DUBBO RAILWAY STATION

IS IT WORTH THE TROUBLE TO READ THESE NOTES?

The answer is yes and no. Yes, because the building at Dubbo station is an important element in the transition away from Georgian-styled buildings of the 1860s and 1870s to the introduction of a new design of watered-down, Gothic-styled buildings in the 1880s. The notes describe the ways in which the building was used as a test-bed for new design features and materials before the introduction of the new standard buildings first evident with the construction of Narromine station in 1882.

No, the notes are not worth reading if the reader already understands the virtual non-existent funding for improvements to station buildings following the construction. Dubbo railway station is a classic example where, other than a cheap extension of the parcels area and the connection of services, there was virtually no level of improvement in the quality of the accommodation for both passengers and staff until the creation of Countrylink in 1989. While some of the original fabric of the building was destroyed in the rebuilding process, Countrylink made an excellent effort to rehabilitate rural passenger stations such as at Dubbo. So, if the reader already knows about the lack of government support for rail passenger stations for 1989, the notes do not add to the existing knowledge – merely confirm what is already known.

Signalling and safeworking historians, Dr Bob Taaffe and Graham Harper, have provided notes on how the large trackwork at the station operated. These notes in Appendix 3 are worthy of attention, even if the body of the notes is ignored.

THE 1870s STATION DESIGN POLICY

Appendix 1 is a statement of the turmoil that was occurring in the 1870s in regard to the allocation of sufficient funding for the expansion of the rail system. It indicates that the Dubbo station building is a reflection of the design uncertainty that was occurring between 1869 and 1879.

Despite the turmoil at a departmental level, the evidence is that John Whitton, who was in charge of engineering for new railway lines in New South Wales, was a relatively happy man when he approved the plan for the station at Dubbo on 9th June, 1879. He was happy because he was the bigwig in charge of all railway engineering on new lines. How can it be ascertained that Whitton was happy? The evidence is that he wrote his name out in full and, after his name, placed the simple title of “Engineer” and then dated the plan. So, what? Well, by the end of 1882 Whitton was not so happy and one of the ways he displayed his displeasure was by omitting to sign any further station building plans. The fact that he took time to write his full name is evidence that he was cheery. Cheery he may have been but he was still pursuing the Quest of finding a new style of platform building that he could use

extensively throughout the 1880s as the rail system expanded. His quest of enquiry ended with the construction of the Dubbo station building in 1880.

THE DESIGN EXPERIMENTS LEADING TO THE MASS PRODUCTION OF PLATFORM BUILDINGS

Although John Whitton was giving very serious consideration to the development of a new design of platform building in the 1870s, he continued to work within the parameters of design policy that prevailed on the New South Wales Railways. These parameters existed in five aspects of design policy, being:

1. the planning process,
2. physical building construction,
3. floor plans,
4. operational elements, &
5. platform and precinct style.

Details of these five design parameters are set out Appendix 2.

Whitton's strategy in the approval for buildings at Wellington and Dubbo was to demonstrate to himself that was possible to provide very similar sized buildings to meet operational requirements and to please the leaders of the towns they served. Whitton knew that it was important to convince the leaders of both towns that they both received different-looking structures.

There was a precedent on which Whitton based both the Dubbo and Wellington buildings. Whitton had started his design experimentation at Raglan, just to the east of Bathurst, where he had approved the use of a gabled roof, a style that he had previously not utilised for platform buildings. His next design experiment was at Bathurst. He applied the same features he had been using since 1858, namely:

- the same floor plan for every station above two rooms using a transverse, centre axis, excluding the combination offices/residences,
- a simple, uncluttered roofscape featuring hipped roofs,
- the symmetrical layout of rooms and spaces, &
- the utilisation of a station forecourt to enhance the dramatic appearance the station buildings.

At the same time, he made a number of experimental changes at Bathurst, including:

- selecting a different design style other than Italianate,
- focusing on the roofscape as a major decorative element using chimneys, ventilators and cast-iron decorative features,
- increasing the pitch of the roof,
- extending the width of end rooms to provide direct public access into the parcels office,
- the provision of a verandah between the wider end rooms, &

- the abandonment of pediment brickwork to hide near-flat roofs on any pavilions at the ends of buildings.

It was these above areas of change that John Whitton played with further in the designs for Wellington and Dubbo.

After the construction of the building at Dubbo, Whitton used these design features, as tested at Bathurst, Wellington and Dubbo, extensively in the creation of standard building plans for the period between 1880 until his retirement in 1889. Although Whitton did not use standard plans, he standardised the design of buildings in the 1880s to the maximum extent. The only variables across the whole range of his standard buildings with in the length and width of structures and the nature and extent of style and decorations. All other factors were constant. In so doing, Whitton was able to convince the leaders of towns in rural New South Wales that they had received a uniquely designed structure that was not replicated elsewhere in the Colony. The reality was different. Towns got basically the same type of structure with a change only in size and stylistic and decorative elements.

WHITTON'S LAST TRIAL WITH DESIGN OPTIONS

The platform building at Dubbo station was the last occasion where John Whitton played with design change options. His experimentation was manifested in the following ways:

- minimised add-on decorations and non-functional embellishments as design features,
- relied on the building form itself, rather than decorative features, to create attractive buildings that had the appearance of uniqueness,
- declined the use of the traditional brickwork or timber construction and selected sandstone for the construction of walls, based on its local availability and relatively lower price,
- approved the provision of smaller-than-usual sized sandstone blocks to achieve economy and to facilitate ease of construction,
- chose broken-gabled roofs at each end of the main building for the first time,
- selected timber shingles to cover the roof rather than the normal use of slate or corrugated iron sheets[1],
- allowed the chimneys to be set asymmetrically,
- decided to provide only one pavilion, making the suite of two structures asymmetrical,
- divided the total length of the main building of 69 feet into seven rooms of small or moderate width,

[1] D. Sheedy, *Dubbo Railway Station Conservation and Management Plan*, unpublished report to the State Rail Authority, 1990, p. 13.

- restricted the width of the centre five rooms to 16 feet and the two end the rooms to a width of 23 feet,
- provided direct access into the parcels office from the road approach side of the building,
- departed from the principal of co-jointed male and female toilets, thereby eliminating the passage way between the main building and the toilet pavilion,
- reduced the width of the platform in front of the suite of buildings from 15 to 13 feet,
- combined in the pavilion the male toilet and the Porters/lamp room,
- reduced the distance between the main building and toilet pavilion to 13 feet rather than the usual 20 feet,
- provided a "store shed" transversely set rather than longitudinally set between the main building and the pavilion,
- utilised three-rail horizontal fencing at platform rear in place of picket fencing.

Some of these initiatives Whitton had implemented at Dubbo's sister platform building at Wellington, such as the provision of only one pavilion and three-platform fencing.[2] Other features, such as the direct access to the parcels room from the road side, was a feature he trialled at Bathurst.

Neither the buildings at Dubbo or Wellington could be graded as First-Class, in view of their moderate size and almost total absence of decoration. However, they did play an important role in providing design options for the railway boom years that followed from 1880. The construction both Dubbo and Wellington stations need to be considered jointly as in many ways they were a pigeon-pair of structures marking the transition of design policies in the mid to late 1870s.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE DUBBO BUILDING

John Whitton approved the plan for the station building at Dubbo on 9th June, 1879. Was the use of "Macquarie River stone" for the building walls a selection based on the desire to ensure that the building mirrored the appropriate status of the town of Dubbo?[3] No. The plan was prepared on the basis of brick walls and a slate roof, with sandstone used for quoins and other dressings. Neither material was applied to the building but the bricks and slates were not abandoned for any other reason than there was a cost saving with the use of stone. As it turned out, the use of sandstone was well regarded by the leaders of the town, as other buildings in the main street were made of local stone.

[2] There is a photograph showing white picket fencing four feet high on the Bourke side of the lamp room/male toilet at the rear of the platform. See M. Dormer, *Dubbo to the Turn of the Century*, Dubbo, Macquarie Publications Pty Limited, 1981, p. 129.
[3] So-named by M. Dormer, *Dubbo to the Turn of the Century*, Dubbo, Macquarie Publications Pty Limited, 1981, inside front cover.

The Dubbo structure was not particularly attractive, being asymmetrical with one attached pavilion and the use of broken gables at the building ends. It was moderate in size, but that was characteristic of all New South Wales station buildings. Tenders closed on 8th July, 1879, for the construction of the Dubbo railway station building and "other works".[4] The successful contractor was Henry Albert Briggs of Glebe, though another source stated that he was a resident of Dubbo.[5] He signed the plan on 20th August, 1879.[6]

In November, 1879, the contractor was working on the foundations of the building.[7] It was amazing that work started on the station structure 15 months before the line opening. This was atypical behaviour for the Engineer-in-Chief, John Whitton, who usually left the building on the platform to the very last, often uncompleted when he handed the line over to the Railway Commissioner. Possibly, Whitton wanted to complete the building at an early time so that he could reflect upon the design changes he was considering before he prepared his standard plans for the 1880s.

The press reported in July, 1880, that the station building "will be finished by the end of the month."[8] This was amazing! The platform building was completed seven months before the line opening. Such early construction was greatly inconsistent with the general trend of station building but, strangely, the building at Wellington had been completed well before the line opening. Again, maybe the reason for the early construction of the Wellington structure was to reflect upon some of the design innovations he implemented at that location.

At the time of the opening of the line to Dubbo on 1st February, 1881, the press described the platform building as follows:

> "the passenger station presents a very neat appearance and is built of rubble sandstone obtained in the district."[9]

While the press was favourable, it was not over enthusiastic about the design by the absence of details. Another interesting feature about the press reporting of the building was the complete absence of details about the architectural features of the structure. It was the norm that the Public Works Department would issue a statement about the room sizes, building materials and design features but there was no such report in any newspaper, local or otherwise. This suggests that Whitton and others realised the building was somewhat experimental and without outstanding architectural merit.

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[4] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4th July, 1879, p. 9.
[5] The *Wagga Wagga Express*, 10th September, 1879, p. 3 stated that the contractor for the Dubbo building was John Briggs of St. Johns Road, (Glebe), near Sydney but the *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 22nd January, 1881, p. 13 says he was from Dubbo.
[6] John Forsyth is incorrect when he said that the contract was signed on 9th June, 1879.
[7] *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 1st November, 1879, p. 39.
[8] *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 23rd July, 1880, p. 2.
[9] *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 22nd January, 1881, p. 13.

The station opening was such a success that, shortly after the opening, no one was allowed on the platform without a ticket. Like Wellington, the Dubbo structure was not a First-Class building. Stone was a common building product in the town of Dubbo at the time for prominent buildings and its use was not a sign of the town's special status. The sandstone was clearly an available and relatively cheap building product. One feature that made both Wellington and Dubbo look attractive was the location of two-storey residences for the Station Masters at the edge of the station forecourts. This was a measure used by Whitton to trick local residents into believing that he had built a station of opulence and, thereby, the reflecting the status of the locality served. It is noteworthy that the residence for the Station Master at Wellington was placed on the right side of the forecourt, which was the traditional position for the more important towns and on the left side of forecourt at Dubbo, which was the location for less important towns.

A waiting shed had also been built at Maryvale and a similar one was intended for Wongarbon and there is a good chance that they were of brick construction as the line contractor had opened a kiln for brick-making half way between Wellington and Dubbo.[10]

The sandstone for the Dubbo building was quarried the western side of the Macquarie River. The commentators who called the stone "Macquarie River stone" have provided a misleading reference, suggesting that the stone was quarried near the River. This was not the case. The quarry was merely west of the Macquarie River.[11] The line opened from Wellington to Dubbo on 1st February, 1881, and Dubbo station opened on the same date. The names of the rooms as planned from the Sydney end were in 1881:

- Ladies' waiting room & toilet (under the wider, end gable),
- Station Master's office,
- Ticket office,
- General waiting room,
- Telegraph office,
- Left luggage office,
- Parcels office (under the wider, end gable),
- 20 feet long space containing a "store shed", &
- Porters' and lamp room (on the platform side) and male toilet (on the road side) in the detached pavilion.

There was an underground freshwater tank and an underground cesspit for night soil.

[10] Ibid. Note the absence of a reference to Geurie. It was not opened until 1885, four years after the line opening.
[11] T. Milling, *Historic Buildings of Dubbo*, 1966, no details, p. 30.

SUBSEQUENT BUILDING ALTERATIONS TO 1940

A new counter was provided in the parcels office in 1883. The station was lit by gas in 1884 from a local, private supplier. In 1891, a new lamp room was erected and a new fence was erected on the platform and this was possibly the picket fence at the western end.

About 1900, the 20 feet long space between the main building and the pavilion was covered to provide additional space for the parcels office.

The press in 1903 reported that, "some time ago, the 'Dubbo R and P Association' agitated for several improvements at the local railway station, including the extension and covering of the platform, a gentlemen's waiting room, an overhead pedestrian bridge or subway, and other alterations considered necessary for the convenience of the public. The Commissioners, when interviewed, promised that some at least of the requests would be complied with, and plans were prepared which were to be carried out when the Coonamble line was completed. The time has now arrived for commencement of the work, but we believe it is now found that there is no money available".[12]

Dubbo folk in 1911 were indignant with Mr. Johnson, the Railway Chief Commissioner over his opinion that increased accommodation at the Dubbo railway station was unnecessary. The local press reported that "to all who know station the reply is amusing, if it is not vexatious.[13]

Additional capacity was added to the footwarmer boiler in 1911.

The Station Master had first complained to the Commissioners on one their annual visits in 1898 about the problems caused by the presence of the vertical posts supporting the platform awning. He said that they were "awkwardly placed and occupy much valuable space" and he requested "to have them superseded by some safer, more artistic, and more convenient arrangement".[14] The present, 14 feet wide cantilevered awning was provided in 1913.

Two years after Royal Assent was given to the Molong to Dubbo Railway Act in 1916, there were rumours in late 1918 that extensive alterations were to be undertaken to the rail facilities at Dubbo. The demolition of the station and the provision of a refreshment room were amongst the rumoured improvements.[15] The Molong-Dubbo line opened in 1925 but it did not involve the demolition of the station building. At least, the refreshment room was provided.

[12] *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*,11th February, 1903, p. 2.
[13] *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 29th August, 1911, p. 2.
[14] *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 14th May, 1898, p. 2.
[15] *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 22nd November, 1918, p. 1.

Also in 1918, 140 cubic yards of screenings were obtained from Coolabah for the dressing of the platform.

The signal box was opened on the Sydney end of the building in 1919.[16] It was provided in conjunction with the interlocking in the yard. The event provided quite a stimulus to the local rumour network about the future of the station. The press reported that:

> "The Railway Deportment has decided to extend the interlocking system to the Dubbo station yards. The material for this purpose has arrived, and when it was being dumped the other day several hopeful onlookers rushed to the conclusion that it was the beginning of the big reorganisation scheme, which has long been expected in Dubbo. Though doomed to disappointment, our friends have not lost hope. They anticipate that, though the beginning may have to be postponed, on account of the multitudinous troubles which the State is passing through, the change to the new order will come sooner than most people expect — the extension of the yard, the demolition of the present station house, which has done duty for 33 years, and the erection of a building worthy of the importance of Dubbo as a town, and worthy of the importance of the depot, the erection of refreshment rooms…."[17]

The station toilets were connected to a septic tank in 1925.

It was initially proposed in early1925 to re-arrange some of the rooms in the main station building, particularly the creation of a new telegraph office by taking the space of the general waiting room. Two months later, the Railway Department had a rethink and decided not to proceed with the proposal.[18] By August, a new free-standing telegraph office was operational. The press reported that:

> "It (i.e. the telegraph office) comprised a timber structure, measuring 25 feet by 18 feet, and consisted of 12 telegraphists, compared to only four in the old office, with two Morse lines and four phones. There are now six Morse lines and ten phone circuits…… The telephone board has 20 switches for local and long distances. An idea of the importance of Dubbo as a telegraph station can be gathered from the fact that the old office used to dispatch between 450 to 500 messages a day whereas the average number of messages now is 2,000".[19]

It was from the Dubbo telegraph office that the last Morse message on the New South Wales Railways was conveyed – to Broken Hill – on 26th August, 1968.[20]

In 1934, an out of shed was provided at the immediate Nyngan end of the station building. The features were:

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[16] See Appendix 3 for details.
[17] *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 14th February, 1919, p. 2.
[18] *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 27th March, 1925, p. 2 and 5th May, 1925, p. 2.
[19] *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 28th August, 1925, p. 4.
[20] J. Dargan, "The Railway Telegraph", *Bulletin*, March, 1985, p. 71.

- 15 feet long by 12 feet wide internal,
- timber framed and covered externally with seven-inch wide rusticated weatherboards,
- four feet six-inch wide sliding doors front and back elevations,
- four-inch thick concrete floor,
- single pitched roof sloping to the rails covered with No. 26 galvanised, corrugated iron sheets,
- extension of roof rafters to provide a three feet wide awning over the platform, &
- absence of windows.

Alterations were made to the entrance of the parcels office in 1936, but no details are known.

The station and other buildings were connected to town sewerage system also in 1936.

In 1940, nine feet wide bitumen footpaths were provided from Talbragar Street on each side of the station forecourt. On the side on which the two-storey residence was located, a picket fence four feet six inches high was built adjacent to the footpath. On the side on which the refreshment room was located, there was a five feet high paling fence, which replaced an existing six feet high corrugated iron fence. In addition, a ten feet wide bitumen footpath was provided along the front of the station building.

THE ABSENCE OF IMPROVMENTS 1940-1969

Nothing was done to enhance conditions for passengers or staff.

MINOR IMPROVEMENTS 1969-1990

Improvements were made to the general waiting room in 1969. These improvements were:

- the existing fireplace was bricked up with “a fancy brick”,
- the concrete hearth was retained and the floor was covered with vinyl tiles up to the hearth,
- the walls were covered with “Marlite wall board” to a height of six feet above the floor[21],
- the existing seats were replaced with “similar seats to Bourke station building” (i.e. laminated Plywood seating),
- existing timber doors replaced with aluminium, self-closing doors, &
- new lighting and electric heating.

[21] Marlite wall panelling continues to be available in 2017. In the 1970s, the Public Transport Commission use the product extensively to upgrade country waiting rooms and booking offices. It gave the appearance of timber panelling.

In the 1970s, the room designations from the Sydney end were:

- Ladies' waiting room,
- Porters' Office,
- booking office,
- general waiting room and entrance,
- Station Master's office,
- Roster Clerks office,
- parcels office,
- male toilets

Gas heating was provided in 1975 in the ladies' waiting room, booking office, general waiting room, Station Master's office, the Roster Clerk's office and the parcels office. Also in 1975, major changes were proposed for the introduction of road coaches, involving shelters and washing facilities but these were located not in the station forecourt area but along Darling Street. All that happened at the station was the erection of a bus stop sign.

In the 1980s, the room designations had changed. From the Sydney end the rooms were:

- Staff meal room,
- Market Manager's office,
- Booking office (with two ticket windows),
- Waiting room,
- Station Master's office,
- Roster clerk's room (with staff sign-on counter),
- Parcels office,
- Parcels despatch area, &
- Female and male toilets.

Then, only a single ticket window served customers, though the seating had been increased. The laminated Plywood benches had given way to 16 individual plastic seats. Gone also were the vinyl floor tiles, having been replaced with ceramic tiles. The Marlite wall panelling had disappeared and the walls were once again plastered. The fireplace had also gone.

The original roof shingles had been replaced at an unknown time by asbestos cement slates set in the diamond position. In 1906, the roof of the Dubbo locomotive shed had been replaced with asbestos cement slates and is possible that the station building and the Station Master's residence were also done at that time. The asbestos cement slates on the roof of the station building were replaced by corrugated iron sheets in 1989.

The problem with John Whitton's station designs at all times during his tenure was the placement of most buildings almost directly on the surface of the soil. This

induced long-term, major damp problems which were associated with the management of rainwater. The building at Dubbo was severely affected by rising damp and the first of a number of reports was made in 1989. The problem was improved in 1990 when the platform was raised. The design of the platform allowed rainwater to run back towards the building into an open drain rather than towards the track. The system worked well as long as there was not a lot of rain from the northern side of the building. The damp problem was rectified further in 1992 when the Countrylinkification was undertaken. At that time, an open drain was provided around the building on other than the platform side. As well as being a drain water management, the structure was designed to allow air at the base of the walls to permit the masonry to breathe, rather than the absorption of any moisture into the walls. Since the provision of the air drain, there has been a reduction in the decay of the sandstone.

Also in 1989 was the provision of a new timber floor in the parcels office, no doubt required because of the rising damp problem.

COUNTRYLINKIFICATION

The big and most radical change started in February, 1992. This was the Countrylinkification of the building. Prior to the work starting, the layout of the station building from the Sydney end was:

- luggage room/staff room (under end gable),
- rail travel centre,
- lobby,
- waiting room 1,
- waiting room 2,
- store/disabled toilet (in the connecting space between the main building and the pavilion),
- male and female toilets (under end gable).

To allow the radical renovation, construction and conservation work to be undertaken, the Station Master and his staff relocated temporarily to the former refreshment room building.

When the work was completed, virtually the entire internal rooms had been gutted and entirely new functions provided, including a small refreshment service. Countrylink succeeded in providing the only major upgrade of passenger facilities since the opening of the station in 1881.

THE REFRESHMENT ROOM

It was in 1914 that the official go-ahead for the refreshment room at Dubbo was made. The town citizens had long requested a refreshment room in the matter came up for discussion in 1914 when the Railway Commissioners visited the town. Chief

Commissioner Harper reported to have said: "I am pretty well aware of the nature of what you ask. And let me tell you that I hardly see the necessity of a deputation. ….." The press reported that Harper stated that "I do not want to hear you further on that matter, for I can tell you that it has been definitely decided to establish refreshment rooms in Dubbo, and good ones too." Mr. Harper was reported as being "most emphatic in this statement".[22] The First World War intervened and "normal" life in New South Wales did not return until after 1920.

The first official plan of the proposed refreshment room was prepared in August, 1922. The building was to be detached and set back from the existing platform building. It was to be a massive building of brick and concrete construction with 70 feet by 30 feet, a light refreshment room 51 feet by 28 feet and a bar 34 feet by 28 feet. The kitchen area is 46 feet by 30 feet. Upstairs, there were to be 24 bedrooms and a large "sleeping out flat staff quarters", five bathrooms as well as a smoking room, a "commerce" room and toilets. Unbelievably, there was also a rooftop garden. On the plan, there was a notation that only the ground floor would be built at present and a temporary roof of corrugated iron would be provided.

In July, 1923, a second plan was prepared reducing the size of the 1922 plan of the ground floor by one third. It also provided for three, small detached bedrooms for male staff as well as a laundry. The location of the serving counter was determined in June, 1924, adjacent to the main entrance. The refreshment room on 12th January 1925, four months prior to the opening of the line from Molong.[23] The press reported the refreshment rooms as "an acquisition to the town, and with their equipment comprise the finest outfit outside of Sydney".[24]

The press reported that the Railway Commissioners had closed the refreshment room at Wellington and opened the new facility at Dubbo. A special train was run from Wellington to Dubbo to bring "a large quantity of equipment, such as tables, utensils, crockery linen, victuals and the staff from Wellington. The new manager brought with him a dozen assistants, including the chef, the assistant chef, the manageress of the bar, eight waitresses and other hands. The staff will be quartered at the railway house in Darling Street, which has been excellently renovated for their convenience".[25] No doubt the proposed opening of the line between Molong and Dubbo was an important factor in the decision to provide the refreshment room at Dubbo.

It was typical policy of the Railway Department to enclose the environs of the refreshment room with a sense sheeted with corrugated iron. This policy had complete disregard to the fact that such fencing faced the town served by the station and corrugated iron was used to fence the refreshment room at Dubbo where one council alderman commented on the plans for the refreshment room saying that they

[22] *Leader*, 22nd May, 1914, p. 4.
[23] *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 13th January, 1925, p. 3.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

"provided for an unsightly structure, with a high, iron fence facing the town."[26] The Railway Department would have realised the unsightly appearance of such fencing and, in the case of Dubbo, did act to rectify the situation, though it took the Department 15 years to get its act together. The six feet high iron fence was replaced in 1940 by a five feet high paling fence.

In 1956, the formal dining room service was converted to "entree meal is only".

The former bar area was converted into a telegraph office in 1969 and the refreshment facilities were restricted to approximately one quarter of the ground floor area.

In 1984, the entire building or most of the building was converted into a rest house and a first floor holding 23 bedrooms was built, as well as a new roof.

From the published work of Chris Banger on railway refreshment rooms, it would seem that Dubbo has been the only railway station on the system, apart from the termini at Sydney and Newcastle, to continuously feature a refreshment service from the time of the station opening to the present.

THE PLATFORM

The platform was extended at the Bourke end in 1898 and again in 1935. At that later time, the platform awning was extended. In 1904, the platform was extended at the Sydney end. The platform was also extended at both ends in 1924.[27]

The platform was raised in 1990 with a layer of concrete.

Stuart Sharp

15th June, 2017

[26] *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 20th July, 1923, p. 2.
[27] *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent*, 16th May, 1924, p. 6.

APPENDIX 1

1870s – CHANGES IN STATION DESIGN POLICY

In the 1870s, the Main West line between Orange and Dubbo looked like it was some sort of giant architectural experimentation.

John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, approved of a moderate-sized, functional building for the now city of Orange and did not approve a First-Class structure similar to that at Bathurst. It must be assumed that the town of Orange was much smaller in the 1870s and that was the reason Orange received a combination office/residence similar to the ones at Rydal, Tarana, Georges Plains and Blayney.

The railway line west of Bathurst to Orange was one of the "cheap" lines that Whitton supervised and he was faced with very tight amounts of money. During the 1870s, he chose construction of combination platform buildings as a means of minimising expenditure. In the 1870s, Whitton experimented greatly with the use and design of buildings. This was reflected in the very unusual design of the gatehouse at Blayney, which was demolished 20 years ago, and the design of the surviving Station Master's residence at Millthorpe. By the time the line was being constructed beyond Orange towards Dubbo, Whitton had settled on a new design for Station Master's residences and then proceeded to use that design extensively from 1880 to 1889. However, he continued to experiment with platform buildings between Orange and Dubbo and had not settled on a new design until he approved the suite of platform buildings for Narromine station.

The extension of the line west of Orange manifested the change in design policy. The buildings at Mullion Creek, Warne, Stuart Town and Maryvale were to be built from a single plan. They were to be simple, brick, open-fronted waiting sheds measuring 26 feet by 12 feet. Over the following years, additions were made and, ultimately, the structures had the appearance of non-standard, brick buildings measuring 36 feet in length with provision for a ticket office as well as two waiting rooms.

The platform building at Wellington was more significant in design and larger in size than the building at Orange. It was simply a case of approving a larger building for a larger town. Moreover, the building at Wellington did not contain residential accommodation for the Station master and his family. Compared to the other intermediate station buildings between Orange and Wellington, the structure at Wellington was a giant.

An equally correct title for this section of line would be: The 1870s – a Time of Fundamental Station Design Change. The revolution in the platform building style had started at Raglan the construction of an unusual, brick temporary building.

Patterns showing similar non-standard architectural explosions were seen on the other trunk railway lines.

It was John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, Railway Construction Branch, Department of Public Works, who was responsible for station design policy. Between1869 and 1879, there was a period of station design policy uncertainty that applied to all three trunk railway lines in New South Wales. Several combination structures and temporary buildings were erected. At some stations, no building was provided while others portable structures were utilised. The western line demonstrates the change in design policy either side of Dubbo. The strange creatures that continue to exist at Wellington and Dubbo stations reflect the period of constant change.

What is a surprise is the unusual design adopted for both the platform buildings at Millthorpe and Spring Hill. Not only were those buildings unusual, there were many platform structures on the western line that were atypical of what was happening elsewhere on the New South Wales railway system. Other examples are at Springwood, Wellington, Dubbo and Trangie show strange design features. These are additional to the bizarre case in 1891 of erecting a building at Katoomba which was designed purely for the main western line from Sydney to Homebush. The existence of unusual design elements was not restricted to station buildings. In 1880, a house for the Station Master had been built at Bathurst; similar one was erected at Blayney in 1885 and a third example instructed at Orange in 1886. All three examples shared a similar but very rare design element – a faceted bay window on the street elevation. Nowhere else in New South Wales where there three examples in the same region. Why? Some heritage architects have considered the possibility of an external design influence on some buildings on the western line. The design that was used at Millthorpe and Spring Hill was never again utilised on the New South Wales railway system.

An unusual brick building was also erected at Petersham in 1878, with a roof structure identical to the building at Wellington. Was it a co-incidence that unusual brick buildings with the same roof style were approved in consecutive years – 1878 at Petersham and 1879 at Wellington? Were there three steps in the design process leading to the 1897 standard Pioneer terminus style – 1878 at Petersham; 1879 at Wellington and the issue of the standard design in 1897? I think not. Precedents for all three examples could be found in use for private residences in Sydney and country areas.

It was John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief, Railway Construction Branch, Department of Public Works, who was responsible for station design policy. Between1869 and 1879, there was a period of station design policy uncertainty that applied to all three trunk railway lines in New South Wales. Several combination structures and temporary buildings were erected. The western line demonstrates the change in design policy either side of Dubbo. The strange creatures that continue to

exist at Wellington and Dubbo stations reflect the period of constant change. Also, temporary and portable buildings were used extensively in these years.

After 1880, there was a new direction of design that focused on gabled roof buildings with semi-detached and/or detached one or two pavilions. The station building that survives at Narromine was an example approved in 1882 that today still reflects the new design policy.

In the 1870s and 1880s, prices overseas for primary products were falling while over-building of farm local infrastructure was taking place. There was full employment and railway building took labour away from productive areas of the economy. These factors helped to force up wages, making all forms of railway construction more expansive. Now, Whitton faced not only a tight limit on capital funds by the NSW government but also dwindling finances to construct buildings and other capital items due to higher wage levels.[28]

Given the additional financial squeeze on Whitton, it may seem odd that the boom year for the approval of First Class buildings was 1880 with four stations approved, namely Albury, Tamworth, Narrandera and Hay. It is noteworthy that three of the four were to be located on the Main South and South West branch. The NSW government told Whitton that the Riverina area was to have priority over all other new lines. Apart from the plan for Tamworth station, Whitton placed aside any planning for the Main North and totally ignores any extension for the Main West.

It seems that 1880 was the apogee of Whitton's career with the NSW Railways. He had completed his plans for railways towards the Victorian border. To make the most out of Whitton's achievement, the NSW Government nominated Whitton as the NSW Commissioner for the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition. His appearance at the Exhibition was a clear reminder that NSW was not going to let Victoria claim all the financial benefits from land development in the Riverina region. After 1880, with planning for the lines to the south turning into reality, Whitton's usefulness was about to fade gradually.

In 1880, Whitton at last introduced and settled on a station design policy that he would use until his retirement in 1889. It is not surprising that the dominant design of the 1880s was not of Georgian style, not of Italianate or any other style. It was a style which had a little Gothic influence, but not much. As Donald Ellsmore, the one-time Heritage Manager of State Rail, expressed, it could only be described as the NSW Railway 19th century, functional design. There was no William Mason or George Cowdery involved in new lines. Whitton had the field to himself and out popped something different. It was a product of the experimental period between 1872 and 1879 and there was no surprise that a simple gabled roof atopped a standard floor plan mostly featuring centre rear pedestrian access.

[28] R. V. Jackson, *Australian Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century*, Canberra, ANU Press, 1977, p. 90

For the only time in the history of NSW railway stations, the buildings did not look like buildings that would be found elsewhere in NSW outside the railway administration. Whiten used a relatively narrow rectangle as the basis of the design. Gone were the attached pavilions of the previous Georgian design. Gone was the use of the more pleasing hipped roof. Gone were the ornamental features. In 1880, the design that Whitton introduced reflected some of the social and psychological character of the people of NSW. The relatively plain, relatively small and relatively practical design mirrored a population where functionality of purpose and clarity of intent were valued.

The building form was simple and this form contained elements that became standard for most buildings serving towns during the 1880s. For example, the use of the verandah posts to contain storm water pipes was a system patented in 1870 in Victoria but not introduced in NSW until 1880 on other than First Class buildings. This system was common for shop fronts but perhaps it was the pressure of limited funds that stimulated its widespread introduction on the NSW Railways in 1880. This little feature had substantial appeal to Whitton at this time. The drainage system allowed Whitton to utilize another building element to express local identity. He developed from 1880 a series of building elements that he could use singularly or in any combination to tweak a building's identity to show that he knew that a particular town was more important than another local or regional centre. Of course, this was all a trick. He gave each town the same floor plan with the same design basis. He merely added features to appear as if a town received a building of unique design. The external design features used by Whitton were:

- The employment of one of two semi-detached/detached pavilions to provide a grouping of platform buildings,
- The use of similar or dissimilar roof designs for any pavilion,
- The provision or omission of an awning over the platform and the width of such awning,
- The use of timber or cast iron posts to support the verandah over the platform,
- The expansion of the distance between the main building and any pavilions to give the illusion of a larger station,
- The provision of a Station Master's residence at the side of a forecourt to provide a suite of different looking buildings,
- The provision of a centre, transverse gable on one or both sides of the main building,
- The engagement of small ventilators on the roof of the main building,
- The provision or absence of a rear, centre pedestrian access, with or without the use of a porched entry,
- The variation in the width of the main building so as to accentuate the entry point for travellers,
- Variation in the height of the ceilings between buildings and within the same building,

- The selection of materials for the surface of the platform, platform wall and any steps,
- The provision, omission or variations in the style and location of fencing and gardens, &
- The location of stations at the end of streets to provide a visual corridor.

There is one outstanding feature that Whitton did not use. It is the addition of any ornamentation that reflected Aboriginal culture. The British colonies in Asia and India manifested a base of fundamentally British architectural practice but added decorations which were based on local cultural tradition. The reason for its absence in NSW is that there was no visible cultural tradition that could be added to a building to reflect the country of its construction. So, it is the base form of NSW buildings, not any added decorations, that show any hint of local social conditions.

What Whitton approved in the period 1880 to 1889 was the closest thing to a local design. That concept of locality in NSW was seen in the relative small size of the buildings, the relative absence of ornamentation and the use of simple and relatively cheap materials. It is easy to see that there really is not much of an idea of NSW or Australia in what Whitton approved. The buildings were mostly of moderate size and plain in appearance and these features mirrored the small size of both the NSW population, the small size of the economy and the absence of large amounts of available capital needed to erect platform buildings that were excessive of local needs or political and social aspirations.

Internally, most rooms and spaces reflected the same range of palette on walls, the same floor and ceiling materials and similar sized fittings, such as seats, mirrors and fireplaces. There was one element of a building that was closely examined by commuters. It was the size of the station clock. There were no clocks in clock towers until 1906 at the third Sydney station. The station clock was usually located on the platform elevation wall towards the centre of the building. Local residents of most towns believed that the status of their community was mirrored by the diameter of the bezel. Protests about the inadequate size of station clocks and claims that a rival but smaller town had a larger clock were common. The NSW Railways had to make sure the size of clocks was always commensurate with the often-rising social status of the town connected with the clock.

Platforms were to change from 1880. The basics remained the same - a raised area of variable length and relatively narrow width, with ramps of 1 in 15 gradients at each end, often with one or two carriage docks. The Colonial Coroner’s office in 1864 had recommended that all future platforms were to be enclosed, as there had been a number of accidents where children had crawled below the platform deck and onto the running lines, where they were killed. However, it was not until 1880 that most new platforms at all but the smallest locations had a timber or brick platform wall in front of packed earth. The walls in Whitton's time sloped towards the toe of the wall. Following the use of picket fencing at the Colony's main station, Sydney, in 1874,

this form of fencing increased in popularity and became the standard form of platform fencing in the 1880s. Before 1880, platforms were narrower and the width varied from six to ten feet Also, from the early 1880s, the width of platforms became not only wider but of variable width in Whitton's time. He set the platform buildings back of the rear of the platform and provided for the variation in width with eight feet wide entry gates for goods set in the diagonal position. From 1880, platforms were usually narrower each side of the platform building/s.

There are two features about buildings approved by Whitton in 1880 and were absent from any year in the 1870s. Firstly, he approved most of the buildings that would be built for the 100 miles of new railway line between the Murrumbidgee River and the Murray River. This was related to the relative speed which Whitton exercised for the construction of the line. Not only did he approve all station plans for the main line, he also approved of buildings as far as Narrandera on the Hay branch.

John Whitton decided to use a family of buildings with the same architectural characteristics. The major variable was length. He used buildings of one, two, three and five rooms. The use of mostly odd numbers of rooms allowed the engagement of a degree of visual symmetry, balanced around a centre, rear pedestrian entry. It is this design that most commentators argue has the personal mark of Whitton. Secondly, he abandoned the use of temporary buildings and instead approved the provision of permanent structures.

Stuart Sharp

13th June, 2017

APPENDIX 2

STATION DESIGN PARAMETERS

Although John Whitton was giving very serious consideration to the development of a new design of platform building, he continued to work within the parameters of design policy that prevailed on the New South Wales Railways. These parameters existed in five aspects of design policy, being:

6. the planning process,
7. physical building construction,
8. floor plans,
9. operational elements, &
10. platform and precinct style.

1 THE PLANNING PROCESS

1. the dominance of architectural and draughting staff by engineers,
2. The autonomy of the two construction branches, namely the Existing Lines Branch and the Railway Construction Branches,
3. The absence of major design freedom as to the use of innovative designs, materials and palettes relative to architects in private practice,
4. The extensive variations in individual, minor design elements,
5. The relationship between the size and scale of individual buildings and the level of decoration and the size and status of the location served, or the existence of local, influential residents or the status of a location for railway purposes,
6. The pivotal role of the availability of funds supplied by the owner, the Colonial/State Government

2 CONSTRUCTION

1. Restriction in the size of structures both in terms of width and length,
2. Expression of minimal ornamentation and decoration,
3. The dominance galvanised, corrugated iron– the near absence of terracotta roof tiles,
4. the preference for single-storey dwellings, &
5. the allowance of variations between planned and as-built versions.

3 FLOOR PLANS

1. Use of standard floor patterns but not necessarily standard plans,
2. Separation of toilet entrances for male and females as far as is possible,
3. The protection of entrances to ladies' toilets by the use of an ante-chamber, usually the ladies' waiting room

4. The placement of the male toilets at the end of platform buildings, the end of platforms or off-platform,
5. The provision of separate spaces for each function, with minimal interconnection of rooms, &
6. The absence of open planning, high visual contact between staff and the public and the minimal use of glazing on the rail side.

4 OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS

1. The treatment of women as special people, as reflected in the provision of space exclusively for women and the use of different furniture and decorations,
2. The hierarchy of spaces with superior room functions receiving higher quality or different materials or an absence of materials, such as the omission of internal wall longs or ceilings,
3. The use of British system to sell tickets, namely through a narrow ticket window 24 inches high and 18 inches wide,
4. The height of the sill of the ticket window – four feet above floor level,
5. Ticket counters set at three feet height above the floor and extending the full width of the booking office,
6. The two feet six inch width of the ticket counter, with a six inch cut-out front of the ticket window,
7. The placement of cupboards under the ticket counter, &
8. The absence of barriers at the point of entry to restrict people from entering the platform.

5 PLATFORMS AND PRECINCT STYLE

1. Raised platforms with a dominance of Locksley granite as the surface material,
2. platform height set at two feet nine inches until 1906, then set at three feet two inches,
3. set platform width of 12 feet (after 1870), outside the footprint of the suite of buildings,
4. platform length up to 1880 rarely over 300 feet; 300-400 until 1919; 520 feet standard length for eight car trains,
5. platform walls sloping outward to the toe of the wall up to 1889, then walls are vertically set,
6. The use of different surface materials on platforms, e.g. bitumen or stone in front of the building suite and Locksley granite for the platform length beyond the suite of structures,
7. Ramps provided at both platform ends until 1935 and then at one end until 1972, then an absence of ramps
8. Use of brick or timber platform walls in rural areas and mostly brick walls in Sydney and Newcastle,

9. Provision of forecourts often with gardens on the road side of station buildings,
10. For buildings erected with only one detached pavilion, the toilet pavilion was set on the left side of the main building in the suite of structures,
11. Location of Station Master's residences on the right side of forecourts for larger towns and on the left side for smaller towns[29],
12. The provision of fencing at the rear of side platforms and the ends of island platforms

Many of these policy guidelines had been set in place by Whitton nearly 25 years previously, though some features, such as the location of pavilions and residences, did not appear until 1880s. It was unlikely that he would alter any of them. Indeed, when Whitton lost command of works on existing lines, his competitor engineers, namely William Mason and George Cowdery, continued to implement Whitton's policy guidelines relating to stations.

Whitton's challenge was to build permanent buildings. Because he was a track engineer, his policy of permanence was manifested in the construction of permanent platform walls even when he provided a temporary building, a portable building or no building. By the time he was ready consider a platform building at Dubbo, he had already implemented his new design of detached residences for Station Masters. These were initially provided at Millthorpe and Spring Hill and both survive in 2017. It was a design that he and George Cowdery continued to use between Orange and Dubbo. Thus, by the time the tracks reached Dubbo, Whitton had implemented a partial policy that addressed operational requirements and funding constraints. However, it was not at Dubbo where his new design policies for both platform buildings and residences were implemented. That occurred at Narromine and what Whitton provided at Dubbo was a final hurrah to end the design turmoil that had been going on since 1869.

Stuart Sharp

15th June, 2017

[29] There were exceptions, such as the location of the Station Master's residence on the left side of the forecourt and Bathurst. In that case, the evidence suggests that John Whitton purposefully implemented a campaign of departmental revenge because he was forced to provide the terminus across the Macquarie River, involving a huge expenditure. He retaliated by ensuring the incompletion of the station building at the time of the line opening on the positioning of the residence on the incorrect side of the forecourt.

APPENDIX 3

SIGNALLING AND SAFEWORKING

Dr Bob Taaffe says that the signal box at Dubbo was a timber framed building, measuring 16 feet by 12 feet 6 inches. It was opened on 25th June, 1919, when the yard was interlocked and was located on the platform at the Sydney end in front of the refreshment room. An unusual feature was the absence of a conventional roof as the signal box was placed under the extension of the station awning. It is not known if the awning was in existence in 1919 or added later. The signal box was closed on 16th June, 2007, with the re-signalling of the yard.

Bob deals with the various subsidiary interlocking frames in the yard.

“Dubbo Frame B was located at the Sydney end of the yard and also controlled level crossing at the Fitzroy Street. The signal box was normally operated by a shunter. This signal box was opened about June, 1919, and replaced in 1936 and replaced again in August, 1984, by a modern brick structure that included shunters’ quarters. This signal box also closed with re-signalling of the yard in 2007.

Dubbo Frame C - was located on the Sydney side near the country end of the engine shed and operated a scissors crossover. The building had no front wall and was never permanently inhabited. It was covered either when the yard was interlocked in 1919 or in 1924 when several ground frames were combined. Frame C was abolished in February, 1982.

Dubbo Frame F was a small signal box located at the Bourke end of the yard controlling the loop and dock points. Opened in March, 1936, it was closed in August, 1988, when the dock was removed following cessation of passenger services further west.

The extensive use of ground frames is nothing unusual for New South Wales. Having so many covered frames is a little unusual. Unless there was a large elevated signal box, then many ground frames would have been the norm. In other states, the rail administrations would probably would have used unlocked points”.

Graham Harper provided additional advice. He wrote:

“At 28 levers, Dubbo signal box was the largest lever frame in the state that did not directly operate a single set of points. The impressive yard and its signals were largely operated from subsidiary frames, all released from the main signal box frame. In addition, two full signal boxes were in use on the outskirts of Dubbo – Dubbo East Junction and Troy Junction.

In 1953, Dubbo signal box had control of some 21 signals; of these only four did not have additional control from a subsidiary frame or outlying box.

On 5th July 1987, Dubbo signal box got its very first set of points to operate. No.22 lever became the lever to operate the junction points between the Coonamble and Merrygoen lines at the site of the former Troy Junction Box.

The set-up at Dubbo was an intriguing mish mash of cheapness and operating efficiency. It was also a reflection on the number of shunters who were around at the time to operate the subsidiary frames.

The die was cast in 1919 when the yard was interlocked. A large Frame B and Frame C were provided from the outset, while Frame F was added later. The basic principles of interlocking and yard operation set in 1919 basically held good until 2007 when ARTC re-signalled the place, with Frames C and F being removed when they were no longer required.

Apart from the signal box, Frame A on the platform, the following large subsidiary frames were in use.

Frame B – at the Sydney end of the yard and controlled all the points and a number of the signals at that end of the precinct. It had 24 levers, only four less than Dubbo Box. It also controlled access to and shunting of the goods sidings and wheat siding on the south side, while the operator of Frame B had responsibility for opening and closing gates at the adjacent Fitzroy Street level crossing. This meant that Frame B had to be manned for any arriving trains from Molong, Wellington, Merrygoen and Coonamble, as well as when shunting was taking place. I have some recollection that these gates were locked in position obstructing road traffic at certain hours, with road traffic having to use the Darling Street level crossing, immediately to the west of the station. Rail traffic at the latter crossing was considerably less than that at Fitzroy Street.

Frame C – just outside the loco shed had 16 levers and controlled a scissors crossover between the Main Line and the Loop/Coonamble line. Its primary purpose was to allow passenger trains from Coonamble and Merrygoen access to the platform. It would only need to be attended when the crossover was needed.

Frame F – controlled the connections at the western end of the yard, basically between the main line and the loop and the back platform road. It is assumed that the operator of Frame F also acted as gatekeeper for the Darling Street level crossing.

The back platform road ceased to be used after the Far West Express was replaced by buses in the late 1970s.

In later years, Frame F was replaced by a three-lever ground frame, the back platform road was abolished and the loop line points were set so that all traffic could run directly to or from the loop, though train services west of Dubbo by then was becoming a distant memory.

Frames B, C and F are referred to as signal boxes because they were covered. They were not operationally signal boxes; operationally they were ground frames. Indeed, according to the Bob Taaffe definition of a signal box, neither was Dubbo Frame A if the diagram is to be believed. It appears to have been an open-air affair during its first years of existence!

Dubbo East Junction was a full signal box with 24 levers located a kilometre or two to the east of Dubbo, and controlled the junction for the Molong-Dubbo line, as well as the southern apex of the Coonamble line triangle. When the automatic signalling on the Molong-Dubbo line went phut in 1933, track block working was retained between East Junction and Dubbo. This meant that East Junction had to be attended to issue and receive the staff to and from Wellington trains, even when no traffic was scheduled for the Molong Line. The demise of the Molong Line in the 1970s made this an expensive exercise in staffing and, once the Molong line was closed in 1987, the closure of East Junction Box rapidly followed. The Wellington staff section was extended to Dubbo Station.

Troy Junction was a signal box about 4km north of Dubbo on the Coonamble Line. Initially only opened to control the Merrygoen line junction, with an intermediate staff instrument for the Coonamble line and lots of complicated instructions on its manipulation. It became a full signal box with 16 levers some seven years later with staff instruments for all sections. As such, it had to be attended for all trains, although in 1954 it was provided with a “U” indicator in the Up Starting signal to allow train crews to work through in quieter times.

At the same time as closure of Dubbo East Junction, Troy Junction was closed on the grounds of economy. Because in this instance the junction involved two viable lines, power operated signals and points were installed and controlled from Dubbo Box.

Why all the complexities with the signalling in and around Dubbo? As mentioned earlier, it was a compromise between operational efficiency and money. The sheer length of the yard would have required at least two signal boxes, at least one of which would have to be very large. Considerable slotting would be needed on many signals which by necessity would have to be controlled by both boxes.

The compromise which was struck allowed direct control of points from nearby frames, but with the necessity only that the frames were attended when the points were to be used. There was a supply of shunters to do this, as well as other shunting duties when not required for the lever frames and this would be better than employing signalmen purely to operate the signal boxes. Shunters were also able to operate the signal box to obtain keys and releases.

As haphazard as it is to describe, Dubbo worked well throughout its existence. In 2007, ARTC re-signalled the yard and did away with the signal box frame and Frame B, the only two larger interlocking machines surviving at the time. ARTC provided eight power operated sets of points, while the two level crossings were converted to

automatic operation. Now the interlocking is not controlled by handy shunters, but by a panel at Broadmeadow, some short distance away!

Bob Taaffe and Graham Harper

25th May, 2017