

Community comment invited until 31 October 2023

# Gordon River Walk Trail & Facilities

**\*\* DRAFT \*\***

## 5 Year Plan

Adopted by the Council: *insert date*



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Introduction:

The Gordon River is significant in Tambellup’s history as a venue for many social activities, in addition to its long history and value to the Aboriginal people as a source of food and enjoyment. In days gone by, infrastructure located at Saggars Pool, to the north of the existing weir picnic area, included a two story boat shed with deck to the upper story for social gatherings, tennis court, change facilities, high and low diving boards, an afternoon tea pavilion across the river, a flying fox and more.



These facilities were well used by the community in the early part of the 20th century. Unfortunately, the effects of modern agricultural practices and flooding saw a decline in the water quality in the river, and the early 1980’s saw the removal of the last of the significant infrastructure.

The River Trail, which runs along both sides of the Gordon River north of the bridge on Tambellup West Road, provides an opportunity for trail users to appreciate the environment and the birdlife that inhabits the area.



This plan seeks to change this current period of neglect and restore the Gordon River as a central focal point to the Tambellup townsite, through improving the walk trail, recreation areas, parking, promotion and signage.

Infrastructure constructed at the river in recent years has not been adequately designed to cope with the intermittent flooding events experienced (e.g. inadequate sized culvert pipes installed without concrete flood ways), and combined with a lack of maintenance in the entire Gordon River Walk Trail area, has resulted in a neglected and sad facility. This is a direct contrast to the long history of the river being the ‘jewel of the Tambellup crown’.





## Planning for the Future:

The Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup Corporate Business Plan, resulting from an extensive community consultation process undertaken in 2022, includes the following initiatives in relation to the Gordon River:

### 7.1 Gordon River advancement

*This is the upgrading of the Gordon River site, including BBQ stand, grasslands, toilets, benches, children play, signage, storytelling of its historical significance and possible event organisation.*

7.1.1 Adopt a plan for the Gordon River weir area clearly showing upgrades to the site and integration with trails, including:

- BBQ stand;
- Grasslands;
- Toilets;
- Street Furniture;
- Children play Facilities;
- Signage; and
- Storytelling of its historical significance.

7.1.2 Investigate the development of facilities that encourage natural asset attractions, such as Bird watching hides.

7.1.3 Restrict all vehicle access to walk trails and repair trail surface

7.1.4 Formalise carpark area and access ways

7.1.5 Improve directional signage

7.1.6 Investigate the construction of a pedestrian bridge on Tambellup West road.

The Senior Management Team has suggested through the development of this plan that ‘another’ children’s playground (refer dot point above) in a small town such as Tambellup is unnecessary duplication and therefore has not been included in this plan. In the place of a child’s playground, the focus of this plan is initially on the walk trail, signage and recreational facilities.

The proposed improvements of facilities will target the Southern (Weir) section of the project area, as opposed to the Sagers Pool (or Northern end) due to the close proximity (walking distance) to the Tambellup townsite. This maximises the possibility of gaining economic outcomes from visitors to the area and combining the Gordon River Walk Trail, 2km in length, with other existing trails (see Appendix 1). This connectiveness will enable a larger combined trail to commence from, for example, the Tambellup Deli, Caravan Park or sporting facilities. Identification and promotion of combined trails can not only occur through signage and wayfinding markers, but also through simply painting directional markings and measurements onto existing paths around the townsite. This will also greatly assist with promotion of the Gordon River and Tambellup generally. For example:



## Trail Branding & Interpretive Signage:

The Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup is part of the Great Southern Treasure’s group of Shire’s which focusses on tourism marketing and promotion. As part of this affiliation, the Shire’s have created The Bobtail Trail, a self-drive recreation trail. Thematic signage has been created by the eight (8) member Shire’s so that all Bobtail Trail points of interest are instantly recognisable.

It is recommended that signage at the Gordon River Walk Trail utilises this theme to take advantage of the strength of regional marketing opportunities. Examples of this signage suite is as follows:



Similarly, the Shire is an active member in the Great Southern Trails Master Plan, coordinated by Outdoors Great Southern (OGS). In 2022, the local government authorities in the Great Southern partnered to create the visual brand for the promotion of trails in the region. This logo will be used at the Gordon River Walk Trail on route markers and trail header signage. It is as follows:

Content to be used as the base for the interpretive signage recommended along the trail is readily available via the Tambellup Heritage Trail Brochure. A copy of the relevant content is included in appendix 1.



## Suggested Improvements / 5 Year Plan:

It is proposed that the following initiatives and upgrades be undertaken, in the year indicated, to update and promote the Gordon River Walk Trail & Facilities:

	Refer to Plan	Overseeing Shire Staff	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028
<b>1. Weir Facilities:</b>							
a. Formalise and seal carpark area and access ways (making allowance for power access to gazebo);	D	MOW	✓	✓			
b. Install BBQ in, or adjacent to, the gazebo;	D	MOW	✓				
c. Improve directional signage (from Great Southern Highway to the site)	D	MOW		✓			
d. Install new Toilet facilities;	D	MOW					✓
e. Storytelling of the river's historical significance;	D	SSPO	✓	✓			
f. Installation of a raised viewing area at the Weir;	D	MOW				✓	
g. Refresh gazebo with a deep clean and repaint;	D	MOW	✓				
h. Remove old bins and replace with new wheelie bin in a bin surround, accessible by the contractor's weekly truck;	D	MOW	✓				
i. Review solar lighting and upgrade.	D	MOW	✓		✓		✓
<b>2. Walk Trail:</b>							
a. Restrict all vehicle access to walk trails;	B, D	MOW	✓	✓			
b. Install directional signage around the trail;	D, F	SSPO	✓	✓			
c. Install interpretative & Trail Head signage to tell the story of the river along the trail;	D	SSPO		✓	✓		
d. Investigate and cost estimate the construction of a pedestrian bridge on Tambellup West road.	D	MOW	✓	✓			
e. Construction of pedestrian bridge on Tambellup West road.	D	MOW			TBC	TBC	
f. Install culvert & gravel fill to repair wash outs on Trail.	G	MOW	✓				
g. Install culvert & gravel fill to give Trail access to Tambellup West Road (short term while waiting for a pedestrian bridge)	G	MOW	✓				
h. Increase regular maintenance to ensure trafficability of trail, public safety and functionality of drainage.	G	MOW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>3. Saggars Pool:</b>							
a. Install interpretative signage to tell the story of the river along the trail;	F	SSPO		✓	✓		
b. Develop a grassed area for recreation;	F	MOW			✓		
c. Install picnic tables and chairs;	F	MOW			✓		
d. Install Deck over the water;	F	CEO					✓
e. Increase regular maintenance to ensure public safety and visual appeal.	F	MOW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>4. Other:</b>							
a. Investigate the development of facilities that encourage natural asset attractions, such as Bird watching hides.		MOW			✓	✓	
b. Review lot boundaries, ownership, zoning and tenure to protect the river as an asset for future generations.	J	CEO		✓	✓		
c. Extend existing Tambellup West Road footpath to meet new sealed car park.	D	MOW	✓				



### Pictorial Examples:

To assist to illustrate some of the initiatives proposed on the previous page, the following pictures are provided by way of example only:

#### Item 1 – Weir Facilities





Item 2(b) - Install directional signage around the trail

Item 1(c) – Directional Signage:



Item 1(d) – New Toilets:





Item 2(c) Interpretative Signage:



Item 3(d) – Install Deck over the water at Saggars Pool:





## Plan A – Overview of Area





Plan B – Gordon River Walk Trail & Site Plan



2(g) - Culvert & gravel fill required  
(short term while waiting for a pedestrian bridge)

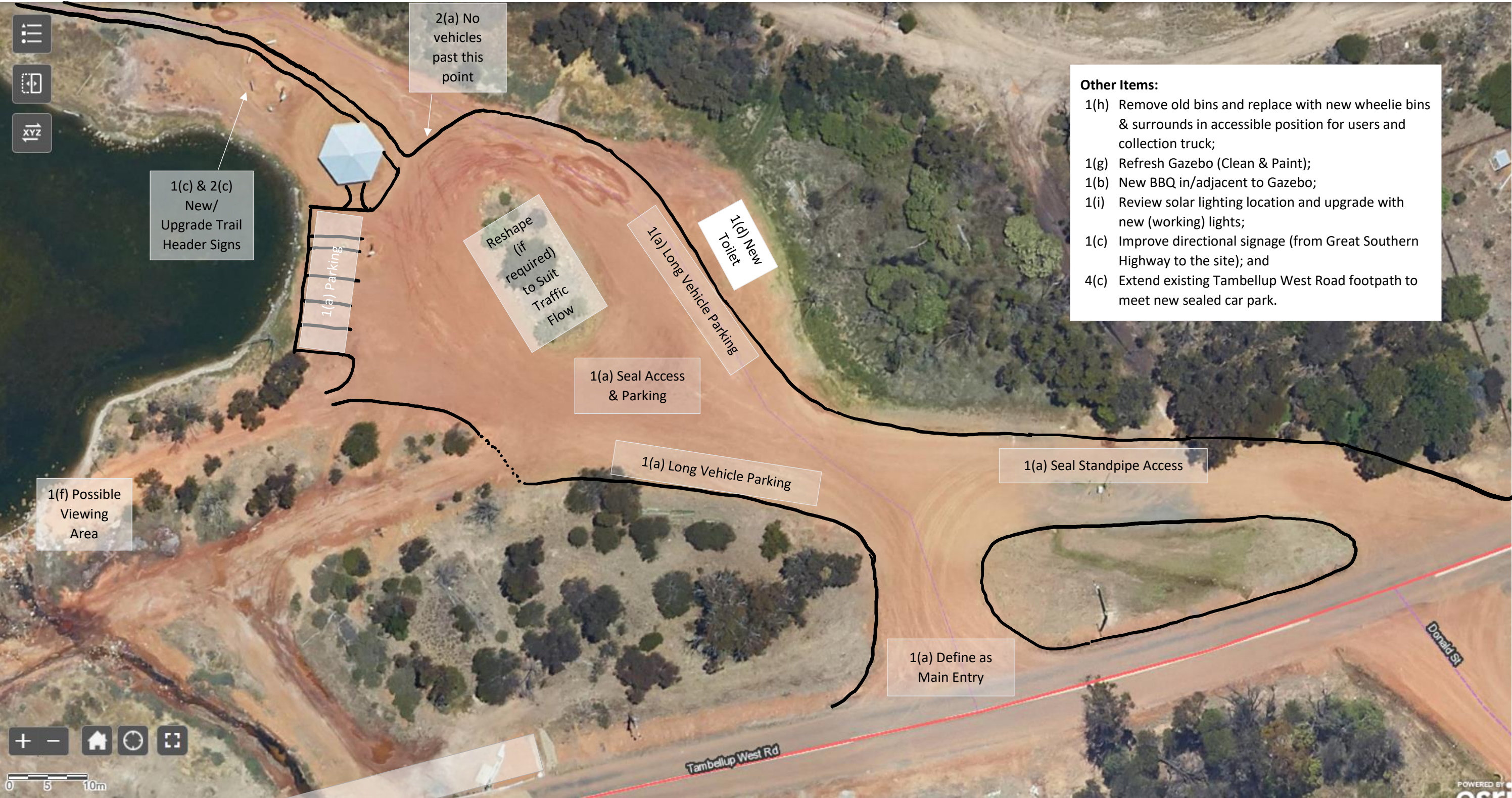


Plan C – Gordon River Weir Area (Current)





Plan D – Gordon River Weir Area (Proposed Detail)



2(d) & (e) New Pedestrian Bridge



Plan E – Saggers Pool (Current)





## Plan F – Saggars Pool (Detail)





Plan G – Trail – Central Detail (Showing Upgrades Proposed)





Plan H – Southern Section – Showing Lot Boundaries





## Appendix 1 – River Trail Information Points

(Extract from Tambellup Heritage Trail Brochure from the late 1990's/early 2000's.) To be used as the base content for the interpretive signage as recommended to be installed at the commencement of the trail and for QR code references at each point of interest.

***The Tambellup Heritage Trail*** is a series of three interconnecting trails. The Trail starts in the centre of town, with the Town Loop, taking in much of the history of the early settlement of the township. Because much of the Noongar history of the area is centred on the Gordon River, the trail continues south of the town, to the site of the former Aboriginal Reserve. To the north of the Town Loop, the trail runs upstream of the main bridge across the river, where much of the social history of the European settler community occurred.



The trails are all presented differently.

***The Town Loop*** is a self-guided trail, about 600 metres in length, with information displayed on boards and plaques along the way.

***The River trail*** to the north of the town is a little more than 2 km in length, and has numbered marker posts. The stories are told on orientation boards at the start of the trail, and in this pamphlet.

***The Noongar Trail***, to the south of the town, is approximately 1500 metres in length, and is also marked by special posts, with some information on an orientation board at the start of the trail. Visitors can walk in their reserve, and reflect on the landscape of the river that sustained the Noongars both physically and spiritually before white settlement.

***The Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup welcomes you to Tambellup, and invites you to take the time to stop, and discover for yourself the history and heritage which has brought our district from pioneering times to the present.***

***ENJOY YOUR STAY!***



## **RIVER TRAIL INFORMATION POINTS**

**1. Saggers Family.** The family lived on the nearby property for many years and the name Saggers appears in the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Tambellup numerous times. Owen Saggers was a member of the Roads Board and served on many committees. He was involved in the building of the original bridge and the setting up of the brickworks. His daughter Minnie Saggers was well known for her role as the honorary town gardener. She was responsible for planting many of the pine trees and for the gardens at the school and station.

**2. Landcare.** Widespread over-clearing of natural vegetation and the heavy use of fertilisers has made this district into a productive wheat growing area. Unfortunately this has been responsible for the deterioration of the river, as well as areas of farmland. One of the ways landcare addresses these problems is by replanting trees in the catchment and on the river banks. This helps to strip the groundwater of nutrients and lower the water table. It will take many years to restore the condition of the river, but a significant start has been made and is well supported by the farming community.

**3. Uses of the River.** The river was a source of food for the Aboriginal people who caught fish, crustaceans and waterfowl, and gathered waterfowl eggs from the margins. During early settlement, the water was fresh enough for stock and horses, and later for steam locomotives for the railway. It was also used for recreation – swimming, boating and elaborate regattas. In recent years, most of these activities have ceased due to the deterioration in water quality. However, as the river slowly recovers with the application of landcare principles, wildlife will return and the river again will be used for recreation.

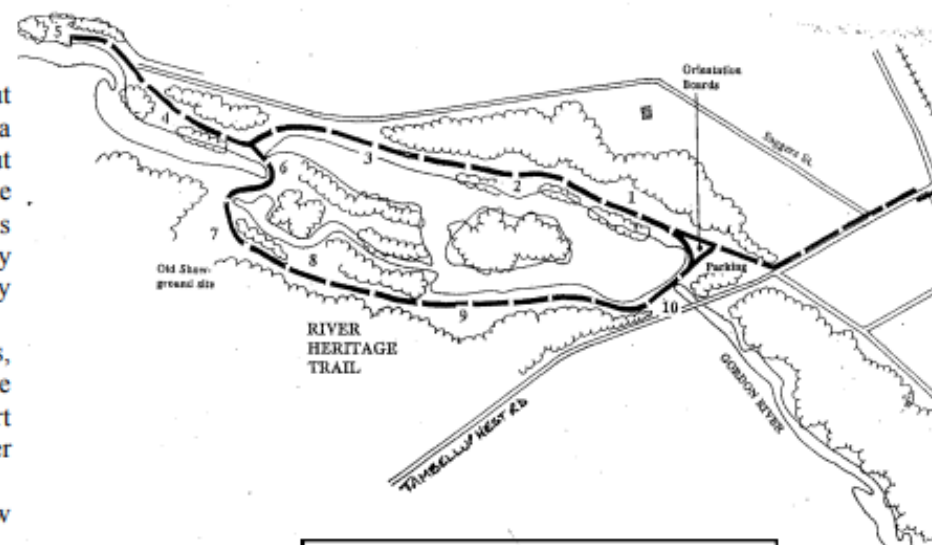


**4. Tammars.** The tamar wallabies were once common in the area but now are found rarely, and only in remnant scrub. Elsewhere in Australia they survive only on islands. They were hunted by Aboriginal people, but their disappearance is due to the clearing of their habitat and the introduction of foxes and cats. It is not so much that their food supply has been removed, as they eat a diverse range of grasses, sedges and woody plants, but that the thick vegetation they need for shelter has been largely removed leaving them little refuge from predators. Adult males reach about 70 cms in height when sitting on their haunches, and females about 55cms. Mating takes place almost immediately after the birth of a joey in January and the embryo grows in the uterus for a short time. Growth then stops for 10 months until 22<sup>nd</sup> December (the summer solstice), after which development restarts and the joey is born in late January. Joeys stay in the pouch for 8 months and are independent a few months later.

**5. The Boatshed.** The boatshed was built in 1921 by the Boat Club. It was a two storey building with a large room upstairs where dances and parties were held. The river was navigable for 8.9 kms at the time, so boating was popular. An annual regatta and picnic was held on New Years Day, and during the Great War in 1915, a re-enactment of the sinking of the Emden by HMAS Sydney was a great success. The regattas continued until 1940 but were not restarted after the war. By 1944 the facility was in need of repair and it was eventually demolished in 1974, the timber being sold to make pig pens.



**6. Wildlife.** The deteriorating water quality has altered the aquatic plant and animal population, and the margin vegetation of the river. In turn this has affected the fish and fresh water crayfish which were once abundant, so they have virtually disappeared. The water birds that fed on these animals would have found it more difficult to survive. There are still a number of water birds on the river, including ducks and swans, and the birdlife should increase with improvement in water quality and revegetation.



*The River Trail*

**7. Old Showground Site.** This cleared area was the first recreation ground in Tambellup. It was prepared in 1906 for cricket and football matches. An account of a 1912 game in the Tambellup Times reads:- "The last half dozen batsmen fell easy victims to the guile of A. Groves and G. Burridge. The whole side was retired for the small score of 27. The combined team quickly gave their friends plenty of leather hunting and eventually reached a total of 63. Uriah Herbert was top scorer with 22 runs." Uriah Herbert's grandson played for Australia 30 years later. In 1918 picnics were popular:- "After a warm day and on the weekly Thursday afternoon holiday, families take lunch or tea to the river bank and spend the afternoon and evening bathing, resting in the shade or collecting bags of gilgies to furnish supper".

**8. Vegetation.** The original vegetation was probably dominated by flooded gums, paperbarks and sheoaks, and with the increased recreational use of the river came the planting of pines and willows. The increasing saltiness of the water has caused the willows to die as well as many of the original trees, but some of the pines have survived on the higher ground. New planting around the rehabilitated river has included some of the original species where there is a degree of salt tolerance, and this range can be extended when landcare measures begin to make a substantial improvement to groundwater quality.



**9. Salination.** The increase salt content of the water occurred when the land was cleared for farming. The water table rose and with the dissolved salts from the soil drained through the groundwater into the river system. Planting of trees in the upstream areas to lower the watertable is one of the main principles of landcare. Most plants cannot survive in ground affected by salt water, but fortunately research is producing some new salt resistant plant varieties.

**10. River Crossings.** The original bridge was built in 1905. The contract was let in mid-winter and there were a few difficulties encountered with the project at that time of the year as Frank Lilford recalled. "We often worked waist deep in water and quite often the river came too high to work, and this meant loss of time. The piles were driven in by a pile driver, three tall shearlegs under which a weight is hauled by two horses and at a certain height released so as to fall on top of the pile. The two horses on the job were Bruce, a beautiful iron grey and Dick, a nice chestnut, owned and driven by Owen Saggers – good horses with a good master."

The original bridge was replaced by the new bridge in 1950



