

## CHAPTER 1

# RAIL EXTENSION FROM DONALD TO BIRCHIP

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT

By the time the railhead had reached Donald in 1882 and Wycheproof in the following year, a great deal of development had taken place in the areas to the north and west of those places. Warracknabeal received rail services in 1886.

Some five miles to the north of Donald lay Lake Buloke. When full it covers a large expanse of water. In early times it was gazetted as a Common and later was made available for settlement. Experience has shown that it floods periodically and is therefore unfit for dwellings or other buildings. The focal point in the Lake Buloke area was The Lady of the Lake hotel. Further to the north-west, settlement of the Witchipool district was progressing rapidly. Undaunted by the difficulties they were experiencing, particularly the shortage of water and the depredations of rabbits, the population grew. The post office was known as Litchfield's Post Office, Witchipool. Litchfields were early settlers of the district and the Post Office was located at their home. When the rail reached that point the station was given the name of Litchfield. The township grew around the station. Some confusion existed at first as the mail was addressed to Witchipool and goods were despatched to Litchfield. Eventually the Post Office name was changed to Litchfield in 1907.

Further northwards, settlement at Massey and Watchem was taking place. North-westwards settlement of the parish of Carron was well advanced and it boasted "*The Half-Way House*" hotel as its central meeting place.

On the other side of Lake Buloke, Corack was already an identifiable community with store, shop and hotel owned by Glowrey Bros and an adjacent blacksmith's shop. The location of Corack is presently indicated by the sign "*Glowrey's Hill*" on the Donald-Swan Hill road. Further on at Corack East a township was surveyed in April 1885. Cutts of Wycheproof established a store there. Later a church, mud-brick hall and wine shanty were erected. In between both of these places (at the junction of the Birchip road and Donald-Swan Hill road), a further blacksmith's shop and other buildings were built. Cobb and Co included Corack in its mail and passenger service.

Watchem township was established in 1875. Settlement on the Watchem and Morton Plains pastoral run had been taking place since 1873 when Donohues made the first selection. Many others followed in close pursuit during the succeeding years. The population increased rapidly, both in the rural area and township. The township survey was carried out in 1877. By the time the rail had reached Donald, agitation commenced for it to be extended northwards and thus reduce the long haul of goods to and from that terminus.

John Miller had established a store, hotel and post-office at Morton Plains in 1866 to serve the pastoral interests. The hotel became a focal point for meetings, social gatherings and commercial activities. It was an important stopping place for Cobb and Co. coaches. It was also the venue for many of the discussions and meetings leading to the extension of the railway from Donald. The site of the hotel is marked by Shire of Birchip historical marker No.15 on the Sunraysia Highway.

Glowrey Brothers established a store at the five ways crossroads at Birchip in 1882. The town and district, then known as Wirmbirchip, did not officially become "*Birchip*" until action by the Shire Council, initiated in 1895, regularized the shortened common title. Mrs Blencowe was operating the Birchip Hotel by 1887 and J.E. Cutts had opened a store at the same time. Other developments led to a Government survey being carried out in 1887 to provide for township expansion. Sales of blocks followed and the township population grew rapidly. By 1890 there were 14 shops and 250 inhabitants in the town.

Meanwhile settlement of Birchip district land progressed under the various Land Acts of the time. The most important of these as far as the Mallee districts were concerned was the Mallee Pastoral Leases Act of 1883. It defined the Mallee area and laid down regulations for its development. The Wild Dog Fence, erected in 1885, became the base for the proclamation of boundaries. It was not until the provisions of the MPLA were revised that grain production was able to develop as a major industry in the defined mallee blocks from the mid-1890's onwards.

Communities became established at many places within what was to eventually become the Shire of Birchip in 1895. Prior to that time this area was part of the Shire of St. Arnaud. Whirily, Jil Jil, Narraport, Marlbed, Curyo, Kinnabulla, Ballapur, Reedy Dam, Watchupga and Wilkur all had established an identity of their own by the late 1890's. In most cases township

areas were surveyed but with the exception of Curyo and Watchupga never developed a commercial centre.

#### **POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Prior to any rail extension northwards from the then terminal points in north-west Victoria, an over-riding consideration stemmed from the need to provide a rail link with Mildura and eventually Wentworth. It was desirable politically and economically that a rail link be provided to tap into the river trade that at that time saw much of the produce of lower New South Wales go down the Darling River into the Murray and finish up at Adelaide rather than Melbourne. The Chaffey Brothers irrigation settlement in Sunraysia was the penultimate destination in mind by the Standing Committee on Railways and was supported by the Government of the day. Wentworth was the ultimate terminal desired. Firstly the Chaffey Brothers supported a link from Donald via Wimbirchip but in September 1889 changed allegiance for an extension from Dimboola as it gave them greater opportunities to open up South Australian trade. They had their Head Office in Adelaide. Many alternative routes were considered to link Mildura over the years and these will be discussed in a later chapter.

#### **AGITATION FOR RAIL SERVICES:**

*The Wycheproof Ensign* edition of 18th June 1886 reported a meeting of the Morton Plains and Watchem Railway Extension League held at Miller's Morton Plains hotel on 14th June. Mr H. Skewes occupied the chair. Mr J. Clark was elected Honorary Secretary and Mr J. Murley, was elected Treasurer. Many new members were enrolled. The Chairman urged the meeting to unite and advocate their claims for a railway service.

Two schemes were proposed. One promoted Donald to Morton Plains via Wichipool and Watchem as the first section of a line from Donald to Wentworth. The second, was for a cross country line from Wycheproof to Warracknabeal via Morton Plains. Information and support was to be sought from the Progress Associations at Warracknabeal, Donald and Wycheproof. A letter to the Editor of the *Wycheproof Ensign* in the next edition advised of the many benefits that would accrue to the people of Narraport, Thalia, Karyrie, Wimbirchip, Morton Plains, Whirily and Marlbed by an extension from Wycheproof and warned the tradespeople of Wycheproof to be alive to their interests in favouring the scheme. It was signed *Pro One O Publico*.

A further meeting was held at Morton Plains on 2nd July. Secretary Clark reported that he had received a

communication from Donald as the result of the previous meeting but had not heard from either Wycheproof or Warracknabeal. The Donald letter gave support for the Donald-Watchem-Morton Plains-Wimbirchip line but was opposed to any other route. Mr Byers, a resident of Wycheproof, said that due to a clash of dates with an important Agricultural Society meeting, the railway matter had not been discussed at Wycheproof. Opinions at the meeting were divided on the choice of routes, depending, it seemed, on where the speaker's property was situated. Those with affiliations with Wycheproof favoured that link whereas one farmer used "*Where can you get the highest price for wheat*" as his criteria. The various advantages of both routes in giving access to markets dominated the discussions. It was finally resolved on the motion of Mr J. McGannon and seconded by Mr Albert Gould, that the Donald line via Watchem and Morton Plains to Wimbirchip should be the route for the League to pursue. The motion was carried by thirty four votes to thirteen. Although the meeting resolved on this course of action further discussions were to be held with people at the extremities of the area, including Karyrie, Kinnabulla and Wimbirchip. Canvassers were appointed to collect statistics. A deputation to the Minister for Railways consisting of Councillor Donohue, Messrs Skewes and Clark was appointed and the President and Secretary of the Shire of St. Arnaud were also invited.

A public meeting was held at Wimbirchip later in July to discuss the proposal of the Morton Plains meeting. Mr W. Cumming of Marlbed occupied the chair. The meeting agreed to support the resolution of the Morton Plains meeting. It also resolved to request the League to be renamed Watchem, Morton Plains and Wimbirchip Railway League. Funds were needed and thirty members were enrolled with Mr R. W. Hannan appointed Treasurer. Mr Cumming and Mr Harvey were delegated to represent the area at future meetings of the League.

On 24th November 1887 a well attended meeting at Wycheproof considered the possibility of a railway extension to Mildura and Wentworth via Wimbirchip. The meeting had been convened by Mr J. E. Cutts J.P., who was Chairman of the Progress Committee. He disclaimed any personal interest in the matter although it must be said that at that time Cutts had a store in Birchip. Mr Cutts thought that the agitation emanating from Donald was seeking to draw trade off the Murray River districts. The matter of mileage from Wycheproof to Mildura via Wimbirchip was central to the discussions. The distance from Wycheproof to Wentworth was 155 miles and Wycheproof to

Melbourne 190 miles for a total of 345 miles compared to the Melbourne to Wentworth link via Donald of 351 miles, a saving of six miles of construction and operating distance. Cr A. Porter of Narraport had previously taken the Wycheproof Progress Committee, particularly Cr James O'Connor, to task for not responding to the request of the Watchem-Morton Plains Railway League for support when the opportunity to be involved in the extension to Mildura via the Morton Plains-Warracknabeal link was under consideration. The rivalry between the Donald and Wycheproof interests led to disparaging remarks being made concerning the *"barren nature of the country to the west of Marbed"* as compared to *"at least thirty miles of good country on each side of the proposed Wycheproof route"*. Mr P. Quirk from Charlton was an ameliorating influence and considered that the matter should be taken up for the benefit of all, rather than individual interests. Mr Tucker from Sandhurst (Bendigo) promised the support of the Sandhurst people for the Wycheproof extension. Finally it was unanimously agreed that a Railway League be formed to pursue the matter of securing the rail extension to Wentworth and Mildura through Wycheproof. It should be noted that as early as 1887 the struggle between Ballarat and Bendigo for business arising from rail traffic was evident.

The *Wycheproof Ensign* reported in the issue of 12th July 1888 that the trial railway survey from Wycheproof to Wimbirchip was now complete and *"in two years we expect to see the Ironhorse come puffing along"*. The same edition carried an item from the Karyrie correspondent stating *"a severe mouse plague and other difficulties which have been overcome by energy and perseverance makes the difficulties of the Donald and Wimbirchip rail pale into insignificance. With wheat growing barely remunerative at present prices, the cost of cartage over twenty or thirty miles means the only chance of profit was gone"*. However he was heartened by a report from the Secretary for Railways that the extension to Wimbirchip was occupying the attention of the department at the time.

Miller's Hotel was again the venue on 8th Nov 1888 for the largest meeting ever held of the Watchem, Morton Plains and Wimbirchip Railway League. Mr S. Fielding occupied the chair. He said that the Minister had received the deputation and petition containing the signatures of five or six hundred bonafide farmers together with statistics setting forth the number of acres under cultivation and the probable amount of traffic that the line would generate from the number of inhabitants in the area. It was now imperative that further pressure be applied to ensure that the extension

was contained in the next Railway Bill. Mr Cutts commented that the want of rail was costing the farmers from one to two shillings per bag to get their grain to a railhead.

The meeting appointed Mr Skewes and Mr Cumming together with the Shire of St. Amaud delegate to meet the Minister. It also agreed to make a compulsory call of two shillings and sixpence on members, those failing to pay to be debarred from voting at future meetings. It further resolved to ask the Chaffey Brothers for assistance for the Donald-Wimbirchip extension.

A report of the deputation was presented at a meeting at Wimbirchip on 20th Dec 88. Mr Gorrie, Secretary of the Shire of St. Amaud, had accompanied the deputation to Minister Gillies. Gorrie was to later become the first Shire Secretary of Birchip in 1895 and played a dominant role in later rail developments. Gillies gave the deputation a good hearing but failed to give any definite assurances whereas local member, Mr W. Madden, was of the opinion that the extension would be amongst the first six in the Bill. The matter of the future extension to Mildura was raised by Mr J. V. Hillgrove who said that flying surveys of three different routes starting from Warracknabeal, Donald and Wycheproof had been reported. Chairman Cumming ruled that it was not advisable to agitate on the Mildura extension before the Wimbirchip link had been secured. Further calls and enrolment of new members were urgently needed and Mr Cutts was delegated to the task.

By the end of 1889 competition for the extension to Mildura was increasing. St. Amaud Council received a letter from the Secretary for Railways at its November meeting advising that the Minister could not authorize a survey of new lines, including that from Wimbirchip to Mildura. Cr Cumming said that surveys were being carried out from Dimboola and Swan Hill whereas Wycheproof via Wimbirchip and Wimbirchip direct extensions had been requested. He urged that local members Taverner and Duncan be asked to use their influence in the matter. In May 1890 a survey party surveyed a line from Wycheproof running ten miles north of Wimbirchip.

The *Wycheproof Ensign* edition of 2nd May 90 carried a report of the Railway League meeting at Morton Plains earlier in the week. Mr Skewes occupied the chair. The meeting had been called to further pursue the rail extension from Donald. He made a plea that *"the work of the previous nine years to be not lost through inactivity to other less deserving but more energetic communities. During all those years the*

country had been developing at a fast rate. Farmers had carted thousands of bags of wheat for distances of twenty to thirty miles. The local claims were indisputable and he hoped that within a year or two, at most, to have the gratification of seeing the Ironhorse steaming through the district". On the motion of Mr J. Miller and Mr J. Lockwood it was agreed to send a deputation to Melbourne to again interview the Minister and impress upon him the urgent need for the Donald-Birchip extension to be placed in a prominent position in the anticipated Railway Bill. The assistance of parliamentarians Tavemer and Duncan was to be enlisted.

The outcome of the deputation was reported by Mr Clark to a meeting at Blencowe's Hotel on 19th May. The replies received from the Minister were favourable. The Minister acknowledged that this area was the largest scope of closely settled country in the colony without a rail service. The matter of the Mildura extension was discussed and it was generally thought that it would not be included in the Bill but *The Age* and *Argus* newspapers were of the opinion that Wycheproof would be the starting point making a junction at Wirmbirchip. The Donald extension was included in the 1890 Railway Bill but it was only to be constructed as far as Corack (11.87 miles). The Bill was defeated in favour of one establishing the Railways Standing Committee to investigate and report back to Parliament with recommendations on all further extensions. The proposed extension to Corack never got under way.

Meanwhile Birchip township continued to grow. Ten building allotments were offered for sale in October 1890. That same month it was noted that the Donald-Birchip extension had been submitted to the Railway Standing Committee as well as the Wycheproof to Mildura extension. The Railway Sectional Standing Committee comprising Messrs J. W. Gore MLC, A. Young MLC, W. J. Taverner MLA and C. M. Officer MLA travelled by train to Donald to further their inquiries. Mr R. Gorrie, Shire Secretary, George Watson, farmer of Carron, Joseph Litchfield, farmer of Witchipool, Daniel O'Leary, proprietor of the *Donald Express* and Phillip E. Came, manager of the Colonial Bank of Australia, were examined to give evidence in support of the proposed extension. The Committee later drove to Watchem and examined John Clark, Henry Skewes, Thomas Connellan and James McGannon; R. Donohue, and W. G. Tyrie of Corack, all farmers and John Caldwell, farmer and contractor of Birchip, before moving on to Birchip for the night. The next morning they examined Joseph Lockwood, general merchant and W. Cumming, grazier

of Marlbed, Elias Warne, farmer and grazier, M. Honan and Peter Scott of Marlbed, W. Barber of Karyrie, Chas Cutts, storekeeper and E. Scown farmer and contractor. Questions to the contractors related to the cost of earthworks while the farmers were asked about farm productivity and costs of delivering grain to railheads.

In December 1890, the Shire of St. Arnaud received a letter from Mr Joseph Watson offering fifteen acres of land in the Birchip township area at £2 per acre on condition that it be used for a railway station and that tenders for the Donald-Birchip line be called during 1891. There is some conjecture regarding the Watson land. Many are of the opinion that it was finally given by Mr Watson free of cost. A copy of the Transfer of Land provided by his grand-daughter, Miss Frances Watson, included a Memorandum of Agreement dated 14th Jan 1892 between Mr Joseph Watson and the Railway Commissioners wherein the Railway Commissioners agreed to withdraw their objection to the reduction by one chain of the main street of Birchip adjacent to Mr Watson's land in return for the transfer, free of encumbrances, of some fifteen acres and seven perches of land owned by him, for use by the Commissioners in connection with the construction of the Donald-Wirmbirchip rail extension. At that time, Mr Watson owned all of the land on the east side of Cumming Avenue. The one chain width reduction was annexed to the titles of the adjacent building allotments when subdivisions were subsequently made. A copy of the Transfer of Land is at Appendix 11.

#### **RAILWAY COMMISSIONERS AND RAILWAY STANDING COMMITTEE:**

*The Birchip Advertiser and Mallee Agriculturist* in its first edition on 15th May 1891 stated that Mr Wrixon, Engineer, of the Railway Department visited Birchip in order to form a rough estimate of the cost of the Donald to Birchip line. The same edition gave a lengthy report of the examination of Mr Speight, Chairman of the Railway Commissioners, by the Standing Committee of Railway Construction on matters relative to the Donald-Birchip extension. The intent of the examination was to investigate ways and means of reducing the cost of construction. The earlier main trunk lines had been constructed under contract as a matter of need and little concern was paid to cost. However as these initial lines had exhausted finances it became imperative that lower cost methods be found. On the matter of the use of light lines in preference to those normally used, Mr Speight posed the question, "*Is it reasonable to expect that people would be agreeable to pay ordinary mileage*

rates for an inefficient service?". He went on to say that light lines might content people for some time, but they would sooner or later ask for an improved service. People, he agreed, "*would be content with less until they got less*". A cheap system of construction, in his opinion, would not be a wise one to adopt. Neither did he support not fencing the line as it would eventually lead to compensation claims. (Light line construction had a gauge of two feet six inches and would only carry light engines and rolling stock at much reduced speeds). Speight appeared almost belligerent in his responses when he replied to a question regarding the cheaper type construction: "*If the Committee decided to have an inferior railway, to run at reduced speeds and all that kind of thing, let the Committee do it with their eyes open. But they should remember it would only be postponing further expenditure*". He used the Donald-Wimbirchip line to illustrate his many points and placed the proposed line at the top of the list of lines mostly likely to pay for the costs of construction in the next five years. He could think of no better principle to adopt than the fair distribution of lines throughout the country, having regard for the people on the land. When the Committee Chairman put it to him that none of the lines would show a profit within five years, Speight thought "*looking at the matter from a business aspect, Parliament should not sanction the making of any one of them*". Sadly for Speight he was regarded as obstructionist and Premier Shiels arranged for his suspension in February 1892 and one month later his services were terminated.

## LOCAL AGITATION FOR RAIL SERVICES CONTINUED

*The Birchip Advertiser and Mallee Agriculturist* contained lengthy editorials on the Parliamentary processes with regard to railway extensions. Editor Grantley on 5th June 1891 wrote one such item stating "*No matter how strong our claims may be to a line from Donald to Birchip, we must not take it for granted that those claims, even backed up by the avowed approval by Mr Speight and his colleagues, are sufficient to ensure their recognition by the inclusion of our line in the Railway Bill. We must watch the progress of events and be prepared to agitate strongly, unitedly and vehemently to prevent the possible ignoring of our rights in favour of some pet swindle of the down-country, log-rolling political clique*".

In the meantime a stalemate developed with the Standing Committee on the one hand supporting the concept of a cheap construction while the Commissioners would not agree to any material reduction, giving as their principal reason that the public would not be satisfied with light or less expensive

lines than the estimates provided for. In this climate a public meeting was held at Birchip Mechanics Hall on 1st June 91 with Mr Crombie voted to the chair. He reported that the committee appointed to collect the statistics and prices required for land had forwarded the data to the Standing Committee. He believed that the line occupied the front position for construction and suggested that a monster petition be forwarded to the Commissioners advising them that they would be content with a light line rather than no line at all. However this point of view was not shared by all of those present. Mr Goudie Sen. said "*Let no man advocate that the gauge be altered, that the rails be less than 60 lbs of steel per yard*". Rev F. Elliott said that by placing ourselves in opposition to Mr Speight, on the one hand, or the Railway Standing Committee, on the other, it would not assist them at all. He advocated that they simply petition the Parliament for a rail service. Other speakers gave support for a light line on the basis that a light line was better than none. Several others favoured a heavy duty construction. Finally the meeting resolved to urge the parliament by petition for the immediate construction of the railway extension pledging themselves to be satisfied with any reasonable measure in so doing. Arrangements were made for the collection of signatures and, if necessary, to pay someone to do the work of obtaining them.

*Note: A light line construction had a guage of two feet six inches, would carry only light engines and at much reduced speeds.*

The Railway Standing Committee on 10th Nov '91, recommended the construction of six lines, including the Donald-Wimbirchip and Warracknabeal-Beulah extensions. The Donald-Wimbirchip line occupied first position when the subsequent Railway Bill was presented to Parliament. Meanwhile plans had been prepared but were sadly amiss. They showed the line passing through the newly erected Wesleyan Church.

When the Railway Bill reached debate in Parliament in December '91 conditions were applied to the construction of country lines. One, which had far reaching effects in the case of the Donald-Wimbirchip extension, was that previous to the construction of any line, all the land required for the construction had to be given free of cost and without compensation for severance or any other impediment. Secondly, local rates would be charged by the Victorian Railways to cover the cost of operating the new lines and payment of interest on construction costs. The interest rate at that time was 4%. Thirdly, it was decreed that the Railway Construction Branch would be the constructing authority using day labour rather than the previous



contract system. Meanwhile Mr Taverner MLA advised that he had obtained from the Minister for Railways approval for a permanent survey of the Donald-Wimbirchip line. This time the survey adopted a deviation from the former survey, which was via Corack, taking a westerly direction towards Buloke, Witchipool (now known as Litchfield), Massey and thence to Watchem, Morton Plains and Wimbirchip. It added a further two miles and fifty-six chains to the original survey distance but went through more settled land. At that time much of the land to the east was occupied by the Banyenong Station and Lake Buloke.

Editor Grantly was frustrated by the many delays in decision making by the various authorities. He wrote an editorial in the issue of 29th January '92 stating *"we are so isolated from a railway that we have to drag our produce immense distances over dusty roads in summer and our stores through a succession of quagmires in winter. Our farmers and tradespeople must, indeed, have an unusual leaven of that invaluable quality which Brother Jonathan calls 'cussedness' to enable them to go in and win in face of these adverse circumstances"*.

The Watchem, Morton Plains and Wimbirchip Railway League responded quickly to the demand that land be provided free of cost for the construction of the rail extension. Lists were prepared and placed in the Cutts and Lockwood Stores at Birchip, Waddells at Watchem and Kramers at Witchipool. It sought the signatures of interested persons who would be prepared to guarantee to pay a sum of not less than one pound for the purpose of raising a fund for the purchase of the land required. One of these handwritten lists is contained in Appendix 4. The attention of Shire Councillors was drawn to the savings that could be made by the use of surveyed roads for the line. In this regard three chain roads were to prove invaluable as they were capable of carrying both rail and road services. Some thirteen miles of the line were constructed on three chain roads. An example of the usage of a three chain road can be seen south of the Birchip township. The Watchem road reserve of three chains width carries both the railway line and the road for some distance. Campbell's Tank, which was constructed by the Shire of St. Arnaud for use as a public water reserve about one mile south of the Five Ways lay directly across the rail line route. Undeterred, the construction gang went straight across it, probably using the banks of the dam as filling. Remnants of the dam may be seen today on either side of the rail track. A pepper tree is now growing in the bottom of the dam on the Sunraysia Highway side of the line. The roadside portion that was not filled in was later used as a

reservoir by the water trains during periods of water shortages.

### CONSTRUCTION OF THE EXTENSION:

Under the headings: *"Railway Projects of the Government: Two Mallee Lines to be Proceeded with: Work for the Unemployed"*, the *Birchip Advertiser* and *Mallee Agriculturist* reported on 19th Feb 92 that the government had approved the construction of the Donald-Wimbirchip and Warracknabeal-Beulah extensions to provide immediate work for the unemployed on a system of day labour.

The 1891/92 report of the Railway Commissioners stated that the earthworks, bridges and culverts required on the Donald-Wimbirchip extension were light; inexpensive fencing was being erected, gates, crossings and public roads almost entirely dispensed with and all the work, so far as was practicable, was being hired or let by tender after open competition or being carried out by piecework at fair prices. Good progress had been made with the works and the lines would be ready for the coming harvest. The construction of these lines by the Railways Department was the first to be carried out by the department as the constructing body. All previous construction works had been carried out by contract arrangements.

The length of the Donald-Birchip line was surveyed at 32 and three-quarter miles. It passed close to Lake Buloke which contained 19000 acres of Crown Lands. This land would be considerably enhanced in value by the advent of rail. The government could therefore increase the rentals substantially. The estimated cost was £112,000 at the rate of £3,500 per mile. The land to be traversed was perfectly level. Engineer-in-Chief Darbyshire recalled surveyors, who had been given extended leave without pay because of the depressed times, to complete a permanent survey. Mr Wheeler, Minister for Railways, proposed a visit to Birchip to secure free land. A veiled threat was contained in the trip suggesting that, if the land was not given, the work would be *"transferred to where the landowners are more tractable"*. *The Donald Times* in its edition of 24th Feb 92 stated that a bond signed by twenty principal residents en route guaranteed the whole cost of the land required. Work would begin at once. It was intended that *"butty"* gangs be used with each gang taking a direct contract from the department excluding the middle man and thus making more remuneration available to the workers.

Arrangements for the actual purchase of the land were pursued by the League. Secretary Clark, accompanied by Mr Duncan MLA, worked to obtain



agreements with the landowners concerned. Some offered their land free of cost. Others sought a nominal price only. A few were not so co-operative. The most exorbitant prices sought were close to Donald where £400 was asked for two acres of land. Another asked for £100 for a "small piece of his cabbage patch". Deviations around recalcitrant landowners were contemplated but never done. Minister Wheeler was not taking any chances. Accompanied by Mr Taverner, he visited Birchip in February armed with legal documents for the transfer of the land and guaranteeing the Government against any claim for damages, trespass or severance. By March, problems at the Birchip end overshadowed those encountered initially at the Donald end. The *Birchip Advertiser and Mallee Agriculturist* in February 1892 stated "The guarantors, who have obtained a clear way to McClelland's paddock, were faced by a request for £300 for something less than five acres and the condition that the railway must enter at the north side of the shire tank known as Campbell's and come out again on the Narraport road no less than ten chain from the Morton Plains road. Mr McClelland also submits a further proposal offering 10 acres free of cost as a railway site and as much land as may be required at £10 per acre. The proposed site is 20 chain long by 5 chains in width and is situated between Messrs Murphy and McClelland's houses. The next obstructionist is Mrs Blencowe, who refuses to entertain any proposal for a railway through her paddock. Up to this point the land along the route has been obtained at about an average of £4 per acre for a total of £700". Although there was an outbreak of indignation at this upset, the League was anxious to ensure that it did not impede the construction and took steps to have the matter resolved. It urged the Minister to deal with Mr McClelland and Mrs Blencowe by arbitration. Mr McClelland had advised the League that if his proposal was accepted, Mrs Blencowe would allow the rail to pass across her land. Mrs Blencowe advised Mr Lockwood that she would allow rail access to her land at a reasonable price providing the station was placed on it. The dispute not only involved the land in question, but had implications for the location of the railway station. Mr Davis, officer in charge of the Survey Team, would not entertain other considerations. He would put the line where it would best suit the public convenience. Watson's paddock site was the preferred option but the League would accept McClelland's site if it meant that the line would reach Birchip as proposed.

The League met at Watchem to consider the position of the guarantors arising from the apparent intransigence of Mr McClelland and Mrs Blencowe. No work could proceed until the land issue was

resolved to the satisfaction of the Railway Commissioners. The meeting resolved, on the motion of Mr L. Simpson, seconded by Mr T. Connellan, to send two delegates to meet the Minister and explain the position to him. It further agreed to send permits and other documents and sign bonds binding themselves to the faithful carrying out of their obligations conditional on the Minister relieving them of any further responsibility after entering Mr A. McClelland's paddock. It sought the support of MP's, Mr Taverner and Mr Duncan, in having work on the line commenced at once. A further meeting of about 400 people at Birchip in the Mechanics Hall concurred in the general thrust of the previous Watchem decision of the League in asking the Railways Department to decide the issue of the station site.

In anticipation of the sanction of Parliament, work commenced on 3rd March 1892. One hundred workers had proceeded to Donald to commence the earthworks. Tents for their accommodation were provided by the Government. Tools were also provided and food was arranged to be made available. The men were informed that no grog would be permitted to enter the camps and that anyone found contravening this regulation would be ordered to leave. Although there was a large number of unemployed in the district, the Government made it clear that the work was being provided to clear Melbourne of the "unemployed" and not for local "unemployed".

With elections in the offing, Mr Duncan MLA tried to make political mileage out of the railway construction issue. He claimed that he was responsible for having the extension to Wirmbirchip when it had been scheduled to only proceed as far as Corack. This claim was hotly disputed. A letter to the Editor published in the *Birchip Advertiser* of 15th April 92 accused Duncan of "trying to cast false impressions broadcast to the injury of others but as most electors have taken his measure, I sincerely trust they will relegate him to private life". This they did. Duncan paid the ultimate price in the election and took no further part in the rail project. However he received some balm to his wounds for £500 defamation damages were awarded to him arising from the newspaper letters of the time.

Further problems arose with land purchase from Mr W. Sutcliffe at Witchipool. By May 92 it also became critical for the Railway League to urge the Government to commence work on the railway bridge at Donald if the line was to be available for the carriage of the next wheat harvest. A further call of two shillings and sixpence was needed to meet League expenses and land purchases. Mr Oakley of Oakley and Thompson



was doing all the legal work associated with land purchases and the meeting thanked him for his services. Railway Department officers gave legal assistance in the later stages of documentation of land purchases and agreements. The League was later able to come to an amicable agreement with Mr Sutcliff for his land.

The *Birchip Advertiser* of 20th May 92 noted with satisfaction that the navvies engaged in the formation of the earthworks were now only six miles from Birchip. It also recorded that tenders had been called for the bridge construction. The tender of £1692/4/- was awarded to Ross, Fraser and Patience. A week later the navvies were only 3 and a half miles from the town and expected to reach there in about a fortnight's time. By the 17th June they had nearly completed the work. A Ministerial visit by Mr Wheeler, accompanied by several Parliamentary colleagues inspected both the Donald and Warracknabeal extensions. He was sufficiently satisfied with developments that he directed the departmental officers to proceed to a conclusion of the project in order that the lines would be ready for the coming harvest. With the earthworks completed as far as Campbell's Tank on the Donald-Wimbirchip extension, the line laying materials, rails, sleepers and ballast were ordered. The sleepers and ballast came from Dunolly while the remainder of the items came from Melbourne. During his visit, Minister Wheeler inspected the three sites that had been sponsored as the location of the station terminus. He favoured the most central site, which was the Watson land. He also indicated that if all of the land was not given free of cost he would terminate the line for the present at some distance south of the town. At one time the line was planned to terminate north of the Pump Hut Reserve. This site is approximately half a mile north of the present Birchip station.

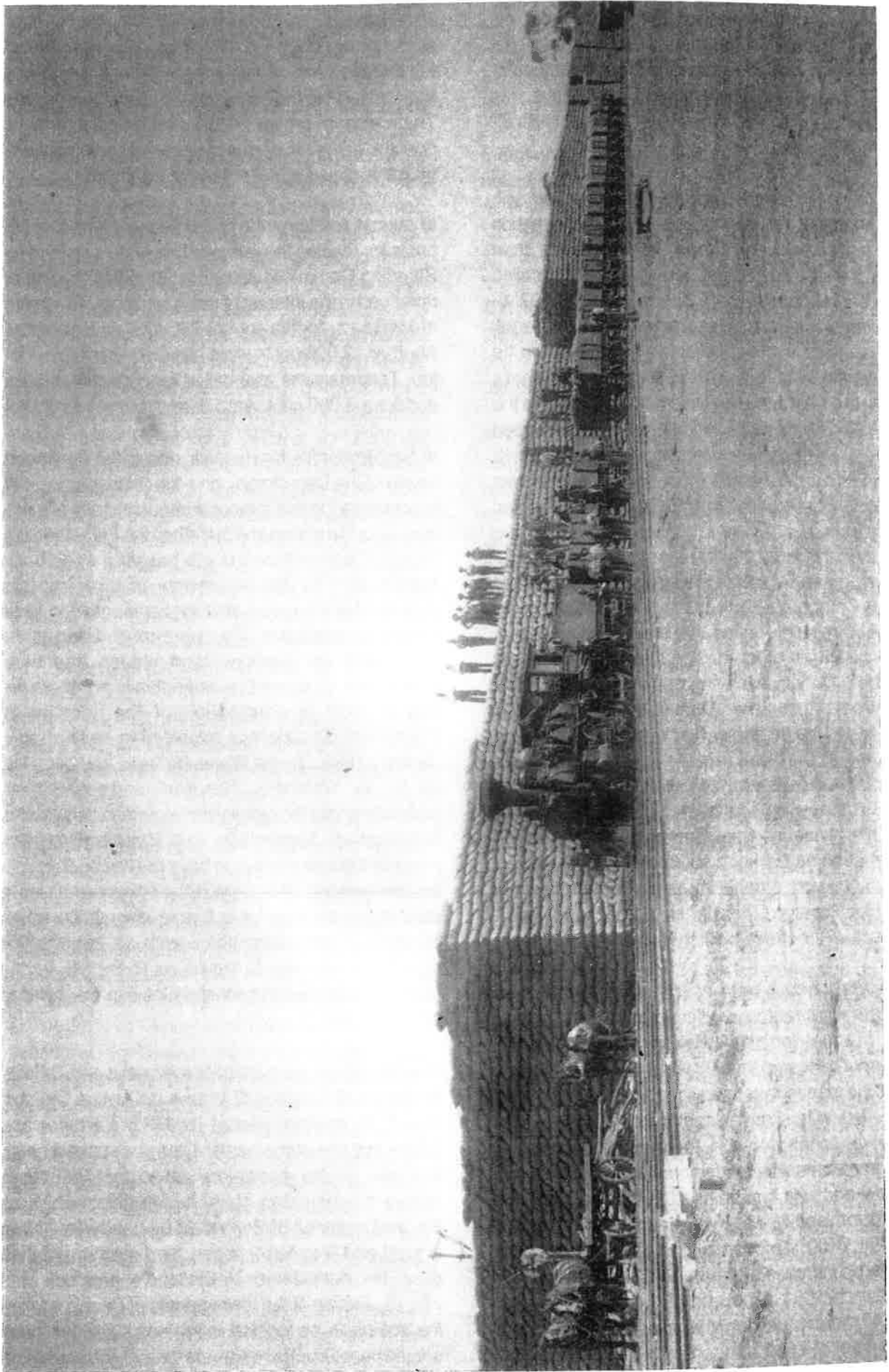
The Railway League was beset with money problems and several guarantors wished to be relieved of their duties. At a meeting at the Watchem Hotel in July 92, Secretary Clark said that Mr McErvale, in particular, desired the meeting as several guarantors had become dissatisfied at the unsatisfactory manner in which money was coming forward. Payments in accordance with agreements with landowners were coming due. Mr Lockwood said that he had £100 in the bank and £200 in promises. Mr McErvale had £50 and expected to obtain £100. Mr Honan had £30 in hand and expected to increase that sum. Mr Connellan had £90 in hand and £105 in promises. Mr Lawlor expected to raise £40 more in addition to what he had already paid in. The total of £600 had a reassuring effect on the guarantors who had become anxious about their

responsibilities. At that time, exclusive of McClelland and Blencowe land, the land and incidental costs amounted to £562.1.6. Chairman, George Watson, felt that the League was apparently ceasing to exist and leaving it to the guarantors to carry the workload. There was an urgent need for both bodies to act in concert. In the future, meetings would comprise both guarantors and members of the League.

In August, tenders were called for the supply of 3,000 posts for fencing the railway. This was in spite of the Standing Committee recommending that the line be unfenced in the interest of reducing costs. The tender of Mr Geady for the sum of £70.17.6 was accepted. Another 12,000 posts were required to complete the job. Tenders were also called for ballasting the line and for a 3,000 cubic yard dam at Morton Plains.

In September 92, Mr Rennick, one of the permanent heads of the Department, on a tour of inspection said in conversation that the department had one site only in view for the station and that when the Bill authorizing the construction of the line was passed it would be an easy matter for the department to take any land required for the works and for compensation to be settled by arbitration. This gave much heart to the guarantors as previous land values had been reasonable. Construction had actually begun on 3rd March 1892 in anticipation of the sanction of Parliament. The line was expected to be finished in January 1893. By mid November rails had been laid as far as Watchem. The earthworks had been completed right through to Birchip and no delays were anticipated. Meanwhile the Birchip Progress Association was anxious to have the line open in time for the harvest. President, Mr Lockwood, called a meeting to arrange for a further deputation to the Minister urging completion with all speed. The deputation was also to inquire as to the site for the station and to seek the construction of a weighbridge without delay.

The deputation comprising Messrs Lockwood, C Cutts, M. Honan, E. Simpson, E. Warne, J. Clark, J. Crombie and T. Connellan, piloted by MP's Tavemer and Dwyer met Minister Wheeler. Clark, as spokesperson and one of the guarantors asked the Minister to relieve the guarantors of any further responsibility as the land as far as Birchip would be handed over free of cost and they felt that they had discharged their duty. He considered McClelland's paddock was virtually Birchip. If the townspeople of Birchip wanted the station to be located in Watson's paddock they should bear the expense as the majority of guarantors were not townspeople. Mr Lockwood said that the



*S class locomotive and a line of wagons being loaded with wheat at Birchip in 1894.*

wheat harvest was almost ready and the line should be pushed on with all speed. He favoured McClelland's site for the station and said that it would give general satisfaction. Mr Honan and Mr Simpson favoured the Watson site. As Birchip would not always remain a terminal the department would be looking for an exit sometime in the future so the matter should be settled now in the interests of saving future costs. Minister Wheeler was sympathetic and said he would ensure that the line was completed as soon as possible. Regarding the station site, the department admitted that Watson's paddock was preferable to that of McClelland's as the formation required in McClelland land would cost £200 but the department would not bear any of the land cost in locating the station at Watsons.

On 3rd December 1892 a meeting, convened by Thomas Coffey, was held in the Mechanics Institute to deal with the matter of the location of the station. There was a large attendance as the meeting was perceived by farmers and townspeople to be a wrangle between partisans favourable to the location of the station in Watsons and those who favoured McClellands. Mr L.L. Simpson was elected Chairman. Mr A. Sheean was appointed Secretary. The meeting was advised that fifteen persons had agreed to find the money to pay the cost of McClelland's land if the station was located at Watsons. They had wired the Minister to this effect: "*If twenty farmers and businessmen guarantee compensation for Blencowes land, providing you arbitrate, will you fix railway station at original site?*" signed Thos Coffey 29th November. The reply was as follows: "*Cabinet agrees to your suggestion provided guarantors pay whole compensation and costs and sign agreement to such effect. Letters posted*". signed J. H. Wheeler, Minister for Railways, Melbourne. 1st Dec. In answer to the question of the cost of Blencowe's land, the Chairman said he did not know as it would have to be settled by arbitration or the department. The new guarantors would pay the cost of Blencowe land and the old guarantors would have to see the line through McClellands. Parties for and against the plan put their points of view forward. Mr Hague moved and Thomas Coffey seconded that in the event of a favourable reply being received from the Minister that the necessary agreement be signed to provide the land to take the line to Watson's paddock. Mr Lockwood insisted that an amendment be put. The amendment was lost 25 to 40 and the motion was carried.

Again the original guarantors met at the Watchem Hotel on the following Tuesday to continue the saga of the location of the Birchip station. Mr J. Lockwood

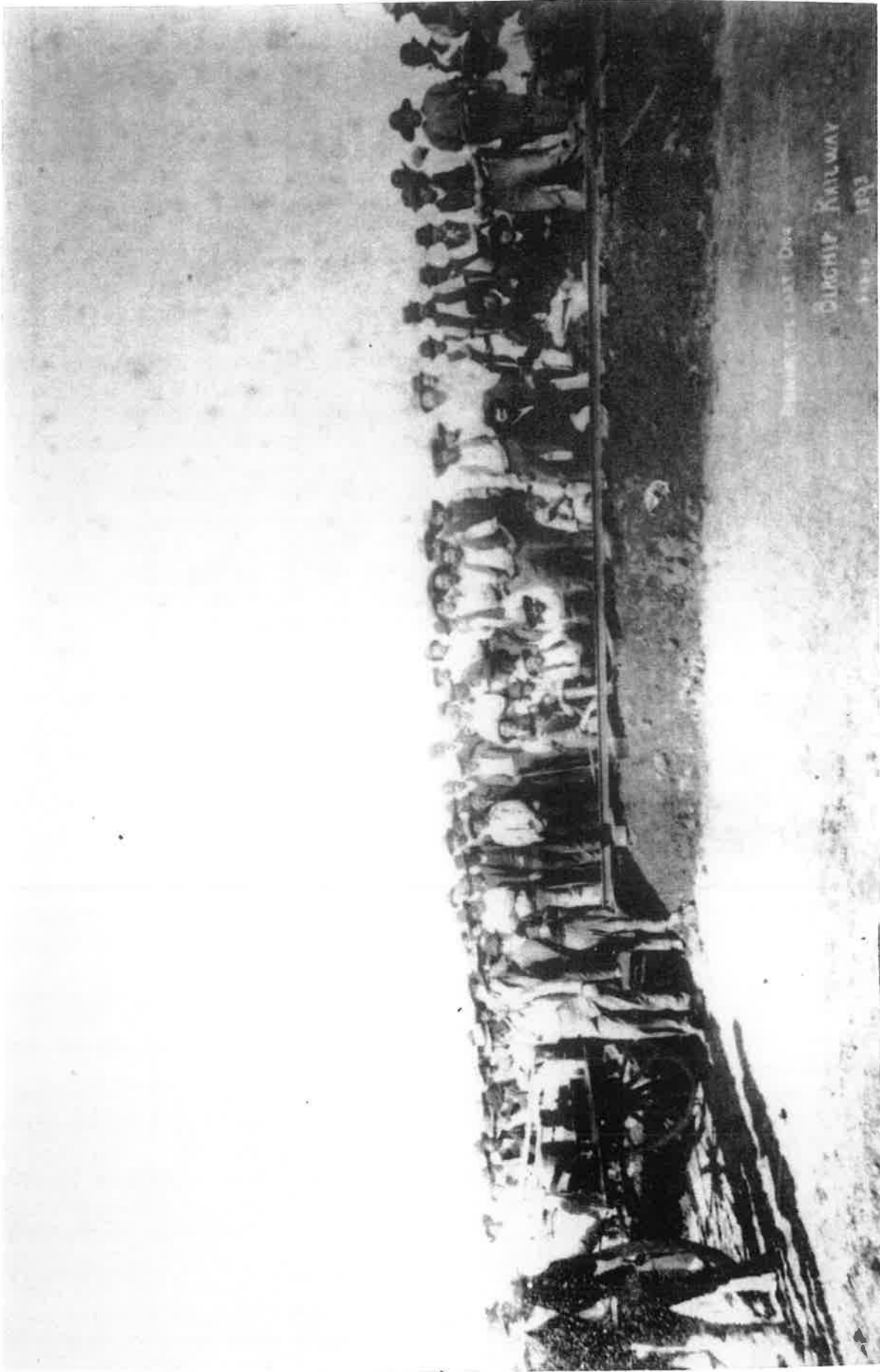
occupied the chair and Secretary Clark was present. Mr McClelland advised the guarantors by letter that he had revised his price upwards from £300 to £500 as the land had increased in value. He offered alternate land free of cost on the Narraport road. This was rejected. Mr Simpson said that the offers of Mr McClelland were out of all reason. The site he now offered for the station was a crabhole and he knew if the station was placed there a big row would take place over it. Despite this comment, a motion was carried that the department accept McClelland's land for the site for the station.

The edition of the *Birchip Advertiser* of 16th Dec 92 reported that Minister Wheeler advised the deputation seeking proclamation of Watson's paddock site for the location of the station that he did not wish to embarrass the guarantors or do anything harsh and arbitrary in the matter but would send an officer to inspect within a few days with full power to make final arrangements and decide the position of the station. Mr Kemot, the engineer in charge of construction of the Donald-Wimbirchip line, visited Birchip on 21st December and informed the local townspeople that Watson's land had been selected for the station. He also produced plans for grain storage sites which would be let by tender very soon. The passenger station was to be directly opposite Rundle Street while the principal goods traffic would be along Church Street, i.e. opposite Cutts Store. *The Advertiser* reported that this advice was received with much rejoicing. The burial of the hatchet was performed with due ceremony by the parties who contended for the rival stations. The McClelland and Blencowe land prices would be arbitrated in due course if the department could not come to terms with them on behalf of the guarantors. The line was expected to be finished in six weeks. The engine had passed Morton Plains and the whistle should be heard in Birchip towards the end of next week. Work on the earthworks through McClelland and Blencowe land was in progress in early Jan 1893. Fencing was also being erected on that particular section.

In a series of news items in *The Birchip Advertiser* the following events were recorded:-

*13th Jan 93: Rails have been laid as far as Pattersons (allot 60 Warmur now occupied by Mervyn Hinchliffe and family) and the ballast train has reached Morton Plains.*

*20th Jan: The completion of the line is being watched with much interest. The rails are about one and a half miles south of Birchip and the ballast train is close by. The whistle of the locomotive was heard in Birchip for*



Crowd which gathered to witness the last dog being driven by Cr. Joseph Lockwood on 10th February, 1893. Note the barrel in the back of the dray ready for the celebrations.

the first time.

27th Jan: It is expected that the line will be open for goods traffic on Monday week.

3rd Feb: The line is rapidly approaching completion. The rails were laid up to the wheat stacks last night. Arrangements are being made for the carriage of goods immediately. Consignments may be forwarded from Donald (prepaid) next week.

10th Feb; A meeting for the rail extension to Marlbed will be held at the Marlbed State School next Monday. The last spike in connection with the laying of the rails on the railway will be driven in at 3 o'clock this afternoon, when that event will be performed with due ceremony by Mr Joseph Lockwood JP.

17th Feb: It is expected that goods traffic will be possible next week. The telegraph line is also nearing completion. The erection of a turntable has been suspended pending further instructions from the department. It is suspected that the delay is caused by the move to have the line extended to Marlbed.

## CEREMONY ON COMPLETION OF CONSTRUCTION

The *Birchip Advertiser* of 17th Feb 93 carried the story of the official completion of the line as follows: "The ceremony of driving the "golden dog" in connection with the laying of the last rail on the Birchip line was performed by Mr Lockwood on Friday last, amidst general rejoicing. The spike, carefully prepared for the occasion, was nicely gilded over so as to represent a veritable "golden dog". It was given to Mr Telford for presentation to Mr Lockwood. The "dog" having been placed into position, the chief celebrant poised his hammer and with erring aim brought it down pretty adjacent to the spike, but without any apparent effect. The second and third attempts were much more successful, and the bruised head of the "Dog" sank into the rail and sleeper. The Inspector of Works, Mr Stewart, declared it well and truly driven. Thus concluded the ceremony which ensured to the contractor, Mr Phillips, the payment of his cheque. Mr Lockwood then addressed the assemblage, expressing the pleasure it gave him to perform the ceremony they had just witnessed, and gave a short history of the line. He complimented the principals and the men engaged on the line upon the manner in which the work had been carried out and expressed the gratitude of the people of this district to Mr Wheeler,

ex-Minister of Railways, for his prompt action in the matter of the construction of this and the Beulah railways. (Cheers)".

"Refreshments were provided by Mr Ball and "Success to the Birchip Railways" and several other toasts were honoured with gusto. The principal men in connection with the railway works, and several of the townspeople, adjourned to the Birchip Hotel, and amid flowing banners of champagne expressed their hearty congratulations in mutual fashion".

## PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL:

The construction of the Donald-Birchip extension was approved by Act No 1273 of 5th December 1892 following the the passing of the Railway (Warracknabeal and Donald) Bill introduced into Parliament on 10th Nov 1892. Construction took place prior to the approval of the Parliament. During the debate Mr Baker, Member for Lowan, opposed the Bill claiming that "it did appear to him, although he was sorry to think about it, that there had been some amount of favouritism shown in the matter". Mr Carter, Member for Williamstown, charged the government with "making use of the unemployed to give a priority to the line above others". Minister Wheeler stated "This is the first time in this country that a line had been constructed without the authority of Parliament". He went on to say that "thousands of men were walking about the streets of the city unemployed, hopeless of work and many of them absolutely on the brink of starvation". He acknowledged that what the government did was "illegal and unconstitutional" but felt it was justified. Mr McIntyre (Maldon) supported the Minister but was sorry at the low wages men received and hoped that the government would not again be in a position to have to repeat proceedings. It was revealed by Member Staughton that, for the first time in the history of the colony, women had been employed in the construction of railways. The Bill contained the provision mentioned earlier that special rates would apply to the extension until construction interest costs of 4% and operating costs were recouped. The Bill was passed by 56 votes to 8 with Baker voting against the motion.

## STATIONS ON THE EXTENSION

The idea of a light line or tramway construction to serve the Carron and Bangerang districts was not proceeded with. Stations were established at the Lake Buloke: Lake Buloke station was erected at 187 and a quarter miles from Melbourne. It is located at an elevation of 380 feet above sea level. The name derives from the adjacent lake of that name. The name was later shortened to Buloke.





*First train to arrive at Birchip, February 1893. The wheat stacks had been built in anticipation of the coming of the rail.*



Litchfield: The station was given the name of Litchfield by the Railways Department. It honours one of the original settlers in the district. The station is located near the 192 mile post (309 kms) and is situated at 383 feet above sea level.

Massey: The name derives from that of one of the early settlers of the district. The station is located at 197 and a quarter miles (318 kms) from Melbourne and is situated at 373 feet above seal level.

Watchem: The name derives from an Aboriginal word for a native plant that grew profusely in the area. The town had already been surveyed and settled by the time the rail reached there. The station is located 202 and a half miles (326 kms) from Melbourne and is at an elevation of 383 feet above sea level.

Morton Plains and Birchip details are included in the section dealing with those stations.

#### **OPERATIONS:**

Commissioners stated that both the Donald-Wirimbirchip and Warracknabeal-Beulah extensions were opened during the year and were showing satisfactory results. *"The lines are being worked without platforms at the stations and with the minimum of siding accommodation. The carriages in use and which have been built on the American principle have been found to be admirably adapted to the requirements of the districts. The guard is enabled to have a thorough surveillance over the traffic; the booking is done on the train; and generally, it is found, large economies in the working are effected by the adoption of this class of stock. It is our intention to apply this system of working wherever practicable to other lines throughout the colony"*. The report continued that these two lines had been constructed at a cost per mile very much below that of railways previously made in the colony. Owing to the light and economical character of the works, the low rate for labour and materials due to the existing depression, the land being handed over to the Department free of cost and the works being carried out under the new system of small contracts. The cost of the 32 and one quarter miles of the extension to 30th June 94 was £69142 with the average cost per mile at £2127. The line ranges from 394 feet to 330 feet above sea level. The steepest grade was 1:100.

Revenue on the extension since opening to 30th June 94 was £11683 and expenditure £4426 for a nett profit of £3417. The passenger traffic from Birchip generated £1004.3.3 and from Morton Plains £38.9.8. By 1895/

6 the number of passengers commencing outward journeys from Birchip had increased to 2484 and 273 from Morton Plains. These numbers continued to rise annually to reach 3440 and 242 respectively by 1900/01.

*The Wycheproof Ensign* of 24th March 93 stated converted American carriages for use on the line had arrived. *"Each carriage is divided, half into first class and half into second class. There will be Stationmasters only at Birchip and Watchem"*. Coincidentally with the arrival of the rail, the mails were carried by train. The Post Office, which had been operated from Lockwood's Store was transferred to the railway station. The inventory of Post Office items held by Mr Lockwood and transferred to the new office is included in Appendix 5.

Mr M. Sullivan was the first Station Master at Birchip. He was appointed in time to be able to issue 30 passenger tickets for the first regular passenger train service out of Birchip on 28th March 1893. As Station Master he was also to become the Post Master when that utility was transferred from Lockwood's store. Mr Sullivan was succeeded by Mr Tom Cotter in mid-1893. Mr Cotter remained at Birchip for several years before being transferred to Femtree Gully in mid 1898. At his farewell he was described as a good citizen and a courteous and efficient officer. In responding, Mr Cotter said that he had been happy at Birchip but after nearly five years in such a trying climate he felt that he was entitled to a change. Mr Cotter was succeeded by Mr Corbett, reliever, who was then followed by Mr Kitson.

Mr Cotter and his family were the first occupants of the Station Master's residence. In the Victorian Railways section of the Government Gazette of 25th May 1894, tenders were called for the removal of Gatehouse No 17 Ararat and Avoca lines and for re-erection as a Station Master's residence at Birchip.

#### **LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST GUARANTORS:**

In the aftermath of the completion of the extension to Birchip two court cases ensued. In the Full Court, Mrs Emma Blencowe stated that she had never given permission for the defendants, the Board of Land and Works, to enter her property for the purpose of constructing a railway line. The court was asked to decide if the Act of Parliament entitled the department to do what they had done. If they were not, it was agreed, the sum of £175 damages should be paid to the plaintiff. The Chief Justice in delivering judgment, said that the Act had given a clear answer to an action

for trespass as the Legislature had given its authority to make the railway through the property. However he thought it lamentable that seven years should pass with no attempt by the Board to do justice to Mrs Blencowe by compelling the guarantors to pay compensation for her property. He regretted that he had to find in favour of the defendant, with costs. The matter was later regularized by the Board of Works issuing legal documents under the Indenture of 22nd Feb 1892 to transfer Mrs Blencowe's land to them free of cost to the Board. It is not known what the terms of the settlement with Mrs Blencowe finally provided.

The newspapers of November 1899 reported the prosecution of the eighteen Guarantors of the railway land by the Board of Land and Works. The action which had been pending for seven years came to a head before the Chief Justice in the Banco Court in Melbourne. Plaintiffs were the Board of Land and Works and the defendants were Guarantors John Clark, Jos. Lockwood, George Watson, Jos. Watson, M. Honan, Thos Connellan, Harris and Telford, J.E. Colbert, J. McErvale, John Cannard, L.L. Simpson, John Fraser, Jas. Litchfield, Richard Merritt, Jas Lawlor, Jas Crombie, R. Donohue, Jas Ryan and W. Beckham.

It was alleged by the Board that by an indenture made on 22nd Feb 1892, the defendants who were the owners of, or interested, in the land required for the Donald to Birchip railway agreed to convey it to the Board. It was said that they had neglected to do so and that the plaintiffs had been sued for trespass on one piece of land. Specific performance of the agreement was claimed, £500 damages.

The defences were that the land had previously been acquired by the plaintiffs, that the land was not the property of the defendants, and that the guarantee of other persons had been accepted and the defendants discharged. Without admitting any liability the defendants paid 20 shillings into court as sufficient to satisfy the claim of the Board.

Evidence was given by Messrs Clark, Lockwood and Simpson who were interested in the construction of the Donald to Birchip line and Messrs Tavemer and Dyer M'sLA, who gave evidence that a second body of guarantors had incurred the liability upon which the action rested. One of the "promoters" of the railway said that Mr Wheeler, the then Minister of Railways, gave the promoters 20 minutes to sign a guarantee that the land required for railway purposes would be handed over to the Government free of expense. Witness did not take the trouble to read the document; he had not time to read it. The only landowners that

the promoters had any difficulty with were Mrs Blencowe and Mr McClelland, both of whom wanted fancy prices for their properties.

On the second day of the hearing, Mr Wheeler, ex-Minister of Railways, being called for the prosecution, said that the guarantors had acted honourably as far as was possible to carry out their part of the contract, and he had told the Attorney-General that the case should never have been brought to court. The Chief Justice in making comment upon the evidence taken placed great stress upon the statements made by Mr Wheeler and considered the Board of Land and Works was not justified in bringing this action into court. The merits of the case were entirely against the Government. The guarantors had done their duty as far as it was possible for a body of men to do it and the expense should have been borne by the country. From a purely legal aspect of the case it would appear, however, that the guarantors would have to satisfy the land in its entirety.

Counsel for the plaintiffs fully endorsed the remarks of the Chief Justice and expressed his regrets at being connected with the case as he felt sympathy with the defendants. He applied for an adjournment till the following Monday with a view to arriving at a settlement. Counsel for both parties subsequently conferred with the result that an agreement was arrived at that each side pay its own costs and that the guarantors be liberated from their bond. It would now be incumbent on the Government to pay for the land in dispute, the amount of the valuation being about £300. The Guarantors legal costs amounted to £199/0/1. This sum was provided by a canvass for subscriptions arising from a meeting held at Watchem in January 1900. The Shire of Birchip contributed £30.

#### TESTIMONIAL TO LEAGUE SECRETARY

Mr John Clark was the Secretary of the Watchem-Morton Plains-Wirimbirchip Railway League from its inception in 1880 until the rail extension was completed in 1893. Additionally he was spokesman for the Guarantors and for most of the deputations made in connection with the provision of the rail service. In recognition of his outstanding service, Mr Clark was accorded a Testimonial on 10th May 1893. After a complimentary dinner at Glowrey's Hotel, Watchem, attended by Mr Dyer MLA and between 40 and 50 other gentlemen, he was presented with a silver tea set and tray, a gold chain and diamond locket by Cr J. Lockwood on behalf of the community. The tray was inscribed "*Presented to J. Clark Esq. JP in recognition of valuable services in connection with the Donald-Birchip Railway*".



**MALLEE RAILWAYS PROPOSED IN 1890  
AND THOSE AUTHORISED IN 1892**

Map Thirty-four.