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Inside This Issue

Our Rail Trail in "Top 101"!	1
History Happenings	2
School Groups Are Making Good Use of the Trail	3
An Easy Retirement?	4
New Works on the Trail	5
Works in Progress :June 2008	6
Business Friends	7
Meetings	8

Our Rail Trail in "Top 101"!

A recent check on the RACV " Top 101" tourism experiences in Victoria revealed that riding this Rail Trail has increased its ranking to 18 out of 101 in Victoria's most popular destinations. It has been as high as 13 but has slipped a little. This survey is based on user responses (voting) so indicates a rise in the number of visitors coming to visit this Rail Trail.

To vote go directly to the RACV website : www.racv.com.au or follow the links from our website.

A top 20 result would certainly help us in lobbying governments for support.



Write a comment as well. This one from Rail Trail Friend Jeff Steedman is an example of comments left by voters:

"This rail trail is full of surprises and pleasant experiences. I have had encounters with emus, wallabies, roos, eagles, goannas and countless other wildlife while on the trail and the magnificent East Gippsland weather ensures you can enjoy it at any time of the year"

Jeff recently led a night ride to Bruthen along the trail and from all reports it was a highly successful adventure!



The railway came to Bairnsdale in 1888.

Prior to its construction, Bairnsdale was almost completely isolated from Melbourne by heavily timbered forests and swamps.

In the times before the railway arrived at Bairnsdale travellers left the train at Sale to catch either a steamer across the lakes or a coach over the rutted roads to Bairnsdale.

Increased population and production from farming, sawmilling and mining activity had persuaded the Victorian colonial Government to finally commence the construction of the Gippsland railway. The line was built in separate sections by a number of private contractors and so the sections were completed out of order - the first train arriving at Moe in 1878. The line from Moe to Sale was completed a year earlier, in 1877 and was eventually extended through to Bairnsdale by 1888.

In January, 1888, a canvas town sprang up around the railway area in Macleod Street and arrangements to build the terminal began. On 8th May, 1888, the railway was officially opened in great excitement with speeches and a band.

In December 1889 R. Kroekel was contracted to build the Bairnsdale railway station. It was completed in 1891 at a cost of 2322 pounds. The building originally had a slate roof, but apart from that and a minor extension, it was much the same as it is today. The first Station Master was a Mr Woodcock whose residence was at the corner of Macarthur and McLeod Streets. (*Historian, John Phillips, tells me that there is a row of former railway workers homes along McLeod Street and diagonally across the railway line is the Railway Gate Keeper's residence*). He remained in the position for 2 years. Mr Woodcock was succeeded by Mr Chambers, who was there for many years. He apparently was very popular with the nickname of "Narrow Gauge" because of his slim build. One story tells of his giving a rousing send-off to a honeymoon couple by placing several fog detonators on the rails just ahead of the engine!

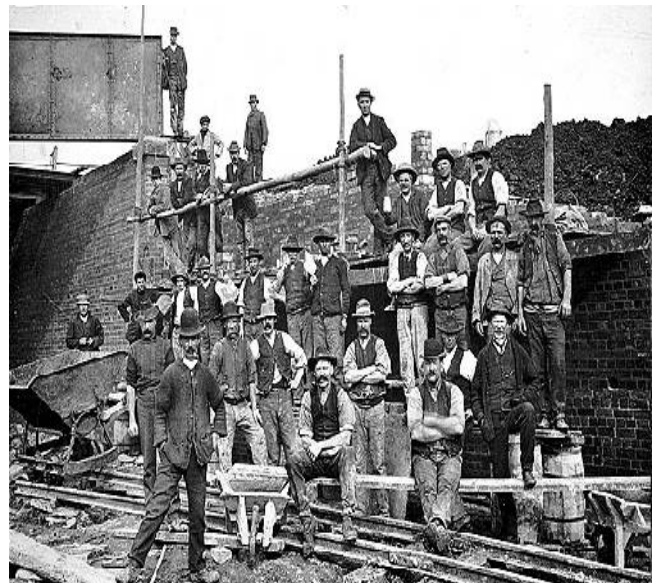
Construction workers, Bairnsdale railway bridge, circa 1910

Next Issue : Murder mystery at Bairnsdale.



Bairnsdale Railway station 1890's

The time-table allowed for two trains a day to and from Bairnsdale. A train leaving Melbourne at 7:50 am would reach Sale at 1:43 pm and arrive at Bairnsdale at 4:42 pm. A second evening train leaving Melbourne at 5:40 pm would arrive at Bairnsdale at 1:35 am. Trains left Bairnsdale at 5:10 am and 1:50 pm to arrive at Melbourne at 1:05pm and 10:43 pm respectively. A spur line was built down to the wharf to pick up fish in louvered vans which were attached to the front of the Melbourne passenger train - Bairnsdale was to become the hub of steamer traffic linking the railhead with steamers to Lakes, Paynesville Tambo and Orbost. When refrigerated cars were placed in goods trains in 1890, fish and dairy produce could be sent overnight in time for the morning markets.



School Groups Are Making Good Use of the Trail



These riders joined the Trail at Bumberrah, supported by well equipped teachers (first aid, 2 way radio etc) and a vehicle which checked with the riders at various cross roads towards Bairnsdale. Several schools have included the Trail experience as part of their outdoor recreation program.

Grades 2/3/4 from Orbost Norths pose before cycling along the link trail to check out the site of the old Orbost Rail Station.



Web Stats

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages
Jan 2008	750	1046	4716
Feb 2008	1001	1305	6345
Mar 2008	939	1234	7627
Apr 2008	777	989	3914
May 2008	742	1006	4178
Jun 2008	795	1019	4680

We have about 25 unique visitors per day each looking at about 6 pages each. Remember the website can accept credit card payment for new or renewal friends memberships.

Keith Law

AN EASY RETIREMENT?



Having completed our rail trail, Dr Bakewell continued her retirement journey on the other Gippsland trails. In her diary she explained that each trail can be appreciated for its own attraction all different from the East Gippsland Railtrail.

The Great Southern Trail has the best riding surface of all the Gippsland rail trails - gently undulating and well-graded. It meanders through cattle farmland and has great views of Wilson's Promontory.

The surface of the Gippsland Plains Trail is rough and puncture inducing but it is appealing for the countryside through which it passes - "plains rimmed by blue hills" - and for having a great campsite at the Cowarr Recreation Reserve.

The Boolara - Mirboo North Trail was remembered for being "unequivocally beautiful" with its "majestic gums with towering pale grey trunks, lots of shade, ribbons of pale tan barkand dappled sunlight".

The Bass Coast Trail is best appreciated for the Kilcunda section with its spectacular coastal views.

The toughest Gippsland trails are probably the Walhalla Goldfields Rail Trail and the Tyers Junction Rail Trail. Dr Bakewell describes them as "rough, steep and inadequately signposted...muddy and slippery, rocky...." more suited to walking or horse riding although she concedes that the tall forests were wild and beautiful.

A short trail (only 3.5km), the Noojee Trestle Bridge Rail Trail features an impressive restored trestle bridge which is higher than the Stoney Creek one but not as long. Nearby is the Toorong Falls picnic and camping area.

(Each of these trails is worth a visit if you haven't already tried them. Check the web-sites or read the 2007 edition of Rail Trails of Victoria book.)

As well as the wonderful detailed descriptions of the trails, Dr Bakewell humorously writes of the difficulties she encountered : the van uncoupling just as she was driving out of the Maffra campsite ; having to camp overnight in a pub car park protected by possibly vicious dogs and with no toilet close by ; becoming lost twice in Leongatha ; falling off her bike at a turnstile! (Haven't we all done this?) and having the fridge door come off its hinges after ten kilometres of corrugated gravel on the Erica Noojee route.

So what had been learned on this exploration of the Gippsland Rail Trails?

"...ride early in the morning while it's cool and if there's a particular long up-hill section to ride up it first while....fresh....free wheel down it, back to the car, when....tired..."

"leave a piece of paper on the caravan table each morning saying what time...left and where...heading to. The mobile phone network,....is a social and business network.....nothing to do with emergency; the more isolated you are, the less the cover."

Having completed the Gippsland Rail Trails Dr Bakewell's fitness had improved, she had become stronger, changed gears less often, became more flexible and lost weight, was injury free and declared "I feel well. It's great!" She was ready to tackle the rest of Victoria's Rail Trails.

New Works on Trail

New concrete decking on Nicholson River bridge has cost a lot of money but has greatly improved the crossing and hopefully will last for many years.



Boggy Creek new shared pathway bridge, link to Rail Trail. This is a wonderful addition at Nowa Nowa for locals and visitors. One ongoing problem we have however are clear signs to guide Trail visitors through the township via the Princes Hwy. But we are working on it!



The 'Serenity Seat', donated by the Steedman family and installed at Harmans Road. Jeff assisted Michael in setting the seat in place one chilly



morning. These seats are made by Mitchell River Rotary who receive the donations to assist their work. The next seat to be added will be near the Waddels Rd/Stephenson Rd area, donated by the Eldridge family. That will happen as soon as MRR can get another one off their 'production line'.

Photos and notes by Michael Oxer

Works In Progress

The Rail Trail Management Committee is very pleased to have obtained sufficient funds to go ahead with the two highway crossings at Bruthen, with major upgrades of the approaches. A new concrete pathway has been added on the north crossing and major earthworks and re-shaping of the old bridge abutment at the southern crossing to provide a less steep grade and wider path. These works were carried out in early July.



The old bridge abutment has been re-shaped to provide a wide pathway down to the Omeo Hwy.



Laying a new concrete path up to the Highway (the crossing just past the footie ground).

Michael Oxe



Future works will include some infrastructure and plantings at the Burn Road trail head at Newmerella/Orbost.

Friends of East Gippsland Rail Trail

Business Friends

Dungey Plumbing P/L
John Florance
Lake Whadie Cafe
Nicholson River General Store
Orbost Visitors Centre
Perry's Bus Service
R.J. Bourke C.P.A. Bairnsdale
Le Cafe at Applespice Cottage

Bicycle Resources Friends

Orbost Sports Kingdom
Rawson's Bikes
Riviera Cycles

**2008 Membership can be renewed
online at our website.**

Accommodation Friends

Beachside Loft at Eagle Bay
Bruthen Inn
Chestnut Hill Country Retreat
Lakes Entrance Waverley House Cottages
Marlo Ocean Views Caravan Park
Mingling Waters Waterfront Wilderness Retreat
Mitchell Gardens Holiday Park
Mitchell Motor Inn
Nowa Nowa Camping and Caravan Park
Orbost Caravan Park
Orbost Country Roads Motor Inn
Orbost Countryman Motor Inn
Snowy River Homestead B&B
Stringybark Cottages Sarsfield
Tambo Park Cottages
Tambo River Tourist Park
Travellers Rest Motel Bairnsdale
Waterholes Guest House



Please support our business friends whenever possible.



The O'Dwyer family from Canberra enjoying Mike's hospitality after riding the trail.

Friends were delighted to be guests at Mingling Waters. Thanks Mike!



Check regularly at www.eastgippslandrailtrail.com for updates.



MEETINGS

July 27 AGM Bruthen (1 pm Sunday)

Sept 15 Bairnsdale

Nov 10 Nowa Nowa

Evening meetings begin
7:00 pm



Working Bee July 27 9:30 am - 11:30 am , all tools and equipment provide.

A working bee will be held before the AGM to plant areas repaired after the 2007 floods. the location is on the trail near Lees Rd Bridge (south of Mossiface), turn into Lees Rd, cross over the trail and then walk down onto the trail. The planting will be towards Bairnsdale direction on the side of the embankment - this location is easily seen from the trail. We will go to the Bruthen Inn for lunch before the meeting.



AGM

All positions are vacant and all members are invited to join the committee of Friends of East Gippsland rail trail.

Nominations, apologies, suggestions or further information contact secretary, Sue Peirce. Ph. 5156 8228 or email peirces@wideband.com.au

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!