

27 Sep

# The railway station that represents all we have to lose



The quaint red train station

**I sent some photos taken around Bungendore Park to a friend who's never been here, and she replied:**

*"What's that beautiful old red building?  
A school?"*

It was a cold grey day, too cold to take old bones into the garden and so we decided on a trip to Bungendore to have lunch at the George and warm ourselves by the open fire. To our surprise it seemed as if everyone else had the same idea. There were couples and family groups, and on one of the long wooden tables there were four couples with several young children scattered around, all having fun; it looked like a mini UN gathering. We got talking. Why had they decided to lunch in Bungendore? Here's their story.

They'd been cooped up all week in small apartments in Canberra. It was miserably cold and wet and the kids were driving them up the wall. Saturday dawned, the sun peeped through the clouds and they decided to all go on a train ride. They parked at Kingston Station and hopped on the Sydney train. Excitement! A few more people got on at Queanbeyan Station and then the train climbed the hill through the picturesque Molonglo Gorge and there was a scramble for a window to see the river far below. A bridge over the river, some cattle in a paddock, then suddenly everything went black as they disappeared into the tunnel; terror and thrill in turmoil. By the time they stepped down onto Bungendore platform they were ready for the next adventure. The kids raced across the wet grass to the playground, turned themselves inside out and were dragged away for a short walk down Gibraltar Street, past the old PO, the old

Courthouse, a glimpse of the very old Cobb and Co stables in Butmaroo Street, past St Phillips Church where the market was wrapping up under the magnificent English elms and when they arrived at the George everyone was ready for lunch. Lunch over, it would be a walk back to the “beautiful old red building” to get the train returning from Sydney... perfect timing, and sleepy heads might not even register the black tunnel or the rushing water in the Gorge before the train was at Kingston.

We have had similar excursions on the train from that beautiful old red building, Bungendore Railway Station, to Tarago Station, for lunch at the Loaded Dog. Before we moved into town we'd park the car at the station for day trips to the Southern Highlands or weekends in Sydney. The convenience of the train is one of the reasons older people move here, but it is an asset for young and old. It has sustained Bungendore for many years. Older residents today still talk about catching the train to school in Queanbeyan and Canberra. It was a great social event, the highlight of their day, and there were many stops along the way.

The Railway Station, on Majara Street, with its two railway cottages adjoining the Park, was finally opened in 1885 with great fanfare, having been delayed by flooding in the area. The railway line heralded great prosperity for the town and while the tracks were being built “there wasn't an unoccupied house and several banks opened their doors”. There was hope that it would become a tourist destination as Lake George had been slowly refilling over the years. The Carrington was built to provide accommodation for tourists arriving by train, a boarding house was built on the Lake shores and a ferry service was established. But as the construction of the railway line progressed towards Queanbeyan and the workers and their families moved with it, coupled with the devastating drought of the late 1880s and the general collapse of the Banks, Bungendore, like the rest of Eastern Australia went into depression.

*“The railway precinct, the town park, community and commercial buildings along Gibraltar, Malbon and Molonglo Streets and the open space along Turallo Creek are major contributors to the distinctive character of the village. There is consistency of building form and building materials....”*

*"Bungendore village was a simple grid plan constrained by creeks and flood plains to the west, north and east. A large extension to the south in the 1880s left the original village largely unaltered, and more recent development has been across Turallo Creek to the north, again leaving the original village largely unaltered." (Palerang Council Heritage Advisory Committee March 2009)*

## **This is what we stand to lose.**

Imagine three prefabricated structures up to 12m high built across Majara Street, a large part of the Bungendore Park and a slice of Mick Sherd Oval surrounded by a 2.1 metre metal fence and closed to the public between school hours, 7.30am to 6pm.

Imagine a high school built for 450 students in an area of rapid housing developments to the north, east and south, confined to such a limited space for expansion. There goes the rest of the Park!

Imagine tourists from afar flocking to historic Bungendore but stepping off the train to be confronted by modern prefabs, dumped in the middle of a once intact piece of Colonial history.

They might as well stay where they are. They certainly won't be bringing their children to Bungendore on the train for a special treat, with lunch at the George.

**Here's how to  
Save  
Bungendore**

**Touch football  
at the Park in  
the Regional**