

East Gippsland Rail Trail - Trail Notes

EGRT/Section 2: 7-15 (Nicholson to Bruthen)

(v.12012009)

Trail Notes are a supplement to the printed information and map brochure and are a 'work in progress'. As new material becomes available the Notes files will be amended and replace the current version. These Notes are only available as PDFs from this web site. Download and print as required. Because these files are updated from time to time please check the version and production date. There may be a later version if you have previously downloaded one of these files.

Trail Notes are referenced by the black numbers shown on the map included in the Trail brochure. Copies of the brochure are available at Visitor Information Centres (Federation Square and Southern Cross Station in Melbourne, Traralgon, Sale, Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Orbost) and from other locations in East Gippsland, or by request by post via the web site email Comments facility.

The PDFs have been prepared as 5 files with the Location reference numbers grouped as Sections of the Rail Trail plus the SIDE TRIPS. The numbers follow the map sequence, west to east.

EGRT/Section 1: 1- 6	(Bairnsdale to Nicholson)	
EGRT/Section 2: 7-15	(Nicholson to Bruthen)	This set.
EGRT/Section 3:16 - 22	(Bruthen to Nowa Nowa)	
EGRT/Section 4:23 - 3 1	(Nowa Nowa to Burn Road)	
EGRT/Section 5:32 - 3 3	(Burn Road to Orbost : off-road link path)	
EGRT/SIDE TRIPS: 34 - 40		

Visitors are invited to contribute notes, comments, etc on their observations about any of the areas references by these Trail Notes. Please use the Comments facility provided on the Trail web site. Photos are also welcome but the files need to be kept small. If you would like to provide digital photos please tell us about that in your message and an arrangement will be made for getting them delivered to the Trail Notes editor. Repeat: please DO NOT email photo files.

NOTES. This Rail Trail is a Crown Land Reserve. It is open 24/7 and no charge applies. HOWEVER - user onus applies. If you are not prepared to accept that there can be from time to time rapid and unexpected changes to conditions (Trail surface variations, effects of wind, fire, flooding etc), DO NOT enter the Trail Reserve. Bicycle and horse riders entering the Trail Reserve must have a sufficient level of competence and be equipped to be independent during their visit. The Trail may be subject to closure in part or whole at very short notice. Check weather conditions before travel. Kilometre marker posts are being installed within 5 Kms of towns and at some other points. ALWAYS CARRY SUFFICIENT WATER FOR YOUR TRIP. Check the Trail web site for late breaking information.

EGRT/Section 2: map reference numbers 7-15 (Nicholson to Bruthen)

(includes: Stephenson Rd, Hardings Cr, Harmans Rd, Slaughterhouse Cr, Kettles Lane, Pages Rd, Swan Reach Rd tunnels, Bruthen Rd, Lees Rd, Dirty Hollow Cr, former Mossiface Station).

Map reference 7. A winery diversion

After leaving the Nicholson River Bridge the Trail climbs through a shallow cutting before veering to the right. River views over your right shoulder. From here on the farm holdings on each side are more obvious. Waddells Road on the left offers a diversion to the [Nicholson River Winery](#). Follow the signed turn off but be aware of the final steep descent (climb on the return) to the winery. It is about 2 kilometres off the Trail. (Check their web site). A few metres further on is the Stephensons Road crossing. A new steel gate and chicane has been installed on the east side (Feb 2008), replacing the former 'farm gate'/chicane type you have been passing through up to this point. The older badly damaged gate was smashed several years ago by an illegal vehicle on the Trail. (to be replaced, finances allowing) The side road is a popular parking spot for Trail visitors.

CAUTION. Be very careful at this road crossing. It is a 100 KPH zone.

The Princes Highway (to Lakes Entrance etc) is to the right.

Map reference 8. Farms and Lakes views

A long straight and slowly rising climb leads to an interesting and bushy section leading through to a small cutting. Verge vegetation provides plenty of small birds habitat. The Trail crosses Hardings Creek on a high embankment. A large new house on the left looks out to the Lakes, and at Harmans Road you too can capture that view. The steel gates/chicanes were added in February 2008.

A donated seat (*Serenity Seat*, donated by the Steedman family, installed May 2008) provides a rest and re-fuel (BYO!) stop. If you carry a binocular you can check out the south side of the Silt Jetties formation and the buildings of parts of Eagle Point.

Unfortunately the old Harmans Road Bridge was demolished and the cutting below filled in. The diversion by-passes a quite long cutting. Princes Highway is to the right via Harmans Road (very rough in parts).

Map reference 9. High embankments and more farmland

The next section was badly damaged in 2007 from a combination of fire prevention works and then major floods. Repair works restored the surface and many sections of drainage were re-constructed. Verge clearing is being followed up with replanting.

A significant feature is the huge embankment which spans Salt Creek. This was a pick and shovel, horse and dray effort as the railway push eastwards. Vegetation includes some very big Eucalyptus trees.

The Trail continues to climb and comes out into open farm land. On the east side you will be passing yet another former railway pick up point. Local dairy produce was loaded at Claybank. Another few Kms and you reach Kettles Lane. The steel gate/chicane was installed in January 2008 as part of an upgrade program. Locked gates have been necessary to try and restrict illegal vehicle use of the Trail.

To this point the trail has been following a wide arc east then heads northwards, to meet up with the sealed Johnsonville / Bruthen Road off to your right. Ahead is one of the most interesting of the former station grounds on the Trail. The Prince Highway is to the south, accessible via Harmans Road (gravel).

Map reference 10. Bumberrah station ground, grasses and big trees

It is a great regret that when the line was closed and decommissioned virtually every piece of infrastructure was removed. This site boasted several buildings and a small marshalling / loading yard to meet the needs of a nearby farms. All that is left are remnants of the Station platform and scattered around the area other signs of building foundations. The small shelter and information point is a popular stopping place. A few metres further on there is an entry point on the RHS with **vehicle parking space**. Remnant native grasses are an important feature of this location, plus a number of very large trees. Read the grasslands information displayed at the shelter. The Trail Friends are working on native grass re-vegetation at this location. Visitors are reminded that camping is not permitted on the Rail Trail Reserve.

The next section into Bruthen will include a number of highlights.

Near the side access point noted above is where the Bruthen / Swan Reach Rising Main (sewer line) joins the Trail. You will notice vent pipe outlets and other signs at several points.

Map reference 11. The Tunnels (Swan Reach Road underpasses)

Over the next few kilometres you will pass several farm houses and cross several minor service roads and pass through two corrugated steel tunnels underneath the Bruthen / Swan Reach Road. There are several short cuttings, quite a lot of dense Trail side vegetation, and service (and emergency) vehicle turning points before the Trail deviates to cross the Johnsonville / Mossiface Road at Tambo Upper where another timber bridge has been removed (Map reference point 13 - details below).

Map reference 12. Lees Road (timber road bridge)

Back on the old easement the Trail runs straight to the Lees Road (timber) bridge. The right hand side was heavily cleared during the 2007 works to rebuild collapsed embankments near Lees Road (which will be obvious on the LHS). A replanting program was completed in October 2008 but due to some unfortunate factors (including a long dry spell) many of that planting did not survive. The plants which have in time will gradually restore some of the trees and ground cover. Hundreds of tonnes of the old ballast stone was recovered from this section and recycled to rebuild the collapsed embankments near Lees Road.

This section is on the back of an ancient sand dune, and in recent years has suffered extensive damage from flooding and the collapse of embankments, due in part to tunnelling by wombats, signs of their renewed activity quite obvious on both side.

On the left hand side just before the bridge are 3 re-generation areas up on top of the re-constructed embankment. The replanting has been done by Friends of the Rail Trail in 2007 and 2008.

The story behind the first collapse in 2003 is that a wombat had dug a burrow into the left hand embankment. Flooding water flowing along the west side fence line on top of the cutting broke through into the burrow and the resulting torrent blew out the embankment dumping hundreds of cubic metres of sand onto the Trail. The 2007 flood repeated the damage and then on the way down to Dirty Hollow Creek the water tore open the surface of the Trail. Who said that managing a rail trail was easy?

During the lifetime of the former railway it was the Dirty Hollow Bridge which seemed to suffer most from bush fire. No surprise then that just past Lees Road the Trail turns down hill to a low level crossing over the Dirty Hollow Creek. The timber bridge has been long gone.

A notable detail here also is that the underground gas pipeline to Sydney crosses the Trail. It meets and then follows the Trail through the Colquhoun Forest near Bruces Track a few kilometres past Bruthen.

Map reference 13. Mossiface to the Omeo Highway Crossing.

Climbing out of the Dirty Hollow Creek valley back onto the old easement) brings you into a short shallow cutting before you crossing an access road (Station Road) and reveals the spread of the Tambo River Valley.

Remnant reminders of former agricultural activity can be seen off to the right hand side. A picturesque red brick building and old timber framed tobacco leaf and hops drying frames, gradually falling to pieces. Swan Reach Road runs parallel on the right, past the Mossiface CFA shed and several local houses before crossing the Trail a few metres from the Omeo Highway.

Our route however skirts around the valley on a wide semi-circle past Wiseleigh before crossing Gibb Street then turning off the embankment which once carried the line onto a quite long, curved bridge not far from Bruthen Station. The path turns sharply at the bottom of the slope beside the former bridge abutment. (This pathway was rebuilt in 2008 as part of a major upgrade of the two highway crossings, each side of Bruthen.)

Please be very careful at this crossing. Take time to check that there is no approaching traffic before crossing. 100 KPH highway.

Most of the timber bridge has been demolished to make way for the big truck traffic on the highway. Once across the highway, follow the track to your right, passing between the old bridge piers and over the creek, then swing slightly left on the track rising back onto the Trail easement. A few more metres and the Trail crosses Station Road.

Map reference 14. Bruthen Station ground

You will now be entering the former Bruthen Station ground area. Part of the Reserve has been fenced off (RHS) for farming purposes under licence. As with Orbost, the railway station at Bruthen was located on level ground some distance from the township centre. Bruthen was a very busy rail yard with additional lines and loading ramp facilities. On the town end of the former platform can be seen a shallow cutting in which a spur line provided a special loading area for the tens of thousands of timber railway 'sleepers' which were moved from this area to build and maintain the lines across the State.

The old platform still stands, and plans are to clean up the area and add a shelter, with appropriate planting. Your path re-crosses Station Road on the way to Bruthen township a few hundred metres further on. The Trail is on an embankment. Several old fruit trees still bear a crop in season.

As the Trail passes a house on the RHS there is an exit point onto a side pathway which will lead you back over the top of the Trail (access to Main Street) near the entrance to the large diameter corrugated steel train tunnel (seen straight ahead). The pedestrian bridge is one of a pair which were once derelict but have been restored for public access. Welcome to Bruthen.

Map reference 15. Bruthen and the Tambo River

Access into the town. After crossing the small foot bridge you are at the start of the Main Street of picturesque Bruthen. The PO and Police Station are to your left. Straight ahead to the shops, toilet block and other attractions of this notable and interesting town, a hub on two major roads, and notably the southern end of the Great Alpine Road. The Main Street road exits to cross the Tambo River and on to Nowa Nowa.

Note that you can return to the Trail by the same route that you left it to get into Bruthen.

You will then proceed through the tunnel and on to the former railway bridge now set up as the Rail Trail crossing of the Tambo River.

Boasting one of the most attractive and relaxing 'main streets' in any town, this one is a significant stopping point on a multi day visit to the Trail. Apart from a notable bakery the town offers a variety of eating options. A local initiative is the Bruthen Walks project, a series of short walking loops which explore the immediate surrounding area. The information and map brochure is available from local shops. An exciting and really major street-scape upgrade is planned to rejuvenate the main street and nearby public spaces. The area has a growing reputation for arts and crafts, has a monthly street market and several music events each year. Bruthen is also a major cross road being at the southern end of the Alpine Way, now a famous route very popular with motor cyclists. Going east the highway heads for NSW. The Bairnsdale - Bruthen - Nowa Nowa road provides a heavy vehicle bypass of the coastal Princes Highway which goes through Lakes Entrance.

Before leaving Bruthen make sure you refill your water bottles.

There are two ways of proceeding to Nowa Nowa. The first is to re-trace your route as noted above, and go through the large corrugated steel lined tunnel and cross the Tambo River; well worth doing.

The second is to follow the road eastward past the Hotel, taking the path on the RHS to cross the river then past the football ground (and caravan park) to meet the Trail again. A new concrete path leads to the highway (**cross with care**) and then a short straight section which again crosses the highway before you re-enter the Trail through a steel chicane and begin the long climb to the Colquhoun Forest section.

END.