Timelines re Steam Train water supply at Glenbrook

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| Date | Information source | Description of event |
| 12051813 |  | Crossing of the Blue Mountains by Blaxland Wentworth and Lawson and ‘discovery’ of Glenbrook Lagoon |
| 1814 |  | Evans surveys route over the Blue Mountains |
| July 1814 |  | Cox established a depot in July 1814 at Glenbrook Lagoon. for road building purposes |
| 1815 | Mackaness, George, Fourteen Journeys Over The Blue Mountains of NSW 1813-1841, 1965. Journey Number four by Governor Lachlan Macquarie. p 73 note 4. | Macquarie authorises an intermediate Post be established at Glenbrook Lagoon to keep the communications with Bathurst open, and to prevent Run away Convicts and other Idle Persons from going to the New Country”. |
| 1826-1830 |  | Coxs Road bypassed between Emu Plains and Blaxland first by Dumaresq’s Old Bathurst Road in 1826 and then by Mitchells Pass in the early 1830s, |
|  |  | When was the railway over the Blue Mountains from Penrith approved? Plus more info |
| 11111867 | NSW Gov. Gazette | The New South Wales Government Gazette (Sydney, NSW), *Tuesday 19 November 1867* (No.205), page 3073, sets out the details of a contract to be let for the construction of the pipeline and ancillary works from Glenbrook Lagoon to ‘Water Tank’, a.k.a. Wascoes, a.k.a. Glenbrook. The relevant section of the tender is reproduced here.  “Department of Public Works, Railway Branch,  Sydney, 11th. November, 1867.  TO CONTRACTORS AND OTHERS  TENDERS will be received at this Office, until Tuesday, the 26th instant, at noon, from persons willing to Contract for excavating, sinking shafts, constructing a valve pit, in masonry, &c., for the Water-works near Wascoe's, on the Great Western Railway.  Plan, specification, and form of Tender may be seen, and further particulars obtained, at the Office of the Engineer-in-Chief for Railways, Tenders are to be endorsed, "Tender for Waterworks, near Wascoe's  JAMES BYRNES,  Commissioner for Railways.” |
| 1867 | ARHS 1959 | *“In 1867, a small tank and pump was installed at Glenbrook, on the original line. The water was obtained from a lagoon to the north of the station and gravitated to a well on the down side at the Lithgow end of the station. The water was then pumped by a Tangye 6” x 3” steam engine to a tank on the upside, which was fitted with a jib, and served the main line west of the station.*  *During the drought years 1877 to 1884, the water supply from the lagoon gave out and it was necessary to carry water from Penrith to water troughs situated near the well.* |
| 1877 | ARHS | *During the drought years 1877 to 1884, the water supply from the lagoon gave out and it was necessary to carry water from Penrith to water troughs situated near the well* |
| 1877 | Ex Denis Bainbridge from Nell Aston | Even with the damming (of the Lagoon) there was not always enough water and the Glenbrook Lagoon Society records that “ During the great drought of 1877- 84 water was pumped from the Duck Hole in Glenbrook Creek to the Lagoon, then gravitated to the Tank.”  The long drought from 1877 until 1884 reduced the dam level dangerously and it was reinforced by water pumped up from the Duckhole down in Glenbrook Creek 1500 metres away to the south-west on the other side of the ridge. (Aston, rails, roads, & Ridges, p 11)  **Note These two entries for 1877 are in conflict.** |
| 1881 | ARHS | *In 1881, an additional Tangye 6” x 3’ pump was erected, this time at the lagoon, to supplement the gravitational supply from the lagoon.* |
| 1892 | ARHS | *During 1892, another tank was built 132’ east of the station on the down side for push-up engines whilst, in 1900, the original tank was removed and another tank installed 560’ from the Bourke end of the platform, both these new tanks having 10,000 gallon capacity* |
| 20051897 | Travers “Murder in the Blue Mountains” | Map by Charles Robert Scrivener dated 20th May 1897 prepared for the trial of ‘Butler’ for the murder of Captain Lee Weller, shows the position of the two circular shafts as well as the plotted alignment of the covered pipeline from the Lagoon |
| 1902 | ARHS | *To suit duplication in 1902, a small covered reservoir was placed 606’ from the Lithgow end of the platform on the upside.* |
| 03061903 | Nepean Times | GLENBROOKS WATER SUPPLY- Owing to the alteration of arrangements for watering trains at Glenbrook, and pending further improvements there, Mr. Charles Towle, who has been employed there for the last 18 months in attending to the watering of trains, has come back to Penrith, and Mr. J. Ensor, of Lawson, is now in charge. During the severe drought, and while the duplication[[1]](#footnote-1) was going on, Mr. Towle's duties were of the hardest, but, by his obliging manner, he had endeared himself to, not only the employees, but the townspeople as well, all of whom regret his leaving”. I am curious about the section, “the alteration of arrangements for watering trains at Glenbrook, and pending further improvements there …Mr. Towle's duties were of the hardest...” |
| 04071903 | An extract from p 388, Shop Orders Mechanical Branch, NSW Railways has the following entry, | “4th July 1903, dated authorised, 13th July 1903, date ordered, Order Number 5236, Glenbrook Water Supply. Pump House and foundations for pump, clearing approaches, £100. Completed 18-12-1903.”  What is not certain is that this approved work was at the Duck Hole. Given that it took six (6) months to complete and is the equivalent in 2017 money to $14,000 it was very likely at the Duck Hole and not at the Glenbrook Lagoon. Read in conjunction with the entry for 3rd October 1903 this looks as though it is the Duck Hole installation |
| 03101903 | Nepean Times | “The Commissioners are now having a pumping plant put down in Glenbrook Creek over a mile from the station and over 400feet below the rail level, which, when completed, will give them a never failing supply of beautiful water. This work will be completed in about a fortnight’s time.” Is this the first date for the installation of the pump in the Duck Hole? |
| 14111903 | Nepean Times | The new pumping plant to supply the Railway Department with water from Glenbrook Creek, a mile and a quarter from the station, and something over 400 feet below the rail level, was put into operation over a week ago, and has done away with the necessity of running a water train from Penrith which has been going on for nearly two years at great expense to the Commissioners. The pump, a very powerful duplex Worthington is working well and keeping up the supply satisfactory.” |
| 20021904 | Nepean Times | Page 4, …The lagoon has been quite dry for months, but there is a never failing supply of water at the new pumping station and off the best quality… |
| 07051904 | Nepean Times | The Nepean Times, Saturday 7th May 1904, page 6, records, “The Railway Department are also calling for tenders for the carting of coal from the station out to the new pumping station for the year ended 30th June 1905.” [We didn’t get that advt- Ed, N.T.] |
| 14011905 | SMH, also Lithgow Mercury 17th January 1905 | Sydney Morning Herald, (NSW) Saturday 14th January 1905, page 12, “Water has again given out at Glenbrook Lagoon, necessitating the Railway Department using the pumping plant at Glenbrook Creek for railway purposes.” |
| 20051905 | Nepean Times | The Nepean Times, 20th May 1905, ran a similar story but with a twist. “Notwithstanding the great amount of rain we have had during the last few months, the water in the lagoon is too low to gravitate and pumping from the creek has to still be continued.” This would mean that the Duck Hole Pump was installed in 1905. |
| 09061910 | Nepean Times, The Star, SMH, BME | GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS: New South Wales Government Railways. Office of the Chief Commissioner, Sydney, June 8, 1910.  Tenders will be received at this Office not later than 12 o'clock noon on the dates specified for the undermentioned Works, Supplies, etc., MONDAY, JUNE 13, 1910.  THE CARTAGE OF PUMPING BOILER AND GEAR FROM GLENBROOK RAILWAY STATION to pump at Duck Hole, Glenbrook: and Cartage of Old Boiler from Duck Hole to Glenbrook Station.  Approximate weight of boiler and gear in each case: 2½ tons. Particulars, Chief Mechanical Engineer's Office, Redfern and Steam Shed Inspector, Penrith.” |
| 21011911 | Nepean Times | The copious rainfall which has fallen over the Mountains this summer has filled Glenbrook Lagoon to overflowing. This splendid sheet of water covers 40 acres and is used by the Railway Department for watering the Mountains trains. The demand in this direction is heavy and as a result the lagoon was entirely drained a few years ago… a pumping station was fixed in the Duck Hole in Glenbrook Creek. For the past three years the water for the Glenbrook train tanks has been pumped from the Duck Hole where there is an inexhaustible supply. **If this is true then the pump in the Duck Hole was installed in 1908**. However to the surprise and regret of local residents, the railway pumping man has within the past week, shifted his location and is now engaged in attempting to lower the lagoon waters… Glenbrook Creek was up to record height, being 6 inches over the pump house floor, clearing away a great heap of ashes the accumulation for the past 7 years…” |
| 03061911 | Nepean Times | “…There is now 2,000 people at the different camps and water has been laid on to all of them…” “There is still plenty of water in the lagoon which supplies the locomotives with water by gravitation, and the different camps,[[2]](#footnote-2) are being supplied from Glenbrook Creek, pumped up into a 20,000 gallon tank in the station yard, and then re-pumped up to the various camps for domestic purposes etc.” |
| 03061911 | Nepean Times | Extract from the Nepean Times, Saturday 3rd June 1911, page 4, “There is still plenty of water in the lagoon which supplies the locomotives with water by gravitation, and the different camps,[[3]](#footnote-3) are being supplied from Glenbrook Creek, pumped up into a 20,000 gallon tank in the station yard, and then re-pumped up to the various camps for domestic purposes etc.” |
| 19061911 | Lithgow Mercury  + Nepean Times 1706911 | THE GLENBROOK DEVIATION PROGRESS OF THE WORK, On January last (1911) the railway deviation works were started at Glenbrook, and hundreds of navvies and camp followers swarmed into the village. A camp was located on a plateau about a mile and a half from the railway station, and soon was the scene of a thriving township, which now boasts a population of 1200 navvies, with their wives and families.  A doctor and a hospital have been provided by the Railway Department. The place also boasts of a couple of policemen and a resident Church of England clergyman. A large hall has been built, wherein are held picture shows, dances, and other amusements. Football clubs have been formed and a proper oval constructed. Regarding sanitary matters, an officer has been especially appointed by the department to supervise matters in the interests of public health. The attendance at the local school numbers two hundred, and an increase of the teaching staff has been found necessary.  The deviation is intended to do away with the steep grade which at present exists between Emu Plains and Glenbrook, and Glenbrook Creek is being blasted out of recognition in the process. The journey over the mountains will, when the alteration is finished, be three or four miles longer than at present, but the train passenger will have ample compensation in the grandeur of the scenery in the Glen-brook Gully. The train will skirt along cliffs 700 feet deep, while the line will pass through timbered country on a course which is parallel with the Nepean River, affording a beautiful view of the prettiest portion of the Nepean.  The progress of the work up to the present is wonderful. Big gullies are being filled up, and hills are being pulled down. Immediately after passing Emu Plains the new line takes a wide semi-circle and returns to the pre-sent line near the road crossing, then skirts along eastwards some three hundred yards. A big tunnel is to be excavated, and it will end right at the back of the Glenbrook station. The first pinch is met with at Penrith, 84 miles from Sydney. Here the line gradually rises 155ft. before it crosses the Knapsack Gully by the via-duct, which is 388ft. long, with a maximum height of 126ft. The crossing is 245ft. above Emu Plains, and the line reaches the lowest point of the first Zig-zag at an elevation of 414ft. above sea level. From there an elevation of 470ft. is attained in 30 chains, and the line continues to go higher until the tunnel, 539 yards in length, conveys the train through Mount Clarence. The rails at the entrance to this tunnel are 3658 feet above sea level.  The construction camp is supplied with water pumped from the Duck Hole, a deep pool in the Glenbrook Creek, and to connect this with the camp miles of pipes had to be laid down. The work of making the deviation will last for two years.” |
| 25051912 | Nepean Times p.6. | The lagoon has supplied sufficient water by gravitation for all locomotive purposes since January of last year (1911) but it is now nearly done and the Department has placed a pumping plant in position to pump out the remaining two feet that will not gravitate. Before this is exhausted there will be a plentiful supply at Valley Heights as the Department is now laying wooden pipes to bring water down from Linden by gravitation. Glenbrook will then be cut out as a watering place, all goods trains taking water at Valley Heights instead of here. |
| 21121912 | Nepean Times | The want of a good water supply is felt by the residents and it is expected the Shire Council will come to some arrangement with the Railway Commissioners to take over their plant when the deviation is completed, as the Department will then take water at Valley Heights for loco purposes. They will not require to pump water here as the water is now available at Valley Heights having been run down from Wentworth Falls by gravitation.” |
| 03031913 | Lithgow Mercury. Nepean Times, 01031913 | Dry conditions coupled with growing demand led to an article in the Lithgow Mercury, Monday 3rd March 1913, page 2. It was captioned, “Not Enough Water… The lagoon at Glenbrook that has supplied the railway for many months has again become dry: Glenbrook Creek, which was supposed to be a never failing supply, has stopped running, and the big water hole known as the Duck Hole out at the pumping station is already some inches below the overflow level. Should this supply entirely fail, it will mean big expense to the Railway Commissioners, as well as to many business places and private residences, which are now depending on this supply” |
| 1913 | ARHS | *All these watering arrangements were removed in 1913, the close proximity of the new Valley Heights Depot obviating the need for a water supply at the new Glenbrook station.”* |
| 03011914 | Nepean Times page 3 | Glenbrook short of water, Councillor Riches said the people of Glenbrook were short of water and had to get their supply from the railway dam, where there was bathing. Carts drew up to the lagoon and conveyed water to places that required it. The President said that of course the people used the water at their own risk. Councillor Walker said that perhaps the council could purchase the pumping plant at Glenbrook and supply water by that means. Councillor Riches remarked that the pipes were being taken away. He added that he thought the council should ring the police at Penrith and get them to stop people bathing in the dam…” |

Michael Keats

18th February 2018

Timelines re Steam Train Water Supply at Glenbrook/MK

1. Shorthand for duplication of the Western Railway line. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is a reference to the railway deviation construction camps, several of which were established in the greater Glenbrook area 1911 to 1913. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is a reference to the railway deviation construction camps, several of which were established in the greater Glenbrook area 1911 to 1913. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)