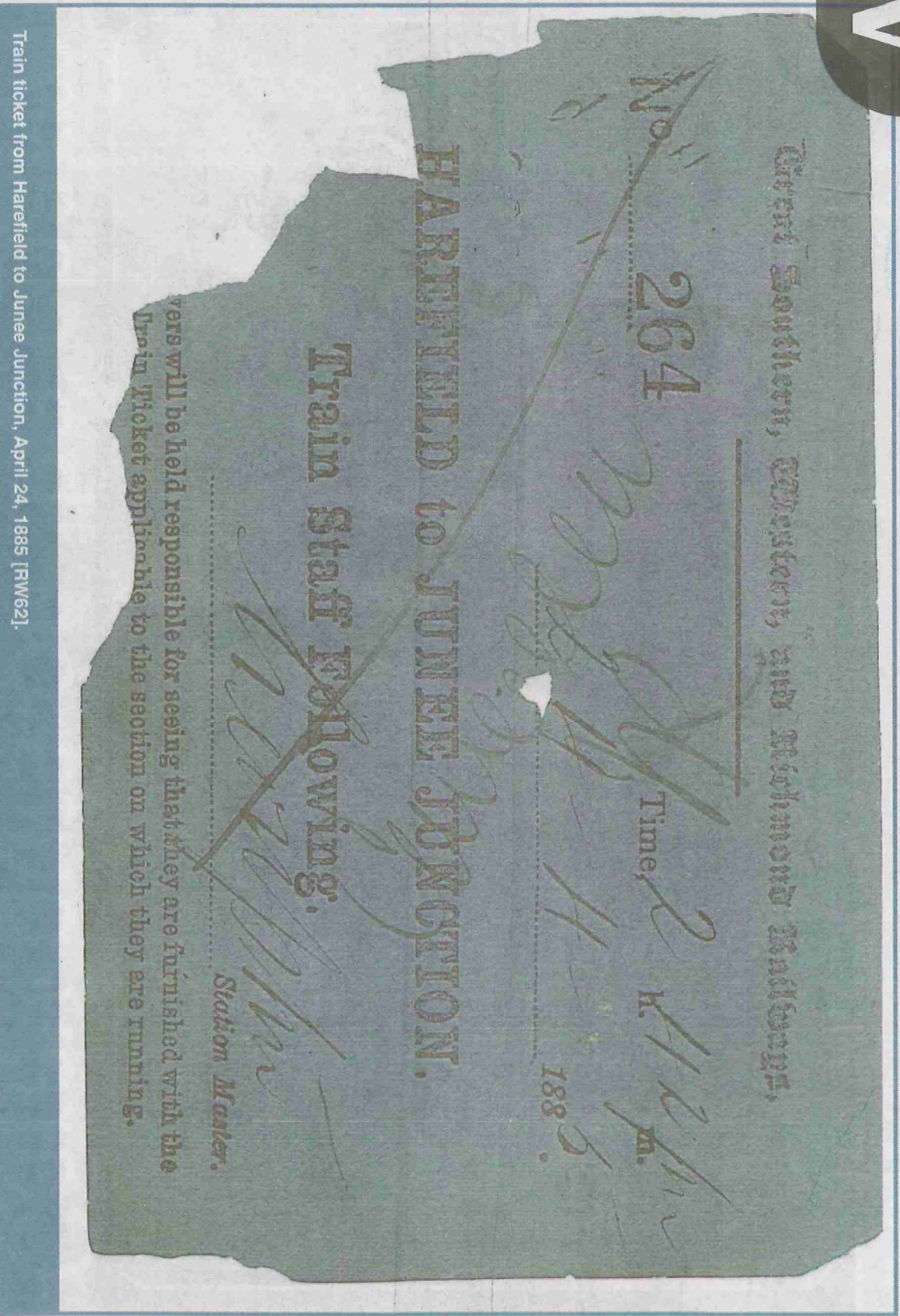


what

**you need to know**

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday – Friday, 9am to 5pm, and the first Saturday of every month from 10am to 3pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the University, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room where professional archival staff can assist with enquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight forward enquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information please phone 6925 3666, email [archive@csu.edu.au](mailto:archive@csu.edu.au), or visit our website at [www.csu.edu.au/research/archives](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/archives) for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



Train ticket from Harefield to Junee Junction, April 24, 1885 [PW62].

## It's all aboard for fun



at the archives  
Wayne Doubleday

**P**eginning locally in 1886, Railway Picnics (also called Railway Amalgamated Sports and Picnic Days) were an annual feature which captured the attention of not only railway employees and their families, but also the whole community.

People would make the trip to the Railway Picnic, regardless of the venue, from across the region and large crowds were always assured as the day was declared a holiday for railway employees on the Great Southern Line stretching from Goulburn to Albury.

The 1889 event was held at Old Junee on the October 21, and it was estimated more than 2000 people attended, some coming from as far afield as Albury, Goulburn, Hay and Jerilderie.

Oranges, apples and lollies were distributed to the children at intervals, while the Junee Brass Band provided entertainment for the adults.

The day also had a large number of athletic events including the 100-yard dash, 150-yard dash, 120-yards boys' race, three-legged race over 100 yards, hop, step and jump competition, the "old buffers" race for those aged over 40, and the single ladies' race.

Other events incorporated into proceedings in later years included, a pillow fight and the "greased pole competition" where "spectators were treated to a very good hour's amusement in watching two lads attempt to walk a greased pine pole, at the end of which was a box supposed to contain a pig. Of course they fell into the water and got thoroughly dunked, but nothing daunted a lad named Hopwood, who finally reached the end of the pole and won."

Such was the significance of the Railway Picnic, especially in a railway town like Junee, that *The Daily Advertiser* referred to the day as

### Hours extended

The CSU Regional Archives is currently extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month. On these days the archives will be open from 10am to 3pm.

The next Saturday opening will occur today. This trial initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays.

during normal business hours. It is hoped that enough researchers and visitors will avail themselves of this service to warrant it becoming a permanent occurrence.

"The great event of the year in Junee...."  
The day was capped off by not one, but two balls in the evening – one in Crawley's Hall and the other in Doyle's Hall.

The 1899 picnic, again held at Old Junee, reportedly attracted a crowd of between 3000 and 4000 attendees.

Arranging and catering for a day of this nature, necessitated a very organised committee. Each year a preliminary committee meeting was held at least three months before the big day to start making arrangements.

Quite often these meetings, which were reported fully by the local press, were "vigorous" in nature.

More often than not, most of the lively discussion focused on the host venue for the Railway Picnic.

For example in 1900, Cootamundra, Wagga and Old Junee were all nominated as possible venues, but after much debate, Old Junee was again chosen.

The following year saw the vote between Wagga and Old Junee go down to the wire, with the latter eventually being chosen 19 votes to 18.

The Railway Picnic of 1900 proved to be another successful day, but did have its share of controversy.

"The amusements for the youngsters this year consisted of abundant swings, but unfortunately owing to a hitch in the arrangements, there was no merry-go-round. This lack of the favourite amusement of the young folks was the cause of great lamenting amongst them. The committee had arranged for a steam merry-go-round, but at the last minute its proprietor was unable to come."

The sporting and athletic events were also not without incident, with two formal protests being lodged after the foot races. Only one protest was upheld where one of the race winners failed to

declare information about previous races he had contested, and was thereby given the incorrect handicap, and later disqualified.

The following year an "erstwhile supporter" of the Railway Picnic wrote to the editor of *The Junee Democrat*, stating that the use of the name "Amalgamated Railway Employees Picnic" should be changed to "The Locomotive Railway Employees Picnic" (due to the fact that the locomotive department had so many representatives on the organising committee compared to the other sections and departments of the railway).

In 1906, the 21st occasion of a public holiday being granted to coincide with the annual Railway Picnic, it was decided to move the venue to the Wagga Showground.

This marked an interval of 19 years since the event had been held in Wagga. No doubt this decision by the committee caused some division between the ranks of Wagga and Old Junee, so it was hardly surprising that in 1908 (and following years) a ballot was taken among all railway employees on the line from Harden to Albury to decide on the venue of the picnic.

Despite these organising issues, the annual Railway Picnics were always hugely popular and drew crowds of up to 5000.

On the occasions when the Railway Picnic had proven to be an especially successful day financially (normally when the balance sheet recorded a profit) the organising committee donated large sums of money to both the Wagga and Junee hospitals.

■ References: *The Daily Advertiser*, 22/10/1889, 24/10/1889, 01/02/1906, 24/03/1906, 14/01/1908, 16/05/1908; *The Junee Democrat*, 30/01/1900, 20/03/1900, 15/01/1901, 19/02/1901, 12/03/1901.  
■ Compiled by Wayne Doubleday. Special thanks to Geoff Haddon for supplying reference material.