

Gippsland Rail Trail Summit meeting

The Clare Valley's Reisling Rail Trail

Protecting our fragile timber bridges

Re-imagining the future in Northern NSW



Rail Trail Connections

This publication is registered with Australia Post

PrintPost Publication no: 100019894

Contributions are welcome, and should be addressed to:

The Editor
Rail Trails Australia
P.O. Box 2127
Oak Park VIC 3046

editor@railtrails.org.au

Rail Trails Australia Inc.

ABN 94 479 743 813
VIC A0038226C

PO Box 2127 Oak Park Vic 3046

P: 03 9306 4846
W: www.railtrails.org.au
E: admin@railtrails.org.au

Contacts

NSW Representative
John O'Brien
jobrien@railtrails.org.au

Queensland Representative
Mark Linnett
qld@railtrails.org.au

South Australia Representative
Shona Cameron
sa@railtrails.org.au

Tasmania Representative
Frank Kinnersley (acting - applicants welcome)
tas@railtrails.org.au

Victoria - Gippsland Representative
Stephen Lodge
slodge@railtrails.org.au

Victoria - North Representative
Damian McCrohan
dmccrohan@railtrails.org.au

Victoria - West Representative
Pam Moore
pmoore@railtrails.org.au

West Australia Representative
Frank Kinnersley (acting - applicants welcome)
fkinneresley@railtrails.org.au

Cover: Wattle flowers signal spring is not far away on the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail.

Photo: Alexander McCooke

President's platform

A ride on the wonderful Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail outside Melbourne with fellow members of Rail Trails Australia also yielded the front cover image. It was part of the 50th anniversary commemoration since the last train ran and along with scenery and good food we also enjoyed seeing the number of walkers, horse riders and cyclists using the rail trail, despite it being in the depths of winter (the cover shot was not staged!).

However there is still a lot of work to do, even in Victoria let alone NSW, and there is never a shortage of important tasks we would like to carry out.

One of the important tasks is to better document and communicate the tangible economic benefits that rail trails can bring to regions, particularly businesses expanding due to rail trails.

An accessible document that clearly and vividly demonstrates these benefits, using examples and analysis, would be invaluable in all states, even in Victoria with its reasonably well established network but still needing better facilities. If anyone is interested in helping to better present our data and information, please contact me.

Finally just a reminder that we always appreciate articles of interest for Rail Trail Connections. If you are involved with a rail trail and have completed a project why not let everyone know about what you have achieved; it may also assist others and is a great way to recognise the contribution that your partners and others have made.

We all enjoy reading about trails we are yet to travel (and those we have), if you have had a memorable or unique experience on a rail trail why not share it?

Like almost all of our work, the magazine is put together by volunteers. The editors are very happy to work with a range of material - no journalistic experience required! It is a lot easier for the team to shape other people's items to fit the requirements than to produce stories second or third hand, as well as providing a more authentic voice that reflects the experiences of our membership.

Damian McCrohan

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting of Rail Trails Australia (Inc) will be held on Friday, November 6th from 6.30 pm at the North Carlton Community Centre, in the former North Carlton Railway Station building in Solly Avenue, North Carlton.

With the recent changes of legislation, RTA is classified as a tier one organisation and the committee has chosen not to have an independent review of our accounts for the past financial year. In conjunction with the AGM, elections will take place for all positions on the Rail Trails Australia committee.

New members to the committee are always welcome.

If you would like to join the committee and help guide our work please contact the Secretary, Frank Kinnersley, by 24 October and we will send you a nomination form and explain the process. Please note that nominees must be financial members of the Association (at both the time of nomination and at time of the AGM).

Due to the slightly early printing of this issue we have not finalised the guest speaker yet. A notice will be put on the website and an email sent out to the newsletter recipients with the details.

Please RSVP to the Secretary, Frank Kinnersley, for catering purposes.
E: admin@railtrails.org.au
P: 03 9306 4846



Queensland Short lines

The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail is getting longer ...

The Queensland Government is currently building the section from Brassall (northern edge of Ipswich) to the Brisbane Valley Highway at Wanora, linking to the current terminus of the BVRT. This 10.7km section is planned to open later this year and bring the total length to 124km.

The Ipswich City Council is also applying for State Government funding to build the 'Missing Link' from Brassall to Wulkuraka. Once funded and built it will be possible to take an interurban train to Wulkuraka Station and ride the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail from Wulkuraka to Toogoolawah and Moore to Yarraman (the section from Toogoolawah to Moore is currently not open for use, but can be ridden safely via back roads).

Rail Trails Australia thanks the Queensland Government for the funding and construction of this section of what will be a fantastic rail trail when completed.

The already completed parts of the BVRT continues to draw users. On 12 July the Fernvale to Lowood section of the BVRT again hosted the annual Somerset Rail Trail Fun Run. The very cool and windy morning found over 500 eager and excited fun runners gathered at Fernvale. This year had some entertainment before the run, including the Somerset Regional Council Mayor, Cr Graeme Lehmann, delighting the crowd with the Nutbush dance. Results were in in less than an hour: the first male completed the 8.3km run in 28 minutes, while the first female crossed the line in 30 minutes.

For maps and details about the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Visit <http://www.railtrails.org.au/trail-descriptions/queensland?view=trail&id=39>



Funding for Kingaroy Rail Trail confirmed

The current Queensland Government has confirmed that it will honour the funding commitment of \$2 million for a rail trail between Kingaroy and Kilkivan made by the previous government last year. This is on the former Theebine to Kingaroy railway line that was pulled up in 2012.

The Gympie Times reported in June that the apportionment of the funding provides \$600,000 for the 45km Kilkivan to Murgon section and \$1.4 million for the 43km Murgon to Kingaroy section, with the emphasis on the section from Kilkivan to Goomeri. There is no mention of the Theebine to Kilkivan section of the corridor, perhaps because of the damage to bridges in this section.

The Gympie Times also reports that a Memorandum of Understanding will be entered into between Gympie Regional Council and South Burnett Regional Council. Negotiations also need to be held with adjoining landowners.

The section from Kilkivan to Goomeri, which is in the Gympie Regional Council, is 27.6km long and is aimed at maximising the benefit to both townships. The \$600,000 will be given to the South Burnett Council who, in accordance with the MOU, will pass it on to the Gympie Council.

Ongoing maintenance will be required, which could be in the order of \$50,000 a year.

In July, South Burnett Council staff visited several rail trails in Victoria to get an appreciation of their construction and management practices. This is encouraging as it will be a challenge to construct this length of rail trail with the funding provided.

Burnett River Rail Trail proposal (QLD)

A new 37km rail trail is being planned in the Burnett region of Queensland by the Gayndah Heritage Railway Rail Trail Group.

This will be a very scenic rail trail, following the Burnett River, and passing citrus, farming grounds and granite rock formations. It is proposed to run from Gayndah to Mundubbera along the old Monto rail corridor, for bushwalking, mountain biking, horse riding, bird watching, and kayaking on the Burnett River. Loop trails are planned to include local tourism attractions, such as bullock teams, sunset and landscape viewing points, and wilderness experiences exploring geology and highlighting flora and fauna. Another attraction of this rail trail will be the many unique bridges that will be crossed, all of which are different in style ranging from timber trestle, steel, concrete and viaducts.

A lease and funding is being sought to construct a pilot six km rail trail from Mount Debateable to Humphrey.

If you would like to join and support this group please contact Mike Goebel (President) at mikegoebel54@gmail.com

For more details about this rail trail visit www.railtrails.org.au or <https://www.facebook.com/gayndahrailway> www.burnetttriverrailtrail.com



Right: Typical scenery along the proposed Burnett River Rail Trail. Photo: Dave Marshall

Left: A low level crossing with easy gradients is being used in lieu of a bridge. Photo: Mark Linnett



Queensland Short lines

Buderim Tramway (Rail Trail) Centenary 20 June 2015

The Buderim-Palmwoods Heritage Tramway Inc. (BPHTI) celebrated the Centenary of the opening of Palmwoods to Buderim Tramway, which opened on 18 June 1915.

BPHTI organized a perfect day for the Centenary celebrations at the site of the old Buderim Station. In front of several hundred spectators, local Councillor Ted Hungerford had the honour of unveiling a commemorative plaque. The guests then walked up the road to St Mark's Church hall to the sound of the church bell, which was originally on the Shay loco which ran on the line, and now housed in the belfry. Celebrations continued at the local hall, where there was an impressive display of old photographs, with members of BPHTI to answer any questions. Lunch was served by BPHTI and what a fantastic job they did feeding the large crowd.

After lunch followed the official speeches. Buderim-Palmwoods Heritage Tramway President Helene Cronin welcomed all to the centenary event. Helene outlined how a small group formed in 2003 to preserve this important piece of Buderim's history and to turn part of the old formation into a walking trail.

The Telco Road end has wheelchair access leading to a well maintained 2km walking track (4km return), including seats at four rest points.

In 2004 BPHTI tracked down one of the original steam locomotives then raised funds to transport the loco back to Buderim and cosmetically restore this loco. State MP Steve Dickson spoke about the importance of getting the loco permanently displayed in glass housing at the location of the old railway station. BPHTI are keen to get this loco displayed - for more information visit <http://www.buderim.qld.au/tram/>

Guests were then entertained with a splendid performance by Buderim Youth Theatre of Excellence (BYTE) of a re-enactment of the official opening of the Tramway in 1915, which included the driving in of the last spike and the arrival of a cut-out model of the Krauss loco, complete with smoke, to cut the

ribbon. The Buderimaires entertained with original songs about the Tramway written by Noel Williams, which the crowd applauded.

After all these activities, it was time to board the free bus to visit the restored Krauss steam loco No 6854. After a longer than expected viewing it was back on the bus to return for a guided walk along the Heritage tramway walking track, led by the members of BPHTI. Unfortunately the fading light of the day did not enable us to complete the trail, but many folk said they would certainly be returning on another day to complete the walk. For some locals this was their first walk along this hidden treasure.



For more information about this Rail Trail Visit <http://www.railtrails.org.au/trail-descriptions/queensland/south-east-queensland?view=trail&id=228>

Good news for the Links Mobility Corridor in Hervey Bay

Fraser Coast Regional Council has allocated \$800,000 in the 2015/2016 Budget for the next stage of this trail. The latest 550m extension will connect the current trail head at Elizabeth St Urangan to Dayman Street Urangan, within sight of the impressive pier.

A further amount has been identified for the extension from Dayman Street to the pier in future years, but as yet there is no time frame given for this project.

For more information about this rail trail visit <http://www.railtrails.org.au/trail-descriptions/queensland?view=trail&id=69>

President of the Friends of the Bendigo-Kilmore Rail Trail, Garry Long, recently cycled part of the proposed Mary to the Bay Rail Trail (the developed section is officially known as Links Mobility Corridor) and has written about his adventure (see next page).

The funding for this link will provide future visitors with a connection between the rail trail and the pier - one of the missing pieces in Garry's search for the elusive Mary to the Bay Rail Trail.

Mark Linnett
Queensland Representative
Rail Trails Australia
mlinnett@railtrails.org.au

Left: The restored Krauss steam loco.
Photo: Mark Linnett



Councillor Ted Hungerford unveils the commemorative plaque. Buderim-Palmwoods Heritage Tramway



A rail trail by another name!

As a cyclist, local designated off-road trails, rail trails and publicised road riding routes draw my interest to an area. The Rail Trail Australia's website highlighted the 'Mary to the Bay Rail Trail' as one of the Queensland rail trails, so I was eager to see and experience this trail in the Hervey Bay area.

Little did I know that the Fraser Coast Regional Council designated the developed part of this trail as "Links Mobility Corridor"! After riding along the meandering 'Esplanade Trail', through parkland and around caravan parks, there was the imposing Urangan Pier jutting out into the bay.

As an important loading facility from a past era, the Pialba to Urangan rail link was connected to this pier in 1913. Whilst a little shorter than the original structure and no longer used for its original purpose, the pier remains an icon, attracting fisherman and visitors alike. Interpretive signage includes old photos to tell its story. Riding along the pier, with the many fishermen eagerly awaiting their next catch being watched by a pelican or two, one could imagine the past activity of steam trains, cranes and ships loading Bundaberg sugar, Burrum coal and Fraser Island timber for export.

Now it was time to start my ride on the rail trail. Yet confusion arose as I viewed a street map near the pier. What was this 'Links Mobility Corridor'? Where was the rail trail that had been my focus? Riding from the pier, I sighted a concrete railway buffer block; so the trail must be here somewhere? With no directional signs at the large parcel of land with its 'For Sale' signs, which must have been the railway marshalling yards, I was soon lost in suburban streets and found myself exploring sections of the well-presented Botanical Gardens. Then appeared an off-road trail, marked as the 'Links Mobility Corridor'; perhaps it was the start of the 'Mary to the Bay Rail Trail' too?

First impressions were "wow!". This was a very well developed formal pathway, with wide asphalt surface, shelters and seats, trees, mowed lawn grass, and even open space 'street' lighting installed. The trail passed adjoining urban housing and shopping centre on one side; the Botanical Gardens, a waterway and caravan park on the other. Street crossings were well

designated, with treatments making the approaches safe. Where this 'trail' or 'link' took me, I was about to find out!

The trail was well used; with school students walking and riding, ladies walking their dogs, even an older couple out on their mobility scooters. Then the trail ride came to an abrupt end at a supermarket complex, with no directional signage. Where to next? Was I right to assume that cycling along footpaths was legally allowed as I searched for a connection point?



*The rail trail is a high standard one well used by local residents.
Photo: Garry Long*

Stumbling across a piece of former railway infrastructure gave me another hint as the adventure unfolded. Nearby was an impressive new outdoor sculpture of a huge whale 'breaching' located at the new Art Gallery. Later research identified that this open public space was the location of the former Pialba railway station, and the former railway crossing grid that I saw was on the spur line to the Urangan Pier. With what appeared to be a trail ahead, off I cycled past more outdoor public art with murals depicting the former railway plus stylised chrome metal sculptures.

Passing through the education and commercial areas, the trail easement widened into open park spaces as the trail curved past residential properties. An uncontrolled road crossing was noted on Urraween Rd, with wide concrete paths on both sides of this divided roadway, making it unclear as to which side of the road was the rail trail. After crossing the road it became a little clearer as adjacent to the pathway was a small cutting with two discarded railway relics. The upgrading of Urraween Rd has significantly changed the landscape, yet small sections of embankments and cuttings could still

be spotted. Further along construction workers were putting the final touches to a new concrete pathway. Was this project related to upgrading and extending the formal rail trail? A machine operator was unable to identify whether this was the rail trail or 'Link Mobility Corridor'. I continued on to explore an open flat undeveloped area. Maybe this was where the former railway line once was, as I sighted a rough track curving away towards the south.

I rode on what became more obviously a former railroad bed. While no links with the former railway's infrastructure or history were evident, you could imagine the train travelling along the gradual curves, where a trail was now formed from a strip of mowed grass. As the area became more rural, trees and scrub intruded on what became a narrower mowed pathway.

This all came to an abrupt end, with a drop away to concrete abutment of a missing former bridge or grid! The former railway alignment could be seen ahead, but with no grass mowed track any passage by bike would be much more difficult. Nearby I spotted what appeared to be a former railway goods shed, so it was time to investigate and take some photos. Then a flat tyre changed my plans.

The adventure on the Mary to the Bay Rail Trail was over. During my ride along the urban section the trail I observed that it was being utilised by a range of different local community users, yet could the same be said for visiting tourists? Will any future trail extension into the rural areas beyond Urraween towards Nikenbah and the Mary River be a Council priority? Time will be the judge of that!

*Garry Long
President of the Friends of the Bendigo -
Kilmore Rail Trail (on holidays)*

Editor's note - see Shortlines for an announcement about funding for this rail trail



The Clare Valley's Riesling Rail Trail

Most people have heard about the many wonderful rail trails in Victoria, but few people realise that some other states also have some excellent rail trails. On a recent trip to South Australia in May, RTA Committee member John O'Brien and his wife visited the Clare Valley and the Riesling and Rattler Trails.

We had our bikes with us, and as the weather was favourable, had the opportunity to ride the two consecutive trails in both directions. Recent rain showers had transformed the normally dry and brown countryside into a carpet of green, and with the addition of the beautiful colours of the autumn leaves, it was a photographer's delight.

Starting at the site of the old Clare Railway Station, we cycled south towards Auburn. The Riesling Trail has recently been enhanced with more interpretive signs, and some artworks at various sites. The sculpture of the man and his sheep at Clare is excellent. This gives you a chance to have a short break, while reading some interesting history of the Clare Valley. It's all uphill to Penwortham, about 10km, but the steepest gradient is only 1.5% making it an easy and pleasant ride.

The next section of the trail is all downhill, passing through the two station sites of Watervale and Leasingham. The trail bypasses two areas where bridges once existed. This is no problem, although you have to be careful of any traffic at these points. Once you arrive in Auburn you are naturally looking for a good coffee shop, and Auburn has plenty of choice. It was a pleasant surprise to see so many shops and restaurants open.

The Riesling Trail actually passes through some undulating country, which you don't notice on the rail trail until you look at some of the deep cuttings and high embankments. There is plenty of signage warning you to stay away from the edges. At some places you are riding through a tunnel of Aleppo pines, giving shelter from the wind and sun.

Leaving Auburn we had a 15km gentle uphill climb back to Penwortham, before the downhill run back into Clare. A coffee shop in the paddock, called the Legless Dog, has sprung up halfway between Watervale and Penwortham.



New bridge near Auburn.

Photo: John O'Brien

Hot coffee and tasty homemade cakes made the return trip even more enjoyable.

The next day we drove down to Auburn to tackle the Rattler Trail to Riverton and return. The Rattler trail is 19km long and mostly flat. The countryside on this trail is different to the Riesling Trail, being more open, with mostly dryland farming, and of course plenty of grapevines. This trail has three brand new bridges which bypass some deep and rough creek crossings.

The surface of the Rattler Trail has recently been upgraded, and is so smooth that you would swear you were on a sealed road at times. Arriving at Riverton gives you the opportunity to get a coffee and snacks at the bakery, coffee shops, or the pubs. We were lucky that our visit coincided with a vintage car rally, and we got to see some wonderfully restored motor vehicles.



Artwork in the Cogwebs Cafe.

Photo: John O'Brien





Watervale - Businesses tap into the rail trail.

Photo: John O'Brien

The railway station at Riverton is a huge double story building, and in original condition, although no longer in use. The platform, all the tracks, the signal box, the goods shed and water tower are all still intact. Unfortunately it has been sold off, and is now in private hands and is off limits to sightseers. The new owner has installed three railway carriages and an old diesel engine at the station to make it even more appealing. We were told that accommodation was once available in the railway carriages, but that is no longer the case.

The Riesling and Rattler Trails both have an excellent hard packed surface, and

gentle gradients. The new interpretive signs give you an opportunity to gain an insight into the history of the area, particularly the role that railways played in the development of this part of the country. There is plenty of accommodation at Clare, Auburn and Riverton, from luxury B&Bs to basic country hotel rooms. This area abounds with wineries and great restaurants that boast local wines and produce. So why not come and spend a few days in a beautiful part of the world.

John O'Brien



The wine and rail trail combination is working in other parts of SA - Coast to Vines Rail Trail, Shiraz Trail, McLaren Vale

Shona runs Gourmet Cyclists, an Australian travel company for foodie cyclists and gives a flavour of a recent rail trail ride.

Our 70km cycling journey began in the urban sprawl of Adelaide, at Marino Rocks Station, the start of the Coast to Vines Rail Trail, also known as the Shiraz trail. The trail starts to open out to farmland and grapes after Seaford. The trail passes wild olives, almonds with rolling hills towards the East. There are some great coastal vantage points too.

McLaren Vale is a vibrant sustainable winemaking region with an amazing food and artistic, trendy vibe. There's lots to explore. Bikes can be hired from Onya Bike Hire, which is situated in the Main Street of McLaren Vale, out of an old tram.

Rolling along onto Willunga, the trail follows more grapes, with plenty of wineries to stop off for thirsty wine lovers. Willunga is also a foodie heaven. Saturday morning is the Farmer's Market, plus a heap of cafes and second hand shops for the thrifty fashionistas.

On the way back, we stopped for a tasting of olive oil and a selection of fine wines.

There was plenty of opportunities to buy wine so naturally we finished our cycling tour with a glass of Shiraz.

www.gourmetcyclists.com

Karen Wilson

Typical scenery on the rail trail in McLaren vale. Photo - Karen Wilson



Transforming the past and re-imagining the future

The air is cool and the wind rustles softly through the overgrown grass that brushes the old rusty tracks of the abandoned Northern Railway Line. Wildflowers determinedly push their way through the rotting wooden slats, competing for a slice of sunshine and all around you can be felt an echo of the past. The remnants of times gone by can be felt intensely in what is left behind, but can what is left behind become part of a new future, part of a new chapter in a place's history?

Supporters of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail feel that is exactly what can happen. They propose that the almost 100 year old rail track, which ran from Casino to Murwillumbah, be redeveloped into a walking, cycling and tourist trail that can showcase the region and bring much needed dollars to the inland towns of the Northern Rivers.

Marie Lawton is a passionate advocate and founding member of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail Group and with the help of many others, she has campaigned

and gained a significant amount of support for the project.

"Our community wants solutions and we want clean, green and profitable options that offer longevity for the people who call these towns home", says Marie.

The trail would take in one of NSW most popular tourist destinations, Byron Bay. It sits at the centre point of the rail trail and would be a tourist feeder town for inland areas of the region that, according to the Group, have thus far not benefited from the massive tourism dollars that pour into Byron Bay.

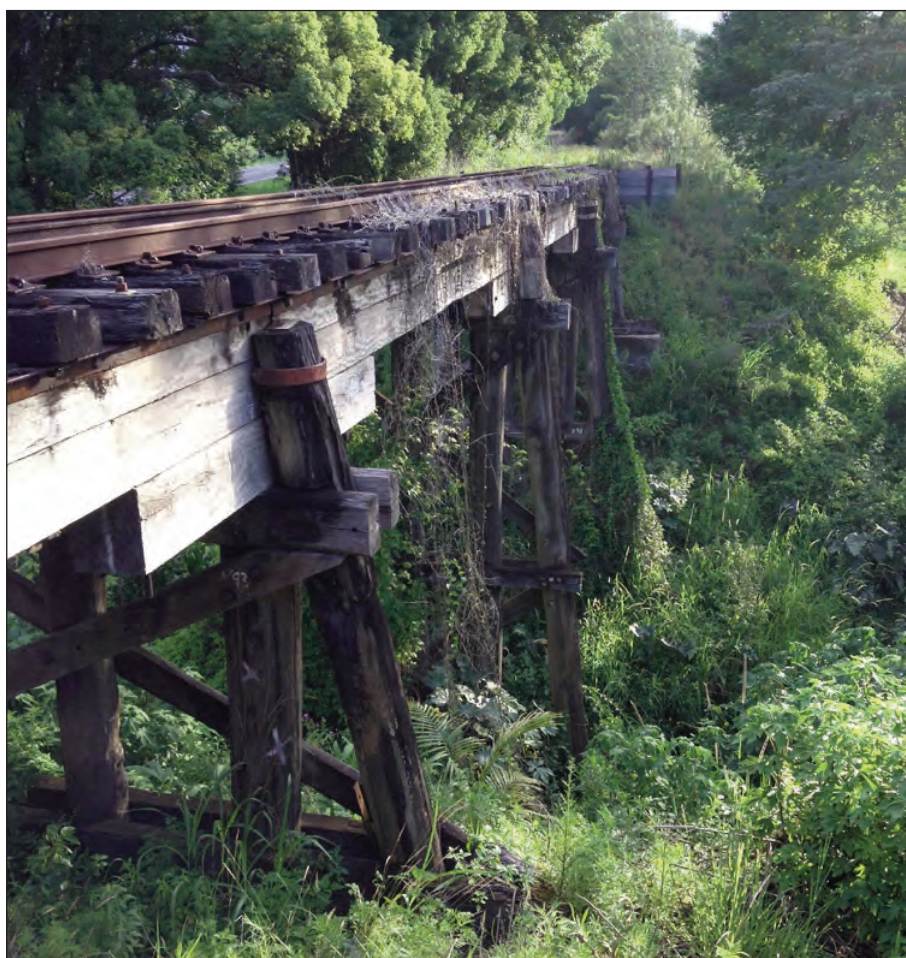
"This project would spread some of the tourists outwards, introducing them to beautiful towns that without this development will surely continue their decline" says Marie.

The Northern Rivers Rail Trail Group submitted an application for some of the \$50m funding on offer. However, the NSW Minister for Regional Development, John Barilaro, announced in late June that only \$5m of the funding for rail trails had been allocated; to the 21 km Tumbarumba to Rosewood rail trail in southern NSW.

The proponents of the Tumbarumba Rail Trail now have to prepare yet another detailed proposal to actually secure the funding. The NSW government has still not provided any details on how they will allow rail trails to be built, as the government have clearly stated that existing legislation prevents their construction.

Rail trails are common across Australia, New Zealand and the rest of the world however New South Wales has experienced barriers to these projects being created on unused government railways due to specific legislation. Connections has reported on the efforts to address this anomaly in previous issues.

If you would like to know more about this issue or are interested in finding out more about the rail trails listed and their unique features please visit Rail Trails Australia www.railtrails.org.au



Typical scenery on this picturesque corridor.

Photo: Stephen Kaye



in northern NSW

Information collated by the Group shows that employment within the region comes predominantly from government and that the rail trail offers an opportunity for enterprise, with opportunities for job creation outside of government services that could equal 1200 jobs.

Local councils managing the region which the railway meanders through support the project. The Tweed City Council is perhaps its biggest supporter and is ready to roll out the first stage. The Byron Shire, Richmond Valley and Lismore City Councils are also onboard. Support for the creation of rail trails is also coming from some state government departments and agencies, such as Tourism NSW and NSW Health.

Early this year, John Barilaro, Minister for Tourism NSW, announced that up to \$50 million dollars will be earmarked for the development of rail trails across NSW. The Group is looking for a large slice of that funding.

Tentative estimates are that at least \$40 million will be needed for the Northern Rivers project. However according to Hillary Wise, Media Officer for the Group, the cost benefit ratio for the project is positive, with the project primed to return \$2.50 for every \$1 invested.

"The return on this project is significant and feasibility study figures show the trail would repay its cost within five years" says Marie.

The Northern Rivers area is perfectly placed to be able to create a thriving and very economically beneficial rail trail, but it is not only the economic benefits to the community that Marie feels so strongly about.

"The rail trail provides an opportunity for community wellness with locals using the trails as pedestrian corridors and cycling paths, and encouraging physical activity and connection with the environment and community".

The 130 kilometre long track was a thriving passenger and goods line that supported industry and community along its length for over 90 years but was discontinued in April 2004.



Timber bridge across the Belongil Creek Mangroves.

Photo: Gary Pressnell

Since then it has sat, unused and forgotten, and surrounding resources, be they station houses, maintenance sheds, bridges and the tracks themselves have fallen into a state of disrepair, choked with weeds, covered in graffiti and providing no community benefit.

"We want to see this valuable community asset returned to our community. We want to see people moving around and enjoying the corridor created by the tracks" says Marie.

But not all local residents are in support of the rail trail project and another local group has been campaigning for years to bring the trains back to the railway line. Trains on our Tracks oppose the project on the grounds that public transport infrastructure should be used for public transport.

Lismore resident Tarryn Corlet agrees: "If the rail trail goes ahead those railway lines need to be ripped up and removed, meaning there will be no option for the return of a passenger service for local residents and that is tinged with sadness for many of us".

As she talks fondly about her memories of long ago train trips down to Sydney to visit family, I can almost hear the chatter of excitable children eager to embark on an adventure and I can understand why some people are grieving for the loss of the experiences they wanted to pass onto children.

But just as those trains moved forward from their stations leaving family and friends waving goodbye, communities move forward too and the ability to transform pieces of their past into a re-imagined future is a powerful opportunity.

Kirsty Schmitt

To learn more about the proposed Northern Rivers Rail Trail, please visit www.northernriversrailtrail.org.au



The UK's Monsal Trail

In spring 2014 Rail Trails Australia members Vince Aitkin and Margaret Holt cycled the Monsal Trail in England and share their adventure with RTA members.

The Monsal rail trail travels for 8.5 miles from near the town of Bakewell to Wye Dale and is located in the Peak District of Derbyshire just a few hours drive and 156 miles north-west of London. It is owned and maintained by The Peak District National Parks Authority. The trail is open year long and its surface is constructed of finely compacted but well drained local limestone. It is traffic free and available for use by cyclists, walkers, horse riders, and those using wheelchairs or mobility scooters. On rain free days there are many users to be seen along its route. During 2014-15 it will be extended to connect with other trails in the peak district.

Railways first came to this area in 1863 when the busy Midland Railway passed through the district. It was closed in 1968. Soon after closing, work commenced on trail development and this section of the route was partially opened in 1981. Following costly repairs to several long tunnels the trail was finally completed and opened in 2011. The trail passes through six well lit tunnels and some of the most spectacular limestone dales in the country. Along its scenic route you can, amongst other exciting vistas, explore the Monsal Viaduct, bridgeworks, Cressbrook Mill, Litton Mill, lime kilns and former railway stations.



The hand operated audio station



One of the wonderful peak district viaducts

We started our cycle trip at the former station site at Bakewell (1 mile from the town centre) where we hired bicycles from the cycle shop and restaurant located in the station building. Parking at numerous waypoints along the way is controlled by pay and display coin operated machines so be prepared with plenty of change. There are several convenience stops along the way. Water and warm weatherproof clothing is needed in all seasons. The gradient rises from Bakewell to Wyedale are gentle. There is an abundance of interpretative signage with several hand operated audio stations which keep you informed of the historic elements of the countryside through which you are passing. We took six hours to explore this fascinating history-rich trail.

Various parts of the trail can be reached by Public Transport and details can be found on the comprehensive web site provided by the Peak District National Parks Authority www.peakdistrict.gov.uk. This web site also provides information about other nearby trails and contains six episodes of downloadable audio files about the Monsal Trail.

The Monsal Trail is in the centre of the Peak District National Park which also features similar trails. The High Peaks Trail is 17 miles long, The Thornhill Trail 2 miles and the Tissington Trail 13 miles. All are well worth a visit.

Accommodation is plentiful but during summer the district is at its best so pre book your stay to avoid disappointment. The Bakewell Information Centre can be reached via bakewell@peakdistrict.gov.uk

This part of Derbyshire is well worth a visit and Bakewell is a convenient centre in which to base yourself for fun packed days cycling, walking and exploring.

*Vince Aitkin
(former RTA treasurer)*



Gippsland Rail Trails Summit

Through hard work and support by all levels of government, Victoria has an extensive network of rail trails in all regions, particularly in Gippsland.

Recognising that there are many benefits to collaboration to share ideas and problems, a summit of all nine Gippsland rail trail committees of management was held on 17 May in Sale. Representatives from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning also attended. The Department is responsible for the committees of management that are appointed to manage most Victorian rail trails. The committees are various variations of volunteers and local or state government employees.

Chair, Helen Hoppner from the Gippsland Plains Rail Trail, welcomed all the attendees. Helen expressed her desire that at the end of the day, members of the different committees would have shared knowledge, networked, established connections and that a number of actions and outcomes would be determined to enable rail trail committees across the region to work together for shared mutual benefit and increased efficiencies.

Frank Kinnersley from Rail Trails Australia spoke first and outlined the role of our organisation in terms of assistance and support that can be provided to rail trail committees of management, along with how Gippsland compares with other regions around Australia.



Participants at the summit meeting

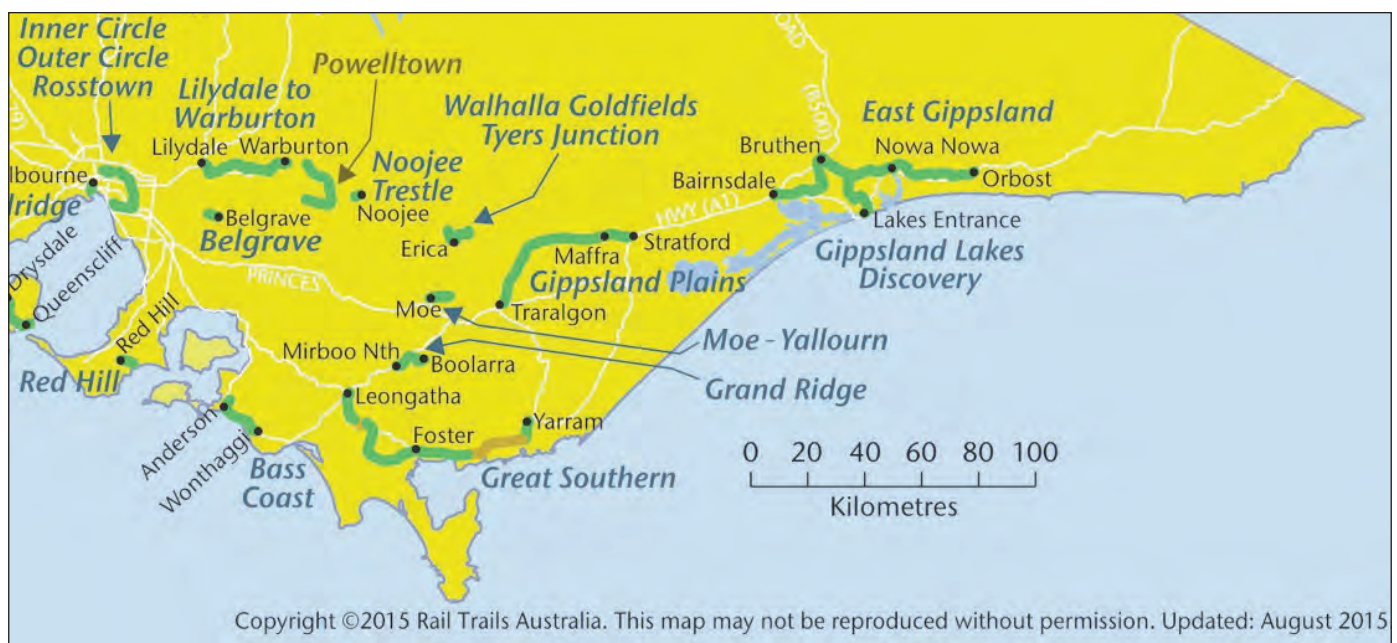
Then followed discussion on common subjects of interest including trail maintenance (and its funding), renewal of (volunteer) committees and combining marketing efforts.

Several presentations capped off a very rewarding day.

Rail Trails Australia congratulates the Gippsland rail trail committees on this initiative as they move from the construction phase to the longer term maintenance and improvement of facilities and marketing to further improve their use.

For the record the eleven Rail Trails Of Gippsland are:

- Bass Coast Rail Trail
- East Gippsland Rail Trail
- Gippsland Lakes Discovery Trail
- Gippsland Plains Rail Trail
- Grand Ridge Rail Trail
- Great Southern Rail Trail
- Moe-Yallourn Rail Trail
- Noojee Trestle Bridge Rail Trail
- Rokeby to Crossover Rail Trail
- Tyers Junction Rail Trail
- Walhalla Goldfields Rail Trail



Protecting our impressive but fragile timber bridges

Bridges played a significant role in the construction of the rail networks. And long time readers of Rail Trail Connections will be familiar with regular articles on the continued importance of bridges on rail trails.

The primary role of bridges is to allow the trail to stay at an easy gradient over rivers and gullies, allowing use by the whole community in all weather. Some bridges are also major historic and engineering features of the rail trail in themselves and really add to the experience.

However on the flip side, bridges are the most expensive assets to construct or restore. Many older bridges, particularly timber bridges, can also be future maintenance risks, requiring regular inspections and works. And the slight irony is that most users, as they cruise across a bridge without having a steep or long diversion around the river or gully, give nary a thought to all the time and cost that went into restoring or building the that bridge.

In addition bridges are particularly susceptible to natural disasters in this land of bushfires and floods.

Many of our historic bridges are timber and so fire is a real threat. A recent reminder of this is the sad loss of Western Australia's Long Gully bridge in February. Earlier examples include the loss of the significant Hospital Creek bridge on the East Gippsland Rail Trail in Victoria in 2011 and in 2009 the very long timber bridge across the Yarra River at Yarra Glen near Melbourne burnt to the ground, along with several smaller ones nearby. They were on the corridor of the proposed extension of the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail back to Yarra Glen. They were only surrounded by grass, which proved enough to set them alight and in the conditions of the tragic Black Saturday the bridges were obviously not a high priority of the fire authorities.

While there has been some flood damage in other states Queensland has borne the brunt of the floods with numerous significant bridges washed away in recent years. This is particularly so on the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail and the proposed Theebine to Kingaroy Rail Trail which is now being planned.



The Hospital Creek bridge on the East Gippsland Rail Trail burns in a bad bushfire in 2011. Photo: Andrew Sharpe

Bridges on the proposed Burnett River Rail Trail have also been affected by recent floods.

With summer approaching this is a reminder to rail trail committees of management to make as much preparation as possible around timber bridges.

And for rail trail users, when you come to a bridge please occasionally make time to stop, and if possible, even go down to the bottom and admire these wonderful structures and the work that went into them.

In the next issue we plan to look at newer replacement bridges that may not have the same heritage value but are cheaper to construct and maintain.



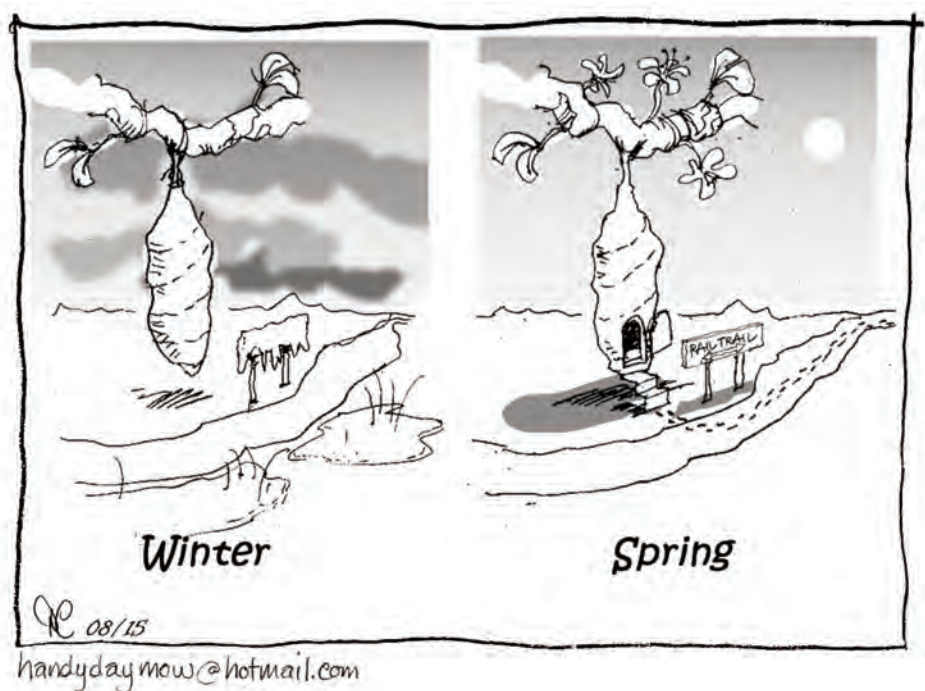
The impressive Curdies River timber bridge survived this flooding in 2010 literally months after years of hard restoration work. It is located on the Camperdown Timboon Rail Trail. Photo: Thais Hardmann





Left: The Sexton River bridge on the Kingaroy line in Queensland in 2010.
Melanie Doherty

Below: After being destroyed by floods in late 2012.



Damian Callanan is a freelance cartoonist and illustrator. He enjoys humour with a loose line to cartoons, logos and special event cards. Contact Damian on 0413 761 999.

Protecting our impressive but fragile timber bridges



Historic Long Gully Bridge lost to fire in Western Australia

The Lower Hotham fire in February this year claimed an historic victim by burning an important crossing on the Bibbulmun Track - the historic Long Gully Bridge over the Murray River.

Considered an outstanding example of an early rail trestle bridge, the 128 metre long bridge, built in 1949, was a great example of the technical design skill of the Western Australian Government Railways.

The rail network was integral for the timber industry from the Serpentine-Jarrahdale area to Dwellingup region. When the Dwellingup Mill burned down in 1961, the track ceased operation. The bridge met sections of land that rise steeply above Murray River valleys and it provided the only viable crossing point for walkers on the Bibbulmun Track.

The Bibbulmun Track Foundation was raising funds for its restoration. A decision is now needed to decide if these funds should go towards restoring the other major timber bridge - River Road - or towards a solution to replace Long Gully Bridge. It won't be easy due to the long span and another timber bridge is out of the question. Once the dust and ash settles we will investigate how we can create a new crossing for walkers.

Parks and Wildlife Fire crews did all they could to help save the bridge. The bridge was doused with water and before the fire hit it was also sprayed with a fire retarder. We thank them for their efforts.

Bibbulmun Track Foundation



Top to bottom:

The flank fire, well back from the head fire, reaches the bridge. Peter Morris, Western Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Fire crews did all they could to help save the Long Gully bridge. The bridge was doused with water and before the fire hit it was also sprayed with a fire retarder. Western Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife

All that remains of the Long Gully bridge. Peter Morris, Western Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife

The Long Gully bridge in its heyday. Western Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife;



RAIL TRAILS AUSTRALIA MEMBERSHIP AND ORDER FORM

You can also order, join or renew online at www.railtrails.org.au/online-store

VIC/SA GUIDE BOOK
SUPPLEMENT 2013

- Descriptions and maps: Port Fairy to Warrnambool and Goulburn River Rail Trails (Vic)
- Barossa Rail Trail description (SA)
- Two pages of other trail updates

Available printed or
via email as a PDF.



**JOIN RAILTRAILS
AUSTRALIA**

Keep abreast with rail trail developments around Australia with our quarterly magazine.

You can save trees
and receive
the
magazine
by email!

RAIL TRAILS OF TASMANIA
GUIDE BOOK

- 17 trails, 12 for cyclists
- topographic maps
- A5 size
- 64 pages



<input type="checkbox"/> Rail Trails of Tasmania		copies at \$12.50 plus \$2.50 P&H (\$15)	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Guide book supplement 2013		copies at <input type="checkbox"/> \$5 printed, or <input type="checkbox"/> \$3 PDF via email	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Join Railtrails Australia and receive our magazine	}	individual membership, emailed magazine	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
or		individual membership, printed magazine	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
<input type="checkbox"/> Renew my membership		organisation membership	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40
		website advertiser membership.....	<input type="checkbox"/> \$99
Donation to rail trail development and promotion			\$
Total			\$

Name:																									
Address:																									
												State:				Postcode:									
Phone*:		AH				BH				Mob				Email:											
<input type="checkbox"/> I enclose a cheque made out to Railtrails Australia Inc., or		* Please provide at least one contact number																							
<input type="checkbox"/> Please debit my:		<input type="checkbox"/> Visa		<input type="checkbox"/> Master Card		All prices include GST. ABN 94 479 743 813. Inquire for overseas postage rates																			
Card Number:		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Expiry:	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>			
Security Code:		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	(3 digits on back of card)																				
Card Holder:												Signature:								Date:		<input type="text"/>	/	/	<input type="text"/>

Please be assured Railtrails Australia will not disclose your personal information. We will not give your email address to anyone else or send you advertising.

Send to Railtrails Australia Inc. PO Box 2127 Oak Park Vic 3046

Phone (03) 9306 4846



First Field Environmental are based in NSW and are your specialists in Rail Trail environmental legislation and planning, from ecological surveys and reviews of environmental factors to construction environmental management plans, heritage, bushfire, weed and pest management plans.

We will develop an overarching Trail Management Plan or provide you with the reporting components you need, as you need them.

Contact us to discuss your Rail Trail planning and management needs.

www.firstfield.net.au

info@firstfield.net.au



Above: Maronghi Ck bridge on a yet to be developed section of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail in 2011 after surviving yet another major flood

Below: Maronghi Ck bridge after the 2013 floods where three piers were washed out. It is not clear why the bridge did not survive this flood but its loss is obviously a major impediment to the development of this scenic section of the rail trail.

Both photos Peter Klies

