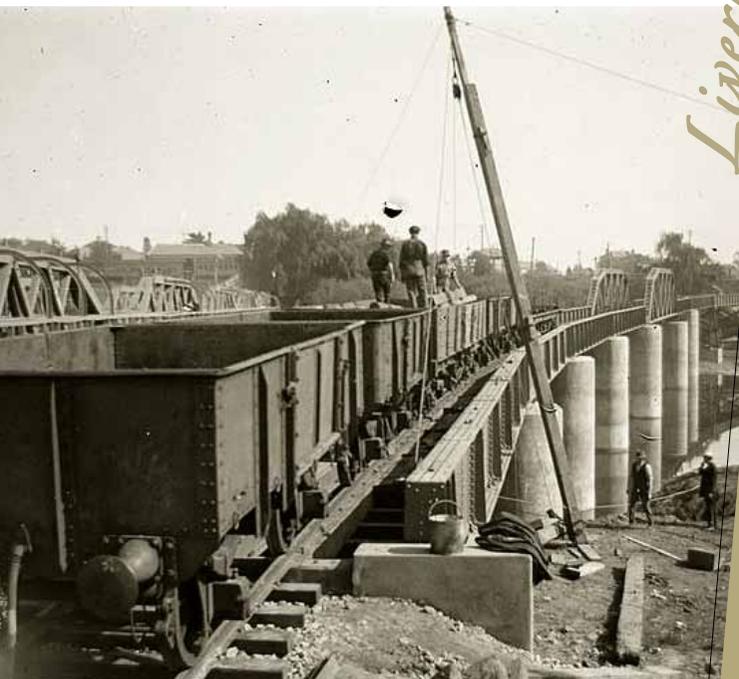


THE LIVERPOOL TO HOLSWORTHY MILITARY RAILWAY



Railway bridge construction over the Georges River 1917

Liverpool Field Training Area

ABOUT

The main rail line from Liverpool to the Holsworthy Internment Camp was built between February 1917 and January 1918, (other sidings were added later). Its purpose was to transport ordnance, ammunition, stores, cavalry and artillery horses, military equipment and personnel for the war effort.

The line serviced the Liverpool Army Camp, Holsworthy Internment Camp, Army Service Corps, Anzac Rifle Range, Remount Depot, Moorebank Stores, and the Ammunition and Ordnance Depots, and later Cable Makers.



A 30-class locomotive crossing the Anzac Creek c1920
Australian Railway Historical Society

SIGNIFICANCE AT A GLANCE

The only military railway line in Australia constructed, in part, by internees during WW1.

One of a few railway lines owned by the Commonwealth but operated by NSW Railways.

The Harris Creek Military Rail Bridge is the only remaining military rail bridge in Australia constructed by internees during WW1.

This bridge is the only remnant of the rail line that remains mainly intact as originally constructed.



Goods shed, Holsworthy Internment Camp c1919 AWM ID: H17370

WORLD WAR 1 PERIOD

During WW1 the Commonwealth Government required a branch railway to be constructed to serve the Liverpool Field Training Area and the Holsworthy Internment Camp.

Construction commenced in February 1917 and progressed steadily using second-hand materials.

NSW Railways constructed the first 2.2km, from Liverpool and east across the Georges River; the remainder, which was located on military land, by Defence employing internees from the Holsworthy Internment Camp as labour.

Testing of the Georges River Bridge was carried out on 18 January 1918, using a S-class suburban tank locomotive. The line was completed and ready for traffic 3 days later.

When opened the line was 7.9km in length. It had two immediate sidings; the first served the Army Camp just across the Georges River, and the Remount Depot, (5.2km from Liverpool), home to the Australian Lighthorse and where cavalry and artillery horses destined for the war effort were loaded. The line terminated at the internment camp. Two small flood openings were constructed over the Anzac (previously known as *Sheep Pool*) and Harris Creeks.

The final cost of construction was £35,000, over three times the original estimate.

The line was unfenced throughout with a speed limit of 25km/hr reduced to 8km/hr on sections where the line operated in close proximity to the public roads.

WORLD WAR 1 PERIOD CONTINUED

Concurrent with the construction of the railway, internees were engaged on the building of Anzac Rifle Range to replace Malabar, Sydney. A short wooden platform was originally constructed which was replaced by a 40m timber sleeper platform closer to the range in May 1926.

After the opening of the main line, several additional sidings were laid in. The first of these was the Ordnance Store Siding which opened in April 1919. A dead-end siding off the ordnance siding and serving the ammunition stores was opened in October 1920.

Source: John Oates / Australian Railway Historical Society



Construction of a shallow railway cutting near Holsworthy by a work party of internees from the Holsworthy Internment Camp 1917
Australian Railway Historical Society

FIRST PASSENGER TRAIN

The guards at the Holsworthy Internment Camp organised a picnic and sports day held on Saturday 26 January 1918, (this date was then commemorated as Anniversary Day).

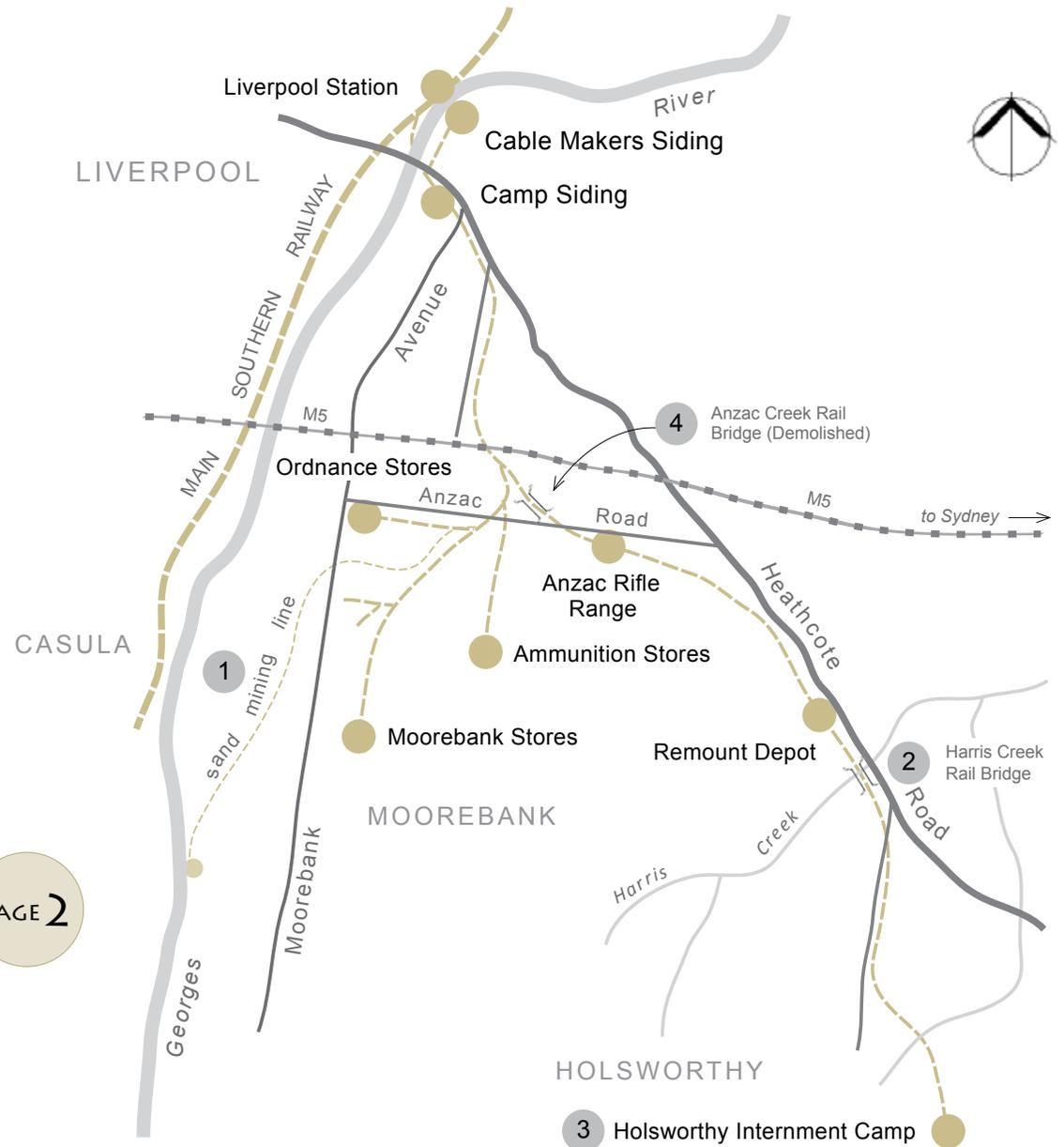
The first train left Sydney at 9.15am arriving at the camp a little over an hour later, conveying relatives and friends of the guards. Over 2,000 spectators enjoyed the event.

This service seems to be the first passenger train to run over the new Liverpool to Holsworthy rail line, but no official recognition was made at the time.

Source: *Evening News* (Sydney) 28 January 1918

Version: October 2016

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former LIVERPOOL TO HOLSWORTHY MILITARY RAILWAY LINE

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Mr John Oates
The Australian Railway Historical Society

for further reading ...
Sydney's forgotten military railways by John Oates
Available from Australian Railway Historical Society,
67 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016 P: 02 9699 4595

1 MOOREBANK SAND COMPANY (c1930-40)

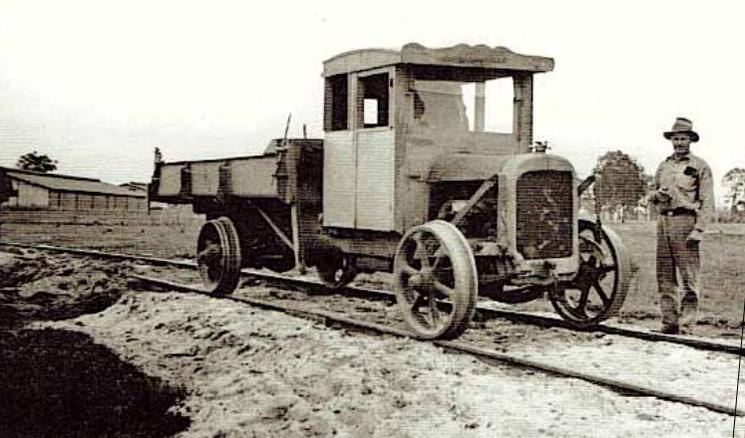
Following negotiations during 1930-32, Mr S H Jackson gained Commonwealth approval to remove sand by rail from the military area near the eastern bank of the Georges River.

Forming the Moorebank Sand Company, Jackson bought and subsequently lifted the abandoned tracks of the Holsworthy extension beyond the Anzac Rifle Range, these were then used to lay a branch line off the existing Ordnance Stores Siding. The 3km line was ready for service on 1 January 1933.

The company undertook to maintain the line from the Liverpool junction to the rifle range at its expense as at that time military traffic was negligible.

A converted truck was used to haul rail trucks to the ordnance siding, from where NSW Railways took over.

During this period virtually no maintenance was performed by the company, consequently the section of the line beyond the Ammunition Stores Siding was declared to be unsafe for trains.



The converted truck used by the Moorebank Sand Company for motive power. c1933-1940 Australian Railway Historical Society

By May 1938, the company was in financial difficulties and only loading about three trucks a week. In early 1940 the company's affairs were placed into the hands of a liquidator, and its licence to obtain sand was terminated by the Commonwealth from 22 May 1940. The track was removed during WW2.

Source: John Oates / Australian Railway Historical Society

BETWEEN THE WARS

At the end of WW1, the traffic on the line decreased dramatically. The condition of the line between the rifle range and Holsworthy terminus was allowed to deteriorate, resulting in all trains terminating at the rifle range platform from 2 October 1923. Despite calls from NSW Railways for urgent repairs to be undertaken, the Commonwealth officially suspended services for this section in February 1930.

The track was sold to the Moorebank Sand Company, and the abandoned ballast bought by Liverpool Council.

Special trains from Sydney conveyed riflemen and spectators to competitions at the Anzac Rifle Range from October 1920. This activity continued until June 1960 with a brief period of suspension during WW2.

WORLD WAR 2 AND ONWARDS

It was only the deteriorating international position in 1939 leading to the outbreak of WW2 that saved the line from total closure. With the obvious necessity for the line to be restored for military purposes, the Commonwealth met the costs of repairs.

The war effort requirements saw increased facilities constructed at Moorebank, the ammunition siding was extended and new ordnance sidings were commissioned in June 1945. The Cable Makers Siding located on the eastern bank of the Georges River was opened in December 1940.

In the years following the end of the war, traffic on the branch declined, although some non-military traffic still used the Cable Makers line; this particular line was closed in September 1973.

A special train ran from Moorebank on the evening of Wednesday 11 March 1970 en route to Bathurst Racecourse Siding conveying military equipment.

The final act in the demise of the Liverpool to Holsworthy Military Railway Line occurred in June 1977 when the junction points at Liverpool were spiked, pending removal.

In mid-1979, the steel utilised in the Georges River Rail Bridge was cut up and sent to the blast furnaces at Port Kembla.

Source: John Oates / Australian Railway Historical Society



Plaque on a pier of the Harris Creek Rail Bridge installed by internees working on the railway. The inscribed 'GCC' stands for German Concentration Camp. Australian Railway Historical Society

2 HARRIS CREEK RAIL BRIDGE

This 3-span bridge is located adjacent to Heathcote Road, Wattle Grove. The steel work and rails were retrieved from duplications. The bridge remains mainly intact as constructed, except for later additions of service pipework. In 1988 it was converted to a pedestrian bridge with the installation of a Bailey Bridge deck on the original piers, abutments and steel superstructure. The timber sleepers and track are thought to have been removed in the 1930s.

The bridge was built between April and September 1917. A plaque on one of the piers, installed by the internees who worked on the bridge, contains figures of a kangaroo and emu, the letters 'GCC' under a crown for German Concentration Camp, and identifies the construction date as 1917.

The six remnant piers of the Georges River Rail Bridge, and the Harris Creek Rail Bridge are the only remaining built elements of the railway able to be viewed by the general public. Other remnants of the line are cuttings and embankments which are located within Defence-owned land at Holsworthy.



Harris Creek Rail Bridge. The horse and dray is crossing on the road bridge. AWM ID: P04970.005

INTERNMENT IN AUSTRALIA WW1

During WW1, interment in Australia was regulated by the War Precautions Act 1914 and its regulations.

Internment camps were set up in each state and the Australian Capital Territory. The three main centres in New South Wales were Berrima in the Southern Highlands, Trial Bay on the North Coast and Holsworthy, near Liverpool in Sydney's south west.

The 6,890 people that were interned without a trial, were mainly of German or Austro-Hungarian background. This included German, Austrian, Hungarian, Croatian, Czech, Bulgarian and Turkish people.

Some were naturalised British citizens including native born second or third generation Australians, a few with siblings serving in the Australian military forces. Despite these intrinsic ties to Australia, many of these internees were deported to Germany after the war ended.

Internees came from Australia, the South Pacific and Asia, and included crews of ships caught in Australian ports, government officials and Lutheran missionaries from New Guinea, prisoners of war, and businessmen. One notable Sydney businessman of German origin, was Mr Edmund Resch, founder of Resch's Brewery who was interned at the Holsworthy Internment Camp.

After the war ended, many internees were expatriated to their native countries, with some coming back to Australia, whilst others returned to their homes in Australia.

Source: migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au

Holsworthy Internment Camp c1915
NSW Migration Heritage: Dubotzki collection, Germany



Internees working in the quarry, Holsworthy Internment Camp c1915
NSW Migration Heritage: Dubotzki collection, Germany

3 HOLSWORTHY INTERMENT CAMP

Known as the German Concentration Camp during WW1, Holsworthy was the largest and longest running in Australia housing up to 6,000 men, both internees and prisoners of war.

Some were transferred from camps in other states that were closed early in the war, as well as many survivors of the German light cruiser SMS Emden, which beached at Cocos (Keeling) Islands on 9th November, 1914.

Of all the internment camps, Holsworthy was the harshest and resembled that of a prison. Physical conditions in the camp were difficult; living conditions were overcrowded with rudimentary sanitary facilities.

At its height, there were in excess of 210 buildings, split between the internee compounds and the guards' camp area. Internees were very resourceful building their own barracks and furniture, a bakery, sausage factory, cafes, gymnasium, and an extensive vegetable garden.

Internees were employed as labour on local road works, the military railway, quarrying, charcoal burning and timber milling activities.

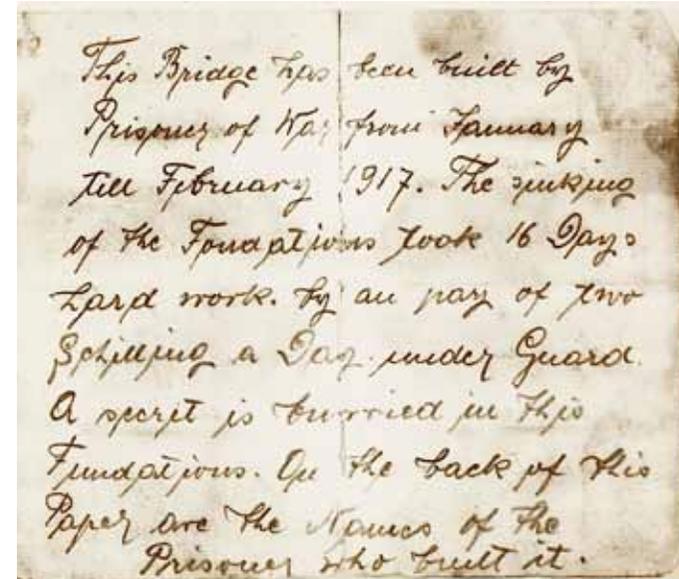
The camp closed in mid-1919 with the last man leaving on 5 May 1920. After the war, the internee compounds were razed with only three buildings remaining today in the former guards' camp area; the burnt-out sergeants' mess and recreation hall, and the gaol.

Source: migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au

4 ANZAC CREEK RAIL BRIDGE

This 2-span bridge, the smallest of the two flood openings, was built by the internees during January and February 1917. The steel work and rails were second-hand, retrieved from duplications as a cost cutting measure and also as there was a shortage of materials available as a result of the war effort.

About 1972, while clearing of the creek bed by the then Commonwealth Department of Works, a corner of the bridge was demolished exposing a bottle embedded in the concrete wall. It contained a note written by internees, explaining it had taken 16 days of hard labour under guard to build the foundations, paid at 2 shillings a day. It also alluded to a 'secret' buried within the foundations. On the reverse of the note is listed the names of the internees who worked on the bridge.



Part of one of the notes written by internees in 1917 found in two bottles embedded in the former Anzac Creek Rail Bridge
Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering

Further investigations by the Royal Australian Army Engineers, from the former Steele Barracks at Moorebank, lead to the discovery of a second bottle. The note contained in this unsealed bottle explains the conditions under which the internees worked whilst constructing the bridge.

Source: Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering