

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.
- **Barnggeong 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.

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The Scarred Songline Marker Tree at Heide Museum Bulleen

This pamphlet was produced by Reconciliation Manningham, in close cooperation with the Wurundjeri Tribe Council, in order to increase public appreciation of the traditional role of Songline Marker Trees and the significance of this particular tree in marking the convergence of Songlines from five different directions.

A special naming ceremony was held on 6th October 2013 when Uncle Bill Nicholson, an Elder of the Wurundjeri Tribe Council, formally invested the tree with a Woiwurung name that reflected its traditional role.

We wish to acknowledge with gratitude, the partners who helped bring this important project to reality:

**Heide Museum of Modern Art
Manningham City Council
Reconciliation Victoria
Rotary Club of Manningham**

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



YINGABEAL



The Scarred Five
Songlines Marker
Tree at Heide in
Bulleen

What are Songlines?

In tribal times the whole of Australia was criss-crossed with Aboriginal travel and trade routes. These not only interconnected all the land within a tribal area, but between all tribal areas as well. These travel and trade routes commonly followed ridge and valley lines or easy contours.

They were carefully maintained by annual clearing and burning off as part of a 'firestick farming' schedule. These burning off activities were usually conducted from mid-April to mid-May each year when it was cool and dry, in order to help the regeneration of particular food sources and reduce the risk of bushfires.

Along every Songline, there were various natural and man-made features that stood as signposts to the travellers. These features were all coded into a never-ending song that varied according to the direction you took. When traveling through another tribe's territory the song had to be sung in their language, so this was in effect, your passport.

What is Singing Country?

Together with natural and man-made features along each travel route, the ecological relationships and custodial responsibilities involved were also coded in the song. Even Aboriginal nursery rhymes spoke of these ecological relationships and responsibilities.

For Aboriginal families then, traveling through the bush was always a joyous occasion. Everyone was always singing in praise of the land and the responsibilities attached to caring for Country. This process called 'Singing Country' was a never-ending song about the wonders of creation and the human responsibilities attached to care of the land.

Songlines are still with us

Because Songlines followed sensible routes with easy grades, early explorers and settlers usually followed the Songlines in their carts, often without realising that the

routes were man-made. Eventually these routes became established cart tracks, then were graveled and ultimately bitumenised.

So, all the meandering main roads that radiate out of Melbourne, to Geelong, Ballarat, Sydney, Plenty, Heidelberg, Whitehorse, and Dandenong were all originally Aboriginal Songlines. It is just another example of how our rich Aboriginal heritage often remains invisible to many of us.

What are Marker Trees?

As well as natural features such as a rocky outcrop, a cliff, a confluence, a river gorge, or a particularly shaped hilltop, there were also man-made features that acted as signposts on these travel routes. Most often these were trees that had been shaped to grow in a particular way.

For instance, if two sapling trees were at a convenient location they would be tied so as to grow into an 'arched marker tree'. That is, the two original trunks would fuse and grow as a single trunk above the arch. Such arched trees were also commonly used to mark birthing places.

Alternatively, two sapling branches on a young tree might be tied together to grow as a 'ring marker tree'. In other words, after many years, the trunk of a tree would grow with a hole in it, like the eye of a huge needle. Some such trees marking important sites might have several rings in them.

Some trees also grow as a genetic mutation with a spiral grain, and they therefore look like giant corkscrews. Such trees were not allowed to grow unless they were on Songlines and would be uprooted if they were not. Otherwise, they were allowed to grow as 'spiral marker trees'.

The final type of marker tree was scarred trees. Not all scarred trees are marker trees, but they often are, particularly where significant bark harvesting has taken place, like in the making of a canoe.

To establish whether a scarred tree is a marker tree, all you have to do is look around and observe your surroundings. Is the tree on a ridge line or valley line? Or does it otherwise seem to be at a natural intersecting point, or an observation point for a nearby land feature? If so, then in all probability, it is a Marker Tree as well as a scarred tree.

The Marker Tree at Heide

The scarred Red River Gum at Heide, from which a canoe was made several hundred years ago, is perhaps the most significant Marker Tree in Melbourne, if not in Victoria. From this ancient tree, Songlines radiate out in five different directions.

First, if you head directly down to the river from this tree, you will find the river ford which allows the river to be crossed easily and safely. From there, the Heidelberg Road Songline offers a direct route to Melbourne and the wetlands at Port Melbourne.

Second, following along the riverbank to the east, the present day Yarra Trail fairly faithfully follows the path of the original Birrarung Songline. This goes all the way along the south bank of the Yarra to the Blacks Spur Songline and on to the Upper Goulburn.

Third, if you follow present day Templestowe Road to the east, this is the flood line route. That is, every April and October, the seasonal rains would flood the low-lying areas of Bulleen and so the Songline followed this shorter and more direct route.

Fourth, another easterly Songline route follows present day Manningham Road, which goes up to the ridge line and connects with the original Doncaster Road Songline, which continues along Mitcham Road.

Fifth, present day Bulleen Road follows the Songline route southwest past Bolin-Bolin Billabong and on to Melbourne via High Street Kew to Dights Falls.