Superpipe Goes Through Muckleford

The huge fresh water pipeline connecting Bendigo to Ballarat has finally arrived at the Victorian Goldfields Railway and after some frenetic activity at Muckleford, the contractors have moved on - leaving Muckleford just as they found it! VGR member Trevor Maylor was on hand to record the works and to observe the huge task of laying the concrete pipeline under the track. The scale of the pipeline is evident by looking at the size of the construction workers standing in the pit. The rails at either side of the pit can be seen. The work only took three days and we were very happy to see the ballast, signaling, sleepers and rails replaced to a suitable standard.

All photos taken by Trevor Maylor

Civil Branch News

The shut-down during February has allowed the Civil Branch to tackle the task of replacing a large number of sleepers between Castlemaine and Maldon Junction. This section is the one that we inherited from Pacific National when the railway re-opened in 2005 and while we initially thought that we were lucky to be taking over a piece of mainline standard track, suitable for the heaviest G-class locos, it turns out that the track was actually in far worse condition than we initially thought. As a result, our trains have been operating to a 5mph speed limit over the worst sections for the last few months.

The fantastic effort by the Civil Branch has seen 7 volunteers replace 7 sleepers and re-gauge a significant length of track on the 9th of February and a group of ten replacing a larger number on the 16th February. This great work will hopefully allow the track speed to be lifted on a section of the track.

Another challenge that will arise over the next couple of years is the issue of track condition between Rowe Street and Castlemaine station.

Because of the proximity of our line to the main Bendigo to Melbourne mainline, it is not possible for us to work on this section without either a total shutdown of mainline services or the use of a contractor with appropriate mainline safety accreditation and protection - potentially a very costly exercise. This is an issue that the board is investigating.

Of course you’d be more than welcome to assist on any of the Civil Branch’s workdays!
In railway terms, Glenorchy is almost 163 miles, (262 kms), from Melbourne, on the main line to Adelaide.

In the 1960s, the station at Glenorchy was impressive. Located at the up end of a long crossing loop, its buildings comprised a booking office, administration area and passenger facilities. Situated towards the up end of the platform, these were of generous proportions, solidly constructed in red brick and well maintained. The platform itself was of sufficient length to accommodate a seven car passenger train.

 Adjacent to the brick buildings, and positioned close to the centre of the platform, was the elevated signal box. Set well back from the platform face, this was of conventional Victorian Railways design, being of weather board framing with lattice windows on three sides and a low pitched roof.

The signalman attending the 30 plus lever frame had a good view of trains approaching from either direction, and an uninterrupted panorama of the Glenorchy yard.

Signal wires and point roding passed from the lever frame under the platform via a platform height, two metre wide, brick tunnel. At the tunnel’s exit, appropriate pulleys and levers directed each item to its point of application in the Glenorchy yard and beyond.

Trains leaving this station in the up direction faced the arduous six mile long Bunyip Bank, so named because the track crossed over the Bunyip Creek. The “Bunyip” was not for the faint hearted. Most trains conveyed maximum tonnage and all engine crews were well aware that their engine needed to be in apple pie order and worked hard in order to literally, “make the grade.” So it was that if they stopped for any reason at Glenorchy, the thought of the Bunyip Bank often prompted a crew to let their engine stand for as long as possible, then blow down its’ boiler in an effort to remove impurities and so reduce the likelihood of priming on the long climb ahead.

Travelling towards Murtoa from Glenorchy one soon reached Lubeck, the junction for the line to Marnoo and Bolangum. These locations were served by a weekly goods train, operated from Ararat. This ran out on Tuesday and back on Wednesday, with the train crew sleeping overnight in a Departmental Rest Hut at Marnoo on Tuesday evening, after a meal at the Marnoo hotel.

“The Marnoo”, was a job that ran up long hours. Typically, you would sign on in the morning of Tuesday at Ararat loco depot, take out your engine funnel first, usually a “K” class, couple on to a string of empty GY wheat trucks in the Ararat yard and head off towards Bolangum.

Their being no turntable or coal stage on the Bolangum line, on arrival at Stawell the engine would be coaled, watered and turned, and set off tender first for the rest of the journey.

Once past Lubeck, speed was restricted to 20 mph. Shunting took place at a number of locations, water was taken at Rupanyip, and by the time the round trip from Marnoo to Bolangum(end of the line) and back to Marnoo was accomplished, the day was far gone. Here the fire was banked in preparation for an early start on Wednesday morning.

This occurred soon after 4 am. The fire was pushed down, the engine prepared, loaded wheat trucks assembled, and one headed back towards Ararat, picking up loads of wheat at each of the three intermediate stations before Lubeck. Here, the train often exceeded 1000 tonnes; so on arrival at Glenorchy the load would be reduced to 820; this being the maximum for a “K” up the Bunyip Bank.

The highlight of Wednesday was one’s relief. This was usually dispatched via the 1-20pm passenger train from Ararat, reaching the home coming Marnoo crew at Wal Wal or Lubeck. The relief crew would take over the engine and the rest crew would travel in the Guard’s van to the nearest station where the afternoon passenger train to Ararat and Melbourne was scheduled to stop.

So it was that on a beautiful Autumn day in 1964, I was rostered to travel on the 1-20pm passenger and relieve and run the ex Marnoo to Ararat. My driver was Bill Smith, a young, but worldly wise fellow, who had recently passed for driving.

On this particular day we relieved the incoming crew at Wal Wal and found ourselves in charge of K 163 at the head of some 800 tonnes.

The critical items in the cab and firebox were generally satisfactory, and with the cane hoop carrying the staff for Glenorchy slung over the air compressor steam valve, a long whistle produced the Guard’s “right away” and we set sail.

The engine’s performance was satisfactory and with the “Distant” at caution, and the arrival “Home” set for No 2 road, we rolled with professional ease along the long station crossing loop, came to a smooth stand near

(Continued on page 3)

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**Railway Re-opens**

The railway will re-open for public services on **Sunday 2nd March**

Tambo attracts many passengers and it’s not hard to see why - what luxury, what comfort!
the station buildings and surrendered our staff. It seemed that we were going to cross something that was not yet on the horizon. In anticipation of a stop here, I had raised the boiler water level as much as possible to expedite a blow down in preparation for the Bunyip Bank. After about five minutes, with the water well up in the gauge glass and still no sign of any approaching train, and all signals at danger, I said to my mate,

"I'll give her a blow down, Bill"

"Yes, alright."

We were only one track away from the station platform, and making sure no one was around, I opened the blow down valve. On a station platform, and making sure no one was approaching train, and all signals at danger, I rose in our minds, our anxiety faded. As thoughts of establishing a new enterprise into the atmosphere like outstretched arms. Overall, the signal box assumed the surprisingly compact shape ascended regally into the atmosphere like outstretched arms. Last months newsletter featured a father and son team on the railway - here we see another father and son team with Trevor and William Maylor preparing to depart Muckleford for Castlemaine on a Fire Patrol. Not only does Trevor carry out the vital task of carrying out Fire Patrols, he is also the webmaster for our fantastic website.

Board Changes

As Board Member Andrew Bridger is now residing interstate, Andrew has decided to step down as Vice President of the society, although he will be continuing on as a board member. Fellow Board Member, Paul McDonald has stepped up to take on the temporary role of Vice President of society until the Annual General Meeting to be held later in the year. Paul is a local who has extensive experience in railway operations both in Australia and overseas.
Happy New Year to All Members,

We are now well into 2008 and already the year is throwing up lots of challenges for us to tackle.

With a large number of mainline railway incidents being reported in the media, the pressure is really on us to ensure that our operations are being conducted safely at all times and that we’re seen to be conducting operations safely. The Australian Level Crossing Assessment Model (ALCAM) that is being introduced in Victoria will certainly help us to make sure our crossings are safe. We have already identified that the Bendigo Road level crossing is one that requires our attention and we are working with Mt Alexander Shire and VicRoads to ensure that we can continue to operate trains safely in the future.

2008 has also brought challenges in terms of the need to continually look after our infrastructure. The board took the decision to close the railway during February to fast-track some of this infrastructure work including the major task of replacing some of the piles on the Muckleford Creek bridge. We are also using this break to carry out some urgent sleeper replacement on the section between Castlemaine and Maldon Junction. The efforts of all those volunteers who have worked in the heat and endured the flies around these areas has been magnificent and I would like to thank them all.

The decision to close the railway during February was one that was based on the fact that February is traditionally our quietest month in terms of passenger numbers. In the past we have found that the train has sat in the platform all day as we have had no passengers at all! We are not alone here as all tourism in Central Victoria seems to suffer from very low visitor numbers during February!

Of course this lack of passengers also means a real lack of income - income that is desperately needed for our significant projects such as the Muckleford Creek Bridge. All heritage railways struggle financially and we are no different. The support of members is vital to ensure that we can maintain the status quo - let alone make progress in terms of further restoration and preservation work. It is with this in mind that I would ask all members to consider making an extra donation to the society with their membership renewal. Some of the costs of operating the railway are staggering and all the help we receive through donations will allow us to funnel ticket income in to further restoration and preservation activities. Some of the costs of operating the railway are listed below. As you can see, it’s not cheap.

Thank you in advance for your continuing support of the railway - we wouldn’t exist if it wasn’t for your generous support.

Stephen Lumsden  
President, Castlemaine and Maldon Preservation Society.

| Tender of Coal | $1,000 | Sleepers | $35 each |
| Tender of Oil  | $1,600 | Ballast  | $70 per tonne |
| Newsletter Postage | $195 per issue | Paint | $3,500 per carriage |
| Insurance     | $40,000 per annum | Diesel Loco Fuel | $70 per hour |

**Your Donation is Very Important**

On Saturday the 26th of January 2008, 5 volunteers (including a new recruit to the railway) turned up for the Signals work day at Castlemaine A Signal Box. Work continued with installing the floor pushers which was started at the previous workday. The hole was drilled for levers 27/28, and the contact box was installed for Lever 24, using the brackets manufactured by Graeme Dunn. The floor plates were then aligned so that the rod will be mounted vertically. If you would like to assist the Signals Branch in its very important work, please contact Signals Branch Manager, Luke Savage via email cmr@vgr.com.au
New Members

The society currently has 413 members spread across Victoria with a number of members from interstate and even overseas! The society is delighted to welcome the following new members who have joined the society recently:

- Jack Chambers
- Audrey Bickford
- Linda Jay
- Stuart Thyer
- Dianne Pearse
- Max and Laurel Jeffery
- Richard Weatherley*

* Indicates that a person has joined the society as part of a Driver Experience Day.

Please make our new members welcome when you see them around the railway.

Board Vacancies

The board has several vacancies and the help of committed members is needed to ensure that we can continue on with effective leadership. Potential board members do not necessarily need to take on extra duties as the roles of Branch Manager and of board member are separate roles. Board meetings are usually held either on the weekend or in the evening so whether you are working or are retired from paid employment - you will have the ability to contribute. Alternatively, you may know a friend or relative who may be able to contribute to the society as a board member.

If you’re considering volunteering to join the board but aren’t sure what is involved, please contact the Honorary Secretary, Luke Savage either via email at cmr@vgr.com.au or on 0418 317 207 who will be happy to talk to you about what is involved.

Membership Renewals

Most members will find their membership renewal enclosed with this edition of the newsletter. Those whose memberships are current for the 2008/9 year will find their membership cards in with this mail-out so please check the envelope to make sure you aren’t accidentally throwing out your new card!

For those whose membership expires shortly, if you could return your payment as well as the form as soon as possible, this will allow our Honorary Membership officer, Doug Pearse to update our records and to get your membership card out to you in the next mail-out.

Staffing News

After a number of years working on the railway, Wally Beeby has decided to pursue a career elsewhere. We wish Wally all the best in his new position.

The position of ganger and Work for the Dole supervisor has filled by a temporary appointment while a permanent appointment is sought. An updated position description is being prepared and will be advertised shortly.

New Fares

The following fares will apply from the 2nd of March when the railway re-opens. The board carefully considered how we can reflect the rising cost of operating the railway while still ensuring that we remain affordable for all visitors to the railway, especially families. This is the first fare increase in a number of years and still provides passengers with a great experience on one of the finest heritage railways in Australia!

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* The Colonel on duty in the Castlemaine station building.*
One thing we do especially well are our special events - fun for everyone, so why not bring your family or friends to experience a magical day on the Victorian Goldfields Railway. They’ll love every minute!

**Good Friday Evening**

**Wine & Cheese Train**

~ March 21 ~

Depart Maldon Station 7.00 pm
Maldon - Castlemaine Return
On Board Musical Entertainment
Step aboard - relax, enjoy the entertainment, the company and the special atmosphere of the steam train as we take you on an autumn evening journey from Maldon to Castlemaine and back to Maldon.

Wine / Beer - can be purchased onboard

Enjoy the unique ambience of a great evening steam train journey

**BOOKINGS : 5470 6658**

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**Friends of Thomas the Tank Engine**

**Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th April, 2008**

With the full range of great ‘Friends of Thomas’ attractions ......


**Trains depart Maldon Station**

10.30 am, 12.00 noon, 1.30 pm & 3.00 pm

Your train ride is 70 minutes, during the 15 minutes at Muckleford, alight from the train and watch while the Engine(s) run-around the train before heading back to Maldon.

PLEASE NOTE: All trains will be ‘Friends of Thomas’ Trains and will operate between Maldon and Muckleford only. No trains to or from Castlemaine during this Friends of Thomas weekend.

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**Adults** $20
**Children** $10

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Enjoy the unique ambience of a great evening steam train journey

**BOOKINGS : 5470 6658**

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**Adults** $30
**Includes Complementary cheese platter**
A Neat Railway Is An Attractive Railway - And A Safe One Too!

The tidiness of our railway is an important issue not only for aesthetic reasons but also to ensure that our staff, volunteers and visitors are safe when they’re on the railway. To enable a “tidy-up”, a bin has been supplied by a scrap metal merchant, who will then collect it when full. We will also be paid for the scrap metal that we’re disposing of. The bin is located at Maldon and is progressively being filled as different areas are being tidied up. Members need not fear that anything useful is being thrown out as the knowledgeable Paul McDonald is inspecting every item that is being thrown out. If you would like to help with this clean-up or can suggest something that we should dispose of, please contact Paul on 0419 116 954.

The next newsletter will feature:

- Muckleford Creek bridge repairs
- Castlemaine platform re-surfacing and the special works train
- Feature on two weeks on the Victorian Railways

If you would like to contribute any articles or photos to the newsletter, please email them to cmr@vgr.com.au

We are very fortunate to have had a large portion of the Castlemaine platform re-surfaced by contractors on behalf of VicTrack. These works were carried out using genuine VGR works train. A full article on these works will be printed in the next edition of the newsletter.

Semaphore signals are rapidly disappearing around the state but not on the VGR.
Catering Update

The staffing of the Castlemaine Refreshment Rooms on non-train running days is proving to be a great success with the profile of the railway being raised amongst commuters from Castlemaine and travelers through the station from passing trains. It is also providing an extra source of income that we haven’t had before.

Shirley Frewin and the Catering Branch have launched this service with a limited number of volunteers and are now looking to recruit a few more volunteers to assist.

Of course the ever popular Sunday First Class service always requires volunteers. This is a fantastic job with loads of interaction with the public and the change to work in the beautifully appointed Tambo and Lowanna while traveling through the scenic Victorian countryside. You would only need to help out on the occasional Sunday. If you are available on a weekday between 10:30am and 4:00pm and would like to help out at Castlemaine or would be available on a Sunday to work on Tambo and Lowanna, please contact Shirley Frewin on 0427 602 882. Full training will be provided and you will love it!

Mechanical Update

The Mechanical Branch is as busy as ever with loads of projects on the go. A summary of the current projects is shown below:

K160 - is currently being prepared for her annual boiler inspection with some minor work being done on some of her stays.

J541 - has had her oil tank drained and cleaned. Amazingly, 5 buckets of sludge was removed from the bottom of the tank! She is available for traffic.

J515 - is available and performing well.

J549 - has finally had her cylinder cover removed after months of effort.

Of course you would always be welcome to work on these magnificent locomotives. If you can help, please contact Stephen Lumsden on (03) 9266 2566 or 0403 086 476 (please ring before 8pm).

Treasurer Needed

Due to personal circumstances, Cindy Tassie has decided to resign as Honorary Treasurer of the society. Cindy has worked tirelessly to keep the society’s finances in order and the society will certainly miss her around the place. We all pass on our thanks and best wishes to Cindy.

The society is now in URGENT need of a treasurer who can continue on Cindy’s work. Cindy is more than happy to show any volunteer how the finances are set up and how our computerized system works. If you have any financial skills and can help out, please contact Luke Savage either at cmr@vgr.com.au or via 0418 317 207.

Victorian Goldfields Railway
General Office and Marketing
Correspondence
P.O. Box 51
CASTLEMAINE VIC 3450

Phone: (03) 5470 6658
Facsimile: (03) 5470 6272
Email: marketing@vgr.com.au for bookings, Train Times & Fares information or cmr@vgr.com.au for all other enquiries

Recorded Train Information
Phone (03) 5475 2966

Castlemaine Railway Station
Kennedy Street, Castlemaine
Phone: (03) 5470 6658
Facsimile: (03) 5470 6272

Maldon Railway Station
Hornsby Street, Maldon
Telephone: (03) 5475 1451
Facsimile: (03) 5475 1427

Muckleford Railway Station
(only staffed for special events)
Muckleford-Walmer Road, Muckleford
Telephone: (03) 5470 6014

www.vgr.com.au