



## Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail.

Compliments Brian McLean

Planned for completion December 20011.  
Distance: 134 k's from Tallarook to Mansfield.  
Open at present: 1 kilometre at Yea.  
21 k's from Bonnie Doon to Mansfield.

At 7-15 am on a brisk Friday morning I set out from Mansfield to explore this newly opened section of rail trail as it wends its way back to Bonnie Doon, a distance of 21 k's.

I had taken my mountain bike because I was not sure what to expect but it soon became apparent that the newly laid surface of compacted road base was suitable for road bikes. My knobbly tired mountain bike did not get much run out of the surface but there were no corrugations at all. Considering the amount of rainfall we have had, the excellent surface was surprising.

The terrain was flat with only a few undulations; there were no hills. The rail trail traverses quite a few minor roads and farm crossings but all of the gates are well designed and although you have to slow down to get through them you do not have to unclip.

For the first few k's out of Mansfield, and out of Bonnie Doon on the return, the trail keeps pretty much parallel with the highway before looping inland.

The ride is very picturesque with a combination of groves of trees opening up onto farmland dotted with huge redgum trees. In the early morning the mist hung low around the base of the hills and at Bonnie Doon covered the surface of the nearly full Eildon Weir. It was a great conclusion of the first 21 k's to ride over the spectacular bridge spanning the Weir with the mist swirling off the water below.

I have completed a few rail trails and would rate this section of the Goulburn River High Country Trail even more pleasant than the Wangaratta Beechworth/ Bright ride. If the remaining 110 k's section from Bonnie Doon to Tallarook is as good, it will be a great ride.

Driving through the Cheviot Tunnel at Alexandra Mt Cook



The water level was low when this photo was taken of the Bonnie Doon bridge. Alexander

It took me just over the hour to ride the section between Mansfield and Bonnie Doon. I had a drink and a snack overlooking the Weir before the return trip. I was back in Mansfield by 9-40am after what was a very enjoyable start to the day. On the ride I passed a couple walking their dog at the Bonnie Doon end. About 4 k's from Mansfield on the return journey I caught up with the local butchers wife who had ridden out from Mansfield for 6k's and was heading back. As you can see it was a little less hectic than a cycle path around Melbourne.

I would thoroughly recommend this area for a short break. There are many mountain bike tracks of varying degrees of difficulty as well as the big road climbs up Mt Buller. Mansfield has a great range of shops, accommodation and variety of pubs and restaurants to help fill in the time. If the weather is right it is a beautiful part of Victoria to ride in.

## **Some people have all the luck,**



Gill at the moment is on a sailing holiday. This picture is taken at Ixtapa Mexico. Behind her are some very hungry crocodiles.