



The Riesling Trail®



An Iconic Clare Valley Attraction

E: admin@rieslingtrail.com.au

W: www.rieslingtrail.com.au

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Introduction

The 33 km Riesling Trail stretches from Auburn to Barinia and was constructed along the path of the old Riverton to Spalding railway line.

The story of the Riesling Trail began with the opening of the railway line in 1918 as part of the Riverton to Spalding line. It was just one of many railway lines constructed during that time to open up the State of South Australia, allowing easier transport of produce and passengers and connecting the State not only to Adelaide but the rest of Australia and the world.

The line closed in 1984 leaving an abandoned corridor wending its way through some of the most picturesque country in South Australia. During the next ten years, the community and State Government combined forces to construct The Riesling Trail along the railway corridor. It is among the earliest rail trails to be constructed in South Australia and one of the only ones governed by a management committee of volunteers.

Since its opening in 1994, the Riesling Trail has become a world recognised icon for the Clare Valley, providing a boost to tourism and recreation, highlighting wine production and accommodation and a strong uniting force in the community.

Information boards, artworks, picnic seating and shelters are strategically placed along the trail to enhance the trail experience.

The community-based Riesling Trail Management Committee (RTMC), along with local organisations, businesses and volunteers, continue to celebrate the major contribution of the original railway line, its infrastructure and identities. Works along the trail from Clare to Auburn have included partly restoring sidings, developing an information hub at the site of the former turntable, upgrading bridges to modern safety standards and clearing introduced vegetation.

This work is ongoing and has resulted in a world standard trail which attracts upwards of 100,000 users each year. It is linked with several other significant recreational trails which encourages a different kind of tourist to access the delights of the Clare Valley.

This booklet deals with the history of the railway, the construction of the Riesling Trail, trail improvements and some of the colourful and hardworking people behind the legacy of the Riesling Trail.



The Archway at Auburn which marks the southern entrance to the trail.

From Rail to Trail

'The mighty bush with iron rails is tethered to the world' *The Roaring Days* by Henry Lawson

Following settlement of Adelaide in the late 1830s, farmers left the capital in the search for good arable land. The Mid North, home to the Ngadjuri people, was perfect for farming and this created a desperate need for cheap and efficient transport to replace horse drawn wagons laden with produce. Clare was one of the first districts in the North to be settled but one of the last to have a railway.

Slowly a network of railway lines spread throughout South Australia. The South Australian Railway Commission considered that any town within 15 miles of a railway was already adequately served. With stations at Hoyleton, Farrell Flat, Saddleworth and Riverton already established, it took years of community and political lobbying to secure a line to Clare.

Although the 15 mile rule was adequate for the flat Adelaide Plains and surrounds, Clare is nestled among hills which made transporting freight on winding, unmade dirt roads to distant rail terminals an almost insurmountable challenge.

Finally, the Commission acceded to the community demands and George Baxter won the contract to build the new section as part of the Riverton to Spalding line. Two hundred men with their own tents, picks and shovels arrived in Auburn in March 1915, with some gangs relocated to Riverton to work north from there. However, the men went on strike almost immediately for a wage increase of two shillings a day (from eight shillings to ten shillings) as well as allowances for tents and shovels.

After several months of bitter negotiating, the wage increase was granted but not the allowances. Work finally got underway in July 1915 but the shortage of materials caused by World War One, ongoing strike action, wet weather, challenging gradients and the need to construct the line through several significant cuttings added to the length of the project. Ironically it is these hard-earned cuttings that are one of the most attractive features of The Riesling Trail.

The construction of a temporary bridge over Pine Creek enabled the first train to travel from Riverton to Auburn in January 1916, followed by the first payload of 40 tons of flour consigned by Auburn millers Jackett Bros, to be delivered from Auburn to Port Adelaide. Because the flour was for military purposes it was transported by rail for free. When the railway reached Sevenhill in April 1917, goods were collected by motor lorries and horse drawn teams to be transported to Clare as a stopgap measure until the line was completed the next year.

Constructing the railway from Riverton to Clare and then on to Spalding (a total of 86 kms) meant that the Clare district became part of the vast network of railway lines throughout South Australia and Australia, with access to the world. During World War Two, the Commonwealth Flax Mill at Auburn handled more than 10,000 tons of flax straw produced by local growers. The straw was railed to Adelaide and shipped to Great Britain to be used to manufacture fire hoses, canvas goods and aircraft fabric. Wine and wool were also transported to Port Adelaide via rail.

The opening of the Riverton to Clare line in July 1918, followed by the armistice that marked the end of World War One (November 1918) signalled the beginning of an era of progress and prosperity. The Clare to Spalding line was completed in 1922. Railways filled the transport gaps between World Wars One and Two. This 20 year period coincided with the decline of horse drawn vehicles and the rise of motorised transport on engineered roads.



Opening of the Clare Railway line—July 1918 [Photo Clare Regional History Group]

The Clare to Riverton section of the railway initially offered affordable transport for both freight and passengers. Freight included stock, grain, flour, wine, dried fruit, fuel, wool, manufactured agricultural equipment and general goods. Producers were able to tap into wider markets enabling local producers to improve their standard of living. The railway also provided a way to increase services to the country. The Baby Health Train consisting of a specially fitted out carriage offering the specialised services of the Mothers and Babies Health Association was first introduced on the Riverton to Spalding line in 1932. The carriage was hitched to various trains and taken to the next destination to expand the delivery of specific services to rural families. In 1921 special trains took 1,700 children on a summer excursion to the beach and Wirth's Circus visited Clare by train in 1922.

The line included four stations - Clare, Watervale, Auburn and Riverton. There were several unattended platforms or sidings including Rhynie, Undalya, Sevenhill and Clare Showground as well as several stopping places where passengers could hail a train. These were between Rhynie and Undalya, Mulkirri and Tatkana.

There were two in the tiny settlement of Penwortham (Morrison Road crossing and Pawelski Road crossing) where locals such as Tommy Duke enjoyed being able to stand by the side of the railway line and stop the train with just one upraised hand.

Up until the 1950s, not many people had their own motor vehicle and many roads, even main roads, were not sealed. The passenger service offered by the railway provided a reliable way to travel. Children attending local or Adelaide based schools often travelled by train, as did passengers enjoying holidays or conducting business in Adelaide. Tourists to Clare also made good use of the railway, attending events such as the Clare Races or Clare Show. These special excursion trains continued to operate until the 1980s. One of these special trains was two 830 class diesel electric locomotives which pulled the largest passenger train to use the line as part of the 1978 Clare Valley Easter Wine Festival.

As a cost saving measure, the railway line had been constructed using lightweight (60 pound) second hand rails which caused major problems in the operation of the line and excluded the use of heavier and faster locomotives. Initially a passenger carriage was attached to the rear of the freight train but as the line deteriorated, the ride became too rough and unpleasant. As a stop gap measure, a bus/rail service was introduced which linked Clare passengers with better quality service centres such as Riverton, which also boasted a well-established refreshment room.



Bags of wheat stacked at the Clare Railway Station [Photo Clare Regional History Group]

The Clare railway yard initially featured a basic station but this was remodelled in 1923 when the station building was relocated from the eastern to the western side of the yard so passengers could alight more safely. In 1925 electric lights were installed at the station as well as a hand operated turntable so the engine could be turned around. This meant that engines were pulling rather than pushing a line of carriages which was safer for the crew and enabled the fire in the locomotive to draw properly.

The Clare railway complex included a basic station with a stationmaster's house located close-by, several goods sheds, cranes, ash pit, watering points, a 30 ton weighbridge and stock yards. An automatic flagman or wig-wag level crossing protection device was installed at the Sevenhill/Mintaro Road crossing in 1926.

Although water for the steam trains was initially transported from Riverton to Clare in open wagons, once the Railway Reservoir was established at Neagles Rock, water was gravity fed to the station. Before the introduction of bulk grain handling, lumpers constructed stacks of bagged grain by the railway station, where they were loaded onto trains and shipped to Port Adelaide. Sheep and other stock were held in temporary stockyards.

The passenger carriages were replaced over time by Brill railcars which then gave way to a passenger road bus that travelled from Jamestown to Riverton, calling in at stations along the route to pick up passengers. The initial S class 130 Glamour engines, as well as the Rx and Q and S class engines, were gradually replaced by the 830 class diesel-electric locomotives.

With the downgrading of passenger travel on the railway line, freight transport was gradually replaced by road transport which was more cost effective and flexible. By 1975 freight services were reduced to three times per week, then twice a week in 1979. In 1983 the last freight train travelled on the line, just days before the Ash Wednesday bushfires (February 16, 1983) which burned vast swathes of the countryside between Clare and Watervale and also large sections of the railway line.

By 1973 South Australian Railways recommended that the line be closed within five years because of declining use. Australian National Railways took over operation of the railway in 1978 and little maintenance was carried out on the line which showed significant signs of neglect. The Ash Wednesday bushfire was the final straw for the once busy line.

The line was closed permanently in 1984. The Clare and Watervale railway stations were in a poor condition and were demolished by 1988 while the Auburn railway station was sold as a cellar door outlet. The rails were sold to Queensland to provide tracks for the slower travelling sugar trains. Two thousand sleepers had been burned in the fire but the 120,000 sleepers that could be salvaged were sold for garden borders in Melbourne. Railway structures including the bridges at Quarry Road, Wakefield Road and Greenwood Park Road across the Wakefield River were removed, as was the turntable, which was relocated to Mount Barker Junction. The wig-wag level crossing protection device was relocated to Melrose Park while one of the cranes was retained on the site of the Clare railway station.

The resulting stripped railway corridor was abandoned to the elements and left, with some nearby landowners fencing off areas for stock grazing. An initial move to replace the line and infrastructure to create a tourist train attraction failed to come to fruition. In the late 1980s, two visionary Clare Valley winemakers, Tony Brady and Evan Hiscock, came up with an innovative idea of converting this overgrown wasteland into a recreational walking and cycling trail that ran enticingly through some of the most scenic countryside in South Australia.

With the Clare Valley as one of the most prestigious producers of riesling, The Riesling Trail was born.



History of the Riesling Trail at Lennon Street carpark



Bales of wool delivered to Clare Railway Station [Photo Clare Regional History Group]

Conception

The existence of the deserted railway corridor which formerly offered a rail service between Riverton and Spalding set off a string of momentous events which eventuated in the Riesling Trail we see today.

Initial ideas considered for the corridor included re-laying a track to be used as a tourist railway, selling off small parcels of land to adjoining landowners and a fanciful idea to relocate the railway collection from Peterborough to Clare and convert the track to narrow gauge. Perhaps fortunately, none of these achieved the required volunteer or financial support.

But one plan managed, over time, to succeed in bringing together State and Local Government support and local groups such as the Clare Valley Winemakers Association. This was a concept put by two local winemakers - Tony Brady of Wendouree and Evan Hiscock of Petaluma.

In the late 1980s, Tony and Evan met with Leith Hughes of the Office for Recreation and Sport (ORS) and Greg Carmody of Transport SA to work out how to progress their vision of a trail that catered for walkers and cyclists and showed off the beauty of the area while exploring the length of the Clare Valley. Fortunately, this move coincided with a focus by ORS for the development of walking trails, promoted by Terry Lavender. Terry was instrumental in the development of both the Heysen and Mawson trails which were better suited to bushwalking rather than the proposed Riesling Trail. This would have a more recreational focus, with a multipurpose surface suitable for young and old, beginners and experienced walkers and cyclists.

In 1990, the four councils involved in the former railway land - Clare, Saddleworth, Auburn and Riverton, agreed that the land should be retained for recreational purposes. Spalding Council was included in this decision at a later date.

In 1992, the Clare Valley Winemakers Association sponsored a Creative Think Day looking for ways to highlight the region's famous riesling wine. Tony suggested a trail be constructed along the former railway corridor and that it be called The Riesling Trail.

This idea won the support of his peers and also solved several problems, not least being resistance to an urban development proposal near Warena Road, Clare which could downgrade the tourist appeal of the area along the trail and near Wendouree Winery. To counter this development, Tony enlisted the help of Professor of Architecture University of Sydney, Michael Towa, to create an artist's impression of what the vineyard area would look like if the area was converted into a housing estate. Even though this appeal to Clare Council against the development was dismissed, Tony persisted in his campaign and eventually the planned development was disallowed and so the rural vista along the trail remained largely intact.

Thus, the railway corridor was saved as well as the surrounding vineyards, vegetation and views, which gave the trail its unique character. State and Local Governments were on board; local groups such as the Clare Valley Winemakers Association were supportive and prepared to lobby for financial input, as well as a local volunteer support group who were keen to take the concept forward. In 1992, The Riesling Trail was registered by the Clare Valley Winemakers Association and the trail moved from **conception** to **construction**.

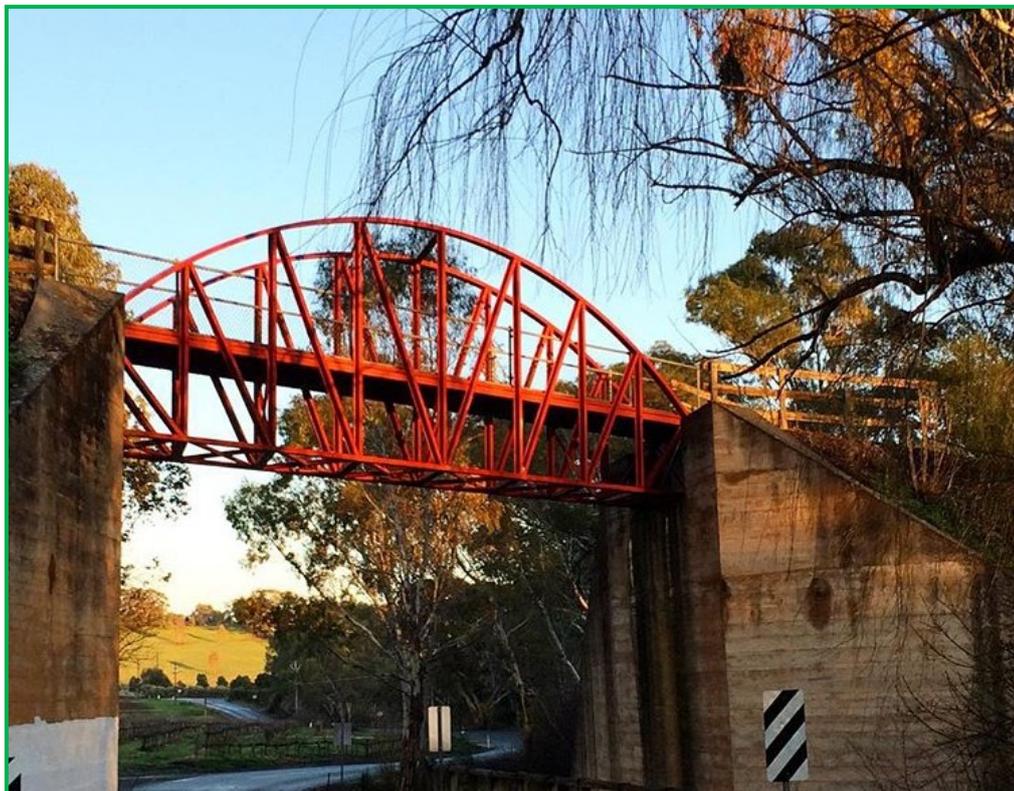
Construction

For several years, management of the Riesling Trail was conducted by a very active sub committee of the Clare Valley Winemakers Association. Aims for the trail included the development of a walking and cycling trail that provided wheelchair access for users of the trail from Clare to Auburn; the provision of a wildlife corridor and access to wineries and other facilities. All aims were to reflect the sub-regional variations along the Riesling Trail.

Practical issues such as creating logos, financial support, fencing, planting, signage, traffic control and trail surface construction were some of the matters that had to be addressed in the early stages.

The first major hurdle to link Clare to the southern sections of the trail was the replacement of the Quarry Road bridge which was removed during the demolition of the railway line some years earlier. In a flash of genius, Tony Brady approached wine lover and principal of BHP Steel Works in Whyalla, George Edgar, to request a donation of steel in recognition of the wine industry's high usage of steel. Paul (Blue) Jenner of Clare Metal Fabrications then built the replica replacement bridge off site and slotted it into the bridge abutments with perfect precision. The bridge design was based on the previous narrow width which suited the railway but would need to be reconfigured in the future to adhere to modern safety requirements.

Next in the "to do" list was the construction of a trial section of half a kilometre of the rail corridor. This was carried out by Clare Quarry based on a method devised by Quarry owner Trevor Schmidt. The procedure graded to one side the railway line ballast and replaced it with a smoother surface of quarry sand. This method is still used today. The high standard of this surface is one of the major factors of the Riesling Trail's reputation for one of the best rail trails in Australia.



The replacement bridge across Quarry Road

Following the success of a trial from Sevenhill to Watervale, work on the different sections of The Riesling Trail commenced in 1994. These early sections were opened by Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing, John Oswald MP in 1994. From 1997, the remaining sections were constructed, with the final section from Watervale to Auburn completed in 1998. The Riesling Trail between Clare and Auburn was officially opened by Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing Iain Evans on November 7, 1998. From its conception, this department, along with SA Tourism and numerous other local, state and federal governments, had all backed the project financially and continue to do so.

Construction was not a simple matter. Vegetation had closed the corridor in some areas and had to be removed, along with fences. Culverts had to be replaced as well as the Quarry Road bridge. The trail surface had to be raised and shaped to encourage water run-off and appropriate safety signage for vehicles and pedestrians had to be installed at road crossings.

Now that the initial trail **construction** was complete, it was time to move forward to the **consolidation** phase.



Signage along the trail

Consolidation

From **conception** to **construction**, the Riesling Trail was now a valuable piece of tourism infrastructure that was ready to move forward to the next stage – **consolidation**. The trail had always had significant public support so the time was right to harness that interest and hand the trail on to the community.

At a public meeting in May, 1999, the inaugural Riesling Trail Management Committee was established as a community management group.

Graham Mill was elected chairman with members Patricia Jacka, Carita Brown, Ted Nettleton, Rosemary Goode, Bev Hannaford, Richard Rowe and Julie Cowperthwaite. The quality and diversity of skills of its members was to remain a feature of the volunteer committee, especially with the wide variety of projects planned to develop the trail. In 2000 The Riesling Trail Inc was incorporated with a constitution drafted by Ted Nettleton. Peter Wood succeeded Graham Mill as chairman in 2011-2012 followed by Allan Mayfield from 2013 to present (2022). The committee continues to include delegates from groups such as Clare Valley Wine & Grape Association, Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council, Office of Recreation, Sport and Racing and the Clare Business and Tourism Association.

Graham Mill believed the development of a landscape master plan would result in a valuable document to become the basis of the trail development for many years. This study was conducted by EDAW Landscape Architects and Environmental Planners in co-operation with the Office of Recreation and Sport. Five sites received detailed analysis including Clare carpark to Wendouree Road, Wendouree Road to Penwortham station, Penwortham station to Watervale station, Watervale station to Main North Road Auburn and Main North Road Auburn to Auburn township.



Ethel Mill, Founding Chairman Graham Mill, Member for Frome Geoff Brock MP, Chairman Allan Mayfield

Special issues identified in the plan included the need of plantings to enhance the existing landscape; signage such as information and interpretive signs; public art; facilities such as shelters, benches and bike racks; trail mapping and implementation. New developments included changing routes to the Mawson Trail to link it with the Riesling Trail, redevelopment at Leasingham Winery to enable a better link with Clare township, the development of loop trails and the extension to Barinia which would create tourist attractions for the north of the town. The need for pamphlets, car parks and the restoration of some sidings to celebrate the history of the railway were also considered. The first Riesling Trail Strategic Plan was produced by Simon Gierke and John Squires in 2000.

A Riesling Trail Network Management Plan was adopted in 2003 and the ownership of the former Crown land on which the trail sits was granted to the Office of Recreation, Sport and Racing in partnership with the Riesling Trail Management Committee.

With the adoption of the Riesling Trail Network Management Plan in 2003, the Riesling Trail Management Committee reported directly to the Office of Recreation, Sport and Racing.

This enabled a clarification of funding agreements to be adopted for long term funding for maintenance and development of the trail. This forward planning has been expanded by other significant studies such as the Condition Assessment of Infrastructure: Barinia to Auburn, conducted by Mace Engineering Services in 2018 which continues to be used for works grants and programs.



Past Chairman, Peter Wood at the turntable display in Clare to mark the centenary of the railway line

One of the major battles undertaken by the committee was a dispute with the Department of Road Transport to retain the Farrell Flat Road bridge, which had escaped the initial destruction of the former railway line. Barinia marked the northern boundary of the official Clare Valley wine region and was a vital part of expanding the trail to the siding there. Auburn was the southern boundary. The Riesling Trail Management Committee won this argument and the trail was extended as planned. With the cooperation of the new owner of the Clare rail yards, Hardy Wines, agreement was reached to allow the Riesling Trail access to the north from Clare with a five-metre easement for the trail over their property. This allowed not only for the extension of the trail to Barinia but also for the development of the head of the trail at Clare. This northern extension was opened by Premier Mike Rann on November 15, 2009.



The trail is used for running and cycling competitions as well as recreational activities such as parkrun every Saturday morning and SA Road Runners Running Festivals

Landscape has always been an integral part of the attraction of the Riesling Trail. There is an ongoing program to plant native vegetation along the trail as well as removing feral, invasive species such as olive trees, Aleppo pines and a wide variety of weeds. Regular working bees are held with community volunteers to clear this nuisance vegetation from along the trail and surrounds. The biodiversity of the trail has always been an important factor of trail management and information was gathered listing bird life and a detailed survey of the vegetation was carried out.

Signage to protect vehicles and pedestrians where the trail and roads intersect was installed on the advice of the Department of Road Transport. Several interpretive story boards have been installed and upgraded along the trail thanks to a total grant of \$6,000 from the Rotary Club of Clare. These enhance the experience for trail users. These include the History of Quarry Road bridge, Clare Showground, The Jesuits of Sevenhill, John Ainsworth Horrocks, riesling grapes, The Gulf Road, Mellor Quarry and the Ngadjuri people. Other signs have been installed to explain further developments including donor signs, Clare Rocks and the Riesling Trail story at the Clare station site. There are also several signs explaining aspects of the railway infrastructure at the turntable development, the history of the Watervale station and the role of the railway to the people of Auburn at the former Auburn station (now Mount Horrocks Wines cellar door outlet.) Interpretive signs, such as the story of Tommy Duke at Penwortham, have also been installed along the trail.

Public art is a growing consideration along the trail as the committee acknowledges the need to continually upgrade trail facilities and appeal. Beginning in 2008, works have included such pieces as Power Lines and Gathering with other works being added over time.

The support of the community has seen many forms, but none is as obvious as its readiness to donate money to the committee for the provision of seating and shelters. Initially it was thought that rough log seats would better suit the appeal of the trail, but the generosity of the community has seen numerous seats, shelters, bike racks and picnic tables carefully placed along the trail.

There are several trail maps at selected sites to enable users to see what they can expect as they walk or ride along the trail. These maps have also been incorporated into the brochure which contains a wealth of information about the trail as well as listing business partners and friends. It is updated regularly and available for free throughout the region.



Landscapes along the trail include vineyards, farmland and native bush.

Loop trails have been established, including the Father Rogalski Polish Hill Loop, John Horrocks Loop and Spring Gully Loop. These have decreased in prominence over time however as they are not suitable for all riders because they utilise public roads.

Car parks have been constructed at key positions along the trail to encourage usage from various sites. There are also several sensors along the trail so accurate records can be kept of usage on various sections, which assists with future developments as well as grant applications.

A portion of the sidings at Sevenhill and Clare Showgrounds have been restored to recreate the era of train travel. The Management Committee worked closely with the Railway Centenary committee to celebrate the contribution of the railway - installing a 3/4 size steel silhouette of a train and highlighting the remains of the former turntable to inform visitors of the role of the railway in the development of the Riesling Trail.

Capitalising on the popularity of the Riesling Trail, a group of Spalding residents is exploring a plan to extend the railway corridor for 30 km from Barinia to Spalding.

Over time, the committee changed leadership and evolved. It succeeded in many of its stated goals and was ready to move forward to its next stage - the **completion** of the trail in line with its original route.



Completion

Completing The Riesling Trail has focussed on two main areas - the Auburn completion and Quarry Road bridge.

Auburn Completion

The completion of the trail to Auburn along the original rail route was a large and complicated project spread over five years. When the trail was constructed in 1998, there were significant issues with how it entered Auburn.

Originally, the railway line crossed Main North Road just north of Auburn and then travelled over the Wakefield River via a bridge before entering the Auburn railway yards on the eastern side of the town. When all the infrastructure was removed, including the bridge, several options to progress the trail into Auburn were considered. These included a proposed underpass constructed at Main North Road (where the speed limit was 110km/h) then linking the trail back to its original route, including a new bridge across the Wakefield River, at a total cost of nearly a quarter of a million dollars.

This plan did not progress beyond costing and so a compromise was reached whereby the trail would instead proceed on a new path constructed adjacent to Main North Road until it reached Auburn. Then users would have to cross Main North Road somewhere within the township, with its lower traffic speeds and follow signs to where the trail ended at the former Auburn Railway yards and Station - now Mount Horrocks Wines cellar door. Users could then join up with the Rattler Trail which travelled to Riverton. This was a compromise position which did not really please anyone but it was cheaper and easy to achieve. Unfortunately, it left many trail users wandering around Auburn lost and bewildered as to where the trail started.



Auburn Bridge. Stephanie Toole, Allan Mayfield and Jeffrey Grosset on the bridge over the Wakefield River at Auburn

The only solution was to return the trail to its original route including building a new bridge for walkers and cyclists and making a feature of the entrance to the trail. Although the first grant application to the Federal Government was unsuccessful, in 2018, the Trail Management Committee was granted \$160,000 from the Federal Building Better Regions Fund, almost matched by \$120,000 from the South Australian Government, secured by Member for Frome, Geoff Brock. The project cost about \$360,000 with the remainder coming from donations, especially the Grosset Gaia Fund as well as Trail Management Committee funds.

The project included making a safe crossing of Main North Road at Taylors Road, construction of a new 60 metre purpose built pedestrian bridge, a decorative archway to define the entrance to the trail and extending the trail surface for a kilometre through the railyards to the former Auburn railway station.

This enabled the Riesling Trail to meet up with the Rattler Trail which proceeds south to River-
ton, a total distance of 52 km from Barinia to Riverton. A new information board explaining the importance of the railway to the people of Auburn was constructed at the former station. Work commenced on the project in February, 2019 and involved many local contractors. It was officially opened in November 2019.

Quarry Road Bridge

The iconic Quarry Road bridge links the northern to the southern section of the Clare to Auburn railway line which is the basis for the Riesling Trail. In 1984, the original rail bridge had been removed by Australian National Railway when the line was decommissioned following decreasing usage and the devastation to the track during the Ash Wednesday bushfire.



Cyclists enjoy the Auburn completion section of the Riesling Trail

With the construction of the Riesling Trail along the former railway corridor, a bridge was constructed. It was designed by GP Architects and manufactured by local business Clare Metal Fabrications under the leadership of Paul (Blue) Jenner using steel donated by BHP. However, it was built to its former specifications making the walkway narrow, ie 1.5 metres, which did not allow for the passing of cyclists. Current safety and traffic standards would be applied to the design of a new bridge.

Fortunately, many of the businesses involved in the manufacture of the bridge still operated in Clare. In a massive joint effort, the bridge was lowered by crane onto the flatbed of a semi-trailer, taken to Clare Metal Fabrications and using specifications provided by Mace Engineering and GP Architects, the base was widened to 3 metres. This would enable a maintenance vehicle to cross the bridge which now had a three-tonne load limit as well as two-way traffic for cyclists. The bridge sides were then re-attached to the new base, guardrails and mesh added for increased safety and the new structure returned to its place on the original, hand-built abutments on Quarry Road. The trail was refigured slightly to include fencing to improve the safety at the bridge entrances. This project was financed by a grant from the Office of Recreation, Sport and Racing and a donation from the Grosset Gaia Fund and was completed in December 2020. The new bridge retains its unique archway profile and colour which is based on the basket bridge design at Undalya.

There are ongoing plans to replace or repair bridges and other structures including the bridge at the Watervale station yard.



The new Quarry Road Bridge

The Rattler Trail

The former railway line ran from Riverton to Spalding. Following the closure of the line in 1983, plans were put into place to redevelop a portion of the railway corridor from Clare to Auburn, later extending to Barinia. The name The Riesling Trail coincided with the international registration of the Clare Valley Wine Regions Geographical Indication in 1993. The rail corridor from Auburn to Riverton, which mainly travels through farming country, was developed as The Rattler Trail, in reference to the uncomfortable experience for travellers as the former railway line deteriorated. This trail is 19km long and was opened in 2010. It is managed separately by a volunteer committee. The two trails connect at the former Auburn Railway Station.

Funding

Support, financial or otherwise, for the maintenance and development of the Riesling Trail comes from a variety of sources. State Government departments involved include ongoing funding and support from the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing (ORS&R,) and Tourism SA. Staff of the Mid North Regional Development Board, Department of Environment and Heritage and the Landscapes Board have assisted in many ways. The Auburn completion was part funded by a grant from the Federal Building Better Regions Fund.

Locally, Clare Valley Winemakers and other businesses as well as Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council, the Grosset Gaia Fund, Waterloo Wind Farm Community Grants, Rotary Club of Clare, Lions Club of Clare District as well as numerous smaller community groups and individuals have given considerable financial support for artworks, signage and seating.

Local businesses including Clare Metal Fabrications, Mace Engineering, GP Architects, Clare Quarry, Jason Gill, MAIT Plumbing, Smart Earthworks, Mid North Pave and Landscape, Nyles Earthworks, SJM Builders, Pinky's Fencing and SC Heinrich among others have all provided expertise or donated services for the Riesling Trail.

Membership

The Marketing and Membership sub-committee developed the present membership program based on the original membership structure. This has enabled many people and businesses to become more closely involved in supporting the Riesling Trail and provided the Riesling Trail Management Committee (RTMC), with some funds to put towards various projects along the trail. When the membership program was initially advertised throughout the community, support was so overwhelming the committee had to regulate the numbers at some of the membership levels to limit the number of advertising signs along the trail.

Community members can become a Riesling Trail Friend for a yearly payment which enables them to receive updates via a regular newsletter.

Becoming a Business Friend appeals to businesses that benefit from being associated with the trail and their names are listed on the Riesling Trail website.

The Business Partner category is mainly for businesses located near the trail and includes a strategically placed sign along the trail advertising the business as well as having their names included on the Riesling Trail brochure.

This category is appealing, but not limited to, accommodation houses, wineries and businesses like bike hire firms.

Two other packages recognise the community support of the Riesling Trail. This includes Honorary Business Friends which acknowledges businesses that have actively supported the construction and operation of the trail and Honorary Friends Forever which is for individuals who have earned Life Membership of the RTMC. The Friends Forever section covers those people or businesses who pay a lump sum equivalent to 10 year membership and they are also listed on the Riesling Trail website.

Other fundraising activities include the sale of named pavers which are laid at the shelter at Lennon Street, a major wine raffle supported by Clare Valley Winemakers and there is also an opportunity for supporters to claim their donation as a tax deduction by donating through the Australian Sports Foundation.

Pinks Reserve

In 2018, The Riesling Trail Management Committee accessed finances through the Federal Drought Communities program to develop easier access from the trail to Pinks Reserve - a native vegetation area adjacent to the trail. Using local contractors, an 80-metre-long pathway was constructed to guide walkers up to the reserve while protecting the path from cyclists. The pathway connects with the trail near the Lennon Street carpark at the head of the trail.

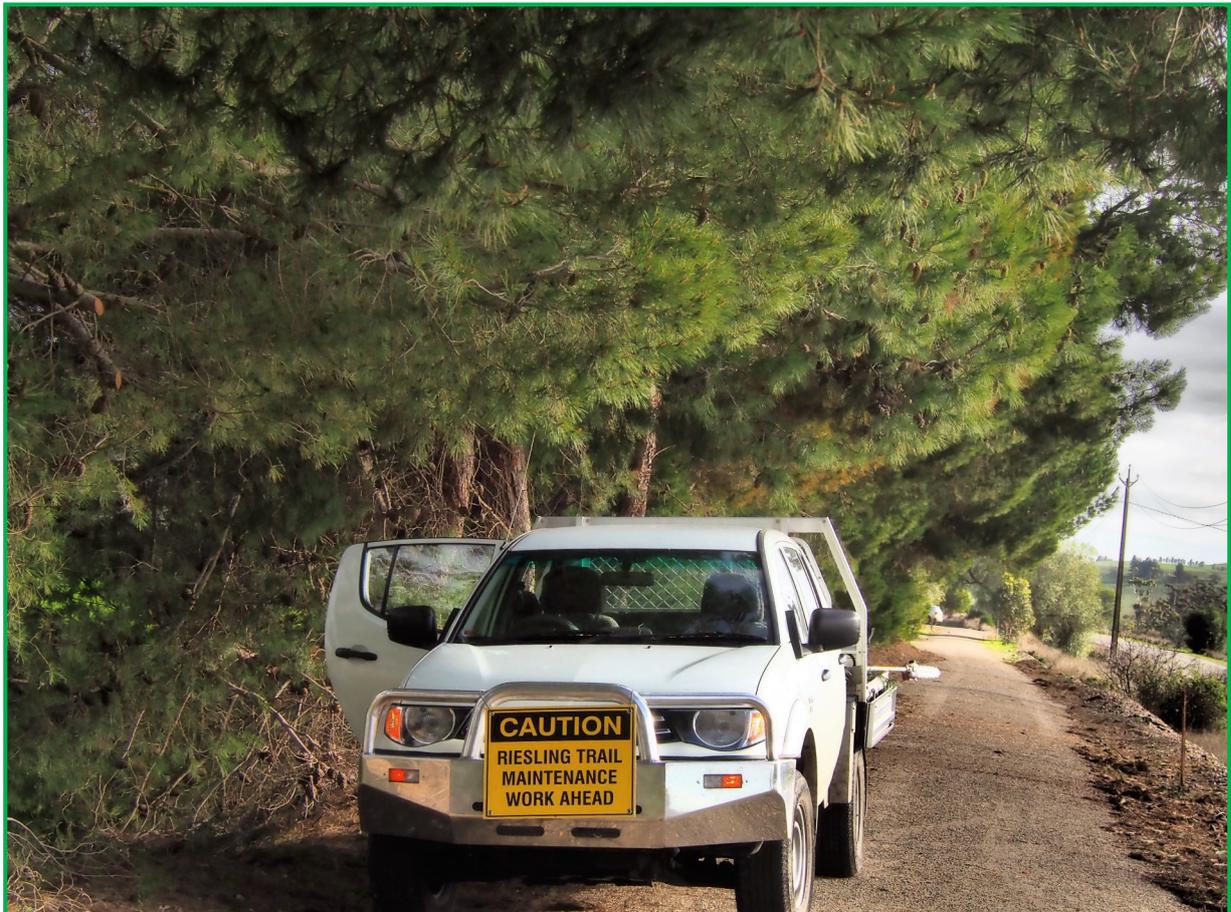
Trail Usage

Although originally developed as a trail for recreational walkers and cyclists, participation on the trail has expanded to include many different users. The gradient and surface of the trail make it very popular with family groups with children who can safely walk along the trail, while cyclists enjoy the trail surface and picturesque views along the trail. The introduction of e-bikes has opened up the total length of the trail to cyclists who prefer an easier ride. Ground level lights were installed along a short section of the trail to assist users in the early evening. The trail is used for events such as parkrun (since 2016), Festival of Cycling, Clare Valley Running Festival, Schools walkathon and the Mothers' Day Walk. Sections of the Riesling Trail also link up with several other significant trails including the Heysen and Mawson Trails, The Lavender Federation Trail and the newly formed Wine and Wilderness Trail. Within Clare, the trail links with the Gleeson Wetlands and Melrose Park, home of the Clare Valley Model Engineers' miniature railway.

For the past few years, sensors placed along the Riesling Trail have recorded more than 100,000 users per annum with numbers continuing to rise.

Maintenance

Ongoing maintenance of the Riesling Trail is an important part of retaining the trail in peak condition. The main focus is retaining the excellent surface of the trail but other jobs include trimming back vegetation, weed control, particularly along the edges of the trail and removing branches and small sticks that fall on the trail. This work is carried out by a balance of local contractors and volunteers. The RTMC receive an annual allocation from the Office for Sport, Recreation and Racing for this work. Local trail users are quick to report damage or problems with the trail which can be addressed in a timely manner.



Surface condition is very important to the ongoing management of the trail. Between 2015 and 2017, the surface was completely upgraded from Auburn to Clare, with 100mm of quarry sand laid on top of the old surface. The trail crown was reshaped to prevent water washing over the surface and eroding the trail. This program cost \$220,000 of which \$189,000 was a grant from the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing and the remainder from the RTMC.

The RTMC reports regularly to ORS&R, detailing the trail condition and any issues as well as prioritising future maintenance projects (especially bridgework) as listed in the 2018 Riesling Trail Condition Assessment of Infrastructure report prepared by Mace Engineering.

Stationmaster's House

When Steve McInerney was appointed Clare's station master in 1958, he was accompanied by his librarian wife Mary and their seven children. One of those children, Monica, grew up to become an international author who would sell more than one million adult and children's books world-wide. Many of her books promote the Clare Valley, the railway line and the Riesling Trail.

Steve and his family lived in the stationmaster's house for 35 years. The house, constructed early in the history of the railway line, is just 200 metres from the station. It is a Federation style house made of sandstone and set on a slight hill, with a verandah all around it. There was a wild garden, a red corrugated iron roof and two rainwater tanks.

Author Monica McInerney described it as more of an adventure playground for the children. As a young child, she would often climb the tanks up to the roof where she would sit, leaning against the chimney and read a book. She was allocated four books a week from the Adelaide Library where they were wrapped in brown paper and sent up to Clare on the train. During her early childhood, trains arrived once a day, carrying mostly freight - wool, wheat and live sheep. By the time Monica was a teenager, the trains had decreased to three times a week and stopped completely following the 1983 bushfires. Steve had the sad duty of being Clare's last station master. The house is now a private residence with an award-winning garden.

The RTMC has commissioned a statue depicting Monica's childhood. It will be sited adjacent to her former home and the Riesling Trail. The statue, constructed by local artist Paul Leditschke, will feature Monica as a young child in her favourite place, on the roof, leaning against a chimney and reading a book. It is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2022.



The Clare Station Master's House

Artworks

Installing suitable artworks along the trail has always been an important facet of the trail. As well as early examples such as Power Lines and Gathering, more recent pieces include The Drover and his mob of sheep, The cyclist, Kangaroos, Auburn archway and Families having fun together at the Clare Showgrounds and soon the Girl on the Roof. Many of these have been supported by local donors and continue to be a unique aspect of the Riesling Trail. Most are created by local artists which adds an extra dimension to the artworks.



Families having fun together art installation at the Clare Showground



Cyclist Di Hood passes The cyclist art Installation

Credits:

Thank you to:

- ◆ The Clare Regional History Group
- ◆ National Trust Clare Branch
- ◆ Regional Trail Management Committee for the Photographs