



Engineering Marvel – Swan View Tunnel

The original Eastern Railway line from Guildford to Chidlow's Well was completed in 1884. With stations on the scarp at Greenmount, Smith's Mill (now Glen Forest), and Mahogany Creek the area soon became useful to those in the timber trade as well as orchardists and vignerons. By the 1890s it became clear, however, that the steep gradient of the railway line posed serious problems for the increasing number of heavily laden trains now traveling over the Darling Ranges. One remedy for this was to have locomotives at both front and back, pulling and pushing the train to the top of the scarp.

An infamous section of line near Boya became known as 'Cape Horn', after a number of accidents in which trains rolled backwards, left the tracks, and ended up wrecked with goods scattered over the scarp. One incident in April 1894 resulted in the derailment of ten trucks.

The newly appointed Engineer-in-Chief of Western Australia, C.Y. O'Connor, decided that a new route with easier grades was needed. The new route would begin at Bellevue, go through a 340 metre tunnel to bypass a granite barrier, and then follow the Jane Brook Valley. It would rejoin the original line at Lion Mill (now Mt Helena). Despite following Jane Brook, the new route became mistakenly known as the 'Mahogany Creek Deviation'.



Train Derailment 4 November 1942

The construction of the tunnel began by boring shafts from both sides of the hill. These shafts were joined on the 24th April 1895. In order to protect the insides of the tunnel from rock falls, it was lined with masonry with an arched ceiling made of bricks. While the brickwork at the eastern end of the tunnel bears the date 1895 the new deviation was not officially opened until the 22nd February 1896. From this time, the line through the Swan View Tunnel became the main line while the earlier route through Greenmount was retained as a branch line. The final cost of the Tunnel was £12 160 10s 7d.

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