



**HISTORY:** The Ballarat Railway was only commenced in the 1880s, more than 20 years after Ballarat had been linked to Geelong by rail. Up to then much of the gold-rush traffic had gone via Geelong rather than Melbourne. The new line opened up Melbourne markets to the pastoral production of the Western District and brought Melbourne engineers in closer contact with the mines of the central goldfields.

This section of the Melbourne-Ballarat railway was constructed in 1887-89 by a private contractor, Horace Bastings.<sup>1</sup> Work commenced on the seventeen mile (27.5km) section in September 1887. The bridges and earthworks were completed by May 1889, with this section, known as "the big cutting", completed eight months later.<sup>2</sup> The line was officially opened on December 4 1889.

A major feature of this was the Inglestone Bank, a steep climb, infamous among railway men, where trains struggled up the incline, and were sometimes in fear of careering on the down hill run. Before the adoption of more powerful diesel locomotives, an extra engine was stationed at Bacchus Marsh just to assist trains up the Inglestone Bank.

A feat of engineering skill, "the big cutting" contained 495,000 cubic yards (378,477m<sup>3</sup>) of earth.<sup>3</sup> The contract had been taken over by the Victorian government on October 26 1889, because of the delay associated with using crushed metal in place of gravel ballast.<sup>4</sup>

**VISUAL DESCRIPTION:** The railway construction works for elevating the Ballarat line to the top of the Pentland hills comprises an earth embankment on a 180° curve at Rowsley with a steel trestle bridge over the Bacchus Marsh-Balliang Road. The line runs into a cutting at the Pages Lane crossing and then crosses Dogtrap Gully on a high embankment before plunging into a deep cutting near Dogtrap Gully Road, where it turns westward. The line continues in a deep cutting for three more kilometres after which it runs a ground level to the two crossings of Ironbark Road, the first at grade, and the second on a steel trestle bridge over the road. The remainder of the line to Inglestone is generally at grade, with three or four small cuttings.

A prominent feature of the route are the massive spoil dumps of basalt from the cutting excavations piled on both sides of the railway line, over a distance of 1.75km. The Goroke trigonometric point is on top of the highest point, demonstrating its prominence in the local landscape. The spoil heaps still show clearly the formations of the horse tramways and wheelbarrow runs which were used to move the spoil. Other small level areas may indicate shed and accommodation for the hundreds of navvies employed on the work. Between the railway line service road and Ironbark Road, south of the Werribee George is Red Ironbark remnant *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* vegetation. (For location plan, refer: 47).

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<sup>1</sup> Moore and Oomes, *Bacchus Marsh: A Pictorial Chronicle*, p.51.

<sup>2</sup> King and Dooley, *The Golden Steam of Ballarat*, p.19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:** Dogtrap Gully Road cutting (44), Pages Lane cutting (49A) Woolpack Road (178) and Browns Road (61) Browns Cutting. No other excavated spoil has been identified, except possibly at Browns Lane. The railway works are comparable to much of the other lighter construction lines eg. Gippsland, North Eastern, etc. although there is probably no other deep cutting which is as long as that up the Ingliston Bank.

**SIGNIFICANCE:** Massive spoil heaps of basalt excavated from the Melbourne - Ballarat railway cutting when it was constructed in 1887-89.

These heaps are of regional historical significance, as evidence demonstrating an action of the government in developing the line. They are also of local architectural significance as indications of the extraordinary engineering achievement the excavation the line necessitated. They are of scientific significance for their archaeological research potential.

**INTACTNESS:** The spoil heaps and cuttings do not appear to have been disturbed.

**CONDITIONS & THREATS:**