

The O'Keefe Rail Trail

Grey Box



- O'Keefe Trail (gravel track)
- Bendigo Creek, Linear Park
- McIvor Highway
- Creeks
- Revegetation Site
- Bendigo Bushland Trail
- Bridge
- Axe Creek Suspension Bridge
- Reserves



- Information Shelter
- Public Telephone
- Car Parking
- Children's Playground
- Barbeques & Picnic Area
- Taps
- Toilets
- Axedale Cemetery



The Trail

- Length** 19km (one way)
- Grade** Easy
- Starting point** Midland Highway, Bendigo
- Destination** Bendigo to Axedale
- Surface** Sandy gravel with a number of low creek crossings
- Walking time** 5.5 hours (approx.) one way at a leisurely pace
- Cycling time** 3 hours (approx.) one way at a leisurely pace
- Connection** Bendigo Bushland Trail between Pratts Park Road and Markovitch Lane. Shorter sections of the trail can be explored. Parts of the trail can be cycled (allow 10 min / km).

Shorter Loops:

- Wilkie Road to** (former Railway siding site, P)
- Bennetts Road** (BFNC Flora Reserve)
- Distance** 4 km or 8 km return
- Cycling time** 40 minutes (one way)
- Bennetts Road to** (BFNC Flora Reserve)
- Peppercom Park** (former Longlea Railway siding site, P)
- Distance** 2 km or 4 km return
- Cycling time** 20 minutes (one way)

For more information Contact
Bendigo Tourism
51 - 67 Pall Mall, Bendigo
(03) 5444 4445
tourism@bendigo.vic.gov.au
www.bendigotourism.com

O'Keefe
rail trail

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Norm Stimson (landscapes),
William Flentje (birds)
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Axe Creek Suspension Bridge

The suspension bridge over Axe Creek was built in December, 1993. The bridge was built by a Life Be In It, LEAP team and took two weeks to complete, costing \$50,000. The native reed growing in Axe Creek is the common reed, *Phragmites australis*. It is an important waterplant as it assists in preventing creek erosion, filters muddy water and provides homes for many insects and even some birds. Stand still and listen for a while. You may hear, and be lucky enough to see, a Reed Warbler darting amongst the reeds.

Bendigo Field Naturalist's Club Flora Reserve

The BFNC Flora Reserve was purchased through a community fundraising appeal co-ordinated by Trust for Nature, Bendigo Bushland Appeal Committee. The reserve has no formal tracks but is easily traversed.

Wander through the dappled shade of Yellow Gums, Grey Box, Long-leaf Box, and Red Stringybark.

In Winter and Spring a spectacular display of local wattles will greet you, along with many other beautiful wildflowers. See if you can identify some of the trees using one of the field guides noted in this pamphlet.

Axedale Flora and Fauna Reserve

Which trees dominate the canopy of this reserve? The BFNC Flora Reserve and this Reserve share many of the same species of plants and animals. Many species occupying these unique reserves are endangered.

Tread lightly and leave no trace of your visit.



Yellow Gums lining the trail

Axedale Cemetery

The Axedale Cemetery is situated at the end of the walking track, a short distance from the township of Axedale. The Catholic section is surrounded by a beautiful bluestone wall. This cemetery is a significant grassland site featuring Kangaroo Grass, Themeda triandra, and many other beautiful native wildflowers which flower in profusion in Spring and early Summer.



Axedale Catholic Cemetery

Bendigo Bushland Trail

This trail covers a distance of 65 km and encircles the city of Bendigo, through urban parks, state forests and other public land. Rex the Echidna will guide you through some of the best vantage points and significant cultural and natural features of Bendigo. Cultural sites include old alluvial gold mining operations and eucalyptus oil extraction sites. All relics are protected. See Dept. NRE for more detailed brochures on the trail.

Former Railway sidings - Longlea and Junortoun

Now sites where car parking is available. At these sites and others, the motor rail would stop for passengers when that service was running.



Original Rail Bridge, Strickland Rd

Who was Andrew O'Keefe?

Like thousands of others, Andrew and his sister, Mary, and parents Edward and Ellen, migrated from their homeland, Ireland, in 1854 in the wake of the great potato famine. Andrew, worked on a number of construction projects before he successfully tendered for his first, the Heathcote to Sandhurst railway line. The price was 88,409 pounds with 50 bridges at various points. The project took 21 months to complete with 2 derailments in the process. The first passenger train ran from Bendigo to Heathcote on 20 July 1888, with Andrew's engine pulling the passenger carriages which conveyed 30 official guests to Heathcote for the installation banquet at the Masonic Hall. Some of Andrew O'Keefe's other construction projects included: **Eaglehawk to Bendigo tram line** from the Coffee House in Mollison Street to Market Reserve, Eaglehawk - 'a distance of 4 miles 30 chains'; **Laanecoorie Weir** (taking 2 years to complete with 25 floods occurring over that time); **Mid-section of the Great Southern Railway** from Whitelaw's Track (Korumburra) to Toora - a distance of nearly 45 miles. Andrew married Elizabeth and had 10 children. He died in 1904 aged 61 years. He owned many properties in his lifetime including Adelaide Vale and Kimbolton Run.



Axe Creek Swing Bridge

The demise of the Heathcote line was the result of a number of factors:

- The steady decline in the demand for timber with the gradual swing to oil and briquettes;
- The gradual closing of the deep lead mines of the Bendigo Goldfields;
- The working out of local forests of timber resources over time; and
- The proposal to build Eppalock Weir which would flood part of the line when full.

What is a Rail Trail?

- Once a functional railway line;
- Now a multi-purpose recreational pathway along a closed railway line;
- A pathway for walking, running, cycling, horse-riding, enjoying;
- A corridor of green providing reserves for native plants and animals.



Train- 'Spirit of Bendigo' between Bob St & Murphy

Caring for the Rail Trail

The plants and animals on this trail are protected. Bendigo City Council is revegetating sections over time and your co-operation in ensuring that the trail is cared for is much appreciated. You can assist by:

- Keeping to the tracks provided;
- Taking all rubbish home;
- Placing your garden rubbish in your compost bin and not on the trail;
- Leaving dead timber where it has fallen. It is the food for many invertebrates (which are food for larger animals) and maybe a lizard or two;
- Photograph and admire the native plants but do not remove;
- No fires;
- No trail bikes.

Late 1852 - A ramshackle shanty town known as McIvor Diggings rapidly rose in the wake of discovery of pieces of the precious metal gold in the valley of McIvor Creek.

1853 - Proposals were made for a railway line to connect the Yarra River with the Murray, following the path of the gold seekers to provide supplies like flour, meat, tools, etc. for those bark-hut stores along the gold route.

1879 - Heathcote had a population of 1500 with 11 hotels, a newspaper and three flour mills.

1880's - The great land boom in Victoria had people crying out to open up the land with railway lines for easier access.

1884 - Railway Construction Act No 821 gave birth to a network of railway lines across Victoria. This Act became known as the 'Octopus Act'. Why?

1887 - Tender for the construction of the 28-mile Heathcote to North Bendigo line was finalised (this line was part of Wandong to Bendigo Line.)

1888 - Andrew O'Keefe commenced construction in January and in July, O'Keefe's own locomotive "Sue", set off down the line.

1888 onwards - Massive amounts of timber left Heathcote's forests for Bendigo to shore up mine shafts and fuel the voracious appetites of engines driving the gold mines deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth. Heathcote provided Bendigo with much fruit and vegetables during this time.

1906-1927 - McIvor Timber and Firewood Company was feeding two trainloads of timber every day to distant towns and cities. Timber was used for railway bridges, sleepers for railway tracks, red gum for bridges and buildings, house timber, mine props and shaft linings, telegraph poles for the communication system of a nation, and firewood for domestic and industrial use in the steadily expanding city of Melbourne, the mines of Bendigo, and for lighting up the steam locomotives of the Victorian Railways.

1925 - The introduction of the rail motor resulted in separating goods and passenger services.

1942 - Unpredictable services over time led to less people using the lines, resulting in withdrawal of passenger services between Heathcote and Bendigo.

1958 (June) - Only 3,000 tons of freight was loaded at the stations, not sufficient to support even a once-a-week goods service. Talk was in the air of constructing a new dam (to be named Eppalock Weir) to hold back the waters of the Campaspe River. The storage when full would engulf part of the route of the railway.

1958 (Dec) - The last train, a T-Class Locomotive, travelled the line which then closed with little, if any, ceremony.

1968 - The Australian Railway Historical Society co-ordinates the historic journey of the last train along this track on 9th November.

1970's - Line dismantled.

Animals and Plants on or near the trail

Animals on the Trail

- Eastern Grey Kangaroo
- Echidna
- Shingleback Lizard
- Banjo Frog (Pobblebonk)
- Spotted Marsh Frog

Birds on the Trail

- Reed Warbler
- Honeyeaters
- Pardalotes
- Rainbow Bee-eater
- Thornbills
- Magpie Lark
- Magpie
- White-winged Chough
- Noisy Miner
- Robins
- Superb Fairy Wren
- Wood Duck
- White-faced Heron
- Red Wattlebird
- Eastern Rosella
- Grey Butcherbird
- Galah

Plants on the Trail

See if you can identify these eucalypts:

- Yellow Gum
- Grey Box
- River Red Gum
- Red Stringybark
- Long-leaf Box

Other common native plants you may come across:

- Mistletoe
- Native Cherry
- Gold-dust Wattle
- Golden Wattle
- Spreading Wattle
- Hedge Wattle
- Black-anther Flax-Lily
- Chinese Scrub
- Sweet Bursaria
- Cats Claw Grevillea
- Golden Everlasting Daisy
- Grey Everlasting
- Kangaroo Grass
- and many more.....



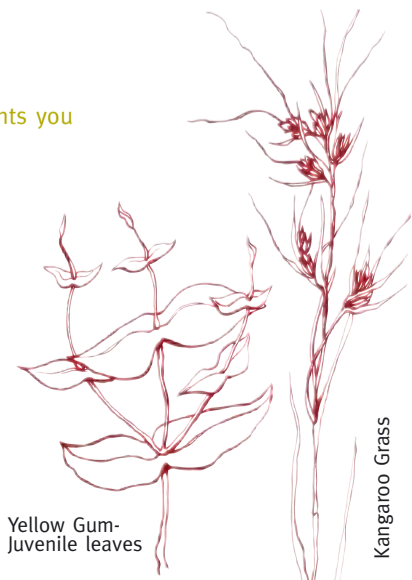
Blue Faced Honeyeater



Sun Orchid



Chocolate Lily



Yellow Gum-Juvenile leaves

Kangaroo Grass