THE SOUTH COAST RAILWAY

The following notes of our July meeting, when Mr. E. C. Rowland was our Guest Speaker, have been prepared by Rev. Bro. J. P. O’Malley, to whom our thanks are extended.

Mr. Rowland, in his own fluent manner and with a good selection of slides (shown again by Mr. C. W. Gardiner-Garden) introduced his subject by referring to Australia’s first railway—that from Sydney to Parramatta (1855). That and the line from Newcastle to Maitland, though commenced by private companies, were completed by the Colonial Government. The unbridged Hawkesbury River proved a barrier between both systems for many years.

By 1870 Aberdeen had been reached in the north, Scone in the west and Goulburn in the south.

Mr. James Manning, of Kiama, was the first proposer of an Illawarra Line.

His family had received a grant of 1000 acres, south of Kiama, in 1839.

Manning had maps of alternate routes prepared from Sydney and Campbelltown.
Sir Henry Parkes, M.P. for Kiama, 1864-70, ordered a trial survey in 1873, which was made by Railways' Surveyor, R. D. Stephens.

In 1875 Rev. John Dunmore Lang, estimating the project at three-quarters of a million pounds (it was actually 2 million), warned a Sydney audience that a Melbourne Company, intending to ship South Coast coal to Melbourne from Jervis Bay, planned a line from Jamberoo.

Further dilatoriness by Parliament did not make for rosy prospects. In 1877, however, the Railways' Engineer-in-charge, Mr. John Whitton, reported four trial surveys to have been made.

Long Nose Point, Balmain, Long Cove, Dulwich Hill, Tom Ugly's, Sutherland, down into National Park, following the Hacking to Lilyvale, etc., brought the line of this first survey (1873) to Wollongong. To the south alternate routes east and west of Lake Illawarra were proposed.

The next year Proudfoot and Logan began the third section from to Rixon Pass, thence down the mountain by a ziz-zag.

The route from Campbelltown followed the Cateract Valley from Appin to the Saddle of Bulli Pass.

On April 6th, 1881, a loan of £1,020,000 was authorised by Parliament for a Sydney-Kiama railway (68 miles), for which tenders were called. The quarter of a million expended on the Harbour at Wollongong was raised by the Opposition and H. C. Dangar advocated terminating the line at George's River.

In 1882, however, C. and E. Miller tendered successfully for the first thirteen miles from McDonaldtown, including a bridge over George's River. Opposition to the National Park descent by Mr. Whitton kept the line on the Bottle Forest route to Waterfall.

The next year Proudfoot and Logan began the third section from Coalcliff Tunnel to North Kiama.

Eighteen eighty-four saw Rowe and Smith on the most difficult second section, which included eight tunnels—the Otford being nearly a mile—and with a grade of 1 in 40.

That year, too, was auspicious because of the opening by Hon. F. A. Wright, of the Sydney-Hurstville line. Ald. McMahon, of Hurstville, entertained the party to lunch at Mr. W. E. Rust's Prince of Wales Hotel, Sandringham.

The Hurstville-Loftus section was opened in 1885. The next year, besides the Sutherland-Waterfall line, that to National Park was in use for military purposes.

A red-letter day was June 21st, 1887, when Mr. Woodward, M.L.A., opened the Wollongong-Clifton (Scarborough since 1916) line. Difficulty was created when the locomotives, shipped to Wollongong, had to be dismantled to pass under the coal shutes. They were not ready for haulage on the opening day, so the small engines of the Mt. Kembla and Mt. Keira Collieries combined with the contractors' locos. to provide transport for some 3000 people. The official party lunched in the Wollongong Goods' Shed.
A coach-service-connection by road brought through-passengers from Clifton to Waterfall.

An 1887 timetable shows a departure from Redfern at 8:22 a.m., reaching Wollongong at 1:15 p.m.

The extension to North Kiama (Bombo) was completed in November, 1887, but five tunnels delayed the Nowra (Bombaderry) section till 1893. Nowra, because of difficulty in bridging the Shoalhaven, failed to secure railway facilities into the town.

Duplication of the Illawarra line proceeded spasmodically between 1890 and 1923. Como Bridge and the tunnel difficulties are still a challenge.

The restricting of the double tracks on the Como Bridge to little more than a single width effected quite a considerable saving. This obviated the necessity for points and is called a "gauntlet track."

Oatley's first landowner (James Oatley) had presented the clock for the Hyde Park Convict Barracks and was rewarded by Governor Macquarie with a grant of land.

Laycocks (Penshurst) occupied land in Port Hacking area in 1822. The Holt family later bought their part of Sutherland Estate.

A Nowra-Jervis Bay line was mooted from time to time. A.C.T. developments lessened the interest on that score.

Extensions noted were:—

1900 Sutherland to Woronora Cemetery (dismantled 1947)
1916 Coniston to Port Kembla opened.
1932 Unanderra to Moss Vale opened.
1926 Sydney to Oatley electrified.
1939 Sutherland to Cronulla electrified.

Paddle steamers to Gunnamatta Bay, horse buses from Sutherland, and since 1911, a steam tramway had catered for the tourist traffic to Cronulla, which now has the second longest platform in the State.

The 2101 feet climb of the Moss Vale line to Mount Murray, provides a panorama which is as breath-taking as that of the sea-sc ape when emerging from the southern end of Stanwell Park Tunnel.

Deviations, very clearly depicted on a slide, did away with the steep gradient of the Otford Tunnel. Serious distress from gases and fumes affected train crews and passengers.
A ventilating shaft proved ineffective and a Sirocco fan, producing a fifteen knot breeze, changed the air in the tunnel every three minutes, but without solving the difficulty. In 1915 a new line was built. The Helensburgh Deviation, although adding over three miles on the length of the line, reduced the number of tunnels.

The new Stanwell Park Bridge, 127 feet high, required 54-million bricks.

Like most lines, Illawarra Line has its crop of name-changes.

Sydenham-Marrickville ............... 1895
Penhurst-Laycock's .................................
Oatley-Oatleys ................................. 1905
Loftus-Loftus Junction ................. 1896
The National Park-Loftus .............. 1896
Scarborough-Clifton .................... 1915
Thirroul-Robinsville .................... 1891
Balgownie-Para Meadow ................ 1909
Yallah-Albion Park ...................... 1888
Albion Park-Oak Flats ................. 1888
Bomba-North Kiama-Kiama ............. 1907
Toolijooa-Toolejooa ................. 1897

In conclusion our Guest Speaker paid an eloquent tribute to the planning of the pioneer Chief Engineer—Mr. Whitton—who, he said, should not be overlooked in the Railways' Centenary Celebrations in 1955.

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