

STATION STORIES

If railway stations could talk they'd have some interesting tales to tell; here are a few told through Australian news articles

Flinders Street Railway Station, 1933 and 1942



The nursery that was once housed within the Flinders Street Railway Station
PROV_12903P1



The Victorian Railway Institute gymnasium was once a vibrant space located above Flinders Street Station, c1933
PROV_12903P1

CHILDREN'S NURSERY

Of interest to all mothers is the establishment by the Railways Department of a modern and well appointed nursery in the Flinders St Station buildings, where babies and young children may be left in the care of a qualified and experienced nursing sister and staff while shopping in the city. There are cot rooms for babies and play rooms with rocking horse, toys and other attractions for older children. If desired, food will be supplied and prepared at the direction of the mother at a very low charge. Fresh air, ventilation and central heating are features of this up-to date nursery. Special attention will be given to country mothers visiting the city.

The charges for the use of the nursery are 6d. for one hour, 8d. for each additional hour, with a maximum charge of 2/- for a whole day. The nursery is open from 9 am. to 6.15 pm. Mondays to Thursdays; 9 am to 9 pm Fridays; 9 am to 1.15 pm Saturdays.

Frankston & Somerville Standard (Vic), Saturday 15 July 1933, page 2

RAILWAY NURSERY CLOSED

Railways Commissioners decided on Saturday to close the children's nursery, Flinders St. Station buildings, after today until further notice in view of the Premier's recommendation against congregations of people in the city.

The Argus (Melbourne, Vic), Monday 26 January 1942, page 5

Hidden History

Have you ever looked up at a building and wondered, *what's up there?* The upper storeys of the iconic Flinders Street Railway Station in Melbourne once housed the spectacular Victorian Railway Institute facilities; including a gymnasium, a beautiful ballroom, lecture theatre, library, and the childcare nursery described in the newspaper articles. The VRI clubrooms housed in the station catered for a broad range of club activities; from fencing and wine appreciation to poetry and cat fancying.

The main station building at Flinders Street Station was rebuilt in 1909, and in 1910 the VRI opened its offices and facilities there. Like other railway institutes around Australia, the VRI provided excellent benefits to its members; such as educational and social opportunities.

The VRI still exists today and has retained offices in the Flinders Street Station, however the Institute's once spectacular facilities are no longer in use and over time have become rundown. There is interest in revitalising the once lively spaces when the station is eventually renovated.

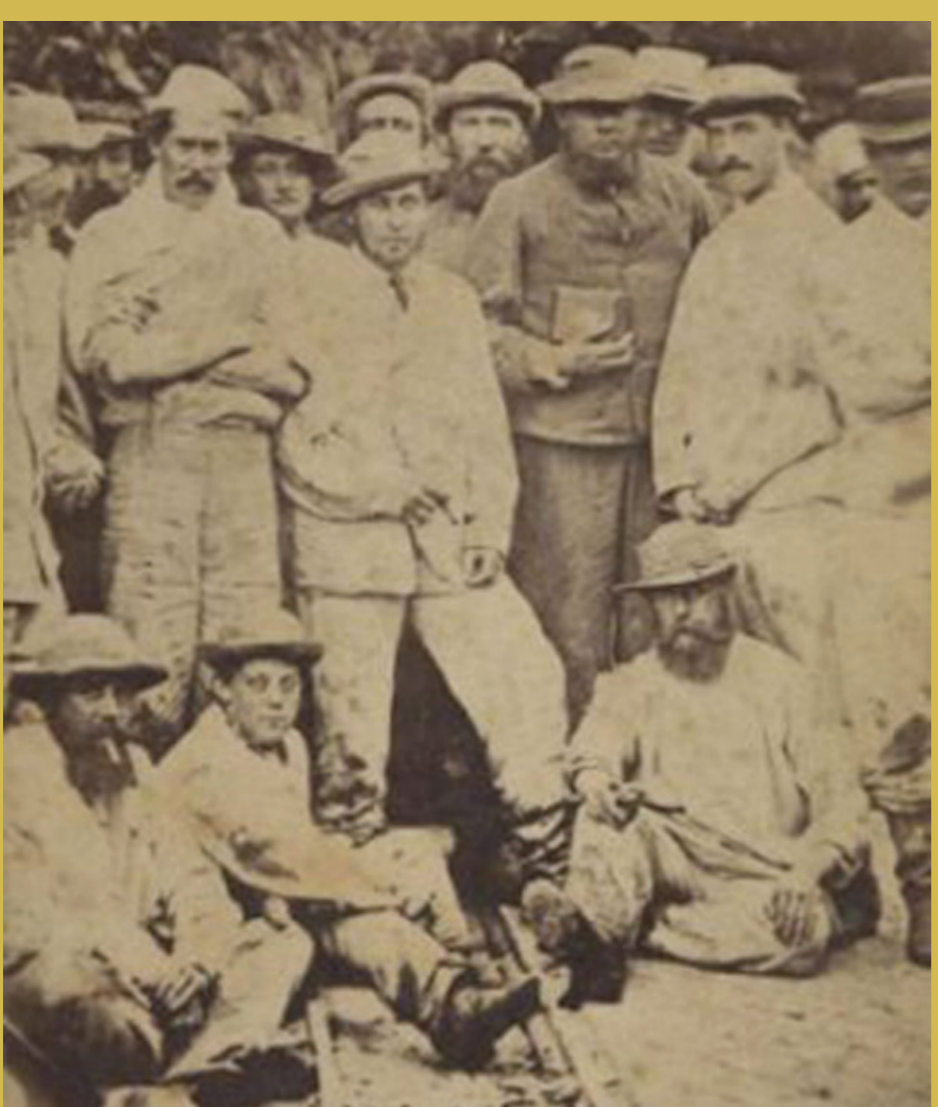


The iconic Flinders Street Railway Station. The upper floors of the station once housed the now unused Victorian Railways Institute clubrooms and facilities
JJ Harrison jharrison89@facebookcom 2010

Jondaryan, 1868



A photograph of Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh. Date Unknown
Wikimedia Commons



Prince Alfred (centre) with miners during his visit to Ballarat, Victoria. 1867
Wikimedia Commons

THE PRINCE AT JONDARYAN

H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh reached Jondaryan Railway Station, by special train, at about twenty minutes past eight o'clock, and here again the mismanagement prevailed. The platform, which is a very small one, was crowded with visitors anxious even to obtain a glimpse of the Prince, although it was very dark indeed, and he could scarcely be distinguished! After some delay, during which he repeatedly acknowledged the loud cheers which greeted him, H.R.H. was conducted to a room at the Railway Station which had been especially filled up for him. It was, however, very small, and totally unfit for such a guest.

After resting for about an hour, the Prince was conducted to a large tent situated about one hundred yards on the opposite side of the Railway Line, and in which dinner had been provided for a large number of guests.

It being now late, the Prince retired to the apartment provided for him at the Railway Station. The other guests immediately began to look about for some place to sleep, and for blankets. There were but very few to be found. The lucky ones, amongst whom was the Acting-Governor, who took possession of the railway carriages, while many endeavoured to find a soft plank on the floor of the dinner tent.

At about half past six on Thursday morning the Prince rose. It was fully expected by His Royal Highness that horses would be provided for himself and suite, and that he could have had a gallop after an emu; but the morning wore on and no horses were to be had. The Prince then borrowed a gun from one of the troopers and went out to see if he could find any game, but of course there was none to be found, and all he managed to "pot" was a few crows.

This article has been abbreviated

Warwick Examiner and Times (Qld), Saturday 7 March 1868, page 4

The First Royal Visit: A Right Royal Muddle

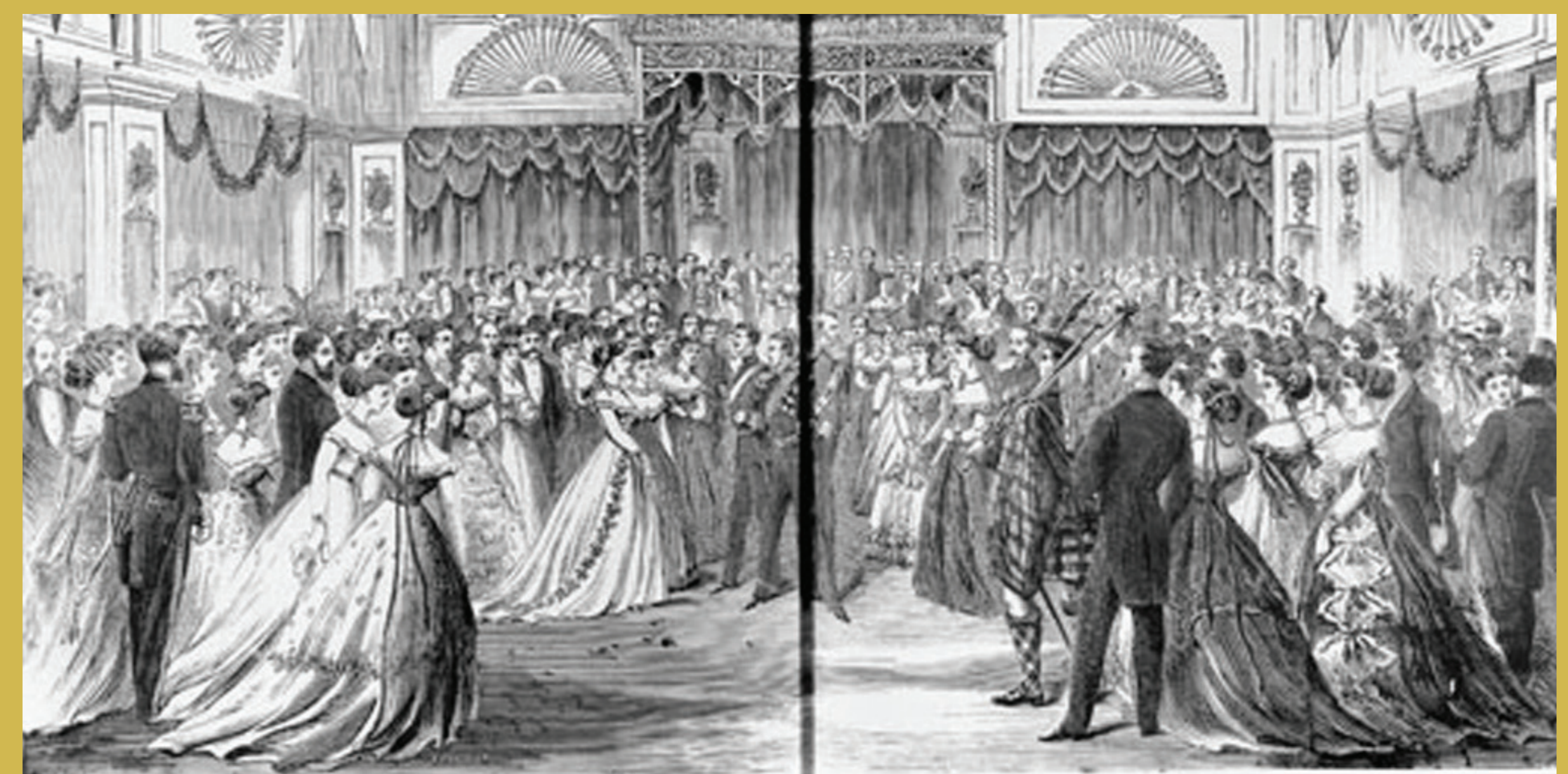
In 1867 Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, was the first British royal to tour Australia. Unfortunately his visit was plagued by a series of unfortunate events; of which his visit to Jondaryan Railway Station, an event later described in the media as 'a disaster,' was just one.

The Duke travelled to Jondaryan in Queensland to open the new railway line extension; however his train arrived two hours late throwing the celebrations and tour schedule the following day into disarray. Reverend Milner, who accompanied Prince Alfred on the tour, wrote:

"Because of the lateness of the arrival of the train, all the welcoming arrangements had to be reorganised....The Duke was highly amused by the oddness of the whole affair"

Reportedly the Duke was frustrated by 'overzealous officials' at Jondaryan who (due to schedule delays caused by the late train) arranged for him to stay overnight at the railway station, instead of the more comfortable quarters prepared for him at the Jondaryan homestead, and prevented the prince and his party from hunting emu and kangaroo on horseback in the morning.

In Victoria there was a riot at a charity event, at which the Duke was to be the guest of honour; but the most ill-fated event occurred in New South Wales, where a gunman attempted to assassinate the Duke. Though badly injured, the Duke made a full recovery, reportedly being saved by his thick rubber braces which slowed the bullet. Despite these misfortunes the Duke returned to Australia again during a non-official tour in 1869.



The royal party at the Governors Ball at the Exhibition Buildings, Victoria 1867
A print by Samuel Calvert, 1867. SLV B49420

Bridgetown, 1920



UNPERTURBED AFTER HIS COACH HAD TURNED OVER

A photograph of His Royal Highness (now King Edward VIII) taken a few minutes after his coach on the Royal train had been derailed and capsized near Bridgetown. The accident occurred during the Prince of Wales' Empire tour in 1920. Stepping over the twisted lines in front of the Royal visitor is Lieut. General Sir J. J. Talbot Hobbs.

Sunday Times (Perth, WA) Sunday 31 May 1936, page 5

Royalty Derailed

Another Australian royal tour that 'went off the rails' was that of Prince Albert, who visited in 1920 to commemorate Australia's contribution in World War I. During his royal tour two carriages of the royal train derailed in the Darling Ranges, Western Australia, after heavy rain had loosened the ballast beneath the tracks. Reportedly the Prince had to climb through a window to exit the carriage, but was unhurt and is reputed to have said "that wasn't in the official programme, was it?"