

Prepared by Paul Mahoney,  
National Coordinator  
Historic Heritage,  
Department of Conservation.  
June 2007

# Rail Heritage managed by the Department of Conservation

The Department manages a diverse range of rail heritage sites that are becoming increasingly popular. In 2007 the Automobile Association asked over 20,000 New Zealanders to identify the '*101 Must-Do's for Kiwis*' — places they most wanted to visit. Of all DOC's historic sites two rail heritage sites were the most popular; the Central Otago Rail Trail (14th) and the Karangahake Mines (42nd).

Rail heritage sites are different from static museums and operating lines. They offer an adventure experience exploring remote and scenic trails, adding diversity to the overall rail heritage scene and providing further entry points to trigger peoples potential interest.

DOC's sites include an industrial railway focus; timber, gold, coal, and even lighthouses, and so preserve another category of rail heritage.

The Department shares the expertise of its heritage program, such as the results of scientific research into materials conservation; stone, wood and metal.

## These 31 DOC sites are open to visitors:

### Auckland

- Kauri Timber Co tramline, 1925-40, Whangaparapara, Great Barrier Island.  
Route of bush tram 14km long. One of the most fantastic bush trams ever. Includes 11 sections of incline worked by winch and cable. Tramping skills required.

### Waikato

- Billy Goat incline, 1922-25, Kauaeranga Valley, Coromandel Forest Park.  
Route of bush tram 5 km long. A section of track is re-laid. A Price rail tractor will be restored and displayed.
- Karangahake Rail Trail, 1905-1978, Karangahake, near Paeroa.  
Route of the former East Coast Main Trunk railway from Karangahake to Waikino, 7 km long. Includes a 1006 m tunnel and two bridges.
- Karangahake Gold Mines, 1887-1918, near Paeroa.  
Route of gold mine tram network of 450 mm gauge, two km long. Includes underground sections. Some track still in place. Three stamper battery sites. Dramatic gorge scenery. Most popular North Island site.



Karangahake Mines: first sections of walking track opened. Karangahake Rail Trail. Photos: Paul Mahoney



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

## Bay of Plenty

## East Coast / Hawke's Bay Wanganui

## Wellington

## Nelson

- Victoria Battery & Tramway, 1895-1954, Waikino, near Waihi.  
Site of the largest stamper battery in New Zealand, 200 stamps operated by Waihi Gold Mining Co. Terminus of former WGMCo 825mm gauge mine railway. Mine tram with tracks 450 mm gauge intact in kiln tunnels. The Victoria Battery Tramway Society operates a 600 mm gauge tram on this site. Two battery mine locos leased to VBTS.
- Waikino railway station, 1925-1988, Waikino, near Waihi.  
Shifted to Waikino, from Paeroa, in 1990 and restored. Now used as tearooms and Victoria Battery interpretation centre. Terminus of Goldfields Railway from Waihi.
- Piako County Tramway, 1883-1918, Waiorongomai, Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park, near Te Aroha.  
A gold mine tramway, of 825 mm gauge, 8 km long with, incredibly, 5 km of 1883 track still intact. It has three incline routes, with two brake-heads intact. Rare 1896 Rand steam-powered air compressor. Two mine trucks to be restored and displayed. Some site interpretation. Annual volunteer work program.
- Waitawheta bush tram, 1895-1926, Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park, near Waihi.  
A bush tram route, of 825 mm gauge, 12 km long. This is the best North Island bush tram route for scenery and integrity. Now a trappers track with six river crossings and a 22 bunk hut. Set of log bogies with kauri log to be restored and displayed on a short section of re-laid track. Tramping skills required.
- Otoko Walkway, 1912-1959, Gisborne District.  
Route of the former Motuohora Branch railway now used as walkway.
- Egmont Branch railway, 1906-1951, Mt Egmont National Park, near Stratford.  
Route of the former steeply graded service railway serving quarries on Mount Egmont. Large concrete ruins at crusher site. Brochure available to aid site exploration.
- Sheridan Creek tramway, 1930-38, Tararua Forest Park, near Otaki.  
Route of a steeply-graded bush tram involving seven stream crossings. A complete restored Vulcan log hauler remains on site. A short section of tram track remains in-situ. The steam plant survives at the mill site. Remote access. Tramping skills required. Annual volunteer work program commenced 2003.
- Rimutaka Incline Walkway, 1878-1955, Rimutaka Forest Park, near Featherston.  
Route of the former railway to the Wairarapa from Kaitoke to Cross Creek, 20 km long. Co-managed with Wellington Regional Council. Includes two bridges and three tunnels.
- Belgrove railway windmill, 1898-1955, Belgrove.  
The best remaining example of a wooden railway windmill in New Zealand, of which there were once over 100 in use. Key remnant of the former Nelson to Glenhope railway.
- Kawatiri Walkway, 1920-1955, Kawatiri.  
Short section of the route of the former Nelson to Glenhope railway, about 500 meters long. Includes a bridge, a tunnel and the site of Kawatiri station. Detailed interpretation on site.



Photo Jim Staton

Belgrove windmill.



Photo: Paul Mahoney

Piako Tramway



Photo Jim Staton

Sheridan Creek stabilised log hauler.

## West Coast

- Charming Creek Walkway, 1910-1958, near Westport.  
Route of a legendary bush tram and coal railway 9 km long with, incredibly, 4 km of track still intact. Includes many bridges, three tunnels, two sawmill sites with steam plant, a restored steam log hauler, and two coal mine sites. This is the best South Island bush tram route for scenery and integrity. Three rail tractors and two Q wagons are on site. Every New Zealander should walk Charming Creek before they die.
- Chasm Creek, 1895-1981, near Seddonville.  
Short scenic section of the former Seddonville Branch railway, including a bridge and a tunnel.
- Denniston incline, 1878-1967, Denniston.  
This incline served the Denniston coal mines. The foot station and head station sites are open to visitors but the incline route itself is too steep. Q wagons on site. Site interpretation provided.
- Coalbrookdale rope road, 1882-1951, Denniston.  
Short section of a former double track rope-road serving the Coalbrookdale coal mine. Short section of track re-laid and skips restored. Fan house alongside.
- Big River coal tramway, 1914-1934, Victoria Forest Park, near Reefton.  
Route of a 450 mm gauge coal mine tram serving a gold mine and timber mill, three km long. Many historic relics remain including a restored poppet head, steam winding engine, boiler, and sawmill ruins. Hut with 18 bunks on site. Remote access, tramping skills required.
- Davidson lokey, 1920-1944, near Ngahere.  
Restored geared lokey displayed on-site.
- Brunner Mine, 1864-1918, near Greymouth.  
Site of one of the major West Coast coal mines. It was served by a siding over a long suspension bridge which is currently being restored. Restored Q wagons on site.
- Mananui tramway, 1905-1951, near Hokitika.  
Route of a bush tram 6 km long through wonderful scenery; virgin rimu forest and a pristine swamp.
- Mahinapua railway bridge, 1905-1980, near Hokitika.  
Restored heritage wooden rail bridge with one Howe truss span, one compound beam span, and seven simple beam spans.

## Canterbury

- Little River Rail Trail, 1962, near Christchurch.  
The first section from Motukarara to near Little River opened in 2006. Running on the old railway embankment, it covers a 20 km stretch between Motukarara and a point near Little River. When completed the 44 km-long trail will run from Hornby.



Davidson Lokey.

Photos: Jim Staton



Kawatiri Walkway, site interpretation.



Mahinapua bridge under restoration



## Otago

- Central Otago Rail Trail, 1891-1990, Central Otago.  
150 km long former railway route from Middlemarch to Clyde. Historic station precinct at Hyde. Preserved station buildings at Ranfurly, Wedderburn, and Clyde. Historic goods shed at Wedderburn. Many historic bridges. The spectacular Poolburn Gorge has two tunnels and a viaduct. Access daily by train to Pukerangi or Middlemarch. Set of interpretive brochures. Can be cycled. Accommodation available en-route.
- Tunnel Hill Historic Reserve, 1892-1971, near Owaka, Coastal Otago.  
Short section of the former Catlins Branch railway running through a scenic reserve. It includes substantial cuttings and a 240 metre long tunnel through McDonalds Saddle.
- Trails rail tractor, 1936-1952, Tautuku, Catlins Forest Park.  
Restored rail tractor displayed at the site of Cook & Sons sawmill. Tram route can be explored but requires tramping skills. Interpretation panel.

## Southland

- Wilson River tramway, 1893-1900, Cromarty, Fiordland National Park.  
Route of a sawmill and gold mining tram 8 km long. Stamper battery intact at far end. Remote access and tramping skills required. Maintained by volunteer work program.
- Māori Beach tramway, 1913-1926, Stewart Island National Park.  
Route of a bush tram 5 km long. Includes an incline, steam boiler remains at the mill site and two steam log haulers are preserved at the top of the incline. Remote access and tramping skills required.
- Johnston A lokey, 1902-1956, Longwood Ranges, near Otautau.  
Restored geared lokey displayed at site of More & Sons sawmill.
- Port Craig tramway, 1917-1930, Fiordland National Park.  
Site of one of New Zealand's largest sawmills and associated village. School used as a hut. Route of a bush tram 16 km long. Includes four massive, restored wooden viaducts, the largest ever used on a bush tram. Remote access. Annual volunteer work program.



Johnston A lokey.  
Photo: Paul Mahoney

Left: Muttontown Viaduct.  
Photo: Paul Mahoney

Right: Percy Burn Viaduct.  
Photo: Tim Higham



### These nine rail sites are not developed for visitors.

- Northland: Cape Brett Lighthouse tramway, 1911, Bay of Islands Maritime Park
- Waikato: Royal Standard mine tramway, 1896, Coromandel Forest Park, Whitianga
- Waikato: Ellis & Burnand Ongarue tramline, 1912, Pureora Forest Park
- Tongariro: Hapuawhenua viaduct, 1908, Tongariro National Park
- Wellington: Mikimiki bush tramway, 1920, Tararua Forest Park
- West Coast: Brownlee's steam shovel, 1938, site not set
- West Coast: Kirwan coal tramway, 1900, Victoria Forest Park, Reefton
- West Coast: Blacks rail tractor (Union Foundries), 1935, site not set
- Southland: Port Pegasus tin mine tramway, 1888, Stewart Island National Park