

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.

BLACKWOOD FOREST.

Some logging and clearing removed all Mountain Ash, leaving only Blackwood - typically an understorey tree - to grow into impressive, if somewhat unusual forest, now seen along the trail.

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.

Grand Ridge Plantations' Policy is to only harvest timber from plantation areas. Therefore the 35,000 hectares of native forest within its estate have been excluded from timber production and are managed for a range of conservation and protection purposes.

A GRAND RIDGE PLANTATION FOREST STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

"Forest stewardship is establishing, growing, harvesting and protecting our clients' forest investments while maintaining or enhancing the environment and community values associated with the land."

We hope your visit has been enjoyable.
Grand Ridge Plantations. P.O. Box 385, Churchill 3842. Ph: 5122 0600.



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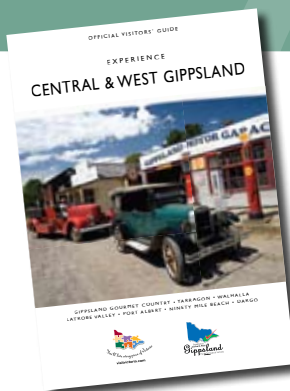
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The Heart of Gippsland



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

"The Heart of Gippsland"

Cover: 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.



Discover the Duff Trail

INTRODUCTION

The Heritage Trail includes good examples of the current forest mosaic landscape in the Eastern Strzelecki Ranges following extensive disturbance that occurred in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries from clearing and logging. It includes remnant old growth eucalypts, regenerating rainforest, an enchanting Blackwood forest once dominated by eucalypts, and examples of commercial timber plantation. The trail is a project installed and maintained by Grand Ridge Plantations, current managers of this native forest for conservation purposes.



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.

EARLY SETTLEMENT

In the earliest of times, the Gippsland ranges were densely forested, rarely visited by Indigenous people, 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 and, by the 1870's, into the hills. The deep soils and high rainfall of the tall forest gave promise of good farmland.

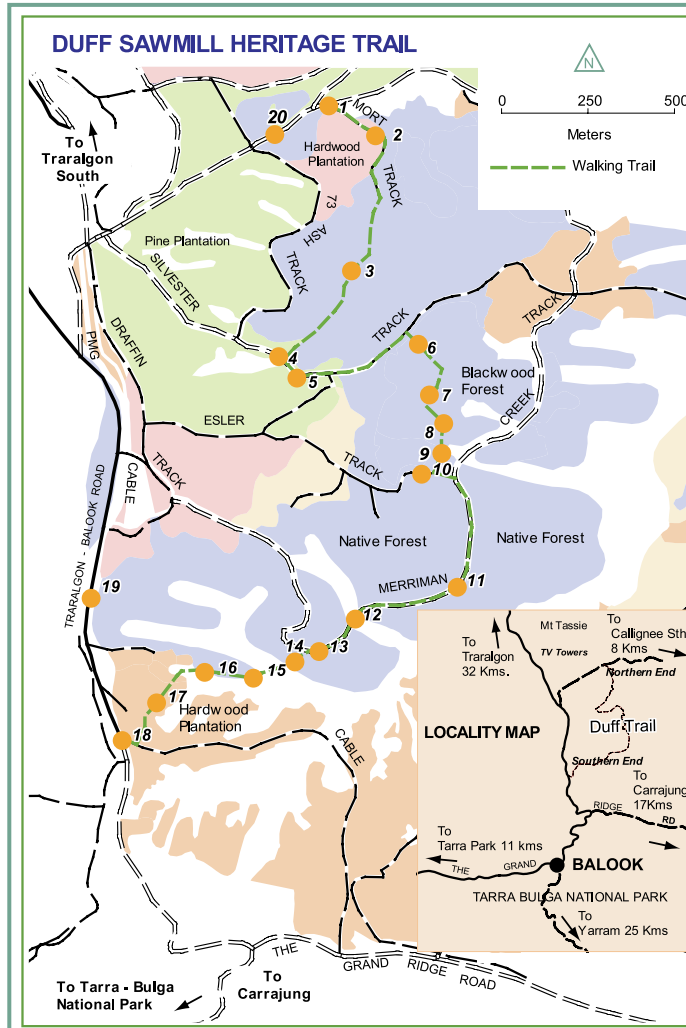
The Duff Sawmill Heritage Trail reflects the story of this settlement and provides an insight into what is seen in the Strzelecki Ranges today.

Early settlement involved cutting the large trees, burning all but a few that were sawn for timber, and sowing the area to pasture. Tough people were required. By the 1940's only a few areas remained uncleared.



Andy Campbell in Bill Duff's truck c 1948

The success of settlement varied. Small sawmills flourished, then declined, as logs became too difficult to extract. Farms faced the onslaught of rain, rabbits and weeds as well as difficult access.



SIGNS

1. North Entrance - 4km to Balook: Traralgon Sth Rd. (Tarra-Bulga Park)
2. Shining Gum Plantation planted 1973 harvested 1995 and replanted 1996.
3. Mountain Ash stump with board holes surrounded by regrowth.
4. Silvester Track Junction - 1km Nth Entrance: 3km Sth Entrance.
5. Radiata Pine Plantation planted 1973 harvested 1995 and replanted 1996.
6. Blackwood regrowth on old (1950's) logging track.
7. Sassafras (*Antherosperma moschatum*). Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*)
8. Blackwood regrowth following logging and early clearing in the 1930's.
9. Tree Fern Glade (*Dicksonia antarctica* - soft tree fern, *Cyathea australis* - rough tree fern)
10. Esler Track Junction - 2km Nth Entrance: 2km Sth Entrance
11. Merrimans Creek Rainforest area remnant from early logging featuring large over-mature Mountain Ash.
12. Sassafras Gully (*Antherosperma moschatum*)
13. Merriman Junction - 3km Nth Entrance: 1km Sth Entrance.
14. Mountain Ash regrowth on old (1950's) logging track.
15. Tree Fern Gully (*Dicksonia antarctica* - soft tree fern, *Cyathea australis* - rough tree fern)
16. Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus Regnans*) remnant of forests prior to settlement
17. Mountain Ash Plantation.
18. South Entrance - 4km to Callignee Sth. Road. (Historic Stumps).
19. View over Duff Sawmill Site. Mill moved here in 1944 from Jeeralang.
20. Historic Tree Stumps, Mt. Tassie

All but a few were abandoned leaving a mosaic of logged remnant forest, regrown scrub areas, cleared grassland and small areas of regrowth forest.

A Government plantation program began in 1948 reclaiming the early logged and abandoned settlement areas once more to trees. These plantations now form the basis of an ongoing timber industry.

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.

