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Contractors and Trail Damage

One of the most frustrating aspects of being a ‘Friend’ of the rail trail trying to restore the environment for the enjoyment of the wildlife and the trail users is the amount of destruction caused by a few often well intentioned, but misguided, men with large machines in the name of maintenance.

The latest in these sorry events is the clearing over the gas pipe line between Bruthen and Nowa Nowa. Obviously this is a job that has to be done – but to remove all vegetation from the trail embankment or edge to the pipeline – in some instances 50 metres- has a very negative effect on the trail. At Driver’s Beak trees were removed that had been planted to prevent the erosion a problem since the pipe line was installed. This is the area just after the trestle bridge towards Nowa Nowa where you nearly always have to get off your bike as it becomes bogged in deep sand.

The Friends brought this to the attention of the COM and have written to Alinta asking for some guidelines to be established and followed in the future and recompense to assist in the restoration of the embankment at Driver’s break.

There have been other instances in the flood repair works where the damage to the existing vegetation has been severe. These are instances where a trail manager would be really useful supervising any work on the trail.

Sue Peirce

Bike Friendly Workplaces

Janice Preston reports that BRHS is becoming more workplaces or promote their own. bike friendly with extra bike facilities planned and investigation into providing a fleet of bikes for local use during business hours (eg to go to a meeting down the street by bike). Perhaps members can contribute with other suggestions for bike friendly



Recent Revegetation Project News

1. Nicholson Bridge Revegetation Project

The rain came during late Spring and summer and the plants responded. A total of 280 rainforest and grassland species have been planted and there is a significant difference at the site. The rabbit control has assisted regeneration of blackwood, and probably the wetter weather assisted the regeneration of muttonwoods. This is interesting as the 3 muttonwoods planted at the site did not survive. During the next months we will be working on the weeds.



A picnic table, purchased with the surplus from the Ride the Trail in a Day has been installed – thanks Evan, Norm and Michael.

The seat and picnic table are being well used and folk are interested in the project and often have a chat when walking by.

2. At the Gardiner family seat





the Gardiners have done some planting near the seat - these will provide shade and bird habitat when grown



Please support our business friends whenever possible.



3. Near Lanes Rd

<p>Norm and Lindsay planted some blackwoods and black casuarinas in 2005. These have been nurtured along during the drought and kept clear of weeds and are now becoming substantial</p>	 <p>casuarina</p>	<p>blackwood</p> 
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4. The 100 plants on the Lees Rd embankment

were looking good at last inspection [in Jan].

There will be big projects in 2008 – one undertaken by the Committee of Management at Lees Rd and two other smaller replanting efforts on the embankments near Lees Rd – these are part of the reconstruction following flood damage sustained in June 2007. The Friends group have offered to participate in the smaller projects.

Friends' Projects for 2008

- Orbost car park –an onsite meeting decided to make this area more welcoming – and a small shelter, some trail information and some planting were thought within our resources. Some herbicide spraying to open up areas for planting has been done.
- Kilometre sign posts – these will be in timber with distance routed into surface of post.
- Drivers' Break urgently needs stabilisation of embankment. This is one area really damaged when contractors cleared over the gas pipe line. *Sue Peirce*

Re-Surfacing Work.

Post-flood recovery works have included extensive re-surfacing, new drains and culverts at some places. It might take a little time for some of the surfacing to compact down.





PLOT TO BLOW UP RAILWAY BRIDGE

23.7.58

An extract from "Daily Items" produced by the office of the Chief Train Controller for distribution to V.R. officers throughout Head office announced that an attempt was made to blow up the Nicholson River railway bridge.

"At 8.10am, advice received from a local resident, Mr. McFarland, that about 4 separate explosions were heard at Nicholson river bridge. Inspection by ganger revealed that 3 piles had been blown out, and concrete base in which piles were set was splintered. On investigating, local police discovered unexploded charges of gelignite in different sections of bridge. These will be removed by police explosives experts at about 2pm. Bridge ganger anticipates temporary repairs will be completed by about 6pm. In the meantime the 10.10am down and 9.20am up goods trains are being held at Bairnsdale and Orbost respectively."

F.E. BUTLER
CHIEF TRAIN CONTROLLER

An article in The Sun newspaper dated Thursday, July 24, 1958, reported the episode but offered no reasons for the attempt. Railway and Russell Street detectives investigated the incident.

"Damage to the bridge was so great, railway experts said that it would not have withstood the weight of a train. Eight charges were ignited on two trestles of the bridge. Six exploded, rocking nearby houses."

I have been unable to find further newspaper reports on this incident. So the mystery remains - Who? Why?

At that time the trestles on the Noojee line were burned down during a bushfire by sawmill mobs with their own trucks, to starve the railways of the traffic and give them the monopoly. The Nayook-Noojee section closed in 1954 and given that this incident is in that same era and that 412% of the traffic between Orbost and Bairnsdale was timber, the conclusion may well be that the bridge could have been sabotaged by the local sawmillers!! *Next Issue :Memories of Bairnsdale*



Officials looking at the damage

Orbost Historical Society
SNOWY RIVER MAIL
WEDNESDAY JUL 23, 1958

Attempt to Blow UP Rail Bridge?

Some damage to the railway bridge over the Nicholson River was reported this morning and fears were expressed that rail traffic to Orbost would be severely affected.

It was stated that a deliberate attempt had been made to blow the bridge up just after a train had crossed about 11.50 p.m. last night.

Orbost railway officials stated at 11.30 a.m. that this evening's train would run as normal, and the full extent of the damage would not be known until an inspection was made.

They stated they were not aware what damage had occurred or what had been the cause.



Thanks to John Phillips from Bairnsdale Historical society for the above cutting. John, although very young at the time, actually remembered the incident!

Nicholson Bridge Re-Decking

Several options for repairing this bridge's decking have been explored in the last 18 months. The most viable but no less expensive is to pour a reinforced concrete topping over the existing timber deck. This work will take several weeks, during which time a bypass route will be required. Again, nothing is easy with rail trail bridges over rivers and the Nicholson is no exception. Several options have been considered but the most obvious and quickest to set up will be as follows: travelling from the west, divert at Sarsfield Road to the highway then over the road bridge and via the track on the north side, past the primary school then via a bush track to Hazeldine Drive. The last link back onto the Trail will need to be on a former (now closed and licensed to a landholder) road reserve which was an extension of Waddells Road. The RT Committee is discussing these details with the Council and DSE. A supplementary reason for this route is that it could form part of a Nicholson Walks network (modelled on the Bruthen system). Notices concerning the works and the alternate route will be posted along the Trail as needed.

New Steel Chicanes.

Several road crossings between Nicholson and Wiseleigh have been fitted with new steel chicane/gate units, at Stephenson Road replacing the older bush gate set-up.



Michael Oxer

WEB STATS

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2008	750	1046	4716	15928	196.38 MB
Feb 2008	1001	1305	6345	21634	268.19 MB

The Rail Trail website continues to be a great resource with strong support as shown by the above statistics. The functionality of the website has been increased with the ability to accept credit card facilities for new and renewed Friends' subscriptions. These payments are through the extremely secure PayPal system. *Keith Law*

Working bee No 1 for 2008



Spying on the working bee from above. High above in a Cessna 712 Sea Hawk we could just make out Keith in his red shirt chopping weeds.

Happened on Feb 25th at the Burn Rd section of trail – just about reduced to one bike width after the luxuriant summer growth – the path is now returned to former glory thanks to Keith , John ,Michael and Sue. It's amazing what a few folk can achieve in a few hours.

Drivers Break and Stoney Creek Upgrades.

Major engineering works have been required to improve the access and Trail surfaces at both locations. Apart from the damage by illegal vehicles, the major problems have been with drainage and especially during flooding conditions. Drivers Break will continue to be a problem with washing sand until there is more vegetation binding the slopes. A recent gas line vegetation clearing by Alinta did not help either. Their contractors cut down many quite large saplings which had regenerated on the north batter (the sloping bank). Their clearing also illegally removed a lot of Trail edge regrowth over a 20 km stretch. We don't need this sort of heavy handed activity.

New Seat For Harmans Road Crossing.

With views across to the Lakes, a seat donated by the Steedman family should provide a 'must do' stop invitation. Plans are to add suitable trees and this crossing will be fitted with barriers to reduce illegal vehicle traffic (bollards and large rocks).

The Rail Trail and Town Walks.

At the 5th national Tracks & Trails Conference in Queensland (March 10 - 14), Michael Oxer will give a presentation based on the Walks projects at Bruthen and Nowa Nowa and their relationship to the Rail Trail. These Walks, and other Side Trips associated with the Trail are a significant development with both local community and wider regional tourism benefits. The mutually beneficial relationship between local towns and the Trail can be copied in the rail trail situations. Arrangements are being made to use the presentation (in a power point format) as a Trail briefing report to the Shire Council in the near future.

A Family Holiday Adventure - visitors from interstate on the East Gippsland Rail Trail



Michael Oxer

AN EASY RETIREMENT ?

Just recently I was told about a retired doctor from Wairewa who was riding the rail trails of Victoria as a prelude to a life of retirement. Just as I was ready to contact her for a chat or an interview, the story of her adventures appeared in the local papers. So I rang to obtain Dr Elizabeth Blakeman/ Bakewell's permission to use extracts from her story and was given it.

Dr Bakewell had decided that after 44 years of medical practice she needed to do something to commemorate this significant change in her life. She chose to ride the rail trails of Victoria - a 12 week solo ride!

With a brand new hybrid 24 gear bike , an upgraded tool kit, a mobile phone, a very small first aid kit and obviously much trepidation she set out towing a small caravan.

This is part of her story describing her experience of the East Gippsland Rail Trail.

"It took me eight days to do what the young, fit aficionados do in three days! What stands out?

The hills - both up, and glorious down!

My knees - sore!

The high, vertiginous embankments through the green gullies behind Newmerella.

The quietness and the scrunch of my tyres on gravel.

The warm sweet smell of eucalyptus oil.

The timber - miles of beautiful, precious trees."

Dr Bakewell continued with descriptions of the wildlife she encountered on the trail- including an unchained Doberman - wombats ; a red-bellied black snake ; wallabies and some of the beautiful birds of our region - black cockatoos, pardalotes and yellow robins. She wrote that the highlights of the ride included swimming alone in Costicks Weir and the ride over Nicholson River Bridge.

Her problems weren't the usual moans of the physicality of riding a long distance but more of the pesky flies, the scarcity of water and the difficulties of finding a nightly camp site.

However, Dr Bakewell seemed to conclude that the effort so far was well worth it! *More next issue*

Check regularly at www.eastgippslandrailtrail.com for updates.



MEETINGS

April 14 Mingling Waters at Nowa Nowa

July 27 AGM Bruthen (Sunday afternoon)

Sept 15 Bairnsdale

Nov 10 Nowa Nowa

Evening meetings
begin 7:00 pm

Trail Notes Making Progress.

It was perhaps a bit ambitious at the time, but when preparing the new (third edition) information and map brochure (with a print run of 40,000 copies!) it was decided to cross reference the map to a set of trail notes to be available as PDF files on the web site. Michael has been drafting the Notes and recently had an offer from the father of a visiting cyclist to help by typing up the rough notes. Brian lives in Kyabram but thanks to email can send Michael the typed up files, speeding up the process of getting the Notes into production. The plan is that the files can be easily updated as new material becomes available.



School group from Carey Grammar in Melbourne joining the trail at Bumberrah to ride back to Bairnsdale

Michael Oxer