



AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MELBOURNE BRANCH

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ARHS Melbourne Luncheon Outing Group, we will be travelling to Castlemaine and visiting the Victorian Goldfields Railway, travelling to Maldon and return to Castlemaine on their heritage steam hauled train.

9:01am	V/Line service to Castlemaine
10:34am	Arrive Castlemaine, Signal Box should be open for small groups to inspect, Museum & Shop open also.
11:30am	VGR Train departs for Maldon.
12:15pm	Arrive Maldon and walk to Maldon Hotel for Lunch.
2:15pm	Depart Maldon Hotel for Maldon Station.
2:45pm	VGR Train Departs for Castlemaine.
3:30pm	Arrive Castlemaine, cross to Other Platform.
3:53pm	Train departs Castlemaine for Southern Cross.
5:33pm	Arrive Southern Cross Station
4:30pm	Train ex Swan Hill an N Set departs Castlemaine Station for Southern Cross.
6:09pm	Arrive Southern Cross Station.

Another Option if trains are crowded back to Melbourne, go and have a coffee or dinner and catch the next train, depart 4:52pm, 5:54pm & 7:37pm
Catch a train up to Bendigo and you will get a seat when the train departs hopefully, depart for Bendigo at 3:33pm, 4:33pm or 5:34pm.
Trains Depart Bendigo at 4:26pm, 5:28pm & 7:06pm

The Castlemaine to Maldon railway was closed on 3rd of December 1976 by the VR, but the Castlemaine and Maldon Railway Preservation Society was formed almost immediately and commenced train operations in December 1986.

Locomotive K160 was purchased from the Victorian Railways and later acquisitions included K157, J549 and E371. Currently the railway operates with J549 and K160 is nearing completion of a full restoration.

K160 was in steam at Steamrail Labour Day weekend 2026 in undercoat.

Operations between Castlemaine and Maldon commenced on 19th December 2004 and continue today with various travel experiences.

History from VGR Website

The railway reached Castlemaine in the form of the main Melbourne - Bendigo Line in October, 1862. This long, classically engineered railway tapped the booming goldfields at Bendigo and Castlemaine and ushered in a new era of transport to the goldfields and towns of Central Victoria.

The Bendigo line was soon extended to reach the Murray River at Echuca, and Maryborough was the destination of a cross-country line from Castlemaine.

As work progressed on the Maryborough line, the citizens of Maldon started to press for their own railway. By the time the Castlemaine-Maryborough line opened (July 1874) they were petitioning their parliamentarians with demands for railway connection to further open up land in their district.

In 1876 a preliminary survey was undertaken for a railway from Castlemaine to Maldon and on to Newbridge. In 1881, the Victorian Parliament authorized a number of new lines including a 10 mile (16 kilometre) branch from Maldon Junction (about 1 km from Castlemaine on the Maryborough line) to Maldon.

In August, 1882 the contract was let for the construction of the Maldon line to A. Nicholls and Co. The country was described as difficult for a railway. Heavy earthworks were necessary and two major bridges required. Built to 'light-line' construction, the line included grades of 1 in 40, sharp curves and rail of 60 lb./yard. The line opened for traffic on 16th June, 1884. 1891 saw the opening of a 10 mile (16 km) extension of the line to Shelbourne.

Two mixed (goods & passengers) trains five days a week were provided with the opening of the line, this was soon increased to three return trips per day. With the opening of the extension, one mixed train per day served Shelbourne. 1924 saw the introduction of an AEC rail motor which provided four trips per day Monday to Friday, with the mixed running through to Shelbourne three days per week. Declining population from the late 1920's reduced the demand for rail services, which were cut back as the years passed.

The AEC rail motor and all passenger services were withdrawn during the Second World War (1941) through wartime fuel shortages. A weekly goods train through to Shelbourne coped with the traffic until the line closed.

Closure

Bushfire damage to several bridges in 1969 resulted in official closure of the Maldon - Shelbourne Extension on the 1st of January 1970. With the closing of the Shelbourne extension little reason remained for keeping the Castlemaine - Maldon line open. The Maldon line officially closed on 3rd of December 1976. Several steam-hauled enthusiast specials were the last trains to venture through the weeds to Maldon.

Preservation

Even prior to the closure of the Maldon Line, preservation moves were underway. The rapid demise of the branchlines throughout Victoria dictated that preservation of at least one line was vital. The choice would be governed by two main considerations, firstly the suitability of the line for restoration and ongoing maintenance by a volunteer workforce and secondly the line's potential as a tourist attraction. Under this criteria the Castlemaine & Maldon Line presented itself as most suitable. Within the same month as the official closure of the line, the **Castlemaine & Maldon Railway Preservation Society** was formed at a meeting held at Maldon on the 17th of December 1976.

With membership drawn from both rail enthusiasts and local residents, the Society set about the task of securing the line, obtaining rolling stock, gaining legislative changes to permit the operation of the line as a tourist railway and financial support. Progress was slow through the early years.

Steam Locomotive K160 was purchased from the Victorian Railways in 1979, moved to a siding at the Mayfair Complex at Bendigo in 1980 and received attention by Society members. Later transferred by rail to Castlemaine, continued attention saw restoration complete by early 1986. Wooden bodied passenger carriages and goods stock were purchased, many by individuals providing the funds for purchase of particular items. Further steam locomotive purchases included K157, J549 and E371. The rolling stock progressively arrived and was stored in Castlemaine Yard.

Track restoration commenced at the Maldon end, with the line between Maldon Station and the Bendigo Road Crossing available for trains by Easter 1986.

Reopening Stages

In the weeks prior to Easter, 1986, Steam Locomotive K160 was transferred by road to Maldon, while a set of rolling stock was taken out along the line hauled by an 0-4-0 diesel locomotive on loan from the APM Broadford Paper Mill.

The Official Re-opening was on Easter Saturday, 29th March, 1986 with the noted historian Prof. Geoffrey Blainey declaring the Railway open again. Trains operated between the Station and the Bendigo Road, a distance of about 1 kilometre, with the engine pushing the train out from Maldon and pulling it back in.

As track restoration progressed, the trip length increased in stages. By Easter 1996 Muckleford was reached.

The track at Muckleford had been re-laid, the platform road and the turnouts in heavier rail and the station platform reinstated. The loop siding enabled the locomotive to 'run-around' its train and so be at the front of the train in both directions of the journey.

With funding from the State and Federal Governments restoration of the 8 kilometre section of line between Muckleford and Castlemaine was commenced in 2001. The works in this section included relaying the track and extensive repairs to the one iron and five timber bridges. Work at Castlemaine reconnected the West Yard, reinstated the locomotive turntable and upgraded the mechanical signalling.

A temporary closure of the Castlemaine - Moolort Section of the Maryborough Line by Pacific National commencing on the 17th December, 2004 allowed the running of VGR trains into Castlemaine Station under the Tourist Railway Provisions. The first VGR train to Castlemaine Station ran on Saturday the 18th December, 2004 and public trains commenced 19th January 2005. The Official Opening into Castlemaine was on the 20th March, 2005.

The Rolling Stock Collection

A large collection of rollingstock from the branchline era has been secured. An unequalled array of 4 wheeled goods trucks along with goods and passenger brake vans and a selection of wooden bodied passenger carriages are now resident on the line.

Wikipedia has an extensive collection of information on the Rolling Stock of the VGR.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_Goldfields_Railway>

Information from vgr.com.au website, Victorian Goldfields Railway Souvenir Guide 3rd edition 2017 (VGRSG) & Wikipedia.

Notes compiled by Geoff Wallace

E&OE



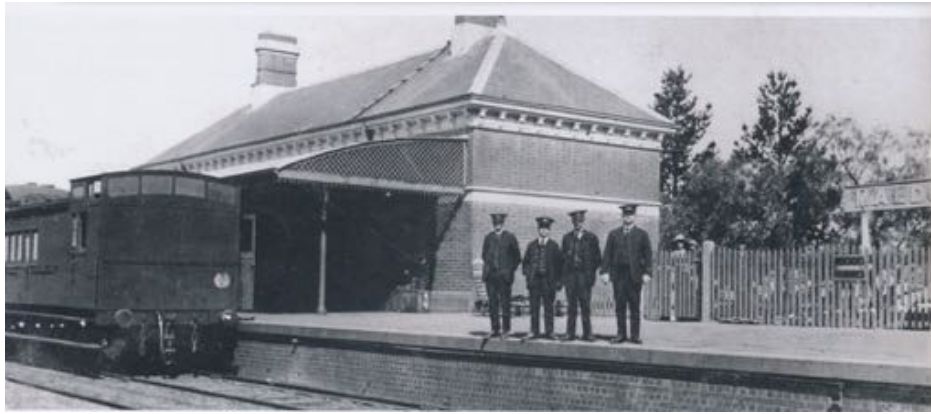
Castlemaine Station 1890 VGRSG



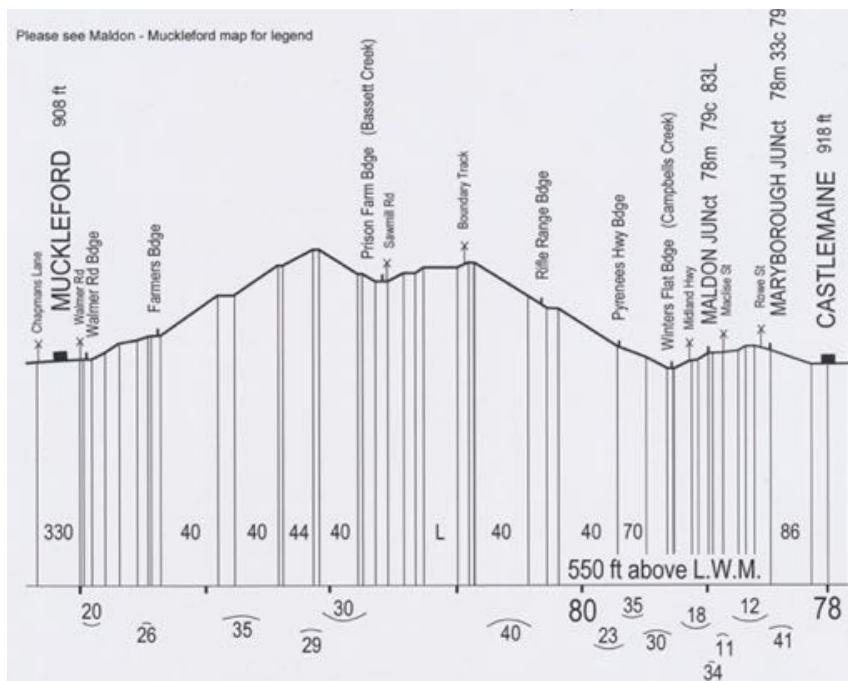
Castlemaine Station 1905, an Up Melbourne bound Train arriving in Platform 1 behind an AA class 4-4-0 Engine. Note the Dog or Wallaby on the track in front of the Engine. Note that the Signal Box is on the end of Platform 1, it was moved to an enlarged Island Platform 2 & 3 at a later date. Signal Drawing 1926-019 dated 8th October 1926 shows Signal Box A on the Island Platform 2 & 3. See Signal Diagram on page 5. VGRSG



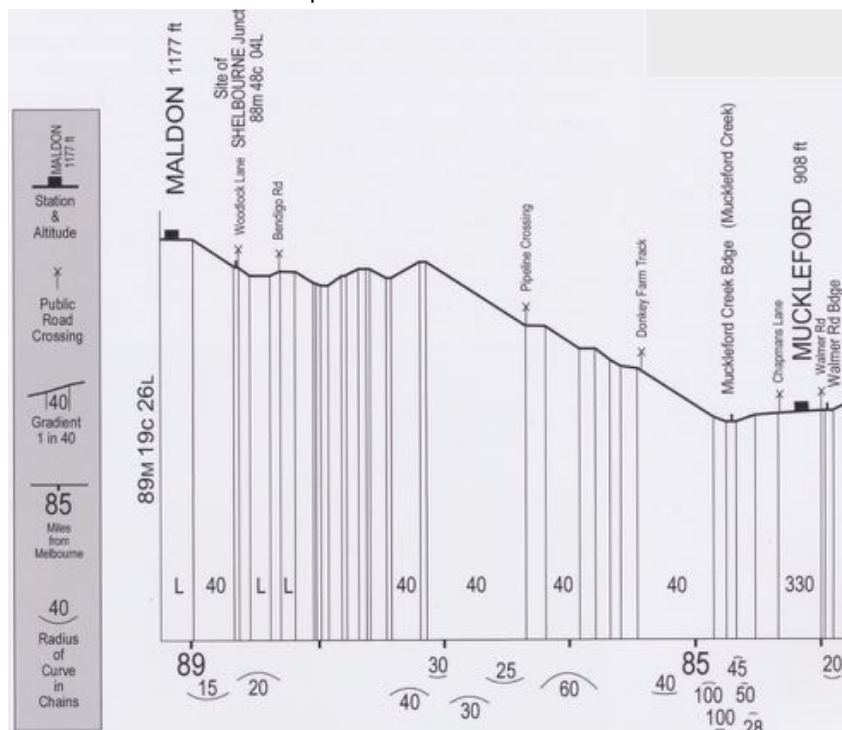
Castlemaine Station 1912 Bendigo Bound possibly the Great Northern Limited, loco is a new A2 4-6-0 express passenger loco in Canadian Red Livery with white lining. VGRSG



Maldon Station staff beside XYZ 6 wheeler composite Guards Van, note Mother & child watching from behind the Platform Gate c1924 VGRSG



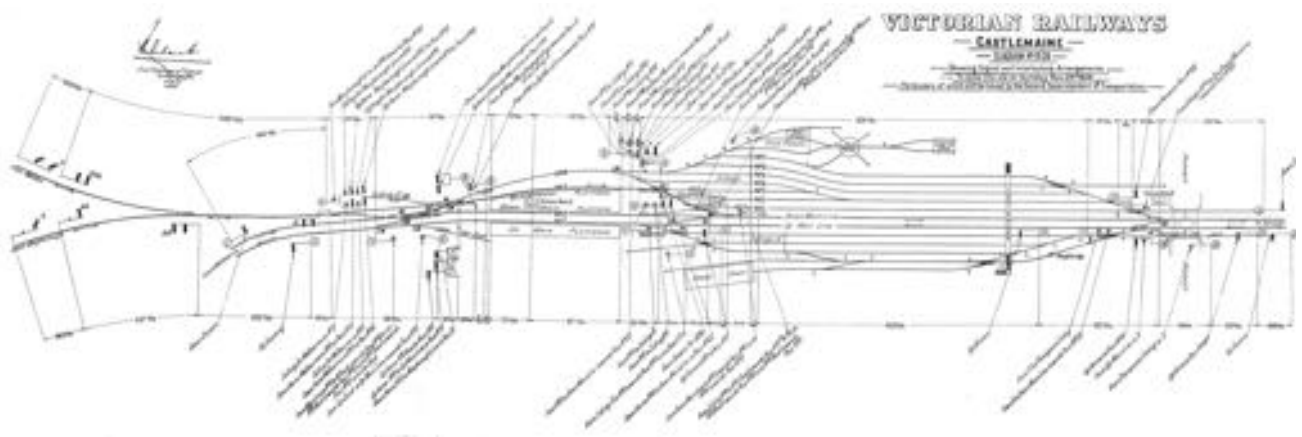
Gradient Map Castlemaine to Muckeleford VGRSG



Gradient Map Muckeleford to Maldon VGRSG



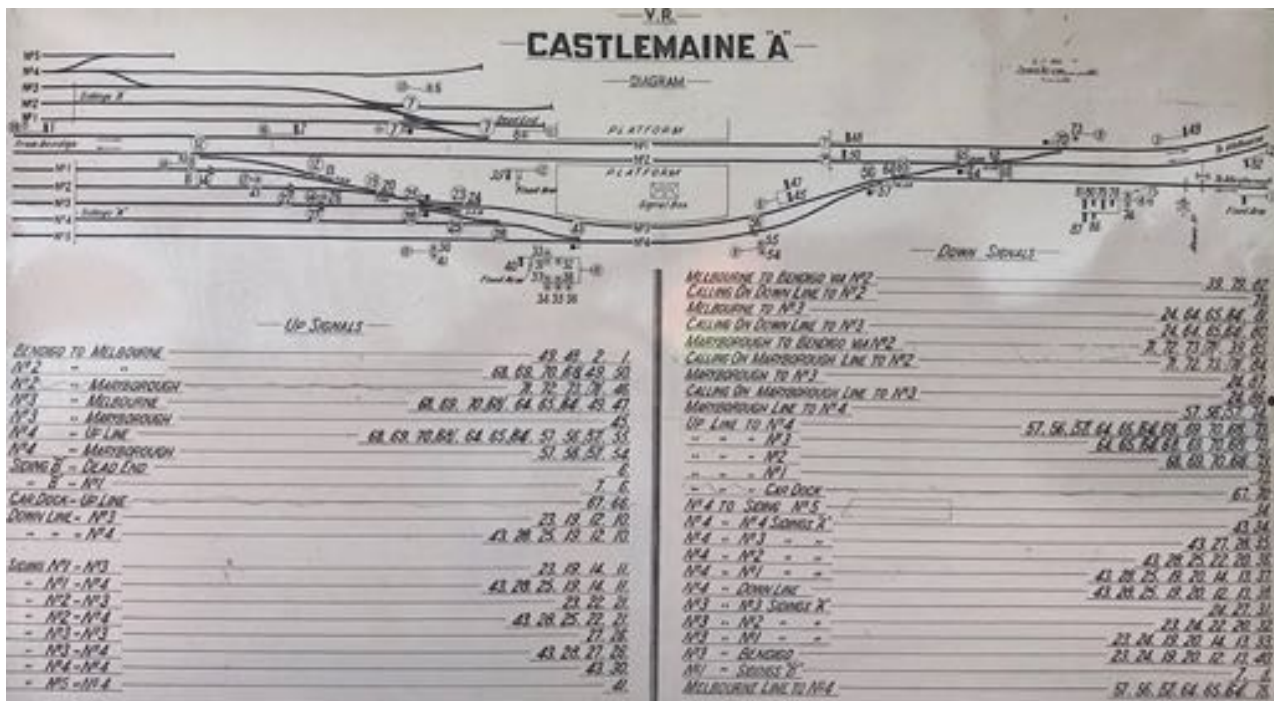
J549 in Ararat working on 19/01/1972 during the last weeks of Steam in Victoria Loco now at VGR. VGRSG



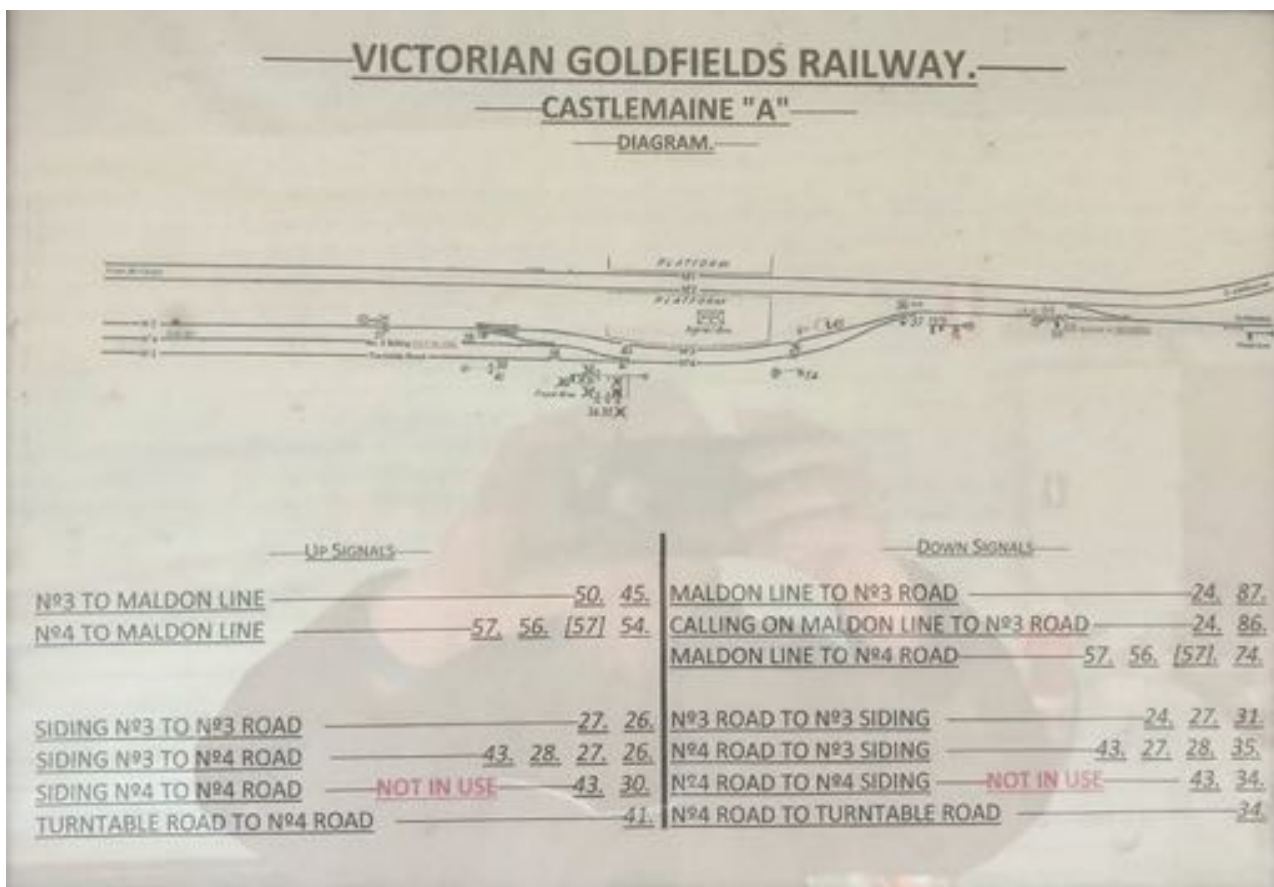
Castlemaine Signal Diagram 1926-019 GW SD Collection.



Portion of Castlemaine to Harcourt Signal Diagram 2011-044 GW SD Collection.



Castlemaine A Box Diagram original 1956, see all the sidings that existed then.



Castlemaine A Box Diagram VGR c2004 for VGR Tracks only now.



Castlemaine Station Platform 3, Yard & Castlemaine A Box prior to the start of track restoration March 2001 VGRSG



Base prepared for new Turntable that was moved from Woodend VGRSG



Turntable reconnected and ready for use 10/06/2002 VGRSG



First train K160, over newly rebuilt Walmer Road Bridge 27-06-2002



Map Castlemaine to Muckleford Station showing mileposts VGRSG



Map Muckleford to Maldon showing mileposts VGRSG