WELCOME to the sixth newsletter of NSW HRSI. The objective of this newsletter is to inform, educate and provide insights about the latest updates, plans and heritage news relating to Heritage Railway Stations and Infrastructure (HRSI) across NSW. The news in this letter is separated into 4 core NSW regions – Northern, Western and Southern NSW and Sydney.

MAIN NEWS

Late 2015 has seen the resurgence of various plans to reopen stations and railway lines across NSW. Some station plans are not publicly released yet but are expecting to be made in early 2016. The interest in maintaining country NSW rail heritage links is strong for some communities and not as strong for others. With my experiences of several projects, I can say it is a very big effort for some towns in NSW to find volunteers or funds to keep their transport heritage alive. It is critical for enthusiasm to be driven from local levels and to be continuous. It is difficult for some external volunteers to commit time and funds to help out, especially if long distances is involved in travels to project.

Phil Buckley, NSW HRSI Editor

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STATION MASTERS HOUSES ACROSS NSW – A REVIEW

HISTORY

Starting in the mid 1850s NSW country railway stations and some suburban station had station masters accommodation built for the station master. The houses were built to a few different timber and brick designs over the years. Some such as Rydal which was a combined station and station masters residence (along with and a few others in NSW) were rather unique being built from brick and sandstone. Later changes to the materials saw fibro paneling introduced at places such as Georges Plains. Designs were noted by Type designation which included Type 1 – sandstone/brick seen at Rydal......up to Type 6 – weatherboard timber seen at Bomaderry and J-2 timber weatherboard seen at Berry.

The houses enabled the station master who held the highly prestigious job, to live locally or in some cases literally metres away from the railway station they managed. In the 1940-80s timeframe, the NSW railway system declined as less people took trains for travelling around NSW and goods were moved to trucks. This decline resulted in less needs for the positions of station masters at rural stations. In locations where senior station staff positions were no longer required, the ability for lower ranking staff to take over the houses were made allowed. Another result of this downsizing saw the selling off or the leasing out of the old former station masters houses to local residents in towns or community organisations. Other houses were let to decay and crumble.

CURRENT SITUATION

Many station master houses continue to still stand across northern, western and southern NSW. These sturdy houses have become popular in the last few decades, with real estate agents suggesting a station master house title does adds value to a sale. In 2016 many of these quite majestic railway houses still stand and this enables people to have a glimpse of the past. Some are used as tourist accommodation and others are private property which either leased or lived in. Other station masters houses have been converted into local community organisation sites such as libraries, museums or cafes.

Noted examples include Mittagong cottage now a café, Capertee now tourist accommodation, Rydal now a combined library and tourist accommodation, Culcairn a museum. Others such as Berry and Bellambi are facing decay / demolition. Recently as 2014 the NSW Govt was still intent on trying to demolish some of these old station masters houses.

Examples of station masters houses still being reused and standing include Capertee, Mittagong, Blackheath, Tumut, Dungog, Yass Junction, Georges Plains, Dapto, Albury, Armidale, Bowral, Bowning, Queanbeyan, Black Mountain, Lockhart, Bownefels, Deepwater, Glen Innes, Culcairn, The Rock, Borenore, Queanbeyan, Black Mountain, Lockhart, Bownefels, Deepwater, Glen Innes, Culcairn, The Rock, Borenore, Uralla and Lawson. A good insight to the work put into Capertee house -

A variety of photos of station master houses shown below except for Trundle (1st row, photo 1) – Adrian Compton and Tumut (4th row photo 3) – Andrew Lawson, were taken by Phil Buckley.

Trundle, Yass, Uralla

Georges Plains, Rydal, Dapto

Albury, Armidale, Queanbeyan

Bowning, Bowenfels, Tumut
LIVING IN A STATION MASTER’S HOUSE IN SOUTHERN NSW – written by John King

GUNDAGAI STATION ACCOMMODATION

After I was appointed Assistant Station Master at Gundagai in 1970, a few months later I was offered the 1 bedroom flat on the station at Gundagai to live in. The Station Master lived in a 2 storey house up on the hill overlooking the station. This was very handy for me being on the station, if anything went wrong I could be there in a flash. As it was one night when in my flat during my couple hour dinner break a Express good’s train came in, and the driver knocked on my window to tell me the Parcel’s office window was smashed [turned out to be a mail bag robbery]. With my TV going and cooking dinner I did not hear the window being smashed as it was up the other end to my Flat, so I was able to secure the station immediately and take charge of the problem till Police and the Traffic Inspector arrived. The flat was just a small one, being a combined, kitchen / dinning and lounge room and a separate bedroom and a small bathroom out back and a separate toilet with a very short walkway fenced from the road. The flat was attached to the Refreshment room until it closed in 1970 then offered to me. Usually Station Master’s in the country would have a house allocated to them but rarely an ASM would get this comfort.

Photo below shows the modern era Gundagai station. The Gundagai station accommodation used by John was next to the roadside chimney where a door is located. This allowed entry to the small room.
After several months I was offered the Station Master’s house at Tumblong station, as this station was unattended the house was empty. The house was next to the then Tumblong station and had no neighbour’s. While the flat and house was right next to the rail line, it was not that busy and you did get used to the noise of the trains passing by. While they could not make me move they wanted the Gundagai station flat for a Ganger so he could be on call and head straight out to an incident should any occur. I went and looked at the house and decided to take it as it was bigger with a yard, although further from work it was peace and quiet there with a couple of fire places for the winter fire. The house was empty for several years before I moved in but was still in pretty good order, only had to give it a good clean and get the power reconnected. There was also no water connected, so only had 2 water tanks, 1 that leaked a little. One good thing about living in a Railway House plus free rent, only had the power to pay.

The Tumblong station master house is in 2012 from a flyover of the Tumut line and is the red roofed building in centre right. (Phil Buckley)

The flat had no fire places. On the other hand, the house layout had 2 bedrooms, a lounge room a separate dining room and a full length front veranda. I had to go out the dining room door that led outside in order to get to the kitchen which had a wood stove. The open laundry had walls on 3 sides only. Then next to this was the bathroom which had a chip heater to heat the water for the bath. The toilet was up near the back fence and it had no lights in it. It was the old style old pan toilet that I had to empty myself. (Yuk). One time my car broke down and the local Fettler lent me his trike to ride home to Tumblong and back on the line the next morning for work. It was a bit scary going over the Gundagai railway bridge. It took 10 minutes to drive home from to work at Gundagai Station. The Tumblong house had no phone, so if I wanted to contact the Gundagai station I would walk across to Tumblong station and call on the railway phone there.
CULCAIRN TO COROWA RAILWAY BRANCH LINE REVIEW - PART 1

DEVELOPING THE WHEAT BRANCH LINE – written by Phil Buckley and photos supplied by Greg Finster

Delayed analysis of rail needs for southern NSW and protracted parliamentary committees decision makings for the wheat region north / north west of Albury finally acquire a railway line after nearly 20 years after a community push in the 1870s. The reasons behind the Culcairn to Corowa branch line are complex yet extremely interesting and provides the modern generation with an insight to the background of the mid to late 1800s as the Australian colonies developed from isolated colonies to state and finally nationhood.

In the mid 1800s the area around Corowa, located just across the river from Victoria, was the first place in Australia for large scale wheat growing and this spurred on more farming development and population growth. Coupled with gold mines and population growth in also northern Victoria this area of southern Australia became very attractive for people to move to for work. Additionally as part of the late 1800s push to unify Australia from separate colonies, meetings were held in Corowa and at one of these meeting, a major breakthrough was achieved which lead to a further push to unify the country. Customs, economic and other ‘isolation' issues were the cause of an earlier movement to create a new state between the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers. This may have occurred if Albury and Wagga had agreed on a location for the capital city.

In the 1860-1870s most of the agricultural produce in southern New South Wales was transported to Melbourne markets via a combination of paddle steamer and Victorian broad gauge rail networks. A hindrance to the farmers and of serious concern, was the customs and duties charged when crossing the border.

By the late 1870s the NSW railway network with its many branch lines was beginning to snake out of Sydney and reach out to regional small towns. In 1876 the main south line had not even reached Cootamundra. This slow expansion didn’t stop many towns further south pushing for their own railway branch lines / railway access. Corowa residents and surrounding locals wanted to join the nearby Victorian Railway system as it was approaching within a few kilometres of their town.

By 1879 the booming business on the Victorian side saw the line extended to the town of Wahgunyah across the river from Corowa. With rail access becoming a need for the town and the surrounding NSW region, a Corowa Branch railway League was formed in 1882 to begin the push for the much need construction. The league committee was made up of members from towns Corowa to Culcairn. Plans for a junction for the proposed Corowa branch line were either to be coming off the main southern line at either Culcairn or Gerogery. Both stations had been opened to railway operations in 1880 as the main southern line extended its reach towards Albury.

In 1883 a survey was undertaken from Culcairn to Corowa to establish which would be the best intended route. The branch line was further supported by strong local representations to Sydney indicating a significant economic loss from NSW to Victoria if it was not built soon.
Branch line costs, population demographics and regional business factors, all played a part in the final selection of the preferred route by the Parliamentary committee in 1889. Unhappiness with survey route results, input from farmers saw more even debate. Another visit in late 1889 to the region by the government committee was undertaken to determine the best route and planning outcomes. By November 1889 all reports, discussions and reviews had been completed and the outcome was that a line to Corowa from the junction at Culcairn would be built. It was to cost no more than $3,500 per mile.

Progress started with letting of tenders in January 1890 and by July 1890 submissions were closed off. In August 1890 the NSW parliament finally passed a bill to officially approve the Corowa branch line. Soon after a selection of a tender to build the line was revealed – a Melbourne based supplier – Messers Horne and Shand who were the lowest cost of all tenders was chosen to build the branch line and associated infrastructure.

**CONSTRUCTION OF THE COROWA BRANCH LINE**

The first rail infrastructure works saw an extension built south from Culcairn towards the river at Billabong Creek. A new bridge was built across the river with the branch line running parallel to the main south line for a short distance and then turning south west through the bush and fields heading towards Corowa.

The total length of the Corowa railway branch line was just under 80 kilometres. When constructed the sleepers were sourced from Wagga Wagga (in New South Wales) and Wangaratta (in Victoria). The sleepers coming from Wangaratta were subject to 5 pence duty and required unloading and reloading at Wodonga on the New South Wales / Victorian border because of the different gauges used.

The lines expansion resulted in 37 bridges and viaducts being built. The sizes of these ranged from the Burrumbuttock trestle across Burrumbuttock Creek at 420 feet long to the smallest being only 10 feet 6 inches. Investigations by John Whitton at the time, found that in Victorian Railways had used wrong timber types which affected bridge constructions. He therefor asked that timber be acquired from in NSW from different locations.

Gravel ballast was transported to the branch line by train from The Rock, Culcairn, Hurricane Hill and Ballast Hill. When constructing through hillsides it required the removal of 66,106 cubic yards of soil, resulting in 27 cuttings formed. Additionally a total of 62 embankments were built made up of 149,885 cubic yards of soil.

**BRANCH LINE HISTORY**

The branch line was finally opened on 3 October 1892. The main purpose of the branch line was the transporting of wheat from the south western NSW region to the coastal city of Sydney. Ballast extracted from the 'Hurricane Hill' quarry siding near Culcairn was used by the railway department across NSW thus providing work in the area. The new line assisted economic and social development of local communities by providing goods and passenger transport. Telegraph offices operated at some of the railway stations. In 1915 to 1916 various proposals were investigated to connect the Victorian railway system to the NSW railway system at Corowa yard. The discussions found the extension plans were not economically worthwhile to proceed with as any improvements would not provide a return on the outlays. It was more expensive to send goods via the Victorian Railways from Corowa to Melbourne, than it was to ship goods from Corowa to Sydney.
STATIONS AND SIDINGS OPENED ALONG THE BRANCH LINE

Weeamera – Located at 604.167 marker. Opened 6 January 1914 a siding. A loading bank was only used to convey goods to the junction. Up to 24 4 wheel S trucks could be placed into the siding. The photos below show what is thought to be the station mound on the left between the trees next to the track.

Looking at the station from Culcairn on left and towards Culcairn on right

General views of the Weeamera yard
Hurricane Hill - Located at 605.918 marker. Brought into use in on 26 June 1926, a 500ft loop siding was utilised for loading of gravel from the nearby quarry for railway purposes. The gravel was then conveyed to various locations around NSW.

Walla Walla – Located at 613.585km marker. Opening on 3 October 1892 with a 150ft long platform. Signals were introduced on December 3 1892 for safe working purposes. Over the next 20 years nearly further improvements saw a grain shed built, a weigh bridge, wheat stacking site and more sheds constructed to provide infrastructure for the railway operations. Walla Walla seen 1980 - http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/walla_wallao1.jpg

Left, looking east to Culcairn from the direction of Victoria Street and right, the A frame located in east end of the yard.

Left, Looking across Queen Street and right, looking across Queen street
Left looking past station site towards Culcairn, right looking towards Corowa across Commercial street

Looking towards Culcairn
Walla Walla yard with left an unusual stub derail, right, looking towards station from Queen street.

Left, looking towards Culcairn from Walla Walla, right, looking towards station from Up end points.

**Burrumbuttock** - Located at 625.605 km marker. Opened 24 October 1892, with upgrades including signals installed December 1892. A 20 ton weigh bridge erected in 1902 and a loading bank installed in 1904 on the extended siding line in the yard. A lifting crane was constructed in 1906. 1914 saw the N.1 goods siding extended into a 366 yard loop line. A station master worked this station from 7.30am to 5.30pm each day. By
1919 the section from Burrumbuttuck to Corowa became Electric Train staff workings. Wheat silos were built next to the yard in 1920 with over 5,000 tonnes capacity.

Burrombuttock seen in 1980 - [http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/burrumbuttock01.jpg](http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/burrumbuttock01.jpg)

Burrombuttock seen in 2005 - [http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/burrumbuttock10.jpg](http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/burrumbuttock10.jpg)

Below are some of the road crossing around Burrumbuttock

[Images of road crossings]

Left, Rail remains on the Howlong road level crossing looking towards Burrumbuttock, right
Orela – Located at 630.046 km marker. This small station opened 30 September 1893 with a 50ft long platform. A loop siding of 264ft was opened opposite in 1903. A 10 ton weighbridge was built in 1903.

Left, Road sign pointing towards the railway siding at Orela, right looking at a steel span on a culvert.

Left, looking at level crossing at Orela looking towards Balldale, right, looking towards Brocklesby.

Coming into Brocklesby the line traverses a long concrete culvert
How the tracks and timber sleepers were bolted to the concrete culvert.

Howlong / Goombaranga road crossing looking towards Brocklesby

Brocklesby – Located at 636.094 marker. Opening for business in 1892. It had a 150ft long platform with main station building and storage shed. Signals were installed at the station yard soon after opening and also a 20ton weighbridge built. At the Corowa end of the platform a water column was located which was feed from a nearby circular shaped 20,000 gallon water tank which was mounted on a brick structure. Now removed Brocklesby this is what the water tank once looked like - http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/brocklesby02.jpg

A 5 ton gantry crane was built 1900 and in 1901 a grain shed was constructed opposite the station. Two further grain sheds followed in 1912 bring its capacity to 66,000 bags. In 1913 a yard for the loading of cattle/sheep opened. Down the Corowa end of the goods yard in 1922 several silos were built for wheat storage.
Seen below in 1925 Brocklesby was an example of a typical intermediate country station.

Brocklesby Station seen in 1980 [http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/brocklesby01.jpg](http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/brocklesby01.jpg)

Left, looking towards Brocklesby railway yard from Burumbuttock, right looking towards Brocklesby station yard from Howlong road.
Between Brocklesby and Balldale a few bridges around Plain Creek which were built using a variety of materials from timber to concrete.

A long span timber bridge resting on concrete foundations
A short span timber bridge
A small concrete culvert.

Coming into Balldale rails have been removed as shown here at this road crossing.
Left, looking towards Brocklesby from Balldale end, right looking towards Balldale from Brocklesby end.

Balldale – Located at 651.587 km marker. A 150 ft long platform with station buildings was opened in October 1892. It was originally named as Carnsdale and was changed in 1905 to Balldale, after the recently newly elected member for Corowa. In 1905 a grain shed was constructed to the west of the station and one year later a wooden gantry crane was erected. 1908 saw an extension to the loading bank put in place to handle bigger goods loading requirements. In 1920 wheat silos were added to the yard. In 1935 the original gantry crane which was only a 1 ton capacity was removed and replaced with a new 5 ton crane.

Balldale in 1980 [http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/balldale01.jpg](http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/balldale01.jpg)

Left, Balldale up end of yard showing a cattle gird, right, old Balldale level crossing looking towards Balldale
Left, Balldale yard Up signal post remains looking towards Culcairn, right Down home signal looking towards Corowa.

Left Balldale looking towards Corowa down end stock siding, right, looking towards Corowa with stock siding on right. The points are outside yard limits and locked.
Corowa stock yard siding. Note concrete drop paneling. Left towards Culcairn, right towards Corowa.

**Hopefield** – Located at 660.726 km marker. Construction finished in 1892 with a 185ft long platform and station buildings. Grain shed were placed in the yard during 1909 and a 20ton weighbridge also added. The booking office was open at this time but by February 1915 the station master was removed and booking office closed down. Interestingly by December 1915 the booking office reopened for business again.

Hopefield station seen 1980 - [http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/hopefield01.jpg](http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/hopefield01.jpg)

Hopefield station seen in 2005 - [http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/hopefield08.jpg](http://www.nswrail.net/locations/photos/hopefield08.jpg)

**Corowa** – The terminus station at 673k.446km from Central is the end of the Corowa branch. The station was brought into use in October 1892. A 325ft platform was originally built to cater for passenger movements. Nearby to the south west the yard was created and contained a carriage shed goods shed, 5 gantry crane introduced in 1901, grain shed, locomotive depot - engine shed, coal stage and a turntable. Before the station is reached just outside the station area/town limits was the stock and flour mill sidings. The Flour shed noted in 1911 with siding access.

Early site changes saw the carriage shed was removed in 1912 and the area turned into another grain shed. The down distant signal in 1915 was moved 600 ft closer to station and in 1917 turned into a landmark. 1915 saw a wheat stacking site built at the yard along with a second weighbridge. The turntable in late 1915 was expanded from 50ft to 60ft to accommodate the expanded steam locomotive sized used on the branch line.

A record for the station was achieved in March 1919 when 3,400 fat sheep were placed into 35 wagons and sent to Sydney. Also a busy period in June the station have consigned 300 wagons of general produce totally 3,950 tonnes despatched. Another noted loading observation in 1919 witnessed in 1 day 1,500 tons of potatoes, onions, chaff, oats and hay being sent out from the station.

Part 2 will cover the Corowa branch line services and the sad decline, removal and eventual closure of the branch line.

__________________________________________________________
ST JAMES STATION – HIDDEN TUNNELS AND PLATFORM

In early 2015 Paula Stevenson took a tour into the interesting remains of the closed off middle tunnel located at St James railway station in the heart of the Sydney CBD. We have used her photos to help illustrate the history of the St James mystery tunnels.

The reason the tunnels exist is that they were built to help with the Sydney railway network expansion. The plans seems to be that it was for an extra line to help connect eastern suburbs to the main network but it was stopped as the Depression era and the beginning of WW2 and only a small section ended up being partially built. This section of tunnel was constructed using the same method for Museum railway station which was the “cut and cover” technique. The tunnel section is connected to the tunnels in St James through pilot tunnels which are accessible via a ladder.

From 1933 to 1934, the tunnel area was used for an experimental mushroom farm producing 10,000 pounds (4,500 kg) of mushrooms per month. The tunnels originally planned use as the eastern suburbs line was put on hold and modified again at the outbreak of WW2 in 1939. During the next 6 years it served as a public air raid shelter and a command centre for the military. At the station end of the tunnels, the air raid shelter is protected by a blast curtain. The doorways and openings for ventilation between the chambers, which are about 30m long, are protected by these blast curtains. The abandoned air raid shelter begins in the double track tunnel section at the north end of the station and continues into the two single track tunnels beyond.
In World War II the tunnels were used as an operations bunker by the RAAF N. 1 Fighter Sector. Many WAAAF personnel were housed in this operations bunker. Their job was collecting information from radar and weather stations, as well as receiving reports coming in on air traffic, ship and troop movements. All this information was collected from airports, army and VAOC reporting posts scattered around NSW. The bunker was located in what was intended to be the City Inner Tunnel. Access was provided by a wooden staircase in a shaft leading upward to Shakespeare Place. The air quality in the tunnel suffered because it was so deep and isolated. This affected the people who were working in the confined areas. As a result of this problem, the WAAAF personnel were limited to six hours shifts. Eventually the health of the WAAAF personnel further declined and the controlling operations were relocated to The Capital Theatre in Bankstown and subsequently to Bankstown Bunker on Black Charlie's Hill near Condell Park.

At St James, many former serving military member’s names and service numbers dating back to 1940 line the walls in sections, which are able to be seen by visitors.

Post WW2, the staircase used to access the St James bunker was destroyed by fire on 16 November 1968. Smoke from this fire stopped train service for approximately twelve hours.
Over the years it has become known that one of the abandoned tunnels flooded and with no where for the water to run off to, this has produced an underground lake. The size is rather staggering -10m wide, 5m deep, and 1km long. Nowadays known as “St James Lake”, it has even been used as a swimming hole. In recent decades, due to drought and diminishing water supplies in underground aquifers across Sydney and NSW, there have been a number of proposals for reusing the abandoned tunnels and other underground spaces for storage and recycling of water to reduce the high demand placed on Sydney’s dam systems.
COMMUNITY REUSES OF ABANDONED RAILWAY STATIONS IN RURAL NSW PART 2 – WESTERN NSW

Where does the NSW railway network stand in 2015 with vacated station buildings and what has become of them?. As the decline of the NSW railway network started in the 1950/60ss, many stations that were once utilised by the state government were left vacated, unused and not maintained. Over the years this lack of care has increased. Even as late as 2014 some heritage station buildings were still being demolished.

This is a 3 part article which will investigate heritage railway buildings and their reuse situation in 2015. This includes recent changes/demolitions.

In reading this listing, you will notice in western NSW that there are very few fully reused stations. If they are reused, they are mostly by community groups or museums but not many actual businesses. (We are open to corrections of this listing if you know more details / information).

| Broken Hill | NSW Govt vacated but still an operational stop. |
| Milthorpe | Wine shop and local community building |
| Parkes | Standing and used with staff in specific hours. |
| Wellington | Locked up and vacated |
| Eublong West | Operational, manned at certain hours and used |
| Clandulla | Standing but very badly decaying |
| Bathurst | Operational railway station |
| Forbes | Operational railway station |
| Kandos | Reused as a cafe |
| Oberon | Heritage museum |
| Young | Community reuse – wine shop, information centre and art gallery |
| Orange | Operational railway station |
| Borenore | Vacated but reused by a local tennis court community group |
| Menindee | Locked up / vacated railway station |
| Mudgee | Last noted as being a Indian restaurant |
| Ivanhoe | Operational stop but decaying / open vacated station. |
| Georges Plains | Standing but vacated and decaying |
| Conoble | Vacated and decaying |
| Condoblin | Operational stop but locked up building |
| Bogan Gate | Standing and in reuse by local community group |
| Lue | Standing but locked up and decaying |
| Molong | Molong community library |
| Grenfell | Locked up. Mens shed reuse goods shed. |
| Peak Hill | Moved off railway corridor to local sports oval and used as clubroom |
| Cowra | 5 local community groups re use the station – car club, musical society, air leagues, .......and many visitors come each month |
| Carcoar | Vacated, locked up and decaying. |
| Blayney | Operational railway station |
| Dubbo | Operational railway station |
| Newbridge | Locked up and decaying |
| Tarana | Operational railway station at times |
| Wallerwang | Locked up was a cafe/lolly shop but now vacated |
| Bowenfels | Locked up and not used |
| Lithgow | Operational railway station |
| Temora | Major refurbishment completed in 2015. Reused for local community and tourism purposes – see news story this issue. |
Ariah Park – Standing but very poor condition.

Griffith - Operational railway station

Merriwagga – Not longer present

Goolgowi – Moved off site in town for preservation

Raglan – Standing, vacated and decaying

Canowindra – Standing but locked up

Stockinbingal – Standing but decaying

Burcher – vacated station

Weethalle – standing and reused by local community group

Woodstock – Standing and planned business to take over in 2016

Rydal – Reused as community function centre and tourism accommodation

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NORTHERN NSW NEWS

NEWCASTLE

NEWCASTLE RAIL LINE CLOSURE BILL PASSED BY NSW POLITICIANS

In October 2015 the NSW Liberal Government introduced a bill to officially close the Newcastle branch line and enable the removal of all rail and infrastructure. The bill was debated in the Legislative Council and came down to 15 opposing, 15 for and the deciding vote was left to the President of the Assembly, a Liberal who then voted for the closure thus sealing the branch line fate.

Those who voted for the rail cut: Liberal, National, Shooters & Fishers

Those against the rail cut: Labor, Greens, Animal Justice, Christian Democrats

This now means the 150 year+ history of trains to Newcastle is now consigned to the history books. Many rail users, heritage operators and NSW travelers disagree with the ideology of removing the branch line and consider it a retrograde step for Newcastle. Urban Growth / HDC plans over the last year hinted to many that property development along the corridor will take place. In the late 1980s a former Liberal premier, Nick Greiner oversaw his government’s cuts to rail services and the closure of many branch line in NSW. So where did the final voting and destruction of the Newcastle railway line happen?

Well…this room below in NSW is where the Newcastle railway line was recently closed down from. It is the Legislative Council of State Government at Parliament House, Sydney.
Now you have a better insight as to what happened in that room. Time will tell whether the NSW Liberal Party suffer a further backlash at the polls for cutting the public transport to the city.

**NEWCASTLE RAIL LINE REMOVAL BEGINS**

The bill’s passing was quickly followed up by in early October 2015 with actual work. The railway branch line was cut and many watched as the first rail sections were dismantled around Wickham.

**NEW PRIVATISED NEWCASTLE TRANSPORT AUTHORITY TO BE IMPLEMENTED**

At the same time as the bill going through Parliament, the NSW Liberal lead State Government announced a very strange move for NSW’s transport future – with an introduction of a planned potential overseas lead “Transport for Newcastle” authority. This body will privately manage the entire region of Newcastle transport – ferry, buses, light rail etc. It is also opens up the question in regards to what future lies ahead for Newcastle rail heritage. Some people are already asking why the waste of money on a new transport authority body when NSW already has the State Government Transport for NSW? Making a Newcastle authority creates a duplicated privately run organisation. See more at - [http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-05/transport-for-newcastle-a-private-operator-to-integrate-cityz/6914358](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-05/transport-for-newcastle-a-private-operator-to-integrate-cityz/6914358) Does this Newcastle plan mean that every NSW town or city gains its own authority for transport?. Could this be the first baby steps in the NSW Liberals out sourcing/privatizing the entire NSW transport network...?

**OURIMBAH RAILWAY STATION**

In December 2015 Ourimbah railway station down side timber building was observed undergoing a repaint. Photo is from 2014 in old scheme. It may result in a new scheme such as is now at Quirindi.
QUIRINDI RAILWAY STATION

In December 2015, Quirindi railway station was noted as repainted from its former red colour into pale cream, brown and tan. Old scheme in red on left seen in April 2015 contrasts with the new scheme in pale cream, tan and brown on right seen in December 2015.

SANDY HOLLOW TO GUNGAL / MERRIW BRANCH LINE

The Merriwa Ringer in November 2015 reported that the Sandy Hollow to Gungal section of the former Merriwa railway branch line - which is currently disused and cut off from main line access – was to have local school students plant native trees within the rail corridor. This planting scheme is reportedly sponsored by John Holland who manage the country railway branch lines.

TORONTO RAILWAY STATION

John Burg alerted us to this news story – “Museums & Galleries Media Release Silent film wins Recently M&G NSW was contacted by a 15 year-old film maker and student from the Central Coast NSW named Noah Lawson. He told us that he and a bunch of his friends had recently won Best Film International Youth Silent Film Festival in Melbourne for a film made onsite at the Lake Macquarie Heritage Centre. We were intrigued. Clicking the YouTube link we watched as a romance between an artist, bound for WW2, and a pretty girl on a train station unfolded—silently and all within 3 minutes. Noah had to be interviewed. He explained that a group of 14 young people, aged between eight and 17 were involved in the production of the film. Many hours were spent developing the plot and in researching suitable props, authentic costumes and hairstyles, as well as preparing the set so that impact on the fabric of the historic building itself was avoided. The set he’s referring to is the 1891 wooden railway station on the edge of Lake Macquarie at Toronto. A darling of a building, it began its life as a private tourist tramway before becoming part of the Government Railway network in 1910, was acquired in 1992 by the Lake Macquarie and District Historical Society to house their local history collection in a Heritage Centre. The building is beautifully presented in the film, something that Margaret Berghofer Heritage Centre Treasurer, said the Historical Society takes pride in despite the property’s up-keep being time-consuming and costly. She mentioned that the building is vulnerable to vandalism and graffiti attack, and was part way through reporting another break-in to the police when we rang to talk to her. Ms Berghofer said the Historical Society was thrilled with the film and working with Noah and his friends couldn’t have been better. They worked around the museum opening hours and scrupulously tidied up after themselves. They approached the committee and provided their own Public Liability insurance for the project. The train has long gone from this area and while the station building and platforms remain, the tracks themselves are covered in grass.”
“The absence of a viable railway presented one of the challenges for the film makers. This was cleverly managed by shooting parts of the film from below the platform deftly avoiding any reference to the now grassy railway line. Additional footage from a local steam train enthusiast—a connection developed through the local Men’s Shed—was spliced seamlessly into the action where necessary adding an extra heritage touch. Noah’s team spent eight hours filming on site and many more in production. Steve Wilson, Noah’s father led the group in the technical aspects of film-making having experience as a photographer and a keen interest in cinematography. Being an enthusiastic group of home schoolers, they called on the skillset of parents, friends and family to fill in the gaps. They’ve done a marvelous job and reckon it’s a win for everyone involved: the local community, Noah and his team, and the Historical Society for getting on board and supporting the initiative. A symbiotic relationship and one that goes to the heart of preserving local heritage and history. The International Youth Silent Film Festival celebrates the recreation of silent movies. Films are submitted from students in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, The Middle East, Europe, Canada and the USA. The film can be seen at this link - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFq6wHL8RNq “

Sadly in early December 2015 Toronto railway station was hit again by vandals with substantial damage done. The good news is that an earlier criminal action has ended with an arrest. An alleged offender was arrested for the break and enter earlier this year at the station it was noted in December 2015.
WESTERN NSW NEWS

COWRA

Cowra continues to attract interest on their monthly open days with visitors coming in and having heritage cars on display. Additional grass clearing took place in October to clean up the yard and make it look like a railway yard.

A grant for a pamphlet and a book was applied for in October 2015 and granted in November 2015. The funds will help design and produce a glossy print booklet on Cowra Railway Station. The aim is to put a personal approach on the stations history, so if anyone knows any-one who worked or has any stories on the people at the station over the years please visit https://www.facebook.com/Cowra-Railway-Station-348015252063485/ and contact them with your information.

The grant news makes for good news which was needed after an ugly graffiti attack on the station in October 2015. Cowra station was defaced by a graffiti vandal attack which left poor scribbles as shown below left. It was removed quickly as shown below right. Enhanced security operations are now in place to deter and record any further vandalism.
In early November 2015 the former Orange Locomotive Depot buildings were upgraded. Asbestos sheeting in roof panels were removed from various brick buildings and replaced with more modern and safer roofing materials.

NSW HRSI reporter Phil Pedley says the buildings are being restored to maybe allow a future reuse of the depot by a private rail operator. The former operational depot buildings have been attacked by vandals and have decayed since the depot was closed down in the 1970s.

Here are some views of the buildings as they looked in 2011 taken by Phil Buckley – note the roofing is asbestos type cladding.
SOUTHERN NSW NEWS

BUKALONG AND HOLTS FLATS STATION

Comments noted online in October 2015, indicated that maybe some of the remaining railway station buildings on the Bombala line had asbestos roofing and panels removed from the PC- style buildings at Bukalong siding and Holts Flat siding.

Bukalong seen a few years ago when more intact- http://static.panoramio.com/photos/large/72045430.jpg

Before – photos found online

https://fbcdn-phots-a-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-xpa1/v/t1.o-0/p480x480/12141667_965249423535218_3304888756948684912_n.jpg?oh=27702934ea7f1635a6ce30ede18e0559&oe=56BD7E89&__gda__=1455050351_6b86f0909cdb15d6dcc01af16abf350a

Currently as is - 2 photos .... with missing tiles.

https://fbcdn-sphotos-b-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-xap1/v/t1.o-9/570x570/12075028_965249796868514_3184660226989622852_n.jpg?oh=f3e1db762007a13bfcd90a423a12b3&oe=56856838&__gda__=1452168550_131e7e85eace6168d1baa7f1b0830

https://fbcdn-sphotos-a-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-xat1/v/t1.o-9/570x570/12112006_965249806868513_687491558085243802_n.jpg?oh=299ba059b508f3d8b0115395bf8b&oe=5685B685&__gda__=1456417345_ac47e8755c56f463400ceaeed8df8c

Holts Flat seen in 2011.
Below on left is a 1986 view of Holts Flat with the last ever passenger train on the branch line from Warren Banfield’s collection, contrasting on right a rather sad 2015 view of an overgrown Holts Flat yard and decaying station from Peter Watter’s collection. Note the verandah has been removed and the missing asbestos tiles/sides of the roof in the 2015 photo.

GUNDAGAI RAILWAY STATION

Gundagai Heritage Railway (GHR) has announced that it has appointed a new site caretaker in late 2015. A small gift shop business is looking to operate from early 2016 using the guard vans which is located at the historical 1885 era station platform. With the new caretaker in place, a major cleanup of the station building and site was conducted in mid December 2015. A grant of $15,000 towards the new toilet block was announced in December 2015 but significantly more funding is still needed to complete this task. Looking ahead in 2016, GHR are planning various projects and site works for volunteer to do. It is hoped that these plans will see local people become involved. Photo below is from Andrew Lawson showing the station in early December 2015 before the cleanup work was done.
RIVERINA

Interestingly on 26 November 2015 the NSW Government has called for private operators to restore/rebuild and reuse the Yanco to Hay railway branch line as far as Whitton. The other line being also proposed to reopen is the Cootamundra to Tumut branch line. The reason for these unexpected tenders to appear has many thinking it is a prelude for a rail trail. Tenders will close in March 2016. If the 2015 tender bid for reopening the Cowra branch line is anything to go by, the NSW Govt refused to accept any tenders. Thus the Cowra branch line remains dormant and unused. It is suspected the same could happen to these 2 Riverina branch lines. A condition for the tenders is that the NSW Govt is not providing one cent of funding to restore the lines – which further leads people to suspect they are aiming to sell off and maybe privatise country branch lines by stealth. NSWHRSI understands if the Cootamundra to Tumut plan goes ahead it will only go as far as Coolac. Furthermore the Coolac extension if not successful in the private tender process, will instead be managed by the NSW Govt who are willing to sell off the two Cootamundra to Coolac sections and at the same time they will move the Harefield siding used by Visy at Tumut for business loading. See more on the tender details at https://tenders.nsw.gov.au/?event=public.rft.show&RFTUUID=37BE5705-ED92-F9DC-A5BB0624C64280A5

TEMORA RAILWAY STATION

On Wednesday December 9 2015, the newly refurbished Railway Refreshment Room (RRR) section of the Temora Railway Station (now known as “Platform Y” for the local youth team) was opened by MP Katrina Hodgkinson. See the newspaper clippings for more detail. The successful restoration of the station was due to major support from local workers, community groups, a $100,000 state government heritage grant and paints donated by Dulux Australia. A growing community spirit helped to save the once neglected and decaying station, has seen the once neglected and decaying station. It has now transformed into a fully restored, colourful and very useful community hub which will help to attract tourists to Temora in the future. The railway museum section when fully refurbished with heritage railway items, will open on 20 March 2016. Major events are expected for this 2nd opening with a heritage train making a visit to the station.
TUMUT RAILWAY STATION

Expressions of interest (EOI) to use the Tumut Railway Station for use by community groups were published in mid December 2015. The council want activities to benefit the community and deliver outcomes in areas of tourism, arts, crafts and/or cultural interest. The EOI details discussed how a group’s plans would see contribution to the cost of operating the building and surrounding Railway Precinct. EOI's closed on Thursday 24 December 2015. With such a short timeframe for submissions this may limit potential users ability to apply on time.
SYDNEY REGION

CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION

STATION UPGRADES – Upgrades in the eastern section near Platform 16-23 Northern concourse area finished in December 2015 with the retiling around the heritage booking offices completed and some new doors put in for offices. Here are photos below the heritage booking offices windows in July 2015 and now in December 2015 with the new tiling.

NEW DEPATURE BOARD / INFORMATION CENTRE AT GRAND CONCOURSE

In July 2015 the grand concourse was upgraded with a new departure board built to replace the 1980s era old tv screens. Before this tv screen version was used, an older heritage style departure board built in 1905 was used. The photos below show the new departure screen.
DEPARTURE BOARD - THEN AND NOW

The old timber heritage theme departure board was relocated to the Powerhouse Museum at Ultimo, Sydney after it was removed from Central in 1982. We are fortunate to be able to see what it looked like before in use at Central and what has replaced it. Gordon Ross 1979 view left contrasts with the new 2015 departure board and information centre taken by Phil Buckley. Note the famous clock hanging over the concourse from the ceiling in both photos.
EVELEIGH RAILWAY WORKSHOPS

The former Eveleigh administration building was for a few months up to September 2015, observed having its tower restored. Scaffolding was noted around the tower while the work was undertaken. At one point the tower top section had been moved off site. It is now all back on site and looking much better.

SOUTH EVELEIGH

New plans for building of very tall apartment blocks in the southern end of the heritage railway precinct has dismayed local residents and railway heritage enthusiasts. The land at the southern end used to be railway workshops up until around late 2009-2010 when these buildings were demolished. Photos below show what they used to look like.
The above right photo shows the initial first apartment block going up very quickly around 2012.
Someone who dislikes the new concept with these planned Eveleigh apartments, has wryly observed to NSWHRSI the new buildings will be akin to “shoving more rats into holes” With so many apartments to be squeezed into a small land area, people wonder if it is appropriate development. See more at http://m.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/city-east/cover-come-off-nsw-governments-north-eveleigh-development-plans/story-fngr8h22-1227603191438

The photos below show initial foundation work being undertaken in late November 2015.

HAWKESBURY RIVER RAILWAY BRIDGE

In November 2015 the NSW Government released an update on plans to secure the bridge structure with a tender being created to find the best repair solution.  
ROZELLE RAILWAY YARD / WHITE BAY PRECINCT

In October 2015 news was released about the planned transformation of yet another railway yard in Sydney into housing and other reuses. Within the last 5-10 years it was first Redfern/Eveleigh....now it is the famous White Bay / Rozelle railway yards.

Online website has more information at -

More information -

Video of the area - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raL_WERT87U

THORNLEIGH MALT SIDING - REMOVED

There used to be a busy malting works at Thornleigh in northern Sydney. The malt site developed from 1913 onwards supplying products across Sydney and NSW. In its heyday the site had a rail siding called “Goonaroo” where steam and diesel locomotives used to shunt the wagons of malt in to the businesses. This siding was visible from trains on the main north line. In late 2015 the business site is now being demolished to make way for a work site for the “North Connex” road tunnel project. In late 2015 the siding has been completely disconnected and removed. Here is a link to the Malting works with interesting details on the rail heritage and business not commonly known - http://www.northconnex.com.au/docs/eis/Appendix%20L%20-%20Technical%20working%20paper%20-%20Non-Aboriginal%20heritage%20-%20Part%204.pdf

The photos below show the Malt railway siding as it was during 2007 when it was being upgraded at the time - note the new concrete sleepers and gravel perway base being rebuilt. Also note the wagons in the siding road.
WYNYARD RAILWAY STATION

Wynyard has been undergoing improvements and these have seen the movement and realignment of the ticket gates in the concourse areas. Painting and upgrade work on platform level is also continuing in late 2015.
“YOUR SAY” - HERITAGE RAILWAY STATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PHOTOS

Every issue HRSI will publish a selection of heritage photos from our growing collection of generous railway photographers, which show different NSW stations as they once were from 1950s up to recent times.

Photographer - Lindsay Richmond – Coolac railway station on the Tumut branch line in the 1970s.

Photographer - Chris Stratton – left Walcha Road on way to Armidale seen in 1984 and right Hornsby seen 1985
Photographer - Mark Zanker – left Cootamundra 1976 and right Newbridge 2001


Photographer – Brett Leslie – left, Gundagai 1982 and right Tocumwal 1982
Photographer Allan Hunt – Bowning yard / signal diagram

Photographer – Gordon Ross – left Thirroul 1985 and right Central railway flyover junction seen 1979
Photographer - Robert Paterson – Gravesend 1980s

Photographer - Craig Thistlethwaite – 1987 view of Merrygoen station and yard

Photographer Douglas Moyle – left, Border Loop 1981 and right, Toronto 1970s
Photographer Steve Bucton - left Casino 1983 and right Cobar 1983

Photographer Jim Leppitts – left, Orange railway station 1976 and right Parkes locomotive depot 1976 – note the coal stage trestle in place still

New contributor - Photographer – Peter Burr – Limbri on the way to Armidale 1974 (now demolished)
New contributor - Photographer – Warren Bansfield – left Bombala 1986 with the last passenger train to ever visit and right, Carrathool station 1983

VIDEOS / FILMS

Here we see a superb insight to the former operational north coast Casino to Murwillumbah branch line from 1979 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kL9suvYRqNo&feature=share

OTHER NEWS

RAILWAY PHOTOGRAPHER NOTICE FROM ARTC – ARTC RELEASES RAIL SAFETY PHOTO GUIDE

From photos uploaded to various facebook groups over the last few years, would appear to that some rail enthusiasts are taking risks in accessing / walking into live / operational main line corridor areas, accessing closed off station areas along with signal boxes without permission or the awareness of what they are doing is “unsafe”.

It is known that railway agencies in NSW (such as NSW Govt, ARTC and John Holland Rail) do watch facebook forums for breaches and combined with reporting of trespassers by traincrews, it has seen there is a need for an education campaign. The result has seen ARTC release an online rail safety guide to ensure enthusiast don’t trespass or cause a problem with railway operations while taking photos. Many photographers don’t know that there are serious fines and police action if you are found inside an operational railway corridor without a proper and valid reason. See http://www.artc.com.au/library/News%20-%202014-08-09.pdf and http://www.artc.com.au/Article/Detail.aspx?p=6&np=4&id=434 for more details.

RAILWAY STATION TOURS – COME ON BOARD!

With the above notice in mind, in the future HRSI is examining offering group tours of some of the heritage railway stations across NSW, to help likeminded enthusiasts photograph the buildings and learn about why the railway stations were built and used. Tours may include northern, western and southern NSW and could be done over a weekend in some cases or a few days, depending on the level of demand and interest shown. More details will be released when planning is finalised.

Recommended links –

NSW Heritage Railway Stations and Infrastructure facebook page - https://www.facebook.com/NSWRSI?ref=bookmarks

NSW railway stations http://nswrailwaystations.wordpress.com/
Sydney railway stations http://sydneyrailwaystations.wordpress.com

Closed and Abandoned railway lines in Australia facebook page - which covers NSW at times https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=531274093606869


NSW station name listing - http://www.ozrevenues.com/Articles/nsw-railway-station-names.html

**NEW LINKS**

3 new sub pages to help further the education of NSW railway heritage and history. Each page will be developed as time to incorporate reviews, photos, insights with people's who worked on the lines and current news of any relevance.

Northern NSW branchlines page - https://www.facebook.com/Northern-NSW-railway-branchlines-181030645567436/

Western NSW branchlines page - https://www.facebook.com/Western-NSW-railway-branchlines-1643417875896346/


NEXT ISSUE

Next newsletter - issue 7 will examine:

- A detailed review at another southern NSW branch line,
- An insight to a rail photographer whose travels in the 1970s-1990s to record on film various northern NSW stations before they were all demolished,
- Examine southern NSW stations which are reused by communities or businesses,
- Plus more insights to news and events covering historical stations around NSW.

To follow NSWHRSI on facebook click on the link – https://www.facebook.com/NSWRSI. NSWHRSI can be contacted on the facebook page for stories / information and photo submissions.
TAIL END TRIANGLE PHOTOS

Coonamble – then and now

Southern NSW NSWHSI reporter and frequent photo contributor Greg Finster shares his view of the terminus station of Coonamble located on the branch line to the north of Dubbo, seen in 1982 left contrasting with a 2015 view right. 33 years later. In 2015, the platform has been demolished then rebuilt as a shorter platform, far end platform shed removed and the goods shed demolished besides other smaller station items.

Eastwood station in northern Sydney looking south towards West Ryde, seen in the early 1900s.