

NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

NAV Medallion No 4

1954

Centenary of First Australian Steam Railway



Event Commemorated

This medallion was issued to commemorate the centenary of the first Australian steam railway.

Australia's first steam railway operated between Flinders Street station in Melbourne and the then Melbourne port suburb of Sandridge (now Port Melbourne). The railway was constructed and operated by the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay Railway Company.

Legislation to enable the building of the railway was passed in January 1853 and construction took a little over 18 months. The railway was opened on Tuesday 12 September 1854 with a festal excursion. The first train, consisting of a steam locomotive, two first class carriages, one second class carriage, and an open third class carriage, carried Sir Charles Hotham (Governor of Victoria) and a large official party from Flinders Street to Sandridge. The third class carriage carried the band of the 40th Regiment. Two more train trips were required to bring all of the approximately 300 guests to Sandridge where a banquet was held in the engine shed.

Some details of the first train were:

- the engine was the first locomotive constructed, not merely in Victoria, but in the southern hemisphere;
- the engine was only 30 horsepower (22 kw), and its power of traction was equal to 130 tons, at a speed of 25 miles an hour (40 km/h);
- the carriages were manufactured in England.

The gauge of the railway was 5 foot 3 inches (1.60 m), ie "broad" gauge.

The railway commenced regular operation on 13 September 1854.

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Medallion

This 38 mm diameter medallion was designed and struck by Stokes, Melbourne in the following metals:

- ◆ Sterling silver (40, numbered 1 to 40)
- ◆ Oxidised bronze (60, numbered 41 to 100)

All medals were individually numbered.

Three trial strikes are believed to exist in lead for both obverse and reverse.

The obverse design features the original railway station at Flinders Street and is based on an earlier design by Alfred Chitty which in turn was based on a print by T S Gill.

The reverse design has the text: "THIS MEDALLION WAS STRUCK TO COMMEMORATE THE CENTENARY OF THE OPENING OF THE FIRST STEAM RAILWAY IN AUSTRALIA ON SEPTEMBER 12TH 1854" in the centre and with "NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA" around above and "SEPTEMBER 12TH 1954" below.