

### **Darling Harbour Railway Station, Sydney. -- Its Enormous Traffic.**

The ingenuity of the little animal called Man is by no means better illustrated than by proof of his capacity to manage large and complicated services, such as the heavy goods traffic of a busy metropolitan railway terminus. At the Darling Harbour Railway Station, of which we publish some illustrations, what is probably the greatest receiving and distributing business south of the Equator, is carried on. It is the principal mart of exchange between the country and the city. Every day from 500 to 900 railway waggons, laden each with from 6 to 22 tons of produce, rumble inwards from the country. In a few hours they have been unloaded, repacked with merchandise and are rumbling away to the places out-back. As the city is the heart of the State, so the railway service is the main artery.

Day by day, the population of Sydney hears the shrieking and coughing of the mighty engines as they tug at their loaded trains; hears the rattle and clatter of the shunting trucks, and the hum of an endless procession of carriers' vans and trolleys that take up the work of distribution when the railways disgorge their freights, or that do the work of collecting from the ends of the metropolis the loading for the return journeys. The average member of the public knows that he may consign any article, from a box of apples to a multi tubular boiler, to almost any railway station in four states, with practical certainty that it will safely and quickly reach its destination.

But few persons have any knowledge of the intricate management involved in thus carrying out of the daily transport work for a community of a million and a half souls. The ordinary railway traveller becomes so bewildered over a couple of portmanteaux, a hat box, and two or three brown paper parcels, that he has no desire to puzzle out a solution to the wider problem of the wholesale carriage of general merchandise.

As most people in New South Wales are aware, the Railway Commissioners have obtained control of Darling Island (which, in reality is not an island but a peninsula) and of the whole frontages of Darling Harbour, thence along the western and southern shores as far, roughly speaking, as the foot of Liverpool-street, city. The work of loading and discharging freight is mostly carried out under cover, the train being run in under enormous sheds. Of these there are eight or nine, some of them being more than 1000ft long, and sufficiently wide for trains to discharge on either side, leaving a cart track almost as wide as George-street, Sydney, and as well paved, in the centre.

Trains bound inwards to the station past Redfern, then travel under the George-street railway bridge, and what is known as the William Henry-street bridge at Ultimo. A short distance below the latter bridge is an open space, many acres in extent, and capable of holding 2000 trucks, known as the general reception roads. The engines are detached from the trains near the William Henry-street bridge, and the trucks are "kicked" along to the general reception roads, whence, according to the class of freight, they are run by gravitation – the grades are downward – to other reception yards, or onto the sheds wherein they are to be discharged.

When empty, the trucks, if necessary are swept out (in some cases of trade they are sprinkled with sawdust) and then they are run back to the sheds wherein "outward" loading is taking place. If not thus required, they are shunted on to "back lines" and left in long trains as "empties" until they are wanted.

During busy wool and wheat seasons, engines are hitched on to these empty trains, and are hurried back to the country, for then the whole of the rolling stock is required for traffic, and the empties cannot afford to be idle.

The wool traffic generally begins in September, and lasts until January. The wheat traffic commences early in December and lasts all the summer till autumn. So that in December and January the railway authorities have to deal with both wheat and wool.

At the head of the harbour, near the Harbour-street entrance to the railway yards are the great woolshed and several smaller goods sheds, beside the Government Meat Markets which occupies an acre of ground.

All the sheds are devoted to inward traffic. The wool is carted hence in great waggons to the big wool stores at Pyrmont or the Circular Quay, or to the wool station at Woolloomooloo. The woolshed, built by the late Chief Commissioner Eddy, is 1050 feet long and capable of unloading 120 trucks simultaneously,

under cover. Hence more than 10,000 bales have been dealt with in a day, under the supervision of Mr Charles Paull, the Darling Harbour stationmaster, who has been handling the wool traffic continuously for 33 years.

When no wool is coming to hand, the big woolshed is used for wheat, flour and general merchandise (inward or outward).

As stated there are four other sheds, and a covered platform at the end of the yards, where flour, and small consignments of grain, etc, for the city, are received. Fruit is carried in enclosed, but well ventilated louvre cars, and unloaded in the open air. All carrying from the station to the city is done via the Harbour-street entrance.

Wheat, wool, and coal are the principal freight lines of the railways. The wheat and coal are handled at the Darling Island end of the yards. The "island" has a concrete sea wall along its eastern side, affording berthing of four large ships, and near the water's edge is an enormous grain shed, 1050 feet by 80 feet and of great height. This shed is divided into seven sections, each of which has an electrically operated grain elevator, and is leased to a shipping firm. There are also gantry conveyors for bundling grain. Lines run along both side of the grain shed.

The remainder of the island, with the exception is a large new building intended for the storage of chilled meat, is used in reception sidings for the grain trucks. (The Naval victualling building)

Opposite each elevator is a 10-ton weighbridge, and prior to unloading the trucks are run on to these, an electric capstan and ropes affording a convenient method of handling the waggons.

Between Darling Island and Pyrmont is a considerable space, where the wool and coal, for metropolitan consumption, is received at a rate of from 120 to 150 truckloads per day. On the water side, between the grain shed of Pyrmont Bridge, are jetties, affording berthing accommodation for seven ships. Here perhaps may be seen a big British-India steamer, taking horses aboard from the railway trucks, and a Vancouver mail steamer having "hoppers" (coal trucks) lifted up and swung bodily into her by the big cranes on the wharf. Fourteen hoppers an hour (120 tons) are being dropped in, and as she requires 1,200 tons she will coal in 10 hours. Further along the shore, colliers are being laden with South Coast and Mountain coal, to take it to ships down the harbour. At the jetties other loading, from vessels to trains is done with such freight as ore, concentrates, etc.

On the southern side of Pyrmont Bridge are two big sheds, 756 feet long, with four times that in platforms, for miscellaneous outward traffic. Each shed has a 42 feet cart-way, and unloading is done on one level, from the cart to the platform, which is 12 feet wide, and from the platform to the truck. There are 34 hydraulic cranes (about 100 feet apart) to facilitate loading and handling goods generally, besides 68 platforms weighing appliances, and the weigh-bridges at the entrances. These sheds are a scene of great activity in the afternoons especially between 3 and 5 pm. Rough loading such as timber, etc, is done out in the open, and provision is made to load timber from coastal schooners right onto the trucks. Here may be seen too, thousands of sleepers sent down by rail for export to South Africa.

To carry on the work of the station, Mr Paull has a permanent staff of 338 men, including 72 clerks and 45 shunters. The gross tonnage handled each year is between  $1\frac{1}{4}$  and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million, and the revenue generated £800,000. The value of the merchandise handled, of course is unknown, but it must be in the millions of pounds. This year there will be a general increase in tonnage, owing to the unprecedented wheat harvest.

The wool traffic, which when Mr Paull became identified with it in 1871, was 38,910 bales in a year, was last year 375,360 bales while it has reached (in 1894) 528,128 bales. The coal traffic represents 250,000 tons per year. One week the average number of trains arriving daily was 28, while as many as 40 or more sometimes arrive in a day.

Darling Harbour Station was opened in 1875, for the wheat traffic; the wool traffic was sent to it in 1878. In 1880, it was necessary to extend to the other side of the Pyrmont Wharf. At the present time, there are  $15\frac{1}{2}$  miles of rails in the yard alone. The traffic has caused great wool stores and other industrial palaces to spring up in large numbers on the Pyrmont side and has attracted fleets of shipping to the wharves. A couple of years ago the department recognised that the supervision became too large for one man, and Mr Paull was granted the assistance of Mr Horan, a valuable officer, whose worth his chief freely eulogises.

The stationmaster himself entered his service 40 years ago as a junior, when the entire goods staff numbered 18 men and the railways only extended to Penrith, Richmond and Picton. After spending seven years in the coaching branch, as a guard, pilot, porter etc., he was appointed goods foreman at Redfern. Darling Harbour Station was opened in 1875, and Mr Paull, under the late Mr Carlisle, managed both stations. The stationmaster is now in his 60th year, but retains the full vigour of his youthful days, which he strongly attributes to the fact that he has all his life been a total abstainer. Mr Paull's immediate chief is the goods manager Mr G.J.S. Corns who was brought to New South Wales by the late Chief Commissioner Eddy, after a varied railway experience in England.