

September 2009

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Antique Fettle's Hut Heads to Bruthen

When the Management Committee recently demolished a derelict house at Mossface it was realised the 'shed out the back' was the last remaining building from the days of the former railway.



Designed and built as a 'transportable' it was used for accommodation for railway workers. The Committee has now offered the hut to the Bruthen community, with a proposal that it be re-located to the former Police Paddock in town and renovated to serve as the local history museum.

The hut will be a nice complement to the former timber shop now being set up in Main Street as the information centre.

New Information Brochure And Map

After several months of revision and including text advertisements for 23 businesses the updated brochure will soon be printed. It will be distributed into NSW including the SE coast and into Canberra, as well as across Victoria. The East Gippsland Bird Observation & Conservation group have assisted by providing a photo for the new cover.

The mapping update was done by Railtrails Australia using information provided by the Committee.

Work is also being undertaken to prepare a map of the Trail for maintenance management and asset records purposes, with the assistance of DSE.



Michael Oxer

New Fire Management Plan (FMP)

Following a half day workshop on June 17 which involved representatives from DSE, local CFA brigades, and the Shire Council, together with the Management Committee, a Plan document has been drafted. The workshop was a very positive event which has led to important new developments including the Reserve being included in the forward fire management burn planning by DSE. The FMP also builds closer ties with CFA brigades, and will serve as the guideline for future fuel reduction works, and to inform the many neighbours of the Trail about this important topic.

Work now being done by the BCCS work crew is an important part of the Plan, aimed at physically removing and reducing combustible material. Another significant development is an agreement to establish a Fire Plan Advisory Group (FPAG) to assist the Committee in setting up the longer term and annual work program to progressively reduce the fuel load on the Trail Reserve.

The recently prepared Management & Development Plan 2009-2014 will be available on the Trail web site (PDF, under Resources)

Michael Oxer



Trash Heap at Bosses Swamp

Fuel Reduction Burning

A one hectare section of Rail Trail has been nominated for fuel reduction burning. The location is the bridge abutment to the East of the Nicholson River. The area has a lot of dead wattles and scrub which is quite messy, and this makes it a harbour for pest plants and animals and restricts growth of native vegetation. Also, adjoining landholders are concerned about the fire threat, not to mention many of the wattles growing up and falling over and breaking the fence.

Andrew Sharpe





Nowa Nowa Access Gets Attention.

A recent meeting between VicRoads and the Management Committee examined a long list of items to be fixed before the highway road project works are completed. Details included signs, surfacing, chicanes, and culverts. When done, the diversion route through the town will be much easier to negotiate.

Michael Oxer

Seldom Seen: an East Gippsland Arts Trail over the Melbourne Cup Weekend



Seldom Seen is an iconic place in the heart of East Gippsland. It's now also a trail of seldom seen art, in deliciously wild places. ☺

We hope you'll discover the Seldom Seen Arts Trail over the Melbourne Cup Weekend – from Friday 30 October – to Tuesday 3 November 2009.

This trail of specially made art and exhibitions extends across eight communities: Buchan, Bairnsdale, Metung, Nungurner, Lakes Entrance, Nowa Nowa, Orbost, Marlo. It's been a huge project that has created a series of excellent artworks - and each location will be 'turning it on' across the weekend. (Check the website for celebration times). You can find all the information online at www.seldom-seen.com or call Andrea Lane 03 5155 7277 for more information.

And – most importantly – we have joined forces with Snowy River Cycling to encourage cyclists to discover our artworks - on wheels. We reckon this is a really exciting partnership and hope there are plenty of art-loving cyclists out there to support the venture. See <http://snowyrivercycling.com.au/>

Andrea Lane



The Trail Mail



**Needed -
URGENT - a trail
manager!**

The Committee has drafted a submission to the East Gippsland Shire Council seeking funding for a trail manager position. If this gets support the co-funding source will probably be Regional Development Victoria. When preparing the submission it was startling to discover just how many agencies and organisations are now closely involved with the Trail. As part of the preparation of the submission letters were sent to more than 50 local businesses, schools and organisations inviting letters of support. This resulted in 18 letters being received with many of these emphasising the growing economic importance of the Trail as visitors spend on a variety of services. This last school holiday period has seen school and scout groups from outside the region bike riding the whole Trail. That level of activity brings real cash inflow to local towns.

Bairnsdale Community Correctional Services * (BCCS) Moves On The Trail

Following an enquiry by the Rail Trail Committee whether there might be an opportunity for the BCCS work crew to help with jobs on the Trail, an agreement was made for a long term arrangement, in the first instance for a trial of 8 weeks on Mondays. The first work site was at Bosses Swamp on Sept 14, when the crew began cleaning up after a big local working bee which pulled out many tonnes of dead Black Wattles the previous Friday. Most of the work this year will be on the Bairnsdale - Nicholson section.



Having BCCS involved in this very 'hands on' arrangement will greatly increase the Committee's capacity to reduce fuel loads on the Trail and carry out other urgent works. The BCCS crew can do a variety of tasks, including painting, carpentry repairs, weeding and whipper snipping, tree planting, and fencing, as well as clearing excessive timber.



Burn Road gets 100 more plants



September 28th. The Burn Road parking/shelter shed area has had more planting attention, with Sue & Michael providing guidance to the Bairnsdale Community Correctional Services work crew who added 100 plants, spread mulch and cut weeds. This was the second week the BCCS crew were assisting on the Trail. They will provide 8 week days of assistance this year, with an understanding the arrangement will continue next year. A large scale version of the new Trail map (1.2 x 0.5m) was also installed in the shelter.

Photos this page by Michael Oxaer



The Trail Mail

Wildlife on the East Gippsland Rail Trail



Echidnas (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*), or spiny ant eaters as they are sometimes known, are monotremes (mammals that lay eggs). They are related to the platypus.

Echidnas are 30 cm to 45 cm in length and weigh between 2 kg and 5 kg. The body, with the exception of the underside, face and legs, is covered with cream coloured spines. These spines, which reach 50 mm in length, are modified hairs.

The echidna is shy and moves slowly and carefully, but can usually be approached by treading softly. It is solitary for most of the year but at mating time several males may follow a female. Echnidas use their noses to find food, and then use their long sticky tongues to catch ants, worms and other insects.

If disturbed, an echidna will usually lower the head, and with vigorous digging, sink rapidly into the ground leaving only the spines exposed. On hard surfaces they will curl into a ball -- presenting defensive spines in every direction. They are also capable of wedging tightly into crevices or logs by extending their spines and limbs.

Female echidnas lay a single egg in their pouch. After ten days, the egg hatches and a **puggle** (baby echidna) is born. They are born blind and hairless, and consume milk from a gland within the pouch. After an average of four weeks, the puggle develops sharp spines, and must leave the pouch. Echidnas can be seen anywhere on the East Gippsland Rail Trail at this time of year more commonly from late afternoon to dusk.

Janice Preston



Pig Sty Replaces Bridge After Devastating Fires !



In the summer of 1965 Gippsland was swept by devastating bushfires. The fires raged for nearly three weeks. From February 21 until March 13 the forests and grasslands were ablaze. More than 60 homes and shops were destroyed and more than 4000 stock perished.

Lightning from one storm had started about 90 small forest fires which then joined with another grassland fire , eventually burning 300,000 ha of forest and 6,000 ha of grassland in North and East Gippsland.

Included in the destruction were three railway bridges between Bumberrah and Mossiface, 17 miles east of Bairnsdale. Two thousand sleepers and four miles of railway telephone lines were also destroyed.



Fire -twisted remains of bridge over Dirty Hollow Creek (photograph in Age April 1965)

Temporary track deviations were constructed

Next Issue : Costicks Weir

around two of the bridges, one of which carried the track over the Swan Reach - Mossiface Road and the other across Dirty Hollow Creek. the deviations were laid with a maximum grade of 1 in 20.

A support known as a "pig sty" was built to temporarily replace the third bridge.

What was used was discarded timber railway sleepers that were found alongside the track. Smaller timbers and fox wedges were put at the top to take up the slack. this is (was?) apparently a common form of railway work.



The temporary work was finished in eight days enabling services to be restored very quickly.

At the same time as the temporary repairs were being effected, work was proceeding on the construction of permanent bridges and sleeper replacement and the service was fully restored by the end of the month

My Favourite Section of the Trail

In springtime the 2km stretch from Burn Road at Newmerella to Prestons Road is definitely my favourite part of the rail trail.

This section is a favourite walk for locals as well and we'll often meet up with them rambling along in the late afternoon with their dogs or out for a morning jog.

grey shrike thrush



clematis and indigofera



a local jogger with his dog stops for a chat along the trail

The air is redolent with the musky fragrance of sweet pittosporum and white clematis clothes the upper storey contrasting vividly with the purple indigofera below. The pale yellow of wattle blends with the intense yellow of the pea flowers and there are occasional splashes of red kennedia just to add a touch of gaudiness.

With the flowering comes a blossoming of birdsong. Wattle birds squawk raucously, shrike thrushes sing melodiously and the thornbills twitter busily. If you're lucky you might spot a crimson rosella or one of the red robins. You'll generally hear a magpie or two (duck if they start to "clack" !) or a kookaburra. Grey fantails and superb fairy-wrens, tails cocked, hop along the trail scuttling off through the bushes when you approach.

Sometimes we've seen a lace monitor scurrying up a tree, a black snake sunning itself or an echidna snuffling along at the edge of the track.

It's different during the rest of the year but still green and shady and a very pleasant place to be.

Do you have a favourite section of the trail? Send a photo and description to the editor at :

marlenerobb@bigpond.com.au

or phone 51541232

with other newsletter article suggestions

The Nicholson River rehabilitation project (next to the bridge) continues to grow with more plants added. A couple of recent working bees have weeded, planted and mulched, but after several hours of back bending 'exercise' a sit down at the Friends picnic table was well earned. And thanks also to Norm & Lorraine Broad for additional assistance.

Michael Oxer



Bosses Swamp, Nicholson, Gets Major Attention

During a casual conversation several months ago with several local residents concerned about the potential fire hazard at Bosses Swamp (between Lanes and Sarsfield Roads) and a light hearted 'challenge' that they might help, on Friday Sept 17 a group of 7 local men, with 5 chain saws and 2 utes got stuck into clearing out fallen timber and removing selected Black Wattles. They carted out many tonnes of firewood and made a big impact on reducing the fuel load. It has been learned that twenty or more years ago this section was a much more open woodland area with big Box trees, and mushrooms to be found during Spring.



There are many small native grasses and mosses too, so it is a valuable flora habitat which needs to be protected. As excessive re-growth is removed a revegetation program will be started to replace the larger Eucalypts. Opening up the site will reduce fire hazard risk and make it easier to deal with rabbit infestation. The BCCS work crew has done a big clean up to stack smaller material for controlled burning. This has been followed by chipping and mulching many of the excessive Black Wattle trees using a hired machine.

Litigation threat defeated by weight of contrary evidence



On October 24th 2006 a bike rider who had travelled from Nowa Nowa and on the day of the incident from Bruthen, after passing through the chicane at the edge of Sarsfield Road, fell and broke a hip.

In December 2008 the Committee and DSE were served with a County Court Writ charging negligence in management and duty of care, and responsible for the fall. Work on a legal defence was commenced, with persistent and detailed questioning of the plaintiff's lawyers following a decision to challenge the charge. A County Court hearing was set for October this year. If the defence could not defeat the charge it would have had serious implications for all rail trails. A slowly emerging picture of the most likely and actual reason for the fall (rider behaviour, not the Trail surface etc) gave the defence team sufficient confidence to rebut a claim for considerable monetary damages during a mediation hearing in August, and challenge the plaintiff to go ahead with the Court hearing. Within twenty four hours the case against the Committee and DSE was withdrawn.

There are some important lessons to learn from this experience, details of which are being written up to assist in future management. One decision has been for the Committee to issue all regular Trail helpers with a diary to help track details of work done and provide an archive record. Good records which can serve in defence of management practice is an invaluable insurance into the future and helps to demonstrate responsible behaviour by the Committee.

Michael Oxer

Check regularly at www.eastgippslandrailtrail.com for updates.

Meetings

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



Meeting dates for 2010.

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Feb 8 th | Orbost |
| May 10 th | Nowa Nowa |
| Aug 8 th AGM | Bruthen |
| Nov 8 th | Bairnsdale |

Activities

Rides

Nov 9th Ride from Nicholson Jetty at 5pm, followed by BBQ and meeting to start at 7.30pm. Food provided.

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

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 |
| Jun 2009 | 770 | 1195 | 8591 |
| Jul 2009 | 726 | 1163 | 8353 |
| Aug 2009 | 827 | 1273 | 6517 |
| Sep 2009 | 829 | 1151 | 6453 |

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 now.



Gippsland Plains Rail Trail Ride

We selected Heyfield for the base on this winter ride. Cold and overcast on Saturday, we opted for the Heyfield – Toongabbie – Glengarry section. But first find the trail! We located the section running to Stratford, but not the other direction – despite 8 rail trail attuned eyes! The Information Centre had no information but a general vague direction through some parkland. After a few false starts we located the trail headed towards Cowarr. The section was relatively rough here and one needed to be alert for electric wires to contain grazing cattle across the trail. Some interesting regenerating bush vegetation at the Dawson Native flora reserve created a pleasant environment before the route become a road. This was a quiet road and after a few kilometres we sighted the new section to Cowarr – a wide gravel pathway which took us into Cowarr. We called in at the pub and chatted to the owner, Helen, who is a member of the GPRT Committee of Management. Back on the trail from Cowarr to Toongabbie – again the surface is fairly rough but OK, after 10k the trail arrives in Toongabbie. We did not linger here to explore the visitor facilities, we kept going toward Glengarry. The trail peters out into a goat track – this was relatively difficult to negotiate, and as we were running out of light decided to return along the road to Heyfield. To get to Traralgon from Glengarry requires completion of the journey on the C 105 this is 11k. On a Saturday afternoon the C105 was quite busy – but gave us a speedy return to Heyfield. A hot shower, warm dining room and generous meal was enjoyed before settling down for the night. Sunday breakfast was served by the publican with much conviviality. The sun was shining and we knew

the way to the start of the trail this time, so got off to an early start. The 11k section to Tinambra to was very pleasant with excellent mountain views across the plain. The Tinambra general store was serving hot coffee so we warmed up before heading along the trail to Maffra. It is not possible to get all the way to Maffra – bridges have been removed and the butter factory has been built over the top of the railway lines. There are lots of opportunities for lunch in Maffra and a comfortable main street green area to rest and enjoy a break. We found the Maffra Station buildings, now rather derelict and waiting to be born again, before picking up the trail to Stratford. This is the equivalent of a rail trail ‘freeway’. A wide, 11k, straight stretch of smooth gravel with no crossings, allows for speedy, comfortable travel. Once again time did not permit us to actually get to Stratford and use the track which has been developed into Stratford, as the rail line here is still in use! At Maffra we saw a large well organised cycling group – the Sale and District Cycling Club- so we accepted a cuppa and some cake and got some good advice on an alternative route to Tinambra along a quiet, smooth bitumen road parallel to the trail and the busy Maffra-Tinambra road. Again the view across the plain to the high country was stunning in the clear afternoon light. We had a most enjoyable 2 days exploring this rail trail – the towns along the way break up the journey and the trail is one to take slowly. We did not come across many other cyclists on the trail – but the weather was chilly. No doubt further development will make this an interesting and more-used trail.

Sue Peirce



Maffra Station

