

Michael Burrell

Junior Station Assistant
Junior Clerk, 6th Class Clerk
5th Class Clerk
Train Controller



IMAGE
William Cole

Born in Sydney but coming from a railway family, Michael Burrell's career spanned 44 years of service with the NSW railways where he started as a Junior Station Assistant and worked his way up to the role of Train Controller.

Michael's grandfather was a railway fettler, his uncles worked at the Paloma signal box and his grandmother was a railway Gatekeeper at the railway gates at Millthorpe. His grandmother lived in the railway house and her responsibility was to open and shut the gates during the day for cars or trains to pass through from 6 am to 6 pm. The Gatekeeper was sent a daily running schedule, trains signaled their approach by whistle and the Gatekeeper's job was to open and closed the gate against road traffic.

Michael started his career on the railway on December 23, 1963 as a Junior Station Assistant at the Millthorpe gates where he worked the night shift from 6pm to 6am, staying in a cabin on the opposite side of the track to his grandmother. Nightshift trains were signalled by lights using kerosene lamps on the gates, the red lights signalling that the gates were open and white signalling that they were closed. If the lights were not red as the train approached, the crew would blow the whistle to gain the attention of the Gatekeeper.

Michael moved to various positions in the Orange District Superintendent's office and worked a Junior Clerk, as well as relieving clerical positions in the parcels office and booking office and in the goods shed in Orange.

He was appointed as the Goods Clerk in Blayney where duties included loading and unloading trucks for the abattoirs and parcels and worked there for 10 years.

He transferred to the Orange Control Centre which ran and coordinated rail services across the district extending from Lithgow to Broken Hill and including all the branch lines in this region and took on a role as Train Controller.

The role of Train Controller was to coordinate the mandatory trains which ran to a schedule and conditional trains passing through, which had to be given a path through the area around the scheduled trains.

With a computerised system introduced by Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) the process changed, and there were no paper instructions, an ability to talk with crews. Giving train orders, codes for running & monitoring lines.

Michael's duties also included instructing and training of district line workers, recruiting and training new staff, relieving positions as an area manager and as an accredited breath tester for rail crews.

Michael retired in May 2007.