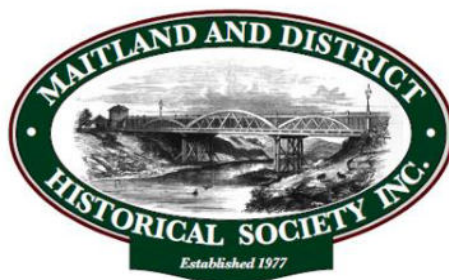


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COVID-19 **NEWSLETTER** N^o 49

31st March 2023

What with floods and pestilence (Covid), Steamfest is finally back. According to my reckoning, the last Steamfest was in 2019. That means there has been a hiatus of some four years. Whilst there's been a fair bit of *Huffin' and puffin'*, it all came to nought but now, all those avid '*steam buffs*' can dust off their cameras, launder the oils rags, don the overalls and come on board, the train's ready to leave the station!

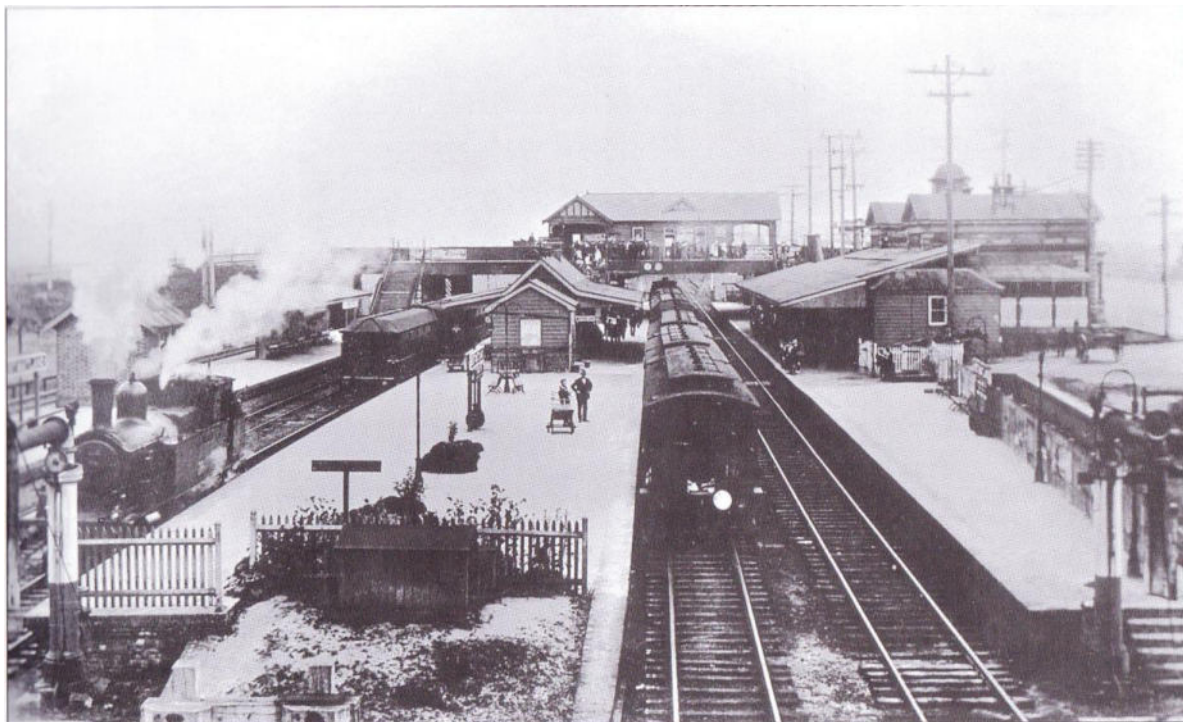
On the subject of trains, I, as the son of a train driver, take umbrage to the descriptive changes that have taken place on the railways. I remember when they were *railway stations* as opposed to *train stations* and *railway lines* rather than *train tracks* although the one that irritates me most is *freight trains*. To me, they will ever remain *goods trains*, freight being the charge to carry the said goods. I suppose I should be grateful it is not yet the '*RailRoad*'

All that aside, it's great to have Steamfest back ... Pete Smith's photograph from a few Steamfest's ago more or less says it all ...



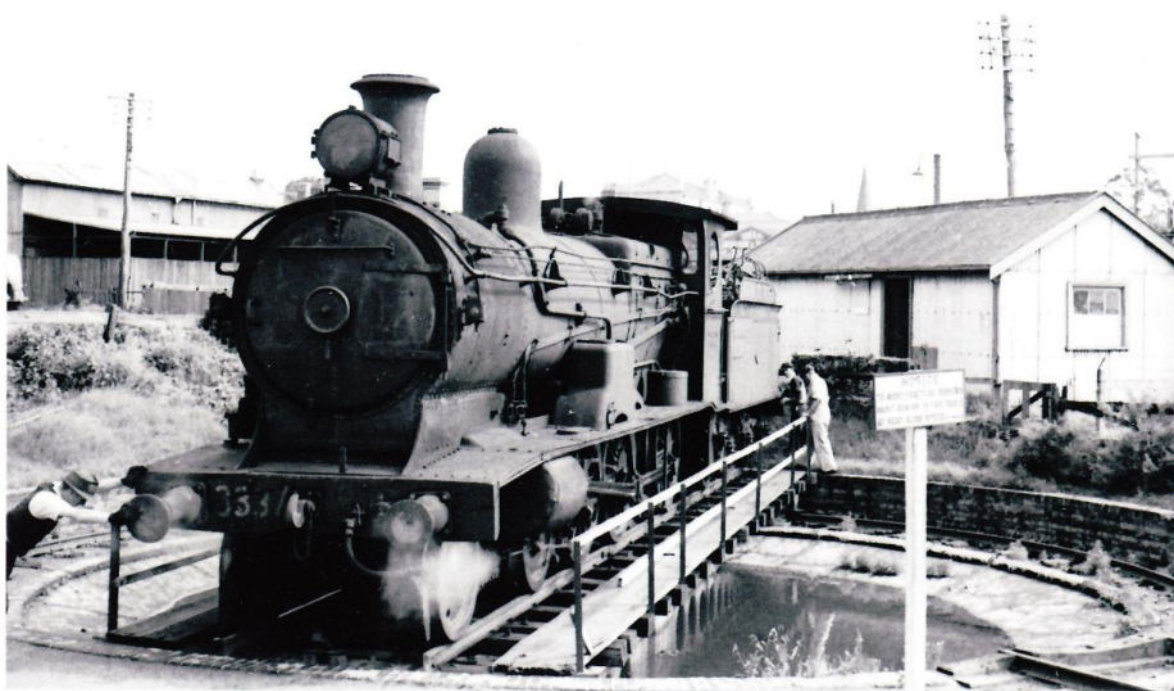
It is of course about more than just trains, the name is after all, Steamfest, not Trainfest. The Rally ground will be awash with all sorts of steam driven memorabilia (well, hopefully not awash but I think you know what I mean).

I have a couple of favourite photos of the railway precinct. The first is from 1918 and shows a time when the ticket office was situated on the elevated walkway at the western end.



West Maitland Railway Station in 1918 looking west showing the busy activity on Platforms 2 and 3. The main station building is at the right of the photo with the Cessnock Road overbridge and booking office in the distance.

ARHS Rail Resource Centre 52745.



The second photo is of the turntable. As the name suggests, this was to 'turn' the engines around so they didn't have to be driven 'tender first'. The positioning of the turntable has been marked in the pavement on the eastern side of the station building.

On occasions trains did have to be driven backwards and the crews hated it for, unlike today's diesels, there was no 'backwards' driving position, the driving controls on the firewall. 'Seeing' was also a problem and a potential safety risk as the tender obscured vision be it signals or any obstructions that might be on the tracks. I remember my Dad telling me of an occasion during the War when he had to drive an ammunition train at night, tender first, between Taree and South Grafton, not knowing if the next bridge was even there, the train in complete darkness ... a leap of faith ...

All that aside (I do get a little nostalgic), *Steamfest* is scheduled for 29th and 30th of April and we need YOUR help to man the Information stand and the Society's stall (located together). Don't be intimidated by it, there'll be help at hand for any tricky questions and I guarantee you'll enjoy yourself.

A roster will be on the email early next week after Sunday's BBQ at Bunnings.

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While on the subject of BBQ's, many thanks to the members that have agreed to 'work' on Sunday. Both Jennifer (Buffier) and Steve (Bone) are convalescing after surgery so it was very necessary that others 'stepped-up' to the plate in their absence. Steve has had a pretty tough time with his back and knee but hopefully he is on the way to recovery, albeit somewhat slowly. Jennifer likewise, her surgery preventing her from climbing stairs for around six weeks. I guess the good bit for Jennifer is that the restriction means she can't go to work, her office up a reasonably steep flight of stairs. The down side is ... *no work, no pay!*

It also means Jennifer will be unable to cater for the Speaker Evening on Tuesday next but I am pleased to say that Ruth and Kevin Murdoch have stepped up to that same plate I mentioned earlier – many thanks Ruth and Kevin.

On the subject of Tuesday's meeting, the guest speaker on this occasion will be member David Sciffer and his topic will be the 1878 Wood engraving of Maitland. The advertising paraphernalia says it all ...

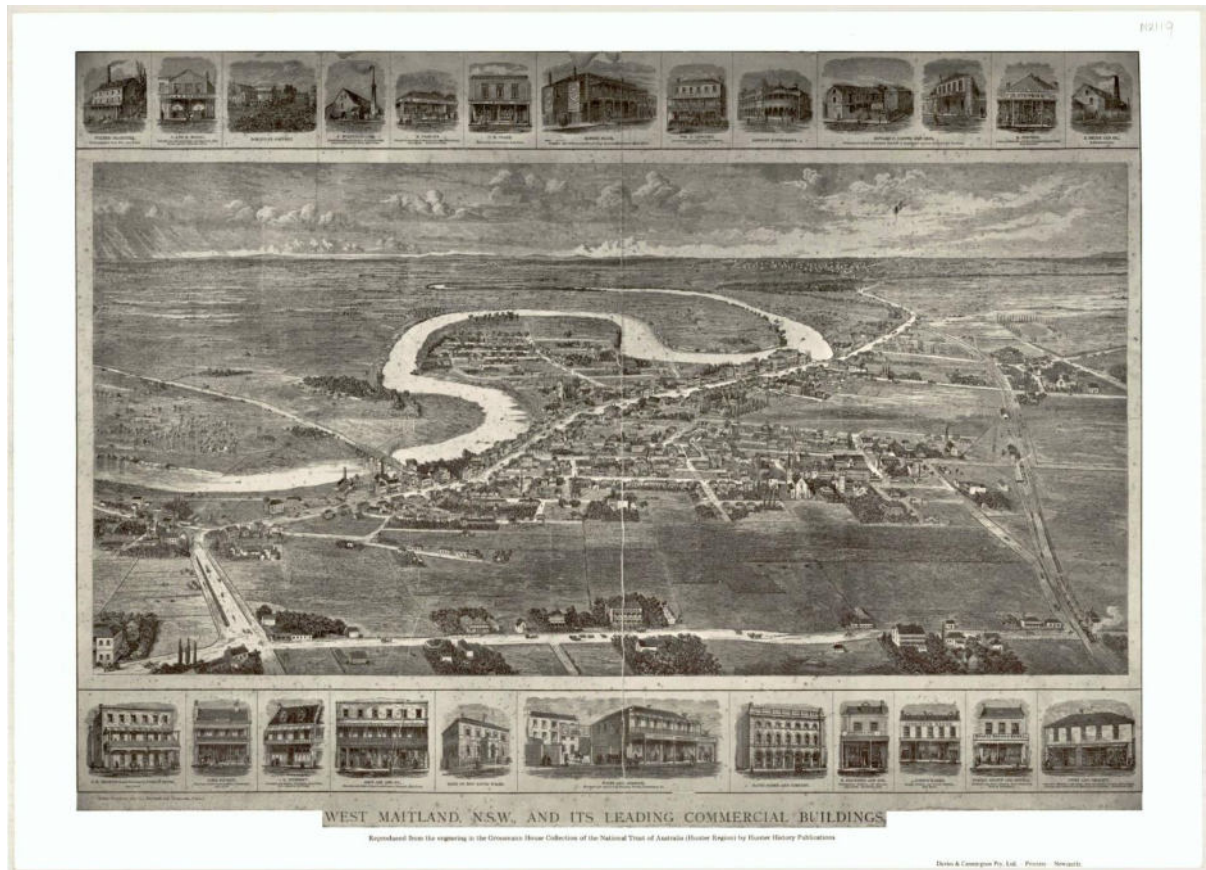
### ***1878 Wood Engraving of West Maitland (Depicting the town from the air)***

In the early days of New South Wales, Maitland was important as a link in the supply chains to and from the north and north-west of the colony. The engraving that David will speak about was in a supplement to the *Sydney illustrated News* on 7 September, 1878 and is a testimony to the significance of Maitland at that time. It tells us much about Maitland during its 'golden age' when it was known as the 'Hub of the Hunter'.

David is a life-long resident of Maitland with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He has had an interest in photography since his teens and assembled his first computer over Easter in 1983. On his retirement in 1998, he combined these interests and now spends his spare time restoring mainly historical digital images.

The Society asks for a donation of \$5 to cover the cost of light refreshments before and after the talk. Members of the Public are welcome.

We are currently using ZOOM (for members only) on speaker nights.



I suppose we can't have a Newsletter without some mention of Covid ...

Almost everyone seems to have lost interest although the deaths and infections keep happening. Australia, like the rest of the western world has more or less stopped posting statistics. When the stats are posted, they are VERY unreliable as almost no one is registering a positive RAT.

I guess I'm part of the problem too in that I'm now eligible for the 5<sup>th</sup> 'shot' but haven't got around to it yet!

Until next time. best wishes and stay safe !

Kevin Short  
President

# Our Past | A view on the loss of heritage in High Street

By Val Rudkin

May 16 2022



**HISTORY:** The Bank of New South Wales building, between Bourke Street and the Post Office, in 1913. Picture: Supplied.

Over the decades, Maitland's High Street has been influenced by many decisions affecting buildings that have been there for many years.

Demolitions have occurred, and history has been made to disappear as a result. Only afterwards do the people of Maitland become aware of what has been lost.

If you own a home, you believe that home is your property to do with as you like provided you do so with council approval. If a business on High Street owns the premises that their business occupies then they too feel they have the right to make changes with council approval, of course.

One of the buildings which most people considered a fine structure and an asset to the town was erected for the Bank of New South Wales in 1854 a few doors below the Maitland Post Office.

Eventually the Bank of New South Wales became known as Westpac, banking became more and more digitised and large impressive bank buildings became redundant.

'Progress' some might call it, 'modernisation' saw some large, heritage-rich buildings around NSW destroyed.

The solid bank building of 1854 was one that was demolished. The land was cleared and Westpac had a nondescript building erected on it. The outcome left people with an eye for history and heritage stunned, even saddened.



REVISITED: The Rourke Building and Best & Less on High Street in 2015. Picture: Supplied.

Whilst the loss of the bank building is mourned by many older folk, another famous Maitland building has suffered a transformation that is a pity to behold.

John Rourke was a saddler who learned his trade from his father. Henry Rourke had established his business just east on High Street in 1836.

By the time that John Rourke took over the family business it had grown and prospered and he put his own name on the building which he had erected to the west of his father's old shop in 1894.

The new two-storey building had three individual shops with historical architectural interest as the only remaining arcaded upper floor remaining in High Street. The attractive facade was constructed in red face bricks with cemented arches and trimmings.

Enter Best & Less, a clothing store whose owners had decided Maitland needed one of their stores. The Union Bank building had stood on the corner of High and Bulwer Streets since 1893 but ceased trading around 1950 when the Union merged with the Bank of Australasia and all business was transferred to that branch.

The Union Bank building became the RSL and served that club well until more space was needed, leading to the sale of the building to Best & Less.

Many Maitland people are unaware that the removal of the RSL building is only part of the story surrounding Best & Less.

The building they planned for the site required more frontage to High Street and this was achieved by the purchase and removal of a section of the John Rourke building. Some will say that the Rourke building still stands, so what?

However, the unique architectural feature has been compromised causing a loss of symmetry in design. It is a pity to behold.



# Our Past – The railway from West Maitland to Lochinvar

By Laurie Henderson

May 29 2022



EXTENSION: Farley Railway Station: the station building on the up platform, looking in the direction of Singleton in 1987. Picture: Jeff Mullier

The Great Northern Railway was opened to West Maitland on July 22, 1858, and the High Street Station was available for passenger use on October 25.

Now came the task of extending the line inland.

Questions began to be asked about when the extension toward Singleton would begin and Mr Robertson, the Hon Secretary for Lands and Works, replied that 271/2 miles (44.5 kilometres) was to be constructed.

There was a requirement for a pause of 40 days for notice of objections by proprietors of land through which the line would pass.

On November 6, 1858, plans for the extension were exhibited for inspection at the West Maitland Court House.

The line of the railway was to go through the lands of the following proprietors: Messrs Otto Baldwin, Joseph Ede Pearce, James Gould, Messrs Owen and Beckett, James Weston, the Very Rev Dean Lynch, Mrs E Pilcher, Mrs Jane Foss, Messrs Bourn Russell, Rutherford, Dowers and Winder.

Since William Wright's contract had not been extended, a series of small contracts were let for the extension.

By April 21, 1859, the line's workings had advanced as far as the Stony Creek bridge (Farley), and the fencing for the railway had reached Lochinvar.

A number of obstacles had been overcome: a cutting through sandstone, bridges over low swampy ground and a bed of whinstone (a hard, dark coloured rock) at Welshmans Hill.

Blasting powder, at up to a quarter of a ton per week, was used to break it up.

By May 21, 1859, the line had been completed beyond Dagworth Road (Regent Street) and by July 5 work had begun at the Lochinvar end of the line.

Mr Willcox, the agent for Sir Morton Peto, started construction operations near Lochinvar.

On August 16, 1859, notice was given that the second part of the railway, extending from Lochinvar to Black Creek was to commence, a distance of 9 miles and 10 chains (about 14.7km).

By November 29, 1859, the whole of the line had been cleared as far as New Freng, a distance of about 6 miles (9.6 kilometres) from the intended terminus in Singleton.

Large workshops for the railway and an office for Mr Ballard, Superintendent of the Works, had been erected at Belford.

It seems that many of the navvies on the railway were local farm workers.

An article in the *Maitland Mercury* of January 10, 1860 states that work had slowed on the railway extension as the labourers left the works to go reaping, but with the harvest now being drawn to a close, the reapers had already begun to become navvies again.

Chinese labourers were introduced by contractor, Joseph Martindale, in January, 1860.

At Stony Creek, a timber station building had been erected and a stationmaster's residence was soon to be built.

A siding had been constructed to receive produce from the farms along Wollombi Road. At Lochinvar, a more substantial brick station was under construction.

The railway to Lochinvar was opened for public traffic to Lochinvar on Monday, July 2, 1860.

A considerable number of the inhabitants of Lochinvar assembled at the terminus to witness the arrival of the first train.



A mate sent me these and although I've seen most before, they are 'corny' enough to appeal to my perverted sense of humour and are therefore worth repeating:

## ***PUNS FOR THE EDUCATED.....***

**1.**

**The fattest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.**

**2.**

**I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.**

**3.**

**She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.**

**4.**

**A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class, because it was a weapon of maths disruption.**

**5.**

**No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.**

**6.**

**A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.**

**7.**

**A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.**

**8.**

**Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.**

**9.**

**A hole has been found in the nudist camp wall. The police are looking into it.**

**10.**

**Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.**

**11. Atheism is a non-prophet organisation.**

**12.**

**Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other: 'You stay; I'll go on a head.'**

**13.**

**I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.**

**14.**

**A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab center said: 'Keep off the Grass.'**

**15.**

**The midget fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.**

**16.**

**The soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.**

**17.**

**A backward poet writes inverse.**

**18.**

**In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.**

**19.**

**When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.**

**20.**

**If you jumped off the bridge in Paris, you'd be in Seine.**

**21.**

**A vulture boards an airplane, carrying two dead raccoons. The stewardess looks at him and says, 'I'm sorry, sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger.'**

**22.**

**Two fish swim into a concrete wall. One turns to the other and says 'Dam!'**

**23.**

**Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.**

**Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, 'I've lost my electron.' The other says 'Are you sure?' The first replies, 'Yes, I'm positive.'**

**Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root canal? His goal: transcend dental medication.**

**There was the person who sent ten puns to friends, with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did.**

**and something to ponder ...**

