**HURSTBRIDGE RAILWAY LINE**

History of the Hurstbridge Railway Line

The first section of the Hurstbridge line to open was between Victoria Park (then named Collingwood) and Heidelberg, in May 1888, although there is some evidence that the contractors building the line operated services prior to that. At this time, the line was connected to other lines via a line from Royal Park to Clifton Hill, most of which comprised what was later known as the Inner Circle line. This connection was opened at the same time.

A more direct connection, between Princes Bridge and Victoria Park (as Collingwood was renamed at the same time) was opened in October 1901. In June the following year the line was extended to Eltham, and ten years later (June 1912) to Hurst's Bridge (now Hurstbridge). In 1912 the short Mont Park branch was built branching from Macleod station to serve the Mont Park Asylum.

In the same year as the line reached Hurstbridge, the line between Westgarth and Alphington was duplicated.

In April 1921 automatic signalling was implemented between Princes Bridge and Clifton Hill.

A few months later, the line (from Princes Bridge) was electrified to Heidelberg, followed by electrification to Eltham in April 1923 and Hurstbridge in August 1926.

In September 1926 the then single-track section between Clifton Hill and Westgarth was converted to Lever Locking and Track Control signalling, followed by Alphington to Heidelberg in June 1927.

In June 1949 Ivanhoe to Heidelberg to was duplicated and provided with automatic signalling. The same was done to the Alphington to Ivanhoe section in December 1951.

Duplication continued between Heidelberg and Macleod in December 1958, except for a short section after Heidelberg where the line crosses a bridge then goes through a tunnel. That section also remains single to this day.

On two consecutive days in September 1964 automatic signalling was provided between Westgarth and Fairfield, and Fairfield and Alphington.

Macleod to Greensborough was duplicated and converted to automatic signalling in August or September 1979.

The short section between Clifton Hill and Westgarth crossing the moderately-deep valley of the Merri Creek was duplicated in January 2009. The rarely used centre running line at Clifton Hill was also removed at this time.

As a part of the upgrades undertaken by the operator Metro Trains Melbourne, the Burgundy Street bridge near Heidelberg Railway Station was replaced in June 2010, costing over $1,000,000.

Several stations on the Hurstbridge Line formerly had Goods Yards or sidings. Those at Fairfield, Alphington, Ivanhoe, Heidelberg and Greensborough have been removed completely (although a single track remained at Heidelberg for many years and was used to stable defective trains). The former goods yards at Eltham and Hurstbridge are now used as stabling sidings, having received some modification to the track layout. The siding at Diamond Creek was originally used for goods purposes (according to the 1926 Curves and Grades book) and was retained for use as a crossing loop. A platform was not built on the loop until the mid-late 1990s, requiring trains to "set back" after using the platform in order to cross.

The name of Wattleglen station has often been debated, as the town is in fact named Wattle Glen. Platform signs also read "Wattle Glen," however the station appears on some official railway documents, as well as being gazetted on the State Government VicNames register, as Wattleglen.

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