CAMDEN RAILWAY STATION

A REMINDER OF INCESSANT GOVERNMENT UNDER-FUNDING OF THE NSW RAIL SYSTEM

These notes relate only to the history of the passenger facilities at the Camden terminus. The history of the branch line has already been published. Alan Smith, a long-time member of the Australian Railway Historical Society and a frequent volunteer at its Resource Centre, won the competition to choose the cover photo for these notes. It seems strange that Alan chose a photograph not of the terminus but of an intermediate station, Kenny Hill. Why? Alan considered that this was the "iconic image of the challenges that existed in the day-to-day operation of the Camden line". Specifically, the photograph shows the absence of priority given to passengers when the train crew had to decide whether to convey people or freight. It should be of no surprise that people lost out. Bob Merchant took this undated photograph on a day when the steam locomotive simply could not succeed in climbing the gradient. In the composition of the train were two milk pots. They were next to the engine. There was no question of reversing the train to Narellan, shunting and then proceeding with the only the passenger car. Why not? Because the milk pots had to be attached to No. 32 Express Goods or there would be serious trouble for the train crew if the Camden milk did not accompany the other milk vans from Bowral and Menangle on the train. What! Passengers are voters. Not so much in 1963 when the line closed. They were then primarily a financial liability. Freight produced revenue. ***SOURCE****: ARHS Resources Centre photograph Image No. 036661.*

CAMDEN STATION OPENING - 1882

John Forsyth, the former State Rail Authority Archives Officer, wrote that the line opening occurred on 10th March 1882. The Railways relocated to a new site on 10th January 1883 and again on 19th June 1901.

Thankfully, the early history of Camden station was written by an anonymous person under the name "Wonder". He or she penned the following:

"At the date of the opening of the tramway on 10th March 1882, the line stopped short of the approved terminus in the neighbourhood of the present Dairy Farmers' Cooperative Milk Depot at a distance of 7 miles 13 chains (11.56 kilometres) from the junction with the main Southern line. Beyond the knowledge that there was a waiting shed in Argyle Street on the down (i.e. left) side at this temporary terminus and a run-round for the motor, nothing can be definitely stated as to what siding or other accommodation were provided. There seems to have been some trouble connected with the acquisition of the land for the selected terminus from the Trustees of' the Presbyterian Church and this, no doubt, accounted for the temporary terminus, as the contractors were under a time limit in their contract".[1]

A pre-1960 photograph of the building at Kirkham, which was reportedly the original terminus waiting shed. The design of the waiting shed was consistent with the use of small, timber structures with gabled roofs and without platform awnings up until 1889, though it was only one of two designs for waiting sheds used between 1855 and 1889. It was relocated from Camden to the then named Kirkham Lane in 1883. The only touch of elegant was the provision of turned timber finials on the roof gables. Finials were also bestowed on the Camden goods shed and are identifiers that the buildings date from the 1880s. ***SOURCE:*** *Ref. No. CHS (Camden Historical Society) 1297.*

[1] Anonymous, Campbelltown to Camden, *Bulletin*, No. 159, January 1951, p. 5.

Kirkam station in the 1960s. Note the simple design and the absence of a platform awning, both features that indicate limited funding. The structure is painted in the traditional 'stone' colours, which were in use up to 1951. **SOURCE**: ARHS Resource Centre photograph No. 161707.

NEW STATION BUILDING - 1883

Wanderer continued with his or her story when the second station site (in 1883) and building were provided, saying:

> "In January 1883, the line was extended a distance of 16 chains into the terminus as originally designed. This was on resumed land with 3 chains frontage to Argyle Street and 7 chains (141 metres) to Edward Street. The line entered the yard from Argyle Street by a 5-chain (100 metres) radius curve and terminated about 163 feet (50 metres) short of to-day's (i.e. 1951) railway dead-end. A goods siding was extended back towards Argyle Street, and the loading bank and horse dock still remain a siding on the Up (i.e. right) side with a crossover forming the locomotive run-round on the curved portion. A waiting shed and office was provided on the Argyle Street boundary opposite the present horse trough, passengers joining and alighting from the trams just inside the yard gate. The waiting shed from the temporary terminus was refixed at Kirkham Lane".[2]

[2] Anonymous, Campbelltown to Camden, *Bulletin*, No. 160, February 1951, p. 26.

The photo above appears to be the passenger station building erected in 1883. This location is at the corner of Argyle and Edwards Streets. It was this building that was relocated and slightly altered to the final site of the station in 1901. This structure also featured timber finials on the roof gables, though smaller in size than those applied to the 1882 waiting shed at the then terminus. Note the Station Master's residence adjoining the station on the left. The residence is enclosed by a fence of the then normal design of pickets in the front and palings on the side and rear boundaries. The photograph was taken in the 1898 flood. ***SOURCE:*** *Ref No. CHS 1663*

This 1962 photograph partly shows the Station Master's residence facing Argyle Street adjacent to the entry gate to the goods yard office. The photographer is standing at the intersection of Argyle and Edward Streets. She or he is facing Elizabeth Street, marked by the hotel, which provided the pedestrian and vehicular entry to the passenger station. The verandah of the Station Master's house has been enclosed sometime after construction. The pastel green colour denotes the 1951 decision by the Department to abandon the use of the three tones of 'stone' colour. ***SOURCE****: ARHS Resource Centre Photograph No. 061313.*

CONSTRUCTION OF STATION MASTER'S HOUSE – 1889

The Station Master's residence is at the extreme left of the photograph. ***SOURCE:*** *ARHS Resource Centre photograph No. 068901.*

George Cowdery was the Engineer in Chief for Existing lines when he approved the construction of the house for the Station Master on 11th June 1889. It was of brick construction and its primary design feature was the asymmetrical front elevation, which resulted in the front verandah extending only halfway across the structure. It was a very modest house but of a very contemporary design with all rooms attached to the structure, including the bathroom, laundry and toilet.[3] The building was erected alongside the 1883 passenger station and, after that structure was moved in 1901, its position was not too far from the good shed.

The design and materials of the Station Master's house and the station building were inconsistent (the station building was timber and the residence was brick), but it had been Departmental policy for many decades to provide brick residences for staff even when the relevant station building was low-cost, of timber construction or modest in size. The New South Wales Railways looked after the housing needs of its staff in the 19th century. The residence faced the main road, known as Argyle Street. The tender of Mr. Á. J. Lee, a local builder, was accepted for the erection of the residence in October 1889.[4] However, John Forsyth, the former Railway Archives officer, has written that the tender for the residence in the amount of £510 was given to a Mr Whiteman on 31st May 1891.[5] Who was the builder remains a puzzle to be sorted at some stage.

The residence was built in reverse to the plan. The plan indicates that the front verandah was to be located on the Nepean River side of the structure. But that did not occur. The verandah was placed on the Elizabeth Street side, possibly to give the

[3] In early designs, kitchens, bathrooms, laundries and toilets were often provided in detached out-buildings.
[4] *Australian Town and Country Journal,* 26th October 1889, p. 13.
[5] John Forsyth, *Station Information A to F*, unpublished manuscript, State Rail Authority, 1997, p. 158.

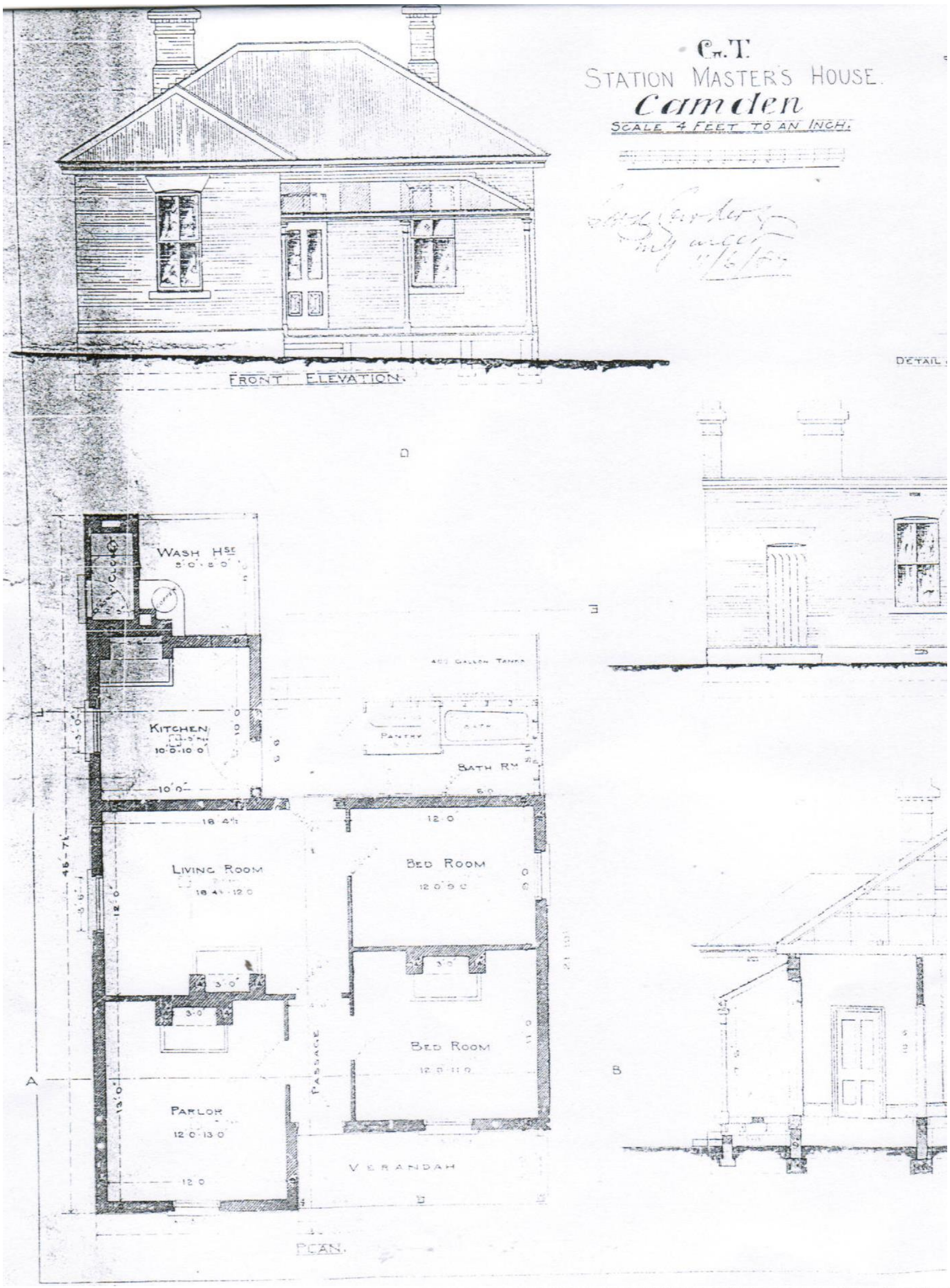
residents a bit more privacy from railway patrons when the house occupants sat on the verandah. Construction in reverse of the approved plan did happen now and then in the 19th century. In other words, it was not unusual.

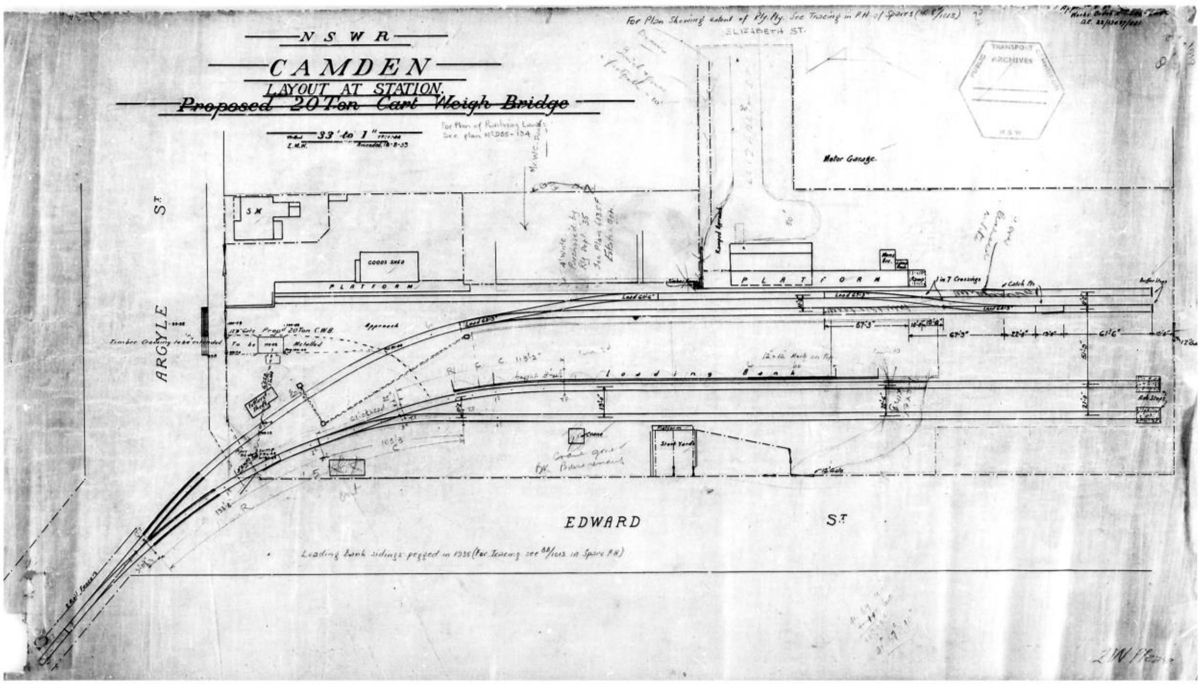
The plan for the house was possibly one of the last Cowdery approved before his retirement at some time between July and November 1889. It was Cowdery who had introduced the asymmetrical design for single-storey residences on existing lines in 1885. As far as railway houses were concerned, Camden received a contemporary-looking dwelling, which could not be said about the station building.

A comparison of the photograph overleaf of the structure as constructed and the above plan indicates that the residence was built to the reverse of the intention.

The Station Master's house looks decidely grubby, as did the rest of the local railwayscape at Camden – and, for that matter, everywhere. George Cowdery intended to place the verandah on the right-hand side, according to the plan. It will be noted that the front verandah has been enclosed. A part of the good shed is seen to the right side of the photograph, which was taken in the 1960s. ***SOURCE:*** *Ref. No. CHS 2517.*

The 1939 track plan overleaf identifies the location of the Station Master's house relative to the other railway infrastructure. The plan had been prepared to locate the position of the 20 ton cart weighbridge in 1923, but was reused to save the need of preparing another plan.


STATION MASTER'S HOUSE
Camden
SCALE 4 FEET TO AN INCH.
FRONT ELEVATION.
DETAIL
WASH HSE
KITCHEN
400 GALLON TANKS
PANTRY
BATH
BATH RM
LIVING ROOM
BED ROOM
BED ROOM
PARLOR
PASSAGE
VERANDAH
PLAN.


N S W R
CAMDEN
LAYOUT AT STATION
Proposed 20 Ton Cart Weigh Bridge
33' to 1"
ELIZABETH ST.
Motor Garage
ARGYLE ST.
S.M.
GOODS SHED
PLATFORM
PLATFORM
Loading Bank
EDWARD ST.
TRANSPORT ARCHIVES

RELOCATION OF THE STATION PLATFORM AND BUILDING – 1901

The above photograph shows the building a year after the termination of services. It shows the 8 steps leading from the forecourt to the verandah. The single door leads to the general waiting room and ticket window. The enclosed wall at the Sydney end houses the extension to the parcels office and was a rare example of vertically-set weatherboards. A steel flue reaches above the ridge of the roof and vents the cast-iron stove-type heater in the Station Master's office. The vertical posts supporting the verandah awning were once used to support the platform awning but were removed upon relocation in 1901. ***SOURCE:*** *1964 Ref. CHS 1143.*

From the very first day of railway operations in New South Wales in 1855, the organisation responsible for building and operating the system has been starved of finance by the colonial and state governments up until 1989. This official concern for spending money without a positive financial return was very obvious in the history of the Camden line. The following story about events in 1899 is evidence of the significance of the Camden line to cover its costs.

The Railway Commissioners sent a letter on 9th May 1899 to the Camden Police District Progress Association about the condition of the rail service and station. The Commissioners "admitted that tbe station buildings were inadequate and stated that, although the line was not a paying one, it was on the up grade, and that, as this increase in earnings seemed permanent, that they were prepared to anticipate the time when the line became a paying one, and would make certain improvements".[6]

The next day, the Chief Commissioner in the company of Thomas Firth, the Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines and a bunch of other senior railway officials visited Camden on 10th May 1899. They received a deputation from the local Council and the Mayor pointed out the "very inadequate arrangements for passengers at the station; the want of proper accommodation for the station master; the platform being inadequate; the goods warehouse, the necessity of a weighbridge….." The Mayor also argued that

[6] *Camden News*, 18th May 1899, p. 4.

the town of Camden was “neglected in accommodation as compared with other townships of far less importance”. Such a comparison of envy about the perceived status between rural towns was often made by local officials.

The Chief Commissioner, Charles Oliver, made no promises but said the matters raised by the deputation would be considered. Council was unhappy about the very short notice given for the intended visit and also unhappy about the poor treatment it received during the deputation. However, the 1899 visit may have been the catalyst for the improvements introduced in 1901.

The 1901 improvement works may have also been assisted by Oliver’s awareness that the local Member of Parliament, John Kidd, was a Cabinet Minister from April 1901, being the Minister for Mines and Agriculture. Kidd had previously been the Postmaster General of New South Wales. Was Kidd influential enough to get the station relocated but not sufficiently influential to get a new building? Possibly. Probably Kidd convinced the Commissioners to go halfway with improvements and this meant the station relocation without a new building. After all, the Railway Commissioners had told Kidd that the Camden branch line was losing money and, therefore, it would be injudicious to allocate money for a new building as a terminus for a line that was loss-making.

The Department improved the railway corridor in 1901 to permit the operation of 20 Class steam locomotives, which were much heavier than the motive power previously utilised. The improvement work included a new bridge over the Nepean River, which was designed to provide common piers for separate decks for both the railway and road traffic.[7] The provision of a combined road and rail bridge over the Nepean River was possibly a further indicator that the Railway Commissioners were cautious about allocating a large sum of money purely for a bridge for a railway line which was loss-making. They, no doubt, thought that, if the railway were a financial failure in the future, at least the bridge piers supporting the deck of the railway bridge would be available as additional road space. The bridge continues in use in 2019 as a monument to speculative history.

With the intention of bringing the Camden tramway up to light railway standards in 1901, the Department commenced enlarging the terminal facilities at Camden. Additional land was acquired so as to extend the yard through to Mitchell Street and the four dead-end sidings were then lengthened to the boundary of that thoroughfare. A raised platform was provided in the yard with a new road approach from Elizabeth Street and the old the old station building which had been erected in 1883, was removed from the Argyle Street frontage.[8]

It is unbelievable that the Railway Department would not provide a contemporary station building in 1901 when it decided to provide a new station site along Edward

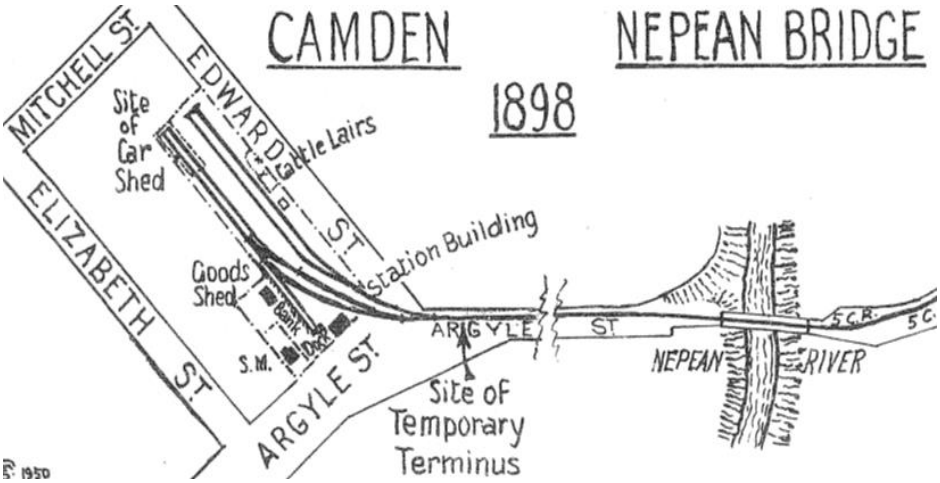
[7] I. Dunn and R. Merchant (Eds.), *Pansy – The Camden Tram*, Sydney, New South Wales Rail Transport Museum, 1982, p. 26.
[8] C. C. Singleton “Campbelltown to Camden, *Bulletin*, No. 163, May 1951, p. 68.

Street. Detailed architectural plans do not exist but, luckily, there are sufficient photographs which identify the building at the third site as the 1883 structure with minor modifications. Camden Municipal Council had every right to protest that its station building was a disgrace and in no way reflected the status of the town served. Camden was not alone in this predicament as many other rural towns in New South Wales had to suffer the indignity of having station buildings that were old, dilapidated and inadequate for the amount of business carried out at the locations.

The plan overleaf shows the layout of the yard prior to the 1901 location. The passenger station was relocated from its position facing Argyle Street along the railway corridor to a position near the site marked on the plan as “site of car shed”. The platform, which was 145 feet long, required a considerable amount of track work, including a run-round to release the locomotive from incoming trains in place them at the head of outgoing trains. Also, a new access road had to be built from Elizabeth Street which directly faced the passenger station, while a second access road was built from Mitchell Street to access the milk shed. These access roads are in place in 2019 and a plaque marks the access from Elizabeth Street.

While the former State Rail Authority Archives Officer, John Forsyth, wrote that the building at the new site was a “new” structure, this was not the case. There are several indicators that reveal the 1883 building was moved to its new location rather than a completely new structure being built. The indicators are:

- both structures match in terms of overall dimensions and scale,
- the use of a single entry door, with outside incandescent lights , from the rear verandah leading to the general waiting room,
- both structures featured the same plainness in design,
- both structures feature the use of vertical awning posts,
- the rear verandah at the new location featured timber capitals cast-iron brackets on the awning posts – a design feature which had fallen out of departmental use by 1901,
- the absence of brick chimneys and other architectural details such as finials,
- the existing Departmental practice against waste which would have occurred if 1883 building had been not re-used.



The location of the passenger station before the relocation in 1901. ***SOURCE****: ARHS Bulletin No. 161, March 1951, p. 48.*

The 1901 relocation of the station stimulated a considerable amount of local protest action as the residents were unhappy with many aspects of the relocation project. A deputation representing the Camden Municipal Council and residents of Camden was introduced to the Railway Commissioners in February 1901 by John Kidd, who was the Member of Parliament for the electorate of Camden between 1880 and 1904. The deputation stated that they understood some alterations were contemplated for the station buildings at Camden, and they desired lo lay before the Commissioners their views in regard to the requirements. They considered the present station buildings to be inadequate and asked also that better arrangements he made for the loading and unloading of milk and stock, and that the passenger accommodation be improved, without saying what improvements they desired. The Commissioners stated that the alterations intended to be carried out would give them station accommodation which would serve all their purposes for years to come.[9]

On 18th April 1901 a meeting of the Camden Municipal Council discussed the inadequacies of the local railway station. The Mayor described the structure as "the most disgraceful in the State" and demanded "proper accommodation to the travellers to Camden". Council also criticised the poor condition of the road leading to the station, which was described as "most dangerous". Another speaker said the station was not only a disgrace to the people of Camden but also to the Railway Commissioners. One voice shouted: "It wants burning down".[10]

Was there any community grumbling about the relocation of the station in 1901? Yes. This was based on remarks at the April Council meeting where the Rev. Thompson said that he would have wished that the tram station remained "in the old place". Dr. Bell at the same meaning stated that "the station should not have been removed, it was better in every way where it was originally, he never saw anything more disgraceful". The Mayor maintained that "the importance of Camden demands the

[9] *Daily Telegraph*, 22nd February 1901, p. 4.
[10] *Camden News*, 25th April 1901, p. 1.

immediate increase of passenger accommodation instead of the present rookery". The Mayor then made the remark that the approach from Elizabeth Street to the station was an extremely poor condition and dangerous. He added that the lane between Elizabeth Street and the station was very narrow and that he had that night, on his arrival from the station , saw passengers on foot leaving the station "dodging about among the waiting vehicles, which owing to the narrowness of the lane were parked so close as to be unmanageable if a horse turned".[11] Those remarks from the three people confirm that the passenger station had been relocated in the first few months of 1901.

A public meeting was held in the School of Arts two days after the Council meeting in April 1901 to emphasise the disapproval of residents of their 'new' railway accommodation. The Mayor presided. The following resolution was carried:

> "That, in the opinion of the meeting, the station accommodation and the facilities given to the travelling public of Camden are inadequate, and that the Commissioners are not giving reasonable attention to the requirements of the district; that the arrangements of the goods branch regarding Camden give the greatest dissatisfaction, and that the arrangements of the passenger traffic on the line are below the standard which this district requires, and which it ought to receive".

The meeting was reported as "largely attended, (John Kidd Minister for Mines and Agriculture) being amongst those present". Kidd said he regretted the Commissioners did not know the requirements of Camden and described the then present station "makeshift", and (commented that) "worse consideration had never been shown to any township. There was no proper entrance, and the goods shed was too far from the station premises".[12]

[11] Ibid.
[12] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th April 1901, p. 7.

The photograph on page 12 was taken in the 1960s shows the physical relationship between the passenger platform and the good shed. Both platform seats under the awning are decorative and date from the 19th century and add weight to the argument that the station building was relocated in 1901. Note the brick platform wall was set vertically, which indicates that the wall was built after 1890. The platform wall is set in English bond with alternative courses of header and stretcher bricks. The coping is formed by two courses of bricks projected forward at the top of the wall and a further two courses, projecting still further beyond the wall, set transverse to the wall to form the coping or top of the platform. The platform design was standard post 1890 practice. ***SOURCE:*** *ARHS Resource Centre Photograph No. 540002.*

In May 1901, Harry Richardson, Superintendent of Lines, and a Mr Simpson, the Divisional Engineer, paid a surprise visit but were met by some local community representatives. The press that that it was not the first time that "our Camden rulers have been treaded by a 'surprise party' without the necessary advance notice. The local press stated that "we stoutly object to such proceedings. Throughout the whole interview, it seemed that the Railway Commissioner possessed the whole of the State, not the citizens who make the progress of the State. The only comment they made was in relation to the trucking yards, to which they said the local community had a 'legitimate grievance,' and that the milk trucking should be kept separate from the goods traffic. We had said enough; the black pencilled remarks in the notebooks of the two officials will doubtless bring good results, if not our local Aldermen must see that our requirements are granted, if not the public will do so".[13]

The Secretary for Railways wrote to the Camden Municipal Council on 6th June 1901 and provided a list of the proposed improvements, which were:

- Lamp room to be erected,
- Posts to be provided for protection of footpath,
- Approach to be metalled to give more room for teams to turn,
- Approach to road to be drained,
- Fence to be erected at back of platform,
- Picket fencing to be erected at present entrance to platform,
- Verandah to be extended, &
- Small milk stage to be erected.

The Secretary said other matters raised by Council would be considered.[14]

By October 1901, the Railway Department had nearly completed its list of works though yet to completed were the rear verandah and the construction of the lamp room.[15] Camden station building remained for all its life an unattractive and run-down structure. It was never replaced.

[13] *Camden News*, 9th May 1901, p. 1.
[14] Ibid., 6th June 1901, p. 4.
[15] *Camden News*, 31st October 1901, p. 1.

The track work was interlocked at Camden on 13th January 1919.[16] The diagram attached to the Traffic Branch Circular is overleaf. Perhaps by chance, Camden Road signal box on the main line was dispense with on 7th November 1919.[17]

THE PASSENGER STATION DESIGN ORIGINS

The first comment that needs to be made is that the station building at Camden did not accord with the standard roadside design that John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief for Railway Construction, had introduced in 1880. Both the standard roadside station design and the Camden structure had gabled roofs, but that was the end of the similarity. This standard roadside design was normally an elegant affair with a floor plan based on a centre axis for structures of three rooms or more. The windows were symmetrically placed and full-length verandahs were not used on the road approach. They were wider than the Camden example. Whitton had no involvement in the design of the Camden structure as his position related only to railway construction, not tramway construction, which the Camden line purported to be. The Camden structure looked very much like what George Cowdery, the Engineer-in-Chief for Existing Lines, was approving during the 1880s for replacement structures on existing lines.

Before the buildings relocation from Argyle Street, the station structure could be described as a timber oblong. It had a gabled roof covered with corrugated iron sheeting. Verandahs supported by timber vertical posts were located on both sides of the structure. Two aspects of the structure were altered when it was relocated in early 1901. The first thing to change was the method by which the awning over the platform was supported. A Departmental programme had been underway since 1889 to eliminate awning posts mainly because they got in the way of side opening door carriages. The awning support programme continued over the next 20 years and it was not unsurprising that the opportunity was taken at Camden to replace the original awning posts with cantilevered metal brackets attached to vertical braces on the external building wall. Such conversions were common. The second change related to the awning on the road approach. This time, the awning posts were retained possibly because there was no practical benefit in replacing them, but the opportunity was taken to extend the awning to the full length of the building. Eight steps were required to mount the verandah, this use of steps was a very unusual treatment for entry into a passenger building. The cheapness of the structure was reflected in many ways, but one obvious element was the use of a single top rail for the verandah balustrade, without any low or intermediate rails.

There were four rooms in the structure, these being from the Sydney end:

- parcels office,
- ticket office,
- general waiting room, &

[16] Circular No. 4 dated 9th January 1919.
[17] Circular No. 20 dated 5th November 1919.

- ladies' waiting room and toilet.

The room composition of the building was typical of the New South Wales railway practice. Conditions inside the building were primitive. Only one room – the Station Master's office – was heated and that was not heated hot by employing the use of a fireplace and chimney but the simple cast-iron stove with a metal flue projecting through the rear wall – a feature that further added to the disgusting appearance on the road approach to the station.

INTENTIONAL DEPARTMENTAL MUTILATION OF THE STATION BUILDING AT THE THIRD LOCATION – 1901-1963

It is hard to believe that the structure when relocated in 1901, as basic as it was, could deteriorate in appearance purposefully, but that is exactly what happened. At an unknown time, the Department decided to the expand parcels office and resolved to extend that room by an addition on the road approach by enclosing approximately 20 feet of the rear verandah at the Sydney end. It was an ugly addition in full public view. Clearly, the Department did not care what the local community thought. This addition was very interesting for one aspect, namely the nature of the weatherboard cladding on the external walls. The New South Wales Railways used horizontally-set weatherboards for virtually 100% of the time and there were very rare exceptions. One of those exceptions was the addition to the Camden parcels office where the weatherboards were set vertically.

Could this situation get any worse? Yes. Another horrid addition was provided at the terminal end of the building were a little cubby house was built at an unknown time to provide a female toilet. The use of a skillion roof identified the addition as a tack-on room designed and erected without the help of Head Office architectural professionals.

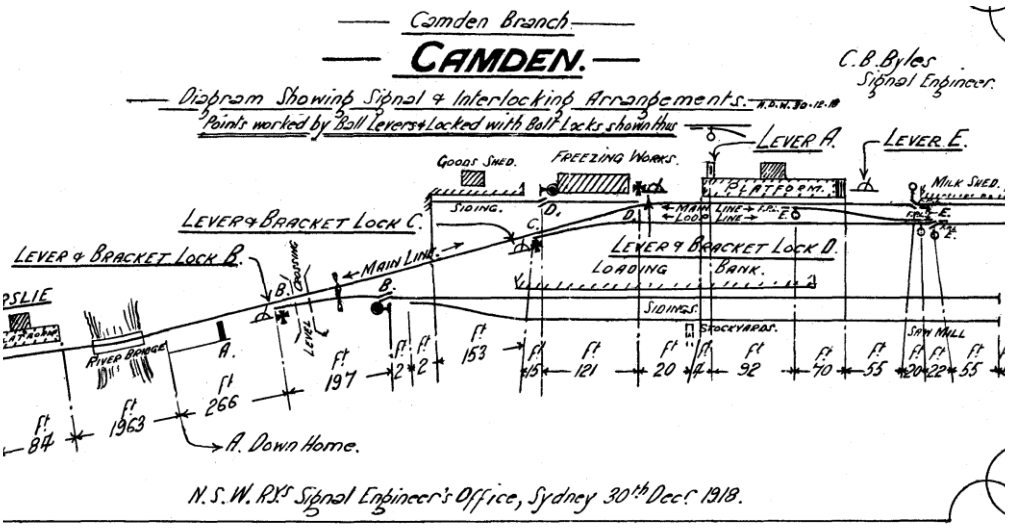
Entry to the platform from the street side was attained by climbing the steps leading to the rear verandah and walking through the general waiting room. The ticket window faced into the general waiting room. All these features were normal Departmental practice.

There were only ever two platform seats on the platform and both of those were of the very ornate style with decorative cast iron bases and arm rests. There was one station nameboard of the circle-and-bar type at the terminal end, the design of which dated from the mid-1920s.

One improvement was the construction of a brick platform wall underneath the coping. However, even that part of the works was not completed to the usual Departmental design standard. What was significant about the Camden platform was the absence of an earth-formed ramp at the Sydney end. A narrow, primitive, timber-framed ramp with timber decking had to suffice until closure in 1963.

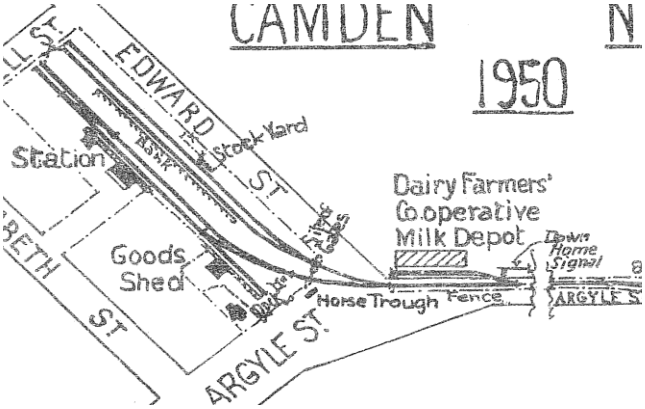
The above photograph shows the male toilet and lamp room at the terminus end of the platform. The male toilet conformed to the design of off-platform toilets used in rural areas and this was the case at Camden until 1928 when the male toilet was relocated from the rear of the platform to the platform. The classic features of the toilet were, firstly, the use of a timber frame with the walls and roof covered with galvanised, corrugated iron sheets and, secondly, the use of a concave roof. Not many people waiting for a train would stand near the male toilet on the platform because of the adverse odours. ***SOURCE:*** *ARHS Resource Centre photograph No. 103108.*

This photograph shows the following features: two-lever interlocking ground frame; primitive nature of the timber ramp at the Sydney end; extended brickwork of the platform; vertical boarding on the parcels office extension; cantilevered awning brackets; single station name board and male toilet and lamp room at terminus end. ***SOURCE****: ARHS Resource Centre photograph No. 22A 003.*



The plan above shows the interlocking arrangement in 1918.

Below is a plan of the yard in its last decade of operation.



This plan shows the relocated station in 1901. ***SOURCE:*** *ARHS Bulletin, No. 163, May 1951, p. 68.*

ALTERATIONS TO THE THIRD STATION – 1928

From the opening of the third station site in 1901, the male toilet and the lamp room had been located behind the ramp leading to the platform at the terminal end. In November 1928, approval was given for the relocation of both of these structures to the terminal end of the platform. They remained in their new locations until the closure of the station. Both structures had timber frames and were clad with corrugated iron and had concrete floors four inches thick placed on top of nine-inch-wide by three-inch-thick timber decking. The male toilet contained two earth closets, being of the standard Department size of five feet by three feet. There was also a three-stall urinal constructed of No. 22 gauge iron sheets with an iron trough 12 inches wide filled with sawdust. Each stall was a standard two feet wide and was protected by a privacy partition 18 inches wide. There was a notation on the plan that the old materials were to be re-used "as far as possible". The pans in the closets were changed by male staff

but that was not possible with the female toilet. As was normal Departmental practice, located behind the female closet was with small doors to enable the male staff to change the night-soil pans without entering the facility.

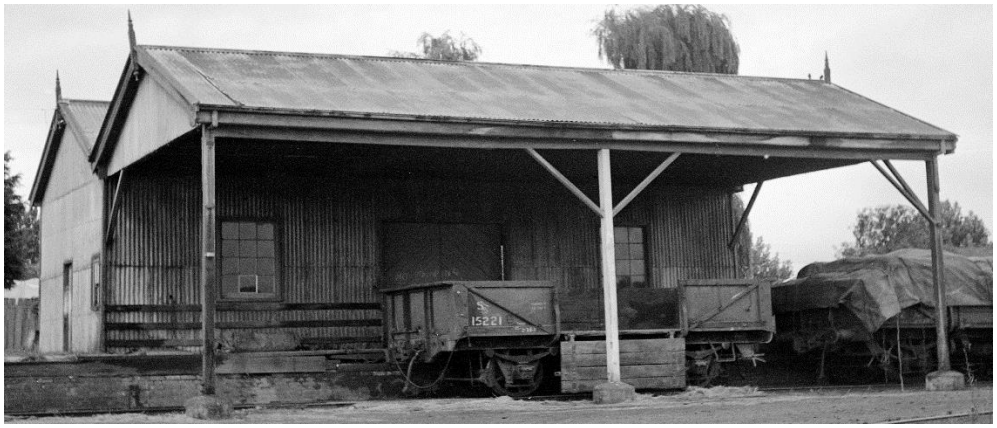
While the male toilet had a barrel-shaped roof, the tiny lamp room had a single-pitched roof sloping to the rear. Both rooms were covered with corrugated iron sheets, that for the toilet being curved and that for the lamp room being flat. These structures were the last improvements to the station before it was closed on 1st January 1963. The punchline was that no improvements were made to Camden station after 1928.

Camden station rarely got a mention in the press in the 1950s. The was a State-wide recession in 1952 and 1953. One time, Camden station got a mention was in 1953 when the Porter was removed from the local staff complement, leaving only the Station Master and an Assistant Station Master to staff the station. The Porter was removed as part of a system-wide programme to lower staffing levels in order to reduce the deficit.

There was also a recession in 1961 and it is no surprise that, given that a single staff member was removed in the 1953 recession, more staff would be removed in the 1961 recession. The economic change was were far drastic in 1961 when the Railway Department decided to close the entire Camden line.

This photograph clearly shows the extension of the ladies' waiting room at the terminus end to provide for a single female toilet closet. The two buildings at the right of the photograph are the lamp room with the single-pitched roof and the male toilet next to it. These were relocated to the platform in 1928 and represented the last improvements to the station. Another ugly addition to the station was the provision of a corrugated iron fence between the male toilet on the main building. Note in the background the very close residential development that abutted the station, which probably induced the Railway Department to sell the station site to obtain revenue. ***SOURCE:*** *ARHS Resource Centre photograph No. 540014.*

THE BIZARRE AND THE BAZAAR GOODS SHED



SOURCE: *ARHS Resource Centre photograph No. 22D-003*

The design of the Camden good shed was equally unusual as was the passenger building. Hence, the use of “bizarre”. Why “bazaar”? Because the goods shed was a significant community facility with customers meeting and often discussing the limited physical space within and outside the goods shed. The local newspaper is full of complaints about the facility. The atypical construction of both the goods shed and the station building suggests that both facilities at Camden were approved by George Cowdrey, the Engineer for Existing Lines, after the line opening in 1882. There is substantial evidence that he was responsible for a number of atypical buildings in the 1880s in various locations throughout the Colony.

In the 19th century, the history of the design of goods sheds was pretty straightforward. Up to 1880, they were of the “through type” favoured by British railway organisations in which the goods vehicles are loaded/unloaded within the shed. In the second half of the 1870s, John Whitton, the Engineer-in-Chief for Railway Construction, realised that he required less costly buildings to meet the budget limits of the approved funding for the expansion of the trunk and other rail lines. By 1880, he had approved of new designs for station buildings, goods sheds and residences. The major change to good sheds was the relocation of the loading/unloading to the exterior side of the facilities. That pattern endued for the remainder of the 19th century. There was one other change that popped up in 1882 and related not to the design but to the size of good sheds. This time, it was not Whitton who approved the issue of a new standard plan but George Cowdrey. Not every station when lines opened were provided with goods sheds and, as traffic grew, there was community demand for the provision of protection of goods. Cowdrey addressed the issue by approving small good sheds being no more than 20 or 30 feet in length at 12 feet in width. Sometimes, when town residents saw how small the new goods shed was going to be, they got annoyed. In an endeavour to dissipate local angst, Cowdrey provided one design feature that was never applied to Whitton’s larger sheds. This design feature was the erection of timber finials on the roof gables. Finials were used only on the smaller sheds between 1882 and 1891. The good shed at Camden possessed for finials for the unusual, double-gabled roof.

Therefore, when the unusual design is added to the presence of finials, it would appear that the Camden good shed dates from the 1880s and was probably the one provided by George Cowdrey in 1883. Heaven only knows why the double gabled roof was applied at Camden, but it did happen at a few locations including Broken Hill and Taralga.

CAMDEN TRACK INTERLOCKING – CONTRIBUTION BY GRAHAM HARPER

Graham Harper is a veteran historian of NSW safeworking and signalling. He writes on two interesting topics. The first is the exclusive use of lever and bracket locks with the complete elimination of two-lever ground frames and, secondly, on the strange arrangement at the Sydney end of the platform which appears to be a two-lever ground frame. He starts:

THE APPLICATION OF OUTDATED TECHNOLOGY - THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF LEVER AND BRACKET LOCKS UPON INTERLOCKING

"Camden was interlocked on 13th January 1919. See the track diagram at the top of page 17. It was a straightforward job and very cheap. A landmark was provided from day one of the interlocking, and a single lever 'A' operated the home signal. Lever 'A' had a duplex lock on it in which were held two keys to unlock ground levers B, C, D and E. Points B, C and D were operated by the lever and bracket lock arrangement, which by then had been supplanted for many new interlockings by the familiar two-lever ground frames.

I did a trawl through the signal diagrams for the year 1918, and the following new or altered interlockings in that year had two-lever ground frames rather than levers and bracket locks.

1918
Bulli
Holdsworthy
Springdale
Gundagai
Old Junee
Lidcombe
Micabel
Booberoi
Sandown line
Clarendon
Wattamondara
Troy Junction to Merrygoen
Caragabal to Forbes
Aberdeen
Quirindi
West Tamworth
Guyra
Delungra
Burringbar

In the above example, all or most connections were operated by two-lever ground frames, in particular, those leading to the main lines. The year, 1918, was typical of the time. To demonstrate the significance of the trend over a longer period, the list below relates to interlockings with two-lever ground frames. The 1912 list is even

more indicative of the advances that bypassed Camden, seven years before it was interlocked. The list is:

1912

Frampton
Kenny Hill
Cooma to Nimmitybelle
Brawlin
Muttama
Bongalong
Mulgrave
Clandulla
Exmouth
Bolivia
Merah North
Rockview
Roach's
Beabula
Nulabor
Urana to Oaklands
Cookamidgera

Camden would appear the most obvious exception from the above lists. Even when a new siding, ultimately for Dairy Farmers, was installed towards Elderslie at some time after 1919, it too had a lever and bracket lock.

A major problem at Camden was that the platform was not located between the two sets of points necessary to release a steam locomotive and for it to run around its train. The platform extended across the points leading towards the run round located towards the terminal end.

The layout at each end of the platform probably made the use of levers and bracket locks more economical that the use of two-lever ground frames. To do justice to the layout, four two-lever machines would have been required. Instead, at the terminus end of the platform, two sets of points and a catchpoint were all released from a single lever – E. These points were operated by individual ball levers, and when Lever E was normal, i.e. not having the key from Lever A to release it, it effectively operated three facing point lock bolts, preventing the ball levers from being moved.

In 1940, more sense was made of the terminus end. The Milk Siding, which had existed as an extension of the platform road, had been relocated towards Elderslie and the platform road took up the old siding. A single crossover, between the terminus and the loop line, was brought into use and the terminus end points operated from Lever E. Lever E was probably seldom used, as its points were 'slotted' to allow them to be run through by the engine as it prepared to run round its train.

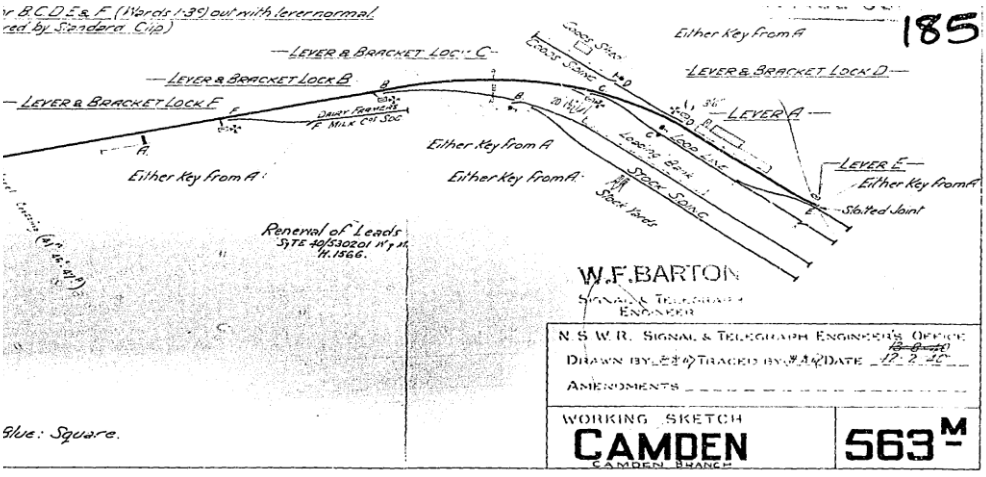
This rearrangement had the effect of markedly increasing the usefulness of the 166 feet platform, as, under the previous arrangements, only the 96 feet platform length could be used if you were going to be able to detach the engine and run round the

train without trespassing on the very short Milk Siding. Trains would basically have had to be limited to 116 feet in length to enable them to be handled expeditiously.[18]

My contention is that to make the thing workable without using tail ropes or other fanciful solutions the entire train had to fit between points 'D' and 'E'. Any longer than 116 feet would require the train be split to allow the run round. This would have to be achieved before placing of goods traffic, as the arriving engine would be at the wrong end of the train. There is no easy way for these movements to take place if the train were over 116 feet long. It might have been achieved by propelling part of the train back towards Elderslie but, given the lack of storage space, I'm not quite sure how this could be done.

Richmond, when interlocked in 1916 [by the way, two-lever ground frames were used there], also had a pretty cramped goods yard. The saving grace there was that a crossover was provided at the terminus end, between the main line and the run round loop. This made running around a train much easier with around 400 feet to play with. As at Camden, the run round at the platform was the only loop available. There was around 900 feet of main line which could be used for placement of goods wagons. This compared with 266 feet at Camden.

Below is the 1940 diagram to help make sense of all this.[19]



THE ABNORMAL TWO-LEVER GROUND FRAME AT THE SYDNEY END OF THE PLATFORM

The Down Home signal was originally operated from a pullover lever on the platform, and after interlocking in 1919 from a single lever 'A' at the same location. There is evidence of this in the photograph on page 16 – the small tunnel under the platform

[18] How did Harper arrive at 116 feet? He states: "Adding up the numbers from the 1918 diagram, I get 96 feet of the platform, plus 20 feet to 'D' points beyond the platform at the Sydney end."
[19] Emails from Graham Harper dated 3rd ,4th and 5th October 2019.

visible just before the Sydney end. There was plenty of room for the one signal wire which passed through the platform wall.

In 1940, the alteration was made to the terminus end of the yard, involving reversal of the crossover to that which is shown in the photo on page 16. Sometime after 1940, control of the home signal from Lever 'A' on the platform was replaced by lever control from just off the Sydney end of the platform. No documentation for this change can be found, but it was certainly in place in 1962. It was probably at the same time as this that the two-lever frame was provided. It was not the normal two lever frame controlling the usual combination of points and a facing point lock. No.1 lever in the ground frame controlled the Down Home signal. It also released keys for all the subsidiary Annett locks and bracket locks around the yard, the keys being secured by a duplex lock on the back of the lever and locking it normal when a key was taken out.[20]

No.2 lever in the ground frame operated the adjacent points. Although it is not obvious from the track diagram, it appears that the ball-lever-operated points had been converted to operation from a single lever, and each was secured by a bracket lock. So, the Station Master took a key from the signal lever [No.1] and inserted it not in lever No.2, but in the bracket lock. Turning the key in the lock would release the bolt lock, and he could then use No.2 lever to move the points. Evidence for this is the point rod emanating from the frame. Now this may or may not be correct.

The Camden situation was not the normal two-lever frame controlling the facing point lock and points. The 1962 working sketch indicated a two-lever frame in use, but the functions of the two levers were somewhat strange. As I have said, No.1 lever controlled the Down Home signal. It also released keys for all the subsidiary locks and bracket locks around the place, the keys being secured by a duplex lock on the front of the lever and locking it in the normal position (i.e. at stop) when a key was taken out. All points were secured in their normal position by bracket locks.

At the outset, the bracket locks were applied to all the points at Camden, which were all operated by ball levers. You could not move the ball lever unless the bracket lock were disengaged. Later, the ball levers were replaced by single ground levers, but the bracket locks remained, and the points could not be shifted unless the bracket locks were disengaged. All points, including those operated from lever No. 2 in frame A, needed a key from lever No.1 in frame A to release the associated bracket locks. So, if No.1 lever could be pulled over to clear the home signal, this would indicate to the Station Master that both keys were in the duplex lock on that lever and, therefore, all points were locked normal.

[20] A bracket lock was a device which locked the points, with the same effect as a facing point lock, by inserting a bar through the point rodding to prevent the rodding and therefore the points from shifting.

In the case of D points and bracket lock, the location of Bracket Lock D is not readily apparent from the evidence. In 1919, it was adjacent to the points, some 20 feet from the Sydney end of the platform. The immediate vicinity of No.2 lever in frame A appears to be clear of anything like a bracket lock, and the other possibility, a few feet in front of the frame is, on the photographic evidence, nebulous to say the least.

SOURCE: photograph No. 014037, ARHS Resource Centre

Graham Harper provides the caption to the above photograph. He writes:

> *"A most excellent shot! Bracket lock D is clearly shown. It is positioned over the point rod so that it can bolt down through it when the points are normal. To the left of the bracket lock can be seen a wire detector, also positioned to interact with the point rod. If the points are not in the normal position, the wire detector will not allow wire to move nor the home signal to be cleared. A sort of double insurance which was commonly used throughout the state. Wire detectors were probably installed on B C and F points as well. It is evident that lever and bracket lock D could have remained in situ, but its operation would be very cramped indeed. The operator's view of proceedings would be enhanced by his working the points from the more elevated position with the signal lever.*
>
> *Lever A and Lever D in the two-lever frame are shown as being at an elevation of about two feet, which may have given some advantage in seeing what was being placed in the goods siding and in being able to hand signal the engine crew during shunting movements. I was puzzled about the two point rods leading away behind the camera. Why two? Enlarging the photo, I was able to note that the second point rod was connected to the derail and point indicator applying to moves from the loop to the main line. These would have been*

controlled by lever and bracket lock C, along with the loop points. Lever and bracket lock C were located a crossover length towards Sydney, and on the opposite side of the running line from D. The rodding presumably ran via the "D" rodding run to avoid creating further trip hazards in the relatively clear area between the loop and the loading bank".

Two lever frames which were not the normal type, i.e. lever No.1 being the facing point lock and lever No. 2 being the points, have existed elsewhere. For example,

- Girilambone in its dying days had a two-lever ground frame to operate the home signals; the yard itself was not interlocked,
- Walgett had a two-lever frame to operate the distant and home signals, the yard not being interlocked,
- Ditto Coonamble, same as Walgett, &
- Ditto Gravesend for up and down homes in later years.

There are almost certainly other instances. In each of the examples, the two levers would have been interlocked with each other to ensure that the home was off before one could pull the distant or at Gravesend and Girilambone to make sure that you couldn't pull off for both directions at once.

Why did the Railway Department provide this unusual two-lever ground frame at Camden? There is no evidence to date or explain the event. It was a cheap, quick fix which also allowed operational consistency with the other points in the yard. The Signal Engineer's Office probably used the redundant ground frame from Currans Hill, the siding at which had been closed in 1937. Also, the relocation may have provided the Station Master with a better view of the position of the levers from his office. Safety may have been an issue. The relocation of the control of the Down Home signal from the platform might have been to deter the Graham Harpers and Bob Taaffes of the World from playing with it.

Moving the lever to control the Down Home signal from the platform to ground level would have put it smack up against Lever and Bracket Lock D, and this was probably why the Department included D as lever No. 2 in the ground frame. The Station Master would still have to find the bracket lock and unlock it with a key from No.1 before he could move the points with lever No.2.

The process of changing the direction of the points was cumbersome. The staff would set the Down Home signal to the normal position (at stop) using lever No. 1; remove the Annett key from the lock on the lever; proceed to the bracket lock and unlock it with the key from No.1 lever leaving the key in the bracket lock; walk back to the ground frame and operate lever No. 2.

There have been a couple of instances of frames with home signals and points without any interlocking between the home and the points. Both at Hay, and later, Merriwa, three lever frames controlled the home signal, and the adjacent siding points and facing point locks. In both cases, the facing point lock lever was released by a key from the home signal lever."[21]

THE SADNESS OF LINE CLOSURE

The closure of the Camden branch line was first publicly aired in early 1961 when the New South Wales Government issued a licence for a bus service between Campbelltown and Camden. The industry Journal, *Railway Transportation*, stated this was the "apparent competition with the NSWGR's passenger services on this branch is surely an indication of the approaching demise of this fascinating little railway backwater. The NSWGR has stated that it does not intend to close the line for some time and the operation of competitive facilities is obviously intended to familiarise local passengers with bus travel in lieu of the friendly, little, one-car train now in use".[22]

Sadly, the last day of operations on 1st January 1963 was the day when the station looked its prettiest. Bunting and flags adorned the road approach and a band played music in the station forecourt.[23]

Strangely, there was one benefit to Camden residents following the closure. After the termination of rail services, parcels were picked up by a private carrier from Campbelltown station and delivered directly to the door of the receiver at Camden .[24] This meant, for the first time, that people had a parcels service where they either did not have to collect their parcels from the station or pay a private courier to deliver them from the station to a private or business address.

The formal closure of the branch line was made under the Campbelltown to Camden Tramway and Jerilderie towards Deniliquin Railway Act (No. 8) 1963 to which Royal Assent was given on the 29th March 1963. Tenders closed on 15th April 1964 for the purchase and removal of material and equipment from the Campbelltown to Camden branch.[25] Had not the Railway Department decided to close the line, mother nature would have stepped in. In 1964, there was a severe flood of the Nepean River and the building at Elderslie station floated away.[26]

The Department in July 1965 offered a 50-year lease of the former railway station and goods yard at Camden.[27] The last item of built infrastructure to survive was the

[21] Emails from Graham Harper dated 3rd ,4th, 5th and 6th October 2019.

[22] *Railway Transportation*, February 1961, p. 5.
[23] A photograph showing the gaiety of the station on the last day is in no author, *21 Years of Tours*, Sydney, Australian Railway Historical Society, 1968, p. 55.
[24] *Weekly Notice No. 5*, 2-8th February 1963, p. 7.
[25] *Railway Transportation*, April 1964, p. 9.
[26] *New South Wales Digest*, July 1964, pp. 14 and 15.
[27] *New South Wales Digest*, August 1965, p. 18.

Camden platform at Campbelltown, which was obliterated in 1967 as part of the works for the extension of electric train operations.

RAILWAY DEPARTMENT NOT TO BE BLAIMED FOR CAMDEN LINE CLOSURE

During the life of the Camden branch line, the railways of New South Wales was an agent of the State Government. It has always been the State Government which allocates funding for railway construction and operations. At all times during the history of the Camden line, the Railway Commissioners were under immense pressure to reduce expenditure to meet the adequate funding levels allocated to them. The Department's decision not to install two-lever ground frames when the station was interlocked in 1919 but to use the outdated technology of the lever and bracket lock system was an indicator even then that it would be cautious in the allocation of limited funds on an obviously loss-making branch line opened on the basis of political whim. Of course, the Camden line was not alone in that category.

When the reader appreciates the primitive nature of the infrastructure along the line; when the reader discovers the reluctance of the Commissioners to make improvements at the terminus; when the reader acknowledges that it was the Government which licensed a competitive bus operator in 1961 and when the reader understands that it was the State Government which approved the end of rail services, the reader should not condemn the New South Wales Department of Railways for recommending closure of the line.

Although the Labor Party controlled the Treasury benches between 1941 and 1965 and viewed employment in the Railway Department as very much a type of welfare payment, it was the Government which had to find money to cover the annual financial deficits owed in great part by the political over-capitalisation in the construction of uneconomic branch lines. That is why Camden received:

- the same unattractive platform building dating from 1883 relocated to the new site in 1901,
- primitive toilet facilities at the station,
- a bizarre design and bazaar-like goods shed,
- a squashed yard track layout with the weird location of the loading bank between the stock siding and the loop (unusually distant from the goods shed),
- outdated interlocking technology (i.e. lever and bracket locks),
- minimal upgrading of passenger rolling stock, &
- priority of freight over passengers.

WHAT'S LEFT TO SEE IN 2019 AT CAMDEN?

The only piece of fabric remaining, in situ relating to the Camden station site is the concrete wall to the goods loading bank which was renewed in 1951. The former milk depot also survives though its future is uncertain, and it is possible to interpret the siding into that establishment. The 1901 concrete piers of the bridge over the Nepean River are also extant. It is also possible to see structures of the former railway corridor in the vicinity of Kirkham.

Anyway, who needs extant relics when those who rode on the line have their memories? Tragically, in another 20 years, those people will not be around to tell their personal stories. Nevertheless, we can count on model railroaders to continue their interest in the history of the New South Wales railways, including the Camden branch. Indeed, it was the Camden branch line which inspired the General Manager of SCR Publications, Bob Gallagher OAM, to model Australian prototype railways.[28] Long may others have a similar inspiration.

A DECLARATION OF GRATEFULNESS

A very big slice of gratitude is essential to Graham Harper for writing the safeworking notes and answering numerous questions. Thanks also to Dr Bob Taaffe and John Oakes for reviewing the article and providing technical assistance. Geoff Lillico, Ray Pickard, Ben Lewis, Michel Thompson, Bill Phippen, OAM, and Alan Smith are volunteers at the ARHS Resource Centre and I acknowledge their aid. It needs not be stated that co-ordinating the entire research effort was the ARHS Resource Centre Manager, James Dalton.[29] Many thanks to him.

Stuart Sharp,

11th October 2019

[28] *Australian Model Railway Magazine*, October 2019, p. 59.
[29] James Dalton is also President of the ARHS.