

ASHFIELD RAILWAY STATION

A HISTORY



Ashfield railway station on 14th May 2018, taken from Station Street on the northern side of the rail corridor facing towards Sydney. The photograph shows the remnant heritage brick boundary wall. The 1892 subway entrance is identified by the wider footpath and stepped paving on which the two pedestrians are walking.

Stuart Sharp

14th September 2018

1856-1890 – THE ESTABLISHMENT AND FULFILMENT OF A RAIL PASSENGER TRANSPORT DEMAND

THE IMPORTANCE OF ASHFIELD AS A SYDNEY SUBURB

Ashfield has always been a very important and one-time elite suburb of Sydney. Its importance was shown by the decision to erect a station – one of only four intermediate locations - to serve the area at the time of the opening of the railway line between Sydney and Parramatta on 26th September 1855. Railway author, Ron Preston, wrote that Ashfield had a “large population”.¹ That comment was only correct relative to other suburban locations in Sydney on the western railway line at the time and, even in that context, Preston made an overstatement to say the population was “large” in 1855. For example, one local history study said that “Ashfield was then (i.e. circa 1855) only a clearing in a tall forest of eucalypts”.² For a person interested in railway history, there could be a no more authoritative account of what was at Ashfield in September 1855 than a passenger on the on the train on the opening day. C. A. Henderson was one of those passengers and he wrote that Ashfield “contained a few scattered houses and a Wesleyan Chapel”.³

The New South Wales Government published a number of *Railway Guides* in the 1880s. The 1881 edition referred to Ashfield as a “village” but, by the time the 1889 edition, the description had changed to a “suburb” and it was stated that “the population, which largely represents the mercantile and business classes of the metropolis, is estimated at about 9,200”.⁴ Local historian, P. Maguire, wrote that:

“the 20-minute journey (from the city) attracted those of the middle class with moderate means and large families to move from the crowded inner-city tenements to enjoy the healthier and happier life”.⁵

Thus, not only was the population larger compared with other suburbs, such as Burwood and Strathfield, it was a place of higher social status. Dr Shirley Fitzgerald wrote that Ashfield had “the kind of face it wished to present to the world by possessing 12 churches, but only five public houses (in 1890)”.⁶ She quotes a contemporary newspaper which stated that the suburb had “more large mansions than any other suburb”.⁷

¹ R. Preston, *125 Years of the Sydney to Parramatta Railway*, Burwood, New South Wales Rail Transport Museum, no date, p. 52.

² No author, *Ashfield 1871 – 1971*, Sydney, Horwitz publishing, 1972, p. 28.

³ C. A. Henderson, "Recollections of Mr. C. A. Henderson – Sydney to Homebush 1855", *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 8, 1923, p. 352.

⁴ New South Wales, *New South Wales Railway Tourists Guide*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1889, p. 20.

⁵ P. Maguire, “Memories of McKimm’s”, *Ashfield Men of Mark*, Ashfield and District Historical Society Journal No. 16, 2007, p. 75.

⁶ S. Fitzgerald, *Rising Damp – Sydney 1870-90*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 34.

⁷ Ibid.

There were claims in the press that station staff treated first class passengers better than second class commuters. For instance, in 1878, the press commented about the difference in the way tickets were inspected on departure from the station. First class male passengers were addressed as “gentlemen” and the request was accompanied by a “please”, these two words being absent from the address to second class travellers.⁸

The continued importance of the suburb was reflected by the major renewal works undertaken at the station on no less than seven occasions between 1855 and the present.

There is one important point to be made. The New South Wales Government did not open a station at Ashfield to service the adjoining general population, no matter what size it was. The reality was that the railway line was headed to and reached Goulburn to serve rural interests. The reason why a station was opened at Ashfield probably relates to the significant, powerful landed gentry who held large areas of land at the time on both sides of the railway corridor.

1855 – THE FIRST RAILWAY BUILDING – ONE PLATFORM

The first railway building at Ashfield was a brick combination structure built before March 1855 and, at the time, was the only station structure on the line between the Sydney and Parramatta termini. The structure was officially named a "station house".⁹ It had the honour of being the first platform building on the NSW railway system. The Ashfield station building was reported as being “nearly completed” in December 1854. No evidence of any approval is extant, but it was probably erected as the first structure to be used as an office for the resident engineer, who would be physically on-site supervising the formation and subsequent track work.

Perhaps it was the one-time, higher social status of the suburb of Ashfield or the knowledge that its station was the first railway platform building in the State that prompted the New South Wales Government to build a replica of the 1855 Ashfield railway station as a setting for the display of steam locomotive No. 1 in the Powerhouse Museum when it was opened on 4th September 1981.¹⁰

Don Hagarty, the author of the major tome relating to the destruction of the 1855 Sydney to Parramatta railway, speculated that William Randle pressed ahead with the construction of the Ashfield station building without the prior approval of the Board of the then Sydney Railway Company.¹¹ Randle constructed the entire line between Sydney and Parramatta, including the station at Ashfield, which cost £2,338 against the quotation of £2,272. In essence, it was Randle who approved construction and constructed the building. While Randle was the builder of the

⁸ *Cumberland Mercury*, 19th January 1878, p. 4.

⁹ Oral advice from Don Hagarty, 17th February, 2010.

¹⁰ *Railway Digest*, November 1981, p. 335.

¹¹ D. Hagarty, *Sydney Railway 1848 – 1857*, Redfern, Australian Railway Historical Society, 2005, p. 181.

station, it was Joseph Brady, the Assistant Engineer, who had prepared the sketches of the proposed building.¹²

By the time the Ashfield station opened in September 1855, the Sydney Railway Company had been overtaken by the New South Wales Government. At that time (i.e. 1855), the New South Wales Railways became the first government owned railway system in the British Empire and the second publicly owned railway system in the entire world.

The structure had a hipped roof with symmetrical chimneys through the roof ridge and was pretty much a product of what was being built in Britain. The bricks for the station building were manufactured only a short distance from the station and are reported to have been made from the first use of a steam-powered brick making machine in Australia, which commenced operation in 1853.¹³ The building contained four rooms, one functioning as a booking office, plus a detached kitchen and a “public” (meaning men only) toilet. There was an adjacent garden, possibly for the cultivation of vegetables for the Station Master and his family, rather than it being an area for ornamental purposes. Entry to the platform was through a side entrance into the booking office in which there was a rounded counter. There were four sets of double columns supported the platform canopy. A separate ‘exit’ gateway was planned. The overall design was a rectangular version of the later, standard square design with pyramidal roof, such as exists at Menangle in 2018. The platform had a timber frame and the deck was covered with timber planks, which was consistent with other platforms on the line.

At the time of the station opening, the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper made the following description:

“a plain verandah cottage, containing living rooms for the Station Master and a commodious booking office. Though the style of the architecture is more simple and ornamental, yet the building answers all the purposes required and was not costly”.¹⁴

Everyone, including politicians, railway staff and the public, would have been pleased to read that no extravagance was spent on the construction of the station building in view of the fact that it was taxpayers’ money which had paid for it.

The platform buildings in 1855 at Newtown and Burwood were similar to the Ashfield structure. There were toilets at the three stations, with one cubicle being uni-sex for the public and one for the Station Master’s family. Further details of the 1855 building

¹² Ibid., p. 243.

¹³ C. Pratten (Ed.), *Ashfield at Federation*, Ashfield and District Historical Society, 2001, p. 56.

¹⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27th September 1855 quoted by S. and R. Coupe, *Speed the Plough – Ashfield 1788 – 1988*, Ashfield Municipal Council, 1988, p. 53.

at Ashfield are provided in Don Hagarty's book, including an engraving, a floor plan and the sketch prepared by Joseph Brady.¹⁵

At the time of the line opening in September 1855, the press reported that there were "two terminal stations erected and the four intermediate ones, besides workshops and other buildings sufficient to carry on the line. The stations are chiefly constructed of timber, but they are sufficiently substantial and capacious for the present traffic. In a few years probably, more extensive arrangements will be required, when it will be easy to remove the present buildings and cause more permanent ones to be erected in their place".¹⁶ Yes. Only three brick platform buildings were erected between 1855 and 1861 on the Sydney-Parramatta line. These were at Newtown, Burwood and Ashfield, the only three intermediate stations which were staffed in 1855 at the line opening. This decision to restrict brick construction only to those locations where the station building included residential accommodation set a departmental residential policy that lasted until 1890. That policy stated that staff were to be housed in masonry dwellings, regardless of the materials used for the platform buildings.¹⁷

It was common, accepted knowledge in the mid-1850s that temporary buildings were built with the planned anticipation that they would be replaced with permanent structures at a later date when traffic volumes increased. To the 30th June 1856, passenger traffic receipts were ten times as large as the goods revenue on the Sydney-Parramatta line, an unsurprising statistic given that goods yards did not exist at all stations, including Ashfield, in 1855.¹⁸

Leigh Stokes, long-time railway history researcher and Ashfield resident, has prepared a series of drawings to depict the growth of the railway tracks through the station from its opening in 1855 to its maximum size in 1927. For ease of comparison, these drawings have also been placed together in Appendix 4. The drawing for 1855 is overleaf.

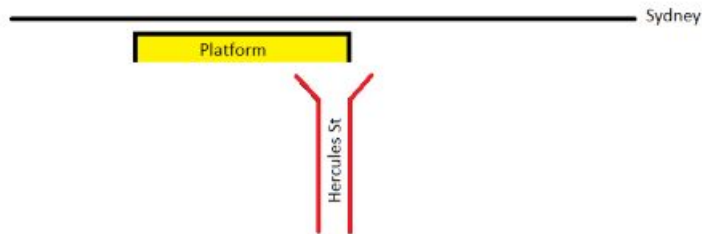
¹⁵ See Hagarty, op. cit., pp. 429, 430 and rear cover.

¹⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27th September 1855, p. 4.

¹⁷ There were a few exceptions to the rule, but these were restricted to the 1880s.

¹⁸ *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 12th July 1856, p. 6.

1855

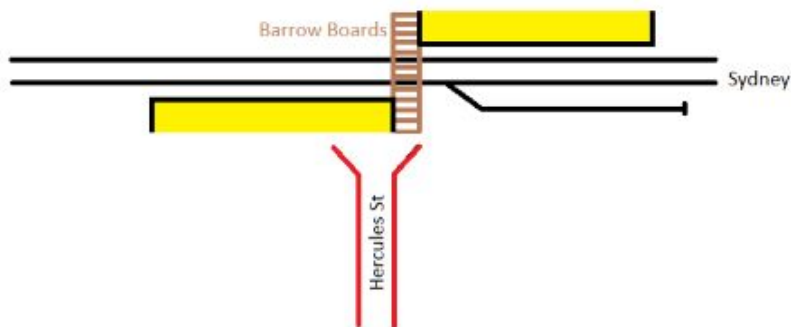


1856 – TRACK DUPLICATION – TWO PLATFORMS

A second track was laid through the station, opening on 1st June 1856. This allowed trains in opposing directions to operate on separate railway lines. The new platform was not located opposite the original platform but was staggered, it being built towards Sydney from the Sydney end of the 1855 platform.

As far as is known, no building was erected on the new, Sydney-bound platform at that time. A pedestrian crossing, formed of timber boards to facilitate the movement of parcels/baggage barrows, commenced at the ground-level end of the eastern ramp to the Homebush-bound platform and crossed the tracks to meet the western ramp to the Sydney-bound platform

1856



LEVEL CROSSINGS

It was standard railway practice to locate stations adjacent to road crossings. Such locations reduced labour costs as the station staff could control the crossing gates, thereby eliminating the need for an isolated gatekeeper and the cost of a residence for the occupant. One puzzling aspect of the period up to 1892 was the location of a level crossing in the vicinity of Ashfield station.¹⁹ From the information available, it would appear that a pedestrian crossing was located in 1856, and maybe in 1855, at the Sydney end of the Parramatta-bound platform. Did it join the area in the vicinity of the present Wood Street on the northern side with the vicinity of the present Brown Street on the southern side?²⁰ Well, there is not much evidence to let us know. The 1857 station arrangement plan, which shows the layout of various tracks, did not indicate the presence of a level crossing. Neither do plans dated 1875 and 1884.

When the second, main line railway platform was constructed in 1856 for the new, duplicated line, staggered platforms were used and there was an at-grade crossing, approximately 12 feet wide, between the two platforms. This provided the only pedestrian access from the southern side of the railway corridor to the new platform on the northern side, which was used by Sydney-bound trains. Whether that crossing was used by horses and wagons/carts is unknown.

There are conflicting pieces of information about a vehicular level crossing in the vicinity of the station, apart from the pedestrian and barrow crossing between the two staggered platforms. According to one press article in 1872, there was a crossing at the station, but the location is unstated. The article said that a "letter (was received) from the Public Works Department (Railway Branch) stating that the crossing on the railway line at the Ashfield station has been closed against all vehicles".²¹ Such a crossing may have been at Bland Street, but maybe not. Maybe the article referred to the crossing between the two staggered platforms? Wherever the crossing was located, it was closed in 1872, according to the press article. John Forsyth, the former State Rail Archives Officer, wrote that the level crossing was indeed located at Bland Street, but was closed in 1879 – not 1872.²² Forsyth's remark was based on an entry in the 1879 *Annual Report* of the Commissioner, which stated that the level crossing gates at Ashfield were "removed and re-erected at Alt Street".²³

¹⁹ The so-named Higginbotham and Robinson map of 1883 shows no vehicular crossings of the rail corridor at either Bland Street or Alt Street.

²⁰ It was not until the 1970s that Brown Street was extended past the entry to the railway goods yard and linked up with Holden Street. In other words, Brown Street terminated at and alongside the railway corridor boundary. See R. & N. Irving, "Some Ashfield Town Centre Street Histories", *Ashfield and District Historical Society Journal* No. 17, 2008, p. 133.

²¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19th September 1872, p. 3.

²² J. Forsyth, *Station Information A to F*, unpublished manuscript, State Rail, 1997, p. 21.

²³ Commissioner for Railways, *Annual Report 1879*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1880, Appendix, p. 7.

Adding to the fishiness, Ashfield Council held a meeting on 6th May 1878 and considered a motion “moved by Alderman Lawrence, seconded by Alderman Clissold, and carried unanimously ‘That a deputation of the whole Council wait on the Minister for Works to secure a safe crossings over the railway in Ashfield’ “. ²⁴ If we had just a bit more information, we would know what was going on!

Leigh Stokes reviewed the evidence and states:

“the 1890s Higginbotham and Robinson’s map shows Bland Street terminated at Elizabeth St (as it did in 1859) and did not extend to the railway boundary. Therefore, I don't think the it's worth speculating that "such a crossing may have been at Bland Street, but maybe not." Nor can John Forsyth's claim about a Bland St crossing that you report be correct, if the Robinson’s map is accepted as accurate. The Robinson’s map also shows that Station Street (running parallel to the tracks along the northern side of the station) did not exist in the 1890s and, if the location of the Sydney-bound platform shown on the map is accurate, Wood Street ran into the side of that platform, and does not align with the barrow crossing between the staggered platforms.”²⁵

What do the official railway records, known as the working plans, say? They do not disclose the existence of a level crossing in the vicinity of the station. However, Deposited Plan No. 402 of the New South Wales Land Registry shows a break in the railway boundary fence line at the end of Charlotte Street in 1878. Was it the mysterious level crossing? Leigh Stokes does not think so. He comments:

“I note the gate (more strictly just an opening in a fence line) in the 1878 'Ashfield Park Estate' plan at the point where Charlotte Street meets the railway. I don't think this indicates a rail crossing because positions of the platforms in the 19th century would have blocked the direct passage of vehicles across the railway line. Therefore, Charlotte Street is an unlikely location for a road crossing when the railway opened in 1855.

More likely, the opening in the fence line simply indicates an access point to railway land. There was an ‘up refuge siding’ (i.e. a subsidiary track to allow faster or more important trains to overtake a train serving local stations) at this location in the 1870s and, hence, a yard area for the transfer of goods between road and rail transport may have been provided. Also, since Station Street did not exist, a path for pedestrians heading east on railway land may have been provided to access Platform No. 1 (the Sydney-bound platform) and the pedestrian crossing to access Platform No. 2 (the Parramatta bound platform).”²⁶

²⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28th May 1878, p. 6.

²⁵ Email from Leigh Stokes, 14th August 2018. The map reference is map/1183, State Library of NSW.

²⁶ Email from Leigh Stokes, 22nd August 2018.

In sum, there is not much certainty to confirm if there was ever a vehicular level crossing near the station. If there was, there is no certainty of its location and opening date, but it seems to have closed either in 1878 or 1879.

What about the level crossing a bit further west at Alt Street? From the existing maps, it would appear that a level crossing existed at Alt Street from the duplication of the line in 1856 and maybe in 1855.²⁷ If the crossing existed in the 1850s, there is a question about the level of protection to road traffic. If gates were relocated to the Alt Street crossing in 1879, what did they replace – nothing? Once again, there is conflicting evidence about its opening, but not about its closure.

Why was the Alt Street crossing closed in 1892? It was the policy of the Chief Commissioner to eliminate level crossings as part of the track quadruplication works. Parliament had considered a Railway Level Crossing Bill in 1891 which would have allowed the Department to close level crossings without any community consultation, but the Bill did not get passed in its original form and not in 1891.²⁸ The situation had somehow been resolved by 1892 and the Alt Street closure proceeded.

1864 – NEW WAITING SHED

At the time of the opening of the railway in 1855, no waiting room accommodation was provided for travellers at Ashfield.

Small waiting sheds were approved in 1864 at Ashfield, Granville and Burwood stations. The one at Ashfield was allegedly erected on the original platform serving trains proceeding to Parramatta, thus rectifying the omission of any form of waiting room in the 1855 building.

All three waiting sheds were built by different, private contractors, with Mathew Jamieson signing the contract for the Ashfield structure on 2nd November 1864. Their construction was evidence that passenger traffic on the suburban line was increasing. The following list showing the number of passengers who travelled on the southern and western railways and demonstrates the increase:

- 1856 350,006
- 1867 300,000
- 1858 313,000
- 1859 331,000
- 1860 405,000
- 1861 423,000
- 1862 446,000
- 1863 426,000 &

²⁷ Map by J. H. Knapp dated 15 August 1856, Mitchell Library Map Collection, reference No. maps/0132.

²⁸ *Daily Telegraph*, 19th January 1891, p. 3.

- 1864 442,000.²⁹

In 1865, Charles Bailey was awarded a contract to build steps and provide a coping for the Parramatta-bound platform. This suggests that the 1855 open-fronted timber platform was replaced by an earth-filled platform in 1865.

1874-76 – THE FIRST REPLACEMENT BUILDING

The suburb of Ashfield was expanding quickly, as indicated by the incorporation of the local government area of Ashfield in 1871.³⁰ Harper and Peek, local historians, wrote that, in regard to the proclamation of Ashfield as a borough on 28th December 1871, “the greatest single factor in Ashfield’s promotion to municipal status was the coming of the railway and the station at Ashfield”.³¹

In addition to the incorporation of the local area in 1871, it would be reasonable to state that the growth of the Ashfield geographic area was also manifested in the decision by the Railway Department to demolish the 1855 platform building and provide a larger structure with expanded passenger facilities. There is just one niggly question. Was the initiative by the Railway Department also based on any other factor than an awareness of the increase in the local population? Was the Department also prompted by the naming of the thoroughfare serving the station on the southern side as “Hercules Street” in 1872? It was named after Sir Hercules Robinson, the Colonial Governor between 1872 and 1879. He was a strong advocate of railway construction and, while not a friend of the Government of Henry Parkes, Robinson had great public support. Was the Railway Department also prompted to or asked to build a replacement station structure following the auspicious name of the public street to the station? May be or may be not?

There is one other important aspect to keep in mind. The new station building at Ashfield was just one project of what subsequently turned out to be a series of new station buildings and additions to existing structures on the Redfern-Strathfield rail corridor, including new buildings at Newtown and Petersham as well as a new station being opened at Stanmore. Platforms were being extended at several stations. On the other hand, the Ashfield structure was the very first intermediate station on the Sydney-Homebush corridor to receive a substantially larger and far more attractive replacement building. No matter what the answer, the financial scandal was not related to the reasons for the reconstruction of new buildings in the 1870s but to the demolition of the 1870s buildings at Ashfield, Newtown, Petersham and elsewhere for the 1892 track quadruplication project – each having a productive life of 15-20 years or so.

²⁹ *Sydney Mail*, 16th September 1865, p. 5.

³⁰ *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 16th December 1871, p. 1331.

³¹ E. N. Harper and N. Peek, *A Triangle of Land*, Ashfield and District Historical Society, 1988, p. 74.

At Ashfield, John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief for Railways, approved on 4th November 1874 a two-storey, charming but utilitarian, combined residence/office on the Parramatta-bound platform.³² The new building was highly visible and placed so as to provide an ocular terminus for people walking along Hercules Street towards the station from the now-named Liverpool Road. Roughly speaking, the building showed some Gothic design influences. The 12 feet wide platform awning extended the full length of the main platform building. It was supported by timber columns towards the edge of the platform with ornate, timber awning brackets. On the Hercules Street side, there existed an eight feet wide awning supported by attractive paired timber posts and an elegant frieze under the awning. This new building made Ashfield the only station in the history of the New South Wales railway system to have an original combination office/residential structure replaced by a second combination structure, though the two buildings were of different designs – the first being a single-storey affair and the second being a two-storey creature.

To a novice railway historian, the replacement of one combination structure with another might be a nice, interesting fact and that represented the end of the story. However, to a veteran railway historian who may have examined extensively station buildings over a long time, the “fact” might just be reflecting another aspect of railway bureaucracy in the 19th century. It may well be that the Railway Department was forced or coerced by some external person or entity to provide a new station building at Ashfield, taking into account that the street which served the station was named in honour of the Colonial Governor. The railway bureaucrats usually implemented requests from their political masters and it may be, in this instance, that a new building was approved in accordance with that instruction but, as a protest at being forced to incur an unwanted expenditure, the Railway Department decided against providing a new design but instead provided an existing design that John Whitton was phasing out use. There is a bundle of other similar occurrences at other locations which can be classified under the name of departmental revenge. What happened at Ashfield may in fact be an addition to the bundle.

The reader needs to keep in mind that the year, 1874, was the last year in the 1870s that featured the use of a suite of designs of platform buildings that Whitton had consistently approved and implemented from 1858 on new lines. During this 1858-1874 period, Whitton had used a design policy that contained two different styles - one a combination of office and residence to a functional design for smaller locations and the second to a Georgian design for more important locations. The design of the 1874 approved building at Ashfield represented a transition of style from the former Georgian towards the Gothic school of architecture, with the gabled roofs being the dominant design influence. Does that not make a person knowledgeable in the political context of railway administration in New South Wales a little suspicious?

³² A sketch of the 1874 approved building appears in W. A. Bayley, *Sydney Suburban Steam*, Bulli, Austrail Publications, no date, p. 10.

It is time to come back from the world of conjecture to one of reality. What did the new Ashfield look like? The two bedrooms upstairs in the 1874 structure featured a gabled roof transverse to the main roof. The building was of brick construction with sandstone applied to all door and window openings and building quoins, with cement mortar, plus sandstone window sills, paired semi-glazed doors facing the platform and an uncluttered slate roof. The building was 108 feet in length. There was then a gap of 40 feet; then, a free-standing pavilion, 14 feet long by 22 feet deep, also with a gabled roof but transverse to the main building. It contained a room for the porters and a male toilet.

In the 1855 building, there were no facilities for waiting passengers. This was remedied in the 1874 building. The rooms from the Sydney end in the replacement facility were:

- Ladies' waiting room with toilet at the rear,
- General waiting room with an enclosed booking office,
- Post and telegraph office, &
- (detached) porters' room/male toilet.

Accommodation for the Station Master and his family was considerably enlarged, compared to the 1855 dwelling. On the ground floor, there were two "private" rooms as well as a kitchen and scullery. Upstairs, there were two bedrooms. From 1870, the Station Master also became the Post Master and the post office at Ashfield was located at the railway station in a free-standing building. The post office remained at the railway station until at least 1878.³³ It was in that year that John Forsyth, the former Railway Archives Officer, wrote that a detached booking office opened at the station. Possibly, it was located on the Sydney-bound platform, but Forsyth omits to state the location.³⁴

Tenders initially closed on 24th November 1874 but were called again ending on 2nd February 1875. The contract was awarded on 10th February 1875 to George Michael, who was a general contractor, but the new building was not completed until after July 1876 because of the difficulties incurred with the foundations.³⁵ The building cost £2,986/18/7. Ashfield station building was the only railway structure that George Michael erected. While Michael was awarded the contract in February, he did not sign the plan accompanying the construction agreement until 9th May 1875.

³³ *Cumberland Mercury*, 19th January 1878, p. 4. From the time of the opening of the station in 1855, the Ashfield post office, which had had opened in January 1856, was located "about quarter of a mile from the railway station" and, after the transfer post office from the railway station, it was located about half way along Hercules Street for many decades until it was closed, the property sold off and post office rented accommodation in the Ashfield Mall. See S. and R. Coupe, *Speed the Plough – Ashfield 1788 – 1988*, Ashfield Municipal Council, 1988, p. 69.

³⁴ J. Forsyth, *Metropolitan Main and Branch Lines – Sydney to Granville*, Part One, 2005, pp. 55 & 56, unpublished manuscript held in the Resource Centre of the Australian Railway Historical Society

³⁵ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 30th October 1874 No. 244 page 3262, *NSW Government Gazette*, 6th November 1875, No. 250, p. 3333, *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 11th March 1876, p. 21 and *Cumberland Mercury*, 29th April 1876, page 2.

In reporting the completion of the building, the press said that “the want of a better railway station was for a considerable time much desired at Ashfield” and it was pointed out that the suburb had “numerous residences of a superior order”.³⁶ An artists’ impression of the station appeared in the press, this being a rare feature relating to new station buildings. The completion of the Ashfield building was another success story for the Railway Department because it wanted local residents to believe that the station structure being provided was the best on the railway system and reflected favourably on the local community. This was achieved at Ashfield where the local newspaper stated that the building was “nicely arranged”, that there was “excellent workmanship throughout” and that the “suitability of the design commanded approval.”³⁷

The Parramatta-bound platform on which the new building was erected measured 300 feet by 12 feet. At the rear of the platform, the timber pickets followed the much rarer concave design rather than the far more widely used horizontal form. The attractiveness of the picket fence was interrupted by the ugly use of corrugated iron sheets on a timber frame for the 40 feet between the main building and the detached pavilion. Corrugated iron sheets were also used for fencing on the roadside of the building to connect the two structures. This stupid decision entirely detracted from the attractiveness of the main building to approaching train users from Hercules Street. Why did the Department do that? It was a Departmental policy to use iron sheets to connect any subsidiary structures with the main platform structure. The unfortunate practice continued until 1950. The universal application of the policy suggested that a physically blind or unaesthetically trained person was in charge of platform fencing policy.

As at July 1876, the new station building at Ashfield was “nearly completed”.³⁸ This prompted jealous rumblings from residents of neighbouring suburbs. For example, the people of Burwood became envious of the new railway station at Ashfield. The jealousy was captured in the following press article:

“We have had occasion to speak of this suburb (i.e. Burwood) in former issues, and more especially dwelt on the non-accommodation for ladies at the railway station; and it seems some notice has been taken of the remarks by the Executive. We hear it is contemplated to have a station which will rival Ashfield and, as the passenger traffic now seems equal, or nearly so, for Burwood appears ahead this last month”.³⁹

1879-1884 - IMPROVEMENTS

³⁶ Journal, *ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15th July 1876, p. 5.

³⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15th July 1876, p. 5.

At this time, the two platforms were staggered with of Sydney-bound platform extending eastward of the Sydney end of the Parramatta-bound platform – an arrangement that had existed from 1856.

Graham Harper, Signalling and Safeworking Historian, indicates that:

“The first signalling at Ashfield occurred around 1879 when a then-called ‘block hut’ (later called a signal box), made by Hudson Brothers of Redfern, was provided at the Sydney end of the Parramatta-bound platform. This rudimentary structure was installed to give shelter for the block telegraph instruments, i.e. safety equipment insuring against train collisions. No interlocking was installed, the home signals being the traditional two-arm station semaphore. The absence of interlocking equipment indicates that the track points and the signals were independently operated”.⁴⁰

Harper adds that:

“the interlocking of track points and signals arrived at Ashfield on 28th August 1884, when a new signal box was provided off the Sydney end of the Sydney-bound platform and opposite the end of Hercules Street. This box had 12 levers and controlled distant, home and starting signals in each direction, two main line crossovers and points to a siding each on the Up side (i.e. the direction towards Sydney) and the Down side (i.e. the direction from Sydney). The signal box only lasted until 28th February 1892”.⁴¹

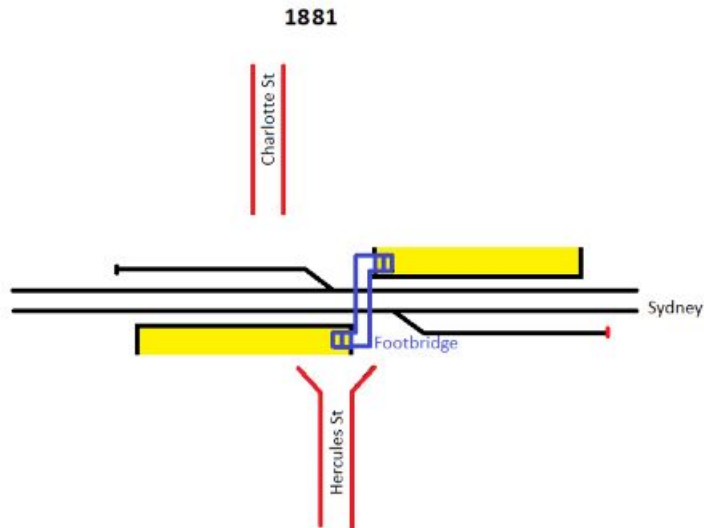
In 1880, John Forsyth, the former State Rail Archives Officer, wrote that unspecified, significant “improvements” were made to the station. They must have been significant as they cost £1,450 and they are probably the works indicated in the table below.⁴² In 1881, an attractive arched footbridge was built between the two platforms at the Sydney end of the Parramatta-bound platform.⁴³ When the footbridge was made redundant in 1892, it was dismantled and re-erected at Honeysuckle. However, the level crossing between the two platforms was retained for use by station staff conveying parcels on barrows to and from the Sydney-bound platform.

⁴⁰ Email from Graham Harper dated 12th June 2018.

⁴¹ Email from Graham Harper dated 12th June 2018. This was an example of an expensive asset having a relatively short life – in this case eight years – prior to demolition.

⁴² J. Forsyth, *Historical Notes on Main Suburban line*, Vol. 1, State Rail Authority, 1981, p. 55.

⁴³ The Minister for Public Works stated in Parliament on 28th January 1881 but the footbridge was then under construction and would be erected "as soon as possible". See *The Daily Telegraph*, 29th January 1881, p. 6.



The Railways created its own urban passenger demand by establishing a station at Ashfield but, in the following 30 years or so, it pretty much provided additional infrastructure to support the ever-growing passenger traffic. Luckily, there is evidence between 1878 and 1885 gives a clear indication of the effort made by the railway administration to improve facilities at Ashfield. Below is a table of the improvements for those nine years.

TABLE: ASHFIELD RAILWAY STATION 1878-1885, IMPROVEMENTS

YEAR	NATURE OF IMPROVEMENTS
1878	new booking office erected and wicket gate installed
1879	Block signals erected; both platforms lengthened; waiting shed erected on Sydney-bound platform; ladies' waiting room erected; new steps to station approach; additional fencing of railway land & rainwater tank fixed to office
1880	six new signals erected; new lamps erected; new toilet closet provided & additional station nameboards affixed
1881	Name of station written in lamps (all stations between Sydney and Strathfield similarly provided) & lamp erected at station entrance
1882	Gas laid on to station and residence; ticket office enlarged & signal box enclosed
1883	two rooms added to Station Master's house; small gates inserted into fencing; new signal box erected & additional gas lamps supplied to platforms
1884	Starting signals for both platforms renewed; new interlocking apparatus and signals fixed & gas used to illuminate home and starting signals
1885	Dry rubble wall erected near urinals; additional toilet closet on Sydney-bound platform; additional picket fencing erected & platforms "tar-paved" by contract

SOURCE: *Annual Reports 1878-1885, Appendices, Sydney, Government Printer, 1879-1886*

Surprisingly, the *Annual Report* for 1882 did not list the provision of the attractive footbridge between the two platforms. No further official documentation is provided in *Annual Reports* after 1885 relating to station infrastructure. Nevertheless, the above table does show a commitment to undertake improvements constantly, in line with passenger traffic growth. It was in the next decade – the 1890s – that departmental philosophy to provide for growth in passenger demand to a new and positive direction.

1891–1902 – THE ATTEMPT AT CREATING AN URBAN PASSENGER IDENTITY

1891-1894 – THE SECOND REPLACEMENT STATION – A NEW STATION BUILDING DESIGNED FOR THE REDFERN-HOMEBUSH TRACK QUADRUPPLICATION PROJECT – FIVE PLATFORMS & FIVE PLATFORMS AT ASHFIELD

The major railway civil engineering project in 1891 was the amplification of the main line tracks between Sydney and Homebush stations. 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.

All traces of the previous Ashfield station were removed, including:

- The two staggered platforms (replaced by three parallel platforms – two island and one side platform),
- All platform buildings,
- The 1881 inter—platform footbridge, &
- Removal of all existing boundary fencing.

The design philosophy had changed completely with the introduction of the 1891-approved station buildings, as manifested by:

- The adoption of a uniform platform building design and station layout stations,
- The use of subways for all platform access,
- The use of off-platform booking and parcels offices,
- The engagement of the narrowest platform buildings ever approved,
- The introduction of platform vegetation, &
- The construction of masonry walls to replace boundary fencing.

In January 1891, the Commissioners released detailed arrangements for the construction of the track quadruplication between Redfern station and Strathfield. For the new stations, Eddy insisted on a new design, which would emphasise the section of track 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.⁴⁴ Using the 1884 configuration of platforms at Redfern as a template, he changed the layout of tracks at almost all stations between Macdonaldtown and

⁴⁴ 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.

Homebush to the same as at Redfern, namely a centre, island platform which was flanked by two side platforms.⁴⁵ At all stations but Stanmore, Petersham and Strathfield, he 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. Narrow platform buildings were utilised to minimize the amount of land that had to be purchased to provide for the expansion in the width of the rail corridor from two to four tracks through the stations.

In January 1891, details of the proposed re-arrangement of the railway lines at Ashfield have been forwarded to the local authorities. By this proposal, the then existing railway premises had been abolished and a new station erected “on the other side of the line”, and an off-platform booking office and waiting-room on the southern side, though the press reported the booking office to be located on the northern side of the station.⁴⁶ Both reports were correct as brick, off-platform booking offices were erected on both sides of the railway corridor. The off-platform booking office on the southern side was situated at the visual end of Hercules Street, in the exact position of the 1872-approved building before its demolition.⁴⁷

The plan for the 1891 off-platform booking office on the southern side survives and indicates that it was a very attractive, featuring;

- Brickwork walls 14 inches thick,
- Sandstone quoins,
- Sandstone window sills,
- Slate roof with decorative terracotta ridging,
- Cathedral glass in upper window sashes,
- Pediment over entry doors,
- Soldier bricks, slightly arched, window heads,
- 13 feet ceiling height (compared with 11 feet for platform buildings),
- Decorative, semi-circular fanlight above the entry doors, &
- Ornate, double entry doors with four panels and two circular features at the top.

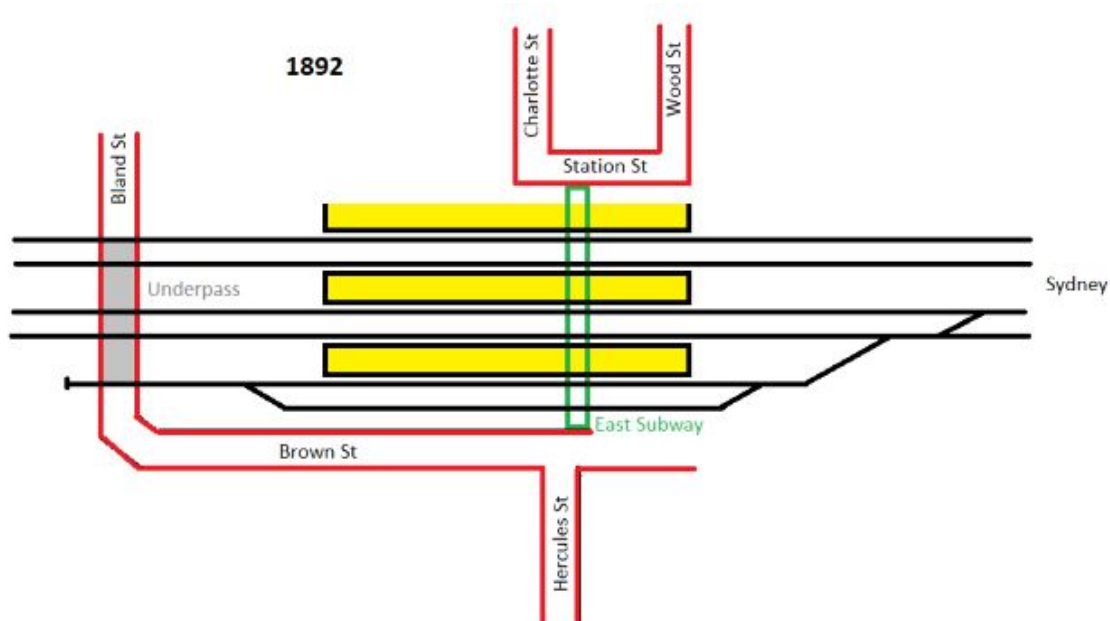
Three platforms, each 400 feet long, were erected, and access was initially stated to be provided by an overhead bridge about 70 feet long. The idea of building a footbridge was quickly abandoned and a pedestrian subway was built towards the Sydney end. A subway for vehicular traffic was constructed at the western end of the station, providing access between Hercules Street on the south and Elizabeth Street

⁴⁵ The exceptions were Ashfield and Strathfield.

⁴⁶ *Evening News*, 6th January 1891, p. 3.

⁴⁷ There is a photograph showing a steam tram proceeding along Hercules Street with the booking office behind the tram. See D. Keenan, *The Rockdale and Enfield Lines of the Sydney Tramway System*, Sydney, Transit Press, 1994, p. 26.

on the north, thus providing direct communication between North and South Ashfield.⁴⁸



An important source of information for many aspects of New South Wales railway history is the work of the former Archives Officer, John Forsyth. Unfortunately, in the case of the layout of tracks and platforms at Ashfield in 1892, his work is unintelligible – a view shared by those who have examined his notes of the railway line between Sydney and Granville.⁴⁹ Fortunately, Signalling and Safeworking Historian, Graham Harper, has sorted out the mess and writes that:

“a plan dated 27th June 1892 for track quadruplication shows the platforms were aligned opposite each other centred on Hercules Street, thus eliminating the former staggered platforms. The configuration in that plan provided for a centre island platform flanked by side platforms on each side. The platforms served:

- Platform No. 1 side platform serving the Up Fast line
- Platform No. 2 island platform serving the Down Fast line
- Platform No. 3 other side of the island platform serving the Up Slow line
- Platform No. 4 side platform serving the Down Slow line

However, the 1892 Circular issued for the signalling of the quadruplication through Ashfield station indicated that a new Back Platform Road was provided at the same time. This Back Platform Road converted Platform No. 4

⁴⁸ *Evening News*, 6th January 1891, p. 3.

⁴⁹ See J. Forsyth, *Metropolitan Main and Branch Lines – Sydney to Granville*, Part One, 2005, pp. 55 & 56, unpublished manuscript held in the Resource Centre of the Australian Railway Historical Society

from a single-sided to an island platform – hence the two island platforms and the single sided platform serving the Up Fast line. A similar arrangement existed at Petersham by 1908, though Ashfield was the only station to feature this atypical platform arrangement at the time of track quadruplication in 1892”.⁵⁰

The provision of the Back Platform Road was necessary after the Department of Railways relocated the terminus of many suburban services from Petersham to Ashfield. This relocation was necessary in order to avoid the elimination of the goods yard at Petersham. The provision of the Ashfield Back Platform Road required the platform awning to be extended to serve both sides of the island platform. Photographs showing the widened awning at Ashfield and the otherwise conventional awning for a side platform is shown in *Australian Railway History*, May 2010, page 185.

Island platforms had only been introduced to the New South Wales railway system in 1884 and very few examples had been constructed in that decade. The use of island platforms at Ashfield, together with those at other stations between Redfern and Homebush in 1892, represented the first widespread use of island platforms on the New South Wales railway system. When constructed, there was no covering over the stepways to the two island platforms from the subway, thus making an easy passage for the flow of water into the subway. Covers were provided as part of the 1918 improvements.

Detailed plans for the new Ashfield station buildings were dated 4th September 1891. Chief Commissioner Eddy applied his former exposure to British station design to the stations between Redfern and Homebush. The dominant design feature of the platform buildings 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, but not on the platforms. Every station received a new booking office and all, but Redfern and Newtown, 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 NSW Railways was to provide a booking office on each platform.

Most platform buildings on the system since 1855 were relatively narrow and the very narrow buildings used in the quadruplication project continued the policy of narrow structures. For the next 60 years, island platform buildings were, mostly, no more than 12 feet wide internal, making for a very cramped work environment. The roofs were hipped, covered with Welsh slate and featured brick chimneys. There were posted verandahs, 100 feet long, on the side platforms and with a mixture of

⁵⁰ Email from Graham Harper dated 12 June 2018.

cantilevered brackets and posts on the island platforms. Although the general waiting rooms on the island platforms had doors, they were not heated.

The buildings approved for the quadruplication between Redfern and Homebush introduced some fundamentally new design characteristics for the New South Wales Railways. These were:

- use of a single design for multiple, sequentially-located station buildings,
- introduction of island platforms as the standard for new stations,
- abandonment of floor plans based on transverse entry and replacement with a linear arrangement of rooms and spaces,
- use of low-pitched roofs partially concealed behind a wide fascias,
- substantially longer platform awnings,
- the first widespread use of Marseille pattern, terracotta roof tiles,
- widespread use of bitumen for all platform services,
- introduction of more than one entry point to some stations,
- dominant use of subways and minimal use of footbridges,
- standard composition of stations utilising one island platform flanked by a side platform on each side – with the exception of Ashfield,
- widespread use of brackets in place of vertical posts to support platform awnings (restricted to island platforms),
- first application of decorative timber aprons under window sills,
- contrasting use of materials using brick, off-platform booking offices with Marseille tiled roofs and timber framed and clad platform buildings,
- the first-time male toilets were physically located within the main platform building (previously, located at a detached location),
- introduction of a new style of roof-mounted ventilators above male and female toilets,
- extensive use of vegetation (especially palm trees) to enhance the station experience,⁵¹
- use of long awnings extending beyond the length of buildings (restricted to side platforms) &
- the widespread introduction of vertical, masonry platform walls sometimes with corbelling of the brickwork under the coping, together with the use of concrete featuring a rounded profile for the top of the coping.

The result of the new design was a creation of classy-looking platform buildings that were extremely different to their predecessors prior to 1890. The new design was noted in the Sydney press, with one article stating:

“The last few years have beheld considerable changes in the character of the station and carriage accommodation provided for railway travellers, especially in New South Wales.The carriages on the suburban lines are, in like manner, a decided advance upon those to which suburban residents had

⁵¹ Lewisham station won many prizes in the annual Railway garden competition in the early years of the 20th century.

been previously accustomed and have done much towards increasing the popularity of Ashfield, Burwood, and other suburban localities as places of residence.the improvement in station construction has kept pace with that of carriage-building and, although Sydney, as yet, possesses no railway station comparable with the Midland terminus in London, or the mammoth stations at Birminham, Liverpool, and elsewhere in the old country, the various stations erected during the last few years on our suburban and other lines represent all the latest improvements in railway architecture. Those who remember the old station at Newtown (i.e. the 1855 building, which was the same design as that at Ashfield) can best realise the contrast between the accommodation it afforded and that at the command of those using the new station. Everywhere the spirit of progress is observable, and the Railway Commissioners, in a true business-like spirit, lose no opportunity of improving the station accommodation at the various points where the stream of passenger traffic is largest, especially in the tourist districts, as at Bowral, Katoomba, and other popular resorts. This ceaseless attention to the requirements of travellers has done much to place our railway business on a stable foundation and prepare the way for a largely increased amount of passenger traffic, when the Colony shall have recovered from the disastrous effects of the period of adversity, which has so long hindered its natural rate of progress".⁵²

There was a considerable difference between relatively low levels of capital for works on new lines and the higher amount of capital available for renewals on existing lines. While Parliament controlled the former, the Commissioners had access to their own funding sources for projects involving existing lines. However, even for existing lines, the pot of money was limited. Member of Parliament, David Scott asked the Colonial Treasurer about the materials to be used in the buildings between Redfern and Homebush for the track quadruplication. "Is it a fact that the Railway Commissioners, after accepting tenders for erecting of brick station buildings and awnings supported by iron columns and lattice girders, at Eveleigh (current Redfern), Macdonaldtown, Newtown and Summer Hill, caused fresh plans of wooden buildings to be prepared leaving out almost the whole of the brickwork and ironwork? Have the contractors received instructions to erect the buildings and awnings of wood and has he approved of the substitution of wood for brick and iron in these buildings?"

Bruce Smith, the Treasurer, replied "I am informed that it is a fact that the original tenders that were accepted for these buildings have been modified. It was found that little or no progress was being made with the brick structures, owing to the difficulty in getting bricks for face work and, in order to expedite the construction, the tenders were amended so as to provide for the booking offices only of brick, the remainder of the buildings having brick foundations and timber sides. The awnings and roofs will

⁵² *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 18th May 1895, p. 1009.

be as originally specified. The alteration greatly expedites the completion of the works, and the cost is reduced. It is considered that, in appearance, the altered buildings will be quite equal to those originally designed, and there will be ample accommodation”.

The story about the limited availability of bricks may have been true as a huge number of bricks were provided to provide boundary fencing, as was the case along each side of the rail corridor at Ashfield. Two other possibilities appear. Number one is that money may have been limited and timber provided a cheaper option. Number two is that Chief Commissioner Eddy and James Angus, the Engineer for Existing Lines, intentionally provided timber structures in an attempt to assuage the concerns of the very conservative engineering fraternity within the New South Wales Railways, who probably thought that large brick buildings on island platforms would develop cracks through the constant and simultaneous running of trains on both sides of the structures. A post-modernist assessment would suggest that there is no way of knowing for certain why timber was used so extensively on the platform buildings for the quadruplication works.

Tenders closed on 7th September 1891, for the construction of station buildings at Lewisham, Ashfield and Homebush.⁵³ Messrs. Alex Dean and Sons was the successful contractor and they built the passenger station buildings at Lewisham, Summer Hill, Ashfield and at Burwood and Charles Palmer built the structure at Homebush.⁵⁴ Dean did not sign the plan until 8th December 1891. The contract price for the station buildings was £3,903, though the actual price was £4,464. In 1890, Dean had previously constructed the large, two-storey refreshment room at Moss Vale, which stands in 2018. Originally, the Commissioners proposed a 70 feet long pedestrian bridge for platform access, but the plans were changed to provide a single subway.⁵⁵

The construction of the attractive, brick, stone and tile booking and parcels office, including that on the Station Street on the northern side at Ashfield and on Brown Street on the southern side, put in some doubt the idea any notion that cost-cutting was important in the quadruplication project, though the booking offices were uniformly smallish. Terracotta tiles were also rarely used on New South Wales platform buildings and below is a list of the few instances where this product was applied before 1920.

- • 1891 Summer Hill
- • 1893 Lewisham, Petersham and Ashfield
- • 1906 Otford
- • 1910 Kogarah

⁵³ *Daily Telegraph*, 7th September 1891, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 15th September 1891, Issue no. 596, p. 7369 and the *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 19th September 1891, p. 646.

⁵⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 9th January 1891, p. 5.

- • 1911 Harris Park
- • 1912 Mortdale
- • 1915 Waratah

With one exception, the above nine instances were all smallish ticket offices or other small structures. All were also placed directly on platforms. The only exception relating to both size and position was the overhead booking and parcels office at Waratah and even that building was of very moderate size. In summary, less than 1% of all New South Wales Railways station buildings had tiled roofs.

The new four tracks opened on 3rd July 1892, though some of the new platforms opened earlier in the year.⁵⁶ Graham Harper advises that:

“The signal box of 28th February 1892 at Ashfield was introduced with track quadruplication and the lever frame was probably at least four times the size of the one it replaced. It was located near the Sydney end of the Parramatta-bound platform. It controlled all points and signals in the vicinity, but was replaced by yet another signal box on 19th November 1899, in conjunction with a remodelling of the yard layout.

The 1899 signal box controlled all the signals and points at Ashfield – left and right-handed connections between the Fast and Slow lines, access to the terminal road, trailing crossovers in the Fast and Slow lines as well as access to the goods yard. The new signal box was erected in an endeavour to eliminate delays resulting from the blockage of the suburban lines. It was located near the site of the later power signal box, and was closed when that power box was brought into use on 22nd May 1927. The quick succession of signal boxes in 1884, 1892 and 1899 reflect the significant growth in the number of trains passing through Ashfield station”.

It was at the time of the track quadruplication that the Alt Street level crossing, not far from the western end of the platforms, was closed and a pedestrian subway provided towards the eastern end of the platforms at Ashfield.⁵⁷ Vehicular crossing of the corridor was transferred much nearer to the station via the present Brown Street subway in 1892.⁵⁸ Clearly, it was Eddy’s intention to eliminate all at-grade level crossings, which was a great step forward in safety for both train passengers and local residents.

In 1872, there had been an interesting juxtaposition of the then new Ashfield station and the naming of Hercules Street. Strangely, a similar episode took place when in

⁵⁶ The new Up Fast platform was opened on 21st February and the new Down Fast platform was opened on 13 March 1892.

⁵⁷ *Evening News*, 4th November 1907, p. 7.

⁵⁸ *The Australian Star*, 15th September 1892, p. 7.

1894. At virtually the same time as the new, five-platform station was opened, the thoroughfare paralleling the line on the southern side was named Wood Street, after the Mayor of Ashfield Municipal Council, Albert Brown, who held that office in 1891 and 1892.⁵⁹ Now was that a coincidence?

1895 - PROVISION OF A MORTUARY

Thomas Firth approved on 17th December 1895 a small mortuary, eight feet by seven feet, of timber construction on platform No. 4 at Ashfield. The plan unusually specified Baltic Pine for the roof barges. As an economy measure, only the external, rusticated weatherboards and the inside of the door were to be painted. Although not classified as a mortuary, a “shelter for coffins” was also approved for construction at Petersham under the stepway leading to platform No. 1. It was also eight feet wide and possessed a barrel-shaped, iron roof. At that time, plans for morgues also existed for Newtown, Sydenham and Kogarah.

In 1896, the roof of the Ashfield pedestrian subway was lined with sheets of corrugated iron. This followed a request to the Commissioners in November of the previous year by the Ashfield Municipal Council in order to eliminate water seepage.⁶⁰ The Commissioners also gave permission to Council to erect a shelter shed for cabmen on railway land at Ashfield station near the Brown Street booking office.⁶¹ It was located at the present position of the 1919-opened parcels office, but was relocated slightly when the parcels office was built.

From 1899, the terminus of the steam, and later electric, tramway from Enfield, Mortlake and Cabarita terminated in Brown Street outside the railway station and adjacent to the goods yard.⁶² In 1929, a loop of line was constructed for the tram in the Brown Street station forecourt to facilitate turning trams. The one casualty of this work was the good shed, which was demolished that year. It had been erected in 1881.⁶³ Access from the northern side to the tram terminus would have been provided by the station subway from 1892 but it is a puzzle how people reach the goods yard for 1892, apart from the use of the Alt Street level crossing.

1902 – MODIFICATION TO THE BROWN STREET BOOKING OFFICE

⁵⁹ R. & N. Irving, “Some Ashfield Town Centre Street Histories”, *Ashfield and District Historical Society Journal* No. 17, 2008, p. 122.

⁶⁰ *Evening News*, 19th November 1895, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Australian Star*, 5th December 1895, p. 7.

⁶² There is a photograph showing the tram terminus in D. Keenan, *The Rockdale and Enfield Lines of the Sydney Tramway System*, Sydney, Transit Press, 1994, p.40. The terminus disappeared in 1948 when the tramway system was closed.

⁶³ There was a direct connection between the tramway and the railway via the goods yard which permitted the change-over of the steam trams to enable them to proceed to workshops when they were required overhaul or repairs.

No provision was made in the 1892 platform buildings for parcels business. It must be assumed such traffic was conducted in the Station Master's office, another building somewhere at the station or not conducted at all at the station.

In 1902, a four feet long parcels counter was installed in the booking office on the Brown Street side of the corridor.

1903-1919 – THE FAILURE TO ALIGN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES WITH THE RISING PASSENGER DEMAND

1912-1919 – THE QUEST FOR A THIRD REPLACEMENT STATION AND THE RESULTANT NEW WORKS

By the turn of the century, congestion at the street entrances to the station was happening on a daily basis.⁶⁴ The pedestrian chaos also occurred in the same period on the platforms, with the situation reflected in the following press article in 1900:

“The arrangements at Ashfield for the transfer of passengers from the 5 o'clock train from Parramatta (which runs through (i.e. non-stop) from Ashfield to Sydney) to the local train appear to be in need of revision. A large number of workmen travel by the Parramatta train, and change at Ashfield for stations between there and Sydney, and the officials have found it impossible to prevent such a rush as renders the examination of tickets absolutely impossible. The time allowed from the transfer from one train to another is too short and the men, in their anxiety to get on board, broke down barriers, and didn't trouble about showing their tickets. The incident has been so often repeated that police assistance had to be called in. The only way of overcoming the difficulty appears to be to delay the local train for a few minutes, or to time the Parramatta train to stop at several of the principal stations between Ashfield and Sydney”.⁶⁵

This increased patronage at Ashfield also was reflected in the installation of two crossovers in late 1899 at the Sydney end of the platforms and the construction of a new signal box.⁶⁶ Despite frequent complaints, the Department proposed no remedy to the congestion for the next decade after 1899. The Commissioners agreed in 1903 that improvements were required. In 1903, they were recorded as indicating that “the Ashfield station required alterations and consequently the main approach would be widened, and the gates at the bottom of No. 1 platform would undergo alterations”.⁶⁷ It is unknown whether the works were carried out.

In 1912, the Chief Commissioner indicated to an Ashfield Municipal Council deputation that proposed alterations would provide for a new central subway or overhead bridge, in addition to the present subway, which would give additional

⁶⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 30th January 1900, p. 4.

⁶⁵ *Australian Star*, 20th November 1900, p. 6.

⁶⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 24th October 1899, p. 4.

⁶⁷ *Australian Star*, 25th November 1903, p. 7.

means of getting to and from the platforms.⁶⁸ However, the work did not proceed “owing to pressure of urgent works”.⁶⁹ Ashfield Council had had a gut full of the delay and, in December 1912, the press reported the failure of the Commissioners to remedy the need for parcels and luggage to be stored in the mortuary on platform No. 1 and recommend the construction of a new parcels office between the cab shelter and the booking office.⁷⁰ The taxi rank for, initially, hansom and other horse-drawn types and, later, for motor vehicles was located in Brown Street near the 1919-built, extant parcels office.⁷¹

The residents of Ashfield had been complaining for over 12 months in 1912 about the inadequate facilities and accommodation provided at the local railway station and, as little or nothing has been done to improve them, the Mayor (Alderman A. Crane) brought the matter before his Council in the form of a minute in 1913.⁷² The Mayor in 1913 pointed out that:

“no notice whatever seemed to have been taken (by the Railway Department) of the great increase in population, carrying with it, as one of its main services, parcel dispatch and receipt. At the present time, a large number of parcels of all description had to be stacked outside in the open air and even the mortuary on the platform had to be used for parcel and luggage storage. Public access to the office for receipt and dispatch was obtained at one small door, which did not conveniently allow for more than one person at a time and, in addition, was too close to the ticket booking office. What was urgently required was a separate building between the cab shelter and booking office, for which there was ample space. This building should open right into the street and be fitted with a proper and convenient counter. These matters coupled with the seeming disregard of sufficient ingress and egress facilities for passengers, went to prove that, as far as Ashfield railway station was concerned, the Commissioners did not take any interest. It (i.e. the station) was in a most antiquated and inefficient state as regards common, adequate structural convenience for the most important of its uses and services, and he would like to see the entire Council take the matter up by urgent and continual representation to both Commissioner and Minister responsible. The Council adopted the minute unanimously and decided to forward a copy to the Railway Commissioner, Tom Johnson”.⁷³

The major problem with the new design proved to be the existence of only one point of entry to the platforms, which was a subway towards the Sydney end of the station.

⁶⁸ *Sun*, 19th April 1912, p. 12.

⁶⁹ *Sun*, 19th April 1912, p. 12.

⁷⁰ *Evening News*, 12th December 1912, p. 4.

⁷¹ B. Russell, “Some Memories of Ashfield 1917-1933”, *Ashfield and District Historical Society Journal No. 4*, April 1985, p. 39.

⁷² One press report stated that the campaign for station improvements had been going on for five years. See *The Sun*, 19th February 1913, p. 11.

⁷³ *Daily Telegraph*, 2nd January 1913, p. 4.

This inadequacy restricted platform access and formed part of the comments supplied by the local Council in 1891 to the Commissioners – advice that was rejected.⁷⁴ Platform access got progressively worse until pressure was placed on the Commissioners in 1912 to improve the situation.⁷⁵ Perhaps the aldermen of Ashfield Municipal Council tried to coerce the Railway Department by naming the road paralleling the station on the northern side Station Street in about 1912?⁷⁶

After February 1913, Ashfield Council's request for improved platform access and enlarged parcels facilities received no further mention in the Sydney press until 1914. Nevertheless, the Member of Parliament for the electorate of Ashfield, William Robson, raised in the Legislative Assembly in October 1913 the inability of the Commissioners "to carry out much required alterations to deal with the congestion of foot traffic at Ashfield railway station, owing to the lack of funds".⁷⁷ His comment made no immediate impact on obtaining improvements.

The year, 1914, started with a request by the Croydon Vigilance Association to the Commissioners to lengthen the platforms at Ashfield as most trains had to make two stops.⁷⁸ At that time, the platforms were 300 feet long whereas the standard platform length was 520 feet. The Department took no action.

In February 1914, the Commissioners proposed to undertake major alterations to the station, featuring:

- closure of the present 15 feet wide subway at the Sydney-end of the station,
- construction of a new, 12 feet wide subway nearer the centre of the platforms,
- two sets of steps to each platform,
- the extension of the existing booking office on the southern side in the easterly direction over the then existing subway,
- construction of a new, larger parcels office,
- relocation of the existing station buildings in an easterly direction over the existing subway,
- extension of the platforms,
- alterations to the approaches to both sides of the line, &
- provision made for future track amplification.⁷⁹

Heavy rain in March 1914 caused the existing subway to flood. "Over a foot of muddy, slate-coloured water swashed about in the narrow subway leading from the station. In this flood, rubbish and pieces of wood snapped off the bookstall (and)

⁷⁴ *Evening News*, 16th January 1891, p. 8.

⁷⁵ *Evening News*, 9th August 1912, p. 10.

⁷⁶ R. & N. Irving, "Some Ashfield Town Centre Street Histories", *Ashfield and District Historical Society Journal* No. 17, 2008, p. 122.

⁷⁷ NSW, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 52, 4 Geo V, 5th Session, 22nd Parliament, 24th September-15th October 1913.

⁷⁸ *The Sun*, 7th January 1914, p. 2.

⁷⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 20th February 1914, p. 7 and station expenditure card.

floated about”, according to one press report.⁸⁰ The newspaper correctly commented that “this is not the first time that the subway at Ashfield has been transformed into a canal, and the night's storm is likely to add strength to the agitation for improvements at the station.”⁸¹

In June 1915, Ashfield Council requested an increase to the staffing level as the parcels office had to be closed every time there was a rush at the ticket windows, pending the remodelling of the station, which had been “in definitely postponed on account of the war”.⁸² In the circumstances, the Council asked the Commissioners to erect a temporary parcels office in another part of the station.

In September 1915, William Robson, M.L.A., forwarded to the Ashfield Council a copy of a letter from the Acting-Superintendent of Lines, advising that the request for extra accommodation and facilities at the Ashfield railway parcels office had been included in the Railway Commissioners' plan for remodelling the whole station, but that shortage of funds prevented the work being carried out. The Department was in the process of obtaining an estimate of the cost of providing additional parcels accommodation, with the objective of proceeding with that portion of the overall scheme being carried out immediately, if money were available.⁸³ The one project that did proceed was the lengthening of the three platforms.⁸⁴

A free-standing, “temporary” parcels office was approved in 1915 on southern side of the station on the footpath facing Brown Street. The proposed parcels office featured a building influenced broadly by the Federation style, with a gabled roof and an awning over the adjacent footpath supported by “standard” steel, cantilevered brackets. It looked very similar to the present facility that was opened in 1919, though differed in some details. It is unknown whether the 1915 design was built. What is known is that there was no construction work in 1915, 1916 and 1917 to provide the new parcels office. World War One restricted funding for both new and replacement capital works and the projected improvements to Ashfield station were one of many announced works that either proceeded only in part or not at all. Construction started on the small brick parcels office in 1918 on the footpath of Brown Street on the southern side and it appears that it was opened in 1919.

Although the parcels office was not constructed in 1917, the Commissioners did announce in January of that year that a new, pedestrian subway would be built.⁸⁵ Also in 1917, a plan was prepared for the installation of Heywood's Patented Glazing Bars over the stepways from the proposed subway at the western end of the station to the platforms. This was an often-used product that had first been introduced system-wide during World War One and was applied as a roofing product for

⁸⁰ *Evening News*, 21st March 1914, p. 6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Evening News*, 23rd June 1915, p. 6.

⁸³ *Daily Telegraph*, 15th September 1915, p. 15.

⁸⁴ Station Cost Account card.

⁸⁵ *Evening News*, 18th January 1917, p. 5.

awnings and canopies. The evidence indicates that Heywood's Patented Glazing system was not used at Ashfield over the subways. The new subway towards the Parramatta end of the station, including a second booking office, was opened in 1918. While the roof over the eastern stepway to No. 3 and 4 platforms was covered with corrugated iron, those on the western stepways were covered with 16-inch square, asbestos-cement "tiles".

The parcels building on the southern side utilises stretcher bond face brickwork and regular-shaped, rectangular (i.e. not bullnose shaped) bricks on an angle for the window sills. The window heads are slightly arched using soldier bricks. There are four small fan light windows above the front door. Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the structure is the way the steel awning brackets over footpath is supported. The usual concrete or stone corbels were not being utilised and, instead, three bricks sit under the bottom of the steelwork. Also, the awning brackets are set very high on the front wall. Another unusual aspect was the staining of the window frames and front doors rather than the application of paint. Again, 16-inch square asbestos-cement slates with terracotta ridging and terracotta finials covered the roof. Steelwork for the structure was second-hand, being from steel sections from the "Wellington bridge stock at Newcastle, stock at White Bay and W.I. Goulburn". The parcels office was connected to No. 5 platform by a new ramp went back platform was provided in 1927. As railway historian, Dr. Jim Longworth, commented during an inspection on 10th May 2018, the building has the appearance of an "el cheapo" structure.

Not all of the 1914 proposed improvements were implemented. In the end, the following works were carried out or not undertaken:

- An additional, cross-corridor, pedestrian subway at the western end with an underground platform linking all the platforms,
- Covered stepways to all platform for both the eastern and western the subways, except the stepway leading from the eastern subway on Nos. 1 and 2 platforms,⁸⁶
- New parcels office on Brown Street with ramped access to platform No. 5, &
- Abandonment of the relocation of the platform buildings.

⁸⁶ Photograph No. 00209 at the Australian Railway Historical Society archives shows the absence of the stepway.



The photograph shows “el-cheapo” 1917-approved and 1919-built parcels office. It is located in Brown Street on the southern side of the corridor. The unusual structural elements include the use of rectangular bricks for window sills, the use of bricks for the corbels supporting the steel awning brackets and the varnished set of entry doors and window frames. The ramp from the parcels office to platform No. 5 can be seen as well as the temporary control office on the platform, which has been waiting for a permanent replacement for the last 20 years. It is the concave curvature of platform no. 5 that requires all trains to be flagged by station staff. Photograph taken on 14th May 2018.

Automatic signalling of the tracks was introduced towards Sydney on 3rd May 1914 on the local and suburban lines westward also on 3rd of May 1914, and the main line westward on 10th May 1914. These allowed a more frequent train service and were an indication of the growing population of the area at the time.

1920-1928 – THE CREATION OF A PLAN AND STRATEGY TO ADDRESS LONG-TERM PASSENGER DEMAND

PROVISION OF A NEW PLATFORM NO. 5 AND ADDITIONAL TOILETS – SEVEN TRACKS/FIVE PLATFORMS

In the 1920s, Ashfield was a very busy railway station. For example, in 1927 Ashfield was the fifth busiest suburban station. Ticket sales for the top six stations were:

- Rockdale 5,069,300,
- Kogarah 4,069,354,
- Burwood 3,911,543,
- Hurstville 3,873-078,
- Ashfield 3,697,317, &
- Strathfield 3,197,829.⁸⁷

However, passenger traffic at Ashfield rose from 1910 to 1914, then declined or stumbled during the war years from 1915 to 1918. The legislation under which the number of tracks through Ashfield increased from four to six was passed in 1916, when passenger journeys were declining. It is a wonder that the legislation passed Parliament at that time, considering that it was not a time of growth in passenger traffic. Possibly, no Member of Parliament was aware that patronage was in short term decline. Patronage stumbled further during the 1920s and peaked in 1924. There was a further decline until 1931 at the height of the Depression, but then began a steady increase during the 1930s. The statistics below reflect the pattern in patronage:

TABLE: PASSENGER & STAFF GROWTH, ASHFIELD STATION 1910-1933

YEAR	NO. OF STAFF	NO. OF PASSENGER JOURNEYS
1910	19	2,012,475
1912	20	2,473,899
1913	21	2,852,401
1914	23	3,059,931
1915	25	3,008,174
1916	28	2,983,715
1917	28	3,163,844
1918	25	3,102,916
1919	27	3,191,020
1920	30	3,856,884

⁸⁷ *St George Call*, 18th May 1928, p. 1.

YEAR	NO. OF STAFF	NO. OF PASSENGER JOURNEYS
1921	29	4,004,239
1922	29	3,996,731
1923	28	3,921,215
1924	26	4,013,549
1925	27	3,918,712
1926	29	3,717,483
1927	29	3,697,317
1928	33	3,633,400
1929	33	3,683,654
1930	31	3,664,281
1931	22	3,172,487
1932	29	3,687,710
1933	29	3,887 316

SOURCE: *Annual Reports*, Railway Commissioner

The short-term ups and downs in patronage levels at Ashfield at the time of the legislation and electrification opening are not criticisms of the work of Dr John Bradfield. His plan for the improvement of transport in Sydney was focused on the long-term and tackling the transport demands of Sydney and its suburbs over the following decades, not just in the 1910s and 1920s.

The press said in 1922 that it was the outer suburbs of Sydney where passenger growth occurred.⁸⁸ One reporter believed that “many people are gradually leaving the congested suburbs of the metropolitan area and settling in the more distant and healthier ones”.⁸⁹ A lot of passenger trains from Sydney terminated at Ashfield. A year later, Ashfield, the suburb, had a population growth of between 50% And 100%.⁹⁰ There was extensive coverage in the Sydney press about the progress of electrification across the metropolitan network. Interestingly, by the time the six tracks had opened in 1928, the peak in patronage had passed four years previously.

A plan was prepared in November 1925 to provide alterations to the 1890 approved timber platform building on Nos. 3 and 4 platforms. Up until that point, there were only two rooms forming the building, these being, from the Sydney end, a ladies’ waiting room and a general waiting room. The functions of these two rooms were reversed from 1925 to enable a female toilet to be constructed adjacent to the ladies’ waiting room. A “public” toilet, which was departmental code for men, was constructed at the Strathfield end of the building. Initially there was no privacy screen across the entrance, but one was eventually built – not a timber but of brickwork.

⁸⁸ *Sun*, 29th December 1922, p. 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Construction and Local Government Journal*, 2nd May 1923, p. 10.

Robert Ranken was the Engineer-in-Chief for Exiting Lines and he approved on 15th December 1925 the first plan relating to the sextuplication and electrification of the rail corridor at Ashfield. The plan related to the extension of the pedestrian subway at the Parramatta end of the station. The floor of the subway was to be made of three-inch thick bitumen. The wall of the new No. 5 platform was made of precast concrete units, manufactured by the New South Wales Railways. That wall was replaced in 1998. The remainder of the platform walls at Ashfield were made of brickwork.

The construction of retaining walls for the track sextuplication between Macdonaldtown and Ashfield was under way at the end of 1925.⁹¹ In 1926, the former, free-standing booking office on Brown Street (facing Hercules Street) was closed and removed and the ticket office was relocated to the eastern end subway in the second half of the year. Although there is no evidence, it is assumed that the off-platform booking office on the northern side in Station Street was also demolished at this time. The new subway ticket office was excavated from an area opposite the bottom of the stepway leading to the present Nos. 1 and 2 platforms. Thus, from 1926 ticket offices were located in the two subways. In July 1926, a plan was prepared for the relocation of the existing bookstall in the eastern subway to make way for a new ticket collector's cabin. The bookstall, which measured 14 feet by six feet, was moved from a position next to the bottom of the stepway serving the present Nos. 3 and 4 platforms to a similar spot at the bottom of the stepway to platform Nos. 1 and 2. A timber roller shutter "supplied and fitted by contractor" was installed over the counter of the bookstall.

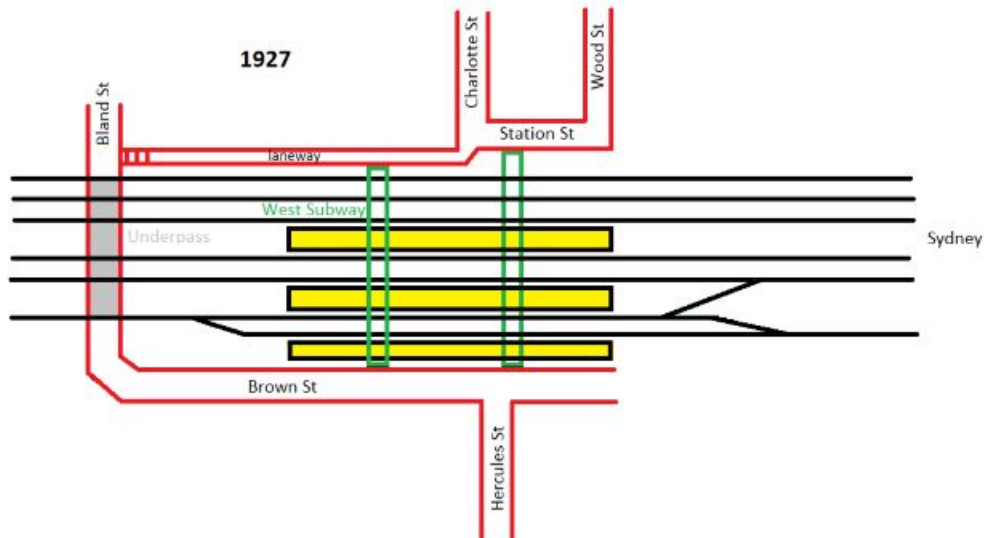
A day after curtailing rail services to Ashfield station, the Railway Department announced that, owing to the demolition in connection with the work of electrification of the platform on the then up main line at Ashfield, number of trains would cease to call at that station as from 19th January 1927.⁹² In May 1927, a photograph appeared in the press of workmen "widening" one of the Ashfield platforms.⁹³ This work involved the demolition of the side platform serving the former Up Fast line and the widening of the former platform serving the Down Fast and Up Slow lines. Toilets were added to the existing platform building on the new Nos. 1 & 2 platforms with the instruction that "suitable old material to be reused". While the six tracks had been opened in May between Illawarra Junction and Ashfield, electrification had yet to be installed.⁹⁴

⁹¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16th November 1925, p. 10.

⁹² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th January 1927, p. 12.

⁹³ *Labor Daily*, 20th May 1927, p. 1.

⁹⁴ *Evening News*, 30th May 1927, p. 7.



Graham Harper explains that:

“Around 1927, a new side platform was erected on the Hercules Street side to serve the Down Slow, later the Down Local line. At the same time, anticipating electrification and more intensive services, Platform No. 4 was allotted to the terminal road, enabling terminating trains to arrive and depart from Sydney without fouling a second line. The same principle can be seen at Lindfield”.⁹⁵

In 1927, an awning was built on the new No. 5 platform, it being supported by “standard”, cantilevered brackets. The awning was demolished in 1998. In March 1927, a plan was issued that specified the use of white ceramic tiles on the walls of the extended subway at the Parramatta end. In addition to the extension of the subway, it was also necessary to connect the subway of the new platform No.5 by the installation of a stepway. Whereas the stepways at the western end to platform Nos. 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 faced the eastern direction, the stepway of the new platform No. 5 faced the western direction and was uncovered. In the middle of 1927, there was a proposal to alter a gate on the present No. 5 platform that allowed direct pedestrian access to Brown Street without the need to use the subway. That access was provided and became very popular. Indeed, Ashfield Municipal Council in 1928 requested that the gate be opened all day, rather than only in the afternoon peak hour.⁹⁶ The outcome of that request is unknown, but the gate survived until 1989.

The table below sets out the changes between the 1892 quadruplication and 1927 sextuplication projects as they relate to the platforms at Ashfield.

TABLE: 1892 AND 1927 PLATFORM ARRANGEMENTS & BUILDINGS

⁹⁵ Email from Graham Harper dated 12 June 2018.

⁹⁶ Ashfield Municipal Council file No. 44771 dated 14 February 1928.

PLATFORM NO.	1892 ARRANGEMENT & BUILDING	1927 ARRANGEMENT & BUILDING
1	Side platform serving the Up Fast line	Demolished
2 and 3	Island platform serving the Down Fast and the Up Slow lines	Platform widened and formed new (present) platform Nos. 1 and 2 – 1892 timber building extant until demolished in 1941
4 and 5	Island platform serving the Down Slow line and a new Back Platform Road	Present platform Nos. 3 and 4 – 1892 timber building lengthened to provide offices and toilets – demolished in 1993 after fire.
Side platform on southern side	Not in existence at that time	Constructed in 1927 as the present platform No. 5 – awning only provided
Booking office	Off platform – located in Brown and Station Streets	Brown and Station Streets booking offices demolished and new booking office provided in eastern subway in 1892

Noteworthy was the fact that the overall width of the railway corridor was not expanded greatly and uniformly with the provision of two additional running lines. In 1892, there were five tracks through the station and this increased to six tracks in 1927. How did they do it? The platform on the extreme northern side of the corridor, which formerly served the Up Fast line, was removed and the new Up Main track was built in its place. The island platforms serving Nos. 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 were reduced in width and the former Back Platform Road in 1927 served the present No. 4 platform. There was room on the extreme southern boundary of the railway corridor to add one additional line and the present No. 5 platform. Interestingly, there were five platforms in the 1892 scheme and five platforms in the 1927 scheme. In essence, the existing, sole side platform in the 1892 scheme on the northern side was simply relocated in the 1927 scheme to the southern side. The implication of the 1927 changes meant that only one single track bridge was required to span the rail overbridge over Bland Street at the western end of the station. The need to squash the additional running lines in the 1927 scheme into the existing corridor was prompted by both the need to restrict funding on any land acquisition proposals and also to opposition from Ashfield Municipal Council and other local interests.

The widening of the rail corridor through Ashfield station for the sextuplication did not require much additional land as six tracks proceeded through the station in the time

of quadruplication between 1892 and 1927. Those six tracks were, by their official nomenclature in 1915, from the northern side:

- Up Main,
- Down Main,
- Up Suburban,
- Down Suburban,
- Back Platform Road, &
- Engine Road.

Graham Harper indicates that:

“With all six lines now virtually completed through Ashfield, no major changes to the track layout or signalling were anticipated and the existing (but decommissioned) 1927 power-operated signal box was installed. Up to that time, the signals and points had been manually operated, but in 1927 the use of an electrically-powered signals and points was utilised for the first time. Initially, the new signal box commenced operation over four roads (meaning railway lines), but very quickly absorbed the new Down and Up Main lines and the renaming of the now Suburban and Local lines. Like its predecessor, it controlled all points and signals at Ashfield including a complex of double crossovers enabling trains to be diverted to other running lines during track possessions or emergencies. This signal box still stands today, although it was decommissioned on 7th June 1982, its functions being the first of several other signal boxes to be taken over by the then new Strathfield Signal Complex.

The transfer crossovers were subsequently altered to two double ladders of single crossovers and were used for more than 20 years. However, they have now all been removed, and the only point work left at Ashfield is that involved in the terminal road access and egress to and from the present platform No. 4.

The modern railway in Sydney, apparently, never requires or will require ad-hoc train diversions because there are never any train failures, injured trespassers or overhead wiring failures – or so they say and pray”.⁹⁷

The Railway Department stated that the tentative date for the introduction of electric train services between Sydney and Homebush was May 1928.⁹⁸ The actual date of electrification of the two local lines between Central Electric and Homebush was on 27th August 1928 while the electrification of the two suburban lines occurred on 22nd

⁹⁷ Email from Graham Harper dated 12th June 2018.

⁹⁸ *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, 27th March 1928, p. 5.

October the same year. The electrification of the two main lines through Ashfield and terminating at Sydney Terminal occurred on 8th October 1955.⁹⁹

1927-1967 THE BROWN STREET ROCKERY

In 1928, extensive correspondence was exchanged between the New South Wales Government Railways and Ashfield Municipal Council about the entry to the vehicular subway from Brown Street. Council claimed that the corner was far too acute and requested the Department to rebuild the corner entry. The Railways declined but Council went ahead and rebuilt the entry. The site today is identified by a cement-rendered, dwarf retaining wall holding back the embankment.¹⁰⁰ Not only was the corner tight to enter the subway, the gradients were steep with Brown Street on a gradient of one in 25 and Bland Street on a gradient of one in 15.

Not only did Council take action itself to replace the retaining wall, it then had a great idea to make the embankment area an attractive place. What prompted the idea of a garden on the railway embankment? Council had already established a garden the opposite side of Brown Street for the entry to the vehicular subway and the construction of a similar garden on the opposite side would have complimented the existing feature. Council's plan was to establish a rockery and it entered into an Agreement (No. A. C. 50611 dated 6th October 1929), which provided for a beautification lease of the embankment area for an annual fee of £2. Council requested that the Railways provide a water supply for the plantings, but nothing happened in that regard. The rockery was established at that time, but it went into decline, possibly when the Depression occurred in the early 1930s.

The evidence suggests that inaction in regard to the rockery existed for a number of decades. In 1956, a resident of The Esplanade at Ashfield wrote to the Railway Commissioner on 1st June 1956 pointing out that the Department staff were dumping rubbish in the area. Before writing to the Commissioner, the resident took up the matter with the Station Master, who was reported as displaying indifference and a "I couldn't care less" attitude to the problem. The outcome of that protest is unknown.

The rockery continued to exist in the 1960s and, in 1965, the Council staff noted that the initial plantings were dead. In an attempt to revive the rockery, Ashfield Council requested once again that the Department provided a water supply. The fact that the rockery had been dormant for some time was reflected in the creation of a new Agreement (No. 55066) between the Department and Council. Correspondence once again flowed frequently between the Railways and Council about the water supply and the Department insisted that Council complete a separate Pipeline Agreement for the provision of a water service using a one-inch diameter pipe

⁹⁹ D. R. Keenan and H. R. Clark, *First Stop Central*, Sydney, Australian Electric Traction Association, 1963, pp. 32 and 33.

¹⁰⁰ See Ashfield Municipal Council file No. 47776 and Railway File No. 27/712-30 dated 23rd August 1928.

extended 240 feet from platform No. 5.¹⁰¹ The work involved the expenditure of £500 capital cost, as well as an annual fee of £2. It would appear that, in 1967, Council decided not to go ahead with the supply of water to the area and the whole idea of the rockery faded away.

On the opposite side of the railway corridor, there is a set of steps that lead from Bland Street to Dengate Avenue. These were built by the Railway Department at the time of the track sextuplication, on the basis that the steps would be maintained by Council. This stepway was another source of extensive correspondence between the Department and Council about the ongoing poor condition of the facility.¹⁰² There is also other extensive correspondence about the damage to Council roads with the additional two running lines were constructed. In the end, the Department pay compensation to Council for the damage done by the drag-line machinery.

¹⁰¹ Ashfield Municipal Council file No. 67/352/53134 and Departmental file 65/85 1838.

¹⁰² Department of Railways file No. 57/204, correspondence dated 24th November 1931.

1929-1971 – THE NEAR-ABANDONMENT OF THE NEED TO FUND ASSET REPLACEMENT

PASSENGER JOURNEYS

For the 11 years from 1945 to 1955 inclusive, there was a 11 at percent increase in total rail journeys undertaken in New South Wales. Ashfield railway station would have participated in the postwar patronage. After 1955, patronage of the New South Wales railway system declined by 10% and, in 1971, was back to the level of 1945. It was in the period between 1955 in 1971 when many former rail users purchase their own private motor vehicle and drove to work. Appendix 1 to this history sets out the statistics for each year.

Despite the increase in the number of passengers using Ashfield station, there were minimal infrastructure improvements and replacements during the period between 1929 and 1971. What was carried out was of a minor nature. The history of Ashfield station during this period is not unique and a simple story applied to the vast majority of other railway stations throughout New South Wales. All the improvements during the period occurred before or in 1955 and no improvements were made to Ashfield station up to 1971. In fact, no further works were approved for Ashfield station between 1955 and 1977.

A similar story relates to the supply of new carriages to the Sydney suburban railway system that served Ashfield station. Appendix 2 to this history provides details of the number of new carriages built for the Sydney suburban network between 1930 and 1980, including services to and from Ashfield. After allowing for the replacement of the 294 timber carriages, the Sydney suburban service received 501 carriages or the equivalent of 63 eight car trains over the 50-year period. This represents an annual average increase of 1.2 trains for each of the years between 1930 and 1980. The number of eight-car electric trains on all lines was lower in 1980 than it was in 1930, given the increased size of the electric network.

Rollingstock specialists, David Cooke, and his co-authors have stated that “there were only two periods when a concerted effort was made to provide new rollingstock that was not specifically for service expansion.”¹⁰³ These were for the 1890s and 1920s. They further state that “the one common thread that runs through the history is the lack of adequate funding to upgrade or replace old or obsolete rollingstock.”¹⁰⁴ Churchman wrote that, “at the beginning of the 1960s, there was a pressing need for new suburban rollingstock.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ D. Cooke et al, *Coaching Stock of the NSW Railways*, Vol. 1, Matraville, Eveleigh Press, 1999, p. 6

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ G.B. Churchman, *Railway Electrification in Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney, IPL Books, 1995, p. 96

The few station improvements between 1929 and 1971 at Ashfield are listed below. Only five projects were approved and two of these did not proceed to construction. The remaining three projects involved two awnings and a small timber shed using recycled material.

1937 – PROPOSED EXTENSION TO THE BROWN STREET PARCELS OFFICE

On the 12th July 1937, the Chief Civil Engineer, Albert Fewtrell, approved a nine feet long extension to the Sydney end of the parcels office. The work never went ahead.

1940 – ERECTION OF A PORTERS' ROOM

A Porters' meal and locker room, both timber framed and clad, was built towards the end of platform Nos. 1 and 2. It had been approved for construction in October 1940.¹⁰⁶ The room was small in size, measuring 12 feet by 10 feet, and the gabled roof was covered corrugated asbestos cement sheets. Its construction at that time was typical of the nature of staff improvements built throughout World War Two as a result of strong and persistent political pressure from the railway unions. The unions were aided by the political force of the NSW Government, which was formed by the Labor Party.

Second-hand materials were used for the Porters' room. From where, the enquirer asks? Well, the existing 1892 timber building on platform Nos. 1 and 2 was demolished in 1941 and some of the materials were reused for the Porters' room. The Porters' room was demolished when the present station structure and platform awnings were built in 1998. Some of the used materials were also applied to alterations to the building on platform Nos. 3 and 4, where the general waiting room and part of the ladies' waiting room were converted into an office for the Station Master – a necessity in view of the demolition of his former office on platform Nos. 1 and 2. The ladies' toilet in the platform Nos. 3 and 4 building was reconfigured with a new doorway.

Another project, approved on 1st July 1941, was the proposed addition of a new waiting room on platform Nos. 3 and 4. This was necessary as the then existing general waiting room at the Sydney end of the structure was converted into an office for the Station Master, whose office was formerly in the building on Nos.1 and 2 platforms, which was at the time demolished. The new general waiting room was to be 20 feet long and its width matched the unbelievably narrow width of the existing 1892 platform building, namely nine feet six inches internal. It was to be freestanding and positioned adjacent to the entrance to the male toilet – an injudicious selection of position because of the unpleasant odours emanating from

¹⁰⁶ There are numerous photographs showing the existence of the Porters' room in the archives of the Australian Railway Historical Society.

the latrine. The proposed waiting room was not built. From 1941, there was no general waiting room on any platform at the station.

A plan was approved on 29th December 1948 for a pair of very small shelters at the Brown Street entrance to platform No. 5 in order to provide weather protection for staff collecting tickets. They measured 27 inches square. They were to be erected from materials in the existing ticket cabin. They were built but the date of their construction is unknown.

1951 – IMPROVED SHELTERS ON PLATFORM NO. 5

Improvements were made to two shelters and the exit gates to Brown Street, though the nature of the improvements is unknown.

1955 – NEW PLATFORM SHELTER ON PLATFORM NOS. 1 & 2

The Chief Civil Engineer, Norm Vogan, approved on 11th November 1955 the construction of new 28 feet by 27 feet passenger shelter on platform Nos. 1 and 2. The roof was designed in the butterfly pattern, the main feature was the concealed, centre box drain. The roof was covered with No. 26 gauge corrugated galvanised iron sheets. It took five years to build the shelter, which appeared in 1960. Two back-to-back, 10 feet long timber seats were provided under the shelter

In 1956, fluorescent lighting replaced the incandescent lights in the booking offices in the eastern subway.

Both the paucity of asset renewal at Ashfield station and the minimal acquisition of new suburban electric rollingstock reflect a near total interest by government in the management and operation of the New South Wales railway system, at least as concerns urban passenger rail transport.

1972-2018 THE THREE-STAGE DEVELOPMENT OF A PURELY SYDNEY URBAN RAIL SYSTEM

STAGE 1 – 1970s – THE TIME OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMMISSION

1977-1979 – THE THIRD REPLACEMENT PLATFORM BUILDING

Ron Christie was the General Manager of the Way and Works Branch on 19th August 1977 when he approved a series of plans to renovate the eastern subway and booking office. The work included:

- affixing panels displaying a marble finish to the walls of the subway,
- one-way turnstiles for access to platforms,
- a blue-coloured ticket collector's booth, built of fibreglass, in the subway similar to those on the then recently-opened Eastern Suburbs Railway,
- moulded fiberglass ticket windows, glazed with polycarbonate, again similar to those on the recently-opened Eastern Suburbs Railway,
- coloured polycarbonate panels between the ticket windows,
- installation of a ticket-issuing machine, also similar to those on the recently-opened Eastern Suburbs Railway,
- illuminated public timetable displays in the subway,
- new, mezzanine-level meal and locker room with staff toilet above the ticket office in the subway,
- internal walls of booking office & staff room covered with "Versilux",
- new internal furniture in the booking office,
- pipe-welded frames for new style of 12 mm thick, compressed asbestos-cement barrier screens,
- air-conditioning of staff areas,
- replacement fluorescent lighting,
- 50 mm bitumen paving to all public areas, &
- sliding top to money tray adjacent to the ticket window.

The railway industry journal, *New South Wales Digest*, reported on progress in December 1978, saying:

"Work has been under way since April of this year on the reconstruction of Ashfield railway station. The renovation work, which is estimated to cost \$450,000, mainly involves waterproofing the pedestrian subway and underline booking office and providing improved staff facilities. During August and September, the waterproofing work on the subway roof involved the closure of some of the running lines. On Sunday, 10th September, the Up and Down Main and Up Suburban lines were closed to allow workmen to repair the

subway roof. Whilst reconstruction work is in progress, the disused booking office at the western end of the station has been re-opened”.¹⁰⁷

As well as the new ideas expressed in the physical changes, the “renovations” featured a new concept in the presentation of the plans. The plans for the Ashfield station subway were one of the earliest uses of isometric drawing, which enabled a three-dimensional presentation. The new materials used in the project were representative of many new commercial building products and procedures that were being introduced from the mid-1950s.

In December 1977, the then Public Transport Commission was advertising Ashfield, along with newly completed stations at Harris Park and Wollstonecraft as models of a new standard in passenger accommodation. The Commission stated that stations needed to be functional and convenient, clean and cheap to maintain and it opined that “they will encourage use”. The Commission also cited recently completed stations at Chatswood and Mount Druitt as examples of “a new standard of architecture”. While the Commission announced that a further intensive programme of modernisation was being drawn up for stations on all lines, the reality was that very few other stations were upgraded before the Commission was abolished in 1980 because the state government viewed the Public Transport Commission as a creation of the former Liberal/Country Party coalition government. The then Labor government, which gained office in May 1976, wanted to create its own railway organization, which it did in 1980 with the creation of the State Rail Authority.

The major reconditioning of the eastern subway continued into 1979, with the opening on 17th June. The booking office in the western subway had been closed prior to 1959 but the stepways to the platforms remained in use until they were bricked up in the subway during the early 1980s. The booking office in the western subway, although closed for the sale of tickets, had been used by the station staff to store old station records.¹⁰⁸ It is amazing to think that the stepways from the western subway to platform Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 were retained for over 30 years, although they were out of use to the public. Well, that is not entirely correct. Long time Ashfield resident and regular train user, Ray Pickard, recalls that the booking office in the western subway was reopened during 1979 while the refurbishment to the eastern subway booking office was being carried out.¹⁰⁹

While the stepway entrances from the western subway to platform Nos. 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 were removed, that was not the case for the stepway on No. 5 platform.

¹⁰⁷ *New South Wales Digest*, December 1978, p. 301.

¹⁰⁸ K. Ames, *From Grease to Gold Braid*, Redfern, Australian Railway Historical Society, 2001, p. 79. Wire mesh screening was in place across the top of the stepways. See photograph No. 548581, taken in March 1964, at Australian Railway Historical Society archives.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Ray Pickard on 21st July 2018.



The photograph taken on 24th July 2018 shows the No. 5 platform stepway. Unlike the east-facing stepways at the western end serving platform Nos. 1 and 2 and 3 and 4, the stepway to platform No. 5 faced the western direction. Moreover, unlike the other two stepways at the western end, the one serving No. 5 platform was uncovered.

There was one negative aspect of the 1977 improvements. The very large kiosk for ticket collectors protruded halfway across the subway width causing a very significant bottleneck. While an attempt was made in 1987 to remove the kiosk, it remained in position and became one of the major issues to be addressed in the design of the new station in 1997.

STAGE 2 – THE 1980s - THE TIME OF THE STATE RAIL AUTHORITY

1987 – LOCAL MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT CLAIMS STATION “OUTDATED” – THE SRA RESPONDED

Paul Whelan, Member of Parliament for the electorate of Ashfield between 1976 and 2003, stated in 1987 that Ashfield station was “outdated” and the victim of severe overcrowding. He maintained that the staff were working under adverse conditions. He reported about flooding in the eastern subway – an occurrence that had been happening from time to time over the previous 100 years, not helped by the absence

of coverings over three stepways.¹¹⁰ Whelan maintained that the station needed “needed to be repaired” but did not specify where those repairs were needed.

Before 1989, the station access policy to help disabled people get to and from the platforms was mostly the provision of ramps set at a gradient of 1 in 12 – the statutory minimum. It was unsurprising that Whelan requested ramped access be built under the Labor Government’s Easy Access Programme. After 1989, lifts replaced ramps as the basis of the Easy Access Programme.

The Government took notice of Whelan’s remark, probably because Whelan was seen as a mover-and-shaker, this being evident in his appointment later to the New South Wales Cabinet as Minister for Police and Minister for Roads.

How did the State Rail Authority respond to the government’s request to implement improvements? On 7th December 1987, the architects of the Way and Works Branch prepared a scope of works that included:

- removal of the western subway entrances/exits to the platforms,
- removal of the direct access from No. 5 platform to Brown Street (thus requiring patrons to proceed down the steps to the eastern subway and up another flight of steps to the Street),
- relocation of the ticket office window in the underground subway selling weekly tickets to a new location in order to minimise congestion,
- changes to the barrier arrangement to attempt to eliminate the congestion caused by the 1977-approved alterations,
- the provision of two new cabins for ticket collectors to replace the single, large fibreglass kiosk that protruded halfway into the subway,
- new fencing to separate the paid and unpaid areas in the subway,
- the construction of canopies over the entrance stepways on both sides of the station on Brown Street and Station Street,
- provision of a canopy over the stepway leading from the eastern subway to platform Nos. 1 and 2 (it being the only stepway in use serving the platforms that was unprotected from rain water),
- improvement of security, in an attempt to prevent vandalism and graffiti attacks,
- painting of the platform building on Nos. 3 and 4 platform, painting the proposed two canopies over the stepways on both streets and painting the subway walls and ceiling with anti-graffiti paint,
- installation of ceramic tiles on the floor of the subway,
- removing the 90 degrees corner of the underground booking office and cutting back the corner to an angle of 45 degrees.

¹¹⁰ The three stepways were those serving platform Nos. 1 and 2 and the stepways from Station Street on the north side and Brown Street on the southern leading to and from the subway.

Of all the above initiatives, the only ones that were implemented were the removal of the western stepways from all platforms and the removal of the stepway from No. 5 platform to Brown Street.¹¹¹ Given the paucity of improvements, perhaps Paul Whelan was not such a mover-and-shaker?

In the mid-1980s, the commuter car park was reported to have held 160 motor vehicles. It was then and is now the closest commuter car park to Sydney Central station. An aerial photograph taken about 1988 shows the railway station with its various buildings, including the 1941 Porters' room and the 1955 awning on platform No. 1 and the timber building on platform Nos. 2 and 3.¹¹² It also shows the canopies over both some of the eastern and western platform stepways. Also, of interest is the very few motor vehicles utilising the nearby commuter car park.

STAGE 3 – THE 1990s – THE TIME OF CITYRAIL

1989 – NEW PLATFORM AWNING ON PLATFORM NOS. 1 AND 2

Almost immediately after the creation of CityRail, which was a purely urban-focussed rail operator, in the middle of 1989, plans were prepared for the “upgrading” of Ashfield station. The work was undertaken as part of CityRail’s station upgrading programme. New steel canopies were provided over the stairs on platform and for a distance of 40 metres along platform Nos. 1 and 2. It featured a metal deck roof. The existing small 1955-approved shelter on that platform, with its “steel butterfly canopy”, was demolished. New CityRail, standard platform sign types appeared, including the three-level “next station” and “you are leaving” signs. The new signs, new bins and new fiberglass platform seats were painted the new corporate colours of bright red and white. This structure, although only 10 years old, was demolished in 1999 and replaced by the present thing of grotesque appearance.

1993 – FIRE DESTROYS THE BUILDING ON PLATFORM NOS. 3 AND 4

A temporary shelter was planned to replace 1892 timber building, which was destroyed by fire on platform Nos. 3 & 4. It was the last remnant of the platform structures approved for track quadruplication. Two alternative plans were issued – one for timber and one for metal framing. The metal framed structure was built and remained in position until 1998, at which time the present awning was constructed.

1995 – PASSENGER SAFETY ISSUES DOMINATE STATION DESIGN

CPTED was an acronym standing for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. This was labelled in the mid-1990s as a new idea aimed at mitigating crime

¹¹¹ Eyewitness account by Raymond Pickard, railway historian and long-term resident of Ashfield.

¹¹² S. and R. Coupe, *Speed the Plough – Ashfield 1788 – 1988*, Ashfield Municipal Council, 1988, inside front cover.

that was occurring on the then CityRail system. It became a buzz-term used by railway architects for a short time but was influential in the design of the present concourse structure towards the end of the decade. The notion has since been absorbed into general civil design work. The strategy involved the elimination of crime through the design of buildings and sites. It included the removal of any features which facilitated crime, which included bushes and advertising so that bad people could not hide behind them. It also involved the removal of flat roofs on buildings so that robbers could not easily walk on them to escape apprehension. Also, the use of single occupancy toilets was recommended so that multiple people could not traffic drugs in them. The objective of the strategy was to manage crime through architectural design and not by enforcement. High passenger and staff visibility were the aim in order to eliminate all areas where passengers were out of sight. Four stations were considered initially, these being Ashfield, Rockdale, Woy Woy and Broadmeadow. By 1997, work had commenced only at Woy Woy with local station managers using this strategy to remove as much vegetation and as many buildings as possible. In respect of Ashfield, the idea was to eliminate the eastern subway and related stepways and to provide a high-visibility replacement station building.¹¹³

The core of the CPTED idea was manifested at Ashfield in the design of the present concourse structure, which is essentially a see-through glass box which has been designed to minimise locations for evil people in which to hide out of sight of staff and travellers. The reference to CPTED, as an important design ingredient, was specifically mentioned in correspondence from CityRail to Ashfield Municipal Council dated 21st May 1998.

1997-1999 – THE FOURTH REPLACEMENT STATION BUILDING – THE PRESENT OVERHEAD CONCOURSE

CityRail intended to upgrade every station in its area of operation. Thus, it was only a matter of time before Ashfield station received attention. CityRail architects and planners considered that the eastern subway, because of its narrow width, had “insufficient capacity” and was incapable of meeting future, increased passenger growth. This problem had been exacerbated by the alleged “improvements” approved and implemented in 1977. There was also an organisational policy to avoid and eliminate subways, where possible, because they presented greater security risks to passengers and posed by footbridges.¹¹⁴ Thirdly, a value management exercise conducted for CityRail established that it was not financially possible to redevelop the eastern subway. Lastly, the drainage and flooding problems were substantial, as evident in 2018 with the continued flooding in the subway at nearby

¹¹³ C. Weerakoon, *Railway Architecture in the Time of Cecil Weerakoon 1973-2003*, unpublished manuscript, 2004, p. 50.

¹¹⁴ There were some exceptions to the policy, such as the use of a subway to replace the Warren truss footbridge at Springwood.

Lewisham station. Those considerations were reflected in the development of a solution involving an overhead concourse for Ashfield station.

Conservation of the extant heritage retaining wall along the Brown Street entrance was considered by CityRail, but it was considered that the dark brown, monochrome brickwork was unattractive and would reflect unfavourably on CityRail, keeping in mind that the new station building would provide the ocular focus of people walking from the Hume Highway along Hercules Street towards the station. In any case, there was a considerable amount of remaining 1892 and 1926 retaining walls elsewhere around the station.

An important part of the station fabric was the eastern subway and it has been conserved, with some elements intact, such as the barrier entrances to the stepways. A new access point has been provided opposite the lift on platform No. 5.

Consideration was also given to the conservation of the 1926 cantilevered awning on platform No. 5. However, the retention of similar awnings at Canley Vale, Yanderra, Waratah and Urunga had all resulted in a negative visual outcome. In any case, CityRail was aware that better examples existed at many stations throughout the State. Ashfield Municipal Council had commissioned a study in 1992 of heritage buildings in its local government area.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, the railway station was omitted from the 1992 study and also from a revision in 1993. Further consideration of the remnant heritage fabric by CityRail may have been aided had the station been included in the 1992 and 1993 heritage studies.

Gazzard Sheldon Architects prepared the initial artist's impressions in March 1997 on behalf of CityRail.¹¹⁶ The firm commenced issuing architectural plans in the following month and continued to produce detailed plans until June 1999. Ashfield Municipal Council gave consent to the Development Application on 23rd December 1997 and gave consent to modifications on 11th June 1999. Several conditions in the consent were never implemented by CityRail. These included the installation of inclinators to stepways in case of lift failures; provision of notice boards at the bottom of the entry stepways; the use of brickwork on the facade facing Brown Street and the location of ticket window trays at a height suitable for people in wheelchairs.

Later in 1997, an artist's impression of the proposed Ashfield building and the proposed overhead concourse was released to the public. The pro-public transport advocacy organization, Action for Public Transport, opposed the use of an overhead concourse on the basis that it involved commuters climbing and descending two sets of steps.¹¹⁷ The group correctly pointed out that a subway would have involved far fewer steps. Also, there was no direct, convenient access between platform No. 5 and the adjacent Brown Street. Action for Public Transport additionally argued that

¹¹⁵ Email dated 26th July 2018 from Carmel Andrew, Ashfield Local History Librarian, Inner West City Council.

¹¹⁶ The artist's impression was published in the industry journal, *Railway Digest*, September 1997, p. 7. it shows the initial, abandoned style.

¹¹⁷ *The Inner Western Suburbs Courier*, 16th June 1997, p. 26.

the proposed overhead facility at Ashfield would be a 'visual intrusion'. Ashfield Council rejected both the initial and a revised design, calling it "architecturally bland".¹¹⁸ The sticking point, the local press stated, was the "two new, massive, flat, glazed facades".¹¹⁹ The protest was too late as CityRail commenced construction without Council's approval of the Crown Development Application. The slab for the concourse was under construction by the middle of November 1998.

Tender documentation was ready in April 1998. The building conformed to the CityRail policy of allowing private architectural firms to design whatever took their fancy, as long as the structures contained offices and facilities that were consistent with the *CityRail Design Guide* manual. Two materials dominated the appearance of the proposed structure. The large, elevated concourse was surrounded in a frame of aluminium and covered in glass. There was a very large, single-pitched roof over the whole affair. One thoughtful measure was the placement of an external platform on the Sydney side of the concourse in order to clean the large, glazed wall. The only difficulty is a reluctance by Sydney Trains to clean the glass regularly and exhaustively.

Like all other station buildings in the CityRail era, the priority is to provide facilities for staff rather than passengers. The overhead facility consists of two separate buildings. The one on the Brown Street side contained a booking office with three ticket windows; a separate office for the Station Master; another office without a designation; a locker room; a meal room and Staff Toilet. Structure adjacent to Station Street contained a barrier cabin; six public toilets; a store; another staff meal room; another staff toilet and two "concessions" (i.e. shops in non-railway language). One unusual feature of the concourse design was the provision of the public toilets, with each closet being of different dimensions due to the irregular shape of the concourse building. Another unusual aspect of the structure is the numbering of the entry/exit gates that separate the public and paid areas on the concourse, these being numbered from 34 to 43, rather than 1 to 10.

In 1998, CityRail and Ashfield Council exchanged correspondence about the design of the facility. Council advised CityRail on 22nd June 1998 that the submitted drawings were not in accordance with the 1997-approved Development Application. Council described the design as "architecturally simplistic and considered unsatisfactory" as well as saying that the design did "not have the articulation and architectural sensitivity of the approved Development Application". In addition, Council stated that the drawings were "not in accordance with Ashfield's Town Centre Development Control Plan".

Ashfield Council broke once again to CityRail on 22nd January 1999 stating that still had "concerns" about the proposed structure, even though work was well under way. In particular, it considered that there would be extensive reflectivity from the large

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 2nd November 1998, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

glazed areas; nuisance glare for pedestrians, motorists and nearby residents; heat buildup causing thermal discomfort and, lastly, poor ventilation on the concourse. In response, city rail engaged in engineering consultant firm in February 1999 to examine the matters raised by Council. The consultant's report described the structure as consisting of "expressed steelwork and mullion structure" and concluded that the Blair risk was acceptable, given the architectural style and cost of the facility. It stated that there was no risk to drivers and pedestrians and that the design of the structure "effectively shades the facade from problematic reflections".¹²⁰

Prominent Sydney architect, Robert Irving, wrote in 1992 that the idea arose in the 1970s "that a new building should have regard for its context".¹²¹ CityRail must have overlooked his journal article six years later when it approved the design of the present building on the overhead concourse. It is a fair criticism to say that the scale of the existing, overhead concourse is far too big for the adjacent urban area. This is particularly the case when it is kept in mind that Ashfield Municipal Council and now the Inner West City Council have long held a policy of conserving the existing low building heights in the streets surrounding the station.

Moreover, the present concourse building does not address the designs and materials of structures in Brown and Station Streets. Those are not the only disappointing aspect of the structure. Composite panels, with the commercial name of Vitrapanel, cover to the external walls of the concourse structure. Unfortunately, no effective worksite supervision was provided by CityRail, with the result that a random mixture of concealed and exposed fasteners has been used. The overall design, with high ceilings and extensive glazing, has made routine cleaning difficult. Also, ugly platform canopies with protruding footings for the vertical posts adorn the platforms. The many vertical columns add considerably to the unnecessary visual clutter of the station's appearance. The galvanized steel finish of the awning frames adds to the overall negativity of the station. The impact of multiple design errors has produced a station of outstanding unattractive visual complexity. Moreover, it was almost a financial crime to replace the 1993-built awning on platform Nos. 1 and 2 – after a period of only five years – with the present awning.

Council informed CityRail on 27th April 1999 that all design matters outstanding had been resolved.¹²² One additional issue that Council desired was the relocation of a vertical steel column near the Brown Street side of the concourse which would have provided an obstruction to pedestrians. The column was relocated.

¹²⁰ Arup Facade Engineering, *Ashfield Station Upgrade – Assessment of Rogue Solar Reflections*, 10th February 1999.

¹²¹ R. Irving, "The Architecture of Ashfield", *Ashfield and District Historical Society Journal No. 9*, December 1992, p. 10.

¹²² Letter from GSA (Gazzard Sheldon Architects) to Ashfield Council dated 27th April 1999.

A project that paralleled the construction of the new station was the provision of new plasma platform indicator screens in 1999.¹²³ The Ashfield indicators were linked to CityRail's automated timetable system under a five year \$45 million programme to upgrade passenger information throughout the entire rail system. Strathfield, Ashfield and Lidcombe were among the first stations to receive the new plasma indicators. The previous timber, turnover, manually-operated indicator boards were conserved and are presently stored in the now closed parcels office on Brown Street. CCTV plans were prepared for Ashfield station in 1999.

At the time, the existing fibreglass platform seats were painted in the new CityRail corporate colour scheme of dark blue, while new blue and white signage was attached to the lamp posts to replace the previous red and white signage.¹²⁴

Completion of the construction of the new station was set for May 2000.¹²⁵ Not only did the new design fail to meet a high level of architectural excellence, the physical needs of platform Management were not fully addressed. Not long after completion, CityRail realised that there was no control room accommodation on platform No. 5 for staff giving the "all clear" indication to train guards – a necessity due to the concave nature of the platform. A temporary office was placed on the platform and has been located in the same position on the platform for nearly 20 years.

In 2002, there was a massive community protest at Summer Hill about a proposal to provide "Easy Access" at that station by utilising a new footbridge to replace the existing subway. The then Minister for Transport subsequently reversed the CityRail proposal and approved the use of the subway to serve the lifts. In so doing, the Minister retained the local, low-height appearance of the neighbourhood. It was a case of strong, learned local resistance supported by professional advice to the protest group. The people at Summer Hill said that they did not want "another Ashfield".

1999 – THE QUESTION OF THE EXTENSION OF THE SYDNEY LIGHT RAIL SYSTEM TO ASHFIELD

The State Government commissioned a feasibility study in 1999 for the extension of the light rail system from Lilyfield. The proposed route involved the extension past Summer Hill railway station and terminating at Ashfield station.¹²⁶ The Government decided against that route and, instead, resolved to extend the line to Dulwich Hill station on the Bankstown line. Perhaps the reason for the selection of the Dulwich Hill route was the elimination of the need to fund the acquisition of property, as well

¹²³ *Glebe and Inner Western Weekly*, 23rd June 1999, p. 10.

¹²⁴ As evident in the photograph No. 541455 taken on 22nd October 2000 in the archives of the Australian Railway Historical Society.

¹²⁵ *Cooks River Valley Times*, 13th April 2000, p. 6.

¹²⁶ Australian Railway Historical Society, *Bulletin*, Vol. 50, No. 735, January 1999, p. 36.

as the need to relocate underground services and other infrastructure. The Dulwich Hill line used the then decommissioned heavy rail freight corridor.

2000 – REFURBISHMENT FOR OLYMPICS

In 2000, the NSW Government announced that Ashfield station would be “refurbished” before September as one of 35 stations in a \$7 million “Olympic upgrade program”. The work included repainting platform buildings, the station entry and the concourse areas in CityRail’s then new corporate colours of blue and white, as well as upgraded platform seating and improvements to other furniture – whatever that was supposed to be. Obviously, the person who wrote the press statement had never visited the station as it would have been obvious that there were no platform buildings requiring new paintwork. The work also resulted in the end of the red and white corporate paint scheme, which had been introduced system-wide in 1989.

2001 - SALE OF AIR RIGHTS

The NSW Government in 2001 announced a programme to sell air rights, starting with feasibility studies for the development of retail facilities planned for Ashfield, Hornsby, Redfern, Liverpool, Penrith and St Mary stations. Such programmes had been similarly announced over the previous 50 years but, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. North Sydney and Bondi Junction), such programmes had failed. In 2018, not one of these stations in the 2001 announcement had received any air right development. The failure did not stop the announcement later in 2001 of another 20 stations to be examined and, not surprisingly, the previous failure was extended to the additional stations.¹²⁷

2002 – CREW FACILITIES

CityRail decided to erect small buildings on platforms at some stations to provide toilet and hot water facilities for train crews at locations where trains terminated/started. For a start, this represented a change in organisational station design policy which, at that point in time, promoted the elimination of most if not all buildings on platforms. Why then? Under the rouse of security, staff toilets and hot water urns in booking offices were no longer available for train crews. Train crews had to have their own facilities or none at all. It was a time when the former climate of camaraderie that had existed for nearly 150 years amongst the various job classifications ended. These sheds were provided at the at Ashfield, Eastwood, Macarthur, Turrella, East Hills, North Sydney and Lindfield stations.

In 2018, the shed no longer exists at Ashfield.

2009 – SUBWAY “ART GALLERY”

¹²⁷ State Rail Authority, *Property Perspectives*, Summer 2001, Vol. 4 No. 4, p. 1.

CityRail approved a combined mural/photographic exhibition in the western subway at Ashfield. The display was labeled as a “walk-through public art gallery”.¹²⁸ Ashfield Council was a joint sponsor and gave the initiative the name of ‘The Underline Project’. While the motives were honourable, the concept was mis-guided.

In 2018, the mural and photographs are dirty, heavily graffitied and falling apart. Why? Because no one thought to prepare and implement a maintenance policy. Today, the Underline Project reflects poorly on Sydney Trains. Had the senior rail officials been aware of the terrible trouble with the management and maintenance of previous mural projects at other stations, perhaps the outcome at Ashfield may have been different. A history lesson in mural management would have been valuable.

2018 – THE NEW COMMUTER CAR PARK AND ‘BIKE SHED’

A photograph of the Ashfield goods yard in 1980, which would be the future site of the commuter car park, is shown in *Australian Railway History*, May 2010, page 184. The goods yard ceased being used for freight traffic in about 1982.¹²⁹ At that time, there were three goods sidings, which were regularly used for the unloading of steel rod from Newcastle. For the next approximate 20 years, the site of the former Ashfield goods yard was used as a single-level car park.

The New South Wales Premier opened the existing, three-level commuter car park on 26th March 2018, according to the plaque at the entrance.¹³⁰ The records indicating the capacity of the car park prior to the work provide conflicting information, with one stating there were 160 spaces and another saying there were 139 spaces. The double-sided, official “Park & Ride” brochure states that capacity of car park is 235 car spaces. Also, on one side of the brochure, it states that the car park is open 24 hours a day but, on the other side, the brochure says that motorists can only stay 18 hours after entering. Work started on the facility in March 2017 according to one source and on 22nd May 2017 according to another. Completion was achieved in March or May 2018, again depending on the source material, though the official brochure states that the facility was opened from 31st May 2018. The signage at the entrance to the car park, indicates that commuters are able to park free by tapping their Opal card when leaving the facility. The brochure states that pedestrian entry is available from either Brown or Orchard Streets, but Orchard Street is not identified on the brochure.

Two months after the opening ceremony for the enlarged car park, the signage indicating the procedure to use Opal cards was in place, but the actual equipment had yet to be installed. The Ashfield car park was the first such facility that required

¹²⁸ State Rail Authority, *CityRail Update*, Issue No. 9, 2009

¹²⁹ J. Oakes, *Sydney’s Forgotten Sidings*, Redfern, Australian Railway Historical Society, 2017, p. 180.

¹³⁰ One news report indicated that the car park was opened on 24th March 2018. See *Railway Digest*, May 2018, p. 16.

the utilisation of Opal cards to use the car park without payment of a fee. After Ashfield, Sydney Trains introduced the scheme to an existing car park at Kogarah.

A naughty aspect to the official publicity surrounding the car park related to the provision of bicycle facilities. The State Government had launched a new policy on 7th June 2016 announcing the introduction of “Opal-activated bike storage areas”. These were open-sided sheds for which an Opal card was necessary for access. The first stations provided with the new facilities were Blacktown and Woy Woy. Sydney Trains produced a lovely glossy brochure about the new bike shed at Ashfield station “with free undercover parking for 50 bikes”.

The major thing wrong with the brochure was that the accompanying photograph was not taken at Ashfield station. The bicycle shed at Ashfield is actually housed in a part of the new motor vehicle car park. The misleading advertising is not the only aspect related to the bicycle facility at Ashfield which suggest a disingenuous policy by the Government towards bicycle transport. The evidence to suggest an absence of genuine policy includes:

- absence of instructions from the station to locate the facility,
- the use of only a single, small sign entitled “to bike racks (not storage)”, points in the wrong direction,
- the location of the facility halfway along the car park without any indication of its existence from the street,
- the absence of directions as to the location of the entry points,
- the priority given to motorbike parking at the entrance of the car park,
- the misleadingly labelled “bike locker hire” container erected in 1999 and positioned in close proximity to the station in Brown Street,
- a sign at the entrance of the car park prohibiting the writing of bicycles.

In other words, the evidence suggests an absence of genuine commitment to bicycle transport and its role in enhancing rail travel. The official brochure states that “you can ride to the station..... with these”. These words are incorrectly used. The so-called bike shed is 500 metres from the station and it is not easy to locate it. The difficulties created by the Government were reflected in the usage of the new facility. On an inspection on 13 August 2018, only one bicycle was inside the new facility, notwithstanding a capacity of 50 bicycles.

Aside from the naughtiness relating to the new bicycle storage facility, the design of the new car park is striking and attractive and was the work of Caldis Cook Architects, a company with a long history of good design of buildings in the railwayscape. The new car park holds 235 motor vehicles, which is supposed to be an increase of 96 vehicles over the previous capacity. There is no public indication of the cost of the new facility, the reason being possibly the seemingly excessive amount that has been allocated to provide the extra facilities.

An excellent view of the 1927 Ashfield signal box is obtained from the top level of the car park. Closer to the viewer looking from the car park is a plain-looking structure built in 1982, which Dr Jim Longworth described as an “unattractive boxy, single-story satellite interlocking building...These two buildings (namely the 1927 single box and the 1982 plain looking structure) sitting side-by-side tell a sad tale of declining aesthetics in railway architecture”.¹³¹

¹³¹ J. Longworth, "Reading the Railway Landscape – Interpreting Visible Railway Relics along the Line: Strathfield – Sydney Central", *Australian Railway History*, May 2010, page 184.

END REMARKS

Appendix 3 is a summary of the infrastructure developments at Ashfield railway station between 1854 and 2018.

The history of the fixed assets at the Ashfield railway station can be separated into six distinct time periods. These are:

1. 1856-1890 – the establishment and fulfilment of a rail passenger transport demand,
2. 1891–1895 – the attempt at creating an urban passenger rail identity,
3. 1900-1919 – the failure to align infrastructure and services with the rising passenger demand,
4. 1920-1928 – creation of a plan and strategy to address long-term passenger demand,
5. 1929-1971 – the near-abandonment by government of the need to replace time-expired infrastructure, &
6. 1972-2018 – the three-stage development of a purely Sydney urban rail passenger system.

What is the big picture but arises from the study of Ashfield railway station? It is that, in the 19th century, the local community did not have to pressure either the railway administration or the government to provide facilities that were both adequate for the passenger demand and reflective of the population growth and status of the Ashfield community. In the 19th century, somehow, the Railway Department understood the need to continually provide increased infrastructure or renew what was in existence without being hounded by the local government authority or community.

The 20th century is a completely different story and it is dominated by the need for the Ashfield Municipal Council, the press and others to place sustained pressure on the railway administration to address the inadequacy of the facilities at the station. The exception relates to the period of track sextuplication and electrification between 1915 and 1928 – the period of influence under the leadership of Dr John Bradfield. In the 20th century, it was only after the creation of CityRail in 1989 that station facilities were provided to cope with the large number of train users.

The history of Ashfield railway station is very similar to any other railway station in the Sydney Metropolitan area and the above time periods apply generally to the vast majority of all railway stations. An examination of the history of Ashfield station is also a revelation into the management of the various railway bureaucracies. Because of the government ownership of the railway system, every aspect of railway management and operation has been the subject of political control and interference at various times. The waxing and waning of funding by the Government, as applied to Ashfield station, has been consistently representative of the pattern of funding for railway works throughout New South Wales between 1855 and the present. One of

the major themes in the 20th century that helps to explain the paucity of expenditure for metropolitan stations and the suburban railway system generally, apart from the 1920s, was the very strong pressure from the rural sector. This had started in 1893 with the establishment of the Farmers and Settlers' Association and progressively assumed an ever-stronger political role, which was manifested ultimately by the emergence, for the first time, of 15 rural representatives in the State Parliament of 1920. The political power of the rural lobby remained strong for the remainder of the 20th century.

It was the opening of the railway station at Ashfield which directly stimulated both population and economic growth around the station. As Historian, Francis Pollon, wrote, "the area developed quickly after the coming of the railway".¹³² For example, she cites the opening of the first post office at Ashfield on 1st January 1856 and the first school in January 1862, as well as considerable industrial development.¹³³ Similarly, architect, Robert Irving, wrote that the railway was a "tremendous influence upon the development of the municipality and, of course, the town centre".¹³⁴ However, Ashfield station opened in 1855 not to meet existing trouble demand but to serve the very few elite people in the area. In so doing, the railway bureaucracy ultimately created its own monster in terms of the ever-increasing number of people who wished to travel by train to and from the station.

The New South Wales Government understood the strong surge in demand for rail services and, in the 19th century, provided sufficient capital to build new and larger facilities. However, this was not the case after 1900. The Government did not provide the New South Wales Railways with adequate finance, as reflected in the failure to implement promised improvements in 1914. There was another factor at play in the case of Ashfield. With the extension of the North Shore railway to Milsons Point in 1893, the area north of Sydney Harbour served by the railway became a new preferred location for Sydney's elite and powerful population, along with the eastern suburbs. This provision of a geographic area for middle and upper classes was a role up to 1893 that had been performed by the suburbs from Newtown to Homebush, but the suburbs served by the inner western railway line lost a high degree of their political clout to achieve railway and other improvements once the North Shore line was linked to the Harbour ferries. This trend is reflected in the substantial station improvements along virtually the entire North Shore line after 1900. In essence, when funding declined for the line between Newtown and Homebush, funding increased substantially on the North Shore line, particularly between Chatswood and Waitara.

It was only the excellent work of Dr John Bradfield in the mid-1910s and 1920s that provided an increase in track and train capacity, though even then there was only a

¹³² F. Pollon (Ed.), *The Book of Sydney Suburbs*, Pymble, Cornstalk, 1988, p. 9.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ R. & N. Irving, "Some Ashfield Town Centre Street Histories", *Ashfield and District Historical Society Journal* No. 17, 2008, p. 122.

moderate increase in passenger facilities. After 1927, virtually nothing occurred at the station to meet the passenger travel demand and to replace outdated assets, as governments of all persuasions were more interested in the private bus and private motor vehicle industry. This situation did not start to change until the appointment of the Labor Government led by Neville Wran in 1976. Yes, the Public Transport Commission in the 1970s started the whole process of urban rail renewal, but the State Government never provided sufficient finance to enable the Commission to make substantial improvements across the entire rail network. It took the Granville rail disaster of 1977 to accelerate funding levels, though it had implemented such a substantial renewal programme when Wran took office the previous year.

It is sometimes hard to take an interest in modern architecture because of its lack of visual attractiveness and minimisation of customer facilities. However, the modern existing infrastructure over the last 20 years does reflect the history of recent changes in station design thinking, as well as the fundamentally important role of urban rail transport. The present overhead facility is the example of modernist architecture. The Director of Heritage Conservation at University of Sydney, Cameron Logan, said that, apart from the design issues, “what is fundamentally important, and has often been missed, is that many buildings of this period (i.e. modernist structures) had a strong civic intent and presence...”¹³⁵ Someone in a future generation will have to decide whether the “civic intent and presence” of the Ashfield station building is sufficient to support its conservation against future development at the station.

There is one important heritage consideration relating to the present overhead concourse building beyond any design factor. It was designed and built for staff to stand at the three ticket windows and physically issue tickets to customers on the other side of the glazing. Now staff have been removed and the ticket windows closed, but the shutters over the windows represent the end of a ticket issuing system that had been in existence from 1855. Children growing up in 2018 will find it amazing that tickets were once issued by people. They will never touch the money tray and never see the inside of a ticket office. Is that issue worthy of future conservation?

The major architectural conflict at Ashfield station is between the scale of the existing station concourse structure and the surrounding, low-level commercial and residential buildings. When the present overhead concourse was constructed in 1998, the architectural process was dominated by the philosophy of CPTED and this was apparent in the comprehensive use of glazing and unpainted aluminium framing.

While the aesthetics of the present structure were not optimised, at least CityRail did take strong action to address the increasing number of people using the station. No one in 2018 would consider that the former eastern subway could be capable of handling the large numbers of customers using the station today. Even in the

¹³⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13th August 2018, p. 3.

western subway were reopened, both would still be inadequate, because of human nature, the majority of people would use the eastern subway because of its better alignment with the adjacent streets.

What was absent from the present design was any visual attractiveness relating to the use of colour. In 2018, it is evident that the design thinking has changed over the previous 20 years and colour is now an important building ingredient and is evident in the design of the present commuter car park. It has been used to good effect to allow a degree of ocular entertainment to be expressed in what would normally be a pretty ordinary type of functional structure. The railway facilities at Ashfield are an excellent representative of the change in architectural design even over the recent, relatively short-term history of the station.

The assistance of Graham Harper, Geoff Lillico, Dr Jim Longworth, Ray Pickard and Leigh Stokes, plus other staff of the Resource Centre of the Australian Railway Historical Society, is very much appreciated. Leigh Stokes has gone to a considerable amount of effort to draw the track diagrams to show the expansion of the layout through the station. Donna Newton, the Librarian of the Royal Australian Historical Society, and Carmel Andrew, the Local History Librarian for Ashfield in the Inner West City Council provided strong and fruitful assistance. Their help is acknowledged with gratitude.

Stuart Sharp

27th August 2018

APPENDIX 1

TOTAL RAILWAY JOURNEYS 1940-1971

The Table below sets out the changes in total passenger journeys for the entire New South Wales railway organisation. Unfortunately, separate figures for the Sydney suburban network are mostly unavailable. Passenger journeys were every station were collated up to 1941 but, because of staff and other shortages related to World War 2, these were discontinued from that year.

TABLE: TOTAL PASSENGER JOURNEYS 1940-1971

YEAR TO 30TH JUNE	NO. OF PASSENGER JOURNEYS
1940	179, 066, 305
1941	194, 145, 738
1942	218, 846, 454
1943	237, 441, 277
1944	250, 565, 758
1945	254, 099, 105
1946	267, 423, 100
1947	261, 644, 206
1948	263, 046, 815
1949	263, 116, 462
1950	258, 182, 826
1951	268, 567, 083
1952	268, 167, 596
1953	271, 698, 493
1954	278, 904, 236
1955	281, 417, 038
1956	280, 469, 989
1957	263, 136, 494
1958	258, 650, 735
1959	254, 055, 033 (239, 738, 677 were suburban)
1960	254, 589, 596
1961	253, 533, 240
1962	252, 718, 641
1963	257, 756, 483*
1964	263, 796, 140*
1965	261, 681, 454
1966	257, 568, 112

YEAR TO 30TH JUNE	NO. OF PASSENGER JOURNEYS
1967	255, 284, 386
1968	253, 313, 296
1969	248, 468, 753
1970	251, 578, 475
1971	254, 786, 237

SOURCE: *Annual Reports*

APPENDIX 2

ACQUISITION OF ELECTRIC PASSENGER ROLLINGSTOCK FOR USE IN THE SYDNEY METROPOLITAN AREA 1930-1980

YEAR INTRODUCED INTO SERVICE	TYPE OF CARRIAGES	NUMBER OF CARRIAGES
1937	1927 Modified Clyde powers cars	12
1940	1940 Tulloch powers cars	24
1940	1940 Tulloch trailer cars	24
1950	1950 Tulloch trailer cars	15
1951	1950 Tulloch powers cars	3
1951	1950 Tulloch trailer cars	9
1952	1950 Tulloch powers cars	8
1953	1950 Tulloch powers cars	6
1953	1950 Tulloch trailer cars	12
1954	1950 Tulloch powers cars	17
1954	1950 Tulloch trailer cars	18
1955	1950 Tulloch powers cars	11
1955	1950 Tulloch trailer cars	14
1956	1955 Sputnik trailer cars	13
1956	1950 Tulloch powers cars	5
1956	1950 Tulloch trailer cars	19
1957	1955 Sputnik powers cars	2
1957	1955 Sputnik trailer cars	9
1958	1955 Sputnik trailer cars	16
1959	1950 Tulloch trailer cars	18
1958	1955 Sputnik powers cars	23
1959	1955 Sputnik powers cars	11
1959	1955 Sputnik trailer cars	10
1960	1955 Sputnik powers cars	5
1960	1955 Sputnik trailer cars	8

YEAR INTRODUCED INTO SERVICE	TYPE OF CARRIAGES	NUMBER OF CARRIAGES
1964-1968	1964 Tulloch double deck trailers	120
1968	Prototype double deck power cars	4
1972/73	Production double deck power cars	53
1973-1976	2 nd contract for double deck power and trailer cars	96
1977/78	3 rd contract for double deck power and trailer cars	50
1978-1981	4 th contract for double deck power and trailer cars	150
TOTAL		795

SOURCES: D. Keenan & H. Clark, *First Stop Central*, Sydney, AETA, 1963, S. Dornan & R. Henderson, *The Electric Railways of NSW*, Sydney, AETA, 1976 & G. Churchman, *Railway Electrification in Australia and New Zealand*, Sydney, IPL Books, 1995

As well as requiring additional rollingstock for ten new electric services, new rollingstock was needed to replace the 294 timber carriages used in electrified services that had been converted from steam-hauled services. These were gradually withdrawn from service between 1952 and 1975. This Appendix indicates that 795 carriages were acquired over the 51 years between 1930 and 1980.

Former Assistant Chief Mechanical Engineer (Electrical), Geoff Moss, explained that the Sydney suburban service had regard to the number of carriages available rather than the number of people who wished to use them¹³⁶. In other words, the Sydney suburban service was supply driven. The rapid increase in the supply of carriages after 1976 was due to the awareness of the needs of urban transport by the newly elected Wran Government. Because of the steep gradients that trains encountered, such as on the North Shore line, the cost of rollingstock was higher for operation in Sydney than was the case for cities without steep gradients, such as Melbourne, as all suburban rollingstock had to be constructed with a high-performance capability.

Stuart Sharp
14th September 2018

¹³⁶ Oral comment to author, 16th January 2006.

APPENDIX 3

SUMMARY OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS AT ASHFIELD RAILWAY STATION 1854-2018

DATE	PERIOD & EVENT	COMPLETED?
1856-1890	The Establishment and Fulfilment of a Rail Passenger Transport Demand	
1854	Platform building under construction	“nearly completed” in December
26 th September 1855	Station opened with a building containing facilities and a residence	Yes
1 st June 1856	Track duplicated with an additional side platform, in the staggered arrangement, serving Sydney-bound trains	Yes
1864	Waiting shed on Paramatta-bound platform	Contractor, Mathew Jamieson, signed the contract on 2 nd November 1864.
1874 (date of approval unknown as most plans for station not extant)	Engineer-in-Chief, John Whitton, approved provision of replacement station building – the only instance of a combination structure replacing an existing combination structure	contract was awarded on 10th February 1875 to George Michael – station completed until after July 1876
1881	“Improvements” made to station	Unknown
1881	Arched footbridge constructed to connect platforms	Built, but removed in 1892
1882	Station lit by gas	Completed
1882	Ticket office enlarged	Completed
28th August 1884	Trackwork interlocked and new signal box erected	Box completed but demolished in 1899
1891–1895	The Attempt at Creating an Urban Passenger Rail Identity	
4 th September 1891	Plans for track quadruplication with five platforms and timber platform buildings approved	Alex Dean and Sons signed contract on 8 th December 1891
28 th February 1892	New elevated signal box	Erected and demolished in 1899
3 rd July 1892	four running lines through station	Opened
1892	vehicular subway at Brown Street opened	still opened in 2018
19 th November 1899	New signal box erected	Erected but demolished in 1927

DATE	PERIOD & EVENT	COMPLETED?
17 th December 1895	Thomas Firth approved construction of mortuary on platform No. 4	Undertaken
1896	Ceiling of subway lines with corrugated iron sheets to eliminate rainwater falling on passengers	Carried out
1900-1919	The Failure to Align Infrastructure and Services with the Rising Passenger Demand	
1902	account that was provided in the Brown Street booking office for parcels business	carried out
1912	Railway Department announces construction of either a new subway or footbridge to address congestion	not carried out owing to funding shortage
February 1914	Railway Department announced new central subway; two sets of steps to each platform; larger parcels office; relocation of all platform buildings & widening of approaches to subway	not carried out owing to funding shortage
1915	Plan approved for a temporary parcels office – platforms extended	Unknown – brick parcels office opened in Brown Street in 1919
1917	Railway Department announced second subway and stepways to platforms with booking office	Opened in 1918
1920-1928	Creation of a Plan and Strategy to Address Long-Term Passenger Demand	
November 1925	Male and female toilets added to existing timber building on platform Nos. 3 and 4	Completed
15 th December 1925	Robert Ranken approved plan for the sextuplication of the line through the station	Completed
1926	Both the Station and Brown Street booking offices closed and booking office relocated to subway; subway bookstall relocated	Subway booking office in operation until 1999
May 1927	Track sextuplication through station; new platform No. 5 built with subway at each end	In operation in 2018; subways closed 1999
1927	Ashfield Municipal Council enters into an Agreement with the Railway Department for a beautification lease of the embankment near the Brown Street vehicular subway entrance	Beautification lease current until 1967.
27 th August	Electric train services commence at station	Implemented

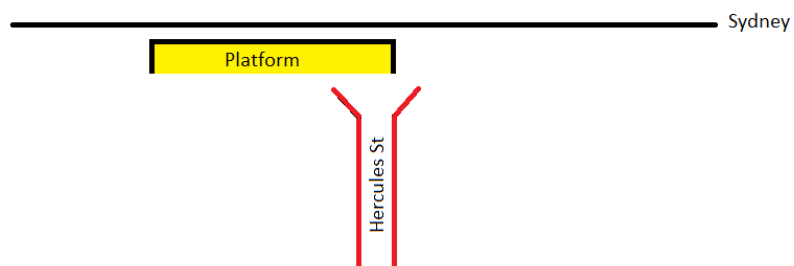
DATE	PERIOD & EVENT	COMPLETED?
1928		
1929-1971	The Near-Abandonment by Government of the Need to Replace Time Expired Infrastructure	
1937	Proposed extension to Brown Street parcels office	Not carried out
October 1940	Approved for small room for Porters on platform Nos. 1 and 2	Carried out – demolished in 1993
1941	Demolition of 1892 large timber building on platform Nos. 1 and 2; version of general waiting room and part of ladies waiting room on platform Nos. 3 and 4 into an office for Station Master	Carried out – building destroyed by fire in 1993
1 st July 1941	proposed stand-alone general waiting room for platform Nos. 3 and 4	Not carried out
29 th December 1948	Provision of two small shelters for ticket collectors at Brown Street exit	Carried out – demolished 1998
1955	Moderate sized, steel shelter approved for platform Nos. 1 and 2	Built in 1960
1956	Fluorescent lighting replaced the incandescent lighting in eastern subway booking office	Carried out
1972-2018	The Three-Stage Development of a Purely Sydney Urban Rail Passenger System	
19 th August 1977	Ron Christie approved extensive improvements to eastern subway, using similar materials and colours to that used on Eastern Suburbs Railway	Completed – subway closed 1999
7 th December 1987	Plan prepared for extensive improvements to eastern subway; closure of western subway platform access and elimination of direct egress between platform No. 5 and Brown Street	Western subway access to platforms closed and direct access to Brown Street eliminated – other extensive proposals not implemented
1989	40 m long awning structured on platform Nos. 1 and 2	Built and demolished in 1999
1993	Temporary steel shelter on platform Nos. 3 and 4 to replace timber building destroyed by fire	Built and removed in 1999
March 1997	Artist's impressions prepared for present overhead concourse	Protests follow

DATE	PERIOD & EVENT	COMPLETED?
23 rd December 1997	Ashfield City Council gives consent to Development Application	
April 1998	Tender documentation completed	construction work undertaken in 1998
27 th April 1999	All design issues resolved between CityRail and Ashfield City Council	
11 th June 1999	Ashfield City Council modifies consent to Development Application	New concourse open in May 2000
1999	New plasma train indicator boards	In service in 2018
2002	Small crew shelters built at ends of platform Nos. 3 and 4	Built but since demolished
2009	“Art gallery” erected in western subway	In poor condition in 2018
22 nd May 2018	Commuter car park and bike storage facility	In service

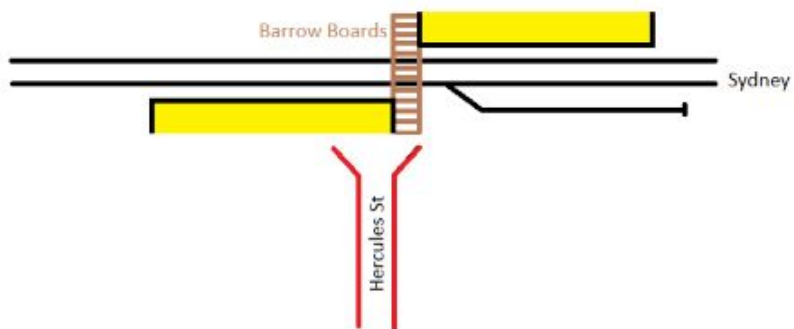
APPENDIX 4

EXPANSION OF TRACKS THROUGH ASHFIELD STATION 1855-1927 PREPARED BY LEIGH STOKES

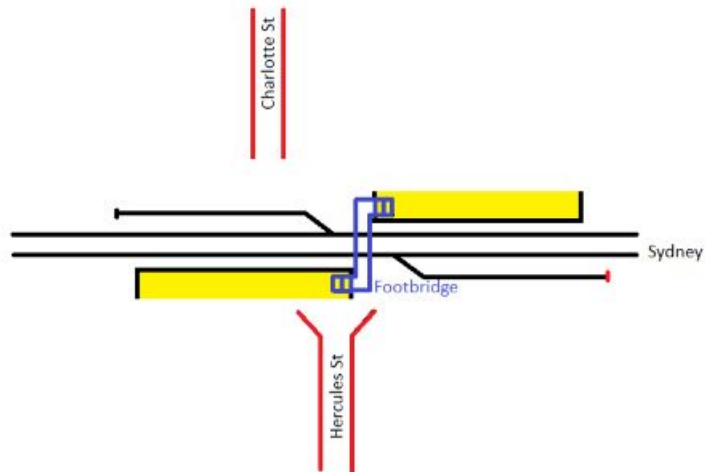
1855



1856



1881



1892

