

Rail Trail CONNECTIONS

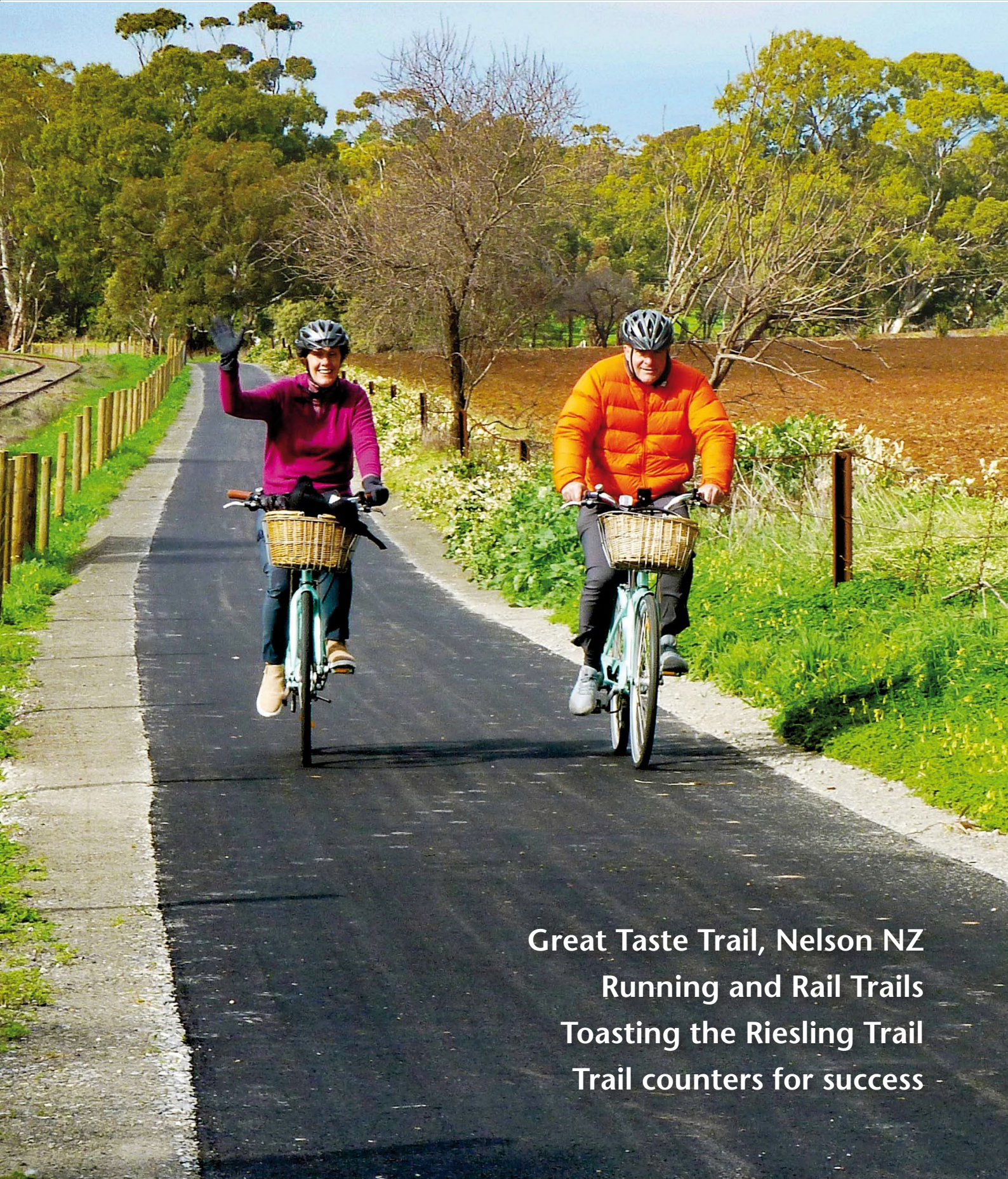


Spring 2022

Issue 106

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Great Taste Trail, Nelson NZ
Running and Rail Trails
Toasting the Riesling Trail
Trail counters for success

Rail Trail Connections

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PRESIDENT'S PLATFORM

Welcome to spring. Those in the southern states especially I am sure are eagerly planning to take advantage of the better weather to get out on the rail trails. After two years of work on the website and updating all our systems for the much larger membership and supporter base I am looking forward to visiting quite a few. This includes getting lots of new great images and to adding a few new rail trails as "visited" and my "favourites" on the website.

Many readers will have seen the News emails about the incremental improvements made to the website. Thank you again to all the members and donors who have made this possible. While we contribute lots of volunteer time to plan and test the improvements, specialist programming skills are needed to implement them, which is where the cost comes in. I thank Softco Solutions for their great work on our website at a very reasonable cost for RTA.

Now that the website is almost complete we should look at making it even more widely known. We would like to hear from anyone who has expertise in Search Engine Optimisation and the like to help promote the website to the wider public. Our committee and volunteers are constantly amazed how often we come across people who still aren't aware of rail trails and all the benefits they offer.

Having said that the articles in this issue show many people do know about rail trails and it's always great to see how rail trails are becoming increasingly important parts of the infrastructure for communities.

The New Zealand article, thanks to former committee member Wren, is a reminder there are many rail trails outside Australia. It also highlights the way NZ generally appears to do the development of rail trails and support services better than Australia, something for us to emulate.

Damian McCrohan
President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our 27th AGM will be held on Thursday 8th September at 7:30pm. It will be online so you can join in wherever you are in Australia.

We would welcome nominations for new committee people to help our work promoting the development and use of rail trail around Australia. Currently the committee members are all from NSW and Victoria and are 80% male. We would like to change this balance. There are many exciting opportunities to promote rail trails and take advantage of our larger member base now, we just need your input. To nominate, or discuss doing so, send an email to: secretary@railtrails.org.au

RSVP is Essential by 10am on Wednesday, 7 September. Please RSVP Robert Zucker via: secretary@railtrails.org.au This will ensure that we email you the meeting link for the AGM.

After the 45-minute AGM we are looking forward to hearing from the following two speakers:



Allan Mayfield
(Chairman of the Riesling Trail Management Committee) will present an historical brief about the *Riesling And Rattler Trail* in South Australia as well as current and future developments.



Tim Watson (General Manager of Dorset Council in Tasmania) will give an update of the current state of and issues involved

with the *North East Tasmania Rail Trail* in Tasmania and looking at the path travelled, the incredible number of challenges and hopefully soon the construction, with the benefits it will bring to the region.

Cover: Enjoying the new extension to the Barossa Rail Trail in the famous wine region of South Australia. More on page 3.

Photo: Tony Familo



Keep a lookout for our feature icons showing the state of origin for the trails covered in the articles. You'll find them located at the top of trail articles.



SHORT LINES



The impressive Thomson River bridge is a great improvement to the rail trail (Photo courtesy GPRT Committee of Management)

'Missing link' of Gippsland Plains Rail Trail completed

The 'missing section' of the Gippsland Plains Rail Trail has finally been completed with the official opening of the new Thomson River Bridge on 30 June 2022.

The Gippsland Plains Rail Trail stretches 63km from Traralgon to Stratford in Gippsland, Victoria, and the new bridge is a milestone and a great improvement, removing a 4km road diversion between Cowwarr and Heyfield that has existed since the rail trail opened.

The volunteer committee of management are justifiably proud of the new bridge.

Check out the photos, map and video on the Rail Trails website.

Barossa Rail Trail Extension Open



The Barossa Rail Trail extension between Gawler East and Kalbeeba is now open and proving very popular with cyclists and walkers.

The hot mix seal provides a smooth path of good width which has been constructed alongside the railway line. Whilst the line hasn't been used by a train since 2013, it is still regarded as 'operational' and the rails can't be removed.

The new 2km extension links to the Gawler Cycleway at Sunnydale Avenue in Gawler East, facilitating safe access to the centre of Gawler via a network of paths and quiet residential streets. See the front cover for a photo of the extension.

The project was jointly funded by The Barossa Council (\$464,000) and the State Government (\$336,000 from PIRSA Regional Growth Fund).

\$7m to develop Bethania to Logan Village Rail Trail



On 28 June 2022 the Queensland State Government announced \$3.5m funding for the 10.5km Bethania to Logan Village section of the Bethania to Beaudesert Rail Trail. This will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the City of Logan Council.

This trail will link with the recently opened (2021) Logan Village to Yarrabilba Rail Trail which is an all-weather sealed trail on a former spur line off the Bethania-Beaudesert line, south of Brisbane.

City of Logan Council will now progress to the detailed design phase of this project which is anticipated to occur late in the 2022/23 financial year. Further community consultation will now proceed.



NEW ZEALAND'S GREAT TASTE TRAIL

In 1870, the Colonial Treasurer began a massive public works programme. Financiers formed the New Zealand Midland Railway Company, which won a government contract to construct and operate railways linking the South Island west and east coasts, including the line to Nelson.

From Port Nelson the track runs up the Western side of the city centre to Nelson's Railway Reserve. This marks the 1873 start of construction, with the railway being completed through to Wai-iti in 1876. Connection back towards Port Nelson followed in 1880. A slow climb towards Bishopdale Hill takes us up through bush with frequent clear spots for views down the valley to Nelson and Tasman Bay.

Descending Bishopdale Hill towards Stoke we reach a walking and cycling bridge over the highway, and on to the old embankment leading to Richmond. Road crossings prioritise trail users. Reaching Stoke's Railway Reserve we can turn left to the Richmond town centre, or right to join the Coastal Route via an underpass.

From Richmond, the trail detours around properties that have swallowed the old corridor. There is a track beside the quiet back country roads through vineyards with wine tasting opportunities.

A new swing bridge across the Wairoa River leads to a riverside track through Brightwater and on to Wakefield. Wai-iti and Foxhill Station are gone, so the next stop of interest is the tiny cluster of houses at Belgrove.

Construction reached here in 1880 but a new government, facing a depression, halted works. Building the next section commenced in 1891.

From Belgrove there is a moderate incline to the tunnel. Spooners Tunnel (See photo on back page) is 1352m long, the track forming a smooth arc disguising any sense of up or downhill. A light is essential.

The railway never made a profit yet remained popular within the area it served

By now locals had started agitating for improved progress and the Midland Railway Company petitioned for release from the contract to complete the railway to the west coast. Before the railway reached the tunnel in 1897 the government expelled Midland Railway and seized its assets. Workers transferred to the government and continued work.

Exiting the tunnel there is a very enjoyable section through to Kohatu. Descending Norris Gully the track opens out on to a plateau above the Motueka

and Motupiko Rivers. The latest section of trail is 8km from Kohatu to Tapawera and offers views of the Motueka hop farms.

Tapawera has a museum, food and lodgings. Here we leave the Great Taste Trail to continue following the railway. The Tapawera Museum includes a tiny station from the next section of trail with a great collection of photographs covering life in the Motueka Valley and the role of the railway.

From Tapawera the embankment arcs west and joins Tadmor Valley Road. Riding is on a very quiet road. There is some rough gravel and there are no refreshments along the way. However, the scenery is magnificent with a steady climb to the Tadmor Saddle at 470m, followed by 15km downhill to Kawatiri which the railway finally reached in 1926. One of the three substantial viaducts has been restored and provides access to the 185m Pikomanu Tunnel, completed in 1923. Little remains of the final section of track to Gowanbridge, where the old hotel offers meals and accommodation. By the time the rail reached here in 1929 the Great Depression was having an impact. In 1930 the government suspended all construction.

The Labour Party in 1949 made a campaign pledge to re-commence construction but they lost the election. In 1954 the government announced possible closure.



The 185m Pikomanu Tunnel near Kawatiri. It opened more than 30 years after Spooners Tunnel. Photo: Wren Bracegirdle



Crossing the Wairoa River on the new bridge. Photo: Virginia Woolf Photography



Map base courtesy Great Taste Trail

Funding the Great Taste Trail

A joint project between Tasman District Council, Nelson City Council, and Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust Initiative launched the Great Taste Trail early 2010. Initial funding of \$2 million came from Central Government's National Cycleway programme and an additional \$940,000 from Tasman District Council. In 2009 the National Cycleway Fund received \$50 million from the NZ Government, which was used to create a network of cycle trails. Local stakeholders contributed around \$30 million of co-funding towards construction of 22 Great Rides, the Great Taste Trail being one. Outcomes expected from the programme included fostering a high-quality tourism asset with associated economic benefits and offering recreational opportunities for New Zealanders.

Auditing of the trail condition and user counting is used to measure the success of each trail and review policy and funding. The latest data set from 2020 shows the Great Taste Trail to be one of the most successful of these projects.

Development of the trail is ongoing with the building of off-road tracks to reduce the need to have on-road links. Most recently \$1 million was allocated for upgrading river crossing to enable moving the trail from a 17km section of main road linking Motueka to Tapawera.

Local interests canvassed for more time to improve freight loadings and returns. However, the decline continued, and final closure was in 1955. The railway never made a profit yet remained popular within the area it served.

It is perhaps ironic that a similar, although much smaller, nationally driven and funded

initiative has now led to the development of this successful rail trail with tangible economic benefits to the district and community at large.

See photos on back page for more views of the Great Taste Trail

Wren Bracegirdle



Tapawera museum at Kiwi. Photo: Wren Bracegirdle



RUNNING UP THAT HILL



parkrun (always with a lower-case “p”) is a worldwide community event that occurs every Saturday morning at over 2,000 locations, including about 450 across Australia.

Ideal locations offer a traffic-free 5km course, with no road crossings, a reasonable running surface, amenities like water and toilets at the starting point, and cafes for a post-event get-together. Some keen runners realised that many of our rail trails are ideal.

The 5km parkruns are free and take place every Saturday morning at 7, 8 or 9am, depending on the location.

There is no time limit and no participant ever comes in last as every event has at least one tail walker to claim last place. Although it’s called park “run,” participants of any ability are invited to walk, push a pram, walk their dog, take the grandkids or simply spectate. All are welcome, and some events are suitable

for wheel-chair users. Events are run by teams of community volunteers (over 125,000 in total have volunteered.)

Every parkrun has its own Facebook page. Like Rail Trails Australia, parkrun has an excellent interactive map of locations and course details on their website.

From 5km to marathons

Rail trails are also being used for marathons.

The Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail is now internationally certified for the 42km marathon, 21km half marathon and 10km courses. Inaugural events took place in April this year.

This year also saw the Mansfield marathon use the Great Victorian Rail Trail (GVRT) in May.

*Yeppoon parkrun on the Capricorn Coast Pineapple Rail Trail in Queensland.
Photo: Yeppoon parkrun*





Let's not forget Fun Runs

Fun runs are another special event using rail trails. Probably the original and still the most popular is the Somerset Rail Trail Fun Run or Ride held on the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail in Queensland. The fun run was first organised by Somerset Regional Council in 2003 when the rail trail was just in its infancy and the success of the fun runs helped gain local support for the rail trail.

The fun run has now grown a lot in size and popularity, as has the rail trail, which is now the longest in Australia at 161km. The 19th fun run took place in July this year.

There are at least 15 rail trails currently in use as parkruns

Rail Trail	parkrun	State
Atherton to Tonga QLD	Ros Gregor Trail	QLD
Nanango QLD	Wondai	QLD
Capricorn Coast Pineapple QLD	Yeppoon	QLD
Part of rail corridor SA	Murray Bridge	SA
Riesling SA	Clare Valley	SA
Copper Coast SA	Copper Trail	SA
Coast to Vines SA	Shiraz Trail	SA
Amy Gillette SA	Charleston	SA
Moe - Yallourn VIC	Newborough	VIC
Port Fairy - Warrnambool VIC	Warrnambool	VIC
Grand Ridge Mirboo North VIC	Grand Ridge	VIC
Timboon - Camperdown VIC	Timboon	VIC
Great Southern VIC	Koonwarra	VIC
Ten Mile Brook Trail WA	Margaret River	WA
Railway Reserves Heritage Trail WA	Mt Helena	WA

If we've missed one, send an email to admin@railtrails.org.au so that we can update our lists.



Opp page: Start of the 2022 Somerset Rail Trail Fun Run at Lowood on the BVRT
Left: A runner enjoying the Lowood BVRT event. Photos: Somerset Regional Council

Early morning parkrun crowd using the Great Southern Rail Trail in Koonwarra Photo: Wolter Kuiper



The Even Greater Southern Rail Trail

The 20th annual Queen's Birthday long weekend bike ride returned to the GSRT in 2022. And it was fabulous!

There is a core group of stalwarts, organised by Maurice Fink and Steven Kaye, with many other intrepid cyclists joining in the adventure. Over the years, more than 150 people have participated in this informal event, cycling most of Victoria's (and South Australia's) rail trails regardless of the weather, to explore, dine, sleep and enjoy some wonderful rural hospitality.

The new GSRT is truly superb with a well graded gravel surface, plus the awesome sights and smells of South Gippsland with safe access into the towns along the way

This year, the GSRT was chosen to host the group. It is such a dynamic trail with so many recent changes that, even though we've used it in the past, it felt like a new journey.

The first time we used the GSRT in 2009, the ever-present Eric Cumming had to guide us on an off-road adventure tour, including river crossings, to avoid riding on the busy highway between Koonwarra and Meeniyan.

Once the trail linkage across the Black Spur was complete it made the journey safer and more efficient – a tremendous benefit.

In 2022, we experienced a substantial addition to the trail. Not only was the road about the Black Spur nearing completion, but the trail had been extended towards Melbourne. The additional 35km west of Leongatha has given the trail a new dimension – Korumburra is on the top of a hill, providing extraordinary rural vistas away from the main road.

Nyora, Loch and Korumburra, just like Leongatha, Koonwarra, Meeniyan, Fish Creek, Foster, Toora and Welshpool, can now enjoy the tremendous benefits of trail-based eco-tourism, reaping the rewards of visitors – accommodation, transport, eBike charging, food & supplies – enhancing services and furthering the community. And we thoroughly immersed ourselves in the brewery, cidery, restaurant, café and pub delicacies across the region.



Remembering Eric's efforts at Stony Creek

Local people, many of whom we saw on the trail even in winter, can now also enjoy safe, beautiful recreation with physical and mental health gains.

Preparing a 4-day bike ride for over 30 people into rural Victoria, complete with transport, accommodation, meals and luggage transfers, is a challenge. The rewards for this trip were the huge smiles and laughter of the entire group, enjoying the cycling and the environment, despite the cold and wet conditions, on a premium rail trail.

The now very much improved GSRT has plenty of options for tourists. The new trail is truly superb with a terrific, well graded gravel surface (even in the freezing rain), the awesome sights and smells of south Gippsland and safe access to the incredible towns already mentioned. And now this amazing trail is a mere 100km (just over an hour's drive) from Melbourne city centre. It's a winner – try it out for yourself and you won't be disappointed.

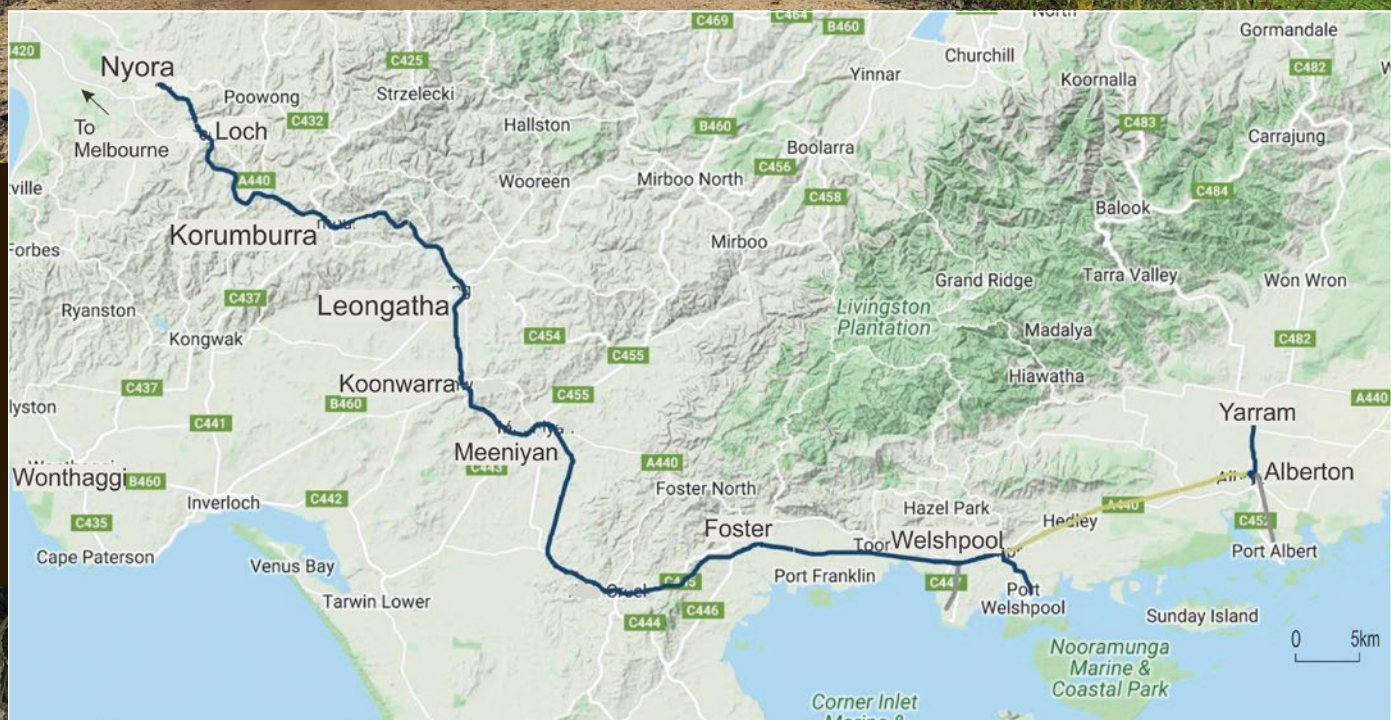
Story and photos by Steven Kaye

An example of trail-side sculpture at Meeniyan





The picturesque hills riding from Korumburra down to Loch can be enjoyed in winter if rugged up for the weather



The gang outside Moo's store in Meeniyana on the Queen's Birthday Weekend 2022 ride.



TOASTING THE RIESLING TRAIL

As one of the pioneering South Australian rail trails, The Riesling Trail remains managed by a passionate band of volunteers and supported by a lasting connection with the wine industry, writes David McAlpine.

Passing through varied landscapes of bush, grazing land and vineyards, Allan Mayfield pauses to admire the sights and sounds of the Clare Valley when he attends to maintenance tasks along the trail.

The Chairman of The Riesling Trail Management Committee says that although the marketing of the trail emphasises the iconic local wine industry, the views of rolling hills and local flora and fauna are the backbone of the experience. The safety and peacefulness of the trail are major drawcards, Allan says, particularly for young families.

Below: Auburn bridge opening 2019 with Allan Mayfield on the far left.



"I'll be working on the trail and a four-year-old will come pedalling around the corner on a bike," Allan recounts. "A couple of minutes later, here come the parents. They are quite happy to let them go ahead."

A recently released history of The Riesling Trail emphasises how it was intrinsically connected with wine from the early years of its development. In the late 1980's, two local winemakers, Tony Brady and Evan Hiscock, conceived a vision of a multipurpose trail suitable for all abilities, on the Clare Valley's deserted rail corridor.

This coincided with the South Australian Office for Recreation and Sport focusing on developing walking trails, such as the Heysen and Mawson bushwalks. The local councils agreed the land should be retained for recreation, rather than implementing a tourist railway or disposing it to private hands.

The winemakers' next move was to suggest a name for the future trail. "The Riesling Trail" was born during a forum by the Clare Valley Winemakers Association exploring how to highlight the area's famous Riesling wine. The Association formed a sub-committee in 1992, which eventually morphed into the Riesling Trail Management Committee in 1999.

"You sense that it has a lot of community benefit and community support," Allan says, highlighting the band of volunteers who contribute, from a few hours a year to long-term committee membership. Local businesses support the trail through financial memberships and in-kind donations, with advertising linking trail users to services they may require.

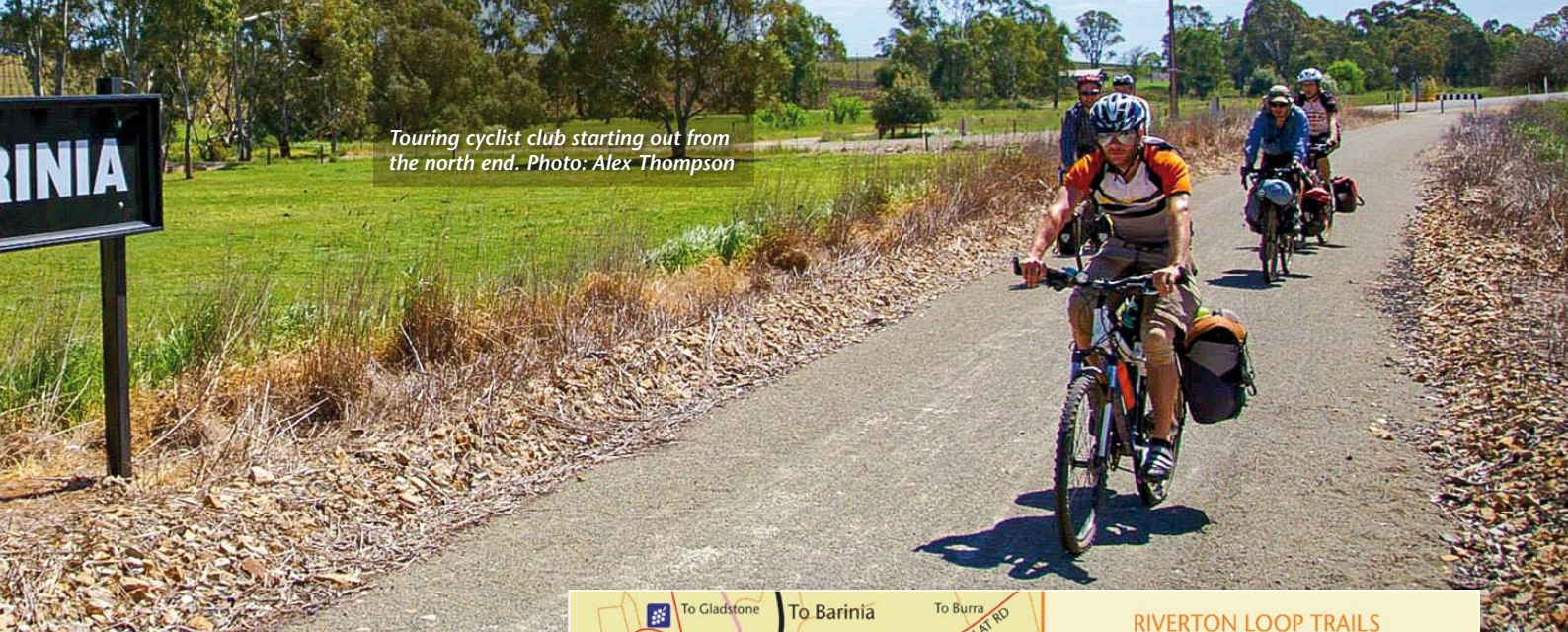


Long time committee person Peter Wood with examples of interpretive signage and art works behind that typify the rail trail

The association with wine also assisted with procuring goods and services for the trail's construction. Tony Brady approached the wine-loving manager of BHP's Whyalla Steelworks to donate steel for local fabricator, Paul "Bluey" Jenner, to build a replica for the previously demolished Quarry Road Bridge. Evidently, the manager appreciated the region's fine product, the vineyards' large demand for steel or simply Tony's pluck for asking the question. The bridge was later modified to accommodate two-way traffic.

Native revegetation and removal of invasive species such as olives are an ongoing challenge for the volunteers





Touring cyclist club starting out from the north end. Photo: Alex Thompson

alongside infrastructure upgrades. The trail was resurfaced in 2018, which prevented erosion and improved the experience for the 100,000 patrons who use the trail every year.

Allan says that the community is heavily invested in the trail. An amusing yarn arose when a metal statue of a cyclist was once hastily removed by his team for a structural repair.

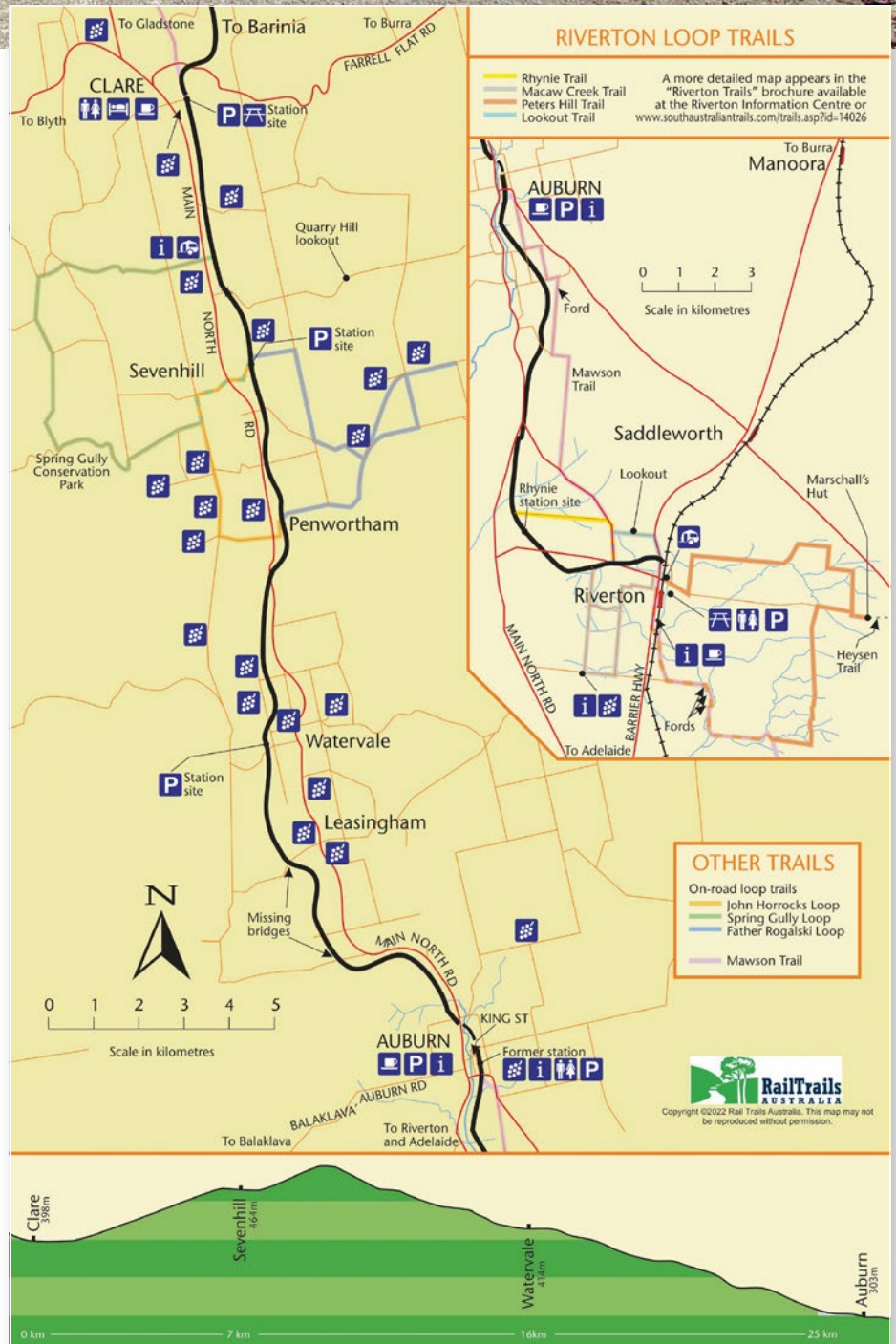
Art installations along the trail complement the experience and provide a history of the Clare Valley

“The next morning, about 6.30, I get a call from the police in Adelaide reporting that it has been stolen. This was actually from a local lady who does long distance running training under torchlight and was horrified to see it gone,” he recalled.

“One aspect that is really pleasing for us is that we have people who like the trail and respect the trail and let me know if there are any issues, such as if a tree comes down.”

Art installations along the trail complement the experience and allow visitors to learn of the history and people of the Clare Valley. For the map lovers at heart, a detailed and eye-catching mural, inspired by a topographical map of the trail, graces Clare’s main street.

An upcoming statue will depict a child leaning on a book on a roof, whilst leaning on a chimney. This will celebrate international author Monica McInerney, who was raised in Clare’s Federation-style stationmaster’s house.



Making Rail Trail visits count

Rail trails provide intrinsic value to the visitors who use them for touring, leisure and recreation. While those visitors are not paying a fare like the rail passengers of former times, they are still imparting a value to the local economy. They buy lunches and coffees and snacks, stay in B&Bs or hotels, and spend money on transport to or from the trail. In short, visitors provide an economic justification for the initial and ongoing investment in the trail.

Measuring the economic benefit

Counting the number of visitors to a rail trail provides data for those who manage the facility. Empirical evidence is crucial when expenditure on recreational facilities is being discussed and when grant applications are being prepared.

Once a trail has been established, visitor numbers can provide the justification for maintenance and for funding promotional initiatives by tourism groups and local agencies. Also, the effectiveness of any trail improvements (such as upgraded surfaces, signage and other facilities) can be gauged by an associated increase in usage. This requires regular and ongoing data collection.

Counting visitors

The old-fashioned way to count visitors is to sit beside the trail, pencil and paper in hand, recording every visitor and at the end tallying up the total.

Thankfully there are several systems designed to deliver data at a modest cost and even on an hourly basis. The most expensive type can record data for a pedestrian, a horse, a bicycle, and with in-ground sensors even the direction of travel. Most of these use an invisible infrared (heat) sensing system with data stored in a battery powered device.

Traker counter on the Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail: The polycarbonate window allows reading of the count total. Where vandalism is a problem, the supports may need to be disguised as a fence post or be in a tree. Photo: Damian McCrohan



The mounting arrangement for an Eco counter (Like this one on the Yarra Valley Rail Trail) is more exacting as they can differentiate walkers, bikes and horses, and even the direction of travel. Photo: Damian McCrohan

Less costly systems, such as the Tasmanian Traker, require a visit to read the counter tally. The Canadian TrafX records an hourly tally and data can be retrieved via a site visit with a download device, or remotely as an option. Raw data can be processed on a desktop or uploaded to a web site which crunches the numbers and delivers several report options such as tabular or graphic output.

Another option is an entirely remote and automatic 24/7 data transmitting system such as the Eco counter used on several major trails in Queensland and Victoria. This level of sophistication is expensive and typically not required for good data gathering on most trails. Where cost is a significant issue but visitor data is essential (as it should be for every rail trail), the Traker is a reliable choice. Regular visits by managers to read or download data also maintains vigilance of conditions.

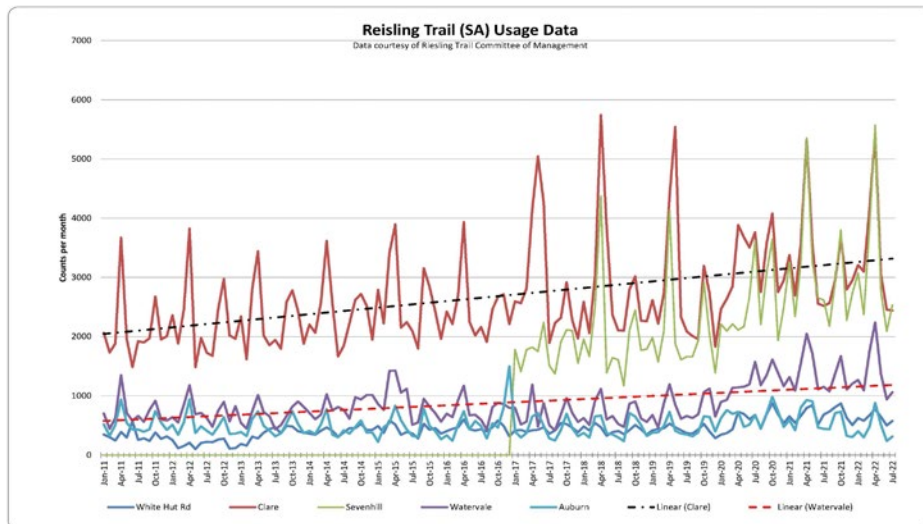


What is Rail Trails Australia doing?

RTA has been collecting data from rail trails that have counting programs and collating this data and other information. We thank the trail managers for their assistance and hope this information will be able to assist all rail trails in the near future.

RTA also assisted the High Country Rail Trail in north east Victoria to buy a Traker counter as part of the 2018 Community Grants Program.

See the 2020 Autumn edition of Rail Trail Connections for more details on counters in use in Australia.



An example of data from the voluntarily run Riesling Trail in South Australia, one of the longest and most consistent measurer of trail usage.

We would value feedback on this article including information about other counter technologies, and related matters from trail managers or interested members. Information can be forwarded to Michael Oxaer who can be contacted direct at: moxer@railtrails.org.au

CAMPERDOWN TO TIMBOON RAIL TRAIL BIKE HIRE

Experience the Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail by eBike. **Ride With Us** bikes are available for hire from Timboon, Cobden or we can organise to meet you along the trail.

We have brand new ebikes and mountain bikes for hire, as well as children's bikes, a child seat, two-child tag along trailer, pet seat and a pet trailer.

Bike transport and shuttle service is available for pick up and departure from along the trail.

Book a **Gourmet Rail Trail Ride** with produce hamper or a back pack of snacks for a fun and memorable day out.

The Camperdown to Timboon Rail Trail is located in the Great Ocean Road hinterland region of South West Victoria and takes riders from Camperdown, through 40 kilometres of dairy farms to Timboon which is renowned for its ice cream, cheese and whisky amongst other local gourmet delights. The rail trail also joins up with the newly constructed 20 kilometre 12 Apostles Trail which is a bike and walking path running from Timboon to the coast at Port Campbell.

The Camperdown to Naroghid section of the trail is along country roads so we recommend starting your ride from Naroghid onwards, where the remaining trail is all off road through to Port Campbell. Enquire with us about accommodation packages to turn your ride into a multi-day trip.

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SHORT LINES



Peter McManus, former federal Member for Nicholls, Damian Drum and City of Greater Shepparton Mayor Kim O'Keeffe open stage 2 of the Dookie Rail Trail.

Dookie Rail Trail Stage 2 officially opened

Eleven years after the request to extend the Dookie Rail Trail westerly, it has finally happened.

On a beautiful March morning, Shepparton Mayor Kim O'Keeffe, Nationals MP Hon Damian Drum and Friends of the Dookie Rail Trail representative Peter McManus cut the ribbon for the official opening.

The new section is only 3.2km in length and ends abruptly at Conway Road. Council contractors have done a great job and trail users can enjoy very scenic rural views from the recently sealed surface. Council has installed a park bench near the end and local organisations have added seven interpretive signs highlighting local history, flora and fauna.

Council is aware of the Dookie community's wish to continue expanding the trail westward and ultimately the additional 20km to Shepparton. In the short term, Council has given verbal assurance that it wants to consider the community request to extend 2.5 km to the Cosgrove golf course. Further expansion will depend on the State Government's decision as to whether the rail is to remain 'open' or can become available to continue to Shepparton if the line is deemed 'closed'.

Meanwhile do come to Dookie and try our short but very sweet 16km (total) rail trail.

Peter McManus
Friends of the Dookie Rail Trail.

Murchison Rushworth Rail Trail Proceeds Westwards

Campaspe Shire Council has unanimously approved funding the extension of the Murchison to Rushworth Rail Trail by matching the federal government's \$1.5m Black Summer bushfire recovery grant.

Rushworth has saved much of its railway infrastructure and has been seeking to complement this and boost the local economy by having the rail trail connected with the town.

The project's date for completion is expected to be mid-2023.

"We are very excited about the project and are looking forward to the community consultation process," said Kerrie Raglus, local Rushworth resident and rail trail advocate.

"It would be great to see the completed Murchison Rushworth Rail Trail being linked to Heathcote and Bendigo, so that visitors can experience the natural forest environments like the Whroo Nature Conservation Reserve, as well as take in some of the wineries along the way, stop off at a brewery and stay a night or two locally," said Garry Long, of the Friends of the Bendigo-Kilmore Rail Trail community group.

East Gippsland Rail Trail News

Following our article last issue on all the improvements to the East Gippsland Rail Trail, the volunteer committee have not been resting on their laurels!

- They won an \$82,500 grant from the East Gippsland Community Foundation's Bushfire Recovery Community fund to control vegetation on the side of the trail. With nearly 100km of rail trail, that's a lot of vegetation!
- In April there were fallen trees and flooding on some sections of the track. Volunteers were quick to clear storm damage near the Orbost end.



New water station at Mossiface (Photo courtesy EGRT Committee of Management).

- in May the trail had a substantial surface upgrade close to Mossiface at the Bairnsdale end of the track. For those who haven't seen how a solid surface is laid, there is some quite heavy machinery involved.
- How many times have you ridden along a rail trail and come across a shelter with a sign saying "untreated water, do not drink"? This will not be a problem on the East Gippsland Rail Trail. Two new hydration stations have been installed for thirsty walkers, riders, and other trail users.



Thinking about heading overseas again?

Why not try the Nelson Great Taste Trail in the South Island of New Zealand

More detail on page 4



Near Brightwater the trail is alongside the Wairoa River with picturesque mountains in the background. Photo: Wren Bracegirdle



Lights are essential in the 1325m Spooners Tunnel opened in 1893. Photo: George Guille Media