

ORANGE EAST FORK

1930 -THE PROPOSED STATION

Also at Orange was the intention for a new station at Orange East Fork to serve the Broken Hill Express. The plan was prepared in May for a three-room timber building 30 feet by 10 feet with skillion roof. It was to contain a booking and parcels office, a general waiting room and a ladies' waiting room, plus an off-platform male toilet. It was but not built but a plan for a one room waiting shed in 1932 was more successful. Clearly, the 1930s Depression was the major force at play at that time.

One project that did take place in 1930 was the elimination of the level crossing near the site construction of the present overbridge. This project possibly went ahead because it involved the elimination of the employment of a gatekeeper, thus reducing current expenditure on wages and salaries.

1932-1937 – OPERATION OF THE STATION

At Orange East Fork, the 1930 proposal for a three-room building was replaced in 1932 with a single room waiting shed 10 feet by 10 feet. It had a skillion roof.

The new platform was 100 feet long by 8 feet wide. The base of the structure was formed by old sleepers, as was the platform wall and deck. Unusual for New South Wales platforms, it was ramped at one end only. The omission of ramps at both ends was a reflection of the role of money. Vertical old sleeper posts were set at 8 feet centres. The platform was constructed in 1933.

John Forsyth's notes states that the station was opened in December, 1932, under the name "Orange Exchange Platform". He states that the station closed on 26th September, 1937, no doubt following the cessation of the operation of the Broken Hill Express.

1970-1998 – REPLACEMENT OF THE WAITING SHED

A platform was re-established at Orange East Fork in 1970 to serve the Indian Pacific train at the station. Initially, the platform was not elevated in the usual New South Wales tradition but what at ground level with a minuscule coping of one course of brickwork. It very much looked like the "platform landings" that were used on a few branch lines in the 1890s.

In addition to the low-level platform, there was a waiting shed built at ground level adjacent to the platform. This was highly unusual for the New South Wales Railways in the first time this had been done for many decades. The walls of the shed were constructed of concrete blocks and it had an open front. There was a window in the rear wall. There was no heating and passengers complained about waiting in cold weather for the often late-running Indian Pacific train. Lighting was also bad in the area. The Masonite ceiling inside the shed provided a lot of entertainment for the

idle youths of Orange who over the years hurled various missiles through the material in their warped attempt at amusing themselves.

At some later stage, a raised platform was built alongside the waiting shed. It utilised a substructure built of old rails and had a concrete deck and concrete ramp.

In the mid-1990s, Orange City Council requested State Rail to upgrade the facility but State Rail declined to do so. The station was not used after 1996 by State Rail and, therefore, declined to provide any money, arguing that the only the only train using the platform at that time was the train operated by Great Southern Railway.

In 1998, the Property Branch of State Rail decided to fund the replacement of the existing-platform waiting shed with a new shelter on the platform. It was erected by an Orange based organisation called All Tech Engineering and Fabrication. It was three metres long by three metres wide and featured Perspex on the sides. It was powder coated in two-tone blue to match the corporate colours of the then Countrylink organisation, although Countrylink did not use the station at the time. The new shelter was built on the existing platform but the width of the platform was increased by threefold, again using old rails of the substructure. It can only be assumed that there was a realignment of the track at some time and the 1970s platform was no longer was in the correct position.

Sometime after the station was improved by the shelter and the platform expansion, Countrylink decided to use the station until November, 2003, when the Broken Hill passenger train was diverted into Orange station. How sneaky was Countrylink to start using the platform after another part of State Rail had paid for it!

The 1998 shelter survives in 2017 on the platform, still in its Countrylink colour scheme.

CHANGES IN DESIGN PHILOSOPHY 1970-1998

The provision of the shelters in 1970 and 1998 well demonstrate the massive change in approach to the provision of platform facilities. The thinking in the 1970s and 1980s was to provide very heavy-looking, solid structures made of brickwork for concrete blockwork, with minimal openings for windows and doors. The idea behind such facilities was to confront the major problem that the New South Wales Railway organisation had with vandalism and graffiti. The thinking changed in 1989 with the establishment of CityRail and Countrylink and the philosophy of design then changed completely in the opposite direction to make structures lightweight and transparent so that evil people could be seen easily doing their evil deeds. The transparent materials provided no hidey-holes as did buildings were solid walls. Since the shelters construction almost 20 years ago, one could say that it was a most successful change in building philosophy.

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7th May, 2017