

Notes: “Then & Now Gallery – Albury Railway”

Image 01:

Local dignitaries (mostly male) in their finery at the not yet complete Albury Railway Station, awaiting the arrival of a special train carrying passengers including Premier Sir Henry Parkes from Sydney for the official opening of the Great Southern Rail on February 3, 1881. Refer to an *Albury Banner* article (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/254362426>) and details of the celebrations in the *Sydney Evening News* (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/107211498>).

Image 02:

The Albury Railway Station and Stationmaster’s residence. With decorations still in place, a grandstand at the station front and a festooned passenger train, this is clearly another photo taken on the day that celebrated the arrival of rail to Albury from Sydney. In the early photo, the platform was quite a modest length, but extensions to the platform were made in 1902, 1907, 1914 and finally in 1920, when an extra 200 feet brought its total length to 1,542 feet or 460 metres.

Image 03:

The almost completed Albury Railway Station in 1881. The Albury Station was not officially opened until February 26 the following year. It was designed in an Italianate style under the direction of John Whitton, engineer-in-charge for NSW Railways. “The grandeur of the new building stood as a symbol of NSW’s colonial pride” (Pennay, 2006).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albury_railway_station

Other the next 80 or so years, many prominent people changed trains across the Albury railway platform – the list includes: Prime Ministers Edmund Barton, Ben Chifley, William Morris (Billy) Hughes and Robert Menzies, Duke of Cornwall (later King George V), Duke of York (later King George VI), Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, Agatha Christie, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, H G Wells, D H Lawrence, Russell Drysdale, Walter Burley Griffin, Enid Lyons, General Douglas MacArthur, Mary MacKillop, Dame Nellie Melba, General John Monash and a many others.

Image 04:

Before the completion of a bridge across the Murray River, passengers were carried to and fro between Wodonga and Albury by the Victorian Railways coach. The temporary grandstands in the background suggest that this may have been its final trip as the occasion was the official opening of the rail link between NSW and Victoria in June 1883.

Image 05:

The Albury Railway Extension or “Great Southern Railway” from Sydney to Albury was officially opened on February 3, 1881 by Mr John Lackey, NSW Minister for Public Works. The event was a grand occasion attended by guests including NSW Premier Sir Henry Parkes and Victorian Premier Mr Graham Berry. Refer to articles on the Trove website:

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/107211498>

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/70952499>

The New South Wales Government Railways were built to the standard gauge of 4’8½” (1.435 metres) and Victoria used the broad gauge of 5’3” (1.6 metres) which meant travellers in both directions had to change trains at Albury. This resulted in a 455 metres (1,493 ft) long platform being built to accommodate that move, then the longest in Australia.

In June 1883, the Sydney to Melbourne link was completed when a temporary railway bridge across the Murray River was opened. A grand celebration was held in Albury to mark the

occasion. The following article appeared in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* (Sydney), on Saturday 16 June 1883:

LAST Thursday complete communication by rail between New South Wales and Victoria was duly accomplished and celebrated at Albury ... The platform was crowded with people, and the whole town was en fete. The various Ministers and members of Parliament had in the meantime attired themselves in their dress clothes, and having alighted took their position on a dais erected for the occasion at the rear of the station. The day was kept a close holiday, even the post office being closed, the only place which appeared to be busy being the telegraph office, where the clerks and operators were working like bees. A band paraded the town playing lively music, and the leading places of business were decorated with flags and evergreens. Four-in-hands with parties from the country districts were met with in every direction. There seemed to be a good deal of feeling in consequence of Wodonga having declined to act in concert with Albury, it being intended by the residents of the Victorian township to present a separate address to the Governor and the Parliamentary representative of Victoria. At 1 o'clock Lord Augustus Loftus arrived at the Albury railway station, and was immediately conveyed to the dais before referred to. Here were drawn up the members of the Albury Borough Council and a number of societies, who presented addresses of the usual character, congratulating the people of the colony upon the completion of the through line of railway, and upon the union of the two colonies. The band played the National Anthem, and the school children sang "God save the Queen" very nicely. There were a large number of mounted troopers, as well as foot constables, to keep order, but their services were not required. Among the crowds present, which numbered many thousands, were hundreds of well-known Sydney citizens, who had arrived by the early train.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/71000480>

Image 07:

A delegation of senators leave the Albury Railway Station after their arrival on February 11, 1902 to inspect Albury as one of the proposed sites for the new Australian Federal capital city. Unfortunately for Albury's prospects, the weather was terrible, with a hot blustery wind and a dust haze over the town.

The *Albury Banner* of February 28, 1902 reported an exchange between a local and one of the senators:

It was bad luck for the border city to be afflicted with its worst day on record just when the Senate was on the job seeking a site and spying out the land about the riverside city to judge of its suitability for the federal capital. The allegation that Albury was too hot has always been a sore point with Alburyites, and it looks as if a malicious fate had sent along a northerly buster and uncovered a fierce sun to affect the Senators with a disgust for Albury. One prominent Albury man, speaking to a perspiring senator, said: "I know what it is. This is just the result of ___'s machinations. He wants one of those sites nearer to Sydney, and as he and the devil were always friends they've put it up between them to let this flaming heat loose on Albury today." "Eh, well," replied the Senator, "if the devil lives so near Albury that the opening of his back door makes the place uninhabitable, I reckon we'd better go further." "No, no," said the Albury advocate, "bring Parliament here and it will soon frighten the devil away!"

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/100604946/10835777>

Image 11:

A view of the Albury Railway Station and railway yards. Comparing the two images, clearly there is more activity in the 'Then' photo – until 1962 all passengers and all freight had to be transferred at Albury from Victorian trains running on the broad gauge to NSW trains on the standard gauge (or vice versa).

Image 12:

The Argus (Melbourne) reported the opening of the permanent railway bridge in August 1884:

OPENING OF THE MURRAY BRIDGE AT ALBURY. The completion of the work in connexion with Mr Alexander Frew's contract for the iron railway bridge across the Murray was made the occasion of some little ceremony yesterday. Mr Luke Gulson, the mayor of Albury, assisted by Mr T H Mate, screwed down the last bolt on the bridge, which would be ready for use now but that the approaches on the Victorian bank are not complete.

The Argus (Melbourne), Monday 4 August 1884

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/6054593>

The railway bridge over the Murray River at Albury, to permanently connect the systems of Victoria and New South Wales, has been completed, and will be opened for traffic in a few days. The arrangement was that the traffic should be transferred from the temporary bridge to the new route on Thursday ... The cost of the bridge has been equally borne by the two colonies, but New South Wales, having jurisdiction over the Murray, undertook the execution of the work upon plans prepared by its own engineers, and approved by the Victorian department ... The total cost of the approaches has been about £30,000. The bridge is constructed for a double set of metals, one line being laid according to the New South Wales gauge of 4ft 8½in, and the other upon the Victorian gauge of 5ft 3in. It is a double span structure each extending over a space of 100ft. In the centre of the river the bridge is supported by piers formed of two large cast iron cylinders ... sunk in the bed of the river to a depth of 120ft, and now rest upon a layer of coarse sand and gravel. Their interior is filled up to the top with concrete ... The distance from Sydney to the pier at the southern end of the bridge 387 miles 51 chains and from Melbourne to the same point, 189 miles nine chains ... The superstructure of the bridge, weighing 583 tons was manufactured by Messrs. Westwood and Baillie, of London. The cost of the ironwork delivered at Albury was £17,609, and the total cost for both work and material will be about £31,000 ...

The Argus (Melbourne), Saturday 16 August 1884

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/6054593>

Image 15:

A great photo of the Albury Railway Station. During work at the station in early 2017, a drone was used to inspect the chimneys. The contractors used the opportunity to take this photo from their drone.

Image 16:

Albury railway refreshment rooms – the well stocked bar area. From 1883, the refreshment rooms had a license to sell liquor, but to rail passengers only. The Melbourne *Argus* reported in July 1883 that

Mr Moses, licensee of the Albury railway refreshment rooms, has now received his licence for the sale of liquors and this has proved of great convenience to overland travellers.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/8536404>

There were complaints that the process of changing trains at Albury was too fast for passengers to adequately enjoy the hospitality available in the rooms. In September 1942 the Melbourne *Age* told its readers that:

The Minister of the Army (Mr Forde) said today that a ban had been placed on soldiers who were travelling in special troop trains from securing drink at Albury railway refreshment room bar ... because of certain incidents in special military trains when troops had been allowed to get liquor at railway refreshment bars.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/206824826>