

HFNC Excursion to Kanawalla Rail Flora Reserve – 18 June 2017

Rod Bird & Dave Munro

Participants: Lyn & Dave Munro, Rod Bird & Diane Luhrs, Peter Hocking, Janeen Samuel & Daryl Delahoy.

This 1.5 km railway siding and reserve runs near the Hensley Park Rd, about 10 km north of Hamilton. It lies between McFarlanes Rd and Forts Rd, both of which intersect with Hensley Park Rd. It is part of the now disused Hamilton to Cavendish section of railway line which was constructed in 1913 and closed in about 1975.

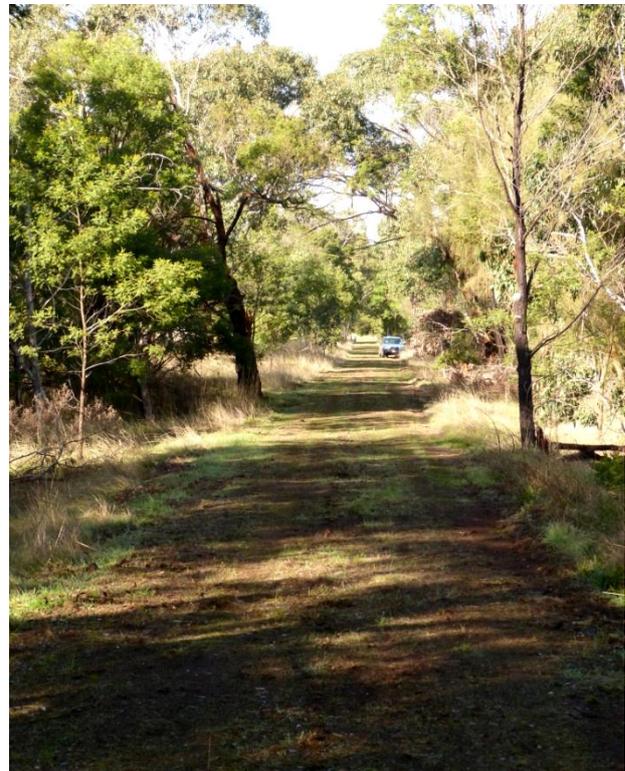
In 2004 HFNC obtained an agreement with VicTrack to manage and restore native vegetation on the former siding and rail reserve. This reserve contains a valuable remnant of Plains-Grassy Woodland flora and currently we have recorded 79 species of native vascular flora and 46 species of birds.

HFNC worked from 2004-08 with various funding bodies, including Glenelg-Hopkins CMA, to remove 200 pines (100 of which were from 30-150 cm diam.) and 41 large cypress from the reserve, and planted back shrubs and trees grown from sources indigenous to the area. Environmental weeds such as Sparaxis, Briar Rose, *Fumaria* and *Oxalis purpurea* were also attacked and annual works are conducted to control or eliminate these pests and a new one (African Weed Orchid). The rail bed was also cleared of Black Wattles to enable access for management, walkers and cyclists along the reserve. This was the largest project that HFNC has ever attempted.

In 2016 we applied to the Shire of Southern Grampians for a Community Sustainability Grant of \$2,500 to grade the rail track, making it suitable for cyclists, walkers and our management vehicles. Our application was successful and the trail was cleared and graded in May 2017. The photos here show the southern end and the mid-section.



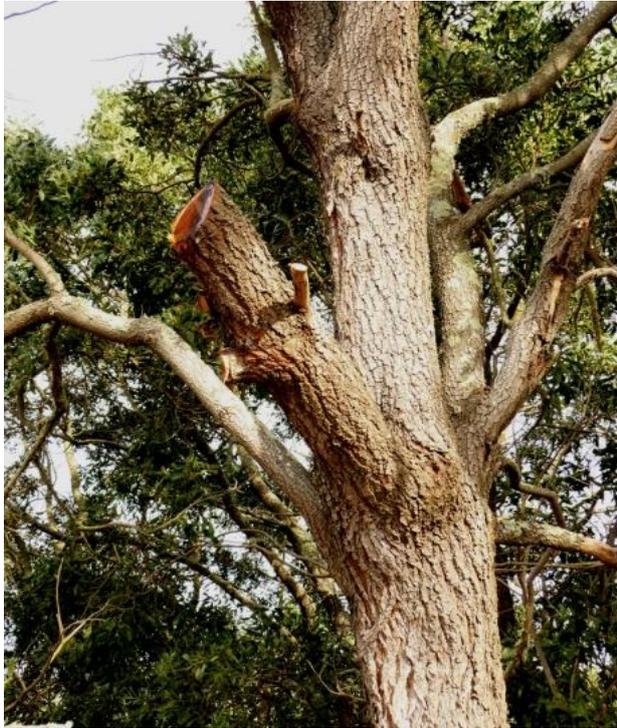
Graded Rail line from McFarlanes Rd



Graded Rail line mid-section

Our main objective was to clear the track of large stones. The surface had been rolled on 21 May to press small stones into the ground. Our members walked the trail and put aside most of the larger stones that might upset bike riders. Access had to be provided for the grader but contractors had left some long branch stubs on trees along the trail and Peter spent time trimming those to the appropriate prescription.

The next task was to remove wire guards from large Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) and Drooping Sheoak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) and to fit those over 7 smaller Banksia trees that had been heavily defoliated by Black Wallabies (*Wallabia bicolor*). Some of the seedlings that we planted from 2005-8 had not survived the attentions of these marsupials. We noted that the Drooping Sheoak grove at the southern end of the siding area had suppressed all weeds in their vicinity. A large fungus *Gloeophyllum seiparium* (Brown Gilled Polypore) was found on a decayed *Pinus radiata* stump in that area.



Lopped Blackwood branches requiring trimming



Peter trimming long stubs of Black Wattle



Lyn and others removing large stones from the trail



Drooping Sheoaks planted in 2005



Morning tea on the Kanawalla Rail Flora Reserve



Gloeophyllum separium (Brown Gilled Polypore)

Other fungi were conspicuous in the reserve and two are shown below:



Xerula australis at Kanawalla Railway Flora Res



Amanita sp. at Kanawalla Railway Flora Res

Another objective was to inspect the 2 sets of tiles that Gary Petersen (Dept Environment) has laid down about 8 years ago in a quest for Striped Legless Lizards (*Delma impar*).

We found 6 skinks (possibly *Pseudemoia pageenstecheri* or a *Phenomorphous* sp.) and 4 Spotted Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes tasmaniensis*). Ants had established homes under many of the tiles and Swamp Rats (*Rattus lutreolus*) had also linked some tiles into their tunnel systems. We had inspected the 3 rows of 10 tiles at the southern end when we arrived at the reserve and the temperature was quite cool. That served to slow down the action of skinks and frogs seen beneath the tiles. We lifted the 5 rows of 10 tiles at the northern end at mid-day and any residents were very active in the warm conditions, denying us the chance to photograph them.



Rod lifting a tile on Kanawalla Rail Flora Res



Spotted Marsh Frog, Kanawalla Rail Flora Res



Skink (minus tail) on Kanawalla Rail Flora Res

The last task was to hand-weed *Fumaria* ('Carrot Weed') and *Galium* ('Clingers') from beneath the large Wild Cherry (*Exocarpos cupressiformis*) on the southern end of the siding embankment. Everyone helped do that and Janeen remarked that it was good to be working without a herbicide!

The working bee excursion ended at about 1.30 pm in pleasant warm conditions. The reserve is looking good and most of our planted trees and shrubs have done well, but more work is needed to control weeds and to establish more *Banksia marginata* and other local species.