

DAPTO RAILWAY STATION

AN EARLY OMEN OF A FORTHCOMING COLONIAL FINANCIAL CRISIS



This photograph shows the platform building before any major alterations have been carried out. The singular feature of the structure from the platform side is the absence of symmetry. The use of one semi-attached pavilion at the northern end and the use of a single-pitched shed at the southern end looked ungainly and unattractive. However, Dapto was not a big urban area and John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief for Railway Construction, would have known that there was no need to provide a building with an elevated level of presentation in order to please local powerbrokers. How come? There were simply no big political players residing in the area at the time. By the look of the number of milk or cream cans on the platform, it would appear that the local milk depot had not been constructed at the time of the photograph. The historian of track layouts, signalling and safe working, Graham Harper, points out the poor location of the points that provide access to the Loop Line. He says that, because the points were located in front of the platform, a good chunk of platform access to a passenger train would have been unavailable if a goods train were entering or departing the Loop at the southern end.

THE INDICATORS OF FINANCIAL RESTRAINT

Although the railway system was physically expanding greatly in the 1880s, the funds made available by the New South Wales Parliament was insufficient to provide all the related facilities and infrastructure at a reasonable standard to meet the traffic demand. The Engineer-in-Chief for Railway Construction, John Whitton, was obliged to reduce expenditure where possible. Amongst the best examples of the impact of this lower expenditure were the lines between Waterfall and Bombo and Hornsby and Broadmeadow. Dapto station was significantly impacted in a negative way in relation to the reduced financial expenditure. The lowering of the allocation to station works was evident in the following ways at Dapto:

- timber construction for all platform buildings south of Waterfall, except Wollongong
- omission of one semi-attached pavilion and the construction of a timber shed at the southern end, thereby making the structure asymmetrical
- elimination of much ornamental cast ironwork, including cast-iron columns, for the support system for the platform awning
- three rail fencing redolent of a local farm at the rear of the platform rather than the engagement of pickets
- the approval of a lower status house for the Station Master
- the delay in the construction of the platform building with the necessary utilisation of temporary structures at the time of the station opening
- the initial elimination of a gatehouse at the Bong Bong Street level crossing, &
- isolation of the station site from the nearest urban area in order to obtain the lowest possible land acquisition cost.

The Dapto building did have one redeeming visual feature and that was the porched entry for pedestrians. The reason that was provided when money was tight is a mystery. Perhaps its inclusion was to direct visual attention away from the less glamorous aspects of the structure and towards the single attractive element. Also, all other examples of that style of structure south of Waterfall had porched entries and, therefore, Whitton may have felt obliged to provide the same feature at Dapto.

BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE RAILWAY

In July 1886 at Dapto, the regional press stated that the railway contractors were “pushing the work along rapidly at this end, but there are no signs of the station buildings being erected”.¹ The contract time for the line construction expired the previous month. During the next month, the press was concerned that there was no effort being made to build the Dapto station.² Construction on the extension was slow

¹ *Illawarra Mercury*, 31st July 1886, p. 2.

² *Illawarra Mercury*, 14th August 1886, p. 2.

and, by the time the isolated section between Clifton and Wollongong opened on 21st June 1887, track work had only reached the vicinity of Yallah.³ John Whitton would not have been worried about the long construction time as there appeared to be few people of political power residing in the area who had the power to bother him. After all, the area was south of the known coal deposits and, hence, the coal barons were largely uninterested. As well, the villages were small in size. Dapto was described in 1879 in the following manner:

“Dapto is the most straggling village in Illawarra. The traveller scarcely knows when he enters it, is never sure whether he is in it, and is equally uncertain when he leaves it”.⁴

The Dapto village was slow to grow. In 1895, the relevant local government authority noted that “in all probability, there will soon be a town there”.⁵ That remark was made a decade after the arrival of the railway.

BUILDING DESIGNS EMPLOYED ON THE EXTENSION OF THE ILLAWARRA LINE

The Illawarra line south of Waterfall was opened initially as an isolated section between South Clifton and Wollongong on 21st June 1887. The press reported that “from Clifton to Wollongong the station buildings preceded the completion of that part of the railway very considerably, but southward to Kiama the reverse is the case”.⁶ The section between South Clifton and Waterfall was opened on 3rd October 1888 and passenger trains operated between Wollongong and Sydney from that date.

There were 11 stations at the time of the line openings between Waterfall and Bombo and all stations were staffed at the time of their openings. The Appendix to these notes lists the opening date of the stations, the date of the plans for the relevant platform building and the type of building.

By the middle of the 1880s, the New South Wales Government realised that a financial crisis was looming and, in 1886, for the first time since the opening of the railway system in 1855, revenue from land sales did not cover the colonial budget, including the construction of new lines. It was the first time the colonial budget was in deficit and it was against that financial background that the buildings for the Illawarra line were planned. The first decision made by the Engineer-in-Chief for Railway Construction

³ W. A. Bayley, *Green Meadows – Centenary History of Shellharbour Municipality New South Wales, Shellharbour Municipal Council 1959*, p. 86.

⁴ J. P. O’Malley, *The Old Dapto Smelting Works*, Illawarra Historical Society, 1950, p. 11.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Illawarra Mercury*, 24th September 1887, p. 2.

was to minimise the number of brick buildings and, south of Waterfall, the only brick buildings at the time of line opening were built at Wollongong and Kiama.

All other stations on the Illawarra line received timber buildings of one of two standard designs and they are easily divided by size – large buildings and small buildings. These are discussed separately.

1. LARGE BUILDINGS – THE STANDARD ROADSIDE STATION DESIGN



This photograph shows the rear of the building at Bulli on 29th January 2000.



The timber building on the southbound platform at Bulli on 26th December 1977. The brick privacy screen protects the entry to the male toilet. Previously, toilets were located in a separate pavilion. The steel mesh fencing was typical of the 1960s and 1970s.

Between 1870 and 1880, Whitton was experimenting with a number of options to provide cheaper platform buildings than what had he had been approving from 1859. In 1880, he issued the first plans of what would later be known as the standard roadside station design. The major visual change was his abandonment of the quasi-Georgian style and his adoption of a Gothic-influenced style. The change involved the abandonment of hipped roofs and the introduction of medium-pitched, gabled roofs. It

is the view of some commentators that this Gothic-influenced style was the only design of station building which Whitton personally developed. In all other cases, it was Whitton's subordinates who undertook the design task. The Gothic-influenced style was consistent with his use of Gothic features for gatehouses. Whitton had chosen to use a single design school rather than mixing one style with another, though there was an occasional exception, as at Tenterfield. Other design features of the standard roadside station design included:

- application of suites of buildings, using one main building and one or two pavilions, rather than a single structure,
- employment of detached and semi-detached pavilions with gabled roofs transverse to the roof of the main structure,
- the ability of the design to be expressed in sandstone, brickwork or timber,
- decorations restricted to finials on gables and cast ironwork, which was restricted to brackets and awning valences,
- the capacity for design enhancement through the optional addition of transverse gables and/or porches at the pedestrian entry, and internal variations in the selection of materials surrounding fireplaces and ceiling fabric.

A less important location would receive one pavilion and a more important location two pavilions. The more important a location, the more likely an example would feature the following additions:

- the walls of the general waiting room on the roadside of the main building proud of the overall building wall
- a porched entry, &
- the application of a centre-located transverse gable on one or both sides of the roof.

For example, the structure provided at Bulli was an example of the standard roadside design but incorporated both a porch entry and a transverse, centre gable on only the road side of the roof. Additionally, two pavilions were provided enhancing the appearance of the station by the expression of a symmetrical composition. An additional feature sometimes utilised to enhance the status of the location was the siting of the Station Master's residence at one side of the station forecourt. Standard roadside designs were also provided at South Clifton, Bulli, Wollongong and Dapto.

2. SMALL BUILDINGS – THE AWNINGLESS BUILDINGS

The small type of building was stripped of most of the features of its large cousin. To address the urgent financial crisis in the mid-1880s, the Railway Department accelerated the use of a relatively new design of timber structure that had been introduced in 1885 sporadically but which the design was ramped in 1885, 1886, 1887,

1888 and 1889. In accordance with the prevailing policy, the structure had a gabled roof, but the following features reflected the tightness of funds:

- lack of platform awning
- absence of waiting accommodation exclusively for women,
- omission of finials on gables
- elimination of brick chimneys for heating of ticket office
- erection of above-ground rainwater tank (as opposed to an underground tank)
- non-existence of a cover over rainwater tank
- replacement of picket fencing with three-rail fencing
- removal of all decoration, except for an arched head using vertical boards above the entry to the open-fronted waiting area
- elimination of a female toilet in some examples (in a small number of examples, there was a female toilet but, most bizarrely, the entry was from the general waiting room (i.e., there was no ante-chamber protecting the ladies' closet)
- use of corrugated iron sheeting for the walls of the female toilet, where provided, &
- location of the male toilet at one extreme end of the platform.

Such smaller, timber buildings without awnings were built at Thirroul, Corrimal, Unanderra, Shellharbour and Bombo. It is unknown what was provided at Otford at the time of line opening. The same pattern of buildings also applied to the line extension between Hornsby and Broadmeadow. On that section, not one brick station building was erected.



The above photograph of Bombo on 8th January 1978 shows the small version of building erected between Waterfall and Kiama but one of the very few examples with a female toilet. The most obvious aspect is the omission of a platform awning. Moreover, the construction of the female toilet with corrugated iron sheets for the wall reflected cost-cutting significantly, as was the omission of an anti-chamber in front of the ladies' toilet.



Another example of the small type of buildings erected between Waterfall and Bombo was located at Corrimal. The photograph above, taken on 26th December 1977, shows the original two room building, those rooms identified by the existence of a subsequent awning. A third room has been added to the northern end of the original structure. A detached out of shed also appears towards the right-hand side of the photograph.

THE ARCHITECTURAL POSITION AT THE OPENING DAY

At the opening of the line between Wollongong and Bombo on 9th November 1887, stations existed at Unanderra, Dapto, Shellharbour and Bombo. There was no reference in the initial timetable or the press to Kembla Grange, Yallah and Albion Park.

There were no completed buildings at Unanderra, Dapto, Shellharbour and Bombo at the time of the line opening. That tradition was continued in 1893 when the line was extended to Bomaderry. The only structure on the platform at Kiama was the signal interlocking frame.

In essence, the appearance of the buildings south of Wollongong at Unanderra, Shellharbour and Bombo oozed poverty, as did their cousins north of Wollongong.



*All examples of John Whitton's standard three room roadside design utilised between Waterfall and Bombo featured porched entries. This photograph, taken on the return of a soldier in 1919 from World War One, shows the extent of decorations on the forecourt approach. Fretted barge boards, finials with drops on gables and cast ironwork form the decorations. Also visible on the right-hand side are the louvres on the 25 foot long passageway that connected the ladies' waiting room with their toilet, which is just visible on the right side of the photograph. **SOURCE:** Google*

Because of the total absence of platform buildings at the time of the line opening, the steamer, Kurrara, landed on 4th November 1887 "two portable station-houses, one of which is to be erected at Dapto and the other at Kiama (i.e., Bombo) and are intended to do service until the permanent station-houses are erected. These temporary station-houses only need fitting up, and they can be erected and made ready for use in about four hours".⁷

PLAN APPROVALS

There was neither signature nor approval date on the plans for any station, but there are stamps showing 13th May 1887 on the plans for Unanderra and Dapto and two stamps, showing the dates 8th and 20th October on the plan for Bombo. The Shellharbour plan had no stamp.

Standard roadside designs were provided at Clifton, Bulli, Wollongong and Dapto. All had rear porch to pedestrian entry and had detached/semi-detached pavilions at both ends, the exception being Dapto where there was only one semi-detached pavilion used for male and female toilets.

⁷ *Daily Telegraph*, 55th November 1887, p. 6.

In essence, there was a strong uniformity of design amongst all the platform buildings, when constructed.

TIMING OF CONSTRUCTION

There were three intermediate stations at the opening of the extension from Wollongong to Bombo, these being Unanderra, Dapto and Shellharbour. Robert Spiers signed the contract for construction of the platform buildings at Unanderra and Dapto on 4th November 1887 and at Shellharbour on 8th February 1888. The contractor for the Bombo building, A. Brown, signed the Bombo plan on 18th January 1888.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DAPTO BUILDING

The building at Dapto, which was located one mile from the town, was consistent with the prevailing station building policy, though it was by no definition large.⁸ Railway historian, Cyril Singleton, described the station as “a country-type timber station building”.⁹ Timber it is but it is not entirely correct to convey the idea that the standard roadside design was restricted to country areas. Several examples existed on the North Shore line as well as at West Ryde, Hornsby, Hurstville, Sutherland, Carlton, Fairfield and Campbelltown. It would be more correct to say that John Whitton applied the standard roadside design primarily in country areas and sparingly in parts of what would become the Sydney metropolitan area.

The Dapto building was a standard roadside station of timber construction with the main section 51 feet long with a pavilion at the northern end. The plan was prepared in 1886 and there is a stamp showing the date of 13th May 1887, though there is no approval signature on the plan.

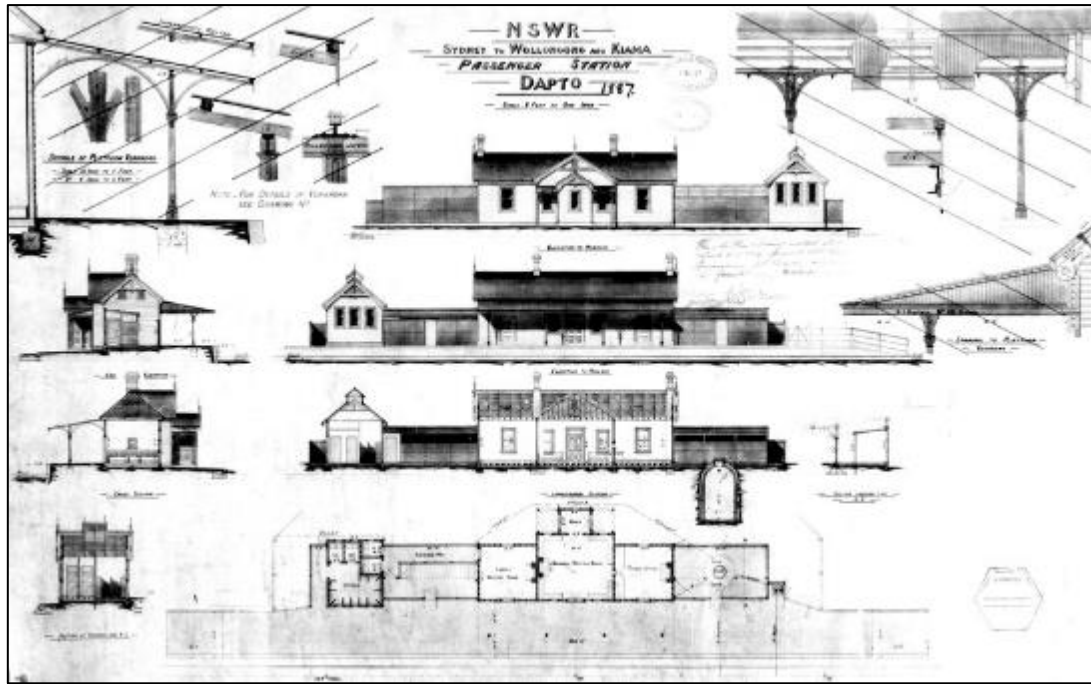
The building was 17 feet wide through the general waiting room/entry/exit with the rooms on each side of the entry being 15 feet wide. On the platform elevation, the width of the building appeared was uniform but there was a recess of approximately six inches for the sheds that flanked both ends of the structure.

The timber building consisted of three rooms and reflected all the design features of a standard roadside structure. Its design was uninspiring and the only comment expressed by the press was to say that it had a “neat appearance” and that “altogether Dapto will have very good station accommodation, which ought to be sufficient for its requirements for some time to come.”¹⁰

⁸ *Evening News*, 7th November 1887, p. 3.

⁹ C. C. Singleton, *Railway History in Illawarra*, Wollongong, Illawarra Historical Society, Second Ed., 1970, p. 51.

¹⁰ *Illawarra Mercury*, 31st May 1887, p. 2.

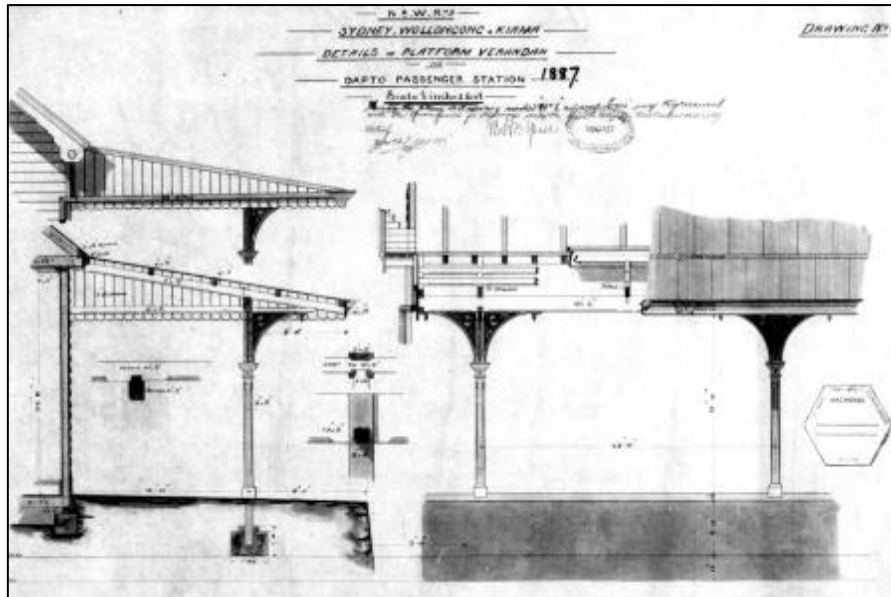


The above plan tells us that it was initially proposed to use of cast iron for the awning posts and brackets but that part of the plan was abandoned and timber posts were utilised to support the platform awning. The timber posts supporting the platform awning possessed limited decorations and the spandrels at the ends of the platform awning had mild decorative vertical boarding.¹¹ Sometime between 1970 and 1972 the decorative vertical boarding in the spandrels was replaced with plain boards.¹²

Originally, there was a lamp room at the extreme northern end of the platform but, with the subsequent extension of the platform in a northerly direction (probably in 1945), the lamp room appeared to be closer to the station building than the end of the platform.

¹¹ Photograph No. 037338 taken on 24th January 1970, ARHS Archives.

¹² Photograph No. 113192 taken November 1983, ARHS Archives.



Whereas the previous plan shows the year 1886, the above plan has a stamp of the Public Works Department dated 13th May 1887. Robert Spiers, the successful contractor, signed the above plan on the same date as the previous plan, i.e., 4th November 1887. The revised plan shows a much for restrained method of supporting the platform awning. Although timber was used for the vertical posts, they were exquisitely designed.

Overall, the platform buildings lacked symmetry with the use of only one semi-detached pavilion at the northern end. The use of a longer corrugated shed at the southern end of the main building further disengaged visual enjoyment. Perhaps the use of a centre porched entry/exit was a feature utilised to focus ocular assessment away from the extremities of the station.

At the northern end of the main building, there was a distance of 25 feet between the main building and the detached toilet pavilion and, in that 25 feet distance, there was a covered passageway that linked the ladies' waiting room and the female toilet. At the southern end of the main building was a 25 feet long shed.

The ceiling height was 11 feet six inches, which was common for all buildings between Waterfall and Bombo.



On 26th December 1977, the station looked spick-and-span. The 25 foot long shed at the southern end of the main building acted as the parcels office. On the left is the 1918 opened signal box.

While the overall assessment of the structure emphasised financial restraint, it is puzzling to understand the provision of the porched entry, which was an attractive though expensive feature.

The centre room was the general waiting room, measuring 20 feet by 17 feet, and its entry wall stood proud of the other two rooms by three feet. In front of the waiting room was an elegant porched entry. On one side of the general waiting room was the ticket office and, on the other side, was the ladies' waiting room, both measuring 15 feet by 14 feet. At each end of the timber building was a 25 feet long shed covered with sheet corrugated iron. The shed at the northern end encapsulated a "covered way" which led to a toilet block containing two closet each for men and women and a seven stall urinal. While the porched entry was a nice, attractive touch, the overall station presentation was spoilt by the extensive use (50 feet) of corrugated iron sheets facing the road approach.

The original timber male toilet had a large ventilator on the ridge of the roof.¹³

THE PLATFORM

The Dapto platform was 264 feet long by 12 feet, widening to 15 feet in front of the building and featured a brick wall sloping to the toe adjacent to the tracks. A three rail timber fence was constructed at the rear of the platform.

There was no dock siding behind the platform in 1887 but, as the platform was lengthened at the northern end, a dock siding was created.

¹³ Photograph No. 259505 taken on 9th December 1993, ARHS Archives.



The above photograph taken on 26 July 1951 of the northern end of the platform shows the post-opening dock siding, the small stockyard and, in the middle distance, the goods shed. Beyond the goods shed were the butter factory/dairy cooperative and also a produce store. Between the Main Line and the Loop Line was a water column to which water flowed from a 20,000 elevated tank outside the picture on the left. The tank was demolished in May 1969. The stockyards were demolished in 1961. Photograph No. 215139, ARHS Railway Archives.

On 19th April 1940, a plan was issued to raise the platform from its existing height of two feet nine inches to the new standard of three feet two inches. The same time the platform was to be extended to 450 feet at the northern end. The work was completed on 18th May 1944.

CONSTRUCTION

The contractor, Robert Spiers, signed the plan on 4th November 1887, which was five days before the station and line opened. Perhaps there was a problem with the original contractor or, more likely, Spiers or someone else erected the temporary structure after Spiers signed the contract. At the end of December 1887, the press reported that “the station buildings will be finished shortly”.¹⁴

The NSW Government Gazette of 11th July 1890 announced the closure of tenders on 14th July 1890 for erection of additions to the passenger station.¹⁵ The nature of the work is unknown. There was no mention in subsequent *Government Gazette*’s of a successful contractor. Given that there is no visible change to the 1887 plan, the work probably did not proceed.

¹⁴ *Illawarra Mercury*, 22nd December 1888, p. 2.

¹⁵ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 11th July 1890, No.372, page 5356.



On the left-hand side adjacent to the door is a sign that reads: "Station Master's office and General Enquiries". When originally constructed, there was no dedicated space for the Station Master and he worked out of the ticket office. After the cessation of parcels traffic in 1987, the 25 foot long shed at the southern end of the main building was utilised as a staff amenities area which included a staff toilet and kitchen. This photograph shows that the building has been stripped of virtually all the ornamental cast ironwork associated with the porch and unsympathetic changes have been made to the pedestrian entry/exit.

The extension from Wollongong to Bombo opened on 9th November 1887. The stations were: Unanderra, Dapto, Shellharbour and Kiama (i.e., Bombo).¹⁶ There was no official opening for the section between Wollongong and Kiama.

A REACTION TO THE DESIGN

One local historian described the building:

"Dapto station was, and is, undistinguished - a standard type of timber station building; its importance is its location".¹⁷

What is the implication of the statement that the location of the station was and is the important aspect? Keeping in mind that there was no urban development around the station site when the station opened in 1887, does the writer mean that the station was of no or little importance?

While the comment that the building was "undistinguished" is correct, the point needs to be made that the same remark could have been applied to every other station with the exception of Wollongong. Money was tight for John Whitton and this situation was reflected by the following factors:

- the introduction of the new type of building in 1885 without a platform awning,
- the extensive use of timber,

¹⁶ *Illawarra Mercury*, 3rd November 1887, p. 2.

¹⁷ W. G. McDonald, *Nineteenth Century Dapto*, Wollongong, Illawarra Historical Society, 1976, p. 67.

- elimination of cast iron brackets and posts to support the platform awnings, &
- the delay in the construction of platform building.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

While on a visit to the station Chief Commissioner Eddy promised in November 1887 the construction of facilities for the transport of milk, butter and other perishables.¹⁸

Two years later, Eddy promised in December 1889 that the platform would be asphalted at once.¹⁹ That part of the platform in front of the buildings was asphalted by May 1890.

In 1902, the Railway Department decided to change the function of the ticket office to a parcels office. At the same time, a section of the general waiting room was partitioned for use as an office for the Station Master.²⁰ Later, the 25 foot long attached shed at the southern end of the main building was utilised as the parcels office with a separate pedestrian entry in the rear wall, thus avoiding the need for clients to buy a platform ticket to reach the parcels office. The original weatherboard covered walls were replaced, possibly in November 1970.

THE 1977 TOILET BLOCK



This photograph is looking towards the south and shows the 1887 toilet pavilion in the foreground. As was usual New South Wales practice, the ridge of the roof of detached and semi-detached pavilions were rotated 90° to the ridge of the main building. The Dapto building accorded to that practice. Ventilation of male toilets in the 1880s took

¹⁸ *Illawarra Mercury*, 22nd November 1888, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Illawarra Mercury*, 3rd December 1889, p. 2.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 3rd May 1902, p. 5.

various forms and, in this case, a small ventilator sits across the ridge to extract the unpleasant fumes associated with male toilet behaviour. SOURCE: Google.

It was the Commonwealth Labor Government that supplied funds from the mid-1970s to the New South Wales Railways via the state coalition government to improve facilities at railway stations. In a spiteful and revengeful act, the New South Wales Government decided that it would not provide any opportunity to promote the Commonwealth Government's policy. Hence, the New South Wales Government and the then Public Transport Commission decided to expend the Commonwealth funds in the provision of improved public toilets. The new toilet block at Dapto was located in the 25 foot space between the main building and the original timber toilet block.

The new building was constructed of 280mm cavity brickwork and divided into two equal parts – one for men and the other for women. The structure measured six metres by five metres. The toilet possessed an almost flat roof covered with Brownbuilt metal sheets. The floor of the block was 460 mm above the surface of the platform. This elevation accorded with the traditional railway policy of stepping up into structures, which avoided the ingress of rainwater.

In each half there were two water closets with the cubicles measuring 1500mm by 900mm. For men, there was also a 1200mm long stainless steel urinal which could theoretically accommodate three users. In the female section, there was a hand wash basin and mirror – neither of these facilities being available for men. Some toilet blocks contained a wet store in the middle of the structure for mops and brooms and cleaning aids but there was no such store room in the new brick toilet block at Dapto.

At the time of the construction of the toilet block, the railway station, the Station Master's residence and the gatehouse were connected to the local sewerage system and this work



The above photograph dates from 26th December 1977 and shows the new, Commonwealth funded toilet block at the northern end of the station. This design was used at approximately 20-30 other locations.

Similar brick toilet blocks were also erected at Albion Park, Shellharbour and Berry.

OTHER SUBSEQUENT ALTERATIONS

In 1977, the local community wanted to establish a garden the forecourt of station. The garden was called Hartigan Park, Hartigan being the name of a long serving former Railway Commissioner. There is no indication that the Park bears that name today.

An ugly, concrete motor vehicles turning circle outside the station does not enhance the heritage values of the station.

Both chimneys were removed in the 1980s with the introduction of gas heating.²¹

²¹ Photograph No. 466104 taken on 17th April 1983 and photograph No. 250184 taken on 16th March 1986, ARHS Archives.



Well-known railway historian and photographer, Ken Winney, took this photograph in November 1883. It shows the 1887 building retaining its three room composition despite the removal of the two chimneys. Concrete has been poured around the bases of the awning posts to keep them in vertical alignment. Photograph No. 113192, ARHS Railway Archives.

Further plans to beautify the station forecourt, which was known as Hartigan Park, were prepared in November 1987 and provided for a 16 feet wide semi-circular approach to the station entrance. One month later, a revised scheme was prepared using a complete circular approach. It was that scheme which was adopted. The local war memorial is now located in the station forecourt.



This image shows the circular approach to the station with a war memorial in the garden area.

The door from the platform to the ladies' waiting room was in place in 1983 but had been removed by 1992.²²

²² Photograph No. 271484 taken on 14th May 1972, ARHS Archives.

THE CITYRAIL PERIOD

In 1991, CityRail applied the usual red platform seats and red bins and three level station nameboards featuring blue letters on a white background. The work was completed by July 1992.²³



The establishment of CityRail 1989 has seen the only systemwide rejuvenation of every station in the State railway network. Red platform seats, bins and lamp posts were obvious features. However, CityRail worked hard in the first five years to provide a pleasant environment for waiting customers. At Dapto, pleasant planter boxes and shrubs were provided. In this image, pre-CityRail signage has not been replaced. CityRail was so pleased with the attractiveness of the work that it inserted a photograph in the State Rail Authority, Annual Report to 30th June 1991. Page 24 has photo showing the “greening” of the platform.

Into the forecourt area was in place in May 1992.²⁴ Tri-level station nameboards were installed with a blue stripe under the name.²⁵

It appears that the wall separating the former general waiting room from the former ladies' waiting room was removed some time in the 1990s or earlier.

THE NEW PLATFORMS

STAGE ONE

In 1988, a platform with a small, primitively designed shelter shed was erected adjacent to the Loop Line. It became platform No. 1. Similar primitive platforms and waiting sheds were also erected on the loops at Albion Park and Shellharbour.

²³ Photograph No. 250184 taken in 1986, and No. 276715 taken about 1979, ARHS Archives.

²⁴ Photograph No. 141665 taken on 24th May 1992, ARHS Archives.

²⁵ Photograph No. 541536 taken on 14th November 2001, ARHS Archives.



This photograph above is of a very simple, steel-framed and steel clad waiting shed but its construction in 1988 was representative of the policy of the State Rail Authority (SRA) in regard to the type of accommodation suitable as a waiting room. The structure was built to withstand incessant attacks by vandals – a problem that had existed for the previous 30 years throughout the railway system. The 1988 waiting shed was one of the last SRA waiting sheds to be built before the emergence of the enlightenment of CityRail, created in 1989, which fundamentally reversed the design philosophy and, in place of vandal resistant steelwork, preferred transparent accommodation through which station staff could keep an eye on waiting passengers.

STAGE TWO

To coincide with the opening of the extension of track electrification from Wollongong to Dapto, CityRail extended platform No. 2 (i.e., the original 1887 platform) with work in progress in November 1992.²⁶ The extension occurred at the northern end and was 108 metres in length and three metres wide. A new awning was erected at the northern end of No. 2 platform.

²⁶ Photograph No. 141683 taken on 20th November 1992, ARHS Archives.



The above photograph shows the extension of platform No. 2 and the erection of a new awning at the northern end of the platform. It would be a further decade before an awning was erected over platform No. 1 on the left. SOURCE: Facebook

STAGE THREE

Track electrification open to Kiama in 2001 and, as a part of the effort to improve services, another platform, which became platform No. 3, was opened behind the main line platform (i.e., platform No. 2) and was known as the Terminating Road. That facility came into use on 28th April 2001.

In 2024, trains depart platform No. 3 at 0603 and 0643.

STAGE FOUR

In December 2002, plans were prepared to extend No. 1 platform, which served the Loop Line. At the same time, CityRail replaced the existing small waiting shed on the platform with a larger area of seating. Lastly, it erected a new awning extending the whole length of the platform. In addition, new ramped access was also erected. The work was completed in early 2004.



The architecture of CityRail is divided into two periods split about 1998. The early period was identified with bright colours and transparent structures. The change came about with the departure of one Chief Executive and the arrival of a new boss. The enlarged waiting area on platform No. 1 dates from the later CityRail period, as evidenced by the absence of a transparent rear wall. The above photograph dates from 2007.

CCTV cameras were installed at the station about 1999.



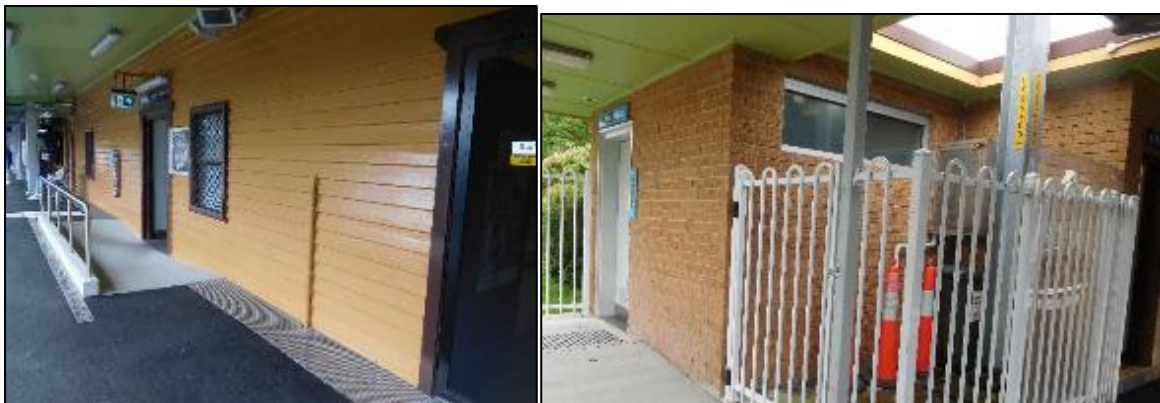
*This photograph shows the 1988 platform on the Loop Line, which was known as platform No. 1. The photograph was taken in the early 1990s and shows the galvanised mesh fencing and the red and white seats, bins and lamp posts. **SOURCE:** Google.*



The above photograph was taken after the erection of the full-length awning over platform No. 1 in 2004. SOURCE: Google

THE SYDNEY TRAINS PERIOD

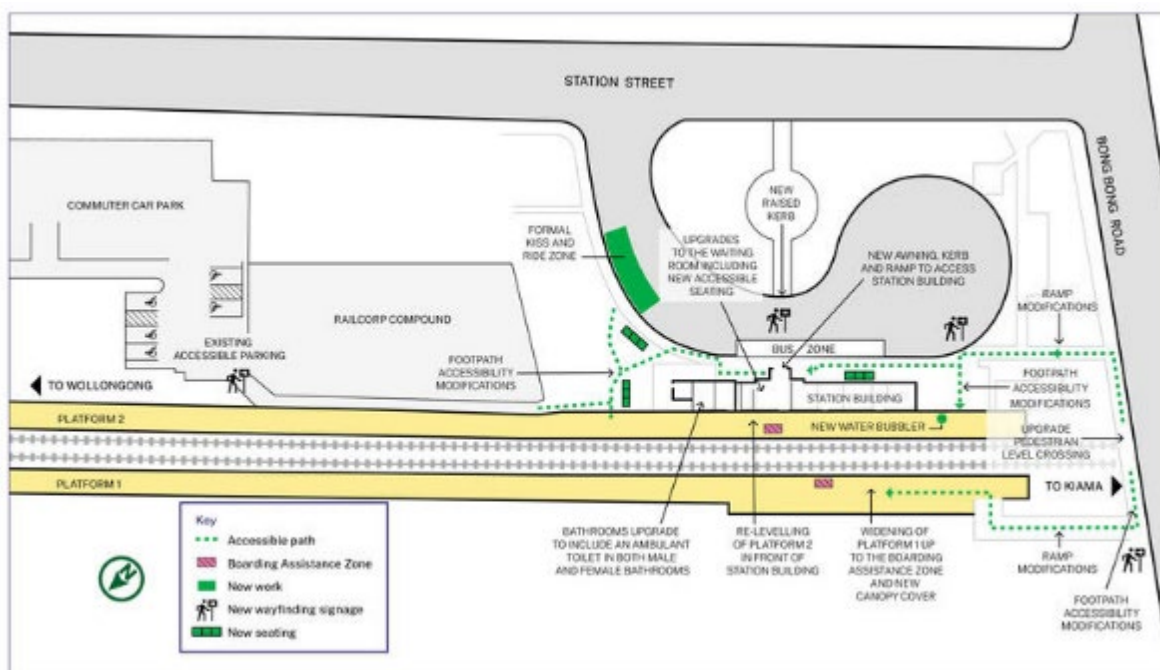
The NSW Government in 2023 undertook work to improve accessibility at Dapto Station. This upgrade was completed as part of the Government's Transport Access Programme. Degnan Constructions started work in March 2023 and the project was completed in September 2023.



These two images show aspects of the improved access to the station carried out in 2023. On the left is the new ramped access from the former general waiting room onto the platform. On the right is the construction of the toilet for disabled people, which has been built at the rear of the 1977 toilet block.

The key benefits of the 2023 upgrade were listed as:

- Updating the level crossing pedestrian zone.
- Upgrading kerbs and ramps.
- Installing a formal kiss and ride zone.
- Upgrading bathrooms with ambulant toilet in both male and female bathrooms.
- Upgrading footpaths.
- Re-levelling platform 2 in front of the station building.
- Widening Platform 1 and installing a new canopy cover.
- Installing a new water bubbler on platform 2.
- Upgrading the waiting room, including installing accessible seating.
- Installing new seating throughout the station.
- Installing new wayfinding signage.



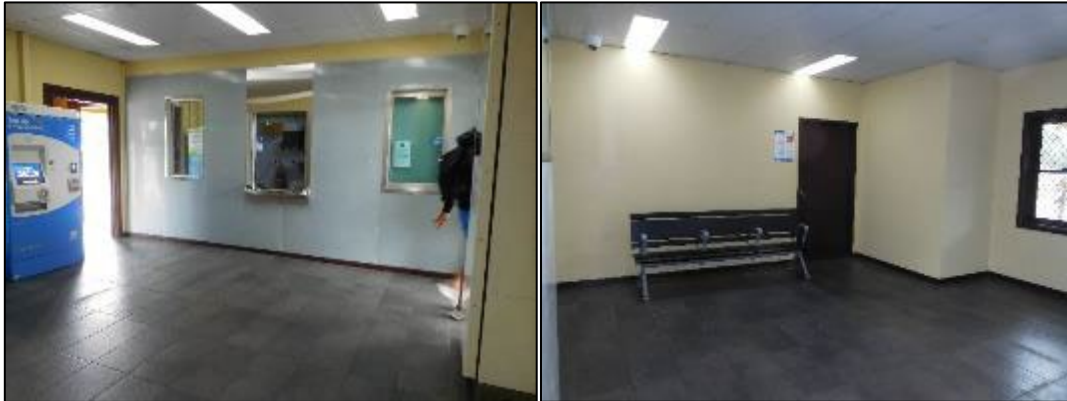
The above image shows the locality of the new works but does not mention that the “footpath accessibility modifications” were themed with Aboriginal motifs.

THE SITUATION IN 2024

The main building has lapped weatherboards and would appear to have been entirely reclad, possibly in the 1990s by CityRail. The door from the platform into the ladies’ waiting room has been removed and there is no trace of it. The internal wall between the general waiting room and the ladies’ waiting room has been removed and the public space has been enlarged. A new wall has been inserted to provide a staff toilet.

The former parcels office at the southern end of the structure survives and is used as a staff meal room, though the former skillion roof has been replaced.

In 2023, major changes occurred to the platform surface on No. 2 platform, which formerly sloped back towards the building and drained into a narrow strip drain. That arrangement has been replaced by a level platform but it has been necessary to provide ramped access between the platform and the general waiting room. New and wider strip drains have been inserted against the building.



These two images show the way the former internal spaces that were once the general waiting room and the ladies' waiting room have been transformed into an unrecognisable single entity. Chopping up the internal spaces started with the resumption of a space of the ladies' waiting room in 1902 for an office for the Station Master. It would seem that either CityRail or Sydney Trains or both have continued the enthusiasm for purging the delineations of the former rooms. In 2024, the structure lacks entirely any interpretation of the original footprint of the 1887 building.

The 1977 brick toilet block survives. There is one stainless steel urinal and two closets in the male toilet, but one of the male closets has been rebadged as “ambulant male”.

A grey coloured metal framed and metal clad concession survives (but closed) on the northern side of the timber buildings and brick toilet on platform No. 2. The metal siding has a profile to mimic weatherboards and has a ramp between the platform and the structure. It is used as a meal room for train crews and also as a storage area for large posters advising of train changes.

There is a soffit under the platform awning on No. 2 platform. All the awning posts have been renewed with steel towards the base and timber above. The decorations on the timber work are not authentic.

There is an awning on the road approach at the southern half of the building which dates from the 1990s. Unbelievably, the white steel pool top fencing survives and has even been repainted white – contrary to the current policy of painting such fencing grey.



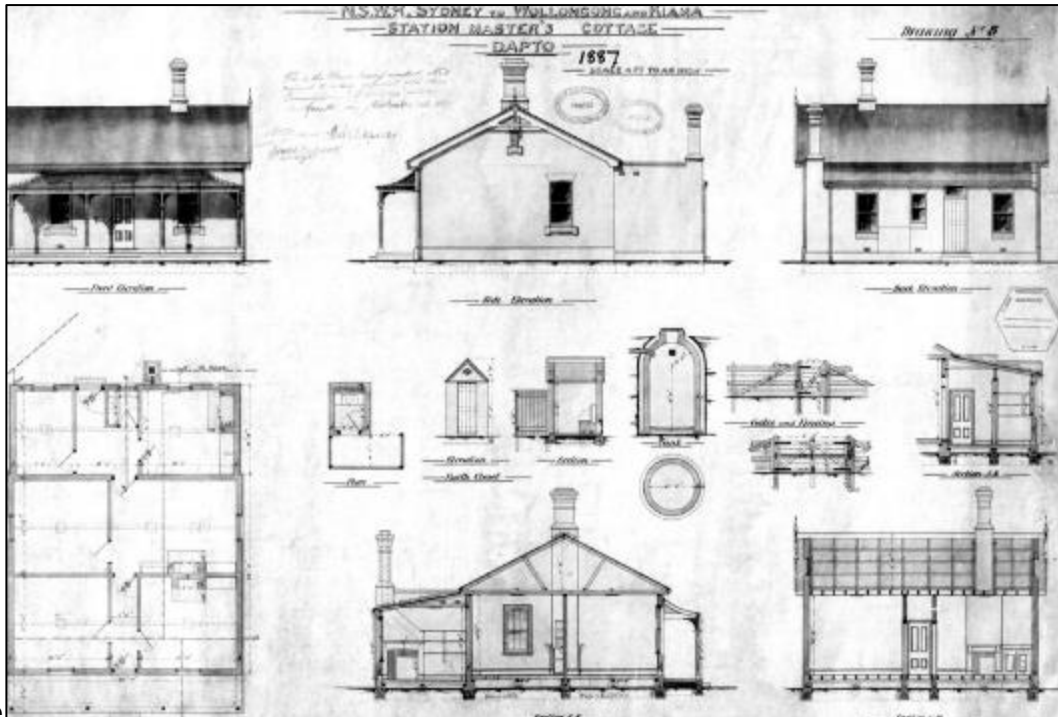
*Neil Munro writes: 4419 is arriving at Dapto with a service to Sydney on 17th April 1983 with two supplementary interurban carriages in the lead (conversions from surplus wooden-bodied corridor cars) and two FS steel side-corridor cars bringing up the rear. 4419 was one of the first 20 Alco locos ordered by the NSWGR from Sydney manufacturer A. E. Goodwin in the 1950s. Their success resulted in another 80 similar locos being ordered in several subsequent batches from the same company. I recall in later years a respected driver saying that despite all the growing creature comforts provided in later and more modern locos he would rather a Mark 1 44-class with streamlined end leading any day. In 1983 Dapto only had a platform on the main line while the passing loop was devoid of any passenger facility. With State Rail focused on electrification between Wyong and Newcastle in 1983, the 'Cinderella' South Coast line would have to cope with diesel rail cars, diesel loco-hauled trains, manual semaphore signals and electric staff instruments for many more months.²⁷ **SOURCE:** Neil Munro.*

²⁷ Email from Neil Munro on 16th January 2024.

RESIDENCES



John Whitton had introduced a new, standard design for residences for Station Master's in 1876. He approved four examples of his standard design south of Waterfall. They were located at Stanwell Park, Clifton, Bulli and Wollongong. The image above shows the 1876 standard design at Bulli. Strangely, Whitton decided against using this standard design south of Wollongong, including Dapto and, instead, selected a smaller structure designed for occupation for officers below the rank of Station Master.



The

The house for the Station Master at Dapto is located on the right-hand side of the station forecourt. It is a typical design of the 1880s for smaller locations but, after 1890, use of the design accelerated in use in the 1890s because of the tightened economic circumstances. The Dapto house was 31 feet wide and 38 feet deep. One would have to feel sorry for the occupants in Winter as heating was furnished only to one bedroom.

A well was excavated adjacent to the rear of the house from which the residents obtained drinking water. It was a short, direct walk from the dwelling towards the railway line to obtain coal from the station's coal bin.

It may seem strange that timber was used for all the platform buildings but brick was the product of choice for official houses. However, John Whitton consistently approved brickwork for official residences even though timber might have been used for platform buildings. Clearly, he did care for the staff who were to live in his houses. That policy changed after Whitton's departure.

The occupant of the house in 1963 installed a television set in his house and the Railway Department issued a plan showing the proposed location for his TV antenna.



This 1992 image identifies the transverse gabled roof as the dominant architectural feature with the full width, concave shaped awning over the front elevation. The use of less costly official houses south of Wollongong was another indication that money was in short supply.

The Station Master's residence, along with the platform buildings and the Gatekeeper's house, were connected to the local town sewerage system in 1977. At that time, the original toilet for the Station Master's family was relocated from its original position, which was at the far northern corner of the property, to a location much closer towards the house.

GATEKEEPER'S COTTAGE

The date of the construction of the Bong Bong Street gatehouse is unknown but the cottage for the Gatekeeper was in existence by 1913.

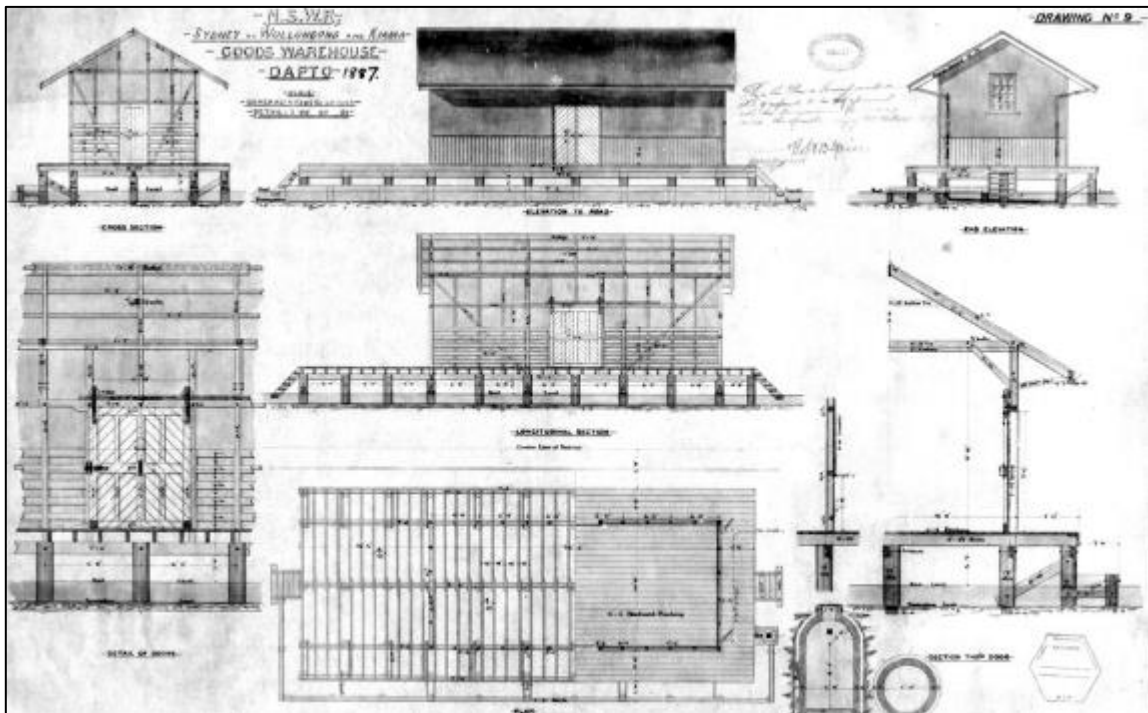
The small size and primitive design were typical of gatehouses built south of Wollongong. The timber gatehouse was destroyed by fire in the 1990s.²⁸

²⁸ Photograph No. 106828 taken on 22nd July 1992, ARHS Archives.



The above photograph, taken on 26th December 1977, shows the timber gatehouse at the southern end of the platform

GOODS SHED



The above plan shows the small goods shed of traditional New South Wales design. The building measured 36 feet by 18 feet with a 4 feet wide platform on each side of the structure. At one end was a timber platform 16 feet long.

Robert Spiers signed the plan for the construction of the goods shed on 4th November 1887, which was the same date as he signed the plans for the platform building.

Stuart Sharp

25th July 2024

A SIGNALLING AND SAFEWORKING HISTORY OF DAPTO BY GRAHAM HARPER

The line through Dapto was opened on November 9, 1887, the actual section brought into use being Wollongong to Bombo. At this stage, the newly opened section was part of an isolated line to Clifton [later Scarborough], and it was a further eleven months before trains could operate to and from Sydney.

The new line was operated under the rules of the ordinary train staff and ticket system, which had been introduced in NSW following the Emu Plains collision of 1878. Staff and crossing stations were Wollongong, Mount Kembla, Dapto, Oak Flats [renamed Albion Park], and North Kiama [renamed Bombo].

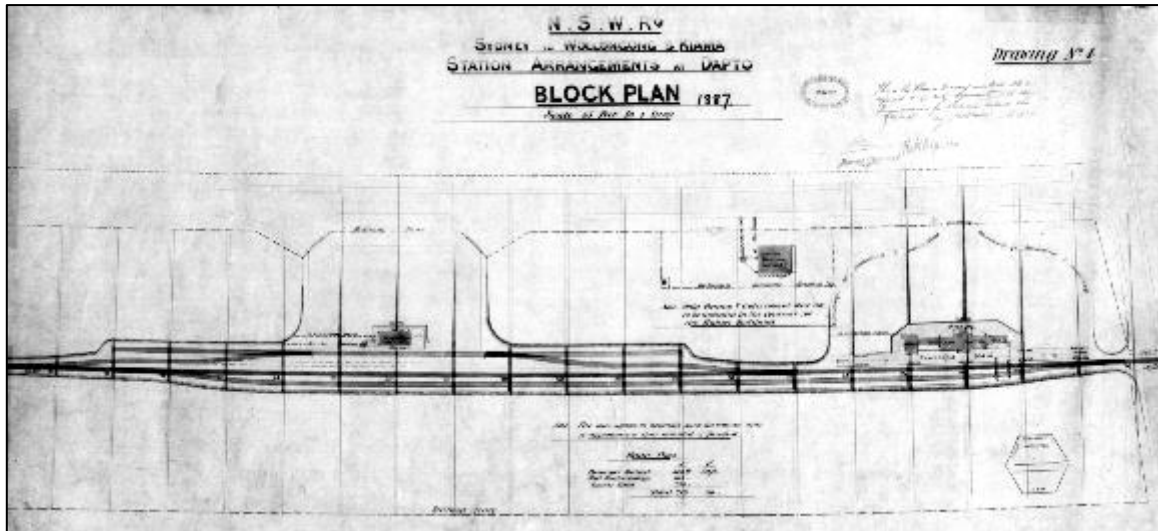
In 1892, staff and ticket working was replaced by electric train tablet which in turn succumbed to electric train staff less than 20 years later.

This detailed safeworking history will not include any great detail about the private lines which existed in the area and will predominantly be confined to the arrangements at Dapto station.

At line opening, Dapto consisted of a platform and a loop siding, both on the Down, or eastern, side of the line, the siding being the closer to Sydney of the two. A crossing loop was provided on the western side of the station and siding.

The layout was interesting for a couple of reasons:

- The southern end loop points were located just off the end of the platform, and the associated reverse curve took up about half the platform length. Such siting of the points was undoubtedly to keep them clear of the adjacent level crossing. However, it set the scenario whereby a passenger train standing at the platform would probably be required to move out of the platform to avoid fouling the passage of a train arriving in or departing from the loop at that end.



The 1887 station arrangement plan shows the extent of official structures, which were the platform building, the Station Master's residence and the goods shed. There was no gatehouse at the time of the station opening. **SOURCE:** ARHS Track and Signalling DVD

- The above block plan shows the layout at the time of opening
- Note the very long crossovers leading to each end of the siding. The length and curvature suggests provision for another siding, between the main line and the goods siding. The future siding is shown in dotted lines on the plan.
- From the outset, the station yard was not interlocked. It had home and distant signals operated from four 'pull-over' levers on the platform.

On September 9, 1892, electric train tablet working supplanted the staff and ticket system on the Mount Kembla to Dapto section, while on October 17 in the same year, the Dapto to Albion Park was similarly treated.



The above picture shows a part of the smelting works. **SOURCE:** Facebook.

On December 23, 1895, a private line for Illawarra Harbour and Land Corporation was opened. The private line crossed the main Illawarra line on the level in the vicinity of Dapto's Up Distant signal and was constructed as part of a scheme to use Lake Illawarra as a port. According to C. C. Singleton, the plan was flawed in that the

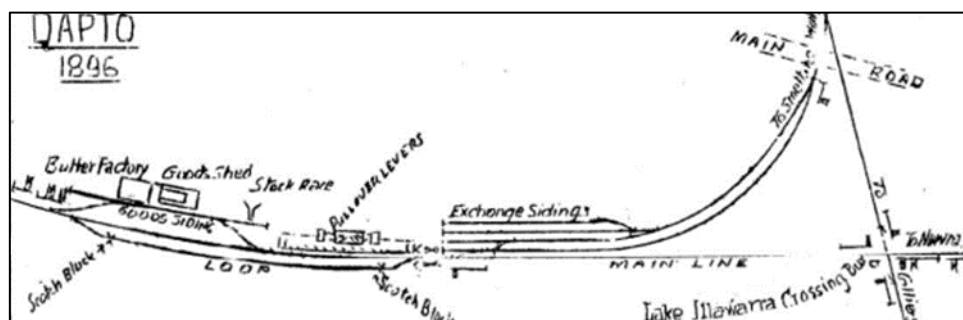
channel between the lake and the sea wasn't reliably navigable. He says that little if any traffic was carried on the line, apart from construction trains. The crossing with the Illawarra line was fully interlocked, but only lasted for seven years until closure on July 17, 1902.



The above picture shows the relationship between Dapto station, which is visible in a line across the bottom of the image, and Lake Illawarra. **SOURCE:** Chilby Photography, Dapto History Photos.

On December 12, 1895, a branch line was provided at the southern end of Dapto yard to serve the Australian Smelting Company's smelting works, some distance away to the east. Three exchange sidings were provided at the junction, and the branch was worked by a private locomotive up to the cessation of smelting in 1907 and abandonment of the branch.

The arrangements are best described in the diagram below, courtesy of C. C. Singleton in the ARHS *Bulletin* of 1946. Note the Down Distant signal for Lake Illawarra Crossing under Dapto's Down home signal at the far left of the diagram.



On April 21, 1910, the tablet instruments for the sections on either side of Dapto were pulled out and replaced with electric staff instruments. One possibility for this replacement given by eminent token systems guru, Dr Bob Taaffe, is that the tablet

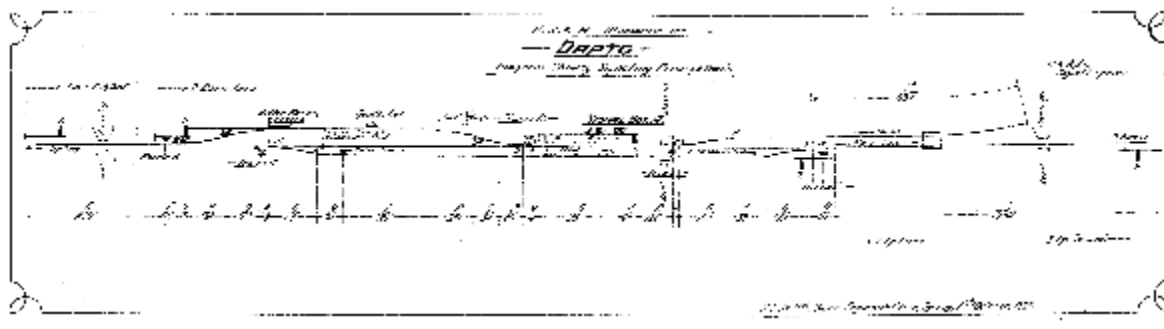
instruments were required on the main southern line, where auto tablet exchangers were in use to avoid delays to trains.

In 1918, Dapto was interlocked as a key-locked crossing loop. An eight lever Frame A of conventional levers, and located in a new signal box, replaced the pullover levers and operated the home and distant signals. A duplex lock on No.5 lever released up to two keys which could be used to unlock ground frames which provided to operate the points. The interlocking of Frame A was such that, while ever No.5 lever was pulled over, the keys being available, it was not possible to clear any signals.

Mount Kembla signal box was replaced by Unanderra as a main line staff station on August 19, 1925. This meant that Dapto now worked with Unanderra so far as the electric staff system was concerned.

Weekly Notice No.13 of 1926 drew attention to a water column at the Sydney end of the crossing loop, where it also served locomotives on the main line. There was a 20,000 gallon elevated water tank at the Railway boundary fence. Water was pumped from Mullet Creek north of the station and gravitated from the tank to the water column. As no such facility is shown for Dapto in the 1922 *Local Appendix*, this may mean that one had been newly provided.

Later, in mid-June 1926, the Up Home and Distant signals were relocated some 600 feet [183 metres] further out towards Nowra. In the process, the Distant signal was fitted with a fixed upper green light. That work was preparatory to the extension of the crossing loop some 445 feet [136 metres], also in the direction of Nowra, which occurred on July 26. The new arrangements are shown in the diagram below.



SOURCE: ARHS *Track and Signalling DVD*

Note the remains of the old smelter line running off to the right hand side. Portion of this was used as Clarke's Timber Siding from March 27, 1939.

The two longish crossovers connecting the goods siding to the main line had, by 1926, included catchpoints in the middle of them. The purpose of these catchpoints is somewhat obscure, but working the siding required the shunter to be aware of the position of the non-interlocked points at the siding end of each crossover as well as the main line points and catchpoints. Sounds like a real trap for the unwary!

Sometime in 1943 or 1944, the platform was extended 185 feet [56 metres] towards Sydney. To make space for the extension, the Nowra end points of the goods siding were similarly relocated.

On November 15, 1950, an intermediate staff instrument was provided at the junction with the Tallawarra Power Station construction branch line at Yallah. This enabled construction trains to be put away on the branch and free the Dapto – Albion Park section for other traffic.

On May 30, 1971, electric flashing lights and a warning bell were installed at Avondale Road level crossing near the Up distant signal.

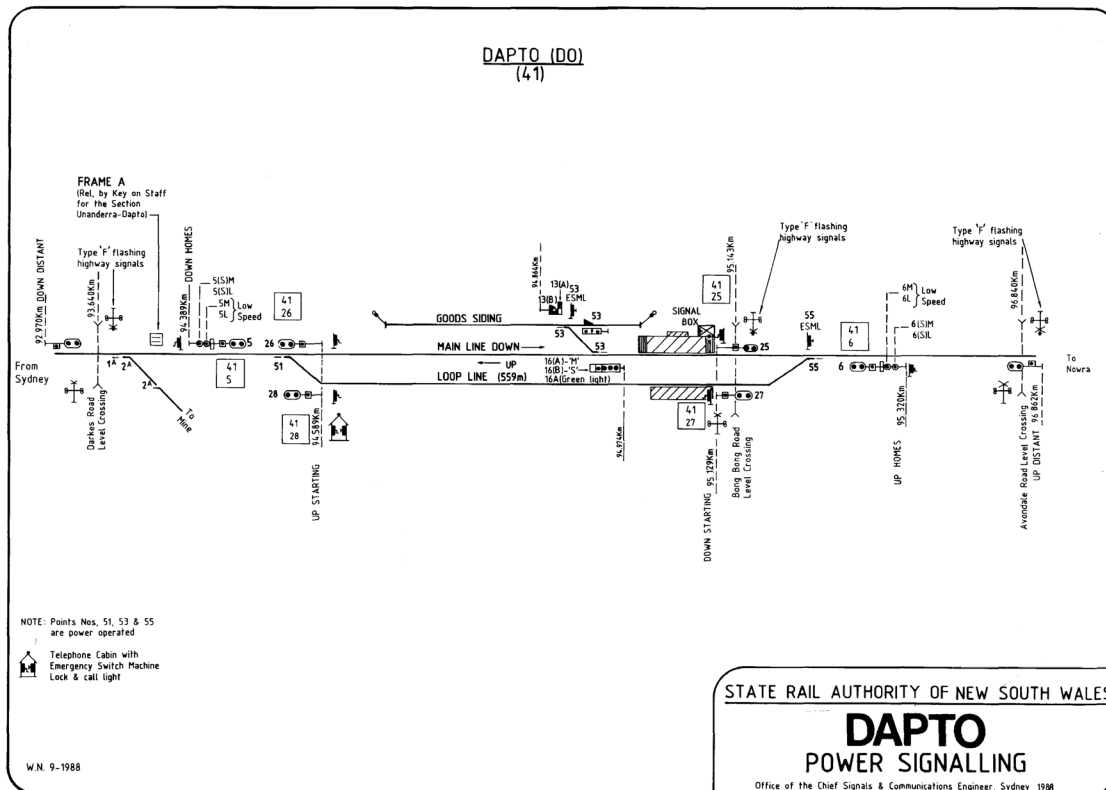
On June 29, 1976, electric flashing lights and a warning bell were installed at Darkes Road level crossing near the junction with the Wongawilli line.

A new Down starting signal was brought into use on September 1, 1976. Associated with this signal, a 'U' indicator was provided, operated from No.4 Guard's lever in the signal box. These works were in preparation for the introduction, on September 15 of the same year of flashing lights and a bell at Bong Bong Road level crossing, near the Nowra end of the platform. The 'U' indicator was a means of allowing a train to pass a starting signal at 'stop' when the station was unattended; its clearance assured all concerned that the points were correctly set for the passage of the train. The 'U' denoted 'unattended', while the Guard's lever which operated it was intended to be worked by the Guard.

Power signalling invaded Dapto on April 16/17, 1988, as a preliminary to CTC signalling and remote control from Wollongong. Features of the work included:

- Replacement of the mechanical home and distant signals with single light colour light signals
- New starting signals for the main and the loop in each direction
- Power operation of the loop points at each end and of the single remaining goods siding connection
- Low speed signals to enter the loop at each end
- Shunt signals to and from the goods siding.
- Formal abolition and removal of Clarke's Timber Siding
- Control of points and signals by a new control panel in the SM's Office.
- Provision of an additional platform opposite the existing one, serving the loop

Electric staff working continued at this stage. The new arrangements are shown in the next page,



SOURCE: ARHS Track and Signalling DVD

On October 4, 1989, facilities were provided for Dapto to be remotely controlled from Wollongong. The local panel at Dapto was retained for local emergency control. The electric staff working between Unanderra and Dapto was replaced by bi-directional single line track control; in other words, the trains in that section were detected and controlled by track circuits.

Traffic south of Dapto continued to be worked under the electric staff system. It was now necessary to prove that a staff was available by inserting it in a lock. Once detection had been proved, the starting signal could then clear.

On August 2, 1992, the peculiar power operated crossover between the main line and the goods siding was removed, along with the applicable shunting signals. Shortly after that, a new connection was installed, facing to Down trains, some distance towards Sydney from the former lead. It was operated from Frame B, which was electrically released from the panel in Wollongong signal box. A new Down second home signal was installed adjacent to the main line points.

On July 23/23 1994, the points to the Wongawilli mine, north of Dapto, were brought under direct control of the Dapto control panel in Wollongong signal box. Power operated points and new signals featured in this work.

The year 2000 saw the next major change at Dapto, with the provision of a third platform, to be known as the terminating road. Frame B was removed, and its points

were converted to power operation. Signals were provided for entry to and exit from the new line, which islanded about half of the Up platform. This occurred on July 2.

During a six week shutdown covering May 2001, electric staff was taken out of use for the sections Dapto – Albion Park – Dunmore [Shellharbour] – Bombo – Kiama. At the same time all mechanical lever frames were removed, colour light signals were installed, and control of operations at those places, except for Dapto which had already succumbed, was assumed by Wollongong.

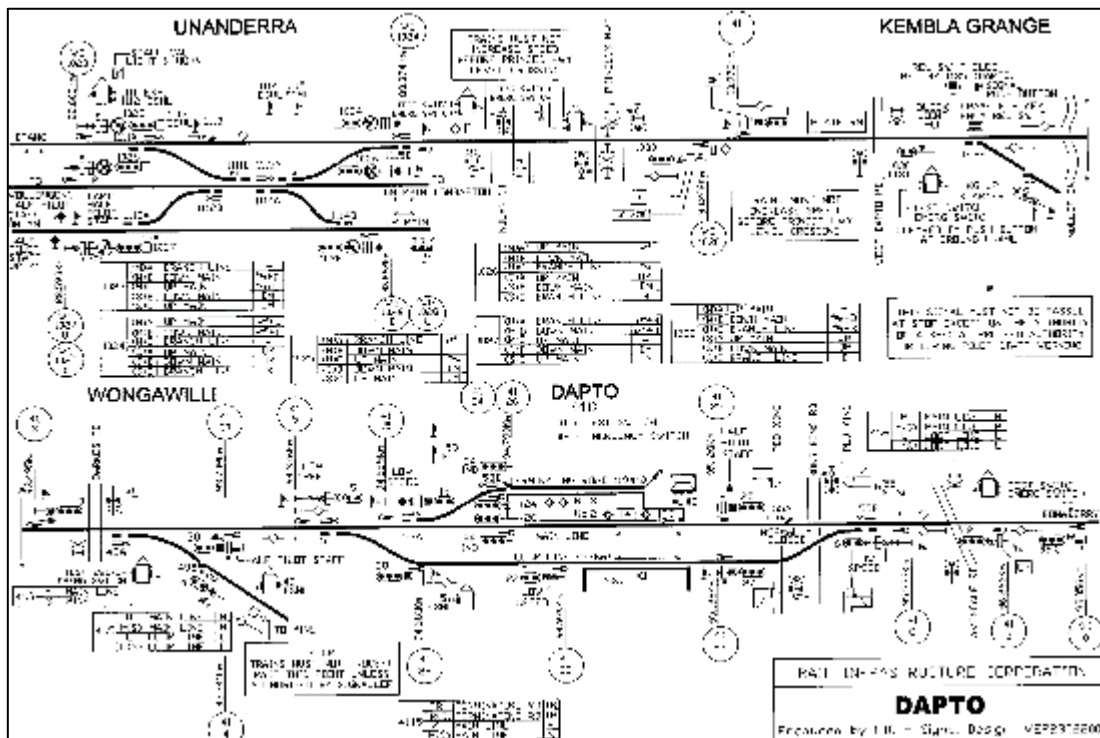


Diagram of Dapto with its three platforms. **SOURCE:** ARHS Track and Signalling

In June 2022, the loop line platform was extended.

That basically concludes the story of the Dapto interlocking. In keeping with electrification, train stops were provided at all main line running signals between Unanderra and Kiama, and catchpoints were introduced at some locations, both in the main line and crossing loops. One was installed at the southern end of the main line at Dapto.

Graham Harper

28th June 2024

APPENDIX

THE DESIGN OF ILLAWARRA STATION BUILDINGS BETWEEN WATERFALL AND BOMBO

SUMMARY COMMENTS

The theme that dominates the approval and construction of the 11 platform buildings from Waterfall to Bombo is one of financial penury. The structures were very simple in design with minimal decorations and this remark includes, to a degree, the largest structure at Wollongong.

There were only two building designs utilised for the stations between Waterfall and Bombo, both inclusive. All 11 buildings had gabled roofs. All buildings were of timber construction, except Wollongong, which was erected in brickwork.

For five larger stations, Whitton's and standard roadside design was applied with the following split of the variations:

- a three room mini-standard example at Waterfall
- three room standard examples at Clifton, Bulli and Dapto, &
- a five room example at Wollongong.

All four standard roadside examples had rear porched pedestrian entry and all except Dapto possessed detached/semi-detached pavilions at each end of the main building. The Dapto building had only one pavilion, being a semi-attached structure containing both male and female toilets. Three room mini examples never featured rear porched entry and the Waterfall building was consistent with that theme.

All examples, except the mini-three room structure at Waterfall, had a centre transverse gable to identify the pedestrian entry point but the Wollongong example was the only one where the transverse gable crossed both sides of the roof.

In addition to the five examples of the standard roadside design, there were six stations with much smaller buildings. The identifying feature was the absence of a platform awning. For all the intermediate small stations, the structure consisted of only two rooms – a booking office and a general waiting room. There was a detached male toilet at one end of the platform but no female waiting room nor female toilet. At the terminus of Bombo, a female toilet was added to the structure with an unusual access arrangement through the general waiting room.

John Whitton considered that, if it were essential to provide a station, it was mandatory that the station be staffed.

Following is a table that sets out the types of buildings at each station.

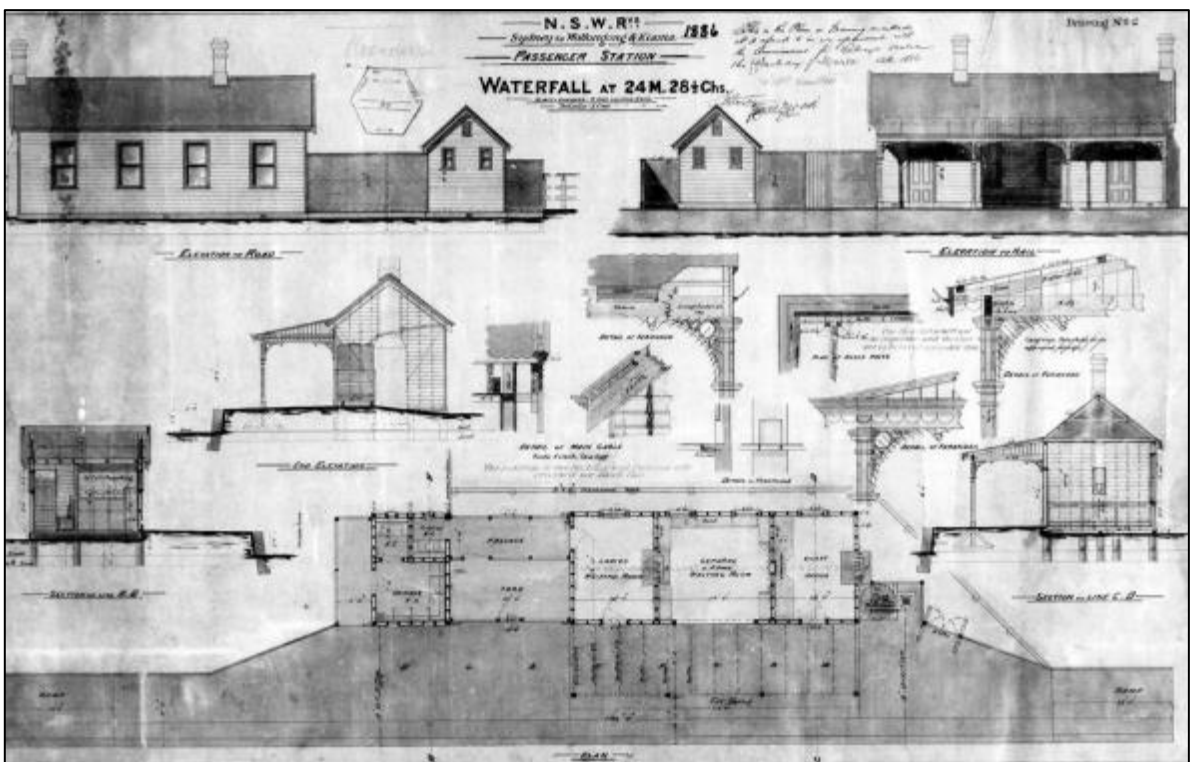
TABLE: STATIONS AT LINE OPENING WATERFALL TO BOMBO

STATION NAME	STATION OPENING DATE	EARLIEST DATE ON PLAN OR BEST GUESS	BUILDING TYPE & MATERIAL
Waterfall	9 th March 1886	5 th January 1886	Mini-three room standard roadside - timber
Oxford	3 rd October 1888	Unknown	Unknown - timber
Clifton	21 st June 1887	12 th September 1885	three room standard roadside – timber
Thirroul	21 st June 1887	3 rd December 1885	two room waiting shed without awning – timber
Bulli	21 st June 1887	6 th October 1885	three room standard roadside – timber
Corrimal	21 st June 1887	10 th November 1887	two room waiting shed without awning – timber
Wollongong	21 st June 1887	1 st December 1885	five room standard roadside – brick
Unanderra	4 th November 1887	15 th March 1887	two room waiting shed without awning – timber
Dapto	9 th November 1887	26 th October 1886	three room standard roadside – timber
Shellharbour	9 th November 1887	10 th December 1887	two room waiting shed without awning – timber
Bombo	9 th November 1887	8 th October 1887	three room waiting shed without awning – timber – shows detached male toilet block

DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF EACH PLATFORM BUILDING AT TIME OF LINE OPENINGS

Overleaf are illustrations of the buildings at each of the stations between Waterfall and the terminus at Bombo (i.e., North Kiama at the time).

WATERFALL

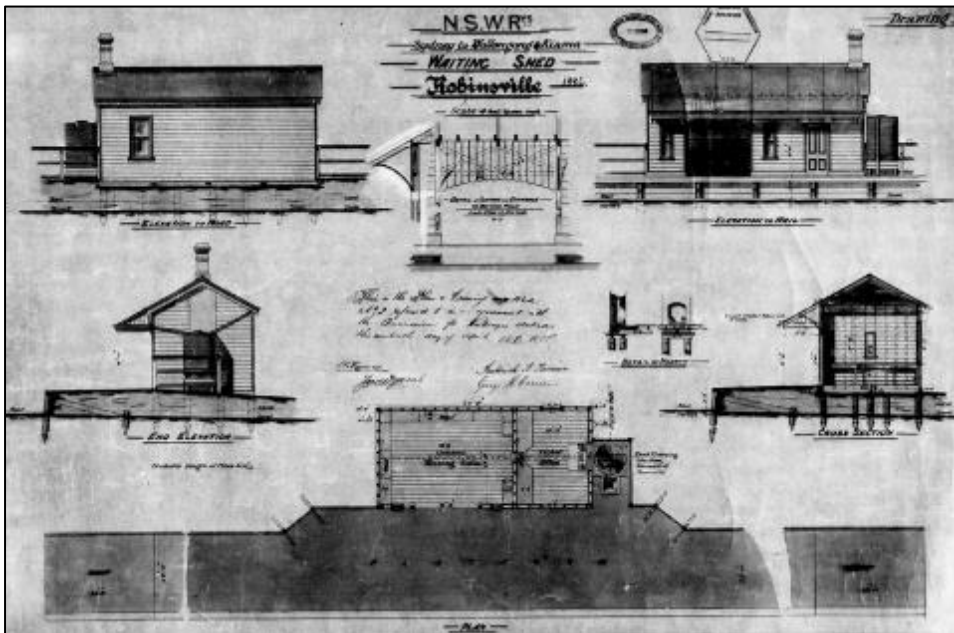


CLIFTON/SOUTH CLIFTON

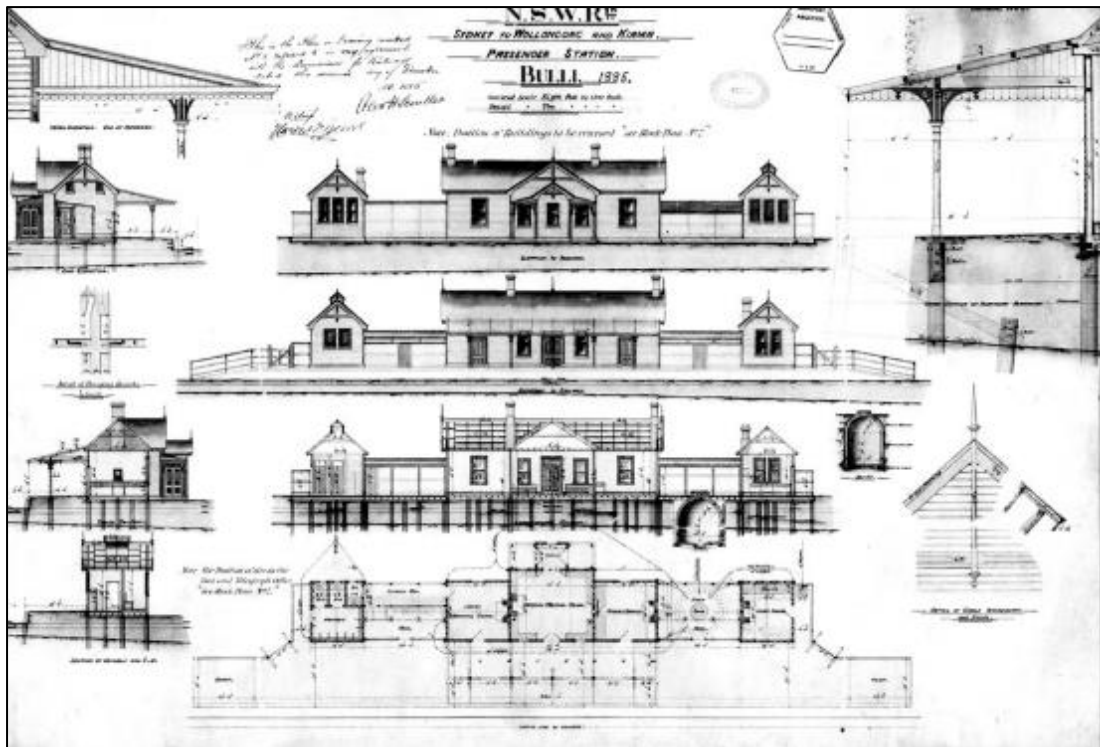


ARHS Photograph No. 034412

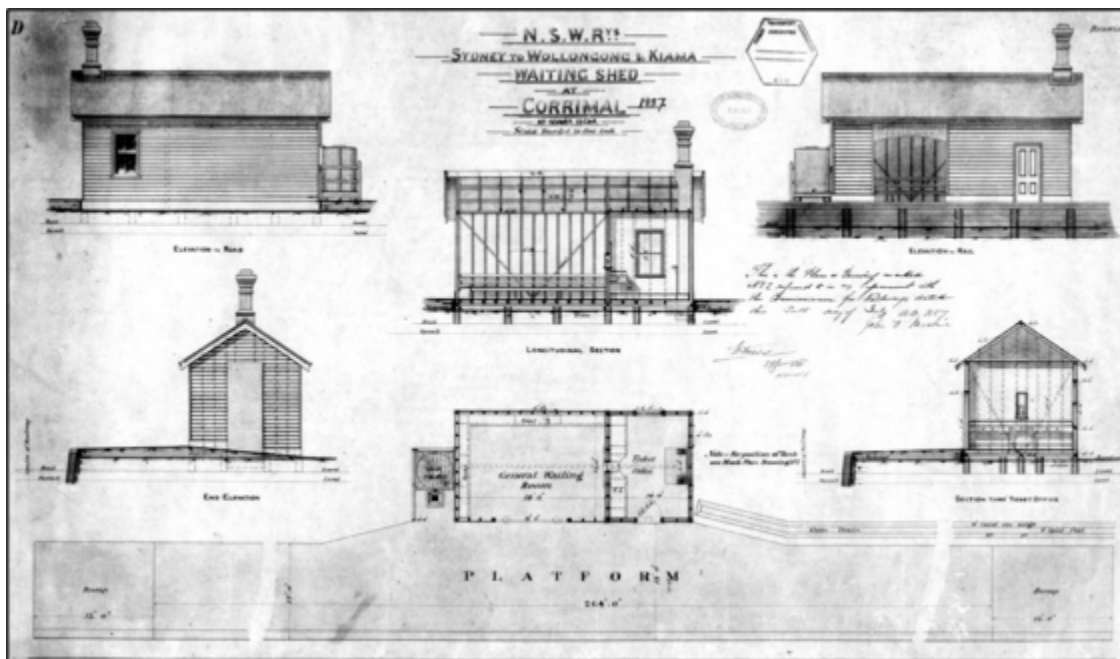
THIRROUL



BULLI



CORRIMAL

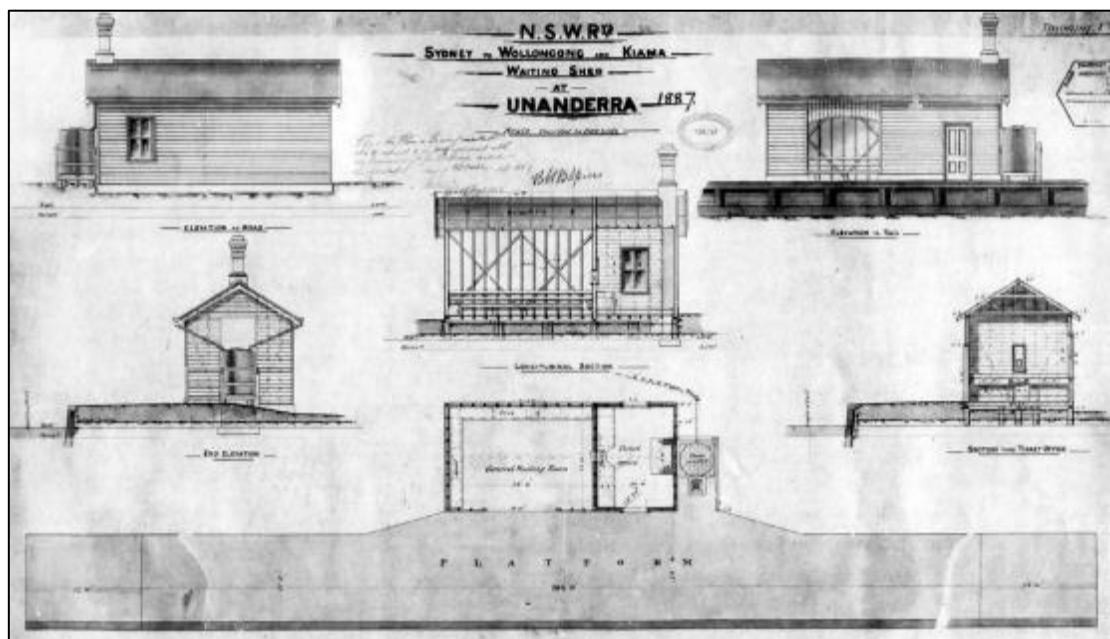


WOLLONGONG

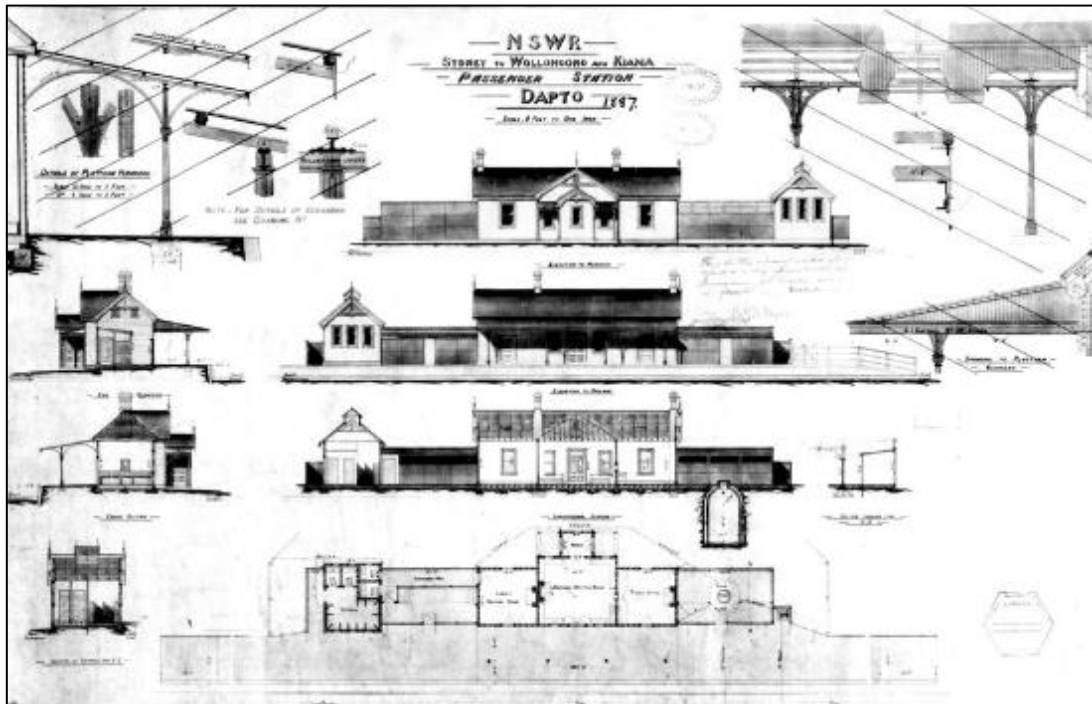


Photograph is taken after 1890 when an infill development has joined the pavilion on the left side with her main, five room structure. **SOURCE:** Alamy

UNANDERRA



DAPTO



ALBION PARK

No platform at time of line opening, which was located in the vicinity of the present Oak Flats station.²⁹ The community asked for “temporary accommodation”. The timetable at the line opening showed no station at Albion Park.³⁰ The Commissioners decided to relocate the station to a new site in January 1889.³¹ Tenders were called in March 1889 for the residence of the Station Master but there is no record of the calling of tenders for the platform building. In November 1889, the Railway Commissioner indicated that the Department would construct an awning over the platform for the length of the building. It would, therefore, seem that the present structure at Albion Park was erected sometime in 1889.³²

Parts of an undated plan are shown below. The design accords with other structures on the Illawarra line dating from the line opening. There is one variation and that relates to the provision of a ladies’ waiting room with an attached toilet. As far as is known, Albion Park and Bombo were the only examples with traditional ladies’ waiting rooms. All other examples of this design which had a ladies’ waiting room featured a female toilet constructed of corrugated iron sheets for the walls with entry from the general waiting room. However, this was not the case at Albion Park where a conventional

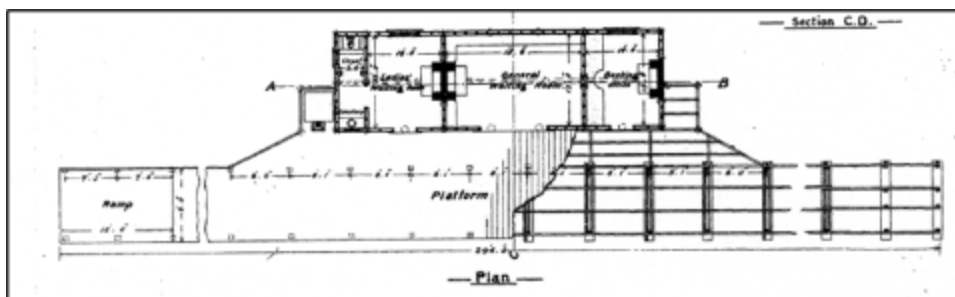
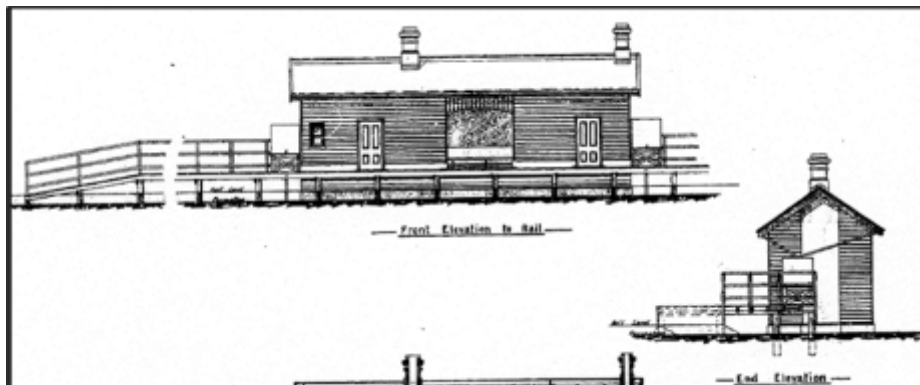
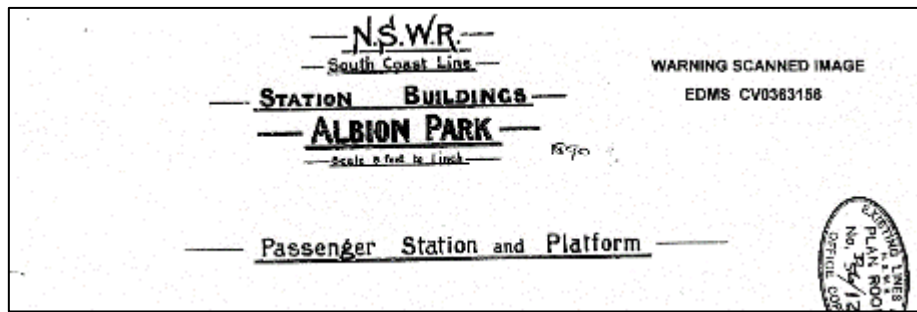
²⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9th November 1887, p. 3.

³⁰ *Illawarra Mercury*, 3rd November 1887, p. 2.

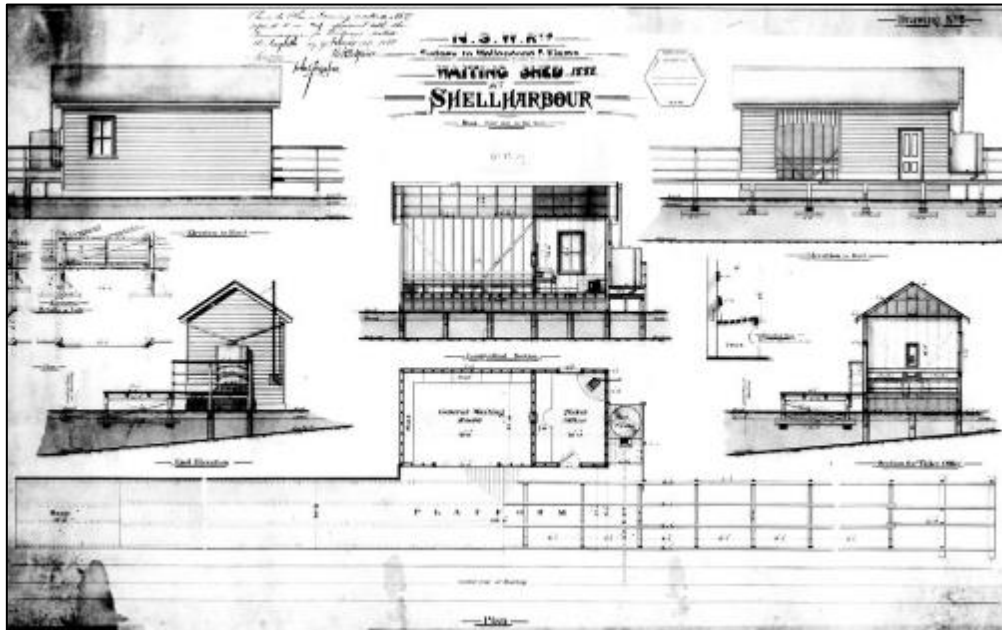
³¹ *Australian Star*, 3rd January 1889, p. 5.

³² *Reporter and Illawarra Journal*, 27th November 1889, p. 2.

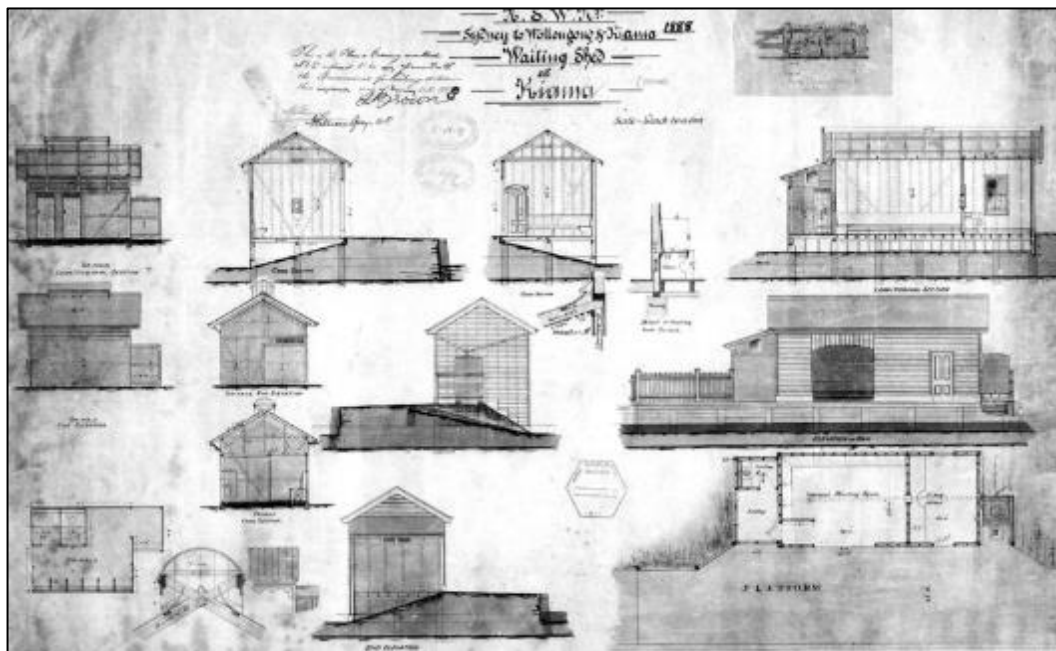
doorway provided access directly from the platform. The Albion Park building measured 42 feet 6 inches external by 13 feet internal.



SHELLHARBOUR



BOMBO



Stuart Sharp

25th July 2024

THE END - NEARLY



Well, another station visit is over. The only problem the author faces is which train to join – the one going north or the one going south.