner confirms that there is no money for refreshment room	
October, 1918	General Manager, Railway Refreshment Rooms, states that plans are ready	Nothing
November, 1918	Railway Department states that financial estimates are being prepared	Nothing
February, 1921	Railway Department indicates that a railway refreshment room will be incorporated into the new station	plan submitted to Parkes Council in February, 1921 – Council maintains it has been “sold a pup”
September, 1922	Railway Department says no money available	Nothing
February, 1923	Alterations undertaken to existing refreshment room	Large marquee 40 feet by 20 feet constructed at a location easily seen by town residents
1st March, 1923	Railway Department purchases existing private refreshment room from the lessee	Railway Department now owns and operates refreshment room for first time
November, 1923	Commissioners reject public criticism of the tent refreshment room	Nothing
January, 1924	Tent refreshment room “somewhat improved”	major improvement is unknown
January, 1924	plans prepared for two-storey refreshment room on island platform	Nothing
September, 1924	Commissioners state they never made a promise to provide a new refreshment room	Not applicable
December, 1924	Commissioners promise “relief”	Outcome unknown
1925	Parkes Council says tent breaches local government sanitary code	No action by Commissioners
March, 1926	three plans prepared for refreshment room with versions both east and west of current station	Plans for refreshment room revised twice in 1927 and once in 1928

DATE	EVENT	OUTCOME
July, 1926	Commissioners promise refreshment room for opening of Broken Hill line	Not done
November, 1926	Commissioners state they want additional information before making a decision	Unknown
September, 1926	Plan prepared for a two-storey refreshment room with 17 bedrooms at Condobolin end	Not carried out
January, 1927	The September 1926 plan was reduced in scope considerably.	first floor not constructed and ground floor plan severely reduced in scope
June, 1927	Commissioners announce RRR to go ahead. Plans sent to Parkes Council	Nothing
7 th November, 1927	Remainder of line to Broken Hill opens	New refreshment room not built in time for opening.
1 st August, 1928	New refreshment room opens	NA
6 September, 1937	main refreshment room alterations	provision of a door between the bar area and main room to allow a single group of staff to serve both areas
8 th February, 1944	Major addition measuring 30 feet by 30 feet to refreshment room	Completed
26 July, 1945	conversion of on-platform signal box into a refreshment store; bicycle shed provided at rear of refreshment room	Completed
1951	New Bottle Room; Sandwich room; cool room	Approved in 1951 completed in 1952
1955-1962	Various equipment improvements	Provided
1986	Closure	Implemented