THE 1903 BRANDLING STREET LOCOMOTIVE BRANCH REST HOUSE

ACQUISITION

- It appears that the original (i.e. pre-1903) Eveleigh rest house was located approximately 61 feet to the west of the proposed large erecting shop, which opened in 1898. The rest house had to be demolished to make way for the new erecting shop,
- The replacement rest house was located at 39 Brandling Street, Alexandria, and is now named "Eveleigh",
- The land on which the rest house resides measures 100 feet by 80 feet and was acquired in 1902,
- Some employees wrote a letter of thanks to the Railway Commissioner in June, 1903, to thank him for building the rest house,[1]

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

- The plan for the building is dated 3rd September, 1902,
- Construction was completed March, 1903,
- Brick construction with all walls, external and internal, were to be rendered but the external walls were face bricks in the less-common, Flemish bond,
- The building has a symmetrical appearance and layout, based on a centre, pedestrian thoroughfare in the same manner as a pre-1890 platform building,
- Pedestrian entry was located at the front with a "tar-paved path" while at the rear was a double-width "cart gate",
- Verandahs on two sides, though the verandah on the north side has been modified – some rear windows have been bricked,
- Planned in 1902 with nine bedrooms (eight on first floor) each 18 feet by 12 feet with each bedroom contained four or five single beds,
- The roof of No. 39 Brandling Street was covered with galvanised, corrugated iron sheets,
- The building was described both officially and in the press as "commodious",[2]

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[1] *Evening News*, 9th June, 1903, p. 3.
[2] *Evening News*, 9th March, 1903, p. 6.

- The only rooms heated when opened were the Caretaker's two rooms and the combined employee dining and reading room (electric strip heaters had been installed in all bedrooms by the 1970s),
- Water was laid on to the property and the closets and urinal used flushing water,
- There was a departmental expectation that the employees would provide a garden,[3]
- The building is classified by some as an example of Federation/Edwardian design, manifested by the fretted timber valance along the front verandah and the use of timber posts to support the verandahs,
- Restrained expression of the double-hung, sash windows with soldier bricks forming a slightly arched head and the unembellished, rendered window sills were early 20th century characteristics,
- Despite the appellation of a 20th century nomenclature, the structure featured some characteristics of the 19th century, Victorian period, such as the panelled front door and the now-departed 16-pane, Cathedral coloured glass in the upper window sashes,[4]

SUBSEQUENT PHYSICAL ALTERATIONS

- Towards the end of its life, the rest house complex at No 39 Brandling Street had a total of 25 bedrooms with ten bedrooms in the two-storey building,
- In August, 1920, the two semi-detached cottages on the northern side (Nos. 35 or 37 Brandling Street) were purchased by the Railway Department and converted for additional accommodation - five bedrooms were located in each of the two terrace cottages with two single beds in each room – they remained in Railway ownership until 1989,
- In July, 1967, a detached structure, known as "the Annexe" was built at an unknown location, possibly at the rear of the property, and it contained five bedrooms,
- The 1903 building was intended and used initially only by locomotive drivers and firemen but, according to retired drivers, guards and other train crew members working on the mails and expresses also used the Brandling Street barracks in later years,

DESIGN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER RAILWAY BUILDINGS

- One newspaper incorrectly described the structure as a "standard" design – in fact, the opposite was correct – the building looked nothing like standard

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[3] *New South Wales Budget,* March, 1903, p. 166.
[4] The plan was drawn showing cast iron verandah posts, not the timber existing posts.

barracks and nor standard platform buildings – the building took its form from the adjacent residential development,[5]

- The structure was one of only six two-storey rest houses on the railway system,[6]
- The design was unique in terms of the oblong shape use of verandahs on two sides of building,
- No station buildings were ever erected the same style as the rest house,
- The Brandling Street complex may be the only instance of the NSW Railway Department acquiring existing private housing (i.e. Nos. 35 and 37) on the open property market specifically for use as a barracks,

THE QUIRKY BITS

- The bedrooms at No. 39 Brandling Street were allocated to specific, departmental districts, such as "south" and "north" but, according to former Lithgow Fireman, Robert Mc Alpine, the room zoning system was largely ignored and men took rooms of their choice,[7]
- The initial position of Caretaker was some time renamed as Barracks Attendant,
- Apart from the Barracks Attendant, the only other creatures to permanently reside at the rest house were a number of cats and kittens,
- While linen was laundered on the site at many country barracks, it is unknown whether this practice occurred at the Alexandria premises. However, by the 1950s, the laundry was done externally either in the Departmental Clyde Laundry or by contract,
- As bicycles were first used by Call Boys in 1908 at Eveleigh Depot, the Brandling Street rest house was the first barracks to witness the arrival and departure of Departmental push-bikes,
- The rest house is listed as a heritage item of local significance on the 2012 Local Environmental Plan of Sydney City Council and is contained within a building conservation area, &
- Train crews staying at the rest house often spent their recreation time in one of several nearby hotels, such as the Camelia Grove, the Stepney and the Rose of Australia Hotel. These hotels near to the Eveleigh locomotive workshops, running shed and barracks were well-frequented by men after

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[5] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10th March, 1903, p. 6.
[6] The others being the 1937 rest house at Orange East Fork, the 1959 building at Delec, the 1976 structure in Market Street, Goulburn and the 1980 approved structure at 75 Railway Parade, Erskineville. The fifth structure was the 1925 built, former off-platform refreshment room at Dubbo, which was converted in 1976 into a rest house by the inclusion of a first floor.
[7] This zoning of rooms was in accordance with an official book entitled "*Special Instructions for Locomotive Engine Drivers, Firemen and Cleaners.*"

work, especially in Summer. Being in a working-class district, there were many local hotels.

THE END

- The Brandling Street complex closed on 4th November, 1981, when the new barracks in Railway Parade opened.
- The new rest house was originally intended to be Sydney Signal Box, but State Rail changed its use. The 1981 barracks closed on 20th January, 2008, whereupon a contract was signed with the Travelodge Hotel at Railway Square for accommodation of Countrylink staff from country depots.

- In the 1980s, the Brandling Street building was reportedly used by the State Rail Fire Brigade,[8]
- The building at No. 39, as well as the terrace houses at Nos 35 and 37 Brandling Street, were sold in 1989 as separate lots and all three are used today as private residences, with No. 39 being the largest dwelling in Brandling Street,

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[8] www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritage.