

## a fascinating journey

### NATURAL HISTORY

Interpretive signage along the Trail describes both the natural and settlement history of the area, as well as current conservation efforts. Some giant old growth trees and regenerating rainforest can be seen. A popular feature is the enchanting Blackwood forest, believed to be former rainforest where Blackwood has replaced the usual canopy of Myrtle Beech and Sassafras due to fire long ago. The hanging mosses, ferns and moss-covered logs provide a wealth of photo opportunities.

### RECENT HISTORY

In 2008 the land through which the southern half of the Trail passes was included in an agreement between HVP Plantations and the Victorian Government to progressively transfer 8,000 hectares of eucalypt plantation and native forest land into State ownership, creating a reserve encompassing and linking core areas of biodiversity (the Cores and Links). This will form a permanent corridor between Tarra-Bulga National Park and the Merriman's Creek rainforest. Single species plantation has been gradually harvested and regenerated with diverse native forest prior to transfer of the land. The Agreement also included the legal protection of another 18,000 hectares of privately managed native forest, through which the northern half of the Trail passes.

The Black Saturday fire on February 7th 2009 impacted part of Duff Trail including the historic tree stumps, but the majority was spared. In places you will see some regeneration from this fire, which is an infrequent event in this normally wet environment.

### PLANTATIONS

Plantations of Pine and Mountain Ash were established on land abandoned by settlers. Plantations are harvested and replanted every 25 - 30 years to provide a sustainable source of timber for the community and local industry. Remnants of native forest are closely interspersed with Pine and Hardwood Plantations in the Strzelecki Ranges.

HVP Plantations only harvests timber from sustainable plantations and has Forest Stewardship Council certification. The 35,000 hectares of native forest within HVP's Strzelecki estate is managed for conservation purposes.

### We hope you enjoy your visit.

HVP Plantations. P.O. Box 385, Churchill 3842. Ph: 5122 0600.

**Supported by:** The Balook & District Residents Association in conjunction with the Wellington Shire.

DUFF SAWMILL HERITAGE TRAIL IS AN HVP PLANTATIONS FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROJECT



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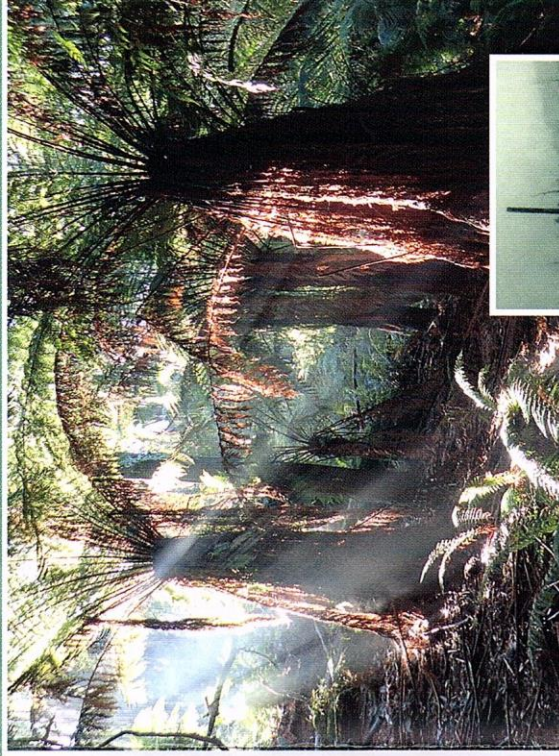
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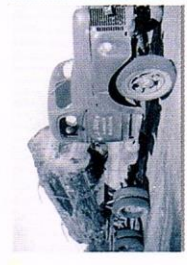
and **discover Wellington** "The Heart of Gippsland"

Cover: The Heritage Trail  
Photographer: Sharon Williams

# Discover the Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail



The Heart of Gippsland



WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL  
The Heart of Gippsland

# Discover the Duff Trail

## INTRODUCTION

The 3.8 km Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail includes good examples of the current forest mosaic landscape in the Eastern Strzelecki Ranges, following a colourful settlement and sawmilling history that took place from the late 19th to mid 20th Centuries. It includes remnant old growth eucalypts, regenerating rainforest, a beautiful Blackwood forest and examples of commercial timber plantations. Now incorporated into the Grand Strzelecki Track, the Trail is a gently undulating walk that can be completed in about 1.5 hours (with room to park at both ends) or as part of the more challenging 18.3 km (6-7 hour) Mount Tassie loop starting and finishing in Balook. Alternatively, just continue 2.3km to the picnic area on Mount Tassie for panoramic views of the Strzelecki Ranges, Latrobe Valley and Wilson's Promontory. Duff Trail passes through private land owned and managed by HVP Plantations Pty. Ltd. and is maintained by HVP for public appreciation of our cultural and environmental heritage.



Andy Campbell in Bill Duff's truck c 1948

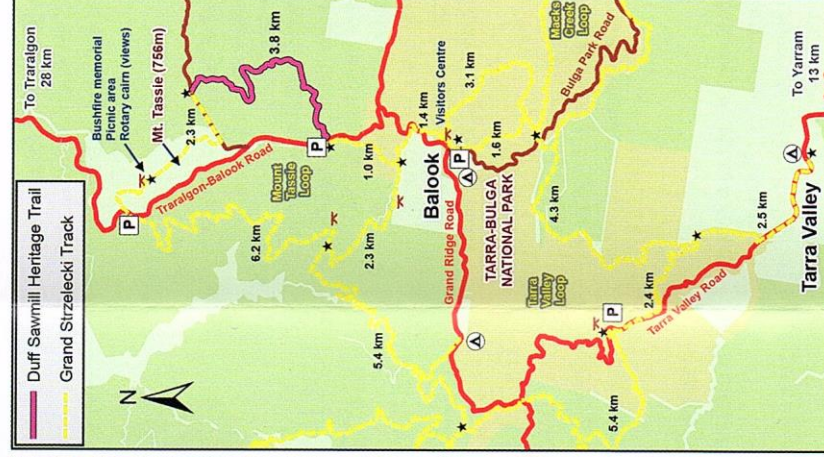
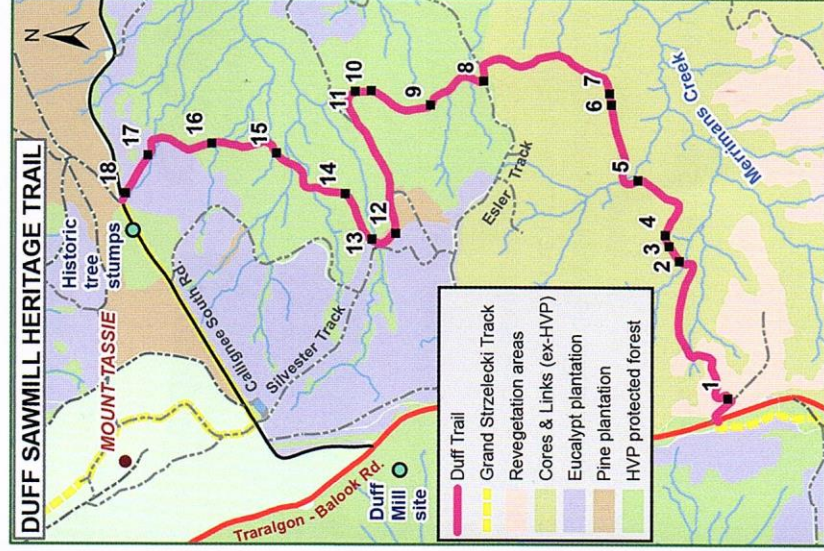
## EARLY SETTLEMENT

In the earliest of times the Strzelecki ranges were densely forested, seasonally visited by indigenous people (the Gunaikurnai), disturbed only by rare fires that devastated the old and created new, vigorous eucalypt forests. Then in the 1840's came the European explorers (Strzelecki & McMillan) who gave the area their names, as well as Bulga and Tarra reflecting the original inhabitants of this challenging country. Settlers followed the explorers, first along the river flats, then by the 1870's into the hills. The deep soils and high rainfall supporting the 'Great Forest of South Gippsland' gave promise of good farmland.

The Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail reflects the story of this settlement and provides an insight into what is seen in the Strzelecki Ranges today. Early settlement involved sawmilling the giant trees for timber and clearing the forests for farming, often using fire as a tool. Tough people were required. By the 1950's only a few small areas remained intact. The success of settlement varied. Small sawmills flourished, then declined, as logs became too difficult to extract. Farmers facing isolation, climatic hardship, rabbit plagues, fires, weed invasion and the Great Depression abandoned their farms, leaving a mosaic of logged remnant forest, regrown scrub areas, cleared grassland and areas of regrowth forest. A Government plantation program began in 1948, replanting the early logged and abandoned settlement areas once more to trees. These plantations now form the basis of an ongoing timber industry.

## The Heritage Trail

The Duff sawmill Heritage Trail takes the visitor on a scenic discovery tour of the Strzelecki Ranges' settlement and natural history, and provides an insight into what is seen today. This walk of 1 hr 30 min one way (2 hrs 30 min return) is graded moderate to easy.



**Interpretive signs** (refer to numbers on the map)

1. South entrance (3.8km to north entrance)
2. Regenerating Cool Temperate Rainforest
3. Mountain Ash regrowth
4. Timber extraction
5. Fire history
6. Old growth Mountain Ash
7. Merriman's Creek rainforest
8. Settlement history (1.9km, half way point)
9. The Blackwood Forest
10. Conservation effort
11. Forest birds
12. Forest mammals
13. Plantation history
14. Aboriginal history
15. Springboard stump
16. Trials of early settlement
17. Weed invasion
18. North entrance (3.8km to south entrance)



This photograph of the Duff family shows that the logging business in the early 1900's was certainly a family affair including the youngest member baby Kevin Duff. It also demonstrates the size of the enormous trees found at that time in the Balook region.



Bill Duff transferred his mill from Jeeralang to Balook in 1944. The mill used timber grown on the level land above the mill and winched logs from the steep valley below the mill.

## DUFF SAWMILL

Duff Sawmill was one of many sawmills in the area that relied on the large Mountain Ash to supply timber demands for a growing Victoria. The mill was located near Mt. Tassie and sourced timber from surrounding forests in the 1940's and 50's. Little remains of the sawmill but the stumps of trees used to supply logs can be seen along the trail. Board holes in the stumps allowed axeman and sawyers to climb to cut the trees above the buttresses. Logs were skidded along tracks by horse or tractor to the mill. The trail links various parts of these old tracks, many of which have now overgrown with ferns, Mountain Ash and Sassafras.