

## WHAT'S IN A NAME



The Heathcote Junction railway station started life as a crossing, or passing loop on the Melbourne-Albury train line and was first known as the Summit loop. The loop opened in 1886 and was situated on the highest point of that track at 349 metres above sea level.

In 1884 the State Government passed an act of Parliament, the Octopus Act, which authorised the Victorian Railways to build 59 new rail lines to almost every corner of the State.

One of these lines was to be a cross country service line running from Wandong through to Sandhurst (Bendigo). The survey teams started work in 1886, and chose Summit (Heathcote Junction) rather than Wandong as the branch point from which to start the new line. Work on the line commenced in 1887, and concluded in stages through to Sandhurst on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1890.

The Summit to Kilmore section of the line was completed and opened on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1888. A signal box and up and down short platforms were constructed. The new complex was renamed Kilmore Junction and was opened for service on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1890.

At about the same time a decision was made to link the townships of Kilmore and Lancefield by rail. This was to be a single track traversing the fourteen miles between the towns over the Great Dividing Range and formed a connecting loop with the Melbourne Bendigo line at Clarkefield.

It was a particularly expensive venture due to the steep terrain, and included five stations and seventeen road crossings, all of them had to be staffed making the seldom used line a financial disaster.

This line was opened on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1892 and became one of the most infamous white elephant rail projects in Victorian rail history it was closed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1897. Protests saw the line briefly re-opened for two years in 1900 for grain traffic.

The Kilmore Junction—Sandhurst line ran both passenger and freight services for many years, but as patronage dropped away a mixed passenger-freight service was introduced.

In 1926 a rail motor was introduced to take the place of the steam trains. This regular passenger service from Kilmore Junction to Heathcote was to continue using a Walker Rail Motor, in June 1965 the service was discontinued.

The last Walker railmotor in use was retired to Daylesford where it is now in service at their volunteer railway running tourists into the Bullarto State Forest each Sunday.



The last regular goods service ran on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1968. The last train to use the track was a locomotive, sent to collect any remaining rolling stock. The Australian Railway Historical Society ran a special train from Melbourne to Heathcote and back to celebrate the closing of the line. This train was pulled by two steam engines, (a D class leader with a K class as second engine). This would have been something to see.

The line was officially closed on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1968, the Heathcote Junction signal box was decommissioned on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1970, and demolished in February 1973.

There are still many Wandong/ Heathcote Junction residents who speak fondly of time spent going to Kilmore and beyond on that Walker rail motor.

As to WHAT'S IN A NAME, the change from Summit to Kilmore Junction occurred in 1888, and from Kilmore Junction to Heathcote Junction on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1922. No matter what name you call it, our town is still a great place in which to live.

Contributed by David Moran

