

NELSON SECTION

Length	103.2 kilometres
Opened	Stage 1 Nelson to Nelson Port May 1880 Stage 2 Nelson to Belgrove July 1881 Stage 3 Belgrove to Tadmor August 1906 Stage 4 Tadmor to Kiwi December 1908 Stage 5 Kiwi to Glenhope September 1912 Stage 6 Glenhope to Kawatiri June 1926
Stops	23 Port Nelson, Nelson, Bishopdale, Stoke, Freezing Works, Richmond, Appleby, Hope, Brightwater, Spring Grove, Wakefield, Wai-iti, Foxhill, Belgrove, Mararewa, Tapawera, Rakau, Tadmor, Kiwi, Tui, Kaka, Glenhope, Kawatiri
Closed	Stage 1 Glenhope to Kawatiri July 1931 Stage 2 Nelson to Glenhope closed September 1955
Passenger services	Stopped in June 1954

The Nelson Section is the second longest “ghost railway” described in this publication, being 103 kilometres long. It takes a day to explore, from the urban centre of Nelson through the plains and rolling hills of the Nelson and Tasman Districts to the northern extent of the wilder Buller District. It requires the explorer to be both dogged and a bit adventurous, as it takes them away from the main highways, but if a journey south to the West Coast is planned anyway, or a back route to Canterbury is of interest, this is well worth the effort.

Barry O'Donnell's publication *When Nelson Had a Railway*¹ is well worth reading and has much to interest the railway enthusiast as well as the general traveller.

The first part of the Nelson Section has been converted to use as a cycle/walking path, which is well used as a regular thoroughfare by local residents as well as those taking advantage of the much longer network of cycle trails around the Tasman district. There are several very informative interpretation panels along the way which set out the history of the railway with good illustrations. There is little point describing in detail this part of the railway corridor, which can be easily found by following the pathway, so the description for the railway explorer starts at Ranzau Road, which crosses SH6 just after Hope on the southern outskirts of Nelson city.

Section 1 Nelson City -Brightwater

Before setting off, though, locate the site of the Nelson station, by heading to the roundabout where Gloucester and St Vincent Streets are joined by Washington Road. The station site occupied the whole block now graced by commercial and retail entities and Fire Service area headquarters. From here there was a line to the port, which ran about two kilometres around the foot of the hill. Heading inland the line ran on the right side of St Vincent Street, crossing a stream which has long since been covered over. Where St Vincent Street starts climbing steeply uphill there is a signpost marking the cycle/walking trail.

From here the trains had a difficult climb over the Bishopdale Saddle and an equally challenging ride down the far side. Once at the bottom of the saddle, the line curved around the inland side of the current airport and highways complex, and then ran almost dead straight for the next 18 kilometres or so to Brightwater. Signboards can be found at Quarantine Road (which crosses Annesbrook Road) and again at Ranzau Road, just south of Hope. Turn right into Ranzau Road² and note the large timber yard on the left after 200 metres. The yard occupies the former site of the Hope station.

SH6, now called Lightband Road, dips down to cross the river flood plain before crossing the Waimea River. The rail bridge was about 200 metres downstream (to the right) of the current road bridge. After devastating floods in 1908 and 1918, the railway line was rebuilt on both banks of the river on long trestles. Flood protection works have removed any vestiges of the railway bridge. Embankment can be seen from SH6 on the right across the fields on the south bank heading towards nearby Brightwater.

Turn from SH6 into Ellis Street on the right, to view the line as it made its way through Brightwater on an angle behind what is now light engineering works at the back of residential housing on the right of Ellis Street to cross at the Fairfield Street intersection, 400 metres from SH6, still at an angle of about 45 degrees to the road.

The station and yards area is now an attractive park on the left of Ellis Street, adjacent to the local Four Square store. According to Wikipedia, "Facilities at this station included a Class 5 Vogel-era wooden station building, a platform, goods shed, crossing loop, siding (through the goods shed), station master's house, and windmill."³ All are now gone. There was also a private siding into the pulverising plant set up by W.L. Lawry Ltd to pulverise rock brought from the Lawry quarry in the nearby Lee Valley, a few kilometres away in the Richmond Ranges. The resulting lime was bagged and deposited directly into railway wagons on the siding, for sending on to the port at Nelson, or for use on farms in the area. The limeworks site is now occupied by housing.⁴

Brightwater is well known as the birthplace of Nobel Prize-winning scientist, the "father of nuclear physics", Sir Ernest Rutherford, to whom there is a memorial close to SH6 on the far side of town.

Section 2 Brightwater – Belgrove

To continue following the railway, proceed along Starveall Street,⁵ alongside the park. On the left-hand side of Starveall Street, just after Laura Lane (on the right), it becomes apparent again, this time as a pleasantly green walkway between housing.

The next viewing point is quite complicated as it involves an underpass for cyclists and walkers on SH6, the Lord Rutherford memorial site, and an awkward intersection between Lord Rutherford Road and SH6. Continue along Starveall Street to the intersection with Lord Rutherford Road. Turn left and proceed 350 metres to the memorial (on the right), just on the approach to SH6. Park the car, and walk to SH6 and on the left note the small reserve area where the walkway reveals the rail corridor. The line has vanished beneath SH6, which also cuts across Lord Rutherford Road. It reappears on the other side of the highway and then runs in front of the houses at the foot of the nearby hill for 1.5 kilometres.

Continue on SH6, keeping a sharp eye out for railway artefacts on the left. Initially, the line ran close to where SH6 now is, but at the first stream it veered gently away to the left and then ran straight for not quite four kilometres. Turn left at Telenius Road to view the railway line crossing, at Spring Grove where the crossing and station sign have been re-erected. The station building was uplifted by the Nelson Railway Society and taken to Nelson where it has been restored and forms part of the Society's complex in Founders Historical Park.

Return to SH6 and proceed to the outskirts of Wakefield via SH6, keeping an eye out for embankment on the left of the road. Shortly after Bird Road the railway line started curving gently right to make its way across the main road at the entrance to Franklyn Close, on the left. Franklyn Close has been built on the line.

Slightly beyond Franklyn Close, turn right off SH6 into Martin Avenue and where this veers to the right is where the line crossed, though nothing remains to indicate that this is so. There is, though, a walking path leading to railway reserve land. Return SH6. Belfit Lane on the right leads to the point where the walkway and railway reserve combine.

Return to SH6 to Wakefield township. It is probably easiest to park, if possible, in Whitby Way immediately after turning into Edward Street, and look around on foot at this point. The railway line came out of the reserve on the far side of SH6 through what is now the local service station and garage. It then crossed to the area now called Whitby Way, and the station was on the grassed area between Whitby Way and SH6. It had a curved platform, though it is not altogether clear why this was required as there was little in the way of an obstacle to prevent the line being straight. The station is of course long gone, to make way for realignment of SH6. An information kiosk in Whitby Way includes some photos of the railway. There was a stationmaster's house at the corner of Whitby Way and Edwards Street, and this site is now a formal public garden area containing a war memorial. Directly across Edward Street the line continued straight ahead along Will Watch Lane.

Wakefield is a pretty town and worth having a walk around. There is a mural on the SH6 side of the local pharmacy, with a splendid steam train seeming to come through the wall. In reality, of course, it is nearly 60 years since any steam trains graced this town.

Continue south on SH6 to turn off SH6 to the left down Eighty Eight Valley Road, and pull into the beginning of Fitzsimmons Way on the right. At this point one is sitting on the line, though it is impossible to get any real sense of the rail corridor.

After Wakefield it is almost impossible to find any sign of the line for some kilometres. From Google Earth it is possible to make out a faint trace of the line running along the foot of the hill to the left of SH6, then in a straight line for about three kilometres, before turning right to run straight to the Wai-iti River crossing. Wai-iti station was somewhere in this area. The original station near the hamlet of Wai-iti was called Foxhill. It opened on Monday 31 January 1876, fulfilling the promise of a line from Nelson to a place called Foxhill. It took another five years before the new terminus at Belgrove was opened, on Monday 25 July 1881. In this five-year period the Wai-iti River was bridged, a new station was created in the vicinity of the hamlet of Foxhill and a further extension was pushed through to the next

settlement of Belgrove. The original Foxhill station was able to be renamed Wai-iti once the line had been extended.

Where SH6 crosses the Wai-iti River there is a picnic reserve on the left side of the road. As well as being a nice place to stop, it reveals the only sighting of the railway in this area, for at the far end of the reserve there is a stretch of embankment, standing about two metres high and visible for a length of about 50 metres at a right-angle to the river. If there are any bridge remnants, they have been covered by undergrowth on the riverbank, or washed away by the river over the years.

Once again continue on SH6, now also called the Wakefield-Kohatu Highway. Foxhill Road on the left is probably the location of Foxhill station, but as with Wai-iti station there is no sign of it anywhere. The line, however, was still parallel to SH6, on the left-hand side about 160 metres away. The area is heavily planted in hops which cover any remaining railway vestiges.

Shortly after Quail Valley Road the line crossed a stream and angled right towards Belgrove. Belgrove opened for operations in 1880, and was a busy railway town at the mid-point of the two halves of the railway, that is, Nelson-Belgrove, and Belgrove-Gowanbridge. It was the “end of the line” from Nelson, until the extension to Motupiko opened eighteen years later in 1897. The station and yards area is today a logging truck weighbridge pull-off on the left of SH6, and in 2013 a shipping container was being used as the radio communications depot for a logging company. The only remnant of the railway is the windmill, believed to have been built in 1898, which has Historic Place Category 1 registration with the New Zealand Heritage Pouhere Taonga.⁶ The windmill was big enough to ensure a constant supply for water-hungry steam engines and also provide a good supply for the township. A full water tank was vital to generate enough steam to get the train up and over the first major obstacle on the line just ahead - the Spooners 1-in-40 gradient, climbing to an elevation of 303 metres (994 feet) above sea level.

The station building, with a raised platform and of standard New Zealand Railways design, stood on the road side of the current layby. Across the tracks, where the weighbridge hut now stands, was the goods shed. Behind the goods shed was an engine shed, and nearby a coal shed to protect the coal from the weather. The stationmaster's house was moved some years ago and tidied up. It is now tucked away across SH6 amongst trees between the highway and Pretty Bridge Valley Road. Belgrove was a bustling township during the days when the line was being pushed through Spooners Range, especially when there were work camps near the tunnel. Belgrove now is a quiet, small village with few facilities other than the Belgrove Tavern to tempt the traveller to stop.

Section 3 Belgrove-Motupiko (1890 – 1897)

The extension of the line beyond Belgrove over the Spooners Range took about 18 years to complete, a distance of just nine miles (about 12 kilometres). This says a great deal about the difficult conditions and the nature of the countryside through which the line was slowly pushed in the days when the only tools available were pick, shovel and wheelbarrow. The greatest obstacle was the need to build a tunnel through the summit of the Range.

The climb to the tunnel began at Belgrove. From the station the line crossed what is now SH6 and gently climbed along the hill on the right where it can be seen as a line of trees or a cutting into the side of the hill. Turn right into Schultz Road on the right to the left-hand bend. Ahead can be seen three of the English Electric units which ran on the Wellington network until 2012. These ones were freighted to the property and placed on a stretch of track laid specially on the bed of the old railway. They are surprising sight to come across in the rural hinterland of the Tasman District. The units are to be adapted to provide accommodation for travellers.

The line at this point is fairly high above the level of SH6 before beginning its run across the Spooners Range. Shortly after Schultz Road the embankment and bridge abutments can be seen to the right of SH6. SH6 is fairly busy so pull off into a layby on the left at the bottom of the hill. The rail embankment across the road is about 15 metres high. The abutments on which the track was carried over the old highway have remained in place, and though a little overgrown can be sighted easily on the right and ahead. From the layby, above the sign "Tunnel Road 26", the line can be seen heading left along the hillside to the northern portal of the tunnel, out of sight (and access) to the motorist.

The climb to the highest point of the Range continued into the tunnel and over a hump inside where the line started its descent to the south. Trains in both directions had to stop in the tunnel at pre-determined places, though often with great difficulty as the marks indicating where to stop were quickly covered by grime and soot. The stopping place was where braking systems had to be applied to control the downhill run to either Motupiko or Belgrove. Navigating the climb on either side and through the tunnel demanded great skill and judgment on the part of the train crews. Not surprisingly, there were no ventilation systems installed in the tunnel, so conditions were dark, dirty and extremely unpleasant, and the crews found navigation at night challenging when there was no light at the end to assist them to judge distance. Presumably passengers too endured the journey through the tunnel with eyes closed against the soot, embers and grit.

Fortunately, the southern portal of the tunnel is easily accessed. About 1.5 kilometres from the top of Spooners, just as the steep incline on SH6 starts to reduce, there is a turn hard to the left into a logging access/roadworks depot area. There is ample parking (not marked) and it is worth taking the short and easy walk to the portal which is not specifically marked, but is easy to find about 100 metres back from the road and on the "uphill side". The walking track is of course on the railway formation but have no fear of puffing locomotives appearing through the surrounding greenery. The distance to the portal is about 300 metres. A pile of rotting railway sleepers tossed to one side of the track is further proof, if any were needed, that this is now a "ghost" railway line.

The portal itself is closed but well-marked, and an old sign providing the most basic facts about it ensures even the most casual explorer can have some sense of its significance. The tunnel is managed by a trust set up with assistance from the local council. Guided walks through the tunnel are arranged from time to time and there are plans to incorporate the tunnel into one of the extensive cycle trails in the Tasman district.

Before leaving the car park, consider the height and angle that the line would have taken to cross the road and continue its journey south through Norris Gully where there is little physical evidence of the line. Norris Gully leads to the river flats leading to Kohatu. There were five level crossings along the 7.5 kilometres of rail corridor through Norris Gully to Kohatu, and not one of them is now obvious.

There is though on the left a series of abutments, each of which spanned streams. One of the abutment sets is at least two metres deep. They confirm that what might have been reserve land at the edge of the forest is actually rail embankment. Closer examination of the abutments reveals rail tracks laid as the base of the culvert providing an almost indestructible stream bed.

Just after North Road on the left, where SH6 is starting to level out, another series of abutments on a raised embankment, still on the left, reveal themselves. These are more or less at road level, but the concrete pillars rise above the railbed. All abutments seen up to this point are capped in the same style, which continues as a distinctive feature along the rest of the line. The abutments continue at fairly frequent intervals for the next 1.5 kilometres (almost straight) along the run into the site of the Kohatu station and yards. In some cases, sleepers span the abutments.

The station at Kohatu occupied the wide flat area leading to the car park on the left of SH6 just before it crosses the Motueka River. The station at Kohatu was another example of name change, having been called Motupiko from 1899 until reverting to Kohatu in August 1906 when the next section, to Tadmor, opened. It is now difficult to find any evidence of the station area. There is a set of gates in a grove of trees on the left approaching the road junction which look as if they could have been the entrance to the yards, and an old house on the right of the road could have been a railway property. The station structures consisted of a goods shed, engine shed, the station itself, and a house each for the stationmaster and a ganger. There were also water vats at both ends of the yards. The yards were spacious, for shunting and for stables for the horse-drawn coaches and wagons needed to go further south to the Buller and beyond.

This was a busy terminus in the years before Glenhope opened, serving the transport needs of a large rural hinterland along the Upper Motueka River and the Motupiko and Korere valleys. The stationmaster was also the postmaster and registrar of births, deaths and marriages, and so had many concerns other than the activity on the lines.

There has been a hotel at the junction since 1878 – these days it is a good place to stop and sample the fare on offer at the café.

Section 4 Motupiko – Tapawera

Entering the railway yard area at Kohatu the railway line was on the left of the road. It then crossed to the right to run behind the hotel initially on a slight uphill

“The Glenhope end of the yard (Kohatu) was dominated by a large circular water vat – the most imposing on the entire Section – while at the other end of the yard was the smaller colonial-standard square vat built to the same pattern as all the others between Motupiko and Nelson.”

Barry O'Donnell *When Nelson Had A Railway* p.90.

incline and continued as far as Tapawera to the north before rounding the Pinchback Range to head south once again. The railway explorer needs to turn right along the Motueka Valley Highway (MVH) to pick up the trail again. For 1.3 kilometres the road runs below the lip of an escarpment on the right side of MVH. The line descended through what is now forestry block to reappear about a kilometre past the hotel and can be viewed from Olivers Road, which turns right up the hill. The formation can just be discerned in a small, somewhat scrubby paddock (on the left facing up Olivers Road). Shortly after Olivers Road it crossed MVH, and ran along and down the escarpment on a ledge to the left of and below the current road level. The ledge can be made out from the beginning of a driveway complex on the right-hand side after Olivers Road, beyond the sign "Maniaroa Cutting" on a farm gate. From this vantage point it is possible to see how the rail bed descended to the river flats ahead.

Once on the flat, there were no obstacles to progress until the Motueka River. There is no evidence of the line itself on the flats, but it was primarily on the left-hand side of the current road. Look for the Mararewa cemetery on the left. For a time there was a small flag station here, comprising only a small lean-to building serving passengers only. This area was called the Upper Motueka Valley Settlement and there used to be a post office, a church, a library and institute and a school.

Nearly two kilometres past the cemetery the road veers to the left. The railway line carried on straight to run behind and then through Tapawera. Tapawera was a busy place during the construction years. Known until 1905 as Maniaroa, there was a construction camp with a population of several hundred people. Facilities previously at Mararewa all moved south to Tapawera over time. The central location of Tapawera meant it became a convenient place for stock sales, and it developed a reputation as a good site for sheepdog trials. It was also the site of a military camp used for training from before 1900 through till the early years of World War 2. Initially it was used for training units of Nelson militia and rifle brigades and then later territorial and regular force troops.⁷

Along the main street of Tapawera, on the left-hand side, there is the Tapawera and Valleys Museum. The museum building is half of the passenger shed from Kiwi station, moved to its present location by local rail enthusiasts. It has been beautifully restored and, with a shortened concrete platform and about three metres of track in front, it cleverly evokes the good ol' days of the Nelson section. The museum is run by local volunteers and is open on Sunday afternoons. An interpretation panel by the museum provides useful and succinct information about the railway in the area, in particular the types of goods that were freighted. A house beside the layby looks as if it may have originally been a railways house.

Nearby in a picnic reserve area there is a standard-design railway verandah on a platform and another short length of rail. From the station the line made its way to the Motueka River by a gentle left-hand curve on a high embankment which can be accessed on foot from near the museum. A short walk demonstrates both how wide the embankment had to be and also the height required to the bridge over the Motueka River.

Section 5 Tapawera – Tui (Tadmor Valley)

The railway line turned at Tapawera to traverse south along the Tadmor Valley. The intersection on Tapawera Main Road is 300 metres from the museum. While crossing the bridge note that from its opening in 1906 it was a combined road/rail bridge until the “modern” road bridge replaced it in 1977.

On the right shortly after the bridge there is a substantial complex of somewhat forlorn buildings which used to be an area headquarters and accommodation for staff of the New Zealand Forest Service working the North-West Nelson Forest Park between 1965 and 1996. The railway line ran on the right-hand side of the road from the bridge embankment and is not visible in the reserve land for the first few kilometres. However, after passing the New Hoplands hop-processing plant on the right the embankment and artefacts start to appear, although some are difficult to locate in the undergrowth.

Somewhere along the stretch of road between the Motueka River and Island Valley Stream there was a “roadside halt” named Rakau. There is now no indication of the precise location of Rakau, which for most of the years when the railway operated was a quiet spot for picking and dropping off a few passengers and some freight. However, during the few weeks of harvesting of berry fruit (especially raspberries), hops and vegetables, vast amounts of produce were sent to Nelson. Likewise, hordes of pickers and harvesters came from throughout the Nelson and Tasman districts, by train of course, to work the fields in January and February, returning to their homes later in March when the work was done. Until about 1922 there was a special school holiday in March so that local children could join their mothers in the hop-picking.⁸

Sets of abutments continue all along the Tadmor Valley, some low in the embankment and tucked away amongst undergrowth, particularly when straddling a stream, and others rising proudly, indicating the height of the embankment. The embankment also continues to be visible on the right for significant stretches, sometimes adjacent to the road and sometimes metres away across paddocks. Hops and berry growing continue to be the main crops in the area, evidenced by distinctive hop “barns” and other processing and storage structures.

The line continues on the right-hand side for about five kilometres until just before Island Valley Stream, which is crossed by Rees Bridge. The line crossed from right to left at about this point and on the left can still be faintly seen making its way on a straight trajectory across the paddocks as the road takes a right-hand curve. Rail and road converge once more on the approach to Tadmor, which these days is little more than a bend in the road, and an intersection with the road to Bushend which heads off to the right to cross the Tadmor River.

Tadmor station was on the left, now accessed along a small lane, at the end of which the embankment is still visible. The only evidence of the station these days is some concrete structures and the raised embankment. The station was also the local post and telegraph office and later became the telephone exchange for the district too. Although there was no permanent staff presence at Tadmor there were two railway houses, which were used by track maintenance staff. The station building burnt down in July 1952, but was rebuilt on a smaller scale by cutting in half the Kiwi station building and moving it to Tadmor. The fate of the remaining half of Kiwi station has been mentioned previously.

Less than 300 metres from the Tadmor station the line crossed the road to run once again on the right for the next couple of kilometres, on the flats above the river. The road climbs slightly on a long straight, and just before a fairly sharp left hand bend (and after Kinzett Creek Road on the left) the railway line turned back to cross the road briefly, returning to the right-hand side of the road 100 metres further along where the river cuts to the road side of the valley. For the next eight kilometres or so road, rail and river continue to diverge and converge as they squeeze through the narrowing valley. The line remains more or less visible for the duration, between the road and the river. Sometimes it is obscured by trees and undergrowth, or by cultivation of paddocks, but the general sense of the corridor is clear.

There is no physical evidence of Kiwi station though its location is marked by the name board on a raised embankment (probably the platform) in a field on the right. Kiwi was also a busy locus for the berry trade to Nelson during the season and comprised the station, goods shed, siding and railway houses. Events at the station made the national news in September 1955 when a group of women travelled from Nelson to protest about the imminent closure of the line. They spent 10 days sitting on the tracks at Kiwi, knitting, sewing and generally being peaceful. The protest, as was to be expected, was unsuccessful, but they had to be arrested and removed before the demolition train could finally move on through. Although the women were all fined, a whip around the courtroom raised sufficient funds to cover their debts.

Shortly after Kiwi there is a particularly good example of standard-design abutments crossing the stream bed on the right after Blanchetts Road on the top of a rise. The road then crosses Donald Creek on a one-way bridge and after a further two kilometres arrives at Tui, another small hamlet marked only by a few houses and an intersection. Turn right along Tui Road and after 750 metres look for the site of the station and yards, which were in the paddocks on the right. Little now remains, the structures all having disappeared in the years since David Leitch and Brian Scott's visit in the 1990s when they described it as "the little treasure trove that is Tui". All that can be seen from the road now is a loading bay at one end of what are somewhat rickety stockyards. The whole site is fenced off and there are locked gates. The angle of approach of the line, which curved through the yards, and the location of structures throughout the yards can be faintly made out. The platform was slightly curved, and there were two loops, a goods shed, a loading bank, a toilet, one railway house and the inevitable water tank on a stand.

The station building was uplifted by the Nelson Railway Society and taken to Nelson where it has been restored and forms part of the Society's complex in Founders Historical Park.

Section 6 Tui – Gowanbridge

Return to the "main" road and turn right at the intersection. From here on the road is unsealed for 15 kilometres, but the surface is good enough for an ordinary vehicle. Four-wheel drive might be useful after heavy rain, and caution should be exercised whatever the vehicle being driven.

For the first three kilometres the landscape slowly but steadily becomes more rugged as the hills on both sides close in and the slopes to the river become steeper. There are some splendid artefacts on the stretch between Tui and the next station – Kaka – so keep alert to the line on the right-hand side. The permanent way can be discerned even where it is hard to see below the road and behind a bluff or escarpment. Dramatic abutments that show the height of the span across Cat Creek, not quite two kilometres from Tui are worth stopping to view. According to a photo in Lois Voller's book *Rails to Nowhere; The History of the Nelson Railway* there were six large piers, at least five metres high and of solid concrete construction.⁹ Remnants of two remain visible, one on each bank of the creek. Be vigilant in looking for them – they are about 200 metres from the road, and the angle of sight is difficult, so it is easy to drive past without spotting them.

The site of Kaka station is passed about 4.5 kilometres from Tui. Nothing obvious now marks the site, described by Barry O'Donnell as "small but busy".¹⁰ During the construction period 1908-1911, when the line was being pushed over the Tadmor Saddle and down to Glenhope, there was a construction camp nearby with up to 200 men in residence. Over many years products from sawmills, clay pits and a limeworks in the area were all sent to Nelson and beyond by rail from Kaka. A mine towards the top of the saddle yielded high-quality feldspathic¹¹ clay, which was bagged from Nelson to Kaka, shipped to Timaru, and railed to Temuka Potteries "where its non-conductive qualities saw it used to make electricity and telephone line insulators".¹² There was also a significant limeworks not far from Kaka. At one time there were sufficient men at the limeworks to field a rugby team. The station site seemed to be in an odd location, tucked on a curve between the road and the steep banks of the Tadmor River. It was though the last level piece of ground of a reasonable size "before the railway parted company with the road, and the 1 in 51 ascent to the 1,485-foot¹³ summit of the Tadmor Saddle began".¹⁴

Having been on the right of the road until Kaka, the line then crossed the road to veer away on the left to cross the Tadmor River and climb steadily on a more or less straight line out of sight to the road traveller. The road winds its way uphill for just over 2.5 kilometres. Leitch and Scott referred to this area as "tiger country". These days the tiger has been somewhat tamed, at least from just below the summit, as a fire has cleared the landscape. At about two kilometres from Kaka keep eyes peeled as the line of the railway can be seen making its way along a ledge on the far side of a gully on the left, and it rapidly closes on and then crosses the road. On the right-hand side of the road there is a distinct cutting. The lack of forest cover since the fire makes the cutting stand out more than would otherwise be the case. This will of course change as undergrowth takes over or the forestry plantations again overwhelm the landscape.

Winding further up and along the road, stop from time to time to peer back and forth to the right where below the road the line can be clearly seen amongst the burnt landscape, ducking in and out of cuttings or making its way on an embankment.

As the road begins to descend from the saddle, the rail corridor moves away from the road and becomes lost to sight on the far side of a hill. Continue to SH6, six or seven kilometres away. Take care on SH6 or the Glenhope site will have been passed unnoticed. Look on the right for Moonlight Road. It ends in a turning area and from here look carefully back up the

valley on the right and locate the Glenhope station building. It is almost out of view behind some other structures. The Department of Conservation has bought the station building to add to their portfolio of heritage properties and plans to restore it.

Barry O'Donnell best sums up the situation at Glenhope thus:

“Nowhere: that best described Glenhope, the new terminus of the Nelson Section. Little more than a railway station, six railway houses, a school, a store, and a few farms, the tiny settlement sits where the Nelson-West Coast road and the railway intersected for the first time since Motupiko. Here, 59 miles from Nelson, there was enough flat land for a railway yard with a station, goods shed, and a locomotive depot before the railway joined the road to pass through the Hope River gorge. Glenhope became the new terminus of the railway with the opening of the 12-mile 50-chain section from Kiwi on 2nd September 1912.”¹⁵

Even today, the label “Nowhere” sits comfortably, perhaps even more so as the railway structures and the surrounding settlement have all but disappeared. Return to SH6 and turn right to continue. Immediately (20 metres) after crossing the Hope River Bridge, pull off the road where there is a building and a layby, and take a look back across the road to the Glenhope yard site. The stockyards, loading bay and station building can be made out, and give some sense of the scale of operations described above.

From Glenhope, the line was eventually pushed on 7.2 kilometres through the Hope River Gorge to the junction of the Hope and Buller Rivers, which is also the junction of the Nelson-West Coast Road (to Buller) and the road to Blenheim. The junction was the site of Kawatiri station.

During the short operating years of the line to Kawatiri and beyond, the line left the Glenhope yards on the right-hand side of the road and continued in the bush on the right above where the road now is. It can no longer be seen from the road as the forest cover, along with roadworks and widening activities, has extinguished all vestiges.

It is a pretty drive through the gorge, and after about six kilometres there is a sweeping S-bend. This area was known as Woodhen Bend and is where there was a major construction camp called Pikomanu on the only available flat land, directly across the river from a granite spur through which a tunnel was dug. On the northern part of Woodhen Bend there would have been abutments and piers carrying the railway bridge across the river to the tunnel's northern portal, but these appear to have been removed or are just no longer visible, perhaps hidden in the river bed behind the trees that have grown along the roadside.

Continue a short distance to Kawatiri junction. It is impossible to miss the site of the station as it is now a well-landscaped layby area, with a series of interpretation panels under a verandah on the old platform. Take a stroll back up the line on a signposted path to the tunnel. The bridge abutments at the southern end of the tunnel now provide the footings for a sturdy footbridge. The tunnel is 185 metres long, and the walkway traverses it then loops up over the top and back to the car park. No torch or special equipment is needed, and the walk takes between 20 and 40 minutes, depending on one's energy levels and inclination to stop and admire the beech-clad hills all round.

The line from Glenhope to Kawatiri survived only five years and 21 days, before the decision was made to close it. The extension to Kawatiri was an example of a politically driven decision, as well as an economic one, and once the political/economic environment changed and the Great Depression of the 1930s became severe, there was no reason to continue rail traffic beyond Glenhope.

The line was, though, developed beyond Kawatiri for six kilometres to Gowanbridge which is located where the road to Lake Rotorua turns off SH6. The Public Works Department ran work trains along this section, but it was never handed over to the New Zealand Railways.

The formation was developed beyond Gowanbridge towards Murchison, but the 1929 Murchison earthquake put paid to plans to connect to the Midland line from Christchurch via Murchison.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Tasman "Great Taste Trail":

<http://www.tasman.govt.nz/recreation/walking-cycling/tasmans-great-taste-trail/>

Nelson Railway Society runs several restored locomotives and associated rolling stock on restored tracks in Founders Park, Nelson:

<http://www.nelsonrailwaysociety.co.nz/>

¹ *When Nelson Had a Railway: The Life and Death of New Zealand's Last Isolated Railway 1876-1955*, Barry O'Donnell, Schematics Limited, 2005, p.114

² A "German group, almost exclusively from Mecklenburg, arrived in Nelson on the *Skiold*. They settled in a village which they named Ranzau, after their patron, Count Kuno zu Rantzau-Breitenburg. It was renamed Hope in 1914, but Ranzau Road, Ranzau School, and the Ranzau Lutheran Church and cemetery still exist."

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/germans/page-3>

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brightwater_Railway_Station

⁴ For more information on limeworks in the Tasman region refer

http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-NHSJ05_03-t1-body1-d1.html

⁵ Presumably named after Mount Starveall in the nearby Richmond Ranges

⁶ Refer <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/244> for a full description of the windmill

⁷ <http://www.museumnp.org.nz/WW100/Events.aspx>

⁸ *Rails to Nowhere: The History of the Nelson Line*, Lois Voller, Nikau Press, 1991, p.205

⁹ *Ibid*, p.325

¹⁰ *When Nelson Had a Railway: The Life and Death of New Zealand's Last Isolated Railway 1876-1955*, Barry O'Donnell, Schematics Limited, 2005, p.114

¹¹ "Feldspar is a common raw material used in glassmaking, ceramics, and to some extent as a filler and extender in paint, plastics, and rubber. In glassmaking, alumina from feldspar improves product hardness, durability, and resistance to chemical corrosion. In ceramics, the alkalis in feldspar (calcium oxide, potassium oxide, and sodium oxide) act as a flux, lowering the melting temperature of a mixture."

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feldspar>

¹² Barry O'Donnell, p.114

¹³ 452 metres

¹⁴ Barry O'Donnell, p.116

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.118