

EYRETON BRANCH

Length	32.4 kilometres
Opened	Stage 1 Eyreton Junction to West Eyreton December 1975 Stage 2 West Eyreton to Bennetts Junction February 1878
Stops	10 Waverley, Wilson's Siding, Wetheral, Ohoka, Mandeville North, Swannanoa, West Eyreton, School Road, Horrelville, Bennetts Junction
Closed	Stage 1 Horrelville to Bennetts Junction in February 1931 Stage 2 Wetheral to Horrelville in May 1954 Stage 3 Wetheral spur in the 1960s
Passenger services	Stopped in February 1931

This branch line was linked to the Oxford branch which it joined at Bennetts Junction. There is almost nothing of the formation left to view, no abutments or interesting culverts, bridges, goods shed or other remnants apart from a loading bank or two and one nameboard. For half its total length it is alongside one straight road with no particular features to please the explorer's eye, though pleasant enough as Canterbury roads tend to be. This description is therefore brief and focusses more on a couple of interesting things in the area, rather than on rail memorabilia itself.

The Eyreton branch was originally called by the locals the "Ohoka Punt" as it had to cross swamp lands prone to frequent flooding. Flax mills abounded in the area. The swamps were drained to create productive farmland, and once this was done the farmers wanted a railway. From its opening it failed to pay its way, its construction having been supported by local political interests competing with the services provided by the nearby Oxford branch.

To connect with the Eyreton branch at Kaiapoi turn west from SH1 in the middle of Kaiapoi to find Island Road. At the intersection with Mill Road look for substantial embankments on both the left and right side of the roads. These are nearly 800 metres from the junction of the branch with the main line, which is hard to access or view from a road.

Return to Mill Road and continue five kilometres to Ohoka. Rail corridor can't be seen, though it started on the right of Mill Road but somewhere crossed to the left. Before Ohoka there was a stop called Wetheral, where there was one of many flour mills making use of the meandering stream system crossing this formerly swampy district. Nothing now remains to identify this stop's location, and the same applies for the next stop, Ohoka.

Somewhere around Ohoka the line started curving to the left. Turn left into Bradleys Road and after 3.5 kilometres look for a loading bank on the left amongst a shingle stockpile in a layby. Cross the intersection directly ahead to follow McHugh's Road. At a slight bend, just over a kilometre from the intersection, the line appears to have crossed from left to right, though there is nothing on the landscape to indicate this.

At the end of McHughs Road cross No. 10 Road to enter North Eyre Road, which is dead straight for the next 15 kilometres and had four stops: Swannanoa, West Eyreton, School Road and Horrelville. There is a loading bay on the left at West Eyreton, about 200 metres before the intersection with Earlys Road. From School Road the formation is used as a walking/cycling lane, on the left. At the northern end of North Eyre Road the Horrellville nameboard is also on the left of the road, just before it bends right and becomes unsealed. The line also curved right and then ran straight to Bennetts Junction.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Kaiapoi Station:

http://landmarks.waimakariri.govt.nz/heritageplaces_kaiapoi/kaiapoi_railway_station.aspx