NEW SOUTH WALES RAILWAY AND TRAMWAY INSTITUTE BUILDING, DEVONSHIRE STREET, SYDNEY

A STRUCTURE DESIGNED AND DEVELOPED TO CONTROL RAILWAY STAFF

NOTES FOR AN INSPECTION ON 16TH MARCH, 2016 BY MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TO MARK

THE 125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INSTITUTE OPENING

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THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

This essay is an examination of the building history of the structure known traditionally by railway people as the Devonshire Street Railway Institute. The structure was also sometimes referred to by Institute staff as the "Central Institute."[1] It examines the way in which the building reflects the temporal environment throughout its history. It is a classic example of the way that the history of one building can act as a marker of the broad spectrum of events through its 125-year existence and also of the history of the New South Wales Railways.

The evidence indicates a history of a building that was an important part of the suite of initiatives used by various Railway Commissioners to control the staff who worked for them. The evidence to support this belief is summarised at the end of this paper.

This paper is not an architectural history nor a history of the organisation known as the Railway Institute but it does mention some events that had a direct and indirect bearing on the Institute building and those who worked, learnt and leisured in the structure.

THE PHYSICAL LOCATION

The street address of the Institute building today is 101 Chalmers Street. To Railway staff, it has always been known as the Devonshire Street Institute.

It may seem unusual today that the front of the building addresses the railway yard at Sydney station but the departmental philosophy at the time of construction was to face buildings into the railway corridor so that passing passengers could see the most attractive component of the building. At the same time, there was a symbolic message transmitted to both employees, travelling passengers and the general public by the specific location of railway buildings, which helped to reinforce the idea that the Railway organisation was a major player at the big end of town. The Railway Department was large in size and powerful and line side buildings played a role in conveying the notion of the mightiness of the organisation.

After the addition of the illuminated nameboard above the western porched entry in1919, the location of the Institute building stood out at night in dominant fashion.

The main entrance to the site was located in Devonshire Street and marked by two tall, brick and stone pillars 13 inches square and a set of two cast-iron gates. There was always a secondary set of double gates around the corner in the present Chalmers Street but the subsidiary role of this second set of gates was displayed by

[1] For example, *New South Wales Railway and Tramway Magazine*, 1st July, 1920, p. 417.

the absence of stone pillars. Surrounding the site on the then Devonshire and Castlereagh Streets was a dwarf sandstone wall which was the basis for a cast-iron picket fence. Remnant fencing remains on the boundary along Chalmers Street but its form is much plainer than the now demolished Railway fence along the former Devonshire Street side.

At the time of the opening in 1891, it would have been easier than it is today to visually interpret the western end of the structure, which faced the second Sydney terminus building. The Institute building marked the north-eastern corner of the railway precinct until the opening of the present Sydney terminal station in 1906. Its role as the corner marker is well shown in a photograph taken from George Street looking eastward down Devonshire Street in 1900.[2] The Institute building dominates the vista. However, even then, the building existed on the northern boundary of an area of relative grottiness as buildings connected with Sydney railway goods yard were located near the Institute's front door and beside it on the southern side.

Sometime before 1959, the main entrance to the building changed from the western end to the eastern end and the original entrance was closed with roller shutters. It has only been since the property has been divided into two tenancies that the original entrance at the western end has come back into everyday use.

Regrettably, there is a different problem today as it is difficult to interpret the fullness of the design of the 1891 building because of the loss of the cast iron boundary fence, the proximity to the running lines at the western end and the placement of trees and structures on the other three sides of the structure.

THE ICONIC STATUS OF THE INSTITUTE AS PART OF THE SYDNEY RAILWAY PRECINT

The Institute building is listed on the State Heritage Register.

The Institute represents one of the three icons of Australian identity within the precinct of Sydney/Central railway station. Three buildings represent the three icons, these being (1) the Institute, (2) the main Sydney terminal station building and (3) the mortuary station.

The first iconic building is the Railway Institute, which was based on an alleged idea to improve the educational and cultural levels of all railway officers but, soon after its opening in 1891, the people who used the structure, that is the ordinary railway officers, converted both the building and the institution into mainly an organisation of social and physical recreation. The Railway Institute building expressed the will of the ordinary, working railway man and woman. That structure, through its whimsy architecture, shows the iconic Australian characteristic of play, both physical and mental. The building demonstrates the way Australians improved themselves educationally and enjoyed themselves socially.

[2] D. Keenan, *City Lines of the Sydney Tramway System*, Transit Press, 1991, p. 59.

The second iconic structure is the main terminus building at Sydney/Central and reflects the behaviour of the greatest Minister for Public Works in the history of New South Wales, namely E. W. O'Sullivan. This lengthy epithet being selected and applied by O'Sullivan himself. The main Sydney terminus expresses the will of the politician in a very powerful position. That structure shows the iconic Australian feature of dreaming and sticking to a dream, in this case envisaging the creation of a building that would somehow unite both rural and urban dwellers. Country people thought that too much money was spent on the Sydney station because, at the time the building consumed almost all government capital funds available for railway stations for several years. Folks in The Bush thought that they missed out on a heap of public funding. The reality was quite the opposite. It was not a denial of all things rural but a reflection both of Government policy and public sentiment towards rural development. After all, there was a high degree of public displeasure by urban dwellers that the new terminus was not located in Hyde Park, which would have been a location far more helpful to railway commuters working in the city.

Lastly, the Mortuary station, from which trains commenced operation in 1868, is examined. It is a manifestation of the high status given to a public servant, namely James Barnet, the Colonial Architect. He had virtually an unlimited budget to express the status of his position and himself, as well as providing a functional use for the station, that is to take the deceased and mourners to Rookwood Cemetery. The Mortuary building expresses the will of the public servant and Barnett design a high-class example of the Gothic Revival style to demonstrate his authority. The structure shows the iconic Australian feature of self-determination, caring not for his political masters; concern about budgets and caring not for what his engineering rival, John Whitton, would support or approve. Unlike Barnett, Whitton did not have access to an unlimited budget and, hence, Whitton's Gothic Revival examples, such as the platform buildings at Rydal and Tarana, are far more restrained than is the case with the Mortuary station. Mortuary also reflects the status of the city in the 1860s, a time when Sydney was not the dominating entity over country towns and cities, as would be the case from the mid-1880s.

In essence, the three buildings with their three different architectural styles, represent the stories of the public servant, the politician and the playboys and playgirls. The three buildings mirror the development at different times of different sorts of Australian individuals, the combination of which mirrors the range of the composition of Australian identity.

THE LEAD-UP TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO ESTABLISH THE INSTITUTE

There was a widespread attitude in the 1880s amongst government officials to educate the citizens of the Colony of New South Wales. This was a pretty much universal notion that occurred in western countries, as well as the other Australian Colonies. Evidence of the notion was contained in Rod Howard's 1998 Conservation

Management Plan for the Institute building, which states that, in 1880, Mechanics Institutes existed at 76 locations throughout New South Wales.

There had been strong support for a long time for the provision of technical education for citizens and it was in 1883 that the New South Wales Government had appointed a formal board to control the Sydney Technical College, which up till that time was managed by volunteers. From 1883, the College became a full-blown part of the official Government education bureaucracy. In 1891, the very year the Railway Institute was opened, the Government opened new premises for the Sydney Technical College in Harris Street, a site that continues to be used for tertiary educational purposes. Thus, the Government in 1888 was receptive to both adding funds to ex-Commissioner Goodchap's donation to establish a library and for the inclusion of the construction of the Institute building as part of the Railway budgets in 1890 and 1891.

Although the Department of Public Works states that the concept of a Railway Institute was first promised by Henry Parkes in 1885, seemingly as part of his political campaign to secure the electoral support of railway workers, the primary evidence has not been located during this study relating to Parkes' announcement. The same remark applies to the alleged letter from seven fettlers in 1888 from the Tenterfield area requesting the implementation of Parkes' promise.[3] The fact that Parkes did nothing for three years shows that it was a case of words without action. Also, when Parkes spoke at the Institute opening in 1891, he made no reference to any previous speech or promise about the establishment of an Institute.

Charles Goodchap, the Commissioner prior to the appointment of E. M. G. Eddy, mentioned in his official farewell in 1888 that he had a desire as early as 1882 to establish a Railway Institute but for unstated reasons said he was unable to initiate action. The story goes that Goodchap requested his Locomotive Engineer, William Scott, to investigate Railway Institute's as a part of Scot's official visit to Great Britain in 1882.[4] Was this true or was it a case of attempted one-upmanship against his replacement, Edward Eddy? It needs to be remembered that the several-times Premier, Sir Henry Parkes, had offered Goodchap to be Eddy's assistant but Goodchap declined.

The official history of the Department of Railways, published in 1955, gave Goodchap too much credit for the creation of the Railway Institute. Although she noted that Goodchap donated the money received from the star as a farewell present, Leone Paddison incorrectly wrote that Goodchap "saw the need for a building where the railway staff could meet both socially and for instruction in particular subjects. Supported in this scheme by Commissioner Eddy,…… premises

[3] References to the promise by Parkes and the 1888 letter were contained in N. McDonald, *The Development of the Railway and Tramway institutes of NSW 1891-1929*, unpublished thesis, Department of Education, University of Sydney, 1971, pp. 1 & 2 and it seems the Department of Public Works cited this information.

[4] The only evidence is Goodchap's comment at his official farewell in 1888.

were erected at the corner of Elizabeth and Devonshire Streets and officially opened on 14th March, 1891, in the presence of the Premier, Sir Henry Parkes. The Institute comprised two halls, a number of classrooms, billiard room……."[5] This reference was grotesquely inaccurate, with the following errors of fact in the above quote:

- Goodchap's public remarks about establishing an Institute postdated those made by Eddy,
- the premises were not on the corner of Elizabeth at Devonshire Streets but on the corner of them Castlereagh and Devonshire Streets,
- there was only one hall – not two, &
- there was no billiard room,

When Charles Goodchap was legislated out of office on 22nd October, 1888, he gave the £500, which the employees had raised as a farewell present, for the establishment of a staff library. E. M. G. Eddy starting work the next day. Goodchap asked the New South Wales Government to match the sum of money, which it did and the combined £1,000 was used for the acquisition of books for railway staff.[6] Tenders closed on 8th August, 1890, for the supply of books and, of the four tenders received, that of William Dymock, whose "Book Arcade" was located at 428 George Street, was accepted.[7] The books started to flood in and, by 12th September, 1890, 1,000 books had been acquired. By the opening date, 14th March, 1891, the number was 3,000 and by 6th May, 1892, the library was comprised on 4,230 volumes.[8] Several people also donated books to the library.

Dymock's Book Arcade continued to supply books at discounted prices to the Institute through the 1890s and Dymocks book shop continues to trade at the same address today. David Burke wrote that "Goodchap devoted his £500 retirement purpose to purchasing a railwaymen's library (forerunner of the Railway Institute)."[9] This gives the impression that a library existed before the establishment of the Institute but, since the successful tenderer for the supply of books was not announced until over one year later in August, 1890, it would appear incautious to say that some form of library existed before the Institute started in 1891.

The extent of Goodchap's involvement was correctly stated in 1911 by the then Institute Honorary Secretary who wrote:

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[5] L. Paddison, *The Railways of New South Wales 1855-1955*, Sydney, Department of Railways, 1955, p. 258.

[6] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29th November, 1888, p. 11.
[7] *Evening News*, 11th August, 1890, p. 5 and *New South Wales Railway Budget*, 16th June, 1894, p. 175.
[8] Minute Book, Railway Institute, Petersham, pp. 41, 48 and 102.
[9] D. Burke, *Juggernaut*, East Roseville, Kangaroo Press, 1997, p. 70.

> Goodchap "must be given the credit of cherishing the idea of taking the first practical step towards its (i.e. the Institute) fruition".[10]

Jobson was referring directly to his financial contribution of £500 towards a library. That was the "practical" step and only step that Goodchap took on this matter. Jobson states that it was Chief Commissioner Eddy who approved the establishment of the Institute. One may think that Goodchap, had he actually did something to establish the Institute – as opposed to establish a library, would have mentioned it at the Institute opening in 1891 but he did not say a single word about his previous involvement in the formation of the Institute.

EDDY MAKES A MOVE IN 1888

During a meeting in early November, 1888, with William Schey, M. L. A., the head of the Railway and Tramway Employees Amalgamated Association, Chief Commissioner Eddy said he was "quite prepared to consider in the most favourable way the establishment of an institution for the benefit of the whole of the employees on the basis of the Institute at Crewe in the United Kingdom, but it must be on that basis."[11] Eddy said that the Institute must be "for the benefit of every class of men employed on the railways."[12] Eddy added that the Commissioners "hope to make the institution they contemplated establishing a little more ambitious than the men themselves thought of."[13]

David Kirkcaldie was the Acting Traffic Manager, Great Southern and Western Lines, and he issued Circular No. 345, M. P. 88/4186a on 23rd November, 1888, indicating the proposal to:

> "establish a General Institute and Library in connection with which Technical Classes will be held."[14]

The Circular was the first official, public indication for the formation of an Institute and provided instructions on how staff would elect representatives of the various branches in the Department. Kirkcaldie issued a second Circular (No. 364, M. P. 88/4348a on 11th December, 1888), stating the appointment of a Provisional Committee "to take the preliminary steps for establishing the General Institute and Library."[15] The Engineer for Existing Lines, George Cowdery, also issued a Circular dated 26th November, 1888, but, interestingly and in contrast to the Circular issued by David Kircaldie, Cowdery's Circular was completely void of a departmental file number and rigmarole. This completely different approach to paperwork was indicative of the almost-autonomous nature of each of the branches of the New

[10] A. E. Jobson, *The NSW Railway Institute – a Short Account of Progress*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1911, pp. 7 & 8. The underlining was added by the author.
[11] Ibid., 9th November, 1888, p. 4.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Reprinted in *New South Wales Railway and Tramway Budget*, 1st May, 1916, p. 259.
[15] Ibid., p. 260.

South Wales Railway Department. Cowdery added the words "urgent communication" to his Circular and stated that the proposals would be submitted to the Commissioners.

On 10th December, 1888, the first meeting of the Provisional Committee of the Institute was held, this being one day before the official Circular providing details of the Provisional Committee.[16] The objectives of the organisation, as revised in March 1889, were:

> "the intellectual improvement of its members and the cultivation of literature, science and art. To be promoted by the maintenance of lectures, classes for instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing and the encouragement of social, intellectual and physical recreation and by such other means as the Council may from time to time deem advisable. No political or religious subject shall be introduced at any of its meetings."[17]

One of the nominees to represent the Commissioners was William Schey, the union representative. No doubt Eddy appointed Schey to keep him quiet for a while and it turned out that it was only for a while before Schey aggressively attacked Eddy in regard to the management of the Railways. It is hard to believe that the Provisional Committee comprised a weighty 31 Councillors, a hugely unmanageable number, but they were keen and met five times between the 10th and 31st December, 1888. All meetings were held after normal working hours at 7.30pm in the office of the Traffic Manager at the then named "Redfern" station.

At the meeting of the Provisional Committee meeting held on 24th July, 1890, approval was granted for the commissioning of a painting of Charles Goodchap to hang in the building. The well-known Sydney artist, Julian Ashton, received the commission and the work was in place by the March, 1891, opening. It is of interest that some of the iconic names and institutions of Sydney were associated with the Institute in the early days, such as William Paling, who supplied the first piano, William Dymock, Julian Ashton, engineering Professor Warren of Sydney University and Norman Selfe, the latter two people being prominent engineers.

[16] NSW Government Railways Employees' Provisional Committee, Minute Book, Railway Institute, Petersham, p. 3.
[17] Extract from Rod Howard, *Conservation Management Plan*, 1998.

WHAT CAUSED DELAYS TO CONSTRUCTION OF THE INSTITUTE BUILDING IN 1889?

The short answer is the lack of sufficient money. It was very difficult for the New South Wales Railways to obtain capital funds for the continuation of new line construction and, in the words of the Council of the Railway Institute written in 1892, "railway construction almost ceased in 1889."[18] This shortage of money may have been a factor in the decision by John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, to proceed on pre-retirement leave on 29th May, 1889. He retired formally on 31st May, 1890. While the Hawkesbury River bridge opened on 1st May, 1889, Whitton did not attend. His advice about the bridge had been rejected and he probably knew that his attendance would not be desired by the key political power players. The Main North line from Sydney to the Queensland border was then completed. Whitton's long-term friend, Sir Henry Parkes made an important speech at the bridge opening. He gave a pro-Federation discourse at the opening and provided statistics that favourably compared the New South Wales Railways with overseas rail systems in terms of tonnage per annum and miles of railway open per head of population. However, he had to concede that New South Wales played second fiddle to the statistics of the Victorian Railways, from which organization New South Wales gained much of its new railway policy, technology and operational procedures.[19]

Planning work occurred on stations in 1889 on only two new lines - the extension between Michelago and Cooma and the branch line from Hornsby to St. Leonards. Work continued on these projects because capital funds had already been made available under Parliamentary legislation made before 1889. The years 1889, 1890 and 1891 were a time when there were very few buildings approved for new lines. That did not stop Eddy from rehabilitating and improving the appearance and capacity of the existing network, which he apparently funded from sources that did not require Parliamentary approval.

From 1889, Members of the New South Wales Parliament received remuneration for the first time. Politicians now were convinced that what they spoke and thought mattered more than ever before because they were now paid for doing no more than they had been doing prior to 1889. It was the creation of the Public Works Standing Committee, with all the time and effort required to take evidence near and far, the previous year that prompted Members of Parliament to seek payment for their time. The Committee members were paid additionally for the hours spent on deliberations. It was a case of more talking meant more money. The first reports of the Public Works Committee were published in 1889, the first lines reviewed were Culcairn to Corowa, Goulburn to Crookwell, and the "North Shore Railway to meet with Port

[18] *New South Wales Railway Budge*t, September, 1892, p. 6.
[19] T. Richmond, *Brooklyn – Federation Village*, p. 34

Jackson at Milson's Point". Governments continued railway construction to avoid high levels of unemployment.

In evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, Henry Deane, the acting head of new line construction who replaced Whitton, said that buildings on the proposed Corowa line would be timber.[20] This was aimed at lowering costs. The local Corowa press was critical of the use of timber because of the termite problem. No doubt the press also thought that such a border town should have at least a brick building. The press won the fight but approval for the brick building did not occur until 1892, the three-year delay being explained by the inability of the colonial government to obtain overseas capital funds.

Most commentators on New South Wales rail stations view the 1890s as a period of declining capital funding and the introduction of low-cost platform buildings as a measure to address the lower availability of funds. For example, R. Lumello, in his B. Arch. final year thesis wrote that "during the 1890s, it seems that the importance of the railway station in country towns as a focal and community centre had faded. As the turn of the century approached, the railway station building made a sad change from a prestigious community building to a staid, functional transport terminal, almost in recognition of the impending industrialization of the 20th century. It was the Commissioner's policy to cut down expenditure and to make the Railways pay."

While Lumello's words are true about the use after 1895, the picture is far more complex with yearly fluctuations in capital investment and rising and falling capital expenditure between 1890 and 1894. When the Railways could obtain money, they spend it.

No better way that shows the importance of financial issues in the early 1890s was than the name of the monthly journal of the newly-formed Railway Institute. Its first issue, dated 15th September, 1892, was officially named the *New South Wales Railway Budget*. The unofficial, self-selected name of the magazine was a focused reminder of the hard financial times. The Institute and the Railway staff used a shorthand name for the journal calling it *The Budget*. The pressure to save money resulted in the 1890s in the introduction of low-cost new rail lines, which were called 'Pioneer lines'. These lines allowed the continuing expansion of the railways with a minimum of maintenance and services. The railway station was consequently a minimal affair after 1895, being a small weatherboard shed with a skillion roof and open on the platform side, being a lower standard of building than in the 1850s."[21] Another indicator of the difficult financial times was the use of second-hand rails for

[20] Henry Deane was not appointed to the position until 1st July, 1890.
[21] Reprinted in *Armidale and District Historical Society Journal*, No. 20, January, 1977, p. 74

the branch line between Yass Junction and Yass Town terminus – the first time new rails had not been utilized for a new branch line.[22]

THE PUSH TO COUNTER INCREASING UNION POWER IN 1889

In May, 1889, Chief Commissioner Eddy indicated that he was desirous for "railway men to have a hall in which they might hold entertainments or lectures."[23] Of course, Eddy was referring to the creation of the Railway Institute and this policy proposal was an important part of his overall welfare program for employees, which would cover sickness, injury and retirement. The compassion which Eddy displayed on several occasions since he assumed office in October, 1888, had a more tendentious basis, namely to thwart the efforts of the early forms of trade unions that had been created earlier in the 1880s. Eddy's argument for public consumption was that these organisations, such as the Railway and Tramway Service Amalgamated Association, cared for the interests of only a section of the workforce whereas Eddy wanted to create an organisation that would embrace all employees, not just some of them. Eddy's secret agenda was manifested by his policy that "railway men as a body (were) to have nothing to do with party politics."[24] Eddy also rattled the unions by his policy of promotion by merit rather than seniority and stated that "no man should be promoted because he had influential friends."[25] In reality, Eddy and William Schey, who was a Member of Parliament and more importantly the head of the Railway Service Amalgamated Association, were locked into a power struggle over the control of the railway workers.

In October, 1889, the purposes of the proposed Institute were stated as:

- reading,
- coffee,
- refreshments,
- holding of meetings, &
- delivery of lectures.[26]

The plans for the Institute building were made available for inspection by railway staff on Saturday, 16th November, 1889, in the board room of the Colonial Secretary's office.[27] Why there are not in a Railway building? Perhaps it was a symbolic pointer to the fact that Eddy had Government backing to his proposal and was indirectly

[22] Nev. Pollard, "New South Wales Railways Progress and Politics 1881-1905", *Bulletin*, June, 1993, p. 144.

[23] *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 23rd May, 1889, p. 4.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] *Singleton Argus*, 2nd October, 1889, p. 2.
[27] *Evening News*, 16th November, 1889, p. 6.

using that feature in a subtle way to show William Schey that the Railways had friends in the big end of town.

On the 14th December, 1889, a detailed sketch of the proposed building was published in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* (page 29).

WHAT WAS HAPPENING WITH OTHER RAILWAY STRUCTURES IN 1890 AND 1891?

One interesting event in 1890 was the decision by the New South Wales Government to abolish the position of Colonial Architect and, in its place, to create a lower graded position of Supervising Architect. In addition, all plans for public buildings in excess of 500 pounds were to be submitted to open competition. W. L. Vernon, who was an external applicant for the new position, took over from James Barnett as the top public servant in charge of the design of Government buildings. Vernon was anti-American and he was known to oppose the use of red tiled roofs, which the Institute structure featured. Vernon's involvement in the design of buildings for the New South Wales Railways was minimal, except for design work on the second Sydney terminus.

In 1890, work started to lengthen platforms at stations over the Blue Mountains. When constructed in the 1860s, the platforms were short and narrow. At Blaxland, James Angus approved amplification of the existing platform, which measured 80 feet by six feet. He added another 120 feet in length and two feet in width and continued the original open frame, timber construction. The most interesting aspect was that the work was carried out by private contract. While the use of external contractors was well-known for stations on new lines, the method was not used for building work on existing lines where rail traffic presented a danger to workers. A similar approach was taken by Angus to lengthen the platform Valley Heights. Was the use of private enterprise just another attempt to lower costs? Possibly. A significant item of evidence is the calling of tenders for external contractors to paint station buildings on the Main South line in 1891. The use of in-house, departmental painters had long been the norm and there is no evidence that external contract painters were ever used prior to 1891 or after it until the 1950s. So, did money shortages demanded new thinking by the new Chief Commissioner?[28] Yes!

In the year the Institute was opened - 1891, the major civil engineering project was the amplification of the main line tracks between present Redfern and Homebush. Chief Commissioner, E.M.G. Eddy, convinced the New South Wales Government to fund the amplification of the main lines that radiated from Sydney. For the section of track between Redfern and Homebush, he increased the number of running lines from two and three to four. The project was massive and involved the complete rebuilding of every station except Stanmore, Petersham and Strathfield.

[28] *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 28th July, 1891. The assistance of Dr Donald Ellsmore in bringing the use of external painters is appreciated.

For the station rebuilds, Eddy insisted on a new design, which would emphasise the section of track from Redfern to Homebush as forming a distinct urban railway. Previously, the same design of buildings was applied to both rural and urban areas but Eddy changed that situation.[29]

Eddy erected the same style of timber buildings, with the centre platform containing the largest structure about 100 feet in length with single-room waiting sheds on the two side platforms. Eddy applied his exposure to British station design to the stations between Redfern and Homebush. The dominant design feature was a very wide timber fascia partly hiding a low-pitched, hipped roof. The English origin of the new design was shown in another feature of the design. The sale and collection of tickets and the receipt and dispatch of parcels were conducted off-platform, either above or below or at the side of the platform level. Every station received a new booking office and all but Redfern, Newtown and Homebush were located below the tracks in subways. It was Eddy who introduced at Redfern the idea of having one, central booking office. Up to that time, the policy of the New South Wales Railways was to provide a booking office on each platform.

At Redfern and Newtown, brick, overhead booking offices were erected with the roof possessing cupolas like the Institute building. A third example was to be built at Croydon but it seems the priority for funds was for stations closer to the city. Some architects call the style at Redfern and Newtown Queen Anne Revival but Conservation Architect, Paul Davies, is perhaps more sophisticated and more correct when he described the building as "restrained Queen Anne New South Wales Railway style".[30] This means that the structure had some features belonging to the Queen Anne style but these features were limited in presentation. These were very smart looking buildings with hipped roofs covered with flat terracotta tiles, being the first use of the product on the New South Wales rail system. There was ornamental fretwork on the ridges of the roofs. Apart from a new building at Strathfield in 1900, the overhead booking offices at Redfern and Newtown remained the only such elevated booking offices erected in brick until a new brick structure was erected at Carlton in 1980. There was one other Railway building erected in the Queen Anne style. It was the Darling Harbour goods office at William Henry Street, Ultimo.

So, the design of the Institute building did have links with a few other structures on the railway system in the same time period.

[29] The only example of Eddy's design outside the Redfern-Homebush corridor was at Katoomba, again in 1891. It is thought that Eddy applied the design at Katoomba to reflect a homey feeling to those elite people who holidayed at the then newly opened Carrington Hotel.

[30] P. Davies, *Redfern Station Heritage Assessment*, unpublished report for the State Rail Authority, 2007, p. 7.

THE DESIGN OF THE INSTITUTE BUILDING

The design of the proposed building was put to open, public competition and won by architect, Henry Robinson, whose office was located at 139 Pitt Street, Sydney. Interestingly, the two examiners were George Cowdery, the then retired Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines and James Angus, who was the incumbent of the same position.[31] Robinson was not involved in the design of any other railway structure in New South Wales, although he did design the ornate, timber tram sheds in 1890 that existed on the footpaths of Hyde Park. The Institute building was constructed by Thomas Henley of Balmain.

Why did Robinson choose the Queen Anne Revival style? Conservation Architect, David Sheedy, muses that Robinson possibly decided to take the easiest possible path, which was to use exactly the same design that had been applied to a school building in Britain. After all, only a few examples of the Queen Anne Revival style had been built in Sydney prior to the Institute structure and there was little opportunity to replicate a local example, particularly a structure to be used by the public. The 1996 Conservation Management Plan prepared by the Department of Public Works stated that "the Institute bears a close resemblance in scale and treatment to a Board School built in 1872 by the London School Board at Eel Brook Common, Fulham, designed by Basil Champneys."[32] David Sheedy says that "the main difference was that the building at Fulham contained three floors rather than the two floors at the Sydney example but the two buildings shared the same concept with a public hall on the upper level, steeply pitched roofs and four Dutch gable windows on each side for light."[33] The profile of the roof tiles were not the flat style used on the overhead booking offices at the present Redfern and Newtown but the now familiar, domestic style, Marseille pattern and the Institute building was the first such use of a New South Wales Railway-owned structure.

Newspapers referred to the attractive brick building as the Queen Anne style or Free Classic style.[34] Today, architects also use the term Federation Anglo Dutch style, as in Richard Apperley et al, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, or Free Classic style as in the 1998 Conservation Management Plan by Rod Howard.[35] The use of three different terms to describe the same architecture indicates that even architects cannot agree on a common industry language. It does not really matter what the design is called as none of the terms gives a hint of the essence of the design. They are merely words.

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[31] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15th November, 1888, p. 8.

[32] The PWD Conservation Management Plan said that the source of its information was a drawing by the Board School in M. Girouard, *Sweetness and Light – the Queen Anne Movement 1860-1900*, 1984, page 66.

[33] Email to author, 2nd January, 2016.

[34] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15th November, 1889, p. 8.

[35] Thanks to Gary Hughes for bringing this reference to notice on 23rd November, 2015. Page 113 contains a photograph of the building.

The features of the Queen Anne style, as expressed by Rod Howard are:

- red brickwork,
- Flemish gables,
- shallow pilasters,
- moulded bricks, &
- picturesque massing.

It is helpful to have the features above listed so clearly. The only problem is that not all architects agree with those features. Cyril Harris was a Professor of Architecture at Columbia University and wrote that the Queen Anne style was an:

> "eclectic style of domestic architecture of the 1870s and 1880s in England and the USA; misnamed after Queen Anne, but actually based on country-house and cottage Elizabethan architecture. It is characterised by a blending of Tudor, Gothic, English Renaissance and, in the USA, Colonial elements."[36]

There was no argument that the Sydney Institute structure was attractive but the design lacked the look of masculinity. There was no boldness or expression of strength in the essence of the design and it certainly did not reflect the large size and power of the New South Wales Railways. It was a design that was more delicate, even female, in appearance and the message conveyed by the architecture is strongly social. The porched entry at the western end gave the structure the image of a town hall and it should be noted that Sydney's Town Hall in George Street, completed in 1889, possessed a porte-cochere until 1934 when it was removed as part of the essential works for the railway extension to the North Shore. The Institute feature was not a porte-cochere to cover road vehicles but simply a porch for pedestrian use. The Institute porch was small and had stepped entry on all three sides, the front three steps often being used to take photographs of the 31 Institute Councillors. In essence, the design of the building does not seem to fill any other function than one of fun. Above the porched entry, the words "Railway Institute" were set in stone in the facade of the building.

David Sheedy agrees and writes that:

> "there was a complete difference in the buildings style and feeling, when compared to the Italianate railway terminal and also the Gothic Revival Mortuary station. Architects with more forward thoughts than Robinson claimed that it was an eclectic mix of styles and tended to dismiss the Queen Anne style in the Edwardian era. Bearing in mind that, as an architect, Henry Robinson was trying to make his mark and to his express purpose wanted to be seen to be different to his professional peers. He certainly achieved a difference! He was trying to display the degree of his advanced architectural

[36] C. Harris (Ed.), *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture*, New York, Dover Publications, 1977, p. 442.

thinking by creating a design that was far more modern than other nearby railway buildings. I do not think it is an appropriate building style for its purpose, location and the time it was built and the style never really caught on in either Britain or Australia probably because it was felt to be too old fashioned – the exact opposite of Robinson's thinking about the style. The Queen Anne design seemed more suitable for residential projects and the Fairfax house in Bellevue Hill named 'Caerleon', designed by an English architect Maurice B. Adams and completed in 1885, is regarded as the finest building of its Queen Anne Revival style in Australia."

More importantly, the Devonshire Street building was not large in size by any means. The Institute structure could only be called moderate in size and, when considered against the thousands of employees working for the New South Wales Railways, it was going to be quickly found to be too small. Possibly one of the reasons considered by the examiners, Cowdery and Angus, was that the adoption of the Queen Anne Revival style would stand out differently to the Italianate architecture of the main terminal building at Sydney station and the Gothic style of the Mortuary station.

One of the most striking features of the structure was the orange colour of the bricks. No station building in Sydney used such colourful and attractive bricks. The bricks used in the structure were manufactured by Rupert Cook of Addison Road, Marrickville, who had set up the first brickworks using modern brick making machinery in 1888. The bricks were described as semi-plastic and extruded and the feature of Cook's brick making machinery was that it could manufacture different shapes of bricks. For the Institute, ten different shapes of bricks were used.[37]

In addition to the unusual brickwork, there were two other design elements that were rarely seen on New South Wales station buildings. Firstly, there were the scalloped gables, the closest thing that was used and used only once on a railway station was the Jacobean gables at Bathurst. Secondly, there were the large Romanesque windows, with their arched heads, which were applied only to two buildings, being the 1900 now-demolished overhead booking office at Strathfield and the 1916 structure at Gunnedah, which survives.

CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS

The plans for the Institute building were placed on public inspection in February, 1890, some three months after Railway workers were invited to inspect them.

The tender of Thomas Henley of Balmain was accepted on 26th February, 1890, for the construction of the Institute building but the contract was not signed until 9th

[37] Thanks to David Sheedy for examining the Conservation Management Plan, item 3.0, prepared by the Department of Public Works in 1996.

April.[38] The tender stipulated that construction had to be completed within eight months.

In April, the contractor had cleared away what most newspapers referred to as the "old sheeting shed", this being a reference to the building in which tarpaulins were made.[39] The work of making tarpaulins remained in Sydney yard and was transferred to the sandstone building in the centre of the facility, which had been constructed for the opening in 1855 as the first goods shed. Tarpaulin operations remained in the old goods shed until transferred to Enfield in 1923.

The clearance of the Institute site prompted one correspondent to write to the Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* expressing concern about the possible impact of the proposal on the adjacent tram track to Botany, which had been operational since 1882. He urged that consideration be given to the intersection of Devonshire Street and what was then called Castlereagh Street in order to avoid what had occurred elsewhere in the city where the radius of the tram tracks was far too tight.[40] No further concern was published in the press.

The Commissioners did not approve a variation of the contract in October, 1890, for the installation of electric lighting but it is unclear whether the electric lighting was supposed to replace or merely supplement the gas lighting. By the mid-1890s, the Institute Council had approved of a contractor setting up an experiment to illuminate one room with electric lighting, this experiment proved successful but the date of subsequent installation of electric lighting is unknown.

In January, 1891, some minor modifications were approved by the Chief Commissioner and these included:

- the tiling of the porch at the western end,
- provision of a ladies' toilet,
- asphalting the forecourt yard,
- removal of the gates providing access to the adjacent goods yard, &
- extension of the boundary wall along the northern side of the structure.

Money shortages in 1891? Certainly not, at least not for the Institute building. By November, 1890, the estimated cost of the Institute building had risen from £3, 000 to £4, 000 but the one third increase over the budget did not concern the Commissioners.[41]

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[38] *Goulburn Herald*, 27th February, 1890, p. 2. and *Riverine Herald*, 26 February, 1890, p. 2.
[39] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5th April, 1890, p. 6. The *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 14th December, 1889, p. 29 correctly described the building as the "tarpaulin shed".
[40] Ibid., 2nd April, 1890, p. 4
[41] *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 29th November, 1890, p. 3. There is one source that states that the budget was initially £5000 and that the final expenditure was £3600, and hence this achievement was viewed as a cost saving rather than an over expenditure. Who is correct? Who cares!

Was the Railway Institute building an absolute necessity in 1890 when work started, considering the shortage of capital funds? Examine the use of internal spaces of the structure, which included:

- reading room 51' x 15' 9 inches,
- smoking room 31' x 15' 9 inches
- coffee and other refreshments room 31' x 15' 9 inches,
- a classroom 20' x 15' 9 inches,
- a meeting hall holding 500 people with platform and stage 73' x 39',
- retiring rooms, as well as a bathroom and caretaker's room.

The smallest space, apart from the toilets, was the classroom. Were these functions so essential in 1890 as to oblige the Commissioners to approve the construction of the Institute building? As one newspaper reported, the building "is intended for the railway workmen as a place where they shall be able to spend a leisure evening."[42] It seems that the timing of the announcement, construction and opening of the Institute building is explained by politics and was a response by the newly arrived Chief Commissioner, E. M. G. Eddy, in October, 1888, and his realisation of the looming industrial problems he was facing dealing with a number of the railway unions.

[42] *Singleton Argus*, 2nd October, 1889, p. 2.

THE 1891 OPENING

The Railway Institute in New South Wales was the first such institution to set up in Australia. This is most surprising as the New South Wales Railways took the leadership over other Australian railway organisations on very few management and operational issues. Institutes were not set up in Queensland until 1896, Western Australia in 1897, Victoria in 1910 and Tasmania in the 1930s.[43]

All the press reports about the building were extremely favourable both internally and externally.

The brass plaque for the opening of the Railway Institute on 14th March 1891 states, interestingly, the structure was "publicly" open. It seems that this was an obscure reference to the use of the structure by women as females were demanding in Sydney a greater role in public affairs. Another interesting feature of the opening plaque is that William McMillan is shown as the Minister for Railways when in fact he held no such portfolio, he being the Colonial Treasurer.[44] The first person to be formally appointed Minister for Railways was Richard Ball in 1916.

In the very year of the building's opening, a ladies' retiring room was added. It is hard to believe that the structure could be planned with the idea that men only need to go to the toilet but this thinking was pretty much endemic in the Railway bureaucracy throughout all of the 19th century and up to at least 1920. This early addition for women is further evidence of the growing public profile of females in the community.

One of the initiatives of the initial Institute Committee was the collection of material in addition to published books. The Secretary of the Committee wrote to leading country newspapers requesting free copies of their newspapers to be available to Institute members.[45] He also wrote to leading British engineering firms requesting plans and models of key railway engineering works. These were also to be supplied by the New South Wales Railways – all hopefully at no cost to the Institute.[46] The strategy initially worked with five Sydney newspapers and 56 country newspapers available by October, 1891, but then enthusiasm stagnated and, by the end of 1893,

[43] No information could be obtained about the establishment of railway South Australia.
[44] It seems that the usage of the term, for Railways, was used generally at least throughout the 1880s with one example of a speech by Henry Parkes, which was recorded in the *Goulburn Evening Penny Post*, 8th October, 1885, p. 2. The New South Wales Railways has had a long tradition copying initiatives implemented by the Victorian Railways and the allocation of the railway administration portfolio of the Treasurer was yet another example of following what had been done in Victoria. See *Freeman's Journal*, 27th October, 1888, p. 9. When the Premier, George Reid, opened the 1899 extension, he was also referred to as the Minister for Railways. See *New South Wales Budget*, 20th March, 1899, p. 137.
[45] For example, the request to receive the Bathurst newspaper free of charge. See *Bathurst Free Press & Mining Journal*, 25th November, 1890, p. 2.
[46] *Evening News*, 9th September, 1890, p. 4.

the Institute was still receiving only copies of 61 newspapers.[47] Monetary donations were also made by the leading commercial undertakings and citizens of Sydney, including James Angus, who was listed as a railway contractor. That title is a puzzle because Angus was the Engineer-in Chief for Existing Lines between 1889 and 1892. Perhaps there were two people by the name of James Angus?

For many years, the masthead of the journal of the Institute included the expression "founded 1892". The immediate thought was that this was a reference to the establishment of the Institute but this was not the case and the word "founded" referred to the issue of the first edition of the in-house magazine, *The Budget*. Usually, organisations are founded and magazines are published and this little puzzle is possibly a reflection of the amateurish editorial scrutiny of the day.

There was one statistic which shattered the fantasy held today of all Railwaymen being a hard wording, honest lot of blokes. Two years after the opening of the Institute, nearly 10% of the library books could not be found.[48] Where would they be? Another interesting statistic casts doubt on the enthusiasm of all the Institute Council members in the early days. In 1893, the Council comprised a cumbersome 37 members and 12 meetings were held during the year. Only three members attended all 12 meetings and a further four members went to 11 meetings. Some 43% of the Councillors attended less than 75% of the meetings.[49] There is some sort of lesson here about humans, possibly along the lines that it is always a few people who do the most.

With 13,000 people working for the Railway and Tramway Department, membership at in May, 1891, was 631 or less than 5% of the workforce. By October, 1891, the membership stood at 1,280 but was still less than 10% of the workforce. A big job in the early years was the increase in membership. There was a general increase to about 1900 but enthusiasm waned and membership numbers either stagnated or dropped until 1914.

The first Annual Report of the institute was published in October, 1891. It showed that average number of daily readers in the reading room was 22, not a big number considering that the Institute was opened over 12 hours each day. The Institute was quick to award Life Membership to 21 people, including Charles Goodchap, James Angus, William Thow, Norman Selfe (of Normanhurst fame) and two early railway power punchers, namely Walter Bradley and Charles Cowper, both of whom were instrumental in making sure the Colony's first railway was built to Goulburn where they resided. Oddly, a few organisations were made Life members, including Dubs

[47] The Sydney newspapers were *Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph, Evening News. Echo and Australian Star*.
[48] *New South Wales Railway Budget*, 15th September, 1893, p. 9.
[49] Ibid, 15th November, 1893, p. 55.

& Co, the locomotive builder and Saxby & Farmer, a maker of interlocking equipment.[50]

Free transport passes were offered to all staff who could be spared to attend the opening.

THE 1896-99 BUILDING EXTENSION

Depending on what source material one adopts, the Council of the Institute approached the Commissioners either in 1896 or at the start of 1897 for the provision of funds to allow an extension into the Prince Alfred Park.[51] This was intended to be a two-storey structure but the expenditure was not approved and a revised scheme was put before the Commissioners in mid-1898, which was approved. The deferral of approval of the project is reflective of the tight financial position in the second half of the 1890s.

What were the reasons the Commissioners did not approve a building addition in 1896 or 1897 but do so in 1898? There were widespread dry weather conditions, collectively known as the Federation drought between 1895 and 1903, and the Railways was suffering reduced revenue as well as subsidising the amount of fodder conveyed by rail to drought areas. Capital funds were also in short supply. Also, the concept of Federation was a major, negative issue for many people and was one issue that affected the joining of the various colonies. The first Federation referendum took place in 1898 to establish the Commonwealth of Australia. New South Wales voted against the proposal. The absence of strong support of the New South Wales Premier, George Reid, and the unresolved site for the national capital were factors in its defeat. The other colonies realised that they could not proceed without New South Wales. A Premiers' Conference was held in late January/early February, 1899, and agreed to amendments to the Constitution Bill which made it more attractive to New South Wales voters, including that the location of the federal capital would be in New South Wales, although not less than 100 miles from Sydney. On 20th June, 1899, voters in New South Wales supported the proposal.

The year, 1898, was an extremely quiet year for new railway station works and the evidence supports a bias towards rural expansion of the rail network but not in the design of platform buildings. In the Sydney area, the provision of a very plain set of timber buildings with skillion roofs at Flemington was testimony to the shortage of funds but the pathetic structures erected at Flemington helped secure the image amongst rural supporters that the Government was not adversely discriminating against The Bush. Of course, that was pretty much an illusion and rural voters were correct to assume an anti-country bias.

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[50] No author, Railway Institute, Redfern, Sydney, Government Printer, 1891, pp. 4-17.

[51] *New South Wales Budget*, 20th March, 1899, p. 137 says 1896 while Conservation Management Plan prepared by Rod Howard says early 1897. There is also conflicting evidence that shows a plan dated 1895 for a proposed, new, single-storey building.

What happened to station buildings on rural new lines in 1898 additionally demonstrated the shortage of money at that time. On 29th August, 1898, senior draughtsman, with the initials H. B., initialled five plans for platform buildings. These were the first plans issued with the word "standard" on them. They were officially called, "standard designs" – use of these words suggesting tough financial times. They remained unapproved throughout 1898. Standard plans for other types of buildings were also prepared. The system used was for the application of a letter of the alphabet combined with a numeral. Two letters were used for platform buildings, namely "A" and "B". The numerals applied were "1", "2" and "3". Between 1898 and 1900, the letters 'A' and 'B' referred to the same design of buildings. Buildings that were staffed received the 'A' and unattended buildings received 'B'. They all had single-pitched [i.e. skillion] roofs. You want evidence of bias against rural areas? Get this! Not a single example of a standard design of the time was built in the Sydney area.

There is no doubt that the Commissioners were busy blokes and it should not be overlooked that, as well as managing the railway system, they also had responsibility for Sydney's tramway network. Well-known author of tramway publications, David Keenan, wrote that between 1894 and 1898 the Commissioners operated four different forms of traction for the tram system, these being horse, steam, cable and electric.[52] Sorting out the future power source for trams no doubt would have taken a considerable amount of effort in the 1890s and Keenan notes that it was December, 1899, "before electric trams became permanent feature of city life."[53]

While the designs for the extension at the Institute were prepared within the Railway Department by W.H. Davidson, the physical construction of the new wing was not entrusted to departmental day labour but was handed over to an external contractor, Adamson and Daw. Although it is not known from whence they came, it is known that they never built any railway station buildings. It was yet another example that tells us that it was not the norm in New South Wales for certain contractors to dominate the railway construction industry. Acceptance of the lowest tender, whoever that was, was the norm.

In December, 1898, work was underway on the construction of the brick addition that today parallels Chalmers Street. The addition doubled the amount of classroom floor space. Before work commenced, the two classrooms in the original building contained 95 m² of floor space but the addition of a further two classrooms in the new wing increased the floor space to 276 m².[54] One interesting feature of the new wing was the installation of a removable screen between the two new classrooms so that the space could be used as a hall seating 200 people.

[52] D. Keenan, *Tramways of Sydney*, Transit Press, Sydney, 1979, p. 6.
[53] Ibid., p. 8.
[54] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30th December, 1898, p. 6.

The existing smoking room was increased by four feet in length, making it 35 feet 6 inches by 15 feet. There was also a store room measuring 10 feet by 9 feet, a ladies' room measuring 10 feet by 10 feet as well is a female toilet and an extension to the caretaker's quarters to provide that officer with three rooms, rather than two. There was also a separate entrance to the new wing. It had been proposed in 1897 to provide a two-storey wing but funds were tight and, by this time, Chief Commissioner Eddy was dead and the new incumbent decided not to make a captain's call, to use the term of former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, as did Eddy, to provide a two-level structure. Nevertheless, the Railway architects in charge allegedly designed the single level addition so that a second storey could be added at a later date.

The official opening of the new wing occurred on 14th March, 1899 and the cost was officially quoted as being under £2,000.

THE IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMMENT OF THE 1899-1906 SYDNEY TERMINUS

The part of Devonshire Street adjacent to the Institute disappeared between 1903 and 1906 and the present pedestrian tunnel was created at that time. Castlereagh Street adjacent to the Institute was renamed Chalmers Street, in conjunction with other road alterations.

On the southern side, a gymnasium had been set up adjacent to the footprint of the two main structures about this time. Some commentators say that the gymnasium was demolished in 1924 but a plan exists showing the provision of a shower in the gymnasium in 1939. The plan shows that the walls of the shower recess, which measured 3'6" x 3' 6", were formed by "small corrugated iron", a product used in the 19th century for ceilings in railway buildings. The use of this primitive, second-hand material, no doubt supplied from the Clyde reclamation yard, would have made the shower look extremely unattractive and it may be assumed that the gymnasium itself could be similarly described. The history of the gymnasium remains a mystery.

In 1905, the 50th anniversary Jubilee celebrations of the New South Wales Railways were held and the Institute building played a major role in the display of materials, models and documents. Adjacent to the Institute building on the southern side was the hay shed, which was part of the Sydney goods yard and was closer to the Institute building than the present 1926 traction sub-station. The hay shed, also titled on some plans as the produce shed, was a massive building of 1,000 feet in length, with corrugated iron wall sheeting, and contained locomotive No. 1 and a comparative display of both historic and then current rollingstock. It was stated that "some of the rollingstock which composed the original train (i.e. from Sydney to Parramatta in 1855) is still in existence and will be used."[55] These words were published with some pride perhaps, endeavouring to reflect the Railway

[55] *New South Wales Budget*, 1st August, 1905, p. 274.

organisation's ability to maintain historic rollingstock but another interpretation is that the New South Wales Railways was so short of funds for replacement rollingstock that it was still utilising passenger vehicles 50 years of age. The gymnasium on the southern side of the main Institute building was used for working models and other appliances made by the employees. The celebration was opened only for three days and an entrance admission of one shilling was charged to members of the public but employees and families could enter at half price. Does it not seem strange that members of the Institute had to enter their own building upon payment of an entrance fee?

It was also during this period that other alterations were made to the Institute building that affected the stage and lighting. There was a large advertisement in the *New South Wales Budget* magazine sprooking the latest in electrical appliances and a suspicious mind would link the implementation of improved lighting with the paid advertisement in the journal.

Improvements were made to the exits in 1910 but the nature of the improvements is unknown. In 1911, the Institute found that the existing accommodation was "inadequate". At that time, there were 12,500 volumes in the library collection.[56] The picture the Institute Council was painting had the appearance of spectacular achievements but this was virtually the opposite of reality. In 1911, only 5% of the Railway and Tramway workforce were members of the Institute. Already at this time, the Railway Commissioners must have been concerned that the poor management of the Institute. A comparison with the Institute in Victoria, which was established only in 1910, provides an indication between good and bad management. The Victorian Institute had a much higher representation of members from the workforce, being 25%; the Victorian Institute had a larger library than was the case in New South Wales; the circulation of books was wider in Victoria and the Victorian Institute "was more inclined to favour Australian literature."[57] The leadership of Victoria in relation to the management of Railway Institutes was consistent with the lead of the Victorian Railways in a wide range of technical and operational subjects over the New South Wales railways generally.

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR ONE

While this was not a happy period, there was one outstanding advantage of the time for the Institute – the substantial increase in membership. The number of members had been pretty pathetic as a proportion of the total staff number working for the Railway Department between 1891 and 1914.

During the period 1915 to 1918, there were substantial changes to the management of the New South Wales Railways and, in addition, there was a massive shortage of

[56] Jobson, op. cit., p. 10 and inside rear cover.
[57] M. Lyons, "The Library in the Workplace: The New South Wales Railway Institute Library," in M. Lyons and J. Arnold (Eds.), *A History of the Book in Australia 1891– 1945*, Queens land University Press, 2001, p. 188.

capital funds for the continuation of the program to provide new branch and connecting lines in rural areas, especially in the wheat belt.

In early 1915, the New South Wales Railway Commissioners established a Safety First Committee chaired by the Chief Medical Officer in order to foster safe working conditions and issued a monthly pamphlet from that time. The existence of this new body may have added weight to the idea of enacting closer management of the Railway Institute in 1917.

In 1916, there was a crisis in the shortage of space at the Institute building in Sydney and in country depots. Membership had risen from 1,767 in 1912, to 3,054 in 1915 and, since 1st January, 1916, 1,140 members had joined up to March and at the end of March the membership was 4,062 and the Institute Council estimated that the membership would soon eclipse five thousand.[58] The Council of the Institute wrote to the Chief Commissioner stressing the need for additional furnishings, books and finance for additional staff. The Council also requested the construction of a building alongside the existing structure to accommodate the library. The most important issue was the need for a much larger subsidy from the Commissioners.[59]

In 1916, the Institute expressed the desire to establish a system of technical education similar to that at Sydney Technical College.[60] That wish came to fruition in 1919 when the Commissioners decided to provide an industrial workshop in Lackey Street, Darling Harbour.[61]

The opportunity was also taken in 1916 to convert the bed and sitting room of the caretaker at the rear of the hall (eastern end) of the Devonshire Street Institute into an additional classroom by the removal of the intermediate wall and fireplace. This seems to be the only alterations undertaken to the building in 1916 and it appears that, rather than provide additional facilities under the control of the Institute Council, the Commissioners were seriously considering taking over direct control and funding. Clearly, the Commissioners understood the massive growth in staff training and in April, 1916, they had fitted out and funded an instruction carriage to tour country centres.[62] In January, 1917, the Commissioners held an exhibition in the Institute and nearby buildings, the purpose of which was reported in November, 1916, as “to show what Australia is capable of” but the date and objective of the exhibition was

[58] *New South Wales Railway Budget*, 1st June, 1916, p. 290.
[59] Ibid.
[60] NSW Railway and Tramway Magazine, 1st September, 1920, p. 562.
[61] Ibid.
[62] *New South Wales Railway Budget*, 1st April, 1916, p. 240. In 1921, carriage FY 94 entered service as the safeworking construction car and in 1925 FZ 909 became the locomotive construction car containing Westinghouse brake equipment. See L. A. Clark, *Passenger Cars of the New South Wales*, Canberra, traction publications, 1972, pp. 119-127. The details of the 1916 vehicle are unknown to the author.

changed, being listed for January, 1917, as an "industrial and models exhibition", which would last five days.[63]

The New South Wales Railways was facing during the Great War one of the worst social and industrial environments that it could encounter. It was a combination of an unwilling industrial workforce and the re-integration of returned soldiers, men who knew how to use weapons. The sour mood of the times was reflected in the opening of the Picton to Mittagong deviation without any ceremony.[64] There was also no ceremony for the opening of the section of North Coast line between Kempsey and Macksville, the official reason for the absence of ceremonies on both lines being the prevalence of the influenza epidemic.

During World War 1, there was a rise in the militancy of the members of a number of union members working for the Railways. They were antagonistic about the War and the social and economic difficulties that had to be faced, especially the increasing inflation rate. The International Workers of the World was active in inciting railwaymen to strike for increased wages and their effort paid off with the wages bill soaring between 1914 and 1918. The workers had been aided in their demands by the Labor Government, which had held power between 1910 and 1916. The Chief Commissioner, James Fraser, illustrated the extent of the trouble by pointing out that, in 1906, the number of train miles run per employee was 909, whereas the number in 1915 was 800 and 812 in 1916.[65] Fraser was reported as saying that:

> "the diminution appears to have been attributed wholly to the malign influence of a section of the employees who favour industrial ferment and disorder and who spare no effort to produce these undesirable conditions. Saturated with poisonous ideas, these men disseminate the poison among those with whom they come in contact, and produce a very unhealthy condition of industrial life. There can be little doubt that, in the main, Mr. Fraser's diagnosis is correct. How to effect a cure is not so obvious."[66]

Added to the existing industrial hostility was the reality that large numbers of soldiers would return after the end of the War in November, 1918. These people knew about the success of the Russian Revolutions and there was a large amount of concern in New South Wales that the returned soldiers would combine with the existing militant unionists to undertake physical combat in order to achieve the implementation of a socialist regime. It was not far off that the Communist Party was established in Australia, being founded in 1920. It is not coincidental that there was an article in the

[63] *The Leader* (Orange), 6 November, 1916, p. 5 and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16th January, 1917, p. 8.
[64] D. Burke, *Making the Railways*, op. cit., p. 160.

[65] *The Muswellbrook Chronicle*, 20th January, 1917, p. 1.
[66] Ibid.

Railway and Tramway Magazine in November, 1918, that hinted at the Government's objective for the Institute with the following words:

> "the chief end of their (i.e. the employees) existence is not work and, when their work for the day is done, they should be offered some counter attraction to the street corner, the hotel or the gambling den. The men should be led to feel that their employers take an interest in their welfare and wish them to improve their social condition. By doing so, the men would more strongly attach themselves to the (Railway) Service, and be more faithful and efficient. For this reason, and to fulfil these conditions, such institutions as ours (i.e. the Institute) have been established."[67]

Government legislation giving priority for jobs to returned soldiers caused many industrial workers to feel bitter about their work life, which encourage further industrial action in support of a socialist regime.

Events of 1919 were reflective of the crisis governments throughout Australia faced. Perhaps the most significant was an event on 24th March, when several thousand "anti-Bolsheviks" led by returned soldiers clashed with Police in Brisbane. The Police fired shots and 19 were wounded. On 4th May, striking wharf labourers and non-unionist strikebreakers clashed in Fremantle with Police. One person was killed and 33 injured. There were other similar events at other places involving other unions during 1919.

Some branches of the Institute had also been established in country railway centres but most country centres held meetings within existing departmental premises. Senior staff of the New South Wales Railways identified that the Railway Institute could play a major role in mitigating the potential revolutionary and militant aspirations of returned soldiers. In January, 1916, the Commissioners were waxing favourably about the future of the Institute "particularly in connection with its education policy."[68] At that time, there was no hint that the Commissioners would move to take over the Institute. Leone Paddison made another error when she wrote that the Commissioners took over the management of the Railway Institute in 1916 and, from that time, made the Institute one of the branches of the New South Wales Railways.[69] They were certainly thinking about the matter in 1916 but had not made a decision at that time. The evidence indicates that the decision was made in 1917, when the name of the in-house journal changed from "*Budget*" to "*Magazine*".[70]

The evidence indicates that the Railway Department had been considering taking over full management of the Institute for quite some time and had sent Mr C. James, a District Superintendent, to visit Western Australia in 1915 in order to study the way

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[67] *New South Wales Railway and Tramway Magazine*, 1st November, 1918, p. 548.
[68] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19th January, 1916, p. 14.
[69] L. Paddison, *The Railways of New South Wales 1855-1955*, Sydney, Department of Railways, 1955, p. 258.
[70] *New South Wales Railway & Tramway Magazine*, 1st December, 1917, p. 4.

the Institute worked in that State. The assumption is that the Western Australia Institute followed the model the New South Wales Railways wish to adopt, namely the Institute being a full branch of the Railway Department. It is a fair bet that the Commissioners were aware that the effectiveness of the Institute Council, full of volunteers, was less than impressive and the Commissioners were convinced that the existing part-time Councillors were incapable of managing a much-expanded membership with the resultant increase in training and recreational facilities.

Also in 1916, the price of the journal went from one penny to six pence, the low price being another indicator that the Councillors were not effective managers. It is hard to imagine that the Institute Council would have approved the 600% increase in purchase price. Many of the country schools of arts were "languishing" and the New South Wales Government in July, 1916, removed the subsidy it gave to them unless they conducted educational classes. The new funding formula saw a number of country school of arts amalgamate with local branches of the Institute and this occurred at that time at Parkes, Wellington, Junee and Harden.[71] The transfer of the Institute building at Devonshire Street to fulltime Railway management was part of a larger Government policy to improve educational training generally but specifically in country towns which were major railway centres.

It seems to have been the policy of the Labor State Government in 1917 to expand the functions and size of the New South Wales Railways in order to employ as many people as possible. There were three significant changes during the year and each one of these three initiatives resulted in a large increase of the staffing level of the Railway Department. These were:

- continuation of the takeover of all refreshment rooms which had hitherto been managed under leases by private enterprise – the process had commenced in mid-1916,
- the transfer of the Railway Institute to full departmental control, with the creation of a new branch to undertake management and administrative duties, &
- the transfer of the Railway Construction Branch from the Department of Public Works to the New South Wales Railways.

Although not a big item, the Commissioners established a Suggestions and Inventions Committee. Different sources give different establishment dates, one saying October, 1915, and another saying 1st November, 1916.[72] A few months does not make any difference as the establishment of the Committee may be interpreted as an acknowledgement of Government policy that the Commissioners facilitate staff involvement in decision-making and that they recognise the role of

[71] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25th July, 1916, p. 9.
[72] *New South Wales Railway and Tramway Budget*, 1st June, 1916, p. 303 states October, 1915 while John Forsyth, *The When and Where of Railway and Tramway Events*, unpublished manuscript, 1996, volume 1, p. 311 states 1st November, 1916.

employees in that decision-making process. The establishment of the Safety First Committee in 1915 can be interpreted as another way of acknowledging the role of workers on the frontline of railway operations.

Historian, Dan Coward, wrote about the impact of the Great Strike of 1917 and stated that "railway lines were a favourite target for construction (by strikers). On one occasion, two miles of line ascending a steep gradient were smeared with grease, so that the Bathurst goods train took forty minutes to crawl over the two-mile distance."[73] By the middle 1917, the Commissioners were using the Institute building at Devonshire Street as if it were just another one of their offices. In August of that year, men on strike were dismissed and paid off at the Institute building and, one week later on 20th August, 1917, the Chief Commissioner met with strike-breakers, again at the Institute building.[74]

In February, 1918, the Commissioners announced the appointment of David Cumming as the first Director of the Institute from a field of 40 applicants.[75] He had started in the NSW Railway Department in 1888 and his immediate, previous position was Principal Clerical Assistant to the Carriage and Wagon Superintendent. The Institute Council was abolished and an Advisory Committee appointed to assist the Director. Cumming was able to take the credit for increased membership in the years after his appointment but the reality was that he was in the job at a time there was a big social need to provide recreational facilities to the veterans of the Great War.

In 1919, the Commissioners made it clear that advancement of the Railway service would in future be linked to the successful completion of courses at the Institute and it was this policy alone that stimulated the substantial increase in membership from 1919 and through to 1930. The Commissioners took the opportunity in 1919 to announced the appointment of the Director of the Institute as the head of the Safety First Movement, an appointment which displayed the closeness of the ties between the formal Railway bureaucracy and the Railway Institute.[76] In 1924, the Commissioners incorporated the safety first pamphlet into the newly titled, in-house Institute publication called *The Staff*.

The period in which the major alterations occurred to the Devonshire Street building was in 1919 and 1920. In 1919, two additional toilets were provided and renovations undertaken to the hall. The surge in membership of the Institute, from 2,157 in 1913 to 6,007 in 1919, as a result of the Great War was also reflected in the provision of a "gallery level" or mezzanine in the hall of the building at Devonshire Street with work starting in 1919 and the opening in 1920.[77] Each side of the mezzanine held 65

[73] D. Coward, "The Great Strike in New South Wales," in J. Iremonger et al (Ed.), *Strikes,* Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1973, p. 61.
[74] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14th of August, 1917, p. 8 and 21st August, 1917, p. 17.
[75] *NSW Railway and Tramway Magazine*, 2nd February, 1918, p. 5.
[76] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6th February, 1923, p. 8.
[77] Membership statistics from *NSW Railway and Tramway Magazine*, 1st March, 1920, p. 274.

people. The original stairway at the western end was also replaced at this time. Alterations were also made the area behind the stage. It is possible that it was at this time that the two original, single-story pavilions at the eastern end of the building were converted into two levels as exist today.

Indicative of the substantial influence of the Great War were major alterations to the front of the Institute building adjacent to Devonshire Street where an additional level was built in 1920 over the porched entry on the western side facing the rail corridor to accommodate the new mezzanine level. The Institute called the 1919 alterations a "transformation of the building" and said that a "prettily designed and decorated gallery" had been erected. The hall had been painted in pastels.[78] The gallery level of the hall did not remain as seating until its closure and had been fitted out by the 1970s, and possibly earlier, as an instructional area where students were taught about Westinghouse brakes.[79]

As part of the 1919/20 alterations, on the western facing wall of the first floor extension above the original porched entry were the letters "Rly Institute" and the letters were formed and illuminated by incandescent light bulbs. The installation of the illuminated sign was considered necessary as the additional level on top of the porch eliminated the original sandstone name.[80] There is a photograph of the illuminated sign taken by Fred Saxon in 1959 in *Byways of Steam 6*, page 80. Refreshment accommodation was also provided in 1920, as was increased accommodation for the library reading room. A gas hot water service was installed in 1920 and four porcelain sinks were provided in the "new chemical laboratory."[81]

Another major aspect of the 1919/1920 alterations, was the provision of an office for the Director and his staff. This accommodation was achieved by relocating the billiard room from its position in the 1891 building and transferring it to the small hall of the 1896 addition.

The State Governor, Sir Walter Davidson, was recorded in 1920 as saying that the Institute's in-house publication, the *NSW Railway and Tramway Magazine*, was a "quite remarkable resume of great progress."[82] Spot on! Moreover, this supposed record of achievement is the reason it has survived. Does anyone think that the journal would have survived if it were a litany of gross incompetence?

The Railways proposed in 1920 to replace the existing gymnasium, which had existed on the southern side of the original building from about 1905, with a new two-storey brick combined gymnasium and classroom building measuring 52 feet by 30

[78] *New South Wales Railway and Tramway Magazine*, 1st July, 1920, p. 417.
[79] Oral evidence by Bob Ritchie, retired fitter and machinist, 18th January, 2016.
[80] A large, temporary sign was positioned above the porched entry with the letters, "NSWGR", in 1905 for the Railway Jubilee Celebrations. A photograph is in M. J. Ferson, "The Libraries of the NSW Railway Institute: a Centenary History," *The Australian Library Journal*, Vol. 39 No. 1, February, 1990, p. 40.
[81] Financial Account Card entitled "Sydney (Railway Institute, Devonshire Street) card number 1/1.
[82] *NSW Railway and Tramway Magazine*, 1st January, 1920, p. 154.

feet. Unlike the timber, ceiling lining boards in the 1891 and 1899 buildings, the ceilings were to be form by asbestos cement sheets. The roof was to be covered with terracotta tiles, no doubt to match the existing structures. The existing gymnasium was demolished in 1920 but the evidence is sketchy whether it was replaced. Certainly, the proposed two-storey structure was not built.

THE ACCELERATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW BRANCHES & BRANCH BUILDINGS IN RURAL AREAS

It was the impact of the consequences of the Great War that stimulated a building program for Institute branches outside Sydney. For example, the Institute branch in Newcastle, which had been set up in 1895, did not obtain its own building until 1917.

Correspondence flowed between the New South Wales Railways and the Department of Education in April, 1917, about the proposed takeover of some schools of arts and mechanics institutes in country towns with large railway depots and this correspondence is further evidence that the Railway Commissioners were themselves considering a large expansion of the network of Institute branches. One such branch where the building was only partially completed was at Werris Creek.[83] The Railway Department did take over the structure but never completed the design works and it remains today as the ugliest Institute building of all rural branches.

The Institute started a series of articles in 1918 in its house journal entitled "Our Country Branches" and in the March issue of that year there was an article relating to the Bathurst branch, which had 200 members in 1919. What was said in that article demonstrated the potential of the country Institute facilities to engage young, returned soldiers. The Institute building at Bathurst was far from luxurious and consisted of a shed 30 feet by 15 feet with the external walls covered with corrugated iron sheets, this being approved in 1917 by the Commissioners.

The Constitution of the Institute was revised in 1919 to facilitate the accelerated provision of rural branches with their own buildings. Central Council of the Institute supplied a billiard table in the Bathurst building and "this resulted in increased membership, and the accommodation became inadequate; subsequently, an addition was made to the building…… A second billiard table was installed and members indulging in this past time are well provided for. The room previously used as a billiard room is now fitted up as a library, which permits of the room previously used for the library being utilised for a classroom."[84]

One week after the Great War ended, approval was given for the erection of a social hall measuring 40' x 25' adjacent to the existing small building at Werris Creek. The internal walls featured two materials with the dado, being the lower part of the wall to the window sill level, possessing "upright boarding", which was a simple expression for wainscotting. The upper part of the wall, called the body, was formed by a product labelled "Cotton Wood", which was a material of unknown parentage. Because of the shortage of corrugated iron in 1918, the roof was covered with

[83] D. Ellsmore, *Australian Railway Monument – Railway Institute Building*, unpublished report, 2002, p. 5.
[84] *New South Wales Railway and Tramway Magazine*, 1st March, 1918, p.231.

Adamax, which was a product used on a few new platform buildings about the same time.

In 1919, buildings were approved for branches at Cowra, Orange and Armidale. No previous buildings nor branches had existed at these towns. A pattern had emerged in 1919 with the design of these Institute buildings. Internally, they consisted of a billiard room, a reading and library room and a classroom, which generally reflected the overall social and educational role of the Institute. However, it was in the external appearance of the buildings where the new design was evident. For the first time, nine-inch wide horizontal, hardwood weatherboards were applied to the bottom half of the external walls up to the window sill level and above that point Fibro cement sheets were used. Fibro was also used for the internal walls above the wainscotting. There was no shortage of corrugated iron in 1919 and, thus, the roofs were covered with iron sheets.

On 18th October, 1919, a branch of the Railway Institute was also established at Lithgow but the building for the branch was not approved until 1st January, 1920.

Together, the plans for the buildings at Bathurst in 1918 and Cowra, Orange, Thirroul and Armidale in 1919 reflected a brand-new presentation of materials to give a distinct visual presence to the Institute structures and this style continued to be applied to new Institute buildings throughout the 1920s. No railway station building had previously used the combination of horizontal weatherboards and Fibro sheeting on external walls and no platform building had used a combination of wainscotting and Fibro sheeting on internal walls.

Most Institute buildings were placed on one side of a station forecourt and, thereby, they had a very dominant exposure to arriving and departing passengers. It had been the long-term New South Wales railway policy to provide different designs for the various buildings in a station forecourt. Residences and refreshment rooms and any other building in a station forecourt mostly presented a suite of different looking structures.

1921-23 - THE (HOPEFUL) END OF CLASS-ROOM LECTURES AT DEVONSHIRE STREET

From April, 1920, there were press reports about a move by the New South Wales Government to appoint a Royal Commission into the railway administration. This was prompted by a petition from ex-staff who had been dismissed as result of their participation in the Great Railway Strike of 1917. The Royal Commission started late in 1920 and continued in 1921. The number of returned servicemen had increased the membership of the Institute from 5,000 in 1916 to over 10,000 in 1920 and the Railway Commissioners felt that it would be beneficial to provide some concessions to staff in order to demonstrate to the Government that they acted out of goodwill to the men. This, of course, was a ruse in order to deflect attention away from the fact that the Commissioners would not reinstate the strikers. The Commissioners used

the Institute as a means of implementing these concessions. They decided, rather than the employees paying fees for educational classes, the Railway Department would make educational programs free for all employees.[85] Of course that sounded a wonderful thing considering the large number of Institute members but the reality was that only half the members undertook educational classes.[86] It also did nothing for the strikers seeking reinstatement.

One of the physical changes in the 1920s to the Institute building was the expansion of the area behind the stage and this is marked by the use of asbestos cement slates set in the diamond position, the same material and pattern that was used around the same time on some sector roundhouses, such as the one at Werris Creek.

In December, 1921, the Institute journal, known as the *New South Wales Railway and Tramway Magazine*, published a photograph of the front of the Institute building facing Sydney yard.[87] This was the first time that a photograph of the building had been used in the journal and its use from 1921 was a regular feature for many years. Of interest, the photograph shows the first floor vertical extension of the porched entry, which was designed to serve the new mezzanine floor and it also shows in place the illuminated sign New South Wales Railways Institute attached to the porch.

By 1923, there was only a single lecture room in both the 1891 and 1899 buildings. At that time, the room designations of the lower level of the 1891 structure were:

- Inspector's office,
- staff office,
- lecture room,
- recreation room,
- lounge room,
- recreation room, &
- publicity department.

The largest room on the lower level was the publicity department. Also in 1923, the contents of the 1899 building were:

- small hall,
- hall,
- ladies' room and toilet,
- recreation room,
- (male) lavatory, &
- store.

[85] P. and M. Body, *With Steam and Steel – the Life and Career of a Railwayman – Albert George Denniss*, privately published, 2011, p. 72.
[86] J. Gunn, *Along Parallel Lines*, Melbourne University Press, 1989, p. 295.
[87] Vol. 4 No. 12, 1st December, p. 1.

Male and female toilets were also located at the eastern end of the lower level of the 1891 building.

By 1923, the conduct of lessons was mainly performed at other locations than Devonshire Street. Both the 1891 and 1899 buildings were dedicated for use only by staff of the Institute.

As part of the transfer process from staff to departmental management, Fraser took over the publication of the in-house journal and renamed it in 1924 *The Staff*. While the Institute continued in-house staff training and education, the accountability of the Institute was increased and, rather than the management being undertaken part-time by staff, full-time employees were now in charge. Fraser no doubt thought that, with an overall Railway and Tramway Department staff of 50,000 people, the workforce was too large for part-time management of the Institute to continue. He argued that, if each employee had three dependants at home, one-tenth of the entire State population was connected with the operation of the Railway Department.[88]

1925 AND 1926 – THE MOVE TO A NEW, SINGLE CLASS ROOM CENTRE

Membership of the Institute grew all throughout the 1920s as a result of the Commissioner's policy of linking promotion with successful completion of Institute exams. The Safety First Movement was also in the hands of the Director of the Institute after 1924. This was the boom time for the Institute. Classes were being conducted in the good shed in Sydney yard, which was soon to be demolished to make way for the City Railway extension, as well as at Newtown tram depot and Lackey Street, Darling Harbour.[89]

Because of the growing size of Institute membership but, more importantly, to demonstrate further that the Railway Commissioners were now in charge of the Institute, Fraser approved the centralisation of classroom activity in a new building rather than the previous arrangement of scattered classroom activity. It was reported that the conduct of classrooms was relocated in 1925 to a five-storey, rented building named the Opera House Chambers at 154 Hay Street and, not long afterwards, the Institute again relocated in 1926 to a six-storey structure, known as the Wills Building at 267-273 Castlereagh Street, where it remained for the next 50 years. Veteran Railway officer, Peter Neve, recalls that his classroom for his shorthand and typing classes from 1959 was located on one of the upper floors and that it was much quicker to walk up the stairs them to wait for the one and only, slow lift.[90] The library was also relocated to the Castlereagh Street building which had been occupied by

[88] *The Staff*, 1st January, 1924, p. 9.
[89] *The Staff*, 20th July, 1925, pp. 420 & 421.
[90] Email to author, 8th February, 2016.

the tobacco manufacturer, W. D. & H. O. Wills.[91] After this time, the building at Devonshire Street was used only for recreational and cultural purposes so far as to the Institute functions were concerned.[92] However, the Devonshire Street structure, with its large seating spaces, continued to be used up to the 1960s at least to hold departmental meetings. For instance, it was location of the annual meetings of Traffic Inspectors and District Superintendents for several decades.

Interestingly, classroom activity had been conducted in the Devonshire Street complex, which was originally located adjacent to the then named Castlereagh Street and, from 1926, lessons were again conducted in a building on Castlereagh Street, though in completely different locations. Even more interesting was the fact that the two Institute buildings, namely the original one adjacent to Devonshire Street and the Wills building between Liverpool and Goulburn streets broadly mark the extremities where Castlereagh Street was divided into two distinct sections many years previously to make way for Belmore Park and the cemetery on the northern side of Devonshire Street.

THE IMPACT OF THE 1930s DEPRESSION

The economic crisis had two consequences for the Railway Institute. The first was the cessation of the in-house publication that went to all Institute members and the second initiative was the opening of the annual eisteddfod in 1931 to public entrants. The eisteddfod had started on 25th and 26th August, 1911, under the title of the Institute Musical and Elocutionary Competition and was rebadged as an eisteddfod in 1925 but still was restricted to serving and retired railway personnel and their families and, in the first eisteddfod event, 600 people participated.[93] With the widening of eligibility to the general public, the number of entries in 1931 zoomed to 2,400. The eisteddfods continued until 1971. The conduct of eisteddfods was a no-cost method of diverting the attention of the Institute members and staff generally away from the considerable impact of the economic problems of the 1920s and early 1930s towards something pleasant. The reason the Institute started a musical competition in 1911 was the attempt to increase membership, which was an all-time low since 1891.

Between January and June, 1933, the New South Wales Railways made a number of changes to the organisation of the department in order to lower operational costs and overheads. The structure of civil engineering was fundamentally changed with

[91] W. D. & H. O. Wills relocated its headquarters to land purchased in 1920 at 50 Avenue, Randwick and opened a new administrative centre at that location in 1926.
[92] Bob Ritchie, *New South Wales Railway Institute*, 2015, www.railinst.com.au.
[93] *NSW Railway and Tramway Budget*, September, 1911, p. 14 and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5th December, 1932, p. 4. A number of secondary sources indicate that eisteddfods first commenced in 1922 or 1931 but these are incorrect. See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9th November, 1925, p. 13. The first eisteddfod was held between 7th-14th November, 1925.

the amalgamation of the Railway Construction Branch and the Existing Lines Branch to form a new branch call the Way and Works Branch. Cascading from that top level restructure was the revision the way the railway tracks were maintained on a day-to-day basis. There were four districts – Metropolitan, Northern, Southern and Western and each was under the control of a Chief Inspecting Engineer. Below district level, the railway system was divided into 13 geographic areas, each of which was under the management of a Resident Engineer. Permanent Way Workshops were maintained at Goulburn, Newcastle and Bathurst.[94] There were changes also relating to the way freight was managed. The Commercial Branch was abolished, the Dubbo and Orange traffic districts were amalgamated and a number of senior appointments were made.[95]

A new branch was also established called the Secretariat and the management of the Institute, which had been previously a stand-alone branch, was now a part of the Secretariat. The management of the refreshment rooms, property and the Appeals Board also lost their administrative independence and were blended into the Secretariat. The result was a reduction in the number of branches from 13 to nine. Notwithstanding that the Institute had been fully integrated into the Railway organisation, it was the Institute rather than the New South Wales Railways that continued to issue certificates certifying that staff had met the qualifications of a particular course. An example of such a certificate is one gained by Bruce Griffey 1948 for "locomotive engine driving."[96]

THE IMPACT OF WORLD WAR TWO

In 1939, unknown improvements were made to the stage lighting. An emergency lighting system was installed in 1940 and in 1944 three additional classrooms were provided for engineering trade apprentices, as well as office accommodation for the teachers. There was a similar expansion in this period in the work of the Institute as a teaching body, as had occurred in the Great War but the major physical impact of the War occurred to the Wills Building Castlereagh Street.

One proposed change was the provision of additional male and female toilets in the 1899 building, opposite the small hall by the conversion of the existing recreation room. The loss of a recreation room seemed a reasonable proposal as staff working at the Institute could utilise one of three recreation rooms. The conversion was not carried out but the staff in the Way and Works Branch kept the plan active until someone made a notation on 7th September, 1952 which said "not carried out."

[94] *The Age*, 18th January, 1933, p. 6.
[95] *The Farmer and Settler*, 19th January, 1933, p. 2.
[96] Photograph in *Byways of Steam*, p. 89.

1945-1951 - THE FAILED ATTEMPTS TO REPLACE & DEMOLISH THE EXISTING BUILDING

Not long after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the drawing office of the Way and Works Branch prepared two plans on 23rd August, 1945, for a three-level building to replace both the 1891 and the 1899 structures. The proposed building was massive in size and scale and was to extend above the Devonshire Street subway in the northerly direction and virtually touch the 1926 traction substation in the southerly direction. It was to have an auditorium with orchestra pit, not a concert hall as the facility in the 1891 building was named, holding 1,100 people. Two lifts were to be provided but not for the public, rather staff. There was to be a semi-circular terraced entry leading to an expansive entrance lobby on the southern side facing Prince Albert Park. A third plan of the ground floor was prepared on 23rd May, 1946. It was not built.

The financial situation for the Department of Railways was not just a shortage of funding. It was also shortage of competent staff. Life member, Ian Brady, in his *Bulletin* article on the Eastern Suburbs Railway (August, 1979, p. 185) gives a table of allocated and actual expenditure for the Eastern Suburbs Railway from 1947 to 1958. Of those 12 years, the actual expenditure exceeded the allocation only in five years. In four of out the remaining seven years, the under-expenditure was 80% in 1948, 50% in 1949, 34% in 1952 and 70% in 1957. Clearly, although there was a shortage of capital funds, the available allocations that the New South Wales Government made to the Railways were not well managed. John Gunn, in his official history of the New South Wales Railways, called the period after World War 2 a "state transport system in crisis" and the "post war breakdown of transport in New South Wales".[97] The Minister for Transport, Ambrose Enticknap, said in 1956 that "no proper accounting system operates within the Department of Railways".[98]

The period between 1945 and 1956 was one in which railway policy ossified. In that period, there were five Ministers for Transport.[99] In the same period, there had been five Commissioners for Railways (Tom Hartigan (1932-48), F C. Garside (1948-52), Keith Fraser (1952), Reg Winsor (1952-56) and Neal McCusker (1956-72)). Winsor announced a ten-year plan in 1954/55 to purchase 300 diesels and electrification to Newcastle. He also desired to build a new, duplicated Scarborough tunnel. The Government did not support his plan and it commissioned Ebasco Limited, an American company, to recommend what to do. It is easy to understand why the *Sun Herald* newspaper in 1957 said that, in relation to the New South Wales Railways, "the abnormal is to become normal".[100]

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[97] J. Dunn, *Along Parallel lines*, Melbourne University Press, 1989, pp. 396 and 406.
[98] Ibid., p. 422
[99] The Ministers were Maurice O'Sullivan 1947-50; Billy Sheahan 1950-53, Clarrie Martin 1953; Ern Wetherell 1953-56 and Ambrose Enticknap 1956-59
[100] Ibid., p. 426

A good financial summary has been prepared by economic historian, Robert Gibbons, who examined the structure of funding for transport for the time. He wrote that "as a percentage of the total State loan funds, public transport's share reached a peak of 42% in 1950/51, fell from 37% to 23% between 1952/53 and 1953/54, and bottomed at about 11% in 1963/64 and 1964/64".[101]

The declining finances are reflected in the Table below. Very, very few buildings were erected between 1945 and 1960. The Table below sets out the locations where new station platform buildings were erected.

TABLE: NEW SOUTH WALES RAILWAY STATION BUILDINGS 1945-1960

YEAR OF APPROVAL	LOCATION	STATUS	NOTES
1945	Nil		
1946	Nil		
1947	Nil		
1948	Bankstown	Overhead booking office built	Timber and asbestos cement sheets on external walls
1948	Cockle Creek	Built but demolished	
1948	Maitland	Booking office built	Brick structure
1948	Waverton	Waiting shed built	15' x 10' brick
1949	Wyong	Parcels office built	Brick construction
1949	Sydenham	Parcels office & 88' long awning for platform No. 1	Not constructed until 1962
1950	Clyde	Not completed until 1960	Initial approval in 1944
1950	Granville	Not completed until 1960	Initial approval in 1944
1951	Nil		
1952	Oak Flats	Built in 1954	Timber booking office 12' x 12'
1953	Loftus Down platform	waiting room and booking office proposed	Waiting room only built
1954	Dora Creek	Built and demolished	New timber buildings on both side platforms
1955	Broken Hill	Built in 1957	In the electorate of the minister for Transport
1955	Circular Quay	Built	Opened in 1956

[101] R. Gibbons, *Transport Administration and Planning in Sydney*, unpublished Master of Economics thesis, University of Sydney, 1978, p. 121

YEAR OF APPROVAL	LOCATION	STATUS	NOTES
1955	Koolewong	Built	8’ x 10’ shed on down platform
1955	Emu Plains	Built	Booking office and signal box
1956	Warrimoo	Built	45’ x 14’ brick building to replace building destroyed in bush fire
1957	Nil		
1958	Nil		
1959	Mount Colah	Built	30’ x 10’ building
1960	Nil		

The above Table shows that 17 buildings were approved in 16 years, six of which were either small in size and simple in architecture. The list of buildings approved but not built between 1945 and 1960 is far longer than those that did get constructed. In fact, 32 stations were approved for replacement buildings but never built.

Another important feature of the period that further emphasises the funding crisis is the length of time between the approval and construction of station buildings. For example, the period for the construction of the station at Circular Quay was over 20 years and the buildings at Granville and Clyde took 16 years to complete. In the case of Cockle Creek, it was nine years between approval and full use of the station buildings. Cockle Creek was one of only four buildings built of brick and the only location where brick buildings were provided on both side platforms. It is significant that, by the time the buildings at Dora Creek were approved in 1954, no brick buildings had been erected between 1948 and 1954 and only three structures were built in brick or stone after 1954 up to 1960.

So, it should come as no surprise as the sketch plans in 1945 for a new Institute building to replace the existing structure on a new site nearer to the Dental Hospital did not eventuate any further in the planning process. Minor alterations were instead made to the existing building.

The Commissioner reported in his 1951 Annual Report that the Institute building would be demolished within one year and intimated that the proposed replacement building would be built on resumed land near the existing Dental Hospital. It seems that, by this time, the Commissioner had decided to relocate his 1945 plan from its original position above the Devonshire Street tunnel to a new location.

1962 – THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE NSW RAIL TRANSPORT MUSEUM

Ray Love is a Foundation Member of the Rail Transport Museum and reports the following about the formation of the organisation. He writes:

> "There were two meetings. The first meeting was called when Ken J. Charlton, who was at the time member of the Council of the Australian Railway Historical Society, he failed to gain support from his fellow Council members about the urgent need to preserve locomotives, rollingstock and other items of historical interest. He made up his mind to do something.
>
> In August 1962, Charlton, plus Graeme Ahearn, Bob Booth, Dale Budd and Terry Bolton decided to call a meeting to test the water. The meeting was held in August, 1962, in the Small Hall of the Devonshire Street Institute building (i.e. the 1899 addition). So substantial was the level of interest in forming a new entity that a public meeting was announced for October, 1962, again in the Small Hall of the Institute.
>
> Over 70 people attended and 64 people put their hand up to join a new organisation. That is where the 64 Foundation Members come from."[102]

Enter Peter Neve. He writes:

> "The Devonshire Street Institute building had two halls for concerts, dances, but usage of these halls had dropped considerably by the early 1960s. They were available for casual hire, not only to Institute members, but also to the general public. An advantage of being an Institute member was that concession rates were available. I forget whether this was half the normal hiring fee or a nominal cost. One of clerical staff in the Branch where I was employed held regular dancing lessons there so I had an idea of how to book the facility. It was the usual practice to book a hall or room through the building's Caretaker and to pay on the night.
>
> I don't recollect whether the inaugural meeting was booked in my name or not, but subsequent meetings from Wednesday 19th December 1962, were held in the Small Hall and my name would be displayed on the blackboard at the entrance to the building. Being an Institute member, I was able to hire the Hall for the evening at the concessional rate. The Caretaker would be paid prior to the start of the meeting and an official receipt issued. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Caretaker had to be "chased up", if he was not in his small cubicle on the lower level, to advise that the group had vacated

[102] Email from Ray Love to Peter Neve, 8th February, 2016.

the Hall, thus allowing him to turn the various lights off, lock-up and secure the building.

It would seem that the RTM continued to hold its monthly meetings at the Railway Institute until better premises became available. Good fortune struck again when another RTM and ARHS member, Barry Millner, who at that time was employed by H. C. Sleigh Limited, ask his employer for use of its meeting Hall. The Company kindly made its centrally located, Sydney theatrette available at no charge and meetings were held at the facility starting with the March 1965 meeting. At a later unknown date, the RTM meetings moved to the 11th Floor Recreation Hall at Railway House, located above Wynyard Station. However, when refurbishment and extensions to Railway House were to be commenced, the RTM's meeting were relocated back to the Devonshire Street Institute building from the commencement of the 1971 calendar year. How long we continued to meet there now escapes my memory."[103]

1975 - THE LOSS OF THE TRAINING FUNCTION

It was in 1975 that the administration of the Institute returned to the Devonshire Street building from the Castlereagh Street office and the library also returned to a position in the 1899 wing.[104]

The training staff were transferred to the newly formed Training and Development Branch of the new Public Transport Commission and an Apprentice Training College was established at Chullora. In 1979, there were eight branches of the Institute outside of Sydney, these being Newcastle, Casino, Junee, Orange, Dubbo, Narromine West, Werris Creek and Ivanhoe. Werris Creek was the only branch to possess a circulating library outside Sydney in 1990. The Fraser Park sporting complex at Sydenham continued to be managed by the Institute until it was sold in 1990.[105]

Possibly as a concession to the Institute, the original unglazed, Marseilles terracotta tiled roof was replaced by the present covering using Marseille patterned tiles in 1975.

[103] Email from Peter Neve, 8th February, 2016.
[104] *Transport News*, Vol. 7 No. 2, March/April, 1979, p. 7.
[105] Ibid, pp. 7-10.

THE CENTENARY OF 1991

Mark Ferson wrote that, "if it survives, the NSW Railway Institute will celebrate its centenary in 1991".[106] Well, it did survive but the way the Institute celebrated its centenary was noteworthy for the wrong reason.

The Devonshire Street Institute sold its library, billiard tables and grand piano in 1991. By this time, income sources from traditional members had declined substantially and the then Director accelerated the hiring out the rooms and halls to non-railway people and organisations. The disposal of the billiard tables was not aimed to achieve a large amount of money but to make way for an external group which wanted to hire the hall for ballroom dancing in which the billiard tables existed. Members did not receive prior notice of the sale and, when they turned up shortly thereafter for a game of billiards, the disappointment was great and the upset long-lasting.

1996-99 - PREPARING FOR THE END OF INSTITUTE OCCUPATION

From the late 1970s, State Governments had been implementing a plan to sell surplus real estate across all departments and this included the State Rail Authority. The programme continued into the 1980s and 1990s and it was only a matter of time before one of the many new, senior appointees in the Property Branch realised that the Institute property would bring a tidy sum of money. Praise and promotion no doubt followed for the officer concerned.

By mid-1990s, it was clear that the end of Government ownership of the building was in sight for the Institute building and a Conservation Management Plan and a Building Refurbishment Report were prepared by the Department of Public Works in 1996 and a further Conservation Management Plan was prepared 1998 by Rod Howard Conservation Pty Ltd. The preparation of these documents had to accompany the sale documentation because the building was on the State Heritage Register and there was an obligation to advise the new owner of the heritage status and condition of the structure.

The Institute building closed its doors on 8th January, 1999, though a part of the Institute itself continued as a private organisation under a Deed of Agreement dated 24th December, 1998, and continues to this day based in part of the former platform building at Petersham adjacent to the Up Main railway line.

The property known as 101 Chalmers Street was sold on 18th June, 1999, to a private organisation known as Wijesinghe-Boffin Pty. Ltd.

[106] Ferson, op. cit., p. 37.

HOW THE BUILDING REFLECTS A DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT TO CONTROL RAILWAY STAFF

- by the use of a rare (in the railwayscape), pleasant design that displays a quirky, pretty and appealing style reflecting fun more than the seriousness of education,
- by the footprint of the structure addressing the railway corridor, thereby emphasising the dominant authority of the New South Wales Railways,
- by the objective of the structure to include all Railway staff, not just union members, not just workers at the nearby Sydney station nor those just in the Sydney metropolitan area,
- by the exhibition of the plans for the building in 1889 in the Colonial Secretary's building rather than a Railway structure,
- by the timing of the decision to fund the construction at a period when Railway building design was restrained and even rudimentary,
- by the decision to provide a structure totally inadequate to the potential number of people who could use it, demonstrating much more a symbolic than a practical role, manifested by the need to provide a supplementary building in 1899,
- by the overwhelming dominance of internal spaces for recreation and the very limited amount of space available for educational purposes,
- by the decision in 1917 to transfer control of the Institute from a committee of volunteers to full-time management within the New South Wales Railways,
- by the use of the building to deal and negotiate with strike-breakers in the 1917 Great Railway Strike, rather than the Head Office of the Commissioners,
- by the title of the in-house journal, called the *Budget*, from 1893 to 1917, thereby reflecting a strong policy message from the Commissioners rather than something chosen by volunteers,
- by the direct statement of November, 1918, of the objective of the Institute,
- by the way the Commissioners in 1921 deflected issues about the reinstatement of strikers in the 1917 Great Railway Strike by eliminating admission fees for all staff attending Institute educational courses,
- by the transfer of all educational duties from the Institute building in 1925,
- by the abandonment of genuine interest in the Institute building by the Railway management after 1925, ceding the structure's role as purely a recreational facility,
- by the broadening of entry to eisteddfods from 1931, &
- by the sale of the building in 1999, its need as a control item no longer required.

END REMARKS

For the past 40 years, New South Wales governments have not been able to fund the conservation of every railway building of heritage significance and, where possible, the sale of structures to the private sector has often proved to be a good, alternative conservation strategy, provided that a building's legal heritage protection was part of the sale deal. The Institute structure has been one of those success stories. At present, the Institute building is in fine condition and the transfer of ownership from the State Government to the private sector has turned out to be beneficial for the building.

The Institute building houses two high-class, excellent tenants who are aware of the heritage significance of the structure and do their parts in its conservation.

The building turns 125 years on 14th March, 2016. Let us hope that the current owner and tenants continue their excellent care of the structure into the future.

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Stuart Sharp

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