

This article is about the railway museum. For the heritage-listed rolling stock, see Valley Heights Steam Tram Rolling Stock.

The Valley Heights Rail Museum is a railway museum located in Valley Heights, New South Wales, Australia. The facility is located 300 metres (980 ft) north-west of Valley Heights railway station. The Museum is operated by two partner organisations:

The Valley Heights Locomotive Depot Heritage Museum,[1] is the Blue Mountains Division of Transport Heritage New South Wales.

The Valley Heights Steam Tramway[2] (the trading name of the Steam Tram and Railway Preservation (Co-op) Society) is the operator of historic steam trams and trains within the former locomotive depot.

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Locomotive depot[edit]

Main article: Valley Heights railway station § Locomotive depot

The heritage-listed locomotive depot was constructed in 1913 when the duplication of the Main Western railway line between Emu Plains and Glenbrook was completed. The depot was available for service from December 1913, but was not officially opened till 31 January 1914. With the duplication and regrading of the line, the heavy grades below Valley Heights were eliminated, the ruling gradient from Penrith to Valley Heights being 1 in 60.[3]

The depot at Valley Heights consisted of a locomotive yard, a 10 bay roundhouse, 18.3-metre (60 ft) turntable, an elevated coal stage, and water tanks and columns. It provided bank engines for trains travelling to Katoomba and beyond. The engines at Valley Heights not only banked over the longest distance in NSW, but also had the envious distinction of having to operate over the longest continual and most steeply graded mainline in Australia. The 33 kilometre section from Valley Heights to Katoomba rises 670 metres, with a ruling gradient of 1 in 33.

During the steam era, the depot had a continual allotment of eight freight and two passenger engines. During the peak of the steam era, an average of 30 trains during any 24-hour period required banking from Valley Heights to Katoomba.

The line was electrified to Valley Heights in October 1956. In February 1957, steam operations from Valley Heights were replaced by the 46 class electric locomotives.

The depot in latter years was an electric locomotive and freight wagon repair workshop, the electric engines receiving everything from minor repairs to complete overhauls at the depot. A variety of freight wagons were also repaired. The demise of Valley Heights depot began when the more powerful 85 class locomotives were introduced in 1979. The demise was accelerated with the introduction of the 86 class locomotives in early 1983. From the mid-1980s, the number of trains requiring banking from Valley Heights had been reduced

to a handful each day, the number of locomotives required for this duty being reduced to three, sometimes as few as two being necessary.

In October 1988, it was announced the depot would close.[4] One electric locomotive remained available for any bank work necessary, until the last week of January 1989, when 4627 had the distinction operating the last train to be banked from Valley Heights to Katoomba.

Milestones included:

1911- railway station destroyed by bushfire

1912 - repairs to railway station buildings destroyed by bushfire

1914 - new roundhouse and depot brought into use

1924 - additional water supplies at depot

1925 - improvements to facilities, including ash tunnel for locomotive ash handling

1949 - upgrading facilities for crew amenities

1953 - the only fatality in the depot's history when Henrikus Trip killed walking on the main line[5]

1957 - electric locomotives take over from steam locomotives as bank engines

1960s - improvements to allow for servicing and repairs to electric locomotives, members room/meal room, visitor centre and refreshment rooms added

1973 - machine workshop annex added

1987 - the first floor level of brickwork at signal box was removed in 1987 and extension added

1988 - reduced use of bank engines as larger electric locomotives are used on main line work

1992 - footbridge, upgrading work, concrete deck and stairs

1993 - depot closed

1990s - extensive repairs to roundhouse

2014 - centenary of depot and official opening of museum by Governor Marie Bashir

2017 - sesqui centenary of opening western line to Weatherboard (now Wentworth Falls)

2018 - major renovation of roundhouse forecourt

Museum[edit]

In 1994, the Blue Mountains Division of the New South Wales Rail Transport Museum (now Transport Heritage NSW) established the Valley Heights Locomotive Depot Railway Museum, with the aim of preserving the depot to provide historical, educational and recreational facilities and opportunities for the benefit of the Blue Mountains community and visitor to the region.

Following the destruction of the Parramatta Park Tramway by fire in June 1993, the Valley Heights Steam Tramway was established in 1997 by the Stream Tram and Railway Preservation (Co-Op) Society Limited and its remaining assets were also transferred to Valley Heights.

In 2007/08, the Museum built a new work shed constructed near ash disposal tunnel, former amenities building (refreshment room and visitor centre) repaired and refurbished, ongoing work in roundhouse, chargeman's office (museum) repaired and refurbished, ash disposal tunnel cleaned and restored, amenities (toilets) were repaired and refurbished.

Heritage status[edit]

Together with the Valley Heights railway station, the locomotive depot was listed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999. The depot is considered "of state significance as an important locomotive depot, and the principal service and maintenance facility for bank engines working over the Main Western line between Sydney and Lithgow for almost 80 years".[3]

Valley Heights Steam Tram Rolling Stock displayed and operated at the Museum is also listed on the State Heritage Register as 'collection of steam tram rolling stock is of state historical significance as a remnant of the steam tram network in operation in NSW between the 1880s and the 1930s'.[6]

Centenary[edit]

On 31 January 2014, the Museum celebrated the centenary of the opening of the depot, with a special ceremony featuring speeches from the NSW Governor Marie Bashir and NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell. The Governor formally opened the Museum during this event, which received extensive coverage on local and state media.[7][8][9]

Museum exhibits[edit]

The Museum's collection of railway locomotives, carriages, wagons and other railway equipment includes:

Locomotives

No Description Manufacturer Year Status Ref NSW Heritage Office Custodian

103A 0-4-0T Steam saddle tank tram engine Baldwin Locomotive Works 1891 operating exhibit Exhibit information, Steam tram motor 103A Valley Heights Steam Tram Rolling Stock Valley Heights Steam Tramway

CPC2 0-6-0T Steam loco Robert Stephenson and Company 1899 operating exhibit Exhibit information, Stephenson Locomotive No CPC 2 Valley Heights Steam Tramway

1022 0-4-0T Steam saddle tank Vulcan Iron Works 1896 in parts under restoration Exhibit information, Locomotive 1022 Valley Heights Steam Tramway

1308 4-4-2T Steam passenger loco Beyer, Peacock and Company 1877 parts only Exhibit information, Locomotive 1308 Locomotive, Steam 1307 Valley Heights Steam Tramway

3214 4-6-0 Steam passenger loco Beyer, Peacock and Company 1891 static exhibit Exhibit information, Locomotive 3214 Valley Heights Loco Depot Heritage Museum

5461 2-8-0 Steam goods loco Clyde Engineering 1915 static exhibit Exhibit information, Locomotive 5461 Locomotive, Steam 5461 Valley Heights Loco Depot Heritage Museum

5711 4-8-2 Steam goods loco Clyde Engineering 1929 static exhibit Exhibit information, Locomotive 5711 Locomotive, Steam 5711 Valley Heights Loco Depot Heritage Museum

4601 Co-Co Electric loco Metropolitan Vickers 1956 static exhibit Exhibit information, Locomotive 4601 Valley Heights Loco Depot Heritage Museum

X206 0-4-0 Diesel mechanical shunting loco Chullora Railway Workshops 1963 operating exhibit Exhibit information, Locomotive X206 Valley Heights Loco Depot Heritage Museum

The Museum publishes historical and technical details of exhibits on its website.

Valley Heights Mixed train at Valley Heights Locomotive Depot Heritage Museum

NSWGR Steam Tram and Trailer at Valley Heights

4601 on turntable at Valley Heights 2015-03-17

Locomotive 5711 under restoration at Valley Heights