

FAIRFIELD

STORIES

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The Sydney Station Stories article series looks at active railway stations around the Sydney region – their history, placement, design, precincts and current services.

When I set out on this Station Stories project, I was not really expected to be surprised by what I would find. All suburban stations are more or less the same, right? Right? But then I found myself starting to learn new things. About my city, and about travelling around my city.

One of the earlier surprises to hit me as I continued my way around Sydney was Fairfield Station in the city's south-west. Here was not just a station, but a veritable time capsule with links back to the early days of Sydney's railway history. Here were remnants of the only intermediate station on the original ('Old') Main South, which was extended from the original Parramatta Station, through to Liverpool less than a year after the Sydney to Parramatta line opened in 1855.

The Down station building and station masters' residence are both original, and the latter is believed to be NSW's oldest surviving railway building, having been built in 1856, while the station building itself is only about four years younger. In fact, the whole, rather tightly grouped cluster of buildings and infrastructure at Fairfield Station is a living museum of railway architecture and design stretching from 1856 through to the early noughties. You would be hard pressed to find many more impressive suburban stations with equal, not to mention greater historical significance anywhere else in Sydney.

While it is true that the 1856 station master's residence is essentially fenced off from regular public access, the remainder of the historic infrastructure is largely still in use – with the small exception of the goods

crane on display in the western forecourt which, without its now long gone goods yard, is today merely an ornament to history.

Although Fairfield has only two tracks (as it has since the line was duplicated in 1891), thanks to a set of points at the northern (Up) end of the station, the location can and has been used as an 'impromptu' turnback, but this generally only happens for special charters and during times of trackwork or emergency response. Further north at Pine Road is one of those increasingly rare things in Sydney – a level crossing. In fact, outside of the still comparatively rural Richmond Line, this is the only remaining road/rail level crossing on a passenger carrying, Sydney metropolitan railway line.

Fairfield station has for a long time been a busy social and economic hub for south-western Sydney, however, the ongoing development of nearby localities at Guildford and Merrylands has meant that it is not necessarily always the busiest in this area anymore. Although located on the Old Main South, today Fairfield is effectively on two separate Sydney Trains routes – the T2 Inner West and Leppington and T5 Cumberland lines. The former generally sees services running between Sydney's City Circle and Leppington via Strathfield and Granville, while the latter hosts services running from the Richmond Line and Parramatta to Leppington. Somewhat surprisingly, this means that generally you cannot catch a train directly between Fairfield and Campbelltown anymore – you will need to change at Liverpool, or perhaps more conveniently, Glenfield where a cross-platform train change is normally available. In terms of connecting bus services, you can connect at Fairfield with bus services to Parramatta, Cabramatta, Liverpool, Chester Hill, Blacktown and Bonnyrigg, while N50/ N60 Night Ride buses run to and from Town Hall.

Aside from the fascinating station precinct why would you travel to Fairfield? Well, as it happens Fairfield has more than its fair share of good cafés and restaurants within a stroll of the station, while it also has



Left (page 42): Set A45 led by car D6445 calls in at Fairfield with T5 run 535C from Schofields and bound for Leppington. The Platform 2 building is the original, but dates from around four years after the station itself was opened in 1856.

Above: Passengers on Platform 1 await the next northbound services to Parramatta and the City. Built in 1891, the Platform 1 building was constructed when the line was duplicated that year.

Below: The original stationmaster's residence on Platform 2 dates from 1856 and is believed to be the oldest surviving railway building in NSW. The building is currently closed off and not publicly accessible.

All photographs taken Monday 27 March 2023



some of the area's best public parks – the Fairfield Adventure Park about ten minutes walk south of the station is great for taking the kids. Nearby Fairfield library is also very good, and a handy place to work from. In terms of what trains you might see passing through Fairfield Station, T2 services are dominated by A and B Set Waratah electric trains, supported by M Set Millenniums, while the T5 Cumberland line services are nominally run by Waratahs and four-car M Sets, the latter of which usually only go as far west as Schofields. During the morning and evening weekday peak periods, a small percentage of T2 runs are still handled by the stainless-steel K Sets, with three Up and one Down in the morning peak, and one Up and three Down services in evening, formed by these older trains. There are also usually a couple of empty K Set positioning runs between Flemington and Liverpool associated with the actual revenue services.

Below: Some of the T5 Cumberland Line services are among the few remaining suburban rosters in the Sydney metropolitan area that call for four-car electric trains. The Lidcombe-Olympic park shuttles are the only other example that purely operate within the suburban Sydney Trains network, and in both cases Millennium M Sets are involved. In this scene set M24 (cars D1050, N1550, N1549 and D1049) arrives in Fairfield as run 52AC from Leppington to Schofields. This set will spend the day running back and forth between those two locations.

Right (page 45): The goods crane now on display within the western forecourt along The Crescent. A goods siding once ran alongside the crane with a goods shed previously located out of frame to the left of the photographer.

Below right (page 45): D1201 leads set B1 into Fairfield with a Leppington to Sydney service.

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Fairfield does witness a small amount of freight traffic, but being north of Cabramatta (and thus the ARTC freight line) and south of the Yennora freight distribution centre (usually served several times a day by Qube services running via Granville), means that Fairfield itself is awkwardly placed to see much freight action. One train that does commonly pass through Fairfield in daylight is Pacific National's 2134 cement train from Berrima to Clyde Yard, which is often through around lunch time or early in the afternoon. PN's Clyde – Tarago garbage trains also pass through Fairfield but at nocturnal hours (see article, from page 32, this issue).

Next: Mindaribba, Paterson, Martins Creek, Hilldale, Wallarobba, Wirragulla and Dungog

Quick facts

Distance from Sydney Central	29.00 kilometres
Elevation	14 metres above sea level
Opened	1856
Platform lengths	Two platforms alongside the double-track mainline.
Departures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T2 to City Circle: 80 (weekdays), 72 (weekends) T5 to Parramatta: 37 (weekdays), 39 (weekends)

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