

# MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

## RAILWAY LUNCHEON CLUB

### TWO-DAY VISIT TO LITHGOW

Bob McKillop in his book *Furnace, Fire and Forge* (available at the ARHSnsw bookshop) describes Lithgow as Australia's first inland heavy industrial centre, and the Lithgow Valley saw the coming of the railway in 1869. Against this background 43 members and friends visited Lithgow on 14 and 15 September on the Railway Luncheon Club's outing to see at first hand the remnants of the Lithgow region's railway and industrial past. Aably led by local historians, and ARHSnsw members, Col Millard and Len Truscott, the group was treated to a feast of heritage sites, many not normally available, or even known in some cases, to the general public.

Occasional showers didn't dampen the first day which was mostly around Lithgow itself, with visits to the various railway buildings in the City, as well as Blast Furnace Park and the original Eskbank Loco Depot. After lunch at the Lithgow Workmens Club we were treated to a ride on the Zig Zag Railway and an inspection of the workshops. We then retreated to the Zig Zag Motel for the night. After dinner, an informative talk was given by Arthur Robinson who served as a signaller at both Lithgow boxes as well as other parts of the system.

On the second day an early walk took in the remains of the first (1888) Eskbank Coal Stage signal box, and then the sun came out as we headed for Wallerawang. En-route various railway residences and other railway buildings in Lithgow preceded a stop to see the 1869 Bowenfels Station building and SM residence. Then to the Marrangaroo Gatehouse and various old railway viaducts and bridges. Before stopping for a look at the Wallerawang Station building, a visit was made to the site of the former Wallerawang Loco Depot and some railway residences. Lunch was at the adjacent Commercial Hotel, and then we returned to Lithgow to see Eskbank Station and a short trip to the State Mine, looking at some historic bridges en route.

In all, it was a very enjoyable and fascinating look at some of our past, and it was gratifying to see the restoration and conservation work which has been done.

The success of the two days must go firstly to Stuart Sharp, who conceived it all and wrote most of the 55 pages of very informative notes, and especially to Len and Col. A short report like this cannot do justice to the packed itinerary which they put together, and they also contributed much of the research and the notes. A big thanks also to the Zig Zag Railway who treated us as their guests and to Arthur Robinson for his after dinner talk.

The next outing for the Luncheon Club is to Helensburgh, on Wednesday 20 October 2010. We meet on the platform at Helensburgh at 10am after the arrival of the 9.03am service from Central. Note that this tour is fully accessible to those with mobility difficulties. We will return from Helensburgh on the 11.24am train for lunch at the Royal Hotel Sutherland. In November we will be going to Carlingford, and December to Petersham Training College.

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Gary Hughes



Tour leaders Col Millard (3rd from right) and Len Truscott (2nd from right) point out some of the features in the foundations of the first (1888) signal box at the Eskbank Coal Stage. Image: Stuart Sharp



Some of the group at the 1870 Marrangaroo Gatehouse. Whilst now unoccupied, it was for some years used as a tea room, and the FH car behind it served as part of this facility. Image: Ed Tonks