

August 2010

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Promoting the Trail at Ausbike Show, August 21st 2010

A 6m x 1m exhibition stand has been arranged for this event with emphasis on the public day, Saturday August 21, to showcase the Trail and points of interest. It will be a 'wall display' with information handouts, posters, the Trail map, a slide show, and two banners (Marketing East Gippsland, and a new one for the Trail). An hourly prize draw is included, thanks to contributions by local businesses. Several Friends and Committee members will be on hand to provide information, decked out in orange safety vests and new caps featuring the Trail name and logo.

This project is part of the promotional effort made possible thanks to funding from the Shire Council.

The Venue



The Ausbike Bike Trade Expo has committed to the next 5 years in the Exhibition Pavilion at the Melbourne showgrounds. Located on the Epsom Road boundary this large scale contemporary Exhibition Pavilion is a striking feature of the new Melbourne Showgrounds. With access from the main road or the Grand Boulevard the Exhibition Pavilion is a versatile 10,000 sqm exhibition space featuring a flexible raised main entrance and 5 large glass tilt up doors opening directly onto the Main Arena and loading dock area.

Bicycle Victoria mails 20,000 Trail information brochures to members.

In a very generous gesture of support for this Rail Trail BV is using its Spring issue of their magazine as a carrier for the new information brochure. BV met the cost of printing.

Thanks, BV!

The Lost Duke

Prince Henry, Duke
of Gloucester



Governor General
of Australia from
1945 to 1947.

A story written by Alex Larkins about a visit to East Gippsland by Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, inspired me to research an interesting incident described in his story.

According to the story the Duke was on a "meet the people" tour from Bega to Bairnsdale. He had just left Orbost when the car he was travelling in plunged into the forest after failing to make an abrupt right hand turn at an isolated rail crossing between Orbost and Nowa Nowa. "Before the Princes Highway was realigned between Orbost and Nowa Nowa in recent years, the now abandoned railway line crossed and recrossed the Highway three or four times.....It was only because the Orbost - Nowa Nowa trains travelled so slowly that accidents did not occur almost daily." In his article Alex describes how the "Rolls Royce came over the crossing at high speedfinally coming to rest when it straddled a small log, leaving the front wheels a few inches off the ground."

Alex relates how Captain Bracegirdle, the duke's aide-de-camp, bailed up Bill Weston and Fred Witchurch as they were heading back into town for an after work drink. The two sleeper cutters after the initial shock of discovering that "it was the bloody Duke!.....took some time to extricate the car from its predicament" and as they were doing so spent some time chatting to the duke about their work as sleeper cutters.

In the meantime, people in the following vehicles had failed to observe the mishap and proceeded on their way to Nowa Nowa while the rest of the group were at the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust mission where general panic prevailed as it was realised that the duke was not with them.

Bush tracks and roads from the mountains to the coast were searched as the alarm spread.

The Duke by now had stopped at the Nowa Nowa pub to enjoy a couple of whiskey and sodas with some of the Nowa Nowa locals.



Eventually he caught up with the Aboriginal elders at the Lake Tyers turnoff and then went on to Lakes Entrance arriving an hour and a half late.

Now, Alex has dated this story as having occurred in February 1945. However, after much research and assistance from the local Historical Societies, I found that the event probably took place before the duke became Australia's governor-general. In fact it more than likely was in October 1934. An inspection of The Snowy River Mail, The Bairnsdale Advertiser and The Canberra Times of 1934 revealed that the Duke certainly did travel through Orbost at that time. He had come by train to Bombala (from Canberra) then by road through Orbost and to Lakes Entrance and on to Bairnsdale where he boarded the royal train for Sale.

There was a newspaper report of a slight accident occurring before the duke's party left N.S.W. on its East Gippsland tour. A car was on its way to pick up the royal party at Bombala and on its way to Orbost had an accident similar to that described by Alex in his article. Is it possible that several events have been combined to produce a very entertaining article?

A DUCAL CAR HITS STUMP

DRIVER SLIGHTLY INJURED.

The driver of one of the Government official cars sent from Melbourne to pick up the Ducal Party on reaching Victoria from New South Wales, met with an accident about six miles out of Orbost on Thursday last. His car swinging round the turn, left the road, and ramm'd a stump on the roadside.

The Gippsland bush won. The buffer bars were bent, the chassis, axle and springs also bent and other damages incurred.

The car was towed in to Orbost, and later sent on to Melbourne.

The driver was hurried to a doctor, but it was found he had escaped lightly, a cut on the chin, the most visible injury, and he resumed the journey to Cann River in another official car.

Article from the Snowy River Mail October 1934



Meetings

Meeting dates for 2010.

Aug 8th AGM Bruthen
Nov 8th Bairnsdale

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is given the Annual General Meeting for Friends of East Gippsland Rail Trail will be held on August 8th 2010 at Bruthen Hotel commencing at 1pm.

For information about meetings contact secretary, Sue Peirce. Ph. 51568228 or email : peirces@wideband.com.au

Activities

Rides

September 12

Orbost

Meet at Forest park, Orbost, at 9.00am for drive to Murrangower. Ride through scenic rainforest along Glen Arte River and then to weir at Rocky River. Distance is approx 25km with some slight hills but a 10 km downhill to compensate.

(A car shuttle will be necessary to avoid the 10 km uphill.)

For further information on this ride contact Marlene Robb Ph 51541232 or email marlenerobb@bigpond.com

Recent planting

It's been a good season for planting with reasonable autumn rain making the ground soft and welcoming for newcomers! The friends were given 90 plants from COM -including hobbush, blackwood, hakea, yellow string bark, and Coastal box. Several of the big trees and some hakea were planted from Sarsfield Rd to



Nicholson Bridge - plenty of spaces where dead black wattle have been removed. Hakeas and hobbushes were planted near Lanes Rd where blackwood and black sheoak were planted about 4 years ago by Lindsay and Norman. These are

now really well established [just visible from the highway!] and the new shrubs will hopefully control the exotic grasses which flourish here. The section of the trail from Sandford's road to Lanes Rd is looking great after the removal of the numerous dead black wattle in this stretch. More large trees and some blackwoods went in near the Princes Hwy crossing, again where dead black wattles had been removed. Spending time on the trail working on plantings its good to see lots of users pass by- often with words of thanks or encouragement, which is gratifying.

The black cockies will also be pleased to have more hakea to eat in the fullness of time!

Sue Peirce

Redevelopment at Bruthen

The Shire Council will assist upgrading the pathway from the western footbridge (next to the tunnel) to the Trail access point by sealing that section and carrying out grass control. A small triangle of land at this point, now called Fig Tree Corner, will be cleared of weeds by DSE using a new high temperature gas fired heat gun. The objective is to turn this corner into a useful area, and move the six posted information sign from Main Street to this point. The Council is also checking on storm water management; the Trail from west of the tunnel to the bridge is a constant problem from heavy grass growth due to excessive water. Some work will be needed to clear the drainage lines. In a separate development related to the new micro brewery being built above the Trail east of the tunnel, owners Neil and Lois Triggs plan to clear weeds etc from a section of the cutting and plant with low growing native shrubs. A ramp is also being considered to enable Trail users who have crossed the bridge to easily gain access to the brewery restaurant.



Fig Tree Corner, west of the Bruthen tunnel, and location for the Main St sign Board.



Trail side access path at Bruthen to be sealed.



Information sign at Bruthen.

Michael Oxer

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A raptor uses a former railway telegraph pole beside the Nicholson Bridge as a vantage point.

Michael Oxer

Boosting the Trail in the EG Visitor Guide

This well known quarterly Guide produced by James Yeates Publishing P/L has for many years included a text promo for the Trail. Thanks to the Council's promotions funding contribution we can now support the Guide with a paid advertisement over the next four issues. A one third page colour insert will encourage visits to the Trail and nearby attractions.



Window Stickers – A Promotion 'On the Move'.

Another promotional idea, put forward at the last Friends meeting, is being developed, using a small window sticker with a brief message boasting the Trail.

It will be available through Visitor Information Centres and local businesses, and at the AusBike Show. Designed 'to travel' on car rear windows or as a boasting take home item for younger folk.

Telstra and Optic Fibre Cable Laying East of Fairweather Track.

In what has been a frustrating time for the management Committee during efforts to protect vegetation and the visual amenity of the Trail between Fairweather Track and Burn Road, a license for work to proceed has been a very drawn out process. The Committee has insisted on a number of conditions to protect the Reserve during works and over the longer term, and to not have unreasonable restrictions imposed on use of the Reserve because of the cable trench line. The chosen route is through a most valuable forest section of the Trail.

The fee for use of the Reserve for this major cable installation is only a few hundred dollars a year, so the Committee has required a 'making good' recompense by asking for \$8000 per year from Telstra for a period of ten years, CPI adjusted. Repair of any damage or other post-trenching costs must be borne by the company. In time it could be that the cable alignment, which will be kept clear of vegetation, could form an equestrian trail.

Michael Oxer

Crew Blitzes Black Wattles at Bairnsdale Entrance.

On Monday July 12 in cold, but fine weather, a team comprising six of the Bairnsdale Community Correctional Services (BCCS) crew, plus John and Michael (RT CoM) were joined by Andrew and Gus (a huge 'thank you' to DSE for letting them loose with chainsaws and 4x4s for the day; they are also both CoM members!). Add a big yellow chipper and the results were nearly a dozen cubic metres of wood chips (for use at re-vegetation planting sites) with a number of dying and potentially dangerous Black Wattles removed.

A great effort all round.



The big yellow chipper (hired) had a lot of work shredding black wattles near the Bairnsdale entrance

Michael Oxer

Visitor Counter Data Indicates More Trail Traffic.

Quarterly visitor data is showing an ongoing increase in traffic on the Trail. While counts are not definitive and there is no way of splitting the figures between short local trips and longer distance visitors (without more and complex equipment), the significant indicator is the longer term trend. Based on data for the two counters to the east end of the Trail, the greater use is by local people and at the western end (Bairnsdale and Nicholson counters). If anyone is looking for evidence that the Trail has high acceptance from East Gippslanders, the count data

tells the story.

Of course a major interest and effort by Trail management is to get more inbound and multi-day stay tourists to visit, bringing with them fresh business support, and cash flow! This effort is happening on several fronts as part of the promotional effort. Informal reports from V/Line staff suggest there is an increase in visitors arriving by train with bicycles. David Perry also reports a rise in demand for his bus and bike trailer transit service.



Railtrails Australia Committee Members Visit In September.

Things will be busy on the Trail mid September, with a 3 day ride event by Snowy River Cycling (16 – 19) and over the weekend 18 – 19 several RA members staying at Nicholson to enjoy some Spring riding. They will however also be 'offered' an opportunity to help with a re-vegetation planting of 300 trees along the south fence line west of Sandford Lane. This will be on Saturday afternoon (18th). Any Friends who

would like to join in the fun will be most welcome. A BBQ evening meal at the Nicholson River jetty area (electric BBQ hot plates) is planned for an informal get-together afterward at 6 pm. BYO food and drinks but bread and salad will be provided. If you would like to join for either or both events and a chance to meet members of the national RA committee, please email name(s) to eastgipprailtrail@wideband.net.au



Town Entrance Information Signs.

A new design for a sign frame has been developed by a Bairnsdale business, Signline, which will provide a high quality product at modest cost (compared to anything comparable). The waist high display frame is made of steel tubing with a powder coat finish. Another lighter weight version of a sign noted recently in a park in Finland is being assessed for

cost. There is need for compact and free standing information signs at the entrance area to each town along the Trail, and also a number of interpretation signs at key points to help visitors learn more about what they are seeing and get the most benefit from their time on the Trail.

Rail Trail management committee seeks more members.

Due to pressures of work and family commitments two members of the Committee have recently offered their resignation, which have been received and accepted with great regret. With the number reduced to just five, steps have been taken to seek at least two new members. The Committee acknowledges the contributions of Jacqui Martin and Michael McStephen, thanks them for their efforts and hopes that at some point they might find ways of further involvement with the Trail.

Maintenance Check - Orbost to Nowa Nowa

In June, Janice Preston and I drove the 35 km from the start of the Link Road in Orbost through to Nowa Nowa. The aim was to note any problems which could be easily rectified and also to find suitable sites for proposed story boards. As a result, a new directional sign has already been placed at the start of the trail in Orbost and plans for the removal of a potentially dangerous wire fence are in place. Other noted problems will be solved as time allows.



Janice Preston trying to remove a fallen wattle which was obstructing the trail.

The idea for adding interest to the trail by the use of information boards had been discussed many times at meetings. The long ride between the two towns would certainly be enhanced with the opportunity for cyclists to stop and learn about the area - its history, flora and fauna. Several obvious sites were noted and possible topics for the boards decided.



The Stockman's Cottage

A quick visit to Tostaree Cottages was very useful in that a great deal of historical info was unearthed for a possible story board at Tostaree.



Inside the communal kitchen at Tostaree Cottages.

Three boards have already been designed for placement along the Link Trail from Orbost to Burn Road and it is hoped that with sponsorship from groups in Orbost these will be in place in the near future.

Satin Bower Bird

Satin Bowerbirds are found along most of the eastern and south-eastern coast of Australia and can be seen along the East Gippsland Rail Trail. The adult male has striking glossy blue-black plumage, a pale bluish white bill and a violet-blue iris. Younger males and females also have violet-blue iris. They are similar in colour to each other, and are collectively referred to as 'green' birds. They are olive-green above, off-white with dark scalloping below and have brown wings and tail. The bill is browner in colour. Young males may begin to acquire their adult plumage in their fifth year.

The mature male Satin Bowerbirds are mostly solitary, but the 'green' birds are often seen in groups or quite large flocks.

Satin Bowerbirds feed mostly on fruits throughout the year. During summer (breeding) the diet is supplemented with a large number of insects, while leaves are often eaten during the winter months. They often invade crops and veggie gardens when the food in the bush becomes scarce.

The male bower bird builds and decorates a bower to attract females. The bower is an avenue of twigs and sticks, which he weaves into walls running in a north-south direction. He usually paints these walls with a mixture of charcoal and saliva.

Platforms at both ends of the avenue are decorated with mainly blue-coloured objects - including flowers, feathers, and berries. When there are humans nearby, the birds will also use plastic items such as clothes pegs.

The bower owner meticulously maintains it throughout the year. Both mature and immature males build bowers and display to prospective females.

Only the female builds a nest. This is a shallow, saucer-shaped construction of twigs and dry leaves, placed 10-15 m above the ground in the upright outer branches of a tree. The nest is lined with fine dry leaves. The female lays one to three eggs, which she incubates. She then raises the young on her own.

If you are lucky enough to view the bower beside the rail trail approximately 500 metres east of Ironstone Creek, please observe quietly and do not disturb the bower or the bower bird's treasures.



When courting, the male satin bowerbird prances and struts around his bower. He offers the female items from his collection of blue objects, while making a series of hissing, chattering and scolding noises. Mating takes place in the avenue of the bower, and the male may mate with several females in a single season.

Janice Preston

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