

ITEM 15 ARHS BULLETIN
September 1977

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BOOROWA BRANCH LINE
(by N.J. Pollard)

New South Wales Railways

Between Yass Junction and Harden on the Main Southern line lies the sleepy settlement of Galong. From this little village, the 17 mile 68 chain (28.74km) branch line swings away to the north to Boorowa, a small town of two thousand people set in the rolling wheat and sheep country of the South Western Slopes.

In attempting to present a history of the line, one must emphasise two features of its genesis: firstly the battle as to where the branch line should leave the main line – no less than seven points were considered and secondly, the procrastination displayed by parliamentarians who virtually promised the line and subsequently went back on their word.

When the Southern line reached Goulburn in the Southern Tablelands in May 1869, various routes were surveyed beyond the town prior to the construction of the next section of the line towards Yass. One of these was a survey made about 1873 through Gunning, Dalton, Burrowa (Boorowa) and Murrumburrah (see Bulletin No. 457 – November 1975). This route was subsequently abandoned because of its relative closeness to the Western line.

Burrowa (since this was the name of the town at this time this spelling will be used throughout the subsequent discussion) residents started to agitate for their own branch line soon after the main line had been extended through the Galong district in 1877.

1884 – 1899 Initial Success then Failure

The first real demand seems to have come from a public meeting convened in Burrowa in early February 1884, when 30 to 40 people attended. It was decided to send a deputation to the Minister for Works to lay the matter of the line before him.

The deputation, led by the local Member Mr. Slattery, met the Minister a couple of weeks later. It was pointed out that Galong was the best site for the junction with the main line and that if it were built, revenue might exceed £20,000 annually.

In reply the Minister said he would obtain returns for Burrowa trade, instruct the Engineer to make trial surveys, and calculate the cost of the said line. If the results were satisfactory he would consider the construction of the line. Instructions were given by the Commissioner for Railways for the surveys to be made.

In August, the Galong to Burrowa branch line had been listed along with numerous others in a document that pertained to be future policy regarding the extension of branch lines. £144,000 was earmarked for the project from Loan Funds. In order to keep the matter constantly before parliament, the Burrowa Railway League was formed on 7th October.

A few days later the matter came up for discussion in the Legislative Assembly. Sir Henry Parkes, the Premier of NSW, wanted these proposed lines left until the next session: another member claimed

there was insufficient information about the economics of the lines. In the midst of a rather heated argument, Parkes made remarks to the effect that the Burrowa line was purely political, a claim hotly denied by Slattery. It was moved successfully that the matter of the railways be dealt with in committee. Parkes, not satisfied sought to move an amendment, 'that the Engineer-in-Chief be examined at the Bar of the House with reference to these railway proposals'. It was lost 33 votes to 15.

On 28th October, Parliament successfully moved that the Galong-Burrowa railway along with numerous others become a part of railway policy, and that a sum of loan money be put aside to finance construction. It must be understood that this Bill did not authorise the construction of any of the lines but merely put them on a short list of lines to be constructed in the near future.

Back in Burrowa there was great excitement, a great crowd assembled for a bonfire and fireworks. A committee was formed to prepare a banquet. Mr. Slattery made the remark that he would travel to Burrowa by train on St. Patricks Day 1886. How very wrong he was!

A further public meeting was held in Burrowa in July of the following year (1885) to urge the completion of the permanent survey. The Minister wanted the matter of the place for the terminus at Boorowa cleared up. The permanent survey was completed in October. The Minister stated that now the survey had been completed there was no reason why the proposed line could not be brought before the House for its consideration. It was decided that the terminus should be placed in the town reserve.

All appeared to be going well until Bowning residents called a meeting on 25th September to deal with the following resolution, 'that this meeting views with disfavour the proposal of the Government to construct a line from Galong to Burrowa'. It was carried unanimously. They further pressed for a trial survey to be made from there to Burrowa. Their opposition to Galong being the junction seems to have been twofold; firstly, the Galong route would pass through huge squatting run areas, whereas if the line was constructed from Bowning it would benefit the numerous small orchardists along the route; secondly, the Galong route was longer, the distance from Bowning to Burrowa would be 16 miles but the distance from Bowning to Burrowa via Galong would be 38 miles.

A petition expressing the views of Bowning citizens was circulated and after 300 names had been added to it, the document was passed on to Mr. L.F. Heydon, local member for Yass Plains for presentation to Parliament.

The next year, 1886, saw some progress made. A trial survey was made between Bowning and Burrowa and at the same time Sir John Fowler released a report on the construction of light railways. 'The Burrowa News' said this report would have an indirect bearing on the proposed line into the district.

In the report, Sir John said that it would be possible to construct light railways using 50lb flat bottomed rail employing 2,000 sleepers per mile from local sources. Such railways would cost in the vicinity of £2,000 per mile. This line would be capable of supporting a 24-ton locomotive on six wheels. However, the report went on to say that it would be more sensible to use 60lb. Rail for future rail extensions even though it would add about £200 per mile.

In June the surveyors were back at Galong making further investigations. It was decided that the junction point should be on the Binalong side of Galong station. Two months later the plans and specifications of the Galong to Boorowa railway and the Goulburn to Crookwell railway were laid on the table of the Legislative Assembly as exhibits.

Another major rail debate occupied the Assembly in February, 1888, when once again the matter of future railway policy was discussed. To the amazement and horror of Burrowa residents their line had been deleted.

A deputation was sent to Mr. O'Sullivan, Minister for Works from the League in an attempt to have the line reinstated on the list. The manager of the Australian Mutual Building Society, one of the members of the deputation, said they proposed to make available 100 farms each of 100 acres and irrigate them in the style of Chaffey Brothers. Mr Sutherland thought the estimated cost of the line, £140,000 or £9,000 per mile far too high and he told the deputation he would try to get a lighter line investigated to cost about £5,000 per mile. To follow up the deputation, the local Railway League sent an invitation to Sir Henry Parkes to visit the district. It is not certain whether the invitation was accepted.

Not long afterwards, Mr. Slattery informed the local committee that the Railway Commissioners would visit Burrowa to gather evidence from the district. They arrived on 21st December, 1888. After travelling from Galong to Burrowa along the surveyed route they spent little over an hour in Burrowa itself and whilst there asked no questions about the potential of the area. The local paper called the visit 'useless'. The following month their report was made public. It was against the construction of the line.

Not deterred, the League switched its course of attack. It decided to send each farmer a set of questions about the effect when built, the railway would have on their farms. They wanted to know how much of their produce would travel on this new mode of transport.

Towards the end of 1889 it was learned that the Burrowa railway would be the subject of a Public Works Committee investigation, This Committee had only just been set up, its job being to report on the feasibility of proposed new public works. The League at Burrowa stepped up its search for statistical information.

In November 1890, Mr. Percy Scarr, an Examiner of Public Works arrived at Burrowa to take evidence. This was gathered from outlying centres as well as Burrowa. The villages of Marengo (Murringo), Frogmore, Reids Flat, Narrowa and Rye Park were visited. His report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in the last week of December. This report was unfavourable, it was considered that the line would run at a heavy loss and what was more, the Crookwell line, when completed, would tap some of the produce of the district.

With yet another rebuff, the Burrowa residents seem to have lost hope. For the next nine years there is almost complete silence on the subject of the railway. One exception to this occurred in 1897, when the Mayor, Mr. Isaac Stevenson wrote to the Railway Commissioners. He received the usual reply stating that the line would be given future consideration.

1900 - 1903 The Gunning - Burrowa Surveys

Burrowa residents hoped that the twentieth century would be kinder to them than the previous one. Mr. Nielsen, representing the Labor Party had been elected local Member late in 1899, and the Mayor

decided to reopen the question with a letter to the Government dated 5th October 1900. He urged the Galong-Burrowa proposal be resubmitted to the Public Works Committee.

When the matter was brought to the notice of the Minister for Public Works who at this time was Mr. Suitherland, he seemed most interested in a route from Gunning to Burrowa and then on to Koorawather on the Harden-Blayney cross-country link. Surveyor Stuart made an exploration (trial survey) of the route and the report was submitted to the Engineer-in-Chief in April 1902. He proposed that the line leave the main line at a point 166 miles from Sydney (single line mileage) and keep to a north westerly direction keeping on the south side of the Gunning- Burrowa Road The line would pass through Dalton and the north side of Rye Park.

A number of deviations were suggested, one being that the line branch out from Oolong rather than Gunning, while Mr. Nielsen suggested Coolalie near Yass as another alternative.

In December of the next year, Traffic Inspector Usher travelled over Stuart's route and shortly afterward the Railway Commissioners were due to make the same journey. Apparently their report was also unfavourable because we hear nothing about any railway proposals for at least another three years.

1906 – 1915 The Railway becomes a Reality

On 20th July, 1906, Mayor Hancock called a public meeting to re-open the matter of the railway. Two to three hundred people attended and three motions were passed unanimously. The first affirmed that the district needed a railway: the second asked that the local Member take up the matter in Parliament: the third reconstituted the Railway League which apparently had not met for some time. Much was made of the fact that if Yass became the Federal Capital then Burrowa would most certainly become a suburb. Under these conditions a railway was most desirable.

Mr. Nielsen met the Minister shortly afterward and was told that nothing would be done until the Barren Jack (Burrinjuck) Dam proposal had passed through Parliament. The Minister for Works at this time was against the Gunning route but was in favour of the Bowning idea. Despite pressure exerted on the Minister by Nielsen, he refused to order new surveys in any part of the Burrowa district.

During 1908 there was heightened interest in railway construction from all parts of the District. Gunning residents formed themselves into a League in order to press for Stuart's route. Various leagues were formed along the Crookwell to Cowra proposal which had gained some popularity after the Goulburn to Crookwell line had been authorised.

In an editorial in the Burrowa News of 7th August 1908, it was stated that the choice of route that the line would take had held up construction for such a long time that if local residents were not careful, the heightened interest recently shown would cause even further delays. A public meeting was held to gauge the town's reaction, After further contact with the Minister for Works, Mr. Lee, it was found that he was only really interested in the line from Koorawatha through Burrowa to the main line. Whether the junction was at Bowning, Goondah, Binalong or Galong did not seem to concern him at the time.

An important report was made public in November. It was a report by Mr. Kennedy on the feasibility of constructing the Crookwell to Cowra line and the Galong to Frogmore link. This latter line would pass through Burrowa and junction with the Crookwell-Cowra line at Frogmore. Kennedy suggested

that the junction of the two lines be at Little Plain a short distance from Frogmore. His report was generally favourable to the construction of both lines. Despite the report the Minister still maintained that the only line that should be constructed was the one through Burrowa. Mr. Nielsen promised to notify all the leagues in the district of the Minister's feelings.

A further public meeting was held at Burrowa on 28th November 1908 where it was decided to call a conference of all delegates from Railway Leagues in the district to discuss the matter of the Burrowa railway.

The leagues involved in trying to get the Crookwell to Cowra line constructed refused to co-operate in any combined meeting. The following resolution passed by them sums up their determination: 'That this meeting has decided to continue its agitation for the construction of the line from Crookwell to Cowra and could not accept the Minister's suggestions. It would be a waste of time to meet the Burrowa delegates in conference'

Mr. Nielsen visited Burrowa on 2nd January, 1909. A meeting was held with him when the motion was passed asking the Public Works Committee to look into all aspects of a line from the Main Southern line through Burrowa to the Harden-Blayney railway.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Kennedy made a tour of the district. He said there would be no difficulty in building the line through Burrowa but he commented that if the line branched off at Binalong steep grades would be necessary in the vicinity of that town. The Yass Progress Association tried to get a survey completed from Yass to Burrowa. All the leagues associated with the Crookwell to Cowra proposal went their own way, but as subsequent history has shown, their efforts were fruitless.

Being concerned with the lack of progress, Mr. Nielsen led a deputation to the Minister for Works in May to try to speed up the Public Works Committee in its investigations of the line through Burrowa. It was not until December of the following year however, that Parliament gave approval for the Committee to look into the matter of the line. It is interesting to note that the Committee was asked to specifically look into a proposed line from Bowning to Burrowa. The reason for this was that this line was to be built first and then at some later date the line was to be continued towards Koorawatha. Bowning was chosen as the junction point for the Committee to consider because the line would then pass through the centre of the region.

The Public Works Committee Enquiry

The report was completed on 21st August 1911, being a lengthy document in which evidence occupied over 70 pages of closely typed print.

The route considered by them was to branch from the main line at 193 miles 72 chains at Bowning and for most of its distance follow the left bank of the Burrowa River. It was to terminate at the southern boundary of Pudman Street at a mileage of 222 miles 29 chains. The ruling grade was to be 1 in 80 with curves no sharper than 10 chains radius. The estimated cost was £162,164 or £5695 per mile. Evidence was taken from three main groups of people, businessmen and farmers in the district, mining interests at the Kangiara Mines, and railway construction personnel. Evidence from each of these groups will be considered:

Businessmen and Farmers.

Their evidence is summarised as follows:

- * A railway from Bowning would boost orcharding in the Kangiara district
- * more wheat, oats and barley could be grown when a railway was built
- * land values would increase by £2 per acre
- * large estates in the region could be subdivided
- * increased settlement would result
- * fat lambs could be economically produced

In general this group of people were not too concerned about the route the line would take as long as it would serve the district.

Evidence from Kangiara Mines These were concerned with extraction of copper ore at a point about 10 miles south of Burrowa. The remains of these mines can still be seen on the Yass-Boorowa Road near the turnoff to the village of Kangiara. The salient points of their evidence can be summarised as follows:

A route from Bowning to Burrowa would be the only one which would help the Kangiara Mines. The following tonnages were given for one mine in the area:

1902 7 tons
1903 234 tons
1904 234 tons
1905 250 tons
1906 253 tons
1907 310 tons
1908 - tons
1909 3962 tons
1910 10,212 tons

- * it would be unlikely that more than 100 tons would be railed per week
- * only 20-30 tons of stores would be railed in per week
- * the railway would not increase the production at the mine. This would only come about with increases in copper prices
- * the mine has run at a loss for the last three years. No dividends have been paid
- * No detailed examination of the ore body had ever been made by the Government
- * the cheap rates given by the railway of lore would not make it profitable to build a railway just for the benefit of the mines
- * there were no real plans for the expansion of the mines

This evidence convinced the Committee that the mines could not be considered an important source of loading for the railway.

Railway Department Evidence. The following tables summarise the evidence given by the Department.

ITEM	Cost of Burrowa Railway (per mile)		
	via Bowning	via Galong	via Gunning
Earthworks	£1451	£697	£1820
Cost Culverts & timber openings	£558	£243	£565

Cost of Burrowa Railway (actual costs)

ITEM	via Bowning	via Galong	via Gunning
Earthworks	£41,312.10.0	£12,404.10.0	£94,365.10.0
Culverts etc	£15,895.18.0	£43,330.16.6	£29,280.09.4
Rails	£29,699.04.0	£15,436.00.0	£44,963.10.0
Plate laying	£21,537.19.6	£13,508.02.6	£39,477.00.6
Length	28m. 38ch.	17m. 64ch.	51m. 67ch.

Running Costs via Bowning

Estimated receipts

Goods, mineral, livestock	£2655
Parcels and passengers	£1713
Mails	£280
	£4648

Estimated Expenses

Maintenance, traffic, loco (3 trains per week)	£2934
Interest at 3.1/2%	£5510
	£8444

Difference (deficit) £3796

Running Costs via Galong

Estimated Revenue

Passengers	£1040
Goods	£1187
	£2227

Estimated Expenditure

Maintenance etc (3 trains/week)	£2394
Interest at 3.1/2%	£2859

Difference (deficit) £3026

It can easily be seen that as far as expenses were concerned, the Galong route was a much better proposition. The Committee's conclusion was to the effect that the route Galong to Burrowa should be chosen instead of the Bowning route.

In early September, the report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Meanwhile, one of the Sydney papers published a list of lines to be constructed in the State and the Burrowa League was disturbed to find that its line was well down on the list. The locals contacted their Member who found out that the position on the list meant nothing and that the Authorisation Bill would soon be before Parliament.

Two months later, Mr. Griffiths, who was Minister for Works at this time moved in Parliament that the proposal to construct a railway line from Galong to Burrowa be referred to the Public Works Committee. This motion was carried.

It does seem strange that the Parliament referred this matter back to this Committee when only a few weeks before they had reached that very conclusion. The answer lies in the fact that the

Committee's earlier deliberations were concerned with the route from Bowning. They now had to meet again to consider the line from Galong!

This only turned out to be a formality the report being completed on 7th November 1911. Evidence occupied only three pages which was gathered on two sitting days. Most of it was repetition of what had been written earlier. Of course, the conclusion was the same as previously. The Committee's report was brought before the Assembly on 14th November. Surveyors were sent to Galong to make the final surveys.

On 27th February, 1912, the Galong to Burrowa, the Finley to Tocumwal and the Barellan to Mirrool Authorisation Bills came before the Legislative Assembly. The Burrowa Bill passed through all stages and became law on 28th March, 1912.

The turning of the first sod at Burrowa was performed on 15th June. A large contingent of parliamentarians came to add colour to the occasion. The ceremony was performed in front of a large crowd by the Premier, Mr. J.S.T. McGowan who was presented with a silver shovel as a memento of the great occasion. The shovel was engraved with the following:

“Presented to Hon J.S.T. McGowan by the residents of Burrowa and district on the occasion of his turning of the first sod of the railway from Galong to Burrowa. 15th June 1912”.

Afterwards a large banquet was held for over 200 people and of course, all the usual speeches followed.

The local Railway League set about to engage plant and equipment for the project and by the end of August they had mustered 70 men, 80 horses, 48 carts, 6 ploughs and 5 scoops. Construction finally commenced on the 21st August at the Galong end. Apparently it was also intended to commence at the Burrowa end but lack of men and equipment seems to have prevented this.

Gordon Man & Sons Ltd. won the contract for wrought iron for the bridge over the Burrowa River, the contract being worth £201.15.0. E.D. Pike & Co. Sydney received the contract to supply ironbark timber for the same bridge. The value of the contract was £127.16.4.

Sleeper laying commenced in August 1913 and by October rails had been laid for half the distance. By January of the next year rails had been laid to within two miles of the town and four months later the permanent way had been laid throughout.

Trains commenced running into Burrowa in August using the construction locomotive believed to have been a G1204 – class (later 27 class). In fact this arrangement lasted until the following February when the Railway Department finally took over the line. The hold-up was due to the rearrangement of the junction at Galong of which more will be said in the next section,

The opening ceremony was carried out on 10th October, that is four months before the line was actually handed over, the ceremony being performed by the Chief Secretary Hon. J.H. Cann. The ministerial party marched from the Post Office to the station watched by over 2,000 people. After the ceremony, a banquet was held in the Guild Hall, a picnic and sports day were held in the afternoon at the Cricket Ground, a free rail trip was made to Galong and return at four o'clock and a social was held at the Guild Hall and the Mechanics Institute at night. Apparently two excursion trains came to Burrowa for the celebrations.

After a final inspection of the line on 13th January 1915, the line was handed over on 2nd February. The first train to use the line was the 3.45am train from Galong. It had taken 31 years for the line to become a reality.

In the months preceding the opening of the line discussion arose as to whether the terminus would be known as Burrowa or whether the name Boorowa would be used instead. Apparently this latter name was gaining some popularity in the town. The P.M.G. Department was adamant that the old name should be maintained as the Post Office was known by that name but the forces advocating change seem to have won the day for the branch was opened as the Galong to Boorowa Line. For some years the two names were used simultaneously and even today some of the older residents of the district still use the old name.

Junction Arrangements at Galong

This section of the history of the Boorowa Line is an interesting story in itself brought about by the fact that when the branch was opened, the Main Southern line was being duplicated in the vicinity of Galong. As part of this project, a major deviation was constructed on the new main line to ease the grades between Galong and Rocky Ponds. This section will deal with the problem in joining the branch to the new double track deviation.

Junction with the single track main line

The old single track main line passed through the northern edge of Galong Village. The embankments can still be seen today in the vicinity of the level crossing over the Boorowa line on the outskirts of the village. The original Galong station (which will be known as Old Galong in this article to avoid confusion with the new double track station) was situated near this crossing. Old Galong was opened with the line on 13th March 1877, and possessed a loop goods siding but no crossing facilities. This siding was interlocked on 2nd August 1886, but on 31st July 1888 this siding was converted to a crossing loop and a fully interlocked dead-end goods siding was provided in lieu. On 22nd December 1896 this siding was converted into a loop.

During construction of the Boorowa line a temporary junction and Construction Siding were completed at the Harden end of Old Galong station. (see diagram). These works were completed on 18th May 1913 and were used until the more permanent junction was completed on 2nd February 1915. The Construction Siding was laid on the Up side of the main line and was about 500' in length. The eastern end of this siding connected with Old Galong yard whilst the western end connected with the junction of the Boorowa line. The more permanent junction was not ready until 2nd February 1915 (see diagram). Mention was made of this hold up in the first section of the article. The junction was brought closer to the western end of Old Galong platform and was interlocked. Entry on to the branch was by Frame E which was unlocked by Lever 9 in the signal box. Access to the branch could also be made through an extension of the crossing loop. This method of working was in operation until 16th April 1916 when the new double track deviation was brought into use between Galong and Rocky Ponds.

Junction Arrangements with the new double track deviation

With the opening of this new section, Old Galong was closed to main line traffic. A second Galong was opened on the deviation, the one in use today. (This station will be known as New Galong for the rest of this section). A distance of half a mile separated the two stations. The problem which faced engineers was how to connect the branch to the new main line and have facing connections to trains from Harden. The junction we know today was opened on 7th March 1917 so that meant some temporary junction would be necessary between April 1916 and the opening of the permanent line.

At first there were plans to build a temporary line which would pass through the western part of the village. This idea was outlined in a site plan dated 15th October 1912. It was to leave the new main line at the Harden end of the station and follow a northerly course past the front of the present hotel, pass through a housing block and run behind the public school. From there an embankment would be needed to cross a shallow water course and join the existing Boorowa line near the site of St. Michaels platform. The total length of the line was to be about a kilometre. The plan was not proceeded with; no doubt the cost would have been quite high, especially when it was to be used for such a short time.

Instead a temporary line was laid from the eastern end of New Galong station which left the main line at almost the same spot as the present line to Boorowa. The junction faced trains from Harden and was laid in an easterly direction for a few hundred metres where it met up with the old single line half a kilometre or so south of the Old Galong station. The formation of the temporary line can still be seen.

The following method of working was used at this time. Trains for Boorowa arrived at New Galong from Harden via the new main line. From the platform they moved on to the temporary line and proceeded to the old single main line. From here, the train reversed back to Old Galong where the locomotive and guard's vans were interchanged. With these movements completed the train proceeded out to Boorowa through the old single line junction at the western end of the old station. A similar movement occurred on the return journey.

When the new junction was completed a short portion of this temporary line was retained for many years as a refuge siding. Evidence for this method of train working has been found in three official sources. Weekly Notice No. 16 of 1916 states "Old Galong station will be retained on the Boorowa branch to enable engines of main line trains to run around until the permanent junction for the branch is completed". Secondly, the Working Timetable for the period shows Boorowa trains working through both Galong stations. Ten minutes were allowed between the two points and 15 minutes allowed for re-marshalling at Old Galong. Thirdly, Circular No. 35 of 1917 gives the following information – "The branch line has been altered to run direct to the connection between the old branch line and the Up Main at the Sydney end of the Up platform (at New Galong) and the old dead-end has been altered to be used as a dead-end Refuge Siding". (This quote refers to the opening of the permanent junction).

The Present Junction

It is not difficult to see that the temporary line was unsatisfactory because of the necessity of having to reverse trains. The present junction was opened on 7th March 1917. Leaving the main line at the Sydney end of New Galong the line swings through a lengthy 12-chain radius curve forming a semicircle to meet up with the original line just west of the site of Old Galong. This large curve can easily be seen from passing main line trains.

Description of the Line

The branch swings to the north immediately beyond the Sydney end of Galong platform (365.18km). Track work is quite complex in the vicinity of the junction, the confined space necessitating a diamond crossing between the branch line and the Goods Siding. Entrance to the branch can also be gained through this siding.

After leaving the main line the remains of a short refuge siding can be seen on the right hand side. Beyond the home signal for Up trains, the line curves through the large 12 – chain curve mentioned

in the previous section, through a cutting, past the Up landmark and across the Galong—Boorowa road on the level. The site of Old Galong was close to this road on the Down Side of the line.

Once over the crossing the line swings once more towards the north behind the buildings formerly occupied by the St. Michaels Convent. This convent was closed in 1970, as many as 80 boarders being resident here at various times. **St. Michaels** Station (367.00 km, 502 m) was located on the Up side of the line just behind these buildings, a few yards north of a small railway crossing. It was a 24' sleeper platform opened on 6th March 1946 and closed in November 1969. Nothing remains of the platform today.

A few hundred yards further on, the Boorowa road is crossed again on the level and for the next half mile the two run parallel. This road is crossed yet again not far from the 228-mile post. Wilson & Flood's flour mill siding was situated on the Down side At 229m. 19ch. Opened on 22nd June 1915 the name was changed to McNamaras siding in 1928 and to Raylen siding in 1929. The siding was finally closed on 7th August, 1935. No official diagram of the siding remains but from observation it seems that it faced Down trains. Once the siding left the main line, it curved away sharply to the left and ended up parallel to the main line. The remains of the foundations of the flour mill can be seen.

From this point the main line takes a course slightly east of north through gently undulating wheat and sheep lands. **St. Clements** is reached at 370.20km. altitude 495m. The station was located a hundred yards or so on the Boorowa side of a small road crossing. It was opened in November 1927, to serve a Catholic Monastery a mile to the north west. This imposing stone building built in 1918, can easily be seen from the line. It was closed in 1975 but it still houses a religious community. The station was described by a priest of the monastery 'as a sort of dais with a rail around it and steps leading up to it' A further quote from his letter gives some idea of the role of the railway in the life of the monastery. The letter concerns happenings in the 1930s:-

"Boys coming from down south when returning from their holidays would travel from Melbourne by the express and get off at Harden about 4am and then the Boorowa train would leave half an hour later and take them on to Galong and they would get off at St. Clements. The old boys knew it was a four foot drop from the carriage to the ground, but the new ones didn't and down they went. I was told that parcels and other goods brought from Boorowa would be deposited at the station and we would send a cart to pick up the parcels or the boys luggage. The boys themselves walked across the paddocks to the Monastery".

Opposite the site of the station, which was closed on 20th January 1975, is a large cemetery flanked by a high stone wall.

After crossing a couple of tributaries of Spring Creek, **Nannong** is reached (373.97km.468.4m). This station was opened as a stopping place only in February 1929, whilst a very modest platform was opened on the Up side of the line in April 1941. It was closed on 5th April 1974. The nameboard can still be seen lying beside the line with assign 'Train Stop 232m. 30ch' lying close by. The only sign of habitation is a lonely farmhouse set amongst trees.

Just beyond Nannong the Boorowa Road is crossed again on the level. From here the line curves towards the east and then to the north to reach the site of Oreston cream platform located near another Boorowa Road level crossing. Between Nannong and Oreston the line begins to rise there being a mile of between 1 in 40 and 1 in 52 grades. **Oreston** (377.89km.) was opened in 1931 and

closed in November 1969. Nothing is known of the type of platform provided or what side of the line it was on. It was certainly not very substantial as nothing remains to-day.

Beyond Oreston the climb continues using more 1 in 50 and 1 in 66 grades, a creek and a road are crossed by a timber bridge before the line curves around a hill to reach the summit at Gooramma. There are quite a number of 12 chain curves in this section of the line. **Gooramma** (382.56km 544.9m) was situated just beyond another crossing of the Boorowa Road. It was opened with the line and was the only station between Galong and Boorowa to possess any sidings. It seems to have been quite a busy station in the past but to-day all is quiet; nothing remains except a large slab of concrete and one or two upturned ground frames. The name is Aboriginal for 'a long glade or place'.

A loop siding was provided on the Down side of the line to accommodate 50 four wheel wagons. It was closed on 1st October 1974. Facilities included a 5-ton gantry crane, goods shed and platform and a 32' x 25' open sided grain shed to hold 20,000 bags of grain. This particular building was removed about 1954 but the concrete floor remains. A loading bank was also provided, it being removed about 1967. Just beyond this siding a further one was provided on the Up side of the main line. This Stock siding could hold 30 wagons and was removed on 18th February 1969,

The station was originally 250' long on the Up side of the line opposite the grain shed. Facilities included a waiting room, ramp and loading dock. It was shortened on 20th April 1960 and finally closed on 5th April 1974. On the original plans a Station Master's house was included but it does not appear ever to have been built. These plans also indicate that a further grain siding was considered. It was to be a loop siding joining one end of the goods siding and the other to the main line opposite the stock siding. A further loop was planned between the main line and the goods siding. This seems to indicate that there were plans to make Gooramma a crossing station.

For the remaining distance to Boorowa mostly falling grades are encountered, the steepest of them being 1 in 60. A north easterly direction is followed across Corcorrans Creek, a tributary of the Boorowa River and a little further on the main Harden to Boorowa Road is crossed by a level crossing. This road runs parallel to the line for a quarter of a mile where the Boorowa River is crossed, the rail bridge being a wooden truss structure with timber piers. The river is normally little more than a creek but after heavy rains the title 'river' is richly deserved.

The line is almost straight from here to the outskirts of Boorowa. On the outskirts of the town a wheat bulkhead was constructed in 1962 with a capacity of 2,700 tons. Rail facilities at this location are typical of most wheat sidings constructed about this time, there being two dead-end sidings joined to the main line by two closely spaced cross-overs in front of the bulkhead. The siding is built on a slight grade so that wagons can be gravitated to the bulkhead for filling.

Near the bulkhead the Down Landmark is passed and the Yass to Cowra Road is crossed and this forms one of the main streets of the town. A stone's throw further on Boorowa Stockyards are located, they were opened with the line. Here a loop siding accommodating 50 four wheel wagons is located on the Up side.

A 20 chain curve swings the line due north across a low timber bridge spanning a creek and a road, which, due to the extremely low clearance of this bridge can only take the smallest of vehicles. The Down Home signal is located just beyond this bridge and we enter the station yard. On the right hand side are the remains of the locomotive facilities. There were once three sidings for engine purposes which joined into one before connecting with the main line by points facing Up trains.

Facilities included an engine shed, coal stage and 60' turntable. The engine sheds, pits and coal stage have been removed along with one of the sidings serving the stage. The turntable remains but does not appear to be in use.

Other sidings in the yard include a Run Around, Loop Goods siding and originally a loop Grain siding. This latter siding was made into a dead-end siding in the 1920s for the silo which was constructed in 1929 with an 80 ton capacity. A further bulkhead was constructed opposite this silo.

Journey	C & D classes			
	Pass	Mixed	Goods	Pass
	tons	tons	tons	tons
Down	120	140	170	154
Up	140	160	177	180

This should not be taken to mean that all these classes actually saw service on the line. The Z20-class for example would have had great difficulty working from Harden to Boorowa on one tank of water. To ascertain those that did work there it is necessary to look at the depot allotments 1970 with a capacity of 14,950 tons. The concrete silo is now only used for the storage of oats. Boorowa (393.75km. 489.5m.) also has a 60' x 16' Goods Shed, a loading bank, a grain shed (about the same size as the one formerly at Gooramma) and a station. The Station Master's residence completes the scene. The name Boorowa is Aboriginal for fish hawk. The dead-end is at 394.01km, making the line 28.74km in length.

Motive Power

Circular No. 27 of 1915 dealing with the opening of the line listed the following locomotive classes as being permitted to work the branch: A (Z19, B (Z 24 & 25), C (Z12), D (Z15 & 16), E (Z20), H (Z17), J131(Z28), K 294 and L (Z21 & 22) classes. No trains were to be longer than 70 four-wheel vehicles on a goods train and 45 on a mixed train. Passenger and Mixed trains were allowed 50 minutes between Galong and Boorowa and 53 minutes for the return journey. Goods trains were allowed a maximum of 68 minutes on the Down journey and 73 on the Up. The following table indicates maximum loads that were permitted for the locomotive classes listed:

L Class	K Class		A & B Classes	
Mixed	Goods	Goods	Mixed	Goods
Tons	tons	tons	tons	tons
190	210	240	230	250
210	235	260	250	270

at Harden where engines for the Boorowa working were supplied. On 1st January 1917, the allotment stood at two D(16) class, one A(19) class, one L(22) class, one B(24) class, seven B(25) class, two I(26) class, one P(32) class and two T(50) class. At 1st January 1940, there were three 13-class (for Yass town working), one 24-class, two 25-class, and one 55-class. By June 1958 the stable had been reduced to two 13s, one 24 class, one 25 class and one 53 class. The 24 and 25 classes were thus given most of the work although any of the others permitted on the line could have been used on odd occasions. The last 2-6-0 at Harden was 2510 being set aside in May, 1960.

With the withdrawal of the elderly 24 and 25 classes, the line was entrusted to the 32-class 4-6-0's with 30 T class also being used on occasions. In 1965 load table provided:-

Journey	Z25 & C30T classes		C32 class	
	Pass Tons	Mixed tons	Goods tons	Goods tons
Down	195	235	260	325
Up	225	265	305	400

The last use of the 32-class locomotives occurred on 12th October 1967, using 3142T and steam finally bowed out on 31st October 1967 when 3245 completed the round trip. 48-class diesel-electric locomotives took over on 2nd November 1967 when 4828 took out a regular train.

However, this was not the first use of this class on the branch as a trial trip had been made some years before and on the 12th March 1966 a stock special used diesel power. 48-class are permitted to haul up to 500 tons in either direction or 1000 tons for a double unit.

Train Working—Past and Present

With a few exceptions, the branch has had three scheduled services per week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. In the early years all trains connected with mail trains to and from Sydney. The following timetable operated from 2nd February 1915.

Station	Read Down			Read Up		
	Tues	Thurs	Sat	Tues	Thurs	Sat
			Am			Pm
Galong (new station)	Dep		4.40	Arr.		8.45
Galong (old station)	Arr.	4.50		Dep.	8.35	
		Dep.	5.05	Arr.	8.05	
Gooramma	Arr.		6.00	Dep.	7.05	
		Dep.	6.10	Arr.	6.48	
Boorowa	Arr.		6.30	Dep.	6.20	

After the completion of the permanent junction at Galong, the service was accelerated. The working timetable of 1919 showed the departure from Galong at 6.00am and arriving at the terminus at 7.25am (with a 10 minutes stop at Gooramma). The return service left Boorowa at 6.40pm and after a 17 minute stop at Gooramma arrived at Galong at 8.20pm. A conditional goods was also timetabled during the day.

By 1929 services had expanded considerably. As with previous timetables, the Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday service remained basically the same but in addition, two trips were made using a rail motor on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, one trip being made in the early morning and the second round trip being made in the early evening. The rail motor was timed to make the trip from Galong to the terminus in 39 minutes, with a one minute stop at Gooramma. Up to 1938 mixed services had remained basically the same but there was an additional rail motor service on Thursdays only, leaving Galong at 9.00am and arriving back at the junction at 10.46am.

An interesting experiment in passenger operation on lightly patronised services was carried out on this branch, as well as two other lines, with a view to providing improved travelling conditions compared with the slow mixed train or "Goods with passenger accommodation service". Six light four-wheel "rail bus" vehicles were constructed during 1937 utilising a Ford V8 chassis and provided seated accommodation for 17 passengers. Whilst the early history of these vehicles is obscure, at least three were utilised in the passenger service experiment before all were converted for Departmental use as pay buses.

Harden and Cowra were chosen as the two bases for the vehicles – Rail Bus No. 2 being allotted to Harden and 3 and 4 to Cowra.

The Harden- based vehicle was required to work the Boorowa branch and also between Harden and Young. Rail Bus No. 2 was despatched to Harden on 20th September 1937 for crew training purposes and entered revenue service seven days later being scheduled to work the Boorowa branch on Wednesdays and Thursdays only. On the other days, excluding Saturdays it saw service on the run to Young.

Train services scheduled to be operated by the Rail Bus (as per the working timetable dated 22nd October 1939 were:-

Wednesdays: No. 17 – Harden dep. 5.55pm to Boorowa arr. 7.pm. Connection off No. 15 Riverina Express.
 No, 22 – Boorowa dep. 8.55pm, Galong dep. 9.31, Harden arr.10.01pm. connection to No. 6 Mail.

Thursdays: No. 19 – Harden dep. 8.50am Boorowa arr. 9.55am (no connection off Down Mail).
 No. 18 – Boorowa dep. 10.10am, Galong dep. 10.46, Harden arr. 11.16am.Connection to No. 36 Riverina Express to Sydney.

The records of the operations of these rail buses are incomplete and the following could therefore be subject to correction through later researchers:

Rail Bus No. 2 worked the Harden based services until forwarded to Sydney on 27th January 1940 for repairs. Its place was taken by Rail Bus No. 3 which had been surplus at Cowra since the discontinuance of Grenfell line services. However, this vehicle was involved in a collision (details unknown) on 10th April 1940 and as a result the Harden based services were discontinued. With the return of Rail Bus No. 2 from the workshops on 28th June 1940 the Harden based services were restored on 1st July 1940. At this stage it had not been possible to ascertain when the Boorowa rail bus service was discontinued but Rail Bus No. 2 had been converted for rail pay bus duties by October 1942.

By 1949 the rail motor service had been discontinued leaving the usual three days a week mixed trains. One significant difference from earlier timetables was that the Tuesday service left Galong at 3.53pm after meeting the morning train from Sydney.

This situation continued with little change up to the cessation of passenger working thought to have been on 3rd August 1974 when services were drastically cut on a State wide basis after the crippling fuel strike. The last passenger services on the line worked in the following timetable:

	Read Down			Read Up	
	Weds	Fris	Tues	Thurs	Sats
					Tues
	am		pm	pm	pm
Galong dep.	5.47		2.00	arr. 12.11	7.55
Boorowa arr.	6.51		2.55	dep. 1107	6.30

St. Clements and Nan nong were conditional stops. All services mentioned above originated and terminated at Harden. With the cancellation of passenger services, the timetable for goods trains seems to have been a rather loose affair. For some time, goods trains worked to and from Harden once or twice a week. From the latter part of 1975, however, the service has been provided by an extension of a local pick-up train originating at Goulburn.

At the present time, there are two trains per week to Boorowa, on Wednesdays and Fridays, worked in the following way: No. 405 Down Goods leaves Goulburn in the early hours of the morning and arrives at Galong between 10 and 11am. The train then makes a trip to Boorowa as No. 93 Goods arriving at the terminus about 1pm. The return journey arrives back at Galong as No. 94 in the mid-afternoon and continues on to Harden where it terminates.

The Boorowa line was once a very busy branch, moving agricultural produce from farms to the city and in return bringing fertilizer and machinery to the farms. During the 1950s for example, it was common to rail out 17,000 bales of wool yearly for sale in Sydney. During another twelve month period in the 50s, over 600 head of cattle were moved by rail. Large amounts of wheat and oats were also conveyed. Since those busy years, traffic has declined due in part to the opening of wool selling facilities at Goulburn 110km away. Road transport is generally used for this short haul. The opening of country abattoirs at Goulburn, Cootamundra and Wagga has led to the use of road vehicles rather than rail facilities to Flemington. In the early 1970s, Boorowa was linked to the Hume Highway which has cut down the cost of road transport.

Despite this, there are significant tonnages still being conveyed by rail. The following table shows wheat receivals at Boorowa in the last five seasons. Almost all of this was moved out by rail:

Year	Receivals (tonnes)
1971-72	4,122
1972-73	3,935
1973-74	3,788
1974-75	1,775
1975-76	7,086 (to 29 th January 1976)

Bulk loading from Darling Harbour is still quite significant. A louvre van is a regular feature of most trains on the branch while the guards van is usually full of parcels of all shapes and sizes. In late January 1976 there was an upsurge of superphosphate traffic and the last few weeks saw an increase in the movement of stock by rail.

Towards the end of 19075 there were rumours that the branch would close as it was felt that the Public Transport Commissions fleet of road vehicles would be able to service Boorowa from Goulburn. A union ban on the use of road vehicles for long hauls coupled with a changing political climate seems to have given the line a reprieve for the foreseeable future. Perhaps the list of special trains that are known to have travelled the line should also be recorded. These were;

Date	Motive power & composition	Remarks
13/2/1954	3MFE engine not known	Left Boorowa 4.17am for Wagga. Arrived back 11.26m. Carried people to see Queen Elizabeth at Wagga.
1/4/1962	2532 – AC,HX,CBC,CBC+ water tank from Galong	Return working of Batlow village train. Was the last use of 2532 which had come out of storage at Bathurst just for Boorowa working
31/10/1964	1709 & 2705 – SBX,TAM HX, AC. Sydney to	‘Back to Boorowa celebrations’ conveyed public to and from

	Galong 4517	Sydney
11/12/1966	3374 - SIB 122, + HCX. Freight wagons on Down journey	Rail Transport Museum tour.
7/12/1074	CPH 1 & CPH 7. (rail motors)	Tour associated with transfer of rail motors between Cootamundra and Sydney
9/5/1975	4895, S, S, MHG, HCX, Down journey	HCX added to normal Friday Goods for Rail Transport Museum Tour.

Signalling & Safe Working

Between 16th April 1916 and 7th March 1917, the line was divided into two sections. New Galong-Old Galong and Old Galong - Boorowa. The first of these two sections was only a kilometre or so in length. As already detailed this arrangement was to permit reversing of the branch train. Subsequently the line has operated as one section. The branch, being a single line, has always been worked under the Ordinary Staff and Ticket regulations. However, the circular dealing with the opening of the line states that Line Clear Reports must not be issued. There was to be an interval of 30 minutes between trains running in the same direction by day and 60 minutes by night. All intermediate sidings were unlocked by the train staff. Level crossings are unprotected except for the usual vehicle approach signs. Galong and Boorowa are protected by landmark and Home signals. Points at the terminus end of Boorowa are not interlocked.

The Permanent Way

Classed as a 'pioneer line', the branch is laid in 'muck' or dirt and ash ballast. Light 60lb rails are mostly used from St. Michaels to the terminus with 80lb rails seen from Galong to St. Michaels. The line is unfenced.

Some Interesting Happenings

Mr. Jack Constant, an elderly resident of Harden used a horse and dray to help complete the earthworks on the deviation between Galong and Rocky Ponds and later on the present junction of the Boorowa line. He remembers trains reversing through Old Galong whilst he was working there. In the early days of the operation of the branch he remembers the Boorowa train used to be called "The Limerick Express". No one seems to know the origin of the term. The fact that water for the engines was not available at Galong sometimes caused problems. On occasions, the train arrived at Galong from Harden rather low on water. This necessitated a light engine dash to Binalong 10 kilometres further east for water before resuming the trip to Boorowa.

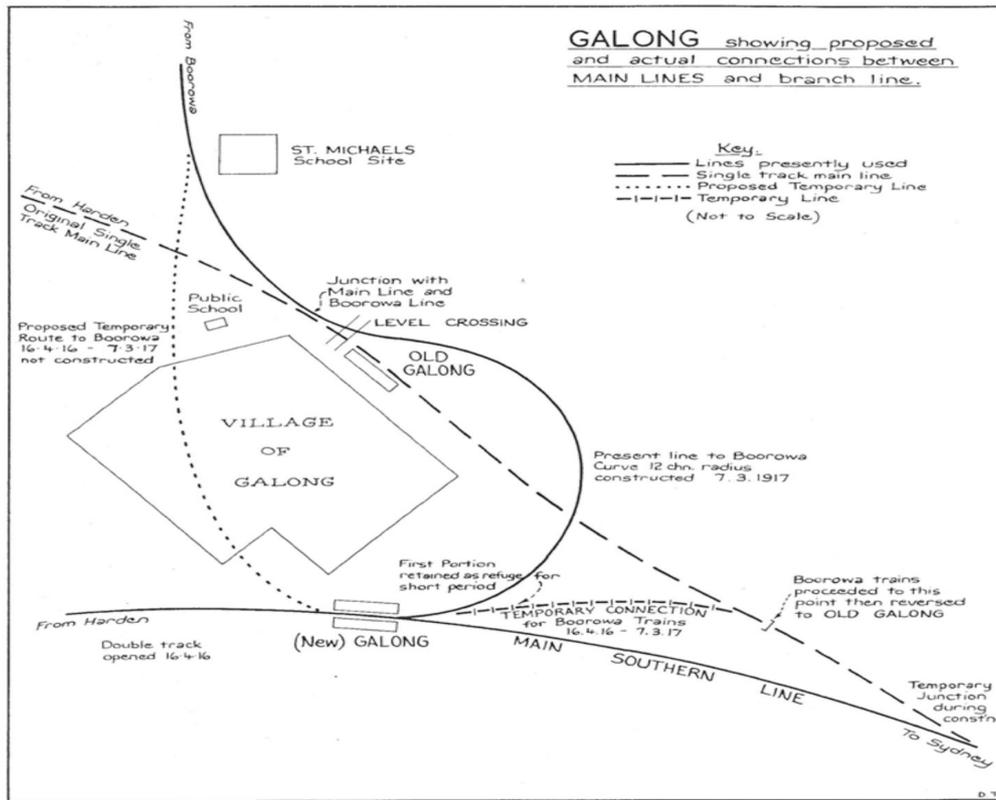
Rumour has it that coal was not always the best. One story that went around railway circles was that one trip to Boorowa took five days! Apparently coal was being tested for its burning qualities on some trips out to Boorowa.

References and Acknowledgements

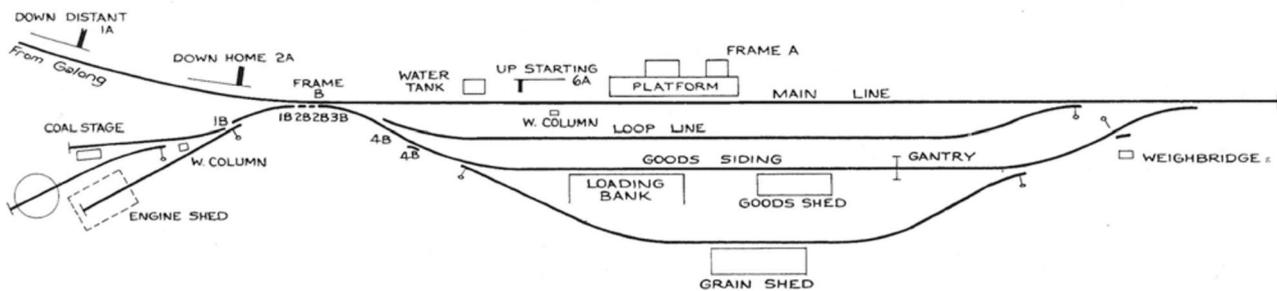
This article would not have been possible without the generous help given by the following gentlemen: Mr. J. Forsyth, Archives Officer, Public Transport Commission: Mr. N.F. Reed, Mr. P. Neve, Mr. Jack Constant, Father L. Sexton, The Editor 'Boorowa News' and those who answered my questions. Their assistance was greatly appreciated.

In addition use was made of material from the following sources; Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. Report on proposed railway Galong to Boorowa and Bowning to Burrowa. The 'Boorowa News' years 1884 to 1917. Official railway material. Working Timetables, Circulars, Weekly Notices and plans relevant to the period. "A Century Plus of Locomotives". N.S.W. Digest - selected dates. A.R.H.S Bulletin No. 200 - June 1954 and Bulletin No. 44 - June 1941. Communication from Grain Elevators Board of N.S.W.

My thanks are also extended to Mr, D.G. Taylor who completed the diagrams so capably.



Rail junction at Galong



Boorowa Yard 1915