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Civic Railway Station Group

Item details

Name of item:	Civic Railway Station Group
Type of item:	Built
Group/Collection:	Transport - Rail
Category:	Railway Bridge/ Viaduct
Primary address:	Hunter Street, Civic Station, NSW 2300
Local govt. area:	Newcastle

North: property boundary to former workshop site; East: west side of Mereweather Street; South: property boundary to rear of properties fronting Hunter Street; West: end of the carpark to 520 Hunter Street.

Boundary:

All addresses

Street Address	Suburb/town	LGA	Parish	County	Type
Hunter Street	Civic Station	Newcastle			Primary Address

Owner/s

Organisation Name	Owner Category	Date Ownership Updated
Hunter Development Corporation	State Government	

Statement of significance:

Civic Railway Station Group is significant at a local level as part of an important municipal precinct for its direct associations with developing a new civic centre for Newcastle in the 1930s, represented both in name and a new architectural style. The station building is the first Interwar Functionalist railway building in NSW to employ domestic architectural features, demonstrating the NSW Railways experimentation with new styles during the Interwar period.

The site is also significant as the former 1857 Newcastle (Honeysuckle) terminus station on the Great Northern Railway line, one of the first railway lines in Australia that was for many years a significant connection point in the state for the transport of goods by land and sea. The site has archaeological potential associated with the original Honeysuckle station and former Honeysuckle Railway Workshops.

The footbridge is unique as the only known example of this structure constructed on brick piers. The footbridge was identified as an item of exceptional heritage significance in the 2016 'Railway Footbridges Heritage Conservation Strategy'. The footbridge is a good representative example of brick substructure (piers) and brick stair balustrades. It is the last footbridge constructed using a haunched beam deck support. The footbridge is an integral part of a relatively intact railway station precinct from the 1930s.

Date significance updated: 21 Oct 16

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Description

Designer/Maker: New South Wales Department of Railways

Builder/Maker: New South Wales Department of Railways

Construction years: 1935-1937

Physical description:

- Station Building, type 13 (1937)
- Platform Shelter, (1937)
- Platforms, (1937)
- Footbridge, (1937)
- Forecourt (potential archaeological site)

CONTEXT

Civic Railway Station is located between Newcastle and Wickham Railway Stations, Newcastle. It is immediately south of the former Honeysuckle Railway Workshops, which are no longer used for railway purposes and have been developed into a new commercial and hotel district. Civic railway station comprises of a station building and forecourt, platform shelter, platforms, and footbridge. On the southern side of Civic station is the main central business district and civic centre of Newcastle.

STATION BUILDINGS (1937)

Exterior: The station building is located on the Up platform, closest to the Newcastle central business district. The building is representative of the Inter-War Functionalist style and is of masonry construction, using dichromatic and polychromatic brickwork as a simple decorative effect. The building is comprised of a single, linear hipped-roofed block, with a skillion awning to the approach elevation and a cantilevered awning to the rail elevation. The main entrance to the station is defined by a projecting gabled portico (presently housing the kiosk) and pedestrian access to the platforms is via an overhead bridge contained within a polychromatic brick wall. The roof is covered with multi-coloured terracotta tiles that may or may not be original. The roof is hipped with a low eaves overhang and timber lined soffit, all typical details of this period of construction. The roof extends at the front to form the veranda, which is supported on heavy brick columns. The underside

of the veranda is lined with fibre cement board.

The building employs simple blocks of dichromatic and polychromatic brickwork as its main decorative detail and this is typical of modest station buildings of this period. Wall construction is of standard stretcher bond. The fenestration on the approach facade is regular and almost severe in its simplicity. Windows are timber sashed and double hung or timber sashed and louvred with two panes to each frame.

The platform elevation of the building is simple and unadorned, relying on dichromatic brickwork for decorative effect. The awning is of corrugated Colourbond supported on cantilevered steel beams. The fenestration to this elevation is regular but not symmetrical.

Interior: Internally, the building is designed as a series of discrete spaces with specific functions arranged on a linear plan. These spaces consist of: booking hall; booking and station master's office; parcels office; waiting room; ladies room and men's room. The scale of the building and emphasis on passenger comfort suggests that Civic was more than just a wayside station and also reflects NSW railway's growing concern for passengers at this time. Most of the original interior fitout has been removed with only a few ceiling cornices and window frames remaining. The waiting room however would appear to retain original joinery (skirtings and architraves), battened ceiling and bench. The interior has been recently repainted, obscuring any remnants of the original paint scheme.

PLATFORM SHELTER (1937)

A second structure on Platform 2 is a simple shelter with cantilevered awning supported on steel beams. The building provides shelter for waiting passengers, but houses no other functions and is in all respects identical to the awning on the rail elevation of the main platform building.

SIGNAL BOX (1937)

Exterior: The signal box is located at the Newcastle end of the Down platform. It is one of the smallest signal boxes in NSW. Dating from 1937 it has a simple square plan and hip roof and is set on a raised concrete platform containing rooms within. The box is timber framed with battened fibrous cement sheet construction and has external access from this platform, with windows (since boarded over) on three sides. Pneumatic level crossing gates at Mereweather Street have been removed and replaced.

Interior: Not able to be inspected (2009).

PLATFORMS (1937)

Platforms are located to both the Up and Down lines and have asphalt surfaces and polychromatic face brick faces set in an English bond. Coping has been cut back. The Down platform has been extended with a new concrete platform.

FOOTBRIDGE (1937)

The footbridge is an original haunched beam design comprising of tapered steel cantilevers supporting shallow steel beams over the railway tracks where headroom for rolling stock can be critical. The cantilevers in turn are supported by face brick trestles. The footbridge has a reinforced concrete floor and modern steel balustrade. The steps leading up to it on either side have concrete treads and feature face brick balustrades.

FORECOURT (POTENTIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE)

An at grade carpark (vested 2013; no longer railway owned) and large grassed area form the approach to the station from the west. These areas form part of the former Honeysuckle Point workshops and wharf precinct and are flanked by historic, former workshop buildings. The original Honeysuckle Station is also known to have been in this area (Doring, 1990). The area may contain archaeological evidence associated with the original station and workshops, although the evidence may have been partially disturbed during the construction of the current station and the realignment of the railway line in this location. The archaeological potential is considered to be moderate and may include remnant footings, pits and artefact deposits.

MOVABLE ITEMS

Mosaic, platform 2, (1997) - "Seams Like Newcastle" 99 tiles created by people in Newcastle area with disabilities as part of Newcastle's Bicentenary.

Bathgate indicator destination board (metal box fixed to underside of platform awning, with metal plates printed with station names).

First aid kit (c1930s). Green, metal, labelled S.R.A. of NSW Railway First Aid Box No. 253B.

Safe (c1930s). Grey, metal.

Timber joinery, internal (c1930s).

Station signs - metal, with station names printed

Ticket counter/desks/cash draw (C1930s)

Miscellaneous Items: train conductors hat, early cans & glass bottles

Sink (1930s)

Timber station seats in ladies waiting room (c.1960s)

Physical condition and/or Archaeological potential:

Station buildings - Generally, the buildings are in good condition.

Footbridge - Good condition

Signal box - Moderate condition. Presently unused, the concrete platform is cracked and windows have been boarded over.

Date condition updated: 15 Oct 08

Modifications and dates:

1984: Some upgrading undertaken for the electrification of the main line between Gosford and Newcastle. The signal box was closed a short time prior to the electrification project.

N.d: Alterations to the station building and shelter appear to be ongoing over a long period, probably since the 1970s. Alterations have been made to the Down platform booking office to allow the provision of a concession selling food.

N.d: The original brick balustrade on the footbridge has been replaced by standard metal bars.

2009: Platform extended

2011: Repairs made to the footbridge, including: Installation of galvanised steel structural components to replace the corroded original items; Corrosion repair and recoating of the main girders; Brick reconstruction and concrete repair to the bridge abutments, balustrades and deck.

2011: Signal Box (1937) removed.

2013: Carpark vested to Hunter Development Corporation

Current use:

Railway Station

Former use: Nil

History

Historical notes: The Main Northern line between Sydney and Newcastle was constructed in two distinct stages and in the earliest years, was worked as two separate railway systems. The line between Sydney (actually the junction at Strathfield) and the Hawkesbury River was opened on 5 April 1887, with the terminus being on the southern bank of the Hawkesbury River. The line between Newcastle and the northern bank of the Hawkesbury River (near present day Wondabyne) was opened in January 1888. The line was completed through between Sydney and Newcastle with the opening of the massive bridge over the Hawkesbury River in 1889.

Civic Railway Station is presently located on the Islington Junction to Newcastle station section of the Northern line. Civic is located between Wickham station and Newcastle station. Present day Civic Railway Station was opened in 1935.

The first railway line in the Newcastle area was built between 'Newcastle' and 'East Maitland' Railway Station. Soon after the opening, 'Newcastle' was later re-named 'Honeysuckle', then 'Honeysuckle Point', then again reverted to 'Honeysuckle'. (A new site near the river port was opened in 1858 and named 'Newcastle'). In 1935, Honeysuckle station was closed and a new station, to be known as 'Civic', was opened on a new site slightly nearer to the terminus at Newcastle.

The original East Maitland Railway Station was re-named 'Victoria Street', when a new 'East Maitland' station was opened a short distance away in 1914. Civic was named due to its close proximity to the civic centre of Newcastle.

Civic Railway station comprises two side platforms (one for Up traffic and one for Down traffic) with brick station buildings. The main building is on the Up platform, closest to the Newcastle business area.

In 1937, a relatively small signal box (Civic Signal Box), was provided at the Newcastle end of the Down platform. The small signal box (resembling a small hipped-roof cabin and appearing similar to the tramway style of signal box) was mounted on an elevated platform adjacent to the nearby road level crossing. The signalman controlled the nearby gates and approaching trains from both directions. Intending train passengers were required to use the road crossing to gain access to the platforms.

Civic Railway Station has seen minimal changes or modifications during recent years. Both buildings appear to have been erected concurrently in December 1935/January 1936.

Electrification of the main line between Gosford and Newcastle was opened in May 1984, an extension of the Sydney-Gosford electrification which had been completed in 1960. The new electrification project involved new or rebuilt platforms, station buildings, footbridges, overbridges and underbridges, line side buildings, sidings and myriad structures in that section in order to permit the operation of the wider electric passenger rollingstock and electric locomotives. Accordingly, some upgrading was undertaken at Civic. The small signal box was closed a short time prior to the electrification project, with control of the crossing gates (aided by closed circuit cameras) being transferred to other signal boxes and ultimately the centrally located signal control centre, located near Broadmeadow station.

The signal box was removed in 2011. It was located at the Newcastle end of the Down platform and was one of the smallest signal boxes in NSW. Dating from 1937 it had a simple square plan and hip roof and is set on a raised concrete platform containing rooms within. The box was timber framed with battened fibrous cement sheet construction, with windows on three sides.

Assessment of significance

SHR Criteria a)

[Historical significance]

The Civic Railway Station site is historically significant as the location of the Newcastle terminus station on the Great Northern Railway line (1857), one of the first railway lines in Australia. The former Honeysuckle station was also for many years a significant connection point for the transport of goods by land and sea. Civic Railway Station is of local historical significance for its association with the development of a new civic centre of Newcastle in the 1930s represented in both name and architectural style. It also has some historic significance as the first station in NSW to be constructed in the Inter-War Railway Domestic style, and represents the NSW Railway's experimentation with new forms of architecture during the Inter-War period.

SHR Criteria c)

[Aesthetic significance]

Civic Railway Station is of moderate aesthetic significance at a local level, associated with the station building and footbridge. While not particularly outstanding in terms of architectural achievement, the station building represents the first attempt to adapt domestic architectural styles for railway purposes. The station buildings and footbridge, are good examples of Inter-War Railway Domestic style in regional NSW, which uses simple and traditional materials of multi-coloured brickwork and tiles to create aesthetic interest, particularly from the roadside elevation. The building is competently executed and is a typical example of station construction at the time. It represents the NSW Railway's experimentation with new forms of architecture during the Inter-War period.

SHR Criteria d)

[Social significance]

The place has the potential to contribute to the local community's sense of place and can provide a connection to the local community's history.

SHR Criteria e)

[Research potential]

The site has moderate archaeological research potential associated with potential evidence of the original Honeysuckle station and former elements of the Honeysuckle Railway Workshops.

SHR Criteria f)

[Rarity]

The face brick trestles to the footbridge are unusual design elements, that are not known to be located on any other railway station building within NSW.

SHR Criteria g)

[Representativeness]

Civic Railway Station is a good representative example of the Inter-War Domestic Railway style in NSW, remaining largely intact, in good condition and with station buildings displaying key architectural characteristics of the style, along with an unusual footbridge in the same style. A number of other Inter-War stations remain in the Sydney Metropolitan network.

The footbridge was identified as an item of exceptional heritage significance in the 2016 'Railway Footbridges Heritage Conservation Strategy'. The footbridge is a good representative example of brick substructure (piers) and brick stair balustrades. It is the last footbridge constructed using a haunched beam deck support. The footbridge is an integral part of a relatively intact railway station precinct from the 1930s.

Integrity/Intactness:

The railway station group is largely intact with a high degree of integrity, however, the integrity of the interiors of the station building have been compromised by the removal of interior fitout. The installation of the modern steel balustrade to the walkway detracts from its Inter-War Functionalist style.

Assessment criteria:

Items are assessed against the  **State Heritage Register (SHR) Criteria** to determine the level of significance. Refer to the Listings below for the level of statutory protection.

Listings

Heritage Listing	Listing Title	Listing Number	Gazette Date	Gazette Number	Gazette Page

Heritage Act - s.170 NSW State agency
heritage register

References, internet links & images

Type	Author	Year	Title	Internet Links
Written	C & MJ Doring Pty Ltd	1990	Honeysuckle Point Heritage Study	
Written	C. C. Singleton		The Short North. The Australian Railway Historical Society Bulletin. Various issues.	
Written	City Plan Heritage	2011	Civic Railway Station Signal Box, Heritage Impact Statement	
Written	John Forsyth		Line Histories	
Written	Ray Love	2009	Historical Research for RailCorp s170 Update	
Written	State Rail Authority of New South Wales	1995	How and Why of Station Names. Fourth Edition	
Written	URBIS	2014	Moveable Heritage Report and Inventory	

Note: internet links may be to web pages, documents or images.



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