

## MOERAKI BRANCH

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**Length:** 2.5 kilometres

**Opened:** January 1877

**Stops:** 2

Moeraki Junction (later Hillgrove)

Port Moeraki

**Closed:** October 1879

The Moeraki branch (12 kilometres north of Shag Point and 35 kilometres south of Oamaru) was one of the shortest in the country and one of the shortest lived. At just 2.5 kilometres long, it operated from 1877 to 1879 and then closed when it became clear that the small port at Moeraki was not going to be able to compete with the larger facility being developed at Oamaru. It is therefore surprising that more than 130 years after it closed it is still possible to work out where this little branch line was located. While there is nothing to see while driving through the small village of Moeraki, it is worth visiting this charming coastal fishing port set in a half-moon bay, with houses cascading down the hillside. There are several interesting historical sites to visit in the area, as well as the Moeraki boulders, and there is an exceptionally nice café/restaurant where one is able to sit outdoors (on a fine day) and enjoy not only freshly caught fish but also fabulous views.

The Moeraki branch left the Main South Line (MSL) just north of the turnoff to Moeraki. It ran on the left (sea) side of Moeraki Road, and embankment and cuttings can be seen for the first kilometre or so. Thereafter there is nothing to see, unless one is prepared to scramble around behind various structures. The line required a viaduct to cross one of the gaps in the cliffs but this is long since gone, remnants having been swept away by the combined forces of land slips and sea action. It is easy to understand why this line took so long to build over such a short distance – four years – and why it had such a short life, requiring constant work to keep it open.

The best view of the corridor is obtained when leaving Moeraki, when a large cutting can be seen about a kilometre from the junction with SH1.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Moeraki information:

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

Moeraki Boulders information:

<http://www.moerakiboulders.com/>