

Rural Ararat Heritage Study

Volume 4

Ararat Rural City Thematic Environmental History



Prepared for Ararat Rural City Council

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History in the Making

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Conversions

Weights and measures

In this work imperial units for common measurements are used until 1970 when the present metric system was introduced.

1 inch = 2.54 centimetres

1 ton = 1.02 tonne

1 foot = 0.30 metre

1 yard = 0.91 metre

1 acre = 0.405 hectare

1 chain = 20.11 metres

1 square mile = 2.59 kilometres

1 mile = 1.61 kilometres

1 horsepower = 0.746 kilowatt

1 ounce = 28.3 grams

1 mile per hour = 1.61 kilometre per hour

1 pound = 454 grams

1 hundredweight = 50.802 kilograms

Monetary Values

Before 1966, Australian currency was expressed in pounds, shillings and pence (£ s. d.). The following form is used: £2 13s. 6d.

1.0 Introduction

The Thematic Environmental History describes how people have interacted with a diverse environment over time to create the unique cultural landscape that is today's Ararat Rural City.¹

1.1 The study area²

Ararat Rural City has an area of approximately 4,230 square kilometers. The municipality is situated some 200 kilometres northwest of Melbourne and is one of the major stopping points between Melbourne and Adelaide. The Melbourne-Adelaide railway and the Western Highway bisect the municipality and converge at Ararat. The main townships in the Rural City include Ararat, Lake Bolac, Willaura, Wickliffe, Streatham, Moyston, Pomonal and Elmhurst (see Figure 1).

The Rural City contains significant natural landscapes and features of environmental value, including wetlands and waterways, archaeological and historic features. There are also significant areas of public land hosting native vegetation and wildlife habitat.

The economy of today's Ararat Rural City is predominantly rural based. Agriculture in the municipality is dominated by the sheep industry with high-grade wool being the major agricultural product. In addition, the industries of grain growing, including wheat, oats, canola and barley; the raising of sheep for mutton and fat lambs and cattle for beef; and viticulture provide significant revenue. Today, agriculture injects some 190 million dollars into the regional economy. This equates to a 19 per cent share of the municipality's annual industry turnover.

The study area for the Rural Ararat Heritage Study is the entire municipality except for the former City of Ararat, which was the subject of a heritage study in 1994.

¹ The Thematic Environmental History sets out the key themes (drawn from Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes) that have influenced the historical development of the study area since first contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The history's objective is to explain how and why the study area looks like it does today. The thematic environmental history is concise and analytical. It is not a comprehensive chronological history, or record of all the individuals, events, schools, sporting clubs, institutions etc. that may have left their mark on the study area. It aims instead to define the key themes that provide an historical explanation of the existing physical fabric and land use patterns of the study area. These themes are applied in the identification and evaluation of individual components of the study area's heritage of today.

² This section is based on information contained in "Rural City of Ararat Planning Scheme Municipal Strategic Statement," <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/planningschemes>.

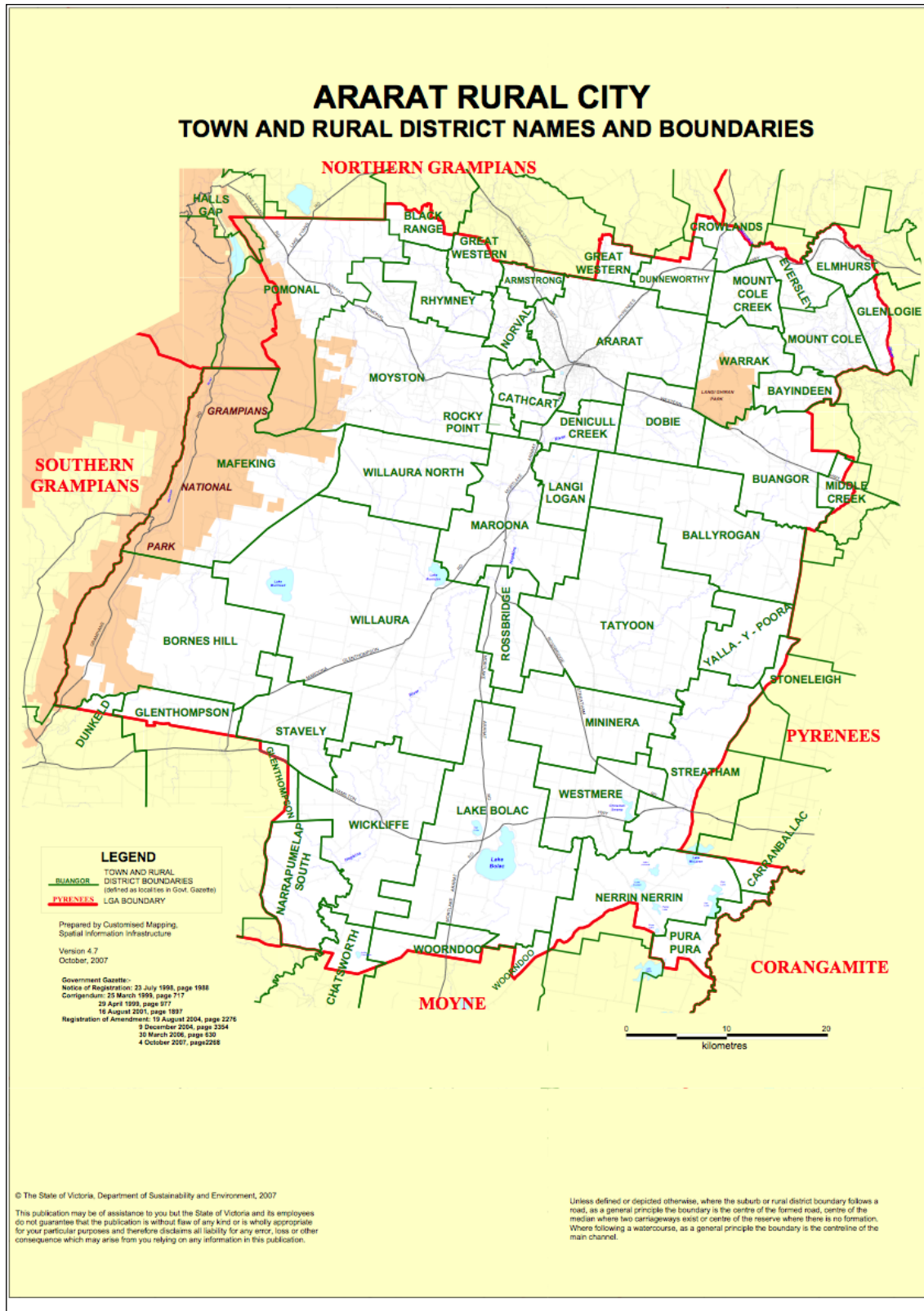


Figure 1: Map of Ararat Rural City.

1.2 The heritage significance of Ararat Rural City's landscape

The original settlers of the municipality are the Tjapwurong, the Wadawurrung and the Girai wurrung peoples.³ Since the arrival of white settlers in 1837, the settlement history of Ararat Rural City has been marked by five overlapping key phases.

Pastoral occupation from 1837

Squatters took over the country of the Tjapwurong, the Wadawurrung and the Girai wurrung peoples from 1837 to claim vast landholdings under pastoral leases. The introduction of the 1860s Land Acts aimed to break up pastoral estates and settle farmers on the land. However in the study area, the Land Acts, for the most part, actually concentrated land into the hands of pastoralists. The pastoral industry continues to make a significant contribution to the economy of the local area. Extensive complexes, including homesteads and associated outbuildings dating from the 1840s, are a significant feature of today's landscape. The pastoral landscape is of historical and technical significance because it provides an understanding of how grazing activities have been undertaken on the volcanic plains of the study area from 1837 through to present day. Buildings associated with this era of settlement are aesthetically and technically significant because of their architectural values and use of local materials and construction techniques.

Road making and railway construction from the 1840s

The study area is notable for roads that travel to the southern seaboard, west to South Australia, southeast to Melbourne via Ballarat, and northeast to central Victoria.⁴ The historical survey and construction of these roads and associated bridges and culverts from the 1840s has had a significant impact on the development of the study area. In addition, the study area features a number of a railway lines that have contributed significantly to the district's growth. The first railway line opened in 1875, connecting Ararat and other rural towns with Melbourne; the line was extended to the west as far as South Australia in 1887. Ararat subsequently became an important junction in the interstate and port-hinterland rail systems with the construction of the Portland line in 1877, the Avoca line in 1890 and the Gheringhap line in 1913. The transport landscape is historically and technically significant for its ability to show how people interacted with the natural land forms and waterways of the study area to construct roads, bridges, culverts and railway lines to facilitate the movement of people, goods, products and natural resources.

Goldmining from the 1850s

Gold seekers arrived in the thousands in the study area from 1857. Exploiting the gold deposits created over millennia, alluvial gold miners moved quickly from field to field. Chinese miners were instrumental in working the alluvial gold and in re-working tailing heaps. Companies developed quartz reef and deep lead gold mining enterprises from the 1870s and continued to make profits through until the 1930s. Today extant goldmining sites, cemeteries and townships mark the goldmining era. The goldmining landscape is historically, socially and technically significant because it evidences the way in which large immigrant populations exploited the resources of the study area to mine gold. The landscape also shows how people stayed to make permanent homes, establish businesses and build settlements.

Forest industries from the 1860s

From the 1860s, the forests of the study area provided the resources for a number of important forest industries, including sawmilling, charcoal burning and wattle bark stripping. The forest landscapes of the Rural City feature natural environments of significance and are also of historical and technical importance because they contain archaeological and historic sites that demonstrate the sites settled and engineering employed by the nineteenth-century sawmilling industry. The sawmilling industry is evidenced today, in particular, by a number of milling and settlement sites in the Mount Cole district.

³ Aboriginal clan boundaries are taken from Ian Clark in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, (Melbourne, Vic.: Land Conservation Council, January 1996), 25. These are generalised descriptions only and bear no relation to current Native Title Claim boundaries.

⁴ Lorna L. Banfield, *Like the Ark... The Story of Ararat* (Melbourne, Vic.: F. W. Cheshire, 1955), 148.

Closer settlement from the 1890s

Closer settlement policies were applied from the 1890s in the study area to break up existing large pastoral estates. An unusual aspect of this process in the study area was the private subdivision of land by estate owners in the 1890s and the subsequent sale and lease of allotments to wheat farmers recruited from elsewhere. Closer settlement initiatives were accompanied by the construction of railway lines and the establishment of towns. Today's landscape evidences patterns of closer settlement subdivision as well as the reverse trend whereby farmers increased the size of their holdings to cultivate wheat on a large scale with the aid of machinery, following techniques and the application of superphosphate. Sugar gum and pine plantings on the boundaries of late 1940s soldier settlement properties are a feature of the landscape. The closer settlement landscape is of historical and social significance because it demonstrates the way in which land was subdivided and how agricultural enterprises utilised the land and water resources of the study area for the growing of crops and grazing from the 1890s. The grain-growing and grazing industries continue to make a significant contribution to the economy of the local area.

2.0 The natural environment

2.1 Geomorphology and geology⁵

The study area is made up of two main geomorphic units: the West Victorian Uplands and the Western Victorian Volcanic Plains.

2.1.1 *West Victorian Uplands*

The West Victorian Uplands (known also as the Western Highlands) of the Great Dividing Range form a wide band from St Arnaud and Buangor on the east to Casterton and Merino on the west. They comprise mainly Palaeozoic sediments with granitic intrusions, including gold bearing quartz reefs that resulted in significant gold rushes to the district. The West Victorian Uplands are divided into Dissected Uplands (Midlands), The Grampians, and the Dundas and Merino Tablelands. The Grampians are registered on the Australian Heritage Database and on the National Trust (Victoria) Register for their natural, historic and Aboriginal cultural heritage values. (See Figure 2 for a depiction of the West Victorian Uplands.)

2.1.2 *Western Victorian Volcanic Plains*

Volcanic eruptions from the Pliocene to the Pleistocene deposited extensive sheets of basalt in western Victoria resulting in an extensive volcanic plain. Low-angle basalt cones, dammed lakes, scoria cones, and stony rises are part of this landscape. These lands were the first to be taken up by squatters because of rich nutrient soils, vegetation suited to grazing, high rainfall and availability of surface water. The plains also cover deep lead alluvial sand and gravel deposits that were mined for gold.

⁵ This information has been taken from *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 14-24, (Powell, 1970 #906. G. W. Cochrane et al., *Introducing Victorian Geology*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne, Vic: Geological Society of Australia (Victorian Division), 1999).



Figure 2: 'Mount Langi from Pleasant Creek', Eugene von Guérard, 1871.
Source: National Gallery of Victoria.

2.2 Vegetation

The forests of the study area have provided a valuable source of durable timber and the grasslands have provided important resources for the farming activities of grazing.

The original vegetation types of the study area that existed before the arrival of white settlers are outlined below.⁶

2.2.1 Vegetation types of the Western Victorian Uplands

Box-ironbark forest complexes	dominant species of red ironbark and grey box and a shrubby understorey of wattles and other species
Plains grassy woodland complexes	extensive native perennial grasslands and variously a low density of river red gum, manna gum, yellow box, grey box and some woody shrubs
Dry foothill forest complexes	variously messmate, red stringybark, brown stringybark, red box, yellow box, yellow gum and long-leaf box over an open shrub layer of golden and hedge wattle and heathy plants and tussock grasses
Moist foothill forest complexes	variously messmate, brown stringybark, blue gum and manna gum over blackwood, silver wattle, prickly moses, shrubs, and forest wire grass
Inland slopes woodland complexes	variously brown stringybark, messmate, scent-bark, red stringybark over heathy understoreys and rocky outcrop scrubs
Dundas tablelands grasslands complex	<i>Poa</i> , wallaby and spear grasses with a very low or complete absence of trees and shrubs

⁶ Most of this information has been taken from *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 14-24.

2.2.2 **Vegetation types of the Western Victoria Volcanic Plains**

Plains grassy woodland complexes	extensive native perennial grasslands with a low density of river red gum or drooping she-oaks over perennial wallaby and spear grasses
Riverine grassy woodland complexes	river red gums and tussock grasses occurring in narrow strips
Grassland complexes	with few or no trees; occurred around Streatham and Cressy

The National Trust of Victoria records that the Western Basalt Plains grasslands are of high significance for both cultural and biological reasons:

The community supports a significant number of threatened plant and animal species and is recognised as being one of the most endangered vegetation communities in Australia. High quality remnants are generally of National or State significance for conservation. As the remnant grassland areas occur mainly in areas set aside from European agricultural or urban development they often coincide with pre and post contact historic sites, such as evidence of Aboriginal daily and ceremonial activity, and relics from the pastoral era, such as cemeteries, rail lines and town commons...They provide a tangible reminder of both the impact of European settlement on the natural environment and of the desirable prospect posed by the grasslands to early settlers.⁷

2.3 **Climate**

In the uplands, mean annual rainfall exceeds 800 mm at Mount Buangor. Mean annual rainfall measures 600-650 mm from Langi Ghiran to Moyston, and 550-650 mm around Wickliffe-Glenhompson. The mean annual rainfall at Mount William is 1,000 mm. On the volcanic plains, mean annual rainfall is mostly between 600 and 750 mm, but is less than 600 mm in the Rossbridge, Wickliffe and Lake Bolac districts.

Dry and wet periods have been part of the climate cycle of the study area for millennia. Recorded major dry periods include 1865, 1876-81, 1888, 1895-1902, 1914-15, 1937-45, 1965-68, 1982, 1991-95 and 2002-10. High rainfall periods led to flooding in some districts of the study area in the following years: 1863, 1870, 1889, 1894, 1916-17, 1939, 1942, 1955-6, 1973-74, 1978, 1992 and 2010.⁸ These dry periods have impacted on the grazing and agricultural industries of the study area and have instigated the establishment and improvement of water supply schemes over time.

2.4 **Waterways**

The river basins of the study area are the Hopkins River, the Wannon River and the Wimmera River basins.

The Grampians contain the headwaters of several substantial streams, including the Wannon River and Fyans Creek (Barriyaloo Creek) in the valley adjacent to the Mount William Range in the west of the municipality.

The Hopkins River is the major waterway within the Hopkins Basin. The Upper Hopkins Basin consists of the upper reaches of the Hopkins River and the upper reaches of Mount Emu Creek. In the study area, the main drainage area in the basin is from the north and northeast and includes the headwaters of the river system and terminal lake systems. It also encompasses Fierey Creek, which runs into Lake Bolac.

⁷ "Western Basalt Plains Grasslands," http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/search/nattrust_result_detail/70293.

⁸ "Climate and Past Weather," Bureau of Meteorology, <http://www.bom.gov.au/>; *ibid*.

The Lower Hopkins Basin includes the lower region of Hopkins River, which flows into the sea at Warrnambool. In this basin in the Ararat Rural City, the main drainage area is from numerous gullies and tributaries to the west, including Back, Reedy, Delanys, Bushy, Chirrip Chirrip, Gray and Muston creeks.

The Wimmera Basin is also part of Ararat Rural City. It includes the tributaries of Mount Cole Creek and Mount William Creek.

Waterways in the study area are managed by the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority.

2.5 Appreciating and protecting Victoria's natural wonders

The need to protect physical resources for community benefit and future use was recognised early in the history of the Port Phillip District (later the Colony of Victoria). In 1839, surveyor Robert Hoddle marked out public purpose reserves in and around Melbourne, for quarrying, brickmaking and lime production. The 1848 Order in Council put aside land for towns and villages, Aboriginal reserves, water reserves, inns, mineral reserves and timber reserves. By 1853, there were nine timber reserves and 185 water reserves in Victoria, and by 1859 there were nearly 3,000 acres of public purposes reserves.⁹ The high number of reservations in the 1850s was made to control the impacts of gold mining and to cater for the needs of the colony's rapidly increasing population. In the study area by 1853, the majority of reserved land comprised water reserves located on waterways.¹⁰

From the 1860s, the public increasingly expressed its concern at the significant degradation wrought to the landscape by gold mining. After a series of Public Inquiries and Royal Commissions, the government proceeded to frame regulations to actively conserve forests, repair damage and encourage growth. Protection of waterways and forests was legislated for in the Land Acts of the 1860s. In 1862, under the *Land Act* of that year, 35,000 acres of land around Victoria's goldfields was reserved for firewood and timber reserves. Forest areas for 'the protection and growth of timber' were reserved under the 1865 *Land Act* and local boards appointed to oversee the management of the new forests. After the extensive felling of trees for use in the boilers and mine props of the goldfields, the 1869 *Land Act* put aside further reserves. By 1870, more than 1,770 sites, totalling approximately 1.3 million acres, had been set aside, mostly as timber and water reserves.¹¹ At an Ararat Borough Council conference in 1871, steps were taken to have timber reserves gazetted; areas selected included the Mount Chalambar range from One Tree Hill to Carroll's Cutting, the Dunneworthy forest; Wattle Gully north to Shay's Flat; from Moyston racecourse to the Sheep Wash bridge; and all available land in Colvinsby, Langi Ghiran and Ballyrogan parishes. These areas were in addition to existing reserves at Lexington, Langi Ghiran and Wickliffe.¹²

In 1877, an export duty was placed on red gum, and cutting licenses limited to 1,000 acres were granted to mill owners only. The first Conservator of Forests, G. S. Perrin, was appointed in 1888. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Victorian government had put in place a system of forest management, including plantations, nurseries, thinning operations, and a royalty system.¹³

After World War One, 'wise-use' conservatism was championed by scientists and technologists in the Victorian public service to ensure that Victoria's water and forest reserves were managed by trained 'experts'. As a result, river basin units were adopted as part of regional planning, a more sophisticated network of forest

⁹ Jane Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria* (Melbourne, Vic.: Department of Conservation and Environment, 1992), 9.

¹⁰ J M Powell, 'Historical Geography' in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 84.

¹¹ *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 10.

¹² Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 113.

¹³ David Bannear, "Study of the Historic Forest Activity Sites in the Box-Ironbark and Midland Areas of Victoria," (Melbourne, Vic.: Department of Environment, Sports and Territories and the Victorian Department of Natural Resources & Environment, February 1997), 6.

reserves was created, and wildlife sanctuaries were established. By 1916 an Acclimatisation Reserve had been put aside in the Grampians.¹⁴

From the first days of white settlement the Grampians were appreciated as a nature-lovers' holiday destination, and in the early 1900s, cottages and guesthouses were opened and bus tours were organised from Melbourne. The Field Naturalist Club of Victoria publicised the beauty and natural significance of the Grampians through talks illustrated with lantern slides in the 1930s. After World War Two, roads in the area were improved dramatically, bringing a growing number of visitors to the Grampians.

The proposed extension of agricultural development into the Little Desert in the late 1960s galvanised protest from people concerned about extending human impacts on the environment. As a result, the *Land Conservation Act* was passed in 1970. The Lands Conservation Council (LCC) was established to 'provide for the balanced use of land in Victoria'. Subsequent LCC recommendations led to the protection of public land through the declaration of national parks, State parks, coastal parks and regional parks. In 1981 the LCC released its draft recommendation for reserving the Grampians as a National Park for its conservation and recreation values, and in 1983 the National Trust recognised the landscape significance of the Grampians. The LCC recommendation was accepted by the Victorian Government and the Grampians National Park was declared in 1984.¹⁵

The Pomonal Grampians chapter of the Australian Plant Society continues today to be active in preserving areas of significant vegetation in the Pomonal district.

3.0 Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes

3.1 Living as Victoria's original inhabitants

Although traditional Aboriginal boundaries were somewhat fluid, the Aboriginal clans who occupied the country of the study area were divided into groups based on the environments they occupied (see Figure 3).¹⁶ Most of the basalt plain and highlands of the study area is the country of the Tjapwurrong people, with some basalt plain country in the east occupied by the Wadawurrung peoples. In the southeast, basalt country is occupied by the coastal Girai wurrung peoples.¹⁷

Except for the Wadawurrung peoples, who adhere to a patrilineal system with clans delineated by the moieties of *waa* the crow or *bunjil* the eagle, the Aboriginal clans of the study area follow matrilineal descent defined by the moieties of *kappatj* the black cockatoo or *krukitj* the white cockatoo.¹⁸

Recent dating of sites in the Grampians, also known as Gariwerd by local Aboriginal peoples, has revealed that the mountain range was occupied by Aboriginal people during the Pleistocene, as early as 22,000 years ago. During the late Pleistocene period the Grampian Ranges were on the fringe of an arid or semi arid zone, with Indigenous occupation of the ranges serving as a focal point to exploit the plains to the north and west. During the early Holocene, climatic conditions became more temperate resulting in changing patterns of land-use.¹⁹

¹⁴ J M Powell, 'Historical Geography' in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 95.

¹⁵ "Grampians National Park (Gariwerd)," Commonwealth of Australia, <http://www.environment.gov.au>.

¹⁶ Where possible, this history adopts the spellings of Aboriginal names used by present-day Traditional Owner groups. Other names are taken from Ian D. Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, Monash Publications in Geography No. 37 (Melbourne, Vic.: Department of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University, 1990).

¹⁷ Aboriginal clan boundaries are taken from Ian Clark in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 25. These are generalised descriptions only and bear no relation to current Native Title Claim boundaries.

¹⁸ Ian Clark in *ibid*.

¹⁹ "Grampians National Park (Gariwerd)".

Lake Bolac, along Salt Creek from its outlet to at Lake Bolac to its junction with the Hopkins River, and at Mount William swamp.²³ The highly organised Aboriginal eel fishing activity in autumn at Lake Bolac was described by an observer in 1881:

Each tribe has allotted to it a portion of the stream, now known as Salt Creek; and the usual stone barrier is built by each family, with the eel basket in the opening...For a month or two the banks of the Salt Creek presented the appearance of a village...The Boloke tribe claims the country round the lake, and both sides of the river...and consequently has the exclusive right to the fish...No other tribe can catch them without permission, which is generally granted.²⁴

When squatters took over the land of the study area in the late 1830s, some Aboriginal groups were living in substantial settlements of huts associated with large and complex fish-trapping systems.²⁵

Aboriginal peoples of the district met for trade and ceremony at a number of sites, including a swamp near Caramut. Here people traded Diorite axe blanks from the Hopkins River, adhesive gum from Geelong, sandstone for grinding stones from the Grampians, obsidian from near Dunkeld for the making of weapons, and mallee saplings from the Wimmera for spears.²⁶

A myriad places tell the story of traditional Aboriginal life in the study area, and include oven mounds, scarred trees, stone arrangements, rock shelters, rock paintings, surface scatters, fish and eel traps, burial places, stone house sites, quarries and axe grinding places. A number of important rock art sites exist within the study area, including paintings at Mount Langi Ghiran and Ben Nevis.

3.2 Exploring, surveying and mapping

Exploration and overlanding in the 1830s had an impact on the municipality in a number of important ways. Surveyor General of New South Wales Thomas Mitchell travelled through the region in 1836 meeting local Aboriginal people, describing the country and naming a number of natural features. His track, and those made by later overlanders, formed some of the first rudimentary roads in the district, although Aboriginal pathways preceded these tracks by thousands of years.

Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke, instructed Mitchell to finish tracing the course of the Darling River to the Murray River, to survey the Murray to its junction with the Murrumbidgee River, and then to follow the southern bank of the Murray back to the settled parts of New South Wales. The chief objective of the expedition was to find agricultural land suitable for a permanent farming population. Mitchell's expedition party included 25 men, and enough equipment and provisions for a five-month journey. The party set off from a property named Boree in central western New South Wales in March 1836. After crossing the Murray River near present-day Boundary Bend, Mitchell ignored his official instructions and explored instead the northern and western areas of the Port Phillip District (later the Colony of Victoria), a region he titled 'Australia Felix'.

Mitchell travelled through the study area in July 1836. He first glimpsed the mountain range he was to later name the Grampians on 10 July 1836, and named Mount William and Mount Zero on 11 July 1836.²⁷ On 13 July, Mitchell with a small expedition party, set off to explore Mount William. On the way, the expedition crossed a wide watercourse named the Wimmera by local Aboriginal people. The party set up camp near present-day Bellelenn on the night of 13 July, and on 14 July, from the summit of the peak Mitchell had named

²³ Ian Clark in *ibid.*

²⁴ James Dawson, *The Australian Aborigines: The Languages and Customs of Several Tribes in the Western District of Victoria, Australia* (Melbourne: Robertson, 1881) cited in Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 114.

²⁵ Ian Clark in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 27.

²⁶ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 18.

²⁷ Information about the route taken by Mitchell in relation to today's landscape is from *The Major Mitchell Trail: Exploring Australia Felix*, (Melbourne, Vic.: Department Conservation and Environment, 1990).

Mount William, Mitchell also named Lake Lonsdale. On 15 July, from his camp on the Wimmera River, Mitchell named the Grampians after a range in Scotland.

On the return to Sydney, Mitchell's expedition made camp on 19 September 1836 to the west of a hill Mitchell named Mount Stavely. Mitchell named the Hopkins River on the same day. The expedition set up camps in the study area on 20 September, south of today's Willaura, at the eastern end of a line of 50 salt lakes which Mitchell called Cockajemmy Lakes; on 21 September near present-day Tatyoon; on 22 September at Ballyrogan west of present-day Middle Creek; and on 23 September at the foot of a granite hill that Mitchell named Mount Cole.

Although others had preceded Mitchell (Mitchell himself noted the fresh tracks of bullocks at Mount Cole),²⁸ it was the physical mark left by his journey, the 'Major's Line', that became the most well known track in the district (see Section 4.1.1).

After Mitchell's expedition of 1836, in 1837 James Monckton Darlot overlanded cattle from the River Murray to Portland,²⁹ and, from 1838, Joseph Hawdon led several expeditions to chart an overland route from New South Wales via the River Murray to sell stock to the Adelaide market, the Colony of South Australia then experiencing a food shortage. In 1839, Hawdon travelled a different route from Melbourne to Adelaide via Mount Gambier.

Mitchell's exploratory expedition through the study area is marked by the names he gave to the country and by cairns at Willaura and Buangor. A stone pedestal with a direction finder on the summit of Mount William commemorates the climbing and naming of the mountain by Mitchell in July 1836. An obelisk at Moyston commemorates the exploration of Mitchell in 1836, the first settlement of the area in 1840-1 by Horatio Spencer Wills, the first gold discoveries in October 1857, and the Moyston pioneers.

3.3 Adapting to diverse environments

Fire, used by Aboriginal people as a land management tool, has been a part of Australian life for centuries.

Since white settlement, several major bushfires have occurred in the study area. In 1851, widespread fires occurred across the Port Phillip District in February of that year. Colin Campbell, licensee of the Buangor run, wrote of Black Thursday, which occurred on 6 February 1851:

the plain and forest were swept by a hurricane of fire which left the country a blackened mass. The great forests of the Otway and Gippsland ranges were a solid body of fire...The animals had a bad time of it afterwards...But our grass has wonderful recuperative powers and when the rain falls on the heated surface it springs like magic.³⁰

Other major fires occurred between De Cameron and Lexington in March 1865, and in the Cathcart, Rhydney and Moyston districts in February 1891.³¹

After the *Fire Brigade Act* was passed in 1890, the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board (MFBB) and the Country Fire Brigades Board (CFBB) were formed. Urban and rural fire brigades were established in the study area from the first decades of the twentieth century. After fires on 1 January 1912 and in 1916 burnt down buildings in Willaura, local residents formed a fire brigade to protect the township from future fires.

²⁸ Mitchell's entry for 23 September 1836, in Major T. L. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia, with Descriptions of the Recently Explored Region of Australia Felix, and of the Present Colony of New South Wales, 2nd Edition, Carefully Revised. Volume Two* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1839; repr., Adelaide: Library Board of Australia, 1965).

²⁹ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 30.

³⁰ 'Colin Campbell' in W. G. Pickford, "Buangor Park Records, Ca. 1889-Ca. 1978," in *Manuscripts MS 12611 Box 344311* (State Library of Victoria), 3.

³¹ Lorna L. Banfield and John McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994* (Ararat, Vic.: Shire of Ararat, 1995), 30.

On 13 January 1939, fires throughout Victoria claimed 71 lives (including three in the Grampians), destroyed 69 sawmills and burnt millions of hectares of land, including farms in the Pomonal district. The day became known as Black Friday. Dug outs were constructed in the forests of the study area after the fires. A Royal Commission into the 1939 Black Friday fires recommended the constitution of a single fire fighting authority for country Victoria, bringing together the Bush Fire Brigades, Country Fire Brigades and the Forest Commission. The Country Fire Authority subsequently commenced operations in April 1945.

On January 14 1944, a fire that originated at the Lake Bolac Flax Mill burnt towards Mortlake and Lismore, and on the same day, a fire from the Grampians travelled towards Glenthompson and Lake Bolac. Three homesteads and 8,000 sheep were lost in the Willaura police district in the blaze.³²

Prior to 1959, the Forests Commission spotted fires from a 'crows nest' built in a high tree on Ben Nevis. A fire tower was built nearby in 1959.³³

In February 1977, bushfires burnt through western Victoria towards the southern coast, burning the districts of Tatyoon and Streatham. Around Streatham, five people were killed, and 81 homes, the post office and shops were razed. Simpson Park was established at Streatham to commemorate the fire of 1977 (see Figure 4). Fireworld, a CFA museum, was established at Streatham after the 1977 fire to commemorate over 100 years of fire brigade service to the community.



Figure 4: Simpson Park, Streatham, established to commemorate the 1977 fire, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.

³² Ibid.

³³ Margaret Beattie and Bronwyn Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People* (Warrak, Vic.: M. Beattie & B. Shalders, 1990), 131.

Fires occurred in the Grampians in 1999 and again in 2006, when 26 homes, 129,000 hectares of land, thousands of stock and fences were burnt. Begun by a lightning strike on 19 January 2006, on 22 January the fire spread rapidly in a southerly direction towards Dunkeld, reaching the outskirts of Willaura before a strong wind took the fire back in a northward direction, affecting a number of small communities along the eastern side of the Grampians, including Mafeking, Moyston, Barton, Jallukar and Pomonal. A man and his son died between Moyston and Pomonal when they were caught in the fire. A memorial has been erected near the place they died. In Willaura, the cenotaph was refurbished in memory of the 2006 fire.

3.4 Migrating and making a home

The first immigrants to the study area were squatters. Mostly young men from England and Scotland, they arrived with the financial means to take up land and establish runs on vast acreages to graze stock. Skilled labour was in short supply in the 1830s and 1840s, and again in the 1850s as station workers left for the goldfields. As a consequence, some squatters employed Aboriginal labour and established immigration programs, sponsoring assisted migrants from England and Scotland to work on their stations. In the period 1846-48, the Geelong and Western District Immigration Society sponsored 2,000-3,000 ex-convicts and free settlers from Van Diemen's Land.³⁴ New arrivals came via ports at Geelong, Portland and Port Fairy.

As part of gold rushes in the study area, Chinese people arrived from 1852, in part driven out by conflict in Southern China. Ararat was one of six Victorian gold mining centres that attracted thousands of Chinese gold seekers, mostly from Guangdong Province. Chinese people were the target of discriminatory legislation. In 1855, a Royal Commission was established in Victoria to examine 'the Chinese question'. As a result, the *Passengers Act* imposed a £10 entrance tax on Chinese landing in Victoria. From 1855, to avoid this tax, most Chinese migrants landed near Guichen Bay in South Australia and walked to *Dai Gum Sam*, or New Gold Mountain, as the goldfields of the Colony of Victoria were known (see Section 3.4). After Chinese people discovered gold in May 1857 at a place later called Canton Lead, by 6 June there were 6,000 miners on the goldfield. On 8 June 1857, a further 2,000 Chinese arrived from Robe in South Australia, triggering an attack by Europeans on Chinese miners.³⁵ There was further conflict at Black Lead in January 1858 and a move was made to expel the Chinese from the leads in February 1858. In 1858, Mr Usher, surveyor at Ararat, noted that only 16 Chinese were working the gold at Black Lead.³⁶

After the new Chinese Act introduced in 1859 abolished the landing tax, by 1862 it was estimated that the number of Chinese at Ararat had trebled. By December 1863, 600 Chinese were living in the Ararat Mining Division.³⁷ However with the introduction of an even more oppressive landing tax of £40, the Chinese population of Victoria declined. From 1861 to 1881, Victoria's Chinese population decreased from 24,724 to 11,869.³⁸ In February 1868, 80 Chinese left the Ararat fields for New Zealand.³⁹ The *Shop and Factories Act* of 1896 made it difficult for Chinese manufacturers to compete with Europeans, and the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901, known as the White Australia Policy, effectively stopped Chinese immigration. The extensive Chinese camp at Ararat, established on land held by Chinese settlers who had taken out miners' rights, was burnt to the ground in January 1899.⁴⁰

³⁴ Jenny Fawcett, "Aus-Tasmania-L Archives," Ancestry.com, <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/AUS-Tasmania/2002-12/1039990981>.

³⁵ Fiona Ritchie, *Guichen Bay to Canton Lead: The Chinese Trek to Gold* (Robe, S. Aust.: District Council of Robe, 2004), 38.

³⁶ Usher and Lorna L. Banfield, "Notebook of Mr Usher, 1850-1860," in *Manuscripts MS8578 Box 941/2* (State Library of Victoria).

³⁷ Extracts from the Ararat Advertiser in Lorna L. Banfield, "Moyston Mechanics Institute Papers, 1859-1932," in *Manuscripts MS 8529 Box 993/4* (State Library of Victoria).

³⁸ Valerie Lovejoy, "Depending Upon Diligence: Chinese at Work in Bendigo 1861-1881," *Journal of Historical and European Studies* 1 (December 2007): 23.

³⁹ Extracts from the Ararat Advertiser in Banfield, "Moyston Mechanics Institute Papers, 1859-1932."

⁴⁰ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 86.

Chinese migrants established market gardens and businesses and took up work on pastoral runs and farms in the study area. When mining became more seasonal in the 1860s, being prepared to work for wages well below that of European miners, the Chinese were sought after by farmers for harvest work. Chinese shearers were also in demand, as an advertisement in the *Ararat Advertiser* on 4 October 1864 evidences, and the Chinese were also employed as shepherds and cooks on stations, including Lexington.⁴¹ The Chinese also contributed to community life, participating in the Ararat Easter charity festivals and donating proceeds from performances at the Chinese theatre to the hospital building fund.⁴²

Other cultural groups also took up work in the study area. Up until the 1940s, Indian hawkers plied their wares to businesses and private homes across the study area. A man named Mahamidali, for instance, serviced the Warrak and Mount Cole districts.⁴³

3.5 Promoting settlement

The British colonisation of Australia was shaped by a complexity of motives. They were, at various times:

to domesticate the wilderness; to prevent the retrogression of the settlers into barbarianism; to recreate pre-industrial Britain; to destroy the image of industrial Britain that was being created in Australia; to relieve Britain of its destitute, poor and surplus populations; to destroy squatter monopoly; to achieve an egalitarian, even utopian, society; to counterbalance the growth of the urban centres; to consolidate Australia's hold on the continent against real and imaginary threats.⁴⁴

These same motivations shaped the various waves of white occupation of the study area.

3.5.1 Squatting

Squatters in the study area took up large tracts of Crown land (public land) to graze mainly sheep from 1837.⁴⁵ In the same year, in an effort to control illegal pastoral expansion, Governor Richard Bourke introduced the *Crown Lands Occupation Act*, which disallowed depasturing of lands beyond the 'limits of location' (defined by the Nineteen Counties centered around Sydney) unless they were taken up under an annual lease or licence costing £10. In addition, the Act imposed penalties for the illegal occupation of land. Squatter licenses, however, were not granted until July 1838 when the first full-time Commissioner of Crown Lands was appointed.

An Order in Council passed in 1847 divided land into settled, intermediate and unsettled areas, with pastoral leases of one, eight and fourteen years respectively. The Order also promised pre-emptive rights (the right to purchase up to 640 acres of the run at £1 per acre) to those in occupation. However, because of the discovery of gold, instead of the promised fourteen-year leases, in the Colony of Victoria yearly tenure only was approved by an Order in Council. Leases were extended to nine years under the 1862 *Land Act*. The study area took in two squatting districts: the Portland Bay District and the Wimmera District.

With sheep fetching high prices, profits from the pastoral industry soared and a major expansion into the Port Phillip District took place in the late 1830s. The good rainfall, rich soils and extensive grasslands of the western volcanic plain of the Port Phillip District resulted in the country being claimed for squatting runs from 1837. The first squatters in the study area came from Van Diemen's land via Geelong and Portland Bay,

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴³ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 127.

⁴⁴ M. Williams, "More is Smaller and Better: Australian Rural Settlement 1788-1914" in J. M. and Michael Williams Powell, *Australian Space, Australian Time: Geographical Perspectives*. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1975), 98; J M Powell and Michael Williams, eds., *Australian Space, Australian Time: Geographical Perspectives*. (Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁴⁵ The term 'squatter' first applied to those pastoralists who took illegal possession of land before depasturing licences were introduced in 1836. Its meaning was broadened in later years to refer more generally to those who undertook sheep and cattle grazing under license on large tracts of land.

occupied by the Henty family in 1834. Soon after overlanders from north of the Murray River arrived. This second wave of squatters were attracted by favorable newspaper reports of Mitchell's 'Australia Felix', even before the explorer arrived back in Sydney in October 1836, and again after he published his journal of his expedition in London in 1838 and 1839.

It has been estimated that two-thirds of the pioneer settlers in the Western Victoria were from Scotland; nearly all were Lowland farmers.⁴⁶ From 1839, squatters drove their flocks and herds along the route established by overlander Joseph Hawdon, and by 1843, the best available natural grasses on the volcanic plains of the study area had been taken up.⁴⁷ Details of pastoral runs in the study area (before they were subdivided) are summarised in Table 1.⁴⁸

Name of run	Name of licensee	Date occupied	Size in acres
Allanvale	William Wooton Blow (for John Sinclair)	1841	80,000
Barton	R H Bunbury	1841	38,000
Bolac Plains	Henry Gebb	1842	14,000
Burrumbeep	William Kirk	1841	110,000
Bushy Creek	John Kidd	1840	37,425
Caranballac	Alexander Johnstone and James and Thomas Walton Campbell	1841	70,453
Challicum	George and Harry Thomson	1840	78,252
Glen Imlay (later De Cameron)	Charles Lynott (for Dr Imlay)	1840	102,400
Glenlogie	Alexander Irvine (for Dr Imlay)	1840	96,000
Greenvale	Robert Adams	1843	56,880
Hopkins Hill	J and A Dennistoun and Co.	1846	98,000
Lake Boloke (Bolac)	Robert Patterson	1842	38,400
Lexington, La Rose and Mokepille	C B Hall	1840	120,000
Mount Burkitt or Burchett	John Grady	1851	13,000
Mount Cole	Alexander and Colin Campbell	1840	48,000
Mount William	Thomas Chirnside	1842	38,000
Mount William Plains	John Ross	1844	20,000
Narrapumelap	John Dixon Wyselaskie	1840	40,120
Nerrin Nerrin	John McPherson	1846	52,027
Pollockdale	Captain Pollock	1845	16,000
Sinclair	Duncan McRae	1847	16,240
Tea Tree Creek	Andrew and William Ewing	1846	6,400
View Lake	M Byrne	1846	20,290
Warrapinjoe	D E Cooper	1846	14,052
Woodlands	W J T Clarke	1841	184,000
Yalla-y-Poora	J W Stevens and A T Thompson	1841	66,493
Yarram Yarram	Robert Muirhead and Edward Parker	1844	32,000

Table 1: Summary of first runs in the municipality before subdivision.

⁴⁶ Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890* (Melbourne, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1962), 14, 36-9.

⁴⁷ J M Powell, 'Historical Geography' in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 79.

⁴⁸ The exact years of the first take up of the runs in the Port Phillip District is difficult to ascertain. Run details in the table provided are drawn from Robert Spreadborough and Hugh Anderson, eds., *Victorian Squatters* (Ascot Vale, Vic.: Red Rooster Press, 1983); Banfield, *Like the Ark... The Story of Ararat*.

Colin Campbell was one of the first squatters to arrive in the study area as part of a group of men from Glasgow who travelled via Van Diemen's Land to take up country between Mount Buninyong and Mount Cole in 1839.⁴⁹ Glaswegian brothers Colin and Alexander Campbell, the latter 'bitten with the Mitchell fever', sailed to Australia arriving with considerable capital in Hobart in March 1839. They purchased sheep and sailed with them in a schooner from Georgetown to Williamstown, arriving in May 1839. In spring of that year, they looked for a run in the Loddon, Campaspe and Western districts. The brothers finally settled at Mount Cole. Colin Campbell described the squatters of the local district at that time:

The calibre of the men in the pastoral districts was mixed but educated men were in the majority. Some had had a little farming experience at home...But most of us were single men aged from twenty to thirty years who had to purchase our knowledge and experience by a series of mistakes...Gradually women's society came to us. First in 1846 an equestrienne party was accompanied by five ladies and in 1847 another party who came by carriage visited us...The scene began to change and wives and families settled down in very simple homes until better ones could be built.⁵⁰

Claims of grazing land slowed in 1842 due to local drought (Lake Bolac dried up in 1842)⁵¹ and an economic depression in the Colony of New South Wales associated with a fall in the wool price in England. By 1843, sheep were worth only 1s. per head and cattle 7s. 6d.⁵² In late 1843, the process of boiling down sheep carcasses to produce tallow for export was introduced and made sheep farming a profitable business once again. The Learmonth brothers took the lead in the boiling down enterprise.⁵³ Boiling down works were established on the Burrumbweep run and in later years at Eversley, where, from 1870, John Little made soap which he sold in the district.⁵⁴

The squatters established runs on river and creek frontages. When they took up land they delineated the boundaries of their stations through reference to natural features such as rivers, creeks and hills. Other boundaries were defined by plough lines and marks made on trees. The stations were mainly stocked with sheep. The fine wools of the western district were improved by merino stock from England and Macarthur's flocks from New South Wales.⁵⁵ When the sheep were shorn, the wool from the study area was transported by bullock dray to ports at Geelong, Portland and Melbourne.

In the 1840s, workers for the runs: overseers, shepherds, hut keepers and shearers, were found amongst the Aboriginal population or from those who had arrived from overseas. Colin Campbell of Mount Cole wrote: 'I often went on board our immigrant ships for the purposes of selecting men or women whose services would be valuable...[shepherds and overseers] were the very backbone of industrial progress.'⁵⁶

The necessary infrastructure required for grazing stock was basic and often speculative in the initial phases of squatting in the study area. Capital was required for the purchase and transport of stock and station supplies, and the hiring of workers. Squatters financed their business ventures through private or family means, and by forming partnerships and companies. Makeshift huts built of local materials of bark, timber slabs, rammed earth, wattle and daub, and stone provided accommodation for the squatters and their workers, with many squatters in the early years choosing to make their permanent homes in Melbourne or Geelong. Colin Campbell of Mount Cole described his accommodation in the 1840s as a one-roomed hut bedded down with straw and tarpaulins.⁵⁷ Fences were a rarity and shepherds controlled stock from outstation huts using moveable hurdles. Sheep washes, constructed up until the 1880s in natural watercourses to clean the fleece

⁴⁹ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 5.

⁵⁰ Colin Campbell, 'Squatting days' in Pickford, "Buangor Park Records, Ca. 1889-Ca. 1978."

⁵¹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 55.

⁵² Stephen Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement* (South Melbourne, Vic.: Macmillan, 1968). cited in Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 50.

⁵³ Colin Campbell, 'Squatting days' in Pickford, "Buangor Park Records, Ca. 1889-Ca. 1978."

⁵⁴ *Echoes of Elmhurst*, (Elmhurst, Vic.? The Centenary and Back-to-Elmhurst Committee, 1968), 9.

⁵⁵ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 36.

⁵⁶ Colin Campbell, 'Squatting days' in "Buangor Park Records, Ca. 1889-Ca. 1978."

⁵⁷ Colin Campbell, 'Squatting days' in *ibid.*

whilst still on the sheep's back, were built at Mount William, Edgarley and Glenronald.⁵⁸ Other infrastructure included rudimentary shearing sheds, blacksmiths, dairies, barns and yards.

Insights into the lives of the squatters are provided by their journals. On his Lexington run in 1846, H S Wills shored 20,400 sheep; by 1851 the number had increased to almost 30,000. The sheep were washed in Mokepilly Creek or Salt Creek and tobacco for the dip was grown on the run. The wool was transported to Geelong port by bullock dray.⁵⁹ Colin Campbell's reminiscences, titled 'Squatting Days', described his days at Mount Cole in the 1840s, including the shooting of kangaroos that 'numbered thousands and were gathered together in drives and slaughtered in pits.'⁶⁰

The 1847 Order in Council provided further impetus to sheep farming by promising fourteen-year leases and established pre-emptive rights that permitted the purchase of 640 acres (one square mile). Large homesteads with numerous rooms, substantial outbuildings and expansive gardens were subsequently built on freehold land accumulated by squatters. The Lexington homestead at Moyston, for instance, was constructed in 1851 by H S Wills from bricks made on the property. It incorporated storehouses, offices and a cellar seven feet deep.⁶¹ A plan for W G Pickford drawn up by architects E Stephenson and Son evidenced the grandeur of the Buangor homestead. The residence comprised six bedrooms, a drawing room, dining room, office, bathroom, kitchen and pantry.⁶² The Chirside brothers built a twenty-stand bluestone shearing shed on their Mount William run in 1862.⁶³ The Lake Boloke station homestead was built by stonemason Robert Pitkethely and Challicum House was constructed for George Thomson on the Challicum run.⁶⁴ John Wilson purchased Woodlands station in 1863 and built a substantial home from stone quarried on the property and established extensive gardens.⁶⁵ Architects Arthur Johnson and Alfred Smith from Melbourne designed the Edgarley homestead in 1877.⁶⁶ The Edgarley homestead was built as a long, low house with a verandah and its outbuildings were constructed of bluestone; an unusual vaulted roof covered the woolshed.⁶⁷ J D Wyelaskie, the owner of Narrapumelap, brought 40-50 stonemasons and workmen to Wickliffe in 1878 to build an imposing bluestone homestead with a high walled courtyard and central tower.⁶⁸

The pastoral industry required wool storage facilities, most of which were built in Ararat. A bluestone building incorporating 24-stall stables was constructed for the Bull and Mouth Hotel in Ararat in 1866 and used by Cobb and Co. It was later converted to Hargreaves' wool store. A wool store of brick on bluestone foundations was also built in Queen Street, Ararat, in 1874.⁶⁹

Increased numbers of cattle were introduced to runs to cater for the gold rushes that occurred in the central districts of the Colony of Victoria in the 1850s. The advent of gold rushes also triggered an exodus of station workers to the goldfields and Aboriginal people provided a crucial labour force at this time. This period also marked a change in the way stations were managed. Because of formal surveying of run boundaries required under the 1847 Order in Council and ongoing labour shortages, livestock were enclosed in fenced paddocks instead of grazed over large areas under the watch of shepherds. Fences were constructed of local materials such as stone, log and brush. In the 1860s, gorse, cypress and hawthorn hedges were planted on paddock

⁵⁸ William Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985* (Willaura, Vic.: Willaura School Centenary Committee, 1985), 79.

⁵⁹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 31-2.

⁶⁰ Colin Campbell, 'Squatting days' in Pickford, "Buangor Park Records, Ca. 1889-Ca. 1978."

⁶¹ Extracts from the Ararat Advertiser in Banfield, "Moyston Mechanics Institute Papers, 1859-1932." *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 32.

⁶² Pickford, "Buangor Park Records, Ca. 1889-Ca. 1978."

⁶³ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 60.

⁶⁴ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 56-7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁶ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 67.

⁶⁷ Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890*, 316.

⁶⁸ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 52.

⁶⁹ Extracts from the Ararat Advertiser in "Moyston Mechanics Institute Papers, 1859-1932."

boundaries and post and rail fences were erected. Dry walls were constructed from stone from the volcanic plain using Scottish labour.⁷⁰ Wire was in use as a fencing material by the 1870s.

Because of the depopulation of districts, labour shortages and depreciation in the value of stations in the gold rush period, some licensees sold up their interests. H S Wills, for instance, sold the Lexington homestead and run, including 29,000 sheep and 3,000 cattle, in October 1852.⁷¹

The Victorian Land Acts of the 1860s were aimed at encouraging the settlement of the colony's burgeoning population, however many squatters were able to retain their hold over the most productive land through methods of dummying and peacocking. 'Dummies' were nominal selectors acting on behalf of the squatter to apply for land. After paying off their leases, the dummies transferred title to the squatter. 'Peacocking', or 'picking out the eyes' of the land, involved the squatter using local knowledge to select the best land to render the country less useful for farming.

By 1870, when remaining leases were cancelled under the legislation of the 1869 *Land Act*, squatters had established large privately owned estates on the basalt plain and in the uplands of the study area, including Allanvale, Yalla-y-Poora, Gorrinn and Barton.⁷² By 1880 in the Western District and southern Wimmera, ten families: the Chirnsides, Roberstons, Russells, Clarkes, Wilsons, Armytages, Moffats, Austins, Manifolds and Wares, owned almost two million acres between them.⁷³ The formation of these estates established the important fine merino wool-growing industry that continues in the study area today. Some of the properties, such as Edgarley, remain in the hands of descendants of the early pastoralists.

The study area was the focus of activity by the Shearers Union, which formed in 1886. In the late 1880s, following a fall in wool prices, local property owners attempted to reduce the rate of pay for shearers. A clash between union and non-union shearers occurred at Wickliffe in 1887, and soon after the union demanded a fixed rate of 20s. per 100 sheep. In response, the Ararat and Wimmera Sheep Owners Association formed in 1888 to keep the rate down. During the widespread shearing strike of 1894, 'free labourers' manned the sheds at Greenvale, Narrapumelap and Lake Bolac, but work under union rules commenced at Nerrin Nerrin, Edgarley and Lake Menenia.⁷⁴

The two Barton pre-emptive rights of 320 acres, which had been claimed by Thomas Chirnside, were part of 16,000 acres purchased by Thomas Maidment in 1921. The Maidment family established Maidment Pty Ltd and came to own most of the land of the Parish of Moyston West. The company used the land to cultivate crops and to graze sheep and cattle, but most of the income came from the production of wool. An existing ledger lists the wool produced by the Maidment company as follows: 1904, 198 bales sold for £3,499; 1905, 192 bales sold for £3,477; 1906, 307 bales sold for £5,075; 1907, 265 bales sold for £3,947; 1908, 214 bales sold for £2,732; 1909, 231 bales sold for £3,351; 1910, 198 bales sold for £3,070; and 1911, 208 bales sold for £3,843.⁷⁵

Significant historical evidence remains of the pastoral industry in the study area, including homesteads and outbuildings at Challicum, Burrumbeep, Berrambool, Blythvale, Narrapumelap, Edgarley, Mount Cole, Yalla-Y-Poora, Lexington (see Figure 5), Yarram Park, De Cameron, Gorrinn and Mount William.

⁷⁰ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 37.

⁷¹ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 32.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷³ Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1971), 47.

⁷⁴ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 124.

⁷⁵ "Maidment Family Papers, 1856-1967," in *Manuscripts MS 11075 Boxes 1607/7-10* (State Library of Victoria, 1856).



Figure 5: Lexington homestead, 1972, by J T Collins. Source: State Library of Victoria.

3.5.2 **Land Sales**

Auctions of Crown land were introduced in the Colony of Victoria from 1851 to encourage settlers to occupy and work the land. Many squatters purchased land at auction at the upset (minimum) price of £1 per acre. In some areas where demand was high, such as the goldfields, the price realised at auction was much more. Land was put up for sale in the study area on the Burrumbeep run in May 1855, on the Lexington run in 1857, and on the Gorrinn run in 1858.⁷⁶

3.5.3 **Settlement under the Land Acts**

With diminishing returns of alluvial gold on the fields of the Colony of Victoria, diggers demanded that land be freed from the hold of the squatters. In Ararat in May 1858, between 4,000 and 5,000 miners and would-be farmers demanded the right to free selection of land at a torchlight meeting of the Ararat Land and Reform League.⁷⁷ In 1860, 'every man a vote, a rifle, and farm' was the cry of a demonstration outside parliament house in Melbourne. The subsequent Land Acts of the 1860s promoted the settlement of a new rural society of an 'industrious yeomanry'. Through a combination of leasing and purchasing arrangements, 'selectors' took up land for farming.

The *Land Act* (Nicholson Act) introduced in September 1860 provided three million acres of country land for sale and lease. This acreage included 'special' lands near towns, and 80-640 acre holdings in the 'country' lands. Under this Act, 800,000 acres of land were sold, but only half to selectors. Four-fifths of the acreage was sold on the western plains, mostly to squatters.⁷⁸ Under the 1860 *Land Act*, allotments were taken up in the study area in the districts of Elmhurst, Moyston, Three Mile Creek⁷⁹ and Streatham.⁸⁰ Selectors took up 34 to 54 hectares on average around the goldfields; on the volcanic plains, land taken up measured between

⁷⁶ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 103.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷⁸ Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement*, 250.

⁷⁹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 104.

⁸⁰ J. M. Powell, *The Public Lands of Australia Felix: Settlement and Land Appraisal in Victoria 1834-91 with Special Reference to the Western Plains* (Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press, 1970), 79.

30 and 110 hectares on average.⁸¹ However, most land was ‘dummied’ by local squatters who ended up owning large tracts on their own runs, including land along waterways.

The Duffy *Land Act*, passed in June 1862, put aside ten million acres of land in designated ‘agricultural areas’, which were surveyed into 40-640 acre allotments. The Act required one acre in ten to be cultivated, or the erection of a habitable building, or the enclosure of the selection with a substantial fence. The Act introduced goldfields commons, on which small landholders could graze stock. Under Sections 33 and 34, residence and cultivation licences were also issued to people occupying land on the goldfields. ‘Novel industries’, to promote the establishment of vineyards, olive groves, mulberries and hop plantations, were established on land up to 30 acres leased for up to 30 years.⁸² Over 1,888,000 acres were alienated under the 1862 Act,⁸³ but again mostly into the hands of the squatters. Approximately 250,000 acres between Ararat, Streatham and Wickliffe, and 107,500 acres between Fiery Creek and the Hopkins River, were made available in 1862. Allotments were taken up in the districts of Lake Bolac, Wickliffe, Maroona, Moyston, Cathcart, Warrak, Armstrongs, Ararat, Rhymney, Three Mile Creek and Willaura. In addition, commons were reserved on Langi Ghiran, Gorrinn and Lexington runs, a process that often drew the ire of the stations’ lessees.⁸⁴ Because the majority of selectors were dummies, the 1862 Act practically completed the alienation of the public land of the western plains by squatters.⁸⁵ In 1862, the *Ararat Advertiser* reported that one squatter waited with seventeen of his employees for the Ararat Land Office to open, with ‘Each frugal servant ready with £320 to take up his block of 320 acres’.⁸⁶

In an effort to overcome the abuses by wealthy pastoralists under the 1860 and 1862 Land Acts, the 1865 Grant *Land Act* aimed to provide families of little means an opportunity of owning land through leasing. Holdings of 40-640 acres in specified ‘agricultural areas’ could be selected, with the selector required to reside on the land for three years and to spend £1 per acre on improvements over a seven-year lease. Some three million acres were selected under this Act,⁸⁷ but the legislation failed to eradicate the practice of dummied. By this time too, ‘professional’ selectors were buying land to force pastoralists to buy them out at a profit. Section 42 of the 1865 Act allowed people to reside on and cultivate Crown land of up to 20 acres in and around the goldfields under annual licenses. Under this section, Chinese residents established extensive market gardens in the study area. One quarter of a million acres were made available through the Ararat Land Office under the 1865 Act, with over 550 intending selectors crowding the office on 5 June 1865, its first day of dealing with the Act.⁸⁸ The Act only succeeded in a further aggregation of land by squatters on the western plains; by 1871 the average size of a rural holding in the Western District was 235 hectares.⁸⁹ Messrs Chirnside and Logan, for example, retained a large portion of their Burrumbeep run. However, small allotments were taken up by genuine selectors in the Moyston, Elmhurst, Eversley and Cathcart districts, and larger holdings in the Yalla-y-Poora, Watgania, Chapman, Westgarth (Langi Logan), Mount Ararat, Tatyoon, Kiora, Buangor, Middle Creek and Rhymney districts. In Tatyoon by the mid-1860s, between 50 and 60 families were settled in the area cultivating crops of wheat and oats.⁹⁰ By the late 1860s, Tatyoon,

⁸¹ J M Powell, ‘Historical Geography’ in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 86.

⁸² Phillipa Nelson, and Lesley Alves, *Lands Guide: A Guide to Finding Records of Crown Land at Public Record Office Victoria* (Melbourne, Vic.: Public Record Office of Victoria, 2009), 329.

⁸³ Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement*, 257.

⁸⁴ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 105-7.

⁸⁵ Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement*, 252.

⁸⁶ Cited in Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 107.

⁸⁷ Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement*, 253.

⁸⁸ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 108.

⁸⁹ J M Powell, ‘Historical Geography’ in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 86.

⁹⁰ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 109-12, 15.

Rossbridge, Maroona, Elmhurst and Eversley were established as the centres for surrounding farming populations.⁹¹

A number of resolutions proposed by a group of selectors from Glenthompson, Beaufort and Learmonth, known as the Ararat Land Selectors' Association, were adopted in the 1869 Amendment to the 1865 *Land Act*.⁹² Under this Act, all un-alienated land in the colony was opened for selection of up to 320 acres, and by the end of 1878, nearly eleven million acres had been selected.⁹³ An important change, and one that the Ararat selectors had lobbied for, was the acceptance of rent as part payment of the purchase money. Because most land in the study area was already alienated, this Act had little effect in new land being taken up the district, however some selectors transferred earlier leases to the new Act.

By 1870, 17,000 acres were under cultivation in the Ararat Shire, and by 1880, 7,500 people resided in the shire.⁹⁴ However, due to the falling price of wheat, the invasion of weeds such as thistles and sorrel, and declining crop yields because of overworking the soil, from 1870 selectors left the district to take up land elsewhere, with up to 15-30 per cent of selectors migrating from the study area in the period 1871-91.⁹⁵ Vacated land was sold to other selectors or to squatters who added it to their already extensive pastoral holdings.

After a series of drought years from 1876, the *Land Act* of 1878 doubled the time allowed for the payment of rents due on land selected under previous Acts. Under the 1884 *Land Act*, which allowed only leasing of land for grazing or agricultural purposes, land was taken up in the Grampians in the districts of Watgania, Halls Gap and Jallukar. Elsewhere, land was made available at Heifer Swamp after it was drained in 1899, and on the Chapman and Lexington Commons.⁹⁶

A few farmhouses from the era of selection remain in the Moyston and Rocky Point districts (see Figure 6).⁹⁷



Figure 6: Rocky Point selector's home, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.

⁹¹ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 30.

⁹² Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 112.

⁹³ Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement*, 253.

⁹⁴ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 151.

⁹⁵ Nelson, *Lands Guide: A Guide to Finding Records of Crown Land at Public Record Office Victoria*, 225.

⁹⁶ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 121.

⁹⁷ Information from Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Moyston, 31 May 2012.

3.5.4 Closer settlement

In the Colony of Victoria in the 1890s, children of selectors wanting to take up farming were left with only the Mallee country. As a consequence, pressure was applied to governments to resume existing estates to make the land available as small farms and agricultural closer settlement schemes were subsequently introduced.

The demands of organised Labor and talk of land taxes provided impetus for the owners of large pastoral properties in the study area to introduce their own closer settlement schemes.⁹⁸ The owners of the Mount William run made 100 to 300-acre blocks for cultivation available to share and tenant farmers in 1897, with a further 18,000 acres released in 1902. Agricultural areas were subsequently surveyed on other estates, including Menenia, Edgarley, Burrumbeep, Yalla-y-Poora and Narrapumelap. The owners of Greenvale offered tenant farmers the right to purchase at the expiration of their three-year leases.⁹⁹ These schemes established the Wickliffe Road (Willaura) township as the centre of a substantial wheat-growing district (see Figure 7).

Increasingly, tenant farmers exerted pressure to buy the land they were farming, with sharefarmers on 63,000 acres of the Nerrin Nerrin estate purchasing their farm holdings in the early 1900s.¹⁰⁰ Elsewhere, Arthur Murphy, an Ararat businessman, operated as an agent for the owners of pastoral properties. Murphy subdivided a number of Willaura and Lake Bolac estates in the early 1900s for the owners, and recruited settlers from the northern districts with experience in wheat farming to take up the land.¹⁰¹ In 1902, Murphy sold 16,000 acres of the Greenvale estate, and in 1903, the entire 22,000 acres of the Lake Bolac station and 10,000 acres of the Glenronald estate. Within twelve months, 75,000 acres of former grazing land in the Lake Bolac-Willaura district was brought under cultivation.¹⁰² So successful was the program of subdivision and re-settlement, in 1906 and 1907 Murphy was employed by the Queensland government to recruit settlers to take up land in the Darling Downs.¹⁰³



Figure 7: Willaura township, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.

⁹⁸ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 35.

⁹⁹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 125.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁰¹ "Moyston Mechanics Institute Papers, 1859-1932."

¹⁰² *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 126-7.

¹⁰³ "Distant Fields," *The Argus*, 22 May 1907.

In 1898 and 1904, further closer settlement legislation was introduced. The *Closer Settlement Act* of 1904 provided for the establishment of the Lands Purchase and Management Board in 1905 to acquire land, either compulsorily or by agreement, for closer settlement. Under conditional leases, settlers were required to live on the land (in a dwelling erected by the Board if they so wished), to fence the land, destroy vermin and noxious weeds, and to make general improvements. Over ten years, the Board acquired 500,000 acres of land. Sections of Nerrin Nerrin were subsequently sold under the Act, however, for the most part in the study area, government-led subdivision had little effect; by 1917, only 20 purchases by the Board totalling 144,540 acres (58,494 hectares) had been made in the Western District.¹⁰⁴

Led by the Wickliffe Road Land Resumption Association, demands were made for the government to purchase the Mount William estate to make it available as small farms. The estate was offered for sale in 1906 by Dalgety and Co, at which time half the area was leased to tenant farmers. The trustees of Andrew Chirnside outbid the Closer Settlement Board and retained the property. A few months later, a Hamilton syndicate purchased 37,000 acres of the station, subdivided it, and sold it to farmers in 1907 for £5 to £8 an acre. During 1907-8, the owners of Yalla-y-Poora, Burrumbeep, Lexington, Menenia, De Cameron and Woodlands privately subdivided and sold parts of their estates, resulting in the establishment of the Mininera and Mininera East settlements. Because of drought, a large number of farmers from the Mallee and the Wimmera left their farms between 1905 and 1910 to take up available land in the study area.¹⁰⁵

Discharged Soldier Settlement Acts passed in the period 1917-24, in conjunction with the Closer Settlement Acts of 1915, 1918 and 1922, formed the legislative basis for Victorian soldier settlement on the land. The *Discharged Soldier Settlement Act* of 1917 provided for sustenance money to be paid during the establishment period, and for advances of up to £500 to every settler. Interest commenced at the low rate of 3½ percent for the first year, increasing ½ percent per year until the ruling rate of interest was reached. The Commonwealth and State governments shared the costs of these Concessions equally. Under the 1918 *Discharged Soldier Settlement Act*, advances of up to £1,000 were provided for, and training facilities were to be established for inexperienced farmers. Seen as repaying the 'debt of honour', soldier settlement schemes enjoyed widespread public and political support.

Approximately 90 returned soldiers from World War One took up portions of five estates in the study area. The largest settlement was on the Narrapumelap and Cowaugh estate, where 14,000 acres were divided into 37 farms; others took up land on Glenronald, Nerrin Nerrin, North Woodlands and Blythvale. However, because of the small size of allotments allocated, less than 50 per cent of the original soldier settlers made a success of their farms.¹⁰⁶

For the most part closer settlement as an active government policy was wound down from 1938, however another phase of soldier settlement commenced after World War Two. In the study area, because of larger blocks and more intensive support and training, this scheme was far more successful than that which followed World War One. Soldier settlement was facilitated with the assistance of Returned Servicemen Leagues (RSLs). The Willaura RSL, for instance, submitted a list of properties totalling 25,600 acres that it deemed suitable for settlement, including land on Edgarley Estate, Narrapumelap, Yarram Park and Toora Estate. It was also noted that homesteads at Berrambool, Narrapumelap and Burrumbeep stood vacant.¹⁰⁷ Subsequently, 120 former servicemen settled on 80,000 acres excised from eight large estates in the Willaura-Streatham-Wickliffe area: Burrumbeep, Narrapumelap, Berrambool, Yalla-y-Poora, Blythvale, Edgarley, Nerrin Nerrin and Bushy Creek, where they mostly took up grazing and mixed farming (see Figure 8).¹⁰⁸ Berrambool, Narrapumelap and Burrumbeep homesteads provided temporary housing for settler families whilst other housing was constructed.

¹⁰⁴ J M Powell, 'Historical Geography' in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 92.

¹⁰⁵ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 129, 35.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁰⁷ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 143.

¹⁰⁸ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 130.

In addition, a portion of the Edgarley estate, 5,101 acres near the Willaura township, was subdivided in 1946 into eight allotments, described as suitable for grazing (sheep), mixed farming and cereal growing by the Soldier Settlement Commission.¹⁰⁹ In addition to mixed farming and grazing, some farmers on Edgarley took up cereal growing.

This phase of settlement corresponded with the post World War Two economic boom and good seasons, bringing significant wealth and growth to the townships and districts of Lake Bolac and Willaura through until the 1980s. The Moyston-Willaura Road became known locally as 'Toorak Road' because of the substantial homes and farms established there during this period.¹¹⁰

Today, plaques mark soldier settlement estates at Berrambool, Edgarley, Burrumbeep, Trawalla South and Nerrin Nerrin.



Figure 8: Residence built ca. 1953, Willaura, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.

3.5.5 Settlement since the 1960s

With farm amalgamation, since the 1960s the farming population in the study area has declined, although people who have moved to rural residential properties around Moyston and Pomonal have increased populations in those areas. In the Ararat Shire in 1964, 773 farming establishments existed; by 1993, this number had decreased to 432. In 1976, 1,158 people worked in the agricultural industry; by 1986 there were only 872, and by 2012, the number was reckoned to be 776.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Subdivision of Portion of 'Edgarley' Estate Parishes of Kiora and Willaura County of Ripon, Victoria Soldier Settlement Commission, 1948? in "Millar Family Papers," in *Manuscripts MS MC 7 DR 3* (State Library of Victoria).

¹¹⁰ Information from Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.

¹¹¹ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 82, 111. Rural City of Ararat economic modelling based on ABS 2006 census data.

3.6 Fighting for survival

The effect of European occupation from 1837 on Aboriginal peoples in the study area was devastating. Apart from the irrevocable spiritual and physical disruption to connection to country caused by squatters, and the resultant collapse of traditional socio-political structures, disease also played a role in the rapid decline of Aboriginal populations. Small pox outbreaks, likely to have been introduced by Macassan fishermen who visited northern Australia, had already decimated Aboriginal populations around 1790 and 1830.¹¹² Syphilis introduced by Europeans impacted dramatically on Aboriginal women, causing sterility and an increase in infant mortality. Alcohol abuse and begging on the fringes of settlements became a feature of Aboriginal life in the 1850s.

Country for sheep and cattle runs was taken up in the places most valuable to the Aborigines - creeks, watercourses and rivers. Dams and wells were sunk in the areas of lakes, soaks and springs fed by artesian water. In addition, grazing regimes mirrored traditional Aboriginal movements: in winter animals were fed and watered away from watercourses, and in summer they were moved back to water.

Aboriginal-European violence took the form of reprisals by squatters for the taking of stock by Aboriginal people, of attacks by local Aboriginal clans on squatters, and of inter-tribal warfare as Aboriginal peoples were forced into country that was not their own. In 1857, for instance, James Bonwick witnessed a clash between Aboriginal peoples while he was standing on the Hopkins River Bridge.¹¹³

Tjapwurong clans overtly resisted the squatting invasion, which, between 1840 and 1841, took 50 per cent of their country.¹¹⁴ In 1840, the Crown Lands Commissioner for the Western District, Foster Fyans, reported that nearly every station had been attacked by Aboriginal people, forcing many squatters to desert their runs. Virtually the whole region west of the Hopkins River was affected by violence in the early 1840s. A shepherd employed by Mathew Gibson, who had established a run with his wife on the Hopkins River near present-day Maroona in 1837, was killed by Aborigines, and A T Thompson left the Grampians after losing 300 sheep to Aborigines who lived at Mount William.¹¹⁵ Squatters W J T Clarke, A T Thompson and P D Rose carried firearms and employed twice the number of men to shepherd and keep huts.¹¹⁶ One of Wickcliffe's first carriers, Charles Grimmer, travelled in convoy to protect himself against attack. The thick, stone walls of the Lake Boloke run homestead and the gun holes in the men's hut at the same station suggests that hostilities existed between the lessees of the run and Aboriginal peoples.¹¹⁷

On the volcanic plains east of the Hopkins River, it was difficult for Aboriginal people to protect themselves. In contrast, in the area west of the Hopkins River, the Grampians and Mount Arapiles enabled Aborigines to establish strongholds where Europeans found it difficult to follow.¹¹⁸ A Dja Dja Wurrung man, called 'King Billy Billy' by squatters, formed an outstation of his own where he yarded sheep from William J T Clarke's Woodlands run in the Pyrenees. In retaliation, Clarke's shepherds shot several Aboriginal people who were assisting the venture.¹¹⁹ The site of the Aboriginal outstation is known today as Billy Billy's Water Holes on Billy Billy Creek.

Ten Europeans were killed in 1842, and nineteen killed in the period 1842-8.¹²⁰ But by comparison, at least 300-350 Aborigines were shot or poisoned before 1850 in the Portland Bay District.¹²¹ Historical information

¹¹² Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 7 & 9.

¹¹³ *History of Wickcliffe 1836-1962*, n.p.

¹¹⁴ Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 94.

¹¹⁵ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 19.

¹¹⁶ Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 94.

¹¹⁷ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 55-6.

¹¹⁸ Jan Critchett, "A Study of Aboriginal Contact and Post-Contact History and Places," (Melbourne, Vic.: Land Conservation Council, July 1995), 20.

¹¹⁹ Letter from William J T Clarke, Melbourne, 13 September 1853 in T. F. Bride, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* (Melbourne, Vic.: Trustees of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria, 1898; repr., South Yarra, Vic.: Lloyd O'Neil, 1983), 279-80. Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 20.

¹²⁰ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 39.

evidences 35 massacres and killings in Tjapwurong country.¹²² Between 1838 and 1841, at least eleven Aboriginal people were shot in the Ararat district. In the same period, the storekeeper at Barton run shot Boodboodyarramin at the foot of Mount William, and C B Hall's hut-keeper shot two men in the Grampians.¹²³

By 1848, the squatting invasion was complete. Approximately 41 per cent of Tjapwurong country had been occupied by the end of 1840; by December 1841 this had increased to 66 per cent, by 1843 to about 80 per cent, and by the beginning of 1846, to 96 per cent.¹²⁴ Aboriginal people had little choice but to live on protectorates (see Section 8.1), rely on begging at settlements, take up work on sheep and cattle stations, or take refuge on public land; racecourses, for instance, were often used in the mid-nineteenth century by displaced Aboriginal people.¹²⁵ In February 1857, Commissioner for Crown Lands in the Western District, T H Puckle, reported that 'the chief places of resort' for the district's Aboriginal people included Mount Cole, Mount Emu, Mount Ararat goldfields, the Hopkins River, Fiery Creek, Mount Rouse and the Wannon River.¹²⁶

Aboriginal peoples contributed important skills to the development of the pastoral and agricultural industry. Men were employed as shearers, woodcutters, shepherds, water carters, and fencers, and women as needleworkers and bark cutters. Mrs Gibson, on her run on the Hopkins River, depended on the skills of an Aboriginal boy to guide her around the country¹²⁷ and Aboriginal women hand picked seed wheat for the sowing of the next crop at Lexington run in 1843.¹²⁸ An Aboriginal man, who was captured by workers on the Mount Cole run, worked on the station and tracked sheep when they were lost. Named Jacky, the man later returned to his clan and married, but after a fight at a public house he died at Buangor, next to the Mount Cole home station. He is buried at Buangor Park in a small enclosure with other members of the Campbell family.¹²⁹ Aboriginal labour was particularly important during the gold rushes of the 1850s when workers left for the goldfields and wages were high. At Gorrinn in the 1850s, Aboriginal workers brought bark from the forests of the district for fires to heat water in boilers used to wash 500 sheep a day in the months of September and October. They were also given lambing, ploughing and dam building jobs.¹³⁰ Colin Campbell employed Aborigines on his run in 1852, where they washed a total of 40,000 sheep for 12s. a week.¹³¹

All squatters took Aboriginal homelands, but with differing attitudes. Thomas Chirnside sought to build friendly relations with the local people of Mount William by providing mutton and flour in return for their promise not to steal sheep. Local Aboriginal people identified Colin Campbell with an Aboriginal man, who had 'jumped up white'; Campbell was consequently given the name *Muchlemumen*. Frances Campbell, his wife, was said to be called 'the Mother of all White Men' by local Aboriginal people.¹³² Colin Campbell wrote of his experiences with the original settlers:

¹²¹ Jan Critchett, *A Distant Field of Murder: Western District Frontiers, 1834-1848* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1992), 130.

¹²² See Ian D. Clark and Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies., *Scars in the Landscape: A Register of Massacre Sites in Western Victoria 1803-1859*, Report Series / Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1995), 57-84.

¹²³ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 19.

¹²⁴ Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 94.

¹²⁵ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 76.

¹²⁶ *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 99-100.

¹²⁷ This run later became known as Burrumbeep. Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 9,12.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 63; Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 99.

¹³¹ *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 99.

¹³² Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 45.

We were camped on the Mount Cole Creek just below Eurambeen house. On this rise the Mt Cole tribe mustered to dispute ground rights. The shepherds were intimidated and something had to be done...Seven of us...advanced with bright barrels [firearms] under our arms and to our intense satisfaction the natives sounded an alarm...The entire tribe was about 300 strong...The natives became conciliated and did not give us a great deal of trouble.¹³³

Once Campbell had occupied the run, he wrote:

we found them thoroughly human with just the same power for good and evil as other races...a new order [the first coming of the Europeans]...combined the dread of evil consequences both to themselves and the country which had hitherto been their own. What has been called treachery upon the part of the natives might very well have been called patriotism in our own men... Our intercourse with the natives continued in a friendly nature during all our times. There were at nearly all times some of the tribe camped about the homestead. Somewhere near the end of 1841 when they were in full numbers a neighbouring tribe came from the south to visit our tribe or family.¹³⁴

In 1866, 36 Aboriginal women and 30 Aboriginal men met at Campbell's run at Moyston for a corroboree.¹³⁵

Numerous examples of interactions between Aboriginal peoples and squatters are captured in reports of the day. During 1848, Emanuel Wilde, who worked at a boiling-down works on the Burrumbeep station, recalled the Hopkins River Aborigines taking the fat and partly cooked meat out of the vats and carrying it away on sticks.¹³⁶ Tom Wills, the eldest son of Horatio and Elizabeth Wills who took up the Lexington run, shared language with the local Aborigines and sang their songs and imitated their dances.¹³⁷ It is said that he used the experience of their games to create the game of Australian Rules Football. In the 1850s, Aboriginal people sold fish from Fiery Creek to Brown's store at the site of what was to become the Streatham township, and to selectors in the district in the 1860s.¹³⁸ In 1864, between fifteen and twenty Aboriginal people attended the Wickliffe races. Aboriginal man, Tommy Wallace, played cricket for Wickcliffe in 1868. In the early 1870s, after selectors took up blocks along the Little Wimmera, Aborigines visited farms exchanging fish they had caught for flour and tea¹³⁹ and two Aboriginal trackers from Narrapumelap helped in the search for two lost children in 1875.¹⁴⁰

Legislation effectively moved people off country (see Section 8.1), however in a radically changing landscape, it was the same reserve system that often saved the lives of Aboriginal people. Research indicates that today's Victorian Aboriginal population is descended from approximately 500 individuals who lived on Aboriginal reserves in the 1870s. The 500-1,000 people outside the reserves were pushed into the Wimmera and have left few descendants.¹⁴¹

In 1972, there were 6,371 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria, 16,570 in 1991, and 25,900 in 2001. As Richard Broome highlights, this strong population growth was due to a continued high birth rate, lower infant mortality, a preference for large families, better health and a greater willingness for some people to identify as Aboriginal.¹⁴²

¹³³ 'Colin Campbell reminiscences' in Pickford, "Buangor Park Records, Ca. 1889-Ca. 1978," 2.

¹³⁴ 'Colin Campbell's reminiscences' in *ibid.*.

¹³⁵ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 23.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 69, 115.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴⁰ *History of Wickcliffe 1836-1962*, n.p.

¹⁴¹ L R Smith et al., "Fractional Identities: The Political Arithmetic of Aboriginal Victorians," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 537.

¹⁴² Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800*, 373.

Local Aboriginal communities re-established the Tandurru Ceremony (an Aboriginal ceremony that allows safe passage and temporary access and use of land and resources by foreign people) in *Gariwerd* (the Grampians) in January 1995, evidence of the strength of Aboriginal life in the study area.

A small part the study area is encompassed by the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) negotiated in 2005. The ILUA incorporates an area of approximately 35,859 square kilometres extending from the South-Australia-Victoria border in the west, to Birchip in the east, the Mallee Highway in the north and to Ararat and the Wimmera Highway in the south.¹⁴³

Today, cultural heritage issues important to local Aboriginal communities are managed by Registered Aboriginal Parties: the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation; Martang Pty Ltd; and the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation. In addition, health and community services are provided by the Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative in Horsham, the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative and the Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd at Halls Gap. The Brambuk Living Cultural Centre at Halls Gap interprets and presents local Aboriginal culture to a wider public.

Significant contact and post-contact Aboriginal heritage places include the traditional spiritual and camping places used by the Aboriginal peoples of the study area, camping places established to escape European violence, places where people accessed European foods and other goods, and places on pastoral runs where Aboriginal people worked and were buried. Other places include strongholds from which Aboriginal people were able to launch attacks on the invaders, and massacre sites.¹⁴⁴

4.0 Connecting Victorians by transport

4.1 Establishing pathways

4.1.1 *The first pathways and tracks*

The first pathways in the study area were made by Aboriginal people travelling to meeting places for trade and ceremony and moving through country to access food and water. In the 1840s, C B Hall of Lexington, La Rose and Mokepille runs described the myriad Aboriginal tracks that traversed the Grampians pass at present-day Halls Gap.¹⁴⁵

It is likely that Surveyor General of New South Wales, Thomas Mitchell, followed Aboriginal tracks through the study area on his 1836 expedition. During their first winter in 1839 at Mount Cole, Colin and Alexander Campbell witnessed stock from Sydney following the tracks of Mitchell's expedition, which was known as the Major's Line. Soon, squatters who had driven sheep from Bathurst, the Murrumbidgee and Two Fold Bay in the Colony of New South Wales took up land in the Mount Cole district.¹⁴⁶ The Line acted as a kind of internal boundary for the Port Phillip District with some of the first squatting runs defined in relation to it.

Joseph Hawdon led several expeditions from 1838 to chart an overland route from New South Wales via the River Murray to sell stock to the Adelaide market, the colony of South Australia then experiencing a food shortage. In 1839, with Alfred Mundy, Hawdon carried the first overland mails between Melbourne to Adelaide, journeying through the study area. Others followed this route to form the Adelaide road.

Other early tracks were made by squatters. After taking up runs, squatters established stock routes to move their flocks and herds between stations and waterways and to cart their wool and hides by bullock dray to ports at Portland and Geelong. A well-used stock route, for instance, ran between the Wimmera and South

¹⁴³ "Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali Wergaia and Jupagulk Indigenous Land Use Agreement," ATNS Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements database, <http://www.atns.net.au/agreement.asp?EntityID=3126>.

¹⁴⁴ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 32-33.

¹⁴⁵ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 22.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

Australia with Crowlands established as a camping place on the route. Some of these tracks were later surveyed as three and six chain roads and used as major stock routes. By 1839, a branch of the road from Buninyong led to Portland Bay via Gregory's Inn at Carngham, Mt Emu, Fiery Creek (later known as Streatham) and The Grange (later known as Hamilton). Later surveyed to a width of three chains and named Portland Bay Road, it was used for the weekly overland mail from Melbourne to Portland from mid-1844.¹⁴⁷ Crossroads were established where the boundaries of Nerrin Nerrin, Blythvale, Menenia and Yalla-y-Poora stations met, near the site of present-day Mininera Railway Station.¹⁴⁸ Three and six chain stock roads, with their associated camping and water reserves, are in evidence in the study area today.

The rapid migration of people to the goldfields of the study area in the 1850s preceded any notion of formal road making. Diggers who rushed the fields formed tracks that skirted around hills and waterways to deliver them to their destination in the most expedient way. Some insight into the condition of roads can be gleaned from a description in 1861 of the road between Ararat and Cathcart:

So up one side and down the other, and hold tight on your chay-cart, dog-cart, buggy or dray...somehow, although the road has been in use for the last four years by hundreds of people, nothing has been done to it...the Mountainous Track is allowed to remain in a perilous but picturesque state of nature.¹⁴⁹

4.1.2 **Coach routes**

The movement of passengers and mails by road was formalised prior to the arrival of the railways by a network of coach routes established throughout the Colony of Victoria in the 1850s. In 1853, Freeman Cobb and three fellow American immigrants established Cobb and Co's American Telegraph Line of coaches to provide the first rapid and reliable passenger transport between Melbourne and the goldfields of Bendigo. The first 'thorough-brace' suspension coaches, that isolated the driver and passengers from the worst jolts of unmade country roads, were imported from America. The Cobb and Co name was retained by other coaching firms who took over the company's routes after the partnership disbanded in 1856. Coach stopping points were established at ten-mile intervals, where horses were changed and inns built. From 1859 'a first-class, four-horse covered coach' left Portland for Geelong. On the first day it passed through Heywood, Green Hills, Branxholme, Hamilton and Wickliffe; and on the second day travelled by way of Fiery Creek (Streatham), Skipton, Rokewood, Shelford and Bruces Creek.¹⁵⁰ In the Colony of Victoria, mail and passenger coaches reached their peak in 1872, after which the expansion of the railways saw coach routes gradually contract. Changing stations for coaches existed at Crowlands, Streatham, Lake Bolac and Buangor (see Figure 9). Bluestone Cobb and Co stopping stations exist today at Wickliffe, Buangor, Lake Bolac, Lake Buninjon and Maroona.

4.1.3 **The gold escort route**

In an effort to attract back the population that had left the colony for the riches of the goldfields of Victoria, South Australia passed the *Bullion Act* in 1852. The Act enabled gold to be purchased at a higher rate in Adelaide than Victoria. As a consequence, the police-escorted Mount Alexander-South Australian Gold Escort was established and operated between March 1852 and December 1853. In the study area, the route of the escort followed the Wimmera River; a section of the road is now known as the Pyrenees Highway and runs through Eversley and Elmhurst.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Joan Hunt, "Campbell and Woolley's Store," *Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria*, no. 10 (2011): n.p.

¹⁴⁸ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 154.

¹⁴⁹ *Ararat Advertiser*, July 1861 cited in Ian D. Clark, *From Barley to Burrumbeep : A Family History of Leonard Clark and Sarah Bowtell* (Jeeralang Junction, Vic.: Heritage Matters Pty. Ltd, 1996), 23.

¹⁵⁰ Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890*, 209.

¹⁵¹ J. Flett map in Leslie James Blake, *Gold Escort* (Melbourne, Vic.: Hawthorn Press, 1971).

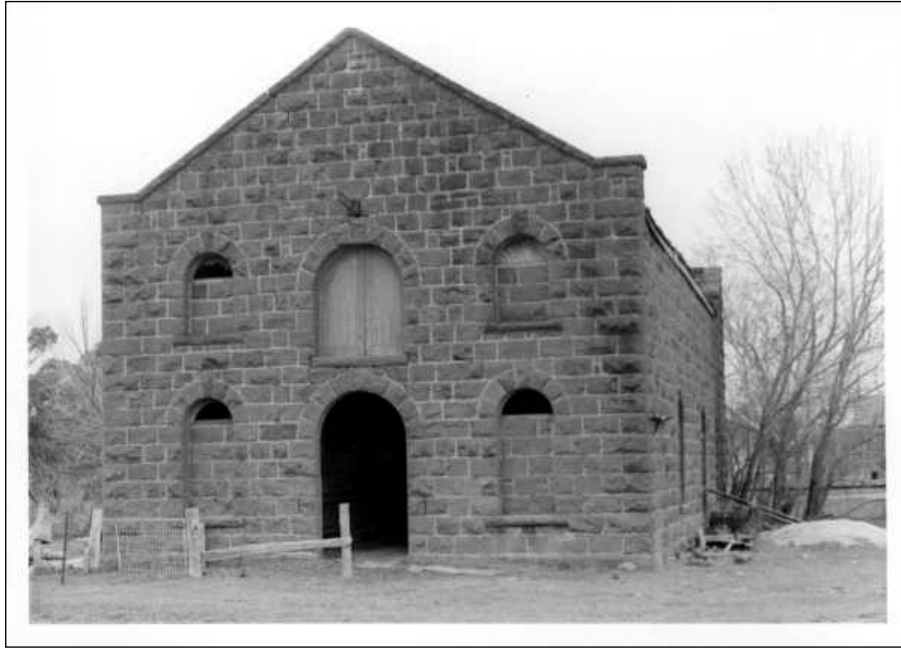


Figure 9: Cobb and Co changing station, Buangor, 1966, by J T Collins. Source: State Library Victoria.

4.1.4 Chinese tracks

Following the introduction in the Colony of Victoria in 1855 of a landing tax on the Chinese, Chinese migrants arrived by ship at Guichen Bay near Robe in South Australia, then walked to the Victorian goldfields – known as *Dai Gum Sam* (New Gold Mountain). During the dry months, the Chinese crossed the Glenelg River at Gray's Crossing. They then walked to Wando Dale station and Koolomert station to Dunkeld and on to Ararat – a journey of 440 kilometres. It is believed that during winter floods, the Chinese travelled through Cavendish and through the Grampians at Halls Gap to Ararat.¹⁵² The Chinese travelled up to 35 kilometres each day carrying long bamboo poles of up to 5 feet 11 inches on which they balanced baskets carrying their entire belongings that could weigh up to 35 pounds. One observer on a journey from Wickcliffe to Wando Dale station in the late 1850s wrote that he was 'Continuously passed by a curious cavalcade going in the opposite direction. There were 20-30 miles of Chinamen in single file, each with the proverbial two baskets and each one going to the [Ballarat] diggings.'¹⁵³ The *Adelaide Times* reported on 4 March 1857 that nearly 300 Chinese were crossing the plains between Streatham and Ballarat at that time.¹⁵⁴

4.1.5 Road making

To cater for the growing population in the Ararat district, road works were undertaken from 1858 with £15,600 granted by the government for general works and £20,000 granted for the construction of a road from Ararat to the seaboard.¹⁵⁵ A bridge was opened in 1858 over Fiery Creek on Ross's station, later to become the Streatham township. Another bridge opened in the same year over the Hopkins River at Dobie's station. In 1858, contracts were let for the construction of roads from Ararat to the coast via Wickcliffe; to Pleasant Creek, Mount Cole and Raglan; and for the clearing and grubbing of sections of the Ararat-Warrnambool road. In the period 1858-1860, toll gates were erected at Dobie's Bridge, Chalambar Gap on

¹⁵² Ritchie, *Guichen Bay to Canton Lead: The Chinese Trek to Gold*, 29-30.

¹⁵³ William Moodie, *A Pioneer of Western Victoria*, cited in *ibid.*, 31.

¹⁵⁴ Cited in *ibid.*, 32.

¹⁵⁵ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 19.

the Port Fairy Road, and Armstrongs on the Mount Pleasant Road.¹⁵⁶ The spiralling costs of some of these bridge and road works led to the formation of the Ararat Road District in August 1861 (see Section 8.2). By 1862, quarrymen and stone-breakers were at work on the Ararat-Buangor section of the Ballarat-Ararat-Hamilton road.

Within two years of the Ararat Road District being designated a shire in 1864, the council had built 32 bridges and cleared over 2,000 chains of roads. In 1867, a road from Ararat to Campbells Reef (Moyston) was cut through the Mount Ararat range. The cutting was named after the contractors, the Carroll brothers. The construction of the Wickliffe-Stawell Road was also undertaken, as were works to drain Nekeeya Swamp near Mount William so that it could be taken up for farming. By 1884, nearly 300 miles of roads, 100 bridges and 500 culverts had been constructed in the Ararat Shire (see Figure 10).¹⁵⁷



Figure 10: J F Watkin 's contracting team and travelling equipment carrying out road and bridge work for the shires of Ripon and Ararat, ca. 1880. Source: Museum Victoria.

New roads and bridges were also required in the Shire of Ararat when large pastoral properties were broken up for closer settlement in the first decade of the twentieth century. It is likely that shire engineer, Robert Speed, opened negotiations with John Monash's Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Co when the spring flood of 1909 washed away two timber bridges. Contracts totaling £1,268 were let to the Monier company for the construction of four reinforced concrete girder bridges, including a bridge over Mt Cole Creek near Crowlands township, and a bridge over Dog Rock Creek on the Avoca Road. Both bridges were opened in April 1910. Several more reinforced concrete bridges were commissioned by the council over the next few years, and by the mid-1930s the Reinforced Concrete and Monier Pipe Construction Co had

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 150. Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 21, 23.

built eighteen bridges in the Shire of Ararat. Only four identified examples are known to be in existence at the locations of Norval, Denicull Creek, Willaura and Maroona.¹⁵⁸

Major projects in the 1950s incorporated the sealing of roads within the Ararat Shire, including the Ararat-St Arnaud Road, the Rossbridge-Streatham Road, and the Willaura-Wickliffe Road; the redesigning in 1955 of the 1899 drainage system established on Heifer Swamp near Glenthompson; and the reconstruction of the Ararat-Denicull Creek section of the Warnambool Road.¹⁵⁹

A significant small bridge and culvert building program was undertaken by the Shire of Ararat in the 1960s through to the 1980s.

4.2 Linking Victorians by rail

The construction of railway lines in the Colony of Victoria followed the spread of settlement, with the first railway lines built with private capital. Surveyor General, Captain Andrew Clarke, was authorised to undertake surveys for railways throughout the central portion of the colony in the 1850s. By the end of 1855, sixteen survey parties had completed surveys for lines, including the Main Trunk Lines from Melbourne to the Murray River at Echuca, opened in 1864, and Geelong to Ballarat, opened in 1862. The building of railway lines led to the establishment of commercial ventures such as sawmilling, brickmaking, quarrying and specialist foundries.¹⁶⁰

After the heavy expenditure of the construction of the main lines, railway building resumed in the 1870s with lower and cheaper standards. Earlier in 1862 the Ararat council had requested a government survey of a railway line from Ballarat to Ararat, but it was not until 1869 that Thomas Higginbotham, Engineer-in-Chief of Victorian Railways, submitted a series of proposals to provide railway links to towns in western Victoria to cater for increasing populations and wheat yields. The routes were: the 'Black Line', from Geelong to Colac, Terang and Hamilton; the 'Green Line', from a point mid-way along the line between Geelong and Ballarat to Skipton and Hamilton; the 'Pink Line', an extension of the Ballarat line to Ararat, then to Hamilton; and the 'Blue Line', from Castlemaine to Maryborough, Avoca, Ararat and Hamilton.¹⁶¹ In 1870, James Maclean, secretary of the Ararat Shire, and the Western District Railway Extension League informed the Minister of Railways that 3,400 tons of goods, not including wool and timber, passed through one toll gate in the Ararat district each month and eleven coaches serviced Ararat daily.¹⁶² By this time, there were only two routes on the table: the Ballarat-Ararat-Hamilton Pink Line, and the Geelong-Colac-Hamilton Black Line. The Pink Line was approved in 1871, and the Ballarat to Ararat line subsequently opened in 1875 (see Figures 11 and 12). The line was extended to Stawell in 1876, from Stawell to Hamilton in 1877, and to Murtoa in 1878. By 1887, the line had reached Serviceton on the South Australian border. The Ararat-Portland railway opened in 1877.

Coinciding with Victoria's land boom, in 1880 an Act of Parliament authorised the construction of 23 new lines, and was followed by the 'Octopus' Act of 1884, which approved 66 new lines. The Ararat to Horsham line was extended to Dimboola in 1882. The Maryborough via Avoca line reached Ararat in November 1890, with the Ararat-Avoca section built by 400 men who lived in three camps at Flint Hill, Three Mile Creek and Mooneys Gap.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ "T-Girder Bridges, Part 1 Bridges in the Shire of Ararat," <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~aholgate/jm/girdertexts/gdrtext1.html#ararat>.

¹⁵⁹ *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 29, 61.

¹⁶⁰ Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 28.

¹⁶¹ Lorna L. Banfield et al., *The Ararat Railway Centenary: A History of the Ballarat to Ararat Railway and Lineside Guide* (Melbourne: Australian Railway Historical Society, Victorian Division, 1975), 4-5.

¹⁶² Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 152-3.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 153.

Railway construction slowed in the study area during the economic depression of the 1890s, but after the closer settlement of large estates (see Section 3.5.4) was revived in the first decades of the twentieth century. The Gheringhap to Maroona line opened in 1913, giving rise to the townships of Mininera and Westmere. The line carried 2,000 tons of wheat daily during the 1914 harvest.¹⁶⁴ The Ben Nevis-Crowlands-Navarre line opened in 1914 to transport timber felled in the forests.



Figure 11: Buangor Railway Station, 2012, built on the Ararat to Ballarat railway line, which opened in 1875. Photo by Tom Henty.

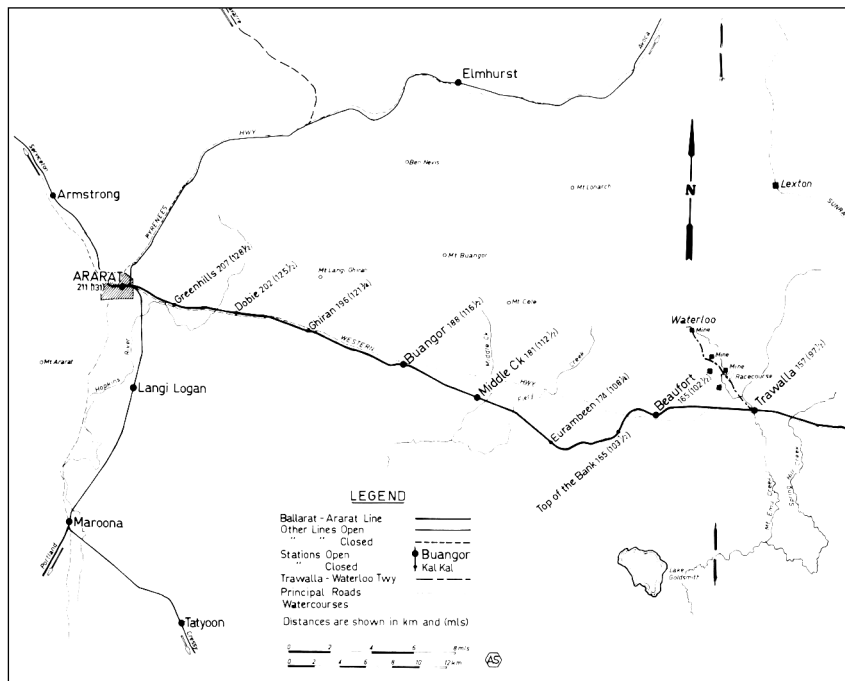


Figure 12: The Ararat to Ballarat Railway, 1975. Source: A Stempel in *The Ararat Railway Centenary 1875-1975*, 30-31.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

The depopulation of rural areas in conjunction with the development of roads spelt an end for the era of railway domination, leading inevitably to the withdrawal of passenger services and the curtailment of whole sections of line. By the 1920s, the motor truck was making inroads on the transport scene, and by the 1940s, little funding for capital improvements was allocated to the railway system. As a result, rail transport was used less frequently. Following Henry Bland's watershed *Report of the Board of Inquiry into the Victorian Land Transport System* of 1971-72, a severe reduction in rail services was implemented. Eventually much of the infrastructure required to provide a traditional rail transport system in the study area was closed down.

Some rail services have been reinstated in recent times. Passenger rail services between Melbourne and Ararat via Ballarat were re-established in 2004. After a \$15 million upgrade of the Ararat-Portland line in 2008, mineral sands were freighted from Portland to Melbourne and grain trains returned to the line with the 2010 harvest. Freight traffic and The Overland passenger service continue to operate between Melbourne and Adelaide.

Station buildings, water towers, grain silos, pepper trees, bridges, tracks, easements and earth mounds are the principal indicators of the early railway network.

4.3 Linking Victorians by road in the 20th century

In 1913, the Country Roads Board (CRB) was established and subsequently conducted a two-year investigation of Victoria's roads, working with local governments to build and maintain main roads. From 1918 to 1943, the CRB took over responsibility for a number of other types of roads: Developmental Roads in 1918; State Highways in 1924; Isolated Settlers Roads in 1925; Tourists' Roads in 1936 and Forest Roads and Stock Routes in 1943.¹⁶⁵ Over this period, the CRB took control of main roads from Ararat to Ballarat, Ararat to Stawell, Ararat to Warrnambool, Wickliffe to Streatham, and Maroona to Glenthompson.¹⁶⁶

4.4 Establishing and maintaining communications

Arrangements to introduce postal services were generally made in the years soon after settlement. Telecommunications in Australia began in 1854 with a telegraph line from Melbourne city to Williamstown. By 1856 the length of line in Victoria had grown to 36 miles, with 14,738 messages, increasing to 35,792 messages in 1857.

An overland mail run from Melbourne to Portland commenced on 23 May 1844.¹⁶⁷ Early postal services relied on unofficial safe repositories for mail. Settlers in the Glenthompson district, for example, placed their letters in a hollow in a red gum tree, from where they were picked up by a mailman on horseback until ca. 1861.¹⁶⁸

As settlements grew, official post offices were opened and telegraph services established. The Commonwealth Government took the responsibility for postal matters from the colonies on Federation in 1901. Many postal services were provided at general stores in the study area (see Figure 13).

Telephone services were connected from the first decade of the twentieth century. The Mount Cole-Warrak community laid the telephone line from Buangor Post Office to the exchange at Mount Cole Creek with volunteer labour in 1926.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ "History of Vicroads," State Government of Victoria, <http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/AboutVicRoads/>.

¹⁶⁶ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 151.

¹⁶⁷ Dorothy Dunn et al., *The History of Streatham, Westmere, Mininera and Nerrin Nerrin* (Streatham and District Historical Society, 2012), 3.

¹⁶⁸ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 54.

¹⁶⁹ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 35.



Figure 13: Pomonal Post Office and General Store, date unknown. Source: National Archives of Australia.

5.0 Transforming and managing the land

5.1 Grazing and raising livestock

The extensive native grasslands of the volcanic plains of the study area are well suited to livestock grazing with the growing of wool from 1837 the first industry to be taken up by Europeans in the study area (see Section 3.5.1). The industry defined the structure and growth of the regional economy and has continued as an important contributor to local and national economies through to the present.

Wool was Australia's main export industry until gold was discovered in the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria in 1851. In 1852, the Colony of Victoria boasted 6.5 million sheep and was exporting 9,112 tonnes of wool with an estimated value of £1,062,787.¹⁷⁰ Wool grown in the study area contributed to this lucrative export market, and from the early 1850s, local squatters introduced cattle to their runs to cater for growing gold centre markets.

For 70 years or more, Yalla-y-Poora, Burrumbeep, Edgarley, Mount William and Narrapumelap ranked in the leading wool producers in Victoria.¹⁷¹ Stud owners at Yalla-y-Poora, Eurambeen, Burrumbeep and Chalicum crossed merino sheep with sheep descended from John Macarthur's Camden Park in New South Wales. Yalla-y-Poora, founded on 'Scone' sheep, led the way in wool production and sheep breeding for a longer period than any other Ararat sheep station (see Figure 14). By 1871, pastoralists in western Victoria had introduced English grasses to large acreages of grazing country.¹⁷² Machine shearing was introduced to the sheds of the study area in the 1880s.

¹⁷⁰ "The Wool Industry - Looking Back and Forward 1301.0 - 2003," Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/featurearticlesbyCatalogue>.

¹⁷¹ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 50.

¹⁷² Nelson, *Lands Guide: A Guide to Finding Records of Crown Land at Public Record Office Victoria*, 157.



Figure 14: Yalla-y-Poora shearing shed, 1967, by John T Collins. Source: State Library of Victoria.

Ararat wool reached 36d. a pound in the 1860s and 1870s, but dropped below 12d. in 1890.¹⁷³ By 1891, 20 per cent of pastoral properties in the Western District were held in trust, with trustees providing little improvement to properties, and from 1884 to 1894, the estimated revenue from the pastoralist's wool clip had fallen by 20 per cent.¹⁷⁴ This was due in part to the economic depression of the time, but other factors were also at play. Native grasses had been eaten out, weeds and rabbits had spread, and the hooves of sheep and cattle had compacted soils and caused erosion. In addition, shearers were making vocal and organised demands for better conditions. As a result, from the 1890s, a more scientific approach to farming was applied to increase profits. Pasture improvement and top-dressing were undertaken from the early 1900s. Crop rotation techniques, the use of superphosphate, bare fallowing and the introduction of improved wheat varieties facilitated a marked increase in wheat yields. These changes enabled pastoralists to lease or sell portions of their holdings to share or tenant wheat farmers, who migrated from northern Victoria, the Wimmera and the Mallee (see Section 3.5.4). As a consequence, between 1903 and 1907, land values in the Western District increased by 20 per cent.¹⁷⁵

From the 1890s, there was a progressive move away from merino wool to crossbred varieties, including Comeback, Polwarth and Corriedale, in demand during World War One when wool was urgently needed for uniforms and other military purposes. In 1916 the British Government purchased the entire Australian wool clip at a fixed price for the duration of the war. Graziers in the study area were well placed to take advantage of the economic boom conditions of post World War One. Crossbred strain studs were established between World War One and World War Two on the Kalymna and Bowmont properties and at Dobie and Elmhurst, and had major success in statewide championships. Ararat wool sold for 48d. a pound in the 1920s.¹⁷⁶ Wool from Yalla-y-Poora made a world record of 51s. ½ d. in 1924, which stood as an Australasian record for

¹⁷³ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 131-2.

¹⁷⁴ Monica Keneley, "The Impact of Agricultural Intensification on the Pastoral Economy of the Western District of Victoria, 1890-1930," *The Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History* (1 November 1999), www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/pdf/keneley.pdf.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 132.

twenty years.¹⁷⁷ During the 1920s, the Yalla-y-Poora stud won seven championships for fine merino wool ewes at the Melbourne Sheep Show.¹⁷⁸

In 1939, the British government guaranteed the purchase of the entire Australian wool stockpile and annual clip for the duration of World War Two at 13s. 5d. per pound. To protect production, shearers were not allowed to volunteer for war service.¹⁷⁹ From the 1940s, 'ley' farming (where crop planting is alternated with a forage legume for grazing, such as alfalfa or clover) was introduced to the Willaura and Lake Bolac districts and greatly increased wool production per acre.

With high wool prices after World War Two and good seasons, the Ararat district wool industry experienced a boom in the 1950s, and, as a consequence, so too did land prices. The wool clip in the Ararat Shire rose from slightly over seven million pounds in 1950 to twelve and a half million pounds in 1963. Some district graziers received from 450d. to 520d. per pound for superfine lambs' wool, with J C Dyer of Elmhurst making an Australian record of 570d.¹⁸⁰ Substantial properties, such as Yarram Park, employed a large number of workers, who were housed on cottages on the property, during this period.¹⁸¹ Because of the steep decline of wool prices in the late 1960s, some properties in the study area introduced beef and dairy cattle from this time.¹⁸²

In 1989, the Shire of Ararat council adopted the slogan 'Fine Wool Country' for the municipality.

Combined with the grain growing, the grazing of livestock was predicted to provide 18 per cent of employment in Ararat Rural City in 2012.¹⁸³

5.2 Farming

5.2.1 Horticulture

The history of the horticulture industry in the study area is characterised by the taking up of small allotments on available watercourses. This development was facilitated by the Land Acts of the 1860s (see Section 3.5.3) and laid the foundations of an internationally recognised fruit and viticulture industry.

Fruit and vegetables

Extensive market gardens were established by Chinese settlers at stations in the study area, including at Mount William swamp.¹⁸⁴ So large was this industry it is believed that the fruit and vegetable trade in the Western District of Victoria from 1877 to 1889 was mostly supplied by Chinese market gardeners.¹⁸⁵

Fruit growing was taken up throughout the study area, including at Pomonal, at Eversley, at Moyston, at Elmhurst on land fronting the Wimmera River, and on Mount Cole Creek. Isaac Ross, Thomas Buckingham and George Padgett planted orchards at Mount Cole in the 1870s, where apples, plums, pears, apricots, peaches, berries and cherries were grown in later years. The opening of the Avoca-Elmhurst-Ararat railway in 1890 facilitated the growth of the industry through exports to London. Prior to World War One, orchardists at Elmhurst, Mount Cole and Bayindeen exported 30,000 cases of apples and pears to England and Germany

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 131-2.

¹⁷⁸ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 50.

¹⁷⁹ "Shear History," Australian Broadcasting Corporation, <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/shearhistory/story2.htm>.

¹⁸⁰ Lorna Lamont Banfield, *Green Pastures and Gold: A History of Ararat* (Canterbury, Victoria: Mullaya, 1974), 100.

¹⁸¹ Information from Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.

¹⁸² Banfield, *Green Pastures and Gold: A History of Ararat*, 100.

¹⁸³ Rural City of Ararat economic modelling based on ABS 2006 census data.

¹⁸⁴ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 46.

¹⁸⁵ Ritchie, *Guichen Bay to Canton Lead: The Chinese Trek to Gold*, 45.

per year.¹⁸⁶ In 1916, orchardists in the study area formed the North-Western Fruit Growers' Association to market their fruit on a co-operative basis.¹⁸⁷ A decrease in demand, a drop in fruit prices, restrictions put in place by the Apple and Pear Board and poor seasons led to a decline in the industry in the 1950s.¹⁸⁸

One of Pomonal's first selectors, Frenchman Peter de Mey, took up land in 1866 and established an orchard and a vineyard of two acres each.¹⁸⁹ Dr W H Syme from Stawell established the apple growing industry in Pomonal in 1890 on land he purchased at the foot of Mount Cassell. Other settlers followed, and by 1899, apples, berries, nuts, passion fruit, lemons, oranges and melons grew on 400 acres of orchards. By 1907, the industry was well established. George Barnes' 319-acre property, for example, in that year comprised two houses, a men's hut, washhouse, fruit house, stables, other outbuildings and 30 acres of fruit trees.¹⁹⁰ In 1912, 30,000 cases of fruit were sent to London and Hamburg from Pomonal.¹⁹¹ Because of the distance of carting fruit to the nearest railway station at Stawell, plans were made to establish a tramway to Stawell in connection with a proposal to establish a village settlement, however this did not eventuate.¹⁹² The Colombie Cup for the best apples was won by Pomonal in 1930, in which year Pomonal's apple output measured 60,000 cases.¹⁹³ Because of declining overseas markets, and the destruction of orchards by bushfires in January 1939, the industry had all but ceased by 1940.

Tobacco

Tobacco was grown on small allotments in the Pomonal district from 1913. After a rise in the duty on imported tobacco leaf to Australia in December 1930, fruit trees were pulled out to make way for tobacco growing. The expansion of the industry was led by companies who planned to cultivate tobacco on hundreds of acres in the Pomonal area, including the British Australian Tobacco Company. By 1933 in the Parish of Jallukar, 1,000 acres had been cultivated to tobacco and pine trees planted as wind breaks. During the 1930s economic depression, the industry employed Greeks and Armenians from the cities.¹⁹⁴ After the duty on foreign leaf was lowered and the excise doubled in 1936, the industry declined. Most of the remaining plantations, barns and kilns were destroyed in the fires of January 1939, however tobacco kilns exist at Pomonal today to evidence the industry.

Viticulture

Winemaking in the municipality was an important industry in the nineteenth century. The climate was considered eminently suitable for viticulture because the warm dry summers favoured disease-free ripening of grapes.

Viticulture was established in the north and northwest districts of the study area in the 1860s. Messrs Trouette and Blampied established vines at St Peter's in 1863. Joseph Best established the Great Western vineyard on the west bank of Concongella Creek, and Henry Best the Concongella vineyard on the east bank. Hans Irvine took over Great Western ca. 1887 and established substantial wine cellars underground. In 1880, nearly 15,000 gallons of wine were produced in the Ararat Shire.¹⁹⁵ By the 1890s, approximately 120 landowners in

¹⁸⁶ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 62.

¹⁸⁷ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 146.

¹⁸⁸ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 63.

¹⁸⁹ Isabel Armer, *Pomonal: A Picturesque Place* (Stawell, Vic.: Stawell Times-News, 1984).

¹⁹⁰ George Barnes and Archibald George Campbell, "Lease, 1907," in *Manuscripts MS 6144* (State Library of Victoria, 1907).

¹⁹¹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 142.

¹⁹² A.N.A. *Ararat and a National Project: Water for the Mallee – the Conference, the Town and the Eversley Weir*, (Ararat, Vic.: Advertiser Office, 1913), 35-7.

¹⁹³ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 142.

¹⁹⁴ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 55.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

the Ararat and Stawell shires were cultivating grapes, and twenty vineyards in the Rhydney district were in operation.¹⁹⁶

In 1913, over 7,000 hundredweights of grapes were harvested in the Ararat region, most of which were used for wine.¹⁹⁷

Grape growing and winemaking today is flourishing in the study area today in the districts of Great Western, Ararat, Buangor, Moyston and Cathcart. The early industry is evidenced by stone wine cellars in the Rhydney district.

5.2.2 **Agriculture**

Agriculture has been a significant industry in the economic development of the study area with farmers adapting their methods to suit the local climate and soil types.

Squatters cultivated oat and wheat crops on a small scale from the late 1830s in the study area, however it was settlement under the Land Acts of the 1860s that established the grain industry, and closer settlement from the 1890s that led to a significant expansion in the cultivation of crops and the construction of infrastructure to support the industry.

Under the Land Acts, by the late 1860s wheat farms had been established in the Rossbridge, Eversley, Kiara and Ballyrogan districts. Accompanied by good rains, in 1871 for the first time, and subsequently in the years of 1873 and 1874, a surplus of wheat was exported from the Colony of Victoria to London where eight bushels sold for an average price of 45s. 2d. Hugh Gordon of Lea Farm at Ballyrogan won a gold medal in the Amsterdam exhibition of 1883 for a bushel of 'Louis' wheat. Angus Polson's wheat from the Chapman Parish was exhibited at the Philadelphia exhibition, and the Laby brothers of the Union Mill at Ararat exported flour to Townsville, Hong Kong and Batavia.¹⁹⁸

With the use of machinery, by 1880 farming enterprises were undertaken on more extensive holdings. In that year, farmers in the Ararat Shire grew 40,000 bushels of wheat and 120,000 bushels of oats.¹⁹⁹ A reaper and binder machine was in use in the Tatyoon district in 1877, seeding with a cultivator and harrower was undertaken at Wickliffe in 1887, and seed was being sown with drillers in 1890. In 1900, the Sunshine harvester was in use in the study area.²⁰⁰

From the 1890s, a more scientific approach to farming was in evidence. Crop rotation techniques, the use of superphosphate, bare fallowing and the introduction of improved wheat varieties facilitated a marked increase in wheat yields. In the 1880s, dryland farmers sowed paddocks to a crop in the first year, grazed livestock on the same paddocks in the second year, and in the third year, rested the paddocks. By the turn of the century, farmers were incorporating bare fallowing into this three-year rotation. Bare fallowing, or breaking up the soil, was believed to diminish weed growth and prevent evaporation through reducing water take up by weeds and by positing a dust layer over the soil. Used in South Australia in the 1880s, bare fallowing was increasingly incorporated into farming practices in the study area from the early 1900s. In addition to fallowing, farmers adopted the principles of deep ploughing with disc ploughs and applying superphosphate of between 60 and 80 pounds per acre.²⁰¹

In the late 1890s these improvements in cultivation enabled tenant farmers to grow crops on large estates in the study area. Facilitated by land agent Arthur Murphy (see Section 3.5.4), a wide stretch of land between Wickliffe and Streatham was put under wheat, oats and barley. Subsequently, wheat deliveries at the

¹⁹⁶ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 139-40.

¹⁹⁷ A.N.A. *Ararat and a National Project: Water for the Mallee – the Conference, the Town and the Eversley Weir*, 33.

¹⁹⁸ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 117-18, 20.

¹⁹⁹ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 28.

²⁰⁰ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 122.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

Maroona railway station increased from 5,000 bags in 1901 to 27,000 bags in 1902. Compared with the low wheat yields in northern Victoria caused by a severe drought, farms on the plains between Ararat and Wickliffe produced between four to six-bag crops.²⁰²

Field trials of H V McKay farm equipment were held in the Willaura and Westmere districts from 1907 until 1953 (see Figure 16), including, in 1907, trials of the Sunshine Push Harvester, so called because the machine was pushed by eight horses attached to the rear.²⁰³

Willaura, at its peak production in 1906-7, was one of the biggest wheat producers in the state.²⁰⁴ From June 1902 to June 1907, grain exports from Willaura increased from 858 tons to 12,364 tons.²⁰⁵ As a consequence, Willaura became an important receival centre for grain, and in 1910 was the second biggest in the western half of Victoria.²⁰⁶ By March 1913, the amount of wheat stacked at railway stations was recorded as: Willaura 92,000 bags; Maroona 36,000 bags; Stavely 16,000 bags; Calvert 12,200 bags; Glenthompson 12,000 bags; Moutajup 2,000 bags; Langi Logan 2,000 bags; and on the various stations between Ararat and Geelong, 200,000 bags.²⁰⁷ Willaura became one of the largest grain collection points in Victoria in the 1920s (see Figure 15).

By the 1920s, crop rotation techniques, the use of superphosphate and the introduction of improved wheat varieties facilitated a marked increase in wheat yields.²⁰⁸ In addition, wheat was cultivated on an extensive scale with tractors and the motorised header-harvester – a machine that was able to reap a crop before it was fully ripe, harvest a knocked down crop, and separate straw and grain. Farmers in the study area were well placed to take advantage of the economic boom conditions of post World War One.

From the 1940s, 'ley' farming (where crop planting is alternated with a forage legume for grazing, such as alfalfa or clover) was introduced to the Willaura and Lake Bolac districts. Under this system, wheat yields increased to 40-45 bushels an acre and the land was also used for grazing sheep.²⁰⁹ This phase of farming corresponded with good seasons and the post World War Two economic boom, resulting in high prices for wool and wheat.

The Victorian Grain Elevators Board was established in 1935 to introduce bulk-handling facilities for wheat; in the 1939-40 season the Board commenced operations as the sole bulk handler of wheat. Concrete silos and weighbridges were erected at railway stations, followed by steel silos constructed by the Grain Elevators Board to handle the bumper crops of the 1950s and 1960s.

In the 1962-63 season, wheat deliveries at silos at Tatyoon measured 271,711 bushels; at Westmere 408,584 bushels; and at Willaura 350,218 bushels. Eighty per cent of the oats produced at Maroona, Langi Logan, Ararat and Buangor districts in the 1962-63 harvest was transported to the bulk terminal at Portland.²¹⁰ Steel silos for wheat were built at Willaura in 1963 and at Westmere in 1964.

Bulk handling of oats commenced in 1962 and a number of oats storage sheds were built in the study area, including a shed at the Willaura railway station complex in 1964 and a Dreyfus shed at Westmere in 1962.²¹¹ Another shed was built at Mininera.

²⁰² Ibid., 125.

²⁰³ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 8.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 83.

²⁰⁵ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 135.

²⁰⁶ Information from history signage, Main Street, Willaura.

²⁰⁷ A.N.A. *Ararat and a National Project: Water for the Mallee – the Conference, the Town and the Eversley Weir*, 86.

²⁰⁸ Keneley, "The Impact of Agricultural Intensification on the Pastoral Economy of the Western District of Victoria, 1890-1930".

²⁰⁹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 136.

²¹⁰ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 54-55.

²¹¹ Dunn et al., *The History of Streatham, Westmere, Mininera and Nerrin Nerrin*, 10.

In more recent years, Grain Corp has established grain bunker facilities at Westmere and Willaura. In 2002-03, RV Broadbent and Sons established a large multifunctional grain terminal on Streatham Road.²¹² Lake Bolac also has a grain storage facility.



Figure 15: Wheat stack at Willaura, 1920. Source: Museum Victoria.



Figure 16: International Harvester, W-30 Tractor & Side Delivery Rake, Mr S H Moreton, Westmere, 1941. Source: Museum Victoria.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 14.

Minimum cultivation systems, which use chemicals instead of ploughing, are now in common use throughout the study area. Today's grain industry, including the growing of wheat, canola, barley and oats, makes an important contribution to the economic development of the area. Combined with the grazing of livestock, it was predicted to provide 18 per cent of employment in Ararat Rural City in 2012.²¹³

5.3 Gold mining

The Australian gold rushes were amongst the most significant of a series of rushes that occurred around the periphery of the Pacific Ocean from the mid-nineteenth century. Beginning in California in the late 1840s, the rushes swept through eastern Australia in the 1850s, New Zealand in the 1860s, the Klondike in the 1880s, and Alaska in the 1890s. People moved quickly, trying their luck at alluvial mining, creating 'instant' settlements, shifting from one gold discovery to another, from one Australian colony to another, and from one country to another. Copper miners from South Australia in the 1830s and 1840s travelled to the goldfields of Victoria and New South Wales in the 1850s. Diggers moved in a general anti-clockwise direction from Victoria to Queensland in the 1860s, the Northern Territory in the 1880s and Western Australia in the 1890s.²¹⁴

Gold rush immigration swelled the population of Victoria from 77,000 people in 1851 to 237,000 in 1854. During 1852, the peak year of the rushes, 90,000 people arrived in Melbourne. By 1857, the colony had a population of 411,000.²¹⁵ In the period 1851-60, Victoria produced 20 million ounces of gold, one-third of world output.²¹⁶ This was at a time when gold was the primary international standard of exchange because it was stable in price, durable, and transportable. The hoarding of vast quantities of Californian and Victorian gold by banks in America, England and France provided a basis for currencies and financial systems around the globe and supported a huge credit expansion that bankrolled world trade, shipping and manufacturing.²¹⁷ By 1903, Australia was the largest single producer of gold in the world.

Incorporating the Ararat Mining Division and a small portion of the Beaufort Mining Division (between Mount Cole and Streatham and focusing on Fiery Creek) gold mining in the study area made a significant contribution to these events.²¹⁸

Today, extant gold mining sites of the 1850s and 1860s are rare in the study area because the ground was re-worked in subsequent phases of mining. The main historical mining sites date from the late nineteenth century and are associated with shallow alluvial (shaft sinking, sluicing and dredging); deep lead (tunnelling and shaft sinking); and quartz reefing (tunnelling, shaft sinking and open cutting). The recent age of surviving mining relics is a reflection of the temporary and rudimentary nature of the early gold rush activities undertaken and the constant re-mining that occurred.²¹⁹

5.3.1 *Early discoveries*²²⁰

The first gold mined in the study area was located in stream sediments (alluviums) and quartz reefs. Alluvial gold, often fine flakes but sometimes large nuggets, was carried by running water from weathered profiles formed over millions of years on the old bedrock. From the early 1840s, shepherds on squatting runs found

²¹³ Rural City of Ararat economic modelling based on ABS 2006 census data.

²¹⁴ Jane Lennon, "Victorian Gold – World Heritage Status?," in *Bendigo: Nothing But Gold 150 Years of Gold Mining Conference Papers* (Bendigo, Vic.2001), 43.

²¹⁵ Cate Elkner, "Immigration and Ethnicity," University of Melbourne, <http://www.egold.net.au/biogs/EG00004b.htm>.

²¹⁶ Graeme Davison, John Hirst, and Stuart Macintyre, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press, 1998), 284.

²¹⁷ Lennon, "Victorian Gold – World Heritage Status?," 45.

²¹⁸ Mining District boundaries have been determined with reference to William Slight, "Victoria Mining Districts, Mining Divisions & the Gold Fields," (Melbourne: Department of Mines, 1866).

²¹⁹ "Victorian Goldfields Project Historic Gold Mining Sites in the South West Region of Victoria: Report on Cultural Heritage," (Melbourne, Vic.: Department of Natural Resources and Environment, August 1999), 2.

²²⁰ Most of the information for this section has been taken from *ibid*.

gold and from the early 1850s, prospectors mined the alluvial gold along streams and valleys by a number of means, including panning, cradling, puddling and shaft-sinking. Gold was also found in older alluvial deposits situated in former valley-bottoms, which over time had been left high along valley sides, sometimes as hilltop and plateau cappings. The sites were quarried or open-cut to expose surface gold. Due to a lack of new discoveries and the rise of more capital-intensive and technologically advanced quartz reef mining, shallow alluvial mining activity decreased from 1860. However this form of mining continued to provide a significant contribution to Victoria's gold production, including through the efforts of Chinese miners.²²¹ By March 1872, alluvial rushes had peaked in the study area.

In the Beaufort Mining Division, gold was discovered in 1854 at Yam Holes, a small hill on the outskirts of present-day Beaufort. The discovery triggered the Fiery Creek rush, which, by late 1859, had dissipated. By 1861, there were seven puddling parties (six European and one Chinese) working Upper Golden Point (upper Fiery Creek). Six of the puddling parties were renting water, and the other had its own dam. Although horsepower was the norm for puddling, at least one operation by Messrs Allen and Company involved steam-powered puddling machines.

In what was to become the Ararat Mining Division, gold was discovered in May 1854 on the Burrumbeep run at a place that became known as Pinky Point on the Mount William goldfield. By 21 June 1854, between 600 and 1,000 people had arrived.²²²



Figure 17: Pinky Point gold discovery monument. Photo by Tom Henty.

Several new alluvial rushes occurred in 1855, which led to the development of two other goldfields: Cathcart and Armstrong's. A series of discoveries from 1856 to 1858 resulted in the assembly of one of the largest mining populations at any of the Victorian diggings. The peak of the Ararat rush came in 1857, when Chinese gold seekers discovered the Canton Lead (later known as Ararat), and a party of European miners opened Campbell's Diggings at the site of present-day Moyston in 1859. On 9 May 1857, a local police report recorded that a party of 900 Chinese, on their overland trek to Bendigo, was fossicking in the Kangaroo Range, where, in the first six months, Canton Lead produced five tonnes of gold. By 11 June, the population at Canton Lead had risen to 10,000 miners, half of whom were Chinese; by 20 June, the population was

²²¹ David Bannear, and N Watson, "North Central Goldfields Historic Mining Sites Strategy, Revised Draft," (Melbourne, Vic.: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, North West Area, November 1994), 7.

²²² Clark, *From Barley to Burrumbeep: A Family History of Leonard Clark and Sarah Bowtell*, 20.

estimated at between 15,000 and 30,000.²²³ In August 1857, Ararat was declared a separate mining district. In 1864, most of the Division's 1,500 mining population was concentrated in five main localities: Moyston, Rocky Point, Ararat, Opossum Gully and Armstrong's, but it was the gold discovered at Pinky Point in 1854 that established mining in the area (see Figure 17).²²⁴

5.3.2 **Quartz reef mining**²²⁵

Quartz reef sites were first quarried or open-cut to expose surface gold, then deep shafts were sunk to extract the gold ore from its parent body, the quartz reef; this in turn was crushed and treated to free the gold.²²⁶ Tunnelling into the base of hills to find reefs was another early quartz mining technique.

Quartz reef mining was accompanied by the establishment of extensive crushing and treatment plants, pumping machinery to rid the mines of water and kilns to roast the quartz to make it easier to crush. The availability of water to drive machinery by steam or waterpower was critical to the success of these ventures. From 1857, powder for blasting in quartz mines was distributed by government-controlled powder magazines.²²⁷ By the end of the 1850s in the Ararat Division, several promising reefing locations had been opened up, including Campbells Reef at Moyston, which featured a large pyrites works, and Mitchells Reef.

From 1868, outside investors attracted by the ongoing success of quartz reef mining formed public companies to take out leases over extensive areas of country. Prospectors profitably opened up Rhydney Reef in 1869.

By the late 1870s, the quartz reef mining boom was declining, but was revived in 1880 with the introduction of compressed air rock drills and diamond drills. The activity of the 1880s, however, decreased in the 1890s.

In 1900 there was a large rush to the Grampians area, south of Mount William, to what became known as the Mafeking rush (see Figure 18). The surveyed township at the Mafeking rush was called Naram Naram. Premier of Victoria Thomas Bent issued free railway passes to the unemployed of Melbourne and thousands of men arrived at the Wickliffe Road (Willaura) railway station from where they made their way to the diggings across the wheat crops of sharefarmers on the Mount William run.²²⁸ A visiting geologist in 1900 reported that 7,000 men were on the field, but that it was a 'duffer'.²²⁹ The rush to Mafeking was short lived, and buildings established in the township were moved to other locations. The former gift shop in Willaura, for instance, was moved from Mafeking, and the hotel at Mafeking was moved to the Willaura district for use as a private residence.²³⁰ A cairn, erected in 1964 at Mafeking, commemorates the gold rush to the area.

Various other attempts were made to mine gold in the district, including one by the Willaura Prospecting Syndicate to extract gold in the Kiora area in 1914.²³¹ During the economic depression of the 1930s, when the price of gold rose from £4 to £8, there was renewed interest in prospecting of tailings.

²²³ Ritchie, *Guichen Bay to Canton Lead: The Chinese Trek to Gold*, 36-7,39.

²²⁴ *Back to Ararat: 1932 Souvenir Booklet*, (Ararat, Vic.: n.p., 1932), 2.

²²⁵ Most of the information for this section has been taken from "Victorian Goldfields Project Historic Gold Mining Sites in the South West Region of Victoria: Report on Cultural Heritage."

²²⁶ B Joyce, "Geology and Environment Overview " University of Melbourne, <http://www.egold.net.au/biogs/EG00004b.htm>.

²²⁷ Lennon, *Our Inheritance: Historic Places on Public Land in Victoria*, 29.

²²⁸ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 61. *Mafeking and Mount William Gold Rush*, (Ararat, Vic.: Ararat and District Historical Society, 1964).

²²⁹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 173.

²³⁰ Information from Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.

²³¹ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 95-6.



Figure 18: Miners on the gold fields at Mafeking, 1900, by W Hale Studio. Source: Museum Victoria.

5.3.3 *Deep lead mining*²³²

Deep lead mining exploited the alluvial material found in ancient buried stream beds. Shafts were sunk to a depth of over 100 feet and the material brought to the surface for crushing, mostly by batteries.

In the early 1860s, a small number of miners prospected the shallow leads around Beaufort. Many of them were new arrivals from Ballarat, where they had learnt deep sinking. They used mostly horse-powered haulage machinery (either whips or whims) or steam engines. In the study area, miners searched for leads along Fiery Creek. Deep lead mining slowed in the mid-1870s, but in March 1878 some eight to ten new leases had been taken out and the Beaufort Division's major leads were being investigated. For the most part, the deep lead mining boom had run its course by 1884.

By 1864 in the Ararat Mining District, twenty large deep lead claims had been taken up: four at Cathcart, six at Opossum Gully, five at Ararat, and five at Armstrong's diggings. By 1865, four companies - the Black Lead, Ararat, Canton and Burrumbeep - between them occupied 12,313 acres. The Great Extended Moyston commenced operations in 1866, but by the early 1870s, partly because of the problem of pumping out water from the mines, many of the deep lead companies had ceased operations. During the revival of the early 1880s in the Ararat Division, the most significant deep lead mines were the Grand Junction Company on Black Lead near Ararat, the Heather Bell Company at Burrumbeep, and the Langi Logan Company in the Hopkins River valley. By 1905, the Cathcart Proprietary (Denicull Creek) was the only mine working to any scale in the Ararat Division.

By 1913, the Cathcart Gold Mines had mined 75,126 ounces of gold. In the same year, Cathcart Central and the New Langi Logan Company were in operation.²³³ Between 1909 and 1915, the Cathcart Company's

²³² Most of the information for this section has been taken from "Victorian Goldfields Project Historic Gold Mining Sites in the South West Region of Victoria: Report on Cultural Heritage."

mines included the Cathcart North, British Queen, Cathcart Victory, Cathcart Central, New Langi Logan, Langi Logan Extended, Langi Logan North, Langi Logan West, Great Langi Logan and Upper Langi Logan. Several of these mines closed due to water problems, and with the closing of the New Langi Logan Deep Leads Company in 1932, deep lead mining ended in the Ararat district.

5.3.4 **Cement gravels mining**²³⁴

Alluvial gold was also found beneath the cemented Pliocene gravels that formed many of the small hills on the goldfields of the study area. These hills (often referred to as 'Hard Hills') were the eroded remains of ancient river beds where pebbles cemented together to form a conglomerate of extraordinary hardness. The mining of cement was undertaken around Ararat during the early 1870s. This was carried out profitably by the Londonderry Company.

5.3.5 **Sluicing and dredging**²³⁵

Sluicing in the 1850s was carried out by cradle; by 1873, mines were using hydraulic hoses to break down the washdirt.

At the Black Swamp in the Beaufort Division, a mile square dam was constructed from which water was pumped by a steam engine to fluming on a hill, and then conveyed by race to gold workings at Fiery Creek. From 1861, water from the swamp was used for sluicing by the Bill's Hill Sluicing Company, Rankin's sluicing party, and the Waterloo Company. Shallow alluvial ground was re-worked with pump-sluices and bucket dredges from ca. 1906. In this year, two main operations commenced: the Yam Holes Sluicing Company and the Fiery Creek Dredging Company. The latter venture was the most successful and operated on the upper part of the Fiery Creek to around 1918.

Towards the end of 1872 in the Ararat Division, alluvial miners began to construct reservoirs and cut races to enable them to sluice higher ground. One of the main sluicing ventures in the Ararat Division was by Hooper and party (also known as Port Curtis Sluicing Company), who constructed an expensive aqueduct from a reservoir in Opossum Gully to sluice the drift-capping of Port Curtis Hill.

The Mafeking Syndicate undertook extensive sluicing operations at Mount William in the first decade of the twentieth century.

5.4 **Exploiting water resources**

5.4.1 **Aboriginal water supplies**

The Aboriginal peoples of the study area learnt over thousands of years where water could be sourced, even in dry seasons. The sequence and location of water sources were memorised and passed down from generation to generation, in story and songlines, and mapped physically on tools used for hunting. The most permanent sources of water could be found in lakes, river and creek waterholes and at underground springs.

5.4.2 **Gold mining water supplies**

Water supply issues soon came to the fore after gold was discovered. Like gold, water was a valuable commodity. By June 1857, for example, water at the Canton Lead field was in short supply and diggers left for other fields at Stawell. While goldfield commissioners attempted to protect crucial local watercourses, both for mining and public use, discontent soon manifested. On one hand a reliable water supply was needed to support gold mining activities, and on the other, gold mining activities were responsible for fouling local

²³³ A.N.A. *Ararat and a National Project: Water for the Mallee – the Conference, the Town and the Eversley Weir*, 7.

²³⁴ Most of the information for this section has been taken from "Victorian Goldfields Project Historic Gold Mining Sites in the South West Region of Victoria: Report on Cultural Heritage."

²³⁵ Most of the information for this section has been taken from *ibid.*

watercourses. As mining success relied on having a dependable supply of water, miners quickly learnt to divert watercourses and build complex race systems. An earthen water race system, for example, was constructed at Hard Hill on Armstrong's diggings and can still be seen today.

Quartz mining put a considerable strain on the district's water supply, resulting in several attempts to ensure an adequate water supply for quartz crushing purposes. By 1859, several water schemes were underway. The water to the Beaufort goldfield was delivered via two main water race systems. One race line was constructed by the Wimmera Sluicing Company and brought water in from Mount Cole area.²³⁶ At a rush to Half Way Gully, Willaura, in the early 1900s, miners cut through a sandstone bar on the Hopkins River to divert the water flow so that they could access the gold believed to be located there.²³⁷

5.4.3 **Stock and domestic water supplies**

On the basalt plain and the Western Highlands of the study area, squatters built weirs on watercourses to create dams, deepened waterholes, and diverted river water through the building of channels.

During the gold rushes, in order to supply a safe drinking water supply to growing settlements the government funded the construction of goldfield reservoirs from the 1860s (see Figure 19). A severe drought in 1865-66 caused most diggers to desert the gullies of the study area. Conditions were so bad in March 1866 that Opossum Flat Reservoir, built in 1856, was appropriated by the Borough Council for the exclusive use of the residents of Ararat.²³⁸

The residents of the first permanent townships depended on these reservoirs, rivers, wells that accessed artesian water, and large public dams for a water supply. In 1874, the Stawell Borough Council approved a scheme to take water to the Stawell township from a weir constructed on a permanent spring at the head of Fyans Creek. Designed by engineer John D'Alton, the Stawell Water Supply Scheme carried water by gravity from Fyans Creek in the Grampians to a reservoir at Big Hill near Stawell via flumes, timber trestle aqueducts, syphons and a kilometre-long tunnel cut through Mount William near Pomonal. A celebration was held at the tunnel site when construction commenced in February 1875. The scheme was finished in March 1880.²³⁹ Some iron fluming of the system is still extant and the tunnel under Mount William continues to carry water to Stawell.



Figure 19: Moyston Reservoir, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

²³⁷ *History of Wickliffe Reprinted by the Lake Bolac and District Historical Society*, (n.p., n.d.).

²³⁸ "Victorian Goldfields Project Historic Gold Mining Sites in the South West Region of Victoria: Report on Cultural Heritage," 10.

²³⁹ *Pleasant Creek Chronicle*, 20 February 1875 cited in R. Allan Blachford, *Anecdotes of History* (Ararat, Vic.: R.A. Blachford, 1985), 55-6.

In 1870, chief hydraulic engineer of the Water Supply Department George Gordon approved a pipe-head weir at a natural basin on a spur at Mount Langi Ghiran to supply water to the Olivers Gully dam in Ararat. The reservoir, holding 15,200,200 gallons, opened in 1876, however failed to supply the town during summer. A pipe-head weir on Spring Creek at Mount Cole and pipeline were completed in 1883 to supplement supplies at Mount Langi Ghiran. Ararat's water supply was still insufficient because of a lack of storage. Minor improvements were made by converting Olivers Gully dam into a storage reservoir, constructing a service basin on Copes Hill, and later, a smaller dam in High Street West, Ararat. The Trust built a single-arch dam on Spring Creek at Mount Cole in 1906. The walls of the Mount Cole dam and Olivers Gully reservoir were raised in later years. Water was diverted from Green Range Creek to Mount Cole in 1954 to supplement supplies.²⁴⁰ Lake Fyans was constructed in the period 1914-16 on the site of Black Swamp by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission to supply the townships of Ararat, Stawell and Great Western.

The onset of dry years from 1878 instigated the development of a number of water supply schemes for the Colony of Victoria. The Water Conservancy Board, established in 1880, comprised George Gordon and Alexander Black, deputy surveyor-general. Gordon and Black were instructed to draw up plans for a stock and domestic and irrigation supply. For stock and domestic use, Gordon and Black recommended that river waters be used only in their own basins. Through the construction of weirs and dams in watercourses to store seasonal overflow, water was to be pumped or gravity fed via channels to farms. Public tanks were to be excavated every five to seven miles, and swamps used to store floodwaters for use in drier seasons. In this way Gordon and Black envisaged a water supply for stock and domestic purposes would be brought to a maximum distance of about three miles to every part of the country.²⁴¹ Amongst other programs, the Board recommended the development of the Wimmera Scheme to supply stock and domestic water from the Avon and Richardson Rivers to an area of 1,750,000 acres, and from the Wimmera River to an area between Glenorchy and Lake Hindmarsh and further north into the Mallee country.

The *Water Conservation Act*, introduced in 1881, incorporated the key ideas of Gordon and Black and enabled the establishment of Urban and Rural Waterworks Trusts to supply stock and domestic water. By the end of 1882, twelve Waterworks Trusts had been established. The Ararat Waterworks Trust was constituted under this Act. In addition to supplying farms, the Trusts undertook projects to improve water supply to townships, including the installation of water towers to provide a gravity-fed supply to residences and businesses. After a series of dry years from 1895-1902, government grants were given to shires to excavate a number of public tanks in settled areas.

Communities were active in applying pressure to improve water supplies. From 1938, Dr Cyril Checchi, who had arrived in Willaura in 1920, led a movement to get a water supply for the township, which at that stage relied on dams and rainwater tanks. Ten years later, as part of the SRWSC's post-war construction expansion and under the management of the Ararat Shire Waterworks Trust established in 1946, water was supplied in 1949 from Mount William Creek in the Grampians via a pipeline to Willaura. The Lake Bolac township finally received a supply from Lake Bolac in 1952 after years of resident agitation for a water supply for the town.

Many townships in the study area did not receive a secure water supply until the last decades of the twentieth century. The security of the Wimmera-Mallee system was improved by the completion of the Rocklands Reservoir in 1953 and the construction of a six million gallon service basin, named the Checchi Reservoir, was undertaken in 1962 to improve supplies to Willaura, Wickliffe in 1977, Moyston in 1973, and Lake Bolac in 1970. Water was supplied to Streatham from Fiery Creek in 1959; the supply system was supplemented with a bore in 1969 and a reservoir in 1982. Pomonal's water supply was provided from a bore and railways tank storage in 1968 and extended in 1990 with water from the Stawell supply; Elmhurst received a water supply from Hickmans Creek via a reservoir constructed in 1971-72; Warrak was supplied from a small weir on

²⁴⁰ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 167-9. R. Allan Blachford, *The Centenary of Water Supply in Ararat 1876-1976* (Ararat, Vic.: Ararat and District Historical Society, 1976), passim.

²⁴¹ "Supply of Water to the Northern Plains: Reports of the Board Appointed to Advise on the Feasibility of Giving a Supply of Water to the Northern Plains - Part 1 Supply of Water for Domestic Purposes and Use of Stock," (Melbourne, Vic.: John Ferres, 1881), 5, 11.

Shepherds Creek from 1973; Westmere was supplied by a pipeline from the Streatham reservoir in the early 1980s, as was Buangor from McLeod Creek at about the same time.²⁴²

In 1984, the Rural Water Commission was established to operate and maintain most of the State's water supply system, including storages and watercourses. In 1987, Grampians Water took over control of the Wimmera-Mallee Domestic and Stock Supply System.

In 1992, with the establishment of the Rural Water Corporation, regions were consolidated and greater local management powers given to Regional Management Boards. In 2004, the Wimmera Mallee Rural Water Authority merged with the Grampians Region Water Authority to form the Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Authority. The Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Authority is currently responsible for water supply in the study area, including provision to the townships of Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Pomonal, Streatham, Westmere, Wickliffe, Willaura and Moyston.

5.4.4 **Irrigation supplies**

Only limited irrigation has been undertaken in the study area. Water was supplied from Lake Bolac in the 1960s to spray irrigate onion, lucerne and potato crops on three properties adjacent to the lake, however high salinity levels meant that the activity was short lived.²⁴³ Lucerne was also irrigated from the Wimmera River at Eversley in the 1960s.²⁴⁴

5.5 **Exploiting forest resources**

Aboriginal people of the study area exploited forest resources to meet their needs. Since the arrival of white settlers, the forests of the study area have been used to provide hard, durable timber for sawmill logs, railway sleepers, fence posts, piles, firewood, building materials and mining timbers. In addition, forests have been used for honey, charcoal making, wattle bark and grazing. Settlers in the study area often supplemented their farm income by working as saw millers, wattle bark strippers and charcoal-burners.

From 1890, State forests were thinned by removing stunted and diseased trees, under-storey debris was burnt, and firebreaks were constructed. In order to provide trees for the replanting of depleted forests, State nurseries were established, including a nursery at Creswick opened by 1901. In 1907 the *Forests Act* was enacted to create a Department of State Forests to more effectively manage forests in Victoria and the Creswick School of Forestry opened in 1910 to train officers in forest management. The Forests Commission of Victoria was set up under the 1918 *Forests Act*, and subsequently exotic softwood species were planted, including Monterey pine plantations established near Mount Difficult in the late 1920s.

In the economic depression of the 1930s, unemployed men were paid by the government to work. This scheme was known as relief or 'Susso' (Sustenance) work and one of the main projects was forestry. At the height of the scheme, about 9,900 men were at work, clearing fire-damaged timber, cutting access tracks, establishing plantations and undertaking extensive thinning operations. Workers at Mafeking in the 1930s thinned areas of messmate and brown stringybark.²⁴⁵

During World War Two, the Forests Commission used alien internee and prisoner-of-war labour to manage the forests of Victoria. The main activity undertaken was the cutting of firewood.

²⁴² Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 92-94.

²⁴³ Information from Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Lake Bolac, 30 May 2012.

²⁴⁴ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 53.

²⁴⁵ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 63. Andrew Story and Peter Davies, "Historic Forest and Forest-Based Places in South-West Victoria Report to the Land Conservation Council," (Melbourne: Land Conservation Council, August 1995), 20.

5.5.1 **Sawmilling and timber felling**

The first milling to take place in the study area was pit-sawing, where a log was cut by a long saw operated between a pit and ground level. The discovery of gold in the study area in the 1850s led to an increased demand for timber for domestic heating and cooking, and eventually for pit props, railway sleepers, steam engine fuel and charcoal for ore processors.²⁴⁶ Steam-powered sawmills were located on waterways and were in use from the 1860s in the forests of the uplands of the study area; from 1918 sawmills operated under license to the Forests Commission. The mills often incorporated built settlements and large tramway networks to transport logs from landings and ramps to mills, and sawn timber from mills to railways. One such tramway operated near Mafeking.²⁴⁷ Mill machinery included steam engines, boilers, mechanical frame saws, circular saws, and breaking-down trolleys and saws. Wooden chutes and slide bridges to enable the hauling of logs were constructed over creeks and gullies.

One of the first mills in the study area was set up by Henry McGie on Hickmans Creek in Elmhurst in 1856. By the 1860s, several sawmills were in operation in the Mount Cole and Warrak areas (see Figure 20). Early records indicate that most trees felled at this time were messmate. Timber was carted to the Ballarat goldfield for use as firewood for steam boilers and for shaft timbers. Shingles for roofing and timber for fencing were also manufactured. In June 1861, the Victoria Mill at Mount Cole advertised for twenty bullock teams to transport timber, and other sawmills in the district offered 5,000 shingles for sale at 5s. per 1,000.²⁴⁸

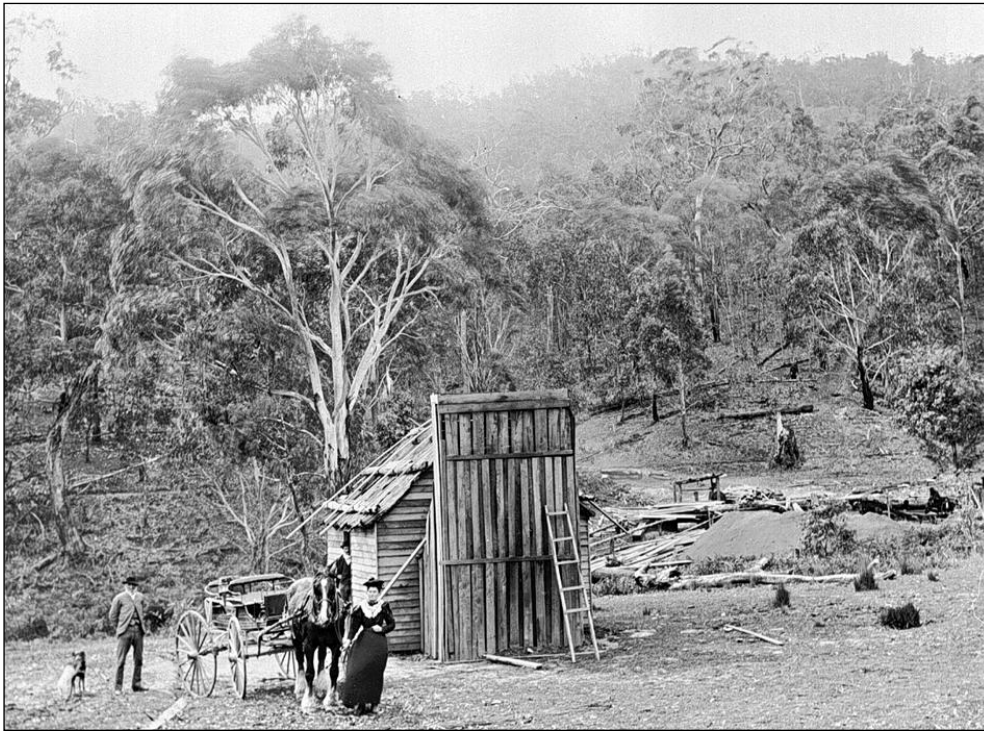


Figure 20: Sawmill at Mount Cole, ca. 1895. Source: Museum Victoria.

²⁴⁶ "Historic Forest and Forest-Based Places in South-West Victoria Report to the Land Conservation Council," 19.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁴⁸ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 1,5. Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 144.

Redgum sleepers were sawn at the Elmhurst pits, and by 1889, eight sawmills were operating within twelve miles of the Elmhurst township.²⁴⁹ By 1904, the forests of Mount Cole had been so depleted that the government closed them to commercial operators until 1947.²⁵⁰

Sawmilling peaked in the 1920s and again after World War Two with salvage operations put into place after the extensive fires of 1939. From this year, the Forests Commission encouraged sawmilling operators to move into towns. By the late 1940s sawmills had moved out of the forests and into Ararat. With motorised transport and electricity, these larger enterprises established on freehold land took over sawmilling ventures.²⁵¹

Following World War Two, the Grampians were heavily logged to supply the building boom, with about ten times the volume of wood being removed than was harvested in the previous century.²⁵²

Evidence of the sawmilling industry on public land today includes sawdust heaps, tree stumps, log landings, artefacts and rubbish heaps from settlements, and the remnants of tramways, bridges, buildings and machinery.²⁵³ Over 30 sawmill sites are in evidence on Mount Cole and Mount Lonach (not in the study area).²⁵⁴

5.5.2 **Charcoal burning**

Charcoal was used by blacksmiths, mines and foundries in the study area from the 1860s. Charcoal was made by covering fallen tree trunks with turf, leaving a small opening at one end for a fire, then closing this up with turf when the wood was well alight.²⁵⁵ Charcoal burning was typically undertaken by small gangs of men who worked in conjunction with firewood cutters. Tjapwurong men, Thomas Ware and Watty, worked for a blacksmith in 1866 bagging charcoal at Buangor for 4s. 3d. for three bags.²⁵⁶

In the early twentieth century, mining companies began to use gas-producer plants to power crushing batteries, and these were fuelled by charcoal. The gold mining industry also used large quantities of charcoal as a filter in the cyaniding process. During World War Two, charcoal, an alternative to liquid fuel, was used to power gas-producing units fitted to trucks and cars. Charcoal was also required for the production of gas masks and other filtering equipment. The Forests Commission in this period coordinated all production of charcoal from private sources, as well as constructing and operating its own kilns. Charcoal production statistics from 1942 indicate a variety of kilns were used, including pits, earthen, metal and brick kilns. Operations ranged from small operators (such as farmers) with one or two kilns, to large facilities with 20 to 40 kilns.²⁵⁷

The Forest Commission established charcoal kilns in several locations in southwestern Victoria, including in the Grampians.²⁵⁸

5.5.3 **Wattle bark stripping**

Wattle bark contains high levels of tannin and, in the nineteenth century, was one of the world's best barks for use in leather tanning. The stripping of bark from wattle trees required an axe for stripping, a heavy implement for knocking off small branches, and leather straps to tie the bark into bundles ready for transport. The method of stripping was wasteful and destructive, with only the trunk of a tree being stripped, and the process proving fatal to the tree. By the 1870s, wattle bark stripping in Victoria had grown into a significant

²⁴⁹ *Echoes of Elmhurst*, 5.

²⁵⁰ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 5.

²⁵¹ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 63.

²⁵² Story and Davies, "Historic Forest and Forest-Based Places in South-West Victoria Report to the Land Conservation Council," 20.

²⁵³ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 64.

²⁵⁴ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 6.

²⁵⁵ Bannear, "Study of the Historic Forest Activity Sites in the Box-Ironbark and Midland Areas of Victoria," 4.

²⁵⁶ Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 100.

²⁵⁷ Bannear, "Study of the Historic Forest Activity Sites in the Box-Ironbark and Midland Areas of Victoria," 9-10.

²⁵⁸ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 65.

industry that supplied both local and export markets. This remained the case until the 1950s when chromium salts replaced wattle bark as the main ingredient in the tanning process. By 1960, the preference for chromium salts by Victorian tanneries had reduced the use of wattle bark to 29 per cent of the total agents used.²⁵⁹

Wattle bark was harvested from the Grampians from the earliest days of white settlement, where government plantations were established in the early 1900s. Little evidence of this industry remains, but includes a New South Wales species of early black wattle that has naturalised and is now considered an environmental weed.²⁶⁰

5.5.4 **Grazing**

Grazing of the forests of the study area was undertaken from 1837 when squatters established runs in the area. In later years, licenses were issued for grazing in the forests, including at Mount Cole.

5.6 **Exploiting other resources**

5.6.1 **Stone, sand and gravel**

Basalt, sandstone, sand and gravel have been extracted for use in agriculture, building and road construction since the 1860s in the study area. Railway branch lines were constructed to access quarries, including a line mid way between Wickliffe Road (Willaura) and Greenvale (Stavelly) to access ballast pits for the construction of the Ararat-Hamilton railway line.²⁶¹

By the early 1970s, most known supplies of road making materials had been exhausted by the Shire of Ararat. With expertise provided by the Country Roads Board in 1975, other supplies of road base materials were found, including washed gravels near Mount William Swamp, soft sandstones south of Greenvale, and tertiary gravels at Denicull Creek.²⁶²

5.6.2 **Salt**

Salt for stock was extracted by Henry Wileman from the Cockajemmy lakes south of present-day Willaura from 1866 to 1889. By 1883, two salt factories had been established. So large was the working population at the lakes, a school was petitioned for in 1885. The Biggins family took over the industry in 1889 and operated it through until the 1980s.²⁶³

Fine salt was manufactured at a salt lake at Parupa Park near Lake Bolac in the 1860s, from where, by 1865, bullock wagons were carting salt to Ballarat. The salt was evaporated by fires lit under steel trays of salt water. Red gum and sheoke wood for the fires was carted from the Lappenich Wood Reserve.²⁶⁴ Merchants were licensed to harvest salt from the lakes at Lake Bolac as late as 1937.²⁶⁵ Those employed at the salt works included itinerant workers such as shearers and rouseabouts.²⁶⁶

Salt was also collected from the lakes of the Streatham district in the 1880s.²⁶⁷

²⁵⁹ "Study of the Historic Forest Activity Sites in the Box-Ironbark and Midland Areas of Victoria," 5.

²⁶⁰ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 65-6.

²⁶¹ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 97.

²⁶² Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 101.

²⁶³ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 72-3.

²⁶⁴ Mary Green, *History of Lake Bolac 1841-1966: After the Boolucburrers* (Lake Bolac, Vic.: Lake Bolac and District Historical Society, 1966), 9.

²⁶⁵ Information from Lake Bolac Historic Walking Trail plaque, Lake Bolac and District Historical Society.

²⁶⁶ Information from Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Lake Bolac, 30 May 2012.

²⁶⁷ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 13.

5.6.3 **Lime**

Several lime kilns, which burnt lime for use in building construction, were established in the Lake Bolac district in the 1860s.

5.6.4 **Alternative energy**

The Challicum Hills Wind Farm was established by Pacific Hydro at Buangor in 2003 and operates 35 wind turbines. RES Australia is planning to build another wind farm on rural land northeast of Ararat.

5.7 **Transforming the land and waterways**

Small areas of highly significant native vegetation are found on roadsides and around the margins of lakes and along the major rivers, however the vegetation and soils of the study area have been significantly impacted on by the fire regimes of Aboriginal peoples, grazing introduced by squatters, the gold rushes and company gold mining, forest industries, agricultural activities and the development of settlements and townships. Likewise, the manipulation of watercourses and farming and grazing activities have caused major changes in stream flows and river health in the study area.

The sheep and cattle introduced to the study area by squatters were quick to make their mark on the land. The hard hooves of cattle and incisor teeth of sheep rapidly depleted vegetation cover creating erosion that polluted watercourses. Trees and shrubs were removed, and the noxious silk-grass that had damaged pastures in Van Diemen's Land was carried to the Western District. In addition, along with the Scottish settlers came the Scotch thistle.²⁶⁸

In the period of gold mining, trees were felled to fuel fires for cooking and warmth, for building and fencing, for feeding boilers, and for propping up gold pits and shafts. The forests of the Western Uplands, dominated by stringybark, peppermint gum, box and ironbark, were felled, creating severe erosion hazards. Valleys were stripped to bedrock, their soils washed in puddlers and the unwanted residue flushed into watercourses. Complaints were received about the 'stream of mud' pouring from the machines into the gullies and creeks and onto the roads. Locals began agitating to improve conditions, and laws were passed to prevent sludge from impacting on waterways and public property.

Before game laws were enforced, from the 1860s professional hunters and fishers took a heavy toll on the animals of the forests; the turkeys of the plains, the ducks, swans and geese of the swamps and lakes; and the fish of the rivers and creeks. During flooding of Fiery Creek and Lake Bolac, white settlers from Ararat netted hundreds of eels at Salt Creek and sold them to nearby towns. The eelers lived in small huts on the banks of Lake Bolac.²⁶⁹ By placing nets across the outlet of Lake Bolac, European fishermen took every eel, thereby depriving Aboriginal people of an important food source that they had relied on for thousands of years. An amendment to the *Fisheries Act* in 1863 subsequently protected Aboriginal rights to the fish and eels of Lake Bolac.²⁷⁰ In later years, professional fishers smoked the eels and sent them to Skipton, Ballarat and Melbourne for shark bait.²⁷¹ Elsewhere, a stone building on the eastern bank of Lake Buninjon was the home of Thomas Biggin, the Kiara postmaster who shot wildlife with a swivel gun attached to a flat-bottom boat. Mount Langi Ghiran was a favoured spot for wallaby shooting.²⁷²

Significant changes have been wrought to the land of the study area by clearing vegetation for cultivation. Farmers experimented with introduced British and European grasses from the 1850s and 1860s. By the

²⁶⁸ Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890*, 177-8.

²⁶⁹ Green, *History of Lake Bolac 1841-1966: After the Boolucburrers*, 17-18.

²⁷⁰ Critchett, "A Study of Aboriginal Contact and Post-Contact History and Places," 121.

²⁷¹ Information from Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Lake Bolac, 30 May 2012.

²⁷² Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 113.

1960s, over 40 per cent of the state's acreage of 'improved pasture' grew in the Western District.²⁷³ From the early 1900s, farmers incorporated bare fallowing in a three-year rotation. Bare fallowing, or breaking up the soil, posited a dust layer over the soil and contributed to wind erosion. The use of superphosphate in farming has impacted on waterways.

Systematic poisoning of dingoes commenced in the 1860s. In 1867, rabbits were released in the Ararat district and by the early 1870s, had reached Cathcart, Langi Logan and Dunneworthy. By the 1870s, rabbits had severely reduced productivity on farms and hares had spread to Tatyoon, Kiora and Moyston. A variety of measures were introduced to control the vermin. Between September 1883 and March 1884, for example, 3,000 rabbits were shot on a 1,000 acre property at Wickliffe.²⁷⁴ Myxomatosis (the *Myxoma* virus) was introduced into Australia in 1950 and to the study area in 1951. The Calicivirus injection was registered in 1996 to control rabbits in Australia, however rabbit, fox and feral cat populations continue to spread in the study area.

The rehabilitation of mullock heaps (sedimentary rock that was extracted to treat gold-bearing quartz reefs) in goldfields areas was accelerated during the 1960s, with dumps being stabilised through the planting of pampas grass and peppercorn trees. A shaft-filling program was conducted by the Mines Department between 1935 and the 1970s.

Although Landcare groups over the past 25 years have made a significant contribution to the management of natural resources in the study area, only fragmented remnants of native vegetation remain. Vegetation loss has in turn impacted significantly on fauna species. Sheet, gully, wind and streambank erosion, dryland salinity, water logging, and soil structure decline continue as issues in the study area. Natural hydrological patterns have been fundamentally altered by settlement. The current low water quality in local streams and rivers evidences the impacts of historical land and water management practices.

6.0 Building Victoria's industries and workforce

6.1 Processing raw materials

Selectors took up wheat growing in the study area from the 1860s. As a consequence, a number of flourmills were constructed, including at Lake Bolac, Norval, Armstrong and Ararat. John Little established a mill for bonedust (used for fertilisation of crops and pasture) at Eversley in the 1880s.²⁷⁵

During World War Two, farmers grew flax for use by the military in webbing straps, uniforms, rope and canvas. The seed was used for the manufacture of linseed oil and meal. The flax was processed at a mill opened at Lake Bolac in 1942, which employed 100 people including 60 Land Army women, immigrants and displaced persons from areas of Europe devastated by war. Considerable acreages of flax were planted in the Lake Bolac and Westmere districts to supply the mill, which processed the crop yield from 3,000 acres until its closure in 1959.²⁷⁶ Footings and buildings from the flax mill can be seen at Lake Bolac today.

6.2 Catering for tourists

The natural environment of the study area, including the Grampians, the Pyrenees, Mount Cole State Forest, Langi Ghiran State Park, Mount Buangor State Park and Lake Bolac, are a draw card for tourists. Bush walkers have been exploring the Grampians since the 1860s. Increased numbers of visitors were attracted

²⁷³ J M Powell, 'Historical Geography' in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 95.

²⁷⁴ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 121.

²⁷⁵ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 28.

²⁷⁶ Information from Lake Bolac Historic Walking Trail plaque, Lake Bolac and District Historical Society.

when walking tracks were constructed in the late nineteenth century. Because of the availability of motor transport in the 1920s and 1930s and the subsequent increase in outdoor recreation, the Tourist Resorts Committee funded the Mount Victory Road and the Silverband Road in the Grampians. The Brambruk Living Cultural Centre, designed by architect Gregory Burgess, opened at Halls Gap in 1990. Facilitated by the Pomonal-Eastern Grampians Tourism Association, tourism is an important industry in the Pomonal district.

7.0 Building towns, cities and the garden state

7.1 Building country towns

The first settlements in the study area were those established by Aboriginal peoples.

European settlements developed from the 1840s at river crossings, on stock routes, and at the sites of inns and wine shanties. Wickliffe was established at the site of Farrell's Inn built near the ford over the Hopkins River, and the settlement of Crowlands grew up around a camping place on the Wimmera-South Australia stock route. Some settlements were named after squatters. John Ross settled near Burrumbeep in 1842 on a small run called Gledfield. After Gledfield was split up, the subsequent settlement became known as Ross's Bridge, today's Rossbridge.²⁷⁷

With the commencement of gold mining in the early 1850s, other settlements formed. Elmhurst was established in 1854 as a canvas town next to the ford over the Wimmera River on the road from the Forest Creek (Castlemaine) and Avoca goldfields to the Mount Ararat and Pleasant Creek diggings (see Figure 21).²⁷⁸ Moyston was surveyed on Campbell's Reef, the site of a gold rush in 1859, with allotments put up for sale in November 1861.²⁷⁹ The township of Cathcart was mistakenly surveyed on the pre-emptive right of the Burrumbeep run. Consequently, township allotments were never put up for sale.²⁸⁰

After the introduction of selection under the Land Acts of the 1860s, the first official township surveys were undertaken, often at the sites of earlier settlements. Townships were also surveyed in anticipation of demand for farmland in newly opened areas for selection and closer settlement. The Parupa (Lake Bolac) township was surveyed at the intersection of the Glenelg and Ararat-Warrnambool roads. Township blocks were put up for sale in 1862, with stonemason Robert Pitkethley constructing many of the town's early bluestone buildings.²⁸¹

After share-farmers established wheat farms on the Mount William estate from 1897, the first lands sales at Wickliffe Road township (named Willaura in 1905) were conducted in 1902. As the township was surveyed near a large swamp, drainage in the town posed an ongoing problem.

After subdividing a portion of Nerrin Nerrin estate, the Closer Settlement Board, expecting a strong migration to the area because of the pending railway line, set aside 1,000 acres for the Westmere township. Few township blocks sold however, and most of the land was later incorporated into two soldier settlement blocks.²⁸²

As part of the survey of townships, public land was reserved for schools, halls, police and court buildings, halls, churches, cemeteries, post offices, parks and recreation grounds. In some towns, substantial public buildings and churches were erected. Plants to generate gas and electricity were installed in later years. Water supplies were provided and drainage infrastructure constructed. Mains electricity was connected to rural districts of the study area from the 1930s.

²⁷⁷ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 51.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁸⁰ Bailliere's *Victorian Gazetteer*, 1865, cited in Clark, *From Barley to Burrumbeep : A Family History of Leonard Clark and Sarah Bowtell*, 25.

²⁸¹ Green, *History of Lake Bolac 1841-1966: After the Boolcuburrers*, 17.

²⁸² Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 155.

The planting of street trees and the establishment of public parks and gardens provided important aesthetic and recreational elements to townships.



Figure 21: Former bank building, Elmhurst, 1982, by J T Collins.
Source: State Library of Victoria.

8.0 Governing Victorians

8.1 Aboriginal administration

Some of the earliest Crown land reservations in the Colony of Victoria were Aboriginal protectorates and missions. The first attempt to govern Aboriginal people in the Port Phillip District, including people in the study area, came with the establishment of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate in 1838.

8.1.1 *Aboriginal Protectorates*

The formation of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate in 1838 had far reaching implications for local Aboriginal people. The Protectorate was established in response to humanitarian concerns about the declining state of Aboriginal people in the Port Phillip District. Its goal was to protect and re-socialise Aboriginal people through the teaching of agriculture, house construction, reading, writing and religious instruction. Aboriginal Protectors were appointed from 1838. George Augustus Robinson, appointed Chief Protector in the Colony of Victoria in April 1838, was stationed in Melbourne. In July and August of 1841, Robinson travelled through the Western District to report on the welfare of local Aboriginal peoples. Making Burrumbeep station his base, in the study area he visited Aboriginal people on Burrumbeep and Mount Cole runs.²⁸³

In March 1839 four Assistant Protectors were put in place with responsibilities for Geelong and the Western District, the Goulburn and North Eastern District, the Westernport and Melbourne District, and the Mount Macedon and North Western District. Tjapwurong country was initially divided between Assistant Protectors Charles Wightman Sievwright, who was assigned the Geelong and Western District, and E S Parker, who was

²⁸³ Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 133.

given the Mount Macedon and North Western District. Burrumbeep, near Burrumbeep Hill, was also gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve, but was never occupied.²⁸⁴

Charles Siewwright remained in Geelong until 1841. In February 1842, accompanied by 210 Aborigines, he settled on a station at Mount Rouse near present-day Peshurst. In November of that year, Captain Henry Dana reported to Governor La Trobe that men from Dana's Native Police Corps had driven 200 to 400 Aborigines from Lake Bolac and the Hopkins River to the station at Mount Rouse.²⁸⁵

From 1842, funds were cut to the Aboriginal protectorate stations, reducing their effectiveness. Initially frequented by high numbers of local Aboriginal people, by 1845 only 33 people remained at Mount Rouse, and, without sufficient supplies and assistance, the station closed in 1848.²⁸⁶

As traditional ways of trading and food collection broke down and supplies at protectorate stations dried up, Aboriginal people became reliant on the blankets, flour, sugar and mutton of white society. Following recommendations of the 1849 New South Wales Legislative Council's enquiry into the state of Aborigines, which largely represented squatting interests, the Port Phillip District Protectorate was abolished. William Thomas was retained as Guardian of Aborigines. Aboriginal peoples had no alternative but to look to white settlers for food and work.

8.1.2 **Missions**

In 1858, Moravian missionaries, F W Spieske and Reverend F A Hagenauer, selected land on Wotjobaluk country, at what was to become known as Antwerp, for an Aboriginal mission, later Ebenezer Mission. The Mission was located at Bunyo Budnutt, an outstation of pastoralist Horatio Ellerman and also an Aboriginal camping and corroboree place. Although the site of the mission station was outside the study area, local Aboriginal people accessed its resources in order to survive. In 1861, Ebenezer had a permanent population of 22 Aboriginal people who attended school and church services; a further 140 travelled to the site when the Board distributed rations. An 1866 report to the Board detailed the construction of twelve new buildings, including a kitchen, schoolhouse, store and four houses for residents.²⁸⁷ The Mission closed in 1904, with many people moving to the Antwerp Public Reserve, which became an unofficial Aboriginal reserve.

8.1.3 **The Aboriginal Reserve System**

The Aboriginal Reserve system for the Port Phillip District was legislated in 1859, and the reserve and rationing system for Aboriginal people was established in June 1860. By 1863, seven reserves and 23 camping places and ration depots were in place. In the country areas of the Colony of Victoria, 39 Honorary Correspondents managed 23 depots on behalf of the Central Board Appointed to Watch Over the Interests of the Aborigines, including depot stations at Nareeb Nareeb station near Wickliffe, Buangor and at Ararat. In 1863, the Board estimated that there were 70 Aboriginal men, women and children living in the Wickliffe, Mount Rouse and Hexham area.²⁸⁸

Under the 1869 *Aboriginal Protection Act*, the Central Board became the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines and provided for six Aboriginal reserves. The coercive Act allowed the Governor to prescribe where and how Aborigines lived and to take charge of orphaned and neglected children. As General Inspector for the Board, Superintendent of Coranderk, John Green, was responsible for relocating Aboriginal people to the reserves, arguing that all Aboriginal children should be removed from their 'old haunts'.²⁸⁹ Many local Aboriginal people moved to Warrnambool, although a few small camps existed on the outskirts of Wickliffe in

²⁸⁴ "The Djabwurrung: The First Peoples of Ararat and District," in *Ararat 1857-2007*, ed. Danny Barry and Judy Barry (Ararat, Vic.: Ararat Rural City Council, 2007), 1-2.

²⁸⁵ *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 96.

²⁸⁶ *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, 67.

²⁸⁷ "Ebenezer Mission History," Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Film Victoria and Koorie Heritage Trust Inc, http://www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/ebenezer/mission_history/default.htm.

²⁸⁸ Cited in Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 59.

²⁸⁹ "Seventh Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines of the Colony of Victoria," in *Victorian Parliamentary Papers* (Melbourne, Vic.: Government Printer, 1877), 19.

1871. In the study area over the 1870s, Wickliffe Aboriginal peoples were removed to Framlingham, and Mount Cole people were removed to Framlingham and Coranderk (near Healesville). A small number remained near their traditional estates. By 1880, only seven Tjapwurong speakers remained.²⁹⁰

The 1886 amendment to the Victorian *Aboriginal Protection Act* initiated an assimilation policy whereby Aboriginal people of mixed descent were removed from Aboriginal stations or reserves to merge into white society. The *Aborigines Act* of 1890 further extended state powers to separate Aboriginal children from their families. In 1901, the Victorian census recorded just 652 Aboriginal people, a sharp decline from the 1877 total of 1,067 people.²⁹¹ The *Aborigines Act* 1910 lessened, but did not remove, the legal distinction between the rights of the white population and Aboriginal people in Victoria.

Even though discriminated against in law in their own country, many Aboriginal people responded to the call to enlist during World War One. The *Defence Act* discouraged 'full bloods' from enlisting, so the Aboriginal men who served were, as defined by the language of the day, 'half castes'.²⁹²

The 1927 census revealed that there were only 514 Aboriginal people living in Victoria; 293 lived in 'supervised camps' or reserves'.²⁹³

In 1967, Aboriginal people were included in the census, and in 1970, the first act to recognise Aboriginal people's entitlement to land in Victoria was passed.

8.2 Developing institutions of self-government and democracy

The Central Road Board was established in 1851 to oversee the construction of a road network in the Colony of Victoria. The responsibility for road works was handed over to local districts, with support given through government grants, rates and tolls, under the *Roads Act* of 1853. Machinery was purchased for road making and toll gates erected to collect the necessary funds for road building (see Section 4.1.5). The Ararat Road District was gazetted on 27 August 1861 and incorporated an area of 1,500 square miles from Crowlands to Halls Gap to the top of Mount Abrupt, and from Streatham to Elmhurst.²⁹⁴ The *Local Government Act* of 1863 consolidated the 1853 *Roads Act* to provide for Road Districts and Shires to administer local affairs. Subsequently, offices were built to house municipal governments formed to take over the responsibilities of the Road Districts.

On 8 March 1864, the Ararat Road District was declared a shire. With the introduction of the Land Acts (see Section 3.5.3), by the end of 1866 there were 1450 properties on the shire assessment list and 5000 acres under cultivation; by 1872 the population was 6557.²⁹⁵

Lake Bolac residents, lacking representation on the council, urged the adoption of ridings. North, east and west ridings were adopted in 1869.²⁹⁶ In 1890, the boundaries of Ararat Shire were re-defined. In 1926, Halls Gap was severed and annexed to the Stawell Shire. Areas of the Ararat Shire were handed over to the City of Ararat in 1941 and 1960. After continued lobbying from Lake Bolac residents, a south riding was added to Shire of Ararat in 1951.

²⁹⁰ Clark, "The Djabwurrung: The First Peoples of Ararat and District," 2.

²⁹¹ Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800*, 194.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 201.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 194.

²⁹⁴ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 20.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The Municipal District of Ararat, centring on the township of Ararat, was incorporated on 24 September 1858, at which time it had an area of 3480 acres and a population of 5200.²⁹⁷ In 1863, the municipality was declared the Borough of Ararat; in 1934 the Town of Ararat; and on 24 May 1950, the City of Ararat.

On 23 September 1994, under state wide local government amalgamations, the Ararat Shire was abolished and merged with the City of Ararat and part of the Shire of Stawell to become the Rural City of Ararat, now Ararat Rural City.

8.3 Maintaining law and order

A police presence was first established in the district in the early 1840s under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Crown Land when members of the Native Police Corps and eighteen Border Police were sent to combat squatter-Aboriginal violence in the Western District.²⁹⁸

The Eureka Rebellion took place in Ballarat at the end of 1854, and had a major impact on how the goldfields were administered. Local self-government of mining affairs was introduced via Local Courts, which were instrumental in framing regulations for the conduct of mining, determining the area of a claim and the conditions for occupying a claim. Police paddocks, from where law and order were administered from temporary headquarters, were established early in the development of towns. Police residences, offices, stables and lock ups were subsequently built. The headquarters for a police district, including a police court, was established at Crowlands in 1854, however miners often took matters into their own hands. On the Ararat field, for example, disgruntled miners formed a Vigilance Committee, which meted out justice according to its own rules to thieves and members of gangs, some of whom later became bushrangers.²⁹⁹

Police stations were established in gold mining settlements in the 1850s. A police camp was established at Mount Cole in 1862, but closed in 1880 after sawmilling activity had decreased in the district.³⁰⁰ Courthouses followed on from police camps and were established in the study area from the 1860s.

A goldfields gaol was built at Ararat in 1861 and was taken over as an asylum for the criminally insane in 1886, remaining open until 1891.

9.0 Building community life

9.1 Maintaining spiritual life

A church was often one of the first buildings erected as the nucleus of a settlement. Prior to the erection of permanent structures, services were conducted wherever shelter was available. The first pastoralists conducted services in their huts.

Because of the major settlement of Scots in the Buangor district, Presbyterian church services were established at Mount Cole station in the 1840s. Rev A Adam lived with the Campbell family until a manse was built at Beaufort. Church of England services were also held at the station.³⁰¹

Available ministers, travelling by horse and cart, covered large geographic areas. The Wesleyan Methodist preacher's plan of 1865 for the Ararat and Pleasant Creek circuit, for example, lists the following places where

²⁹⁷ Danny Barry and Judy Barry, eds., *Ararat 1857-2007* (Ararat, Vic.: Ararat Rural Council, 2007), 297.

²⁹⁸ Clark, *Aboriginal Languages and Clans: An Historical Atlas of Western and Central Victoria, 1800-1900*, 95.

²⁹⁹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 57, 73.

³⁰⁰ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 1.

³⁰¹ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 47.

services were provided: Ararat, Moyston, Cathcart, Opossum Gully, Crowlands, Eversley, Pleasant Creek reef, Great Western reef, Congongella Creek reef, Deep Lead, Rose Hill reef and Landsborough reef.³⁰²

Church buildings were erected as settlements grew and funds were raised for the establishment of permanent structures. Early structures were often constructed from local timber and bluestone on Crown land (see Figure 22). Most of the church titles were passed over to the occupants under the *Abolition of State Aid to Religion Act* of 1871.

In 1861, a stone Presbyterian church was built at Wickliffe. J D Wyeslaskie, the owner of Narrapumelap, paid for the addition of a tower and spire to the church in 1878. Another Presbyterian church was built by Scottish selectors at Tatyoon in 1870. The building was erected for £66 from timber carted by the local settlers from the Mount Cole mills. Rev P Homan from Ararat provided church services to the sawmill population at Mount Cole and Warrak until a multi-denominational church was built at Mount Cole in 1862 from local subscriptions from timber supplied by local millers. A stone church was built ca. 1870 at Streatham, and included an upstairs gallery with a private pew for the owner of Fiery Creek run (a subdivision of Carranballac run).³⁰³ An unusual Methodist church hall was constructed in Warrak from a former RAAF building moved from Ballarat in 1962.³⁰⁴

Tamara Beggs and Malcolm Fraser, later Prime Minister of Australia, were married at the All Saints Anglican Church in Willaura in 1956. The route taken by them to reach the church is known today as Wedding Road.

With declining congregation numbers during the latter half of the twentieth century, churches have consolidated, often leaving only one denomination being represented by a single operating church, or resulting in several denominations operating from the one building.



Figure 22: Church at Rossbridge, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.

³⁰² See "Papers and Reminiscences," in *Manuscripts MSB 466 MS 9468*. (State Library of Victoria, n.d.).

³⁰³ *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 69, 115.

³⁰⁴ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 44-5.

9.2 Educating people

In the 1840s, the children at station homesteads attended boarding schools in the city; others were instructed by governesses and tutors at home.

National Schools were introduced to Australia in the 1840s. A new Board of Education in Victoria took over control of all National and church schools under the *Common Schools Act* of 1862. Mount Cole Common School was established in 1865 in a building that was used as a church and hall.³⁰⁵ Parupa Common School was opened at Lake Bolac in 1866 in a bluestone building later used as a flourmill.³⁰⁶

State schools were erected in Victoria in the 1870s after the Victorian *Education Act* of 1872 established a central public school system based on the principles of free, secular and compulsory education. Local residents, often represented by Progress Associations, petitioned the Department of Education to give approval for the opening of a school. Schools were built at an average of ten miles apart so that children could walk or ride. Settlers often donated the land, provided half the cost of the school (sometimes more), and boarded the teacher, while the government paid teachers' wages, provided some equipment and the balance of school costs. Because of a lack of financial resources of many of the settler communities, schools were often not built for some ten or fifteen years after settlement. School buildings were used for a variety of purposes and were often moved as populations grew or declined.

In the study area, Bessie Austin opened a preparatory school for boys, called Greenvale College, on part of the former Greenvale run in 1900. The college, a preparatory school for Geelong Grammar, closed in 1919.³⁰⁷ Mafeking State School No. 3388, which opened on the Mafeking goldfields in 1901, was unusual because the one-room building belonged to the miners.³⁰⁸

With soldier settlement after World War Two a higher elementary school opened at Lake Bolac in 1957.

Another education initiative was the mechanics' institute movement established in 1800 when Dr George Birkbeck of the Andersonian Institute in Scotland gave a series of lectures to local mechanics. The nineteenth century term 'mechanic' referred to an artisan or workingman. The lectures were free and proved popular. They led to the formation of the Edinburgh School of Arts (1821) and the London Mechanics' Institute (1823). The movement spread quickly throughout the British Empire, including the Colony of Victoria from the 1850s. Mechanics' institutes (also named Athenaeums and Schools of Art) were established wherever a hall, library or school was needed. Nearly 1,000 were built in Victoria and 562 remain today.³⁰⁹ An existing Moyston Mechanics' Institute account book records memberships from 1867 until 1879 and a minute book details the day-to-day running of the institute. At the end of 1877, the institute's library contained 389 volumes.³¹⁰ A mechanics' institute was built at Kiora in 1909. The building was also used as a school, church and hall by the local community.³¹¹ The Elmhurst Mechanics' Institute building continues to be used today.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 19.

³⁰⁶ Green, *History of Lake Bolac 1841-1966: After the Boolucburrers*, 30.

³⁰⁷ *History of Wickliffe Reprinted by the Lake Bolac and District Historical Society*, n.p.

³⁰⁸ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 48.

³⁰⁹ "What Is a Mechanics' Institute?," Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc, <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~mivic/history.htm>.

³¹⁰ Moyston Mechanics' Institute Minute and Account Book 1868-1880 in Banfield, "Moyston Mechanics Institute Papers, 1859-1932."

³¹¹ "Peopling the Land. Village Settlement," *The Argus*, 2 June 1911, 69.

9.3 Providing health and welfare services

Early settlers in the area experienced increased risks to their health due to the remoteness of settlements and lack of facilities. Frances MacWhirter, who married squatter Colin Campbell in Geelong on 15 January 1851, had been educated in Edinburgh in medicine. Her medical skills were much valued in the Mount Cole district until her death in 1883.³¹²

Prior to the 1890s, few women were allowed admission to hospitals. Childbirth and the treatment of women's illnesses were carried out at home with the help of visiting bush nurses, midwives or relatives. Midwives, including Aboriginal women, and bush nurses played a vital role in providing care for settlers in the district from the days of early settlement right through until the 1930s in the more isolated towns. Midwives and nurses walked or drove buggies to reach their patients; some set up beds in their own homes. Payment for their services was often made in farm produce. A number of private hospitals were established in homes from the 1880s.

Medical services were provided in later years by doctors. Sydney Patterson MD set up a practice in Willaura in 1909, and also provided services to Glenthompson, Wickliffe and Lake Bolac.³¹³ After purchasing the medical practice of Doctor Osler, Dr Checci arrived in Willaura in 1920. He provided medical services to the community, took on management of the Kelvin Private Hospital, which opened in 1910, and provided services to the Willaura Bush Nursing Hospital.

Bush Nursing Centres were introduced in Victoria from 1911 to provide essential nursing care in country areas that were isolated from regular medical services. Bush nursing hospitals were opened at Elmhurst in 1917 and at Willaura in 1935.

The first Baby Health Centre was established in Melbourne in 1917. Others were built throughout Melbourne and rural Victoria municipal councils at the behest of local groups such as the Country Womens Association, with the support of the Victorian Baby Health Centres Association from 1918, and the Society for the Health of the Women and Children of Victoria from 1920. Infant Welfare Centres were constructed in the study area in the early 1960s at Streatham and Willaura, and services also provided to Buangor, Lake Bolac, Elmhurst, Maroona, Moyston, Pomonal, Westmere and Yalla-y-Poora.³¹⁴

9.4 Establishing meeting places

Some of the first meeting places in the study area were inns. A wayside inn was built on the track that passed near Colin Campbell's home station at Buangor, at a site opposite the Cobb and Co station that was built in later years. Alexander Laing set up a roadside inn in 1858 beside the bridge near John Ross's home station over the Hopkins River.³¹⁵ Farrell's Inn was built at the ford over the Hopkins River on the coach road from Portland to Melbourne (see Figure 23). The site later became the nucleus of the Wickliffe township.³¹⁶ An inn and store were constructed in 1848 at Crowlands on the Wimmera to South Australia stock route, which were also used as a Cobb and Co changing station.³¹⁷ During the gold rushes to Campbell's Reef, ten hotels existed in the ten miles of the road between Ararat and Moyston.³¹⁸ Elsewhere, Ford's hotel on Mount Cole,

³¹² 'Colin Campbell' in Pickford, "Buangor Park Records, Ca. 1889-Ca. 1978," 1,3.

³¹³ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 150.

³¹⁴ Banfield and McKenzie, *Shire of Ararat 1864-1994. The Centenary Years 1864-1964 / Lorna L. Banfield. The Final Thirty Years 1964-1994*, 62.

³¹⁵ Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 51.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-8.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

and Lewin's hotel and McGuinness's 'Live and Let Live' hotel at Warrak offered alcohol, food and entertainment to employees of the sawmills in the early 1860s.³¹⁹

Other social gatherings were held in whatever buildings were available. Residents of the Lake Bolac district, for instance, attended dances, concerts and tea meetings at the flourmill before a hall opened in 1896.

In later years, public, memorial, shire and church halls became the focus of district social life. The erection of a hall, often through the efforts of the local Progress Association, stood as a measure of faith in the future of the community. Often built of timber, or only partly finished, halls required regular upkeep and often rebuilding. Communities came up with creative ideas on how to raise the required funds.

Halls housed a variety of activities, including school classes, dances, meetings, church services, wedding receptions, drama and musical entertainments, kitchen teas, court cases, debates, horticulture shows, parties, wakes, and film screenings. Halls were also the focus of sadder occasions such as gatherings to commemorate the lives of servicemen who did not return, or send offs to settler families leaving the district.

Today in the study area halls remain, sometimes as the only evidence of once thriving settlements; others, such as the Mount Cole Creek Hall, are marked by plaques (see Figure 24).

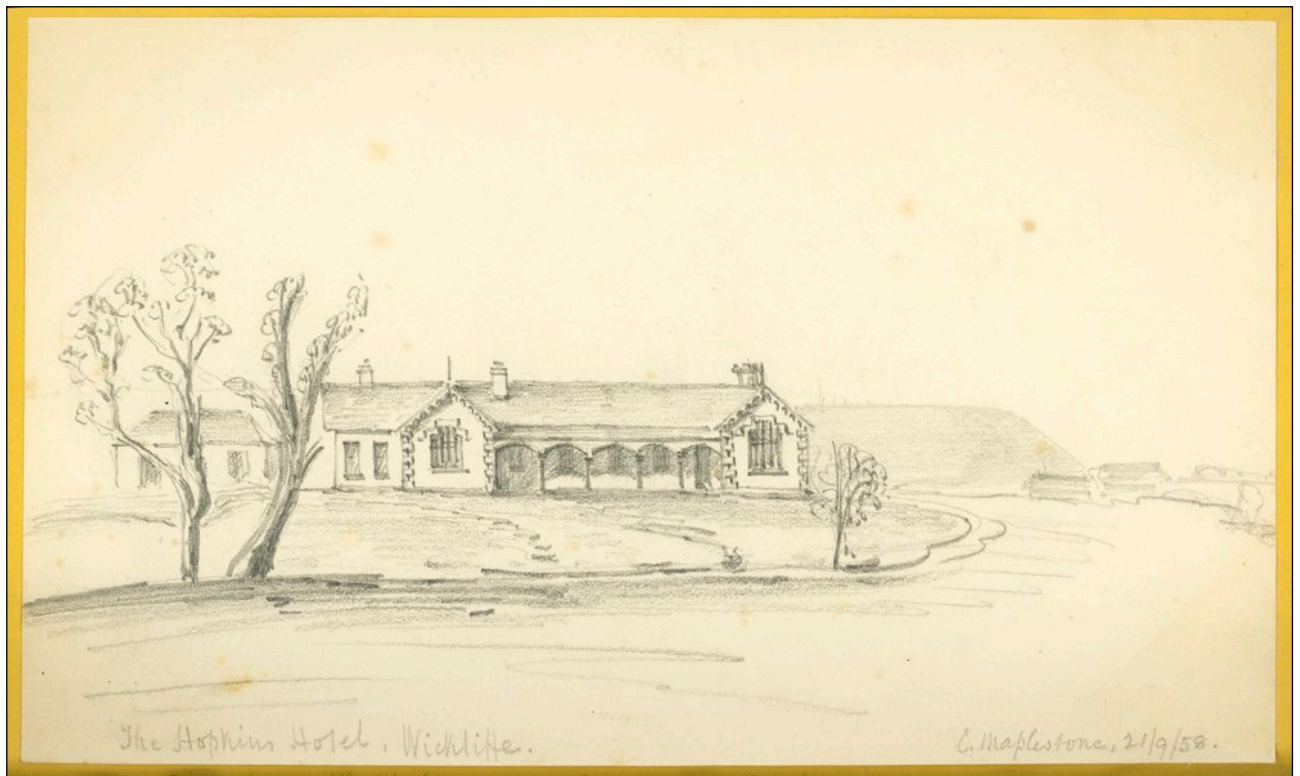


Figure 23: Farrells Inn, Wickliffe, 1958, by Charles Maplestone. Source: State Library of Victoria.

³¹⁹ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 1.



Figure 24: Mount Cole Creek Hall site, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.

9.5 Preserving traditions and commemorating

The advent of wars, especially World War One and World War Two, impacted greatly on community life in the study area. Residents commemorated those who served in the wars through the erection of war memorials, including obelisks, cairns, fountains, statues, honour boards and memorial halls and gates. Avenues of honour were also established.

A memorial obelisk made of Mount Cole granite was erected at Warrak in 1920.³²⁰ Moyston has an honour avenue and obelisk, Maroona and Streatham a memorial hall, Lake Bolac a memorial hall and obelisk (see Figure 25), Willaura a memorial hall, cenotaph and memorial wall, and Westmere, Wickliffe, Elmhurst and Warrak have monuments.

Monuments and plaques also commemorate other key events in the development of communities and districts.

9.6 Marking the phases of life

The earliest burials were those of Aboriginal people. In later years, graveyards were established on runs, and are evidenced today by headstones at Buangor Park, Woodlands, Allanvale, and at the Lexington homestead. Many of these graveyards contain Aboriginal burials.

A small bush cemetery at Mount Cole marks the deaths of sawmilling families in the 1850s.³²¹

Elsewhere, single graves testify to the isolated deaths of early settlers before public cemeteries were established.

Cemeteries throughout the study area still in use are mostly associated with larger townships; the exceptions are cemeteries at Cathcart (see Figure 26) and Spring Lead, which survive in isolation to evidence their once thriving settlements.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.



Figure 25: Lake Bolac Memorial Hall and war memorial, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.



Figure 26: Cathcart Cemetery, 2012. Photo by Tom Henty.

10.0 Shaping cultural and creative life

10.1 Participating in sport and recreation

Dances were held from the first years of pastoral settlement, often in shearing sheds. Activities held to raise the necessary funds to ensure provision of services, such as hospitals and churches, also brought communities together in celebration. Some of the first events held in the study area were the sports and dances introduced by Scots, Alexander and Colin Campbell, of the Mount Cole station. In the 1840s, dances were held in the loft above the Cobb and Co changing station at Buangor and New Year's day sports were organised by the brothers and other Scottish squatters and workers who settled in the district.³²²

Places of natural beauty were the focus of outdoor pursuits. A Christmas picnic for squatters and their families was held at Langi Ghiran in 1854³²³ and schoolchildren attended annual picnics held on New Years Day or Boxing Day. Residents swam at their favourite spots on rivers in the study area (see Figure 28). In 1966, a swimming enclosure to allow competitive swimming was established on Lake Bolac.

Cricket and football teams were established from the 1860s (see Figure 27). Settlements were quick to utilise available spaces until funds enabled the erection of permanent facilities on recreation reserves. Clubrooms, grandstands and score boxes were amongst the structures built. Planting of trees, particularly pine, cypress and sugar gums, was also undertaken. Often memorial gates were erected at the entrance to reserves. Tom Wills, the eldest son of Horatio and Elizabeth Wills who took over the Lexington run in 1841, became a well-known Australian cricketer and, after observing local Aboriginal people playing a game with a possum skin ball, founded the game of Australian Rules Football. A memorial to Wills was unveiled at Moyston in 1998.

Farming land at Willaura was converted to a recreation reserve in 1910 when a committee placed a notice in the *Willaura Farmer* calling for competitive designs for a reserve including tennis courts, cricket, football and sports ground with grandstand and tree plantings.³²⁴ Early improvements at sports and recreation grounds depended on community funds and labour. Local man Otto Dadswell, for instance, built the shed at the Warrak Recreation Reserve in 1926.³²⁵

Horse racing clubs were established throughout the district. The 'Shearers Races', with shearers riding their own horses, were part of race meetings held at the Lake Bolac racecourse from 1863.³²⁶ The Mount Cole Turf Club held race meetings from 1864 until 1920 and drew race-goers from Maryborough, Stawell and Ararat who travelled by special trains.³²⁷

Coursing was popular from 1909 to 1914 in the Lake Bolac district, where riders and dog pursued hares at Eilyer, Bolac Plains, Ennerdale and the Marsh.³²⁸

Golf competitions were organised from the early 1900s, and tennis tournaments were played on courts built in the study area from the 1890s. Facilities were established and extended as community numbers grew. The Streatham Golf Club clubhouse, for example, was extended in 1975 by incorporating the relocated Mininera Hall.³²⁹

Town bands were formed throughout the study area, including a brass band in 1878 at Lake Bolac. In 1951 the Lake Bolac Music Club was established to perform drama, music and live shows.³³⁰

³²² Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 40.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 63.

³²⁴ Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 235.

³²⁵ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 90.

³²⁶ Green, *History of Lake Bolac 1841-1966: After the Boolucburrers*, 34.

³²⁷ Beattie and Shalders, *Mt Cole-Warrak: A History and Its People*, 97.

³²⁸ Green, *History of Lake Bolac 1841-1966: After the Boolucburrers*, 36.

³²⁹ Dunn et al., *The History of Streatham, Westmere, Mininera and Nerrin Nerrin*.

³³⁰ Information from Lake Bolac Historic Walking Trail plaque, Lake Bolac and District Historical Society.

A sheep dog competition established in Moyston in 1928 is the longest consecutively run sheep dog trial event to be held in Victoria.³³¹



Figure 27: Moyston Football Club, 1922. Source: Museum Victoria.



Figure 28: Families picnicking at Picnic Point, Lake Bolac, 1910, by Hugh Michael O'Rorke. Source: State Library of Victoria.

³³¹ Information from Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Moyston, 31 May 2012.

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