

LEWISHAM RAILWAY STATION

A CASE STUDY IN THE DISCHARGE OF AUTHORITY AND POWER¹

WHAT'S THE POINT OF SPENDING TIME WRITING A HISTORY OF LEWISHAM STATION?

Lewisham station contains a history that is an excellent case study in power and authority. Why so? The station was established through public mass power in 1885. Chief Railway Commissioner E.M.G. Eddy in 1891 expressed his personal authority derived from his position in the Railway organisation to provide a stunning-looking suite of station buildings to implement his notion of a distinct urban railway system.

The announcement of the extension of the subway under Railway Terrace in 1937 reflected the authority of the Department of Railways, the Department of Road Transport and Petersham Municipal Council. A plaque exists at Lewisham station to reflect the importance of the event.

It was the power of the Sydney press in 1989 to embarrass the New South Wales Government and the State Rail Authority about the decision to launch the \$105 million station upgrading programme on the North Shore line, rather than in a more working-class area of Sydney.

Nick Greiner, as Premier in 1989, demonstrated his authority to re-establish Eddy's dream of nearly 100 years previously to provide a distinct urban railway system. He did that by establishing CityRail and he acknowledged his commitment to upgrade the entire railway system, including Lewisham station, when he officially opened the upgrading works in 1990. A second plaque is affixed to Lewisham station as evidence of Greiner's commitment and expression of authority.

In summary, the history of Lewisham station nicely contains examples of mass people power, personal bureaucratic authority, inter-departmental authority, the power of the press and the personal authority of a political leader. The lesson learned from reading the history of Lewisham station is that it is possible to obtain improvements in public services provided that there are strong, committed leaders in both the civil service and polity and that the local people and the press are correctly engaged.

The history of Lewisham station also clearly demonstrates that, when there are no political or administrative leaders and no press and no public interested in

¹ Authority is defined as power is based in legislation or regulation. Power has no such legal basis.

improvements to a public service or facility, nothing is done. What prompts leaders, the press and the public to act? A genuine community need which is acknowledged by the four sources of power and authority. The history of Lewisham station is an excellent case study of action and inaction as well as the discharge and non-discharge of power and authority.

1885 PRELUDE TO THE OPENING OF THE STATION

The railway line through what is today Lewisham was opened in 1855 with the opening of the Sydney – Parramatta line. At that time, there were no stations between Newtown and Ashfield.

New South Wales was a very lucky Colony. Just when revenue from the sales of rural land started to decline in the early 1880s, there was very substantial sale of the large estates in the Sydney area, including the Petersham and Lewisham area which resulted in a “prolific subdivision” into housing allotments.² The suburb of Lewisham was at the time a part of Petersham Borough Council.

Petersham station had opened in 1878 and another at Summer Hill in 1879. The boom in urban development was reflected in the renewal of station buildings at both locations, with a rare pure Italianate example at Petersham in 1884 and an even rarer Gothic Revival example at Summer Hill in 1886.

It was inevitable that demand for easy access to railway transport would be an issue raised by the Lewisham community. A public meeting was held in the Petersham Town Hall on 10th August, 1885, to engage public support for the establishment of a railway station at Lewisham. One press report stated:

“(the meeting was held)...in order to take some steps to urge upon the Government to erect a railway platform at the junction of Frazer's Road (now Hunter Street) between Petersham and Summer Hill. There were about one hundred and fifty persons present. The Mayor (Mr. W. L. Davis) occupied the chair. Among those upon the platform were Mr. Q. Day, M.L.A., Aldermen Evan Jones and Elphinstone, and Messrs. E. E. O'Connor, G. Pile, W. H. Binstead, John Mason, and A. D. Rogers and Mr. Day, M.L.A. The Mayor said the people wanted the erection of a platform at Frazer's Road, about half-way between the stations of Petersham and Summer Hill. He said some time ago a deputation of the inhabitants of the district waited on the Minister of Works with the object of the present meeting in view but the Commissioner for Railways declined to recommend the proposal to the Government unless sufficient land to meet the requirements of the railway station, etc, was purchased by the inhabitants.

It was pointed out then that a railway station at the present was not required, but only a platform, and that enough land within the railway fence was available

² no author, *A History of Petersham Council*, no date, p.2 VF991.PET at library of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

on either side or such a purpose. The increase of population in the vicinity where it is proposed to erect this platform had increased largely of late and in those streets converging at Fraser's Road there were no less than 600 houses, containing 3,000 inhabitants who would use the facilities. He (i.e. Mayor Davis) could not understand on what ground the Commissioner refused to recommend the erection of the platform. The inhabitants were simply asking for what is reasonable and right. The Government could not advance the argument that there would not be sufficient traffic, neither could they say with reason and justness that the proposed platform would be too close either to Summer Hill or Petersham. The intermediate distances would be much greater than between any of the other platforms and stations. He had made an estimate and did not believe that the cost of the two platforms would exceed £250.

Then the Minister said, 'When you have got the platform, you will be wanting something more'. Well, if the population increased to such an extent as to warrant the erection of a station and goods shed, why should they not have them. He (Mayor Davis) would urge upon the inhabitants not to let the matter drop, but to carry on the agitation until they received what they were now asking for, and were reasonable entitled to. They intended to form a deputation to the Minister of Works, and place before him the foregoing resolution. The Minister had great experience with railway platform agitations, and he could instance Croydon, Summer Hill, and Redmyre (i.e. Strathfield). Who could say that these platforms had not created traffic? At first, the inhabitants were small in numbers, and the erection of a platform was not justified in an L.S.D. (an abbreviation meaning money, the "L" standing for pounds, the "S" for shillings and the "D" for pence) point of view but each of these suburbs at the present time warranted a station-house. One dissenter thought the proposed site for the platform should be the junction of Victoria Street.³

The reluctance to provide a station was typical of the response by the Railway Department to new works on existing lines. The negativity demonstrated that there was simply insufficient money to fund every project and the best way to avoid expenditure was to reject proposals, unless they were politically supported to those governing the colony. With so much public money expended in the provision of very attractive, large platform buildings at Petersham and Summer Hill in the mid-1880s, it was virtually impossible for the Railway Department to deny the opening of a platform for the people of Lewisham.

1886 FIRST STATION SITE

John Forsyth, the former State Rail Authority Archives Officer, wrote that a side platform commencing near West Street and extending towards Summer Hill was the

³ *Evening News*, 11th August, 1885, p. 3.

first station site. Forsyth cites two plans relating to the station dated 21st February but he queries whether the year was or was not 1886. The Catholic Church maintained that the station was opened in 1887.⁴ It is known that the station was operational in February, 1887, because there were press reports about additional trains stopping at Lewisham platform.⁵

John said that only the local tracks were served. It appears that staff were on duty from the time of the opening.⁶

By June, 1889, the press reported that “upwards of 32,000 passengers travelled from Lewisham Station last month; for that number, the waiting room is disgracefully inadequate. The size of the Station Master's box is a monument of departmental retrenchment (sic).⁷ Another newspaper report described the building in 1889 as disgraceful, stating that “the accommodation by way of a shelter at Lewisham station is scandalous. The present disgraceful 'humpy' will only accommodate eight persons, while over 30,000 persons travel from that station monthly”.⁸

John Forsyth also wrote that a new waiting shed was built in 1890 for a cost of £480 but further details are unknown. At that time, the Sydney Water and Sewerage Board had laid a main pipe adjacent to Lewisham station.⁹

In 1890, there was a robbery at the station and the press port for the event gave a description of one of the buildings at the station. It stated:

“The small wooden office on the up side, which poorly does duty as station (sic), was entered by a window in the back, and the iron safe, weighing about 8cwt. wrenched from the wooden cupboard and carried bodily away”.¹⁰

The first station site was closed on 19th December, 1891, when the present station was opened.

1891 THE SECOND (PRESENT) STATION SITE

THE INNOVATIVE DESIGN

In January, 1891, the Commissioners released detailed arrangements for the construction of the track quadruplication between Redfern station and Strathfield. The existing Lewisham station was to be demolished and replaced by a new station on the Wells Street side of the “Summer Hill Bridge”, the site being almost opposite the

⁴ *The Catholic Press*, 19th December, 1929, p. 14.

⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11th May, 1887, p. 9.

⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 2nd November, 1887, p. 4.

⁷ *Evening News*, 8th June, 1889, p. 4.

⁸ *Evening News*, 27th July, 1889, p. 4.

⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8th January, 1890, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 14th October, 1890, p. 2.

Catholic Church. A “double subway” was to be provided, meaning that one passage way would be for people crossing the railway corridor while the other subway would be for people using the railway platforms.¹¹ The new station was said to be seven chains closer to Summer Hill than the first platforms.¹²

The buildings approved for the quadruplication between Redfern and Homebush introduced some fundamentally new design characteristics for the New South Wales Railways. These were:

- use of a single design for multiple station buildings,
- introduction of island platforms as the standard for new stations,
- abandonment of floor plans based on transverse entry and replacement with a linear arrangement of rooms and spaces,
- use of medium-pitched roofs partially concealed behind a wide fascia,
- the first widespread use of Marseille pattern roof tiles,
- widespread use of bitumen for all platform services,
- introduction of more than one entry point to stations,
- extensive use of subways and/or footbridges,
- standard composition of stations utilising one island platform flanked by a side platform on each side,
- widespread use of brackets in place of vertical posts to support platform awnings (restricted to island platform),
- contrasting use of materials using brick, off-platform booking offices with Marseille tiled roofs and timber platform buildings,
- the first time male toilets were included within the main platform building (previously, located at a detached location),
- introduction of a new style of roof-mounted ventilators above male and female toilets,
- extensive use of vegetation (especially palm trees) to enhance the station experience,¹³
- use of long awnings extending beyond the length of buildings (restricted to side platforms) &
- the widespread introduction of vertical platform walls with corbelling under the coping, together with the use of concrete featuring a rounded profile for the top of the coping.

The end result of the new design was a creation of classy-looking platform buildings that looked extremely different to their predecessors prior to 1890.

1891 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

¹¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21st January, 1891, p. 4.

¹² *Daily Telegraph*, 21st January, 1891, p. 5.

¹³ Lewisham station won many prizes in the annual Railway garden competition in the early years of the 20th century.

The plans for the quadruplication buildings at Lewisham are unsigned and undated. However, they came under the control of James Angus, the Engineer in Chief for the Existing Lines Branch. Angus must have approved the plans before 8th September, 1891, as he resigned on that date.¹⁴ His signature is on plans for some of the other buildings in connection with the quadruplication between Redfern and Homebush. Three buildings were erected at Lewisham, as was the standard arrangement at those stations which did not utilise one or more existing buildings between the present Redfern and Homebush inclusive. The main building was located on the centre island platform and measured 109 feet six inches long and nine feet eight inches wide. This was an extremely narrow structure but reflected the overall narrowness of the railway corridor. The Railway Department did not wish to resume additional land because of the high acquisition costs. The centre platform and buildings were flanked by side platforms and the buildings on the side platforms were wider being 11 feet on the Up Fast platform and 12 feet on the Down Slow platform.

The initial plan was to provide two booking offices, one on each side of the railway corridor. One was located on the southern side directly underneath the waiting room on the Down Slow platform. The other booking office was located on the northern side at platform level serving the Up Fast line. No booking facilities were provided in the building on the centre island platform. Before construction commenced, the Railway Department changed its mind, probably because of the absence of ticket selling facilities on the island platform, and relocated the proposed booking office on the southern side facing Railway Terrace and inserted it in the centre of the subway. The walls of the subway booking office were extended above the platform level where a lantern roof provided natural light downwards into the office.

The table below sets out the details of the station buildings.

DETAILS OF BUILDINGS AT LEWISHAM RAILWAY STATION

LOCATION	BUILDING LENGTH (FEET)	BUILDING WIDTH (FEET)	OFFICIAL NAME OF ROOM/S	AWNING LENGTH (FEET)	AWNING SUPPORT SYSTEM
Down Slow platform	24	12	General Waiting Room	107	Vertical iron posts
Up Slow/Down Fast platform	109.5	8.75	(From Sydney end) 1 Station Master, 2 General Waiting Room, 3 ladies' Waiting Room,	109.5	Cantilevered iron brackets below horizontal timber beams with vertical timber posts affixed to the building walls

¹⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 9th September, 1891, p. 4.

LOCATION	BUILDING LENGTH (FEET)	BUILDING WIDTH (FEET)	OFFICIAL NAME OF ROOM/S	AWNING LENGTH (FEET)	AWNING SUPPORT SYSTEM
			4 Ladies' Lavatory, 5 Yard, 6 Public Urinals		
Up Fast platform	38	11	(From Sydney end) 1 Booking Office, 2 General Waiting Room	107	Vertical iron posts
Booking office in subway	13.5	13.5	Booking Office	NA	NA
Off the Sydney end of No.1 platform adjacent to the Up Fast line	Circa 6	Circa 6	Lamp Room	No awning	No awning

While all the other platform level buildings were of timber construction, the brick vertical extension of the subway booking office that was located on the Sydney-end ramp of platform Nos. 2 and 3 featured bright-red coloured, nine-inch thick walls, with moulded aprons under the window sills and sandstone blocks for the building quoins. More unusual was the appearance of the hipped roof covered in small, flat Marseille pattern tiles, as survive at Newtown station in 2017. These tiles were also fitted to the roofs of the other platform buildings. The roof ridge featured ornamental terracotta pierced tiles, which were terminated in terracotta ram's horn finials. This was an eye-pleasing structure, despite its small size. Though of diminutive dimensions, it provided a strong symbolic message, along with the other platform buildings, that the Railway Department acknowledged the importance of the suburb served by the station. Similar key brick buildings were built at the other stations, with those at Redfern, Newtown and Summer Hill extant in 2017.

In the 125-year history of the subway, several problems have been identified by staff. For a start, it was too narrow and the position of the windows was such that it was impossible for staff to clean. Flooding in the subway has also a problem from time to time. Just as there are levels marked on the main building showing the flooding at Maitland station, there is also a mark on the wall of the booking office which shows the height to which the water reached. Despite a second pump being installed, the entire subway and booking office continues to flood during heavy rain storms.

Even the off-platform lamp room was an attractive structure with a simple hipped roof.

In addition to the narrowness of the building on the island platform, the narrowness of the stepway, being only eight feet wide, to the island platform also demonstrated the minimal width of the railway corridor. There would have been equally worse pedestrian pandemonium as the stepway to the Down Slow platform was only seven feet wide. The only platform where the stepway was of tolerable width was that which served the Up Fast platform on the northern side. That was the only location where there was not a severe space restriction and the stepway there was a reasonable 15 feet wide.

Although a detailed description cannot be found in the Sydney press relating to the new Lewisham buildings, there was a comprehensive article dealing with the design features of the same style of building provided at the same time at Katoomba, though there only one island platform and one building was erected. The Katoomba building was a little larger than the island platform building at Lewisham, being 126 feet long and 13 feet wide, the additional length being explained by the provision of a booking office. The press report stated:

“being an entirely novel design, the following particulars may prove interesting, the more so as it is understood that it is the Commissioners’ idea of the most suitable railway platform, and similar to what they intend building in the future wherever stations are to be erected. The rather modern idea of the island platform has been followed in this instance. The building is entirely of timber and there are 34 intermediate vertical timber posts set at six feet six inch centres supporting the platform awning. The outside is covered with tongue and grooved boards and vertical lining to a height of four feet, with string moulding which forms a dado. The remainder of the walls are covered with sunk rabbetted boarding, with a string moulding running over the heads of all door and window openings round the building. There are also moulded pediments over the heads of all the door openings. The principal doors have raised bottom panels, with bolsection moulding. The upper panes are tinted Cathedral glass, with lead glazing. The windows are in the Queen Anne style; in the upper sashes, tinted Cathedral glass has been used, while the lower ones are glazed with ground plate glass, the effect being very pleasing. The arrangement of the various offices and rooms as evidently received considerable thought. The walls and ceilings of all rooms are covered with T and G and V-jointed Kauri lining boards, with dado moulding, and massive wood cornices. The whole is varnished in the natural colour owing to the boards used being all picked ones. The result is most handsome and pleasing. Kamptulican has been used in the ladies’ and gentlemen’s waiting rooms to fill the space between the underside of the dado moulding and the top of skirting. These rooms as well as the Station Master’s room and clerks’ office, are fitted with marble mantelpieces. Water is supplied by an underground tank, holding 9,000 gallons. From this, it is pumped into two 600 gallon tanks placed under the roof, and thence is laid on throughout the building. What has in previous stations done duty as verandah,

and which has been supported by iron or wooden posts, is in the building under notice replaced by an elegant awning carried two 12 inch by 4 inch beams, bolted together and moulded, each being 40ft long. These beams are laid at right angles to the platform six feet six inches apart, and extend the full width of it, with a projection over the rails. They are supported by the posts referred to in the description of the building. Around the awning there is a curtain boarding four feet deep, with capping and moulding. Under each girder and bolted through each post are fixed cast iron brackets, and wrought-iron scrolls are fixed against the curtain boarding. The whole of the outside has been painted in suitable colours. The contractors for the whole works were Messrs A. Dean and Sons".¹⁵

The comment above that the design would be used for all future new stations was rubbish. In 1892, yet another new design was introduced with further refinements during the 1890s leading eventually to the appearance of the Federation-influenced design of which over 200 examples were built. Interestingly, the same contractor who built the Katoomba building also constructed the suite of three buildings at Lewisham. As there was a water main adjacent to the station when the second site opened, it is possible that the local reticulated water supply was connected to the station. If this were so, there would have been no need for an underground freshwater tank as well as tanks in the ceiling cavity, as was the case at Katoomba.

Former State Rail Authority Archives Officer, John Forsyth, wrote that the 1890 structure was a "standard Eddy type".¹⁶ That comment was not entirely accurate and helpful as the design as applied to Lewisham was only used in 1891 and only between Redfern and Homebush and also at Katoomba. The Lewisham station building was standard to other buildings on the corridor but the design was never used again after 1891.

It is known that the station was connected to the local sewerage scheme at a cost of £645, along with Newtown and Petersham stations on 31st October, 1899, having been authorised on 22nd February, 1899.¹⁷

UNUSUAL FEATURES

There were two unusual features of Lewisham station. The first was the provision of brick fireplaces in all waiting rooms. In the 1880s in the Sydney area, waiting rooms had been provided but without heating in light of the frequency of train services and the short time travellers would have been waiting for trains. Their inclusion in the

¹⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26th October, 1891, p. 7.

¹⁶ J. Forsyth, *Metropolitan Main and Branch Lines, Part 1 Sydney-Granville*, State Rail Authority, 2005, p. 48.

¹⁷ Summer Hill and Ashfield stations were connected to the local sewerage scheme on 15th September, 1900.

1890s buildings was possibly more to do with an acknowledgement of the social status of the Sydney suburban area. The second was the omission of a parcels office. No doubt parcels were kept either in the subway booking office or in the Station Master's office but the omission of the facility on the plans was strange, considering that Chief Commissioner Eddy put a lot of effort into reforming the parcels business.

The Sydney press reported on the new scheme introduced by Eddy, stating that the Chief Commissioner had decided to introduce "what may be termed a parcels post system by train". If the press reports are to be believed, up to 1891 parcels were not conveyed by passenger trains but rather goods trains. Eddy introduced the scheme under which a "specially built, light-built van of large dimensions would be attached to all mail and other country trains, distinct from the ordinary goods trains, and parcels would be received at all stations by the staff on board for swift dispatch to all destinations.¹⁸ At the Sydney end, the large triangular space at the station near George Street, would be devoted to a large receiving and dispatching depot, specially designed to accommodate a large staff and about 100 vehicles and horses. With this special organisation for quick receipt and dispatch, there would be a complete cut down of the rates ranging from 50 to over 100 per cent."¹⁹

Eddy also introduced a scheme whereby parcels continued to be conveyed by goods trains at lower rates than passenger trains. Parcels conveyed by passenger trains were kept within the main station building but Eddy introduced a new type of building for parcels conveyed by goods trains. For this second group of parcels, he introduced a new official name – out of s – meaning that these parcels were removed out of the guard's van of a goods train. He also introduced a new type of platform building, known as the out of shed. Also, Eddy introduced for the first time on the New South Wales Railways the use of special parcels stamps, despite these being in use in other Australian colonies as early as 1867.²⁰ The new parcels arrangements were introduced in August, 1891, and after one month's operation the Sydney press reported favourably on the new scheme and heaped congratulations on the Railway Commissioners.²¹ The absence of both a dedicated parcels office and an out of shed at Lewisham station may have been related to the timing of the new system of parcel transport.

Despite the absence of a dedicated parcels office, Lewisham station in later years became a member of an elite group of 16 stations in the Sydney area from which the designated parcels contractor would pick up parcels from the station and deliver them to houses within that suburb. The reverse also applied. The contractor would pick up parcels from residences in Lewisham and deliver them to the rail head, although it is

¹⁸ Eddy made good on his promise to introduce parcels vehicles with eight mail vans built in 1890 and 1891. See L. Clark, *Passenger Cars of the NSW Railways*, Canberra, Traction Publications, 1972, p. 140.

¹⁹ *Evening News*, 28th January, 1891, p. 3.

²⁰ K. Williams, "Parcels and Small Consignments on the NSW Railways – Part 1", *Australian Railway History*, July, 2016, p. 17.

²¹ *Evening News*, 2nd September, 1889, p. 3.

unknown whether they would be delivered to Lewisham or to another station for processing.²²

The story of Eddy's desire to improve services does not end with the fixed infrastructure. In 1891, he introduced the 11 Class tank locomotives which were able to haul heavy loads and provide faster services than their predecessors.

WHY WAS TIMBER USED EXTENSIVELY FOR THE ALLEGEDLY CLASSY BUILDINGS?

There was a considerable difference between relatively low levels of capital for works on new lines and higher amount of capital available for renewals on existing lines. While Parliament controlled the former, the Commissioners had access to their own funding sources for projects involving existing lines. However, even for existing lines, the pot of money was limited. Member of Parliament, David Scott asked the Colonial Treasurer about the materials to be used in the buildings between Redfern and Homebush for the track quadruplication. "Is it a fact that the Railway Commissioners, after accepting tenders for erecting of station buildings and awnings supported by iron columns and lattice girders, at Eveleigh (current Redfern), Macdonaldtown, Newtown and Summer Hill, caused fresh plans of wooden buildings to be prepared leaving out almost the whole of the brickwork and ironwork? Have the contractors received instructions to erect the buildings and awnings of wood and has he approved of the substitution of wood for brick and iron in these buildings?"

Bruce Smith, the Treasurer, replied "I am informed that it is a fact that the original tenders that were accepted for these buildings have been modified. It was found that little or no progress was being made with the brick structures, owing to the difficulty in getting bricks for face work and, in order to expedite the construction, the tenders were amended so as to provide for the booking offices only of brick, the remainder of the buildings having brick foundations and timber sides. The awnings and roofs will be as originally specified. The alteration greatly expedites the completion of the works, and the cost is reduced. It is considered that, in appearance, the altered buildings will be quite equal to those originally designed, and there will be ample accommodation".

The story about the limited availability of bricks may have been true as a huge number of bricks were provided to provide boundary fencing, as was the case along Railway Terrace at Lewisham. Two other possibilities appear. Number one is that money may have been limited and timber provided a cheaper option. Number two is that Chief Commissioner Eddy and James Angus intentionally provided timber structures in an attempt to assuage the concerns of the very conservative engineering fraternity within the New South Wales Railways, who probably thought that large brick buildings on island platforms would have cracked through the constant and simultaneous running of trains on both sides of the structures. A post-modernist assessment would suggest

²² *The Murrumbidgee Irrigator*, 26th June, 1936, p.3.

that there is no way of knowing for certain why timber was used so extensively on the quadruplication works.

1891 PHYSICAL BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

Tenders closed on 7th September, 1891, for the construction of station buildings at Lewisham, Ashfield and Homebush.²³ Messrs. Alexander Dean and Sons was the successful contractor and they built the passenger station buildings at Lewisham, Summer Hill, Ashfield and at Burwood and Charles Palmer built the structure at Homebush.²⁴ Deane did not sign the plan until 8th December, 1891. The contract price for the station buildings was £3,903. In 1890, Dean had constructed the large, two-storey refreshment room at Moss Vale, which stands in 2017.

With the construction of the new station, the first station site was abandoned. and John Forsyth, the former Archives Officer for the State Rail Authority records that the station was moved to its present site on 19th December, 1891, but at that time only the two southern tracks, being the Down Slow and Up Fast lines, were in operation. The press reported about progress in early 1892 about the opening of the additional tracks, with one report stating:

“On 27th March, 1892, the most important stretch of the quadrupled railway line — namely, that between Macdonaldtown and Lewisham — will be handed over to the commissioners by the (track) contractor, Mr. O. W. Mc Master. This will include the new stations and platforms, and will thus completely divide the suburban from the country mail or express traffic, and greatly facilitate the running of all trains”.²⁵

John Forsyth’s records state that the quadruplication opened on 10th April, 1892.²⁶ The press reported that Lewisham station had been completed in April for the opening of the four tracks in April. At that time, one press report described the structures at Lewisham as belonging to the “now familiar style, with the booking office in the centre of the subway”.²⁷

There was a change in entry/exit arrangements at the station in 1893. On 6th March, 1893, a system of “snipping tickets” for passengers entering through barriers to join trains was introduced at Sydney station and main suburban stations. It is unknown

²³ *Daily Telegraph*, 7th September, 1891, p. 4.

²⁴ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 15th September, 1891, Issue no. 596, p. 7369 and the *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 19th September, 1891, p. 646. Charles Deane was also involved in the project and it is assumed that his was one of the sons. See J. Forsyth, *Metropolitan Main and Branch Lines, Part 1 Sydney-Granville*, State Rail Authority, 2005, p. 48.

²⁵ *Evening News*, 24th March, 1892, p. 5.

²⁶ J. Forsyth, *Station Information G to M*, State Rail Authority, 1998, p. 175. The opening dates in that document conflict with another document prepared by John Forsyth. In J. Forsyth, *Metropolitan Main and Branch Lines, Part 1 Sydney-Granville*, State Rail Authority, 2005, p. 48, he states that the Sydney-bound platform was opened on 12th December, 1891, and the Strathfield-bound platform was opened on 21st February, 1892.

²⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13th April, 1892, p. 8.

whether Lewisham station was included in the new policy. John Forsyth, the former Archives Officer in the State Rail Authority, noted that a “ticket cabin (was) erected in subway in 1893”. Was that a reference to a cabin at the barriers for the Junior Porter to snip tickets? Yes, and may have had some connection to another event that occurred later in 1893. In addition to the pedestrian access provided via the subway on platform No. 4 (i.e. on the southern side adjacent to Railway Terrace), a gate was located at the western end of the platform providing additional access. A ticket collector was stationed there to check tickets. The additional access relieved congestion, particularly in the afternoon peak with trains arriving from Sydney. However, in October, 1893, the gate was permanently locked and all access to that platform was restricted to the subway.²⁸ One thing is for certain. The present ticket office in the subway was opened as part of the station complex in connection with track quadruplication in 1892.

White timber picket fencing was placed at the rear of the two side platforms.²⁹ At some later stage, multiple hideous advertising hoardings were placed at the rear of the Up Fast platform.³⁰ At the Sydney end of the building on the island platform was the usual larger station clock and also a personal weighing machine.³¹ There was extensive vegetation at the station comprising of palm trees and hedging for at least 30 years after construction of the buildings.³²

1905 PLATFORM LENGTHENING

In 1905, all the stations between present Redfern and Strathfield were provided with longer platforms, possibly to 520 feet, which within a few short years would be the standard length for Sydney and Newcastle stations.³³ This was no doubt a response to the introduction in 1903 of the larger 30 class locomotives, which possessed a 21% increase in tractive effort compared to the 11 class locomotives they replaced. This increase would have allowed longer trains to be hauled.

At Lewisham, the platforms were extended in the Sydney direction. A major issue to be faced in the lengthening of the platforms was the removal of the brick structure over the subway booking office. It was located over the ramp at the Sydney end of the island platform. While the platform at that location was approximately 30 feet wide, the brick building was 13 feet six inches wide, leaving what was regarded as a narrow distance of eight feet three inches on both sides of the structure. The Railway Department decided to rebuild the structure above the booking office by reducing the

²⁸ Ibid., 2nd October, 1893, p. 5.

²⁹ Photograph number 009590 at ARHS Archives.

³⁰ Ibid number 023738.

³¹ Photograph numbers 510189 and 510190 at ARHS Archives. These photographs also show how filthy the buildings were from locomotive smoke.

³² See photograph numbers 507899 and 510189 at ARHS Archives.

³³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21st January, 1905, p. 7.

overall width by two feet six inches. The roof and brick walls were dismantled and rebuilt to provide a building width of only 11 feet, thereby increasing the platform area on each side of the structure to nine feet six inches. All the original building materials were reused and the structure continued to look like a classy building when it was erected in 1891. A photograph of the altered building and the longer platform appears in Ron Preston's book, *125 Years of the Sydney to Parramatta Railway*, page 74.³⁴

1892-1915 LEWISHAM SIGNAL BOX

Graham Harper, railway signalling and safeworking historian, provides the following story about the role of Lewisham station before, during and after the provision of the signal box at the Strathfield end of the station. He writes:

"The history of signalling at Lewisham before 1892 is a bit murky. Dr Bob Taaffe, historian of signal boxes and interlocking frames, wrote in his signal box gazetteer that a box was provided 'circa 1888', although the arrangement did not show up in the departmental interlocking register. It may have been a block signal box from that time, but there are no details available.

What we can be certain of is that, by the time of the opening of the quadruplication in 1892, there was a block signal box at Lewisham. The 1892 *Weekly Notices* refer to the relocation of the Lewisham Down Starting signal just prior to quadruplication, and the reference to a starting signal is a pretty good clue to the existence of a block signal box at the time.

The then Lewisham Signal Box was closed with the quadruplication. However, platform home and distant signals were provided and were to be operated by platform staff or guards to afford some protection for a train standing at the platform. These signals were operated from three small lever frames, possibly pull-over levers rather than actual interlocking frames, one on each platform. The arrangement seems to have represented the height of contempt the authorities must have had for the absolute block system installed at the time and those operating it. After all, the rail traffic was regulated by the signallers at Petersham and Summer Hill signal boxes and two trains should not have been possible in the one section at the same time.

Added to this situation, the actual protection of a train by the platform signals was limited to the time a train was standing at the platform, especially if they were being operated by the guard who had to be on the train when it arrived and departed!

Interestingly enough, the Lewisham Down Distant signals were not distant signals at all, but rather a control on the Petersham starting signals. In other words, Lewisham could return these signals to stop [or rather prevent the Petersham signaller from

³⁴ R. Preston, *125 Years of the Sydney to Parramatta Railway*, Burwood, NSW Rail Transport Museum, no date, p. 74.

clearing them – after all, only one train at a time per track per section!] This arrangement was abolished in 1901, and Lewisham got its own distant signals, below the Petersham starters.

The Lewisham block signal box of 1907 was obviously provided to divide the Petersham to Summer Hill section, as it was only switched in for a couple of hours each day during peak hours. Stanmore station had been similarly equipped earlier in the same year. However, when the signal box was switched out the same ritual was observed with the home and distant signals being controlled from the platform levers in the manner described above.

Around the same time, the three subsidiary lever frames became four, one for each running line. The one installation on the island platform was divided into two, one being placed on each side of the top of the subway steps on the island platform.

Finally, in 1915, automatic signalling was introduced between Petersham and Ashfield and, as the signal box at Lewisham had no other function than regulating traffic, it was dispensed with. Lewisham station has not had signal boxes or interlocking since³⁵.

1925-1927 THE IMPACT TRACK SEXTUPLICATION

Physical work was underway in August, 1925, at Lewisham for the demolition of the building and platform that served the Up Fast Line. This was no big issue to the press, which stated that the platform was rarely used at that location.³⁶ One month later in September, the press reported that a strip of land approximately 50 feet wide would be acquired through the cemetery and enclosed in the railway corridor.³⁷ It was also necessary to cut back the walls of the remaining platforms to allow for the wider electric trains to pass. The former brick platform wall that served the former Down Fast line was removed and a new wall made of old sleepers provided instead. This grubby-looking timber wall was visible from the northern side of the corridor and suggested that the once-elite people of Lewisham were no longer a powerful community lobby group.³⁸

In preparation for the sextuplication of the line between Redfern and Strathfield, the New South Wales Parliament in December passed the Lewisham Cemetery Act (No. 24) in 1925 to relocate the Roman Catholic Cemetery north of the station where the present main up and down tracks are located. The legislation provided for the reinterment of the graves and vaults to Rookwood, Bunnerong or another unspecified cemetery. The Railway Commissioners paid the full costs.

³⁵ Email from Graham Harper, 3rd October, 2017.

³⁶ *Sun*, 21st August, 1925, p. 8.

³⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22nd September, 1925, p. 8.

³⁸ See photograph in *Railway Digest*, February, 1990, P. 48.

In February, 1926, the Railway Department was in the process of calling tenders for the removal of the grave sites and asked relatives to contact the Departmental Estate Agent, who was located in Adyar House at 29 Bligh Street, Sydney.³⁹

From press reports, the work of demolishing the Up Fast platform and the provision of the additional tracks through Lewisham station had been completed by 29th May, 1927, when the additional two tracks were opened between Petersham and Ashfield.⁴⁰ The existing subway was extended on the northern side under the two additional tracks and a set of steps was provided parallel to the rail corridor adjacent to the nearby street system.

Activities returned to normal after the opening of the new main lines and no changes occurred to the station buildings for the next decade.

1934-1940 RESOLVING THE DANGER OF USING THE STATION ENTRANCE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CORRIDOR

The access to Lewisham station from Railway Terrace on the southern side of the line was dangerous for pedestrians because of the limited footpath space and the high frequency of motor vehicles. In 1934, the Catholic Church expressed concern to the Police about the dangerous entrance to Lewisham station and, until Catholic Brothers had been trained, the Police supervised the crossing in the mornings.⁴¹ Local residents in 1935 pointed to the number of serious accidents involving deaths at the intersection between Railway Terrace and Victoria Street. They intended to petition the Minister for Transport and also to establish the Pedestrians' Protection Association of Australia. The press called the intersection a "death trap".⁴²

The Commissioner for Road Transport announced in June, 1936, that it was intended to extend the subway under Railway Terrace and emerge it on the southern side of the road. He also was prepared to provide pedestrian access from Old Canterbury Road to the Thomas Street entrance on the northern side of the corridor. This access to Thomas Street was not provided. The subway extension went ahead and was paid for by the Department of Road Transport and Petersham Municipal Council.⁴³

In January, 1937, the Department of Railways prepared a plan for a 10 feet wide subway under Railway Terrace emerging on the southern side of that thoroughfare adjacent to Victoria Street. It was necessary for the building alignment on the southern side of Railway Terrace to be moved back to allow the stepway to emerge on the footpath.

³⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 4th February, 1926, p. 18.

⁴⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1st June, 1927, p. 11.

⁴¹ *Catholic Freeman's Journal*, 3rd May, 1934, p. 33.

⁴² *The Labor Daily*, 3rd July, 1935, p. 5.

⁴³ *Labor Daily*, 26th June, 1936, p. 16.

It took another four years of negotiation before the Department of Railways issued a revised plan for the subway in October, 1940. Whereas the 1937 plan showed the subway under Railway Terrace on the diagonal, the 1940 plan provided for a straight extension under the roadway. While physical construction was underway at that time, traffic was diverted away from Railway Terrace.

The excavation work started in May, 1940, and took six months to construct and was carried out by the Petersham Municipal Council staff from plans prepared by the Department of Main Roads. Whatever role the Railway plans paid is a mystery. From the evidence of subsequent developments, it appears the Railway plan was unnecessary despite taking four years and two separate plans. A 48-inch wide water main had to be lowered 23 feet and provided with an elbow at each end. The work allowed Railway Terrace to be widened by four feet six inches. The press stated that:

“Resumptions made at the corner of Victoria Street and Railway Terrace cost the Council about £3,000. The total cost of the work and resumptions was approximately £8,000, a portion of which was met by the Department of Main Roads and Transport”.⁴⁴

The original entrance to the subway on the northern footpath of Railway Terrace was filled in with earth and a 14-inch thick brick wall was erected where the entrance had been located. The use of stretcher bond brickwork identifies the original entrance. On each side of the former entrance, the retaining wall is formed of English bond brickwork. The impact of that work resulted in the newly opened entrance on the southern side of the street as the only means of entry to the station on the southern side of the railway corridor.

The extension of the subway was a very important local issue. How is that remark assessed? There are two pieces of interesting evidence. Firstly, there is a plaque on the Victoria Street side of the subway saying the subway was opened 4th November, 1940, by Alderman F.J. Cahill, the Mayor of Petersham Municipal Council and C.N Neale, the Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways. Secondly, the opening of the subway extension rated a mention in the official history of Petersham with the article stating:

“an important improvement effected in 1940 was the construction of a pedestrian subway as a means of ingress and egress to and from Lewisham railway station on the southern side. For many years, the subway from the railway station terminated at the railway boundary and pedestrians had to enter or emerge from it onto Railway Terrace and cross at the roadway level. Railway Terrace, being a narrow thoroughfare carrying heavy through traffic, pedestrians using the railway station entrance at that point were exposed to an

⁴⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5th November, 1940, p. 15.

increasingly serious danger and several fatal accidents and many others had occurred there.

After some years of agitation during which financial assistance from the Railway Department was unsuccessfully sought, the Government eventually agreed that cost of providing a suitable subway under the roadway should be the responsibility of the Department of Road Transport. Plans and specifications for construction of a suitable subway at an estimated cost of £3,971/15/- were prepared by Council's Engineer and, in August 1939, the Department of Road transport approved of the plans and agreed to bear the actual cost of the work up to 10% in excess of the estimate, excluding any expenditure necessary for resumption of properties which Council was required to arrange and pay for.

On this basis, the work was carried out. Council resumed two properties, which were partially demolished and the residue reconstructed. Actual subway construction was duly completed at a cost of £4,196/17/3 and it was officially opened on 4th November, 1940".⁴⁵

Railway Terrace was also significant in the history of Petersham Council as it was one of two short experimental links of road which were reconstructed reinforced concrete. These were the first such sections in the Municipality and undertaken in 1924.⁴⁶

It was a pity that the problem of flooding in the subway was not addressed at the time of the subway extension. No doubt the reason was the reluctance of one government department – the Department of Road Transport – to fund work that was the responsibility of another government Department – the Department of Railways. The problem of floods in the subway continued for the next 70 years.

1945-1977 THE TIME OF NOTHINGNESS

After World War Two, successive New South Wales governments became disinterested in providing reasonable funding to maintain the assets managed by the Department of Railways. Governments were more interested in road motor transport, private car ownership, road construction and the replacement of Sydney and Newcastle trams with diesel buses. The absence of any major renewal at Lewisham station was typical of what occurred at nearly every one of the 1,200 stations on the New South Wales railway system.

Only a few minor jobs were undertaken at the station. The fireplaces in the general waiting room and ladies' waiting room on the centre island platform were bricked up

⁴⁵ A. Shepherd, *The Story of Petersham*, Petersham Municipal Council, 1948, p. 42.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

on 16th January, 1946. Those on the two side platforms remained serviceable, though no doubt unused.

In 1952, the Department of Railways planned to introduce fluorescent lighting to replace incandescent lighting at railway stations. The first application of this new technology was planned to be the subway booking office at Lewisham but the project was cancelled for an unknown reason. It was five years before the Department commenced to install fluorescent lighting at stations. In 1957, the first stations to be so fitted were Croydon, Granville and Clyde.

On 9th December, 1965, the barrier box at Lewisham in the subway used by the Junior Porter to collect tickets all was relocated. It was moved from the centre of the subway to the adjacent western subway wall.

At an unknown time before 1984 the waiting room on the present No. 2 platform was removed and that three windbreaks were provided at the rear of platform under the awning.⁴⁷ As at 1984, the platform structures were painted in two tones of brown.⁴⁸

1977 FIRE DESTROYS THE MAIN PLATFORM BUILDING

If it had not been for a fire destroying the timber building on the Sydney-bound platform, it would have been another decade before any action would have taken place to modernise the station facilities at Lewisham.

On 3rd December, 1977, the 1891 timber building on the Sydney-bound platform received fire damage but was not totally destroyed.⁴⁹ It had commenced in a store room. *New South Wales Digest* reported that the fire commenced at 1830 and required the Fire Brigade to run their hoses across the running lines. Yes. You guessed it! The down Brisbane Limited Express cut the hoses, after which the Fire Brigade ordered the cessation of all train services on the affected lines.⁵⁰ Ron Christie, the then General Manager, Way and Works Branch, approved of the new structure on 3rd July, 1978. The building was to be constructed at the immediate Sydney end of the 1891 building. The platform was not level but this was rectified prior to construction.

Tenders closed on 6th September, 1978, for the construction and completion of a new station building on the platform. The total area of the building was estimated at 43 square metres. The tender advertisement said that “the structure will comprise steel-framed canopy modules with metal deck roofing and standard station modules of conventional brick construction on (a) re-inforced concrete floor slab”. The new building featured cavity brickwork and was described as being of “modular

⁴⁷ Photograph numbers 026855C & D at ARHS Archives.

⁴⁸ Ibid. photograph number 406041.

⁴⁹ A similar example at Burwood on platform Nos. 2 and 3 was also destroyed by fire about the same time, while some years later buildings of the same design were destroyed by fire at Ashfield and Homebush. As a result of these fires and the demolition of the building at Summer Hill, not one of the large, 1891 timber buildings on the island platforms survive.

⁵⁰ *New South Wales Digest*, January, 1978, p. 15.

construction in units of 2400 mm". It was 14,700 mm long and possessed a near flat roof. The reference to "modular construction" did not mean the simple relocation of prefabricated units placed on site with the ability of immediate occupation. The reference was to a series of standard drawings for individual parts of a building. Lewisham station consisted of two modules. The module closer to the stepway was denoted as "waiting area – Module F". It was correct to describe it as a "waiting area" rather than a waiting room as the 2852 mm long front was open to the elements, as was the policy at the time. The module closer to Strathfield was denoted as "toilet block Module H". This latter classification was incorrectly labelled as it contained a room for the Station Master in addition to male and female toilets.

Railway Digest magazine in the July, 1980, issue promised that the "new brick buildings, with improved passenger facilities, will be constructed in their place as soon as demolition work is completed".⁵¹

Demolition of the fire damaged timber buildings at Lewisham on the Sydney-bound platform and at Burwood on platform Nos. 2 and 3 commenced at the end of May, 1980. At the end of October 1980, work on the new station buildings at Lewisham and Burwood Nos 2 and 3 platforms was underway.⁵²

Work was continuing in early 1981 but the contractor, Arvan Constructions Pty Ltd, which demolished the timber buildings at Lewisham went bankrupt and the work was taken over by the Public Transport Commission.⁵³ Upon completion, the new brick building looked entirely like it had been designed by engineers rather than architects. To say that it was ugly is not far removed from a precise assessment. How come this happened? Architects in the 20th century working for the New South Wales Railways, no matter what the organisation was called, were always dominated by the engineering fraternity which approved structures on only one criteria – cost. Moreover, engineers wanted the lowest cost possible because they did not think platform buildings were important and at Lewisham community received a building from those people who controlled all aspects of civil engineering. Galvanised, Cyclone mesh fencing was placed at the rear of that form No. 1.

Thankfully, the new, allegedly modern-looking brick structure on the Sydney-bound platform had an extremely short life – eight years. It was demolished in 1989.⁵⁴ This time, it was the architects who were and would continue to be in control of the design of platform buildings. After 1990, the authority of the engineers to dominate station design declined greatly.

⁵¹ *Railway Digest*, July, 1980, p. 197. Photograph numbers 026855A & B and 137042 at the ARHS Archives show the 1980 building.

⁵² *Railway Digest*, January, 1981, p. 22.

⁵³ *Railway Digest*, May 1981, p. 143. The contractor was also undertaking work on similar designed buildings at Wollstonecraft, Cheltenham, Thornleigh, Normanhurst, Burwood and Meadowbank and work on these structures was also adversely affected.

⁵⁴ *Railway Digest*, February 1990 p. 48 has a photograph of the demolished Lewisham station.

In 1981, staff at Lewisham were complaining about the excessive noise in the subway booking office. Insulation with foil backing was added to walls and ceiling sisalation was fixed to new timber stud walls. Helga carpet tiles were placed on floor and new skirting boards fitted. The opportunity was taken to improve the appearance of the structure, including painting. The staff complaints stopped.

1989 THE BIRTH OF A NEW RAILWAY - CITYRAIL

The most significant year in the history of urban public rail transport in Sydney was 1989.⁵⁵ The vast majority of railway stations in New South Wales that existed in 1989 were either derelict, not far from being derelict or in need of essential, urgent maintenance. Buildings were filthy because no funding had been provided to upgrade station facilities for the previous 100 years. Many station buildings had not been painted in decades. What occurred from 1989 up to the end of CityRail in 2013 was nothing short of revolutionary. Amazingly, it was the Greiner conservative government that created a railway organisation purely for passenger operations. The word “amazing” is used as conservative governments have traditionally showed little genuine interest in improving Sydney’s public transport. Moreover, the Greiner government made available a hitherto unbelievable amount of money to upgrade railway stations as well as other railway activities. Subsequent events showed that the year, 1989, was the most important year in the history of Lewisham station since 1891 when Chief Commissioner Eddy and James Angus provided a new, engaging design for the urban environment.

CityRail commenced on 11th April, 1989 with Rob Schwarzer as the Group General Manager and seven Line General Managers. On 1st May, 1989, a publication, entitled “*A New Strategic Direction for CityRail*”, was issued with the commitment that CityRail would become a first-class urban railway system by 1995. All 294 stations would be subject to ‘revitalisation’, including:

1. Rehabilitation and maintenance to established standards - a five-year programme,
2. State-of-the-art design standards to be fixed for stations with the project design team to report by 30th June, 1989,
3. Quicker responses to maintenance requirements,
4. Stations to be painted every six years – the first two stations nominated were Sydenham and Strathfield,
5. Catch up on deferred painting – 30 stations by December, 1989,
6. A major clean-up of stations every six months,
7. Target of graffiti-free stations by 1995 – 72-hour removal by June, 1990, and 12 hours by 1993,
8. New signage at all stations – to be available by June, 1989,

⁵⁵ The same could also be said for railway stations in regional and rural areas in New South Wales.

In July, the first edition of the *City Rail Design Guide* for stations was distributed to staff for the preparation of tender documentation. This document provided minimal standards in relation to buildings and other fixtures, such as signage and seating. The first time, way-finding signage was to be standard and each station was identifiable by adjacent roadways by light boxes showing the station name and the CityRail corporate logo. The existence of the *Design Guide* allowed a standardisation of passenger facilities at the same time as providing flexibility in the creation of overall station designs by external architects.

Bruce Baird, the then Minister for Transport, launched on 14th August, 1989, the Government's \$105m station upgrading programme, with 60 stations to be done in the first year. For almost 100 years, the low-cost, basic, unattractive, timber platform buildings remained to bear witness to the financial neglect of past New South Wales governments over the previous century. Baird added that safety and convenience were the highest priorities and explained that all stations were to conform to CityRail design standards, ensuring that they would be bright, clean and easy to use. The upgraded stations would feature improved lighting, seating and signs, better facilities for buying tickets and improved information about train scheduling. The problem of safety was to be addressed by eliminating dark corners and replacing some waiting rooms with rain, sun and wind resistant canopies, plus comfortable and effective work conditions for staff. Baird stated that "passengers judge CityRail by the conditions of its stations and trains" and it would be these very words that would be fired back at him and the executive CityRail management soon as the prototype station was launched.

The prototype station under the station upgrading programme was Artarmon.⁵⁶ There never was an official explanation that explained why Artarmon station was chosen, despite a plethora of station buildings requiring upgrading. Perhaps the physically dominant position of the Artarmon station platform and building and its strong visual impact probably were factors in the 1989 decision to make Artarmon the prototype for the introduction of the "Station Sparkle" programme, which lasted to 1995, when it was absorbed into other station upgrading programmes. With the addition of brightly coloured red paint on virtually every timber and metal, structural item on the station, Artarmon station was able to be seen vividly and widely from either side of the rail corridor and, hence, transfer a message from the railway administration to the general public that an effort was being made to brighten station areas.

One factor that cannot be overlooked to explain why Artarmon was selected as the prototype station is the politics of the place. Artarmon station was in the conservative electorate of Willoughby, which was held in 1889 by Peter Collins. He was the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party as well as the Minister for Health and Arts. Perhaps the

⁵⁶ *Railway Digest*, February, 1990 p. 48 was incorrect when it stated Lewisham was the first station to be 'completely refurbished under CityRail's five year plan'. The error is understandable as the NSW Government issued a press statement with fake news that Lewisham was the first station.

selection of Artarmon was based on both the political and physical attributes of the location?

CityRail was formed as a marketing entity to manage urban rail services in Sydney but ownership of the land and building was retained under the name of the State Rail Authority. CityRail announced the upgrading of every railway station on the network under the banner of a \$105 million station upgrading program.⁵⁷ Artarmon was not only within the first group of stations to be upgraded, it was the very first example. The work was completed in September, 1989.⁵⁸

How did the station upgrading programme about in 1989 and not, say, in 1986 or earlier? Because Rob Schwarzer, the newly appointed Group General Manager for CityRail, appointed forward-thinking, inspirational people to the key roles of Line General Managers. On the Bankstown line, Geraldine Killalea occupied the top position and she was personally involved in the upgrading of all stations on her line, which included the section between Macdonaldtown and Strathfield. Another factor was the involvement of young, enthusiastic architects within the organisation who had been waiting for the opportunity which the creation of CityRail afforded them. Schwarzer and Killalea provided the opportunity.

In a submission to the State Rail Authority Board, Rob Schwarzer said “stations are our front door, our most visible asset (along with rollingstock) and our critical link with customers – station upgrading can be justified on economic grounds by reduction of maintenance costs, better utilisation of services and resources, increased opportunities for station trading, and increased passenger traffic – unattractive stations which appear unattractive to be unsafe and are difficult to use will not attract people – a well presented station will attract patronage, as the British have experienced” – design and construction to be undertaken by contractors and supervised by CityRail’s architects and project managers – aim is to upgrade 200 stations in five years – a Station Upgrading Steering Committee has been established – priority is based on need and work that can be completed within 12 months – the high visibility of upgrades will result in public and political support.

1989 THE IMPACT OF THE STATION UPGRADING PROGRAMME AT LEWISHAM

CityRail executives were stunned when there was media outrage that Artarmon became the first station to be upgraded and wanted to know why stations in much

⁵⁷ *CityRail*, Issue No. 07, April, 1990, p. 1

⁵⁸ *North Shore Times*, 2nd September, 1989.

poorer conditions were not selected before Artarmon. Lewisham station was singled out by the press and others as the worst station in Sydney, based on a public poll undertaken in 1988. John Laws, a Sydney radio announcer, also took up the issue on behalf of commuters from the west suburbs of Sydney.⁵⁹

On 1st May, 1989, the Minister for Transport, Bruce Baird, announced that Lewisham station would be completely rebuilt at a cost of more than \$1 million. He said that, "once described as Sydney worst station, (it was) set to become the best". Baird said the work confirmed "the refreshing new approach of State Rail management". What was interesting about the Minister's press release was its complete omission of any reference to Artarmon station and the document gave the impression that Lewisham, rather than Artarmon station, was the prototype for the station upgrading programme, calling it the "role model for other stations on the CityRail network".

The standard features of the CityRail upgrading programme were applied to Lewisham and related to:

- provision of vandalism resistant seating,
- security lighting,
- easy to clean wall and floor surfaces,
- awnings over ramps and stairs, &
- new signage.

The local press in June, 1989, was enthusiastic about the proposal, though commenting that it was overdue.⁶⁰ Added to the list of improvements made in May, was the provision of "special areas designated as safety zones and special help points". These "special areas" turned out to be the allocation of zebra striping to the platforms to denote an area where passengers should stand at nighttime because of the improved lighting at that location and the nearby presence of the help point.⁶¹ Tenders were called in July, 1989, despite detailed planning taking place until November of that year.

Marrickville Municipal Council was supportive of the upgrading work but was not entirely happy about the proposal to close the railway station for a period of four months. Lewisham station was closed between 30th September and 30th December, 1989.⁶² Of the 294 railway stations that were graded under the CityRail station improvement programme, it was only Lewisham that was completely closed. A person speculating on the peculiarity of that situation would have to think that the closure was

⁵⁹ What was the station after Lewisham that was ranked as the second worst station? Following the upgrading at Lewisham station, *Railway Digest* reported that "the honour of being the most dilapidated station in Sydney must surely have gone to Vineyard". See *Railway Digest*, September 1991, p. 318.

⁶⁰ *Glebe and Western Weekly*, 14th June, 1989, p. 4.

⁶¹ The zebra markings were later removed from the platforms after concerns at that they may induce epileptic seizures in people with that disability.

⁶² *Railway Digest*, February, 1990, P. 48.

related to the location of Lewisham station in a Labor-held electorate. Was that a case of political revenge?

Red paint featured on almost every piece of infrastructure, including awning columns new platform seats and rubbish bins.⁶³ This was the same treatment that had been applied at Artarmon station and would continue to be applied to a few more stations in 1990 before a review was undertaken which resulted in the restriction of red paint to seats and rubbish bins. In accordance with the then prevailing policy, a single unisex toilet was provided in the subway but no toilet or other facilities were provided for disabled travellers. The selection of a stainless steel toilet suite was just one way that CityRail reflected its new station upgrading policy. White coloured, loop-top steel fencing was provided along the rear of the platforms. This coloured fencing became a standard feature for the entire life of CityRail.

Apart from the poor judgement related to the excessive application of red paint work, CityRail was committed to maintaining the appearance of the fabric of the 1891 station and provided replica elements so that the station appeared to retain most of its original fabric. This was not the case. After the demolition of the then existing station elements, the only remaining original, fabric on the platforms dating from 1891 at Lewisham was part of the platform canopy at the Lewisham end of the Strathfield-bound platform. A few bases of former awning columns at other locations also survived the demolition process. Today, it is virtually impossible to tell from casual observation which elements are from 1891 and which date from 1989.

One unusual feature of the 1989 upgrade at Lewisham – and also at Artarmon – was the provision of a store room in the ceiling cavity. Access to this store room, in which paper documents were held, was by the use of a sprung-loaded, hinged staircase that was lowered by the use of a hook. The staff at Artarmon station made continual protests about the inadequacy of cavity store room. They stated that the space was unpleasant in character. Also, they complain that there was inadequate headroom and that the access did not conform to prevailing occupational health and safety policy. Staff complaints went on for years at Artarmon and the facility was removed in 2006 by the construction of a new store room at the Sydney end of the existing building. The history of the store room above the booking office at Lewisham was different. There were no staff complaints and the store room above the ceiling is still in use to hold communications equipment.

Nick Greiner, the then Premier, formerly re-opened Lewisham on 14th March, 1990. A plaque announcing the reopening is affixed to the wall of the station. Lewisham must rank as one of the very few stations that have been blessed by the fixture of two plaques – the earlier one in 1940. On the opening day, Greiner said that \$22.5 million of the allocated \$105 million for the station upgrading programme had been spent in

⁶³ Photograph numbers 137287 and 192940 at the ARHS Archives show the extent of the red and white paint work.

the first year and that more than 50 stations “had received a facelift”. He repeated the often-stated promise that the government intended that CityRail would “provide the public with a world class railway by 1995”.

Had not the media made a big protest about the poor condition of Lewisham station, would the outcome of being different? The media protest certainly hastened work on the provision of modern facilities but, as it was CityRail policy to upgrade all stations, Lewisham station would have received improvements at a later date. It was just a matter of time. Full marks must be given to Premier Greiner for taking swift action to address the horrible conditions at Lewisham station and it must be remembered he did this despite the station not being in an electorate held by his political party. Lewisham station was in Labor Party territory in 1989. If it were not for the powerful media campaign, the Minister for Transport, would not have acted in 1989 to help commuters who predominant voted for the opposition party.

A CONTRAST IN STATION DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

It was, of course, a gross waste of public funds to provide a new brick building on the Sydney-bound platform in 1980 and then demolish it nine years later. However, the 1980 building provided one excellent benefit and that was the facilitation of the interpretation of the change in station design philosophy in 1989.

The table below contrasts major, fundamental differences in station design policy before and after the creation of CityRail in 1989.

TABLE: PRE AND POST STATION DESIGN POLICY CRITERIA

DESIGN ELEMENT	PRE 1989	POST 1989
Overall design philosophy	Solid looking brickwork and concrete construction	Light and airy with a high degree of use of transparent materials
The importance of design consistency	Important. Stations to have a consistency in relation to floor plan, rectangular footprint and materials. Controlled by departmental architects.	Overall design secondary to the role of minimal customer standards, as stated in the CityRail Design Guide. Determined primarily by external architects.
Co-ordination between station elements	No co-ordination. Platform train indicators, seating, bins, lighting, vegetation or controlled by different parts of the organisation.	All station elements co-ordinated as a single overall design system coordinated by Line General Managers.
Location of platform buildings	traditional provision of office space for Station Master	elimination of platform buildings and containment of all functions in an

DESIGN ELEMENT	PRE 1989	POST 1989
		overhead or subway concourse
Building materials	Concrete and brickwork	Steel and glass
Heritage considerations	Irrelevant	Relevant
Functions of paint	Maintenance of materials	Symbolic and practical functions
Provision of toilets	Separate male and female toilets	Uni sex toilets
Access for disabled travellers	platform access by the use of ramps, with minimal examples of disabled toilets.	platform access by lifts for all stations where necessary and provision of disabled toilets and vast majority of stations.
Passenger safety	undertaken by station staff	prevented by good lighting, communications technology and CCTV
Role of Station Master	Supervision of other staff, management of bookkeeping and emergency safeworking	Absence of need following restructuring, staff reductions and introduction of technology
Fencing	Unpainted, galvanised final coat providing minimal safety role	Powder coated fencing in white colour acting as a symbolic change agent as well as safety function
Complaint system	No visible system of complaint lodgement	Advertising invites dissatisfied travellers to directly communicate with the Line General Managers

The demolition of the 1980 building caused no adverse comment about wasting public funds, this being in line with the overall dominant public lethargy in relation to urban transport policy and operations. Nevertheless, the 1980 building provided an easy method of demonstrating how radically different the CityRail design philosophy was in 1989 compared to its immediate predecessors.

POST 1990

Little official attention has been paid to Lewisham station after the Greiner opening. In 1996, the booking office was refurbished with new workstations and other furniture as a part of a system-wide programme. CCTV was installed in 2002. Since that time, Sydney Trains has not maintained the station in a high level of excellence and it would appear that the present condition is reflective of the same absence of adequate maintenance that was present in the early 1980s.

Surrounding Members of Parliament have protested and complained about the absence of lifts at Lewisham station. The lifts will come one day but, as Lewisham station is in a Labor held electorate, that will happen later than sooner.

The blue and white station signage dating from the later period of CityRail survived until October, 2017.

In 2017, the organisations that exercise authority and power in relation to Lewisham station are less interested in maintaining the physical fabric than was the case in 1989. The existence of graffiti at the station reflects current management thinking. Maintenance and improvements now depend on the decisions of public servants with little passion for rail transport, with those in the executive ranks primarily under direct political influence.

WHAT'S THERE TODAY TO SEE?

The two plaques are in place in the subway near the bottom of the stairway to No. 2 platform.

There is some fabric remaining from the 1990 opening. The unusual mesh seats have the name of the station spray-painted on the back and their peculiarity denotes their very early construction in the CityRail period. Perhaps the most obvious fake work that was done in 1990 was the fascias on the platform awnings which are solid material rather than individual, vertical match boards. Green paint has replaced the original red and white colours. The fencing is the usual white painted, loop top style.

Stuart Sharp

18th October, 2017