

Ballarat–Skipton Rail Trail



Fast Facts



Start/Finish

The trail officially begins approximately 500m west of Ring Road at the junction of the former Ballarat to Skipton and Melbourne to Serviceton railway lines.

Due to construction of the **Ballarat Western Link Road**, it is recommended that trail users begin at public access point ² **Remembrance Drive** (Avenue of Honour). It is anticipated that the link will be completed by November 2014.

Alternative starting points

- Skipton Station Ground, Station Street
- Ballarat Railway Station, Lydiard Street North
- Wendouree Railway Station, 1225 Howitt Street
- Any of the Public Access Points or road crossings.

Distance

The rail trail is 53kms one way. The ride to the trailhead from Ballarat CBD adds another 8kms.

Public Access

Walkers, cyclists and horse riders may use the trail. Users should stay within the reserve boundaries.

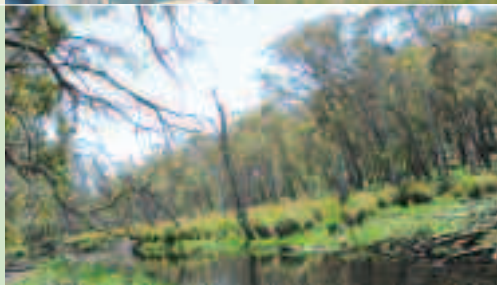
Trail surface

Unsealed; crushed granite sand that may become boggy when wet. A mountain bike or hybrid bike with 30mm tyres is recommended.

Difficulty

A moderate grade ride with a few gradual climbs and descents. The trail crosses numerous minor roads and the Glenelg Highway several times.

Additional Information



Further Information

Ballarat – Skipton Rail Trail Committee

- **City of Ballarat**
www.ballarat.vic.gov.au | Tel. (03) 5320 5500
- **Golden Plains Shire**
www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au | Tel. (03) 5281 1202
- **Ballarat Visitor Information Centre**
www.visitballarat.com.au | Tel. 1800 44 66 33
- **Ballarat Bicycle Users Group (BaBUG)**
www.balbug.net
- **Ballarat-Skipton Rail Trail**
www.ballaratskiptonrailtrail.com

Community websites

- www.ballarat.com/smythesdale/index.htm
- www.skiptonaustralia.org.au
- www.lintoncommunity.com

Introduction to the trail



To enjoy a bike ride without having to worry about sharing the ride with traffic, head for the Ballarat – Skipton Rail Trail. This is an unsealed trail for walkers, cyclists and horse riders that follows the line of the former Ballarat to Skipton railway.

The line operated between 1883 and 1985. It was developed as a link between the gold towns west of Ballarat and the surrounding pastoral region. Initially the line out of Ballarat reached Scarsdale, then Linton before it was eventually extended to Skipton.

Today the Ballarat – Skipton Rail Trail provides an interesting and informative 53km journey. Enjoy wide open grasslands, eucalypt forest, historic bridges and attractive nineteenth century towns along the trail. Check the information signs at each of the former railway stations for local information.



There are three access points in Ballarat; on the Ring Road as it crosses the railway line, off Blind

Creek Road and off the Avenue of Honour in Cardigan. You can join the trail at any of the settlements along the route.

To walk or ride the trail from Ballarat to Skipton and back to Ballarat is a long way. To make a weekend of it, overnight accommodation is available in Smythesdale, Scarsdale, Linton and Skipton.

The trail was completely resurfaced in 2008, rendering it smooth, but it can get muddy.

Significant dates for the Ballarat – Skipton Railway (1862–1985):

- 1862** Unsuccessful proposal to lay a tramway to Linton.
- Late 1870's** Haddon - Smythesdale - Scarsdale population estimated at 16,300. Provision made for a railway in the Railway Construction Act of 1880.
- 1882** Contract signed for construction of Ballarat to Scarsdale line for a sum of £25,779.
- 1883** Formal opening of line to Scarsdale including intermediate stations at Haddon, Smythesdale, Scarsdale.
- 1889** Linton railway lobbyists succeeded in having an extension to the Scarsdale railway included in the 1884 Railway Act.
- 1889** Opening of Cardigan passenger station.
- 1890** Contract signed for construction of the Scarsdale to Linton line for a sum of £52,256.
- 1890** Opening of Newtown Station with the beginning of the Scarsdale Linton line.
- 1890** Scarsdale passenger journeys totalled more than 20,000 annually.
- 1890** Opening of the Happy Valley and Linton stations.
- 1891** Extension of railway to Linton via Newtown opened nine months behind schedule due to wet weather and a dispute about the final location of the Linton station. Intermediate stations were provided at Newtown and Happy Valley. The line was officially opened by the Chief Secretary, the Hon. Alfred Deakin (later Australian Prime Minister).
- 1896** Closure of Scarsdale as a staff and ticket station.



- 1911** Ballarat to Colac (via Cressy) railway line opens as an extension of the Ballarat – Skipton line from Newtown.
- 1914** Commencement of work on the Linton to Skipton section of line (works were costed at £65,000). One intermediate station was provided at Pittong.
- 1915** Opening of the Ballast Siding – to obtain ballast from the tailings of the Golden Lake mine – closing a year or two later.
- 1916** Extension of line from Linton to Skipton officially opened.
- 1920** A Royal Train carrying the Prince of Wales travelled between Colac and Ballarat.
- 1931–32** Reduced passenger use of line as a result of the Depression, stagnation in world commodity markets and competition from road transport.
- 1931** Withdrawal of the train crew and station master at the Skipton station. Skipton station reduced to caretaker status.
- 1934** A Royal Train carrying the Duke of Gloucester travelled between Colac and Ballarat.
- 1953** Smythes Creek bridge destroyed by fire resulting in the line beyond Newtown being closed for several months while the bridge was re-built.
- 1954** Closure of Nintingbool station.
- 1970** Closure of Cardigan Station.
- 1973** Establishment of the kaolin plant at Pittong, resulting in a revival of freight use along the line.
- 1975** Introduction of the Melbourne to Hamilton road coach service (calling at Linton and Skipton).
- 1976** Closure of the Ballarat – Linton motor rail passenger service. The railway then operated a freight only service until its closure.
- 1976** Closure of the Happy Valley Station.
- 1977** Closure of Kopke, Scarsdale & Haddon stations.
- 1979** Regular Ballarat – Skipton freight trains ceased with the opening of the Ballarat Freight Centre. Seasonal grain traffic and kaolin loading were handled as required.
- 1985** Closure of the Ballarat – Skipton railway line on September 27, 1985.

Township Maps: Smythesdale, Linton & Skipton



Key to Symbols	
= Accommodation	= Garage
= Art / Craft / Gifts	= Golf Club
= Cafe	= Hotel
= Camping	= Lookout
= Cemetery	= Picnic Ground
= Church	= Point of Interest
= Disused Mine	= Restaurant
= Drinking Water	= Significant Old Buildings
= Fishing	= Swimming Pool
	= Toilet

Smythesdale

- A** Courthouse Hotel, 63 Brooke Street
Tel. 5342 8198 | Wednesday-Sunday
- B** Old Courthouse (Woody Yaloak Historical Society Museum)
Glenelg Highway
- C** Smythesdale Botanic Gardens & Camping Grounds
Garden Street | Tel. 0418 503 938 or 5342 8752
Camp sites available, shower facilities, BBQs, playground
- D** Kathabeas (Furniture and giftware), 33 Brooke Street
Tel. 0421 500 435 | Thursday-Monday, 10am-5pm
- F** 44 Brooke Street (Antiques), 44 Brooke Street
Tel. 5342 8186 or 0438 557 886
Thursday-Monday, 10am-5pm



Linton

- A** St Peters Roman Catholic Church
- B** Traquair House 1862
- C** Linton Free Library
- D** St. Pauls Anglican Church 1861
- E** Peacock Cottage Gallery and Studio | Tel. 5334 7401
- F** Linton Takeaway Newsagency, 18 Sussex Street
Tel. 5344 7362 | Monday to Saturday 6.30am-8pm;
Sunday 8am-8pm
- G** Susie's on Sussex (Recycled clothing and books)
Sussex Street | Tel. 5342 8554
Friday 2-4pm; Saturday & Sunday, 11.30am-4pm
- H** Number 80 Café, 80 Sussex Street
Tel. 0411031749 | Thursday-Sunday, 10am-4pm
- I** Railway Hotel | Tel. 5344 7214
- J** Linton Cemetery (Chinese graves)
- K** Avenue of Honour
- L** Mortchup Road Reservoir (Old Linton Reservoir)



Skipton

- A** Skipton Eel Factory
- B** Historical Museum
- C** Skipton Hotel, Montgomery Street | Tel. 5340 2111
- D** Skipton Golf Club, Geelong Road | Tel. 5340 2054
- E** Swimming Pool
- F** Stewart Park Picnic Ground
- G** Presbyterian Church
- H** Catholic Church
- I** Skipton Cemetery (plaque commemorating Henry Bolte's schooling at Skipton)
- J** Trout fishing Mt. Emu Creek
- K** Church of England
- L** Skipton Lake Reserve
- M** Skipton Gallery and Café, 36 Montgomery Street
Tel. 5340 2073 | Open 7 days, 10am-4pm



Ballarat–Skipton Rail Trail: Highlights, Information, Access Points

Arch of Victory and Avenue of Honour

As you leave central Ballarat you'll pass through the 1920 Arch of Victory and along the Avenue of Honour. The Avenue of Honour has a tree planted for each Ballarat resident who enlisted in the First World War between 1917 and 1919.

Six sites of historical significance have been identified along the Ballarat – Skipton railway reserve by the Woody Yaloak Historical Society and the Linton and District Historical Society. These include:

Nimons Bridge

Nimons Bridge is one of the largest timber trestle bridges in Victoria. It crosses the Woody Yaloak River near Newtown.

Cutting No 18

Located between Nimons Bridge and the Happy Valley station ground, this is the largest cutting on the Trail.

Nintingbool Siding

This was the site of the original homestead of the squatting station known as Nintingbool Run, taken up in 1838.

Chinese Camp

The Chinese camp was located just past the Nintingbool Siding, placed between the line and Smythesdale Road.

Haddon Railway Station and Kopke Railway Station were once centres of large settlements in the gold mining era.

Rail Trail sections

The trail divides into three distinct sections:

- Ballarat to Scarsdale is a region of grasslands, swamps and long open vistas.
- Scarsdale to Pittong has lovely stretches of forest, historic trestle bridges and interesting railway cuttings.
- Pittong to Skipton is the final section, meandering through rural farmland where sheep may wander onto the trail.

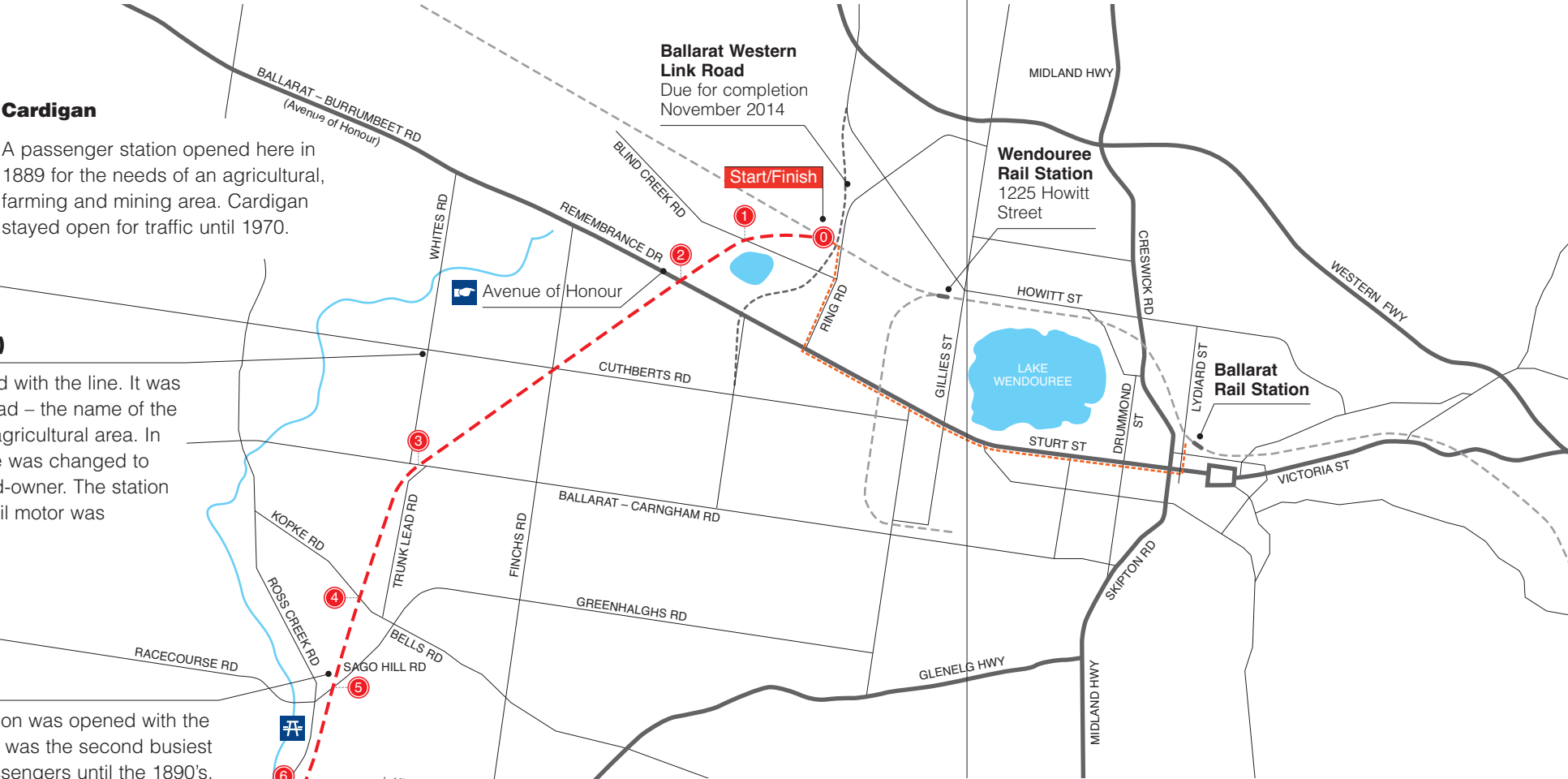
Flora and Fauna

The most significant vegetation seen over the length of the trail include open forest (predominantly Eucalypt), native grassland, Black She-oak and Silver Banksia Woodland.

Approximately 32 species of mammal have been identified along the Rail Trail (21 native species and 11 introduced species). Four important species are under some threat in a national context. These include the Koala, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Common Dunnart and Common Bent-wing Bat.

Key to Symbols

- = Accommodation
- = Cafe
- = Cemetery
- = Church
- = Drinking Water
- = Disused Mine
- = Garage
- = Hotel
- = Picnic Ground
- = Point of Interest
- = Significant Old Buildings
- = Toilets



Kopke (Trunk Lead)

This station was opened with the line. It was first known as Trunk Lead – the name of the local gold mining and agricultural area. In 1910 the station's name was changed to Kopke after a local land-owner. The station was closed once the rail motor was withdrawn in 1977.

Haddon

Haddon's station was opened with the line in 1883. It was the second busiest station for passengers until the 1890's. In its later years it was mostly used for school children riding the rail motor to and from school. They enjoyed travelling on the rail motor until 1976 when they had to switch to a bus.



Smythesdale

www.ballarat.com/smythesdale/index.htm

This station opened with the line in 1883. This goods loop was the only one intact between Linton Junction and Linton, remaining until the line closed in 1985.

Scarsdale

This, the first terminus on the railway, soon had so many passengers using it that they had to expand the facilities. By 1890 over 20,000 people used this station each year. But by 1977 most people travelled by car or bus and the station closed.

Accommodation is available at the Woody Yaloak: 0438 580 247

Newtown

After they built the line to Skipton the Government decided to build another line from Newtown south to Cressy and Colac. This line was used to serve local farmers and the small towns. The line to Cressy was closed in 1953 and Newtown was no longer a junction station. Then the main use of the station was for school children riding on the rail motor.

Linton

www.lintoncommunity.com

This station was opened on 10 October 1890 as the terminus of an extension from Scarsdale. The Linton locomotive and train crew were transferred to Skipton when the line went through, but Linton remained a staff and ticket station. Linton revived in status after 1930 when a passenger rail motor was based there. Regular goods trains and the rail motor ceased running in the late 1970's.

Happy Valley

The station opened on 10 October 1890 with limited facilities; a 70 metre passenger platform, a shelter and one spur siding. The passenger platform remained in use in a shortened form until 1969, when the station was down-graded to a Motor Rail stopping place and finally closed in 1976.

Skipton

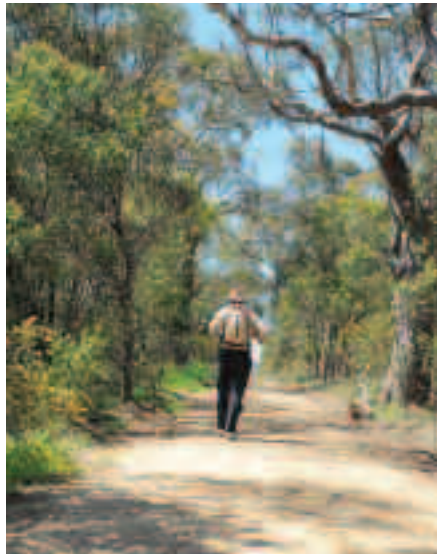
www.skiptonaustralia.org.au

Skipton township was the centre for a large pastoral and agricultural area. Once the line was opened the farmers could send produce to the markets by rail. Originally there were locomotive drivers, firemen and an important station master here. When traffic declined in the 1930's depression these positions were withdrawn. Traffic increased after the war and facilities for receiving bulk wheat and oats were built.

English China Clay (ECC) mine

Pittong

This station opened with the line and originally consisted of a 70 metre passenger platform and shelter plus a loop siding, ramped goods platform and livestock loading races. The livestock facilities were removed in 1956. A revival in freight came in about 1973 with the establishment of a kaolin plant in the station yard. A long loop siding on the side behind the old passenger platform was installed for the plant and this traffic became the mainstay of the entire railway until its closure in 1985.



Accommodation & Camping

Camping

Limited camping facilities are available along the Rail Trail. Campsites are available at the Smythesdale Botanic Gardens in Garden Street. Shower facilities, BBQs and a playground are also located here. To book a campsite phone 5342 8752 or 0418 503 938.

Pittong Stopover

Pittong Stopover provides basic short-term accommodation for weekend trail users. It has limited cutlery, plates and a BBQ. Users are required to bring their own linen / toiletries. To book the Pittong Stopover, contact Golden Plains Shire on 5220 7111.

Other accommodation

For more accommodation options visit the websites listed under the 'further information' and 'community websites' sections of this document.

Bike hire & servicing

Welcome Nugget Bike Hire

128 Lydiard St Nth, Ballarat | Tel. 0423 268 618
Hours: Contact directly for opening hours

Bicycle Centre Ballarat

24-28 Armstrong St Nth, Ballarat | Tel: 5334 4388
Hours: Mon – Thur 9am-5:30pm; Fri 9am-6pm; Sat 9am-1pm

Linton Takeaway Newsagency

Puncture kits and air compressor available
18 Sussex Street | Tel. 5344 7362
Hours: Mon – Sat 6.30am-8pm; Sun 8am-8pm

Emergency Help

Call 000

Triple Zero should only be called when police, fire or ambulance attendance is needed in a life-threatening or time critical situation.

ESTA Emergency Markers

Emergency Markers are designed to pinpoint your exact location during an emergency in public open spaces or a hard to define locality. It is envisaged emergency markers will be installed in early 2013 at each of the kilometre markers located along the Ballarat to Skipton Rail Trail.

Litter

Please carry all rubbish with you as no bins are provided.

Reporting Faults and Feedback

A Smartphone App is currently being developed by City of Ballarat to provide information, updates and reporting features. In the interim, contact Council's Customer Service Team on 5320 5500.

Vehicle Access

Access is provided for management vehicles and emergency vehicles only.

