

The Seymour Story

The Seymour Railway Station was officially opened by His Excellency the Colonial Governor, Sir John Henry Thomas Manners-Sutton, K.C. B., Viscount Canterbury on 2 September 1872.

Seymour became the junction of two busy railway lines – the North Eastern and Goulburn Valley lines. Within ten years of the opening of the line to Seymour, the station was handling seventy passenger and freight train movements a day. The town is often described as Victoria's first 'railway town'.

In its heyday, Seymour employed more than 400 drivers, shunters, firemen, guards, track and loco repairmen and administrative staff. Combined with family members, railway staff made up almost one third of the population of the town.

The introduction of the famed 'Spirit of Progress' boosted the importance of the North Eastern Line and also heightened the significance of the Seymour Locomotive Depot as the servicing and repair point for its four 'S' Class steam engines. The iconic 'S' Class locomotives were originally introduced to service in 1928-30 to operate the Sydney Limited train. The locomotives were fitted with their streamlined cladding in 1937/8 to run the new art deco styled Spirit of Progress. The 'S' Class loco firebox was manually coal fed. This meant that the fireman had to shovel coal for three hours for the trip between Albury and Melbourne and would use nearly all the 8.5 tons of coal carried in the loco tender.

Railway Refreshment Services

As the rail network expanded and longer journeys were undertaken, it became important to cater to the needs of travellers. From the 1860s the prime means of providing refreshments in Victoria was from rooms located on station platforms, which became known as Railway Refreshment Rooms

In 1874 permanent station buildings were erected to replace earlier temporary structures. In 1884 extensive alterations saw separate buffet and dining rooms constructed to cater for the growth of inter colonial traffic as a result of the completion of the rail link with Sydney in 1883.

When the last major structural upgrade to the Seymour refreshment rooms was completed in 1928/9 the facilities included a buffet room capable of serving 800 people in twenty minutes while the train stopped at Seymour. There was a dining room seating 48 people that had a fixed menu of five courses with tea and coffee and all had to be consumed within the same time. The fruit bowl provided was usually emptied by passengers for consumption on the train. The rooms included a modern kitchen, two cellars and staff accommodation above the buffet and dining rooms.

Between 1939 and 1945 the Seymour Refreshment Rooms catered to large groups of servicemen as well as German, Italian and Japanese prisoners of war and displaced persons moving into and out of the nearby internment camps. Seymour provided some 250,000 meals to military personnel during World War II. During the 1950s, Seymour supplied meals to the many migrants moving in special trains from Port Melbourne to Bonegilla near Wodonga.

Over time the Rooms decreased its range of services and by the mid 1970's only light refreshments were available from the Buffet and ultimately the Seymour Refreshment Rooms were closed on 4 October 1981 after serving the travelling public for over 100 years.