

<sup>1st floor
entry</sup>
G. H. EARDLEY,

'Old Lambton Colliery Railway,
Scottish Australian Mining
Company.'

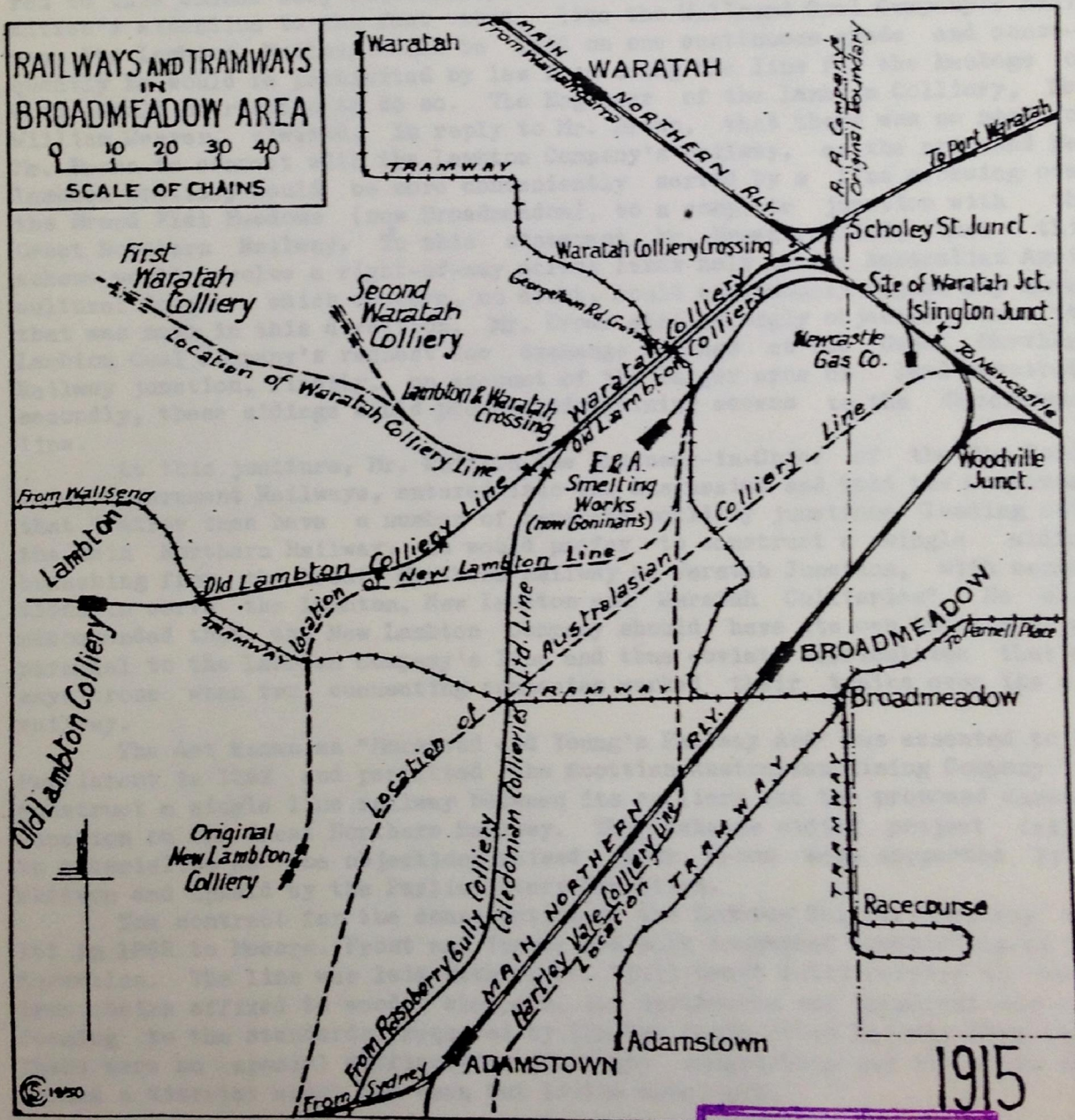
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OLD LAMBTON COLLIERY RAILWAY

Scottish Australian Coal Mining Company

By G. H. Eardley

The Scottish Australian Coal Mining Company was floated in England during the year 1860 by Messrs. Robert Archibald Alison Morehead and Matthew Young to develop and exploit a coal mining proposition at Lambton, situated some five miles to the west of Newcastle in the Colony of New South Wales. The development of the field was undertaken by Mr. Thomas Croudace, who was sent out from England by the Company. Operations were commenced in 1861 and the original holding of 2,000 acres, leased from the Crown, was opened out by means of an edit. In the following year, the workings, now consisting of two adits and a shaft, reached the Wallsend Coal Seam, which at this point ranged from eight to eleven feet in thickness. The coal proved to be of the highest quality and was found suitable for steam and gas making purposes. The Company was, at this period, successful in obtaining a further 280 acres of the Newcastle Common Reserve under leasehold conditions.



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The Scottish Australian Coal Mining Company now sought, and eventually obtained, Parliamentary powers to make and work its own railway from the colliery site at Lambton to a junction located on the Great Northern Railway at a distance of 2 miles 60 chains from the shipping cranes at the port of Newcastle. As the Company intended to operate its own locomotives on its railway, it applied for permission from Parliament to construct at least four exchange sidings at the junction, then known as Waratah Colliery Junction, one for large coal, one for smalls, one for empty wagons, and the other for a spare or engine loop.

When the draft came before the Parliamentary Committee for consideration, serious opposition to the proposals was made by Mr. Alexander Brown who held mineral leases adjacent to those held by the Scottish Australian Coal Mining Company. Mr. Brown petitioned that a clause should be included in the Act giving him the right of entry on to the proposed railway in the event of any development taking place on his New Lambton property. He also stated, that a provision of the draft prevented any person or company from joining the proposed Lambton Railway on any inclined way or curve. Mr. Brown referred to this clause very caustically as "The Wallsend Dodge" and drew the Committee's attention to the fact that, like the Wallsend Coal Company's Railway, the Lambton Railway would be laid on one continuous grade and consequently he would be prohibited by law from using the line for the haulage of coal should he require to do so. The Engineer of the Lambton Colliery, Mr. William Weaver, claimed, in reply to Mr. Brown, that there was no need for Mr. Brown to connect with the Lambton Company's railway, as the proposed New Lambton Colliery would be more conveniently served by a line crossing over the Broad Flat Meadows (now Broadmeadow), to a complete junction with the Great Northern Railway. To this statement, Mr. Brown replied, that this scheme would involve a right-of-way across lands held by the Australian Agricultural Company, which concern, no doubt, would strenuously oppose any move, that was made in this direction. Mr. Brown also strongly objected to the Lambton Coal Company's request for exchange sidings at the Great Northern Railway junction, firstly, on account of the larger area of land required, secondly, these sidings would prevent him gaining access to the Government line.

At this juncture, Mr. Whitton the Engineer-in-Chief of the New South Wales Government Railways, entered into the discussion and told the Committee that "rather than have a number of separate colliery junctions leading onto the Main Northern Railway, he would prefer to construct a single siding branching from the Great Northern Railway at Waratah Junction, with connections to serve the Lambton, New Lambton and Waratah Collieries". He also recommended that the New Lambton Company should have its own track running parallel to the Lambton Company's line and thus obviate difficulties that always arose when two connecting companies worked their trains over the one railway.

The Act known as "Morehead and Young's Railway Act" was assented to by Parliament in 1862 and permitted the Scottish Australian Mining Company to construct a single line railway between its colliery and the proposed Waratah Junction on the Great Northern Railway. The exchange siding project failed to materialise as the objections raised by Mr. Brown were supported by Mr. Whitton and upheld by the Parliamentary Committee.

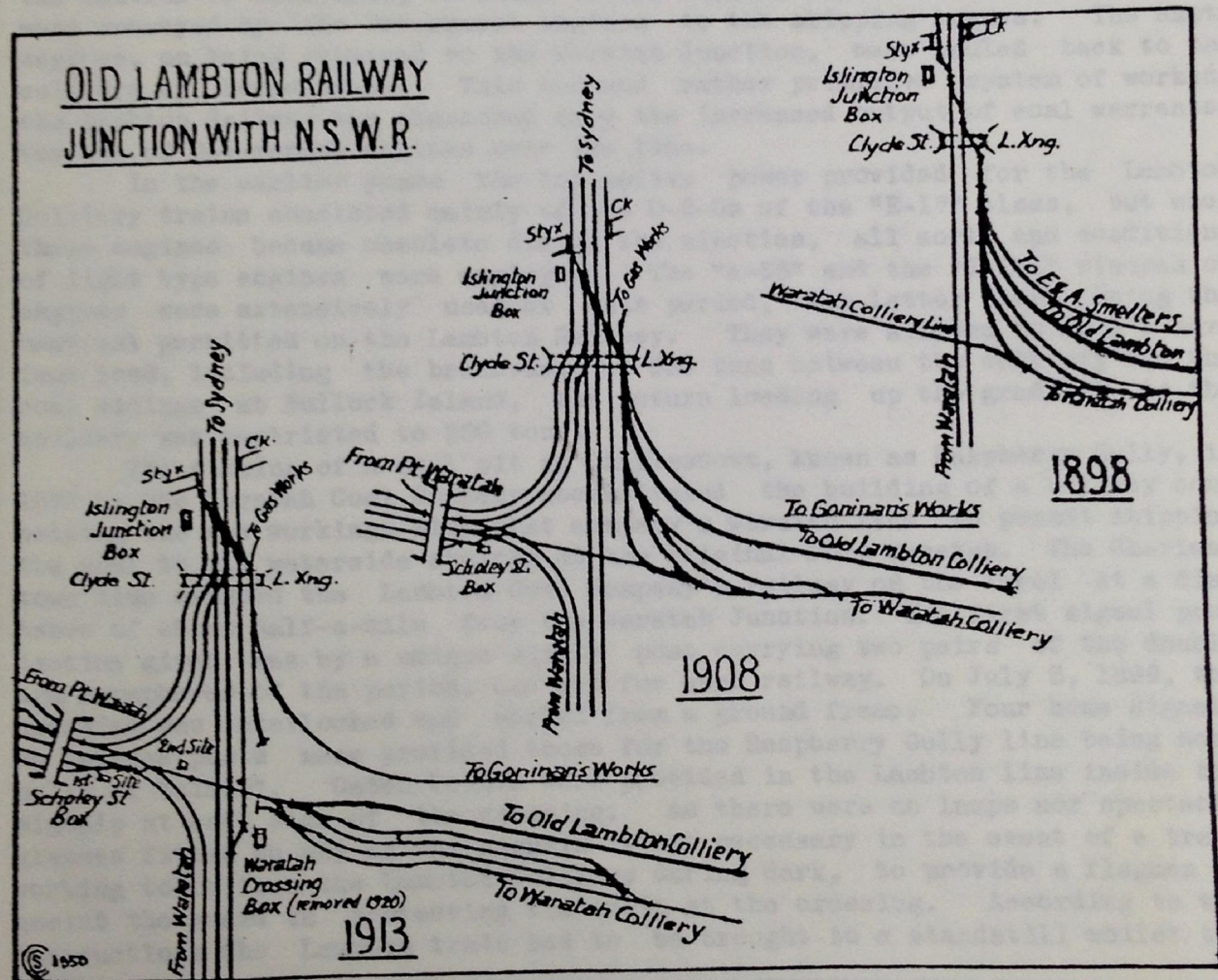
The contract for the construction of the Lambton Colliery Railway was let in 1862 to Messrs. Frost and Turner and work commenced immediately on the formation. The line was laid with 75 lb. "Bull-head" rails carried in cast-iron chairs affixed to wooden sleepers, the earthworks and permanent way conforming to the standards required by the New South Wales Railway Department. There were no special difficulties about the undertaking and the route traversed a district which had been but little developed.

(To be Continued)

OLD LAMBTON COLLIERY RAILWAY Scottish Australian Coal Mining Company

By G. H. Eardley
(Concluded)

The Lambton Railway, after leaving the Main Northern line at what was then Waratah Colliery Junction, was carried round a fifteen chain curve to the south-west and continued on in that direction for a distance of approximately one mile, the first quarter of which traversed a level sandy flat, and the remaining portion laid along a low embankment across a swampy depression, the material for the bank being obtained from numerous small side cuttings. Lying to the west of the route is an elevated ridge, known locally as the "Great Hill", which thrusts out a spur in an easterly direction across the path of the line. Driving a cutting through this spur was the most formidable difficulty encountered in the formation work. The soil removed from the excavation was used in the building of an embankment, averaging some ten



feet in height, over which the line makes a wide sweep to the west towards the colliery. At a distance of a little over two miles the facing points of the colliery arrival loop siding were reached. Catch points are provided about 45 yards from these facing points to derail any vehicles which may break away from the colliery yard. The two tracks of the loop continued on and, after clearing a crossover connecting the two lines, crossed a wooden trestle bridge spanning the Lambton Road (Howe Street) and then divided into the various sidings within the colliery property.

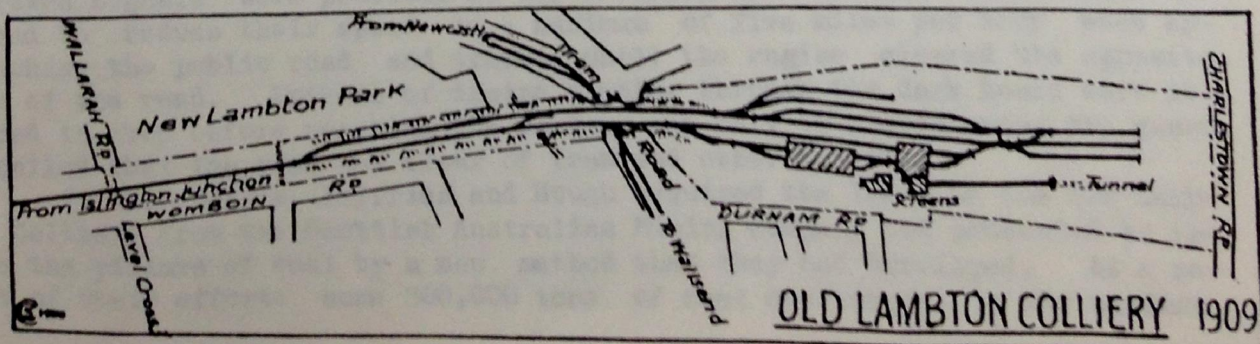
Following standard colliery practice, as old as the railways them-

selves, the Lambton Railway inclined downwards from the colliery to its junction with the Great Northern Railway, the gradients, which averaged 1 in 79, thus being in favour of the one-way loading. It was considered that with this method the strain on the locomotive was diminished and it was easy for it to haul the empty waggons back to the colliery. As the route crossed the Newcastle Common for practically its whole length, the right-of-way could not be fenced nor enclosed in any way and consequently the several road crossings were unprotected. There were no passing loops on the line which was worked under Ordinary Train Staff regulations.

Mention has been made of the intention of the Scottish Australian Coal Mining Company to work its railway with its own locomotive power, and presumably, owing to the failure of the exchange siding scheme, it was decided to arrange for Government locomotives to haul the coal traffic. However the comparatively small amount of coal obtained at the commencement of operations did not warrant the expense involved in this system of through running. Consequently arrangements were made to gravitate the loaded coal waggons, under the control of brakemen, downhill to the Waratah Junction, from whence they were conveyed by the Government engines to the shipping cranes. The empty waggons, on being returned to the Waratah Junction, were hauled back to the colliery by horse teams. This old and rather primitive system of working the Lambton Railway was abandoned when the increased output of coal warranted the use of Government engines over the line.

In the earlier years the locomotive power provided for the Lambton Colliery trains consisted mainly of the 0-6-0s of the "E-17" class, but when these engines became obsolete during the nineties, all sorts and conditions of light type engines were employed. The "A-93" and the "J-131" classes of engines were extensively used at this period, the latter class being the heaviest permitted on the Lambton Railway. They were allowed to haul a maximum load, including the brakevan, of 530 tons between the colliery and the coal sidings at Bullock Island, the return loading up the gradient to the colliery was restricted to 330 tons.

The sinking of a coal pit at Charlestown, known as Raspberry Gully, in 1875 by the Waratah Coal Company necessitated the building of a railway connecting the new workings with that company's Waratah line to permit shipping the coal to its waterside staiths at the original Port Waratah. The Charlestown line crossed the Lambton Coal Company's railway on the level at a distance of about half-a-mile from the Waratah Junction. The first signal protection given was by a unique single post carrying two pairs of the double arm semaphores of the period, one set for each railway. On July 3, 1899, the crossing was interlocked and worked from a ground frame. Four home signals on lattice posts were provided those for the Raspberry Gully line being normally at "clear". Catch Points were provided in the Lambton line inside the signals at each side of the crossing. As there were no lamps nor spectacle glasses fitted to any of the signals it was necessary in the event of a train working to or from the Lambton Colliery during dark, to provide a flagman to assist the guard in protecting the train at the crossing. According to the instructions the Lambton train had to be brought to a standstill whilst the



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road was set. The guard and the flagman, one on either side of the crossing had to exhibit a red light to warn the driver of any approaching train on the Waratah Company's line, and when satisfied that the safe passage of the train was assured, the hand signal was given for the Lambton train to proceed on its way.

To indicate the development of the Lambton Colliery, it is only necessary to state that during the year 1879 the output of coal amounted to 225788 tons, valued at £144,088.

The construction of a steam tramway from Newcastle to the mining township of Plattsburg was undertaken by the Government during the years 1886 and 1887. The route of the tramway crossed under the Lambton Coal Company's line near the Lambton Road underbridge. The span of this bridge was insufficient to clear both the road and the tramway and leave a safety margin for horse drawn traffic, therefore a similar timber structure was erected at the north-eastern side of the road bridge to suit the needs of the Tramway Department. In later years when the Wallsend-Plattsburg tramway was duplicated, it was decided that the cost of replacing the old bridge with one having a greater span to clear the two tracks was not warranted and, as an alternative solution, the Tramway Department laid a short section of gauntleted track beneath the existing bridge and through its abutments. A system of staff working, more honoured in the breach than in the observance, was instituted over the gauntleted section.

Coal production steadily continued at the Lambton Colliery and in the course of time the coal seams of the original holdings gradually worked out. As all the adjacent leases of the coal lands were in possession of other companies, it became necessary for the Scottish Australian Coal Company to seek another field suitable for its requirements. After a considerable number of tests and bores had been carried out on various properties, it was eventually decided to acquire the leases of a property comprising some 3214 acres at Red-head situated near the coast line some nine miles to the south of Newcastle. The transaction was finalised in 1886 and operations were commenced at Ryhope as the new site was known, during 1888 when surface equipment of a substantial character was erected and shafts sunk to the underlying coal seams. The Victoria Tunnel or Burwood seam was struck at the depth of 220 feet and the well known Borehole seam was reached at the 435 feet level. An Act sanctioned by Parliament in 1893 authorised the Scottish Australian Coal Company to construct a railway from its Durham Colliery, as the new working was now called, to the Great Northern Railway at mileage 95. The subsequent history of the Durham Colliery will be dealt with as a separate article in the Society's Bulletin at some time in the future.

With the advent of the Durham Pit the operations at the Old Lambton Colliery were considerably curtailed and eventually came to a close. The colliery sidings however remained in constant use, as there were quite a number of small mines in the vicinity whose owners made arrangements to load their coal into hoppers for shipping at the Bullock Island cranes.

A single track steam tramway was opened between Newcastle and Waratah on January 20, 1915, the route intersecting the Old Lambton Colliery railway at Newtown Road level crossing, about half-a-mile from Scholey Street Junction. No fixed signals were provided at the crossing and all coal trains were required to reduce their speed to a maximum of five miles per hour when approaching the public road and tramway until the engine cleared the opposite side of the road. Drivers of trains running through the dark hours were required to stop before reaching the roadway and only to proceed when the guard signalled that the road was clear of tram and other traffic.

In 1923 Messrs. Jeffries and Hough acquired the lease of the Old Lambton Colliery from the Scottish Australian Mining Company and proceeded to remove the pillars of coal by a new method that they had developed. As a result of their efforts some 300,000 tons of coal was brought to the surface.

Upon the completion of this work the colliery was abandoned and its surface buildings let to various factory undertakings. The colliery sidings still remain and are used by small local companies for loading coal. The railway retains its original chaired track and consequently the traffic over the line is hauled by 19 class locomotives. The coal trains average about three a week, and they generally consist of the ordinary 10-ton privately owned non-air hopper trucks. A standard CHG caboose brake van is invariably marshalled at the rear to afford such braking as may be necessary for the safety of the train.

In 1908 the cranes for coal shipment at Bullock Island were approached by the new line via Port Waratah, and the Old Lambton Colliery line trains working through what is now Islington Junction had to be reversed there. To avoid this movement the line was diverted to connect with the Waratah Railway line, crossing the Northern line on the level and controlled by a new signal box, Waratah Colliery Crossing. In 1920 Scholey Street Signal box was re-located to take over the working of Waratah Crossing signal box which was then dispensed with.

THE AUSTRALASIAN RAILWAY AND LOCOMOTIVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

(Founded 1933)

AFFILIATIONS - The New Zealand Railway and Locomotive Society, The Australian Electric Traction Association and The Light Railway Transport League, London.

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MEETINGS are held as under - Sydney, at the Railway Institute, Devonshire St. on the second Tuesday in each Month - Melbourne, Railway Institute, Flinders St., on the fourth Thursday in the month. Visitors are welcome.

FINANCIAL - The subscription rate is £1. 1. 0 per annum, which includes the Society's Bulletin. Subscriptions are payable in advance. Members in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania should remit to Victorian Treasurer (Phone WXL729); all other members to the General Treasurer at Sydney (Phone UW6054).

GENERAL - Back numbers of the Bulletin are obtainable from Mr. G. C. Taylor, 26 Raeburn Ave., Willoughby, N.S.W. Communications in connection with the Bulletin should be sent to Mr. M. A. Park, who will be pleased to receive articles or notes on railway affairs, both current and historical, for use in the Bulletin. In addition to the Victorian Branch, the Society is represented in South Australia and Tasmania by the undermentioned members:- Mr. O. A. Thomas, 31 Torrens Rd., Hillside, S. Aust., and Mr. K. Flood, 140 Wellington St., Launceston, Tas.

NOTICE BOARD - The following new members were elected (Sydney):- Messrs. A. Edgar, Annandale, N. S. W., L. Scarborough, Hamilton, Ohio, U.S.A., W. J. McDonald, Burwood, N.S.W., Mr. Sullems, Enfield, and Dr. A. W. Stocks, Young, N.S.W. Future Meetings (Sydney) - November, 1950, Railway Communications, by Mr. Arthur Henry, Chief Communications Engineer, N. S. W. R.; December, Lantern Night by Mr. H. H. Matthews. Badges are now available on application to the Treasurer. Price 3/3 plus postage.