

## WHAT'S INSIDE

Heritage Recognition Ceremony

Orbost Viaduct Update

Surveying the Line

Nicholson Projects

Vandalism

F.E.G.R.T President's Report

Water Dragons

## Heritage Recognition Ceremony

**10:45am Sunday 21 August, 2016 at Stony Creek Bridge**

An Engineering Heritage Recognition Ceremony will be held on the 29th anniversary of the last train departing Orbost. The railway will be awarded an Engineering Heritage Mark under Engineering Heritage Australia's national Heritage Recognition Program.

Built just before WWI by Victorian Railways, the Bairnsdale to Orbost Railway was quite an engineering feat.

The 100km route crossed a number of rivers and creeks with difficult foundation conditions, unpredictable flood regimes, and ran through isolated forest country. There was also the issue of obtaining the materials to build the railway with the onset of war.

The railway was built in what was then a remote part of Victoria to link isolated communities and provide them with a way to reliably transport their produce to market and obtain supplies in return.

Unfortunately the vision did not last. The railway was shut down during a period when governments generally looked at railways at "old technology" and the last train ran from Orbost on 21 August 1987.

**Join Engineers Australia and the Department of Environment, Lands, Water and Planning for the official ceremony and some local history.**



*Information from Engineers Australia*

Winter 2016

**Melina Bath with Brian Gustus**



## Orbost Railway Viaduct Project

Several meetings to inform and request advice on the restoration of the Orbost Railway Viaduct have been held since the last report in the Trail Mail.

In a meeting with Kate Nelson, from the Shire, we outlined the community and wider support for the restoration. Advice on how best to inform councillors, and how to prepare a case for funding was given. Any funding application would need to include a cost-benefit analysis, demonstrate community support and preferably State wide support. We need to look at heritage, health and tourism benefits. Information in the form of a newsletter on the sources of funding available was provided. The levels of competition for funding are many and diverse.

The meeting with Ms Melina Bath, MLC for Eastern Victoria, was held in Orbost and attended by representatives of Committee of management EGRT, DWELP, Orbost Historical Society, Friends of East Gippsland Rail Trail, Landcare, Heritage Advisors and the affected land owner.

The background to our restoration project was provided by May Leatch who detailed the evidence that the viaduct is an important feature of Orbost and the old railway and is thus worthy of protection. The economic and social values were outlined with the need for a community to have a sense of pride in its heritage and its future.

Helen Martin described the importance of the longest timber bridge in Victoria. It was made from local timber, mahogany and has proven to be very durable. The viaduct is on the Shire Heritage Register and the Bairnsdale to Orbost Railway has been recognised by Engineering Heritage Australia.

The current status of land zoning and stewardship was supportive of, and conducive to restoration. Several timber railway bridges have been restored at Scarsdale, Kowetung and Kilcunda. The viaduct restoration has the advantage that it is not subject to destruction by forest fire.

It is anticipated that any restoration would enable the grazing lease to be continued.

The cost estimate, as provided by Rolf Jinks and John Shaw, their reliability, credentials and experience were recorded. Their construction methods can use unskilled labour under supervision and restore sympathetically and economically.

Ms Bath advised that all the “pegs need to be lined up” - Council, State and Federal. Possible funding sources could cover heritage, tourism, economic development and community health aspects of the project. We need to describe the cost of the project with anticipated benefits to the community. Her preliminary discussion with Darren Chester indicated that the “Better Regions” program or Green Army could yield results.

Other funding sources were canvassed as funding often had the requirement for local contribution.

Following the meeting Ms Bath inspected the site.

**Sue Peirce**





## The Job of Surveying The Line

*From Maurice Kernot's "Bairnsdale to Orbost railway Paper & Discussion" in 1917. The author was Chief Engineer for Construction, Victorian Railways.*

*As a step towards opening up this country, the Railways Standing Committee recommended in November, 1909, the construction of a railway from Bairnsdale through Bruthen to Orbost, having a length of 60 miles..... It was opened for public traffic on loth April, 19116.*

*Access was difficult and costly owing to the roughness and steepness of the bush tracks. There were many rivers and creeks to cross and considerable debate over which towns would be included on the line.*

***Surveying the rail corridor was therefore a major undertaking.***

The **Surveyor General of Victoria** is nominally responsible for all government surveying in Victoria. There were two surveyors general in office during the time of the construction, Joseph Martin Reed and Alexander Bruce Lang. The main original duty was to measure and determine land grants for settlers in Victoria. However as the state of Victoria grew, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became obvious that there was a need to build an ambitious rail system serving the entire state. There had been men surveying in East Gippsland from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Railway surveyors advocated two lines beyond Bairnsdale – one via Bruthen and the Tambo Valley to Omeo, the other via Swan Reach and Colquhoun to Orbost, then on to Bendoc and the border. With all the argument and feuding between the warring factions, by the end of 1891, the Parliamentary Railways Standing Committee gave up in despair of trying to reach any agreement and abandoned the idea altogether. Finally, with all problems solved, the first sod was turned at Mossiface on 9.1.1912, the government sticking to the original route in the 1890 survey.



**Surveyors at Camm's Camp on the Orbost-Bairnsdale line, East Gippsland, 1914. There are two theodolites at the front.**

### What did the surveyors use?

For their conventional ground surveying, surveyors used sextants for determining latitudes, chronometers for determining longitudes and theodolites for measuring horizontal and vertical angles. They might have used a **prismatic surveyor's compass (left)** to more accurately sight the geographical landmarks for the alignment of the rail route.



They may also have used a **metal surveyor's chain (right)** (or Gunter's Chain) for measuring the distances.

This map of Eastern Victoria shows the mining tracks existent in 1899. There weren't many in the Orbost – Bairnsdale area. The teams of surveyors would have had to make their own.



**Next issue : The Construction Teams**

## Nicholson Walks Project

A new walking track is being developed on a 250 metre long by 7 metre wide section of the north grazing paddock at Nicholson (former station ground), fenced off by the third Green Army team.

In early June the Green Army and RT committee members built a new entry point off Sarsfield Road, which now includes a vehicle gateway and a pedestrian entry. The GA will also assist with opening an access point at the river end of the walk.

The next job involves planting nearly 700 tube stocks which will be mostly understory with a scattering of Eucalypts to create a future parkway avenue. Nicholson River Landcare is also assisting in this interesting project.

The walkway will establish a visual break with what in the future to the north will be an extension of the Nicholson township, and adds another important route to the Nicholson Walks project.

*Michael Oxer*



**Green Army members and John Nelson installing the new entrance point.**



**Walk entrance and service gateway ready for planting out the 1750 square metre walkway.**



### Nicholson Water Point and Rest Stop



Following the excellent guide signs which now assist visitors going into and leaving Orbost for the rail trail, the township bypass route at Nowa Nowa, and extensive signs and map resources at Bruthen, Bairnsdale now also has a guide route between the railway station and the start of the trail near Howitt Park. This is a timely and valuable addition to assist new visitors to East Gippsland. **(photos right)**

*Michael Oxer*

A combination of Nicholson River Landcare (donated gravel and assisted with planting) and Friends of the Rail Trail (plant selection and several working sessions on site) has resulted in this location just west of the bridge now set up as an attractive addition to the trail. It includes a memorial seat and significant revegetation. **(photo left)**



### Shire Adds Direction Guide Signs at Bairnsdale



## What We DO NOT Like to See

Trail bike activity on the trail north of Pages Road (Bumberrah section) in recent wet weather has been ripping up embankments, endangering legitimate trail users and causing unnecessary waste of resources in attempts to stop such stupidity and trying to repair some of the damage.

All trail biking on the trail is illegal, culprits are liable to prosecution and if they cause injury to any other trail users they are totally responsible for the consequences. If you see illegal vehicles it will assist if a clear photo can be obtained, especially of rego plates. Or contact a local police station or report to DELWP on 5152 0400.



### Next Meeting

**Monday Oct 10th:** at Orbost

Meet at Leon Palace, the Chinese restaurant in Nicholson Street, for dinner at 6.00pm.

Meeting at 7.00pm at the Landcare office behind the post office.

**Please join us.**



**MEETINGS AND**

**ACTIVITIES**



*F.E.G.R.T. President, Janice Preston*

## FRIENDS OF THE EAST GIPPSLAND RAIL TRAIL 2016 President's Report

With the East Gippsland Rail Trail alongside my property, I am constantly reminded of how lucky we are to have such a wonderful asset. There is not a week goes by when I am not using the trail, which through the huge effort put in by a small group of local residents with vision and commitment, has become part of our heritage.

The Friends of the East Gippsland Rail Trail is now 13 years young.

This year we have continued to provide the COM of EGRT with support in improving the trail and its surrounds in partnership with local Landcare groups, keeping the trail clear of trees and branches with assistance of CFA and DEWLP, maintaining the Website, producing the Newsletter and financially contributing to trail improvement.

We have continued our partnership with Orbost Historical Society in investigating the feasibility of restoring the Orbost Viaduct and heritage bridges, advertising and engaging the community including at The 100 year celebration of Orbost Railway and the Orbost Show, and lobbying local government for their restoration.

This year we have reduced the meeting schedule and in retrospect I wonder if this has been a wise move. Our meetings provide an opportunity to meet as friends and advocates of the trail. It is an opportunity to keep members engaged and provide a forum for new members to become involved and make their suggestions known.

Planning for the future is part of every organisation's role. Those that don't plan ahead, often end in folding as we are seeing constantly in East Gippsland. Local branches of CWA have folded, pony clubs, football teams and other groups no longer exist. How we plan for the FEGRT I am not sure, but with our small core committee largely unchanged in 13 years, we need to think of ways of engaging our larger membership to ensure our ability to provide the management of the EGRT with assistance and support.

Thank you to Keith, Marlene, Sue, Michael, Geoff, Eddie, May and all the FEGRT for your dedication, hard work, perseverance and friendship.

*Janice Preston*

*President*

## WATER DRAGONS

As you travel the East Gippsland Rail Trail, you will cross several creeks and rivers. If you look carefully amongst the rocks and vegetation nearby, you may be lucky enough to see a Gippsland Water Dragon feeding or basking in the sun. The Gippsland Water Dragon is a close relative of the Eastern Water Dragon which is found along the east coast of Australia.

Australian water dragons have long powerful limbs and claws for climbing, a long muscular laterally-compressed tail for swimming, and prominent nuchal and vertebral crests. (A nuchal crest is a central row of spikes at the base of the head. These spikes continue down the spine, getting smaller as they reach the base of the tail.)

### Gippsland Water Dragon



*Intellagama lesueurii howittii*

### Eastern Water Dragon



*Intellagama lesueurii lesueurii*

**Intellagama lesueurii**, the Eastern Water Dragon, tends towards white, yellow and red on the throat and possesses a dark band behind its eye; I. **Intellaghama howitti**, the Gippsland Water Drago, lacks this and instead has dark bands on side of its throat, which is blotched with yellow, orange, or blue. Both subspecies are light greenish grey in overall colour with black bands running across their back, tail and legs. The water dragon can slowly change skin colour to aid its camouflage. The skin will shed during periods of growth. Total length is up to 80 cm including tail. The head and body length is 20-25cm.

The lizards can remain submerged for up to 30 minutes and rise to the surface where they are able to breathe, while checking the area for danger before emerging back onto land.

The Gippsland Water Dragons are active during both the day and night time. During this period of activity they hunt for insects, frogs, yabbies, water insects, fruit and berries. Eastern Water Dragons are active all year. However the Gippsland Water Dragon will experience a dormancy period due to the cooler winter. The dragons dig a small hole under a log or rock; they then will seal the entrance to emerge in the warmer months.



### References:

Australia Zoo, Australian Museum, Ozanimals .com,  
Australian National Botanic Gardens,  
matthewjonesphotography.c

Janice Preston