

Riesling Trail Management Committee Chairman's report, 2014 AGM, 13/11/14

I am pleased to report that the past year has been a very successful one for the Riesling Trail Management Committee. I must firstly acknowledge the outstanding work of those with vision and persistence who established the Riesling Trail some 20 years ago, including past Chairman Graham Mill, who will address us later this evening.

The use of the Trail continues to grow – total Traker readings are now close to 50,000 a year, up from 44,000 two years ago. This equates to approx. 25,000 users a year. Of these we estimate half are visitors to the district. Hence, the Trail is of great economic and social value to the region. Of note is a recently formed U3A Riesling Trail Group (by Sue Mayfield), which visits sections to learn more about the plants, birds, geology and history of the Trail.

Management Committee

Much of the activities of the Committee are at the sub-committee level. These subcommittees include other people not on the main Committee. The two main subcommittees are Marketing and Maintenance. The Art and Loops subcommittees meet less often, as the need arises. We are still looking for a leader for the Amenities and Signage subcommittee.

Marketing and membership

The Marketing subcommittee (led by Mark Hill and with administrative support from Monica Trengove) has greatly improved our income as well as publicity of the Trail. We now have a five tiered membership structure

- Business Partners: These businesses provide a significant annual contribution (of \$500/year) and receive recognition in Newsletters, at the Lennon Street Trailhead and on signs along the Trail. These signs provide useful information to visitors about the location, opening hours and contact details for these supporting businesses. There are currently 20 businesses who are Business Partners.
- Business Friends: These businesses provide an annual contribution (of \$150/year) and receive recognition at the Lennon Street Trailhead. Currently, there are 40 Business friends.
- Honorary Business Friends: These businesses have donated significant time or facilities to projects on the Riesling Trail. These are also listed at the Lennon Street Trailhead.
- Friends of the Riesling Trail: There is now a life membership option (Friends Forever) for \$400 for anyone not wanting to renew their subscription each year. Of the 73 Riesling trail Friends, 26 are Friends Forever.
- Honorary Friends Forever: These are life memberships in recognition of outstanding service to the Riesling Trail.

We thank all these businesses and individuals for their financial support for the Riesling Trail. We need, however, to continue to build our membership numbers, especially Riesling Trail Friends. This gives us a strong base for any project work and on-going management of the Riesling Trail.

Publicity about the Riesling Trail has increased remarkably thanks to the efforts of Monica Trengove. As well as a new look web site, which is frequently updated and four Newsletters a year, there is now Facebook which send comments & photos of the Riesling trail far & wide. The latest count is that we have 530 Facebook friends. Monica has given very generously of her time over the last two years. The Management Committee has agreed to pay Monica for at least part of her time for this work from this financial year on.

A major project for the marketing sub-committee has been the sale of paving bricks. All being well, these will be installed at the Lennon Street Park this Sunday. There are many who have donated time and equipment for this project, including Earles Transport, Clare Quarry, MAIT Plumbing and Murf Sims, for which we are very grateful.

Maintenance

It is important for the continuing popularity of the Riesling Trail to keep the Trail surface in very good condition. As well as an annual grant for Trail maintenance from the Office for Recreation and Sport, we also have a group of willing volunteers to help on maintenance projects. Volunteer work includes pruning, minor repairs and leaf litter clean-ups.

Major work this year is planned for a 600m section from Greenwood Park Road to Mulkiri Road. We are also repairing other shorter sections (such as private vehicle cross-overs) with the help of Butch (Leigh) Meaney. Repair material and piping for this work has been donated by the Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council.

Art along the Riesling trail

Other than an additional sheep to the flock, artwork has taken a pause this year. We have re-considered the plan to install railway equipment at Barinia and have decided not to continue with this but instead build a display with a wine-making theme at Watervale. This sub-committee was chaired by Neil Ruff. Neil resigned during the year due to business commitments so we are looking for a new chair of this subcommittee. We thank Neil for his contributions to the Riesling Trail.

Amenities and signage

It seems we can never have enough signs along the Trail to help direct visitors to where they want to go! The Business Partner signs help provide some of this detail. We will also install directional signs to toilets at a few locations. We are mindful however that signs can detract from the bushland settings of the Trail and so do not want to have too many.

To improve the appearance of the Trail we have replaced all the kilometre markers with new ones and also replaced the faded signs directing people to the Trail from Horrocks Highway. As well, we have re-located all of the km posts so that they are now exactly one km apart and start from the Lennon Street Park. Some of this signage has been funded by a grant from the Office for Recreation and Sport.

Development of the Lennon Street Park has progressed very well. Plants are now well established, thanks to the volunteers who helped with watering last summer and also helped with weeding, pruning and spreading mulch. During the year the car park was bituminised (by Tristan Smart) to stop dust and water erosion.

A major project this year has been a complete revision of the Riesling Trail brochure. This was very capably managed by Sara Twigg-Patterson. These brochures are very popular, and we are close to re-printing another batch.

Future plans for facilities include a shelter and water tank at Barinia and more seats along the Trail, especially where it is used more frequently. We will also put in more signs and white posts, especially near main cross roads, to improve safety along the Trail.

Other projects

- Biodiversity

With a grant from NRM we have completed a survey of the vegetation and birds along the Trail. Details of these surveys are on the Riesling Trail web site. Interpretive signs have been installed at Sevenhill station and brochures to publicise these further have been distributed. Special thanks to Dave Potter, Jean Turner and David Donato for the survey work and to Lorraine Edmunds for compiling details for the brochure and signs.

- Control of pines and olives

To improve the biodiversity along the Trail we have a major project to remove olives and selected pines from Barinia to Auburn, with the Rattler Trail Committee covering the section from Auburn to Riverton. This has been funded by Northern & Yorke NRM (through the CGVC). Although the term of this funding has finished we will still continue with this work, including control of any re-growth or new seedlings. So far we have controlled an estimated 1,000 of the 2,000 olive trees along the Trail. The section north of Clare and the cuttings south of Watervale are now mostly free of olives.

Acknowledgements

There are many I need to thank for support over the past 12 months. In particular

- Peter Wood for his great work as treasurer and for willing assistance with any job (never too big or too small) for the Trail.
- Mark Hill for his great leadership with the Marketing Subcommittee and wise guidance throughout the year.
- To the Management Committee for on-going support.
- To Grant McKenzie, Richard Tappin and others at the Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council for excellent cooperation with projects along the Trail.
- To Kate Matchett and Anthony Nitschke with the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure.
- To the many volunteers and local businesses who have willingly helped with Riesling Trail projects.
- To Riesling Trail Friends for their on-going support and ideas to improve the Trail.

Allan Mayfield,
Chairman, Riesling Trail Management Committee