

WOMIN JEKA!

— the Woiwurrung words for 'Welcome'

GAWA WURUNDJERI ABORIGINAL RESOURCE TRAIL

The Gawa Wurundjeri Aboriginal Resource Trail is a clearly marked 340 metre looped trail located near Watsons Creek on the Eltham-Yarra Glen Road, located within the Pantom Hill Bushland Reserves System.

The Trail is a bush walk of discovery through Wurundjeri country - a country which is rich in natural resources that sustained the Wurundjeri people for more than 40,000 years.

Wurundjeri lore ensured sustainable care was taken of the country, and while you are welcome to visit, remember, you have a responsibility to take this burra burra yan and go respectfully.

ABOUT THE GAWA TRAIL

The Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail features 11 plaques which are designed to broaden understanding of how the Wurundjeri Willam used the land to provide themselves with food, medicine, tools and shelters – all seen as being created for their use and enjoyment by Dreamtime spirits.

This part of the Yarra Valley was their homeland. The clan of about 50 closely related individuals developed ways of harvesting and using the rich resources of the bush according to season.

In 1840 land at Watsons Creek became part of James Murray's Watsons Creek Station making it difficult for the Wurundjeri people to continue their normal lifestyle. In 1854 gold was discovered in the streams flowing into Watsons Creek and this brought hundreds of diggers in, making life impossible for the Wurundjeri.

This site is now jointly managed by Nillumbik Shire Council and Parks Victoria in consultation with the Wurundjeri who have kindly permitted the Nillumbik Reconciliation Group to construct and maintain this walking trail.



NILLUMBIK RECONCILIATION GROUP



The Nillumbik Reconciliation Group Inc (NRG) is a volunteer-based, not-for-profit, incorporated group, which is committed to furthering the process of reconciliation with Australia's indigenous people – the first Australians.

Based in Nillumbik, in Melbourne's north east, NRG aims to cultivate and promote issues around reconciliation in the region. NRG originated from a committee which was formed by Nillumbik Shire Council in 1997 to organise a reconciliation ceremony.

This Committee recommended a formal document of Acknowledgement, Apology and Commitment to be presented by the Council to Wurundjeri Elders. This presentation took place at a Gayup (inter-clan gathering) in 1998.

In 2008 Nillumbik Shire Council passed a Reconciliation Charter to underpin all Shire initiatives and activities which has resulted in the NRG working collaboratively with Council and a range of community groups to promote reconciliation across the region.



For further information on the Gawa Wurundjeri Resource Trail visit

www.nrg.org.au



GAWA WURUNDJERI RESOURCE TRAIL

Gawa Reserve
873 Eltham Yarra Glen Road
Watsons Creek (Melway 272 D5)

The Wurundjeri people are the traditional custodians of their land which includes the Shire of Nillumbik



WALKING THE TRAIL

The 340 metre trail consists of a main track with a loop. The main track leads to a lookout area over Watsons Creek. The loop track takes you through the diverse and interesting vegetation of the Gawa Reserve. To help preserve this area visitors are reminded to:

- Stay on the walking track at all times
- Do not collect, remove or damage any plants as they are protected
- Keep dogs on a leash at all times
- Take all rubbish home



SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Self-guided tours are available by following the 11 plaques that weave throughout this unique environment. The plaques tell the story of the Wurundjeri clan of about 50 people who lived near Watsons Creek.

Take your time to imagine this place before white settlers arrived.

- Imagine how different the land looked with fire-stick farming methods being used to encourage open grassland between the trees.
- Imagine the Wurundjeri men, women and children camping here on the banks of Watsons Creek.
- Imagine a time when everything you needed to survive was provided by the land. A time when knowledge was shared and taught through Wurundjeri lore by stories and observations.

Maps of the Trail and plaque locations can be found at www.nrg.org.au

NRG conducts school group tours of the Trail which provide an understanding of the Wurundjeri culture, lifestyle and their use of local fauna and flora. Tours can be booked at www.nrg.org.au

FOLLOW THE TRAIL AND TAKE THE TOUR

The 11 plaques have been designed by Wurundjeri artist, Judy Nicholson, a descendent of William Barak.

1. Tanderrum: Welcome Ceremony

The Wurundjeri people of today practice their living culture by conducting a Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country. The Tanderrum was a more detailed ceremony for visitors to Wurundjeri country.

2. Burgan

Spear making was an essential skill for Wurundjeri men. They used tea tree, burgan, which grew strong and dense with straight trunks for spears.

How was it crafted into weapons and other tools?

3. Lomandra (spiny headed mat-rush)

Spiny headed mat-rush grows prolifically here. Its leaves were woven into bags and baskets for cooking and collecting the harvest from the bush.

4. Warendji (wombat)

This area is wombat country. See the picture drawn by an early anthropologist who met the Wurundjeri people in early 1800.

How did Wurundjeri hunters extract the wombat from his long burrow?

5. Bracken Fern

The Wurundjeri used Bracken Fern for bread, a cure for ant bite and a springy mattress. Find out how this versatile plant served so many uses.

6. Coranderrk (Native Mint Bush or Victorian Christmas Bush)

This Bush grows along creeks and blooms with white flowers in December. The mint flavoured leaves were used in cooking.

How were the stalks used for wands for fire making?

7. Gawa (echidna)

The echidna can only be found near Watsons Creek. Only Wurundjeri Elders were allowed to eat the delicious meat. This law was strictly followed.

How did women use the echidna quills?

ABOVE: Short-beaked echidna (*Tachyglossus acuteatus*)



8. Acacia

A very useful tree as acacias provided hard wood for clubs, shields, digging sticks and boomerangs. It was used for the frame of the willam (house). The sap was used to make glue for tool making.

How else was it used?

9. Watsons Creek

Wurundjeri camps were established near water for drinking, washing, cooking and recreation. Water also attracted kangaroos and other mammals, lizards, ducks and other water birds. Fish, eels and mussels were in good supply with water ribbons and reeds growing along the banks.

10. Urrun (Manna gum)

The Wurundjeri name was derived from the Manna gum (Wurrun) and a grub (Djeri) which lives in it. Many small mammals and birds nest in Manna gums. They also provide edible sap.

11. Stringybarks

The heavy hairy bark of this tree had many uses. It was cut into thick slabs for the walls of a Wurundjeri willam (house) or to make a canoe. Fibres were used to make strong string and rope. Bags and nets were woven to trap fish and birds.

