

East Gippsland Rail Trail - Trail Notes EGRT/Section 4:23 - 3 1 (Nowa Nowa to Burn Road)

(v.08012009)

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)
EGRT/Section 3:16 - 22	(Bruthen to Nowa Nowa)
EGRT/Section 4:23 - 3 1	(Nowa Nowa to Burn Road) This set
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 4: map reference numbers 22 - 3 1 (Nowa Nowa to Burn Road - then on to the Snowy River Flats)

(includes: Ironstone Cr (bridge), Fairweather Track, Wairewa Rd (bridge), Jonsons Rd (Tostaree), Hospital Creek (bridge), Carl Smith Rd, Waygara (former station site), Joiners Rd (2 crossings, West and East), Robinsons Rd, Preston Rd, Newmerella 'town', then Burn Road)

Map reference 22. for Boggy Creek see Notes for Section 3.

Map reference 23. Ironstone Creek

After leaving Nowa Nowa and returning to the old railway line formation the Trail will be again diverted, first at a point where removal of a dangerous bend on the Princess Highway (proposed for 2009/10) requires the Trail route to be moved to the north, and then at Ironstone Creek, with the first of the low level by passes of old timber bridges. Although it is regrettable that the timber bridges on this final section cannot be used, an upside is that the stream level crossings which were installed takes the visitor into a different eco-environment, in fact parts of remnant temperate rain forest. The underside views of the bridges also add extra interest and reveal the ingenuity of the railway engineers. We don't see timbers that big these days.

The Nowa Nowa to Orbost section was constructed during 2005/6 and officially opened in January 2006. Funding came from the (then) Federal Government Regional Partnerships Program, when prior to the Federal Election in 2004 the (then Hon) Peter McGauran, former Member for Gippsland announced allocation of \$660,000 to complete the Trail and also carry out other urgent upgrading of several locations between Nowa Nowa and Bairnsdale. This funding brought into reality what had previously only been a dream.

The extension was achieved on time and on budget, although some of the works were carried over to through 2007 and 2008. All the contracting was carried out by local companies, which injected half a million dollars into the local economy.

The cost of repairing the several timber bridges precluded their use which meant some challenging engineering to install the low level by passes, using poured on-site concrete crossings. These are designed to present little impedance in flash flood conditions.

WARNING. If water is flowing over these crossings DO NOT USE THE CROSSING.

The Ironstone Creek bypass might miss the use of the old bridge but does allow you to experience the cool damp conditions of a temperate rain forest micro environment. Pause awhile to feel the change in conditions. This plus the one at Hospital Creek are wonderful stopping spots on a hot day.

Map reference 24. Fairweather Track. A changing landscape & vegetation

Pressing on to Fair Weather Track the visitor discovers a different type of forest environment. Watch for large goannas, wallabies and Lyre birds. The sandy soils support Banksia, and indicate underlying granite bedrock.

Cuttings throughout this country can be unstable, (as shown so dramatically by the Drivers Break Cuttings collapse west of Nowa Nowa). Just before reaching Fair Weather Track the trail diverges left at the start of a long cutting which has been abandoned because it would present short and long term maintenance procedures. The side track offers a view of the cutting, with a small stopping spot at the top.

At Fair Weather Track there are signs of some of the vandalism the third section of the Trail has experienced. Chicane/gates have been buckled; side fencing cut down and lock chains cut. Large rocks have been used at several of the road crossings to try and impede illegal vehicle access but damage still continues, at considerable cost for repairs.

Details of illegal vehicles / trail bikes can be noted and reported via the Rail Trail web site.

Land use along this section is a mixture of forest and cleared grazing land.

Map reference 25. Wairewa and a remarkable timber bridge

The next major structure is a quite spectacular curved timber bridge across the Wairewa Road. Considered by some a more outstanding structure than the one at Stoney Creek (west of Nowa Nowa), unfortunately this one has also been by-passed because of the huge expense involved to make it safe.

The western by-pass is a fairly long and steep ramp with a concrete surface. Take care on the decent and when crossing the road. The next chicane/gate has also been repeatedly damaged. A short climb gets you back onto the old formation.

A short diversion can be made back towards the bridge, with a different view for taking photos. Then past a farm house (on the right), through a short cutting and a pleasant stretch to Jonson Road. At this point another side trip can be explored, (but requires some planning) by heading south via bush roads towards Lake Tyers. (See Notes 35)

Map reference 26. Tostaree: Jonson Road (side trip to Lake Tyers) & Hospital Creek

Just before Jonson Road you will have passed a rather overgrown area on the left which was the former Tostaree Railway Station site. There are several farms nearby, including dairying.

After crossing Jonson Road it is a short run to another of the historic old timber bridges at this end of the Trail. **Take care here where the trail surface becomes narrow in several places.**

Hospital Creek is another low level by-pass, and a delightful spot to stop for refreshments or lunch. (Apart from the noise of traffic just metres away on Princes Highway) Take care on the ramps into and out off this creek. Note the superb stand of Eucalyptus on the east side of the Creek as you move back onto the old easement.

Onward from here is a peaceful trip through forest country with occasional grazing paddocks. Keep a watchful eye for wildlife.

Map reference 27 Partellis Crossing and Hartland River (picnic table stop)

This minor cross road is about half way between Nowa Nowa and Burn Road.

Thanks to the generosity of some Friends of the Rail Trail, a picnic table and seat has been installed not far along the Trail from the road crossing. An ideal spot to take a break, as the donor friends frequently do, to boil the billy, even if it's only a thermos and tea bag event.

The Trail then crosses the Hartland River before heading on to the former timber mill site of Waygara. Again the country is a mixture of forest and farmland.

Map reference 28 Waygara - former timber mills now gone. The trees return.

Native vegetation re-growth is rapidly reclaiming formerly closed land where a big timber mill was situated on the west side of the Waygara Track (which crosses the Trail).

Still standing is a huge shed and a sawdust incinerator stack. There are also former mill houses at this site, which is now in private ownership. Please respect the privacy of the owners. No amenities are available. This property is not open to the public.

Just past the Waygora Track crossing (two more chicanes) on the left is the site of another previously very large timber mill site. There are several houses alongside the Trail to the right, all part of the former timber mills community. Apart from a length of an old and very large tree and a few remnant structures, there is nothing left of this former timber mill operation.

Map reference 29 Simpsons Creek and (another) tea break spot

By this time the visitor who has travelled all the way from Bairnsdale will have seen a lot of forest, and depending on the time of year, hopefully some of the native animals which live along or visit the Reserve.

For some visitors the forest areas might seem not to be very interesting, even monotonously repetitive. The upside however is the diversity of wild life which can be supported, with space to survive.

The Trail also provides a growing space for a large number of indigenous plants, from the big eucalyptus to very tiny grasses. Because the Reserve was not often (intentionally) burnt when serving as a railway (vegetation controls were by way of herbicides) there is still a seed bank from the early days of European settlement. Careful ecological burns today can re-launch some of that resource.

To this end there is considerable advantage in the Committee working with interested biological conservation organisations. Unlocking some of the latent plant material which can be found on this Reserve has some intriguing possibilities.

The picnic table/seat sets you will find on these last few kilometres have been donated by local Friends who cycle out from Orbost. These spots provide a chance to rest awhile and just listen to the countryside around you.

Simpsons Creek might easily be missed. Just before you reach Simpsons Creek Road the Trail crosses the creek, not over the bridge which originally carried trains, but large corrugated steel culverts which many years ago replaced the timber crossing. It's worth going back along the side track just before the chicane to get a close up view of the large culverts.

Map reference 30. Joiners Road - two crossings, west and east

The Princes Highway now follows a route which irons out a number of deviations which the early road had to make to avoid difficult engineering situations.

Joiners Road is one such example. At the western end it cuts across the Reserve (or maybe the former rail line 'cut' the road!) and heads east almost parallel to the Trail. There are only a couple of house along the Trail but many more on Joiners Road. Although it is sealed and rather lumpy/bumpy the road can be used as a detour to the Trail because it re-crosses the Trail a short distance from Newmerella. It would be an interesting short alternative if returning on the Trail.

The Joiners Road section brings the visitor back a bit closer to the tempo of ordinary life; the rumble of traffic on the Princes Highway, which is only a short distance to the south.

On the south side of the Highway you can see a set of pale green buildings, fences and pipe work. This is a pumping station on the underground gas pipe line. there is a convenient motel on the right hand side just passed the crossing of Joiners Road, then sheds which are part of a local saw mill facility. The actual mill is farther on, after Preston Road.

Map reference 31. Newmerella; Trail end and the famous Snowy River; or if you are starting from Orbost, the Trail beginning!

Preston Road is the way to go to reach the Newmerella Service Station located on the Princes Highway off to your right (it includes a Post Office and Store). Otherwise press on for the last couple of kilometres and enter a quite fascinating cutting which take the Trail around a really steep hillside. This escarpment rims the Snowy River Flats (flood plain) and provides a surprise view across the very productive vegetable growing land formed by the Snowy flood plain, before the pathway drops off the railway formation to descend to Burn Road and the eastern end of the Trail.

There are signs of old attempts to stop the collapse of the hillside. Buttressing with steel rail lines and corrugated flumes channel water away from the path, suggesting this section presents considerable problems in the future.

There is also a bit of colourful local history before Burn Road. When a train was once held up by flood water across the Flats some 'persons of interest' helped themselves to a van load of white goods. Apparently they didn't get very far but it caused quite a deal of comment around the district at the time. An irony of this theft was another theft, in November 2008, of a home made sign marking the spot of the robbery which had been nailed up on a Trail side tree. Maybe the reminder was a sore point with someone!

Across from the final gate is the entrance to a new off road shared pathway which was constructed in 2007/08. (funding by the State Government, Shire Council and Committee). This pathway guides the visitor into Orbost. A shelter and information board was added in November 2008 next to the car park, thanks to the efforts of the Friends Association and with Council support. Indigenous species of grasses, reeds and shrubs were planted in December 2008.

There is an excellent lookout spot above the car park up on the old line. It can be reached by a pathway up the embankment. A short distance further on is the start of the now abandoned but very impressive low level timber causeway bridge across the flood plain. The Orbost Railway Station was near the west bank of the Snowy River but now there is little remaining to show its location. The line did not cross the river into Orbost. Information signs will be installed beside the shared pathway to mark these highlights.

Access to Orbost is via an off-road shared pathway which begins at Burn Road. Follow the signs.

(More details of historical interest related to the former railway line are recorded in back numbers of Trail Mail, the newsletter produced by the Friends Association. These can be found on the Trail web site.)

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