

The Railway Luncheon Club

19 August 2009

EAST HILLS

Approximately 40 members visited East Hills Station on a beautiful, sunny day. After a warm welcome from the station master, the tour group inspected the station facilities. Guests were given a special four-page handout on the station's history and present features. Special guest on the day was Life Member John Oakes. He explained to members the relationship between the 1931 and the present station site. After inspection of the operation of the terminating road, John took the group to the footbridge over the Georges River where he explained to members the naming of the station and details of the extension to Glenfield in 1987. Noel Read also spoke to the group about the signalling and safeworking history of the line.

The East Hills line was the first line in NSW to have all platform structures built from the one plan and, not only one plan, but from just two sheets of paper. It was the first case where the general arrangement plan additionally contained virtually every detail of building construction. The design was approved in August 1929 and initially the structures were designated 'A8' but this was deleted and 'A11' inserted. Thus, this was the first addition to the 'A' series of platform buildings since 1917.

East Hills building was the same size as Turrella, Bardwell Park and Bexley North are today, i.e. 55' long. However, there was to be a detached signal box at East Hills 20' long, the only detached box on the line. Both the building and the box were 10' wide internally. The structure featured the early use of sheet fibro for the external soffits and corrugated fibro on the roof. No staff accommodation in the main building was provided, but in all cases the open-sided passenger 'corridor' was converted into a booking office. Access to the platform was via two footpaths that led directly onto the end of the platform. The traditional barrier box was provided towards the end of the platform but this was relocated closer to the platform building in 1971. The toilets at the station were designed to be connected to the sewerage system but 'absorption trenches' were used to drain the urinal. There was a supplementary plan issued for a separate brick booking office 30' long but this was not built. Externally, buildings were externally painted in a combination of No. 5 'light stone', No. 6 'medium stone' and No. 7 'dark stone'. In 1962, the main platform building was lengthened on the Down end with a 25' addition for a larger booking office. The former booking office was converted into a parcels office.



Above: Set C5 in the terminating road at East Hills. (Both images D Wynter)



Above: John Oakes (in two-tone jacket) speaks to the luncheon club members about the history of his local station. Note the roofing 'space frames' mentioned in the text.

Tenders were called in 1986 for one side and one island platform with ramped and stair access linking a central booking office below track level which exists today. The design was undertaken by the well known architectural firm of Edwards Madigan Torzillo Briggs of North Sydney. The distinguishing feature of the design was the use of steel 'space frames' to support the metal deck roofs. A space frame is a three dimensional truss using triangular shapes. The individual elements are subject only to compression or tension. Lattice frames are two-dimensional and designed to deal with stresses in only one plane, i.e. downward. Space frames are three-dimensional and designed to deal with loads in all directions, including side loads and twisting. A similar design feature was also applied at Holsworthy. This has been the only application of space frames on the NSW rail system.

The building that housed the booking office also contained pre-unisex male and female toilets, with the male toilet featuring the classic stainless steel two-person urinal. The staff facilities included a meal room, locker room, staff toilet and a single store. The station generally features substantial amounts of white ceramic wall tiling on surfaces exposed to the public.

East Hills Station was one of the last new station buildings to be constructed prior to the establishment of CityRail in May 1989. The station design provided three aspects that would be fundamental design concepts to be applied by CityRail. These were, firstly, the provision of comprehensive staff amenities; secondly, the elimination of buildings of any type on platforms and, thirdly, the elimination of all platform structures. Another pioneering aspect was the provision of a toilet/crew room just off Platform 1 for the convenience of train crews. Such crew facilities have become common and mandatory since the construction of East Hills Station.

The next outing will be at 11.00 on Wednesday 16th September at Mortdale. Meet at the Down end of the platform. Our special guest will be Keith Audet, former Manager of the Mortdale Maintenance Centre. The inspection will include the station master's residence. Lunch will be taken at the nearby Mortdale Hotel at noon. The October outing will be at Fairfield. Members are encouraged to wear name badges.

Many thanks to Stuart Sharp for writing this report.