

## CAMPERDOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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Volume 22 - No. 2

NEWSLETTER

April 2012

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Heather McDowell

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Sue Cole  
Gillian Senior

Hello everyone,

This month our 'Member Profiles' will let you know who is doing what at the Heritage Centre (just in case you thought we mightn't be working hard enough!) and letting you know about some of our current projects.

The ceremonial unveiling of Robbie Burns took place in January in perfect weather and a big crowd of locals and visitors gathered to share the moment. This link to the Shire website will take computer users to a full report and lots of great photos of the day:

[http://www.corangamite.vic.gov.au/page/page.asp?page\\_id=3431](http://www.corangamite.vic.gov.au/page/page.asp?page_id=3431)

The Society took part in the Lakes & Craters Festival on 17/18<sup>th</sup> March with a display in the Theatre Royale and by hosting an Historical Bus Tour on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup>.

The major theme of this newsletter is a short history of the railways in Camperdown – the arrival of the first train, the changes of ownership and the effects on the community.

We happily welcome our many new members: M. Grant & S. Nagle, I. Baxter, A. Buchholz, M.&J. Butler, B. Gaut, J. Hill, B. Matthews, L. Taylor, I.&J. Urquhart, S. Wadds, and trust they will enjoy being part of the CDHS.

We are delighted to introduce our new, re-designed website at: <http://www.camperdownhistory.org.au> and are very grateful to our brilliant designer, Angela Preiss, for the great result. We now have a link on the site where we can post regular news updates. Check it out with a click on 'Blog'.

*Gillian Senior* Newsletter Editor

### From the Heritage Centre Collection: Railway Memorabilia



A rail spike from the Camperdown line, a wind-up toy train, a couple of guards' whistles and a few tickets; that's all we could find in our artefacts – apart from photos – that relate to the railways. Is there anyone out there with something more? A lamp? A driver's or guard's cap? Perhaps an old station sign? If so, we'd love to hear from you.

### Camperdown Heritage Centre

241 Manifold Street  
Camperdown 3260

### Opening hours

Tuesdays and 1<sup>st</sup>  
Sunday of month,  
10am-3pm  
Or by appointment

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## COMING EVENTS: MAY - JULY 2012



Lake Bullen Merri, 1948

### Annual Dinner

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May, 6.30 pm  
Commercial Hotel Camperdown

Guest speaker;  
**Professor Peter Gell**  
Professor of Environmental Science,  
University of Ballarat

*"The history and significance of  
Western Victoria's crater lakes and  
the lessons learned from them about  
our changing climate and vegetation".*

Professor Peter Gell has spent many years studying Western Victoria's crater lakes, including Lakes Bullen Merri and Gnotuk at Camperdown. By examining the ancient layers of sediments in these lakes, Peter and his colleagues have been able to piece together the fascinating history of our changing climate and vegetation.

Professor Gell is an internationally respected Scientist. This is an event not to be missed.

**\$30.00/person**

**RSVP by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April**

**Ray Watson, Ph. 55933388, or Bob Lambell, Ph. 55932213**

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May, 7.30 pm**

**Executive Committee meeting at the Heritage Centre**

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> June  
7.30 pm at the McCabe Room  
Family History Night**

Our chief researcher, Maree Belyea, will give us some hints on how to use the internet to uncover our family histories. By way of example, she will explore the family history of a Camperdown and district notable.

On the night, we will also have a look at our much improved Camperdown & District Historical Society website.



Maree Belyea

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July  
7.30 pm at the McCabe Room  
"Show & Tell" Night**

Our "Show and Tell" nights always create a lot of interest. Please bring along those family treasures and collectables to show us



**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> July, 7.30 pm**

**Executive Committee meeting at the Heritage Centre**

## MEMBER PROFILES

### Heather McDowell:

Heather wears many hats: Minute Secretary at meetings and expert/consultant for the Cataloguing System amongst others. She describes herself as 'general dogsbody' but that hardly describes all her various jobs.

She also types up articles for the newsletter, backs-up the cataloguing files each week, orders stationery etc., sets up Heritage Centre display boards, looks after new members and generally tries to keep the Centre – and the workers – organised and under control – a **very** difficult job on occasion!



### Sue Cole:

Sue is not **quite** an inaugural member of the CDHS – she says she was 'far too pregnant' at the time the Society was formed – but has served as President and has been an active participant for many years. As a fifth generation resident of Camperdown and related to almost everyone in the district, she is a fount of local knowledge. One of her major occupations with the Society, apart from answering questions about Camperdown history from visitors and members, is researching many different subjects. Her next project is to document and collate everything we have about her great grandfather, William A. Taylor – which is currently scattered through various different files and needs to be properly accessible.

### John Gronbeck:

John describes himself as janitor, cleaner, building supervisor, dish-washer, storeman, cricket-controller (the hopping kind!) and many other things to do with keeping the building clean and running efficiently. Apart from this practical work, he is also going through all the old storage boxes and cupboards in the building and sorting out their contents – anything from photos and papers to old artefacts – so they can be properly stored and accessed. If you think we have it and you can't find it, ask John!



## THE CAMPERDOWN TURNTABLE - A WINDY STORY



**George Arnott using the turntable – Camperdown 1964**

it and around it went, moving by itself. Around and around she went, about twenty times! Not quickly, but fast enough to prevent me from stopping it spinning, which you did by releasing a plunger called a 'pall' into a recess in the turntable wall. I eventually lined it up and had a go. I shoved the pall home, which stopped the table alright, but not before it ripped the guts out of the timber surrounds and caused quite a mess!"

Graeme O'Brien (from: *Enginemen of the Victorian Railways* – Nick Anchen)



# CAMPERDOWN RAILWAY LINE

1883 to 2004

*After waiting six years for the railway line to be extended from Colac, at last Camperdown was to have a rail service. No wonder then, that the Chronicle of 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1883 reported the great day with such enthusiasm – and with the wonderfully elegant language that was expected on such an occasion!*

## The Railway Celebration

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The success of the great event of yesterday mainly depending on

### THE WEATHER

it was an intense relief to all who had looked forward to the formal opening of the railway, to observe that the morning dawned most brightly, as befitted a day destined to be marked by a "white stone" in our local annals. From very early in the morning the streets were enlivened by the presence of the residents and the numerous visitors, and congratulations were exchanged by everyone on the happy augury offered by the brilliant atmospheric conditions. A slight over-casting of the sky at about ten o'clock overshadowed for a time the spirits of the hundreds bent on celebrating, with adequate enjoyment, the auspicious event of the day, but the depression was only temporary, as the clouds lifting shortly before eleven o'clock, the sun shone out in undiminished splendour. From that hour till after the close of the festivities, the weather was simply glorious, and the throngs who, directly and indirectly, participated in the celebration, submitted themselves with abandon to its exhilarating influence. The appearance, of

### THE TOWN

in the sparkling sunlight, with the display of gay and many-hued bunting, was a novel and striking one. From all, the places of business, hotels, the banks, the Mechanics', Temperance, and Masonic Halls, and many private houses, floated out in the bracing breeze flags of every nationality, and flags of none The guards of the way-side trees also supported standards, and an effective display was made by a line of bunting, which formed a kind of triumphal arch at the junction of Pike and Manifold streets. The railway station, was prettily decorated and the approaches to the station were marked by parti-coloured bunting. The charming spectacle presented by the general decorations will be cherished by the thousands who viewed it is not the least among the pleasant reminiscences of the day. We say thousands, believing that at a moderate computation, between six

or seven thousand people were present in the township, at one time or other, during yesterday, from every quarter representatives of every class flocked into Camperdown, and not only the townspeople themselves, but all the population within an extensive radius, seemed to have made holiday.

### THE COMMITTEE

controlling the banquet arrangements were astir from an early hour. Mr. W. Scott (chairman), and Mr. J. N. M'Arthur (secretary), and all the members were indefatigable in their attention to the thousand-and-one details requiring final adjustment, and their efforts were so wisely vigorous that the success of the demonstration became assured.

### THE BANQUETING PREPARATIONS

in the Mechanics' Hall were ably superintended by Mr. Schafer, of the Café Gunsler, who, as manager for Mr. H. G. Iles, acted as caterer, and met with the warmest approval of the Committee. Five large tables—one across and four lengthwise—occupied the body of the hall, and three smaller ones, forming three sides of the square, filled the platform. These were all covered with a profusion of the ordinary table requisites, and were adorned by epergnes and vases bearing choice flowers, or delicate confections. The crown of the proscenium supported a charmingly worked design in laurel leaves, bearing the word "Welcome" within a tasteful border. At the back of the stage the gilding of a royal escutcheon was relieved by fern fronds, and the effect was further heightened by gracefully arranged flags. At either side of the platform, two fine tree ferns contrasted with the colouring of the proscenium and formed an agreeable background for the "table of honour". The side walls were decorated by star-like clusters of ferns with centres of rich-hued flowers, and the lower end of the hall was adorned by the royal standard and the tri-colour. Outside the building, other floral devices had been arranged, and as if to emphasize the hearty character which the visitors were to receive, "Welcome" again met the eye in bold outlines. Numbers of people, especially ladies, visited the hall prior to the banquet to

view the effect, and the ante-room was still thronged by expectant sightseers, when it became evident by the marshalling of the school children that the hour at which the special train, bearing the Hon. The Minister of Railways, was nearly due. The approaches to

### THE STATION

and the platform itself were accordingly soon crowded by the thousands interested. The children of the state schools of Camperdown, Cobden, and Naroghid, were reinforced by large numbers of others whose education is either completed or in progress privately, till upwards of nine hundred young people of all ages, ranging from infancy to man and womanhood were assembled in addition to a thousand adults.

### THE SPECIAL TRAIN

drew to the platform at ten minutes to noon.

*Visiting dignitaries were taken on tour of the town, including a visit to the Botanical Gardens, before adjourning to the Mechanics' Institute and the banquet "punctually at 2 o'clock".*

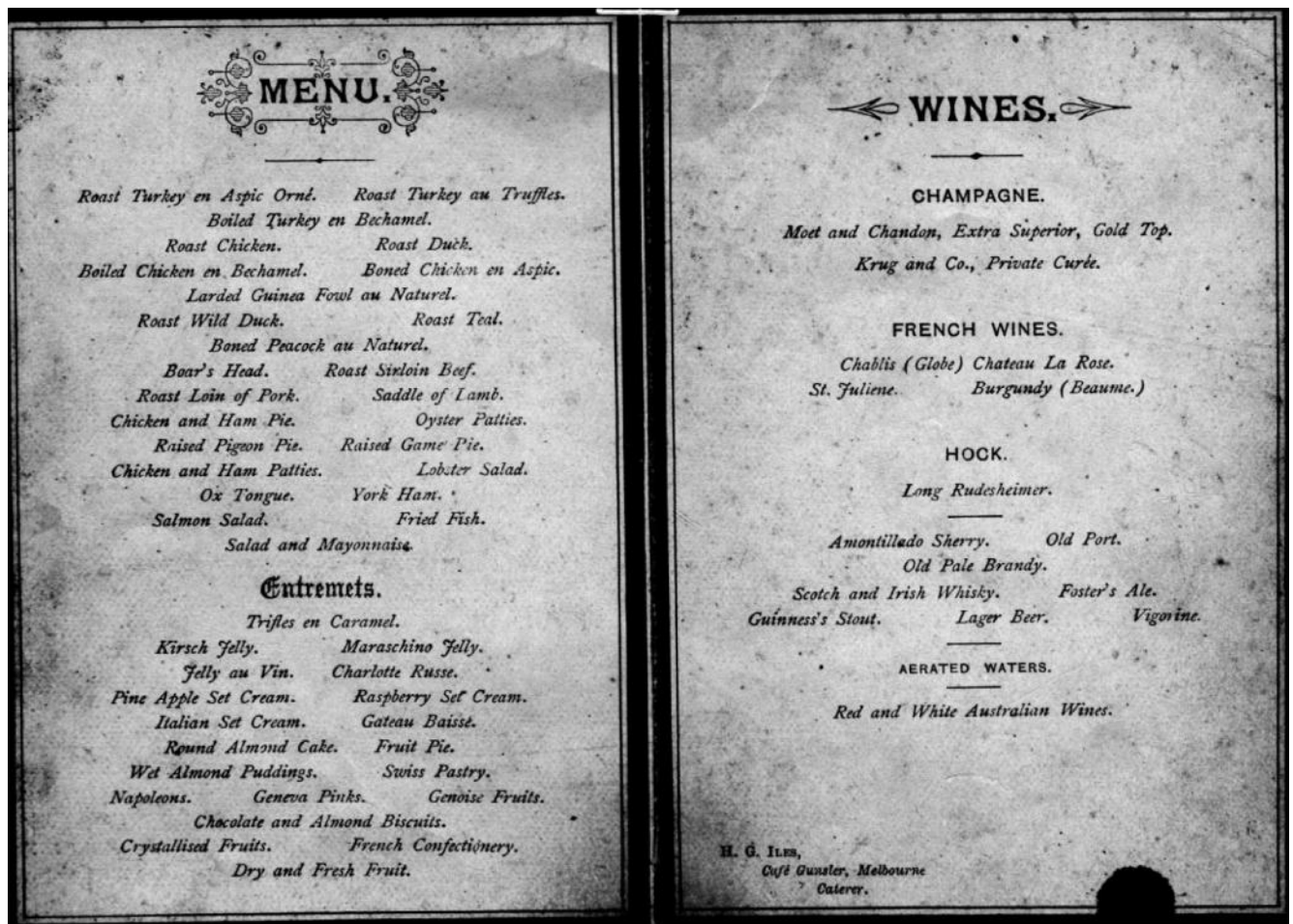
*(See next page for the magnificent menu for the Banquet.)*

*The Chronicle gives a full (and very detailed) report of the fourteen toasts and sixteen speeches from the Members of Parliament, Railways Executives and prominent local citizens which followed – some so long and verbose, that one wonders how there was any time left to enjoy the banquet. Perhaps time did get away from them because the report concludes:*

The proceedings were then somewhat hurriedly brought to a close, to permit the Ballarat and Melbourne visitors to catch the special train, which left at 5 o'clock, amidst the cheering of a large concourse of spectators.

### THE CHILDREN'S TREAT

took the form of a trip to Colac and back in the special train, a distribution of buns and lollies at the Temperance Hall, and bonfires on Mount Leura in the evening.



From: *“The Shire of Hampden 1863-1963”* by R. A. Mcalpine:

The train, though rough and slow enough by today’s standards, must have been a distinct improvement on coach travel. Trains were whisking their passengers right through to Melbourne in a little over six hours, while the coach took twelve hours to reach Geelong. There were two trains daily: the first leaving at 4.05 a.m. and arriving Melbourne at 10.15 am, the other leaving at 1.50 pm and arriving Melbourne at 8.30 pm.

## 1983 - CENTENARY YEAR

*One hundred years after the rail arrived at Camperdown, an article in The Standard, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1983, recalled the coming of the railway and its effect on the region.*

### Wealth Arrived with Railway - by Kaye Dowdy

District residents had differing motives for celebrating in carnival style, the day the railway was finally extended – six years after it reached Colac and twenty after the Melbourne to Geelong link was established.

Regular travellers looked forward to a more comfortable, faster mode of transport after years of arriving at their destination ‘weary, sore and weather-beaten’ from open-air coach travel. No longer would women’s fashionable dresses and hats look crumpled and gloves grubby or men’s Sunday suits be dust covered on arrival.

Greengrocers would have fresher fruit and vegetables; less likely to be bruised from being carried over uneven corrugated roads. Hoteliers and food houses predicted an increase in business with an influx of holidaymakers searching to investigate newly opened areas of the Western District.

The main cause for the lengthy delay in extending the line west of Colac was the almost impassable terrain of the Stony Rises. Engineers spent hours surveying the area and weeks over drawing boards trying to select and design a suitable route through the volcanic rock-strewn barriers and chasms.

### LOCAL BUSINESS VENTURE

A Pomberneit family launched a business venture which is still operating a century later. A quarry was opened on the Pomberneit property of George Harrison and the volcanic scoria mined from beneath the rock-strewn rises. Until the track came closer, scoria was carted by horse-drawn dray to the railhead. On reaching the rises, a railway siding was constructed into the quarry site and buckets carried the material to the railway workers.

The scoria was used to form the base on which the long iron rails were laid. As the line approached Camperdown, the further the little steam engine pulled the scoria-filled buckets from the pit. George's son, Claude, marked the additional distance travelled each day on the family calendar. Rusty remnants of the siding track are found among the ferns and bracken on the Harrison property.<sup>1</sup>

Along the line, over the Harrison scoria, the first train to enter Camperdown steamed, the drivers and firemen cheered every now and again by the crowd of onlookers at sidings and small rural stations.

The coming of the railway served to 'open up' country areas between Colac and Camperdown. Farmers found it less harrowing to get goods delivered and heavier farming equipment could be picked up from the Pomberneit station, for example, rather than having to wait weeks for willing carriers to brave the rough tracks of the formidable Rises countryside.

The local guano miners also found business increased with the delivery time to consumers reduced considerably. Guano – a product found in the caves of the Rises frequented by bats, (*in other words, 'bat poo'*) was used as a fertiliser before the turn of the century.

Farmer's wives found the area less isolated as they began taking regular shopping excursions to Camperdown and Colac. When operational, there were two trains each way – all stopping at the 16 country stations<sup>2</sup> between Camperdown and Geelong on the six-hour trip to Melbourne in the luxurious coaches.

Trains were initially mixed, with passengers and goods being pulled by a steam engine which took on coal at Geelong and Camperdown.

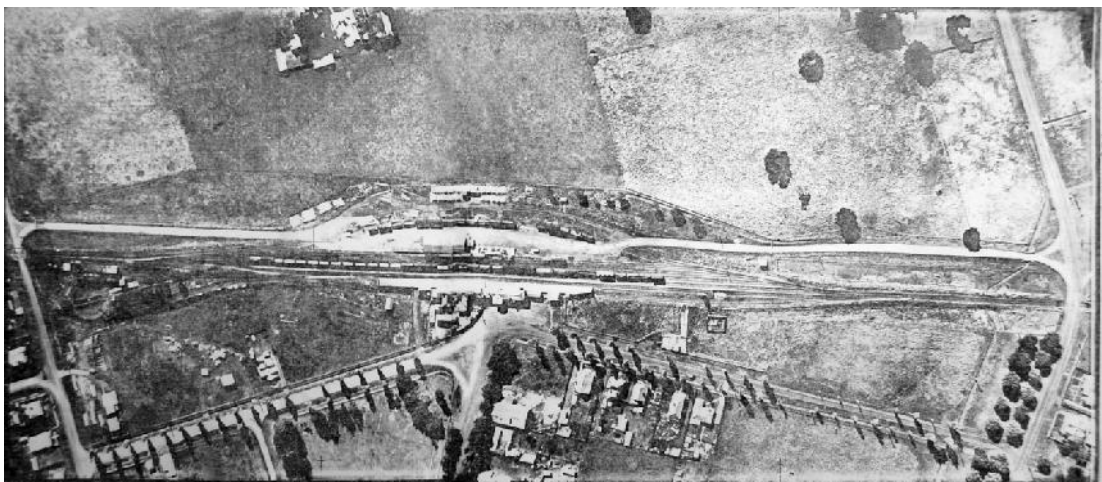
The fare in 1890 was one pound and nine-pence Camperdown to Melbourne first class single, with cheaper second class and holiday excursion rates.

Another benefit to the town was the construction of stock-yards with holding pens for stock awaiting transport to market. Cattle and sheep would be driven overland from many parts of the district, often as far as the South Australian border, and be left at Camperdown's railhead for transport to Melbourne.

Local business continued to benefit from the railway line construction as it was extended further west towards Terang in 1887 and south to Timboon in 1892.

*<sup>1</sup>Historical Society member, Zelda Clementson (nee Harrison), grew up on this property and tells us that traces of the track still remain to this day.*

*<sup>2</sup>How many now? Only five: Colac, Birregurra, Winchelsea, Marshal and South Geelong.*



*An aerial photograph of the station and the rail lines, including the siding for livestock (c. 1950). The extension containing the Refreshment Rooms, etc. has been added to the station building, and the turntable can be seen on the far left of the picture.*



## 1993 - TEN YEARS ON - PRIVATISATION

*Another ten years passed and, with different government policies, finally the Victorian railways were going out of business. The Chronicle of 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1993, reported on the next big event in Camperdown's railway history – the first line in Australia to be privatised.*

### HISTORICAL DAY FOR RAILWAYS

After 110 years of operation by the Victorian State Government, the Warrnambool to Melbourne railway line will pass to private contractors this coming Sunday.

**West Coast Railway** successfully won the tender for the operation of the passenger services on the line between Melbourne and Warrnambool in May of this year.

To celebrate the takeover of the service, celebrations will be held on the normal passenger service leaving Warrnambool station at 5.05 pm this Sunday.



W.C.R. director, Don Gibson said a banner will be erected at the station and a headboard announcing the new operation will be attached to the front of the engine.

Balloons and streamers will decorate each of the carriages and passengers will be treated to handouts during the journey.

Sunday will be an historic day, not only for the south west district, but for the State Government and Australia. The operation of the railway line by a private company is the first for Australia and could set the way for other areas to be privatised.



## 2004 - "V/LINE PASSENGER" TAKES OVER

*After a little more than 10 years of operation, West Coast Railway eventually found itself unable to continue the Melbourne to Warrnambool service.*

**From Wikipedia:** West Coast Railway encountered a series of operational difficulties during 2003–04 which impacted on its business. The death of one of the company's key founding principals, Gary McDonald, on April 25, 2003 removed the guiding light and spirit of the company. The closure of the Warrnambool line between Melbourne and Geelong for rebuilding as part of the 160 km/h (100 mph) Regional Fast Rail project caused the company to temporarily replace rail services with road coaches while construction works were underway, with a resulting drop in passenger numbers.

Although West Coast Railway announced as recently as May 2004 its intention to negotiate a new contract to operate Warrnambool services beyond the expiry of its then-current contract in June 2004, the expected locomotive repair bill in excess of A\$1,000,000 was the last straw for the company.

On 31 August 2004, West Coast Railway operated its final services and handed back the contract to the Government. **V/Line Passenger** resumed passenger rail services to Warrnambool the following day with the 05:40am Warrnambool to Melbourne passenger service.

## REFRESHMENT ROOMS - AT LAST!

*It took three decades and much lobbying by residents and others before, in 1912, the government finally built the Railway Refreshment Rooms. These served the town and railway passengers for more than sixty years until, in 1976, they were at last closed.*

*Here's how the Camperdown Chronicle reported in on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1912:*



### GENERAL NEWS

The building for the new refreshment rooms at Camperdown Railway Station is one of which the department has reason to be proud. The need for such a convenience for the travelling public of the Western District line at a centre of the importance of Camperdown, has often been urged, and though the response by the railway authorities has not been as rapid as the most ardent of the citizens here anxious to see the town

possessing all the facilities its size warrants, or as quick as train-passengers desirous of being able to obtain meals of the substantial order, might wish, the department has at last had erected a structure, which fills requirements.

The outer walls of the building are of Tasmanian hardwood, stained jarrah, and are very substantial. In front the veranda is constructed on supports built against the wall, and veranda posts, as the term is usually applied, are done away with. The main doors giving ingress from the station platform are of Flemish glass. The building contains a bar, dining-room kitchen, servery, and rooms for the lessee and staff, as well as the smaller apartments essential in such an establishment. The apartments are freely windowed to ensure plenty of light, and the ventilation is carried out on most approved lines. The linings and ceilings are of steel. The bar measures 50 feet by 18 feet, and is very commodious and in it the wants of a great many customers could be speedily supplied. The appointments are very extensive. There are, of course, the familiar pumps. The counter is of very solid workmanship, with the framing of cedar, the panelling of Queensland maple, and topped with linoleum, and skirted with brass facing.

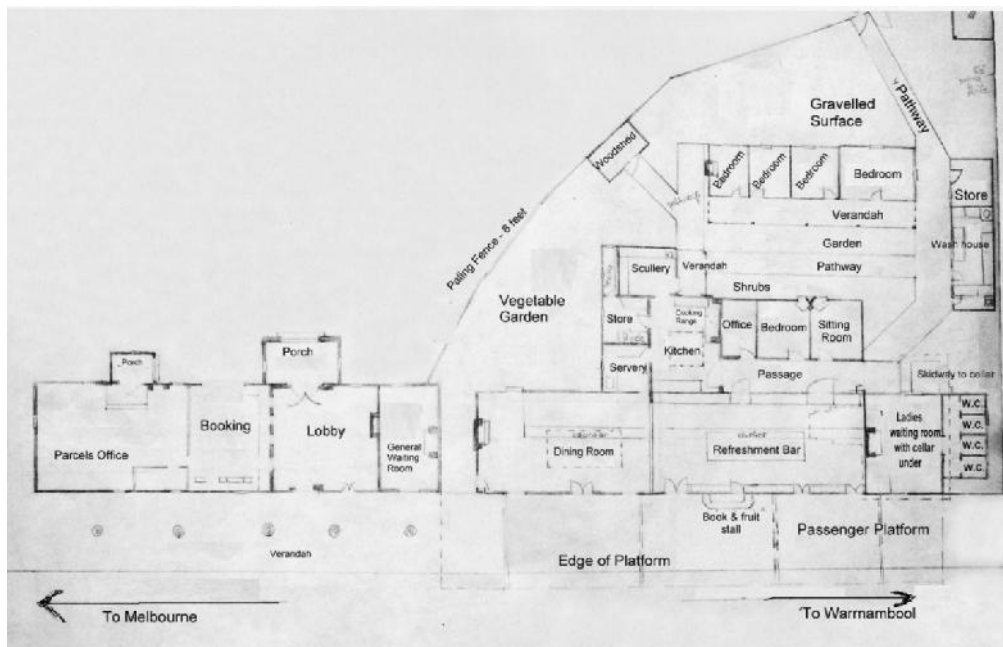
Cupboards, for storing liquors, extend along the back of the bar the full length of the room, and are set off in the centre with a buffet made of elaborately carved wood and glass. The dimensions of the dining room are 38 foot by 18 foot, and here space will permit of the installation of all the up-to-date appointments of a large modern room where meals are served to a large number of diners.

The kitchen is replete with all the latest requisites of the cuisine. The range is a large, one constructed on lines that will permit of the cooking with expedition of all the dishes in common request, as well as those of rarer demand, and the preparation of grills to the taste of the most particular.

At night the lighting will be done by the illuminant known as "aerogen", which is said to be a gas obtained by petrolising air. The contractor is Mr E. A. Wieland, of Footscray. Mr. F. W. A. Cauldwell is the departmental supervisor. The lessee is Mr. Page. The opening of the new rooms, which will probably take place tomorrow, is a mark in the progress of the town.

*The plan on next page, shows just how much land the whole Railway Station complex covered. The original brick building, now the only part still standing, is on the left of the picture. The rest of it, Dining Room, Refreshment Bar, Ladies' Waiting Room and complete living area including bedrooms, wash-house, vegetable gardens and more, has gone – demolished in 1982. (See story below)*





**Plan of Railway Station & Refreshment Rooms etc. – 1958**

*(This plan came from a school project marked “Denise Flowers, 1981” which we discovered in our Railways files. Perhaps Denise is still in Camperdown – does anyone know?)*

**Better than the pub!** It appears that ‘The Refresh’ was the chosen watering hole for many Camperdown workers. It was a bright and busy place, it was very welcoming and – best of all – it stayed open past the pub’s 6 o’clock closing time, right until the last train had left – well after 10pm!

**The ‘Demon Drink’** We have been told of a conversation with one of Camperdown’s older members. The lady in question recalled how shocked she was at her daughter’s employment behind the bar of ‘The Refresh’ when she learnt that beer and wine would be sold there.

“I never thought,” she wailed, “that my daughter would be serving the demon drink to some other mother’s son!”

**The end of “The Refresh” – What happened to the carved timber counter?**

After serving the public of Camperdown for more than sixty years, in 1976 the Refreshment Rooms were finally closed – no doubt due to the growth of road traffic and the consequent reduction in rail transport of freight and passengers.

Six years later, some time in 1982, when John Madden was at the Railway Station to collect his shipment of beer for the Commercial Hotel, he noticed a gang of workers arriving with bulldozers and other heavy machinery. They were there to knock down the old Refreshment Rooms, they told him, under orders from ‘someone in Warrnambool’.

“What about all the stuff that’s inside?” asked John.

Their instructions, they said, were simply to demolish it all and burn the lot.

“Everything?”

“Yes, everything.”

John immediately spoke to his father who was a local builder and, after a couple of phone calls, an offer was made (and accepted) to buy the beautiful wooden bar for ‘fifty pounds’.

Very quickly it was collected and taken to the Commercial. There it stayed until Mr. Madden Snr. did some re-building and it was incorporated into the pub.



**The front of the counter can now be seen above the small dining-room next to the Bistro.**



**The back, mirrored section, has pride of place in the large dining-room.**