

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.

The Traditional Woiwurrung Aquaculture Area at Finn's

This traditional fish farming area on the Yarra River can be found at the end of Duncan Street in Lower Templestowe. It is past the Scout Hall and behind the Wombat Bend play space and picnic area. (Melways 33 B3).

One hundred meters further upstream, a suspension footbridge spans the river and leads across to the Odyssey House facility off Bonds Road in Eltham.

A great view of the two-hundred-meter-long aquaculture area, both upriver to the east and downriver to the west, is to be seen from the footbridge.

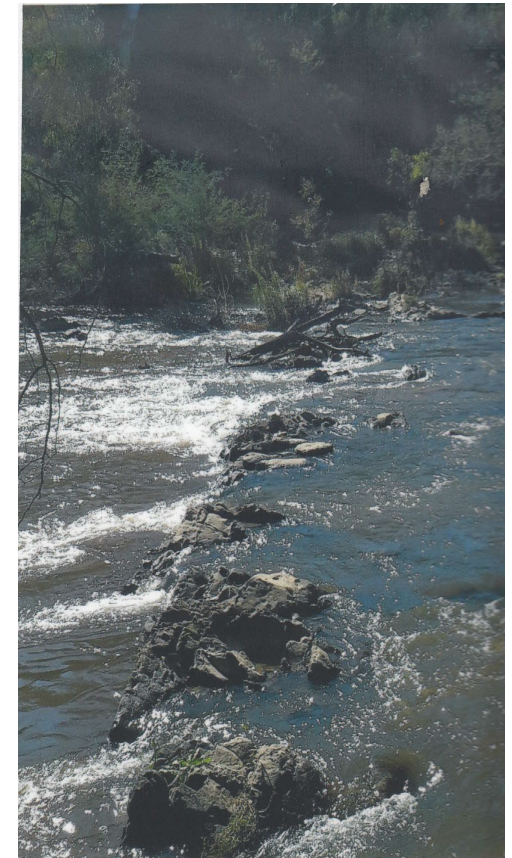
For information on the activities and contact details of Reconciliation Manningham, please visit our website at:

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

Or contact the Secretary, Jim Poulter, on 9842 3598



THE ABORIGINAL FISH FARMS AT FINN'S RESERVE IN TEMPLESTOWE



A Managed Environment

When colonists arrived in Australia from 1788, they were confronted with the vision of an environment that had been closely managed for aeons, principally by fire. They assumed, that this was a 'natural' state.

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. Skeptics who have been indoctrinated with ideas of Terra Nullius, have put forward that the artists were painting imaginary views of their homeland, rather than faithfully recording what they saw.

When colonists arrived in Tasmania fifteen years later, the same observations were made. Settlers gave names like 'Eden', 'Paradise' and 'Promised Land' to places in recognition of the unspoiled beauty of the places 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 1st 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 at Finn's Reserve, which has until now remained invisible to our eyes.

The Wurundjeri Aquaculture area at Finn's Reserve

If you stand on the suspension bridge and look east upriver, you will see a rock formation across the river which marks the start of the rapids area. On the right is where Ruffey Creek joins the Yarra.

This beginning of the rapids area was where the eel traps operated during the eel migration period in late February and early March each year. The natural rock formations were enhanced by placing stones to channel the eels into places where they were either caught in woven eel traps or caught by hand. This was usually carried out by the children, who obviously had great fun in doing so.

The area underneath the suspension bridge was also where the Aboriginal Travel route (Songline) crossed the river. About 200 metres up Ruffey Creek near Foote Street was where the Aboriginal camp was located. An oven pit had been carved into the rock but was buried when Foote Street was put through in 1963. Middens created by the piling up of discarded freshwater mussel shells were seen here also.

If you now turn and look west from the suspension bridge, the shallow rapids area you see in front of you, was actually a freshwater mussel farm. Mussels were a staple part of the Aboriginal diet. In early Spring, they were collected in their hundreds, taken up Ruffey Creek and buried in earthen pits for later use when the river was in flood.

These pits were made by digging a meter-deep hole in the damp soil above the flood line. The mussels

were then buried and once the soil was on top, the mussels would go into suspended animation and stay fresh in these 'refrigerators' for up to two years.

There is a deep-water area after the mussel farm that is best observed by walking west down to what is locally referred to as 'the old swimming hole'. This is a deep-water area maintained by the Wurundjeri as a fish and yabbie nursery. These deepwater areas were quickly taken over by colonists as favourite swimming places.

During Summer in tribal times, a lot of duck-diving would be undertaken by Aboriginal people to remove any rocks swept into these deepwater nurseries for eels, blackfish, and yabbies, and of course to repair the fish-traps.

Beyond this deepwater nursery is yet another area where fish traps and eel traps were located. You only have to look at the natural rock formations to know this. The Finns Reserve aquaculture area is only one of about twenty such areas that existed along the whole course of the Yarra River in Manningham.