STUART TOWN RAILWAY STATION

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PERHAPS THE MOST PUZZLING SET OF STATION STRUCTURES ON THE NSW RAILWAY SYSTEM

James Dalton obtained this image using a drone on 9th December 2023. The physical proximity of the station to the town is clear. Up until 1962, the Liddell Street/Wellington Street level crossing at the eastern end of the station was protected by gates operated by the station staff. On 2nd October 1962, the gates were removed and the level crossing was widened to form what the Department of Railways called an "open type" facility. That event was probably associated with the removal of the Junior Porter and/or the Assistant Station Master from the station. On 27th October 1998, the State Rail Authority activated flashing lights for Wellington Road level crossing at 379.403km. Also shown in the image is the former Railway Hotel is the second building towards the left with the silver-coloured, corrugated iron covered, hipped roof.

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The Central West XPT comes into view from Wellington and passes over the points leading to the dock siding. The main interlocking frame at Stuart Town was located adjacent to the points after Frame "A" on the platform was removed. The white building was a staff hut in which the electric staff instruments were located following their transfer from the ticket office in the platform building. The post with the numeral, 1, tells the XPT Driver the stopping location so that her/his train clears the Liddell Street level crossing. The train will stop at the 379.5-kilometre post on the platform. The date is 14th September 2022.

PART 1

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STUART TOWN PLATFORM BUILDING

1. THE BASIS OF THE BUILDING'S SIGNIFICANCE

In essence, the Stuart Town railway station building is significant because of its involvement in two major aspects of railway history. Firstly, it is one of the few remaining small structures that tell the story of railway design experimentation in the time of the expansion of the network in the 1870s. Secondly, it is a rare, surviving structure built and expanded on an existing line in the 19th century. It has strong links to the design policy of key engineers, John Whitton and George Cowdery.

The structure at Stuart Town is a good example of a simple, rectangular building that reflects both functionality and the social norms of the 19th century, as seen in the provision of separate waiting accommodation for women and the concealment of the entry to their toilet facilities.

The architectural style of the platform building has no dominant link to any design school, though some commentators may call the design *Bricklayers' Gothic*, which basically means that it has a gabled roof. Its quintessential, no-nonsense appearance and small size encapsulates its heritage virtues for it is representative of a large group of small and moderate-sized buildings on the railway system which have largely disappeared. The significance of the structure is based on five specific features, these being:

- the non-construction of the planned building
- the staged erection of the internal spaces following the station and line opening
- the bizarre porch attached to the rear wall
- the location of the first male toilet
- the high number of other, non-standard building elements (e.g., the aboveground rainwater tank, timber thresholds & fenestration)

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BUILDING AND THE STATE'S RAILWAY HISTORY

It may appear strange to refer to issues in the 1870s considering that the building was erected partly in 1880 and partly in 1890. The intended architectural plan was prepared in 1879 and the production of that document would have been embedded in the ideas, beliefs and political, financial and other realities of the 1870s. Those background factors were reflected in the building size, the pattern and timing of its erection and the structure's physical fabric. It is the design process which reflects the intellectual characteristics of a building rather than its construction.

The building was planned under the supervision of John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief for Railway Construction. He was responsible for the physical expansion of the railway network, in this case beyond Orange to Dubbo and the far west of the then Colony. Whitton did not build the intended structure at the time the station opened on 1st June 1880. In fact, the planned building was never built, as far as it is possible to determine. The next stage in the decision-making process to provide a structure Stuart Town became the responsibility of George Cowdery, who from 1880 was the Engineer for Existing Lines. Very few of his smaller and moderate-sized buildings survive. The significance of the Stuart Town structure is based substantially on its survival.

3. THE LINK TO THE 1884 BRIDGES ROYAL COMMISSION

The manner in which the building was constructed, in terms of the decision-making process, its small size and fabric help to provide an understanding of the issues that led to the hostilities between John Whitton and George Cowdery. The story involved the clash of work ethics, the willingness to engage in new technologies and a misalignment of resources to ensure that the infrastructure was adequate for the increased travel demand. The tale of Stuart Town station was enmeshed in the politics of people which, in 1884, was one of the myriad of issues that prompted the Government to appoint a Royal Commission into the safety of railway bridges.

There are relatively few small and moderately sized station buildings dating from the turmoil of the 1870s. The majority of those that survive are relatively large in size and their existence is not representative of the many small stations that date from the 1870s and 1880s. It is for this reason that the Stuart Town platform building has a high level of heritage significance.

4. ANYTHING WRONG WITH THE PRESENT SILVAN SETTING?

The railway station building presently sits in an attractive setting of bushes and trees which were planted by the State Rail Authority. While the motive for the planting was honourable, the totality of the vegetation does not assist in the correct interpretation of the structure as an industrial building in an industrial worksite. The removal of all other railway structures in the locality, except the residence for the Station Master, detracts from the values of the place and makes authentic interpretation of the site very difficult.

5. THE POTENTIAL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF A FALSE MESSAGE CONVEYED BY THE PRESENT LEVEL OF PRESENTATION

The importance of the building is not related to its perceived attractiveness, as it is very much a plain-looking, functional structure with minimal embellishment. While the platform building is well maintained today, the high level of the positive presentation does not give an accurate picture of the years of the funding neglect which the Stuart Town building endured specifically, and the New South Wales railways sustained generally.

Therefore, the building's history must be observed and considered in the light of the totality of the colonial/state railway chronicle.

6. CURRENT INCORRECT ANALYSIS

*Above is a photograph taken after 1890. The entrance gates to the goods yard can be faintly seen over the picket fence towards the centre of the picture. **SOURCE:** Stuart Town Preservation Society Archives*

Sydney Trains has published the picture above as a postcard with the following remarks about the building:

> "It is of State heritage significance as one of the best examples of a Victorian period 'Standard Roadside Station Building' on the NSW Railway system".

That information is based on outdated analyses and sources 30-40 years ago and is not based on recent research. The investigation and analysis in these notes demonstrate that the structure at Stuart Town is not a standard roadside building and, hence, the building is not a good or even bad example of a standard roadside building. It simply does not belong to that family of structures. Roadside buildings were approved and built by the Railway Construction Branch whereas more recent research shows that the building at Stuart Town has been erected by the Existing Lines Branch. The Stuart Town structure is in no way standard and in no way a roadside type of structure. Rather, the building is a typical example of what George Cowdery approved as the Engineer for Existing Lines for use at what he considered third class stations, and it is those characteristics on which its heritage significance is based.

7. AN APPENDIX TO IDENTIY THE IDEAS EXPRESSED BY THE BUILDING ELEMENTS

An Appendix to these notes sets out the way individual construction elements of the Stuart Town building express the policies, standards and ideas involved in the approval process that led to the provision of the building.
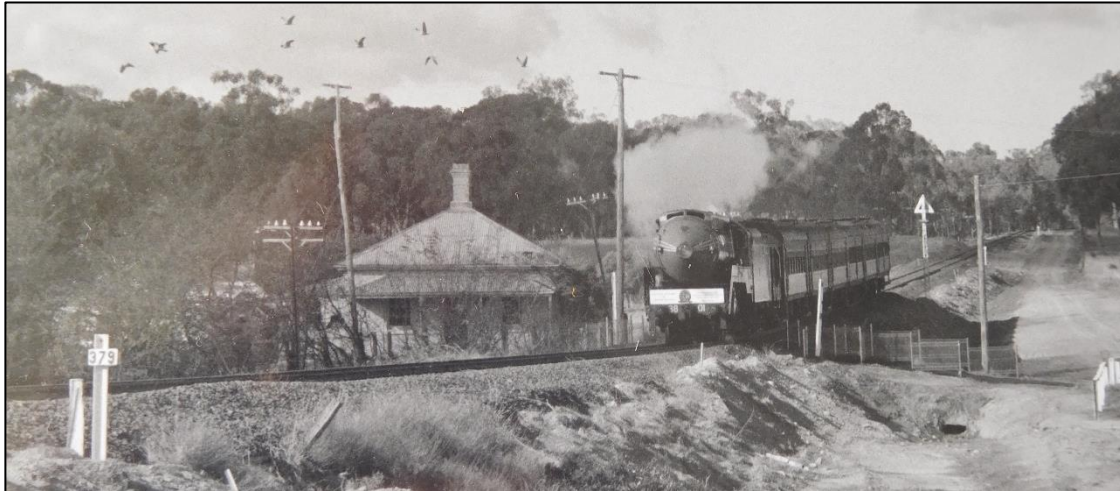
Locomotive 3801attacks the gradient at the Alexander Street gatehouse as it approaches the Stuart Town platform. The officially named "landmark" replaced the Down Distant signal in 1973 and is visible behind the train. While the single arm was replaced by the triangular structure, the existing lattice framed post was retained. The Down Distant signal, as constructed, had a McKenzie and Holland type decorative finial at the top of the post but this elegant cast fitting was removed at an unknown time. **SOURCE:** *Ian Percival.*

PART 2

THE INITIAL PLATFORM BUILDINGS

THE REGION SERVED BY THE STATION – A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALITY IN 1884

The Second Edition of *The Railway Guide* informed readers of the topography and the quality and use of land between Orange and Stuart Town. It stated:

> "After leaving Mullion Creek, the line commences to descend from the higher tablelands towards the lower interior plains, there being a fall of nearly 800 feet between Mullion Creek and Warne (i.e., Euchareena), a distance of 14 miles. The cuttings between these two stations are both numerous and heavy, and some of the gradients severe, running as steep as 1 in 40. The line passes through rough, broken country of a poor description.

> After leaving Warne, the character of the country changes, being more open and lightly timbered, presenting the appearance of an extensive park. The line passes through a solely pastoral district. As the traveller nears Ironbarks he will notice on both sides of the line the ground turned over in every direction, the place having the appearance of being covered with an immense number of large anthills. The reason of this is that Ironbarks was once flourishing alluvial diggings, and in the early days of gold-mining many rich finds were obtained here. Mining is still carried on, but it is in the shape of reefing, the quartz reefs in the vicinity being worked and giving payable returns. The township is but a small one, containing a couple of hotels, the railway station being the centre for a limited pastoral district".[1]

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[1] *The Railway Guide of New South Wales*, Second Ed., Sydney, Government Printer, 1884, p. 79.

This is a sketch of the Railway Hotel which was licensed from the year station opened, 1880. It was the closest establishment to the railway station from which thirsty passengers could obtain alcohol legally.[2] The building survives today as the local post office.

The comments made in 1884 about the poor quality of the land continue to be a correct assessment of the soil in the vicinity of Stuart Town. One commentator stated that the soil was insufficiently deep for either farming or grazing but provided excellent conditions for orchards. The area has produced some of the finest stone fruit in New South Wales.

Locomotive 3665 on No. 65 goods on 20th January 1967 slows to exchange electric staffs. Just past the end of the platform is a facing point that leads into the stockyard.

OPENING OF THE LINE AND STATION AND ITS PHYSICAL IMPACT ON THE TOWN

The town of Ironbarks had existed from about 1840 and had been established along the banks of Kugaburga Creek on what was later known as Alexander Street. The opening of the station in 1880 had an immediate physical effect of encouraging new urban development away from Alexander Street, turning the main street 90° and

[2] G. Althofer, *Ironbark Chips,* Dubbo, Macquarie Publications, 1980, p. 18.

extending the main drag towards the railway station. The commercial part of town had been relocated approximately 500 metres (1,640 feet) from the former centre of town.

Stuart Town station was opened on 1st June 1880 in conjunction with the opening of the extension of the Main West line between Orange and Wellington. The station opened with the name Ironbarks though the station was not named after the Ironbark Mountain Range, which was a geographical feature four miles distant from Temora.[3] The station may have been named after the extensive ironbark trees in the area or the name of the Parish, which was called Ironbarks.

The *Dubbo Dispatch* newspaper reported in 1885 that the change of the name of the town and, consequently, the station

> "Poor old Ironbarks is wiped out of existence. In future, it is to be known as Stuart Town. It is to be hoped that, under the new title, the township will take a fresh lease of life".[4]

The machinery of government operated slowly and the official change of name, at least for the station, occurred on 1st May 1889. The new name came from the surname of the Premier between 1883 and 1885, namely Alexander Stuart. From a railway point of view, Stuart was not a nice person and was directly involved in the mischief that contributed to the 1884 Bridges Royal Commission. When the town and station name change in 1889, Stuart had been dead three years and had been living in Great Britain before his demise.

If it were not bad enough to rename the town from Ironbarks to Stuart Town, one thoroughfare towards the eastern end of the town was named Alexander Street.

The post office in Stuart Town predated the arrival of the railway by 15 years. The name of the post and telegraph office, which was not located at the station, was changed in 1889 to Stuart Town.[5] Stuart Town was proclaimed a town on 4th October 1890.

There was a Railway Hotel in the town, but the single-storey structure now operates as the local post office. It was one of four hotels in town when the railway arrived in 1880.

THE ADOPTION OF A METHODOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND THE DESIGN HISTORY OF THE PLATFORM BUILDING

There is only one architectural plan relating to the Stuart Town building and it is dated 1879. It shows an open-fronted brick waiting shed without a platform awning. In addition, there is a station arrangement plan issued in 1880 which shows the outline

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[3] *Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 2nd November 1880, p. 3.

[4] *Armidale Express and New England General Advertiser*, 23rd January 1885, p. 8.

[5] *Molong Express and Western District Advertiser*, 2nd February 1889, p. 2.

of the 1879 building and nothing more. Only the 1880 building is initialled by John Whitton, who was the man in charge of the construction of the station.

The task of documenting the history of the present platform building is made difficult by the minimal plan detail and is made even more difficult by the knowledge that the present building on the platform does not have the overall appearance of the building in the plans of 1879 and 1880. Moreover, there are minimal references in the official documentation and in the regional press to the building.

Because of these difficulties, the way evidence is gathered to explain the history of the building has had to include different research techniques. In particular, the following areas of research have been adopted to understand the footprint and design features of the existing building. The techniques adopted are:

- preparation of a list of unusual and irregular building elements
- an analysis of economic, political and social factors that impinged upon the decision-making process
- a comparison of similar buildings approved by the Railway Construction Branch and the Existing Lines Branch to determine the origin of the building design
- a comparative analysis of platform buildings in the same local area to assess the typicality of the structure
- a comparative analysis of similar sized buildings on other existing railway lines throughout the Colony approved by the Engineer for Existing Lines
- the creation of a hypothesis which examines whether the present platform building was initially developed from a single room, two rooms or three rooms

After considering the results of the foregoing analyses, a best guess has been formulated as to the development of the Stuart Town building.

THE UNUSUAL AND IRREGULAR BUILDING FEATURES

The following building elements and features of the platform building combine to make frustrate an accurate history of the building. These are:

- the measurements of the 1879 intended building not correlating with any of the existing spaces
- the irregular length of the structure combined with the standard internal width
- the non-existence of any other station building plans
- conflicting contemporary press reports of June 1880 about the nature of structures at station
- the absence of photographs that show other than the present building envelope
- the void of waiting room and toilet facilities for women in 1880
- the internal timber wall separating the ticket office and the general waiting room when the external walls are formed by brickwork

- the omission of an underground rainwater tank and the presence of such facility associated with the good shed
- the appearance in the rear wall of a joint between the centre internal space and the eastern end internal space and the nonappearance of a similar identifier on the elevation facing the platform
- the unusual timber porch with unusual vertical boarding
- changes in the brickwork in the rear wall suggesting the one-time presence of a window
- the large window in the western end wall, thus allowing unwanted analysis of the contents of the room
- the pattern of the chimneys with a double chimney penetrating the roof ridge and a single chimney near the corner of the western end internal space

All these unusual elements or features combined to make impossible task of writing an accurate history of the station. The building and its surrounding infrastructure make the station a puzzling potpourri of confusion and conjecture.

Stuart Town is not an everyday railway building in terms of its design history. It is not representative of other surviving buildings on the railway system. Instead, it is an unusual and non-standard building belonging to a group of structures that have mostly been purged from the railway network. They have been demolished because untrained people have been allowed to make erroneous judgements about the significance of structures. The Stuart Town building would have met a similar fate had it not been for the combined forces of various local people who acted at different times and in different ways to ensure the survival of the building, despite the expressed intention of the railway authorities to demolish the structure. The heritage values of the platform building rely on its very irregularity – not its typicality.

While many aspects of the development of the platform building and related infrastructure remain a puzzle, their history was embedded in the political, economic and social environment of the 1870s and 1880s and the history of those factors are known. These notes now examine what is known.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS IMPINGING ON THE SELECTION OF THE DESIGN OF THE PLATFORM BUILDING

There were two broad strands of thought that were involved in the process to determine the nature of buildings that would be provided at Stuart Town. Both these two elements involved the adequacy of public funds to carry out the tasks requested by the colonial Parliament.

The first factor was the desire by John Whitton to minimise expenditure in any way possible so that he did not exceed the financial limit set by the New South Wales Parliament. To achieve that aim, Whitton had started from 1868 on a journey of design

innovation and experimentation and continued for the whole of the 1870s ending in 1880. Whitton was one of the earliest practitioners of design minimisation.

The second factor was a consequence of the first factor. Whitton's policy of minimal expenditure resulted in minimal station facilities when lines were opened. After Whitton handed over a new line at the time of completion of the trackwork, any subsequent costs relating to construction of associated facilities, such a station buildings and freight facilities, became the responsibility of the Commissioner for Railways and the Engineer for Existing Lines, initially William Mason and, from 1880, George Cowdery. Cowdery was forced to spend money to erect those absent buildings and structures which had been omitted by Whitton.

The two broad strands are amplified below.

FACTOR ONE: DESIGN INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTATION ON THE TRACK SECTION BETWEEN ORANGE AND WELLINGTON

The decade of the 1870s was a time of incessant experimentation by John Whitton to trial building designs that would meet likely traffic demands at the lowest possible cost. This experimentation applied to platform buildings, goods sheds and residences. At Stuart Town, the buildings that were proposed provided examples for each of the three broad types of buildings – platform buildings, goods shed and facilities and residence. Whitton's objective was to select a standard design that would meet functional requirements at the lowest possible cost. It was in 1880 that Whitton selected his standard roadside design of platform building for use on all new lines. Oddly, he chose not to use one of his standard designs at Stuart Town for the platform building and what he approved had more connection to the experimentation of the 1870s than to the standardisation of building designs that he introduced from 1880 for the rest of the decade.[6] In terms of the goods shed, the structure displayed the transition of designs from the through type of shed to the side loading/unloading type. The Station Master's residence accorded with a standard design that John Whitton had introduced in 1876 and had used widely since that time.

In essence, the buildings at Stuart Town, no matter what their origin, formed an outstanding case of design change from the period dominated by British influences to one which was subjugated to European architecture. It does not matter whether building approved by Whitton for Stuart Town was built or not built. The surviving plan

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[6] The pattern of building development between Orange and Dubbo was very similar to the pattern between Wagga Wagga and Albury in regard to the platform buildings, goods sheds and residences approved in 1880. A single plan was used to provide two room, brick "waiting sheds" at three stations (i.e., Uranquinty, The Rock and Yerong Creek) but the evidence indicates that none was built. Instead, Whitton built the first example of the standard roadside design at The Rock. Again, there is a similarity between the two lines as no plans survive for the three stations concerned.

is a statement of the outcome of the design process and the contextual decision-making setting involved in that activity.

When John Whitton approved buildings between Orange and Dubbo in 1879, he would have been aware that the main industry at Stuart Town was gold mining and that a railway line and station were not necessary to transport the extracted minerals. He would have also been aware that the country between Orange and Stuart Town was largely useless for farming. Money, or the lack of it, was at the forefront of Whitton's mind and he simply did not have sufficient money to expand the railway network to a standard he supported.

Perhaps Whitton decided that the town of Stuart Town was so small that he could not justify the allocation of the smallest standard roadside design, namely his mini three-room example, which measured 37 feet in length. Instead, he intended to provide simply a waiting shed though, puzzlingly, he thought it should be built in brickwork. In the end, he chose to build nothing for the line opening – no platform and no building.

FACTOR TWO: ANGER OVER INADEQUATE TRACK STANDARDS BETWEEN BATHURST AND DUBBO

The forty-eight miles of track between Bathurst and Orange were completed in 54 weeks by contractors. Newspapers claimed that it was an act of unbelievable speed and was the fastest section of line opened in the Colony since 1855.

It was the first section of line, together with the lines south of Goulburn and north of Murrurundi, to feature lower construction standards. These lower standards were mirrored in the following ways:

- reduction in the radius of curves
- use of lighter rails
- sleepers made from inferior, local gum trees
- utilisation of stones from the Macquarie River for ballast rather than crushed gravel
- two-rail fencing
- minimisation of permanent platform buildings
- minimisation of openings for natural waterways
- absence or minimisation of overhead timber road bridges.[7]

This lowering of construction standards had an immediate impact with higher track maintenance and other costs incurred by George Cowdery. For Stuart Town, the result of Whitton's decision was the elimination of the platform buildings that he should have constructed.

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[7] G. Reynolds, *The Kings Colonials*, privately published, 1982, p. 5.

DETAILS OF THE PLANS PREPARED IN 1879 AND 1880 FOR THE PLATFORM BUILDING
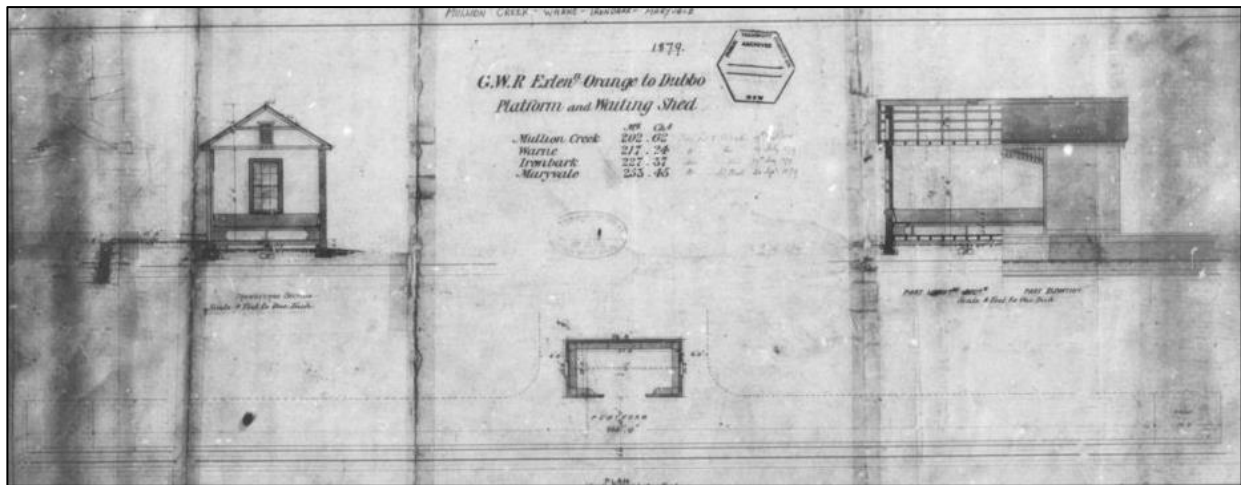
This is the only surviving architectural plan of a building intended for erection at Stuart Town. The plan was also to be applied to Mullion Creek, Euchareena and Maryvale. [OBJ] The building was not erected at Stuart Town at the date of the station opening on 1st June 1880 but appears to have been built by the end of December of that year. The waiting shed would have been a chilly place in Winter without heating and its open front wall and would have been a sweltering locale in Summer without a platform awning.

As a cost saving measure, Whitton, starting in 1879, sometimes used one plan for more than one intended location for platform buildings, as in this case. There is no approval signature on the single, surviving plan but the plan was stamped with the date of 20th September 1879. Whitton also initialled and dated the station arrangement plan on 15th May 1880 which showed the proposed 1879 waiting shed in outline.

The extension of the line west of Orange involved a change in design policy. In addition to the application of a single plan for more than one location, Whitton intended to construct waiting sheds to be made of brickwork, rather than timber. These two criteria marked the intended buildings, which were void of platform awnings, as experimental. Mullion Creek, Euchareena, Stuart Town and Maryvale were to be built from the same plan. They were to be simple, brick, open-fronted waiting sheds measuring 26 feet by 13 feet 6 inches external. They had gabled roofs. There were only two slightly decorative elements – (1) the slightly arched head over the entrance to the general waiting room using fretted, decorative boards and (2) the expression of simple fretwork on lower ends of the bargeboard on the gables. Windows were placed in both ends of the structure, which was a traditional place for waiting sheds.

It is unknown whether the four waiting sheds were built to the same dimensions, namely 24 feet 6 inches internal by 12 feet internal. Three are demolished and it is impossible to interpret the present building at Stuart Town. There were benches

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against the walls on three sides while the front of the structure was open to the platform. The platforms were 264 feet long, which was standard for smaller centres.

Stuart Town, Mullion Creek, Euchareena and Maryvale were all small places, and they were to receive a small, simple waiting shed without staff. How small were these locations? A decade after the line opened between Orange and Wellington, one reporter described Euchareena as having "around it two or three houses and a little railway station".[8]

There are no known photographs of the platform building at Stuart Town prior to its appearance today.
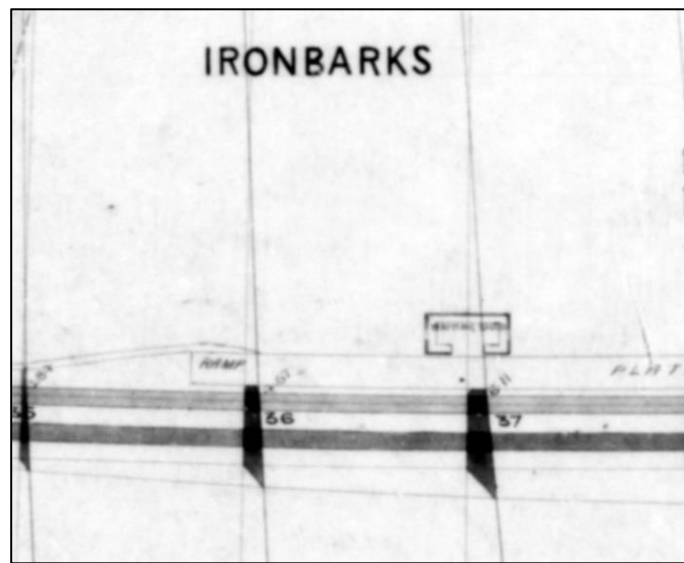
In addition to the plan issued in August 1879, a second plan was produced in May 1880, shown above in part, which displays exactly the outline of the same building as expressed in the 1879 plan. John Whitton initialled the May 1880 plan "JW" and he wrote the date 15th May 1880 on it. By his signature, it is clear that Whitton proposed to erect a waiting shed but, given that he dated the plan only 15 days before the station opened, he had no intention of erecting the structure.

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[8] *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 6th April 1889, p. 718.

The above photograph shows the building at Stuart Town at an unknown time but probably after 1890. There are no known plans explaining the development of the structure. The building at Stuart Town never expanded further than that shown in the photograph. Rather than add rooms to an existing building, the Railways Department would provide small, stand-alone structures at smaller stations. As well as the brick building in the middle of the foregoing picture, there is a gabled roof out of shed towards the far end and, in between the main building and the out of shed, there was a lamp room with a semi-circular shape roof. **SOURCE:** *N. King, There's No Railway There Anymore, privately published, no details, p. 34.*

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING PLATFORM BUILDING

Overall, the structure is 47 feet 6 inches long by 12 feet 5 inches wide, both external, according to a 1984 official plan. The room at the eastern end was the ladies' waiting room and toilet, being 16 feet 4 inches long. In the centre was the general waiting room with a length of 9 feet 10 inches and, at the western end, was the ticket/parcels office for the station officer with a length of 14 feet 9 inches. It may be observed that the room dimensions add up to about 40 feet and not 47 feet. The official measurements do not correspond with on-site measurements taken on two occasions – in 1979 and in 2022 – which both approximated the length at about 45 feet.

The awning over the platform is nine feet wide and supported by four square, timber posts with timber capitals and timber brackets.

A strange looking public entrance was added to the rear of the general waiting room featuring timber construction and, extremely rare for the New South Wales Railways, vertical set weatherboards. None of the dimensions of the existing three rooms mirrored the 26 feet long waiting shed approved in 1879, though the width is consistent.

A new picket fence has been erected. The height of the pickets on the fence at the rear of the platform is six feet. They are two inches wide and set at four inches centres, with each picket two inches apart.

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BUILDING DESIGN – JOHN WHITTON IN THE RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION BRANCH OR WILLIAM MASON/GEORGE COWDERY IN THE EXISTING LINES BRANCH?

It is often thought that the building on the platform that Stuart Town was the work of John Whitton. His Railway construction Branch, which he headed, was responsible for not only building the railway lines but providing infrastructure within the railway corridor to facilitate operation of the lines. The plans prepared in 1879 and 1880 for the four waiting sheds was prepared by staff in his Railway Construction Branch but Whitton neither signed nor dated the plan. The building that was erected at Stuart Town contained four features of the 1879 architectural plan mainly:

- rectangular shape
- gabled roof
- brickwork for all walls
- windows at both ends.

Apart from those four characteristics, the structure at Stuart Town is significantly different from the 1879 architectural plan and that is reflected in the following elements:

- approximately 20 feet longer
- awning over platform
- enclosed general waiting room
- office accommodation for staff
- porched entry into general waiting room
- provision of a ladies' waiting room
- erection of one double and one single chimney.

On the basis that there were no buildings at the station when it opened on 1st June 1880, the variations in building features cannot be attributed to John Whitton. Instead, the physical changes to the planned building in 1879 and confirmed in 1880 were the work of the Engineer for Existing Lines. That position did not exist in Whitton's Railway Construction Branch, which was a branch in the Department of Public Works. Rather, the Existing Lines Branch, with the Engineer for Existing Lines as its head, was a branch of the New South Wales Railways, which was another branch in the Department of Public Works. By the existence of two separate branches, the heads of those branches reported directly to the Minister for Public Works. The work of neither branch head was subject to the approval of the other head. In 1879, the occupant of the position of Engineer for Existing Lines was William Mason and, upon his resignation in 1880, George Cowdery occupied the top position until his retirement in 1889. Both Mason and Cowdery knew Whitton intimately is they previously held management positions within the Railway Construction Branch.

Although primary evidence to support the involvement of Mason and Cowdery is limited, a photographic comparison of what Whitton and Mason/Cowdery were approving in the early 1880s helps to identify the origin of the design of the Stuart Town building. The photographs below show the building approved by Whitton at Borenore in 1885 and at Woolbrook by Cowdery also in 1885.

Presented above are photographs of buildings provided for what the Railway Department classified as a third class station. On the left is the mini three room building that John Whitton approved in 1885 for Borenore when the line was extended between Orange and Molong. Whitton's station design policy, which he introduced in 1880, provided for a standard footprint in three lengths – 37 feet, 55 feet and 70-80 feet. These buildings were called standard roadside design by a later administration. The photograph on the left shows the smallest of the three standard sizes. The building contained three rooms, namely a ticket office, a general waiting room and a ladies' waiting room. In the case of the smallest standard building, there was one semi-detached pavilion which contained both the male and female toilets and was connected to the main building by narrow passage through which women moved between their waiting room and their toilet without being observed by men. Virtually every major element of the standard roadside design was fixed. The photograph was taken on 7th August 1978.

Woolbrook station opened in 1881 and shown on the right. It got its permanent platform building in 1885. The structure was 54 feet long. It was the product of the Engineer for Existing Lines, George Cowdery, and conformed to a design that his predecessor, William Mason had introduced in 1876. The overall design feature was the lack of architectural attractiveness. Whereas Whitton's standard roadside design was pleasing in design, Cowdery's equivalent structure was a purely low-cost, utilitarian affair and unappealing. Another standout feature of Cowdery's work was his absolute abandonment of standardisation. In all examples, virtually every aspect changed. This was most obvious in the absence of a toilet pavilion. At nearly every one of Cowdery's third class buildings, the male toilet was erected in a different position while the ladies' closet was placed either at the rear or side of their waiting room. Other strange aspects of the Woolbrook structure include the ornate barges on the gables, the lattice work in the spandrels and the window in the end wall. With only one chimney, some people waiting for trains probably froze to death or decided that the pain associated with freezing was not worth the effort of train travel.

Even if there were not a single item of documentary evidence, the photographic evidence confirms that the building at Stuart Town was definitely not the work of John Whitton but of William Mason and George Cowdery.
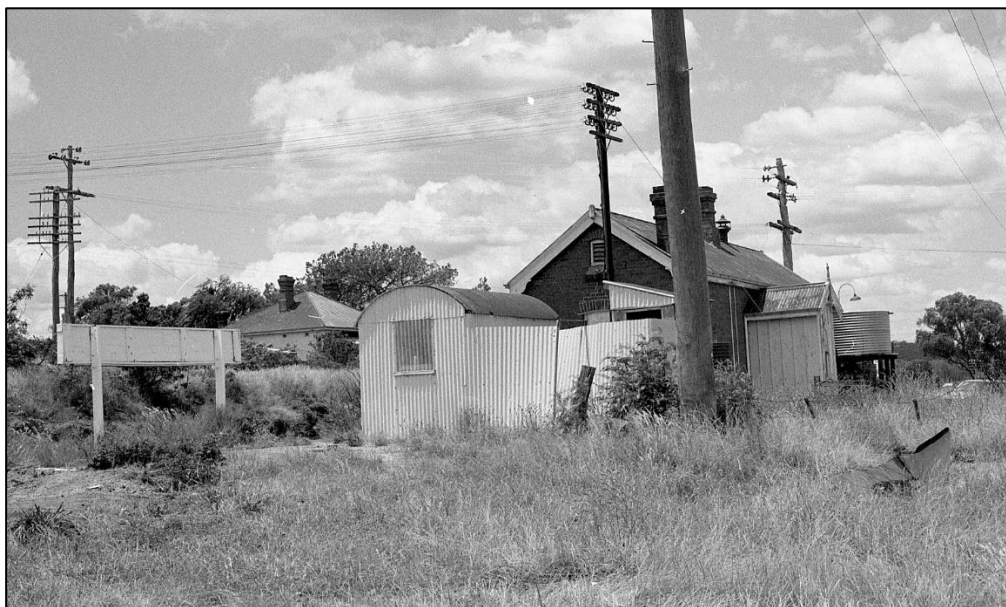
One of the standout features of third-class buildings erected on existing lines was the random location of male toilets. This photograph of Stuart Town taken on 24ᵗʰ January 1979 shows the small male toilet located between the main brick building and the corrugated iron lamp shed. Its location at the rear of the platform was supposed to be provide a discrete location. Additional discretion was provided by the placement of twin rainwater tanks that were located on the road approach to the building, but these tanks had been demolished at the time of the photograph.

HOW TYPICAL WAS THE STUART TOWN BUILDING AMONGT ITS GEOGRAPHICAL NEIGHBOURS?

The building at Stuart Town displays a similar appearance to the buildings at Mullion Creek, Euchareena and Maryvale and is approximately the same length as the building at Mullion Creek and Euchareena but not at Maryvale, which was shorter and was possibly the only station where the original building dimensions, 26 feet by 13 feet 6 inches both external, were not altered. Post-opening plans refer to the Maryvale structure as an office. The physical development of these buildings and the layouts of their subsidiary structures, such as, waiting rooms, toilets and lamp rooms, were different, which was a characteristic of third-class buildings on existing lines. Mumbil was opened five years after Stuart Town and was a much larger, timber building with a cantilevered platform awning. In other words, the Mumbil building was dissimilar to the others mentioned.

*Of the three other similarly designed buildings in the regional area (i.e., Mullion Creek, Euchareena and Maryvale), only that at Stuart Town has survived and its preservation is only due to the strong and ongoing political pressure from the local community. The above photograph of Stuart Town was taken about eight years after the Public Transport Commission withdrew the officer from the station. When the photograph was taken in 1984, the Liddell Street/Wellington Road level crossing immediately east of the station operated under "open type" conditions without any protection for motor vehicles apart from standard "stop" signs. The Down Home signal has been "pulled off" by the reversal (i.e., movement) of lever No. 2 in the interlocking frame. Three red coloured buckets to fight fires used to hang from the horizontal length of timber fixed to the wall of the lamp room but they were removed once the staff had been purged from the station in 1976. The silhouette of Signalling and Safeworking Historian, Graham Harper, is visible in the Stuart Town photograph. **SOURCE:** Lyn Harper.*

The four photographs show Mullion Creek on 8th June 1968 at the top left, Euchareena on the top right, Mumbil is on the bottom left and Maryvale on the bottom right. The physical similarity of the buildings at Euchareena, Mullion Creek and Maryvale is clear. All three were erected in brickwork but Mumbil was constructed of a timber frame with weatherboard cladding of a later time than its 1885 opening. **SOURCES**: *Ken Winney photograph of Euchareena No. 112472 taken in February 1964. For Mumbil, photograph No. 461704 and for Maryvale photograph No. 59188 all from the ARHS Railway Archives.*

The Public Transport Commission and its replacement in 1980, namely the State Rail Authority, did not have the financial capacity to keep these and other buildings in tiptop or merely a reasonable condition. Why? Just like all other railway administrations prior to the Commission and the Authority, New South Wales governments did not provide sufficient funds for the multitude of works that deserved to be maintained. David Hill became Chief Commissioner in 1980 and it was he who was able to obtain some additional funds from the governments for conservation works but the task of conserving all buildings was impossible. David Hill has been credited as the Father of Railway Conservation in New South Wales.

HOW TYPICAL WAS THE STUART TOWN BUILDING AMONGT SIMILAR BUILDINGS APPROVED BY GEORGE COWDERY?

The building at Stuart Town is similarly dissimilar to all other known third-class buildings erected on existing lines by William Mason and George Cowdery. The few examples extant include Wingello (northbound platform), Bundanoon (southbound platform), Thirlmere and Blackheath.

In other words, the Stuart Town building was a typical third-class structure approved and built for existing lines throughout New South Wales railway system. Its significance is enhanced by the small number of surviving examples in its design family of structures.

This photograph taken on 24th January 1979 shows several items of interest. Just to the left of the window in the brick wall is a vertical line that marks the addition of the ladies' waiting room to the other two internal spaces. A mixture of adjectives is essential to describe the porched entry – cute, incompatible and unusual – all in a fake Gothic Revival fashion. Porched entry through the rear of platform buildings was a status sign in most cases, but it is hard to see that the idea worked successfully at Stuart Town. It is hypothesised that the porch was added in 1890. The unusual location of the single chimney that evacuated smoke and gases from the fireplace in the Station Master's office suggests that it was provided after the construction of the building and possibly replaced a cast-iron stove which had a metal flue penetrating the rear wall. On the left side are two rainwater tanks on stands which provided some visual protection for the unattractive, corrugated iron male toilet. The erection of rainwater tanks above ground was very rare before 1890.

AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESENT PLATFORM BUILDING

With virtually every platform building on the New South Wales railway system, there is normally at least one clue which helps to understand the structure's physical development. Unfortunately, that is not the case with the brick building at Stuart Town. The insubstantial evidence that does survive, in the form of a few entries in *Annual Reports,* in no way helps the observer to interpret the evolution of the structure's footprint.

Accordingly, several hypotheses have been developed to consider the possible ways in which the building involved. These are dealt with seriatim.

1. THE NO BUILDING HYPOTHESIS

There are conflicting press reports at the time of the line opening in June 1880 which provide confusing information. One reporter stated his belief that there was no building at the station, saying:

> "The Ironbarks station is reached. Here, there are to be a "waiting shed, platform, goods shed siding, Station Master's house, & c".[9]

Another newspaper reported a different assessment of the situation, writing in the present tense:

> "The first platform after leaving Orange is at Mullion Creek, at 202 miles from Sydney; the second is at Warne, 217 miles 24 chains from Sydney; the third platform is at the mining township of Ironbark, 227 miles 37 chains from Sydney. At each of these platforms or sidings there are waiting sheds and other station buildings".[10]

Were the reporters paying attention to the places at which the train stopped or to the contents of the official railway propaganda handed to them? In the following press article, the reporter does leaves it to the reader to guess the situation with his reference to Dripstone, which opened three months after the line to Wellington was opened. About Dripstone station, the reporter wrote:

> "The next stoppage place is at 'the Springs' [i.e., Dripstone] where there is a siding or platform only".[11]

Thankfully, the reporter of the *Sydney Morning Herald,* like that of the *Sydney Mail,* was much more alert than those representing other newspapers. What appears to be the correct situation in relation infrastructure together with a visual impression of the locality was published by the *Herald* on the 2nd of June 1880 and stated:

> "Here [i.e., Stuart Town] there are to be a waiting shed, platform, goods shed siding, Station Master's house, &c. The township is seen in front of the station, and the cleared land stretches away for a mile and is backed by a high ridge, over one of the lowest parts of which may be seen the Catombal Mountains, situated on the west off the road from Molong to Wellington. Ironbarks is a mining township; but its industry is waning. From the station may be seen the mining mill and along the line on either side are the holes out of which in times gone by the miners dug the precious metal [i.e., gold]. A quartz reef is exposed in one of the cuttings on the railway and in regard to this section of the line, one peculiarity of its construction is that over many miles it is ballasted with white quartz" [12]

Tenders closed on 27th July 1880 for the erection of the "goods warehouse, the uncovered platform and water tank".[13] That tender advertisement suggested that there

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[9] *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser,* 5th June 1880, p. 1036.
[10] *Australian Town and Country Journal,* 5th June 1880, p. 18.
[11] Ibid.
[12] *Sydney Morning Herald,* 2nd June 1880, p. 7.
[13] *New South Wales Government Gazette,* 20th July 1880, No.292, p. 3784.

was to be no awning on the platform but does not omit the possibility of a structure without a platform awning. The omission of a platform awning would be consistent with the plan of the waiting shed. The reference in the tender advertisement to the construction of a water tank is puzzling. Was it a container to capture rainwater for human consumption? An elevated water tank for locomotives was never provided at Stuart Town. Another concerning aspect relates to the Station Master's house. As the contractor did not sign the plans for the house until three weeks after the station opening, the residence certainly was not in existence on the opening date of 1st June. There is no way of knowing what happened in relation to the platform structure.

It was not until 3rd August 1880 that Commissioner Charles Goodchap indicated that James Douglas was the successful contractor for the "goods warehouse, uncovered platform and water tank.[14]

There is one item of infrastructure that suggests there was no platform building upon the opening of the station. The item is located at the site of the former goods shed and has survived the various official purges to eliminate everything from the former goods yard. It is an underground cistern approximately 17 feet deep and 8 feet wide that would have been used to collect rainwater from the roof of the goods shed.[15] The construction of a cistern at a goods shed was usual, but the unusual aspect was the absence of a similar underground container of rainwater at the platform. No underground cistern or aboveground tank was indicated on the 1879 plan for the platform waiting shed. Had the main building been erected at the time of the station opening, John Whitton would have provided an underground rainwater tank. The existence of multiple aboveground tanks to capture rainwater confirms that the initial building did not exist at the time of the station opening.

Someone must have realised that the goods shed, being 66 feet in length, had a far larger roof and thus greater capacity to capture rainwater than the platform building. The known installation of a water closet by the end of 1880 may be related to the existence of the cistern at the goods shed rather than at the station.

In conclusion, the one statement that seems to be correct is that there was no building on the platform at the time of station opening on 1st June 1880 and that it is conceivable that the platform had not been erected.

2. THE SINGLE ROOM HYPOTHESIS

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[14] *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 6th August 1880, No.320, p. 4064.

[15] Dimensions assessed by inspection by Ian Percival, resident of Alexander Street, Stuart Town. The cistern continues in its location and covered by a steel sheet.

It is possible that the brick waiting shed, as set out in the surviving plan, was erected and subsequently was enlarged or altered from a single room, but the dimensions of the existing internal spaces do not support the measurements of 1879 plan.

Although the external walls are formed of solid nine-inch brickwork, the internal wall between the ticket/parcels office and the general waiting room is formed by a timber frame covered with timber lining boards. Usually, the internal walls of brick buildings are formed by one the skin of bricks four and a half inches wide, but that is not the case at Stuart Town. The presence of the timber framed wall adds weight to the idea that, originally, the building was a single room with measurements either the same as the 1879 plan or different to the plan. Also of interest is the timber cover for the ticket window which slides horizontally against the traditional practice of covers sliding vertically. The "L"-shaped counter was designed to pass parcels between customers and staff. The image was taken by Bill Laidlaw on 23rd February 2024.

3. THE TWO ROOM HYPOTHESIS

It is also possible that the first building on the platform contained two rooms or there were two separate buildings with one or both being temporary, timber structures. Frequently, John Whitton utilised small, portable, temporary buildings that were frequently repositioned according to the location of the railhead.

There is one unsubstantiated secondary reference which suggests that a two-room building was constructed in 1880. John Forsyth, the former State Rail Authority Archives Officer, writes that a contract was issued to James Douglas for the erection of a brick building measuring 30 feet by 15 feet.[16] However, Forsyth does not disclose

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[16] J.H. Forsyth, *Historical Notes on the Main West Line*, Vol. 2, unpublished document, 2003, p. 215.

his source for that information. There is no known official information calling for tenders for the construction of such a two-room platform building in 1880. Moreover, the Forsyth's alleged contract date of 24th June predates the date of 6th August 1880 announced in the *Government Gazette* for the awarding of a contract for the construction of the platform and good shed.

In this two-room hypothesis, the ladies' waiting room at the eastern end would have been added later.

No photographs are known to exist that indicate any other building form other than the current arrangement, i.e., showing a shorter building containing one room or a structure containing two rooms. All surviving photographs show only the present building configuration.

Although no building existed on the opening date on 1st June 1880, the evidence indicates that there was an office for staff in existence in July. These references add weight to the notion that portable structures were utilised initially. The *Sydney Morning Herald* stated that a telegraph office will be opened at the station on 26th July 1880.[17] In August of the same year, the *Annual Report* states that a stove was "fixed in the office". A station nameboard and platform lamps were also erected and that a water closet and urinal were built by Christmas 1880.[18] It is unknown whether those toilet facilities served only men or both sexes – in separate facilities, of course. The operation of a water closet depended on the capture of rainwater from the roofs of one or more buildings and, as even one water closet would require a considerable supply of water; the existing building/s seems to have been more than a single room waiting shed. Other stations listed as having water closets installed in 1880 on the Main West line in the 1880 *Annual Report* were Mount Victoria, Lithgow, Locksley, Perthville and Wellington.[19] In those cases, water was pumped from the underground station rainwater tank into a second tank in the ceiling cavity and then flushed by gravity.

In 1881, the *Annual Report* discloses that a drawer had been fixed in the Stuart Town booking office, probably in the counter underneath the ticket window.[20]

4. THE THREE-ROOM HYPOTHESIS

The building was not erected as a structure of three rooms.

The physical evidence shows uniformity in the construction of the ticket/parcels office at the western end and the general waiting room in the centre and a distinct change in the fabric between those two spaces and the ladies' waiting room at the eastern end.

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[17] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24th July 1880, p. 3.
[18] *Annual Report of the Railway Commissioner for 1880*, Appendix p. 20.

[19] Commissioner for Railways, *Annual Report 1880*, Appendix 1, pp. 6-19. At that time, the reporting year ended on 31st December, not 30th June.
[20] *Annual Report of the Railway Commissioner for 1881*, Appendix p. 20.

THE BEST GUESS OF THE PLATFORM BUILDING'S PHYSICAL GROWTH

Some sort of building existed in 1880 after the station opened. There is evidence of an office existing in late 1880, 1881 and 1882. The first salaried Railway officer appointed to Stuart Town was Mr. Tibbs, whose appointment dated from 1st January 1882.[21] The staff prior to Tibbs' appointment were wages employees, such as Attendants and Porters. At the time, Stuart Town was the only station between Orange and Wellington with staff and was also the only location where trains could pass or overtake each other using the loop adjacent to the main line.

The development of the footprint that exists today is unknown, but the shaky evidence suggests that the three-room structure was in place no later than 1892 and most likely during the 1880s. The platform awning is supported by vertical timber posts. That support mechanism was being replaced from 1889 with the use of cantilevered brackets, initially with a width of only three to five feet. Had the Stuart Town awning been erected after 1892, it would not have had a posted awning. A dubious piece of evidence is found on the signalling diagrams for 1927, 1959 and 1969 which shows the platform building divided into three rooms as at present.

There is physical evidence of the joint of the building between the ladies' waiting room on the eastern end and the general waiting room in the middle but there is no similar identifier on the platform elevation. The date of that change, as well as the unusual pedestrian entry at the rear of the structure, is unknown. Both by the Gothic-influenced design and the contrasting use of timber work, there is confidence in saying that the porch entry was added after construction of the room to which it gave entry.

There is one press reference in 1890 that indicates that a timber waiting shed was erected. Tenders closed on 15th December 1890.[22] The successful tenderer was R. Garwell.[23] The Stuart Town waiting shed is the only known contract for a railway station that he was granted. This is another perplexing reference. Was timber specified to match the wall material in an existing ticket office? Probably not. There is a chance that Mr Garwell did not build a waiting room but erected the timber porch at the rear of the structure which gave access from the road side of the building directly into the existing general waiting room.

The 1879 and 1880 plans for the waiting shed display one item of help. The plan also applied to Mullion Creek, Euchareena and Maryvale. An analysis of the buildings at those stations reveals structures of very similar architecture. Based on that source of information alone, the building that was erected at Stuart Town initially had a close resemblance to the proposed structure in the 1879 and 1880 plans. Louis Christian Young was awarded a contract in 1884 for the construction of additions to the existing

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[21] *Blue Book 1882*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1883, p. 111.
[22] *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 9th December 1890, No.706, p. 9432.
[23] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31st December 1890, p. 5.

buildings at Euchareena and Stuart Town. [24] There is a good chance that that work involved the addition of ladies' waiting rooms and other alterations to both structures.

A best guess at the development of the Stuart Town building would state that:

- nothing was erected at the station when it opened on 1st June 1880
- the proposed 1879 single room, brick waiting shed, or a structure approximately the same physical dimensions, was built sometime between July and December 1880 but quickly divided into two rooms, consisting of an open-fronted general waiting room and an office
- a stove was erected in the ticket/parcels office with the flue penetrating the rear wall in the second half of 1880
- three timber "doors" were fitted to the platform elevation to enclose the original, wide opening in the second half of 1880
- a male/unisex toilet was provided behind the rear of the platform in 1880
- the lamp room, with its semi-circular shape roof, was erected in 1882
- the ladies' waiting room was added to the existing two rooms in 1884 and a double chimney erected through the roof ridge as well a single chimney to replace the metal flue in the ticket/parcels office
- the posted verandah was erected either in 1880 or 1884
- the timber porched entry was constructed in 1890
- the out of shed dates from the 1890s.
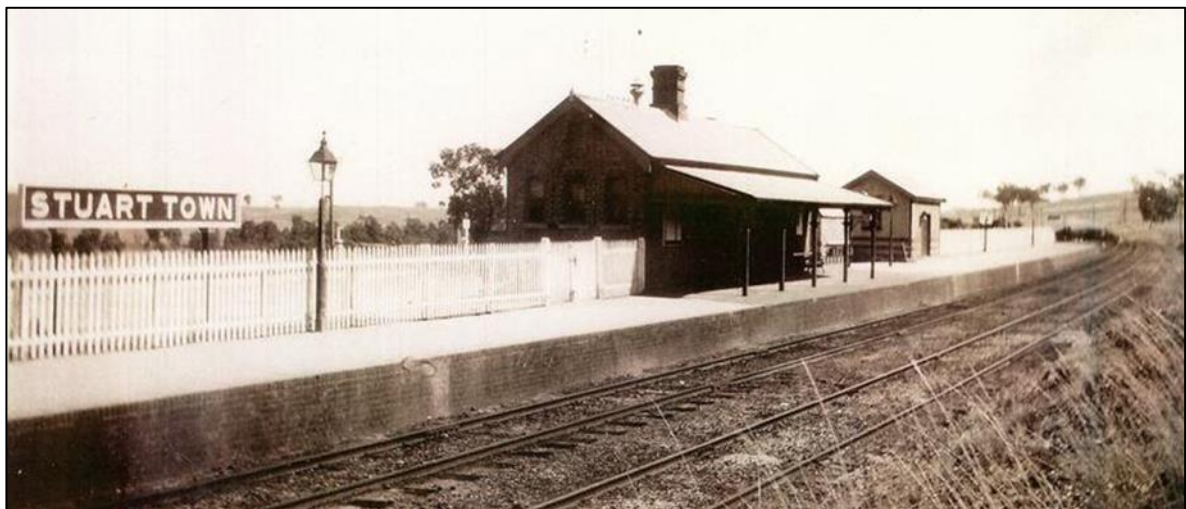
The above photograph was taken not long after the platform have been extended at the western end in 1897. Station nameboards were usually not erected at the time of station opening is a cost saving measure and this practice applied virtually everywhere as trunk line extensions were made in the 1880s. However, by the end of the 1880s, nameboards had been erected for virtually every platform. In the photograph above, the dominant form of

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[24] *New South Wales Government Gazette,* 3rd June 1884 No.257, page 3587.

presentation of the colours at the time was used, namely white letters on a black background. The application of white letters on a black background was reversed around 1915 and, after that, the letters were painted black on a white background, as shown in the photograph. However, because there were so many nameboards in existence, the policy was adopted of reversing the colours only when the condition of the nameboards was so poor that they required repainting. As a result, many stations, especially in rural areas, continued to display white letters on a black background for decades. **SOURCE:** *https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/sydneytrains/culture-and-heritage/welcome-to-historic-stuart-town-railway-station/stuart-town*

OTHER PLATFORM INFRASTRUCTURE

In 1882, the *Annual Report* listed that a "small lamp room" had been erected, the "carriage dock" had been built and a distant signal for westbound trains had been provided.[25] The 1883 *Annual Report* repeated the information about the lamp room and the carriage dock.[26] The lamp room was demolished in 2015.[27] While the use of a semi-circular shaped roof for the lamp room relative to other structures with single or double pitched roofs on the platform, the use of curved roofs for lamp rooms occurred at a few locations on the western region.

TOILET CHANGES 1970

A septic system was installed at both the station toilets and at the Station Master's residence on 21st January 1970. The opportunity was taken shortly afterwards to discontinue the use of the former detached male toilet block adjacent to the lamp room at the western end of the main building. A new male toilet was incorporated into the station building at the eastern end by truncating the size of the ladies' waiting room. The work required a new opening for a door in the wall facing the platform and the new facility is identified by the door head being four courses of bricks lower than the other doors on that wall.


The railway staff painters had not long been at Stuart Town to paint all the timber work when this photograph was taken on 20th January 1967. The photograph shows the entry into the ladies' waiting room and the three windows marking two closets and a hand washbasin. It was most unusual to see adequate toilet facilities provided for women. The photograph was taken three years before an additional

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25 Ibid., 1882, Appendix p. 11.

26 Ibid., 1883, Appendix p. 11.

27 https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/sydneytrains/culture-and-heritage/welcome-to-historic-stuart-town-railway-station. Video on station.

opening was made in the wall facing the tracks to provide entry/exit to the new male toilet.

Station Building
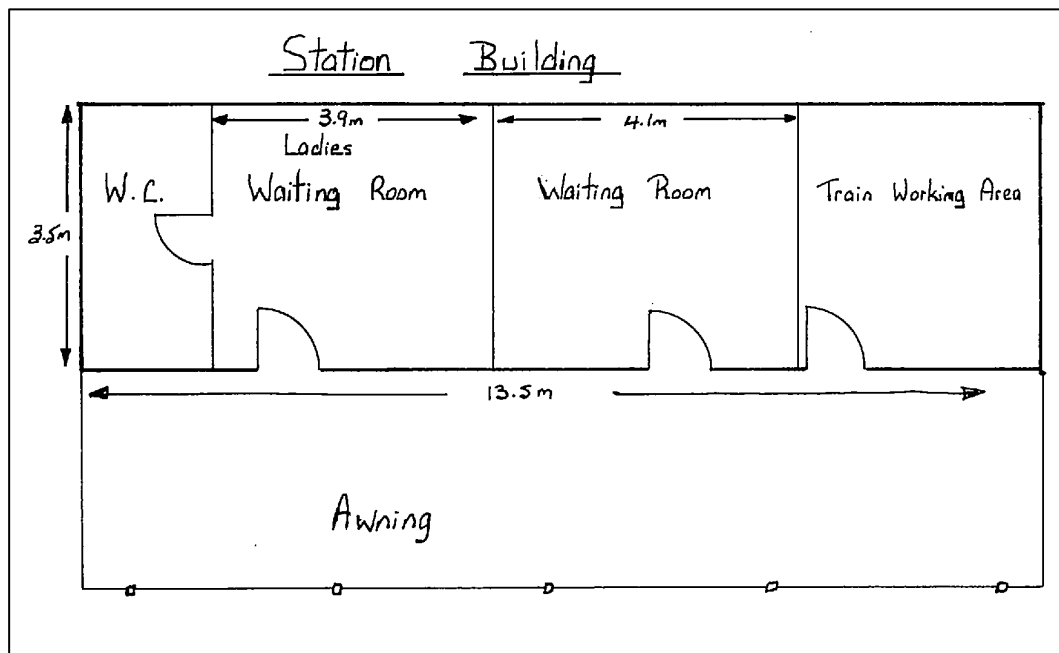
The above plan shows the layout of the building in April 1970 prior to the transfer of the male toilet into the main building. The following plan of the building in July 1970 was made after the provision of the new male toilet into part of the former ladies' waiting room.
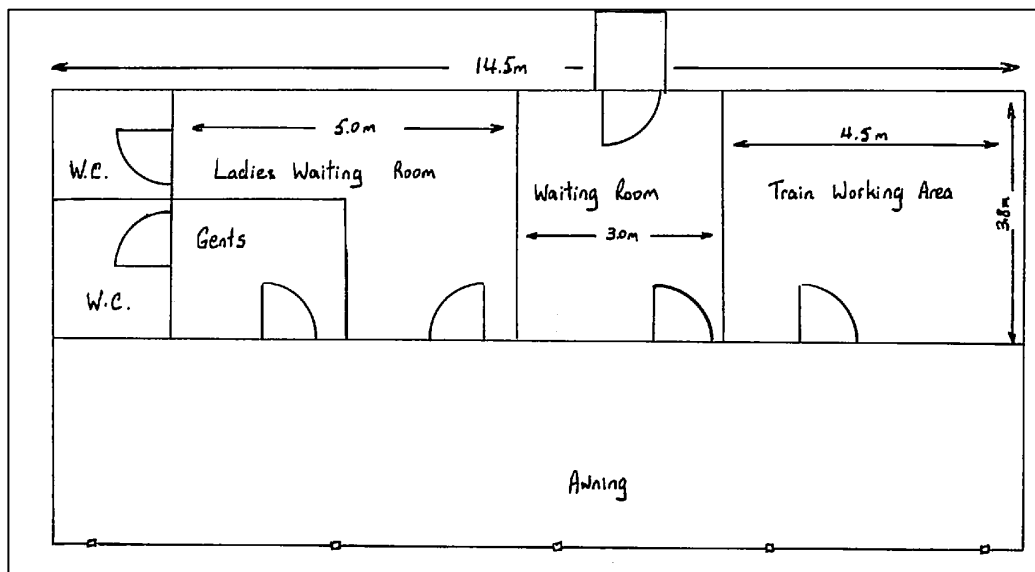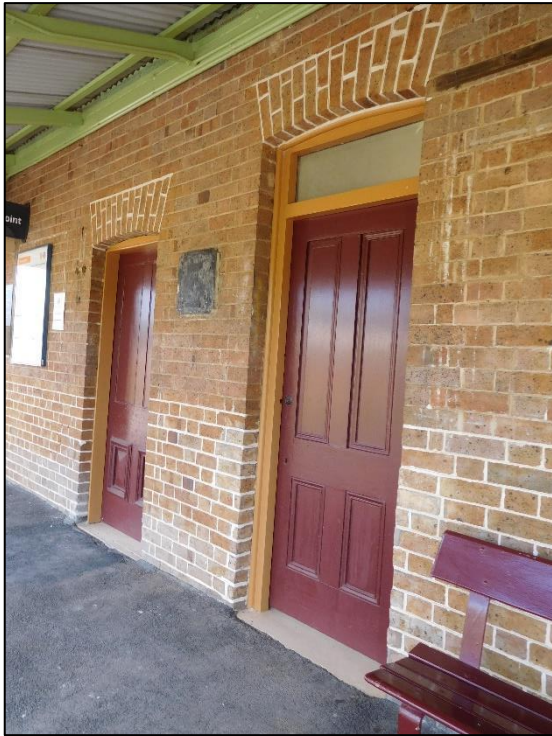
This image shows the impact on the building of the 1970 installation of the male toilet into part of the ladies' waiting room. The door on the right-hand side was the original door into their chamber while the door without the fanlight on the left-hand side provides access to the new male toilet. The omission of a fanlight for the new door opening is viewed as good conservation practice as a casual observer can determine the original door entry and the subsequent alteration. However, back in 1970, the omission of the fanlight was not made on conservation grounds but on a need to save money. Image taken on 14th September 2022.

This photograph shows the building on 16th June 1975. A new addition to the platform is the steel box positioned outside the door of the Station Master's office. It was placed on the platform to facilitate the deposit of departmental correspondence and parcels when the station officer was not on duty. Other stations in the area also possessed these containers.

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The platform, with its brick face, was extended twice – in 1897 and 1910 – according to official sources. While the 1897 extension is easily visible, there is no evidence of any other platform extension. The extensions were not necessarily due to an increase in the population of the town population, which peaked in 1905. The population had doubled from about 250 in 1886 to just over 500 in 1910. The platform was probably extended in 1897 so that both passenger traffic and parcels traffic could be dealt with simultaneously without the need to make two stops at the platform.

Also on the platform was an out of shed. It had a timber frame, and the external walls and roof was covered by corrugated iron sheets. The structure had a gabled roof. While there is no evidence to indicate the construction date, the use of a double pitched roof is suggestive of erection in the 1890s rather than in the 20th century. After 1900, single pitched roofs became the standard form of roof covering for out of sheds.

The above photograph, taken on 16th June 1975, shows the out of shed which was the third of three buildings on the platform. Out of sheds/rooms first appeared on the railway system in 1890 and followed the introduction by Chief Commissioner Eddy of the notion of second-class parcels. Prior to 1890, all parcels were conveyed by passenger train and kept in the office of the Station Master if there were not a dedicated parcels office. In order to reduce the cost of sending parcels, Eddy introduced a scheme whereby a lower tariff could be charged for those parcels conveyed by goods train and retained at their destination not in the safety of the Station Master's office but in less secure accommodation not under the direct supervision of the Station Master. In the photograph above, vertical boards have been placed against the corrugated iron wall sheets facing the platform to mitigate the damaged caused by the station Junior Porter banging the platform trolley into the building. Three other interesting other features are shown. The first is the strip of asphalt on the platform which terminates at the western end of the out of shed. In Departmental language, the bitumen on the platform surface of many stations, was called a barrow strip and its purpose was to facilitate the movement of

the parcels and luggage barrow along the platform – not for the benefit of passengers. Lastly, at an unknown time, the original timber pickets have been removed from the horizontal rails. The uniform absence of paint tells the story. Wire was a cheaper alternative.

INADEQUATE STAFFING 1920s

The station was staffed by a Station Officer, a Night Officer and a Junior Porter in 1924.[28] Some of the townsfolk complained that staffing level was inadequate. For instance, in 1925, the press complained that there was no staff at the station, maintaining that the sole officer on duty was frequently occupied with other duties, such as "cleaning points, attending to signal lights half a mile from the station, or scrubbing lavatories or other station premises, or picking up paper, etc., that may have blown into the yard. The press expressed the opinion that:

> "Men of the status of the Station Master or Night Officer should not "have to then take up such menial work as is allotted to Junior Porters".

The correspondence suggested that "the excess inspectors be put on to do this work, and so earn a little of the high wages they receive, and thus give the public the attention they are entitled to.[29]

CONNECTION TO THE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY 1949

The Railways Department included the connection of electric lighting to the railway station in its 1949 programme that connected station and other buildings to the exiting local electricity supply system. The Secretary for Railways advised that Stuart Town had been included in a programme for installation of electric lighting at country railway stations. Secretary Nicholas said that the Stuart Town installation would be carried out as soon as labour and materials permit. He pointed out that, at that time, it was possible to carry out only a limited number of electricity installations and priority was be given to stations which handled the heaviest night passenger traffic.[30] The electricity was switched on 22nd June 1949.[31]

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[28] Ibid., 27th November 1924, p. 8.
[29] *Wellington Times*, 22nd October 1925, p. 5.
[30] *Wellington Times*, 10th February 1949, p. 6.
[31] Ibid., 24th June 1949, p. 5.

It was late in the afternoon when locomotive 6040 on No. 9 goods entered the station on 20th January 1967. While all the pickets on the fence at the rear of the platform have been replaced by horizontal wire strands, the pickets had been retained to partially enclose the ends of the platform.

When the photographer turned around to take a second photograph of 6040 on No. 9 goods, the fireman had steadied himself out the doorway to exchange staffs with the station officer, who was hidden by the timber posts.

STAFF REMOVED FROM STATION 1976

The station became unattended in 1976. Royce Baldock was the last Station Master and the local press stated that his last day of service was 1st January 1976.[32] Baldock held the rank at the time of Assistant Station Master. The State Heritage Inventory expresses the last day as 10th April 1976.[33] Possibly, this later date is explained by the presence of relief staff who visited the station after the removal of the permanent staff. There is a photograph in the Wellington newspaper that shows Baldock in uniform in February 1976. Baldock also managed Mumbil and Euchareena.

BUILDING CONSERVATION WORKS

The conservation of the station building, one local resident reflected, was a "funny" story because it involved a period of decades and a wide range of people who volunteered time and materials. These contributions were made by various people in the town and locality and also by sympathetic, railway staff based in Orange. Typical of the work by local volunteers was the effort by long-time resident, Ian Percival, to prevent the demolition of the station nameboard nearer to the level crossing. Ian witnessed the demolition and immediately went to the State Rail Authority maintenance depot at Orange where he purchased with his own money the letters to form a new station nameboard, which was constructed and funded by volunteers. It was volunteers who also constructed new entry gates to the former goods yard as well as the associated picket fencing.

A significant level of funding was made by the Commonwealth Government, which had no jurisdiction over the precinct. Stuart Town is in the Commonwealth electorate of Calare. David Simmons was the Member of Parliament for the Federal electorate, and he held the seat for the Australian Labor Party between 1983 and 1996. More importantly, he held the ministerial portfolios of arts and tourism and local government at different times. He is widely lauded as the person for finding money for a significant part of the conservation works at Stuart Town and, through his position of both being the local member and a minister with access to finance, he was able to help in the fight against the demolition of the structure by the then owner, namely the State government entity known as the State Rail Authority.

The State government did not totally walk away from financial assistance and Countrylink supplied trees and other vegetation behind the station when the platform was being elevated in 1999.

In 2024, it is the local residents of the town who clean the platform and remove any rubbish.

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[32] *Wellington Times*, 6th February 1976, p. 2.

[33] The Heritage Office staff probably obtained the date from a local history by G. Althofer entitled *Ironbark Chips,* Macquarie Publications, Dubbo, 1980, p. 70.

Unusual items at Stuart Town included double fencing along part of the platform and two "stop" signs at the end of the dock platform. James Dalton 9th December 2023

PLATFORM ARTWORK 2021

The State Parliamentary Member for Dubbo electorate, Dugald Saunders, opened artwork on the platform on 29th June 2021. Local artists were engaged to deliver the heritage display and artwork. The official blurb states:

> "Graphic designer and photographer, Louise Austin, produced the Acknowledgement of Country artwork, which incorporates aboriginal story telling through art to bring together the diverse history of the area. In collaboration with Orana Arts, visual Artist Tim Winters, a Stuart Town resident, designed the sculpture, 'On the Night Train', which interprets the structure of the former lamp room once located at the station. A stone plinth inscribed by letter cutter, Ian Marr, incorporates the words of the Henry Lawson poem, 'On the Night Train.' Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Paul Toole, said the project combines Aboriginal and railway history, poetry and contemporary artwork to tell the area's story".

Rolfe Bozier took this image on 30th August 2002. Countrylink raised part of the platform in 1999 by about 550mm (about 21 inches) or six courses of bricks. The two-tone blue Countrylink platform nameboard had been previously erected in 1992 and was refixed. It also built a second picket fence at the rear of the platform, thereby creating the present arrangement of twin picket fences on the platform west of the building. **SOURCE:** *NSWrail.net*

PART 3

DEVELOPMENTS AFTER THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLATFORM BUILDING

CRITICISM OF THE UNSUITABILITY OF THE ORANGE-WELLINGTON LINE 1897

The residents of the area around Molong were furious that John Whitton had decided to extend the railway line westward to Wellington via Stuart Town rather than via Molong. Whitton's reason was simple. The route via Stuart Town was shorter in length. Hence, it was cheaper to build. The townsfolk at Molong had long pointed out the much more productive land between Molong and Wellington but overlooked the severity of the grades against eastbound trains. In the 1870, there was no intention of building the line to from Orange to Parkes and Forbes

Andrew Ross, who was the Parliamentary Member for Molong for 23 years, asked the Colonial Treasurer in September 1897 the following questions:

> (1) Is it the intention of the Railway Commissioners shortly to make a deviation of the railway between Orange and Mullion Creek, on the western line; if so, what are the distance and expense of haulage likely to be saved?

> (2) How much is the proposed deviation likely to cost?

> (3) Would the Railway Commissioners take into consideration the propriety of extending the railway from Molong to Wellington - 40 miles - where it was originally surveyed and proposed to carry out in 1878?

> (4) Has the construction of the western railway, line from Orange, to Wellington, via Stuart Town, in place of by Molong, as originally proposed, not proved a loss, to the revenue of the colony?

> (5) Does the extension of the line from Molong to Wellington pass through rich and valuable agricultural land, while the other passes through a barren country?

James Brunker, the Chief Secretary at the time, answered:

> (1) I am informed the Railway Commissioners propose to make some improvements in the existing line between Orange and Mullion Creek in order to secure better grades with consequent greater convenience and economy in the railway working. The deviation, between 194 miles. and 196 miles, will convert a 1 in 40 grade to 1 in 70 on the up journey, and on the down journey 1 in 40 to 1 in 55.

> (2) The cost of the deviation is estimated at £7,500.

(3) The Railway Commissioners have no authority in the matter of initiation of new lines.

(4) The earnings and expenses are not kept separately for the section referred to and, therefore, the information cannot be given.

(5) There is no detailed information at the moment available which will permit of this question being definitely replied to. [34]

A railway traveller in 1898 made the following comments

"There is a legend that much logrolling, backstairs influence, underground engineering and, last but not least, 'palm oil,' were used in successfully bringing the railway line via Ironbarks. A more unprofitable bit of country can scarcely be conceived. The proper route for the line was of course via Molong, Cumnock and by the western road to Wellington. ….. The line of railway, Orange to Wellington, is uninteresting excepting Stuart Town; the roadside stations are small and of no commercial value. Wellington is of some importance to the night traveller as there is a commodious refreshment room where breakfast can be had at 6 a.m." [35]

THE STATUS OF THE TOWN IN THE 1890s

1. TOWN DESCRIPTION 1892

A description of Stuart Town appeared in the regional press in 1892. It said:

"This little village is becoming a town of modest size. From this point, we had an opportunity of seeing the country and having a fellow traveller a native of the district, we received information and were enlightened. The country looks beautiful — the hills, the dales and plains being covered with the greenest of verdure. Nature, it seemed, had marked it out for special favours. The crops of different kinds were of extraordinary height and, not being an agriculturist, I expressed an opinion that they would have the finest crops in the colony. But one thing I noticed that cattle and sheep were allowed in, and I was surprised. They looked fat — and no wonder! I was taken aback when our farmer friend informed me why the cattle were put in. 'The season is too good, said he, 'and the crops have grown too quick. The cattle are put in to 'nip' it − to stop its growth for a while".[36]

2. TOWN DESCRIPTION 1896

[34] *Molong Express and Western District Advertiser*, 4th September 1897, p. 3.

[35] *Truth*, 27th November 1898, p. 7.

[36] *Bathurst Free Press and Mining Journal*, 29th September 1892, p. 2.

A press report from Stuart Town in 1896 says that matters in general "are now looking up and brightening". Another newspaper reported the lengthening of the crossing loop:

> "Owing up to the heavy loads being drawn by the double engines in the number 3 district of the Railways Department, the loop lines at the Stuart Town station are being extended to meet the necessary requirements as the present accommodation is not sufficiently adequate to admit of long trains passing. "[37]

For example, there was a report that the Paper Train consisted of two engines and 28 vehicles.[38]

3. TOWN DESCRIPTIONS 1899

The press gave another description of the town, this time in 1899, saying:

> "The stores seem to be doing a good business judging from the large stocks that Messrs. Crick, Read, Poile, Betar, etc., have and are continuously replenishing. In fact, it is a thing of note the number of commercial travellers that call here, and they all speak well of the place. Mr. Barlow, at the Railway Hotel, is, doing a thriving business, as is Mr. Fitsimmon at the Carrington. The introduction of the (gold) dredging industry on the Macquarie brings many visitors to the town".[39]

The Minister for Mines and his party left Sydney by the mail train at 2000 on Friday night (2nd June 1899) and reached Stuart Town at 0700 the next morning. Stuart Town was described thus:

> "A typical inland township, 220 miles from Sydney, and, like many others, boasts of one street, with two hotels, one store, the baker, the butcher, and a post office, all a very respectable distance apart. The town was all astir when the party, cold, sleepy, and hungry, sauntered bag and baggage from the insignificant shed-like railway station down the dusty street to Barlow's Hotel. Such a crowd of visitors at one time had not before visited Stuart Town, and the few residents of the main street, who had long before been up and doing, were given a rude shock.[40]

On the night of, Constables Hockley and Brown made a very smart arrest at the station. The Station Master had received a telegram during the day of 18th September 1899 informing him that a highway robber would very likely be on the mail train that

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[37] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23rd November 1896, p. 6.
[38] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22nd July 1897, p.5.
[39] *Wellington Times*, 5th October 1899, p. 3.
[40] *Evening News*, 5th June 1899, p. 8.

night. The offender did attempt to join the train at Stuart Town and, when the Station Master spotted him, he summoned the police, who arrested him on suspicion of having robbed one Hop Wah of a quantity of gold.[41]

THE RABBIT PROOF FENCE 1892

The Minister for Lands stated on 11th July 1892 that he was more than ever convinced of the wisdom in choosing the route along the railway corridor for the construction of a rabbit-proof fence. The New South Wales Government had stitched up an inter-departmental deal under which employees of the Railway Commissioners, by and arrangement with the Lands Department, would officiate as rabbit inspectors. Before construction of the fence began, perway gangs were collecting information regarding the number of bridges, culverts, and gates along the route. When this task had been completed, the Minister called tenders for the erection of the fence in lengths of 50 miles each.[42]

The Minister for Works accepted the tender on 23rd June 1892 of Messrs. Lysaght Bros. of Sydney for the supply of 400 miles of wire netting, 17-gauge mesh, 1.5 inches mesh, containing 26.5 meshes in the width, an average of 670 meshes to the square yard, an average weight of 20cwt. All 18lb. per lineal mile and at a cost of £31 per mile, or a total of £12,400. Lysaght's were to complete delivery within four months from the date of accepting the tender. The rabbit proof netting was to be affixed to the railway fence extending from Narromine to Corowa, via Blayney, Murrumburrah, and Culcairn.[43]

On 17th August 1892, the Department of Lands closed tenders for the erection of that section of the rabbit-proof fence along the line between Wellington and Stuart Town.[44] The work was under way in December.[45]

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHINESE RESIDENTS LATE 1890s

The newspaper in Molong was critical of the involvement of Chinese people in town affairs at Stuart Town. The report stated:

> "The yellow agony curse has got hold of Stuart Town, I regret to say, and if something is not done to check the support of the celestial, by the unthinking white people, then it will serve them right if the principal business of the place

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[41] *Orange Leader,* 20th September 1899, p. 4.
[42] *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser,* 16th July 1892, p. 127.
[43] *Crookwell Gazette,* 29th June 1892, p. 2.
[44] *Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent,* 9th August 1892, p. 2.

[45] *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 9th December 1892, p. 28.

is done in the future by the Chinese. I ask the boys of Stuart Town to stick by their own colour and race and support their white storekeeper.[46]

In 1899, Ah Kin, a Chinaman, was elected to fill the vacant seat on the Stuart Town Progress Committee. This was the first time that residents of Orange had heard of a "Celestial being dignified in this way". The newspaper added:

"Ah Kin must either be a good man or Stuart Town is very short of such".[47]

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[46] *Molong Argus*, 2nd October 1896, p. 5.

[47] *Leader*, 23rd August 1899, p. 8.

PART 4

THE GOODS YARD

THE GOODS YARD AND SHED

1. THE LOCATION OF THE GOODS YARD

The only flat land at the station suitable for a goods siding and shed was located on the westbound side.
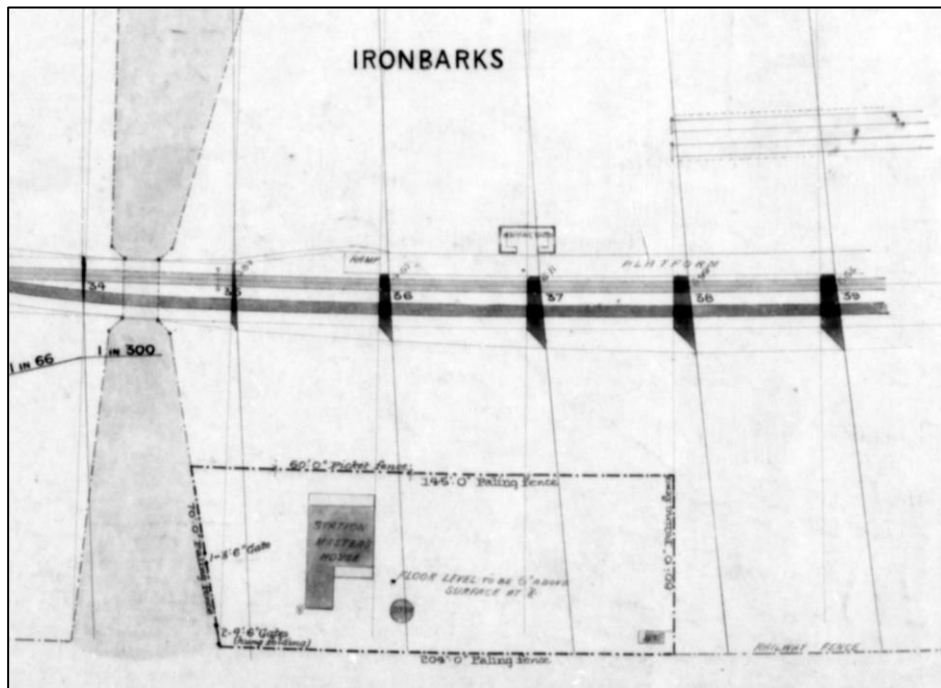
This plan, which was Initialled "JW" and dated 15th May 1880 shows all the proposed facilities with the residence in a topographically elevated position at the bottom, the passenger platform and waiting shed in the centre and the stubs of two sidings, which formed the goods yard. Out of view to the right is the remainder of the platform, the dock platform and the connections to the main line.

2. THE LOCATION OF THE GOODS SHED

The goods shed was located on one of the two single ended tracks forming the goods yard.
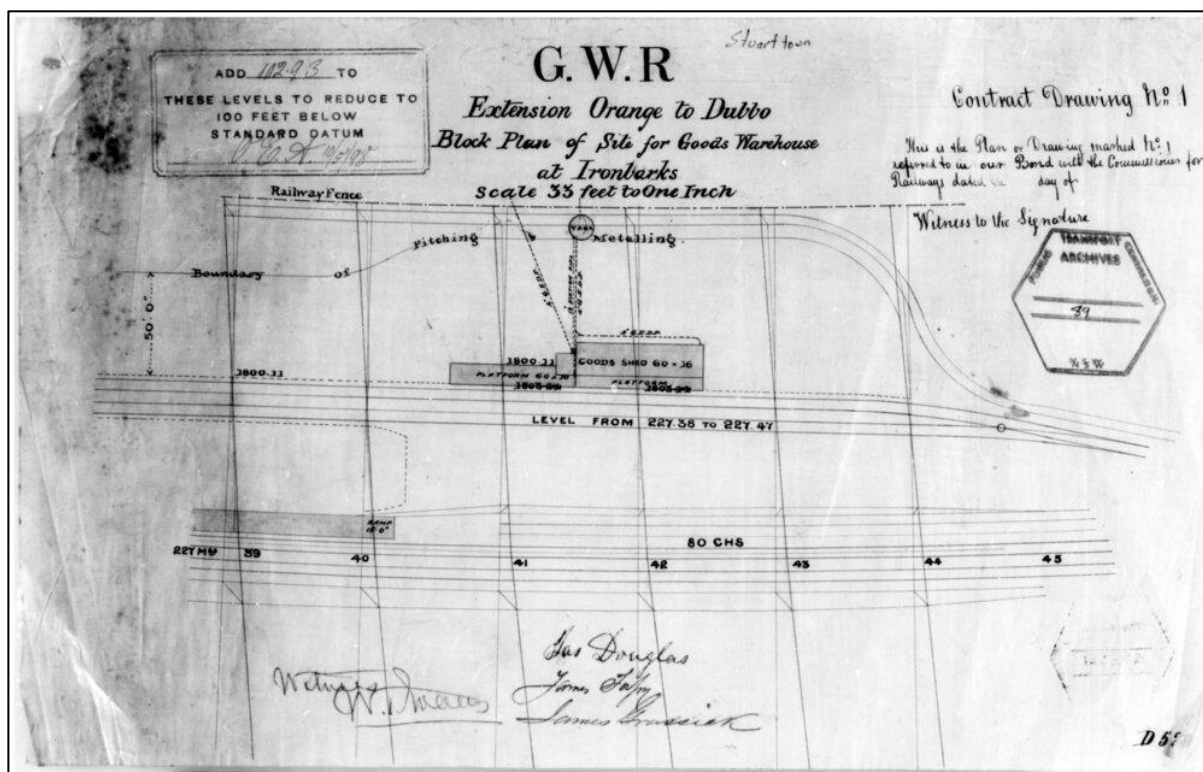
The above plan also dates from 1880. Towards the bottom on the left side is the western end of the passenger platform, part of the dock platform and, in the centre, the two tracks of the goods yard. The plan shows the 60 feet by 36 feet goods shed and adjacent loading/unloading stage. The names of the contractors, including James Douglas, are at the bottom. Unfortunately, the date of the contract is not expressed.
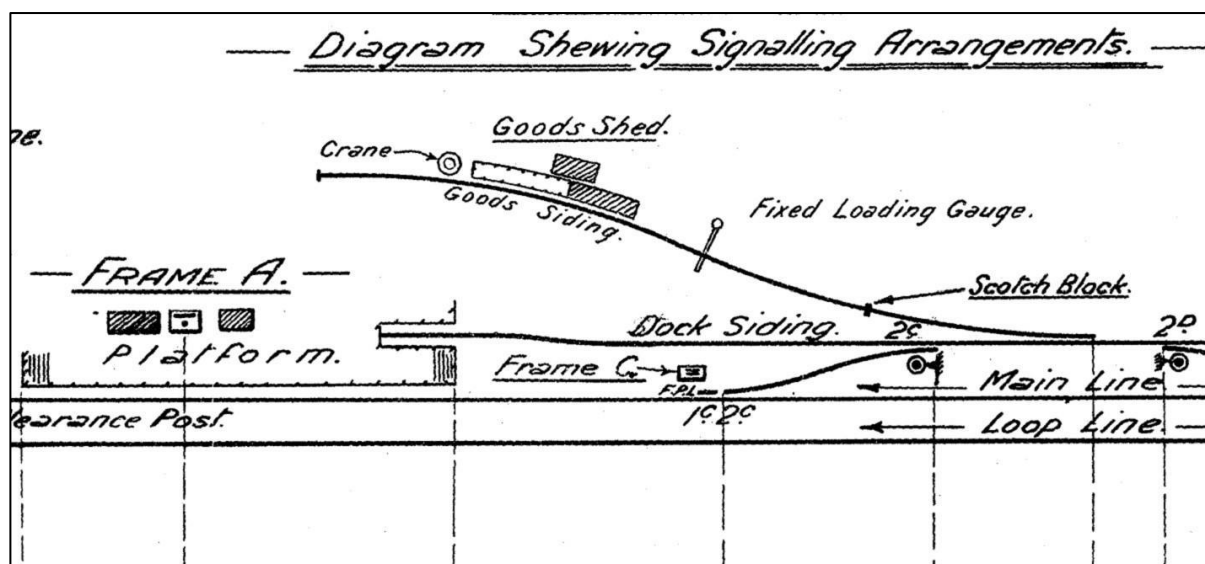
This 1927 track diagram shows what appears to be a new location of the good shed. The diagram is not to scale and, while it appears that the good siding is in a new location and on a curve, this may not have been the case. The three structures expressed on the platform are the main station building on the left, the signal interlocking Frame "A" in the centre and the lamp room on the right.

Signalling and safe working historian, Graham Harper, illuminates on the location of the goods yard:

"I would suggest that the position of the goods siding and goods shed on the 1927 diagram appears to be approximately the same as shown end the 1880 plan. Yes. It seems a bit further away from the main line, but this might be due to the disappearance of one of the two goods sidings and the lack of scale. The 1927 diagram appears to show the goods platform and, possibly the shed, as being located on a slight curve. It would be unlikely that the goods shed would be on a curve. It may well be that one of the two goods roads was removed, and that the removal of the second siding may have been related to the provision of improved access to the goods shed". [48]

3. EXPERIMENTATION WITH THE DESIGN OF THE GOODS SHED

John Whitton approved the plan for the goods shed on 29th June 1880. Tenders closed on 27th July 1880 for the construction of the "goods warehouse, uncovered platform and water tank".[49] Commissioner Goodchap announced on 3rd August 1880 that James Douglas was the successful contractor for the "goods warehouse et cetera".[50]

The style of the goods shed dates from 1880 and reflected the design experimentation that was occurring throughout the 1870s and in the first one year of the 1880s. The unusual, asymmetrical design demonstrated that experimentation was not restricted to station buildings or residences. It is fair to say that entire line between Orange and Dubbo inclusive was the best example in the Colony at the time of the design changes to the physical railway infrastructure. From 1880, experimentation abruptly disappeared and was replaced by building standardisation.

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[48] Emails from Graham Harper on 9th and 10thFebruary 2024.

[49] *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 23rd July 1880, No.298, p. 3056.

[50] *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 6th August 1880, No.320, p. 4064.
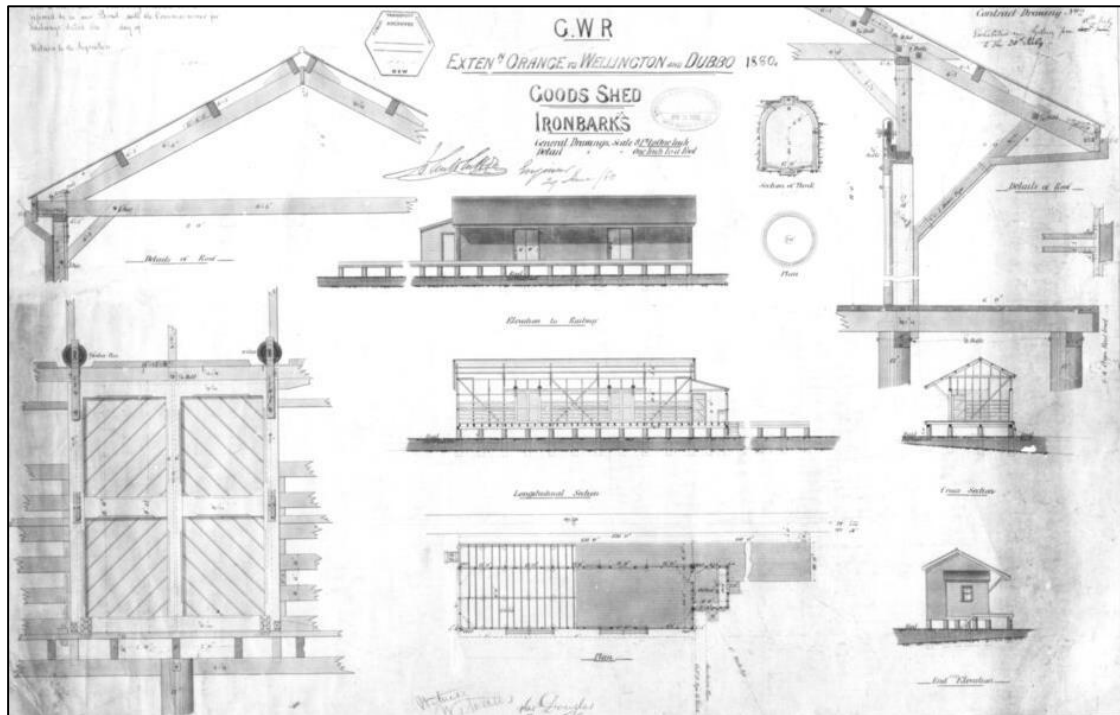
*The goods shed plan involved the abandonment of the policy that had existed between 1855 and 1880 of the goods siding passing through the inside of the goods shed. A transition from the former through type to the side-loading standard type took place in 1880 and 1881 and was applied to Stuart Town where extended roof rafters were erected over the rail platform, but the roadside was not similarly treated. The building was, thereby, unsymmetrical. On the road side of the Stuart Town goods shed, there was an absence of a loading platform and a narrow, protective awning. Those features were added to the standard design from 1882, thereby making such buildings symmetrical in appearance once again. The 1882 design would be the final standard expression for the design of goods sheds approved by John Whitton until his departure in 1889. **SOURCE:** Image No. E1053649, ARHS Railway Archives.*

It was the design of the 1880 goods shed that was important. The plan for the goods shed at Stuart Town demonstrated the transition that was underway at the end of the 1870s from the former through-type to the side-loading design. At Stuart Town, Whitton proposed that the goods wagons would not enter goods shed but would be placed alongside and weather protection on the rail side would be given to a small degree by the extension of the roof rafters. No protection was to be given on the road side. Another variation occurred at Wellington and Dubbo where vehicles continued to enter the goods shed, but the road side was provided with protection by the extension of the roof rafters. In other words, the goods sheds at Wellington and Dubbo were, in a way, the reverse of that provided at Stuart Town so far as the use of extended rafters were concerned. When the line was extended to Narromine in 1882, the transition had been completed. Vehicles no longer entered the goods shed but were positioned alongside it and the roof rafters were extended on both sides of the building to provide minimal protection from the weather for the traffic interface between rail and road transport.

It seems that almost every item of infrastructure at Stuart Town was unusual. Rather than the normal arrangement of placing a goods siding adjacent to the main line a little

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distance from the passenger platform, the good siding at Stuart Town was placed almost behind the platform. It seems that the experimentation of track designs was not restricted to Stuart Town. Further along the line at Maryvale, the good siding enveloped the platform in such a way that passengers stood on one side of the goods siding while a goods loading bank was provided on the opposite side of the same siding. In effect, the track arrangement converted the main line platform into an island platform and had the unusual design of having platforms (passenger platform on one side and a goods platform on the other side) on both sides of the same line.

Locomotive 6015 on No. 699 goods has stopped to undertake some shunting on 20th January 1967. The young station officer, who is extremely neatly dressed in dark trousers, white shirt and his official cap, stands opposite the locomotive cab exchanging communications with the Driver and Fireman. Behind the station officer is a classic shed for the local perway gang which retained its traditional colour of light stone. The perway shed has been demolished.

4. THE CHANGE IN THE SIZE OF THE GOODS SHED

One interesting feature about the goods shed is the almost complete inconsistency of the dimensions shown in official documents. Both the length and the width of the building were recorded differently on nearly every occasion.

The Stuart Town goods shed plan of 1880 gave dimensions of 60 feet by 30 feet with a platform adjoining the shed measuring 60 feet by 20 feet. The dimensions of the goods shed were shown in the 1892 *Local Appendix West* as 66 feet by 18 feet. John Forsyth, the former State Rail Authority Archives Officer, writes that, in 1897, a new goods shed was erected. Forsyth does not disclose his source for that information, but the 1914 *Local Appendix West* contradicts the claim of new goods shed as it shows the goods shed as being 66 feet by 18 feet, which were the dimensions given in the 1880 plan.

However, the 1929 *Local Appendix West* which, along with the 1944 *Local Appendix West*, shows the dimensions of the goods shed as being half the size it was in 1880 and 1914 with the new measurements 30 feet by 15 feet, which was roughly half its original length. It seems that Forsyth was correct about a change in the goods shed but whether it was a new goods shed or a truncation of the existing structure there is no certainty. The good shed was probably truncated in half sometime between 1914 and 1929. It is hard to believe that a new goods shed would be erected and the original one relocated without some reference in the local newspaper or official documents.

Between 1914 and 1929, the measurements of the goods shed changed and, in 1929, the goods shed was approximately half its 1880 size. Probably, the 1880 goods shed was truncated in approximately half. With the elimination of one of the single ended goods sidings, the use of the goods shed, and stage would have facilitated the loading and unloading of freight between road and rail. The increased use of motor trucks probably prompted the relocation.

A five-ton jib crane was installed in 1884 and "stockyards of portable hurdles" were erected in 1885.[51]

5. REMOVAL OF GOODS FACILITIES

The measurements of the goods shed were recorded in 1965 prior to the calling of tenders for its disposal. The shed was recorded as being 31 feet long by 17 feet wide external. Attached to the goods shed was a timber loading stage which measured 91 feet long by 6 feet wide.

The goods shed and stage, and probably the jib crane, were officially recorded as being demolished on 8th June 1966. However, oral evidence indicates that goods shed was not demolished but dismantled and re-erected behind the general store on the southern side of Alexander Street.[52] It is extant in 2024.

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[51] Ibid., 1885, Appendix p. 16.
[52] Discussion with local resident, Ian Percival, on 23rd February 2024.

Locomotives 3638 and 6014 on No. 69 goods are moving at a fast pace past the station yard. On the left-hand side in the distance is the race for the stockyards. The railway line in the foreground on the left serves the goods shed while another line in front of the "S" trucks terminates in the dock platform. The date is 20th January 1967.

There exist three stories about the disappearance of the stockyards. One declares that they were demolished on 31st October 1972; the second maintains that they were sold and removed in 1974 and the third states that the stockyards were not eliminated until the goods siding and stock siding were removed on 14th September 1979. Also on that last date was the elimination of the connection between the goods siding and the dock siding.[53] The dock siding was then connected directly to the main line. It is the 1974 story that is marked on one station arrangement plan.[54]

The dock siding was reported to have been removed on 29th October 1985, but it is still connected to the main line in 2024.

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[53] The State Heritage Inventory incorrectly states that the stockyards were removed on 7th September1982.

[54] Located at Item 1.07/ infrastructure/stations, ARHS Railway Archives.

This photograph marks the location of the surviving goods siding after the removal of the second goods siding, which was closer to the passenger platform. This photograph provides considerable support to the argument put forward by Graham Harper that the post 1927 goods siding had not been relocated away from the main line but was, in fact, in the same position as it was initially in 1880. The structure towards the centre is the loading gauge which was used to check the height of wagons loaded with bags of grain or bales of wool. The photograph was taken on 24th January 1979.

PART 5

THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCES

1. THE STATION MASTER'S HOUSE AT LIDDELL STREET

The Station Master's residence, located opposite the platform, is the oldest surviving structure at the station which displays its original design.

This photograph, taken on 24th January 1979, shows the geographic relationship between the platform and the residence. Often, John Whitton would approve an elevated posture for the Station Master's house, as at Stuart Town. The photograph shows the topographical limitation that prevented the goods yard being erected on the eastbound side of the passenger platform. Such a notion would not have entered Whitton's mind as he always endeavoured to place goods facilities on the same side as urban development in an effort to avoid slow-moving road vehicles crossing the railway tracks. The photograph also shows the simplicity of the timber posts supporting the platform awning and the absence of cast-iron awning brackets, which would have been provided had the building been directed by John Whitton.

When the station opened, the residence for the Station Master, located opposite the platform, the house was not built as its approval was given on 15th May 1880 just two weeks before the station opening. The architecture accorded with a standard design that John Whitton had introduced in 1876 for use on new lines throughout the railway system. Of the four initial examples erected in 1876, two survive on the Main West line – at Millthorpe and Spring Hill. Tenders closed on 6th April for the construction of residences for Station Masters at Mullion Creek, Warne and Stuart Town.[55] The three houses were of the same design featuring a full-width front veranda and symmetrically placed brick chimneys. James Douglas was the successful contractor, according to

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[55] *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 23rd March 1880, No.106, p. 1399.

the *Government Gazette*.[56] The contractors signed the plan on 25th June 1880 but, unfortunately, the scanned copy does not indicate Douglas's name but mentions two others.
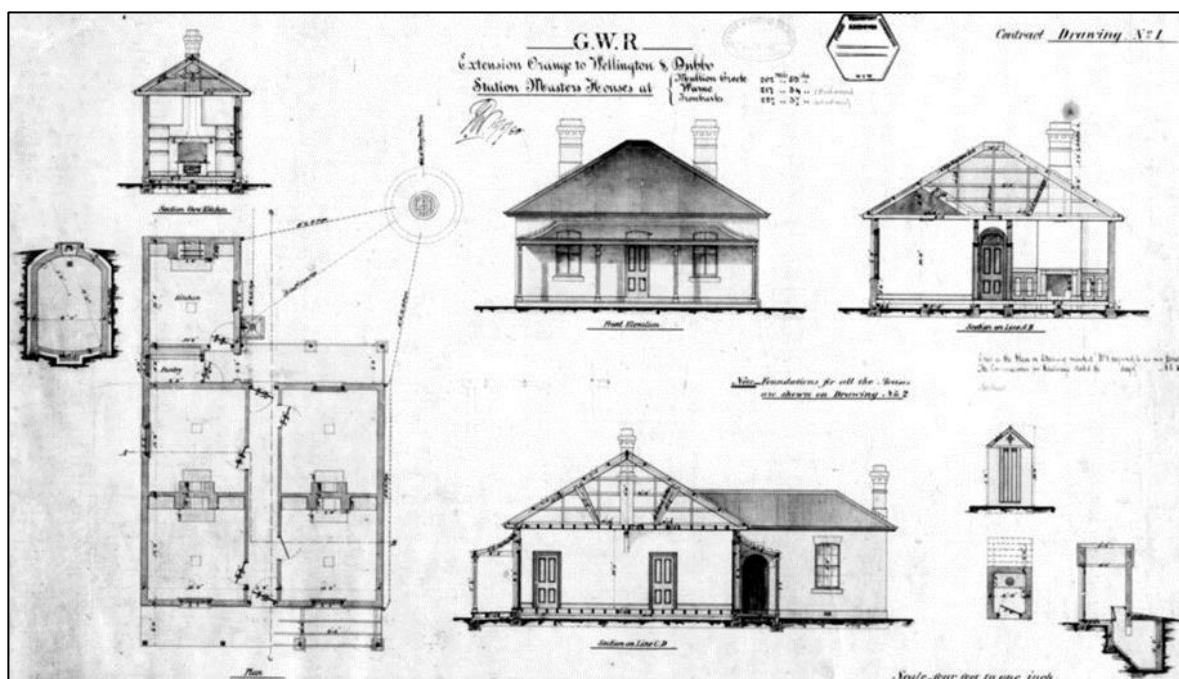
This plan shows the 1880 official residence. It was modest in size, void of decorations but pleasant looking in its simplicity. John Whitton was adamant that, while passenger platform buildings could be eliminated, it was impossible to take such action in relation to accommodation for staff. Whitton had been experimenting with designs in the 1870s for all sorts of buildings to lower costs and his first achievement applied to staff housing. In 1876, he approved and erected the first of four of what would be his standard design for the 1880s. These were located at Binalong, Harden, Millthorpe, and Spring Hill. All four houses stand today.

An officer of the Property Branch of the then Public Transport Commission inspected the Station Master's residence on 9th July 1974. By that time, the house had been sold but the land was retained in railway ownership, it being classified as a "res sites". The inspecting officer noted:

> "Stuart Town is a small hamlet of only a few houses".[57]

The house was small, measuring 20 feet wide by 26 feet deep, and contained four rooms and a kitchen at the rear measuring 12 feet by 14 feet. There were full-width front and rear verandas 5 feet wide. The presence of an internal corridor marked the building as a house for an officer senior to the gatekeeper, as did the more elegant

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[56] *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 21st April 1880, No.143, p. 1894.

[57] Inspection Record indexed at location 1.07, ARHS Archives, 21st September 2022.

and symmetrical design, the use of two verandas and provision of fireplaces in all rooms.

This picture shows the lovely, peaceful vista of the landscape in the vicinity of the station from the front veranda of the Station Master's residence. **SOURCE:** *Wikipedia*

2. THE GATEHOUSE AT ALEXANDER STREET

This 1992 image shows the relationship of the Alexander Street gatehouse to the platform. The gatehouse is just visible towards the centre of the picture where the main line dips between the hills.

Approval was also given in June 1880 for the construction of a Gatekeeper's house at the public level crossing on Alexander Street at the eastern end of the town approximately 2,000 feet on the eastern side of Stuart Town station. It was of brick construction being of a standard design of gatehouse with the chimney in the apex of the roof. It was built only 25 feet from the line. The gatehouse remains but is derelict.
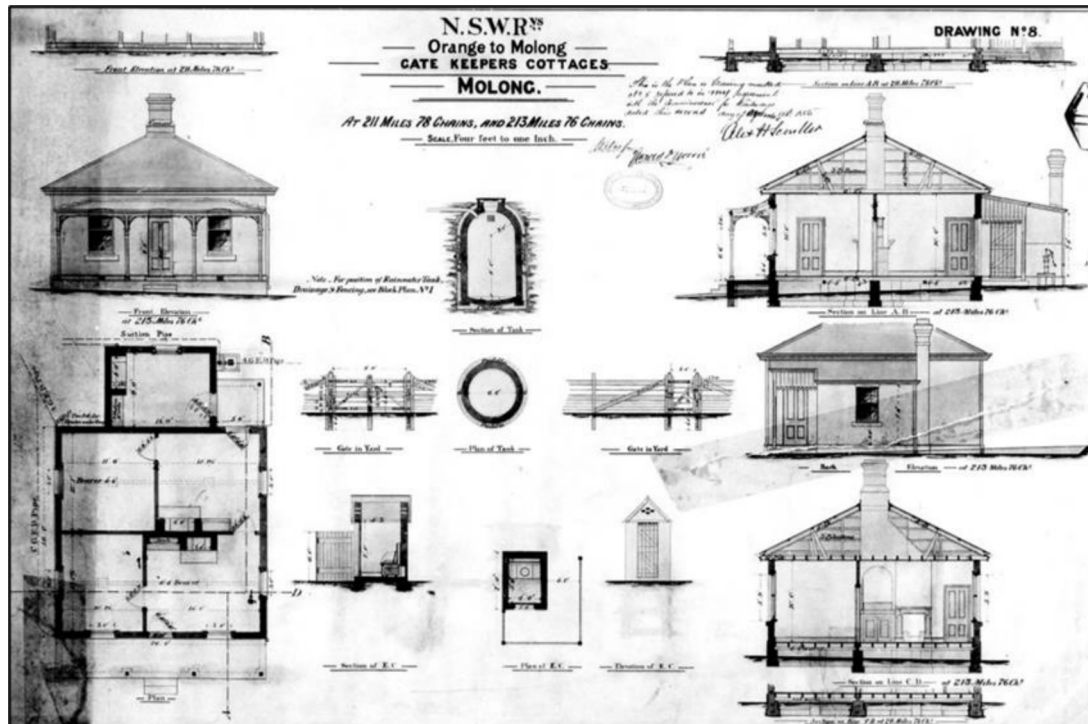
The above plan is for similarly designed gatehouses between Orange and Molong. The plan for the gatehouse at Stuart Town does not exist, as far as is known.

The gatehouse at Alexander Street was a standard design in use from the 1850s. Sometimes, John Whitton would approve a standard plan for a particular section of track, such as the section between Orange and Molong shown in the above plan. At other times, he would approve individual plans for each gatehouse. There was a lack of consistency in the preparation of plans for gatehouses during his tenure between 1857 in 1889 but, as he worked closer to his retirement, the use of one gatehouse plan for more than one location became more frequent.

The Alexander Street house was small, measuring 26 feet by 26 feet, and contained four rooms and a kitchen at the rear measuring 12 feet by 9 feet. There was a full-width front veranda 5 feet wide but no rear veranda. The absence of an internal corridor was a feature of the design. Only two rooms had fireplaces.

This photograph is of the Alexander Street gatehouse, which addresses the adjacent road. The photographer, being a railway officer, was permitted to enter the rail corridor to capture the picture. **SOURCE:** *Ian Percival.*

The Gatekeeper, who resided in the Alexander gatehouse, opened and closed the gates across the thoroughfare for over 80 years between 1880 and 1962. The date the gates were removed, and the Gatekeeper was out of a job is unknown but probably was in 1962. Graham Harper searched exhaustively the various official railway documents and found an amending entry for the Department's *Working Timetable West* in 1963 in *Weekly Notice No. 41* of 1963 stating:

"D*elete* Stuart Town and relative particulars (gates removed and replaced with cattle stops)".

The State Rail Authority was adamant that the gatehouse could not be sold or leased to a non-railway employee or other tenant because of its proximity to the running line. Hence, the Authority was very keen to demolish the Alexander Street gatehouse but the protests from the local residents were such that the organisation decided in the 1996 to leave the structure as a monument.[58]

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[58] *Wellington Times*, 18th December 1996.

This drone image by James Dalton looks eastbound towards Orange. On the left-hand side is the Station Master's residence. Its front elevation faces the main line from the elevated location. The railway boundary on the right-hand side is marked by three trees and, beyond the trees, is the gravel surface of Railway Street. This image demonstrates the limited land available for the goods yard and strengthens even further the proposition by Graham Harper that the good siding was never relocated. Amongst the trees about 2,000 feet from the platform is the gatehouse at Alexander Street. The image was taken on 9th December 2023.

Sometimes, the ranking officer in charge of the station did not live in his nominated accommodation adjacent to Liddell Street because of staff changes and, in those circumstances, he resided in the gatehouse in Alexander Street.

3. THE PROPOSED RESIDENCE FOR THE NIGHT OFFICER

In 1934, a plan was prepared for the provision of a four-room timber residence for the Night Officer with the remark on the plan stating: "site to be selected". As far as is known, the residence was not constructed.

PART 6

SIGNALLING, SAFEWORKING AND INTERLOCKING AT STUART TOWN

Graham Harper, the well-known historian of railway safeworking and signalling, has kindly written the following history of Stuart Town.

PROVISION OF CROSSING LOOP

It is believed that, when the line was opened through Stuart Town in 1880, there was a crossing loop on the Up or Eastern side of the line. Two dead end goods sidings were provided on the Down or Western side of the line accessed by two crossovers from the Main line, one facing each direction. In 1885, the Working Timetable shows two crossings daily at Stuart Town.

The 1892 *Local Appendix West* states that a crossing loop 729 feet long existed. In 1896, it is stated that the crossing loop was extended to 1,931 feet a cost of £188. There is no reference in the *Weekly Notices* at the time advising of the extension".[59]

INTERLOCKING

The points and signals were not interlocked between 1880 and 1927, although it is possible that station semaphore signals may have existed at the line opening.

Interlocking came to Stuart Town on August 11, 1927, and a yard diagram was issued. Home and distant signals were provided and the four main line connections [one at each end of the crossing and the two crossovers leading to the goods siding] were connected to two lever ground frames. The ground frames were unlocked by either key on a duplex lock on No.5 lever in the main frame on the platform. To obtain the key, it was necessary to pull No.5 lever over and, while it was over or reversed, the interlocking prevented the signal levers protecting the main line from being pulled over. It was a simple but effective way to address the safety of trains and the staff working them. Clearance posts were provided at the fouling point of the main and the loop at each end.[60]

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[59] Email from Graham Harper on 8th February 2024.
[60] It was the apparent overlooking of such a clearance post that led to a spectacular collision between a Garratt hauled goods train and the Up Mail at Geurie in the early 1960s.

THE SAFEWORKING OF TRAINS

The safeworking of trains from 1880 was based on what was known as ordinary train staff and ticket, which was a system introduced on single lines after the Emu Plains head-on collision of two trains in 1878.

The 1892 *Local Appendix* shows the safeworking system on the line between Orange and Dubbo as electric train staff, but there was no detail given of the staffs in use. A note says that stations on this section of line were being equipped with electric instruments at the time of publication.

n 1959, the large type of electric staffs was replaced by miniature electric staffs. A lot of rationalisations of staff instruments were going on around the State at the time, and it is probable that the replacement equipment for the Dubbo line was cascaded down from lines like Rand, where the traffic didn't warrant electric staff.

This undated photograph of the 1980s shows the Dubbo oil train. Something is wrong with the engine and the locomotive crew has stopped at the station opposite the building to use the telephone in the office. The roof of the station building needed repairs. The entire roof was replaced not by the State Rail Authority but as a donation by a local roofing contractor. The same person also repaired the vertical timber posts supporting the platform awning. **SOURCE:** *Transport for NSW*

THE DECLINE IN RAIL ACTIVITY AS REFLECTED BY THE CHANGE IN SAFEWORKING INFRASTRUCTURE

The rot set in, not only at Stuart Town, but along the whole route between Wallerawang and Dubbo from the 1970s. The changes at Stuart Town were typical of those that occurred at other stations between Orange and Dubbo.

Firstly, in March 1973, the distant signals were replaced by landmarks. It was no longer possible to give clear signals through the interlocking; all trains had to approach under caution. Then, in December 1975, Euchareena was closed as a staff and crossing station, leaving a much longer section Mullion Creek to Stuart Town.

This 1984 photograph shows a new timber apron in front of Frame "A" which replaced the original timber planks. Lever Nos. 1 and 8, which formerly connected to the Down and Up Distant signals, have been painted white following the replacement of those signals with fixed triangular shaped signs, which were officially known as landmarks. An improvement that had been made prior to 1973 was the provision of a stirrup adjacent to lever No. 1 to help staff activate the Down Distant signal. **SOURCE:** *Lyn Harper.*

By January 1976, the Assistant Station Master had been withdrawn and Stuart Town became unattended. Next, in January 1976, Mumbil and Dripstone were closed as staff and crossing stations, creating the longer section of Stuart Town to Wellington.

In January 1979 the goods siding at Stuart Town was abolished.

At some time after 1984 and before 1987, the station interlocking frame was relocated off the platform, possibly due to poor condition of its supporting timbers.

In February 1987, a new six lever Frame "A" was established about 200-300 metres off the western end of the platform, together with an off-platform staff hut, replacing an earlier installation. The remaining siding connection leading to the platform dock was disconnected from its ground frame and connected to the new Frame "A". This development rendered Stuart Town the only place on the line with points operated from a main signal frame. Loop points at each end of the yard continued to be operated from adjacent ground frames, released by a key from No.5 lever in the new signal frame. Westbound passenger trains were required to stop at the platform at Stuart Town to undertake coaching business and then draw forward the 200-300 metres to the new staff hut where the train driver would converse with Control and obtain permission to extract the staff for the section to Wellington. For eastbound trains, the procedure was reversed with the passenger train stopping, firstly, at the new staff hut and, secondly, at the Stuart town platform.

At the same time as the 1987 changes, the crossing loop was extended some 274 metres towards Dubbo. At that time, the loop was 850 metres long.

In April 1987, Mullion Creek was closed as a staff and crossing station, and the section became Orange to Stuart Town.

This 1967 photograph of the Stuart Town signal frame demonstrates several characteristics common to small key-locked crossing loops. The frame contains provision for eight levers. Such locations normally had provision for six or eight levers, occasionally twelve.

A home and a distant signal were provided in each direction. The distant signals were controlled by the levers at each extremity of the frame, in this case numbers one and eight. Behind the distant signal levers can be seen two signal repeaters which indicate the position of the respective distant signal. This indication was important particularly at night or in inclement weather when the signal and its backlight might not be visible to the signaller. Even in good weather, the indicator was useful to detect a distant signal which was 'hanging off', i.e., not showing a distinct caution or clear indication.

The distant signal repeaters are encased in heavy white containers. These would protect them from the elements and would probably not have been provided if the frame and the indicators had been enclosed in a signal box. The two home signal levers are located next to their respective distant signal levers. In the photograph, lever No.2 has been pulled over, clearing the Down Home signal. The officer in charge does not want a train thundering through his station at high speed as he must exchange the staff (which is small metal cylinder) with the locomotive fireman. Hence, he has not cleared the distant signal. The train should therefore approach at a suitably cautious speed.

Of interest are the lever sleeves attached to each home signal lever in front of the catch rod. When circumstances required, these sleeves could be swung around to a position such that they obstructed the squeezing of the catch rod and prevented the lever from being pulled over to clear the signal. Perhaps there might be men working in the section ahead, and trains

needed to be warned. The lever sleeve, correctly used, would serve as a reminder that the signal should not be cleared willy nilly. The storage of the lever sleeve on the home signal lever was possibly not 100% kosher, but at least you knew where to find them in a hurry!

Behind each distant signal lever can be seen a GNR type signal adjuster. This made it possible for the signaller to tighten or loosen the wire on the distant signal by winding the wheel. The long runs of wire to the distant signals were subject to expansion and contraction according to the ambient temperature and the signal adjuster offered a simple way of tightening or loosening the wire, compensating for that. To loosen the wire, it was necessary to wind up a bit of tension and then flip the pawl, then while holding the wheel let the tension off a bit and put the pawl back.

A stirrup can be seen just after No.8 Up Distant lever. This was provided so that the signaller could brace his foot against it to give him better purchase when pulling over the lever. No.8 Up Distant was some 3400 feet (about 1.04 km) out from the levers and would probably be a hard pull on a frosty winter's morning. No stirrup appears to have been provided for No.1 Down Distant lever at the time of the photograph, but one is present in a 1984 photo. Such stirrups were common in conjunction with levers operating distant signals.

Note the duplex lock on lever No.5. When pulled over, it was possible to withdraw one or both Annet keys and use them to unlock the ground frames which operated the various points. At Stuart Town, the second key would have made it possible to set the road to/from the loop at both ends simultaneously to allow a train to use the loop to cross one on the main line. The delays incurred in waiting for the arriving train to stop clear in the loop, changing back the points at the arrival end to retrieve the key, doing a quick march to the other end of the loop and inserting the key to operate the points at that end, would thus be obviated.

Whenever lever No.5 was pulled over, the interlocking prevented any of the signal levers being pulled over.

Levers 3, 4, and 6 are all missing, or in the signal terminology, spaces. The railway normally only provided levers for which a function was planned. As there were no plans for Stuart Town other than as a simple key locked crossing loop with a couple of sidings, no other levers were required.

Note also that the duplex lock has its own cover on the lower of its two keys. This key would have to be turned and removed before the upper key could be withdrawn. The cover on the bottom key is secured by an SL [Staff Lock] to prevent visiting signalling enthusiasts or other unauthorised people from accessing the keys and the possible mayhem that might occur.

Finally, the yard diagram can be seen behind the lever frame. This is not the original diagram, but a more recent replacement with aluminium replacing the original glass enclosed paper/card diagram surface. Such aluminium diagrams were more resilient to the rain, and the absence of any glass lessened the temptation for vandals.

ALTERATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH TRAIN ORDER WORKING

The end of the use of train staffs came with the introduction of a system called train order working, which was instituted between Orange and Dubbo on the weekend of 29th and 30th November 1997. At Stuart Town, the landmarks and home signals were removed and replaced with train order type location and yard limit boards. Frame "A"

was renamed Frame "B" and continued to operate the points leading to the dock platform, and nothing else. The ground frames were left in situ at each end of the crossing loop, and derails on the loop supplemented the old clearance pegs. As part of the work, a mechanical point indicator was provided to work in conjunction with the dock siding trap points. One might wonder why the officials bothered! Instructions were issued for train drivers to sound their whistles at Stuart Town (and Geurie) in sufficient time to give adequate warning of their approach to the level crossings.

The section of line between Orange and Dubbo was the first occasion that Train Order Working had been introduced in New South Wales. That occurred in 1995. This mid-1990s photograph shows the black and white main line mainline point indicator associated with the train order system. In this picture, the point indicator faces Up trains and is located at the end of the eastern end of the platform. It displays to both Down and Up directions the photograph shows that the loop points are set and locked for the main line. If there were a problem with the points, the white rectangular element would be expressed in the horizontal plane. It is unknown whether there was any detection between the points and the signal; possibly the white on black board was left to warn a driver if the points were or were not correctly set.[61] **SOURCE:** *Ian Percival Collection.*

In October 1998, flashing lights and bells were installed at the Wellington Road level crossing, the gates of which had been removed in 1962. The lights and bells were to be automatically operated by track circuit, except for the Up XPT, for which the driver was required to operate a push button when ready to start. This causes the level crossing equipment to activate, and the signal to show a 'proceed' [pulsing white light] indication. The exercise was intended to prevent delays to road traffic while the XPT was stopped at the platform.

In April 2015, common sense reigned, and the dock siding points, and the mechanical point indicator were finally booked out of use pending removal, at a time when the crossing loop was undergoing further extension.

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[61] Email from Graham Harper on 24th February 2024.

This early 1990s image shows the black and white point indicator associated with the train order system. In this image the point indicator faces Up trains and is located at the end of the eastern end of the platform. It displays to both Down and Up directions that the loop points are set and locked for the main line. It is unknown whether there was any detection between the points and the signal; possibly the white on black board was left to warn a driver if the points were not correctly set.[62] **SOURCE:** *Ian Percival Collection.*

About 2018, Fletcher Industries, which runs its own trains between Dubbo and Port Botany, funded the extension of the loop at Stuart Town to approximately 1,500 metres. It is the only loop between Wellington and Orange. The objective of the private funding was to avoid delays to his trains.

As at April 2024, train control is situated at Mayfield, which is a suburb of Newcastle. It is the Government intention to relocate control to Orange.

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[62] Email from Graham Harper on 24th February 2024.

This image shows the Main Line Indicator facing Up trains using the loop. Upon the installation in 1998 of flashing lights on the road crossing, the lights and associated bell were automatically controlled by track circuit for Up and Down trains with the exception of the Up Central West XPT service, which requires the operation of a driver's pushbutton at the station to activate the lights and bell. Also, shunting at the eastern end of the Loop siding requires the operation of a shunter's pushbutton and duplex lock to operate the level crossing equipment. In conjunction with the provision of this equipment, a main-line indicator (MLI) has been provided in the Up direction on the Down side of the line at the clearance point with the Loop siding at the Sydney end. The MLI normally displays a pulsating white indication (to proceed) or a red indication (Stop). The MLI has been timed such that it will show a red indication during the period 15 minutes before due time and 60 minutes after due time of the Up Central West XPT. When the XPT is ready to depart, the driver must operate the driver's MLI pushbutton to activate the crossing equipment and cause the MLI to display a pulsating white light. SOURCE: https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/sydneytrains/culture-and-heritage/welcome-to-historic-stuart-town-railway-station/stuart-town-0

In areas where train order working operates, no signals are provided. The contractor who built the electrical structure behind the eastern end of the platform provided a sign on the door. The sign stated: " 'A' signal location". Someone forgot to tell the contractor there were no signals where train order working was in operation. Bill Laidlaw took this image on 23rd February 2024.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stuart Sharp

10th March 2024

APPENDIX

STUART TOWN RAILWAY STATION –
KEY ELEMENTS AND WHAT THEY INDICATE

BUILDING ELEMENT	WHAT THE ELEMENT USUALLY INDICATES	WHAT IS THE INTERPRETATION AT STUART TOWN
Overall dimensions	Width of 12-13 feet is standard NSW practice between 1870-1960;	Building conforms to standard practice but length is unusual, confirming a building erected in stages
Bond of brickwork	Consistent bond indicates simultaneous construction	While all the walls are built in Flemish bond, the platform wall and the walls of the dock are set in English bond, indicating different construction times. The chimneys are set in what appears to be stretcher bond and possibly suggest that at least the chimney at the western end replaced a stove flue.
Designation of the rooms	the number and order of the rooms identifies the design family and time of construction	The three-room building is consistent with practice, but the original two room configurations were unusual. A fourth room was added in 1970 by dividing the existing ladies' waiting room into two parts to accommodate a male toilet.
Toilet pan door located at rear of female toilet	indicates pre or post 1890 construction in a rural area	It is unusual to find only one of the two closets with an access door. It is highly unusual to provide a female toilet as the first room of a building at the point of pedestrian and vehicular entry. It indicates that there was no other option but to provide the female facilities at the eastern end because of

BUILDING ELEMENT	WHAT THE ELEMENT USUALLY INDICATES	WHAT IS THE INTERPRETATION AT STUART TOWN
		the safe working interlocking frame was preventing any addition at the western end.
Window located in western end wall of the Station Master's office	Windows are usually placed in rear walls to minimise prying eyes of miscreants who wish to steal cash to valuable parcels kept in the office	The location of the window is inconsistent with policy and suggests that the plans were prepared by an officer not familiar with the issues, probably not a person in Head Office in Sydney
Grouping of three small windows at south end of structure	Placement of windows in female waiting rooms and toilets indicates location of closets and hand washbasin	It is highly unusual to highlight any architectural features associated with a female waiting room and toilet. The use of a set of three windows was possibly designed having regard to that end of the building which addresses the station entry point and not the location of closets
Width of doors and windows	Traditional width of 2 feet 10 inches for doors. Positioning and width of doors and windows designate building design	Doors are consistent width of roughly 3 feet, which is slightly wider than the norm; similarly, the windows are very slightly wider than the norm. These differences confirm 19th-century construction.
Ticket window facing into the general waiting room	From 1877, the timber covers over some ticket windows moved horizontally rather than the traditional vertical movement.	The horizontal movement of the ticket window cover at Stuart Town indicates that the design was consistent with other experimental/irregular features of the building.
Window sills	The design and material reflect the time of construction. The extent of render on windowsills and	The absence of any render indicates that the building served a small centre. The horizontally

BUILDING ELEMENT	WHAT THE ELEMENT USUALLY INDICATES	WHAT IS THE INTERPRETATION AT STUART TOWN
	around windows and doors generally reflected the status of the local town, which was expressed by the level of decoration. The omission of rendered sills manifests a utilitarian structure	brickwork for windowsills of any design was most unusual in the 19th century and possibly evidence of both local design and construction.
Number of doors	The number of doors in the 19th century reflected the size of structure and status of town served by the station	There are five doors facing the platform. However, the middle door of the set of three doors at the western end is fixed and provides no internal access and is a part of the western end office.
Positioning of and material for thresholds	Ground level location indicates pre 1892 construction. Usual 19th century material was slate or sandstone	Thresholds for four of the five doors are timber, which is most unusual, indicating local design control. Their positioning flush with the earth surface indicates pre-1892 construction.
Fanlights above doors	Traditional feature of buildings in the 19th and first three decades of 20th centuries	Fanlights consisting of glass located above four doors. The door at the eastern end, which was provided in 1970, does not have a fanlight and the head is set for courses of brickwork lower than the other doors. Inconsistency reflects 20th century changes.
Set of three "doors" facing platform	No precedent. The middle door is fixed. All three doors originally had glazing in the top half.	This is bizarre arrangement with panelled doors does not exist at any other platform building in New South Wales. Possibly the work was undertaken by the local Bridge and Buildings Ganger rather than

BUILDING ELEMENT	WHAT THE ELEMENT USUALLY INDICATES	WHAT IS THE INTERPRETATION AT STUART TOWN
		professional involvement. It is also possible that the doors were used to enclose what the surviving plan showed as an open-fronted waiting room.
Location of chimneys	Inconsistent location of chimneys suggests different times of construction	With a single chimney on the rear roof and a double chimney through the ridge, the structure was built at different times; the rear chimney possibly is located towards the corner to replace an iron stove installed in 1880
Design of brickwork on chimneys	a marker of construction time. Two courses of bricks standing proud of sides was typical railway practice	The height of chimneys and design of the corbelling and strapwork indicate a pre-1900 construction date.
Ceiling material	An identifier of age	Lining boards in western end office is consistent with late 19th century/early 20th century construction
Porched entry	The provision of a porch to enter was used to signify a more important centre served by the station.	This hideous addition has all the hallmarks of a jerry-built, local project. The Gothic shaped window possibly takes its form from the church on the opposite side of the track to the platform located on the top of the nearest hill.
Use of vertical boarding – on rear porch and above set of three "doors"	Used by the New South Wales Railways for specific tasks in and after	Does not conform to traditional practice. Further confirmation of the

BUILDING ELEMENT	WHAT THE ELEMENT USUALLY INDICATES	WHAT IS THE INTERPRETATION AT STUART TOWN
	1890, e.g., internal walls within the ladies' waiting room and for privacy screens across entrances to male toilets	local nature of the building design and construction rather than professional supervision.
Platform awning	The standard width of platform awnings was 12 feet after 1880. The use of vertical posts to support the platform awnings ended in 1892	The platform awning is 9 feet wide, indicating a non-standard structure. Its construction using vertical posts indicates a construction date in 1892 or earlier.
Spandrels	Located at the ends of the platform awning, these elements are usually an important decorative element of varying designs.	The absence of any decoration, including the bevelling of the ends of the vertical boards, reinforces the idea of local design input.
Above ground rainwater tanks	The installation of aboveground rainwater tanks was not used, with only a few exceptions, prior to 1884.	Three tanks existed. The two at the western end adjacent to the office possibly a date from the first half of the 1880s and the one at the eastern end from a later time.
Location of male toilet	Indicates approving officer	The location of the toilet off the platform at the western end indicates that the station buildings were erected after the opening of the line with the work being carried out by the Existing Lines Branch.
Missing decorative elements	The extent of decoration and/or the overall attractiveness of a building mirror the status of the stopping place in the extent of money available	The platform building was purposefully designed in a restrained manner to show the relative low status of the town.

BUILDING ELEMENT	WHAT THE ELEMENT USUALLY INDICATES	WHAT IS THE INTERPRETATION AT STUART TOWN
	to provide non-essential elements.	

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The overall oblong design with a gabled roof is consistent with the idea expressed in the surviving plans of 1879 and 1880. The design was also consistent with the thrust of the design process throughout the 1870s, namely the high degree of experimentation. The location of the male toilet at the rear of the platform strongly suggests that the male toilet facility was erected after the station opening, as was the female toilet. It would seem that the building was completed in its existing form when the station did a high level of customer business and that period was in the 1890s. Possibly the structure, as it exists today, was erected partly in the 1880s with completion in the following decade.

There are many aspects of the structure that indicate the absence of professional architects in the design process. The structure at Stuart Town is very similar to those at Euchareena and Mullion Creek. There is no difference in the size and colour of the bricks or nature of the mortar and no easily identifiable vertical joints in the brickwork, apart from one joint in the rear wall between the general waiting room and ladies' waiting room. The major evidence indicates an addition to the eastern end of the structure, which was originally the female waiting room and toilet. The position of the female toilet fully exposed to the eyes of people approaching the station suggests that it was a subsequent addition. That idea is enhanced by the absence of a fanlight over the entry door and the difference in the overall height of the door compared to the others.

The set of three doors towards the western end facing the platform is most unusual and was possibly done to cover a former open-fronted waiting area.

Well, it's time to go westward. I'll have to move fast to jump onto the rear of the Central West Express Comet connection to Dubbo powered by DP 102 (20th January 1967).

Stuart Sharp

10th March 2024