SYDENHAM RAILWAY STATION

THE OVERALL ILLAWARRA LINE

FUNDING AND BUILDING STYLES 1880-1889

The period between 1878 and 1889 is often called the railway "boom" period because so many miles of new lines in rural areas were added to the system.[1] It was in this period that most of the First Class platform buildings were erected. Appendix 1 shows all First Class buildings on the NSW rail system.

While it is correct that massive amounts of money were allocated for railway expenditure in this period, the demand for capital was so great for all aspects of railway development and operations that sufficient money was simply unavailable for all the projects. Even in key projects, money was in short supply. For instance, when the Great Southern Railway reached Albury in 1881, the platform building at that station was incomplete for over one year and the goods shed was used for that period as the first station.

To reflect the tightness of funds, some of the gatehouses on the line to Hurstville in 1884 were of timber construction and, more importantly, were visible from the platforms where there were high-class structures. When the buildings were planned for the Hornsby-Waratah/Hamilton line in 1886 and 1887, not one platform structure was over 55 feet in length and all were of timber construction. Similarly, the platform buildings on the line south of Waterfall to Bomaderry and Kiama between 1886 and 1892 were all timber, except for Helensburgh, Wollongong and Kiama. In 1885, the lattice bridge over the Georges River at Como held only a single track despite the formations of the lines on both side of the bridge being built for duplicated tracks. There were simply insufficient capital funds to address all the competing needs of the rail system. Strathfield was an unusual exception in the 1880s and very fortunate to get its large station, even though the platform buildings were of the utilitarian design, without the large amounts of decoration that had been applied to buildings at Summer Hill and Petersham stations in 1885 and 1886.

In the 1880s, there appeared a different design of building on existing lines. By no means was this the only design or even the dominant design. Unlike platform buildings on new lines, the dominant design policy for replacement buildings or new stations on existing lines was mostly a case of choose what you like. At the top end, there was some level of standardisation when George Cowdery, the Engineer for Existing Lines, started re-using a design for new lines that had fallen out of use in 1871. Stations such

[1] For example, see R. Lee, *The Greatest Public Work*, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger, 1988, pp. 88 and 97

as Auburn, Blacktown, Riverstone, Windsor and Richmond all received this former, top-of-the tree design featuring a brick building with hipped roof and attached pavilions at each end. Apart from that design, the overall design pattern was a case of anything goes.

Below the immediate top locations requiring a new building was a design that had not been seen before 1880. It was much like the top design but the building had a large, open-fronted waiting area, as is the case with the 1880s buildings extant at Stanmore and Lidcombe today. The building at Redfern No. 1 platform exists and also demonstrates the open-front style.

In March, 1881, the NSW Parliament passed the Public Works Loan Act No. 28 that provided capital funds for a 68 mile railway line "from Sydney to Wollongong and Kiama". Soon after, the momentum was lost when Henry Parkes went overseas in December, 1881, and suspended Parliament during his nine months away. Added to that was the Garden Palace fire on 22nd September, 1882, which destroyed many stored railway plans. Luckily, a change of government on 5th January, 1883, saw Alexander Stuart form government. He held land and mining interests on both Sydney's North Shore and Illawarra regions "so he concentrated his government's efforts towards building railways to serve his own property."[2] It was during Stuart's term of office that the first section of line was opened to Hurstville.

THE PATTERN OF DESIGNS OF PLATFORM BUILDINGS ON THE ILLAWARRA LINE

The Illawarra line from Illawarra Junction near Redfern to Bomaderry/Nowra falls into three periods so far as the design of platform buildings is concerned. The three periods are 1883 and 1884 (Redfern Junction to Hurstville), 1885 to 1887 (beyond Hurstville to Bombo) and 1893 (beyond Bombo to Bomaderry). The period between 1887 and 1893 was void of construction on the Illawarra line, the omission of action being an indicator of the NSW Railway's shortage of capital funds for all the tasks that Parliament had approved.

1 FROM ILLAWARRA JUNCTION TO HURSTVILLE

The new line to Hurstville was built to please land speculators. At all stations except Tempe, very large platform buildings were erected. This was a clear sign that big money interests were involved. Another sign was that this was the first line that was duplicated (i.e. two tracks) upon opening. A third sign was that these were the first stations where two platforms at the one station were parallel to each other, as opposed to the prior use of staggered platforms.

[2] Lesley Muir, *The Bankstown Line*, Kingsgrove, Canterbury and District Historical Society, 1995, p. 5

All but Tempe received First Class buildings, as listed in Appendix 1, on one platform. At each station, a second building, misleadingly named a 'waiting shed', was erected on the opposite platform. Thus, each station had a large, grand building on one platform and a bit smaller but still large building of a more restrained style on the opposing platform. The design for the smaller buildings featured the open-fronted design, as mentioned before.

2 FROM HURSTVILLE TO BOMBO

The extension of the line south of Hurstville contrasts dramatically with the Illawarra line north of Hurstville. Between Illawarra Junction and Hurstville there was a dominant presentation of First Class platform buildings on one of the two lines and with large, brick "waiting sheds" on the other line that were themselves larger than the structures south of Hurstville, apart from Wollongong and Kiama station buildings. The contrasting architecture and differences in line capacity (i.e. double track) identifies the Illawarra line as the only line in NSW that was built equally as a short haul, suburban passenger railway and a longer distance goods line to serve powerful interests that desired lines to serve their collieries.

When Sutherland station was opened on Boxing Day, 1885 it possessed John Whitton's standard, third-class, brick building, which a few years later was named by the NSWR as its "roadside" design. The only other station opened on the additional 15km extension from Hurstville to Sutherland was a dumpy looking, large waiting shed at Como. The year, 1885, was very much a watershed year. While the number of route miles opened continued to grow, the quality of platform structures started to deteriorate. The Colony of NSW was facing a shortage of revenue because the amount of rural land which it could sell was almost exhausted. For example, in 1885, magnificent platform buildings were erected at Bourke and Young and a longer version of Sutherland was built at Bungendore.[3] Apart from those three examples and Sutherland, no other brick platform buildings were built in 1885. It is of interest to note that, beyond Sutherland, the only other brick buildings to be erected on the line opening to Bomaderry were Helensburgh and Wollongong.

Chief Commissioner Eddy's policy to duplicate the main lines into Sydney after his appointment in 1888 saw the duplication of the line from Hurstville to Como and between Sutherland and Waterfall in 1890. The section from Como to Sutherland was opened in 1891.

[3] The NSW Railways tried very hard to avoid taking the railway line into Young, in an attempt to avoid the capital costs with the provision of a large building in the town.

The rail line between Sutherland and Bombo was opened in November, 1887, though a 13 mile length between Clifton and Wollongong had been opened in June, 1887. It featured Whitton's standard roadside design mostly with timber examples.

It has been stated that 1885 was a watershed year in relation to the provision of capital funding for the Railways. From that time, the Railway Construction Branch introduced a new design of platform. The dominant design feature was the absence of an awning over the platform projecting in front of the building. There was also an open-fronted waiting area, similarly seen on larger buildings, which was cheaper to build than enclosed rooms with doors. The design was far from impressive in size or design but it stands today as an icon of the tight financial situation facing the NSW economy in the second half of the 1880s. The present platform buildings at Shellharbour and Bombo retain most of their original form and interpret the tight, fiscal times.

The provision of the railway station for Kiama was not part of the 1886 Parliamentary approval for the allocation funds for the extension of the line south of Wollongong. Yes, the proposed line from Wollongong was to terminate at "Kiama", but that place name was loosely applied and related to a terminus at Bombo. The present platform at Bombo was the 1887 terminal structure. All platform buildings and all railway residences south of Wollongong were relatively small in scale and of timber construction.[4] It is not surprising that the NSW Railways wished to terminate the line at Bombo, as the short extension into Kiama involved the construction of two costly bridges and a tunnel.

3 BOMBO TO BOMADERRY

It appears incongruous that such a beautiful building could be designed for Kiama and, in the same year, piddling, little timber buildings be approved for Gerringong, Berry and Bomaderry. Well, in order to relieve local concern by residents and civic leaders that their part of the NSW rail system received inferior treatment compared to other parts of the colony, it needs to be stated that the section of line between Kiama and Bomaderry was treated no worse than other regions at the time.

Bombo to Bomaderry section was like the vast majority of lines in other areas of the Colony. Of the 24 sections of lines opened between 1887 and 1896, 13 had no brick buildings. Of the 11 lines that had one brick building, that brick building on four of the lines was a First Class building, including Kiama. Only two of the 11 sections had more than one brick building, those being for the Molong-Forbes section and the Sydenham-Belmore branch.

[4] There was one important exception - the Station Master's residence at Kiama.

Platform buildings on the NSW Railways were the product of time, money and politics. Station buildings were provided on the strength of local political and economic power. Clearly, there were important combined politico-business interests served by the massive investment in the provision of tunnels on each side of Kiama. Had unimportant people populated the town, the railway would have probably avoided the heavy expenditure to take the line to and through the town. Gerringong was a place void of political umph and, thus, the railway and the station just touched the edge of the urban area and the NSW Railways plonked a low-cost building to serve as a station. The section south of Kiama was the first time where the design of the terminal building was the same as all other buildings on the line. Now that was a sign of a money shortage!

WHERE SYDENHAM FITS IN TO THE ILLAWARRA STORY

THE STATION AT LINE OPENING

Sydenham station was opened on 15th October, 1884, when the line from Illawarra Junction to Hurstville was opened. When the Belmore branch was opened on 19th January, 1895, the name of the station changed from Marrickville to Sydenham.

As with the vast majority of post 1882 Railway plans, the signature or even the initials of John Whitton, the Engineer for Railway Construction, is absent from the surviving plan. It is the contract plan for Sydenham, signed by William Robinson, dated 20th November, 1883, that survives. Robinson also built Rockdale station in 1884 and Eastwood and West Ryde stations in 1886.

There were two large buildings that composed the station, one on each of the two parallel platforms, forming superior and subordinate structures. On the up platform was the larger ‘passenger station’ building and was massive in size and scale compared to the vast majority of buildings erected on the NSW rail system. It was 115 feet 10 inches long. On the down platform was the smaller ‘waiting shed’ measuring 85 feet long. Both brick buildings were beautiful structures and, combined, they formed one of only 34 First Class stations built between 1859 and 1894. There is no meaningful word that can be used to describe the style of architecture of the Sydenham building as it was a bits-from-here and bits-from-there design approach. Typical, 19th century NSW Railway style is about the only way to describe the station and that is a somewhat unhelpful nomenclature, apart from saying that Sydenham got a building much like others in NSW.

The main building on the up side, presently Nos. 2 and 3 platforms, was 18 feet wide through the General Waiting Room but was of variable width overall with two transverse gables on the roof. From the down end were Urinals, a 25 feet yard, the Ladies’ Ante Room, the Ladies’ Waiting Room, the Ticket Office, the General Waiting Room, the

Station Master's office, the Parcels Office, another 25 feet long yard and a detached Porters/Lamp Room. The walls of the yards between the main building and the pavilions are rendered brick, which was very unusual. On the down side, the connection between the main building and the single pavilion was covered with the far more normal corrugated iron sheeting. The ceiling height was 14 feet. The roof design was Dutch Gable and there were small vent gablets along the roof (three on main roof and one on the waiting shed on the opposite platform). The window heads were arched. There were posted verandahs on both sides of the main building, though the one on the road side is shorter. There was ornate cast ironwork on the awning spandrels (i.e. at the ends). At the edge of the awning there was a vertical clearance of ten feet to the platform coping.

The waiting shed on the down platform was of constant width and contained a Ticket Office, a large open-fronted General Waiting Room and a Ladies' Waiting Room. The building was asymmetrical with a detached toilet block 20 feet from the main building. Strangely, the front and back walls of the Waiting Shed were 14 inches thick but the end walls were only nine inches thick. All walls on the passenger station were nine inches thick.

Both platforms were 20 feet wide and ramped at both ends.

Both platforms had male and female toilets and users stepped up into each cubicle, which were classified as 'water closets'. The urinal had full-length, two feet wide partitions for each stall, which were a roomy two feet four inches wide.

Two ticket windows were provided on the up platform and one on the down platform. Each window had a standard width of 18 inches. The ticket counters were a standard two feet six inches wide. A reticulated water supply served St. Peters station on opening day but Sydenham station was not so lucky and had to rely on rainwater stored in underground tanks on each platform.[5]

Member, Gifford Eardley, wrote a small publication called *All Stations to Como*, many years ago for the St. George Historical Society. Unfortunately, two of the statements he made about Sydenham station were incorrect. Firstly, Eardley stated that "the elaborate station buildings were slightly larger than those at St. Peters station". 'Yes', they were elaborate but 'no' the buildings were smaller than those at St. Peters. The passenger station at St. Peters was 116 feet long, which was two inches longer than the passenger station at Sydenham. Secondly, Eardley said that there was at the southern end of the station "a Station Master's residence, a neat four-roomed, square shaped building of a

[5] J. Hatton and L. Muir, *The Triumph of the Speculators*, Hurstville Historical Society, 1985, p. 58

standard design adopted in the early 1880s for the more important railway employees". 'Yes', there was a squarish building at the level crossing at the down end of the station but it was for the Gatekeeper, not the Station Master. The SM had his own, larger residence on the corner of Park and Unwins Bridge Roads, a bit away from the rail corridor. It survives. It was built to a design introduced at Harden in 1877 and used widely up until 1889.

THE 1890s – THE QUIET YEARS

By this time, the focus of railway investment in the area was away from Sydenham and focused to the Canterbury and Belmore areas, ending up with the opening of the new branch to Belmore in 1895.

Nevertheless, some things did occur. In 1890, Sydenham station was interlocked on 15th March. Also, in 1891, the first footbridge was erected by private contractors, Best and Smith. This was unusual to engage the private sector to undertake construction work on an existing line but other instances appear showing the use of private contractors doing various tasks in 1891. It is possible that, in 1891, Chief Commissioner Eddy gave instructions to engage the private sector rather than employ additional full-time staff, in view of the 1890s Depression.

Woronora Cemetery was opened in 1895 and, to allow funeral trains to pick up coffins, gates were provided in the fences at Erskineville, Sydenham and Kogarah to permit the transfer between road and rail modes. It could be argued that dead people had a smoother interchange between modes than live passengers.

Sydenham station connected was connected to a local sewerage scheme in 1895.

THE ALMOST REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD 1900-1930

THE OVERVIEW

Something very different happened in the early 20th century about the Sydney metropolitan area that did not happen in the 19th century – transport planning. This trend was reflected in the warrant for the establishment of the Royal Commission into the City of Sydney in 1908 and the delivery of its report in June, 1909. The concept of a metropolitan railway system using electric trains and serving a new, larger Central station was a recommendation. In 1912, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works was taking evidence from John Bradfield about the construction of a Sydney Harbour Bridge. In 1913, the Town Planning Association of NSW was formed.

The administration of Railways was deeply involved in these proceedings and, from the evidence of the works at Redfern station at the time, it is easy to say that the NSW Railways embraced the concept of a distinctly urban railway system.

Perhaps the best evidence of the difference of the first part of the 20th century was provided by the NSW Railways. In the Commissioner's *Staff Bulletin* No. 24 of October 1923, readers were told:

> 'In the last 10 years, the business offering the Railways has not increased at the same rate as in the 10 years prior to 1914. From 1905 to 1914, our business – passenger and freight – increased by 126%, while in the interval between 1914 and 1923, the business increase was only 25%'

In the one year ended 30th June, 1910, the Railway Commissioner reported a 65% increase in passenger and 9% increase in goods traffic over the previous year. In 1906, the then new Sydney Terminus station was far from completed when it opened. When work was under way on the new Sydney station, the NSW Railways was fearful that the project would be a white elephant. In 1901, it was stated that the new station "will mean a big expenditure upon which no return whatever can be realised, and one that will always, to the extent of the annual interest required, be a drag upon the whole railway system".[6] Firstly, the pessimism about the new Sydney station proved not to be true. In fact, the opposite was the case. Patronage exceeded all expectations in the following years by a very substantial degree. The then newly appointed Railway Commissioner, James Fraser, said that so rapid was the growth of passenger business than four additional platforms had to be provided at the Sydney railway station in 1914, in addition to the 15 platforms opened in 1906.[7]

Added to the surging increase in business and the developing urban focus and interest in transport planning was improved climatic conditions in rural areas. The long drought from 1900 had ended. Wages had been depressed for a long period and did not meet their 1891 levels in real times until 1909. Times were much better after 1910.

The Labor Party took office from 1910 for the first time in NSW and held office until 1916, at which time the debates on conscription split the Party. With the Labor Party as a strong political force, public servants generally and railway workers specifically became much more aware of the politics around them. This was manifested, not much further in time, as the great Railway Strike of 1917 which endured for months.

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[6] The *NSW Railway Budget*, 21/8/1901, p. 273

[7] James Fraser, *The Development of the NSW Rail System*, an address to an interstate Gathering of the Institution of Civil Engineers, October, 1919

Another indicator of both the propitious timing for transport planning generally was the creation, for the first time, of the portfolio of Minister for Railways in 1916. The NSW Railways took over direct management of all Railway Refreshment Rooms in 1916 in order to improve service to the public and, in 1917, the Railway Commissioner's duties were enhanced by the addition of the construction of new railway lines, a task formerly performed by the Department of Public Works. Sometimes, the appointment of a new Commissioner or the head of a relevant branch of the NSW Railways explains a change in station designs or a change in the level of building decoration. This was the case in 1891 when both the Chief Commissioner and the Engineer-in-Chief were relatively new in their jobs and the outcome at that time was the new style of buildings between Redfern and Homebush in 1892. This possible explanation did not apply in 1912. There were no staff changes until 1914. Thus, it was the political, social and economic environment that produced change.

In 1912, planning was underway to double the existing two tracks between Redfern and Sydenham on the Illawarra line, making four tracks between these two locations. This was a massive project that involved the relocation of the junction between the Main West and Illawarra lines and the construction of a new signal box positioned above the tracks towards Macdonaldtown which was opened in 1916.[8] Although the signal box was closed in 1979, the location still is known as Illawarra Junction.

CHANGES AT SYDENHAM – THE TWO ISLAND PLATFORM PERIOD

The platforms were extended in 1907, it seems co-incidently with the provision of a third road between Sydenham and Edgeware Road signal box on the down side of St. Peters station.

In 1910, a small, timber overhead booking office measuring 35 feet by 20 feet was proposed for a new footbridge. Despite John Forsyth saying that it was erected in 1912, the evidence to the contrary casts doubt on the 1910 proposal. A new plan was prepared in 1913 for a much larger timber structure, which was built and lasted until 1985. It had a hipped roof with two small vent gables and a transverse gable over the Booking Hall. The 1913 plan was for a building 76 feet by 21 feet. The roof was covered with16 inch by 16 inch grey asbestos slates on two by one inch timber battens. The ridge was covered with No. 16 gauge galvanised steel and there were zinc 'terminals' at the ends of the gabled roof. The upper window sashes had nine panes of 24 ounce glass and lower sash contained "G" glass. The combined parcels and booking office sat on a haunched, steel structure with steel from Dorman Long in Middlesex, England, which was erected allegedly in 1914.

[8] The signal box at Illawarra Junction was one of only two signal boxes positioned above running lines, the other being West Box in Sydney yard. Wells Street signal was designed and built above a rail track but the track under the signal box was never installed.

The well-known and much admired, C. C. Singleton, over-simplified the date of quadruplication of the tracks through Sydenham. He wrote that the section between Illawarra Junction and Hurstville was opened on the 10th August, 1925.[9] This is only partly correct. That date applies only from Cooks River Junction signal box, on the Cooks River side of Tempe station to Hurstville. A third track was opened between Sydenham and Edgeware Road signal box at the down end of St. Peters station in 1907. That third road was then incorporated into the quadruplication in 1913.[10] Thus, the initial two side platforms at Sydenham were converted into island platforms in 1913 when quadruplication was taken through the station to the junction with the Bankstown branch line.

From 1913, Sydenham had four platforms. Rail traffic was increasing. In 1917, automatic signalling was introduced between Wardell Road and Sydenham on the Bankstown line, as well as new junction arrangements at Sydenham that allowed a train at any platform to proceed to the Bankstown line. In 1922, additional automatic signals were installed between Illawarra Junction and Sydenham Junction and also between Tempe and Sydenham to cater for the additional services.

Meanwhile, at the station improvements were occurring. In 1917, gas heating was installed into the booking offices at St. Peters, Erskineville, Sydenham, Stanmore, Burwood and Eastwood.[11] The component parts were made in the Railway workshops.

By 1923 there was a bookstall at the station. This was probably operational from 1914 when the overhead booking office was finished. The bookstall was relocated in 1923 for an unknown reason.

CHANGES AT SYDENHAM – THE ONE ISLAND TWO SIDE PLATFORM PERIOD

The big change occurred in 1925. Four tracks had been in existence from 1913 and had been extended south of Sydenham in 1919. In 1925, major changes were made to the layout of the tracks from Redfern along the line to Sydenham. These were all parts of the big, big plan to provide electric services around the City Circle. New platform Nos. 9 and 10 were provided at Redfern and the Illawarra lines were slewed into new positions.

The Illawarra line had seen its fair share of unusual things before 1925. In the same year as the third Sydney station was opened (1906), economy measures were introduced at Arncliffe where the down platform was closed between 1906 and 1923 in

[9] C. C. Singleton, *Railway History in Illawarra*, Wollongong, Illawarra Historical Society, 1969, Appendix IV, p. 60.
[10] Quadruplication between Edgeware Road signal box and Illawarra Junction through St. Peters and Erskineville stations also occurred in 1913. Quadruplication from Sydenham to Cooks River Junction signal box, through Tempe station, occurred in 1919.
[11] J. Forsyth, *The When and Where*, SRA Archives, 1996, Vol. 1 p. 317

order to eliminate the requirement to staff two booking offices. In that case, the up platform was converted into an island platform between 1906 and 1923 and the down platform was completely abandoned.

A new signal box was commissioned at Sydenham in 1925 and the opportunity was taken to re-arrange the tracks through the station. Veteran signalling and safeworking Guru, Graham Harper, has provided details. He writes:

> "Having looked at about a squillion and a half entries – well at least a thousand – we have a winner! The date of the opening of the new Down Illawarra platform was the weekend of 26th and 27th September, 1925, the same days as the old No. 1 platform [today's No. 2 platform] was put out of use, and the major changes took place to the track layout and the new power signal box was brought into use".

So in September, 1925, the present No. 6 platform comes into use. John Forsyth wrote that the new building on the platform was opened on 15th November, 1925. Now that's got to be a puzzle. For it was on the 11th March, 1926, six months after the opening of the new track, that Robert Ranken, the Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines, approved the construction of a stripped-down, standard design, brick building on the present platform No. 6.

There was a new brick building on the new [present] platform No. 6. It was 65 feet six and a half inches by 11 feet wide internal. There was cavity brickwork on three sides but not for the wall on the side facing the track, which was formed by a traditional nine inch thick double brick wall. These three walls are easily identified as they are in stretcher bond brickwork, whereas the wall facing the rails is in Flemish bond. There were a General Waiting Room and a Ladies' Waiting Room with porched entry to the female toilet . The relative economy of the platform No. 6 building was reflected in the following features:

1. Ugly, dark brown face bricks from the State Brickworks,
2. Use of monochrome brickwork, rather than contrasting colours,
3. Absence of rendered string course around external walls,
4. Omission of ornate window heads,
5. Omission of doors to the General Waiting Room,
6. Square window and door reveals, rather than shaped or chamfered reveals
7. Replacement of timber finials with small zinc "terminals",
8. Omission of tuck pointing for the brickwork,
9. Bullnose bricks for window sills in place of render,
10. Absence of heating in waiting rooms,
11. Use of 21 oz, clear rather than multi-coloured glass in the nine small panes in the upper window sashes, &

12. Concrete corbels supporting the awning brackets rather than stone,

Other features of the platform building were:

1. roof was covered with No. 26 gauge corrugated iron, not Fibrolite as at Newtown,
2. small open waiting area at Sydney end,
3. render and set internal walls,
4. stock cornices,
5. The use of concrete for toilet and Out of Room floors,
6. The name of the station was at the bottom of the lower window sash,
7. Mill Rolled glass louvres used in toilet windows,
8. Brick arches over doors and windows,
9. "G" class glass in all lower window sashes ,
10. No. 16 gauge iron roof ridging,
11. 11 feet six inch ceiling height,
12. small corrugated iron for ceilings,
13. multi-coloured nine pane upper window sashes and similar six pane fan lights, &
14. application of a traditional NSW Railway palette of stone shades on non-brick surfaces

The toilet closets in the male toilet are in near-original condition and open to the public. They possess the original closet doors.

The 1926 building accorded with the design features of similar buildings erected after 1924 of that design. The post 1924 examples were a stripped version of the more ornate versions erected before 1924, as at Erskineville and platform Nos. 4 to 9 at Redfern.

One very important initiative started in April, 1925, at Sydenham was the commencement of the construction of overhead wiring for electrification. The first section to be installed was from Sydenham Junction to Rockdale. The first trial runs of electric rollingstock were conducted through Sydenham station in May, 1925. It seems that almost everything good was happening in 1925. The goods line to Botany using the steel truss bridge over the Illawarra lines took place in October.

In 1927 on 25th June, the NSW Railways opened a kiosk under the control of the Railway Refreshment Rooms (RRR).

THE GREAT RAILWAY NOTHINGNESS – 1945 TO 1979

In 1948, the Department of Railways approved plans for six platforms at Sydenham, with two island and two side platforms, as at present. There were also major changes

to the building on platform Nos. 2 and 3. A cantilevered, large section, steel awning was designed for platform No. 2. The Ladies' Waiting Room was moved so that the Way and Works Branch surveyors could be accommodated in the former female toilets. Other rooms were occupied by the Way and Works "Chainmen" and the Electrical Branch. Some parts were demolished. The present platform No. 2 was extended slightly at the up end to the standard 520 feet. It was intended to build a second footbridge with a nine feet wide deck at the up end serving all six platforms in much the same location as the temporary footbridge in 2011. Of course, the 1948 proposal never came to the construction stage at that time. The two additional tracks were not introduced until 2nd September, 1962. This substantial delay is typical of the long period of nothingness.

Not only did the track amplification through the station take 14 years, all it did was move the junction with the Bankstown line from the down end to the up end of the station. The work was supposed to be a part of a much larger project to provide six tracks between Sydenham and Illawarra Junction. The cessation of work in the early 1960s on the project was another indicator of the long period of nothingness. Remnants of the six tracks are still visible at St. Peters and Erskineville. It was the completion of the six tracks that was part of the rail transport platform of the Liberal Party for the May, 1965, State General Elections, along with the completion of the Eastern Suburbs Railway. That election was the first time rail transport was mentioned in the platform speeches and policies of any political party in a State election. Although the Liberal/Country Parties formed a coalition government, no further work was done on the six track project.

In 1949, the Department of Railways approved an awning 18 feet six inches wide with a length of 88 feet on No. 1 platform, having a slight reverse slope with rain discharging into a boxed gutter. The edges of the brickwork around the steel columns were to have bull-nosed bricks. It had a "standard Fibro roof". The plan for the brick Parcels Office on platform No. 1 probably dates from 1949. The plan is not extant.

In the 1950s, very little happened at NSW railway stations because the priority for NSW Governments was the motor car industry. In1955, glass display windows were added to the RRR kiosk and, in the same year, there was the installation of an electrically refrigerated fruit juice machine and refrigerator. In 1960, the Department provided in the RRR a four-door counter type refrigerator. Thus, from 1927 until 1960, the only improvement to Sydenham station was the provision of RRR kiosk equipment.

Andrew Killingsworth, the one-time, well-known retired RTM Tour Director, submitted a proposal to the National Trust in June, 1986, to include Sydenham station on the Trust's Heritage Register. He described the new awning on platform No. 1 as "notable for its length and departure from the standard waiting room type design [and] represents a

uniquely functional passenger facility". He also claimed that the awning was the "longest in the state without associated structures". These are bold statements considering that the awning was built in a period between 1945 and 1965 when hardly any new platform buildings were approved for construction. There is a little puzzle about the awning. The only extant plan is the 1949 plan for an 88 feet structure but what was built appears longer. Perhaps there is also another missing plan.

Between 1960 and1962, the fifth and sixth tracks were built. The Parcels Office was one of only six free-standing Parcels Offices, without any ticketing functions. The other free-standing Parcels Offices on the NSW rail system are:

- Ashfield
- Summer Hill
- Redfern (in Wilson Street)
- Granville
- Lidcombe
- Blacktown [1955]
- Mount Druitt [1973]
- Chatswood
- Wyong
- Hurstville (in conjunction with the 1967 goods shed)
- Liverpool [1980]

The new, brick Parcels Office at Sydenham was opened in 1963. It features bullnose shaped bricks on the corners of the building and on window sills. The building has two key elements of the Inter War Functionalist style. Firstly, the single-pitch roof is hidden on three sides by parapets. Secondly, the awning over the platform is supported by welded, cantilvered steel brackets. This style had been in use since the construction of Dungog station in 1944. Interestingly, the relative small awning on the road side is of timber construction. The Parcels Office at Sydenham was the very last building to be erected on the NSW Railways to possess features of the Inter War Functionalist style, which was first introduced on the East Hills line in 1931.

In 1969, the District Engineer, Metropolitan, (whose office was located at Sydenham) approved an extension of the plumbers' shop at the down end of platform Nos. 4 and 5 under the Gleeson Avenue road bridge between the brick piers. There was a meal room, a change room, wash basins and showers. It was classic NSW Railways use of an awkward, tight space on a platform. Typical of the delay because of insufficient funding was the completion on 15th September, 1971.

There was one very important thing that occurred in the 1980s. It was the new Chief Executive of the then State Rail Authority (SRA), David Hill, who was appointed

foundation Chief Executive in 1980. Hill had the 100% backing of the then Premier, Neville Wran, to "fix" the NSW Railways. The support Hill got was massive in terms of capital funding. For the first time in the history of Sydney's stations, Hill actually had a strategy to improve passenger facilities. He decided that priority would be given to those stations whose role was fundamental, either as junction interchange stations or locations used by large numbers of commuters. It was called the *Major Station Replacement Programme* and commenced in 1981 with six stations to be completed by 1983. Those stations for which work was well advanced formed the initial stations in the Programme. The SRA soon realised that the so-called Station Replacement Programme was not the correct title because stations were not being replaced but merely upgraded. Hence, the Station Upgrading Programme was born.

Rob Schwarzer, the then General Manager, Way and Works, approved on 14th November, 1985, a new Overhead Booking Office. The key details were:

1. 7190mm x c7000mm overall dimensions,
2. concrete floor slab replaced timber floor,
3. cavity brickwork with raked joints,
4. two level flat roof,
5. wide fascia with Lysaght panel rib sheets,
6. two ticket collectors' booths,
7. awning over entrance,
8. 9mm thick laminated aluminium framed windows with security grilles,
9. electronic indicators hanging from ceiling,
10. door mounted Type 'F' signs,
11. air conditioned,
12. 2743mm ceiling height

The building had the typical Railway look of the early and mid-1980s. This look was basically ugly and was evident in:

1. The use of face brickwork,
2. Extensive application of metal siding with a profile to replicate timber weatherboards,
3. The squarish footprint for the booking office,
4. The use of wide, metal fascias
5. A near-flat roof, using the Stramit roofing system,
6. An unattractive, raised section of the roof over the entrance
7. An overall, square, box-like appearance.

Sydenham was one of the last structures to feature face brickwork and metal siding. Most later buildings featured compressed fibreboard for the external walls, as was applied to Canterbury booking office in 1986.

One feature of the pre-CityRail period commencing in 1989 was the omission of public toilets from new buildings placed on overhead concourses. In the 1980s, the State Rail Authority had sufficient staff to clean and supervise the existing toilets that were located on the platforms. Come CityRail and the 1990s, the policy changed. CityRail's preferred position was to omit all public toilets from new buildings. The organization tried to implement the policy but there was a tremendous public rage that CityRail, reluctantly, had to continue providing toilets under protest but decided to minimize the number of toilets by adopting unisex arrangements. As could be expected, the use of unisex toilets became unpopular and single sex toilets were provided where the commuters were known to be vocal. As Sydenham has unisex toilets, it can be assumed that CityRail considered that local commuters would not complain about the dual sex cubicles.

Extremely little maintenance was applied to the 1985 Sydenham building over the years. When inspected in 2005, the structure was in poor condition. The metal siding had received considerable damage and one corner of the structure had to be re-inforced. There was water penetration in the awning over the street and the public ceilings were dirty, having not been cleaned in years. This lack of cleaning was caused by the design process, which provided for very high ceilings that the station staff could not reach. Bad luck when a fluorescent light tube had to be changed. Unfortunately, this same design feature appears in the current building at Sydenham.

Work was supposed to commence in late November, 1985 and take six months. By the expected completion date, no work had commenced. On 23rd April, 1986, the SRA released a press statement indicating that a contract had been let to Leon Constructions Pty Ltd of Canterbury for the new overhead building. The previous timber structure had been destroyed by fire 1983, having been in existence for 70 years. At the same time, the SRA announced that additional platform awnings would be provided and "a new control room for staff".[12]

THE CITYRAIL PERIOD 1989 to 2013

In this period, station presentation benefitted from the creation of a management organisation solely focused on Sydney's urban and inter-city rail system.

CityRail was formally established on 1st May, 1989. This was the first time the Sydney metropolitan railways had been organised into an institution solely to focus on urban

[12] SRA, *New Booking Office for Sydenham*, 23rd April, 1986, press release No. 76/1986

railways. One of the basic aims of CityRail was to upgrade 200 stations by 1995 in order to help achieve its goal of being a world class urban rail system within five years. Priorities were based on need and the ease of work so that CityRail could be seen as doing something fairly quickly. There was an overall CityRail policy to provide only a single pedestrian entry/exit point for stations. This was related both to reduce staffing levels and reduce fare evasion.

On 1/5, "*A New Strategic Direction for CityRail*" was issued with the commitment that CityRail would become a first class urban railway system by 1995 – for stations 'revitalisation' of all 294 stations included (PF6)

1. Rehabilitation and maintenance to established standards - a 5 year programme,
2. State of the art design standards t be fixed for stations – project design team to report by 30/6/1989,
3. Quicker response to maintenance requirements,
4. Stations to be painted every 6 years – first two stations are Sydenham and Strathfield,
5. Catch up on deferred painting – 30 stations by December, 1989,
6. A major clean-up every 6 months,
7. Target of graffiti free stations by 1995 – 72 hour removal by 6/90 and 12 hours by 1993, &
8. New signage at all stations – to be available by June, 1989

Sydenham benefitted from the CityRail station improvement programme. On 26th February, 1992, tenders closed for supply and installation of 12 Dot Matrix platform indicators and one concourse indicator at Sydenham. [13] These were indicators where the station names 'ran' horizontally from right to left.

The Minister for Transport and Deputy Premier, John Watkins, visited Newtown station in 2006 with the local MO, Ms Carmel Tebbutt, to "review local facilities" and to respond to local requests for Easy Access lifts. The Minister said that the priority in the area was Sydenham, not Newtown. Mr. Watkins explained that Sydenham was where there were lots of "transfers". He said that the Iemma Government was "listening" to the local residents. Guess which station opened first? Not the stated priority station, Sydenham, but Newtown.

Work on the Sydenham Easy Access scheme was announced in 2011, with the first task to build a temporary footbridge at the Sydney end. There was also a temporary booking office on platform No. 1 using a second-hand 40 feet long shipping container. It

[13] *Railway Digest* April 1992, p. 162

commenced on 16th July on No. 1 platform and continued until mid 2013. Also, new canopies were built on all platforms, except No. 1, at the up ends, canopies being built on No. 1 platform in the mid 1980s at the down end. The contractor was Arenco (NSW) Pty Limited. The company had previously built Easy Access and other station facilities at Rhodes, Meadowbank, Lindfield, Mortdale and Turramurra.

Not much time before completion of the new station in 2013, some councillors from Marrickville City Council protested that there is no interchange between bus and rail in the new station building. This assessment was correct and the absence of co-ordination between different modes of transport was a hallmark of Sydney's transport planning in the 1990s and continues today. The new station opened on 25th February, 2013, with no improvement to modal interchange arrangements.[14]

REVIEW OF THE 2013 DESIGN

There are some good and some bad aspects of the 2013 station design. These are set out below.

THE BAD THINGS

1. An absence of physical integration with local bus services,
2. An absence of signage to assist passengers interchange between rail and bus services, there being four nearby bus stops two of which are located on steep grades,
3. An absence of provision of roadside space for vehicles with disabled passengers and buses to drop-off/pick up passengers(this could have been provided where the bicycle stand is located, which in turn could have been relocated to Railway Parade "dumbbell",
4. Lack of action to eliminate conflicting movements between customers changing platforms and those entering/leaving the station (should the temporary footbridge at the up end be retained to help split the high level of pedestrian movements, as at Lidcombe and Liverpool?),
5. Stairway access to the platforms not in accord with CityRail policy, creating pedestrian chaos at the down end,
6. Design of the station amenities creates conflicting, opposing pedestrian movements between the ticket windows and machines and the gated entry,
7. Very high ceiling makes cleaning and change of light bulbs/LEDs very difficult,

[14] A photo of bicycle area on the concourse appeared in *Railway Digest*, April, 2013, p. 12

8. The overall design of the roof is only visible from the rail side – the interesting roof cannot be seen from Marrickville Road, Gleeson Avenue or Railway Road,
9. Multiple wall materials, including mass concrete, fluted stainless steel, Vitrapanel, glass and sheet metal, only some of which is accessible for cleaning,
10. Small size of the *Easy Access* lifts,
11. No indication in toilets as to which are half/full flush buttons, &
12. The absence of solar panels, despite the huge roof area

THE GOOD THINGS

1. Wide concourse in the paid area,
2. Handles on the toilet doors,
3. Painted steelwork, &
4. Handrails on stepways carried beyond the bottom step, in accordance with the disability code

WHEN THE DESIGN OUTCOMES OF THE 2012 NEWTOWN AND THE 2013 SYDENHAM STATIONS ARE AMALGAMATED, WHAT IS EVIDENT?

1. An overall lack of design priorities – what is the primary design ingredient – best facilities for customers, high-level accommodation for staff or work for contractors?,
2. A reluctance to spend additional public funds to obtain a more effective outcome for customers,
3. An organisational culture that does not strive for the best possible customer outcome – an *anything-will-do* attitude,
4. A station design policy that is focused on minimum, not maximum outcomes,
5. An inability to review completed projects to establish problem areas that need to be avoided for future projects, seen in the continued use of small lifts,
6. Inability to initiate any improvements in the transfer between local rail and bus services,
7. Lack of signage to help customers move between bus and rail,
8. Disinterest in providing the best possible intermodal transfer for disabled customers,
9. Poor layout of facilities, creating awkward or conflicting pedestrian movements, as seen in the area where the ticket windows are located,
10. Absence of area to safely set-down disabled people at the concourse,

11. Poor design of infrastructure to protect customers from adverse weather with high-level protection,
12. Substantial problems for the cleaning of buildings because of the height and mixture of surfaces, &
13. Inability of designs to reflect local, physical environment or to identify the location of stations

SUMMARY POINTS

1. Sydenham was amongst the first stations on the first railway line intended to serve suburban residential development – as well as the coal mines in the Illawarra,
2. The Illawarra line was the first NSW Government railway opened with duplicated tracks after 1855, when the Sydney-Newtown section was duplicated
3. The Illawarra line from Illawarra Junction to Hurstville was the first, last and only line where there was massive expenditure on every railway station,
4. The line was the last major application of side platforms for multiple tracks,
5. Sydenham is the only station on the NSW rail system to had a rail line removed from an island platform (in 1913), converted into a side platform (in 1925) and converted back to an island platform (in 1962),
6. The construction of the Illawarra line to Hurstville marks several important milestones in NSW history – it indicates the start of the dominance of Sydney over rural towns in terms of population – it marks the end of the long run of surplus Colonial budgets due to the exhaustion of rural land sales – it marks the start of the long run link between suburban rail development and promotion of urban land sales,
7. The 1883 platform buildings at Sydenham are consistent with most others between Erskineville and Hurstville in terms or large size, design and the extent of ornamentation,
8. The design of the 1883 platform structures is typical 19th century NSW Railway design, being an eclectic mixture of Gothic Revival and Italianate schools,
9. The floor plans of the 1883 platform structures are consistent with NSW Railway practice, being based on centre, transverse access and symmetrical, longitudinal placement of rooms from the centre and the symbiosis between major and minor structures on the two platforms, one building being classified as a “passenger station” [on platform Nos. 3 and 4] and the other as a “waiting shed” [on platform Nos. 1 and 2],
10. Quadruplication in 1913 had only a small impact on the 1883 structures, with cantilevered awnings being added to the rear of the existing buildings supported by standard awning brackets to augment the existing awnings, AND

11. The other buildings at Sydenham, namely the 1926 building on No. 6 platform, the 1913 demolished overhead booking/parcels office and the demolished 1985 overhead concourse building overhead booking office were typical NSW Railway 20th century designs.

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Stuart Sharp

22nd February, 2014

APPENDIX 1

FIRST CLASS NSW RAILWAY STATIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

STATION	YEAR APPROVED	YEAR BUILT	DESIGN OFFICER	DESIGN STYLE
Parramatta	1859	1860	Unknown – Whitton signed the plan	Mid-Victorian Free Style
Goulburn	1868	1869	William Mason (Whitton on leave)	Italianate
Mortuary station, Regent Street	1867	1869	James Barnett, Government Architect	Gothic Revival
Necropolis station, Rookwood Cemetery	1867	1869	James Barnett, Government Architect	Gothic Revival
Sydney	1871	1874	William Mason – Whitton signed the plan	Italianate
Bathurst	1875	1876	Unknown	*Jacobean*
Newcastle	1876	1878	William Mason	Italianate
Maitland	1878	1880	William Mason (Whitton on leave)	Italianate
Wagga Wagga	1879	1879	Unknown John Whitton signed the plan	Italianate

STATION	YEAR APPROVED	YEAR BUILT	DESIGN OFFICER	DESIGN STYLE
Albury	1880	1883	Unknown John Whitton signed the plan	Italianate
Narrandera	1880	1881	Unknown John Whitton signed the plan	Late Victorian Free Style (meaning a mixture of Gothic and Italianate)
Hay	1880	1882	Unknown John Whitton signed the plan	Late Victorian Free Style
Tamworth	1880	1882	Unknown John Whitton signed the plan	Italianate
Armidale	1882	1883	Unknown John Whitton signed the plan	French renaissance
Glen Innes	1882	1884	Unknown John Whitton signed the plan	Late Victorian Free Style
Mudgee	1883	1884	Unknown John Whitton signed the plan	Late Victorian Free style
Werris Creek	RRR 1883 Main building 1883	1884 1885	George Cowdery	John Carr says *Victorian Free Classical*
Junee	1883	1885	George	Late Victorian Free style,

STATION	YEAR APPROVED	YEAR BUILT	DESIGN OFFICER	DESIGN STYLE
			Cowdery	including elements of French Second Empire
St. Peters, Sydenham, Arncliffe, Rockdale, Kogarah & Hurstville	1883 & 1884	1884	George Cowdery	Late Victorian Free style
Bourke	1884	1885	Unknown – no signature appears on plan	Late Victorian Free style
Young	1884	1885	Unknown – no signature appears on plan	Late Victorian Free style
Petersham	1884	1886	George Cowdery	Late Victorian Free style
Summer Hill	1886	1886	Unknown – plan not extant	Late Victorian Free style
Tenterfield	1886	1886	Unknown – no signature appears on plan	Late Victorian Free style
Queanbeyan	1886	1887	Unknown – no signature appears on plan	Late Victorian Free style
Cootamundra	1887	1888	George Cowdery	Forsyth says *Italian Renaissance*
Milsons Point	1892	1893	Henry Deane	Adjacent, domed tram concourse, full-length canopies, clock tower – the first multi-

STATION	YEAR APPROVED	YEAR BUILT	DESIGN OFFICER	DESIGN STYLE
				modal interchange
Kiama	1892	1893	Henry Deane	Covered steps
Marrickville, Canterbury & Belmore	1894	1895	Henry Deane	Transition – from Italianate to Federation
TOTAL	34			

Stuart Sharp
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