



The Trail Mail



June 2009

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Nowa Nowa Bike Project

The small community of Nowa Nowa is looking to become the centre for Mountain Bike Riding in the state.

Now Nowa, which is already on the East Gippsland Rail Trail that runs between Bairnsdale and Orbost - aims to have 40 kilometres of bike trails up and running by 2010.

To get to that point the Nowa Nowa Community Development Group has looked to South Australia and the small town of Melrose which has reinvented itself as a destination for bike riders in that state and has been able to attract significant visitors over the past five years.

Mike Ryan from the Nowa Nowa Community Development Group hopes that by attracting funding and then visitors the small town can become a central hub for visitors to explore not just Nowa Nowa but Lake Tyers, Buchan, Gelantipy, Orbost or Lakes Entrance.

On Tuesday March 17th, Mike Ryan and Neil Smith (East Gippsland Shire Council), presented their vision and launched the Nowa Nowa Bike Project, auspiced by the Nowa Nowa Development Group. The project has been welcomed by the community including local businesses, which are committed to providing services to meet the needs of the bike touring public.

Plans for mountain bike tracks include Mt Nowa Nowa Track, Lake Tyers Track, and others easily accessible from the East Gippsland Rail Trail.

Janice Preston

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Trail Counters Come Out From The Trees

Since May 2006 there have been four infrared sensing counter units dispersed at key points along the Trail, to track visitor activity and help build a 'picture' of how it is being used. This is essential data to help in getting funding support, and to prove to the doubters that the Trail is a worthwhile investment.

These were all positioned on trees. Earlier this year the unit just east of the Nicholson Bridge was stolen, with the cable from the small hardware container ripped from the back of the sensor. This mindless vandalism was both an expensive loss of the counter but also of nearly four months' data. More recently a fuel reduction burn near Waygara resulted in the unfortunate loss (it was incinerated) of a second unit (and 3+ months of data); it had not been anticipated the fire would have been at the counter location. DSE offered to replace that unit and the Committee has now ordered two replacements from the Canadian supplier (TRAFFx). To avoid further damage to the counters they are now being installed in steel posts, with a specially designed removable, but locked, container section. Data from counters each side of Nowa Nowa has been used to assist a funding application for the new mountain biking trails project "40 x 2010". Visitor activity at the western ends of the Trail system (including both local and intourist visits) is at about 10,000 a year. This might surprise many people, but what to a casual observer might look like low numbers of users, when actually counted and added up over months, becomes really significant.



Counter data being downloaded



New counter installation at the Bairnsdale entrance to the Trail

Michael Oxer

Newsletter For Trail Neighbours.

The Committee is now in a position to address an information newsletter to all of the nearly 300 immediate neighbours of the Trail, that is, those with a boundary fence to the Reserve. This will be a very important and valuable means of sharing information about relevant Trail matters which affect these property owners. We hope it can lead to an increase in assistance in looking after the Trail.



Photo:

Participants at the May 9th strategy workshop included (L to R), Michael Oxer, Keith Law, Marlene Robb, Michael McStephen, Janice Preston, Neil Smith (EGSC), Jacqui Martin and Andrew Sharpe.

5 Year Plan For Management & Development

Thanks to funding from the Shire Council under their Community Strengthening Demonstration Projects program, the Rail Trail CoM has begun work on developing a working plan to assist in handling the very big challenge involved in keeping this Rail Trail in good condition and attractive to visitors over the next five years.

With guidance from a professional facilitator, the Committee, supported by representatives from the Friends Association, held a one day workshop on May 9th. A draft strategy is being prepared based on that work. It will be shared around with interested business and other stakeholders for comment before being finalised.

A second part of this process will be an update of the Fire Management Plan, through consultation with CFA's, DSE and interested land holders.

With no allocation from the State government of funds to either pay for maintenance or towards even a part time paid trail manager position, the work mainly depends on the time, energy, skills and commitment volunteers, except for valuable support from DSE, and occasional assistance from CFA groups.

Michael Oxer



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Green Corp tackle some Trail jobs



The first job of the 2009 team was a 2 day clean up on the Trail between the entrance and Phillips Lane. They removed woody weeds and cleared rubbish. The Shire Council assisted with free tip access.

Thanks team!

Kilometre Marker Posts

The installation of kilometre marker posts has been a project a long time coming. It seemed an easy thing to do but rather complicated in reality. Markers will be at one Km intervals for 5 Kms each side of towns and then at 5 Km intervals. Routing of the numbers on each post has been generously donated by T & L Carved Signs (Louise & Tony McCarthy). The '0' mark will be the east bank of the Mitchell River. The new Green Corp team have expressed interest (with assistance from Andrew Sharpe) to establish the GPS reference points onto a map and then install the markers.

Roadside Signs Update

The Committee has ordered replacement panels for most of the large road side signs between Bairnsdale and Tambo Upper Road, to add Orbost where relevant. When these signs were installed the idea of getting the Trail all the way to Orbost was just a dream. Instead of changing each whole sign a new sheet steel panel is being made which will be fixed over the existing names panel.

Michael Oxe



The Sleeper Cutters

The spread of settlement throughout Victoria and the expanding rail network increased the demand for sleepers.

When the line from Bairnsdale to Orbost was being constructed and used, sleeper cutting was one industry which brought employment and an income to many of the people of East Gippsland. Sleeper cutters became a familiar sight in the forests - putting heavy pressure on forests close to railway lines. For example, the ironbark and box timbers in the Nowa Nowa forests were all cut out before World War 11. Lake Tyers was another area where there was heavy depletion of the timbers. Between 1935 and 1937 16,418 sleepers were removed from the forest there.

Sleepers were cut from ironbark, yellow stringybark and mahogany trees using tools such as the axe, cross-cut saw, hammer and wedges. Broad axes were used to trim and square the sleepers. Using these tools the cutters averaged 12 - 14 sleepers a day. As time went on swing saws, trucks, tractors and chainsaws lightened the load, although it was still hard and challenging work.

Many perils faced the sleeper cutters in their job. A tree could fall the wrong way. Flying branches - widow makers - could catapult silently from above. Chainsaws could jam or kick up into the operator's face. Tractors might overturn and crush the driver if a log snagged as it was towed. There was always the chance of a slip with an axe or stumbling into the swing saw's spinning blade. There are many tales of old sleeper cutters, particularly the broad axe men, with missing toes and curious scars!

Apart from falling trees and flying branches, if a man was severely injured he could bleed to death because help was far away. Snake bites in rough country were another danger to be faced - it would be a long trip to the doctor even if a tourniquet could be applied and the victim carried back to camp.

Next Issue : Bushfires in 1965 destroy three bridges near Bumberrah.



Workers unloading sleepers from rail truck, Bairnsdale district, circa 1905



Until the 1960's there were still dozens of sleeper cutters in East Gippsland from Bairnsdale to the border. However, by the 1970's numbers had dwindled as rail transport gave way to road and branch lines were closed.

Yet, sleeper cutting was a way of life which still appealed to some and it wasn't until new industry legislation was introduced in 1983 that the industry in East Gippsland all but disappeared. Upgraded safety regulations and restriction of areas for harvesting had a huge effect and by September, 1992 all sleeper cutting in the region had ceased.

Loading sleepers at Orbost Station in the seventies.



RIGHT: Sleepers — essential for VicRail and a money spinner for Orbost.

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Controlling weeds - a never ending task



Weeds on and along the Trail are for ever on the march, so they need regular treatment. This is especially important on the sealed sections because weeds dislodge the paving material with start a steady process of crumbling surface and erosion.

By arrangement with DSE we have been able to have ready access to and use of a spray unit on a 6x4 trailer and over the last few months nearly all the Trail has been treated. Eddie worked his way from Orbost back towards Nowa Nowa, where Geoff Preston took over the unit and went

further westward. Frank Garden has recently sprayed the sealed section between McEacharn St and Nicholson.

The Management Committee expresses sincere thanks to these willing Friends, and to DSE for access to this equipment.

Another area which has required quite intense treatment is the new planting near the shelter and car park at Burn Road but that has been done with back packs as well as some hand weeding!

Michael Oxer



The slip-on spray unit and trailer returning from a run on the Trail.

New Cycling Tourism Venture For Orbost

Liz Mitchell, event manager for the early Wilderness Bike Rides

three day events, has created a new tourism attraction for East



Gippsland. Snowy River Cycling is designed for small groups. The six day tours "travel on a variety of roads from forest tracks to quiet sealed back roads" and cater for reasonably fit riders who want to see spectacular scenery with a friendly group and excellent support.

Check out the website linked to our site.

Recent Rail Trail Works



1. The re-surfacing repair work between Bruces Rd. and Tambo Upper Rd. is complete.
2. The patch up of the washout of the track at Stoney Creek is done.
3. Some heritage repair work on 'K' bracing on Stoney Creek trestle bridge was done.
4. A Development and Maintenance strategy meeting was held.
5. A new toilet has been placed on the Rail Trail at Partellis Crossing.
6. Fuel reduction burns adjoining Rail Trail in Waygara area have been completed.

Andrew Sharpe

TRANSPORTING YOUR BIKE ALONG THE TRAIL

A regular pick-up service for cyclists using the trail may happen soon. David Perry of Perry's Bus Service in Orbost is awaiting the permits which would allow this service.

At present Perry's provides, on request, a bus service for riders and their bicycles between Orbost and Bairnsdale. This includes the intermediate locations of Nowa Nowa and Bruthen. The basic fee is \$25 per person including bicycle carriage one way.

David and Sue will, if given sufficient time, organise transport to suit the needs of trail users. However, a regular service would give trail users security in planning their rail trail holiday.



Forestec students planning to use the Trail



The Rail Trail is a wonderful stretch of land with a rich biodiversity. Discussions are taking place with Forestec with a view to students studying conservation management to use parts of the rail between Bruthen and Nowa Nowa as resource material. This would be a multi year program with important benefits for the Trail.

Protecting Your Head

Cracks in the helmet shell are common on helmets that have been banged around. Sometimes you can keep using it - sometimes not.

A major purpose of the helmet's hard outer shell is to protect the softer styrofoam underneath during normal, everyday use. Though the hard shell also helps dissipate the impact over a larger area in the event of a crash, the styrofoam is what really absorbs the shock (rather than your brain and skull). With that said, the very small cracks that commonly form around the vents on your helmet will not significantly compromise the helmet's overall purpose of protecting your brain.

* Important: if you find any larger cracks in your helmet, such as ones along the edges of the helmet shell or that run from one vent to another, it is time to replace your helmet. This is the case with the helmet shown below.



Article from bicycling.about.com

WEB STATS

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages
Jan 2009	978	1599	8172
Feb 2009	797	1290	8078
Mar 2009	908	1251	7680
Apr 2009	851	1277	7112
May 2009	732	1187	7754

Website usage remains strong. For the month of May the following was the way people came to the website:

81% directly by bookmark or favorites,

13% from a search engine

6% from a link from another website.

Keith Law

The Trail Mail

Other Trails

The Gippsland Plains Rail Trail extends 65km from **Stratford to Traralgon** in Central Gippsland.

The trail head is located at Apex Park at **Stratford** adjacent to the Avon River bridge at the entrance to the town. Services at the trail head include toilets, water, bbq, parking, childrens playground and adjacent swimming pool and caravan park.

The 10km trail to Maffra is a smooth surface, suitable for all bikes. The journey to **Maffra** is flat with only one road crossing.

Leaving Maffra, the trail requires a short (2.0km) road section before linking to **Tinamba** (6km) via a good trail with a mainly earth surface but some gravel sections. This part of the trail has a number of creek crossings where waterbirds can often be seen in billabongs nearby.

From Tinamba, the trail extends on a good surface of gravel to **Heyfield**, a distance of 11km.

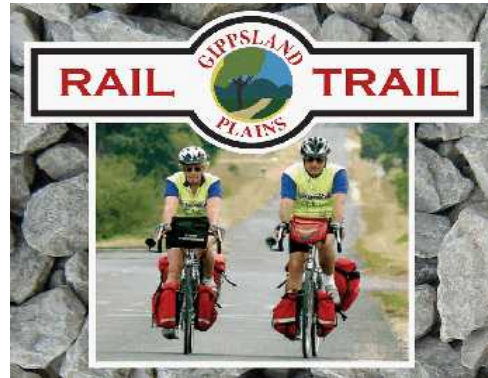
From Heyfield, the trail recommences approx 1km from the Wetlands Centre trailhead and continues to the Dawson Flora Reserve near **Cowwarr**, however is not fully developed at this time. This section of trail is quite rideable for mountain bikes and some hybrids, but the surface is gravel with occasional larger stones.

From Dawson, a road section along country backroads connects to Cowwarr (5k).

The 17 km section from Cowwarr to **Glengarry** via **Toongabbie** has not been fully developed but has had the rocky ballast removed. This section has two creek crossings that can be walked through.

The trail reserve has significant remnant stands of native trees, shrubs and grasses.

A road section from Glengarry to **Traralgon** via the C105 is necessary to complete the journey. (11km).



There is full 3G mobile phone coverage on the route.



Source :

www.gippslandplainsrailtrail.com.au

Bridge between Maffra and Tinamba

Check regularly at www.eastgippslandrailtrail.com for updates.

Meetings

Aug 9th AGM & ordinary meeting at Bruthen 1pm at Bruthen Inn

Nov 9th Nicholson – short ride 5pm, then BBQ and meeting at 7pm



Nominations, apologies, suggestions or further information contact secretary, Sue Peirce. Ph. 51568228 or email : peirces@wideband.com.au

Activities

Rides

June 13/14th Gippsland Plains - Sue

Sept 27th Ride Mississippi Trail from Bruthen

or

Nowa Nowa

or

start of Mississippi Trail - Sue

Friends of East Gippsland Railtrail are extremely grateful to Craig Ingram's office which has supported our group with the printing of this newsletter for some time now.

