

Baw Baw Shire Heritage Study Stage 1

Volume 1: Thematic Environmental History

CONTEXT



Prepared for Baw Baw Shire Council

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PREFACE

The *Baw Baw Thematic Environmental History 2006* comprises Volume 1 of the *Baw Baw Heritage Study (Stage 1) 2006* (the Study). The purpose of the Study is to identify places of potential post-contact cultural significance within Baw Baw Shire (the study area) and to make recommendations for their future assessment.

As described in the following section, this environmental history provides an explanation of the themes and activities that have been important in shaping the study area so as to provide a context to assist with the identification of heritage places that illustrate its rich cultural history. It should be read in conjunction with *Baw Baw Shire Heritage Study (Stage 1) Volume 2: Key Findings and Recommendations*. That volume provides an explanation of the key findings including a list of places and precincts of potential heritage significance identified by the Study as well as a series of recommended actions and strategies for undertaking Stage 2 of the Study at a future date.

The terms used throughout this report are consistent with *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance*. A glossary of these terms and their meanings is provided at the end of this report.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This environmental history provides an explanation of the themes and activities that have been important in shaping the present-day Baw Baw Shire (the study area), which was created in 1994 and comprises the former Shire of Buln Buln, Shire of Narracan (part), the Rural City of Warragul, and a small part of the Shire of Upper Yarra.

It is important to understand that it is not intended as a complete social or political history of the municipality, but rather as a summary of human use and impact upon the landscape in the years since the period of first contact between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous explorers and settlers (this is referred to as the 'post-contact period') during the middle of the nineteenth century. It is not intended to be a chronological record and has not been prepared in such a way.

Rather, the history is organised according to themes so as to provide a context to assist with the identification of heritage places that illustrate the rich cultural history of the study area. These heritage places include buildings and structures, precincts, objects, ruins, trees and landscapes. The themes are also embodied in the historic or continuing uses of places and people's social and spiritual associations with them.

While the history will encompass the whole of the study area, the Brief for this study specifies that identification of heritage places will focus on the areas other than the former Rural City of Warragul, and Walhalla township, which have already been the subject of a number of detailed heritage studies.

The themes used in this environmental history have been adapted from the *Australian Historic Themes* (AHT) set down as guidelines by the Australian Heritage Council (AHC) and the *Thematic List of Post Contact Aboriginal Places/Sites* prepared in 1999 for Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and the Australian Heritage Commission. The AHC notes that:

The consistent organising principle for the Thematic Framework is activity. By emphasising the human activities that produced the places we value, and the human response to Australia's natural environment, places are related to the processes and stories associated with them, rather than to the type or function of place.

Finally, it is important to understand that the history has not been arranged as a hierarchy giving priority, weighting and privilege to some themes, nor will it simply be a checklist. One place may be associated with many themes reflecting the integrated, diverse and complex way that places evolve over time.

The process has been an iterative one, with the themes and sub-themes being revised and refined throughout the study depending on the outcomes of more detailed research, fieldwork and consultation with key stakeholders.

On this basis, each chapter includes:

- A brief introduction, which includes an explanation of which AAV/AHC theme is relevant.
- An outline of the history of the study area associated with the particular theme.
- A description of some of the heritage places associated with the theme. The heritage places mentioned in this report are not an exhaustive list; rather they are representative of the many places that the Study has identified.

Historical Overview

As described above, this thematic environmental history is set out in a thematic, not chronological, order. The following table is provided to assist in understanding how the historic themes are associated with key dates in the historic development of the study area. Please note that this table is indicative only of broad timeframes associated with each theme and reference should be made to the appropriate chapter in this environmental history for more specific information about the actual periods of influence for each theme.

Theme	Period of Influence											
	Pre-1860	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	
First contact & Exploration												
Settling the land												
Transport & Communications												
Governance												
Utilising natural resources												
Managing & appreciating the environment												
Creating local & regional centres												
Community & cultural life												

	Primary period of influence
	Secondary or continuing period of influence

Landscape of Baw Baw Shire

Baw Baw Shire has a distinctive and picturesque landscape, which is comprised of several major landforms. A landscape character study undertaken for the Shire of Baw Baw in 2004 described the Shire as containing:

a varied and valuable landscape, with mountain wilderness, National Parks, rivers, lakes, and cleared pastoral land in a variety of topographical settings, including the rich dairying country of West Gippsland. (Planisphere, 2004:3)

Three distinct landscape character regions are identifiable in the Shire:

- High alpine environments and herbfields of the Great Dividing Range and the wet forest slopes and foothills of the Great Dividing Range, which form part of the *Northern uplands*
- Extensive rolling to flat pastures surrounding the Princes Highway corridor, which are part of the *Moe River plains* extending to low flats that adjoin with the Koo Wee Rup swamps to the south-west that are part of the *Central lowlands*.
- The Strzelecki Ranges, which are part of the *Southern uplands*.

Topography

Baw Baw Shire is topographically diverse, rising to over 1500m AHD at Mount Baw Baw and including flats and plains in the south. More than one-third of the Shire is mountainous. According to Planisphere (2004):

The dramatic variation in topography creates a highly varied landscape, with a number of local and regional topographic landmarks, including Mt Worth, on the Strzelecki Range, Mt Erica in the Baw Baw foothills, and Mt Baw Baw itself, which is visible in clear weather from throughout the municipality and beyond. (Planisphere, 2004:5)

Vegetation

At the time of first contact, tall forests of Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and Alpine Ash (*E. delegatensis*) covered much of the northern part of the shire. Higher up in the Baw Baws supported sub-alpine and Montane vegetation communities. Further south, forests of mixed eucalypts were common, including Messmate (*E. obliqua*), Silvertop Ash (*E. •eeberi*), Mountain Grey Gum (*E. cypellocarpa*), Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*) and Blue Gum (*E. globulus*). Tall stands of Mountain Ash were also common in the Strzelecki Ranges.

Today, the northern half of the Shire is in the most part densely vegetated as it is contained in State Forest and National Parks. Throughout the southern half of the Shire, much of the landscape is cleared of treed vegetation, however, substantial remnant and regrowth stands of lowland forest occur such as at Mt Worth State Park. The Strzelecki Range contains substantial areas of wet forest, although much of this has been replaced with plantations of pine and eucalypt. Some major waterways including the Latrobe and Bunyip Rivers still support riparian heath and forests.

In agricultural areas throughout the Shire, exotic feature planting around homesteads and mature shelter belts of pine and cypress in pastures and paddocks contribute to the landscape character.



Geological map of Gippsland Sheet No.1 Survey July 1875 (Detail)

Source: State Library of Victoria

This map, which shows geological features within the study area also indicates some of the early roads and tracks such as the Main Sale Road (middle right) and McDonalds Track (extreme lower right), as well as the Electric Telegraph line.

1 FIRST CONTACT & EXPLORATION

INTRODUCTION

The study area is home to two Victorian Aboriginal Nations, the Kulin and the Kurnai who between them occupied the land extending from Melbourne into East Gippsland and first encountered explorers such as McMillan and Strzelecki during the 1830s and 1840s. These explorers opened up central Gippsland for settlement but did not penetrate the difficult terrain of the study area, which posed a barrier between central Gippsland and Melbourne. Although several attempts were made to explore a route through the study area, it was not until the 1850s that satisfactory stock routes were found. The early tracks cut through the dense bush later formed the basis of transport routes that would play an important role in opening up the study area for settlement. Out of all the themes in the history of the study area it had perhaps the least impact in terms of its initial effects upon the landscape, however, its impact upon the Aboriginal inhabitants and their traditional lifestyle was devastating.

This chapter incorporates the following Australian Historic Themes:

- *Peopling Australia*: Living as Australia's earliest inhabitants, Fighting for land.
- *Developing local, regional and national economies*: Surveying the continent.

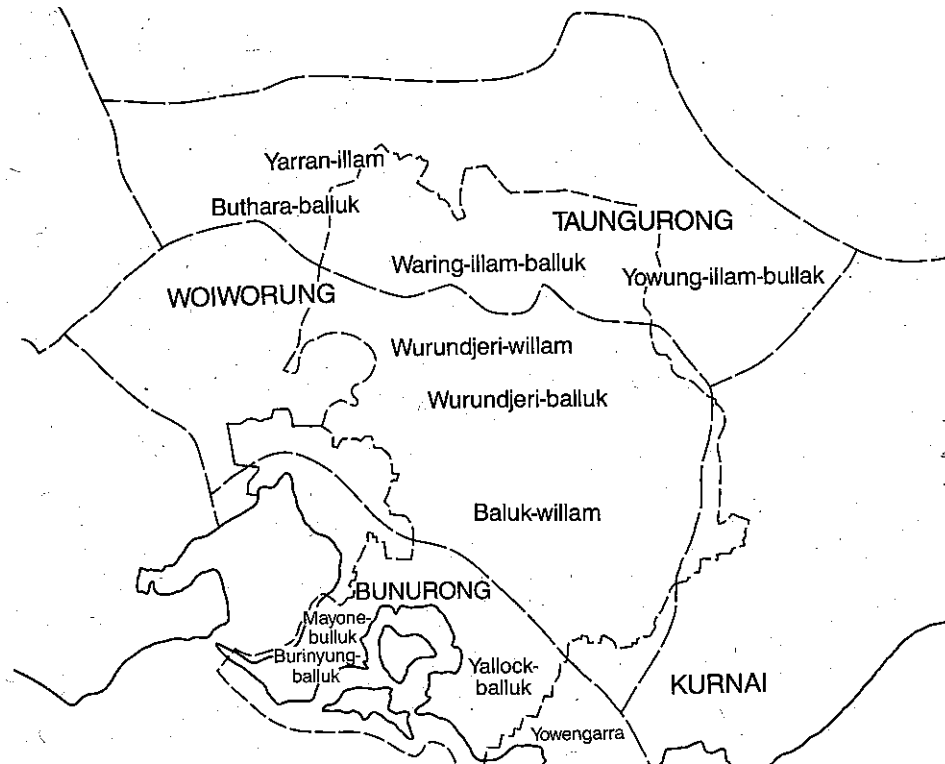
HISTORY

1.1 Living as traditional custodians

The study area straddles the boundary of two Victorian Aboriginal Nations as shown on Figure 2. To the west was the country of the Kulin Nations. The *Wurundjeri* clans of the *Woi wurrung* people occupied the Upper Yarra catchment, probably to Mt Baw Baw. The south-western corner of the study area was probably close to the boundary between the *Wurundjeri* and the *Yallock balug* clan of the *Boon wurrung* people. The Great Dividing Range marked the boundary of the *Taungerong* clans. The *Woi wurrung*, *Boon wurrung* and *Taungerong* were three language groups of the Kulin Nation, a loose confederacy of five groups that shared close linguistic, cultural and economic ties.

East of the Upper Yarra Catchment and into Gippsland was the traditional land of the *Kurnai* Nation. The Kurnai people were significantly different to the Kulin in terms of culture and social organization. The part of the study area north of the Latrobe River would probably have been the westernmost extent of a group called the *Braiakaulung/Yaktoon worcat* (meaning 'people of the west') who spoke the *Nulit* language. South of the River it was the westernmost extent of the country of the *Brataualung/Thaua rookut* people (meaning 'the fire people') who were also *Nulit* speakers. The early ethnographers did not, however, record any specific clans of these two groups in the study.

It is very difficult to reconstruct from documented evidence the specific Aboriginal history of the study area prior to, at the time of, and after first contact with Europeans as very little material can be linked directly to this area. It is, however, possible to paint a broad picture of Aboriginal culture in the area at the time of contact and to talk more broadly about the history of the Kulin and Kurnai peoples. Three Aboriginal missions and reserves in relatively close proximity to the study area (*Coranderrk* at Healesville, *Lake Tyers* and *Ramahyuck* at Lake Wellington) have also been very important in the history of Aboriginal people in this area and to a very large extent the post-contact story of the traditional owners of the study area until the inter-war period is the story of these places.



Aboriginal tribal boundaries

Source: LCC, 1991

The Kulin Nation

The western extent of the study area encompasses some of the traditional country of the *Woi wurrung* and *Boon wurrung* peoples. Although the *Woi wurrung* and *Boon wurrung* are two distinct nations of people they shared much in common. They belonged to a larger affiliation of five central Victorian tribes known as the Kulin Nation. The other Kulin people were the *Wathaurong*, the *Dja Dja wurrung* and the *Taungurong*. The people of the Kulin Nation had similar languages and culture and maintained close economic ties (Hercus, 1969:map, unpaginated).

The Kulin Nations organised themselves under what we call a moiety system. Each of the individual clans of the Kulin Nation belonged to one of two moieties. The moiety groups of the Kulin Nation were named after the important spirit ancestors *Bunjil* (Eaglehawk) and *Waa* (Crow). Moities governed many aspects of social and ritual behaviour and amongst the most important of these was marriage. Spouses had to be selected from the opposite moiety. It is thought that most of the *Boon wurrung* clans were *Bunjil* moiety and these people frequently married from among the *Waa* moiety clans of their *Woi wurrung* neighbours. Children inherited their clan and moiety from their father but they also had to maintain ties with the land of their mother's clan. The moiety system therefore ensured that appropriate marriages were made and close ties built between kin (Barwick, 1984:117, Clark, 1990:366-369, Cotter, 2001:2).

The *Bunjil* moiety clans of the *Boon wurrung* would have been in close contact with the *Waa* moiety clans of the Kulin Nations to organise marriages and visit relatives. They would also have regularly met with other *Bunjil* moiety clans to conduct important ceremonial business. All clans of the five tribes of the Kulin Nation regularly came together at a meeting ground that was located where Government House now stands. Despite the close ties between the Kulin Nation, conflicts did occur and it was not unknown for tribes who had been on friendly terms to become enemies. Conflict between the tribes of the Kulin nation tended to be short lived, however, and amicable relations would soon return (Gaughwin and Sullivan, 1984:96).

The first attempt at a permanent European settlement in Victoria was undertaken in 1803 when Lieutenant David Collins settled 400 convicts, troopers and free settlers at Sorrento, in Boon wurrung territory. The most famous member of the party was the convict William Buckley who would have passed through Ngaruk willam lands as he walked across Boon wurrung country on his way west where he was adopted into the Wathaurong. The Collins Settlement was short lived and in 1820 another attempt was made to establish a garrison at Corinella, again in Boon wurrung country. The garrison lasted little more than a year. It was the official settlement of Melbourne in 1835, however, that had the greatest impact on the Boon wurrung. Within six years of settlement, the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation had been settled by nearly 12,000 Europeans. The traditional owners of the land had been dispossessed (Barwick, 1984).

The Kurnai Nation

The Kurnai Nation refers to the Aboriginal people of Gippsland between the Tarwin River and Snowy River north to the Alps. *Kurnai* or *Gunai* literally means ‘man’ in a gender-specific sense and, as Wesson (2000:17) notes it would be more technically correct to refer to these people as *Kurnai / rookut* (meaning ‘woman’) but that the term Kurnai is used by Aboriginal people today. The Kurnai people were very much bounded by the geography of Gippsland and their relative isolation from people outside the region is reflected in a number of cultural differences (Howitt, 1904:505).

The Kurnai people were divided into a number of groups. One of the ways by which they identified these divisions was by their directional orientations within Kurnai territory (Wesson, 2000:39, has called these ‘super groups’). The ‘fire people’ and ‘people of the west’ whose traditional territory encompassed parts of the study area were two of these groups. These five groups spoke one of three different languages, however, the languages shared many similarities and it is probable that the Kurnai spoke all three languages, not just the language of the local territory.

The super groups were divided into smaller groups, which are probably roughly equivalent to clan groups, who had responsibility for specific areas of land (Wesson, 2000:8). According to Pepper and Araugo (1985:1), the Kurnai men were of the order *Yerang* and the women *Djeetgang*, both names referring to species of small bird. The Kurnai did not traditionally seek marriage partners from among the Bunjil or Waa moiety clans of the Kulin. As among the Kulin, marriage laws were strict and designed to ensure that marriages did not take place among kin. The Kurnai had no chiefs, with the younger people typically obeying their elders. There were, however, people recognised as experts in a particular skill or power. These skills included control over the wind and detailed knowledge of particular animals (Pepper and Araugo, 1985:6).

The Kurnai moved frequently between camps within their territories and their traditional country was crossed by a number of tracks, some of which eventually became roads, such as sections of the Omeo and South Gippsland Highways. The territory of the Kurnai was particularly rich in resources including a wide range of marsupials, reptiles, root and leafy vegetables, fruits and berries and bird life. The Kurnai people did meet in gatherings. These gatherings were often associated with harvest events such as the annual bogong moth harvests in the high country over the summer months. *Jeraeil* (male initiation ceremonies) were also cause for large-scale gatherings of Kurnai. Warfare was not unknown amongst the Kurnai, even when the groups involved were on generally friendly terms. Pepper and Araugo (1985:3) describe some of these as highly ritualised battles that ended amicably. Others, however, were carried out in genuine attempt at retribution. Among the latter is an account recorded by Howitt (1904:350) between 1854 and 1856 involving Braiakaulung and Bratauolung men against men from the Omeo. This conflict is thought to have decimated the Aboriginal populations of Dargo and Omeo.

Contact with settlers

Little information exists about initial contact between the traditional owners of the study area. One account comes from the Brodribb expedition which passed through Brataulung country in 1841 in the company of their Aboriginal guide Charlie Tarra who came from the Goulburn Plains in New South Wales. The Aboriginal people they encountered were amicable but kept their distance (this could well be due to the expedition party's habit of firing guns and cannons to keep them away from camp). The Brataulung were said to be fascinated with Tarra and, specifically, with the scars on his chest (the result of ritual scarification, which was unknown among the Brataulung) and asked him to scar one of their young men. Tarra is said to have performed the procedure with a piece of bottle glass (Pepper and Araugo, 1985:16).

It seems probable that the process of cultural encounter between traditional owners and the new settlers would have been similar to that experienced across Gippsland. In the 1840s, Gippsland was said to be a 'lawless' place (Pepper and Araugo, 1985:26) with Commissioner for Crown Lands Charles Tyers being despatched to provide protection for the settlers from Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal people were responding to pressure on land and resources – as these pressures increased, so did the level of resistance.

As Aboriginal people were forced off their lands and into the territory of their neighbours, conflict between Aboriginal groups increased. One such incident was recorded in 1855 when some 150–200 people came down from the high country entering Brataulung country at Tarraville. Naming five Aboriginal men they intended to kill, they promised not to hurt any of the settlers providing that no-one interfered. Local police, however, claimed to have prevented a collision between the tribes (Pepper and Araugo, 1985:108).

Throughout the mid to late nineteenth century, the number of Aboriginal people left in the area declined markedly. An 1839 census of the Braiakaulung recorded 500 men, women and children, dropping to around 15 individuals by the early 1850s. From the 1850s on, numbers rose slightly to around 60 individuals. However, in 1880 Fison and Howitt recorded only 5 men, 8 women and 12 children (figures cited in Wesson, 2000). Death due to disease and low birth rates had decimated Aboriginal populations across the state. For those that remained, their relationship with their traditional lands was also altered, with the majority of people moved to missions, particularly Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck. As we shall see in chapters 4 and 5, while many Aboriginal people remained on these reserves, others began to move back into the study area from the 1930s onwards.

1.2 Early Exploration of Gippsland

This section discusses the early exploration of Gippsland, which commenced from the sea in the late 1790s, but was not crossed by overland explorers until 1838. Exploration in the study area, which is part of West Gippsland, reflects the history of land exploration in Gippsland generally, in that the principle purpose of exploration was to find suitable grazing land for pastoralists moving into the Port Phillip District from New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). The explorers were often pastoralists themselves, though government officials were also given the task of exploring routes between Melbourne and Gippsland. However, the rugged and swampy terrain of the study area made exploration more difficult, and delayed the development of overland routes connecting the more settled parts of central Gippsland with Melbourne. Later exploration that was to have a profound effect on Gippsland's history and the settlement of the study area was the search for gold, undertaken by prospectors, and the quest for scientific knowledge, undertaken by Victoria's Government Botanist, Ferdinand von Mueller.

1838-41 – McMillan and Strzelecki

In 1838-9 a drought in the Monaro district of New South Wales forced squatters southwards across the Alps in search of green pastures. The first squatting runs were established on the Buchan plains in 1838. In the following year, Angus McMillan moved south from Omeo and set up a station at Ensay for his employer, Lachlan Macalister. McMillan subsequently

established his own run at *Bushy Park* near present-day Maffra. Essential to any permanent settlement of Gippsland was a coastal port, but it was not until the *Clonmel* was wrecked near Corner Inlet in 1841 that a suitable site was found at the mouth of the Albert River. Port Albert was subsequently established as Gippsland's main port (Daly, 1960:5-13).

Meanwhile, Polish explorer Paul Edmund Strzelecki was following McMillan's track southwards, looking for a track to Western Port. The exploration party included James Riley and the aforementioned Charlie Tarra as guide. The expedition experienced great difficulty finding a way across the mountains, swamps and thick scrub to the west of the Latrobe River. Abandoning their horses at the place now known as Koornalla, just outside the study area, the explorers proceeded on foot. They cut their way through the South Gippsland scrub, skirting the study area to the south, and after 21 days they arrived exhausted and starving at Western Port in May 1840. Their very survival was thanks to Tarra's bush skills. A few weeks later, Riley and Tarra, with John Rutledge and an Aborigine named Pigeon, returned to Koornalla seeking the abandoned horses and equipment. It is believed they took a route through the study area to the north of the Moe swamp (Bride, 1983:202-9; Adams, 1978:22-3). Riley's expedition was therefore the first European exploration of the study area.

1843-45 – Commissioner Tyers

In September 1843, Gippsland (or Gipps Land as it was first known) was proclaimed a district, and its first Commissioner of Crown Lands, Charles Tyers, attempted to travel overland from Melbourne to his new post in Port Albert. The travelling party tried several different routes from the west and north, but after suffering considerable hardship in the bush, they abandoned the attempt to travel overland. Tyers made his journey by sea, arriving at Port Albert in January 1844. On arrival he found considerable pastoral occupation of the central plains surrounding the site of Sale (Bride, 1983:223-4).

By 1845 a stock route had been established along the coast, however, a direct overland route between Gippsland and Melbourne was needed for bringing livestock from the central Gippsland pastoral runs through West Gippsland (including the study area) to the Melbourne markets. The densely forested mountains and the vast swamps that barred the way for moving stock also discouraged settlement, and there was still very little pastoral occupation of the study area. A number of attempts were made by pastoralists before a satisfactory route could be cut across the study area.

1.3 Looking for overland stock routes

Early in 1841 a group led by William Brodribb sailed to Port Albert, with the intention of finding an overland route back to Melbourne. Unable to penetrate the thick mountainous country of West Gippsland within the study area, they eventually pushed their way through a southern coastal route. In July 1841 Albert Brodribb and two others brought a mob of cattle from Melbourne into Gippsland. They headed north of the Moe swamp, 'close under Mt Bobo-Kosciusko' (Mount Baw Baw), and discovered the Tanjil River flowing through good grazing country. After becoming lost in the hills of South Gippsland, the party eventually found their way southwards from the Latrobe River to Port Albert (Adams, 1978:24-5).

In November 1845 a party of Native Police under the command of Sergeant Walsh succeeded in cutting a track from central Gippsland through the study area. They took a route to the north of the Latrobe River and travelled to Western Port without having to cross any creeks. The party made their halfway camp at the junction of the Tanjil and Latrobe rivers, where the town of Moe now stands. In about 1850, Commissioner Tyers surveyed a road following part of that route - but skirting the Moe swamp to the north - which became the main Gippsland Road to Sale (Adams, 1978:26-7; Morgan, 1997:87).

Although these early routes traversed the study area and gave access to pastoralists bringing in cattle from the east, the sea route between Melbourne and Sale was the main access to Gippsland for many more years. Further attempts at finding a satisfactory land route were made during 1850s and 1860s. The pioneers and surveyors who cut tracks through the bush

suffered considerable hardship. Their efforts have left an enduring legacy in the heritage of the study area in the development of the Shire's road system. Two roads that still bear the names of these historic tracks and (in part) follow the original routes are Jackson's Track and McDonald's Track.

Jacksons Track 1850s

A stock route was opened by Joseph Jackson through the Warragul district in the late 1850s, and became the route by which cattle were driven to Melbourne from Heyfield. The Jackson family arrived in the Jindivick district as gold prospectors, and remained as the district's first settlers. They erected cattle yards near the crossing of the Tarago River. Part of Jacksons Track still winds its way through the hills north of Drouin and Warragul, to the township of Jindivick. As we shall see in chapters 4 and 5, Jackson's Track has been immortalised in a recent book, which tells the story of the mill established by Daryl and Harry Tonkin and the Aboriginal community that grew around it (Adams, 1978:26; Morgan, 1997:87-8; Landon & Tonkin, 1999; Jindivick Centenary Committee, n.d.:5).

McDonald's Track 1862

In 1861 surveyor George McDonald was instructed to find a better track, to the south of existing routes established by Jackson and others, which would be more suitable for cattle. McDonald cut a route from Tobin Yallock (Lang Lang) to Morwell following the ridges across the hills through Seaview and Mount Worth along the southern boundary of the study area. The track, which was two metres wide and passed through thick scrub, kept to firm ground and did not cross any creeks and thus provided little feed or water for the travelling cattle (Adams, 1978:46-7). Consequently, it was soon abandoned as a stock route, and became overgrown with scrub until it was cleared again for use by selectors in the 1870s.

1.4 Assessing scientifically diverse environments

Ever since botanist Joseph Banks accompanied Captain Cook on his voyage to Australia, the continent's unique flora and fauna has fascinated scientists. One of Victoria's most influential botanists was (Baron) Ferdinand von Mueller, who migrated to South Australia from Germany for health reasons in 1847. On moving to Victoria in 1852, Mueller was appointed Government Botanist. Besides taking charge of Melbourne's newly established Botanic Gardens, Mueller made it his business to explore the whole colony to discover and document its diverse flora. Between 1853 and 1860 Mueller undertook four excursions into Gippsland, travelling throughout the region, including Wilson's Promontory and the alpine areas. In 1853 Mueller crossed the study area on his expedition through the Alps to Mount Kosciuszko. Mueller's last Gippsland expedition was to Mount Baw Baw in December 1860. His guides were miners prospecting the Baw Baw goldfields. The party left Good Hope Creek on 23 December, taking a northerly and north-easterly course across the ranges. Mueller recorded the vegetation on the Baw Baw plateau and named Mount Mueller and several other mountains in the range. It was Mueller who suggested the cutting of prospecting tracks through the Baw Baws (Johnson, n.d.:55-6; Adams, 1980:24-5).

HERITAGE

Some examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *First Contact & Exploration* include:

- Remnant trees and forests, which provide evidence of the landscape at the time of first contact
- Routes of present day roads such as the Old Sale Road, which recalls the route of the track originally established by Commissioner Tyers, and Jacksons Track and McDonald's Track, which follow (in part) the routes established by Jackson and McDonald
- Mount Mueller, which recalls the early exploration by Baron Ferdinand Von Mueller

2 SETTLING THE LAND

INTRODUCTION

As noted in Chapter 1, squatters moving across the Alps from the north opened up the plains of central Gippsland for pastoral occupation, and until a road fit for wheeled vehicles could be made, all settlement of Gippsland was made from the north or by sea through Port Albert. In less than a decade all the pasture land on the central plain around Sale had been taken up by squatters, but West Gippsland (including the study area) was not regarded as suitable grazing land. As we have seen, many attempts were necessary before a satisfactory stock route could be found through the study area to connect Gippsland with Melbourne, and to enable squatters to bring in their cattle to graze. Squatters only began moving into the study area from the east in the late 1840s, however, the steep mountain terrain, dense forests and low-lying swamps that barred the way to travellers also discouraged any permanent form of European occupation before the discovery of gold in the 1860s.

The study area's very significant gold era will be dealt with in Chapter 5, however, it is noted here that it was the discovery of gold and its aftermath that stimulated permanent European settlement in the study area, as it did in other parts of Victoria. However, compared with other parts of the State, the process of settlement by selection was late in the study area, commencing in the 1870s, and accelerating only after the opening of the Gippsland Railway in 1878. Before they could start farming, selectors were required to clear the dense forests, a task that defeated many aspiring settlers. In their struggle with the dense bush, the mud and the isolation, the selectors of West Gippsland epitomised the battling 'cocky' farmers of Australian folklore. In the 1890s large parts of the study area were selected under the Village Settlement scheme, which aimed to settle people of limited means on small allotments.

This chapter incorporates the following Australian Historic Themes:

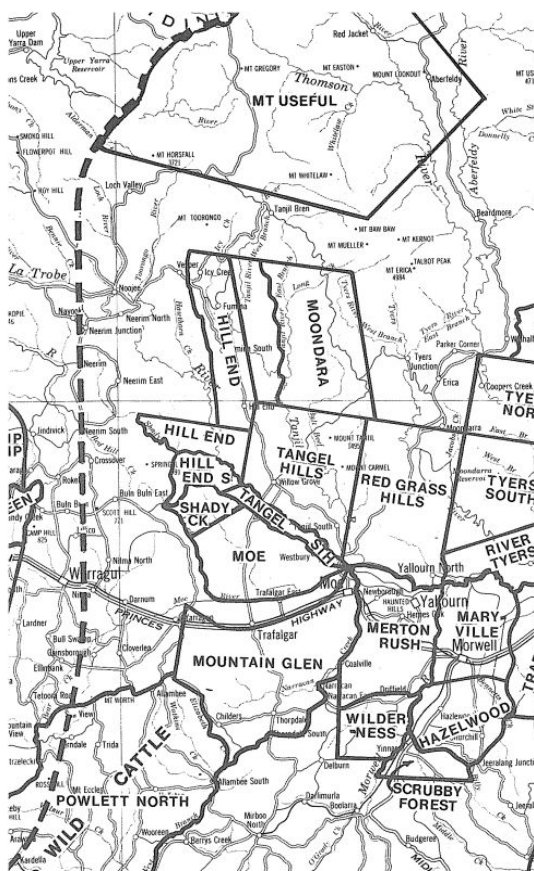
- *Peopling Australia*: Migrating, Promoting settlement

HISTORY

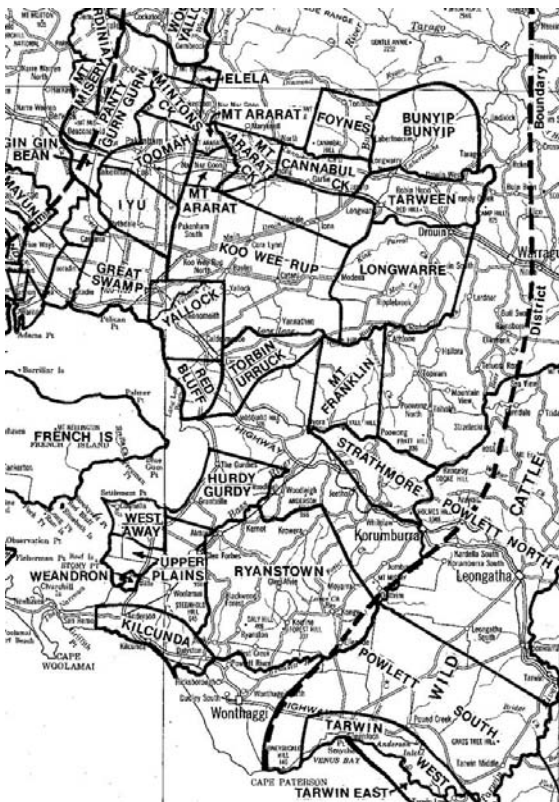
2.1 Pastoral occupation

Victoria's pastoral era began in the mid-1830s when pastoralists brought livestock, mainly sheep, across Bass Strait from Van Diemen's Land; or overland from the Riverina District following Major Thomas Mitchell's exploration of new pastures south of the Murray River in 1836. It lasted until the 1860s when, as we shall see later in this chapter, a series of Land Acts opened up Victoria for selection and most of the large pastoral runs were broken up into smaller farms. The first pastoralists grazed their animals on vast areas of land illegally, thus acquiring the name 'squatters'. In 1836 the government formalised their occupation of the land by means of pastoral licences, for which pastoralists paid £10 per year. The pastoral occupation of what was then known as the Port Phillip District occurred rapidly. By 1850 all the best grassland had been taken up, with only the arid parts of the north-west and the inaccessible areas of Gippsland remaining unoccupied (Dingle, 1984:28, 68).

In the beginning, the changes to the natural landscape were, comparatively speaking, relatively small. Labour and capital were scarce and on most runs there were no fences apart from those around holding yards. There were no sown pastures, no fodder crops and only the most rudimentary buildings. Dingle (1984:28) concludes 'Because they did not own the land and had no security of tenure, squatters kept housing and fixed equipment to a minimum'. However, in 1847 as part of the *Sale of Waste Lands Act*, new regulations were gazetted allowing squatters to purchase 'pre-emptive rights' to their homestead blocks.



Cattle runs in the east of the study area
 Source: Spreadborough & Anderson, 1983



Cattle runs in the west of the study area
 Source: Spreadborough & Anderson, 1983

Pastoral run holders who previously held grazing leases (sometimes called ‘grass rights’) were able to purchase up to 260 ha. (640 acres) of their runs before any land in the locality was made available for purchase by the general public. This privilege was given in recognition of their pioneering efforts. This legislation gave landholders more certainty and thus encouraged them to construct more permanent and substantial homes, outbuildings and other structures, which began to alter the landscape of the study area, a process that was further accelerated by the selection era (Peel, 1974:49-53).

As we shall see, the sparse settlement of the study area during the squatting era made little impact on the landscape, and surviving homesteads or other structures of the era are rare. It was selection rather than squatting that characterised the permanent farming settlement of the study area.

The arrival of squatters in Gippsland

The pastoral occupation of Gippsland was relatively late, beginning with the arrival of squatters such as McMillan from the north in 1838, as already noted, and was confined in the early years to the central Gippsland region extending from Sale and Port Albert, which is outside of the study area. When Commissioner Tyers arrived at his post in Port Albert in 1845 he found a belt of country from the coast to the mountains, extending from Port Albert to the Tambo River, which had been taken up by 40 pastoral stations. Tyers declared that all ‘available’ land was occupied, referring to the grassy plains of central Gippsland centred on the site of Sale (Bride, 1983:223-4, 239). In 1851 Tarraville, with a population of 219, was the largest town in Gippsland, and Sale, the future ‘capital’ of Gippsland had just been proclaimed a village (Daly, 1960:26). Both of these towns are outside the study area and West Gippsland, on the other hand, particularly the parts of the study area within that sub-region, was one of the last parts of Victoria to be taken up for pastoral pursuits and large areas remained unoccupied until late in the squatting era.

Another feature of squatting in Gippsland was that the runs were stocked mainly with cattle, which did not generate the wealth from wool enjoyed by the sheep graziers of Victoria’s Western District - thus Gippsland’s pastoral era is not represented by impressive mansions, such as those that abound in the Western District (Morgan, 1997:53). This is certainly the case in the study area, where many of the early runs were not developed as residential stations in the early years, if at all, but used as outstations by squatters moving stock around between their multiple holdings. The history of squatting in the study area is therefore not one of a settled pastoral community; rather, it was typified by absentee leaseholders and speculators.

Early cattle runs in the study area

The large *Wild Cattle station* established by M. Gibson in 1846 in South Gippsland was mostly outside the study area, only extending into the southern reaches of the study area as far as Allambee and the slopes of Mount Worth (Spreadborough & Anderson, 1983:31). The name of the run suggests little human occupation. Adams points out that the cattle were left unattended on many runs, and subsequently became wild. An early visitor to Mount Baw Baw, John Meeson, saw feral cattle in the mountains during his 1872 expedition (Adams, 1980:21; Meeson, 1872:9).

The first squatter to have an influence on the study area was Henry Scott, who established *Merton Rush* on the Narracan Creek in 1846, to become Moe’s first settler. Although almost the entire *Merton Rush* run was outside the study area - as is the City of Moe - the establishment of the run and the Moe township was significant to the settlement of the study area. It was quite common for squatters to take advantage of any passing trade on their runs by establishing an inn. By 1848 Scott had opened a rough shanty, where Tyers’ new road (noted in Chapter 1) crossed the Narracan Creek. Known as the *Eagle Inn*, Scott’s shanty became a landmark for people making the journey through the study area, including Gippsland squatters moving west in search of new pastures. The site of the inn was to the north of the present town of Moe (Adams, 1978:26, 28).

In 1848 William Pearson of *Kilmany Park* in central Gippsland, along with Hugh Reoch and Francis Brodribb, took up the *Tanjil Hills* run and the adjoining *Red Grass Hills* run to the east. In 1850 Pearson and Reoch added *Hill End* to their holdings. These three runs were all abandoned in the 1850s. In 1849 Patrick Coady Buckley, a squatter from East Gippsland, took out a licence for the Moe run, but soon abandoned it when he found the land was poor for grazing. In 1855 John Wood Beilby, who had pastoral holdings in other parts of the colony, took up the Moe run. Beilby added the other three runs in the following year, but held them only briefly (Adams, 1978:28, 31). *Hill End*, *Red Grass Hills* and *Tanjil Hills* runs changed hands a few times and were abandoned in the 1860s, to be taken up again a few years later. The O'Connors, who occupied *Hill End* between 1865 and 1867, gave up the struggle of keeping their cattle from joining the wild cattle in the mountains and left.

Mountain Glen run was taken up in 1863 by Dr Frederick Lloyd, who was a founder of the Medical Association of Victoria. The run was managed, and later taken over, by his cousin Robert Lloyd, who was a prominent member of the Moe community. The homestead was at Mosquito Creek, but only one quarter of the land was considered suitable for grazing (Adams, 1978:45-6). Other runs taken up in the 1860s included *Tyers North* and *Tyers South*, whereas *Moondarra* and *Mt Useful* runs, situated in the mountains to north, appear to have been speculative ventures only. They were forfeited soon after they were formed (Spreadborough & Anderson, 1983:19, 21; Adams, 1978:45). There were also large tracts of land in the mountainous areas to the north where no squatters attempted to form runs.

Pre-emptive rights

The influx of gold miners to the Tanjil valley in the mid-1860s finally made squatting viable in the area and the O'Connor family returned to *Tanjil Hills* in 1869. The O'Connors lived in a wattle and daub hut, and were able to make a living supplying meat and cheese to the miners (Adams, 1978:28, 45). John Edward Bates, who had squatting runs in the Western District, took over *Tanjil Hills* and *Red Grass Hills* in 1866. Bates was the first squatter to establish permanent settlement on the run. He cleared part of the land, built fences, stockyards and a homestead. The *Tanjil Hills* homestead, which still stands on a bend in the Tanjil River, is a rare example (perhaps the sole example) of a squatting-age homestead in the study area, and one of a small number within the Gippsland region. With the influx of selectors into the district in the 1870s (see below) the *Tanjil Hills* run was reduced to 1300 acres. In 1884 the lease was taken over by the Whittaker family, who purchased the pre-emptive right (the homestead block which squatters were permitted to purchase from their runs) and continued to farm there well into the twentieth century (Hasthorpe, 1987:1-13).

In the western part of the study area, *Tarween* was the first run to be established, in 1848 by James and Isabella Warman, which covered 24,000 acres extending from the Bunyip River to the Tarago. Adjoining it to the north was *Bunyip Bunyip*, formed in 1851 by Henry Jennings, who also held *Tarween* during the 1850s. After 1868 the *Tarween* run passed to Thomas Walton who obtained the pre-emptive right by 1872. During this time, he is said to have erected a pre-fabricated house on his property known as *Riverbanks*. Part of this homestead was thought to survive in the late 1970s (Butler, 1979:18).

To the south of *Tarween* was *Longwarre*, taken up in 1857 by W. Hampton and W. Watts. *Longwarre's* 'simple' homestead was built on the banks of Musk Creek by Thomas Wilkinson, who occupied the run from 1868 to 1873 (Spreadborough & Anderson, 1983:5, 16 & 28; Butler, 1979:3-5, 45, 98-9).

2.2 Selection

From 1860 the Victorian government, motivated by the ideal of populating Victoria with independent farmers, and by the demands to ‘unlock the land’ from miners leaving the central Victorian goldfields, passed a series of Land Acts aimed at breaking up the squatting runs into small farming allotments. These allotments, known as selections, were made available to people with little capital, who desired to settle permanently on the land. Loopholes in the early Land Acts enabled many squatters to purchase their former runs, frustrating the intentions of the legislators and the prospects of many would-be selectors. Although selection commenced in the 1860s in central Gippsland there was little demand for farming land in the hills and scrub of the study area before the decline of the gold mining boom in the Tanjil and Walhalla districts in the 1870s (Morgan, 1997:53; Adams, 1978:34-6). By then, the loopholes that favoured squatters had been removed from the legislation. Most of the farmland in the study area was selected under the 1869 *Land Act*, which was more favourable to selectors than the earlier Acts. Nevertheless, selectors had an even more formidable obstacle than the opposition of squatters – the dense mountain forests and vast expanses of swampland that had for so long impeded access to the area.

As they struggled through the scrub, explorers, such as Albert Brodribb, had noted the rich soil, and the giant trees that grew in it (Adams, 1978:24). They reasoned that such soil must be good for cultivation of pasture and crops, if the dense scrub could be removed. Morgan has pointed out that the heroic pioneer legend of the struggling ‘cocky’ farmer is epitomised by Gippsland selectors. These farmers have been immortalised in *Land of the Lyrebird*, which records the struggles of South Gippsland selectors, however similar stories could be told in parts of the study area (Morgan, 1997:107-9).

The *Land Act* 1869

Under the *Land Act* 1869 almost all of the unselected land in Victoria was thrown open for selection, including unsurveyed land. A person could select up to 320 acres, which was held by licence for three years before it could be purchased. During this time the selector was expected to reside on or near the block, and make £320 worth of improvements, including a house, fences and the clearing and cultivation of 32 acres. After the first three years an additional seven-year lease could be granted, during which time the balance was to be paid. An amendment to the *Land Act* in 1878 increased the period of license and lease to 20 years and halved the annual rent. Even with these easier terms, many selectors found it extremely difficult to make the required improvements, pay their rent and make a living for their families during the establishment phase. Thus the failure rate was high in many parts of the study area (Morgan, 1997:110).

Selection and the associated development of agricultural and timber industries (to be discussed in the following chapter) profoundly altered the landscape of the study area. The changes were driven mostly by economic and legislative necessity (the need to establish viable farms and satisfy requirements of the Land Act), but also by a desire to ‘civilise’ the environment and create a more familiar landscape based on European ideals. The great forests were replaced with open pastures enclosed by hedges and windrows of exotic trees including hawthorn, cypress and pine, while homestead complexes dotted the landscape and settlements began to form.



Detail of c.1878 map showing selection of map in the western part of the study area

Source: As reproduced in Wilde, 1991

Patterns of settlement

The study area was surveyed from the early 1870s onwards. In 1873 John Lardner, a surveyor for the Department of Land and Works, surveyed a line from the Old Sale Road at Brandy Creek southward, creating a north-south axis from which ten thousand acres were surveyed for selection. As we shall see in later chapters, this line became known as Lardner's Track and later became a route used by selectors as well as a municipal boundary (WDHS, 1982:1; Wilde, 1988:221). Morgan (1997:110) has identified four distinct groups of selectors who settled in south and west Gippsland following this survey, two of which - the Warragul group and the Thorpdale-Mirboo group - are relevant to the study area. The Warragul group included the earliest selectors in the study area, who began arriving in the early 1870s, following the (Old) Sale Road (to the north of the present Princes Highway). Surveyors commenced surveying blocks in the Brandy Creek area in 1872, and by the end of the year there were several families at the settlement. In 1873 residents were lobbying the government for a school. In the same year, the announcement that a railway would be constructed through the study area to Sale encouraged further selection. Lilloco and Nilma North were settled from 1875. With the opening of the railway in 1878, the trickle of selectors became a steady stream, extending south from the new stations at Drouin and Warragul along Lardner's Track to places like Ellinbank and Bull Swamp as shown in the map on the facing page (Morgan, 1997:93-4, 108, 110; Hansen, 1974:10, 19; WDHS, 1982:11).

Further east the Thorpdale-Mirboo group began selecting in 1873, moving southwards from Moe into the western Strzelecki Ranges and up the Narracan Valley. By 1877-8 selection had extended to Childers and Allambee. The opening of the Moe to Thorpdale Railway in 1888 stimulated further settlement, particularly in areas close to the line (Morgan, 1997:110; Adams, 1978:48-51, 74-5). By the end of the 1880s much of the land in the southern part of the study area had been selected, communities had formed and small townships dotted the landscape.

In the central part of the study area, where mining communities already inhabited the Tanjil and Tarago valleys, selection commenced in the 1870s. The land associated with the *Tanjil Hills* run became known as Tanjil South to the selectors. Selection commenced on the *Hill End* cattle run in the 1880s, but beyond that there was little settlement before the 1890s. By 1880 there was a village at Neerim South, as miners spread out from the Crossover diggings, and there were selectors scattered further north through the Neerim district. The opening of the railway from Warragul to Rokeby in 1890s and to Neerim South in 1892 assisted further settlement of the Neerim district.

Selectors often came in family groups or with friends from the same districts. At Narracan the Hennessy brothers came from Lilydale with John Maloney in 1874. At Lilloco the Dwyer family had seven selections. In some districts the 320-acre selections were too large to manage, and many were subdivided into smaller farms. *Green Hills Estate* at Lilloco, originally selected by A.B. Biggs, changed hands before it was subdivided into three farms. One of the farms was purchased in 1898 by H.E. McFarlane, who settled there, cleared and drained the land, built a house and developed a successful farm. The property was still in the family a century later (Adams, 1978:49; WDHS, 1982:15-20).

Selections could be forfeited because of non-payment of rent or failure to make the required improvements - although Lands Department officials showed remarkable lenience in the matter. Some selectors simply abandoned their blocks and walked away. Their selections would be taken up again sooner or later by new settlers (author's experience researching Gippsland land files held by the Public Record Office Victoria; see also Adams, 1978:56-7).

Establishing farms – clearing the land

Clearing the dense mountain forest was a mammoth task. Michael O'Connor, who had held the *Hill End* cattle run, moved to a selection at Narracan in 1875. His son later recalled his first impressions of the settlement:

In no place could you see more than 50 yards ahead of you, and in many places you could not see the sky. The settlement was situated on the outskirts of this appalling forest, and as each selection was taken up the next settler was pushed further back. Our selections were situated seven miles back in the forest (quoted in Adams, 1978:50)

It was difficult for selectors like O'Connor to appreciate the beauty of the forest they were required to destroy. George McDonald recorded his impressions when he cut his track through the district fifteen years earlier:

The scenery in many of the gullies is of the most charming description and were it not for the difficulties of access, would well repay some of our distinguished artists for visiting. ... The immense quantity of fern trees, with the innumerable forms and shades of the gums, lightwoods, wattles, musk, honeysuckles and various other small shrubs, together with the gracefully tapering form of sassafras; combine to form scenes of the most enchanting beauty, the description of what is utterly beyond the power of pen or pencil (Adams, 1978:16)

Settlers were not necessarily blind to such beauty, just focussed on the big task ahead of them.



A selectors house within the forest at Childers

Source: Adams, 1982

Adams describes the 'slow backbreaking job' of clearing the dense scrub of the Strzelecki Ranges. The clearing of the small scrub and trees was relatively easy, but the ferns would grow back before the job was finished. The tall trees were a more daunting prospect. It was found that if trees were cut halfway through and left to fall when the wind blew, they would push other trees over as they went. An alternative method of clearing was to ringbark large trees and leave them to die standing. Fire was then used to clear out the dead timber. In the summer settlers would have a 'burn' to finish the clearing process; the resulting ashes formed a seed-bed for new pastures. All too often the burn would get out of hand, taking fences and even houses, and sometimes lives (Adams, 1978:54).

Fire has been a recurrent theme in the history of the study area, and its negative impact is all too often expressed in terms of the heritage places that have been lost. The history and impact of fire will be explored in Chapter 6, however, it is important to note here that fire was

frequently a tool used in clearing and thus became part of settlement culture. While devastating bushfires that have swept the study area since the mid-nineteenth century led to terrible losses they, in some cases, ultimately had a lasting benefit as Adams (1978:113) notes when describing the aftermath of the 1898 conflagration:

In one respect the fires proved to be beneficial to the district as they cleared away trees and scrub and opened up areas of fertile country, easier to clear completely and for road construction. One farmer commented that before the fires he had only 16 ha cleared, now he had 60 ha to work in. He had been thinking of selling his property before the fires – now he would stay. The whole district ventured into a new phase of development after the fires.

Settlers used some of the timber they cut during clearing to build houses, sheds and fences. It was possible to build a whole farmhouse with the wood from one large tree (Morgan, 1997:117). In later years sawmills were set up near new settlements to take advantage of the timber cut for clearing, providing some income to the selectors (WDHS, 1982:31). However, there was a tremendous amount of wastage of timber, particularly of Mountain Ash, which was not considered useable for building before special seasoning techniques were developed in the early twentieth century – this is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Establishing farms – making improvements

Houses and outbuildings

Selectors resided in tents or even hollow trees until they could build a house. At Fumina the Penny family lived in a hollow tree stump for nine months after bushfire destroyed their tent. It was ‘so big they could make a fire in the centre and sit around it and have their family beds in the hollow roots’ (Butler, 1979:700). The first farmhouse constructed on a selection was usually a rudimentary one-or two-roomed hut built of logs or slabs with a shingle or bark roof. Gaps between the logs or slabs were filled with clay, and the floor was of earth (see description of a house at Drouin South in ‘King Parrot Country’, p.15). Farm buildings were soon added - a cow shed, pig sty, fowl house. Vegetable gardens and orchards were planted near the house, and crops or pasture sown in the rest of the cleared portion. Over time, gardens, featuring exotic plants -fruit trees, oaks and conifers, replaced the eucalypt forests, to become an important part of the cultural landscape.

As the settlers became more established they built more substantial homes and began to set out gardens for purely aesthetic value – this was usually in the early twentieth century after the freehold grant had been obtained and farms had been made more profitable (Many new houses were also constructed in the wake of the 1898 bushfires). At *Brandie Braes*, the property selected at Lardner by John and Catherine (Kate) Currie in the 1870s, a fine new house was erected in 1903, which required the transportation from Drouin of over 1,000 bricks for the chimneys alone. Meanwhile, as the house was being constructed Kate was already planning her garden. She ordered many exotic trees to replace the native trees that were being removed including Sycamores, Magnolia, Oaks, as well as roses near to the house ‘to allow easy watering and a glorious outlook’ (Butler, 1979:223).

At Neerim South, the Moyes family replaced their original log cabin with a larger farmhouse at *Clairdale* around 1884. Later another house, *Burn Brae* was built on the Moyes’ property (Hunt, 1986:96-100). Henry Alder, who selected at Tanjil South in the early 1880s replaced the early cottage on his farm with a new farmhouse in 1901-2. *Alderwood* a double fronted timber Victorian style house, with a front verandah, was typical of the farmhouses of the era, although it was lavishly furnished and included a cellar under the kitchen (Hasthorpe, 1987:41-4).

Fences, hedges and windrows

The erection of fences created a distinctive pattern of subdivision within the study area. Priestly (1984:92) notes that:

Land ownership made a permanent imprint on the Victorian countryside initially in the shape of boundary fences. The land surveys which were a necessary prelude to sale were patterned according to the grid of true meridians and parallels which had been defined in the systematic geodetic survey of Victoria begun in September 1858.

Fences were initially made from saplings or boughs with a crossed stake every two feet; or chock and log, made from the logs picked up after the burn. Post and rail fences were built later (Adams, 1978:55-6; Hansen, 1974:9). An alternative form of fence was the Hawthorn hedge, which was introduced by English and Scottish settlers – by using a technique known as thorn-setting or layering (as practised in England) where the branches are interlaced the hedge could be effectively rendered cattle or sheep- proof (Beaumont et al, 1959:98). The most common hedging plant used was the English Hawthorn or Whitethorn (*C. monogyna*), one of a number of different plant varieties used throughout Victoria in the nineteenth century. After clearing the eucalypts and other native vegetation, the settlers planted rows of conifers, mainly cypresses or pines, to divide paddocks and provide shelter from the wind for their livestock. Windrows of Bhutan Pine or the more common Monterey Cypress or Pine, usually running north-south following the subdivision lines established by the survey, also had an aesthetic value and became a distinctive feature of the landscape in the Neerim and Ellinbank districts and other parts of the study area.



Bhutan Cypress hedges at Ellinbank

Source: Anne Napier, 2006

The early selectors could only farm at subsistence level - milking a few cows and growing a few vegetables in their small patch of cleared land. It took years to clear the whole block, and many farmers took work outside the farm - clearing for other farmers, or working on roads or railways - so that they could bring in some income for the family. Prosperity was elusive, as those first settlers contended with hardships such as bushfires, caterpillar plagues, lost cattle, family illness, and the isolation - so remote from markets for their produce. Only after the construction of the railways from the late 1870s, and passable roads to the railways, could farmers begin to develop commercially viable industries, such as dairying, which were to become the area's mainstay. The development of these rural industries will be discussed in Chapter 5. Meanwhile it is important to note that the settlement era lasted well into the twentieth century, as renewed attempts were made to convert the bush into productive farms.

Village Settlements

The village settlement movement had its roots in Christian and Utopian ideals of co-operation dating back to seventeenth-century Europe, which were brought to Australia in various forms by nineteenth-century idealists. One such scheme was instigated in the study area by George Brown, a Baptist pastor from England, who, in 1890, founded a Christian Socialist commune on a dairy and potato farm in Drouin. Members of the commune built houses and a hall for lectures and church services, and shared the profits of their farm equally. The commune failed after two years, due to lack of farming experience and difficulties maintaining the group's ideals (Blake, 1966:191).

In 1892 the severe economic downturn that followed Victoria's land boom of the 1880s prompted Rev. Horace Tucker of Christ Church South Yarra to form the Village Settlements Association, members of which included influential churchmen and politicians. Tucker founded a number of village settlements to provide small allotments where unemployed men and their families from the city could live and work the land on a co-operative basis. Tucker's first two village settlements were at Wonwondah East near Horsham, and at Jindivick in the study area. Tucker set up the Jindivick settlement in May 1892, with fifteen families from Melbourne (Blake, 1966:191-3).

By July 1892 there was another Tucker village settlement at Red Hill, on an undeveloped 309-acre farm halfway between Longwarry and Drouin. The existing homestead became the manager's house. Settlers were to pay £10 per acre for their ten-acre lots, which presumably were to be cleared and cultivated by the settlers working co-operatively. The land was cultivated for fruit and vegetables and, while this was becoming productive, a timber mill producing firewood for the Melbourne market supported settlers. A railway siding and small branch line was specially constructed to the mill from the main railway line to assist with transport of the firewood (Butler, 1979:81-3).

The Association subsidised the families living in the settlements - 160 families altogether in seven settlements - but within a few years the whole scheme had failed, and most of the settlers left. By this time, however the Victorian government had seized on the idea of village settlements as a way of relieving the unemployment in the city, and passed the *Settlement of Lands Act* 1893, which provided for the development of *Village Communities*, *Homestead Associations* and *Labour Colonies*. Under the *Act*, village community allotments ranged from one to twenty acres (0.4 to 8 hectares), and were available to those who did not own more than two acres of land. Allotments were priced at £1 per acre, plus survey fee, to be paid off over a twenty-year lease. Settlers were required to make improvements and bring the land into cultivation, and cash payments were available to assist needy settlers with the cost of buildings and fences. The residential requirement of living on the property for a minimum of eight months of the year, allowed settlers to augment their farm incomes by seasonal work away from home. Unlike the Tucker villages, there was no co-operative element to the government village communities. Of the 78 village settlements in Victoria noted by Blake, over 30 were in Gippsland, and a considerable number of these were in the study area, particularly in the north-west, where little selection had previously taken place. Large areas around Noojee, Nayook, Neerim, Neerim North, Neerim East, Fumina and Vesper were opened up as village settlements in the 1890s (Blake, 1966:197). There were also village settlements at Willow Grove and Hill End, Childers, Trafalgar and Yarragon.

The village settlement at Trafalgar was formed in 1895 as the Moe Swamp Settlement, offering around 620 acres (250 hectares) surveyed into small blocks on the newly drained Moe swamp. The drainage works had commenced in 1889, and from 1891 unemployed men were brought from Melbourne to work on the project. As the swamp was still subject to flooding, the new village settlers were each allocated an additional township block in Settlement Road for their home. Middle Road was created to give the settlers access to their cultivation blocks to the north of the town (Adams, 1978:116-7), while other roads such as Seven Mile and Eight Mile were named according to the distance from the Main Drain. The draining of the Moe Swamp will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

The village settlement at Childers, gazetted as the Thomas Homestead Association in 1894, appears to have had a co-operative element. The settlement, on McDonald's Track two kilometres south of the present Childers township, was a small one, with only ten allotments. The villagers received the support of the old residents, and contributed to existing community life in the district. Of the eleven villagers, only three remained to gain freehold title to their blocks (Adams, 1978:112-3). In other places, such as Nayook, villages completely disappeared, as settlers gave up the struggle to make ends meet on such small allotments and moved on to better prospects (Butler, 1979:83).

Closer Settlement

Around the turn of the century the Victorian Government adopted a new initiative known as 'Closer Settlement' for breaking up large land holdings and populating the countryside with small farmers. The first closer settlement provisions were included in the *Land Act* 1898, and enabled the government to repurchase freehold land, however, the *Closer Settlement Act* 1904 provided for compulsory acquisition of large estates from freeholders. Between 1900 and 1938, 1.4 million acres were subdivided and selected for closer settlement in Victoria, the bulk of the land repurchased by the government. Although the study area had few large estates, the Closer Settlement Board found 7,000 acres (2,800 hectares) in thirteen original allotments at Allambee, which they believed suitable for closer settlement. The blocks were only partly cleared, many of the original selectors having given up the struggle in such difficult country. In 1907 the *Allambee Estate*, comprising 32 allotments on the Tarwin River were on offer. Only eleven settlers remained there in 1915, when the government declared the estate a 'notable failure'. An abandoned shack from the *Allambee Estate* could still be seen in 1988 (Adams, 1978:127-8; Wells, 1988:64-6).

After the First World War some districts in the study area that had remained undeveloped, or having been cleared, had succumbed to the ravages of rabbits and weeds because of neglect, were purchased by the Closer Settlement Board. Former selections in the Childers-Allambee district were re-surveyed and offered to new settlers, including new immigrants from Britain. Some 48 of these new allotments were offered under the Board's 'mountainous condition' clause, which freed settlers from any payments for ten years. The government financed the construction of Childers Settlement Road to assist in developing the area, and over £20,000 was advanced to settlers, as they began dairying and pig-raising or growing potatoes. Active communities took shape and Hollydale and Glenleath Schools were opened. With the onset of the Depression in the 1930s, low prices for the settlers' produce, plus the heavy burden of debt, resulted in the abandonment of 45 of the blocks. Established local farmers subsequently leased some of the blocks, and the houses were sold and moved to other locations.

Soldier settlement

Soldier Settlement represented the efforts of both State and Commonwealth Governments to deal with the thousands of returned soldiers following the First and Second World Wars, in a manner that recognised their wartime sacrifices, while satisfying the aims of closer settlement policies. The *Discharged Soldier Settlement Act* 1917 enabled soldiers to become farmers under seemingly generous terms. A large proportion of the land taken up by soldier settlers after the First World War was in the Mallee, in Victoria's north-west, although there were some soldier settler communities in Gippsland - including Maffra and Koo-wee-rup (Dingle, 1988:185-7). There does not seem to have been any significant soldier settlement in the study area following the First World War, although it is possible that some of the Childers-Allambee allotments mentioned above were taken up by soldier settlers. After the Second World War a small number of farms were sold to soldier settlers in the study area, including the Blackwood Park estate near Warragul, which was divided into three farms, and seven farms on the Tarago River (Wilde, 1988:229-30).

2.3 Immigrating to seek opportunity

The squatters and selectors who settled in the study area were predominantly of British or Irish origin, generally reflecting nineteenth-century immigration patterns to Australia. Their origins are reflected in place names such as Trafalgar and Waterloo, commemorating famous victories claimed by the British, and Childers, honouring an English politician and pioneer of education in Victoria (Adams, 1978:51). An exception to this rule was one small group of selectors, originally from Denmark, who made their mark in the Poowong East district in the south of the study area.

The miners who joined the gold rush to the study area were a multicultural group, as they were in goldfields throughout Victoria, and all were seeking their fortunes. Two distinctive groups of immigrants – the Chinese and the Italians – have left their mark on the study area. These people left conditions of poverty in their homelands to endure hardship on the goldfields or in the bush, keeping apart in their own communities and maintaining their traditional practices.

Danish community – Poowong East

In the 1870s and 1880s a number of Danish people selected land in the Poowong East district. Mainly immigrants from Jutland in Denmark, they spent some time on the goldfields around Castlemaine and Chewton before selecting in Gippsland. The families who settled at Poowong East included the Stabens, Mollers, Andersons, Byriell, Petersons and Olsens. The Stabens' property (which is just outside the study area) was known as *Dorfsteldt*, and Olsens' was *Triholm*. Triholm was the name given to a station on the short-lived Koo-Wee-Rup to Strzelecki railway that crossed the district (see Chapter 3). The Poowong East School, originally on Byriell's selection, was sometimes called the Danish School. Danish immigrants Pool J. Holdenson and A.J. Neilson were instrumental in the development of butter manufacturing in the Warragul area (Jupp, 1988:347-8, Butler, 1979:263, 279-86, 294, 439-40).

Chinese

Chinese miners who came to the Victorian goldfields worked almost entirely on the alluvial fields. There was an enormous gulf between the culture and lifestyle of the Chinese and Europeans, thus the Chinese, being a minority, were subjected to open hostility on racial grounds. The extent of hostilities against the Chinese is actually revealed in their absence from the Russell's Creek diggings. In 1864 a party of Chinese visited the diggings, but on finding there was no trooper to keep European prejudices in check, decided not to stay. Through a legalised discrimination system, which provided Chinese Protectors from 1855 to 1860, Chinese miners were restricted to living in designated Chinese camps situated apart from European communities on the goldfields (Markus, 1979:14; Adams, 1980:25).

In the Jordan Valley there were some Chinese people working in the alluvial diggings during the mid-1860s. Their numbers increased after the European population abandoned their worked-out claims in the 1870s – Chinese miners were able to make a living reworking the old claims. There was a Chinese settlement of about 200 people on the Jordan River between Red Jacket and Jericho, with a joss house and also a pig oven used to roast pigs on Chinese feast days. The pig oven was still at the site in the 1980s, although in a poor condition (Adams, 1980:39, 47; *Victorian Goldfields Project*, site 12.0).

Walhalla, with few alluvial deposits, attracted few Chinese miners; however a number of Chinese market gardeners did settle in the district and provide vegetables to the town. The gardeners cultivated one of the few flat sites to the north of the town (*Walhalla Conservation Study*).

Italians

In the 1880s a group of Italian woodcutters formed a community at Poverty Point on the Thomson River near Walhalla. They supplied firewood for the steam engines used in mining, and also milk and cheese from their goats for the townspeople. They lived in shacks built into the sides of the hills, with cellars for storing food. These Italians remained a distinct group amidst the Walhalla mining community, maintaining their own customs (Adams, 1980:193; Jupp, 1988:597).



Italian miners outside the Copper Mine Hotel

Source: Grollo, 2004

In the late 1920s a separate Italian community formed near Walhalla. Its members were all from the province of Treviso in the Veneto region of Northern Italy. Diana Grollo has described in detail the migration process, as young men left the impoverished conditions of their country seeking better opportunities, while maintaining their hometown ties. At Cooper's Creek and Jubilee the men worked in the timber and lime-extraction industries. Whether many of them achieved a better life is debatable, because they spent years away from their families in Italy, working in dangerous jobs and they suffered extra hardships as enemy aliens during the Second World War. The community was very close-knit, sustaining its members through their traditions and distinct identity as Trevasani. Eventually some of the men were able to bring their families to Australia. By the 1950s the lime industry had ended and the Trevisani moved to the northern suburbs of Melbourne. One member of the community who did make the most of his opportunities was Luigi Grollo, founder of the Grollo Construction Company, a firm that has made a name constructing large modern city buildings. Luigi's wife, Emma, was the daughter of fellow Cooper's Creek Trevisano, Virginio Giradi (Grollo, 2004:213, 4).

One cottage with some pear trees from its garden remains at Jubilee, and several years ago the cellar and a plum tree from the Marchiori house could still be seen at Cooper's Creek (Grollo, 2004:14 & 193).

2.4 Township development

As part of the Government survey of the land for selection, township or village reserves were set aside and laid out in each Parish, however, such reserves did not necessarily become the main township for the district. As Dingle (1984:130) has pointed out:

Although farmers sold their produce across the world, their personal mobility was limited to what could be comfortably achieved in a day by horse and cart. The nearest township thus had to supply most of their social, intellectual and spiritual as well as their economic needs. As a result a vigorous community life flowered in the country towns between about 1880 and 1914 ...

As little travelling distance could be accomplished via the muddy tracks of the study area during the settlement era, there was a proliferation of small towns within a few miles of each other, invariably clustered around a public hall, school, hotel or store. The fate of these towns depended on the fortunes of the selectors and, as we shall see in Chapter 3, the towns' relationship with transport links. However away from main transport routes, small townships were necessary to serve the immediate needs of local communities. More than that, small townships provided a focal point and a gathering place for settlers establishing community ties. Neerim and Childers are just two of the many examples of small townships associated with selection and settlement of land throughout the study area.

Neerim

When the Parish of Neerim was surveyed the township of Neerim was reserved. By 1877 there was a post office and store in the township, and a Methodist Church and a public hall were built in the early 1880s. A railway was proposed through the Neerim district, but by 1892 it had only reached Neerim South, where the main township for the district eventually developed. Neerim remained a small township, with a couple of stores, a butcher, blacksmith and chemist, and by 1903 there were still five unoccupied village blocks (Butler, 1979:589-605 *passim*).

Childers

Childers took shape around Dickinson's store and Post Office on McDonald's Track. The store opened in 1879, a year or so after selection commenced in the district. Wesleyan Church services commenced in 1880, and a school commenced the following year. The Mechanics' Hall, built in 1886, soon became the social centre of the community. Sporting clubs were formed, and a sportsground cleared in the 1890s. A cemetery was also established. Closer Settlement during the early twentieth century provided a significant, if short-lived, boost to the population of the district and by the inter-war period the town boasted two churches, the Mechanics' Hall and a permanent school. Childers saw little commercial development, but remained at the centre of the farming community through its fluctuating fortunes. The school eventually closed in the mid-1970s (Adams, 1978:64-5, 187, 194).

HERITAGE

Some examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Settling the Land* include:

Pastoral occupation

Very little remains to recall the pastoral occupation of the study area. Two places that are thought to have a connection to this era are:

- *Tanjil Hills* homestead, Tanjil South
- *Riverbanks* homestead, Longwarry North

Selection

- Selectors' houses – examples include *Brandie Braes* at Lardner, *Glenaveril* at Narracan, *Wilderslea* north of Yarragon, and various homesteads identified by Bick (1991) including the Gregory homestead on Lardners Track (p.928), *Belmont* in Brandy Creek Road (p.830), and those in Darnum-Allambie Road (p.880), Hazeldean Road (p.918) and Old Sale Road (p.944)
- Farm buildings – *Brandie Braes* at Lardner retains a fine complex of outbuildings; examples identified by Bick (1991) include those in Darnum-Allambie Road (p.860 & 876), and Browns Road (p.840)
- Hawthorn hedges. Examples include the hawthorn hedges in Falls Road, Narracan, at *Killarney*, Killarney Lane and in Ellinbank and Brandy Creek
- Cypress and pine windrows. Examples are found throughout the study area. The study area is especially notable for the mature Bhutan Cypress windrows, which are found in greater quantities here than in other parts of Gippsland
- The Childers Settlement Road, which is one of the few tangible reminders of the Closer Settlement of that area during the inter-war period

Immigrating to seek opportunity

- Italian houses at Poverty Point
- Cellar and plum tree from the Marchiori house, Cooper's Creek
- Chinese market garden site at Walhalla and the remains of a Chinese Pig Oven at Jericho

Township development

- Childers, Drouin South, Ellinbank, Ferndale, Neerim, Labertouche, Lardner, Seaview and Shady Creek, which are examples of townships in the study area associated with selection.
- Neerim North, Neerim East, Nayook, Fumina, Willow Grove, and Hill End, which are examples of districts or townships associated with Village settlements in the 1890s.

3 TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

As already noted, early access to Gippsland was by sea through Port Albert. Gippsland's heavily timbered mountain ranges, numerous streams and large expanses of swamplands posed huge obstacles to the development of land transport routes in the whole province, not the least being in the study area. This chapter discusses the slow and difficult process of developing the transport systems upon which settlement depended. Indeed roads and railways – or in many cases, lack of them – were a key to the spatial arrangement of the cultural landscape, the location of towns and the cultural life of the communities that took shape in the study area.

Morgan has described the four stage evolution of early roads through Gippsland's forests: bridle path, pack track, bullock track and coach road. The main Gippsland road went through all these phases – and via a number of routes – in the nineteenth century, to become the Princes Highway, now the study area's main east-west axis. Other tracks explored to the north and south of that axis – alternative cattle routes, pack tracks to the goldfields, and selection survey lines – later became the area's main roads. Whether highway or back road, nineteenth-century Gippsland roads, in particular those of the study area, were notoriously bad, and often impassable during wet weather. It was not until the formation of the Country Roads Board in 1913 that the parlous state of Gippsland's roads began to be addressed. By then road making was being focussed on the requirements of the new motorised transport.

Meanwhile, the arrival of the railways from 1878 opened up land for farming and had a profound impact upon the pattern of settlement in the study area leading to the emergence of new towns, sometimes at the expense of earlier settlements. The chapter also begins to examine the close relationship between railways and the development of related industries such as coal mining and sawmilling, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

This chapter incorporates the following Australian Historic Themes:

- *Developing local regional and national economies*: Establishing communications, Moving goods and people

HISTORY

3.1 The evolution to coach and wagon roads

The Gippsland Road

The track surveyed by Tyers in the late 1840s (see Chapter 1) became the main Gippsland road, although for many years it remained little more than a bridle path. The journey on horseback from Melbourne to Traralgon took three days, with stopping points to rest every 15 to 30 kilometres (Morgan, 1997:88). In 1849 the Bishop of Melbourne, Rev. Charles Perry, and his wife Frances visited Gippsland, escorted by Captain Dana and five Native Police. Mrs Perry recorded the details of the journey in her journal. The road wound amongst the trees and it was studded with crab-holes:

... varying in depth from one to three feet, and the smallest of them wide enough to admit the foot of a horse: nothing more likely than that a horse should break its leg in one. We were obliged, however to canter over them, keeping the best look-out we could, for the day was fast wearing away, and Captain was very anxious to get us over two bad bridges, which come just at the end before it became quite dark. (cited in Adams, 1978:29)

The party rode in single file, with Mrs Perry following Captain Dana, careful not to lose sight of him amongst the trees. The Bishop rode behind her, with the escort and pack-horse at the rear. The night was spent at Scott's shanty at the Narracan Creek crossing.

Although a number of routes had been found through the study area by the end of the 1840s, as outlined above, they were far from satisfactory and efforts to find better routes continued into the 1860s and '70s. Campbell's Track, cut in 1865 for the telegraph line, through Labertouche, Tarago and Rokeby to Shady Creek, was widened to become the main road for drays and coaches. The Old Telegraph Road is a reminder of that route. It was used by the Cobb & Co Coach service, which commenced running between Melbourne and Sale in 1865. The journey took 36 hours and used 50 horses. By 1870 the journey had been reduced to 20 hours, but often took much longer, especially in winter. The most difficult stretch of the road in the study area was the notorious 'gluepot' near Christie's Road, Buln Buln, where horses would flounder in mud up to their bellies. Coaches could be turned over, horses injured, and passengers thrown out. Consequently passengers would be asked to walk through the 'gluepot', which meant wading in mud up to their knees (Adams, 1978:37-8; Hansen, 1974:6). By the 1880s the road was taking a smoother route via Robin Hood, Brandy Creek, Buln Buln to Shady Creek, where it joined the old route to Westbury. Today, the Old Sale Road follows part of the route of the old coach road.

With the Gippsland road as the main east-west axis through the study area, other tracks branched off into the country as it was taken up for selection (Adams, 1978:86).

Gold seekers' tracks

The first gold seekers into the study area travelled south from the Goulburn goldfields. Once the Jordan and Thomson valley goldfields were established, a route from the east was needed for people coming into Gippsland through Port Albert. In 1862 local business people offered a prize to the discoverer of a satisfactory track. Tom McEvoy cut a track from Heyfield through the mountains to Mount Useful, without crossing any streams, and then on to the Jordan. This track was mostly outside the study area, however, branches were cut from the track through the study area to explore new goldfields such as Donnelly's Creek.

Archibald Campbell cut a track from Toongabbie, keeping to the south-west of the Thomson River until he crossed it near its intersection with the Aberfeldy River. The track followed the range northwards between the two rivers. Although most of the prize money was awarded to the explorers of two other routes from the west, McEvoy's Track became the most popular pack track, and Campbell's Track evolved into the route used by wheeled vehicles (Adams, 1980:34-5, 40).

Roads to Walhalla

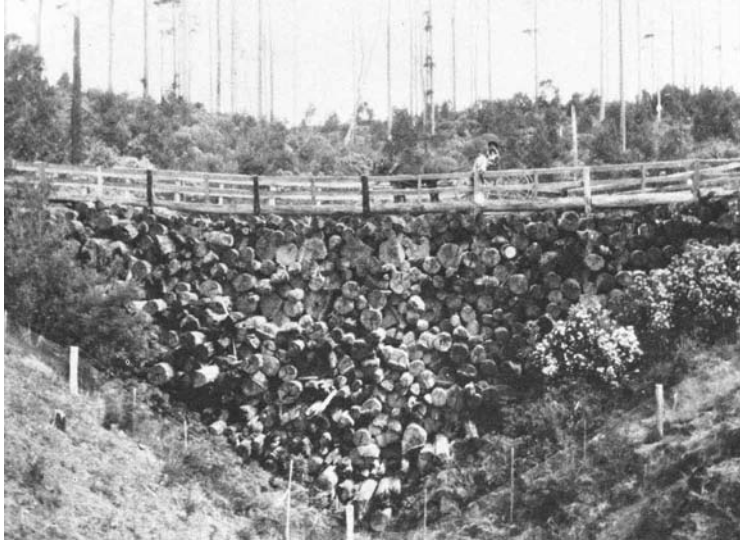
Following the discovery of the rich Cohen's reef at Stringer's Creek in 1863, a road suitable for bullock drays was necessary for carrying quartz-crushing machinery to the mines. Campbell's Track was cleared as the most suitable route, although the steep descent of Flour Bag Hill resulted in the loss of many bullocks. English writer Anthony Trollope, who made the journey in 1872, was amazed that 'immense masses of machinery' had been taken down the hill. A bridge, later known as Brunton's Bridge, was built across the Thomson River, and the route was taken to Walhalla through Happy Go Lucky. An easier descent into Walhalla was later found from Little Joe. When the Cobb & Co coach service commenced in 1869 the road was improved.

After the opening of the Gippsland Railway, coach roads were made to Walhalla from Moe and Traralgon stations, with the Moe route the most direct for travellers from Melbourne. The service from Toongabbie also continued, but by 1900 this and the service from Traralgon had ceased (Adams, 1980:39-40, 61-3, 87-8). Parts of the Old Coach Road to Walhalla are still shown on current maps.

Surveyors' tracks – Lardner's Track

As we have seen in Chapter 2 the survey line created by John Lardner in 1873 became known as Lardner's Track. In contrast to the earlier tracks that wound through the hills, seeking the easiest route, Lardner's Track was part of the surveyor's grid, from which the rectangular

selections were laid out. The straight road therefore paid no attention to topography. Settlers with their loaded drays had to cope with the steep hills and muddy gullies (WDHS, 1982:1; Wilde, 1988:221). Many of the other roads established after survey of the land for selection followed similar improbable routes creating a problem that took several decades to fix as described later in this chapter.



**Log bridge at Seaview
[early twentieth century]**

Source: WDHS, 1982

Road bridges

Because of the study area's many streams, bridges were a vital link in the transport system. One of the earliest bridges to serve the study area was one built across the Narracan Creek at the direction of Commissioner Tyers in 1847. Early bridges were often little more than logs placed across the stream or piled up in a shallow stream to make a ford. One early bridge in the study area at Seaview (see illustration) was an extreme example of this technique. Such primitive bridges were invariably swept away in the first floods. It is unlikely that any nineteenth-century timber road bridges have survived the area's frequent floods and fires. According to Adams, practically every timber bridge in the former Narracan Shire was replaced after the Second World War. Most of the present post-war bridges are composite steel and timber. The only surviving wholly timber road bridge in the study area appears to be a small single-span bridge crossing Brandy Creek on the Old Sale Road (Adams, 1978:27, 35-6, 86, 208; National Trust Bridge Database). A number of timber tramway bridges have survived from the 1920s, and they will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

A surviving example of a nineteenth century bridge crossing is Brunton's Bridge, over the Thomson River on the old road to Walhalla from Cowwarr. The original timber bridge at the site was built in the 1860s when the wagon and coach road was cleared from Toongabbie. The bridge was replaced by an iron truss bridge with a timber superstructure in 1887-8. The bridge fell into disuse after 1899 when a new bridge across the Thomson River on the road through Moondarra from Moe provided better access to Walhalla (Adams, 1980:87-8; AHD). The later Walhalla road bridge appears to have been replaced by a reinforced concrete bridge, while the iron substructure of Brunton's Bridge still remains (National Trust Bridge Database).

Inns

Along the main Gippsland road, usually at crossroads or stream crossings, were inns or shanties, where travellers took refreshments and coach horses were changed. One of the earliest was *Eagle Inn* on the Narracan Creek crossing, owned by Scott of *Merton Rush* run. Another squatter turned publican was Nicol Brown who opened the *Drover's Rest Hotel* at Shady Creek in 1859. When the section of road was re-routed to the line of Old Sale Road in 1865, Brown moved his hotel to the new creek crossing, and built stables where the coach horses were changed. At Brandy Creek the Northern Junction Hotel was the changing station for mail coaches on the Drouin to Neerim Road. The *Turf Club Hotel* was on the corner of Brandy

Creek to Drouin Road and the Old Sale Road, and was the halfway mark between Melbourne and Sale – the building has gone, but two Norfolk Island Pines mark the site. The *Bunyip Hotel* was on the Telegraph Road at Labertouche. In 1877 Henry Dicken built the *Robin Hood Hotel* on the Old Sale Road at the Whisky Creek crossing. The hotel had stabling for six horses (Butler, 1979:6; Hansen, 1974:25). The *Robin Hood Hotel*, on what is now a stretch of the Princes Highway, is a rare surviving example of those early coach inns, continuing in its function as a highway inn, and later motel, to the present.

3.2 Twentieth-century road improvements

In Gippsland road making was a difficult and costly procedure, and few Shire councils had sufficient means to provide satisfactory roads. As Butler (1979:467) explains:

In the past the roads had been laid out by surveyors to fit gridiron subdivisions. They were essentially surveyor's roads and did not work – they took no notice of hills or valleys but went straight over them. Subsequently Shire Engineers had struggled, with limited funds, to right these wrongs but always facing the expensive task of land acquisition to form the necessary deviations, around hills, rather than over them.

In 1911, at the instigation of Cr. Copeland of the Shire of Warragul, representatives of 18 Gippsland councils met in Warragul and resolved to ask the State government to form a Gippsland development trust with a loan of one million pounds for road construction. The State government had already identified the need for a central authority to assist local councils throughout the State, but it seems that the Warragul meeting gave some impetus to the formation of the Country Roads Board in 1913. The new Board was to provide long-term loans to shire councils and acted as a road construction authority, initially for roads declared as Main Roads. The Board divided the State into 10 districts, which were ranked according to need. Following a State-wide inspection by the Board members, Gippsland was ranked as the district with the highest need and long-awaited improvements to roads in the study area began in earnest at the end of the First World War.



Opening c.1920 of the first section of the main Gippsland Road [Princes Highway] to be constructed between Drouin and Warragul

Source: WDHS, 1982

From Main Roads to Freeways

The Gippsland Road was declared a Main Road in 1913, but the section running through the study area was still impassable in winter. The first contract in the State to be completed under the new system was the construction of about three kilometres of the Gippsland Road between Warragul and Drouin near Lardner's Track. In 1930 a memorial was erected in honour of William Calder, the chairman of the CRB, at the intersection of Lardner's Track and Princes Highway to commemorate the event (CRB, n.d.:13-18; Butler, 1979:468; WDHS, 1982:11). The *Highways and Vehicles Act 1924* recognised the increase of motorised vehicles and the growth of through traffic on Main Roads, and authorised the declaration of State highways, thus removing the burden of their construction and maintenance from local councils. The Gippsland Road was the main coastal link between Sydney and Melbourne, and therefore part of an important national highway. It was renamed the Princes Highway in 1921, following a visit by the then Prince of Wales (*Victorian Year Book*, 1973:241-2). By 1930 the Princes Highway had been surveyed, remade and sealed (Adams, 1978:170).

Meanwhile, progress was being made on other Main Roads in the study area such as the Yarragon to Leongatha Road and the Trafalgar to Thorpdale Road. The former road was completed in stages by 1917 when the grades of ‘1 in 19 made the road much easier to negotiate than the old 1 in 5 grade’ (Adams, 1978:171). Improvements to the latter road required a circuitous deviation up ‘Big Hill’ to the east of the old road, which was opened on 6 February 1920 (Adams, 1978:171).

From 1956 the CRB began to construct By-pass roads or Freeways, with dual carriageways, which directed heavy through traffic around centres of population. The first part of the Princes Highway to be converted to freeway conditions was the Moe By-pass, completed in the late 1960s. At Yarragon and Trafalgar shops were demolished in the 1970s to make way for the widening of the highway to four lanes. Warragul and Drouin were by-passed by the new Princes Freeway in the early 1980s (CRB, n.d.:22; *Victorian Year Book* 1973:242, Adams, 1978:208-9; WDHS, 1982:14).

Developmental roads

Following the formation of the CRB in 1913, the Shire of Warragul with the support of other Gippsland Councils sought to achieve their ‘ultimate goal’ at a Conference of Shires held in Melbourne in October of 1914. After the declaration of Main Roads in 1913 it was recognised that development of these roads alone would not be sufficient to provide access for farmers to railways. Consequently, a motion was moved at the conference to extend the Board’s powers to include what became known as Developmental Roads – William Calder expressed ‘total agreement’ for this motion and the *Development Roads Act* was ratified in 1918. This provided for roads that connected settlers with railway stations, which were to be funded by the CRB and then maintained by Councils. Many of the roads in the study area today are a legacy of this Act and were constructed in the inter-war period. Adams (1978:171) describes a flurry of road building in the Thorpdale area in the 1920s.



Construction of the main Gippsland Road [Princes Highway]

Source: WDHS, 1982

From 1925 the CRB also funded ‘isolated settlers roads’, to provide settlers with access from their farms to the nearest Developmental or Main road. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, funds for such roads were increased to give work to the unemployed (Butler, 1979:469; CRB, n.d.:20).

Tourist and Forest roads

Other types of roads designated by the CRB that have been significant to the study area were Tourist roads and Forest roads. From 1924, the State government funded the construction of roads that would make places of interest accessible to tourists. One such road partly in the study area is the Grand Ridge Road, which winds its way up Mount Worth, allowing breathtaking views across the surrounding countryside ‘every turn unfolding fresh beauties and valley vistas’ (CRB, n.d.:20; tourism publicity cited in Morgan, 1997:124).

Even during the 1930s, survey and road-making work was very difficult in the mountain terrain of the study area. Clem Perrin remembered working on the road from Matlock to Aberfeldy:

The old existing track was so steep in places that it was necessary to tie a tree to the back of the truck to go safely down hill and drive backwards in reverse to get up some hills (VicRoads Retirees Association, 1995:264)

Perrin slept in a tent when working in the area during the Depression. A little later, in 1938, the CRB provided a hut near the Aberfeldy River bridge.

As we shall see in Chapter 5, the urgent need to salvage fire-damaged timber after the 1939 bushfires led to the declaration of Forest roads from 1943, in areas within or adjacent to State forests. Such roads, suitable for logging trucks, were funded by the State government, relieving local shires of the high cost of construction and maintenance (CRB, n.d.:22; Johnson, n.d.:76-8). One example of a road constructed under this Act is Big Creek Road, which was constructed by the Forests Commission of Victoria in 1944.

Municipal quarries

Quarries to provide materials for road construction other purposes have existed in the study area since the nineteenth century, but it was the creation of the CRB and the consequent responsibility placed upon Councils under the *Development Roads Act* that gave impetus for Councils to develop a more co-ordinated and expanded network of quarries to serve the increased road-making demands.

In the Shire of Narracan, the Council leased a site near Mosquito Creek near Trafalgar to A.E. Ekberg who later formed the Gippsland Blue Metal, Fuel and Timber Co. He is thought to have spent several thousand pounds building an aerial tramway connecting to a siding on the Gippsland Railway. The quarry was in operation from the early 1920s until 1937 when it was taken over by Council to use as a depot (Adams, 1978:169).

To the south of Drouin, in Buln Buln Shire, John Startup established a private quarry in the late nineteenth century in Greenshields Road, which provided road metal to Buln Buln Council. This quarry was later purchased by his rival, Thomas Walton, who developed the 'Woodlands' Bluestone Quarry on the site – this included the construction of a tramway to the Lardner siding on the Gippsland railway. In the early part of the twentieth century Buln Buln Shire acquired part of this quarry site, and other properties in the area and established their own quarry. This quarry was described as 'the pride of Buln Buln' when it was opened in April 1915 at a ceremony officiated by John E. Mackey MLA and attended by W.B. McCormack of the recently formed CRB. Although stone from this quarry was more expensive than that of quarries in Melbourne or Berwick, it was of higher quality and therefore favoured by the CRB for use in road construction in Gippsland (Butler, 1979:461-7).

The continued search for stone throughout the three Shires within the study area to satisfy road-building demands eventually led to an extraordinary joint enterprise between the Shires of Buln and Buln and Warragul. A meeting was held on 13 September 1917 'to consider the advisability of acquiring and opening a quarry to be worked jointly by the two Councils' (Butler, 1979:465). Narracan Shire was initially invited to be part of the Scheme, but later withdrew on the advice of independent arbitrators (Adams, 1978:169).

A Joint Committee was established and sites were investigated. Eventually, two were chosen – the existing Drouin South quarry, which would service the southern parts of both Shires, and a site in Moyes Road, Neerim South that would provide for the north. It was agreed that the Joint Committee would take full control of both quarries from 1 April 1919 (Butler, 1979:465-70). The quarry at Neerim South was worked out by the late 1920s and was replaced by a quarry at Jindivick, which eventually became the main quarry servicing both Shires. The quarry at Drouin South closed down the 1940s and most plant and equipment were removed after the Second World War although it seems that the quarry continued to be used intermittently after this date. The joint operation of the quarry at Jindivick by the two Shires

continued until disagreement about the running of the Joint Committee led to the termination of the agreement in 1967 (Butler, 1979:472-7).

3.3 Railways

The transport difficulties experienced by Gippsland's early settlers prompted the formation of railway leagues, which campaigned for railway lines through areas of settlement. Railways were commonly regarded as the answer to Gippsland's travel problems, and a way of stimulating settlement. This proved to be true, to a large extent, in the study area in the nineteenth century.

While the early tracks and coach routes had an early influence upon the pattern of settlement in the study area, it was to be the railways that would have the most significant and far-reaching impact. The location of railway stations determined where the most important towns would develop, which created a hierarchy of settlement that exists to the present day. As we shall see in this section, early townships that found themselves by-passed by the railway usually declined in importance, or in some cases moved to where the station was located.

Gippsland Railway

As early as 1866 surveyors began the task of surveying the best rail route through Gippsland, but the proposed Melbourne to Sale railway was not approved by Parliament until 1873. The line was completed in five stages: Morwell to Sale, June 1877; Oakleigh to Bunyip, October 1877; Moe to Morwell, December 1877; with the most difficult and crucial section through the study area – 32 miles from Bunyip to Moe – completed in March 1878. The final stage, through suburban Melbourne to Oakleigh was not completed until April 1879. The train trip cut travel time between Melbourne and Sale to a relaxing six hours, compared with a 20-plus-hour bumpy coach ride.

Lardner, who surveyed the railway line, chose a suitable route to the south of the Gippsland Road, laying out new townships along the line, where stations would be built (Wilde, 1988:36). Drouin, Warragul, Darnum, Waterloo (Yarragon) and Trafalgar all came into being because of the railway. Consequently the old highway townships such as Brandy Creek lost their importance and withered away as commercial centres.

The Gippsland railway, besides providing fast transport to Sale, facilitated the settlement of the areas between Melbourne and Sale. It also provided that vital link to the Melbourne markets for settlers' produce, without which selection was not a viable option.

The size of station complex depended upon the importance of the stop. Most stations were provided with a simple ticket office and waiting room with an adjacent van goods shed, as well as a large goods shed located on a separate siding. Larger complexes were established at towns such as Warragul, which was a main stopping point for trains during the steam era as they took on water or disposed of engine ash into dedicated pits below the line adjacent to the platform.

As patronage increased in the Edwardian era, the Victorian Railways embarked on a building program to improve facilities at busy stations, particularly at key junctions. In the study area, new station buildings were erected at Yarragon, Trafalgar and Warragul. The new Warragul Station, erected in 1915, was perhaps the finest in the whole of the Gippsland region and one of the largest in country Victoria. Situated on an island platform it featured extensive refreshment rooms, where travellers relaxed during timetabled stops or while waiting to catch a connecting train to Neerim or Noojee.



Warragul Station c.1920s

Source: Adams, 1982



Thorpdale mixed goods train

Source: Adams, 1982



**Loading potatoes at Trafalgar Station
c.1920s**

Source: Adams, 1982

Following the Second World War the main Gippsland line was to play a significant part in Australia's program of industrialisation, as the coal deposits of the La Trobe Valley were developed and industry expanded into West Gippsland. The move to regrade, duplicate and electrify the line as far as Traralgon commenced in 1948. The Melbourne to Warragul section of the line was the first main country line in Australia to be electrified and by 1955 electrification had reached Moe. As part of the project, a new station on an island platform was erected at Drouin and a Control Building was established in McDonald Street, Warragul. By the late twentieth century, the decision was made to cease electric train services and in 2005-06 all overhead infrastructure was removed from the line east of Pakenham, however, electricity sub-stations remain at some stations along the line.

Branch lines

Continued problems with the roads and the need to get farm products and the newly discovered coal deposits of the Moe district to market led to campaigns for branch lines to connect with the main Gippsland line. In 1881 a campaign for a railway to connect Mirboo with Moe through the Narracan Valley was rejected by the government in favour of a line from Morwell to Mirboo North, which opened in 1886. The line was outside the study area and of limited value to its residents. In 1884 the *Railways Construction Act*, nicknamed the 'Octopus Act', was passed, which authorised the construction of 60 branch lines throughout the State including two branch railways in the study area (Adams, 1978:88-9).

Moe – Thorpdale Line

The first branch line constructed under the 'Octopus Act' in the study area was the Narracan Valley railway, connecting Moe with the settlers in the Strzelecki hills to the south. Settlers moving into the Narracan Valley proposed the railway as early as 1880, but it seems that a key factor that led to the eventual construction of the line was the opportunity it presented to exploit coal deposits found in the area. This is discussed in more detail in Section 4.3. Construction, which commenced in 1886, involved the building of thirteen bridges across Narracan Creek alone, plus many other bridges, culverts, cuttings and embankments. The opening ceremony took place in May 1888 at the terminus – a station named Warrington, later renamed Thorpdale. The station became the focal point of a new township, which was laid out in 1887. The railway and township were established at the height of Victoria's economic boom, when land speculators brought buyers on a special train from Melbourne to Thorpdale. Township blocks brought high prices before the economic crash that resulted in the Depression of the 1890s and the use of this line reflected the fluctuating fortunes of the district and those of the wider economy in the ensuing years; The Railway Commissioners responded to the impact of the 1890s Depression by cutting services from two trains per weekday for goods and passengers, to three trains per week (Adams, 1978:75, 89-90).

The prosperity of the 1920s as farming become established and profitable brought new demands for the rail service, particularly for freight, and a new storage shed was built at Thorpdale in 1922. The line was threatened with closure during the Great Depression of the 1930s, but was kept open with three trains a week. At the end of the Depression competition with road transport reduced demand for rail services and the service was cut to one train per week in 1940, however the war and petrol rationing brought new demand for rail transport. Use of the line continued into the early 1950s, when coal mining was temporarily revived in the district, however, declining use of the line led to its closure in 1958.

Warragul – Neerim South and Noojee Line

The other railway line built through the study area under the auspices of the 'Octopus Act' was the line from Warragul to Neerim South and, later, on to Noojee. Construction commenced in 1888, and the line was completed as far as Rokeby in May 1890, and Neerim South in 1892 (WDHS, 1982:18; Harrigan, n.d.:287). The line served the mining community at Crossover, as well as the selectors who had begun moving into the Neerim South district in the mid-1870s.

There was some scattered selection in the north around Neerim, Nayook and Noojee, but of greater economic importance were the huge timber reserves of the mountain forests. When the railway line to Neerim South was surveyed in 1888 an extension was contemplated, but the Victorian Railways Surveyor, Robert Rolland, recommended that a more suitable route for exploiting the timber resources would be through the Upper Yarra Valley from Lilydale. Such a line never eventuated. Noojee and Nayook settlers and sawmillers had to wait until after a depression and a war before they had a rail link. The railway was completed to Nayook in 1917, and to Noojee in 1919 (Butler, 1979:613; Harrigan, n.d.:287), to become a crucial link in the transport of timber to Melbourne, via Warragul.

The route chosen through Nayook involved grades of one in 30, which required considerable earthworks, however a more direct route from Neerim to Noojee would have involved impossible one in ten grades (Butler, 1979:613-5). Sections of the embankments can still be seen beside the Main Neerim Road just north of Neerim township. In the short stretch between Nayook and Noojee seven tall trestle bridges were built to straddle the deep gullies. Several of these bridges were damaged or destroyed in bushfires and subsequently rebuilt, however, only one has survived to the present: Number 7 near Noojee. This bridge was rebuilt soon after its destruction in the 1939 fires, when a huge program to salvage the fire-killed timber was implemented for wartime timber supplies. By the 1950s most of the timber had been salvaged, and the sawmillers moved to the forests of East Gippsland. The railway was closed in 1958 (Fletcher, cited in Griffiths, 1992:147-8; Harrigan, n.d.:287).

Koo-Wee-Rup – Strzelecki Line

Since 1880, settlers in the Poowong and Jeetho districts, to the south of the study area, had been campaigning for a rail link. The construction of the Great Southern Line in the early 1890s served the southern part of those districts, however settlers in the wedge of land between the Gippsland and Great Southern lines had to wait until after the First World War for a rail service. In 1922 a branch line was made from the Great Southern line at Koo-Wee-Rup, which passed through the south-western corner of the study area to the terminus at Strzelecki (right at the southern boundary of the study area). Within the study area the line passed through Athlone, Topiram (Poowong East) and Mountain View. Services on the line in the 1920s included a daily milk train, and three mixed goods trains with a passenger carriage per week. The line was an early casualty of the Great Depression, and in 1930 the line was closed beyond Triholm. In 1941 the Yannathan to Triholm section was closed, and the remainder of the branch closed in the 1950s (Butler, 1979:294-299; Harrigan, n.d.:287).

Walhalla Narrow Gauge Railway

Lobbying began for a railway to Walhalla when the Gippsland Railway was being planned, however it took 25 years of campaigning to persuade the government to approve the line, and several more years to build it. The main arguments put forward in support of a railway were the shortage of timber for the mines and the cost of cartage of supplies to the town. These arguments, and the belief that the Walhalla mines still had a rich future ahead, were summed up in a report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways in 1896:

... round Walhalla the hills have been denuded, to a great extent, of timber for use in the mines. The distance timber for mining purposes has to be carted or trammed is becoming a serious question at Walhalla. It is alleged that thousands of tons of quartz from comparatively poor lodes could be profitably crushed, in addition to that at present obtained from the richer lodes, if cheap fuel were readily available. The principal mines state that they would use Victorian coal if they had a railway. The farmers at Moondarra now find a good market for their produce at Walhalla, where there is a population of 2,616 in the town alone, and 3,394 in the Walhalla Shire. The mines require a large quantity of stores and timber annually. The cost of cartage to Walhalla at present is very heavy, averaging about £2 per ton from the Toongabbie railway station. Three coaches are running daily to and from Walhalla, and there is a considerable passenger traffic. The mining field is a very rich and extensive one, and the prospects of

permanency and further development, not only at Walhalla but throughout the shire, are very favourable (cited in Watson, 1980:7)

A number of possible routes for the line had been put forward, representing the interests of the districts through which the line would travel. Surveys had been made; however, the government hesitated to make a commitment because of the enormous cost of construction of a railway in the rugged terrain beyond Moondarra. A possible solution was the construction of a narrow-gauge railway, a cost-saving measure being considered by the government for a number of Victoria's mountainous districts. In 1900 Parliament passed the bill authorising construction of a 2 foot 6 inch gauge line from Moe to Walhalla. Work did not commence until 1904, and construction was slow, because funds were not readily available, and because challenging engineering work was required, particularly on the final section from Erica. No tunnels were made; instead a track was cut into the cliff in Stringer's Creek Gorge. The final stretch into the Walhalla township was constructed on timber trestles above the creek. The Walhalla Railway was considered one of Australia's most spectacular railways, and an engineering feat of its time (Watson, 1980:4, 22; Adams, 1990:104-7).

Eventually the railway was completed to Walhalla and officially opened in May 1910. By this time the Walhalla mines were already in decline. It has been said that the expensive railway 'arrived just in time to take the people and materials away' (Watson, 1980:33). Nevertheless the railway became an important adjunct to tourism. More importantly it served the timber industry, which replaced mining as the district's major industry for a few decades. A number of sidings were constructed along the line to connect with the sawmillers' forest tramlines. The railway also served the farmers in the Moondarra district. The line was closed down progressively in sections from 1944, with the last section – Moe to Erica – closing in 1954. Much of the line was dismantled and buildings removed. The Walhalla station building was transferred to the suburban station of Hartwell (Adams, 1980:127-8). The Thomson River Bridge is one of the few remaining early bridges along the line.

In 1991 the Walhalla Railway Taskforce was formed with the aim of restoring the line from Walhalla to Erica. Restoration began with the Thomson station railway yard and gradually the line progressed first over the Thomson River in May 1994, then to Leachville, over the Three Span Bridge, to Cascade Halt, on to Happy Creek and finally, after the re-construction of six bridges over the last one kilometre section, into the Walhalla Station yard in March 2002 (<http://www.walhallarail.com/>). Tourist trains now operate regularly upon this section of the line, and there are plans to complete the restoration of the railway line to Erica.

Tramways

Although tramways were closely associated with the timber industry, and will be dealt with specifically in the next chapter *Utilising Natural Resources*, it is important to note here that some of the tramways in the study area were also used for the transport of goods and passengers. The South Gippsland Timber and Tramway Company's tramway, built from Waterloo (Yarragon) to the Company's mill site on McDonald's Track in 1882 only operated until 1894, but during those years it played an important additional role by transporting settlers' produce to the station. The Loch Valley tramway was frequently used by people travelling to the shops into the 1930s (Adams, 1978:88-9; Hunt, 1986:148).

The idea of constructing tramways to serve the settlers in the Strzelecki hills was popular in the 1880s, and although government and the Narracan Shire Council considered such a scheme, it did not eventuate (Adams, 1978:88-9).



Warragul Post Office c.1900

Source: WDHS



Walhalla Post Office

Source: Context 2005



Yarragon Post Office

Source: Context 2006

3.4 Developing mail, telegraph and telephone services

The transport difficulties in and through the study area meant that other forms of communication with the outside world were particularly important and the development of road, mail and telegraph services was closely related. The telegraph line was made to link Sale with Melbourne in 1864, and another line linked Walhalla with Sale in 1870. The construction of the 1864 telegraph was to be doubly beneficial for, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, the route was widened for coach and dray transport. (Adams, 1978:39; Adams, 1980:55).

Early mail was transported by packhorse and later by coach. In the 1840s mailmen would camp at the Postman's Yard, a small enclosure at Westbury (Adams, 1978:28). The first mail coach service to Gippsland commenced in 1865, soon after the coach road was cleared following the route of the Telegraph line as described above. Goldfield settlements received postal deliveries at least weekly from the early 1860s and a post office was amongst the first service to be established along with a store and, invariably, a hotel. Some of the earliest post offices in the study area opened in the hotels along the coach route, one was established in the early 1860s at the *Retreat Inn*, at what later became the township of Westbury (see below). In towns without a hotel post offices were sometimes located in the homes of the postmistress or postmaster; often the storekeepers ran the post office.

During the late nineteenth century as townships grew permanent post office buildings were built in the main towns of the study area. Handsome brick post offices were erected in 1890 in both Drouin and Warragul, while the importance of Walhalla was underscored by the opening of a post office there in 1891. However, the Depression of the 1890s led to a cessation of public building works for almost a decade and, as a cost-cutting measure, the post office was often situated within the railway station (as the delivery of mail was now via the railway) with the station-master given the job of local postmaster. Trafalgar, Yarragon and Thorpdale all had their post offices at the station for several years.

After Federation in 1901, the Commonwealth government assumed responsibility for postal services and embarked on a major building program that saw many new permanent post offices established in towns throughout Australia. For many people in rural areas these post offices were the first tangible symbol of Federation. The post offices at Thorpdale (built in 1911), Trafalgar (1924 - which until then had been in several locations, including the station) and Yarragon (1926) are examples of those built by the Commonwealth after Federation (Adams, 1978:70, 72, 144-5, 153).

Telephone services, available in Melbourne since the 1880s, did not reach the study area until the twentieth century. The area's first telephone exchange was installed at Warragul Post Office in 1909. Walhalla had a telephone exchange in 1910. Exchanges were established in other towns over the next few years. Outside the towns, people organised party lines, which allowed a number of subscribers to use the one line to a local exchange in town. The first party line in the study area, and one of the first in Australia, was organised by six subscribers at Cloverlea, with a line to the Darnum exchange (Adams, 1980:108; Wilde, 1988:180).



Brandy Creek township 1877

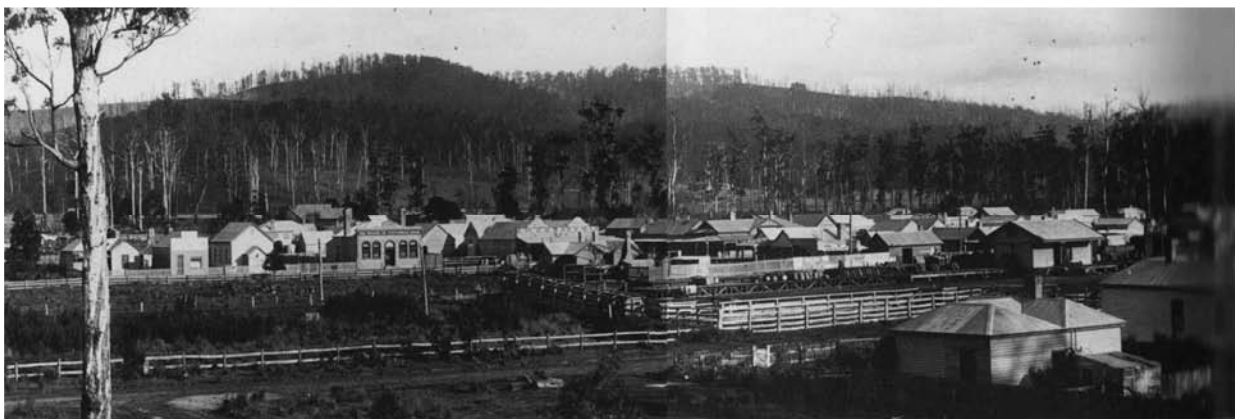
Source: WDHS, 1982

Buln Buln Store c.1920

Source: WDHS, 1982

Trafalgar township c.1908

Source: Wells, 1988



3.5 Township development

Coach (Gippsland) road towns

Some of the first townships in the study area grew up around hotels along the coach route to Sale. The *Retreat Inn*, built in 1859 on the Gippsland Road became the centre of Westbury township, laid out on the high ground overlooking the Moe Swamp in 1861. The hotel was also the general store and post office, but there was little other development until selectors moved into the area in the 1880s. Even then there was little commercial development, however the local community established sports clubs on Hennessy's Hill public reserve, with the Retreat as a popular meeting place before it was destroyed by fire in 1915 (Adams, 1978:34-5; 121, 138-9). In the late 1860s the township of Shady Creek grew up around John Brown's Hotel established near where the Gippsland Road crossed the Creek.

Brandy Creek originated as a highway township around John Connor's inn, built in 1868, and a staging post for the coaches. There was also a toll gate, where tolls were collected from travellers and drovers to finance the upkeep of the road. With the arrival of selectors in the early 1870s, Brandy Creek became a village, with a post office, shops, banks, churches and hotels. It was officially renamed Buln Buln in 1874 and for a time it was one of the most important townships in the western part of the study area. However, as described below the decision to run the Gippsland Railway to the south of Brandy Creek commenced the town's decline as a main commercial centre and led to its partial relocation.

Railway towns

Prior to the construction of the railways the study area's main townships were the tiny highway settlements along the main Gippsland road, and the gold town of Walhalla. All of this was to change with the coming of the main Gippsland Railway and the study area's main towns – Longwarry, Drouin, Warragul, Darnum, Yarragon and Trafalgar – owe their origins to that line, which also played a crucial role in their continued development. Townships also formed at the railheads of branch lines at Thorpdale and Neerim South and at key stations along each route. Both Drouin and Warragul originated as railway construction camps, and quickly became commercial centres after the line opened.

Towns situated on the railway enjoyed an immediate and unsurpassable advantage over their neighbours and the effect upon the settlement pattern was immediate and long lasting.

Brandy Creek/Buln Buln

The opening of Gippsland railway led to an almost immediate exodus of people and businesses from Buln Buln (nee Brandy Creek) – as early as May 1878 it was reported that the townspeople 'appear to be moving to the township, newly formed on the Railway Line' (District Inspector Holland, cited in Butler, 1979:517). By 1881, the population had declined to 204, while Drouin could claim 418 citizens and Warragul was already asserting its dominance with a total of 839 (Butler, 1979:515). The final blow to the old township was dealt with the opening of the Neerim South railway in 1890, which ran to the east of the existing township. A new village formed around the railway station, which assumed the name of Buln Buln and by the early 1900s the 'new' Buln Buln had a hall, church and a fine new school and teacher's residence. Little remains of the old Brandy Creek township today (WDHS, 1982:1-2, 9; Wilde, 1988:22-3, 40).

Meanwhile the development of Warragul continued apace with it becoming the dominant township for the study area, perhaps partly because it was also the junction for the branch line to Neerim South. Warragul remained an important railway town throughout most of the twentieth century, employing 240 railway staff until the early 1980s. The development of Warragul is discussed in more detail in later chapters.

Yarragon (Waterloo) and Sunny Creek

The early history of Yarragon (Waterloo) and Sunny Creek also highlights the impact of the Gippsland railway upon township development. After the opening of the railway, Waterloo quickly grew into a thriving township, with a population of 311 by 1881. The township was laid out by Lardner to extend north and south from the railway. A post office was opened in 1878 and a telegraph station in 1880. As a cost-cutting measure the post office was moved to the station in 1892, where it remained until 1906. This highlighted the centrality of the station in the town. The Waterloo Hotel was opened in 1878, and several other hotels followed over the next few years, as well as several stores. A branch of the Bank of Australasia was opened at the Waterloo Hotel in 1879. A police station and police court were also established in the early years, as well as churches, a school and a Mechanics' Institute. The town's name was changed to Yarragon in 1884, and with the influx of settlers it became, for a time, the leading town of the Narracan Shire until it was overtaken by Trafalgar early in the twentieth century (the development of Trafalgar is described in detail in later chapters). The station was a busy centre for the dispatch of timber, and the platforms were extended to handle the trade; with two timber tramways connecting to it in the 1890s. By contrast, Sunny Creek to the south of the railway line and a few miles to the east of Yarragon was laid out as a village reserve in 1876 and the first blocks offered for sale in 1879. Houses were built, and a school was opened in 1888, but without a railway station, no township ever developed (Adams, 1978:66-72).



Narracan East WWI memorial

Source: Context, 2006

Narracan & Narracan East

As we have seen, the district of Narracan was settled during the late 1870s and by 1878 a Mechanics' Institute Hall had been erected, which became the centre of the new community. Ten years later, a new township formed around the railway station just 2 km to the north-west of the old district centre, which assumed the name of Narracan, while the old district became known as Narracan East. However, unlike Brandy Creek, this was not the end of the old township and it continued to be an important district centre until well into the twentieth century – a new Mechanics' Institute and Hall was erected in 1906 and when a First World War memorial for the district was erected in 1921 the site chosen was at Narracan East.

HERITAGE

Some examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Transport & Communications* include:

The evolution to coach and wagon roads

- Early miners tracks, some of which have now been incorporated into walking trails in National and State parks such as the Alpine Trail
- Section of the routes of early tracks still form part of the road network today and provide evidence of its historic development – examples include Lardner’s Track, Old Sale Road and Old Telegraph Road
- The *Robin Hood Inn*, which is the last surviving example of an early coach route hotel, while two Norfolk Island Pines at the corner of Brandy Creek Road and Old Sale Road mark the site of the *Turf Club Hotel*
- Brunton’s Bridge, which is the only nineteenth century bridge to survive in the study area (and perhaps the only one in the whole of the Gippsland region)



Brunton’s Bridge

Source: National Trust File No. B2620

Twentieth century road improvements

- The Calder Monument at the corner of Princes Way (former Princes Highway) and Lardner’s Track, Drouin East
- The CRB Hut near Aberfeldy River Bridge
- The route of the Yarragon-Leongatha Road, just to the south of Yarragon, which deviates around the hillside and can be contrasted with the route of the Old Leongatha Road that passes directly over it. Another example is the circuitous route of the Trafalgar-Thorpdale Road as it rises just to the south of Trafalgar
- The Princes Highway and Freeway, which demonstrate the improvements that have been made to roads in the twentieth century
- The Grand Ridge Road, which passes through part of the southern districts of the study area
- At Brandy Creek on the Old Sale Road, the timber stumps of the old road bridge can apparently be seen

- The former municipal quarry sites in Greenshields Road, Drouin, Quarry Road, Jindivick and at Neerim South

Railways

- *Gippsland Railway* – Warragul Railway Station, Trafalgar Railway Station, Drouin Railway Station, Yarragon Railway Station. Also buildings associated with electrification and duplication including the former Control Room in McDonald Street, Warragul and surviving sub-stations
- *Branch lines* – Remnants of Noojee, Strzelecki, Thorpdale and Walhalla branch lines such as tracks, cuttings, embankments, bridges and the sites of station grounds. Specific features include the Noojee Trestle Bridge and a timber road-over-rail bridge near Bloomfield Road at Crossover (on the route of the Noojee Line), Thomson River railway bridge (Walhalla Line), and bridge remnants on the Narracan Creek near Falls Road, Narracan (Thorpdale Line)



Old timber road-over-rail bridge at Bloomfield Road, Crossover

Source: Context, 2005

Developing mail, telegraph and telephone services

- Old Telegraph Road, which provides evidence of the route of the first telegraph line to Sale
- Post offices at Jindivick, Walhalla, Trafalgar and Yarragon

Township development

- Brandy Creek, Shady Creek and Westbury, which are examples of towns that developed on the early road to Sale
- Buln Buln, Yarragon, Neerim South and Narracan, which are some examples of new towns that developed on the railways that spread throughout the study area in the nineteenth century

4 GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

The formation of the four former municipalities that make up most of the current Shire of Baw Baw reflected the stages of community development at the time of their constitution and illustrated the desire of new settlers to have more control over their destiny. This chapter notes as in other areas, how the development of local government was strongly associated with the creation of local identity and how there were (and are) strong inter and intra-municipal rivalries, but (as we have seen in Chapter 3) some instances of cooperation. In the main towns, particularly Warragul, the role of State and Federal governments is represented by public buildings, which indicate the development of regional administration, and illustrate key periods of civic development. Various sites throughout the Shire are a reminder of the community's war effort.

This chapter also examines how the lives of Aboriginal people living in the study area were controlled during the late nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth century by the State government through the Aboriginal Protection Board and (after 1958) the Aboriginal Welfare Board.

This chapter incorporates the following Australian Historic Themes and AAV themes:

- (AHC) *Governing*: Developing institutions of self-governing and democracy, Federating & Administering Australia, Defending Australia, Establishing regional and local identity
- (AHC) *Building settlements, towns and cities*: Supplying urban services
- (AAV) *Government administration of resources for Aboriginal people*

HISTORY

4.1 Forming local government

Owing to the isolated and unsettled nature of the small communities scattered throughout West Gippsland, local government was late in developing. As already shown, there was little permanent settlement outside the township of Walhalla before selectors began to arrive in the early 1870s. In the absence of local road boards (forerunners of shire councils) roads and bridges were the responsibility of the Central Road Board, and were far from satisfactory. In 1876 Brandy Creek residents sought to have a shire proclaimed under the *Local Government Act* 1874, covering the area between Berwick and Rosedale, however there were insufficient settlers willing or able to provide the necessary rate revenue. It seems that some prompting by the Minister for Public Works was necessary before local people petitioned for municipal government. The outcome was the proclamation of the Shires of Buln Buln and Narracan on the same day in 1878 (Adams, 1978:78). These two Shires originally extended southwards to the coast. Changes to municipal borders, including the excision of the Shire of Warragul from the Shire of Buln Buln in 1881, reflect the changing economies and community interests of the times.

Shire of Walhalla

The first attempt at establishing local government was made in the most settled part of the study area - Walhalla - in 1867, when a group of townspeople formed a Council of Ten. This body had no legal powers and could not levy rates on property, however, it did manage to gain some government funding for roads. One of the works carried out by this Council was the construction of a stone wall along the foot of the Maidenhead Road to Toongabbie at the junction of the main street (Adams, 1980:55).

After various attempts to form a legally constituted municipal council were opposed by residents reluctant to pay rates, sufficient support was found for the formation of a Borough Council. On 25 November 1872, the Borough of Walhalla was proclaimed. The fact that it was the first municipality in Gippsland west of Rosedale highlights Walhalla's role as the region's main centre of population at the time (Adams, 1980:56).

In 1885 the Shire of Narracan petitioned the Government to annex the unincorporated territory between the Tyers River and Matlock, however, the people of Walhalla successfully argued that the territory had more 'community of interest' with the Borough of Walhalla. The Shire of Walhalla, incorporating the territory in question and the former Borough of Walhalla was proclaimed on 23 March 1886. Council meetings were held in the Oddfellows Hall, which was eventually purchased by Council for use as the Shire Hall.

Following Walhalla's decline, the growth in the other parts of the Shire did not compensate for the loss of population, and the Shire struggled to remain viable. On 29 May 1918, the Shire was annexed by the Shire of Narracan (Adams, 1980:56, 82-3, 118).

Shire of Narracan

The formal meeting that proposed the formation of the Shire of Narracan took place in the Narracan Mechanics' Institute in May 1878 (Adams, 1978:78). The Shire of Narracan was proclaimed on 20 September 1878. A number of changes were made to the original boundaries, including severance of several areas to the east and south, which were ceded to neighbouring shires in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century the main changes were the annexation of the Shire of Walhalla in 1918 and the severance of the area that became the Borough of Moe in 1955 (*Victorian Municipal Directory*).

Early meetings of the Shire Council were held in the Selector's Arms Hotel in Moe, but it was then decided to rotate the seat of local government annually between the three townships - Waterloo (Yarragon), Trafalgar and Moe. This arrangement only lasted until a Shire Hall was built in Moe in 1885 (Adams, 1978:79-80).

The drainage and development of the Moe Swamp in the 1890s focussed the population around the Trafalgar district, so in 1908 Council transferred its meetings and offices to the old Mechanics' Institute Hall in Trafalgar, on the site of the present Public Hall. After the Mechanics' Hall was destroyed by fire in 1934, new Shire Offices designed by architect, F.C. Purnell, in the Moderne style were built on the main Gippsland road, and opened in 1935. Meanwhile, a new public hall, designed by the same architect, was erected on the old Mechanics' Institute site.



Narracan Shire Offices and WWI memorial, Trafalgar c.1935

Source: Adams, 1982

Post Second World War growth and prosperity in the Shire, and the development of increased municipal services, necessitated more space for Council staff. In 1979 a new Shire Hall and Municipal Offices complex was built on the Princes Highway next to the old offices (Adams, 1978:153, 168, 207).

Shire of Buln Buln

The Shire of Buln Buln was proclaimed on 20 September 1878. Early rivalries between settlers in Drouin and Warragul resulted in the severance of eastern part of the Shire to form the Shire of Warragul in 1881. In 1891 the southern part of the Shire was excised to form the Shire of Korumburra, and in 1893 the south-western part of the Shire was annexed to the Shire of Cranbourne (*Victorian Municipal Directory*).

The seat of local government for the Shire of Buln Buln has always been in Drouin, despite early attempts by Warragul residents to have it in their town. The first Council meeting took place in the Railway Hotel opposite the station in November 1878. Subsequent meetings were held in A.C. Lyon's Drouin Assembly Hall, next door to the hotel, and in other rented premises until 1879, when Council moved to the newly built Mechanics' Institute Hall. In December 1883 Council moved into its new timber Shire Hall in Main Street. The Shire Hall was also used as a Court House, in a cost-sharing collaboration between local and colonial governments (Butler, 1979:303-4, 326, 376-81). Such arrangements were common at the time and enabled shire councils to finance substantial civic centres for their towns.

By the end of the Second World War, Council staff had outgrown the building and sought new premises. In the 1950s Council converted Russell House, a former private residence on the corner of Church Street and Lampards Road. The old Shire Hall continued to be used as a Court House. Russell House was eventually replaced when the new Buln Buln Council offices and Shire Hall were built in Young Street in the mid-1970s (Butler, 1979:402-11).

Shire of Warragul

The Shire of Warragul was proclaimed on 9 December 1881, following the severance of part of the Shire of Buln Buln. Lardner's Track became the boundary between the two Shires. Early Council meetings were held in the Athenaeum Hall, until the completion of the Shire Hall on the corner of Queen and Smith streets in 1893. In 1965 new municipal offices and a civic centre were opened at Civic Place (WDHS, 1982:5, 45). In August 1990 the Shire was elevated to the status of the Rural City of Warragul, a reflection of the urban nature of Warragul town and its position as 'capital' of West Gippsland.

Shire of Baw Baw

In the Victorian municipal restructure of 1994 the Shire of Buln Buln, the Shire of Narracan minus the Yallourn North district, the Rural City of Warragul, and the eastern extremity of the former Shire of Upper Yarra, were amalgamated to form the Shire of Baw Baw. The new Shire was proclaimed on 2 December 1994.

Providing services and infrastructure

As we have seen in the preceding chapter roads were a pre-occupation of the Councils in their formative years and much of the rate revenue was spent in meeting this need. However, as communities grew and townships developed new demands arose for other infrastructure and services to be provided by local government and the twin demands of water provision and waste disposal were chief amongst them. As we shall see in Chapter 5, Warragul was the first town in the study area to provide a reticulated water supply, and it was also the first to construct a sewerage system. The Warragul sewerage scheme was constructed between 1936 and 1940 and was a 'major achievement' for the town although Bick (1991:1010) notes that it was 'not universally sought by the community' as the water supply had been. As part of this scheme a pumping station and treatment plant with a distinctive castellated tower was constructed on Warragul No. 1 Road. Some of the plant and equipment were still in use in the 1990s.

Warragul was also one of the few rural cities in the nineteenth century to have a gas supply. In 1886 the Shire council signed an agreement with the firm of John Coates and Co., gas engineers, to manufacture and supply gas to Warragul. Buildings and plant were erected and

gas mains laid by 1887 and the gas was then available for street lighting and those who wished to install it in their homes. In the mid-twentieth century, this supply was replaced by natural gas supplied from Bass Strait and the buildings and plant were demolished.

4.2 State and Federal government

Public buildings and works

Branches of State and (after 1901) Federal government maintained a presence in country towns for the provision of services to the public, such as education, postal services, administering public resources (such as forests), transport, health and maintaining law and order. This presence was demonstrated by post offices, Forests Commission offices, foresters' houses, court houses and police stations. Such buildings document the impact of government policy on local areas, and can highlight a significant era in a town's history.

Transport and postal services have already been discussed in the preceding chapter and the provision of health and education, and the management of forest resources will be discussed in those to follow. In the study area few towns had early purpose-built government buildings – part of this was due to the fact that the development of the study area during the late nineteenth century co-incided with a severe economic depression, which led to a cessation of building activity by the then Colonial government. As we have seen, post offices usually started in shops or private residences before a permanent building was provided. Early courts were conducted in local government offices, as in Drouin, rented premises, or even hotels, as in Walhalla in the 1860s (Adams, 1980:54, 59).

The importance of Warragul as a regional centre in the nineteenth century was demonstrated by the construction of a number of imposing public buildings. Warragul Court House, built in 1887, is the only nineteenth-century court house in the study area and one of just five in the Gippsland region. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Warragul has had a succession of post offices. The imposing 1880s building, like the Court House, indicated Warragul's supremacy as the Shire's leading town. That Post Office was replaced by the present modern facility on the same site in 1967, just two years after the opening of the new Civic Centre. The modern Post Office and Civic Centre represent the renewed development that was then taking place in the town (WDHS, 1982:44-5, 66; Wilde, 1988:293-5). The State Public Offices in Smith Street, built in the 1970s provide a further indication of Warragul's position as a regional administrative centre.

Defending Australia

Although the study area had few specific defence sites or places of strategic significance during times of war, its residents, like those of other parts of Australia, contributed through military service or to the war effort at home.

Military training and protecting Australia from invasion

Between the time of the departure of the last British garrison from Victoria in 1870, and Federation in 1901, Victoria was responsible for her own defence. Fear of a Russian invasion in the late 1870s prompted a number of defence initiatives, including the formation of the Victorian Mounted Rifles in 1885 (*Victorian Year Book* 1973:457). Two companies of this volunteer force were formed in Gippsland from existing rifle clubs (see Chapter 8 for rifle clubs). The Warragul Company had several detachments, each made up of men from local towns and districts. A number of these horsemen served in the Boer War. The VMR of Gippsland were eventually absorbed into the 13th Light Horse Regiment just before the First World War. Arthur Bell of *Visiondale*, Tanjil South was a Captain in the 13th Light Horse, and drilled the troops on his property. He served in the First World War. Arthur's half-brother, (Sir) George John Bell, distinguished himself as a mounted soldier in both the Boer War and the First World War (Copeland 1934:496; Hasthorpe 1987:266-279).

In 1909, concern over the threat of war with Germany resulted in the requirement for all young Australian men to undergo military training (*Victorian Year Book* 1973:459). An outcome of this was the construction of new drill halls in many locations. According to Copeland (1934:528) the first drill hall built under the *Commonwealth Defence Act* was erected at Warragul in 1913.

Many men and women from the study area served in the defence forces during both world wars, and monuments to their service and sacrifice can be found in practically every town, in the form of honour boards, statues, RSL halls or avenues of honour. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

During the Second World War, Warragul was chosen as one of several strategic locations throughout the country to be the location for emergency fuel storages in case of invasion. Two tanks, painted in camouflage colours, were constructed close to the Neerim branch railway and were serviced by a siding. One of the tanks survives today (Bick, 1991:468).

War Effort

During both world wars those who remained at home supported the war effort through industry and charity. In the study area, flax production was an example of a special wartime industry during both conflicts, as mentioned in Chapter 5. Women, in particular, worked voluntarily for their local branch of the Red Cross or Comforts Fund to provide comforts for the troops. Much of the fund-raising involved social functions or fairs in public halls, which were well supported by local communities. At Nilma North the local Red Cross unit held sewing bees in the Mechanics' Hall (WDHS, 1982:37).

Prisoner of War camps

Labour camps were established at the outbreak of the Second World War to accommodate 'enemy aliens', and later, prisoners of war, especially Italian soldiers. Many of these camps appear to have been established in the forest areas around Healesville and Broadford (Watt & Brooks, 1992:178). Further research is needed to determine the presence of such camps in the study area.

Plane crash site

An unusual reminder of war is the site of an air crash at Aberfeldy in the Baw Baw National Park. Captain Joseph P. McLaughlin, was one of five pilots from the 20th Pursuit Squadron, United States Army Air Corps, sent to Australia from the Philippines to fly new P-40s back to Clark Field. In March 1942 McLaughlin was lost in bad weather while flying from Canberra to Laverton. The aircraft was not found until 1948. The airman's remains were sent to Hawaii, and a plaque was placed on the crash site in 1997 (Hanning).

Government administration of resources for Aboriginal people

This section examines the significant role that the State government via the Aborigines Welfare Board played in lives of Aboriginal people in the study area during the post-Second World War period. In this context, it also tells the story of the local branch of the Aborigines Advancement League, which although not a Government body, worked closely with the Board in many areas of Aboriginal welfare.

Aborigines Welfare Board

The Government approach to managing the welfare of Aboriginal people in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth was based on the policy of assimilation. This policy was formally articulated at the first Commonwealth-State conference on 'native welfare' held in 1937 and again at the second in 1951. In Victoria, the Aborigines Welfare Board was created in 1958 (thereby replacing the Aborigines Protection Board) as a result of a one-man enquiry by Charles McLean in to the 'Aboriginal problem' in Victoria. The function of the Board was to 'promote the moral, intellectual and physical welfare of Aborigines with a view to their assimilation into the general community' (Landon, 2006:14). In 1959, the *Aborigines (Houses)*

Act provided for the Housing Commission to enter into contracts to build houses for Aborigines on behalf of the Board (www.access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component).

The McLean enquiry was commissioned in response to government and community concern about the 'Aboriginal problem', which arose as a consequence of increased visibility of Aboriginal people in urban centres after the Second World War. According to Landon (2006:16) with the onset of the War in 1939 there was a relaxation of controls on the movement of Aboriginal people and 'a general movement of Aboriginal people across the state as work patterns shifted to accommodate the war effort and Aboriginal men joined up'. It appears that control of the movement of Aboriginal people from the missions also eased during this time and, as a result, camps sprang up in many places throughout Victoria (Landon, 2006:17).

As we shall see in Chapter 5, one such camp was the Aboriginal settlement that from about 1940 developed around a timber mill at Jacksons Track near Jindivick operated by Daryl and Harry Tonkin. Despite accommodating up to 150 people it appears that the existence of the settlement remained largely unknown to much of the wider community until a road re-alignment in 1957 made it far more visible to passing motorists (Landon, 2006:33). As a consequence, between 1957 and 1962 the Board with the assistance of the local branch of the Aborigines Advancement League (see below) moved most of the families from the settlement to houses in nearby towns such as Drouin, Rokeby and Neerim South. The new homes included old houses that were acquired, as well as new houses that were built, apparently in accordance with 1959 housing act. The consequent demise of the settlement and its eventual destruction in 1962 is recounted by Daryl Tonkin in *Jacksons Track: Memoirs of a Dreamtime Place*.

The Aborigines Welfare Board survived until 1967, when a new Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was established, which signalled a move away from the policy of assimilation. The creation of the new Ministry and policy followed the 1967 Federal referendum, which extended voting rights to Aborigines and authorised the Commonwealth to make laws in relation to Aboriginal people (www.access.prov.vic.gov.au/public/component).

Aborigines Advancement League

The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League was formed three weeks after Charles McLean tabled his report and followed a public meeting held in February, 1957. The formation of the League was a response to the threat posed by the assimilation policies set out in the McLean report, which 'heightened the need for a broad-based umbrella organisation that could deal with Aboriginal needs on many fronts'. The objective of the League was integration rather than assimilation and it aimed to establish a 'general policy of advancement for Aboriginal people'. The League 'worked quietly at first' but soon came to national attention when it launched a campaign to establish a defence fund for Albert Namatjira, the painter arrested and thrown in jail for supply alcohol to his kin. As a result, support for the League grew and branches began 'to spring up everywhere' (Landon, 2006:26-27).

One such branch was established in the Neerim South area around 1957. Most of the founding members were associated with the Methodist and Presbyterian churches such as Bert Clarke, school master at Neerim East Primary School who was also lay preacher at the Methodist church. One of the first reported actions of the League was to arrange for Pastor Doug Nicholls to come to the RSL Hall in Warragul to speak 'of the plight of the Australian Aborigine' (Landon, 2006:28).

Research undertaken by Carolyn Landon indicates that the League quickly turned its attention to the Aboriginal settlement at Jacksons Track and as mentioned above worked with the Aborigines Welfare Board to re-house families in nearby towns. In 1958, two families were moved to a site opposite the Drouin racecourse and a 1959 newspaper article describes how the League 'initiated a move for demolition of the humpies' at the settlement (Landon, 2006:11 cites an article in the 4 August 1959 edition of the *Warragul Gazette*). Later, in 1960, it was reported that a new £3,000 home was being built with funds donated by the State Country

Women's Association and the Aborigines Welfare Board. The entire project was initiated by the League (Landon, 2006:32).

In 1962 the connection between the League and the Board was formalised with the establishment of a Local Committee of the Board, which included three members of the League as well as representatives of Buln Buln Shire and the local police. This was the third such committee appointed in the State and followed those already operating at Warrnambool and Morwell (Landon, 2006:35). Landon notes that the cooperation between the local branch of the League and the Board represented an apparent 'conflict of interest'; however, it appears that some League members felt that working with the Board was the only option – Landon (2006:41) cites one member who remembers that:

I knew I would have to go with the Board or get out of it' he says. As he was unwilling to give up his mission with the Aborigines, he felt he had to find a way of cooperating with the Board.

HERITAGE

Some examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Governance* include:

Forming local government

- The Warragul Shire Offices, which is the only surviving nineteenth century municipal building in the study area and one of only a small number in the Gippsland region.
- The stone retaining wall at junction of Main Street and Toongabbie Road at Walhalla, which provides evidence of works carried out by the former Walhalla Shire.
- The former Narracan Shire Offices complex, which provides evidence of the development of the Shire between the opening of the new offices in 1935 and the extensions in 1978.
- At Drouin, Russell House and the former Shire offices in Young Street, which illustrate the development of the Buln Buln Shire during the post-war period.

State and Federal government

- The former Warragul Court House, and the State Public Offices (both in Smith Street, Warragul) former Drouin police station (28 Princes Way).
- The former Walhalla Post Office, which is an example of a nineteenth century post office erected by the Public Works Department, while those at Trafalgar and Yarragon are examples of the post offices erected by the Commonwealth after Federation.

Defending Australia

- The Warragul Drill Hall
- The fuel storage tank at 188 Normanby Street, Warragul
- The Second World War plane crash site, Baw Baw National Park



**Forest scene
near Tanjil**
*Source: Wells,
1988*

5 UTILISING NATURAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

The study area has been richly endowed with a variety of natural resources, both above and below ground, which have been utilised in the economic development of the region and of the State of Victoria. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the squatters who grazed cattle on the forested hillsides did not enjoy a great deal of success, however, grazing continued in many parts of the study area, including the mountain districts, often in conjunction with other rural industries, to become a significant part of the economy.

The first major industry in the study area was mining – particularly gold – which was discovered in the northern mountain districts in the 1860s. The most famous goldfield – and one of Victoria’s richest – was Walhalla. Other minerals – copper, lime and coal – have also been exploited in the study area. Although of lesser importance to the region’s economy, the utilisation of these three minerals – particularly black coal – made an impact on the environment of the study area.

Early selectors, having cleared parts of the dense forest of their selections, found that the rich soils and high rainfall supported a variety of agricultural pursuits. The commercial development of these industries – particularly dairying, which became the study area’s mainstay – was dependent on the development of technology for the local processing of milk products and of transport links to markets for all produce. The study area also became renowned for its potatoes, and more recently, flowers.

The study area includes forests of Mountain Ash – where the world’s tallest hardwoods have been found – and has a significant place in the history of Victoria’s timber industry. The forest resources of the study area have been exploited for mine timbers, charcoal and firewood, but mostly for saw logs. Sawmilling was first established as an adjunct to land clearing, but developed as a major industry, as shown by the large number of sawmills and their associated tramways that operated in the study area prior to the Black Friday bushfires of 1939. The subsequent salvage of huge quantities of fire-killed timber is a significant episode in the timber history of the study area. A number of small settlements sprang up around the mills, many were short-lived or destroyed by bushfires. The settlement near Tonkin’s Mill on Jacksons Track is notable as it was for a time one of the largest Aboriginal settlements in Victoria.

The other major natural resource of the study area is water. The rivers and streams that provide a large proportion of the water supplies for metropolitan Melbourne, the Mornington Peninsula and parts of Gippsland, have their sources in the Baw Baw Ranges. Several dams and water supply systems have been developed to bring the water to its users.

This chapter incorporates the following Australian Historic Themes and AAV themes:

- (AHC) *Developing Local, Regional and National Economies*: Utilising natural resources, Developing primary production, Farming for commercial profit, Altering the environment, Feeding people
- (AAV) *Associations with Forests*: Places where people worked in forest industries, Places where people lived in forests.

HISTORY

5.1 Grazing

Although Gippsland is best known as a district of dairy farmers, the raising of cattle, and to a lesser extent sheep, has always been part of the economy. The squatters ran cattle, which they fattened for the beef market, but as mentioned in Chapter 2 it was not a notably successful

venture, and many cattle were lost in the bush and went wild. The O'Connors of *Hill End* raised some cattle in the early 1870s and sold them at the first market to be held at Brandy Creek. They were disappointed with their profits (Wilde, 1988:16).

Many early selectors grazed cattle and sheep on the cleared sections of their blocks. Before the establishment of the railways or roads suitable for wheeled vehicles facilitated the transport of farmers' produce to market, there were at least stock routes, (as noted in Chapter 2) along which cattle could be driven to market. Grazing for the local meat market was also important in the remote mining areas. In the Aberfeldy district the Svenson family, who had kept a hotel and butchery continued to graze cattle in the surrounding bush after the cessation of mining (Steenhuis, 1999:6).

Alpine grazing commenced in the study area as early as 1860, when Thomas Hamilton had a grazing lease for Baw Baw, an area adjacent to the range (Waters, 1966:34). The Rawson family, who began farming at Parker's Corner in 1874, held a grazing lease on the Baw Baw Plateau until 1913. From 1914 to 1958, the lease was held by Fred Jans¹, who erected a cattleman's hut in 1922. Most of his cattle were burned in the 1939 bushfires, although it is believed that his cattleman's hut survived the conflagration (Australian Heritage Database, Place ID No. 102574 – note other sources say the hut was destroyed and replaced). Subsequently Hec Stagg grazed cattle under licence from 1958 to 1975, when the licence was withdrawn. Grazing was discontinued on the Plateau to protect the water catchment for the proposed Thomson Reservoir (DNRE, 2005:26-7; Parks Victoria, 1991:16).

Cattlemen of the high country constructed huts for shelter from the severe weather conditions. These huts were rough timber structures, of one or two rooms with a large fireplace. Cattle yards were usually built near the huts. It is believed that a few cattlemen's huts and yards remain in what is now the Baw Baw National Park, including Jans' Hut and at places such as Mustering Flat and Little Boys Creek. In many parts of the high country cattlemen made their huts available to bushwalkers. The NBW Hut at Mushroom Rocks appears to be a cattlemen's hut from the 1940s although it is now used as a shelter by bushwalkers (Parks Victoria, 2005:27; information provided by Historic Places Section DSE).



Slaughterhouse at Longwarry

Source: Anne Napier, 2006

After the establishment of dairying as the mainstay of the study area's economy, many farmers ran beef cattle and sheep as a sideline. In the 1920s Claude Staff of *Westbury Meadows*, Tanjil South began grazing Hereford and Shorthorn cattle, and raised fat lambs, and the Goodings of *Riversleigh Park* at Tanjil established a Shorthorn stud (Hasthorpe, 1987:70 & 141)

When the dairying industry was rationalised in the latter part of the twentieth century (see section 5.5) many former dairy farmers turned to beef cattle and sheep grazing. In 1991 there

¹ *Fred Jans died in 1942. His nephew, Norman, carried on the lease after this time.*

were almost as many beef cattle as dairy cattle in Narracan Shire, while Buln Buln Shire had half as many beef cattle as dairy cattle (LCC, 1991:230-1). By 2005 livestock production, mainly beef cattle had become the second largest rural industry in the study area.

5.2 Gold Mining

During the 1840s there were many small finds of gold at various places in the Port Phillip District, however there were official restrictions on digging until 1851. In that year, following the exodus of many workers to the newly discovered goldfields in New South Wales, a group of Melbourne businessmen offered a reward for the finders of a payable goldfield within 200 miles of Melbourne. News of discoveries of gold at Clunes and Andersons Creek in 1851 set off what became known as the gold rushes. People rushed to the goldfields from all over the colony, and, as the news travelled, immigrants flocked to Victoria from all over the world. The major goldfields were initially concentrated in central Victoria, but rush followed rush throughout the 1850s and '60s as new discoveries were made in other regions.

Alluvial mining

The initial rushes were for alluvial gold, found near the surface and in stream-beds. Alluvial deposits were quickly worked out, and many early diggings were soon abandoned as miners moved on to the next rush. Even so, crowds of miners who occupied the alluvial goldfields had an enormous impact on the landscape, as various forms of technology were used to win the gold. Miners sank shallow shafts, creating small mullock heaps along streams and choking the streams with the sludge from their puddling machines. The processes called sluicing and paddocking involved stripping away the topsoil so that the gold could be washed out. Because extracting gold from the alluvium requires large quantities of water, the landscape was modified by the construction of dams and water races. Sometimes miners even diverted river waters by tunnelling through the banks near a bend. Around 1900 dredging was introduced on some goldfields. This involved the use of large steam-powered machines with bucket dredges, which moved along the stream, scooping up gravel and soil from the river-bed to extract any remaining gold.

The alluvial fields were worked and reworked several times, particularly by Chinese miners in the nineteenth century and European miners during the Depression of the 1930s. In the latter part of the twentieth century, gold fossicking became a popular recreational pastime, particularly once the use of metal detectors came into vogue.

Settlement was transient, as people moved from one diggings to another. Townships sprang up almost overnight, prospered for a few years and withered to become ghost towns. Business people followed each rush and helped create new townships.

Quartz reef mining

Gold was also deposited in quartz reefs found on rocky outcrops near the surface and beneath the alluvial deposits. These reefs were mined by sinking shafts or tunnels. Once the gold-bearing quartz was brought to the surface, it was treated by roasting and crushing to extract the gold. Mills and batteries to crush the quartz were erected on the goldfields by mine owners. Like alluvial mining, quartz reef mining had a huge impact on the landscape, producing large mullock heaps and denuding the nearby forests of trees for mine timbers, structures such as poppet heads, and for firewood to fuel the steam-powered machinery. Miners built tramways through forests to facilitate the transport of the felled timber to the mines, and flumes to bring the water necessary for the gold extraction processes and for powering machinery.

By the late 1850s mining companies were being set up with capital to invest in expensive machinery for pumping water, roasting and crushing quartz, and processing the mineral ores to separate out the gold. Many miners became employees of the companies and settled in permanent communities, which grew into substantial towns, such as Walhalla.

Gippsland's goldfields

Gippsland's early goldfields were discovered by prospectors moving across the mountains from the north in the 1850s, when the Omeo, Tambo and Nicholson goldfields were opened up. In the late 1850s prospectors began moving southwards across the ranges from the goldfields of the Upper Goulburn region into the study area. By then fossickers were already working their way along the streams and gullies from the Moe district. The three main goldfields in the study area were Baw Baw/Tanjil, Jordan/Aberfeldy, and Walhalla. All began in the early 1860s as alluvial diggings, followed by quartz reef mining. Walhalla was to become Gippsland's richest and most famous goldfield.

Baw Baw and Tanjil

Small quantities of gold were first reported in Shady Creek in 1851. Throughout the 1850s small parties worked along the creeks towards the ranges, and by 1859 there were diggings on Bull Beef Creek, Pheasant Creek and Hawthorne Creek. However it was the discovery of significant deposits in Good Hope Creek by Edward Gladman in 1859, and at Shady Creek by a Government prospecting party in 1860, that led to the establishment of the Baw Baw and Tanjil goldfields. Russell's Creek, opened in 1860, became the largest of the Baw Baw diggings and the main township during the 1860s. Mining in the district was mostly alluvial, with diggings all along the Tanjil River and its tributaries, but several quartz veins, such as the Empire Reef, were also worked successfully for a time (Adams, 1980:23-6; Steenhuis, 1999:62).

One of the best finds was at Cement Hill, where gold was 'cemented' together with sand and rock, requiring the use of crushing machinery to separate out the gold. A number of companies were set up and crushing commenced in 1870. By this time the main township was Tangil (old spelling), where business people from Russell's Creek had opened new hotels and stores. There was also a police camp and cemetery. These goldfields were never very large. After a brief heyday, in which the population of Russell's Creek and Tangil combined reached 300, the Tanjil diggings declined in the early 1870s. Several attempts were made at reviving mining in the district in the 1880s and '90s, with limited success. Dredging commenced in the Tanjil River in 1899, and continued until 1910 (Adams 1980:25-32; Steenhuis, 1999:66-8).

The 1920s saw new mining activities in the Russell's Creek and Tanjil area, the most successful being on private land at Camp Creek. The Depression of the 1930s brought crowds of unemployed people, who, with some government support, eked out a living on the old diggings. Much of the Tangil township and associated mining sites are now submerged under the Blue Rock Lake (Adams, 1980:25-6, 120-1; Hasthorpe, 1987:94).

The Baw Baw and Tanjil goldfields spread to Crossover in the west and Fumina and Icy Creek in the north. Beilby, the squatter at *Mountain Glen* run, first discovered gold in the Crossover area in 1864, and a number of reefs were worked until the early 1870s. Interest was revived in mining at Crossover during the 1890s Depression, with little success (Butler, 1979:574-5; Wilde, 1988:86).

Jordan, Jericho, Aberfeldy and Donnelly's Creek

Miners on the Upper Goulburn had extended southwards to establish Woods Point in 1861, and continued moving down the south slopes of the dividing range to discover alluvial gold at BB Creek, a tributary of the Jordan River. BB Creek is believed to have been, for its size, the richest alluvial diggings in Victoria (Steenhuis, 1999:11). The new rush brought miners into the Jordan Valley, spreading along the banks of the river and surrounding creeks. By February 1862 there were 4000 miners in the area. The main settlement on the Jordan was Jericho, built at the junction of BB Creek with the Jordan River. The township was described by a visitor in July 1862 as:

... a single street and is situated on the left bank of the river. Both sides of the street are lined with stores, hotels and restaurants, etc., regularly and neatly built (cited in Adams, 1980:35).

By 1865 the town had a settled air, with diggers' houses and vegetable gardens, a police station and a Court of Petty Sessions, a branch of the Bank of Victoria, a school, and a cemetery (Adams, 1980:48). A feature of the town was a diversion tunnel cut through a loop in the river in order to alleviate flooding of the river flats on which the township was situated (Steenhuis, 1999:44, 49). However there is an alternative suggestion that the tunnel was cut by river-bed sluicers (DNRE, 1988:21). Further downstream the smaller settlements of Red Jacket, Blue Jacket and Violet Town were established soon after Jericho.

Although there were some quartz mines, the Jordan goldfields were mainly alluvial, and sluicing was popular there in the 1860s. After Jordan's heyday had passed in the 1870s, Chinese miners continued to re-work the diggings. Later a small bucket dredge was used, and hydraulic sluicing continued until the 1950s. Jericho township was destroyed in the 1939 bushfires (Adams, 1980:115; DNRE, 1998:6).

Prospectors working south-east across the valleys and hills very quickly found gold in the Aberfeldy River and its tributaries – Donnelly's Creek and Fulton's Creek – where new rushes had occurred by the end of 1862. The first reefs were discovered around Donnelly's Creek in late 1862, including the White Star, and were found to yield good quantities of gold. The difficulty for reef miners was getting the stone crushed. Not only was machinery expensive, it was heavy and cumbersome to transport across the mountain tracks. Such operations required capital, and 'men of substance' willing to invest money. John McMillan of Stratford erected the first battery at Edwards Reef (just outside the study area) in July 1863. The machinery had to be dismantled and the pieces carried in by pack horses. Eventually machinery was brought in to the various reefs in the region, and because of the difficulty of transport, many where left were they stood after they ceased to be used (Adams, 1980:38-9; see citations in DNRE 1998).

New reefs were still being found into the 1870s at Aberfeldy and Toombon. The Toombon mine had 200 workers in the mid-1880s, and was the largest producer in the Aberfeldy district. The mine was closed in 1898, to be re-opened in 1934 with little success (Steenhuis, 1999:73; DNRE, 1998:4-6).

As already noted, the story of mining is one of boom-decline-revival, and this cycle could occur several times over the life of a goldfield. As revivals occurred, newer technology was tried, and because the machinery was often abandoned with the mine, there is a range of early technology represented amongst the mining relics of the study area. For example at White Star Mine the boiler used for the original 1860s workings can be seen, along with parts of the original battery, which appears to have exploded. In 1906 the mine was re-opened and a water-powered battery was used. The pelton wheel and water race remained on the site (DNRE, 1998:14).

Walhalla

In January 1863 Edward Stringer and three companions, working their way southwards from Fulton's Creek, discovered alluvial gold in a tributary of the Thomson River, and a new rush to Stringer's Creek followed. The alluvial deposits were soon exhausted, but a rich lode was found running parallel with Stringer's Creek. Cohen's reef, as it was called, proved to be the richest reef in Victoria. The first crushing had to await the arrival of machinery via the newly cleared bullock track from Toongabbie in February 1864, but by March there were 45 claims along the reef. By the end of the year the first quartz mining company, which was owned by four Gippsland squatters, including William Pearson, a former holder of *Tanjil Hills* run, had been registered. Another early company, and the most prominent, was the Walhalla Gold Mining Company, after which the new mining settlement was named. In 1881 the Long Tunnel Gold Mining Company took over the assets and operations of the Walhalla Company. The Long Tunnel Mine was one of Australia's richest mines in the 1880s, and the Company paid out over £1.2 million in dividends to its shareholders before it closed in 1914 (Adams, 1980:36-44; DNRE, 1998:28).

The mining companies invested heavily in technology, and relics of their workings and machinery have remained on site, showing the development of the industry at different stages. Walhalla prospered for almost fifty years, surviving a number of disasters, including fires and

floods, however, it could not survive the inevitable failure of its mines. As we have seen, by the time the long awaited railway arrived in 1910, Walhalla's heyday was ending.

Other gold deposits in the vicinity of Walhalla were also exploited, including Happy Go Lucky, Jubilee and Cooper's Creek, but were of minor significance compared with Walhalla. A reminder of the alluvial diggings at Cooper's Creek is the Thomson River diversion tunnel, constructed by the Cooper's Creek Sluicing Co. at Wild Dog Spur in 1871 (Adams, 1980:46). As we shall see, exploration for gold at Cooper's Creek led to discovery of other resources including copper and lime.

5.3 Copper and Lime mining at Cooper's Creek

Copper

In 1864 some miners found a vein of copper in Cooper's Creek, a tributary of the Thomson River. This was the first copper to be discovered in Victoria. The Thomson River Copper Mining Company took out mining leases on both sides of the river and erected smelting furnaces. Several other companies also commenced operations in the area. During the 1870s the mines produced 214 tonnes of copper. A township developed, with hotels, a post office, stores and a school. The population peaked at 200, when 70 men were employed in the copper mines. Due to high costs, however, copper mining was not very profitable. The mines and town were in decline by 1880 (Adams, 1980:42, 46).

At the turn of the century, as gold mining in Walhalla was in decline, copper mining at Cooper's Creek revived, again with little financial success. In 1910 the Gippsland Copper Platinum & Gold Mining and Smelting Co. began smelting operations. Platinum deposits had also been found in the area. The settlement of Platina, developed around these works, where a siding was opened on the Walhalla railway. The smelting works ceased in 1913. In the 1960s renewed attempts were made to exploit the copper deposits. A new smelter and machinery were installed, but by 1971 had the venture failed due to poor copper prices (Adams, 1980:114, 121-2).

Lime

Deposits of another important mineral – limestone – were also found at Cooper's Creek. Lime was used in the copper smelting process, and was quarried at Cooper's Creek at the time copper was being mined in the late 1860s. Two lime kilns were built near the creek. Lime was also a component of mortar and plaster used in the building industry, and more recently it has been used in sugar refining and glass making, and in agriculture, to correct soil acidity.

In 1912, two years after the revival of copper mining at Cooper's Creek, the Evans Brothers built new lime kilns and a tramway to their own siding at Platina. The lime industry continued after copper mining ceased in 1913, and expanded in the 1920s when the White Rock Lime Company commenced operations. This company employed Italian workers who formed a distinct community during the 1930s, as already described. The lime produced was sent to Queensland for use in the sugar refineries. The lime industry at Cooper's Creek began to decline in the 1940s, and ended with the closure of the White Rock works in 1950 (Grollo, 2004:37-9, 67, 179-81).

5.4 Coal

Although Victoria's main coal centres are in the neighbouring areas of Latrobe Valley and South Gippsland, the study area made an early contribution to the State's coal mining history with the mining of black coal deposits at Coalville.

Coal was found in Victoria as early as 1827, when the explorer William Hovell discovered black coal deposits near Cape Patterson in 1827. Although this field was exploited in the 1850s, most of Victoria's coal supplies came from Newcastle in New South Wales. In 1862 the surveyor George McDonald, while cutting his track through the area, found black coal in the Narracan Valley. At that time gold was the glamour mineral, so little interest was shown in these or any of the other deposits found in South Gippsland (Morgan, 1997:137-9).

In 1870 the Victorian government, keen to develop local supplies to fuel its expanding rail system, offered £5000 for 5000 tons of coal. In 1877 a 60-centimetre seam of 'fine bituminous coal' was discovered on a selection south of Moe. The selector, Peter Mills, set up the Fear Not Coal Mining Company, but lacked the finances to develop the mine. Another attempt to open a coal mine on Mosquito Creek came to nothing. Eventually, in 1882, the Mines Department used its new diamond drill in Narracan Creek and found some more promising deposits. The Moe Coal Mining Company was formed, followed by the Narracan Valley Company, which located a 76-centimetre seam. One of the directors of the latter company was Frank Mason, Member for South Gippsland, who was supporting the campaign to build the Narracan Valley railway. The development of coal mines was closely connected with the expansion of the railway system. If coal was needed to fuel the trains, trains were necessary to transport the coal to Melbourne for distribution in the rail system. In 1884 a sample of coal from the Narracan Valley Company's mine was tested by the Railways and found to be of better quality than Newcastle coal. This seems to have been a key factor in both the development of the local coal mines and the decision to build the Narracan Valley railway.

Although the new line to Thorpdale was not completed until 1888, by 1887 the line had reached as far as Coalville, where a steep tramline linked the siding with the Moe Company's coal mine. The first load of coal was carried from Coalville to Melbourne in June 1887 (Adams, 1980:93-6).

During the 1880s and early 1890s several other coal mining companies were operating in Coalville. However, prosperity was elusive due to a number of factors, including the thin seams and the need to dig many tunnels, industrial action over rates of pay for the workers, disputes with owners of the land occupied by the mining companies, and reduced prices offered by the Railways. Essentially, it was difficult for the Coalville mines to compete with the mines in the Korumburra district, which could supply better quality coal more cheaply. After 1896 the Railways only seemed to be interested in Coalville coal when Korumburra workers were on strike. Mining activities at Coalville dwindled by the end of the century. In 1908 a new company, the Dudley Colliery Co., sank new shafts on the west side of Narracan Creek and found good quality coal. Their customers included the Sale Water Works and Australian Paper Mills, before industrial disputes led to the company's failure in 1911. The last attempt at mining in Coalville was made by the Gladiolus Company in 1929-30 (Adams, 1980:94-101).

Other minor discoveries of coal in the study area included those at Allambee, Yarragon, Childers and Thorpdale. At Yarragon John Rollo found a seam of brown coal, which was promising enough for the Railways to build a spur-line from the station, but the mining venture came to nothing (Adams, 1980:194-5).

5.5 Dairying

Gippsland's high rainfall and rich soils were perfectly suited to the dairy industry, however, it was only after transport links were established from the late 1870s and key technology – refrigeration and the cream separator – were introduced from the late 1880s that dairying could develop on a full commercial footing. Although significant dairy industries developed in Victoria's Western District and Northern Plains, Gippsland became Victoria's premier dairying region. The history of dairying in the study area is very much a reflection of dairying in the wider Gippsland region.

Early dairy farms

As Wilde (1991:231-2) points out, dairying was just one of many farming enterprises tried by early selectors, who kept one or two cows, planted orchards, potatoes and other crops and raised fat lambs, pigs and poultry. With transport to markets difficult and costly, fresh milk was not a viable product for most of the study area's farmers. Butter, on the other hand, being less perishable and less bulky, was a better prospect, as was cheese.

Herds were small, and it would be several days before a farmer had enough butter to fill a cask for transporting to the nearest town by pack horse or horse and cart, depending on the state of the roads. The Moyes family of Neerim South took their butter to the Drouin West store, where it was exchanged for supplies (Hunt, 1986:96-8). Some farmers sent their produce to sale rooms in Drouin, where it was auctioned (Butler, 1979:439), presumably for the Melbourne or export market. Others sent their butter directly to agents in Melbourne by rail (Wilde, 1988:76). Many farmers also made cheese.



Old milking shed

Source: WDHS, 1982

Butter exported from Victoria in the early years was of poor quality and had a bad reputation, which is not surprising considering early dairying facilities and practices. A vivid description of dairying is given in *Land of the Lyrebird*. Although the location was South Gippsland, conditions were similar in the study area:

The milking sheds were of the crudest kind – one or two bails with a bark or shingle roof over them, or perhaps no roof at all, just a bail in a corner of the yard, which, owing to the loose nature of the soil and the heavy rainfall, soon became knee-deep in mud, unless floored with timber, which was a most unusual circumstance ... (Committee of the South Gippsland Pioneers Association, 1920:238)

Dairies were of similar construction with hessian walls. The earthen floors absorbed spilt milk, breeding harmful bacteria, which contaminated the milk and spoilt the butter unless overloaded with salt (Committee of the South Gippsland Pioneers Association, 1920:238).

Such primitive facilities were eventually replaced by more substantial buildings – Tilgner (1976:19) noted that early milking sheds in Thorpdale were usually small, with two to six bails, but there were some larger double-sided sheds with up to 20 bails. Tilgner also noted that milking sheds and dairies usually had brick paved floors, but this was unlikely before the turn

of the century. Although paved floors became mandatory under the *Heath Act* 1890, they were still in a minority in Warragul farms in the first two decades of the twentieth century (Sillcock, 1972:50; Wilde, 1988:137).

The dairy was built in the coolest place possible. Some farmers on Lardner's Track had underground dairies (Wilde, 1988:137-8). The dairy was fitted with wooden shelves or slats to hold a number of shallow pans. The milk was brought from the milking shed, poured into the pans and left for up to 36 hours for the cream to rise to the top. The cream was then skimmed off by hand, using a metal skimmer, and churned into butter with a hand churn (Committee of the South Gippsland Pioneers Association, 1920:241).

Centrifugal separators, introduced into Victoria in the mid-1880s, provided a much faster and more hygienic way of separating cream from milk. The earliest separators were powered by circular horseworks. In 1886 there were 35 Victorian farms, including *Yarrowee* at Ellinbank using such separators (Sillcock, 1972:41; Butler, 1979:438), but these machines were beyond the means of most small farmers. Small hand separators later became available. The Moyes farm, *Clairdale*, built in 1889, had a cowshed with built-in bails and storage space for hay, chaff, chaff-cutter and other implements. The dairy had a hand separator, and an outside storage tank for the skim milk which was fed to the pigs. Pig raising was the usual adjunct to dairying in Gippsland. *Clairdale* with its pig-sty, fowl pens, blacksmith shop, stables and buggy shed, would have typified the well-set-up dairy farms of the time.

On the farm, women did much of the dairy work, including some of the milking, in the early years of settlement (Committee of the South Gippsland Pioneers Association, 1920:241). Dairying continued to be women's work, and children's work, on many farms in the study area. Emma Blair of *Tangil*, assisted by her children, ran the farm in the first decade of the twentieth century, while her husband managed gold mines and butter factories (Hasthorpe, 1987:144). Such arrangements would have been common in many families, particularly in the establishment phase of the farm, when many men found it necessary to work away from the farm to bring in income.

Butter factories and creameries

The introduction of separators was to revolutionise the dairy industry, ultimately shifting butter manufacture from farm to the factory. At the same time new refrigeration technology was enabling perishable produce to be exported successfully to overseas markets. The Victorian government, keen to develop Victoria's primary industries for export, offered financial incentives for the establishment of butter factories in dairying districts. Victoria's first butter factory was opened in Cobden in the Western District in 1888. Gippsland's first butter factory was opened at Bull Swamp near Warragul in 1889, and several others followed during the next few years. By 1895 there were 174 butter factories in Victoria (Sillcock, 1972:43).

In most localities creameries were set up to provide mechanised means of separating the cream from the milk before it was sent to the butter factories. Gippsland's first creamery was opened in 1890, in an old store at Narracan East with a steam powered separator installed. Farmers carted their whole milk to the local creamery and took back their skim milk for the pigs. Eventually most farmers acquired their own separators, and the butter factories sent carts to pick up the cream cans from the farm gate, however, creameries were not completely phased out until after the First World War (Adams, 1978:138-40). Yarragon still had its creamery until 1927, the last operating in Victoria (Wells, 1988:55).

The Bull Swamp butter factory, like many other early butter factories and creameries, was owned and operated co-operatively by a group of local farmers, so that the shareholders were also the suppliers. Many such factories were taken over by proprietary companies based in Melbourne, which also set up new butter factories and creameries in the dairying regions, and acted as marketing agents for the produce. The Warragul Butter Factory, established in 1889 as a co-operative, was taken over by the Pioneer Dairy Concentrated Milk Company in the 1890s. In 1900 it was acquired by the Melbourne firm Holdenson and Neilson, who ran it for

over 50 years (Wilde, 1988:73). By 1900 the Melbourne-based Fresh Food and Frozen Storage Company, of which Narracan pioneer George Auchterlonie was a director, had set up several more creameries in the study area, besides their first one at Narracan East, including Westbury, Willow Grove and Yarragon (Adams, 1978:138). By the early twentieth century every dairying district in the study area had its own butter factory or creamery.



Trafalgar butter factory c.1900s

Source: Adams, 1982

Some factories, including the Drouin Co-operative and the Neerim South butter factories, also made cheese and a few factories were set up specifically for cheese making. Another product made from milk was casein, used in the manufacture of items such as buttons and knife handles before the development of modern plastics. The Vermont Casein Factory was opened in Warragul in 1923, and later taken over by Holdenson and Neilson (Wilde, 1988:46-7). Several other butter factories produced casein. The dairy industry was booming in the 1920s, and continued to sustain the study area through the Depression. In Drouin the Co-operative opened a new brick wing in 1932 and the 'new' Drouin Co-operative Butter Factory in Lardner Road was opened in 1938 (Butler, 1979:454). Yarragon farmers set up the new Yarragon Dairy Company after the Yarragon Butter Factory was burnt down in 1933 (Adams, 1978:174-5; Butler, 1979:451-2).

Supplying fresh milk

Although a few farmers in the Warragul district were sending whole milk to Melbourne as early as the mid-1880s (Wilde, 1988:74-5), the study area did not become a major supplier of fresh milk until well into the twentieth century. In 1912 Morris Brothers established the Darnum Milk Depot, where farmers brought their whole milk to be brine cooled before it was sent by rail to Melbourne. The Casanella depot began nearby in 1923. In 1925 Morris Brothers built a new depot in the bush on the banks of the Moe River, where they had a ready water supply, and a timber supply for the boiler and for making charcoal to fuel the gas refrigeration plant. Other factories, including those at Warragul, Trafalgar and Drouin began pasteurising and cooling whole milk for the Melbourne market. Trafalgar Milk Supply Depot claimed to be the state's largest supplier of fresh milk for the Melbourne market in 1924. The Drouin factory later made a similar claim (Wilde, 1988:146-7; Adams, 1978:175; Butler, 1979:454). In the 1950s, half of Melbourne's milk was supplied from West Gippsland, with the biggest depots at Drouin, Warragul and Longwarry (Wilde, 1988:228). The growth of the fresh milk trade and subsequent reduction in skim milk meant that by the 1940s pig raising ceased to be an adjunct to dairying.

Twentieth century improvements

Dairying began to bring real prosperity to the study area following the First World War, when farmers, having passed the pioneering phase, became more interested in pasture improvement, stock-breeding and herd testing, with the help of experts in the Department of Agriculture. The Babcock test for butterfat content in milk, introduced in the 1890s, determined the payment to farmers for their milk – the higher the butterfat percentage, the higher the payment per gallon. In the 1920s farmers began forming herd-testing associations, which employed herd testers to check each farmer's herd regularly. This encouraged farmers to improve pastures, breeding, and general dairy practice to boost butterfat yields and productivity. Victoria's first herd-testing association was formed at Yinnar, just outside the study area, quickly followed by associations in other parts of Gippsland. One of the earliest of these associations was at Trafalgar (Sillcock, 1972:82-3).

The other main development on the farm was the milking machine, first introduced around the turn of the century. Early machines were steam powered and needed constant stoking during milking. They were not widely adopted. A few farmers had milking machines run by oil engines around the time of the First World War, but hand milking continued on most farms until the electricity supply was connected. This began in the 1930s in most parts of the study area, but places such as Willow Grove had to wait until the 1950s. By 1945, 85% of Warragul farmers had milking machines (Wilde, 1988:228).

The installation of milking machines usually required milking sheds to be modified or rebuilt. From the 1930s the standard milking shed had double walk-through bails, with three rooms separated from the bails by a passage: a room for the separator and milk tank, a wash room, and an engine and pump room. Floors and lower walls were of concrete (Sillcock, 1972:99). The herringbone sheds were introduced from New Zealand for medium and large herds in the 1950s. In the 1970s rotary milking sheds were used for herds of 150 or more (Tilgner, 1976:19).

The other major development was bulk collection of milk, commenced first by the Archie's Creek factory, near Wonthaggi, in 1957. This was introduced into the study area gradually as milk factories bought tankers. The new system required farmers to install vats in their dairies and did away with the traditional milk cans (Sillcock, 1972:140-2).

Ellinbank Research Station

In 1945 the Shire of Warragul asked the Victorian Government to establish a dairy college in the Shire. Subsequently the Government purchased the Kingston Farm and part of Tackaberry's Farm at Ellinbank for the purpose. In 1951, instead of a college, the Ellinbank Research Station was opened. The Station's function was to investigate all aspects of dairy production and to advise local farmers. Facilities included three dairies, a laboratory, workshop and staff residences. In the 1970s Ellinbank employed 43 staff (Centenary of Ellinbank Committee, p.18). Now known as Agriculture Victoria Ellinbank, it is one of 14 State agricultural research institutes in Victoria, and the only one in Gippsland. In 2005 it has 95 staff and has extended operations to provide information to farmers throughout Victoria on matters relating to beef and sheep grazing as well as all aspects of the dairy industry (www.dpi.vic.gov.au, 5 October 2005).

Rationalisation in the late twentieth century

In the 1950s large proprietary companies were again buying up locally run co-operative and private factories throughout the State's dairying regions. The Darnum Milk Depot was sold to Woodruff Dairies in 1955, then to Petersville in 1979. Petersville had already taken over the Warragul Factory, the Yarragon Butter Factory and the Trafalgar Milk Depot. This enabled the company to produce its diverse range of products at specialised locations. Yarragon began making cultured products such as yoghurt, and then later changed to special milk powders when Peters moved yoghurt production to its Oakleigh factory. The Trafalgar Depot changed

to cheese production, and butter was transferred to Warragul. In 1987 the Drouin Co-operative was taken over by Bonlac (Silcock, 1972:143; Williams, n.d.:35; Adams, 1978:210; Wilde, 1988:241-3). Further takeovers and rationalisation led to the closure of all the established factories in the study area, ending butter and fresh milk processing there. Bonlac's new powdered milk factory, constructed at Darnum in the 1990s is now the only large milk processing factory in the study area. A landmark building, its tower can be seen from vantage points throughout the study area.

Since the 1980s a few small farm-based 'artisan' cheese factories have opened in the study area, including Jindi Cheese at Jindivick, Tarago River Cheese at Neerim South, and Piano Hill Cheese at Drouin West (www.jindi.com.au; www.sinfullyaustralian.com, 5 October 2005).

Rationalisation of farming was also necessary in the changed economic climate of the late twentieth century, particularly following the loss of the UK export market around 1970. The trend has been for a smaller number of dairy farms, but increased herd sizes, and a greater focus on increasing production for each cow. With the high cost of mechanisation and land for expansion, the smaller and less efficient farmers have been squeezed out. At Thorpdale, where 90% of farmers were dairying in the 1930s, the decline was huge, with only 10% of farmers dairying by 1976. However, over the same period, herd sizes had doubled (Van Teese, 1997; Tilgner, 1976:18-20).

5.6 Developing agricultural industries

As soon as they had cleared part of their land, selectors sowed a variety of crops that would feed their families and bring a quick cash return: potatoes and other vegetables, fruit trees and berry fruits, grains, rape seed for oil and fodder, tobacco, hops and flax. Unlike dairy products, which are highly perishable, most agricultural products could be stored until it was convenient to transport them to market, enabling many early settlers to establish viable farms. After dairying became the study area's mainstay, these crops have continued as part of the rural economy, often as a sideline to dairying.

One of the most important of these crops has been the potato, which has been grown in most parts of the study area throughout its history. The potato has become the principal product of the Thorpdale district. Other vegetables, particularly onions and peas, have been grown commercially in some districts, as have fodder crops, including hay. Orchards and berry fruits have been significant in some parts of the study area. Flax growing and processing has been a significant crop during wartime. Since the mid twentieth century flower growing has contributed to the landscape, particularly at Ellinbank.

Potatoes

Many early settlers found that planting a potato crop was useful in the clearing process, especially where ferns and bracken grew. After a couple of years of potatoes, good pastures could be sown. Potatoes were also an important cash crop grown by farmers throughout the study area, but particularly in the former Narracan Shire, where successful crops were noted in the 1870s. Potatoes became the principal crop in the village settlements at Trafalgar and Yarragon after the Moe Swamp was drained in the 1890s. Trafalgar and Yarragon railway stations became the main dispatch points, and their platforms were lengthened to handle the volume of produce sent to Melbourne. By 1905 Narracan Shire was Gippsland's leading producer of potatoes. Production peaked at Trafalgar in 1920, then potatoes gave way to dairying as the district's main activity (Adams, 1978:132-4). Nevertheless potatoes remained an important part of the economy throughout the study area.

During the Second World War, potato growing began to replace dairying as the main activity in the Narracan Hills, with Thorpdale as its centre. Irrigation, commenced in the 1920s, showed that yields could be doubled. However the early systems, which required heavy pipes and piston pumps, were abandoned until the advent of aluminium pipes in the 1950s. A branch of the Potato Growers Co-operative was formed in 1944 and a depot was built on the

site of the Thorpdale railway station in 1962. According to Tilgner, potatoes brought the ‘comfortable brick homes and shiny new cars’ to Thorpdale farmers after the Second World War. Thorpdale held its first Potato Festival in 1977, an event that is still held annually (Adams 1978:190).



Potato farming at Thorpdale

Source: Adams, 1982

A particularly important aspect of the Thorpdale potato industry was seed production, which commenced in the 1940s. By the mid 1970s, Thorpdale was producing half of the State’s certified seed potatoes (Tilgner, 1976:38).

Fruit

While it was customary for settlers to plant fruit trees in their farmhouse gardens, some farmers in the study area developed commercial orchards. The Narracan Hill district was found to be suitable for fruit trees, particularly apples. One of the first orchardists to export apples from the study area to London was Henry Crisp of Thorpdale South, who built a large packing shed on his property. Another notable orchard was that of George Bell at *Visiondale*, Tanjil South, planted in the 1880s. Bell grew many varieties of apples, pears and stone fruit. The *Visiondale* orchard was protected by a hedgerow of hawthorn and poplars. At Sunny Creek, W.H. Matthews had an apple tree that was believed to be the largest in the state. It produced two tonnes of apples in 1899. Cherries were grown at Fumina, Willow Grove and Moondarra (Adams 1978:134-5; Hasthorpe, 1987:103). There were also some large orchards near Warragul from the 1880s (Wilde, 1988:66, 152).

The growing of berry fruits, particularly raspberries and strawberries, commenced at Childers and Allambie in the 1880s (Adams, 1978:135).

Flax

Flax was one of the early crops tried by selectors. In the 1890s the government encouraged flax cultivation for linseed oil production. The Warragul Oil Mill produced oil, and linseed cake for stock feed. Farmers were again encouraged to grow flax during the First World War, for the production of linen. High quality crops were grown by farmers around Drouin, Warragul and Thorpdale. A flax mill was built at Drouin and another at Buln Buln (Wilde, 1988:80, 154-5; Adams, 1978:187-8). During the 1930s a wilt-resistant flax was developed at *Hazeldean*, in the Tarago district. Renewed efforts at flax growing were made during the Second World War, when prize-winning crops were grown at *Hazeldean*, and at Thorpdale just after the War. Because of low prices for the product, the industry ceased in the study area soon after the Second World War (Wilde, 1988:155; Hansen, 1974:28-9; Adams, 1978:182, 188-9).

Flowers

In 1946, Rowse Brothers bought a run-down property at Ellinbank and began a plant nursery and flower farm. They grew flowers and bred bulbs for the Australian and export market. In 1974 the farm employed 40 workers (Centenary of Ellinbank Committee, n.d.:18). Rowse Horticulture continues to produce flowers, and liliium and daffodil bulbs. Gippsland contributes 15% in value to Victorian's flower industry, with the largest growers situated at Ellinbank (www.flowersvic.com.au; www.gippslandagribusiness.com.au, 6 October 2005).

5.7 Timber

Tall trees and great forests

As we have seen in preceding chapters, the first Europeans to encounter the landscape of the study area were often met with heavily wooded country, which appeared to present an impenetrable barrier to settlement. From the slopes of the Great Dividing Range in the north, southward toward the Latrobe Valley and up again into the Strzelecki Ranges, large trees dominated much of the terrain. Although millennia of Aboriginal burning helped keep much of the undergrowth down, movement through the study area was slowed by extensive forests and the generally broken terrain.

The Mountain Ash species dominates many of the higher ranges in both the northern and southern parts of the study area, and has formed an object of awe and veneration for generations of forest dwellers. The species grows rapidly and can reach a height of 40 metres in 20 years. The tree was originally regarded as a variety of *E. amygdaliana*, but in 1870 Ferdinand von Mueller separated it as a distinct species. It has acquired a variety of vernacular names: White Mountain Ash, Victorian oak, Tasmanian oak, Australian oak, blackbutt and swamp gum. Owing to clearance by logging and forest fires, however, none of the very tall specimens recorded in the nineteenth century which exceeded 300 feet (91.4 metres) are still standing.

Public interest in the large trees dates to the 1860s, and by the 1880s the Hon. James Munro, Premier of Victoria, was personally offering a reward of £100 to anyone who could point out a tree 400 feet in height. Mueller reported rumours of trees reaching 'half a thousand feet' (152 metres) towards the sources of the Yarra and Latrobe rivers. Reports by surveyors showed that the largest trees were to be found in the Otway Ranges, South Gippsland and near Healesville. Surveys by engineers, however, found the highest specimen reported, on Mt Baw Baw, to measure 326 feet one inch (99.4 metres; Moulds, 1993:19).

The tallest living Australian tree ever measured by a qualified surveyor was one known as the 'Thorpdale Tree', in the southern part of the study area. It was measured by George Cornthwaite with a 5-inch theodolite in 1881, and promptly chopped down. It was 375 feet (114 metres) high. A concrete pole topped by a sign declaring it the site of 'The World's Tallest Tree' now marks the spot (Griffiths, 2001:19).

While they were an initial impediment to settlement, these forests were also a bountiful resource that led to the establishment of a substantial timber industry throughout much of the study area from the earliest days of permanent European settlement. As we shall see, the development of the timber industry in the study area was closely related to the opening up of the land for selection and the development of transport links, particularly railways. Sawmillers exploited the eucalypt forests, often as a means of clearing land for later agricultural activity. Numerous sawmills and hundreds of kilometres of tramline were constructed as part of timber-getting operations in the study area.

The development of the timber industry was haphazard and it was not until the establishment of the State Forests Department (later and better known as the Forests Commission of Victoria - FCV) in the first decade of the twentieth century that a more co-ordinated approach to harvesting and management of forest resources was initiated. As we shall see, the FCV played an important role in the development of the forest industry by providing infrastructure to

support activities such as sawmilling and, perhaps more importantly, developing long term strategies to manage and sustain Victoria's forest resources.

The following sections in this chapter describe the development of forest industries (principally sawmilling, but also charcoal burning and firewood) in the study area, while the management of forest resources by the FCV in the twentieth century, particularly in the control of bushfires, is discussed in the following chapter.

Development of forest industries in Victoria

The rush for gold described in this chapter led to a population explosion in Victoria. This, in turn, led to a huge demand for timber for building, mining and firewood. In addition, the need for food stimulated the agricultural development in the study area described in the previous chapter.

The vast forest resources found in the study area in the nineteenth century apparently seemed an inexhaustible resource to the Colonial Government as they initially placed very few controls on the harvesting of timber in the belief that it should be available at low cost. The 1869 *Land Act* that opened up the land for selection provided for the reservation of land specifically for timber production, however, despite a number of reports and enquiries little else was done to effectively manage the exploitation of the ever-dwindling forest reserves. A series of critical reports during the later decades of the nineteenth century eventually led to a Royal Commission in 1897, which resulted in no fewer than 14 reports. The first 13 described in detail the major forest areas, while the last criticized the 'short sighted manner in which the Victorian forests were being exploited'. The Commission recommended 'the need for legislation, policy, funds and bureaucratic support' (DSE, 2003:3).

The Royal Commission led to the introduction of the *Forests Act* in 1907, which established a State Forests Department under a Minister for Forests. In December 1918 a more comprehensive *Forests Act* was passed, which led to the establishment of the Forests Commission of Victoria (FCV) in 1919. The role of the FCV in the development of forest industries in the study area is discussed in this section, while its role in the management of forest resources, particularly in relation to bushfires, is discussed in the following chapter.

Forest industries in the study area

Sawmilling was by far the dominant timber industry in the study area, but the timber resources of the study area have also been used for a source of firewood and for charcoal burning.

Sawmilling

Sawmilling was essentially a transport industry and sawmills did not operate in isolation. They depended on timber resources (logging areas), transport infrastructure (tracks and tramlines) and labour crews (sawmills and camps) to transform forest trees into sawn timber for market. These elements were integral to the success of the sawmilling industry, and must be considered together to understand the development of timber-getting in the study area. An efficient means of transporting heavy logs to mills and sawn timber to market was needed to ensure profitability.

In the absence of navigable rivers and in the presence of poor quality roads, sawmillers in Victoria typically relied on timber tramlines for transport. Sawmillers operating in the study area were no different. Tramlines connecting sawmills to railways provided a vital means of transport and communication in otherwise largely inaccessible areas. Thus, as railways expanded, the timber industry followed. The history of timber-getting in the study area is therefore related to the development of railways in the region. In particular, these include the opening of lines to Sale in 1879, Yarra Junction and Warburton in 1901, Walhalla in 1910, and Noojee in 1919. The historical development of the timber industry in the study area described below is framed with reference to the construction of these railway lines.

The FCV played a significant role in the development and co-ordination of the industry after its formation in 1919. It assumed control over forest production on unoccupied Crown land and the collection of royalties. It also established the first State Mill at Nayook and improved infrastructure such as tramways and roads. After the devastating bushfires of 1939 the majority of the Commission's work for the next ten years was co-ordinating a massive salvage exercise to recover as much of the burnt Ash-type timber before it split and began to rot.

Charcoal burning

Charcoal was produced by the slow and controlled burning of durable timbers in earthen or metal kilns over a period of days or even weeks. It was often regarded as a 'black art', with intuition and 'feel' for the burning needed to produce high quality charcoal. An early method of manufacture was to build large conical heaps of logs, cut to a standard size and length. The logs were arranged standing to allow for the flow of air and smoke, and then covered with turf or clay with openings to regulate the air supply. The production of good charcoal depended upon the air supply being as low as possible and the temperature high (Calder, 1987:110-1). The material remains of these simple earthen kilns are probably very slight.

An alternative method of producing charcoal involved the use of iron retorts or kilns. After wood was stacked within the retort and set alight, the fire was regulated by opening small vents around the sides of the retort. After several days the charcoal was left to cool and then loaded into bags for transport. During the Second World War, charcoal was also required for gas mask construction and other filtering equipment, as well as for gas producer units fitted to large numbers of trucks and cars to replace rationed petrol (FCV, 1941).

In the study area, many farmers produced charcoal from dried timber, to be used for producing gas (Adams, 1978:182). An iron charcoal kiln beside Tonimbuk Road near Bunyip (VHI site no. H8022-0030) measuring 2.5 metres across and 3.1 metres in height lies just outside the study area (Bannear, 1997:8).

Firewood

The forested areas of the study area yielded enormous quantities of firewood from the beginning of European settlement. Wood was needed in homes for heating and cooking, and to fuel boilers in locomotives, factories and workshops, and mines. Much of the firewood supply was generated through clearing the land for agriculture. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the region around the Bunyip River near Longwarry in particular became a major supplier of firewood to Melbourne in the 1880s before the decline in metropolitan manufacturing led to a drop in demand (McCarthy, 1993:5).

Following the bushfires of 1939 and rationing during the Second World War, an emergency firewood program operated from 1941 to 1952. Utilising fire-killed timber, an Emergency Firewood Committee provided Melbourne with 500,000 tonnes of firewood annually, to replace heavily rationed supplies of gas, electricity and other fuels. Much of the wood came from the fire-damaged forests of the study area. In addition, wood was made available to government institutions such as schools and hospitals (Moulds, 1991:88).

Sawmills along the Gippsland railway

The opening of the Gippsland Railway to Sale in 1879 provided the opportunity to transform the forests of West Gippsland, including those within the study area, into productive land for agriculture and settlement. Although the interests of farmers and sawmillers coincided, clearing the land was enormously difficult. The forest was dense, and on a standard allotment of 320 acres, removal of tree cover by axe and saw represented a tremendous investment in time and labour.

Forest historian Mike McCarthy notes that the fortunate settlers were those on timbered blocks close to railway sidings, because it was on these blocks that sawmillers sought to place their mills. Selectors in these situations found themselves being paid royalties for the use of their land and access to their timber. In addition, while the sawmiller logged and milled the trees,

the farmer could obtain paid work in the mill or contract his horse team on the tramway. This extra income was often the difference between success and failure in establishing a farm (McCarthy, 1993:2).

This economic co-dependency was reinforced by the dramatic expansion of Melbourne in the 1880s, resulting in a growing demand for timber products. Factories and housing increased quickly, and sawmills spread through forest areas to meet the demand for building timbers, firewood and paving blocks. The forests of West Gippsland featured prominently in this expansion. It was only with the economic depression of the 1890s that the timber industry in the area slowed. In many cases, timber-getting was not resumed as economic prosperity returned, as land clearance had largely been achieved.

The timber industry also played an important role in the early development of transport in the West Gippsland area. High winter rainfall turned roads and tracks into quagmires, stranding isolated selectors on their blocks. Despite pressure on local councils to remedy the situation, the lack of money remained a problem. Roads were expensive to build, at around £1500 per mile. The typical sawmill tramway, however, cost between £150 and £500 per mile, and could be used year-round. Campaigns for community-owned tramways in the 1880s bore little fruit, with the result that sawmill tramlines retained a vital role in transport and communication during the 1880s and '90s (McCarthy, 1993:109-114).

Longwarry district

The Bunyip River, west of Longwarry, forms part of the western boundary of the study area. Within its broad valley and tributaries stood an extensive forest of Mountain Ash and Stringybark. Sawmilling began in the area in 1881, and tramways were vital for log and timber transport. Lines snaked up the Bunyip River and Labertouche Creek. Donald Fraser erected the first mill in the district in 1881, 250 metres north of the Longwarry station reserve. Soon after, Fraser entered a partnership with John and Alfred Trinca to build and operate a tramline and sawmill 14 km to the north-east, along Labertouche Creek. The mill was the focal point of a small settlement, and featured four-room cottages for married men and smaller huts for single men.

Donald Fraser formed the Longwarry Sawmill Company in 1883 to purchase the Trincas' mill. A new mill site was established close to Gypsy Creek, which operated until 1888, and was then transferred higher up the Labertouche valley. In 1886 Fraser replaced horse teams on the tramline with a small, four-wheel, 9 hp locomotive. By the early 1890s, however, the collapse of the building industry brought insolvency to the company, and all operations ceased in 1894 (McCarthy, 1993:38-41).

Daryl Tonkin was a sawmiller who began cutting the regrowth forests between Labertouche and Jindivick in 1938. His story is related in *Jackson's Track: Memoir of a Dreamtime Place* (Landon and Tonkin, 1999). In partnership with his brother, Harry, the pair established their first sawmill on one of Donald Fraser's earlier mill sites. For many years thereafter, the business cut poles, firewood and sawn timber, using horses for logging in the forest and trucks to take the timber into Longwarry. Tonkin is also notable for his very close associations with local Aboriginal people who he employed at the mill and his relationship with an Aboriginal woman, Euphemia Hood Mullet. As described later in this chapter, an Aboriginal settlement developed around the mill.

East of Longwarry, the Gippsland railway climbs the ridge separating the Bunyip and Latrobe valleys. The forest country around Drouin was dominated by Messmate (*E. obliqua*) and Blackwood (*A. melanoxylon*), providing small mills the opportunity to cut a mixture of firewood and sawn timber. Sidings were installed along the railway in response to the demands of the growing timber trade, as tramways of short length and duration served the mills around Drouin.

Warragul and Nilma

The forests around Warragul and Nilma to the east also sustained a substantial timber industry in the later nineteenth century. Between 1878 and 1895, the years during which the forest in the area was converted to pasture, at least 21 different sawmill sites were established.

One of the most prominent was the Warragul Sawmilling Company, formed as a partnership of investors in 1883 and led by Henry Hine. Hine was already developing interests in the coal industry at Korumburra when he and his partners bought out the mill of William Fraser, established three years earlier on a site three kilometres south-west of Warragul. The new owners installed new log handling machinery imported from Canada and increased production to 4,700 superfeet per day. Hine also became very active in the emerging Sawmillers' Association and its concerns with tariffs on the increasing volumes of imported timber arriving at Melbourne's wharves. In 1886 the Company's mill was shifted to a new site two kilometres to the west to cut stands of blue gum and messmate. This mill closed at the end of 1889, and operations were shifted north along the Neerim Railway, cutting until 1894 (McCarthy, 1993:88-93).



Yarragon, Childers and Allambee

Yarragon began in 1877 when construction work on the Gippsland Railway reached the swampy flats of the floodplain of the Moe River. However, only one kilometre to the south lay the steep slopes of the Strzelecki Ranges, clothed in a thick forest of Mountain Ash, messmate and blackwood. An all-weather tramway was needed to exploit the timber, a project achieved by the South Gippsland Sawmill and Tramway Company, registered in December 1882. The promoter of the company was John Rollo, a successful builder, and partner in a small steam sawmill with Charles Skinner. By May 1883 construction of a tramway had reached the top of the range and was being extended to the south. The sawmill at the foot of the escarpment was producing large volumes of timber, but by 1885 a slump in timber prices caused a fall in profits. The mill was shifted to the top of the range, but the company was wound up in 1886. The mill and tramway were purchased and operated by Miller Brothers and Company, but deteriorating economic conditions forced the closure of the mill in 1889. The tramway remained in use by local selectors until 1897 when the line was pulled up and the rails sold to W.W. Gunn for use on his tramway at Crossover, north of Warragul. The formation for the tramline can still be seen as cleared track cut into the hillside from the foot of the escarpment all the way to the top (Evans, 1998:114-18; McCarthy, 1993:127-36).

The 1880s also saw the operation of the Childers Tramway and Timber Company, cutting forest in the hills about 15 kilometres south-east of Yarragon. Earthworks were underway for the firm's timber tramway by 1884, which included 30 bridges and steep side cuttings. The mill was situated on a branch of the Narracan Creek and began cutting in 1885. The tramway was extended three kilometres further south in 1886 and the mill was moved to a new site at Childers. Log tramways were built in several directions into the forests surrounding the mill.

Due to the distances involved, however, the steep and rugged country, and changing economic conditions, the mill was closed in 1887. It was reopened soon after by the newly formed Yarragon Timber Company, but the operation was wound up in October 1889 (McCarthy, 1993:136-8).

By the turn of the century most of the timber covering the steep northern slopes of the Strzelecki Ranges had been removed and the land was converted to grazing country. Although good stands of Mountain Ash and Messmate still lay along the deep gullies in the headwaters of the Tarwin River, extraction of this timber required the construction of roads capable of bearing heavy tonnages. Soon after the turn of the century improvements were made to the early tracks running south from Yarragon towards Allambee, allowing the re-establishment of sawmilling beyond the logging areas of the early Yarragon mills. Sawmilling operations in the Allambee district included those of Joseph Keeble (1908-10), the Co-operative Box Company of Victoria (1922-23), the Allambee Sawmilling Company (1923-27), Joseph Hutchison (1923-30), Broomfield and Gorman (1929-35) and Bert Dawson (1929-60s). Most of these mills hauled timber along short tramways to roads for cartage into Yarragon (McCarthy 1987b).

Sawmills along the Yarra Junction and Warburton railway

The Ada and Little Ada Rivers form the headwaters of the Latrobe River, in the far north-west of the study area where it borders Yarra Ranges Shire. A large number of sawmills were constructed to exploit the region's immense stands of timber. In particular, Mountain Ash grew from 175 to 200 feet, and many specimens were recorded as exceeding 300 feet in height. Beneath their crowns grew an understorey of myrtle beech, blackwood, sassafras, wattles and giant tree ferns. Timber-getting expanded dramatically in the district following the opening of the railway line between Lilydale and Warburton in 1901. It helped establish the timber industry of the Upper Yarra district as the largest in Victoria by the 1920s and 1930s.

Victorian Hardwood Company

In 1920 the Victorian Hardwood Company (VHC), based in Powelltown, formed the Ada River Timber Company to exploit timber cutting rights in the valleys of the Ada and Little Ada Rivers close to north-west border of the study area. VHC intended to bring the timber along a tramline to Powelltown (located just outside the study area), where it would undergo seasoning. The 'Powellising' process of timber preservation was patented in 1904. It involved heating timber in a solution of water, molasses and arsenic, allowing the timber to cool, after which it would supposedly be harder and more resistant than untreated timber. A three-foot steel tramway linked Powelltown to the Victorian Railways line at Yarra Junction. The Ada River Timber Company's logging area included some of the finest stands of Mountain Ash trees in Victoria.

Initially, the VHC took over the mill site at Starling Gap in 1920 from the Warburton Timber Company. Timber from this mill was taken by horse-hauled tramway to Big Pat's Creek and from there to Warburton. The mill operated until 1927 (Stamford et al, 1984:89-90; Supple et al, 1989:S41)

Removal of the timber from Ada River to Powelltown required overcoming several obstacles. Until 1925 access from Powelltown to the Latrobe River valley was via 'The Bump' incline. Log trucks were hauled up one side and lowered down the other by a stationary winch on top of the divide. In July 1925 this system was replaced by a tunnel, which took 13 months to dig. It was 313 metres long, 2.8 metres wide and 4.0 metres high. The tunnel overcame the bottleneck of bringing logs from the Latrobe Valley to Powelltown (Stamford et al, 1984:49-52).

A second obstacle was the divide between the Ada River and Latrobe River. A three-rail incline was laid over the divide by 1927, with winding gear and logging winches at the summit. The Ada No.2 Mill was constructed one kilometre to the north and commenced operation in 1928. A log extraction tramline extended south-east from the mill along the Ada River for more than

two kilometres, and supplied logs to the mill for several years. The mill closed during 1930-31 due to the Depression, and was totally destroyed by fire in 1939 (Stamford et al, 1984:89-91).

The New Ada Mill was built in 1931-2 as part of an expansion by the Victorian Hardwood Company. A tramway was built north of the Ada No.2 mill for about 2.5 kilometres, with a steam winch to provide haulage for the steepest section of the line. The New Ada Mill appears to have escaped the 1939 fires and closed in 1942 (Vines, 1985:114-119).

New Federal Mill

Several other sawmills operated in the area as well. The Federal Timber and Case Company established the 'New Federal Mill' in 1935 in the valley of the Little Ada River. Unable to use the VHC's tramlines through to Powelltown, the company was forced to build a three-foot gauge tramway north-west up the Ada River, through Starling Gap, and on to La La Siding at Warburton. Specialising in the production of barrel staves, the mill continued in operation until 1949 (Evans, 1993:71-3; McCarthy, 2001:261-83).



New Federal Mill bridge remnants 2005

Source: Peter Davies, 2005

Peter Ryan, formerly a columnist for *The Age*, recalled his time at the New Federal Mill and the lives of the men who worked there:

The mill sat in a tiny island of cleared space in the illimitable (as it seemed then) ocean of forest. Its centre was the huge black and brass wood-fired donkey engine, whose immense power dragged the logs in from the bush by steel cable, and drove the great screaming saws. The engine's whistle could be heard miles away.

Each man lived alone in his little hut made of saplings. A bunk made from chaffbags, a table and shelf filled it, but there was unlimited fuel for the huge fireplace.

Everything I owned then, from a spare shirt to a frying pan, fitted comfortably in an old duffle bag. It was my delight, after reading for an hour or so by the light of a candle, to drop off to sleep listening to the gentle 'glug-glug' of my breakfast porridge cooking slowly beside the dying fire.

The trees we were cutting were the tallest and the straightest in the state. This beautiful timber – hundreds of straight feet without knothole or sap vein – would have made superb furniture, beautiful polished floors, enduring panels. But we were cutting it all into flimsy barrel staves that made a single trip between a Melbourne glucose plant and a barley-sugar factory. Then they were burnt.

...it was a lovely life for a young man back from the war, and who wanted to be quiet (The Age, 27 August 1988)

State mill

In 1918 the FCV purchased a sawmill operated by the Nayook Sawmilling Company and established the first 'State' mill. A township known as Nayook West sprang up in association with the 'State' Mill on the east side of 'The Bump'. A school was opened here in 1920, and the mill operated until the 1939 fires (Stamford et al 1984:49; Supple et al, 1989:S34).

Post 1939 salvage work

Salvage work in the forests following the 1939 fires saw many changes in the timber industry, as cars, trucks and tractors replaced steam engines and horses. The transport of logs from the Ada No.2 area to Powelltown was very expensive due to the lifting and lowering over the High Lead inclines. In 1941 the manager of the Victorian Hardwood Company recommended the use of road transport to carry logs to Powelltown. Following construction of the Big Creek Road by the FCV in 1943-44, the VHC used winches to haul logs to the roadside and load them from a log platform onto waiting trucks (Supple et al 1989:S44).

Sawmills along the Walhalla railway**Gould**

The township of Gould began as a resting place on the Moe-Moondarra coach road. When the railway arrived in 1908, on its way to Walhalla, it soon became a major point of dispatch for the extensive forests of messmate and stringybark in the area (McCarthy, 1988:5). G.V. Morgan was among the first to exploit timber around Gould. His mill lay about two kilometres to the north-east in a steep valley and commenced operations around April 1914. It was connected by a three feet inclined tramway up out of the valley to the station. Several log lines were constructed to feed the mill. After cutting out most of the available timber, Morgan installed a second mill in 1925 about 4 kilometres upstream from the first mill. Both mills had ceased operating by 1927 (McCarthy, 1988:5-8).

Other sawmillers to work in the forests around Gould include Jim Marchbank, on a branch of Jacobs Creek (1913-29), and the Elton Brothers on several sites to the south-east and south-west of Gould (1921-28). Tom Brown logged a mixed forest of Mountain Grey Gum, Messmate, Stringybark and Silvertop to the west of the Tyers River from a mill site about one kilometre from the Gould station (1928-33). Herman Kirchhubel briefly worked the mill plant of Munro and Sons on a site south-west of Moondarra (1936-39), before shifting to Tanjil Bren to work in the fire-killed timber (McCarthy, 1988:8-19). Construction of the Moondarra Reservoir in the 1960s largely obliterated the remains of the mills and tramways in the immediate vicinity of the Gould railway station.

Erica and Tyers Valley

The sawmilling history of the Erica district began in 1910, with the opening of the narrow gauge railway line between Moe and Walhalla. The only timber-getting in the area prior to this time was to satisfy the needs of the Walhalla mines. With the arrival of the railway, however, sawmilling expanded dramatically, with numerous mills cutting the extensive stands of Mountain Ash and other timbers in the thickly forested hills and valleys of the Western, Middle and Eastern Tyers Rivers. A network of tramlines radiated out from railway sidings at Erica, Collins Siding and Knotts Siding. Tramways played a crucial role in transporting timber in the area until the 1940s, when crawler tractors and heavy trucks replaced the older technology of steam and animal power (McCarthy, 1983:1).

The first sawmills in the area were built to the north and north-west of Erica by G.V. Morgan, William Murie, William O'Shea and Munro and Sons. In 1916 Henry Collins moved into the area and operated several mill sites along the Tyers and Middle Tyers Rivers. In 1924 the partnership of Christensen and Saxton was formed, and a water-powered mill was installed on the Middle Tyers River, cutting logs from the side of Mount Erica. Christensen left the firm in 1937, and the Saxton brothers continued for another year before shifting their operation to Tanjil Bren in 1938 (McCarthy, 1983:5-6).

Timber-getting in the area was boosted in 1927 with the opening of the Tyers Valley Tramway. Constructed and operated by the FCV, this two feet six inch steel rail tramline replaced earlier and increasingly rundown timber tramlines. It extended up the Tyers Valley from Collins Siding, and then branched at Tyers Junction, with lines penetrating up the Eastern and Western Tyers Rivers (Evans, 1993:50-2). One of only two railways in Victoria for which the FCV provided both the motive power and direct operating responsibility, the railway used the same gauge as the Victorian Railways narrow gauge line to which it was connected at Collins Siding, enabling the sawn timber and mill products coming out of the forest to be directly transported on rolling stock destined for Melbourne (Australian Heritage Database, Place ID No. 102710).

Motive power on the tramway was provided by several locomotives. After an Australian-built 'Harman' articulated steam engine was tried and proved a failure, a 'Climax' locomotive was ordered from the USA. While this was being delivered, service was commenced using two rail tractors built by Malcolm Moore of Port Melbourne. When the Climax arrived in 1928 it was found to answer requirements perfectly but was prone to break axles. When this happened the rail tractors, which were normally confined to the two branch tramlines, took over the operation of the line.

An engine shed, workshops and housing for the tramway employees were built at Tyers Junction, which became the centre of operations for the line. The tramway operated at a loss for most of its working life, but it played a vital role in the timber industry in the area, transporting 120 million superfeet of timber during its lifetime and large quantities of non-sawn timber products such as poles and firewood. The last revenue trip on the line was made on July 1949, when the lack of traffic and the dangerous state of the line forced its closure (McCarthy, 1983:8-11).

In 1927 G.V. Morgan established a mill near the junction of Growler's Creek and the Western Tyers River, about 10 kilometres west of Tyers Junction. Morgan's tramline connected with the FCV line over a lengthy trestle bridge spanning the Western Tyers River. A substantial settlement, known locally as 'Morgans', developed around the mill, which worked until 1972.

Northern Timber Mills installed two sawmills along the upper reaches of the Western Tyers River in 1928 and 1929. The firm commanded an area of 4500 acres, with extensive stands of Mountain Ash, messmate and mountain grey gum extracted along many miles of log tramline. The remoteness of the area, about 25 kilometres from Erica, meant people lived permanently on site, with the FCV tramline being the only way in or out. State School No.4485 was opened at the No.1 Mill in 1931. By 1937 the No.2 Mill had cut out and was shifted to Tanjil Bren, while the No.1 Mill continued until 1942 (McCarthy, 1983:12-14).

The last sawmill to be established in the Western Tyers area was installed by Hector Ingram in 1940. The mill was unusual in being powered by a water-driven turbine fed by a weir on the Middle Tyers River. In 1943 a logging tramline was installed which incorporated a skyline logging system, one of only a few ever built in Victoria and the only one with substantial extant remains. Ingram continued working the site until 1954 when he moved to Mitta Mitta in north-eastern Victoria (Evans, 1993:47-9; McCarthy, 1983:14-15).

Forests in the Eastern Tyers valley were also exploited in this period. In 1919 the firm of O'Shea and Bennett established a mill along O'Shea's Creek, with timber hauled up a steep incline and eventually taken down to the railway at Knott's Siding. In 1924 the firm opened a second mill, four kilometres to the north, the first sawmill to be established in the upper reaches of the Thomson Valley and in an area containing some of the finest forests in Victoria. The bushfires of 1926 destroyed both mills and much of the firm's tramlines. The No.2 Mill was rebuilt but destroyed by fire again in 1932, along with six people killed.

J.F. Ezard took possession of O'Shea and Bennett's milling operations following the bushfire, with two mills established and logs drawn from higher up the Thomson Valley. By 1938 the tramline extended to South Cascade Creek. Ezard installed skyline and high-lead haulages to carry logs in the air across valleys and down mountainsides to the tramway.

Following the 1939 fires, the FCV decided to extend Ezard's tramline further up the Thomson Valley to salvage fire-damaged timber. John Sharp and Son had their No.1 Mill on North Cascade Creek and their No.2 Mill on Swift's Creek. Alstergren's Pty Ltd established a mill on Bell's Creek with a steeply graded incline to connect with the Commission's tramway. The FCV itself logged the area as well, establishing three camps for the bush workers and tramway construction crews. According to McCarthy, all were of ramshackle appearance with mill offcuts, canvas and corrugated iron used as the main building materials (McCarthy, 1983:20).

Sawmilling ceased in Thomson Valley in 1950, after the closure of Alstergren's Mill in 1946, Sharp's mills in 1948, and Ezard's No. 1 Mill in 1950. The Thomson Valley tramline also ceased operating in 1950, and thereafter the Thomson Valley Road was extended through to Bell's Creek.

Sawmills along the Noojee railway

Selectors began moving into the forests around Noojee in the 1880s. Struggling to clear the immense forest trees, however, they achieved little more than a subsistence living from farming. Partly due to the forests of the area, the broad gauge railway line linking Nayook with Warragul was extended to Noojee in 1919. Sawmillers moved into the area, and timber trucks were sent regularly down the line to Warragul. The fires of 1926 and 1939 had a devastating impact on the communities of Nayook and Noojee. The need to salvage fire-killed Mountain Ash timber in the area, however, meant the Noojee line was quickly rebuilt. By 1950 the bulk of this timber had been recovered, and the sawmillers moved further eastward (Fletcher, 1992).

Mount Horsfall and Loch Valley companies

To the north of Noojee, the Loch River rises in the hills west of Mount Horsfall, and flows south to join the Latrobe River at Noojee. In May 1923 the Mount Horsfall Sawmilling Company of Philip and Benjamin Davis began to extend the Loch Valley Tramway north to the top of the ridge separating the watersheds of the Loch and Yarra Rivers. The Loch Valley Timber Company installed a mill (Loch Valley No.2) adjacent to the upper section of the tramway, and used it to despatch sawn timber and split palings. For this they were charged sixpence per ton per mile, although the Mount Horsfall Company believed this was too low given the expense they had incurred in construction of the tramway. For their part, the Loch Valley Timber Company complained that the line was in poor condition and the curves were not maintained.

Davis No. 1 and Davis No. 2

Philip and Benjamin Davis established their No.1 Mill in the headwaters of Alderman's Creek and their No.2 Mill a little to the south-east to cut timber on private property. The fortunes of the Mount Horsfall Company began to decline almost as soon as the No.1 Mill opened. Problems included serious mechanical breakdowns, fire in their Melbourne yards, disputes with the FCV over royalties, complaints from the Timber Workers' Union and the loss of logging rights to the Loch Valley Timber Company. Transport costs and poor quality trees were also to blame for the Davis' increasing financial difficulties. The 1926 bushfires then destroyed the No.2 Mill, tramway and most of the trees available to the remaining mill. The Mount Horsfall Sawmilling Company went into receivership in 1927, and despite an attempt to resurrect operations, little further timber-getting occurred (Evans, 1993:53-8).

Toorongo Saw Mills

Further to the east, the Toorongo Saw Mills No.1 and No.2 were associated with the 1939 bushfire salvage operations. The Toorongo settlement contained several shops as well as houses during the 1940s. The mill sites were established to process several log dumps which were stockpiled during the 1939 salvage effort (Supple et al, 1989:87).

Herman Kirchhubel acquired the sawmill of Munro and Sons of Erica and moved it to the West Tanjil valley as part of the salvage effort following the 1939 bushfires. The mill began in 1940, cutting fire-killed trees immediately around the mill. Sawn timber was sent away over an

outlet tramway feeding the West Tanjil Steel Tramway. This latter tramway was owned by the Forests Commission but operated by sawmillers using the line who formed the Tanjil Haulage Company. Kirchhubel's Mill closed in 1949 (Evans 1992b; 1993:43-5).

Limberlost Lumber Mills

By the 1920s and '30s there was a growing demand in Melbourne for seasoned timber. Perfected by the Grant brothers at Warburton around 1920, the process involved kiln drying and steam reconditioning in sealed chambers. In 1930 Limberlost Lumber Mills Pty Ltd purchased the mill site operated by the Goodwood Timber and Tramway Company in the Upper Latrobe valley west of Noojee. The company constructed seven concrete kiln chambers at the site as a timber seasoning works. Timber was despatched along a tramline to the railhead at Noojee. An increase in royalty rates in 1937 triggered a scaling down of the operation, and the bushfires of 1939 destroyed the company's remaining assets in the area (Evans, 1993:65-7).

5.8 Water

The study area is known for its high rainfall and as we have seen in preceding chapters the incessantly wet weather created problems for early settlers. However, it is this very abundance of water that has ensured the prosperity of the study area as one of the richest agricultural districts in the State, and has allowed the harvesting of water to supply not only local and regional needs, but also Melbourne.

Local water supply systems

The development of reticulated water supplies is one indication of the growth of townships. Early settlements were often situated near a supply of water, usually at a point where a road crossed a stream or creek. Towns without a natural supply such as this had to rely on artesian bores or wells and underground tanks, which were soon to prove inadequate as growth led to ever-increasing demands for water. As towns grew, the disposal of waste also became an issue and often compounded the problem by polluting local sources of freshwater. By the end of the nineteenth century, major towns in the study area such as Warragul and Drouin were investigating means of improving water supplies to the townships.

The first water supply systems for the townships were established by locally constituted waterworks trusts from the early part of the twentieth century. The trusts built weirs, pumping stations and other infrastructure to bring piped water from the local streams to houses and business premises in the towns.

Warragul Waterworks Trust, constituted in 1908, was the first water authority in the study area. Warragul is situated beside Hazel Creek, a small intermittent stream that even in the early years of settlement did not provide a reliable source of water for the town. Bick (1988:960) notes that:

By the 1890s, Warragul had been settled for nearly fifteen years and had experienced a major building boom during the 1880s. This meant that Hazel Creek was badly polluted, receiving all the excess groundwater, sewerage and other waste from the town .. during the 1900s the Health Officer at Warragul declared the water there as being unfit for human consumption.

Apart from health issues there was the ever-present danger of fire; in 1888 fire destroyed all of the buildings in Queen Street, Warragul between the Railway Hotel and the Bank of Australia. Drouin similarly experienced a series of disastrous fires in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Initial investigations undertaken for the Shire of Warragul eventually led to a report to the Council in 1906 by consultant engineer, Thomas Walker Fowler, MCE of Melbourne, which proposed the scheme that was constructed in two stages from 1910 to 1919. The first stage comprised the pumping station on the Tarago River at Rokeby and a service basin or holding reservoir several miles away on the highest point of land between the pumping station and Warragul township. The second stage was the construction of a weir across the creek in 1919.

The scheme supplied the townships of Warragul, Nilma, Darnum and Rokeby for over 50 years until it was decommissioned in the 1960s (*Victorian Municipal Directory*; Wilde, 1988:42). Drouin had an opportunity to join the Warragul scheme, but declined and it was not until 1935 that its own water trust was constituted and a gravity scheme using from the Labertouche Creek developed (Butler, 1979:409). As part of this scheme, a concrete water tower was constructed in Norman Street at the rear of the butter factory from whence water was reticulated to the township.

The situation at Warragul and Drouin was similar to that faced by other towns in the study area and several other local waterworks trusts were formed as townships grew. The Trafalgar Waterworks Trust, constituted in 1924, built a weir on Sunny Creek to supply the Trafalgar township (Adams, 1978:154), while a weir on the Narracan Creek just above Narracan Falls was constructed in 1949 to provide a water supply for the then rapidly developing city of Moe, which at that time was still part of Narracan Shire. This latter weir, now known as the T.J. White Weir, is still in use and remains the primary source of water for the water treatment plant at Moe (which also supplies the towns of Newborough and Yallourn North as well as the Yallourn ‘W’ power station and works area) for around 9 months of the year (Summer flows are affected by crop farmers above the weir who draw water to irrigate crops) (Wayne Shaw, Gippsland Water, pers. comm. 8 May 2006).

Supplying water to the Gippsland region and Melbourne

The study area straddles the boundaries of two key catchments – The Melbourne and Westernport Catchment, which contains the Tarago River and Bunyip River and tributaries, and the West Gippsland Catchment containing the Thomson, Tyers and Tanjil rivers and tributaries. Water originating from and collected within these catchments provides the major proportion of Melbourne’s water supply, and also supplies the Mornington Peninsula and Latrobe Valley urban areas.

Thomson Reservoir

The Yarra River, Melbourne’s earliest water supply, has its source on Baw Baw’s slopes. A number of reservoirs have been built in the Yarra watershed, however, they are all outside the study area. In the late 1960s, in an effort to ‘drought-proof’ Melbourne, the decision was made to divert the waters of the Thomson River catchment for Melbourne’s supply. The first two stages, which involved the construction of 33 kilometres of diversion tunnels under the ranges to the Upper Yarra Reservoir, were completed in 1973. In 1983 the Thomson Reservoir was completed, more than doubling Melbourne’s water storage capacity. The dam, the second highest in Australia, has an earth and rockfill embankment, with a total capacity of 1,068,000 megalitres. Its catchment of 48,700 hectares lies entirely within the study area. Thomson Reservoir supplies 60% of Melbourne’s reservoir capacity. It also supplies irrigation water for the Macalister Irrigation District of Gippsland (www.melbournewater.com.au, 8 October 2005; Adams, 1980:138-9).

Tarago Reservoir

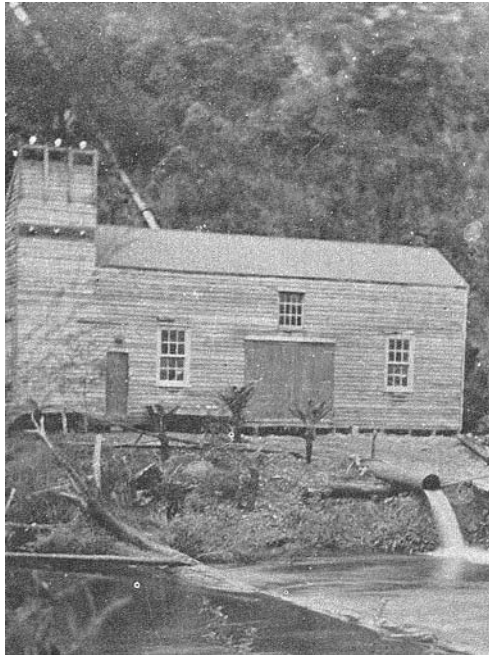
In 1957 an aqueduct 26 kilometres long was constructed to carry water from the Tarago River to the Bunyip River, and from there to supply the Mornington Peninsula (www.nre.vic.gov.au/ourwater, 8 October 2005). The Tarago Reservoir, built by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, was completed in 1969, to meet the increasing demand for water on the Mornington Peninsula. It also supplied Neerim South, which had formerly been supplied from the weir and pump-house now submerged by the reservoir. The reservoir’s initial capacity of 25,000 megalitres was enlarged to a capacity of 37,600 megalitres in 1971 (Butler, 1979:657-8; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au, 8 October 2005).

Moondarra Reservoir

The Moondarra Reservoir was constructed on the Tyers River between 1959 and 1962. The dam has a rockfill wall with a clay core. It covers the site of the former township of Gould. A reminder of the township is the Cecil Inn, a tavern that was salvaged from the town, moved to its present site in the picnic ground and restored. Moondarra Reservoir is the principal water supply system for the Latrobe Valley. It does not supply water to the study area (www.gippswater.com.au, 8 October 2005).

Blue Rock Dam

The Blue Rock Dam was constructed between 1979 and 1984 on the Tanjil River for the purpose of regulating the river's flow and augmenting water supply to the Latrobe Valley. The dam has an earth and rockfill embankment and a storage capacity of 208,000 megalitres (www.srw.com.au, 8 October 2005).



The power house of the Latrobe River Hydro Electric Company

Source: WDHS, 1982

Hydro-electricity

The study area's first electricity supply was provided in conjunction with the timber industry when the Goodwood Timber Company, together with a number of Warragul farmers and business people, formed the Latrobe River Hydro Electric Company Ltd in 1917. The Company diverted water from the Mundic River via flumes to a holding dam in the hills above Noojee. The water was then piped down to a power station on the banks of the Latrobe River at Noojee. After considerable difficulties with what was then fairly new technology, the Company began supplying electricity to Warragul, Buln Buln, Neerim and Noojee in 1922. After the State Electricity Commission supply was connected to Warragul in 1930, the Latrobe River Hydro Electric Company continued to supply Neerim and Noojee until 1935 (Wilde, 1988:182-5).

5.9 Township development

'Butter' towns

Many of the towns in the study area owed their development to the establishment of a butter factory or creamery in the 1890s or early 1900s. The proximity of a railway ensured continued town growth and prosperity as the dairy industry boomed. Warragul and Drouin in particular, with their large factories, were centres of the industry. Small towns like Narracan also developed around their railway station and creamery, opened within a year of each other. Neerim South began to develop as a town when the railway opened in 1892, however, the town really grew with the opening of its butter factory, formerly a creamery, in 1903. In that year the town also gained a bank and a printing office. The Neerim South butter factory closed in the 1940s, but the town remained an important centre for dairy farmers.

Trafalgar epitomises the busy and prosperous butter towns of the study area. Its first butter factory, Trafalgar Co-operative, opened in 1891, but was soon outgrown and replaced by a larger brick building in 1904. The Trafalgar Factory and the neighbouring Yarragon Factory amalgamated under one management, with the Trafalgar Factory concentrating on butter manufacture. Another factory, the Trafalgar Milk Supply Depot, commenced in 1920 and both businesses expanded and diversified. The Co-operative Factory had a general store, providing a further incentive for regular visits to town by farmers. The two Trafalgar factories made well-known brands of butter - 'Sunny South' and 'Meadows' - and competition was keen. The growth of the dairying industry was reflected in the growth of the town - Between 1900 and 1910 the population increased threefold to 600 and the town overtook Moe and Yarragon to become the largest in Narracan Shire (VMD, 1900, 1910). Consequently, in 1908 Trafalgar became the centre of Narracan Shire as the Council transferred its meetings and offices from Moe to the old Mechanics' Institute Hall in Trafalgar, on the site of the present Public Hall. A further wave of development occurred after the First World War when the population rose from 700 to 1200 in the decade from 1925 to 1935. The town's prosperity, mainly from the dairy industry, is reflected in its buildings of the 1920s and '30s. Trafalgar obviously weathered the Depression successfully, as it was able to replace the Mechanics' Institute, destroyed by fire in 1934, with a fine *Art Deco* public hall the following year, while the new Shire Offices were opened in the same year. Several new churches and commercial buildings were constructed during the same period along with many houses. (VMD, 1930, 1935; Adams, 1978:138, 150-4, 174-5).

Mining towns

Integral to the history of gold mining in Victoria was the mushrooming of numerous townships to provide basic amenities to the mining population. Many such townships developed into substantial towns or even cities, to serve as commercial centres for the rural communities that replaced or joined the mining population - Bendigo, St Arnaud, Omeo - to name a few. Other mining townships disappeared almost as quickly as they appeared, as the gold ran out and miners moved on to the next rush. The mining towns of the study area generally typify the latter type. With the end of mining and no rural population settling in their immediate environs, the mountain mining towns lost their economic base and became ghost towns. Former towns such as Jericho, Red Jacket, Coopers Creek and Toombon have few of their structures left intact, but some mining relics and distinctive landscape remain to tell the story of their brief moment of fame. Similarly, the coal mining settlement at Coalville was, for a brief period, the largest town in Narracan Shire, but little trace of it is left today.

Walhalla

Walhalla is unique in the study area in that it survived as a viable mining town for the best part of half a century and was, during its heyday, Gippsland's second largest town, and the city centre for the surrounding goldfields. After the decline in mining, Walhalla played a role in the tourist industry and to some extent the timber industry.

Initially known as Stringer's Creek, the town was surveyed and named Walhalla in 1866, when the first land sales were held. Because of its remoteness, Walhalla became a self-sufficient close-knit community. Most of the residents' needs were supplied by its shops, hotels, banks, businesses, schools, sporting clubs, music and cultural groups, churches and other community institutions. Townspeople built their houses on terraces cut into the hillside, and many had gardens. They grew their own vegetables, or relied on those supplied by Chinese market gardeners, whose gardens were situated on one of a few flat areas, to the north of the town. In and around the town were the signs of mining - batteries, wood piles to fuel the steam-driven machinery, tramways and chutes for the timber, water races and a tailings flume raised above the creek. After mining ended, many of the buildings were removed and re-used in other parts of the study area and elsewhere. Fires and floods have also taken their toll on the town, however, sufficient remains to tell the story of Walhalla's fame.



Walhalla c.1900

Source: Wells, 1988

Coalville

Coalville owes its origins to the coal mines, which opened up in the district in the 1870s. Although selectors were already settling in the district, the township began to form only after the arrival of the railway in 1887 made mining a viable prospect. The first hotel was opened in 1887, by selector Jacob Green, who had also worked as a ganger on the Gippsland railway. During the 1880s and early 1890s several other coal mining companies were operating in Coalville. A settled mining township had grown up around the mines, and by 1891 Coalville was the largest township in Narracan Shire. By 1890 there were several stores, a postal service, 'coffee palace', and two boarding houses. When the survey was made in 1890, the township already had many houses built on the mining lease on the banks of the creek. The residents, presumably mine workers, were evicted and transferred to blocks outside the surveyed township, because they could not afford township blocks. One of the local selectors, John C. David, built a hall, which was used for the first school, church services and meetings of friendly societies, as well as social functions for the community. Coalville shared in the mining decline at the end of the century, and many buildings were removed. The township revived somewhat with the development of the dairying industry in the district in the early twentieth century, however, it never regained its status and today only a few houses remain (Adams, 1978:101-3).

Timber towns

As we have seen, a number of towns in the study area became closely associated with the timber industry. In the nineteenth century, tramlines from forest sawmills terminated in railway station yards at Longwarry, Drouin, Warragul, Nilma, Darnum and Yarragon, and large storage areas were needed to accommodate the huge piles of sawn and split timber and firewood which accumulated awaiting dispatch.

The pattern of development was to change in the twentieth century as reserves close to the railway townships were exhausted and new townships sprang up in ever more remote areas deeper in the mountains to the north and south of the study area. The activities of the FCV were to have a significant influence upon township development during this time. As the Commission gradually expanded its works and personnel throughout the forest and sawmilling districts, it established offices, works depots, nurseries and staff accommodation in timber towns. In remote districts there was usually no housing available, so the Commission accepted a responsibility to build accommodation for forest officers and their assistants. This applied to both single and married men. FCV houses were generally small wooden structures with limited amenities.

Foresters would also spend much of their working lives isolated in the bush, on forest patrols or silvicultural work. This resulted in camps of tents, and getting around on foot, horseback or bicycle.

Darnum

Between Warragul and Yarragon to the east, lay the small settlement of Darnum, which owed much of its existence and prosperity in the late nineteenth century to the timber industry. In 1875, five members of the Cropley family selected adjoining allotments 11 kilometres south of Darnum Station. The properties totalled over 1400 acres and were thickly timbered with messmate, blackwood and Mountain Ash, as were another 1000 acres leased to the east. Construction of a tramline to Darnum commenced, and in 1888 the family took delivery of a steam locomotive from John Fowler and Company of Leeds, England. The locomotive transported the output not only of the Cropley mill but also that of Amos & Gunn and the Whiteside brothers, both having been in operation in the area since 1889. The tramway also catered to the needs of the farmers through whose property it passed. The Cropleys' mill occupied four sites in the area over the 15 years of its existence, with the iron rails serving each cut-out mill being lifted and re-laid to serve the new location (McCarthy, 1993:114-119).

Longwarry

William Henry (Harry) Collins arrived at Longwarry in 1882 to work for the Trinca brothers at their Labertouche Creek mill. In 1887 he established his own mill on Robinson Creek, 14 km north of Longwarry. A school was established on the site in 1891, named Jindivick North State School, with 17 pupils enrolled. The mill was then shifted by bullock team to the Ryson Creek, about three kilometres to the north. By 1899 the Ryson Creek Mill was among the best known in Gippsland, with close to 200 people in residence. Unlike most sawmill camps, it had an air of permanence, with houses and gardens stretched along either side of the outlet tramway. Teams representing the mill entered local football, tennis and cricket competitions. There were also stables, a store, butcher, community hall, smithy and boarding house. The mill closed in May 1901, and was shifted 1.5 km north-west to the Tea Tree Creek, with a new tramline built to serve the mill. This mill closed in 1903 (McCarthy, 1993:41-50).

FCV towns

Tyers Junction was the headquarters of the Tyers Valley Tramway, built by the FCV in 1927 to aid sawmillers in the area to get their timber to market. The Commission built locomotive sheds, workshops and housing for the tramway employees at Tyers Junction, which became the centre of operations for the line, until its closure in 1949.

Erica was also closely associated with activities of the FCV. Late in 1940 the Commission erected the State Mill at Erica, which had earlier been based at Noojee, and rebuilt tramlines to

serve it. Much of the timber waste from the mill went into paper pulp but the mill also helped fill Defence Department orders. The mill had a large staff, who worked at the site until its closure in 1961.

Noojee was for many years a base for the FCV, with offices and a work centre. Officers of the Commission also supervised operations of the Noojee Boys' Camp (see Chapter 6). In 1986, the Native Forest Research Centre was also established in the town.

Jacksons Track aboriginal settlement

The story of the aboriginal settlement associated with the Tonkin Mill at Jacksons Track is told in *Jacksons Track: Memoir of a Dreamtime place*. In about 1939, Stewart Hood was employed by the Tonkin brothers and he established a camp near the mill on the banks of the Labertouche Creek. As a child Stewart had grown up on the banks of the Albert River near Yarram and in 1919 he and his family were moved to the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Mission. After a dispute with the Manager Stewart was forced to leave his family at the Mission and was banned from returning. With the assistance of the Tonkin brothers he collected his family from the Mission and brought them to live with him at his camp near the Mill. Other members of the Hood family followed and soon 'word got around what a good place Jacksons Track was, with plenty of work, good water and firewood, plenty of wild game to be had'. Many of the people came from Lake Tyers, while others came from the Western Districts and North eastern Victoria (Tonkin & Landon, 1999:42-6, 58-9).

The families at the settlement lived in huts built out of bark and timber. At its peak it is estimated that between 100-150 people lived at Jacksons Track making it one of the largest Aboriginal settlements not only in Gippsland, but also in Victoria. Families were raised at the camp and the children attended local schools. Churches services were held and Pastor Doug Nicholls would often come to preach. One of the most notable people to have been born and bred at the settlement was Lionel Rose, who went on to become World Bantamweight Boxing Champion in 1968. Despite the size of the settlement, many local non-Aboriginal people were unaware of its existence until a road re-alignment in 1958 made it more visible to passing traffic. As we have seen in Chapter 4, this increased exposure coincided with the introduction of new laws affecting Aboriginal people and contributed to the eventual demise of the settlement. Families began to move out in 1958 and, according to the memoir of Daryl Tonkin, the physical remnants of the camp were destroyed in 1962 (Tonkin & Landon, 1999:255-62; Landon, 2006:29-33).

Rawson

Rawson is a more recent example of town created for a specific purpose, in this case to house people working on the Thomson Dam project. Before the building of the Thomson Dam commenced, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works purchased a site at Parker's Corner for a new township to accommodate the workers in a location convenient to the construction site. Rawson township was gazetted in 1978. The MMBW aimed to build a well-designed town with modern amenities, rather than a makeshift settlement. Roads were sealed, sewerage was provided and power lines were put underground. Architects Don Hendry Fulton and Associates laid out the town to take advantage of the natural topography of the site, and also designed the buildings. Many buildings, particularly the quarters for single staff, were intended as transportable units, which could be removed after the reservoir construction was finished, however, some of the houses were permanent brick veneer construction (Town and Country Planning Board, 1980:1-6).

In 1980 the Town and Country Planning Board recommended that Rawson remain as a permanent town, to serve as centre for local MMBW administration and residential area for Latrobe Valley workers, as well as a tourist centre. The Rawson Village Scenic Holiday Resort and Convention Centre now occupies part of the township, and a caravan park occupies the original caravan park site of the construction town (Town and Country Planning Board 1980:67; www.rawsonvillage.com, 8 October 2005).

HERITAGE

Some examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Utilising Natural Resources* include:

Grazing

- Cattlemen’s hut and yard, Little Boys Creek, Baw Baw National Park
- Jans’ Hut (aka Stagg’s Hut), Mustering Flat, Baw Baw National Park.
- Cattlemen’s hut and yard, Mt St Gwinear Road, Baw Baw National Park

Mining

- Baw Baw and Tanjil goldfields sites, which as noted in the History are now submerged under the Blue Rock Dam. Surviving places include the water races at Russell Creek
- Jericho-Jordan River, Alberfeldy and Donnelly’s Creek goldfields sites, which include the Red Jacket township site, the Toombon mine, township and battery, and the New Dawn Mine and battery (Aberfeldy), the Mountain Maid battery at Fiddler’s Green, Victor’s Quartz Mine and battery (Ross Creek), White Star No.1 & White Star No.2 mine sites (Donnelly’s Creek), Dry Creek-Harbinger (New Chum) battery and mine workings and Wildflower mine and battery site (both at Dry Creek), Lily Creek battery and mine site (Mt Lookout), and Winden Hut (Maidentown)
- Walhalla goldfields sites, which include Walhalla township and places such as the Long Tunnel mine
- Engineering works such as the Baw Baw Water Race, and the Thomson River diversion tunnel at Platina
- Cooper’s Creek sites such as the ruins of Cooper’s Creek Copper Mine and settlement, White Rock limeworks, Evans Brothers limeworks, and the Cooper’s Creek limestone kilns

Dairying

- Factories producing butter, cheese, milk and related products are found throughout the study area and illustrate all aspects of the development of the industry during the twentieth century. At Drouin the early development of the industry is represented by the 1904 factory, while the Lardner Road complex (now occupied by Pureharvest) illustrates the expansion and diversification that occurred just prior to and following World War Two. Other complexes include Darnum, Longwarry, Warragul, Trafalgar and Yarragon
- The outbuildings at *Brandie Braes*, which includes the old homestead that was converted for use as a separating room, Bick (1991) also identified one early farm dairy on the Darnum-Allambee Road, Darnum

Developing agricultural industries

- State Dairy Research Institute at Ellinbank
- Coolstores such as the old potato storage shed in Waterloo Road, Trafalgar adjacent to the old milk factory

Timber

- The ‘Ada Tree’, which is one of the best-known surviving examples of the legendary tall trees once found throughout the study area, stands in the headwaters of the Little Ada River, amidst cool temperate rainforest. Probably over 300 years old, the tree stands 76 metres high and has a girth of 15 metres (Griffiths 1992:143). Other tall trees in the study area include the Neerim Township Reserve tree (227 feet), the Toorong Plateau tree, the Whitelaw Mountain Grey Gum and the Tanjil Over tree (*E. nitens*; Moulds, 1993:27), and a tree south of Yarragon
- Sawmilling sites and associated infrastructure including former townships– e.g. Ada mill sites, Ingram’s skyline at Parker’s corner, sites within Mt Worth State Park



South Gippsland Sawmill & Tramway Co. formation, south of Yarragon

Source: Peter Davies, 2005

- Routes and remnants of tramways at Erica, Longwarry, Labertouche, Darnum and Yarragon. There is also the prefabricated metal tramway bridge at Poverty Point that now forms part of the Alpine Trail
- Regional Forests Commission headquarters at Erica

Water

- Water supply infrastructure - Rokeby pumping station complex, and the service basin off Reservoir Road, and the T.J. White Weir on Narracan Creek, off Falls Road at Narracan
- The Latrobe River Hydro electricity site at Toorong Falls Reserve near Noojee

Township development

- *Butter towns* – Trafalgar (Princes Highway East precinct and Contingent Street precinct), and Warragul (Peace Avenue precinct, Bowen Avenue precinct)
- *Mining towns* – Walhalla and Coalville, also the township sites of Aberfeldy, Jericho and surrounding areas
- *Timber towns* – Darnum, Erica and Noojee
- Rawson township

6 MANAGING & APPRECIATING THE ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

The clearing of the land and the exploitation of natural resources as described in the preceding chapter had inevitable consequences upon the environment of the study area. Yet, at the same time there was a growing awareness of the importance and beauty of the natural landscape that can be traced back to the first exploration of the study area by Ferdinand von Mueller as described in Chapter 1.

This chapter firstly describes the response to managing environmental threats and impacts, principally in relation to bushfires and floods. As we have seen, the study area is home to the world's tallest flowering plant, *Eucalyptus regnans*, the Mountain Ash, which attracted much interest amongst nineteenth century settlers. The forests of the study area are amongst the world's most fire-prone, and fire is an important recurrent theme in the Shire's history. This chapter examines the influence that fire has had upon the development of the study area in the context of the management of forest resources by the Forests Commission of Victoria.

Low lying parts of the study area also have a history of flooding, and many alterations have been made to the landscape in order to avert disaster and to make the land more productive. The Moe swamp drainage scheme was a major undertaking that took several decades to complete and had a significant influence upon the development of Trafalgar and surrounding districts.

Secondly, this chapter examines the emerging conservation movement in the study area and how bushwalking groups, in particular, have raised awareness of the environmental assets of the Baw Baw ranges in particular. Since the mid-twentieth century various groups – both local and from outside the study area - have worked towards the protection of large parts of the study area that have environmental significance, through the declaration of National and State parks. This, in turn, has led to the growth of tourism and the study area's outstanding landscapes have long been a magnet for tourists interested in the natural environment and outdoor recreation. Key attractions include walking tracks and snowfields.

This chapter incorporates the following Australian Historic Themes:

- *Tracing the evolution of the Australian environment*: Appreciating the natural wonders of Australia
- *Developing regional, and national economies*: Utilising natural resources, Altering the environment, Struggling with remoteness, hardship and failure, Catering for tourists
- *Governing*; Administering Australia

HISTORY

6.1 Bushfire management

Victorian forests are among the most fire-prone in the world. Eucalypts are adapted to and, in many cases, dependent on fire. Short wet winters and long hot summers, periodic droughts and regular hot northerly winds often combine to create explosive conditions for destructive bushfires (Pyne, 1991; Moulds, 1991:77-90). Prior to the arrival of Europeans in Australia, fire resulted from both natural causes, such as lightning, and cultural factors, which involved the deliberate burning of plains, woodlands and forest margins by Aboriginal people to promote fresh grass that attracted game animals to hunt.

As we have seen in preceding chapters, Europeans also used fire as a tool; miners burnt the bush to ease prospecting, graziers burnt their paddocks, and selectors cleared their land with

axe and fire. Bushfires occurred in most years, but the most extensive and life-threatening fires across Victoria in the nineteenth century occurred in 1851, when all the Colony of Victoria was said to be alight and ash fell on ships at sea, and in 1898, when fires raged in Gippsland and the Otways, destroying the homes of more than 1500 people.

Upon its formation in 1919, the Forests Commission of Victoria identified the need for fire prevention and management and recognised that native forest vegetation was adapted to survive repeated fires. Even in these early days the FCV recognised that protection of forests from wildfire should be an important objective of forest policy and its response to fire protection was prophetic in that it forecast the continuance of major bushfires. The FCV recommended a number of restrictions on the use of fire over summer months, that precautions be taken during forest operations over summer, and a hazard reduction program with penalties for non-compliance should be developed. Very few of these recommendations were implemented at the time. At the time many fires were deliberately lit, mainly to clear land for agriculture and in the first annual FCV report, the fledging government body noted that:

many people have no compunction in setting the forest ablaze, and who for small immediate gain, can watch without pang the immediate destruction in flame and smoke of the timber that might provide their sons with employment and wealth.

By 1920, as it remains today, the basic problem was how to achieve enough public awareness so that 'wanton or grossly careless fire raising shall become a thing of the past'. Consequently, by the end of the 1920s, the FCV had organised foot, mounted and motor patrols each summer, a system of lookout towers connected by telephone, and a network of firebreaks and tracks to try to control fire outbreaks. However, despite the efforts of the FCV, bushfires continued to wreak havoc upon forest settlements in the study area. As we shall see, a series of bushfires in the 1920s and 30s led to some safety improvements such as the requirements for dugouts to be provided, but the scale of the 1939 fires, which became known as 'Black Friday', meant that few of these measures were effective and was to change forever how people lived and worked within fire-prone regions of the study area and elsewhere in Victoria.

Creating places of refuge – 1919-1939

Dugouts were small chambers excavated in the earth close to a sawmill or within settlements to provide protection from bushfires. In spite of the historical frequency and intensity of bushfires in Victoria, the construction of dugouts by sawmillers was a haphazard affair prior to the 1940s. Following the fires of 1926, millers were required by the FCV to clear firebreaks around mills of not less than 40 metres, to burn mill waste and to ensure an adequate supply of water. It was not until 1932 that the FCV required all sawmills to construct dugouts, but these conditions were rarely enforced. In addition, the specified designs were simple holes in the ground with minimal protection (Condé, 1992:154-5).

In the Ada River valley, the bushfires of 1939 took a terrible toll. As the flames approached the Ada No.1 and Ada No.2 Mills in January, mill workers at both sites hastily built dugouts. At the No.1 Mill, a T-shaped construction about 16 feet long protected 12 men, a woman and two children as the fire roared past. The smoke and heat in the dugout were so intense that the occupants almost lost consciousness. Nevertheless, all remained inside overnight until the following morning. Further south, the settlement at Nayook West was destroyed. Residents sheltered in the Bump Tunnel to escape the fires (Stamford et al, 1984:117).

At Tanjil Bren the Saxton brothers constructed two dugouts in 1937. The first and largest of these consisted of a long tunnel into the hillside with an entrance facing south. As the fire approached on 13 January 1939, 31 men took refuge inside and all were saved. The second dugout was smaller and faced east. Three people took shelter as the fires approached, but one died from head injuries as the entrance collapsed, and the other two died from suffocation.

After the 1939 fires, the FCV insisted on dugouts at all mills. The site had to be approved by a forests inspector and the construction by a mines inspector. The walls were to be of split slabs covered with earth, and the dugout was to be covered with 3 feet (0.9 m) of earth. Water for

drinking and cooling was to be supplied, along with a sanitary pan, deodorants, first-aid equipment, torches and batteries (Condé, 1992:156). Dugouts were also provided in settlements such as Noojee and Tanjil Bren.

After sawmills were abandoned, most dugouts were destroyed as a safety measure. The remains of some can still be identified at mill sites in the study area. At the New Federal Mill, for example, a collapsed roof has revealed the size and structure of the dugout. At Alstergren's Mill in the Thomson Valley, drystone walling protects the corrugated iron entrance to a dugout constructed after the 1939 fires. The dugout at Noojee was demolished c.1980, while the dugout at Tanjil Bren still exists.



Tanjil Bren dugout 2005

Source: Context, 2005

Black Friday – The 1939 fires and their aftermath

It took the death of 71 people, the destruction of entire townships and the razing of millions of hectares of forest and agricultural land in January 1939 before an awareness of the need for fire protection became deeply etched in the State's psyche. The 'Black Friday' bushfires of 13 January 1939 were the result of a long drought and a severe, hot and dry summer; blown by extremely strong winds, these fires swept across large areas of Victoria at horrifying speed, causing much destruction. The recommendations from the Royal Commission, which was held following the 1939 fires, did much to establish Victoria's current fire protection arrangements. Judge Stretton, who conducted the Royal Commission, noted in his report:

That the major overriding cause, which comprises all others, is the indifference with which forest fires, as a menace to the interests of all, have been regarded. They have been considered to be matters of individual interest, for treatment by individuals

The Commissioner noted that there was a general apathy concerning fire protection and he was critical of the then Board of Works and the FCV for their failure to act as effectively as possible to prevent the outbreak and spread of the fires and noted that as both organizations undertook forest and fire management, this created confusion as to who should be in overall charge. He also repeatedly noted how hampered the FCV was by the shortage of funds and staff. Judge Stretton's report recommended the establishment of a State Fire Authority to include bush and country fire brigades, the FCV and local government representatives. (Prior to this time funding of local volunteer brigades has occurred through the FCV). Another important recommendation was that for fire suppression and prevention, the FCV should have complete control of all forests except where exemptions had been recommended.

The first major initiative was the provision of the *Forests Act 1939* which enacted many of Stretton's recommendations including giving the FCV complete control of fire suppression and

prevention on public land in Victoria. There were also recommendations concerning the early detection of fire, methods of firefighting and the protection of forests through a strategic program of burning selected areas of forest in a controlled way during spring and autumn. It took time, but as a result of these, and later recommendations in 1944 by Judge Stretton, when the Country Fire Authority (CFA) was formed that a clearly defined three tier system for fire prevention and management was created with the FCV responsible for all State forests and national parks, the Board of Works in charge of water catchments and the CFA looking after all other rural areas outside the metropolitan fire district.

Just one example of the changes since the 1939 fires is the enhanced network of roads and access tracks within the millions of hectares of public land. These have allowed firefighters and their equipment into the more remote areas. Prior to the 1940s this was impossible. Another measure was the further development of watch towers, and increased use of radio communication and aerial reconnaissance.

Country Fire Authority

The CFA expanded the role of the earlier Country Fire Brigades Board, formed in 1890 (Luke and McArthur 1978:312-4). The Authority engaged in public fire safety education, training of officers and volunteers, and the co-ordination of fire protection services. It consisted mainly of volunteer brigades. The organization expanded rapidly, and by 1960 there were 1031 registered brigades, with a total volunteer strength of 100,000 men. Rural fire brigade buildings were often erected by the brigades concerned. However, the CFA retained responsibility for purchasing trucks, pumps, communications equipment and tools.

Until the formation of the CFA in 1944, voluntary fire brigades were confined to urban areas, usually those with a water supply such as Trafalgar where a brigade was established in 1927. In 1946, several new rural fire brigades were established in other towns including Neerim & district, Hill End, Thorpdale and Yarragon, while Trafalgar also formed a rural unit. In 1963 all fire brigade units, urban and rural, in Narracan Shire formed the Narracan Shire and District Group and, with Shire assistance, set up a radio base with 2-way radio at Yarragon South in 1965, linked with mobile radio units (Adams, 1978: 195, 199, 213).

Impacts of fire on settlement

The bushfires described earlier in this chapter have had a significant influence upon the pattern of settlement in the study area. Many of the townships throughout the study area have been scarred at one time or another by bushfires and much of the fabric of such places thus post-dates the most destructive fires. Several have been completely destroyed and subsequently rebuilt, however, others such as the remote mining towns of Jericho and Aberfeldy never recovered after the 1939 fires - a further consequence of the 1939 Royal Commission was that the old system of sawmills and associated settlements within forests was replaced with a new industry based on logging towns outside the forests to which logs were brought along newly built roads by motor truck. Noojee and Erica were the two main towns in the study area to benefit from this new arrangement.

Noojee was almost totally destroyed in the fires of 1926, when four members of the Olsen family were killed. Only a church and the hotel were saved. The pattern was repeated almost precisely in 1939, with over 100 houses destroyed. When danger was imminent, an evacuation train was rushed from the town, carrying women and children.

Major fires have also swept through the Neerim district in 1893, 1898, 1906, 1926, 1939 and 1983, with each fire destroying various buildings and other property in and around the township. Nearby, the settlement at Nayook West was destroyed in 1939. Residents sheltered in the Bump Tunnel to escape the fires.

Hill End was a small town 20 kilometres south of Tanjil Bren. It was overwhelmed and destroyed by the fires of 1939, with the loss of St James Church, the school, hall, three sawmills and eight homes (Adams, 1978: 1960). Further north, Fumina was destroyed by the

1926 fires, with the loss of the school, hall, and 21 out of 24 homes in the area and numerous farm buildings (Adams, 1978:197).

Bushfires menaced Erica in 1919, 1923, 1926, 1932 and 1939. By early January 1939 there were already several fires burning in the district. Monett's sawmill was destroyed and eight others were directly threatened by the flames, and the women and children were evacuated. By 10 January up to 200 people were homeless in the Erica district. The construction of numerous dugouts in the area following the 1932 fires provided refuge, and helped ensure no lives were lost to the flames in 1939. The fires also burnt out Tanjil Bren, killing nine people. Much of the remaining townships of Jericho and Red Jacket were also destroyed in 1939, leaving almost no buildings standing (Adams, 1980:133).

In the aftermath of the 1939 bushfires more attention was paid to the use of fire-resistant materials in buildings. At Noojee, for example, the new public hall and church were constructed of concrete blocks, while fibro-cement (which was also cheap, lightweight and therefore easy to transport to remote areas) began to be used more widely in both public and domestic buildings.

6.2 Managing and sustaining forest resources

Another important role of the FCV has been the sustainable management of Victoria's forest resources. One of the first initiatives was to establish softwood and hardwood plantations and during the 1930s Depression considerable work was carried out on plantations as part of unemployment relief measures. At the same time, programs were developed to reforest previously cleared land in the Strzelecki Ranges that had been abandoned by failed settlement schemes described in Chapter 2. This program was expanded after the Second World War to meet the unprecedented demand for sawn timber that was a result of the severe housing shortage experienced at that time. This program, which commenced in 1949 and expanded in 1960, resulted in the area of State-owned plantations increasing from 20,000ha to over 100,000ha.

Sustenance camps

The Victorian government established labour sustenance camps in the forests around Melbourne during the 1930s. Managed by the FCV, the purpose of the camps was to provide work for unemployed men and boys from the city, at subsistence rates of pay. Jobs included constructing roads, cutting firebreaks and slashing scrub, firewood production and pine plantation work (Watt & Brooks, 1992:177). Men were employed in forest camps for up to 13 weeks at a time. The FCV employed 5295 men in 1931 and 9898 men in 1936 on unemployment relief schemes. Relief workers lived in camps at the site of their work, in cold and often mildewed and leaking tents (Stamford et al, 1984:111). Eleanor Bridger suggests that:

Although many of the men from the city may have felt the isolation of the camps, it was seldom expressed to the foresters. It was 'very hard living' in the forests; many of the camps were so isolated that they had no roads near them. Some were accessed by sawmill tramlines.... Many of the camps were awash with mud in winter, so that duckboards had to be supplied to make walking around the camp easier (Bridger 1994:24)

In the study area, such camps were constructed in the forests around Neerim and Noojee as early as 1929. The Noojee Boys' Camp began in 1933, when Herbert Brookes and George R. Nicholas offered an area of 2000 acres of forested land near Noojee. Brookes (1867-1963) was a businessman and public official who helped found Australian Paper Mills, while Nicholas (1884-1960) was a pharmacist and philanthropist who developed Aspro (Aspirin) in Australia during the First World War. The Noojee forest area carried a fine stand of young Mountain Ash, Silvertop and Messmate. The principal forestry work was thinning and ringbarking trees to encourage the development of regrowth and construction of fire protection work such as

tracks, firelines and firebreaks. The Noojee project was so successful that it inspired the creation of more camps in 15 forest districts around Victoria (Moulds, 1991:63).

Forest Commission camps

Immediately after the Second World War, the Forests Commission began rehabilitating large areas of forest ruined by unsuccessful soldier settlement after World War One. The scheme initially focused on the western Strzelecki region, primarily on the Childers and Morwell River valleys. A large forest camp, Childers Camp, was constructed to accommodate up to 100 men required for clearing, road-building and planting pine trees. The camp operated from 1946 to 1949. On completion of the Childers and Allambee plantations, the bulk of the camp's sleeping huts were transferred to a new camp being established at Olsen's Bridge near Mirboo (Bannear, 1997:45).

Pine plantations in the Strzeleckis

Source: Peter Davies, 2005



Plantations

During the twentieth century, demand for paper products increased significantly throughout Australia. Much of this demand was met by the planting of large areas with exotic softwood trees. In Victoria, most plantings are on slopes at an altitude of 500 m to 1200 m, where rainfall is above 750 mm per annum. The study area includes a number of areas matching these criteria.

Following the establishment in 1939 of a large pulp and paper mill at Maryvale (in the Latrobe Valley, just to the east of the study area) by Australian Paper Manufacturers Ltd (APM), the company commenced a large-scale program to establish monoculture plantations of *Pinus radiata* nearby. Thus, since 1950, extensive plantations of this species, as well as of *P. pinaster* (Maritime Pine) and of *Eucalyptus regnans* (Mountain Ash) have been formed in central and western Gippsland (Friend, 1978:1-4). The FCV began purchasing land in the Strzelecki Ranges for reforestation in 1938. In 1946 the Commission used an area of 383 hectares in the Childers area, and 246 hectares in Allambee, to plant radiata pine and Mountain Ash (Adams, 1978:190). The FCV also supervised the salvage of fire-killed timber for pulp production from the Boola forest area east of Moondarra in the 1940s and '50s (Adams, 1980:138). The establishment of these plantations has had a dramatic impact upon the landscape character of the study area as shown in the above illustration.

6.3 Flood prevention and management

Early settlers in the study area found plentiful supplies of water in the rivers and creeks that flowed from the mountains, or in the swamps that covered low lying areas. Such abundance of water was sometimes as much a hindrance as an asset. As noted in chapters 1 and 3, rivers and swamps were barriers to transport for early travellers. Bridges became features in the landscape, and roads were routed to skirt swampy areas.

In Chapter 5 it was noted that rivers were diverted or dammed for the convenience of miners and for water supply purposes. Such engineering works had lasting effects on the riparian landscapes of the study area. The Horseshoe Bend tunnel on the Thomson River, the district's largest engineering work of its kind, can still be seen near Walhalla. The large reservoirs on the Tarago, Tyers, Tanjil and Thomson Rivers, beside flooding valleys, helped to regulate flows and minimise floods downstream. These reservoirs were all constructed in the second half of the twentieth century. Prior to that, floods, like bushfires, were frequent hazards to people, their livestock and their property in many parts of the study area. Floods were most frequent in low-lying swampy areas. Draining the swamps not only alleviated flooding, but also provided rich land that was put to productive use.

Impacts of floods on settlement

Just as settlement exacerbated the natural process of bushfires, so the clearing and logging of forests, and the denudation of mountain catchments by grazing, intensified the natural process of inundation of floodplains during periods of high rainfall (LCC 1991:296-7; State Rivers & Water Supply Commission, 1936:2-4). The parts of the study area that have been particularly susceptible to frequent flooding are the valleys of the Tanjil and Latrobe rivers, which join above the Moe Swamp, and the Swamp itself. Situated on the Moe River and blocked by the Warragul Hills in the west and the Haunted Hills in the east, the Moe Swamp

... was in reality a mass of lagoons stretching across a width of about 15 km for a distance of 20 km from Yarragon to the junction of the river with the Latrobe river north of Moe. The water lay here for much of the year some centimetres deep ... (Adams, 1978:113)

Even after extensive drainage works in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the Moe Swamp was frequently flooded. One of the most memorable floods occurred in March 1900, when the newly drained swampland was inundated. The Tanjil and Latrobe river flats were also flooded, destroying fences and crops, and killing livestock. People were rescued by boat and taken to Trafalgar (Hasthorpe, 1987:304-06).

New records were set on 30 November and 1 December 1934, when storms brought torrential rain to the whole of eastern Victoria, flooding the Yarra Valley, including suburban Melbourne. Gale-force winds uprooted trees and caused widespread damage. At least 36 people died as a result of the storms and floods. The worst hit area was South Gippsland, which received 350 mm of rain over the 48 hours (www.bom.gov.au/lam/climate, 19 October 2005). To the west of the study area, Koo-Wee-Rup, a former swamp, was under several feet of water and to the east the Yallourn open-cut coal mine filled with water. In between, the farmlands of the Moe Swamp and surrounding areas for miles were inundated, isolating small communities, flooding houses and drowning stock. Several bridges were swept away by the rush of logs and debris along stream courses (Adams, 1978:173-4; Hasthorpe, 1987:307-13).

Other floods of lower intensity followed in 1935 and 1937. One of the remedies attempted to alleviate flooding was the 'snagging' of the streams to remove fallen timber and debris (SR&WSC, 1936:7; Hasthorpe, 1987:313-15).

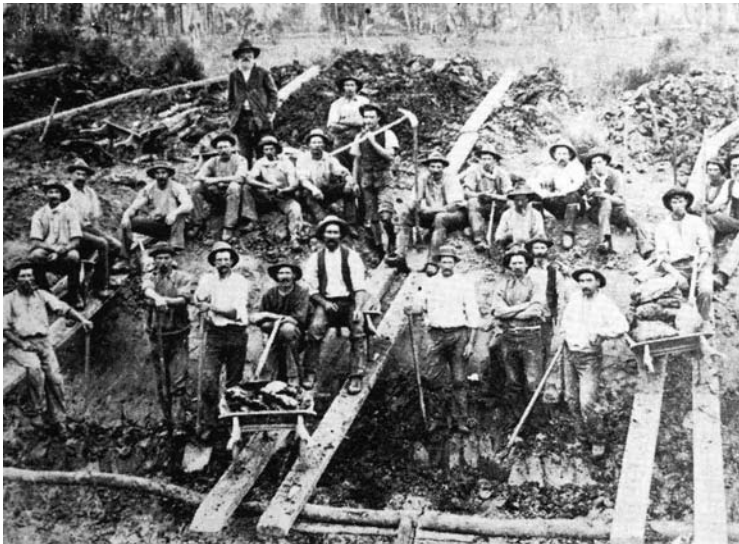
The goldfields of the mountain country to the north also experienced flooding when fast flowing streams burst their banks following heavy rain. The diversion tunnel cut through a loop in the Jordan River at Jericho, noted in Chapter 5, is a reminder of the mining community's attempt to alleviate flooding.

Walhalla, situated in the narrow valley of Stringer's Creek, was particularly subject to inundation, and experienced many devastating floods. In August 1891, two days of torrential rain swelled the creek to cover the valley floor. The rush of water scoured out the creek bed and undermined the banks. Buildings on the creek banks collapsed and were swept away, along with bridges and roads. There was damage to mining works and four people died, including surveyor O.P. Whitelaw. Later floods, in 1951, 1952 and 1978 damaged many of the town's old buildings and bridges (Adams, 1980:72, 131).

Like fire, floods leave a legacy of loss. Because of this, few fragile structures, such as early timber bridges, remain in the study area. Nevertheless physical evidence of drainage works can still be seen as a reminder of attempts to eliminate floods and bring swampland into production.

Draining the Moe Swamp

As early as 1881 moves were made to have the Moe Swamp drained. Besides being an obstacle and a hazard, the swamp contained rich soil suitable for farming. Work in the first phase commenced in 1889. The bed of the Moe River was deepened and widened to form the main channel, with a series of subsidiary channels and two contour drains at the sides. The Narracan Creek was re-channelled, and a weir built on the Moe River west of Yarragon for irrigation purposes. As noted in Chapter 2, the project became one of the remedies adopted by the State government during the Depression. Unemployed men carried out much of the work, and the resulting drained land was offered in small allotments under the Village Settlement Scheme.



Construction crew at the Moe Swamp

Source: Adams, 1982

Settlers began taking up the land from 1895, but repeated episodes of flooding showed the drainage works to be inadequate. Over the years, usually after a major flood, several improvements were made: drains were widened, extra channels cut and banks were raised to higher levels. In 1935 a major overhaul was made of the whole system, again using unemployed labour (Adams, 1978:116-7, 173-4).

Early settlers in the swampland found it necessary to dig drains in their paddocks. Some Trafalgar farmers put the drains below the surface, filling them with small logs that allowed the water to flow through, and then covering the logs with soil and pasture (Adams, 1978:30). By the 1920s the swamplands were productive potato and dairy farms. The landscape to the north of Trafalgar still features the drains and closely spaced farmhouses on the small allotments of the village settlement. A further reminder of the settlement is the Trafalgar East Public Hall, constructed in 1922 and the Yulungah State School.

6.4 Tourism and the environment

Since the time of early settlement the study area has attracted nature-loving tourists. As we have seen, the first recorded eco-tourist in the study area was the botanist von Mueller, whose 1860 walking expedition to the Baw Baw Plateau is noted in Chapter 1. According to the historian of bushwalking, Graeme Wheeler, von Mueller should be the ‘patron’ of bushwalkers:

With his curiosity, his sound body and insatiable desire for research, with his love of the open air, he would be our definitive outdoorsman (Wheeler, 1991:11).

Von Mueller epitomises the strong link between the appreciation of nature and the use of the environment for physical and intellectual recreation that characterises the history of recreation in the study area. However, it was to be a later generation of intellectual men (women came later) who pioneered the bushwalking and field naturalist movements in Victoria. They and their successors played a vital role in the environmental movement that led to the establishment of national parks and raised community awareness of environmental issues as well as leading to the development of tourism in the study area.

Early nature appreciation and tourism

In the summer of 1872 John Meeson claimed to be Mt Baw Baw’s first tourist. Apart from von Mueller, and the surveyors whose cairn he found on the summit, Meeson probably was the first European to climb Mt Baw Baw. Even the gold miner, Varney, who acted as Meeson’s guide, had not ascended the plateau. Meeson undertook the ‘martyrdom’ of the coach trip on the Old Sale Road, and then approached the ranges through the Tanjil River valley on horseback, with a packhorse for his luggage. On reaching the top he carved his initials on a tree and left a message in a bottle (Meeson, 1872). Meeson’s description of his excursion typifies the spirit of adventure that motivates humans to explore new country and to climb mountains.

In 1906 the Victorian Government, through its newly established Tourist Bureau, set about promoting Victoria’s beauty spots. It offered an organised tour of Gippsland by rail, sea and horseback. After a day or two in East Gippsland, the tour returned by rail to Moondarra (the extent of the Walhalla line then under construction) and on to Walhalla by horse, then along a new track to the Baw Baws (Waters, 1966:39). It is not known how many tourists actually made this trip, but the new track to the Baw Baws became popular with bushwalkers. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

Other parts of the study area promoted for tourism in the early part of the twentieth century included the Strzelecki Ranges, which were promoted by the government when the Grand Ridge Road was constructed in the 1920s, as noted in Chapter 3. One of the popular beauty spots on the Ranges had long been known to local people - Narracan Falls, a waterfall on the Narracan Creek, was discovered by selector Thomas Savige in 1874. Savige consequently named his nearby property *Laughing Waters*. Narracan Falls became a popular place for family and community picnics. In 1941 the area was reserved for public recreation and a committee of management appointed. A few years later picnic facilities were provided (Adams, 1978:49, 62, 196).

Another waterfall, the Toorong Falls to the north of Noojee, was set aside as a reserve in 1910 and a boarding house was established for visitors. The area was logged, but has re-generated following the 1939 bushfires. Glen Nayook, a ferny gully amongst the tall trees on a branch of the Tarago River in the foothills of the Baw Baws, was noticed by settlers clearing their nearby selections early in the twentieth century. Appreciating the beauty of the place, a number of settlers instigated the move to have the area reserved for public recreation purposes. The nine acre (1.8 hectare) reserve was gazetted in September 1907. A committee of management was appointed, which took responsibility for the construction of walking tracks, a viewing platform and picnic rotunda. The Glen Nayook Reserve was officially opened in 1914 by Lady Munro-Ferguson, wife of the Governor-General. The reserve was promoted as a tourist attraction by the Victorian Railways - the railway from Warragul reached Nayook in 1917. Glen Nayook received a steady stream of visitors until it was destroyed by bushfire in 1926, then it was

forgotten for many years. In 1960 it was re-discovered, restored naturally to its former natural beauty. The Shire of Buln Buln organised restoration of the track and new facilities, using some local volunteer labour (Budge, 1967).

Another site of natural significance in the study area that has become a tourist attraction is the Labertouche Cave system, which is one of the most visited wild caves in Victoria. The Geological Society of Victoria classifies Labertouche Cave as a site of State significance. The caves are created by airspaces between large granite boulders that have filled a gully then had earth and debris washed out from between them. The complex is approximately 200 metres long. There is a glow worm population in the cave and a large number of cave crickets. Although the Labertouche Cave site is not formally set up as a tourism or recreational visitation location (signage is minimal and the surrounding area has not been developed) it is well known and regularly visited within Victoria's 'caving' community, as well as some commercial tour operators and school and scout groups (DSE, 2006:27)

Bushwalking

Development of bushwalking clubs and tracks

In 1894 a group of Melbourne professional men formed Victoria's first walking group, the Wallaby Club. The Club's purpose was 'reasonable outdoor enjoyment that would be conducive to health, conversation and good companionship'. Their walks were not strenuous and they only ventured as far as Melbourne's outer suburbs. A few months later the Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club, later known as the Melbourne Walking Club, was formed. Another men-only club, its members ventured further a field to remote places such as Wilson's Promontory and Matlock, and pioneered bushwalking and recreational camping in the state. Many other bushwalking clubs followed, including the Melbourne Women's Walking Club, formed in 1922. The 1930s saw the peak of popularity of bushwalking and the formation of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs. The Federation aimed, amongst other things, to 'develop amongst bushwalkers an interest in native flora and fauna and Victorian history' and to 'assist in preventing vandalism and bushfire in national parks and bush areas' (Wheeler, 1991:54).

These objectives encapsulate the sense of responsibility for the environment that was to underpin the bushwalking movement's role in campaigning for national parks as described later in this chapter.

Early walkers in goldfields areas such as Matlock followed old miners' tracks. One such track was cut between Marysville and Matlock in the 1860s, and known as the Yarra Track. Another track ran from McVeigh's Hotel on the Upper Yarra to the head of the Thomson River near Mt Whitelaw. In 1906 the Public Works Department commissioned surveyor William Baragwanath to lay out a tourist track across the Baw Baw Plateau to connect Warburton with Walhalla via part of the existing track through the Upper Yarra. Amongst the first people to travel this track in February 1907 was a party consisting of the Governor of Victoria, Sir Reginald Talbot, the Minister for Lands, and the Surveyor General. Mt Talbot was subsequently named in honour of the Governor. A few weeks later two young men made the journey. Being ill-prepared, they lost their way and were found hungry and dehydrated by a surveyor. One of the young men, John Jensen, later Sir John, became head of the Munitions Department (Waters, 1966:38-9; Wheeler, 1991:25-7).

This incident highlighted the importance of shelter and good directions on the track. Subsequently mileages along the route were marked on trees, a tourist map was produced and three huts were built along the track - at Yarra Falls (outside the study area), Talbot Peak and Mt Whitelaw. The huts were of timber or corrugated iron, with earthen floors, two rooms and a fireplace. They were equipped with wire mattresses and cooking utensils to provide basic overnight accommodation. They also had stables and fenced paddocks for horses, which could be hired at McVeigh's and Walhalla.

Another hut was erected at Mt Whitelaw in the 1930s at the request of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs. At Mt Erica, the first hut was the NBW (reputedly ‘No Bloody Women’), which was built in 1940 by five State Electricity Commission staff to take advantage of the clear ski slopes after the 1939 bushfires. Also in 1940 the Yallourn Rover crew built a prefabricated hut, known as the J.W. McMahon Ski Lodge (also known as the Captain Hurley Rover Crew hut), near Mushroom Rocks. The parents of two boys who were lost on the Baw Baw Track and saved by the Rovers provided the funds. The McMahon and NBW huts are the only two huts now remaining on the former Baw Baw Track, the others having been destroyed by a storm in 1938 and the 1939 bushfires (Waters, 1966:39-40, 43; Parks Victoria, 2005:28).

Walkers also sought accommodation at the hotels that had served the mining communities - Svenson’s at Aberfeldy and Merrington’s at Donnelly’s Creek (Waters, 1964:6-7).

By the end of the 1930s interest in bushwalking was in decline. The destruction of the forests and huts by bushfires brought an end to bushwalking on the Baw Baw Track (Waters, 1966:43). Instead, a new range of recreational activities began to develop on the Baw Baw Plateau - skiing and other snow sports - which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Alpine Walking Track

Bushwalking underwent a revival after the Second World War, when the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs expanded its membership and its interests. In the 1960s the Federation took part in discussions with the FCV, the Ministry of Tourism and the Department of Youth Sport and Recreation regarding the development of a walking track across the whole length of the Australian Alps. These organisations co-operated to establish the 400 kilometre Alpine Walking Track. Stretching from Walhalla to the Namadji Visitors Centre in the ACT, the Track was developed bit by bit over a decade. The western end, which is in the study area, took in part of the old Baw Baw Track, between Mt Erica and Mt Whitelaw. One of the last links in the Track was an old timber tramway bridge at Poverty Point, which bushwalkers helped to re-deck for pedestrian use in 1976. The Track was marked with distinctive signs along the way (Wheeler, 1991:87, 97, 150-1).

Snowfields

Many of the bushwalkers of the 1920s and ‘30s were involved in the development of skiing, particularly as foundation members of the Ski Club of Victoria, formed in 1924 (Wheeler, 1991:40). The idea of developing winter sports on Mt Erica had first been suggested in the *Walhalla Chronicle* in 1906, however, it was not until the 1930s that such activities commenced. In 1934 the newly formed Yallourn Rover Scout Crew cut several ski runs on Mt Erica, which became popular with skiers from Yallourn. The Mt Erica Development Association was formed to promote the area for skiing and to campaign for roads and facilities. The Association later became the Mt Erica Division of the Ski Club of Victoria. Early skiers used timber tramways to gain access to the mountains, and stayed overnight in the bushwalkers’ huts at Mt Talbot.

In the 1940s the Neulyne Timber Company cut a track from the summit of Mt Baw Baw to its winch site, connecting with the Company’s road to Tanjil Bren. This track gave skiers access to the Baw Baw Plateau. Neulyne also allowed skiers use of some of their timber worker’s huts at Tanjil Bren. The Mt Erica Division of the Ski Club and other local groups subsequently developed ski runs, put in snow poles and the first ski tow. In 1959 an Alpine Reserve was declared on the Baw Baw Plateau. It was enlarged in 1962. The first public ski lodge, the *Tanjil Lodge*, was at Tanjil Bren, until the *Baw Baw Ski Lodge*, later known as *Waltzmann Haus*, was opened in 1965. The Baw Baw Alpine Village developed in the 1960s, and over the following decades facilities were established, including Gippsland’s first and Victoria’s (then) longest chair lift, opened in 1970, and a snow making machine in 1976. The Baw Baw Plateau became popular for cross-country skiing in the 1970s (Waters, 1966:43; Adams, 1980:140-1).

In 1958 the Shire of Narracan proposed a road to link Rocky Knob on Thomson Valley Road with the Baw Baw Village. The road was to run across the plateau from Mt St Gwinear and

form a ring route through the village to Walhalla. It was argued that the road would provide easier access for Latrobe Valley residents. Following a storm of protest from the environmental movement, including the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, the plan was abandoned. The road from Tanjil Bren, made in the 1960s by the CRB, remains the only vehicle access to the Village, and the Baw Baw Plateau remains Australia's only significant alpine upland not penetrated by a tourist road (Johnson, 1974:152-3).

6.5 The rising conservation movement

The appreciation of the natural environment discussed in the preceding sections led to a growing awareness of the need for it to be protected and conserved. In 1880 the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria was formed, with von Mueller an active member. One of the Club's earliest conservation campaigns was for the reservation of Wilson's Promontory as a National Park. The conservation movement - a loosely constituted alliance of individuals and groups interested in the natural environment - blossomed during the twentieth century, taking in groups such as the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs, the Town and Country Planning Association and the Victorian National Parks Association (formed in 1952) and the Australian Conservation Foundation. The movement campaigned for the setting aside of areas of environmental significance as National parks.

In 1970, public opposition to development proposals in the Little Desert in western Victoria led to the establishment of the Land Conservation Council to make recommendations on the balanced use of public land. Many of the Council's recommendations resulted in the declaration of National, State and Regional parks.

Baw Baw National Park

Since von Mueller's visit to the Baw Baw Ranges in 1860, the unique nature of its flora and fauna, including the Baw Baw frog, has been recognised. However, continued grazing and logging posed threats to such rare species, and to the water supply catchments fed from the ranges. In 1948 the Town and Country Planning Association proposed that the Baw Baw Plateau be reserved as a National park and, although the Alpine reserve was declared in 1959, answering the needs of the area's developing recreation sector, conservationists had to wait another two decades for the proclamation of a National park.

Eventually the Land Conservation Council recommended a National park, which would provide for recreation and the enjoyment of the natural environment, protect natural ecosystems and conserve water supply catchments. The Council also recommended that no further villages be built on the plateau and recommended against the construction of the proposed road across the plateau, thus restricting tourist development to the existing Alpine Village (LCC, 1977:11). The Baw Baw National Park of 13,300 hectares, which includes the Plateau and adjacent Thomson and Aberfeldy valleys, was proclaimed in April 1979. The Park offers a range of outdoor recreational activities, cross-country skiing and bushwalking, rock climbing at Mushroom Rocks, and opportunities to enjoy the natural and historic environment (DNRE, 1991:17, 25-7).

State Parks

Mount Worth State Park

In the 1970s, the Warragul Field Naturalists Club and the Shire of Warragul worked towards reserving a small remnant of Mountain Ash forest in the western Strzeleckis as a National park. Part of it, including the Moonlight Creek area, had been cleared for farming and there had been many sawmills in the area. The farms had failed, mainly because of the steeply sloping land. Regeneration was occurring in the fern gullies and there was regrowth of young Mountain Ash and other species. Lyrebirds and the giant Gippsland earthworm abounded. The Mount Worth State Park was proclaimed in 1978. Attractions in the park include a huge old Mountain Ash, panoramic views from the high points, remnants of the sawmilling industry

and a homestead site (Wilde 1988:297-8; DNRE, 1990:102, 10; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au, 8 October 2005).

Moondarra and Tyers State Parks

Similar areas of forest, failed selections and grazing lands, with important water catchments on the Moondarra Plateau and in the rugged Tyers Valley, were proposed for reservation as parks by the Land Conservation Council in 1977. Both areas have a rich diversity of flora and fauna, and scenic attractions for tourists interested in nature. Since the early 1970s, Peterson's Lookout in the Tyers Valley has been popular with Latrobe Valley Field Naturalists (Adams, 1980:142; www.parkweb.vic.gov.au, 8 October 2005).

HERITAGE

Some examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Managing & Appreciating the Environment* include:

Bushfire management

- Fire lookout towers at Dick Hill, located west of Neerim Junction (18-metre steel tower built in 1969), Mount Tanjil (18m steel tower, 1968), Mount Toorong, west of Tanjil Bren (18m steel tower, 1969), Mount Useful, north-east of Toombon (18m steel tower, 1960). There are also remains of a fire tower at Spion Kopje
- Remnants of dugouts such as the Bump tunnel, and at Tanjil Bren



St Andrew's Church, Noojee

Source: *Context*, 2005

- At Noojee, St Andrew's Anglican Church, Noojee Public Hall, and several houses constructed of fibro cement, which illustrate the fire-resistant building materials that were used more widely after the 1939 fires
- Big Creek Road, which is one example of the new forest roads constructed by the FCV after 1939.

Managing and sustaining forest resources

- The sites of the two Noojee Boys Camps
- The site of the Childers Forest camp
- Hardwood and softwood plantations throughout the Strzelecki Ranges

Flood control and management

- Moe Swamp canal system
- Trafalgar East Public Hall
- Jericho River Diversion Tunnel

Tourism and the environment

- Glen Nayook Reserve, Narracan Falls Reserve, Toorongu Falls Reserve and Labertouche Caves
- Grand Ridge Road
- Alpine Walking Track, incorporating the former timber tramway bridge at Poverty Point
- J.W. McMahon Scout Hut, near Mushroom Rocks and the NBW hut, both are situated within Mt. Baw Baw National Park. There are also the ruins of Mt. Whitelaw and Talbot huts



Tanjil Lodge

Source: Context, 2005

- *Tanjil Lodge* at Tanjil Bren. The Baw Baw Alpine Village, although just outside of the study area, is historically associated with the development of tourism in the region

The rising conservation movement

- Baw Baw National Park and Mount Worth State Park

7 CREATING REGIONAL CENTRES

INTRODUCTION

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the districts, villages and towns in the study area came about as a result of a variety of factors. Many of these places would never develop beyond a few buildings and the evolution of the larger towns took place in conjunction with the establishment of commercial enterprises, which sustained the economic development of the study area and served its residents and those in the surrounding region. In the nineteenth century, Walhalla was the largest town in the study area in the nineteenth, but quickly declined by the early twentieth century when a clear hierarchy of towns began to develop with Drouin, Trafalgar, Warragul and Yarragon emerging as important regional centres. It was no coincidence that all four towns were situated on the Gippsland Railway, had a butter factory as its major industry, and, bar one, were municipal seats. Thorpdale, Neerim South and, for a time, Noojee were also important centres but their importance declined with the closure of the railway lines leading to them.

We have seen in Chapter 5 how the development of agricultural industries had a significant influence upon township development. Warragul had its first development ‘boom’ in the 1880s, but many of the other towns did not really experience significant development until the early twentieth century when new and expanded milk factories brought prosperity across the study area, even during the 1930s Depression. The periods of prosperity were reflected in grand (and often architect-designed) civic, commercial and private buildings.

After the Second World War, local and State government encouraged the establishment of new industries in rural towns and cities, such as Warragul. The industrial development of the Latrobe Valley, just to the east, was gathering pace and this stimulated development in the towns close to that area such as Trafalgar and Yarragon.

This chapter incorporates the following Australian Historic Themes:

- *Developing regional, and national economies*; Developing an Australian manufacturing capacity, Financing Australia, Marketing and retailing, Catering for tourists
- *Building settlements towns and cities*; Planning urban settlements, Making settlements to serve rural Australia, Remembering significant phases in the development of settlements, towns and cities

HISTORY

7.1 Centres of commerce and industry

Business in the study area commenced with the inns and stores dotted along the Sale Road to cater for passing trade, as noted in Chapter 2. The first towns to develop as retail and commercial centres were on the goldfields, Walhalla being the largest and most permanent. During the selection era a hotel or store formed the nucleus of a township, such as Brandy Creek, however, after the arrival of the railway, commercial centres shifted to the towns that developed around the stations: Warragul, Drouin, Trafalgar, Thorpdale and Neerim South. Saleyards and banks were early indications of the importance of a town as a main commercial centre. Warragul quickly grew to become the dominant town and is now the regional centre for the study area. In smaller townships such as Longwarry, Nilma and Noojee, general stores continued to provide basic everyday supplies for local residents.

Hospitality and Hotels

Along the bush tracks, on the goldfields and in the burgeoning selectors and sawmillers towns, hotels provided much more than hospitality for those away from home or entertainment for locals. Hotels also served as important community centres, providing venues for Council meetings, lodge functions, church services and court hearings, and places of refuge in times of disaster. Accommodation was also provided in boarding houses and ‘coffee palaces’, the latter being alcohol-free venues that were popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the Temperance movement was at its peak.

As we have seen, inns established at key stopping places along the early coach routes were the first to be established in the study area. As towns developed, so did the number and size of hotels and the fortunes of towns can often be gauged by opening and closing of hotels over the years.

Goldfields hotels

As in other parts of Australia, it seems that miners had the greatest thirst of all the early settlers. During the boom years of the 1860s and ‘70s Walhalla had around a dozen hotels. However, the Star Hotel, built in 1873, was the only hotel still operating in Walhalla when it was destroyed in the 1945 fire. A replica of the Star Hotel was built in 1988. Walhalla also had several boarding houses, including Windsor House, built in 1874, a rare brick structure amongst the town’s mostly wooden buildings. Windsor House has been restored to provide accommodation for tourists (Adams, 1980:53, 69, 130).

After the decline in mining, some of the old goldfield hotels, such as Svenson’s at Aberfeldy and Merrington’s at Donnelly’s Creek, became popular with bushwalkers in the 1920s and 30s (Waters, 1964:6-7).

Selectors hotels

As the country was opened for selection the earliest businesses were often hotels, which did a good trade with selectors arriving in search of their allotments. It was not uncommon for selectors to open hotels as a means of support while establishing their own farms. One of the earliest settlers in the Narracan district, John Savige, built the Narracan and Tarwin Junction Hotel on McDonald’s Track opposite the Narracan East hall in the 1870s. The hotel remained open only until 1881, when the building was transferred to Savige’s farm and converted to a mill, giving the property the name *Mill Farm* (Adams, 1978:43, 60).



First commercial Hotel, Warragul

Source: WDHS, 1982

Township hotels

In the new railway townships, hotels were built close to the stations. A.C. Lyons’ Railway Hotel in Drouin, venue of early Buln Buln Council meetings, was one of the grandest buildings in the town until it was burnt down in 1975 (Butler, 1979:386, 388). In Warragul several hotels were built in Queen Street, opposite the station. As the town grew, so did the hotels with many being substantially improved as the result of changes to licensing laws in the early twentieth century. Others were closed after their licences were revoked during the same

period. Four of them - the Railway, Royal, Commercial and Orient - have survived, rebuilt from their original single storey timber structures (Wilde, 1991:252-5).

Trafalgar had a number of early hotels, however, the Criterion, built opposite the station in the 1890s, was the only one remaining in 1900. It was burnt down and rebuilt in 1908, and later expanded (Adams, 1978:73, 147, 213).

At Neerim South the Neerim Hotel opened in 1879, but was before its time in the infant township. The opening of the butter factory in 1902 brought new growth to the town and the old hotel was replaced on the same site. Ye Kynge's Armes Hotel (later Kings Arms) was built by Edwin Fowler, formerly of the Turf Club and Orient hotels. The town was then being promoted as a tourist resort. Next door to Fowler's Hotel, Stephens' Coffee Palace next door offered accommodation, plus a host who could act as guide to the district's many beauty spots (Butler, 1979:633). The Kings Arms was burnt down in 1981 and rebuilt.



Second Commercial Hotel, Warragul

Source: WDHS, 1982

The township of Noojee began to take shape around the timber mills of the Loch Valley before the railway arrived in 1919. The Noojee Hotel was probably built around this time. In the disastrous bushfires of 1926 the hotel was one of few buildings in the town to survive, and it provided refuge for the townspeople. Its billiard room was subsequently used as a temporary infant room for the school. In 1939 Noojee Hotel again escaped the fires that wiped out the rest of the town, to become a refuge during the fire and the centre of the local relief effort in the aftermath (Hunt, 1988:39-40; Butler, 1979:683, 687-8).

In sawmilling districts such as Noojee, boarding houses provided accommodation for single timber workers. Guest houses such as *Braeside* at Noojee (destroyed in 1939) and various 'coffee palaces' provided accommodation for visitors or short-term residents in an alcohol-free environment.

Saleyards

Trading in livestock was an important part of the rural economy, and saleyards were early features of the developing towns. James Brown's Turf Club Hotel, at the junction of the Old Sale Road and Neerim Road, Buln Buln, became the venue for stock auctions, and saleyards were built there in 1878. Brown had some competition in Drouin, with saleyards at Lyons' Railway Hotel, which operated from 1880 until after the turn of the century. In 1896 Buln Buln Shire Council constructed municipal saleyards and a market. The site was later used for the Infant Welfare Centre. In Warragul, saleyards were located in the market reserve opposite the railway station, and run by auctioneers Rosling and Hyde, who had offices in Queen Street (Butler, 1979:323-5).

Trafalgar had two or three saleyards in the early part of the twentieth century. People came from all over the district to the horse sales conducted at the Jennings and McInnes yards on the site later occupied by the Trafalgar Milk Supply Depot. The Narracan Shire's municipal saleyards were established in 1950, when modern facilities were built on the site of one of Trafalgar's existing saleyards (Adams, 1978:146-7, 213). Saleyards were also established at Thorpdale in the 1920s.

Banking

In mining towns, banks were necessary for the purchase of gold from the miners, and its safe keeping. The first banks opened in the study area were in small mining settlements such as Jericho, where the Bank of Victoria opened a branch in 1864, only to close it in 1867 once the town's boom had passed (Adams, 1980:48). Walhalla had a branch of the Bank of Victoria by 1865 and a Bank of Australasia in 1866. Because of the impermanence of many mining towns, it was usually some time before substantial bank buildings were constructed, however, both Walhalla banks had purpose-built buildings with manager's residences by the early 1870s. In the 1880s, on the first Monday of the month, all the gold stored in the Bank of Victoria was loaded into a coach and taken, under the protection of the gold escort, to Traralgon for transport by train to Melbourne. Both banks burnt down in the town's 1888 fire, and were replaced with handsome buildings. As the town declined the banks closed. The Bank of Victoria was moved to Moe, to become the State Savings Bank, leaving behind its strong-room as a reminder of the huge amounts of gold stored at the bank (Adams, 1980:52-5, 71, 113).

In the selection districts banks opened only where there was a substantial commercial presence. Brandy Creek, the leading business centre before the railway arrived, had two banks in 1875. One, the Commercial Bank, established an agency in Warragul. As Warragul grew rapidly Brandy Creek's importance shrank and by 1880 its banks were closed. The Commercial Bank established a branch in Queen Street, Warragul in the 1880s (Wilde, 1988:38; WDHS, 1982:35). As Warragul grew in importance several more banks opened permanent branches.

The Bank of Australasia opened a branch in Drouin, with a new building constructed in 1878. This was the main branch for the area, with sub-offices at Buln Buln, Warragul, Waterloo (Yarragon) and Morwell. The Bank of Australasia was also chosen as the banker for the Buln Buln Shire Council, which was centred in Drouin (Butler, 1979:309-313).

Early banks in country towns were small single-storey timber buildings, often with a manager's residence at the rear, such as the Bank of Australasia in Drouin (see photograph Butler, 1979:310). As the towns prospered these modest bank buildings were replaced by more imposing brick structures in the styles of the era. Several such banks remain in Warragul today. The towns that declined as commercial centres, like Thorpdale, usually lost their banks.



Queen Street, Warragul c.1895 [looking east from Smith Street] Note the street trees

Source: WDHS, 1982

Retailing

As with hotels and banks, the number and variety of retail stores depended on the stage of development of the town and its proximity to transport. Most localities, whether a fleeting goldfield town or primitive selectors' village, had a general store, which sold everything from groceries to gumboots. Many general stores also served as post offices. General stores, such as the one at Drouin West, bought settlers' butter, cheese and potatoes prior the development of transport links that gave farmers access to the wider market. The general store was thus the lifeline of the miners and selectors living in isolated mountain mines or forest selections.

The general store

It was often a selector or relative of a selector who opened the first store in a district. At Lardner selectors John and Margaret Syme ran a store in 1877, but went out of business in 1878 when the railway drew customers into the new Warragul township. Another selector, Henry Rintel, also had store at Lardner, which was burnt down twice - hence the name Burnt Store Road - before he re-established it in 1881. The new store in the name of Rintel and Fryberg, was on the corner of Shaw and Grants Track, and had an agency for Singer sewing machines (Butler, 1979:210-1).

At Neerim Junction, John Woolstencroft, son of a selector, opened a store in 1895. The store was rebuilt after its destruction in the 1898 bushfires, then converted to a boarding house when Woolstencroft built a 'fine commodious store' beside it in 1905. John Woolstencroft was active in the local community and served on Buln Buln Council. His Neerim Junction general store was something of a community landmark in the isolated northern part of the study area. The store was still operating, with different owners, in 1986. Other members of the Woolstencroft family also ran shops in the Neerim district (Hunt, 1986:130; Butler, 1979:604, 639, 688).

After the First World War, John Woolstencroft opened one of the first stores in Noojee. The business later included a post office and motor garage. In the 1930s Woolstencroft's store and post office were joined by two more general stores in Noojee's Main Street, plus a sweets shop, hairdresser and bakery. All of these shops were destroyed in fifteen minutes on Black Friday 1939 (Butler, 1979:662, 687-8). The town, subsequently rebuilt, still has a small shopping strip to supply the locals and the passing trade.

Narracan's general store served the local community for almost 100 years, before it was relocated to 'Old Gippsland' museum in Moe, where it can now be seen (Adams, 1978:191-2).

Establishing retail centres

Warragul's business development began with James Biram's general store and post office - the first of the line of wooden shops and hotels that sprang up along Queen Street beside the station reserve around 1878. Ten years later substantial brick buildings had replaced many of the wooden shops, and by 1900 the commercial centre extended along Smith and Victoria streets (Wilde, 1991:251-5). The late Victorian buildings that remain from this time reflect Victoria's boom time and the era when Warragul was established as the region's dominant town. Warragul underwent another period of growth and change in the post-World War Two era, when the dairy industry prospered, and milk processing became concentrated in fewer factories in the larger towns. As we shall see Warragul also gained a few new industries, mainly textiles, partly as a result of the Victorian government's decentralisation program (Wilde, 1988:241-6). All this, plus the fact that the motor car became most people's preferred form of travel, brought more people into Warragul - as new residents in the town or as shoppers from surrounding districts. By the 1980s large supermarkets and retail complexes such as Centrepoint were features of the town.

Many of Drouin's original timber shops were destroyed by fires. There seems to have been a rebuilding boom in the 1910s, after the opening of the new butter factory, when a number of brick shops were built in the town, including a group of three with copper shopfronts and cantilevered verandahs, reputedly the first in the district (Butler, 1979:389-393).

Meanwhile smaller towns, such as Neerim South, Trafalgar and Yarragon remained local shopping centres. After the Princes Highway was re-routed to by-pass Warragul and Drouin in the 1980s, Trafalgar and Yarragon received increased custom from the passing trade. Yarragon 'Village' has been re-invented to specialise in gourmet local produce, cafés and craft shops for the passing trade on the Princes Highway.

Industry

As we have seen in Chapter 5, dairying has been the main industry in the study area and most of the factories are associated with this industry. After the Second World War, State government policy encouraged decentralisation of industries and local Councils often offered incentives for industry to establish in their area. One of the first new industries to be established in the study area was the James Miller Linen Thread Co., which in 1946 established a large brick factory complex in Sutton Street, Warragul. Another company to establish in Warragul was Maurice C. Dowd Pty Ltd who first set up in the old Warragul Shire Hall in 1965 before moving into new premises in 1967 that were built for them by Council (WDHS, 1982:96).

7.2 Residential development

As noted in Chapter 2, early settlers built rough dwellings of logs or palings cut from the timber felled when they cleared their selections prior to erecting more substantial dwellings. As they became established on their farms or in business in one of the towns, they replaced their first houses with neat weatherboard cottages or more commodious villas. However, even the grandest houses in the study area were relatively modest - mansions were never a feature of the landscape - and timber was the most commonly used building material. A typical house of the 1880s had four or six rooms, with a central corridor, brick chimneys, a verandah on the front and a skillion on the back. Local builder, William Hastings, built many such houses in and around Warragul (Wilde, 1988:112).

As we shall see, many new houses were built in the study area during the mid-twentieth century at a time when the dairying industry was expanding and bringing prosperity to towns such as Trafalgar, Warragul and Yarragon.

Miners' houses

In the mining towns such as Walhalla the traditional two-room miner's cottage predominated, often sitting on a narrow terrace cut into the hillside and surrounded by gardens. Larger houses were usually built for mine managers. Many of Walhalla's houses were removed in the twentieth century and can be found in towns throughout the Gippsland region (some were relocated to Thorpdale), or destroyed in one of Walhalla's disastrous fires.

Town houses

Photographs of early Warragul and Brandy Creek townships show that most residences were weatherboard cottages with gable roofs and skillions at the rear or side. As towns grew and prospered, more substantial villas were built, usually by successful business people, such as Peter Faragher, whose Victorian-style timber house was built on the corner of Young Street and Bank Place, Drouin in the early 1900s (Butler, 1979:394-5). Brick houses were fairly rare until the mid-twentieth century, one exception being the substantial villa erected for Warragul storekeeper, James Biram, in 1889 and the house constructed in 1898 for Dr. Cowen at 3 Princes Way, Drouin.

Warragul's first building boom occurred in 1880s, when many of the town's most impressive houses such as James Biram's villa were built. Another example is *Rulemount* (now at 101 Rulemount Road), which was built in 1886-6 for Mrs Mariquita Jones. The house of Mrs Jones' daughter, *Carbethon*, was built around the same time not far away in Sargeant Street. By 1890 Warragul's population had reached 1000, further increasing to 1,700 by 1900 when many villas in fashionable styles lined the elevated streets above the town such as Albert and Bowen streets (VMD). With the expansion of the Holdensen and Neilson factory, Warragul experienced another development boom during the inter-war period. After little growth since 1900, the population increased from 1700 to 2800 in the decade from 1925 to 1935(VMD). This growth is demonstrated by Peace Avenue, constructed in 1931, which was the first full Private Street Scheme in Warragul. It was part of a 66 lot subdivision extending from

Gladstone to Normanby streets, which was quickly developed with houses in the distinctive bungalow styles of the period. Infill development also occurred in the older streets such as Albert and Bowen streets during this time. An unusual development for the town (and unique within the study area) was a group of two storey Maisonettes, erected in Mason Street in 1936.

At Drouin, well to do townspeople erected their houses in what is now Princes Way and Albert Road. In the 1930s, a new residence for the manager of the Drouin Butter Factory known as *Dhuringa*, designed by Melbourne architect F.C. Ballantyne, was erected at the northern end of Albert Road.

Trafalgar's main growth years were in the first decades of the twentieth century – as noted in Chapter 5 the population of the town doubled between 1910 and 1930. Just prior to the First World War William Ashby built a row of six timber houses, similar to those described at the beginning of this section, for his daughters. They indicate the strong family ties that existed in small towns. Much of Trafalgar's housing was built during the 1920s and '30s when the dairy and potato industries were booming and the town became the Shire seat. An indication of the growth of the township came in 1924 when part of the *Summerlea* estate was purchased by a syndicate that subdivided it into 113 blocks of roughly 1000 square metres. The subdivision significantly extended the township eastwards beyond what would become known as Anzac Road – the row of inter-war houses facing the Princes Highway, some built to State Savings Bank of Victoria designs, is evidence of this development (Adams, 1978:149-50).



Houses at Trafalgar constructed by William Ashby c.1915

Source: Adams, 1982

Government housing after the Second World War

Some towns in the study area, particularly Warragul, experienced another period of growth after the Second World War. The Victorian government, keen to encourage decentralisation and to overcome housing shortages provided public housing in places of need. As Wilde (1988:239) notes:

Victoria as a whole faced a drastic housing shortage in the late 1940s, partly because of limited building in the 1930s depression years and during the war, and partly because of renewed immigration.

The Housing Commission of Victoria constructed two estates of prefabricated houses to the north of Warragul. The HCV also built two estates in Drouin (one at the corner of Main South Road and Weebar Road commenced around 1948, while the second near the corner of Albert and McNeilly roads commenced in 1957), and houses in Yarragon and Trafalgar.

When the Gippsland railway service was electrified and duplicated in 1955 Warragul once again became a busy railway centre employing a large workforce and sixty railway houses were built to accommodate the workers. (Wilde, 1988:285, 292-3)

HERITAGE

Some examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Developing Regional Centres* include:

Centres of commerce and industry

- *Hospitality and Hotels* – the Star Hotel and Windsor House in Walhalla, the Railway, Royal, Commercial and Orient hotels in Warragul, Royal Hotel (Drouin), Longwarry Hotel, and the Criterion Hotel, Trafalgar
- *Saleyards* – the Warragul Shire Council Saleyards building, Trafalgar Municipal Saleyards and Thorpdale Saleyards



Former State Savings Bank, Trafalgar

Source: Context, 2005

- *Banking* - the ANZ Bank (Princes Way, Drouin), former SSB at Trafalgar (see above), and several nineteenth century banks in Queen, Smith and Victoria streets, Warragul. At Walhalla, the only surviving evidence of the many early banks is the former Bank of Victoria strong-room
- *Retailing* - the groups of early shops in Queen and Smith streets in Warragul, Princes Way in Drouin, and the main streets of Thorpdale, Trafalgar and Yarragon. Only one small group of early shops survive as evidence of the once extensive commercial area of Walhalla. Small local or general stores are found in Erica, Hill End, Neerim Junction, Neerim South and Jindivick
- *Industry* – Butter factories as mentioned in Chapter 5, and the former James Miller Linen Thread Co. factory at Warragul

Residential development

- *Miner's cottages* - Walhalla
- *Town houses* – *Rulemount*, and James Biram's house (cnr Alfred & Galloway streets), and the Peace Avenue, Bowen Street and Victoria/Albert Street precincts in Warragul; Dr. Cowen's house, the Princes Way precinct and houses in Albert Street, Drouin; and the Princes Highway East precinct in Trafalgar

8 COMMUNITY & CULTURAL LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Community and local identity within the study area is evidenced in the range of public halls, schools and churches that sprang up in even the smallest townships and hamlets, and in the local sport and social clubs and associations. These community facilities and institutions were achieved through the public-spirited work and generosity of local people sometimes with the assistance of government and private agencies. In very small settlements, one building often served many purposes - many early churches often acted as schools and public halls before purpose-built facilities could be obtained (and sometimes vice versa). For some community facilities, such as hospitals, people looked to the larger townships. Bonds of mutual support were expressed in the friendly societies that had branches in the towns. Agricultural Societies were founded amongst farming communities, and one variation is the trade fair known as the Gippsland Field Days at Lardner. Memorials are crucial to identity and memory in all communities. Each community established its own cemetery early in its settlement era, nonetheless, lone gravesites are a feature of the study area and illustrate the hardships faced by early settlers. The study area also has a range of memorials commemorating key aspects of its history, however, the majority of its monuments commemorate wars. Local identity and civic pride was also expressed in the creation of gardens and parklands on private and public land.

The places, buildings and memorials associated with this theme express the hopes, dreams and optimism of the first settlers for the future development of their communities. In some places, these buildings formed the foundations of important towns such as Warragul and Drouin. In other areas such as Narracan East, the First World War memorial is the only physical reminder of this very early settlement. The places also represent important stages of life within communities from early childhood until old age. Consequently, these buildings have great social value and associations with local residents.

This chapter incorporates the following Australian Historic Themes:

- *Developing local, regional and national economies:* Providing health services
- *Educating:* Forming associations, libraries and institutes for self-education, Establishing schools
- *Developing Australia's cultural life:* Organising recreation, Forming associations, Worshipping, Remembering the fallen, Pursuing excellence in the arts and sciences, Living in and around Australian homes
- *Marking the phases of life:* Bringing babies into the world, Growing up, Dying

HISTORY

8.1 Creating places to meet and socialise

Although the first townships in the study area grew up around a roadside inn or a railway station, the first public building to indicate the formation of a settled community in more remote areas was invariably a hall, typically built on a corner of land donated by a selector, with funds raised by community members. The local public hall was a focal point of community life, serving as a social centre for dances, concerts and other entertainment and celebrations, a venue for charity functions, educational lectures and political meetings, and as temporary municipal offices, churches, schools and court houses. As the place where neighbours gathered to work for common goals, receive instruction, worship, sort out their differences and enjoy recreation together, the public hall was the place where the local community was formed and sustained.

The most common kind of public hall in the nineteenth century was the Mechanics' Institute hall. Mechanics' Institutes originated as a form of self-improvement for working people who had little access to higher education or book learning. They were set up initially to provide libraries or reading rooms and to run lectures and debates, but their educational function was minimal. Mechanics' Institutes were popular throughout Victoria because they attracted government subsidies, and by the 1880s there were more than 300 in the colony (Priestley, 1984:235). Other community halls were known simply as public halls, particularly after the Mechanics' Institute movement waned, around the turn of the century. There were also a few privately owned halls made available for public use.

Public halls were a feature of all country towns in Victoria and they were of particular importance within the often-isolated hill communities of Gippsland as a community meeting place. The dances, in particular, held during a full moon provided a welcome respite from the never-ending toil of farming work and often went on all night with revellers staying overnight and returning the next day. Adams (1978:63) cites a Mrs Bell who recalled:

Dancing would go on till daylight usually and the boys would pull down the blinds sometimes to hold back the dawn. Music – a concertina and fiddle, or mouth organ, and a lusty MC to call the sets ..

Mechanics' Institutes and public halls

The first Mechanics' Institute in the study area was opened at Walhalla in May 1867, with musical entertainment provided by the Walhalla Glee Club. The hall was used as a school for several years. It was destroyed by fire in 1888, subsequently rebuilt, and burnt down again in 1945 (Adams, 1980:58, 60, 71, 75, 130). In recent years a replica of the hall has been built on the same site.

According to Adams, the most substantial building in Narracan township for many years was its Mechanics' Institute, built in 1877. By the turn of the century it had a substantial library, specialising in books on agriculture, which was a 'matter of pride' to the district and by 1916 numbered over 2000 volumes. The hall was used as a school and church, and also for the meeting that proposed the formation of the Shire of Narracan (Adams, 1978:61, 78, 143). The Mechanics' Institute was replaced by a new building in 1905 (see below) and continued to serve the district until 1978 when it was moved to the Gippsland Folk Museum at Moe along with its fine library (Adams, 1978:192).

Warragul's earliest public hall and library was known as the Athenaeum, although it had the same function as a Mechanics' Institute. Built in 1880, it served as the Warragul Shire Hall for several years, and was also used by several churches before they put up their own buildings. The original wooden building was burnt down in 1928, and rebuilt in brick. This building housed the Council-run library until 1970 (WDHS, 1982:5, 59).

Mechanics' Institute halls were built in many other towns of the study area, including Yarragon, Jindivick, Drouin, Neerim South, Noojee and Thorpdale.

In localities that did not attain the status of 'town', a public hall, often close to a school, indicated the presence of a community. Drouin West, Nilma North, Neerim, Seaview, Buln Buln, Lardner and Teetora Road all had Mechanics' Institutes or public halls. Nilma North Mechanics' Institute Hall was built on land donated by Mr Irwin in 1883. The Nilma North School was opened nearby. The hall became known as the 'old hall' when a new public hall was built in 1957 (Lillico & Nilma North Centenary Celebration & Reunion Committee, pp.21, 25-6).

Many of the original halls have been lost, but their replacements, often on the original site, indicate the continuity of community. After the Trafalgar Mechanics' Institute in Contingent Street was destroyed by fire in 1935, it was quickly replaced by the modern style Trafalgar Public Hall, which boasted a large dance floor, and is still a landmark building in the town (Adams, 1978:153).

However, the importance of a hall to a local community is perhaps best illustrated by the districts of Narracan East and Narracan. As we have seen, the Mechanics' Institute was the centre of the district from 1877 and it remained so, even after 1888 when a new township began to develop around the new railway station a little way to the north-west. In 1903 there was discussion on building a new hall to serve both towns, but eventually new halls were built in each settlement – just 2km apart. The new hall near Narracan Station opened on 29 April 1904, while the second, adjacent to the old hall at Narracan East, opened less than one year later in February 1905.

In the early years of settlement a few enterprising individuals built halls for rent to the public. A.C. Lyons ran the Drouin Assembly Hall, and William Bradley built a hall at Brandy Creek, which was used for entertainment and for the Buln Buln School when it opened in 1878 (Butler, 1979:303, 500 & 516). Trinca's Hall in Warragul was popular for dances, until the town outgrew it, and in Coalville local businessman, John David, built a hall that served as a community centre (Wilde, 1988:124-5; Adams, 1978:102). These hall owners were businessmen who contributed to the commercial life of the community.

8.2 Education

Schools were among the first public institutions in new settlements, and they illustrated the rise and fall of communities over the years. They continue to have strong associations with their communities even after they have been closed. In the early twentieth century, State secondary education was introduced to the study area in the form of the Agricultural High School at Warragul. The Catholic School system was later in commencing, and concentrated in the larger towns. Since the 1970s the McMillan Rural Studies Centre has provided an innovative approach to agricultural education.

Primary schools

Prior to 1872, education was provided in Victoria by private or church-run schools, some of which received government funding from the National Board of Education from 1851. The earliest schools in the study area, opened in the 1860s, were in the goldfields towns of Jericho and Walhalla. The Jericho school was conducted in St Peter's Catholic Church, and the Walhalla School opened in a public hall in 1867 (Adams, 1980:49, 58). These two early schools were exceptional in the study area, where the vast majority of settlement took place subsequent to the founding of the State education system.



This typical nineteenth century school with attached residence was at Darnum

Source: WDHS, 1982

The State took over responsibility for primary education following the passing of the *Free, Compulsory and Secular Education Act* 1872, and subsequently began building State schools throughout Victoria. The Victorian Government developed standard plans for school buildings, including plans for one-room schools specifically for rural areas. These wooden buildings were in two sizes, designed to accommodate either 40 or 60 children. They were roofed with shingles prior to 1875, after which corrugated iron was used. The Education Department provided teacher accommodation in these one-teacher rural schools, usually in a two- or three-room residence attached to the schoolhouse. Rooms were small and cramped, making no concessions to the size of the teacher's family, and many were the complaints. Some

districts had to wait for a school – during the 1890s Depression there was a cessation of school building and many schools in the study area were established in public halls, churches or other rented accommodation while awaiting the construction of a schoolhouse. The transient nature of many settlements during the selection era prompted the development of portable school buildings, which could be moved from areas of declining population to settlements where the need was greater (Burchell, 1980:113-23).

In the twentieth century, partly in response to criticism of the poor quality of school buildings, the Public Works Department began to prepare more individual school designs that departed from the standard nineteenth century model, while residences were provided in separate buildings. Several schools in the study area constructed prior to the First World War including Neerim South, Nilma, Buln Buln and Ellinbank illustrated the improvements in school design during this period. Later, as an economy measure, standard designs were developed that were then copied throughout the State. Schools constructed after Second World War such as Cloverlea and Ferndale are examples of these standard types (Burchell, 1980:113-23).

A characteristic of primary education in the study area is the plethora of small one or two room rural schools, reflecting the efforts of communities to secure schools in places that were convenient for their children. Butler (1979:252) discusses the local rivalries and negotiations with the government that accompanied the establishment of schools:

It is easily seen that education represented some sizeable importance in the minds of the Gippsland selectors. In those dark forests the building of a school house was just the first problem solved. It was often very difficult for young children to walk along muddy, hilly bush tracks in unsympathetic weather to reach it. In this light, perhaps the factionalism of the community can be forgiven to a degree ...

Schools reflected the fortunes of their communities. Some were short lived, closing when a larger community nearby had a greater claim for a school. Others flourished during the heyday of the district, to eventually dwindle or close altogether, as was the case with the schools on the goldfields. On the other hand, a number of these small schools, with enrolments well below 100, still exist in rural districts throughout the study area, a few using their original buildings. They form a focal point for the local community. In the main towns of Warragul and Drouin the original schools have been replaced by larger urban-style brick buildings, with an accretion of additions that reflect later growth of the school populations.

The first State school in the study area was at Drouin West, the small settlement that grew up around the Northern Junction Hotel on the main road to Neerim South. Residents petitioned for a school in 1873 and in 1874 School No. 1417 was opened with an enrolment of 35 children. The school was initially known as Brandy Creek, but in 1878, after a few name changes, its official name became Drouin West. The school was also used as a Court House in the 1870s (Hansen, 1974:19-20).

This one-teacher school was typical of the small wooden schools that were built across the study area during the last quarter of the twentieth century. The original building was renovated in 1916 and again in 1935, when it was also extended. In 1960 a Jennings Light Timber Construction (LTC) classroom was added. At some stage the four-room detached residence was demolished. The brick residence built in 1971 was believed at the time to be one of the best teacher's houses in Victoria (Hansen, 1974:19-20; Butler, 1979:501, 507). Further extensions to the school have been made to accommodate the 152 students who attend Drouin West Primary School in 2005. Students are drawn from surrounding localities including Drouin, Drouin East, Brandy Creek, Longwarry North, Jindivick and Labertouche (www.drouinwest.vic.edu.au, 26 October 2005).

Many schools in the study area were established in public halls, churches or other rented accommodation while awaiting the construction of a schoolhouse. At Warragul, School No. 2104 commenced in a rented building in 1878, and a wooden schoolhouse, typical of the times, was constructed in 1879. By 1880 there were 80 on the roll. As Warragul grew from a tiny selectors' township to a burgeoning commercial centre, it rapidly outgrew its school. In

1890 a new brick building, typical of urban State schools and commensurate with Warragul's status, was added to the site. This building was extended in 1913 and the original wooden building was removed to Dandenong in 1914. To accommodate the children of the post-war population boom, several modern LTC classrooms were added in 1957, 1960 and 1978. In 1954 a new school was constructed at Warragul North to relieve overcrowding at Warragul School. Warragul North is now the larger of the two schools (WDHS, 1982:46-7; www.eduweb.vic.gov.au).

At Drouin the little portable schoolhouse provided in 1877 was inadequate for the growing town from the outset, and it was replaced with a larger building the following year. Brick and timber classrooms were added over the years prior to 1915, as the school population grew, and a separate teacher's residence built. In 1936 the whole school was destroyed by fire. It was replaced by a 'modern school in keeping with its status and locality'. The brick building in the 'modern' style developed by Percy Everett, Chief Architect of the Public Works Department, was opened late in 1936 and is still in use (Butler, 1979:357, 416-9).



Drouin Primary School

Source: Anne Napier, 2005

Seaview School, on a hilltop south of Warragul, reflects the fluctuating fortunes of the district. Commenced in a leased building in 1885 with 13 students on the roll, the enrolment had risen to 60 by 1912. The 1933 there were only on 13 the roll, and in 1954 the school was closed, only to be re-opened in 1965 (Copeland, 1934:211; Blake 1973:1235-6). The school has subsequently been closed.

Crossover School No.3131 opened in a leased building in 1891, just before the railway reached Neerim South - which was the original name of the school. In 1894, with the establishment of a number of Village Settlements in the district, enrolment had reached 80. However it was 1900 before a school was built. During the 1880s and '90s a number of other schools were opened in various halls throughout the Neerim district. The present Neerim South School No.2432 was built in the newly developing town in 1902 (Butler, 1979:580-3; Hunt, 1986:162-3).

Tanjil South School No.2840 commenced in a portable school with an attached residence, originally built at Moe in 1882 and moved to its new site in 1887. Since then, the school has been renovated several times, and classrooms added to the site. The school also served the local community as venue for fund-raising and social functions, and church services (Hasthorpe, 1987:190-219).

In 1906 a school opened at Clancy's Cutting, near Allambee. In 1914 the wooden schoolroom was moved to a new site and renamed Cloverlea. Another classroom and office was added. Although Cloverlea School had only 13 students in 2005 it provides a focal point for the locality (WDHS, 1982:54; www.eduweb.vic.gov.au).

Residents of the Noojee district had a long struggle to gain a school for their children, and had to make do with halls for many years. The Noojee School, opened in 1922 was destroyed in the 1926 bushfires that devastated the district, rebuilt and destroyed again in the 1939 fire. It was replaced with a brick school (Butler 1979:661 *passim*; Hunt, 1988:40).

As roads were improved, particularly in the post war era, buses began to be used to transport children to school. This meant that students could travel further distances and it led to the closure of several smaller schools and the increasing consolidation of small schools onto central sites.

The newest school in the study area is Rawson Primary School, established in January 1994, following the merger of the Erica School and A.G. Robertson Primary School at the Rawson township. The school now serves 68 students from the surrounding districts (www.eduweb.vic.gov.au).

Secondary schools

At the time of the *Education Act 1872*, primary education was deemed sufficient for most people. Few farming families could afford to keep their children at school after they were old enough to work; moreover, they were needed on the farm. Country children could only gain a secondary education by boarding at colleges in major cities. Technical and trade education was usually acquired on the job by people in skilled and semi-skilled occupations.

A new *Education Act* in 1910 allowed the Education Department to provide high school education. The intention of the legislation was to provide education in agriculture for country students. Thirty of the thirty-three high schools established before 1925 were in rural districts. One of the earliest of these was Warragul Agricultural High School, opened in 1911. Classes were held in the Shire Hall until the school building was completed in 1913. The school was on a 23-acre rural site outside town, and had a working farm. Although the school won prizes for its crops, the concept of agricultural education never caught on in Warragul - or anywhere else really - and secondary agricultural education was abandoned in favour of more academic courses (*Victorian Year Book*, 1973:486-7; Copeland, 1934:214; Wilde, 1988:200-1).

The Government began taking responsibility for junior technical education in 1912, however, it was not until the Second World War that technical education was developed. In 1959 the old Warragul High School building became the Warragul Technical School and a new High School was built on the campus. Both schools subsequently expanded on the site (*Victorian Year Book* 1973:490; WDHS, 1982:48-9). In the 1990s the two schools amalgamated to become the Warragul Regional College.

Secondary education was not expanded in the study area until after the Second World War, when Drouin Primary School was elevated to a Higher Elementary School in 1953, to teach years 7 and 8. The new classes were accommodated in Bristol prefabricated units. This was the forerunner to the new Drouin High School, which commenced in 1956. In 1961 Drouin High School became the first State school in the region to have a swimming pool (Butler, 1979:421).

The third and fourth largest towns in the study area, Neerim South and Trafalgar, gained high schools to serve students living in the towns and surrounding areas in 1963. Neerim South High School is now Neerim District College.

Church schools

Without State funding for church schools, it was difficult for Catholic parishes to provide separate education for their children. Catholic schools, staffed by religious orders, were eventually opened in the larger towns, bringing in children from the wider districts.

A Catholic school was opened by two women in Warragul in 1882 in Napier Street. Its relationship to St Joseph's School, opened in 1884, is not known. St Joseph's was taken over by the Sisters of the Order of Our Lady of Sion who came from Sale in 1905. In the same year the Sisters opened the Convent of Our Lady of Sion, to provide secondary education for girls.

Many of the students were boarders from out of town. A number of Protestants sent their daughters to the Convent in preference to the co-educational High School. A Marist Brothers College for boys was opened in St Joseph's Parish Hall in 1951. Its new school in Skinners Road was opened in 1963. In 1974 the Convent closed and the girls' and boys' colleges combined to become Marist Sion College (Wilde, 1988:100, 202, 266; WDHS, 1982:52).

In Trafalgar a convent was built next to St John's Catholic Church in 1930, and St Joseph's School opened. The school was rebuilt in 1961 (Adams, 1978:156, 217).

McMillan Rural Studies Centre

When Warragul people tried to gain an agricultural college in the 1940s, the result was Ellinbank Research Station (see Chapter 5). There were three long-standing agricultural colleges in other regions of the State, but none in Gippsland. Another attempt was made in 1973 when a group of local farmers, with the support of the Shire of Warragul and local staff of the Department of Agriculture, proposed the establishment of an educational institution that would:

... improve the knowledge and skills of people with farm management responsibilities or aspiring to this level, with the aim of improving the standard of agricultural practice and the quality of life of farm people in Gippsland ... (Falvey & Bardsley)

The Minister for Agriculture accepted these general proposals, and in 1977 the McMillan Rural Studies Centre was opened, with headquarters in Warragul and four campuses in other Gippsland towns. McMillan was different from other agricultural colleges in Australia, because it put an emphasis on meeting the needs of practising farmers rather than training young students. McMillan provided a variety of short courses, some through distance education. It did, however, become involved in teaching apprenticeship and degree courses. The Centre has made a point of recognising the crucial role of women in agriculture, with special courses for women and courses designed to attract couples. In 1979 the Centre was instrumental in the formation of Women in Agriculture Inc.

McMillan's buildings, opened in 1982, were designed by the Public Works Department specifically for adult learning, and have received an award for excellence. The Centre was established during a time of reform in agricultural education, and in 1983 it became part of the newly formed Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture. The VCAH has subsequently merged with the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry at the University of Melbourne to become the McMillan Campus of the University's Institute of Land and Food Resources (Falvey & Bardsley, Ch.10).



St Jarlath Catholic Church, Yarragon

Source: Anne Napier, 2006



St Mark's Church, Thorpdale

Source: Anne Napier, 2006



Drouin Methodist Church

Source: Anne Napier, 2006

8.3 Religion

Churches, along with schools, were key institutions in the development of settled communities. Although most of the mainstream Christian churches have been represented throughout the study area, the Anglican, Catholic and Methodist churches tended to predominate, especially in small rural communities. Presbyterians, Baptists, Churches of Christ and the Salvation Army have also had a significant presence, particularly in the larger towns. There are also some interesting examples of co-operation between Protestant denominations.

While schools were built with government funds, the churches were required to raise their own money for buildings. Most congregations worshipped in private homes, public halls or schools before they had chapels of their own. A number of Warragul churches commenced in the Athenaeum Hall. The first church buildings were modest wooden chapels, rather similar in design to the early halls, but often distinguished by pointed Gothic windows to indicate the building's function. Where settlements grew into larger towns, congregations replaced their original wooden chapels with brick buildings that reflected the prosperity and aspirations of their communities. It was common for the original wooden chapel to be retained for use as a church hall. The churches of the study area also have an interesting history of recycling buildings, with a number moved from one site to another. Distinctive church buildings in the study area include Wesley Church, Warragul and St Jarlath Catholic Church, Yarragon. Parishes usually supplied residences for their clergy, and some interesting presbyteries, vicarages and manses were built in the study area.

Goldfields churches

The transient goldfields populations of the early 1860s were served by visiting clergy. The first chapel in the study area is thought to have been St Peter's Catholic Church, Jericho, built in 1864. As the town of Walhalla grew, Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists began holding regular worship services. Methodism was strong amongst mining communities throughout Victoria, and Walhalla was no exception. The Wesleyan Methodists had a chapel by 1866, which they replaced in 1877. A Catholic chapel was built in 1867, and St John's Church of England opened in 1872. Congregational and Presbyterian churches came later, as well as the Salvation Army, which established barracks in the 1890s. During the town's heyday:

The church was a main part of life for most Walhalla people as it offered not only the opportunity for worship, but was also the medium for bringing them together on all kinds of social events and clubs. Church picnics and socials could be highlights in their lives, while church anniversaries, harvest festivals, All-Nations fairs and processions were great never-to-be forgotten occasions. In times like these there were opportunities for individual talent to be displayed, in marked contrast to the hardships and monotony of many of everyday life in this isolated place.
(Adams 1980:79)

Following the demise of mining in the town, the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian buildings were moved elsewhere. St John's Anglican Church building was moved to Wonthaggi, and replaced in Walhalla by a smaller building; its Sunday School building was moved to Childers in 1917. The Catholic church was destroyed in the fire that swept the town in 1945 (Adams, 1980:49, 59, 78-9, 130; Adams, 1978:144).

Denominations in co-operation - churches in rural areas

Churches also provided a central focus for people establishing communities in the farming districts and towns of the study area. The first church outside of the goldfields in the study area was founded at Brandy Creek, where the community raised funds for a Sunday School hall on land donated by James Hann, one of the district's first selectors. In 1875 a wooden chapel with a shingle roof was constructed. Pine trees were planted around the boundary. The trustees represented Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians, and the building was therefore known as the Buln Buln Protestant Church. The building was taken over by the Anglicans and moved to Buln Buln, where it became St James' Church. The Catholics also built their first church in

Brandy Creek, in 1876. This building was later moved to Rokeby, but was subsequently demolished (Copeland, 1934:77-8, 93; WDHS, 1982:57).

Co-operation between Protestant denominations was strong during the settlement era, as already noted at Brandy Creek, and there were inter-denominational churches at Erica and Ellinbank. Tanjil South's Anglicans and Methodists used the Tanjil South School for many years, before the Anglicans built St George's Church in 1930. Local Methodists supported St George's Church rather than building their own. Congregations in this church, like so many other country churches, were small, and communities struggled to keep their churches open. The highest ever attendance at St George's was 74, but it closed in 1970 after numbers had dwindled to three. The building was removed to a parish in another part of Gippsland (Hasthorpe, 1987:234-242). Removal or demolition was often the fate of tiny chapels such as St George's. Other parishes were the recipients of recycled buildings. At Erica, the Anglican community acquired a hall from Gould in 1961 - before the township was submerged by the Moondarra Dam - and dedicated it as St Thomas' Church (Adams, 1980:136).

In some parts of Australia a formal co-operative arrangement between denominations occurred with the formation of Union Churches by Baptists and Congregationalists. Phillips has noted that two Union Churches were formed in suburban Melbourne in the 1850s, and that there may have been some in country areas. Although the Congregationalists and Baptists shared similar theologies there were differences over baptism - Congregationalists baptised infants, while Baptists fully immersed candidates who professed their faith - which needed to be accommodated in buildings. Phillips noted that the Caulfield Union Church congregation built a chapel with a baptistry in 1890 (Phillips, 1991:11). Adams (1980) refers to one or two Union Churches in the northern part of the former Shire of Narracan. The Union Church at Longwarry is a very late example, being erected in 1961.

Town churches and parish centres

Many churches founded in the larger towns such as Drouin, Warragul or Trafalgar would often go on to become the centre of a parish or preaching circuit. New and grander buildings were erected as congregations and townships grew or to mark significant events such as the elevation of a church to a parish centre and to ensure that the Church reflected the status of the town and its position. Churches were a source of pride for their congregations, but could also be a source of shame - St Mary's Church, Trafalgar, was described early in the twentieth century as

an ancient little structure, dilapidated .. a disgrace to Trafalgar. Between the handsome new parsonage and the fine buildings of the Mechanics' Institute the poor little church edifice appears terribly mean and insignificant. (Mr Rodgers, church minister, cited in Adams, 1978:155)

As we shall see later in this chapter, this apparently prompted the building of not one but two new churches within 20 years. Similar patterns of re-building are found in many of the main towns of the study area.

Warragul's Methodists first gathered at *Drumlarney*, the homestead of the Copeland family, who gave a block of land for the church. The original wooden chapel became the hall, after it was superseded by a brick building, which was in turn superseded by the present Wesley Church, designed by T.J. Crouch (Copeland, 1934:88). St Joseph's Catholic Church was built in 1880, but moved across the road when a larger timber church was constructed in 1885. This became the parish hall when the new brick basilica-style church was built in 1907. The building was remodelled in 1978 (Copeland, 1934:93-6; WDHS, 1982:59). Similar patterns of church building were repeated by each denomination in Warragul.

At Trafalgar, Catholic and Anglican services commenced in 1879, and Methodist worship commenced in 1885. St Mary's Church of England was built in 1880 and St John's Catholic Church was built in 1890. In 1896 the Methodists moved a church building from Boolarra to the present site of the Post Office. As the town prospered in the new century each denomination improved their properties. As noted above, the old St Mary's was considered 'a

disgrace' to the town and so it was replaced in 1906 and again in 1926, when the 1906 building was moved to the back of the Contingent Street site to become the parish hall. The new brick gothic style church, designed by Gawler and Drummond, was placed in front. Meanwhile, the Methodists moved their church to the corner of Anzac Road in 1922, then replaced that building with a new brick church, designed by Harold Wright Bladen, on the same site in 1933, at the time when Trafalgar was experiencing the development boom described in Chapter 7 (Adams, 1978:74, 155-6).

Presbyterian churches were fewer in the study area, and tended to commence slightly later than the other three denominations - although an early Presbyterian congregation was formed amongst the Scottish settlers on Lardner's Track in the 1870s (Copeland, 1934:84). As we have seen, many Presbyterian congregations in rural areas shared churches with other denominations. The first Presbyterian Church in Trafalgar was built in 1908 in Seven Mile Road, and moved to Contingent Street in 1933 (Adams, 1978:156).

In the post-war era Trafalgar's renewed prosperity was expressed in another round of church improvements. In 1955 St Mary's Anglican Church was expanded to include a new sanctuary. A new St John's Catholic Church was built in the same year. The old building was later moved to become the parish hall at St Jarlath, Yarragon. In 1959 a new 'A' shape Presbyterian church was built in Trafalgar, later to become the town's Uniting Church after the Methodists, Congregationalists and the majority of the Presbyterians combined to form the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977 (Adams, 1978:217).

At Drouin, the development of the township was reflected in the construction of churches by different congregations. The first churches were erected in the years after the opening of the railway and served the district until new and more imposing structures in the early twentieth century. Most of the early churches were timber, the one exception being the third Methodist Church, which was constructed of brick in 1892. Early Anglican services were held in the Shire Offices and Mechanics' Institute before the first church was built in 1880. This was replaced by a new church in 1936.



St Ita's Catholic church, Drouin

Source: Anne Napier, 2006

Drouin's first Catholic Church was constructed in 1881, to be replaced by the present building in 1912. The foundation stone was laid by The Very Rev. Dean Colman V.F. on the 2nd June 1912. The pastor at that time was The Rev. M. Roche (Copeland, 1934:96; Foundation stone). The Church building was designed by the renowned church architect Augustus Andrew Fritsch in the Romanesque 'Blood & Bandage' style. Fritsch was one of the key exponents of Romanesque style church architecture in Victoria between the 1890s and the 1930s and also designed St Patrick's College, Sale (c.1920); the Catholic Church in Yarram (c.1916); and the impressive St Mary's cathedral in Main Street Bairnsdale (c.1913) (Lewis, 1991:24).

8.4 Organising recreation

Sport has always been a significant aspect of Australian life, and communities have always found time and space to play. As Wilde (1988:214) points out, every township in the Shire of Warragul had its football and cricket clubs; the same could be said for the whole of the study area. Perhaps the study area's most famous sporting hero was bantam weight boxing champion, Lionel Rose, from the Aboriginal community at Jacksons Track.

Sports grounds

In hilly country it was often a challenge to find a flat area, nevertheless two of Walhalla's rare flat areas were devoted to sport. The Recreation Club had their tennis courts and bowling green on a level site near the station site from the 1890s to the 1930s (Adams, 1980:80, 109). The town's official recreation reserve and cricket ground was established in the 1880s on a hilltop high above the town. On public holidays, such as New Year's Day, the whole town would turn out for a day of sports. A Walhalla resident described the fun on Eight Hour Day:

Up to 2000 and more would trek up to the recreation ground, 700 feet above the town, the women and children joining the menfolk. It was an ordeal climbing the hill, but scores of comfortable gum tree shelters had previously been erected by the miners for their womenfolk. Athletic events, cycling, tug-of-war, iron quoits, 'toss the caber', children's events, ladies' Siamese races and the inevitable egg and spoon race etc, were held. (quoted in Adams, 1980:80)

Sportsgrounds, although none as spectacular as at Walhalla, could be found at townships throughout the study area. At Trafalgar matches were played in Graydon's paddock before about 1910, then the recreation reserve was used. A grandstand was erected in 1920, and other facilities added.

Other communities besides Walhalla maintained the tradition of an annual picnic sports day. At Willow Grove the annual New Year's Day Sports commenced on the recreation reserve in 1906. Events included the Willow Grove Gift foot race, which was still being held in the 1970s, and wood-chopping - appropriate in this heavily timbered district (Adams, 1978:123-4, 199). At Erica, the Axemen's Carnival was held annually from 1921, and saw the likes of axeman Jack O'Toole of Gould, who won championships at the Sydney Easter Show in the 1950s (Adams, 1980:136-7).

Sports clubs

One of the earliest cricket clubs was at Jindivick, formed around 1880. The club had an oval sown with English grass, donated by a store owner Walter Edney in 1881 (Butler, 1979:537). Trafalgar had a number of sports clubs from an early date, including the Trafalgar Football Club, formed in 1888, which has participated in its local football league every year since (www.footypedia.com). Even tiny mining townships such as Toombon and Aberfeldy fielded cricket and football teams in the 1880s. Well after the decline of mining in Walhalla, the town still had active football and cricket clubs (Adams, 1980:130).

A sport that involved women as well as men was tennis. Yarragon Tennis Club, formed in 1903, had the first asphalted court in Gippsland (Adams, 1978:163). Tanjil South Tennis Club was formed in 1914, and a level site found for a court on a gravel reserve at the junction of the Willow Grove - Walhalla Road. The court, which was surrounded by bush, became known as Wilson's after a neighbouring landowner. Opening day attracted a crowd from surrounding districts. The club declined during the First World War, and the courts fell into disrepair. The club was eventually re-formed in the 1940s, and new courts constructed at the Tanjil South Sports Club's new ground in Willow Grove Road. By then the Tanjil and District Tennis Association had been formed, with several teams from surrounding districts as members.

A great deal of community commitment in the form of voluntary work and fundraising was necessary to establish sporting clubs and maintain facilities such as these. This is evident in the

Tanjil South Centenary Hall, a recycled brick building which was re-erected to serve as clubrooms and a community facility in 1986 (Hasthorpe, 1987:242-254).

Horse racing

Horse and harness racing has a long history in the study area. Early horse races were held next to the saleyards at the *Turf Club Hotel* near Buln Buln in the 1870s. Trafalgar had a racing club, formed 1903, which developed a course with grandstand to the west of the town in 1910. The race meetings were popular in the 1920s when the Trafalgar Cup commenced, however the popularity was short-lived and the club ceased in 1930 (Adams, 1978:158-9). Matthew Bennett Park at Drouin was gazetted for racing, agricultural show and recreation and was originally known as the Whiskey Creek Racecourse. After closing down during the inter-war years, it was re-opened as the Drouin & District Racing Club (Copeland, 1934:197)

Harness racing in West Gippsland began in on New Year's Day 1889, at Drouin, with a Trot event run by the Buln Buln Turf Club. Trot events then featured at various thoroughbred meetings throughout the study area, before a club was formed at Warragul in the late 1930s. This club, known as the Warragul and District Trotting Club, used the grass gallops track at the Warragul Showgrounds. The first race meeting was held on Saturday, November 18, 1939, and the club conducted the first country Derby in Australia three months later, with the Warragul Derby for pacers and for trotters. After a break owing to the Second World War, the club and racing resumed in 1946, and in 1950 hosted the first Victorian Trotters Derby to be held in rural Victoria. Another first was the commencement of night trotting in the early 1950s. The WDTC still operates today and is now the oldest club based east of Melbourne, pre dating Healesville (Yarra Glen), Cranbourne, and now defunct clubs such as Traralgon and Leongatha (<http://www.letsgotrotting.com/history.html>).

Rifle clubs

From the 1880s rifle shooting was a popular sport and a number of rifle clubs were formed in the study area, including Trafalgar, Yarragon, Thorpdale and Tanjil South. Although primarily sporting bodies, rifle clubs also had military connections, and many became detachments of the Volunteer Mounted Rifles. During the Boer War the government encouraged the establishment of rifle ranges. During the First World War, many existing ranges throughout Victoria were officially reserved as rifle ranges by the Lands Department, and taken over by the Defence Department (Adams, 1978:71, 74, 77, 159; Hasthorpe, 1987:261-2).

8.5 Health & welfare

Hospitals

In the nineteenth century hospitals were charitable institutions that cared for people who could not afford medical or nursing care at home. In Walhalla an accident hospital was opened in a donated cottage in 1893. It was not available for people suffering from long-term illness or the destitute. The hospital received little public support and closed in 1900. Walhalla later had a private hospital that was still operating in the 1930s. It became the Tree-tops Guest House after the Second World War (Adams, 1980:74-5, 129-30).

West Gippsland Hospital

What was to become the major public hospital in the study area, the West Gippsland Hospital, had its origins in a public meeting held in Warragul in 1889. A site was donated by Mary Sargeant, and a building was completed in 1891. However, due to drainage problems, it was not used as a hospital until 1908, when a government grant enabled the problem to be remedied and the hospital opened. In 1940 this building was replaced by a new hospital. The hospital was partly funded by public charity and was a major focus for fundraising in the community over the years. As the public hospital serving the study area, West Gippsland Hospital has grown into a large complex on a hill dominating the town. In the 1970s it was one of town's biggest employers (WDHS, 1982:64; Wilde, 1988:128, 220, 250-1, 259).

Private hospitals

Private hospitals began to appear around the turn of the century. They were small concerns, mostly run by women with nursing experience, and they provided nursing care for those who could afford to pay. Many private hospitals specialised in midwifery at the time when childbirth was beginning to move from home to hospital. In Trafalgar there was St Margaret's Private Hospital, commenced as a midwifery hospital in 1905, and St Monace Private Hospital in Seven Mile Road. Yarragon also had a couple of private hospitals (Adams, 1978:155, 162), one known as *Lemnos*, was a maternity hospital. In Warragul the private hospitals included *Cooinda*, *Rothwell* and *Rongoa*. *Cooinda* was used as an annex to the West Gippsland Hospital's maternity ward during the baby boom that followed the Second World War (Wilde, 1988:162, 252). At Drouin, the last private hospital was *Ronara* at 30 Young Street, which continued to the 1940s.

Bush Nursing Hospitals

The Victorian Bush Nursing Association, founded in 1911, initiated the opening of Bush Nursing Centres in rural areas. Centres were supported financially by subscriptions from members of the local community. Subscribers were entitled to free treatment in the centres, which were managed by committees elected from amongst the subscribers. Nurses were employed to care for patients, in consultation with local doctors, where available. Some centres extended to become Bush Nursing Hospitals (*Victorian Year Book*, 1973:555-6). A Bush Nursing Centre was established in Neerim township in 1914. It closed in 1931 when the community was unable to support it during the Depression. Meanwhile a Bush Nursing Hospital had opened at Neerim South, in 1928. The weatherboard building had accommodation for five in-patients. At some stage it appears to have been renamed the Neerim District Soldiers Memorial Hospital. In the 1950s accommodation had doubled and an operating theatre added. In 1967 a new twelve ward brick hospital, designed by Melbourne architects Harry and Frank Norris, was opened (Butler, 1979:655-7). Neerim District Soldiers Memorial Hospital has been upgraded in recent years, and continues to provide private medical care to the local community, specialising in a surgical services (gippsland.com/web/NeerimDistrictHealthService).

Baby Health Centres

Maternal and child health became a major issue in the first decades of the twentieth century and led to a baby health movement that was driven by committed volunteers frustrated at government inaction. Dr Isabella Younger Ross (1887-1956) who had studied infant health in England helped set up Victoria's first baby health clinic in Richmond in 1917. By 1918 the voluntary Victorian Baby Health Centres Association (VBHCA) was formed to oversee the growing number of centres. Financial support also came from local councils and in 1926 the State government formed the Infant Welfare Section of the Public Health Department and appointed Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown as the first Director. In the post-war period, the State Government introduced a construction subsidy of £1,000 to assist with the establishment of centres and from 1917-76 54 centres were established throughout Victoria (Heritage Victoria, File No. HER/2000/000033)

Baby health (or infant welfare) centres usually commenced in public buildings before permanent buildings were provided. The first purpose-built Baby Health Centre in the study area was opened in Queen Street, Warragul in 1934. The service had commenced in temporary premises at the Shire Hall in 1928 (WDHS, 1982:77). Drouin's centre opened at the Shire Offices in the 1940s and a permanent building was opened in Oak Street in the 1950s. A centre opened at Longwarry in 1953 and at Noojee and Neerim and Neerim South in the same decade, and Thorpdale in the 1960s (McDermid, 1978 & Adams, 1978).

Friendly societies and lodges

Friendly societies originated in eighteenth century England as a way of providing self-help and mutual support amongst working people. With no state welfare, the societies were an important form of social security. Members made regular contributions of a few pence to a fund upon which they could draw if illness prevented them from working. Funds were also available to pay funeral expenses and assist widows and orphans of members. In the nineteenth century, Victoria was a stronghold of friendly societies, probably because of its industrial base. Blainey estimates that in 1890 up to one in three Victorians came under the protective umbrella of a friendly society. Although meetings were sometimes held in hotels, friendly societies generally promoted temperance, as sobriety was regarded akin to respectability and prosperity (Blainey, 1991:22-3). Some lodges, particularly the Freemasons, had a secret ceremonial dimension, which bound members even closer together.

Friendly societies and lodges had strong presence in the study area from the earliest times of settlement in the gold and coal mining towns such as Walhalla and continued to be a powerful force within the social, cultural and political life of the community well into the twentieth century. The presence of the organisations was marked by a number of hall and temples erected in towns throughout the area.

Walhalla, as an isolated mining town, was a stronghold of friendly societies and lodges. The Freemasons, Ancient Order of Foresters, Oddfellows and Rechabites all commenced lodges in the 1860s and '70s. They built halls for their meetings and social activities, which were also available for other community activities. The Grand Union of Oddfellows hall was used for the Law Courts and as the Shire Hall. The Masonic Hall was converted from the original Wesleyan Church in 1878 and was still in use a century later (Adams, 1980:59, 77, 130). The coal mining town of Coalville was also well served with lodges, including the Temperance Lodge and the Orange Lodge, which used David's Hall.

Warragul had the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows, Rechabites, the Gippsland Forest Lodge, and the Australian Natives Association. The first temple of the Gippsland Forest Lodge was built in Victoria Street in 1885 and was sold to the Rechabites when a new temple was built in Queen Street in 1926 (Wilde, 1988:127, 243). Members of the Gippsland Forest Lodge included some the most influential people in Warragul society – Roy Ross, Warragul Shire Engineer from 1924-34, became a member shortly after his permanent appointment to the Shire and ceased to be a member in January 1934, shortly after his resignation (www.rosstrust.org.au).

The Drouin Masonic Lodge commenced in 1892, but did not have its own meeting place of its own until 1926 when a Temple was erected in Sinclair Street. The temple was used until 1997 when meetings were transferred to the West Gippsland Masonic Temple in Warragul and the building was converted for use as the Drouin Fire Station.

Trafalgar had several lodges, including the Freemasons, who erected their Masonic Hall in Kitchener Street in 1933 (Adams, 1978:157). Thorpdale and Narracan both had branches of the Oddfellows and Rechabites, but it is not known whether they built halls (Adams, 1978:103, 144).

8.6 Agricultural societies

Agricultural Societies originated from early traditions of ploughing matches between farmers, which were taking place in Victoria in the 1850s (*Argus*, 24 May 1856). These matches provided an opportunity for farmers to discuss implements and farming methods, and were the forerunners of Agricultural Shows. Farmers of the Buln Buln district held ploughing matches at the Buln Buln Hotel in the 1870s, prior to the first the Buln Buln Agricultural Show in 1880 (Butler 1979:434). The Warragul Agricultural Society formed and ran its first show in 1885, overshadowing the Buln Buln Show, which ceased a few years later. By the First World War Warragul had become the biggest show in West Gippsland, and a major social event on the

calendar for all the district's farming families (Wilde 1988:117-8, 313). In the 1940s the Warragul Showgrounds were developed to include sportsgrounds and were used for events, including Boxing Day horse races, greyhound races, motor cycle races and showjumping (Wilde, 1988:259-60).

The Central Gippsland Agricultural Horticultural and Pastoral Society, formed from two earlier groups - The Trafalgar Horticultural Society and the Farmers Co-operative - ran shows in the 1920s and 1950s, using showgrounds in Trafalgar, but eventually lapsed. Its successor was the Narracan Shire Garden Club, which ran annual flower shows in the Public Hall (Adams, 1978:156-7, 219).

The Neerim South Agricultural Society held its first show in 1907 in a paddock near the Neerim South station. A few years later the Society developed a site next to the school, where shows were held until 1980. The Society then transferred its shows to Neerim (Butler, 1979:648-9; Hunt, 1988:34). Annual shows are still held in January by the Neerim and District Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

Gippsland Field Days

A variation on the agricultural show after the Second World War was the field day, where the latest in farm technology was displayed and demonstrated. The Gippsland Field Days commenced in 1967 at Lardner on *Brandie Braes*, the former property of the Currie family, who, as we have seen in Chapter 2, were early selectors in the district. The Gippsland Field Days is an organisation run by a voluntary committee of Warragul businessmen. Its main event for the year is Farm World, held in March when hundreds of companies exhibit equipment relating to beef cattle, dairying and horticulture. This trade fair attracts around 60,000 people each year (Wilde, 1988:232; www.thegfd.com.au).

8.7 Cemeteries

From the time of earliest European settlement it has been necessary to have places to bury the dead. Before the establishment of cemeteries, or in places remote from cemeteries, burials were in single, isolated graves in the bush or beside roads and the Gippsland region has a number of these 'lone' graves. A railway worker killed during the construction of the Gippsland line was buried on a hillside south of the highway at Darnum (Williams, n.d.:5). Mrs Walker, whose husband Charles was an early selector in the Tanjil district, was buried in the orchard of their property (Adams, 1978:122). A well-known lone grave is that of Kitty Cane, a former dance-hall girl who kept a shanty on the Aberfeldy diggings. When she died, her coffin bearers found her body too heavy to carry up to the cemetery, so they buried her by the track near her shanty (Adams, 1980:51).

Cemeteries are memorials to the harshness of life faced by early settlers. Many people died prematurely from mining mishaps, accidents when cutting timber, in bushfires and floods, or from illnesses in the absence of medical facilities. It was common in the nineteenth century for women to die in childbirth, and for children to die of childhood diseases. At the Yannathan & Longwarry South (now known as Ripplebrook) Cemetery, for example, 21 of 28 burials between 1879 and 1905 were of children under the age of 10 (Butler, 1979:127). Burial grounds are reminders of men, women and children who died in such situations. Each township had its own cemetery, which kept the dead within their own community. Such cemeteries are documents that recognise those who lived and worked in the local community. At some places, such as Cooper's Creek, the cemetery is one of the few tangible reminders that a community once existed there, while the cemetery at Walhalla with over 1000 gravesites provides evidence of the size of the town at its peak.

Cemeteries were usually set out according to religious denominations with sections reserved for major churches. Exotic plantings often used species that would provide a characteristically sombre and melancholic atmosphere. Pine and cypress trees were favoured trees in cemeteries for their symbolic associations (Heritage Victoria website).

One of the earliest burial grounds in the study area was at Shady Creek, where squatter and innkeeper, Nicol Brown, buried his wife Juliet and daughter Isabella. Both died from different causes in 1860 and they were the first burials in that little cemetery. Their remains were later re-interred at Rosedale (Adams, 1978:37).

As townships such as Drouin, Narracan, Trafalgar and Yarragon took shape in the 1880s, sites were reserved for cemeteries, with trusts appointed to manage them. At Willow Grove the Tanjil Cemetery was laid out in 1888, and its first occupant was, appropriately, Tom Needham, the first selector on the Tanjil Hills Run, who died in 1890 (Adams, 1978:123).

At Childers, the site of the cemetery was chosen out of urgent necessity, when two paling splitters acting as undertakers found a convenient place for the burial near Chute Road to the south of the town (Adams, 1978:65).

8.8 Commemorating

Memorials and monuments are an important way by which communities remember past events and honour people and their contributions to the community. In the study area there is a range of monuments commemorating a variety of past events and people, however, the most prevalent are war memorials, which can be found in every town.

War Memorials

The First World War had a devastating effect on all communities throughout Australia, and almost every small town has its memorial. Such memorials express the grief and loss of the community and also pride in those who served. Monuments vary from the concrete column with brass tablet erected by the people of Fumina, to statues of a soldier standing at reverse arms, as found in Trafalgar, to avenues of honour, such as those planted at Nilma and Brandy Creek. At Drouin, two granite tablets were mounted on the front wall of the Drouin Memorial Hall. Like cemeteries, the memorials are sometimes the only physical remnant of a once-vibrant community.

New plaques were often added to commemorate later conflicts such as the Second World War, and those in Korea and Vietnam. The monument in the A.G. Pretty Memorial Reserve at Jindivick is a rare example in the study area of a memorial specifically dedicated to the Second World War – it honours four local men lost in that conflict.

Honour boards were installed in Shire halls and churches to remember those who served in both World Wars. In some places the monument was a community facility, such as an RSL Hall or the Soldiers Memorial Hospital at Neerim South.

Forestry memorials

The importance of forests and forestry is demonstrated by a variety of memorials in the study area. In Thorpdale the 'World's Tallest Tree' pole, is a rather ironic replacement for the largest Mountain Ash ever measured, which was cut down in 1881. The pole was erected many years later, during the Thorpdale centenary celebrations, and is now a symbol of what has been lost. At Darnum a huge grey gum stump has been placed beside the highway as a monument to the workers in the timber industry.

Memorials to pioneers

Various memorials to district pioneers have been erected throughout the study area. Some of the first were erected in the 1930s; about 50 years after the first settlers began to arrive. The memorial gates at the Jindivick Public Hall, which were erected in 1936 to mark the 50th anniversary of the hall, are dedicated to the 'courage, faith and enduring labours of the pioneers'. At Lardner in 1943, the Currie family donated land for a memorial recreation reserve dedicated to the early settlers of that district. At Blue Rock Lake a Pioneer Wall, consisting of six large boulders excavated from the site, commemorates the miners of the Tanjil

goldfields and the farming settlers who followed them. Plaques honouring 25 of the pioneering families of the district are included in the monument, which was constructed during Victoria's sesquicentenary in 1984 (Hasthorpe, 1987:327-30). Another more recent memorial is at Yarragon.

Another 'pioneer' memorial is the Calder Monument on the Princes Highway, erected in 1919 as a memorial the construction of the first stretch of CRB Road and in honour of William Calder who was a 'pioneer' of modern road construction in the study area. This memorial also serves as a reminder of the difficulties of road transport in the first half century of European settlement.

8.9 Creating public and private landscapes

As we have seen in Chapter 2, after clearing the land early settlers planted windows of exotic trees for stock protection and, perhaps also, aesthetic effect. Thus began the transformation of the natural landscape of the study area into the distinctive cultural landscape that exists today.

Private gardens

We have heard the story of Kate Currie who in 1903 set about establishing a garden around her new house at *Brandie Braes*. The garden fashion in the Victorian and Edwardian eras was for specimen planting using a mixture of native trees such as *Araucaria* sp. (Norfolk Island Pines, Bunya Bunyas) and exotic trees such as Oaks and Elms. An Australian native tree that was frequently used was the *Cordyline* or Cabbage Tree. Hardy survivors, Cabbage trees are often the only early plantings to remain from old gardens, sometimes remaining long after the buildings that they were associated with have gone. Several examples remain in Walhalla on the sites of lost buildings and there are two fine specimens in the front gardens of the former Count Von Horn's house north of Warragul.

The garden at *Rulemount* contains a fine collection of mature exotic trees including *Araucarias* and a *Magnolia grandiflora*. At Drouin, the mature Norfolk Island Pines in the garden at the corner of Lardner Road and Westernport Road are local landmarks. In the late nineteenth century, George William Jones acquired a 'densely forested block' that would become known as *Treforest*. Here he planted a range of exotic trees and established a fernery. Some of the trees survive today.

Public parks and street plantings

The nineteenth century penchant for specimen planting can also be seen around public buildings. At about the same time (or soon after) as the Warragul Court House was built a Bunya Bunya Pine was planted along with a Holly Oak. These trees have grown into the fine specimens that can still be seen today. Adjacent to the Warragul Shire Hall are three mature Algerian Oaks and one English Oak, which were planted soon after the construction of that building in 1892-3.

Street tree planting began in Warragul in 1890 and one Councillor, David Connor, was a 'strong supporter of street tree planting' (Copeland, 1934:269, 293). Over the years, trees were planted in main streets of the town such as Palmerston, Queen and Smith streets.

Unfortunately, many of these early trees have succumbed to the pressures of road widening and overhead services and few survive today. During the inter-war period palms became fashionable and in 1935 one side of Albert Street was lined with Canary Island Palms, alternating with Planes, which lined both sides (Bick, 1991:377).

At Trafalgar and Yarragon, trees were planted along many of the streets during the 1930s. At Trafalgar in 1924, a small wayside park was established in the railway reserve opposite Anzac Road, which became known as Campbell Square. A few years later, Trafalgar acquired its first public park. In 1921, the Progress association sought to have part of the police paddocks in Contingent Street made into a park but it was not until 1928 that occupancy was granted. It

would then be several more years before Council was able to use a special Unemployment Relief Grant to convert the reserve into a park (Adams, 1978:151-2).

Arbour Day was celebrated for many years with memorial plantings, particularly by State Schools and many of the mature trees within school yards bear testament to the efforts of past schoolchildren. The avenue of flowering gums along Princes Way in Drouin was planted on Arbour Day in 1935. At Neerim North Primary School a fine collection of trees was planted over a 100 year period. One of the earliest plantings was a *Sequoia giganteum* (Sierra or Giant Redwood) planted in 1903 by G.J. Knight. After the school was closed and the buildings removed, the site was dedicated on 28 March 1981 as the H.F. McCay Arboretum. The 1.5-acre site contains two Sequoias at the entrance (two of about seven on the site), as well as a Silver (or European) Fir, Caucasian Fir, Monterey Cypress, Oriental Spruce, English Ash, Holm Oak, English Oak, Cork Oak, Italian Stone Pine, White Pine, and Douglas Fir (Pretty, 1995:170-1). At Narracan, the magnificent trees lining School Road and within the grounds of the Narracan Primary School itself provide a beautiful setting for the school.

HERITAGE

Some examples of heritage places associated with the theme of *Community & Culture* include:

Creating places to meet and socialise

- Warragul Athenaeum Hall
- Trafalgar Public Hall
- Public Halls at Narracan, Hill End, Hallora, Icy Creek, Jindivick, Seaview and Drouin West

Education

- Larger state schools at Warragul and Drouin
- One or two room early twentieth century state schools – Buln Buln, Ellinbank, Seaview (closed), Crossover and Neerim South. Lardner & District School is an example where buildings from surrounding closed schools may have been moved onto the site.
- St Joseph's School Warragul & Sion Convent, Warragul
- McMillan Rural Studies Centre

Religion

- *Goldfields churches* - St John's Anglican Church, Walhalla
- *Inter-denominational churches* - St James' Church, Buln Buln and Longwarry Union Church
- *Town churches and parish centres* – Wesley Church, Warragul; St Mary's Church of England, Trafalgar; Wesleyan Methodist Church & St Ita's Catholic Church, Drouin; St Jarlath Catholic Church and hall, Yarragon

Organising recreation

- Walhalla Cricket Ground
- Tennis courts at Ellinbank and Lardner

Health and welfare

- Trafalgar Private Hospital (former), 34 Ashby Street
- Neerim District Soldiers Memorial Hospital
- *Lemnos*, a former private hospital at Campbell Street, Yarragon
- Baby Health Centres at Drouin, Longwarry and Warragul
- Masonic temples at Walhalla, Trafalgar, Drouin and Warragul

Agricultural societies

- Warragul Show Grounds Exhibition Hall

Cemeteries

- Town cemeteries such as Warragul and Drouin
- Rural cemeteries still in use at Drouin West, Erica, Narracan East, Neerim, and Childers & Thorpdale. Closed cemeteries (now on private property) such as the old Russell Creek Cemetery and the Shady Creek Cemetery



Jindivick memorial gates

Source: Context, 2005

English Oak, 1A Pepperell Drive, Drouin

Source: Anne Napier, 2005



Commemorating

- War memorials, which are found in most towns throughout the study area. At Narracan East, the First World War memorial and trees are among the few remnants of the township
- Pioneer memorials, which include the Jindivick memorial gates (see above), Lardner memorial recreation reserve, Savige family memorial at the Narracan Falls Reserve, and the Pioneer wall at Blue Rock Dam
- Forest memorials, which include the Grey Gum stump at Darnum and the 'Worlds Tallest Tree' memorial at Thorpdale
- William Calder memorial, Princes Way, Drouin West

Creating public and private landscapes

- The garden at *Rulemount*, which is an example of a town garden that contains a significant collection of mature trees, while *Wildersea* near Yarragon is a fine example of a country garden with notable mature hedges
- The Bhutan Cypress Avenue opposite McNeilly and Albert roads intersection at Drouin
- Trees associated with public buildings, such as the Bunya Bunya and Holly Oak at the former Warragul Court House, and the Oaks at the old Warragul Shire Hall
- The English Oak identified by the National Trust at 1A Pepperell Drive, Drouin (see opposite)
- The street trees in Albert and Queen streets, Warragul, and Westernport Road and Princes Way, Drouin
- The mature trees within Balfour Park, Trafalgar
- H.F. McCay Arboretum, Neerim North and the trees at Narracan Primary School and in School Road, Narracan



View of Baw Baw

Source: Anne Napier, 2005



Noojee Trestle Bridge

Source: Context, 2006

Narracan Falls reserve and Trafalgar Railway Station

Source: Context, 2006



9 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This chapter contains the Statement of Significance for Baw Baw Shire, which is based upon the information contained in this history and seeks to describe the principal reasons for the significance of the heritage of the municipality. It is intended to be:

... a brief, pithy but comprehensive statement of all the ways in which the place is significant. It should not just be a list of every conceivable reason for significance that the assessor can think up, however, it must state clearly and unequivocally the major reasons why the place is important. It must be supported by the presentation of sufficient evidence to justify the assessment judgement. (Pearson & Sullivan, 1995:176)

In assessing the significance of the heritage of the Shire, this chapter considers:

- *What is significant?* The preceding chapters provide information and analysis about the influence of the historic themes in the development of Baw Baw Shire and identify representative places associated with each. This essentially provides the basis for understanding *What* is significant about Baw Baw Shire in terms of its historic development and the associated heritage places.
- *How and Why is it significant?* This provides a summary of the reasons why the places within Baw Baw Shire are significant. In accordance with the definition set out above (Pearson and Sullivan, 1995), this does not attempt to list every reason for every place, but provides an overview of the key reasons having regard to the themes described in this history.

9.1 What is significant?

Baw Baw Shire has a rich and diverse cultural heritage that illustrates the historic exploration, occupation, use, adaptation and development of the land since the first contact between Aboriginal communities and non-Aboriginal people. This in turn promotes a greater understanding of the historic development of Victoria and Australia generally. The preceding chapters have described the key themes in the historic development of Baw Baw Shire and provided some examples of heritage places that illustrate these themes. As we have seen, the heritage places of the Shire are many and varied and include buildings & structures, trees, landscapes, and archaeological sites. There are also places with few physical remnants, but with strong associations and values for local communities. They have one thing in common:

These are places that are worth keeping because they enrich our lives – by helping us to understand the past; by contributing to the richness of the present environment; and because we expect them to be of significance to future generations. (The Burra Charter)

On this basis, the places of particular significance to the post-contact historical development of Baw Baw Shire may be summarised as:

Thematic context	Place types*
<i>First contact & exploration</i>	Place names, explorers routes & roads, remnant landscape
<i>Settling the land</i>	Homesteads & farm complexes, farm landscapes (trees & hedgerows), roads, townships and town sites
<i>Transport & communications</i>	Railways and associated buildings & infrastructure, early coach inns, roads & bridges, municipal quarries, post offices, townships and town sites
<i>Governance</i>	Public buildings and infrastructure

Thematic context	Place types*
<i>Utilising natural resources</i>	Early cattlemen's huts, mining and timber sites (buildings, infrastructure and works), timber tramways, FCV buildings and sites, butter & cheese factories, farm dairies, produce coolstores, water supply infrastructure, town sites
<i>Managing & appreciating the environment</i>	Fire lookout towers and dugouts, fire-resistant buildings, Forest Roads, Forest camps and timber plantations, swamp drainage and flood control infrastructure and works, Tourist roads and sites, alpine walker's huts and accommodation
<i>Creating local & regional centres</i>	Commercial buildings (Hotels, banks, shops, etc.) and residential buildings and precincts dating from the 19 th to mid 20 th century. Postwar industrial development
<i>Community & cultural life</i>	Public and community buildings (schools, churches, halls), private hospitals, baby health centres, memorials, cemeteries, gardens & trees.

*The description of place types also includes archaeological sites associated with these places.

9.2 How and why is it significant?

The heritage places of Baw Baw Shire are historically, socially and scientifically (archaeological) significant for the following reasons:

- The places associated with early exploration provide evidence of the pattern of settlement of the West Gippsland region, which was one of the last regions in the State to be settled and is of interest as an area where there was virtually no pastoral era and the land was predominantly taken up via selection. While there is little physical evidence of this period, it is remembered by the explorers routes (now followed by some roads) and in place names. (RNE criteria A.4, C.2)
- The places associated with gold mining, many of which are primarily archaeological sites, provide important and varied evidence of the role of this area in stimulating the 'gold rush' that had a significant influence upon Victoria's development during the nineteenth century. In a local context, the gold rush was important as it opened up transport routes and led to the first permanent settlement in the area and the formation of local government. (RNE criteria A.4, C.2 & D.2)
- Places associated with transport routes illustrate the important influence of roads and then railways upon the pattern of settlement in the Shire. Of particular interest is how the early townships along coaching routes were replaced by later towns set out along the Gippsland Railway (which became the main centres in the Shire), and branch lines as they opened. With one main line and four branch lines constructed between 1878 and 1922 the Shire contains many places, including archaeological sites that provide important and varied evidence of the development of the Victorian railway network and the central role it played in the settlement of the Shire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. (RNE criteria A.4, B.2, C.2 & D.2)
- The Shire contains places that illustrate the importance of roads to the development of rural areas within Gippsland during the twentieth century. These places also have important associations with the formation of the Country Roads Board and include some of the first projects carried out by the Board. Evidence of road construction by the former Shires and CRB can be seen in many Developmental Roads constructed to serve agricultural districts during the inter-War period, quarry sites and the William Calder memorial, and the Forest Roads constructed after the Second World War. (RNE criteria A.4, D.2 & H.1)

- The civic, commercial and residential development in Drouin, Warragul and Trafalgar demonstrate how they developed as regional centres to service the rich farming hinterland of West and central Gippsland. The development in secondary towns such as Neerim South and Thorpdale illustrate the importance of smaller service centres to serve communities that remained relatively isolated until improvements to road transport were made after World War II. (RNE criteria A.4 & D.2)
- The Shire includes many places that provide evidence of ways of life and how people lived in isolated rural communities – they illustrate the harsh conditions that settlers had to overcome and how the environment was modified in order to establish farms and open up the land for farming. Of particular interest is the Moe Swamp Scheme, which stimulated development in the eastern part of the Shire during the inter-war period. (RNE criteria A.4, C.2 & D.2)
- The places associated with the timber industry illustrate the central role of the Shire as one of the major centres of the timber industry in Victoria in providing building and heating materials to Melbourne and Victoria. The range of heritage places, which includes many valuable archaeological sites, provides important evidence of the development of the timber industry over a 100-year period. This includes places associated with private operators as well as the Forests Commission of Victoria. (RNE criteria A.4, B.2, C.2, D.2 & H.1)
- Farm and rural buildings such as dairies, haysheds and coolstores demonstrate the importance of the Shire as a rich agricultural district, which has been an important source of fresh produce for Melbourne and Victoria since the nineteenth century. These buildings also provide evidence of vernacular building techniques, which are becoming increasingly rare. (RNE criteria A.4 & D.2)
- In particular, the places associated with the dairying industry demonstrate how the Shire is one of the richest dairying districts in the State. The buildings and sites provide important and varied evidence of the development of this industry since its earliest beginnings and demonstrate the significant influence that this industry had upon the development of the Shire. This is illustrated not only by the farms and factory complexes, but also in the associated civic, commercial and residential development that occurred within the towns where the factories were situated. (RNE criteria A.4, B.2, C.2 & D.2)
- The Shire contains places and features that demonstrate the significant influence that bushfires and their management have had upon patterns of settlement and the development of forest industries both within the Shire and in Victoria generally. It includes places that illustrate the far-reaching consequences of the Royal Commission that followed the devastating 1939 fires. (RNE criteria A.4, B.2, C.2 & D.2)
- The Shire contains the Baw Baw mountain range, which has been a source of inspiration for scientists and nature lovers since the first European exploration. Places within and around the Baw Baws have important associations with the early development of the nature conservation and appreciation movement. (RNE criteria A.4, B.2, C.2, D.2 & H.1)
- The Shire contains places that illustrate how water has been used or controlled to encourage development. It is of particular interest for the use of water as a source of power and for other reasons in nineteenth century mining and timber schemes, and for the Moe Swamp Scheme, one of two major swamp drainage schemes in Gippsland. The places associated with water supply illustrate the increasing need for remote water supplies to support township within the Shire, the broader region and Melbourne and include rare evidence of very early water supply schemes. (RNE criteria A.4, B.2, C.2 & D.2)
- Public and community buildings such as schools, churches and halls provide evidence of the formation of small and often isolated rural communities and the central role that these places played in community development. They have strong social values and attachment and are often central to the sense identity of districts and areas. These buildings and other places such as recreation grounds, memorials and cemeteries provide an important insight into how people lived and ways of life. (RNE criteria A.4, C.2, D.2 & G.1)

Baw Baw Shire is aesthetically significant for the following reasons:

- The Shire contains some of the most picturesque rural landscapes within Victoria. Of particular significance is the contrast between the ordered farmland featuring ordered rows of exotic trees and hedges on the foothills and plains with the remnant bushland in the adjacent hill country. (RNE criterion E.1)

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