

## **Katoomba Railway Goods Yard: Part of the National Estate and our State Heritage**

(from the report by Ray Christison of High Grounds Consulting, Lithgow, June 2000)



*Wool dray unloading in Goods Yard, 1906*

The Great Western Railway extension from Wentworth Falls to Mt Victoria was opened on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1868. **Crushers station** was opened in 1874 with the name changing to **Katoomba** in 1876-7. The name Crushers came from sandstone quarry that was located here.

The railway stop was provisional in the first phase of railway building but before long a passing loop was in place at Crushers/Katoomba

The first timber platform was up in 1881 and a waiting area, ladies waiting area, office and toilets were also built.

The timber station buildings are the only surviving timber structures of their type outside the Sydney Metropolitan area and one of the few surviving Eddy standard (as in Eddy Avenue at Sydney Central) timber buildings that were once common on the main line between Redfern (where the original Central station was located) and Katoomba.

The designs of most of these buildings came from 1882 from the plans of George Cowdery, Assistant Chief Civil Engineer. The goods shed itself was built sometime between 1890 and 1920, and was to match as closely as possible the existing timber railway buildings.. It probably contains elements of an older shed that was the Lue (near Mudgee) station shed.

The goods yard itself contained the turntable, gatehouse before the present set up was put in place in 1932.

The goods yard, with turntable, a shed and 5 ton crane were working in 1884, and there was a siding off the main line to load coal and shale from the mines in the Jamison Valley. The remaining historical parts of the mine are at the scenic railway today.

The railway quickly became very important for Katoomba as the tourist attractions of the area were able to be heavily promoted with easy access from Sydney. The opening of the **Great Western Hotel (the Carrington)** was a huge boost to the railway patronage. The tourism boom of the age saw the station buildings become inadequate as soon as 1889 and construction of new buildings began in 1891.

The station building that was replaced by the new work of 1891 was moved across the way to become the goods shed, slightly further west than the goods shed that remains today. This shed was moved to its current location in 1921, but the crane plinth remained where it is now. The open shelter shed was built between 1910 and 1918 and the loading stage was built during World War II. The stage was built for The Western Transport Company.

A horse and carriage dock were also part of the design and planning of the station and yard and these were in operation from 1884, with various alterations up until 1902.

## Railways to the West: their importance to Katoomba and western NSW.

Many are familiar with the tales of the first crossing by white people of the Blue Mountains, and of the various roads down from what is now Mt

Victoria. By 1830 it still took two days to get from Sydney to Bathurst, with the usual overnight stop being Wentworth Falls. In 1860 it took eleven days for wagons and drays to travel to Bathurst from Sydney and users of the steep Cox's Road (now part of the historic walking tracks of the mountains) would take four to five days to make it up to Katoomba. A Parliamentary Committee report in 1860 said the Bathurst road was almost impassable. The coming of rail was then vital to inland development. The opening of coal mines around Katoomba and further west also increased the demand for better transport routes to Sydney. The construction of the station, together with the development of guest houses and in particular the Great Western Hotel gave a huge push to Katoomba as a tourist venue, and the goods yard and station were the hub of the town, with so much produce of all kinds coming via rail and being distributed by horse transport to the town and surrounds.

The Goods yard remained in operation until 1990 as a Trackfast and parcel depot.

The Progress Buildings (now Tries Elies, coach booking office and coffee stop) were built between 1916 and 1919. The word Marx in the tiling of two of the doorways was not Karl but Alfred who operated a produce store and other businesses from here.

