

Towards Cultural and Environmental Renewal of Jacksons Creek

biik wurrdha Regional Parklands Cultural Values Study



Wurundjeri
Woi-wurrung

Cultural Heritage
Aboriginal Corporation

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Warning: The following document may contain images of deceased persons.

This summary document presents the results of the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands Cultural Values Study prepared by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. This Cultural Values Study is intended to guide planning for the biik wurrdha parklands. The full report is available by request to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation.

biik wurrdha is known as Jacksons Creek in English.

Cover artwork produced by Ash Firebrace for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.
Graphic design by Jo Melrose Design.



Welcome to Country
Wominjika Wurundjeri
Galluk yearmen koondée bik

Foreward



Wurundjeri managed grassland

Documenting the cultural significance of the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people has revealed that these parklands are a cultural landscape traditionally shaped by Wurundjeri Woiwurrung occupation and land management.

The cultural landscape is home to ceremonial sites, archaeological places, places representing colonial settler and Woiwurrung interactions and other important cultural features.

The investigation and identification of this significant cultural landscape provided the basis to develop Wurundjeri Woiwurrung aspirations to appropriately protect and manage the diverse cultural attributes of this landscape into the future.

This overview document condenses a twelve-month study to document Wurundjeri Woiwurrung values in the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands in the Melbourne suburbs of Sunbury and Diggers Rest, Victoria. The study has been delivered by the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

biik wurrdha is known as Jacksons Creek in English.

1. Traditional Owner Significance



Redstone Hill Plateau

The biik wurrdha Cultural Landscape is valued in its entirety for the spiritual, archaeological, historical, ecological and living connections that it provides to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community.

A landscape, whether it be environmental or artificial, is the product of human occupation and interpretation of our surroundings. The cultural values imbued into a landscape or place are dependent on a community's interpretation through their usage of the area, their memory or knowledge and through its historical narrative. Cultural values can also be described as the aggregate forms of attachment to Country which forms an individual's or communities' sense of place; or the association that exists between people and place.¹

At the time of colonial settler arrivals within the Port Phillip District from 1835, the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands were situated within Country held by the Marin balluk and Wurundjeri willam clans of the Woiwurrung speaking people.

This diverse landscape of the parklands features the creek valley, floodplain and flats, volcanic peaks of Redstone Hill and Jacksons Hill and elevated plateaus above the steep escarpments of biik wurrdha. Within some portions of the escarpment, e.g. on the eastern bank opposite Jacksons Hill and overlooking biik wurrdha at Redstone Hill, extensive rocky outcrops protrude from the escarpment overlooking the floodplain. In conjunction with the preserved ecological biodiversity at Holden Flora and Fauna Reserve, this landscape represents ancestral Woiwurrung Country.

¹. Rose (1996); Australia ICOMOS (2017)

1. TRADITIONAL OWNER SIGNIFICANCE

The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Elders and project participants formed a view that their association with the biik wurrdha cultural landscape is held within the archaeological record, their historical narrative, their spiritual fulfilment found on-Country, the environmental aesthetic and through their understanding of traditional land use which continues in the parkland area through the Narrap land managers. These associations were found to be represented within the integrated cultural and spatial elements of the parklands which also includes the formerly identified Sunbury Rings Cultural Landscape National Trust Registration (National Trust Database File Number L10303) which made a prior determination that the Sunbury Earth Rings of the parklands demonstrates Woiwurrung occupation, cultural life and traditional land use.

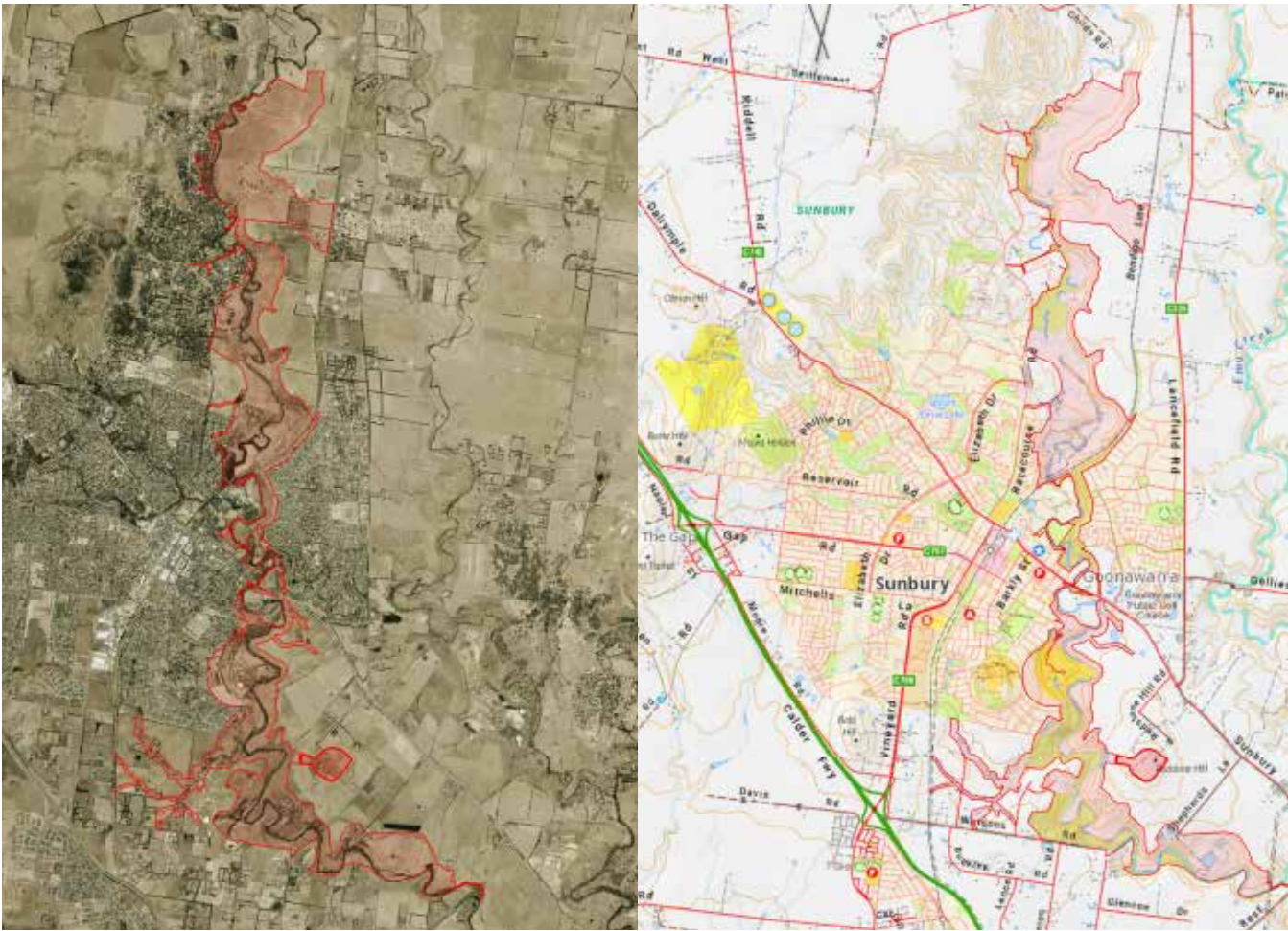
Establishing the significance of this cultural landscape reflected the worldview of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung participants in conjunction with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* which defines cultural significance as including archaeological, anthropological, contemporary, historical, scientific, social or spiritual significance; and significance in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. ²

It is important to get out on Country as much as we can. We need to see Country and talk about it how we want to. Walking across the landscape and sharing knowledge with everyone is absolutely amazing.

Being on Country at biik wurrdha is a privileged and special moment. We are visiting our ancestors' home. It is important that the public knows this. They should be aware of the history and how significant biik wurrdha is to us, and why we do these cultural walks. It is very important to preserve and look after these areas.

2. Study Findings

The study area for this project is the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands proposed along a 24 kilometre stretch of biik wurrdha extending northward from Diggers Rest to Childs Road in Sunbury.



Study Area a - JC_Parkland_aerial

Study Area b - JC_Parkland_aerial

² . Aboriginal Heritage Act, 2006, Sec. 4[1]

Attributes: *Archaeological*

The biik wurrdha Regional Parklands Cultural Values Study included a review of registered Aboriginal places that are located within the proposed biik wurrdha Regional Parklands footprint. This cultural values study has also facilitated detailed archaeological investigations of Holly Green Mound (VAHR 7822-0589) and Aboriginal stone artefacts excavated previously at Sunbury Ring G (VAHR 7822-0098), which are currently underway.

The review identified 93 previously registered Aboriginal places, comprising 328 components. Most of these Aboriginal places were identified on the ground surface – probably due to the prevalence of Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments where no excavation was required at the time (e.g. before the enactment of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*). The Aboriginal places tend to be situated on the western side of biik wurrdha, on the upper valley hill/slopes, lower floodplain, or terraces, rather than the escarpment on the eastern side of biik wurrdha.

This is not surprising, as the western side of the creek is flatter and more easily accessible, and has been the focus of more Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments in advance of residential development. The most common Aboriginal place types are Artefact Scatters, Low Density Artefact Distributions, Scarred Trees, and Quarries, followed by Earth Features (including the Sunbury Rings and Holly Green Mound), Aboriginal Cultural Places, and Object Collections. Stone artefacts are the most commonly identified tangible remains of past occupation by Woiwurrung people in the study area. However, this is probably because stone is less likely to disintegrate once buried compared to artefacts made on more ephemeral materials such as wood, bark, plants, bone, shell, animal hide or fur, etc.

The archaeological investigations of Holly Green Mound (VAHR 7822-0589) will comprise a combination of survey and excavation undertaken in partnership with La Trobe University, as per approved Cultural Heritage Permit WTP039. A pedestrian survey will provide the opportunity to record surface artefacts identified on the mound. Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey will investigate the inner structure of the mound, and whether any potential burial locations of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains are present within the mound. The excavation will be minimal, comprising a stepped trench where excavation of the mound occurred previously (in the 1930s) to investigate soil stratigraphy and whether subsurface Aboriginal cultural heritage is present, and to collect sediment and charcoal samples for microscopic analysis and dating. These archaeological investigations are due to commence once COVID-19 restrictions have eased.

The analysis of the stone artefacts excavated at Sunbury Ring G (VAHR 7822-0589) by David Frankel in the late 1970s is currently underway. Caroline Spry and Delta Freedman (Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation) catalogued the artefacts. Caroline is currently preparing a stone artefact analysis report. Ebbe Hayes (MicroTrace Archaeology; University of Wollongong) and Richard Fullagar (University of Wollongong) will undertake a microscopic examination of the stone artefacts to investigate residues and usewear patterns on their edges/surfaces, and what they reveal about how the artefacts were used. This microscopic study is due to commence once COVID-19 restrictions have eased.



Caroline Spry at Melbourne Museum



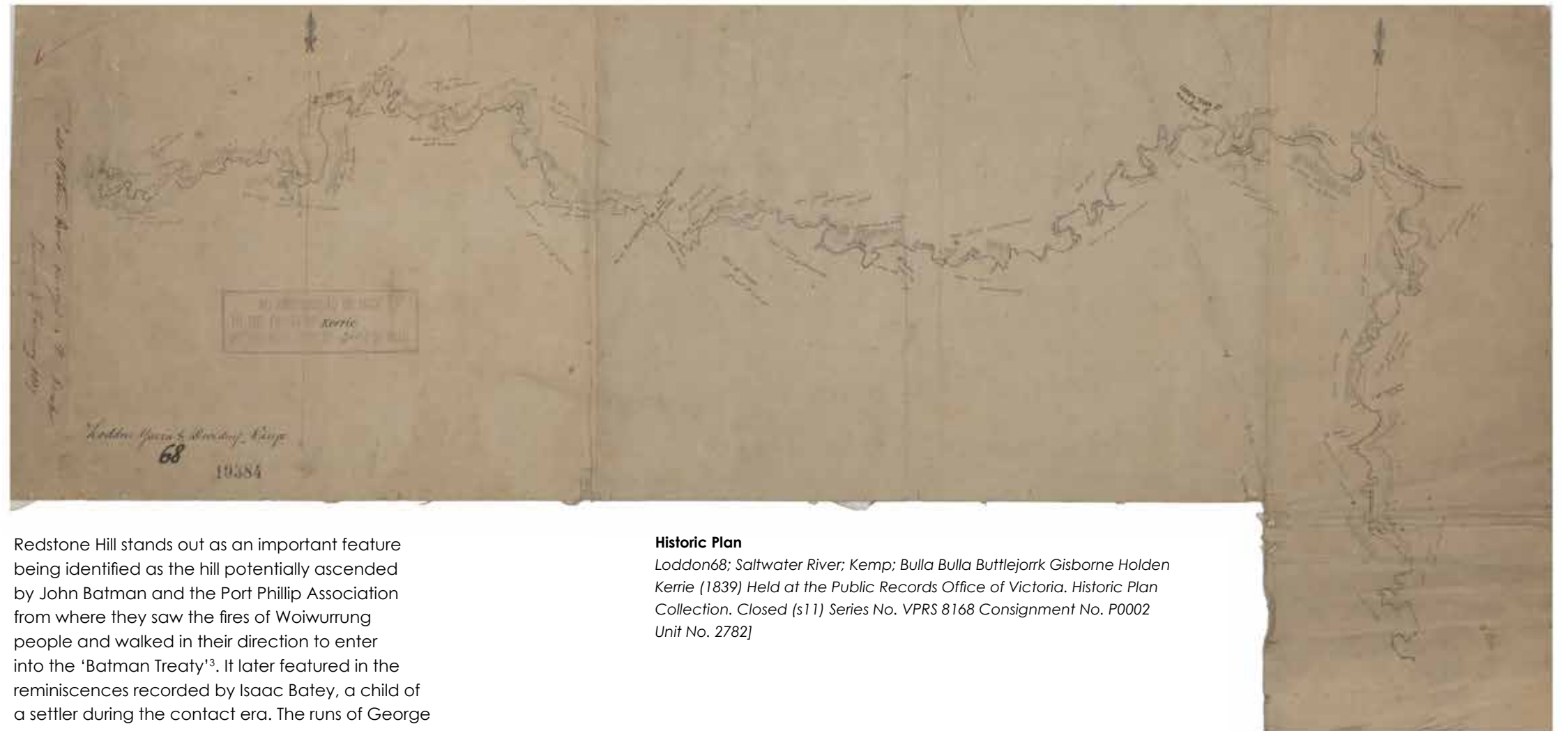
Ron Jones, Allan Wandin, Richard Fullagar, Rob McWilliams at Melbourne Museum

Attributes: *Historical*

The biik wurrdha cultural landscape holds historic significance to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people, revealed through the historical narrative of Woiwurrung people at the interface of colonisation from 1835.

The grasslands and biik wurrdha were targeted for occupation by some of the first colonial settlers of the Port Phillip District from 1835 onwards. Marin balluk and Wurundjeri willam people were immediately dispossessed of their most vital areas of Country. Prior to the establishment of the Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate in 1839, these four years of colonial settlement at Sunbury were distinguished by continual tension between the colonial settlers and Traditional Owners. There were instances of Traditional Owners attempting to assert their rights to Country via attacks on settlers and their stock; to some who continued to maintain access to Country and cultural practices on the runs of settlers such as the Jackson brothers; and instances of dependency on the rations provided by settlers due to the rapid speed by which settlers hunted marsupial game and grazing stock ate local supplies of murnong and other important food plants.

These circumstances cumulated into what Assistant Protector Edward Parker observed at Sunbury as Aboriginal people living in destitution, starvation, experiencing the brunt of frontier conflict and resorting to extreme measures to support their livelihoods. Following Parker's move to his Loddon Reserve, the Marin balluk and Wurundjeri willam people at Sunbury transited between Loddon and the Melbourne protectorate areas of William Thomas to join with their Woiwurrung clans people. They were not free agents to transit through their Country as a letter was required from the Assistant Protectors vouching for their character and their permission to be moving between protectorate areas.



Redstone Hill stands out as an important feature being identified as the hill potentially ascended by John Batman and the Port Phillip Association from where they saw the fires of Woiwurrung people and walked in their direction to enter into the 'Batman Treaty'³. It later featured in the reminiscences recorded by Isaac Batey, a child of a settler during the contact era. The runs of George Evans and the Jackson brothers are also important places where frontier relations played out.

Within this context, the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands cultural landscape can also be understood as a site of Wurundjeri Woiwurrung peoples' colonial accommodation, resistance and efforts for self-determination.

Historic Plan

Loddon68; Saltwater River; Kemp; Bulla Bulla Buttlejork Gisborne Holden Kerrie (1839) Held at the Public Records Office of Victoria. Historic Plan Collection. Closed (s11) Series No. VPRS 8168 Consignment No. P0002 Unit No. 2782]

³. Daniels (2014)

2. STUDY FINDINGS

Edward Parker Census of Marin balluk people

Public Records Office of Victoria, Aboriginal Protectorate Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly and Annual Reports and Journals Periodical Report for the period March to August 1840. (Includes names of Aborigines of the Urtowrong or Niclowra Tribes & a portion of the Jajowrong Tribe) Edward Parker (Assistant Protector, North Western District) VPRS 4410 Consignment No. P0000 Unit No. 21



Image of Winberry
Woiwurrung man Winberry illustrated by Assistant Protector William Thomas, pictorial material of the Thomas Papers held in the Mitchell Library (State Library of New South Wales)

2. STUDY FINDINGS

Attributes: *Spiritual*

This landscape is a very significant area. We were born on Country, we lived, grew up on Country, I feel this huge sense of belonging. It's important to share our stories with our family members. It is a beautiful landscape. Listen to our cultural values because it's all we've got.

For the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung participants, spiritual meaning was found in areas of the parklands that were identified during the research as living spaces of their ancestors and thus provided the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung participants with a conceptual link to the traditional Country of their people. For example, the soundscape of Jacksons Falls, their connection to the Sunbury Earth Rings and the visual power of the Redstone Hill plateau elicited emotional responses to Country.

The events surrounding Woiwurrung creation ancestors and supernatural or totemic beings are often identified as taking place in various locations across Woiwurrung Country. Creation events relate to the formation of river systems or features within Country and can also offer explanations of geological or weather events which took place during Indigenous sovereignty of the Port Phillip District.

Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people continue to respect their creation ancestors and supernatural or totemic beings, as well as the physical manifestation of their activities within the features of Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Country. The biik wurrdha Regional Parklands constitutes an area where they carried out their cultural responsibilities and the landscape continues to resonate with spiritual meaning for Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people.



Jacksons Falls

Attributes: *Caring for Country*

Healthy country is to keep planting and putting our species back in, to see our species growing in the ground. To see water flowing and hear the sounds of animals and birds. Hopefully our people can get out there and do that and work with the stakeholders that manage biik wurrdha. Here our ancestors would have caught eels, made spears, scarred trees for shields and canoes. Bunjil our creator and Waa the protector put these resources here for them. We respect these creation ancestors. That day we were out Bunjil circled and welcomed us. He stayed with us. His wings were so big and beautiful. He'll protect us.

Woiwurrung people do not perceive the land, vegetation and wildlife within a landscape as isolated elements. Rather, they view the aesthetic of a landscape holistically through the ecological biodiversity required for healthy Country. Extensive land clearing places high value on remnant plant and tree species. The landscape, but not the cultural association, is at risk of being irretrievably lost when measures are not in place to protect the environmental and topographic features through correct land management. This is understood as Caring for Country or Bunjil's law.

biik wurrdha was not a permanent water source and its seasonal flooding was essential to filling adjacent waterholes for water supply through the warmer months. The environmental characteristics of the study area provided the right conditions for an abundant variety of food, fibre, resource and medicine plants to thrive. The slopes of the study area were likely murnong cultivation areas. The grasslands of the study area were likely to have been seasonally enhanced by cool burns.

The resource and food-rich biodiversity of the study area, in conjunction with the historical and archaeological evidence, does speak to the successful response to, and shaping of, the Sunbury landscape by an active and generational presence of Woiwurrung people.

Woiwurrung people sustainably managed the land and its resources to ensure seasonal harvests of plant and animal species required for diet, resources, clothing and body adornment, tools, manufacture, weaponry, dwellings, utensils and craft. Central to land management practices were cool burning regimes dictated by seasonal transitions. The reliance on healthy Country for the seasonal regeneration of food, fibre, medicine and resources meant that the traditional landscape was shaped by intentional design through the land management techniques of Woiwurrung people, comparable to a designed landscape in the present-day.



Woven Bag

Image downloaded from the British Museum for non-commercial use released under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license. Asset number: 1613714652; Museum number: Oc1980.Q.719; Production date: 1840-1880 (circa); Field Collection by: Rev George Gill; Found/Acquired: Macedon, Mount Oceania: Australia: Victoria (Australia); small square bag with handle; made of net of twisted vegetable fibre; Registration number Oc1980.Q.719]

Attributes: *Anthropological*

Indigenous Victorians were delineated by socio-dialectical groups with linguistic and localised distinctions. The notion of a language group classification has come to be commonly understood as defining the boundaries between East Kulin groups and is reflective of Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation's appointed Registered Aboriginal Party area. Their principal units of kinship were local patrilineal descent groups, commonly referred to as clans, being a group of individuals in relation to one another through biological descent with the addition of affinal relations. The extent of territory held by a clan was the Country they inherited through their forebears and whose familial connections dictated certain responsibilities held by individuals. biik wurrdha at Sunbury likely marked a border between two Woiwurrung speaking clans, the Marin balluk to its west and Wurundjeri willam, under the leadership of Billibellary, to its east.

The Wurundjeri willam have maintained their traditional custodial relationship with the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands through Annie Borat (daughter of Bebejern and niece of Billibellary) the ancestor of present-day Wurundjeri willam people. A clan's members were not centralised at all times; members would have been dispersed over the broader region according to their familial and cultural obligations, totemic responsibilities in caring for Country, hunting and harvesting, cultural business and recreation.

1. *Recommendations*

The identification of a significant cultural landscape required consideration as to how the landscape is managed and protected within the biik wurrdha Parkland Plan, legislative compliance and other actions.

Underlying the objectives and recommendations for the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands is the principle of caring for Country, or Bunjil's law, in which the environmental landscape, culture and history of Woiwurrung people is viewed holistically. Extensive colonial and more recent land clearing places high importance on existing indigenous plant, tree and animal species. The landscape features, but not the cultural association, are at risk of irretrievable loss when measures are not in place to protect the environmental and topographic features through correct land management.

Ten objectives for managing Woiwurrung values and otherwise embedding Wurundjeri Woiwurrung perspectives into the biik wurrdha Regional Parklands have been identified through consultation with DELWP, Hume City Council and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation who are seeking support from the Victorian Government, local government and other authorities to deliver on 25 actions to achieve the objectives set out below.








Cultural Heritage Officer with Artefacts








biik wurrdha and Harpers Creek Confluence

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION AND SIGNIFICANCE	OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATION	EXAMPLE OF PLACE
<p>1.Cultural Heritage Management and Protection</p> <p>The biik wurrdha Regional Parklands area has been determined as a significant Wurundjeri Woiwurrung cultural landscape.</p>	<p>The biik wurrdha Cultural Landscape holds an extensive presence of archaeological artefacts. A complete assessment of extent, nature and significance of archaeological cultural heritage material has not been documented for the parklands. It is essential that this be assessed to register previously unidentified cultural heritage material on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register; avoid future impact from parkland infrastructure; and reflect accurate cultural heritage sensitivity mapping.</p>	 <p>Unregistered Artefact Scatter</p>
<p>2. Sunbury Earth Rings</p> <p>The Sunbury Earth Rings evidence Woiwurrung occupation, cultural life and traditional land use. They are an integral feature of the biik wurrdha Cultural Landscape</p>	<p>To establish clear requirements with the Victorian Government, local government and relevant public land managers that enables a timely and effective response to any damage that is occurring, or could potentially occur, to the Sunbury Earth Rings.</p>	 <p>Sunbury Earth Ring</p>
<p>3. Protect Aesthetic and Natural Attributes within biik wurrdha Regional Parkland Infrastructure</p> <p>The biik wurrdha Regional Parklands area is significant to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people, including the diverse landscape features of the creek valley, floodplains and flats, volcanic peaks of Redstone Hill and Jacksons Hill, and the elevated plateaus above the escarpments. Along with preserved ecological biodiversity such as Holden Flora Reserve, this landscape represents ancestral and present-day Woiwurrung Country.</p>	<p>The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Elders would like the public to enjoy the parklands however need to work with land managers to ensure that walking paths, lookouts and other visitor attractions support, and do not damage, the significant aesthetic and natural attributes of their ancestral place.</p>	 <p>Expansive view of Woiwurrung Country towards Mt Macedon from Redstone Hill</p>
<p>4. Caring for Country</p> <p>The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people are the custodians of the biik wurrdha Cultural Landscape and hold the generationally conferred responsibility of caring for this place to ensure seasonal maintenance of the right ecology, habitats for totemic and creation ancestors and restoration of the landscape traditionally managed by the Woiwurrung people.</p>	<p>Support of the Wurundjeri Narrap Unit service delivery to protect, manage and restore the parklands in conjunction with cultural burning and application of traditional ecological knowledge. Includes support to extend direct land management of additional 'Conservation Areas 20 and 21'.</p>	 <p>Example of cultural burning at Macedon: Healing Geboor through Wurundjeri Wiiñ</p>
<p>5. Planning Controls to Conserve the Jacksons Creek Cultural Landscape</p> <p>The biik wurrdha Cultural Landscape is valued in its entirety for the spiritual, archaeological, historical, ecological and living connections that it provides to the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community.</p>	<p>It is critical that planning controls are in place to ensure surrounding urban development and any ancillary impacts from this development does not compromise the cultural landscape.</p>	 <p>biik wurrdha Cultural Landscape</p>

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION AND SIGNIFICANCE	OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATION	EXAMPLE OF PLACE
<p>6. Supporting Cultural Practice in the Jacksons Creek Regional Parklands</p> <p>For the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community, significance is sustained through the renewal of customary practices and ensuring the generational conferral of knowledge. This is achieved in many ways including caring for Country, undertaking archaeological assessments, walking Country, knowledge sharing and on-Country cultural activities.</p>	<p>In contrast to the ownership of the Woiwurrung people, the Jackson brothers owned a portion of the land at Sunbury for mere decades. Their name is now immortalised in the naming of this creek. A Woiwurrung name must be returned to this waterway.</p>	 <p>Cover art by Ash Firebrace</p>
<p>7. Growling Grass Frog Wetland Locations</p> <p>The flowing water and waterholes of Jacksons Creek were an essential element of healthy Country and Woiwurrung living areas. The archaeological record and cultural heritage sensitivity mapping confirm that biik wurrdha, and all waterways in Woiwurrung Country, were central living areas for Woiwurrung clan estates.</p>	<p>The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation must have a greater role in ensuring future pond locations are sited well to best consider the cultural and ecological impacts.</p>	 <p>Example of Growling Grass Frog Location</p>
<p>8. Involvement in Legislative Decision Making</p> <p>Recognition and protection of the Jacksons Creek Cultural Landscape must be integrated into relevant policies, legislation and regulations to ensure adequate protection and cultural respect for the biik wurrdha Regional Parkland area.</p>	<p>Recognition and protection of the Jacksons Creek Cultural Landscape must be integrated into relevant policies, legislation and regulations to ensure adequate protection and cultural respect for the biik wurrdha Regional Parkland area.</p>	 <p>Jacksons Falls feature and soundscape</p>
<p>9. Interpretation</p> <p>The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung community place importance on renewing their connections and interpretation of places, customs and landscapes. Sharing some Woiwurrung knowledge is important to help others learn of our land and our heritage.</p>	<p>A consistent signage strategy will enhance public knowledge of the cultural importance and sensitivity of the parklands and biik wurrdha Cultural Landscape.</p>	 <p>Kismet Creek Unregistered Artefact Scatter</p>
<p>10. Further Research</p> <p>Wurundjeri Woiwurrung designed and led research is important to underpin advocacy for the protection of cultural values within future land uses.</p>	<p>Further studies to determine areas of cultural significance along further stretches of Jacksons Creek, Maribyrnong River, Emu Creek and Deep Creek are required to protect previously unidentified cultural values through planning measures prior to future impacts.</p>	 <p>Redstone Hill Floodplain Area</p>

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PHOTO CREDITS

All photographs were taken by Delta Lucille Freedman and Dr Caroline Spry for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Corporation and Sheridan Blunt for DELWP over the duration of the biik wurrdha Regional Parkland Cultural Values Study.

NGOON GODJN – THANK YOU

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