The Blayney – Demondrille Cross – country line

Presented by Lawrance Ryan
Why build a cross-country line?

- The Main Western Railway Line reached Blayney on 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1876.
- The Main Southern Railway Line reached Murrumburrah on 12\textsuperscript{th} March 1877.

- There was no link between the two lines west of the Blue Mountains.

- As early as 1875, John Whitton, Engineer-in-Chief of the NSW Railways, suggested a cross-country line should be built to link the two main lines.

- That line should pass as close as possible to the towns of Carcoar, Cowra, Grenfell and Young.
The Blayney - Demondrille Line

• Built in three sections;

• Demondrille to Young – Opened 26 March 1885.

• Young to Cowra – Opened 2 November 1886.

• Cowra to Blayney – Opened 13 February 1888

• The first cross-country line in NSW was complete.
Young to Cowra
Opened 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 1886

The stations en route

• Burrangong
• Maimuru
• Monteagle
• Bendick Murrell
• Crowther
• Koorawatha
• Wattamondara
• Noonbinna
Bridging the Lachlan

- The Cowra railway bridge was the last of 12 similar wrought iron bridges built for the NSW Railways. It features lattice girder construction and was designed by John Whitton.

- The Cowra bridge is the only one of the 12 not constructed in Britain.

- The Cowra bridge was built by A. Locoq of Halle, Belgium using steel supplied by the Stockton Forge Company.
Bridging the Lachlan

Work commenced in June 1886 and was completed on 15\textsuperscript{th} June 1887.

The bridge was tested under load on Thursday 25\textsuperscript{th} August 1887.
In 2009 the Lachlan River Railway Bridge was still capable of handling the heaviest loads on the Blayney – Demondrille Line. These loads were up to ten times greater than the average train weight in 1887.
Cowra Railway Station

With the bridge complete services to the new Cowra railway station officially commenced on 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1887.
Blayney to Cowra
Opened 13\textsuperscript{th} February 1888

The stations en route

- Stanfield
- Carcoar
- Coombing Park
- Mandurama
- Lyndhurst
- Garland
- Lucan
- Swan Ponds
- Nargong
- Waugoola
- Woodstock
- Westville
- Holmwood
Blayney to Cowra

Apart from long and steep grades in both directions the section also featured:

The only tunnel on the cross-country line, just west of Carcoar station.

The major locomotive watering facility at Swan Ponds.
Cowra’s Rise to Prominence

The guaranteed supply of water from the Lachlan River and its central location made Cowra the logical operational centre of the line.

Cowra Locomotive Depot opened 1889.
Cowra Locomotive Depot

The original engine shed was destroyed by fire on 10th October 1897.
Cowra Locomotive Depot

A new and larger engine shed was immediately built as a replacement.

It remained in operation till 1923.
Cowra Locomotive Depot

A new depot, the most modern in NSW, was built at Taragala in south Cowra during 1922 and 1923.

It featured: a partial roundhouse, 75’ diameter turntable, an 800 ton capacity elevated coal stage, an elevated locomotive de-ashing facility, a 275,000 gallon water reservoir and two 20,000 elevated water tanks.

Up to 200 employees worked at the new facility.

The NSW Government Railway was Cowra’s single greatest employer.
Cowra Locomotive Depot

The most modern in NSW.
The pride of the Railway and its staff.

Cowra Loco’s award winning gardens.
Cowra Locomotive Depot

Isolated from an operational rail line but still in use today.
The home of Cowra’s Lachlan Valley Railway Society.
The Blayney - Demondrille Line

Closed in sections between June 2007 and September 2009.

Badly damaged by flooding in 2010.
The Blayney - Demondrille Line

The line has been closed and re-opened before.

In May 2000 Minister for Transport Carl Scully said in Parliament;

Whilst the Cowra to Blayney line was always intended to be re-opened as a tourist line it is also capable of carrying freight. The Rail Access Corporation has been actively consulting the local community to encourage the use of rail freight on the line.

But they never did!

This time there is a compelling business case.
A proven candidate for revival in 2013

An alternate route for rail traffic that takes heavy freight off regional roads
The Koorawatha to Grenfell Branchline

- The Act to build the line passed through Parliament on Christmas Eve 1898.
- Work commenced in November 1899.
- The line was built by the NSW Public Works Department using day labour. It cost £95,580 to construct.
- The line reached Grenfell in January 1901 and a limited goods service was introduced.
- It was officially opened on 7 May 1901.
The Koorawatha to Grenfell Branchline

The stations en route

Warrangong
Uppingham
Greenethorpe
Brundah
Mogongong
Wirrega
Quondong
The Koorawatha to Grenfell Branchline

Grenfell
Closed - 6 April 1975
Some Scenes to Remember

Grenfell Railway Station 1904

One of only two station built to this design.
Some Scenes to Remember

Maintained by Station Master Lance Cluff and wife Merrill.

Something for Grenfell to be proud of.
Some Scenes to Remember

A canyon of grain: 1911 – 1912 Harvest
Some Scenes to Remember

Beating the drought – 1944

A water train from Cowra unloading in Grenfell Railway Yard.
The Grenfell Branch

The section from Greenethorpe to Grenfell closed in 1991.
The Koorawatha to Greenethorpe section in September 2009.

The line was flood damaged in December 2010 but there is an argument for re-opening as far as Greenethorpe.
The Cowra to Canowindra Branchline

• The Act to build the line passed through Parliament on 15th December 1908.

• Work commenced 11th January 1909.

• The line was built by the NSW Public Works Department using day labour.

• Earthworks were completed by the end of 1909 and the line was officially opened on 4th July 1910.
The Cowra to Canowindra Branchline

The stations en route
Cowra West
Glen Logan
Billimari
Bangaroo

Canowindra’s First Train – 4th July 1910
The Cowra to Canowindra Branchline

Canowindra Railway Yard 1967

Virtually unchanged today.
A living reminder of our railway heritage.
From Canowindra to Eugowra

- The Act to build the line passed through Parliament on 17th September 1913.

- Construction was delayed by manpower and material shortage during WW1.

  - First sod turned 10th March 1920 but construction suspended between July 1921 and June 1922 owing to a lack of sleepers.

  - Line officially opened 11th December 1922.
From Canowindra to Eugowra

The stations en route:
- Nyrang Creek
- Geradan
- Gooloogong
- Nanami
- Trajere

Geradan
The district’s least known station.
From Canowindra to Eugowra

Eugowra’s first train – A special to the annual Eugowra Show ran on 26th September 1922.

There was no station building. Opening day was still three months away.
The Eugowra Branch

The last train to Eugowra ran in 1991 and the last to Canowindra in 1997.

There are five distinct breaks in the line.

The Eugowra Branch has seen its last train.
The Blayney – Demondrille Line

A fondly remembered part of our railway heritage
Or an important regional rail connection through central NSW