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# Railtrail

CHRISTCHURCH - LITTLE RIVER

## History

### How the Railtrail began...

After several years of promotion by a working party comprising the Department of Conservation (DOC), Environment Canterbury, the Christchurch City Council, Selwyn District Council, Banks Peninsula District Council, Transit New Zealand and others, a group of enthusiastic supporters came together in November 2003 as the Christchurch to Little River Railtrail Trust to develop the cycleway/walkway from Christchurch to Little River.

The Christchurch to Little River Railtrail mostly follows the route of a 19th century railway line between Hornby Junction and Little River via Prebbleton, Lincoln, Motukarara and Birdlings Flat. The rail corridor from Motukarara to Little River has remained in public ownership since its closure in 1962 but has been little used by the public because creeks and rivers were not bridged along the route of the trail itself. It is managed on behalf of the public by the Department of Conservation

### A brief history of the Christchurch-Little River Railway line...

#### Hornby to Lincoln

The Hornby to Lincoln section was completed in 1875 as part of the Southbridge line with Prebbleton and Ladbrooks stations (completed by 1874) along the route. A bridge at Prebbleton was built in 1937 to take Springs Road over the railway. This narrow bridge, a hazard to motorists and cyclists, was removed in 1998. The Lincoln Line was still in use until 1967. The first part of the industrial line from Amyes Road at Hornby to Marshs Road (4 km) is still in use.

#### The Lincoln to Little River branch

Construction of this 35 kilometre section began in 1879 and was completed in 1886. An extension of this branch through to Akaroa, including the building of a 2.4 kilometre long tunnel, never eventuated due to the expense. Stations were built at Greenpark, Matthews Road, Motukarara, Kaituna, Birdlings Flat and Little River. The Station at Little River has been preserved and is a craft shop and information centre with historical displays. Rail travel was not a fast experience in the 1880-1890's as described in an extract from Ellesmere Guardian November 1899:

*"Once again we return to the speed of the local train - it takes 2.5 hours to cover over 30 miles. Cyclists, both men and women, boast of having beaten the train from Station to Station when it was moving at only 12 miles per hour!"*



Sustainable Management Fund



**The Secretary**  
Christchurch-Little River Railtrail Trust  
PO Box 166 Lincoln 7640, Christchurch  
Email: railtrail@littlerivertrail.co.nz  
Website: www.littlerivertrail.co.nz

**Contact Information**  
For further information, or to add your name and contact details to a database of 'Friends of the Railtrail', please contact:

**Motukarara to Little River**  
Contact the Programme Manager  
Visitor Assets, Mahaanui Area office,  
Department of Conservation.  
Ph: (03) 341 9105  
Email: dmilward@doc.govt.nz

**Prebbleton to Lincoln**  
Log a service request with the Selwyn District Council  
Ph: (03) 347 2800  
Email: council@selwyn.govt.nz

*Maintenance contacts:*

## Contact Information

Fourteen bridges were built over streams and along the railway embankment along the lakeside of Te Waihora (Ellesmere) and Wairewa (Forsyth) between Lincoln and Little River. Most of these were removed when the railway was dismantled.

The original Motukarara Station was restored by the Lincoln Rotary Club and relocated in November 2006 close to its original site on Park Road at the start of the Motukarara to Little River section.

For more information about the history of the Lincoln-Little River Branch read Fiona Farrell's booklet "The Christchurch Little River Railtrail" which is available at the Little River Information Centre.

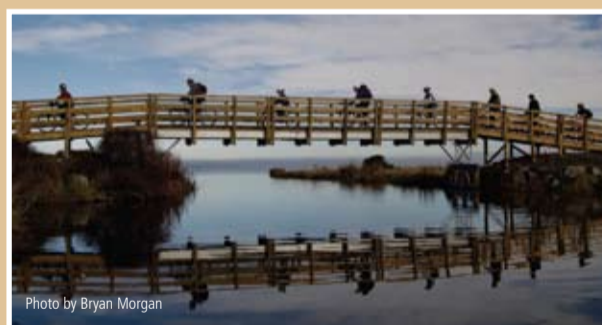


Photo by Bryan Morgan

## Other important information

**Car parking** is available along the Railtrail. See the information for the section you wish to walk or ride.

**Drinking water** is not available along the route and should be carried by Railtrail users. Lake water, rivers and creeks carry farm runoff and their water is not safe to drink.

**Food and drink** can be bought at a number of the local villages and townships near the Railtrail where there are dairies and cafes. Please see the map for their locations.

**Toilets** are available at a number of points. Please see the map for their locations.

**Camping** is not permitted on the Railtrail or in the associated car parks. Available camping sites can be found on the Railtrail website.

**Accommodation** is available along the Railtrail. Details on the Railtrail website or from the Little River Information Centre.

**Railtrail merchandise** can be purchased at the Little River Information Centre.

**Cycle Hire** providers can be found on the Railtrail website.

## The Railtrail Project is supported by

**Platinum:**  
Ministry for the Environment (Sustainable Management Fund)  
Eureka Trust

**Gold:**  
Scottwood Gaming Machine Trust  
Caversham Foundation  
Pub Charity  
NZ Lottery Grants Board  
The Southern Trust

**Bronze:**  
Lion Foundation  
Rotary Club of Hornby Charitable Trust  
Canterbury Foundation  
NZ Community Trust

The Railtrail Project is also supported by

Environment Canterbury  
Department of Conservation  
Christchurch City Council  
Selwyn District Council  
Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism  
Wairewa Runanga  
Friends of the Railtrail  
Local landowners  
Rotary Club of Lincoln  
Rotary Club of Hornby  
Waihora Ellesmere Trust  
Living Streets Aotearoa  
Cycling Advocates Network  
Lincoln Community Committee  
Prebbleton Community Association  
Little River Information Centre  
Transit New Zealand  
Land Transport NZ  
Goodman Steven Tavenale Reid

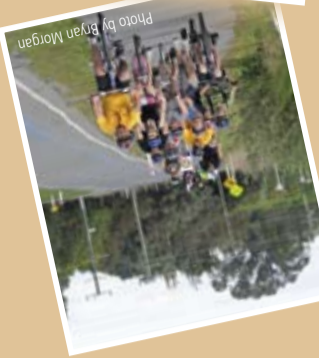


Photo by Bryan Morgan

Joy Burt, Department of Conservation

Department of Conservation, Te Papa Atawhai

## Railtrail code of conduct and environmental care code

- only cyclists and pedestrians are permitted to use the Railtrail.
- dogs are not allowed on some sections of the Railtrail (e.g. Motukarara to Little River).

### Cyclists please:

- ensure you are wearing your cycle helmet and your bike is in good working order.
- control your speed to keep you and others safe.
- give way to pedestrians. A timely, friendly warning will allow you to pass them safely.

### All users please:

- be prepared for sudden changes in the weather. Dress accordingly and carry a coat or wet weather gear.
- keep to the left of the Railtrail to allow other users to safely pass you.
- keep to the Railtrail track to lessen the chance of damaging fragile plants, disturbing wildlife, especially birdlife, and damaging riverbanks and lake foreshores. Do not cross fence lines or venture onto private property without the express permission of the land owner.
- exercise caution at all driveway and road crossings.
- do not disturb stock as some sections of the Railtrail are grazed. Please close any gates along the way.
- keep streams and lakes clean because they are of significant cultural and environmental importance to our district.
- use the available toilets – see the map for their location.
- remove your rubbish as litter is unattractive, harmful to wildlife and can increase vermin and disease. Plan your visits to reduce rubbish, and carry out what you carry in.
- do not light any fires on the Railtrail.
- do not camp on the Railtrail or in the associated car parks.



Joy Burt, Department of Conservation



Department of Conservation, Te Papa Atawhai

# Sections of the Railtrail

## 1 Christchurch (Hornby) to Prebbleton scheduled to open November 2008 Distance: 4km

This section will provide an off-road trail at the Christchurch end of the Railtrail and will connect Hornby to the nearby residential township of Prebbleton in the Selwyn District. The asphalted Railtrail will run alongside Shands Road, turn into Marshes Road and then go along the old railway corridor into Prebbleton.

## 2 Prebbleton to Lincoln opened November 2006 Distance: 7km

This section joins the village of Prebbleton to Lincoln township. It is a 7 km off-road sealed route alongside Birchs Road, adjacent to the original railway line, through pleasant rural surroundings and is wide enough to enable cycling in both directions. Both Prebbleton and Lincoln have cafes, shops, parks and historic buildings.

**Start** – Join the track in Prebbleton either on Springs Road, where there is a cycleway marked on the road seal, or from the start of the off-road section that begins at the Trices Road Birchs Road intersection. There is adequate parking along Springs, Birchs or Trices Road.

### Hints and tips

Toilets in Prebbleton are located in the Reserve at the back of the club rooms (24/7) or at the children's playground (24/7). In Lincoln, public toilets are available in Kildare Terrace (24/7) and at the Lincoln Service Centre, Gerald Street (open: 8:30am - 5:00pm Mon-Fri).

## 3 Lincoln to Ahuriri Reserve planning in progress Distance: 10km

This section will join Lincoln to the Halswell River in the vicinity of River Road. Halswell River is a very attractive spring fed river that feeds into Lake Ellesmere. The area is low-lying with a high water table. The Ahuriri Lagoon, an Environment Canterbury managed reserve, is being restored by the Waihora Ellesmere Trust (WET).

The Trust is working with the Selwyn District Council and Environment Canterbury to determine the best route. As part of the planning process there will be consultation with local residents, land developers and the Railtrail users.

## 4 Ahuriri Reserve to Motukarara scheduled to open December 2008 Distance: 4km

This section will be off-road and located adjacent to the Halswell Canal as far as Park Road and then on to Motukarara. This section will include the first of a number of bridges required to be replaced. Much of this land is owned by Environment Canterbury for river control purposes.

The wetland restoration project is to enhance the habitat for wildlife, particularly birds. This will be the key attraction in this area. With the Waihora Ellesmere Trust, the Railtrail Trust will promote the importance of the wetland ecosystem and inform Railtrail users of the sensitivity of this environment. At fence crossings, grated cattle stops will be used.

## 5 Motukarara to Birdlings Flat opened May 2006 Distance: 13km

This was the first section of the Railtrail to be opened to the public. This section is on public land managed by the Department of Conservation. The area is also pursuant to a unique Management Plan administered by the Te Waihora Management Board (Department of Conservation and Ngai Tahu).

There is significant natural, cultural and historical interest along this section of the Railtrail including:

- The restored Motukarara railway station and wagon.
- Te Waihora (Lake Ellesmere) where the railway embankment is raised above the lake and adjoining wetlands, affording magnificent views of the surroundings and the prolific birdlife.
- Ataahua Reserve (Kaituna Quarry), the Kaituna Lagoon and the Kaitorete Spit, the largest landform of its type in New Zealand.
- The regeneration of native wetland vegetation and associated wildlife where old rail corridor has been fenced (through the Sustainable Management Fund) to exclude grazing by cattle. With only sheep grazing the Railtrail, native species should regenerate. Sheep grazing helps to manage introduced grasses.

**Start** – There are car parks at Motukarara (off Fiddlers Road) and Ataahua Reserve (Kaituna Quarry, accessed directly from State Highway 75) and parking space at Birdlings Flat.



### Hints and tips

A return trip from Motukarara to Little River (about 44 km) can be comfortably cycled in a day.

Cyclists are advised to use tyres with good tread for this section.

Toilets are available at Motukarara (by the Railway Station) and Ataahua Reserve (Kaituna Quarry, on the pathway to the car park).

Wind can be a factor along this section of the Railtrail because it is exposed for much of its length.

Midges, or lake flies, (*Chironomus zelandicus*) are present during the spring/early summer. On still, warm days vast clouds of midges, called 'leks', can be seen over the lake. These flies do not bite but their sheer numbers can be a nuisance. Cyclists, particularly, are advised to take eye protection (glasses or goggles).

## 6 Birdlings Flat to Little River opened May 2006 Distance: 7km

This section also traverses along the historic railway embankment until closer to the Little River township. Much of this section travels beside Te Roto o Wairewa (Lake Forsyth). The Wairewa Runanga was the lead organisation in the development of this section of the Railtrail.

The Railtrail currently ends about a kilometre south of Little River. A temporary extension of the Railtrail, to be constructed mid-2008, will take users to Wairewa Pa Road. In the long-term the Railtrail will continue into Little River, terminating at the historic Little River Railway Station (now an information centre).

**Start** – There is car parking at Birdlings Flat and Catons Bay and in the Little River township. This section can also be ridden in conjunction with Section 5.

### Hints and tips

Toilets are available at Catons Bay and in the Little River township.

Wind can be a factor along this section, especially the North Easterly that can build up during the afternoon

Please take great care if you ride on or cross State Highway 75.

