

Changing Trains in Albury

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In 1873 the 1.60 metre broad gauge line from Melbourne reached Wodonga. In 1881 the NSW 1.435 m standard gauge line reached Albury from Sydney. Then in 1883 the railway bridge across the Murray joined the two colonies.

Passengers had to change trains at Albury including Donald Bradman, American General Douglas MacArthur, Phar Lap and Saint Mary MacKillop, Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling, D H Lawrence, H G Wells, Agatha Christie, Robert Louis Stevenson as well as most Australian politicians up until 1962. In 1962 a standard gauge track was opened between Melbourne and Sydney.

Author Mark Twain passed through and commented “The strangest thing, the unaccountable marvel that Australia can show, namely the break of gauge at Albury. Think of the paralysis of intellect that gave that idea birth.”

The Albury railway refreshment rooms were well stocked. From 1883, they had a license to sell liquor, but to rail passengers only. *The Argus* reported “Mr Moses, licensee of the Albury railway refreshment rooms, has received his licence for the sale of liquors and this has proved of great convenience to overland travellers.”



The well stocked bar area at Albury railway refreshment rooms (State Records NSW)

During World War II, troop trains rolled into the station, sometimes at 5:30 in the morning. The station came to life as 500 or more soldiers stepped out. On the short break the first priority was a meal and drink in the refreshment room.

In 1942 it was reported that soldiers were banned from the room “because of certain incidents in special military trains when troops had been allowed to get liquor.”

The Duke of Cornwall (later King George V) and the Duchess were on the platform on their way to Brisbane in 1901. The *Albury Banner* reported "The entire length of the platform was richly carpeted and ornamented with festoons, flags, flowers and Chinese lanterns."

In 1927, the Duke of York (later King George VI) and the Duchess stopped briefly on their way to officially open Parliament House in Canberra.

The world's greatest prima donna, Dame Nellie Melba, passed through in life and in death. In 1931 her coffin was conveyed by mortuary train to Melbourne. As the coffin changed trains, a large crowd saw Albury mayor Alf Waugh place a wreath while the Albury Town Band played 'Nearer My God to Thee.'