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W.A. Heritage Trails Network

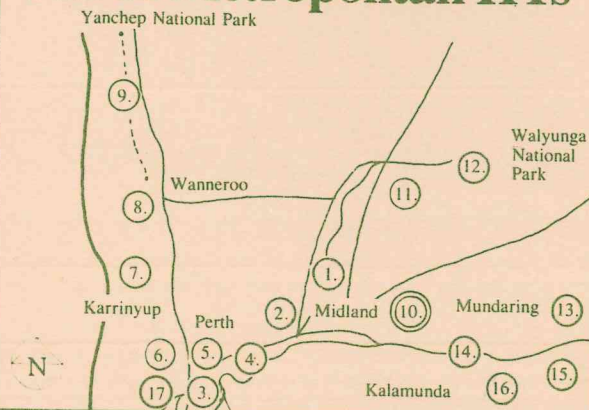
A Bicentennial Project for
Community Participation

The **John Forrest Heritage Trail** is part of the Heritage Trails Network, a project for community participation devised by the Western Australian Heritage Committee. To commemorate the 1988 Bicentenary, the project established a statewide network of 'Heritage Trails' — routes designed to enhance awareness and enjoyment of Western Australia's natural and cultural heritage.

The Heritage Trails Network was jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Western Australian governments under the Commonwealth/State Bicentennial Commemorative Program.

The map below indicates Heritage Trails in the North Metropolitan region of Western Australia.

North Metropolitan HTs



1. Swan Valley HT
2. Swan River HT
3. South Perth HT
4. Perth HT
5. Four Seasons Trail
6. Subiaco HT
7. Star Swamp HT
8. Lake Joondalup HT
9. Yaberoo Budjara HT

10. John Forrest HT
11. Coondebung's Kalleepgurr HT
12. Walyunga HT
13. Railway Reserves HT
14. Bilgoman Well HT
15. Katta-Morda HT
16. Cala Munnda HT
17. Claremont HT

Further Information:
W.A. Heritage Committee (09) 322 4375.



John Forrest Heritage Trail

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A Commonwealth/State
Bicentennial Project

How To Get There

John Forrest National Park is 10km east of Midland on Great Eastern Highway (National Highway 94).

The **John Forrest Heritage Trail** is a 10.2km (return) walktrail which retraces a section of the old Eastern Railway through Jane Brook Valley in John Forrest National Park. The original line passed over the Darling Range and on to Kalgoorlie and was in use between 1896 and 1966.

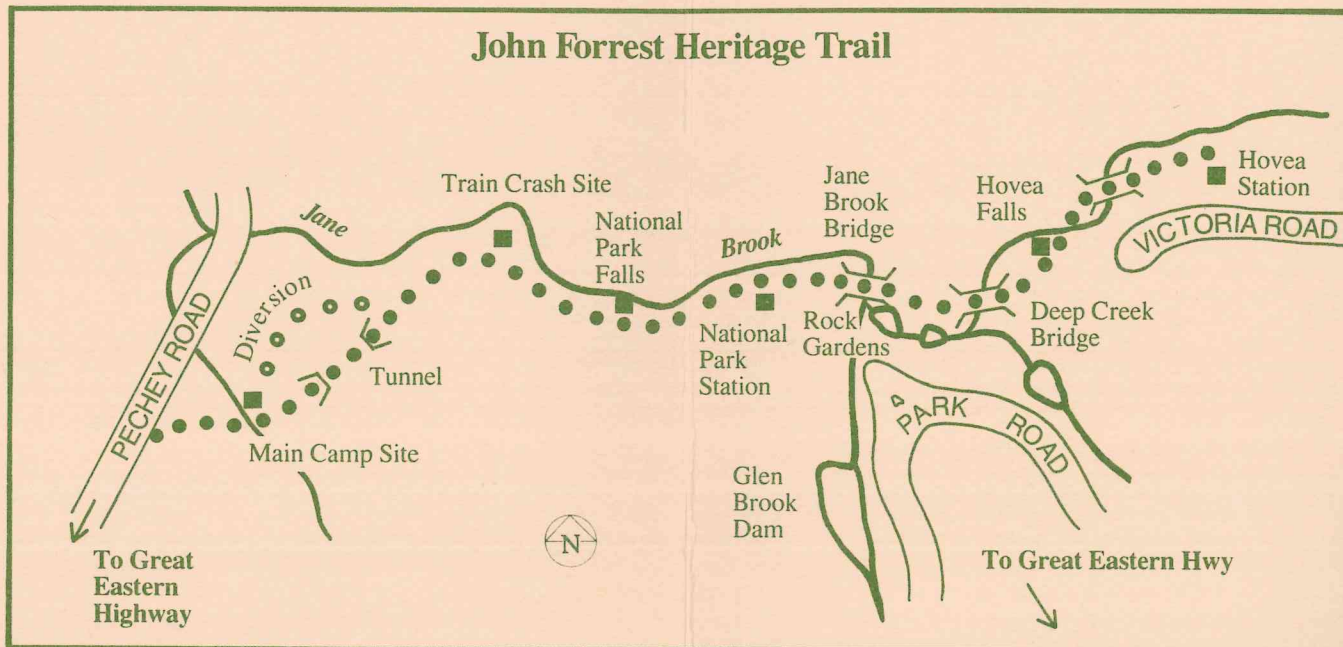
The trail can be commenced at the main entrance to John Forrest National Park, from Pechey Road to the west or from Victoria Road to the east, and offers a pleasant half-day's outing with facilities for picnicking. The park is at its best during the spring wildflower season between August and December, when the weather is cool.

Please note:

- During summer it is recommended to wear a hat and sunscreen, and to carry something to drink.
- Persons using this Heritage Trail do so at their own risk.



Front cover: Opening of the tunnel in 1896 (courtesy Shire of Mundaring, BL 4969B/21).



Introduction

The first railways were introduced to Western Australia in the 1870s when timber companies, keen to transport timber cheaply and efficiently to the nearest ports for export overseas, constructed their own private lines. It was not until the mid 1880s that the Government made significant contributions towards funding railway construction. Then in 1891, when C.Y.O'Connor was appointed Acting General Manager of the railways, the Government, for the first time, sought to establish an extensive rail network throughout the State.

One of O'Connor's first priorities was to upgrade and extend the Eastern Railway begun in 1881, when the first stage from Fremantle to Guildford was completed. By 1886 it extended to Beverley and Northam and in March 1896 it reached Coolgardie. The difficulty in 1891 however, was that, due to the shortage of funds available, all the existing lines had been purposely designed to a low standard. Steep gradients and underpowered locomotives were recurring problems, and a number of accidents had occurred, especially on the section of track over the Darling Scarp at Greenmount. O'Connor examined possible alternatives to this route and in 1893 the Government called for tenders to construct the Mahogany Creek Deviation. The contract was won by a South Australian firm, Smenton and Hedges, and work commenced in February 1894.



Working on the cutting near Swan View on the Mahogany Creek Deviation 1894-95 (courtesy Shire of Mundaring, BL 4684B/35).

Curiously the Government erred with the name as the diversion followed Jane Brook and not Mahogany Creek as they had been led to believe.

To complete the deviation one tunnel had to be constructed, five bridges built, and six short cuttings made. Four of the bridges were in an area which was later declared a National Park. The work was scheduled for completion within 12 months but unexpected difficulties in constructing the tunnel (which had to be cut through solid rock), wet weather and other problems (including a short-lived strike by horse drivers for an extra shilling on Sundays) delayed the project.

Early in 1896 goods trains began using the new line, and the first passenger train made its run on March 22nd, 1896. The line carried timber goods of all varieties, ballast for the line, and passengers between Perth, mill towns, and various places of work and pleasure.

The completion of the railway deviation brought about an awareness of the attractive scenery and waterfalls in the area and as early as 1898 it was set aside as a public reserve. Premier John Forrest was keen to have it declared a National Park and in 1900 the park was gazetted as an "A Class Reserve for National Park and Native Game". It was only the second in Australia to receive this distinction — the first being Sydney's Royal National Park. In 1947 (in recognition of Forrest's early enthusiasm for the area) it was decided to change the name to John Forrest National Park.

The Mahogany Creek Deviation remained in use until it was replaced by the standard gauge line through the Avon Valley built in the 1960s. The last train to use the deviation pulled in at Bellevue Station on New Year's Day 1966 before continuing its journey up the Darling Scarp, through the Park and on to Chidlow. The deviation was formally declared closed on February 18th, 1966.



Sir John Forrest, early explorer and the State's first Premier from 1890 to 1901 (courtesy Battye Library, 1372P).

The Trail

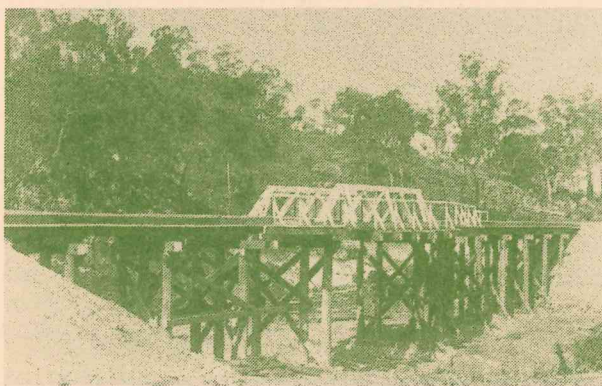
The following points on the trail are of particular interest; they have not been numbered as their sequence will depend on the route selected by trail users. As it is assumed that most trail users will commence the trail from the facilities located near the main entrance to the Park the stops are described from this reference point. Each stop is clearly marked on the map in this brochure.

To approach the railway embankment from the Park's major parking areas trail users can pass through a series of rock gardens and paths. The detailed stonework of the steps, garden wall and footpaths was built during the depression years of the 1930s by workers on sustenance schemes, earning just enough money and food to keep themselves and their families from starving.

Throughout the National Park there are traces of these 'work for the dole' schemes. The workers surveyed the scenic drive, opened gravel pits, formed and rolled the road, and built a wall across Jane Brook to form a swimming pool

Walking west along the embankment the following stops are highlighted:

Jane Brook Bridge



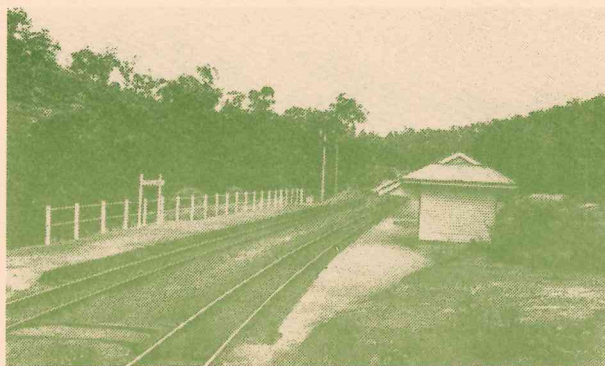
The original Jane Brook Bridge, c.1895 (courtesy Shire of Mundaring).

The first bridge was built on this site during the construction of the railway line in 1895. Constructed of wooden posts and beams of locally-cut jarrah it is recorded as having been some 62 metres long.

In the 1920s the bridge became unstable and, to steady the structure, gravel was carted from nearby pits and dumped at either end to form an embankment.

The bridge was replaced by the present steel and concrete structure in 1928 to enable it to carry larger engines and heavier loads and was designed in two sections to allow its use as at two-way shunt.

National Park Station



National Park Station (courtesy Shire of Mundaring).

As the National Park became increasingly popular it was decided to build this station in 1936 as an alternative setting-down point to the existing Hovea Station. The National Park Station was built specifically to cater for day trippers out to enjoy the attractions of the park. Today only the footings of a building, and the embankment of the station platform remain.

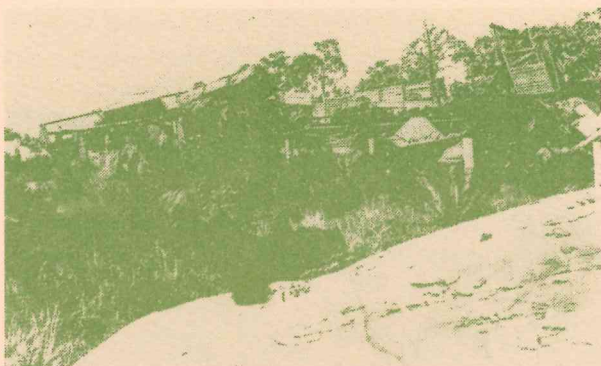
All along the railway embankment there are the remnants of the blue metal (crushed granite) that was laid during construction of the line as a base for the sleepers.

National Park Falls

One of the most popular sites in the Park, the Falls are caused by Jane Brook dropping some 25 metres over massive granite rocks which outcrop from the bedrock of the Darling Scarp. They provide particularly attractive scenery between July and September, when the brook is carrying winter flows. There is a viewing area, on the trail side, above the Falls, and another below the Falls (particularly good for photography) which can be reached by following the track north of the Brook.

About 200 metres from the Falls, towards the Tunnel, there is a white painted sign, reading "1/2", on a boulder. Such signs were common on the train routes of the time and often indicated the distance, in miles, to the next station. It is believed that this particular sign may have indicated the half way point in the journey between Guildford and Mt. Helena.

Train Crash Site



Wreckage of the 11:40 runaway, June 30th, 1896 (courtesy Shire of Mundaring, BL 4684B/65).

Early in the afternoon of June 30th, 1895, the 11.40 train from Perth to Northam set down two of its four passengers at Mt Helena. The train, consisting of 22 six-ton wagons (loaded with general goods and seven horses), one passenger carriage, and a guard's van pulled by two light engines, was then shunted and backed onto a loop line to allow a Perth-bound passenger train to pass.

A coupling broke between the second and third wagons and as the train started to move forward 20 of the 22 wagons began rolling back down the scarp towards Perth.

The guard screwed on the hand-brake of the guard's van, then leapt off and sprinted alongside the train trying unsuccessfully to put the rest of the wagon brakes on. By this time however, the wagons were rolling too fast and a telegraph was sent to the Parkerville Station Master. He reacted by shunting the incoming passenger train onto a side line and the runaway wagons hurtled past at great speed.

The two remaining passengers on the runaway train chose to stay in their seats, rather than jump to certain death from the speeding carriages. On this curve just before the tunnel (which is extremely tight for trains) the train left the rails at an estimated speed of 193kph. Wagons splintered like matchwood killing one of the passengers and the seven horses. The impact of the crash was heard at Parkerville, some five kilometres away.

Within a few days, the torn up rails had been removed and normal traffic on the line resumed.

Tunnel

In February 1894 work commenced on carving a 340 metre tunnel into a solid rock face. Because of the unstable nature of the ancient granite the tunnel had to be lined throughout with stone and brick. It took over 12 months to complete and is unique because it is the only rail tunnel in Western Australia. Trail users may walk through the tunnel (and so view the lining) or proceed by using the deviation cutting which was installed in 1945 as a safety measure after it was found that the tunnel was dangerous due to poor lighting and limited ventilation.



Construction near the tunnel, 1894-95 (courtesy Shire of Mundaring).

There were many accidents on this section of line. The first serious one occurred in 1903 when a driver fainted and fell from the engine after being engulfed in asphyxiating fumes from the smoke of the engine. The fireman heard the bump but paid no attention to the sound until the engine reached daylight and the driver's absence from the cab was noticed. The fireman stopped the train and searched the tunnel, where he found his unconscious partner, who had fallen clear of the wheels and only sustained minor injuries.

Despite the dangers of the tunnel nothing was done to rectify the problem until a serious accident occurred in the mid-1940s when the crew of a heavy goods train were all overcome by smoke and fumes. The train, drawn by two locomotives gradually ran out of steam, slowed to a halt and then started rolling backwards, down the grade. The officer at Swan View was notified and the train was diverted onto a spur line and derailed. Some of the crew jumped, some were thrown and one person was killed.

Main Camp Site



The main camp during construction of the 'Mahogany Creek Deviation' in 1894-95 (courtesy Shire of Mundaring, BL 4684B/32).

This site was the main construction camp established in 1894 below the location of the future tunnel and was one of the numerous sites used by railway workers while laying the new track. While on site they set up temporary accommodation and slept under canvas sheeting. The tunnel and railway embankments were constructed by using picks, shovels, horses, carts and a mechanically operated crusher.

The following sites are east of the main parking area:

Deep Creek Bridge

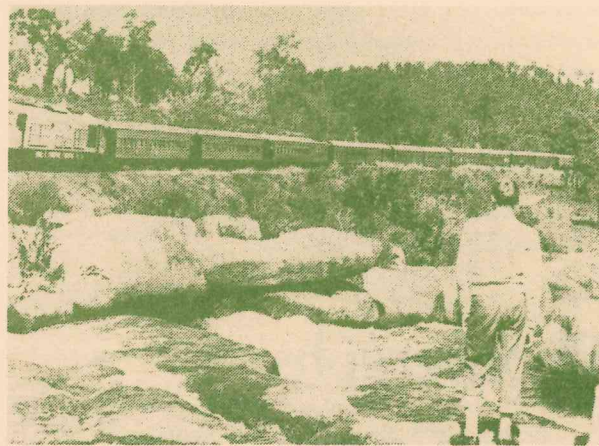
The original bridge (which at 125.76 metres was the longest timber trestle bridge in Western Australia) was constructed in the 1890s. Like Jane Brook Bridge, it became too unstable for heavier engines and loads, so that in November 1928 culverts were put underneath the centre section and gravel carted and dumped to fill the structure, which is now buried under an embankment.



Deep Creek Bridge, c.1895 (courtesy Westrail).

Hovea Falls

Hovea Falls are named after a native plant, Holly-leaved Hovea, that is common to this area. The name was first suggested by Surveyor General H.F. Johnston. These falls are not as attractive as National Park Falls, but provide an interesting aspect featuring a large expanse of granite rock and several rivulets.



A diesel locomotive passing Hovea Falls, c.1950 (courtesy Westrail).

Hovea Station

This was the first stop in the National Park at which picnickers could alight from the train before the National Park Station was built in 1939. It was used by locals who commuted to Midland for work.

The crossing loop was constructed in 1912 and was named Park View, but because of the name's similarity to Swan View and Bellevue, it was changed to Hovea within a few months. The floor pad of the Station Master's house, the old palm trees that were planted around the station and part of the original platform can still be seen.

*For those interested in further exploring the history of the Eastern Railway, the **Railway Reserves Heritage Trail** is a walking/cycling/bridle trail which traces 70km of the abandoned railway reserve between Midland and Wooroloo. For further information please contact the Shire of Mundaring on (09) 295 1400.*

Acknowledgements

The **John Forrest Heritage Trail** was developed by the Department of Conservation and Land Management, which gratefully acknowledges the cooperation and assistance of the following:

- Shire of Mundaring
- Westrail
- Battye Library
- Mr Jack Stanbridge
- Railway Historical Society

Photographs

The photographs in this brochure are courtesy of:

- Battye Library
- Shire of Mundaring
- Westrail

Further Reading

Elliot, Ian

Mundaring — A History of the Shire
(Shire of Mundaring, 1983).



A locomotive and carriages steaming through the cutting near Swan View, c.1900 (courtesy Shire of Mundaring).