

# ARHSnsw RAILWAY LUNCHEON CLUB

## DULWICH HILL STATION TOUR

18<sup>th</sup> June 2014

### History of the local area.

The area around the Cooks River, including modern day Dulwich Hill was once occupied by the Cadigal clan of the Darug people. Archaeological investigations along the Cooks River suggest the area has been inhabited by indigenous peoples for over 6000 years.

Soon after the arrival of the First Fleet in January 1788, explorations by our intrepid forebears saw land grants being made in the district and the first such allocation was to the Reverend Richard Johnson, chaplain of the First Fleet, in 1793. He gave his grant the name Canterbury Vale. By the 1830s, the district consisted of five large estates, including Thomas Chalder's estate "Marrick", named after his home town in Yorkshire.

By the 1820s, the district had taken on an urbanised, industrial atmosphere.

### Coming of the railway

When the railway line from Sydenham on the Illawarra line to Belmore opened on 1 February 1895, a station, bearing the name **Wardell Road** was featured, serving the Dulwich Hill area. The Belmore line was the first new railway in NSW to use island platforms and was the first exclusively suburban line to feature duplicated trackwork for its entire length. The design of the platform walls was a change from the Whitton era, with a vertical (not sloping) wall and with a single extension of the wall beneath the coping standing proud of the wall (i.e. not uniform height) - cement render was used to cover the extended section and the coping (not bricks on edge).

The station is located in a cutting and the important thoroughfare of Wardell Road crosses the line via an overbridge at the Marrickville or Sydney end. The name was changed to **Dulwich Hill** on 1 July 1920. In modern day parlance, Dulwich Hill station is 7.87km from Central station. Historically, the line to Belmore was the first suburban line opened, as opposed to all other lines then existing which were main lines to the north, south, west and Illawarra. In 1909, the line was extended to Bankstown and in 1928 to Regents Park on the Liverpool line.

On 24 October 1926, the line to Bankstown became available for electric traction and the overhead was extended to Sefton Park Junction on 24 August 1939 where it met the already electrified line from Liverpool.

Strangely Henry Deane, Engineer for Railway Construction, did not approve the plans for the station buildings. It was Thomas Firth, Engineer for Existing Lines, who approved in 1894 the building design for present-day Marrickville, Canterbury and Belmore. He made a determination between more important and less important locations and implemented a two tier design approach. At the more important locations, namely present-day Marrickville, Canterbury and Belmore, he used large, ornate brick structures, which were a variation of a high-class design by Henry Deane who first applied this new concept to Kiama in 1892.

The station for Dulwich Hill (as well as Hurlstone Park and Campsie) formed a different policy approach to what had been used previously – Firth provided no buildings, as far as is known – this stunt was a piece of financial brilliance he had learnt from John Whitton's practice, who realized he could save money by not completing buildings at the opening date.

On 27 August 1895, six months after the line and station opening, Thomas Firth, still the Engineer for Existing Lines, had the task of approving buildings for Dulwich Hill and Campsie – both buildings were the same design - the most significant design feature was the provision of narrow, three feet (one metre wide) awnings each side of the platform building by the extension of the roof rafters – this design was re-used when the line was extended to Bankstown in 1909 for Lakemba and Punchbowl.

The design for Dulwich Hill was most unusual for the NSW Railways and, apart from the Bankstown line, was used only once again in rural areas during World War 1.

In 1923, there was a failed attempt to replace the original, 1895 Dulwich Hill building.

However, in 1929, the present platform building was approved – it was the only platform building approved for replacement during that year for the Sydney area and only one of two replacement buildings on the whole of the NSW rail system (the other structure was a 28 x 10 foot timber building at Colo Vale [extant]) – ultimately, the proposed building at Dulwich Hill was not built.

Nothing happened until 1934 when the Chief Civil Engineer, Albert Fewtrell, decided to approve the removal of the three feet wide awnings on each side and build in their place eight feet wide awnings supported by timber struts projecting from the building walls – it is unknown whether the work was undertaken.

In 1935, approval was granted for the construction of the present day brick building on the platform, as well as the current timber overhead booking/parcels office – the design being the one that was expressed in the 1929 plan – it is the use of the 1929 plan that explains why the Dulwich Hill building looks very similar to the East Hills line buildings, which were also prepared and approved in 1929 – apart from Dulwich Hill, no other buildings were designed in the same manner as the East Hills line structures.

The design features of Dulwich Hill include:

- Ornamental roof treatment at the building ends,
- Marseille pattern, semi-glazed roof tiles,
- An open-styled waiting area called a “corridor”, with a then new style of fixed seats [still in situ],
- Fireplace in the SM’s office [other buildings in 1935 had radiators],
- Ceilings of Fibro-cement sheets under both platform canopies, hiding the awning support mechanism, &
- Restrained, ornamental brick work.

The platform building at Dulwich Hill (as well as all the East Hills line structures) belongs to the initial group of buildings named the Inter War Functionalist style.

The Dulwich Hill building was one of only two stations in Sydney that were replaced in 1935 (the other being small, timber buildings on both platforms at Pennant Hills) – other buildings also approved outside of Sydney were brick structures at Civic, Griffith, Condobolin and Cringilla, all of which belong to the second group of buildings in the Inter War Functionalist style.

The re-use of the 1929 plan for Dulwich Hill shows how much the station approval process was undisciplined – had the plan for Dulwich Hill been prepared in 1935, the building would probably have looked like Civic.

Why is the overhead booking/parcels office of timber construction, in view of the use of brickwork for the same type of structure at North Sydney in 1931? The answer is people. Dr Bradfield approved the North Sydney building whereas Robert Ranken, the Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines, approved the Dulwich Hill buildings. Timber had been the material of choice for overhead booking/parcels offices after 1900. Brick was not used between 1901 and 1979, when the little masonry structure at Carlton was approved.

A total of 68 overhead booking/parcels offices were built between 1892 and 1965. All but five were in timber. The Dulwich Hill example dates from a 1929 plan. Up to that year, 48 examples had been built. Dulwich Hill became the 49<sup>th</sup> example and, after 1929 a further 19 examples were built up to 1965, when timber stopped being used for external walls. The example at Dulwich Hill was the first to abandon complex roof forms and possessed a simple hipped roof which extended to cover the “booking lobby” in front of the two north-facing ticket windows. This design was used up to 1957, when single-pitched roofs were introduced, first being applied at Granville.

There was a third ticket window at Dulwich Hill [for season tickets only], which is still in place near the staff door. The door to the former parcels office has been boarded up.

## **Metropolitan Goods lines**

In 1916, two extra tracks to serve goods train operation on the Metropolitan Goods lines became operational to allow trains headed for the South Coast, Mascot and Botany (and later Cooks River Goods Yard) to avoid conflict with suburban trains on the two passenger lines. In addition, two junctions on the main line were provided at Dulwich Hill to allow access to the coal, wheat and goods wharves at Rozelle. The fork adjacent to Dulwich Hill station was named Wardell Road Eastern Fork Junction and that some 300 metres away toward Hurlstone Park was known as Wardell Road West Fork Junction. Where both forks combined on the Rozelle Branch line, the confluence was named Hercules Street Junction. Two signal boxes were provided in 1916, one known as Wardell Road Signal Box adjacent to the main lines mid way between the east and west forks, the other at Hercules Street Junction where the east and west forks meet at the apex of the triangular junction. However, Hercules Street Junction Signal Box was closed in 1922, its functions being transferred to Wardell Road Signal Box. This latter box in turn closed on 10 August 1974, its functions being transferred to Meeks Road Signal Box and then to the Sydenham Signalling Complex. In connection with the electrification of the Main Southern line to the Glenlee Coal Loader in 1968, the goods lines, as well as the branch to Rozelle and Balmain were electrified.

At various times when accidents blocked the normal route to Sydney from the southern line via Regents Park, services were diverted along the Bankstown line and hence through Dulwich Hill. Such an occurrence was on 7 May 1952 following a collision between two electric trains at Berala, resulting in the 38 Class-hauled Melbourne and Melbourne Limited Expresses using the route. A more permanent, though short lived touch of importance resulted from the running of two "blue ribbon" express freight trains from Alexandria Goods Yard to Melbourne, following the completion of the standard gauge line between Albury and Melbourne in January 1962 . These services used the electrified suburban lines as opposed to the adjacent Metropolitan Goods lines and ran direct to Sefton Park Junction to join the Main Southern line, thus saving a good deal of time.

The present island platform at Dulwich Hill is an interesting curved shape. At the time of the construction of the abovementioned Goods lines, the other four stations which are located adjacent to the Goods lines were converted to side platforms, these being Marrickville to the east, Hurlstone Park, Canterbury and Campsie to the west. Only Dulwich Hill survived as an island platform.

With the State Government's desire to rid Sydney Harbour of shipping and make it a so called "Leisure harbour", the rail access facilities at Rozelle were closed during the early 1990s. Trains conveying export wheat shipments from the south of the state or coal from Glenlee and the Blue Mountains were diverted to Port Kembla. Accordingly, the two junctions were removed during October 2012.

## **Light rail**

Dulwich Hill has taken on new importance as the terminus for the extension of the light rail network from Central and Lilyfield. The former double track Goods line has been converted for light rail use and a new station to serve terminating trams has been constructed in the cutting opposite the station on what was formerly the east (Wardell Road) fork of the triangular junction and will be known as Dulwich Hill Interchange. Three other new stations in the Dulwich Hill area will be located at Dulwich Grove (between Hercules Street and New Canterbury Road); Arlington and Waratah Mills (adjacent to the now abandoned flour mill which bore that name). Other new stations are featured between Waratah Mills and Lilyfield. As welcome as this extension of railed public transport infrastructure is to Sydney, one cannot help but ponder the rationale behind terminating trams a stone-throw from the Dulwich Hill suburban electric train platform but not providing a footbridge to connect the two. Commuters changing from light rail to suburban electric train services will be required to walk some distance to cross the existing overbridge which carries Wardell Road over the four heavy rail lines, without climate protection. Good planning would have provided a footbridge with lift access. Dulwich Hill, as a now attractive transport interchange is also devoid of car parking facilities.

A series of annual closedowns for the entire month of January during the early to mid 2000's saw the complete upgrade of the Bankstown line with the replacement of timber sleepers with concrete, as well as the upgrading of overhead masts and catenary.

## **Present day services**

Under the new timetable introduced by Sydney Trains on 20 October, 2013 Dulwich Hill enjoys a frequent service with trains serving the station every 15" from 5am to 11pm. Trains from the city alternate their destination between Lidcombe (terminate) or Liverpool via Sefton Park Junctions.

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Stephen Halgren

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