Geelong to Ballarat Railway

The Early Railway Engineers

Captain Andrew Clarke (1824-1902) was a Royal Engineer and public servant who started his career in Tasmania in 1847. He replaced Robert Hoddle in 1853 as Surveyor-General of Victoria. Clarke was involved in selecting routes for railways and in the formation of Victorian Railways. He returned to Britain in 1858.

George Christian Darbyshire (1820-1898) came to Melbourne in 1853, having gained extensive railway experience in England. He took up a post as engineer for the Melbourne and Mount Alexander Railway in 1855, was appointed Engineer-in-Chief of the Victorian Railways from 1856 until 1860 when he was replaced by Thomas Higinbotham.

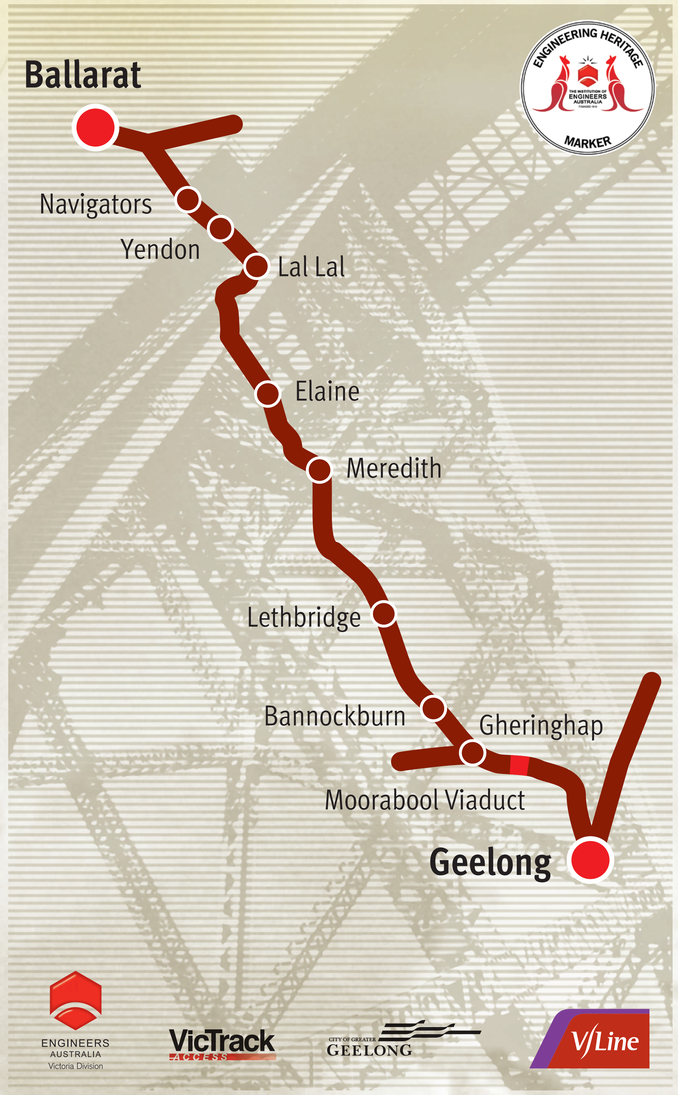
Thomas Higinbotham (1819-1880) was an experienced railway engineer before he moved to Melbourne in 1857. He was Engineer-in-Chief of Victorian Railways almost continuously from 1860 until his death. Higinbotham was one of a select band of English railway engineers who exercised a profound influence on the development of Australian railways.

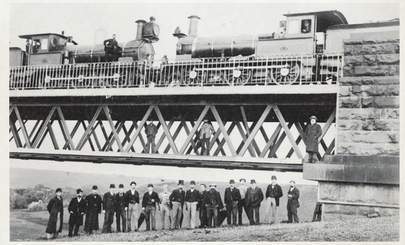
Victorian Railways

Victorian Railways operated railways in Victoria from 1856 until 1983. Owned by the State Government, their first task was to build railways from Melbourne to Bendigo and from Geelong to Ballarat. The existing railway from Melbourne to Geelong was taken over by Victorian Railways in 1860. Engineer-in-Chief George Darbyshire quickly built up a competent design team and Victorian Railways had access to London capital markets.

This proved to be the beginning of a long period of expansion for Victorian Railways which built a comprehensive network throughout the state over the next 83 years.

Tenders for extensive railway works closed in March 1858. A contract was awarded to Evans, Merry & Co. for the Geelong to Ballarat line. Work commenced in June 1858 and the railway was opened by the Victorian Governor on 10 April 1862.





The Moorabool Viaduct

The Moorabool Viaduct, 12km north-west of Geelong, is the most important engineering feature of the Geelong to Ballarat Railway. It was the largest in Australia until the construction of the Hawkesbury River Bridge in 1889 and remains in railway service today.

The viaduct was built between 1858 and 1862 to the design of Victorian Railways engineers. It has a total length 1299 feet (396m) consisting of 10 spans resting on 9 bluestone piers up to 110 feet (33.5m) high above the valley floor. Originally the deck was supported on 120 foot (36.9m) wrought iron Warren truss girders. These were replaced in 1918 by steel plate girders. At the same time intermediate steel support trestles were added.

Geelong Railway Station

Geelong Railway Station stands on the site of the former Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company terminus and is noteworthy as the largest complex of polychrome brick buildings constructed by the Victorian Railways. It was built between 1877 and 1882.

The first Geelong Station was a dead ended terminus located somewhere near the present Law Courts Complex.

In 1876 the railway was extended south to Colac, and the station was altered considerably.

The present station has three platforms and is one of the three nineteenth century Victorian stations to have a train shed (the others being Ballarat and St Kilda).

This marker was unveiled on 10 April 2012 to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the Geelong to Ballarat Railway.

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