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# A Walk ON THE Railway Trail

PHOTOGRAPHS BY OLIVER TUCKER

Elizabeth Jones walks us down the revitalized and reconnected stretch of the railway trail from Flatts to Bailey's Bay, bringing to life the landmarks, flora, fauna and history along the way.

For most people living in Bermuda today, the name Tynes Bay conjures up the tall, cylindrical incinerator on Palmetto Road and the waste disposal facility. Essential though it is for disposing of much of our garbage, it does not seem the most auspicious place to start our walk. And yet across the road is where Mike and I pick up the railway trail and begin the scenic route across land and water all the way to Bailey's Bay. We should remember "Tynes" goes back hundreds of years before the incinerator opened in October 1994 as it was the name of a seventeenth-century family. By the eighteenth century, many Tyneses had become well-known shipbuilders. In 1807 one Nathaniel Tynes was quoted as being "one of the most celebrated shipbuilders to His Majesty in the island."

Next to the incinerator is an old Bermuda house, now called Tynes Bay House, which was built in the eighteenth century but had nothing to do with the Tynes family. It has significance for Mike since he spent the first four years of his life there with his grandparents and mother. Used as housing for the military, it was called Bleak House in those days, though his British Army family had no idea sadness was attached to it when they first moved in. In 1793 Mary Robinson, second wife of the house's builder and owner, Benjamin Cox, died mysteriously. According to the Bermuda National Trust's *Devonshire*, it was thought she had drunk poisoned coffee although there was also a theory she had died of small pox, thanks to an inoculation that went wrong. Fast forward to 1941, during the Second World War,





▲ Tynes Bay House, formerly called Bleak House.

▲ The bridge overlooking Ocean View Golf Course and the North Shore.

when Margaret Stapleton, a censor, left Bleak House and was later found raped and murdered near the railway line. Decades after that, in 1972, Bleak House was the residence of Police Commissioner Duckett who was murdered on the premises. No wonder the house has been renamed. Today, it houses the Child Development Project.

We are actually embarking on the trail just before what was originally a halt in Devonshire on Barkers Hill. Mike's sister, Alison Shewell, remembers it clearly because the railway ran across the paddock at the end of Bleak House's garden and she took the train to Bermuda High School for Girls and back every day. Devonshire Halt, east of the house, was her nearest station. "I can remember occasions when the driver failed to stop at Devonshire Halt, a request stop. The conductor could only communicate with the driver by whistle, and we would see the train travelling at its usual speed while the conductor leaned out, waving his arm and blowing his whistle, trying to catch the driver's attention." As she says, the walk she would then have to take to Prospect Station from Bleak House was quite a way.

The trail does not hug the shoreline on this stretch; instead it runs parallel to North Shore Road, allowing us a mixture of views. At the start we have the illusion of being in the heart of the country since palmetto stands, cherry trees, fiddlewood and agave

hedge us in, preventing any view of the ocean at all, let alone of the buildings behind the hedge on our right as we walk our way east. A paradox occurs to me. When the Bermuda Railway Hamilton line to St. George's opened in 1932, it instantly gave easy access to areas in Bermuda that many locals may not have seen before; their transportation was restricted to bicycle, shank's pony and, for the rich, horse and buggy. It also meant attractions were within easy reach. But the trail left in the wake of the railway's demise often gives us a rural retreat from the bustle and stress of

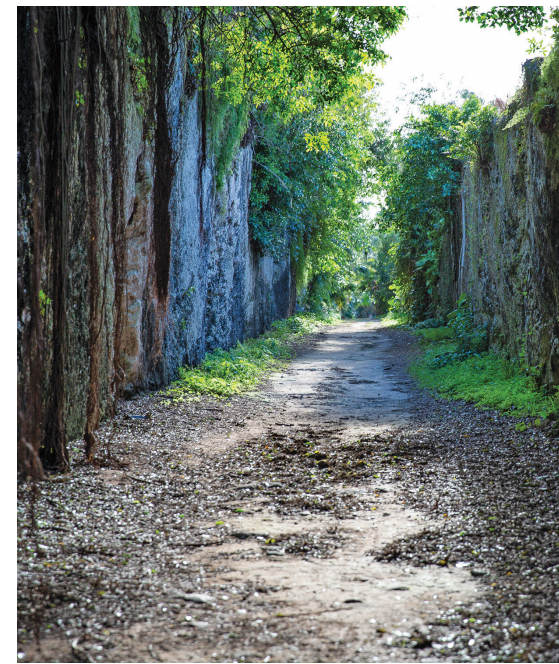
They remind me that horses were not at all pleased by the coming of the railway. They would rear and run away at the sound of the engine, as Alison well remembers. "There was a horse in Prospect which regularly bolted as soon as the train entered the station just below the Military Hospital."

Ahead of us is the first bridge of our walk, one which we usually go under rather than over when we drive up Barkers Hill. On either side of us is the government owned Ocean View Golf Course. Once upon a time, when it was open to private members only,

***What is it that is so satisfying about walking over a bridge? I still feel the same satisfaction I felt as a child knowing that the bridge connects me to a geographical point that would otherwise be impossible for me to reach.***

modern day living, as well as an opportunity to eschew motorised travel for a while. Today, morning glory vines (or bluebells as they are commonly called by older Bermudians) sprawl over bushes and small trees. We can hear that distinctive sound of wings like the brushing sound of a snare drum. Sure enough, a mourning dove flies past us before making for the trees. Chickens, scuttling across the trail and disappearing into the shrubbery, add to the rural atmosphere as do occasional dumps of horse manure.

visitors carrying their golf club bags would get off at the station to see the station sign "Golf and Country Club." We stop on the bridge to admire the expanse of ocean as the north shore comes into view and to see Barkers Hill from a higher perspective. Continuing the trail, we see more stands of agave. One leaf stretches out onto the road. Somebody has braved the serrated edges and carved the name "ISA-BELLA." Was it the same person who carved on another, "Rip Bullet"? Whoever it was, let's hope it's a prank.



▲ A rock cut in the trail before Jennings Land bridge.



▲ Jennings Land bridge, with Gibbets Island and the inlet in the background to the left.

Suddenly the trail breaks into farmland, Penhurst Park. We cannot see North Shore Road that bisects it but can look across the fallow fields to the ocean. Soon we experience the diversity of this part of the trail as we enter a built-up area. For tourists, sometimes the trail allows them a peek into people's backyards and therefore an opportunity to see how Bermudians "really live." They can also look down to the sea over a medley of pastel coloured houses with traditional Bermuda stepped roofs. We see a lone figure working on the wall of a new building already half up, in contrast to an old, ruined Bermuda stone chimney next to it.

Further on, we are back in the country again as we approach Store Hill which connects North Shore Road to Middle Road and which, in the days of the railway, accessed a wireless station. Today, it marks one of the bridges constructed in 2015 by the Friends of the Bermuda Railway Trails to improve the trail's connections ([www.thebermudian.com/home-a-garden/nature/building-bridges-connecting-the-community/](http://www.thebermudian.com/home-a-garden/nature/building-bridges-connecting-the-community/) January 8, 2019). We can now follow the train, as it were, before its entry into the cutting. What is it that is so satisfying about walking over a bridge? I still feel the same satisfaction I felt as a child knowing that the bridge connects me to a geographical point that would otherwise be impossible for me to reach.

Figuratively, a bridge is an image of transition from one stage of life to the next, of what anthropologists would call liminality. There's also the feeling of being high up, a sensation the Bermuda train travellers experienced on much of their journey, especially when crossing the ocean. Sandra Rouja remembers the thrill of travelling from St. George's to Hamilton every day in order to attend Mount St. Agnes Academy. The journey with its beautiful ocean views always seemed to her far too short.

Ahead is the cutting, the faces of rock bare in some places, allowing us to see their slanting grain, covered in others with overhanging shrubbery and long tree roots dangling to the floor. At last, we reach the two bridges we have been eagerly anticipating, the ones the Friends erected just a few months ago in the late summer of 2018. The first takes us to Jennings Land while the second changes direction, taking us over North Shore Road to the southern shore of Flatt's Inlet, to what was once Flatts Station, where people would disembark to explore Flatts village. On the way we have a wonderful view of the inlet and of Gibbet Island, a beautiful part of Bermuda because the water around it is particularly clear and iridescent. Gibbet evokes special memories for us since it is here that as a child Mike learned to swim and snorkel. Some thirty years later, our four-year-old

son followed his example and soon the two of them spent many a holiday snorkelling around the island.

But, as its name suggests, Gibbet has a sinister history for it is also here that people were hanged, their bodies displayed as a deterrent to others. In 1681 Indian John, a slave, was convicted of attempting to murder his "owner" and his wife by setting fire to their house, Orange Grove on Flatts Hill. He was hanged, drawn and quartered here, parts of his body being displayed on Somerset Bridge and at other landmarks. In 1753 a slave called Quash was convicted of killing his "master," Captain John McNeil of Hamilton Parish, with a hatchet. He was hanged from a very high pole on Gibbet Island and his body was said to have hung there for days before he died. For a long time "Quashi's Pole" was a landmark. Thankfully, today no trace of the pole is left, but other historical vestiges are visible in the water ahead of us: the pylons left from the old railway bridge that traversed Flatt's Inlet to what was Aquarium Station. Hopefully, the Friends will fulfil their goal of reconstructing it as a pedestrian bridge so that eventually we will be able to walk the trail to Bailey's Bay with hardly an interruption.

In the meantime, a chapter in Carveth Wells's *Bermuda in Three Colors*, published in 1935, describes the railway journey from





▲ Villa Monticello, the summer home of the Whitney family in the 19th century.



▲ An eastern view over the pylons at Flatt's Inlet.

Hamilton to St. George's and mentions the "quaint little Flatts Village" and the "Coral Island Club," formerly Frascati House, which was later demolished to make way for St. James Court. Four years after Wells had published his book, the Second World War broke out and the Coral Island Club was full of soldiers listening to Bermuda's own Talbot Brothers. (For more historical information on Flatts, see Flatts: The Small Town with a Big History) But intriguingly Wells advises tourists to visit the rectory in Flatts, which has an inscription over the door: "Through this wide, opening gate, none comes too early, none returns too late." He amusingly continues, "In the days of Mr. Havard (the rector), there was an annual garden party in the rectory to which the governor was invited and admission charged to see the governor." The rector apparently said, "It helps the cause." Quite what cause he meant is not clear, at least to me; neither is where this house is or was. "Rectory" suggests an Anglican church but the nearest Anglican church is St. Mark's, some distance away from Flatts. Research reveals he must have been referring to Villa Mont Clare, built on Harrington Sound Road in 1812, which eventually became the property of the Whitneys, who also owned the neighbouring Villa Monticello. William Zuill's *Bermuda Journey* tells us Villa Mont Clare was "their winter palace" while Monticello, just across

the lawn, was their summer home. According to the National Trust's *Smith's Parish*, eventually Mrs. Whitney left Villa Mont Clare to St. Mark's, which used it as its rectory. It was owned by St. Mark's until 1978.

We pick up the next part of the trail on the other side of the inlet, a few minutes' walk along the opposite side of the road to the Aquarium. The old Aquarium Station building (formerly a railway museum) is still there, reminding us that in the 1930s visitors wanting to see fish and animals would stop here. Carveth Wells mentions the penguins, sea lizards and turtles brought by Louis Mowbray to the zoo from the Galapagos Islands. Though the penguins and lizards have long disappeared, the same turtles are still here. Crooked Nose has to be at least 103 years old.

We clamber up to the trail and turn west to see the pylons of the old Flatts railway bridge rising from the water before we head east to Shelly Bay. The path runs parallel to the sea on our left and to the road on our right. However, the stone walls and hedges hide the houses from us, while mostly keeping the ocean exposed. So we have stunning seascape views whether the water is cerulean silk shot with turquoise lights or, when the wind comes from the north, capped with racing white horses, as happens today. Often, we stop to take in the coastline panorama that stretches out to Dockyard on the western tip

of the island. Our imagination, though, goes back to the shipbuilding era which began long before Dockyard appeared. A stone ruin, with evidence of a chimney, reminds us there was a shipyard here, belonging to the Outerbridge family; later in the nineteenth century, Thomas Davis joined the business.

Soon we come to the footbridges and boardwalk approaching Shelly Bay. A guy skims the waves, his parasail casting a shadow on the water like a gigantic fish. We pass the playground and follow the shore where a few children are playing on the sand this winter's day. At the far eastern end of the beach is the old slip of the shipyard where clippers such as *Sir George F. Seymour* were launched. From there the trail takes us through a mangrove swamp to Shelly Bay field which was formerly a horseracing track until it permanently closed in 1961. We can see the remains of the grandstand where once the crowds thronged to watch the races. (See Bermuda's Favourite Haunts: Shelly Hall in Shelly Bay for more historical information.) We climb up the bank to Old Road that lets us reconnect with the north shore at Burchall's Cove Park. Fishermen gather on the quay selling their catch. Here we are again in what was once shipbuilding country. The cove was named after Peter Burchall, the shipwright son of another shipwright, Elisha. Peter was born in 1753 and died in 1834, the year of Emancipation.



▲ The footbridge that approaches Shelly Bay.

He made a significant change to the cove which, according to the National Trust's *Hamilton Parish*, was originally an inland pond, probably used for storing live fish. He cut an exit and a channel so it opened up into the sea. Ship slips are visible on the north shore west of the cove but he might also have built ships where the fishermen gather now.

Looking westward across the cove, we can see the large house he built on Old Road between 1784 and 1796. Though it now consists of apartments, it can be distinguished by its scalloped Flemish gables. In addition, he owned many properties in the surrounding area. He had numerous slaves as well. *Hamilton Parish* also tells us by 1821 he had 34 slaves, half of whom were aged under 15. Nine women were house servants, while eight men were shipbuilders, including two caulkers, a ship's carpenter and five sawyers.

His will of 1827 directed his wife to free slaves as she saw fit, but stated: "At all events I will and direct that at her death, all and every of the said Negroes and Slaves and the future issues of those who are females, shall be emancipated and enfranchised and set free to all intents and purposes." Given the slave trade was abolished by the British in 1807, this may be unsurprising. But he also directed that once freed they would be guaranteed security and allowed to "live without any rent, service or acknowledgement whatever being demanded or required therefore."

Taking leave of Burchall's Cove, I remember Wells explaining: "The train now crosses a low girder bridge and stops at Crawl Station. This is a favourite place for giving horses a bath in the sea—watch out for them on your left." No doubt the horses had to do with the racing track as many were stabled where the Radnor Road Christian Fellowship Church is now. The "low girder bridge" would have been Burchall's Trestle and sure enough, as we continue a little along North Shore Road, we can see the naked pylons crossing a piece of rocky shore. This is the one part of the trail from

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the Aquarium stop to Duck's Puddle (the entrance to Coney Island) the road has to interrupt for a little way. It means we can take in Temperance Hall as we walk towards Crawl Hill. A small building with a gabled roof, it has a larger history, especially for former students who remember attending it. Built by the Hamilton Parish Temperance Friendly Society in 1852, it became an elementary school in August 1857, offering instruction to 129 children—74 boys and 55 girls. How the teachers managed to teach so many children in just one room boggles my mind.

But presumably they did, as did Rosalind Taylor Robinson, who joined Temperance Hall as headmistress in 1936 when it was still a one-room school. In her time, there were 73 pupils with two other older teachers on the staff. In *Bermuda Recollections*, she describes how she would teach the children outside in good weather: "It was a little country school very close to the sea...the spruce trees particularly made a good harbour—the children seated on the lower branches and the teacher seated in a chair beneath." The school closed in 1950 when it merged with Francis Patton Primary School.

Just past the Esso Station, on the other side of the road, a sign tells us we've reached the trail again, and we're at the original Crawl Station although only the platform remains. The name "Crawl" arguably derives from "corral" and refers to an enclosure. This makes sense since from Bermuda's earliest settlement, fishermen used fish ponds, often sheltered inlets and bays, for storing or penning the live fish they had caught. According to the National Trust's *Hamilton Parish*, a shallow bay west of Crawl's Point and

between Burchall's Cove and Bailey's Bay, could have been closed off and used as a fish pond or as a salt pan. Salt pans were mentioned in a 1623 proclamation: "...there are dailie complaints made of the greate want of salte" to preserve fish during a time of food scarcity. Two carpenters ("Thomas Pye of Brackish Pond and John Askew of Spanish Pointe") were required to "fit and furnish" two pans at Crawl Point.

Wells never mentioned ponds or salt pans but he did allude to private, or privilege halts, used by socially eminent individuals:





▲ Willoughby, the former home of Dr. Thaddeus Outerbridge.

▲ A beautiful stretch of the trail, with spectacular views of the sea and coves along the shore.

“After passing bridge 35 [There were only 33 bridges in all. He must have meant bridge 25, Crawl Trestle.] (ask the conductor) notice on your right a typical water catchment area and then watch out for the private halt of Mr. Hastings Outerbridge and Mrs. Constable.

The last time I travelled this way, a servant stopped the crack train of the island and took delivery of a pound of pork chops... Be sure to notice the private railway waiting room that has been built for the benefit of these two neighbours; notice the partition in the middle of the waiting room so that the

We pass an unpainted stepped chimney and partial wall of a ruined Bermuda cottage, which was once Crawl Point Cottage and last inhabited in 1963. Today a lone kiskadee perches on top of it. Once again we can see to the west the curl of Dockyard and to the east, the round Martello Tower of Ferry Point Park.

Eventually, the Friends’ Bailey’s Bay foot-bridge comes into sight. The first part crosses the Winton Way short stretch of shallow water while the second runs over the water of Bailey’s Bay to the trail on the other side. As usual we take pleasure in walking over the

***I had forgotten how beautiful this stretch of the trail is, with its perfectly unimpeded view of the water and the coves framed by craggy limestone.***

neighbours may wait for the train without being forced to pass the time of day!”

I had forgotten how beautiful this stretch of the trail is, with its perfectly unimpeded view of the water and the coves framed by craggy limestone. We look across the sea of colours, all shades of aquamarine, turquoise and emerald, streaked with the shimmering shadows of reefs and set against a sapphire sky. On the right side of the trail in parts is a high rocky wall, showing how the railway’s engineers had created cuts through the limestone to allow for a level track.

bridges, especially as this time they are over water. We peer over the side to watch the fry, mercurial flecks just beneath the water’s surface and then look across the bay to an elegant house with shuttered windows and an upper balcony overlooking a narrow strip of sand. Originally, it was named The Lodge but once Dr. Thaddeus Outerbridge (1822–1905) acquired it from Susan Outerbridge Algate, widow of William Burrows Algate who died at sea, he expanded it and renamed it Willoughby. Dr. Outerbridge successfully

treated yellow fever cases and served in the House of Assembly for 50 years.

Off the bridge, we continue the trail to the site of Bailey Bay’s Station. A sign tells us the railway promoted Bailey’s Bay as the stop for the Crystal and Leamington Caves and for a view of “the hulk of the Sha, last steam-and-sail battleship of the British Navy.” According to Wells it was one of the most important stops of all, allowing access also to Tuckers Town, Tom Moore’s Tavern, the Jungle, Castle Harbour Hotel and the Mid Ocean Golf Course, not to mention the still popular Swizzle Inn. We wander past Sandymount, a house dating back to the eighteenth century on the east side of Bailey’s Bay which once belonged to Captain Daniel Outerbridge Algate. Aged just 35, he tragically died in a shipwreck while en route from New York to the West Indies. His brother, the previously mentioned Captain William Burrows Algate, drowned with him.

On the shoreline is another boat slip which probably belonged to Scottish ship designer and builder Claude McCallan, another victim of a shipwreck with a much happier outcome. In February 1787 he was on board the *Fame*, making for Antigua from Norfolk, Virginia. On the 24th, the ship struck the reefs about 12 miles north of Bermuda. According to E.A. McCallan, author of *Life in Old St. David’s*



▲ Cuts such as this one at Shelly Bay were made in the limestone to allow for level train tracks.



▲ The bridge over Bailey’s Bay.

and Claude’s great grandson, the next morning he was rescued, together with five others, by Daniel Seon who fortuitously happened to be chub fishing. Claude managed to save his ship-drafting implements. Seon landed him at Bailey’s Bay not far from “Great John” Outerbridge’s shipyard, where he would carry out his lucrative career in Bermuda, as Bermuda’s first shipbuilder to draft a plan on paper rather than create a ship model. Eventually, he also married Outerbridge’s niece, Lucy Burrows Mercer and built Callan Glen, a gracious Georgian house still standing on the other side of the road, not far from where he first landed.

In partnership with Outerbridge, he designed and helped to build many ships, including two Bermuda cedar sloops of war, the *Hunter* and the *Dasher*, ordered by Admiral Murray in 1795. Callan Glen became famous for its launching parties. For the *Dasher* launch there was a luncheon in the morning at the house, followed by a dance in the evening. Long after Claude died and ship building declined, social activities at Callan Glen continued: in the nineteenth century tennis courts were built on the property for the Bailey’s Bay Tennis Club, according to Zuill, the oldest tennis club in Bermuda.

We decide to finish our walk just before Duck’s Puddle, rather than continue to Coney Island. The coastline along this stretch is

particularly dramatic, its harshness sometimes softened by green sprawls of succulents—trailing ice plant and iodine bush. But the craggy rock formations towering over the inlets,

one resembling the profile of an eighteenth-century captain staring out to sea, are grim and apt reminders that life at sea can be merciless. Claude William McCallan was a lucky man.





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