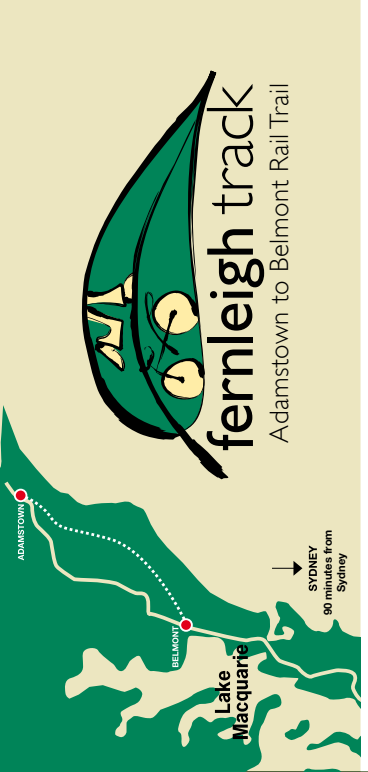




Walk, cycle and explore
this unique heritage rail trail

What is the Fernleigh Track?

The Fernleigh Track is a popular shared pathway, built along a former railway line between the cities of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle. The track can be used by walkers and cyclists, however motorised travel is prohibited.

Users can absorb the history of the Fernleigh Track through numerous railway relics preserved along its length. Old sleepers, signage and former stations have been adapted to create interpretational features and welcoming rest areas.

Travelling from the wetland environment of Belmont past an ancient sand dune system, through cool, quiet forests and into urban Newcastle, the track takes a spectacular journey through various coastal environments.



Kahibah – Adamstown (3.6 km)

- Start:** Burwood Road, Kahibah – parking, local shops within 600 metres of the track
- End:** Adamstown Train Station, Park Avenue, Adamstown – drinking fountain, parking, cafe within 600 metres

From Kahibah to Adamstown, the track consistently slopes downhill. Continuing through the Glenrock State Conservation Area, this section is full of interesting features. The track crosses Flaggy and Little Flaggy Creeks and passes through mahogany, Sydney peppermint and smooth-barked apple forest. The area is home to possums, bandicoots, echidnas, rosellas, honeyeaters and more.

A curved former rail tunnel of 181 metres guides the path under the Pacific Highway, marking the transition from the Lake Macquarie to Newcastle. Upon arriving at Adamstown train station, the Fernleigh journey is complete.



Features of the Fernleigh Track

- See heritage railway relics along the track, including former stations, signage and old rail sleepers
- The Fernleigh Tunnel is a highlight, a restored 181 metre long, curved rail tunnel that marks the connecting point between the cities of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle
- The track is built along a green corridor, taking in wetland, coastal and bushland environments. You may even be lucky enough to spot some of the native birds and wildlife that call this stunning area home
- Paved and gently graded for people of all fitness levels
- Facilities along the pathway include numerous access points, public toilets, drinking fountains and parking, with cafés, takeaways and local shops close by



The Fernleigh Code of Conduct

- Keep left at all times and do not block the track.
- When cycling, ring bell on approach of other users and travel at a safe speed.
- Keep dogs under control on a short lead.
- Ensure young children are supervised at all times.
- Whilst sharing the path, consider children, elderly users and people with disabilities.
- The track runs through a corridor of natural bushland. In the event of extreme weather conditions including bushfires and high winds, reconsider use.
- A number of fresh water supplies are located along the track, however it is advisable to carry one's own supply if travelling in high temperatures or for long distances.
- Help protect this beautiful natural resource. Please retain all litter and dispose of in the bins provided.

Emergency: **000** or **112** from a mobile
State Emergency Service: **132 500**

Belmont – Jewells (3.3 km)

- Start:** Railway Parade, Belmont – public toilets and local shops within 600 metres of the track, drinking fountain, parking
- End:** Wommara Avenue/ Kalaroo Road, Jewells – drinking fountain, parking

Leading from the landscaped former rail platform at Belmont, the Fernleigh Track begins its journey through a wetland forest of paperbarks and swamp mahogany. This area is particularly attractive in winter when the rough-barked eucalypt trees produce cream-coloured flowers, a delicacy for local birdlife. Further along, a 200 metre-long elevated timber boardwalk travels over the fragile swamp environment of the Belmont Wetland State Park. The scenery slowly changes from wetland to coastal heath vegetation as the track continues along behind the 10,000-year-old sand dune system of 9 Mile Beach.



History behind the Fernleigh Track

For an estimated 6,000 years, the Fernleigh Track area was home to the indigenous Awabakal people. They lived amongst the rich natural environment and utilised the resources of the open and rocky coastline, swamp land and hilly forests.

Rail construction began in the late 1880's, and the Adamstown to Belmont railway line was opened for traffic early in the 1890's. It was used to transport coal from the mines in Lake Macquarie to the port of Newcastle and the Newcastle steel works.

In addition to coal haulage, a passenger service existed between Belmont and Newcastle. The trip took around one hour and was frequently used for weekend excursions from the city. When coal transportation began to decline, the service and maintenance of the line decreased.

Fernleigh Loop, Adamstown - Belmont railway line, early 1970s



In 1967, a switch from steam to diesel rail motors was made, before the scheduled passenger service was finally terminated in 1971. Throughout the 1980s, closures of coal mines along the line increased. After the Lambton Colliery shut down operations in 1991, use of the line ceased completely.

The Transformation Process

Guided by the Fernleigh Track Committee the transformation from former rail corridor to treasured community asset began in 1994 after the joint purchase of the land by the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle City Councils. In 1999, the development of a shared pathway was proposed. Funding from both Councils and the NSW State and Federal governments allowed construction to commence with a significant focus set on restoration and preservation. Different sections were completed in stages, spanning 2003 – 2011.

Former location of the Fernleigh Loop, Fernleigh Track, present day



Redhead – Whitebridge (4 km)

- Start:** Cowlishaw Street, Redhead – public toilets, drinking fountain, parking, local shops within 600 metres of the track
- End:** Station Street, Whitebridge – drinking fountain, parking, local shops within 600 metres of the track

There are ample ocean views looking back towards Redhead as the track steadily climbs up and away. Notice the change in natural environment travelling past the twisted scribbly gum bushland of the Awabakal Nature Reserve. The highest elevation of the track's entirety occurs just south of Whitebridge station. The local shops are within sight here, a handy spot to stock up on supplies.

Jewells – Redhead (2.4 km)

- Start:** Wommara Avenue/ Kalaroo Road, Jewells – drinking fountain, parking
- End:** Cowlishaw Street, Redhead – public toilets, drinking fountain, parking, local shops within 600 metres of the track

Predominantly flat, this section of the Fernleigh Track continues through the coastal heath environment. This type of vegetation is compact in nature, caused by constant exposure to sea breezes. Flora to look out for includes banksia trees, tea trees, wattles and the 'bacon and eggs pea' bush, named for its distinctive red and yellow flowers. The Redhead train station has been transformed into a predominant feature of the track, with north and southbound traffic separated by the former platform.



Whitebridge – Kahibah (2 km)

- Start:** Station Street, Whitebridge – drinking fountain, parking, local shops within 600 metres of the track
- End:** Burwood Road, Kahibah – parking, local shops within 600 metres of the track

The stretch from Whitebridge to Kahibah traverses through the leafy forests of Glenrock State Conservation Area. Blue gums provide dappled shade along the gentle downhill slope. Listen carefully to hear the musical, bell-like chimes of the native bell miner bird, and keep a watchful eye out for the shy tawny frogmouth owl camouflaged amongst the treetops.



Lake Macquarie Visitor Information Centre
228 Pacific Highway, Swansea
1800 802 044
www.visitlakemac.com.au

Newcastle Visitor Information Centre
Newcastle Regional Maritime Museum,
Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle
1800 654 558
www.visitnewcastle.com.au



This brochure has been sponsored and produced by
Lake Macquarie Tourism:

Love the Lake

LAKE MACQUARIE
www.visitlakemac.com.au

This iconic regional facility was funded by:



Welcome to Fernleigh Track

Adamstown to Belmont Rail Trail

