

**RAILWAY LUNCHEON CLUB
MEADOWBANK RAILWAY BRIDGES**

In keeping with our desire to provide variety to our outings, on Wednesday 17 September our group of about 45 was treated to a presentation by RRC Manager Bill Phippen OAM, on the various design features of both the Meadowbank bridges and the complexities of their construction.

The first Meadowbank Bridge was opened on 17 September 1886, (128 years ago on the day of our visit!) concurrent with the opening of that section of what we now call the Main Northern Line. The bridge was built by Andrew and Robert Amos, contractors for construction of the section of the line from Homebush to Hawkesbury River. The bridge is a lattice girder design, similar to that at Como but of double track whereas Como was single track, and the various bridge components were fabricated in Britain. Being built before the widespread use of steel, Meadowbank Bridge was constructed from wrought iron.

By the late 1940s heavier train loads, coupled with its age, meant that the first bridge had to be replaced. The initial plan was to replace it with two new bridges of a steel truss design, similar to the two short trusses of the then new Hawkesbury River Bridge (and the same as built at Cockle Creek), the second bridge being necessary for the planned quadruplication of the Main Northern Line.

Construction of the piers for the first of the new bridges was suspended in 1953, but when work was resumed in the late 1970s, the era of the truss design had given over to the steel box girder, and coupled with an integral concrete decking, this design meant that the need for a second bridge was no longer necessary to provide for the proposed four tracks. The new bridge was opened in two stages between 15 and 25 May 1980.

Our thanks go to Bill for his professional commentary, and also for his informative notes which cover not only the Meadowbank bridges, but some factors of bridge design generally. These notes are now on the Luncheon Club page of the ARHSnsw website.

The next outing is on Wednesday 15 October when Life Member Nev Pollard will present some of the history of Regents Park and the Potts Hill Branch. We meet on Regents Park Platform at the Lidcombe end at 11.00am. Lunch will be at the Royal Oak Hotel at Lidcombe, necessitating a short train journey departing Regents Park at 11.54am.

For the future, on 19 November, Stuart Sharp will be returning and will show us some history of some of the railway buildings at Moss Vale. This will be the last outing for this year.

Report by Gary Hughes



The first Meadowbank Bridge nearing completion in 1885. The timber falsework used to support the bridge components during construction is clearly evident. The view is looking north towards Meadowbank.

Image: ARHSnsw RRC 004945



The second Meadowbank Bridge during construction in 1979. The floating crane is positioning one of the box girders onto the piers. The view is looking south towards Rhodes.

Image: ARHSnsw RRC 033441



Our group on the old Meadowbank Bridge as RRC Manager Bill Phippen describes some of its features. The old bridge is now a pedestrian walkway and cycleway.

Image: David Taylor