

## Yarra valley Aboriginal Sites of Significance

- **Aboriginal sculptures at William Ricketts Sanctuary:** Mt. Dandenong, Melways 52 H10.
- **Coranderrk Aboriginal Cemetery:** Barak Lane, Badger Creek, 300 Kulin graves, Melways 277 K9.
- **Battle of Yering Memorial Rock:** Site of battle between Border Police & Wurundjeri, 13/01/1840.
- **William Barak Memorial at Brushy Creek:** Stone monument plaque and tree, Melways 37 C7.
- **Barngoon Birthing Site:** At the confluence of Brushy Creek and Yarra is a Wurundjeri birthing and female initiation site where William Barak was born, Melways 24 K6.
- **Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail:** 340m bushland walking trail at Watson's Creek with 9 resource markers along the way, Melways 272 D5.
- **Pound Bend South Memorial Rock:** Dedicated to Reserve & 1852 corroboree site, Melways 23 C12.
- **Wurundjeri Stories Walk:** Start at Pound Bend tunnel & follow signage, Melways 23 A11.
- **Pound Bend North Memorial Rock:** Dedicated to Reserve & 1852 corroboree site, Melways 23 C9.
- **Moorrul Viewing Platform in Kangaroo Ground:** Interpretive panels, memorial, Melways 271 E11.
- **Tikalara Park:** Aboriginal living area occupied by Major Newman in 1837, Melways 22 C11.
- **Fish Farms at Finns:** Traditional fish & eel trap area, yabbie & mussel farms, etc, Melways 33 B3.
- **Yingabeal - the Scar Tree at Heide Museum:** Not just a canoe tree, also Marker Tree at junction of five Songlines (walking trails), Melways 32 E5.
- **Bolin-Bolin Billabong:** Eel and duck hunting site adjacent to corroboree ground, Melways 32 C8.
- **Bunjilaka Centre:** Melbourne Museum Carlton, 'First Peoples Exhibition', Melways 2B J9.
- **Birrarung Marr:** Celebrating Wurundjeri culture, displays, etc, along riverside walk, Melways 2F K6.
- **Koorie Heritage Trust:** Federation Square, Melb., Interactive displays, souvenirs, Melways 1A P10.

## The Woïwurrung Aquaculture Area along the river at Warrandyte

This traditional fish farming area on the Yarra River can be found on the riverfront of the Warrandyte Township. It stretches from Police Street at Stiggants Reserve up to just east of the Warrandyte Bridge. (Melways 23 D12 to F11).

Standing on the bridge and looking upstream to the east, then downstream to the west gives a commanding view of the natural rock formations and shallow areas. Four-foot-high weir walls were built to form fish traps.

Fallen trees were never cleared as these helped slow the river flow to allow the area to become freshwater mussel farms where mussels proliferate beside the riverbanks.

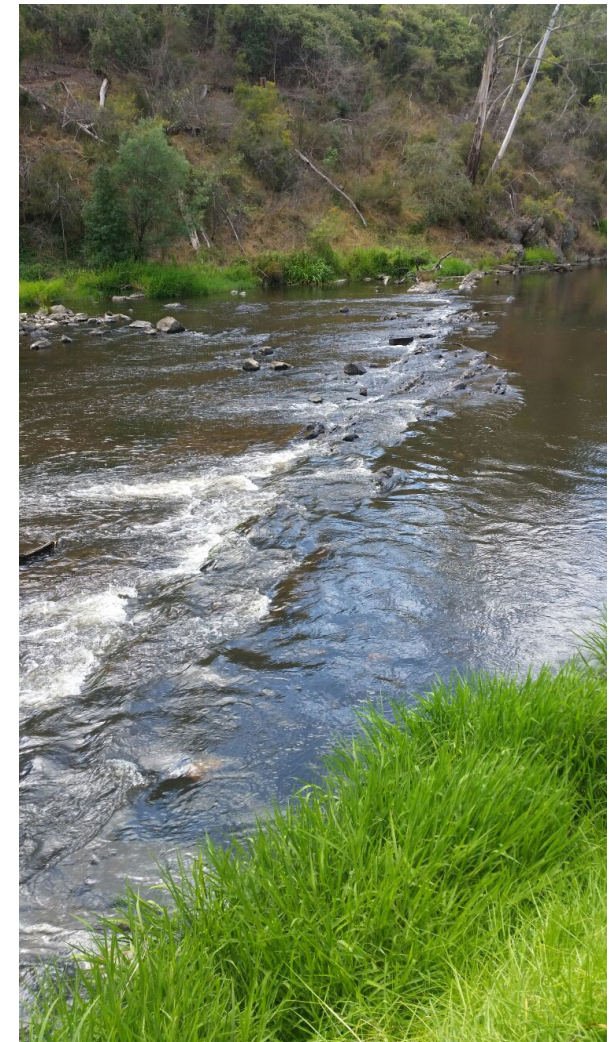
*For information on the activities and contact details of Reconciliation Manningham, please visit our website at:*

[HTTP://WWW.RECMAN.ORG.AU](http://www.recman.org.au)

*Or contact the Secretary, Jim Poulter, on 9842 3598*



## The Traditional Aboriginal Fish Farming area at Warrandyte



## A Managed Environment

When colonists began arriving in Australia from 1788, they were confronted with the vision of an environment that had been closely managed for aeons, principally by fire. However, they assumed, as did most settlers, that this was the 'natural' state of affairs.

The reality was that through the whole of Aboriginal Australia there was no wilderness and no understory in the forested areas. Open linear fields stretched as far as the eye could see, with trees at regular 25 to 50 metre distances apart. There were grassy hilltops and wooded areas with clearly defined perimeters.

This was the pattern across the whole of Australia and many of the colonists commented that the whole country: *'Looked like an English Gentleman's Estate'*.

Paintings by the artists with the First Fleet all reflected the manicured environment they now saw, Skeptics who have been indoctrinated with ideas of Terra Nullius, have put forward that the artists were painting imaginary views of their homeland, The truth is that the artists were faithfully recording what they saw.

When colonists arrived in Tasmania fifteen years later the same observations were made. Settlers gave names to places like Promised Land, Paradise, and Eden, in recognition of the unspoiled beauty they had 'discovered'.

Similarly, when John Batman arrived in Port Phillip from Tasmania in May 1835, he was wonderstruck by the ordered beauty of what he saw and wrote: *'The land appeared laid out in farms for some hundred years back, and every tree transplanted. I was never so astonished in my life.'*

A few days later, on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1835, Batman explored a few miles up, what is now known as, Hovell's Creek and noted the fish traps there in his diary.

*'The walls were built of stones about four feet high, and well done and well planned out.'*

Many settlers and explorers made the same observations about Aboriginal technology when it was strikingly obvious, but often Aboriginal technology was so blended into the environment it was invisible to their eyes.

This has been the case with the aquaculture area now before you at Warrandyte, which has until now remained invisible to our eyes.

## The Wurundjeri Aquaculture area at Warrandyte Township

If you stand on the Warrandyte bridge and look east upriver, you will see a rock formation across the river which marks the start of the rapids area which accommodated a four-hundred-metre-long aquaculture area.

This beginning of the rapids area was where the eel traps operated during the eel migration period that took place from mid-February to mid-March each year.

The natural rock formations were enhanced by placing stones to channel the eels into races where they were either caught in woven eel traps or caught by hand. The catching by hand was usually the children's job and they obviously must have had great fun doing it.

The shallow area underneath the bridge was enhanced as a breeding area for freshwater mussels, and it was also where the Aboriginal travel route (Songline) crossed the river. This Songline followed the ridge-line route of present-day Kangaroo Ground Road. It still today offers the same stunning views on either side of the road that Aboriginal people appreciated every day on Country.

On the bank beside these shallow areas along the river, middens were created by the piling up of discarded freshwater mussel shells. These middens were observed and recorded by the earliest settlers at Warrandyte.

Mussels were a staple part of the Aboriginal diet. In early Spring, they were collected in their hundreds, taken up the damp gullies above the flood line and buried in earthen pits for later use when the river was in flood.

These pits were made by a metre deep hole being dug in the damp soil. The mussels were then lined up and buried. Once the soil went on top, the mussels would go into suspended animation and stay fresh in these 'refrigerators' for up to two years.

Further down the river, behind about where the old Post Office stands, there is another shallow area. Here it is strikingly obvious how the natural rock formations were built on and enhanced to form fish and eel traps. This was also the site of another Songline crossing that was the route to Research

Beyond these shallows ending at Police Street are deep water areas that served as nurseries for blackfish, eels, and yabbies. These deepwater areas were quickly taken over by settlers as favourite swimming places. After the spring floods caused damage to the fish traps, the Hot North Wind Season of summertime would be spent repairing the traps. This would also involve a lot of duck-diving in the deep-water nurseries to remove any rocks swept in by the spring floods.