

HOW KANDOS GOT ITS RAILWAY STATION

This article by Colleen O’Sullivan appeared in the *Mudgee Guardian* on 22 July 2013

I have never been impressed by the Railway Station at Kandos. It has always seemed small and unassuming, lacking the flamboyance of Mudgee, the charm of Clandulla and Rylstone, and the stability of Lue. Unlike those stations, which were built on the Mudgee-line in the 1880s, Kandos was established three decades later; and there-in lies its difference.

The establishment of a railway station and sidings for the new town of ‘Candos’ was one of the first priorities of NSW Cement, Lime and Coal Company. After all they had to despatch goods in order to receive revenue. Luckily their chairman was James Angus, who had constructed the Wallerawang to Mudgee railway line 1882-1884¹. He had knowledge and contacts.

It is extraordinary that a month before the NSW Cement, Lime and Coal Company Limited was registered (22 May 1913), a draftsman in NSW Railways had prepared a plan for a waiting shed for the proposed station, measuring 20 feet by 12 feet.

Within eighteen months the company had built a double line of tramway 300 metres long from the coal mine to the railway line; and a tramway to the shale mine. A newly constructed reservoir was ready to provide water for engines. A railway siding, one and a quarter miles in length, together with shunting lines and loops, had been completed. And the Railway Commissioners had given approval for a railway station and platform, despite their concern that the distance between the station and the siding would necessitate extra staff.

According to railway records Candos station was opened on 24 December 1914. We can assume that by then the platform had been constructed (though not the waiting shed). The platform was 250 feet long (unusually long for a small location), built of rammed earth fill, its face a vertical brick wall, corbelled with three tiers of extended brickwork. It was a standard construction for a reasonably sized town but Candos at this stage hadn’t even been fully surveyed. Platforms for small towns were usually timber framed, 100 feet long and eight feet wide, with a deck formed by old sleepers.

Early in 1915 the *Mudgee Guardian* reported that “the mail train now picks up and sets down passengers at the Candos railway station” and Mr J Dawson (the town surveyor) had “secured” the first ticket from Kandos to Rylstone. Mind you he had to go to Clandulla to buy it.

The official opening of Candos railway station occurred in the first week of March according to the *Mudgee Guardian*. Hjalma Langevad described the celebration in Bruce Fleming’s *History of Kandos*: “There was great jubilation and cheering and what-have-you at the opening of the Kandos Railway Station. We had anticipated this for some time of course. I

¹ I have since discovered Angus didn't construct that railway line and I will address that issue in a future blog.

can remember the complete gathering of the Kandos population on the new railway station". Soon after, on 1 April 1915, the station name was changed from Candos to Kandos.

The company directors gave pride of place to a photo of Kandos Railway Station on the first page of their program for the first land sale in August 1915. It was a town still on the drawing-board but the image suggested permanence and growth. Prospective buyers would alight on a newly erected platform covered in crushed granite from Locksley quarry and read the town's name, KANDOS, in white letters on a black background. They would admire the timber waiting room, newly painted in two shades of standard railway brown, with its double-pitched gable roof, generous awning and water tank.

The station was to remain like that for another four years. Unfortunately James Angus died in 1916, having been killed at Rooty Hill railway crossing by an express train. In the meantime Kandos grew and its residents grew increasingly irritated with the Railway Commissioners.

Within six months of the land auction, locals began petitioning the Commissioners for a station officer. A year later the call for an officer had become more strident and it appeared the Commissioners had become deafer.

From their point of view Clandulla, a fully operational railway station only six kilometres south of Kandos, had responsibility for the siding to the cement works. "Since all the input and output is worked through Clandulla there is no warrant for an attendant at Kandos," they declared. (MG 14/2/1918)

The residents argued that their town and the cement works provided the Commissioners with most of the revenue from the area. Clandulla and Rylstone provided a small income in comparison and yet had all the facilities of proper stations.

Over the years Kandos residents made a long list of complaints, backed by the cement company, their Member of Parliament W F Dunn MLA and the media. Goods were pilfered and this resulted in serious losses; they had to purchase tickets at adjacent stations; shopkeepers had to meet trains at any hour of the day or night; parcels for Kandos residents were placed on the platform or on the seat in the shed and "there is often someone on the lookout for free gifts"; the waiting shed was used at night by swagmen and drunks and people had to step over sleeping men to find their goods; goods consigned from Kandos were sometimes left on the platform for three days.

The *Lithgow Mercury* urged residents to form a Progress Association. "It is about time the railway authorities awakened to the fact that Kandos has become a township in every meaning of the word," they railed. "It is a station that is supposed to be handling freight equal to or greater than Mudgee" (LM 1 June 1917). Residents continued with their petitions, letters and representations. The response of the Commissioners: "under consideration", "when sufficient traffic". The advice of the newspapers: "Agitate, agitate, agitate."

Media articles were increasingly scathing.

"Each successive and reiterated application and plea for consideration is met by mulish objection...The Commissioners' extraordinary attitude...constitutes one of the most glaring scandals of public mal-administration that has ever come under our notice..." (MG 20/6/1918)

The turn-around came in August 1918 when there was a promise from the Commissioners to appoint an officer as soon as a suitable residence could be arranged. That certainly took longer than expected, as did the decision to provide a railway station building. In February 1919 the *Mudgee Guardian* reported that materials for the new buildings had arrived though no workmen.

The *Lithgow Mercury* reported (7/5/1919) “the station platform has been lengthened to nearly double its previous size and the offices are those which were formerly at Locksley”. Unfortunately no railway records confirm that the railway station came from Locksley and it may be that materials which were meant for Locksley were re-consigned to Kandos.

Kandos Railway Station was built by a skilled crew using architectural drawings and this resulted in a soundly constructed building. It was a typical standard “A 4” building, 68 feet long and 12 feet wide, with an awning 8 feet 10 inches wide.

At the Lithgow end was the Out of Room with its sliding double door (goods train parcels were received and despatched here), then the Station Master’s Room (initially tickets were sold through a small window), next an open-fronted General Waiting Room and beside that the Ladies’ Room and Toilet. The male toilet at the Lithgow end of the platform was a corrugated steel construction. Anchor fencing provided a protective barrier at the rear of the platform. Apparently Kandos is the only known station in rural NSW to feature this type of fencing.

It was in May 1919 that the first officers took up duties at Kandos Railway Station: Mr W J Solling relieving station master; Mr W Davidson night officer; Mr B Davies junior porter (and son of Mr Ben Davies station master at Clandulla). Mr T Connor, the permanent stationmaster, was expected to relieve Mr Solling in early June.

Kandos had its railway station though it wasn’t long before the residents were aiming higher. In 1929 the Progress Association approached the Commissioners for a new railway station and an extension of the platform. We should not be surprised that “the Commissioner did not think that the business done at Kandos warranted the construction of a new station and that the existing premises were quite adequate.” (MG 21/3/1929)

Residents might have persisted had their proposal not become buried beneath the Great Depression.

So Kandos was left with its unassuming railway station. But it is a railway station with a rich history, more of which will be revealed at another time.

Valuable information about Kandos Railway Station came from Stuart Sharp:
The Railway Stations of NSW 1855-1980, unpublished thesis, Master of Economics,
University of Sydney 1980.
Kandos – the Lucky Railway Station? unpublished article, 7 May 2013.